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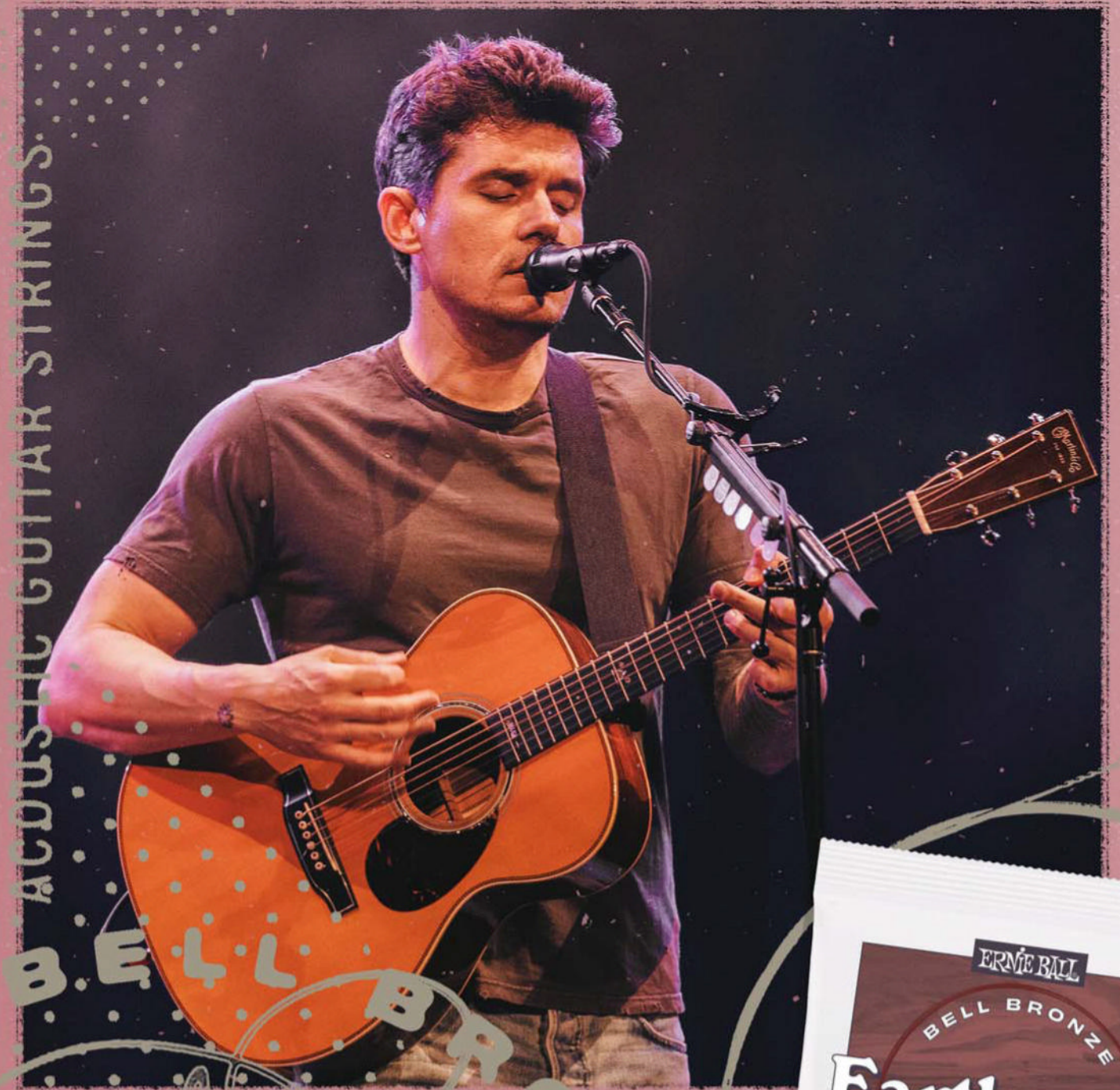


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A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, blue jeans, and large black headphones, is seated in the cockpit of a small airplane. He is wearing aviator sunglasses and has a microphone in his mouth. He is playing a white Traveler guitar. The cockpit has a vintage aesthetic with various gauges and controls. The view out the window shows a mountainous landscape with a lake. The text "Flying Solo" is written in a cursive font in the upper right. The Traveler logo is in the bottom right, along with the slogan "THE WORLD'S MOST ADVENTUROUS GUITARS" and the website "TRAVELERGUITAR.COM".

*Flying  
Solo*

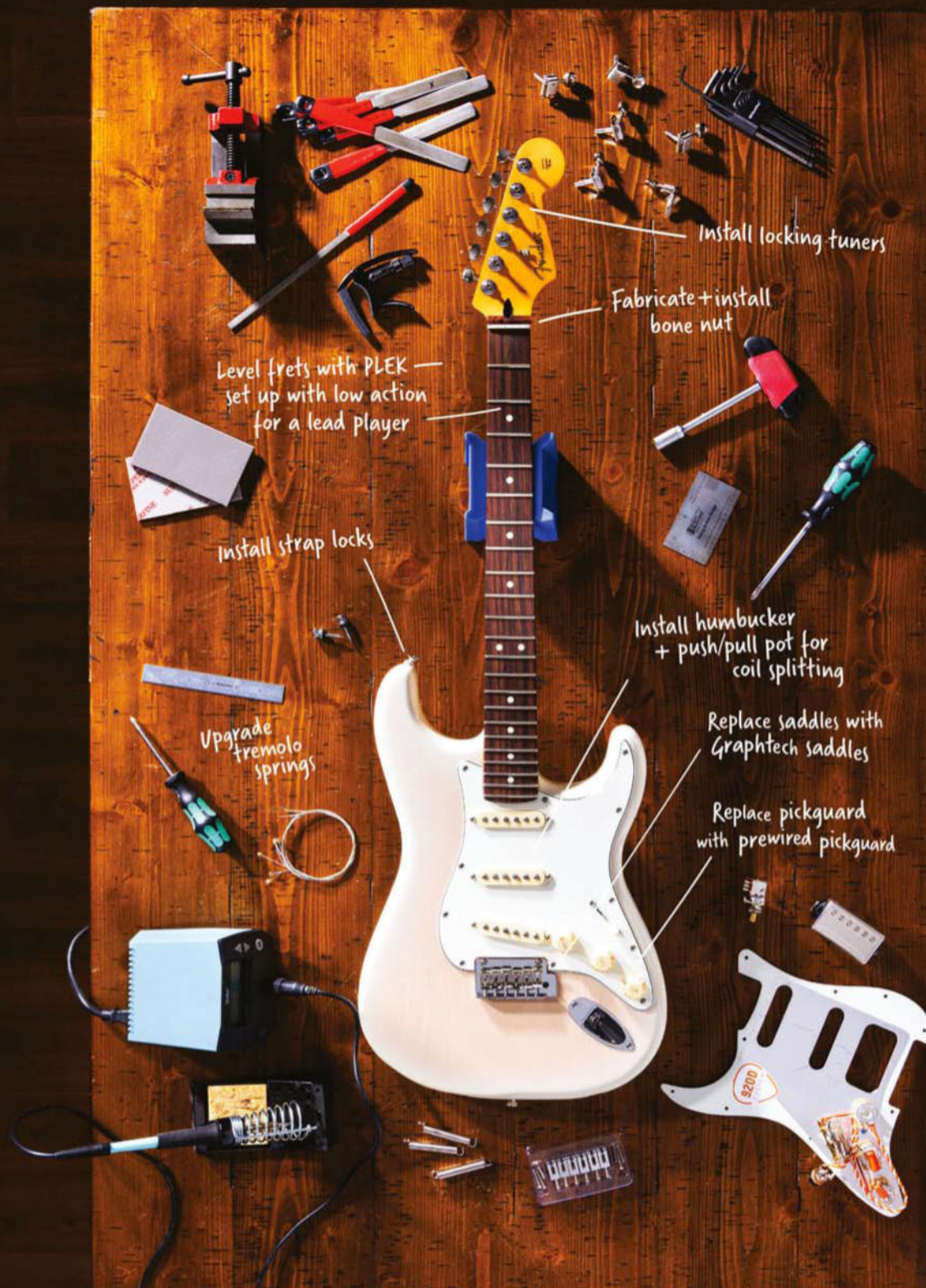


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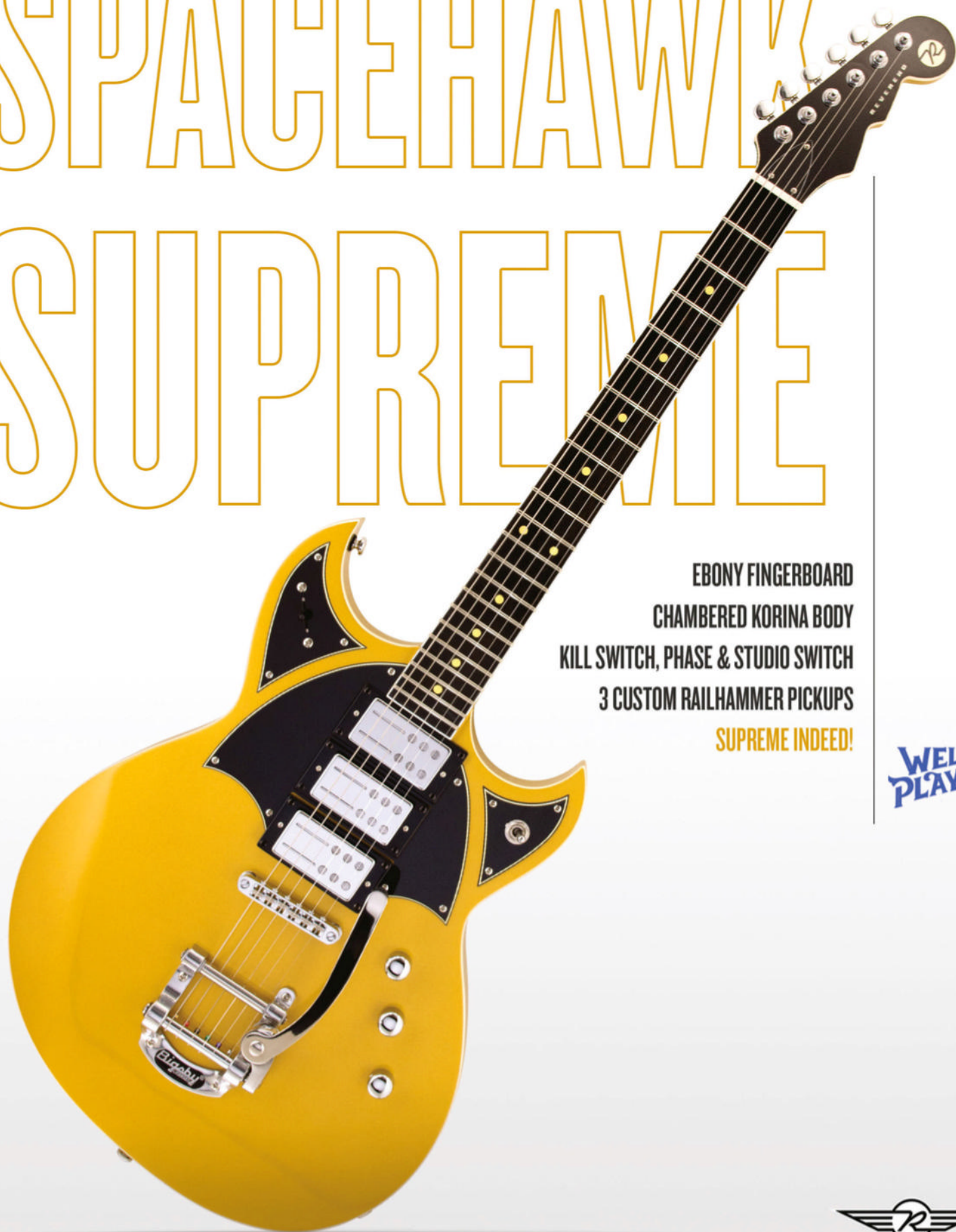
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When combined with other effects like distortion, phase shift/flanging and pitch shifting, the Mu-Tron III envelope filter pedal — manufactured from 1972 to 1980 — can generate some dazzling, unusual sounds. Because the effect is dynamically responsive, it should be placed at the front of your signal chain, and effects like compression and distortion should be plugged in after it.

COVER PHOTO: ROSS HALFIN

ROSS HALFIN



# Woodshed

VOL. 47 | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2026

## I really don't love this remix

**▶ WHEN I GOT** my copy of *GW*'s year-end issue (also known as the January 2026 issue), I realized I had forgotten to include my own thoughts about the music that came out in 2025. So let me do that now!

Besides being bowled over by the playing of Isaiah Sharkey, Pasquale Grasso, Muireann Bradley, Chris Buck and Ian Thornley, I appreciated *On the Other End of the Line* by Joyer, *Absence of Something* by the Collect Pond, *Breathe Easy* by Canyon Lights, *Core Memory* by Marble Sounds, *Hot Shock* by HotWax and *Somos Los Straitjackets* by Los Straitjackets. I also got a kick out of Robin Nolan's *For the Love of George*, a collection of instrumental versions of George Harrison and Beatles tunes performed on Harrison's own guitars.

Speaking of the Beatles, 2025 also brought us *Anthology 4*, one of many new Apple Records releases celebrating the 30th anniversary of the band's *Anthology* documentary, book and albums (1995's *Anthology 1* and 1996's *Anthology 2* and 3). OK, so, *Anthology 4* is cool. I'm happy it exists, and I appreciate its 13 never-before-released tracks, including the take 2 of "Nowhere Man" and take 1 of "Matchbox," both of which highlight Harrison's 12-string Rickenbacker (and who doesn't love the instrumental take 4 of "Hey Bulldog"?). But it also includes "Real Love" (2025 Mix). For those who don't remember, "Real Love" is one of the solo-era John Lennon demos that were turned into full-on Beatles tracks by Harrison, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and producer Jeff Lynne in the mid-Nineties. The other one is "Free As a Bird," and, apparently — as part of the *Anthology 4* proceedings — Lynne was asked to create new mixes of both songs.

Fans have voiced all kinds of complaints about these mixes. I have only one — but it's a valid one. For some reason, "Real Love" (2025 Mix) omits Harrison's edgy, bendy fills originally heard during the last verse (in the vicinity of 2:52 in the track). Harrison died in 2001 — so he won't be recording new solos and fills anytime soon — and new Beatles mixes are being created that *remove* his guitar tracks? It's kinda like making a "2025 mix" of Cream's "White Room" that *removes* Eric Clapton's fills during the "At the party" verse. To quote an obscure message left on They Might Be Giants' public answering machine in the early Eighties, "It don't make no sense!"

**DAMIAN FANELLI**



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# Sounding Board

GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY? EMAIL US AT: GWSOUNDINGBOARD@FUTURENET.COM

## Shining a light on *The Midnight Special*

**I CAME TO** *GW* through my *Guitar Player* subscription – and I just renewed my *GW* subscription. I'm a 72-year-old retired Manhattan package design creative director and – since the Sixties – a guitarist and songwriter. *GW* content is diverse and informative. I enjoyed the recent article on 50 years of guitar-focused music on NBC's *Saturday Night Live* [December 2025]. Here's a suggestion for a similar feature: NBC's *The Midnight Special* featured an eclectic range of guitar-focused bands during its 1972-to-1981 run. It's terrific that *Midnight Special* broadcasts are now on YouTube, thanks to executive producer Burt Sugarman; the shows have been digitally remastered from the original 2-inch quad videotapes. So many notable bands and artists appeared on *The Midnight Special*, spanning numerous genres. *GW* readers would no doubt be intrigued by an incisive feature probing the many guitar-focused live performances on this well-produced show. I bet their podcast team – and Mr. Sugarman himself – would cooperate with *GW* in terms of photos and information. Best regards...

JOHN DIGIANNI

## How could you leave out Neil Young?

I cannot believe you left Neil Young's 1989 performance of "Rockin' in the Free World" off your list of 50 greatest *SNL* guitar moments. Not only was it one of the best guitar moments in *SNL* history, but it was one of the greatest live musical moments in TV history, period. Just like the Beatles on Ed Sullivan a generation earlier, many of my generation saw Neil Young on *SNL* that night and went out and started a band the next day. And not for nothing, the lyrics to that

song are more timely now than ever (God help us!).

BILL L., LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA

## Ode to Guitar World in the Nineties

**I WAS READING** the Sounding Board section in your Holiday 2025 issue and felt compelled to respond. In it, Larry Williams of Colbert, Georgia, writes in to say he stopped reading *GW* in the Nineties, "when it became almost completely metal coverage."

I suspect I'm a generation younger than Gary. I grew up in the Nineties. I remember how big Guns N' Roses and Metallica were in the early Nineties, and then the grunge tidal wave hitting, and then Britpop and techno and nu-metal closing out the decade – and *GW* was there for all of it. My favorite bands in the Nineties were Pantera and White Zombie, and you guys had regular columns by both guitarists!

All of these modern guitarists, of course, prayed at the altar of Seventies stars; Slash owed an obvious debt to Marc Bolan, and the grunge guys worshipped Neil Young; Korn would play a Metallica song at an awards show. It was like a generational lineage of music, and *GW* was there to document it. I loved the rankings, the tabs, the fact that you guys gave the illusion that every guitarist who mattered seemed to drop by the office every week to show someone how to play a lick or help compare stomp boxes.

I would like to thank you for making the Nineties magazine Larry Williams hated so much. My friends and I loved it. We were loyal subscribers and specifically adored all the metal coverage. I guess you lost one subscriber and gained five.

JAY PINKERTON

## The greatest non-guitar cover star?

**THANKS SO MUCH** for the



Ozzy Osbourne tribute [November 2025]! I started playing guitar in the early Eighties, so Randy Rhoads, Jake E. Lee and Brad Gillis were huge influences. I grew to appreciate Zakk Wylde later in life. They're all fantastic in their own way, and each contributed to Ozzy's amazing career. I know some might disagree with a non-guitarist being on the cover, but Ozzy brought these guitar legends to our attention by hand picking them out of obscurity. I can't think of another vocalist that's been able to duplicate what he did. And let's not forget about his Black Sabbath years as well! This issue brought back some great memories.

NIGHTBREED

## Live the Day seizes the day

**I APPRECIATE GUITAR** *World* on so many levels. I've been a subscriber since I started playing guitar 30 years ago, and I've kept every issue because who knows when you may want to reference an old one! As a fan of guitar and music in general, one of the things I always love about *Guitar World* is learning about new bands and musicians that the magazine deems worthy of mention. *GW* has led me down the rabbit hole of so much great music over the years, and for that I am thankful. While some of the artists you feature might still be

relatively new to the world, it seems most of them already have a substantial backing, be it professional management, a record deal or a million online followers. But what about independent artists who are still trying to make a name for themselves? I love the Defenders of the Faith section, where you give subscribers a chance to feel seen, a chance to feel special and even mention their own band if they want. I propose you consider Defenders of the Faith – for bands; I believe that providing a platform for unknown bands will only strengthen and expand your subscriber base. For your consideration, I proudly submit my band, Live the Day, from Lake County, California!

JEFF MICHAELS

## What's a Christmas song without Garland?

**IMAGINE MY SURPRISE**

when I opened the newest edition of *Guitar World* and found a pre-1968 song transcription! ["Jingle Bell Rock," *Holiday 2025*] It's about time *Guitar World* showed some respect to Hank Garland. His subtle playing on this 1957 classic is fantastic, as is his 1958 contribution to Brenda Lee's "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree." Garland's September 1958 sessions with Elvis Presley, which produced *50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong* (*Golden Records Volume 2*), is some of Garland's best work – particularly on "I Need Your Love Tonight" and "(Now and Then There's) A Fool Such as I." Maybe someday you'll transcribe those songs. All I can hope for now is either Dobie Gray's "Drift Away" or Elvis' "Suspicious Minds," featuring the incredible guitar work of the equally underrated and forgotten Reggie Young. Best regards...

CHRIS BELEÑA, TUCSON, ARIZONA

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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](mailto:GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com) with a .jpg or screenshot of the image. And (obviously...), please remember to include your name!



**Crocheted Ace Frehley blanket**

BY JEREMY ASBJORN



**Megadeth's Vic Rattlehead**

BY BEN HOFFMAN

## DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



### Jeff Harding

**HOMETOWN:** Portland, OR

**GUITARS:** 1984 MIJ Squier Strat, 2013 Gibson LPJ Les Paul goldtop, 2005 LTD M-1000, Jim Adkins JA-90 Telecaster, Squier Stratacoustic

**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** AC/DC "Live Wire," Rival Sons "Nobody Wants to Die," Muse "Psycho"

**GEAR I WANT MOST:** New Ultra 2 Strat HSS in Texas Tea, Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier



### Rick Sweeney

**AGE:** 62

**HOMETOWN:** Ipswich, MA

**GUITARS:** PRS 24 SE, Mira and SE Zach Myers 594; Ibanez acoustic-electric 12 string; Fender Strat 50th anniversary edition; Fender Telecaster 75th anniversary edition, Epiphone Dot

**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** Aldo Nova "Fantasy," Gordon Lightfoot "Sundown," AC/DC "The Jack" (on an acoustic 12-string, no less)

**GEAR I WANT MOST:** Marshall half-stack and a Gretsch White Falcon



### Will Aguilar-Geeslin

**AGE:** 53

**HOMETOWN:** Lexington, KY

**GUITARS:** B.C. Rich Ironbird MK2, Jackson RRX24M, Ibanez Destroyer DT155 X-Series, Jackson Death Angel

**SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING:** Opeth "The Wilde Flowers," Slayer "Die by the Sword," Brainsalad "Get Help Somewhere," Rush "La Villa Strangiato," Devin Townsend "Kingdom"

**GEAR I WANT MOST:** Mesa Boogie Mark VII combo

### ARE YOU A DEFENDER OF THE FAITH?

Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to [GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com](mailto:GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com). And pray!





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Kevin Jonas on stage with the Jonas Brothers in Anaheim, California, on September 27

## Jonas and the Les Paul

It turns out Kevin Jonas — yeah, the guy from the Jonas Brothers — lives and breathes guitar just like the rest of us

BY BRUCE FAGERSTROM

**AS PART OF** the hugely successful pop group the Jonas Brothers, guitarist and singer Kevin Jonas has been in the limelight for 20 years, but his musical journey goes back way further than that; he's been steadily honing his skills from a young age.

"I taught myself guitar early," Jonas says. "I was home sick from school one day when I was 13 or 14, and we had a red knock-off electric guitar in the house and a 'teach yourself guitar' book in our piano bench.

I just looked at it and was like, 'You know what? Maybe I'll play guitar,' because I was already fooling around with the bass at that point. Opening up that book to playing guitar just changed everything for me. For the next week, I just kept cranking until my fingers were essentially bleeding. After that, I spent a lot of time playing acoustic guitar.

"I got my first real guitar from my dad. He bought me a Takamine that had the tuner included. I loved that guitar, and

I learned to play everything on it. We wrote our first song as Jonas Brothers, 'Please Be Mine,' on that guitar. And because of that guitar, I got into players like John Mayer. I was obsessed with his album *Room for Squares*. It really spoke to me from a songwriting perspective."

Jonas' influences were a bit wider than you might expect from a pop star. "I was really into punk rock and the emo scene back in the day," he says. "The first tape I bought was by MxPx, and I was also into Slick Shoes and Element 101 — there were so many bands that pushed the boundaries for me. I just wanted to be able to learn to play like those guys. They played a lot of fast drop D, but at the same time they also played a lot of harmony power chords. That influenced all of us; you can hear a lot of that in our early music."





Jonas with his Les Paul in Boston on August 23

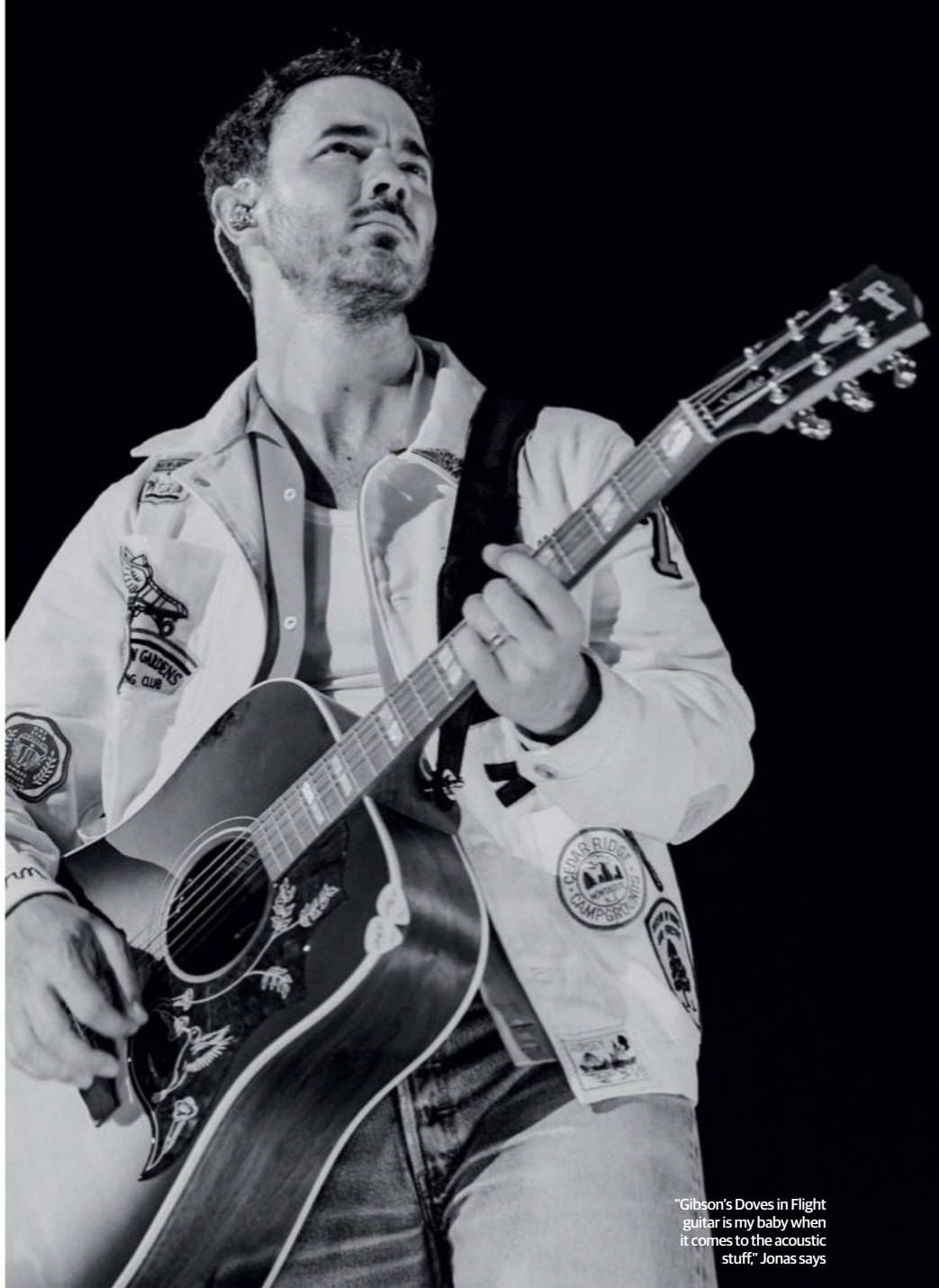
Occasionally joined on stage by dad Kevin Sr. and younger brother Frankie, the trio of Kevin, Nick and Joe Jonas has spent the second half of 2025 touring in support of their seventh album, *Greetings from Your Hometown*. On it, the brothers joined forces with a battery of talented producers, songwriters and players to craft an album that draws inspiration from sources as varied as their New Jersey upbringing to the classic stylings of the Bee Gees.

Jonas has mostly sung backup with the group, but the 2025 tour saw him take the lead on the new non-LP song "Changing." Although he's not the tune's author, he feels a special connection to it. "I worked with [singer-songwriter] Jason Evigan and his team. Those guys are incredible, and 'Changing' is really special," Jonas says.

Asked about his future songwriting plans, he explains: "I'm still unsure exactly what the plan is. I just wanted to start working on some independent music. I've been making music for 20 years, writing songs and putting my vocal on them. But something never really clicked. It never felt like my song. And then when I heard this one, I just felt like, OK, this is the first time I'm feeling different about something; it spoke to me."

Jonas says the group likes to mix up their tunings, adding, "One of our favorites is DADGAD; we play it to this day. You can hear its influence in 'When You Look Me in the Eyes.' It's this big open tuning that just triggers everything. Our song 'Little Bird' is in that tuning but down a half step."

He also notes that being able to play in different tunings comes in handy at gigs. "We do a section in our show where Joe will read signs [*held up by audience members*] and we



"Gibson's Doves in Flight guitar is my baby when it comes to the acoustic stuff," Jonas says

take requests in the middle of the show. We'll play anything from those requests, which is great because with DADGAD we can get away with figuring most things out."

Plenty of photos show Jonas holding a Les Paul, but he's also a Gibson acoustic player, with a preference for square-shouldered models. "Gibson's Doves in Flight guitar is my baby when it comes to the acoustic stuff," he says. "For some reason I always connected with them; I even have tattoos of the doves on my arms. I made my own version, and Gibson added those to the pickguards for me, which is really beautiful and cool."

Besides the Les Pauls, Jonas loves his custom Baranik. "It's unique. When I went to Mike Baranik and told him I'd love to buy one, he said, 'I don't have any, but I can build one,' and I asked, 'What's the time frame on that?' And he told me he needed six months. I said, 'I leave for a tour in a month and a half — is it possible?' Luckily, he made it work!"

Although Jonas says he's not a gearhead, he can't help collecting the tools of his trade and leaving them around the house. "There's pretty much a guitar in each room," he says. "Even at our wedding, our guest book was two custom acoustic Gibsons that everyone signed for us. They have 'Kevin' and 'Danielle' down the fretboards, which was a very special thing — and I have them in my house to this day." **GW**

**"I was really into punk rock and the emo scene back in the day"**

DEANIE CHEN



## COVER MODELS

Guitarist **Reb Beach**Guitar **Ibanez WRB-3**GW Cover Date **October 1990**This Interview **June 2025**Photographer **John Peden**

BY ANDREW DALY

**Q** What's the story behind this guitar, which seems to be the sequel to the Ibanez WRB-1?

This is the red one, so it was the second one. This first one was called the WRB-1, and it had a really cool Winger graphic on it. This one — the second one — came out around 1990. Ibanez tried to do a lower-cost model with just a straight color. Candy Apple Red is still my favorite color, but it would've been so much cooler in black. I wish they did one like that.

**Q** Was there a WRB-2?

It's a mystery. Nobody knows why the WRB-1 came out, and then the next guitar to come out was the WRB-3. There's no WRB-2, and nobody knows why, not even Ibanez. I called them; they don't even have a record of that guitar; it was so long ago that no records or specs even exist on it.

**Q** Do you recall any of the specs you went for that made this guitar personal to you?

The volume knob was right next to the bridge, which drove a lot of people crazy. [Laughs] I liked it at the time because my pinky is always there. I don't know if I would like it now, but it was unique.

**Q** Another thing that was unique to you was the shape.

That's the whole thing about it; it's like no other guitar, no other design. A longtime friend of Winger, Dan Hubp, who has been our art director, designed the cover for the first album and did all our videos. He did this guitar. He actually did the [Sir-Mix-A-Lot] "Baby Got Back" video with all those giant butts. [Laughs] I had the opportunity to have another shape with Ibanez. If you got the Ibanez catalog that year, it was Reb Beach, Steve Vai and Joe Satriani on the first three pages. They said, "Whatever shape you want." I said, "I want a cool-looking Explorer shape.



I want it to be different from an Explorer but with that feel." It was amazing, and it was all Dan Hubp's design. There were only 100 of the WRB-1s with the graphic made in Japan only. I don't think they were made for sale here. And with the WRB-3, the number made is not verified, but it's speculated that only 100 of the red ones were made.

**Q** Why did you choose this guitar for your *Guitar World* shoot?

I don't really recall, but usually, with stuff like that, it was just whatever the easiest guitar was, or if I'd just gotten it, and thought

it was cool. [Laughs] That's probably the reason.

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

When Winger disbanded [in 1994], I sold my house in Florida, which was a house with a pool on the lake. I moved back to Pittsburgh. After that, I lived for a year by selling my guitars, and yeah, that guitar was one of the first to go. But it was a really cool design, and again, it was unique because there weren't a lot of artists who had their own shape for a guitar. **GW**



Car Bomb's Greg Kubacki  
with his Jericho Nomad

# Car Bomb

Greg Kubacki combines technical wizardry and atmospheric brutality for explosive results

BY GREGORY ADAMS

**IF YOU LOOK** under the hood of Car Bomb's *Tiles Whisper Dreams* EP, and you're going to find a twisted metal landscape of tech-death complexity, heavy shoegaze subversion and engine-cracking djent-outs custom-built to keep you on edge.

Take "Blindsides," a multi-chambered monstrosity wherein guitarist Greg Kubacki uses a Fractal Axe-FX to tone-warp chords as a motion-sick nod to My Bloody Valentine, then undulates through mock-gear-shifting texturalism like a renegade NASCAR driver, and then heads into a dangerously off-kilter rhythmic parabola that makes it sound like Car Bomb are about to come to a catastrophic end.

"I've always been fascinated with rhythms that sound like they're speeding up and slowing down, but are in a particular time," he says of that tense push-and-pull and how it's meant to throw off listeners. "You get this perception of a certain tempo while we're thinking in another one."

Like the other two irregularly shifting pieces on the EP, the New York City veterans' first release since 2019, "Blindsides" is an ideas-jammed enterprise. Not everything makes it off Car Bomb's assembly line, though, as evidenced by a recent Instagram post promoting a vibrato-and-tap laden, yet ultimately unused solo of Kubacki's.

At the suggestion of co-producer and Gojira guitarist Joe Duplantier — whose Queens-based Silvercord Studio was used to track drums — they pulled that out of "Blindsides" to focus on Jon Modell's walking bass

**"You get the perception of a certain tempo while we're thinking in another one"**

and a temporarily melodious vocal from more-generally rage-howling frontman Michael Dafferner. The section now finds Kubacki gliding through a subtle octave-shifter melody inspired by Cave In's spacey use of the Boss PS-3 pedal.

"We were like, 'Why don't we just do that, because it'll be easier if I don't have to do another solo when we play this all live,'" Kubacki says with a laugh.

Since forming in 2000, a major part of Car Bomb's heavy aesthetic has been the guitarist's percussive, picking-hand-panicked presence. That rhythmic intensity continues through the drop G-to-drop-Ab rumbled *Tiles Whisper Dreams*, but Kubacki also notes that he's spent the past few years busying up his left-hand work. That's what led him toward the new EP's chromatic death-metal licks, tap-crazed micro-solo improvisation and pitch-shifted "high-note randomness."

"We've been guilty of doing a lot of the Meshuggah, machine-riff stuff where it's always [*working the*] right hand and you're leaning into one note," he says. "It always sounds great, but every once in a while, you gotta throw something else in there."

