# AC/DC 45 YEARS OF BACK IN BLACK

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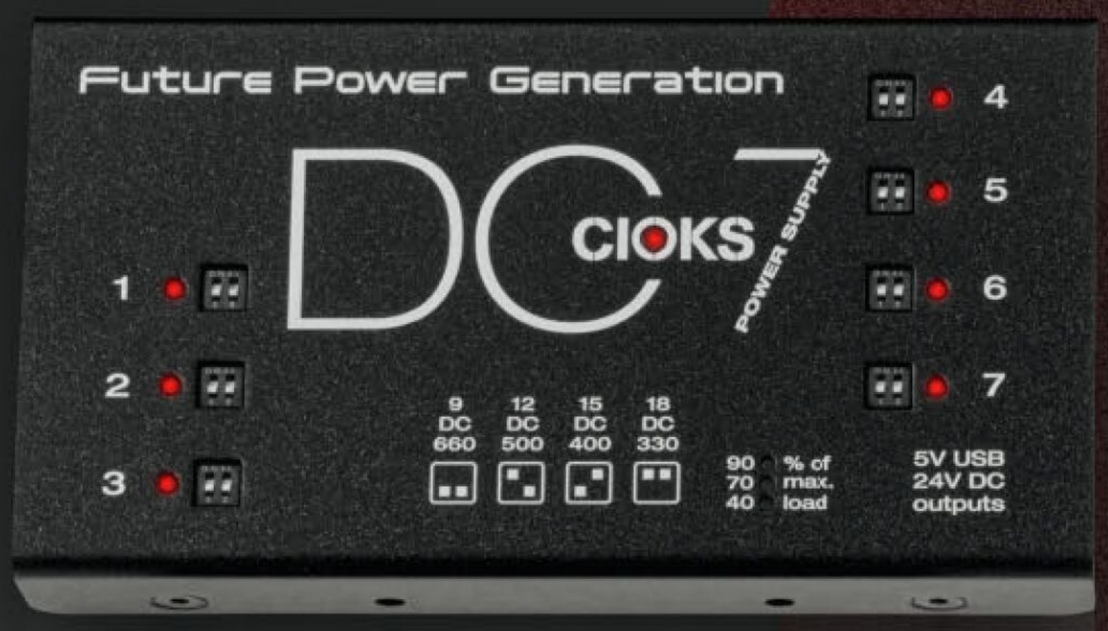

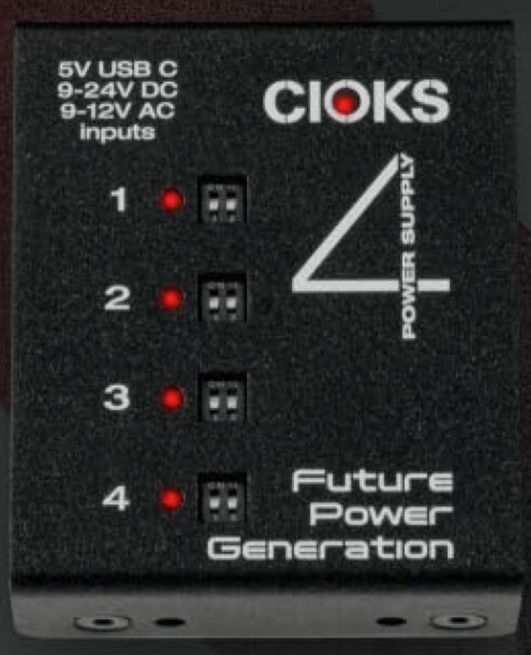


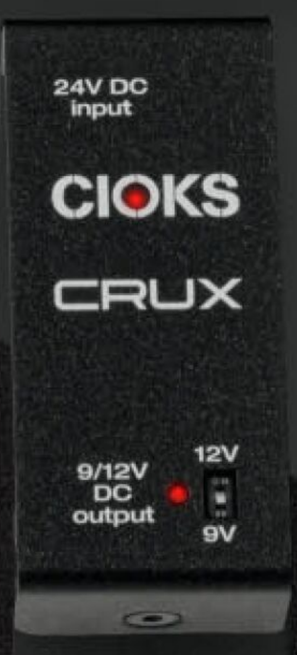


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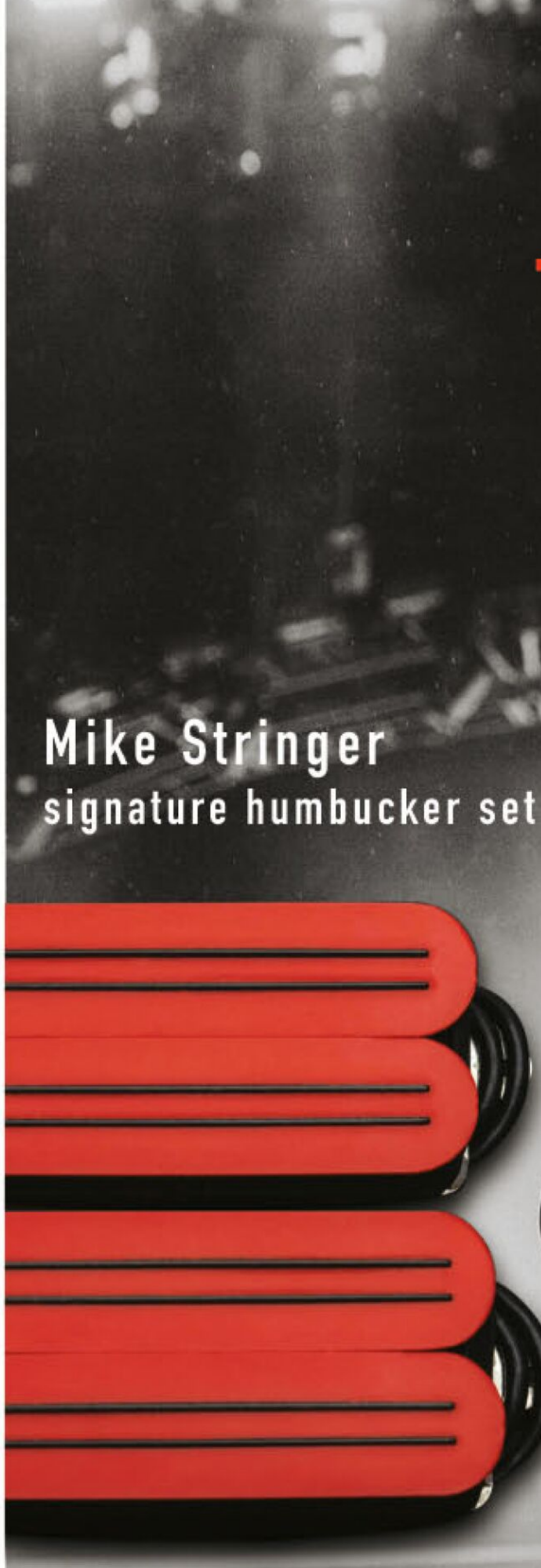

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# WOODSHED

VOL. 46 | NO. 7 | JULY 2025

## THE SUMMERS OF ANGUS

**VERY OFTEN, WHEN** it comes time to write these Woodshed columns, I just ask myself, "What are your personal experiences with the band/artist/thing on the cover?" And when I did that for this issue, this is what I came up with:

It's August 1984, and my band (a bunch of young'ns, mind you) is roped into playing at a talent show at a vacation-community clubhouse in northeastern Pennsylvania. This guy — not really a friend, but he was an OK kid — decides he's gonna enter, but he's gonna dress up as a punk with spiked blue hair, and he wants to sing "Back in Black." So I had to learn it. Luckily, I had just seen Stevie Ray Vaughan that March, so I knew that Angus Young was most likely playing that descending, Texas blues-style lick (the one right after the A chord in the song's main riff) way down in the first position, complete with a few open strings. Believe it or not, before I'd seen SRV in action, I thought he was playing everything — including stuff like the main licks to "Pride and Joy" and "Scuttle Buttin'" — way up by the 12th to 14th frets. (I know — it's crazy!) Anyway, the "Back in Black" kid won the talent show. Thank you, Stevie!

The next summer (same place), we entered a battle of the bands, playing two more *Back in Black* songs — "Have a Drink on Me" and "You Shook Me All Night Long" (We also played Deep Purple's "Perfect Strangers," but that doesn't really help me right now). We lost, but the bits and pieces I picked up while learning those songs have remained part of my guitar vocabulary to this day. Almost every time I pick up a guitar, I play a riff that incorporates what I call the "'Have a Drink on Me' A7 chord," which is the variation Angus and Malcolm are playing just as the vocals kick in.

Cut to modern times: Comedian/actor Bill Burr — on the March 20 edition of his *Monday Morning Podcast* — was discussing his attempts to learn Angus' "You Shook Me All Night Long" solo by ear, hoping it'd "open something up" in terms of his comprehension of the fretboard. Bill, as someone who learned that solo by ear in 1985, lemme tell ya, you are definitely on the right track.

***— Damian Fanelli***

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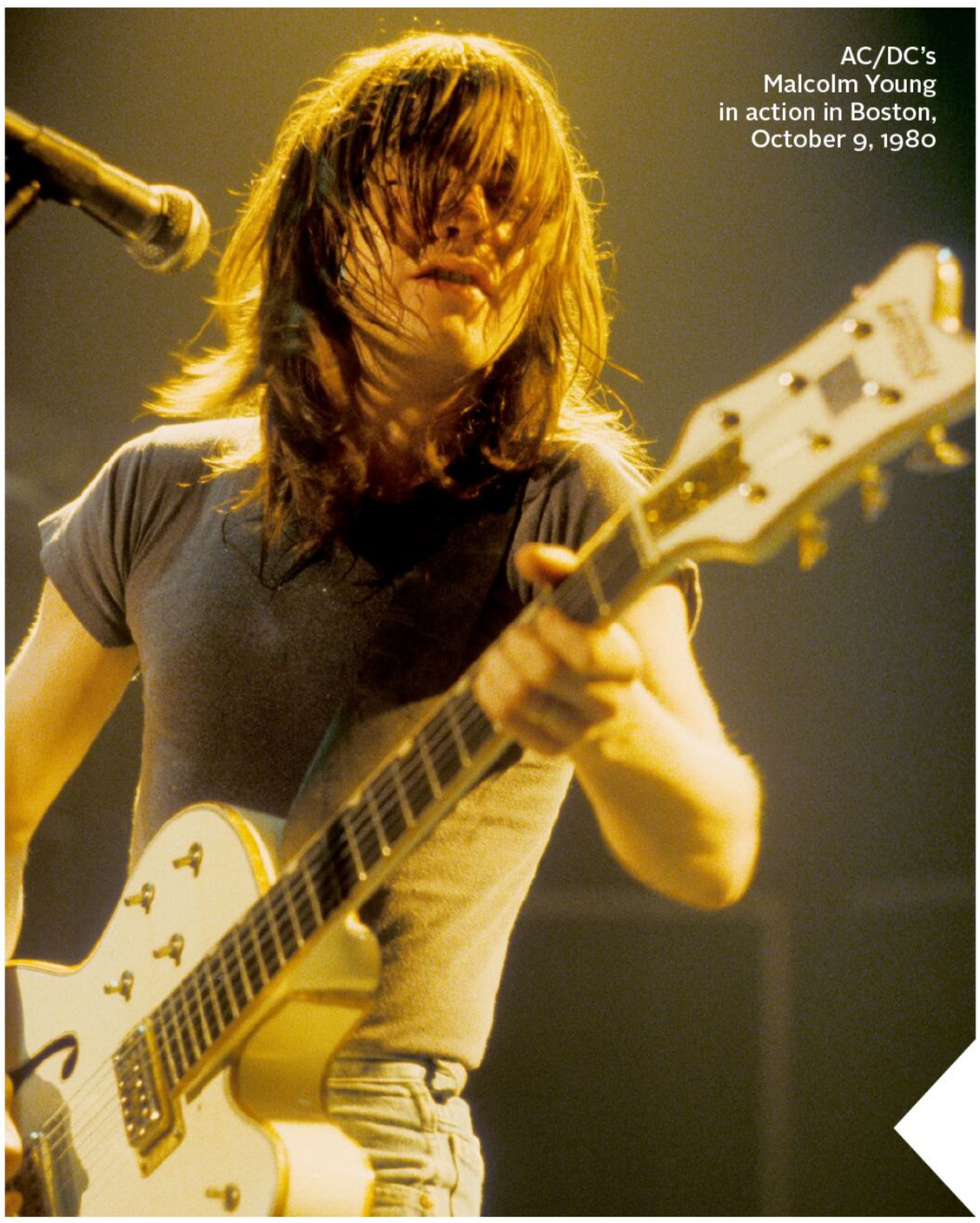

AC/DC's Malcolm Young in action in Boston, October 9, 1980


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**COVER PHOTO:** DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS (ANGUS YOUNG IN LONDON, NOVEMBER 1, 1979)

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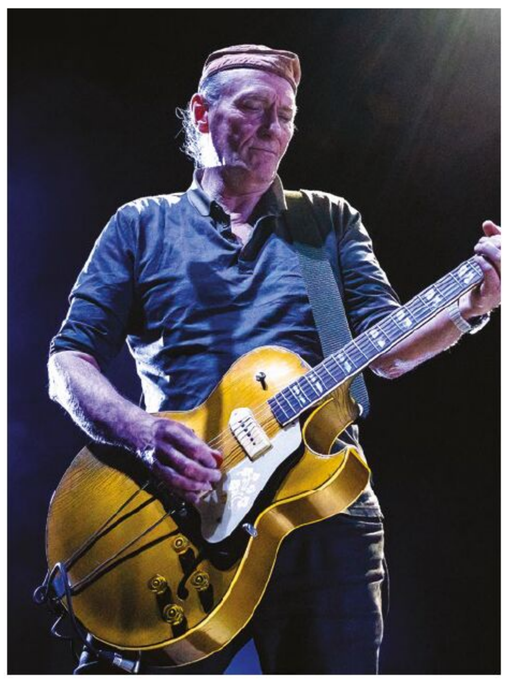

## Thanks for the Geordie…

I just received my May 2025 issue, and in the lower-right corner of the cover you guys finally gave a tribute to one of my favorite guitarists, Geordie Walker. I'm shocked it took so long, considering he passed away on November 26, 2023! Yet you guys pulled off a great "requiem" for him. I really loved reading what you guys wrote. Thank you for what was long overdue.

*— Joe DeBellis*

Thank you for the feature on Geordie Walker, one of my favorite "punk" guitarists. I'm actually quite an authority on Geordie. I have the leading viral video of how to play "Love Like Blood" on YouTube! The secret to his tone (as you know) is that archtop. His stuff just doesn't work on a super-strat. I also used .12 flats and a liberal dose of chorus, overdrive and delay, as can be expected. Thank you again for featuring this unsung, influential hero from Killing Joke. On another note, I'd love to see a feature on praise and worship guitar. It's so big now! Every musician I know has a church gig these days.

*— Ryan Sullivan, Asheville, NC*

## …and the Georgie!

From Beatlemania to *All Things Must Pass* and beyond — the definitive guitar history of George Harrison's greatest recorded works [*May 2025*]. I have to tell you that was one of the best examinations of Harrison's guitar work. Having first seen the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* at age 8, I was awestruck by him playing guitar. This, for me, started a lifetime of playing guitar, and I'm still trying to nail down his technique and solo phrasing. I can't thank you enough for your deep dive into his playing and for your excellent article. Thanks for your generous tribute to George!

*— Larry Ogintz*

## Let's mix it up a bit, *Guitar World*!

I am one of the many former *Guitar Player* subscribers whose subscriptions were transferred to *Guitar World* when *GP* ceased publishing. While the two magazines are, on the whole, quite similar in content (and I just renewed for two more years), two differences stand out:

1. While *GP* focused on rock guitarists, there were regular nods to players from other genres, such as jazz, classical and more avant-garde styles. In comparison, *GW* seems uni-dimensional in its rock-centric articles, song transcriptions and lessons. I think it would benefit all readers to demonstrate that there are more similarities than differences between genres when it comes to playing guitar, and that everyone can learn from what guitarists in other genres are doing.

2. I was very surprised to find that the guitar reviews in *GW* are missing very basic specifications (neck length, neck width, etc.), which *GP* invariably included. This seems like a major omission that would take almost no effort or space to include.

Count me among those old *GP* readers who would love to see these two omissions transfer over to *GW*! All the best,

*— Lawrence Joseph, Beaconsfield, Quebec, Canada*

## Looking to "pickup" some pointers

Hello, *Guitar World*! My name is Julian Lenci, I'm 17 and an avid reader of your magazine and also an avid guitarist. I'm a fan of all things gear related, and I was wondering if you might be interested in investigating humbucker combinations and how they differ from each other. Perhaps you could look at how the legends swapped and used in order to get their sound, and what

it would take for an everyday guitarist to achieve something similar. I understand if it's too nuanced to write about, but I can't seem to find any articles that talk about this specific thing. I'm doing a pickup swap in an old Les Paul, and I'm curious about what different product combos would get me. Thanks for your continuous effort in producing the best information about guitars, and thank you for your time. Sincerely,

*— Julian Lenci*

## *RANDOM PHOTO* OF THE MONTH

Jazz great **Grant Green** in New York City, circa 1964. Some guitarists play with their heads, some from the heart. Green was firmly in the latter camp, with the ability to stir listeners' souls with his stinging style. His playing on the Blue Note label was blues-infused yet packed with ice-cool poise and rhythmic drive, making him the godfather of funk guitar. For starters, check out Green's *Idle Moments* and Baby Face Willette's *Face to Face*.

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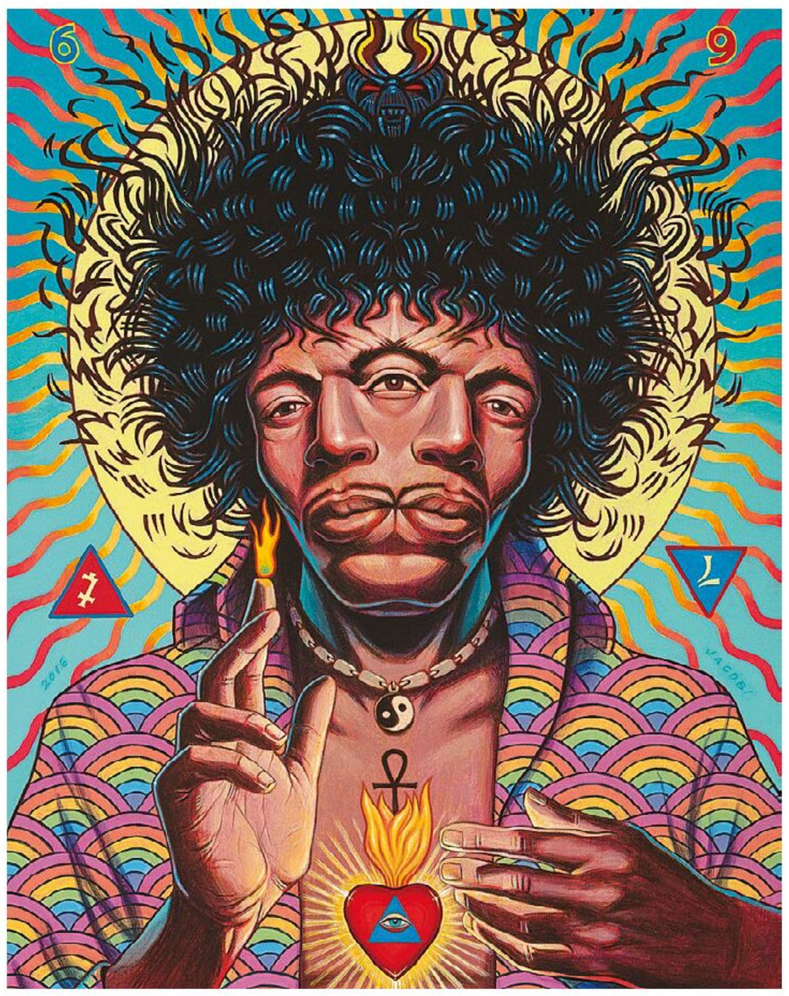
# READER ART

**OF THE MONTH**

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

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

**MERLE HAGGARD** BY TAVIS LOVEALL



**JIMI HENDRIX ("THE MESSENGER")**
BY RICK JACOBI

## DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

### Paul Deesen

**AGE:** 62
**HOMETOWN:** Rochester, MI
**GUITARS:** Ibanez RG 270/560, Charvel San Dimas/DK 24, Fender Strat MIM, Washburn MG600
**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** Peter Frampton "Lines on My Face," Jeff Beck "She's a Woman," Skid Row "Monkey Business," Slash "Back from Cali"
**GEAR I WANT MOST:** Gibson Les Paul Slash Appetite Burst

### Waylon Binkley

**AGE:** 14
**HOMETOWN:** Kansas City, KS
**GUITARS:** Fender Duo Sonic, Epiphone Les Paul Junior, Gretsch G2420T Streamliner, Gretsch G2210 Streamliner, Recording King Dirty 37, Seagull S6+ (Tobacco Burst), Yamaha JR1 3/4
**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** Ween "Papa Zit," NOFX "Linoleum," Jawbreaker "The Boat Dreams from the Hill," Hum "Iron Clad Lou," Minutemen "#1 Hit Song," Anthrax "Caught in a Mosh," songs by my band, Steer Away
**GEAR I WANT MOST:** Back Gibson Les Paul Studio with silver hardware, 1950s Fender Musicmaster, Orange Super Crush 100

### Rick D'Lisa

**HOMETOWN:** Los Angeles
**GUITARS:** Jackson Soloist with Seymour Duncan Perpetual Burn Jason Becker and DiMarzio D-Activator pickups; Taylor and Martin acoustics
**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** Greg Howe "Abrupt Terminal," Jason Becker "Perpetual Burn," Polyphia "Playing God" and songs by my band, Theatre of Memory
**GEAR I WANT MOST:** Ibanez JIVAX2 Ghost

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

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Alien Weaponry's Lewis de Jong

# Weapons of Mass Destruction

## HOW ALIEN WEAPONRY CAME UP WITH THE CONCEPT OF MIXING THEIR MĀORI BACKGROUND WITH HARD-HITTING RIFFS

**By Amit Sharma**

**OVER THE LAST** decade, New Zealand trio Alien Weaponry have positioned themselves as one of the most exciting new forces in metal, opening for giants like Guns N' Roses and Gojira. After inking a deal with Napalm Records, they released their *Tū* debut in 2018, peaking at Number 5 in their native charts. What made it an even more impressive feat was singer/guitarist Lewis de Jong being only 16 at the time.

Their second album, *Tangaroa*, arrived in 2021, not long after landing a worldwide-management deal with the same team who look after Slayer, Mastodon and Ghost, and this year sees them building on that momentum with their third full-length, *Te Rā*. The 11 new tracks could very well be the most explosive they're written to date, splicing elements of groove and thrash metal into a hypnotic storm of noise, with veteran producer Josh Wilbur (Lamb of God, Megadeth) ensuring the three members sound as big as groups with double the personnel. The Lamb of God connection doesn't end there, either. Lamb of God's Randy Blythe lends his voice to the track "Taniwha," which was a dream come true for the young bucks hoping to tread similar musical ground.

"[*Lamb of God's*] Mark Morton and Willie Adler are huge inspirations for me," says de Jong, not long after flying back from some American dates supporting Kerry King. "They have this certain something about their tones and riffs — you can

MAURICE NUNEZ

always tell when you're listening to Lamb of God. Randy guesting on our album is one of the craziest moments of our career so far. When me and my brother, Henry [*drums*] found out, we couldn't believe it. We were both speechless."

**Who were the first guitar heroes that inspired you to get into music?**
The person who made me want to play guitar from a young age was Stevie Ray Vaughan. His whole way of operating and playing the Strat drew me in. You can feel that dude's soul through his playing. Some of his songs were ridiculously fast. Even though he wasn't playing heavy metal, I feel like he had the elements of the style just through pure skill alone. You can hear it on tracks like "Scuttle Buttin'." David Gilmour is another big inspiration. His bends and feel always blow my mind. You don't even need a vocalist in your band when you're that good at guitar.

**All three of you share Māori ancestry. When did you realize that the Māori language could work so well with heavy metal riffs?**
Me and Henry grew up in a Māori-speaking household. We were put in Māori schools as kids. That was instilled in us from a young age. We had friends in a reggae/ska band who entered a competition where the idea was to incorporate native culture into the music. We wondered what would happen if a metal band did the same thing. I felt like the concept worked. The sound of the Māori language pairs well with heavy music. That's been our direction ever since, though we also write some songs in English.

**Which song are you most proud of on this album?**
I love how "Hanging by a Thread" came out. The ideas on that track capture the emotion well. It's one of the seven-string songs, so we're playing in drop A, and I think the tones came out great. It was interesting working with Josh Wilbur; after two days, we locked into his way of operating. It all ran like clockwork.

**What have been your biggest discoveries in the art of riffing?**
The main lessons came from listening to Metallica. You can say what you want about the band, but James Hetfield has a strong right hand. He can rip through those triplets super tight, like it's second nature. I wish my chugging and tremolo picking was more natural. I'm always focused on making it all match up and sound uniform with no unwanted noises. I have to work hard on not making mistakes. I'm more of a riff guy, though I appreciate lead guitar. I've been trying to work on that stuff to see if I can bring it into our sound.

[*from left*] Lewis de Jong, Tūranga Morgan-Edmonds and Henry de Jong

**Some of the groove metal ideas on tracks like "Tama-Nui-Te-Rā" are reminiscent of Gojira, another band who have two brothers on drums and guitar.**
They are the champions of that groove metal sound. They can write riffs that clear your brain, rather than making it more busy. I firmly believe you can overcook an idea until it's a messy, overcomplicated soup. I've been guilty of that in the past. I will listen back and think, "Yeah, it's impressive but it doesn't groove!" The best riffs you end up writing are the ones that come out of nowhere. The simple ones that end up stuck in your head. Basically, I just want to write riffs that make people bounce and start mosh pits.

**In the past, you've stuck with DBZ and ESP guitars. Is that still the case?**
I've been experimenting. I have an endorsement with ESP so the plan is to get a whole fleet at some point soon. The DBZ guitars will probably get phased out — not that I don't like them; it's just a case of being endorsed by someone else. I didn't use any DBZs this time; it was all ESP stuff for six- and seven-string. Josh had some nice guitars lying around, so I used his baritone for a bit. The Evertune bridges worked great for saving time.

**"The sound of the Māori language pairs well with heavy music"**

**What exactly do you look for in a guitar?**
I don't like spiky guitars. Explorers are too weird and wonky for me. B.C. Rich guitars look cool, but I don't like the way they sit. I generally go for a singlecut, though I'm open to doubles. I'm more into the classic shapes. Most of my guitars come already fitted with EMGs or Seymour Duncan Blackouts. We recorded through an EVH head, which was really screaming.

**It doesn't sound like you're using loads of pedals.**
It was just raw distortion from the amp, for the most part. Maybe there was a gate in line to clean up, any other effects were done post-tracking. To be honest, the digital stuff is incredible these days. There's software out there that can emulate any amp or pedal perfectly. I have some things in the pipeline in terms of upgrades for my live rig. I haven't decided on the final setup, but it will be stuff to make my life easier. I don't want to deal with fragile tube heads anymore.

**What do you use currently?**
I run a DI out from my Marshall DSLs, and I have my cabinets mic'd. The mix of both really helps get a really big tone. In front of me I have my Line 6 M5 stompbox modeler, which helps with songs that need different settings. My wah pedal is the Ibanez Weeping Demon, though I think they've discontinued that one. I try not to use too many effects. It's more about adding little bits of color where necessary.

FRANCES CARTER

Winona Fighter's Dan Fuson [*left*] and Coco Kinnon

# Winona Fighter

## ON THE NASHVILLE BAND'S DEBUT ALBUM, GUITARISTS COCO KINNON AND DAN FUSON SPECIALIZE IN GRUNGY POP HOOKS AND BRASH LEADS

**By Jim Beaugez**

**COCO KINNON WAS** just another bored young punk rocker lost in the rudiments of guitar and learning songs like "Blackbird" and "Stairway to Heaven" when she decided her guitar lessons were going in the opposite direction of her interests.

"It wasn't for me," Kinnon says. But the owner of the guitar shop where she took lessons heard something that liberated her playing. "He was like, 'You play guitar like a drummer,'" she says. "That shifted my mindset to, 'Oh, I can play guitar and just lay it down.'"

The shop owner was right — Kinnon was a drummer first. Now, as the frontwoman of the Nashville-based pop-punk band Winona Fighter, she's a dual threat who bashed the skins and laid down slamming out guitar riffs on the band's 2025 debut album, *My Apologies to the Chef*.

After moving from Boston and its famed hardcore punk scene to the more placid home of country music, Kinnon and lead guitarist Dan Fuson put together Winona Fighter and began playing showcases at bars off Lower Broadway, where country ax-slingers and singer-songwriters vie for attention. The experience spun them right back to their punk roots.

"It makes you lean into what makes you better as opposed to, 'Let's try and retrofit what we have into what seems popular," she says. "If we want to play a super-fast song, that's great. If we want to have a song that's a little more mid tempo, let's do that and play 'em fucking balls-to-the-wall."

Live, Kinnon and Fuson flip the script on the search-and-destroy punk rulebook by eschewing half stacks and running their guitars through stomp boxes directly to the house mix. But even when running a quiet stage, they have plenty of guitar bite — metalhead Fuson, who culls ample squeals and solos from his EVH model guitar over Kinnon's caffeinated, grungy Jazzmaster riffing, makes sure of it.

"Some players will talk about wanting it to be a battle when they're playing the instrument, like, I want it to hurt playing this guitar," Fuson says. "I'm like, no, I want to make this fun. And I'm driving a sports car."

### AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Fender Jazzmaster (Kinnon); EVH 5150 Series (Fuson)
- **EFFECTS** MXR Dookie (Kinnon); Universal Audio Lion (Fuson)

NEIL SCHWARTZ

Dutch Interior guitarists Connnor Reeves...

...and Noah Kurtz

# Dutch Interior

## ON THEIR THIRD ALBUM, THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA-BASED INDIE ROCKERS REFINE THEIR SOUND WHILE HONORING THE MUSICAL BOND THAT BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER

**By Jacob Paul Nielsen**

**DUTCH INTERIOR IS** a band. An indie-rock band, specifically. Indie in the sense that they make music for themselves, rock in the sense that they cut their teeth on classic rock riffs — and they have the chops to prove it.

"That is the tale of Dutch Interior, with every single member being each other's oldest friend and having a connection through music," says Noah Kurtz, one of six — yes, six — guitarists in the band. "We've had many iterations of the band; Dutch Interior was the culmination of all of that."

Six guitarists might sound like a classic case of too many cooks in the kitchen, but for Dutch Interior, all that means is there's a deep well from which to draw creations that will become songs.

"We're all thinking like artists creating a record," says guitarist Connor Reeves. "That makes collaborating a lot easier. We bring a song [*or an idea*] to the studio — a strip or a melody — and then we hear a vision for it. We're all focused on achieving that vision. We're not thinking about who's playing guitar on this song, who's playing bass, who's playing drums. We're just working on the song as a recorded version."

Kurtz and Reeves have been playing music together since fourth grade, bonding over their shared knowledge of riffs and licks — just like musicians in the pre-YouTube era.

"I think I showed [*Reeves*] how to play 'Black Dog,'" Kurtz says.

"I can confirm that. I remember Noah was the 'Black Dog' guy," Reeves says.

"There's no way I was playing the timing right on that shit," Kurtz adds.

"For Dutch Interior, the songs are written by one person, then they're brought to the group where they turn into something else," Kurtz says. "All of our influences are similar; since we're such old friends, our ideas come together like glue."

"We're a 'record' band," Reeves says. "We all care most about the records we're making before any of the other noise."

"You hear that through all our projects, whether it's the one recorded in our living room or this most recent one," Kurtz adds.

This "most recent one" is *Moneyball*, the band's third album. It opens with the warm crackle of a July campfire before the dueling solos on "Sweet Time" and the jangly, early Teenage Fanclub-inspired guitars on "Fourth Street" evoke an era of 20-minute jams and raw guitar tone.

"We wrote 'Sweet Time' short, but we wanted to play a 20-minute crazy solo outro — dynamics, the whole shebang — live. That was the idea," Kurtz says.

"I feel like an extended, jammy outro used to be a pretty common thing, and now it feels completely dead," Reeves says. "I don't know the last record I heard that had something like ['*Sweet Time*'] on it. So let's do it — let's sneak in a little Allman Brothers reference. I know a lot of people hate it, but I don't really give a shit."

For a band to bring a song like "Sweet Time" to life on a record — and Dutch Interior does exactly that — the secret ingredient is the tone that comes from the guitarists' hands, not their pedalboards.

"I'd rather flip through pickups to find my tone and work with my amp with my hands," Kurtz says.

"Being familiar with your guitar is the best thing you can do for your tone because tone starts in the hands," Reeves adds. "That's one of the biggest things for me — being so familiar with your instrument that when you pick it up and wrap your hand around it, there are no surprises."

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# LOST CLASSICS: Sonic Youth

## NYC NOISE-ROCK PIONEER THURSTON MOORE RECALLS THE MAKING OF 1987'S *SISTER* AND HIS LATEST ALBUM, 2024'S *FLOW CRITICAL LUCIDITY*

**By Mark McStea**

[*from left*] Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley and Kim Gordon in 1986

***SISTER*, RELEASED IN** 1987, is widely acclaimed as Sonic Youth's best album. At the time of its release, it was acknowledged as a step up for the New York City alt-rockers in terms of writing and sonic quality. *Evol*, released the previous year, had already served notice that the band was moving toward a more mainstream sound. *Sister* was the record that made good on that promise, delivering commerciality without compromise.

Guitarists Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo had already adopted a wildly experimental approach to their playing, inventing unique alternative tunings, using prepared guitars — with drumsticks wedged under the strings (among a number of radical approaches) — and playing behind the bridge. The fact that they could weld such radical unconventionality to songs that delivered memorable melodies and solid hooks was a testament to their creative prowess.

**_Sister_ is often cited as one of the key albums of the Eighties. How do you feel about it these days?**

I knew we were moving into a territory that was possibly less reckless than the previous albums we'd recorded. We were more focused on concision as far as songwriting was concerned. At that point, when I was in my late twenties, I remember thinking we were becoming more refined and sophisticated as a band, in the context of what kind of band we had been. By that, I mean one that isn't defined in the traditional high technique bands dealt in. I think *Sister* was when we were able to combine what we were doing with alternate-tuned guitars and alternate song structure into more accessibility for a broader listenership. I think it marked us entering a new era of sophisticated sonic songwriting. I think we were allowing ourselves to grow up in public.

**In terms of the writing, would all the songs have been fully formed before going into the studio, or did things change a lot once it came to putting the songs down?**

I think everything was definitely fully formed. We had it together. We knew we had to be as ready as possible because we were recording at Sear Sound [*in New York City*], which was something of a bespoke studio. It cost a bit of coin, so we had to make sure we were acting responsibly toward our budget. [*Laughs*] We went in there knowing there was no time to fool around — and we were ready. We had rehearsed that material quite a bit in a very tiny room on the Lower East Side. The room was so small that we couldn't turn the amps up loud. It meant we had to play fairly quietly, and in a way, I think that defined how that record sounded. There were no blasters on there except maybe "White Cross" and "Hot Wire My Heart." The songs had a contained, linear quality, which continued as an aspect of the band for our subsequent albums.

**What was the process in terms of you and Lee dividing the guitar parts?**

It was totally organic. A lot of songs were predicated on me bringing up riff ideas that I would have come up with in my apartment with Kim [*Gordon, bass*]. Once I brought them into the rehearsal room, Lee, Kim and Steve [*Shelley, drums*] were free to create their own ideas around the structure. Lee brought in "Pipeline/Kill Time," which was fully composed by him, but again, we were all free to play what we wanted. Nobody ever brought in a song and said, "Look, this is how you have to play that part" or whatever. You could never be precious with a song you brought to the band. You'd show it to your wolf brothers, and they'd tear into it. [*Laughs*] That was why none of our records had "lyrics by" or "music by" or whatever. They were all credited to Sonic Youth. Everything that everybody contributed was of equal value.

**Did you make the album quickly? Were you a first-take kind of band?**

We did work very quickly on that record because, as I mentioned, the studio time was expensive at Sear Sound. I think, in general, we'd usually go for about six takes of a song before it started to become stiff. I was very into expediency, but very rarely do I recall us getting a song that was perfect on the first take. I was always keen on getting in and out of the studio; I always felt it was a bit like being in a boat on a lake where you can never escape. [*Laughs*]

**What were the main guitars you and Lee were using at the time?**

I was still playing a Fender Duo-Sonic that I'd got for a couple of hundred dollars. I always thought it looked a little dinky though on my six-foot-six-inch body. [*Laughs*] But around the time we started the album, we had gotten into Jazzmasters and

FRANS SCHELLEKENS/REDFERNS

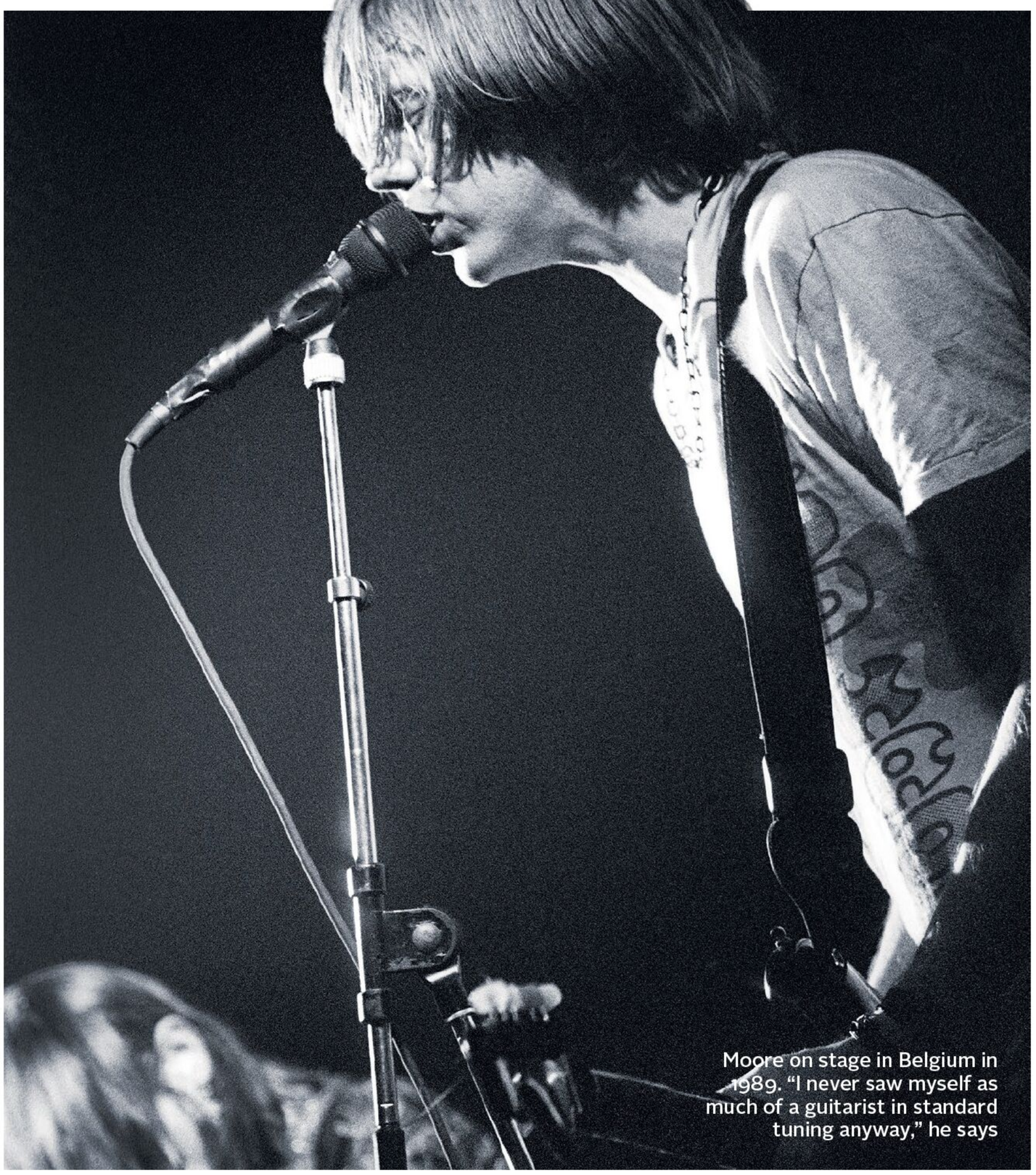
Jaguars. We were moving away from the junk-store guitars we'd been using, like old Hagstroms and Harmonies. They were falling apart on us. We stuck with Fender. Lee was also using a Telecaster on the album. I felt very in tune with the Jazzmaster. I think the longer neck it has — compared to the Duo-Sonic — was the key. We'd been looking at new guitars as we'd made some money from touring. I remember Lee pointing at a Jazzmaster on the wall in a store and saying that's the guitar Tom Verlaine uses, and I thought that was good enough for me. I still play a Jazzmaster all the time — even now.

**You and Lee were renowned for using alternate tunings which you had created. How did that come about?**

The first album [*1983's* Confusion Is Sex] was in traditional standard tuning, funnily enough. We were aware of musicians using different tunings in downtown New York in the scene we were in — the art-rock composers like Glenn Branca. I was amazed by that, but I didn't think it could be employed in a traditional rock band lineup. I remember saying to Glenn that [*our*] guitars were so bad that we couldn't really make them work for us. He came over to my apartment with six guitars, three under each arm — no cases or anything — and threw them onto the futon. [*Laughs*] It was amazing. He had one that had six .10-gauge strings all tuned to E, for example. We started to really delve into alternatives to standard tuning. I'd just strum the open strings and adjust them until I liked what it sounded like, and then I'd make a note of what the strings were tuned to in that tuning. This was before you could buy tuners very easily — I think all you could get were those big [*Conn*] Strobotuners. I used to tune Kim's bass to a Black Uhuru record, then tune our guitars based on that.

**Given how many unconventional tunings you were using, did you ever find yourself getting lost, trying to remember where you were on the neck?**

I never saw myself as much of a guitarist in standard tuning anyway; I never really engaged with traditional tuning. I didn't feel like I needed to express myself in that tuning and never felt comfortable in standard. In fact, in some ways I felt more under pressure because the world was so full of great players who were in standard, and I had no interest in trying to compete with them. I never really thought of myself as a guitar player until well into the game. My brother, who is five years older than me, is a great guitar player. He'd be shredding in his bedroom, and I'd sneak in sometimes to steal a guitar. I wanted to be a drummer, but I didn't have the coordination.



