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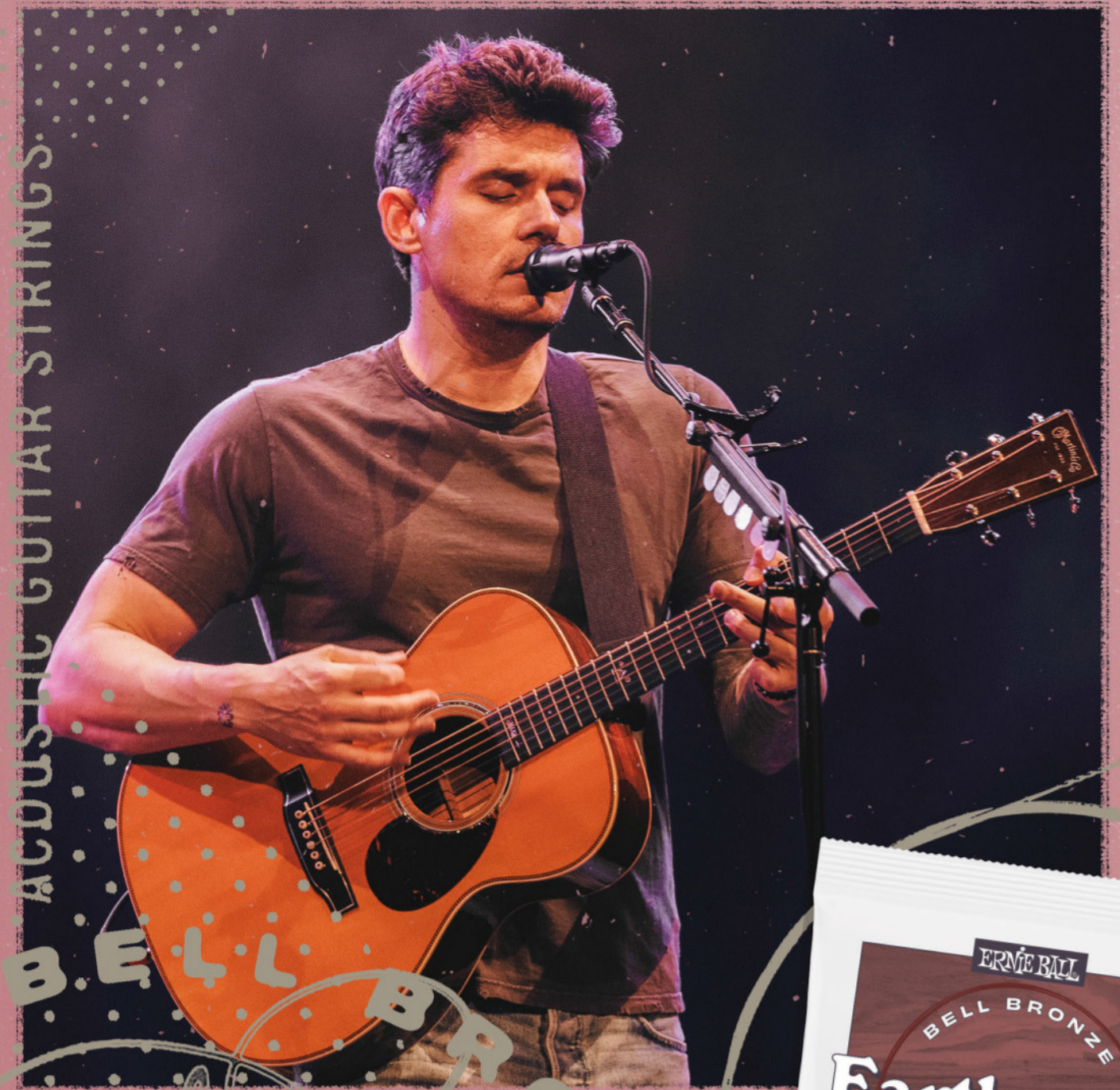
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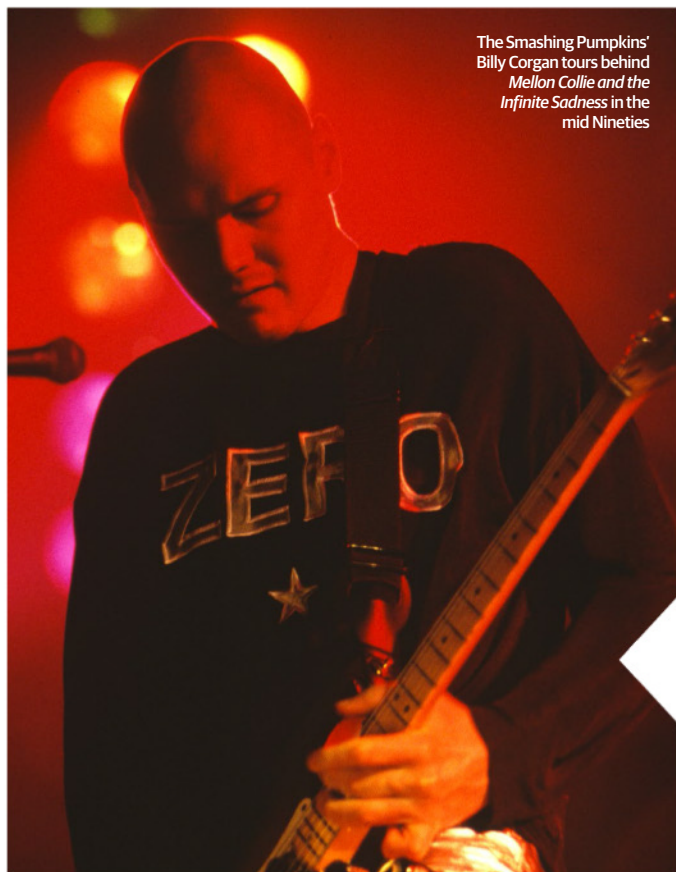
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Steve Jones, Glen Matlock and Paul Cook are about to kick off a super-rare U.S. tour with 41-year-old Frank Carter — as in, not good ol' Johnny Rotten — on vocals. Says Jones, "For the first time in a long time, I'm really enjoying doing Sex Pistols songs."

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Billy Corgan and Kiki Wong — the Smashing Pumpkins' first and latest guitarists, respectively — discuss how bonding over Dimebag Darrell and dressing like "Rob Halford's cousin" helped turn Wong into a Pumpkin overnight. While we were at it, we got Corgan to tell us about the making of 1995's *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, home of "Bullet with Butterfly Wings," "1979," "Zero," "Tonight, Tonight" and more.

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Six decades into his career, this Woodstock legend remains excited by the very thought of having an electric guitar in his hands.

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We look back on the life and times of the late Rick Derringer, who left us in May. Meanwhile, Zakk Wylde tells us about the three most important guitars in his life. We also chat with Ricky Byrd, Ally Venable, Bumblefoot, Laura Pleasants and Vernon Reid (who revisits a classic GW cover), plus dynamic duos from Momma, Phoneboy, the Voidz and Khruangbin.

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In the late Fifties, in an attempt to appeal to a more "respectable" group of musicians, Leo Fender and his designers developed a brand-new flagship-model guitar aimed at jazz guitarists. He even named it the "Jazzmaster" so everyone would know exactly who it was designed for.

COVER PHOTO: DANIELLE SIMONE

Woodshed

VOL. 46 | NO. 10 | OCTOBER 2025

In the end, the Beach Boys really weren't a "guitar band"

▶ WHEN BRIAN WILSON died on June 11, I – for a couple of minutes, anyway – considered lining up an issue of *GW* dedicated to his brilliance and the Beach Boys' studio output. I've always loved those guys, and Wilson was, after all, one of the greatest musical minds this country has ever produced. But then, like I said, it didn't take too long for me to change my mind. Even though there are a few photos of Wilson holding a guitar, he definitely wasn't a "guitar guy" (I can't imagine anyone arguing with me here); his greatest musical statements and moments – things like "God Only Knows," "Caroline, No" and "This Whole World" – have very little to do with guitar. And, with all due respect to the late Carl Wilson, some of the most memorable guitar parts on the most culturally important Beach Boys records weren't played by Beach Boys; as we've known for decades, they were played by Glen Campbell, Tommy Tedesco, Jerry Cole and – according to an interview I conducted with Al Jardine in 2015 – Ed Carter, among many others. The guitar was a bit player on the stage we call Brian Wilson's mind – and that's OK. His approach worked – perfectly, one could argue – for him and his band. What's my point here? Not much beyond what I've written above. But let's just say this is my little requiem for the Brian Wilson issue that never was. Let us also pause to ponder the man's amazing gift as we consider a world without Brian Wilson.



OUR BEACH BOYS TIMELINE: BTW, this issue's Al Jardine interview was conducted (and written) several months before Wilson's death.

THAT PEDAL ON PAGE 21: I asked Jordan Fresque of JFX Pedals to describe the Fresmann PLL, which is pictured – and mentioned twice – on page 21, since it's not something that can be summed up in a word or two. "I'm not one for eloquently describing things," he replied, "but I guess you could say it's an unhinged and scratchy squarewave harmonizer." There you have it. Enjoy!

DAMIAN FANELLI

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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!



Chevelle's Pete Loeffler
BY ASHLEY GILES



Jimi Hendrix
BY TONY PADUANO



Guitar Legends (Part 1)
BY SHAWN BLACK



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[from left] Preston Fulks,
Allegra Weingarten,
Etta Friedman and
Aron Kobayashi Ritch

The Great Gig in the Sky

On album number four, Brooklyn-based indie rockers Momma find themselves at their most autobiographical, searching deep to channel the music

BY AMIT SHARMA

▶ **WHILE MOST DUAL-GUITAR** bands tend to have designated roles in terms of what kind of sonic space their members occupy, Momma six-stringers Etta Friedman and Allegra Weingarten enjoy being unrestricted, fluid and free. They both write and sing, switching from rhythm to lead, depending on what is required for the song. It's a very easygoing musical partnership born out of the mutual respect that's come from working together over the past decade, having

formed the band at school while in their mid-teens. That sense of collaboration and cohesion is more than evident on the 12 tracks that make up hook-laden fourth album *Welcome to My Blue Sky*, which blurs the lines between grunge, dream pop and indie in the most brilliant of ways. By their own admission, it could very well be the secret to their success.

"We've always been like this," says Weingarten, who's joined by Friedman on

a hard-earned day off in the middle of a sold-out tour. "Both of us are good at writing and playing leads, so it would be weird to separate the roles. It also makes things more interesting. If one of us writes a song, we leave space for the other person to contribute melodically. I think we bring out the best in each other."

What felt different about this album from a guitar standpoint?

ETTA FRIEDMAN: We were a lot more

simplistic this time round, not to say the parts aren't interesting. This latest record feels more autobiographical. It's more about our emotions and our identities. We found a lot of the direction through experimentation, using all the crazy pedals that Aron [*Kobayashi Ritch, bass/producer*] has. That's why it's more experimental in places.

"I Want You (Fever)" has an extreme reverse delay and tremolo effect at the beginning and end. How did you get that sound?

ALLEGRA WEINGARTEN: Most people think it's a synth, which is wrong. It's me going into a pedal called the Meris Ottobit. We're not gearheads, so I can't tell you what the pedal does. We kept the glitchy loop running, and it became the anchor of the song.

FRIEDMAN: It somehow automates whatever is happening and creates weird noises in the moment. We had to use the first take from the demo. We couldn't redo it in the studio; it just wouldn't have sounded the same.

There are a lot of influences at play in your music, but from a fuzz and dream pop perspective, there's definitely a Smashing Pumpkins connection.

WEINGARTEN: Billy Corgan is a legend. I got into the Pumpkins a bit later, but they're influential to us in the sense that they set the standard for how big things can sound. I think what makes our band special is how we take mellow influences and put them through the filter of what the Pumpkins sound like live. That's what Momma is.

Which players got you hooked on guitar early on?

FRIEDMAN: The first guitarist I was encapsulated by was Joan Jett. I was obsessed because she was so cool and fearless. When I got more into the Nineties era, I was looking up to players like Stephen Malkmus [*Pavement*]. Another big one is Kim Deal, because she's really innovative and has this interesting rhythmic thing she does. She writes such beautiful songs.

WEINGARTEN: Rob Crow is my main influence. I used to sit in my room and learn all those Pinback parts. It's corny, but Alex G changed acoustic guitar for our generation in such a massive way. Not enough people admit that. I'd never played in drop D [*tuning*] until

"Our riffs are unconventional because we don't know what key anything is in"

ALLEGRA WEINGARTEN



Weingarten [*left*] and Friedman perform in Toronto, April 30, 2024

I started listening to him. Liz Phair is hugely underrated because her chord progressions are really weird and off the map. She doesn't get enough credit for her awesomeness.

What kind of gear were you using on this record?

FRIEDMAN: I played Aron's Les Paul Junior. There were some Fender Jaguars in the studio. I used my Jagstang on "Take Me with You," because that's also in a weird tuning. I was trying to learn a Big Thief song that was in C/G/D/G/G/D, and then we put a capo on the third fret.

WEINGARTEN: We also had a weird E/G#/B/F#/B/E tuning for "New Friend," which I stole from American Football. Being in the studio was a blur; things would get handed to me. I remember they had this Les Paul from the Eighties that I liked. I used my Martin X-Series for the acoustic parts, which is funny because it's a shitty guitar. As for amps,

there was every kind of Fender and some Marshalls. For "My Old Street" we took an old Princeton and turned it all the way up to get a sludgy, dusty vibe.

And how does that differ from what you use live?

WEINGARTEN: We both play Fender Deluxe Reverbs because they're loud and take pedals well. My main guitar is a Gibson SG. I have the little orange [*Electro-Harmonix*] Big Muff, a [*Pro Co*] Rat and some EarthQuaker Devices pedals — the Westwood for my overdrive, the Grand Orbiter for my phaser and the Hummingbird for my tremolo.

FRIEDMAN: I'm mainly playing my brother's humbucker Telecaster. I also have a Jagstang and a Les Paul Junior. For pedals, I use my Tube Screamer, Big Muff, ZVEX Box of Rock overdrive and ZVEX Super Hard On boost.

"Last Kiss" has a dreamy quality, thanks to all the ninth chords.

FRIEDMAN: We love a ninth chord. Every time I pick up a guitar, I always start with a ninth chord. I probably picked it up from learning Alex G songs. We're not trained players; we're self-taught, which I think is essential to our sound. I've never played a scale in my life. I don't know the names of the chords I'm using.

WEINGARTEN: Our riffs are unconventional because we don't know what key anything is in. Most guitar players wouldn't admit that, but I actually think it's cool. It keeps the music fresh. We're not relying on theory to find what's correct or acceptable. It's all very intuitive. **GW**



JEREMYCHANPHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY



Ricky Byrd in New York City and [below] the cover art for *NYC Made*, his new album

INQUIRER

Ricky Byrd

The former Joan Jett guitarist — who just released the new *NYC Made* — discusses adopting Jeff Beck's amp philosophy and, of course, getting pelted with 9-volt batteries

BY JOE MATERA

Q What was your first guitar?

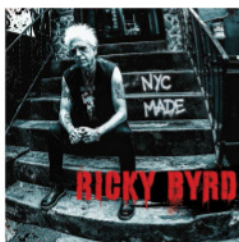
I was around nine when I saw the Rolling Stones and the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. I was instantly attracted to George Harrison and Keith Richards' guitar playing, so I asked my mom if I could get a guitar. She was working at a handbag company, and her boss gave her a gift — for me — on my birthday, a no-name acoustic. That little acoustic was how I first learned to play guitar. The second guitar I got, which was my first electric, didn't even have a name, but it was from a store called Lafayette Electronics. It looked like a Gibson ES-335, but it was cheap and came with a little amp.

Q What was the first song you learned to play?

The Turtles' "Happy Together," because it had a riff I could learn. I wound up doing a show-and-tell at my public school in the Bronx where I grew up, and I played "Happy Together." I noticed the girls were all smiling at me, and being 10, I was like, "Well, now — that is interesting!"

Q What was your first gig?

I was in a band called Ruff Stuff, and we started playing in our local neighborhood place that was like a coffee, wine and cheese place. It had a stage in the front, and the gig was for a dance. We played all kinds of British stuff. I don't think we even got paid.



"I was thinking about what I was going to play next as opposed to just shutting my eyes and playing"

Q Ever had an embarrassing moment on stage?

There was this one time when I was with Joan Jett. We were opening for the Scorpions at an indoor stadium in Spain, and the crowd got a little rowdy. Something went down as somebody had stolen some equipment from the opening act that played before us. Somehow we got blamed for it, so the crowd went crazy and somebody threw a 9-volt battery, and it hit me right above my eye. We stopped the show, and Joan and I just stood in the shadows. I remember me and her looking at each other going, "I'm not going back out there."

Q What's your favorite piece of gear?

I was a Marshall guy back then with Joan. Now I literally cannot listen to Marshalls. I use a lot of small old Fender amps. That all came about after I went to see Jeff Beck play at the Iridium in New York, Les Paul's old club. Jeff was using two small Fender Pro Junior amps — 15 watts, two knobs — Volume and Tone and that's it. So I went on eBay and found one. I just mic it up and it's loud as shit. And I can carry it with two fingers.

Q The building is burning down. Which guitar from your collection would you save?

It'd have to be two guitars, because how could I choose? It would be my '75 blue sparkle Les Paul Deluxe that I used on the "I Hate Myself for Loving You" tour I did with Joan Jett — and my '69 Gibson Hummingbird.

Q When was the last time you practiced, and what did you play?

I have an '87 Martin HD-28 in my den. I always pick it up and play it, and that's what I was doing last night. But I don't call it practice; I just sit there and play blues or anything like that. I also kind of just sit down with the guitar and play stuff that might be something that could turn into a song. I really don't sit down and practice scales; I've never been that kind of guy. But I'll put on an Albert King record and play along with it.

Q What aspect of the guitar would you like to be better at?

Probably practicing, because I'm just lazy with that. But I play how I play. I've been playing for 50 years, and though I'm pretty good, I could be better. The blues player, Walter Trout, he played in New York a while ago and I went and jammed on a song with him. But I realized I came up cold. I was thinking about what I was going to play next as opposed to just shutting my eyes and playing. And that's what comes with practicing. It becomes just a natural response. You hear the next beat coming, you know what to play, what not to play.

Q What guitar-centric advice would you give your younger self?

I never learned to read music, so maybe I should've learned how to read. I do these big events where there might be charts — but I can't read the charts! So I write it down and learn the songs on my laptop. I sit in my den and just learn the songs. And if I feel it's something I'll get confused about, I'll write a chord chart, a cheat sheet. Over my career, I don't think I have done too badly. I've done well with the ability to not be able to read music, though it could have helped in certain situations. **GW**

COVER MODELS

Guitarist Vernon Reid**Guitar** Early Nineties Hamer Chaparral Custom**GW Cover Date** April 1993**This interview** May 2025**Photographer** Kristine Larsen

BY ANDREW DALY

Q How did you come upon this guitar?

I think it was from 1990 or 1991. We did a few variations [*along with the MLK and E=MC² graphic*] as a collaboration between me and [*Hamer co-founder*] Jol Dantzig. It was a conceptual collaboration – a series we kind of developed. It was really fun and one of my most personal collaborations. It was very satisfying.

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

I loved Hamer, and they were great at the time. I was very sad when Hamer kind of changed. And the illustrations on that blue guitar were kind of like a version of ASL, American Sign Language. It was a long time ago, so I don't remember exactly what they said, but it was really unique.

Q Was this guitar modified in any special way?

At the time, I was really into using guitar synthesizers. There were a lot of Roland products available at the time, like the GR [*guitar synthesizer*]. And so, all of those guitars from that time period had to have a hex [*hexaphonic*] pickup in them [*which provides discrete output for each of the six strings*]. And all of my guitars had a V-neck back because I've always loved that neck shape. That's been a consistent thing through all my interactions with various companies.

Q What steered you away from traditional finishes for your guitars?

It was part of this creative period for me. I'd been into dramatic, or pictorial and artistic finishes, kind of like some of the finishes developed by Bruce Kulick [*of Kiss, with his ESP M-1 and B.C. Rich ST III guitars*]. So I'd been into guitars as art pieces and expressions from the very beginning. I mean, I like a traditional guitar; I love a beautiful finish. But I also think a guitar is a great canvas. I loved Rick Nielsen's crazy guitars that Hamer would build for him, and I love the ones they made for Steve Stevens, so it was a great fraternity to be a part of.

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

I definitely toured with that guitar. I'm pretty sure it was one of the guitars I played during the first Lollapalooza [1991]. I was still using ESP when Living Colour opened for the Rolling Stones, and I switched to Hamer in 1990, so that guitar would have been used on our Japanese tours at the time. And definitely, that guitar was part of the first Lollapalooza. And it was definitely part of [*the recording of 1993's*] *Stain*.

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

It was just one of the ones I was using at that time. I loved it; it was bold. I'd been using a couple of other guitars for shoots, so I wanted that guitar to be a part of that shoot. I thought

it was cool and had a cool message behind it. Yeah, man, it was a groovy instrument.

Q Do you still have this guitar? If not, what became of it?

I do not. I've traded and sold instruments over the years... I'm funny with that. I like to challenge my attachment to things. But it's weird... I've given away, traded and sold guitars, though I still have some of my main Hamer instruments. But that guitar is with a collector. I know there are people who hold onto everything – and I'd say I hold onto most things – but I don't have that guitar anymore. But I do have a lot of things, so if I want to dip into nostalgia, I can do that. So I don't have that guitar in my possession, but I'm okay with that. If it's meant to come back into my life, it will. **GW**



KYGER

MODERN | SLEEK | ERGONOMIC

KIESEL
CUSTOM GUITARS

[from left] Amir Yaghmai, Julian Casablancas and Jeremy "Beardo" Gritter perform on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, October 23, 2024



Different Strokes

Why have one cool rock band when you can have two? Meet the fleet-fingered ax-slingers from Strokes singer Julian Casablancas' inventive other band, the Voidz

BY ADRIANA TOMA

▶ YOU'LL BE FAMILIAR with the New York five-piece the Strokes, renowned since their formation in 1998 for their angular, stripped-down rock singles. While that band remains sporadically active, back in 2013 singer Julian Casablancas announced the formation of the Voidz, a side project featuring guitarists Amir Yaghmai and Jeremy "Beardo" Gritter, bassist Jake Bercovici, keyboard player Jeff Kite and drummer Alex Carapetis that has grown dramatically in profile over its decade-plus in business.

The appeal of the Voidz is obvious. Their charismatic debut album, *Tyranny* (2014), set the tone perfectly, with Yaghmai and Gritter exploring a wide range of experimental textures on singles such as "Human Sadness." As musicians, the guitarists use unorthodox

tones and complex lines to complement the synth-heavy songwriting, leading to a sound that's worlds away from the knowingly retro approach of Casablancas' day-job band. It's no surprise that multi-instrumentalist Yaghmai has a diverse resume that includes sessions

"There are a lot of great players out there, but they're more like 'Look at me!' on YouTube instead of 'Go learn!'"
JEREMY GRITTER

with Daedelus and Scarlett Johansson (for *Break Up*, her 2009 album with Pete Dinklage), while Gritter has built an online presence with W.A.N.T. (featuring Andre Legacy) and other projects.

On their second album, *Virtue* (2018), the Voidz expanded their sound while reining in the experimental edges, delivering five singles and touring alongside Beck and Phoenix. The band's third album, *Like All Before You* (2024), covered even wider ground — see the 15-minute video for "Flexorcist"/"Prophecy of the Dragon" for evidence — and a new EP, *Megz of Ram*, is set for release as this issue of *Guitar World* goes to press. Although its leadoff single, "Blue Demon," released in March, was primarily electronic and highly Autotuned, the two musicians reassure us that guitar is very much at the forefront of the Voidz' approach.

How has your music changed since your first single, 2014's "Human Sadness"?

AMIR YAGHMAI: "Human Sadness" was pre-2016 when we were doing more introspective stuff. Then, with the pandemic and everything else going on, collectively



Yaghamai [left] and Gritter do their thing in Madrid, June 10, 2023

everyone is more aware of external forces. "Human Sadness" and "Blue Demon" came about during really different times.

JERAMY GRITTER: I think we were all at a point in our musical journeys when we wanted to push the limits a little bit, and the guitars kinda followed that. Hearing these melodies, I wanted to do something that was a little more chaotic. Also, Julian pushes the boundaries on the guitar. He's got a specific sound and message he's going for. That first song blended external things with specifics from Julian's experience, which he really hasn't done that much in the Voidz since then.

How do the differing personalities co-exist in your band?

YAGHMAI: With any band, it's the result of everyone reacting to one another and bringing a style. I definitely think we're lucky. We had different careers before this, so I'd never expected to join another band. I thought I'd merge into more production and studio time and other things, not get started with a new band.

GRITTER: I was thinking about that too, since keeping a band together is hard. It's like five horses pulling in five different directions and hopefully we all run the same way forever. With the guitar, Amir will tone-search for the records. He knows right away when it's wrong or right. I'm such a loose artist in my brain, so Amir structures me in a way, and I make him a little looser. I always used to joke, "If it ain't feedback, it ain't working."

YAGHMAI: There are a few days you get where everything will just come together and it just happens.

GRITTER: And we don't want to let each other down. When you have six people in a band, you take what you don't have from them, and they take what they don't have from you.

How do you write songs?

YAGHMAI: All of us come from very different

backgrounds, and we're bringing five different things at all times. We'll have this whiteboard and Julian will jigsaw it all together. Even if he's not physically engineering the album, he's doing it in its own way.

GRITTER: We all have our studios in L.A. and create our own stuff, so if we're getting ready to make music together, we start a random Dropbox and everyone has their own folder,

including Julian. We all add what we think will work for the Voidz. I dumped "Blue Demon" into that box as a sequencer line.

How did you create the unusual melody that runs through "Blue Demon"?

GRITTER: I used a Korg MS-10 synthesizer to a Korg SQ-10 sequencer through a Neve. Then I wondered what it would sound like on an electric guitar. The only way was through octave displacement, where you're jumping between them. You could play a low D, but you play a high one instead. It's tricky since you have to skip strings. I put down this crazy line but didn't record it. Months later, I was thinking about that wacky line when Julian said we'd play "Blue Demon" live on TV for millions of people. That's the lineage of the song.

Are solos an important part of your songwriting?

GRITTER: I think that guitar-solo moment in "Human Sadness" was important because I don't think that was happening as much then, and I don't think it does now. There are a lot of great players out there, but they're more like "Look at me!" on YouTube instead of "Go learn!" We live in this digital era, but we came from analog. When we first got together in New York, Amir and I were learning and figuring out how to play this crazy-hard technical song, "Human Sadness," and we knew Julian was expecting a 10 on the guitar.

Your songs require a lot of picking-hand dexterity.

YAGHMAI: Playing it live, you have to do it correctly 30 times in a row and avoid hand fatigue. You have to get it right.

GRITTER: There's just a lot of parts that happen in the Voidz. I get smarter just being around these guys. We're just like, "What can we do now? What haven't we done?" Isn't that the whole idea of writing, but with as little words as possible? **GW**

AXOLOGY

GRITTER Guitars

1999 Fender Jeff Beck Stratocaster,
1985 Fender Contemporary Telecaster,
1963 Guild S-50

Amps

Vox AC30, Roland JC-77, Fender DeVille

Effects

Terry Audio White Rabbit, Death by Audio Rooms reverb, Death by Audio Space Bender chorus modulator, Supercool Pedals '77 Fuzz Blender, JFX Fresmann PLL custom Voidz pedal [pictured below], Cosmodio Pet Yeti distortion

YAGHMAI Guitars

1973 Guild S-90, Fender Stratocaster

Amps

1960s Fender Bassman head and 2x12 cab

Effects

Fairfield Circuitry Randy's Revenge, JFX Fresmann PLL custom Voidz pedal, Marshall Guv'nor, EarthQuaker Devices Dispatch Master, various Boss effects



MY LIFE IN THREE GUITARS

Zakk Wylde

The trio of axes that have meant the most to the Ozzy, BLS and Zakk Sabbath guitar god

BY MARK MCSTEA

▶ **SHRED LEGEND ZAKK** Wylde was grabbing some downtime when *GW* connected with him at his home in California not long after he appeared at Ozzy Osbourne's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction. Only hours before we connected, he'd been busy tracking songs for the next Black Label Society album, before heading into six weeks of rehearsals for a Zakk Sabbath tour. After that, he's scheduled

to start rehearsing for the Pantera celebration tour, followed by more Zakk Sabbath. He's also already penciled in numerous BLS shows. As Wylde says, "It's just music, music, music as far as I can see, and that's how I love it." No matter how busy he is, Wylde is always ready to talk guitars, and the rock 'n' roll viking was stoked to tell us why these are the three most important axes in his armory.

1 Gibson Firebrand SG (1981)

"This was the Firebrand SG in Pelham Blue, the first real 'quality' guitar I ever owned. I did so much of my learning on it. I bought it at Red Bank Music [*in New Jersey*] back in the day. There was a lot of publicity for these models at the time; I remember the Gibson ads saying, 'A Firebrand for under a grand.' It was a fantastic guitar, though, and a major step up for me. My guitar teacher at the time, Leroy, recommended it to me. He was a fan of SGs; he thought the double cutaways and access to the top frets would suit the stuff I wanted to play. I wasn't really playing shows when I got it, more parties and jamming in the basement. I spent a ton of time woodshedding. I never changed a single thing on it — it's completely stock. I still pull it out from time to time at home; it's a bit of a lost classic in the Gibson range. Another thing about it was the color, which I liked so much that I've used it on a few guitars since then as well as on some of my own Wylde Audio fiddles.

"I still have it. I sold it but managed to buy it back, which was an amazing feeling. Before I got it, I had a bunch of guitars that weren't anywhere close to the SG. There was a copy of a Gibson L6 with action that was about 10 feet off the neck. I had a Fernandes and a couple of Electras in crazy shapes and some other stuff that was pretty crappy. The ones I didn't hang on to, I tried to pick up in later years on eBay or Reverb; some I managed to buy back from the guys I'd sold them to, so I have all my childhood memory guitars one way or another. I think it's important to keep your early gear if you can; there's something special about picking up a guitar years later and thinking about the hours you put in. Those first guitars are what set you off on the path. I have friends who say they wish they still had some old toy or something, and I always say just go and hunt one down on the internet! Reconnect yourself, you know?"