If you need convincing about Car Bomb's prowess, consider Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid's endorsement of "Tiles Whispers Dreams" as the best guitar riff of 2025 (from our January 2026 issue). "They're a maelstrom, a rising tide of shards," Reid says. "The sound of a tank groaning just before it bursts, sending a flood of molasses... They are implacable. Impossible. Unflinching." Who are we to disagree? **GW**

## AXOLOGY

### GUITARS

Jericho Nomad baritone,  
Dunable Asteroid,  
Gibson Baritone Explorer

### AMP

Matrix Amplification Power  
Amp

### EFFECTS

Fractal Axe-FX, Boss PS-3  
Digital Pitch Shifter





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ANDREW DAVIE

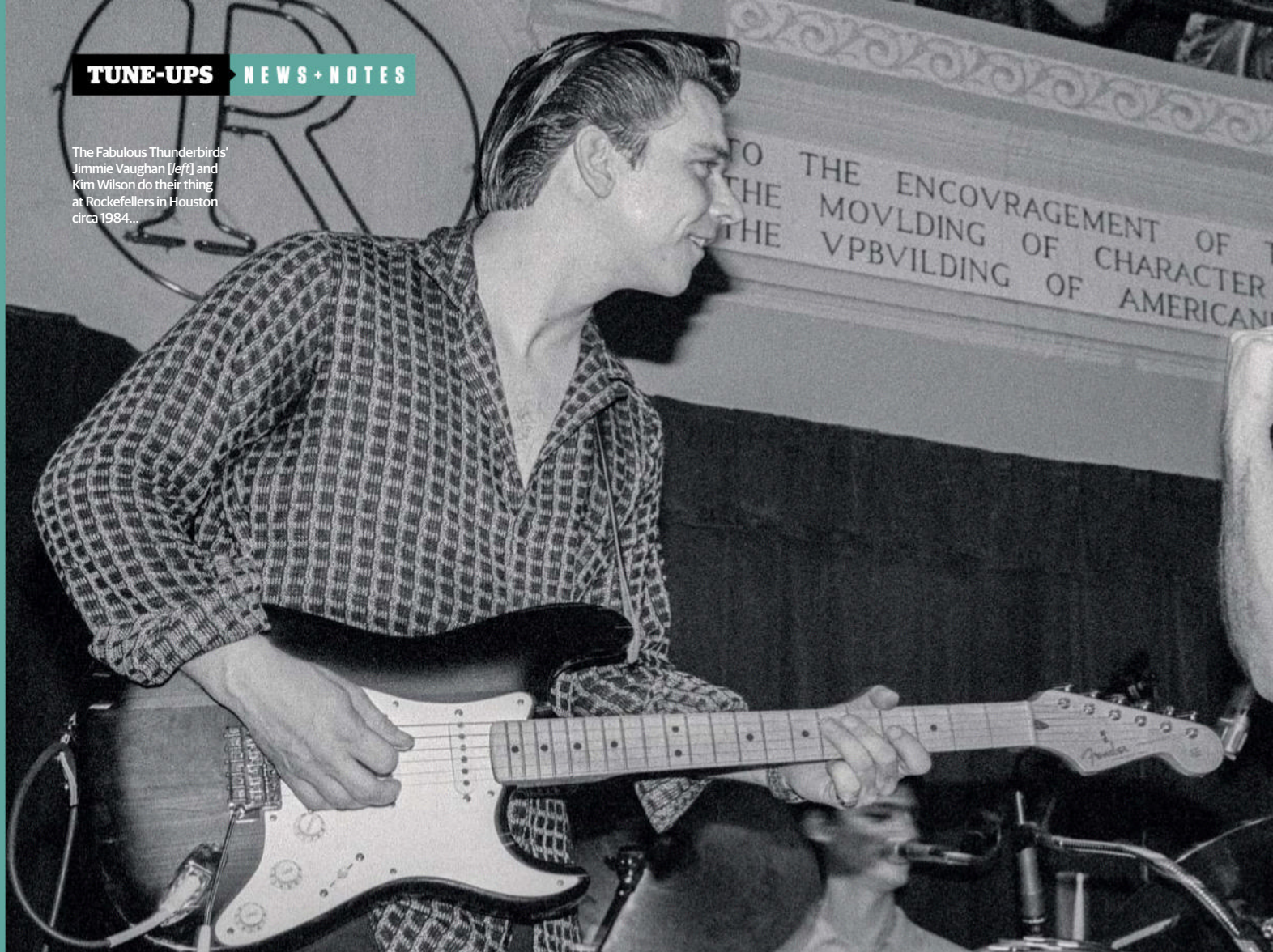
# EXCEPTIONAL SOUND MEETS UNPARALLELED CLARITY

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The Fabulous Thunderbirds' Jimmie Vaughan (left) and Kim Wilson do their thing at Rockefellers in Houston circa 1984...



## Extra Jimmies

A new Fabulous Thunderbirds box set is bursting with powerful stuff by Jimmie Vaughan & Co. — including an entire unreleased album from 1978

BY ANDREW DALY

▶ **JIMMIE VAUGHAN IS** still kicking at 74, but he's endured a few setbacks along the way, mostly in the form of three recent heart attacks. After the third of these — which happened in 2022 — the Texas blues guitar slinger underwent successful quadruple bypass surgery. Two years later, Vaughan was diagnosed with “a curable form of cancer.” But this also seems to be at bay, as he just wrapped a rippin’ tour beside fellow guitar legend Bonnie Raitt.

“I’m feeling great,” Vaughan tells *GW* when asked about his health. “I just did a tour with Bonnie — 30-something shows — and I went to Europe before that. We had a great time.”

Meanwhile, Vaughan is preparing to revisit his iconic — and undeniably influential — days with his old band, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, via a new box set, *The Jimmie*

*Vaughan Years: Studio Records 1978-1989.*

“I’m really proud of the Thunderbirds and my participation with them,” Vaughan says. “And the new box set has the Doc Pomus recordings from before we signed with Takoma Records; nobody has ever heard those. And there’s also all the stuff on Takoma, like *Girls Go Wild*, *What’s the Word*, *T-Bird Rhythm*, *Butt Rockin’*, *Tuff Enuff*, *Hot Number* and *Powerful Stuff*. So there you go!”

Vaughan has come a long way since his Fab T-Birds days, dropping nearly a dozen solo offerings, which netted him four Grammys and one Blues Music Award even before we take into account 1990’s *Family Style*, the album he recorded with his late brother, Stevie Ray Vaughan. Regardless, his approach to guitar remains as simple as it was in the earliest days of the T-Birds.

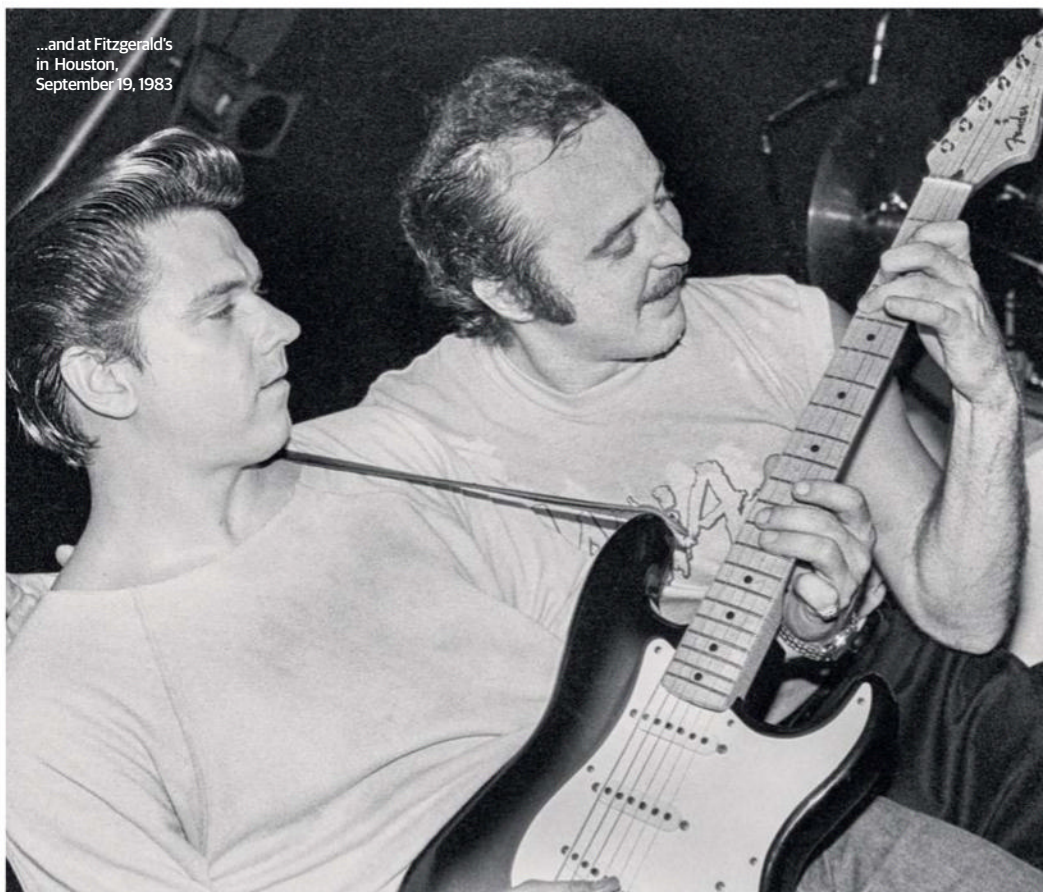
“It sounds silly, but if you mix it the way you want it, you’re always gonna like it,” he says. “Just play what you want to hear. That’s what I’ve been doing for a long time. If all of my favorite guitar players were in the same room, and it got to me, I’d think, ‘What am I gonna do? Play what I want to hear!’”

Vaughan seems to have plenty more music that he wants to hear — and that he wants us to hear, too. “I’m working on my new album,” he says. “I’m always looking forward and trying to figure out what I’m gonna do next. It’s totally exciting.” Though he’s not ready to offer up any details just yet, mostly because he doesn’t know himself, he does give us a few crumbs to nibble on. “I can’t say what it’s gonna be called,” he says. “I’m not gonna tell you! I don’t want it to get out. But I also haven’t made it yet. I’m working on it, and I’m excited and looking forward to doing it.”

**When you look back on how you played guitar across that era, did you have a developed approach that you worked on, or did you just do what came naturally?**

I’ve been playing, or trying to play, since 1962. I was playing when I was 12, 13 or 14,





## “Play what you want to hear. That’s what I’ve been doing for a long time”

and I’ve been working on it since then. When we recorded, they just put the mic right on the soaker, you know? I always had a room sound, and it was Kim [Wilson, *Fabulous Thunderbirds* singer/harpist] and I that came up with that room sound. We found that if you move the mic away from the amp and just put it in the right place, it sounds better. That’s what we were into.

### It was mainly Fender gear to go along with that, right?

Yeah, we pretty much always used Fender amps. We had a Marshall back then, too, but it was mostly Fender. I had a Fender amp from when I was 12 that I bought at Barry’s Music in downtown Jefferson [Texas]; when you turned up the presence, it just came alive. At the beginning of the T-Birds, I was still trying to get that same sound – and I still look to get that sound.

### Was there a moment during your time with the T-Birds when you felt you came into your own as a player?

I didn’t think about it that way. We were just always working on it, and I was always

working on my tone and sound. I was just trying to make it happen. We loved it. We were on the road a lot, in the van, going all over the country, and didn’t come home for a long time. I was always working on all of it.

### All that work led to you and Stevie Ray giving the Eighties blues scene a real shot in the arm.

It was a club that there weren’t very many members of. We just went around, the people

showed up, they liked it and wanted to hear more. [Laughs] But as far as importance, I don’t wanna think about that. We always liked the blues. We were there, we played and we just had a good time, you know?

### Circling back to the new box set, you mentioned the *Fabulous Thunderbirds’* 1978 sessions with songwriter/producer Doc Pomus – which not too many people know about.

Yeah, that was before *Girls Go Wild* [1979]. We met Doc Pomus while we were playing over the place, and he basically had a room full of horns, and we did all the songs we’d been doing live. Of course, a lot of the songs ended up on the albums that came [later]. After that, we played a lot of blues festivals, and we got a pretty good buzz going.

### How would you say that session with Doc impacted you as a young player?

We learned about room mic’ing. If you go to engineering school, you learn that they want to put the mic right next to the speaker. All of the blues records we’d been listening to had that perfect sound – and that was partly





because of the room mics. So we looked for that — particularly when we went and tried out a studio and found out that Doc Pomus was into that same room sound! It's just a way of recording where you put your amps in a room. Have you ever been to a club *[where live music]* sounds great going through the PA?

**Yes. It's a sound you get when things are mic'd properly in a small room.**

That's the method, and that's what the Chess brothers figured out with a lot of guys back in the Forties and Fifties. So we experimented with Doc and figured out how to do it.

**It's been about 40 years since you participated in the recording of Bob Dylan's "I Don't Wanna Do It" with George Harrison, which ended up on the *Porky's Revenge* soundtrack. What was that like?**

George was fabulous. It's been a long time — 40 fucking years ago! I'm still trying to figure out what I'm gonna do tomorrow. *[Laughs]* But it was great to meet George, one of my heroes. I mean, I had all the Beatles albums in the Sixties. I couldn't believe I was actually in the same room with him. I don't really remember what George said at the time; I just couldn't believe I was gonna be on a George Harrison record. Actually, he did say he'd been listening

to what the T-Birds had been doing, so it was kudos back and forth. *[Laughs]*

**There are rumors that you're working on a yet-to-be-titled new album, your first proper studio album since 2019's *Baby, Please Come Home*. What inspires you to press on with new music these days?**

I just forget about everybody else — forget about what the trends are. I don't even know what the trends are! *[Laughs]* I just make records that flip my switch. That's the goal. I have to get in the recording mindset. You write a song — you make it up when you have a little bit, and then you go into the studio. Sometimes, it turns out that you don't have to analyze it too much, and then you have to mix it. And that's sort of the final say, if that makes sense. After that, you go on to the next one.

**What flips your switch these days?**

I don't differentiate between albums and periods and things like that. I just keep going.

**"I just forget about what the trends are. I don't even know what the trends are!"**

I guess I don't really think about all that. If somebody writes me a song and sends it to me, like the one we just did with Kenny Wayne Shepherd, who we're going on tour with, I'll listen and maybe do a bunch more stuff. You just take it one day at a time.

**What's the latest on your rig?**

I'm still using two Fender Bassmans with a Strymon Flint tremolo/reverb. It's a great little pedal that does both. It's got a little toggle switch on it, and you can go back and forth between tremolo and reverb. And I'm still playing my Jimmie Vaughan Fender Custom Shop Strat. I keep wearing out the frets, but it's still doing it. *[Laughs]*

**If the building were burning down, and you could rescue only one guitar, which would you choose, and why?**

I would grab the two I had while I was on tour with Bonnie. That's my white Strat, which has a Mexican-made body and custom-wired pickups. And then the Fender Custom Shop came out with a copy of my old guitar from my Fabulous Thunderbirds days, which you can still buy... unless they discontinued it! *[Laughs]* But that guitar sounds good. Once you figure out the mix, it sounds fabulous, and it'll sound good from there on. **GW**

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Demi Demitro  
with her baritone  
Eastwood Sidejack



# The Velveteers

Demi Demitro, the guitar and voice of this must-see ax-and-drums duo, talks *A Million Knives*

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

**▶ SEEING ICONIC GUITAR/DRUM** duos like the White Stripes and the Kills left a big impression on Demi Demitro, the mastermind of the Velveteers' off-kilter, grungy sound. Even before she picked up a guitar, she was already envisioning how her band would sound.

"When I'd watch Meg and Jack White on stage, her just pounding away at the drums, and having those two pieces, it felt really inspiring," Demitro says. The next move for the Boulder, Colorado, native was to up the stakes. "Eventually I thought, what would it be like if we added another drummer? And then it got fun. I just love the raw energy of that. It opened up more room for us to express our creativity."

Demitro's vision for the Velveteers is split between her melodic instincts and love of grinding, fuzzed-out baritone guitar riffs, tuned to C standard and played on .013s. This dichotomy is loaded with notes and voicings that thread mystery and unease through the band's sophomore album, *A Million Knives*.

While Demitro covers a large portion of the sonic territory, the group's two drummers pound rhythms behind her wicked riffs while also adding synths to the mix. Working with Dan Auerbach, who also produced

**"We didn't know what was going to happen, but I had a strong idea of what I wanted the soundscape to be"**

their 2021 debut, *Nightmare Daydream*, Demitro and her crew were keen to experiment with sounds and arrangements on their latest album.

The results are evident 12 seconds into the opening song, when the lead riff of "All These Little Things" slices like a sonic laser, eviscerating the doomy stomp courtesy of a pair of octave pedals. On "Suck the Cherry," the guitar tone — not scooped so much as scraping — sets the baseline for her wide-ranging vocals. Sonically it's all related, and within those sonics, Demitro finds plenty of expression. "Sometimes the riff kind of said what I was wanting to say, which is a really cool feeling," she says.

The group dug deep to focus their energies on the songs that became *A Million Knives*, a process that allowed them to "get back to the simplicity of making something," she says, after becoming a bit jaded by the music industry. But once the creativity and chemistry began to flow, the magic that all musicians chase followed.

"Those moments were fun to figure out in the studio," she says. "We didn't really know what was going to happen — but I had a pretty strong idea of what I wanted the soundscape to be." **CW**

## AXOLOGY

### Guitars

Eastwood Sidejack Baritone

### Amps

Fender Twin Reverb,

Fender Deluxe Reverb



England Dan and  
John Ford Coley on  
stage in the Seventies



# Lukather Is the Answer

How it took three session-guitar aces to get a soft-rock classic back on the right track

BY JOE MATERA

**▶ IT'S WIDELY KNOWN** that Steely Dan's Donald Fagen and Walter Becker were tough taskmasters when it came to the studio, particularly in terms of their session guitarists. The most famous example of their forensic approach to the recording of guitar solos is 1977's "Peg," which saw the pair go through seven guitarists in order to secure the perfect solo. Big names such as Robben Ford and Larry Carlton took stabs at it before Jay Graydon finally nailed it.

Although fewer people know about it, a similar thing happened during the recording of "Love Is the Answer" by soft-rock duo England Dan and John Ford Coley, under the watchful eye of producer/engineer Kyle Lehning. The track was a cover of a Todd Rundgren-penned song from Utopia's 1977 album, *Oops! Wrong Planet*. In late 1978, the

duo were in the studio laying down the track to what would become their final top-40 hit single from their final studio album, 1979's *Dr. Heckle and Mr. Jive*.

Lehning, who was helming the production and engineering sessions for the track at Davlen Sound Studios in Universal City, had hired session supremos Lee Ritenour and Wah Wah Watson to track guitar parts, but what was put to tape wasn't to Lehning's liking.

"After the session was over and everyone left, I felt the guitar parts by Ritenour and Watson weren't quite right for what we

**"Steve heard the track and said, 'I have to play on this'"**

wanted," he says. "I ended up taking the tape back to Nashville and added our longtime guitarist Steve Lukather to the track."

But Lehning still wasn't happy with what was laid down. Then a passing comment by Steve Lukather turned matters around.

"I went back to L.A. to continue work on the album," Lehning says. "Steve Lukather — who was 20 at the time and already a well-known wunderkind — was doing overdubs on some of our other tracks for the album, and we finished early. He asked if I had anything else while he was there, and I said I had another tune that I really loved, but I didn't hear anything for him to play. He asked to hear the track, so I played it and he said, 'I have to play on this. Give me a track.'"

He continues: "Steve came up with the chimey guitar fill in the middle of every

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES





chorus. We ended up doubling it at half-speed. The master take had been recorded at 30 inches per second, but when Steve added the part, I felt it would be really cool if it were doubled an octave higher. Rather than have him try to play it in the upper octave, we decided to record his second part in the same register while playing the tape back at half speed, 15 inches per second. The effect was like a shimmery, electric 12-string. I can't imagine the record without that part."

Looking back at the session, Lukather recalls using a very simple setup in the studio. "I used an early-Seventies Gibson ES-335 through a modded Fender Deluxe Reverb," he says. "We also double tracked the two guitar parts. The effects were added later during the mix, where we added some delay and reverb."

Lehning notes that post-recording, unlike in today's studio world where plugins can easily and quickly achieve any desired guitar effect, the result was achieved through a painstakingly hands-on physical approach.

"Back in the analog days, the use of vari-speeding the tape was a common practice," Lehning says. "That effect was used on the guitars where we'd double at slightly different speeds to get what later became a harmonizer effect. We also did a similar thing with the background vocals by slowing down the tape significantly, so that when they were played back at normal speed, the vocals would have an 'angelic' quality."

Lukather's pivotal six-string contribution helped to propel the song to Number 10 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. It also peaked at Number 45 on the U.K. singles chart and provided the bookend to England Dan and John Ford Coley's decade-long partnership. The track became another in a long list of hit records featuring Lukather's guitar work.

"Kyle was great to work with, as he gave me a lot of room to try out stuff," Lukather says. "I actually heard the answering-chime part in my head and then went for it. The half-speed idea was from my Beatles mindset — 'What if...?' — and Kyle let me have a go at it. It worked, and became a hit record." **GW**

JAN HUBERT



"My Knaggs signature models have that Tele/Paul singlecut thing going on," Eric Steckel says

## Eric Steckel

Meet the Knaggs Guitars signature artist who grew an international profile by importing metal into the blues

BY AMIT SHARMA

**IF YOU'VE SEEN** recent footage of Eric Steckel in action, you'll probably have noticed that his take on the blues is an undeniably aggressive one. It's a new thing for him, he tells *GW*, having started his live career two and a half decades ago at just 11 years old. Months later, he was invited on stage to join John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers, who ended up asking him to guest on their next album. It's the more fiery fretwork on Steckel's newest recordings, however, that have seen him build a formidable fanbase as a solo artist.

"Getting heavier brought a ton of people into my realm," he says. "It started well because my dad convinced me to do a live album when I was 11, which was a great idea because you can't fake something like that. Things slowed down for a while, but since the pandemic, I've seen a lot of growth with some of my videos going viral."

It was the music of Gary Moore that convinced Steckel to play harder and with more gain. Given the Belfast titan's background in Skid Row and Thin Lizzy, he certainly had a way of intensifying the blues with a surplus of potency and authority. "Gary sits at the top of the pyramid," Steckel says. "His style was like, 'Fuck the rules, I'm going to play what I like!' If people didn't care for it, too bad for them. I wasn't always like that myself. My *Polyphonic Prayer* album

## "Every modern guitarist gets the same kind of haters"

from 2018 is when I decided to go high gain. I remember the engineer asking me, 'Are you really going to use that Diezel Herbert overdrive on your blues record?'"

It was around this time that Steckel invested in his first Knaggs six-string. The company were so impressed by online footage of his playing that he was soon approached to collaborate on a signature model, which also led to the manufacture of his own amp by Italian specialists Mezzabara. Steckel, who has a new label deal for an album due later this year, is the first to admit that it all played out like any guitarist's dream scenario.

"My signatures have that Tele/Paul singlecut thing going on," he says. "My pedalboard is just a Boss DD-200, CAE wah and ISP Decimator. That's all I need. I'm just playing blues, but I throw in extra notes to spice it up. Every modern guitarist from Joe Bonamassa to Jared James Nichols gets the same kind of haters who say, 'Everything you play is pentatonic.' But in reality we aren't just playing five notes. People are so used to hearing Dorian and Mixolydian in blues; they've become the new pentatonic." **GW**



Joyer's Nick Sullivan...



...and Shane Sullivan



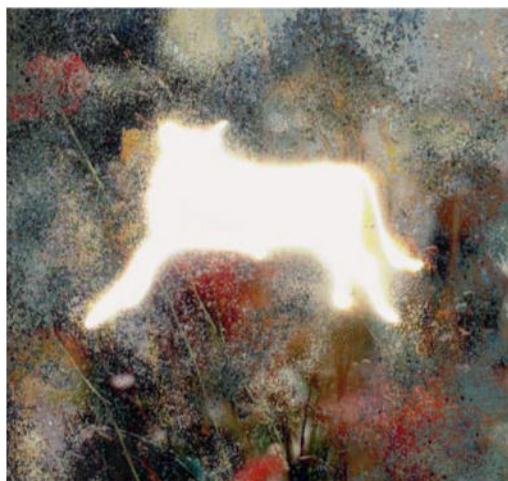
# Joyer

Oh, brothers, where art thou? Making loud shoegaze in the basement, probably...

BY JOE BOSSO

**GUITARISTS NICK AND** Shane Sullivan, who lead the East Coast-based shoegaze/bedroom pop band Joyer, credit their parents with providing them a solid musical education. "They were into so much music, starting with the Sixties and Seventies classic rock and stretching into the Nineties and alternative rock," Shane says. "We heard all of it — everyone from the Beatles to the Feelies. I think that created a through-line for all the bands Nick and I got into on our own."

Nick points to bands like Velocity Girl, Yo La Tengo and Lillies as touchstones for tone and style.



**"The idea is to have more grit in the guitar solos, whenever possible"**

## A X O L O G Y

### Guitars

Fender Stratocaster (Nick);  
Fender Jazzmaster,  
Gibson Les Paul (Shane)

### Amps

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe  
(Nick), Fender Deluxe  
Reverb (Shane)

### Effects

Klon Centaur, Chase Bliss  
Warped Vinyl HiFi, Boss  
CH-1 Super Chorus, Electro-  
Harmonix Cathedral (Nick);  
Klon Centaur, Fulltone OCD,  
Zvex Effects Fuzz Factory  
(Shane)

"We like how they're able to blend a lot of different genres and sounds," he says. "That's important when you're trying to take the whole shoegaze thing and move it forward in less traditional ways."

Joyer's new album, *On the Other End of the Line...*, is full of shape-shifting alt-rock that builds on the pop sensibilities of their 2024 debut, *Night Songs*. When it comes to guitar solos, however, the Sullivan brothers are decidedly on the side of noise. On "Spell," Shane interrupts the toe-tapping hooks with a shrieking, single-note lead break, and on the jangle epic "Cure," he rips out a wild-ass, fuzzed-out flurry of notes that recalls the ragged approach of one of his heroes, J Mascis. "I always loved the way he would create tension and weirdness during the middle of a pop song," Shane says. "Overall, the big idea was to have more grit to the guitar solos, whenever possible."

When they're not touring, the brothers live in separate cities (Nick in Philadelphia and Shane in Brooklyn), but rather than sending song files back and forth, they head back to their hometown of Nutley, New Jersey, to write and jam.

"We feel so lucky that our mother still lives in the house we grew up in," Nick says. "We store our amps and gear in the basement, and that's where we go to practice and write. It's a great place to get away from everyone and lock in without worrying about being too loud."

Shane laughs. "It doesn't hurt that our mom is our biggest fan. She's the coolest." **GW**





Josh Menashe with  
a Fender Jazzmaster  
Special

# Frankie and the Witch Fingers

Searching for just the right guitar-packed, frenetic workout soundtrack? These chaotic L.A. psych-punk rockers have got ya covered

BY JOE BOSSO

**IF YOU SPEND** just 10 minutes listening to the music of the whacked-out, Los Angeles-based psych-punk rockers Frankie and the Witch Fingers, you'll undoubtedly think, "How on earth does that guitarist come up with so many crazy-cool riffs?"

Turns out, the group's lead guitarist, Josh Menashe, has a formula for that, and it doesn't involve his instrument. "I used to come up with riffs the normal way, which meant I'd sit and play and my fingers would go to all the usual places," he says. "But now I just sort of walk around and think of riffs, and then I try to play them. It's really helped me break out of a cage."

The band's eighth and newest release, *Trash Classic*, sounds like exactly that; It's an overwhelming mash of surf music, garage rock, late-Seventies new wave and punky heavy-metal crunch jam-packed into 11 tight tunes so relentlessly energetic, they could qualify as a cardio workout.

"A lot of people say we're their favorite running music," Menashe says. "We've never been big on ballads

**"I just sort of walk around and think of riffs, and then I try to play them"**

## AXOLOGY

### Guitars

Fender Classic Player Jazzmaster Special, Fender 1962 Strat reissue

### Amps

Fender Hot Rod Deville 410, '70s Fender Twin Reverb

### Effects

Ibanez Tube Screamer, JHS Firefly fuzz, Boss RE-20 Space Echo, Keeley Dark Side

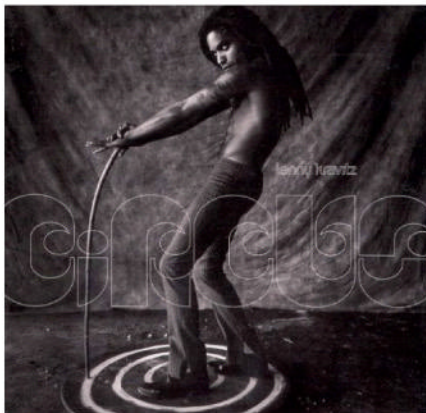
or extremely long songs. We like to get in and get out, then go on to the next idea. There's no reason to belabor the point because once you've said it, it's done."

On rapid-fire knockouts like "Fucksake," "Economy" and "Eggs Laid Brain," Menashe locks in with jagged synth lines in a way that recalls early Gary Numan, B-52's and Devo.

"We started collecting all these old synthesizers, and we pretty much decided on this record to let the synths take the lead," he says. "Somehow, that didn't happen as much as we liked. The guitars still came out sounding pretty awesome."

"Awesome" describes the furious dance-punk rocker "Dead Silence," on which Menashe lays into a herky-jerk riff that calls to mind another new wave giant — the Knack. "I can hear that reference," he says. "There's a little bit of 'My Sharona' going on, and maybe something else, but I couldn't name which one. I think I've got one of the Knack's albums; I found it in a dollar bin somewhere. I'll have to give it a listen." **GW**





## LOST CLASSICS

# Lenny Kravitz

Thirty years ago, the soulful rocker recorded *Circus*, his most guitar-heavy album. Below, he and guitarist Craig Ross take a look back at a suite of songs born of jams, soundchecks and dreams

BY MARK MCSTEA

**▶ WHEN LENNY KRAVITZ** released *Circus*, his fourth album, in 1995, he was coming off the back of the career-defining, global success of 1993's *Are You Gonna Go My Way*. That album – and the single of the same name – saw him scoring huge success in every market around the world, maintaining his seemingly constant upward trajectory; his second album, 1991's *Mama Said*, had already comfortably surpassed the impressive sales of his debut, 1989's *Let Love Rule*. Kravitz and his longtime guitarist/collaborator, Craig Ross, sat down with *Guitar World* to revisit *Circus*, which has recently been rereleased as an expanded 30th-anniversary deluxe edition that sports a hefty helping of bonus tracks.

**Q** *Circus* came on the back of the huge success of *Are You Gonna Go My Way*, which had been your biggest record to date. Did that cause you to feel any pressure, either from yourself or your record company?

**LENNY KRAVITZ:** Not really; we were too busy. We were on tour a lot at that time, and we were basically almost making the albums back to back. We knew we just wanted to

move forward. We began by renting a chateau in France, about two hours outside of Paris. We started to work on the songs without any preconceived notions or feelings; we were just geared to accept whatever was given to us. I don't try to control the record or say what theme I want or anything; I just go with whatever I feel.

**Q** Some of the original reviews of *Circus* called it a “spiritual concept album.” Is that a valid description?

**KRAVITZ:** Music is always a spiritual situation, but I was going through a lot at that time. My mom had been sick and passed away, and I was dealing with the whole crazy explosion that the success of *Are You Gonna Go My Way* generated. Life was changing in all directions.

**Q** Given the increased success and visibility, did you feel disillusioned with the way things were going?

**KRAVITZ:** It was a lot of attention that I wasn't necessarily prepared for. It was definitely an adjustment, but the music always came first. It's always all about the music, regardless of whatever noise might be going

on around you – people telling you what they think you want to hear or whatever.

**Q** When you revisit an older album from your catalog, are you able to hear it with fresh ears, or do you find yourself wishing you'd done things differently?

**KRAVITZ:** You can't do that, really; you have to accept that the record is what it is, and that it captured where you were at when you did it. It's a snapshot of a moment. You can hear things you might think could be a little improved here or there – small tweaks – but you accept it for what it is.

**Q** As with all of your albums, great guitar tones are a given. What were your go-to choices for *Circus*?

**CRAIG ROSS:** We'd really started to get a lot of great gear around the time we did *Are You Gonna Go My Way*, so it was a case of continuing the exploration – trying a whole lot of different amps. When we got to Europe, we hired a bunch of cool stuff as well, as we didn't take a lot of what we had. We rented some really great Marshall and Vox amps.



Lenny Kravitz [left] and Craig Ross perform in Landgraaf, Holland, May 31, 1993





**KRAVITZ:** We took our normal array of vintage guitars, though – Les Pauls, Teles and Strats and a couple of additions – a cool Gretsch Tennessean and an old Gibson ES-330.

**Q What's the writing process when you get ready to record a new album?**

**KRAVITZ:** It depends. There isn't one standard method that we use. Sometimes I'll write the whole song myself and bring it into the studio, but then some songs will be written with Craig and some just arise out of us jamming together. For example, the opening cut, "Rock and Roll Is Dead," was done at Waterfront Studios in Hoboken, New Jersey, where I'd already come in with the whole idea. We used to do very long soundchecks at that time, and that would spark ideas, but in the end most of the stuff happens in the studio. You need a couple of things in your pocket to start off with when you go in there, but once you get into the groove it's like the sky opens; there's an energy flow. You go with that flow and let it take you where it wants to go. Quite a lot of my songs come from dreams. I remember I dreamt "Can't Get You Off My Mind"



Kravitz and Ross in action in 1995

in its entirety. I called Craig to come over to my loft, told him I had a song that sounded kinda country, and we just jammed it out in no time. It didn't come from any country influence; I hadn't been listening to that kind of stuff when I dreamt up the song, it was just a reflection of how I was missing my partner when I was on the road.

**Q "Beyond the Seventh Sky" has a real John Bonham groove on the drums.**

**ROSS:** We worked that one out on a soundcheck. Lenny played the drums. Robert Plant was singing and riffing over our groove.

**KRAVITZ:** He was our guest on the tour – though we didn't end up using his melody. Bonham is one of my favorite drummers; he's one I try to channel when I play drums.

**ROSS:** That was another one we did in the big room at Waterfront.

**KRAVITZ:** It was a huge, warehouse-sized room. We used one mic to capture the whole drum sound.

**Q When one of you comes up with an idea, does the other one instinctively know what to play to complement it, or do you spend time experimenting?**

**ROSS:** For the most part, it comes

**"I was going through a lot at the time... Life was changing in all directions"**

**LENNY KRAVITZ**

immediately – even down to the tones. It's all about staying out of the way and making the arrangement work. Sometimes I'll just think a track needs an acoustic or maybe something that sounds totally different from what Lenny is playing.

**KRAVITZ:** We're very instinctive after playing together for so long; I think that's just a natural evolution in any long-term musical relationship.

**Q The solos always seem to be exactly what the song is asking for, minus any showboating.**

**KRAVITZ:** Everything is about the song. The song tells us what to do at all times. We just make quick decisions; I'll say to Craig, "This is you, or this one is me." The song is always king, though.

**ROSS:** Without a doubt, the song kicks things off; it tells you what works and what doesn't. The secret is to listen to what the song wants and work with that. If you don't have a great song, it doesn't matter how good the solos are. They're not gonna save the track.

