

OZZY OSBOURNE 1948–2025

GUITAR



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Zakk Wylde

PLUS

The return of Spinal Tap!

Jake E. Lee

Laurence Juber

The new PRS SE NF 53 reviewed!

Mick Ralphs
(1944–2025)

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In an interview that took place before Ozzy Osbourne's death, the Back to the Beginning standout talks Charvel guitars, next steps and the joy of achieving closure with his former boss back on July 5. Speaking of whom...

46 RIP, Ozzy Osbourne

GW looks back on the life of the life and times of Ozzy, a non-guitarist so intertwined with guitar greatness that he actually appeared on *Guitar World's* cover before Tony Iommi did, and that's no lie.

>>>> Joel McIver, who interviewed Ozzy at different stages of his bizarre career, looks back on the unique life and (very) high times of John "Ozzy" Osbourne

>>>> Chris Gill tells the tale of every Ozzy guitarist, including (but not limited to) Randy Rhoads, Bernie Tormé, Jake E. Lee, Zakk Wylde and Joe Holmes

>>>> Night Ranger blazer Brad Gillis recounts the tale of his conscription into Ozzy's universe

>>>> We know about the star guitarists who played with Ozzy's band — but what about the guys (and gals) who didn't quite make the grade?

>>>> In 1990, Brad Tolinski sat down with Ozzy, who was asked to comment on all the major guitarists he'd worked with up to that point

>>>> Andrew Daly checks in with Zakk Wylde, a guitarist who — pretty much more than anyone (including Iommi and Rhoads) — is forever tied to Ozzy

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We look back on the life and times of the late Mick Ralphs (Bad Company, Mott the Hoople), who left us in late June. We also chat with the Texas Headhunters — namely Jesse Dayton, Johnny Moeller and Ian Moore — plus Paradise Lost guitarist Gregor Mackintosh, Baby Said's Veronica Pal, Disturbed's Dan Donegan, Bella Rayne, University man Zak Bowker, the guys from Quadrium and Gilby Clarke, who revisits a classic GW cover.

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When Bill Finnegan first offered the Klon Centaur to the general public in the mid-Nineties, the price was \$239. The Centaur soon appeared in the rigs of numerous high-profile players and noted tone connoisseurs, inspiring extreme gear lust among players who wanted to sound like them.

COVER PHOTO: MARTYN GOODACRE/GETTY IMAGES

JEN ROSENSTEIN/GUITAR WORLD

Woodshed

VOL. 46 | NO. 11 | NOVEMBER 2025

Farewell to Ozzy Osbourne, the John Mayall of heavy metal

▶ I DON'T HAVE 45 years' worth of *Guitar World* covers sitting right in front of me at this very moment, but — outside of a 1983 Jaco Pastorius cover — I really can't think of any other non-guitar-playing artist who has appeared on *GW*'s cover alone — without a guitarist in sight — except for Ozzy Osbourne. And, as I pointed out just a few issues ago, Ozzy appeared on our cover even before his guitar-playing Black Sabbath bandmate Tony Iommi did. Why is this so, you ask? Because Ozzy loved the guitar and respected guitarists. He realized the importance and value of the guitarist in a band. He plucked guitarists from obscurity and gave us our stars, from Randy Rhoads to Zakk Wylde. And as we'll see, he didn't just hire any amazing guitarist; he or she had to be just right — another example of how important guitar players were to him. I've always said that Ozzy's solo band was basically the *Guitar World*



era's version of the Yardbirds, that crazy proving ground where Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page got their starts — or perhaps John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers (Clapton, Peter Green and Mick Taylor), but — pardon the *cliché* — Ozzy's band was basically those bands on steroids. Of course, along with all these great Ozzy guitarists come countless guitar stories, and that's what *Guitar World* has always been about. You'll find several of those guitar stories in this issue — plus a side order of Spinal Tap (one of my favorite, um, "things" of all time) and Laurence Juber, my favorite Wings guitarist (check out "Spin It On"). 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!



Sting

BY DENNIS HOPKINS



Ozzy Osbourne

BY OLIVIA HUNG

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



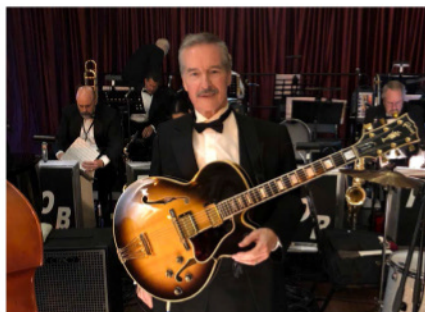
Steve Schnepf

HOMETOWN: Niagara Falls, NY

GUITARS: Fender Player Stratocaster, Fender American Standard Telecaster, Fender Player II Telecaster, Gretsch G5220 Electromatic Jet (all left-handed)

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: The Marketts "Out of Limits," the Shadows "Apache," the Ventures "Diamond Head"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Lefty Fender Jaguar or Mustang



Dave Lynch

AGE: 67

HOMETOWN: Tampa, FL

GUITARS: Aria Pro II PE 180,

Greco J-115 Johnny Smith

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: The Beatles

"Yesterday," plus "Nuages," "All of You," "All the Things You Are," "These Foolish Things"

GEAR I WANT MOST: Henricksen amp



David Miller

AGE: 68

HOMETOWN: Apex, NC

GUITARS: Gibson SG Standard 61, Fender FMT Tele and 50th anniversary HSS American Deluxe Strat, Silvertone SSLA-30, IYV 300D

SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Pink Floyd "Wish You Were Here," John Lennon "Imagine," the Band "Up on Cripple Creek," Lynyrd Skynyrd "Gimme Three Steps"

ARE YOU A DEFENDER OF THE FAITH?

Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com. And pray!

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"When Paradise Lost became a thing in '88, we realized we'd fallen into our roles in the band," Gregor Mackintosh says

Santa, Laughing, Spreads His Wings

Paradise Lost guitarist Gregor Mackintosh on the tricky task of combining miserabilist metal with Yuletide cheer

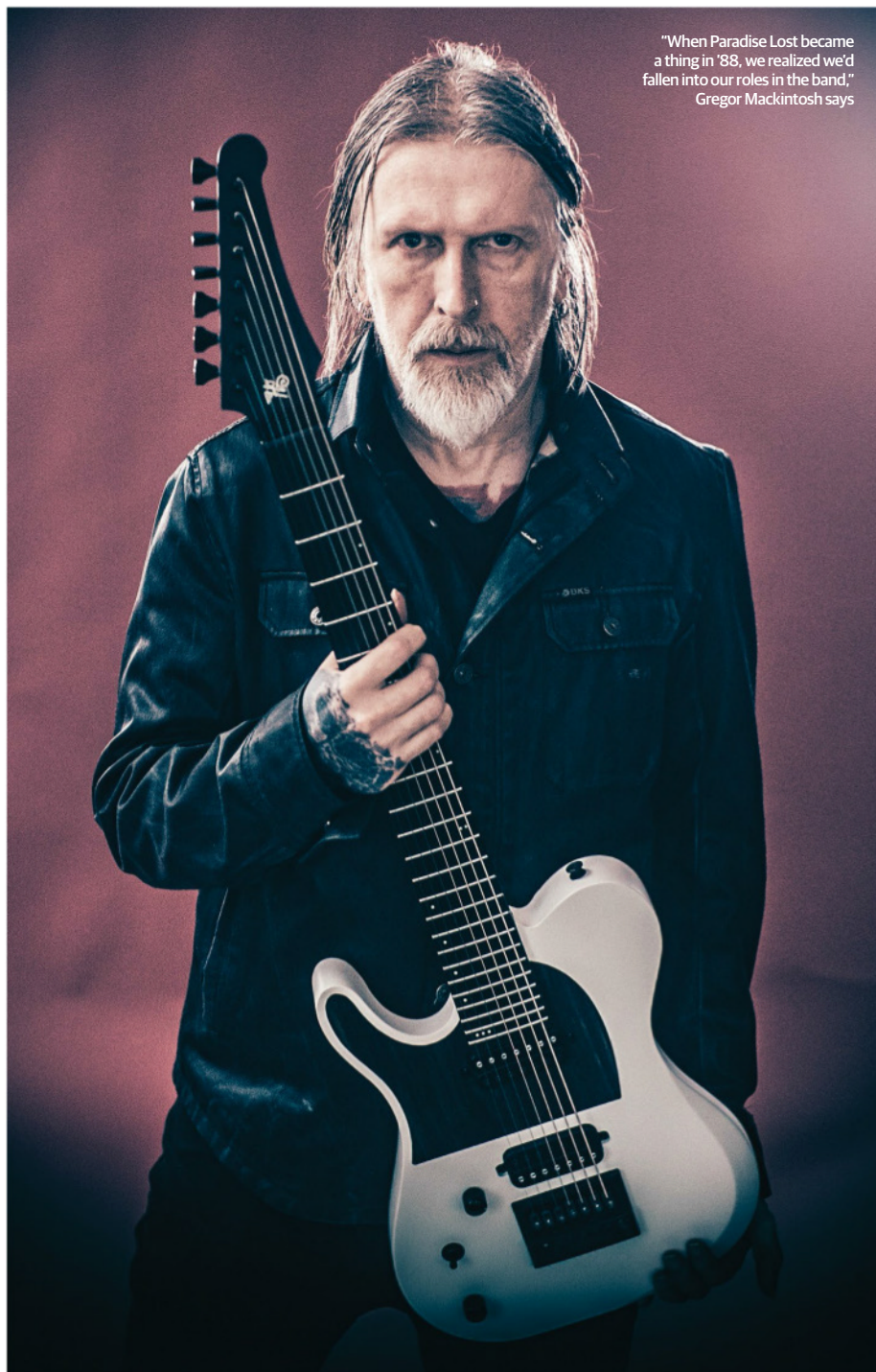
BY GREGORY ADAMS

IF PARADISE LOST guitarist Gregor Mackintosh gets his wish, music fans might be adding the gloom-driven sounds of his band's *Ascension* LP to their Christmas playlists this year, perhaps alongside Yuletide staples like Michael Bublé and Bing Crosby. The throughline might not be readily apparent between those crooners and the U.K. metal veterans; few holly-jolly moments exist across the latter's new album, where vocalist Nick Holmes uses death-growls and a gothic baritone to explore themes of war and the interminable struggle of life.

Nevertheless, Mackintosh suggests the melancholic melody lines he brings to *Ascension* pieces like "Salvation" and "Serpent on the Cross" chime through the speakers like a peal of church bells on a crisp December morning, which he argues makes the quintet's 17th full-length "a Christmassy, winter-type thing."

"It all started with the song 'Salvation,' which is a full-on Christmas song to me — but, you know, like an alternative, miserable Christmas," he says through a laugh, noting how he was inspired to up the seasonal ante, production-wise, by juxtaposing jingling percussion against his sorrowful riffage. ▶

VILLE JUURIKKALA, JACK LUE



"When I did that song I thought, 'I wonder if I can get away with putting sleigh bells on a doom-metal song?' I put them all through the chorus in the demos and no one batted an eyelid. So, I thought, 'Right... I'm going to use it on two or three more songs!'"

Despite *Ascension's* inherently chilly aesthetic, Mackintosh is explaining all this to *Guitar World* on an early summer afternoon from his home in Yorkshire, England, during a brief layover from Paradise Lost's European run with King Diamond. He's hoping to get in a bit of gardening before hopping back on a plane to rejoin the tour and step into his act's long-awaited next era.

As it stands, *Ascension* is the group's first set of original songs since 2020's *Obsidian*, marking the longest gap between Paradise Lost albums in the act's nearly 40-year career. *Obsidian* dropped during the height of Covid, which obviously brought on various logistical challenges when it came to promoting the release. By the time the act began full-scale touring again in 2022, they were broaching the 30th anniversary of their gothic epic, *Icon*, so they decided to celebrate that by re-recording the collection in full, partly to regain the rights to their music (per Mackintosh, the original album is owned by Sony).

During the *Icon 30* sessions, Paradise Lost dug through their old gear haul to track down the Marshall JCM800 head they'd used all over their earliest LPs, including *Icon*. Mackintosh and co-guitarist Aaron Aedy loved its vintage crunch so much that it ultimately became the principal rhythm tone across *Ascension*, though Aedy's Orange Rockerverb MKIII 50 is in the mix as well.

When it came to guitars, both Paradise Lost players went modern with their setup. Mackintosh has been sponsored by Hapas for a few years, so he hoisted a few different custom shop models loaded up with signature pickups he'd developed with the Berlin-based company. Those pickups were likewise wired into one of Aedy's ESPs.

Whether exploring terse staccato tension or an aching, valley-wide vibrato, Mackintosh dialed into *Ascension's* pervasive lead tone using EQ pedals at both ends of his chain, and a pair of Ibanez Weeping Demons fine-tuned and filtered to varying degrees.

"When I was recording, my initial idea was to do very different lead sounds on each song. I tried all that out — various things, like heavy choruses — but it just wasn't hitting the sweet spots for me. It's all about the sweet spot for me, you know — when you hit a certain note and it sings," he says, though the guitarist



Mackintosh in action with his Hapas offset V seven-string

reiterates that his wahs were technically angled differently between takes. "I'm not doing full-on wah-wah stuff, but I'm shifting it minutely."

As for the general flow of *Ascension*, Paradise Lost's latest album kicks into a wide breadth of heaviness — from that gloomy Sunday solemnity toward classically galloping metal, gray-skies folk and doom-crunched romanticism. During the writing phase, the band felt that the ominously anthemic wallop of lead single "Silence Like the Grave" was militaristic enough to "sound like a war." While *Ascension* covers a lot of ground, variety's been a part of Paradise Lost's DNA ever since Mackintosh and Aedy started riffing together in the Eighties.

"When we came together, we had a few jams and he was playing this choppy, Metallica-type stuff, which wasn't really my thing at the time. I was doing all this goth-y

guitar work over the top of it," Mackintosh says of the dynamic. "It blended together as we went along, and when Paradise Lost became a thing in '88, we realized we'd fallen into our roles in the band. And it's worked constantly like that. It's always felt comfortable."

Notably, the time between *Obsidian* and *Ascension* also found Mackintosh and vocalist Holmes briefly side-journeying themselves through a more profoundly synth-driven dark-pop full-length as Host (usually stylized as HOST) — a sound reflecting Paradise Lost's 1999 album of the same name. Though that was fun and fulfilling, Mackintosh is glad to be firmly back in the zone with longtime metal partner Aedy on *Ascension*.

"When I was doing the Host stuff, I was really buried in it and loving that I was doing it, because I hadn't done anything like that for a long time. But then when we came back to doing Paradise Lost, it made me feel rejuvenated [to play] more metallic guitar work, because we'd had a good year or two off from doing that kind of thing. It gave me extra vigor." **GW**

"I wondered if I could get away with putting sleigh bells on a doom-metal song. No one batted an eyelid"

COVER MODELS**Guitarist** Gilby Clarke**Guitar** 1969 Fender Telecaster**GW Cover Date** November 1992**This interview** June 2025**Photographer** Robert John

BY ANDREW DALY

Q How'd you get this guitar?

I worked at Hogan's House of Music in Hawthorne, California, when I was younger. I bought it there. I paid \$300 for it in 1980.

Q Did you modify it? And what sort of rig did you pair it with?

It was modified by Jim Foote at Music Works in Lawndale, California. I had it painted black, and they added binding along with a 1959 Gibson PAF pickup. Then I found the pickup in a drawer, but it wasn't working, so they gave it to me. I sent it to Seymour Duncan to rewind it to the original specs. And, of course, jumbo frets were *de rigueur* back then. I played it with a 50-watt Marshall JMP and a 4x12 cabinet.

Q Was this guitar part of your main Guns N' Roses touring arsenal?

I actually never played it live with Guns N' Roses, but I used it on a lot of recordings. I used Teles quite a bit back then; the middle pickup would be for verses and the bridge for choruses.

Q What notable recordings did you use this guitar on?

I used it on Guns N' Roses' *"The Spaghetti Incident?"* and the 1995 Slash's Snakepit record, *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*. I always tried to use the opposite of Slash. I would use a Tele, Gibson Les Paul or my [Silvertop Custom Deluxe] Zematis through a '62 Fender Deluxe. And I usually had to run a Marshall Bluesbreaker [overdrive] pedal to add a little more gain. I also used it in the music video

"It was my first cover. I knew Slash would use a great vintage Les Paul, so I had to up my game"



for the Kill for Thrills song "Brother's Eyes." You can find it on YouTube.

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

It was my first cover, and Slash had already been on a lot of covers. I knew he'd use a great vintage Les Paul, so I had to up my game. But I only owned four guitars when I got the Guns N' Roses gig, and, of course, I got more for the *Use Your Illusion* tour. But all of those guitars were on the road, so this was my only guitar

at home in L.A., where the shoot took place. I'm glad, though.

Q Do you still have this guitar?

Of course! But I only record with it. It sounds so good with the original PAF pickup. I haven't modified it since back then; it's exactly the same. It still feels like a vintage Tele, even with the humbucker in there. **GW** Editor's note: In the November 1992 issue of GW, this guitar is identified as a Fender Custom Shop Tele. "They got it wrong," Clarke says today.



"I don't have heroes, but I adore Queen," Veronica Pal says

Baby Said

Queen-revering British rockers unite indie crunch and a whole lotta classic-rock influences

BY AMIT SHARMA

HAVING LANDED KEY spots at international showcases like SXSW and The Great Escape, as well as invites to perform at festivals as renowned as Glastonbury and Reading/Leeds, British duo Baby Said have achieved a lot in the year-and-a-half since they formed. Led by 20-year-old singer/guitarist Veronica Pal and her 18-year-old sister Jess on bass, the Italian/Punjabi siblings started out playing covers in their AstroModa project before finding their own sonic footprint. This year's debut album, *BS*, shows them mixing elements of Royal Blood and English indie heavyweights Arctic Monkeys with Italian disco rockers Måneskin, who also inspired the name behind the new band.

"We learned a lot from those covers," Veronica says. "It's quite natural how you find things you like in other people's music. Arctic Monkeys, for example, use a lot of pentatonic patterns. When we started writing our own music, I was looking out for those patterns.

My teacher in Italy always told me to sing my solos first. That really helped with phrasing."

For the debut album sessions, the singer/guitarist relied on her G&L Comanche, an instrument she describes as "the most beautiful guitar I've ever held in my arms." Though a handful of parts were recorded through a combo, the majority of the tones came direct from her Line 6 Pod Go, which came with a ton of amp models and effects built in and ready to go. Ultimately, the digital option felt easier and more reliable.

"I used my G&L for everything," Veronica says. "It has three Z-coil pickups, which

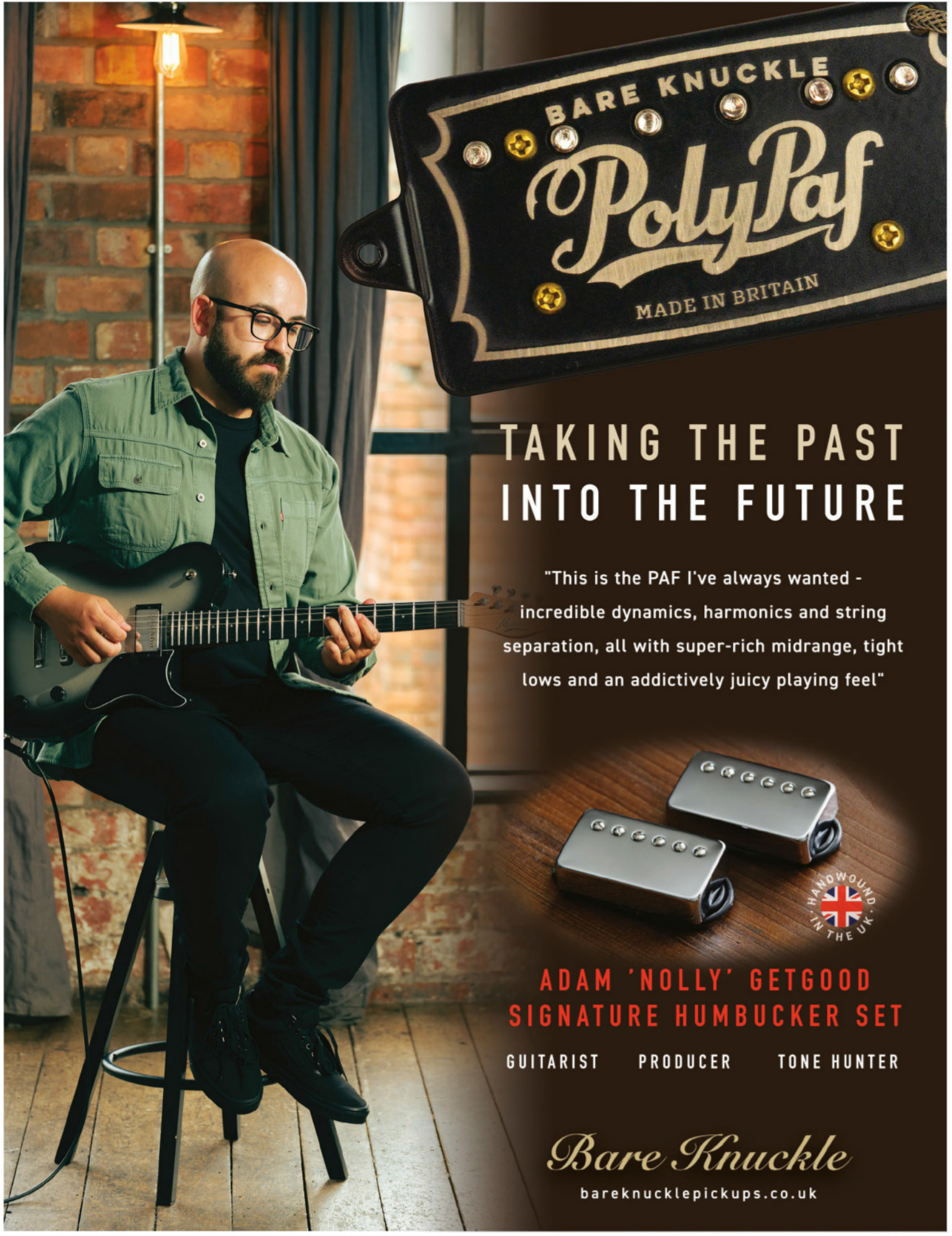
"My teacher always told me to sing my guitar solos first. That really helped with phrasing"

look weird but sound amazing. There's a switch that turns them all on, but I haven't found it yet. For the solos in 'Burn,' I wanted a specific reverb that I'd heard on 'Dakota' by Stereophonics. We recreated it using plug-ins. Since then, I've programmed those settings into my Pod Go so it'll sound just as good live."

When asked about her ultimate guitar hero, the singer/guitarist says she's more passionate about the songs that have inspired her than the guitarists who played on them. But, if push came to shove, there is one person worthy of such a crown.

"I don't have heroes, but I adore Queen, so I have to mention Brian May," she says. "My dream would be to work with him. I think you can hear bits of Brian in my solos; our manager even joked it's him playing on the album. I also admire Thomas Raggi from Måneskin. His simple ideas can sound complicated and beautiful at the same time. It's very strange. I'd love to be able to do that one day." **GW**

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Mick Ralphs on stage
with Bad Company
in the mid-Seventies

IN MEMORIAM

The Rock-Steady Straight Shooter

Remembering Bad Company's Mick Ralphs (1944–2025)

BY NICK BOWCOTT

▶ **ON JUNE 23**, the guitar world lost a true legend — Mick Ralphs of Bad Company and Mott the Hoople fame. He was 81. Besides being an amazing songwriter, Ralphs was a criminally underrated blues/rock guitarist who played with wonderful feeling, phrasing, melody, groove and tone. He was a master of restraint who could say more with a few perfectly placed notes than most shredders can say with a furious flurry of “Look at me!” sweep arpeggios. Ralphs knew when not to play; he’d use poignant pauses between phrases to let his guitar sing and his melodies breathe. Yes, sir — sometimes silence and the notes you choose not to play are just

as important as the ones you do play. As Ian Hunter — Ralphs’ old Mott the Hoople partner in crime — once said: “Mick always played for the song, not the spotlight. He was the soul of the riff.”

When you combine those playing sensibilities with Ralphs’ almost uncanny ability to pen seminal rock songs, the results are rare and magical. Ralphs crafted gems such as “Can’t Get Enough,” “Moving On,” “Simple Man” and “Good Lovin’ Gone Bad,” many of which were — and are — staples of classic-rock radio. As are “Feel Like Makin’ Love” and “Deal with the Preacher,” both of which he co-wrote with Bad Company’s Paul Rodgers.

Ralphs was born March 31, 1944, in Herefordshire, England. Like most guitarists of that era, his first guitar was a cheap one, a Rosetti Lucky 7, which coincidentally happened to be the same guitar Paul McCartney played when the then-unknown Beatles went to Hamburg in 1960. The song that first inspired a young Ralphs to pick up the instrument was “Green Onions” by Booker T. & the MG’s, which came out in 1962. It was the song’s groove and “nasty” guitar playing that planted the seed.

“Green Onions” hooked the teenage Ralphs on R&B, but his pool of influences quickly grew to include Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Freddie King, B.B. King, Albert King and Chuck Berry. Ralphs even credited Berry for helping him develop his own unique sense of “rolling rhythm” and groove.

Ralphs started playing in bands as a teen. When he left school, he worked as an electrical engineer before becoming a full-time musician in 1966. Just like the Beatles, he’d often go to Germany to play in clubs for weeks at a time. He got his first “big break”

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

when he joined Jamaican singer Jimmy Cliff — a popular artist who mixed ska, reggae and soul — in the late Sixties. Due to constant lineup changes, the band was often just Ralphs, a bassist and a drummer, a situation that caused Ralphs to develop the seamless combination of rhythm and lead lines that became his signature.

Ralphs' next big break was the one that established him as a guitar player to be reckoned with. It was with the oddly named band Mott the Hoople, of which he was a founding member. The group had an eclectic sound that somehow melded glam rock with the street-smart vibe of punk and hard rock. Add to that the clever, often tongue-in-cheek lyrics and gritty delivery of frontman Ian Hunter, and Mott the Hoople's unique sonic recipe was written. The band got signed to Island Records, but — while their high energy live performances deservedly earned them a loyal and fervent following — their first four albums were anything but commercially successful. Consequentially, in 1972, they decided to call it quits — news that upset their fans greatly.

As it just so happened, one fan in particular — David Bowie — offered the band a song in hopes it'd keep them together. That song was "All the Young Dudes." Mott the Hoople recorded it, and the rest is rock history. It was a hit in the U.K., reaching Number 3, but it also made waves in the U.S. The band's 1973 album, *Mott*, spawned two more U.K. hits, "Honolulu Boogie" and "All the Way from Memphis." Another U.K. hit single followed later that year in the form of "Roll Away the Stone," which was recorded before Ralphs decided to leave the band.

All four of the aforementioned Mott the Hoople hits showcased Ralphs' penchant for creating compelling, repeating lead lines that became integral "hooks" within a song. "All the Young Dudes," "Honolulu Boogie" and "Roll Away the Stone" open with an instantly memorable Ralphs melody line. In fact, Def Leppard's Joe Elliott had this to say about Mott's first hit: "Bowie gave them the song, but Mick wrote the intro — the lick of all licks." Perfectly stated.

Ralphs left Mott the Hoople because he felt creatively constrained. He'd met Free legend Paul Rodgers when Rodgers' band Peace opened for Mott. They quickly became friends and bonded musically. Ralphs had several finished songs, including "Can't Get Enough" and "Moving On," so the pair worked together on Ralphs' material, Rodgers' material and things they had written together. One of the first songs Rodgers presented was "Rock Steady," a track that ended up being covered by a pre-record-deal Van Halen. Apparently, the original idea was for them to work together as a side project and possibly record an album together. But Rodgers' Free



Ralphs with a Fender Esquire in 2013

A master of restraint who could say more with a few perfectly placed notes than most shredders

bandmate, Simon Kirke, turned up one day and asked if he could sit in... and thus, the side project evolved into a band — a "supergroup" with Boz Burrell (ex-King Crimson) filling in the empty bassist slot after more than a dozen others "didn't quite fit."

The quartet's name? Bad Company, of course. Bad Company approached Peter Grant, the legendary manager of Led Zeppelin, and after hearing them rehearse, they became the first band on Zeppelin's new label, Swan Song. They recorded and released their eponymously titled debut in album in 1974, and it quickly catapulted the band to multi-platinum, stadium-filling success. The outfit's next two releases, *Straight Shooter* (1975) and *Running with the Pack* (1976) enjoyed similar, chart-topping success and consolidated the band's superstar status. The group ended up disbanding in 1982 but reunited on many occasions with various lineups. With more than 40 million album sales worldwide and songs such as "Can't Get Enough," "Feel Like Makin' Love," "Good Lovin' Gone Bad" and "Shooting Star" remaining classic rock staples, Bad Company are still a highly revered band.

In addition to his time with Mott and Bad Company, Mick released a couple of blues/rock solo albums, toured with David Gilmour and co-wrote a song with former Beatle George Harrison in the late-Seventies. That song, "Flying Hour," was born of the

"Henley Music Mafia," a gathering of local Thames Valley musicians Harrison hung out with and enjoyed playing with. Still waters indeed run deep.

While to many Ralphs is synonymous with the classic-rock "Les Paul plugged straight into a 100-watt Marshall stack" staple, he also used a Fender Esquire; it's that guitar's open-C tuning that gives "Can't Get Enough" its distinctive chime. He also used a Les Paul Junior, his go-to during his Mott the Hoople days. The reason? Mott opened for Mountain in 1982 when they toured the U.S. for the first time. Ralphs wasn't only blown away by Mountain guitarist Leslie West's playing but also by the colossal sound he conjured from his Les Paul Junior. So he bought one at a pawn shop.

On October 29, 2016, Mick and Bad Company concluded a successful U.K. tour with a show at London's O2 Arena. Sadly, just a few days later, Ralphs suffered a stroke and was forced to retire from touring. He passed away this past June 23 due to complications from that unfortunate, debilitating event.

A guitar-playing friend of mine — also a huge Mick Ralphs fan — once told me that the most valuable thing he ever read was an old magazine interview where his hero said something along the lines of, "Keep it simple — let it sing." And coming from a man who wrote the 1976 Bad Company song "Simple Man" and had an amazing ability to create lead lines that became hooks, that makes a lot of sense. Ralphs truly did let his guitar sing. He also kept it simple — simply, timelessly brilliant.

Thanks for all the great songs, riffs, licks and memorable single-note melodies, Mick Ralphs. Rest in peace and rock steady! 

[from left] Johnny Moeller, Ian Moore and Jesse Dayton



Gimme a Three for Texas

After coming up on the same scene, Texas-bred lonestars Jesse Dayton, Johnny Moeller and Ian Moore put their heads together as the Texas Headhunters

BY JIM BEAUBEZ

▶ THERE'S A MOMENT that happens between seasoned players when the song stops being a structure and starts being a language. For Austin-bred guitarists Jesse Dayton, Ian Moore and Johnny Moeller, that moment came not at a rehearsed gig but inside a recording studio — Willie Nelson's Pedernales Studio, in fact — where the three longtime friends threw down a few tracks with no real plan.

"I don't think we had any idea what it was gonna sound like when we went in," Moore says. "We just went in and started recording."

What happened was "Everybody Loves You," "Independence Day" and "Maggie Moved Back to Mineola" — three songs tracked quickly, with enough chemistry

to stick in the back of Dayton's mind long after they packed up. "I was putting out a solo record at the time, and I was like, this sounds better than anything on my record," he says. "I was sold on it."

The recently released *Texas Headhunters*, the eponymous debut album for a band they didn't quite know they were forming, makes official an idea that had been brewing for a while.

"Three or four years ago, I kept bumping into Johnny," says Dayton, a Beaumont native who's split time between punk, outlaw country, horror-film scores and modern blues. "I suggested we get together with Ian, work on some tunes and just see what happens." After that first session, the trio, who had shared

many stages over the years (Moeller cut his teeth with the Fabulous Thunderbirds, and Moore opened for the Stones and Bob Dylan before forging his own soulful path), went back to their own lives and careers. But in time, the pull of what they'd started, not to mention the decades they spent chasing each other's leads across Texas, sent the trio back to Pedernales to finish the job.

"I remember me and Ian playing in Dallas together in Deep Ellum," Dayton says of their early days playing the Texas scene. "We both sat there and changed our strings and talked about music, and all of us were hanging out and life was new and exciting. We were so lucky to have that kind of community to grow in."

RAY REDDING



That community shaped not just how they play, but how they listen. On *Texas Headhunters*, you can hear three players working in conversation. All three sing, write and play guitar, but no one's trying to outshine the others. When Moore goes celestial on "Kathleen," stretching David Gilmour-inspired bends into the stratosphere, Dayton is there to bring it down safely with a descending slide run.

Cut in five days with no overdubbing marathons or perfectionist paralysis, the group's debut leans into what happens when three lifers know exactly when to lean in and when to get out of the way.

"We weren't sitting there beating ourselves over the head," Dayton says. "We weren't punching in over and over. We weren't worried about scales or anything like that. This thing's got a real loose kind of vibe to it."

Moeller's pocket playing, Moore's restless fire and Dayton's sharp-edged swagger don't cancel each other out; they sharpen each other.

"Johnny is steeped in this whole kind of Austin blues thing, and so is Ian," Dayton says. "But Ian has a rock thing to him, this component that takes his playing to a different place. Then I have country and blues and those kinds of things. We're all three in the same wheelhouse, but we are incredibly different. As soon as you hear the record, the guitar playing – you know who it is."

That clarity comes in part from the way they deliberately steered away from overlap. The arrangements were built around contrast. If one of them opened up a tonal space, the others filled in from a different angle. "We tried to do contrasting things so we weren't living in the same world," Dayton says. "Sometimes we'd just let Johnny rip the whole thing. It's a real coin toss, man."