Moore on stage in Belgium in 1989. "I never saw myself as much of a guitarist in standard tuning anyway," he says

**When you listen to *Sister* now, do you hear anything you wished you'd done differently?**

It has a really nice resonant quality. Sear Sound was a wonderful studio, and I think that had a lot to do with the sound of the record. I wouldn't change a thing. When I hear about bands remastering a record, it makes my eyes go funny. [*Laughs*] Even when the Sonic Youth records were remastered, all I thought it did was make them louder, which I don't think is necessarily a good thing. It's kinda like the record is waving its arms in the air or something. Even worse is if a band tries to re-record an album years later because they think they can play it better. Big mistake. The clumsiness of youth is what makes a record what it is. There are parts on *Sister* that are sore-thumb moments, but that's the beauty — the bruises of your youth.

**You've just released *Flow Critical Lucidity*, your first solo album in three years. I appreciate the way it combines peaceful, mellow ambience with a vaguely unsettling undercurrent.**

Yeah, I guess that's right. I had recorded quite a lot of material for it. The sequence of the album is pretty much the songs that worked together with this gentle quality. I left a couple of wilder songs off the record as they were a little too jarring. I'm interested in investigating a more meditational aspect of rock music, and this record enabled me to do that. It allowed me to examine the meditational exchange between the creative impulse and the natural world — the woke world and the world of dreams. It was written during a residency I was doing in Switzerland. I knew I was going to be doing the album, so I wrote the songs over two weeks. I brought the rest of the musicians over from London; we set up in a small rehearsal unit and I'd show them my ideas. I recorded the songs on a Zoom recorder and was initially tempted to put them out [*in that format*], but I thought better of it. They were almost good enough, but once we got in the studio they became far more majestic.

GIE KNAEPS/GETTY IMAGES

# Robin Nolan

## HOW A GYPSY JAZZ BUSKER BECAME A FRIEND, INTERPRETER AND COLLABORATOR OF GEORGE HARRISON

**By Bill DeMain**

**ONE DAY IN** 1994, gypsy jazz guitarist Robin Nolan was busking in Leidseplein, a lively square in Amsterdam. A tourist bought one of his CDs. "And he turned out to be George Harrison's gardener," Nolan says. "He gave the CD to George, thinking he might like it. The next thing I know George and Olivia [*his wife*] call to ask if we'd play at their Christmas party."

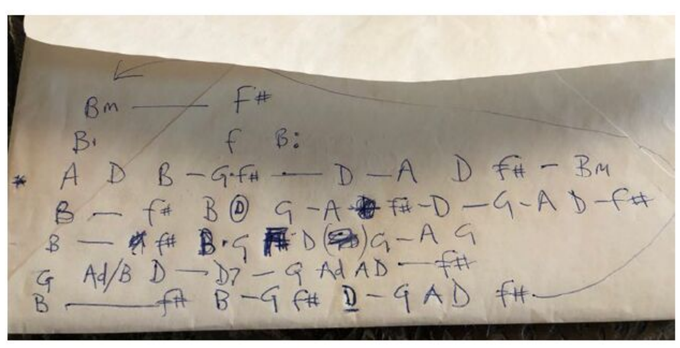
There began a friendship, with Nolan's combo becoming what he calls "the house band" for parties at Friar Park, the Harrisons' home (and home studio) in England's Thames Valley. "We played [*their son*] Dhani Harrison's 21st birthday, and everyone there was famous except for us," Nolan says with a laugh. "Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Tom Petty, Ravi Shankar, the Monty Python members. We'd be doing our Django Reinhardt stuff and George would say, 'Check these guys out!' Our CD was in his jukebox with all his favorite music. We even got to play together. It was surreal."

Nolan is celebrating the friendship with *For the Love of George*, tasteful gypsy jazz re-imaginings of 10 Harrison and Beatles songs, plus the original title track — a virtual co-write with Harrison. That began with a texted pic Olivia sent Nolan of an envelope with a chord progression scribbled out in George's hand. "I had to unravel the mystery of what he intended," Nolan says. "As I played the changes, I kind of heard George's voice humming in my head." He sent a melodic idea to Olivia. "That was nerve-wracking. I thought, 'God, she might hate it.' But she texted back, "Oh, it sounds so George!' Now the copyright says, 'Harrison-Nolan.' Unreal." As if that's not enough, Nolan recorded the album at Friar Park. Aside from his Polak Gypsy Swing 42N, he played what he calls the "crown jewels" of George's collection. These include the Gibson J-160E, the Rickenbacker 360 12-string and the Ramirez gut-string heard on the Beatles' "And I Love Her."

"When you put your fingers in the same place that George put his fingers on the same guitar from an epic recording from the Beatles, and it sounds the same, it blows you away," he says.

Nolan will be touring this year while maintaining his educational outreach via his Gypsy Jazz Club instructional books and videos. Though the soulful fluidity of Django is integral to the new album, Nolan says, "Noodling or trying to shred was out the window. With these songs, I was only thinking of George. I just wanted to play for him."

**"With these songs, I was only thinking of George. I just wanted to play for him"**



[*top*] Robin Nolan plays George Harrison's 1963 Rickenbacker 360 12-string. [*above*] Nolan turned a chord progression — written in George's hand — into a new Harrison/Nolan song, "For the Love of George"

JASON ROGAN, COURTESY OF ROBIN NOLAN

Kenny Wayne Shepherd performs in Los Angeles, January 11, 2024

**"For most of my show, I can get through with just the guitar and a couple of pedals — that's it"**

# MY PEDALBOARD
# KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

## WHAT THE MODERN BLUES-ROCK ICON SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

**"THE RECIPE IS,** if it's not broken, don't fix it. A number of different things have come out, but I think we can universally agree that, for the most part, the new products in the pedal world are just different-colored housings of the same circuits we've all been using for decades.

"I'm using a primitive setup, but I haven't had many problems with it or had to make many repairs to it over the years. It comes from a need — or a desire — not to have to tap dance quite so much. For most of my show, I can get through with just the guitar and a couple of pedals — that's it. Most of my tone is just the guitar and the amp — but every single one of these pedals makes an appearance once or twice.

"I have a Boss TU-3 [*Chromatic*] tuner in the middle. On the one side, I've found that the Ibanez TS808 Tube Screamer works great as an overdrive, and my AnalogMan King of Tone overdrive is a staple in every pedalboard configuration I've ever had since that pedal came out.

"I've got a [*Thomas Vox*] Clyde McCoy wah and a Roger Mayer Spaceship version of the Octavia [*fuzz*]. I've used different ones over the years — and I have an original one — but the Roger Mayer is supposed to have a circuit that's authentic. Then I've got the [*Sir Henry by Tinsley Audio*] Univibe. My tech, Dustin Sears, makes those; it's the most faithful recreation of the vintage style you'll find anywhere. On the other side of the pedalboard, I've got an AnalogMan [*Standard*] Chorus. It's two choruses in one; I can also have a slow speed for a Leslie sound and a regular chorus.

"I've also got a Free the Tone [*Ambi Space*] Digital Reverb and a Free the Tone [*Flight Time*] Digital Delay. The whole thing is controlled by two Voodoo Lab [*Pedal Power x4 4-output Isolated Guitar Pedal*] power supplies and a Voodoo Lab pedal-selector switching system. Like I said, it's a primitive setup. I put that on the board when I was experimenting with them when they first came out in the early 2000s. It's working fine and has been relatively bulletproof. It takes up a lot of real estate, and my board could be much smaller without it, but it works, it's programmed with what I want it to do, and I don't have to worry about it."

***— Andrew Daly***

***IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONLY ONE PEDAL FOR A FULL SHOW:***
"The King of Tone pedal — without a doubt!"

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES

"I'm psyched about this record, because I feel like it's all the types of music that I love," Dario Lorina says

# Dark Chapel

## DARIO LORIA — WHO HAS SPLIT BLACK LABEL SOCIETY'S GUITAR DUTIES WITH ZAKK WYLDE SINCE 2014 — DELIVERS SOME SERIOUS FUEL-INJECTED MOTO-METAL FURY ON *SPIRIT IN THE GLASS*

**By Gregory Adams**

**DARIO LORINA OFTEN** blazes licks on one of his many EMG-loaded Wylde Audio axes — from a brawny Warhammer to a devilishly pointy Goreghen offset he hoists while playing in Zakk Wylde's iconic Southern-doom crew, Black Label Society. Impressive though they all may be, when the Boston-raised, Vegas-based guitarist was recording the debut album from his new hard rock force, Dark Chapel, Lorina relied on a family heirloom to get the job done: his father's old Les Paul Standard.

"It was under my dad's bed when I was a kid first learning how to play guitar," he says of the "Holy Grail" Gibson he's still wowed by to this day, though he adds that his actual starter six-string was a Strat-shaped Samick. It took some time before Lorina's papa let him hold that Les Paul — let alone play it — but even eyeballing the thing was a major event back then. "When it slid out from underneath the bed... it was like the heavens were opening up."

**"My dad sliding his Les Paul out from underneath the bed was like the heavens opening up"**

No doubt, Lorina's built up a god-tier guitar game ever since. After getting his start as a 16-year-old prodigy in former Warrant singer Jani Lane's backing band, Lorina spent time with veteran Sunset Strippers Lizzy Borden, ripped out a pair of killer instrumental solo albums and most famously joined Black Label Society in 2014 (eventually going toe-to-toe with Wylde on their 2021 record, *Doom Crew Inc.*)

All of those experiences come into play on *Spirit in the Glass*, Dark Chapel's multi-barreled 10-song introduction. That's where vocalist-guitarist Lorina and the rest of the outfit — guitarist Brody DeRozie, bassist Mike Gunn and drummer Luis Silva — deliver fuel-injected moto-metal fury ("Afterglow"), girthy down-South sludge-blues ("All That Remains"), Priest-leaning back-to-back solo sections ("Hollow Smile") and varying layers of melodically righteous heaviness.

While Lorina puts on a refreshingly

### AXOLOGY

- **GUITAR** Seventies Gibson Les Paul Standard
- **AMPS** Marshall JCM800, Peavey 5150 straight 4x12 cabinet, Marshall slant 4x12 cabinet with Celestion G12M Greenback speakers
- **EFFECTS** Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive, Seymour Duncan 805 Overdrive, Dunlop Rotovibe, vintage MXR Flanger

SHANE O'NEAL

lightning-fingered clinic throughout Dark Chapel's debut, it's fair to say his rep as a top-tier player had already been long-established — after all, he shared a *Guitar World* cover with Wylde back in 2021. What may be most surprising about *Spirit in the Glass* is how the project also fully pushes his smokily soulful tenor vocal to the fore.

"With Black Label and other things I've been involved in, I've always sung backups. I didn't have to rethink too much, thankfully," Dark Chapel's frontman says of co-existing mic-time with the spidery-fingered, wide-interval dramatics and blues-scorched shred passages of their dynamic first single, "Glass Heart."

"I love how it goes into the verses, which [*turns it into*] a clean, pulled-back piece," he says of that particular track, which conjures Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" by way of a slinking James Bond theme sophistication. He adds of evolving the tune's tonal shimmer throughout the making of *Spirit in the Glass*: "When I was demoing this, I was using the Brigade chorus, [*as a*] Universal Audio plugin in ProTools, but when we recorded I did it with the Dunlop Rotovibe."

Elsewhere, "Corpse Flower" affects a fragrant grunge-gloom aura through the use of hard-clanging requiem bells, eBow-droning texturalism and phase-shifting string ambiance inspired by prime Eddie.

"In the beginning of it I'm doing the Van Halen, palm-on-the-strings thing. I think I used my flanger for that, maybe an MXR Phase 90. It's just some layered effects going on in there that I recorded separately," Lorina says of the intro's percussively swooshing pedal accoutrement.

While Lorina's tone is occasionally accentuated by interstellar effects, the guitarist notes that his streamlined, go-to setup for most of the *Spirit in the Glass* sessions was the Les Paul, a vintage JCM800 blasting through a Peavey 5150 4x12 and a classic canary-yellow Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive thrown up front. "I like the setup to be as simple as possible... an overdrive pedal going into the front of the amp... that is the tone that I want to hear."

Though the guitarist is still fully raging with Black Label Society — they're prepping an album behind the scenes — Dark Chapel further expands Lorina's overall musical vision by incorporating gently brooding acoustic sojourns ("Dark Waters") and heart-stirring piano ballads ("Dead Weight").

"I love sitting with the acoustic and writing stripped-down songs, one vocal and a guitar. Same thing with the piano," he says. "I'm psyched about this record, because I feel like it's all the types of music that I love."

The Frst's Mikei Gray with his DIY hubcap guitar

# The Frst

## SINGER-GUITARIST MIKEI GRAY HAS A SECRET WEAPON — A GUITAR MADE OUT OF AN OLD BUICK HUBCAP, OF COURSE

**By Joe Bosso**

**"GENRE FLUID" IS** how singer-guitarist Mikei Gray describes his Nashville-based duo the Frst, and judging from the swirling array of musical styles he and partner singer-bassist Laura Dobransky trade in — pop rock, punk, hip-hop, blues, country, metal, surf and so on — the term fits. Classical music seems to be the only art form these two upstarts don't tackle on their incandescent debut album, *This Never Happened*, but give them time; they'll get there.

**"I put a Slash humbucker and some SG electronics in it, and let me tell you, it rips!"**

"We love all kinds of music, but blues is closest to my heart," Gray says. "I grew up playing VFW halls with people who were a decade older than me, so I learned Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson. It was fun, and I earned money to buy guitars."

Intent on a career as a session guitarist, Gray left his native Florida for Nashville, and after a six-month stint working as a dishwasher, he began getting gigs. "It seemed as if every country artist was looking for a metal guitar player," he says. "I could play whatever they wanted, so I got lots of work." Gray even gave bluegrass star Ricky Skaggs a guitar lesson. "Ricky's mainly a mandolin player, and he saw me playing my Tele at the Grand Ole Opry. He asked me to show him some things, and I was glad to. What an honor!"

Gray was already plotting his own group when he met hardcore punker Dobransky. Their musical chemistry was immediate, and the two began testing the waters by issuing singles — "Tarantino" hit Number 78 on iTunes' Rock chart, and last year's hook-filled "Bruce Lee" cracked the Top 30. The duo have spent the past four years putting together *This Never Happened*, and Gray says they're hot to perform the album on the road this summer. "Our van breaks down all the time, but that won't stop us," he says.

No doubt he'll draw attention on tour with his self-made "hubcap guitar," fashioned from a 1950s Buick hubcap. "People think it's a banjo or a toy, and they're stunned when they hear it," he says. "I put a Slash humbucker and some SG electronics in it, and let me tell you, it rips!"

### AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Fender Modern Player Plus Telecaster, PRS Custom 24, Schecter Diamond Series C1, DIY "Hubcap Guitar"
- **AMPS** Orange Dark Terror, Randall RM100, Matchless Clubman Reverb 30
- **EFFECTS** Electro-Harmonix Small Clone chorus, Electro-Harmonix Bass Big Muff Pi, Boss DD-3 and DD-6, Ibanez SM7 Smash Box, Digitech XP-100 Whammy Wah

LAURA MARIE

# 5 FIVE QUESTIONS CAMILLA SPERATI

## THE ON-THE-RISE ROMAN GUITARIST IS HELPING TO PUT FUSION BACK ON THE MAP

**By Mark McStea**

**ITALIAN GUITARIST CAMILLA** Sperati has been building a serious rep as a major new force in the rarified world of fusion. Taking her influences from the likes of Frank Gambale, Guthrie Govan and Scott Henderson's work with Tribal Tech, Sperati — who lives in Rome — has spent time at Berklee College of Music in Boston, opened up for Steve Vai, bagged an artist endorsement deal with Strandberg and self-released a mini album, *Moonrise*, with a full-length outing on the way this year. Her smooth, mellow tone and updated take on the classic sounds of the fusion era have earned her a constantly growing following on social media platforms. We recently threw five questions her way.

"There isn't really much of a music scene here in Italy for fusion, which is sad," Camilla Sperati says

ILARIA TOSCANO

**Q: What inspired you to start playing?**

My parents were not musical. They were alt-rock fans, actually, but my father was also a big Pat Metheny fan, so hearing his music started to make me obsessed with the idea of playing music. I heard someone playing a guitar in person, and that was really what set the seal on my need to play. In fact, when I got a guitar at 11 years old, it came fairly easily for me. My first guitar was a Stratocaster, which was a great way to kick things off. When I was 16, I moved on to a Music Man John Petrucci model, which seemed to suit the kind of fusion music I was starting to play.

**Q: You won a summer scholarship to Berklee in 2017. What was that like?**

I had to study and prepare for the audition. I was really getting into fusion at that time, and I was working hard on my phrasing. I also had to show that I had good rhythm guitar chops. Of course, the experience of going there was really cool, as I studied with some really great professors and made some good friends.

**Q: How did your deal with Strandberg come about?**

They contacted me in 2022, thanks to a fan who wrote to them and suggested they should check me out. I play the Classic Boden. I love their instruments; the guitar feels very different from any other guitar I've ever played, plus they look so cool and so modern. I use the neck pickup a lot. I play through a Kemper Profiler — I really like digital amps. I did try some real amplifiers, but I didn't find anything I liked until I got the Kemper in 2016. I usually use the Marshall JVM setting. The only effects I use are reverb, delay and compression.

**Q: Are you able to make a living playing guitar?**

Yes, but that's because I have a lot of students; teaching is my main source of income. I also play on some sessions, and I offer my playing on Fiverr for different projects. I get a lot of requests on there — sometimes it's for a solo, but it can be for rhythm-guitar ideas as well. I do get some requests to add something that I don't think is very good, which can be a challenge. [*Laughs*]

**Q: What's next for you?**

I have a new album, *Amber*, coming out later this year via Bandcamp. There'll be a couple of singles coming out before it. There isn't really much of a music scene here in Italy for fusion, which is sad. People are always telling me I need to move to America, but that's easier said than done. I'd like to get a manager who could help me take things to the next level. That's the plan at the moment.

Ricky Warwick's new album features appearances by Lita Ford, Billy Duffy, Charlie Starr and more

# Ricky Warwick

## HOW OLD FRIENDS (AND GUITARS) HELPED TURN THE THIN LIZZY SINGER'S NEW SOLO RECORD INTO A SONIC TOUR-DE-FORCE

**By Amit Sharma**

**IT'S EASY TO** get the impression that Ricky Warwick has lived many lives. The Northern Irish guitarist got his break playing rhythm in New Model Army before fronting Scottish hard rock group the Almighty, who reformed last year. Then there's his work alongside Scott Gorham in the latest incarnation of Thin Lizzy and its splinter group, Black Star Riders; one album with supergroup Circus Diablo; plus a whole host of solo releases including this year's *Blood Ties*, which begins with an ensemble of overdriven guitars that feel loud enough to rattle your teeth.

"I knew straightaway that's how I wanted to start the album," he says. "This is a very diverse record, but the first riff is something all my fans will be familiar with. And when you're working with [*producer*] Keith Nelson, you're in a land of great guitars. He's got such a beautiful collection of vintage instruments. I didn't even take anything to the studio."

Favorites included a Les Paul with P90s, a Telecaster and a Rickenbacker 12-string, which were all fed into vintage Marshalls. You won't hear any plugins on this album, Warwick says, before explaining how his ears always gravitate to sounds that feel more organic and lively. This latest release also features a handful of famous friends, from Lita Ford — who was kind enough to bring her original 1976 Hamer to the "Don't Leave Me in the Dark" video shoot — to Blackberry Smoke's Charlie Starr and Billy Duffy of the Cult. "Even though Lita only sang on the track, I begged her to bring that guitar along," Warwick says with a laugh. "And Billy's brilliant. He would rock up to the studio on a Triumph looking cool as fuck. He didn't bring a guitar or amp. I don't even think he had a pick. He just heard the tracks once and was ready to go."

**"There's a warm feeling I get when I hear seventh chords"**

Thin Lizzy diehards may very well single out "Rise and Grind" and "Don't Sell Your Soul to Fall in Love" as favorites, thanks to their usage of rich and fuller-sounding seventh chords. It's a nostalgic sound that has a special place in Warwick's heart, which he describes as a great way of adding more emotional depth to the music.

"From Bob Mould in Hüsker Dü to Gerry Rafferty in Stealers Wheel, there's a magic to those voicings," Warwick says. "And yeah, they're in a lot of classic Lizzy songs. There's a warm feeling I get when I hear seventh chords. I'll use a capo to play them in different positions because they open so many doors for me as a songwriter. You can use them to take listeners somewhere they might not expect."

PROVIDED/SECRET SERVICE PUBLICITY

"I make music for weirdos," Frank Swart says

# Funkwrench Blues

## THIS SAN FRAN BASS PLAYER HAS A KNACK FOR GETTING TOP-SHELF GUITARISTS — INCLUDING VERNON REID, OZ NOY, GRANT GREEN JR. AND JAZZER MIKE STERN — TO PLAY ON HIS NONSTROP STREAM OF SPOTIFY MASTERPIECES

**By Joe Bosso**

**"I MAKE MUSIC** for weirdos," says Frank Swart, the San Francisco-based producer-bassist — clearly a master of branding — who since 2017 has been releasing an endless string of wild and wacky instrumental recordings under the moniker Funkwrench Blues. "If you're looking for something post-rock, but it's got a jazz-blues thing and a bit of a cosmic fusion thing, this could appeal to you." He laughs. "I've got over 100,000 listeners on Spotify, so somebody must like it!"

Swart estimates that he's released more than 200 Funkwrench Blues recordings — he issues a single or album every two weeks — that have featured big-time guitarists such as Mike Stern, Charlie Hunter, Robbie McIntosh and Oz Noy, among others. "I can play guitar, but when you're making records you want people with real facility," Swart says. "I thought it would be hard to get name players to say yes, but I figured out two things. One, it never hurts to ask. And two, don't suck. That last one is really important."

**"I could listen to Vernon Reid's solo about a million times. It's scary and strange, but in a good way"**

Until recently, Swart has released his recordings digitally, but his last album, *Soundtrack for a Film Without Pictures*, was something of an artistic breakthrough, and its impressive Spotify spins warranted an actual physical release. He's hoping his new album, *Mischief in the Musitorium*, featuring guitarists Vernon Reid, David Fiuczynski, Grant Green Jr. (son of jazz legend Grant Green) and Guitar Shorty, reaches even more ears. The record's first single, "Mr. Coleman," is a swinging and jumping art-jazz gem, and Reid's hyper-spacey solo sounds like it was beamed in from the Pillars of Creation.

"That thing just blows me away," Swart says. "Once something gets out into the world, I lose interest — I've already heard it over and over. But I could listen to Vernon's solo on that song about a million times. It's scary and strange, but in a good way."

Swart hasn't gigged in a decade ("I used to have lots of hair. I thought I was Chris Cornell"), but he's looking into sponsorships to take Funkwrench out on the road. "I want to do something that will involve improvisation, removing constructs and breaking the fourth wall between the audience and musician. You know — yada yada yada."

### AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Eastwood Airline H78, Squier Tele, early Seventies Fender Jazz Bass, Eighties Jerry Jones U2 Bass, Nineties Lindert Locomotive Bass VI
- **AMP/EFFECTS** 1965 Silvertone 1484, 1969 Marshall 100-watt head with a Mesa Boogie cab, 1960s Sano 2x12 combo

LAEL SWART

## COVER MODELS

**GUITARIST**
SOPHIE LLOYD

**GUITAR**
2023 KIESEL SIGNATURE SERIES

***GW* COVER DATE**
SEPTEMBER 2023

**THIS INTERVIEW**
FEBRUARY 2025

**PHOTOGRAPHER**
JEN ROSENSTEIN

**Q: Where and when did you get this guitar?**

This is my signature guitar, which I did with Kiesel in 2023. My journey with the company began in 2018 when they sent me a purple Aries, which later became part of their Artist series. The success of the Aries led to the development of my signature model, making me the first female on Kiesel's roster to achieve that milestone. It has the Iron Age kill switch, the Sustainiac system and my signature truss rod cover.

**Q: Why did you choose this model, and what makes it unique?**

I became obsessed with the Sustainiac system after playing a few guitars that had it. So it's modeled from my Aries/Artist series, but to accommodate the kill switch, the rear Aries bevel is reduced into a sleek, minimalistic contour while a different control layout is utilized for the Sustainiac system. I love the black Limba wood, which is on my signature; it gives it a rich, full tone – similar to a Gibson but without the weight. The Kiesel Lithium pickup at the bridge allows me to play almost any genre and style. The guitar has 24 frets, a thinner neck profile and a heel cut to allow for optimum shredding. I also have it set with low action, which allows your fingers to fly over the strings. It's very fun to play!

**Q: How did this guitar impact how you played?**

When I got it, it felt like an extension of myself. I feel like it actually made me play faster, as it's literally built for my shredding style. The lightweight and dynamic shape have definitely improved my stage performance. I used to perform with a Gibson Les Paul, which sounded amazing, but it was very fatiguing on my shoulders after a long gig. Now, with this Kiesel, I'm able to throw it around and do all the best guitar moves without any pain. The Sustainic, tremolo system and kill switch have also allowed me to be more creative and think outside the box with solos.

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

I used this guitar on Machine Gun Kelly's Mainstream Sellout Tour, the Rugby Sevens World Series and my own live shows – and it's featured on my *Imposter Syndrome* album and a lot of my shred videos on YouTube. This and my original Aries artist series are my go-to guitars for all live shows and all writing/recording for Machine Gun Kelly and my solo stuff.

**"I feel like it actually made me play faster, as it's literally built for my shredding style"**

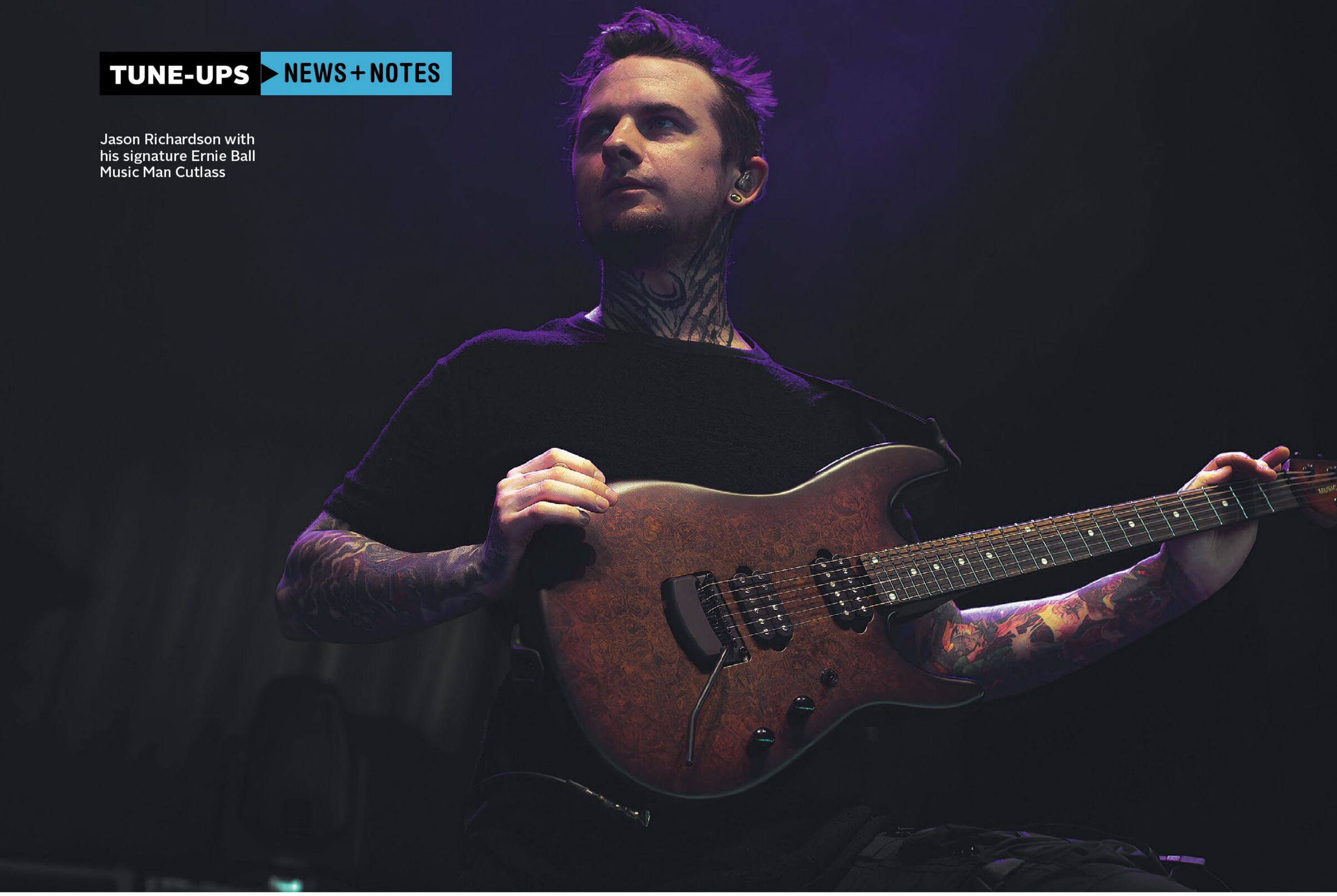
**Q: Why did you choose this guitar for your *GW* cover shoot?**

It was the first opportunity for me to showcase the guitar, as it was a new release. I was so excited to show it to the world; it's an extension of myself and represents me and my playing very well.

**Q: Silly question, but do you still have this guitar?**

Absolutely! I wouldn't be without it. It's so essential to my music, and I can't wait for more adventures with it.

***– Andrew Daly***



Jason Richardson with his signature Ernie Ball Music Man Cutlass

# Divine Intervention

## SIX-STRING-SAVANT JASON RICHARDSON ON THE NEW ALL THAT REMAINS ALBUM, DUAL GUITAR SOLOS, USING MUSIC THEORY AND IMPROVISATION (HIS ALLEGED ACHILLE'S HEEL)

**By Nick Bowcott**

**IN THE WORLD** of melodic metalcore, All That Remains are rightfully considered one of the genre's finest exponents, alongside the likes of Killswitch Engage, Trivium and Bullet for My Valentine. In fact, popular YouTuber and respected metalcore evangelist Nik Nocturnal describes the band's 2006 album, *The Fall of Ideals*, as follows: "It is God-tier; the riffs still hold up to this day and the hooks are huge. It is the perfect era of metalcore encapsulated in one amazing album." The fact that said album was certified Gold by the RIAA in 2023 for sales in excess of 500,000 is proof positive of its importance.

A pivotal member of this band — which emerged from Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1998 — was, of course, original member and lead guitarist, Oli Herbert, a much respected and highly inspirational player and riff writer in modern metal. Sadly, he passed away in 2018. His replacement, Jason Richardson, wasn't only a close friend of Oli's but also, according to ATR's frontman, Phil Labonte, the late guitarist's choice. On a YouTube podcast called *Drinks with Johnny*, Labonte revealed that Oli had once said, "Look, if anything ever happened to me I'd want Jason to be the guy. He's the best guitarist in the world right now." Consequently, when Richardson offered to fill in for his much-missed friend at some ATR shows, he was offered the gig.

**"Al Di Meola said, 'Learn as much theory as you possibly can and then forget it!'"**

Prior to joining All That Remains officially in 2019, Richardson had already carved his name in modern metal thanks to his precise, lightning-fast, virtuosic playing with Born of Osiris (2009-2011) and Chelsea Grin (2012-2015). These stints were quickly followed by a successful solo career with two albums thus far — *I* (2016) and *II* (2022). Richardson also has guested with the likes of Polyphia, August Burns Red and Falling in Reverse, to name but three. Add to that a range of signature six- and seven-string guitars with Ernie Ball Music Man and Sterling by Music Man; a critically acclaimed signature MixWave amp simulation plugin; and his own website, which offers a slew of tabs and more, and Richardson's profile is pretty darned high.

The fact that he recently won the Guitarist of the Year at the popular Nik Nocturnal Metal Awards 2024, which garnered more than 76,000 votes from the metal-loving public, merely adds to this driven young man's already impressive resume — as does his pivotal role in the writing and recording of the new All That Remains album, *AntiFragile*, which was released in January.

NEVERMORE VISUALS

"Playing fast — it's good to be able to do that, but it can't be your only thing," Richardson says

**Prior to your joining All That Remains, I understand you were a big fan of the band and Oli's playing.**

Yeah. *The Fall of Ideals* came out in the mid-2000s. I was in high school at the time, so that album is pretty nostalgic for me. I'd also toured with them a few times when I was in Born of Osiris and Chelsea Grin, so I got to know the guys — and I was able to hang out and jam with Oli, too. He was an amazing guitarist and a great guy.

**How would you describe *AntiFragile* to an All That Remains fan who hasn't heard it yet?**

This album was definitely a collaborative effort. I wrote the majority of the music on this one, but it wouldn't sound the way it does without everyone involved. For everything I put into it, my thought process was that I wanted to bring back the sound that most fans know the band for — the one from the *Fall of Ideals* [*2006*], *Overcome* [*2008*] and *For We Are Many* [*2010*] era. Those three albums are my favorites, by far. And, from the outside in, those are the ones you hear people talk about the most. So I just wanted to bring back that staple sound — and the dual guitar leads. There's only one song on *AntiFragile* that doesn't have a solo; the rest all have some crazy lead with harmonies spinning out of it the whole time. That was always my favorite part of their live show when I toured with them because it was so sick. Not enough bands are doing that nowadays, so I made sure every solo on this record had something like that in it.

**How do you go about constructing those dual harmony lead lines? Theory, ear or a bit of both?**

Definitely a bit of both. Theory is important because it helps expedite the writing process, but it's obviously not a necessity. I know plenty of players who write the craziest-sounding stuff, and some of them don't know anything about theory. And that's almost better for them in a way because they don't have any constraints or perceptions that might dictate what they're going to write, if that makes sense. They're just playing what sounds cool to them. The bluntest way I've ever heard it put is this: Al Di Meola was at one of the John Petrucci camps [*John Petrucci's Guitar Universe*] and he said, "Learn as much theory as you possibly can and then forget it!" [*Laughs*] That way it's subconscious; it's in the back of your head, not the front. Remember, it's called music "theory," not "law." It's just there to guide you, to be a suggestion and help make things work better together with each other.

**Talking of things that work well together, *AntiFragile* has a nice mixture of intensity and melody.**

I agree, thank you! [*Laughs*] Dynamics are pretty important. It can't just be one thing the whole time. Like playing fast — it's good to be able to do that, but it can't be your only thing.

**To be brutally honest, ignoring your blazing leads, trying to master some of your riffs on this album would break a lot of players, including myself. What does it take for you to maintain your level of playing, let alone improve?**

Some of those riffs I couldn't play right now, because I haven't been practicing as much as I should be. [*Laughs*] I could definitely play the majority of the stuff on the record, but — If you're not practicing this kind of shit consistently every day (at least a little bit) — endurance is where things can start to fall apart. Even if I were just to do 30 minutes a day, I would never have to go through the "rebuilding my technique" phase ever again. But I don't do that when I'm home, [*Laughs*] so I'm gonna have to do it again at some point soon. For example, that song "The Piper" — it just sounds like a metalcore riff, because it is — but it keeps going by so fast, and the verse riff in that song is supposed to be all down-picked. I can do it when my technique, endurance and stamina are up after I've been practicing that stuff for a week or two straight. But right now, during this interview, if I were to pick up a guitar and try to play that, my right hand would just fall apart. When I know I've got to play stuff like that live, I make sure I'm consistently practicing for two or three weeks beforehand, working to where something like that is more comfortable and isn't a stress-test where your just arm just gets locked up after trying to play it for a little bit. It's like working out; that's the best analogy I can give for it.

**Your tone on *AntiFragile* is great. Did you use amps or your signature MixWave plugins?**

When I was writing and tracking, I did everything through my plugins. [*Producer*] Josh Wilbur tried a couple of things to see what's gonna work best, but he ultimately ended up just using my plugins. It's got his touch on it for sure, but before he shaped it onto the mix, it was my MixWave amp sim.

**When you're recording, are you** ➔

COURTESY OF ERNIE BALL

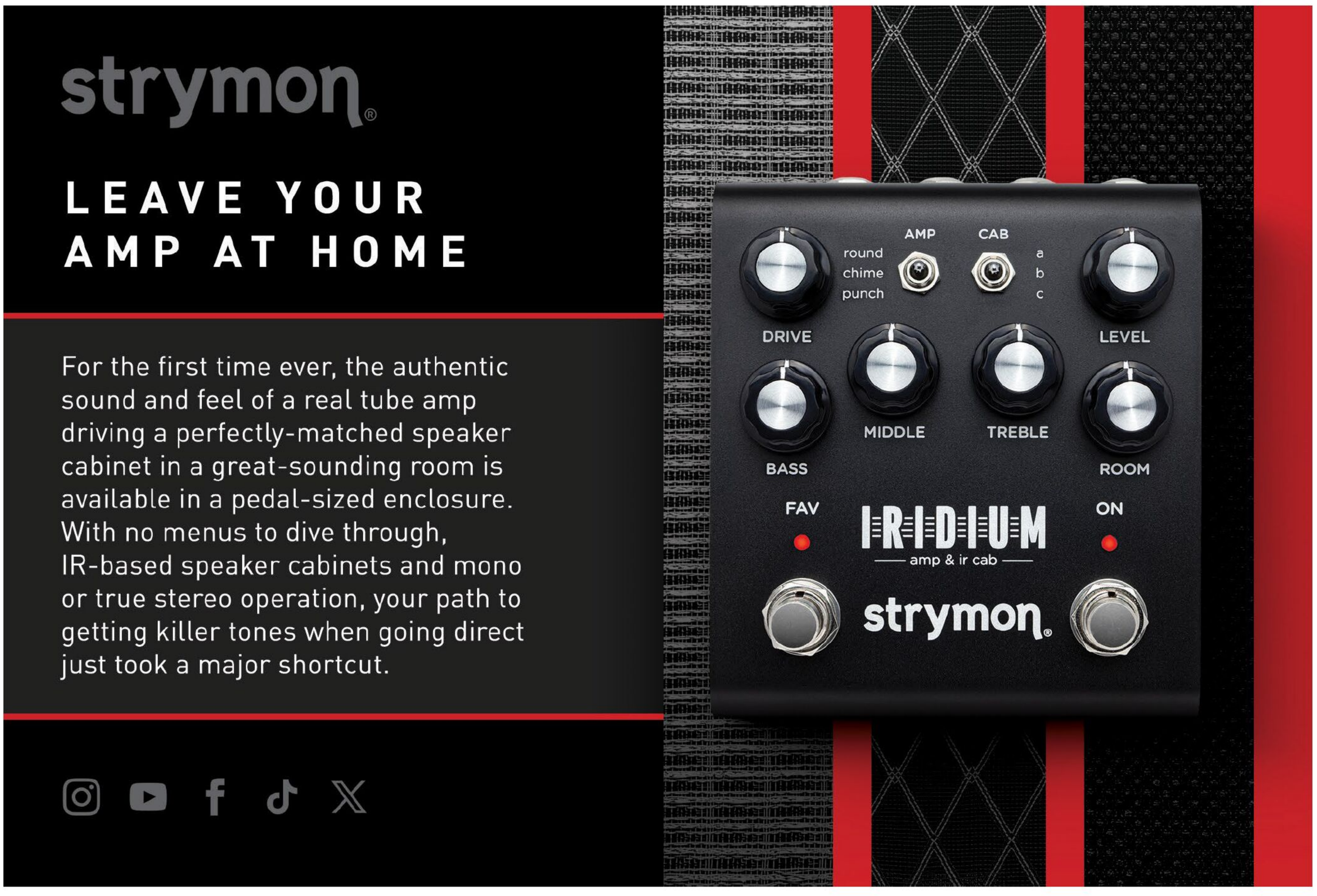
MATTHEW OWEN

**standing or sitting?**
I sit the fuck down... I'm lazy! [*Laughs*]

**Do you have any advice you'd like to pass on to aspiring guitarists?**
Pay more attention to improv because I feel like not doing so has bitten me in the ass a little bit. I've seen videos of me running improvisation live, and while they've always been better than I remember them being in that moment, I'm not where I'd like to be. This is probably an unrealistic standard, but someone like Guthrie Govan can go up there, pull something out of his ass on the spot and it's just the sickest thing you've heard every time! Nick Johnston, too. Those guys can just pick up the guitar and think on their feet so well, whereas I get inside my head, and it doesn't come out like them. Everyone is always their own worst critic, but I've definitely got to work on improv a lot more.

First, you've got to learn solos by players you look up to. You need an arsenal of licks, runs and ideas to pull out of; you have to build that library first. I'm very compositional; I'll work something out then practice the shit out of it and get it down. But every now and then, there are moments you never think are gonna happen in your career where being able to improv is essential. Like when I played the jam at the last G3 reunion with Eric Johnson, Steve Vai and Joe Satriani. My friend, Bryan [*Beller*], plays bass for Joe, so I texted him to see if I could come to the show that night and hang out. He hit me back an hour later with, "Sure, do you wanna play?" I was like, "Uh, yeah sure. I'll come and play G3; that's sick." [*Laughs*] Obviously I'm not going to say no to an opportunity like that, regardless of me thinking, "I suck at improv." I just went, "Fuck it, I'm gonna do it!"

Nita [*Strauss*] who played the same night as me, had a similar experience. They hit her up and she almost said no — but then her husband said, "Are you kidding me? Go play!" So we were in the same headspace, I guess. I watched the video of me at that jam and I was like, "OK — that was much better than I thought it was in the moment!" That said, it definitely wasn't Guthrie Govan. [*Laughs*] GW

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TAKING THE PAST
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incredible dynamics, harmonics and string
separation, all with super-rich midrange, tight
lows and an addictively juicy playing feel"
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The gear hunter

# LIEBER GUITARS

**The story of Tom Lieber, the aspiring guitar builder who wouldn't take no for an answer and ended up making prized instruments for the Grateful Dead**

By Amit Sharma

Tom Lieber, surrounded by his creations, including the Garcia [*far left*]. "The way I look at it, there are other people doing replicas of this stuff. Mine are all originals," Lieber says

**EVERY GEAR COMPANY** will have a pedigree of talent that it's most associated with, though in the case of Lieber Guitars, it really just boils down to one group above all others — American rock 'n' roll originals the Grateful Dead. Master luthier and owner Tom Lieber got his big break designing and building guitars for the band alongside Doug Irwin, resulting in Jerry Garcia models like the Wolf and the Tiger. Since then, his instruments have been seen in the hands of Paul McCartney, Victor Wooten, Blondie's Chris Stein and many, many more.