**Q The sequencing of the album is interesting, with "Can't Get You Off My Mind" and "Magdalene" together, right in the middle. They're outside the usual things you'd expect to hear on a Lenny Kravitz album, and their juxtaposition against the more familiar sounds is quite striking.**

**KRAVITZ:** The sequence for me is about what I feel at that time – how the song that ends feeds into the next one. I just felt that they really seemed to need to sit together. "Magdalene" is a real quirky song with an



unusual pop feel. I can't really explain where the feel for "Can't Get You Off My Mind" came from, but I really liked the way they sat together; they seemed to complement each other perfectly.

**Q The tone on the "Tunnel Vision" solo is great. Is that a wah?**

**KRAVITZ:** Yeah, that was me playing that. It was a Vox wah and a Roger Mayer Fuzz Face, both from the Sixties. They weren't owned by Jimi Hendrix, but they're from the same period — and they're the same models as the ones he used. I traded Elliot Easton an old left-handed Telecaster for them. I think I did really well with that trade. *[Laughs]*

**Q So much of the characteristic sound of your albums is about the warmth of analog and vintage gear. Do you think you could get the same sound with modern equipment?**

**KRAVITZ:** It ain't the same, man. It really isn't the same. I A/B test everything, and while technology has come a long way and some things are very close, they're just not close enough. Plus, there is the effect of the accumulation of one thing on top of the other, one old piece combined with something else vintage; it begins to build up a sound that

modern equipment can't reproduce. Just look at old guitars — the age of the wood, you know? That's something almost indefinable.

**ROSS:** Wood ages and dries; it's almost like there's something in the air that imparts a unique sonic effect. I think you can't deny that the pickups in old guitars age in a way that is very hard to reproduce.

**Q Given that you're such avid collectors of old gear, what are the latest guitars you've bought?**

**KRAVITZ:** The goldtop I'm using now on tour. I have several, but this one is a conversion; someone in its history put PAFs on it and took off the tailpiece. It is the most amazing sounding guitar. I think it's from around '54.

**ROSS:** I got a '56 Les Paul Custom that had already been routed for the bridge pickup to

**"If you don't have a great song, it doesn't matter how good the solos are. They're not gonna save it"**

**CRAIG ROSS**

hold a PAF. I wouldn't want to be the one who routed out a vintage guitar, but if it comes to me that way, I'll happily take it.

**Q I remember you saying that once you started to get some success, you'd get people trying to sell you old guitars in the parking lots at your shows. Do you still pick up much that way?**

**KRAVITZ:** No. If they're bringing them now, they want a ridiculous amount of money. Many times it'll be a professional dealer with prices to match. Back then there was no internet, people didn't research values and the market was different. People would come with some great old Gibson that had been under the bed or something. *[Laughs]* It's not what it was, that's for sure.

**Q What's coming up?**

**KRAVITZ:** We've got another album on the way. It's already recorded; in fact, we've got two albums recorded and ready to go. Every break we have, we love to record. Recording is like breathing for us. It's something I can't stop doing, so I'm thankful that the music continues to turn up. I do this for me. I'd never want to just tour on the old hits. I've got into this to create music. That's what it's all about for me. **GW**





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## Interview

Big Wreck's Ian Thornley  
with one his signature  
Suhr Classic S guitars





# THE WRECKING CREW

Ian Thornley of Canadian rockers Big Wreck on clashing with producers, the joy of pinch harmonics and the importance of extravagant guitar solos

BY GREGORY ADAMS

**S**INCE FOUNDING BIG Wreck in the early Nineties, Ian Thornley has filled his band's songbook with arena-conquering melodies, Led Zeppelin-hailing heft and some of the most super-heroically knuckle-busting leads in contemporary hard rock. In other words, he's a master auteur, and this only continues with the Toronto-based outfit's latest album, *The Rest of the Story*. But behind every great writer is a great editor, which is how the new record's subtly strummed "Laws of Man" escaped its Seagram's Seabreeze-schmalzy origins.

Though the song is an acoustic outlier on Big Wreck's eighth album, Thornley had initially sailed his way toward a mellow yacht-rock feel that "washed over you" with good vibes. Album producer Nick Raskulinecz (Deftones, Foo Fighters) just thought it was washed.

"I came up with a really beautiful guitar hook, and there were these little Jeff Beck-wannabe, bar-inspired licks that would float around the vocals," Thornley says. "I was like, 'This is going to be great when the boys get a handle on this,' but then Nick heard it and he was like, 'I fucking hate it.'"

"He was not into the tune. He said it sounded New Age, like, 'Welcome to Denver Airport.' He wasn't ripping me to shreds — it was all for a good laugh — but he made his point, and I think he was right."

In turn, the next draft of the arrangement went minimal; the bass and drums got scrapped. It remains lush through full-bodied, open-D-tuned Dobro strumming, a few Nashville-tuned guitar layers in the final chorus, and Thornley's emotive vocal.

Despite "Laws of Man" being a serene chapter within *The Rest of the Story*, Thornley and his bandmates — guitarist Chris Caddell, bassist Dave McMillan and drummer Sekou Lumumba — nevertheless pump up the release with jaguar-print metal, low-tuned hookiness, Edge-adjacent delay-scaping and one particularly jazz-shredded juggernaut of a solo on "Short Bangs."

As Big Wreck turn another page in their prolific career, Thornley discusses songcraft, his Suhr-sponsored gear haul and the rest of the details behind his band's latest *Story*.

**The album's "Holy Roller" plays out with this squealy, speedy, Sunset Strip kind of feel. How hard are you pinching that Suhr?**

Ninety-eight percent of the guitars I play don't have a locking trem on them. You can't do any of the real acrobatics, but often I'll just grab ahold of the G string, pinch it and then bend it way up. You're doing it to get a laugh out of the guys, you know? That guitar is basically a signature Classic S model Suhr, but the body is basswood. Because I wanted a Floyd Rose guitar I can go up and down with, we affectionately call it the "Jungle Gym." It's so goofy and fun. Once you do a couple of squeals and pinch harmonics, you just can't stop. [Laughs]

**Were you an Eighties metal fan as a kid?**

If I'm being honest, not even a little bit. That was more Brian [Doherty, Big Wreck's late co-founding guitarist]'s thing. The heaviest thing I heard growing up was the Beatles' "Helter Skelter." My parents were not into that; they were hippies, but we did have *Led Zeppelin III*. That was my first personal exposure to heavy, riff-driven stuff. I fell in love with the second side, with "That's the Way" and "Tangerine," but then I remember

flipping it over and it's "Immigrant Song." Like, "OK, what's this?" So I didn't really know that era of metal. The Van Halen song I really liked was "Dance the Night Away," you know what I mean?

**When it comes to those harmonized tap-peggios in the bridge, are you doing all that or are you locking in with Chris?**

No, that's me. There's the main pass of it, and then I was like, "Maybe I'll do it an octave lower." And then I was like, "Why stop there? Let's put a harmony on it!" I'll be honest with you, I'm not really a fan of the harmony, but it's in there. It just makes the whole thing goofier. And admittedly, I'm really not a tapper. That's something that's eluded me, the tapping and sweeping. I can get by with a pattern or two...

**You might be underselling yourself.**

No, really! I'm just doing 16th note triplets, and once you get the pattern down, it's not hard. There's no Guthrie Govan-style tapping in there, or any of those guys that next-leveled the whole game. That requires seeing the fretboard in a different way.

**There's a chunky, start-stop, early Van Halen swing to the groove of "Believer."**

Yeah, I could see that. I mean, a lot of that stuff has seeped in over the past 15 to 20 years. I've gone back and listened to all the greats. With Eddie Van Halen, you can learn the licks, and you can learn the songs as he was doing it, but it's still going to be missing a certain bounce or swing. It's just an innate feel; it sounds like he's smiling. [Laughs] It sounds like he's having the best time.

But there was a certain point in Big Wreck's career where I was like, "I want to start playing guitar solos again." Before [2012's] *Albatross*, I hadn't really done much in the way of solos — at least stuff that's a little more showoff-y. It might have been out of sheer boredom, but I was like, "I'm gonna start really drilling down on some of these guys' styles," so I went to my favorite guitar





players — Steve Morse, Eric Johnson and guys like that. Eventually, those things show up in your feed, as it were.

**One of the standout solos is on “Short Bangs,” which has a lot of movements in it. It’s a journey, man.**

Thank you! I really like that solo. Every once in a while, you can surprise yourself. There are some hustle-y bits in there — again, I’m going to cite either Steve Morse or Eric Johnson... or it could have been something I ripped from anyone from Scott Henderson to John Scofield. I think the trick is to keep lifting and trying stuff until it happens naturally in your own playing.

**When we spoke with you around your 7 album, you mentioned that Suhr’s Ombre amp was a major revelation through those sessions. Were there any new gear finds that impacted *The Rest of the Story*?**

The solo on “Short Bangs” was done with a Suhr Hedgehog. I just love the sound of that thing. I usually use it for solos or for something really thick and mid-rangey. If you overload it, it gets kind of chewy, and I like that. I had a couple of setups. There was a Custom Audio amp — like, what Suhr was before they put the Suhr name on them. A few years ago,

**“Every once in a while, you can surprise yourself. The trick is to keep lifting and trying”**

we blew an amp on the road, and when we were swinging through L.A. the Suhr guys were nice enough to drop off this OD-100 SE+. It’s a different thing than the PT100 that I use for that Marshall-y sound, and I really fell in love with pairing those two together — putting the PT100 on a set of greenbacks, and putting the OD-100 on the V30s. I used that for a lot of the heavier stuff on the record. There was also a 5150 III hanging around that we would use to reinforce some low stuff, and I’m still obsessed with using small amps — there was an Hombre, there was a Bella, there were a couple of Fender Pro Juniors. And I use Brian’s Matchless a lot — an early Nineties DC30 that I’ve used on every record since *Albatross*. It was his favorite amp, and for good reason. It’s a gorgeous-sounding amp.

**How about guitars?**

For guitars, my Lumberjack [Thornley’s

signature Suhr Classic T] saw the most playing time. Nick was obsessed with it. He was like, “That is the best-sounding guitar you’ve got, man.” But I was like, “I’ve got a lot of guitars here... they all sound great!”

**Does it surprise you to continue to have a story to tell?**

Yeah, 100 percent. That is never lost on me, dude. Anytime we get to go in the studio, it’s a real privilege. We get to go in and create. We don’t have somebody hovering over our shoulders saying, “Nope, can’t do that.”

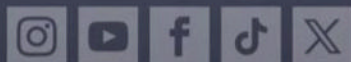
**Have you ever faced writer’s block and been unable to tell that story?**

I’m touching wood right now, but I’ve never really had writer’s block, per se. I’ve had stuff that I’m not satisfied with, but I just roll up my sleeves and rewrite the fuckin’ thing. Every record has at least one song that’s been rewritten several times. With “Believer,” there was some moving around, lyrically. That probably gave me the most hassle. My version of writer’s block is when I don’t dig it right away, because the tiniest little drop of doubt can spoil the entire soup, you know? I’ll go back to the drawing board, wash my brain clean and say, “OK, what else could this music be saying to me?” **GW**

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# PERSONALITIES

## Marcus King

2025 was the year of the King, thanks to his band's landmark, guitar-loaded album, *Darling Blue*

BY ALAN PAUL



**DARLING BLUE** IS the Marcus King Band's first album since 2018's *Carolina Confessions*. This might sound weird considering we're talking about a crew that has been a dedicated band of road warriors since their 2014 debut, *Soul Insight*. But King's last three albums have been solo efforts recorded with producers Dan Auerbach and Rick Rubin and their respective session musicians. While King says he learned a lot working with these seasoned pros, he was eager to get back to working with his road band. Emphasizing this back-to-his-roots approach, King recorded *Darling Blue* at Macon, Georgia's Capricorn Studios, where the Allman Brothers Band and many others recorded landmark Southern music.

"It was really healing to be back in that room — and just to be in Macon, a city with a lot of magic and musical history," King says.

**ABOVE** "I was very excited to breathe new life into this music that I hold so dear and that I've been so influenced and encouraged by," Marcus King says

*Darling Blue* represents a huge leap in King's songwriting, with confessional lyrics and earnest love songs that never sound contrived. Musically, it shows King and company leaning into country sounds, with plenty of acoustic guitars and fiddles. The King band has toured in recent years with Chris Stapleton and the Zac Brown Band, and they're hitting the road with Dwight Yoakam and Eric Church. Guests on *Darling Blue* also include bluegrass king Billy Strings and country crooners Jamey Johnson and Kaitlin Butts. There's also less shredding on *Darling Blue*, but you'll still find plenty of tasty playing by King and guitarist Drew Smithers.

"We tried to play to fit the songs, and I'm proud everyone did that so well," King says.

The album's Americana blend also shows the influence of Motown, Sly and the Family Stone and King's beloved South Carolina homeboys, the Marshall Tucker Band. King's passion for Tucker is highlighted by his role in the Toy Factory Project, a group put together by MTB founding drummer Paul T. Riddle to pay homage to his original band. It also features Charlie Starr (Blackberry Smoke), bassist Oteil Burbridge (Dead & Company, Allman Brothers Band), keyboardist Josh Shilling and fiddler Billy Contreras, who also plays on *Darling Blue*. The band debuted last summer with a single show, with more to come, as well as an album that also features Derek Trucks.

"I was very excited to breathe new life into this music that I hold so dear and that I've been so influenced and encouraged by," King says. "It made recording at Capricorn all the more special."

**Why did you choose to work at Capricorn Studios, an intimate place with an incredible history?**

It was the first time the band and I had been in the studio together in a minute. The band is really me and my drummer, Jack Ryan. We started the band together, and it was time for us to get back in the studio together. We settled on Capricorn because we wanted to feel like we were at home, and we wanted to echo the influence the bands that recorded there had on us.

**Why did you not record together for so long?**

I moved to Nashville and Jack was back in the Carolinas and was working on a side project. I was working with Dan Auerbach, who likes to have a house band, sort of a Southern-fried version of Phil Spector's wall of sound. He works with the remaining Memphis boys who played on Dusty Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" and Elvis' "Suspicious Minds" and a lot of other stuff I love. I grew a lot from

ALYSSA GAFKJEN

**"GUITAR IS SO DEEPLY ROOTED IN ME. IT'S A HOLY EXPERIENCE"**



the incredible experience of working with all those guys, as well as with the people Rick Rubin brought in for *Young Blood*, but it's just different.

**Musically, you've moved toward Americana, with more of a country influence, more acoustic guitar, different songwriting. Is this just a natural evolution?**

As I've grown as an artist, I've gotten more confident in my songwriting and more meaningful with the lyrics. I have a better chance of articulating what I want to say and I feel the song deserves to be heard in the best light. I wouldn't say the playing was gratuitous on our past works, but it was more instrumentally focused. When we play live, we stretch all these songs out and leave room for improvisational creativity, but the songwriting has progressed and evolved, so we fell in line behind that.

**I think the songs sound very natural.**

I'm so proud of this work, and it did happen organically. There's room for pop country and hip-hop country – and there's certainly room for Southern-rock country, which is what I think we do. I love the fans we've met being out with Chris Stapleton and Zac Brown Band. The country community is a strong, loyal fan base.

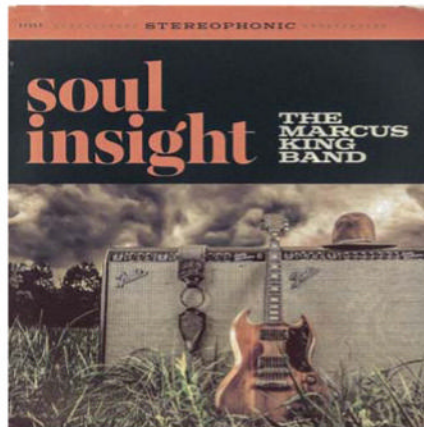
**You have some interesting guests on the album, such as Billy Strings.**

Yeah, we have my old neighbor William on there. Me and Bill used to be neighbors in East Nashville and I love that guy so much. The song is just a cowboy number, inspired by people like Toy Caldwell, but applying some of the real-life strife I've gone through lyrically. I heard Billy on it right away and he was kind enough to give me some of his time.

**Your playing has shifted along with your songwriting, with less overdrive and more Tele sounds. Which shift came first?**

That's a fine question. When I'm at home, I don't like to touch the guitar. I play a lot of piano, which I write on. Or I'll sit and I'll play my pedal steel guitar or my fiddle, banjo, ukulele – anything but the guitar. If I do pick up a guitar, it's a gut-string, fretless number.

The guitar is something that I'm so familiar with. It's like riding a bike or speaking the English language. If I moved abroad and only spoke Spanish for six months, it's not like I would forget how to speak English. Guitar is so deeply rooted in me. I like to play different



**MARCUS KING BAND'S DEBUT**  
*SOUL INSIGHT* (2014)



**MARCUS KING BAND'S LATEST**  
*DARLING BLUE* (2025)

instruments, and it helps my playing when I go back to the guitar. I read Victor Wooten's book [*The Music Lesson*] and he harped on about the importance of being a musician, not a bass player, and I've always been influenced by that idea. It's a holy experience to be able to sit at a guitar and say exactly what I have on my mind.

**You've had a second guitar player, Drew Smithers, in your band for a few years, but this is the first time you've recorded together. I love the way you play together. Is the slide on the album all him?**

He plays most of the slide, but "Carry Me Home" is us playing harmony, which evokes George Harrison. We met when his former band opened for us and we'd always end up hanging out, talking about music and life, and we quickly became good friends. He's one of the finest people I've ever known, and the chemistry of how we played together was just

profound right away. He was the only person I considered as a second guitar player and it was a way to take a little pressure off, being a front man, but it became a whole new tool in our bag. We play like one player. Taking a page from Eric Clapton, it's inspiring to have another guitar player on stage, and it makes me play better.

**"Carolina Honey" is an unabashed love song. Is that about meeting your wife?**

It is. It's one of two songs that form the theme of the record, along with "Die Alone," and they are about two days that happened back to back, the day before and the day I met my wife. "Carolina Honey" is about her ability to make me see that life was worth living. She gave me the kick in the ass I needed to start living it.

**"Die Alone" is a heavy theme.**

I had gone back out on the road with the intention of drinking and drugging myself to death. When I met her, all that changed. Growth is the hardest thing we can do as human beings, but after the fact you're thankful for it. My wife doesn't put up with any bullshit, and I was just baggage. I was in real rough shape, but she saw the potential in me and helped me get back up on my feet. I'm always just floored by that woman and I'm thankful that she took a chance on me like she did.

**It's great that you've been so open about your struggles, because they are so widespread in our world and not everybody is so open about it. And I believe that talking about it is helpful to other people.**

Thanks. I just talk about it like anything else going on. If I'm having mood swings or I'm depressed out on the road, I speak about it openly on stage and with my bandmates. It's just part of our makeup, especially kids in my generation. It's a mindfulness practice because you gotta do it every day or you'll fall back into those habits – depression, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies and all of that. It's got many faces and the ability to suck you back in, even when you think you're doing all right.

**I love "Honky Tonk Hell," which has a Sturgill Simpson vibe, with that country funk and the horns. Has he been a big influence on you?**

Oh, yeah. I love Sturgill, and I don't think I'm unique in that. He's one of the baddest motherfuckers on two legs and I'm always

**TO SIT AT A GUITAR AND SAY WHAT I HAVE ON MY MIND"**





influenced by him, but it's the horns that really gave it that Sturgill vibe and I was adamant about that. That was one of the very few disagreements I've had with my producer. I was so influenced by Sturgill's magnum opus, *Metamodern Sounds in Country Music*. I just want to do some country funk, man.

**Paul T. Riddle loves the term country funk. You did the Toy Factory Project with him, Charlie Starr and Oteil Burbridge, playing terrific versions of Marshall Tucker Band songs. This feels like a labor of love for everyone.**

Oh, yes. The Marshall Tucker Band is the best export we have in South Carolina, second only to peaches. As a kid, them being 30 minutes away from where I was made a big impression. Paul and I were connected by my guitar instructor, Steve Watson, and we immediately hit it off. When he asked me to be a part of this project I was honored. It's been a painstakingly slow process with everybody being in different label deals, but everybody's there for the right reasons – that music and its importance and cultural impact. I say that to my friends at the Rock and Roll Hall of

**ABOVE** For *Darling Blue*, the Marcus King Band set up camp at Macon, Georgia's Capricorn Studios, historic home of the Allman Brothers Band and Marshall Tucker Band

Fame, because they're not in there, which is a miscarriage of justice. The Marshall Tucker Band needs to be inducted right away.

**They all knew and respected your father, Marvin. Your grandfather was also a musician. What did he play?**

My grandfather was a country and western musician and a career serviceman in the U.S. Air Force. He met my grandmother when he was stationed in Munich, Germany. He was head of the culinary arts for the Air Force and was also in charge of the NCO clubs and

## AXOLOGY

### Guitars

"Big Red" 1962 Gibson ES-345, Gibson Marcus King ES-345, 1966 Fender Esquire, 1961 Gibson Les Paul SG, 1969 Les Paul Black Beauty, Banker Guitars Explorer

### Amps

Fender Super Reverb, Marshall plexi

### Effects

Behringer Super Fuzz, Tru-Fi Colordriver

their dances. He hired people like Johnny Cash and Charlie Pride, and they would come over to play, backed by his band, with him on bass. My grandfather was a career musician, a weekend warrior who played every honky-tonk between here and the moon. He was one of my greatest influences and supporters. And he was just a bad dude. I owe so much to him and the rest of my family too because they always viewed music as an honest way of making a living, not a pipe dream. It was like learning the family trade.

**Your grandpa's guitar is the Gibson ES-345, and – as of a few months ago – you now have a Gibson signature model based on it. Do you still play it on the road?**

It depends. If I'm flying, I usually bring a backup, but if the bus is leaving from Nashville, I'll bring it with me because nothing plays quite like it. It's a family heirloom and the most inspiring instrument I have in my arsenal. It was his dream to play the Grand Ole Opry – and he won a fiddle contest to do so – but he was already overseas when he found out he had won. I always bring his guitar there, because that's the only way I can bring him to the Opry with me.

**What is the Telecaster you're playing?**

I've been playing a '66 Fender Esquire. I was drinking a lot and forgot that I bought it. The folks at Carter Vintage [Guitars, Nashville] called me and were like, "Are you gonna come get this guitar?" It's probably the only good thing that ever came from my drinking.

**Did you use any inspiring vintage gear at Capricorn?**

The Hammond organ and piano we used were Chuck Leavell's. Otis Redding's upright piano is also there. It's unusable, but we sure tried. Just having it there was inspiring. The whole town is. We went down to Rose Hill Cemetery [where four members of the Allman Brothers Band are buried] and spent a day visiting our heroes. You got a town where the Allman Brothers lived and Little Richard and Otis Redding grew up on the same street.

I wanted to put bass on a track and didn't have an instrument, so I called our good friend Richard Brent at The Big House Allman Brothers Band Museum and asked if he had anything inspiring of the bass guitar variety. He brought over Gregg Allman's 1966 Guild Starfire. It's like riding Dale Earnhardt's motorcycle; it's not something he's really known for, but it's still cool that Gregg Allman played a small part on this record! **GW**

**"MY FAMILY VIEWED MUSIC AS AN HONEST WAY TO MAKE A LIVING, NOT A PIPE DREAM"**



# HALCYON

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*Bare Knuckle*



# PERSONALITIES

## Jason Narducy

In 2025, a Chicago alternative-music fixture teamed up with a Hollywood actor to launch a barnstorming R.E.M. tribute tour. This already-rich pageant will only get richer in 2026...

BY JON WIEDERHORN



▶ **IT WAS AN** unlikely project that stemmed from unusual connections and happy coincidence. And about a decade after its inception, Chicago alternative-music fixture Jason Narducy and Oscar-nominated actor Michael Shannon (*Death by Lightning*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *The Shape of Water*, *Revolutionary Road*), toured the country as an R.E.M. cover band. Not only did they receive accolades from the band's most devout fans, they even had the blessings of the guys in Peter Buck's legendary group.

On February 28, 2025, all four members of R.E.M. took the stage together for the first time in 17 years to join Michael Shannon, Jason Narducy and Friends (the official-ish

**ABOVE** Michael Shannon (left) and Jason Narducy do their thing on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, December 4, 2023

name of the collective) for a performance of "Pretty Persuasion" at the 40 Watt Club in Athens, Georgia, R.E.M.'s hometown.

"It's overwhelming to us that the four people in this massive band actually support us," Narducy says from his home. "For them to take the stage with us was mind-boggling. A week after we did a show in Chicago, Michael Stipe said, 'Can I sing with you guys in Brooklyn?' I'm like, are you serious? Of course you can! How many bands got that big, remained friends and would be open to something like this? I can't think of any."

Shannon and Narducy first performed

together in 2014 when their mutual friend, unconventional alt-country star Robbie Fulks, invited them to join him at one of his legendary weekly residency gigs at the Hideout in Chicago. The group played Lou Reed's 1982 album, *The Blue Mask*, in its entirety and had a great time. After Fulks relocated to Los Angeles a couple of years later, Shannon contacted Narducy to see if he was interested in putting together a band and playing more themed shows. They started in 2016 with the Smiths' *The Queen Is Dead*, and over the next half-decade, Michael Shannon, Jason Narducy and Friends staged theme nights to celebrate Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited*, the Modern Lovers' self-titled debut, Neil Young's *Zuma*, songs by the Cars and many others.

"It started out as this fun Chicago project we did, and a lot of the shows wouldn't even sell out, partially because of how eclectic we were getting," Narducy says. "It was mostly not mainstream stuff."

That all changed when they booked a concert at the Metro in 2023 to cover R.E.M.'s 1983 album, *Murmur*, for its 40th anniversary. "Man, did people show up for that!" Narducy says. "The level of enthusiasm and excitement was unreal, and the project took off. I started getting emails from promoters around the country asking if we would bring it to their city. And I thought, 'Okay, now we're really onto something.'"

Michael Shannon, Jason Narducy and Friends played nine *Murmur* shows in 2023 that were so well-received the group returned to the road in early 2025 for 18 more concerts. This time they performed R.E.M.'s 1985 album, *Fables of the Reconstruction*, for its 40th anniversary. In August, they flew to Europe to play six additional shows in England and one in Dublin.

Anyone who missed out on the tribute tours has another chance to witness a sliver of history. In 2026, Michael Shannon, Jason Narducy and Friends will head back out to

LLOYD BISHOP/NBC VIA GETTY IMAGES

**"PETER BUCK IS A GREAT GUITAR PLAYER. THERE'S A REASON**



celebrate the 40th anniversary of R.E.M.'s fourth album, *Lifes Rich Pageant*. Before they can cement the dates, however, they need to coordinate their schedules. Not only does Shannon spend most of his time shooting movies or acting in plays, Narducy has been Bob Mould's bassist for the past 20 years. He also plays bass on tour with Superchunk and has performed guitar with Sunny Day Real Estate. Then there are his solo shows and maybe some more studio work.

But while writing and performing his own music will always be Narducy's favorite activity, he's looking forward to hooking up with Shannon again to launch their third U.S. tour to celebrate one of their favorite bands.

**When did you first hear R.E.M., and what impact did they have on you?**

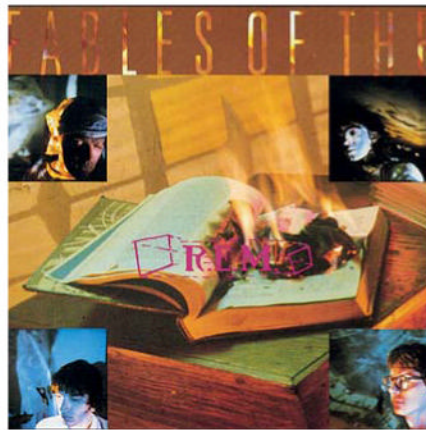
I was 15, and my high school friend John Peters had gone to the UIC Pavilion in Chicago to see the *Fables of the Reconstruction* tour. He loved it, and after the show, he played me "Can't Get There from Here." I went, "This is awesome," but it didn't change my life or anything. I didn't run out and buy the album. The following year, I was up in Madison, Wisconsin, with some high school friends when *Document* came out [1987]. I bought it and as soon as I put it on and heard "Finest Worksong," I thought, "Wow! This is incredible." It's thematic and beautiful, melodic and dark — everything I like about the band.

**Did *Document* turn you into a diehard R.E.M. fan?**

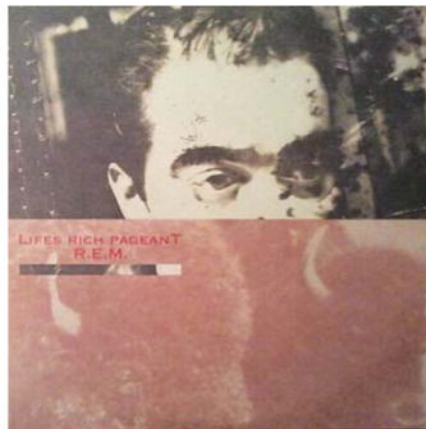
It did. It's funny because I came from a background of punk and classic rock. But R.E.M. was one of those bands that was welcomed by the punk-rock community because, even though they didn't sound like punk, they had that punk-rock ethos of anti-big-rock independence and progressive thinking. And their sound was so unique.

**Were you inspired by Peter Buck's guitar playing?**

I related to his approach right away. He'd be the first guy to say he didn't think he was a good guitarist, so he tried to figure out ways that made it sound like he was better than he was. He uses this arpeggiated open-string approach, and once I learned the songs, I discovered how many chords I could get from that technique. There's an F sharp major with an open B and open E string that I use in so many songs. I don't think I heard anybody use that before Peter Buck, and he used it a lot and played a lot of chords in that position.



**THE 2025 TOUR  
*FABLES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION* (1985)**



**THE 2026 TOUR  
*LIFES RICH PAGEANT* (1986)**

**When did you start playing guitar, and what were your first influences?**

I got my first electric when I was 10. Pete Townshend was my first big influence; I found out he took the third out of a chord and got a powerful sound with the power chord. So I started to do that. I formed a punk band called Verboten with neighbors in Evanston, Illinois, and wrote original songs. We started playing gigs when I was 11. Our singer, Tracey [Bradford] was charismatic and befriended a lot of punk bands. In 1983, we played a bar across from Wrigley Field called Cubby Bear and opened for Rights for the Accused, Naked Raygun and Negative Element.

**Tracey had some family connections.**

Her cousin is Dave Grohl, and when he did the HBO *Foo Fighters: Sonic Highways* episode in Chicago in 2014, he told me he saw Verboten in rehearsal when he was 13 and it had a big influence on him.

**You were in a band in 1994 called Jason & Alison, which released an album on an indie and then changed its name to Verbow and landed a deal with a major label. Bob Mould produced your first album, *Chronicles*, in 1997. Is that how you met him?**

No, no. I was a superfan. I first saw him at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C., in 1991. Then I started going to a lot of his shows. I used to collect all the interviews he did with local papers. This was before the Internet, and back then artists didn't see most of their press. So I would show up at soundcheck with four or five articles and give them to him. He got to know me as a fan. Then, in 1994, he was doing three sold-out acoustic shows at the Metro in Chicago. The promoter suggested Jason & Alison as the opener. Bob said, "Tell me more about this duo." Nick described us and told him I was in the band and Bob said, "Oh, I know who Jason is." So we opened up those shows, and then he took us on the road and we got a deal with Epic Records.

**Verbow's second album, *White Out*, was mostly produced by Brad Wood (Liz Phair, Sunny Day Real Estate, Veruca Salt). Epic dropped Verbow in 1990, but the contacts you made seem to have paid off.**

After the label lost interest in Verbow, things died down so I started working as a bassist with Liz Phair and then Bob Mould. I did a show with the Pretenders and Eddie Vedder. I got a lot of work as a bassist because I tried to be a good band member, and I can sing backup harmonies. But really, I'm a guitarist that picked up the bass to get work. Guitar is my first love, for sure.

**When you play R.E.M. covers, do you use gear Peter Buck used in the Eighties?**

No, but we touch on things. The other guitarist, Dag Juhlin, plays a Rickenbacker and I play a Tele. I did some research about the first R.E.M. show at St. Mary's Church and Peter is playing a Telecaster, so I thought I'd play one to approximate the sound. I don't like the idea of two guitarists playing the same guitars because they can cancel each other out. When I play with Sunny Day Real Estate, [guitarist] Dan [Hoerner] and [frontman] Jeremy [Enigk] are playing Gibsons and I'm playing a Fender, and it sounds great.

**What amps do you use for the R.E.M. shows?**

I have a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe III that I like. It's not very loud, but it breaks up in a nice

**WE DON'T PLAY SOME SONGS EXACTLY THE WAY THEY DID"**





spot, so it's got a little bit of amp dirt in it. I think Dag is playing through a Vox AC30.

### Do you play the R.E.M. songs note for note?

We listen to the records intently, and we try to get some things exactly right. But we've all been working in the business for a long time, and we all bring something new to the table. We're not a tribute band. We're straddling the line because the music means so much to us, but we're not interested in using the exact equipment they used, dressing up like them and doing their moves. Michael Shannon is a really good singer, but he's not going to sing like Michael Stipe. No one can. So why not learn the songs as best we can and then let them grow from there? I often use a Strymon chorus pedal at the shows because on the records — especially the ones recorded with Mitch Easter — the guitars have a natural chorus sound to them. And I'm just trying to give it that nice jangle. I learned about Strymon from my work with Sunny Day Real Estate because Greg Suran has used one for decades. But they're expensive. So I sold some of my pedals that I haven't used in decades that, for some reason, are worth a lot of money now, and bought two Strymons, the BigSky [multi-effects reverb] and the Mobius [multi-modulation] pedals.

### Did you meet Peter Buck back when you were regularly touring?

I met [bassist] Mike Mills first. He's very sociable and is always down to hang out and talk about music. Then, around 2010, I was in Seattle and I went to see Built to Spill at the Showbox and Peter was standing there alone. I introduced myself. Clearly he was not

**ABOVE** R.E.M. in 1985 [from left] Mike Mills, Michael Stipe, Peter Buck [sitting] and Bill Berry. "I related to Peter Buck's approach right away," Narducy says

eager to talk. But when I mentioned I was Bob Mould's bassist, he opened up to me because he realized I was a fellow musician and not just a fan. The last thing I wanted to do was punish him with a monologue about what his music meant to me.

### How did that grow into a friendship?

As I got to know Mike better, Peter started to recognize me at different events and opened up to me more. Our relationship really changed after we did the *Murmur* show at the 40 Watt Club. Peter came up to me after the show and said, "Hey, check this out." He's holding a guitar, and he starts showing me something. We had made small talk over the years, but we didn't talk about R.E.M. songs until that moment.

### Did you and Michael Shannon hit it off when you played Lou Reed's *The Blue Mask* with Robbie Fulks?

We got along okay. He had some knowledge of indie rock and we talked a little bit, but it wasn't an intense connection. We didn't exchange emails or phone numbers. When Robbie did a show at the Metro, we played Velvet Underground songs with him and Michael and I got along fine, but it was still casual. After Robbie moved to L.A., Michael wanted to keep doing these shows, so in 2015 we covered the Smiths' *The Queen Is Dead*. After the show, a man named Guy, one of the founding members of Chicago's Red Orchard Theater, which Michael helped launch, came up and gave me a big hug. Michael asked how I knew Guy. I said, "I knew Guy from 16 years

ago when my roommate [the late playwright and actor] Ben Beyer was doing acting stuff with him. And Michael said, "What? You knew Ben Beyer? I went to high school with him and we started a theater together. I wrote a song about him." That's when Michael and I developed a real connection. We started to hang out even when we weren't doing a show.

