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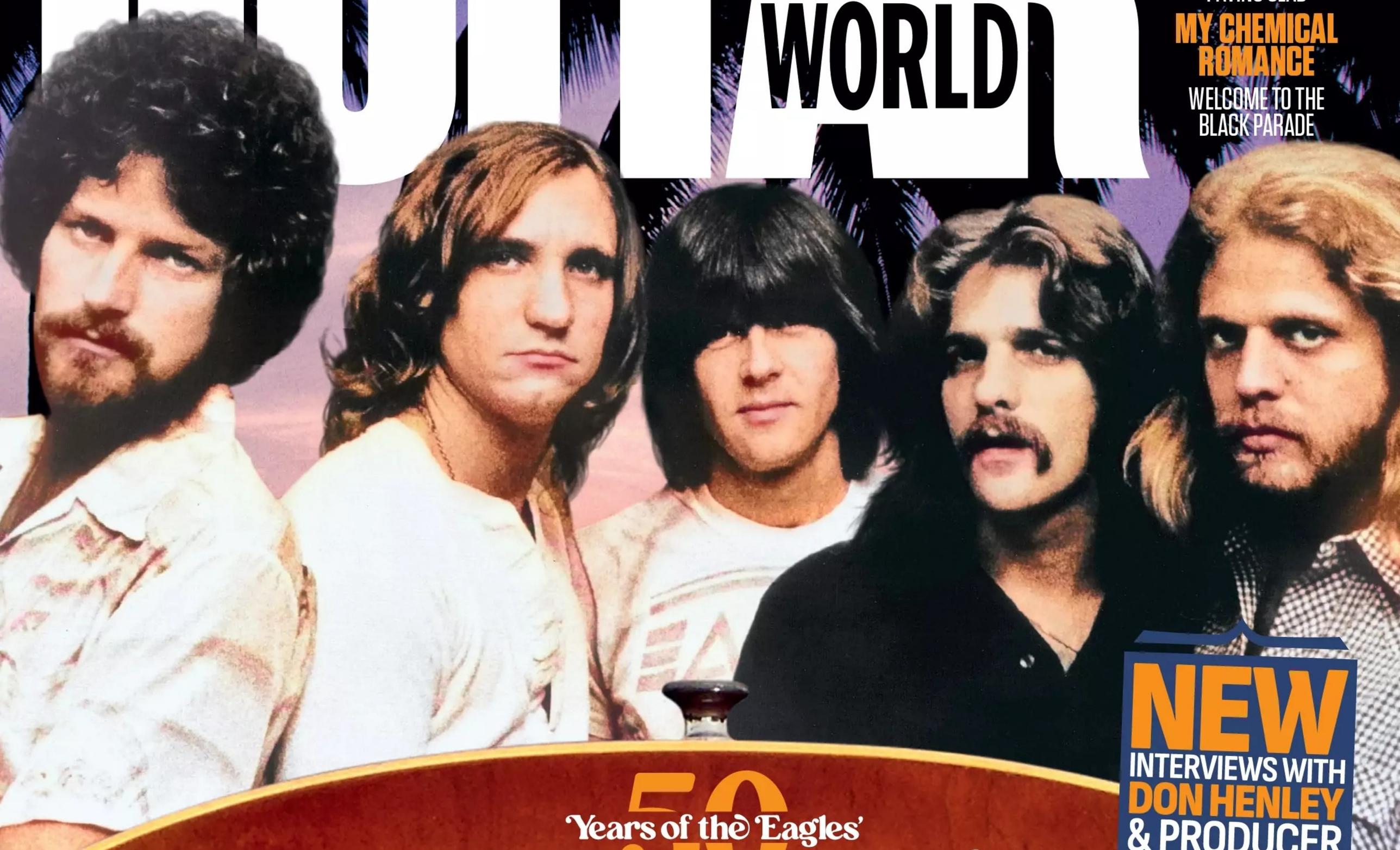
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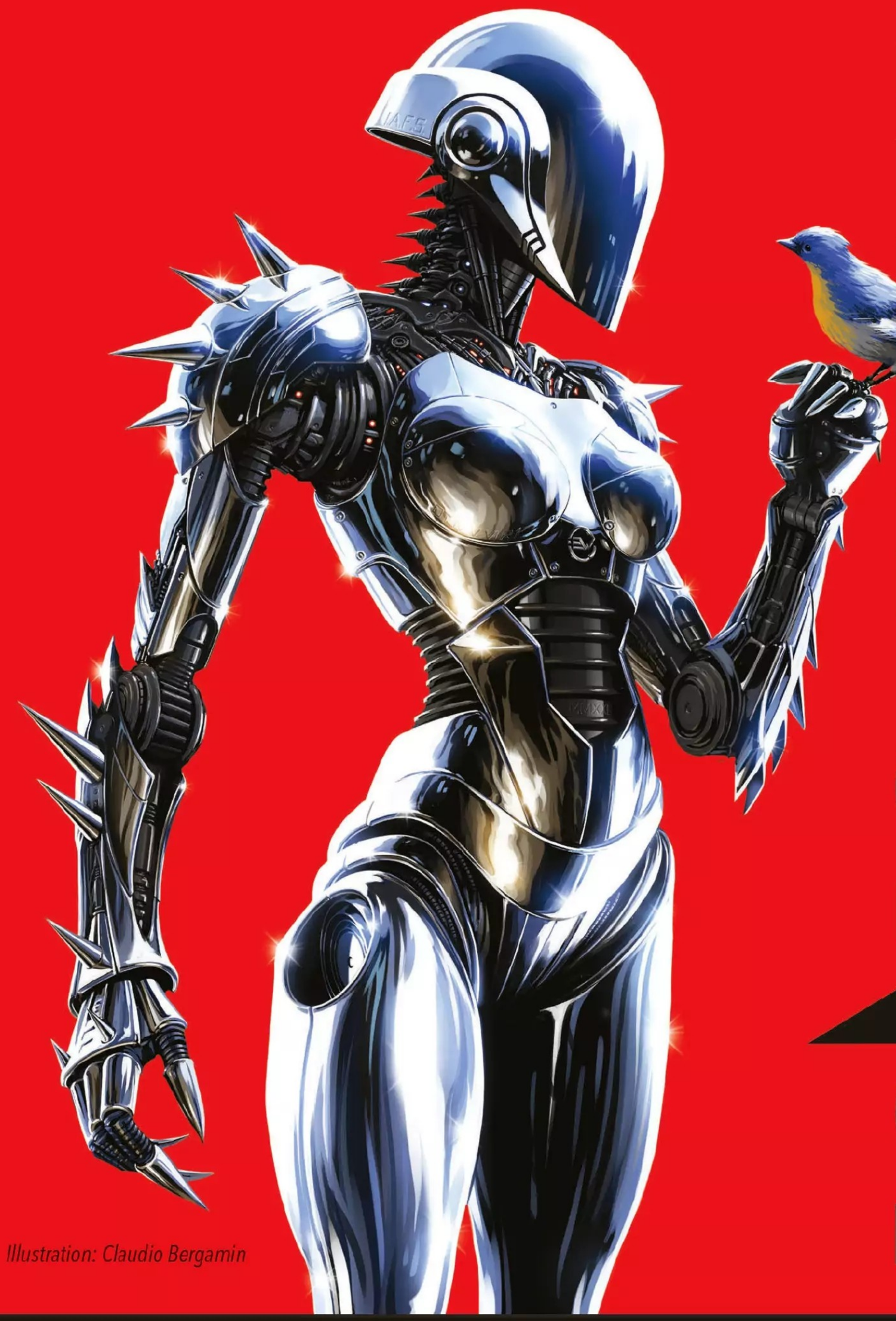


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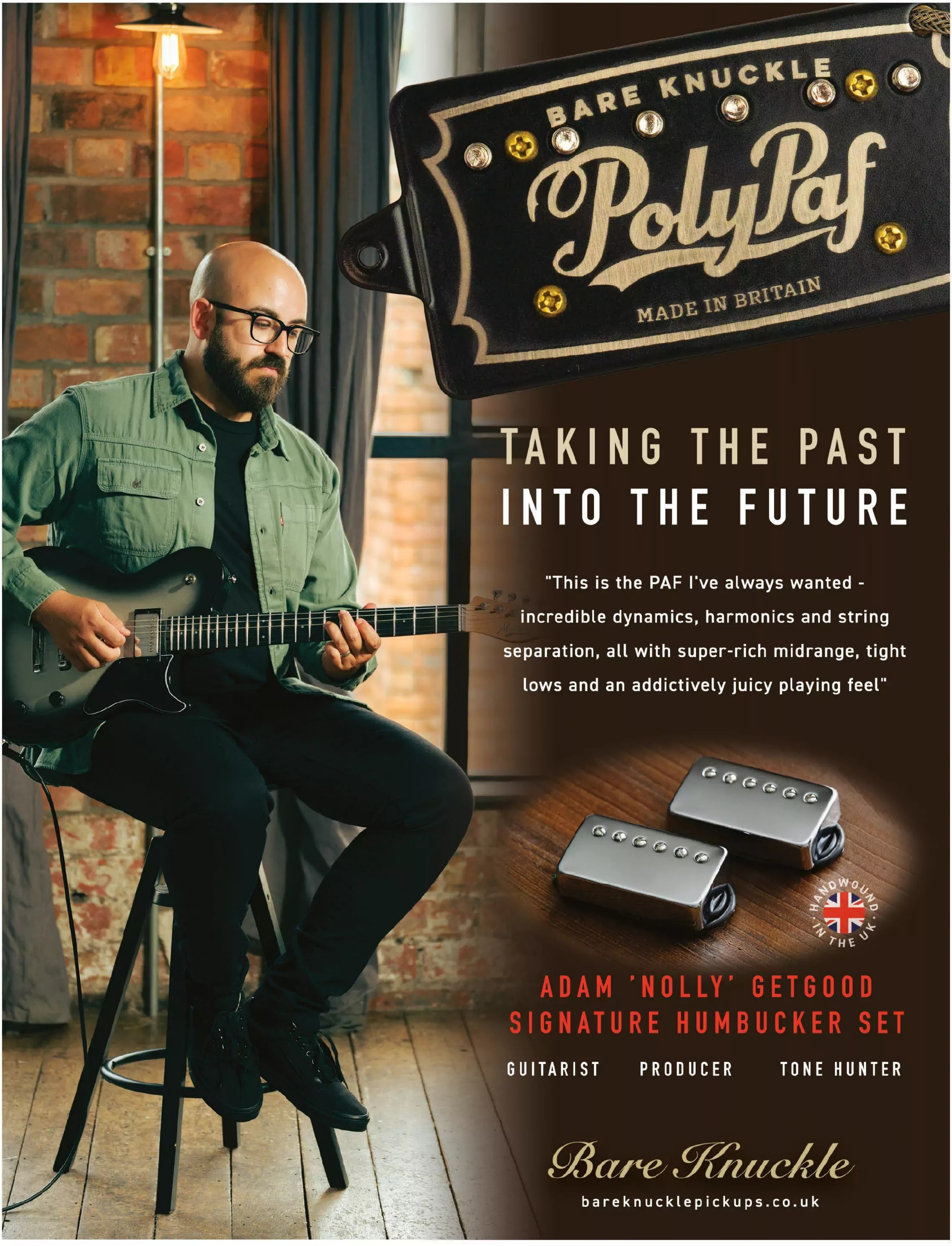
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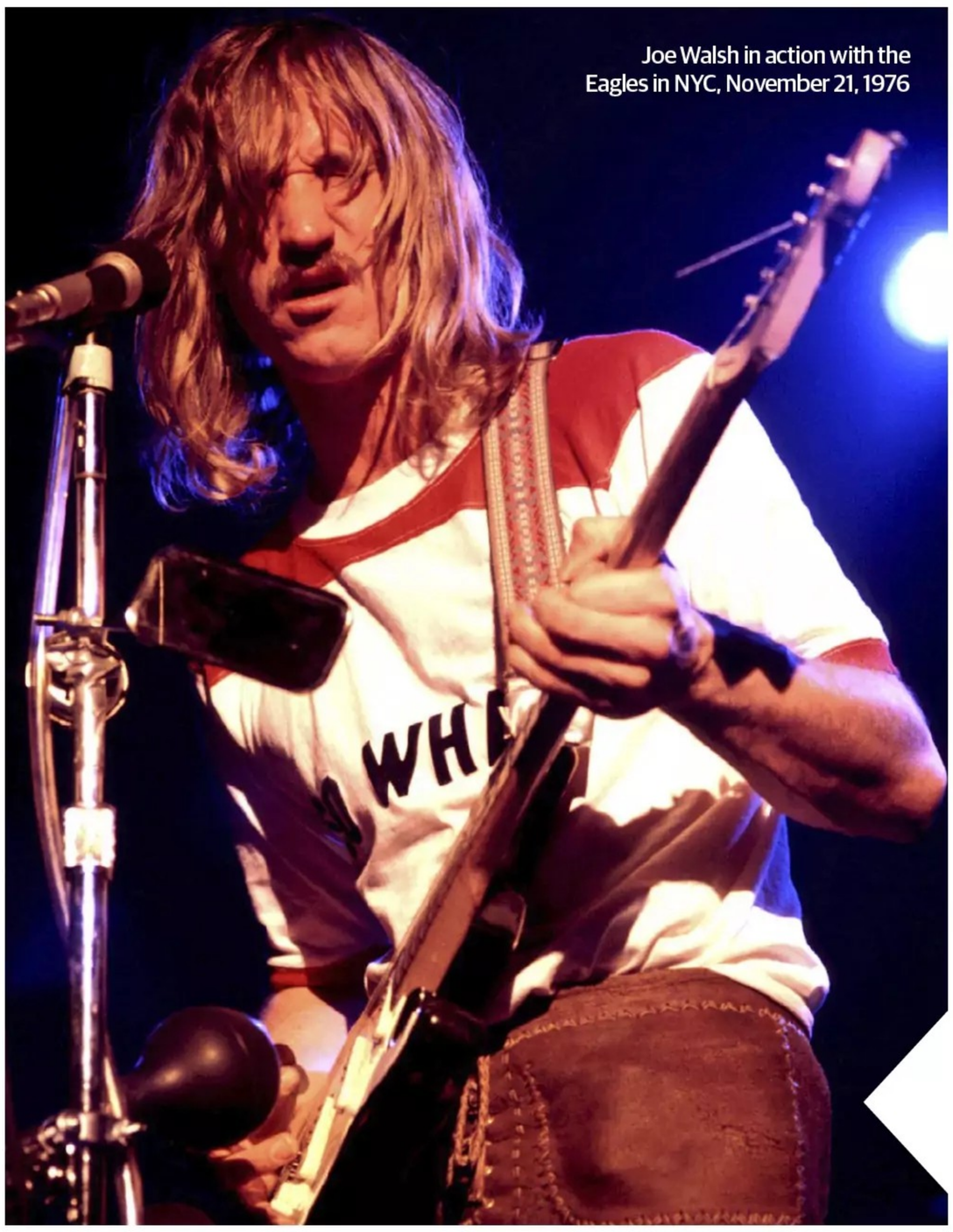
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BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE

COVER PHOTO: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (EAGLES); FUTURE (GUITAR)

Woodshed

VOL. 47 | NO. 6 | JUNE 2026

In 1969, a new Strat retailed for approximately $350



AS I'VE SAID a few times in this column, another year, another wild, big-ticket guitar auction. But, really, the world has never seen anything like this before. In mid-March, when the late Jim Irsay's guitar collection was being auctioned off by Christie's in NYC (weirdly on the same day that I spotted him on a rerun of *Parks and Recreation*), David Gilmour's heavily modified 1969 Black Strat sold for $14.5 million (a new record, topping the $6 million shelled out for Kurt Cobain's *Unplugged* Martin D-18E in 2020). Gilmour's Black Strat shattered records in 2019 when it sold for nearly $4 million, meaning that – in seven years – it appreciated by 350 percent. But that ain't all. Jerry Garcia's custom-built Tiger went for $11.5 million. Cobain's Fender Mustang sold for nearly $7 million, Eric Clapton's *Unplugged* Martin 000-42 snagged $4 million (while his The Fool SG claimed $3 million) and George Harrison's *Revolver*-era SG hit $2 million. All of which makes the $635K paid for Prince's custom "Yellow Cloud" guitar seem like quite the steal. I'm not big on numbers, and I was terrible at math in school, but here's one more numerical outburst for you: the combined mid-March Irsay figures exceeded Christie's sales estimate by 373 percent. What does all this mean? Besides the obvious (*"Wow, there are a lot of rich rock fans out there!"*), it shows that it's getting more difficult – or at least much, much more expensive – to claim pieces of history, relics of a fast-fading halcyonic era. At the same time, it's amazing to see so much undying interest in this thing we love, this combination of wood (or carbon fiber, aluminum, acrylic, etc.), metal and electronics that can change our moods and take us to unlimited places, real or imagined. Guitars with provenance are now just starting to climb that graph currently inhabited by prized works of art – your Pollocks, your Rothkos, your Cézannes, Klimts and de Koonings. And sure, guitars still have a way to go (works by these guys have sold for upwards of $200 to $400 million), but mark my words – and watch this space! And while you're at it, enjoy this issue of *Guitar World*!

DAMIAN FANELLI

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



JIMI HENDRIX (on a guitar)

BY RYAN COMBS



GENE SIMMONS

BY TREVOR RUELLAND

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



Greg Awalt

AGE: 59
HOMETOWN: Memphis, TN
GUITARS: USA Charvel San Dimas Style 2, Music Man JP15 and Luke I, Les Paul Classic Plus, Strandberg Boden, Epiphone ES-335
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Originals by my band Capt'n Tripps and various covers, including "Slither," "Big City Nights" and "Folsom Prison Blues"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Gibson SG



Dundee Woods

AGE: 62
HOMETOWN: Oak Harbor, WA
GUITARS: '83 Kramer Pacer, Ibanez bass, beat-up Ovation acoustic
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Lynyrd Skynyrd "Call Me the Breeze," Tom Petty "I Need to Know" and "Honey (You've Got Some Cookin' to Do)," my Joe Dirt-inspired original
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fret work on the Kramer, Tom Scholz Rockman



Denny Lippert

AGE: 76
HOMETOWN: Deer Park, WA
GUITARS: Taylor 214-L3 Maranatha, 1983 Fender Strat, Alvarez 12-string A/E, 2013 Gibson Les Paul Custom Goldtop, Fender FR-48 resonator
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: "This Old Guitar," "Grandpa was a Carpenter," "Against the Wind," "Shooting Star," "Great Light of the World," "San Francisco"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Larrivee C-09

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Isolation Drills

Guided By Voices guitarist Doug Gillard hits the solo trail in fine style

BY **GREGORY ADAMS**

DOUG GILLARD'S GOT a great work ethic. Devoted, quick and efficient – and passionate in equal measures – it's the kind of trait that comes in handy when you're making a couple of records a year with legendary indie-rock act Guided By Voices. His first stint with the prolific band began in the late Nineties, while he's collaborated on close to 20 albums with project mastermind Robert Pollard since rejoining in 2016. It's also helped Gillard learn dozens upon dozens of early Beatles songs and rock 'n' roll standards for Bambi Kino, the fab Cavern Club-era-honoring covers act he plays with on the side. Hell, it might also explain why, ahead of his call with *Guitar World*, the six-stringer spent the afternoon regrouting his bathroom, just to save his landlord a trip to his Queens, New York, apartment.

While Gillard's generally got his hands in several projects at all times, he admits his off/on solo career got put on the backburner after getting back together with GBV. Thankfully, he ends a 12-year drought this spring with the release of *Parallel Stride*, his first solo release since 2014's *Parade On*. The 11-song outing is positively swimming in garage-rocking rave-ups, taut-and-wiry post-punk and precious-gem jangle-pop.

"This record of mine came together over the course of many years. I mean, too long... I just got busy and didn't really feel like doing another solo record for a while," Gillard says, explaining that tightening up and tracking the collection was mostly done over the past year with engineer, author and former *Guitar World* scribe Tom Beaujour at the latter's Nuthouse Recording in Hoboken, New Jersey. "I made a concerted effort to make a mad dash and finish some songs, come up with some new ones, go to Tom's, and really get it finished in a concentrated window of time."

Some of the most recent album additions include the gorgeously e-bow layering "Face of Smiles" and the piano-punchy "Lost Alarmists." One that Gillard held onto for the better part of a decade is "My Friends," a pulse-quickening piece he'd finished in 2017 alongside producer and drummer Travis Harrison. Above a twitchy backbeat, chiming chords and sleek low-end elasticity, Gillard's voice booms forlornly of an emotional isolation ("There were lonely



Parallel Stride, Doug Gillard's first album in 12 years, is out April 24

LESTUDIO NYC, ROSS HALFIN





days/Those days are here again"). That said, the *Parallel Stride* sessions thrived through Gillard's in-studio collaborations with Harrison, Beaujour, drummer Ray Kubian and saxophonist Danny Lipsitz.