It's not just in the songs with vocals where they stretch out. Instrumental songs like "Headhunters Theme" dip into looser territory. "On the instrumentals that we have, there seems to be this kind of Seventies, funky Jeff Beck thing that slipped in there,"



[from left] Dayton, Moore and Moeller go head hunting in Texas

"We're all in the same wheelhouse, but we are incredibly different"

JESSE DAYTON

Dayton says. "And I'm proud of that because I always loved Beck's *Wired* and *Blow by Blow* when I was a kid."

The result is a band that doesn't rely on a shared ZIP code – Moeller's in New Orleans, Moore's in the Pacific Northwest – but thrives on the muscle memory built from years of watching the same players, coming up through the same rooms and internalizing the same unspoken rules about when to rip and when to lay out.

"Be it the Continental Club or Antone's,

you'd be in there watching a gig and Jimmie Vaughan might bop in," Moeller says. "We were all three right there."

That era left a mark. But these guys aren't chasing ghosts, even if they modeled *Texas Headhunters* loosely after *Showdown!*, the 1985 album featuring fellow Texans Albert Collins and Johnny Copeland plus Robert Cray. Moore thinks the studious nature of some players today misses the point.

"There's so much style in playing blues," Moore says. "And the new kind of blues scene is kind of like guitar teachers. They're great players, but it's a different thing. To me, the blues felt like high art in a weird way. There are so many little things most people don't know – what you don't play, when you do play, why you play it when you play it. It's really deep, and I think a lot of people lose that because the blues is such a simple form of music, they think."

In *Texas Headhunters*, Moore, Moeller and Dayton play the kind of music that knows better. It's not just how well you can play, but what you're brave enough to leave out. That kind of trust only comes from time.

"When you play with different guitar players, you're just pulling stuff out of your ass," Dayton says. "If he's taking a right, I'm taking a left. It's fun to see where you land." **GW**

AXOLOGY

Guitars

Blast Cult Batavia "King" (Dayton); Big Tex S-Style, Berly Bird (Moeller); 1962 Fender Strat with '55 Esquire neck, Paoletti 500 Lounge (Moore)

Amps

Fender Deluxe Reverb, Fender Hot Rod DeVille (Dayton); 1950s Ampower (Moeller); Holy Watt Ian Moore Signature (Moore)

"I've been playing Schecter guitars for quite some time now," says Disturbed's Dan Donegan



In Sickness and in Health

Disturbed guitarist Dan Donegan on the chaotic 25 years since the release of his band's era-defining debut album, *The Sickness*

BY JOEL McIVER

▶ **"OOH-WAH-AH-AH-AH-AH!" SHOUTED DISTURBED** singer David Draiman in the intro of his band's signature tune, "Down with the Sickness," back in 2000. Weird though it sounded at the time, millennial headbangers embraced the song in droves, ushering in a productive quarter-century for the Chicago quartet in which they have become one of the world's biggest rock bands. That track, its guitar parts delivered in a cabinet-busting drop C# tuning by Dan Donegan, was a highlight of their debut album, *The Sickness*, recently celebrated with a 25th-anniversary tour of North America.

Although Disturbed were initially bracketed with the nu-metal movement, the band — Draiman and Donegan plus bassist John

Moyer and drummer Mike Wengren — moved away from that sound, incorporating melodic solos and textural elements that gave their songs a virtuoso edge. Below, we ask Donegan to look back on his progression as a guitar player over 25 years of unsociably loud music.

How have you managed to keep the band going for so long?

We've always been driven and focused, and we've stayed true to ourselves. We still have the hunger to perform, too. It's like a drug to us, or an addiction, and it's very therapeutic for us. Our music is what gets us through life.

What are the challenges of running Disturbed in 2025?

It's a business, so we have to strategize when it comes to the timing of things, or when we're feeling ready to write a new album and put it out, and what markets we need to focus on. We try to make the right moves without doing anything that's going to backfire on us. Fortunately, we have a good team of people in our management and our agents.

Have you evolved as a guitarist over the last 25 years?

I'd like to think that I'm continuing to grow. I'm always trying to inspire, and I've never cared about trying to meet any expectations from the record label or anybody else. I write what I feel, and I push myself, and I try to push the other guys to experiment

BRITT BOWMAN

[from left] John Moyer, Mike Wengren, David Draiman and Dan Donegan



and branch out a bit. As David and I are the songwriters of the band, I try to give him something that's gonna inspire him, whether that's on guitar or on a different instrument, such as piano when we did [a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's] "The Sound of Silence" in 2015. We're always challenging each other.

How has your playing changed?

I've incorporated more solos into the songs over the years. That nu-metal phase that we were lumped into at the time, there wasn't a whole lot of that going on. I was more in the school of bridges and riffs, like Soundgarden and Alice In Chains, even though they had some guitar solos here and there. But I'm a pretty melodic guy too, so I'd hear something like "Jesus Christ Pose" by Soundgarden and I'd listen to the musical journey they were going on. I loved Jerry Cantrell's playing and how melodic he is in his solos, and that became the direction that I went in. It's not about speed, although I add a little bit of that sometimes, or an arpeggio here and there. Mostly, I play with taste and melody.

What's in your guitar rack these days?

I've been playing Schecter guitars for quite some time now. Originally I played Gibsons, and then I played Washburns for a number of years: they made me a signature guitar named after my daughter, Maya. I was with them for a number of years, but then there were some internal changes at Washburn and a lot of the guys I worked with left and went to other companies. The family kinda fell apart there, and then I was approached by Schecter, who I really liked. I knew the guys from Avenged Sevenfold and a few other bands were playing them, so I tried out the guitars. They wanted to make me a signature model, and we took it from there: we did a couple of different

prototypes and hit on the one I really liked, and I've been with them ever since.

How about amps?

I've had my rig pretty set for quite some time now. In the early stages of the band I was using a Mesa Boogie Triple Rectifier, and that was my go-to for a number of years. Later I assembled a pretty monstrous rig with my guitar tech, and we still use it to this day. It's a combination of things: a Bogner XTC Ecstasy 20th Anniversary head, an EVH 5150 head that I've just incorporated into this tour, a Fractal rack and a Kemper rack, so I've got four different things going on there. It has quite the tone, and we're very happy with it.

Why use such a complex rig?

It's so my sound guy has options for blending whatever he chooses out front. We mainly use the Kemper for a direct feed for our in-ear monitors: it's a cleaner tone that's easier for David to sing to. I mainly use the Fractal for some of the effects that it has in it. I have some other effects on my pedalboard: a DigiTech Whammy and then a wah — I have the Cry Baby rackmount and the expression pedal out front on my board. My channel-switching is MIDI, so when we're doing big stages I don't have to run from one side to the other to get to the pedalboard. It's very convenient.

You've evolved a very tight, palm-muted picking style.

It's all about syncopation. I like things locking

in and being rhythmic with our drummer when he's playing certain double-kick patterns. My tone is pretty tight: it's not oversaturated, it's easy to control, and with those palm-mutes I can be rhythmic with it.

Name a couple of cool Disturbed riffs we should listen to.

"Stupify," which was our first single off of *The Sickness*, has that chunkiness, and toward the end of the song there are a couple of moments with those palm-mutes. It was written early on, when we first became a band in 1996, and it was one of those songs that came together real good. I love what David did with it, vocally, and we've played that song our whole career. I don't think there's ever been a show where we haven't played it. I also like the vibe and the feel of the bridge in "Voices," another track on *The Sickness*. If that was the very first thing people heard by us, it would be a good introduction to what we do.

What have been the high points of the last 25 years?

There have been so many high points. One that comes to mind is when we got the call from Sharon Osbourne to do Ozzfest 2000 in the States and Canada. We'd been going to Ozzfest since the mid-Nineties, so we knew what an opportunity it was that Sharon and Ozzy provided for new bands. We also knew it would be a chance to be put in front of big audiences, five days a week or whatever it was, and really go out there and make our mark.

Did the Ozzfest crowds understand what Disturbed was about?

They did, but it didn't happen overnight; it was a steady climb, gradually going upward. I'll never forget — our first show was in West Palm Beach in Florida, and we were the first band to open the second stage, which was basically a stage set up in the parking lot. There were so many good bands coming out at that time, so there was this friendly competition, with everybody trying to leave their mark. We were on at 10 in the morning, so we were like, "Is anybody even gonna show up?" Sure enough, we start playing at 10 a.m. and nobody's there yet. The festival people said, "They're coming in, don't worry about it," and by the time we got to the second or third song, there were thousands of people watching us. It was great exposure, and it really helped launch our career.

It's been 25 years well spent, then?

We're still going strong, and we feel like we still have a lot left in the tank. It's been quite the journey, from playing small bars in the suburbs of Chicago to playing a sold-out show at Madison Square Garden on our last tour. We definitely have to pinch ourselves. **GW**

"We still have the hunger to perform. Our music is what gets us through life"

Bella Rayne with her Gibson 1957 Custom goldtop reissue



Bella Rayne

Meet the Bay Area prodigy who turned to guitar during the pandemic – and found her mojo on stage

BY JOE BOSSO

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD BELLA RAYNE used to run for the hills whenever her parents played Grateful Dead records in the house. “It drove me crazy. It’s like they pushed it on me,” she says. “I liked punk rock and grunge. I even said to my mom, ‘There’s no way I am ever going to like the Grateful Dead.’”

A funny thing happened during the pandemic, however; with school and social events canceled, Rayne wandered around the house looking for something – anything – to do. One day, she discovered her mother’s old Squier Strat in the garage, and she figured she’d give it a try. Within months, Rayne had taught herself Pearl Jam songs and started posting videos of her playing on YouTube. Local Bay Area musicians took notice and asked her to jam. Ironically, one invitation came from an all-female Grateful Dead tribute band called the China Dolls.

“I was like, ‘You’re kidding. I can’t stand the Grateful Dead!’” Rayne says. “But I decided to play with them anyway, and just like that, I felt so comfortable on stage. I discovered I actually liked the music. Before I knew

“Before I knew it, I was improvising to songs I’d never heard before”

AXOLOGY

Guitars

Fender American Vintage II 1961 Stratocaster, Gibson 1957 Custom goldtop reissue

Amps

Fender Tone Master Twin Reverb, Orange OR30 with vertical and horizontal cabs

Effects

All Pedal Macrodose envelope filter, Microdose phaser, Interstellar Octonaut Hyperdrive, JAM Pedals Delay Llama

it, I was improvising to songs I’d never heard before. It was incredible!”

These days, Rayne leads her own group, Bella Rayne & Friends, that mixes Southern rock and blues with lots of jam band goodness. She’s performed with heavy hitters (Melvin Seals and JGB, the Allman Betts Family Revival), and ahead of a summer tour she’ll record her debut EP with celebrated producer Narada Michael Walden (Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston).

Recently, Rayne’s first “real guitar,” a Bourbon Burst Les Paul, was stolen after a gig in San Francisco. Heartbroken, she stayed up all night getting the word out via social media.

“The next morning, I got an email from the Grateful Guitars Foundation that had a receipt for a 1957 Custom goldtop,” she says. “I called Jack Barton from the Foundation and said, ‘I can’t accept this. I haven’t earned it.’ He was like, ‘You need to go pick it up.’ I couldn’t believe it. How remarkable! I feel like my old guitar lives on through the new one. It brings me such joy and inspiration every time I play it.” **GW**

NICK HILL

Quadvium

Welcome to the Tetrādōm! Fretless wonders Steve DiGiorgio and Jeroen Paul Thesseling set out to create a bass-forward epic, but their fusion-heavy debut album isn't just a rhythmic duopoly

BY GREGORY ADAMS

THE GENESIS OF Quadvium – the extreme fusion project from fretless bass visionaries Steve DiGiorgio (Testament, Death, Sadus) and Jeroen Paul Thesseling (Obscura, Pestilence) – dates back to the mid-'00s with the two slippery rhythm-stringers excitedly talking shop after meeting at a European metal fest. They quickly developed a bond, and over the years – whether reconnecting in their respective home bases in California's Bay Area or the Netherlands – they started toying with the idea of forming a fretless fraternity to transform the game forevermore.

Two decades into their friendship, they've charted a fresh course as Quadvium. After conceptualizing the project over Zoom calls, the pair linked up in an Amsterdam rehearsal space with Pestilence drummer Yuma van Eekelen to start fleshing out new music. That's when the bassists made a horrifying discovery: while both were virtuosic fretboard freaks of the highest order, neither were natural songwriters.

"We suddenly realized between the three of us that nobody possessed the ability to just pull something out of thin air and make it a composition," DiGiorgio says. "It was important to find a final member to not only have chops but the intellect to write and support our fuckin' wacky idea of having these two fretless bass players interact."

The musician that brought things together is Eve, a mononym'd shredder from Boston who Thesseling had been following on Instagram. He DM'd the guitarist, asking if she'd take a crack at composing for Quadvium, and Eve accepted the challenge.

At any given point, the group's stunning seven-song debut album, *Tetrādōm*, merges classical themes with death-metal grotesquerie and prog. Building off Eve's foundations, DiGiorgio and Thesseling finessed the tracks with their respective aesthetic – from the former's grit-and-gain-surged fingerings, to the latter's crystal-toned,



Quadvium's Steve DiGiorgio [left] and Jeroen Paul Thesseling

seven-string octave slides. The bassists entwine for feverish, caterpillar-crawling moments of jazz-metal counterpoint ("Apophis"); other times they maintain a technical, yet conversational back-and-forth ("Näströnd"). No matter the approach, the goal was to have "no dominant factor" in their music, this extending to how Eve also brings expressive, horse-whinnying whammy bar work to *Tetrādōm*. In other words: Quadvium aren't operating as a duopoly.

"We suddenly realized that nobody possessed the ability to pull something out of thin air and make it a composition"

"Instead of making it a dualistic thing with two basses playing solos left and right, we were looking for a way to put basses in a group, functionally. In a very musical way, not to show off," Thesseling says. His bandmate distills the ethos even more simply: "It just involves moments where we both shut up for a second."

Coincidentally, Eve had acquired a Warwick fretless bass just before Thesseling had reached out; she's actually the one who closes the album's smooth-fusion finale, "Eidolon," with a soul-glowing set of low-end slides.

"Writing our songs inspired her to get better on bass, and within a short period of time she passed me and Jeroen's ability like it was nothing – just commanding the instrument right out of the box," DiGiorgio says with a laugh of his Quadvium compatriot, adding of her many talents, "Like, holy shit... Eve was indeed a total godsend to us." **GW**

[from left] Zak Bowker,
Joel Smith, Eddie Leigh
and Ewan Barton



University

The rising English punk rockers talk forging your own path, using the hell out of cheap gear and keeping it real

BY AMIT SHARMA

▶ WITH THE RELEASE of their debut album, *McCartney, It'll Be OK*, English punk rock quartet University are plotting to take the world by storm via sensory overload. Their sound can be described as visceral and itchy, with jangly drop-D guitars being strummed into oblivion over pounding drums that are erratic and unpredictable. It's an impressively unpolished take on high-octane noise, mixing abrasive hardcore and post-rock in ways few have dared.

"I try to avoid idolization because it can box you in," singer/guitarist Zak Bowker says. "I think your biggest inspiration should always be yourself. Obviously, like any guitar player, I had a big Jimi Hendrix phase. But I don't want to sound like him; I want to sound like me."

When asked to elaborate, Bowker explains how bands like Hella taught him that "unabashed confidence when attacking a guitar can make huge sounds," with emo groups

like American Football and Nouns providing a makeshift course into songwriting. And though his band sounds nothing like Oasis or the Beatles, the frontman feels a lot of kinship with Northern England's biggest groups.

"The Oasis ethos and sound is a big one for us, especially as they're from the same part of England," he says. "And we love the Beatles' harmonies. I guess the album title is us reassuring Paul that rock music will be fine!"

The singer/guitarist's weapon of choice is a Fender Mustang, modded with a humbucker from a Yamaha Pacifica ("I'm a cheapskate," he says) for extra heat in the bridge. This is fed into a Marshall JCM900 on full gain, with a Tube Screamer and an MXR Super Badass Distortion in front for additional feedback.

"The Oasis ethos and sound is a big one for us"

A different guitar, however, ended up being used on the album.

"I used a Charger made by a cheap brand called Hartwood," Bowker says. "It sounded meatier, though I prefer the Mustang for feel. It's so light I can throw it around like a toy. I want a guitar that feels so nice that I forget it's there and float my way through the set."

Perhaps one of the more bizarre aspects of University is Eddie, their in-house enigma, who plays video games live on whatever stage they grace. They're effectively a musical trio performing with someone they describe as their personal "mascot."

"He writes the music and tells us what to do," Bowker says with a laugh. "Seriously, lots of bands feel artificial and curated. Our mate is always around, it'd be weird if he wasn't there. This is humble music for everyone. You don't have to be a gorgeous Disney star. It's for people who have sunk a million hours into fighting zombies on [an] Xbox." **GW**

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PERSONALITIES

Laurence Juber

The veteran session guitarist talks playing for Wings, Harry Styles and more

BY JOE BOSSO



▶ DURING THE LAST week of November 1963, the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand" was released in the United Kingdom. That same week, a young Brit named Laurence Juber started playing guitar. It wouldn't be a vast reach to read a little divine providence into the latter occurrence, given that Juber would eventually go on to join Paul McCartney in the last iteration of his post-Beatles band, Wings. But as he points out, he had been bugging his parents for a guitar for some time.

"My dad wanted me to play saxophone because he was a big-band fan," Juber says. "I signed up for clarinet in school, but I put my name at the bottom of the list to make sure they ran out of instruments before they got to me. I'd been following the Beatles since the summer, when 'She Loves You' came out. Then when they did the Royal Command performance [November 4, 1963], that seemed to give the guitar a certain gravitas. It was no longer a hooligan instrument. So I got a guitar as a birthday present, and I never put it down."

By the mid-Seventies, Juber was living a charmed life as one of London's top session guitarists, a career he would've happily continued had fate not intervened in 1978 in the form of an offer to join Paul McCartney and Wings. "I thought about it for a nanosecond," he says. "Even though I'd spent the last decade working my way up in the studio circles, this was Paul McCartney. I couldn't turn it down. Why would I?"

ABOVE Laurence Juber performs at the Alan Parsons & Friends 75th Birthday Tribute Concert in Santa Barbara, December 20, 2023

OPPOSITE PAGE Wings in Liverpool in November 1979; [from left] Denny Laine, Laurence Juber, Paul and Linda McCartney and Steve Holley

Along with another new member, drummer Steve Holley, Juber joined guitarist Denny Laine and the McCartneys (Paul and Linda) to record *Back to the Egg*, and he took part in what would be the band's final tour, a 19-date trek through the U.K., in late 1979. (Famously, the group's January 1980 tour of Japan was over before it started when McCartney was arrested for marijuana possession upon his arrival at Tokyo's Narita International Airport.)

Juber's tenure in Wings was brief (the group disbanded in 1981), and he moved to New York City, where he met and married Hope Schwartz, before settling in Los Angeles. Resuming his career as a session guitarist, he worked on film and TV scores, as well as recording with artists such as Belinda Carlisle, Eric Carmen and Al Stewart, among others. Starting with 1982's *Standard Time*, he's released a steady stream of acclaimed solo albums, many of which showcase his mastery of finger-style acoustic playing. These include five Beatles and Wings collections he's recorded over the years, and now there's a sixth, *A Day in My Life*, on which he reimagines 12 Fab Four classics on solo acoustic guitar.

"These songs are endlessly fascinating and a joy to play," Juber says. "Reworking them for solo guitar is challenging; it's almost like you're working with puzzle pieces, but there's no limit to how you can arrange them. It's a matter of finding the nexus of the guitar side, the musical side and the fan side of it." And indeed, he covers each aspect majestically in his loving and inventive interpretations of songs the whole world knows by heart. On "Day Tripper," he's a veritable one-man band, covering bass, drum and melody patterns with rollicking energy, and he manages to approximate the pioneering studio magic of "Strawberry Fields Forever" with dizzying lines and percussive accents. He uncovers previously untapped nuances on "Rain," "Let It Be" and "In My Life," while on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" he effortlessly shifts between George Harrison's beguiling melodies and Eric Clapton's celebrated lead work.

As the title suggests, all of it was recorded in a single day, and on one Martin guitar, at Abbey Road's hallowed Studio Two, the same studio where the Beatles created much of their catalog. For Juber, working at Abbey Road carries special significance, for it was in Studio Two where he received the phone call to audition for Wings. "That studio is a second home to me," he says. "Beyond the emotional attachment, there's such mojo to the place; it's got a sound and vibe like no other room. And

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES

"I THOUGHT ABOUT JOINING WINGS FOR A NANOSECOND."

you can't beat the microphones. I was looking at a pair of Neumann KM54s that were used on Beatles records, and I played into them. Pretty incredible."

You've distinguished yourself as a great acoustic fingerstyle player, but that wasn't what you set out to do originally. You wanted to be a blues-rock lead guitar player.

And specifically, a studio musician. At 13 that became my ambition, so I wanted to establish myself as a versatile guitarist. I took classical guitar lessons in high school and studied music at university. I was equally enamored of Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, but also folk baroque players — John Renbourn and Bert Jansch — as well as Stefan Grossman and John Fahey. I also practiced Bach lute suites and Clapton's parts on "Hideaway" from the Beano album [1966's Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton]. Whatever I could get from slowing down records and figuring them out, I just wanted to understand what was going on.

Nowadays, people can just see how it's done on YouTube.

Sure, but I had to use my ears. We all did. It wasn't that difficult, really, and it sharpens your skills. When I took air training exams in college, I always managed to scrape through, but in reality I had bandstand ears. I didn't have perfect-pitch ears that the keyboard players had, but I got by.

How did you go about breaking into the London session scene?

Early on, I understood that one way of getting there was through the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. I played with the orchestra all through college, and I made it my business to become indispensable there. We did a BBC TV concert, and the next day I got a call from a contractor who wanted me to do some studio work in London. That's how I sort of got in.

From what you experienced, was it a very competitive scene?

I was really in kind of the post-scene. By the time I got in, which was around 1974-75, I was working with musicians who had been playing on records back in the mid-Sixties. Conversely, when I got into studio work in L.A. in the Eighties, it was very different from the Seventies scene or the Sixties scene with the Wrecking Crew. Interestingly, a lot of producers I worked with in London were [*working with*] kind of classic singers. The first album I played on was for an English jazz singer named Cleo Laine, which was produced by George Martin. He was the first record producer I worked for, and it was all downhill from there. [*Laughs*]

Did George Martin have anything to do with you getting in Wings?

Not at all. I got to the point where I was doing movie dates. For example, I played on *The Spy Who Loved Me*,

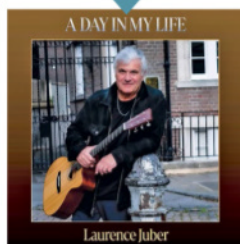


HIS FIRST WITH McCartNEY



BACK TO THE EGG
(1979)

HIS LATEST PLAYING McCartNEY



A DAY IN MY LIFE
(2024)

and I was playing lead guitar in the house band on a TV show with David Essex, who was a big pop star at the time. Denny Laine was a guest on the show. He liked my playing and recommended me to Paul and Linda.

It didn't happen overnight. About six months later, I was doing a session in Abbey Road in Studio Two when I got a phone call inviting me to come and jam on Monday with Denny. "Oh, by the way, Paul and Linda will be there." That was April 1978. I went into the audition not really knowing any Wings tunes. Happily, we played some Chuck Berry tunes and reggae grooves. Then Paul said, "What are you doing for the next few years?" Wings became my gig for the next three years. And not just a gig, but an education.

If you can put it into words, what did you learn?

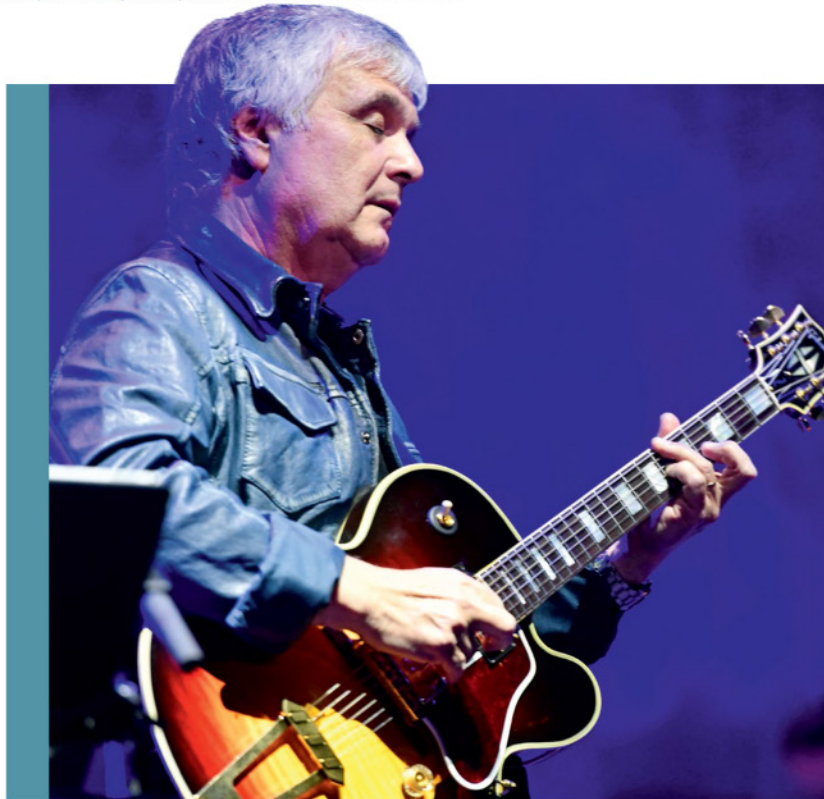
I learned how to make records from the production side. I learned what it meant to be an artist. All the things you had to do as a studio musician were vastly different when you're the artist cutting the records. Instead of doing three tunes in one three-hour session, we'd spend a day on a tune, sometimes longer. I spent a lot of time working with Paul on *Back to the Egg*, but also with the co-producer, Chris Thomas, who is one of those unsung heroes of the British rock record-production scene.

How much space did Paul give you to be your own man on the guitar?

A fair amount, actually. Very rarely did he tell me what to play. There was a time when we were doing the solo on "Spin It On," which is kind of a punk rockabilly thing, and I sat in the control room next to Paul. It was just eyeball to eyeball and him bringing stuff out of me that I didn't know I could do. That was like, "Okay, this is really where the transcendence happens, where you can just kind of create something new."

That was an important part of the whole experience for me, being able to get into that artistic space and having the time to really tweak guitar sounds and

THIS WAS PAUL McCARTNEY — I COULDN'T TURN IT DOWN"



parts. It's what you do when you're in a band versus being a studio musician. Paul was very insistent that we thought of ourselves as a band. It's where that extra space to be creative came from.

When you're in a band with Paul, how do you not pepper him with Beatles questions all day long?

[Laughs] Basically, you don't, although once in a while, Paul would say, "Well, in my old band..." I think that's how it works with any artist of stature — you don't want to be too pushy about stuff like that. Although, when I worked with George Harrison on the soundtrack to *Shanghai Surprise*, he was very happy to talk about Beatles stuff. He felt like he was kind of an observer of it himself, because Paul and John were the upfront guys, and he was a step behind. And yet, in the end, George became one of the most successful songwriters in the band. The only Beatles song in the Spotify Billion Stream Club is his song [ed. Note: "Here Comes the Sun"].

Back to the Egg features "Rockestra Theme." That must have been a heady session with all those guitar greats in one room.

You had Peter Townshend, David Gilmour, Denny Laine, Hank Marvin and myself. Jimmy Page's amp was there, but he never showed up. We had three drummers — John Bonham, Kenney Jones and Steve Holley — Steve being the Wings drummer at the time. There were three bass players. It was like Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, the Who, Wings and a whole bunch of other people. It was a remarkable session, and we won the first Rock Instrumental Grammy. They never told

ABOVE Juber in action at the Ace Hotel in Los Angeles, June 3, 2019

us that we'd won it until this little box arrived in the mail. Oh, another important lesson I learned from Paul is to never smuggle cannabis into Japan. [Laughs] The Grammy ceremony was not long after the Japan thing, so everybody was a bit distracted and just neglected to tell us that we'd won a Grammy.

How did Paul tell you he was disbanding Wings?

I went with Paul and Linda to France in July 1980 to work with Ringo on *Stop and Smell the Roses*. Prior to that, and after that, we had been rehearsing the material for the *Tug of War* album. That was the point at which George Martin came in and said, "This doesn't need to be a Wings album. Let's make this a Paul McCartney album." Even then, it wasn't the entire end of the band because we were still in the studio in January of '81. But I had already seen the writing on the wall, and I was making plans to move to New York. To be honest, in the history of Wings, no incarnation of the band had lasted more than three years. I didn't have the expectation that it was going to go on forever.

I'm curious about the Martin guitar you used on *A Day in My Life*. What model was it?

It's a triple-O body size, but with a long-scale length — 25.4 inches, which is a little less than a Taylor but more than a Gibson. The guitar I use is a Cuban mahogany body, which didn't come from Cuba. I think it was from a storm-felled tree in Florida. It's a species of mahogany that has more dimension to it than Honduras mahogany to my ears. It almost has some of the gravitas of Brazilian rosewood, but there's still the warmth of mahogany, and it has a moon spruce top. This one has a titanium truss rod. It's a very comfortable and useful guitar. One thing I did do, and I do periodically depending on the circumstances, is I'm not tuned to 440 [Hz]. I'm tuned to 432. There's some thought that it's more natural. We're getting into kind of voodoo stuff. Hendrix didn't tune to 440, either.

I noticed that you recently played one of Harry Styles' hit singles, "Treat People with Kindness," co-written by your daughter, Ilsey. It helps to have friends in high places, huh?

It does. Well, that's what she does — she's a successful songwriter. I very rarely play on anything she's written, but I got a phone call one lunchtime saying, "What are you doing this afternoon, Dad? We can use you in the studio." So I trotted off to the studio, armed with a Stratocaster and a little Fender amp.

As it turned out, Harry Styles is a Wings fan. In fact, I found there's a lot of musicians and artists of his generation who are specifically fans of *Back to the Egg*. It's a shame Paul is not so much a fan of that album. I think he's kind of neglected the late Wings era. But the fans love it, and those tunes are kind of fun to play. The session for Harry was a lot of fun, especially the fact that it became a hit record. It was the first Number 1 album I played on in about 25 years. **GW**

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INFINITE JEST

Like it or not, U.K. rock legends Spinal Tap are back with a new movie, a new outlook and custom Marshall amps that go to Infinity. In a stupendously rare interview, legendary Spinal Tap guitarist Nigel Tufnel ruminates about birds, gear, cheese, Blind Bubba Cheeks and so much more

BY JOE BOSSO

I**N A 1992** *Guitar World* feature that celebrated the release of Spinal Tap's reunion album, *Break Like the Wind*, it was reported that lead guitarist Nigel Tufnel had been, at some point during the band's hiatus, "mysteriously conscripted into the Swiss Army."

It's a claim that Tufnel, speaking via Zoom from his home in the U.K., now shoots down as totally bogus. "It's just not true," he says.

"Someone said that, and it's not a very good joke as well, but that's a separate matter."

Tufnel is happy – well, that might be stretching things a bit – to set the record straight regarding other persistent tall tales and canards surrounding him and the pioneering heavy metal band he co-founded in 1966 with singer-guitarist David St. Hubbins and bassist Derek Smalls. There's the matter of guitar strings; for years it's been thought







[from left] Paul McCartney with Spinal Tap's Derek Smalls, David St. Hubbins and Nigel Tufnel

that Tufnel started out playing strings made of catgut.

"No," he says dryly. "I think you've been put off a bit, either by yourself or someone who works for you. You've got some wrong information there. Now, catgut was used on early classical instruments, and then they went to nylon strings. I always played steel-string guitars from the very beginning. I played a Sovereign Harmony. Then I got my first Gibson, and then I got Fenders and whatever. The answer to your question would be no."

What is true is that Tufnel, for the past 15 years, has been living a quiet life in Northern England with his longtime partner, Moira. "We're just on the border of Scotland," he says. "I've got a cheese shop there, and we work together." He continues to play music, mostly with locals in a nearby pub, and he does some recording at home. "But it's not for the public to hear, really," he says. "Well, it could happen, but as just so happens, it's not. It's just for me."

When asked if the pub sells any of his cheeses, he's quick to stress that "pubs are not really known for their cheese, now are they? If you know what a pub is, it's mostly people drinking cider or port or some sort of ale or lager."

After years of career setbacks, Spinal Tap achieved sudden worldwide fame following the release of Marty DiBergi's "warts and all" 1984 documentary, *This Is Spinal Tap*. Yet the film's success left the band feeling somewhat dismayed. St. Hubbins told *Guitar World* that the movie portrayed the group as "sort of second-rate, a great big joke," while Tufnel griped that he felt "betrayed" when he saw the finished doc.

Decades later, those feelings haven't exactly softened. "I think we were bloody angry because it made us seem as if everything we ever did was rubbish and went wrong in some way," Tufnel says. "Marty DiBergi, the director, picked these things to show, but there was a lot of stuff he didn't show, like when we didn't get lost or when we weren't having a row. So we were miffed, as you like to say in America."

Taking into account the band's misgivings about *This Is Spinal Tap*, it's more than a little surprising that they would choose to work with DiBergi again for an all-new film, *Spinal Tap II: The End Continues*, in which the group reunites after 15 years for one final show.

According to Tufnel, "We had a long discussion, all of us, and Marty made a case that it made sense for us to do this new thing, which is us coming together again for a reunion. I haven't seen the lads for 15 years, and besides that, we had a legal obligation to do one more show."

Asked if he felt that the new film might paint a more accurate portrait of the band, Tufnel says, "Well, I can't say why it will or not. There's some things in it that are upsetting emotionally. You see us getting angry occasionally, but there's some good things as well. I think it balances itself out, really. But I don't want to give it away. You'd like people

"30 years ago we had a lawsuit against our label. They said, 'We will pay you not to record'"

to go and see it in the cinema. If I tell people what's in it, then they won't go because they know everything. You see?"

What are you hoping audiences come away with after they see the new film?