### How did that friendship evolve into a touring R.E.M. cover band?

We did a bunch of covers-night shows where we'd learn an entire record for a set, practice it once and play it once. Then we'd move on to the next. There was no time to breathe and I loved that. I think it made me a better musician. In 2023, Michael was coming back to Chicago to help promote a local theater. I texted him and said, "It's the 40th anniversary of *Murmur*. Would you want to do a show in the summer when you're in town?" I called Joe Shanahan, owner of the Metro, and ran the idea by him. He said, "It's our 40th anniversary, too. And the first band to play the Metro was R.E.M. I think we're on to something here."

### Sounds like it was kismet.

We came up with the idea a month before the show, which is unheard of and not really smart. But we put on the show and it sold 1,000 tickets. So, yeah, it was very spontaneous and organic. It was meant to be one night's work for all the musicians, and it turned into much more than that.

### You also played Europe late last summer?

We went to the U.K. and did one show in Dublin. That happened because R.E.M.'s manager asked me last year if we were going to play a show in London, which is where the band recorded *Fables of the Reconstruction*. I said, "It's funny you should ask because Michael is going to be in London all summer doing a play, so maybe we can pull this off." So we did seven shows. Honestly, because of Brexit, it's a money-loser. That's one of the reasons so many of the bands I'm in haven't been to the U.K. in the last six years. But we figured, well, we'll lose some money on this but it's cool that R.E.M. recorded the album there, and it'll be good for us to pay tribute to that.

### In 2026, you're going to tour for *Lifes Rich Pageant*.

Yeah, it's the band's fourth album, and we're doing them in order. It's going to be the 40th anniversary of the album, which

**"I'VE HAD TO DO A LOT OF CAREFUL LISTENING..."**



is my favorite R.E.M. record. It has extra significance for me because when I got *Document* as a kid, I wanted to absorb the rest of their catalog, and *Lifes Rich Pageant* spoke to me the most. It's a little poppier and more accessible than the first two, but it still has a great energy. And the sequence is perfect. Sometimes a great record is sequenced in a way that's perfect for a record, but not for a show. *Lifes Rich Pageant* is sequenced perfectly for a show, so I'm really excited about doing that next year.

**Were any of the songs from the first two R.E.M. records tricky to play?**

Sure, Peter's a great guitar player. So I've had to do a lot of careful listening to play some of those parts, and there's a reason we don't play some songs exactly the way they did.

**Peter Buck is an innovative and skilled guitarist, yet he's not considered a guitar legend.**

He's not a conventional guitar hero or a major part of player culture. Those people gravitate to the Yngwie Malmsteens and Van Halens. He's more of a musician's musician. When I was with Peter in Portland recently, we were sitting on a couch, he picked up an acoustic guitar, and music just flowed through him.

For someone like me who loves writing and creating original music, Peter is an inspiration. I said, "Hey, that sounds like a song. You should do something with it." But he was just messing around. He oozes creativity, and that's exciting to me.

**Have you talked about collaborating on something?**

No. He has joined Michael Shannon and me onstage a few times, but that might be it for us. Peter's so busy making music and touring. I can't even keep track of all the projects and records he's making. But a lot of my friends are fellow musicians, and we haven't talked about doing projects together either because we only have so much time in the year.

**In addition to playing with Michael, Bob Mould and Superchunk, you're touring as a solo artist.**

I play these living room shows. That makes me sound like I'm a vagabond, but it's a great way for me to play my songs. I'm lucky there are people who appreciate my work and they open up their homes and sell 50 tickets and I play, then go to the next one. I play every night and I can do three weeks of touring that way. It's a nice way to get my music out there without playing the game with clubs. I don't

know how many people I could get to go to a club in Richmond, Virginia, but for the last six years, I've sold out this living room show there that holds 80 people.

**You wrote the songs and lyrics for a musical about your first band, Verboten, which debuted in Chicago in 2020. Would you like to keep working in musical theater?**

I'm working on a new musical. I can't say too much about it yet. I'm a little behind on the songs, or the writer is ahead with the script — however you want to describe it. But that's something I'm looking forward to.

**As a live musician for Bob Mould, Superchunk and Sunny Day Real Estate, it must be fulfilling to tour with people whose music and company you enjoy.**

I've never been in a band that tours that extensively. I'm a musician that needs to pay the bills, so I work really hard and try to find lots of gigs. I'm a big fan of Superchunk and Sunny Day. I respect what they've done and enjoy their camaraderie. So, yeah, you nailed it. I don't tour with bands whose music I don't love. I guess that's why I call myself a band person instead of a hired gun. I'm not really for hire if I don't like your band. [GW](#)



## BLUES SPECIALS

BY LINDY FRALIN

ENDLESS ROCK-ABILITIES

*Fralin*  
PICKUPS









LOST CLASSICS

ROBERT FRIPP

# SEEING RED

In a special, expanded edition of our Lost Classics series, King Crimson guitar icon Robert Fripp – his personal diary open for the first time in 50 years – looks back on the making of 1974's *Red*, the album that pushed the U.K. prog-rock greats to their (first) breaking point

BY ANDREW DALY

**B**Y THE SUMMER of 1974, King Crimson had reached critical mass. Albums like *In the Court of the Crimson King* (1969), *Larks' Tongues in Aspic* (1973) and *Starless and Bible Black* (early 1974) had seen the venerable British band reach the apex of proto-metal-meets-fusion-meets-prog. But tensions within Crimson's ranks were escalating, leading to drummer Bill Bruford, vocalist and bassist John Wetton and guitarist and mastermind Robert Fripp entering the sessions for the heavier-than-heavy album, late 1974's *Red*, on the precipice of spontaneous combustion.

Lineup shifting, specifically the expulsion of violinist David Cross, had left Fripp feeling uneasy. This, along with the increasing sensation of needing to break away, manifested in *Red*'s ultra-heavy, yet still intellectually complex atmosphere.

"The music is in the body," Fripp tells *Guitar World*. "From there we might say, 'Well, look, what's going on here? How is the music speaking to us?' And then we engage the head and express it formally, analyze it and so on. But the strength of *Red* is that the power is in the music."

Songs like the hyper-urgent "Red," the catchy yet chaotic "One More Red Nightmare" and the sprawlingly beautiful "Starless" illustrate what Fripp refers to as his entry into the liminal zone.

"It was very, very open," Fripp says. "But it's a very difficult and uncomfortable place to be. If someone comes in with a pretty well-written piece of music and says, 'Let's play this,' then it's relatively safe and straightforward. But

the problem is, when you know what you're doing, if you know where you're going, you might get there, and that's not an interesting place to be. Where you wish to arrive is where you could never possibly know you might be going. But that is a very difficult tension to hold together."

Given the tension and mental gymnastics that came with it, along with the tepid response *Red* garnered, which was followed by Crimson's collapse, one wonders if Fripp regrets the whole thing outright. But time has been kind to *Red*. Many think of it as an unintentional yet intentional proto-metal masterpiece. True, some people hate it, but putting art out into the public is to be subject to criticism and hatred. With that, it's up to the artist to determine how to filter that and how it affects their art.

"I would've stayed as an estate agent in Wimborne, Dorset, if I had known the grief that was coming my way," Fripp says with a laugh. "I would have stayed in real estate!" Jokes aside, most would probably agree that Fripp did alright for himself as far as music – and *Red* – goes.

"That's a very generous estimation," he says. "But my approach has been, if you read your press, you read all of it. And if you read all my press, there have been – by and large – as many people who hated it as who enjoyed it."

## What prompted King Crimson's shift into *Red*'s heavier territory?

We usually suggest or assume the music is determined by the so-called right of the writers or players. Another way of looking at this is that music actually seeks to become





Robert Fripp on stage  
in New York City with his  
1959 Gibson Les Paul Custom

what it is by acting on the players. In other words, let's ask the music what it required of those young players. One of the difficulties of working with Peter Sinfield in 1971 was that Peter's idea for the future of King Crimson music was Miles Davis-esque, gentle Mediterranean-influenced improv. Peter had a holiday, I think, on [*Spanish island*] Formentera, and came back very vibed up about a gentle, Miles-leaning atmosphere.

Whereas at that time, my personal voice was speaking more *Larks* – "Larks Part One"

and "Larks Part Two." So the beginning of metal in Robert's voice, if you like, began around 1971. I have this from my own notes. Although if you go back to "21st Century Schizoid Man," that was about as metal as it gets.

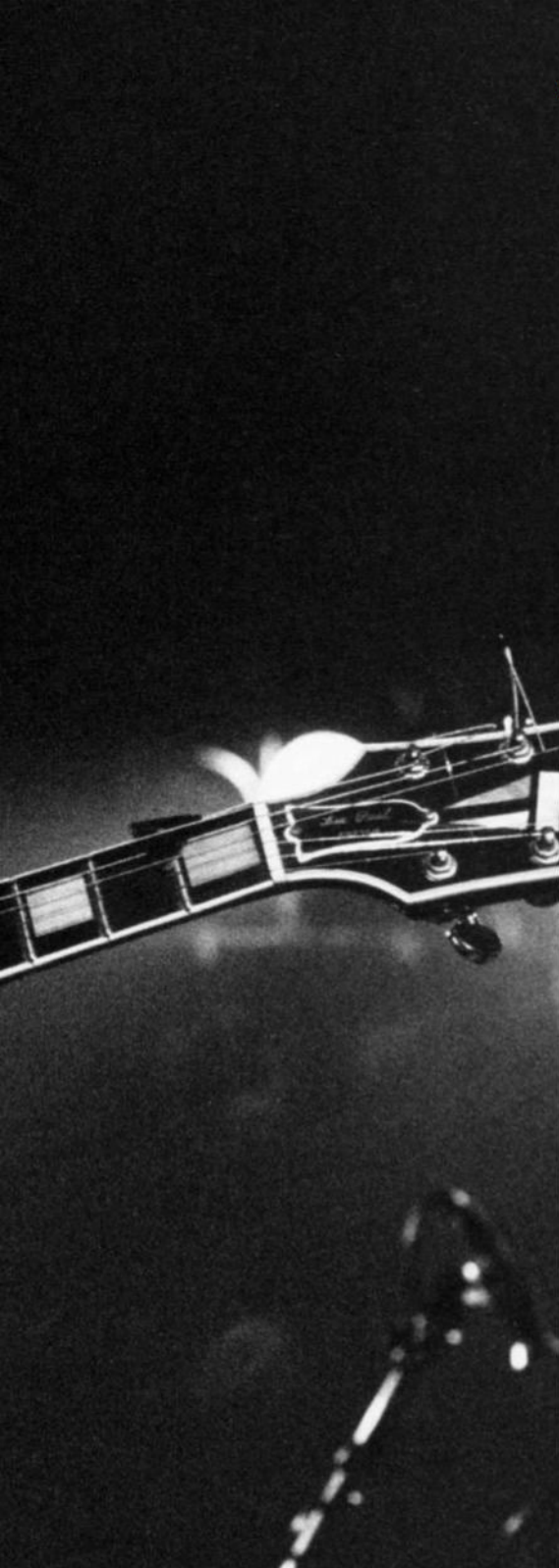
**In that way, you could say Crimson was as proto-metal as anyone.**

I saw a recent video on YouTube on the 10 precursors to heavy metal, and "Schizoid Man" wasn't among them. That's absurd.

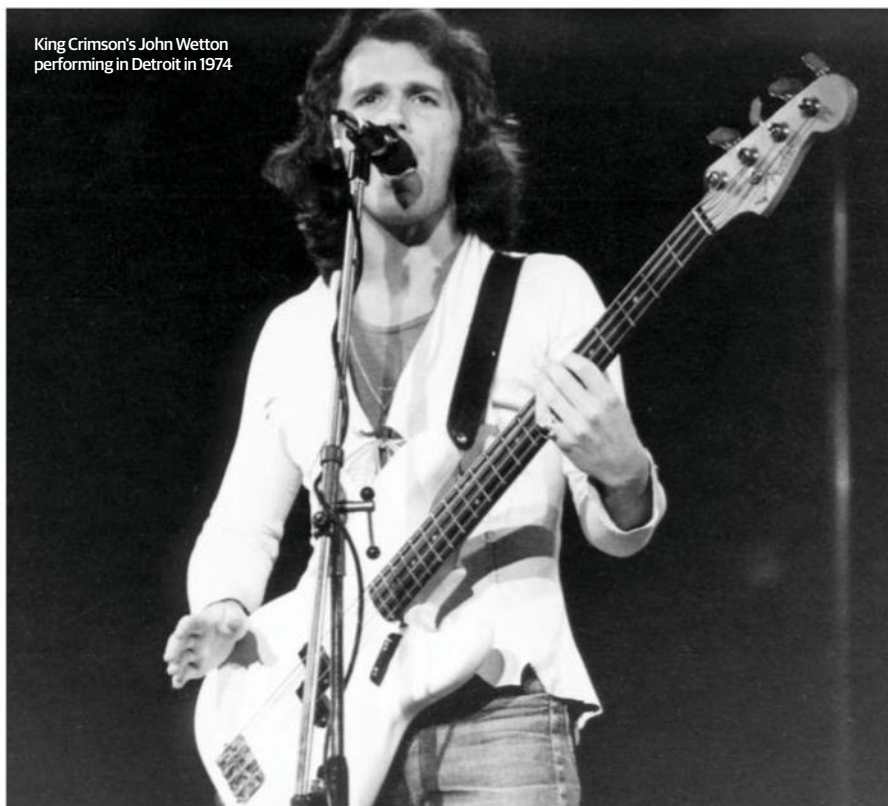
I mean, Ozzy, Master Osbourne, not only recorded "Schizoid Man" on a solo album, but he was always generous enough to acknowledge Crimson. The metallic – the powerful, metallic element – has always been there in Crimson. For me, it became increasingly articulated in the simple question: What would Jimi Hendrix have sounded like playing a Béla Bartók string quartet? In other words, the sheer power and spirit of the American blues-rock tradition speaking through Hendrix's "Foxy Lady" or "Purple Haze."

© DGM ARCHIVES/IRON GOTT





King Crimson's John Wetton performing in Detroit in 1974



been perhaps more varied than some of the other bands working at the same time. So, moving on from "Schizoid Man" through *Larks' Tongues in Aspic* and arriving at *Red*, a particular feature of Bartók's writing was his use of the golden section [or *golden ratio*].

**That's apparent in the title track, correct?**

"Red" uses the golden section within it. So "Red," in a sense, is very much in a European folk music tradition, as coming through Bartók for me. It was instinctive that, for example, with "Red," why would it have a five into a four? The answer is, because that's the way you play it, no intellectual analysis. You strap on and rock out, and that's what comes out at the end of it. And the introduction, and the vocabulary is, once again, from one point of view of folk vocabulary from Eastern Europe. For me, the American vocabulary didn't go far enough; certainly the power and the blues and the emotional strength of American blues.

**"I saw a video on YouTube on the 10 precursors to heavy metal, and '21st Century Schizoid Man' wasn't among them. That's absurd"**

**The second track, "Fallen Angels," includes a lot of interesting guitar flourishes. How did you approach that?**

You strap on and rock out, and some things work better than others. [Laughs]

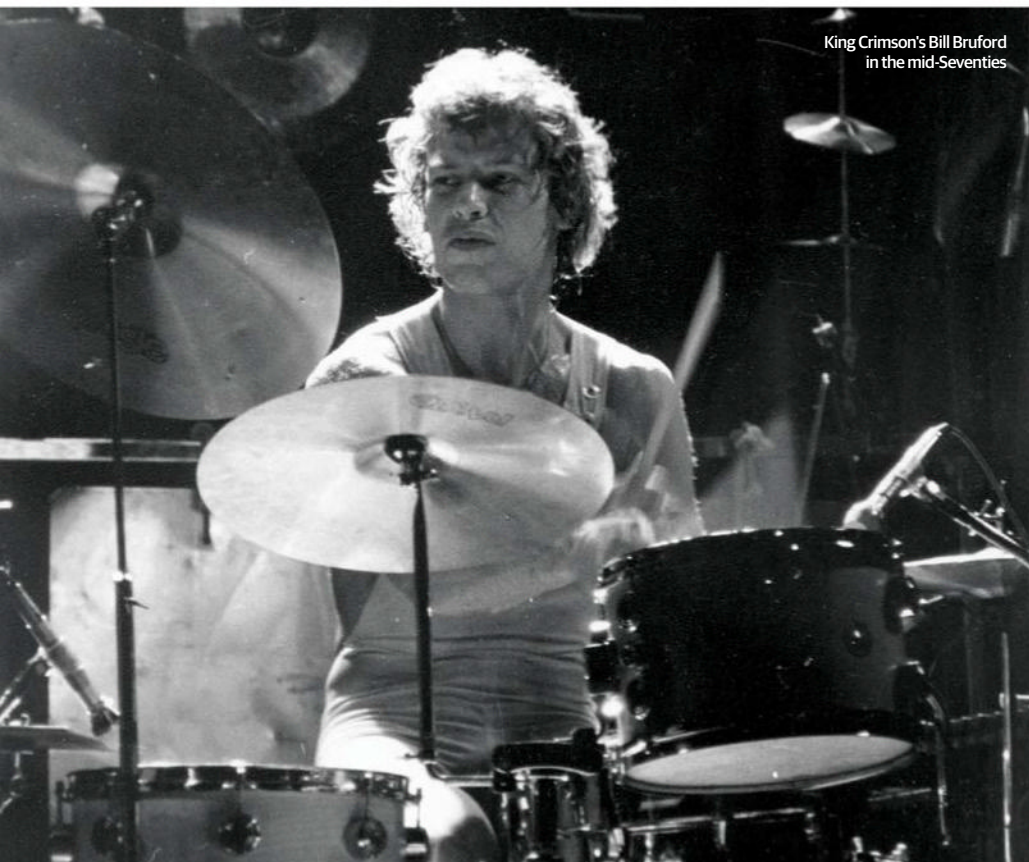
**So it was a lot of improvisation as opposed to being thought out?**

Yeah, that's it. I kept a diary at the time, and for the first time since I wrote it 50 years ago — and it was never written for publication, this is my personal diary, various mental exercises, how I'm addressing my day, my thought process, feelings and so on — I went back to it this afternoon. My entry for Monday, the 8th of July 1974, the first day of recording, was: "Idea. Let everyone do what they want. Is that cowardice?" And then it goes on: "Today, ■



Suppose instead there was a more European vocabulary, for example, and Bartók and early Igor Stravinsky were very influential on me. Also, may I say Claude Debussy must be included in that with whole tone — the Debussy vocabulary was part of my epiphany as a young player listening to all these different forms of music as if it were one musician playing all these different elements, one musician speaking in a number of dialects. That, for me, was an epiphany and a driving force. Crimson's music has always





King Crimson's Bill Bruford in the mid-Seventies

**"When you're improvising in front of an audience, there's an element of risk and uncertainty that you won't find in a studio"**

volition, and partly because John Wetton, in particular, didn't see any further possibility of King Crimson with David. And this was an interpersonal tension at the time. I was very fond of David Cross, but nevertheless, in the evolving power dynamic of Bill, a very energetic drummer, constant activity, and John, a remarkably powerful and increasingly loud bass player, the front line of David Cross on violin and myself, we were struggling to stay, not on top, but shall we say, alongside. And David's instrument was a violin, and at the time it was not amplified. You didn't have amplified violins generally. So David – you couldn't hear him. He couldn't hear himself. On stage, John Wetton was so loud that the front-of-house man had to simply take John out of the PA system. Even then, we weren't able to overcome John's volume. These were the kinds of dynamics and tensions we were dealing with.

my life has changed: glimpsed possibilities and prices to pay." That's just personal notes to myself. Then we go on to Monday, the 15th of July, with another quote: "BB's drumming begins to irritate me. Held myself back from passing opinions." And so, on we go.

**That brings up the subject of the chemistry and working relationship between you, Bill Bruford and John Wetton.**

Here's one from Wednesday, 24th of July, 1974: "Argument with Bill Bruford. Bill says, 'They might as well get a session guitarist.'"

**I suppose things were a bit tenuous between band members by this time.**

Yeah. And I think whenever I consider a situation or an event or an undertaking, there are four criteria I apply to come to a view or judgment: time, place, person and circumstance. Now, 1974 was the beginning of my entry into a liminal zone. Liminal zones are between points and processes. Qualities of liminalities can be found in places, times, people and processes. The liminal zone is the in-between zone. Three characteristics of liminality are ambiguity, hazard and opportunity; the situation is non-determined. In King Crimson, we were at the end of my first seven years as a professional musician in London, from 1967 to '74, at the beginning of the next seven-year period, in which King Crimson comes to an

end, and in '81, where King Crimson begins again. So the making of *Red* was ambiguous, characterized by hazard, but also opportunity.

**Opportunity, as in the making of the music or the openness to change?**

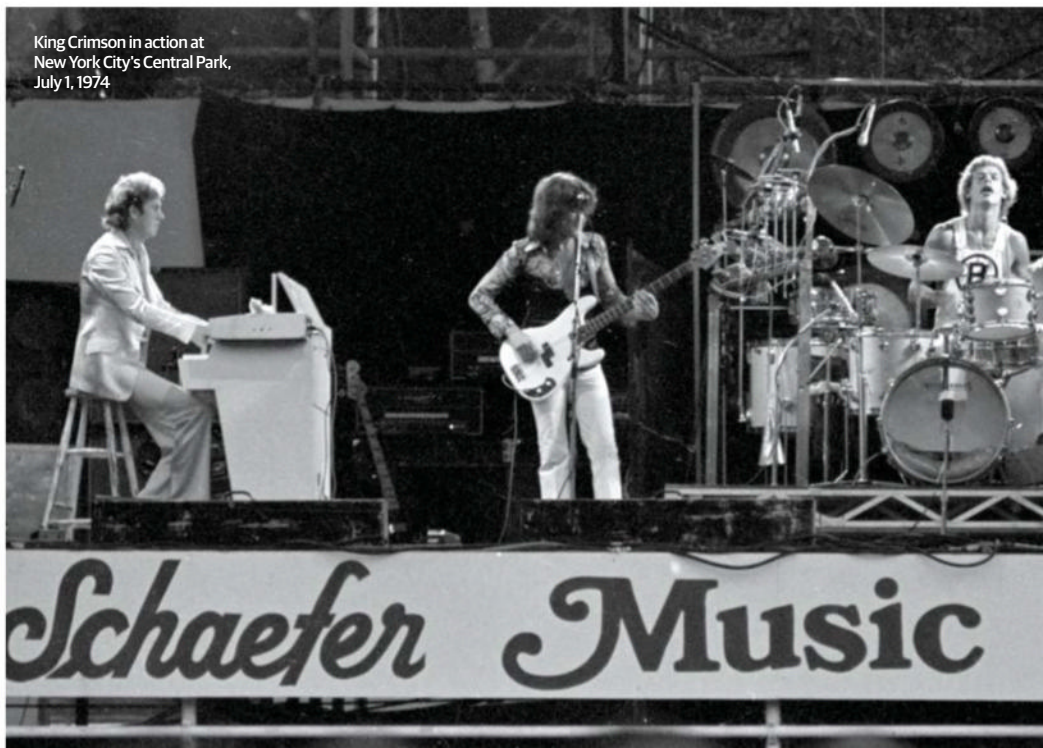
King Crimson had moved from being a five-piece to a four-piece at the beginning of '73. David Cross had just left, partly by his own

**Would you say those frustrations manifested as the heaviness of *Red*?**

Yeah, I do. I think that's what gave it an edge.

**"One More Red Nightmare" balances catchiness with controlled chaos.**

I believe John's part came from an idea from a song back in '72. We'd been throwing around



King Crimson in action at New York City's Central Park, July 1, 1974

© DGM ARCHIVES/GARY WEISEL





in improv at least through '73, and then in the studio, pulling the parts together, and the arpeggiated section at the end, I think probably came from within the recording session itself. Now, conventionally in Crimson, I preferred us to play material live so that it's inside the body. So when we get into the studio, you just throw it away and go with the music, wherever it leads you. But since we had some experience working together, we were able to pull together a number of ideas that were already in the Crimson cyber world, if you like, and pull them together with some coherence.

**The back half of *Red* consists of two sprawling tracks, "Providence" and "Starless." Are those long jams, or was there a lot of puzzling together with bits and pieces?**

In terms of "Providence," the piece originally included on the *Red* album was edited down to eight minutes. And from the notes from my diary, which I consulted this afternoon, just for you, I saw from the notes that we

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TITLE "Red" STUDIO Two DATE: 11.7.74					
1	2	3	4	5	6
STEREO	BASS	BASS	BASS		ROOM
DRUMS	DRUM	GTR	GTR		
	o/o "Bass	o/o "Ria	o/o "Fuzz	o/o "Fuzz	"Continuo"
	GTR. front	GTR. front	BASS GTR	BASS GTR	RHYTHM + GTR
	LEAD	LEAD	and GTR	and GTR	o/o "Bass" Lead GTR
	STAINES	STAINES	STAINES		
TITLE "Starless" STUDIO Two DATE: 15.7.74					
1	2	3	4	5	6
STEREO	BASS	BASS			
DRUMS	DRUM	GTR			
o/o "Lead	o/o "V.T.	o/o "Lead	o/o "Vocal	o/o "Soprano	o/o "GTR
VOCAL	TO VOC	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	GTR. front	PERCUSSION
PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION
TITLE "Starless" - Part (2) STUDIO Two DATE: 17.7.74					
1	2	3	4	5	6
STEREO	BASS	BASS	BASS		
DRUMS	DRUM	GTR	GTR		
o/o "Lead	o/o "Soprano	o/o "Lead	o/o "Soprano	o/o "GTR	o/o "GTR
GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front
PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION
TITLE "Spiral Staircase" STUDIO Two DATE: 24.7.74					
1	2	3	4	5	6
STEREO	BASS	BASS	BASS		
DRUMS	DRUM	GTR	GTR		
o/o "Lead	o/o "Soprano	o/o "Lead	o/o "Soprano	o/o "GTR	o/o "GTR
GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front	GTR. front
PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION	PERCUSSION

Red's original Side A acetate [top] and master sleeve, mostly involving work that took place in July 1974



were listening to several improvs that we'd recorded live just on the final tour in America, including another improv from "Providence" and a live track from Asbury Park, New Jersey.

The simple example that Bill Bruford generally gives is, well, we didn't have enough written or composed material. Yeah, that's one fair comment. The second is that improvisation was such an essential part of King Crimson, and improvisation in the studio, by and large, doesn't have the power of improvisation in front of an audience. Why? When the audience is there, you have a family like a father, mother and child. You have music, the musician and the audience. The audience is mother to the music. And if you're improvising in front of an audience, there's nothing like exposure to public ridicule to galvanize your attention. Now, if the drunk in the third row really doesn't like what you're doing, the bottles might come flying this way.

So when you're improvising or playing in front of an audience, there is always an element of risk and uncertainty that you won't find in a studio. That conveyed a part of what King Crimson was musically; we chose something we came to a consensus on, and that became "Providence."

#### Was it a similar situation with "Starless"?

John regretted that, when he presented this to us in 1973, we didn't recognize it. Well, it wasn't complete. And in '74, we did recognize it, and we played it live. But if you listen to the live tracks, you'll find that the lyrics aren't complete, and on some lines, you hear John singing, but he's singing a line, and he's articulating, he's vocalizing sounds but the lyrics aren't written. So clearly, in 1973, at the time of *Starless and Bible Black*, the song "Starless" wasn't completed. But we had the song, which was a stunning song, may I say, breathtaking and quietly heartbreaking. And when Crimson was playing this song from 2014 to 2021, I was closely in touch with John and would email him from the road. We played "Starless," and on occasion, it was hard to keep a tear down.

But there we are anyway. So, we have "Starless," and then at the end of it, Bill came up with his gang-gang sound. Now, Bill said to me around 1972 at the beginning of *Larks' Tongues*, "I see it as my job to give you 100 ideas. And it's fine if you throw out 99 of them." So Bill was happy to live with a 99 percent failure rate. Me, I think a 10 percent failure rate — where you present 10 ideas and one doesn't work — is a better way to go. But Bill's one idea in 100 that worked was stunning. He came up with this idea, and I began playing the very simple one-note version on two strings, moving up slowly as the changes happen with anticipation and retardation where they move in respect of the changes. ■

## MY LIFE IN THREE GUITARS Trio

The guitars that have meant the most to King Crimson founder Robert Fripp

BY ANDREW DALY

**FEW GUITARISTS HAVE** shaped progressive and avant-garde music as profoundly as Robert Fripp. With King Crimson, Brian Eno, David Bowie and others, Fripp perpetually reinvented the six-stringed wheel with ease. He usually did so with a Gibson — or something that looked like a Gibson — in hand. This is why, shudder to think, if the building were burning down, Fripp would grab his beloved '59 Les Paul Custom.

"It's the one that's worth the most," he says with a laugh. "That's for sure!"

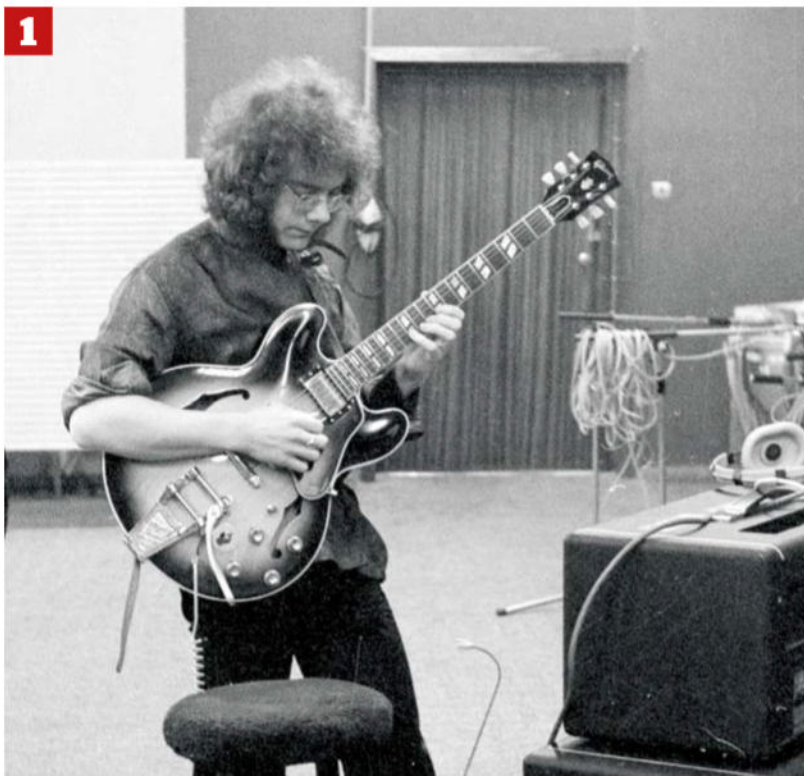
"I'm not a collector," he adds. "[*The guitar you buy*] should be the one that's right for the music you're playing. So I guess the criteria is, 'Why might you choose this guitar?' And all my good instruments have been Gibsons or facsimiles. It's the right fit. I put it up to my body, and it's the right fit for my left hand and my right hand."

With all that in mind, we asked Fripp to select and discuss the three guitars that have "fit" him the best over the past six or so decades.

### 1 Gibson ES-345 1962

**I BOUGHT IT** in the middle of 1963 when I was 17. Up until then, my first guitar was an appalling instrument called an Egmond Frères that my mother bought me for Christmas in 1957. I still have it. It was appalling. My second guitar was a Rosetti, and that was appalling. My third guitar was a Höfner — a President, I think — which was really a semi-pro instrument. In England at the time, it was very difficult to get American instruments, and you needed a lot of money. But come the middle of

1963, I needed to move on to a proper instrument and bought a 1962 model. The ES-345 was made the year before, I believe, and I bought it from Eddie Moors Music Shop in Boscombe near Bournemouth. It was £350. I still have the original case and strap. But I needed to buy it on hire-purchase [*lay-away*], so I went to my father. Because I was 17, you needed a mature person to sign off on the guarantee for payment. My father refused to sign an authority until I had a £100 deposit. I was earning £5 a week, so £5 a week to get to £100 is a bit of a struggle.



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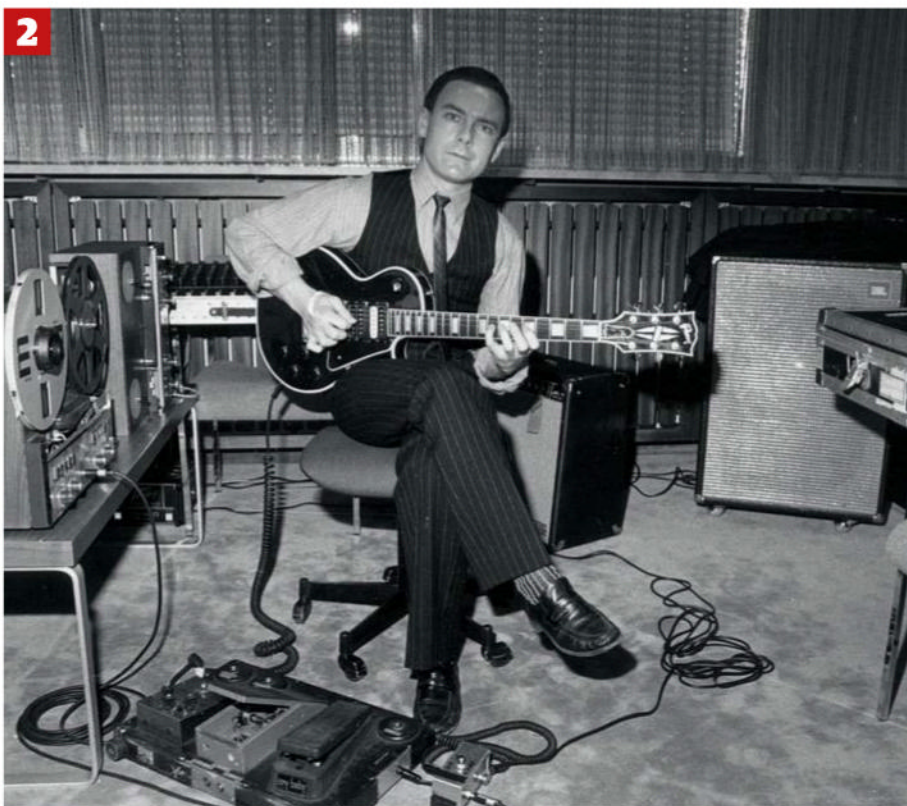
The band I was in – and that I was buying this guitar to work in – was the League of Gentlemen, and the singer was Reg Matthews, a muscular, hard-working young man from a working-class background, same as me. He had a job digging an allotment for two or three nights, so he took me out with him as his assistant digger, and I worked two or three nights digging. My hands were so thick when I got home that I couldn't turn a doorknob! But I got my £100 deposit together and my father signed off. Eddie Moors Music – where I bought the guitar – was one of two music shops in Bournemouth where young players would hang out on a Saturday afternoon. And, on Saturday afternoons, I gave guitar lessons for the shop around the corner in something like a village hall. If a young guitarist came in with their mother to buy an instrument, [the Eddie Moors staff] would say, "We have a young guitarist who can give you lessons just around the corner." But the only student I had from there who went on to success was Al Stewart, but he went on to success having ignored everything I suggested to him! [Laughs]

This is the instrument I used in the League of Gentlemen – and also on Saturday evenings when I was working at Chewton Glen Hotel, which wasn't far down the road from Bournemouth toward Christchurch, which was the first of the English country house hotels. I was in the Douglas Ward Trio, and I'm still in touch with Doug.