"It's sort of an imagined song about people not getting a hold of you much anymore," Gillard says of "My Friends." "It sounds whiny to say... it's just as you get older, that actually turns out to be the case. People's lives take over and go different directions."

On that point, the highlight of the song might be its solo; a speaker-jumping, stair-tumbling quarter-note descension that Gillard had technically assembled through multiple chorus-warbling takes. "I thought it would be clever – let's just have them ping-ponging [*over*] different tracks so they can ring over each other," he says, adding that the competing, pitch-undulating wavelengths were achieved with one of the blue-plated Boss chorus pedals he's got in his collection. "Sometimes I'll do little tricky things like that for fun, to have something different going on."

While the record's "New Vista" is pure power-pop confection, the back-end resolve of Gillard's main acoustic riff arguably conjures Rush's classic rock radio-conquering "Fly by Night." "That wasn't conscious," he notes when pressed on this. "I've always kind of dug that tune. I actually used to play the riff in practice for fun. That could have been a subconscious thing... but I was just trying to make a snappy song. I threw the capo on the 5th or 6th fret, and it wrote itself after that."

He concedes of a more direct inspiration: "There is a section in that song that's going for the feel of the Pretenders' 'Kid' solo."

For Guided By Voices fans, one of Gillard's most recognizable guitars is the black '76 Les Paul Custom he copped sometime in the mid-Eighties. It's been a live staple of his and then some – much of the finish on the back of his workhorse Gibson has been stripped after 40 years of steady use. Though Gillard says the guitar did factor into his *Parallel Stride* sessions, he also notes that Beaujour had him hoisting a bunch of other instruments that were hanging around the Nuthouse, including a 2023 Gibson Murphy Lab goldtop Les Paul reissue that was modded and aged by Danocaster Guitars. That's the one that gave him the juice to jolt out the sly, staccato rhythms and livewire solo of *Parallel Stride*'s foot-shuffling title track.

"It's a very cool-looking guitar. I do remember using that, standing there in the control room until the solo was right," he says. "It took a while – probably 40 minutes – because I didn't really have a plan. I didn't have it composed or mapped out or anything. I just let it rip and was like, 'Let me try again.'"

Some choices come more naturally. The drop-tuned "Face of Smiles" runs lush with a series of major seventh-heightened chord shapes sliding across Gillard's middle strings, a low open D gently droning through each strum. He says that's one of his go-to moves, the veritable chef's kiss from a master craftsman.

"I tend to always have a root note or a bass note in there. It's something I've always done all my life, and I can't get away from it," he says, adding wryly, "I have to remind myself it's okay to play the tops of chords." GW

LESTUDIO NYC

Blackwater Holylight

How these recent Oregon-to-L.A. transplants filtered some Sunshine State vibes — positive and negative — into their magnetic doom-gaze

BY GREGORY ADAMS

"I DON'T KNOW if it sounds like 'happy California sunshine' per se, but I definitely think our sound has changed from previous albums," says Blackwater Holylight guitarist-bassist Mikayla Mayhew, reflecting on the musical palette of her band's new *Not Here Not Gone* — the Portland-formed outfit's fourth album since 2016 and first since the heavy psych-smiths left the gray-days gloom of the Pacific Northwest for Los Angeles. Their move took place in 2021, shortly after a conversation at a bar left the group — Mayhew, fellow guitarist-bassist Sunny Faris and drummer Eliese Dorsay — communally "craving that sun."

Despite the change of scenery, Faris says Blackwater Holylight still bring "dark and doomy vibes" to *Not Here Not Gone*. Take the tuneful, yet deep-chunking throb of "Bodies" or the bleak, black metal-adjacent adventuring of "Poppyfields." Gorgeously slow-strumming opener "How Will You Feel" unfolds with lighter, teal-iridescent shoegazing while "Giraffe" has Mayhew bending ambient drones around a booming trip-hop beat. Experiments like this bring a ton of contrast to their overall sound. "It has to do with us maturing as musicians and being interested in other tones and other music," Faris says. "It's a natural shift that some musicians take."

They also envelope each new song with a warmer, more immediate fuzz than the distant, echo-blown aesthetic brought to 2021's *Silence/Motion*. Tone-saturating stompboxes of all kinds were in constant rotation at El Paso's Sonic Ranch, where producer Sonny Diperri (Narrow Head, DIIV) was laying out Klon Centaurs, Death by Audio Fuzz Wars and one-of-a-kind home-job pedals built by friends of his. On lead single "Heavy, Why?" Faris' guitarwork rides out the finale atop a scene-stealing wave of delay-corroded effects.

"I don't really feel like it's a solo; it's just a little tremolo section," Faris says of string partner Mayhew's presence on their shared SG. "She plays more lead parts and walks around the fretboard more than I tend to — and similarly on bass."

The Maiden-ly guitarmonies Mayhew layers into "Void to Be" reflect more maximalist tendencies than Faris' more strum-forward sections, yet the former did dial down her vocal style on the album's "Spades." Originally, Mayhew complemented its Cro-Magnon stony riff-outs and double-kick-driven intensity with harsh screams, but the band ultimately flipped the script with subtle, melodic mic work that better fit the mood of the overall record.



[*from left*] Blackwater Holylight's Mikayla Mayhew, Eliese Dorsay and Sunny Faris

ERIC TRA

"We're becoming interested in other tones and music. It's a natural shift"
SUNNY FARIS

Both agree that *Not Here Not Gone*'s weightiest piece — sonically and contextually — is "Poppyfields," a mournful, yet cathartic seven-minute explosion of tremolo-picked hypnotism inspired by the hardships close friends had faced in Blackwater Holylight's adopted home.

"That song is about the fires that happened in L.A. last year — and my best friend who lost her home in those fires," Faris says. "It was a really heavy one to write. It'll be a heavy one to perform, for sure." GW



[*from left*] Treaty Oak Revival's Jeremiah Vanley, Lance Vanley and Sam Canty

Treaty Oak Revival

A beer can in the face? That ain't nothin' for these punk-country-rock troubadours (who you've heard if you've binge-watched *Landman*)

BY **GREGORY ADAMS**

DESPITE TITLING A hit song "Bad State of Mind," Treaty Oak Revival are in a good place. The Odessa, Texas, quintet's vibrant, genre-blurring sound — vocalist and acoustic strummer Sam Canty describes them as a "rock band with a country accent" — has put them in front of massive crowds at punk fests like the Warped Tour, C&W-curated blowouts like Stagecoach and at their own sold-out shows.

They've gotten their music on Paramount Plus' *Landman* and racked up platinum-streaming singles since 2020. Their third album, *West Texas Degenerate*, debuted at the top of the Rock and Americana/Folk charts at the end of 2025. Another smash hit from the fall didn't go over as well.

"Sam got hit in the face with a beer, that was memorable," lead guitarist Jeremiah Vanley says of an especially rowdy outdoor performance in Easley, South Carolina. The can of brew bloodied up their frontman, but "Sam ate it and kept going," says rhythm guitarist Lance Vanley — Jeremiah's nephew. Of the frothing frenzy the quintet instills in their fandom, he adds, "We're all a little mad when we get pelted; I don't understand why they throw cans at us."

Treaty Oak toss plenty of style into *West Texas Degenerate*, a reflection of Jeremiah and Lance's youths spent studying Metallica and Switchfoot, respectively, and playing in various cover bands and church groups before launching their Revival. Boot-stompin' grit merges with pop-punk hooks on "Port A." The watery bass chorus on "Shit Hill" briefly gives grunge. The album's opening "Intro" finds guest guitarist Edgar Viveros of Ben Quad delivering layers of emo texturalism beneath a real-deal recording of a fan comparing Treaty Oak's guitar wizardry to Neal Schon and Michael Schenker.

"All I can think of is a casserole," Lance says with a laugh of the worlds-swirling aesthetic. While purists might think it odd to bring wrist-grindingly metallic judding to a country song — as on "Naders" — Treaty Oak Revival may be the ones to finally bring spin kicks and mosh moves to the Grand Ole Opry. "That's my favorite song on the record, probably because of that breakdown," Jeremiah adds.

Though happy to deliver those djents, Jeremiah also scorches his way through a number of solos, from the mesquite-broiled arpeggiation of "Blue Star" to the Bad Horsie-riding finale of "Bad State of Mind," a rare effects-laden ripper.

"Because I'm a pretty Plain Jane player, I don't use a lot of effects, but when I do, it's a phaser or a wah pedal," he says. "It's just something I've always been a fan of, growing up listening to a lot of Kirk Hammett, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix. I wanted to incorporate that wah into my playing." GW

"Growing up listening to SRV and Hendrix, I wanted to incorporate wah into my playing"
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COVER MODELS

GUITARIST JERRY CANTRELL

GUITAR 1984 "BLUE DRESS" G&L RAMPAGE

GW COVER DATE JANUARY 1996

THIS INTERVIEW AUGUST 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER MARTY TEMME

BY ANDREW DALY



Q How'd you get this guitar?

I'd just graduated from high school, so I was 18. I was in a band, and we were about to go to college. I got the ultimatum from the family – get a job or go to school: "If you wanna live at the house, take your pick. Otherwise, get the fuck out." [*Laughs*] I was like, "Maybe I'll go to school." I worked jobs, too, but I took school because I figured it would allow me more time to play guitar. I made it through half a semester of college, and then my drummer was chirping in my ear about quitting school, taking a year off and going to Texas to try to take the band to the next level. [*Laughs*] He said his dad would give us jobs at an insulation company. So I quit college, and we were in a van a week later fucking driving to Dallas. It was pretty short-lived. I worked for the insulation company for a whole summer before I fell in with some Texas boys and started jamming. I had this dark brown tobacco-colored Hamer V, but they had these G&Ls. The first time I picked one up, I fell in love.

Q What did you like about it?

It fell right into my hand. Their dad worked for a music store called Arnold & Morgan Music Company in Garland, Texas, and he gave me a job. That's where they'd gotten these G&Ls. With my first paycheck, I bought the G&L with the "Blue Dress." A couple of months later, I bought the "No War" one.

Q Did you modify your G&L?

Van Halen is one of my favorite bands, and Eddie was just a fucking alien. I was like, "How the fuck does this guy make his guitar sound like this?" It was inspiring on many levels, and he was also into tinkering. His guitar is called Frankenstein for a reason! [*Laughs*] Also, the artwork – the striped pattern – was a direct influence on me and the way my guitar looks with the circles and squares. I was trying to find my own pattern.

The strings always came off the Kahler because it was top-mounted. I felt like it needed a bit more tension, so I counter-sunk the Kahler down into the body a little, which added a bit more tension at the rolling bar. It came with a shitty locking mechanism where the screws were made out of tin foil or something. [*Laughs*] Every time I changed the strings, I was replacing nuts because you'd strip them. So I put a Floyd Rose nut up top as that's what Eddie had and counter-sunk the Kahler. I added a Seymour Duncan JB as my main pickup.

Q How did your G&L impact the way you played?

To some degree, you're a mechanic. You use whatever tool you need for the job. Even if the G&L is my main guitar and is gonna be on most of the stuff and the one I feel most comfortable with, if I'm writing a song that sounds better on a Tele or a Strat or a V, I'm gonna use that. But then there's the one you're kinda known for. Angus [*Young*] plays a Gibson SG or Eddie's got his guitar. The G&L is mine. It's the one that felt right. It's the one I've been playing the longest. There's

FUTURE

something to miles traveled, time spent together and sweat, blood, tears and soul being transferred from the player into the guitar and from the guitar back to the player. Those two G&Ls — nothing sounds as good or feels as good or has the right weight that those two have. You put them side by side to others like them, and they should sound the same, but they don't.

Q What makes them special?
There's an individual personality to the wood, or maybe one guy was paying more attention at the shop that day. [*Laughs*] It could be any number of things that lined up to make that instrument what it is... It's like cars on an assembly line. Every once in a while, there's a special one — and I got two.

Q It goes without saying that your G&L is probably on nearly every notable album you've put out, right?
I'd have to say that probably 95 percent of anything you've ever heard from me has at least one of those G&Ls on it, if not both. [*Laughs*]

Q When it came time for your *GW* cover shoot in 1996, was there ever a question that you'd grab a G&L?
I've appeared on covers with other guitars that are important to me. But with the G&Ls, it's the "Blue Dress" and the "No War." Those, with my Les Paul, are my unholy trinity.

Q We know you still have your "Blue Dress" G&L, which appeared on the January 1996 cover, but you had a close call with it in April 2024.
I was freaking out for three or four days. We couldn't track it down. It was a pre-album thing, and we were doing a video and a photo shoot and then going back for rehearsal, and shit was moving around, and I lost track of it. Thankfully, it was just misplaced. The feeling of, you know, when I put the post out when I was in a panic, was like, "I'd rather be wrong and have a little egg on my face, so I'm gonna throw this out there to the world."

I've had a guitar that meant a lot to me go missing, where I was lucky to get it back, and that was a goldtop Music Man that Ed [*Van Halen*] gave me. Alice In Chains were on tour with Van Halen, and I got two from him. One was a goldtop and was a trans blue where you could see the wood flame through the finish. The goldtop went missing when I was making *Degradation Trip* [*Jerry's 2002 solo album*]; I didn't see it for 18 or 19 years. It disappeared, and it broke my heart because my fucking dude gave me that guitar. Luckily, it made its way back to me. When I thought that was what happened to the G&L, I was crushed for a couple of days. GW



"This music is not about acrobatics or showmanship," Peppino D'Agostino says

VOENA

Peppino D'Agostino

Open your mind with the neurobiological properties of a new, guitar-centered album by a player another guitar mag once called "transcendent"

BY JOE MATERA

STRADDLING THE BOUNDARIES of virtuosity and eclecticism, Italian-born American acoustic guitarist Peppino D'Agostino's innovative fretwork saw him named by *Guitar Player* in 2017 as one of the 50 Transcendent Acoustic Guitarists on the scene. His cross-cultural collaborations have also seen him work with longtime Joe Satriani drummer Jeff Campitelli and classical guitarist David Tanenbaum.

For his latest collaboration, D'Agostino teamed up with Dr. Barbara A. Minton, an internationally recognized psychologist, neuroscientist and musician, for *Calm the Storm*, an album blending cutting-edge neurobiology with the transcendent power of music to foster restoration, emotional healing and inner-connection.

"When I was asked by Dr. Minton [*who accompanies D'Agostino on pipe organ*] to work on this project, she set up certain parameters," D'Agostino says. "I needed to stay within two octaves because the idea is to engage the brain with melodies so that the brain is focusing, and at the same time, give the brain this kind of a slow tempo. Also, the pitch was important because if it's too high frequency, the brain gets disturbed."

While the fingerpicking guitarist is normally at home playing a Robert Godin designed signature model Seagull steel-string guitar, he switched to a nylon-string for the new album. "Due to the brightness of the steel string guitar, Dr. Minton determined that it was not what we wanted," he says. "So, we decided to use a Godin nylon-string guitar. I had to be careful about touching the strings a certain way because we needed to avoid parasite noises when you slide your fingers along the strings. I also had to consciously think about the amount of pressure that I was putting on each string, especially on the bass strings. If you press too hard, the string goes out of tune."

D'Agostino hopes *Calm the Storm* inspires people to reflect on the unique combination of classical guitar and pipe organ. "This music is not about acrobatics or showmanship: it's about touching people with beautiful melodies and rich harmonies," he says, "so that it brings them into a positive state of mind and reminds us that music can be a source of healing and a refuge of happiness."

For more info, check out musicandhealing.net. GW



LOST CLASSICS

Nitro

Michael Angelo Batio, with his quad-necked-guitar mayhem, was the star of Nitro's 1989 debut album, *O.F.R.* But how does it stand up 37 years later?

BY JOE BOSSO



Michael Angelo Batio performs in the U.K. in 2009

THE CRITICS WERE brutal, none more so than *Guitar World*'s editors, who branded Nitro's 1989 debut, *O.F.R.*, "dickhead music." Michael Angelo Batio says the smackdowns stung, but he also reveals that what pissed him off the most was that he found himself agreeing with much of the criticism. "The band knew going into it that we were going to be very extreme, but we wound up going way beyond that," he says.

Everything about Nitro was pushed beyond the max. The Los Angeles-based glam metal quartet, which also included singer Jim Gillette, drummer Bobby Rock and bassist T.J. Racer, was billed as having "the fastest, loudest, highest sound around." And boy, did they ever. Gillette, whose ballsack-grabbing soprano seemed to extend to a range heard only by canines, reportedly shattered not one, not two, but three wine glasses at live shows. Batio, brandishing a custom "Quad guitar" with four necks pointing outward, blitzed through songs with neutrino-like speed. (His solos were so blindingly fast, in fact, that many listeners assumed they were the result of computer manipulation.) With Nitro's songs whooshing by at a head-spinning 200 beats per minute (perfect for cardio workouts), all the rhythm section of Rock and Racer could do was hang on for dear life.

The group's image was as outlandish as their sound — circulation-constricting leather and Spandex, and bigger-than-big hairdos that surely boosted Aqua Net's stock. Gillette took things to the point of parody, with a gravity-defying hairstyle that made him look like Tina Turner's stunt double from *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*. "It was all very calculated," Batio says. "I was surprised at how divisive the record was. You loved it or you hated it with a passion. It was an odd thing, because I don't consider it representative of who I am, or who I was at the time."

Previously, Batio had high hopes for Holland, a Chicago-based metal band he joined in 1984. Fronted by singer Tom Holland, the group signed with Atlantic Records and recorded an album titled *Little Monsters* with hard rock production specialist Tom Werman. "If you listen to that record, that's the real me on guitar," Batio says. "The playing is tasteful, kind of like Cheap Trick meets L.A. heavy metal. It's got really ripping guitar sounds."

When *Little Monsters* failed to chart, Holland broke up and Batio moved to Los Angeles. "Suddenly, I thought, 'Is black really white? Is up really down?'" he says. "Fast didn't sound fast to me anymore. High didn't sound high. I hung out on the Strip, and I morphed into this hair metal guy. Nitro became an extreme version of it."

According to Batio, the group's demo — "all fast playing and high singing" — wasn't quite extreme enough for Rhino Records President Bob Cahill. "He said, Angelo, I thought you were fast," the guitarist says. "I was a little taken aback, and then he said, 'I want you to overplay all the time.' He wanted the record to be sonically abrasive." Which it was, once the label mastered the album. The finished product accentuated treble frequencies, rendering Batio's fulsome sound thin and tinny. Worse yet, Racer and Rock's bass and drum performances all but disappeared under Gillette's shrill, multi-tracked gang vocals. "The label wanted the PMRC [*Parents Music Resource Center*] to ban the record, so everything was way over the top," Batio says.

O.F.R., which stands for "Out-Fucking-Rageous," appeared to go unnoticed by the nation's self-appointed censors, but it reached an audience comprised of hardcore metal-heads, shred-guitar enthusiasts and curiosity seekers. Boosted by the singles "Freight Train" and "Long Way from Home," which received weekly plays on MTV's *Headbangers Ball* and regional metal video shows, the album performed respectably, reaching Number 140 on the *Billboard* 200.

Even so, Batio and Gillette wanted more. "We just weren't happy with the mastering of the record," Batio says. "Jim and I even went to Bob Cahill's house and said, 'Look, we hate how the record sounds. We'll take our own money to remix and master it.' Bob

DAVID CAUDERY/FUTURE



looked at us and said, "Why? It's on the charts. It's selling!"

You wanted to be "the fastest, the loudest and the highest." When you met Jim, did you think, "He's the guy"?
Oh yeah. Jim's outfit had so many metallic studs on it — the jacket weighed almost 80 pounds. It was very heavy metal. We didn't have big hair — we had the biggest hair. We didn't have any money, but that didn't stop us from looking like rock stars. Jim's hair was the biggest of all. I remember when we drove to the photo studio to do pictures for our album, I had a hatchback car, and Jim had to sit in the front seat and push it all the way back to accommodate his hair. Even then, his hair was sticking out the car door.

How did you find Jim?
I met him at a party in Venice Beach. We had a mutual friend, a hair stylist who did people like Farrah Fawcett and all the stars. All the rockers used to hang out at her place and go to her parties. I thought Jim could fit in perfectly. He's an interesting guy. He's got a black belt in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. He's super smart, super street. He's just an extreme guy. You don't bet against Jim. And he had this voice.

Bobby Rock had already been in the Vinnie Vincent Invasion, so he had that extreme thing down already.
Oh yeah. We targeted Bobby. I don't mean that in a stalking sense, but we used to see him on the Strip. Jim would be like, 'Bobby Rock... We need Bobby Rock!" So I ended up talking to him, and he joined up.