Well, it is another view, maybe a more honest view of who we are as older people, yes, but not just the catastrophe. There's always a balancing thing. Yes, bad things have happened, but they've happened to every single band that goes out on a tour. There's more good stuff [than] upsetting stuff. Where are you talking from, by the way?

New Jersey.

Oh my God, sorry. You've really put your foot in it. I've been to Montclair. A young woman I used to know lived in Montclair.

The new film is called *Spinal Tap II: The End Continues*.

Yes, that's right.

If the end continues, how is it actually the end?

Yeah, well, you'll have to work that out yourself – in New Jersey. I can't give you the answer to that. Some of these things you're going to have to work out on your own. I know it's not something you normally do, but you're going to have to do some research. Go to the library in Verona. They've got a lovely little library there, and there's a woman there who will help you. Or there's a public library in Rumson that you might want to pop into. Between that and the other one, you're going to get all the answers to these questions you're asking me, which I don't know.

In *This Is Spinal Tap*, there is a scene in which you say that the band's message is "love your brother," which you then say you don't actually mean. Has your message changed over the years?

Well, look, we're older people. We're bloody old is what we are. There's no getting around that business. We're old people. So you do learn a few things when you get older. You can't do backward flips, for instance. That's just not going to be something you do. After 50, your hearing starts to get worse, I would say. But there's another thing that happens. I like being in the quiet because we played loud music for a long time. I like being in the country. I like taking a walk and looking at birds and simple things. When we did the new film, we were thrown into this other world, which was loud again. We were playing loud, but it's all right. I don't think I could do that as a steady diet anymore.

You say you look at birds – you mean girls, right?

No, you see, you are confused again. This is a different thing. In the Sixties, we called women birds, but we don't call them that now. I mean actual birds — creatures with wings. I like hearing them in the morning. We watch them fly around, Moira and I. We're not official bird watchers because we don't really know the names of all of them, but we like to look at them as we walk down the lane to the cheese shop. It's a quiet kind of life.

By the way, I have guitars at my cheese shop. You can come in and trade guitars for cheese, or vice versa. If you bring in some cheese, I might trade you one of the guitars on the wall.

Have any notable guitarists come into your shop to trade their guitars for cheese?

No, but it's possible. It's not something I lose sleep over. It's a barter system; that's what they used to call it in the old days. Let's say someone has a piece of cheese, and they think, "I don't really like this cheese, so I'm going to bring it in. And oh, look at that! There's a nice F-hole Gibson..." They can do a swap or whatever.

I'd like you to clear up a few more things. In the past, Spinal Tap have turned down some not very sizable sums of money to reform, but a rumor persists that there were also very hefty fees offered for you not to reform.

No, again, that's not true. In the old days, we had what you would call a lawsuit against one of our labels. They said at the time — this is 30 years ago — they said, "We will pay you not to record." But now, you see, we've made a new record, and there's a book and a film coming out. We're in a different place.

You're in the driver's seat now.

No, no, I'm not in the driver's seat, actually. I'm in the backseat. Moira drives me, and she's a very good driver. She takes me places, but mainly we walk or take our bicycles.

Do you use a walking stick?

Now, what would I do with a walking stick?

Isn't it customary to use a walking stick when you're in the English countryside?

I think this is a New Jersey problem, you see, because you have this weird concept of what it's like where you're walking down a lane and you see a thatched roof and a little elf comes out and a guy has a big pipe. I think you're confusing it, maybe with the Hobbit thing or something. No, I don't have a walking stick. I just use my legs to walk.

Tell me about when you first met Jimi Hendrix. The story goes that you were at



Tufnel (left) with director Marty DiBergi at Tufnel's cheese shop in the north of England

his first London performance at the Scotch of St. James.

No. You see, again, I think you've been thrown off a bit — by yourself, first of all, but by something else. I never got to meet Hendrix. As a young person learning to play, my main influence was Blind Bubba Cheeks. He was a great bluesman from the Delta. His records were quite rare — they were 78s. I had two of them, and I never met anyone else who had them. I'd play them for David St. Hubbins. We would sit around and try to learn the licks, and it was amazing. Blind Bubba Cheeks was really the great one of all those people, even more than Robert Johnson or Skip James, I would say.

Did you ever speed up those 78s to learn the licks?

I don't know what to say to that. I don't know

you well enough to say something rude, so let's move on.

Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Eddie Van Halen, Joe Satriani —

You're just naming names. You're reading off a list of names. What's the point?

All of those guitarists have said they were somewhat influenced by you, but not by much.

Yeah, so? Look, if you listen to a guitar player, you take a little bit from him. He takes something from you. It's called an organic sort of way of learning. This happens with any musician. You don't even realize it. You listen to a song, you hear something — the tone, a specific effect pedal, whatever is — then you might copy that. They may copy you, whatever. That's a natural thing that happens. 





Finding steady — and living — drummers has always been a problem for Spinal Tap. In this scene from the new movie, Tap & Co. interview Questlove via Zoom

In the new film, people like Paul McCartney, Elton John, Garth Brooks, Trisha Yearwood, Chad Smith and Lars Ulrich appear with you. Legends all, yeah.

Do you think they're just trying to piggyback on your fame?

Well, I think, no, because you may have noticed that those are very famous people, and they've been famous for a long time. What's the Latin expression? No, I don't know... What am I saying that for? I think the answer is no. They have their own thing. It was lovely playing with them. It was really fun for everyone, I think.

Before Spinal Tap, you, David and Derek were known as the Thamesmen, and you had a hit in the Sixties with "Gimme Some Money." Why have you never reformed that band?

Lots of reasons: One, a dead drummer is a reason, right? You can't go backwards. That was when we were young people. That was ridiculous. We're old people now, and you

"Marshall has made me an amp head, and it now goes to Infinity. Think about that for a moment..."

can't go back. You can't say to the Beatles, "Why don't you become the Silver Beatles or the Quarrymen?"

So no Thamesmen reunion. The Yardbirds were featured in Michelangelo Antonioni's classic film *Blow-Up*. Do you feel slighted that you weren't asked to be in it?

No, no. That was an interesting film at the time. It was in the mid-Sixties, I believe, and Jeff Beck was in it. It's sort of interesting the way they used that. I don't feel slighted. We were very much under the radar for what we did. Some people knew us, some didn't.

Legend also has it that Spinal Tap performed as part of *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* in 1968, but your performance was cut from the film.

Again, you say "legend," meaning it's not true. No, we were not there, ever. We did some things you probably didn't ever hear about. We did some concerts in the late Sixties that were not publicized because no one was there to publicize them, which is all right. People were listening to the music. They seemed to enjoy it, but no one said, "Oh, we're going to write about this." No one heard about it, other than the people who were there — and us, of course.

What was one of the best shows that was never publicized?

There was one in Holland. I don't know if you've ever left New Jersey, but Holland is amazing. They've got these canals and great food and nice people. We did this show in a lovely park in Amsterdam. It was quite loud, so it was shut down after about 20 minutes. But the first bit of it was great. The people started throwing wooden shoes. I think they liked it, and then they decided it was too loud.

Did any shoes hit the band?

No, it was too far away. People later said that's the highest compliment you can get, when they throw wooden shoes. They say that if people don't throw shoes, that means they hate you. Anyway, you don't want to get hit in the face with a wooden shoe.

How has your guitar playing improved over the years? Or do you feel that once you achieve greatness, you just stay there?

I think that's the wrong term — "improved" — because players always play. I still play every day. I play differently than I once played, and I'm learning. I used to play a lot of fast solo things, but now I'm listening in a different way to a spacious way of playing, which is more long notes. There's different effects, some backwards things going on, and so it's different. I wouldn't say I've improved. It's just different.

Was skiffle still a major influence on your playing?

It was originally in the Sixties. Everyone was affected in the U.K. by skiffle. Everyone said, "I'm doing this," and they were in a skiffle band of some sort. Then they moved into a different thing.

What's going on with your solo project, the long-awaited trilogy *Clam Caravan*?

Yeah, well, the first part of it still exists. The second and third part of it is still being thought about.

It's taken quite a while, though.

Things take a while. Sometimes it's a long time. It's not just "Oh, boom, boom, boom." It doesn't work that way when you're writing music or painting or anything else. It takes time, and maybe there won't be a second and third part. I don't know. But in the back of my mind, I think there probably will be.

All we know from *Clam Caravan* is your beloved song "Lick My Love Pump."

Yes, exactly. I've played around with that a bit, but it's not for public consumption.



Tufnel, St. Hubbins and Smalls kill time before their reunion show in New Orleans

In the first film, there was a scene in which you became quite upset over the mediocre deli trays backstage. Have things gotten better in that regard?

This is a staple of tour nightmares when people have a rider, it's called. So they say, "This is what we want. After the show, we want milk or vodka." It's always messed up. The bigger the band, the more it fucks up, really. This has happened to everyone. It did happen to us, yes, but it was on film, so it's exaggerated, you see? That was Marty's choice. We weren't involved in the editing. We did a show the next night, and everything was perfect.

Spinal Tap were once cited as being "the world's loudest band." Is that still the case?

I don't walk about with one of those little dB meters, which you can get on your phone now. But yeah, we're still bloody loud. I can't say if we're the loudest because you'd have to have all these groups playing at the same time to try to figure it out.

As we know, your amps go to 11. Are there any recent guitar or gear developments you're excited about?

Yes. For instance, Marshall has made for me an amplifier, the head, and if you look at the dials, it now goes to Infinity. Just think about that for a moment. Think about infinity — oh, my God, that's literally infinity. There are lots of pedals that people have done in the last years that are quite extraordinary. Companies that make these pedals, which I use, and I do a little work on them. I take them apart, and I do a little fooling around with wires and stuff like that to get the sound I'd like.

You tinker.

I tinker, yeah. Lots of times I break them because I don't really know how to do that work. I haven't been trained, but it's interesting to open things up, see all the wires and move them about a bit.

What do you think about amp modeling?

No, no. People use it in studios to make records, but I like my amplifiers. Occasionally I've gone direct when I record at home. There's something about pushing air, as they call it. I've got this great Marshall at a home, a Studio Marshall, and it's hard to beat.

How much air do you like to push?

I'll leave that for you to figure out.

In the new film, you're playing a custom Union Jack Ernie Ball Music Man St. Vincent guitar. Are you playing that quite a bit these days?

Yeah, well, it's one of the guitars I play in the



film. I've got probably 50 to 75 guitars — a lot of them are in storage. That guitar was custom done for me. It's a great guitar. They've always done custom ones for me, going back 35 years.

What do you like so much about Ernie Ball Music Man guitars?

They're just really well-made. I can say to the people there, "I'm thinking of doing this or that," and they say, "Yeah, let's go for it." I play other things as well. I play a Nacho, and I also play a Novo. They're both fantastic.

What other kind of gear are you using?

It's just so much to even talk about. Honestly, I can't even list it all. There are so many. I play Collings acoustic guitars and mandolins. It just goes on and on.

You said you play every day. How much do you play each day?

I play two hours a day. Three is too much, isn't it? I like to take a walk in the morning with Moira. I come back, have a little breakfast, and then I sit down and play. It's not exactly two hours, but it's normally two hours. Then I go to the cheese shop.

Are any of your new songs inspired by Moira?

I can't share that because it's personal,

isn't it? This is the woman that I love, and I'm not going to say to you, "This is what's going on." Because I don't know you well enough.

I feel as if we're getting to know each other...

No. I think you are wrong.

Oh, OK. I'm sorry.

Don't be sorry. I like the paintings you have — you've got a painting in a mirror, and it looks like there's a fireplace. It looks like some kind of velvet flocking on the wall. Is this a care home that you're in, or is this your own place?

It's my own place.

It's comforting and disturbing at the same time.

Will you guys reform again in 15 more years?

Well, as they say in the States, "Do the math." What we would say is "do the maths." When you're studying arithmetic in the U.K., they call it "maths."

But you could play again in 15 years. People are living longer these days.

Yeah, but I don't know that many people at the age of 100 are going out and doing gigs. People who are 82 are going out. That's not a hundred, is it? Look, we're all old. We're bloody old. It's weird, isn't it? **GW**





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Jake E. Lee photographed July 5 in Birmingham, England, with the custom Purple Burst Charvel he played at Back to the Beginning



RE-ENTER THE DRAGON

In an interview that took place before Ozzy Osbourne's death, the Back to the Beginning standout talks Charvel guitars, next steps and the joy of achieving closure with his former boss

BY ANDREW DALY PHOTO BY ROSS HALFIN

ALL'S BEEN QUIET for several years on Jake E. Lee's proverbial Western Front. The guitarist has taken extended breaks before, like the one after the demise of his beloved Badlands in 1993. Still, after forming Red Dragon Cartel in 2013 and reeling off two well-regarded records in 2014's *Red Dragon Cartel* and 2018's *Patina*, the thought was that Lee was back to stay. Covid put a pin in that, as it did with most sectors of the world.

Making matters worse is that Lee suffers from particularly nasty arthritis in his right hand, leaving him with "basically no cartilage." That's painful, but probably not nearly as painful as a life-threatening incident in October 2024, when he was shot multiple times while walking his dog near his home in Las Vegas.

After intense physical therapy, Lee is recovering well. While none of his injuries were life-threatening, one of the areas of his body damaged during the shooting was his left arm, making his guitar playing even more

painful, not that Lee pays much attention to that. "I can live with some pain," he says. "That's why they created alcohol." [Laughs]

Lee's outlook is nice to hear. Then again, what choice does he have? What else could he do when faced with a wounded left arm and a cartilage-less right hand? One option is that he could quit, which is more or less what he did after Covid forced Red Dragon Cartel off the road in 2020. He was in pain, which he could handle, but time was on his side, so why not?

The results of the time off have been good. When not in physical therapy, Lee has been pulling out his vintage guitars, of which he admits to having too many. He's reconnecting with SGs, his '58 Les Paul and various hollow and semi-hollowbodies. He's also writing, though not recording, music of his own. Instead, he's dipping his toe back into the water by laying down a bluesy solo on a yet-to-be-named album by fellow Las Vegas resident and Count's 77 guitarist, Stoney Curtis.

Oh, and he found time to participate in the Back to the Beginning event in Birmingham,

England, on July 5, where his old boss, the late Ozzy Osbourne, regrouped for the last time with his Black Sabbath colleagues Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward. As you'll already know, Lee played in Ozzy's solo band from 1982 to '87, appearing on the metal legend's *Bark at the Moon* and *The Ultimate Sin* albums in 1983 and '86.

Lee featured prominently in the Back to the Beginning event's first supergroup, a band put together by the show's curator, Rage Against the Machine's Tom Morello. The stellar nature of the lineup – Lizzy Hale (Halestorm), Mike Bordin (Faith No More), Nuno Bettencourt (Extreme), David Ellefson (ex Megadeth), Adam Wakeman (Ozzy), David Draiman (Disturbed), Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) and II (Sleep Token) – made the performance Lee's highest-profile appearance since his Ozzy days. You can see him on YouTube ripping through "The Ultimate Sin," "Shot in the Dark," "Sweet Leaf," "Believer" and "Changes," the last of these featuring Gen-Z's poster-boy of the moment, Yungblud, on vocals.



Scott Ian [left] and Lee during the July 4 rehearsals for *Back to the Beginning*

All of this leads to Lee branding this period of his guitar-playing life as a “rebirth.” His mind knows what to do, but his body is lagging behind; still, the outlook is good. “It’s made it interesting,” Lee says. “It’s like I’m relearning the guitar, even though I know how to play it. I’m having fun.”

Jake E. Lee knows a thing or two about fun. He’s shredded beside Ozzy, dropped two of the best records of the hair-metal era in 1989’s *Badlands* and 1991’s *Voodoo Highway*, and proved to the world that he still had the goods with Red Dragon Cartel. But time waits for no one, and to be fair, Lee has never minded retreating when needed. “I’ve taken breaks from the guitar before,” he says. “I always come back refreshed.”

Lee admits this time was different. “It had never been to this length before,” he says. “There were a couple of years where I just didn’t play, unless I was writing something. It’s refreshing. It clears your mind.”

With his left arm getting stronger each day, and a new technique that compensates for the lack of cartilage in his right hand, the outlook for Lee is the best that it’s been in a long time. For a second, it looked as if he’d have to have surgery to fuse the bones in his right hand, leaving his wrist locked up — but there’s clearly no need for that procedure right now, as fans found out in England on July 5.

How are you healing up after being shot in October 2024?

I’ve healed up pretty good. I got shot through the forearm and lost a lot of feeling in my left hand, which doesn’t really affect my playing, but it feels weird. But most of that came back. And I just got finished doing physical therapy for my right wrist because I have arthritis, but that’s getting better. It’s a lot of strengthening and stretching — and steroid shots.

You recently talked about how there’s no cartilage left in your right hand. How do you compensate for that?

I have arthritis in my right hand, and they said the cartilage is basically gone. I can’t feel it; it’s bone on bone. I’ve had to adjust my playing style to where I’m using mostly the elbow on the right hand, trying to use as much elbow movement as I can, while keeping the wrist movement down to a minimum. The only operation they had available was to fuse the bones together, and then my wrist

“For years, in the back of my head, it was like, ‘I hope I get to see Ozzy one more time’”

would pretty much be locked in. I didn’t want to do that.

Is the pain manageable while playing?

There’s some pain, but it’s not that big of a deal. Let me quote [*the 1989 movie*] *Road House* by saying, “Pain don’t hurt,” you know what I mean? [*Laughs*] I’ve had back issues forever, and wrist pain isn’t anything compared to that.

Are there any techniques you’re accustomed to that you can’t do anymore?

I usually use a heavy pick, but I went to a lighter one. It forced me to have a lighter touch with my right hand, and that’s been interesting. And my left hand is a little bit weak, so lately I’ve been playing with sevens to force myself to have a lighter touch. And it’s interesting because Billy Gibbons uses sevens, and that’s what Tony Iommi and Brian May use, I think, and they don’t have a problem with getting a good tone.

Do you feel like you’re almost having to relearn how to play guitar?

I’m enjoying the sevens right now because it’s a whole different technique as far as the left and right hands. It’s interesting, because, in a way, it’s like learning to play

guitar again. But I know how to play guitar, you know? Mentally — and as far as theory and all that — I know exactly what to do, but I have to teach my left and right hands to accommodate me.

How do you think the Back to the Beginning concert went? I know you experienced some technical difficulties.

Yeah, there were a few. [Laughs] There was this whole setup, like, “Has anybody seen Jake?” And I was backstage, and I knew my guitar needed tuning, and I kept saying, “Where’s the rest of the band? Shouldn’t I be out there?” But they said, “No, we’re not ready for you?” I was like, “Okay... can I go out now?” They said, “Okay, you can go.” Then they led me to stage right, and I said, “Shouldn’t I be stage left? I’m playing over there...” But they said, “No, you’ve got to go this way...” So I came out, and I hadn’t heard anything, but Nuno [Bettencourt] had the crowd chanting my name. And I walked out and Lzzy [Hale] and Nuno are doing little bows to me. [Laughs] Then Nuno grabbed me and gave me a kiss on the cheek!

Once you got rolling, what was the experience like?

The crowd was chanting my name. It was overwhelming. I’m surprised I didn’t trip and fall down. [Laughs] But because of all that, I was a little out of tune — but it was worth it. To have that introduction and reaction was good for my soul. And then, with “Shot in the Dark,” we rehearsed it a certain way, but I think David got a little excited and jumped ahead. So I didn’t get to do my cool harmonics at the beginning, but that’s okay! Did I play my best? Maybe not. Was I in tune? Maybe not. Was it fantastic and amazing? Absolutely.

How did you feel physically and emotionally, especially in front of such a huge crowd?

It was a trip. My wrist was a bit sore, but I’ve gotten used to that. I practiced my ass off for the last couple of months on those two songs, so my wrist is used to being a bit sore. And I get to rest it now! But I haven’t played in front of that many people in decades. It was very heady, if you know what I mean.

You’re known for using your Charvel, but are you trying anything different during this rebirth?

I have a lot of guitars. I’ve recently been going through them; I have too many. [Laughs] They’ve been sitting in their cases for a long time! I have a ‘58 Les Paul Special that I love, and I just brought it out to do some recording with Stoney Curtis. He asked me to do a solo on it, so I brought the ‘58 Les Paul, and it’s blues, so the Les Paul fit that perfectly.



Lee in action with Red Dragon Cartel in New York City, December 2, 2014

What other guitars are you taking out of mothballs lately?

I have a bunch of old guitars, like a ‘63 SG Junior. I love SGs, and I’ve been bringing them out. It’s fun. And I like a wide variety, like hollowbodies; I’ve been really into hollowbodies and semi-hollowbodies lately. They just have a different feel and resonance. I like playing a lot of different guitars because it makes you play a little differently.

You played a purple custom Charvel at Back to the Beginning. What’s the story there?

In the Ozzy days, I had my white one, a purple burst and a blue burst. Charvel reissued the white and blue ones, and I’ve been hassling them about getting the purple burst out there. So when this came up, I said, “What better promo would there be than for me to come out with a purple burst and have people start asking about it?” So they made me one. It’s a sweet guitar, and it’s a little different from the versions Charvel has come out with. It’s a Gibson-scale length, with the jumbo frets up to the 12th and then thinner frets above that. I can get a little more meat on the string and a little more wood underneath. And it’s a roasted maple neck, and the body — I think they call it “cooked ash,” so it’s lighter, and they get all the moisture out of it.

It’s beautiful. Hopefully they’ll come out with a version of it. Also, Kirk Hammett let me play his Greeny Les Paul backstage. I can confirm that it’s a magical piece of wood. I didn’t want to put it down — didn’t want to leave it. I’ve missed it ever since! It’s so resonant; it just sings. I almost wish I’d never played it! [Laughs] Nah — I’m glad I got to bask in its magic, if for just a while.

Are there any updates to your signature Friedman amps?

Not too long ago, we came out with the 50-watt [JEL-50]. We also did the 20-watt [JEL-20] and the IR [IR-J Dual Tube Preamp] pedal. The 100-watt [JEL-100] isn’t available anymore; that was a limited run. That was a pretty specialized beast. I don’t think there are a lot of guitar players who can get away with using a 100-watt amp.

Were there any other additions to your rig on the Friedman side for the show?

Yes. I used the Friedman IR, the Jake E. Lee version. I figured since it was all rental stuff — rental Marshalls — I didn’t know how many people would be playing through it and what the settings would be like. It’s easier for me to have the IR and have it preset so I could just plug in the effects loop and be all set.

What was it like reconnecting with Ozzy, who you hadn't seen in decades?

I did get to talk to him. There was a big photoshoot a couple days before the gig, and I talked with Sharon, and she brought me over to Ozzy. There's no ill will; there has never been any on my part. Business is business. I don't think anything they ever did was to try and fuck over Jake; it was always about business. I didn't know how they'd be, but they were amazing, friendly, open, welcoming and loving. I hadn't seen either of them in decades, and after the show, on the flight back, I got a text from Ozzy.

What'd he say?

He said he was sorry he couldn't spend more time with me. And he said that when he got back to LA, he'd shoot me a text and maybe we could get together and shoot the shit for a while. Everything's cool. I'm glad it's resolved and everybody still likes each other.

Do you see this as closure on the Ozzy chapter of your life — and maybe even a rebirth since you've been away for so long?

There's a certain amount of closure. For years, in the back of my head, it was like, "I hope I get to see Ozzy one more time." I would've hated for the last time I spoke to him to be in 1987. I wanted to tell him I'm grateful for the opportunity he gave me. [*Back to the Beginning*] was the perfect place to do it — so I did it, and he thanked me. That was a big bucket-list check-off.

Are you working on new music with Red Dragon Cartel?

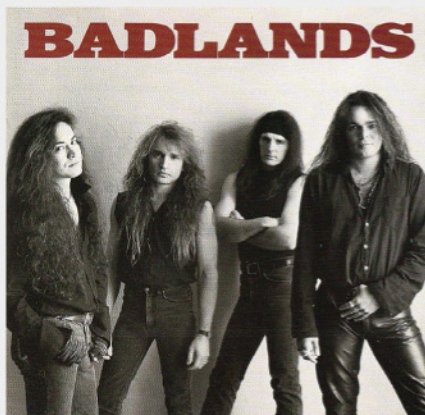
I still write. I quit playing guitar for a couple of years because my wrists were hurting, and when Covid came around, I canceled the last Red Dragon Cartel tour. I said, "Okay, this will give me a break," and I just quit playing guitar for a couple of years.

Where does that leave you as far as recording and touring in the future?

Part of the process now is getting the muscles back into it — but I do still get ideas, usually as I'm falling asleep. [*Laughs*] But I'll get out of bed, pick up the guitar and record them.

What's next?

I'd like to do a tour with Red Dragon Cartel, because we never really got to finish off touring for *Patina*. We got cut off halfway through because of Covid. After that, we'll see. But I like doing guest spots. It's challenging, but Stoney's a friend. I knew I could go in there, and if I played like crap, he'd tell me, "This isn't really up to snuff." I'm open to doing that right now and then getting Red Dragon Cartel out on the road. **GW**



LOST CLASSICS

Badlands

Jake E. Lee recalls the making of Badlands' long-lost debut album

BY ANDREW DALY

ALTHOUGH HIS PLAYING on Ozzy Osbourne's *Bark at the Moon* (1983) and *The Ultimate Sin* (1986) is beloved, Jake E. Lee pulls no punches when it comes to what he feels was his finest hour: 1989's *Badlands*.

"I thought it was perfect," Lee tells *Guitar World*. "There was nothing wrong with it. I didn't know if it would sell, but I knew it was something I would be proud of for the rest of my life."

Lee's love for *Badlands* isn't singular. There's a legion of devotees who feel it was his best work. The album's greatness doesn't just come from the sum of its parts, aka the great songs carried out by Lee, vocalist Ray Gillen, drummer Eric Singer and bassist Greg Chaisson, but because Lee's musical aspiration had been pent up.

"I was getting a little frustrated," Lee says of his latter days with Ozzy Osbourne. "But with Badlands, I could do whatever I wanted. And at that point in time, I was getting really into the blues. And Ray Gillen, when we met up, he wanted to do the same thing. We just did whatever we wanted, and it ended up being more of a blues-rock band."

Unless you were Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Healey, Robert Cray or Eric Clapton, the blues was less popular than hard rock and Hollywood metal in the Eighties. But Lee wasn't interested in diving deep into hair metal and felt that taking a chance on a blues-driven record would give him the creative freedom he sought.

Lee's need for sovereignty was one thing, but he also was brimming with confidence,

leading to a record that oozes six-string-driven machismo. "I don't think a player ever really gets to the point where they think, 'Oh, this is it. I'm it. This is me. I don't need to go any further,' you know?" he says. "You always think you can be a little better."

Most players might never get there, but with Badlands, Lee came closer than most. "Just shy of that," he says. "I did [*get there*]. I was pretty confident in my playing and the band. I thought, 'This is the best band in the world, we'll open for anybody. I don't care who you are, we'll open for you, and we might make you sorry.'"

Songs like "Winter's Call," "Hard Driver" and "Devil's Stomp" tell the story. Lee got his wish and couldn't have been more content. Unfortunately, the behind-the-scenes dealings and the decline of hair metal, as Badlands was inaccurately categorized, contributed to the band's demise in the 1990s. Their albums were pulled from shelves — and digital platforms — for good, at least for now.

Lee looks back on the album fondly, if also despondently. He hopes to get it out back out there for mass consumption one day, though it's probably more or less out of his hands.

"I was really happy," he says. "When it all folded, I was just so heartbroken that I didn't want to do anything anymore. There was a period of a decade where I wasn't doing anything. It was because I was just so heartbroken over what happened with Badlands."

After playing with Ozzy for most of the Eighties, how did you want to approach Badlands?

To be honest, by the end of my tenure with Ozzy, I wanted to branch out more. I always like a hard rock edge to whatever I'm playing, but I wanted to experiment a little more. When I was writing new stuff for [Ozzy's] *The Ultimate Sin* record, a lot of times Ozzy would say, "What's that? That's not Ozzy, that's jazz." I'd say, "It's not jazz, but it's branching out a little bit." Ozzy would say, "No. This isn't Frank Zappa, this is Ozzy Osbourne. Go back and write me something else."

You wanted to do something different. Was your rig much different from what you used with Ozzy?

It was pretty much the same as the latter half of Ozzy with Badlands. I used Gibson SGs; I love SGs, but I felt like my sound was based on using the Charvel. So, it was mostly the white Charvel, and I would sometimes double that with either the purple or blue burst Charvel. And I had two Marshall heads. One was a plexi and the other was an early aluminum-faceplate Marshall, which had more of an edge, while the plexi was warmer. That was my basic rig.

One of the best solos on *Badlands* comes during "Winter's Call." Do you remember putting that together?

I was trying to channel Tommy Bolin. That's the one where the first note in the solo is kind of off. Paul O'Neill was the co-producer for that album, and he said, "Please, that first note, it just throws me for a loop." [Laughs] I said, "I don't want to change it. That's why I like that note so much! I think that note's perfect." He tried bribing me with money. He said, "I'll give you 500 bucks right now out of my wallet, and tickets to see *Cats*, and I'll buy you dinner at the finest restaurant." And he said, "I'm not even saying we'll use another one, I just want to hear one where it's not that weird note." I said, "Nope." I knew if I recorded another one, somehow, that would end up being it.

Did you just like it because it was "wrong" or weird?

I remember I wanted it to be kind of psychedelic-sounding. It's kind of out of tune, but I liked it so much. We kept it, even though it's a little bit out of tune. The feel of it, I thought, was really cool. I go through different modes; there was a Locrian mode in there, a Phrygian, and I was doing all these things to try and sound like I took acid in the Sixties. [Laughs]

"Dreams in the Dark" was the single, and it's probably the most pop-sounding song on the album. How did that come about?

We'd started recording the album in L.A., and halfway through, Atlantic Records said, "We don't hear a single." So me and Ray went back to New York and started writing more songs. "Winter's Call" was one of them, but they didn't hear a single. I just said, "Okay..." Never in my life, before or since, have I tried to write a hit single, but "Dreams in the Dark" was my attempt at writing a pop song. Without having pressure from the record company, I probably never would have written that song – but it's a good song.

"Hard Driver" was the b-side to "Dreams in the Dark" and is more in line with your vision for the record, it seems.

"Hard Driver" was a song I had sitting around. I had presented it to Ozzy for *Bark at the Moon* and *The Ultimate Sin*, but he said he just couldn't come up with anything. So that's a song I'd had since my L.A. days, I think.

Did you find Ray Gillen to be more inspirational to you than Ozzy?

No. I mean I don't want to compare them as singers. Ray was an exceptional singer, a once-in-a-lifetime singer as far as actual ability to sing. But Ozzy is a once-in-a-lifetime singer, too. He's a unique voice. When Ozzy sings, you know it's Ozzy. You don't confuse



Lee with his Charvel in Bloomington, Minnesota, July 9, 1986

him with anybody else. He's blessed to have a unique voice, and his writing and melodies? He'll come up with them right away. He'd sing these melodies right off the bat; he never had to work at it. They just came to him.

Listening back to *Badlands*, as far as the guitars go, there's a lot of bravado. Were you very confident in your playing by then?

Yeah, I was. I was very confident, although I'd never actually considered myself a "shredder" in the true sense. I could [play that way] – and I did – but I always thought there were other aspects of playing, like a more melodic sense, and being more heartfelt, like the solo in "Rumblin' Train."

And that was different from the canned shred that a lot of "hair metal" players were seemingly purchasing off shelves, so to speak.

I'm not going to say I thought I was the best in the world, but I thought I was as good as anybody – well, except for Uli Jon Roth or some insane person like that. I thought my playing was at a level where I was maybe as happy as I could be with it.

There's a legion of fans who feel *Badlands* was the best thing you've ever done.

"As far as creativity and having a band unit, *Badlands* was as good as it ever got"

Do you agree?

The high point of my musical career, really, was *Badlands*. I mean, it was also Ozzy because I was thrown into it from playing clubs and into Ozzy, which was wonderful. But with *Badlands*, as far as creativity, working with other musicians and having a band unit, that was as good as it ever got.

Did you feel that way from the first time you listened back to *Badlands* after wrapping the recording sessions?

The first time I listened back in '89 and heard the finished product, I didn't know if it was going to sell, but I knew it was really, really good. I knew it was, to me, perfect. I worked really hard on the songs, and I was there for everybody while recording. I was there for the mixes, and I thought – and I don't want to sound like an ego man – it was a beautiful piece of art. It's too bad you can't get it anymore, but whatever.

***Badlands* can't be streamed, and physical media isn't available. Are you planning to change that?**

There might be one thing, but I've gotta act on it fast. There might be one way where I can get the masters, and I really need to start working on that because that's it. There's a deadline on that.

There have been a lot of theories, but why has *Badlands* been buried?

It was such a mess, that whole thing. There's been so many theories about why you can't get it, but it was [co-founder and former president of Atlantic Records] Ahmet Ertegun. It was his decree to bury *Badlands*. He said he never wanted us to see the light of day again. He was very upset with Ray, and he had a falling out with Paul O'Neill. I don't know exactly what he said, but Ahmet was so upset with Ray – and this is what I've heard from people that would know – and he made a decree and said, "We're burying *Badlands*. I don't ever want them to see the light of day again. They're history." And he was the man. It was his record company.

What's your outlook on this music, which clearly meant a lot to you, seeing the light of day again?

Who knows? I imagine that someday, depending on who's present at the label, someone will say, "We've punished them enough." There's potential for making money here because lots of people would love to see that album out again. There's a lot of interest in it. The fact that it's so buried and hard to get has added somewhat to its legend. But eventually, because this is the way corporations go, somebody's gonna say, "We'll make some money off it. Let's put it out again." I hope! **GW**



Diary of a Madman

The unique life and (very) high times of John "Ozzy" Osbourne

BY JOEL McIVER

WITHOUT A SINGLE doubt, the most familiar character in heavy metal, the late Ozzy Osbourne, was presented to the public as a madman, a maniac and a court jester whose life was a constant ricochet from one chaotic episode to another. There was a degree of truth to this exaggerated persona – in his younger years, Ozzy was definitely prone to extreme actions when under the influence of alcohol or drugs – but he also earned our sympathy for his flaws, our admiration for his music and our respect for his talent for recognizing guitar genius.