From there, '63 and '64, I was in the League of Gentlemen, and from '65 to '67, I used the guitar at the Majestic Hotel in Bournemouth to work three to four nights a week, paying my way through college. And then I moved to London with the ES-345 when I initially went up in about June or July '67. This is the instrument I used on the Giles, Giles and Fripp album, *Cheerful Insanity* [1968], until I bought my second guitar, which we'll come to in a moment. But I also used the ES-345 on "Cat Food" from the second King Crimson album, *In the Wake of Poseidon*, and on "Bolero" from the third Crimson album, *Lizard*. I still have it in the cellar. It's wonderful. But I disconnected the Bigsby a long time ago because it shook up the tuning.

## 2 Gibson Les Paul Custom 1959

**ON TO THE 1959 Les Paul Custom!** I bought it in November 1968, when Giles, Giles and Fripp were just about to become King Crimson. King Crimson were lent £7,000 by a businessman called Angus Hunking. He took an interest in us, and I believe £2,000 came in cash in a briefcase. So I went shopping in the West End of London with Michael Giles. We went to a music shop on Shaftesbury Avenue; in the window was this Les Paul for £400.



I'm not sure of the exact equivalent of what that might be in today's cash, but I think it would probably be five-to-seven-and-a-half thousand. I went online today and I found a pristine model the same as mine, advertised at \$139,000! And that was an instrument without provenance.

But I went into the shop with Michael Giles with the cash, and I asked for a cash discount. The shop assistant, a young man I disliked because of his attitude, said, "I could phone up Eric Clapton and he'd come and buy it." And I thought, "Then why haven't you phoned him already?" So this young man was lying to me, and I didn't like him. Anyway, I bought the instrument for £380.

This was my main instrument from then onwards. I used it with Crimson and my other work up until 1980. It's on all the Crimson albums – *In the Court*, *Poseidon*, *Lizard*, *Islands*, *Larks' Tongues*, *Starless and Bible Black* and *Red*, and moving on with David Bowie on *Scary Monsters* and all the Eno albums. But in early '78 in New York I bought a second '59 Les Paul, which I then left in New York, where I was living at the time. I would use it at the New York sessions. Nevertheless, that first 1959 Les Paul was my staple.

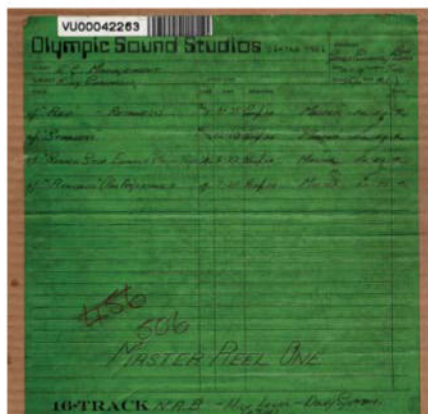
## 3 Fernandes custom goldtop 2004

**MY THIRD INSTRUMENT** is the Fernandes, though there are honorable mentions in between. I began using



Fernandes, I think, in 1995, when we were in Japan. Fernandes expressed interest in making instruments for Adrian Belew and me. They made Adrian a couple of red ones, and he cobbled together the best of each, and I bought it from him, probably about 20 years ago. I still play it from time to time. But around 2004, they made me the first goldtop. My contact there was Ken Suiguiru, and that was a superb instrument. They made me a second replica goldtop in 2016 as a spare, which is virtually identical to the original from 2004. But the original 2004 goldtop became my main instrument with King Crimson from 2014 through 2021, and it's still my main practicing instrument. I'm no longer a touring musician, but I continue to practice as a way of earthing and centering myself, kind of like guitar yoga. [Laughs]





That line is referred to by Steven Wilson as the “death of the prog guitar solo,” because it does virtually nothing other than move up slowly and incrementally until it really opens out widely.

**As far as gear, did you primarily use your '59 Les Paul across *Red*?**

You have my Gibson Les Paul and a Hiwatt

**“I had a volume pedal, a fuzz, a wah-wah and an echo unit. At the time, that was sophisticated”**

stack. By and large, that's really enough for anyone if they have a background in analog. But I used my Pete Cornish pedalboard, which had a volume pedal, fuzz and wah-wah. And also a [Watkins] Copicat echo unit. And hey, that's pretty basic, but at the time, to actually have a pedalboard was sophisticated. I mean, that's astonishing, isn't it?

**It is. Save for Frank Marino, few players had full pedalboards in the mid-Seventies. That's relatively high-tech stuff for the time.**

Well, what I did was introduce one technical innovation. If you plug through a pedal, you lose gain and the signal gets weaker. So I sug-

gested to Pete Cornish that he put in a bypass pedal so you have volume, but you have to switch in your fuzz or wah-wah if you want to use them, and when you don't, you switch it out. Now, that sounds so dumb, but at the time, it was actually a technical innovation – astonishing! [Laughs] One of the tricks we used to use, for example, are Marshall stacks, where you'd have four inputs onto a Marshall stack – channel one and channel two – with an input and output on each. Those in the know would put an input on channel one and lead it to an output on channel two. So channel two would crank channel one; it's a simple analog technique that I learned in '69, and boy, would that give you some crunch.

**If you look at the back cover of *Red*, there's a picture of a needle moving into the red zone, hitting a critical point where, I suppose, it will blow. There seems to be some symbolism there regarding the state of Crimson while recording *Red*. Seeing as you have your diary open, can you give direct insight into your mindset and what led to Crimson breaking up after *Red*'s release?**

Looking at that today, what does that tell me? That tells me, “Hey, dude, crank it. Go for it as far as it can possibly go. No compromise.” Looking at Fripp and Brian Eno [Fripp & Eno, officially], there's the album title (*No Pussyfooting*) [1973], and the title came from what I wrote on a piece of paper at the session to record, meaning no compromise, no wussing out, because the management and record company aren't going to like this.

So, most “no pussyfooting” was the equivalent to crank. If there was going to be an alternative title for *Red* today, I would say call it *Crank*. At the time, my direction in life was somewhere else. And moving through these diaries for the time, I saw myself going into retreat. Here's an entry: Saturday, the 13th of July, 1974: “I went down from London to Wimborne to see my mum and told her that it was around the fifth of July, just immediately getting back from New York and the final



Fripp, once again with his 1959 Les Paul Custom. “I bought it in November 1968 when Giles, Giles and Fripp were just about to become King Crimson,” he says



Crimson show, that it became obvious to me that I had to leave the industry and go into retreat."

And I told my mother, and this is a quote I had not remembered, where my mother said to me, "Why can't I have normal kids?" [Laughs] Anyway, for me, I had to leave Crimson, but that didn't mean Crimson had to end. So, the question for me was how to keep King Crimson going as an authentic King Crimson – but without me. And in these various entries, an early one was where I'd called a violinist who worked with ELO, and maybe he would replace David Cross and keep the band going.

And I see that I called Steve Hackett on a number of occasions and that Steve was a guitarist who could maybe replace me. All of these are discussions underway, and I felt a responsibility to the band and the road managers because they had working lives, and I felt responsibility toward them.

But eventually, [manager] David Enthoven made it fairly clear to me that they weren't interested in a King Crimson without Robert. So, at that point, I phoned up Bill and John and said, "Well, this is it." So that, I guess, was that, and Bill wasn't happy. There's various quotes you'll find from interviews at the time... I think Bill was disappointed. I think

John was too. But what to say? I wasn't able to persuade anyone about an alternative way of King Crimson moving forward.

**Red wasn't a hit, but in the years since, it's become beloved, especially in the U.S. What's more, it's become very influential on heavy metal and prog. Tumultuous as it was, it seems like an important moment in your trajectory. How do you look back on it now?**

It is one of the three Crimson albums that, for me, has a completeness or integrity about it, along with *In the Court of the Crimson King* and *Discipline*.

**Looking at it objectively – and as a fan – I can see why you feel that way. But I'd love to hear your perspective on why you feel that way.**

*Red* is a complete and satisfying statement. *In the Court* is a complete and satisfying

**"Red is one of three King Crimson albums that, for me, has a completeness or integrity about it"**

statement. *Discipline* is a complete and satisfying statement. If you didn't have any of the albums in between, you would think, "Yeah, I can see this band's journey..." If you put the other albums in between, you can see how we got from *Court* to *Red*. *Discipline* is interesting because it came completely out of the blue. No one could have seen that coming. On the other hand, how could it not have been what it was? You probably know that *Red* was the album found in Kurt Cobain's CD player, and Butch Vig told John Wetton that seeing Crimson, I think in Salt Lake City in '74, was a very powerful moment for him.

**I do. Those stories only give credence to Red's legacy and impact.**

When Billy Sheehan was in Japan, I think in 2000, he invited me into the dressing room and began playing "Frame by Frame" on bass with Paul Gilbert. Billy later told me that if he had to take three albums to a desert island, *Red* would be one of them. And I trust Billy's point of view. Hey, look, I can't make assessments on this, but those are the three pivotal albums for me. *In the Court of the Crimson King* and *Red* bookcase that first period, and *Discipline* somehow keeps it going – but from an entirely different dimension. **CW**



## Guitars

- PRS Signature Dealer
- Suhr
- Tom Anderson
- Duesenberg
- James Tyler
- Nik Huber
- Collings
- Fender Custom Shop
- McPherson
- Maton
- Taylor
- Martin
- Bourgeois
- Cole Clark
- BILT
- Dunable

## Amps

- Mesa Boogie
- Two-Rock
- 3rd Power
- Synergy
- Carr
- Tone King
- Aguilar
- Darkglass

## Pedals

- Neural DSP
- Strymon
- MusicomLAB
- Keeley
- Electronics
- JHS
- Free the Tone
- Vemuram
- Walrus Audio
- Kernom
- Origin Effects

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DAVE MUSTAINE  
GUITAR WORLD | FEBRUARY 2026  
PORTRAITS BY ROSS HALFIN

# GO COUNT DOWN TO EXTINCTION

AS **MEGADETH** PREPARE FOR THEIR FINAL ALBUM RELEASE AND TOUR, **DAVE MUSTAINE** RECOUNTS SOME MEGA-MEMORIES, THE GHOSTS THAT STILL HAUNT HIM AND, OF COURSE, THE LEAD GUITARISTS HE PLAYED WITH ALONG THE WAY — THE GOOD, THE GREAT AND THE UNHINGED!

BY ANDREW DALY







**Y**OU CAN LOOK at Dave Mustaine's career in two ways: as a revenge tour or as a story of perpetual redemption. If Mustaine's life, which is earmarked by iconic records like 1986's *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying*, 1990's *Rust in Peace* and 1992's *Countdown to Extinction*, is viewed through the post-Metallica-related revenge lens, then you might conclude that ol' Dave has done pretty well for himself.

Sure, Metallica is thrash metal's top dog, but Megadeth is one of the other three of that movement's Big Four along with Anthrax and Slayer. That means something. What also means something is that Mustaine, a fire-breathing, self-taught, V-wielding player, still endures at age 64 despite addiction issues, personality crises, a nasty arm injury, a cancer diagnosis and an ever-revolving band lineup. To that end, it's perhaps more astute to focus on the "perpetual redemption" angle, right?

After all, we're talking about one of rock and metal's most enigmatic and dynamic characters. And with that comes the push and pull between revenge and redemption — aka

mean he plans to cozy up with Friedman — or any other former Megadeth alumni — while on his final jaunt.

"We've already done that with Marty," Mustaine tells *Guitar World* [Friedman joined Megadeth on stage twice in 2023 — February in Japan and August in Germany]. "And, I mean, let's look at the other people we've played with... there's a lot of people. [Laughs] That would be a huge undertaking. I don't think I want to do that. I'd rather keep doing what we're doing and let the fans [experience] Megadeth music and be happy about it. It's not 'puppet show Megadeth.'"

Though he's not about to bring any old pals onstage, Mustaine admits some 'Deth-related ghosts still haunt him. "I wish I would have kept in touch with [late drummer] Gar [Samuelson]," he says. "You see that Ace Frehley passed away and how sad that is. Whenever stuff like that happens, I feel fortunate because I'm still kicking. But on the opposite side of the coin, I think, 'Fuck... that could have been me,' but by the grace of God, it's not."

Mustaine's words on life and death refocus the revenge versus redemption arc he's been penning since he was booted out of Metallica, picked himself up and formed the band that

Robbie McKinney. He stayed in touch with me over the years. He's a great guitar player, but he wasn't the right fit. Then I ended up moving into an apartment, and you know the story about [bassist] David Ellefson living underneath me and me throwing a potted plant into his air conditioner... [Laughs] Anyway, we got into the studio together, started playing, had a drummer who then said to me, "I'm going to go find myself," and he left. We auditioned drummers, and we got Gar Samuelson, who was a mind-blowing jazz drummer. No one had ever given thought to doing jazz drumming in metal, but we did, and that's what set us apart.

#### **How did you land on Chris Poland as your initial partner in guitar-related crime?**

We were trying to get our guitar situation replaced because we temporarily had Kerry King [of *Slayer*] sitting in with us. So Gar said, "Hey, I know somebody," and we ended up auditioning Chris Poland. His playing was so bizarre and unorthodox that I thought, "If he could do this, this could be the missing ingredient we need. This could really set us apart from everybody else by not having the same wang-bar, doodly kind of stuff on the solos." So we hung out for a little while, and

## **"I KNOW WE DID SOMETHING PRETTY MONUMENTAL WITH CREATING A MUSIC STYLE. YOU CAN'T GO ANYWHERE AND NOT HEAR PEOPLE PLAYING GUITAR LIKE WE DID"**

the naming of Mustaine's arc — that may never be finalized. At least, not now.

But maybe soon: Mustaine recently announced that early 2026's *Megadeth*, the band's 17th studio album, which features yet another new lead guitarist, Teemu Mäntysaari, will be their last. On top of that, the ensuing tour will be Mustaine's final trot around the globe.

Mustaine cautions that he isn't going anywhere anytime soon, as Megadeth's international fanbase dictates that a large-scale tour around said globe will be in order. As for that new album, it sounds decidedly old-school. You know, the kind of sound that made Mustaine a thrash metal legend back in 1986, 1990, 1992 and so on.

And then there's Mäntysaari, whom Mustaine believes will be a "star." His playing is something out of the Eighties and early Nineties, aka the era helmed by Marty Friedman, whom Mustaine calls "incredibly talented" and "incredibly mysterious."

As one listens to Megadeth's final record, one can't help but be transported back in time to the days when *Rust in Peace* made waves via Friedman's playing. But just because Mustaine is kicking it old-school doesn't

would feature him as one of metal's grizzliest warriors, akin to a man not to be messed with.

The fact is that when it comes to Megadeth, no matter what, there seems to be a hint of inherent darkness that lurches over the band. It's a matter of light and shade, hate and anger, life and death and revenge and redemption. Whatever that cocktail is, it's what makes Dave Mustaine and his band, no matter the members, tick.

With that dichotomy comes a harrowing impact that can sure as hell be felt, but not so easily defined. To this, Mustaine shrugs, saying, "I try to stay humble. I know we did something pretty monumental with creating a music style. You can't go anywhere and not hear people playing guitar like we did, and some of the drum patterns and chord changes — I hear that all the time in young bands, and it makes me very happy. I'm very proud."

#### **After leaving Metallica, what was your vision for forming Megadeth?**

When I left New York [after *Metallica*], I got home, dusted myself off, moved to Hollywood and was trying to piece together what was to be called Megadeth. The first thing I did was meet this guy in a building next to me named

that's basically when we made the decision because, besides his incredible playing ability and a lot of the things we did in our private lives that we all did together, it wasn't hard to make friends and blend, if you know what I mean.

#### **To your point, Chris was fabulous on Megadeth's first two records, *Killing Is My Business... and Business Is Good!* and *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?*. What led to Jeff Young replacing him for *So Far, So Good... So What!*?**

Jeff Young is a great guitar player. It's unfortunate that the world knows that Jeff is a great guitar player, but they don't know how really bright he is. I saw something in Jeff when we hired him; it was kind of a strange occurrence. We had tried to find a guitar player, and I went with David Ellefson to the country club in Reseda, where we watched this band called Malice. Malice had this big, tall, good-looking guitar player [Jay Reynolds] that had a Gibson Flying V and was heavily influenced, to me, by Michael Schenker. We talked to him after his show, and then we met him, and I said I wanted him to be in Megadeth. He was excited about joining the band; then we





Dave Mustaine  
[right] with Chris  
Poland in Chicago,  
February 12, 1987



Megadeth in the Jeff Young era, February 1988: [from left] Young, Mustaine, David Ellefson and Chuck Behler



were in the studio recording *So Far, So Good... So What?* and I was like, "Okay, it's time to do your solos, man." He goes, "Okay, I'm gonna call up my guitar teacher, have him do [the] solos and then have him teach me." I thought, "Get out — you're pulling my leg." But no, that was true. That's what he wanted to do. I went along with it, and Jeff showed up, and like I said, Jeff was a really superb guitar player. He really had his own unique style, like Chris did, and we started working on the record.

#### What made Jeff stand out?

If I remember correctly, he was really influenced by the gunslingers that were coming out of Mike Varney's stable. One guy I know — I think his name might have been Tony MacAlpine — was just a mind-blowing talent. Another was Vinnie Moore. It was apparent that Jeff was a shredder. I remember standing out on Melrose Avenue, and I said to Jeff, "Do you wanna join the band?" He said, "Yes," and I thought, "Thank God. This is too funky right now." I didn't wanna go back to looking

for another guitar player because we'd spent so much time looking for Jay, and then that whole thing happened, where he said, "I'm gonna have my teacher come down." That really threw me for a loop.

#### Sadly, Jeff didn't last too long, either.

After we parted ways with Jeff, we started looking for new guitar players again. It was difficult. I mean, you've got Chris Poland and you've got Jeff Young playing in your band, so how do you find somebody that's gonna compare with those guys? It's gonna be really hard, right? And it was really hard.

We had a guy come in from San Francisco, and he set up his amp, put on his guitar and goes, "Show me the songs." I looked at Ellefson, and I just went, "Oh, my God..." And then we had one guy who I'd never seen in my life, not once, and he comes in, sets up his stuff and he's got this bright green and fuchsia-colored Ibanez JEM with the handle on it — one of those Steve Vai models. We had this *[unspoken agreement]* where when an

audition was over, I'd reach behind me and turn off my wireless setup. This guy comes in, starts setting up his guitar, stops for a second and goes, "Yeah, man, I wrote [Megadeth's] 'Wake Up Dead'..." I looked at Ellefson, and I reached back and clicked off my unit at exactly the same time David did. We just said, "Interview's over..." *[Laughs]*

#### How did you find Marty Friedman?

Marty's CD, *Dragon's Kiss* [1988], had been sitting on the counter in the management's office, and I remember walking past it. The cover was this black picture with bright orange lettering on it, and it was pretty eye-catching. But I just couldn't do it because of his hair. *[Laughs]*

#### His hair?

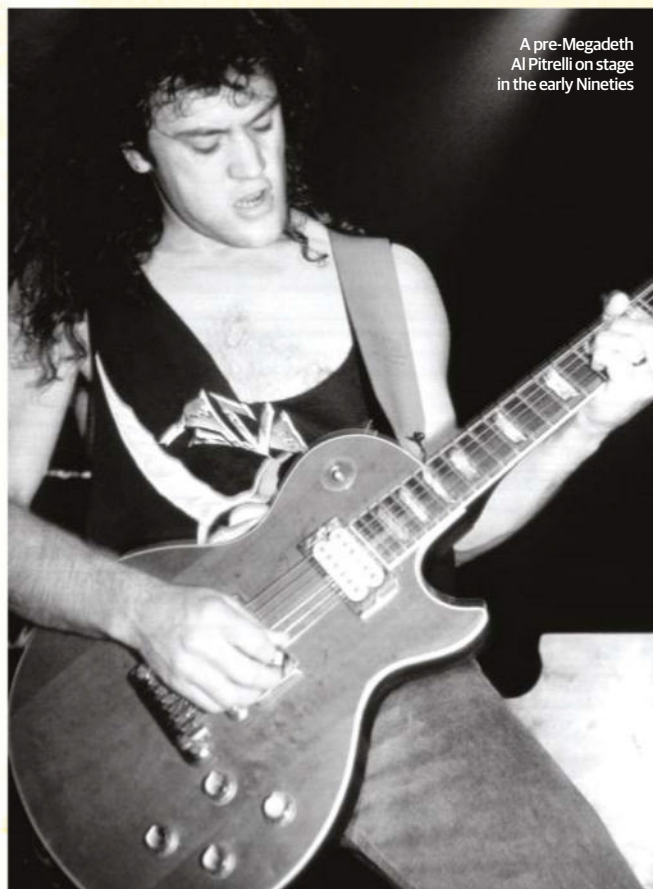
He had two different colors in his hair. His hair was black from the roots down to about his ear line, and then it was red all the way down to his armpits. I thought, "I can't do this," but against my will, I said, "Okay, let's do this..." So, he came in, and he walked in with a Carvin, which wasn't a company renowned for its guitars. He had this ADA rackmount unit, but I don't know what it was for or how he thought it was going to help him. *[Laughs]* By then, I had already had minimal success and had a lot of amps, so I said to my guys,

**"WE'RE AN INTERNATIONAL BAND. WE'VE GOT FANS AROUND THE GLOBE, SO IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME TO SAY GOODBYE"**





Marty Friedman  
in action with  
Megadeth  
in Philadelphia,  
June 29, 1991



A pre-Megadeth  
Al Pitrelli on stage  
in the early Nineties

"Do me a favor, please set up a stack for Marty over there."

And when it came time to do the solo, Marty just popped in. We've been through guitar player after guitar player, and we get to the solo part in "Wake Up Dead," and he nails it. I just thought, "Oh, my God..." and I reached behind me, turned off my wireless, went out and called my manager and said, "I think we've got him."

**It was the right choice, as *Rust in Peace*, *Countdown to Extinction* and *Youthanasia* were huge records in the Nineties when grunge was all the rage and metal was waning.**

It had a lot to do with around 1992 when Nirvana had *Nevermind*. They were so successful that normal heavy metal closed up a bit and was done. Metal wasn't getting played on the radio anymore, but Nirvana was, along with all these bands from Seattle, like Pearl Jam, Mother Love Bone, Soundgarden and all those other bands. Those bands became the flavor of the day, and hard rock and heavy metal had to go underground, which is where most bands dissolved, sadly.

**But Megadeth didn't. Did that make it all the more tough when you lost Marty after**

#### **recording *Risk*?**

That was a really weird period. I don't even know if Marty knows why we were brought together and why we were taken apart, but I had a fun time with Marty. But Marty is an enigma, and a very unique human being. I think you can ask any of the people who have played with him... he's incredibly talented, but very mysterious. He loves Oriental music, and we were able to make that work with Megadeth, so it's sad that we stopped working together.

**You two seemed to have a unique musical chemistry. Plus, he brought stability to the lead-guitar spot, a notoriously volatile spot for Megadeth. It must have been painful to have him leave.**

I had a couple of songs that I needed to write to get the feelings out of me from Marty leaving. There were a couple of songs I wrote that were cathartic to be able to talk about what happened.

#### **Which songs were those?**

"1000 Times Goodbye" [from 2001's *The World Needs a Hero*] wasn't written to or about Marty, but about the feelings I was going through. It was inspired by that because I was very confused. I hadn't really had somebody that I cared about that much

walk out. It was the first time I'd ever had that happen, and I didn't know how to deal with someone I really respect... I don't want it to come off weird, but I really did enjoy Marty's goofy one-liners and the stuff we did together.

**Marty's leaving, combined with an arm injury that nearly ended your playing career, led you to fold Megadeth in 2002, but you came back in 2004 with Chris Poland back on lead guitar on *The System Has Failed*.**

Let me explain about Chris Poland coming back; he wasn't invited back to play with me on a permanent basis. In the same way as the Metallica thing, I thought I was done. I thought my arm was done. I was going to do one more record, and then I was going to hang it up. So I asked him if he would come and play the solos, and that was it. Nothing more. And he did well; it was neat to see him play again.

**Aside from Chris, you ran through Al Pitrelli, Glen Drover and Chris Broderick. That level of volatility from the lead guitar spot must have been challenging.**

Oh, yeah, it was tough. I had to have a lot of mentors. I heavily backed into martial arts and had several spiritual mentors that I worked really closely with for a while





Glen Drover performs in 2007. "A first-class guitarist," Mustaine says



A post-Megadeth Chris Broderick on stage in New York City

because I was sad. I felt like I'd lost my mojo. Do you know what I mean?

**It can be tough when you're putting everything you have into something, and there are perpetual roadblocks.**

Yeah, absolutely. But I really enjoyed playing with Glen. He and his brother [drummer Shawn Drover] came in after a really ugly period where we tried to get the *Rust in Peace* lineup back together, which wasn't meant to be. Working with Glen and Shawn was enjoyable because a lot of the hardcore Swedish, Danish and English heavy metal that I loved, they knew. We would play it a lot, and that was great. Shawn is a really amazing drummer, and his brother is a first-class guitarist. And here's a thing people don't know: the two of them can switch instruments without missing a note. They both play guitar and drums, and they're both exceptional at it.

**It seems as if Kiko Loureiro's arrival in the band before *Dystopia* stabilized Megadeth. You had a lot of success with that record, and its follow-up, *The Sick, the Dying... and the Dead!* Was it painful to have him leave, sort of like it was with Marty?**

No. By the time Kiko had come, I had pretty much galvanized myself toward people. And

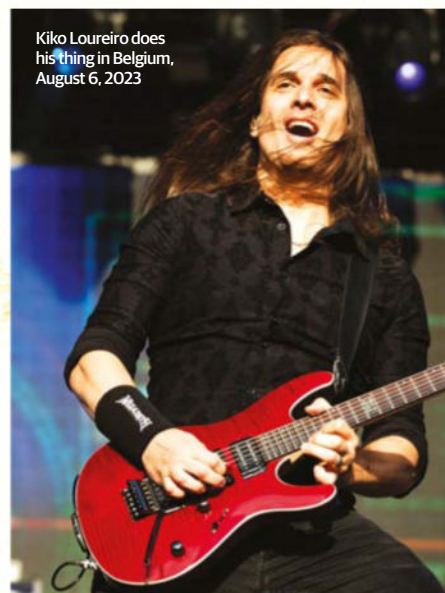
by that time, Kiko just started feeling like he was being away from home too much. I did tell him we were gonna be doing a lot of touring when we first met, and unfortunately, I'm the leader of a band that requires more time, you know? But I hear from him every once in a while, or I'll see something that somebody sends me, and I smile. Kiko was a good guy.

**With Teemu Mäntysaari in the fold, Megadeth still seems to have a lot left in the tank. Is it hard knowing you're releasing the band's final record and embarking on its final tour?**

We do have a lot left in the tank. And it might seem counterintuitive, but I also think that if people look at what I said, you know, this being our last studio album, and the part about touring, we're an international band. We've got, by the grace of God, fans around the globe, so it's going to take time to see everybody and say goodbye to everybody.

**With this being Megadeth's final tour, once you hit the road, will you be exclusively using your new signature gear, or will you bring out any old gear to make the occasion?**

I don't have any old gear for old time's sake. [Laughs] I've got one Jackson, but my [new] Gibsons are the guitars I want to be playing.



Kiko Loureiro does his thing in Belgium, August 6, 2023

And this isn't some product-placement thing; those guitars are exactly what I want and what I've always wanted. We made some slight adjustments to the guitars. It's kind of like a modified F1 [race car] where, over time, there are a couple of things you can do and bring along with you from what you've had in the past. I think that's where we're at right now with this, the new custom guitars. They're like hot rods. The only thing we're contemplating now is making the legs have points.

**How do you hope to be remembered as a guitar player?**

As someone who made a difference. **GW**

**"I DON'T HAVE ANY OLD GEAR FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE. MY NEW GIBSONS ARE THE GUITARS I WANT TO BE PLAYING"**



# WARCHEST

AN ALBUM-BY-ALBUM GUIDE TO MEGADETH'S EXPLOSIVE STUDIO OUTPUT — FROM THEIR 1985 DEBUT TO THEIR 2026 FINALE

BY GUITAR WORLD STAFF AND ANDREW DALY



**KILLING IS MY BUSINESS... AND BUSINESS IS GOOD!**  
**COMBAT, 1985**

Still bitter about being fired from Metallica, Dave Mustaine returned

with a band fashioned from his own imagination. The songs were sharp and socially aware, while the music was surprisingly mature. Mustaine had immediately made his intentions clear — namely to take the thrash beast he'd helped create and give it a rounded metal education. It didn't chart on the *Billboard* 200, but it was loved from the start.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS POLAND**



**PEACE SELLS... BUT WHO'S BUYING?**  
**CAPITOL, 1986**

Originally recorded for Combat Records, this was switched to the much bigger Capitol label, with

the band given the budget to completely re-mix. The result is a true landmark album. Forget about thrash; here was Mustaine leading a charge through the whole spectrum of musical emotions. The title track itself is something of an epic, showcasing Megadeth's startlingly creative process. Meanwhile, Chris Poland's playing is nothing short of brilliant.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS POLAND**



**SO FAR, SO GOOD... SO WHAT!**  
**CAPITOL, 1988**

Two years after *Peace Sells...*, a new Megadeth lineup landed on their feet with a record

that refused to conform to expectations. While the cover of Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the U.K." seemed somewhat superfluous, Mustaine was at his finest on the emotional "In My Darkest Hour" — a tribute to the late Cliff Burton of Metallica — and the haunting "Mary Jane." We also don't mind "Hook in Mouth" and "Set the World Afire."

**GUITARIST: JEFF YOUNG**



**RUST IN PEACE**  
**CAPITOL, 1990**

The debut album from arguably Megadeth's finest lineup, with Mustaine and long-time bassist

Dave Ellefson being joined by guitarist Marty Friedman and drummer Nick Menza. Trying to come to terms with his substance dependence, Mustaine became much more politically charged in his lyrical themes, exploring the implications and ramifications of war. The music is, at times, breathtaking, with Friedman proving he could cope with the considerable demands put on the guitarist in this most exhaustive of metal bands. "Hangar 18" is a striking moment of genius.

**GUITARIST: MARTY FRIEDMAN**



**COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION**  
**CAPITOL, 1992**

Max Norman, the man behind Ozzy Osbourne's solo success, was brought in to co-produce

with Mustaine, and his obvious commercial leanings can be heard in the way many of the songs here are structured. Gone were the sprawling epics, only two tracks — "Sweating Bullets" and "Ashes in Your Mouth" — were over five minutes in length, and many had an almost traditional arrangement. However, "Symphony of Destruction" was a triumph and remains a Mega classic. Was this an attempt to challenge Metallica's success with the Black Album? If so, it worked to some extent, as *Countdown to Extinction* came up just shy of the mark, making it to Number 2 on the U.S. charts.

**GUITARIST: MARTY FRIEDMAN**



**YOUTHANASIA**  
**CAPITOL, 1994**

Now the band were really starting to alienate some of their diehard fans. Almost divorced from the quali-

ties that had made their early albums so successful, Megadeth were moving inexorably towards melodic hard rock. Norman's guidance saw them become virtually one-paced, which meant that songs like "Train of Consequences" weren't given the credit they deserved. While "A Tout Le Monde" provided a moving interlude, nevertheless it appeared that Mustaine had lost touch with his roots.

**GUITARIST: MARTY FRIEDMAN**



**CRYPTIC WRITINGS**  
**CAPITOL, 1997**

Often dismissed as the worst album of the band's career, *Cryptic Writings* actually saw

Megadeth get back in touch with their thrash roots, on songs like "FFF," "She-Wolf" and "Vortex." And "I'll Get Even" saw them re-igniting a creative spark. The problem was in the production. Mustaine has in recent times expressed his regret at the decision to bring in Dann Huff, known for his work in melodic rock circles — far removed from where Megadeth should have been. And it cannot be denied that this record suffers from a somewhat tame timbre.

**GUITARIST: MARTY FRIEDMAN**



**RISK**  
**CAPITOL, 1999**

The last Megadeth album of the 20th century and Friedman's farewell performance. Part of the problem here

is that tracks like the single "Crush 'Em" are so smooth that they positively glide, rather than truly bombing along in Mega style. Mustaine has claimed that the decision to take Megadeth even further into the jungle of melodically-driven music was suggested by Lars Ulrich and, as the album title suggested, it was a real risk. Again, the production from Huff was a problem, and the album suffers for it. However, it couldn't be denied that Mustaine was still a formidable songwriter, as he proved on "Prince of Darkness" and "Breadline."

**GUITARIST: MARTY FRIEDMAN**





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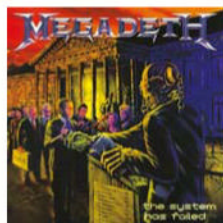


**THE WORLD NEEDS A HERO**  
**SANCTUARY, 2001**

A new label, a fresh guitarist (Al Pitrelli) and a return to the hard stuff. After the

hard-rock dabbling of the Nineties, the band got suited up in body armor and plunged back into the metal melee. While this was not a complete return to the band's original principles, the album had just enough rough and tumble to keep diehard fans satisfied.

**GUITARIST: AL PITRELLI**



**THE SYSTEM HAS FAILED**  
**SANCTUARY, 2004**

After calling time on the band due to a career-threatening arm injury, Mustaine

intended this as a solo return. This was subsequently changed, although it was very much a Mustaine-plus-hired-hands effort. A darker, more insidious record than *The World Needs a Hero*—it offered no solutions but highlighted current social and political problems and inconsistencies. However, what it did do was put Megadeth right back to the fore. They were once more metal heroes.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS POLAND**



**UNITED ABOMINATIONS**  
**ROADRUNNER, 2007**

Although Megadeth were once more a true band, it was obvious that the songs were the product

of Mustaine's mind. However, if *The System Has Failed* was a little inconsistent, this time it was clear Megadeth had found their range again. A cover of Zeppelin's "Out On the Tiles" and a re-visit of "A Tout Le Monde" (with a guest appearance from Lacuna Coil's Cristina Scabbia) apart, it was an album pulling no punches. In keeping with modern cynicism, Mustaine showed himself to be as angry and agitated as he was in 1985. *UA* topped the *GW* readers poll for 2007's best metal album.