2 Gibson Les Paul Custom (1985)

"I remember saving up for this guitar; it was a big deal. I bought it new, complete with the 'chainsaw' case. I still have the receipt — \$800. Those models go for four grand now. This guitar is actually in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at the moment. I graduated from high school in 1985, and I hadn't saved enough money for it by that time, but my parents surprised me by adding the rest of the money to the pot. I think I needed about \$300. I got home and they said something had come for me. I went into the room, and I freaked out because they'd got me the white Les Paul Custom. This is another one where I never changed a thing; it still has the original PAFs.

"I'd go and look at it all the time in the store — I wanted that guitar so badly, man. This guitar holds so much sentimental value because my parents got it for me. I used to take this and the Grail [*see Number 3*] on the road, which seems crazy now, given how precarious it is to travel with guitars on tour. After a few years I stopped doing that and started treating show guitars as exactly that; I wouldn't touch them until I got on stage. I felt much happier leaving all the important guitars safely at home.

"My first guitars were all fitted with humbuckers, and I know people don't associate me with single-coils, but I have quite a few Fenders. I've got a Tele I bought for \$600 that I asked Bill Lawrence to paint to look like the one Jimmy Page had with the dragon on it. This was way before Fender brought out their Page model. I have a bunch of Strats, and I have a few guitars loaded with P90s, including a '65 SG and a '58 Junior. It's all about having tones to paint with when you're in the studio. If you're painting a picture, you're going to want a whole palette of colors. If you can hear something in your head, you find the right tools to capture it."

3 Gibson Les Paul Custom, "The Grail" (1981)

"A friend of mine, Scott Quinn, who used to work at Garden State Music in New Jersey, made a deal with me. I was endorsed by Gibson after I'd got the gig with Ozzy; Scott, a huge John McLaughlin fan, said that if I could get him a double-neck, he'd trade the Grail for it. Gibson hooked me up and I made the trade. I'd played this guitar and been knocked out by how amazing it sounded and how well it played. It was one of those moments where you just really connect with an instrument. It already had EMGs; I'd discovered them a little before I played the Grail. One of my students had a Fender Jaguar with EMGs. He was telling me you had to put a battery in the back for the pickups, which was a weird notion to me at the time. Anyway, when I plugged it into my Marshall combo I was astounded. The clarity, the depth, the glassy highs, the tightness and definition — I was amazed.

"I wrote my first Ozzy song, 'Miracle Man,' on this one. Most of the records I did with Ozzy featured this guitar. After we'd recorded [1988's] *No Rest for the Wicked*, I was gonna be shooting some photos and I realized I was gonna look like I was trying to be Randy [Rhoads] with the cream Les Paul, so I sent it to be refinished. It was meant to look like the poster for [1958 *Alfred Hitchcock* film] *Vertigo*, but it came back with the bullseye. I realized it was pretty cool anyway, and I made it a signature look ever since. I nearly lost it around 2000 when it fell out of our gear trailer. It came with one of those tough chainsaw cases, so it survived crashing onto the highway. It turned up in a pawn shop; someone bought it, realized it was mine and — three years after I'd lost it — contacted me and sold it back. I exclusively use Wylde Audio models on the road now; they're exactly the same as the ones for sale. They're already modded, because they're built to my specs, with the Tone Pros hardware, the EMGs and everything."

1. COURTESY OF ZAKK WYLDE. 2. FUTURE. 3. PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES



Wylde's '85 Les Paul Custom probably looks a lot like this 1990 model, which belongs to Manic Street Preachers guitarist James Dean Bradfield



Khruangbin's Mark Speer (left) and Laura Lee Ochoa with their new signature Fender axes (and drummer Donald "DJ" Johnson)



Double Whammy

Khruangbin's Mark Speer and Laura Lee Ochoa make Fender history as the first bandmates to get a signature guitar and bass at the same time

BY ADAM KOVAC

THE TRAPPINGS OF rock stardom have changed a great deal since the 1970s. The money and record sales ain't what they used to be, the drug-fueled parties in Laurel Canyon have died out, and being on the cover of the *Rolling Stone* doesn't have the cachet it once did. But even if having a wall full of platinum records is a thing of the past, there remains one irrefutable sign of having made it — a signature instrument. Bonus points if said instrument is made by one of the most famous guitar makers of all time.

So, even if the good old days remain the old days, psychedelic rockers Khruangbin have

irrefutably hit the bigs, as guitarist Mark Speer and bassist Laura Lee Ochoa became the first members of a band to have a signature guitar and bass come out at the same time in Fender history.

The band's connection with Fender goes back to Speer's early days, when he had been relying on gear picked up second-hand from friends. Eventually, he found himself at a Houston music store's going-out-of-business sale, and that's when he spotted the Strat that became the first guitar he ever bought.

"All the shiny, pointy guitars were gone, and this one was still on the wall, and they

had lowered the price significantly so I could afford it," he says. "So I went ahead and got it, and it became the guitar I played and still play. And I don't know — something just drew me to that one. I just really liked how it looked, how it felt."

For Ochoa, the road to a signature model had more twists and turns. The bass she'd been playing, the one Fender used as the basis for the series of Jazz basses that carry her name, wasn't a Fender at all.

"When I started playing bass, I wanted a Fender, because that's the cool brand," she says. "It was the brand I always sort of idolized as somebody who wanted to be in a band but was never in a band. Mark helped me get my first bass, which was a knockoff Fender, which is what I've been playing for the history of Khruangbin. It's something that looked and felt like a Fender but was something I could afford at that point. And what's so wild is that now I have a signature model, essentially



based off of a knockoff Fender."

The appeal of Fenders for the Khruangbin members is simple: the guitars are durable and endlessly modifiable. Those are key attributes for a band that spends big chunks of the year either on the road or in the studio.

"I've spent a lot of time as a tech and have repaired many different kinds of guitars, and the ones that never come up with broken necks or headstocks or bodies ever are Strats and Teles," Speer says. "They just don't break."

That sort of pragmatism is the dominant theme when it comes to how Speer and Ochoa customized their signature models. For instance, for many Strat purists, putting a single humbucker in the bridge position is already bordering on a sin. Putting another one in the neck position is downright blasphemous. For Speer, it was simply a matter of finding a solution to a problem. While he kept a Seventies Strat pickup in the middle, to maintain some



semblance of the traditional Strat tone, he opted for DiMarzio Pro Tracks in the neck and bridge. While the switch allows him to pursue some high-gain tones, it was mostly a practical decision to make recording easier.

"I was working for producers in studios that range from an actual recording studio to home/bedroom situations, and once you've got single-coils in a noisy room, the producer doesn't care that it's a Strat; that producer wants to get a clean sound," he says. "It's like, well, I'm buzzing, and I can't change the buzz, so let me just go ahead and upgrade my pickups so they don't buzz."

His decision to use a vintage-style synchronized trem system was based on how it allows for easy tunings and adjustments, while Graph Tech TUSQ saddles allow for an extended string life. The guitar also features a custom C-shape neck and jumbo frets.

For Ochoa, it was important for her bass to be user-friendly, to the point that a beginner would be comfortable learning on it.

"I feel like it is something that a bass player who's just starting out can really find themselves on; the humbucker pickup allows you to play without having so much buzz as a beginner, which is a really difficult thing to kind of get around," she says.

To add to that clean, buzz-free sound, the signature model also comes with a little trick Ochoa picked up from her bandmate.

"I shove foam in the bottom of where my strings are in the ashtray," she says.

"It's actually a throwback. Fender built them like this for a couple years and that was it"

MARK SPEER

"It's covered by the ashtray, so it looks cool and you can't see the foam, but the foam is in there to even further make your tone nicer, and the sustain really nice, and the buzz even less."

Like Speer, she opted for jumbo frets ("I really like to dig in when I play," she says), as well as an electronics system featuring Volume and Tone knobs for each pickup. It was a customization that came during one of Khruangbin's tours, and Ochoa credits Speer with implementing it.

"The electronics that came on that knockoff bass, they just kind of died," Speer says. "The pots just got worn out, so we decided to get that because, honestly, the stacked concentric knobs looked really cool. It's actually a throwback. I think Fender built them like this for maybe a couple years and that was it. But they look really cool, and they seem really functional, because now you have more options as to how you want to shape the tone of those pickups."

Khruangbin's signature sound varies wildly, drawing influence from world music, soul, psychedelia, blues and rock, so the instruments they play have to be adaptable. The end result, Speer said, is a tool he hopes will find its way into the hands of players across the musical spectrum.

"This guitar will work," he says. "I'll tell you that you can pretty much play almost any genre you want to play on this guitar. If you want, you can modify it to your own special action and relief. If you wanted to get really, really deep with it, you could put in a push-pull pot on one of the tone knobs so that the bridge and neck pickup both turn on at the same time. You could make it be single-coil, and it would sound more or less like a Tele — if you want to go that far. It will get you 90 to 95 percent of where you want to be for most genres." **GW**



Phoneboy's Ricky Dana
[left] and Wyn Barnum

Phoneboy

The New Jersey indie quintet revisit their pop-punk influences on their new album, *Heartbreak Designer*

BY BRUCE FAGERSTROM

WYN BARNUM AND Ricky Dana, guitarists for New Jersey indie band Phoneboy, are onto something when it comes to crafting memorable leads and fills. "You should ideally be able to sing the guitar solo," Barnum says, while Dana adds, "You play the part over and you sing something and say, 'That's a good melody!'"

Along with bassist James Fusco and vocalist/keyboard player Jordan Torres, recently added as a full-time member, Phoneboy has been steadily gaining fans over the last five years by putting out melodic yet melancholic albums, including their latest, *Heartbreak Designer*, supported by consistent touring.

"On this album, we pulled heavily from our pop-punk influences growing up," Dana says. "A lot of Blink-182, some Weezer. We really tapped into what inspired us to start a band in the first place."

The new album features a more expansive sound than their first two releases, audible on the leadoff track "Wayside," which showcases languid, dream-pop fuzz riffs. "No matter what you do, you're going to have people saying, 'I miss the old stuff,'" Barnum says. "But if we just release the same-sounding thing on every album, we're doing our fans a disservice."

"One big influence for me is Billy Corgan," Dana says of the alt-icon who graces this issue's cover. "He uses a lot of octaves, just sliding up and down the guitar. The first time I heard the Smashing Pumpkins' 'Cherub Rock,' I fell in love. He's playing rhythm, but it's about so much more than the rhythm.

"The first time I heard 'Cherub Rock,' I fell in love"

That falls a lot into my playing, especially on the new record."

The guys have differing preferences when it comes to guitars.

"Live, I use a Japanese Fender Jaguar," Dana says. "My parents got it for me for Christmas when I was 16, and I still use it. I love the short neck; it's easy to fly up and down when playing live." Barnum takes a more custom approach. "I built my guitar," he says. "It's based on the Fender Tom DeLonge Strat. It just has the bridge pickup and one knob. Mine's got a ShawBucker humbucker."

Although their current album is still getting a road workout, the band is already looking ahead.

"I'm itching to get back in and start writing again," Dana says. "This album has been testing out a new dynamic with four people instead of three. There's so much gas left in the tank; I'm excited for where we go next." **GW**

NIKO STYCOS



"With every album, the inspiration comes from living life, from whatever you're feeling in the moment," Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal says

Bumblefoot

Former GN'R ax-slinger Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal returns with a slick new instrumental album, assisted by Brian May, Steve Vai and Guthrie Govan

BY ANDREW DALY

▶ FROM HIS EARLIEST days as the apple of Mike Varney's eye to stepping in for Slash in Guns N' Roses, it's always the same for Ron Thal, aka Bumblefoot.

"With every album, the inspiration comes from living life, from whatever you're feeling in the moment," he says. "Suddenly a riff pops into your head, and that expression of whatever you're feeling and experiencing turns into a song. That pretty much sums up my last couple of years of putting wackiness to music."

Bumblefoot's "wackiness" has led to lots of friendships, too. An example is Guthrie Govan, who features on "Anveshana," track number nine from Bumblefoot's new instrumental smorgasbord, *...Returns!*.

"That song goes back to 1989," Bumblefoot says. "I got a writeup in a guitar magazine, and a gentleman from the U.K. sent me

a handwritten letter in the mail saying, 'Hello, my name is Guthrie. I'm a guitar player.' He sent me a cassette demo of songs, and we became penpals. I've had the riff for that song since then."

Elsewhere, *...Returns!* features Steve Vai on "Monstruso" and Brian May on "Once in Forever." Those iconic players' styles differ from Bumblefoot's, but the 14-track guitar gamut works. "Whatever frame of mind I was in was a big part of it," Bumblefoot says. "It could be random things, what I was going through personally, or the news."

Bumblefoot feels Govan, Vai and May's efforts were strong but is especially fond of

"I've had the riff for 'Anveshana' since 1989"

"Funeral March," featuring classical violinist Ben Karas, which Bumblefoot says "came out of all the death happening around us."

But it's not all morbid, as instrumental records allow Bumblefoot space to express himself in ways that vocal-led records don't. "There's so much more room," he says. "There is room for melody, and using the guitar for different sounds, where if it were sung, the guitar would be stuck doing all the crazy noodly stuff."

As for where he plans to take *...Returns!*, Bumblefoot says, "I'm sure I'll play some shows at some point. I want all different ways for people to enjoy the music: they can stream it, download it or have the CD and cassette. And if people want to use their eyes, there will be music videos. So there are many ways for people to enjoy the music with the technology available." **GW**



"I like being surrounded by guitar players that are better than me," Ally Venable says

Ally Venable

The Texas triple-threat on the importance of women's rights, magenta Les Pauls and "facing your own blues"

BY BILL DeMAIN

▶ LAST YEAR, IN the middle of a solo on stage, Ally Venable had a revelation. "I was playing so many shows that it started to become kind of a monotonous blur," she says. "I noticed I was playing to my ego and just looking for applause. It was like I knew when people were gonna clap when I did certain things. After I caught myself, I started to get very intentional about playing for connection over playing for praise. And that really changed the energy for me and my band on stage and opened up a whole new world."

"Connection" is a word the fiery 25-year-old guitarist-singer-songwriter returns to often during our conversation. "I connect to the guitar on a very emotive level," she says. "I connect with blues music, and I think it's one in the same — blues music and guitar music."

Venable first felt that connection when she was 12 and heard her dad playing Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Texas Flood* in the car. "When

I looked him up on YouTube, it changed my world," she says. "I wanted to play like Stevie and wanted to see if I could break my guitar in half like he tried to do. Through him, I found Albert King, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Guy and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. My goal for my music became to introduce other people that don't know a whole lot about blues or guitar music to this genre — like Stevie did for me."

On her sixth album, *Money and Power*, she continues to do that. From the empowering Zep-like roar of the title track to the funky "Stopper Back Papa" to the tender melodicism of "Keep Me in Mind," there's a maturity in the

"When I looked up Stevie Ray Vaughan on YouTube, it changed my world"

writing, singing and playing that's remarkable for someone so young.

In addition to her own extensive touring behind the record this year, Venable will be playing dates with Experience Hendrix alongside Eric Johnson, Samantha Fish, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Zakk Wylde.

"I like being surrounded by guitar players that are better than me," Venable says with a smile. "It makes me feel like I can work on something and learn something new from somebody else."

Your last record, *Real Gone*, went to Number 1 on the *Billboard* blues chart. How'd that affect what you wanted to do with the new album?

It's cool when your album has any kind of chart success, and I was very grateful. But I don't want to make music solely for the intention of receiving accolades. My goal is

to write about what goes on in my life and try to connect with myself, my instrument and other people. Making music is always about connection.

What was going on in your emotional life that fed the new songs?

Over the past two years, I was going through a lot of grieving, thinking about all of these situations and relationships and people who aren't in my life anymore. And so what I did was I wrote a letter to each of them. That helped me come out the other side and become a better version of myself. I think it's important to face your own blues, because you're going to come out on the other side of that as a better person.

The title track, "Money and Power," speaks to not only women in music but in society at large, and that's especially resonant in the current political climate.

Recently, I've been seeing more young girls at my shows — with their parents. I was thinking about them seeing someone like me, not that much older, playing music and following her dreams. Even if she doesn't want to play guitar, just seeing a woman doing her thing is inspiring. The song asks, "Why is it so conflicting to see a woman with money and power?" That's a conversation we need to keep having. Let's dig into our history, especially with where we're at right now and raise awareness about how far women have come and how much work still needs to be done.

What gear are you using?

In the Nineties, Gibson did a limited-colors-edition series for Les Pauls, and I love my magenta model. I call her "The Wounded Warrior," because I've dropped her so many times. [Laughs] For amps, I use a Category 5 [Andrew]; last year, I upgraded the speaker to a Celestion. It has a nice big, round sound. I use a [Detrik Fx] Experience Wah — the white one — with an Analogman King of Tone [overdrive]. That's my bare-bones setup. But then there's also an MXR Carbon Copy for delay and a Keeley Monterey [Rotary Fuzz Vibe] for fun, vibe-y effects.

Do you have outside interests that feed your creativity?

I just bought a house that I've been renovating, so that's been a hobby. But don't ever renovate a house and release the album at the same time — you'll go crazy! [Laughs] I'm gardening, trying to grow some strawberries and potatoes and perennials. And I love thrifting, going in and not knowing what little treasures I'll come out with. It's like creating music. You kind of know where you'll start, but you don't really know what you'll get until it's finished. **GW**

"I wanted to continue along that journey of heavily effected psychedelic guitars," Laura Pleasants says



The Discussion

Kylesea guitarist Laura Pleasants strips back her tones to great effect with her streamlined solo project

BY GREGORY ADAMS

IF YOU FIRST came around to Laura Pleasants' guitar playing through the maximalist, effects-soaked sludging she brought to Kylesea — the cult metal quartet she co-founded in Savannah, Georgia, in the early '00s — the sound of her current solo project, the Discussion, might come as a surprise.

On her debut album, *All the Pretty Flowers*, the now Los Angeles-based musician pulled herself away from a swampy drop-G aesthetic to explore a more harmonically approachable standard tuning. While stripping away her muddiest tendencies, she discovered a skeletal guitar style inspired by Siouxsie and the Banshees/Magazine guitarist John McGeoch and minimal wave music.

"Toward the end of Kylesea we were doing more psychedelic stuff," she says, adding of the Discussion, which she'd begun in 2017, "I wanted to continue along that journey of heavily-effected psychedelic guitars, but I wanted to streamline my songwriting."

Accordingly, the new album's "Fade Away" is driven more by a brawny post-punk bass rhythm than the leanly-picked guitar spectrality Pleasants shimmers into the piece. That makes sense, she says, because the song is set in a "hollow house" and concerns a general thematic "emptiness." That said, by the time she and producer Jason Corbett — of the band Actors — wrapped up the sessions, they

realized they'd pruned away quite a bit of *Flowers'* overall guitar presence.

"There was a shitload more guitar on this record before. Jason helped me hone my vision," Pleasants says. "The guitar was maybe a little too proggy, so it was good to restrain myself. The chords and the notes were the same, but I changed the approach."

Synth-oscillating pieces like "Blue Light" now find Pleasants harnessing a more textural, string-scraping style. Elsewhere, the focus is on throbbing low-end melodies conjured from a short-scale Mustang bass.

Still, some habits die hard. Take the guitar-blaring mid-album standout "In Death & Life." This death-rock anthem was initially demoed with every instrument coursing through EarthQuaker Devices' Life Pedal V3 boost/distortion. The album version remodels the tones a bit, but retains a wiry, string-stretching solo that Pleasants wanted to sound "triumphant but not cheesy." It's the record's biggest guitar-hero moment.

On top of her tour plans with the Discussion, Pleasants will also spend 2025 playing Kylesea shows for the first time since 2015. The guitarist doesn't know if the reunion will yield any new metal music ("If we have time, and if the stars align..."), but the return of her heavier band has given fans plenty to talk about. **GW**

Rick Derringer in action
at the Oakland Coliseum
in 1978



IN MEMORIAM

All American Boy

A tribute to rock guitar legend Rick Derringer (1947-2025)

BY ANDY ALEDORT

▶ RICK DERRINGER, LONG revered as one of rock's greatest guitarists, passed away at age 77 on May 26 at his home in Ormond Beach, Florida. Derringer first came to national prominence via the 1965 hit "Hang On Sloopy," which he recorded with his band, the McCoys. It was released just as he was turning 17.

Thus began a long and storied career that found him working as a multi-instrumentalist on guitar, pedal steel and bass, and as a successful producer. The long list of artists he recorded with or produced includes Johnny and Edgar Winter, Todd Rundgren, Steely Dan, Kiss, Cyndi Lauper, Barbara Streisand, Alice Cooper and Air Supply. He also produced, arranged and performed on six "Weird Al" Yankovic albums, including

1984's *"Weird Al" Yankovic in 3-D*, home of the Grammy-winning "Eat It."

Derringer — born Richard Dean Zehringer on August 5, 1947, in Celina, Ohio — was raised in Fort Recovery, Ohio. As a child, Derringer was steeped in the music of his parents' vast record collection and was initially inspired to play guitar by his uncle, Jim Thornburg, a successful local singer and guitarist. Derringer got his first electric guitar for his ninth birthday and quickly began playing music with his younger brother, Randy.

After the eighth grade, the Zehringers moved to Union City, Indiana, where Rick and Randy formed their first band, the McCoys, briefly known as the Rick Z Combo and then Rick and the Raiders before reverting to the McCoys. As Derringer told me in 1994, "The

first song I learned to play was 'The McCoy' by the Ventures, and we took our name from that song." By the time he went to high school, the family had moved to a town just outside of Dayton, Ohio.

In 1965, the McCoys opened for the Strangeloves, a fictional group that consisted of three New York City songwriters. The Strangeloves' "I Want Candy" became a hit in mid '65, and they were considering releasing "My Girl Sloopy" — which had been a 1964 hit for R&B vocal group the Vibrations — as a followup. However, their touring partners, the Dave Clark Five, told them that they planned on releasing "Sloopy" as a single when they got back to England. The Strangeloves couldn't beat them to the punch because "I Want Candy" was still so fresh, so they enlisted the McCoys — the band that had been opening for them and backing them — to record the song. "The Strangeloves were looking for a young band that looked like the Beatles, and we fit the bill," Derringer said.

The McCoys flew to New York and sang on the Strangeloves' already-recorded instrumental track; Derringer — who suggested the name change to "Hang On Sloopy" — also recorded the song's guitar parts and amped-up solo. In an interview at the time, Jimi Hendrix said, "Have you heard the guitar player on

"I was there that famous night in 1968 when Jim Morrison got up and sang with Hendrix and went completely nuts"

RICHARD MCCAFFREY/ MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/ GETTY IMAGES

'Hang On Sloopy'? He's great."

"That was the first time I recorded in a real studio," Derringer said. "When we finished, everyone in the control room was jumping up and down, going nuts, yelling, 'Number 1!' 'Hang On Sloopy' went to Number 1, and we thought, 'This business is easy!' I soon found out it wasn't quite so easy."

I asked Derringer if they got rich for having a hit single. He laughed and said, "Not at all; we got rich in life experience. We were kids with no experience, and our parents had no experience, and, contractually, we'd sold ourselves down the river. We got cheated about every way you can."

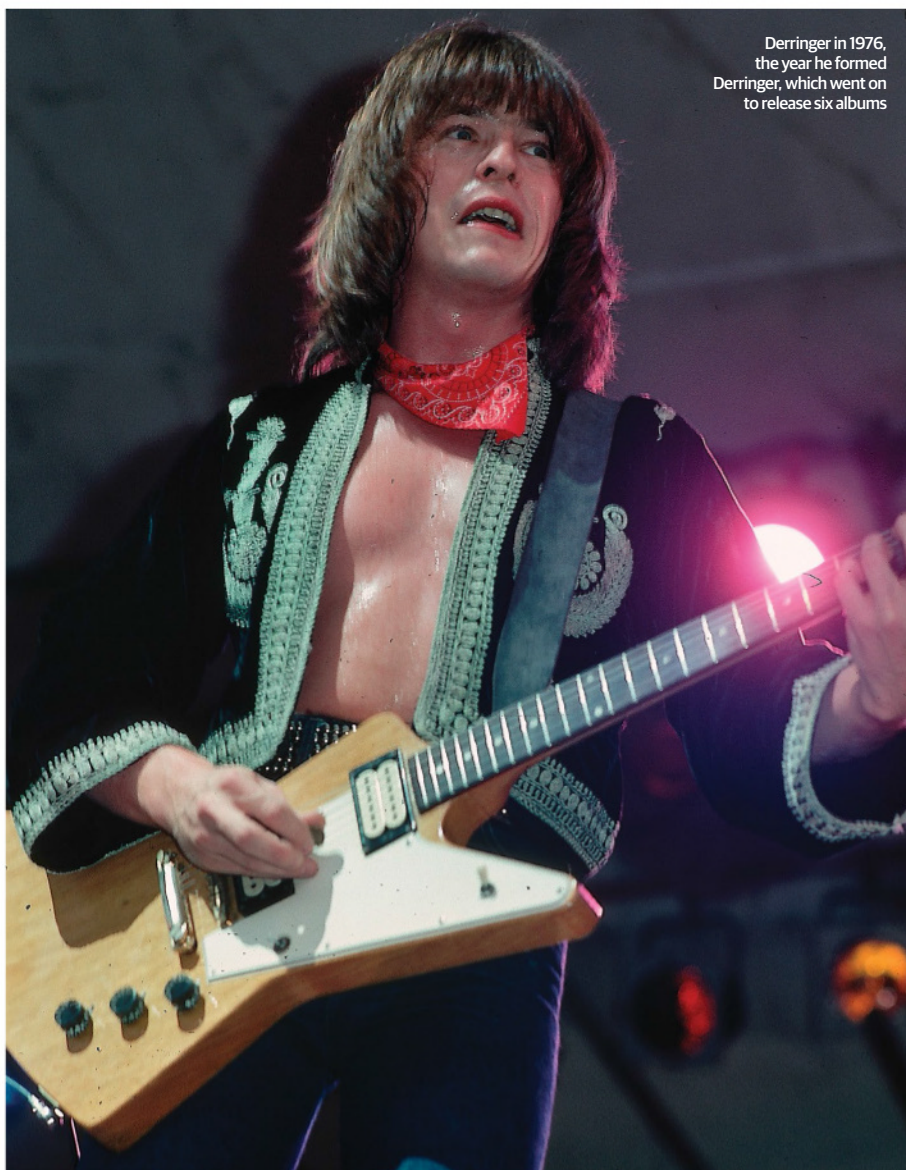
Following three albums — *You Make Me Feel So Good*, *Infinite McCoys* and *Human Ball* — the band relocated to New York and became the house band at the Scene Club, which was frequented by the rock elite and run by entrepreneur Steve Paul, who managed Johnny Winter.

"I was there that famous night in [March] 1968 when Jim Morrison got up and sang with Hendrix and went completely nuts," Derringer said. "Jimi would come down every night, and he, my bass player Randy Jo Hobbs and Buddy Miles would back everyone up. I often got up and played with them, as did Larry Coryell. Jimi usually had an open-reel tape recorder there so he could tape the sessions.

"They were up there jamming, and Morrison, who was so wasted he could barely stand, climbed onstage and grabbed the mic in the middle of this jam! This was when Jimi was wearing hats with feathers, and Morrison reaches over and grabs the hat off Jimi's head. Jimi was a nice guy, but it was like, 'Now you're screwing with my hair!' He put Jimi's hat on his own head, and everyone in there went, 'Ohhh, I can't believe he did that!' Steve told the bouncers to get Morrison off the stage, and four guys grabbed one limb each and started dragging him off while Jim was screaming, 'AAAROOAAROOOO' into the mic. It was incredible! He screamed into the mic until the cable wouldn't stretch anymore and he had to drop it." (The tracks from this gig can be heard on the bootleg releases *High, Live 'N' Dirty* and *Woke Up This Morning and Found Myself Dead*.)

"That's how we first met and started playing with Johnny Winter, and we all moved upstate to Hyde Park, New York," Derringer said. "We lived in two houses next to each other and formed the band known as Johnny Winter And. They didn't want to use '...and the McCoys' because of our bubblegum image, so someone suggested, 'Just call it 'Johnny Winter And!'"

"We began work on material for *Johnny Winter And* [1970], which I think is a cool record. Everyone always gives credit to *Johnny Winter And Live* [1971], but I always



Derringer in 1976, the year he formed Derringer, which went on to release six albums

thought the studio album was overlooked. It was a great example of what the McCoys did and what Johnny did, and we were writing for each other. The album is really important to me from a collaborative point of view.

"I wrote 'Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo' for Johnny. I wanted a song that had some rock and pop kind of parts that Johnny would sing, so it needed a melody and lyrics that weren't foreign to his style. The title says it all — it's 'rock 'n' roll,' but it's 'hoochie koo' too, whatever that means! The rhythm parts are more rock, but the single-note riff is more bluesy."

Also in 1971, Derringer worked with Alice Cooper on his fourth album, *Killer*, supplying all the guitars and the blistering solo to "Under My Wheels."

For his 1973 solo debut, *All American Boy*, Derringer recut "Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo," which became his first hit as a solo artist. "I felt the version we'd cut with Johnny

could've been better, so that's what I tried to do. We sped it up and added the female background vocals. It became more of a rock-sounding record with more energy."

After the breakup of Johnny Winter And, Rick joined Edgar Winter's band, White Trash, and thus began a relationship that resulted in Derringer producing that group's first four albums, *White Trash* (1971), *Roadwork* (1972), *They Only Come Out at Night* (1973) and *Shock Treatment* (1974). Derringer supplies incredible guitar work on every record; his solo on White Trash's "Keep Playing That Rock and Roll" is one of his best.

"I'm proud of that solo," he said. "This is one of the few that, when we play the song now, I try to emulate the original solo.

"I'm aiming for a certain balance in my solos. Whether I'm playing show-off kind of stuff, or slower and simpler, it really doesn't matter as long as the whole thing has some

[from left] Kenny Aaronson, Vinny Appice, Rick Derringer and Danny Johnson in Willimantic, Connecticut, June 1976



form. John Coltrane always played these wild, strange solos, but somehow they always maintained a sense of form, and I've always been a student of that. For a time I was studying to be a painter, and I felt the things I was good at were form and composition. I think along those lines for guitar solos, too."

The live White Trash album, *Roadwork*, is a showcase for Derringer's virtuosity as a guitarist. He is featured as the singer on incendiary versions of "Still Alive and Well" and "Back in the U.S.A.," and his extended solo on the latter is a masterclass in rock guitar brilliance.

Edgar Winter and Derringer scored a massive hit with "Frankenstein" from *They Only Come Out at Night*.

"I was working with Bill Szymczyk as my engineer; he'd co-produced *All American Boy* with me," Derringer said. "Then I used him on two projects as an engineer, *Johnny Winter's Still Alive and Well* [1973] and Edgar's *They Only Come Out at Night*. Edgar had always done a song called 'The Double Drum Solo,' which they first did when Johnny brought Edgar into the limelight to tour with him in the late Sixties. This was a song they did every night to show off, as Edgar would move from organ to saxophone to the drums.