Is it really true that Jim could shatter wine glasses with his voice?
He could. We advertised "double axes and shattered glasses" at Nitro's debut show at Gazzarri's. At first, we had no clue how to shatter glass. All we knew was that Ella Fitzgerald did it in a Memorex commercial, but we thought, "There must be a way." Jim and I were on a quest. We actually went to [*California-based loudspeaker manufacturer*] Renkus-Heinz, and we pumped 125 dB against a wine glass — and it still wouldn't break! We tried everything. We got hold of the guy who did the Memorex commercial. He was like, "Who are these crazy rockers?" But he liked us and he kept giving us clues. For example, it had to be a fluted goblet made by a German company called Schott Zwiesel, and it had to have a two percent lead content. If you had one of those goblets, it was easy.

Did have all the music written for *O.F.R.* before you found Jim?
The two songs that became singles, "Freight Train" and "Long Way from Home," I had written before I met Jim. I didn't have any words, though. I patterned "Freight Train" after Deep Purple's "Burn." That's how I came up with the riff. I had these words, "Believe in yourself, believe in yourself," and Jim went, "Dude, that's stupid." In two minutes, he came up with lyrics to "Freight Train." Sonically, what I did on the demo was killer. It was thick and heavy, but that wasn't what the label wanted.

Were you already playing the four-neck guitar at this point?
No. What happened was, I had a two-neck guitar, and then Steve Vai came out with his three-neck heart guitar. My label wanted me to challenge Steve to a duel. I didn't see the point in competitions like that.

You'd be doing the *Crossroads* thing in real life.
Yeah. I didn't want to do that, but the label went, "Michael... Steve's got three necks and you have two. You know what you need?" And I went, "Four." They loved it. As it happened, Wayne Charvel was building all my guitars. I said to him, "Can you do this?" He said, "Sure." I have a good engineering mind for guitar design, so I designed the Quad. I told him how I thought it should be four separate guitars, and that was that. It was the wildest thing. There was no limit to what we were trying to do.

When the record came out, a fair amount of people thought you had sped up your guitar playing with computers.
No, no. Those songs were clocking at 200 bpm, which was nothing for me — that's all 16th notes. There are a lot of guitarists who can play like that now. No, that was all analog tape. There were no punches.

What about Jim's vocals?
With Nitro, we wanted the biggest background vocals since Queen. Jim could sing like that — five octaves. He was massive, and we didn't even put reverb on him. There's no reverb on my guitar either, except for one part of "Machine Gunn Eddie." Live, we used the background vocals from our records, and we played everything to the clicks of the record.

How much touring did Nitro do for the album?
We did two- and three-month runs, but we couldn't get on a big tour. The label gave us tour support for six months. Everybody else got paid, but Jim and I were broke. A lot of people liked us; others didn't. There were no gray areas with Nitro. After a while, Bobby Rock got offered to play with Nelson. We couldn't match the number they gave him. I understood. I'm still friends with him.

"My label wanted me to challenge Steve Vai to a guitar duel. I didn't see the point in competitions like that"
MICHAEL ANGELO BATIO

You guys made another album before breaking up. But you reformed for a time in 2016 with Victor Wooten on bass. How on earth did that happen?
We got Chris Adler from Lamb of God on drums. He was a fan of my solo albums. Victor, too. He'd heard songs from my solo albums, and he said, "I'm looking to get into something heavy." We were like, "Yeah! We've got a supergroup." Unfortunately, life got in the way. My mom got sick and I had to go take care of her. She ended up passing. I had already told Jim that I couldn't focus on the band at that time.

Think you guys might ever try again?
No, no. I play in Manowar now, and I'm happy. We headline arenas — our average crowd is, like, 15,000 people. I love what I do now. GW

Castle Rat

When it comes to this quirky NYC fantasy outfit's on-stage arsenal, their axes are mightier than their swords

BY GREGORY ADAMS

THOUGH CASTLE RAT founding vocalist-guitarist Riley Pinkerton (a.k.a. the Rat Queen) is often swinging a big broadsword in photoshoots and music videos, she explains that their concerts actually have her wielding a foam weapon, so as to not "accidentally kill my bandmates on stage." Nevertheless, she and co-guitarist Franco Vittore (a.k.a. the Count) are cleaving through crowds with an epic heaviness inspired by Black Sabbath songs and *Red Sonja* comics.

As such, *The Bestiary* — Castle Rat's sophomore full-length — was primarily cut using the Mexican-made Fender Strat the Count's been playing since his teens, and the Queen's more recently Reverb-acquired pearl white SG. Considering the New York City quintet are also self-stitching their furs-and-metals-heavy battlewear, Pinkerton notes that her Gibson has a mean-looking chainmail rash stretching across its back.

Castle Rat's latest release expands upon the world-building mysticism of the band's 2024 debut, *Into the Realm*. It ups the fantastical ante with Seventies metal-summoning swagger ("Wizard"), hypnotically hefty unison riffs ("Wolf I," "Unicorn") and chunkily doom-driven swings (the "Manic Depression"-esque "Dragon").

Though now generally cranked to the max, Pinkerton says she got her start on guitar as a 15-year-old folk fiend. This is reflected subtly in her go-to open-C tuning (Vittore's in E standard), but more obviously through acoustic *Bestiary* piece "Wolf II," an eerily chimed medieval raga. Castle Rat songs also always get their start on an acoustic.

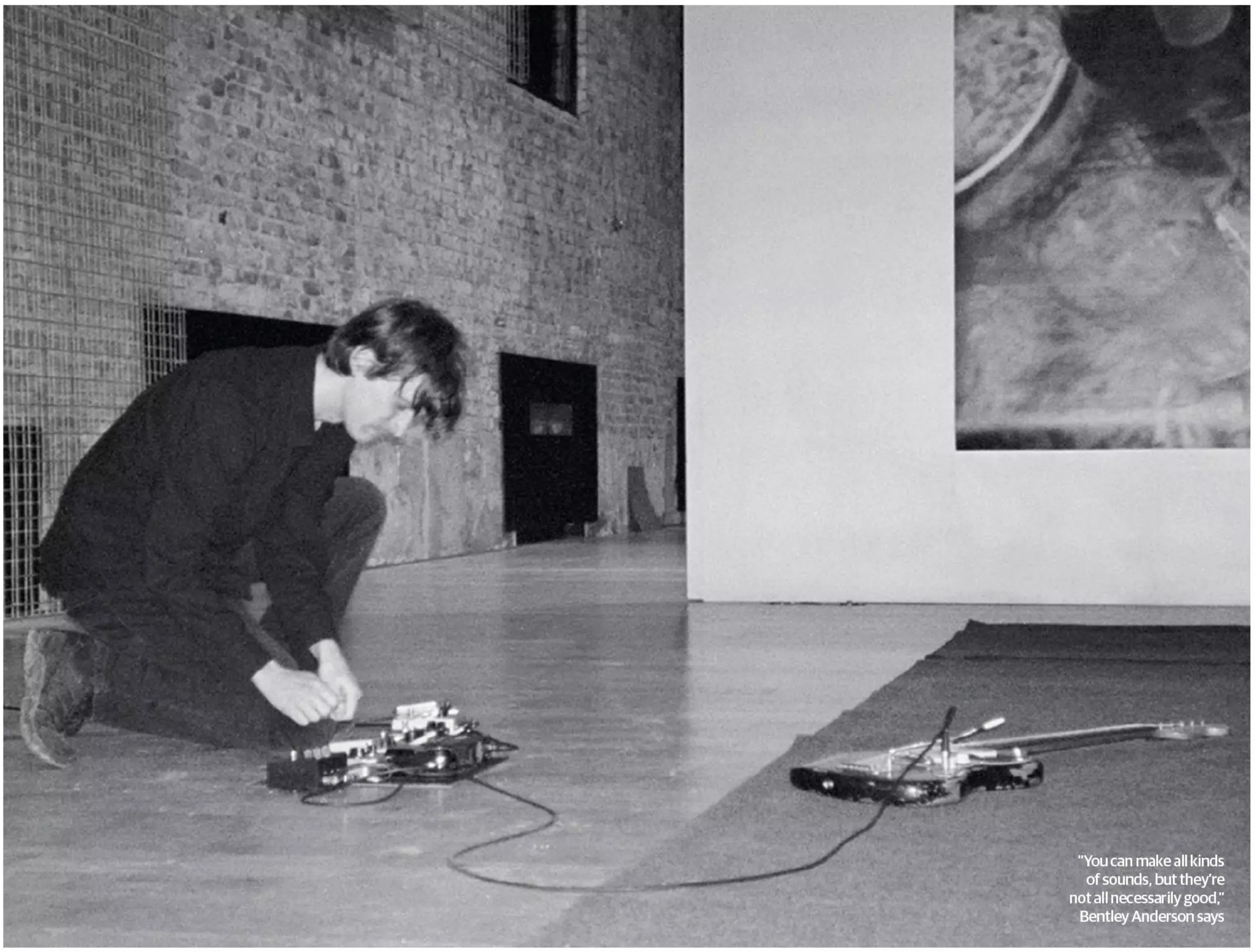
"My theory behind that has always been that if it sounds heavy on a classical guitar, then it will probably sound even heavier once I'm plugged in," she says.

Mutual friends introduced Castle Rat to *The Bestiary* boardsmith Randall Dunn (Sunn O))), Boris). They bonded over a shared love of metal and barbaric Frank Frazetta paintings. While the Queen and the Count report that they're running modelers on stage, Dunn helped the pair mine meaty tones at Saugerties, New York's Applehead Recording with a coterie of Sunn and Marshall amps, signal-juicing stompboxes and the wind-warping Leslie rotary speaker Vittore uses on "Crystal Cave" and "Serpent." For the latter, the Count says his solo is snaking through a more Eighties-indebted approach, explaining that its fiery flat nine arpeggios, harmonic minor runs and frenzied G-string pull-offs are conjuring Alcatrazz-era Yngwie Malmsteen.

In addition to collabing on amp tones with Dunn, Castle Rat tapped into a more naturally cooperative spirit throughout the making of *The Bestiary*. While Pinkerton had penned *Into the Realm* on her own, songs like "Wizard" were feverishly spell-cast together in their practice space. The Rat Queen admits she had anxieties over ceding creative control, but these were ultimately quelled as the gang continued banging out *The Bestiary*. "I was freaking out about it, but I'm glad we pushed through," she says of opening up the group dynamic. "I'm proud of what we've done together. I feel like the shiniest moments on the album are when we're collaborating." GW

"If it sounds heavy on a classical guitar, it will sound even heavier plugged in"
RILEY PINKERTON

JONATHAN PUSHNIK



"You can make all kinds of sounds, but they're not all necessarily good," Bentley Anderson says

Bentley Anderson

The underground NYC guitarist leans into his strengths — and those strengths involve making a whole lotta glorious, trance-inducing noise

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

ALONE IN HIS dorm room, transfixed by the bloom and decay of a single note, Bentley Anderson discovered his obsession and his voice on the guitar.

"I spent years trying to learn how to play proper guitar, and I was totally mediocre," Anderson says. "I could never learn how to shred, even though I really tried."

Anderson weaponized that sound and resonance from his dorm into a glorious noise. Carved from saw blades, chisels, metal rods and a Fender Jazzmaster, *Valence* — his latest collection of hellish soundscapes — dares the listener to turn away, offering catharsis only to those who return. Still, to describe Bentley Anderson's music as "just noise" would be reductive at best.

"If you're someone who's never heard anything outside of, you know, Barry Manilow, you're gonna be like, 'What the fuck is this?!,'" Anderson says. "It's not a literal racket. You can glean some kind of narrative from it."

"You can make all kinds of sounds, but they're not all necessarily good. You have to dig deep for compelling sounds," he says. "The saw blade just has this perfect kind of metal weight and size. I hold it over the pickups and hit it with my fingers."

"Altered tunings obliterated my knowledge of the fretboard"

"I found it on the ground," he says with a laugh. "I find all kinds of shit here in New York. I call them my "implements." It's a little bit like a prepared-instrument situation."

Anderson views playing guitar as an opportunity for deconstruction. Inevitably then, when he began interning at Sonic Youth's studio in 2005, the band's use of alternate tunings became another tool for Anderson to employ as he found his voice on his instrument.

"The guitar on *Valence* is, low to high, F#, F#, D, G, A, C#," he says. "Altered tunings obliterated my knowledge of the fretboard to where I just put my hands on the guitar, started playing and found I was using only my ear. It was liberating."

Has traditional guitar-based music run its course, then?

"I think someone will always be writing an amazing song in a standard tuning," he says. "I don't think that'll ever stop, and I don't think people will ever get bored with that. It's not that I'm bored with that either, but I'm obsessed with sounds, resonance and weird. You have to find your strengths." GW

IVANA VUKŠIC

INTERVIEW

Heavy on the MSG

Foxes, gold pieces, Tom and Jerry cartoons? It can only be the great Michael Schenker, who takes us through MSG's new album, *Don't Sell Your Soul*, track by weirdly-inspired track

BY JON WIEDERHORN



"I've always believed in doing exactly what I feel like," Michael Schenker says

ROSS HALFIN

IN CONVERSATION, 70-YEAR-OLD guitar hero Michael Schenker overflows with excitement like he's 20, answering questions with effusive run-on sentences, making sure he expels every uncensored, elliptical thought that glides past his tongue. This makes for lengthy yet revealing interviews. Each comment is a puzzle piece that helps reveal the full picture of his unorthodox approach to music and business. In short, the message is fairly straightforward: Enthusiasm, self-belief and impulsiveness are the keys to happiness. And he's got plenty to be happy about.

Late last year, Schenker released *Don't Sell Your Soul*, the 13th studio album of originals by his band, Michael Schenker Group (MSG). It's a grand return to rip-rockin' form and the second release in a three-album series. The first part of the package, *My Years with UFO*, came out in June 2024 and featured re-recorded, star-studded versions of 11 tracks Schenker wrote between 1972 and 1978 during his years with British powerhouse rockers UFO.

Schenker decided to record the album not just to play old favorites with Slash, Dee Snider, Roger Glover, Stephen Pearcy, Axl Rose and others. He created it as a history lesson for fans.

"Many people think I was born musically in the Eighties, because when you click 'Michael Schenker' on the internet, all you see is 'Michael Schenker Group'; there's nothing there about UFO or Scorpions," Schenker says. "With *My Years with UFO*, I wanted to show the songs I created in my developing years from age 17 to 23, because every year I improved my guitar playing and songwriting in some way. So the record reminds me of that and educates all the people who didn't know where I came from."

A refresher: Schenker left UFO in 1978 after growing friction between him and vocalist Phil Mogg ended with the guitarist getting sucker-punched — after telling Mogg he'd leave the band if he was ever hit. Schenker's first offering with Michael Schenker Band was 1980's self-titled album, and over the next four years (their most prolific era), MSG released three more studio records and two live albums. *Don't Sell Your Soul* revisits the driving and highly melodic style Schenker last showcased on 2022's *Universal* and reflects the guitarist's songwriting MO — "freedom of expression" — a technique that prioritizes spontaneity over premeditation, authenticity over trend, and instinct over theory.

"Maybe I play parts of scales, but I don't know the names of them or the modes or whatever. I just don't care about that stuff"

"I've never known about anything technical," Schenker says. "When I put a musical sketch together for a song, I can't say if it's major or minor. People say I switch between the two, but I don't know. Maybe I play parts of scales, but I don't know the names of them or the modes or whatever. I just don't care about that stuff."

While Schenker was working on *Don't Sell Your Soul*, he was writing more experimental and atmospheric songs for *Freedom of Expression*, the third album of his trilogy. Originally, that album was going to be instrumental, but when producer and singer Michael Voss impulsively added vocals one night, then played them for Schenker, the guitarist liked the way they complemented the song, and the direction of the album abruptly changed. Suddenly, Voss was singing across the tracks.

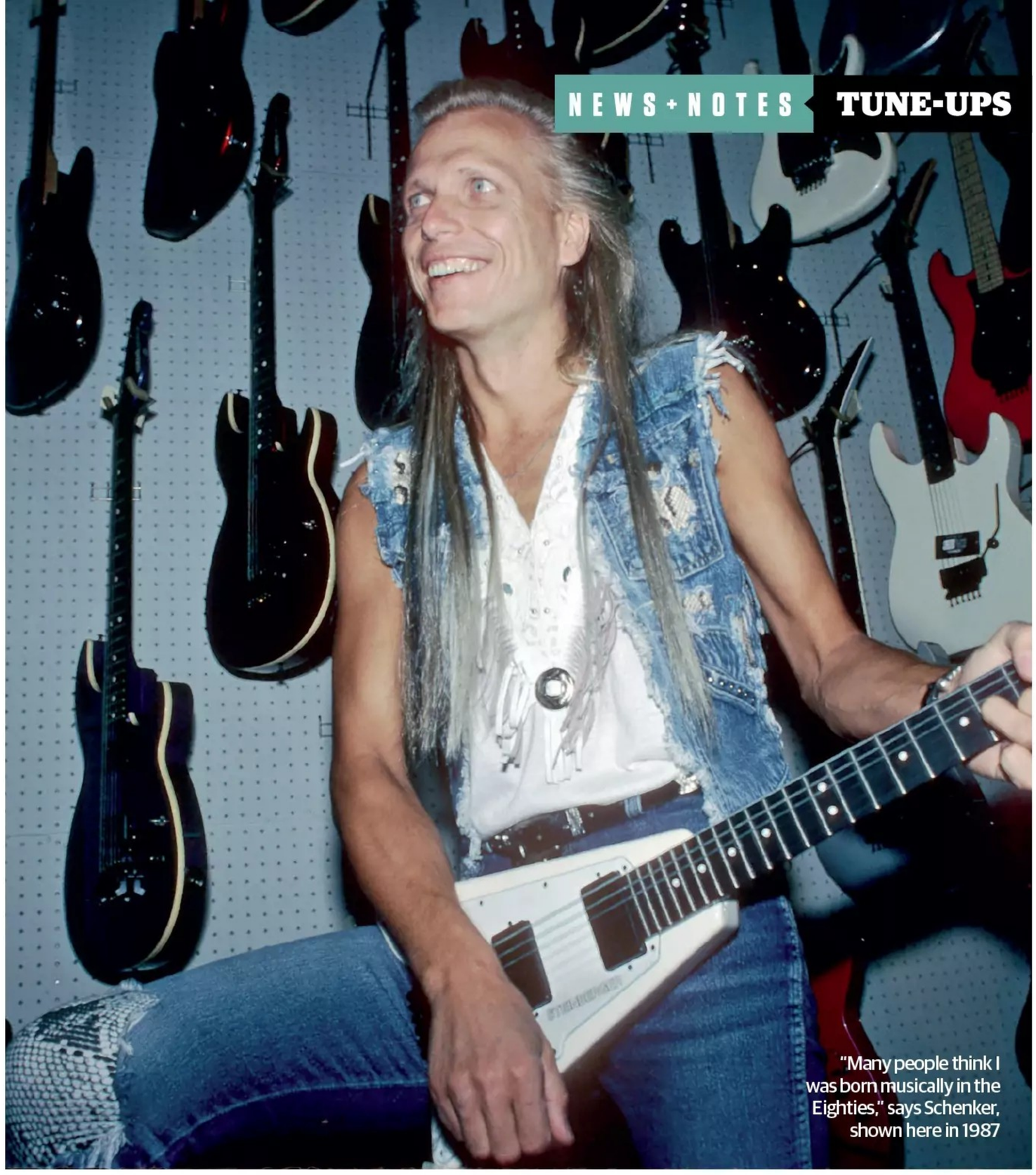
"I've always believed in doing exactly what I feel like," Schenker says. "That's freedom of expression. If I did something just because it was what people expected, or if I stopped what I was doing because I was blinded

by fame and money, that would be selling my soul."

Reflecting over the past 50 years, Schenker admits there were times he easily could have hopped the money wagon for a quick cash grab. When Uli Jon Roth quit Scorpions in 1978, Schenker returned to the band (of which he was a member between 1972 and 1974) to work with them on *Lovedrive*, but he didn't stay. After Randy Rhoads died, Schenker was the first guitarist Ozzy Osbourne approached, but he decided to pursue his own vision instead of following the Prince of Darkness.

"With Scorpions, I helped them out as a gesture to my brother [*Rudolf*]," Schenker says. "They were lost; they couldn't do an album, so I worked with them as a jump-starter. And when Ozzy approached me, there was an inner warning light that said, 'Don't do that because you have just left UFO and Scorpions.' I had time to digest my situation and the message was clear to me. I wanted to carry on doing my thing and purely self-express, and not run after a trend, which Scorpions and UFO had been trying to do since I left."

As for *Don't Sell Your Soul*, the songs are rooted in the propulsive, driving riffs and neo-classical-tinged leads of classic MSG (Schenker used his old black Gibson Flying V for most takes), but with some production twists that make the songs more modern-sounding. If nothing else, *Don't Sell Your Soul* is an affirmation that Schenker continues to follow his instincts, whether that means foot-stomping anthems, heartstring-tugging love songs or rhythmically off-kilter cuts that defy dancing. Between musings about the power of music and the best ways to achieve peace of mind, Schenker talked about each song on *Don't Sell Your Soul* and explained how plugging in for another MSG album is like putting on a favorite pair of shoes.