**GUITARIST: GLEN DROVER**



**ENDGAME**  
**ROADRUNNER, 2009**

*Endgame* features yet another new lead guitarist entering MegaDave's midst. This time around, it's Chris

Broderick, who came in hot, adding bouts of old-school thrash meets new-school edginess. The result is an album that felt like a true band effort that was still clearly spearheaded by Mustaine, who continued to run the gamut of lyrical topics, ranging from *Lord of the Rings* themes to the Great Recession. Songs like "Head Crusher" and "44 Minutes" showed that Mustaine wasn't just back at it, but aiming to properly reinstate the Megadeth machine atop the proverbial MegaMountain. And once again, this barn-burner topped *Guitar World's* end-of-year poll for the best metal album of 2009.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS BRODERICK**



**THIRTEEN**  
**ROADRUNNER, 2011**

For the first time since the halcyon days of Marty Friedman, Megadeth made an album with

the same lead guitarist as the previous one. Also noteworthy is the return of founding bassist David Ellefson, whom James LoMenzo had previously replaced. The results were good, if not outstanding... in a way. The Al Capone-inspired "Public Enemy No. 1" was kind of weird, but also kinda awesome in that Mustaine continued to push his lyrical ideas past their limits. And then there's a cut like "Sudden Death," which found Mustaine and company pummeling away at full blast with intent to kill.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS BRODERICK**



**SUPER COLLIDER**  
**UNIVERSAL, 2013**

Three albums in a row with a guitarist not named Marty Friedman? Madness! Sadly, this would be

Broderick's Megadeth swan song. Thankfully, he went out with a bang, as *Super Collider* was handily the band's best since the vaunted *Rust in Peace*. This is not to say *Super Collider* is as good as *Rust in Peace*, but that Mustaine had harnessed some sort of latter-day resurgence, landing Megadeth back among the genre's best and most consistent bands. Evidence can be found in songs like "Kingmaker" and "Burn!" Though great things were to come, it's a shame Broderick didn't stick around to challenge the vaunted Friedman era for consistency and dominance. That aside, he did find his way onto *GW's* cover (our June 2013 issue), becoming the first Megadeth guitarist to share the cover with Mustaine since Friedman back in 1991.

**GUITARIST: CHRIS BRODERICK**



**DYSTOPIA**  
**UNIVERSAL, 2016**

It's not hyperbolic to say that *Dystopia* was the best Megadeth album since the band's first few beloved

records. But this time, this isn't just because it's good, but because it's truly great. With former Angra guitarist Kiko Loureiro aboard, Mustaine found the best foil he'd had since the Eighties, leading to the creation of a modern metal monster. "Fatal Illusion," "The Threat Is Real" and "Post American World" are commentaries that pummel the listener into blissful submission. *Dystopia* is top-tier Mustaine, so it's no wonder that it nabbed him a Grammy for Best Metal Performance.

**GUITARIST: KIKO LOUREIRO**



**THE SICK, THE DYING... AND THE DEAD!**  
**UNIVERSAL, 2022**

Mustaine & Co. carried the momentum from *Dystopia*

into the sessions for *The Sick...* leading to another late-career metal masterstroke. But there was more at play here, such as the Covid pandemic and Mustaine's throat cancer diagnosis. These issues shrouded the album in darkness, which is fitting for Mustaine's vibe anyway. "We'll Be Back" netted Megadeth another Grammy nod for Best Metal Performance, which was icing on the cake given all that Mustaine had been through. On the downside, this record put a period on Loureiro's tenure, ending his time in the band... and leaving fans wondering what could have been.

**GUITARIST: KIKO LOUREIRO**



**MEGADETH FRONTIERS, 2026**

Given the fact that Mustaine and his band of merry men had nabbed two Grammys after the release of the

band's previous two records, and that their live show is as hellacious as ever, it was a surprise to hear that *Megadeth* will be the band's final album. But it's not all bad, as newbie Teemu Mäntysaari made like it was 1990, delivering a Friedman-ish performance across "Tipping Point," "I Don't Care" and "Let There Be Shred." Mustaine is going out like he came in: kicking, screaming and delivering blood-boiling rock just as he did in '85.

**GUITARIST: TEEMU MÄNTYSAARI**



## CoverStory

Megadeth — the final lineup: [from left] Dirk Verbeuren, Dave Mustaine, James LoMenzo and Teemu Mäntysaari





# THE LAST NOTE

DAVE MUSTAINE TAKES US THROUGH THE INSPIRATIONS BEHIND MEGADETH'S FINAL ALBUM — TRACK BY TRACK — AND REVEALS HIS MOTIVATION FOR RE-RECORDING METALLICA'S "RIDE THE LIGHTNING"

BY ANDREW DALY

**IT SEEMS THAT** Dave Mustaine's wild heavy metal journey is ending via a final Megadeth album — January's self-titled release — and a globetrotting tour. To that end, he tells *Guitar World*, "We have a lot of territories we need to play before we stop. We've got a lot of stops to get to so that we can see everybody. It's more than just weekend-warrior stuff here in the States. We're not just here traveling in a Winnebago." [Laughs]

It's hard to imagine the metal landscape without Mustaine, a man whose playing is as fiery as his personality. Thankfully, those traits come across throughout *Megadeth*, meaning that Mustaine is going out with a massive bang — a bang that will punctuate a hell-raising career of music-making that'll be remembered for as long as any of us are still here.

But Mustaine still has a lot in front of him, namely the aforementioned new album, which he discusses below, track by track. As is the case with any Megadeth offering, the themes run a wide gamut, but it's the album's final track, "The Last Note," that seems the most symbolic.

"It's like we're playing to carry on forever," Mustaine says of the song. "For people who know my music, it'll carry on. I know it will."

## "TIPPING POINT"

**THIS SONG CAME** along in the middle of the recording process; the songs were numbered, and "Tipping Point" was Number



9, so we had gotten through a good portion of the record by the time we started working on it. As far as performing in the studio, we had some crude racks from Lowe's or Home Depot, and we had all of our amps stacked up there. We had our Marshalls and a bunch of other amps I've never seen before, all the stomp boxes and stuff. This song came together pretty easily. The hardest part was knowing when to stop, because Megadeth songs reveal themselves — if that makes sense. The first time you listen to it, it sounds like something, and then you listen again, and you hear so many things you didn't hear before. The easiest way to say it is that it's like peeling an onion, and every time you listen to it, you hear a little something more. Teemu

[Mäntysaari] is definitely going to be a star. The guitar work he did on this record was just amazing.

## "I DON'T CARE"

**IT'S SONG NUMBER 2**, but it was song Number 4 in the list of songs. That was the order the songs were penned — not as far as their importance. "I Don't Care" is really a super-punk track I had been hanging onto in my head for a long time and thinking about, you know, how aggressive it would be to do a really great skating video, or any of those extreme sports. It just kept fueling the song. When it was time to sing the lyrics, I don't know what I was thinking, but I went up and just spat out these lyrics — and all that stuff. ▶



came out the second time I sang it.

The first time I sang it, it reminded me a lot of Nirvana and then Fear. I was in one of those little obnoxious Dave Mustaine moods, and I got through the first pass. Then the producer, Chris [Rakestraw], goes, "You need to just go 'da da da da da' during that middle part there." I kind of tilted my head, went in there and just said the most obnoxious things I could say — and there you go! [Laughs]

The fun part about doing the guitar layering was, when we started with the main riff, we added another, which was all down-picking the same chords. Then we had another layer that went on top that was like when you do the first note and then an octave higher — that jazzy kind of chord, where you can slide it, like a George Benson chord. At the very end, there was one more layer that's a cross between a percussive sound and a little bit of a pinch sound.

## "HEY GOD?!"

**WHEN WE STARTED** this one, it had different lyrics. We went through numerous ideations where the song stayed the same, but the lyrics were really hard to come down on. I spent so much time getting this lyric right that I lost it, and I just wrote down what

with AC/DC's "Let There Be Rock," although I'm a huge AC/DC fan and I love that song. Teemu is such an exceptional talent that he really lit a fire in me for my playing. We were joking around and constantly talking about how we have to make this record absolutely shred and that we needed to put a lot of solos in it. I think we accomplished that.

We didn't write songs like [we used to in former] periods of Megadeth's lifetime. We had songs that were great songs, but were fit for a time, like the *Countdown to Extinction* years. Those songs are classic, but they're not fast by today's standards. The songs people like are like those on the new record, but, you know, different songs for different times.

A pretty unique thing about "Let There Be Shred" — in terms of the guitar duels Teemu and I were doing — is that he would do all the shred stuff, and I'd do all the hippie stuff. I thought that was really fun, based on what the lyrics were about, because it was supposed to be a guitar challenge. I think if we did a video, it'd be really great to get a bunch of super-amazing young guitar players in there just going for it, and then the song ends and it's me standing out in front of the audition place with my guitar case like, "Wait

growing up — especially videos and movies. "Another Bad Day" reminds me of that Madness video for "Our House" [1982], where everything's fucked, and you can cross that with that 1993 Michael Douglas movie, *Falling Down*. There's a whole meltdown — he's got a baseball bat, his car breaks down. That's my visual for this song. [Laughs] He wakes up and has no idea what's going on. He's losing everything, and his normal routine is gone. The song discusses the hardships in life. I've had a lot of experiences like that; these things happen to everyone. Singing about it sometimes makes it a little bit easier for people who are struggling with stuff like this.

## "MADE TO KILL"

**THIS WAS ONE** of those songs where the first half is like the second half, but it's telling a story. There's the first half, and then it goes back to the beginning, and I think there's some really cool riffs in there. The lyric ideas talk about the state of affairs in our country right now, where people are so agitated that they start organizing. I'm not saying one side's right or one side's wrong; I'm saying this is what's coming next if things don't change.

# "I WANTED TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO JAMES HETFIELD, WHO I THINK IS AN AMAZING GUITAR PLAYER, AND LARS ULRICH, WHO WAS AN EXCELLENT SONGWRITER"

ended up becoming the final lyrics. A lot of the thought process for the retirement stuff was swirling around in my head around that period. The thoughts would come and go, but that's when I zeroed in on those lyrics.

The song — the music — was written; it was the second musical track we were working on, but the lyrics took forever. But when we finally got to that place, about how we're nearing the end here, that's when these lyrics came up. It's funny because there's a lot of those, I don't know if "slogans" is the right word, but they're like wives' tales and limericks and stuff like that about footprints in the sand, looking back. And there was only one set of footprints. And you say to God, "Where were you?" And God says, "Well, those footprints were mine, when I was carrying you." I thought, "That's a really cool concept." It's like the old poem that says something like, "It's better to live your life like there is a God, and when you get to Heaven, find out there is none, than to live your life like there's no God and go to Heaven and find out that there is." I thought, "That's pretty heavy."

## "LET THERE BE SHRED"

"LET THERE BE Shred" has nothing to do

a minute, I'm, I'm here..." [Laughs] It's kind of like a David Lee Roth video.

## "PUPPET PARADE"

**WHEN WE WROTE** this song, we knew the melody was really catchy. As for the guitar parts, the rhythm is close to several songs we have, but it isn't the same. We didn't want to borrow anything from ourselves, but the simplicity of the riff makes it really catchy. Sometimes you want it to be super-explosive, but the riff doesn't call for that; the riff calls for a simpler performance. Maybe you take out one or two rhythm notes; maybe that's the difference between good and great.

With "Puppet Parade," the rhythm in the beginning is really cool and hooky. The chorus is from when I dug into trying to sing again, you know — really sing along with the song. Believe it or not, the chorus was one of the hardest parts on this song. Not the lyrics, but the music. When we got that done, we knew it was going to be a catchy song. And Teemu did a great guitar solo; we both did.

## "ANOTHER BAD DAY"

**THIS WAS FUN** to write. I'm inspired by things from my past and from when I was

## "OBEY THE CALL"

**THIS WAS THE** second-to-last song we wrote. We had some pretty good soloing and trading off, if I remember right. Teemu had the majority of the solos, and it was kind of a follow-up to [the cover art of 2018's] *Dystopia*, that kind of bombed-out city, where everything's all fucked up. I've written about this a lot of times. The first time I really got into something like this was when I saw the Jean-Claude Van Damme movie *Timecop* [1994] and we were finishing up *Rust in Peace*. We had just finished "Poison Was the Cure," and we needed a little bit more for the record, and David Ellefson had written this part, which we ended up using as the beginning of "Poison Was the Cure." I watched *Timecop*, and I had this dream where I had my own vision of what it would look like. The lyrics were me dipping my toe into full-on apocalypse stuff.

## "I AM WAR"

**IT'S SIMPLE, BUT** the lyrics are deep. I'm a big fan of Sun Tzu and *The Art of War*; it's something every band leader should read. It's not generally made for musicians, but the credo throughout the book — the "not



taking shit from anybody and knowing how to defeat your enemies and how to be a warrior" part – really inspired me when I first started getting into martial arts. When I heard businessmen were reading it, I figured, "Shit, I'm gonna read this for sure now." So I did, and it's very difficult to understand, but I got through it and read it a second time. It's like our records, where it reveals itself as time goes on. That's important when you're trying to learn something; you learn it like you're gonna teach it. When you learn something and somebody makes it too fucking difficult, you're not gonna learn it. It's the same with martial arts – and with guitar. I thought this was really cool. The song shows the dichotomy between these two approaches to war. One is the leader going to war and trying to win; the other person tries to win and then goes to war. He is somebody who will plan out his attack, like a reaction to a response.

### "THE LAST NOTE"

**THIS STARTED OUT** as a very sad song. It was actually called "Jumpers," because it was about the dilemma on the Golden Gate Bridge – the tragic problem they have there with people ending their lives on the bridge so often that they've got a police force just for the bridge. There's a clip that shows several people jumping off the bridge and

what happens when someone jumps. They hit the ground with such velocity that their bones turn into splinters, which go upward, piercing every organ in their body. As soon as the rescue team gets there, they go to where the person jumped and throw this flare off the side of the bridge. It goes into the water and floats along with the current so that you can see the body trail. It's gnarly stuff when you think about it.

I wrote a song about it, but when it was time to sing it, I just couldn't bring myself to do it. There was no way I could get any emotion behind it. I mean, I sang it well, but it just didn't sound good. There was no way I could make that something somebody could sing, so we changed it to "The Last Note."

I was out last month [October] during our European/U.K. tour, and some of the first interviews we did there were with some really rugged guys – strapping guys from Scandinavia. A couple of them said to my face, "When I listened to 'The Last Note,' it brought a tear to my eye." And I went, "What?" – because this was the first time we'd done any press on this record. Imagine that I haven't spoken to anybody since we shut the record down, and this was one of the first times I heard from anybody about the record, and certainly about that song. When these two guys, in two separate interviews, said the

same thing – one said it brought tears to his eyes and the other said it almost made him weep – I was like, "Mission accomplished."

### "RIDE THE LIGHTNING" (BONUS TRACK)

**THE MAIN REASON** I chose to do this was to close the circle and pay my respects to my partners. I thought this was a really great way to do that. Whenever we select any other band's music to go on our albums, sometimes there's a lot of thought behind it and sometimes there's not. This was one of the ones that we thought long and hard about, because all I wanted to do was play the song I wrote with the guys in Metallica. I wanted to pay my respects to James Hetfield, who I think is an amazing guitar player, and Lars Ulrich, who was an excellent songwriter. I remember when I was there and we were putting these songs together, Lars didn't just sit there; he was very instrumental in making these songs. Of course, when we got into making demos of these songs, it was fun to do the recordings, but we were never really able to do a full-on produced version of "Ride the Lightning," and I would have loved to have heard that. I gotta tell you – listening back to James' original vocal performance, it was really tremendous. Anyway, there's no big strategy; I have respect for the guys, and I just wanted to show that. And it's a hell of a song!



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"I'm just living in the moment and making the best of the time we have," Teemu Mäntysaari says





# OBEYING THE CALL

TEEMU MÄNTYSAARI ON THE MAKING OF *MEGADETH* AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE  
THE BAND'S FINAL GUITARIST IN A LONG LINE OF GREATS

BY ANDREW DALY

**A**T 38, TEEMU Mäntysaari is Megadeth's youngest – and newest – member. But don't discount him – he was handpicked by Megadeth's commander-in-chaos, Dave

Mustaine, to carry on a lead-guitar legacy that includes Chris Poland, Marty Friedman and Kiko Loureiro.

That's not an easy task, especially given that part of said task includes helming the band's six-string duties (besides Mustaine, of course) for their final studio album and tour. But Mäntysaari isn't sweating it.

"It was a pretty amazing process," he says. "After I got the gig, Dave said, 'If you have any ideas, it's good to start saving them.' By the end of the 2024 touring season, we started talking more and more about what we wanted to do."

Mäntysaari says that one of the first things Mustaine had the band do was listen to the group's entire 16-album discography to catch an amalgamated vibe that would springboard them into what would become 2026's *Megadeth*.

"We'd have an Excel spreadsheet where we'd make notes about every song," Mäntysaari says. "That was the first bit of inspiration, and also, us looking back at the legacy of the band."

By the time Megadeth's final run is done, unlike Mustaine, Mäntysaari will have his entire career ahead of him. He'll walk away with cache, but there's more to it.

"It was a lot of learning," he says. "Dave was telling us about how those songs from back in the day came about. It was really inspiring,

and it helped us understand how to make a good Megadeth album."

**Megadeth has an old-school feel. Was that intentional?**

Absolutely. We really wanted to honor the old-school Megadeth sound and have some of that punk attitude, plus some of the rougher, raw edges with sprinkles of modern production – but not too modern! We created something new and cool that reminds you of something [older] but still sounds fresh.

**When did Dave tell you this would be the final Megadeth record?**

Pretty late in the process. We were in the studio for a good 10 months, and that's when there were first talks about the "farewell" idea. So most of the album was done, I'd say. But, for example, the lyrics for "The Last Note" were done after the farewell decision, so we really didn't think about it while making the other songs.

**How did the news make you feel?**

I have huge appreciation for Dave. It's super exciting to have my name printed in the [album] booklet; that's probably only going to hit when you actually see the physical product. But I haven't thought about it too much; I'm just living in the moment and making the best of the time we have. And the farewell tour isn't going to be short; we're going to go everywhere.

**Did Dave give you a lot of freedom from a guitar perspective while recording?**

There were a bunch of times when Dave had an idea, and then there was a Dropbox folder for the band where everybody could contribute their ideas. So we'd keep track of ideas that could maybe go together stylistically and tempo-wise. Some were snippets of a riff, some were fuller arrangements. It was like Lego pieces you put together. Dave has a huge catalog of things that haven't been used, so we all contributed.

**Given that you wanted a timeless yet fresh record, what gear did you use?**

We basically had a chance to try anything we wanted. I brought a few amps to the studio, and I like to tweak sounds. One of the main things I brought was a German amp by a builder called Eddie Lenz [*Lenz Amplification*], which he tweaked to my taste. But we ended up using mostly Friedman. And the producer, Chris Rakestraw, has a big pedal wall connected to this MIDI switching system, so we could easily engage any sound we wanted. So we had a lot of fun exploring tones, but all the amps were in the classic Megadeth direction – modified Marshalls, British sounds, but with some modern tightness.

**What will you take away from having played lead guitar on Megadeth's final LP?**

I really value collaboration, having a common goal and good vibes. It was a lot of long days, but the good communication and appreciation of everyone's input were two of the biggest takeaways. I like the power of collaboration. **GW**

**"WE REALLY WANTED TO HONOR THE OLD-SCHOOL MEGADETH SOUND AND HAVE SOME OF THAT PUNK ATTITUDE, PLUS SOME OF THE ROUGHER, RAW EDGES"**



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# Gibson Noel Gallagher Les Paul Standard

It started as a “mystery” guitar for the 2025 Oasis reunion, became a high-priced (and scarce) collector’s piece and is now a Gibson USA ‘Paul for the people

BY DAVE BURRLUCK

**▶ NO SOONER HAD** Oasis begun their Live ‘25 reunion tour on July 4 when chatter started about a mystery guitar Noel Gallagher was wielding – a pretty cool-looking black Les Paul. Was it the fabled LP Custom that Johnny Marr had loaned him?

As the dates continued, so did the speculation – until Gibson announced a 25-piece limited run (at a mere, um, \$22,499) that “paid tribute to the instrument Noel Gallagher has been using at Oasis reunion shows.” It was technically a made-to-measure Les Paul that Gallagher and Gibson had been working on for the previous 18 months.

Surely a production version would follow, right? Lo and behold, just before Oasis kicked off their five-date run in Australia, it was announced:

the Gibson USA Noel Gallagher Les Paul Standard we’re reviewing here.

Rather than any radical re-design of the Les Paul, this new signature model comes across as a pimped-up hot rod. Gibson already has its Les Paul Standard 50s P90, and this is really the same guitar with some tweaks. First off, instead of the ‘50s Vintage neck profile, it swaps to Noel’s preferred SlimTaper. The gloss nitro-cellulose Ebony-only finish is not only nicely done but is the perfect backdrop for the all-chrome hardware instead of the 50s P90’s nickel. The specs (and some Gibson photos) tell us we should have an ABR-1 tune-o-

matic bridge, although our sample uses the aluminium Nashville tune-o-matic with its slightly wider-travel saddles – as used extensively in Gibson USA’s Modern Collection – along with a lightweight stop tailpiece and Grover Rotomatic tuners. Further pimps include a chromed-metal jackplate – as used on certain Modern models too – and toggle switch surround, aka the “switch washer.”

Under the moody exterior there are no changes to the Standard’s mahogany back/maple top construction or its one-piece mahogany neck with a mid-brown, single-bound rosewood fingerboard and time-honored acrylic trapezoid inlays.

While the actual soapbar P90 pickups are the same specification as that 50s model, the difference here

**The Noel Standard has way more sonic potential than merely playing Oasis covers**



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE. JOSHUA HALLING, GIBSON









being the unique chromed-metal covers, a nod to the chromed dog-ear covers of another Noel favorite, the Epiphone Casino. There are no changes in the controls, either; it's the standard Gibson modern-wired control circuit that's typically neatly done with Gibson logo'd pots and Orange Drop capacitors. Overall, it's a pretty tidy contemporary Les Paul.

If the five-ply pickguard is a nod to that loaned Johnny Marr Les Paul Custom, so is our Standard's heft. There's no weight relief here and our sample tips the scales at exactly

10 lbs. That aside, it's obviously very similar to plenty of other USA Les Pauls, and feels familiar.

That said, Gibson's so-called "medium jumbo" fret wire feels more like a smaller "medium," and our sample's felt and measured a little low. Bends feel a little less positive and you can certainly feel the fingerboard face; it's almost a built-in vintage-y played-a-lot vibe. The frets could also benefit from a bit more polishing and the fingerboard needs a little conditioning, if only to deepen the color.

**STREET PRICE:** \$2,999

**MANUFACTURER:**  
Gibson, [gibson.com](http://gibson.com)

#### PROS

- Classic sounds from the soapbar P90s
- "Everyman" SlimTaper neck profile
- 'Black 'n' chrome rock 'n' roll vibe

#### CONS

- It's heavy, man
- Small frets
- It's "limited," but we have no idea how many

**VERDICT:** Forget the backstory. This is a fine USA Les Paul pairing a SlimTaper neck profile with P90 single coils and rock 'n' roll dress. It's damn snazzy, too.

In some quarters, the SlimTaper gets some flak, not least from the "big is best" fraternity. But that's a matter of taste. The profile here isn't exactly skinny; it's quite a classic "C" with a little more shoulder.

There's nothing remarkable in the guitar's unplugged response, either. It offers a good, typically pushy ring. But it's the single-coil P90s that – with the exception of that Les Paul Standard 50s P90 – differentiate this from the mainly humbucker-loaded USA LP models.

Using an original 1957 Les Paul Junior as a sonic benchmark, the NG doesn't disappoint. It retains some of that Junior's bite and mid-range attitude but smooths it a little, seemingly adding depth and clarity.

Switch off the obvious crunch and gain on your amp and go clean and there's some strident jangle at bridge, jazztastic smoothness at neck and a little sparkle with both pickups voiced that works in more soulful, funkier styles. But then bring back a little hair and crunch and the single-coil texture eases into Americana and a whole lot more.

If only there were a Bigsby option!

But the humbucker was invented for good reason. Single-coils pick up noise and hum that in certain situations can ruin the fun. It's why numerous Gibson artists, most recently Warren Haynes, choose hum-canceling P90 DC soapbars for his signature. In the short time we had this guitar, though, it was very well-behaved. The pickups have the same magnetic polarity so aren't hum-canceling in the mix position.

Potential pitfalls aside, the quality of sound, that different texture and bite ain't to be sneezed at.

Some might say this is far from a valid Oasis signature guitar, having only come into play earlier this year. It's simply based on a custom-spec'd guitar, a tool for Noel's day job, admittedly a ginormous world tour, but is Noel even still using his versions?

All of that aside, as we said, it's a slightly different, pimped-up take on an existing USA Les Paul that quite simply might entice players to taste, or remind themselves of the P90's different, less-smooth fat single-coil voice that has way more sonic potential than merely playing covers of the signature artist's band. It's quite the rock 'n' roller, old or new. **GW**



# Warm Audio Tube Squealer

Warm Audio's latest overdrive machine serves up the three greatest hits of the "Green Screamer" overdrive in one stompbox

BY PAUL RIARIO

## ▶ ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER

Tube Screamer-inspired overdrive has shown up at our door. At this point, we have to ask ourselves, "Have we hit the ceiling in the amount of Screamer-style overdrive pedals?" We could say yes, but there's always room for improvement, right?

So the question should be, "What's different this time around?" With countless versions of the hallowed green box available, distinguishing between them while they fight for space on your pedalboard can be challenging. But since our place is already Screamer Central, let's just unearth what's new here.

If you heed the gospel of certain YouTube content creators, you'll find they frequently extol the virtues of the classic Japanese "Tube Screamers," particularly the holy trinity of the TS808, TS9 and the TS10. To that end, Warm Audio is well known for making repros of some very famed overdrives, fuzzes and boosts, so it only seems fitting in the natural progression of things for the company to take a stab at the iconic Tube Screamer – now known from them as, er... the Tube Squealer.

Yes, Warm Audio's Tube Squealer

is an all-analog, Screamer-inspired overdrive offering three selectable voicings – 808, TS9 and TS10 – that authentically recreate those revered Japanese circuits along with some modern features for flexibility.

The rock-solid Tube Squealer looks pretty reminiscent of its inspiration, arriving in that old-school Screamer-mould pedal enclosure with grippy indicator knobs. It achieves its asymmetrical clipping through carefully selected internal components, including JRC4558 op-amps, discrete transistors and diodes and premium JFETs.

For each of the 808, TS10 and TS9 circuits, the Tube Squealer is in an "original pedal" voicing when clicked down to the "single-coil" setting on the Pickup Voicing switch. By clicking up toward the "humbucker" setting, it adds a midrange emphasis from 800Hz to 2kHz, which supposedly removes muddiness when using humbucker-equipped guitars. Finally, the Tube Squealer can be selected to operate at 9V for vintage harmonic distortion or at 18V (via an internal voltage doubler) in "On" mode for a cleaner boost with increased headroom. However, we found the difference between these two modes negligible.

While each circuit in the Squealer nods to those Ibanez classics, the differences in their sound are often subtle to somewhat imperceptible, though distinct characteristic variations do exist.

## Sounds fantastic with your other favored distortions, drives, fuzzes and boosts

**STREET PRICE:** \$149

**MANUFACTURER:** Warm Audio, [warmaudio.com](http://warmaudio.com)

### PROS

- Re-creation of three famed Screamer-inspired overdrive circuits in one pedal
- Versatile features with plenty of tailoring on hand
- Robust build with a five-year warranty

### CONS

- Differences between the three overdrive voicings are slight to subtle

**VERDICT:** The Tube Squealer is an elevated Screamer-style overdrive that stands out in its flexibility for complementing cranked rigs and stacking with other gain pedals. For some, it'll be a showstopper; for others, it might be heavily scrutinized compared to other choices.

We primarily favored the 808 for its warmth and the TS10 for its sparkle. We also found ourselves sticking with the single-coil setting (which is the "original" un-modded circuit), as the humbucker setting sounded too strident to our ears. However, we do know this humbucker setting is preferable to use with high-gain amplifiers for that enhanced mid-emphasis.

We found ourselves keeping the Mix knob disengaged, as we preferred a pure overdriven tone without any clean signal, but if you like this blendable option, this feature functions comparably to other pedals with similar mix/dry controls.

The Tube Squealer is more of a supportive pedal that sounds fantastic when paired with your other favored distortions, overdrives, fuzzes and boosts. Even in front of a pushed Marshall, Fender or Vox, the Squealer shines by introducing a smooth layer of compressed drive that accentuates pick attack and dynamics, and adding a welcome bump of brawny girth to your tone. All that's needed is to select which of the three Squealer's voices works best for your rig. And for that, the Squealer is just as good, if not in some cases, better than most overdrive pedals that offer less versatility for a similar price. **GW**



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE



# Gamechanger Audio Motor Pedal

Synth sounds for the guitar from a real spinning motor, packaged in a striking, car-themed aesthetic

BY PETE EMERY

**IT'S SAFE TO** suggest that Game-changer Audio isn't afraid of being a little different. Its innovative products, like the Plasma and Light pedals, generally feature an aesthetic that stylistically displays the outlandish components of the pedal in a unique, grin-inducing style. The Motor Pedal is certainly in keeping with this.

A real, brushed DC motor is at the heart of this electromechanical synth machine, with an inductor that "captures the real-world motion of the motor's spinning coils, transforming mechanical energy into a raw, electric audio signal." Who doesn't want that?!

Functionality is provided by way of MIDI and USB-C connectivity and a separate "Track" input that the 500mA pedal can use to sync the motor's speed to a different source if

needed. Without using this, it defaults to using the guitar input. It's all contained in an entertaining car-themed package. Let's buckle in and let's find out what this thing can do.

Weighing in at over 2 lbs., you wouldn't want to drop the Motor Pedal on your foot. There's some real heft to the solid metal construction, accompanied by sturdy-feeling controls and an expression pedal with a nice rubberized feel.

The aesthetics are striking, with that spinning motor taking center stage, backlit by a red light that can only be described as cool. Its black chassis with white stripes keeps up the car theme, and modes with titles like Break, Accelerate and Clutch drive that theme home.

When it comes to usability, the Motor Pedal is a bit of a mixed bag. Some of the controls are easy to understand with familiar terms such as Vibrato, Glide and Shift controlling modulation, portamento and pitch-based effects via a familiar

**The aesthetics are striking, with that spinning motor taking center stage**



rotary knob.

The naming conventions of some of the other functions – Clutch and Drift for example – are stylistically fun, but they don't give the user much info about what they actually do, so you'll need to do a little experimenting or manual reading to get to grips with the full potential of the pedal and also uncover functions like "Floor It," which aren't indicated on the front panel.

That said, these naming conventions all serve to exaggerate the Motor Pedal's car-based theme, which, for a lot of users, will be a lot of fun. This is a rare case where the trade-off in usability is a pedal with some real personality.

Moving on to sounds, we have five engines to choose from: Motor, MXD, M-Wave, Coil and Vocoder. These range from gritty and cutting on the MXD engine, to space-age smooth





with a lovely floating portamento between each of the notes on the M-Wave engine.

The M-Wave is easily our favorite, with the Vocoder falling a little short of providing the vowel sounds we were hoping for. The rest are an entertaining collection of wild, synthy goodness, tweakable through the Tone, Drive, Release and Mod controls.

We found the Tone control useful for taming brighter engines like the MXD, and the Drive handy for controlling the aggression or smoothness, depending on what engine it's affecting. Then, the Release knob tweaks these tones from a spitty gated sound to infinite sustain. The Mod control is interesting, as it's dual-function. The first half of its travel increases the intensity of the characteristics within each engine, and the second half, in

Gamechanger Audio's words, routes "the Motor signal through an analog multiplier IC, where it is modulated by the main input signal – producing a wide range of complex, gritty textures and essentially 'fusing' the two signals together."

This adds yet more aggression to the sounds, with increased drive and bite. The exact change differs on each mode, but in short, it brings out some more wild sounds on each one.

For some movement, we have the Vibrato/Glide dual-function knob. Vibrato adds a pleasing wobble, and Glide adds additional portamento

**There's some real heft to the Motor Pedal's solid metal construction**

**STREET PRICE:** \$399

**MANUFACTURER:**  
Gamechanger Audio,  
[gamechangeraudio.com](http://gamechangeraudio.com)

#### PROS

- ✦ A real spinning motor makes for a unique pedal
- ✦ Five different synth engines
- ✦ A wide array of tweakable parameters

#### CONS

- ✦ Not the most user-friendly
- ✦ Over the long term, DC motor brushes will wear (3,000-5,000 hours of playing)

**VERDICT:** It's not the easiest pedal to use, but that doesn't stop it from being tons o' fun.

(slide) between each note, which is highly enjoyable in single-note lines.

Finally, the expression pedal serves to add a range of different functions to the Motor Pedal, which can be selected via the rotary knob located above it. Each mode is car-derived – Accelerated and Brake shift the pitch up and down, Clutch holds a played note, Drift engages a Vibrato, and Volume is, well, volume.

Press the pedal harder, and the "Floor It" function is engaged, adding more functionality to each mode. It pushes the pitch changes even further, chaotic fluctuations to the Drift mode, permanently locks a note in place in Clutch mode and sets the Volume to move between 50 percent and 100 percent rather than 0 percent to 100 percent.

All of this adds a whole other level of expression, greatly expanding the sonic possibilities. **GW**







# Gretsch Synchronomatic Falcon

The Falcon has finally landed — in a more affordable price bracket. Let's see if Gretsch's big bird can fly economy

BY DARYL ROBERTSON

**▶ DESPITE THE FALCON'S** revered status, there's been one major hurdle keeping this large hollowbody out of reach for many cash-strapped musicians: that hefty price tag. Thankfully, that's all changed with the introduction of the newly revived, cut-price Synchronomatic series.

Nestled between the already-affordable Electromatic line and the premium Japanese-made Players Edition, the Synchronomatic collection — featuring the Falcon and Nashville — finally brings this iconic guitar within reach for more players than ever.

Built in China, this model boasts a 2.5-inch deep maple body with a Semi-Arc bracing design. And let's not forget the must-have Bigsby, this one sports the B60 V-Cutout variation, of course.

At the heart of this beauty is a set of Hi-Fidelity Filter'Tron pickups, promising to deliver that signature Gretsch chime that is synonymous with the Falcon name. Plus, it comes bundled with a Deluxe hardshell case and is available in the classic Snowcrest White or the sleek and goth-tastic Black.

First things first, this new collection impresses right off the bat with its stylish and premium-looking case. The black and grey textured exterior, paired with a plush blue interior, feels like it belongs to the higher-end version of the Falcon, not one priced as competitively as this.

Lifting the lid reveals a dazzling guitar that wears its iconic snowy-white finish and gilded gold hardware with pride. At first glance, there's no denying this is a Falcon. And whether it's the jet-black ebony board, the bone nut, the smooth-feeling Grover Super Rotomatic tuners or the extra visual appointments, it's easy to see where your money is going and why this model commands a higher price.

As you'd expect from a Falcon, this model boasts a maple neck, and in the case of the Synchronomatic, we've got what we'd call a nice soft-C profile. It also features that classic 25.5" scale length and a flat 12" radius. Honestly, this guitar feels fantastic in hand. The neck isn't too small or too big; it's just right. The medium jumbo frets are installed beautifully along the fingerboard, making bends and wide-as-you-like vibrato an absolute breeze.