"This turned into 'Frankenstein'; all of the parts were already there except for the synthesizer break in the middle. When we went in to do the album, Bill and I were looking forward to doing that song as much as anything else on the record. The rest of the music was more traditional, but this was a big, long instrumental with all of the wild stuff.

"At some point, we got word that the record company was thinking of not including the song on the album because they thought it was too different — too jazzy or something. Bill and I went to whoever the powers that were at that moment, and we said [*shouting*], 'What do you mean you're dropping it? It's the best one!' Of course, we had no idea how successful it would be. It became a Number 1 record and was a big hit for a long time. The real hits are usually the ones that the record companies have fought against."

How did the song get its signature title?

"The real hits are usually the ones that the record companies have fought against"

"The song was too long, even for the album version, and it was cut even more for the single. We didn't want to call it 'The Double Drum Solo,' and I was thinking it was a real 'Frankenstein' in the way we spliced all the sections together. I may have even suggested it as a title. I didn't have the power to give it the title, because it was Edgar's song, and in the end, he chose that as the title."

Around this time, Derringer began to do a lot of session work, often recording with Steely Dan. Previously, in 1972, Rick had played on a Donald Fagen demo that secured a record deal for the band. Derringer added guitar to the Steely Dan tracks "Show Biz Kids" from 1973's *Countdown to Ecstasy* and "Chain Lightning" from 1975's *Katy Lied*. In 1980, Derringer again worked with Steely Dan on *Gaucho*, adding guitar to "My Rival," and he played on Fagen's 1982 solo album, *The Nightfly*. Derringer collaborated with Todd Rundgren on *Something/Anything* (1972), *A Wizard, A True Star* (1973), *Initiation* (1975) and *Back to the Bars* (1978).

In 1976, Rick formed the band Derringer, which went on to release six albums. Their eponymous debut LP was released by Blue Sky, Johnny Winter's signature imprint. The album features stellar guitar work from

Derringer and co-guitarist Danny Johnson; one of its highlights is "Beyond the Universe."

"This is a song that remained in our set for the longest time," Derringer said. "We needed an uptempo, fast song, and that's what I came up with. I had been reading a lot of Carlos Castaneda books, and much of the lyrics were copped from those books. It was something I was into; I wasn't just writing anything down. I think that was the whole idea of the Castaneda books — that you could go anywhere and do anything."

At the end of the track, he and Johnson trade unaccompanied guitar solos. "In a lot of records nowadays, that's the stuff I miss. In striving to devise something for the marketplace, oftentimes the guitar playing is forgotten, just lettin' the guys get out there and play. Everything is so charted out, the solo can become something of a musical contrivance — it comes and goes so quickly — and you miss hearing somebody really play. When we cut it, we'd been playing it live for a while, and we recorded it totally spontaneously in the studio. We wanted to show people what we were like as a live band, too."

In 1982, Derringer began working with comedian "Weird Al" Yankovic, producing his eponymous debut, released in 1983, followed by *"Weird Al" Yankovic in 3-D*, which included

"Eat It," a parody of Michael Jackson's "Beat It."

"Something people wouldn't expect is that some of the best records I ever produced were with Weird Al," Derringer said. "I feel bad about it in some ways, because we had to take apart the best-made records of that time. When Quincy Jones produces Michael Jackson, unlimited money can be spent to make those records great. We had to learn to take them apart and recreate them!"

"Because Weird Al was thought of as a 'novelty artist,' all of a sudden my production career became stagnant, because people considered me to be a 'novelty producer.' The only thing novel about it was how hard we worked!"

"This took me into some work with the World Wrestling Federation, and I produced two albums for them. The first included a song I wrote that went on to become Hulk Hogan's theme song, 'I Am a Real American.' I got the WWF gig because they said, 'This guy's a novelty producer — we've got to get him!'"

Among the scores of studio tracks featuring Derringer's contributions, two were hit power ballads written and produced by Jim Steinman — Air Supply's "Making Love Out of Nothing at All" and Bonnie Tyler's

"Total Eclipse of the Heart," both from 1983. "It may sound silly to some people, but my favorite solo I've ever cut is probably the one on 'Making Love Out of Nothing at All,'" Derringer said. It's relatively simple, but it's very dramatic and melodic, and I love how it's harmonized. It fits the song so well."

Over the course of his career, Derringer released 15 studio albums and three live albums. Between 1993 and 2010, he recorded seven blues albums, plus two with drummer Carmine Appice and another with Appice and bassist Tim Bogert (DBA), 2009's *The Sky Is Falling*. In 1997, Derringer became an Evangelical Christian and, with his wife Jenda and their two children, released four Christian-themed albums. Starting in 2010, he performed on three world tours as a member of Ringo Starr's All-Star Band.

Derringer has provided inspiration to generations of guitar players, including some of the greatest ax-slingers of all time.

"Duane Allman told me he was inspired to pick up slide guitar because he saw me playing slide with the McCoys," Derringer said. "That blows my mind! He became one of the greatest slide guitarists ever."

Derringer's larger-than-life exuberance as a guitarist, singer and songwriter will continue to inspire musicians for decades to come. **GW**

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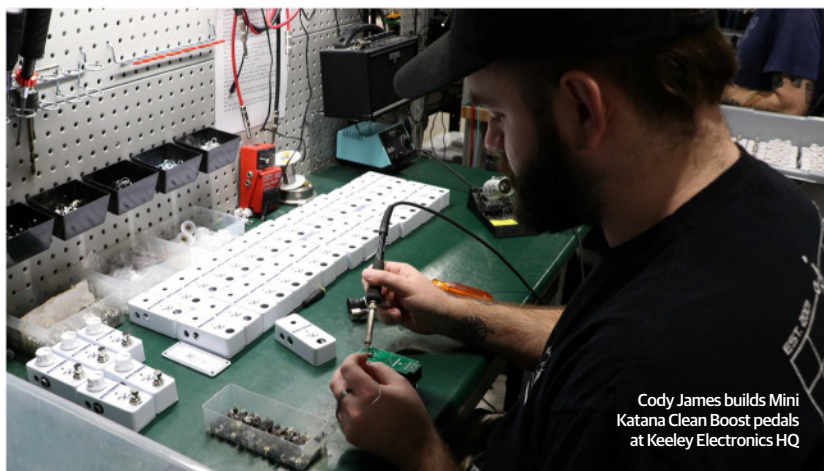


THE GEAR HUNTER

Keeley Electronics

Drawing on his background in electrical engineering, Robert Keeley has spent more than two decades building reliable and innovative pedals, from his top-selling Compressor to one notably trippy device

BY ANDREW DALY



Cody James builds Mini Katana Clean Boost pedals at Keeley Electronics HQ

IN 2001, ROBERT Keeley, a top-flight engineer out of Oklahoma City, founded Keeley Electronics. His goal was — and still is — simple, and he explains it like so: “If a player can become more expressive with my pedals, I’m super happy.”

In the quarter-century since his company’s founding, largely through the success of his Compressor pedal, which essentially cloned what Boss had done years ago but brought it into the 21st century, Keeley has established himself as one of the biz’s premier tone-makers.

A few things set Keeley apart from the pack, such as his insistence on staying independent and upholding a cut-above-the-rest quality standard.

“I’ve strived to do as much as possible in-house,” Keeley says. “From the initial concepts to engineering, development and manufacturing, I like to keep everything here. I don’t farm out any part of it. And because I have a background in consumer and professional electronic repair — and I’m an electrical engineer — I feel like that puts me ahead of some others, technologically.”

That’s probably true; Keeley isn’t a salesman by nature or trade. He’s just a guy who loves to make noise — and help other people do the same. And he’s still doing it, with the Compressor logging more miles as a top-seller on Reverb, and through a slew of new designs, too. Keeley plans to enter the MIDI fray soon, and stompboxes like the Octa Psi fuzz and Noble Screamer overdrive are also out there making waves. And who could forget the Vapor Drive, aka the first pedal that allows users to smoke and/or vape marijuana out of it?

That said, as of mid 2025, Keeley isn’t allowed to sell this hazy-brain-inducing pedal on Amazon, eBay or

“The funniest metric of my success is the number of knock-off clones I have”

“The Compressor was the first Keeley pedal, and it’s still my most successful,” Robert Keeley says



Reverb, for relatively obvious reasons. That, along with many other things in the pedal-making business, makes Keeley shake his head. He has no regrets, though he might do one or two things differently given the chance.

“If I could go back and do it again, I’d cut out the stop along the way called ‘addiction,’ and I’d have hired a business partner to help me navigate working with dealers and retailers,” he says. “I’d focus on the engineering and not so much on the sales side. Thankfully, sales have generally been there to allow me to continue forward. In general, however, I’ve been very lucky with the decisions I’ve made.”

What got you started in this biz?

I saw that I could build Ross Compressor clones and mods to provide people with better-sounding gear. I love working for myself and building gear, I have an electrical engineering degree with an entrepreneurial spirit, and I’m a guitar player who’s always looking to sound better — so I’m rarely satisfied with the current selection of gear.

When Keeley started, what were your observations of the effects scene, and how did you hope to shake things up?

It was very easy in the beginning because no one else was doing mods to pedals. I could take a popular pedal, say, the [Ibanez] Tube Screamer, and look at the list of complaints about it. People wanted more of this or that, more gain and less mids, for example. Then I’d create a mod to solve the problem.

You’ve often said you’re not a good engineer, which is hard to believe. Are you being modest?

It probably is modesty; I graduated sixth in my class at OU [University of Oklahoma], so I was definitely above C+/B-. [Laughs] I should say I don’t have a lot of experience designing my own boards or even putting my thoughts on paper. I like to have the people around me figure out how to make my dreams happen. I provide the design overview and help with clarifications and questions along the way. I tell them when it’s not working the way I want. I have good troubleshooting skills. I understand the electrical and computing concepts of professional and consumer-level audio electronics. All the brain work is done by Craighton Hale, an electrical engineer, and Aaron Tackett, who has 10 years of effects and DSP programming. I’m afforded the luxury of daydreaming about new ways to create effects and help guitar players become more creative and dynamic.

DAMIAN FANELLI (LEFT), KEELEY ELECTRONICS (ABOVE)

What was the first pedal you made on a large scale?

The Compressor was the first Keeley pedal, and it's still my most successful. We've sold about 500 to 1,000 per month for the past decade or more. It was the most popular pedal on Reverb in 2024 when looking at new and used sales through that platform. That pedal has evolved from being built one at a time at the kitchen table to having pick-and-place [CNC] putting components on the circuit board. It does one thing many guitar players want – it fattens up your tone and adds sustain without [adding] a lot of distortion.

How about the Germanium Super Phat Mod?**What was the science behind that?**

The way I like to have the boards designed is to put a lot of mods or special versions into the original design so we can grow the pedal and the idea in the future; many pedals we release are part of a platform to reduce the amount of unique boards. The Ge SPM is a perfect example where we added a germanium transistor boost, maybe about four to six parts extra, as a possibility for future development.

What's the story behind the latest Keeley creation, the Octa Psi?

The Octa Psi is my dream of putting a high-gain analog fuzz together with a mind-blowing pitch shifter. It took three years before all of the different aspects came together. The user interface was a huge turning point in the pedal concept and design, making it easy to switch between dry/wet and all-wet, order switching, expression pedal use, or momentary pitch bending, etc. And then I could focus on perfecting the nuances of the fuzz. I knew it would be a first, so I had to make sure it was easy to use. I spoke with [guitarist] Larry LaLonde of Primus, and he told me the pedal is so fun to develop music on; he joked that he didn't want to make music unless he had an Octa Psi. What a huge compliment!

Other Keeley pedals include the Rotary, Halo Core and Noble Screamer. These are classic sounds, so what is the key to putting the Keeley stamp on things?

If I can't make it any better-sounding, then I feel it's done and I can release it to the public. In the past few years, I've become fond of using the Audio Precision APx515B Series Audio Analyzer to make sure I have the lowest noise and the least amount of unwanted distortion in the signal and my products. I like to combine new features with an incredibly great tone.

With the way the market and economy are, has it been difficult to source quality components to uphold your standards?

That's not my biggest concern. Sometimes parts change, and we have to redesign – that's a big headache for me. Or parts become expensive to get because of tariffs, etc. That makes you plan a lot more and look for ways to make it yourself.

Are there any new products you can tell us about?

All kinds of stuff! Craighton has developed Keeley's first high-voltage tube design. We have at least two huge artists that have requested signature delays, loopers...



Derek Smith loads Keeley pedals into a Mimaki UV printer

My team has put work into these ideas and concepts already, so we aren't years away from new offerings. I've just started to play with our Core Series of pedals. I have phasers, choruses, octave generators and a variety of other prototypes out in the field already. I've not explored any of the fertile tone grounds in one series of drive pedals. Each one of those pedals can get a sweet set of mods for germanium or a nod to old-school Keeley modifications to each of the tones. We have plans to add MIDI this year, so that opens up a ton of possibilities. Can you imagine a MIDI Bubble Tron Random Quantum Filter-izer? I just did. [Laughs]

Is there a Keeley pedal that totally failed that still makes you scratch your head?

I have a pedal that you can smoke/vape weed/THC out of. It's the first rechargeable pedal, and it produces the most amazing distortion. It charges at 5 volts through a USB or the standard 9-volt battery, but I can't sell it on Amazon, eBay or Reverb because it's a tobacco or vaping product. There's lots of laws and barriers against me selling my invention. So I scratch my head and take a toke from my cordless Vapor Drive pedal. [Laughs]

How do you measure your impact and legacy on the modern pedal and modding scene?

I measure it in a couple of ways. The funniest metric is the number of knock-off clones I have; that gives me an idea as to how I'm perceived in the pedal world. The number of times that mature artists say they want to develop an effect with me is a good indicator as well. If people who have been happy with their tone over the past 10, 20 or 30 years are now enthusiastically coming to my shop for new ideas, that means I have lots going right for me at the moment.

Smaller companies are selling, but you haven't. Will you stay independent for as long as you can?

I don't plan on selling my company. There may have been a time in the past, but this is what I love doing. I like the idea of creating a manufacturing business that can sustain generations of employees. Martin, Gibson, Fender, Dunlop and Electro-Harmonix have done it; maybe Keeley can. **GW**



[top] "The Octa Psi is my dream of putting a high-gain analog fuzz together with a mind-blowing pitch shifter," Keeley says



[above] Keeley's Halo Core delay

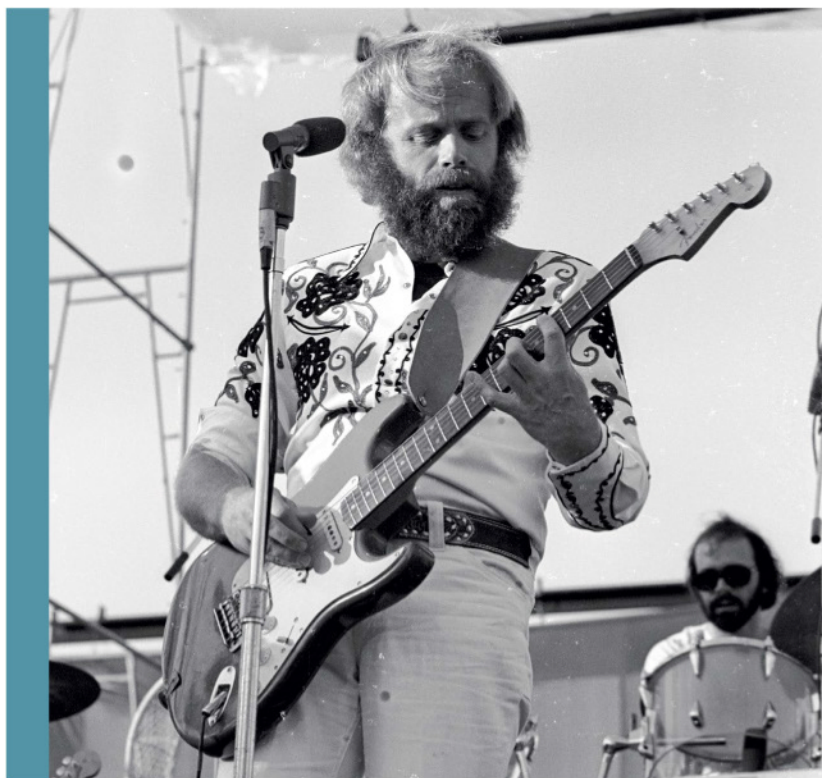
"Can you imagine a MIDI Bubble Tron Random Quantum Filter-izer? I just did"

PERSONALITIES

Al Jardine

The longtime Beach Boys guitarist talks lesser-known albums *Surf's Up* and *Holland*, his six-string relationship with Carl Wilson, his early Seventies Beach Boys gear, new EP and more

BY ANDREW DALY



▶ **AL JARDINE WILL** be the first to tell you he didn't play much guitar for the Beach Boys in the Sixties. Early Beach Boys albums — like *Surfin' Safari* (1962) and *Surfin' U.S.A.* (1963) — feature plenty of nifty vocals and a ton of great songwriting but little to zero Jardine-related six-string action. Later records — including *Pet Sounds* (1966) and *Wild Honey* (1968) — did little to change that narrative. Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys' brilliant yet deeply eccentric and erratic bandleader, had a vision manifested via sounds in his head, and he relied on a revolving group of L.A. session musicians called the Wrecking Crew, rather than Beach Boys guitarists Jardine and Carl Wilson, to bring it to life.

But Jardine wasn't bothered. "In the Sixties, when the Wrecking Crew came along, it was Glen Campbell and Tommy Tedesco," Jardine says. "Back then, there

were so many of them that we really didn't do too much compared to the second generation of our music. Before then, we used a lot of the best players in the business. Our primary focus was doing vocals."

Things began to change in the Seventies after the Beach Boys fell into the shadow of jam bands and riff rock. The result was a string of cult records featuring more guitar via Jardine than all of their Sixties records (probably) combined. *Surf's Up* (1971) and *Holland* (1973), in particular, have long left fans of the Beach Boys' sugary pop Sixties offerings scratching their heads. The dark, socially conscious lyrics mixed with experimental and psychedelic tones make these records memorable, as did Jardine's coming to the forefront with a 12-string Gibson ES-335 — and a banjo — in hand.

Still, Jardine, who refers to himself as a "crappy guitar player," is quick to push aside his efforts. "Carl was our primary guitar player then," he says. "Because we were on the road so much, by then, in the Seventies, we were basically rehashing the hits. So, for me, as a rhythm player, I was pretty much happy just playing on some of the best songs ever written."

Jardine is credited as playing guitar on several cuts on *Surf's Up*, including "Don't Go Near the Water," which he co-wrote with Mike Love. "Toothpaste and soap will make the ocean a bubble bath," Jardine says. "That's what it was! It was about avoiding an ecological aftermath. How about that?"

Two years later, while recording *Holland*, Jardine's push to the forefront continued. He played guitar on the entire three-part "California Saga," including "California Saga/The Beaks of Eagles." Along with adding plenty of 12-string sunshine, Jardine played a 1938 Gretsch Broadcaster banjo on "California Saga/California."

Looking back on *Surf's Up* and *Holland*, it's easy to associate them with Brian Wilson's degrading mental state and the slow breakdown of the Beach Boys as a unit. But time has been kind to these records. They might not be everyone's cup of tea, but at the very least, they're snapshots of a moment in time when, for the first time, the Beach Boys were a full-tilt band rather than vocalists pretending to be one.

If you were to ask Jardine about it, he'd probably shrug off the whole thing. In fact, he does, instead choosing to remind us that he's always been a "song-

ABOVE A Fender Strat-totin' Al Jardine in action with the Beach Boys in the Seventies

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"MY FAVORITE GUITAR WAS A 12-STRING GIBSON ES-335."

writer, producer and arranger first." And that's fair, but there's no denying his impact, even if Jardine is unable — or refuses — to see it himself. "With the advent of pedals and all these great guitar players... all those guys could play circles around me," he says. "The primary way the instrument was looked at changed, and its sound changed over time with all these new developments. I was never a pedal player; I just stuck to the old way of just playing some good chords back then."

These days, Jardine is about as active you'd expect an 82-year-old musician to be. He's still playing shows, though not on a grand scale. As for new music, he's just released a new four-song EP called *Islands in the Sun*.

"The song 'Islands in the Sun' is a pretty valid and really nice piece," Jardine says. "It's modeled a bit — not that it's the same melody of anything — after the Beach Boys' 'Kokomo.' It doesn't sound like 'Kokomo,' but it does have that Caribbean swing and feel. Once you get it in your head, you can't get it out of your head. I sing it all the time around the house; I think it's gonna be a winner."

During a break in the action, Jardine dialed in with *GW* to dig into the approach, tones and gear that defined the polarizing, bewildering, yet retrospectively respected *Surf's Up* and *Holland*.

Going into recording *Surf's Up* and *Holland*, what were the biggest lessons you'd learned as a guitarist?

Play with better guitar players than yourself. You always learn from someone else. Any little thing you can pick up along the way, it makes you better. And don't be afraid to ask questions. I remember one time Steve Miller and I were goofing around, and he said, "Let me show you a couple of my main blues licks." It was that kind of thing, but for the life of me, I couldn't get it. For some reason — and I don't know why — I couldn't. Maybe it was because he was watching me, you know? You know the pressure you feel when someone tries to show you something? That's how it was. And, of course, he's the master of that kind of music, and if you practice it, it becomes perfect. But I couldn't even get to first base. I don't know what happened... that was my big failure. I'm still embarrassed about it.

What were the most significant differences in how you approached guitar in the Sixties versus the Seventies?

To be honest, my forte is not really as a lead guitarist. I'm a rhythm player, so frankly, I could play just about anything in that regard. As long as I approached it with the proper chords and in the proper setting... I mean, nothing really changed for me.

The credits for *Surf's Up* say you played electric and acoustic guitar — and even some bass.

You're probably right. I even played banjo on that album. But those [parts], you know, are simple, little things, like more of an effect. It was playing a little part here and



ABOVE [from left] Ricky Fataar, Blondie Chaplin, Al Jardine, Mike Love and Carl Wilson — surrounded by a ton of prime Fender gear — rehearse circa 1972

HIS FIRST WITH THE BEACH BOYS



SURF'N' SAFARI 1962

HIS NEW EP



ISLANDS IN THE SUN 2025

there. What's the term? Not really solo, but... I was trying to do something tasteful as a producer of music. If you don't have your guitar player around to do something for you, you do it yourself, you know? But I look at myself as a songwriter, producer and arranger. I'm really a crappy guitar player, to be honest. You probably shouldn't be talking to me. [Laughs]

You're too hard on yourself. You got some great sounds on *Surf's Up*, *Holland* and other albums from that period. What gear did you use?

By the time we got to that stage of our careers, we were working out of Brian [Wilson's] living room, believe it or not. It was a living-room studio; I'll call it the Bellagio. It was kind of a fancy way of doing studio recordings. But the gear there was our road gear. Carl and I would switch around with the Gibson ES-335s. We didn't necessarily use our Fender equipment, but that was something Carl and I had. As we began to play a little better, the quality of our instruments went up. But that ES-335 was a terrific guitar.

Did you pick out those guitars yourselves?

Our road guys would try to help us out. They would go out and shop for guitars. Even on the road, they would come back with a variety of guitars for us to play. So we were kind of learning as we went along on some of the tours. Then we'd take them home with us, and we used those guitars on our different albums.

You both played 335s, but what made yours special?

Carl preferred Epiphone, particularly the 335 shape. But my favorite guitar was a 12-string Gibson 335. I think it's a '60 or '61. God, it looked like Stradivarius among 12-strings. I can't even imagine not having it. An example of a later song I played it on is my song "Lady



ABOVE Jardine performs the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* with Brian Wilson's band in Austin, May 14, 2017

Lynda [from 1979's *L.A. (Light Album)*], which was big in Europe and basically everywhere except the States. I think it was a little too classical. But anyway, that guitar has that "California Girls" sound and feel to it. I really enjoy playing that instrument. It's my favorite.

Was that a guitar the Beach Boys' road crew found?

Yes, that would be another one that the road crew found. They would go and find these different instruments. Carl got the Epiphone and I got the Gibson. But yeah, what a guitar.

You co-wrote "Take a Load Off Your Feet" and "Don't Go Near the Water." What was your process like?

Usually, I had someone to bounce ideas off of. It helps to have a group because you can bounce your ideas off somebody in the band that you trust. And then you also can develop a lyrical thing, like with "Don't Go Near the Water." With that song, at the time, there was a big uproar about phosphates in our drinking water. *Time* magazine actually interviewed me about that in particular and about some of the lines in that song. Phosphates were kind of a soap-based product, and they were getting into all the water systems, causing foam in the rivers and stuff. That's why I was inspired to write that song.

Was it mostly Carl that you bounced ideas off?

Yeah. I'd start with an idea like that and then bounce it off somebody like Carl. And Carl would bounce ideas off Brian, and Brian would bounce his ideas off Carl and Mike [*Love*]. Even Mike and I had a relationship in that

way, and Brian and I, too, for that matter.

With the knowledge that you consider yourself a songwriter first and guitarist second, how did the guitar play into that?

We did those albums at a home studio, so we were just sitting around with each other; it was an everyday thing. And pretty soon, you're writing a song with friends, like "Don't Go Near the Water." So, with guitar, it's good to have songwriting buddies that are available to you. In order to complete a song, it really helps. There are different approaches you can take to writing a song.

As you mentioned, you played banjo on "California Saga/California," one of your tracks on *Holland*.

Oh, yeah. I've always really enjoyed that song. That banjo is from 1938, so it's a real oldie. I got it in Chicago when I was in college when I had my group, the Islanders, so it's been around forever. It's a Gretsch Broadkaster. I thought it would be kind of a cool way to kick off the song.

Banjo isn't often associated with the Beach Boys.

You know... it's just whatever instrument fits. And it kind of fits that particular song because it's more of a country-based, well... not country. I don't know what you'd call it; maybe it's a Beach Boys country song. [*Laughs*] It has more of an organic feel to it, and I said, "Yeah, that's what I'm looking for," and I grabbed the Broadkaster.

Did the way you approached guitar impact the way you approached banjo?

Oh, yeah, one's a fingerpicking deal. Yeah, that's a totally different style. The five-string banjo, you know, you just strum; it's more of a strumming deal. But this bluegrass style is different. There are so many styles with banjo, and they're all amazing. The guitar is fundamentally different; it just fills all the holes in your recordings. It gives you a nice, smooth, level backdrop for your lyrics.

Even though you didn't play much guitar in the Sixties with the Beach Boys, you contributed a lot to the Seventies. Are you proud of that?

Oh, my — I don't know how to answer that one. Basically, I'm more of an acoustic player. I like acoustic guitars. I like those kinds of songs. I like songs that are based around good melodies and harmonies. I've always loved Martin guitars and was an admirer, but I never quite found one with the tone I wanted. So acoustic over electric is really more my style.

So why bother with electric guitar at all?

To be honest, I had to learn to play electric guitar when I formed the Beach Boys with the guys. I had to go electric. It was like [*Bob*] Dylan. He had a choice, and he decided he was going to join the electric group [*of players*], even though people weren't happy about it. I think he and I made the right choice. **GW**

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Interview

Inhaler guitarist
Josh Jenkinson with
his 1976 Gibson ES-335



LEWIS EVANS

READY PLAYER ONE



Inhaler's Josh Jenkinson is living proof that this generation's guitar heroes actually got hooked on guitar courtesy of — you guessed it — *Guitar Hero*

BY MARK McSTEAD

IRISH ROCKERS **INHALER** have been on a steep upward trajectory since releasing their debut single, "I Want You," in 2018 (having appeared on a various-artists release, *Garageland, Vol. 1*, the previous year). Singer/guitarist Elijah Hewson, bass player Robert Keating and drummer Ryan McMahon had been playing together since 2012 — when they were just 12 years old — with guitarist Josh Jenkinson coming on board three years later at age 16. His arrival coincided with the band's determination to focus on writing their own music, establish themselves on the Irish club circuit and break into the U.K. market. They attracted immediate attention, especially when the news got out that Hewson was the son of U2's Bono (not to mention the younger brother of *Bad Sisters* star Eve Hewson). For the band, that family connection wasn't something they ever thought about or even tried to capitalize on.

"Growing up in Ireland in our mid-teens, it didn't seem like anyone knew about that or cared," Jenkinson says. "We'd been playing at a venue called Garageland in Dublin, getting regular gigs, and it was weeks before the promoter knew about Eli's connection. He

was amazed when someone told him. We've never really experienced much pushback, but then we've never taken advantage of Eli's connections anyway."

By the end of 2019, Inhaler had released three more singles and were creating a huge buzz, dropping another three singles the following year. There was a strong sense that they were deliberately biding their time, letting the anticipation build before releasing their debut album, *It Won't Always Be Like This*, in 2021. Clearly, the plan paid off as they achieved the impressive feat of reaching Number 1 on the U.K. albums chart.

Momentum was maintained with the release of *Cuts & Bruises* in 2023, which saw them break into the U.S. alt charts and cemented their rep as one of the biggest bands in Europe. With the release of 2025's *Open Wide*, the band's music has reached a new level of depth and emotional maturity. They mix a wide range of influences to create

their own rock/indie crossover; they're able to pull off the cool trick of maintaining rock credibility while not being afraid to embrace insanely memorable pop sensibilities.

Jenkinson, who is, by his own admission, the least extroverted member of the band, was excited to talk to *GW* for a rare one-on-one interview.

In the press info for *Open Wide*, you describe it as almost feeling like you were making an album together as a band for the first time.

We only had about three songs that existed in any form that we used, but even those were completely gutted and retooled for the record. Our producer, Tom Hull, has worked with some really big acts, like Miley Cyrus, Kings of Leon and Harry Styles, and he brought some interesting perspectives and ideas to the recording process. We've also acquired a lot of knowledge from making the first

two albums in terms of what's required in the studio, so it was almost as if it was our first record as conscious adults.

What was the process for the band in terms of writing and prepping for the new record?

We had a lot of time to think about what we wanted to do, and we spent hours jamming in the rehearsal room. Eli is a powerhouse at making great demos; we're always amazed and enthused when he plays them. When you have someone with such a fantastic ability to come up with ideas, it's not hard to find inspiration for parts that will complement what he's done and suggestions for extra bits here and there.

For your first album, you presumably already had a bunch of songs that were good to go. Did you find you had to start again for *Cuts & Bruises* two years later?

We did have quite a few more songs on hand from the first album, but we'd actually grown a bit bored with them by then. We'd been playing them and living with them for so long that we wanted to write a bunch of new songs to really get ourselves fired up. Maybe when we do the retrospective box set in 10 years we'll dig those old songs back out. *[Laughs]*

What drove your need to play guitar?