At the turn of the millennium, Lieber was approached to build a Tiger six-string for a client and eventually decided to revisit his past as a full-time pursuit — producing top-of-the-line, custom-made instruments for all the Deadheads (and every other kind of head) out there. He now oversees a whole range of Garcia favorites, from limited-edition models to the Coco series, as well as other guitars connected to giants like Stanley Clarke, John Entwistle and Pete Sears. Below, the legendary builder looks back on an impressive legacy and gives us a look into the business he's running today.

**How did you first get into guitar building?**
It helps to be a player first. That was the driving force for me to find a more refined tool in my hands. Around 1970, Alembic Inc. started a revolution with Jack Casady's $4,000 bass. I was into what [*Alembic co-founder*] Rick Turner was talking about, but I couldn't afford one. The only way to get one was to build it myself. I moved to California to find an apprenticeship and went to Alembic with some instruments I'd been modding, but they told me there was no room at the inn. I ended up getting put in touch with Doug Irwin, who worked for Jerry Garcia. I found Doug working out of a small chicken shack and convinced him to take me on. He needed nobody; Jerry was his only customer. I told him, "Dude, I've come a long way to learn. I'm going nowhere!" I basically forced myself upon him.

**"I HAVEN'T BUILT A SINGLE GUITAR WHERE I DIDN'T SHED A DROP OF BLOOD"**

**What are the most important things to remember about making these instruments?**
You have to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty. Everyone always says it must be nice building guitars, and I tell them, "Yeah, but the knowledge you need is broad; it goes well beyond what you think!" I never expected I'd have to be a machinist and know how to take everything apart, repair whatever went wrong and then put it all back together. If you can't do that, you'll never be a boutique builder.

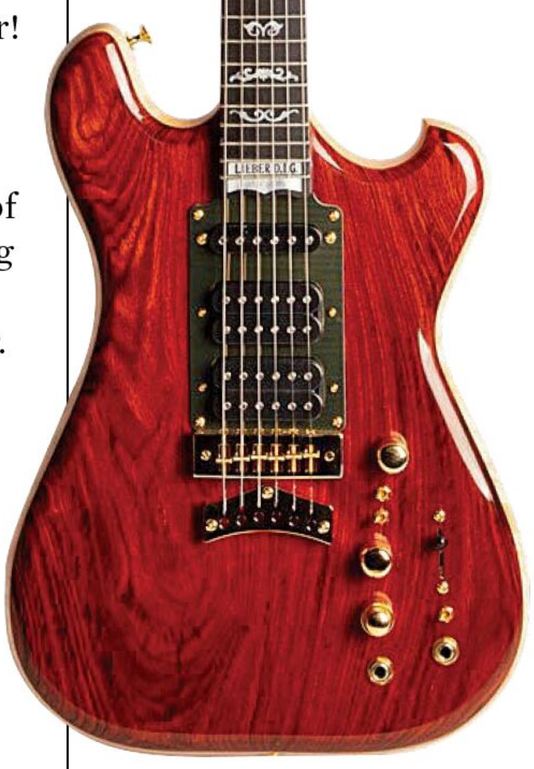
**Which of the Grateful Dead models did you end up making first?**
I began with the Pendulous bass, which was one of three models Doug and I did back in 1975. What became the Tiger was the "Garcia." And there was the Firedrake, which was a combination of the Pendulous and the Tiger.

**What was Jerry Garcia looking for?**
Jerry's guitars were always a working platform. He liked to try different stuff, which was great for us. Not all of it worked. As a builder, your ego can get in the way if you're not paying attention. For the player, the guitar should be comfortable like an old pair of shoes. There should be nothing foreign about it. As much as players say they want the Holy Grail, they usually want what they already have. Alembic were

LIEBER GUITARS, MILO STEWART JR.

[*left*] The Garcia, which is described as "the final evolution of the most famous guitar in rock history" on lieberguitars.com

[*below*] The Coco Wolf. From lieberguitars.com: "This hybrid of Tiger and Wolf features a curly maple back and sides with a cocobolo top"



building all sorts of guitars for the Dead, who owned a portion of the company at one point. Bless Rick Turner, but he couldn't get Jerry to play his guitars. On his own time, Doug got to use the Alembic shop to build. He made the Eagle, but he couldn't afford to put the Alembic electronics, so he threw in some passive stuff. Jerry picked it up and loved it.

**And the rest was history?**

Pretty much. Jerry then contracted Doug to build the Wolf. At the time, Jerry was playing a modified Strat called the Alligator. Doug decided to make something similar. In a genius way, Jerry ended up thinking Doug was the greatest builder on the planet because he did the one thing Alembic refused to do. He'd been given loads of great guitars; he just didn't know because he never liked the electronics. With those Fender pickups inside, Jerry was happy. That's what sold him to Doug. It was just a case of paying attention. There was Gibson spacing for the strings at the bridge and nut, but with the Fender scale. It was one of the first long-scale Gibsons. I don't care what anyone says, what Paul Reed Smith builds today is what Doug and I made back then.

**Your guitars were quite experimental for the time, featuring exotic woods and brass lines.**

Nobody was doing that kind of stuff. A lot of the exotic woods came from Doug's time at Alembic. We were using purpleheart and padauk, plus other woods you probably shouldn't use. We were always experimenting. We got the Wolf back for repair and had no idea what to do next. There was a Travis Bean [*guitar*] on the bench. Nobody was happy because Jerry had been playing that instead. I inspected the thing and noticed it weighed a lot. So we decided to stop worrying about weight and put together a hardwood laminate design. That's how the Tiger came to be. Doug's vision was a laminate sandwich with the brass going around the side. The only thing I had to do was bleed out the woods before assembly. The design and shape of the guitar was also mine. It took off — 40 years later!

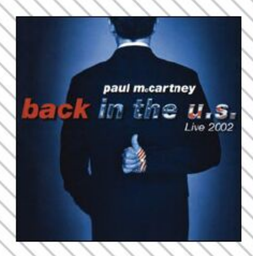
**So which guitar is your best seller?**

Last year I sold more Garcias, which are high-end. Before that, I was selling one a year and then tons of the Coco models. The Spellcaster basses were going out the door for a while. For me, the Garcia stuff sells more than other stuff like the Butternut guitar. I've only ever made one Gigerstein and don't plan to do any more, but it was amazing to work with [*Swiss artist*] H.R. Giger.

**What makes your guitars different from everything else out there?**

Lots of people build, but not many of them instill themselves into everything they make. With my creations, I can promise you that's what happens. A piece of me goes into every guitar. I haven't built a single guitar where I didn't shed a drop of blood. I will cut myself or get a splinter or prick my finger at some point. I only make one of each guitar. There were 53 Spellbinder basses from 1980, and I did 24 Garcias for the Grateful Dead's 50th [*anniversary*] — 12 Tigers and 12 Wolf models, all made out of sustainable materials. Other than that, it's always one of everything. The way I look at it, there are other people doing replicas of this stuff. Mine are all originals. GW

**"FOR THE PLAYER, THE GUITAR SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE, LIKE AN OLD PAIR OF SHOES"**




**HIS FIRST WITH McCARTNEY**
*Back in the U.S.* (2002)

*My Town* (2024)
**HIS NEW SOLO ALBUM**

JESSE GRANT/GETTY IMAGES

# BRIAN RAY

## From playing the "Monster Mash" with Bobby Pickett at 17 to touring the world with Paul McCartney, Brian Ray has had a career like no other **By Joe Bosso**

**SINCE 2002, BRIAN** Ray has held down the enviable gig as guitarist and bassist in Paul McCartney's band. At the same time, he's built a successful side career as a solo artist — sometimes with his garage rock band, the Bayonets — and has released a series of punchy power pop albums and singles that recall the ebullient, hard-driving and hook-laden sounds that dominated the Southern California scene in the late Seventies.

"I'm a West Coast guy, so that stuff is in my roots," he says. "The Plimsouls, Dwight Twilley, the Knack — they were awesome. Of course, power pop can be traced earlier to the Raspberries and the Sweet, and then that got adopted by Cheap Trick. Even Tom Petty was power pop at times. I have my rootsy side, but I also have my pop side. In my music, they sort of dance together."

Ray's latest album, *My Town*, is something of a "best of" collection in that it includes his singles from the past decade, but it also features four new cuts that he recorded with his McCartney bandmate Abe Laboriel Jr. on drums, as well as bassists Scott Shriner (from Weezer) and Davey Farranger (from Elvis Costello's the Imposters). The record's lead single, "Bad 4 U," which Ray co-wrote with his label head, Steven Van Zandt, is an irresistible nugget of ear candy that boasts hooks at every turn and packs a knockout guitar solo. "When the Earth Was Round" and "Hold Me Close" are raucous, ridiculously catchy rockers, while the coral sitar-flavored "All the While" dips into Sixties psychedelia and features Ray channeling Jimi Hendrix on a cosmic guitar lead.

"That song is a bit of a left turn for me," Ray says. "I was talking to Dennis Mortensen, who works with Steven Van Zandt, and he said, 'Why don't you do a long-form jam that doesn't have any adherence to a singles format? It could be seven minutes long — just have a blast.' That's what I did. I used a 1955 Les Paul Special and put it through a Marshall, but what sounds like a whammy bar is a [*Gamechanger Audio*] Bigsby Pedal. It's absolute wizardry."

Ray feels right at home on Van Zandt's Wicked Cool Records, which he says, "is geared toward garage rock, but that encompasses so much. And the great thing about working with Steven is he's like the old-school A&R guys in that he really gets involved with his artists. We talk all the time, and I'll play him songs. He always has ideas, so we bounce things off each other. Of course, it's great when he plays my songs on his Underground Garage station on Sirius. He'll pick a track and put it on his Coolest Songs in the World channel. He's a big believer in what he plays and gets involved in, and I'm very happy to work with him."

**Let's go back to your early years. I understand your first pro gig was touring with Bobby "Boris" Pickett of "Monster Mash" fame.**
That's right. Bryan Englund, the drummer of my high school band, was the son of the great actress Cloris Leachman, and back then she was dating Bobby Pickett. One day, Bobby heard us rehearsing in Bryan's garage,

**"I'M A WEST COAST GUY. I HAVE MY ROOTSY SIDE, BUT I ALSO**

and he asked us if we'd do some gigs with him. We were, like, 17, so this sounded amazing — we were going to be the Crypt-Kicker 5. We played Six Flags in Texas, a gig in Missouri and a few other places. It was great; we did our own sort of zombie makeup, and my late sister came out with us and sang.

**Beyond "Monster Mash," what was the rest of the set like?**
It was a seasonal novelty 40-minute set based on "The Twist" and "Monster Mash" and "Me and My Mummy." He did a lot of cover songs. He had an assistant who played Renfield [*Count Dracula's fanatically devoted servant*]. He'd come out and throw chicken wings at the kids. It was a lot of fun.

**I'm sure. Soon after, you joined Etta James' band. Quite a big switch from "Monster Mash"!**
Yeah. [*Laughs*] That came about from a charity gig I did with Bobby Pickett. At the show, I met Phil Kaufman — he was a producer and tour manager — and he took a liking to me. He told me that he was working with Etta James, and he asked me to come to a rehearsal because he heard the guitar player couldn't make it. It was wild — there was Etta James and all these killer players. I was shy and kind of sat there, but Etta said to Phil, "I like that little white kid." She asked me if I'd like to play the next night in Long Beach.

**Which was the start of a 14-year stretch with Etta James.**
That's right. I was so young. I had just turned 18.

**Did her material offer you a lot of opportunities to shine as a guitarist?**
Oh, absolutely. Etta loved guitar, and in concert she did a lot of bumping rhythm and blues. It got very blues rock. I had lots of space to open up. She wanted me to rip. When I would play a solo, she'd keep yelling at me, "Play! Play!" On songs like "Running and Hiding Blues" and "Baby What You Want Me to Do," she encouraged me to play solo after solo. She was tough and hard, but she could be warm and fun. I had a great experience with her, and eventually I became her musical director.

[*facing*] Brian Ray at the 2015 Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim, California; [*above*] a circa-20-year-old Ray in action in 1975

**In 2002, you joined Paul McCartney's band. How did that come about?**
It was kind of crazy. I had done an album with Shakira and was asked to go on tour with her. I told her people what I needed for a salary, which they agreed to, but then I said I required Business Class travel because there would be a lot of long flights. This became a problem, and they got somebody else. I was kind of kicking myself over that because I would have had years of work.

A little later, my friend Abe Laboriel Jr. came to my birthday party. We had worked together in France doing Johnny Hallyday and Mylene Farmer, but now Abe was playing with Paul McCartney. I asked him if they were playing any shows, and he said they were thinking of doing a song at the Super Bowl before the National Anthem. So I asked, "Who's going to play guitar when Paul plays bass, and who's going to play bass when Paul plays guitar?" Abe said, "Actually, we're looking for a guitar player who plays a little bass."

I said, "I'd love a shot at that." Abe put my name forward, and sure enough I got a call from David Kahne, who had produced a lot of Paul's stuff. I went to meet David and hung out with him. I played some guitar and bass, and he said, "I've got a good feeling about this. I'll put your name forward."

But David also said, "I have to be honest: There's four other guys that are in the running. I don't really have control over it, but I wish you good luck." I thought, "Okay, that's about as good as it gets." I thanked him and split, and the next day I got a call: "Can you be on a plane tomorrow to go to New Orleans to play one song with Paul McCartney?"

**So you didn't have to actually audition with Paul?**

ANDREW PUTLER/GETTY IMAGES

**HAVE MY POP SIDE. IN MY MUSIC, THEY DANCE TOGETHER"**

[*from left*] Rusty Anderson, Abe Laboriel Jr., Paul McCartney and Brian Ray on stage in San Jose, July 10, 2019

SCOTT STRAZZANTE/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Playing "Freedom" at the Super Bowl was my audition.

**No pressure at all.**
[*Laughs*] No, none! Later that night, everybody went back to the hotel bar. Paul was telling stories for a couple of hours, but after a while he said, "Thank you, guys. It's time for bed." He hugged a bunch of people and started out, but before he left he came up to me and said, "Goodnight, Brian. Welcome aboard. Stick with Rusty — he'll show you the ropes."

**Rusty being Rusty Anderson, who already played guitar in the band.**
That's right.

**You were a guitar player primarily, so I imagine you had to woodshed on bass once you were in the band.**
Absolutely. I raced home and prepared for five weeks straight so I could be ready for the first band rehearsal. Truth is, I never concentrated on bass-playing. I played bass on my own demos and other people's demos, so getting ready to play in Paul's band was challenging.

Thankfully, Paul's basslines, while they're iconic and memorable and musical, they're not really technically challenging. They're just so good. Because they're so listenable, they're easy to understand. Let's face it — they're in our bloodstreams. Even if you're not a bass player, you know these parts. They're in your head.

**Is there any process for how you and Rusty work our guitar solos?**
Rusty plays the lion's share of the solos. He was the first guitar player hired, so that's how that went. As time has gone on, Paul has asked me to do more and more solos. We just naturally fall into who plays what, though sometimes we talk about it: "Why don't you play the lower part here?" or "You want to play the higher part?" At the end of the show, we do the guitar shoot-out on "The End," with Paul, Rusty and me doing solos. I come in last, so I do the John Lennon parts.

**You guys extend those solos live.**
It just keeps going around and around as long as Paul feels like it. Sometimes it's short, sometimes it's long. For the first sequence, we start off kind of note-for-note, and then we do whatever we want.

**Let's go back to your album. I'm curious about your songwriting influences. Who would you say had a big impact on you?**
Oh, wow, good question. I'd never thought about that, actually. I mean, obviously Lennon and McCartney. And then there's Ray Davies. Those are the main influences. [*Laughs*] These are such Boomer answers. I also like John Hiatt and, of course, Dylan, not that my songwriting is anywhere near what they do. There's a British singer-songwriter named James Hunter who's fantastic. He does sort of retro R&B, rock and soul. His lyrics are as tight as those great Leiber and Stoller songs.

**Are you generally a fast writer, or do you labor over songs?**
I'm pretty fast. Sometimes it starts with a guitar lick, but it could be a vocal melody or lyric idea. I try to figure out what the song is about, and then I'm good. In the case of "Bad 4 U," it's basically autobiographical. I was a blond, smiley kid from Glendale, California, but I wanted to be Robert De Niro because I thought that's what the girls liked.

**Break down the collaboration between you and Steven Van Zandt on that song.**
Steven really nailed down the lyrical aspect without making the protagonist come off as weak. He wanted the kid, who is me, to keep his strength. Now, I thought I had the music all done, but Steven said, "This lyric, you've got to move it into the chorus. We have to hear the chorus in a big way, because it's everything." I didn't want to do it at first because I thought I was finished, but then I was like, "Goddammit, he's right. That's a better idea." He was great about hooks moving into hooks. He understands that so well.

**You mentioned your Les Paul Special. What other guitars did you use on the new tracks?**
On "Bad 4 U," the main guitar in the intro is my 1965 Epiphone Casino. It's got a Silver Fox finish, which makes it pretty rare. I think only one or two of them were ever made like that. What else did I use? Les Pauls and SGs. I like vintage stuff; it just sounds better. On some things I played a Hofner bass — don't tell Paul. [*Laughs*] Sometimes I used Fender basses and a Vox Phantom IV bass.

**You mentioned how you lost that Shakira tour over your desire to fly business class. I assume much of your travel with Paul is by way of private jets.**
Paul is very generous, and he takes really good care of us. He takes us on little excursions between dates when we're out in the middle of nowhere. He'll find some cool resort to take us to, which is lovely. It's a combination of every kind of travel you can imagine.

**No complaints there, huh?**
Oh, no. None at all. GW

## "PLAYING 'FREEDOM' AT THE SUPER BOWL *WAS* MY AUDITION"

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# MINI

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Deafheaven guitarist Shiv Mehra in the studio. “We’ve gotten into these jazz chords that we try to bring into a metal format,” he says

GUITAR WORLD
JULY 2025

# RIFFER MADNESS

## How Deafheaven brought back the heavy on *Lonely People with Power*

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

BEFORE DEAFHEAVEN RELEASED *Infinite Granite* in 2021, the metal world seemed to have the band pegged for its shoegaze-obsessed black metal sound. But the group's fifth album was a major detour that left fans divided. Produced by longtime Beck collaborator Justin Meldal-Johnsen and rife with dreamy, layered guitar and synth textures, mid-tempo beats — and notably, George Clarke's actual singing voice instead of his usual skin-peeling demonic shriek — *Infinite Granite* crushed fans' expectations like a slab of Precambrian rock.

So, when "Magnolia," the first single from 2025's *Lonely People with Power*, hit streaming services in January, fans cautiously heralded a return to form, hoping album six held more blast beats than indie rock. That's also what guitarists Kerry McCoy and Shiv Mehra were thinking as they toured the previous record.

"There would be parts of me that would be like, 'This is cool, but once it gets to "Honeycomb" [*from 2018's* Ordinary Corrupt Human Love], this place is going to light up,' thinking they're just being patient," McCoy says. "But then we're in Korea and it's 5,000 people in the rain jumping along to 'Great Mass of Color.'"

"We ended up missing some of those other elements," Mehra says. "*Lonely People with Power* doesn't lose any of our new palette, but we brought back some of the heaters."

*Lonely People with Power* isn't merely a return to the band's previously established sound. It's a culmination of the stylistic detours and identities Deafheaven has cultivated over its 15-year history. Sections of "Heathen" and "Amethyst" share the most DNA with *Infinite Granite*, while the emotional chasms of "Winona" and "The Marvelous Orange Tree" harken to the critically acclaimed *Sunbather* from 2013.

Guitar players will no doubt gravitate to the chunky, palm-muted riffs at the core of songs like "Magnolia" and "Revelator," which inevitably give way to the interlaced guitar harmonies of McCoy and Mehra overlaid to brutal beats.

"'Revelator' is chock full of riffs," McCoy says. "The chorus is just like, 'What if a war metal band had Portishead chords?'"

Ahead of the release of *Lonely People with Power*, the guitarists sat down to talk tones, creative chording and the return of huge riffs to the Deafheaven *oeuvre*. →

SEAN STOUT

**_Infinite Granite_ was a deliberate shift in sound. What was the thought going into this record?**

**McCOY:** *Infinite Granite* is a time capsule of us at that moment, [*being*] worn down with the idea of black metal and long songs and blast beats and pretty, delayed guitar parts. *Lonely People with Power*, to me, is a timestamp of us having had a whole cycle of playing *Infinite* songs and learning how to do that. There was a rediscovering of, yeah, I kind of miss playing fucking ass-beaters and blast beats and headbangy stuff, and I miss the energy as much as I love the highfalutin indie rock things. There was a part of me that was like, this is who we really are.

**MEHRA:** It's also linked to the time period that we're in, because *Infinite Granite* was Covid times, and we had a lot of time to experiment and broaden our palette of writing and singing and trying this whole thing out. But I feel like the power was missing, and we wanted to bring that back but not lose some of the more avant-garde writing style. We go into these chord journeys that are super fun and hooky, but then also brutal riffs.

**How did these songs come together structurally, and particularly with the guitars?**

**MEHRA:** With a shit-ton of rough demos until we finally put the puzzle pieces together the way we wanted it to happen.

**McCOY:** Shiv and I can kind of read each other's minds at this point. The riff from "Magnolia," originally that riff was an Isis kind of post-metal clean guitar riff that had a different scale behind it. It was very dirgy and off-time. And then when we got in the

**"Add this weird chord, make this a little dissonant. Not everything has to be saccharine" *Kerry McCoy***

practice space with Dan [*Tracy, drummer*], I remember being like, yeah, it's this, but shouldn't it...? And he finished my sentence — like, 'Yeah, it should be more Scandinavian.' And that's what I was just thinking.

**MEHRA:** We've gotten into these jazz chords that we try to bring into a metal format. We wouldn't necessarily know the name of the chord, but we both know it.

**McCOY:** I think one of the beautiful things about this band is that there is no creative boss; it's the input of five people giving direction. For instance, Shiv has this chord progression [*on "Amethyst"*] that could technically be an inverted fifth-minor thing. There's no root note, but the root note is implied. And we send it to Chris [*Johnson, bassist*], who doesn't know what the chords are, and he adds a bassline that implies a different series of root notes. That is where so much of the magic comes from.

**What did you like about working with Justin Meldal-Johnsen the last time, and how did that carry over to this record?**

**MEHRA:** We see things a little differently, and he helps us put riffs into a bigger-picture idea.

**McCOY:** Part of it is that Justin is not a metal guy. I wanted to work with him because I love M83, especially the classic era, *Hurry Up, We're Dreaming*, and to me, the feeling on that record is not dissimilar from Deafheaven. There are these grand soundscapes filled with big, widescreen feelings and it triggers emotions, and the chords are very dense, but little changes can hit you right in the heartstrings. That's what we do, as well.

He does things because he wants to and because he considers them interesting, and neither of us are trying to hold back anything. So, when there was this interesting pushback where he would be like, "This double-kick part in 'Doberman,' why is he doing this little ride bell pattern? Isn't that kind of busy for the speed of the song?" And I'd be like, "No, it's a callback to this band from Germany that we all like, and it's a reference for the heads." We would push back on each other.

**MEHRA:** On *Infinite*, we were in a new synth world with him, but this time it's a more guitar-oriented record, so it was also nice to just hone in on guitars with him. His tone-listening ear is impeccable to the point where he'll hear the slightest of sourness on a note or a tuning. So we keep learning from him. Last time he was maybe a little more involved in our song structures, whereas this time, like Kerry said, we had a bit more of push and pull where we took a little more control of our structures, and he was more overarching on tones. But he did give us grand ideas, like the break in "Revelator."

**McCOY:** The point of it was to play less.

**There's still a lot of the ethereal stuff — that's part of your signature — but _Lonely People_ also has really tight riffs, which is a much different kind of game. How did that impact the tones you were going for?**

**McCOY:** I was referencing a lot of Godspeed [*You! Black Emperor*] at some point, and so I would play him something and he'd be like, "Oh, that sounds like this ancient Silvertone I have. Let's try that with this kind of mic." Or a [*Fender*] Princeton, or a weird Yamaha thing for the cleans. For the heavy stuff, honestly, it's 80 percent EVH 5150s. You can't beat it. We tried a bunch of different stuff and just kept coming back to it.

**MEHRA:** We use Traynors as the Marshall-y sound. We had a stack of choices, but the majority of it was really EVHs.

**McCOY:** And then to add clarity, a little bit more of the articulation of the chords, let's add a brighter Traynor, which has a hint of gain on it, and blend it.

**Are you using in-the-box processing or pedals for all the delays and shimmering tones?**

**MEHRA:** Lots and lots of pedals. I feel like



"We did use a lot of cool pedals this time," Mehra says

SEAN STOUT

"I think one of the beautiful things about this band is that there is no creative boss," Kerry McCoy says

we used less than on *Infinite*, which was so psychedelic and shoegazey, but we did use a lot of cool pedals this time.

**McCOY:** Every once in a while on the record, probably on "Winona," I would say there was like, "Ooh, maybe this should have been wetter. Let's throw that into a FabFilter reverb," or something like that.

**MEHRA:** We used the [*Hologram*] Microcosm, and just basic delay like the [*Empress Effects*] Echosystem.

**McCOY:** I feel like we used the Red Panda a little bit for some glitchy, weird shit.

**MEHRA:** Justin's house is like a candy shop for musicians. And I brought my [*Chase Bliss*] Gen[*eration*] Loss pedal, which has been my favorite pedal.

**McCOY:** There's a bunch of Chase Bliss stuff on there.

**MEHRA:** We just got these [*Line 6*] Helixes for live, and we ended up using the verb for "The Marvelous Orange Tree."

**McCOY:** I've been playing guitar for 25 years, but if you had told me 10, 15 years ago, one day your entire live rig will be a Line 6 multi-effects pedal, that's fucking crazy. But there were a few times on the record I was like, I don't know, the Helix is kind of getting it done here. [*Laughs*] I mean, the proof's in the pudding.

**MEHRA:** We encounter so many issues on the road with tubes, or something's going wrong with cables, so we're just streamlining. And the funniest part is when you see George [*Clarke, vocalist*]'s face when we play this tone and he's like, "That's the one."

**McCOY:** When you have a non-guitar-player be like, "Oh yeah, that hits," you're like, damn, this is literally just — well, alright.

SEAN STOUT

**How did you challenge yourselves on this record?**

**McCOY:** I don't deliberately challenge myself. I can beat myself up at times. I'll be like, man, we're doing this fucking chord progression again. You get in those grooves. "Amethyst" is a great example, and I would say "Revelator" and "Body Behavior" are especially good examples where it's like, "fuck that time signature up," or "get atonal on the scale. Add this weird chord, make this a little dissonant." Not everything has to be saccharine.

**MEHRA:** With chords we've done too many times in a certain way, we just want to try and push it a little bit. I don't think it's intentional. It's just the way we write music. We're not listening to the same stuff we did 10 years ago.

**McCOY:** On something like "Body Behavior," the verse on that where it's just like, it's that note, [*you*] resist the urge to add something over it. It's this one note for this long, and that's it. And that's all they get. GW

# PERMANENT WAVZ

Envy of None guitarist Alex Lifeson brings his prodigious chops back to the forefront on the band's sophomore release, *Stygian Wavz*. Plus, a new Rush box set, hangin' with Geddy Lee, Lerxst gear and more

BY **ANDREW DALY**

**WHEN RUSH CAME** off the road in 2015, Alex Lifeson's interest in guitar waned. And when Rush drummer Neil Peart died of cancer nearly five years later, Lifeson entered a period of mourning, meaning guitar completely took a backseat. But things began to change when fellow Canadian (and Coney Hatch bassist) Andy Curran reached out to Lifeson, asking him to provide scratch guitar tracks to help bring a few of his skeletal compositions to life. At first, Lifeson thought nothing of it; soon, however, a new band — Envy of None — was born.

Lifeson says he was reticent during the recording of the band's self-titled first album back in 2022, which led him to take something of a six-string backseat and focus on creating sounds that "didn't sound like a guitar." Call it a case of easing into things after spending most of his adult life beside Rush's Peart and Geddy Lee, who he considers his brothers. But nothing could change the fact that Rush was over.

"You can't change the past," Lifeson says. This meant that if Envy of None were to make a second album, he'd have to dive in, take the training wheels off and let it rip.

Lifeson did just that, as heard on 2025's *Stygian Wavz*, an album that, for a time, didn't even appear to be in the cards. "I didn't expect, really, to make a second record after the first one, which was just an exercise more than anything," Lifeson says. "But this album has got our soul in it. We're not just a group of musicians in some sort of co-op unit. We're functioning like a band, we sound like a band, and that was the result of being freer and more open, which you can do on a sophomore record." ➜

RICHARD SIBBALD

[*from left*]
Alex Lifeson,
Maiah Wynne,
Alfio Annibalini
and Andy Curran

As a lifelong gearhead with a new sense of interest in the process of creation, Lifeson turned to his stable of toys to bring his guitar playing to the forefront. "It's just so much fun to create moods, colors and textures," he says. "I have loads of crazy gear and old pedals. There are just so many things now that you can use to manipulate sounds. It's really a treat for me to work that way."

Listening to *Stygian Wavz*, one gets the sense that Lifeson, a guitarist whose playing has always served the song, has regained his footing as a titan of rock guitar. That's not to say he's overplaying; he's merely expressing himself in ways his fans are used to.

"There's no need to be flashy," he says. "I want to be memorable in [*terms of*] what the solo is. To do that, you have to be connected to the song. I got to express myself more as a guitarist. I consciously tried to work some solos in, and there's a little more heaviness on some of the songs — and lots of funky stuff, too."

Regardless of what Envy of None does (or doesn't do), Rush will always loom large in Lifeson's mind. But even though he's proud of his past, he says he's focused on his new band, meaning we'll just have to keep on waiting for one of those rumored Rush reunions. Still, Lifeson doesn't entirely punt on the idea. "We [*Lifeson and Lee*] get together — we do stuff together. Sometimes I go over there, and we're going to jam or something, and we end up just drinking coffee and laughing, you know? That's a beautiful part of our relationship. Will something come of it? I don't know. Who knows? But I know I'm really happy doing [*Envy of None*]."

**"To my core, I'm a musician. I play guitar three or four hours a day. I've really come to love playing guitar more than ever"**

RICHARD SIBBALD

***Stygian Wavz* definitely has a different flavor from the band's 2022 debut.**
Yes, it does. The first one, I think, I don't know... it was a new thing for us. We'd never worked together, and songs developed the way they did. It had that cinematic, atmospheric thing, and I loved it. But this one sounds more like we're a unified unit — more like a band.

**There's definitely cohesiveness, and it sounds like you're stretching out as a player, with some signature touches and ethereal sounds. What's the secret sauce?**
Well, I start off with a little bit of cannabis. [*Laughs*] Then, I just go, you know? I've always loved that, even in Rush; whenever I had the chance, I tried to do little atmospheric intervals wherever I could. And with the first Envy of None record, I had a free license. Probably 70 percent of the guitar stuff on that record doesn't sound like a guitar. I made an effort to do that because I wanted to do that — I wanted it to not sound like a guitar.

**You've found a balance between that and letting loose on this record.**
With this record, I take those moments and try to incorporate them in more of a rock sense. Then, working with [*vocalist*] Maiah [*Wynne*], we work very closely together. She's a real inspiration for me and naturally drives me along that path.

**A song like "Not Dead Yet" has got that ethereal thing, but there's also some twang. How did you approach that?**
When I first got the original idea, Andy and [*guitarist/keyboardist*] Alf [*Alfino Annibalini*] had written a very simple sketch of what they were after. I loved it right from the get-go. Part of my history dates back to the Toronto scene in the Sixties between the hippies and the R&B guys. There was a real movement for Toronto funk, and that's what I heard in the first few bars of that song. I wanted to create something along those lines.

**What gear did you break out to do that?**
I used a Tele for the main track; I have all my analog gear here in the studio — my compressors, preamps and three or four amps. And I have an enclosure with a single Celestion 12. This is all in my apartment. I've got lots of tools here to work on anything and develop anything. With that song, I wanted to keep that funky groove; then, once it went off into the chorus, the heavy guitars came in, and we followed up with the cleaner, James Bond-ish thematic outro.

**Speaking of heavy guitars, "Under the Stars" has a lot of that — but it's also got a very quintessential "less is more" solo, which is something you've always done very well.**
That's been number one with me for my whole life. It's all in service of the song.

When I'm constructing solos, I'm thinking about the song, like, "How does it fit into the song? How does it reflect what the emotional character of the song is?" That's really important to me. I don't set out to go, "I'm gonna play the fastest I can possibly play." Maybe in the early days I was sort of like that, but it's not about flashiness and trying to out-flash some other guitar player. It's all about the song.

**What did you hear in "Under the Stars" that led to your approach?**
When I first heard that section, we discussed it, and everybody said, "It'd be great to have a guitar solo." I've been sort of reluctant to play solos because of that whole attitude, but on this record, I thought, "You know what? I'm going to go back to playing solos and constructing them because it's going to help the song." So that one was kind of different for me. The volume and tone pots were turned down, and I played with my fingers instead of a pick. Then I stole a little David Gilmour lick there; it's very emotional and very powerful.

**You mentioned being reticent in terms of playing solos. I assume that on the first record, there was a concern that your lengthy track record with Rush could weigh down the project. Have you moved past having to bear the weight and legacy of Rush and be more free as a guitarist?**
That's a great question and observation. With the first record, I was very reticent about being too flashy or too much of a guitarist, you know? I made an effort to create sounds that we un-guitar, which was a great challenge, fun and suited the record. But with this record I felt more confident I could play a more traditional role. My response was to start including more solos and being more open about the guitar parts that I was writing.

**Is that a lot different from your role within Rush since you're not the sole guitarist in Envy of None?**
In Rush, I was the only guitar player. In this band, Alf plays a lot of guitars, and Andy throws down a guitar every once in a while. I'm a little more free because I've a commitment to this unit as a band. When I got the mixes back, I thought, 'Oh, my God, we've become a band."

**After spending all those years in Rush and having it end the way it did, there must have been a level of trepidation to where trying something new felt insurmountable or that it might impact the way you're viewed.**
You know, to my core, I'm just a musician.

Lifeson [*left*] and Geddy Lee perform Rush's "Closer to the Heart" (with *South Park* co-creator Matt Stone on drums) in 2022

I'm just a guitar player. I love playing guitar. I play guitar — I don't know — three or four hours a day, and I always include an hour before I go to bed. It's just a discipline I've adapted, which I'm very happy about because I'm not a very disciplined person. [*Laughs*] I've really come to love playing guitar more than ever. Then, working on this project to where I'm feeling a little more comfortable, I'm not in the shadow so much of Rush. I mean... I'm so proud of what I did in Rush and all that we did, but at the end of it, I'm still that guy who likes to play in a band. It doesn't matter what form, just as long as I love it and I respond to the ideas — and there are great ideas among the four of us.

**As someone who isn't so disciplined, and after being a working musician for more than 50 years, it's incredible to hear that you're still playing for hours a day. What keeps you inspired?**
After Rush finished in 2015, I really didn't play much. I did a little bit afterward, but honestly, I really didn't play for months. It wasn't until Andy reached out to be in 2016, saying, "I'm working on some music. Would you mind putting some guitars down?" that I started to play more. I did that for him, and it wasn't particularly tight, but it gave him an idea, a sketch, of what a guitar sounded like with the songs he was writing. That was that. But he came back later and said, "I've got a couple of other songs. Would you mind doing the same thing?" Then, Envy of None started to happen. And Neil [*Peart*] was sick; I wasn't inspired to play very much when Neil was sick. I noodled a bit because I didn't want my fingers to go completely rubbery, but my heart wasn't in it with my brother being ill in that way.

**Did Neil's passing and, of course, mourning him help you move forward?**
When he passed, it was like, "I gotta move forward." That was part of the whole grief process for me. Usually, grief lasts for a solid year, and then, I say to myself, "Okay, you've got to move forward. You can't change the past." It was around that time that I really dove back into playing much more regularly. In the last year, I've adapted this more manic playing, where I'm playing for hours every day — and I love it.

**Was it a challenge to get back into proper playing shape?**
Well, my fingers feel better! I'm 71; I'm not going to play like I did when I was 21 — or 51, for that matter. [*Laughs*] But I've found that my fingers are coming back; they're grateful to me for doing this and getting them back into shape. It's a long road when you're at this age and battling the things that come with advanced years, but my fingers feel so much better than they did six months ago. I feel so much more confident

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

in my playing. I feel confident. I feel happy. I feel reborn in terms of playing. It's a good place for me right now.

**Can you describe the player you are today? We know what you're capable of and what you've done, and with that, listeners have an expectation and perception of you. Who is Alex Lifeson the guitarist in 2025?**
I know where I came from, and I know what I was like as a player for the bulk of my main career. Now, I'm more of a sensitive player. I don't have the same kind of expectations. I've never been very confident, to be honest with you, as a player. I've always felt like I had to work hard, and maybe I didn't appreciate that I have a natural talent for playing guitar.

**Given the breadth of your catalog, it's hard to believe you lacked confidence.**
I always felt like I had to work really hard if I wanted to be good at it. I kind of discounted my natural ability, and I'm more aware of that now. I find that when I'm doing takes, I've always been an early-take guy. My best work is in the first five or six takes, particularly the solos. But I'm finding now that the first couple of takes are really satisfying.

**Having more confidence has to help with the age-related roadblocks you mentioned.**
My playing has changed quite a bit. I don't think I'm as dexterous; I don't think I have the precision and speed I had, but that's coming. The more I play, the more creative I feel in how I envision the part I'm trying to do and with the part I'm writing. That's why I'm getting results quicker these days.

**Are there any updates to your stable of signature gear?**
Yeah — we had the [*Lerxst*] Limelight come out, the Grace, and now we have the Freewill, which is the original modified Strat I had in 1979. So, that's the black version of all these three guitars. That's coming out next. And Epiphone has a few things they want to release; they'd like to do a reissue of the ES-335, and Gibson wants to do an acoustic and some other things. On the pedal front, we have the [*Lerxst*] By-Tor and the Snowdog. We're working on a chorus and probably a delay. I have some ideas about an amp pedal, you know, incorporating what we do with the Lerxst amps but in a smaller enclosure. So yeah... there's always something in the world of gear. I've always been a gearhead!

**Do you mostly lean on your new gear when recording, or do you use a lot of your tried-and-true gear from your Rush days?**
There are definitely go-to's that I prioritize, but I also just like grabbing something that I don't think is the "right" thing and seeing how that works. Like, I have the first guitar I ever owned, which my parents bought for me in 1967 for $57. It's just a cheap Japanese guitar that I had refinished. I pull it up for some things; it's kind of like a Jack White sensibility, like, "I'll take this crappy guitar and see what happens." So far, I haven't had much success, to be honest. [*Laughs*] But you get what I'm saying. Sometimes, I'll go for a P90; I'm not normally inclined in that way with guitars, but now I realize that tonality is what it's all about. I create different tones.

"There's always something in the world of gear," Lifeson says, including the Lerxst Limelight guitar [*left*] and Lerxst By-Tor overdrive and boost pedal

**Is there one guitar or amp you favor?**
I'd probably say my ES-335, the Lerxst guitars and a couple of my Teles. And then, on the amp front, I've got a bunch of them. I've got a Marshall, my Lerxst amps, Bogner, a Mesa Boogie Mark V and — like I said — I have an enclosure built with a single Celestion 12. Then I've got my Universal Audio compressors and about a dozen good acoustics. I've been collecting gear for 50 years, so I've got a good arsenal of gear here in my apartment. I'm covered.

**On the Rush side of things, there's a new box set, *Rush 50*. What's the story there?**
We [*Alex and Geddy*] don't get involved too much in how that's all put together. Everybody knows what we want to do, and we have good people who know what we want to create. And the record company, Anthem, has been amazing. They don't have to get our approval; they can just go ahead and do all this stuff. But they always ask us. They want to make sure we're happy and satisfied with everything. So we do engage, and we do change things up, and we do get clarification on stuff and all of that. But this particular package is pretty remarkable. It's a beautiful package with great, great stuff in it. I'm really looking forward to its release.

**Has your newfound comfortability and growing confidence in Envy of None as a functioning band given you the license to put to bed the hope that you and Geddy will work together again? Is that officially in your rearview mirror?**
Well, you know, "in the rearview mirror" is maybe a little harder than... I would say I'm so proud of my past and all of that. But I like playing. I like writing. I like working with people. Geddy is my best friend. I talk to him every day, you know?