Born John Michael Osbourne in the war-damaged suburb of Aston in Birmingham, England, on December 3, 1948, Ozzy (as we'll call him from now on) was one of six children to Jack and Lillian Osbourne, a toolmaker and factory worker. At school he enjoyed acting in drama productions and, quitting education at age 15, became a singer in various short-lived Aston bands. He was also a part-time criminal, if an ineffective one; he was jailed twice, once for stealing clothes and again for punching a police officer in the face. The Army wouldn't take him

("They told me to fuck off," he later admitted) and he was obliged to take on a sequence of terrible jobs, including one in an abattoir and another in the truly hellish environment of a car-horn factory.

Ozzy first sang alongside guitarist Tony Iommi, bassist Terence "Geezer" Butler and drummer Bill Ward in the Polka Tulk Blues Band, renamed Polka Tulk and then Earth before borrowing their permanent name from the 1963 horror film *Black Sabbath*. Iommi was

According to rock 'n' roll lore, Black Sabbath recorded their first, Rodger Bain-produced album for a miserly £600 (of Simpson's money) on a four-track machine. An aspiring engineer on the LP, laid down in London's Tottenham Court Road, was Tom Allom, later to find fame as a platinum-status producer for Judas Priest. Black Sabbath went on to define a whole new genre of music, with thick, industrial riffing and intimidating devices such as the flattened

It's highly arguable that Ozzy never recovered from the March 1982 death of Randy Rhoads, his brilliant young guitarist

briefly recruited by the folk-rock act Jethro Tull, leaving Sabbath for two weeks and appearing on screen in *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* film alongside John Lennon, the Who and other stars of 1968. Returning to Sabbath after a falling-out with Tull's Ian Anderson, Iommi instated a strict rehearsal schedule for Osbourne, Butler and Ward, elevating the nascent heavy metal band's professionalism and signing with a manager, Jim Simpson. A deal with Vertigo followed.

fifth, or tritone, that made the title track both memorable and spooky. Ozzy's role in all this was to deliver Butler's creepy lyrics in an untrained monotone and to stalk the stage while exhorting Sabbath's steadily growing crowds to "go fuckin' mental," a catchphrase he would reuse for the next 50 years.

In 1970 Sabbath released their second album, *Paranoid*, with the title track becoming their biggest chart single to date. Was it a ripoff of Led Zeppelin's



Ozzy Osbourne gets down to business with Tony Iommi (already with his Gibson/Laney setup) in 1969

"Communication Breakdown"? You decide. Meanwhile, "Hand of Doom," "Fairies Wear Boots" and the almighty "Iron Man" gained them a new coterie of fans, especially after the band completed their first U.S. tour in the autumn, supporting Canned Heat, the Faces, Love and the James Gang. On a later American run in 1971, Sabbath took Yes and, perhaps oddly, Fleetwood Mac out as opening acts.

This was Sabbath's golden period, with 1971's *Master of Reality*, '72's *Vol. 4* and the utterly sumptuous *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* (1973) elevating them to the upper echelons of metal, although fans and critics referred to classic songs such as "Sweet Leaf," "Children of the Grave," "Into the Void," "Supernaut," "Snowblind" and "Spiral Architect" as "acid rock" and other groovy terms at the time.

The downsides (cocaine binges, writer's block, exhaustion, the beginnings of addiction) were obvious by the time *Sabotage* — high points of which included "Hole in the Sky" and "Symptom of the Universe" — rolled around in 1975. Still, career high points were many; Sabbath's show-stealing appearance at the California Jam festival the previous year, alongside Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Deep Purple, had been witnessed by more than 250,000 people.

No band could maintain this level of momentum, especially as Sabbath were being ripped off on all sides by management and

their record label, and the quality slipped with 1976's experimental *Technical Ecstasy*. Ozzy actually quit in September 1977 and attempted to put together a solo band while Sabbath recruited the little-known Dave Walker as his replacement. Persuaded to

return for 1978's sub-par *Never Say Die!*, its title indicative of the group's depressed state, Ozzy did his level best despite his fondness for booze and substances. His efforts were in vain; the album failed to impress fans, who now had an energetic new form of music to listen to — punk rock.

More or less impossible to work with by this point, Ozzy was fired in 1979 and promptly sank into a bottle, only rescued by Sharon Levy, daughter of the terrifying manager Don Arden, who took over his affairs and encouraged him back on his feet. Success as a solo career seemed unlikely for Ozzy, especially as Sabbath were taking a leap forward with their new singer Ronnie James Dio. Still, Sharon — now his girlfriend, and later his wife — helped Ozzy to assemble a new band, the Blizzard of Ozz, featuring bassist and lyric-writer Bob Daisley, drummer Lee Kerslake and the ace in the pack, former Quiet Riot guitarist Randy Rhoads.

It cannot be overstated how improbable it was that their 1980 self-titled debut album went on to become a milestone release, eventually earning five platinum certifications in the U.S. Some of its success was down to the excellent single "Crazy Train," a showcase for Rhoads' rhythm and lead playing; its tendency toward radio-friendly hard rock, a much more digestible recipe than the sluggish riffing of Sabbath, also paid off handsomely.



Ozzy lays down a vocal track with Black Sabbath in the early Seventies

ELLEN POPPING - K & K/REDFERNS, CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE



Osbourne with Randy Rhoads, August 14, 1981. "Randy didn't really have any weaknesses," Ozzy said. "I was the one that needed work"



Ozzy in *The Ultimate Sin* mode, 1986

The group, now simply named after Ozzy – to Daisley's permanent annoyance, as his subsequent interviews reveal – quickly recorded *Diary of a Madman*, essentially a companion piece to *Blizzard of Ozz* that placed Rhoads even more prominently in the spotlight. Released in 1981, the LP was followed by a 14-month tour of North America, with Rudy Sarzo (also ex-Quiet Riot) and Tommy Aldridge (ex-Black Oak Arkansas) replacing Daisley and Kerslake. Attention to Ozzy was now growing, thanks to incidents such as a May '81 meeting at CBS Records in which the singer bit the head off a dove, for reasons best known to himself.

The *Diary of a Madman* tour was a turning point for Ozzy for two reasons. In January 1982, at a concert in Des Moines, Iowa, he picked up what he assumed was a rubber bat from the stage and gave it the full dove treatment, chewing its head off. This proved to be a poor choice as he was obliged to endure a series of agonizing rabies shots afterwards. While the incident was macabre but amusing, genuine tragedy struck when Rhoads died in a plane crash in Leesburg, Florida, on March 19. Ozzy's tourbus driver, Andrew Aycock, took Rhoads for a spin in a light aircraft before losing control, reportedly (but not provably so) under the influence of cocaine.

It's highly arguable that Ozzy never recovered from this loss, as the extended tribute to Rhoads that we witnessed at the Back to the

Beginning show this past July 5 revealed. His music certainly changed after 1982, for better or worse, depending on your point of view, and indeed, a useful way to view his 13-album solo catalog is to divide it into eras by guitarist – the Rhoads era, the Jake E. Lee era, the Zakk Wylde and Gus G eras, and so on.

With that understood, there were certain axemen who couldn't cut it for whatever reason – the pressure of following Rhoads and the stress of working alongside the traumatized Ozzy, for example – such as

Ozzy's music. A year later, McCollum's parents filed suit against Ozzy and CBS, alleging that the song "Suicide Solution" from *Blizzard of Ozz* had directly contributed to their son's death. As the song had been penned by Daisley about Ozzy's alcohol problems, the case was thrown out of court, but not before generating reams of negative press.

In July 1985, the world's largest rock event, Live Aid, was the catalyst for an original but brief Black Sabbath reunion. Although it was a one-off event, the original quartet took to the

A useful way to view Ozzy's 13-album solo catalog is to divide it into eras by guitarist — Rhoads, Lee, Wylde, Gus G, and so on

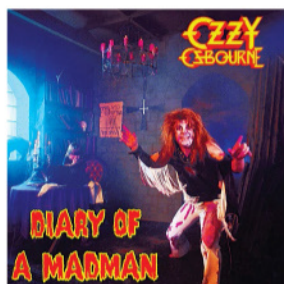
Bernie Tormé and Brad Gillis, who each held down a brief position in the band, and even George Lynch, who was a potential candidate before Jake E. Lee stepped up in late '82.

Lee's first vinyl outing with Ozzy was 1983's Max Norman-produced *Bark at the Moon*, which emerged with an elaborate sleeve shot of the singer in full werewolf costume. Lee was joined by Aldridge, keyboardist Don Airey and a returning Daisley, the latter contributing heavily on the lyrical front. Tragedy came later in '84 with the death of a 19-year-old fan, John D. McCollum, who committed suicide with a handgun after spending a day listening to

stage for a brief, three-song set – "Children of the Grave," "Iron Man" and "Paranoid" – in Philadelphia before Ozzy returned to the studio in 1986 to create the Ron Nevison-produced *The Ultimate Sin*. This LP's polished sound and songwriting tied in neatly with the then-current hair-metal trend, gaining him his highest chart placing yet in North America and the U.K. A new bassist, Phil Soussan, co-wrote the single "Shot in the Dark," Ozzy's biggest-selling solo single to date.

1986 also included a U.S. tour with Metallica in support; the young stars-in-waiting, then hot as a pistol with their third album, *Master of Puppets*, correctly credited that tour in later years as the one that broke them into metal's major league.

As 1987 drew to a close, Jake E. Lee was fired – later turning up in the commendable Badlands – and the process of locating an able replacement was begun. Auditions whittled down hundreds of hopefuls to a list including Vinnie Moore, Chris Impellitteri, Mitch Perry, Nick Nolan, Joe Holmes and Steve Fister of Lita Ford's band. One of the very last guitarists to attend, recommended by the rock





Ozzy in 1995, during the era of *Ozzmosis*, an album that neatly bridged his "old" and "new" iterations

photographer Mark Weiss, was the 21-year-old Jeffrey "Zakk Wylde" Wielandt. Ozzy's gift for choosing exceptional guitarists hadn't waned, and Wylde got the gig.

1990's *No More Tears* was Ozzy's high point, alongside the Rhoads albums, as a solo artist. It featured songwriting by Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead on four songs, one of which, "Mama, I'm Coming Home," became a major hit. Ozzy announced that his next tour would be his last, not for the first time, causing fans to speculate about a Sabbath reunion; however, neither reunion nor retirement took place despite a heavily-publicized "final" show in Costa Mesa, California, in November 1992.

In 1995, Ozzy returned with the *Ozzmosis* album, which neatly bridged his "old" and "new" iterations, segueing into the pre-millennial, post-grunge moment by which point a new generation of classic rock fans were ready to pay homage. What really sealed the deal, commercially speaking, was his wife Sharon's Ozzfest project, an annual touring metal festival that soon completely outperformed

existing entities such as Lollapalooza, and which ran in some form or other until 2018. By now Ozzy's band featured Joe Holmes on guitar, as Zakk Wylde had temporarily fallen from favor, plus the future Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo and Faith No More drummer Mike Bordin. A short reunion of Black Sabbath in late 1997 gave a boost to Ozzy's career resurgence, as did that band's appearances on subsequent Ozzfests.

We remember Ozzy Osbourne as perhaps the last real star of the original heavy metal movement

From this point on, churlish as it might seem to compress a quarter-century of music into a few short lines, Ozzy's trajectory was simpler — musically speaking, at least. Zakk Wylde returned for 2001's *Down to Earth* and *Black Rain* in 2007, with an adequate covers album called, well, *Under Cover*, keeping fans on board between those releases.

Ozzy's TV career was more prominent than his musical endeavors at this point, if we're honest, as the huge success of the MTV production *The Osbournes* made him, Sharon and their kids household names. A huge audience of viewers, many of whom had never heard of Black Sabbath or Randy Rhoads, climbed willingly aboard the now much-less-crazy train. Ozzy's later albums, *Scream* (2010, featuring Firewind guitarist Gus G), the all-star *Ordinary Man* (2020) and his final studio outing, *Patient Number 9* (2022) were perfectly decent, if unremarkable, works.

By the mid-2000s, Ozzy's health had become an issue. While *The Osbournes* sometimes portrayed him as a buffoon with a noticeable tremor, and a fall in 2001 had left him with a broken leg, the truth is that he was in relatively good shape before 2004, when a quad-bike accident at his English home caused serious damage to his spine. He recovered most of his strength, however, and was able to score a chart hit with a cover of Sabbath's 1972 song "Changes," sung as a duet with his daughter Kelly, as well as appearing at Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and other high-profile events. Tours and festival dates took Ozzy as far as the pandemic, which essentially ended his live career. He also was battling Parkin syndrome, an affliction similar

to Parkinson's disease, by that stage.

This brings us to Back to the Beginning, Ozzy's literal last act, and therefore that of Black Sabbath. This star-studded, Live Aid-style event was announced in early 2025 and scheduled for July 5 at Villa Park in Aston, symbolizing a full career circle. Scepticism was high among fans who had been disappointed by the repeated tour cancellations Ozzy had been forced to issue in recent years, but to everyone's surprise, the live-streamed event — featuring two supergroups, plus a raft of bands including Metallica, Slayer, Guns N' Roses, Pantera and Tool, supporting Ozzy's solo and Sabbath sets — went off without a hitch. It raised millions for local charities and was a bona fide triumph, made poignant when Ozzy died, suddenly and unexpectedly, 17 days later. He was 76 years old and departed surrounded by his family.

We remember Ozzy Osbourne as perhaps the last real star of the original heavy metal movement, his bandmates in Black Sabbath aside. We also remember him as a human being — with all the flaws and frailties that you'd expect, plus a few more that you wouldn't. Raise your glass to him. **GW**



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Randy Rhoads does his thing
at an Ozzy show somewhere
in the U.K. in 1980

Rock and Roll Rebels

As metal's biggest advocate of new rock guitar talent, Ozzy Osbourne changed the world

BY CHRIS GILL

MUSIC FANS KNEW Ozzy Osbourne as the Prince of Darkness or maybe even the Messiah of Metal, but among the hard-rock guitar community, he'll always be remembered as the Godfather of Heavy Guitar. Thanks to his impeccable taste, discerning ear and a perfect 1,000 batting record when choosing great guitarists for his bands, Ozzy introduced the world to an incredible roster of phenomenal players that he hand-picked from the underground and boldly brought into the mainstream during his 45-plus years as a solo artist. This is a big reason that *Guitar World* – a publication for guitar players – frequently interviewed and featured Ozzy on its covers and is celebrating him today, even though he never played the instrument himself.

The amount of great guitar music that Ozzy gifted metal aficionados over the course of 18 studio and live albums, plus nearly two dozen headlining and Ozzfest tours, is staggering. Even during the mid-Nineties and early 2000s when solos fell out of fashion, fans of great guitar music could always turn to Ozzy

to get their fix. It's no wonder that a Who's Who roster of guitarists showed up to perform at the Back to the Beginning tribute concert to show their deep respect for Ozzy and his immortal contributions to guitar culture.

Randy Rhoads

Black Sabbath fired Osbourne in April 1979 while in the middle of recording an album in Los Angeles, but Ozzy defiantly returned to Hollywood a few months later hell bent on finding a new guitarist for his first post-Sabbath band. The memory of Van Halen blowing Sabbath off stage on tour in 1978 was still fresh in his memory, so he thought it might be a good idea to plunder the same Sunset Strip club scene that Eddie Van

Halen emerged from. There certainly was no shortage of bona fide guitar talent in L.A. at the time, but by fate and fortuitous timing he ended up with the best of the best, a 22-year-old phenomenon named Randy Rhoads, who was in the process of leaving his band, Quiet Riot, and looking for new opportunities.

Ozzy's Hollywood gambit paid off as Rhoads was everything the singer sought and more – a virtuoso player who could shred, tap and whammy dive like Van Halen but was also a master of advanced classical music-inspired minor, diatonic, Dorian and Aeolian scales, chromatic runs and trills.

Rhoads developed these advanced skills via his obsessive study of music theory and as a guitar instructor at his mother's music school in North Hollywood. After he found fame in Ozzy's band, his melodically intricate solos inspired many rock guitarists to study music theory and seek advanced instruction at institutions like G.I.T. and the Berklee College of Music during the Eighties.

Equally importantly, Rhoads was an adept songwriter who crafted a multitude of phenomenal riffs that became the foundation of early hits like "Crazy Train," "Mr. Crowley" ■

Ozzy introduced the world to an incredible roster of phenomenal players hand-picked from the underground

and "I Don't Know," recorded for Ozzy's 1980 solo debut album, *Blizzard of Ozz*.

The significant role that Rhoads played in Osbourne's phenomenal early success as a solo artist cannot be overstated. Osbourne was already a heavy metal legend, but Rhoads' charismatic stage presence and dazzling guitar playing brought superstar energy to Ozzy's live shows and albums. With Rhoads by his side, there was no way any other band was going to blow Ozzy off stage ever again.

The 1981 release of Osbourne's sophomore effort, *Diary of a Madman*, helped cement Rhoads' reputation as a guitar legend, thanks to his brilliant rhythm and lead playing on songs like "Flying High Again" and "Over the Mountain." Around this time, Rhoads reached out to luthier Grover Jackson at Charvel Guitars to collaborate on the design of the Concorde model, featuring a sleek asymmetrical V "shark fin" shape, neck-thru-body construction and Strat-style vintage tremolo. In addition to being the first guitar to feature the Jackson name on its headstock, this model (which eventually was named the RR model) still remains a very popular choice for metal guitarists today.

Unfortunately, Rhoads' time in the spotlight was cut short when he was killed in a private plane crash on March 19, 1982, at age 25. Gone but never forgotten, Rhoads continues to inspire guitarists today via the two studio albums he recorded with Ozzy plus the live *Tribute* album. His incredibly tasteful, melodic and distinctive playing style remains as emotionally exciting and technically exhilarating as it was when he first blew listeners away in the early Eighties.

Bernie Tormé

Osbourne wasn't given even a full two weeks to mourn Randy Rhoads' death before he had to continue his 1982 tour, which included huge commitments like an April 5 show at Madison Square Garden. The combination of grief, alcohol and poor communication with his label, Jet Records, resulted in a confusing scramble to hire Rhoads' replacement.

Bassist Rudy Sarzo recommended his brother Robert for the gig, and Ozzy accepted the offer, but unbeknownst to them Jet Records had already hired British rocker/former Gillan member Bernie Tormé to fill the lead guitar spot. Because Jet had already paid Tormé a sizable advance, Osbourne decided not to challenge his label's decision. Tormé was undeniably an excellent rock guitarist, but his bluesy, Jimi Hendrix-inspired sound wasn't an ideal match for Ozzy's post-Sabbath material. He played only seven shows on the 1982 tour before being replaced.

Brad Gillis

The decision to replace Tormé was made

Ozzy with Bernie Tormé at NYC's Madison Square Garden, April 5, 1982



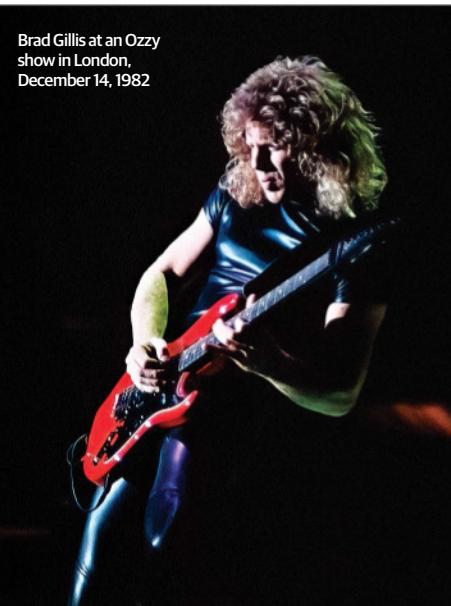
after his first show with Ozzy's band. Brad Gillis most likely got the audition when an A&R rep at CBS Records (Jet's U.S. distributor) recommended him. Night Ranger's impressive demo tape had recently circulated as the band sought a deal, and Gillis' incendiary playing caught attention across the music industry. Gillis flew to New York to try out for the band — he was the

only guitarist asked to audition — and he immediately landed the gig.

Gillis had only five days to learn the material before playing his first show with Ozzy. "When I joined the band, it was quite a heavy situation," Gillis told Greg Prato in 2021. "After the sad death of Randy Rhoads, the band was going through a lot of emotional stress throughout the rest of the tour."

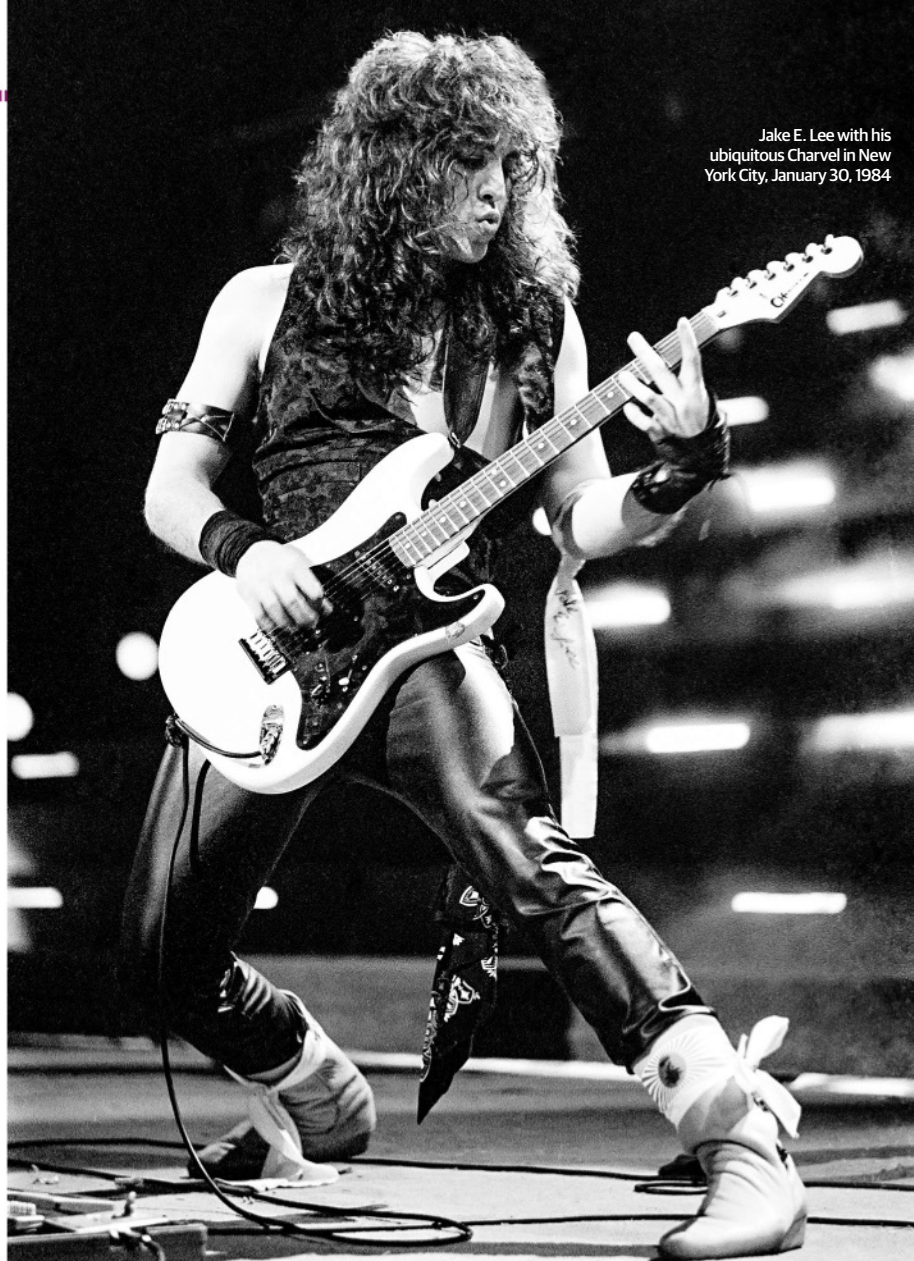
Gillis toured with Osbourne from April 13 through December 20, 1982. During that time, he recorded the live album *Speak of the Devil*, which consisted entirely of Black Sabbath material recorded in September 1982 at a pair of special shows at the Ritz, an intimate 1,000-capacity theatre in New York City. Gillis' performance of Black Sabbath classics pulled off the amazing feat of simultaneously evoking both Iommi and Rhoads while showcasing his own signature shred licks and whammy bar tricks.

Speak of the Devil and Night Ranger's debut album, *Dawn Patrol*, were released the same week in late November 1982, a one-two punch that helped Gillis establish his reputation as a guitar hero seemingly overnight. Faced with the choice of carrying on with Ozzy or forging



Brad Gillis at an Ozzy show in London, December 14, 1982

Jake E. Lee with his ubiquitous Charvel in New York City, January 30, 1984



1983 through February 1987, when manager Sharon Osbourne abruptly fired him shortly after the band played a special homeless benefit concert at the Hollywood Palladium. After decades of silence, Ozzy reached out to Jake after the guitarist was shot while walking near his Las Vegas home on October 15, 2024, and the two reunited in person when Lee was invited to perform at the July 5 Back to the Beginning concert.

Zakk Wylde

Born and bred in New Jersey, Zakk Wylde entered Ozzy's orbit in the most Jersey way possible – by hearing about the opening on *The Howard Stern Show*. He was only 20 years old in 1987 when he got the gig, but his impeccable chops and outrageous onstage attitude made him a perfect addition to and continuation of Osbourne's guitar legacy.

When Wylde joined the band he was a bit of a pretty boy, with long straight blonde locks and a slim physique accented by tight-fitting flared trousers – a look that attracted legions of female fans during the height of hair metal's popularity during the late Eighties. However, the sounds that he summoned from his white Gibson Les Paul Custom, equipped with EMG active pickups and adorned with bullseye graphics, were tough, violent and aggressive, with tight, mechanically precise rhythms influenced by thrash metal and stupefying solos that rivaled those of the most esteemed shred gods.

Although no one ever quite matched the reverence that Ozzy held for Randy Rhoads, Wylde came the closest as Ozzy's main partner in crime on and off for almost four decades. He held Osbourne's lead

his own path with Night Ranger, Gillis chose the latter by the end of 1982.

Jake E. Lee

Like Randy Rhoads, Jake E. Lee was a product of the Hollywood club scene, playing in bands like Ratt and Rough Cutt before those bands got signed. Ironically, when Lee got the call to audition for Ozzy the guitarist had just recently left the band that Ronnie James Dio (Ozzy's replacement in Black Sabbath) formed after quitting Black Sabbath.

Lee's flashy and flamboyant style helped him earn a reputation as a worthy successor to Rhoads with his own distinctive personality. His solos on Osbourne songs often featured wild harmonic squeals and wide bends, but he also delivered sophisticated melodic flair as heard on his slide parts for "Shot in the Dark" and his solo for the power ballad "So Tired." Unlike Rhoads and Gillis, who made frequent use of their guitars' vibrato bars, Lee preferred to use fixed bridges even though his weapon of choice was a superstrat. He

also used effects like delay and flanging more prominently than his predecessors.

Lee's songwriting contributions, which were uncredited on the *Bark at the Moon* album, helped Ozzy maintain multi-Platinum success during the mid-Eighties. On stage with Osbourne he was a commanding presence who never missed a note as he swaggered about. Ozzy maintained his status as one of the top-drawing live acts of the mid-Eighties thanks in part to Lee's supporting showmanship.

Lee recorded *Bark at the Moon* and *The Ultimate Sin* and toured with Ozzy from

On stage with Ozzy, Lee was a commanding presence who never missed a note as he swaggered about

Zakk Wylde on stage in Illinois, July 12, 1989



guitar spot on stage and in the studio from 1987-1995, 2001-2007 and 2017-2025 and is considered by many fans as the penultimate player of Ozzy's solo career. His contributions to the *No Rest for the Wicked* (1988), *No More Tears* (1991) and *Ozzmosis* (1995) albums on songs like "Miracle Man," "Crazy Babies" "Perry Mason" and especially the soaring slide work and epic solo of "No More Tears" have aged like fine Kentucky Bourbon sitting for decades in a charred French oak cask.

As Zakk transitioned from his late-Eighties /mid-Nineties glam dandy look to his current bearded biker-meets-Viking image in the late Nineties, his sound became heavier and tougher as well, which enabled Ozzy to maintain acceptance and relevance amongst the increasingly extreme legions of metal fans going into the new millennium. Wylde and Osbourne's collaborative output on later albums like *Down to Earth* (2001), *Black Rain* (2007) and *Patient Number 9* (2022) greatly benefit from Zakk's flash and finesse.

Wylde enjoyed considerable success in various bands and projects outside of Ozzy, including Pride and Glory, Black Label Society, Zakk Sabbath and currently as a member of Pantera. A consummate fan of great guitar playing regardless of musical genre, Wylde has displayed his command of a wide variety of styles like Southern rock, country and fusion via solo efforts that didn't mesh with Osbourne's musical persona.

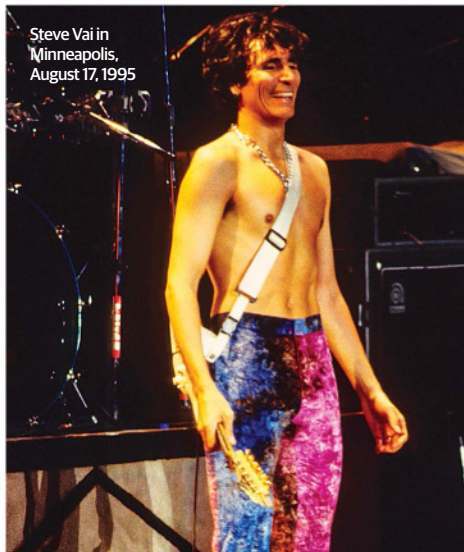
Steve Vai/Alex Skolnik

Although Ozzy announced his retirement with his not-so-subtle-titled *No More Tours* concerts in 1992, everyone knows that old rock stars never retire; they just go into rehab. Sure enough, by 1994 news leaked that Osbourne was in the studio again. Even more fascinating was the rumor that he was collaborating with guitar legend Steve Vai. Unfortunately, Ozzy's record company was not as excited about the prospect as guitar fans were.

"I was writing heavy stuff in C tuning with an octave divider," Vai told Marc Allan in 1995. "Your testicles grew big just listening to it. It scared the shit out of the record company. They were like, 'Ay, ay, ay, get rid of Vai.'"

All of Vai's work on the album got scrapped, although one of the songs he wrote – "My Little Man" – later appeared on *Ozzmosis* with Zakk Wylde playing the electric sitar part Vai penned.

When Wylde declined an invitation to join Ozzy's 1995 "Retirement Sucks" tour in favor of pursuing his solo career, former Testament and Savatage guitarist Alex Skolnik landed the gig. However, his tenure in the band lasted for only one show – June 9, 1995, in Nottingham, England. On Instagram, Skolnik recalled, "Although it was very brief, I got to



spend a week or so in Ozzy's orbit. He'd been through many guitarists post Zakk, but I was one of the only ones to play a live concert with him (with Geezer on bass, still pinching myself). What an honor – beyond grateful for the brief but profound memory."

Joe Holmes

Having to fill the roles of Randy Rhoads, Jake E. Lee and Zakk Wylde is an intimidating challenge, but Joe Holmes was up for the task when he joined Ozzy's band in 1995. In addition to previously touring in 1991 with David Lee Roth, where he performed guitar parts immortalized by Eddie Van Halen,

Steve Vai and Jason Becker, he also had the advantage of being one of Rhoads' guitar students in 1979.

"I stopped going to school for 43 days so I could fully absorb everything Randy was teaching me," Holmes says. "That gave me such a strong foundation. He taught me how to break up the phrasing of my solos rhythmically, which is so much more musical and interesting than just playing as fast as you can. That always stuck with me."

When Holmes joined the band, he initially played alongside Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler and drummer Deen Castronovo before the roster switched to future-Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo and drummer Mike Bordin. That lineup injected Ozzy's live shows with an impressive blend of heaviness, chops and explosive energy that kept Osbourne and his music relevant during the musically challenging post-grunge era. Joe's uncanny ability to play Rhoads' solos with note-for-note perfection and identical phrasing paid proper tribute to the departed legend.

Holmes played early Seventies Fender Strats heavily modified with Floyd Rose double-locking vibratos, Jackson J80 bridge humbuckers and minimalist controls consisting of a single volume knob and pickup selector switch. Ozzy took Holmes on numerous tours between 1995 and 2000, including the first Ozzfests, but they never recorded much together as Ozzy split commitments between solo tours and the Black Sabbath reunion. Three songs Holmes co-wrote – "Junkie," "That I Never Had"





and “Can You Hear Them?” — appeared on Ozzy’s 2001 release *Down to Earth*, but Wylde returned to the band before the sessions. The best artifact of Holmes’ stint with Ozzy is a 1996 live recording of “Perry Mason” featured on the *Ozzfest Live* compilation.

More recently, Holmes released the stellar *Farmikos* album in 2015 and he is preparing to release a new album in late 2025, which will include the epic psychedelic metal track “The Deadfall” released digitally earlier this year.

Gus G

Greek guitarist Gus G developed a cult following playing with his band Firewind and several other European metal bands on the festival circuit during the 2000s before he joined Ozzy’s band in 2009. Gus brought power metal and black metal influences to Osbourne’s sound, which helped the singer update his image and remain as relevant as ever. After playing a handful of shows with Ozzy in 2009, Gus G made his full-fledged mainstream debut as the dark lord’s new guitarist on the 2010 studio album *Scream*.

Although *Scream* was Ozzy’s first solo album of original material that failed to achieve RIAA Gold or Platinum certification status, the album peaked at an impressive Number 4 on the *Billboard* 200 album chart and the single “Let Me Hear You Scream” was Osbourne’s second single ever to top the Mainstream Rock chart. For those who missed it the first time around, *Scream* is highly recommended for Gus G’s blazing fast alternate-picking Aeolian, Dorian and Phrygian mode solos and monstrous rhythm guitar textures, which helped Ozzy sound fresh, vital and modern a full three decades after *Blizzard of Ozz*.