"Many people think I was born musically in the Eighties," says Schenker, shown here in 1987

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"Don't Sell Your Soul"

I wrote that in my head before I even picked up the guitar. I was humming a part and imagined a guitar to it, which is a rare way for me to work. I was on tour and I was driving, and I had time to contemplate things. When I eventually picked up a guitar, the song kept progressing step by step, and it kept me going. I used a wah in it, and I haven't used a wah-wah for a long time. For some reason, I wanted to hear that sound, and I used it in some other songs, too. Michael Voss wanted to put delay and other effects on it, but I said, "Nah, I want to hear that rough sound," so I kept it dry on purpose. It's a very personal song about my story, which is why I wrote the lyrics, which I also rarely do.

"Danger Zone"

I collect gold pieces. I bump into them as I play guitar and when I've found one, I put it aside. For "Danger Zone," I went back to one of these pieces of gold and used it to start the song. That inspired me to write the bridge and chorus parts. It's interesting because when I write riffs, I don't know what songs they're for. And then I start randomly putting them together. I don't even look for the best piece of gold, I just start playing something in my collection, and if it works I use it. If it doesn't, I reach for something else.

"Eye of the Storm"

I put together a sketch for the song, but then after Bodo [*Schopf*] put down his drums, there was more feel to it. I wasn't sure if I still wanted to use the guitar parts I had put down. The next time I came into the studio, Michael Voss played the track back for me so I could hear how it sounded and evaluate it. He had already worked on it, and the way he put it together sounded very unique, so I didn't feel like I needed to do anything to it anymore. It didn't stick out as a lead guitar song. It was more atmospheric and interesting. I said, "I think what I did yesterday is perfect."



"Janie the Fox"

It's a spooky song right from the beginning because it's different. I think I was inspired by doing the acoustic instrumentals we started out with for *Freedom of Expression*. But I mixed together cleaner sounds with a distorted riff I had written, and that's where the atmosphere comes from. Michael took advantage of that, and then one night after I left the studio, he had a spiritual experience. He was working on the vocals and when he looked outside of his big glass window, there was a fox looking in. Michael looked at the fox, and the fox looked at Michael — right into his eyes. He explained later that he felt like he was completely in tune with nature, so he wrote the lyrics and vocals. And that created a contrast because the beginning is more wild and spooky, and in the chorus he sings so melodiously and it's beautiful.

"I Can't Stand Waiting"
I put down a riff I had from my pieces of gold. I did verse, bridge, chorus. And then Michael did something with it, and when I came in the next day, he played me what he had. It was great, but it was catchier than what I did because Michael is a trendy guy. It's only me who does pure self-expression. When I put my music down, there's a sketch. And then when all these people join in, they're coming from a different world.

"Sign of the Times"
That was a fun song. I did this kind of palm-muted arpeggio that's just part of what I do. I've used it for a long time to figure out how to use strings in different ways. And that goes along with the vocals and becomes a big part of the song.

"The Chosen"
When I did it, the fast part in the end came out of nowhere. It's quite a spooky song. You have all these clean guitars in the background, and there's off-time parts that just aren't resolving. While I was doing it, I had this vision of those *Tom and Jerry* cartoons where the cat is chasing the mouse. I thought it would be great to create this vision of somebody being chased and running away.

"I collect gold pieces. I bump into them as I play guitar, and when I've found one, I put it aside..."

"It's You"
That's the only other song I wrote in my head and didn't have a guitar when I came up with it. I can't even describe what I did to make the feeling that's in the song, where it's maybe sad, but happy. It was just a feeling that comes out in the riffs. There's a story in between the riffs, and I'm playing along with it, I guess, and naturally capturing the feeling of it. I think the rock riff I played makes it more upbeat, but I didn't think about doing that. It happened on its own.

"Six String Shotgun"
I put a musical sketch together that was instrumental. There was nothing particularly special about it. Then, [*guest vocalist*] Robin McAuley [*McAuley Schenker Group*] wrote the lyrics. He told me it was called "Six String Shotgun," and I thought maybe it was about someone shooting somebody. But maybe that's ironic. There's a reason Robin wrote those lyrics. I don't have anything to do with that part, and sometimes the music has nothing to do with the music.

"Flesh and Bone"
It has a very hard-rock sound — not to balance a slow song or anything; I was just self-expressing. I wouldn't express something I don't want to do. So, obviously, everything I want to do is put on a recording because that's what I want to work on and hear and let other people hear.

"Surrender"
There's a gallop in that song. It's funny because I once read one of the guys in Iron Maiden say they invented the gallop. First of all, the gallop was already there if you look at TV shows like *Bonanza*. Also, the gallop was done a long time ago in rock; I played it in [*UFO on*] "Lights Out." It's just something I've always liked to do. It has this adventurous kind of sound that works well sometimes. It's in my blood, and it's the beat that never resolves, so you can't really dance to it.

And while we're at it... The Michael Schenker Group released a six-disc box set, Live & Ready: 1980–1984, *on April 3. So this is definitely your chance to go, um, heavy on the MSG.* GW



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THE GEAR HUNTER

Yamaha

A look back at highlights from Yamaha's 60-year history — from Carlos Santana to the current one-two Revstar punch of Chris Buck and Matteo Mancuso

BY AMIT SHARMA



Yamaha FG series acoustics, photographed in 2009

IT WOULD BE fair to say Yamaha are a bit of an anomaly compared to all the other gear brands you'll read about in *Guitar World*. The company's history stretches all the way back to 1887, when reed organ manufacturer Nippon Gakki Co. was established by Torakusu Yamaha. At the turn of the century, they were responsible for the very first pianos made in Japan. By the mid-Fifties they were at the cutting edge of motorcycle design, which led to their expansion into a number of motor-related industries, including boats, generators and robots.

The Guitar Research Division was founded in the mid-Sixties by Yamaha's president at the time, Genichi Kawakami, who told his team to create something that could rival the finest instruments in the world. All these years later, their guitars have been seen in the hands of many a musical legend, from folk heroes like Paul Simon and John Denver and classic rockers like Brian May and Randy Bachman all the way through to alternative greats such as Billy Corgan and Chino Moreno.

The company's most famous designs include FG series acoustics, the Carlos Santana co-designed SG-2000, RGX Superstrats, ultra-versatile Pacificas, and the newer Revstar models seen in the hands of modern trailblazers Chris Buck and Matteo Mancuso. In celebration of their 60th anniversary in the business, we tracked down Electric Guitar Product Manager Yusuke Ota and Acoustic Guitar Product Manager Shingo Ekuni for an exclusive look into the company's evolution.

What can you tell us about the very first Yamaha guitars?

SHINGO EKUNI: The first Yamaha guitar was the FG-180 acoustic, which was designed in 1965 and released the following year. Our president was very ambitious and wanted to make the best guitar possible. We were already known for making high-quality pianos and orchestral instruments. The new guitars had to live up to that benchmark — built well enough to last forever. That was how it all got started.

YUSUKE OTA: The first electric models came the same year, originally called the S201 and S302, though we changed the names to SG-2 and SG-3. We've changed the strategies and names behind our guitar lines a few times; in this case it was because Yamaha was planning to launch a semi-acoustic range like the Gibson ES-335 and wanted to call it the SA series. The plan was to match the model name with the models, and the meaning behind SG was "solid guitar." Back then, the ideas were a bit more fluid, so they were happy to change things around.

"We wanted to invent a Yamaha-ness, if that makes sense, by adding unique features or coming up with quirky body shapes"
YUSUKE OTA

Even that early on, there was a focus on making guitars of all kinds, rather than sticking to one core design or sound.

OTA: That's one of Yamaha's greatest strengths. We have a wide range of styles, sounds and affordability. Things like the Pacifica became well-respected for being one of the best entry-level beginner's guitars, but we have a lot of high-end instruments for professional artists. It's a wide operation that caters to players of all skill levels and budgets, which can only be a good thing.

The SG-1000 and SG-2000 were introduced in the mid-Seventies. Their names were soon cast into legend as "the Les Paul killer," ending up in the hands of Al Di Meola and Phil Manzanera.

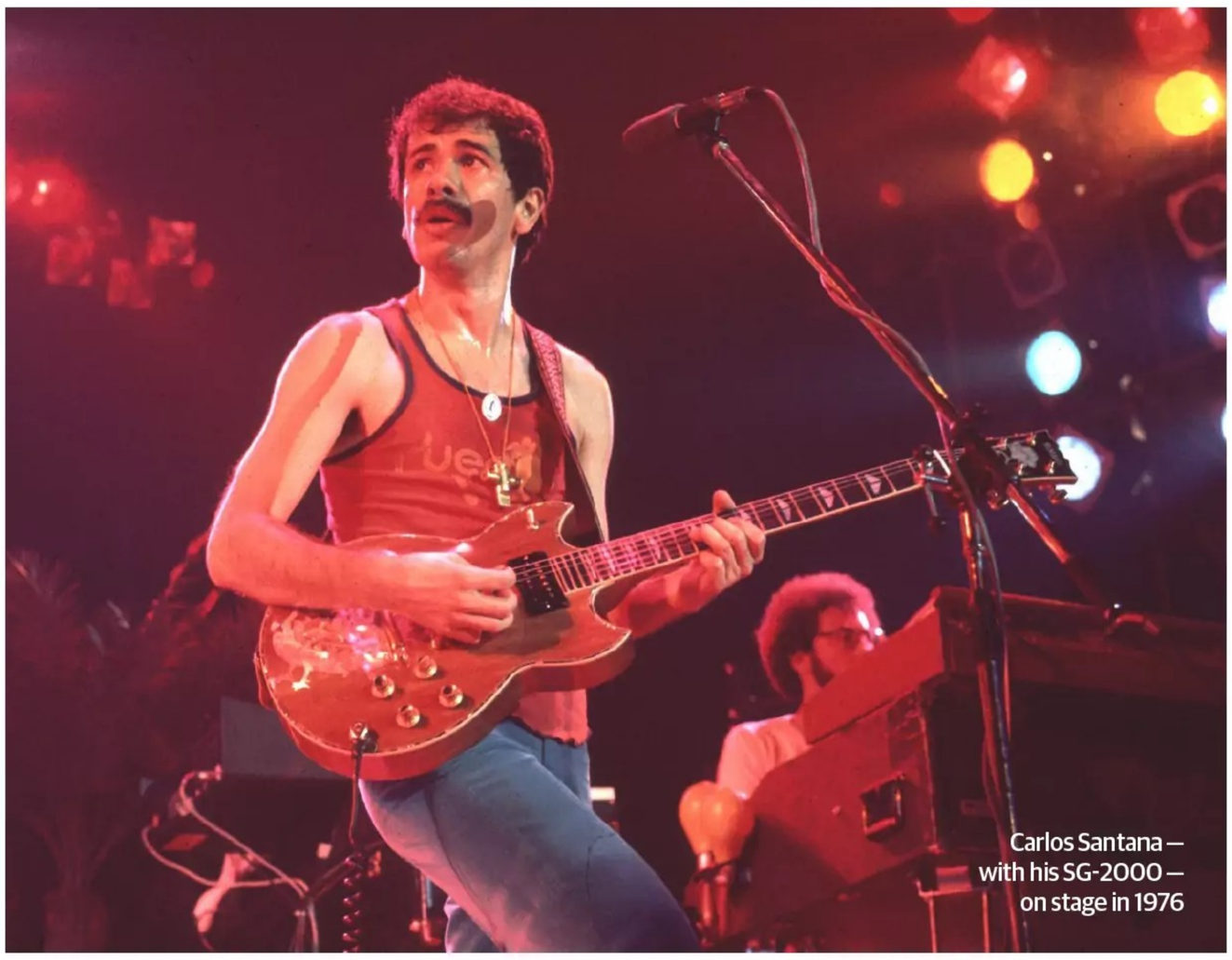
OTA: Early on, our development team didn't really define what SG stood for very clearly. We actually call many different body shapes the SG, because it stands for solid guitar. In 1974, we made a very iconic model with the symmetrical body shape of the SG-1000, which officially arrived in 1976 along with the SG-2000, designed in collaboration with Carlos Santana. He gave us a lot of feedback, which we utilized to make the best-sounding guitar of its kind. Our goal during that era was to produce "Made in Japan" models that could be used by professional guitarists. The construction was a set neck with a maple top and mahogany back, almost

PHILIP SOWELS/FUTURE

like a Les Paul but made in a Japanese factory with all the benefits of artisan Japanese craftsmanship. We also gave the guitar some unique tonal features, like the bi-sound system, which worked like a coil split with push/pull tone pots. We wanted to provide single-coil sounds even though the guitar had two humbuckers.

What have been the best-selling acoustic models over the years?

EKUNI: It would probably be the FG series, because every dealer will stock them and a lot of people end up having those models as their first guitars. Some people even carry on using those entry-level guitars on a professional level. We've seen players with vintage FG-180 acoustics, the first model we ever made, on stage or in the studio. We also started making folk-style acoustics, which is what American folk artists like Paul Simon wanted. The singer/songwriter players came back in the Nineties after all the metal generation kids in the Eighties, so the FG models had a revival. Gradually the lineup has expanded. In 2010, we did the vintage reissues called the FG Red Label, as well as the FG9 and FS9. These were high-end guitars that looked back to our earliest models. We are proud to see vintage FGs still being used by professional artists, as well as the newer reissues. Today's artists are more picky when it comes to sound, so it means a lot when someone like David Ryan Harris from John Mayer's band is using the FS9.



Carlos Santana — with his SG-2000 — on stage in 1976

> **"We've always loved catering to many styles"**
> **SHINGO EKUNI**

In the 1970s, the quality of the Japanese guitars famously created a wave of fear and controversy for some U.S. brands. Now these "lawsuit era" models are highly collectable.

OTA: For sure. Many of the guitars made in Japan back then were copying Fender and Gibson. The currency exchange rate at the time made it hard for people to buy American guitars — it was super expensive. So the local manufacturers made their own versions to sell to the Japanese market. The difference with Yamaha is that we were trying to make original guitars rather than copies. We wanted to invent a Yamaha-ness, if that makes sense, by adding unique features or coming up with quirky body shapes.



"Things like the Pacifica became well-respected for being one of the best entry-level beginner's guitars," Yusuke Ota says

Then there was the age of the Superstrat, starting with the now-discontinued RGX series in the mid-Eighties and then the Pacificas of the following decade.

OTA: In 1985, hard rock and heavy metal was very trendy. We wanted to make a guitar for that market, with a pointy body shape, a thin and compact neck profile plus high-output pickups even with the HSS configuration. It was like a guitar for the younger generation who were pursuing more of a technical playing style. That was definitely us going into the Superstrat world. In 1990, we launched the Pacifica series by getting the Japanese and American teams to collaborate and make a guitar for all the session players in L.A. That was a big thing around that time, so we wanted to create something that was ultra versatile and able to cover just about any kind of sound and genre. Another consideration was the price point, we wanted affordable versions of these guitars, as well as mid-tier and higher-end ones.

Which players would you say are most connected to the Yamaha brand and encapsulate the sound?

OTA: Of course there are a lot of legendary players who have used Yamaha guitars, but of the classic players, Carlos Santana is one of the biggest names we've been associated with. He really loved the SG series in the 1970s. We made that great guitar together that really influenced the market. The SG-2000 had this really fat sound that was rich in the mid-frequencies, almost like a vocal. That's why his guitar lines would sound like he was singing, with all that long sustain. It was such a thick tone even without any distortion or overdrive. It would always cut through thanks to the neck-thru construction, tonewoods and our pickup design. In the Seventies, players were after a more powerful sound with a little bit more output but without sacrificing that very musical tone. After that, Carlos went on to PRS, but he was mainly using Yamaha electrics before that and helped make the SG series very iconic. As for contemporary players, we have to mention Chris Buck and Matteo Mancuso who are both using our Revstar series.

PHIL BARKER/FUTURE, CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE



Billy Corgan's custom LJ16BC, photographed in 2018

"For 60 years, Yamaha has been designing guitars with musicians at the center. That won't change, but players are changing"
YUSUKE OTA

In terms of contemporary players, you couldn't have asked for better endorsees. Both of them were born with this one-in-a-million kind of magic touch.
OTA: Exactly. I think they are two of the greatest guitar talents of this era. Chris is a very dynamic player who uses his right hand to create this very unique feel and tone. On the other hand, Matteo is super technical and has a very clear tone. They are such different players, but both of them want something similar – lots of dynamics and transparency. I think the Revstar is one of our most iconic models right now. I'm proud to see those two players using our guitars and look forward to seeing them both become even more popular.

Other famous names connected to Yamaha over the years include Billy Corgan, Wes Borland, Steve Lukather, Mike Stern and Rodrigo Y Gabriela. It's been quite a mix, when you think about it.
EKUNI: We've always loved catering to many styles. Billy Corgan has been using the LJ16 as well as the FGX5 from the Red Label series. I've spoken to him directly about what he wants and expects from his acoustic guitars. What he mentioned was that our pickups are perfect for him to express himself. I think it's partly because our development team is so big – we are making professional mixers, pianos and all kinds of equipment. We pull from the same resources, which means we have more technology than other brands. Billy's playing style is quite wide; he might go from very soft fingerpicking to hard strums with a pick. He needs a pickup that can do both, and most pickups that are good for one aren't particularly good at the other. We made our pickups to handle every kind of playing style. Billy has told me that's why he chooses Yamaha.

What are your current bestsellers?
OTA: The Revstar is doing really well right now. I think that's because it's so different to what other major brands like Gibson and Fender are putting out. Again, it helps that Chris and Matteo are using them. The Revstar allows the player to really create the tone from their fingers, which a lot of electric guitars don't always do. It's all about what they hear in their head and translating that through the wood and the pickups.

What can we expect next from the gang at Yamaha?
OTA: The Revstar is our key series right now, so we're looking to expand the lineup. For 60 years, Yamaha has been designing guitars with musicians at the center. That won't change, but players are changing. Styles and expectations aren't what they used to be. We'd like to keep evolving and offer the instruments our customers need. People will always expect great guitars from Yamaha, and we want to make sure we deliver.
EKUNI: Compared to other brands, we're quite unique. I'm working from Japan while Yusuke is in the U.S. We have teams across the world in Europe and other Asian regions correlating with each other, feeding back what our customers and artists are saying. We use this information to carry on developing better and more unique guitars. It was the mission statement for when Yamaha Guitars first launched and still is today. GW



Chris Buck with his Revstar in 2025. His signature Revstar model was announced at the 2026 NAMM Show

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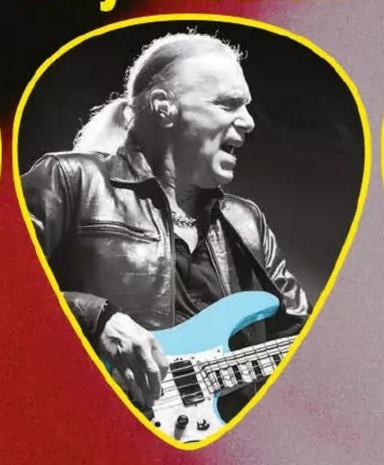
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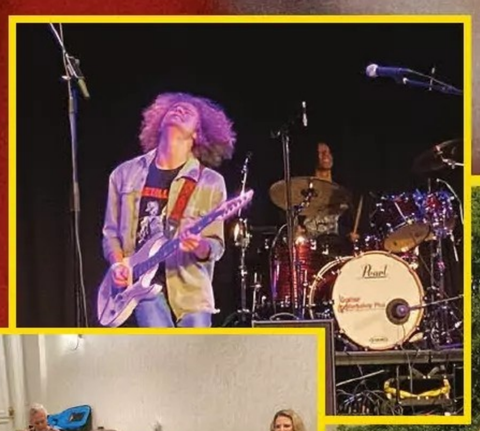


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the prodigal sunn

Washington-formed doom-metal duo Sunn O))) return with an album of crushingly low frequencies. We ask Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson to explain how they unleash their floorboard-loosening sounds

BY JOEL MCIVER

TEN ALBUMS SINCE their formation in Seattle in 1998, Sunn O))) have built an intimidating and intellectually rigorous catalog of music based on subterranean riffing, currently in trouser-flapping drop-A tuning.

A wide range of alternative musicians have performed with them over the years, including *Joker* soundtrack composer Hildur Guðnadóttir, Japanese experimentalists Boris, singer Attila Csihar of black metal ghouls Mayhem and the avant-garde songwriter Scott Walker, whose collaborative 2014 album, *Soused*, was one of many high points of the duo's prolific career so far. Still, their new album, *Sunn O)))*, a monstrously edifying piece of work, might well match that highlight.

Guitar World met Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson for a discussion of all things downtuned.