**Does that mean Envy of None has a long-term future?**
We're likely going to start the third record the day after this one releases. So I'm in a good space. I'm working on another project for a documentary on the Great Lakes with some brilliant musicians. That's really a lot of fun, but there's no hard deadline, so we're moving slowly but in a really good direction. And I'm working with another female artist; I always pick up little gigs here and guest on other people's albums. I'm a working musician. GW

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45 YEARS OF BACK IN BLACK

# Black to the Future

The death of AC/DC frontman Bon Scott in February 1980 looked like it might've also dealt a fatal blow to the band. But then they got a new singer and made a career-rejuvenating record that became the biggest-selling rock album of all time — *Back in Black*

***By Paul Elliott***

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

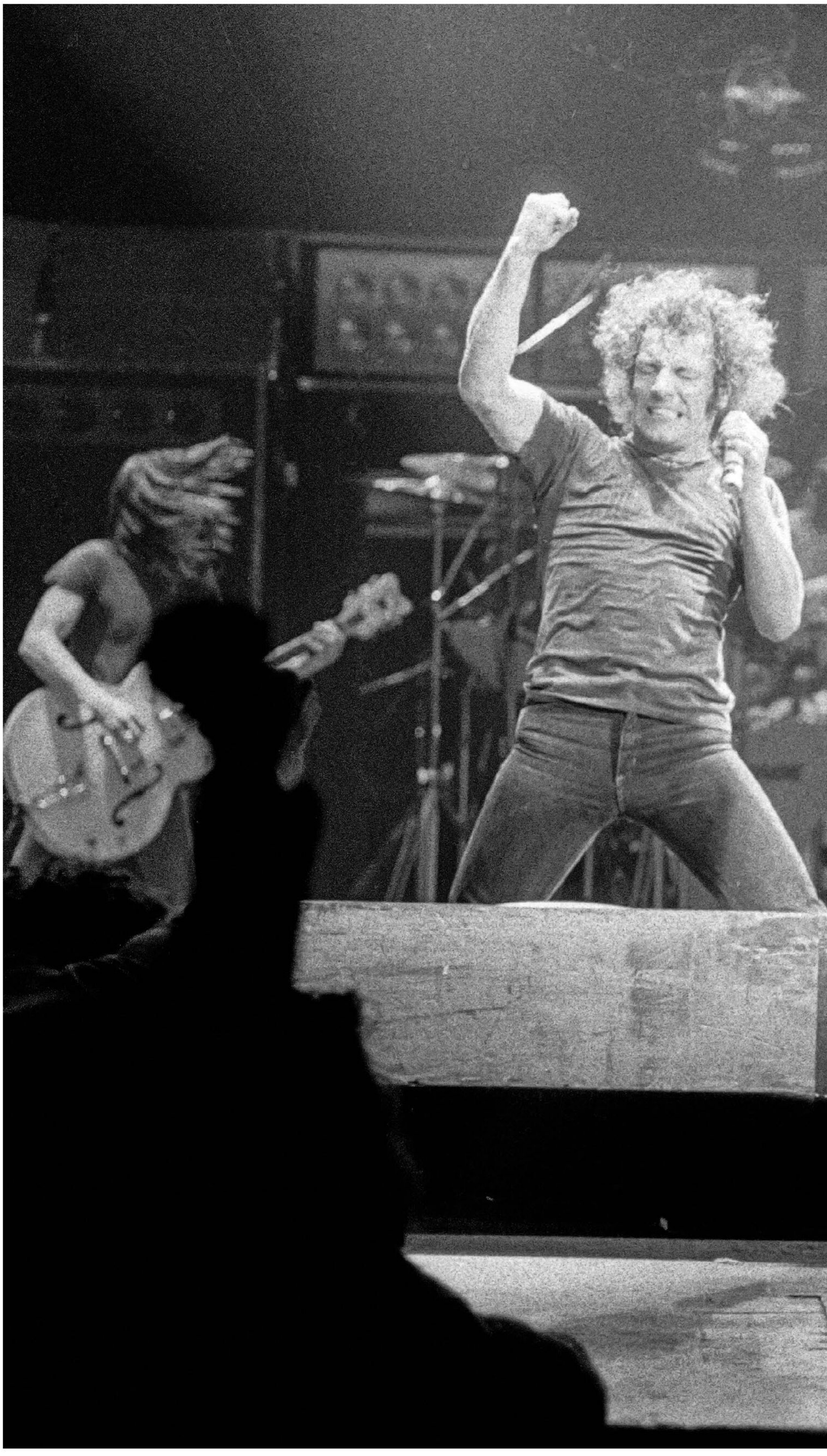
**FOR ANGUS YOUNG,** the pre-show ritual was the same as it had always been. In the dressing room backstage at the Palais des Expositions in the Belgian city of Namur, AC/DC's lead guitarist changed out of jeans and T-shirt and put on his schoolboy uniform, went for a piss and had one last cigarette to take the edge off his nerves. But this was no ordinary gig. On this evening, June 29, 1980, AC/DC were about to perform in public for the first time with their new singer, Brian Johnson. And in the last few minutes before going on stage, as Angus looked around the room, he could see the tension in Johnson's face. "He was shitting himself," Angus said.

Johnson had big shoes to fill. The man he'd replaced, Bon Scott, had been a great rock 'n' roll singer and charismatic frontman, a free-spirited hellraiser whose easy charm earned him the epithet "Bon the Likeable." Following Bon's death in February that year, the band had pushed on with Johnson to make the album *Back in Black*, of which Angus later said, "When I first heard it in all its glory, I thought: 'Fuck, it's magic!'"

But on that warm summer evening in Namur, with the release of the album still a few weeks away, Johnson was a worried man as he waited for showtime, wondering how AC/DC fans would react to him, especially when he was singing the old songs, Bon's words. It was only when he got on stage and looked out into the audience that he realized how much those fans were rooting for him. In the audience he saw a banner raised aloft, on which it was written, "R.I.P. Bon Scott. Good Luck Brian." "That," he recalled, "just lifted me."

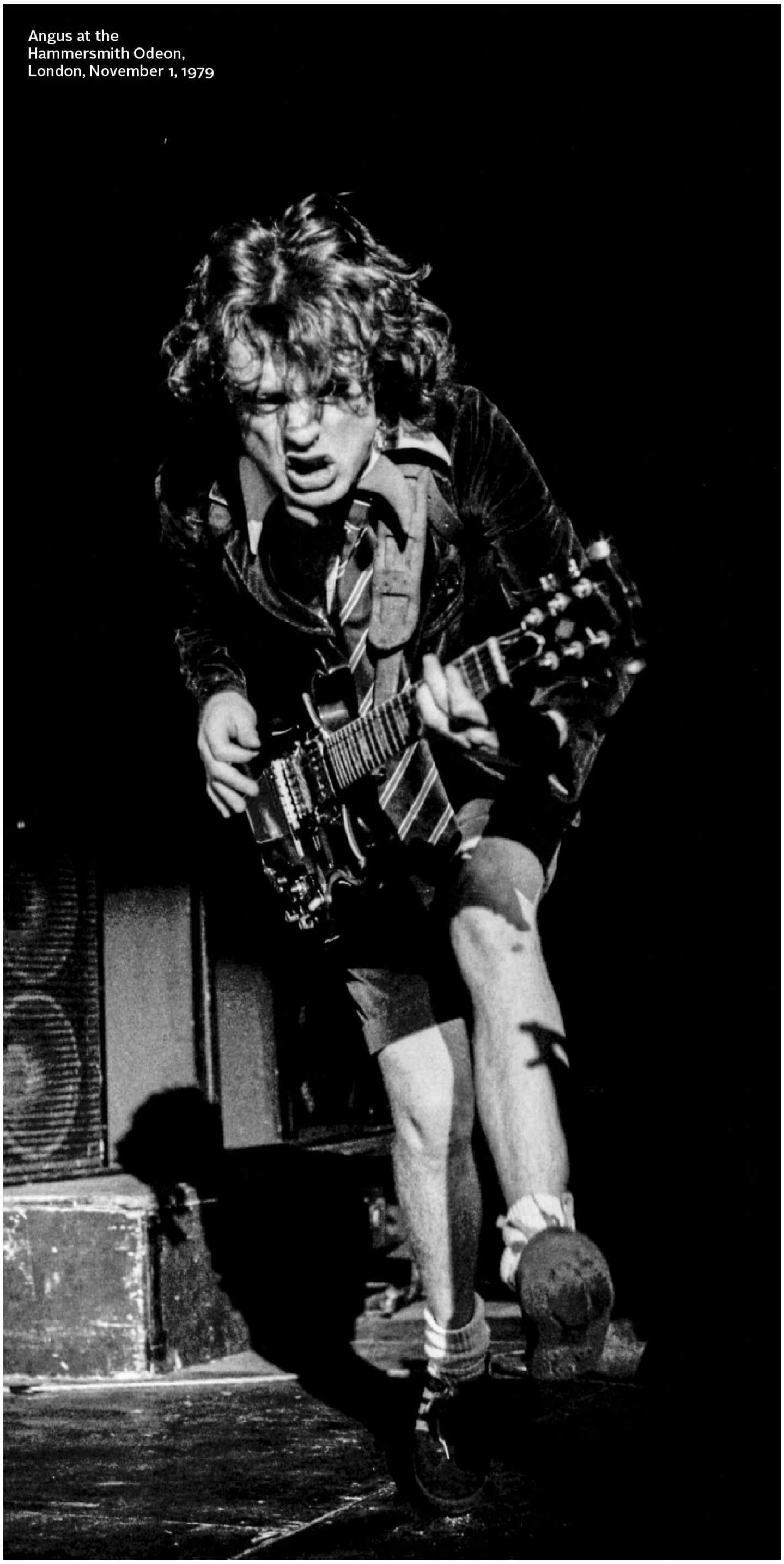
There were moments during the show when all of that anxiety and adrenalin got the better of him. "It was a very traumatic night," he said. "I was so nervous." Halfway into the set, he had a brain-freeze and sang the same lyrics to two songs. "I thought, 'Oh God, what have I done?'" For that he received a bollocking from rhythm guitarist Malcolm Young, Angus' elder brother. "Malcolm looked at me and went: 'What the fuck was that?'"

It was a baptism of fire, but Johnson got through it. He won the respect of that audience by singing his balls off and by being his own man. The flat cap he wore was a sign of his working-class roots in the North East of England, and his on-stage demeanour was different to Bon's; Johnson was a cajoling, fist-shaking rabble-rouser, but without the macho swagger that Scott had, or the glint of craziness that was always in his eyes. Johnson also knew



AC/DC somewhere in Europe in 1980 during the *Back in Black* tour; [*from left*] Malcolm Young, Brian Johnson, Phil Rudd, Angus Young and Cliff Williams

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Angus at the Hammersmith Odeon, London, November 1, 1979

DAVID CORIO/GETTY IMAGES

from the start how the band worked on stage, ceding the centre ground for Angus to run amok.

That night, AC/DC performed seven songs from *Back in Black*, beginning with album opener "Hells Bells." The set ended with "Let There Be Rock" — significantly, the last song Bon ever sang on stage, just five months earlier, at Southampton Gaumont on January 27, 1980.

Johnson later said of the Namur show, "We had enough spirit to cover up any mistakes." On a deeper level, there was also a feeling within the band that they had a spirit watching over them. As Angus said in the first days after their new singer had joined them: "We still think Bon's around."

**BON SCOTT HAD** known, in his last days, that AC/DC were on to something big. Their 1979 album, *Highway to Hell*, was the band's first million-seller, and in the early days of January 1980, when work began on new songs in London, he was buzzing. These new songs were demoed by Angus and Malcolm, with Bon playing drums, as he had done in his first groups back in Australia, and he was convinced that they had the makings of an album that would be even bigger than *Highway to Hell*. In a phone call to his mother Isa in Australia, he had told her, "This one is going to be it!"

It was only a few days after that call — on February 19, 1980 — that Bon was found dead in East Dulwich, London. He had been out drinking with friends the previous night. Rumors suggested that he might also have taken heroin. In the official inquest, the coroner's report cited "death by misadventure." Bon was just 33.

It was at Bon's funeral, in his home town of Fremantle in western Australia, that his father Chick urged Malcolm and Angus to carry on with the band. On April 1, Johnson, then 32, formerly of glam rock band Geordie, was announced as AC/DC's new singer.

The place where the band created their comeback album was far removed from the cold and gray of London and the bad vibes around Bon's death. Nassau, on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, was a tropical paradise. As Johnson would tell *Record Mirror*, "Actually it's quite difficult recording in the Bahamas. All you want to do is lounge on the beach. And you can't get a decent pint of beer." He added, with tongue in cheek, "Somehow we managed."

What drew the band to Nassau was the calibre of Compass Point Studios, a world-class facility that had been established by the founder of Island Records, Chris Blackwell. According to Tony Platt,

AC/DC in 1977, during the Bon Scott era; [*from left*], Phil Rudd, Angus Young, Mark Evans, Malcolm Young and Bon Scott

the engineer working on the album alongside producer Robert "Mutt" Lange, it was also beneficial for the band to be in such a remote location, away from all the distractions of London or Sydney. "That helped to bring everyone together," Platt said.

In the tracks laid down in Nassau, there was something different from previous AC/DC albums, and not only because they had a new singer. While the music was anything but subtle, the change in it was. While the essence of AC/DC — the hard riffing, the heavy grooves — remained intact, the tone had shifted a little. It was rock 'n' roll, but with more of a heavy metal edge. And what Mutt Lange had begun with the band on *Highway to Hell* — adding a touch of sheen, while retaining maximum power — was brought into full effect. The sound was huge, and at the highest end of it was Johnson's voice, pushed to its limit.

Some of those tracks were as simple as they come: shoot-from-the-hip numbers such as "Have a Drink on Me," "What Do You Do for Money Honey," "Given the Dog a Bone" and the frantic "Shake a Leg."

Elsewhere, a little more sophistication came into play: the title track, with its ticking-time-bomb intro and twisting riffs, the slow-burning "Let Me Put My Love Into You," and "Shoot to Thrill" with its funky breakdown. "You Shook Me All Night Long" was a rock 'n' roll song made for radio, with its ringing intro, hooky riff, walloping groove and shout-it-out-loud chorus. And in "Hells Bells" there was an epic feel, a sense of gravitas AC/DC had never had before, with its tolling bell leading into a slow, mighty riff that was described as "ominous" by Malcolm and "mystical" by Angus.

As Angus confirmed in a 1991 interview, some lyrics written by Bon were used in the new songs. In other songs there were echoes of his spirit and sense of humor. Just as Bon had poked fun at religion in "Let There Be Rock" and "Highway to Hell," so Brian delivered a Christian-baiting one-liner in "Hells Bells": "If good's on the left, then I'm sticking to the right!" In a similar vein, the bluesy boogie "Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" — the last track recorded for the album, written on the spot in around 15 minutes — had an intro in which Brian did what he called "this Southern preacher thing," just talking off the top of his head and hailing with missionary fervor the life-affirming power of rock 'n' roll.

**"The whole album was our dedication to Bon Scott — that's why the cover was pure black"**
**ANGUS YOUNG**

With the album completed in six weeks, they knew what they had was dynamite. Atlantic Records knew it, too. The only problem, as the label saw it, was the band's idea for the album cover — all black, with the AC/DC logo and album title the only detail. It was suggested by Atlantic that this would not be good for business. But the band would not yield. As Angus put it: "The whole *Back in Black* album was our dedication to Bon. That's why the album cover was pure black, and why the album starts with a bell ringing, something sombre and different to anything else we'd done."

**IN THE FIRST** days of the *Back in Black* tour, with Namur the first of six low-key warm-up gigs in Belgium and Holland, there was another memorable moment for Johnson. He met a Dutch fan with a tattoo of Bon Scott on his arm. "Bon was my hero," the fan said. "But now [*that*] he's gone,

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

I wish you all the luck in the world." Johnson later recalled the profound effect those words had on him. "I just stood there shaking," he said.

The band were in Canada, in the first week of a North American tour, when *Back in Black* was released there on July 25, 1980. For one British writer who reviewed the album, there were mixed emotions. Phil Sutcliffe had been a supporter of AC/DC since 1976, and had a great affection for the guys in the band, Bon in particular. In his review for *Sounds*, Sutcliffe awarded *Back in Black* four out of five stars, but stated in memory of Bon: "The ecstasy with which I expect to greet a new AC/DC album just wasn't possible this time." Moreover, he dismissed Brian Johnson as a "copy" of Bon. For all that, Sutcliffe concluded: "*Back in Black* remains a genuine, excellent AC/DC album."

**FUN FACT!**

The Beastie Boys sampled "Back in Black" for their 1984 song "Rock Hard." They sought AC/DC's permission after the fact, but permission was denied, based on AC/DC's anti-sampling policy.

Two other leading critics had no such reservations. *Rolling Stone*'s David Fricke declared the album a masterpiece and a milestone in rock. "*Back in Black* is not only the best of AC/DC's six American albums," he wrote. "It's the apex of heavy metal art: the first LP since *Led Zeppelin II* that captures all the blood, sweat and arrogance of the genre. In other words, *Back in Black* kicks like a mutha." In *Record Mirror*'s review — headlined: 'POWER IS RESTORED' — Robin Smith wrote: "The resurrection shuffle starts here. Brian was the perfect choice, possessing an almost uncanny feel for the band's songs."

In Smith's feature on AC/DC in the July 26 edition of *Record Mirror*, Johnson said: "Bon is still around and watching. At night in my hotel room I had proof that he was there in some form. I know that he approves of what the new lineup is trying to do. He didn't want the band to split up or to go into a long period of mourning. He wanted us to build on the spirit he left behind."

In that interview, Johnson opened up to a remarkable degree, expressing his sorrow over Bon's death. "It's strange how rock music breeds ecstasy and tragedy," he said. "You build up that great feeling every night when you go on stage, and then suddenly death strikes in the strangest form. The truth of the matter was that Bon died because he vomited when his neck was twisted, and he choked. That poor boy was loved by thousands of people worldwide." He also spoke with great humility about his role in the band. "I hope I've been accepted by AC/DC fans," he said. "They want the band to go on as well. Certainly I've had no letters or phone calls saying 'get out.'"

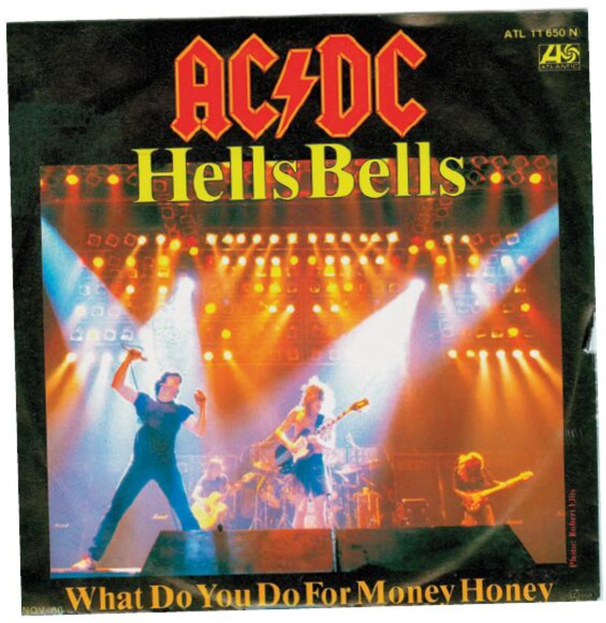
On August 1, at the Palladium in New York City, AC/DC's support act, for one

# How the "Bells" Tolled

## A quick guide to Angus Young's *Back in Black*-era gear, as heard on "Hells Bells"

**IT'S WELL-DOCUMENTED** that Angus Young is a no-nonsense player who prefers the sound of just a guitar and amp with no other effects. But there's much more to Angus' tone than just his timeless Gibson SG Standard and Marshall amp rig. In the studio — particularly when recording *Back in Black* — Young used a variety of different Marshall amp heads to narrow down the perfect individual guitar tones for each song. Some of his favorite recording amps for *Back in Black* included various plexi Super Lead 100-watt heads when he needed crisp treble and crunchy overdrive, various 50-watt Marshalls for solos and Marshall 2203 JMP 100-watt master volume heads for when he wanted darker tones with fatter midrange and more saturated distortion.

Unfortunately, Angus didn't keep detailed records of what amps he used on which *Back in Black* songs, but his tone on "Hells Bells" has the unmistakable midrange growl and thick saturated grit of a Marshall 2203. Angus recorded his primary rhythm track (panned hard right) using just his favorite 1970 Gibson SG Standard and a Marshall 2203 half stack (the amp can be heard bleeding into the mics used to record Malcolm's amp, which is panned to the left channel), but when recording overdubs for his center-channel rhythm guitar track and solo he also employed his secret weapon — a Schaffer-Vega Diversity System wireless transmitter and receiver.




Angus used the Schaffer partly because it allowed him to play in the control room and hear his performance over the monitors. More importantly, the Schaffer system's circuitry provides more than 30dB of clean boost along with compression and expansion (a.k.a. companding) to deliver richer harmonic content, more dynamic touch sensitivity and fuller body while maintaining percussive attack and the raw metallic crunch of the strings. The Schaffer essentially took what was good about Angus' Marshall tones and made them great, which explains why many guitarists who plug into SG and Marshall rigs in search of his sound fail to truly replicate his elusive magic.

If you're looking to bring some of that Schaffer-Vega magic into your life, check out the SoloDallas Storm pedal. It's an exact replica of the Schaffer-Vega's boost and companding circuitry; nothing gets you closer to Angus' signature tones from AC/DC's classic recordings. For more SoloDallas fun, check out our review of the company's SVDS Boost pedal in the June 2025 issue of *GW*. — ***Chris Gill***

VINYLS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, SOLODALLAS

### Angus Young's original gear

**GUITAR:** 1970 Gibson SG Standard with stock Gibson "T-Top" humbucking pickups (bridge pickup setting), Volume: 10, Tone: 10
**AMP:** Late-Seventies Marshall 2203 JMP 100-watt head (Presence: 0, Bass: 5, Middle: 6, Treble: 5, Master Volume: 5, Preamp Volume: 6, High Sensitivity input), Marshall 4x12 cabinet loaded with Celestion G12M greenback speakers
**EFFECTS:** Schaffer-Vega Diversity Wireless
**STRINGS/TUNING:** Gibson Ultra Lights — .009, .011, .016, .024, .032, .042/Standard
**PICK:** Fender Extra Heavy

night only, was Def Leppard, whose singer Joe Elliott was celebrating his 21st birthday. The young British band, then promoting their debut album, *On Through the Night*, had opened for AC/DC a year earlier on the *Highway to Hell* tour. They also shared a manager with AC/DC, Peter Mensch, and as a result they had been among the first people, outside of AC/DC's inner circle, to hear *Back in Black*. Joe Elliott recalled in 2020: "Mensch came on our tour bus with a cassette of the album, and when we heard 'Hells Bells' we all sat there going, 'Holy crap!' It was almost *too* fucking good."

When Elliott met Johnson for the first time, in a hotel lobby ahead of the New York show, the conversation they had seemed a little weird to Joe.

"Brian was a seasoned veteran," he said. "Geordie had a few hits in the early Seventies, and after that he'd done years in clubs in the North East. But this was one of his first gigs in the States, and I'd already done a ton of gigs out there. So he took me to one side and said, 'What the hell am I supposed to do?' I was just a kid, still learning my craft, but I told him, 'Just be yourself, man. It's all you can do.'"

That night, when Elliott watched AC/DC's performance from the side of the stage, he still had his doubts as to whether Johnson could pull this off. "What they had with Bon Scott was this cocky mother-fucker, bare chest, all attitude. And then you've got the guy who looks like fucking Andy Capp singing for them! My initial impression was, 'Hmm, not sure about this. But as it turned out, Brian was perfect for that band, and maybe the only guy who could have done it. He had the voice for it. And that record — it was just amazing."

*Back in Black* was an immediate hit. Within two weeks of its release, it was at Number 1 in the U.K. The first single from it, "You Shook Me All Night Long," made the Top 40 in the U.K. and U.S. and the Top 10 in Australia. By early October, when the band finished touring in North America, the album was certified platinum in the U.S. as it began an incredible 13-month residency in the *Billboard* Top 10.

It had been a punishing schedule in North America — 64 shows in three months — and there was no let-up.

On October 19, just eight days after the final U.S. date, the band's U.K. tour kicked off at the Colston Hall in Bristol. Such was the demand for AC/DC that this tour included six sold-out shows in London: three at Hammersmith Odeon and three at the Apollo Victoria Theatre. At this time, the single "Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" gave AC/DC their biggest U.K. hit to date, reaching Number 15. And in America it was reported that the album was selling 10 thousand copies a day.

Angus does his thing at the Rosemont Horizon in Chicago, September 20, 1980

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

It was on December 4, when AC/DC played in Essen, Germany, that the demise of the biggest rock band in the world was confirmed. The death of Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham on September 25, 1980, had come seven months after that of Bon Scott, and in similar circumstances. Bonham was a heavy drinker and died in his sleep at the home of Jimmy Page following rehearsals for a U.S. tour. The official inquest revealed that Bonham had vomited and choked to death after consuming approximately 40 shots of alcohol within 24 hours. At the age of 32, Bonham was a year younger than Bon had been. For Zeppelin there was no way back. A band statement read: "We wish it to be known that the loss of our dear friend, and the deep sense of undivided harmony felt by ourselves and our manager, have led us to decide that we could not continue as we were."

**"When we heard 'Hells Bells' we all said, 'Holy crap!' It was almost *too* good"**
**JOE ELLIOTT**

In contrast, AC/DC had overcome the death of Bon Scott to become bigger than ever. And after the last European dates, and four more in Japan in early February, came the last and most significant shows of the *Back in Black* tour, as AC/DC returned to the place where it all began.

A parting shot of Angus, on stage somewhere in Europe in November 1980

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

The band arrived in Australia to lurid headlines in the newspapers. What Johnson had said earlier in the year — how he had felt Bon was watching over him — was translated into classic tabloid sensationalism. As Malcolm said in 2003, "When we went back to Australia with Brian the first time, the headline in the paper was: 'Brian Speaks to Bon!' They were just looking for a big sell on the front page. He had a hell of a time living it down." Even so, for the band this was a familiar story. As Angus said: "When Brian first joined us, there were lots of guys turning up saying they'd contacted Bon on ouija boards."

In an emotional and triumphant homecoming, AC/DC performed seven shows in Australia, and at the third date in Sydney on February 23 there was a moment that Brian Johnson would remember for the rest of his life. Bon's mother Isa was a guest at the show, and afterwards she said to Brian: "Our Bon would have been proud of you, son." For Brian, there could be no greater validation.

The tour ended with two shows at the Sidney Meyer Music Bowl in Melbourne on February 27 and 28. The last of those shows came a year and one day since the last gig with Bon. By this time, *Back in Black* had sold more than three million copies in the U.S. alone.

**THE RESURRECTION OF** AC/DC with *Back in Black* was arguably the greatest comeback in the entire history of rock 'n' roll. Out of their darkest hour had come a heroic victory.

Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash was just 15 when *Back in Black* was released. Many years later, he recalled the impact that record had on him, and spoke of it as a triumph not just for Brian Johnson and AC/DC, but also for rock music, period.

"*Back in Black* saved rock 'n' roll," Slash said. "It was the defining rock record of that time, and it just exploded! AC/DC was always a great band, totally genuine. But the miracle of the whole thing was that *Back in Black* was just a great new record, it was still AC/DC. We all missed Bon, but we let him go and at the same time welcomed and embraced Brian."

**"*Back in Black* saved rock 'n' roll. It was the defining record of that time; it just exploded!"**

**SLASH**

The key songs from *Back in Black* — the title song (which Jerry Cantrell once called "the ultimate rock song"), "Hells Bells," "Shoot to Thrill" and "You Shook Me All Night Long" — have remained in AC/DC's live set for decades. Most remarkable of all is the sheer scale of this album's success. *Back in Black* is not only the biggest-selling rock album there has ever been — bigger than anything by Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones or even the Beatles — with more than 50 million copies sold it's also the second-biggest-selling album of all time, after Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

In the making of *Back in Black*, their tribute to Bon, as Angus Young called it, AC/DC dug deep. As Malcolm Young once said, "The emotion in that album, it will be around forever."

For Joe Elliott, and millions of others who feel the same way, what AC/DC achieved on *Back in Black* was perfection. "That record sounds as good now as it did the day it was released," Elliott said. "It's timeless, and very few records are like that — the first Montrose album, the first Van Halen album, the first Boston album. AC/DC was always about full-on rock 'n' roll, based on the blues and Chuck Berry. But with *Back in Black* they blew everybody else out of the water. It's one of the greatest rock albums ever made." GW

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# Solid Gold

## In 1965, Eric Clapton and Michael Bloomfield unwittingly saved the archetypal Les Paul Standard from total extinction. The market was the would-be killer, but the murder weapon was the guitar you see before you. Join us as we chart the rise — and rise — of the Gibson SG

***By Mick Taylor***

**YOU COULDN'T MAKE** it up. Take a trip to 1960, and sit at a table in Kalamazoo, Michigan. You work for Gibson and you're looking at — or at least talking about — what will turn out to be the Holy Grail of electric guitars, the 1958-1960 sunburst Les Paul Standard. Honduras mahogany, big leaf maple, Brazilian rosewood, PAF pickups — timeless, aching beauty.

But the financial picture for this guitar isn't so pretty. You revived it in 1957 with humbucking pickups, again in '58 with the sunburst finish. Sales peaked in 1959, but you've shipped fewer than 1,800 bursts in total. Your biggest-selling guitars are the lower-priced, slab-bodied Les Paul Junior and Melody Maker. What's more, you're doubling the size of your factory and you need to get it working to capacity. The next decision taken by your boss, Ted McCarty — with some help from Bloomfield and Clapton — ensures firstly that those original bursts will sell for a million dollars one day, and more importantly, it creates yet another legendary Gibson solidbody.

## SG Origins

**MCCARTY WAS GIBSON'S** president between 1950 and 1966 and was ultimately responsible for the most important electric guitar designs in the company's history. The SG's development was part of a wider restructure in the electric guitar line through the late 1950s and early 1960s. With hindsight, the decision to radically morph the Les Paul Standard into what we now know as the SG might look like madness. At the time, and in the context of what was happening in the market, however, it was the obvious move. Gibson's legacy of high-craft, archtop instruments was getting new electric life via the hollowbody ES-175 and revolutionary ES-335 thinline semi of 1958. Meanwhile the trend for more modern-minded, feedback-busting solidbody electrics for younger rock 'n' roll players got a shot in the arm with the Flying V and Explorer of the same year — well ahead of their time and selling poorly as a result. Less radical but just as important, in 1958 came Gibson's first double-cutaway solidbody, the Les Paul Junior, which would prove pivotal in the SG's genesis.

For 1961, then, McCarty took the single-cutaway Les Paul Standard's 60mm thick body and slimmed it considerably, did away with the carved maple top and left a simple slab mahogany body already popularised by the Junior and Melody Maker. The shape was resculpted to a more aggressive, modernist outline, offering twin-cutaways and unrestricted access to the very last of its 22 frets. With the chunk of wood gone between the 16th and 21st/22nd frets on the bass side, the neck would also prove more unstable; "flappy" or "whippy" and very easy to bend in and out of tune, perhaps the SG's most notable idiosyncrasy, loved and loathed equally. Indeed, the neck itself was slimmer than the 1960 Les Paul model.

Retained from the previous models was most of the hardware and electronics complement — the first models shipped with the distinctly odd, sideways action "Gibson Deluxe Vibrato" — and the overall effect on tone was a brighter, harder-edged sound with less apparent low end response. It was certainly different — evidence, assuming more were needed, that McCarty was moving forward fearlessly.

**"A guy could kill himself on those sharp horns. It was too thin, and they had moved the front pickup away from the fingerboard so they could fit my name there. The neck was too skinny... So I called Gibson and asked them to take my name off the thing. It wasn't my design"**

**LES PAUL, FROM *AMERICAN GUITARS: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY***

## Losing Les

**LES PAUL, BY** all accounts, wasn't enamoured with his new signature guitar. As Tony Bacon explains in his book *50 Years of the Gibson Les Paul*, and indeed Walter Carter in *The Gibson Electric Guitar Book* (both Backbeat Books), the superstar's contract with Gibson was up for renewal in 1962 or 1963, depending on who's telling the story. Waning popularity in the charts, Les's impending divorce with Mary Ford and his general dissatisfaction with the new design meant that by 1963 the contract hadn't been renewed and Paul, almost unthinkably in hindsight, was no longer officially associated with the Gibson company. As it turned out, he wouldn't be again until 1968 when Gibson reintroduced the original Les Paul shape, having realized that a handful of world-changing players were lusting after those old bursts. The new guitar, meanwhile, became the SG — Solid Guitar — and so it would remain for ever more.

Over the years, the SG has been subject to plenty of revisions, changes and tweaks. Like Fender's celebrated Stratocaster, Telecaster and indeed the very guitar from which it was spawned, it has survived mid-Sixties stylistic tinkering, 1970s corporate meltdown and 1980s metal-driven excesses. What prevails in the hearts of most guitar enthusiasts is that '61-'63 classic spec; the Cherry Standard, Juniors and Specials and the white three-pickup Custom that we'll forever associate with a man named Jimi Hendrix.

## Happy Mistake

**NOW, NEARLY 65** years later, who could have guessed that such a potentially colossal mistake — evolving the super-plush single-cut Les Paul Standard into a stripped-down, twin-horn rocker — would net the most desirable electric guitar in history for Gibson, right alongside its rebellious, outlandish sibling? Exciting, visceral and thoroughly modern, players who saw it first couldn't help but be seduced by its sharp lines and unbridled playing potential. In the hands of Angus Young through Tony Iommi to Frank Zappa and beyond, the SG has come to hold a unique place, both tonally and visually, in rock 'n' roll history. Long live the Solid Guitar. May you never grow up!

**"With an SG, I can let out my visceral, animalistic side as a player. Honestly, that's difficult for me to attain with anything else... Seeing those British Invasion guys up there playing an SG made me want to be that guy. I knew it was what I wanted to do."**

**JAKE KISZKA, SEPTEMBER 2023 *GUITAR WORLD***

# The First SGs

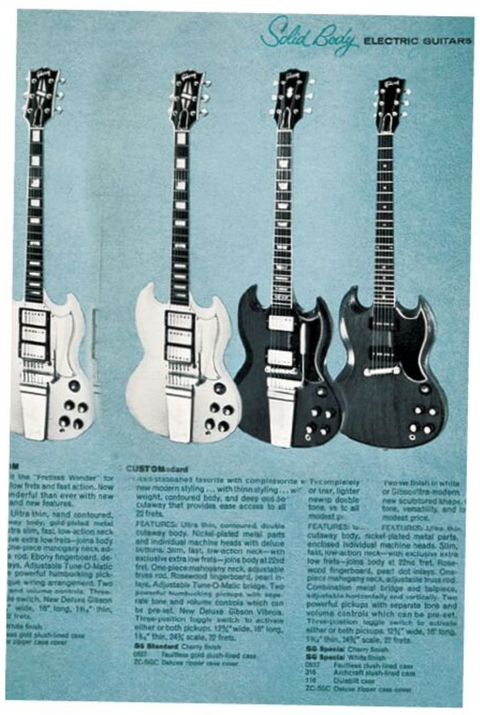
## The Standard, Custom and Junior models

**WHEN THE SG/LES** Paul first appeared in 1961, there were two models. The Standard ($265) had a pair of humbuckers, two controls per pickup, crown inlays in a bound rosewood 'board and sideways-action vibrato. The Custom ($395) was the top of the line, with gold hardware, three humbuckers, a bound ebony fingerboard and a bound headstock.

Later that year, the Junior ($147.50, single-pickup) and Special ($210, dual-pickup) were added, featuring a one-piece wraparound bridge/tailpiece and P90 pickups. They had unbound rosewood fingerboards with dot inlays.

Gibson tweaked the design over the years, most notably adding the enlarged pickguard on the Custom and Standard in 1966, which held the pickups, rather than them being mounted directly to the body.

***— Mick Taylor***



# Making the (Double) Cut

A handy guide to the 12 (or so) greatest players ever to make a Gibson SG sing

*By Mick Taylor with Joel McIver*

## Angus Young

**AC/DC'S LEAD GUITARIST** — yes indeed, the gentleman on this issue's cover — favors the Gibson SG for its light weight — useful for high-voltage guitar heroics — and also because his vintage SG Standard (with its Lyre vibrato removed) has an uncommonly thin neck. But regardless of the exact reasons behind it, Young is truly dedicated to the SG.

"The guitar I consistently use has always been the same guitar, the Gibson SG," Young told us in 2020, the last time we had a full-fledged chat. "Everyone always asks me what year [*the guitar*] is. You know, I've heard somebody say, 'It's a 1970s Gibson.' Then other people say, 'It's a bit earlier than that.' I don't know what year it is, but it couldn't have been [*from*] past 1970, because that's when I got it! [*Laughs*] And I've got a few other guitars. One is a black SG — I think there's a photo of it from *Back in Black*. I have another SG that's maybe a '68 or '69 that I used on *Highway to Hell*. But the main, most consistent one is the one I've always had. It's got lightning bolts on the fretboard that, I don't know, it was getting repaired and some guy put them in. I said, 'What the hell is that?' And I didn't have time to go, 'Can you put it back the way it was?'" [*Laughs*]

On stage, Young's sound is the archetypal roar of vintage pickups through Marshall stacks, without a pedal in sight. Angus in full flow remains one of the premier sonic experiences in all the classic rock kingdom, as proven by footage from any of their 2025 shows.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Shot in the Dark" (AC/DC, *Power Up*, 2020)

ROSS GILMORE/REDFERNS

# George Harrison

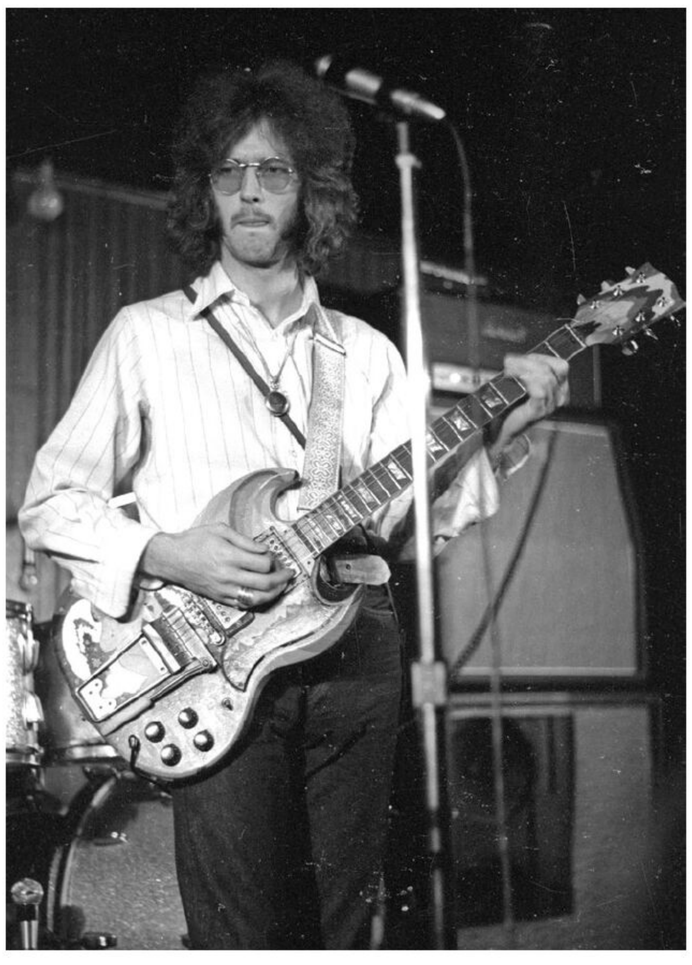
**IN 1966, AROUND** the same time John Lennon and George Harrison were following Paul McCartney's lead and adopting the Epiphone Casino, George also took delivery of a 1964 SG Standard [*pictured in 2004*]. It was his main guitar on *Revolver*, featured on some later recordings and was used sporadically for live work in 1966, before he gave it to Pete Ham of Badfinger circa 1969. Guitar-playing Beatles fans who want to recreate Harrison's circa-'66 mojo should check out one of Gibson's current offerings, the SG Standard '61 Faded Maestro Vibrola Vintage Cherry.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Hey Bulldog"
(The Beatles, *Yellow Submarine*, 1969)

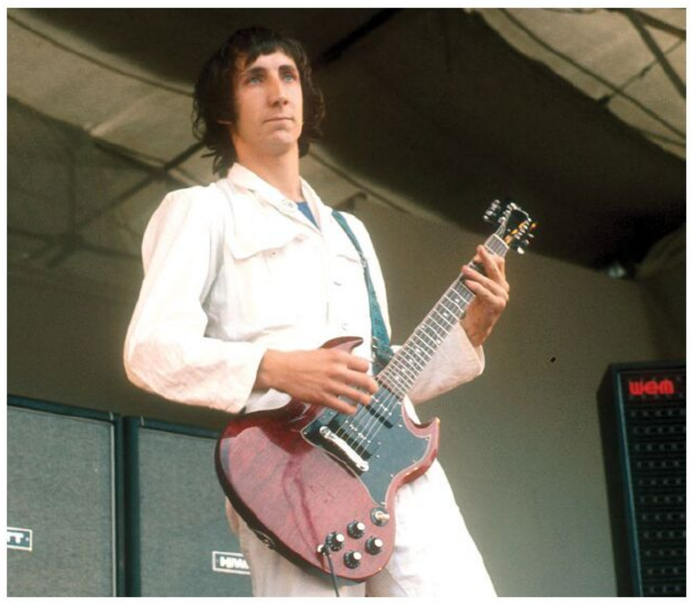
# Derek Trucks

**THE SLIDE SUPREMO** is synonymous with his 1961 Custom Reissue SG, which was built in 2000. He chose the model because when he was gigging at the tender age of nine, he found a Les Paul to be too heavy. "I also saw a picture of Duane Allman with an SG, and that look has always stuck with me," he told the gang over at Gibson's website.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Down Don't Bother Me"
(The Derek Trucks Band, *Already Free*, 2009)

# Eric Clapton

**DURING THE TRIUMPHANT** Cream era, between 1967 and the band's demise in late 1968, Clapton brandished and recorded with a 1964 SG Standard that was to become one of the most iconic guitars in history. Inspired by the work they'd done for the Beatles, Clapton commissioned Simon Posthuma and Marijke Koger, known as Dutch artist collective and band the Fool, to "psychedelicize" the SG prior to the band's 1967 U.S. tour. The following year, either Clapton or George Harrison loaned it to Apple Records recording artist Jackie Lomax, who sold it to Todd Rundgren in 1972 for a bargain $500. Rundgren renamed it "Sunny" and eventually auctioned it in 2000 for $150,000.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Sunshine of Your Love"
(Cream, *Disraeli Gears*, 1967)





# Pete Townshend

**THE WHO'S PETE** Townshend favored (in terms of smashing them to smithereens) Cherry SG Specials with P90s into enormous Hiwatt Custom 100 DR 103 amps between late 1968 and 1971 — the era that included the classic *Live at Leeds*, one of the greatest live albums of all time. He first played an SG Special live in July 1968 and bought his first one from Manny's Music on West 48th Street in New York City.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Young Man Blues"
(The Who, *Live at Leeds*, 1970)

# Sister Rosetta Tharpe

**PERFORMING FROM AGE** four onwards, "Little Rosetta Nubin, the singing and guitar playing miracle" was a gospel sensation. A conduit for jazz, blues and all the music she was exposed to during her showbiz upbringing, she became a huge star in the late 1930s. Her style was an influence on many of the pioneers of rock 'n' roll, and footage of her on Chicago's 1962 *TV Gospel Time* show proves why. Clutching an immaculate-looking Polar White 1961 Les Paul/SG Custom and peeling off dextrous picked bends and doublestops through a cranked Gibson GA-8 Discoverer amp, her performance is testament to an unearthly talent.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Up Above My Head"
(*TV Gospel Time* performance)

ALESSANDRO ABBONIZIO/GETTY IMAGES, JEFFREY MAYER/WIREIMAGE, KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE, MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES, TONY EVANS/TIMELAPSE LIBRARY LTD.