Gus G continuously remained Ozzy’s lead guitarist from August 2009 through April 2017, the second-longest stint for a guitarist in Osbourne’s band behind Zakk Wylde.



Ozzy and Gus G in action in San Antonio, Texas, January 24, 2011, and [left] on GW’s August 2010 cover

Gus G brought new influences to Ozzy’s sound, which helped the singer remain as relevant as ever

However, like Joe Holmes, he often had to sit on the sidelines while Osbourne shifted his focus to his second reunion with Black Sabbath, including the recording of Sabbath’s final studio album, *13*. He played fewer than a dozen shows with Ozzy during 2014-15 and parted ways with the singer when Osbourne decided to reunite with Zakk Wylde for his 2017-18 farewell tour.

Studio guests

Late in his career, Osbourne invited numerous highly esteemed guitarists to make guest appearances on his albums, which further established Ozzy’s role as a major force in the guitar community. In 2005, Jerry Cantrell was the main guitarist on *Under Cover*, a collection of covers of Osbourne’s favorite songs from the Sixties and Seventies. Leslie West also revisited his solo on “Mississippi Queen,” Robert Randall played pedal steel and guitar on two tracks and Michael Landau and Joe Bonamassa made unspecified contributions.

In 2020, Ozzy recorded *Ordinary Man* with producer Andrew Watt, who was the primary guitarist on

Ozzy and Andrew Watt appeared on the newsstand and subscriber versions of GW’s May 2020 cover

the record, which also featured guests Slash (“Straight to Hell” and “Ordinary Man”) and Tom Morello (“Scary Little Green Men” and “It’s a Raid”). Watt returned to the producer and guitar chair for 2022’s *Patient Number 9*. A star-studded cast of guitarists made cameo appearances on Ozzy’s final studio effort. The solos that Jeff Beck played on the title track and “A Thousand Shades” were among the British legend’s last recordings, also earning him his final Grammy nomination. Eric Clapton (“One of Those Days”), Josh Homme (“God Only Knows”), Tony Iommi (“No Escape from Now”) and Mike McCready (“Immortal”) also provided vital six-string support. **GW**



Brad Gillis Dials it Back to the Beginning...

BY ANDREW DALY



One of many Polaroid pics of Brad Gillis (left) and Ozzy during Ozzy's '82 tour

BELOW, BRAD GILLIS remembers the day Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne asked him to fill Randy Rhoads' spot in Ozzy's band.

What are your memories of first meeting Ozzy?

Two weeks after the tragic death of Randy, I received an early morning phone call from Sharon and Ozzy asking me to fly to NYC to join the band. I told Ozzy I only knew a few songs but would learn them ASAP. I got my first guitar when I was 8 and learned by ear, and I could emulate Randy's awesome solos after a bit.

Did you gel with Ozzy immediately?

After flying to New York, I had a casual introduction to Ozzy at a large private party in Ozzy's Helmsley Palace Hotel Presidential Suite. Earlier that night, Ozzy had played Madison Square Garden with Bernie Tormé. Ozzy told me to go grab my guitar. I ran down the stairwell to my room — I was too excited to

take the elevator — grabbed my 1962 red Strat and ran back up to the suite. He had me follow him up the stairway to the master bedroom to play for him. I sat on the edge of the bed while he sat cross-legged on the floor in front of me.

Which song did you play?

"Flying High Again" with no amp. He jumped up after I finished the solo and gave me a hug. He cried out, "I love you, Bradley — pull me through." I told him I was there for him and would do my best to help finish the tour. He opened up the master-bedroom-suite door and yelled down to the crowd, "I've got a new fucking guitar player." It was crazy and surreal. Me, a 24-year-old newbie about to join the Ozzy Osbourne band! The next day, I was given two live board cassette tapes with Randy, a boombox and small amp to start learning all the material. I gave them the green light four days later. My first show was sold out in Binghamton, New York, April 13, 1982. I had no stage clothes, and they supplied me with a white Ferrari jumpsuit. I later found a black one and switched it out before the show.

Why do you think Ozzy chose you?

Pure luck! I was playing a few Ozzy tunes in a San Francisco Bay Area club band called the Alameda All Stars while Night Ranger was shopping a record deal. The word spread that I was interested in possibly joining to help finish the *Diary* [of a Madman] tour. I never thought I'd even be considered. My guitar playing reached the ears of Preston Thrall, who vouched for my playing, and he told his brother Pat Thrall, who then told Tommy Aldridge. Sharon took their word, and I got the call.

What did Ozzy expect from his guitar players?

I was never specifically told what to play, but I knew my job was to replicate Randy to the best of my ability. Every show was sold out, and they just needed to get through the tour. I recall screwing up the middle section of "Revelation (Mother Earth)" during my first show. Before my second show, Sharon came to me and said, "Try not to fuck up tonight."

What did you bring to Ozzy's sound?

When I joined the band, I only had my guitar and played through Randy's amps and pedalboard. About a week into the tour, I had my Mesa Boogie amps sent out and played through Marshall cabs. Randy's style was different from mine, so I had to learn his licks. I slowly brought in slight whammy bar inflections into the solos.



Gillis in action on Long Island in 2018



Ozzy with a shaved and (not really) bloody head in Dallas, August '82

KINDLY SUPPLIED BY BRAD GILLIS, MIKE PONT/GETTY IMAGES



Ozzy and Gillis in action in 1982

You probably had – and maybe still have – tapes of Randy playing to help you learn. Will you ever release them?

No, those tapes are sacred to me. Learning Randy's parts was a challenge. I'd sit in my hotel room all day and practice to the live tapes then head to the show and watch Bernie and the band from the soundboard. I'll never forget the soundman looking over at me, laughing, saying, "You're next, buddy."

Do you have any wild memories from your tour with Ozzy?

Too many to tell. [Laughs] But in August 1982, Ozzy showed up with a shaved head for the Cotton Bowl gig in Dallas. They bought him a blonde wig to match his hair color, and

Rudy [Sarzo] cut it to copy his hairstyle. We thought it would be awesome to have fake blood on his scalp and rip his wig off very slowly in front of 80,000 people. Every mouth dropped. He pulled it off like the pro that he was. [Laughs]

Do you regret leaving Ozzy's band and not making a studio album with him?

I have no regrets. We did record the live show at Irvine Meadows that was released on MTV and then via VHS. We also played the Ritz in NYC to record live Black Sabbath material for the *Speak of the Devil [live]* record. At the end of the year, Rudy left Ozzy to rejoin Quiet Riot. My band Night Ranger just secured its first record deal. I felt the writing was on the wall – it was time to rejoin Night Ranger and build something special of our own.

Did you stay in touch with Ozzy?

I didn't keep in touch, but he did stop by a Night Ranger recording session in L.A.

Where do you think your career might have gone if you'd never met or played

with Ozzy?

Who knows? I'm amazed I was offered that gig. Being hired under those tragic circumstances and by word of mouth is just crazy, but I was chosen to hop aboard that crazy train! **CW**



Ozzy with the wig he ripped off to reveal that not-so-bloody head (see facing page)

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Missing the Crazy Train

We know about the star guitarists who played with Ozzy's band over his four-decade career — but what about the guys (and gals) who didn't make the grade?

BY ANDREW DALY

FEW VOCALISTS IN history are as synonymous with guitar heroics as Ozzy Osbourne. Starting with Tony Iommi and somehow also connecting with Randy Rhoads, Brad Gillis, Jake E. Lee, Zakk Wylde and so many other greats (see page 52), when it comes to six-stringers, Ozzy knew how to pick 'em.

But what about the coulda-beens, shoulda-beens and never-beens? You know — the “close, but no cigar” gang? So many top-notch guitarists have told tales of auditioning for Ozzy and, for one reason or another, not being the right fit.

Below, in the spirit of “almost,” *GW* dials it back to 13 players who were ever-so-nearly the apple of Ozzy's ever-fickle eye.

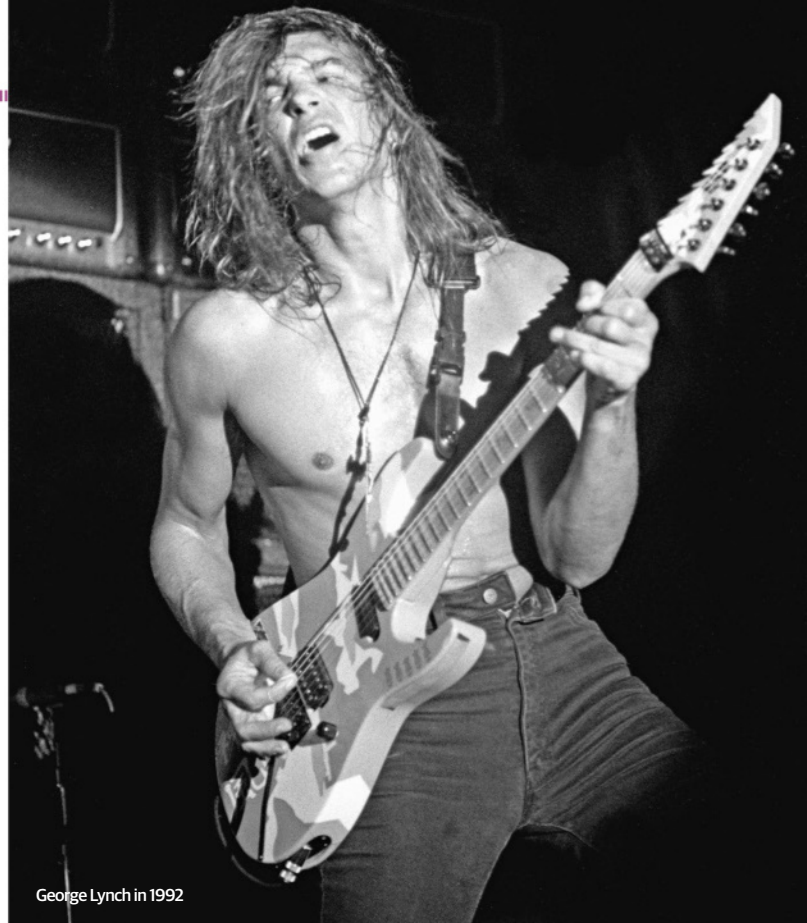
George Lynch Auditioned in 1979 and 1982

The Washington-born future Dokken star auditioned for Ozzy Osbourne not once, but twice. He first tried out in '79 but lost out to Randy Rhoads. He auditioned again after Rhoads' death three years later, this time to replace Brad Gillis, who had replaced Rhoads. Lynch insists that he secured the gig but was quickly fired after Ozzy got a load of Jake E. Lee's look.

“They had two problems with me,” Lynch told *Ultimate Guitar* last year. “Ozzy had a problem

with my short hair. I had short hair at the time. Then his wife [*Sharon*] had a problem with my green guitar. She said it looked like a booger. [*She*] didn't care what it sounded like, didn't care what I was playing.”

It's all a bit hard to believe, given Lynch's instrumental prowess. That said, Lynch is known as a, shall we say, free spirit. He didn't jive with Don Dokken, nor did he get on all that well with Oni Logan in Lynch Mob. It's reasonable to speculate that he might eventually have fallen out with Ozzy.



George Lynch in 1992

Richie Ranno Auditioned in 1982

Back in 2022, the East Coast-raised guitar-slinger Richie Ranno told *GW* how he met a young Randy Rhoads in 1976 while he was playing with Starz. “Randy was a friend of mine from back in the Seventies,” he told us. “He was a big fan of Starz, and I think he was around 19 when I first met him.”

Fast forward to '79, and Ranno ran into Rhoads again just before Rhoads left Quiet Riot to join Ozzy's band. After the fateful plane crash in March 1982, Ozzy called on Ranno for an audition.

“When [*the first*] two Ozzy solo records came out, I didn't realize it was that same kid [*Rhoads*] on guitar,” Ranno says. “I learned ‘Crazy Train,’ ‘I Don't Know,’ ‘Goodbye to Romance’ and ‘Over the Mountain.’ I was trying to play as much like Randy as I could, which wasn't easy, but it went great. Don Airey told me I was the first person to audition, and I felt like, ‘Fuck, I'm in a bad spot here,’ because you never want to be first.”

Ultimately, Ranno lost out to Bernie Tormé, who wasn't long for the gig.

Robert Sarzo Nearly asked to join in 1982

It would've been easy to pivot to guitarist Robert Sarzo, as his brother Rudy was playing bass in Ozzy's band at the time of Randy Rhoads' death. Rudy wrote in his 2006 memoir, *Off the Rails: Aboard the Crazy Train in the Blizzard of Ozz*, that Sharon and Ozzy wanted Robert, nicknamed “the VuDu Man,” to join the band.

Robert would have gotten the job, except for the fact that Sharon's father, Don Arden — who managed Ozzy at the time — paid Bernie Tormé in advance to replace Rhoads on the *Diary of a Madman* tour. Ozzy and Sharon reluctantly agreed, and Sarzo missed his chance at stardom.

Vito Bratta Asked to audition in 1982

One of the less-talked-about would-be Ozzy shredders is New Yorker Vito Bratta, who revealed in 2023 that he had a brush with the Osbournes while Brad Gillis was still in the band.

“Somebody sent a cassette of me doing the Sabbath stuff to Ozzy's people,” Bratta told *GW*, revealing this information for the very first time. “And then — if I remember right, it was probably

JOHN ATASHIAN/GETTY IMAGES, BARBARA ALPER/GETTY IMAGES

Sharon, but I can't be sure — called me, saying, 'Hey, we like your tape, and we want you to come down to the Ritz to play.'"

But Bratta never got the chance to audition properly, as he botched the opportunity over the phone while with Sharon.

"I told her, 'Sure, I can come down. What songs do you want me to play?' She tells me, 'Do you know anything from Ozzy's two solo albums?' I told her, 'No, I don't know anything.' I did love Randy's stuff, but I didn't have time to sit at home and learn it. I never got around to it."

At this point, Bratta knew he'd blown it. "Her voice was getting higher and higher," he recalled for us. "I told her, 'You want me to come down there soon, but I don't know the stuff yet.' She said, 'How long do you need?' I told her, 'Give me a week.' She said, 'Okay, maybe you're right, it's not a good idea.' And she hangs up, and I bang the phone down."

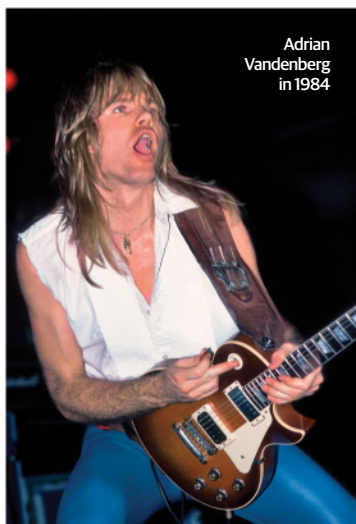
Ultimately, Bratta went on to stardom with White Lion, but it sure would have been cool to play with Ozzy. "God almighty," he says. "I remember being frustrated, you know? I felt like, 'Fuck... this was the shot.'"

Adrian Vandenberg

Asked to join in 1983

According to Vandenberg's social media, Ozzy asked the Dutchman to join his band while Jake E. Lee was still with him, during the *Speak of the Devil* tour. On the day Ozzy died (July 22), Vandenberg said of their first meeting, "I was fortunate to spend time with him, starting with touring the USA with Ozzy and his band in 1983."

Vandenberg added that "There was never a dull moment" on tour with Ozzy, with "daily practical jokes" and Ozzy giving Vandenberg's self-titled band "daily soundchecks." Those soundchecks are probably where the alleged invitation to join took place, but due to commitments with his own band — not to mention Lee's presence in Ozzy's group — Vandenberg declined the offer, which may or may not have been formal.



Adrian Vandenberg in 1984

Jimi Bell

Auditioned in 1987

After Jake E. Lee left Ozzy in 1987, several guitarists auditioned for the gig. One of them was Joan Jett's guitarist, Jimi Bell. In 2022, Bell recounted the details of that audition on the *(Don't) Quit Your Day Job* podcast, saying, "I played on this big soundstage with Ozzy, and it went phenomenal. Ozzy really loved it, and when I got done playing, they sat me down and said it was between me and Zakk Wylde."

History shows that Wylde was chosen, but it wasn't all bad for Bell. "After deciding to stay with Zakk, Sharon gave my promo pack to Geezer Butler," he recalled. "At that point, I was flown to England to work with him." After that, Bell wrote some music for Sabbath's "Master of Insanity," which appeared on 1992's *Dehumanizer*, although he wasn't credited for it.

Marty Friedman

Auditioned in 1987

Looking back, it seems obvious that a Marty Friedman/Ozzy Osbourne pairing would have been a recipe for disaster, as the guitarist is something of a maverick. We'll never know, as Friedman "failed miserably" when he took his shot at replacing Jake E. Lee in '87. He attributes this to his image, recalling during a Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp Q&A session in 2023: "I was practically homeless

at the time, [but] I thought I played everything absolutely just fine, and I thought it sounded great. Everybody was friendly enough. But our images were very different. Those guys in the band [were] totally decked out in 1980s Sunset Strip — what do you call it? — skull T-shirts with handcuffs and long necklaces."

Jennifer Batten

Submitted a tape in 1987

Jennifer Batten can play with anyone; her work with Michael Jackson and Jeff Beck is a testament to that. But Ozzy disagreed, as Batten told *Ultimate Guitar* in 2022. "I remember before the Michael Jackson thing came up, I was trying to get an audition with Ozzy. They were auditioning everybody in L.A. at the time, and I know my audio got to the right people, and I didn't even get a chance."

Batten says the reason was simple: she was a woman. "Looking back, it's a super-macho gig, and they probably wouldn't even consider a female for that. Having said that, if it were the same thing today, I think it'd be a whole different story." The gig ultimately went to Zakk Wylde.

Chris Impellitteri

Asked to audition in 1987

Yet another fleet-fingered guitarist who auditioned to be Jake E. Lee's replacement in 1987 was Chris Impellitteri. Notoriously, Impellitteri is one of the fastest shredders of them

all, but it's hard to envision his style fitting with Ozzy's music — which, while shred-heavy, also require a bluesy player with feel.

Impellitteri's story is similar to Vito Bratta's in that it began with a phone call. "I came home one night from rehearsal," he told *GW* in 2024. "My room-mate goes, 'You've got to listen to this message,' which said, 'This is Sharon Osbourne. Me and Ozzy have been checking you out, and we really love your guitar playing. We want you to come down and audition.'"

Unlike Bratta, Impellitteri didn't blow his shot over the phone. Still, he never got past the talking stage. "I talked to Sharon — and, I think, Ozzy — probably three to five times," he says. "There was some back and forth. The problem was that I'd already signed a deal with Relativity Records." In this case, business deals rather than image or gender proved to be the impassable obstacle.

Nuno Bettencourt

Asked to join in 1995

On the surface, Extreme guitarist Nuno had everything Ozzy could want in a guitarist. He had singular talent, he could (and can) rip it up with the best of them, and he was a great songwriter. But like many guitar-playing musos, Nuno is also a maverick whose heart beats strictly to its own drum. This led him to reject an offer to join Ozzy's band, which was served



Jennifer Batten in action with Michael Jackson



Nuno Bettencourt
in 1996

up on a silver platter in 1995, just before Extreme broke up. "Nobody says 'no' to Ozzy," Nuno told *GW* in 2025. "It's the gig of a lifetime." So then, why did he? Simple. As iconic as the position is, Nuno never wanted to be known as just Ozzy's guitarist. "For better or worse," Nuno says,

"I've always had my sights set on — and I'll never reach it, probably — becoming Randy or Edward or Brian May or Jimmy Page, and the list goes on. You have this mission to carve your own path, whatever that is."

Richie Kotzen Auditioned and was asked to join after Steve Vai didn't work out in 1995

If the sometime Poison and Mr. Big guitarist Richie Kotzen is to be believed, in 1995 — after Zakk Wylde had departed and an attempt to record with Steve Vai didn't work out — he was asked aboard the good ship Ozzy.

"I got a phone call from my manager," Kotzen told *Metal Sludge* in 2014. "The way it was presented to me was that they had called and wanted to meet with me. Sharon wanted to meet me, and they needed a guitar player. At the time, they had done a lot of work with Steve Vai and, for whatever reason, it didn't pan out. Zakk wasn't involved at

that point." According to Kotzen, he secured the gig but made the mistake of telling a friend, who leaked it to the press. This didn't sit well with the Osbournes, leading to Joe Holmes taking his place. "I remember seeing [*the report*], and I was so fucking pissed," Kotzen said. "I said 'Why the fuck would you go and fucking make this public? I told you this as a friend, and now you're blabbing it [*in public*]!' The whole deal, everything, went dead."

Buckethead Auditioned around 2005

Brian "Buckethead" Carroll has never commented on this story, but Ozzy has. According to the singer, he auditioned Buckethead for his solo band just before the 2005 Ozzfest, as he wasn't quite sure Zakk Wylde would be available. Unsurprisingly, it didn't really go well.

"I tried out that Buckethead guy," Ozzy told *Revolver* in 2005. "I met with him and asked him

to work with me, but only if he got rid of the fucking bucket. So I came back a bit later and he's wearing this green fucking Martian's hat thing. I haven't even got out of the room and I'm already playing fucking mind games with the guy."

Needless to say, Buckethead didn't get the gig.

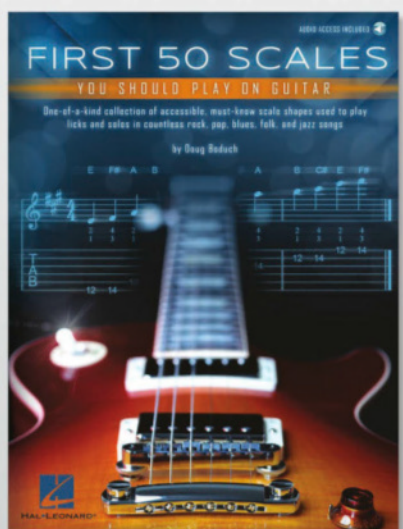
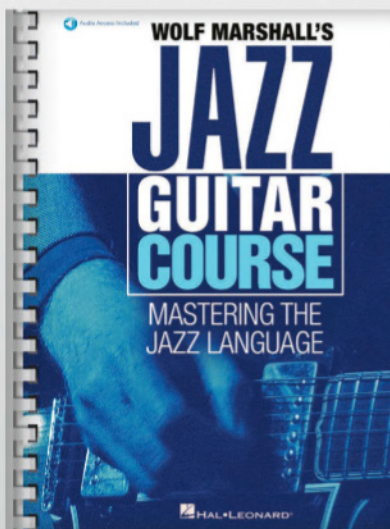
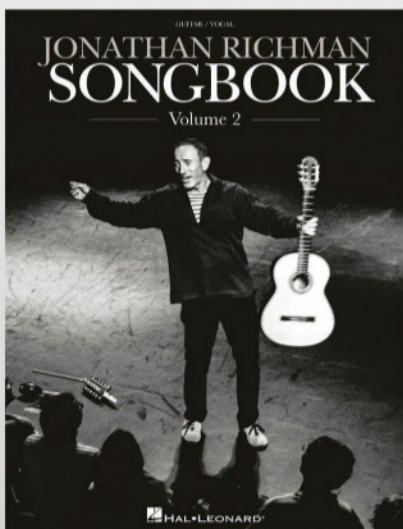
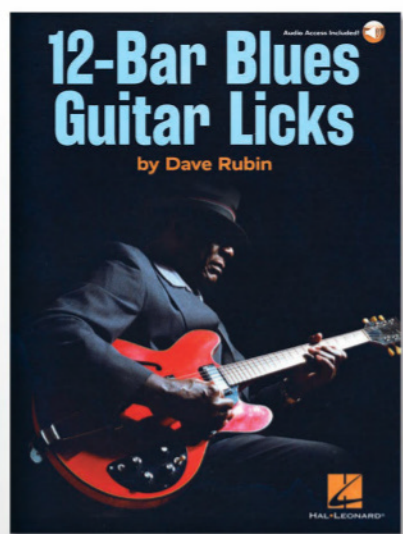
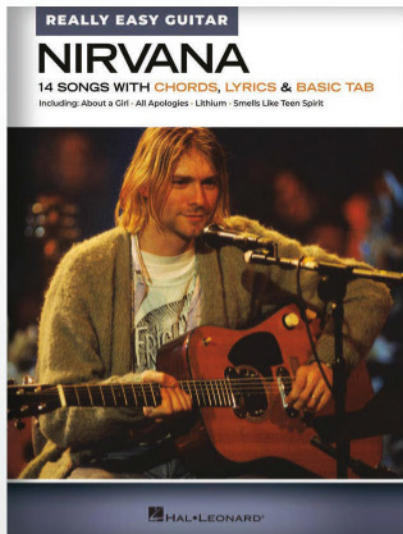
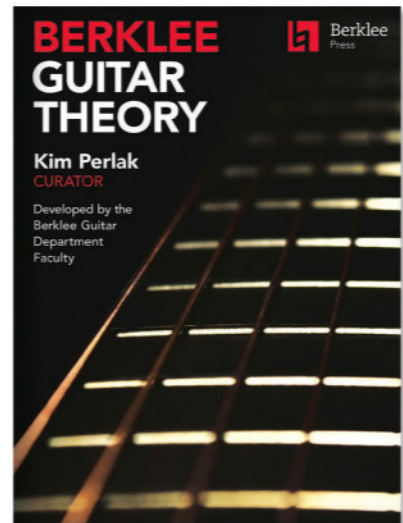
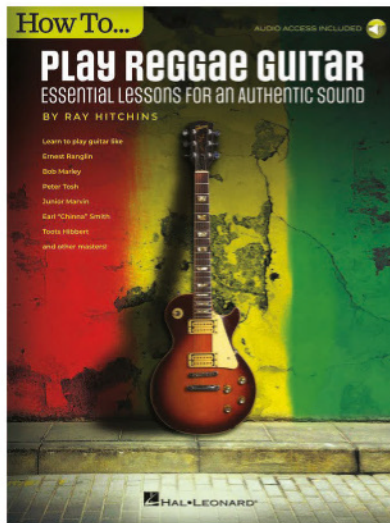
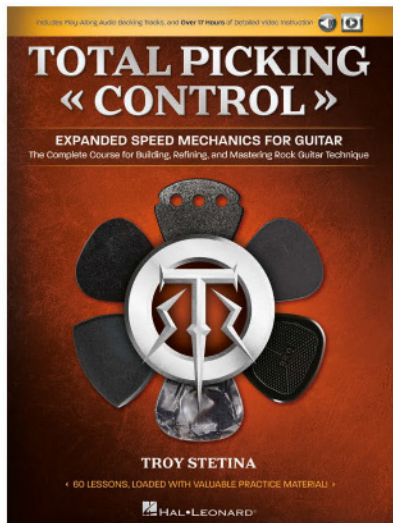
Frank Sidoris Auditioned around 2017

As Osbourne was gearing up for what was to be his "farewell" solo tour, before Zakk Wylde hopped aboard for round three with the Prince of Darkness, he was — once again — auditioning guitar players. One of these was Frank Sidoris. Ozzy ultimately went with good 'ol Zakk Wylde due to familiarity, but Sidoris — who is now a touring guitarist with Wolfgang Van Halen's band, Mammoth — left a positive impression. Ozzy later commented in a letter to Sidoris, "I can see why you've had success at a young age." **GW**

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The Good, The Bad & The Ozzy

In early 1990, *Guitar World's* Brad Tolinski sat down with Ozzy Osbourne and asked him to assess Tony Iommi, Randy Rhoads, Jake E. Lee and Zakk Wylde

BY BRAD TOLINSKI

IF ONLY HALF the rumors about him are true, Ozzy Osbourne should be dead. Yet, after 21 years of twisted public behavior, the man who brought you songs like "Paranoid," "Bark at the Moon" and "Children of the Grave" looks incredibly healthy and ready to take on the world. Ozzy recently celebrated more than 20 years in the business by polishing off a live greatest-hits EP, *Just Say Ozzy*, and is currently at work on his next studio metal masterpiece.

In the conversation that follows, Ozzy thoughtfully recalls what made each of his great guitarists special, and elaborates his criteria for choosing a guitarist, his audition process and his theory on why it's good to be bad.

Let's start by looking at your past guitarists. How did you find Randy Rhoads?

Thinking back, it was quite extraordinary. I had been in Black Sabbath since high school, and suddenly Tony Iommi fired me from the band. It was a shock because Sabbath had always been there. I was out of my brain on drugs and alcohol and I was stuck in the position of getting a band together. I had never auditioned anyone before and I was petrified.

The auditioning process was so embarrassing. How do you tell someone that they're not what you're looking for? Back then, everyone was trying to clone Jimi Hendrix. I heard nothing but "Purple Haze" and "Foxy Lady" riffs. One guy even hooked up several tape recorders and echo units so he could play

both the lead and rhythms to Hendrix tunes simultaneously. It was a nightmare!

I had almost given up when somebody told Sharon [*Osbourne, Ozzy's wife and personal manager*] about this great guitar player in town named Randy Rhoads. Shortly afterward, Randy came over to my Los Angeles apartment. He was so frail, tiny and effeminate that I thought, 'Oh no, oh hell.' But out of politeness, I invited him to play the next day. Unfortunately, when he turned up, I was stoned out of my mind. I mean, I was on another planet. Some guy woke me up and said, 'He's here!' I looked up and Randy started playing from this tiny amp. Even in my semiconsciousness he blew my mind. I told him to come by the next day and that he had the gig. ▣

The next day I told someone I dreamed that I hired a guitar player. They told me I didn't dream it and that he was coming that day. I thought, 'Oh god, what have I done? I hope he can play!'

How do you know when a guitarist is right or wrong?

It's like shopping for a new suit: there may be a whole rack of blue suits, but only one will grab you. There's no ritual, there's no formula. I've just been lucky that everybody's liked my taste in guitar players.

What were Randy's weaknesses as a player? Was there any aspect you had to help him with?

He didn't really have any weaknesses. I was the one that needed work. I had just come from Sabbath and Tony Iommi was a bit of a tyrant. His attitude was that I was the singer, I was allocated a space, and if I couldn't come up with anything then I was screwed. Whereas Randy would work with me. Randy had patience because he was a guitar teacher. It was potentially a very frustrating situation for him because I couldn't play a musical instrument. But he was always supportive and would say things like, 'Try bending a note

"Even in my semiconsciousness, Randy blew my mind," Ozzy told us in 1990



and day out, whatever spare time he had was spent plucking on his flamenco guitar. He was a musician in the true sense. The instrument was an extension of his personality.

When we were recording *Diary of a Madman* he would disappear into the studio for days. I'd ask him what he was doing and he'd say, 'I'm working on this solo and I still

must have the capability to do some amazing things, but it's too cold; it's too much for the mind to take in. And watching Steve Vai is like watching a good mechanic strip down an engine in three seconds and rebuild it. He makes things run perfectly, but there's no nice little errors that make things sound human.

But what about Jake?

Jake was fine for the first three days; then he wanted to take over. Randy wasn't like that; he was one of the cool guys. I wouldn't say Jake and I got along, but I wouldn't say we didn't get along. But in the last few years he became very reserved and it was hard to communicate with him. We lived together in a house in Beverly Hills and we never spoke! It wasn't because we didn't like each other. We just didn't have anything to say.

It was similar to the relationship I had with Tony Iommi. We'd get together to rehearse, write a mediocre song and then go our own way. It's not the relationship I wanted with Jake, but a festering cancer set in. I wouldn't have it. If I ask, 'What do you think of that?' I want a reaction. If it's negative we'll try something else, that's not a problem. But Jake would shrug his shoulders, raise an eyebrow and walk away. The word "band" means a band of men — an army, a platoon, a unit. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If there is a communication breakdown — hey, that's a great name for a song — you've got no unit. To be fair, Jake did have a fantastic presence, and he was a great guitar player.

What made Zakk stand out?

This is a bizarre story, but it's the God's honest truth. It was a bad period for me because I was sick of auditioning people — drummers, bass players, keyboard players. Now it was time to audition yet another guitar player. The spark had gone out of it, probably due to my battles

"I want someone that's hungry. I want someone who wants to go out and kick Eddie Van Halen's ass"

here,' or 'Try this key.' It was a bit like going to music school. Randy was very instrumental in bringing me out of me. The first two Ozzy albums are by far the greatest things I've ever done. He was too good to last.

You and Randy had chemistry.

Yeah, and now I think it's gone, but you never know. I was never sure whether my work with Sabbath was any good. I used to think it was too ordinary, but it seems to have stood the test of time. You never know what you got 'til it's gone.

You must have had more confidence when you found Jake E. Lee.

Not really. I knew a guitarist had to look good and have a good attitude, but other than that... Randy was the exception. He was from somewhere else. Randy came to me one day and said, 'I've had enough of this rock 'n' roll stuff, I want to get a degree in music from UCLA.' I said to him, 'Why don't you wait a few years and get some money and success behind you. You can always get a degree when you're 90 if you want.' But he wanted to study right then and there. He started spending hours practicing and writing out his own formulas — diads or niads or whatever you call them. Day in

can't get it." Finally, it would come to him and he would call me and say, "Listen to this." It would always tear my head off. That's the difference between guitar players: there are guys who'll go wingly-wangly up and down the fretboard, and some have emotions and others don't. Randy and Eddie Van Halen were at the winning post, and everyone else is a close second. I mean, Yngwie Malmsteen

"To be fair, Jake did have a fantastic presence, and he was a great guitar player"



with drugs and alcohol. I had a lot of hang-ups about a lot of things, plus I was tired.

I asked the guys who were in the band at the time to put out the word that I needed somebody and to have people send me résumés. I auditioned about 50 guys. Some were hilarious. I asked one guy to play something in a specific key. He said, "I think it would be better in another key." I said, "No it wouldn't. Just play it in the key it was written in." He protested again and I just thought, What the hell am I doing here? I'm jet-lagged to the max, arguing with some idiot guitar player.