Gretsch and Bigsby go hand in hand like peanut butter and jelly or alcohol and bad decisions, but if you've ever wrestled with this vibrato system, you know they can be a bit temperamental when it comes to tuning. Thankfully, the Synchronomatic held its tuning pretty well for the most part. It took a couple of practice sessions to really settle in, but once

**STREET PRICE:** \$1,469

**MANUFACTURER:**  
Gretsch,  
gretschguitars.com

## PROS

- ✦ Really does look and feel like the real deal
- ✦ Delivers that classic Gretsch sound
- ✦ The deluxe case, ebony fingerboard and bone nut are nice touches
- ✦ Treble bleed circuit ensures you retain the bright tone when turning down the volume

## CONS

- ✦ Our review example has a poorly installed strap button
- ✦ Ships with 11-gauge strings that feel pretty heavy
- ✦ The bass frequencies can get thumpy

**VERDICT:** The Falcon is famed for its larger-than-life tone and drop-dead gorgeous looks, but its premium price tag puts it out of reach for many. This more affordable take impressively captures the essence of the legendary model.

we stretched the strings out and it settled down, we could finally stop stomping on the tuner after every song.

People often drone on about "that great Gretsch sound," not least because it's part of the brand's identity, but what does that actually mean? For us, a Gretsch guitar carrying the Falcon name should strike that perfect balance between bright and present, with a bass response to die for. Yeah, we know, those are some big shoes for this affordable Falcon to fill.

In this Synchronomatic model, you'll find a pair of Gretsch's Hi-Fidelity Filter'Tron pickups. Complete with Alnico 5 magnets and measuring at 3.94k in the neck and 4.59k at the bridge, they really do their best to replicate that coveted chime and articulation of a vintage set of Filter'Trons.

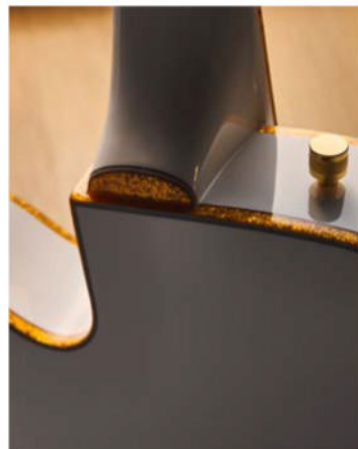
Plugging it into our trusty Vox AC30, the high-end shimmer from these pickups is nothing short of delightful, and the midrange has just the right amount of bark when it meets a Klon-style drive pedal. Now, we should warn you, the low end can get a tad thumpy and tubby if you're not careful. But hey, that's part of the joy of playing such a large-bodied box of air, right?

Like many Gretsch guitars, this Falcon comes loaded with a four-knob control layout: a master volume, master tone, individual volumes for both the bridge and neck pickups, plus a three-position toggle switch. And here's the ace up its sleeve: the master volume features a treble bleed circuit, which helps keep those high frequencies intact as you dial down the volume.

It's a total lifesaver if you're like us and prefer to clean up your signal with the volume instead of switching between a dirty and clean channel on your amp. This is not a feature you'll find on the cheaper Electromatic models, so it's a nice inclusion here.

Okay, so some players may bemoan its origin, but if it looks like a Falcon, plays like a Falcon and squawks like a Falcon, it must be a Falcon. **GW**

**A dazzling guitar that wears its iconic snowy-white finish with pride**



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE



# Orangewood Clementine

Orangewood leans into its acoustic roots and a high spec with an electric model, but can it win you over from the established giants of semi-hollow guitars?

BY ROB LAING

**▶ ORANGEWOOD'S FIRST EVER** electric guitar release was definitely not playing it safe for a brand coming from the acoustic world; a thinline baritone guitar was a surprise, but the Orangewood Del Sol was a very pleasant surprise indeed. Now the Los Angeles-based company has another surprise for us with its follow-up and first standard six-string.

The Clementine is a 24.75"-scale semi-hollow guitar with a higher price than the Del Sol, but higher specs too, including Grover Rotomatic locking tuners and Seymour Duncan Seth Lover humbuckers. It's also a design that reflects the brand's acoustic guitar roots a bit more tangibly.

With a double-cut body at just over 15" wide, the Clementine is akin to a Hofner Verythin and certain Jr. Gretsches like the G655, so there's an immediate potential appeal here for players put off by the broader physical dimensions of 355s and their kin. But there's more to tempt them, too.

Our test guitar's maple top finish is Bluebird; the other two options are Evergreen and the more traditional dark sunburst hues of Americano. But the rest of the guitar, with the exception of the slim gloss black headstock front, is a smooth satin



**STREET PRICE:** \$1,495

**MANUFACTURER:** Orangewood, [orangewoodguitars.com](http://orangewoodguitars.com)

## PROS

- ✦ Great feel from the satin back and comfort from the belly contour
- ✦ Seymour Duncan Seth Lover pickups contribute to premium sounds here
- ✦ Excellent tuning stability and setup

## CONS

- ✦ Despite the overall build quality, at full retail, it's a little pricey for a Chinese-made electric
- ✦ Our test guitar had tiny indentations in the polyurethane finish across the top, visible close up under light
- ✦ The 16-inch radius may not suit some smaller hands

**VERDICT:** The Clementine feels fresh and classic in design and feel, with Seth Lover pickups helping it deliver on the sound side. It's not bargain-priced, but it delivers a higher-end playing experience.

natural mahogany. It has a really immediate appeal that feels premium and comfortable.

Further surprises for a semi await at the back, with a belly carve and a control cavity cover for the wiring — a rare treat for the notoriously difficult to work on designs of most semi-hollow guitars. This test Clementine is also pleasingly light at 7 lbs. The setup is excellent; the frets are well polished, and our rocker reveals they're level across the 'board. Which is just as well because the action is super low 1.3mm from low E and 0.75mm from the high E on the 16" radius rosewood fretboard.

"Our acoustic guitars have a similar 16-inch fretboard radius, so we deliberately carried that spec over to the Clementine," Gerald Ignacio, Orangewood's product lead, tells us. "This was our first original electric guitar design, so throughout product development we were really intentional about reflecting our acoustic background." This extends to that sleek satin wood back, too.

Radius can often be a matter of context with guitars. During our sessions with the Clementine, the low action and modern C-shape here didn't leave us suffering from finger

fatigue. The rolled bound edges, 23.5mm neck depth (measured at the 12th fret) and medium jumbo frets don't make us work too hard at all.

The belly contour on the back of the guitar shouldn't be overlooked as part of the positive playing experience; we honestly found it to be a bit of a revelation with a guitar of this style in bringing us closer to the playing experience.

While the coil-splits here tend to suffer from the typical drop in low end, the bridge Seth Lover humbucker isn't lacking high-end ring in full flow, along with some airiness from the Clementine's body. The Alnico 2 magnets prevent things from getting too sharp.

The neck reveals the PAF territory we expect; smooth, thick low-end when driven with singing sustained mids and percussive highs. Neck 'buckers can benefit from the hollow quality that semis can bring to the sound, offering a hollow element that's attractive for cleaner sounds with a touch of modulation. The middle position is perfect for Sixties rock chordwork, with the balance of air and jangle. The Clementine is a very convincing debut from Orangewood. **GW**





# Fender Hammertone Breakup Drive

Fender's latest addition to its Hammertone pedal range proves that some breakups are worth going through

BY DARYL ROBERTSON

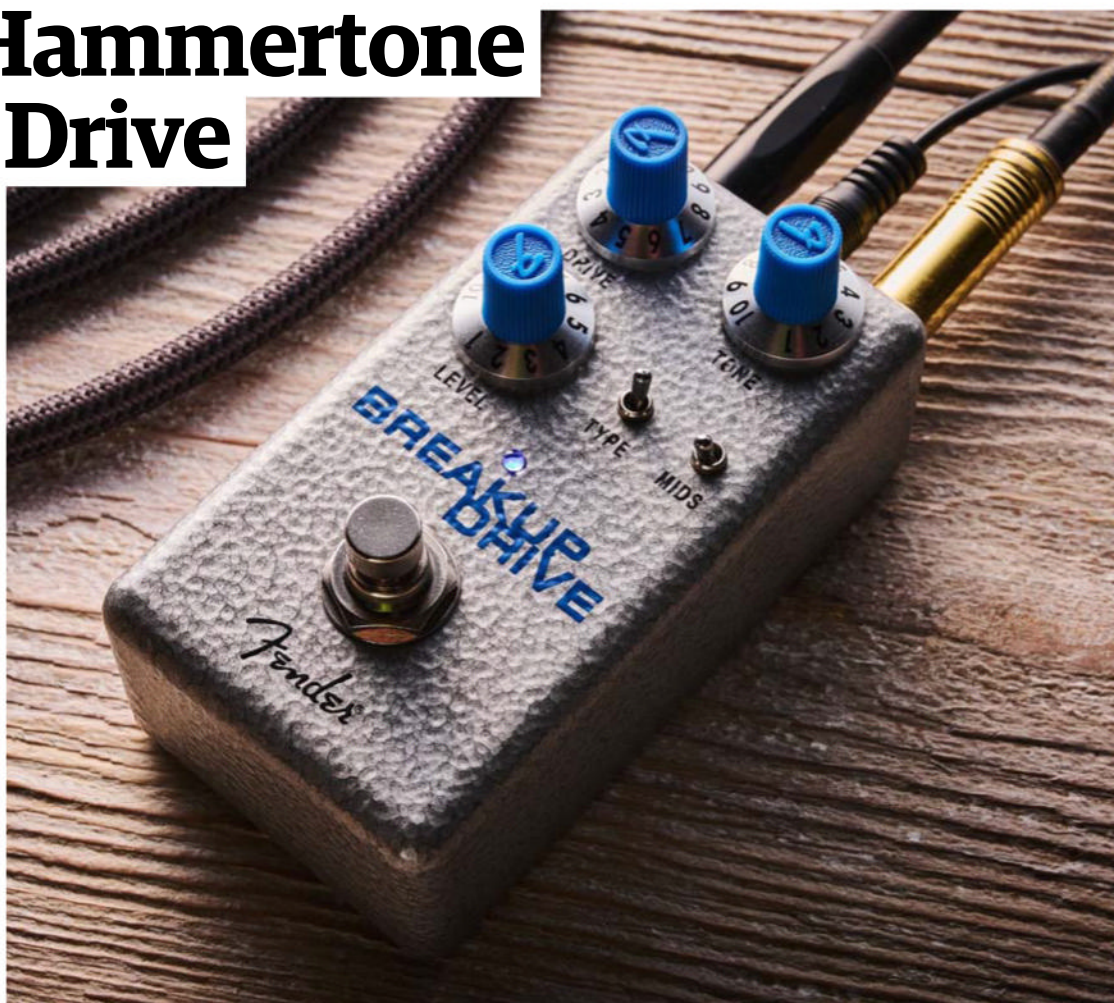
▶ **ONE OF THE** most inspiring guitar tones is the sound of a tube amp that's just on the edge of breaking up. There's something truly magical about a combo that hovers between clean and distorted, coaxing out some of our best playing – and that's exactly the experience Fender's latest stompbox aims to deliver.

Introducing the Breakup Drive, the newest member of Fender's ever-growing Hammertone series. This unassuming JFET-based overdrive pedal has been expertly crafted to replicate the dynamic response of cooking tubes right at the brink of saturation, giving you that coveted touch-sensitive feel that many of us guitarists crave.

With a simple trio of knobs for Volume, Tone and Gain, this pedal is a pretty straightforward affair. That said, there is some depth. On the face of the pedal, you'll discover a small switch for choosing between two distinct clipping modes – light breakup and medium-gain overdrive. A switchable pre-gain mid boost ensures that your tone slices through even the densest of band mixes with ease.

The Breakup Drive features a soft-touch relay true bypass switch that automatically engages bypass mode when no power is detected, and the in/out is served by a pair of top-mounted jacks. Encased in a rugged, road-ready aluminum enclosure, this pedal is designed to operate with power supplies ranging from 9V to 18V – plug in an 18V supply

**Lives up to expectations set by its industrial-looking aesthetic**



and you'll unlock an additional 6dB of headroom.

When it comes to build quality, the Fender Hammertone Breakup Drive lives up to expectations set by its industrial-looking aesthetic. The pedal feels rugged, though, even with a touch of royal blue color from the controls, its grey hammered (hence the series name) casing is quite drab compared to many of the designs elsewhere in the burgeoning pedal market.

The user-friendly layout of the Hammertone is a breath of fresh air in a sea of over-engineered gear. Straight off the bat, it captures the essence of a lightly overdriven tube amp as we dial in an inspiring blues tone.

Pairing the pedal with an AVRI '64 Tele and a Fender Blues Junior set as clean as possible, with a touch of reverb, we found both drive modes to be solid contenders for always-on applications. There is a warmth to this pedal that is genuinely satisfying to play through.

**STREET PRICE:** \$104.99

**MANUFACTURER:** Fender, [fender.com](http://fender.com)

#### PROS

- ✦ Great amp-like tone
- ✦ Very easy to dial in
- ✦ Sturdy build

#### CONS

- ✖ The look is a little drab
- ✖ The mid boost can come across as nasal

**VERDICT:** The Hammertone Breakup Drive might not win any beauty contests, but don't let its modest appearance fool you; this pedal is all about delivering a killer tone. Rugged and competitively priced, it captures the essence of a cranked-up tube amp with surprising accuracy.

Out of the two modes, we leaned toward the more overdriven setting, which delivered a richer, more dynamic presence for us. Maybe it's the rocker in us, but we preferred having more saturation, as we could always back off our Tele's volume to get the cleaner sound of the first mode, anyway.

We did encounter a slight downside with this pedal. We found the mid boost feature to be a touch nasal, which detracted from the overall warmth and smoothness that we'd hoped for. Is it a bad tone? No, certainly not. It just wasn't really to our taste. Perhaps a Q control, which allows you to tweak the frequency of the boost, would have been a nice addition so you could better tailor the pedal to your amp.

That said, ultimately, the Breakup Drive holds its own, blending simplicity with solid performance, making it a worthwhile addition for those seeking that classic drive sound without a convoluted setup. **GW**





## FOLLOW THE GROOVE

BY CORY WONG

# Melodic Intention

Soloing over chords in a musical way

**CRAFTING AN APPEALING** guitar solo for a song is always a creative challenge. There are many different approaches one can take: Do I follow the chord changes so that the notes line up perfectly with the progression? Or should I simply strive to “be melodic,” like a singer, even if the notes are a little less “anchored” to each chord? For me, the best approach is usually to follow the “song within a song” compositional concept, while also being aware of what each chord in the progression affords me as a soloist.

A good example of this can be heard in the track “Meditation,” from my 2020 album *Elevated Music for an Elevated Mood*. It’s a song that I play at most of my shows, and I know there are certain things that will always work, but I don’t want to always lean on those things; sometimes I just want to explore and see where the music will go.

Compositionally, the tune is pretty simple, with a clearly defined melody built into a primary guitar part. As shown in **FIGURE 1**, I begin by outlining the chords with 10th intervals, also known simply as “10ths,” starting with an E major chord built from the open low E root note and a major 3rd above it, G#, sounded in the next higher octave, which creates a 10th. I use my pick and middle finger to pick the notes on the low E and G strings.

These two-note forms built from 10ths move up to F#m, G#m and Bm, and then descend to A, followed by an E major chord. At the end of bar 3, I include G major, with the notes G and B, and in bar 4 move down to F#m and E. This is repeated in bars 5 and 6. In bar 7, I play a Jimi Hendrix-style riff on beat 3, followed by the chord changes D - A/C# - E.

**FIGURE 2** shows the slight variations I introduce the second time through. In bar 3,

**FIG. 1** E Bm A E G F#m E

Bm A E D A/C# E

**FIG. 2** E Bm A E Gmaj7 F#m7

E Bm A E D A/C# E

**FIG. 3** (E) (D) (A/C#) (E)

(D) (A/C#) (E)

I play Gmaj7 instead of G, and in bars 6-8, I move to higher chord voicings and phrases for the E - D - A/C# - E changes.

This progression sets up a great vibe to solo over, and I’ll usually begin in a reflective or contemplative way. And though I keep the individual chords in mind, I often simply think E Mixolydian (E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D), E major (E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#), or E major pentatonic (E, F#, G#, B, C#) and sometimes even E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D), depending on where I am in the progression.

Throughout the section, I’ll mostly sit on E major pentatonic, except over the G chord in bar 4 and the D chord in bar 8. In these spots, I try to avoid playing any notes that will clash with the chord, such as G#.

**FIGURE 3** offers an example of drawing from a melodic sensibility first and foremost, which is always a solid approach. In bars 1 and 2, I’m moving freely through E major pentatonic, but at the end of bars 2 and 7, I target a D note over the D chord. My goal is to make the lines sound like they belong together, “singing” my way through the solo as melodically as I can. And if the ideas are solid, they can become repeatable motives.

Starting with a contemplative vibe allows me to build a slow arc to increase the intensity in a natural way, so that I can lead the listener on an engaging musical journey. And maintaining the connection to the chord progression can help make the solo sound and feel like an integral part of the song. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to [guitarworld.com/february2025](http://guitarworld.com/february2025)

Funk, rock and jazz pro Cory Wong has made a massive dent in the guitar scene since emerging in 2010. Along the way, he’s released a slew of high-quality albums, either solo or with the Fearless Flyers, the latest of which are 2025’s *Wong Air (Live in America)* and *The Fearless Flyers V*.





## TALES FROM NERDVILLE

BY JOE BONAMASSA

# Hail to the King!

My tribute to the great B.B. King

**TODAY, I'D LIKE** to talk about the legacy of the legendary B.B. King, as 2025 marked what would have been his 100th birthday. I met B.B. in 1990 when I was 13 years old, and we became lifelong friends. He was the nicest and most generous person I've ever known.

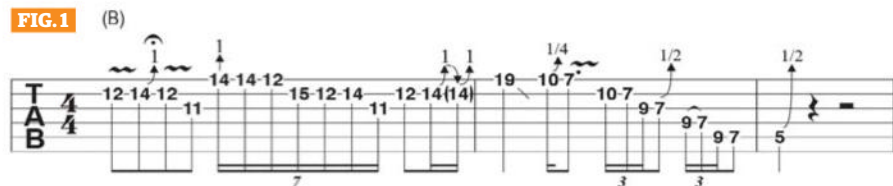
I recently recorded a tribute album in B.B.'s honor, *Blues Summit 100*. Sadly, he passed at the age of 89 on May 14, 2015, but he left behind a trove of the most essential and influential blues recordings of all time. Everything that I and most other blues and blues-rock influenced guitarists play, owes a tip to the hat to B.B. The title of my tribute album references the guitarist's 1993 release *Blues Summit*, which features duets with Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker, Albert Collins and others. Following in that tradition, *Blues Summit 100* includes appearances by Buddy Guy, Slash, Marcus King, Jimmie Vaughan, Kirk Fletcher and a variety of other guests.

When you talk about legendary guitarists and their indelible marks, there are some who can be identified upon hearing them play a few notes. With B.B., all it takes is one note! That's it! Just one stinging vibrato and you know it can only be him.

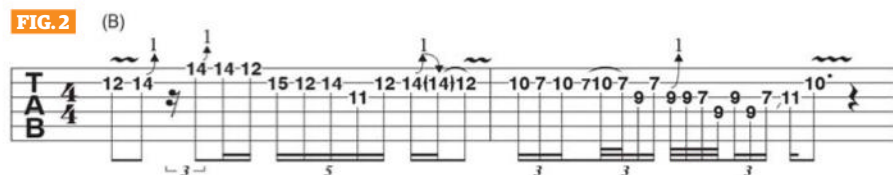
B.B.'s soloing style was built on killer melodic phrases, like the one demonstrated **FIGURE 1**. Played in the key of B and based on a combination of B major pentatonic (B, C#, D#, F#, G#) and B minor pentatonic (B, D, E, F#, A), this lick is played in 12th position, in what's often referred to as the "B.B. box." All of the notes fall within that four-fret span, with the 1st finger anchored at the B string's 12th fret. In bar 1, notice the essential whole-step bend of F# up to G# on beat 2.

In bar 2, I jump up to accent a high B note followed by a slide down to 7th position and

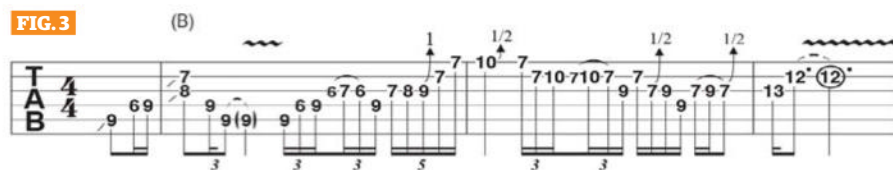
**FIG. 1**



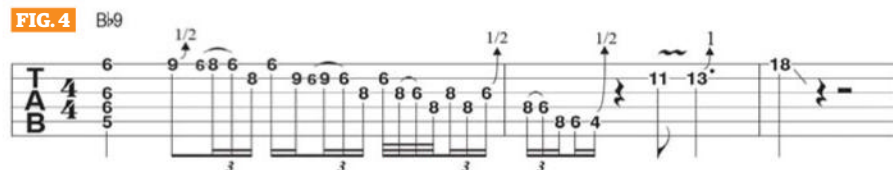
**FIG. 2**



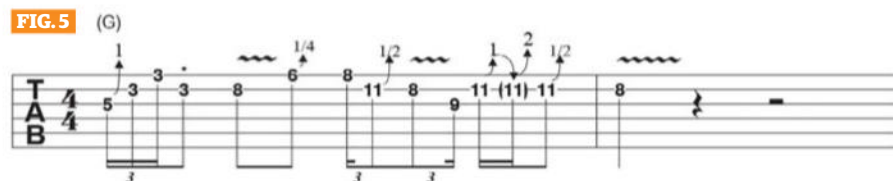
**FIG. 3**



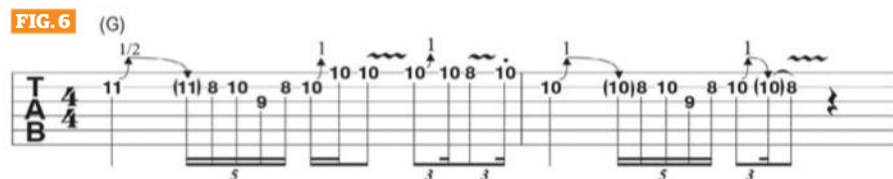
**FIG. 4**



**FIG. 5**



**FIG. 6**



a quick descending lick based on B minor pentatonic, phrased in B.B.'s style.

In **FIGURE 2**, I again begin in the same box but then shift down to 7th position for faster phrases based on B minor pentatonic, ending with a nod to B major pentatonic with the inclusion of the 6th, G#. King was faster than he's usually given credit for, as he would blaze through licks like these in just about every tune. He also had some jazz influences, most notably Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt, which he'd reference with licks like that shown in **FIGURE 3**, which begins in the manner of a horn line.

To telegraph a key change, B.B. would suddenly play a lick in, say, Bb, and when the band fell in behind him, he'd play expressive

lines starting with a chordal stab, as in **FIGURE 4**.

B.B. had such an original catalog of licks, and there are many phrases I've learned from him that pop into my playing. **FIGURES 5** and **6** are prime examples.

For me, as a blues player, it always starts and ends with B.B. King. Among my favorite albums are *Indianola Mississippi Seeds*, with "Changing Things," *Completely Well*, with "The Thrill Is Gone," and, of course, the burning *Live at the Regal*.

B.B. was so original and so powerful a player; his influence can be heard everywhere. He could plug into anything and would always sound like himself. Happy 100th birthday to B.B. King! **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to [guitarworld.com/february2025](http://guitarworld.com/february2025)

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 latest album, *Breakthrough*, is out now. For more information, head to [jbonamassa.com](http://jbonamassa.com).





## WORKIN' MAN

BY CHARLIE STARR

## Standard Time

## Tips for playing slide in standard tuning

**A CHIEF CONSIDERATION** when playing with a slide is the tuning. Many of our favorite slide players — Elmore James, Duane Allman, Johnny Winter, Derek Trucks — play slide almost exclusively in an open tuning, such as open E or G. One great benefit of using an open tuning is that you can lay the slide across the strings at a given fret and sound a pleasing major chord. But when playing slide in standard tuning, you don't have that luxury and lose access to some of those familiar sounds. As a result, more attention and care is necessary in order to avoid unwanted sounds. You have to go "peckin'" to find the right ones!

Therein lies the compromise: standard tuning limits your options for sounding groups of strings together, but you retain all your familiar chord shapes and scale patterns, and you still can play a few sweet-sounding two- and three-note chords. In this way, playing slide in standard tuning is the best of both worlds.

For the Blackberry Smoke song “Free on the Wing” (*Like an Arrow*, 2016), which features Gregg Allman, I chose to play slide in standard tuning, albeit with my 6th string tuned down to D (drop-D tuning). Doing this enables me to play a solid rhythm part throughout the track, and when it’s time for the slide parts, I use both hands to deliberately mute strings I’m not playing on at any given moment, so that only the “right” notes ring out. The two key elements of slide playing are *muting* and *intonation* (pitch centering), and standard tuning raises the challenge for both a little bit more.

"Free on the Wing" opens with a beautiful D7/D9 keyboard part. **FIGURE 1** illustrates the chord shapes, and **FIGURE 2** shows how the part is played. To "answer" the keyboards, I play a vocal-like melody with a slide, as

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

**FIG. 1** D7 C/D D9

**FIG. 2** D(7) C/D D9 D7 C/D D9

Swing 16ths feel (♩ = ♩)

**FIG. 3** (D7) w/slide

**FIG. 4** (D7) w/slide

**FIG. 5** E5 w/o slide G5 w/slide

C5 Csus2 G/B D5

(D) (C) (G/B) (G) (D)

(C) (G) (D) (C) (G/B)

(G) (D) (C) (G) (D)

shown in **FIGURES 3** and **4**.

I prefer to use hybrid picking when playing slide, combining flatpicked downstrokes with fingerpicking. Duane Allman, Derek Trucks and Warren Haynes strictly fingerpick when playing slide, but I like the versatility of having the sound of fingerpicking augmented with the sound of the pick.

The slide solo comes out of the bridge section, illustrated in **FIGURE 5**. Drop-D tuning enables me to barre the power chords on the bottom two strings in measures 1 and 2, after which I jump to the slide solo, which is

played over the repeating progression C - G/B - G - D - C - G - D. As I do with the slide parts earlier in the tune, I play the solo in a very vocal-like manner, phrasing as deliberately and precisely as possible. Throughout the solo, I'm careful to sound only one note at a time as I mute the surrounding strings.

Many guitarists are wary of getting into slide playing because of these challenges, and starting in standard tuning or drop-D is a great way to dive in. Give it a shot! You'll be surprised and delighted by the many great sounds you can discover and create. **GW**

**For video of this lesson, go to  
guitarworld.com/february2025**

Charlie Starr is the frontman and lead guitarist for Blackberry Smoke, an Atlanta band that's been country-rocking its way around the universe since 2001. Their latest album is 2024's *Be Right Here*. For more info, head to [blackberrysmoke.com](https://blackberrysmoke.com).





## HARDWIRED

BY JARED JAMES NICHOLS

# Thumbs Down

## "Dead thumb" fingerpicking

**AS I STATED** last month, my favorite band line-up is the guitar-bass-drums power trio. With the guitar being the primary chordal and melodic instrument in the ensemble, there are challenges inherent in the role. But with those challenges come great freedoms to direct the music however I might feel like doing at any given moment on stage. This is something I strive to take advantage of in just about every song I play with my trio.

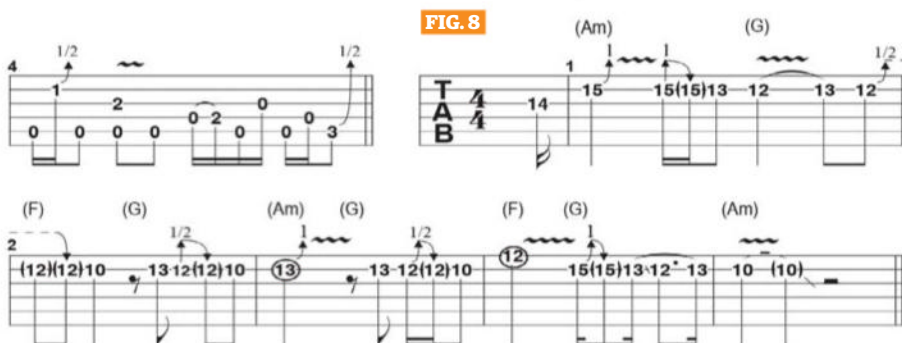
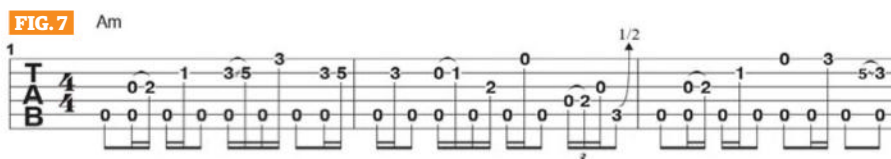
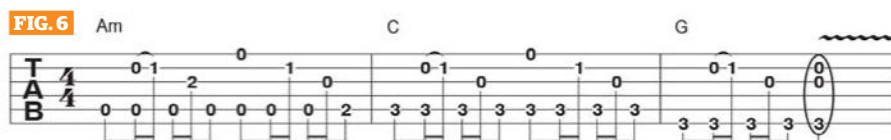
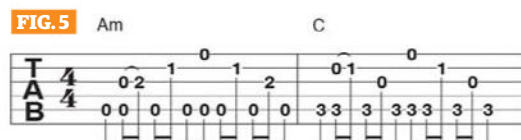
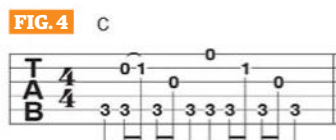
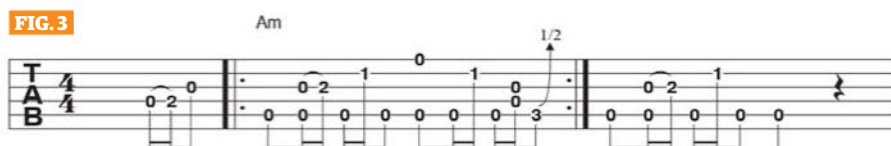
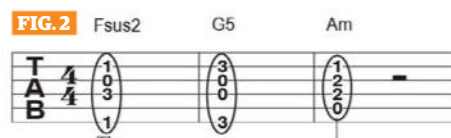
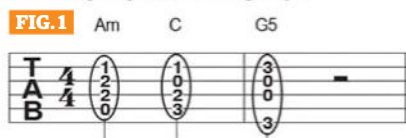
A great example of what I'm talking about here can be found in the title track to my 2022 EP *Threw Me to the Wolves*, which features both electric and acoustic versions of the tune. "Threw Me to the Wolves" is a song that I play at just about every live show, and in that setting I like to stretch out and explore the song dynamically, from quiet, unaccompanied fingerpicking to full-on power trio Mountain-style soloing.

Essential to the song is the fingerpicked rhythm part during the verse sections. As shown in **FIGURE 1**, I play all 1st-position chords here, starting with Am to C to G5.

At the chorus, illustrated in **FIGURE 2**, the progression moves from F#sus2, sounded with the open G string, along with a thumb-picked low F root on the 6th string, to G5 then back to Am. The primary rhythm part is built around a fingerpicking technique known as "dead thumb," wherein thumb repeatedly strikes an open string in a steady rhythm, with a little bit of palm muting, while the fingers pick melody notes on the higher strings. As shown in **FIGURE 3**, I pick the notes on the G, B and high E strings with my index and middle fingers in a syncopated manner over the thumb-picked open A string.

The verse moves to a C chord and is performed with the same thumb-picking technique (see **FIGURE 4**). **FIGURE 5** focuses on the switch from Am to C.

All examples performed fingerstyle.



**FIGURE 6** illustrates the complete Am - C - G progression, with each chord presented in essentially the same fingerpicking style. The only difference is, for the G chord, I change the pattern to bring in a C note, sounding a Gsus4 chord. The chorus is made up of F#sus2 - G5 - Am played in the same manner.

The "dead thumb" technique provides a self-accompaniment, so once you have it down, you can explore playing a variety of improvised melodies along with the steady bass pattern, as I demonstrate in **FIGURE 7**. This is a great way to expand on the basic approach in a freely melodic way.

The solo section of "Threw Me to the Wolves" is wide open and lets me "breathe," musically. With all of the sonic space afforded

by the trio, I can really lean into what I'm doing. I like to take my time, use a lot of sustain and allow the music to blossom in a natural way.

As shown in **FIGURE 8**, I begin over an implied Am chord with a whole-step bend from D to E, followed by the minor 3rd, C. I then drop down to B, which is the major 3rd of the G chord. Throughout the remainder of the line, I alternate between the notes B, C and E over the F and G chords, which creates a great sound.

There's something really special about how the song becomes a journey for both the band and our audience. As the guitarist in a power trio, it's always an adventure to steer the journey down a new musical path. **GW**



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# HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS

BY JIMMY BROWN

## PAUL GILBERT "Fuzz Universe"



**ALTHOUGH HE'S MAINLY** revered for his fiery fretwork and technical precision, Paul Gilbert puts as much dedication and thought into

crafting musically appealing, memorable themes as he does being able to cleanly execute fast single-note lines. This gloriously rocking instrumental title track from the guitarist's 2010 album showcases the long-fingered axman's talents and brilliance as both a guitarist and composer, and serves as a fun masterclass for aspiring shredder-songwriters.

When playing the song's looping intro riff, which formally begins in bar 1 (the pickup notes during the quick fade-in are the last seven notes of bar 4), the first challenges you'll encounter are frequent string skips and a five-fret span between the two notes played on the G string, which requires a wide reach and stretch. Allow your fret hand to twist and shift as needed to reach each note, and don't feel obligated to keep a finger hovering over a previously fretted note. Focus instead on what's coming next.

We've indicated the specific pick strokes Gilbert uses during this challenging opening passage, which, along with the hammer-ons and pull-offs, facilitate the numerous string crossings. Notice that he begins his repeating  $G\sharp m7\flat 5$  arpeggio in bar 13 on the B and high E strings then switches to playing the same notes on the G and B strings in bar 14. This is a prime example of how the guitarist thoughtfully considers how and where to play every note and how to articulate it.

One of the most technically demanding passages is the section-D theme, beginning in bar 44. Here, Gilbert performs a machine-gun-like pedal-tone figure across two strings, for which he alternate picks an unbroken stream of 16ths notes that periodically requires the arduous movement of picking an upstroke followed by a downstroke on a higher string — and, even harder, picking a downstroke followed by an upstroke on a lower string. Try to keep your picking movements as small, efficient, precise and relaxed as possible.

## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH Bourrée in E minor



**WRITTEN BY JOHANN** Sebastian Bach for the lute over 300 years ago (!) and later adapted for classical guitar, this mini-masterpiece

encapsulates the legendary German composer's musical genius and epitomizes, in a nutshell, perfect *counterpoint*, which may be defined as two or more independent single-note lines, or "voices," with different pitches and rhythms. Throughout the piece's AABB form, the grandmaster shows us how to express a chord quality with only two notes — a root and a major or minor 3rd or 7th (the 5th is not needed, unless it's "flatted"). The root is oftentimes on top, creating an inversion.