# Robby Krieger

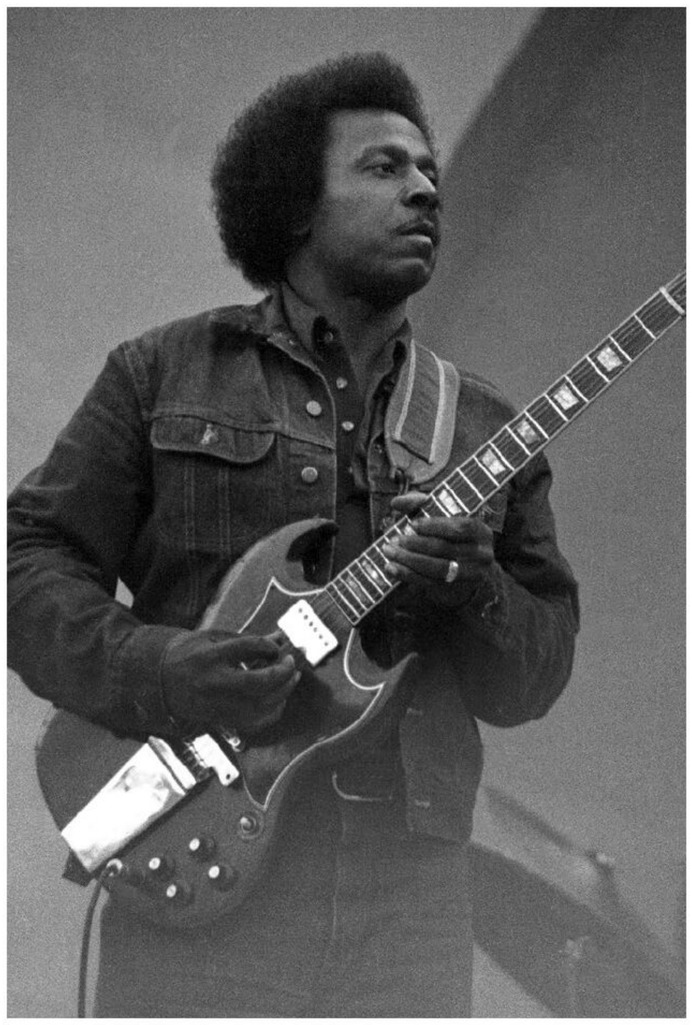
**IF YOU HAVEN'T** heard them in a while, listen to the Doors — who are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year — and pay attention to Robby Krieger's sinuous blending of diverse blues, jazz, rock, exotic flamenco and Indian styles. Also notice his unusual fingerpicking-only technique; and, of course, the fluid tones he wrangled from his 1964 SG Special with P90s, mostly through Fender Twins.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Peace Frog" (The Doors, *Morrison Hotel*, 1970 — transcribed in this issue)

# Frank Marino

**THE MAHOGANY RUSH** main man is a true "guitarist's guitar player" who is rarely afforded the respect his powerful tone and superb Hendrix-influenced lead playing deserve. He's been widely renowned for tonehound tendencies, modding amps and pedals (which he also builds over at Frank Marino Audio) and sporting gargantuan pedalboards — but his beloved 1961 Les Paul SG has always been the essential link in the signal chain.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "Land of 1,000 Nights" (Mahogany Rush, *Strange Universe*, 1975)

# Lonnie Brooks

**THE LATE BLUES** maestro Lee Baker Jr. didn't nickname himself "Guitar Jr." for nothing. A 30-year solo artist under his other stage name, Lonnie Brooks, he combined Chicago and Louisiana blues with R&B, wielding a chestnut-brown SG (among other models over the decades) to create a slick, energetic sound that his devotees labeled "voodoo blues." He found success in Europe as well as with domestic audiences; a career high point came when he jammed with Eric Clapton in Chicago in 1993. Brooks also co-wrote the *Blues for Dummies* book in 1998 and appeared in films such as *Blues Brothers 2000*. In his later years, he played a truly sumptuous white Custom Shop SG with gold hardware.
**HEAR IT HERE:** "TV Mama" (Lonnie Brooks, *Turn On the Night*, 1981)

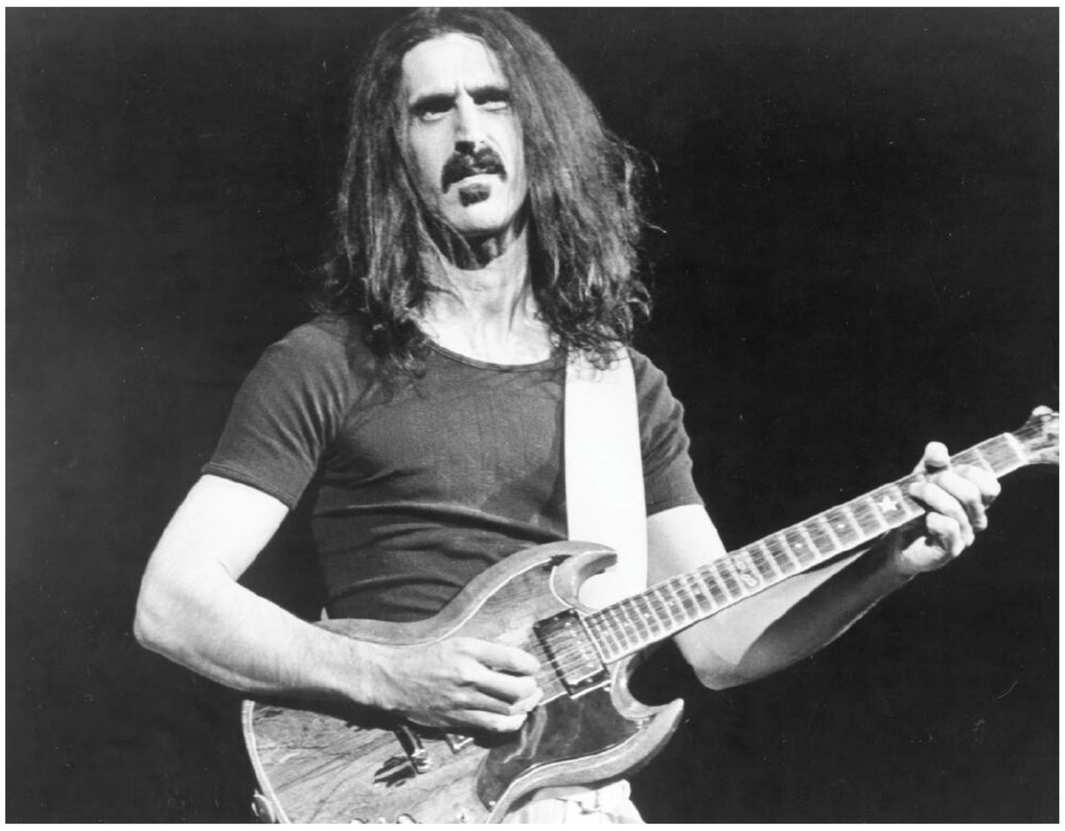


CHELSEA LAUREN/WIREIMAGE, GUS STEWART/REDFERNS, AL PEREIRA/GETTY IMAGES,

# Tony Iommi

**SG SIGNATURE ARTIST** Tony Iommi's red 1965 SG Special with P90s, named "Monkey," was drafted in as a replacement for his Strat, which developed a faulty neck pickup during the recording sessions for Black Sabbath's eponymous debut. He replaced the pickups with lower-powered specimens, filed the frets down, raised the action, down-tuned the strings, cranked his Laneys and *voilà* — heavy metal was summoned forth from the void.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Paranoid" (Black Sabbath, *Paranoid*, 1970)



# Frank Zappa

**ZAPPA USED TWO** main SGs during the Seventies — an SG with a black full-body pickguard and stripped headstock nicknamed "Roxy" and a walnut mongrel nicknamed "Baby Snakes." Both were heavily modified; Baby Snakes had a non-Gibson neck, a built-in preamp, coil taps, phase selectors and an onboard Dan Armstrong Green Ringer fuzz/octaver. According to legend, at one point he used .007-gauge E strings and incredibly low action.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Baby Snakes" (*Baby Snakes* soundtrack, 1977)

# Ian MacKaye

**"I THINK I** probably should have been a horn player. It's all horns for me," Fugazi and Minor Threat main-man Ian MacKaye told *GW* in 2020. "I always hear horns, these melodic lines, and I try to do them with a guitar. It's hard." MacKaye has frequently attempted this tricky task on a pair of SGs, one with a natural finish and one in sparkling Alpine White, both bought in the mid Eighties and repaired after onstage breakages. As Mackaye told us, he asked expert luthier Steve Melkisethian to replace the DiMarzio Super Distortion pickups at the treble position with PRS Chainsaw pickups, after his sweat from his performances caused the DiMarzios to malfunction.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Waiting Room" (Fugazi, *Fugazi*, 1988)

KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE, MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

# And let us not forget...

The legacy of the SG is intact in the hands of these three guitarists, who've risen to the top over the past decade

## Samantha Fish

**"MY MAIN GUITAR** is a Gibson SG," Kansas City singer-songwriter Samantha Fish told *GW*. "I find it's really versatile, and it's something I feel very comfortable playing." Her choice of instrument is perfect for her musical approach, which blends rootsy rock with blues elements, a sound packed into a dozen live, studio, solo and collaborative albums to date. Check out her phenomenal slide playing, delivered on an Arctic White SG with a standard action height so that Fish can play regular picked solos without switching instruments.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Fire" (Live) on YouTube

## Jake Kiszka

**GRETA VAN FLEET** and Mirador guitarist Jake Kiszka doesn't just play his SG: he practically inhabits it. "With an SG, I can let out my visceral, animalistic side as a player," he told *GW* in 2023. "Honestly, that's difficult for me to attain with anything else." First introduced to the sleek looks and chunky tones of the SG through British guitar heroes of the 1960s, Kiszka was eager to deploy the same instrument on his classic rock-inspired band's three albums to date. "Seeing those British Invasion guys up there playing an SG made me want to be that guy," he said. "I knew it was what I wanted to do."

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Highway Tune" (Live) on YouTube

## Grace Bowers

**"I HAVE THREE** SGs," Nashville's award-winning guitarist Grace Bowers told *GW*, adding that her 1961 model is her favorite. "At first, I started playing SGs because they look cool and they're lightweight," she adds. "Then I discovered how I had full access to the neck, which I didn't have on a Les Paul." Although she's only 18 as we write this, Bowers has already played her '61 alongside Dolly Parton, Tyler Childers, Lainey Wilson, Susan Tedeschi and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. Her debut album, *Wine On Venus*, by Grace Bowers & the Hodge Podge, drew praise for its earthy but technique-heavy playing, a promising hint at continued success to come.

**HEAR IT HERE:** "Tell Me Why U Do That" (Live) on YouTube GW

***Richard Bienstock contributed to this story.***

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# A FABULOUS DISASTER

## Exodus and Slayer mainstay Gary Holt reveals what compelled him to finally roll up his sleeves and unflinchingly tell his life story

BY **JON WIEDERHORN**

Gary Holt on stage with Exodus in Belgium, August 11, 2024

ELSIE ROYMANS/GETTY IMAGES

Gary Holt with one of his custom ESP signature models. "They pretty much build me whatever I can dream up," he says

**THERE IS NO** shortage of tell-all autobiographies from pioneers of thrash metal. While none of the current members of Metallica or the founding members of Slayer have released memoirs yet, the glory days of the San Francisco-area movement and other major thrash scenes have been well documented in books by members of Megadeth (Dave Mustaine, David Ellefson, Marty Friedman, Nick Menza), two guys from Anthrax (Scott Ian, Frank Bello) and Testament guitarist Alex Skolnick.

So, why did it take thrash veteran Gary Holt so long to throw his tales in the ring when he was there from the very start? After all, Holt was hanging out with Kirk Hammett in Exodus long before the latter left to join Metallica — and he is the only SF guitarist to play on every Exodus album and perform live in Slayer from 2011 to 2019 and again at their recent reunion shows. In other words, Holt is arguably more qualified than anyone from the Bay Area to chronicle the rise and fall of thrash metal. Initially, he had some reservations, but he eventually came around.

"I've been asked over the years when I was going to do a book, and at first I didn't want to because I know where all the bodies are buried and I didn't want to put anyone out to dry or get them in trouble," he said before the recent release of *A Fabulous Disaster: From the Garage to Madison Square Garden. The Hard Way.* Holt, chuckles, then continues in an understated voice. "But then I realized I could focus on my own stories and spill the dirt on myself without involving anyone else. That made the idea a lot more appealing."

Holt's initial plan was to flex his storytelling chops and write the book on his own; however, he couldn't find time to sit down and dedicate himself fully to the project and decided he needed to find a compatible co-author. That happened when Holt was being interviewed for a cover story for *Decibel* magazine by Adam Tepedelen. After their conversation, Tepedelen asked Holt if he might be interested in working together on a book. "It was the right time and right place," Holt says. "I said, 'Okay, let's try it and see how it goes. If we click, we'll make it happen.' We started talking and it worked out really well from the start, so we kept going and I'm really happy with the end result."

Named after Exodus' third album, 1989's *Fabulous Disaster*, the book begins with Holt looking back at his earliest days as a thrash guitarist, working with friends to create music that resonated with the sounds of various scenes, including the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (especially early Iron Maiden and Venom) and Eighties hardcore punk (Discharge, Cro-Mags). After being Hammett's friend and guitar tech, Holt joined Exodus when guitarist Tim Agnello left the band. Exodus played backyard parties and dreamed of making a quality demo they could exchange with other tape traders. "We just wanted to be heavy as fuck," he writes. "And I'm pretty sure no major record label saw that as a marketable attribute."

In addition to giving him a creative outlet, Exodus provided Holt with a community that provided a temporary escape from poverty and ostracism through the misanthropic lens of violent music, excessive drinking, drugs and juvenile delinquency. In unflinching detail, Holt reveals how Exodus was a platform to overindulge in each of the above with some of the craziest motherfuckers in the scene, some of whom, including Exodus' original

**"You could drop me on a desert island with the UFO catalog, or just Rainbow's *Rainbow Rising*"**

"Tom Hunting [*right*] and I having a backyard-party-days reunion with Kirk Hammett [*center*] in Paris," Holt says

CHAD LEE (ABOVE), COURTESY OF GARY HOLT

unhinged vocalist Paul Baloff, are no longer with us. Lucky for thrash fans, Exodus worked just as hard on their music as they did at trashing houses, torturing so-called posers and drinking everything within their reach. As Exodus released their heralded 1985 debut, *Bonded by Blood*, developed a strong following and became successful, Holt and his bandmates wrangled with inter-band turmoil, addiction and the collapse of metal in the Nineties. After breaking up the band and returning to a blue-collar job to make ends meet, Holt experienced a redemptive second wave of success with a reformed Exodus and an invitation to join Slayer. The euphoric highs and debilitating lows are vividly captured in *A Fabulous Disaster*, which is flavored with enticing drama, self-deprecating humor and honest, sometimes agonizing reflection.

"Half of the battle to doing the book right was feeling comfortable about opening all of these wounds," Holt says. "You really have to feel like the person you're working with is someone you can share this stuff with. We got so many good stories in there and there's tons leftover that wouldn't fit in the book, which are just crazy, hilarious, cringe-inducing, horrifically bad stuff and amazingly good stuff and everything in between. Hopefully, I'll revisit some of that stuff down the road."

In a candid conversation, Holt reveals what compelled him to roll up his sleeves and unflinchingly tell his life story, what he gained from the revising Exodus' gritty past, and his plans for the follow-up to Exodus' 2021 album, *Persona Non Grata*. He also talks about Slayer's reunion shows, why he didn't want to play on Kerry King's 2024 solo album, the rigors of arthritis and how he'd be okay if he had to give up music and return to roofing for a living.

"Tom Araya [*center*] and I meeting one of my heroes, Brian May, at the Sweden Rock Festival in 2016," Holt says

**Many autobiographies are filled with anecdotes about booze, drugs and debauchery. What makes yours different?**
These things usually follow a formula: A guy gets famous, makes lots of bad decisions, develops drug habits and eventually achieves redemption. But most of these dudes don't fall quite as far as I did. They don't develop a meth habit and end up shoveling dog shit for $6 an hour in between releasing an album like *Bonded by Blood* and playing Madison Square Garden. I've been through a lot, and it's all in there.

**You illustrate that juxtaposition in the chapter "Riffing in '83. Roofing in '93."**
When I quit Exodus in 1993, I needed some time to figure out what I wanted to do in music, but I also needed a job. So I got a job as a roofer, and I was out in the 100-degree weather hauling 50-lb rolls of tar paper up a 40-foot ladder. I know the meaning of work and I've never been ashamed to get my hands dirty.

**Was there anything in the book that you were reluctant to reveal?**
No, because I was really particular with what I wrote about. I didn't feel it was my place to tell really dark stories about other people — other than what was already public knowledge. There's a lot of great stories I could have told, but then I'd have been dragging down other people without their approval. When it comes to my own problems and my own drug use, I've always been an open book, but there are parts where I wanted people to cringe when they read it. So that's why there's all that stuff in there about sitting in a warehouse smoking meth with crackheads and prostitutes because that's who I used to be. That's not who I am now.

"Exodus with Slayer's Tom Araya [*third from right*] backstage at Wolfgang's in 1984," Holt says

**Did you learn anything about yourself while writing this book?**
I don't know if I learned anything I didn't already know. But I do have a ton of →

**"I don't play on nobody's solo record. If I'm going to, your name better be Rob Halford"**

BRIAN LEW (LEFT), COURTESY OF GARY HOLT

regret, and I carry a ton of guilt. I've seen people I know doing the VH1 *Behind the Music* thing, and sometimes when they talk about their wild days, they smile and say, "Yeah, it was fun." I'm different. When I look back at some of my indiscretions and the selfish things I did that hurt people, I'm not proud. I was a delinquent and a lot of the things I did were not cool. But that's what pushes me now to be an even better father, grandfather, husband and bandmate.

I'm constantly striving to improve, which is something we all should do. Who wants to just be happy when there is room in your life to be better? I try to be kind to people even though I write songs about hate. Doing that is my therapy. My wife always gets on me about how many times a year I give money to random strangers on GoFundMe. I do it because I can, and if it's legit, why not help people? [*Our drummer*] Tom [*Hunting*] needed money to fight cancer, and a lot of people helped him through the GoFundMe I started for him. I'm just trying to give back when I can. Karma.

**Do you believe wisdom comes with age, or do you think that the more experience you have about the world, the less you understand its complexities?**

There's truth to both. When you're young, you think you know everything, and when you get a bit older you realize you don't. But if you've paid attention to your own failings, you'll learn from them and hopefully improve. I guess that's the simplest way to look at it. Just learn from your mistakes.

**Do you want readers to view *A Fabulous Disaster* as a cautionary tale?**

If anyone sees it like that or if it helps anyone who's having trouble clean up their life, then that's great. But I'm a guitar player. I'm not curing cancer. I write riffs and I'm really good at it. And I love what I'm doing, so it's not work. I'm 100 percent constantly aware of how lucky I am that I have a career, and when I think back and realize that I threw it all away for a long-ass time, I just feel stupid. First, I threw it all away because I was unhappy, then later I threw it away because I was on drugs. And now, I've bounced back from that and I'm back with my band making music. No, I'm not selling out arenas. I'm not selling out theaters. But when you factor in that I'm able to tour, which I love, and when you couple it with merchandise sales — because we're all traveling clothes salesmen — I'm doing just fine. And I love doing this.

**Last year, Slayer announced a handful of reunion shows. Before they were scheduled, there was bad blood between guitarist Kerry King and vocalist and bassist Tom Araya, and Kerry pulled no punches about Tom when he did press for his solo album *From Hell I Rise*. Was there any tension between those guys during the Slayer reunion shows?**

There was no weirdness at all. Those shows were amazing. It was a great return. I hadn't seen anybody since I left after the last show we did. Especially on the anniversary of the show. We usually send each other texts: "I really appreciate you. Miss you." Blah, blah. But I hadn't seen anyone. And [*drummer*] Paul Bostaph lives about 40 minutes north from me up in the woods. So this was a great chance to see them all again.

**Will there be any more Slayer shows?**

There won't be any more full tours. There won't be any albums. If we come back and do a couple shows here and there — as Kerry has alluded to — I think that's perfect. I love Slayer, but I'm not ready to put Exodus on hold anymore. That's my band for life. Slayer are my family, but Exodus were my first family. They sat

"Tracking guitars for *Pleasures of the Flesh* at Alpha & Omega studios in San Francisco with Rick Hunolt [*right*], circa 1986," Holt says

on the sidelines and used a stunt double for me for a long time — just shy of 10 years. And if we do a couple more shows as Slayer, that means I get to play those songs that I've grown to love. But I've got to record and tour with Exodus full-time again. That's my priority.

**Did you hear the Kerry King album before it came out?**
No. I knew who was in the band, which was just confirmation that it was going to be killer. And then when I heard it, I loved it. It definitely has a Slayer vibe because Kerry is one-fourth of Slayer, so of course it's going to have that feel. I'm always going to sound like I do in Exodus unless I was absolutely trying my hardest not to sound like Exodus — like if I was going to issue a funk album — and even that would probably have a little Exodus in it.

**Would you want to do a funk album?**
That would be awesome. I don't know if it'll ever happen, but I love listening to that stuff. I don't listen to metal at home. I like listening to the classic stuff I grew up on. You could drop me on a desert island with the UFO catalog, or just Rainbow's *Rainbow Rising* and I'd be happy. Nowadays, my car radio is either on the local sports talk channel or it's on the soft stuff station and I'm listening to Backstreet Boys and Adele. I love pop music — always have, though.

**Did you wish Kerry asked you to play with him on his solo album?**
No, I don't play on nobody's solo record. That's not a knock on anybody who does, but I'm self-aware of who I am, and if I'm going to play on someone's solo record your name better be Rob Halford. I mean, if James Hetfield did a solo record... I don't know if I'd want to play for Hetfield. I'd be tempted, though.

**Nobody down-picks like Hetfield.**
Yeah, and with the tendon problems I've had over the years, down-picking is the first thing that's slowed down.

**How bad are your tendon problems?**
Man, I've had arthritis and chronic tennis elbow. I had to fight back from them and they've affected me in both arms. On the last Exodus album, I had so many cortisone shots I lost count. I had one a couple months before recording the album and that worked wonders until we tracked "The Beatings Will Continue (Until Morale Improves)." I was down picking on that and I blew my right elbow out. I had to go to physical therapy to get back to playing. So, if I worked with James he might give me shit about keeping up on some of the down-picking stuff, but the things I do well, I do as well as anybody else. With down-picking, you learn little cheats to get through it.

**Can you make alternate picking sound like down-picking?**
I do both. I'll go down-up-down-down- →

**"Everybody cheats. I've seen Hetfield leaving out down-picks. We're living with 60-year-old arms now"**

# Talkin' Gear with Gary

**You're endorsed by ESP. Will you have a new signature with them?**
They've been the most amazing company to work with. I have five variants of guitars. That's pretty remarkable. If I had just one LTD model, I'd be happy. But they pretty much build me whatever I can dream up.

**What do you bring on tour with Exodus?**
My Exodus rig is identical to my Slayer rig, only the Slayer rig is three times larger. I've got a Marshall 2555X Silver Jubilee, and I'm still a slave to my ESP guitars with EMG pickups and Von Frankenstein Monster Gear strings. When I do a fly gig, I use the Quad Cortex and I love it. I don't run mine direct with in-ears. I'll put it in the effects return of a head or I have one of those Seymour Duncan PowerStage 700s, and I can travel with my entire amp rig except for cabs in carry-on. It's amazing.

**You're a big fan of pedals. What are some of your more obscure favorites?**
Dude, the Mooer pedals are some of the best pedals I own. I've got the 005 Brown Sound, which is a 5150 micro pedal. I've plugged it into the effects return of a Jubilee combo and it's so crushing. I sent a video of it to Scott Ian, and I said, "Check this out, dude!" And when we did the final Slayer show in Santiago, Chile, for 60,000 people, Scott used it as his primary tone — this little Mooer pedal! The Mooer Tender Octaver is my favorite octave pedal — and I've always had an octave pedal in my rig.

**You've also joined forces with STL for a Tonehub digital expansion pack for use with most any DAW. How's that going?**
Good. The tone pack is sick. The tones sound really good. Some of them were crafted straight from the album tones, so they're as close to my sound as you're ever going to get without owning my right hand. STL wanted a large quantity of them. I was like, "Look, here's 15 tones. That's more than you'll ever need." But everybody else's tone pack has, like, 80 tones. So, I said, "Okay, here's the tone. And here's me moving the gain knob a half a click down and we'll call it mid-gain." It's still super-high gain, it's just a little different. And then I did some with different microphones to stretch it out. But the core of the pack is super-crushing. I hear a lot of plug-ins, and they all sound exactly the same. I think mine sounds like real amps. I love them and I've been working with them on home demos and using them on GarageBand and they're really killer. — ***Jon Wiederhorn***

COURTESY OF GARY HOLT

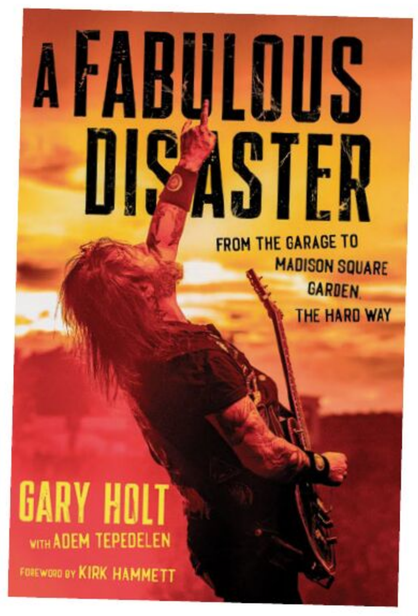
down-down-down/down-up-down-down-down-down-down... That gives me a split-second break. But everybody cheats. I've seen videos of James leaving out down-picks. You know? We're living with 60-year-old arms now. On these reunion shows, Slayer was playing "Reborn." And Kerry and I were like, "Man, that's fast!" Goddamn, that was fun to play for those two shows, but I was super-relieved when we got through it.

**How far along are you on the follow up to Exodus' 2021 album, *Persona Non Grata*?**
I've got about 20 new songs that we're working on. Tom Hunting and I worked out some of the stuff in advance together because as long as we go into the studio with five or six completed songs, then we've got a good starting point. We tend to write a lot in the studio, anyway. We like to do what I call our album summer camp, where we all live in one house together and immerse ourselves in the music. We did that on our last album during the pandemic and it gave us the greatest opportunity we've ever had. We shipped a truckload of recording material to Tom's house in the mountains in Lake Almonor, California, along with Steve Lagudi, our engineer. And we stayed there and worked on the album. Of course, there wasn't anywhere to go then, but I'm hoping we can have that same game plan this time around.

**How would you describe the new Exodus material?**
It's hard to say, because every album is its own thing. Some of the record is super, super fast, and other parts are big, slow, and ominous with lots of space to breathe and build. And there are a couple moments that are, dare I say, doomy. There's a lot of melody in there, but it's also really heavy. Exodus fans are gonna dig it. [*Guitarist*] Lee Altus has a bunch of stuff he's still working on, so that will add more elements to the songs. The only challenge is hitting our recording goal, otherwise it's going to be out in 2026, and we have a bunch of tours lined up, but we'll figure it out.

**You look like a rock star onstage and you've lived like a rock star, but you seem humbler than some of your peers.**
Look, I'm not out there selling out arenas. Exodus just got off our first headlining tour in the U.S. in a long time, and it was a blast. Maybe the shows weren't as well-attended as some we've done in the past, but they were really good because a lot of bands on the road right now are getting hammered. I just have to be smarter these days, so I'm involved in all sides of the business. People don't realize that when I'm home from tour and you buy a shirt or even a guitar pick from me, I'm the guy who puts it in the package. I don't hire someone else to do it. And I'm lucky to do it.

I live a good life. I have great grandkids, great kids, a great wife, and a great band. I was lucky to have two great bands for a long time. If the bottom fell out in music for me tomorrow, I'd go get a job again. I have no hangups about that. I appreciate what I have and the position I'm in. That's something that I'll never take for granted. GW




"I've been through a lot, from the totally horrific to the amazing, and it's all in there," Holt says about *A Fabulous Disaster*

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# SOUND CHECK

## Mesa Boogie Mark IIC+ head

**By Chris Gill**

**FOR MANY GUITARISTS,** the Mesa Boogie Mark IIC+ ranks at the top of their Holy Grail, bucket list, unobtanium amps. The main reason the Mark IIC+ is so desirable is because it was James Hetfield's main amp (he actually had a IIC++ with additional gain) on Metallica's immortal *Master of Puppets*. The Mark IIC+'s use by Prince (the *Purple Rain* tour and beyond), John Petrucci with Dream Theater and studio legends Michael Landau, Steve Lukather and Dean Parks on hundreds of Eighties hits also helped elevate its legendary status.

Mesa built only about 3,000 Mark IIC+ amps during its original 14-month run in the mid Eighties, but after four decades it's finally made its long-awaited return. The new Mark IIC+ is available in head-only or 1x12 combo versions and is essentially a fully loaded version with all of the most desirable options: 5-band graphic EQ, Simul-Class and reverb.

### Build Quality

Taking the Mark IIC+ head out of the box is like opening a time capsule. With only seven knobs (six of which featuring pull functions) and a 5-band graphic EQ, the front panel looks downright austere compared to today's Mesa Mark series amps and even the recent JP-2C Mark IIC+ John Petrucci signature model. Rest assured that the reissued Mark IIC+ is a very faithful reproduction of the original with only minimal changes made due to modern safety regulations and parts availability. This is the short-chassis version of the head, so the Presence and Reverb knobs are on the rear panel, where you'll also find a buffered effects loop, a Slave output with level control and the Simul-Class/Class A switch for selecting 75-watt or 25-watt output.

Although the Mark IIC+ is a true dual-channel head (the Mark II was the first amp to offer channel switching), note that the "clean" and "lead" channels share the same Treble, Bass and Middle EQ controls. Dialing in EQ settings that sound good on both channels can be difficult and usually is somewhat of a compromise. The graphic EQ features a three-way switch with an "EQ auto" setting that engages the graphic EQ only when the Lead channel is selected, which can be helpful. However, the Treble, Bass and Middle controls are pre-gain and the graphic EQ is post-gain, so the settings of the standard EQ knobs still influence the overall tone in ways that don't always complement more sensitive high-gain settings. Pull Bright, pull Shift and pull Deep functions also provide additional tonal shaping capabilities.

Like the original Mark IIC+ head, the reissue features several footswitchable functions. Two footswitches with accompanying cables are provided, consisting of a single-footswitch controller for channel switching that plugs into the front panel below the input jack and a dual-footswitch controller for graphic EQ on/off and reverb on/off that plugs into a jack hidden underneath the chassis behind one of the 6L6 power tubes. The EQ/reverb footswitch jack is not in the most convenient place, →

and you'll definitely want to plug in the cable before the tubes heat up.

## Sounds

The original design's quirks are all forgivable once a guitar is plugged in. The reissue Mark IIC+'s tones are simply divine. The clean tones are some of the finest ever heard from a Mesa Boogie amp, ranging from crisp sparkle with percussive spank to warm, rich jazz tones with full body and smooth sustain. The Mark IIC+'s high-gain lead channel tones are the main reason so many guitarists are willing to spend big bucks for an original model, and the reissue fully lives up to the legend with its deeply saturated distortion with complex, layered harmonics, pummeling attack, extremely articulate note definition and finely tuned midrange that dominates a mix. Even after four decades of high-gain amp design evolution, the Mark IIC+'s distortion tones still remain the Gold Standard.

One important attribute to keep in mind is that the pre-gain EQ controls can affect the Lead channel quite dramatically. The Bass control in particular can get very boomy and woofy past 3, so it's best used in moderation with a high-gain Lead channel setting. Similarly, the Presence control can get a bit shrill at higher settings, so a little goes a long way. However, the extra range of these controls is helpful for dialing in gorgeous clean/overdrive tones and even Lead channel tones with moderate overdrive, particularly in studio recording applications where players aren't dependent on channel switching. Just like the original, the Mark IIC+ offers limited capabilities as a dual-channel amp in live applications, but as a single-channel amp in the studio it has few peers.

## Verdict

Mesa Boogie's reissue of the venerated Mark IIC+ offers guitarists a dead-on perfect reproduction of the original amp from its wide range of stellar, professional tones and unbeaten high-gain textures to its somewhat quirky old school dual-channel functions and capabilities. GW

**STREET PRICE:** $3,599

**MANUFACTURER:**
Mesa Boogie, mesaboogie.com

**PROS**

+ Classic Mark IIC+ tones in all of their glory.
+ 5-band graphic EQ provides exceptional tone-shaping versatility.
+ Much more affordable and reliable than chasing down a 40-year-old vintage model.

**CONS**

– Both channels share the same Bass, Middle and Treble controls.
– Awkward placement of the Reverb/EQ footswitch jack.

MESA BOOGIE

# Fender Standard Series Stratocaster

By Paul Riario

**AT THIS POINT,** Fender's core instruments have become the equivalent of classic novels like *Moby-Dick* and *On the Road*, which are refreshed nearly every other year for new audiences to digest. It's almost ironic that a "The Standard Is Set" sticker on this review Stratocaster's pickguard reads to me as window dressing because, as much as I want to believe that, I'm fairly certain there'll eventually be yet another revision to this Standard Series' Strat in some shape or form. Don't get me wrong; in no way am I cynically punching down at the brilliance of a Strat or Fender's attempt to reach more musicians with a revamped and well-built guitar at an affordable price point every so often. The bigger point I'm illustrating is that Fender's consistent tinkering with their legacy instruments — like this latest Standard Series Strat — has led to improved player-centric versions that never get lost in translation.

## Build Quality & Playability

Fender's Standard Series is the inexpensive and introductory starting line of Fender's multiple guitar designs. Below that is the Squier brand, or you can move up in features and price points to Fender's Player II Series or beyond in other series. Regardless, what's more important is how Fender has made its Standard Series base models all the more appealing with touched-up playability and better hardware and pickups. In hand, this is the quintessential bare-bones "Standard Strat" with all the familiar curves on its midweight poplar body and the traditional bolt-on maple neck and fingerboard sporting the vintage standard of 21 frets. There are no fancy performance enhancements like a sculpted heel; however, the neck's modern C-shape is carved to a shallower profile and satin-finished, allowing for a comfortably pleasant grip across it. Likewise, chording and soloing are easily accomplished by its medium jumbo frets and a relatively flat 9.5-inch fingerboard radius. Notable upgrades include a 2-point synchronized tremolo bridge with satin chrome saddles and three Fender Standard ceramic single-coil pickups. Everything else is pretty much "Strat-customary" with a white pickguard, one volume and two tone controls, a 5-way pickup selector and sealed Fender diecast tuners. The guitar comes in Olympic White, 3-Color Sunburst and Aqua Marine Metallic gloss polyurethane finishes. This one arrived in a striking Candy Cola color that plays on the classic Candy Apple Red finish with deeper red hues. Finally, a noticeable transition is Fender's spaghetti logo on its headstock, which is all black here.

## Performance & Sounds

There's no overlooking that this Stratocaster is primed for beginners and intermediate players as evidenced by its approachable price and being strung with a lighter gauge of strings (.009-.042), which will make bending and chording more approachable for non-calloused fingers. That's not to undercut the beauty of its inherent utility or the many ways more experienced players can dial in or slightly modify this Strat to go toe-to-toe with other costly guitars. Speaking of that, I fine-tuned its setup to meet my needs, and what's practical is that any playability tweaks are accomplished with ease compared to Fender's vintage-spec models where you have to know what you're doing. The truss rod is located at the headstock so neck adjustments are a cinch to make and to optimize the setup I simply screwed the two-point vibrato system down a notch for closer action to the fingerboard without having to lower the saddles. Also, the satin chrome block steel saddles are a welcome addition in durability and provide a smoother feel against the palm of your picking hand. But, the guitar could use a bit of filing at the nut and better tuners for tuning stability when using the vibrato. Despite that, the guitar plays as well as any of my other numerous Strats, and the neck feels incredibly comfortable with bigger frets and a flat fingerboard to execute any agile fretwork.

Fender's higher-output ceramic magnet pickups are a welcome addition to this Standard model, giving this guitar a little more crackle and pop in its single-coil snap. Neither too hot nor too weak in output, the pickups dish out punchier glassy tones with well-rounded edginess through my bevy of vintage combos and hi-gain amps. Even the in-between 2- and 4-positions on the pickup selector sound firm delivering that classic Strat quack without the 60-cycle hum. That's why it's easy for me to say this is exactly the "Standard" many players expect when they're in the market for a classic Fender Stratocaster.

## Verdict

The Fender Standard Series Stratocaster ticks all the boxes in build quality, upgraded playability and punchy single-coil tones, making it an elevated introductory Strat for many discriminating players. GW

**STREET PRICE:** $599.99

**MANUFACTURER:**
Fender, fender.com

**PROS**

+ New Standard Strat ceramic pickups dish out higher output for crunchy tones and punchy single-coil spank.

**CONS**

– Players may want to upgrade components or pickups to suit stylistic needs.

# Hamstead Redwing Analogue Stereo Modulator

**By Chris Gill**

**THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN** modulation effects are often a simple matter of different delay ranges (for example, delay times for flanging effects typically range from 1 to 15ms, while chorus typically uses a 15 to 50ms delay), delay versus filtering (a split signal is delayed for flanging or filtered for phasing), or what is actually modulated (a phaser modulates phase while vibrato modulates pitch). Many pedals can generate more than one modulation effect — for example, some flangers can be tweaked to provide outstanding chorus effects, like the EHX Electric Mistress and ADA Flanger. Packed with a generous variety of controls and parameters, the Hamstead Redwing Analogue Stereo Modulator is aptly named as it delivers a wide range of modulation effects, including chorus, flanging, vibrato and more.

## SPECS

**CONTROLS:** Gain, Blend, Bass, Treble, Manual, Width, Regen, Speed, Offset, Shape (waveform)
**SWITCHES:** On/off footswitch, Offset on/off; Waveform: Asymmetric/Sine/Triangle; Speed: Hi/Lo; Phase: In/Out; Stereo/Wet-Dry; Internal switches for Power Up Effect On/Off, Input Stereo/Mono, Bypass Buffered/True
**JACKS:** (all ¼-inch) Input, Control, Hold, Output R, Output L
**POWER:** 9-24VDC 365mA center negative

## Build Quality

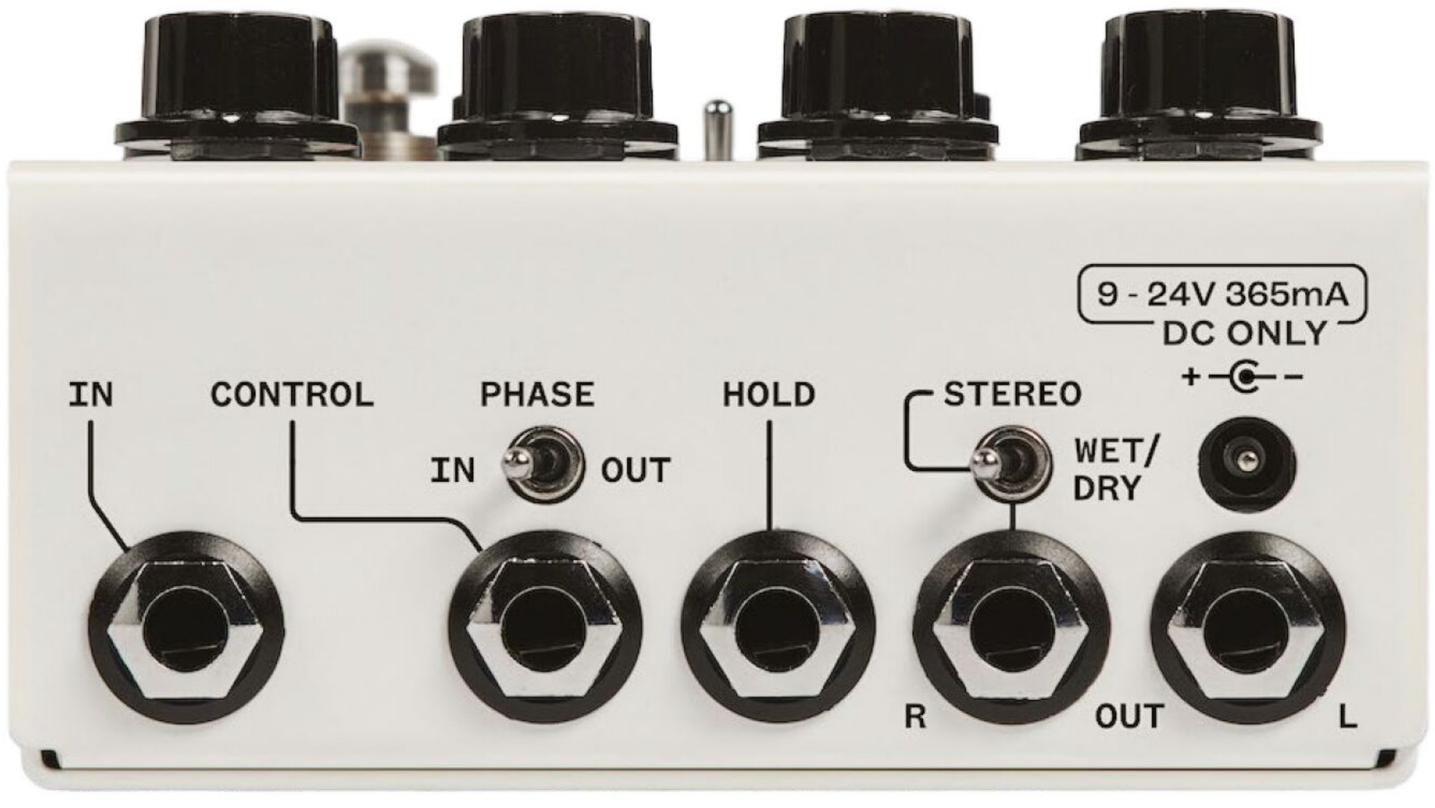
Hamstead designed the Redwing in collaboration with the blokes from YouTube's *That Pedal Show*, resulting in a pedal that ticks a lot of the right boxes when it comes to features many experienced stompbox users need or prefer. It's made in Britain (don't worry — it won't spontaneously combust like Moss's fire extinguisher!) using all-analog construction that includes BBD (bucket brigade device) components to deliver classic warmth and depth. Internal switches allow users to customize preferences like effect on/off at power up, stereo or mono input and buffered or true bypass.

Because the Redwing can dial in a variety of modulation effects, it has more controls than a typical flanger or vibrato unit and requires more know-how of what each parameter does if you want to quickly dial in desired effects. For example, flanging is generated by turning up the Width and Regen controls while chorus requires lower Width and Regen settings plus a higher Manual (delay) setting. The Speed control covers a very wide useful range from slow sweeps to hummingbird flutters thanks to its Hi/Lo switch. Gain, Bass and Treble controls also give users more sound shaping flexibility than the average modulation stompbox.

HAMSTEAD SOUNDWORKS

The rear panel is similarly sophisticated, providing stereo outputs with selectable "Stereo" (split to two separate modulation lines for true stereo modulation) and "Wet/Dry" (with the dry signal in the right output and the two modulation lines summed in the left output) settings, a Control jack for using an expression pedal to control speed settings and a Hold jack for controlling feedback oscillation with a footswitch. The pedal uses a switch-mode power supply that internally regulates whatever you put into its DC jack +/-15V, so it operates in the same manner regardless of input voltage.