Then there were all these Eddie Van Halen clones on steroids. They played like Van Halen while standing on their heads and hopping on one leg. One guy even played like Eddie while eating a fucking sword! One morning I was confronted with a mound of tapes and I remember picking one up out of thousands and saying, "Look here, a Randy Rhoads clone." It was a picture of some guy with long blonde hair playing a Les Paul Custom. I couldn't even bring myself to listen to his tape. I tossed it back in the pile and forgot about it.

Then about six months later, my drummer, Randy Castillo, walks in and says, "I found this great guitarist from New Jersey, and his name is Zakk." I walked into the audition and I knew I had seen him before, but I couldn't remember where. He plugs in and plays my whole catalog, note for note.

I then asked him to play something of his own and he played some acoustic stuff and some classical stuff. He had a bounce and a spark about him. Then I realized where I saw Zakk before: he was the Randy Rhoads clone in the photo, the one tape I had picked out of thousands. Only it turned out that he wasn't a Randy clone at all. Randy would've looked like an ant next to Zakk. There were lots of benefits to choosing Zakk. He had followed my career and he knew my songs better than I knew them myself. We knew it wouldn't be hard to break him in.

Now that you've worked with Zakk for a while, what are his strengths?

That's a difficult question. He's still very young and still very impressionable. I think he's still finding his own feet.

What are the drawbacks to working with young players?

I keep thinking I would love to work on a project with musicians my own age. I guess I'd better do it quick because with each passing year the number of people my age gets smaller. I'm starting to feel like a daddy or something. I don't want to be the wild man of rock 'n' roll for too much longer.

You could go the David Coverdale route and hire established guitarists, yet you



seem to prefer to discover new talent.

I want someone that's hungry. I want someone who wants to go out and kick Eddie Van Halen's ass. I look for that hunger, that ability to succeed.

What was your most bizarre auditioning experience?

There's been thousands of them. One guy did a breakdance and spun around on his back on the floor while playing wild guitar licks. There were lots of guys who were great but horrible to look at. I mean, there's always cosmetic surgery, I suppose. Besides being a great guitarist you've got to look the part; you've got to be able to attract people. Some of the people I've auditioned looked like they

that film. It seemed that all anyone talked about was partying and getting laid. What about being in a band and playing music?

Guns N' Roses is a great name for a band, and they seem committed. I'm not trying to be trendy, but that's what I think. I think they've got a great image, as well. Everybody likes the bad guys. Take that band Stryper — that's the highest form of hypocrisy. They wear the same clothes as me, but they carry crucifixes and Bibles. The difference is, nobody likes to hear a good person. I discovered that many years ago.

What's your assessment of Tony Iommi? He's left-handed, his fingers are chopped off, he had to detune his guitar three steps,

"I have no real regrets, except that I wasn't up to keeping Randy Rhoads from getting on that plane"

should've been in a sideshow at the circus.

I'm never worried about finding players, though. If Zakk walked through the door and said, "I'm leaving," I'd say, "God bless you, goodbye." There's an abundance of guitar players jamming in their rooms who are brilliant. In fact, I often wonder why they aren't out doing something.

You've got to have an interesting frontman.

Yeah, you're right. There is a lack of good frontmen. Axl Rose is the best I've seen in many years. I appeared in a movie called *The Decline and Fall of Western Civilization, Part II: The Heavy Metal Years*, along with a number of bands. I couldn't believe the horseshit in

yet he ended up defining a genre.

In the beginning he was brilliant — he was the master of heavy metal riffs. He was very clever. But I never really knew Tony; we rarely spoke. He was the god-almighty figure in the band and verged on being a bully. I must have learned something from him, though, because when I left I did pretty well on my own. I still keep in touch with the rest of the band, but I don't speak with Tony because we never talked when I was in the band.

He's very intimidating. To be honest, toward the end his playing bored me, because everyone else was progressing and he wasn't. That's probably not fair, given his problems with his fingers. I should be grateful for Black Sabbath. But Tony needs to stop writing



"In the beginning, Tony was brilliant — he was the master of heavy metal riffs"

about devils and bullshit — it's already been done. Ultimately, I think it was good that I moved on when I did. It was starting to get frustrating, because Tony would get a good headbanger going, then he'd start doing all this weird stuff. It started getting too complicated.

Except for "Shot in the Dark," your live versions of songs stay pretty close to the originals.

I've seen bands who've played endings that are longer than the actual song. I always think, 'Jeez, c'mon! End it already!' I'm old-fashioned in the sense that I like the song to sound like the song. I don't even like live records; I haven't really acknowledged the release of *Just Say Ozzy*. Those songs have already been done. Why do them again?

Aren't you ever tempted to rework songs to keep them from getting boring?

No. If I don't get off on something, I just drop the song from the set. I've got enough tunes in the pipeline.

Millions of bands have tried to copy your formula, yet you endure. What is it about your songs that make them stand the test of time?

God only knows. I was touring with Metallica a couple of years ago and I went backstage to talk with them. They were hanging out, and all of them were staring at me in a very strange manner. Then a couple weeks later I wandered backstage and they were playing Sabbath tunes. I asked 'em if they were trying to give me a hard time. And they said, "No, we're mad for Sabbath." They were big fans. I thought, What, Sabbath-mad? It's incredible to me that people still like the music.

Sabbath was a band that used to pull into an arena, play and never see a fan on

the street. We came, we saw, we conquered and went home. I'd see an occasional acid freak wandering around San Francisco like a zombie mumbling "Black Sabbath." But we had no real contact with the fans, and we had no idea of the extent of our impact.

Of your albums, which are your favorites?

Black Sabbath, *Paranoid*, *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, *Blizzard of Ozz* and *Diary of a Madman*. I relate more to the period of time than to the actual album. If I was having fun, then it was a good album. If I wasn't, then the album was crap. We had a blast making *Blizzard* and *Diary* — screwed-up and always laughing.

Those first two albums were my revenge because I was fired from Sabbath. I thought, 'Man, I'll show them what it's about!' I always come out with my best when my back's against the wall. It's always when the luxury and financial rewards come piling in that I begin to lose it.

What would make you hungry again?

I am, in a way. This is the first record I've ever done sober. I'm five months sober, and it's very difficult. I don't know whether it's good or not. I'm writing mellower songs. Not to say the album will be mellow. Zakk will make sure it's not. He's crazy. In fact, he reminds me of me.

During rehearsal, I'll sit down with the road crew and have a can of Coke. Geezer [Butler] will walk in and quietly join us, then Randy [Castillo, drums]. But Zakk, you hear him from a mile away, screaming or whatever. He's like a circus coming to town. Geezer cowers when he hears Zakk coming. There are so many cool-guy guitar players with their sunglasses and all that, but Zakk is one of the boys. He's a real shitkicker. He always says hi to people and takes the time

to talk to the fans — he's always on. One of the key things about him is that he's always got some time for the people. That's a big asset. When people find success, they tend to get big heads and 18 bodyguards. They forget that without the fans they wouldn't have a flash limousine and the money to pay for the bodyguards.

You shouldn't make yourself over-available, but you shouldn't make yourself invisible either. I have to be careful because, in a lot of areas, not only are there a lot of people who like me but also a lot of people who hate me. I don't want to be the next John Lennon.

Trying to clean my act up was a major step in my life. I'm suddenly stone-cold sober in this zoo and the lions are trying to pick the lock. I was stoned for 21 years. Most rockers get stoned to break down the inhibitions, paranoia and shyness that stem from personal hang-ups we've carried around since we were kids. We all want to communicate with our fellow man, but we're too frightened to try.

Getting drunk allowed me to relax. But after a period of years, that stopped working for me. So I had a real dilemma. I was getting high and it was killing me. Yet, I was afraid of being sober. Things began going drastically wrong for me in my personal life. I had hit the bottom, and all that was left was death or insanity. Now with the grace of God, I've kept my sobriety, but I still take it one day at a time.

On the next studio record, I've decided to take a whack at writing a love song and things I actually feel. I may also write a song called, "Son of a Bitch, Everything's Real." [Laughs]

Someone once described you as a "nuclear bluesman." The analogy fits — you often write simple, guitar-oriented songs about the woes of the modern man.

Just the other day I was watching an old video of me singing "Paranoid." I listened to the lyrics and thought, 'Hell, where were we when we wrote that?' It was really strange because I had this smile on my face while I was singing this heavy, heavy song.

I mean, Sabbath grew up in Birmingham, England, which was in an industrialized pit. That was a billion light years from San Francisco's hippified flower power, where you'd hear some guy singing about wearing flowers in your hair. Meanwhile, my life was shit. I was frightened by fear. Fear has been my closest friend throughout my life. That's why we drank. That's why we're all fucked up.

But I have no real regrets, except that I wasn't up to keeping Randy Rhoads from getting on that plane. I'm no superman, no person from another planet — I'm just a lucky guy. **GW**

Miracle Men

Zakk Wylde reflects on his one-of-a-kind relationship with Ozzy

BY ANDREW DALY



JEN ROSENSTEIN/GUITAR WORLD

FUTURE

We'd always keep in touch. People were always like, "Zakk, why doesn't Ozzy have you writing on all his stuff?" Because the songs would often already be written later on, and Oz would say, "Zakk, can you just come in and play?" I'd go, "Yeah, whatever you need me to do. No problem, man." I remember Oz saying, "Zakk has left the nest. He's his own guy now." He was like, "Zakk, I don't want to be the lead singer of Black Label Society." And it's like I told everybody, "I completely get it." It's like if Randy had stayed with Quiet Riot, and then he's coming back to Ozzy, and it would be like, "Is Ozzy the singer of Quiet Riot now?" And it's the same with Jake E. Lee and Badlands. It's like, "Jake is having success with Badlands, and it sounds like Badlands..." But if you put Ozzy on that stuff, now it's an Ozzy record. Jake can't help but write like Jake, and it's the same with me or anyone else like Eddie Van Halen or Dimebag Darrell.

None of that ever impacted your working relationship with Ozzy?

People write the way people write. I completely understood what Ozzy was saying. If anything, at the end of the day, it's a compliment. It's like, "Zakk, it doesn't sound like it's my band anymore. It's like I'm in your band." It would be like if Jerry Cantrell were

doing the writing; it's gonna sound like Alice In Chains. I was like, "No, I understand what you're saying."

What are your most poignant memories of what ended up being your final show with Ozzy on July 5? It has to be sobering knowing that those versions of "Mama, I'm Coming Home" and "Crazy Train," for example, are the final versions with Ozzy.

Yeah... they're ingrained in my head. I was just more worried about making sure Oz was okay for the whole performance, you know? So, with "Mama, I'm Coming Home," when we got the acoustic out, I had to be like, "Keep the guitar away from the microphone so I can sing," because Oz's voice was having trouble at certain notes.

I was just like, "I need to make sure I'm always there so I can double him," and I was three feet away from the microphone when I started playing the song. I started, and I go, "Wait, hold on a second, I'm like three, four feet from the friggin' microphone." [Laughs] I was like, "I gotta gear near the microphone," so I had to almost stop playing, lift the guitar up and put it over the mic. It was like juggling balls or chainsaws while being on a skateboard. It was actually pretty funny, but it was business as usual. But yeah... It's supposed to

be, like, the most important show ever, and everything's on the fly.

When was the last time you spoke with Ozzy before he died?

After [the July 5 show] — because obviously everybody and their mother were in the backstage dressing room, I just wanted to give him a break. I figured we'd see him later on, the next day or whatever. But no, the last text I got from Oz was, "Zakky, sorry, it was like a madhouse back there. Sorry I didn't see you." He goes, "Thanks for everything," and it was just us talking, saying, "I love you, buddy" and everything. So yeah... that was it.

Where would you be if you'd never met or played with Ozzy?

It's like I always say — to have music be the thing that turns the lights on instead of some job that you can't stand, it's everything. Everything revolves around playing and music. If I didn't have Oz, I'd continue playing... but it's how Ozzy would say what the Beatles did for him, you know? What he gave me with Sabbath, and then with Randy and Jake, it's a beacon of light. It gives you purpose. So, even if I hadn't played with him, he gave me purpose to be a musician. And that'll always be with me. [GW](#)

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PRS SE NF 53

Say hello to a new T-style guitar with some seriously broad appeal

BY DAVE BURRLUCK

▶ WHEN PRS PRODUCED the Silver Sky for John Mayer, it nearly broke the internet. For some it was simply a “Stratocaster” with the wrong headstock, while PRS maintained it was a complete re-tooling of a classic.

A little while later, the debate was stoked when a more affordable SE version of the Silver Sky appeared. Fast forward to 2023, and another Fender classic was reimagined as the NF 53, which was launched simultaneously with the similarly styled Myles Kennedy signature model. Now – about halfway through the brand’s 40th-anniversary year – PRS has finally launched the SE NF 53.

Offered in three solid colors, the single-cutaway T-style influence is clear, but the SE NF 53 is no clone. The materials might ape the original – a swamp ash body and maple neck

– but that’s about all the new guitar has in common with Fender’s original solidbody.

Unlike the slab body of the original, the SE NF 52 throws in PRS’s hallmark contour in the treble cutaway, plus we get a forearm and ribcage contour. The neck is slab sawn with a separate maple fingerboard, but the three-aside back-angled headstock is pure PRS. That said, it does employ the longer Fender scale length of 25.5”, although the board radius is 10” – and we get those ubiquitous bird inlays.

Another key difference is the PRS plate-style bridge used initially on the S2 Vela before that USA NF 53. The steel baseplate has key-hole-shaped

The single-cutaway T-style influence is clear, but the SE NF 53 is no clone

cutouts to top-load the strings and the two brass barrel saddles can be surprisingly accurately intonated.

The USA NF 53 nodded to the Telecaster with a cut-down version of its scratchplate, direct-mount pickups and rear-mounted controls but the SE version runs with a more production-friendly larger scratchplate that holds both the pickups and the controls. Functionally different, it also creates a big visual difference to the USA model.

A pair of Narrowfield DD small aperture humbuckers were created for the NF 53, and here we have the Indonesian-made “S” versions, which first popped up on the three-pickup SE NF 3 last year and are also used on the new SE Special Semi-Hollow and SE Studio models.

Weighing in at 7.33 lbs., it’s a great weight for a solidbody bolt-on. And while so many PRS designs seem to fuss about precious visual style, the SE NF 53 focuses on function. I took it straight to a gig.

The neck is pretty big – measuring 41.7 mm at the nut, 22.7 mm in depth at the first fret and a pretty fulsome 25 mm by the 12th – with an almost





raw wood-feeling light satin finish. It looks rather white, quite clean and modern. A little more in-curve to the fingerboard edge and a little more edge rolling might well give it the more rounded “big Fender” feel of the USA guitar, but I can’t fault the fretting and smooth fingerboard feel though. It’s first class. There’s no

vibrato to worry about either, and tuning proves rock-solid.

Unplugged, there’s a big ring to the guitar that translates to the epitome of the cliché “Tele on steroids.” The pickups sort of sit between single-coils and humbuckers with a little more oomph than the former but more focus than the latter that nods

STREET PRICE: \$979

MANUFACTURER: PRS
Guitars, prsguitars.com

PROS

- ✦ Detailed build, swamp ash body and good weight
- ✦ Versatile small aperture humbuckers
- ✦ Thin satin finish
- ✦ Big neck

CONS

- If you don’t like big necks, avoid this guitar
- Doesn’t capture true T-style tones

VERDICT: It might be inspired by Fender’s finest, but the SE NF 53 is no copy or clone. It’s a finely made piece with a swamp ash body and hugely versatile Narrowfield humbuckers. Any guitar player could rock this!

to a good P90 but with a subtly smoother note attack.

Pull the volume back and pick close to the bridge and there’s obvious Tele-like steely-ness before you wind the volume back up for a nice bit of saturation. Think Pete Townshend, Mike Campbell, or classic Rolling Stones-y grind. These are humbuckers, though; apply some heavier gain and the bridge is muscular and gnarly while there’s bags of woody depth at the neck. This is a T-style for those of us who never got along with one.

If you think PRS just makes guitars for well-heeled doctors and dentists, you might have to change your opinion. Bird inlays aside, there’s zero bling – and this comes across as a real “working guitar” that could sit in pretty much any style you can muster.

It might appear bare-bones to some, but there’s nothing basic about the build, feel or sounds or the tuning stability. Who cares where it’s made? This is a workingman’s tool, pure and simple. Any guitar player could use one, which might well qualify it as the most essential guitar of 2025. **GW**



Electro-Harmonix Oceans Abyss

EHX brings us a reverb pedal with sliders, a screen and the potential to be competition for Strymon

BY MATT McCRACKEN

REPRESENTING THE SECOND model in a seemingly new dawn of Electro-Harmonix pedals after the POG3, the Oceans Abyss features 10 reverb algorithms with dual paths that allow you to blend and swap to your heart's content – and it's all presented in glorious stereo.

But it's not just reverbs; you can harness the power of delay, tremolo, chorus, flanger, phaser, saturation and a bitcrusher to supplement your soundscapes, all customizable to any part of the signal chain or stereo field. You can even use these on their own, making the Oceans Abyss much more of a multi-effect than just a pure reverb pedal.

The chassis feels solidly built. The footswitches are angled toward the player and are of the soft-click variety, giving quiet switching under the press of our finger. The screen takes full focus with the encoder knob forming part of the maritime-inspired logo emblazoned on the center of the gunmetal green exterior. The encoder knob feels solidly applied, and its shape means it should stay out of the way of any mistimed stomps during a

show. But we do have concerns about things getting lodged in the gaps left by the slider controls over time.

It's rare that we come across a pedal where we can't work out the basic functionality for ourselves. Consider us humbled and slightly disappointed, then, that this pedal isn't easier to use. We needed to consult the manual just to switch presets. Once we spend a little time with the Oceans Abyss, we're able to customize patches at will, but – to be honest – it always feels a little bit fiddly with the encoder. Although nice as an endlessly rotating knob, the stubby button makes for uneasy directional pressing at my fingertips, resulting in miscues that change settings we didn't want, or it taking us to a completely different menu we weren't anticipating. You would get

The ability to pan each of the reverbs makes for some super soundscapes

STREET PRICE: \$495

MANUFACTURER: Electro-Harmonix, ehx.com

PROS

- Superb selection of presets
- Lots of additional delay, modulation, and saturation tones
- Blend two reverbs together in stereo
- Plenty of flexibility with routing

CONS

- Using the menus isn't very intuitive, and the encoder can be fiddly
- No EHXPort editing software for Mac available at time of review

VERDICT: Although let down somewhat by the usability, the Oceans Abyss is a really rewarding reverb pedal with the added scope of modulation effects if you're willing to stick with it.

used to it with time, but it's definitely not a seamless experience getting acquainted with it.

The sounds are a far more positive experience, and the 125 presets are fantastic (though we'd advise taming the low end on some). Our testing here moved from a stereo-amp setup to a full-band practice and with headphones on, the stereo spread is fantastic. The ability to pan each of the reverbs to our liking makes for some super soundscapes, blending multiple reverbs together with various modulation effects to create some truly wacky sounds, with the added effects furthering the potential.

It's more than capable of producing more traditional reverb sounds, too. The spring setting especially is delightfully metallic, giving you those tinny pings of steel when you clamp down on a note that rings on beyond before cutting off dramatically.

The Oceans Abyss is a real paradox. The usability isn't as good as we were hoping, but despite this, it offers some incredible sounds, and once you get your head around how to use it, the ability to combine them (in all sorts of ways) will allow you to sculpt some truly unique soundscapes alongside the traditional. **GW**



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE

ESP LTD RZK-III OW

Richard ZK, Rammstein's riff-in-chief, returns with his third signature guitar, marking a departure from its predecessors with an arsenal of fun features

BY PHIL WELLER

RETURNING TO THE drawing board for his third ESP/LTD signature guitar, Rammstein's Richard ZK has pivoted toward the trending offset shape and bestowed it with some killer appointments. Headlined by signature, chrome-covered Fishman Fluence active humbuckers – fast becoming go-to pickups for metal guitar – and an arcade-style kill switch, it stays true to his Strat-like tonewood preferences. But his beloved Floyd Rose is gone and new creative utilities are in.

ZK tested three different bridge options blindfolded, saying, "If I knew which one was the Floyd Rose, I would've chosen that." A classic-style locking TonePros stoptail was chosen on "sound alone" but has been partially recessed into the body so that the hand comfort of a Floyd was retained.

There are very few discernible flaws or blemishes in this guitar's construction, and the hardware is rock solid. That said, there's a noticeable rough seam at the heel. Given the contrast between the natural neck finish and the thick gloss of the body, something needed to give, but the triangular cut feels aesthetically crude. The cut itself is fairly smooth, and the only noticeable difference is in the thumb feel when playing the upper frets. The Rammstein logo inlays, meanwhile, look more like blobs until you get close; outlines would have looked much clearer, and the fact that the

battery compartment for the pickups needs to be unscrewed irks us a bit. A latch-based solution, as found on many other guitars from Strandberg to Charvel, is an open goal.

Considering Richard ZK's day job, it's understandable that soloing isn't super buttery, but it's not a chore either. Ultimately, the neck hits that Goldilocks spot between riff-wringing fatness and lead-friendly thinness. Granted, there's a lot of body with this offset shape – it's bulkier than a Fender Jazzmaster or Jackson's Surfcaster silhouette – Lee Malia's new signature feels very snug for lap playing in comparison and measures similarly to a Gibson Firebird, but the LTD's balance is top-drawer.

Meanwhile, careful decisions help counter the larger body size, including a smooth contour on the treble-side bout for picking hand comfort. The subtly recessed bridge also makes a huge difference to hand positioning, comfort and feel. There's no hand fatigue after prolonged playing. We're Fishman Fluence fans, but our only gripe with them remains: The volume control isn't super responsive when rolled back. Swells can be achieved with the right movement, but we tend to avoid halfway points with the volume knob as I find it struggles there. Besides that, though, Richard ZK's signature set provides a tonal playground. From bluesy, mid-gain Marshalls to war-mongering Fortin amps, rhythm tones sound great through every

The neck hits that Goldilocks spot between riff-wringing fatness and lead-friendly thinness

modeled amp we try them on. The bridge pickup has a little more treble than stock Fluence pickups.

That equates to snarling rhythms, which work incredibly well with palm mutes, but they aren't exceptionally warm, so tweaking the amp – boosting the bass, reducing the treble – is advisable for when you don't want this guitar to bear its teeth quite so much. Elsewhere, this guitar's clean tones shimmer, especially when iced with chorus. They are exquisitely modern-sounding, and the neck rounds out some of those sharp edges for chords. The middle position on the selector, conversely, marries the best of both. I found it to be the best position for edge-of-breakup tones – perhaps controversially – with the others either too woolly or too scratchy for my liking without overcompensating on the amp.

Voice three (accessed via the push-pull volume pot) gives a coil split. Tonally, the differences made by splitting are subtle but well worth exploring. They don't have that in-your-face Stratocaster spank that other pickups can conjure, but they aren't too noisy when split, and there's a satisfying quack when playing with a little palm muting. It's a fair compromise overall.

The kill switch is extremely noisy in standard mode on our test guitar, turning our Buckethead impressions into crackly affairs. It improves after repeated taps, as if it takes a moment to warm up, but it isn't ideal. Elsewhere, the guitar's mini switch reverses its functionality, meaning pressing it activates the signal, rather than killing it. Interestingly, this mode is completely crackle-free, but its inverted methodology takes some getting used to.

There's a lot to admire. The RZK-III plays superbly, it's multifaceted in what it can handle, and it looks cool. In the end, its biggest pitfalls, like the neck seam and its kill switch, are either aesthetic or solvable. It's a solid and versatile guitar that (generally) looks the business, and just about justifies its asking price. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$1,999

MANUFACTURER:
ESP LTD, espguitars.com

PROS

- Versatile tones – not just for metal
- Crisp aesthetics make for a mean-looking ax
- Solid tuning stability
- Well-balanced weight

CONS

- Kill switch is a little noisy
- Neck joint may divide opinion

VERDICT: Well-spec'd and looking like it could do serious damage on the battlefield, this guitar is as muscular as Rammstein's live shows. Its chameleon-like pickups allow it to adapt across genres, and its recessed bridge is inspired, but the noisy kill switch is a shame.







Peavey Josh Homme Decade Too

In its 60th-anniversary year, Peavey updates a little amp gone by, aka Josh Homme's "secret weapon"

BY PETE EMERY

THE PEAVEY DECADE TOO largely shuns 45 years of progression and stays faithful to the original 10-watt 1x8 practice amp, albeit with a few additions. The instigator behind this is Queens of the Stone Age guitarist Josh Homme, who has ID'd the Peavey Decade as the "secret weapon" behind his more wiry recorded tones, leading to some internet hysteria and skyrocketing prices for that discontinued amp. But is there a place for it alongside some much more capable, feature-rich and affordable practice amps that've emerged since?

We'll have to keep that context in mind when it comes to the sounds; however, the build is solid. Its open-backed, wooden construction feels sturdy, and with metal braces at the corners for reinforcement, this thing will surely be long-lived. It's still a very portable piece of gear, with an 8" speaker you can chuck in the back

It accurately recreates the lo-fi sound of practice amps from yesteryear

of any car. A tiltable extension cab (\$199.99) is available separately should you need more.

The volume is controlled via a pre- and post-gain, and there's a 3-band EQ to tweak the tone. New for the Decade Too are switches to boost the bass and top end, plus a Saturation (overdrive) switch. While that's a fair amount on the front panel, it's all well laid out and mostly self-explanatory.

The original Peavey Decade had two inputs – Normal for clean sounds and Saturation for overdrive. This new version puts this on a switch on the front panel and can also be controlled via a footswitch, an appreciated improvement. Around the back of the unit, we have an output for the extension cab, an effects loop, pre-amp out and a 1/4" unbalanced and XLR transformer balanced direct-out, all clearly labeled. There's also a phase switch for keeping the extension cab and combo in phase.

As we've said, Homme likes the Decade for exploring the "wiry" character of its tone, and he's used it to cut through a mix along with other amps, so the fact that the Decade Too accurately recreates the lo-fi sound of practice amps from yesteryear is

STREET PRICE: \$299.99

MANUFACTURER:

Peavey, peavey.com

PROS

- Recreation of Josh Homme's "secret weapon"
- Extra tone-shaping options over the original
- Easy to use
- Cuts in a mix with other guitars
- Surprisingly loud

CONS

- Recreates original Decade sounds, warts and all
- Not suitable as a normal practice amp vs. contemporary competition
- Our test model had some slightly noisy switches

VERDICT: Peavey's Decade Too recreates the sound of an old-style practice amp, warts and all, but with some handy bonus features. If you'd like a quirky studio tool to add some cut to your mixes, this amp is worth a look.

entirely the point. The clean sound is quite boxy in the low end, and the bass boost switch didn't help with this, as it muddled things up a bit. We found the best way to use the clean was to lean into the bright nature of a tiny solid-state amp, as the high end is surprisingly nice with the High control taming it a little. The Top switch renders the sound quite a painful one in the room – but in a way that could cut nicely in a studio mix.

Contrary to this, the new Bass switch is useful when the amp is working in its Saturation mode. The overdrive here is thin, so the bass



boost helps round it out when used with a set of single-coil pickups without losing too much of that cut. For even more of that piercing character, bring in the top boost, and you'll have a sound that'll sit forward in any mix, particularly effective with humbuckers.

Put a guitar in C standard, punch in the Saturation switch, turn the preamp gain to full and suddenly it all starts to make sense. Doing this and blasting through some QOTSA riffs on our PRS S2 Custom 24 is endless fun; every note punches through with clarity, thanks to that wiry nature.

Peavey's TransTube-powered saturation sounds massive in a lo-fi way within this context, with the 3-band EQ proving fairly powerful. We found ourselves leaving them mostly in the middle and using the treble to cut out some fizz while leaving the Top boost switch in to retain that clarity. All of this can be effectively replicated through the D.I. output on the back of the amp. In Peavey's words, this is a "full-range, old-school, transformer-balanced design that's great for DAWs and IRs." Our experience recording a demo of the amplifier was in line with this.

It's surprising just how loud this combo is. More than enough to encourage complaints from the neighbors on its own, and with the cab plugged in, the Peavey Decade Too could easily keep up with a drummer in a rehearsal room.

It's not a sound that can compete in a modern context, but the Decade Too does what it sets out to do – recreate the Peavey Decade (with some extra tone-shaping features). As a recording utility to help a guitar part cut, or as a way to get you closer to the QOTSA sound, its mission is accomplished. **GW**

Vox V863-CA Semi-Auto Wah

Featuring three modes and manual and automatic control, Vox has put together a versatile wah to help get the funk out

BY PETE EMERY

▶ AFTER SPENDING 60 years as a go-to name for wah thrills, Vox now has a triple-threat – a pedal that combines an envelope generator, envelope follower and manual control. Versatility seems to be key.

The V863's metal chassis and solid-feeling foot pedal certainly give the impression that it's built to last, and the deep red textured finish is classy. But its base plate needs to be completely removed in order to place a battery inside the enclosure, which is a little annoying. Speaking of power, the Vox V863 is listed as drawing a surprisingly high 600mA in the manual, which isn't something every pedalboard power supply can handle without doubling up a couple of outputs, so it's worth keeping that in mind.

When on, the V863's auto-wah mode will be engaged until you move the foot pedal, at which point it changes to manual mode. The various modes enabled by the mode switch are labeled in detail on the base plate, resulting in a very intuitive experience, and they almost make this a plug-and-play device. We love the notches in the center of the controls, too; they're an intuitive way of letting the player know when they are in the middle of a sweep.

After 60 years as a go-to name for wah thrills, Vox now has a triple-threat



Another particularly nice touch is how the Envelope Follower and Envelope Generator functions are explained on the base plate. In Follower mode, the pedal will “follow” the dynamics of the player's attack to control the wah, while in Generator mode, the wah sweep will trigger regardless of the strength of the note played. Altogether, we have a pretty well-thought-out and easy-to-use pedal.

Despite a shallow physical sweep in using the pedal manually, this is not the case when it comes to the sound. Toe-down presents the bitey, cutting sound that a wah is duty-bound to provide; similarly, heel-down does the woolly thing it is supposed to, in what is a wholly usable and rewarding sweep. Some competitors are notorious for tone suck, even with the pedal off. That's not a problem here. There's a tiny bit of high-end loss, but it's nothing that would be noticeable outside of an A-B test.

Getting into the auto-wah modes – the hero features of this pedal – the envelope follower mode has that same pleasing sweep. Designed to

follow the dynamics of my playing, it does exactly that with the sensitivity control proving useful to tweak how it reacts. Having this amount of control across the sensitivity is particularly useful when it comes to guitars with differing outputs. We were able to tweak this setting to reflect the differences between my Les Paul and Telecaster with ease.

The Attack control is equally useful. Set fast, it's an almost immediate progression through the sweep, and it can definitely get plenty slow enough for the vast majority of potential uses. The Envelope Generator mode is much the same, with the exception being that it triggers constantly, without consideration of playing dynamics. This is probably our favorite setting, with an ever-prominent wah, giving my tried-and-tired pentatonic licks a new lease of life.

The Sensitivity control switches to “Decay” in this mode, controlling how quickly the wah returns to its starting position. This offers a way to get that more laidback wah feel, and it's particularly enjoyable with slowed-down blues riffs. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$279

MANUFACTURER:
Vox Amps, voxamps.com

PROS

- A manual mode and two automatic modes
- Easy to use, versatile controls
- Great sound

CONS

- Awkward battery installation
- Screws protrude from the base plate; could be awkward for attaching to pedalboards
- High 600mA current draw

VERDICT: A great-sounding, versatile wah, offering manual and automatic modes in a format that's relatively easy to use. Coupled with a rock-solid build and only very minor points of criticism, it's hard to go wrong.



Aclam Go Rocky Go

Aclam goes a bit deeper in its search for authentic Beatles guitar sounds

BY TREVOR CURWEN

▶ WHILE THE GUITAR sonics heard on *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* were the goal with Aclam's Dr. Robert and The Mocker pedals, the Spanish company has now moved deeper into the Beatles' discography — namely *Magical Mystery Tour* and *The Beatles* (better known as the White Album) — with Go Rocky Go, a pedal replica of the Vox Conqueror amp's preamp (that happily looks a lot like George Harrison's "Rocky" Strat). The Vox Conqueror, one of a solid-state range of amps that also included the Supreme and Defiant, was used

by the Beatles for recording around '67 and '68, and can be seen in the band's "Hello, Goodbye" video.

Based on a Vox Conqueror's Brilliant channel, the pedal gives you several building blocks for sound creation, accessing mid-to-late-Sixties Beatles tones and more. The core sound is controlled by the volume, treble and bass knobs and has two modes, Normal and Crunch, which are activated by holding down the Bypass footswitch for 1.5 seconds. Normal is the spanky clean tone, while Crunch offers a degree of extra grit that can add an aggressive edge to

STREET PRICE:
\$348 (approx)

MANUFACTURER:
Aclam, aclamguitars.com

PROS

- Resurrects the tones of vintage equipment
- Practical switchable options
- Flexible EQ options
- Cool paint job based on George Harrison's "Rocky" Strat

CONS

- Not everyone will appreciate the holes for the Aclam Smart Track pedalboard mounting system

VERDICT: An amp-in-a-box pedal based on a solid-state amp is a rare thing, and it offers the opportunity to embrace a less-traveled path of tonal colors.

rhythm work. There's also an internal Crunch Gain control for fine-tuning. Further sonic tweaking comes courtesy of the MRB (Mid-Range Boost) switch that's engaged by pressing the two footswitches simultaneously. This was a feature of the original amp and was closely related to the development of the Vox wah pedal, so it's no surprise that the three different frequency boosts are reminiscent of the vocal resonant sound of a cocked wah.

Things can get dirty when the fuzz-like distortion mode is footswitched in, controlled by an Attack-Sustain knob that ramps up the gain, and a dedicated volume knob to add a boost if needed. Combine the distortion with the MRB and you'll get raucous tones that really cut through.