I've included a harmonic analysis, via chord names, which I think proves helpful in navigating the piece and understanding and appreciating what's going on with the outlined chord progression. Bach begins in the key of E minor then, at the end of the A section (bars 8 and 9), pivots to the relative major key of G. He

**"This mini-masterpiece encapsulates Bach's musical genius and epitomizes, in a nutshell, perfect counterpoint"**

then gets more harmonically ambitious in the B section and briefly visits and salutes other related tonal centers via secondary-dominant cadences. For example, E7 is the V (five) chord of Am, and  $F\sharp 7$  is the V of Bm.

In deciding where to play each note, I studied a half dozen videos of serious classical guitarists performing the piece. Each had his or her own preferred fingering and position choices, with some opting to play certain notes higher up the fretboard on the next lower string. So there's no "right" way to play the piece. I mostly chose to perform each note as low on the fretboard as possible, or open, for the sake of superior tone and ease of fingering. There are a few exceptions, though, where I felt that fretting a note at the 5th or 6th fret on a lower string ultimately makes for a smoother transition and flow to or from the note that precedes or follows it (see bars 2, 15, 19 and 20). Finger each note as you see fit, and feel free to move any note to a different string.

## INCUBUS "Nice to Know You"



**INCUBUS IS** ONE of modern rock's most creatively original, eclectic and distinctive bands, one that melds elements from a diverse

range of musical genres that includes metal, funk, prog, hip-hop, jazz and experimental/atmospheric. And they do so in a widely appealing and accessible way, with well-written songs and evocative lyrics.

Guitarist Mike Einziger is widely admired for his use of unusual and interesting chord voicings, often in conjunction with tone-shaping and/or time-based effects. In this alternative rock radio hit from 2001, the inventive six-stringer begins the song by dwelling on a mysterious-sounding  $F\sharp m(add4)$  chord and uses flanger and delay effects with recurring volume swells to create swirly, haunting waves of sound.

The biggest challenge in playing this song is keeping track of the shifting meters (during the intro, verses and heavy chorus riff (see sections

A, B, C, E and H). Starting at bar 3, the entire band repeatedly plays one bar in  $\frac{4}{4}$  followed by two bars in  $\frac{1}{4}$ , all the way until section D. Count "1 and 2 and 3 and 4

and 5 and 6 and - 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and - 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and." And notice the added two beats of rest in bar 15 (the  $\frac{3}{4}$  bar), for which you'll want to count "1 and 2 and" before resuming the previous counting loop.

During the heavy chorus riff, Einziger makes great use of an inverted power chord, D5/A, playing the 5th, A, below the D root, on his low E string's 5th fret. Doing so adds sonic thickness and girth to the voicing and creates the aural near-illusion of a 7-string guitar, or a 6-string in drop-D tuning, with a low D note implied. Also noteworthy here is how, when switching back and forth between  $F\sharp 5$  and D5/A, the guitarist conveniently uses his open 5th and 6th strings as a passing chord ( $A5/E$ ).

Einziger also makes great use of his open G, B and/or high E strings during the song's pre-chorus and bridge (see sections D and G), where the open notes add shimmer and color to his chord voicings, specifically D6add4, Cmaj7 and Cadd9. **GW**



**PAUL GILBERT**  
**"Fuzz Universe"**

AS HEARD ON **FUZZ UNIVERSE**  
WRITTEN BY **PAUL BRANDON GILBERT**  
TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

(0:00)

**A** **Intro** (0:01, 5:38)

Fast ♩ = 264

F#7sus4

*Riff A*

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist. and phaser effect)

**GTR.1**

**TAB**

12 14 11 14 12 14 12 14 12 16 11 16 14 12 12 14 12 16 11 16 14 12 12 14 12 16 11 16

*fade in*

\*Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.

\*Chord symbols reflect overall harmony.

*Bass plays Bass Fill 1 on theme reprise (see bar 33)*

F#9sus4

(repeat bars 1-4 first time only)  
end Riff A

**GTR.1**

The second system of the exercise continues with a variety of intervals and accidentals. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes (14, 12, 12) followed by a half note (14) and a quarter note (12). This is followed by a half note (16) and a quarter note (11). The system then features a half note (16) and a quarter note (12). The next measure contains a half note (16) and a quarter note (12). The final measure of the system contains a half note (14) and a quarter note (12). The system concludes with a half note (14) and a quarter note (12).

F#7sus4

F#9sus4

*Gtr. 1 plays Riff A (see bar 1)*

(repeat bars 1-4 first time only)

**5 Bass**

Dmaj7

C#m7

Bm7

Amaj7

Gtr. 1

**GTR.1**

4

Guitar

Bass



G#m7b5

Gtr. 1 substitutes Riff B  
on repeat

Riff B

GTR.1

13

14 15 16

1 4 3 2 4 2 3 4 2 1

GTR.1

17

F#m E D C#m

GTR.1

21

sim. light P.M. N.H. pitches: D A

**B** (0:40, 6:09)

(♩ = 132)

N.C. (E5)

(phaser off)

P.M.

GTR.1

29



**C** Verse Theme in F# minor (0:47, 2:24, 6:16)

*Rhy. Fig. 1*

**GTR.1**

33

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

11 11 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 11 11 9 9 9 7 7 7 9 9 11 12 9 12 9 7 9 11 7 11 9 7 11

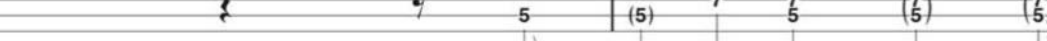
Bass Fill 1

\*Note played first time only.

*First time on 3rd Verse, skip ahead to [M] (bar 130)*

F#5                      E5                      F#5                      D5                      Dadd9 (repeat bars 33-36 first time only)  
w/phaser ..... end Rhy. Fig. 1

**GTR.1**

35 

1st time on 2nd Verse, skip ahead to [F] (bar 80)

F#5      E5      F#5      D/F#      N.C.

*Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 33)*

[illegible]

2.

F#5                      E5                      F#5                      N.C. (E5)                      E5                      F#5                      E5                      D5                      A5                      E/G#                      N.C. (E5)

41 Gtr. 1 P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass

*Bass Fill 2 (4:08)*

N.C. (D5)

T 4/4 12° 14 (14) 11 (11) 13° 14 | 7 2 (2) 4° 5° 2 (2) 4° ||  
 A 4/4  
 B 4/4

*Bass Fill 3 (4:46)*

C



**D** (1:18, 3:44)

N.C. (F#m)

Rhy. Fig. 2

GTR.1

44 P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----

GTR.1

46 Gtr. 1 P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- end Rhy. Fig. 2

(F#m)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 44)

(A)

(E)

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 1 second time (see below bar 54)

48 Bass

(1:33, 3:58)

(D5)

(C#5)

GTR.1

52 Gtr. 1 P.M. ----- P.M. -----

GTR.1

54 P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----

Rhy. Fill 1 (3:57)

N.C. (A)

(E)

Gtr. 1

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

GTR.1

TAB

4/4

12 12 12 12 11 12 12 12 (12) (12)







**GTR.1**

66

D G Esus4 E

7 9 7 10 9 10 10 (10) 8 8 10 7 10 10 (12) 10 (12) 9 10 7 9 0 7 6 4 7 4 6 4

**GTR.1**

70

A C#m F#m

*Gtr. 1 substitutes Fill 3 second time (see below bar 114)*

14 16 14 17 16 14 17 16 19 19 19 17 19 17 16 17 (17) 6 14 14 15 17 14 16 14 17

**GTR.1**

73

D G

16 17 16 14 17 16 17 16 14 17 14 17 14 14 17 14 14 15 19 15 19 15 17 19 16 19

**GTR.1**

76

C Csus4 C C#sus4

*Gtr. 1 substitutes Fill 4 second time (see below bar 147)*

*Bass substitutes Bass Fill 3 second time (see below bar 42)*

19 (19) 20 20 19 (19) 17 20 (20) 20 (20) 18 20 18 20 17 20 17 20 17 20 17 19 17 19 17 19 17 16 (18) 16 16 (18) 16

**GTR.1**

Fill 2 (4:21)

F#m

*Gtr. 1*

**TAB**

5 14 14 (14) 19 (19) 19 17 16 19 16 17 16 19 17 15 18 16 14 18 16



# TRANSCRIPTIONS

**F** (2:35)

F#5 E5 F#5 N.C.(E5) E5 D5 A5 E/G# N.C.(E5) B5

**GTR.1**

P.H. P.M. P.M. w/phaser

pitch: F# let ring

**G** Main Theme in C# minor (2:40)

C#5 B5 C#5 A B5 C#5 B5 C#5 A B5

**GTR.1**

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

C#m7 B C#m7 A B C#m B C#m7 A5 B5

**GTR.1**

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T

**H** 1st Guitar Solo (2:51)

N.C. (A5) (G#5)

**GTR.1**

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass Fig. 2

(A5) (G#5)

**GTR.1**

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 three times (see bar 87)



(A5)  
91 w/phaser P.M. ----- P.M.

GTR.1

7 6 9 7 6 9 8 6 9 8 6 10 8 9 8 11 8 11 9 11 9 8 11 8 10 11 8 9 8

(G#5)

92

GTR.1

11 8 11 9 11 9 8 11 9 13 14 17 14 17 14 13 14 17 14 17 19 17 17 18 16 16 18 16 17 16 18 17 19 17 19 17 16

(A5)

93

GTR.1

19 20 21 21 21 19 21 19 17 20 17 20 18 17 18 20 17 19 17 20 17 21 19 21 19 17 19 20 21 21 21 17 21 19 21 19 17 20

(G#5)

94

GTR.1

21 19 17 20 17 21 19 17 20 17 21 19 17 20 17 19 21 17 2 17 21 20 17 19 21 17 20 17 20 1/2 (phaser off) (20)

**I Main Theme in D $\sharp$  minor (3:13)**

95

GTR. 1

D#5 C#5 D#5 B5

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass

1. 2.

Bsus2(add#11)  
w/phaser

98

GTR.1

w/extreme flanger effect\*

\*Riser effect produced by Ibanez Paul Gilbert  
Airplane AF2 Flanger "Takeoff" button.



# TRANSCRIPTIONS

## J 2nd Guitar Solo (3:27)

N.C. (D#5)  
(w/phaser)

(C#5)

**GTR.1**

100

\*repeat previous beat

Bass Fig. 3

(D#5)

(B)

**GTR.1**

102

(D#5)

Gtr. 1

**GTR.1**

104

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 100)

(C#5)

**GTR.1**

105

(D#5)

Gtr. 1

(C#5)

**GTR.1**

106

Bass



Go back to **D** (bar 44)

F#5 E5 D5 A5 E/G# N.C. (E5)

**GTR.1** 107

**K** (4:49, 5:04)

N.C. (F#5) B5 A5 N.C.

**GTR.1** 109

Bass Fig. 4  
(Play top note and rests first time.)

(Play bottom notes second time and on recall as Bass Fig. 4.)

N.C. (E5) A5 E N.C. E5 D5

**GTR.1** 111

(1st time)

(2nd time)

(2nd time, skip ahead to bar 117)

**GTR.1** 113

end Bass Fig. 4

Fill 3 (4:35)

F#m  
Gtr. 1 (trem. pick)

**GTR.1**



1. (go back to bar 109)

2. **L** 3rd Guitar Solo (5:15)

**GTR.1**

118

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

3 3 5 5 3 3

(E5)

GTR.1

119

17 12 17 12 14 12 16 12 14 12 17 12 14 12 16 12 14 12\* 0

3 3 5 3 3

**GTR.1**

120

7 4 0 9 5 0 7 4 0 9 5 0 7 4 0 9 5 0 7

0 0

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(F#5)

123

GTR.1

14 14 9 16 19 18 16 19 18 16 19 17 16 19 17 16

P.M. -----

Bass plays first four bars of Bass Fig. 4 simile (see bar 109)

124 **GTR.1**

P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. ----- P.M. -----

21 19 17 21 19 17 19 17 16 19 17 16 17 16 14 17 16 14 16 14 12 16 14 12

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

(E5)

125

GTR.1

P.M. -----

P.M. -----

The musical score for guitar (GTR.1) is written on a single staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked '125'. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. Above the staff, there are two 'P.M.' markings with dashed lines. The notes are as follows: Measure 1: 10 (quarter), 12 (quarter), 14 (quarter), 11 (quarter), 14 (quarter). Measure 2: 10 (quarter), 12 (quarter), 14 (quarter), 11 (quarter), 12 (quarter), 14 (quarter). There are several triplets indicated by a '3' below the notes. The notes are connected by slurs and ties. The notes are 10, 12, 14, 11, 14, 10, 12, 14, 11, 12, 14, 11, 14, 12, 11, 12, 14, 11, 12, 14, 11, 14, 12.

126

GTR.1

E5 D5

11 12 14 11 13 14 13 14 16 13 14 16 13 14 16 13 14 16 14 15 17 14 17 17

Go back to **A** (bar 1)

(D5) (E5) (D5) (A5) (E/G#) (E5) (F#5) (E5) (D5) (A5) (E/G#) (E5) (B5)

Gtr. 1

127

GTR.1

Bass

**M** (6:23)

## Freely

F#5      E5      F#5      D/F#      N.C.

Gtr. 1

(rapidly accelerate tempo over next three bars)

130 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. (rapidly accelerate tempo over next three bars)

**GTR.1**

11 9 9 9 9 9 9 11 7 7 9 14 16 17 14 17 14 12 14 16 12 12 14 16 17 14 14 12 14 16 12 12 14 16 17 14 14

1 3 4 1 4 1 1 3 4 1 4 1 1 3 cont.

(♩ = approx. 336)

133 P.M. -----

**GTR.1**

12 14 16 12 16 12 14 16 17 14 17 14 12 14 16 12 16 12 14 16 17 14 14 16 17 19 16 19 16 17 19 21 17 17 16 17 19 16 19 16 14 16 17 14 17 14



# TRANSCRIPTIONS

136 P.M.

P.H. P.M.

GTR.1

(Freely)

139 P.M.

P.M. (measured trem. picking in sextuplet rhythm)

GTR.1

(grad. decrease tempo)

142

GTR.1

**N** Outro (6:49)

(♩ = 132)

E5 D5 A5 E/G# N.C.(E5) F#5 E5 D5 A5 E/G# N.C.(E5) B5

144 Gtr. 1

P.M.

GTR.1

F#5

F#7sus4

w/phaser

146

GTR.1

Fill 4 (4:44)

Csus4

C

C#sus4

Gtr. 1

TAB

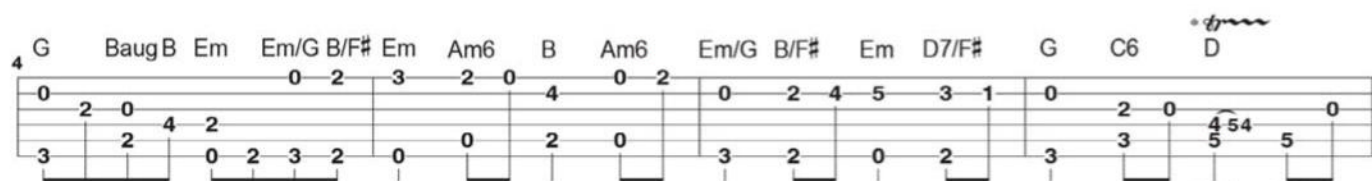
# JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

## "Bourrée in E minor"

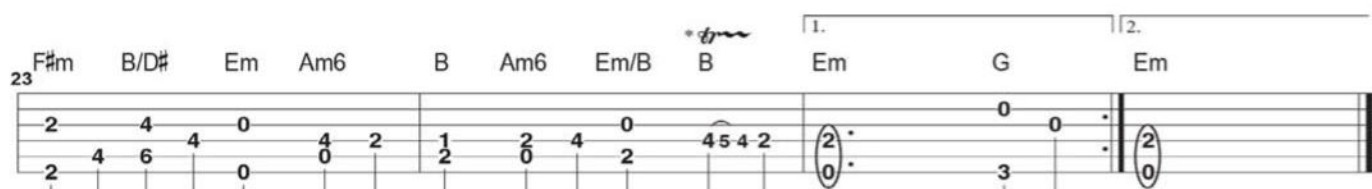
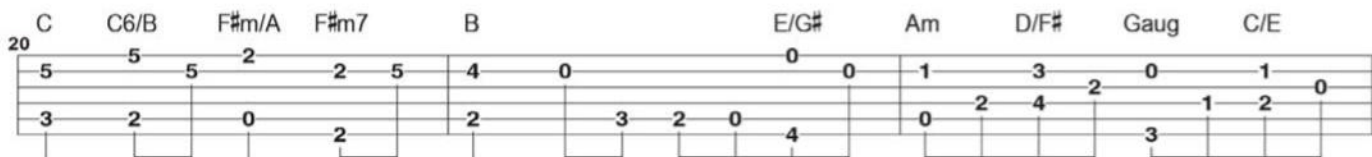
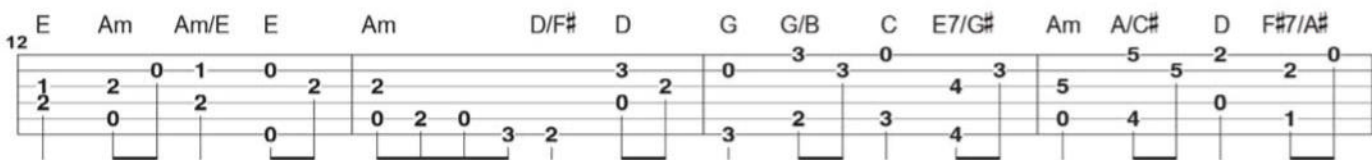
WRITTEN BY JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

TABLATURE ARRANGED BY JIMMY BROWN

Moderately Fast ♩ = ca. 138

*fingerstyle***A**

\*Optional: single or double hammer/pull.

**B**



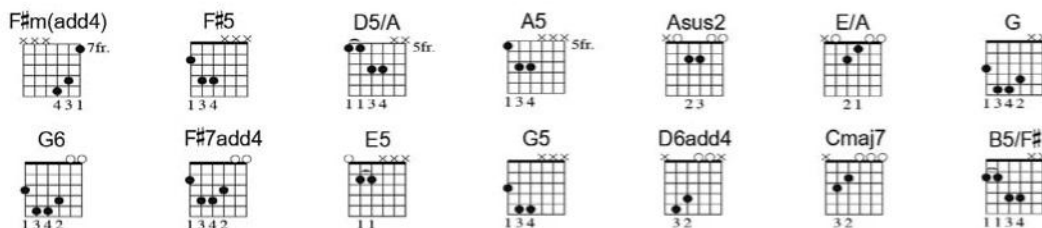
## INCUBUS

## "Nice to Know You"

AS HEARD ON MORNING VIEW

WORDS AND MUSIC BY BRANDON BOYD, MICHAEL EINZIGER,  
ALEX KATUNICH, JOSE PASILLAS II AND CHRIS KILMORE

TRANSCRIBED BY JEFF PERRIN

**A** Intro (0:00)

(0:14)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 156

F#m(add4)

Gtr. 1 (clean elec. w/delay and flanger effects)

GTR.1

(play 3 times)

(volume swells)

Bass \*(w/sub-octave effect)

Bass Fig. 1

12-14-14-10-10-10-10-12-12-14

12-14-14-10-10-10

10

\*Effect doubles pitch one octave lower. Wet/dry mix set to approximately 50/50.

GTR.1

Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 three times (see bar 3)

**B** (0:37)

F#5 D5/A

Gtr. 2 (w/dist., doubled)

F#5

D5/A

F#5

A5

(play 4 times)

GTR.2

Bass Fig. 2

Bass (sub-octave effect off)

**C Verses** (0:58, 2:07)

1. Better than watching Gelder bending silver spoons
2. Deeper than the deepest Cousteau would ever go

N.C. (F#m)  
Gtr. 1

Better than witnessing new born  
And higher than the heights of what  
F#m(add4)

GTR. 1

19

pick scrapes

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 three times (w/sub-octave effect; see bar 3)

nebulae in bloom  
we often think we know

She who sees from up high  
Blessed she who clearly sees

smiles and surely sings  
the wood for the trees

GTR. 1

23

pick scrapes

Perspective pries your once weighty eyes  
To obtain a bird's eye

And it gives you wings  
to turn a blizzard into a breeze

GTR. 1

28

6 12 14 14 10 10 10 10 12 12 14 4 12 14 14 10 10 10 (10)

**D Pre-chorus** (1:20, 2:29, 3:53)

**Half-time Feel**

I haven't felt the way  
E/A

I feel today

Asus2

Gtr. 3 (clean elec., doubled)

GTR. 3

31

Bass (sub-octave effect off)

5\* 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

in so long It's hard for me to specify  
G G6 F# F#7add4 D5/A E5

GTR. 3

35

3\* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3



Asus2

I'm beginning to notice E/A

how much this feels like

39

5<sup>\*</sup> 5 (5) 5 5 7 5 7 12 (12) 12 12 12<sup>\*</sup> 12 (12) 12 0 2

\*Gtr. 3 part doubled w/phaser effect.

GTR. 3

47 **GTR. 2**

G5 F#5 D5/A F#5 Nice to know you Goodbye

Gr. 2 (w/dist., doubled) D5/A F#5 A5

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 16)

50

**GTR. 2**

6/4

F#5 D5/A F#5 D5/A F#5 A5 (play 3 times)

Nice to know  
Nice to know you  
Nice to know you

Goodbye  
Goodbye

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 16)

	to know	you		
F#5	N.C.	D6add4	Cmaj7	N.C.

**GTR. 2**

Gr. 2      Gr. 3 (clean elec., doubled simile by a 12-string acous. gtr.)

**GTR. 3**

Bass

*Bass Fig. 3*

## "NICE TO KNOW YOU"

58

**GTR. 3**

D6add4 Cmaj7 C D A5 Asus2 N.C.

end Bass Fig. 3

[illegible][illegible]

70 GTR 3 D6add4 Cmaj7 But could it be Cadd9 that it Cmaj7 has been there all along N.C.

74 **GTR. 3**

D6add4 Cmaj7 C D D6add4 A5 Asus2

Go back to **D** Pre-chorus (see bar 31)

**H** (4:34)

Nice to know you

F#5 D5/A F#5 D5/A F#5 B5/F# Asus2

78 Gtr. 2

**GTR. 2**

Bass





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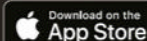


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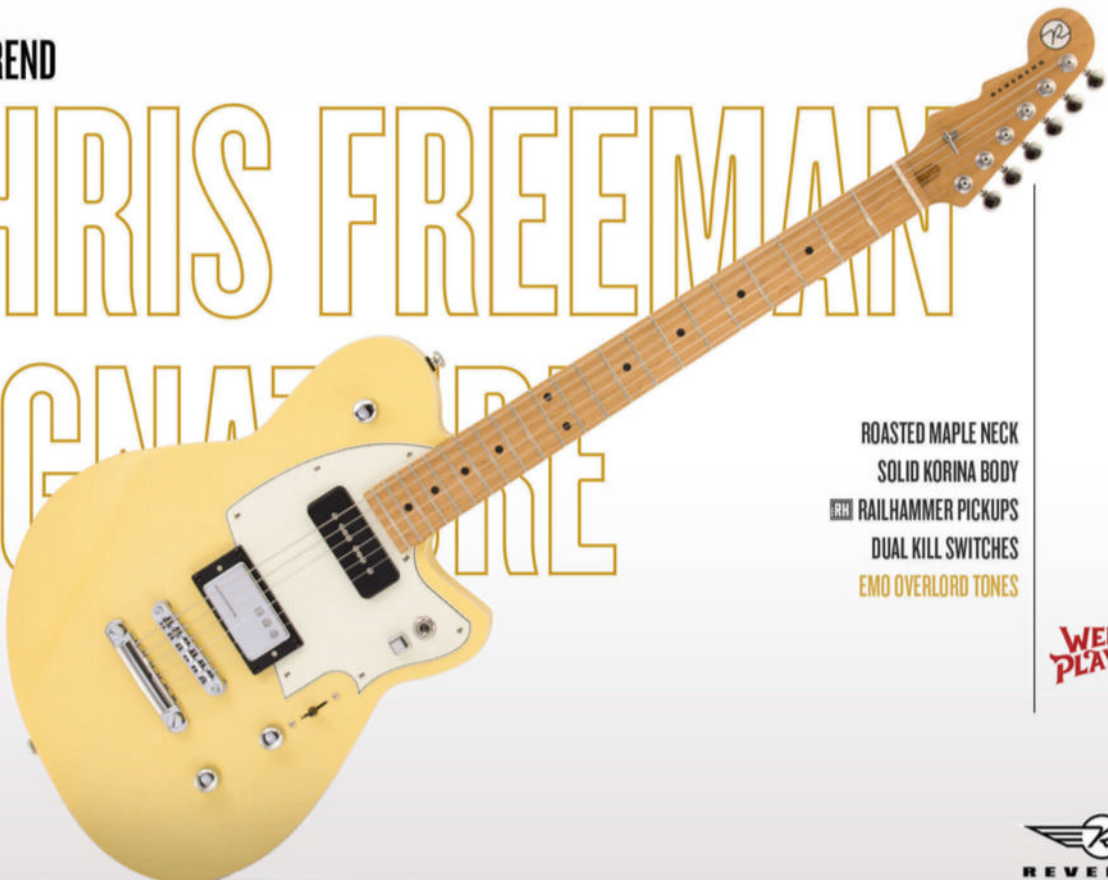
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# POWER TOOLS

## Mu-Tron III

1972-1980

CATEGORY ENVELOPE FILTER PEDAL

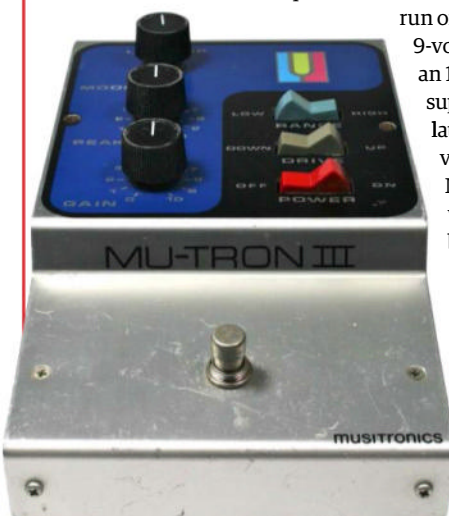
BY CHRIS GILL

**▶ WHERE DEMAND FOR** pedal effects grew exponentially during the early Seventies as musicians sought new sounds, many stomp box designers turned to the synthesizer for new inspiration. Mike Beigel was among the earliest engineers who realized that synth modules could easily be adapted into standalone effects. Although Guild hired Beigel to develop a synthesizer in the early Seventies, the project got canned, which inspired Beigel and former Guild chief electronics engineer Aaron Newman to form their own effects company, Musitronics, in 1972.

Beigel and Newman developed the prototype for their first product, an envelope filter called the Mu-Tron III, during the summer of 1972, and it became an overnight sensation when Stevie Wonder used the effect for his supremely funky Clavinet riff on the hit "Higher Ground" released in mid-1973. The circuit consists of an envelope follower that uses optocouplers to control a voltage controlled filter. The optocouplers respond to input signal playing dynamics to sweep the EQ filter, resulting in a funky wah sound that is exceptionally expressive and responsive. The wah sounds go well beyond those of a typical wah pedal, producing a wide variety of textures that include duck-like quacks, vowel-like vocal tones, piercing synth squeals and bowel-shaking bow wows.

Controls on the Mu-Tron III include a Mode switch with low-pass, band-pass and high-pass filter settings, a Peak (Q) knob for adjusting the resonant peak, a Gain knob and low/high Range and down/up Drive rocker switches. Most guitarists prefer the fatter, thicker sound of the low-pass setting, which provides full bass and rolls off harsh treble frequencies. The early versions

run on either two 9-volt batteries or an 18-volt power supply, while late-Seventies versions (when Musitronics was owned by Arp) have a built-in power supply. "We used a dual supply instead of a single supply so the effect could



**The pedal made a strong impression in the hands of funk musicians like Bootsy Collins**

**SUGGESTED SETTINGS**  
**JERRY GARCIA (FIRST)**  
**AND PETER FRAMPTON**  
**"BLACK HOLE SUN"**  
**(SECOND):**

**MODE:** LP  
**PEAK:** 5/7.5  
**GAIN:** 4/5.5  
**RANGE:** Low  
**DRIVE:** Up

**JUICY FUNK SINGLE-COIL**  
**RHYTHM:**  
**MODE:** LP  
**PEAK:** 9  
**GAIN:** 3  
**RANGE:** High  
**DRIVE:** Up

have a wide dynamic range," Beigel said. "That way you could really smash on the guitar and not distort the whole effect."

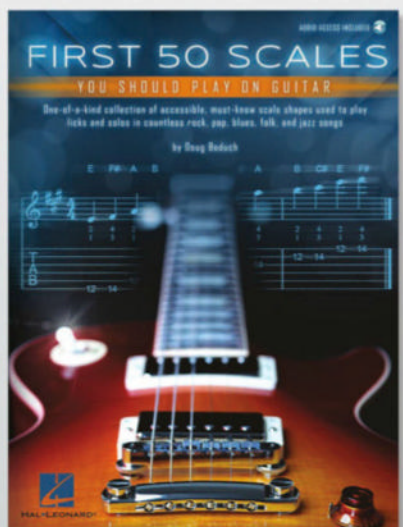
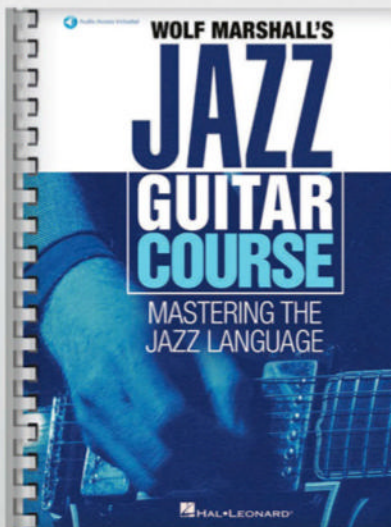
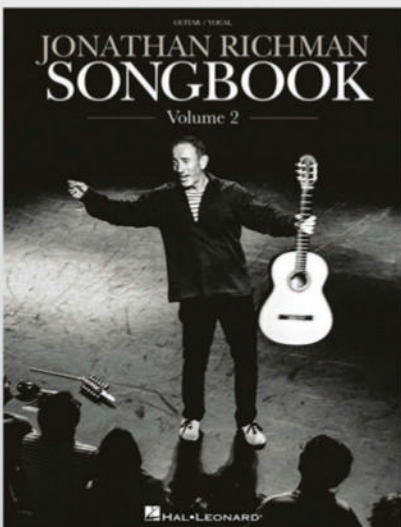
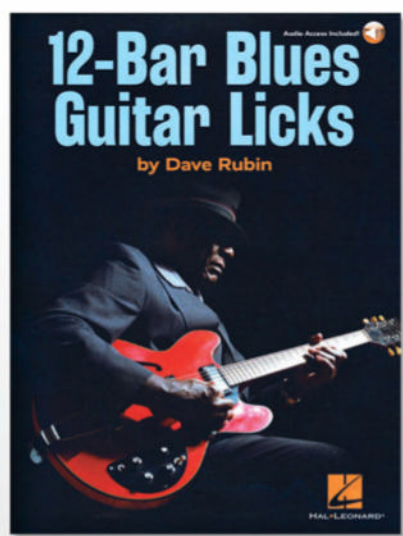
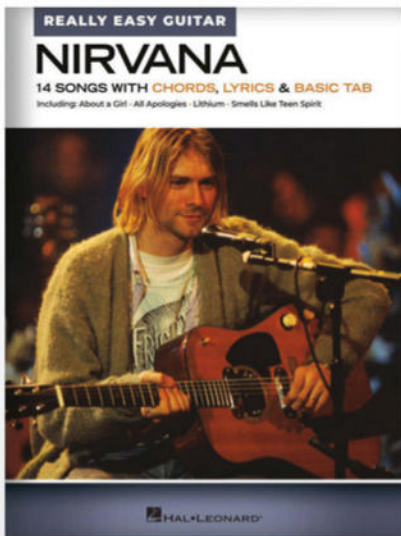
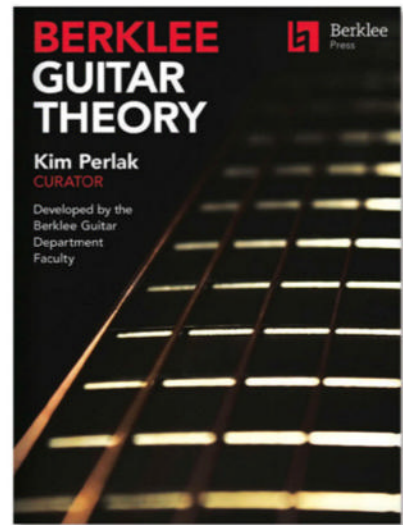
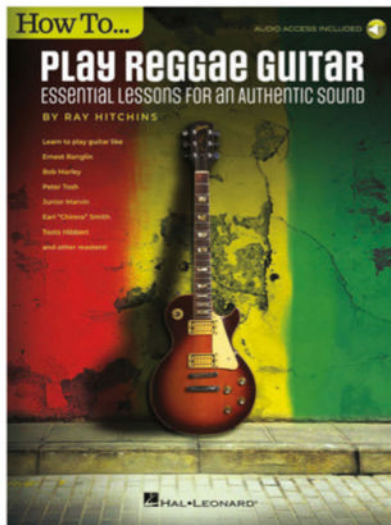
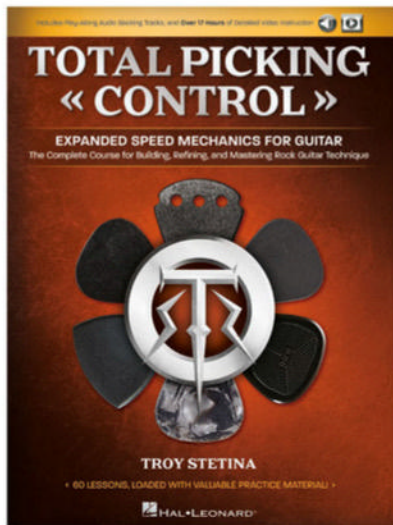
When combined with other effects like distortion, phase shift/flanging and pitch shifting, the Mu-Tron III can generate some dazzling, unusual sounds. Because the effect is dynamically responsive, it should be placed at the front of the signal chain and effects like compression and distortion should be plugged in after it.

Although the Mu-Tron III's sounds are undeniably funky, and the pedal made a strong impression in the hands of funk musicians like keyboardists Stevie Wonder and George Duke and bassist Bootsy Collins, most of the guitarists known for using one hail from genres other than funk. Psychedelic jazz fusion guitarist Larry Coryell was an early adopter during the Seventies, as were Jerry Garcia and Frank Zappa. Andy Summers and Steve Vai (taking a cue from his mentor Frank Zappa) employed a Mu-Tron III frequently during the Eighties and Nineties, and more recent, users include Trey Anastasio, Ira Kaplan (Yo La Tengo), Larry LaLonde, and Peter Dinklage, who expertly summoned vocal-like textures from his Mu-Tron III on his 2006 cover of Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun." **GW**

JOSEPH BRANSTON/FUTURE, MU-TRON



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