**"Because the Redwing can dial in a variety of modulation effects, it has more controls than a typical flanger or vibrato unit"**




## Sounds

Vintage stompbox connoisseurs know that there's a certain *je ne sais quoi* about modulation effects generated by analog BBD components. Chorus effects shimmer with more body; flangers sound thicker, more jet-like and animalistic; and vibratos get more seasick and woozy. The Redwing delivers all of these classic sounds very well, and it can be dialed to more extreme sounds such as atonal metallic clangs and siren-like self-modulation (albeit with some rather extreme frequencies that can damage speakers, so use in moderation). Unlike the classic BBD units of yesteryear, the operation is impressively quiet, delivering only the noise you want when you want it and no annoying hiss or bacon-fry splatter when you're not playing.

The Redwing is an impressively versatile pedal, but that comes at a rather head-spinning price. It doesn't have any memory storage so you can only use one effect at a time, and should you be bold enough to change settings while performing live you'd be well advised to mark them on the box in different colors. The pedal provides better value when used in the studio, where players can make the most of its luscious-sounding effects and versatility instead of just using it to generate one effect on stage.

## Verdict

The Hamstead Redwing excels at classic BBD modulation effects, allowing users to dial in the analog flanging, chorus, vibrato or many other effects of their dreams, albeit at a rather steep price. GW

**STREET PRICE:** $559/£429

**MANUFACTURER:**
Hamstead Soundworks,
hamsteadsoundworks.com

**PROS**

+ Lush, thick, animalistic modulation effects.
+ Gain and Treble/Bass EQ control provide enhanced tone-shaping.
+ Full range of useful parameters for numerous modulation effects.

**CONS**

– Expensive.
– No memory so it can only provide one effect in live performance setting.

SOUNDCHECK

# On-Stage Travel Guitar Amplifier

By Paul Riario

**BEFORE YOU RIP** my head off for reviewing the most basic of portable guitar amps — the On-Stage Travel Guitar Amplifier — allow me to point out that there's more to this one than meets the eye. "Travel" or "portable" amps have been casually lumped in with many others, including "Mini," "Desktop," "Practice" and "Headphone," so narrowing down the plethora of choices becomes a matter of size, sound, features and, for some, price. And while On-Stage's Travel Guitar Amp might not be as packed with up-to-date tech as other brands, I say it's one of the tiniest rechargeable amps with Bluetooth connectivity, full-range sound that's astoundingly clear, simple two-channel operation and enticing affordability.

## Build Quality & Playability

Small enough to hold in hand or tuck into your "nu-metal" cargo shorts' side pocket, On-Stage's Travel Guitar Amplifier (TGA01) is about the size of a Boss pedal and weighs roughly the same. Built with a sturdy, hard-molded plastic brick-like frame, the amp has a black basket-weave grille to mask its dual 1.75-inch, full-range speakers, with a top panel that features a mode button (for the clean or overdrive channel); a trio of controls for Gain, Tone and Volume; a Power/Bluetooth button; an indicator light (that flashes when its rechargeable lithium battery power is low or flickers with a prompt sound when Bluetooth is enabled) and a 3.5mm headphone jack. There's also a side panel with a 1/4-inch input jack, a Type-C USB charging port and a charging indicator light. The amp is rated at 5 watts and has a battery life of approximately seven hours on a full charge.

## Performance & Sounds

I'll admit I was a bit skeptical before even plugging into the TGA01, presuming it was some cheap transistorized practice amp with anemic guitar tones. But all my biases were put to rest once I fired it up and heard how surprisingly good this amp sounded with its limited controls and zero effects. The cleans were sufficiently clear and present, and its OD channel presents the kind of "overdrive that meets distortion," which doesn't get mushy or muddy and remains crisp and defined throughout its range of saturation.

Moreover, when using the TGA01 with its Bluetooth connectivity as a practice tool to hear audio and click tracks, a metronome, or jam along — the two onboard guitar tones have enough favorable character to be distinctly heard. But if you want depth, run a few modulation and time-based pedals through it for additional coloration. I also pumped a bunch of music from my iPhone to hear how it fared as an audio source. Did it have the complex fidelity found in more sophisticated Bluetooth speakers? Obviously, no, but its clarity and output volume at 5 watts is impressive despite its diminutive size. Sure, there are other desktop and travel amps out there with boatloads of advanced features, but for the TGA01, that was never the point. As an affordable on-the-go travel amp and Bluetooth speaker you can tuck in a gig bag, it's wonderfully uncomplicated and sounds good.

## Verdict

At just under $50, the On-Stage Travel Guitar Amplifier is a solid dual-purpose guitar amp and Bluetooth speaker. It might be the smallest of the small, but it's a Goliath in sound. GW

**STREET PRICE:** $49.95

**MANUFACTURER:** On-Stage, on-stage.com

**PROS**

+ A rechargeable 5-watt pocket-sized travel guitar amp to play anywhere.
+ Loud and clear; simple, intuitive operation; two-channel modes of clean or overdrive; offers up to 7 hours of playing time from a single charge.
+ Weighs a little over a half-pound; built-in Bluetooth connectivity for jamming to audio, metronome, click track or use as a Bluetooth speaker.

**CONS**

– Those who crave more power and advanced features (like modeling) might find it too basic.

# Cort Sunset Nylectric DLX

By Chris Gill

**EVERY GUITAR PLAYER** should have at least one nylon-string guitar in their collection. Even better is a nylon-string acoustic-electric that can hold its own amongst other amplified instruments on stage. The Cort Sunset Nylectric DLX leans more towards the electric than acoustic side of the spectrum with its chambered solidbody design, but that makes it a great choice for electric players who want to explore the nuances and expressiveness of a nylon-string instrument without having to adapt their playing style too much to a traditional classical or flamenco guitar.

## Playability

Featuring a chambered mahogany body with a solid Sitka spruce top covered with a flamed maple veneer, the Cort Sunset Nylectric DLX looks more like a steel-string acoustic-electric or even a solidbody electric (minus the pickups and electric hardware). The bolt-on neck joins the body at the 16th fret (instead of the 12th), and a deep cutaway and contoured neck-body heel joint provide unrestricted access to the entire fretboard. The body width measures slightly more than 1.75 inches, so it even feels like an electric solidbody instrument.

However, the Nylectric's slotted headstock, ebony bridge with tie block and mahogany neck with a relatively flat radius (15.75-inch), ebony fretboard with 22 medium-profile frets, 25.5-inch scale length and U-shape profile provide familiar nylon-string aesthetics. The nut width, which measures 1-7/8 inches is slightly narrower than a traditional classical guitar to allow electric players to adapt to the neck more easily. Internally, the top is fan braced to provide similar sonic characteristics to a traditional acoustic nylon-string guitar.

The built-in Fishman Sonicore under-saddle piezo pickup/preamp system is designed specifically for nylon-string guitar to preserve natural resonance and expressive nuances. Controls consist of volume, treble and bass knobs, with the EQ allowing players to dial in more presence to cut through a band or warmth for fuller-sounding solo performances.

## Sounds

Thanks to its chambered body design, the Sunset Nylectric DLX can be played unplugged at a decent volume level for practice, although by no means does its purely acoustic sound compare with that of a finely crafted classical or flamenco instrument. However, the bass is nicely round and full-bodied and the treble is sweet and expressive.

Those acoustic tones provide a solid foundation for the Cort's amplified tones, which is where the Nylectric shines. The chambered body provides "air" and resonance that makes each note sound lively and three-dimensional instead of dry and flat. The pickup can handle rather aggressive flamenco strumming techniques without distorting or compressing the tone, although it may not be responsive enough to body slaps to please an Andalusian purist. Although the Nylectric sounds more than good enough on its own, it really shined when it was processed with a touch of room reverb, which brought the sound even closer to that of a miked classical guitar.

## Verdict

The Cort Sunset Nylectric DLX is an ideal "gateway" instrument for electric players who want to add nylon-string classical/flamenco tones to their stage and studio repertoires. GW

**STREET PRICE:** $999

**MANUFACTURER:**
Cort Guitars, cortguitars.com

**PROS**

+ Body design provides easier access to the entire fretboard.
+ Fishman Sonicore system delivers organic nylon-string tones.
+ Can be played unplugged thanks to chambered body design.

**CONS**

– Designed more with electric players in mind instead of traditional classical/flamenco performers.

# FOLLOW THE GROOVE

by Cory Wong

For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/july2025

## THINK DRUMS

### How to approach rhythm guitar like a drummer

**A GREAT APPROACH** for all rhythm guitar players is this: think like a drummer! Granted, the drummer is the one who is driving the song's momentum, but rhythm guitar can similarly contribute.

Let's begin with some simple things we guitarists can do that are derived from a standard drumbeat, the primary elements of which are the patterns played on the kick drum, snare and hi-hats. If we think of just the kick alternating with the snare, we've got, "Boom, kahh, boom-boom, kahh." Add the hi-hat, and it's, "Tss, tss, kahh, boom, boom-boom, kah, tss, boom, kahh" etc.

We can emulate these different elements on the guitar. Starting with the hi-hat, **FIGURE 1** shows a series of fret-hand-muted strings sounded as straight eighth notes. We also have low and high notes.

**FIGURE 2** emulates the alternating kick-to-snare sound that falls on the quarter-note downbeats, with a low G serving as the kick and a G one octave up functioning as the snare.

Also available to guitar players is the sound of harmony and melody. Putting all these things together will result in a rhythm guitar part that contributes to the groove akin to a drum set, but with the added bonus of pitches and timbres.

**FIGURE 3** offers an example of a rhythm part that combines these different drumset-like elements, played in the key of G. The initial low G note in bar 1 represents the kick drum, followed by muted-string accents that function like the hi-hats. On beat 2, I slide into a two-note G7 voicing in the place of the snare accent, and beats 3 and 4 feature E and F bass notes walking up to G in alternating octaves. Bar 2 is virtually the same, but I stop on the low F on beat 4. The two-bar phrase is played three and a half times and ends with a chordal accent on G7.

**FIGURE 4** presents another rhythm part, this one a little simpler, to help drive the point home. Here, the four elements are the low G, played on beat 1 of each bar; the two-note G7 voicing, played on beat 2, the B♭-to-B hammer-on played on beat 3, and the E-to-F eighth notes on beat 4. To me, this is a great example of how a rhythm guitarist can think like a drummer.

Let's move to the key of E minor and shift between the i (one minor) chord, Em9, and the IV (four) chord, A7, the voicings of which are illustrated in **FIGURE 5**.

**FIGURE 6** is a nine-bar rhythm part built from alternating bars of Em9 and A7. Notice the dead-string accents that fall on various upbeats and downbeats Additionally, I slide up from the last note(s) at the end of each bar to add emphasis to the chord change. In bar 5, I drop in a high E unison bend, which functions like a one-beat "horn blast."

We can elaborate on this idea, as shown in **FIGURE 7**, which sounds a high Em9 on beat 1 and emulates a crash-cymbal accent.

The more you think like a drummer, the more you'll be able to effectively lock in with the rhythm section. If your bass player is thinking along the same lines, you both will add a lot of value to the groove.

**FIG. 1**

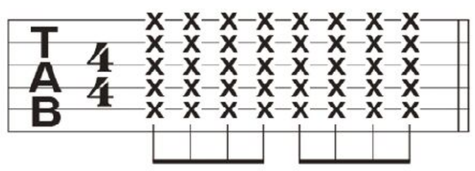


**FIG. 2** (G)

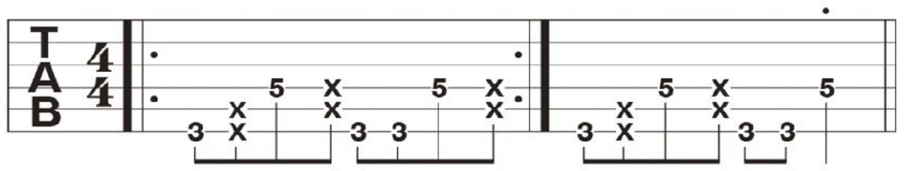


**FIG. 3** (G7)

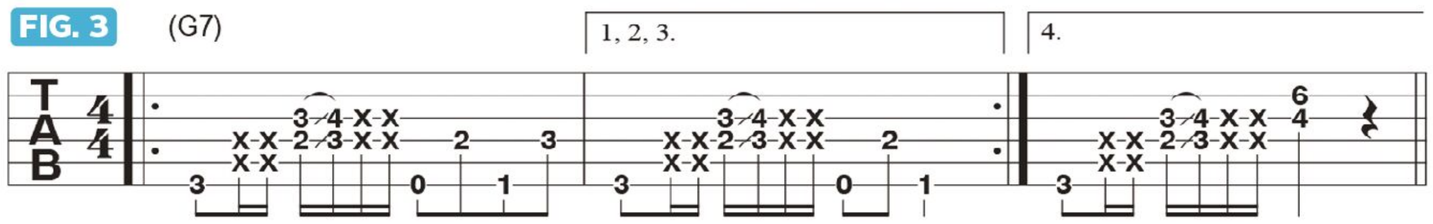



**FIG. 4** (G7)

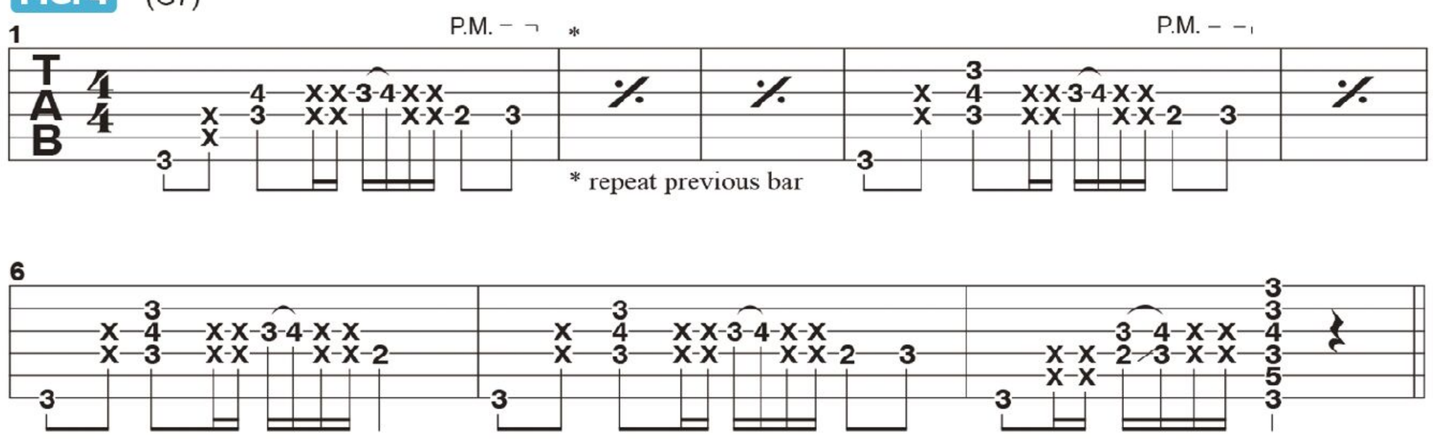



**FIG. 5** Em9 A7

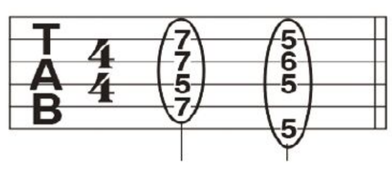


**FIG. 6** Em9 A7

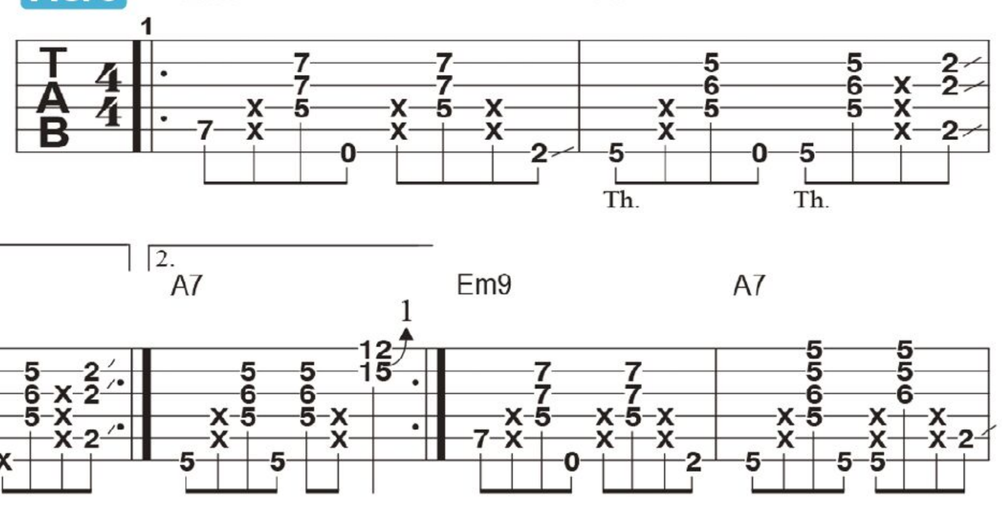
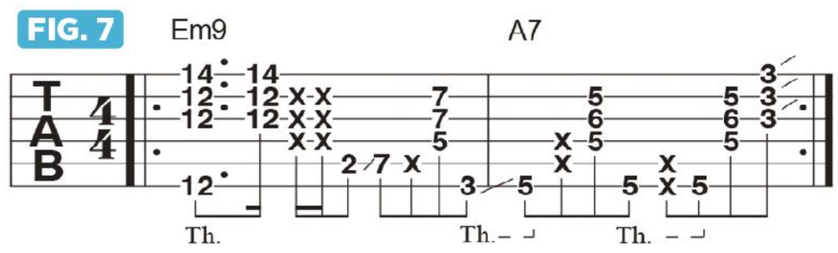



**FIG. 7** Em9 A7




**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.**

TAICHI NISHIMAKI

# TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/july2025

## PURE FIRE

### The influence of the great Eric Johnson

**IT OCCURRED TO** me that I have yet to speak about one of my biggest guitar influences — the other elephant in the room, as it were! I always say that, for me, it's all about "the two Erics" — Eric Clapton and the one and only Eric Johnson.

I first heard Eric Johnson play via a tear-out flexi-disc that was included in *Guitar Player* magazine back in 1986. It was his studio recording of his virtuosic masterpiece "Cliffs of Dover." I had never heard anything like that in my life! I was into Hendrix and SRV and many other guitarists, but I hadn't heard anything like what Eric was doing. The tone, the technique, everything!

Eric was on the cover of the magazine, with the headline, "Is Eric Johnson the greatest unknown guitar player?" He had been working with Christopher Cross and kicking around Texas, but he didn't hit the mainstream until releasing his first two solo albums, *Tones* and *Ah Via Musicom*. A lot of my faster playing and phrasing comes directly from Eric's influence. I apologize to him every time I see him! He's nice enough to say, "We all get it from somewhere."

Perfect examples are the fast cascading pentatonics, such as those in **FIGURE 1**, that I often incorporate into my solos. Here, I begin with a D note, the flatted 7th (♭7) of E, which I then bend up to E and shake vigorously, followed by a line that descends straight down the E dominant pentatonic scale (E, G♯, A, B, D).

**FIGURE 2** illustrates a longer line that ascends and descends within E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D). I begin in 12th position and then shift up to 15th position at the end of bar 1, wrapping up the phrase in 14th position in bar 3. These scalar phrases are built from fast 16th notes and are articulated as clearly as possible.

Eric uses more hammer-ons and pull-offs than I do, whereas I like to pick every note. I struggle with legato-style phrasing because it just hasn't been a part of my approach to playing. My approach to these lines is like a hybrid of Al Di Meola and Eric Johnson, picking every note, as in **FIGURE 3**, which once again is built from fast ascending and descending 16th notes. Notice that these long phrases are structured primarily in four-note groups.

**FIG. 1** (E)

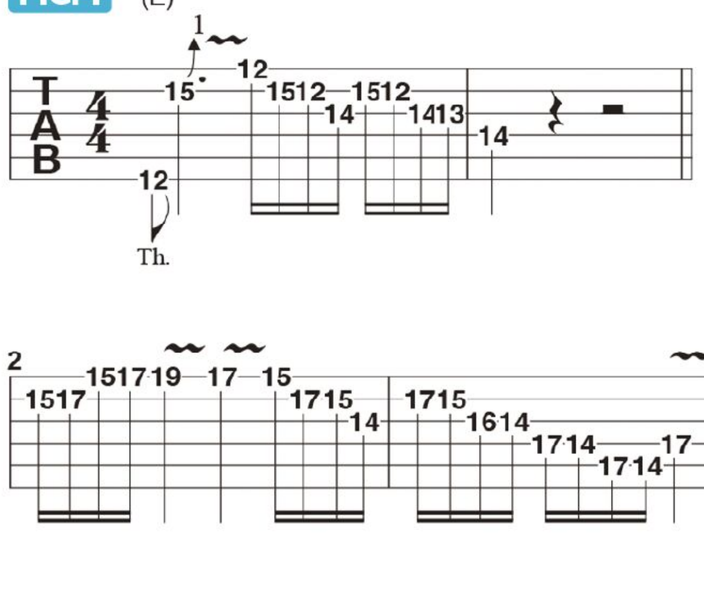



**FIG. 2**

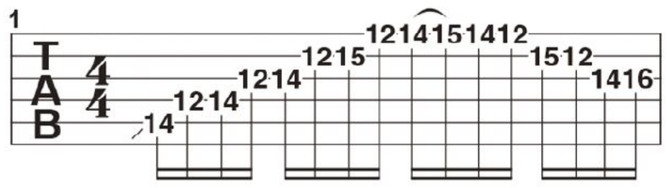
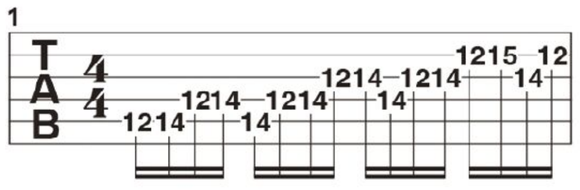


**FIG. 3**



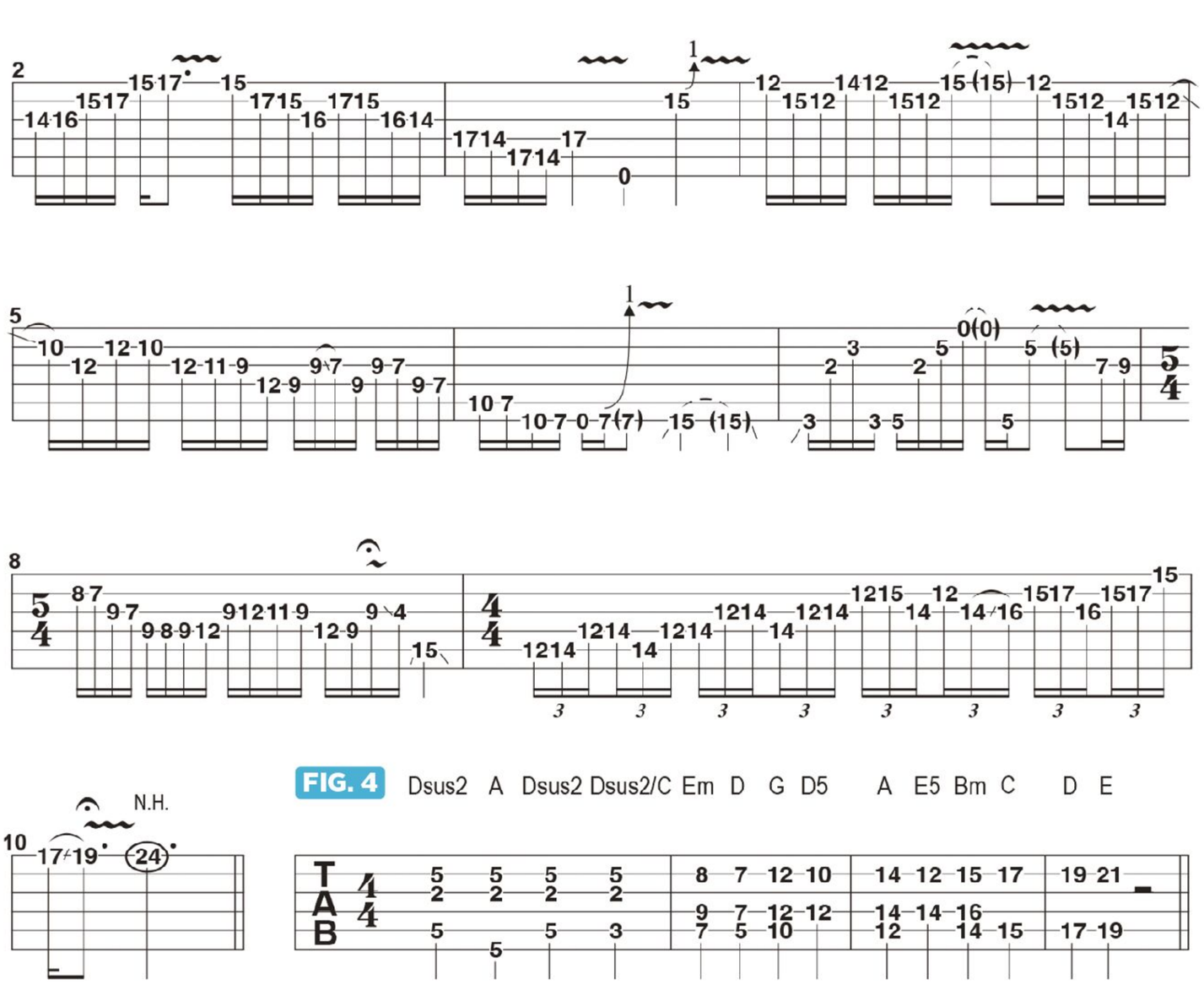


**FIG. 4** Dsus2 A Dsus2 Dsus2/C Em D G D5 A E5 Bm C D E

Also, the numerous quick position shifts in bars 1-6 are essential to making these phrases "speak" properly. The figure ends in bars 9 and 10 with fast ascending 16th-note triplets, culminating with a high natural harmonic (N.H.), sounded above what would be the 24th fret.

Eric Johnson also loves to play distinct, open-voiced three-note chord voicings, such as those shown in **FIGURE 4**, which have become a signature of his unique style.

These sounds and techniques have been an important part of my playing for as long as I've had the facility to hear and use them. And Eric's approach to equipment is equally important. When other guitarists had racks of modern digital gear with dozens of switchable sounds, Eric, even when playing live, switched between three completely different rigs consisting of vintage tube amps and analog pedals, all of which might be on the verge of exploding at any minute. I subscribe to the same model. That's why I play through seven amps! Old gear? It may not work today, but tomorrow it could change your life.

**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.**

JEFF FASANO/GUITAR WORLD

COLUMNS

# ONE GUITAR WOMAN

by Sue Foley

For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/july2025

# MORE BLUES YOU CAN USE

## Essential blues riffs for soloing, part 2

**LAST MONTH, I** introduced an approach to playing through a 12-bar blues shuffle in the key of E with some of my favorite licks to play over the IV (four) chord, A7, and the V (five) chord, B7. This month, we'll expand on these ideas with melodic phrases that work perfectly over these chord changes.

**FIGURE 1** illustrates the 12-bar blues form in E, starting with the stock root-5th, root-6th boogie vamp pattern, moving from E5 (E and B) to E6 (E and C♯) on each beat through bars 1-3. I begin bar 4 by sliding into a two-note shape known as a 6th, so called because the two notes — B and G♯ — are six major scale tones, or degrees, apart. At the end of this bar, I anticipate the move to the IV chord by playing my open A string along with C♯, the major 3rd of A, on the G string. This sets up the lick over A7 in bars 5 and 6. On beat 2 of bar 5, I play, over an open A pedal tone, a lick based on the E blues scale (E, G, A, B♭, B, D), with the inclusion of F♯, which can be thought of as either the 2nd, or 9th, of E or the 6th of A.

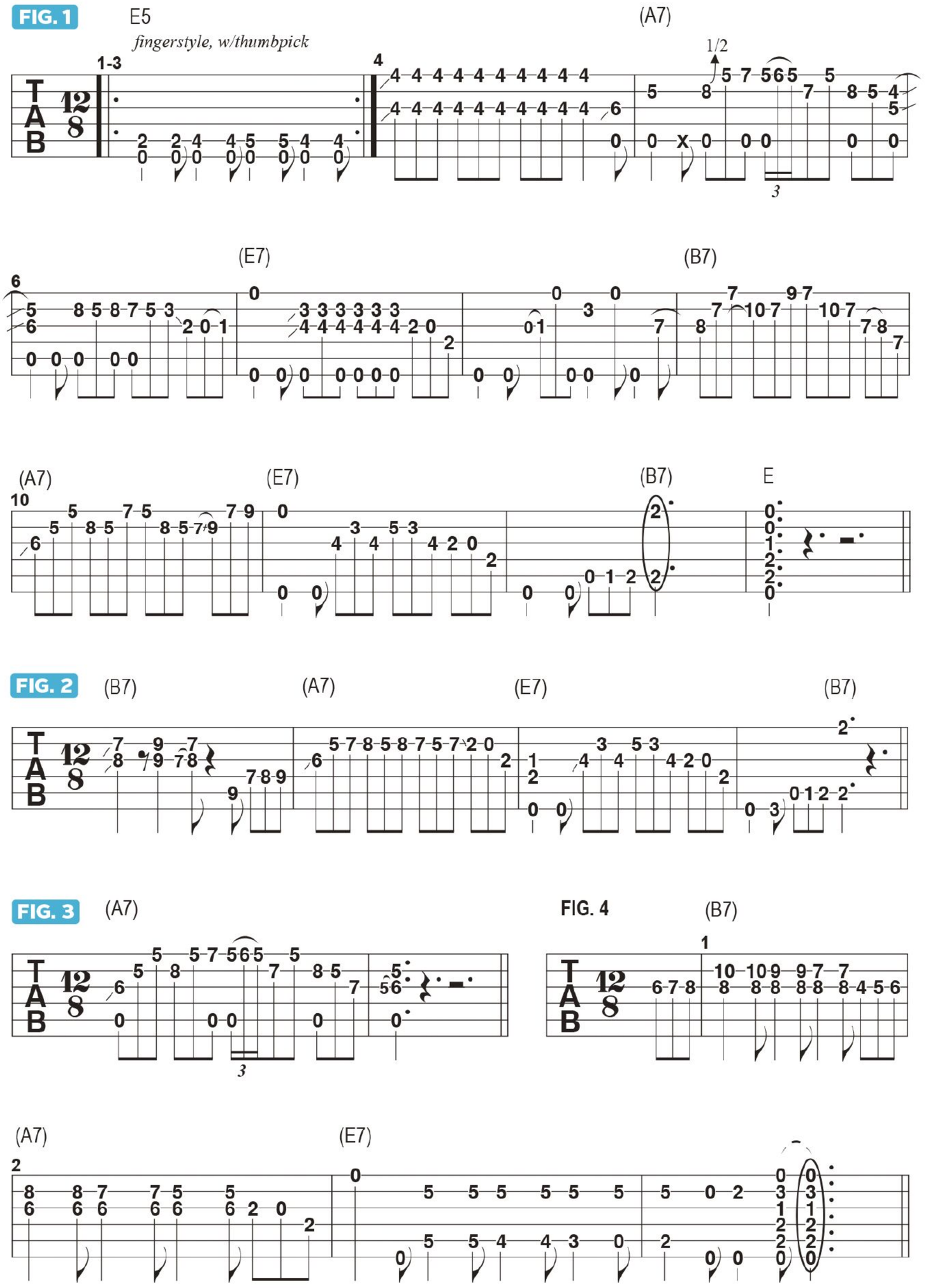
Over the last two beats of bar 6, I anticipate the change back to the I chord with a lick based on E the minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D) that also includes, G♯, the major 3rd of E, and I stick with this sound through bars 7 and 8.

The end of bar 8 then anticipates the move to the V chord, B7, with a hammer-on from D to a D♯ that falls on beat 1 of bar 9. D♯ is the major 3rd of B7, and the remainder of the lick is based on B minor pentatonic (B, D, E, F♯, A) with the inclusion of the 2nd, or 9th, C♯. In bar 10, I shift down two frets to play a similar line over A7. Notice that the "shape" of this phrase is nearly identical to what I played over B7, but now it's a whole step and two frets lower.

**FIGURE 2** offers a look at the shift from B7 to A7. Bar 1 begins with the notes D♯ and F♯, which are the major 3rd and 5th of B7, and bar 2, played over A7, is a mashup of E minor pentatonic and E major pentatonic (E, F♯, G♯, B, C♯). **FIGURE 3** demonstrates another option for a great blues phrase to play on the change back to A7.

Let's wrap up with **FIGURE 4**. In bar 1, over B7, I play simple two-note forms that descend from B7 to B6 to B, and in bar 2, over A7, I move the idea down a whole step and two frets to sound A7, A6 and A. The phrase then ends with a classic oblique-motion blues turnaround, as a D note on the 5th string descends chromatically to B, picked together with a reiterated high E root note sounded on the 2nd string.

You'll hear these kinds of licks in the playing of Chicago blues guitar greats like Jimmy Rogers, the Myers Brothers and Luther Tucker, not to mention the great Texas guitarist Johnny Winter, whose Eighties albums with Muddy Waters, such as *Hard Again, I'm Ready* and *King Bee*, are fantastic and must-listens for all blues guitar fans.




**Austin-based Sue Foley — a member of the Jungle Show with Billy Gibbons and Jimmie Vaughan — is touring in support of her new album, the Grammy-nominated *One Guitar Woman*. Head to suefoley.com.**

MARK ABERNATHY

COLUMNS

# HARDWIRED

by Jared James Nichols

For video of this lesson, go to
guitarworld.com/july2025

# LOVE IS BLUE

## Targeting the ♭5 "blue note"

**ONE OF MY** favorite sounds in blues and blues-rock soloing is utilizing the "blue note." I'm talking about the flatted 5th, or ♭5, which is located one half step below the 5th of the root note of whatever chord you're relating to.

Let's use the key of G as our point of reference: **FIGURE 1** begins with a G5 chord, establishing the "home base" sound of the I (one) chord. I follow this with the single notes G, then the minor 3rd, B♭, then the ♭5, D♭, which I proceed to bend up a half step to D, the 5th. I then play these same notes an octave higher, followed by a phrase that descends through the G blues scale (G, B♭, C, D♭, D, F). Notice in the last bar that I mphasize the ♭5, D♭, before ending the phrase with the notes C, B♭ and G.

When I was first learning the guitar, I found that when playing the G blues scale, as shown in **FIGURE 2**, the inclusion of the ♭5 in this scale added a really cool, bluesy sound, one that we all know and love. It's a tried-and-true sound that we've heard in the soloing of all of our favorite players, from Jimi Hendrix, Johnny Winter and Leslie West to Eddie Van Halen, Randy Rhoads and Zakk Wylde.

I discovered that using the ♭5 as a landing note added suspense and drama to my melody playing. One of the things I would suggest to everyone is to get that note "in your ear" and try using it as more than as just a passing tone.

Let's take a simple riff like **FIGURE 3**: I begin on the G root note, then walk up the G blues scale with the notes B♭, C, D♭, and D, then walk back down. A neat, twisty way to add expression to this phrase is to bend up to the ♭5, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 4**. After playing G, B♭ and C, I bend the C, which is the 4th of G, up a half step to D♭ then proceed to bend it up a whole step to the 5th, D. I then partially release the bend back to D♭, followed by a vibrato-ed C note.

Another cool thing to do is, instead of bending all the way up to the 5th, just bend up to the flatted 5th, D♭, as your final destination, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 5**.

I like to isolate the ♭5 within a phrase to make the note stand out. In **FIGURE 6**, the phrases played in each bar emphasize D♭ as a target note, which results in a very distinct sound.

Using the ♭5 in this way changes one's perception on where to start and stop within an improvised phrase. **FIGURE 7** offers a longer, nine-bar example that emphasizes the ♭5 throughout. Bar 2 begins on a low D♭, followed by D♭ an octave higher. In bars 3 and 4, I repeatedly play F, D and D♭ as triplets as I approach the end of the phrase in bar 5.

Bar 7 offers another angle, with the emphasis of the repeating D♭-B♭-G triplets. Bar 8 brings us back to a more straightforward blues-rock style phrase, followed in bar 9 with another targeted D♭ note.

Emphasizing the ♭5 is a great way to put a fresh spin on a sound we already know and add some flair to our improvised solo ideas.

**FIG. 1** G5

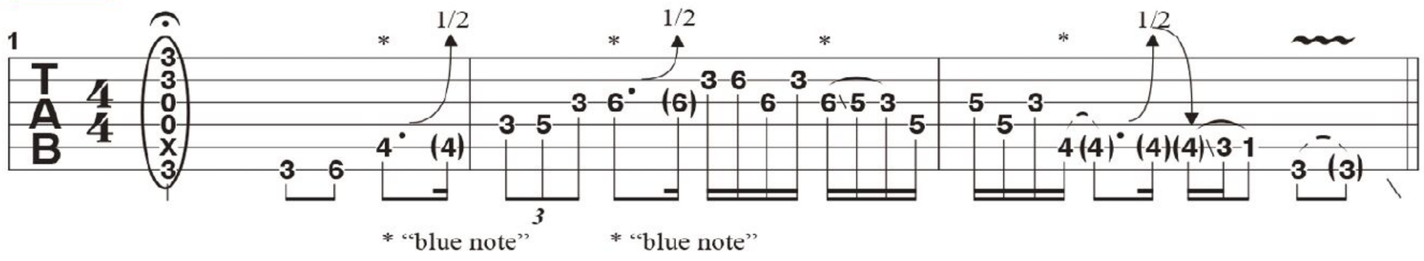



**FIG. 2** G blues scale

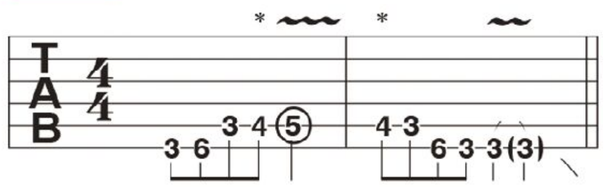


**FIG. 3**

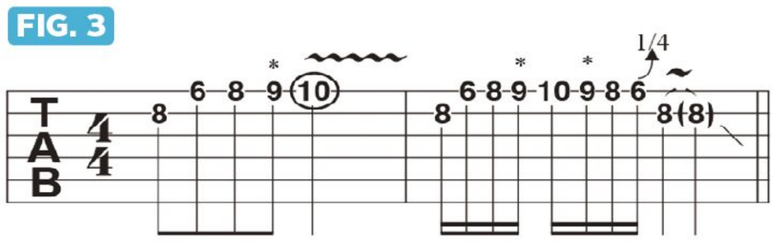


**FIG. 4**

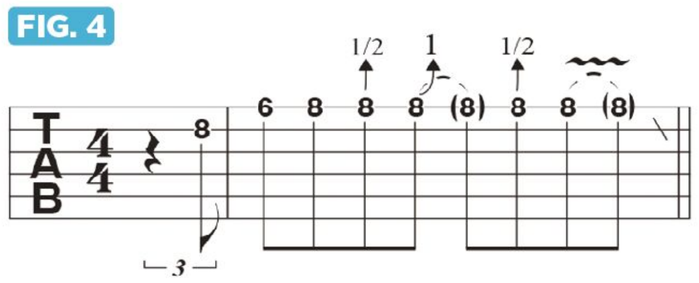


**FIG. 5**

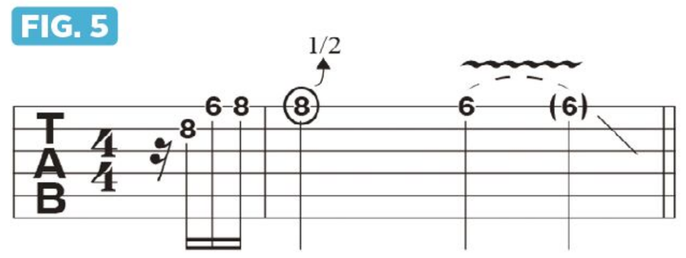


**FIG. 6**

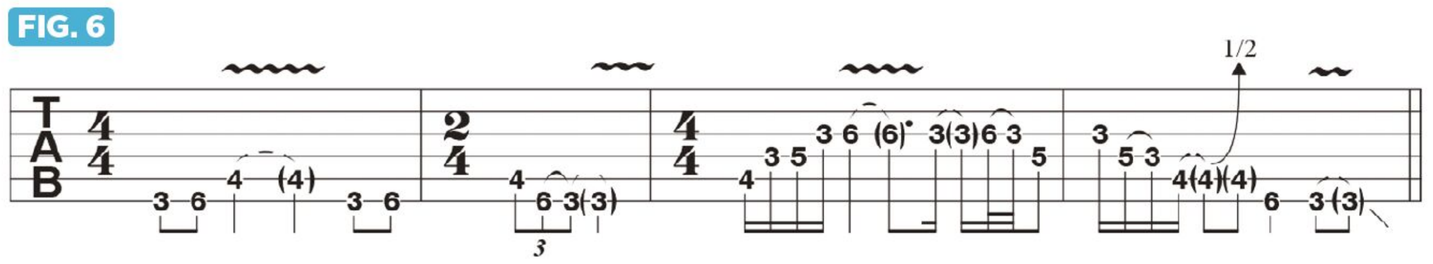
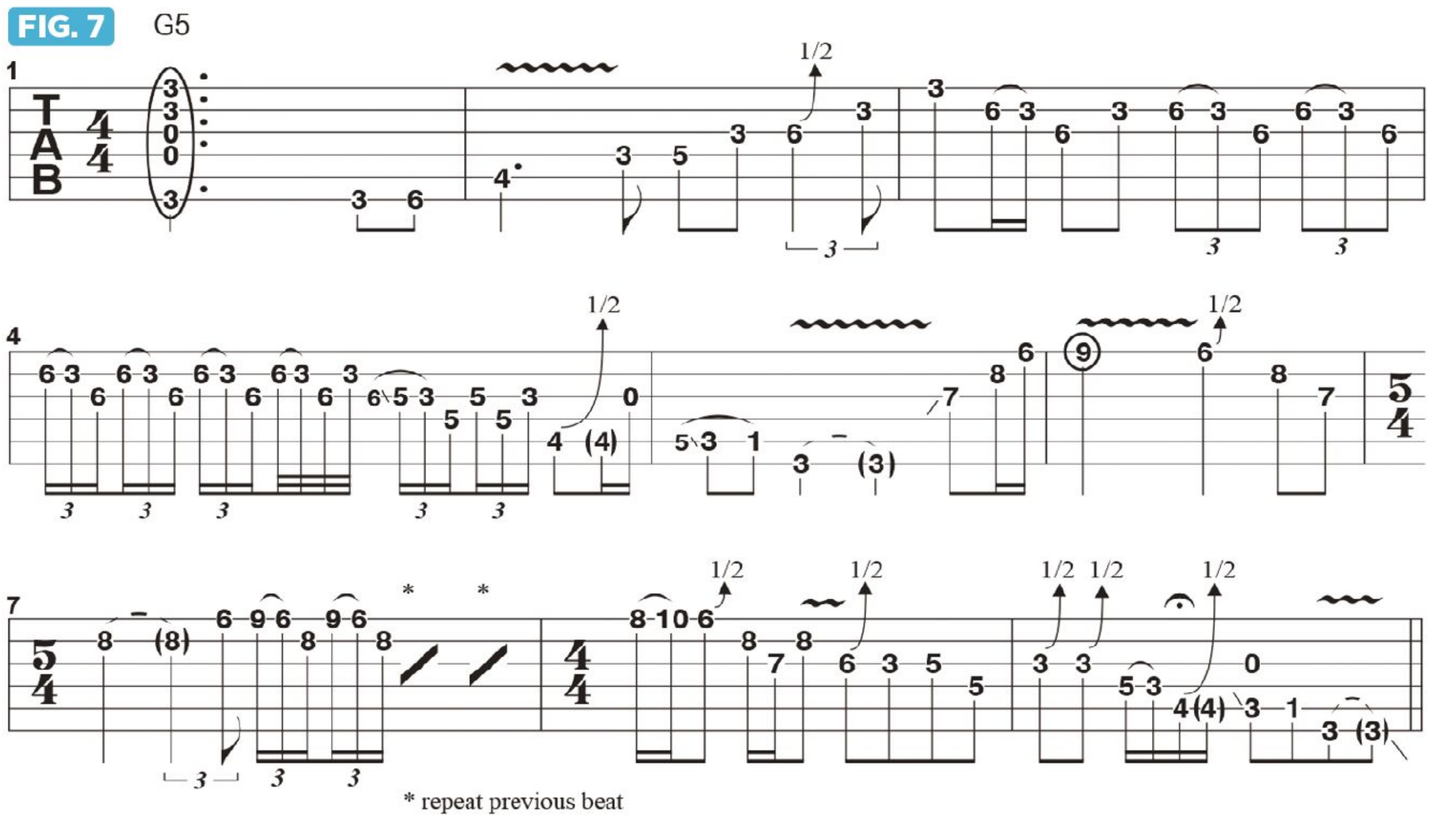


**FIG. 7** G5




**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.**

DAVID McCLISTER

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**B5DMAG**

# Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

## "GREEN SERPENT"
## Jinjer

**ONE OF MODERN** metal's most melodic and dynamic bands, this young Ukrainian quartet fuses elements of their homeland's rich musical heritage with a sophisticated sonic vision, state-of-the-art level of technical proficiency and an intensely dramatic delivery.