The press release for *Sunn O)))* claims there are 130 guitar tracks on the album. Is that true?

GREG ANDERSON: Maybe more, actually. The producer that we worked with, Brad Wood, developed this concept of recording us almost as you would an orchestra, with a microphone or two on every instrument, to get a really detailed documentation of the sound. There was a microphone on every single speaker that was used in the tracking. In the past, on a 4x12 cabinet, we've had one, maybe two microphones on it. Brad put a microphone on all four speakers, and we're playing with multiple cabinets.

STEPHEN O'MALLEY: It was an incredible way of doing it. I think there were about 20 mics per person per take, so with that, all of the variety of color of each speaker, and even location of each mic, it was great. It was Brad's concept that he brought to the table.

And you were reamping, too.

ANDERSON: We did a lot of that on this record, so there was a direct signal that was recorded while we were tracking, and then we ran that back through a different pedal setup or different amplifiers, but the speaker cab remained the same. One of the things that we also did on this record was take Stephen's signal and run it through my setup, and then we'd take my signal and run it through Stephen's setup, just to get some different sounds and different textures. We had many, many layers to work from, hence the absurd amount of tracks.

Presumably 130 guitar tracks is quite a challenge to mix.

O'MALLEY: That was our only hesitation – like, "Can you manage this?" Because if we do one take of one guitar part, that's 40 tracks. And then if we re-amp it, it's adding another 40 tracks, and then there's the other instrumentation as well. If someone was playing a bass track through the backline, that'd be another 40 tracks of bass. It adds up quite quickly, and the management of all that takes a lot of skill. Another question was,



"Our live performances are something you can feel in your bones"
GREG ANDERSON

CHARLES PETERSON

"Are there enough Neve preamps to handle this?" Fortunately, the studio had them, and to Brad's credit, the entire mixing process was totally smooth, with no issues.

If you're going to do this, you might as well go big, right?

ANDERSON: Yeah. That's actually part of the story of this group. Our backline is enormous, and so is the sound we're making.

Just as well you weren't recording to tape.

O'MALLEY: That would have been a lot of tape machines. I mean, our last two records that we recorded with Steve Albini [Life Metal *and* Pyroclasts, *both released in 2019*] were on tape, and it was exactly that — like, "How many channels do we have to work with?"

Can you take us through the gear you used on the record?

O'MALLEY: Yeah. I need to pull up some photos. We had someone come in and take them for this specific purpose.

For when *Guitar World* calls?

O'MALLEY: Yeah — exactly! My main guitar on the record was my signature silverburst Travis Bean TB1000A.

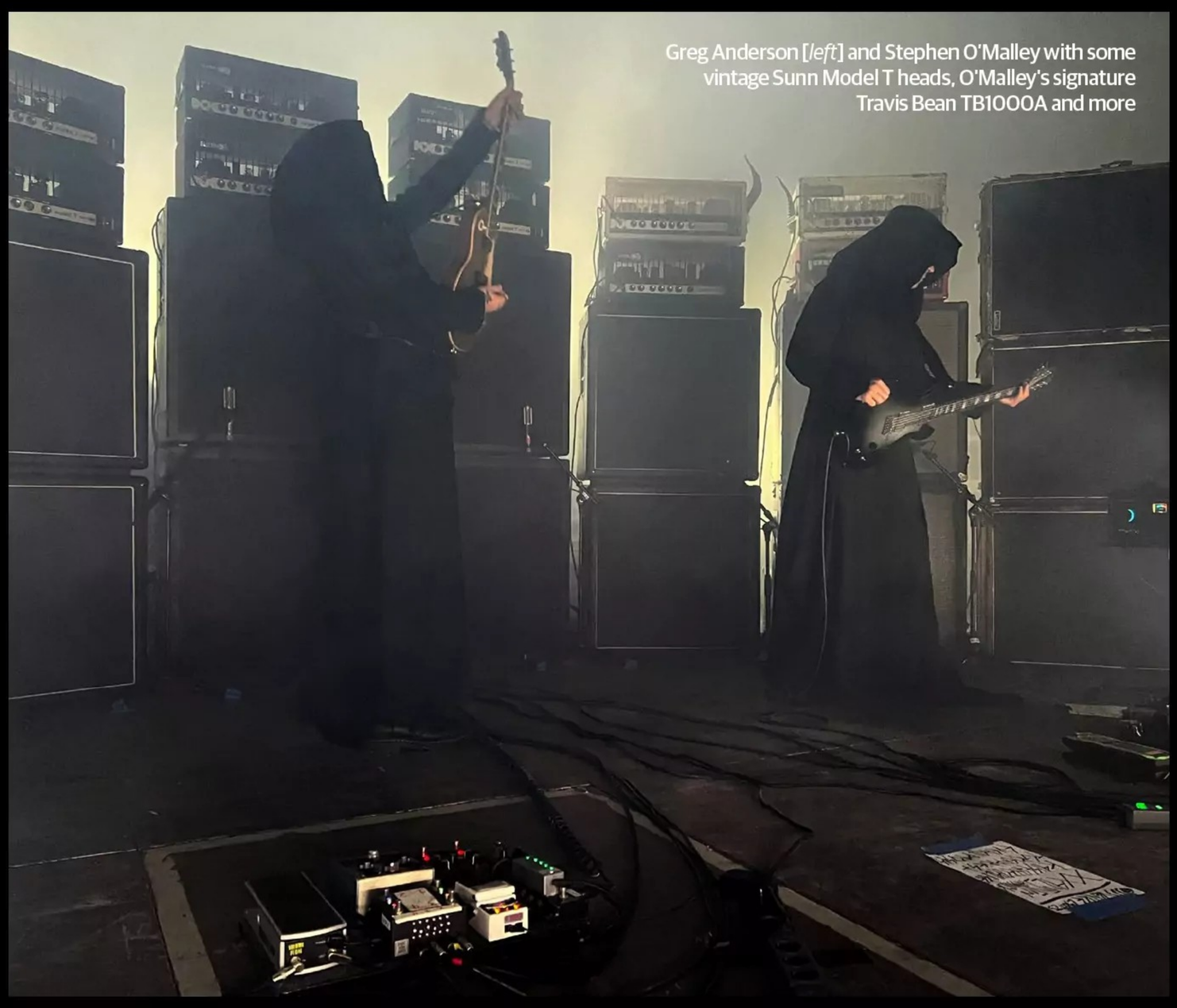
ANDERSON: I played two Les Pauls — a 1972 Custom and a 2005 Deluxe. One has P100s in it and the other has Lollar humbuckers.

O'MALLEY: On the bass guitar tracks, I was playing this amazing vintage Gibson Thunderbird. The guy we rented it from, I asked him if he could do a drop-A tuning with a .140 string on the A, and he was like, "Well, I'll have to put a new nut on, but I'll do it," and he set it up like that. It was great.

How about effects?

O'MALLEY: My board had my ProCo Big Box Rat with the Keeley mod. There's a Zvex Super Hard On, which I've had since the early Nineties. There's a J. Rockett Silver Archer, a Dallas Rangemaster, a Black Ash from EarthQuaker Devices, an Aguilar Octamizer, an EarthQuaker Swiss Things, a Peterson StroboStomp tuner and an Echo Fix EF-X3 Chorus Echo. The Sound Shank by EarthQuaker was used a lot, as well as a few Big Muffs.

ANDERSON: We brought a shit-ton of different distortion and fuzz pedals and a few other pedals as well. Stephen tends to be the one who uses more echo and reverb in his sound; I leave that out of mine. I was using a Big Muff Civil War fuzz. That runs through the EarthQuaker Devices Life pedal, whose circuit is based off the Rat and has an octave and boost in it as well. Those are the two main pedals as far as the sound for me.



Greg Anderson [*left*] and Stephen O'Malley with some vintage Sunn Model T heads, O'Malley's signature Travis Bean TB1000A and more



And amps?

O'MALLEY: On my side, the amplifier wall was four Sunn Model T tube heads, vintage. Two of those were Super Ts, with Fender Soldano and Marshall cabs. For the bass, we had a vintage blueline Ampeg SVT and an 8x10 cab. That was all for the primary tracking. For reamping and some of the overdubs, I also had to create a Fender wall, which had a Champ, a Deluxe, a Twin and another one with a 12" speaker that I can't recall. Those were all vintage.

ANDERSON: Of course, we had the Sunn Model T heads, and on my side we also set up a bass setup with an 8x10 and a bass head. Typically for us on a live performance, that's done with an Ampeg SVT head and cabinet, but this time I used an Orange OD120.

O'MALLEY: We called one of the guitar cabs, a Fender 4x12, "the Black Hole." It had an insane bass response, much more than the Ampeg, even. It was pretty juicy on the bass – actually, a little bit too much, which is kind of good for our songs. We're kind of about having too much.

That's a lot of gear.

O'MALLEY: That's about half of what we usually use. [*Laughs*] I mean, recording full stacks isn't really necessary, so it was primarily half-stacks in the studio.

How do you two divide up the recording?

O'MALLEY: Obviously, we're both playing electric guitar, and the way that works is pretty old school and pretty democratic. We'll introduce parts to each other and work on them and create arrangements, and then try different variations and make suggestions. It's pretty open in that way. We've been playing together for so long that we have a vocabulary that we go back to, but at the same time, each time we work together, it seems like we have to find new paths to communicate. I find that to be really positive and stimulating.

Do you guys play the riffs in unison?

ANDERSON: Oftentimes, yeah. There's moments, too, especially on this record, where we were experimenting with contrast and one person would riff and the other person would lay out, and we would take turns on that. Sometimes there were moments where we were playing slightly different variations of the same thing in unison. But oftentimes it is in unison, or one player played an octave up to give it some depth. We did a few overdubs, but not many: most of the album is a singular performance. What you hear is what was played in that moment. There's different things happening in reaction to the riffs, where each player is adding their own thing. To me, that's what makes up the entire sound. It brings in the character of each player.

"We called one of the cabs 'the Black Hole.' It had an insane bass response"
STEPHEN O'MALLEY

Is it physically exhausting to play your stuff?

ANDERSON: Somewhat, but it's also exhilarating, like jumping into a frozen lake. Our live performances are typically around 90 minutes long, and it's definitely something you feel, like a great hike through the woods. You can feel it in your bones. I like that feeling.

Is there a limit to how low the guitars can go, frequency wise?

ANDERSON: There are limitations to the instruments and amplification when it comes to producing sounds. On some of our earlier recordings, we experimented with low tones that only dogs can hear. I'm sure there's recordings that have that, but I think as far as an expression of what we're doing, it can't be captured correctly, or in a way we would present it.

It's a great album. From the Mark Rothko picture on the cover to the guitar tones, it's one hell of an artefact.

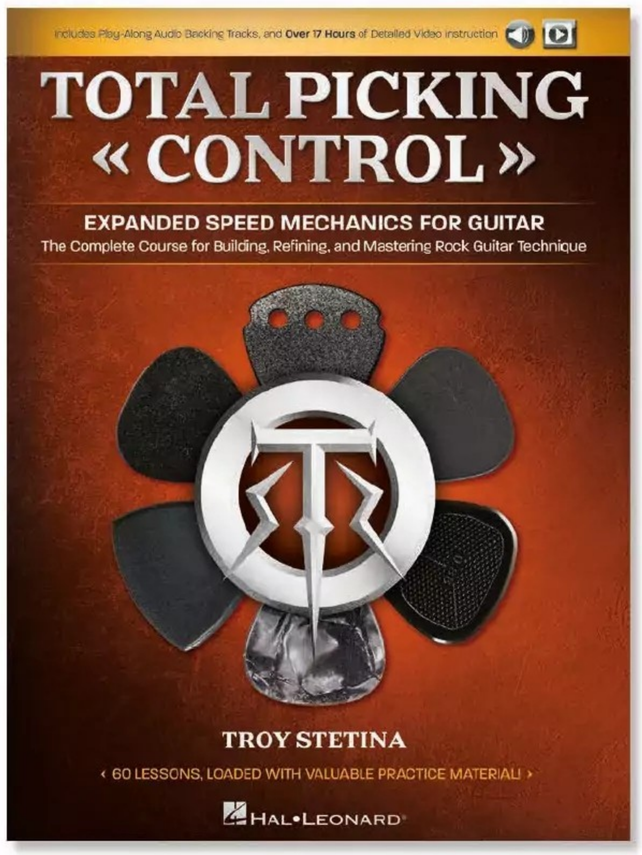
O'MALLEY: Thanks. It's taken a lot of development to get here, and what's exciting about it is that it always feels fresh, and we're working with a new label, Sub Pop. Greg and I grew up in Seattle, and we started playing music there in the Nineties, so to be working with Sub Pop is really cool. This is a life's-work kind of artistic project, and it's really been a blessing, considering where it's brought us.

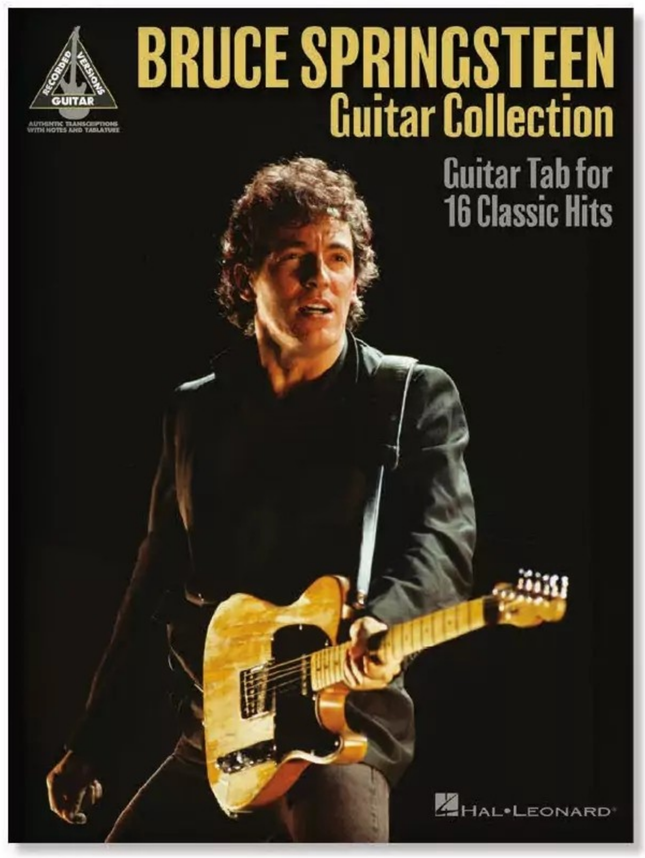
ANDERSON: I'm really excited about *Sunn O)))* – and very proud of it. This is the first record we've made with just the two of us. We've gone back to the beginning, in a sense, but in a way that this project has turned into its own beast. After 10 albums, we're still moving forward.

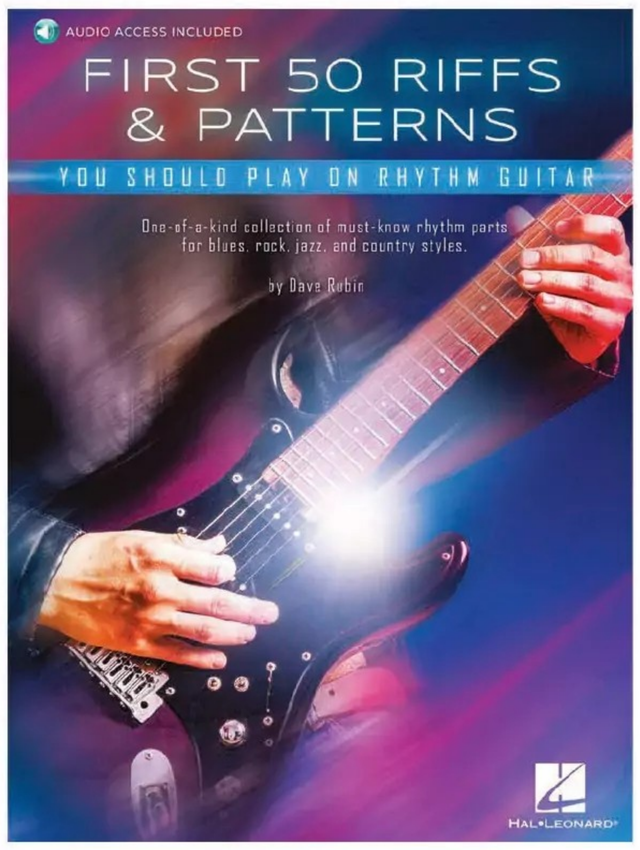
Sunn O))) *was released April 3 on Sub Pop. For info, check out sunn.bandcamp.com.* GW

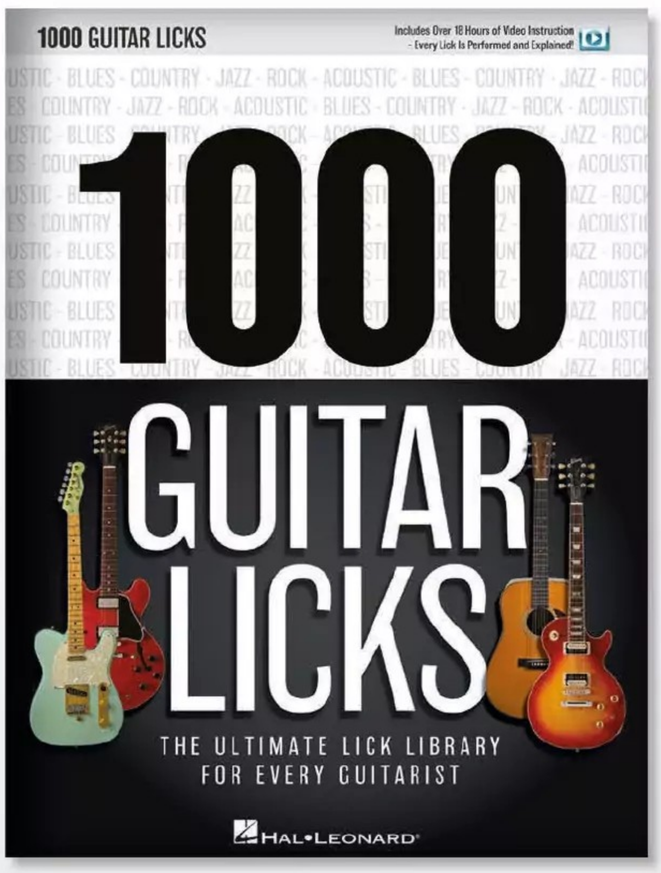
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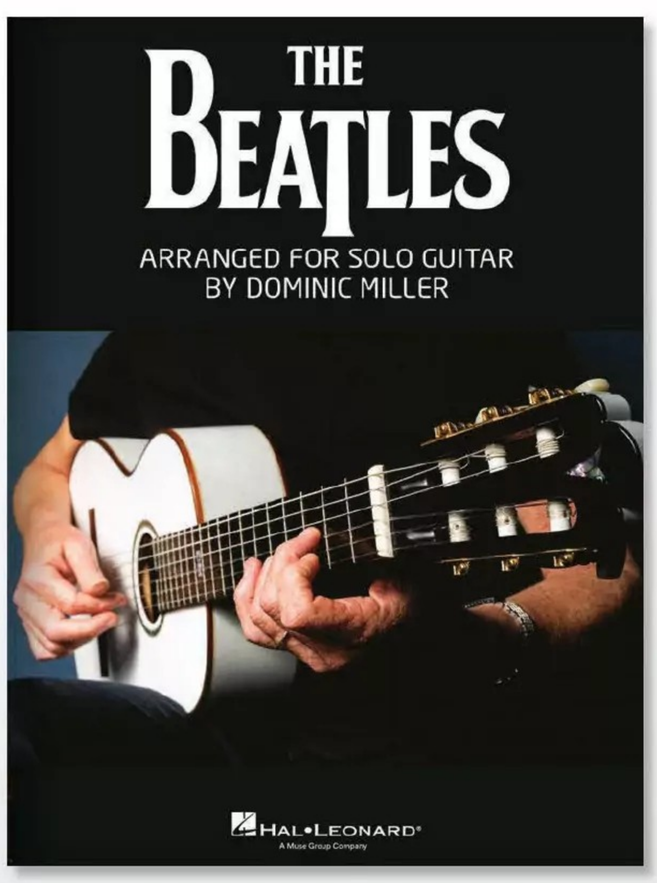
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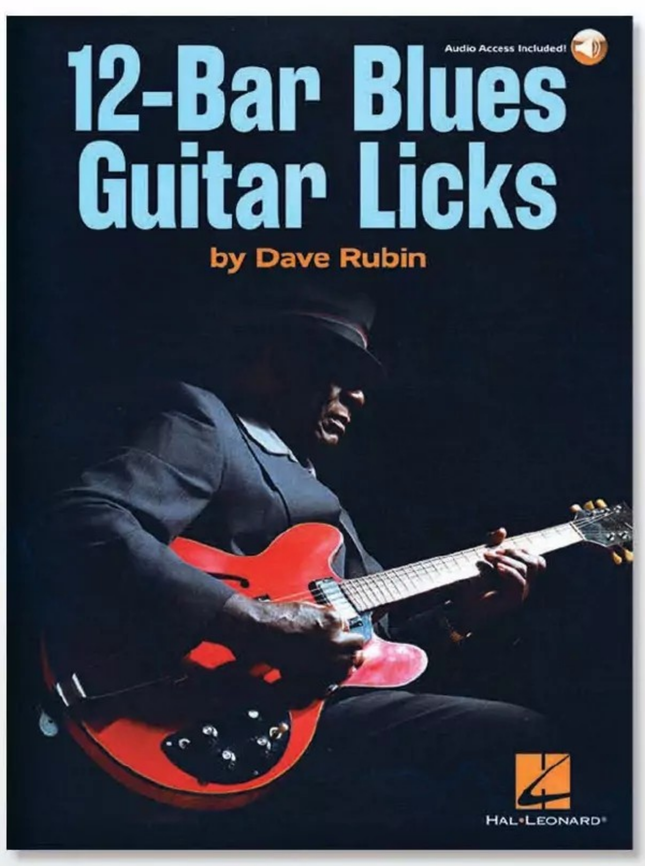