It was *Guitar Hero*, funnily enough. All my uncles played it, and I got addicted to it. I'd be going round to their houses all the time; eventually I got my own game console, and I couldn't stop playing it. My grandma asked me why I was spending so much time pretending to play the guitar when I could just get a real guitar and try to learn how to actually play. *[Laughs]* Of course, there is no crossover from playing the game to actually playing a real guitar, so all those thousands of hours I put in didn't really count for much, though maybe I guess it helped to get a sense of rhythm.

When I was 10, my grandma booked some lessons for me; I had a great teacher. The first day I went to him he just asked me what I wanted to play, and he did that trick of teaching me songs I knew from the start. I'd never done very well at school; I couldn't buckle down to studying and doing homework. I was a bit like that with the guitar for a couple of years – the teacher would *[give]* me something to learn, but I wouldn't even work on it until just before the lesson. I'm sure he knew I wasn't putting the effort in, but then I really started to get into it. That's when I started to make serious strides – once I realized that the

[from left] Josh Jenkinson, Eli Hewson, Robert Keating and Ryan McMahon



more you put in, the more you get back out of it. When I really got interested, my uncle's girlfriend gave me her Encore Strat copy and practice amp. I played that for years.

How'd you hook up with the band?

I met Eli on a night out and we got on well; he sent me a couple of demos on Facebook Messenger, and I couldn't believe someone our age was coming up with stuff like that. I'd only ever messed around a bit in bands that played covers for fun. I could tell the band really wanted to do something significant.

What were your go-to guitars and amps for the new album?

At the start of 2024, I bought my first guitar that was with my own money – I'd been playing guitars people had given me or that I'd borrowed. I got a 1976 ES-335, which had a coil-splitter. It combined the best of everything I'd been looking for, as I used a Jaguar for the first album and a regular 335 for the second one, but with the splitter I could pretty much get all the sounds I was looking for from one guitar. I used a Vox AC30, and Tom the producer suggested I try a Roland JC-120. The mix of amps was such a great sound that I use them live now. Eli used a Les Paul, a Strat and an Epiphone Olympic from Rivington Guitars in New York City.

“My grandma asked me why I was spending so much time playing *Guitar Hero* when I could just get a real guitar and learn how to actually play”

How do you work out your parts with Eli?

It's pretty organic. He'll usually play something that was on his demo, and I'll instinctively go to a different place to find the part that complements his work. We don't really sit down and plan; we just know what we need to do.

Your playing is very song-focused. Do you ever feel the urge to break out the shred?

No! I shudder every time I think about having to do something like that – I'm not that type of player, and I've never been able to do that kind of thing, no matter how good I was at shredding on *Guitar Hero*. *[Laughs]*

It sounds like there are a lot of subtle influences at play in the band's music.

We like so many different bands between us, but we never want to do something that sounds like any of our influences. Our main focus is to try to ensure that we never do the same thing twice. We want to keep it fresh; we don't want to ever feel stale and do something again just because it worked once before.

How does the upped level of visibility feel?

I'm not an extrovert in any way, but if someone sees me on the street and tells me they like our music, it does make me feel very happy. I guess if you're a big celebrity, getting noticed could be a bit weird. We have a very strong, committed following – sometimes they'll be camping outside the venue overnight, and then you start to worry that they'll be OK. That's a massive inspiration for us, though, to see that level of support.

How did you find the transition from clubs to much larger venues?

In terms of actually playing, the more you do the bigger venues, and the bigger the venues get, the more confident you feel. It's a little more stressful in a small room, actually, but if it's a venue where you can't see the whites of their eyes, I feel like I can walk out anywhere and feel comfortable.

What's coming up next?

We've got loads of shows through to the fall, but we've also got a massive hunger to make some new music. When you're in a band it's always about the next record, not the one you've just done. There's no goal for us as a band other than us acknowledging that we're a guitar band. If there's any plan at all, it's to turn up the guitars more with each album. But our first priority is to get out of our parents' houses into our own homes. *[Laughs]* **GW**

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Glen Matlock [left]
and Frank Carter on
stage with the Sex
Pistols in the U.K.

JEMMA DODD

ANarchy in The U.S.

Original Sex Pistols Steve Jones, Glen Matlock and Paul Cook are about to kick off a super-rare U.S. tour with 41-year-old Frank Carter — as in, not Johnny Rotten — on vocals. Says Jones, “For the first time in a long time, I’m really enjoying doing Pistols songs.”

BY ANDREW DALY

STEVE JONES HAS been on the road with the Sex Pistols. And like his old-guard bandmates, bassist Glen Matlock and drummer Paul Cook, he's been reinvigorated by their vocalist, who — you might've noticed from our photos — isn't John Lydon, also known as the infamous, sneering, occasionally cantankerous Johnny Rotten. Jones says he has nothing but love for Lydon but also acknowledges that they've grown apart. Lydon, based on the poison-covered darts he sometimes slings at his old pals through the media, seems to agree.

But, really, who cares? Jones certainly doesn't, as the Sex Pistols have a range of dates planned for 2025, and the door is open for more. All of this was made possible by Frank Carter, the 41-year-old vocalist of Gallows and Frank Carter and the Rattlesnakes. But he's definitely not doing it by channeling Lydon; he's just being himself.

"For the first time in a long time, I'm really enjoying doing Pistols songs again," Jones says. This was not the case when the Pistols reunited with Lydon in 1996, nor was it the case in the early to mid 2000s when they got together again. "I was just done," Jones says. "I was looking at my watch after two songs, thinking, 'I'm so fucking miserable doing this.' That was the last time we did anything with the original lineup. I was quite happy with not doing it again, but this came about with Frank, and it's given us new life."

It's a life that dates back to 1975, when Jones formed the Sex Pistols alongside Matlock, Cook and guitarist Wally Nightingale. Back then, Jones was the Pistols' frontman, but that didn't work out, leading to Lydon joining the band and Jones replacing Nightingale on guitar. This completed the lineup that'd record the infamous *Spunk* tapes, not to mention most of the band's iconic debut, 1977's *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*. "Most" being the operative word; Matlock, aka the only seasoned musician in the Pistols, exited stage left, leading to Lydon's pal — the non-bass-playing, but very punk-rock-looking and big-time-drug-taking malcontent Sid Vicious — replacing him.

From that point on, which wasn't very long — as the Pistols busted up after a very unfun-looking concert in San Francisco in 1978 — the band became known for outrageous and very "punk rock" behavior rather than their music. This was mostly due to Vicious, who ushered in a "look cool and worry about playing well later" mentality.

After the Pistols' run to glory ended, Jones and Cook formed the Professionals, and Lydon formed Public Image Ltd. As for Vicious, he was accused of murdering his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, in 1978; he went to jail and died of an overdose in 1979. His final words came via a suicide note, which read, "We had a death pact, and I have to keep my half of the bargain. Please bury me next to my baby. Bury me in my leather jacket, jeans, and motorcycle boots. Goodbye."

Jones admits that Vicious's death and the polarizing memory of Rotten's sneering persona set to song have come to define the Pistols as much as their music has. But on the flip side, by no means were the Pistols musically incompetent. In fact, when observers look back on *Never Mind the Bollocks*, despite his greener-than-green nature, Jones' licks stand out. Jones shrugs when reminded of this.

"I've never really been one to want to practice and get better," he says. "I'm quite happy... I don't know if I can, or if my brain will let me play anything fancy. It's like Keith Richards. He's great at what he does, but it's

limited. That's fine because I'd be happy with Keith Richards' limited guitar playing. I'd much rather be like him than Yngwie Malmsteen." [Laughs]

Practice or not, people still dig the Sex Pistols. More importantly, they dig what Jones is doing on stage. He laughs at this, saying, "Why don't you

come and see us, and tell me if you think I can play guitar or not!"

Jokes aside, Jones is loving every minute of the Pistols' resurgence. "It really is a lot of fun," he says. "People love it. You're going to get your naysayer, you know — whatever. But the proof is in the pudding. A lot of fans, young and old, show up. They just love it. They love singing along, and I love looking at them looking happy. It makes me happy, and it's a joy to play these songs again. Otherwise, I wouldn't be doing it. Making a few bucks is nice, but if you're miserable... I'm 70 in [September]; I'm too old to be putting up with crap at this stage of the game."

The Pistols have been on the road with Frank Carter out front. What led to that?

It was all a bit of a fluke, really. Last year, we did this thing in Shepherd's Bush [West London], and we'd talked about it because we did the Generation Sex [supergroup] with Billy Idol and Tony James, the original bass player in Generation X, in 2023. We did a lot of Generation X songs and about the same amount of Sex Pistols songs. When we were

"I would take speed to keep me focused, and just play along to New York Dolls and the Stooges"



all done and dusted with that, we thought, "Why don't we just do Pistols songs?" Billy Idol wanted to do his own thing — like he's doing now, where he's playing stadiums and whatnot — so we thought, "Who could we get as a singer?" Glen's son came up with Frank, but I didn't know who Frank was. We did a Zoom meeting with Frank while I was in L.A. and he was in England, and then [the 2024 shows] came about in Shepherd's Bush.

That's where you're from, so you've got history there.

Yeah, so this little club [Bush Hall] was going under, and Cookie [Paul Cook] mentioned that we could do some shows there to raise money. It sounded like the perfect way to test

[from left] Glen Matlock, Frank Carter, Paul Cook and Steve Jones in action



if something works or not. Lo and behold, it was brilliant.

No easy feat, as Frank was filling John Lydon's spot.

Frank's a lot younger, so he's got a lot more energy. He's literally the best; I call him the ringmaster. He loves getting the crowd going; he goes crowd surfing and just takes the heat off of me, Cookie and Glen. I'm 70, so I'm definitely not jumping into the crowd. [Laughs] He's great – and he's definitely not trying to be Johnny Rotten. He's really something else, and he's made it a lot of fun.

And now you have a full-scale tour planned, which also marks the 50th

anniversary of when you formed the Pistols. When you started out, could you have imagined you'd be here all these years later?

Not really. After we disbanded in San Francisco, I'd had enough. I was quite happy ending it. Then we did the reunion in '96, and that was, like, 70-odd shows, but I wasn't having a great time. We tried doing a few more, and I will say it was the first time I'd actually made somewhat decent cash with the Pistols. That was the case for all of us. Prior to that, we really didn't make any money back in the day with Malcolm McLaren. So that was good, but then we did a few more shows in 2002 and 2003 – and then in 2007 and 2008. By the end of that, I was done.

Going back to the start of the Pistols, is it true that you'd only been playing guitar for a few months when you formed the band?

Yeah, it is true. I was basically the singer at the time before we got John. I did one silly, little show, and I don't even remember... I was so terrified because I don't like being the front guy. And after we'd done that show, it was a disaster. I didn't want to be the singer, and Malcolm and us talked about getting a different singer.

Which would leave you in a more comfortable position, correct?

Yeah, I would just come and play guitar, and that's what we did. And then I took a load



The Sex Pistols do their thing at Dunstable Queensway Hall in 1976; [from left] Glen Matlock, John Lydon, Paul Cook and Steve Jones

of speed — black beauties — and that kept me focused. I didn't even really know what I was doing. I knew a couple of barre chords, and I would just play along to records, like the New York Dolls, the Stooges and glam bands like Mott the Hoople.

Did you pick it up quickly?

I tried to pick up how those other players were playing, and I did pick it up really quick. I wasn't great when we first started playing; I was far from great. But by the time we did *Never Mind the Bollocks*, I'd been playing for about a year before we got into the studio.

What were the writing sessions like?

Well, we did this *Spunk* [bootleg], which we recorded in the rehearsal room where I used to live upstairs. We did it on reel-to-reel, and we were experimenting a lot. We had all the time in the world because it wasn't a studio; we were just rehearsing. Before I knew it, I was picking up the guitar pretty well. But I loved it in the studio, and I loved doing the *Spunk* tapes. I love experimenting, and soon I was capable of getting away with playing eighth-note power chords and a bit of Chuck Berry. The best thing about Chuck Berry is even when you do a Chuck Berry lead, the ass doesn't fall out of the song if you're playing the one-note lead. Plus, Chuck Berry's leads are cool.

As green as you were, Bill Price, the engineer on *Never Mind the Bollocks*,

said you were one of the tightest guitar players he'd ever worked with.

Yeah, and I don't mind him saying that. I appreciate it.

You seemed to pick up the guitar quickly to the point that Bill said there were really no overdubs needed.

No, not a lot. We doubled both sides, you know, with the same rhythm, and then maybe add the power chords on the choruses and bits and bobs and little bits of leads here and there. It just seemed to work. I played most of the bass on the album, too.

Did you find bass just as easy to pick up?

Yeah. I think "Bodies" was probably the only song I didn't play on. But it was all eighth notes, you know? I wasn't doing anything like Jack Bruce, that's for sure. [Laughs]

With the Sex Pistols, you became known for your cream-colored Gibson Les Paul Custom. What's the story behind that guitar?

It was given to me by Malcolm. He got it off of Sylvain Sylvain from the New York Dolls.

"I wasn't trying to sound like whatever punk rock was; I just wasn't technically good at that point"

He was managing them at the time in New York, and then that all fell apart. I don't know how he got it, but he brought it back from New York, and this was when I was still singing and rehearsing with the original guitar player, Wally Nightingale, and Paul and Glen.

In a way, that guitar became the springboard for you becoming a proper guitarist — and John's induction into the band.

Well, Malcolm brought it back, gave it to me, and said, "You've got to stop singing, let's get someone else." That's when auditioned singers, and funnily enough, a lot of people don't know this, but when we got John in the band, I guess I wasn't that competent. We actually auditioned a second guitar player on Denmark Street, where I was living and we were rehearsing.

What was that process like?

We went through about 50 guitarists, and most of them were clowns. They didn't know what they were doing. There were a few good ones, but they weren't doing what we were doing, which was something new. They were more like rock guys, you know? I just didn't work out.

Is that what led the Pistols to stick with you as the sole guitarist?

By the time this had gone on for about three weeks, I was playing and getting better all the time. I was really going through a crash course, though not intentionally, you

EVEN more PISTOLS? NEVER SAY NEVER!

Glen Matlock recalls Sex Pistols reunions past and present and discusses the likelihood of new music from the U.K. punk legends

BY ANDREW DALY

SINCE THE BEGINNING, the face and voice of the Sex Pistols has been John Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten. Beyond that, the imagery associated with the band mostly stems from the drugged-out, bass-slung-low antics of Sid Vicious. But Lydon only wrote the lyrics and Vicious could hardly play bass. And none of it would have been possible without Glen Matlock, the Pistols' original bassist and (depending on when and who you ask) chief songwriter.

Regardless of who wrote and played on what, songs like "Anarchy in the U.K.," "God Save the Queen" and "No Fun" became classics. What's more, Vicious is dead and Lydon isn't fronting the Pistols for their latest reunion. Instead, former Gallows frontman Frank Carter is out front.

What does Matlock think of all this?

"We're celebrating," he says. "Everybody wants to hear the Sex Pistols thing, so we might as well give it to them."

But this is a new animal compared to past Pistols parties, as Carter isn't bothering to do his best Johnny Rotten impression. "What we're making now is a glorious racket," Matlock says. "We're not trying to relive those songs, but we're playing those songs in the spirit that they were kind of written musically."

Matlock doesn't know what the future holds beyond the "never say never" mentality. For now — and perhaps for the first time — he's happy just to be out there repping punk rock as only a Pistol can. And there's no denying that Carter is a big part of that.

"Frank brings his own thing to the band, which is joyous," Matlock says. "He respects the songs and the sentiments behind them, and he sings them in his own way."

What kicked off this current iteration of the Sex Pistols?

It sort of evolved organically. That's not very punk, is it? [Laughs] We were thinking about doing it, and my son,

Louie, suggested Frank. I met up with him, introduced him to Paul and we had a little play. And Steve was in L.A., and he came over, and we started rehearsing. That was it.

Just like that, you'd replaced one of the most irreplaceable frontmen in history.

It was like falling off a log, really. You know, I was aware of Frank a little bit. I went to see the Rattlesnakes play. They did two sold-out shows at the Roundhouse in London, and I was impressed. They've got a lot of presence.

Frank gets what the Pistols are all about, and he's not trying to replace John.

Frank gets it. He's not a po-faced, miserable git. He's got a sense of humor. He's got a twinkle in his eye, you know? You're playing away, and he'll come up to you in the middle of Steve doing a guitar solo, and he'll pull sort of a funny face and make you laugh. That didn't always happen before, so it's kind of cool.

A lot of the lore surrounding the Pistols stems from John's cantankerous nature and Sid Vicious's outlandish persona.

After you left the band, was it tough to watch from the sidelines, considering you'd been so integral to building the band and writing or co-writing many songs?

There's a TV show over here [the U.K.] called *The Fast Show*; it's like

all kinds of little skits. So, there's two, like, English, working-class blokes sitting in a bar, you know, complaining about things, and one says to the other, "If that's what you want, that's what's going to happen," you know, because it's all going tits up. That's what I thought. So, if they get him [Sid Vicious], if that's what they want, well, that's what will happen. And it kind of did, you know. That's a shame.

Considering you were the most accomplished musician in the band in the early days, and Sid literally couldn't play bass, what did you think of him replacing you?

I kind of didn't dislike Sid. I thought he had something going for him as a singer, not as a musician. But he was kind of a bit like Elvis [Presley] in the way that he would be quite good at singing somebody else's song but not necessarily come up with anything himself, you know? So there you go.

It didn't hurt that you kept busy after leaving the Pistols.

As soon as I left the band, I was doing my own band, a band called Rich Kids. We had our moment in the sun over here. And then I ended up playing with Iggy Pop straight after that, so I've always been busy. Fortunately, the phone rings, you know? [Laughs]

You reunited with the Lydon-fronted Pistols in 1996 and the 2000s. Steve alluded to not always feeling happy during those years, but it's different now with Frank. Do you share those sentiments?

Yeah, I can. I think that it's a totally different thing. Some people have different takes on things as they go through life. We just go and play our music, you know? It's as simple as that. The people like it; it's great. It's not the original band, but it's pretty close to it.

How do you view the band's legacy?

I think it's good that we're always up there in the top 100 songs of all time. I think that's because they're pretty catchy in a cool way. And I think that was my contribution. I think I gave John a vehicle for his off-the-wall lyrics.





[from left] Matlock, Carter, Jones and Cook; "I just want to get through this tour and see where we stand at the end of this," Jones says

know? And by the time we did our first show, it sounded like what a lot of bands wanted to sound like, which was punk rock.

Was that the sound you were doing for, or is that what came naturally to you?

I wasn't trying to sound like whatever fucking punk rock was; that's just the way I sounded because I wasn't technically good at that point. I don't think I'm technically good. I think I'm really good at what I do, but I never practice. I hate practicing. I would doodle around on the acoustic when I'm at home doing nothing, learning a few chords, but I don't practice. But I'm talking about later years with that, not originally.

Bare bones as that approach seems, it produced songs like "Anarchy in the UK" and "God Save the Queen."

Well, there's a bunch of songs... we literally would sit in our rehearsal room, Glen would give me an idea, and me and Cookie would pick up on it. And John would be sitting in the corner, scribbling lyrics down on a piece of paper. And the next thing you know, we just did it. There you go. There's "God Save the Queen." Then, it was, "Here's another song. Here's 'Bodies,' and here's 'No Feelings.' Here's the whole album." I'd learned some covers at first, and we did a version of a Dave Berry song called "Don't Give Me No Lip," where I would play a different riff than the riff that was on the original, which was like a blues song. And we did the Who's "Substitute" and various other cover songs.

So that's basically what we started with. I think the first original song we had was "Did You No Wrong," which we wrote with the original guitar player, and I was singing. But yeah, that was the crux of it. We'd all be

in a room together, and we knocked it out pretty quick.

Did you find that there was a sort of chemistry you can't put your finger on when it came to being in a room with Glen, Paul and John?

It was quite amazing. You know, John wrote amazing lyrics for a 19-year-old or however old he was — 18, 19, 20. It was just one of them lightning-in-a-bottle situations. And after we did it and broke up, we attempted messing about with writing something new in 1996, and it didn't work out. And then we attempted something a bit later, and it just didn't work; the magic had gone. So we didn't pursue it.

A big part of that chemistry seemed to come from Glen, who was the most schooled musician when the Pistols started. It must have been a big change bringing in Sid Vicious, who, to put it mildly, wasn't a natural bass player.

Well, there's two different concepts. Glen was the musician in the band. He knew how to play bass when I didn't know how to play guitar, so he was ahead of the curve. He knew chords; hence, when it came to writing songs, there was no comparison. But Sid didn't; he'd never played bass before.

Whose idea was it to bring a non-bass player in to play bass?

He got slung into that position because John... It was John's buddy. John wanted a buddy in the band. Unfortunately, Glen left, and that's just the way it panned out. I don't think it helped us in staying together much longer; it was probably part of the demise, getting Sid in the band.

So the band wasn't really creative with Sid on bass; it was more about looks and making John happy.

As great as Sid and John looked together, we really didn't write much after Sid got there. There were a few songs, like "Bodies" and "E.M.I." and a couple of others that we wrote, but that, coupled with doing the Bill Grundy show, we just became a household name, and the music went out the window. It was all about image and how outrageous you're going to be. And then we came to the States, and that was really the nail in the coffin. We were just all over the place, and egos were all over the place, and then we broke up.

The legacy of the Pistols is mostly defined by being poster children for the so-called "punk image," and Sid was a big part of that. When you look back on that, do you want to be defined by looks and outrageous behavior rather than your music?

I think both. I think we made a fantastic album. And like I said, I think it was lightning in a bottle, and all the songs are great, so that's always going to be the legacy. The fact that we only did one album is also big, and I think breaking up after that helped the legacy. I think that the whole Sid and Nancy thing, with her dying, and him dying, really made part of the legacy, as sad as that is. And I think that's why we've still got legs today, to be honest with you.

You mentioned that playing with Frank has made touring as the Pistols fun for you for the first time in a long time. The chemistry is clearly there, as is the energy; do you see the Pistols writing and recording with Frank?

Anything's possible, but I'm not even thinking about that. I just want to do these shows and have fun, and if something happens in a soundcheck, great. If not, I just want to get through this tour and see where we stand at the end of this. We're going to assess what we're going to do, if we're going to tour more, or, you know, it's too far ahead. I haven't really been thinking about writing songs.

Things are going great with Frank, but do you have any sadness about John not being part of the fun?

I've got nothing but love for John. He was brilliant back in the day, and I never would take that away from him. I would never deny it; he was fantastic. But I think we've just grown apart. He's going somewhere else, and we're going somewhere else. It's just the way it is. But you never know. I'll never shut the door, but I don't think he'd have the energy like Frank does, to be honest with you. **GW**

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white lace top and a blue patterned skirt, sits on a large tree stump in a lush, magical forest. She is playing a brown acoustic guitar. Golden musical notes float around her, creating a whimsical atmosphere. In the background, there are tall trees, a waterfall, and a small stream. The overall scene is vibrant and ethereal.

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DUO EX MACHINA

Billy Corgan & Kiki Wong — the Smashing Pumpkins' first and latest guitarists, respectively — discuss how bonding over Dimebag Darrell and dressing like "Rob Halford's cousin" helped turn Wong into a Pumpkin overnight

BY JOE BOSSO

DURING A DUAL Zoom interview with *Guitar World*, Billy Corgan remembers he has a bit of pressing musical business to go over with Kiki Wong. "Kiki," I'm breaking down all these parts, so I've got to call you about some guitar stuff," he says.

"Awesome. Sounds good," Wong responds cheerfully.

No doubt this has been a constant in her life since the day everything changed for her back in April 2024, when the Phoenix-based guitarist and social media shredder was chosen over 9,999 other hopefuls to join the Smashing Pumpkins following the departure of longtime guitarist Jeff Schroeder. Given just three months to get up to speed (during which time she had to learn some 35 songs that might comprise a Pumpkins setlist on any given night), Wong was thrown in the deep end and made her debut with the band in front of 15,000 British fans at the Birmingham Arena (her second show — at London's O2 Arena — raised the stakes even higher).

"The second show at the O2 was insane," Wong says. "But I do remember feeling, when we did get up on stage, that it felt a lot better than in rehearsal. It was so much fun to be a part of it all."

During rehearsals, Corgan had a strong sense that Wong could handle the gig, but he also recognized that the concert stage would be the true litmus test. "Some people get the deer-in-headlights thing, particularly when you're up there and suddenly you have to remember 4,000 weird guitar parts," he says. "Plus, the band's loud and we're playing faster, we're playing lots of big places... That's the problem with being in an old band. We can kind of phone it in at rehearsal or just be like, 'Does

everybody know what they're doing?' No one's playing with the level of intensity we're playing at live. I think Kiki probably experienced that on stage, like, 'Oh... There's that other thing that happens with them.'"

That "other thing" — the hurricane-like force of the band in full flight, along with the thunderous roar of the crowd — could break even the most capable and experienced of players. Happily, none of that came to pass. During those first high-level shows, Corgan recalls glancing at Wong and thinking, "All right, she's fine. I don't need to pay one ounce of attention to whether or not she's drowning over there. She's going to be fine."

What's more, he noticed right away that Wong had a profound — and unexpectedly infectious — impact on the rest of the band (which also includes guitarist James Iha and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, along with touring bassist Jack Bates and keyboardist Katie Cole). "Kiki held down her corner of the stage, and something about her personality kind of brought Jack forward," Corgan says. "Suddenly the band was playing with a lot more aggression and fire."

Given that the Smashing Pumpkins have had more than a few musicians drift in and out of their ranks over the years (between actual members and touring players, it's something like 30 different people), Corgan's assessment of Wong's influence is not insignificant. Could this be something of a new chapter for the veteran group?

Corgan mulls over the question, then says, "I think when you're in a situation where you need to bring in an additional musician, there's a trepidation in the unit because you're wondering how that person's personality will tip the balance positively or negatively. Secondly, ▶



DANIELLE SIMONE

[from left] Kiki Wong (with a Jackson Rhoads series guitar), Billy Corgan (with his Reverend Billy Corgan Signature model) and touring bassist Jack Bates in Los Angeles, September 17, 2024



of course, there's how it will work in terms of musicianship. Kiki's such a wonderful person to be around — she's already made the band better because everybody is in a better mood."

Wong blushes and smiles as Corgan continues: "Sometimes that's all it takes. Someone's enthusiasm and positivity and just good-heartedness can make grumpy musicians realize that the opportunities they have are still important, and not to be looked past or easily waved off if they become inconvenient to obviously a much longer story that doesn't always involve one gig or one tour. We're very grateful to Kiki, because she's brought a lot of good vibes and good times, and all those things aside, she's a great, professional musician."

At the time of our conversation, Corgan is prepping for a solo tour billed

as "Billy Corgan and the Machines of God" for which he's formed a side band consisting of Wong, drummer Jake Hayden and bassist Kid Tigr. Soon after, it's right back to Pumpkins world — the band will tour Europe, then Asia and the Middle East.

"When I do any kind of solo stuff, I know the first thing people assume is there's some issue with the band," Corgan says. "Everything's fine. In fact, the band's playing more shows this year than I'm playing solo."

As for Wong, who will perform new songs and deep cuts on the solo tour before heading back to the Pumpkins, it's a seemingly never-ending cavalcade of fresh material to digest.

"We're heavier with Kiki, to the benefit of the band live"

BILLY CORGAN

"It's a lot of work, but I love the work," she says. "It's been really challenging; I've been so used to my own style, and it's easy to get very confident, maybe too confident. Suddenly I'm learning a different style, and I'm almost becoming a different musician, so it's super-fulfilling. I'm deep into this whole new world of music I can tap into and grow from."

Kiki, from what I understand, at the time that the Pumpkins were holding the open auditions, you were kind of in a down place musically; things weren't quite working out for you. What made you think you had a chance to be considered for the Pumpkins?

KIKI WONG: Oh, man, it's so funny. My baby was six or seven months old, so it was these super-hardcore months of babyhood.

Of course, when your baby is that young, you naturally think about trying to join a big band. Everybody knows that.

WONG: [Laughs] Yeah, right? But you know, my brain is wired in a way that makes me on the verge of being a pessimist – slightly pessimistic but closer to a realist. But there's always been this thing in my head, like, "When am I going to quit the dream and be just a person? How long can I keep hammering at this thing and constantly being let down?"

Now I had an actual reason to think that way, which was to take care of my kid. I remember pushing the baby around in a stroller – he couldn't sleep – and while pushing him around in the Arizona desert heat, I kept saying to my boyfriend, "What if I become a Pumpkin?" He said, "You've got this. You're going to get it." This was before we even heard anything back from anyone. I had just thrown the resume in there, and I was like, "There's no way. There's probably 4,000 people already."

You were off by 6,000.

WONG: [Laughs] But then everything unfolded in such an unbelievable way. Every step of the Zoom call with the band and being invited to L.A. – I remember right before the audition I still didn't think I was going to get it, but I didn't care because I knew I was going to play with legends. Even if I didn't get anything, I've gained that experience. I remember going into the actual audition and playing, and I forgot what I was doing because I was just looking at the band, thinking, "This is fucking awesome!" I was having so much fun.

Billy, I have a key question: Out of the 10,000 applicants, how many videos did you actually watch till you got to Kiki? And when you got to her, were you like, "Maybe we should stop here?"

CORGAN: I had to give some sort of filter to it because the response was so overwhelming, and that filter was, "Send me anybody with a professional resume." If they've done anything – play a casino show in Vegas, tour with any band that's got a recording history, anybody who would remotely qualify – send them to me. I would say there were easily, gosh, 500 or 600 of those. I had to go through all of those responses and whittle them down.

The thing I remember very distinctly, obviously given the result, was when I saw Kiki's name, I kind of stopped and thought, "Wait... I think I follow her on Instagram." I went to Instagram to confirm this, and I was like, "Oh, that's that person I really like."

You had already seen her playing somewhat.

CORGAN: Right. So I had this sense of, "Well, I know her and I like her." At least I had a positive mental impression. I set her name aside specifically because I knew who she was. It would be like if you called me and said, "Hey, at least give my friend Bobby a look because I've known him for 20 years and he's somebody you can count on." It's like a personal recommendation.

It helped that I had a positive impression of what she was doing on Instagram. There were a lot of other people who had very impressive resumes. I would go to their Instagrams and look at the way they stood or the way they played or the way they talked about music – even just the pictures they posted. But I kept thinking, "This person has no idea what kind of band I'm in."

What was the exact moment when you thought, "That's it! Kiki is the one!"?