This popular new song from their latest album, *Duél*, has guitarist Roman Ibramkhalilov playing his six-string electric baritone guitar in "drop-A" tuning, which is drop-D, transposed down two and a half steps (low to high: A, E, A, D, F♯, B), with bassist Eugene Abdukhanov tuning his five-string's low B down to A, to match the guitarist's low strings an octave down. So while Roman plays the song as if it were in the key of D minor, everything sounds in A minor, a perfect 4th (two and a half steps) lower than written.

Using a high-gain bridge pickup tone, Roman begins the song with a hauntingly dark and intriguing chord progression, which he lightly arpeggiates on his top three or four strings. Notice his use of unusual voicings that include a minor-2nd cluster with his open 1st string — for Dm(add9) — and a couple of wide intervals, with big three- or four-fret stretches required between the 2nd and 4th fingers on the top two strings for B♭m(maj7) and Em, as illustrated in the chord frames.

Heading into the first chorus at section C, Roman lays into his low strings and plays a series of heavy, inventive "drop-D-style" riffs. To bend the strummed octaves up a half step during this section, pull the 5th and 3rd strings downward, in toward your palm, as opposed to pushing them away from the palm, as one would typically do for a bend on a higher string, as in bar 65.

The only technically tricky guitar parts to nail consistently are the pairs of unusual, high-pitched natural harmonics (N.H.) Roman plays on his top two strings during the second verse, in bars 44 and 51. While they're not physically difficult to perform, you need to precisely lay one of your fret-hand fingers across the strings at a very specific point, which is a little past the 3rd fret, as indicated by the decimal "3.2."

## "I AIN'T THE ONE"
## Lynyrd Skynyrd

**THIS OPENING TRACK** on Lynyrd Skynyrd's classic debut album features some of guitarist Gary Rossington's finest riff writing, as well as killer soloing by co-guitarist Allen Collins, with bassist Ed King nimbly octave-doubling all the song's intricate rhythm guitar parts.

Rossington kicks things off in bar 5 with a swampy, John Lee Hooker-style riff built around an open A5 chord shape, using *hybrid picking* (pick and fingers technique) to play a bluesy low melody on his A string while repeatedly sounding an A note one octave higher on his G string's 2nd fret. Notice how the guitarist punctuates his phrases with rests here. Use both hands to silence the strings.

As the full band enters at section B, Rossington switches to pick strumming to introduce the song's verse riff, as Collins helps establish the mood with some tastefully phrased, wailing high lead licks, playing in the 17th-position box pattern for the A minor pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G). Throughout the verse (section C), which is based on a 12-bar blues form in A, both guitarists tightly double a series of supportive low riffs behind Ronnie Van Zant's vocals. As they move to the IV (four) chord, D, in bar 17, Gary and Allen play lots of shifting perfect-4th double-stops on their middle strings, for D5, C5, E5, F5 and G5. When fretting these two-note chords, use either the tips of your 3rd and 4th fingers or barre your index finger across both strings.

Collins makes great use of string bends and finger vibratos in his solo at section E, often combining them to make his phrases really sing. Notice how, instead of gravitating to the familiar "box 1" A minor pentatonic shape that most rock guitarists rely on — as he himself had done earlier — he begins in the less common 14th-position box, playing licks on his middle two strings with a three-fret span between the bent and unbent notes. When performing these and all the other bends that follow, push the string upward with both your 3rd and 2nd fingers and hook your thumb around the top side of the fretboard for leverage.

## "PEACE FROG"
## The Doors

**GUITARIST ROBBY KRIEGER** made great use of his wah pedal for this song's simple but super catchy intro and verse riff, using it rhythmically, as if he were tapping quarter notes with his foot, to accentuate his funky 16th-note strumming. And instead of strumming a standard G barre chord shape, which would have sounded too thick here, Krieger chooses to not finger the low G root note at the 3rd fret on his 6th string, nor the high G note on the 1st string, both of which would normally be barred. He also intentionally mutes his 3rd string, so as to not include a major or minor 3rd (B or B♭) in the chord voicing, keeping it a harmonically not-commital "stacked" G5 voicing, which works well with the repeating melodic bass figure that moves back and forth from G to C.

There's a lot of fret-hand muting going on in this strum riff, as indicated by the stacks of Xs in the tablature. To perform the muted strums, simply loosen your grip on the chord shape, just enough for the strings to break contact with the frets. But don't let go of the strings, or else you'll sound a bunch of unwanted open notes. Speaking of which, as indicated in bar 1, be sure to silence the open low E note right after picking it. This is done by lightly touching the string with the tips of your fret-hand thumb and ring finger.

During the song's interlude (section F), Krieger uses both hands to damp his strings during the rests that follow certain single notes and chords, and also to perform the short, crisp *staccato* articulations. Indicated by a small black dot above a note or chord, the staccato marking tells you to cut its rhythmic duration in half (by 50%). So a staccato eighth note should sound like a 16th note followed by a 16th rest. Likewise, a staccato quarter note should sound like an eighth note followed by an eighth rest.

Notice the fingering Krieger uses for the Gm7 chord he plays during the outro, in bars 53, 55, 56, 60 and 61 (see the frame at the beginning of the transcription). While it may seem a little odd to finger the chord this way, it's an outgrowth of the G5 grip and best facilitates changing back and forth.

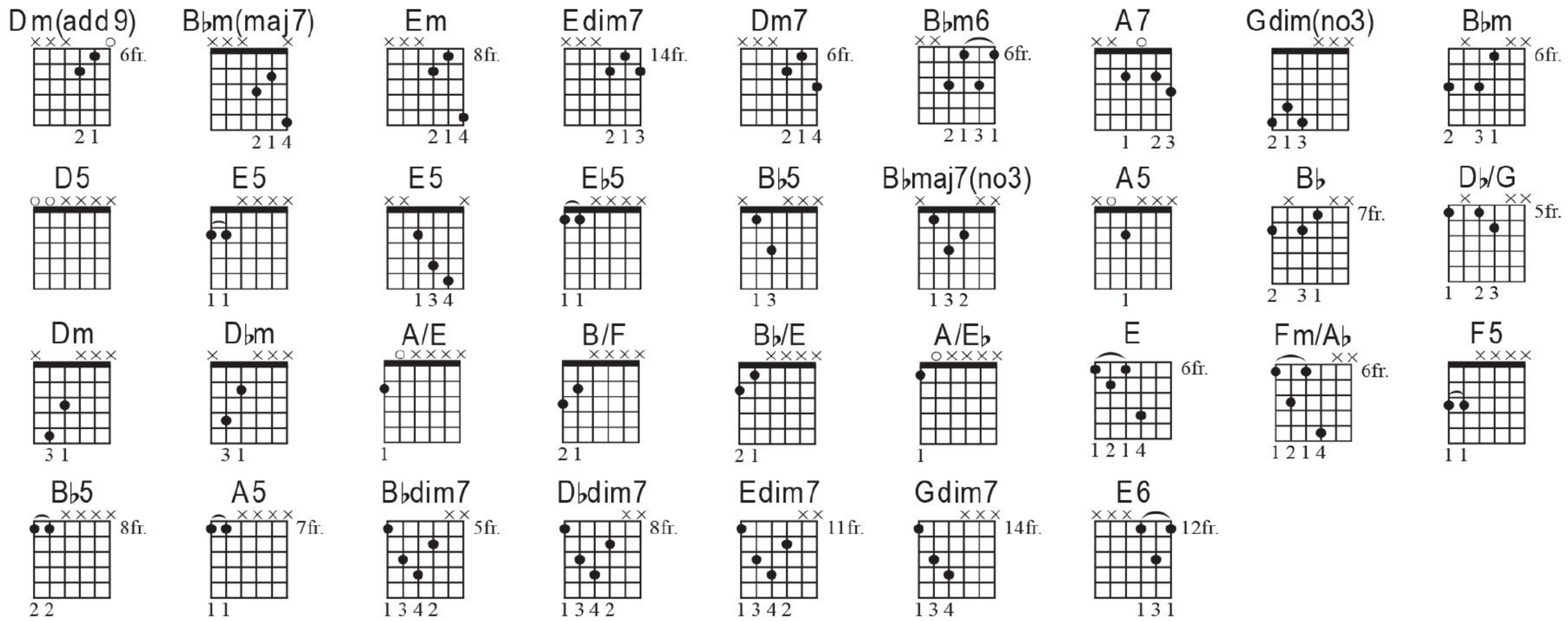
# "GREEN SERPENT"

## Jinjer

*As heard on* **DUÉL**

*Words and Music by* **TATIANA SHMAYLUK, ROMAN IBRAMKHALILOV, EUGENE ABDUKHANOV** *and* **VLAD ULASEVICH** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

**All guitars are drop-A tuning (drop-D tuning, down two and one half steps) [low to high: A, E, A, D, F♯, B].**
**5-string Bass is in altered tuning (low to high: A, E, A, D, G).**
*All music sounds in the key of A minor, a perfect 4th (two and one half steps) lower than written.*



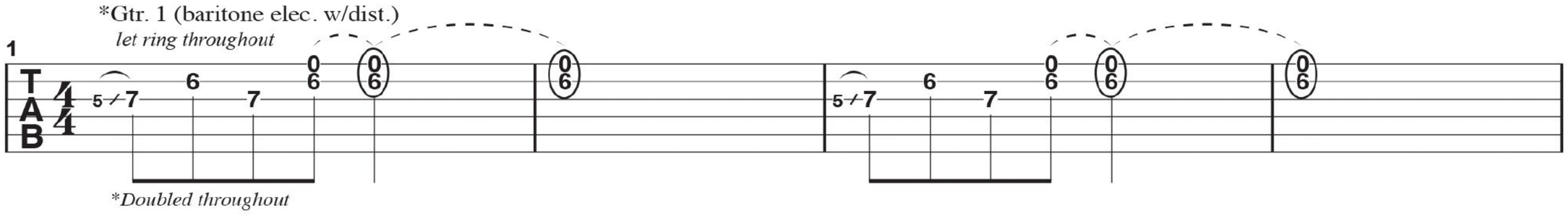

**A** **Intro** (0:00)

**Moderately** ♩ = 145

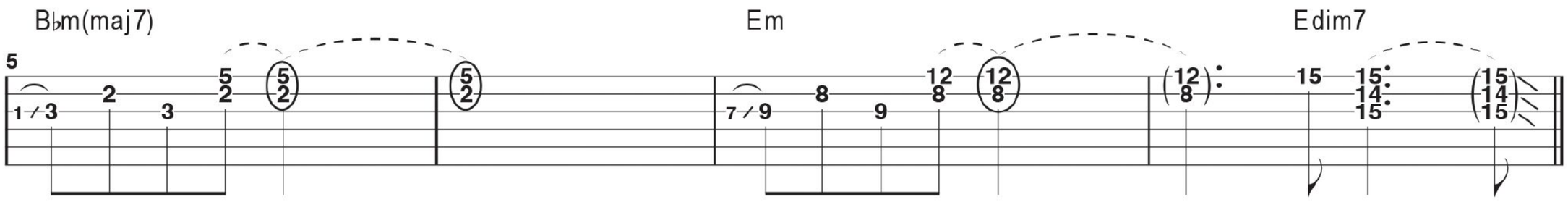
Dm(add9)

*Gtr. 1 (baritone elec. w/dist.)

*let ring throughout*

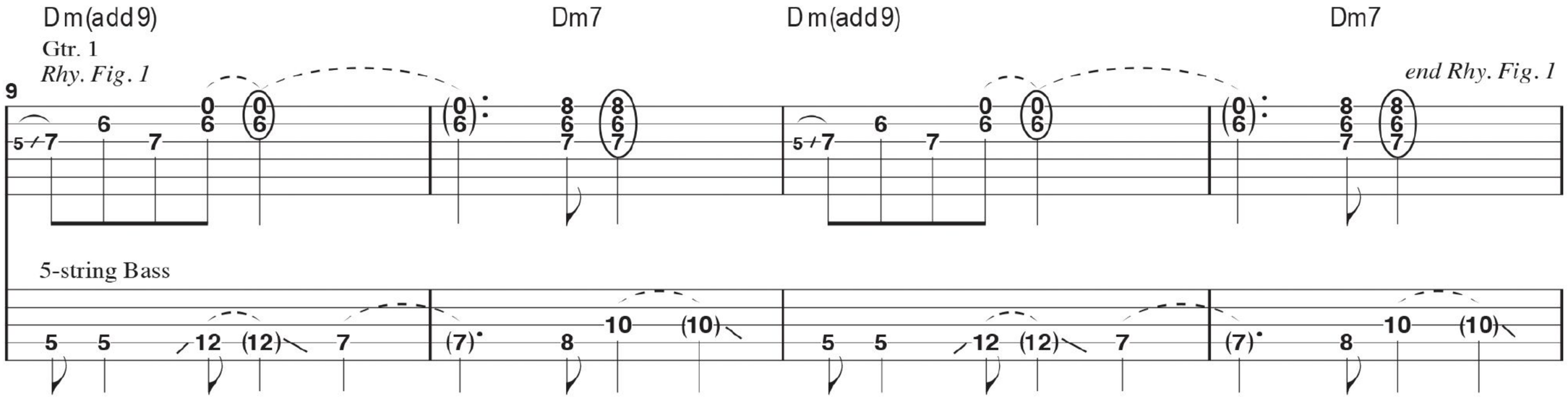



*Doubled throughout




**B** **1st Verse** (0:13)

**The grapes are falling down** **The grapes are falling down**






"GREEN SERPENT"
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EUGENE ABDUKHANOV AND VLAD ULASEVICH.
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The grapes are falling down

B♭m6 A7

13

Please add some sober water into heady wine

Dm(add9) Dm7 Dm(add9) Dm7

*Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 9)*

let ring

17 Bass

*P P

*P = 'pop' string with pick-hand finger.

Don't turn into a raging storm this peaceful night

B♭m6 A7 Gdim(no3) B♭m

21 Gtr. 1

P.M.

Bass

C **Chorus** (0:40, 1:30, 2:28)

(2., 3.) It's starting here (1.) This peaceful night
You don't drink it You absorb it

D5 N.C.(E5) (F5) (B♭5) (D5) E5 E♭5 B♭/E E♭5 E5 E♭5

25 P.M. 1/2 P.M. 1/2 P.M. P.M. 1/4 1/4

Eventually you're swallowed Now by the mud

D5 N.C.(E5) (F5) N.C. B♭5 B♭maj7(no3) N.C.(F5) A5

29 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Here it comes The green serpent
Here it comes The green serpent

E F♯m/A♭ N.C. B♭ N.C.(A5) E/B♭ D♭/G

33 P.M.

*2nd time, skip ahead to* **E** *Bridge (bar 56)*
*3rd time, skip ahead to* **F** *Outro (bar 71)*

It puts you on the path How deep is the
It puts you on the path So unsure

D5 N.C.(E5) (F5) N.C. (E5) (B♭5) Dm D♭m A/E

37 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

**D** **2nd Verse** (1:06)

mud in the temping vineyard The grapes are falling down

E♭5 D5 N.C.(E♭5) (D5) (B♭5) (A5) (D5) (D♭5) (C5) (A5) (A♭5) B/F B♭/E A/E♭

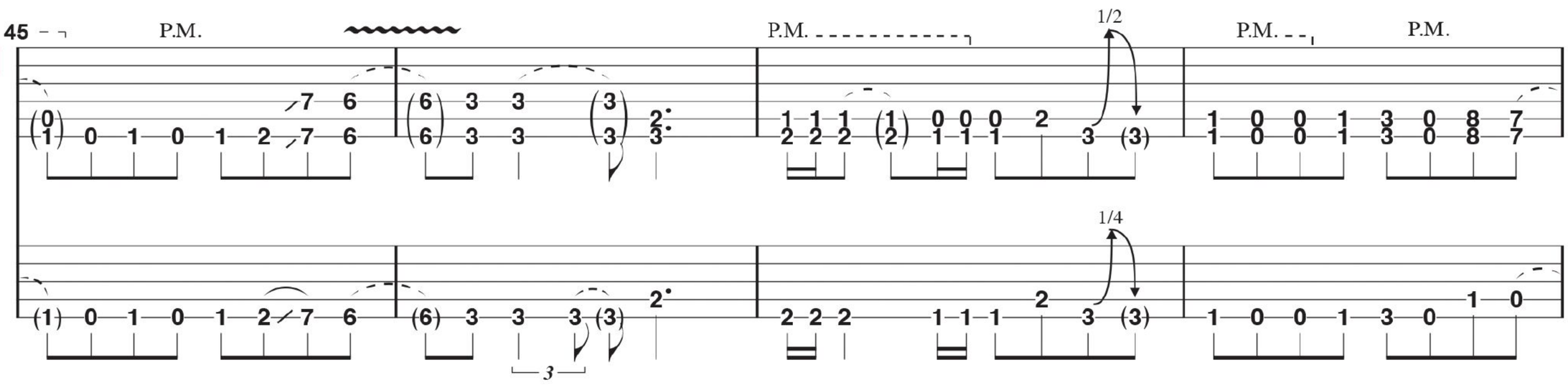
41 P.M. P.M. P.M. N.H. P.M.

pitches: F♯(left channel gtr.)
C♯(right channel gtr.)

**And you pick them one by one The drunk stepped in -**

(D5) (E♭5) (A5) (A♭5) (F5) B/F B♭/E A/E♭ (F5) D5 E♭5 F5 D5 B♭5 A5

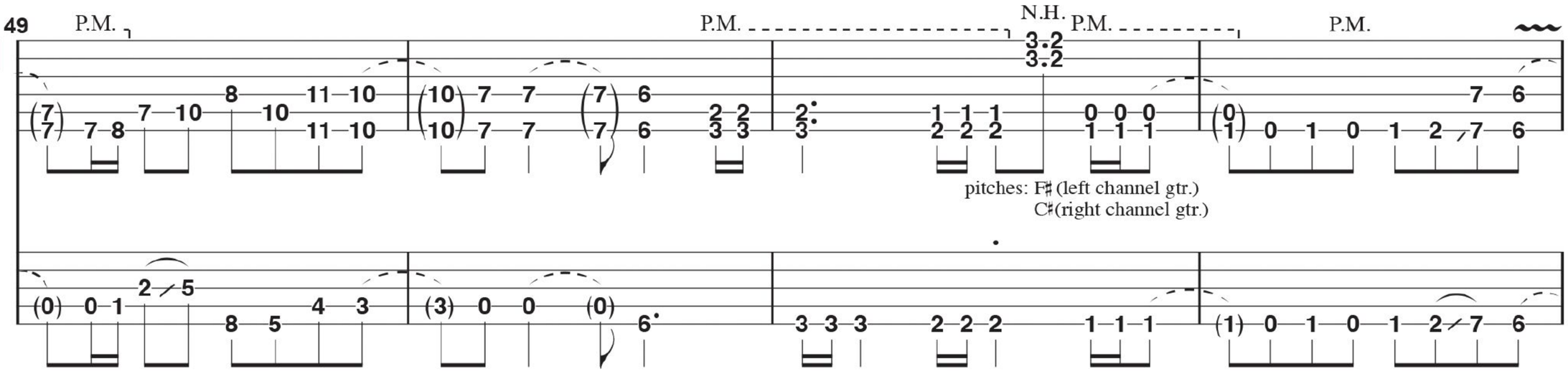
45




**- to the adult life Lukewarm wine in his blood It's not him who drinks**

N.C. (D5) (D♭5) (C5) (A5) (A♭5) B/F B♭/E A/E♭ N.C. (D5) (E♭5) (A5) (A♭5)

49

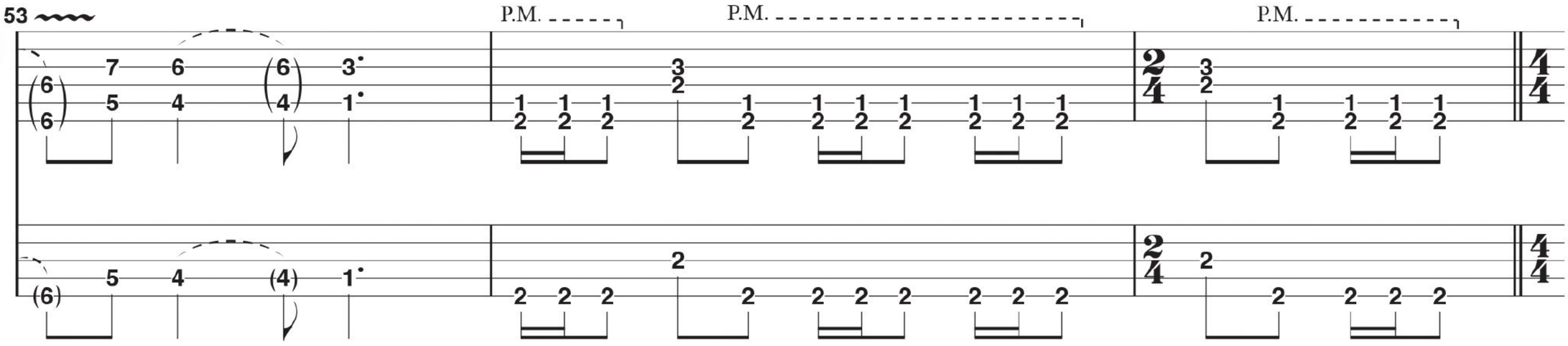



*Go back to* C *Chorus (bar 25)*

**from the bottle It's the bottle that drinks from him**

N.C. (D5) (D♭5) (B♭5) B♭/E

53

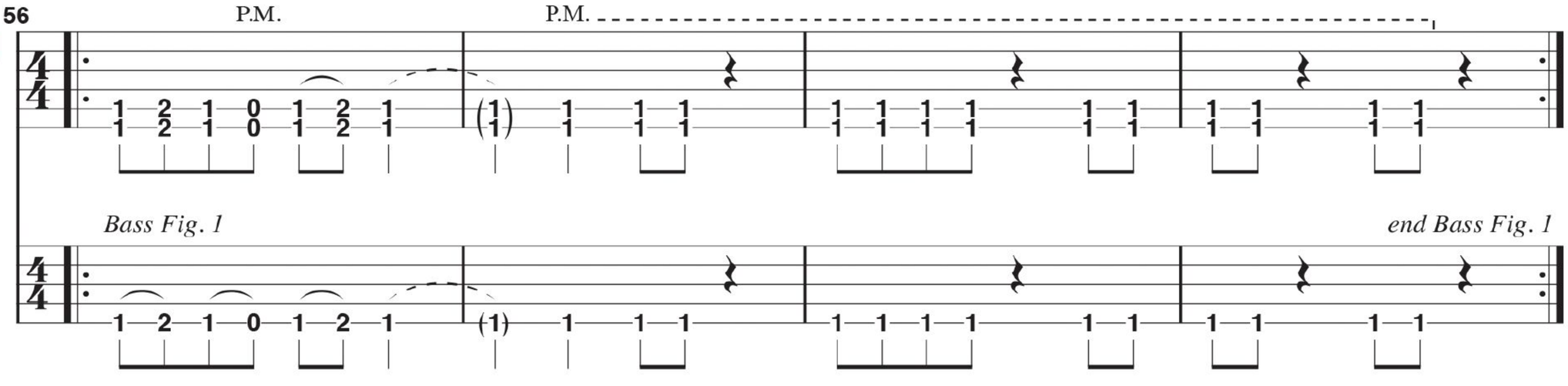



## E Bridge / Drop (1:57)

**The serpent gives an umbrella on a sunny day**
**And takes it back when it rains**

E♭5 E5 E♭5 D5 E♭5 E5 E♭5

56



**It holds so much annihilating**

N.C. (E♭5) (D5) (E♭5) (G5) B♭dim7 D♭dim7 Edim7 Gdim7

60 P.M. P.M. let ring P.M. let ring P.M. let ring

**power So it's turning**

(E5) (F5) (E5) (D♭5) (E5) (D♭5) (G5) (F5) (E5)

1/2

64 let ring

1/2

*Go back to* C *Chorus (bar 25)*

**saints into sinnners in just one hour**

(G5) (F5) (E5) E6

68

**F Outro** (2:55)

**A foe and a friend locks you in pirouette**
**Shame hurts more than headache**
**Let the green serpent slither away**
**Let the green serpent slither away**

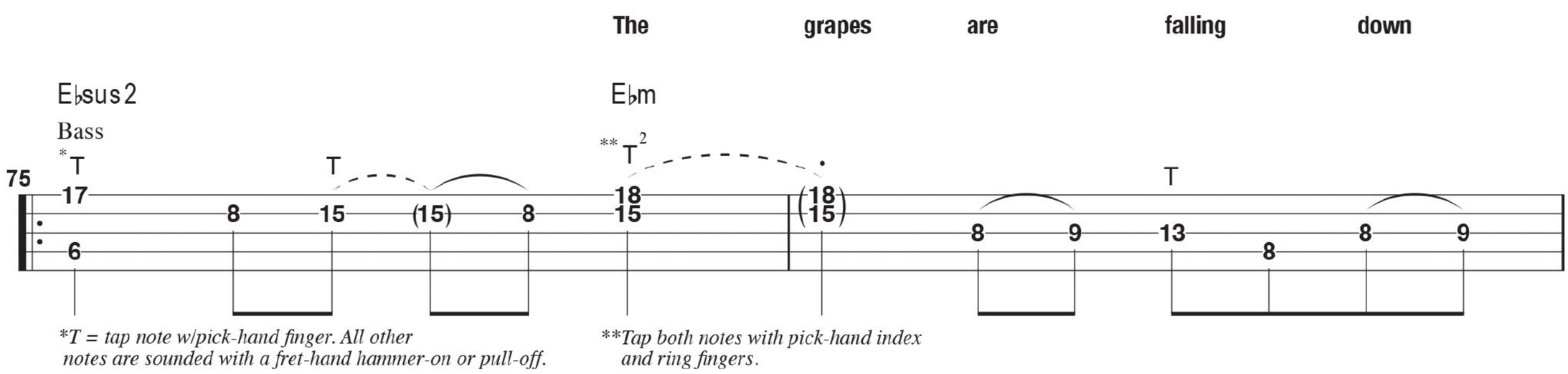
E♭5 E5 E♭5 D5 E♭5 E5 E♭5

71 Gtr. 1 P.M. P.M. *(play 4 times)*

*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 56)*

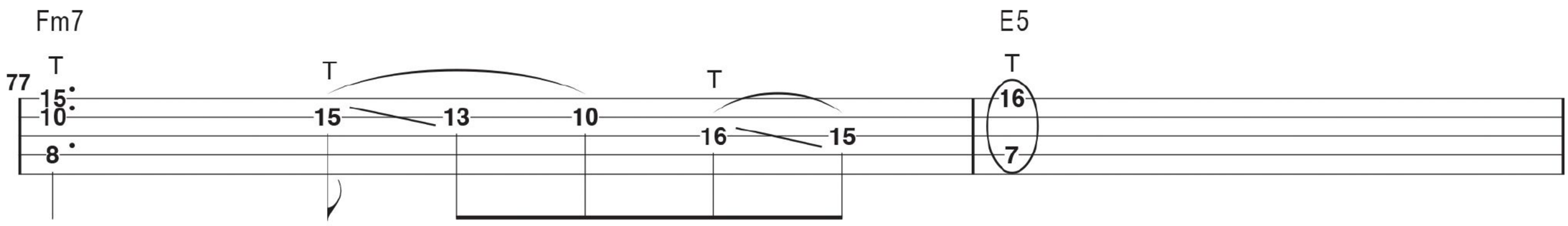
**G** **2nd Outro (Bass)** (3:21)

(♩ = 134)

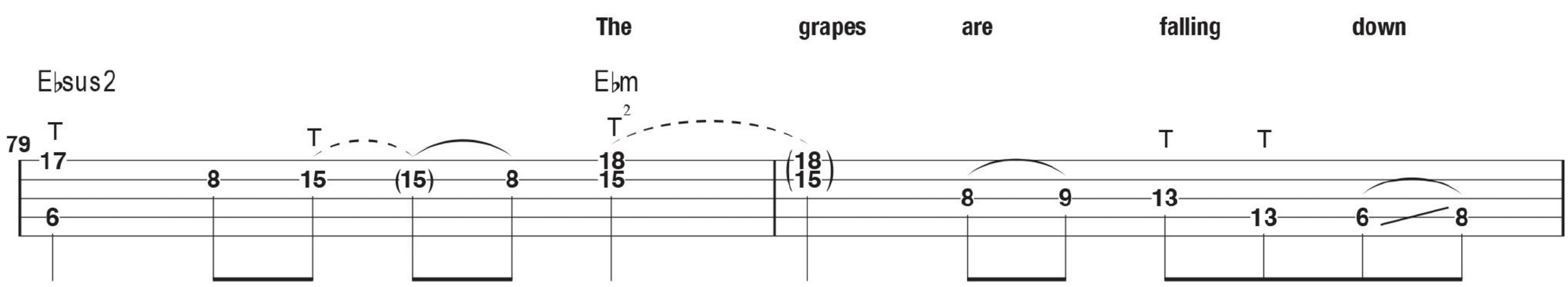



*T = tap note w/pick-hand finger. All other notes are sounded with a fret-hand hammer-on or pull-off.

**Tap both notes with pick-hand index and ring fingers.

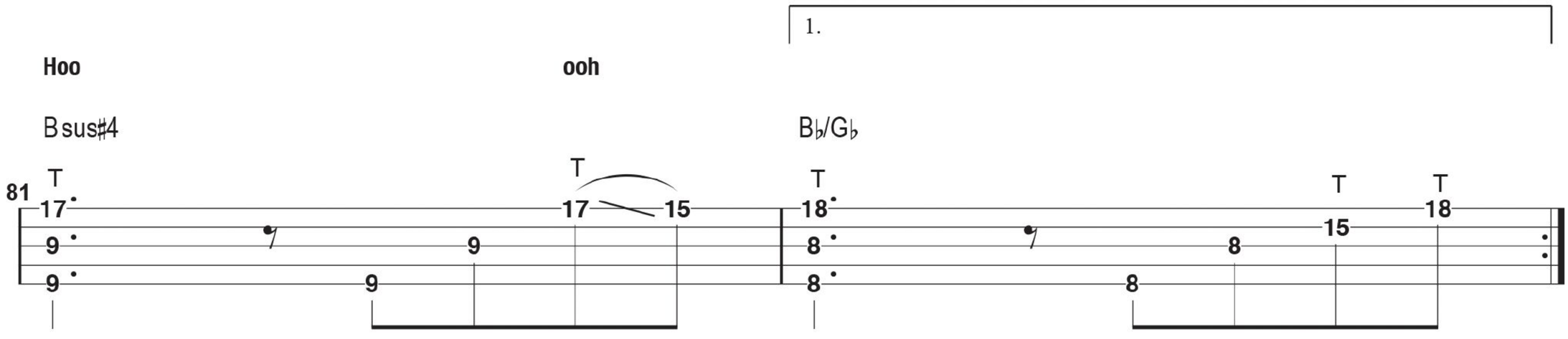



Oh




Hoo ooh

1.

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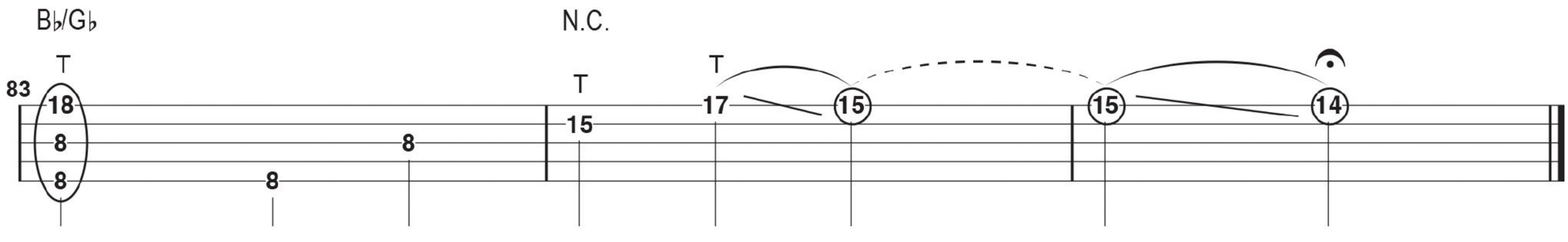
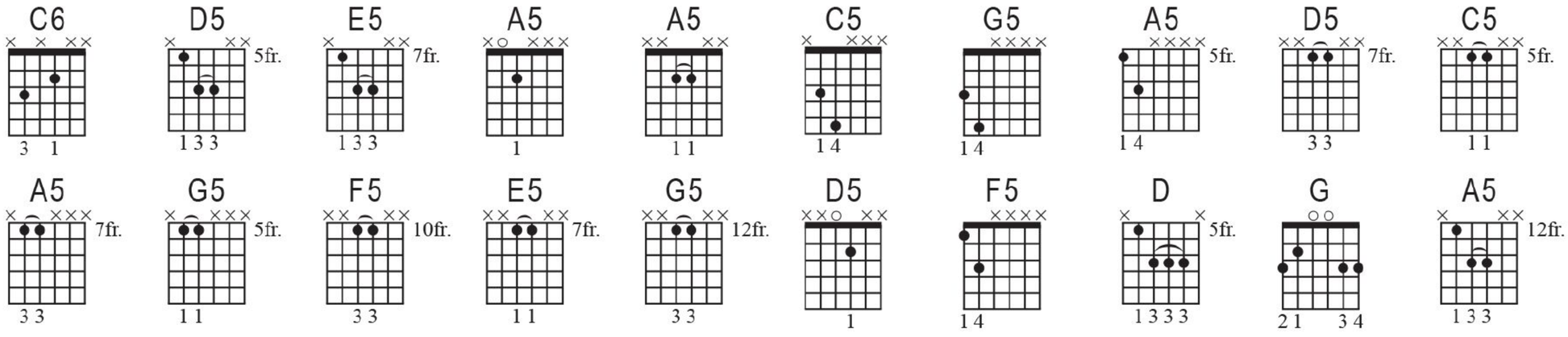


# "I AIN'T THE ONE"

## Lynyrd Skynyrd

*As heard on* **PRONOUNCED 'LĚH-'NÉRD 'SKIN-'NÉRD**

*Words and Music by* **GARY ROSSINGTON** *and* **RONNIE VAN ZANT** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**




**A** **Intro** (0:00)

**Moderately Slow** ♩ = 93

**One two three**

N.C.

C6

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/overdrive)
Gary Rossington (left speaker ch.)

1 *(cymbal roll)* *(drum intro)* *(play 3 times)* (w/pick and fingers)

Bass

(0:13)

(0:14)

**(whistle)**

N.C. (A5) D5 E5

Gtr. 1

5 (w/pick)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/overdrive)
Allen Collins (right speaker ch.)

1/4

Bass

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**B** (0:24)

A5 C5 A5 G5 A5 C5 A5 D5 C5 A5 G5

*Gtr. 3 (elec. w/overdrive) (Collins)

9

*Doubled throughout

Gtrs. 1 and 2

*Rhy. Fig. 1*

*end Rhy. Fig. 1*

Bass

*Bass Fig. 1*

*end Bass Fig. 1*

**C** **Verses** (0:34, 1:16, 2:45)

**1. Now I'll tell you plainly baby What I plan to do Say I may be crazy woman**
**2., 3. You're talking jive woman when you say to me that your daddy's gonna take us in baby**

A5 G5 A5

*Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 first time (see below bar 16)*
*Gtr. 3 plays Fill 2 second time (see below bar 17)*

*Gtrs. 1 and 2

13

*Gtr. 2 doubles Gtr. 1 simile throughout

Bass

**but I ain't no fool Your daddy's rich mama You're overdue**
**Take care of me Well you know and I know woman I ain't the one**

D5 C5 A5 G5 D5 F5 E5 D5 F5 E5 F5 G5

16

*Fill 1* (0:34)

Gtr. 3

*Fill 2* (1:16)

Gtr. 3

And I ain't the one baby
I never hurt you sweet heart

Been messing with you
I never pulled my gun

Got bells in your mind lady
Got bells in your mind mama

A5 G5 N.C.(E5)

19

1/4

*Substitute Bass Fill 2 second and third times (see below bar 30)*

*2nd time, proceed to bar 29*
*3rd time, skip ahead to* G *Outro (bar 51)*

And it's easy to see
And it's easy to see

I think it's time for me to move along
I think it's time for me to move along

I do believe
I do believe

22

1/4 1/4 1/4

D5 C5

1.

*Go back to* C *2nd Verse (bar 13)*

Oh you're trying to put a hook in me baby Oh no

2. Now

A5 C5 A5 G5 A5 C5 A5 D5 C5 A5 G5

*Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 9)*

25 Gtr. 3

1/2

*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9) Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 (see below bar 29)*

2.