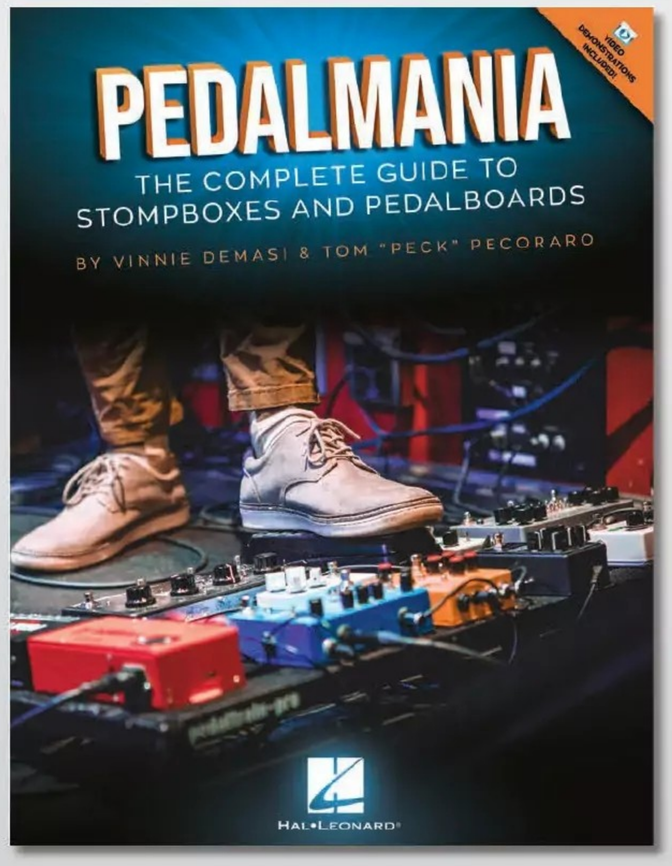


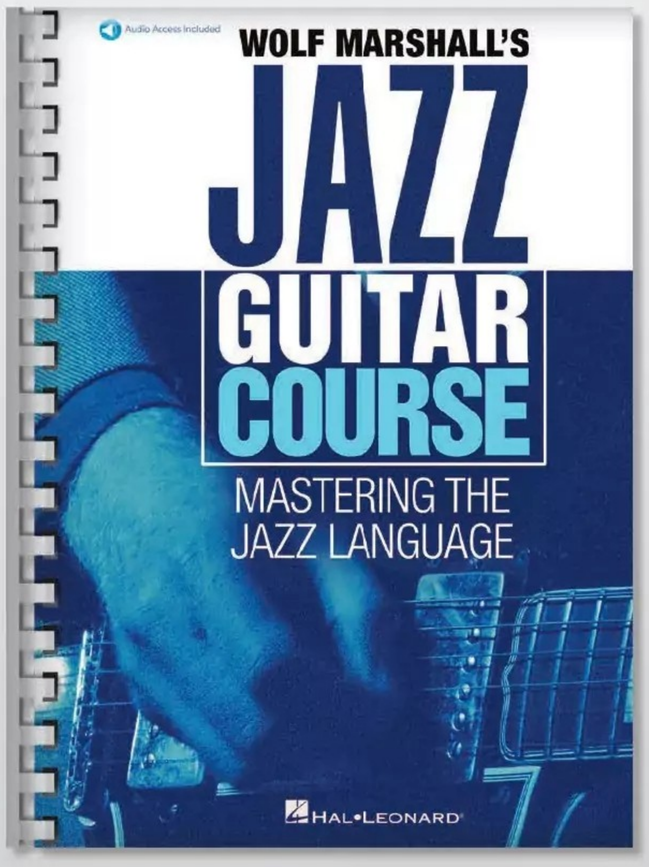


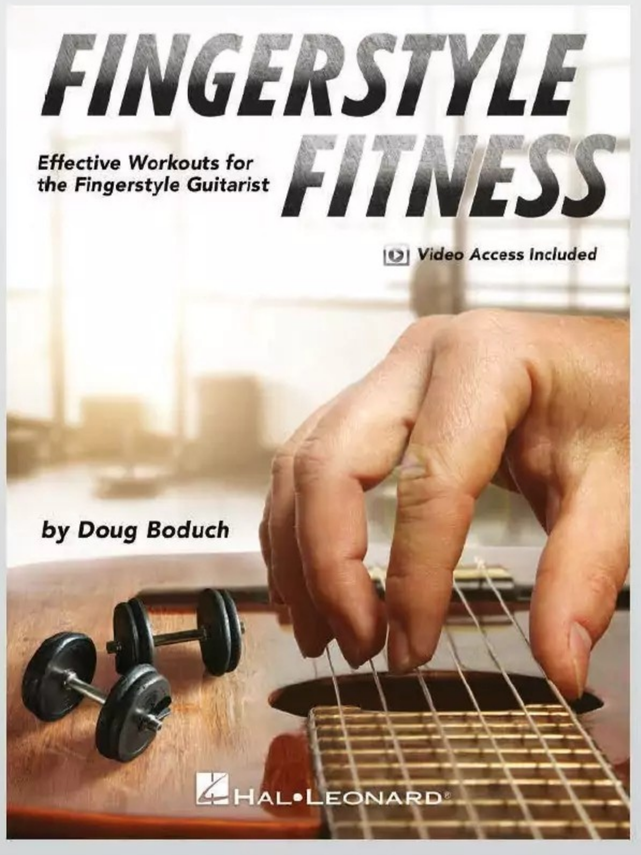












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ROOTS OF A KILLER RIFF

The riff from Mötley Crüe's "Looks That Kill" shook the music world and changed the shape of Eighties metal. Four decades later, we time-travel back to the era of zebra stripes and ripped jeans in search of this immortal guitar line's origin story

BY DAMON ORION

IN EARLY 1984, MTV bubbled with cheery pop acts like Culture Club and the Human League. It was a Crayola-colored world where girls just wanted to have fun, Huey Lewis wanted a new drug and spontaneous group dancing in public was as common as sneezing.

Enter the four-headed glam-metal beast known as Mötley Crüe. Looking and sounding like supervillains from the underworld, the Crüe marauded mass consciousness by way of a pseudo-Satanic, post-apocalyptic-themed video for "Looks That Kill," the first single from their breakout sophomore album, late 1983's *Shout at the Devil*. The song's brash, sawtoothed guitar riff had a Pavlovian effect on millions, pulling America's alienated teens toward their TV screens with tractor-beam efficiency.

The "Looks That Kill" riff is a four-second summation of everything that was awesome about Eighties metal. It's one of those instantly iconic guitar figures that sound like they fell from the sky, fully formed and howling for blood. In truth, however, this riff took many incarnations on its way to becoming a sonic weapon in the Crüe's hands. Its origin story takes us into the heart of Neon Decade-era Hollywood, where Mötley and their fellow Sunset Strip rockers were blazing a musical trail that reeked of booze and Aquanet.



George Lynch [*left*] and Don Dokken do their thing in San Francisco in 1983

[*facing page*] Mötley Crüe in Chicago in March 1984

PAUL NATIKIN/WIREIMAGE, RANDY BACHMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Girls, Girls, Girls

Stop reading now and Google the song "Young Girls" by the pop-metal band Dokken. No, really – do it.

Yep, the opening riff is damned near identical to the one from "Looks That Kill" – a rhythmic pattern built from twin palm-muted tonic pedal tones interspersed with descending chords played an octave higher. Structurally speaking, a single half-step is the only thing setting these two chord progressions apart. Like the "Looks That Kill" riff – and, for that matter, all the others we'll be exploring – Dokken's riff kicks off the song without accompaniment.

On first impression, despite Dokken guitarist George Lynch's undeniable guitar prowess, the "Young Girls" riff comes off as a no-calorie "Looks That Kill" knockoff, lacking the rude, dirty tone that gives the latter its sledgehammer wallop. However, closer inspection reveals that "Looks That Kill" might be the imitator here; the European release of *Breaking the Chains*, the Dokken album that contained "Young Girls," came out almost exactly two years before *Shout at the Devil*.

Precluding any premature assumptions that "Young Girls" was written before "Looks That Kill," Mötley Crüe premiered the latter song live at Pasadena's Perkins Palace on April 19, 1982, according to setlist.fm. Since Mötley formed in January 1981, it's possible, if unlikely, that Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx had already written the song by the time the European version of Dokken's *Breaking the Chains* came out in September of that year. However, "Looks That Kill" doesn't appear on live Crüe bootlegs from '81, so the odds are far greater that Lynch and vocalist Don Dokken penned "Young Girls" before "Looks That Kill" was a glimmer in Nikki Sixx's twisted imagination. Could a gig that Mötley Crüe played with Dokken at the Roxy in November 1981 have sown the seeds of inspiration inside Sixx's skull?

Breaking the Chains also featured a tune called "Stick to Your Guns," which, like Mötley Crüe's debut single of the same name, used the line "You gotta fight!" to drive home a message of perseverance in the face of hardship. The Crüe's single came out in May 1981 – four months before the European release of *Breaking the Chains* – so once again, no definitive conclusion on which song was written first can be made until one of the songwriters lets that information out of the cellar.

The "Looks That Kill" riff is a summation of everything awesome about Eighties metal

Out on the Streets, That's Where We'll Meet

The chord progression from "Young Girls" wasn't the first – nor the last – to bear a strong resemblance to the one from "Looks That Kill." For example, the rhythm guitar performance that opens a song called "Tell the World" by Mötley Crüe's glam-metal brethren in Ratt belongs to the same family of riffs. "Tell the World" first appeared on the compilation album *Metal Massacre*, which was released June 14, 1982, about two months after Mötley's onstage premiere of "Looks That Kill." A new version of "Tell the World" surfaced on Ratt's self-titled debut EP, which came out roughly one month before the September 1983 release of *Shout at the Devil*.

Notwithstanding the musicians' well-known passion for intoxicants, there's little chance that the similarity between the "Looks That Kill" and "Tell the World" riffs escaped both bands' notice. However, considering the close timing of the two songs' releases, it's possible that, rather than this being a case of one riff directly inspiring the other, these guitar lines emerged side by

side during group rehearsals or songwriting sessions between Nikki Sixx and the late Ratt guitarist Robbin Crosby.

In his book *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll*, Ratt vocalist Stephen Pearcy recalled that certain members of Ratt and Mötley were thick as thieves, at one time forming a street gang called the Gladiators. "Robbin Crosby and I were closest with [*Crüe drummer*] Tommy [*Lee*] and Nikki, and we started tripping around with them frequently," Pearcy wrote.

Sixx and Crosby, the latter of whom co-wrote "Tell the World" with Pearcy, were especially tight, eventually sharing a living space. As told in Sixx's book *The Heroin Diaries*, the bassist moved in with Crosby after Mötley wrapped up their *Shout at the Devil* tour.

Naturally, the friendship between Sixx and Crosby sparked some musical collaboration. Sixx confirmed this in a Facebook post from July 2025. After writing that Robbin "had a heart of gold," he noted, "[*I*] look forward to finishing some of these songs we started down the road."

During a conversation with SiriusXM radio personality Tommy London in 2022, Pearcy revealed that he and Crosby rehearsed with Sixx and Lee "a couple of times" in the early Eighties. "I don't know if we wanted to start a band or if we were just jamming, but something was getting intense in there," he said.

The singer added that while Sixx ultimately decided to go his own way, "if that would have been a band, it would have been a great band, actually. I don't know what songs we played, but we were very supportive of each other back in the day."

Did the alliance between these musicians give rise to the "Looks That Kill" and "Tell the World" riffs... or might Ratt, Dokken and Mötley Crüe all have drawn inspiration from an unexpected source that predates glam metal?

The Journey Begins...?

Various rhythm guitar performances from songs that came before "Young Girls," "Tell the World" and "Looks That Kill" vaguely foreshadow these later songs' signature riffs, perhaps even helping inspire them. One example is the guitar line that drives "You Don't Have to Be Old to Be Wise" from Judas Priest's 1980 album *British Steel*. The link between this tune and "Looks That Kill" is especially evident at the song's end, with the group's

Journey's Neal Schon may be the unlikely godfather of Eighties glam metal

TRACKING THE BEAST

Survivors of Mötley Crüe's notorious *Shout at the Devil* sessions dish the dirt on in-studio debauchery, secret overdubs and bringing the "Looks That Kill" riff to life

BY DAMON ORION

IN LIGHT OF Mötley Crüe's infamous penchant for bad behavior, you'd think trying to get a coherent performance out of them in the studio would be like trying to train a pack of hyenas as valet attendants. It's easy to picture the band members anointing the walls of Hollywood's Cherokee Studios with liquor, spray paint, lighter fluid and various unsavory emissions as their hapless producer begs them to pick up their instruments and give "Looks That Kill" a run-through. The *Shout at the Devil* liner notes do little to dispel that notion: "This album was recorded on Foster's Lager, Budweiser, Bombay Gin, lots of Jack Daniels, Kahlua and brandy, quackers and krell [*the band members' nickname for their favorite illegal nasal decongestant*] and wild women!"

Jonathan Little, owner of the L.A.-based audio gear company Little Labs, had a front-row seat to the bedlam while working as a tech during the Shout sessions. "I saw all the well-known Mötley Crüe debauchery," he says. "There would be chicks getting champagne bottles inserted in their private parts, [*and*] for most of one night, I sat in a little back room with Nikki Sixx and [*Doors keyboardist*] Ray Manzarek doing blow."

He adds that even engineer Geoff Workman "always had a big Coca-Cola glass full of ice and Jack Daniels. He'd go through a bottle of Jack each night."

However, *Shout at the Devil* producer Tom Werman says the Crüe's antics didn't impede recording progress. "There was a lot of partying in the studio, but it was really softcore," he says. "They didn't get near the heroin thing, which they did later, but not in the studio, really. Alcohol and party-favor drugs — that was normal in probably the majority of recording sessions in L.A. in the Eighties, but we got it done. They wanted good music, and they wanted to be successful, so they took the partying only so far."



GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES

Werman adds that working with Crüe guitarist Mick Mars was the best part of the recording experience, largely because Mars came into the studio with his guitar parts worked out in advance. "The only thing I really contributed to Mick's playing was fills. He would have the basic guitar lines down, but he wouldn't have any fills between verses or between a verse and a chorus, so I would suggest stuff to him, and he would be very cooperative."

The late Geoff Workman's experience with Mars was less pleasant, according to Little. "Geoff was getting frustrated with Mick[*'s performances*]. He claimed to me that he would take the tapes to [*Toto keyboardist*] David Paich's place, which was called Hog Manor, and overdub his own guitar tracks [*in place of Mars'*]. Not even the band knew about it."

Leaving aside the question of whose playing made it onto the record, the rhythm guitar track on "Looks That Kill" consists of a single performance split to two separate tracks. One track was close-miked with a Neumann U 87 and panned left. The other, recorded with a microphone in the back of the room, was panned hard right.

"I was a rhythm guitar player, so that was really the basis of my whole approach to making records; put a good rhythm guitar [*track*] down, double it and spread it left and right," Werman says. "That was the cushion on which the whole song sat."

As the first thing mainstream audiences heard from the Crüe, the "Looks That Kill" riff was the battering ram the band used to smash their way into popular music's hall of victors. It played a crucial part in transforming Mötley from underground sensation to the unchallenged trash sultans of the heavy metal world. In the process, it helped set the template for the commercial metal sound that ruled the 1980s.

Werman acknowledges the powerful impact "Looks That Kill" and *Shout at the Devil* had on music. "[*Mötley Crüe*] were as new and influential as Guns N' Roses was when they came along. It established a new bar for metal achievement and attitude."

"Looks That Kill" Axology

GUITAR: 1972 Gibson Les Paul Standard or Gibson Les Paul Custom with T-Top pickups
AMP: Marshall JCM800 or late-Sixties/early-Seventies Super Lead plexis with master volume mod and extra gain stage (Volume 1: 7, Volume 2: 8, Presence: 3, Bass: 8, Middle: 4.5, Treble: 4.5, Master Volume: 9 o'clock), Marshall cabinets loaded with Celestion V30 or G12M Greenback speakers
STRINGS: Ernie Ball Light Gauge
TUNING: D standard

shout-along "You! Don't!" chant prefiguring the gang vocal in the chorus of the latter song.

That said, "Where Were You" by Journey might be the song that started it all. It appeared on *Departure*, released in early 1980 and co-produced by future *Shout at the Devil* engineer Geoff Workman.

Listening to "Where Were You" and "Looks That Kill" back to back is a study in the contrasting directions a musical idea can take in the hands of two different bands. Rather than flying headlong into over-the-top metal aggression, Journey used their riff as the starting point for a high-energy pop-rock tune whose vibrance outweighs its bitter lyrics. The song's buoyant feel stems in part from guitarist Neal Schon's relatively moderate use of overdrive. He likely got his gritty tone on this song by playing a Gibson Les Paul through a Marshall or a "jumped-up Hiwatt head," the latter of which was one of his go-tos in the early Eighties. Regardless of this song's possible status as a forerunner to "Looks That Kill," Schon's searing lead playing on "Where Were You" is worth checking out.

Thus, the journey of the "Looks That Kill" riff appears to have begun at the dawn of the Decade of Decadence, when Schon cooked up a rhythm guitar part that might make him the unlikely godfather of Eighties glam metal. GW



Ratt's Robbin Crosby [*left*] and Stephen Pearcy in Chicago, May 12, 1984

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

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JAMES' GANG

How guitarist Jimmy James' spartan approach and tone propel funk-instrumental powerhouse Parlor Greens into the stratosphere – minus any parlor tricks

BY JOE BOSSO

"**I LIKE TO** plug straight into the amp," says Parlor Greens guitarist Jimmy James. "When I first started playing, I didn't have effects, so I got used to hearing my guitar right into the amp. It makes my ears feel happy. It's like I can make the music flow from my soul into my fingers."

James' clean, unadulterated tones, along with his astute, deceptively simple playing style – economical, soulful lead lines and tight, drop-dead funk rhythms – are indispensable elements of Parlor Greens. Drawing inspiration from the Meters and Booker T. and the MGs, the trio, which also includes organist Adam Scone and drummer Tim Carman, made waves with their 2024 debut, *In Green We Dream*, an irresistible set of psychedelic funk-soul instrumentals highlighted by the stirring original "West Memphis" and a delightfully inventive take on George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord."

The group came together from various outfits; the Seattle-based James plays with the funk-soul band True Loves (and you might remember him from the Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio), Scone is known for his work with Miami's Scone Cash Players and the Sugarman 3, while Carman is the former drummer for Boston blues stars GA-20 – but with Parlor Greens they're a musical dream team. They don't burden their songs with unnecessary bouts of instrumental excess. They jam, but they don't noodle. This is an intuitive, sophisticated bunch that knows when to leave space between the notes. With Scone's righteous melodies leading the way, James and Carman provide groove-filled fuel, and the music takes flight.

"For me, it all comes from James Jamerson, the great Motown bass legend," James says. "I watched the movie *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, and Jamerson's son quoted his father as saying, 'If you don't feel it, don't play it.' That stuck with me. I think that's how the band approaches our music. When we first got together, we played what we felt, and if we didn't feel it, we didn't play it. We didn't even have to discuss it."

"Playing straight into the amp makes me happy. It's like I can make the music flow from my soul into my fingers"

Touring tightened them to a dangerous degree, and they came off the road ready to track their new album with gusto. Produced by their Colemine label owner, Terry Cole, *Emeralds* sees the group working their way through 11 impeccable jams that take no time at all to get going. "Lion's Mane" is slinky and sensual, while "Letter to Brother Ben" is a fun and frisky shuffle update. James gets into a frenzied, single-string situation on the upbeat dance gem "Eat Your Dreams," and cool as can be, he tucks a snaky new riff inside the Parlor Greens' perky cover of Dolly Parton's "Jolene."