CORGAN: The funny thing is, and this was something of a miracle, Kiki's audition was the first on this one day. Somebody set up the schedule people were traveling in and stuff, and I remember thinking, "Oh, that's probably not very good for Kiki," because the chance of us hiring the first person we see is probably pretty slim. By the time you get to the eighth or ninth person, you're going to have a hard time remembering the first person.

Kiki came in and played very well. Now, I know how to read Jimmy Chamberlin's body language pretty well; we've played together for over 35 years. I remember looking at Jimmy, and I could tell he was surprised at how well Kiki played. We had this thing at the auditions where we played three or four songs, and then we'd sit down and talk to each person for 15 minutes.

A lot of people played well, but once we talked to them I thought, "They're not really going to fit into our world." We're a bit of a weird lot. [Laughs] We're kind of picky in our own way. Maybe every band is, but



Wong on stage with her PRS S2 Custom 24

"I went to the audition and forgot what I was doing because I was just thinking, 'This is awesome!'"

KIKI WONG

I know the way we're picky. Kiki was just who she was. She wasn't trying to be someone else. She wasn't trying to be a flatterer. She was just herself. And it was like, "OK, this person can hang in our world." After that, for the next three hours, nobody who followed Kiki could beat her. She was still on my mind, even though we weren't discussing it internally.

How many people followed Kiki till you decided on her?

CORGAN: I think there were nine others.

Kiki, what was the process of you fitting in with the band sonically?

WONG: It's interesting, because I've always been afraid to play anything with a clean tone; I still am a little bit. One of the things I loved about our first Zoom call was how we spent a lot of time talking about Dimebag Darrell. Billy is such a huge metal fan, and after listening to the Pumpkins' music, I realized there's so much variety in it. There's a lot of heavy metal and grit. This made me feel comfortable. I did a deep dive beyond the band's radio

hits, and I felt the kind of energy I get from heavy metal. I felt I could meld my own energy sonically. The band has been super open to that, too. There hasn't been that "No, no, you have to do it this way or that way." It's been sort of an invitation to express myself on top of the stuff that already written.

You bring up the metal aspect. As you know, there's been some criticism from fans that you're "too metal" for the Pumpkins.

WONG: Honestly, that's been my life story since I was 13, the whole metal thing. It even got to the point where my girlfriends stopped talking to me. It got a little weird, but now it doesn't phase me. I go on stage looking like a wrestler in my outfits, but that's what I like to wear. People are like, "You look like you should be in Judas Priest." And to that, I say, "Thank you." Billy's been totally cool about it — "Wear whatever you want. Just be comfortable."

Sound-wise, I've dialed the heavy metal stuff back a bit, but I'm just trying to find that metal voice and integrate it. I actually think it meshes

have to be anything to be up here. You could just be yourself.

Billy, you talked about the impact Kiki has had on the band personally, but let's drill down into the musical aspect. Specifically, are there some songs you play differently as a guitarist because of the way Kiki plays?

CORGAN: No. I think of it more like an author, which is like, "OK, we have these ingredients to play with." Having Kiki allows us to do things in a different way, so let's lean into that. It's less of an influence as more as an opportunity for me. When it gets to the metallic side of the band's catalog, whether it's "Bullet with Butterfly Wings" or something we're going to play live on the solo tour, like "Eden," which is off the new record, that's the best form of that band with Kiki in it.

She's still learning what we would call more of the goth/atmospheric stuff. Sometimes I kind of pull her aside and I'll show her — "I think this is the way psychologically you need to approach this." Oftentimes I'll use references that she might understand,

bust." The problem with that is, I didn't have a lot of the foundations of music that other people have when they go through the nitty-gritty theory and all of that.

Billy's been really understanding, and he knows how to navigate that sort of thing with me. He'll be like, "All right, I'm going to play the chords and then show you how to do it," versus "I'm going to talk in super-theory jargon," which is my weakness. I actually bought four music books I'm going to be reading. This needs to be tackled. It's been almost 20 something years of never going through it, and I should.

The band has been extremely accommodating in being able to speak my language and sensing how I learn things. It's really helped. When we did the first tour in Europe, we had five days of rehearsal, and my fear kicked in, like, "Fuck!" It was like the imposter syndrome, where you're like, "I know I can't do this. If somebody sees that I can't do this, then it's not going to work out." My biggest fear was holding me back. Then we just found a way that works in terms of learning, and we were able to get some of the really difficult stuff done in five days. Everything was all good, and I was able to learn things a lot faster.

CORGAN: There was this time when Kiki was really struggling with how to play a song — I don't remember which one — and because we believed in her and trusted that she was giving her

"I've been strictly a metalhead for years. That's all changed now"

IKKI WONG

pretty well. There's a lot of metal influence and style in the music, but it's in a truly heavy way, not just this, "Oh, my God, that's making my ears sore. Get that out of here!"

CORGAN: We're heavier with Kiki, which is actually to the benefit of the band live. But to the other thing she said, at some point Kiki came to me and said, "Is there anything you'd like me to do as far as how I'm going to look on stage?" I said, "I want you to be comfortable. That's more important to me, and I think it's more important to James and Jimmy. They wear what they want to wear."

If you're looking across the stage at the Pumpkins, James is wearing a suit. I'm wearing a priest's dress, Jack is wearing the Manchester outfit of a lumberjack shirt and jeans, and Kiki looks like Rob Halford's cousin. And I go, "Yeah, this is the band." I look out and see audience members who are super goth, super metal. We have a ton of LGBTQ+ fans just being themselves. I think that's really the beautiful message the band sends. You don't

whether it's a Metallica or a Mercyful Fate or something to sort of say, "This is maybe how they would do it." She may not understand if I start talking about Bauhaus, for example.

Kiki, we talked about how many songs you had to learn. Billy, James and Jim know this stuff cold —

CORGAN: Hey, wait! I'm downstairs practicing every night. I'm cursing myself right now for the setlist I picked for this thing. [Laughs] There's some songs on the Machines of God tour that I've never played live. I'm not talking about live in front of a crowd; I mean played live ever.

Hey, well, you better get to it.

CORGAN: I'm working on it!

But Kiki, it is true that there's 35 years of material you've had to master in a short period of time.

Has it ever felt overwhelming?

WONG: It's really interesting because I've always kind of taught myself. My parents were like, "Piano lessons or



[from left] Classic-era Pumpkins Jimmy Chamberlin, Billy Corgan and James Iha in action in 2024



"People are like, 'You look like you should be in Judas Priest,'" says Wong, shown with her PRS S2 Custom 24 in Fire Smokeburst. "And to that, I say, 'Thank you!'"

Billy, what can Kiki do on the guitar that's just beyond you?

CORGAN: Well, she's got that Hetfield/Kerry King downstroke thing that I could never do, whatever the fuck that is. [Wong busts up laughing]. That *Master of Puppets* thing – I have to cheat that shit. Trust me, I knew Johnny Ramone and he was a big proponent of this. Obviously, Hetfield and Kerry King would tell you the same. So would Mustaine. The only way to play that way is you gotta do all downstrokes. I remember being at Johnny Ramone's house – [imitates thick New Yorker accent] "all downstrokes, all downstrokes." There's a belief that the attack of the downstroke is better than if you pick up-down, up-down. To me, when I see somebody who can do that with the downstrokes, I'm like, "Fuck, I can't do that!"

Kiki, same question: What does Billy play that's just beyond you?

WONG: Oh, my gosh. One of the most jaw-dropping moments on the first tour was just seeing Billy go crazy-shred. We have these times when it's all improv, and hearing some of the voicings he uses... One of the things you strive for as a musician is developing your own sound, where someone will say, "Hey, that's Kiki Wong!" or "That's Billy Corgan!" But more than that, it's "That's Billy Corgan, and no one else can be Billy Corgan." When he solos... we have this 10-minute jam on "Gossamer," and it's just insane. Insane! You start to listen to what he's doing, and he's speaking and he's using voices that are from the Smashing Pumpkins. There's all these hints from other songs, but he's simultaneously shredding. Then you just look out and people are just like this [she drops her jaw in awe].

Because if you're a "hits" person, you're not going to find this insanity that comes with the other songs. You just don't expect the absolute insane shred experience from some of the main hits on the radio. But when you go to the show and you hear the hits, and then you hear something like "Gossamer" with Billy just going in... you hear all of those things, and then the visual experience... you're blown away. When that happens, I'm like the audience, with my jaw literally wide open. I'm watching the show as I'm playing. It's incredible. **GW**

best, I went over and sort of rejiggered what she was playing. I took on a different responsibility. Rather than be like, "Oh, you're hired for this gig and you're failing," it was like, "OK, I see where you're weak over here. Let's figure out a way we can cover you and not expose you," all while knowing it was something she needed to work on. That's the sort of environment that we have. We don't expect Kiki to understand everything we do.

It's pretty arcane in many ways, and it was developed over many, many years. If you're playing a song from *Mellon Collie*, that's seven years of James and me playing guitar in a very specific way. We're talking many, many concerts and recording sessions. I don't expect somebody to just parachute in and understand that style. Even when Jeff Schroeder was in the band, it took him probably two years to fully assimilate what people would call the "Pumpkins"

guitar style.

WONG: I think what makes it difficult, but also inspiring, is that it's a style I'm not used to. Obviously, for the past year or so, I've gotten a little bit more acquainted with the Pumpkins' style, which is different in some ways from where I come from. I've been a metalhead for years, just strictly high-distortion and no real dynamics in my playing. That's all changed now. What's truly great about all this is how it's allowing me to expand my musicianship. I'm really trying to tap into tone and voicings in a way that's almost orchestrated with the band, as opposed to just playing a part.

"One of the most jaw-dropping moments on the first tour was just seeing Billy go crazy-shred"

KIKI WONG

The making of
Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness

TALES OF A SCORCHED EARTH

Thirty years after its release,
Billy Corgan looks back on the making of the
Smashing Pumpkins' era-defining grand opus,
1995's *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*

BY JOE BOSSO



Corgan belts one out in Amsterdam in December 1995

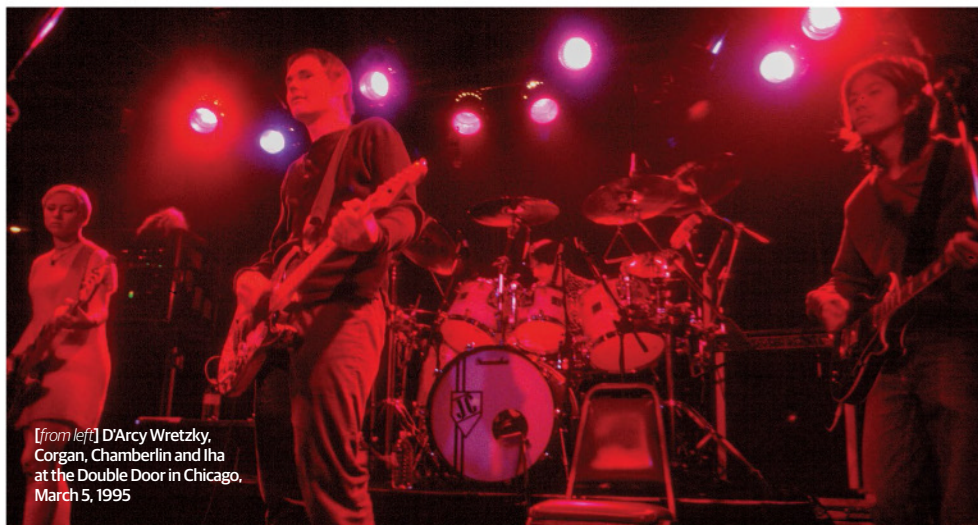
WE WERE THE first band of our generation that started to grow up," Billy Corgan says, reflecting on the making of the Smashing Pumpkins' 1995 grand opus, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. "The band was coming off a golden moment, which was the grunge explosion. But all movements start to run out of gas, and then the gatekeepers come in and start trying to say what it really means – when they had nothing to do with authoring it. In our case, we made the move to grow up before anybody else, and then we were sort of singled out for criticism as far as other people were concerned, either because A) the party needed to continue, or B) growing up was some sort of sell-out or something." Wong responds cheerfully.

Indeed, the previous two years were a heady time for the Pumpkins. Their 1993 album, *Siamese Dream*, contained a steady stream of radio and MTV smash hits that drove sales past the four million mark. The band – which in addition to Corgan, Iha and Chamberlin also included original bassist D'arcy Wretzky – spent much of that year and the next on a relentless touring cycle (they headlined 1994's Lollapalooza festival), and by the time live commitments wound down, Corgan, championed by some as one of the era's most creative and vital music makers while lambasted by others as nothing more than headline-seeking megalomaniac, found himself at a personal and creative crossroad.

He decided to go big, and that meant wielding his newfound commercial clout as a form of political capital. The new record would be a double CD, and the material would spread the

waters of what was considered "alternative rock" by embracing progressive rock, art rock, orchestral pop, folk and heavy metal. In place of Butch Vig, who had produced *Siamese Dream* and the band's debut, *Gish*, Corgan enlisted Flood (U2, Nine Inch Nails, PJ Harvey) and engineer Alan Moulder (the Jesus and Mary Chain, My Bloody Valentine) as co-producers. Over an eight-month period – "It was essentially four months of preparation and four months of recording, sort of," Corgan remembers – the band cut upwards of 57 songs, 28 of which ultimately made the final double album that clocked in at just over two hours.

As lavish and ambitious albums go, *Mellon Collie* ranks alongside the Beatles' *White Album*, Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk* as career-defining masterworks. Meticulously conceived and rich in every detail, its day-and-night theme contains moments that veer from



[from left] D'Arcy Wretzky, Corgan, Chamberlin and Iha at the Double Door in Chicago, March 5, 1995

almost unspeakable beauty ("Cupid de Locke," "Stumbleine") to ghastly horror ("Tales of a Scorched Earth," "X.Y.U."), with Corgan channeling a torrent of emotions. One minute he's frozen in a kind of childlike awe; the next, he's luxuriating in blissed-out romanticism. Songs that reveal stark introspection give way to truly frightening sections of raw, unhinged anger in which Corgan — yes, he's raging in a cage — gnashes his teeth and froths at the mouth. It swoons and spirals, exalts and destroys.

Released in October 1995, the album debuted at Number 1 on the *Billboard* 200 (it's the band's only record to reach the top spot), and thanks to yet another succession of hits ("Bullet with Butterfly Wings," "1979," "Zero," "Tonight, Tonight" and "Thirty-Three") it stayed on the charts for well over a year. All told, the album sold a staggering 10 million copies, earning diamond certification by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

While the reviews were generally favorable (most critics hailed the record as a work of art), a few journalists took issue with the album's length — the word "indulgent" was frequently tossed around. For *Rolling Stone* critic Jim DeRogatis, Corgan's lyrics were a particular sticking point. In his three-star review (which Corgan remembers as two-and-a-half stars), he wrote that the songwriter was "wallowing in his own misery and grousing about everyone and everything not meeting his expectations."

"But he wasn't wrong. I'm still there," Corgan says, before adding, "Jim had a particular bone to pick with

"I threw the guitar at the amp over and over to get the perfect kind of cataclysmic ending"

me that was personal, and that went on for years. We eventually made our piece, so I laugh at it now, but he was using that as a way to basically kneecap the band before it got out of the gates. I'll say this, though: If the record was indulgent and wallowing in a particular form of misery, well, so were a lot of other people because that's why the record resonated.

"This is where critics oftentimes mistake things that hit the zeitgeist," he continues. "If an actor plays a serial killer, no one really believes the actor's the serial killer. But when rock stars play misanthropes, the

critics can help but believe the rock star is the misanthrope. Capturing the zeitgeist of a time requires some sublimation of one's personality. *Mellon Collie* is not my personality. It's close to my personality, but it's not my personality."

He pauses. "*Machina/The Machines of God* [2000] is probably much closer to who I am as a real person than *Mellon Collie* ever was."

The Beatles disagreed with him, but George Martin famously said that he thought the *White Album* would've been stronger as a single record. Hindsight being 20/20, is there anything about *Mellon Collie* that you would change today, if given the opportunity?

I think the only sort of inner regret I have is that it's probably a touch too long. If I had it to do over again, it probably would've been a slightly better record if it was 24 songs instead of 28.

At the time you were starting to make it, was everybody on board with it being a double album?

Oh yeah. I'd fought all the political battles internally in the year before that. During the height of Lollapalooza, when we were touring as the headliner and the band was getting really big, I announced on MTV that our next record was going to be a double, and the record label went into a panic. They told me I was insane — things like "career suicide" and all that stuff was thrown around. It was seen as a sign of my growing hubris. "He's gone mad" and that sort of thing. I kept saying it was like our version of *The Wall* or the *White Album*, but I never took the time to count how many songs were actually on those records. If I'd done that, you could argue it would be a really strong record if you took the best 18 songs off of *Mellon Collie*. I mean, that's a very, very strong record.

It ended up being about filling those two CDs. So yes, I'd won the battle, and yes, we were going to make a double album. We had a producer who was willing to take the journey into the murky depths of whatever this was going to be. Oh, but there was something else I don't think I've ever really spoken about: There was also a sense of "Wait... If they're going to do a double album, they're going to be off the road for a very long time." So





[from left] Wretzky, Iha and Corgan at the MTV Europe Music Awards in London, November 14, 1996

there was that pressure – you're giving up a lot of money by going off-cycle this long, so the record had better be fucking good.

It's been reported that when Flood came into the picture, he wanted to change the way the band worked. He wanted you to jam more and record that way, which resulted in a lot of basic tracks.

His main thrust was, "I want to record the band I hear on stage." He said he was shocked by the difference between the band he heard on *Siamese Dream* and the band he saw on stage. It became a process of like, "OK, how do we do that?" The jamming and live take approach actually wasn't dissimilar from *Siamese Dream* in that we would record live and then I would erase everything and re-record everything.

Flood's idea, however, was that he wanted Jimmy's drum takes to be representative of the band at full throttle, not go in there and play so as Jimmy gets a good drum take and then we'll put music on it. No, Jimmy needs to be playing like he does in a concert, which meant the band needed to animate and push Jimmy to the edge of his capability. And then you erase the tracks and then you put music on the top of that.



Three of the singles/EPs that make up *The Aeroplane Flies High*, a five-disc box set released in November 1996; [north to south] "1979," "Zero" and "Bullet with Butterfly Wings"



How do you actually do that in a recording setting? Because you're actually not live in concert. You don't have people screaming, and you don't have that kind of excitement. The band is in a room by themselves. It's kind of a sterile environment.

Great question. First of all, we brought in a full P.A. so we would play at full volume. Imagine we're in a room where it's easily over 110 decibels. The old Pumpkinland, which is what we called it, had brick walls, a concrete floor with industrial carpeting and a high wood ceiling. So now we've turned everything up – I've got two Marshall half-slant cabinets at full power. James has two at full, and D'arcy's got two full SVT bass rigs. We have a full P.A., including Jimmy's drum monitors and our wedges. We're playing at full concert volume.

Logic would dictate that yes, that would certainly change the way you played and recorded. It sounds like an overwhelming experience.

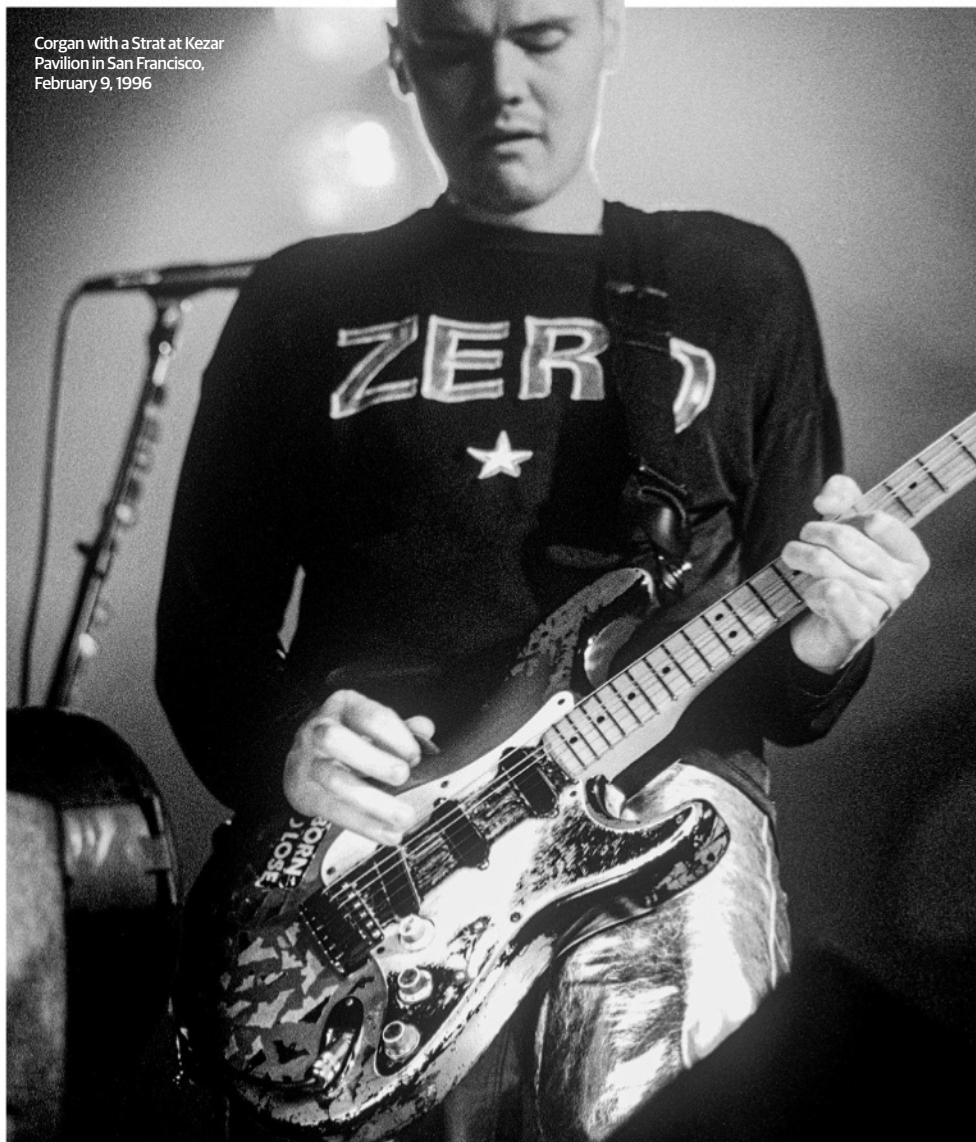
Well, it's a lot different from putting your amps in a room, wearing headphones and playing along to Jimmy to get the most pristine drum tracks. When you hear, for example, "Bullet with Butterfly Wings," that's the live take of Jimmy playing to the band

at full volume. That kind of energy and ambiance could only have been created that way.

As you mentioned, the band had now become huge, and with that success came a relentless touring schedule. By the time you got in the studio, did that kind of energy and exhilaration give way to burnout?

I don't think so. I also think it had a lot to do with the way we recorded. On any given day, we would come in at, say, 11, and we would practice for at least an hour. Whether we were working on an arrangement or a new song, we would practice as we would as if no one was in the building. Then, if we had something we felt was worth recording, we would go ahead and endeavor to record that, however many takes that might require.

There would probably be a lunch break, and then we'd go into recording mode. Now, the band's responsibilities were about one 10th as vast once we were in recording mode as they were when we were tracking. So although they might be in the building, once practice was over, it was mostly me working with Flood on a guitar sound, a guitar part or an arrangement or whatever. I was full time, and the band were kind of part time.



Corgan with a Strat at Kezar Pavilion in San Francisco, February 9, 1996

Because you were shouldering so many of the responsibilities, did you ever feel as though you were stretching yourself a little too thin? Did you ever feel as though you were losing your focus?

Let me answer it this way: First of all, we pushed the record back, which alarmed the record company because they had hard release dates that were involving typical record company stuff. It was going to be their big record of the year, so they were really counting on it coming out. It reached a point where there was a hard, fixed date, like, "You will turn in this record whether it's done or not. Here's your hard date out."

No pressure, right?

There's the pressure of that, sure. By the way, there was a ton of stuff that

was unfinished when that verdict came down. Now, we were running two rooms at CRC Recorders, which is now defunct. Alan Moulder was working in one room with other band mates, and I was working in the main room with Flood and flitting back and forth between the two rooms, depending on what work was going on.

I remember walking in when James had been working on the guitar parts of "Thru the Eyes of Ruby." I might've been in a bad mood, but I just didn't like what was happening. I let Flood know that we were at a stalemate on the song, and he looked at his watch and said, "You've got four hours to figure it out, because otherwise we're going to have to kick the song off the record." In the next four hours, no joke, I think I put 46 guitar parts on the song, totally on the fly.

It's been written that you recorded 70 guitar parts on the song.

Who knows? There was a lot of layering, so maybe that pads the number of parts. My point is, not only did I have to make up the parts that I didn't have, but I had to record them over a seven-minute song. At the end of the four hours, I had to present it all to the producer and have him go, "OK, good. Let's move on." That's the atmosphere this was recorded in, which was like, "Go now. No time. Yes or no?" It's also worth pointing out that we worked 86 days in a row to finish the record.

That might cause some burnout. Yeah.

The song "1979" is regarded as a classic. Is it true, however, that Flood initially wanted to drop it from the record?

No, that's not true. What happened was, it was tabbed early on as a potential single, which threw a shadow over the song, like, "It better be great." Well, every time the band tried to do it, it sounded like really bad B-level Rolling Stones. We would go out and play it, and I'd look around like, "This just sucks." Jimmy would say, "OK, what do you want me to play?" Everybody was convinced that was the beat.

We had this whiteboard Flood had made — you know, drums, bass, guitars, vocals. He looked at the board, and "1979" had nothing checked off. Then he looked at his schedule, and we were literally two days from the end, and we had to fly to L.A. for mixing. He said, "OK, tomorrow is the day. If we don't finish this song, it's off the record." It was the right decision, but I was thinking, "How can I drag it out even further?" I guess I would've made the case that we could have worked on it in L.A. while the mixing was going on.

So what did you do to save the song and make it more than just B-level Rolling Stones?

Well, a few things happened. I went home that night knowing I reached this kind of crossroad, and I needed to make up my mind on something. That's when I reframed the song in my mind and I recorded an acoustic demo. I changed something about the arrangement with the vocal, but I don't remember exactly what it was. I basically finished the song. It was done and it sounded great.

The next morning, I played Flood that version of the song, which I think we recorded — it was just acoustic and vocal. Flood said, “OK, great. Now what are we going to do?” We all agreed the demo had something, so Flood said, “Why don’t we just redo the demo?” We had the Alesis drum machine. I recreated the exact beat with the exact same sound, including the click. If you wanted the click in, you’d press some button and it would go on top of the beat. That’s what gave it this kind of drive. We tried it without the click, but it didn’t sound the same.

OK, we made up our minds — we’re using the drum machine. We had the drum machine, and let’s call it a sketch of me playing the song. Now what the fuck were we going to do? We’d cast our lot into this particular ocean. The next thing was, “What’s Jimmy going to do?” I said, “Well, what if he came in playing on the chorus?” Flood was great at setting up drums really fast, so he threw up a kit and had Jimmy play along to the song, and I would just kind of go, “Jump in here and play.” And then, “OK, stop.” We got the arrangement to where it was like it could

work, but when Jimmy would try to track it, he would invariably drift. This was pre-Pro Tools, basically.

I had Jimmy play for two minutes, and I’d listen to where his beat swung intuitively with the drum machine beat. I took those two bars, dropped it into an Alesis sampler, fucked up the sound, then flew it back in.

The phrase “chasing the demo” comes to mind.

Well, the strength of the song is in its simplicity, but the mode we were in was simplicity was the last thing on our mind. What’s funny about it is, it’s become a very influential song. It was recently used by Jessie Reyez in an interpolation, which is a great version. I think it was so modern in its approach, but we weren’t trying to be modern. We were just trying to find a version that sounded good to us. We ended up just letting it be what it was instead of trying to make it something that it wasn’t.

“Fuck You (an Ode to No One)” is one of the most bruising songs you ever recorded. Is it true you played

the solo till your fingers bled?

I don’t know if that’s true. I remember we had a B room, this very small production room. I had my cabinet in this really, really small room — it was about the size of a closet. Even when I would sit and play in the control room, the sound from the cabinet was so loud because it was right there. Somehow I got the idea that not only did I want to play the solo in front of the cabinet to get the right kind of feedback and resonant things looping through the guitar, but at the end of the solo, I wanted to throw the guitar at the amp to make some sort of statement.

As one does.

I would throw the guitar at the cabinet, which would knock it completely out of tune. Then I would go back and listen to the take and think, “Oh, that sucks. Do it again.” I’d tune the guitar, go back in and blast it out. I have this memory of killing myself, blasting my head off, and then throwing the guitar at the amp over and over to get the perfect kind of cataclysmic ending. Whether or not my fingers bled, I don’t remember. [GW](#)





DENISE TRUSCELLO



Still Supernatural

Six decades into his career, Carlos Santana remains excited by the very thought of having a guitar in his hands. Below, he looks back on the music and gear that's soundtracked his one-of-a-kind life

BY AMIT SHARMA

THERE ARE VARYING degrees of guitar hero, but Carlos Santana is a name you'd expect to find near the top of any list. Like Jimi Hendrix, Brian May or Slash, Santana has transcended guitar music and permeated his way into popular culture, immortalizing his name into legend on every corner of the globe. Of course, he's a tremendous player, but it goes way beyond that; he's a highly prolific composer and collaborator, the type of musician who can thrive in just about any musical environment, drawing from an impressively wide pool of influences to make his guitar speak to any kind of audience or listener.

His latest album, *Sentient*, serves as yet another reminder of these universal talents. It consists of 11 tracks, three of which were unreleased until now, and the rest reimagining some of his most famous partnerships over a storied career, from a moving live version of Michael Jackson's "Stranger in Moscow" to classic cuts alongside Miles Davis and Smokey Robinson. It's an impressive body of work that captures the breadth of his sound and imagination while taking the listener on an unforgettable journey that defies all notions of boundary or genre. And, as the chart-topping veteran explains to *GW*, it's mainly because his approach to music is a profoundly holistic one.

Santana with his PRS Private Stock McCarty Singlecut in 14-karat gold-leaf finish. "The singlecut is more like a merlot; it's a more robust sound," Santana says



You're one of the most prominent faces for PRS, but you've played all kinds of guitars throughout the years.

Guitars are like crayons to me. Life is the canvas, and guitars are the colors you use to express your soul, your spirit, your heart, your passion and emotions. Those are the ingredients to create beauty, and guitars are the tools.

How many guitars do you own these days?