N.C. (A5)

Time for me to put my boots out in the street missy

Gtr. 1 (panned to right speaker channel)
(w/pick and fingers)

29

Bass

5

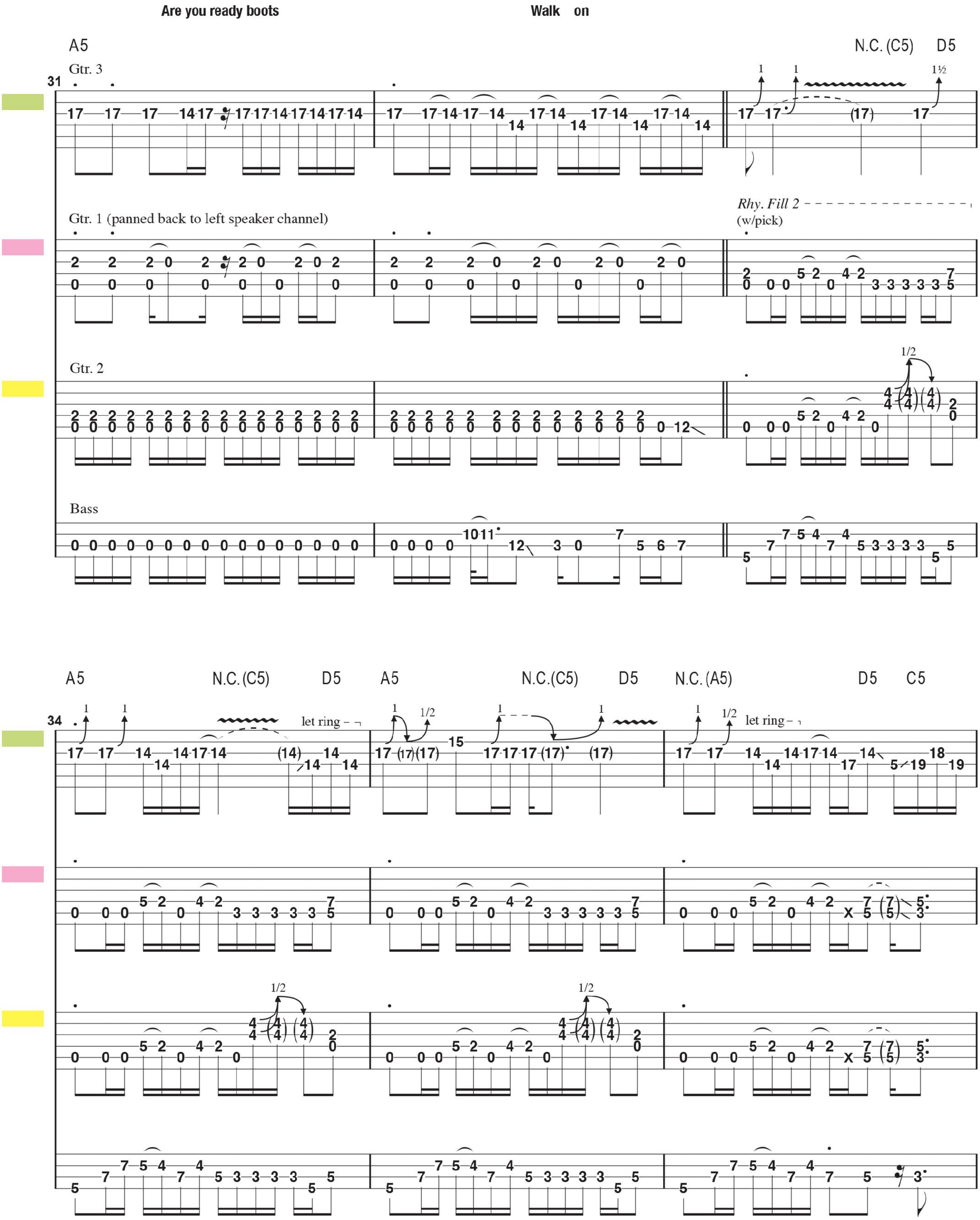
*Bass Fill 1* (1:08)

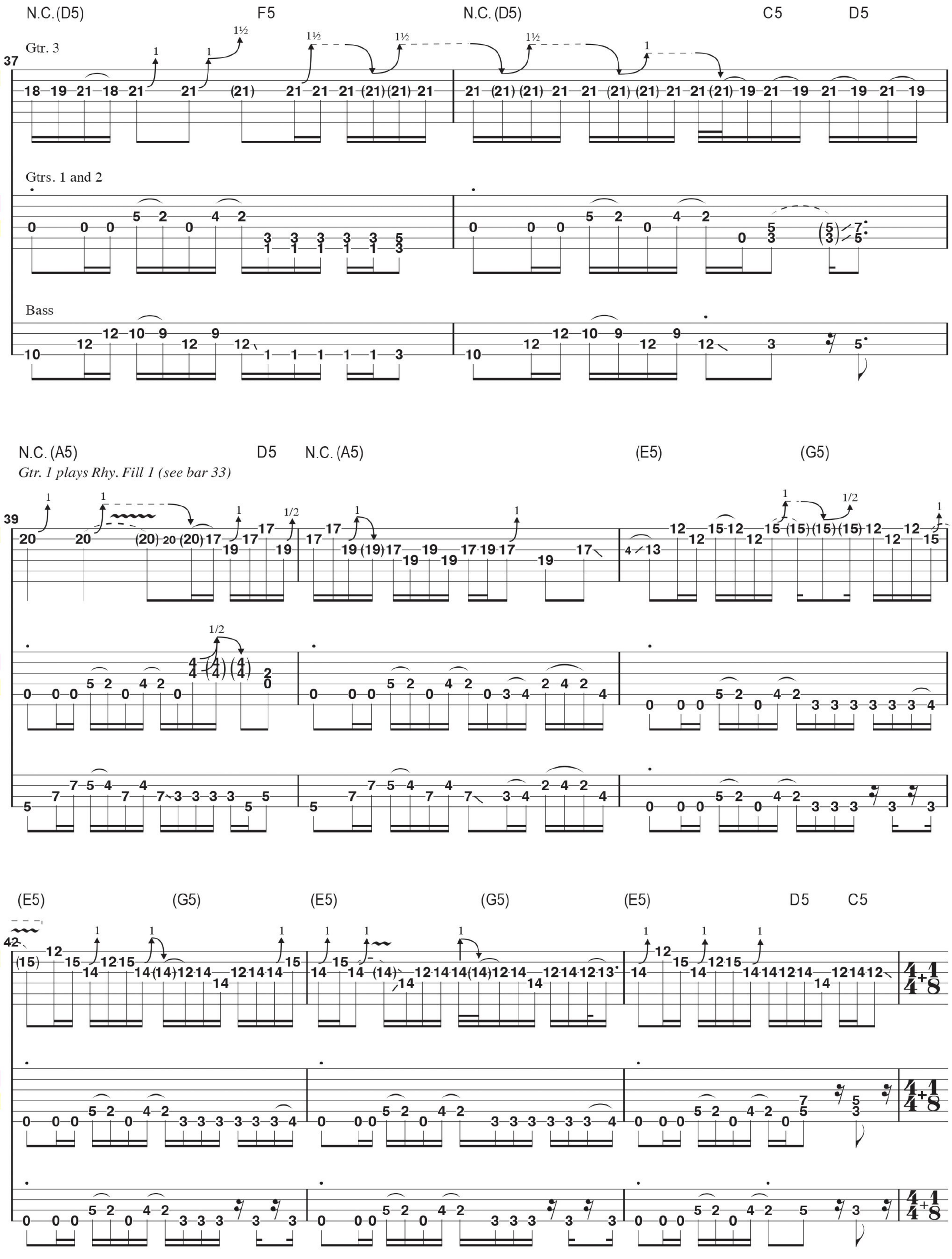
A5 G5

*Bass Fill 2* (1:34)

A5 G5

## E Guitar Solo (Allen Collins) (1:57)




N.C.(D5)
F5
N.C. (D5)
C5
D5
37
Gtr. 3
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Bass
N.C. (A5)
D5
N.C. (A5)
(E5)
(G5)
39
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see bar 33)
(E5)
(G5)
(E5)
(G5)
(E5)
D5
C5
42

Well now

N.C. A5 C

Gtrs. 2 and 3

45

Gtr. 1

Bass

**F** (2:34)

*Go back to* C *3rd Verse (bar 13)*

Alright there missy Let me tell you a thing or two How 'bout it baby 3. Now

A5 C5 A5 G5 A5 C5 A5 D5 C5 A5 G5

*Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 9)*

Gtr. 3

47

*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)*

**G** **Outro** (3:16)

Oh I must be in the middle of some kind of conspiracy

N.C.(A5)

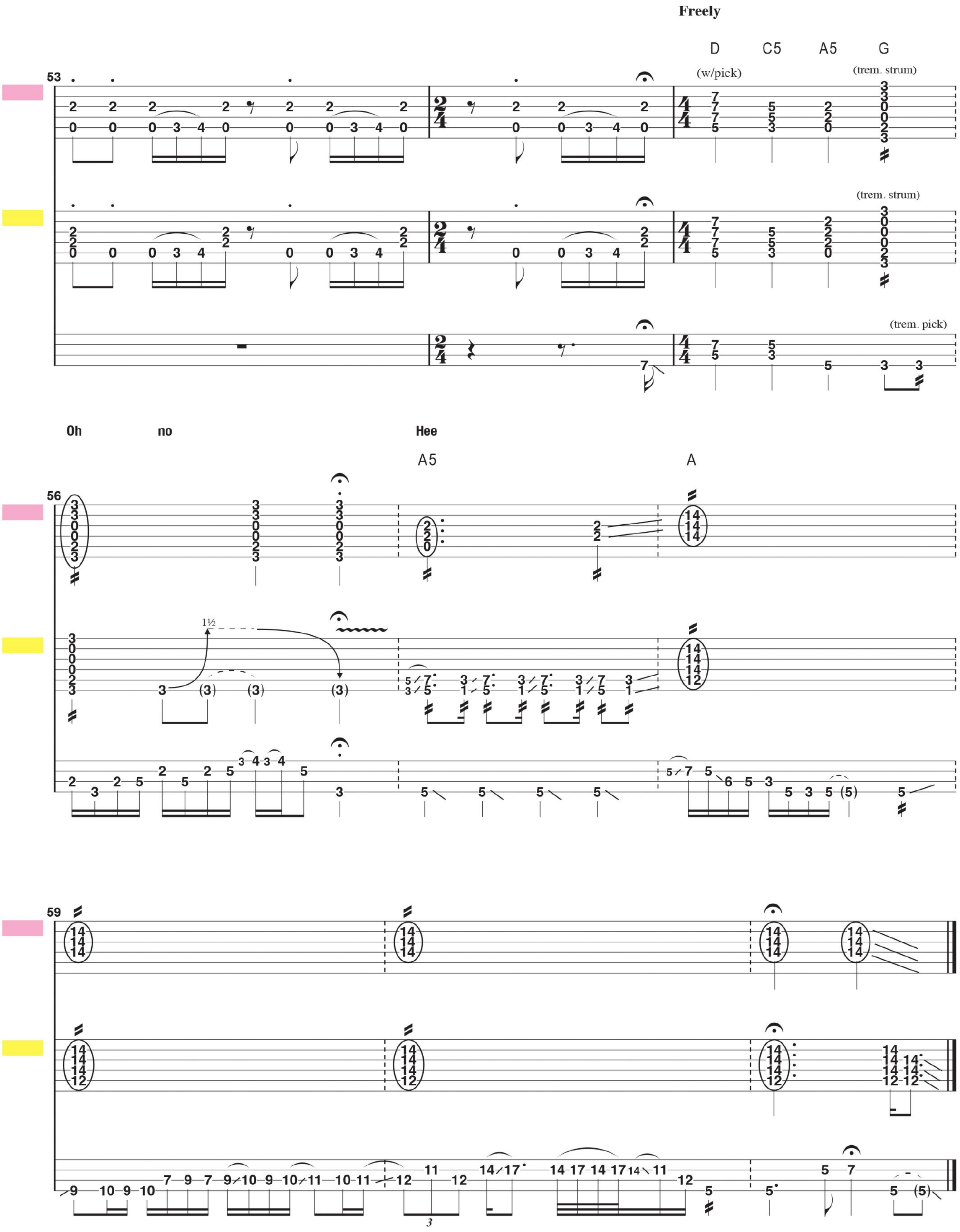
Gtr. 1

(pick w/fingers)

51

Gtr. 2

Bass

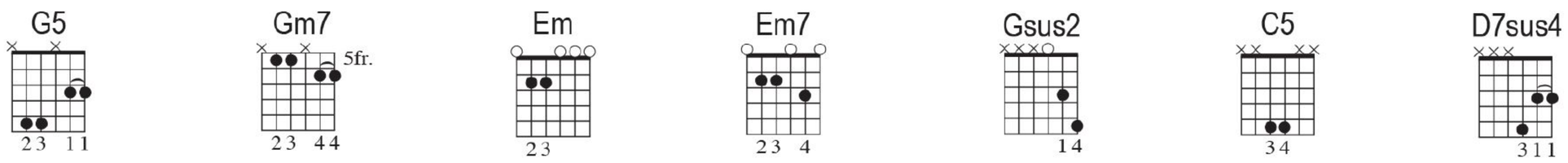

Freely
D
C5
A5
G
(w/pick)
(trem. strum)
(trem. strum)
(trem. pick)
53
Oh
no
Hee
A5
A
56
1½
59

# "PEACE FROG"

## The Doors

*As heard on* **MORRISON HOTEL**

*Words and Music by* **JIM MORRISON** *and* **ROBBY KRIEGER** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**




**A** **Intro** (0:00)

**Moderately ♩ = 110**
**W/swing 16ths feel (♫ = $\overset{3}{\overline{\text{♫}}}$)**

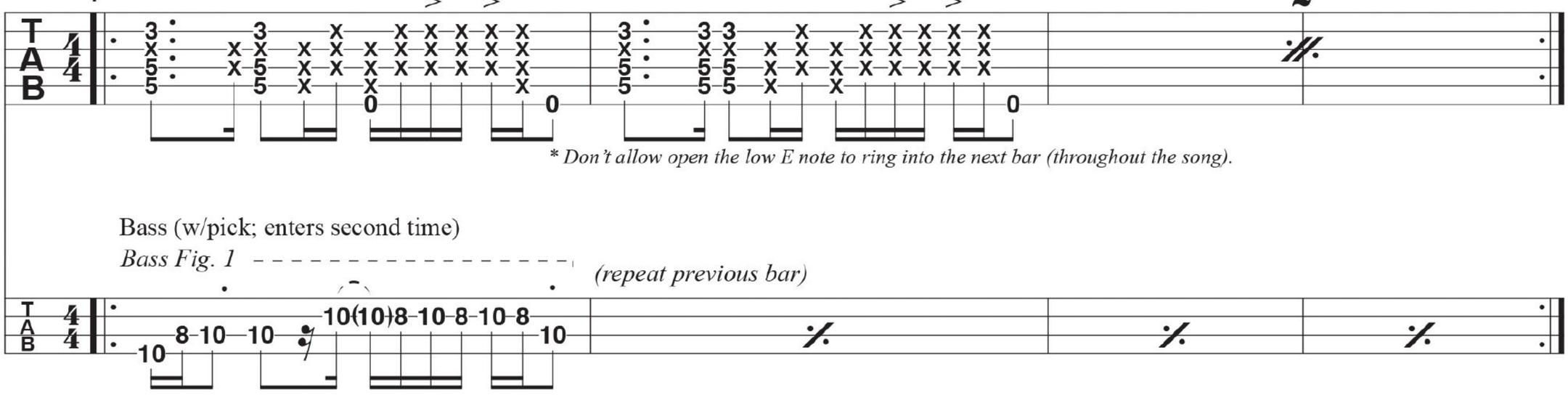
*(2nd time)* **There's**

G5

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/light dist. and wah)

(drums enter)

*(repeat prev. two bars)* **2**




* *Don't allow open the low E note to ring into the next bar (throughout the song).*

Bass (w/pick; enters second time)

*Bass Fig. 1*

*(repeat previous bar)*




**B** **1st Verse** (0:17)

**Blood in the streets It's up to my ankles**

**Blood in the streets the town of Chicago**

**came)**

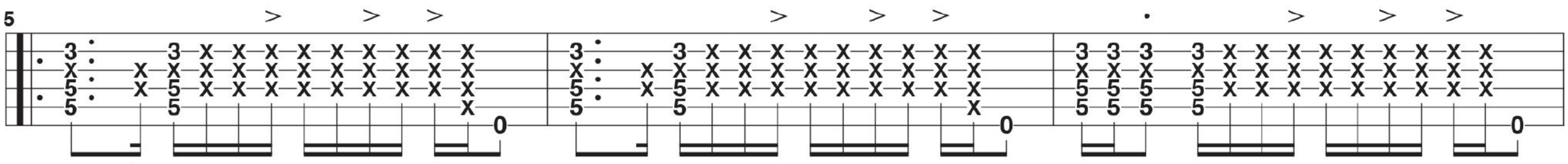
**(She Blood in the streets It's up to my knee came)**

**Blood on the rise It's following me**

**(She came)**

G5

Gtr. 1

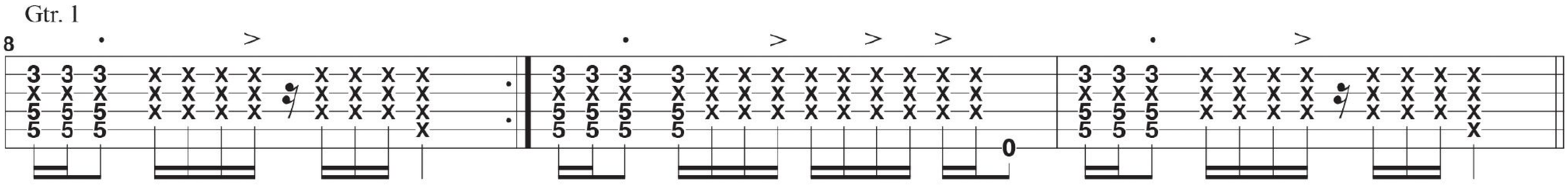



*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 10 times (see bar 1)*

*(1st time only)* **(She**

**Think about the break of day**

Gtr. 1

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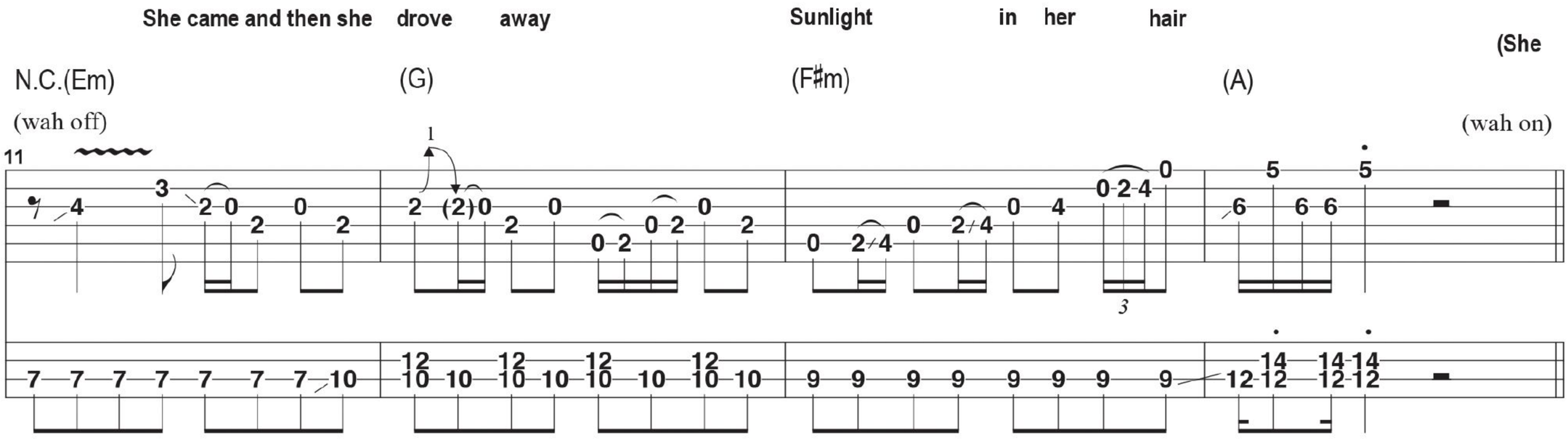
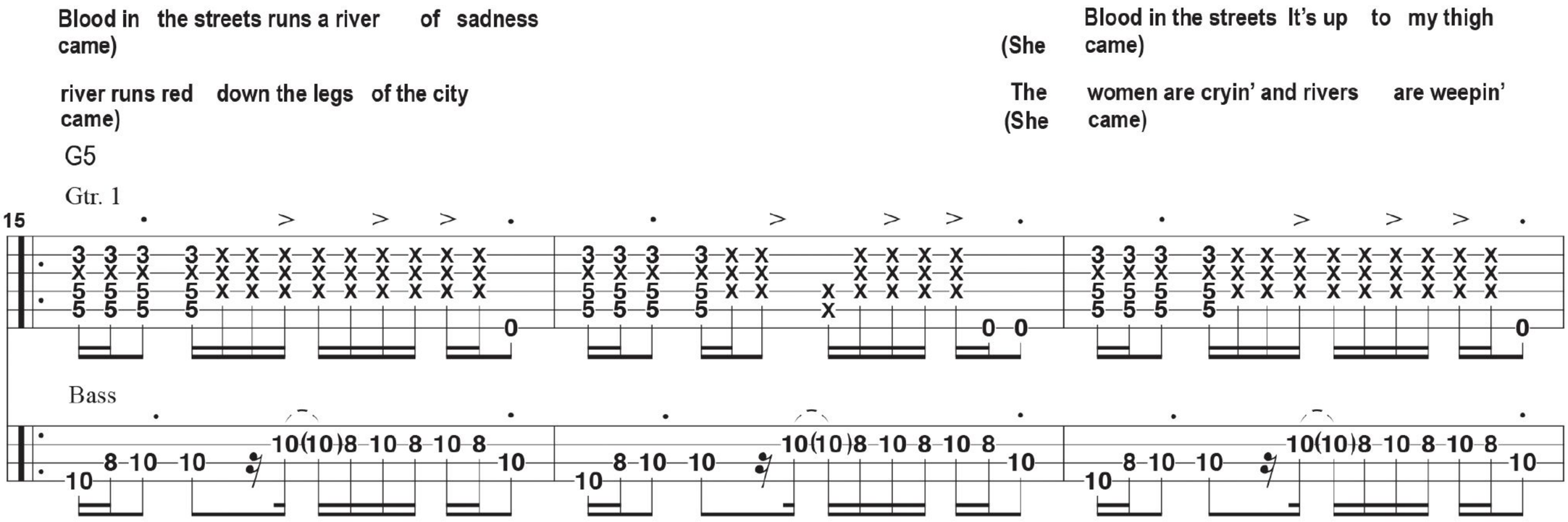
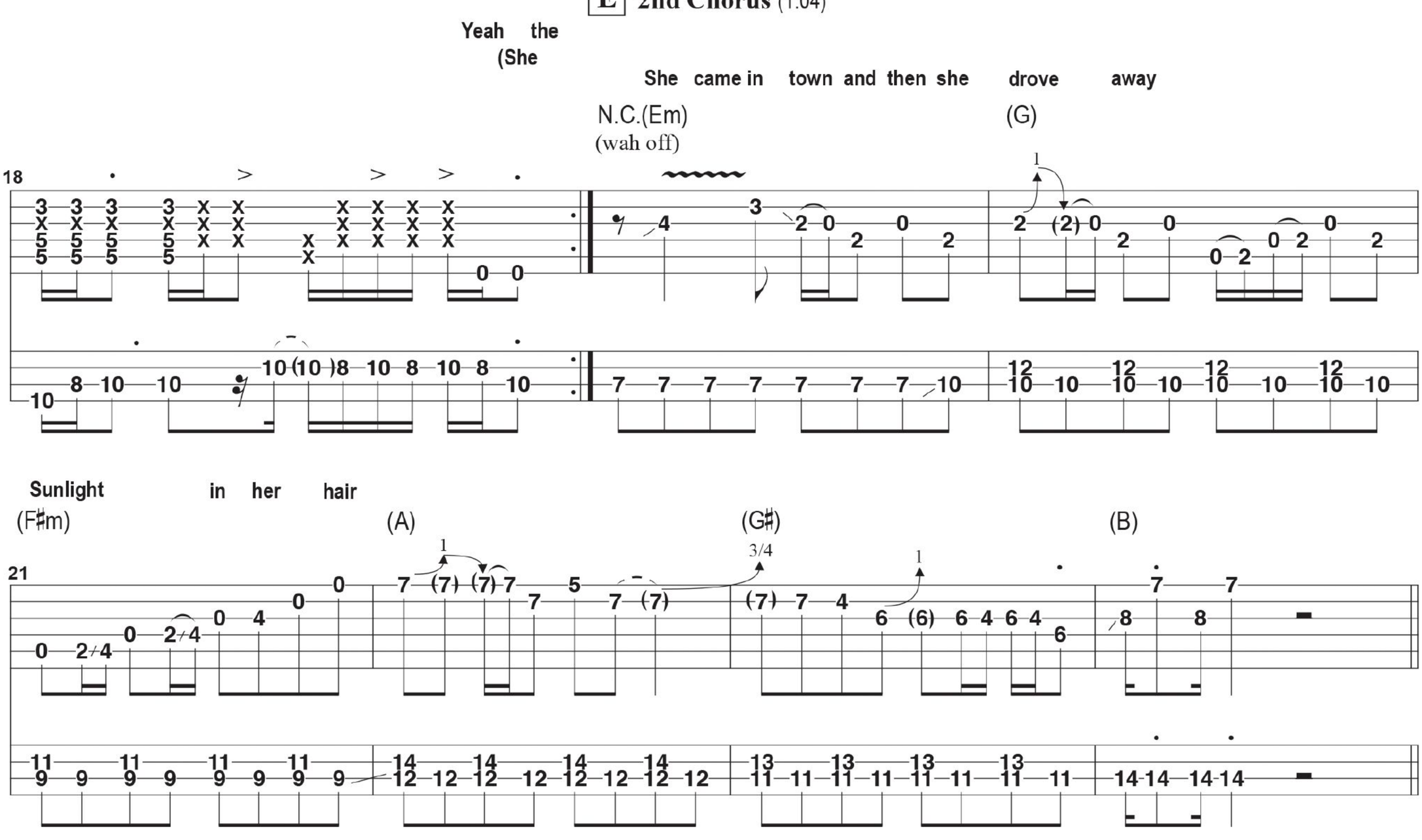
## C 1st Chorus (0:38)



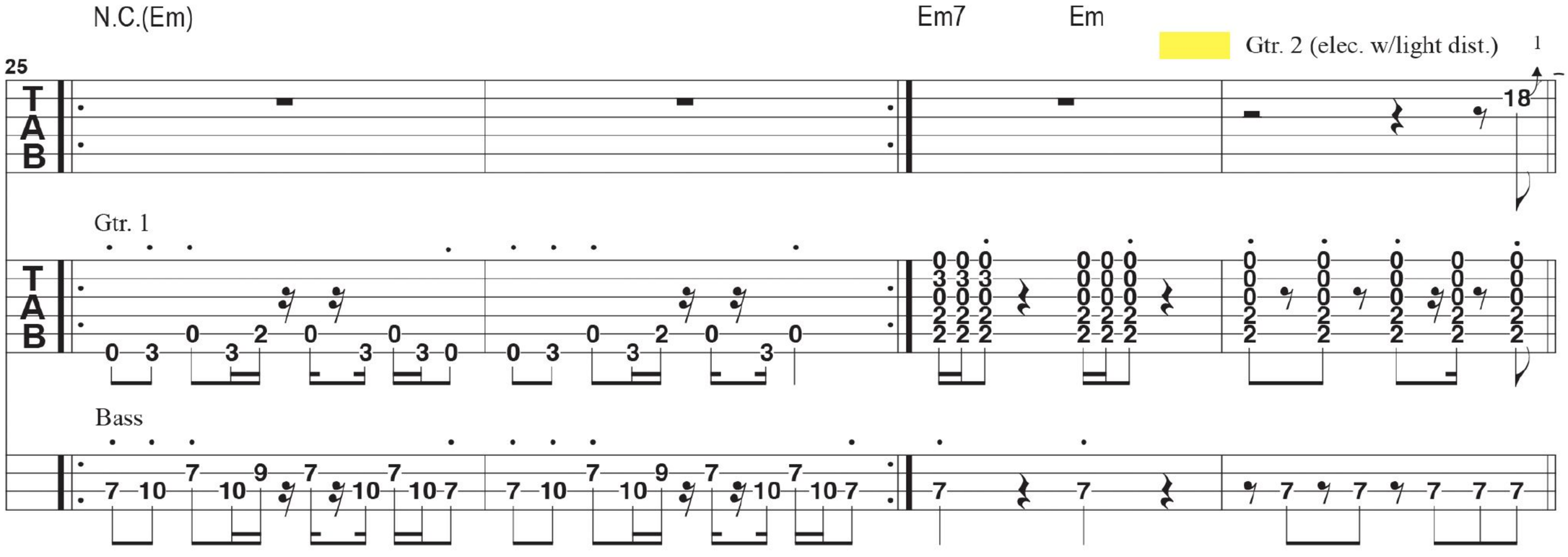

## D 2nd Verse (0:47)



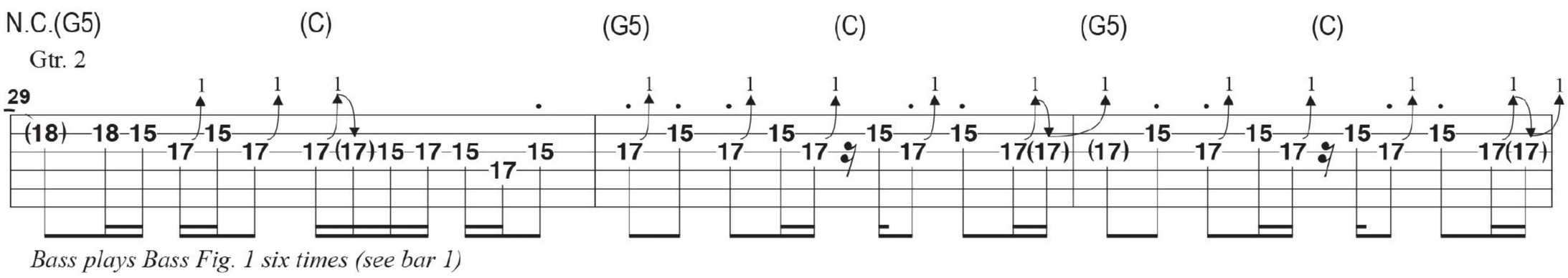

## E 2nd Chorus (1:04)



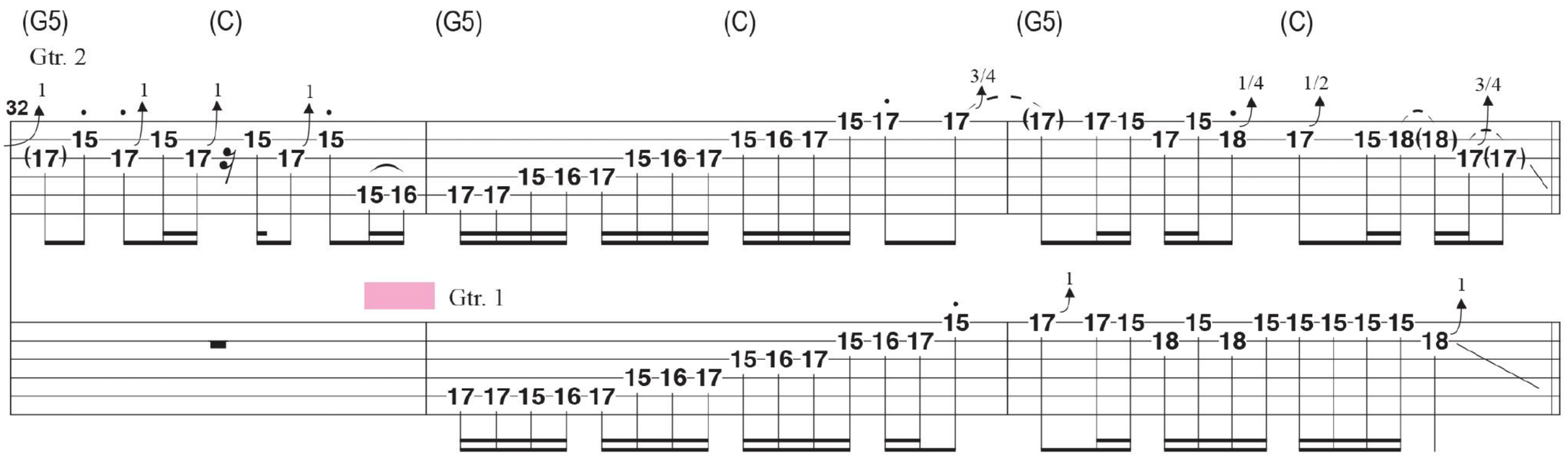
**F** **Interlude** (1:17)



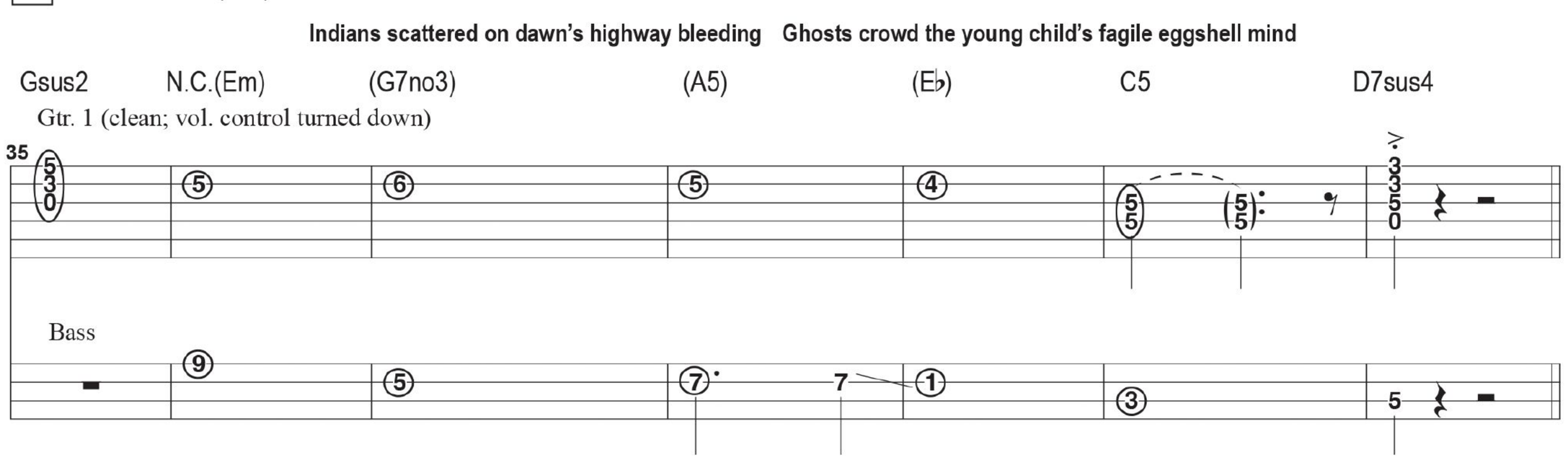

**G** **Guitar Solo** (1:30)




*Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 six times (see bar 1)*




**H** **Breakdown** (1:43)



## I 3rd Verse/Outro (1:59)

Blood in the streets in the town of New Haven Blood stains the roofs and the

G5

Gtr. 1 (w/wah)

42

palm trees of Venice Blood in my love in the terrible summer

45

Bloody red sun of fantastic L.A.

48

Blood screams the pain They chop of her fingers Blood will be born in the birth of a nation

51

Gm7

Blood is the rose of mysterious union

G5 Gm7

54

There's blood in the streets It's up to my ankles

G5

57

Blood in the streets It's up to my knee Blood in the streets the town of Chicago

Gm7 G5

60

*(segue into "Blue Sunday")*

Blood on the rise It's following me

63

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BY CHRIS GILL

# IBANEZ ICEMAN

## 1975-82, 1992–PRESENT

**CATEGORY: SOLIDBODY ELECTRIC GUITAR**

**JAPAN'S ELECTRIC GUITAR** industry underwent some fascinating twists and turns in the Sixties and Seventies. Many Japanese guitar designs from the Sixties are highly original but with an emphasis on low cost and quirky, gimmicky features that weren't entirely ergonomic for most players. During the late Sixties/early Seventies, focus shifted to copies of classic American models (now known as "lawsuit models"), often with better playability and quality than American companies offered at the time. By the time American companies caught on and issued cease-and-desist orders, Japanese manufacturers were already one step ahead and building high-quality, original designs during the mid Seventies.

The Ibanez Iceman was one of Ibanez/Hoshino Gakki's first original designs to emerge during the mid Seventies, along with their Artist and Musician models. The Iceman model was actually part of Ibanez's Artist Series before the Iceman name emerged in 1978. Whereas the standard Artist model resembled a double-cutaway Les Paul and the Musician's asymmetrical double-cutaway was Strat-inspired, the Iceman's angular shape was completely new and original.

Ibanez initially offered three different Iceman models (Artist 2663, also called the "Flash"): a traditional dual-humbucker version (2663/IC200), one with an innovative triple-coil pickup (2663TC/IC210) and a short-lived variation with an unorthodox sliding triple-coil pickup (2663SL). Steve Miller was the first Western artist to adopt the future Iceman model, using a 2663TC onstage and on his *Book of Dreams* album. Miller favored the bright, funky #4 setting (all three coils in parallel) on "Jet Airliner," "Swingtown" and other songs. In 1978, the triple-coil 2663TC model was named the IC210 Steve Miller model.

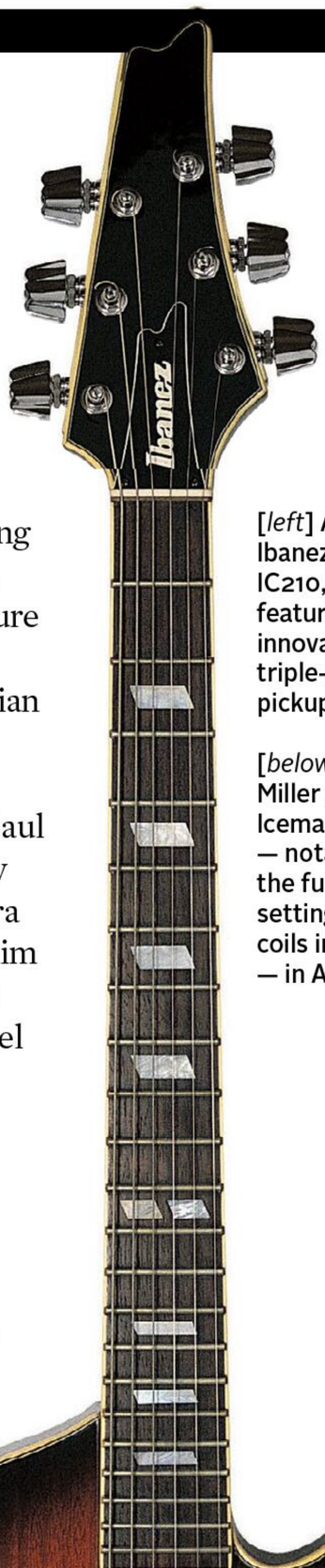
**"Steve Miller was the first Western artist to adopt the future Iceman model"**

Paul Stanley was another early Iceman user. When Kiss went to Japan in 1977, Stanley collaborated with Ibanez on the Paul Stanley PS-10, which was an Iceman with a black finish, fancy binding and new chrome/mirrored hardware appointments.

Other recent players honored with Iceman signature models include J. Yuenger of White Zombie (ICJ100WZ, 1994-99), Daron Malakian of System of a Down (DMM1, 2004) and Sam Totman of Dragonforce (STM1/STM2/STM3, 2008-2019). Paul Gilbert's Fireman/FRM is essentially an upside-down Iceman with an extra cutaway. Gilbert says Ibanez asked him to choose an existing model when he wanted to offer a new signature model because of the costs of making new tooling, so he just flipped over an Iceman body to come up with something different.

Typical Iceman models offered today feature two humbuckers, individual volume and tone controls for each pickup, a three-way pickup toggle and stop tailpiece. Most earlier models have mahogany bodies (although some are ash or basswood), whereas today Okoume is the standard material, with the exception of the Paul Stanley PS120 with its mahogany body with maple top. The Iceman sounds similar to other mahogany/dual-humbucker guitars like a Gibson SG but with perhaps a little more bottom end and warmth due to the Iceman's greater body mass, thicker body and body design that contacts the neck on the bass side at the 17th fret.

Although the Iceman may not sound that much different from most dual-humbucker guitars, it certainly looks different with its distinct geometric, angular lines tastefully complemented by rounded curves and sweeping-wave treble horn. The body shape is highly functional as well, offering exceptionally solid and comfortable balance. Overall, it's a classic alternative to the similar but bulkier Explorer design with tonal character that falls between an SG and Les Paul. GW




[*left*] A 1978 Ibanez Iceman IC210, which featured an innovative triple-coil pickup

[*below*] Steve Miller plays an Iceman 2663TC — notably using the funky #4 setting (all three coils in parallel) — in August 1977

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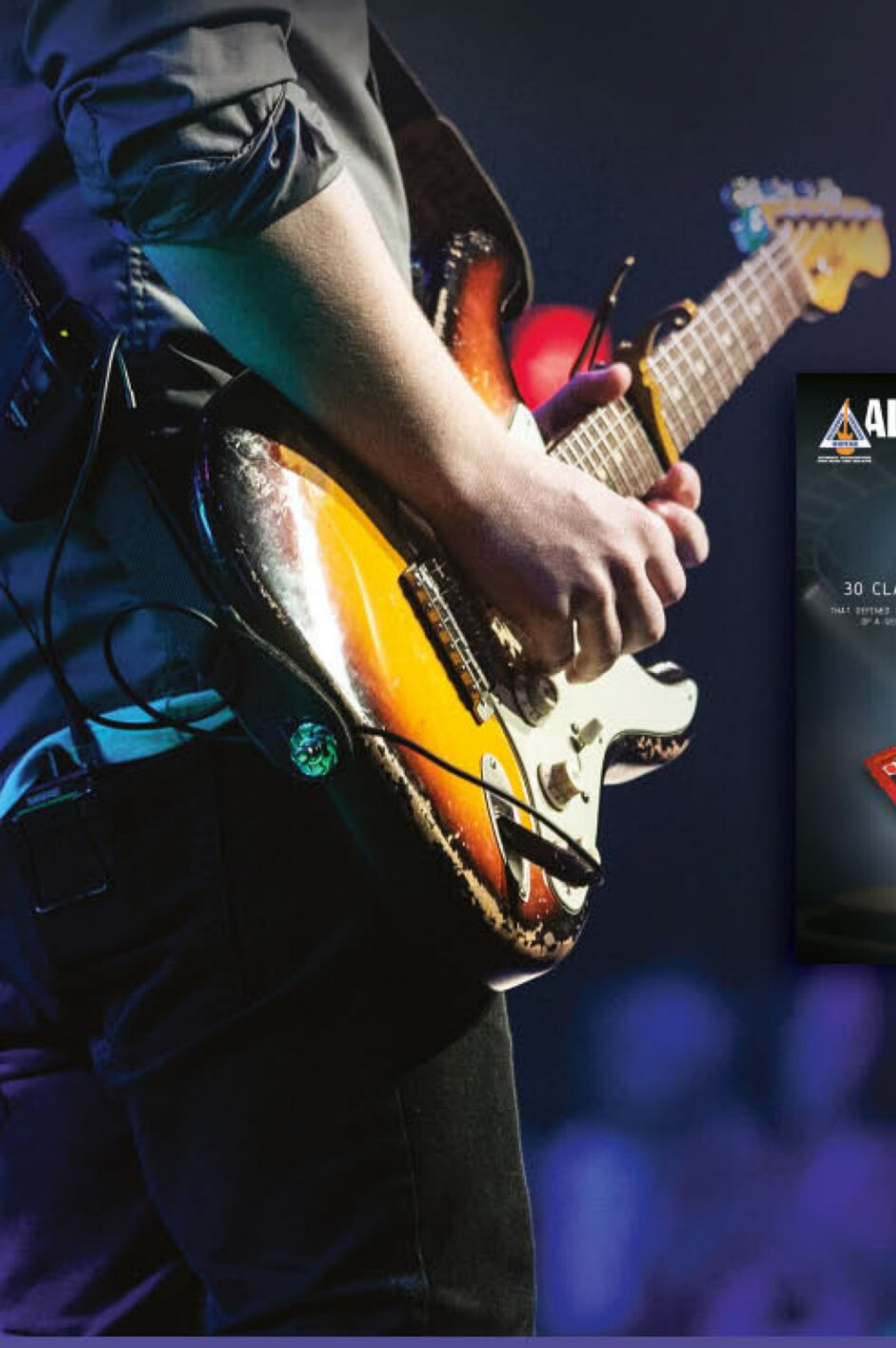

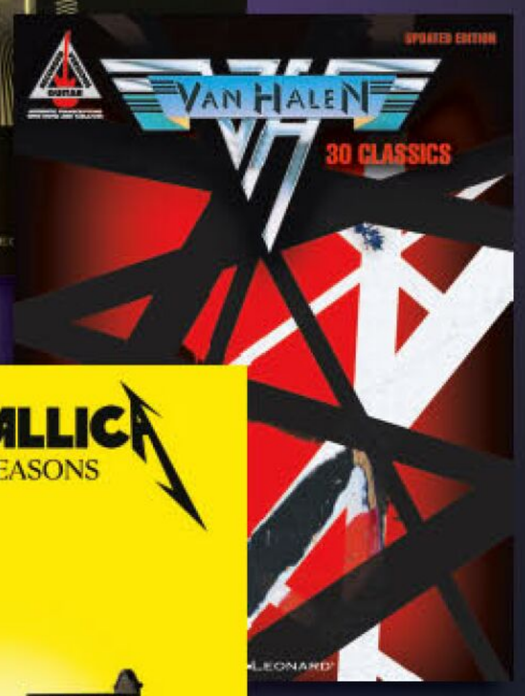

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