"On the first record, we were getting to know one another," James says. "Now we have all this experience together, so we made this record with a different perspective. We took more chances – 'Let's try this' or 'Let's try that.' We got experimental, but we always had the song in mind. When you can get to that place where things are loose but tight, it's a beautiful thing. It's like we can shoot out into the stratosphere and go to the cosmos."

One doesn't have to think too hard to hear a lot of Steve Cropper in your playing.

Oh, I'm a huge Steve Cropper fan, of course – rest in peace. I actually got to talk to him in a podcast. I didn't get to meet him in person, but we talked on the podcast. I was really excited. I started playing some of his riffs to him and told him how much "Soul Man" influenced our song "West Memphis." He giggled and was very tickled by that. He was such a big influence on me – not only the stuff he did with Booker T., but also "Walking the Dog" with Rufus Thomas or "Who's Making Love" with Johnny Taylor.

I was really grateful to talk to him because I consider him to be the last of that bunch. I didn't get a chance to talk to Jimmy Johnson from Muscle Shoals. I didn't get a chance to talk to Joe Messina or Eddie Willis from the Funk Brothers. They all passed before

CEDRIC PILARD



[*from left*] Keyboardist Adam Scone, guitarist Jimmy James and drummer Tim Carman

CEDRIC PILARD

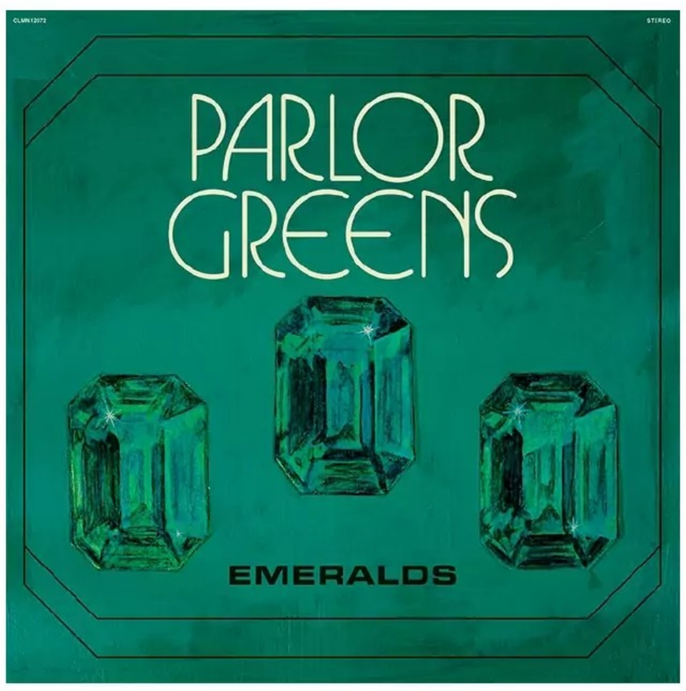
I could talk to them, but I did speak with Steve Cropper, and I'll forever hold that dear.

Was he encouraging about what you were doing?
He was very encouraging. I sat there listening to what he had to say, because you know, he was in the thick of it. He was like, "You keep doing what you're doing." I said, "Thank you, Mr. Cropper. I'll take that and I'll savor that."

The band is already distinguishing itself for its creative way with covers. First came "My Sweet Lord," and now you're having your way with "Jolene." Have you tried any covers that you couldn't get anywhere with?
No, that hasn't happened yet. Yeah, we got into the country roots, which I don't get to play very often. It was great to do "Jolene" by Miss Dolly Parton. The whole thing was crazy. We put it out before the album, and I said, "I wonder if anybody will recognize this." When we were doing it, it started out with a gospel intro, and then we hit that groove and I was like, 'Wait, what song is this?" When the melody hit, I was going, "Whoa, whoa, this is Jolene!" The band was like, "It is Jolene!" We didn't know it could be done like that. But like I said, I wanted to visit the country roots and do a groove take on it. My mother listened to country records when I was growing up — Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline.

Are you still playing your '64 Silvertone?
Yep. I had a Harmony Rocket a while back. I'm not really big on hollow bodies, but the Rockets have this raw, jagged sound that I liked. You always want to find something that fits who you are on the inside. I was a teenager and something happened with that guitar — something went haywire — and I could never find a guitar that sounded like it. I called around to vintage guitar shops, and shouted out to Mike Hitt and Chris Lomba at Georgetown Music. They had this guitar sitting there that they'd worked on. They said, "We've got a Silvertone here. Maybe you can check it out."

I picked it up and fell in love with it instantly. It was like I was 15 years old all over again. It had that thing, you know? I was like, "Okay, this is meant to be." I didn't know if I could afford it, but then I said to myself, "You only live once."



You made the right call.
Yeah, and the funny thing is, that guitar was on its way to the dump. They rescued it.

How about your amps? Are you still using a Sixties Ampeg Gemini II G-15?
Only for the recording sessions. The Gemini belongs to Terry Cole and his studio. I'd like to take it on the road, but you can't find any replacements. For my own amps, I have a Peavey Delta Blues 115 and a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe. I take the Hot Rod on the road; the Delta stays in the studio.

And, of course, no pedals.
I don't use pedals. I mean, sometimes if there's a certain amp I have to use and I need to boost the signal, I might put something in front of it. Most of the time, though, everything is straight in.

How long did it take to record the new album?
We didn't take long, maybe two or three days. We didn't really have distractions; it was cold and snowy outside. There was nothing much to do other than keep warm, so we just decided to stay in the studio. We probably



could have taken longer to work on things, but we kept it live and fresh. There were no overdubs.

Was every song born out of a jam?
Not everything. There's one song called "Parlor Change" that started when we were in Austin. The melody came about because we saw a barbecue joint with this sign: "You don't need no teeth to eat my beef." [*Ed. note: The establishment is Sam's Bar-B-Que*] Somehow a melody rang out. We were in the car singing, and I sang it into my phone. We recorded the melody and it became a groove.

Let's talk about a few more songs on the new record. Your guitar takes somewhat of the backseat to the organ on "Eat Your Greens," but there's a section where it jumps out and you do a wicked single-string workout. It's not really a solo; it's more like a percussive thing.
Honestly, I never even think about what I'm playing. I just play what I hear. Whatever I'm doing there was just the first thing I did, and it felt right at the moment. It's like this flow happens.

You get a little abstract in "Lion's Mane." There's this passage where you play these way-out bends that border on the atonal. I'm assuming that's spontaneous?
Everything is spontaneous. I don't ever work it out. It is just what I feel at the moment for the content of the song. I hear things as I hear them.

Your playing on "Letter to Brother Ben" is so energetic. You sound like you really enjoy playing a shuffle.
Oh yeah! Tim is playing a mean shuffle on that one. I don't get to play shuffles very often, so I had a lot of fun playing that groove. It was a total dream.

You dedicated the album closer, "Queen of My Heart," to your late mother. It's such a gorgeous ballad.
Thank you. That's actually my mother's voice you hear at the end of the track.

"Everything is spontaneous, I don't ever work it out. It is just what I feel at the moment for the song"

That's right. It's so touching.
That was one of the hardest songs I ever wrote. I brought my guitar to her grave, and I just started playing. I recorded what I played and kept it in my back pocket. I didn't think we'd ever record it. Then one night I had a dream about my mother, and she kind of gave me a wink like, "Go for it." We went into the studio, learned the song in about 15 minutes and recorded it in two takes. The first time was a bit of a false start, but the second take flowed smoothly. I couldn't listen to it once we'd laid it down. I had to go outside and let it all out.

I'm sure. What a powerful moment — writing a song at your mother's grave.
Absolutely. I brought my little battery powered amp, and it just flowed. [*Pauses*] It's still the hardest song to listen to on this record.

I have to ask — are you going to play it live?
I don't know. I don't know if I could make it through. If we played it, I'd be spent. It's the most emotional tune I've ever had to do. Without my mother, I wouldn't be who I am. I miss her every day. It's going on four years in April, and it's still hard. It's good to hear her voice, and I want the world to hear it. It's beautiful. GW

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Guess Guess

After years of legal struggles, Randy Bachman & Burton Cummings of legendary Canadian rockers the Guess Who have reclaimed their name – and will be thrilling American women (and men) in 2026

BY JOEL MCIVER

"**I SAW KEITH** RICHARDS on TV with Ronnie Wood the other day saying, 'The new rock bands are terrible. They all rock, but they don't know how to roll.' And the interviewer says, 'What does that mean?'" says Randy Bachman, guitar hero since the Sixties and renowned for not one but two hit-making bands – the Guess Who and Bachman-Turner Overdrive.

"Keith said, 'Rolling means you don't play to a click track. You get together, you rock out, and you speed up when you get excited. It's like you're jogging. You take off with a start, you slow down, you get to a pace, you speed up again. Very few bands can rock and roll anymore.' And the interviewer asked, 'Which bands do you mean?' and Keith said, "Well, like the Guess Who" – and he named a couple of other bands like us who play live and don't have a click track."

Bachman has every right to be proud of his band's reputation. Like that of his admirer Richards, the Guess Who has a heritage that goes back six decades to the birth of amped-up rock 'n' roll, building a name along the way for compelling songwriting and fiery guitar playing. The Canadian group's heyday might be some years in the rear-view mirror, with the classic lineup doing its best work between 1965 and 1970, but their catalog still has a loyal following, as the reaction to their recently announced Takin' It Back spring-and-summer 2026 tour has proven.

Not that getting to this point has been plain sailing for Bachman and his long-time songwriting and performing partner, singer and keyboardist Burton Cummings. The Guess Who have been touring for some years in a new line-up formed by the group's best-known bassist, Jim Kale, doing good business nationwide – until Bachman and Cummings stepped in with legal action. The situation was resolved out of court in 2024, allowing the two musicians to form a new line-up and announce Canadian and U.S. live dates.

"We went after them for false impersonation, fraud, things like that, and then our lawyer and I shut down the publishing from BMI," Cummings says, with audible relief. "The promoters were told that if they hired this band, they were breaking the law



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The Guess Who in the Sixties [*from left*]: Randy Bachman, Burton Cummings, Jim Kale and Garry Peterson



The Guess Who on stage earlier this year; Randy Bachman [*left*] is playing Steve Lukather's lightweight backup Les Paul goldtop

because the band was playing unauthorized, unregistered songs and they would be sued, so the promoters actually shut it down. There was a lot of meditation and mediation. It took another year and a half or two years to get that done. Finally, the whole thing was settled."

Now that the authentic Guess Who lineup has been re-established, fans are in for a treat in May, when the spring portion of the tour kicks off in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. Bachman and Cummings, now 82 and 77 respectively but on fine guitar and vocal form, will be backed by guitarists Tim Bovaconti and Joe Augello, bassist Jeff Jones, percussionist Nick Sinopoli and drummer Sean Fitzsimons, delivering songs from their entire catalog. Shoehorning all the fan favorites into a standard set will be no easy feat, simply because of the band's long and prestigious history.

The first iteration of this group appeared way back in 1958, when the Winnipeg-based singer Chad Allan formed a local band called Al and the Silvertones. By 1962, the lineup included Bachman, Kale and drummer Garry Peterson and, after a sequence of singles and a change of name to Chad Allan and the Expressions, the local Quality Records label released a cover of Johnny Kidd & the Pirates' "Shakin' All Over." A domestic chart-topper, the single bore the words "Guess Who?" on its sleeve, reportedly because the group's manager wanted people to think that it might be by a famous British Invasion band working anonymously. The same slogan appeared on the 1965 album *Hey Ho (What You Do to Me!)*; within a year or two, the name had stuck.

True success didn't come until 1969, when the albums *Wheatfield Soul* and *Canned Wheat* yielded the hit singles "These Eyes," "Laughing" and "Undun"; stardom followed with the immortal "American Woman" in 1970, something of an anthem for a generation despite some confusion over its lyrics, thought by some to be anti-American. The *American Woman* album was a Canadian Number 1 and charted highly in the U.S. and U.K., while the singles "No Time" and "No Sugar Tonight/New Mother Nature" also made an impact.

Bachman departed the band in 1970, somewhat curiously given their newfound success, although he had the last laugh, forming Bachman-Turner Overdrive with two of his brothers and scoring with a series of hits, notably the huge-selling "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" in 1974. The Guess Who continued under Cummings' leadership until 1975, followed by occasional reunion tours and an induction into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1987.

"My 1957 Gretsch 6120 is never going to leave my house again. It took me 46 years to get it back"
RANDY BACHMAN

Thirty-nine years later, the original Guess Who singer and guitarist will be treading the boards together once again, as the two men explain – dropping in plenty of guitar adventures along the way.

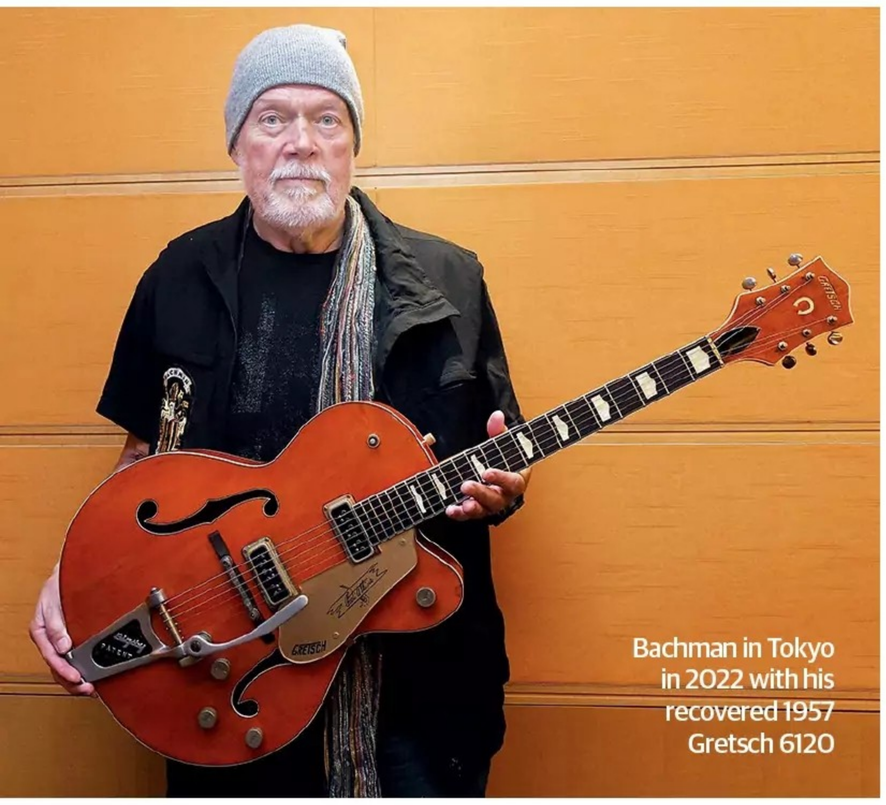
This is set to be a busy year for the Guess Who. How does it feel to be back on the road?

RANDY BACHMAN: My whole year is going to be rock and rolling. I'm really looking forward to it. We kept getting offers and offers and offers, and finally, we got a really good one, too good to refuse, for January in Fallsview Casino in Niagara Falls. It sold out in an hour. Then we got asked to do the Rock and Roll Legends Cruise in February that goes from Florida to Jamaica and back, and then we announced our tour in May, right across Canada, and boom, it's 80 percent sold out already. The fans are going crazy. [*In March we announced*] U.S. dates soon for June, July and August. After that, in September, October, November, I'm touring with BTO. My three brothers passed away during Covid, so I inherited everything. I owned it anyways, but I got no speed bumps in my way to stop me.

How is the Guess Who lineup sounding with the new members?

BERTON CUMMINGS: We just did a week of rehearsals in Toronto, and I was just so proud of everybody and very proud of how the songs were sounding. We're going out to give the music to the people that really want to hear

COREY KELLY



Bachman in Tokyo in 2022 with his recovered 1957 Gretsch 6120



More vintage Guess Who [*from left*]: Peterson, Cummings, Bachman and Kale in the mid to late Sixties

JUN SATO/WIREIMAGE, MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

the guys that made the records. And Randy has never played better.

BACHMAN: Let me say that Burton sounds incredible on vocals. When there's a song you haven't played for 30 years, and you play it and it sounds exactly the same as ever, it's fantastic.

CUMMINGS: What's great is that there have only been a few bands in history that have had three lead guitar players. I can think of the Allman Brothers and Moby Grape and Lynyrd Skynyrd, and that's about it as far as well-known bands. And now, last week at rehearsals, here was Randy as the general of a guitar army. We never had that before in the Guess Who, and the stuff sounds great. Back when we recorded some of these records, Randy did all the guitar parts, so when we played live, we could never sound like the record. Now we can, and it's very exciting.

No backing tracks needed, then?

CUMMINGS: I don't like them. We've never used them. No band that I've been in has ever used them. We brag on stage that everything you hear tonight is being played live. We don't use machines. I don't even want to go there.

BACHMAN: I also think people come to hear mistakes. They know that everything they hear on the radio has been sung or played on guitar 30 times, so they're hearing a close to perfect record. You see us play live, and sometimes you start in the wrong key, or you play the wrong note, and you go, "Oops." And everybody goes, "Wow." It's like jazz guys improvising. Like in *Spinal Tap* — play it once, it's a mistake. Play it again, it's a cool jazz transition note.

You also play the guitar, Burton.

CUMMINGS: A little bit. Randy taught me just enough guitar to be annoying. He gave me a book with all the chord formations and he helped me learn certain chords, so I switch to rhythm guitar once in a while on stage. I'm not that good, but it's nice to put on an old Gibson once in a while.

Randy, your treasured 1957 Gretsch 6120 was stolen from you in 1976 and you only got it back in 2022. I assume you're not bringing it out on the road.

BACHMAN: No, although I did play that Gretsch on every Guess Who song. It's a very clean guitar, a big hollow-body. If you turn it up loud, you get an incredible honking feedback, so I use it for rhythm. That's what I played on "These Eyes," that's the beginning of "Laughing." It's the rhythm track on "American Woman," but then I put my '59 Les Paul on top of that, which is very thick, sounding like a cello or a viola. They go well together.

That's a classic Sixties combination.

BACHMAN: Well, in those days, in the middle and late Sixties, there were no pedalboards. You had an amp, usually a Fender, or maybe a Marshall if you were British, and you got your tones from three guitars. You had a Gibson if you wanted to sound Clapton-esque, you had a Strat if you wanted to sound like Hendrix, or you had a Gretsch if you wanted to sound cleaner, like John Fogerty. And then if you had a 12-string, obviously it was a Rickenbacker, like Roger McGuinn and the Byrds. But no, I will not be playing the Gretsch live. It's never going to leave my house again. It took me 46 years to get it back. If I lost my Gretsch again or somebody stole my '59 Les Paul, how do you replace that? You can't.