I don't know, but probably not more than 100 and not fewer than 75. I guess the Fender Strats and Gibson Les Pauls would be the oldest models in my collection. I've got Strats from 1954; some of my Les Pauls go all the way back to 1959.

You even had a Yamaha signature model in the Eighties.

That's right. I had a good time with Yamaha. I learned from each one of the guitar companies. They all have their own

sound, texture and feel. But I always go back to my PRS models. Paul Reed Smith has mastered creating an instrument that behaves. No matter what the weather is like, it will stay in tune and always give you that great tone. I'm very grateful to Paul. He came up with his own vision to create a different tone and feel. I'm grateful he did that because his designs suited my personality when it came to self-expression. We've had a relationship since the late Seventies. He convinced me to come on board. Back then, there were only three companies I knew of — Gibson, Fender and Gretsch. There were others, but those three were the main ones.

The PRS signature you call "Salmon" is the guitar you're most associated with lately. What makes it so special?

I also think of it as my "Supernatural" guitar, because that's what I used for 99 percent of that album [1999's *Supernatural*]. As for what's special about it, I think it's

the most fluid. It's the easiest instrument for me to materialize my inner-vision, thoughts and emotions. There's not much struggle translating myself onto that guitar. But sometimes that struggle is nice, you know? Some people struggle with playing Stratocasters. It's not easy to play a Strat and get really nice tones without pedals, because some people use pedals for extra sustain. But when you play loud enough like Jimi Hendrix going straight into Marshall stacks, they can become a whole other canvas. That's why players like Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Buddy Guy stuck with Stratocasters.

PRS has continued to evolve through the years with models like the Silver Sky. Have you ever tried one?

A bit here and there. I thought they were pretty close to the original design it had been clearly inspired by.

The company's SE models are also pretty well known for

being some of the best guitars you can find for that kind of money.

That's right! From guitars to food or whatever, there are two words that are important for any business — impeccable integrity. When people put love and attention into what they make, it stands out. When my guitars arrive from Paul Reed Smith, they are always perfectly in tune. I'm not making it up! They come to me set up perfectly because somebody at the factory is doing that final check. A lot of companies don't do that.

You play PRS singlecut models, too. What kind of situations call for that over a doublecut?

It's like wine. You've got choices like burgundy, merlot and cabernet sauvignon. The singlecut is more like a merlot, it's a more robust sound. When you play a doublecut, the sound changes dramatically and you get more treble. So in situations where I want more of a rounder



Santana [left] with Buddy Guy in 2004. "We all took a lot from Buddy. He put the turbo inside the blues"

sound, I will go for the singlecut. Both have their uses for different sounds and songs.

On your new retrospective album, you turned your guitar into a voice for an instrumental version of Michael Jackson's "Stranger in Moscow." Not many players can make their instruments talk like that.

There are components to articulating. It's a bit like how a chef thinks about ingredients, from flavors to nutrients. To cook a delicious meal, you need more than salt and pepper. Nothing is closer to the heart than the voice. To make a guitar speak to people, it's more than just volume and control. You need to put your soul into each note; when you do that, it changes the sound. There are a lot of people who play music that's more mental, which has a different type of feel. It's okay for certain things, but I prefer the sound of someone playing from their heart because of players like Wes Montgomery and Otis Rush. They made you feel what you hear.

Which singers helped you most with your phrasing?

If I sang, I'd want to sound like

Marvin Gaye. If I were female, I'd want to sound like Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston or Billie Holiday. That's what I'm thinking of when I play guitar – how to articulate. I've spent a lot of time taking my fingers for a walk with Smokey Robinson, so when I play my guitar, I become the voice through my fingers on the fretboard. It's the same way I approached "Stranger in Moscow." I had to morph myself and get into a character, almost like an actor. When you see Robert De Niro on a talk show and he's not in character, sometimes he can be a little boring. But when he turns into the guy from *Heat*, *Taxi Driver* or *The Godfather*, he's incredible. It's a frame of mind. When I'm playing "Stranger in Moscow," you're hearing a different Carlos, because I'm thinking of Michael Jackson and phrasing everything differently – even if it's still got my own fingerprint.

On a technical level, what were you doing to sound like

the original vocal?

I chose to play more relaxed and behind the beat, choosing my notes carefully. It's like putting your fingers in water and sprinkling someone's face with water, or if you take a spoon to grapefruit and it squirts. Those are the good notes. A lot of people don't know how to squirt their best notes! I learned this stuff from Buddy Guy, B.B. King, Albert King and Freddie King. If you don't know how to squirt, everything is contained, and it can get boring after a while. I like being squirted in the face by music because it makes me feel alive. The goal of any guitar player, whatever the style may be – from funk and flamenco to heavy metal – is to make the listener feel alive. A good guitar solo should sound like an orgasm. I can hear it in Eddie Van Halen's playing, and the same goes for Jimi Hendrix. I live for the juicy notes.

There's almost a Jeff Beck approach to your improvisa-

tion on that track. You knew each other and famously played together on *The Nagano Sessions* [with Steve Lukather] in 1986. What do you remember most about Jeff?

Jeff Beck took guitar way beyond. His approach was like letting the hamster out of the cage. I was a big fan of Jeff from the second I heard him play. What I loved most was his imagination and passion. He was a very untraditional player, even though he had learned the traditional approach to blues to start with. I remember hearing *Truth* [Beck's first solo album from 1968] a long time ago and loving it, but I think the first song I heard by him was "Over Under Sideways Down" by the Yardbirds. He had this fuzz sound that was very special. You could also tell he'd been listening to people like Ravi Shankar or Ali Akbar Khan. He was a multi-dimensional player in that sense, the opposite of a one-trick pony. He learned from Roy Buchanan and Buddy Guy – I mean, we all took a lot from Buddy – because he put the turbo inside the blues. Like Jeff, I learned how to take a deep breath and trust my fingers almost like a child going down a water slide. ■

"I like being squirted in the face by music because it makes me feel alive"



Santana with his PRS Santana II Salmon/"Supernatural" guitar, which also appears on the cover of his new retrospective album, *Sentient* [facing page]

Is it because in situations like that, it's more about heart and soul than technicality?

Anybody can practice scales up and down. But there's something about coming down a water slide. You don't know how you're going to land; it might be on your head or on your feet. That's what happens when you deviate from the melody. John Coltrane, Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter taught me a lot. It's the art of improvisation, entering the unknown. People would ask Wayne how he practices, and he'd tell them, "We don't know what we are going to play; how do you practice the unknown?" I learned improvisation from Coltrane. I learned cosmic music from Sun Ra. I learned down-to-earth music from the Grateful Dead because they were heavily immersed in the folk and bluegrass worlds. And don't dismiss the guitar playing of Bob Dylan. He played a lot of great guitar, which worked beautifully with his vocals. I've learned from many musicians, especially the incredible women I mentioned earlier.

Playing along to soul singers is something nearly every guitar player could learn something from.

I don't care who you are, whether you are Al Di Meola or not, I'd recommend this to any guitar player. If you spend even one day learning how to play and phrase like those lady soul singers, you will become a better musician. This is the truth. This is genuinely the most important

part of the interview — right now. The only thing people will remember about your music is how you made them feel. They are not going to remember all the fast scales and "Look at what I can do!" moments. But they will remember those three notes that made the hairs stand on the back of the neck and tears come out of their eyes, even if they don't know why. That's a whole other element, one I call spirit. Some people don't know how to play with spirit, heart and soul.

"Don't lose the magic of self-discovery"

Those are three very important ingredients.

Music isn't a sport at the end of the day — especially for the listener.

If you just practice all day and night going really fast, after a while, it's a bit like going to the gym and seeing somebody flexing their muscles. Big deal. So what? Playing with spirit is like giving someone a hug that lasts for infinity. Time stops.

Are there any songs that you think demonstrates this best?

There's a note Jimi Hendrix plays in "All Along the Watchtower" that makes you feel like you are entering eternity. It's like being from Kansas and having only seen the Pacific Ocean on a postcard, then going to Hawaii and putting your feet in the water. That's when you understand

the totality and absoluteness of an ocean. A lot of musicians don't understand how to play like that, but Chick Corea can. You have to learn how to dive into infinity through one note. It's like learning how to French kiss correctly — to be fully alive with all your senses but no guilt, shame or embarrassment. Take the inhibitions and all that stuff out. You will see how beautiful it is to interact so intimately. That's what a guitar player is. The guitar is a very naked and sensuous instrument. That's just the way it is.

The other Michael Jackson track on the album, "Whatever Happens," has some harmonic minor lines, but on nylon acoustic. Where'd you learn to use that sound?

I got a lot of it from my father because he played violin. It's funny; when I started, people would say I was using a Dorian scale. But the only Dorian I knew was a girl who went to my junior high school. She invited me to go over to her house when her mom was working. I had a good

time with Dorian. They also said I was using tonic scales, but the only tonic I knew was in gin and tonic. I don't know, nor do I want to know, about scales because that will get in my way. I would rather feel like a blind man touching someone's face. They are memorizing something in a completely different way to how someone else would see it. I'm not saying ignorance is bliss; I'm saying that if you learn everything, you can take some of the magic away. Don't lose the magic of self-discovery. There's something so beautiful about purity and innocence. Again, it's like that first kiss.

The Smokey Robinson track, "Please Don't Take Your Love," has a distinct, lively blues tone. What were you using?

That sound is a combination of three things. The guitar was a re-

ally old white Stratocaster going straight into a Dumble amplifier that was lent to me by Alexander Dumble. The tone of that Strat with the Dumble is something magical. You stop playing notes, sounds and vibrations, and it all becomes a living sensation. How many players can say they play with a living sensation? Manitas De Plata, Paco De Lucía, John McLaughlin and Sonny Sharrock. The main ingredients for me are spirituality and sensuality. Without those two things, I wouldn't play guitar like this. I wouldn't want to be on this planet.

"Get On" is an interesting piece of music. Do you play differently knowing someone like Miles Davis is on the same track?

I'm almost 80. I've learned how to diversify my portfolio and my Rolodex of expression, tones and vibration. When I first heard this song with Miles, I had to trust that I knew enough about what he was doing. Certain music comes from Africa, and that went on to influence stuff played by Cubans and Puerto Ricans, all this sensual music like guahira, bolero, charanga. If you listen to the African band Kékélé, you will hear a lot of Santana in there. I have to give credit to the musicians because they knew how to make music feel like it's alive. It's not just notes and clever inversions. I always go back to something physical. You have to make people feel. They can't take it or leave it. The song has to speak to them. They will stop all conversations because they are enthralled and captivated. The sound is making love to them. And it takes trust. If there's no trust, you won't get the goods. With music, you gotta give the goods, man. Otherwise it's just too clever and intellectual, and that stuff is boring.

You've said Stevie Ray Vaughan once came to you in a dream and told you to use his Dumble Steel String Singer amp for a performance at Madison Square Garden. Not many people can say that.

I call them visitations. I get visitations from Miles Davis sometimes, as well as B.B. King. You don't have to be dead to visit me. Sometimes a dream is not a dream; someone has come back to communicate with you. I had a dream about Miles where I went to his concert and someone said, "Miles knows you are here and wants to see you in his dressing room." He asked how I was doing and started writing on a bit of paper, which he then gave to me. And just as I was about to read it, I woke up. I have to analyze what he was trying to tell me. It's like that with Stevie Ray and Jaco Pastorius. I feel very honored that these people come to me. Sometimes I feel like I'm like [John F. Kennedy International Airport] and all these musicians are landing on me and sharing things. I have to figure out what it all means.

What exactly did Stevie tell you?

With Stevie, he was saying,

"Carlos, where I am, I don't have any fingers; I am only spirit." He missed putting his fingers on a guitar and making the speakers push air. He told me to call his brother Jimmie [Vaughan] and ask him to lend me his amp, the #007 Dumble, and then play it with a Strat so he could feel it through me. You know that *Ghost* movie with Whoopi Goldberg? There's a part where a ghost comes into her body so he can feel. That's what Stevie was doing. He wanted to utilize my body and hands because he missed playing guitar. Jimmie wasn't sure at first. Fortunately, Stevie's tech, René Martinez, had the same dream and called Jimmie, which is how we convinced him to lend me the amplifier. The last person to borrow it was John Mayer. Let's just say Jimmie doesn't loan that thing out very easily.

Rightly so. For those of us waiting in vain for Jimmie Vaughan to give us the green light on the Dumble, how would you describe the sound of that amp?

It sounded like everything I love about Peter Green when he played a certain kind of heavenly blues. My mom once asked me, "Mijo, do you like Whitney Houston?" and I said "of course." She then told me that when Whitney sang, her voice would become a legion of angels. I think my mom knew what she was talking about. Sometimes when you play, you channel things. One person I haven't mentioned too much is Michael Bloomfield. I miss him a lot. He was a great player who knew how to tap into things. Those Paul Butterfield Blues Band albums, like the [self-titled] debut and *East-West*, are incredible, with songs like



"Born in Chicago." And the stuff he played with Bob Dylan, forget about it. Michael Bloomfield was a hero beyond heroes to me. But the guy who got me out of all that stuff was [Hungarian jazz, pop and rock guitarist] Gábor Szabó. The way he could play ballads was amazing. Listen to his album *Spellbinder* [1966] and you will hear a lot of Santana in there. Anyone reading this should listen to Hungarian gypsy music. There is nothing more romantic than hearing that stuff. It really pulled me out of the blues, which is something we all need from time to time. **CW**

"The main ingredients for me are spirituality and sensuality"

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Gibson

Marcus King ES-345

A royal reimagining of an ES classic — and it might just take the crown as the best signature guitar of the year

BY DARYL ROBERTSON

▶ EVERY GUITARIST DREAMS of having an instrument that bears his or her name, and with not one but two models under his belt, Marcus King is living that dream before even hitting 30. Back in 2021, the South Carolina-born virtuoso was honored with a Custom Shop recreation of a treasured family heirloom: a rare Sideways Vibrola-equipped 1962 ES-345 named “Big Red” that was passed down from his father, who got it from his father. Fast-forward to mid 2025, and this quirky model takes center stage again, now as a Nashville-made variation.

Unlike the Custom Shop’s detailed reproduction, this new version skips the features King finds unnecessary. The result? A streamlined ES-345 that keeps the spirit of the original, but without the fluff. As you’d expect, this

new model features a 3-ply maple and poplar body, solid maple center block, quarter-sawn Adirondack spruce bracing and a mahogany neck. The fingerboard is adorned with split-parallelgram inlays and 22 medium jumbo frets.

Now, here’s where it diverges from a traditional ES-345: the stereo wiring is gone and the Varitone is axed. And while it looks like it sports the classic Sideways Vibrola, it’s actually a fixed tailpiece in disguise. Also on board is an ABR-1 Tune-O-Matic bridge, Grover Rotomatic tuners and a Graph Tech nut.

Opening the case reveals a breathtaking sight. The deep crimson

“Move over, Freddie, Albert and B.B. There’s a new King looking to take the throne”

finish perfectly showcases this model’s curvaceous features, while the gilded hardware glistens enticingly. If we didn’t know any better, we’d think this was a Custom Shop creation. The nitrocellulose lacquer is flawlessly applied with not a single detail out of place. The fretwork is impeccable — no sharp ends, no high frets, no dead spots.

Now, let’s address the semi-hollow elephant in the room. With so many features stripped away, when does an ES-345 lose its identity and become an ES-335? The gleaming gold hardware and classic split-parallelgram inlays might keep it in 345 territory, but ditching the Varitone and stereo wiring nudges it closer to a 335 — maybe too close for some purists. If you were hoping for a historically accurate 345 to grace the Nashville lineup, you’ll have to keep waiting.

A standout feature of King’s model is the fixed Vibrola. It retains the look of the vintage vibrato system but removes its innards and arm. This eliminates the tuning issues infamous with the original design. And let’s be real; the Sideways Vibrola was never designed for an archtop. If the arm were present, it would almost certainly scratch up your stunning cherry finish. Here’s hoping Gibson



MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE





makes this tailpiece a common option going forward.

Moving on to playability, it's a fairly standard affair for those familiar with Gibson's current Nashville output. The neck is billed as a "rounded" profile, and it suits this guitar perfectly. Not too big, not too small, it's sure to fit the vast majority of players like a glove.

In fact, we had a hard time putting

this guitar down. It's just so inviting to play – and it helps that the action was incredibly low straight out of the box. This is the kind of guitar that encourages you to play your best, allowing you to perform faster, smoother and more expressively than you thought possible.

When plugging in an ES guitar, you expect that classic bell-like tone, and thankfully, this model delivers it in

STREET PRICE: \$3,999

MANUFACTURER:
Gibson, gibson.com

PROS

- Stunning looks
- Plays like a dream
- Has the classic ES tones you know and love

CONS

- With a lack of bespoke ES-345 features, this is more of a dressed-up ES-335

VERDICT: While traditionalists might lament the absence of certain classic ES-345 features, for anyone seeking a breathtaking instrument that effortlessly captures those iconic ES tones without the usual fuss, look no further.

spades. Starting on the neck pickup, paired with a Vox AC30, the sound is silky smooth with a rounded top end and a slightly vacant midrange. Switching to the middle position, a noticeable brightness is introduced. We found this setting ideal for finger-picked passages or clear, crisp rhythm playing. Turning our attention to the bridge pickup, it's sharp, characterful and plenty expressive – everything a good ES should be. We've sung the praises of the Custombucker pickups before, and this guitar reaffirms it. These might just be the best pickups Gibson makes right now.

Okay, so we can debate until the cows come home whether this really is an ES-345 or just a fancier ES-335. But what's not up for discussion is how good this guitar is. King and Gibson have knocked it out of the park with a stunning instrument that walks the fine line between a tasteful homage and a streamlined player's dream. King is two for two on signature models, and we (for one) are excited to see what fruits this partnership bears next. Move over, Freddie, Albert and B.B. There's a new King looking to take the throne. **GW**

MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE



Taylor 314ce Studio

An attainably priced "serious" Taylor with high-end touches

BY JAMIE DICKSON

TAYLOR'S GUITARS ARE clean-cut, original and (most of the time) their sound owes little to the past. The benefits of that approach are all to be found in this neat and sleek Grand Auditorium cutaway 314ce Studio – but also one or two of the drawbacks.

Who is Taylor aiming at with this guitar? One clue is that, while relatively simple cosmetically, the 314ce Studio is built with solid woods throughout, rather than cheaper laminates. In fact, Taylor states that this model is now "the lowest-priced gateway to the solid wood experience," though at \$1,999 it's hardly a beginner's model. Think of it as a beckoning invitation to buy your first "serious" Taylor, if you will.

To keep the price tag tempting, not all of this guitar is made in the U.S.; the neck is manufactured over the border at Taylor's Tecate factory in Mexico before the 314ce is assembled at the El Cajon, California, facility. Taylor's sapele is used for the back, sides and neck, instead of the increasingly expensive mahogany that it resembles. However, with a rich, auburn color and attractive grain stripes running through it, the sapele certainly doesn't look like a cheap option. Turning our attention to the top, we find a solid spruce soundboard that's been heat-treated using a process called torrefaction. This roasting technique was developed to give brand-new spruce tops similar tone and stability to those of vintage guitars that have settled and mellowed for decades.

Other standout details include a slightly narrowed neck, which we measured at 43mm (1 11/16th inches) at the nut, which might be Taylor's attempt to make the guitar more user-friendly to players crossing over from electric. Supporting the spruce top, we also get Taylor's V-Class bracing system. Finally, there's Taylor's simple but dependable

3-control ES2 pickup system. The gloss finish of the top is gleaming and mirror-flat, while the satin-feel neck is tactile and silky to play. That's a good start and plays to Taylor's strengths in making impeccably turned-out, detail-driven guitars. Fretwork is similarly tidy, while the rolled-in (subtly bevelled) edges of the fretboard give the neck a comfortable, played-in feel.

Strumming the 314ce Studio reveals a bright, breathy and clear voice with piano-like composure, and that finely intonated character really helps reveal harmonic detail when playing chords with ringing open strings. No particular era of music or acoustic heritage is evoked, just a harmonious modern voice that's quite neutral in character. One thing we've noticed in the past about V-Class braced guitars, however,

is that you seem to trade just a little bass for the other virtues it offers (sustain, improved intonation higher up the neck) and even our shallower-bodied Martin 000-14 had a touch more low-end than the 314ce studio.

Detuning to DADGAD fills things out nicely, however, and despite that slightly narrow neck, the fantastic intonation and silvery voice could make this a fingerstyle player's dream. The ES2 pickup system is the jewel in the crown here, though. It does a beautiful job of turning all that clarity into a focused but attractively natural amplified voice and, combined with Taylor's slinky playability, makes the 314ce a serious live performance tool. Overall, it adds up to a charming package that, while not cheap, is fairly priced (with premium gig bag included), crisply built and shines on the live stage. **GW**



STREET PRICE: \$1,999

MANUFACTURER:
Taylor, taylorguitars.com

PROS

- ✦ Detailed and shimmering tone
- ✦ Fantastic amplified voice
- ✦ Beautifully finished

CONS

- ✦ Could use slightly fuller bass
- ✦ Modern voicing might not suit traditionalists

VERDICT: An agile acoustic with a sparkling voice at an attainable price.

Jackson Pro Series Misha Mansoor Juggernaut ET6

The Periphery riff-master's new signature model is a double-cut powerhouse with a difference

BY MATT McGRACKEN

THE JACKSON SIGNATURE Misha Mansoor Juggernaut ET6 is a forward-thinking metal guitar that's all about performance and playability.

Its poplar body features ultra-thin, carved horns and a sculpted neck heel, prioritizing upper fret access. The thin-profile caramelized maple neck is bolted to the body and topped with a stainless steel-equipped ebony fingerboard with Luminlay side dots.

The centerpiece is the EverTune F6 bridge. For the first time ever, we have to read the manual for a guitar to find out how to tune it. Handily, it comes with an EverTune-specific manual. EverTune bridges are

"It sounds so good, it almost feels like cheating"

designed to hold your guitar in tune no matter the atmospheric conditions, how hard you bend or fret the strings or how long you play it. There are two modes, one that keeps the strings perfectly tuned – even if you bend them – and a second mode that allows you to bend and use vibrato but returns the strings to perfect pitch. Once set, you don't need to do anything else. The EverTune is paired with a set of Jackson locking tuners in an offset 3x3 mounting.

The humbuckers were created by Jackson with input from Mansoor, the venerable Periphery guitarist. There's a push-pull knob on the tone control to unlock extra tone options alongside a 5-way blade switch, so there are plenty of sounds available.

Taking the Jackson Pro Plus Juggernaut out of the gig bag, that Riviera Blue finish looks a little pop-punk to our eyes. It's been immaculately applied, apart from

some small bits of wood showing through the holes where the neck bolts are. The fretwork is superb, with the fingerboard edges nicely rolled.

It's not often that we get a guitar that completely blows us away with how it plays, but using the EverTune bridge is quite unlike anything we've ever tried. It's much simpler to set up than a Floyd Rose, and stays in tune better than any locking tremolo system we've come across. Once we get over the initial weirdness of all our licks being perfectly intonated, we can see how good of a tool it would be for any player, let alone pro recording and gigging musicians.

The overall playability of the guitar is fantastic in terms of fingerboard





and neck. The neck feels like a “D” profile and, as you might expect coming from a Mansoor signature model, it is absolutely rapid. Combined with the fact that it’s difficult to pull the string out of tune you can really lay into it, switching between chugging and fast lead work without ever feeling like you are pushing it too hard — it is a really amazing experience.

I start by returning the guitar to its factory tuning of drop C via the included hex key, much as you would tune a Floyd Rose with the micro-tuners at the bridge. With the guitar in “zone 2,” I can play as hard as I want without the strings sounding like they’re even a smidge off perfect

pitch. It’s an unfamiliar feeling, one that takes a minute to get used to. It sounds so good, it almost feels like cheating.

Unusually, the tone control is bypassed by default, so pulling the push-pull tone knob out engages the circuit. With the tone knob removed from the circuit, it sounds brighter — and a little harsher. The pickups are seriously hot when played through the gain channel of our Orange tube amp. It’s modern metal through and through, with a rich saturation that’s articulate and has a nice bit of low-end oomph. It sounds great when switching between chunky riffs and chord stabs with open strings higher up the neck. Moving to the bridge

position, it’s a similar tale. I find a searing sound that’s a little woolier with open chords in the lower strings but retains a nice clarity. Lead licks are thick and warm but will still cut through a mix. The in-between positions surprise us with just how spanky they sound. They’re very Strat-esque and great for that overly compressed, modern prog-metal clean tone.

All in all, the Jackson Pro Plus Series Signature Misha Mansoor Juggernaut ET6 delivers a superb array of tones for heavy playing and the lighter stuff, and the tuning stability and intonation of the EverTune bridge really needs to be played to be believed. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$1,469.99

MANUFACTURER:

Jackson,
jacksonguitars.com

PROS

- + EverTune offers otherworldly tuning and intonation stability
- + Searing tones for modern metal plus spanky Strat-style sounds
- + Neck profile equally well-suited to chugging and shredding

CONS

- Bending and vibrato on the EverTune bridge takes some getting used to
- Offset inlays disappear under your fretting hand

VERDICT: If you want a guitar to cover all the sounds of modern and progressive metal with the clinical accuracy of a djent breakdown, the Jackson Pro Plus Series Signature Misha Mansoor Juggernaut ET6 is totally worth the money.



OLLY CURTIS/FUTURE

ToneWoodAmp2

Acoustic guitarists, meet your new best friend

BY ROB LAING

▶ **ACOUSTIC GUITARISTS OFTEN** get left out of the world of effects. However, about a decade ago, ToneWoodAmp appeared. It was a dedicated device that enabled acoustic players to enjoy effects *through* their guitar – without the need for a traditional amp or pedal.

Flash forward to 2025, and along comes ToneWoodAmp2. Using the patented technology of its predecessor, ToneWoodAmp2 creates vibrations. And – when it is attached to the back of your guitar via a magnetic X-brace – it's these vibrations that create effects without the need for a traditional speaker. The effects are combined with your guitar's usual acoustic response, and the results are very impressive indeed.

Designer and company co-founder Ofer Webman has taken up the challenge and widened the ToneWoodAmp's horizons with a slimmer design, a rechargeable battery that offers more than 10 hours of life, a "Lift Kit" that enables the guitar to fit to bowl-back acoustics and an app that unlocks a huge array of new features for the stage. There are now four modulation effects, with flanger, vibrato and phaser joining chorus. Gone are the overdrive, autowah and Leslie-style sounds of the original, but they're not really missed. The effects feel tailored to the acoustic and can be activated and controlled via the hardware or with the companion Google and iOS smartphone app, where a Stage Mode can be activated when the output of the ToneWoodAmp2 is used.

This is where the device reveals itself as an impressively featured preamp for live use, including three-band EQ, three-mode compressor, feedback assassin and boost. It allows players to take a soundhole pickup or piezo-equipped acoustic guitar (both of which we tested with the ToneWoodAmp2) and carve out a more pleasing sound for the stage, as well as save presets for different needs and guitars. We were impressed by the level of control on display here and just how user-friendly and stable the app is.

This is bolstered by the option of purchasing additional magnetic X-braces to move the ToneWoodAmp2 between different instruments. And if you *do* own multiple acoustics, you'll want to do this because the effects are best in class when pitched against brands that build similar technology into their stock guitars. The ability to run four effects at once and the level of control over them (including plate, room and hall reverb alongside sine and wave tremolo) opens up the inspiring potential from subtle modulated sounds for chordwork to huge spacey atmospheres. **GW**



"It's difficult to imagine how ToneWood-Amp could have made this follow-up any better"

STREET PRICE: \$310

MANUFACTURER:
ToneWoodAmp,
tonewoodamp.com

PROS

- ✦ Can be fitted to most electro-acoustic guitars yourself
- ✦ Excellent sounds
- ✦ Now with improved features for stage use
- ✦ New app works very well
- ✦ Improved (rechargeable) battery life

CONS

- You'll need to free up some time because you'll probably want to play your acoustic even more

VERDICT: It's difficult to imagine how ToneWoodAmp could have made this follow-up any better. This is an inspiring, useful and powerful tool for your acoustic guitar.



Roland JC-120 Jazz Chorus plugin

One of the world's greatest clean amps arrives as a DAW-friendly plugin

BY MATT McCracken

▶ **THERE'S NO DENYING** that Roland's Jazz Chorus is the most legendary solid-state guitar amp of all time. Its pristine, punchy clean tones and god-tier built-in chorus have given it a place on the pantheon. So it's about time we got the ability to run it in our DAWs from the comfort of the home studio.

The software is a rather simple affair, all told. You get the amp as it is in real life with a clean and dirt channel, high and low inputs for each, three-band EQs and the universal chorus and vibe effects with speed and depth control.

We've played a few JC amps in real life, and that ultra-responsiveness is present here, with a brilliant but neutral-sounding clean tone that's great if you need something with clarity, or to serve as a base for your pedalboard. The plugin gives you a selection of five different microphones to use on the cab, three settings that blend multiple mics and a "flat" option. The distance of the mic to the grille of the amp is adjustable and you can add in more room ambiance via a dedicated knob. A handy tempo sync button allows for synchronization of the speed knob on the effects panel to the project tempo.

Like its real-life counterpart, the plugin can work in stereo, but we see limited use for that in terms of recorded guitar tracks that are usually mono and are typically panned out wide. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$199 for lifetime key, part of Roland's Cloud Plan Ultimate membership for \$19.99 a month (30-day free trial also available)

MANUFACTURER:
Roland, roland.com

PROS

- ✦ Delivers classic punchy, pristine JC clean tones
- ✦ Chorus and vibrato effects are superb
- ✦ Distortion channel is surprisingly useful

CONS

- Individual license is expensive versus other amp models
- You can't bypass the plugin in Pro Tools

VERDICT: The standalone price is expensive for a single amp mode. That said, the amp tones – particularly the chorus effect – are sublime; it's easily one of the best clean tones we've come across.



Kramer Volante HSGT

Can one of the O.G. shred brands “transcend nostalgia” with its new \$1,000 high-performance SuperStrat?

BY AMIT SHARMA

GIVEN ITS CONNECTION to Eddie Van Halen in the Eighties, Kramer is a brand steeped in history for high-gain players hoping to dazzle audiences with technical proficiency. The brand-new Volante series follows that trend, with the Gibson-owned brand hoping to “transcend nostalgia” and position itself as the “progressive choice for high-performance guitarists.”

There are twin humbucker models with a Floyd Rose 1000 tremolo and classic super-S-style options with a single-coil in the neck and a vintage-style two-point tremolo system, like this Volante HSGT in Triburst.