There's no denying the Beatles' ongoing influence on music, and Aclam's Go Rocky Go can zero in on some of their retro tones. But there's much more to it than that. **GW**

A preamp replica pedal that looks like Harrison's "Rocky" Strat



FOLLOW THE GROOVE

BY CORY WONG

Orchestral Mindset

A systematic approach to layering guitar parts

WHEN I AM composing and arranging music, I like to think as an orchestrator. As the guitarist, I try to represent just about everything that's in the arrangement – the drum syncopations, horn parts, keyboards, etc. – in multiple guitar parts. I might start with a bass-like theme, along the lines of **FIGURE 1**. Playing in the key of G, I begin on a low G and then playing a G one octave higher on the last 16th note of beat 1. After a 16th rest on beat 2, the high G is played again, followed by E to F in eighth notes. I've now established a "16th-note grid" that serves to represent the rhythmic syncopation of the music.

My next inclination would be to add a complimentary part above that, one that's intentionally simple and sparse. As shown in **FIGURE 2**, I play two-note shapes, 3rds apart, on the D and G strings, that fall on the upbeat of beat 2 into beat 3. Doing this serves to strengthen these accents in each bar, simple as it may be.

A great way to add to these two parts is to virtually double **FIGURE 2** an octave higher. As shown in **FIGURE 3**, I begin each bar with a quick accent on G9, followed by the same two-note shapes 3rds apart, played one octave above the previous part.

For a fourth guitar part, I could add a 16th-note horn-like stab, voiced as a unison bend on the top two strings, on the last 16th note of beat 1, as shown in **FIGURE 4**.

Right now, everything I've played fits into the same type of 16th-note rhythm, so, all together, it feels like one big groove.

My next inclination is to move away from the 16th-note grid and add something that hints at the other parts but supplies a little more momentum via a straight eighth-note

FIG. 1 N.C.(G7)



FIG. 2 N.C.(G9)



FIG. 3 G9



FIG. 4 N.C.(G)

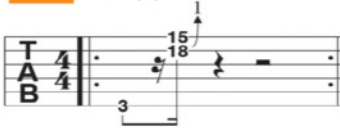


FIG. 5 (G)



FIG. 6 N.C.(G7)

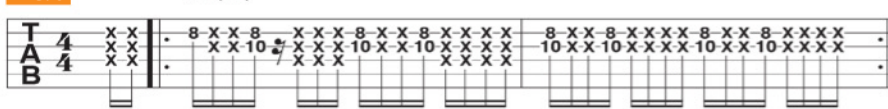
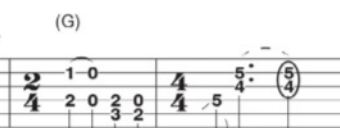
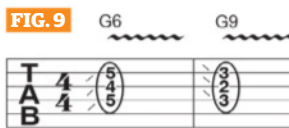
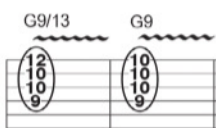
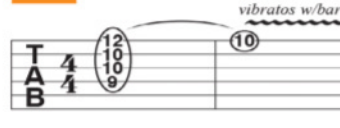


FIG. 7 (G9)



FIG. 8 G9/13



feel. This is shown in **FIGURE 5** and is built from other two-note shapes that are 3rds and 4ths apart.

Notice that for many of these parts, I play them as four-bar phrases, as opposed to a repeating one- or two-bar phrase. This way, the parts are less repetitive and also come to a "conclusion" in bar 4 before the phrase repeats.

A great part to add now is something along the lines of a shaker or hi-hat accenting straight 16th notes throughout. **FIGURE 6** is played in this way, devised of muted-string accents along with the interval of 2nds, sounded with F and G notes. Just as a drum kit has a kick, snare and hi-hats, this high part functions like the hi-hats, while the previous figures are more representative of the kick and snare.

At this point, with all these guitars outlining the rhythmic foundation, it's good to add a more melodic part, like **FIGURE 7**. Here, I play 3rds on the G and B strings, descending and then ascending one fret at a time. Also, I'm getting a pizzicato violin-like sound by using palm-muted downstrokes.

What else is missing? Thus far, everything is quite rhythmic, so, with this new layer, I have the ability to really change the vibe via some ringing chords, treated with a little bar vibrato, as shown in **FIGURE 8**.

FIGURE 9 offers another part played with the same approach, similar in vibe to Miles Davis' "Freddie Freeloader."

My objective with all this is to find a purposeful role for each guitar part, and when they're added together, it feels like one unified rhythmic and harmonic entity. **GW**



TALES FROM NERDVILLE

BY JOE BONAMASSA

Tools of the Trade, Part 16

The Gibson ES-350

ANOTHER OF THE many Gibson guitars that I love (are there any that I don't?) is the ES-350. This is a semi-hollow "jazz box" type of guitar, deeper than an ES-335 but still kind of skinny when compared to a true jazz box, like an L5 or a Super 400. There are ES-350s that pre-dated this one and were full-bodied, with P90 pickups. In 1955, the guitar was redesigned with the thinner body among other specification alterations.

The up-market guitar to the ES-350 was the ES-5, made famous by T-Bone Walker, later to be known as the Switchmaster, which had three P90s and a big toggle switch that said "1 2 3 ALL," meaning neck, middle, bridge or all three pickups on at once. All pickups all the time! This, unfortunately, never really sounded very good because the pickups would cancel each other out and get muddy. But whatever! It was a cool concept!

Chuck Berry was known to use an ES-350 in his early days, and it's perfect for playing Chuck's classic songs, like "Johnny B. Goode" and "Maybellene" and double-stop-driven licks like this (see **FIGURE 1**).

FIGURE 2 offers an example of rocking out in Chuck's style, played in the key of A and starting on the IV (four) chord, D, with typical two-note, root/5th-root-6th voicings. Notice that I barre my index finger across the G string, as well as the lower strings, in order to get the $\flat 7$ C note in there too. Following the E7 chord in bar 5, I play some Chuck-type solo lines based on A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G), utilizing subtle quarter- and half-step bends and double-stops as Chuck would in pretty much all of his solos.

These are fantastic guitars, if you don't need to play too loud. There's no center block, so they can howl with feedback.

FIG. 1

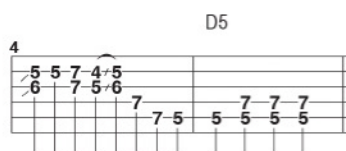
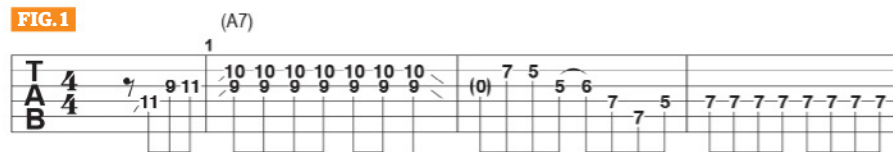


FIG. 2

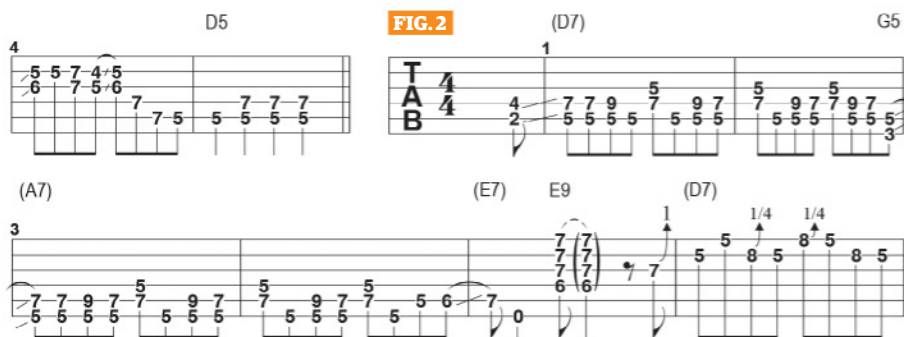


FIG. 3

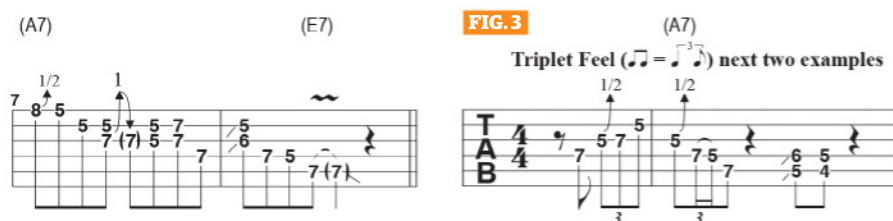
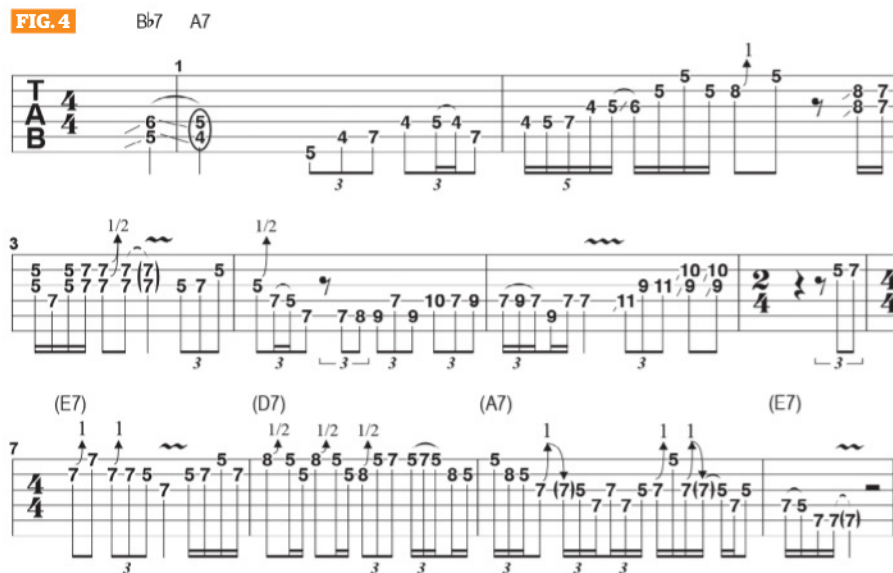


FIG. 4



I love the front pickup on these guitars too, because it's also great for blues (see **FIGURE 3**). In **FIGURE 4**, I play a 10-bar solo with a slow blues feel, leaning on a variety of scales: in bar 1, I begin with an A major triad (A, C#, E) and then move into lines based around the A Mixolydian mode (A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G). Typical for blues, I move freely between the minor and major 3rds, C and C#. Also, I'm picking near the bridge to get a sharper, clearer tone.

In the second half of bar 4 and into bar 5, I move into the lower "B.B. box" territory, so

named for blues guitarist B.B. King, which combines A minor pentatonic notes with some from A major pentatonic (A, B, C#, E, F#), along with a little bit of chromaticism.

In bar 7, over the V (five) chord, E7, I make brief reference to E major pentatonic (E, F#, G#, B, C#) before returning to A minor pentatonic to wrap up the solo.

Gibson ES-350s also make for fantastic rock 'n' roll rhythm guitars, which I will explore in next month's column. See you then! **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/November2025

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*, was released July 18. For more information, head to jbonamassa.com.



ONE GUITAR WOMAN

BY SUE FOLEY

Tying it All Together

Essential blues turnarounds, part 1

AN ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL element in blues guitar is the turnaround. It is a basic function of blues music that the turnaround happens at the end of the progression and flips it over back to the beginning of the form. When playing a standard 12-bar blues, the turnaround occurs in the last two bars, 11 and 12, as the tonic chord (rooted in the key you're in) moves to the V (five chord), which then resolves back to the tonic in bar 1 of the next 12-bar chorus.

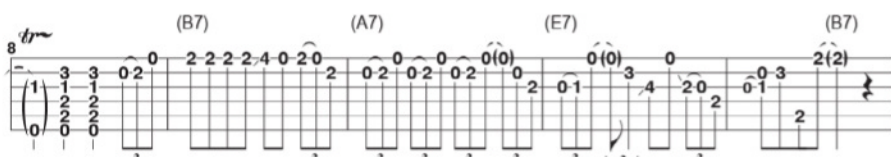
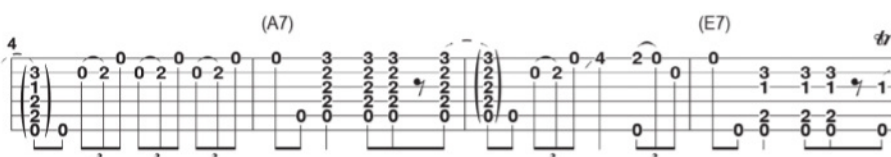
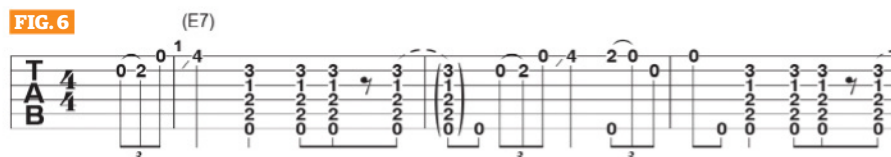
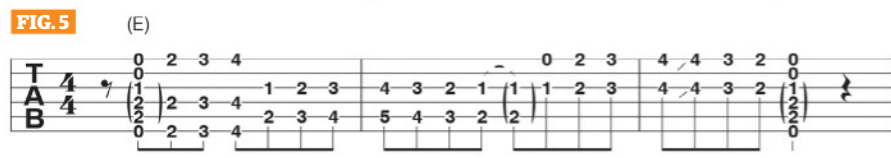
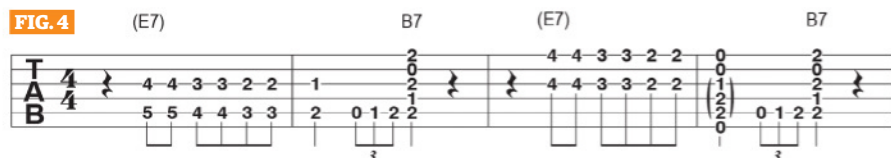
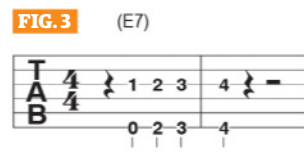
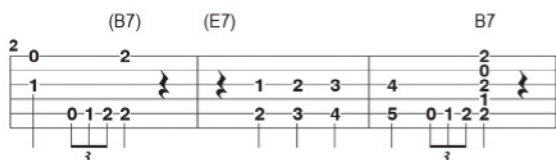
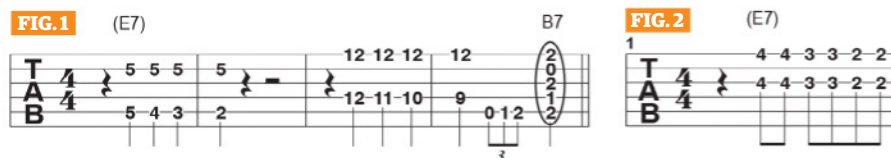
When playing a single-note blues solo, players sometimes forget about where the turnaround is and how important it is to make reference to it melodically. Playing these turnarounds as part of your solos will tie everything together and ensure that it sounds like a blues song.

If a guitarist is just riffing away on minor pentatonic licks, it will make his or her playing sound "scale-y"; you don't want to sound scale-y! You want to sound like a blues player, and incorporating the following essential blues turnarounds will ensure that you do.

Let's stick with the key of E and look at a handful of essential blues turnarounds. In **FIGURE 1**, I play the most basic one of all: while repeatedly picking a high E root note on the B string, notes on the A string descend chromatically: D, C#, C, B. In bars 3 and 4, the same turnaround is played an octave higher, starting at the 12th fret and wrapping up with a walk-up to the V chord, B7.

FIGURE 2 illustrates two more great turnarounds: in bars 1 and 2, I play notes that are 6ths apart on the G and high E strings and descend chromatically, from the 4th fret. In bars 3 and 4, I sound notes that are 6ths

All examples performed fingerstyle and with a swing feel (♩ = ♩♩)



apart on the A and D strings and ascend chromatically, from the 2nd fret.

FIGURES 3 and 4 offer a few more turnaround twists. **FIGURE 3** is built from 10th intervals. A 10th is a 3rd (major or minor) plus an octave. The open low E note and the G# on the G string's 1st fret ascend to F# and A, G and B and G# and B. **FIGURE 4** presents two more turnaround options: in bars 1 and 2, 6ths descend on the A and D strings, followed by the V chord, B7. In bars 3 and 4, notes two that are octaves apart, on the low and high E strings, descend from the 4th fret to the open strings. In **FIGURE 5**, I combine three types of turnarounds and bring them all together.

One great approach is to actually play the same turnaround all through a song. This is something that the great T-Bone Walker would do all of the time, as did Freddie King on his classic song, "Hideaway."

FIGURE 6 illustrates a 12-bar example played along the lines of "Hideaway." Starting with the pickup bar, there is a melody sounded on the top two strings that runs through the entire form. In bars 11 and 12, Freddie's essential turnaround is a very specific melodic line played on the top three strings. This signature lick serves to define the song; when I hear it, I'll say, "That's 'Hideaway'!" **GW**



HARDWIRED

BY JAMES JARED NICHOLS

The Big Picture

Combining varying approaches in my "Hard Wired" solo

LAST MONTH, I talked about how I devised the primary riffs in the title track to my 2023 album *Hard Wired*, which is played in drop D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E). I'd now like to share some of the varied approaches and techniques I use in the song's breakdown and solo sections.

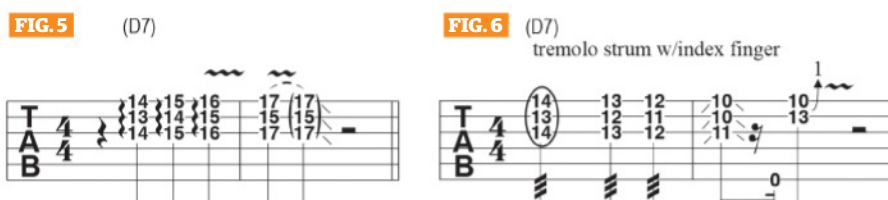
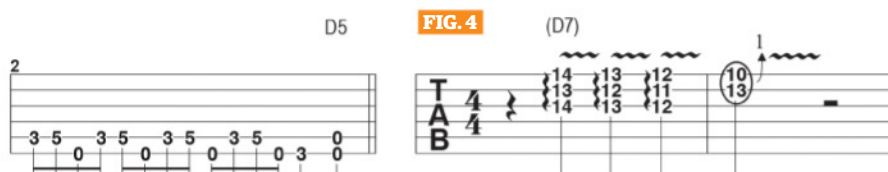
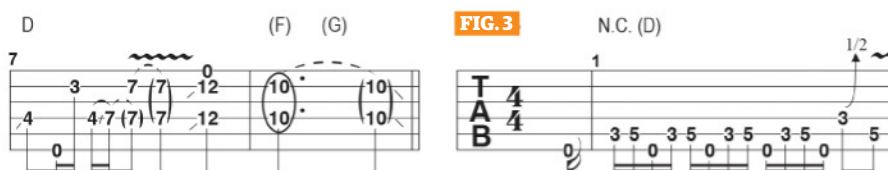
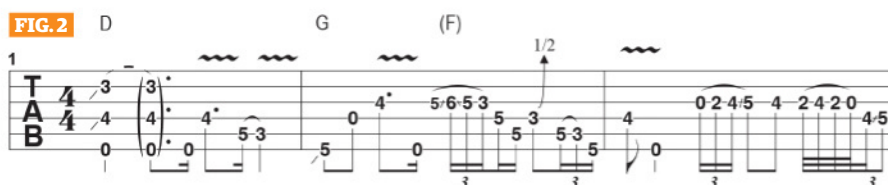
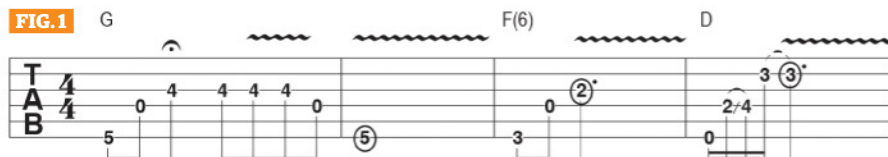
One of the cool things about the breakdown section is that I take the opportunity to interpret the chord progression in different ways. The first thing I do is switch things up by establishing a progression of D - G - F. But instead of playing straight major chords or root-5th power chords, I like to bring in the sound of open strings to help broaden the harmony, as well as the timbre.

One way I accomplish this is to keep an open D string in the mix for all of the voicings. As shown in **FIGURE 1**, I play a G chord by fretting the low G on the 6th string's 5th fret, played along with the open 4th string and a B note at the 4th fret on the G string. I then slide this shape down two frets to sound F on the 6th string's 3rd fret along with the open 4th-string D and an A note at the 2nd fret of the G string. I end with a D chord sounded by the open low D along with the notes F# and D on the D and B strings, respectively. Be sure to allow all of the strings to ring throughout.

While improvising over these sections, I like to emphasize the sound of F#, the major 3rd of D, moving to the minor 3rd, F, which then becomes the root note for the F chord. To me, there's something beautiful about messing with those double-stops of D and F# over the D chord and then C and F over the F chord.

As shown in **FIGURE 2**, I slide into fretted F# and D notes, sounded along with the open low D, then move to G followed by a single-note riff that's based on the D blues scale (D, F,

All examples performed fingerstyle and in drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G, B, E).



G, A♭, A, C). In bar 3, over D, I freely move through the D Mixolydian mode (D, E, F#, G, A, B, C) with hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides, followed in the next bar with reference to F then more D blues scale riffs. Bars 5 and 6, are played with the same approach, with all of the riffs freely improvised, as are bars 7 and 8.

By playing two-bar phrases like these, initially establishing the chord changes and then moving into solo lines, I'm replicating the tandem approach of rhythm and lead guitars, as the leads effectively "answer" the chords.

The solo section then kicks off with

a heavy riff that sits right on the D chord. As shown in **FIGURE 3**, I repeatedly play C and D notes over the open low D and resolve at the end of each bar to an F note that I proceed to bend up a half step to F#.

I then flow into the solo with triads played on the top three strings, either moving chromatically downward, as in **FIGURE 6**, or upward, as in **FIGURE 7**. In **FIGURE 8**, I use my pick-hand index finger to tremolo strum the triads in a Jimi Hendrix-like way.

Next month, we'll take a deeper dive into the techniques I used to develop the solo section of "Hard Wired." See you then. **GW**

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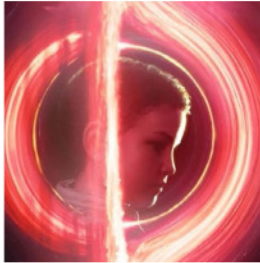
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B5DMAG

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS

BY JIMMY BROWN

COHEED AND CAMBRIA "Blind Side Sonny"



GUITARIST TRAVIS

STEVER kicks off this driving, uptempo rock song with a punchy, syncopated lead riff in the key of D minor,

playing in the 10th-position D minor pentatonic "box" and aggressively digging into his note attacks with both hands (see bars 1-12). To keep things tight sounding, he applies a heavy palm mute (P.M.) on his low strings. On the studio recording, the muted "X" notes on the 6th string, which aren't intentional, sound low F notes, which is surprising, considering that the riff is performed in standard tuning. It's possible that those in-between notes might have been digitally pitch shifted up a half step (from E to F) in the mixing stage. In any case, when playing the song live, Travis avoids scratching his low E string here and focuses mainly on the intended melody notes played on the D, G and B strings, with any palm-muted scratches occurring on the A and/or D strings.

"To keep things tight, Stever heavily palm-mutes his low strings"

A key element that makes this riff come alive and speak is Stever's use of whole- and half-step string bends ("1" and "1/2") on the G string's 12th fret and fierce finger vibratos on the 10th-fret F notes. Notice how, starting in bar 3, the guitarist adds double-stops to these bent and shaken notes, by barring his 3rd and 1st fingers across the G and B strings at the 12th and 10th frets, respectively. Stever performs all the bends and vibratos here by pulling the string(s) downward, toward the palm, which produces a distinctly different sound and feel than that attained by pushing the string(s) upward, away from the palm.

The guitarist uses this same pulling technique for the vibratos he applies to the 10th-fret F and A notes during the chorus, in bars 31 and 35, and elsewhere in the song, except in bar 49. Here, the vibratos are on the high E string, where bending downward is simply not an option, as you'll end up pulling the string off the fretboard. In this case, Travis uses a push-bend technique to create vibrato.

THE RED CLAY STRAYS "Wondering Why"



HARKENING BACK TO

the traditional country/Americana sound of homegrown electric guitars plugged into vintage Fender

tube amps and played with tasteful purpose, The Red Clay Strays axmen Brandon Coleman, Drew Nix and Zach Rishel crafted this hit downtempo ballad arrangement by combining simple, effective clean-tone rhythm parts and lightly overdriven melodic fills that support and complement the vocals and laidback triplet feel of the rhythm section.

Coleman begins the song alone, softly self-accompanying his singing with low, palm-muted chord thumps that provide just enough rhythmic and harmonic information to establish a $\frac{6}{8}$ groove and tonal bed.

Nix and Rishel (Guitars 2 and 3) join in at the 1st chorus (section B), playing sparse parts that subtly enhance the groove and provide soulful melodic fills around the vocal phrases while leaving plenty of "breathing space," in the form of rests and held notes or chords, for the bass and drums to lay down a swaying $\frac{6}{8}$ feel. Notice the use of well-placed finger slides in these parts, with both single notes and double-stops. These melodic ornaments lend the notes a bluesy, vocal-like quality.

The great thing about using fingers slides in general is that, unlike some other techniques, they always sound good in any style of music and with any guitar tone, be it clean, dirty, high-gain, bridge pickup, neck pickup, acoustic, nylon-string and what have you. And they sound especially sweet with reverb.

Another noteworthy aspect of this arrangement is the layering of strummed chords and arpeggios, beginning at the 2nd verse (section C, bar 33), which serves to enrich and gently intensify the accompaniment. Also note the use of palm muting and staccato fret-hand articulations in the Guitar 2 part here, which effectively prevent the notes from ringing together, thus preserving more open sonic space in the groove.

Finally, notice the band's sensitive use of dynamics (contrasts in volume and texture) throughout the arrangement, with the bridge and 3rd chorus (sections E and G) being the dramatic high points.

GEORGE HARRISON "My Sweet Lord"



THIS GEORGE HARRISON

classic features the guitarist's polished electric slide playing in standard tuning, with

two cleanly executed melodic solos that serve as instrumental hooks in the arrangement.

Playing slide in standard tuning can be unforgiving, as it's all too easy to inadvertently sound unwanted, sour notes on adjacent strings that don't musically agree with the ones you're playing. So it's important to mute any unplayed strings with the fingers of both hands, to keep them silent. Playing fingerstyle, as Harrison does here, helps in this regard.

George begins the first slide solo (see section B, bar 7) playing in the key of E and way up high on the neck on his B string, which produces a rounder and mellower tone than playing the same notes five frets lower on the high E string, and precisely doubles the line with a second, overdubbed slide guitar (Guitar 4). In addition to the difference in tone, playing the notes way up there also affects the vibrato, as the slide doesn't need to swing as far to the left and to the right of the fret to achieve a wide, pleasing warble. Again, try to suppress any unwanted sympathetic vibrations on non-played strings, especially when crossing from one string to another.

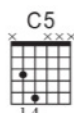
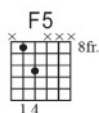
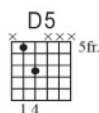
In bar 14, Harrison plays a cool, slippery line on his B string, descending then ascending an E#dim7 (or G#dim7) arpeggio and precisely gliding to targeted notes that are three frets apart. Notice how the overdubbed Guitar 4 part now harmonizes the melody a minor 3rd below (three frets lower) and the way both guitar parts then resolve beautifully to chord tones of F#m and B in the next bar. As always, strive for accurate intonation with the slide, keeping it parallel to the frets and lining it up directly over each indicated fret.

At section J (bar 67), Harrison reprises his double-tracked and harmonized slide melody from the intro, but now a whole step higher, in the key of F# major. Judging from the brighter timbre and absence of any vibrato in the first phrase here, it sounds like he opted to play the highest notes on his high E string this time, which also keeps him from having to go past the fretboard on the B string. **GW**

COHEED AND CAMBRIA

"Blind Side Sonny"

AS HEARD ON **VAXIS — ACT III: THE FATHER OF MAKE BELIEVE**
 WORDS AND MUSIC BY **CLAUDIO SANCHEZ** • TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A Intro (0:00)

Fast ♩ = 170

N.C.(D5)

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff A

end Riff A

GTR.1

(0:06, 0:51)

D5

Gtr. 1

F5

C5

GTR.1

Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fig. 1 second time
 (see bar 13)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR.2

Bass

Bass Fill 1 (0:58)

D5

Bass Fill 2 (1:03, 1:09)

D5

"BLIND SIDE SONNY"

1. Hey I'm
2. Go on

GTR.1

GTR. 2

B Verses (0:17, 1:02)

(1.) Blind Side	Sonny	here	to	give you the news	The kind	you won't like	'cause it	involves	you	You
(2.) Give me some	Go	on		give me your tears	Know	this for a fact	I	will not	hear	what were

D5
*Gr. 1 plays Riff A simile, three times
(see bar 1)*

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 2

2nd time, skip ahead to **D** (bar 37)

want you wanna	take me take me	for all	I got	Well	you got to	catch me are you	ready	or not	Decide	once
Your retaliation		don't	mean shit		Go on	give me a	myriad		of	reasons

GTR. 2

TRANSCRIPTIONS

and for all Is it trouble you want 'Cause here in your lies You're only gonna get caught And now

C5

21 *Rhy. Fig. 2*

7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	X	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	X	0
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	8	8	8	8	8	8	X	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 one and one half times (see bar 9)

you're going to face your biggest fear Your ass is no longer welcom here

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A first two bars of Riff A simile (see bar 1)

25 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\uparrow$ *end Rhy. Fig. 2*

C 1st and 2nd Choruses (0:39, 1:25)

Blood we want blood We want blood Yeah Yeah Yeah Give us some We want blood

D5

Riff B

29 (16th-note trem. strum) -----

13 12 13 12 13 12 15 14 11 10 11 10 11 10 11 10 10 12 10 0 10 12 10 10 (10) 12 10 12 12 10 0

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 3

Bass

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 | 5 5 5 5 5 3 5 5 | 5 5 3 5 5 3 5 5

1/2

1st time, go back to bar 5
2nd time, skip ahead to **E** Bridge
(bar 45)

We want blood We want blood Yeah yeah yeah Give us some

D5

33 (16th-note trem. strum) - - - - -

The first system of the musical score for 'The Little Boat' consists of a single staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a simple, child-friendly style. The first measure contains a quarter note G4 (labeled 13/12), followed by a quarter note F#4 (labeled 12/12), a quarter note E4 (labeled 12/12), and a quarter note D4 (labeled 15/14). The second measure contains a quarter note C4 (labeled 11/10), a quarter note B3 (labeled 11/10), a quarter note A3 (labeled 11/10), and a quarter note G3 (labeled 11/10). The third measure contains a quarter note F3 (labeled 10), a quarter note E3 (labeled 12), a quarter note D3 (labeled 10), and a quarter note C3 (labeled 0). The fourth measure contains a quarter note B2 (labeled 12), a quarter note A2 (labeled 12), a quarter note G2 (labeled 10), and a quarter note F2 (labeled 10). The fifth measure contains a quarter note E2 (labeled 10), a quarter note D2 (labeled 12), a quarter note C2 (labeled 10), and a quarter note B1 (labeled 10). The sixth measure contains a quarter note A1 (labeled 12), a quarter note G1 (labeled 10), a quarter note F1 (labeled 12), a quarter note E1 (labeled 10), and a quarter note D1 (labeled 10). The system ends with a double bar line.

end Rhy. Fig. 3

"BLIND SIDE SONNY"

D (1:13)

I'd have to relive through the times of all the unpleasanties and crimes Used

D5

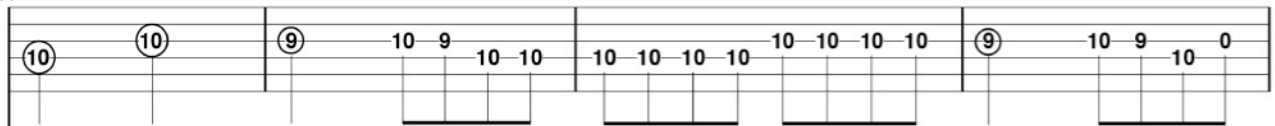
F5

C5

GTR. 2 Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 21)

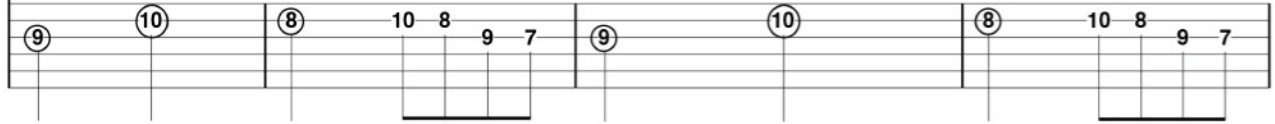
Gtr. 1

GTR. 1



Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR. 3



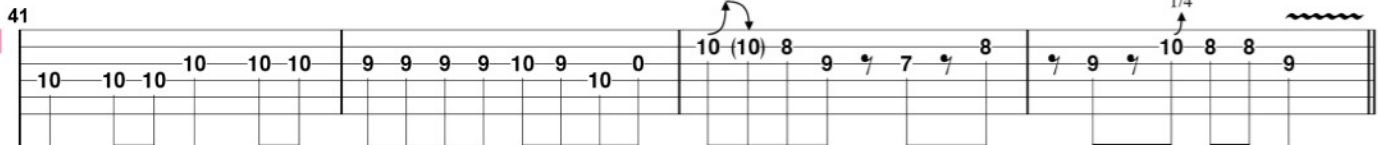
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 13)

Go back to **C** 2nd Chorus (bar 29)

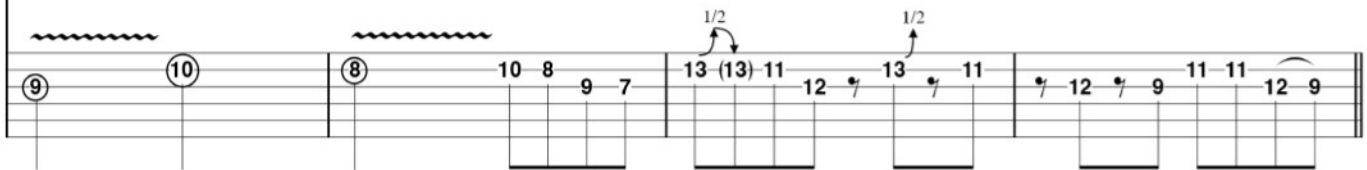
up all of your nine lives Don't fool yourself Sonny Now you're living in mine

D5

GTR. 1



GTR. 3



E Bridge (1:36)

Dancing through a mental breakdown I find I am always met with doubt

N.C.(D5)

(C5)

(D5)

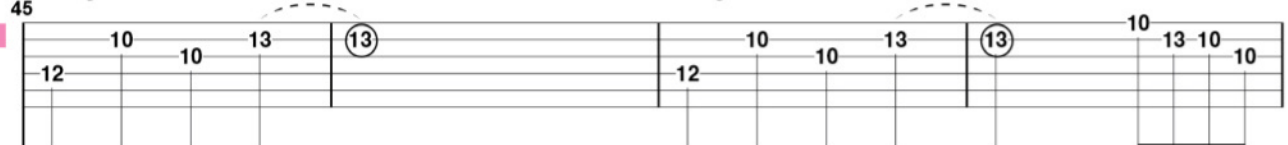
(C5)

Gtr. 1

let ring-----

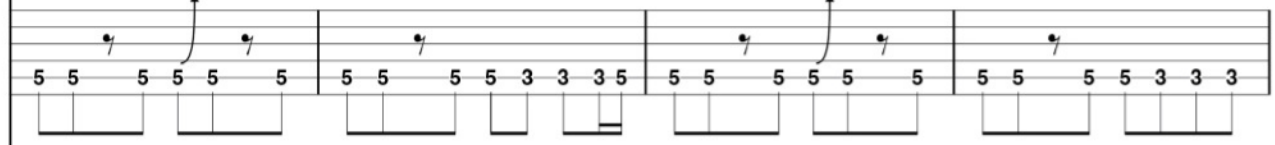
let ring-----

GTR. 1

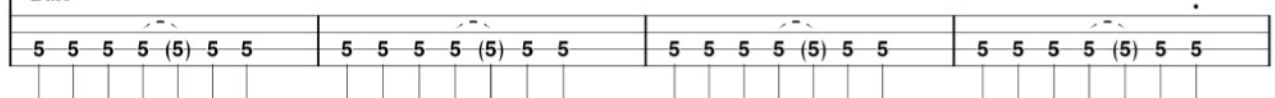


Gtr. 2

GTR. 2



Bass



TRANSCRIPTIONS

I'll show my baby I can

(B $\flat$ 5)

(G5)

(D5)

N.C.

let ring - - - -

49

GTR.1

GTR.2

13 13 13 13 13 13 13 13 (trem. pick) 15 10 8 10 10 10 10

1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 X X X 5 5 5 5 5 10 10 10 10 10 10

3 3 3 5 5 5

Change to become something better The work I put in isn't what I get out

(D5)

(C5)

(D5)

(C5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

53

GTR.1

GTR.2

Bass

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3

The work I put in isn't what I get out

(B $\flat$ 5)

(G5)

(D5)

57

GTR.1

GTR.2

Bass

1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 X X X 12 (12) (12) 10 12 12 10 12 12 10 12

1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 X X X 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 X X X 0 0

1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 1 3 5

F 3rd Chorus (1:59)

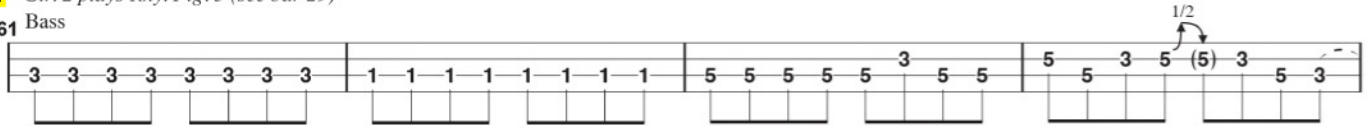
Blood We want blood We want blood Yeah yeah yeah Give us some We want blood

C5 Bb5 D5

GTR.1 Gtr. 1 plays Riff B (see bar 29)

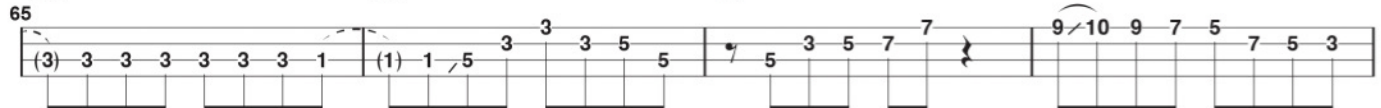
GTR.2 Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 29)

61 Bass



We want blood We want blood Yeah yeah yeah Give us some

C5 Bb5 D5



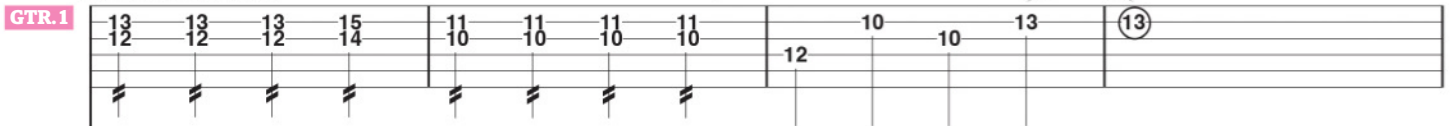
Blood We want blood We want blood Yeah yeah yeah Give us some We want blood

C5 Bb5 D5

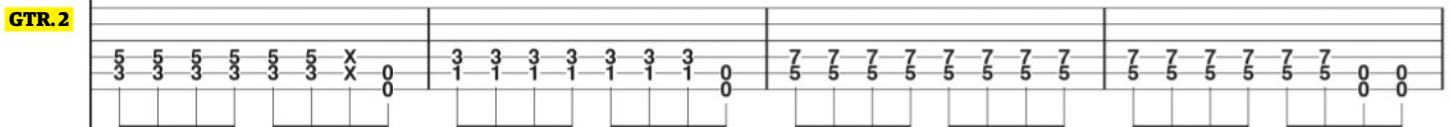
Gtr. 1

69 (16th-note trem. strum)

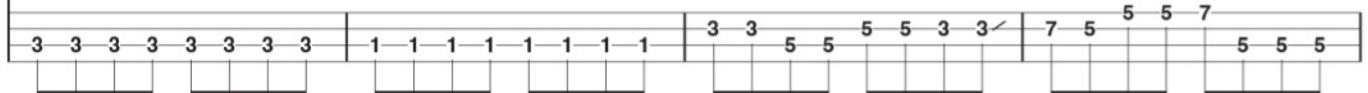
let ring



Gtr. 2



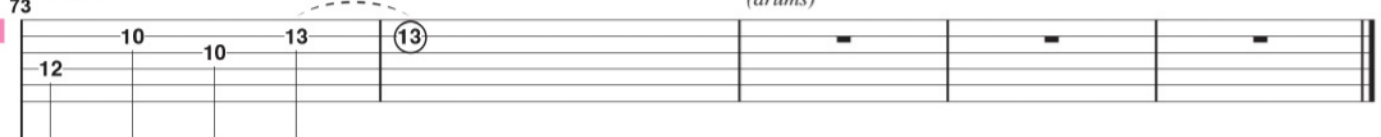
Bass



We want blood We want blood

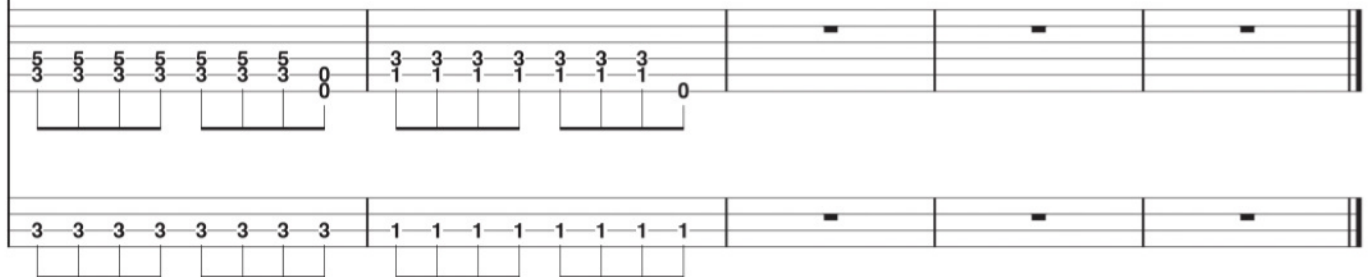
C5 Bb5

let ring



GTR.1

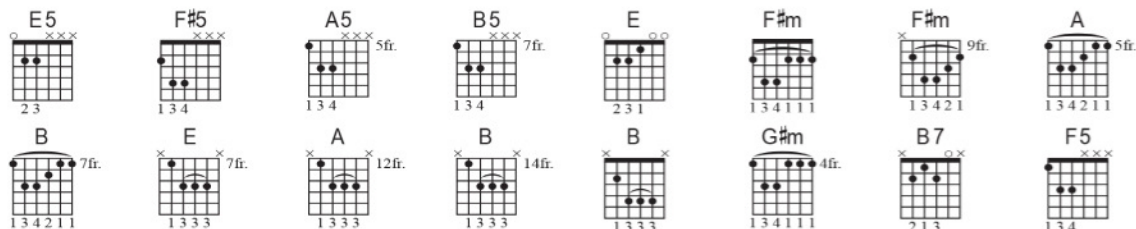
GTR.2



THE RED CLAY STRAYS

"Wondering Why"

AS HEARD ON **MOMENT OF TRUTH**
 WORDS AND MUSIC BY **BRANDON COLEMAN, ANDREW NIX AND DAN COUCH**
 TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A 1st Verse (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 148

1. She comes from silver spoon golden rule private school never missed Sunday church

And I come from

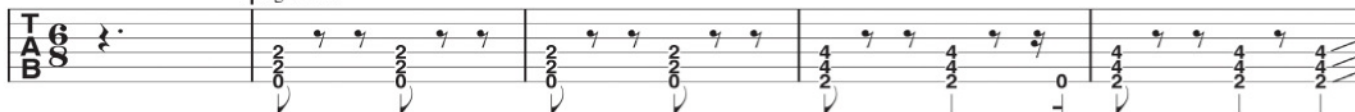
E5

F#5

Gtr. 1 (clean elec.)

light P.M.

GTR.1



blue collar

low dollar

out here where concrete

meets

old

red dirt

And I

A5

B5

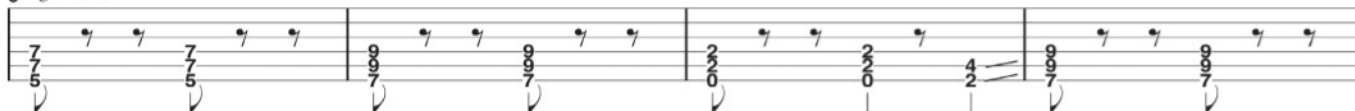
E5

F#5

B5

5 light P.M.

GTR.1



(0:21)

don't know what happened but it sure don't add up on paper

But when I

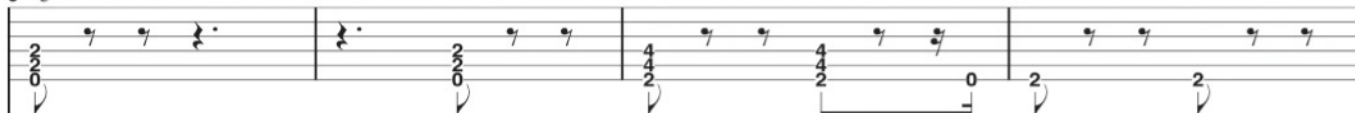
E5

F#5

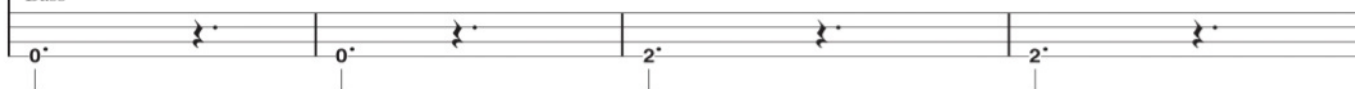
Gtr. 1

9 light P.M.

GTR.1



Bass

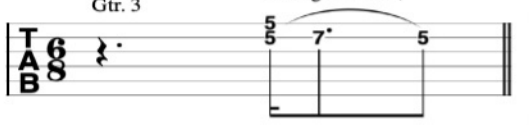


Fill 1 (1:16)

B

Gtr. 3

let ring



close my eyes late at night You can bet I thank my maker

She keeps on

A5

E5

B5

13 Gtr. 2 (clean elec.)

GTR.2

Gtr. 1

light P.M.

GTR.1

P.M.

Bass

B 1st and 2nd Choruses (0:40, 1:38)

loving

me

Loves me the way I

am

She's not just a -

E

F#m

Rhy. Fig. 1a

w/delay effect*

Gtr. 3 plays Fill 2 second time
(see below)

GTR.2

*405ms delay time producing 'eighth-note' delay echoes
(Composite arr.: Two gtr parts are for one gtr.)

Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR.1

*Notes played 2nd time only.
(Composite arr.: Two gtr parts are for one gtr.)

(play repeat w/ad lib variation)

Fill 2 (1:43)

F#m

Gtr. 3

GTR.3

TAB 6 8

Fill 3 (1:53)

E

B

E

Gtr. 3

GTR.3

TAB 6 8

- long for the ride

She's my

biggest fan

Lord it's a

A

B

E

B

*Gtr. 3 plays Fill 3 second time
(see below bar 17)*

GTR.2

GTR.1

little

old piece

of

heaven

When we lay

down

at night

She keeps on

E

F#m

GTR.2

GTR.1

loving me

and

I

keep on

wondering

why

2. She's got a

A

B

E

F#5

B

end Rhy. Fig. 1a

*Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1
(see below bar 10)*

GTR.2

GTR.1

end Rhy. Fig. 1

“WONDERING WHY”

She's as

33 Gtr. 3 (clean elec.)

[illegible]

P.M.-----, > P.M.-----, > P.M.-----, > P.M.-----, > P.M.-----, > P.M.-----
 7 9 9 9 9 9 | 7 9 9 9 9 9 | 9 11 11 10 11 11 | 9 11 11 10 11 11

[illegible]

The first system of musical notation for 'The Rose Tree' is written on a single five-line staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes and rests: a quarter note G⁰, a quarter note A², a half note B², a quarter note G⁰, a quarter note F¹, a half note E², a quarter note D², a quarter note C², a half note B², a quarter note A², a quarter note G², a half note F², a quarter note E², a quarter note D², a half note C², and a quarter note B². The notes are marked with fingerings: G⁰ (0), A² (2), B² (2), F¹ (1), E² (2), D² (2), C² (2), and B² (2). The system ends with a double bar line.

She keeps on

[illegible]

The first staff of music is a single-line melody on a five-line staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of the following notes: a quarter note G4 (labeled 5°), an eighth rest, a quarter note A4 (labeled 5), a quarter note B4 (labeled 7°), a quarter note A4 (labeled 7°), a quarter note G4 (labeled 0°), a quarter note A4 (labeled 2), a quarter note B4 (labeled 0), a quarter note A4 (labeled 1), a quarter note G4 (labeled 2°), a quarter note A4 (labeled 2), a quarter note B4 (labeled 2/4), and a quarter note A4 (labeled 2). The notes are connected by a continuous line, with a slur over the final three notes (A4, B4, A4).

TRANSCRIPTIONS

D (2:12)

E Bridge (2:14) (Slightly faster ♩ = 150)

why

Hmm hmm

E

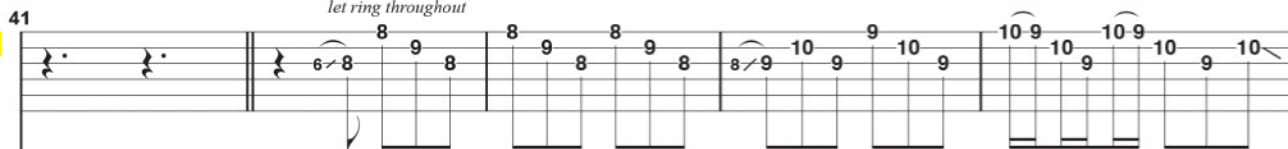
G#

A

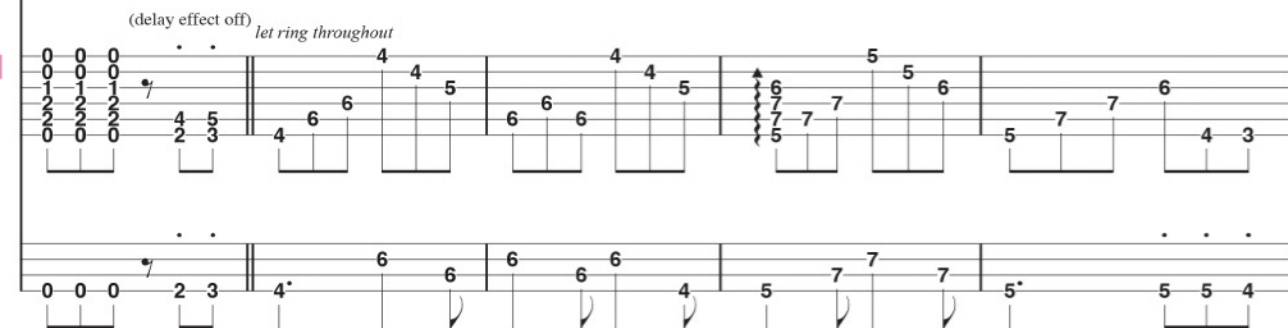
w/tremolo effect

let ring throughout

GTR. 2



GTR. 1



hmm

Alright

alright

alright

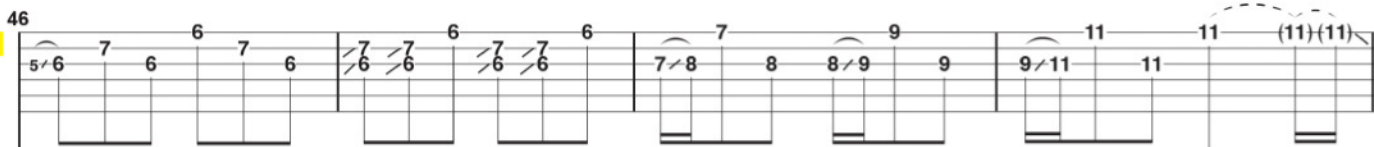
I

F#

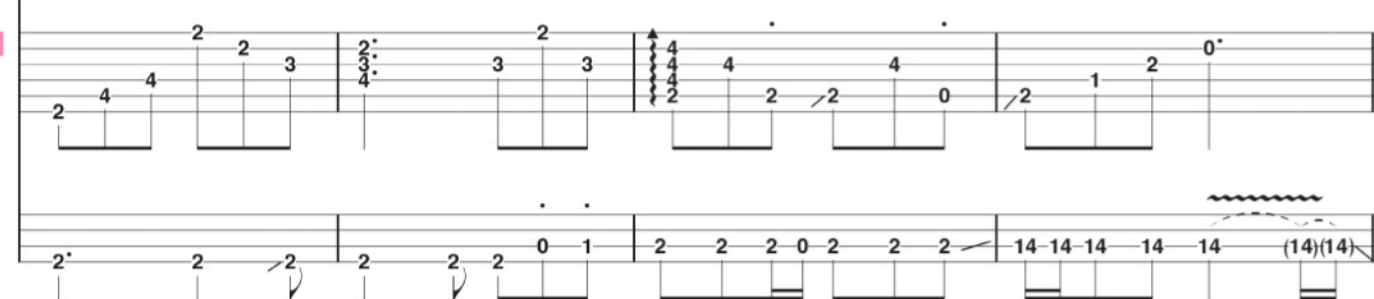
B

B7

GTR. 2



GTR. 1



F 3rd Verse (2:34)

(Original tempo ♩ = 148)

don't know what happened but it sure don't add up on paper

And as

N.C. (E)

G#m

w/slap-back delay effect

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

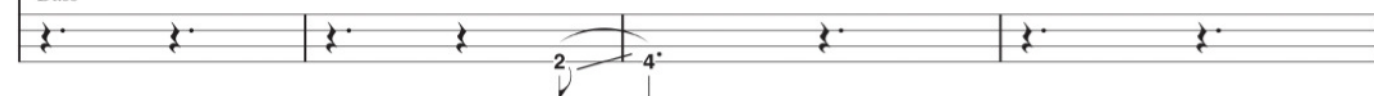
P.M. -----

50 Gtr. 1

GTR. 1



Bass



long as she lets me I'll take her wherever she wants me to take her Oh She keeps on
A B E B
let ring - - - - -

54 Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

Gtr. 1 P.M. - - - - - P.M. - - - - - (slap-back delay off) Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR. 1

Bass

G 3rd Chorus (2:53)

loving me Loves me the way I am She's not just a -
E F#m

GTR. 1 Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 17)
GTR. 2 Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a simile (see bar 17)
Gtr. 3

58

GTR. 3

Bass

- long for the ride She's my biggest fan And it's a
A B E B

62

GTR. 3

Bass

little old piece of heaven when we lay down at night
E F#m

66

GTR. 3

Bass

TRANSCRIPTIONS

She keeps on loving me (and) I keep on wondering

B

69

GTR.3

The second system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melody from the first system, starting with a quarter note G4 (labeled 9), followed by a quarter note A4 (labeled 11), and a dotted quarter note B4 (labeled 11). This is followed by a half note G4 (labeled 11) and a half note F#4 (labeled 13), which are beamed together. Then, a quarter note G4 (labeled 9) and a quarter note A4 (labeled 11) are beamed together. The staff ends with a quarter rest and a dotted quarter rest. The lower staff continues the accompaniment, starting with a quarter note D3 (labeled 2), followed by a quarter note E3 (labeled 4), and a quarter note D3 (labeled 2). This is followed by a quarter note E3 (labeled 4) and a quarter note D3 (labeled 5). The staff ends with a quarter note E3 (labeled 7), a quarter note F#3 (labeled 7), a quarter note E3 (labeled 5), and a quarter note D3 (labeled 7).

Freely

why

She keeps on loving me and I keep on wondering why

F

F#m

N.C.

B

72 Gtr. 3

GTR.3

[illegible]

Gtr. 2

GTR. 2

Gtr. 2

Gtr. 1

GTR.1

Gtr. 1



Bass

Bass

7^{*} 7 (7) 0 2 (2) (14)^{*} (14) [wavy line] 4

E

76 Gtr. 3

(vol. swell)

GTR.3

76 Gtr. 3 (vol. swell)

76 Gtr. 3 (vol. swell)

77 8[•] (8)[•] (8)[•]

Gtr. 2
let ring

GTR. 2

Gtr. 2
let ring

The notation for guitar 2 consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The notes and fingerings are as follows: a quarter note G2 (fingering 0), a quarter note A2 (fingering 2), a quarter note B2 (fingering 1), a quarter note C3 (fingering 0), a quarter rest (fingering 0), a dotted half note D3 (fingering (0)•), a quarter rest (fingering (0)•), a dotted half note E3 (fingering (0)•), and a quarter rest (fingering (0)•). A dashed line with a downward-pointing arrow is placed above the staff, spanning from the first quarter rest to the end of the staff, with the text 'let ring' written above it.

Bass
let ring

Bass
let ring

The bass line is written on a five-line staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first measure contains a whole note chord consisting of a B-flat on the second line and a G on the third line, with a '7°' symbol above it. The second measure contains a whole note chord consisting of a B-flat on the second line and a G on the third line, with a '9°' symbol above it. A dashed line connects the '9°' symbol in the second measure to a '(9)°' symbol above the third measure. The third measure contains a whole note chord consisting of a B-flat on the second line and a G on the third line, with a '(9)°' symbol above it. The fourth measure contains a whole note chord consisting of a B-flat on the second line and a G on the third line, with a '7°' symbol above it. The piece ends with a double bar line.

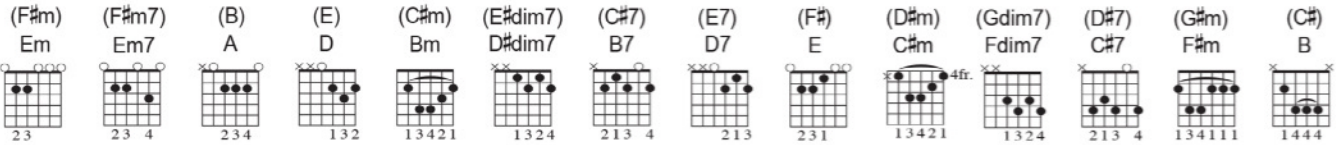
GEORGE HARRISON

"My Sweet Lord"

AS HEARD ON **ALL THINGS MUST PASS**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **GEORGE HARRISON** • TRANSCRIBED BY **JIMMY BROWN**

Gtr. 1 capo 2. Chord names in parentheses indicate concert-key harmony throughout (for Gtrs. 2-4 and Bass).



A Intro (0:00)

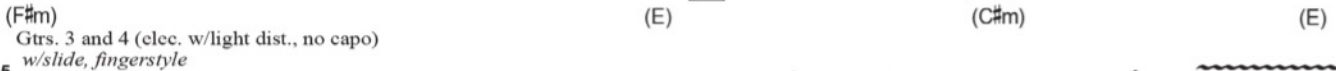
Moderate Acoustic Rock ♩ = 120



GTR. 1

*Multiple acoustic guitarists, doubling the same part with slight variations in their strum rhythms.

B 1st Slide Guitar Solo (0:16)



GTR. 3

GTR. 4

GTR. 2

GTR. 1

*Let E chord ring into next measure.

My sweet Lord

(E) (E#dim7) (F#m) (B) (F#m)

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

13

Gtr. 4

GTR. 4

D D#dim7 B7 Em A Em

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

C 1st Chorus and 2nd Chorus continued (0:32, 1:00)

Hmm my Lord

(F#m7) (B) (F#m) (B) (F#m) (B)

Em7 A Em A Em A

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

D 1st and 2nd Verses (0:44, 1:12)

I really want to see you
I really want to know you

Really want to be with you
Really want to go with you

Really want to
Really want to

(E) (C#m) (E) (C#m)

D Bm D Bm

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

E 2nd and 3rd Choruses (0:56, 1:24)

see you Lord but it takes so long my Lord
show you Lord that it won't take long my Lord (Hallelujah)

My sweet Lord
My sweet Lord (Hallelujah)

(E) (E#dim7) (C#7) (F#m) B (F#m) (B)

D D#dim7 B7 Em A Em A

GTR. 1

Hmm my Lord (Hallelujah) My sweet Lord (Hallelujah) I really want to

A Gtr. 1 Em A Em A D

32 GTR.1

(B) (F#m) (B) (F#m) (B) (E)

Gtr. 2

GTR.2

F Bridge (1:40)

see you Really want to see you Really want to see you Lord

D D7 B7

Gtr. 1

37

GTR. 1

(E) (E7) (C#7)

Gtr. 2

GTR. 2

Bass

7 7 7 7 4 3

G Modulation (1:52)

H 4th Chorus (1:56)

Really want to see you Lord but it takes so long my Lord (Hallelujah) My sweet Lord

42

GTR.1

B7 E Fdim7 C#7 F#m B F#m

(C#7) (F#) (A#dim7) (D#7) (G#m) (C#)

[illegible]

TRANSCRIPTIONS

I 4th Verse (2:11)

I really want to know you (Hallelujah) Really want to go with you (Hallelujah) Really want to

2

B E C#m E C#m E

Rhy. Fig. 1

(C#) (F#) (D#m) (F#) (D#m)

Bass Fig. 1

(4) (4) (4) 4* 4 (6) 6* 4 (4) 4* 4 (6) 6* 4

show you Lord that it won't take long my Lord hmm hmm hmm (Hallelujah)

(Ahh) Fdim7 C#7 F#m (Hallelujah) B F#m B

E end Rhy. Fig. 1

0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4
1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4
2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4
0 0 0 0 0 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 x 4

(F#) (Gdim7/Bb) (D#7) (C#) (G#m) end Bass Fig. 1 Bass Fig. 2

④ 4° 4 6 6 4 6° 6 ④ 4° 4 ④ 4° 6 ④ 4° 3

[illegible]

J 2nd Slide Guitar Solo (2:39)

(F#) (D#m) (F#) (D#m)

GTR.1 *Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 53)*
 Gtrs. 3 and 4 (elec. w/dist., no capo)
w/slide, fingerstyle

67 **GTR. 3** **GTR. 4**



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 53)

"MY SWEET LORD"

GTR. 3

K 5th Chorus (2:55)

GTR.1

L 6th Verse (3:11)

GTR.1

M Out-chorus (3:23)

GTR.1

Play 17 times simile (w/vocal variations) and fade

GTR.1



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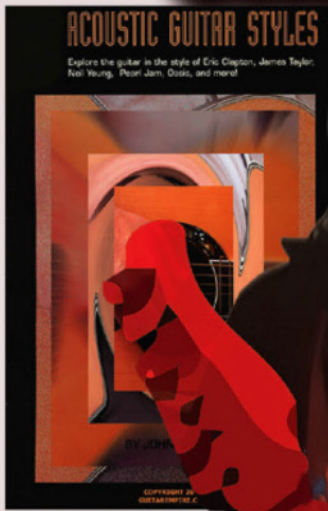
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POWER TOOLS

Klon Centaur

1994–2008*

CATEGORY OVERDRIVE PEDAL

BY CHRIS GILL

WHEN BILL FINNEGAN first offered the Klon Centaur to the general public in the mid-Nineties, the price was \$239 (which was considered expensive back when most high-end and boutique pedals sold for \$100 to \$199). The Centaur soon appeared in the rigs of numerous high-profile players and noted tone “connoisseurs” like Aerosmith’s Joe Perry and Brad Whitford, Jeff Beck, Joe Bonamassa, Nels Cline, James Hetfield, John Mayer, Ed O’Brien, Jack White and more, inspiring extreme gear lust among players who wanted to sound like them.

Today, you’ll be lucky if you can find a bona fide original for less than \$4,000. Finnegan built about 8,000 Centaur pedals entirely by himself before he stopped taking orders around 2008 (*He still occasionally builds Centaurs that he auctions on eBay to raise funds for a friend; to date he’s made fewer than two dozen “reissues”), which instantly elevated the Centaur to rare-collectible status.

As most guitarists who have owned or tried a Centaur can attest, the pedal isn’t an ordinary overdrive/boost effect. Whereas most overdrives have a distinctive sonic signature, the Centaur is more “transparent,” enhancing the performance of a rig and delivering more of the amp’s most desirable sonic attributes without changing its overall vibe. It’s been described as a “clean boost” and “transparent overdrive” but it’s actually much more than that and somehow also neither.

Although Finnegan encased the Centaur circuit board in a heavy layer of black epoxy, a few individuals eventually figured out the circuit by the mid 2000s. Whereas most overdrives run the guitar’s signal through a single path, the Centaur ingeniously splits the signal to three paths. One path is a sort of crossover that isolates bass frequencies and passes the signal through the circuit without distortion (a key to the pedal’s clarity and definition even at extreme output and gain settings). Another path distorts the signal through a TL072 JFET op amp and two germanium diodes (similar to what a standard overdrive or distortion pedal does). The final path processes a separate signal with clean boost. A double-ganged gain pot blends the op amp/diode distortion with the clean boost, with the clean boost emphasized in the gain control’s counter-clockwise settings while the op amp and diodes come into play (while the clean boost is simultaneously reduced) as the gain knob is cranked past its halfway point. This three-way split preserves tight, defined bass, adds body and midrange sweetness and can dial in satisfying crunch and grit that retains dynamic responsiveness, pick attack and string-to-string clarity.



A very nice Klon Centaur specimen, photographed in 2010

“Today, you’ll be lucky if you can find a bona fide original for less than \$4,000”

SUGGESTED SETTINGS

JEFF BECK SOLO

Gain: 6.5

Treble: 5

Output: 4

TIP: Paired with a Strat and Marshall, this setting delivers aggressive, expressive full-bodied mids.

CLEAN BOOST

Gain: 0

Treble: 5

Output: 6

TIP: This setting works very well with a wide variety of tube amps, but it sounds particularly sweet with vintage blackface Fenders.

Paired with a good tube amp, the Centaur allows players to achieve the “sweet spot” tones and performance of hard-working power tubes at lower volume levels. The pedal’s tone is not truly “transparent” as it noticeably boosts midrange to enhance body, but the mids are expertly dialed into a very musical range with a relatively wide Q and subtle peak that seems to be centered around 1 kHz. Players who prefer compressed high-gain tones with scooped mids seem to be the Centaur’s biggest naysayers, but many guitarists who use vintage blackface and silverface Fenders, non-master volume Marshall and Vox amps or even Hiwatts and later Marshalls often find the Centaur a great match for their rigs.

Despite the fact that Finnegan started offering a lower-cost alternative to the Centaur called the Klon KTR in 2012 and the emergence of dozens of “Klones” that imitate, expand upon and arguably improve upon the Centaur circuit, the original Centaur remains as desirable as ever. The KTR and many Klones sound indistinguishable from a Centaur in recorded examples, but some discriminating players claim that the feel, dynamic responsiveness and subtle harmonic overtones of the Klon products are superior to those of the Klones. Whether that’s worth the extra cost is a matter of debate, influenced no doubt by one’s financial means as well as the intensity of one’s gear lust. **GW**

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