You can see the effort in the craft. The Premium Quilt options with AAAA maple tops are certainly the most eye-catching in the series, but there’s a vintage charm to this Triburst finish that feels elegant and enticing. Kramer chose to use a lightweight alder for the body with forearm and body comfort carves,

as well as a sculpted heel for improved upper-fret access. It’s as comfortable as a guitar can get – ergonomically sound and seamless to hold, whether you are standing or seated. The guitar’s action is set low enough for comfortable playing but high enough for a good amount of resonance, and the bridge has been set to float – which means you can pull up a fret or two depending on which string is ringing.

As you might expect, the Elliptical C Profile neck makes string skipping, arpeggios and sweep-picking a breeze – it’s the kind of instrument that inspires you to take in-the-moment risks instead of feeling like you’ve got to play it safe. You really can’t put a price on something like that.

Perhaps the first thing you’ll notice is just how loud and resonant these

STREET PRICE: \$999

MANUFACTURER: Kramer, kramerguitars.com

PROS

- ✦ Incredibly reactive
- ✦ Great tremolo system
- ✦ Series/Parallel switching for the bridge humbucker

CONS

- Pickups vary in output
- Neck single-coil very bright

VERDICT: There are a lot of great SuperStrats out there for under \$1,000, but few could rival the Volante HSGT in terms of resonance and comfort.

guitars feel, partly thanks to Kramer’s new five-bolt heels and the all-new KeyLock system for stable tuning and maximum vibration. There are no dead spots; every fret on every string rings with full-bodied punch and ample sustain. The two-point tremolo holds its tuning and is set up perfectly for Jeff Beck-style warbles and gargles. We plugged this into an EVH 5150 Iconic combo with a Nobels ODR-1 in front and a Gurus Echosex 3 Steve Lukather signature delay pedal in the loop.

The Neptune bridge humbucker, which packs a whopping 14k DCR, is articulate and well balanced, capturing all the vibrations with no shortage of dimension and reacting well to adjustments using the volume and tone knobs. The tone knob can be pulled to run the humbucker in parallel mode – a great option to have if you want more of a Stratty funk or blues tone.

If I were nitpicking, the Triton Noiseless single-coil neck is just a little too bright (especially for certain vintage-leaning players), never quite getting to the thickness of a Strat on the neck pickup, and also too low in output compared to the bridge humbucker.

Overall, the Kramer Volante HSGT is a very well-rounded and immaculately conceived modern machine with one foot in the past and another in the present. **GW**

“The tremolo is set up perfectly for Jeff Beck-style warbles and gargles”

TC Electronic Ditto 2

The ubiquitous compact looper gets a well-deserved update — but has it kept up with some stiff competition?

BY MATT McCRACKEN

THE TC ELECTRONIC Ditto 2 is the long-awaited sequel to TC Electronic's ubiquitous little gray box, AKA, the king of compact looper pedals. Building on the success of the 2013 original, which is small, robust and simple to use, the Ditto 2 aims to take all the best aspects of the OG and make them even better.

Nowadays, however, there's a lot more competition in the category of loopers, with similarly budget-priced offerings from Boss, Electro-Harmonix, NUX and Zoom all vying for space on our boards. So is Ditto 2 ready to continue TC's compact looper supremacy? Let's find out...

First impressions? It's ridiculously lightweight yet feels nice and robust in the hand. It's a teeny-tiny thing with just a single knob and footswitch on the front fascia and an LED to indicate what mode it's in. Speaking of the footswitch, it has a much wider top than we're used to seeing and depresses with a satisfying yet quiet click. We can already see it being handy when trying to quickly engage loops on stage.

Single 1/4-inch jacks for input and output provide your connectivity, and on the right-hand side of the pedal, we see some additional connectivity via USB-C. Using this connector, you can hook it up to your smartphone to adjust settings, and this functionality is available via Bluetooth too. A mode switch on the same panel lets you change between an original Ditto profile and a user-defined one.

In use, the LED turns green to indicate playback mode, and adding some upstroked stabs to our original



lick is as simple as pressing the button again, playing our part, then hitting it again to complete the overdub. While overdubbing, the LED switches to purple to help you differentiate what's going on with the pedal — useful if you're looping longer phrases.

It doesn't take us long to start building in harmonized parts and additional embellishments — all without having to look at a smartphone app or dive into the manual. It's a devilishly simple pedal, and it's easy to see why the Ditto remains so popular over the years. The addition of "loop snap" — whereby the pedal irons out any small chinks in your rhythm skills — is noticeable too; our loops feel immediately smooth, which could be useful for looping newcomers especially.

Using TC's new Bluetooth app allows you to change the way the pedal behaves without having to unhook it from your pedalboard

STREET PRICE: \$119

MANUFACTURER:
TC Electronic,
tcelectronic.com

PROS

- Compact
- Wide magnetic footswitch
- Retains audio quality with multiple overdubs

CONS

- Single footswitch means it's only suitable for simple looping
- Side-mounted power outlet and mode switch could be awkward

VERDICT: It doesn't do a ton differently from the original, but the app and "loop snap" function make it a great looper for beginners or those who need simple functionality.

to access that side switch. The default mode gives you classic Ditto behavior with overdubs aplenty, while a secondary "singletap looping" mode is also unlocked.

Here, the pedal cycles through record, play and then clear modes, which we can see being useful in a band format where you might only need a single additional part rather than endless overdubs. It also allows you to turn "loop snap" off, should you want to delve into funny time signatures or just loop freely.

We are honestly surprised at just how easy it is to use the Ditto 2. Even if you've never used a looper before, we'd bet it wouldn't take most guitarists more than five minutes to get up and running with it. Its intuitiveness and simplicity are the core of its strengths, and it's easy to see why it remains one of the most popular looper pedals around. **GW**

"Its intuitiveness and simplicity are the core of its strengths"



FOLLOW THE GROOVE

BY CORY WONG

The Right Stuff, Part 2

More on developing solid strumming

LAST MONTH, WE delved into the all-important topic of developing solid pick-hand timing when strumming. To me, that's where the groove is: the pick hand is the timekeeper, and I've spent a lot of time working on exercises designed to bolster my strumming competence. In this column, I'd like to share some more of these exercises.

One of the interesting things that I did to develop my strumming technique had nothing to do with my wrist motion or how to hold the pick. I actually had teachers in college tell me that my technique was terrible and say "you should hold your pick this way!"

I eventually realized that everyone's bio-mechanics are different and unique, in terms of works best and most efficiently. So, I don't swear by my technique; I swear by my ability to control my right-hand movement and the exercises I used to get there.

An unorthodox approach I took was to borrow something from my old marching band drum line exercises and adapt them to guitar. In hitting the snare drum, I'd practice the typical "stick control" exercises of "right-left-right-right" (RLRR) or "left-right-left-left" (LRL) and I practiced "grid-ing" drills of shifting accents from one 16th note to another. I realized that this approach could enhance my right-hand technique.

Let's pick up from last month's examples with steady 16th-note strumming on fret-hand-muted strings, utilizing the "steady motor" approach of down-up-down-up alternate strumming on every beat, as shown in **FIGURE 1**. If you verbalize the four beats of 16th notes in each bar as "1-ee-an-da, 2-ee-an-da, 3-ee-an-da, 4-ee-an-da," the pick strokes are down-up-down-up, etc., with "ee"

FIG. 1 ▣ = downstroke ▤ = upstroke

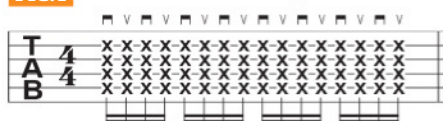


FIG. 2 > = accent (strum harder than normal)

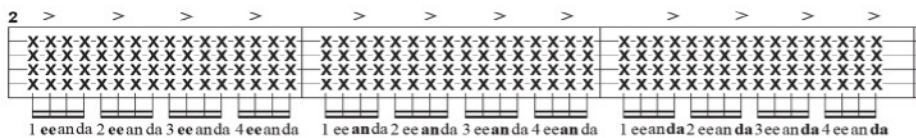
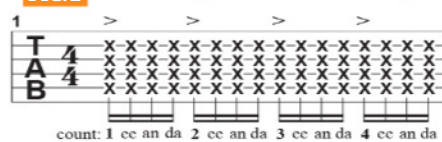


FIG. 3

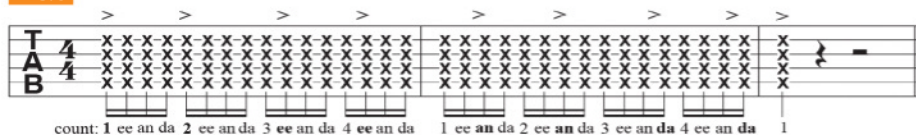


FIG. 4

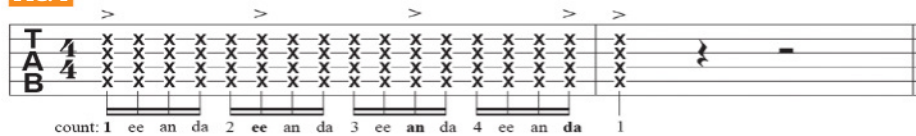


FIG. 5 E9

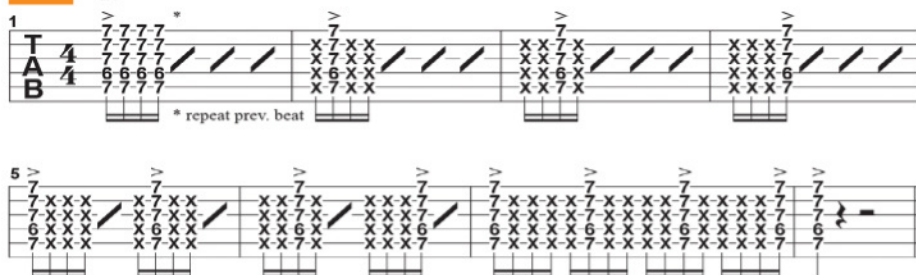


FIG. 6



and "da" being strummed with upstrokes.

When strumming this way, you have three options: hit a note or chord, play a "chuck" (muted-string strum) or play nothing – just let your hand swing over the strings.

FIGURE 2 illustrates a "grid-ing" exercise to strengthen pick-hand control for strumming, achieved through shifting the accents. We begin with one bar of accenting the four downbeats (1, 2, 3 and 4), strumming them a little harder than normal. This is followed by a bar of accents on "ee," then a bar of accents on "an" and ending with a bar accenting "da."

Now let's switch the accents to two beats each, as shown in **FIGURE 3**. On beats 1 and 2, I accent the downbeats, and on beats 3 and 4, I accent "ee." In bar 2, I accent "an" in the

first two beats, then "da" in the last two.

In **FIGURE 4**, I shift the accent forward on each beat, which is a little more challenging to do. Proceed slowly at first while tapping your foot squarely on each beat, then gradually increase the tempo.

The next step is to work in some chords. In **FIGURE 5**, I press down on an E9 voicing at the same accent points specified in the prior examples, moving from one 16th-note accent to the next on each successive beat. In

FIGURE 6, I apply this approach to a more traditional funk rhythm part with changing chords. As you'll discover, rhythm parts like these are much easier to play once you learn to control how your two hands work together in laying down a solid rhythm part. **GW**



TALES FROM NERDVILLE

BY JOE BONAMASSA

Twang Travels

The great Duane Eddy

I RECENTLY HAD the honor to pay tribute to the legendary Duane Eddy, the “Titan of Twang” who passed away on April 30, 2024, at age 86. Duane was a wonderful guy, and it’s testament to one’s life and legacy when A-list players like Peter Frampton, Albert Lee and Vince Gill show up in Nashville with Gretsch guitars, Eddy’s signature, to celebrate your music at a tribute concert.

Eddy recorded some of the most important and enduringly popular instrumental guitar music between the late Fifties and early Sixties, selling 12 million albums by 1963 with hits like “Rebel Rouser,” “Peter Gunn” and “Because They’re Young.” I got to play two songs for the event, “Bye Bye Blues” and “Three-30 Blues.” I wanted to do it right, so I showed up with a Duane Eddy Guild guitar from 1963 and a Gretsch 6120 from 1956, which he was more associated with, but he did use Guilds as well, fitted with DeArmond pickups. The guitar I’m using for this lesson’s video is a 1960 Gretsch 6120 with Filtertron pickups, but it will do the job very well.

Additionally, your guitar must have a “5-speed transmission” Bigsby tremolo arm if you hope to do justice to Eddy’s distinct sound. Also, I like using flatwound strings with these instruments, which give them a very round sound, almost like a compressor, plugged straight into a Fender amp with lots of reverb and vibrato. That’s how he did it! There were no tricks or magic boxes involved – all you need is a twangy guitar sound.

FIGURE 1 is a melody along the lines of “Bye Bye Blues,” with held notes treated with Bigsby dips and vibratos and ringing over a fairly simple chord progression. Notice that I’ll often pick a note, add a tremolo arm dip and return followed by a subtle vibrato shake.

My approach in going for the Duane Eddy sound is to pick all of the notes down by the

All dips and vibratos performed with a Bigsby tremolo bar, unless indicated otherwise.

FIG. 1 (A) (F) (A) (F#7)

FIG. 2 E5 **FIG. 3** E A/E finger vib.

(A/G) (D/A) Am F C Gadd4 G Am

FIG. 4 Am **FIG. 5** (Am)

FIG. 6 (G7) Eb9/Bb D9/A

bridge, as in **FIGURE 2**. Once the notes or chords are ringing out, I’ll then apply the Bigsby arm movement. Bigsbys are nothing like Fender-style vibrato units in that the sound is very different and also very distinct. **FIGURE 3** offers a longer example demonstrating the Bigsby’s signature qualities.

One of the more popular songs I do is “Dust Bowl,” for which I wrote a riff in honor of Duane Eddy. I needed a theme at the head of the tune, and the main rhythm figure, shown in **FIGURE 4**, is based on a repeating Am arpeggiated figure, for which all of the notes are sustained.

FIGURE 5 illustrates the Eddy-inspired

“Dust Bowl” theme. This simple lick outlines Am7 with the notes A, C and G, followed by the 6th, F#, treated with Bigsby vibrato, which lends drama to the melody. A Bigsby dip is added on the E note at the end of the phrase as well.

Duane Eddy was a great blues player too, as heard on “Three-30 Blues.” **FIGURE 6** is a five-bar phrase along the lines of what Duane plays on this track, with single-note phrases based on the G major triadic tones G, B and D, with the inclusion of the flatted 3rd (b3), Bb, the 4th, C, and the 6th, E. The phrase ends with a nice Gdim voicing (G, Bb, Db) that slides up to the G major triad. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/October2025

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. His new album, *Breakthrough*, is out now. For more information, head to jbonamassa.com.



ONE GUITAR WOMAN

BY SUE FOLEY

She's Got the Blues

My biggest female fingerstyle influences

ON MY LATEST album, *One Guitar Woman*, I pay tribute to many of the female pioneers of the guitar, all of whom are among the biggest influences on my approach to playing the instrument. On the album, I cover material by Maybelle Carter, Elizabeth Cotten, Memphis Minnie, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Ida Presti in classical guitar, and even Charro, to whom I dedicate a flamenco piece.

I learned a lot working on this album because I had to study many different techniques, which was fun but also challenging. I already had my hands around the Piedmont fingerpicking style, also often referred to as "East Coast" guitar, as it was popularized in a region known as the "Piedmont plateau," which runs from Richmond, Virginia, to Atlanta. Some of the most well-known and influential Piedmont-style players are Elizabeth Cotten, Reverend Gary Davis and Blind Blake.

The Piedmont style is built from alternating bass figures, picked with the thumb, and syncopated melodies fingerpicked on the higher strings, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 1**. While holding an open G chord, the thumb alternates between the low G note and the open D string while the first two fingers pick the open G and B strings in a syncopated rhythm. I always use a thumbpick and have acrylic nails on my other fingers, which produce a strong, clear pick attack.

For the entire album, I used a Negra nylon-string acoustic guitar, crafted in Paracho, Mexico, by Salvador Castillo. I bought this guitar specifically for the album, but I play everything on it, from blues to classical to flamenco to Piedmont style to the Maybelle Carter "scratch" style. As shown in

FIG. 1 G
*fingerstyle

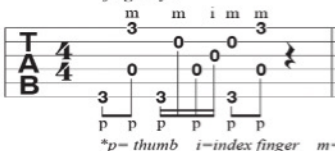


FIG. 2 G

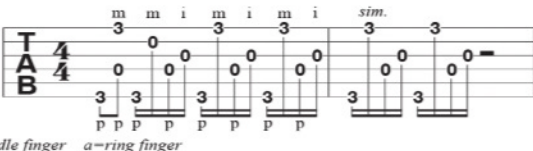


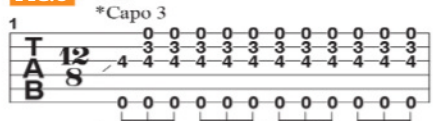
FIG. 3



FIG. 4 C



FIG. 5 E7



*All music sounds in the key of G.
All tablature positions are relative to the capo.

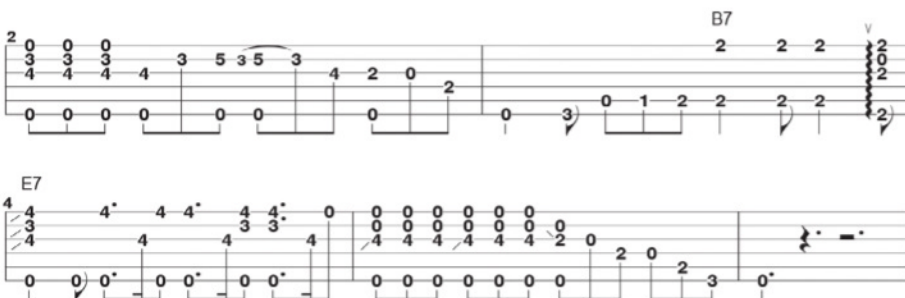


FIGURE 2, the thumb alternates between the 6th and 4th strings while the index and middle fingers pick the syncopated melody.

The first single from the album is "Oh Babe It Ain't No Lie" by Elizabeth Cotten. **FIGURE 3** is played in this style. While alternating bass notes with my thumb, I play a melody on the higher strings and move down the high E string chromatically, from G to F# to F. This is followed by similar fingerpicking patterns applied to C and E chords. Over E, I bring in hammer-ons to sound the G# and D notes. In bars 4-6, I use hammer-ons and slides over the F chord to set up the change to C/G. Bar 7 ends with "double octaves," as pairs of G and A notes, two octaves apart, set up the resolution from G to C.

Cotten's signature song is "Freight Train," which she plays pretty fast. **FIGURE 4** is played in this style. Cotten's technique is particularly difficult to replicate because she played "upside down" on a guitar strung for a righty but played left-handed.

FIGURE 5 offers an example along the lines of Memphis Minnie's "In My Girlish Days." It's played in a more traditional country blues style and with a capo at the 3rd fret. I'm playing as if I'm in the key of E here, but everything sounds in the key of G.

This type of playing does not follow any regimented fingerpicking patterns, as I alter my picking approach to accommodate how the melody lines are balanced against the bass notes. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/October2025

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



HARDWIRED

BY JAMES JARED NICHOLS

Drop-D Stomp

Utilizing drop-D tuning to play "Hard Wired"

THIS MONTH, I'D like to go over the namesake song of my column, "Hard Wired," which appears on my self-titled 2023 album. I wrote this song with my good friend Tyler Bryant, and it grew out of a jam session, as many songs do. It's played in the key of D and in drop-D tuning.

Tyler and I had this idea to write a bluesy "stomp" type of song, like the old traditional blues of Howlin' Wolf, but for it to have an intensity and energy that would make it heavy. The main riff, to me, has that classic Mountain/Leslie West, Nazareth/early Blue Öyster Cult vibe. **FIGURE 1** shows the opening riff, which starts with a pick-up on a low G note, followed by the initial phrase, which is based on the D minor pentatonic scale (D, F, G, A, C). Notice the slight bends on the C and F notes. When playing this lick, be sure to use an aggressive attack, to attain that heavy, "mean" quality. I fingerpick everything, so I'll snap the strings here.

FIGURE 2 illustrates the entire main riff. Following the opening two-beat phrase, I answer it with a descending line on the 6th string that's based on the D blues scale (D, F, G, A $\flat$, A, C). To button up that riff, I end with a chromatically ascending figure built from ascending octaves on the 6th and 4th strings, which are rhythmically syncopated and reinforced by the bass and drums. As shown in **FIGURE 3**, bar 2, beats 3 and 4, I begin with an E octave at the 2nd fret then move up one fret at a time to F, F $\sharp$ and G.

I was sure to leave lots of space in this lick, because, once you start adding fuzz, overdrive and sheer volume, it can be challenging to control the focus. The most important thing to me is for there to be clarity combined with the raunchiness and bite. All of my favorite players, such as Paul Kossoff, Leslie West and

All examples are played in Drop-D tuning (low to high, D A D G B E).

FIG. 1

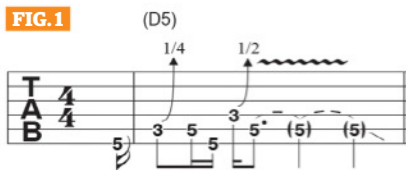


FIG. 2

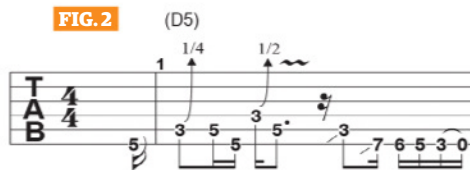


FIG. 3

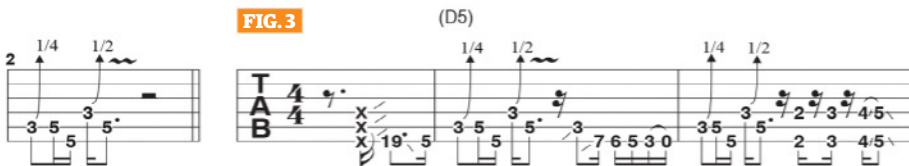


FIG. 4 Dsus2



FIG. 5 Dsus2

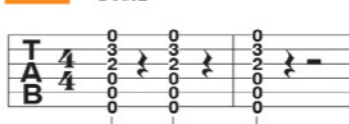


FIG. 6 Dsus2

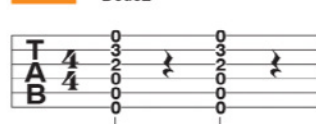


FIG. 7 B $\flat$ Cadd2

FIG. 8 C5 D5



FIG. 9 C5 D5

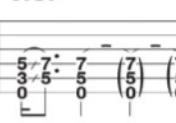


FIG. 10 C5 D5

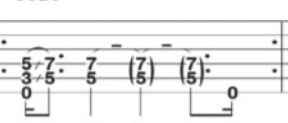


FIG. 9 C5 D5



FIG. 10 C5 D5



FIG. 10 C5 D5



FIG. 10 F5 G5

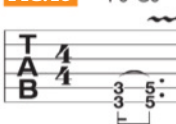


FIG. 10 F5 G5

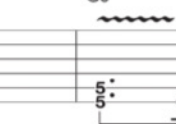


FIG. 10 F5 G5



Jimi Hendrix, play with tonal perfection, but it also often sounds like they're hanging on by a thread! And that's what gives the music that exciting edge.

For the song's verses, I was thinking of a Stone Temple Pilots vibe, with the rhythm guitar less as a melodic instrument and more as a "pulse" that's driving the riff. As shown in **FIGURES 4** and **5**, I simply hit big open Dsus2 power chords on all six strings. **FIGURE 6** includes the single-note phrase that falls in bars 2 and 4.

FIGURE 7 depicts the pre-chorus chords, which consist of just three notes each but sound huge: in bar 1, I play a B $\flat$ voicing on the

6th and 3rd strings, including the open D note on the 4th string. I then move that two-finger shape up two frets to C, while still including the open D note, which creates a Cadd2 chord.

The chorus riff, shown in **FIGURE 8**, is very Free/Bad Company-esque, as C5 slides up to D5. As shown in bar 3 of **FIGURE 9**, I vary the riff by playing the major 3rd of each chord instead of its root — E and F $\sharp$, in place of C and D.

The chorus wraps up with the low chords shown in **FIGURE 10**, which double the vocal line, *a la* Leslie West.

Next month, I'll share my approach to soloing in the song. See you then! **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/October2025

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 information, head to jaredjamesnichols.com.

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B5DMAG

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS

BY JIMMY BROWN

INTERVALS & KOAN SOUND "Neurogenesis"



THIS INTRICATE YET melodic and catchy prog-metal instrumental features two tightly arranged 7-string guitar parts, crafted by

Aaron Marshall, and a nimble fingerstyle bass line by Jacob Umansky. Both axmen tune their low B strings down to A, what's commonly referred to as drop-A tuning, which enables them to utilize a drop-D-like approach to playing on their lowest string, with octave notes on their two A strings conveniently falling at the same fret.

Both Marshall and Umansky have posted high-quality close-up play-through videos online of them performing "Neurogenesis" alone, which were invaluable helpful to transcribers Jeff Perrin and Sungjun Park. You'll no doubt find those videos very helpful too, for observing the fret-hand fingerings and right-hand articulations used.

In addition to straight fingerpicking, Umansky also does some slapping and popping here and there, as indicated in the tabs, and occasionally employs the unusual technique of "thumb strumming," using his thumb to pick brief flurries on 16th notes in alternating downstrokes and upstrokes, as one would do with a pick. Transitioning between these different techniques can be tricky to do on the fly, as the pick-hand posture and orientation to the strings needs to change, so observe how Jacob does it.

As the track's tempo is a brisk 175 beats per minute, Marshall plays mostly eighth-note rhythms in his guitar parts, although in a few spots he does perform fast 16th notes for some brief tremolo picking/strumming on a reiterated note or octave. He also plays a few 16th-note hammer-ons, pull-offs and/or legato finger slides, most notably during sections L-O (bars 98-131), which lend his melodic lines a smooth, lyrical quality.

One of the biggest technical challenges in the guitar parts is quickly and cleanly performing all the crosspicked, one-note-per-string arpeggios that Aaron plays in sections A-E. Again, study his play-through video to observe his choice of pick strokes, as well as his selective application of palm muting (P.M.) for many of the low notes, which serves to emphasize the higher, unmuted notes.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS "Under the Bridge"



ONE OF THE Peppers' most well-written songs, this classic ballad from their 1991 breakout album, *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, showcases each

bandmember's softer side and musical sensitivity.

With his pick tucked into his palm, guitarist John Frusciante starts off with a gently finger-picked, arpeggiated two-chord vamp, adding a few decorative melodic embellishments to the D chords in bars 3, 5 and 7 that are deceptively challenging to play cleanly. After performing the initial pinkie hammer-ons in these bars, you'll need to quickly move your 3rd finger from the 5th string to the 4th, which can be tricky to "stick the landing." And to execute the triplet hammer/pulls in bars 3 and 7 you'll need to borrow the pinkie, redeploying it from the 5th string to the 2nd, without inadvertently pulling-off to an open A note.

Notice the overdubbed Guitar 2 part shown in *Fill 1* at the bottom of the first page. To replicate the sound of the two guitars during the

"Frusciante adds Hendrix-style chord embellishments"

intro, try adding Guitar 2's high D and C# notes to the Guitar 1 part, fingerpicking them on beat 1 of each bar and holding them until beat 4.

As the 1st verse gets underway at section B, Frusciante retrieves his pick and strums a progression of chords in the key of E. Notice that, for B, C#m, G#m and A, he foregoes barring his index finger across all six strings and omits the low root notes on the 6th string, giving each chord an interesting *2nd-inversion* sound, with the 5th being the lowest note. Throughout the song's verses, the guitarist tastefully adds Jimi Hendrix-style chord embellishments, such as the two-string finger slides when moving from B to C#m in bars 10, 20 and elsewhere.

During sections C and E, Frusciante adorns the A and B chords with elegant hammer/pulls while allowing the other notes to ring. As in the intro, he uses his pinkie for the hammer-ons, which means it needs to let go of the 4th string. But that's okay because the 5th-string note is still ringing and providing musical "cover."

STEVIE WONDER "Sir Duke"



WHEN IT COMES to crafting truly inventive, original chord progressions and impeccable pop song arrangements,

the great Stevie Wonder has no peer. This jazz/rock-flavored chart topper from 1976/77 stands among at least a dozen of the gifted musical visionary's evergreen compositions and features some novel chord changes, such as B to Fm7 to Emaj7 in the chorus, as well as some fine rhythm guitar work by Michael Sembello and Ben Bridges and grooving, melodic bass playing by Nathan Watts.

We've arranged the song's signature intro horn melody for guitar, and the notes lays comfortably under the fingers in the upper-middle region of the fretboard, where they also sound fatter and more horn-like.

Throughout the song, both Sembello and Bridges employ fret-hand muting extensively, to make their notes and chords sound crisp and articulate, punctuated by rests, or "holes of silence." Also note how the two guitarists play distinctly different chord voicings throughout the verse, pre-chorus and chorus sections and octave-double their single-note lines during the interlude, so as to not be redundant or step on each other's musical toes.

Notice throughout all the vocal sections the little black dots above the strummed and arpeggiated chords in the Guitar 2 part, and in both guitar parts during the pre-chorus (section C). These *staccato markings* are a notational shortcut that tell you to reduce the duration of the rhythmic value by 50%, or divide it in half. So a staccato quarter note is to be played like an eighth note followed by an eighth rest. Likewise, a staccato eighth note is like a 16th note followed by a 16th rest. This minimalist notation makes for a less cluttered and more reader-friendly chart. To perform a staccato articulation, pick or strum the note or chord, then loosen your fret hand's grip on the string(s) slightly, just enough to "choke" the vibration(s). You don't want to lift the finger(s) off the strings, however, as that would be wasted movement, and doing so would also risk sounding unwanted open notes. It's a micro-movement that's only visible to the player, and it's all about precise timing and coordination, not finger strength. **GW**

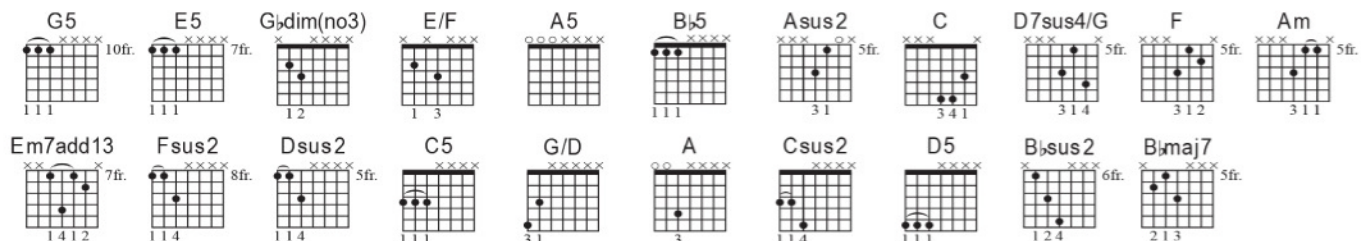
INTERVALS & KOAN SOUND

"Neurogenesis"

AS HEARD ON **MEMORY PALACE**WORDS AND MUSIC BY **AARON MARSHALL, JAMES BASTOW AND WILLIAM WEEKS**TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN AND SUNGJUN PARK**

All guitars are 7-string instruments in Drop-A tuning (low to high: A, E, A, D, G, B, E).

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

**A** Intro (0:00) (0:11)

Fast ♩ = 175

(production intro)
(approx. 10 sec.)

N.C. (A5)
Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

T 4/4
A 4/4
B 4/4

1

0 10-12 (12) 10-12 0 0 10-12 (12) (12) 0 0

Bass

T 4/4
A 4/4
B 4/4

0 3 5 (5) 3 5 0 0 3 5 (5) (5) 0 0

(2nd time) (1:25)

G5

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

GTR. 3

12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

Bass

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

*strum w/edge of thumb.

"NEUROGENESIS" WRITTEN BY AARON DANIEL MARSHALL (SOCAN), JAMES BASTOW (PRS), AND WILLIAM WEEKS (PRS).
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5

N.C. (A5) E5 N.C. (F5)

GTR. 3

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

B 1st Theme (0.22, 1.33)

N.C. (A5) (B5) (C5) (G5) (F5) (D5) (E5) (G5)

9 P.M. P.M.

GTR. 3

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 second time (see below bar 132)

2nd time, skip ahead to **G** (bar 55)

Gdim(no3) E/F A5 Bb5

13 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

GTR. 3

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

*S S

*S = slap w/thumb

TRANSCRIPTIONS

N.C.

N.C. (Am)

17 (elec. perc. and keyboard)

C 2nd Theme (0:35)

(Am)

(C)

Gtr. 3

19 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. -- P.M. P.M. -- P.M. P.M.

GTR. 3

*Chord symbols in parentheses implied by keyboards and bass gtr.

Bass

S S S *P S S S P S S S S S S

*P = pop string w/index finger.

(Am)

(F)

(G5)

(F5)

23 P.M. P.M. P.M. slight P.H. let ring- P.M. P.M. P.M. -- P.M. --

GTR. 3

S S S S P S P S S S P S S P S S S P S

*Pop D and G strings with index and middle fingers respectively.

D (0:46)

Asus2

C

Gtr. 3

27 N.H. 12

GTR. 3

pitch: E

Gtr. 1 (w/delay effect*)

P.M.

GTR. 1

*300 ms delay time (dotted 16th-note delay) with a 50/50 dry to wet effect mix ratio.

Bass

S S P P S

D7sus4/G	F	Am	Em7add13	N.C.	Fsus2
----------	---	----	----------	------	-------

31

GTR. 3

P.M. - - - P.M. - - - let ring - - - slight P.H.

(delay effect off)

GTR. 1

S S S S S S P S P

Gtrs. 1 and 2

E Main Theme (0:57, 2:06)

Gtr. 3
 35
 Dsus2
 N.C. (A5)
 P.M.
 let ring - - -
 (12) 12 15 12 14 14 12 10 12 10 12 14 (14) 10 14 14 12 10 12 (12) 10 10 0
 Gtrs. 1 and 2
 P.M. - - - P.M.
 (w/sub-octave doubling effect)
 (10) 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 0 0 7 8 0 5 (7) 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 0
 Bass
 (1) 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 1 0 5 (5) 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 0
 Substitute Bass Fill 2 second time (see below bar 133)

C5

G/D Fsus2

GTR. 4 *Gtr. 4 plays Fill 1 second time (see below bar 140)*
(end sub-octave effect)

39

GTR. 3

Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass Fig. 1

P.M.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

43

GTR. 3

P.M.

P.M.

GTR. 1

P.M.

P.M.

GTR. 2

end Rhy. Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1

F (1:14, 2:22)

47

GTR. 3

(14) 14 14 14 12-14 12 (12) 12-14 12 18 (18) 18 18 18 15-17 13

(11) 11 11 11 12-14 (14) 12 15 (15) 15 15 15 12-14 10

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

(4) 4 4 4 4 4 (4) 4 5 0 7 5 (5) 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

(0) 0 0 0 0 0 (0) 0 4 5 0 3 0 (3) 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

(0) 0 0 0 0 0 (0) 4 5 0 7 3 0 3 (3) 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

2nd time, skip ahead to **I** (bar 71)

Go back to bar 3

N.C. (A5)

Gtr. 3

53

GTR. 3

G 1st Break (1:44)

N.C. (A5)

Gtr. 3 (w/prod. effects)

(G5)

55

GTR. 3

P.M. -----

(D5)

58

GTR. 3

P.M. -----

let ring - - -

(F5)

61

GTR. 3

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

N.C.

(end prod. effects)

H (1:55)

N.C. (A5)

Gtr. 3

(C5)

63

GTR. 3

Bass

S

S S P S P S

(F5)

66

GTR. 3

slight P.H.

let ring - - -

S S P S P S S S P S S S P

Go back to **E** (bar 35)

I 2nd Break (2:31)

J (2:42)

82 P.M. P.M. N.C. (A5) P.M. N.H. P.M. N.H. P.M. P.M. let ring -

GTR.1

6 6 6 6 6 6 0 13 0 0 0 0 0 10 0 0 0 0 9 0 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 0 3 4 0 7 6 5 4 8 0 0 6 0

pitch: C# A

K (2:53)

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(on repeat, skip ahead to bar 95) | 1.

GTR. 3

90 P.M. ----- * P.M. ----- * ----- P.M. -- N.H. P.M. -- N.H. P.M. ----- P.M. P.M. -----

N.C. (A5)

6 6 6 6 6 6 0-13 0-16(13) 0-10 9 5 3 4 0 6 0 0 0 0 4

*Substitute hammer-on with note(s) in parentheses on repeat. pitch: C# A

V V V S P * S ** S ** P S S

13 13 13 13 13 13 0-13 12-12 12-12 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 4 0 6 0 0 0 0 4

*Substitute hammer-on with note(s) in parentheses on repeat. **Perform upstroke w/index finger.

(go back to bar 87) |

GTR. 3

93 P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----

(Bb5) A5 N.C. (G#5)

0 0 14 11 0 8 (8) 4

0 0 12 9 0 6 (6) 0 0 2

0 0 0 16 0 1 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 0 0 2

| 2.

GTR. 3

95 P.M. ----- P.M. let ring -- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----

(Bb5)

7 6 14 11 8 (8) 11

3 4 0 5 4 0 6 0 0 12 0 9 0 1 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 9 10 0

3 4 0 10 9 0 6 5 0 0 0 16 0 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 9 10 0

P S S

L Main Theme (Breakdown) (3:15)

Fsus2

Dsus2

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

98 -----

10 (12) 12 15 12 14 14 12 10 12 10 X 12 14

Gtr. 1 (w/prod. eq effect)

10 10 10 10 10 10 (10) 10 X X X 9 10 7 8 7 5

TRANSCRIPTIONS

N.C. (A5)
(w/sub-octave
doubling effect)

100 Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

(end prod. effect)

Csus2

G/D Fsus2

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 39)

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 39)

GTR. 4 Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see below bar 140)
(end sub-octave effect)

Dsus2

A

106

GTR. 3

P.M.

P.M.

M (3:31)

Csus2

110

Gtr. 3

(w/sub-octave doubling effect)

GTR. 3

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

P.M.

P.M.

P.M.

P.M.

N (3:42)

Bass plays first three bars of Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 39)

Bass

A

TRANSCRIPTIONS

O (3:53)

GTR. 3 126 *Gtr. 3* *Csus2*

GTR. 1 *Gtrs. 1 and 2* *P.M.*

GTR. 2

Bass

GTR. 3 129 *D5* *Bbsus2* (let ring into next two bars)

GTR. 1 *P.M.*

GTR. 2

Bass

P **Outro** (4:01)

N.C. (A5) *A5* *Bbmaj7(no3)*

Gtrs. 1 and 2 *P.M.* *N.H.* *P.M.* *N.H.* *P.M.* *P.M.* *P.M.* *P.M.*

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

Bass Fill 1 (1:36)

N.C. (G5)

TAB

Bass Fill 2 (2:10)

Dsus2

N.C. (A5)

TAB

1. N.C. (A5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

135 P.M. ----- * P.M. ----- * ----- P.M. --, N.H. P.M. --, N.H. P.M. -----, P.M. P.M. -----,

GTR.1

GTR.2

6 6 6 6 6 6 0 13 0 16 (13) 0 10 9 5 3 4 0 6 0 0 0 0 4

*Substitute hammer-on with note(s) in parentheses on repeat.

Bass

13 13 13 13 13 13 0 13 12 12 12 12 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 4 0 6 0 0 0 0 4

*Substitute hammer-on with note(s) in parentheses on repeat.

pitch: C# A

(go back to bar 132)

(Bb5) A5 N.C. (Gb5)

138 P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----, P.M. -----,

GTR.1

GTR.2

14 11 8 (8) 4 0 0 2

0 0 12 9 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 0 0 2

0 0 16 0 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 0 0 2

2.

(Bb5) (A5)

140 P.M. ----- P.M. let ring --, P.M. -----, P.M. -----, P.M. -----,

GTR.1

GTR.2

7 6 14 11 8 (8) 11 12 3 4 0 5 4 0 6 0 0 0 12 0 9 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 9 10 12

3 4 0 10 9 0 6 5 0 0 19 0 16 0 1 1 1 1 6 (6) 4 3 7

S P S P

Fill 1 (2:16)

Csus2 G/D F#sus2 Dsus2

GTR.4 Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

TAB 4/4 - z 7 9 (9) 9 10 9 9 12 10 12 10 9 -

Rhy. Fill 1 (3:49)

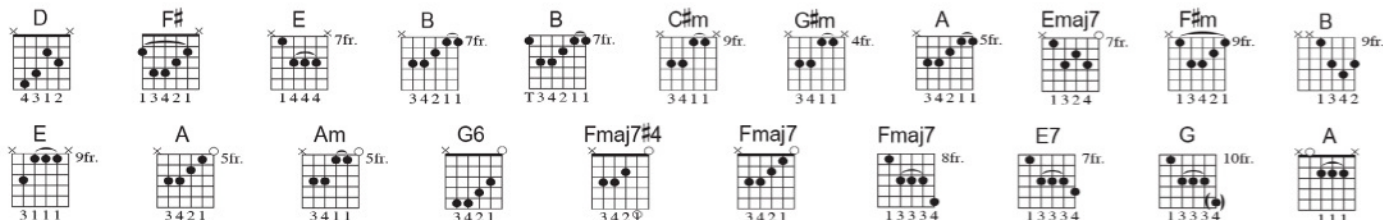
GTR.1 F#sus2 Dsus2

GTR.2 Gtrs. 1 and 2 P.M. P.M.

TAB 4/4 10 10 0 5 (5) 10 8 0 7 5

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

"Under the Bridge"

AS HEARD ON **BLOOD SUGAR SEX MAGIK**WORDS AND MUSIC BY **ANTHONY KIEDIS, FLEA, JOHN FRUSCIANTE** AND **CHAD SMITH**TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF CATANIA, COLGAN BRYAN** AND **DALE TURNER****A** Intro (0:00)

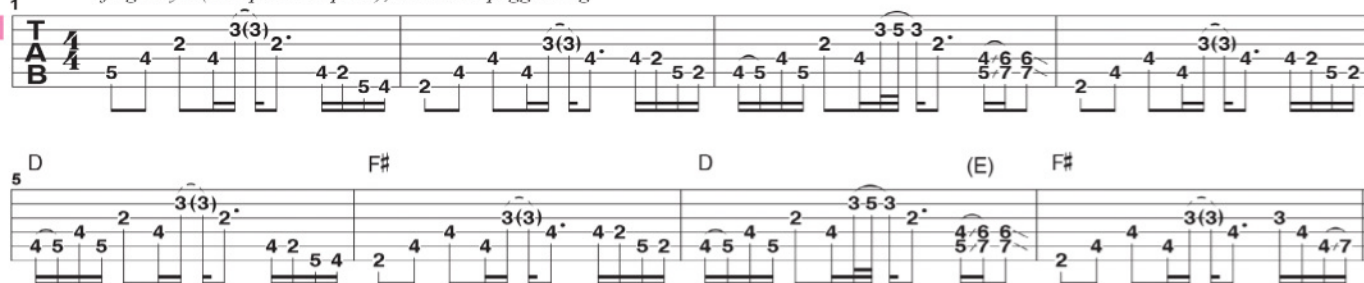
Moderately Slow ♩ = 90

D F# D (E) F#

GTR.2 Gtr. 2 plays Fill 1 (see below)

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

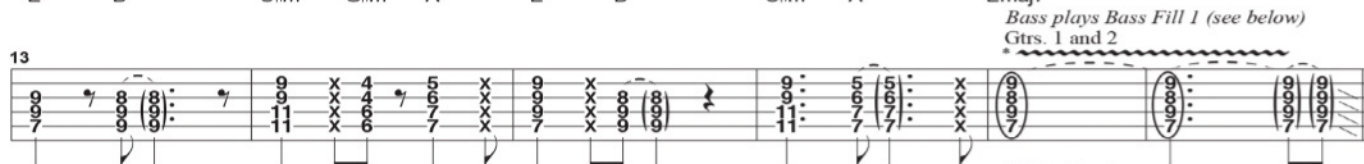
fingerstyle (tuck pick into palm); let each arpeggio ring

GTR.1**B** 1st Verse (0:28)

Sometimes I feel like I don't have a partner Sometimes I feel like my only friend is the



city I live in the City of Angels Lonely as I am together we cry



Emaj7

Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see below)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

*slight vib. w/bar

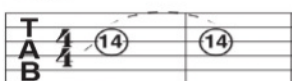
Fill 1 (0:00)

GTR.2 (D) (F#)
Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light dist.) (play 4 times)



Fill 2 (3:57)

GTR.2 (A) (Am)
Gtr. 2



Bass Fill 1 (0:53)

Bass



C 2nd Verse (0:57)

drive on her streets 'cause she's my companion I walk through her hills 'cause she knows who I am She
 sees my good deeds and she kisses me windy

E B C#m G#m A E B C#m A

GTR. 1

19

I never worry Now that is a lie
 E B C#m A

Emaj7

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR. 1

23

*slight vib. w/bar

D Pre-chorus (1:26, 2:29)

I don't ever want to feel like I did that day Take me to the place I love
 I don't ever want to feel like I did that day But take me to the place I love

F#m E B F#m E B F#m

2nd time on 2nd Pre-chorus,
 skip ahead to **G** Interlude (bar 45)

GTR. 1

27

Substitute Bass Fill 1 on 2nd Pre-chorus (see below)

Bass

*Don't play muted strums 1st time.

Yeah

Yeah yeah

It's

GTR. 1

31

Bass Fill 1 (2:29)

F#m E B F#m E B F#m

Bass

TRANSCRIPTIONS

E 3rd Verse (2:00)

hard to believe that there's nobody out there It's hard to believe that I'm all alone At
E B C#m G#m A E B C#m A

GTR.1

35

Go back to **D**
Pre-chorus (bar 27)

least I have her love The city she loves me Lonely as I am together we cry
E B C#m G#m A E B C#m A

Emaj7

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR.1

39

G Interlude (2:51)

Yeah Yeah yeah Oh no no no yeah yeah Love me I say
A Am G6 Fmaj7#4 Fmaj7 A Am G6 Fmaj7#4 Fmaj7 A Am

Gtr. 1 (w/chorus)

GTR.1

45

Bass

yeah yeah

One time

G6 Fmaj7#4 Fmaj7 Fmaj7

E7

*G(maj7)

GTR.1

50

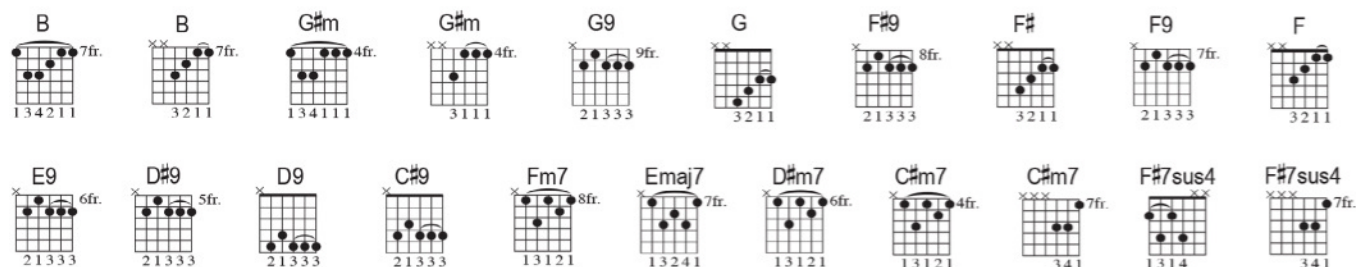
*high G note is fretted
but barely played.

STEVIE WONDER

"Sir Duke"

AS HEARD ON **SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **STEVIE WONDER** • TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 108

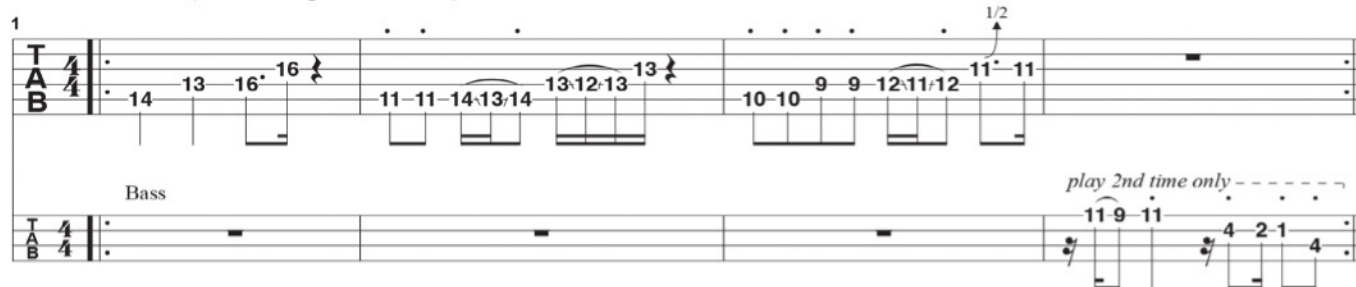
N.C. (B)

(G#m)

(G)

(F#)

Horns (arr. for elec. gtr. w/clean tone)



B Verses (0:19, 1:22)

1. Music is a world within itself

2. Music knows it is and always will be one of the things that life just won't quit

B

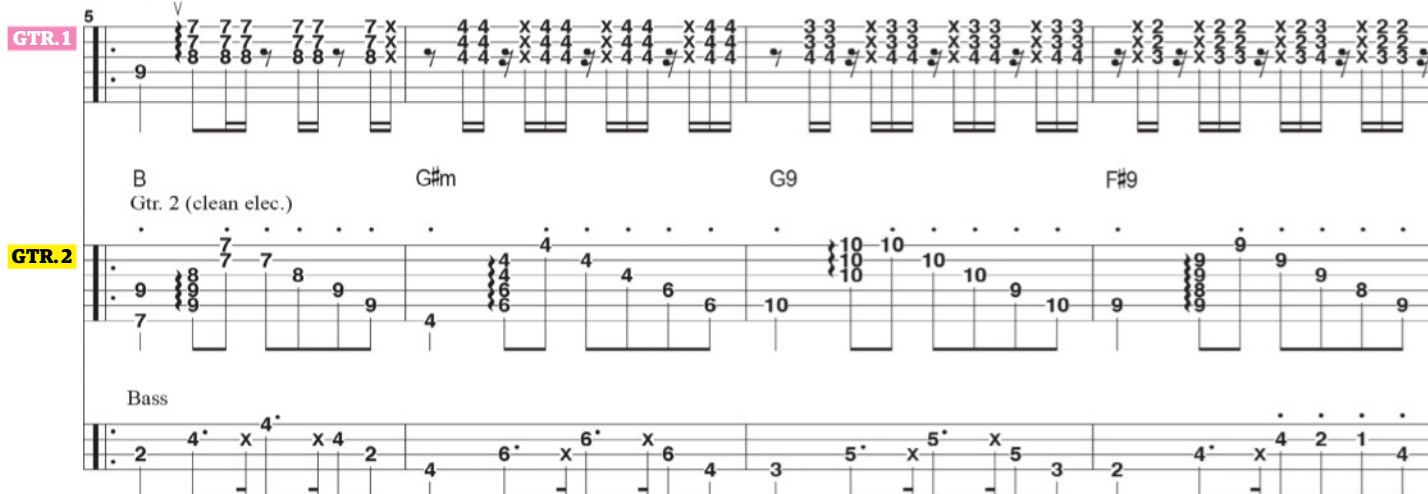
G#m

G

F#

Gtr. 1 (clean elec.)

light P.M.-



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With an equal opportunity for all to sing dance and clap their hands But just be-
But here are some of music's pioneers that time will not allow us to forget Now well there's

GTR. 1

B light P.M. G#m G F# F

GTR. 2

B G#m G9 F#9 F9

Bass

C Pre-chorus (0:37, 1:39)

cause a record has a groove don't make it in the groove But you can tell right away at letter A when the people start to move
Basie Miller Satchmo and the king of all Sir Duke And with a voice like Ella's ringin' out there's no way the band can lose

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (composite arrangement)

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

E9 D#9 D9 C#9 D9 D#9 E9 E9 D#9 D9 C#9 D9 D#9 E9 F9 F#9

D Chorus (0:46, 1:49)

They can feel it all over over people
You can feel it all over over people

B Gtr. 1 Emaj7 D#m7 C#m7 F#7sus4

Rhy. Fig. 1

light P.M.

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

TRANSCRIPTIONS

They can feel it all over
You can feel it all over

1.
They can feel it all over people Go!
You can feel it all

B Fm7 Emaj7 D#m7 C#m7 F#7sus4
light P.M.

GTR.1

GTR.2

E Interlude (1:04, 2:24, 3:35)

N.C.(B)

GTR.1

GTR.2

2nd time, skip ahead to **G**
Out-chorus (bar 42)
3rd time, end of song

(F#)

GTR.1

GTR.2

F Double Chorus (2:06)

2.

over people You can feel it all over You can feel it all over people

C#m7 F#7sus4 B Fm7 Emaj7 D#m7 C#m7 F#7sus4

light P.M. -

GTR.1

GTR.2

Go back to **E** Interlude (bar 25)

You can feel it all over You can feel it all over Yeah go! Go!

B Fm7 Emaj7 D#m7 C#m7 F#7sus4

light P.M. -

GTR.1

GTR.2

G Out-chorus (2:42)

6th time, go back to **E** Interlude (bar 25) and end song

(1, 2, 3.) You can feel it all over You can feel it all over people
 (4.) You can feel it all over I can feel it all over now people
 (5.) Can't you feel it all over Come on let's feel it all over people
 (6.) You can feel it all over Everybody all over people Go!

B Fm7 Emaj7 D#m7 C#m7 F#7sus4

GTR.1

GTR.2 Grs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Figs. 1 and 1a six times simile (see bar 17)

Bass

(play 6 times simile)

GTR.2

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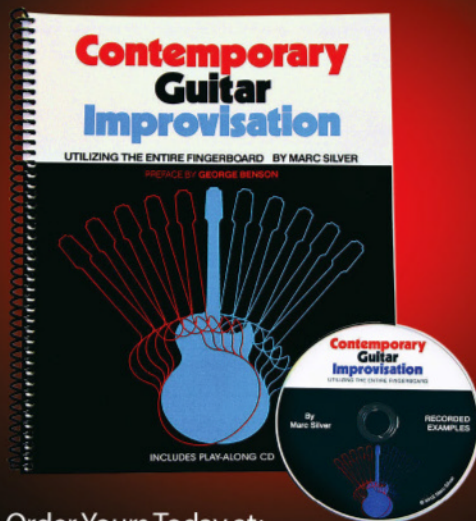
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POWER TOOLS

Fender Jazzmaster

1958–1980/1985–present

CATEGORY SOLIDBODY ELECTRIC GUITAR

BY CHRIS GILL

LEO FENDER WAS quite pleased with the success of Fender's Telecaster and Stratocaster electric guitars during the Fifties. However, he wasn't thrilled that his inventions were embraced more fervently by rock 'n' roll and blues players than they were by his favored country and western musicians. Furthermore, he was somewhat disgusted that he played an indirect role in the growing popularity of the newfangled radical and rambunctious sounds that were taking over radio airwaves.

In an attempt to appeal to a more "respectable" group of musicians, Leo and his designers developed a brand-new flagship model aimed at jazz guitarists. He even named it the "Jazzmaster" so everyone would know exactly who it was designed for. Unfortunately, jazz players felt somewhat lukewarm about the Jazzmaster upon its introduction in 1958, with Joe Pass being one of the few jazz guitarists of note who actually adopted the model during its early run. Instead, the Jazzmaster became a hit with the instrumental surf rock phenomenon that started to emerge around the same time.

At its original retail price of \$329.50, the Jazzmaster cost \$55 more than a Stratocaster with a "synchronized tremolo" bridge. Gibson's hollowbody archtop ES-175 with two pickups — a model highly favored by jazz players — was four dollars cheaper. The ES-335 (\$279.50), Les Paul Standard (\$265) and the Gretsch Double Anniversary (\$310) also cost less. Despite its off-putting expensive retail price, the Jazzmaster became successful enough to remain in production until 1980, when it was officially discontinued, although the last Jazzmaster actually shipped in 1982. In Japan where surf music never died, the Jazzmaster came back to life in 1985, when Fujigen Gakki made reissues for Fender Japan. USA-based production of the Jazzmaster resumed in 1999, and the model has remained a fixture of the Fender lineup ever since.

The Jazzmaster delivers a very distinct, twangy tone that may have missed the mark for traditional jazz but found favor among guitarists seeking a brash sound that stands out from the norm. Its soapbar-style pickups may look similar to Gibson P90s, but the construction is notably different. The P90 has a large bar magnet under the coil and adjustable pole pieces. The Jazzmaster pickup has magnetized non-adjustable pole pieces instead of a bar magnet. Also, the Jazzmaster coil is wide and flat, while the P90 coil is narrow and tall. Both pickups typically have similar resistance around 7- to 8k ohms, but the Jazzmaster has notably lower output and much brighter tone with nasal

[right] Elvis Costello with his Fender Jazzmaster (and a couple of the Attractions) in the late Seventies

[below] A Fender Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster photographed in 2015



mids, jangly upper midrange and spiky treble.

Another notable quirk of the Jazzmaster design is its springy-feeling floating tremolo with an ingenious mechanism that locks the strings for non-vibrato playing or maintaining tuning when a string breaks. The "dual" electronic circuit is unorthodox as well, featuring separate "lead" and "rhythm" settings selected via a slide switch on the upper bout. The lead circuit is somewhat standard, providing master volume and master tone controls and a three-way pickup selector toggle switch, although the pots are 1meg ohms rather than Fender's typical 250k ohm pots, which contributes to the Jazzmaster's bright, twangy character. The rhythm circuit engages only the neck pickup and a pair of thumb-roller master volume and master tone controls with 500k ohm pots. This setting is somewhat darker, more subdued and arguably "jazzier."

With its super-cool space-age angular offset body design, the Jazzmaster has always appealed to players who prefer to go against the grain. The Ventures were prominent users amongst numerous Jazzmaster-wielding surf rock bands during the early Sixties. During the Seventies, the Jazzmaster re-emerged on the punk and new wave scene in the hands of players like Elvis Costello, Tom Verlaine (Television), Robert Smith (the Cure) and Ric Ocasek (the Cars). From the Eighties and beyond, the Jazzmaster has appealed to grunge, alternative, shoegaze and other rebellious genres via iconoclastic players and bands like J Mascis, Kevin Shields, Nels Cline, Troy Van Leeuwen, Thom Yorke, Sonic Youth, Yo La Tengo and Arctic Monkeys. Slipknot's Jim Root has given the Jazzmaster metal credibility, although his are so heavily modified that they're really Jazzmasters in body shape only. Good ol' Leo would probably be pleased to know that country artist Chris Stapleton also plays a Jazzmaster, although he'd tell him to get a haircut and shave his beard. **GW**

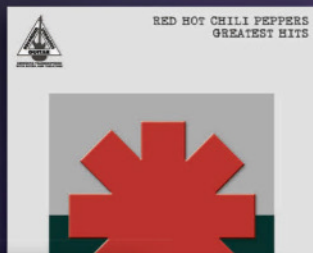
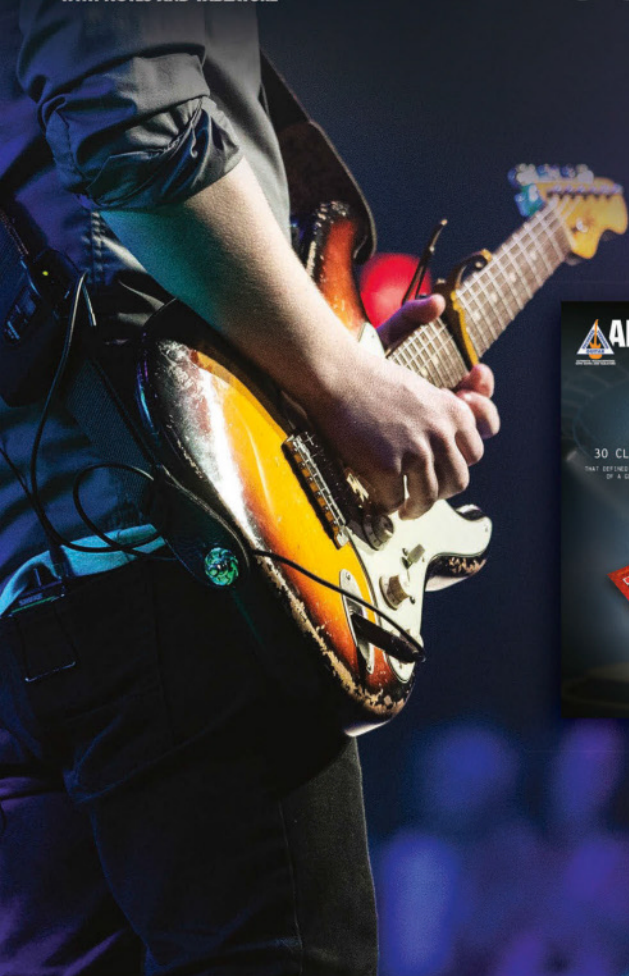


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