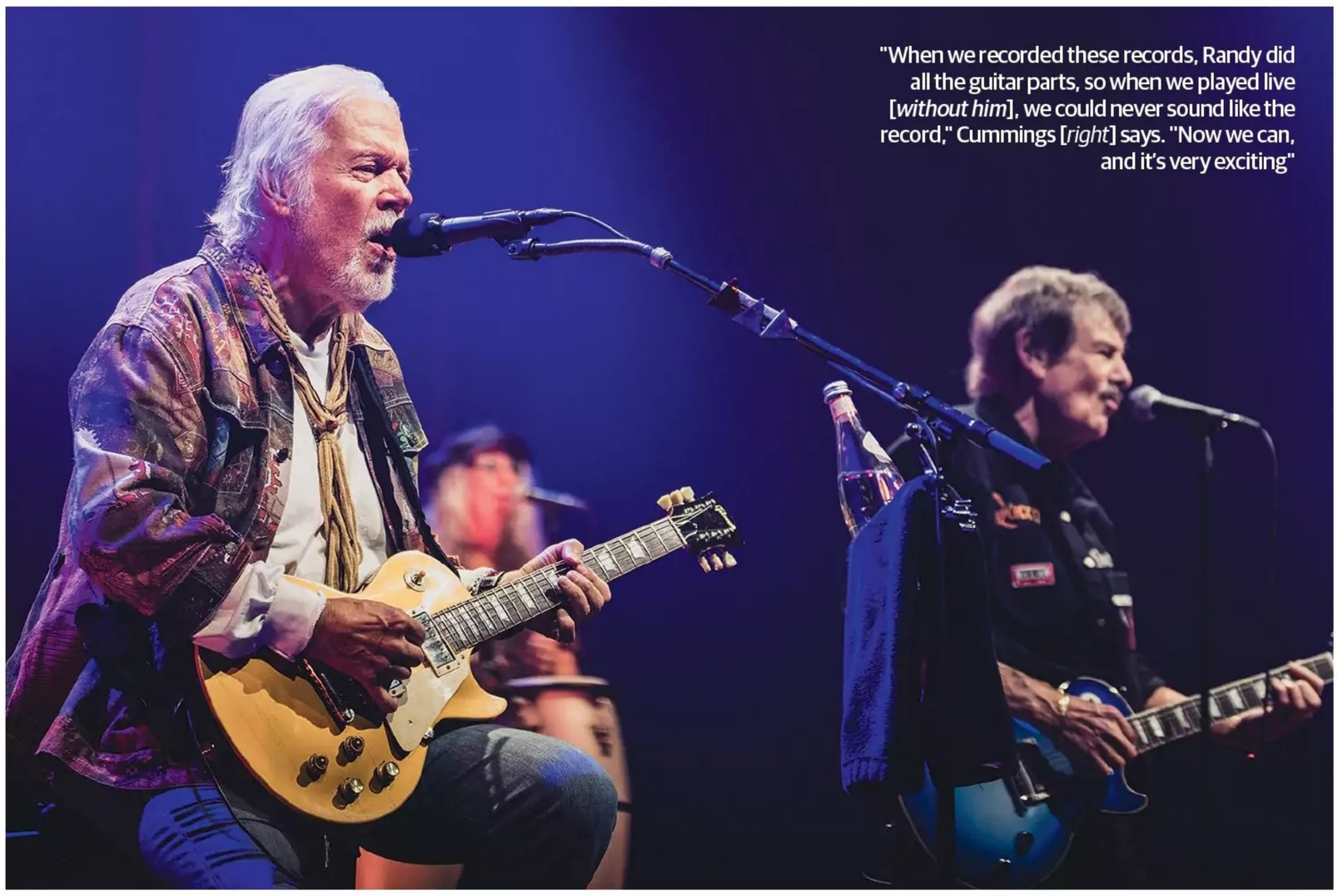
"Randy taught me just enough guitar to be annoying"
BURTON CUMMINGS

How did the 6120 come back to you?

BACHMAN: Here's what's amazing. The guy who found my Gretsch, his name is William Long. He did it from facial recognition of the pattern of the wood and my pickguard on my guitar. Since then, he also found Neil Young's '59 Gretsch. I saw Neil two weeks ago; it was his birthday in Malibu. He and I are gonna do a video together where he's got his Gretsch and I've got mine. We'll play our Gretsches and sing together, because we both got them from the same store, Winnipeg Piano in Winnipeg, back in — holy cow — '62 or '63.

Which guitars will you take out in May?

BACHMAN: It'll probably be a '57 goldtop reissue Les Paul. That's a lighter guitar. I was touring before and I got a call from Gibson saying, "Why aren't you playing your '59 Les Paul? That was your sound." I said, "Well, mine weighs 14 lbs. That's why I'm not playing it." If you put a 15 lb. brick on your shoulder for four hours a day for decades and decades, you'll have a screwed-up shoulder, and I have a screwed-up shoulder and back, so I only play it sitting down in the studio. And they said, "What would it take to get



"When we recorded these records, Randy did all the guitar parts, so when we played live [*without him*], we could never sound like the record," Cummings [*right*] says. "Now we can, and it's very exciting"

you playing a Gibson again?" I said, "Make a lighter one," and they said, "We've got a lighter one, a goldtop '57. It's Steve Lukather's backup guitar. He's on tour in Japan with Toto and he's not coming back for two weeks, so we'll send you his goldtop. We'll make him another one for when he gets back." They sent me the goldtop and I've been playing it ever since.

Any other guitars in the current arsenal?

BACHMAN: I was in Nashville at a Christmas party for Kevin Shirley, the producer. He's a really good friend of mine, and he produced my *Heavy Blues* album [*2015*]. At his party, I got to meet Paul Reed Smith, who says to me, "You're a legend." I said, "Are you kidding? You're a legend. You're the new Leo Fender. You're the new Les Paul. You're the new Orville Gibson." And Kevin Shirley says, "Two legends get together, what are you going to do?" And I said to Paul, "I'm looking for a lighter guitar, even lighter than my '57, because I've got a back issue. I had my left knee replaced. I'm a cancer survivor. I had four cancers, and I can hardly stand up. I'm learning to walk and balance again. Standing on one foot and operating your pedals is like tap-dancing, and I can't do that yet. I'm still building up. I work out every day in a pool with weights." And he said, "I've got a new guitar. It'll be under 4 lbs." So I got his number. I'm typing him a letter right now.

Will you be taking an amp and effects out with you?

BACHMAN: I'm using a Fender amp. I found a guy in Florida who takes the Roland blues pedal [*Boss BD-2 Blues Driver*], removes the little transistors and puts in military-grade ones, so they're more stable and more solid. I have two of those. One of those on half will give me a rhythm like the beginning of an AC/DC song.

Has any effects company ever offered to make an "American Woman" pedal?

BACHMAN: We did that about 12 years ago. I bought a Tech21 SansAmp, the little black pedal, and then the rackmount, and I'm clicking through the tones on the rackmount and I get to number 48 and it says "American Woman." So I turn it on, and I plug in, and it's the "American Woman" sound off the record, which is my '59 Les Paul, a Garnet Herzog amp and an RCA tube mic into a 3M tape machine [*For more on this tone, head to page 71*]. It's all that distortion and sustain all put together. So I called this guy in New York City and I said, "Can you just take that sound out of there and put it in a pedal for me?" and he said, "We don't have a casing big enough to put in, so we'll jam it in an old casing." He took what he thought was two preamps in there and put them in the casing, but when I would step on it on stage, it was so jammed in there, it would short out because the switch would be touching the metal. I'd have a roadie crawling on stage trying to push the buttons. Nobody could see him, and he was trying to push the buttons, or loosen it up, so I could get my sound back.

"Every Gretsch that's out in the world from the mid-Nineties onwards is a copy of one I had in my collection"

RANDY BACHMAN

The "American Woman" solo is a classic. How do you compose your solos?

BACHMAN: I grew up playing violin, and all you play in violin is lead; it's a lead instrument. But when I was 14, I saw Elvis on TV and I said, "What is that?" They told me it was a guitar and that this was rock 'n' roll. I said, "Well, I want to do that, it's wild." Elvis was going crazy, and I loved the guitar player behind him, Scotty Moore. I wanted to play that way. Then I met [*jazz guitarist*] Lenny Breau in Winnipeg, who was a year older than me, and he could play that way, so I hung out with him for two years. He taught me that if you can sing a guitar solo in your head, other people can sing it in their head. The simpler you play, the more people will remember it. I can do that shredding stuff, but it just shows people you're the fastest gun in town. It's not memorable, so I try to play solos you can sing, like "American Woman."

Is it true that you collected hundreds of Gretsch guitars over the years while you were trying to find the original 6120?

BACHMAN: It is. This was way, way, way, way back. My guitar was stolen in 1976 in Toronto, so I went to the Ontario Provincial Police and the Mounties, and they said, "Your guitar's probably gone east to Montreal," because it was really easy to cross the border then; in the mid-Seventies, there wasn't a whole lot of border crap going on. Bands would come to New York and then play Montreal and Quebec City and go back into New York. So, my guitar was gone. I got a letter every month from Gruhn Guitars in Nashville, Norman's Rare Guitars in L.A. and Pete's Rare Guitars in Minneapolis, saying "Hey, man, we've got a Gretsch here that we paid some guy $100 on a trade-in. We want to make $50. Will you pay $150? We'll send you the Gretsch."

How come they were so cheap?

BACHMAN: Nobody wanted Gretsches then. The factory had burned down in Brooklyn. They were being made in Arkansas, and they weren't made that well, but they looked beautiful. So I'd say, "OK" and send them $150 when I was on tour, and when I got home, there were 20 guitars at my house. I'd open each one up, and it was never my guitar. The years went by, and my midlife crisis wasn't a young blonde chick and a red Corvette; it was finding my Gretsch. It became an obsession. I ended up with 350 of them over the years.

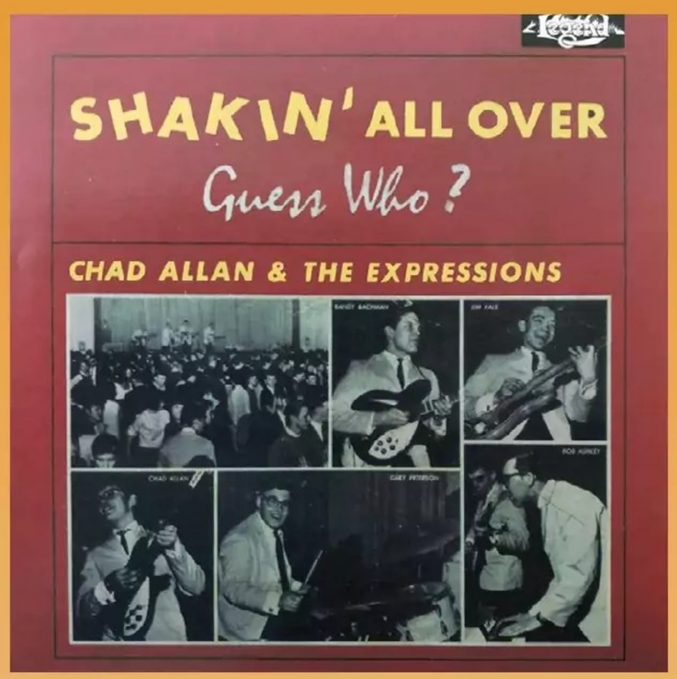
What did you do with them?

BACHMAN: I got a call in the mid-Nineties

COREY KELLY

TEN GUITAR-HEAVY GUESS WHO SONGS

BY JOEL MCIVER



"SHAKIN' ALL OVER"
(*SHAKIN' ALL OVER*, 1965)
Randy Bachman's 1957 Gretsch 6120 is all over this faithful cover of Johnny Kidd & the Pirates' classic R&B stomper, from the Duane Eddy-style topline melody to the staccato, arpeggiated chords he picks in the verses. He later traded in the '58 6120 for the 1957 model that appeared on many TGW hits and was stolen in 1976, before being returned to him in 2022.

"THESE EYES"
(*WHEATFIELD SOUL*, 1969)
The Guess Who's 18th single — but the first to feature the classic lineup of Cummings (vocals, keyboards), Bachman (guitar), Jim Kale (bass) and Garry Peterson (drums) — "These Eyes" is half ballad and half R&B workout. In its opening stages, Bachman plays simple, muted chord stabs on the off beats, with the song dominated by Kale's midregister bass part. Later, he delivers full chords beneath Cummings' keyboard parts and the accompanying brass and strings.

"UNDUN"
(*CANNED WHEAT*, 1969)



A slice of plangent soul with jazz and bossa nova influences, "Undun" appeared at a transitional point for the Guess Who, landing somewhere between late-Sixties pop and early-Seventies rock. In fact, it's an anomaly of sorts, making the few live clips of the song that exist doubly enjoyable. Search YouTube for "The Guess Who 1969 with dancer Anita Mann," and you'll see what we mean; the 26-year-old Bachman wielding his Gretsch in glorious sepia is quite a sight.

"NO TIME"
(*CANNED WHEAT*, 1969 / *AMERICAN WOMAN*, 1970)
Two versions exist of the Guess Who's self-nominated best song, the first on *Canned Wheat* and a slightly faster, edited re-recording on *American Woman*. The latter was released as a single and became a major hit, although Bachman fans may regret its slightly shorter guitar solo, delivered on the lower register of a Les Paul in contemporary live performances.

"AMERICAN WOMAN"
(*AMERICAN WOMAN*, 1970)
It's Bachman's compelling riff that drives the Guess Who's biggest song, its mellow blues intro replaced by a slick groove after a minute or so. The song is a masterclass in sustain and economy, a fact noted by Lenny Kravitz when he covered it for the soundtrack of Mike Myers comedy *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* in 1999. Kravitz had trouble getting the famous tone of the solo, according to Bachman, but his version scored a Grammy anyway.

"NO SUGAR TONIGHT/NEW MOTHER NATURE"
(*AMERICAN WOMAN*, 1970)
The first half of this two-song mashup, issued as a single in 1970, is loaded with satisfyingly chunky power chords and stands perfectly well on its own. Deemed too short for a single, it was lengthened by simply bolting on the mildly funky second song, a ruse which worked just fine as both pieces are in F♯.

"SHARE THE LAND"
(*SHARE THE LAND*, 1970)
The highly Eric Clapton-esque intro of this song leads into a piano-driven ballad packed with close vocal harmonies. The main solo is another showcase for Bachman's expert Slowhand impression, wailed "Layla" string bends, warm tone and all.

"HAND ME DOWN WORLD"
(*SHARE THE LAND*, 1970)
Led off with a quirky-but-cool descending chord



sequence, this song also features a slinky solo that sees Bachman applying the slightest, atonal vibrato to a couple of the notes to add an extra dose of weird. Later live versions smoothed this off a little — you'll find an energetic live rendition of this song from 1983 on YouTube.

"HANG ON TO YOUR LIFE"
(*SHARE THE LAND*, 1970)
Anchored by a slippery, repeated unison riff between Bachman and Jim Kale, "Hang on to Your Life" is an exercise in songwriting for mainstream radio, with the AOR chorus built for hit status. While the short main solo is satisfyingly sharp-toothed, Bachman's ad-libs at the song's back end are where the real fun is to be found.

"STAR BABY"
(*ROAD FOOD*, 1974)
Let's include a post-Randy Bachman TGW song; this one features guitarists Kurt Winter and Donnie McDougall. It's jaunty, upbeat and loaded with extravagant, Eagles-style guitar fills. The solo is a squealing, overdriven beast that perfectly echoes the spirit of Bachman, if not his unique tone and attitude.



from Fred Gretsch and from Duke Kramer, who was the head of his production at the time. And he said, "Do you really have this many Gretsch guitars?" And I said, "Yeah, it's my obsession, because I still haven't gotten back my 1957 6120." Fred says, "We want to come and see them," so he comes to my basement, where I've got a white wall that's all White Penguins and White Falcons, I've got an orange wall that's all 6120s and 6121s, and I've got a sparkle wall of gold and purple and champagne Sparkle Jets. He looks at it and he goes, "This is truly amazing. I've only been able to make Gretsch drums for the last 10 years, but through corporate shuffling and divorces and people owning the copyright, I can now make Gretsch guitars again, but all my templates are gone. They were burned in the factory. Can I borrow your guitars and we'll copy them, and then we can put out new Gretsches?" I started lending him five or six at a time, so every Gretsch that's out in the world from the mid-Nineties onwards is a copy of one I had in my collection.

Which songs are you most looking forward to performing on tour?

CUMMINGS: My favorite Guess Who song has always been "No Time." When we do it on stage the people sing every lyric with me. I've always liked that song because before that, we had "Laughing," "Undun" and "These Eyes," and they were all softer songs. When "No Time" came out, I think we started getting taken more seriously as a rock band.

BACHMAN: I'll tell you this much – I heard "No Time" on the radio the other day. It sure didn't sound that old. It's still pretty rocking. And I always love doing "No Sugar Tonight" and "New Mother Nature" together. We do that live, and the people just sing along with every word. It's amazing.

What did you think of Lenny Kravitz's 1999 version of "American Woman"?

CUMMINGS: I liked the way they put the background vocals in with harmonies. On New Year's Eve a while back, there was a broadcast of Lenny Kravitz and Prince together, and they were doing "American Woman." Oh, man. Two of my all-time favorite artists, and there they were, jamming

"When I was 14, I saw Elvis on TV and said, 'I want to do that, it's wild!'"
RANDY BACHMAN

stuff that came out of Randy's head and my head. That was pretty special for me, I'll tell you. Prince was an amazing, amazing guitar player. The solo he does is incredible. Hey, Randy, were you with us when we played it with Lenny in Toronto?

BACHMAN: I was there – it was the MuchMusic Video Awards [*1999*]. At the end, it was cool because Lenny and I were trading vocal ad-libs. It really worked very well.

What's the best song you guys wrote together?

BACHMAN: It's going to come back to "No Time." It's got everything. It's got guitars. It's got great lyrics. It's got a good melody. Tailored to a three-and-a-half-to-four-minute single, I think it was a perfect record for us.

Good times ahead, then?

CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. We've got six guys singing now on stage. I've always been a stickler about the vocals, and I have never heard the vocals sound better in any band I've ever been in in my 60 years in the business. So for many, many different reasons, this is exciting and it's valid, and Randy and I are very happy that all the fake, false stuff is over with. The future looks great for us. We're coming out to honor the music. GW



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DREA

"ON A DARK DESERT HIGHWAY, COOL

THE EAGLES

HOTEL CALIFORNIA

"WIND IN MY HAIR..."



Mexican reggae! Gunslinger duels! Chainsaws! Fifty years after it was recorded and released, Don Henley and producer Bill Szymczyk revisit the making of the Eagles' 1976 masterpiece, *Hotel California*

BY BILL DEMAIN

IF YOU TAKE a night drive through the Mojave Desert, you will see the glittering sprawl of Los Angeles appear on the horizon to the west, 90 miles out. It hovers there as an otherworldly dome, mirage-like, beckoning. Technically, its hazy golden glow is a result of light pollution intensified by water vapor and clouds, which reflect the city's eight billion watts of power. But a century's worth of dreamers and small-town escapees know the real reason for the glow. It's the promise: the promise of palm trees and perpetual sunshine, of being in the movies or on hit records, of achieving the big American Dream. ▶

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"The desert is where mirage and myth are created, and so is Hollywood," Eagles founding member Don Henley tells *Guitar World*. "We are just as susceptible, now, to illusion as the pioneers were — if not more so."

That mirage, myth and illusion was immortalized on *Hotel California*, the Eagles' big American dream-come-true. "*Hotel California* was obviously our creative peak," Henley says. "Every band, every artist, has one." Released 50 years ago — on December 8, 1976 — it's not only their personal best, but the third-best-selling album of all time, at 32 million copies and counting (the Eagles' *Their Greatest Hits (1971–1975)* is Number 1). The epic title track inspired a thematic album about the toll of dreams, touching on fame ("New Kid in Town"), the high life ("Life in the Fast Lane"), relationships ("Victim of Love") and westward expansion ("The Last Resort"). The message throughout was that dreams often look different up close and have a way of vanishing in thin air.

"We were always keenly aware of the transitory nature of fame and fortune," Henley says. "The entire *Desperado* album was basically about that. We had witnessed all the wreckage alongside the Yellow Brick Road. Pop culture, for lack of a better term — and which might be an oxymoron — is all about the new. You grind away for seven or eight or 10 years, and suddenly, boom, you're on the radio; your face stares out from a billboard on Sunset Boulevard. Then your sophomore album flops, your record label drops you, and you're right back to square one — 'Please drive through.'"

While square one wasn't part of the Eagles story, chasing the new was. And the turmoil and pressure to keep outdoing themselves led to substance-fueled power struggles that turned once-close friends into rivals and led to a breakup three years after *Hotel California*. As Glenn Frey once said, "We made it, and it ate us."

Significantly, the mythic desert passage is one that all five band members on the album had made respectively in the late Sixties and early Seventies. It was a more innocent time, as they relocated from the South and Midwest with hopes of being part of the burgeoning hippie country scene in and around Laurel Canyon and nightclubs like the Troubadour.

The spot where everyone from Kris Kristofferson to Carole King made their debut is where Henley first joined Glenn Frey for a beer, starting a friendship and the creative nucleus for the Eagles. Back then, the two would ride around L.A. in Frey's '55 Chevy, nicknamed Gladys, "plotting and planning." It took a while for things to take shape. Both were already in groups signed to the same indie label. Henley's Shiloh made one album, produced by Kenny Rogers. Frey's Longbranch Pennywhistle (with J.D. Souther, a key collaborator on *Hotel California*) did one that included Wrecking Crew cats James Burton and Larry Knechtel. Neither record troubled the charts.

The duo joined Linda Ronstadt's touring band in 1971, which soon added bassist Randy Meisner of Ricky Nelson's Stone Canyon Band and guitarist Bernie Leadon of the Flying Burrito Brothers. The proto-Eagles quartet played together only once, during Ronstadt's engagement at Disneyland, on the Coca-Cola Terrace in Tomorrowland. It was a prophetic spot for the birth of a band that would become as ubiquitous — and successful — as America's favorite soda.

Within two months, thanks to help from Jackson Browne, they'd signed to David Geffen's Asylum Records. Their first two albums — *Eagles* and *Desperado* — produced by Glyn Johns, were released in 1972-73, inside 10 months. And thanks to "Take It Easy" and "Peaceful Easy Feeling," the group quickly climbed to the top of the country-rock heap. But they craved a bigger heap, especially when they found themselves on the bill with arena rock acts.

"Opening for Jethro Tull and Yes was odd because it was such a mismatch, musically, but it did have the effect of toughening us up,"



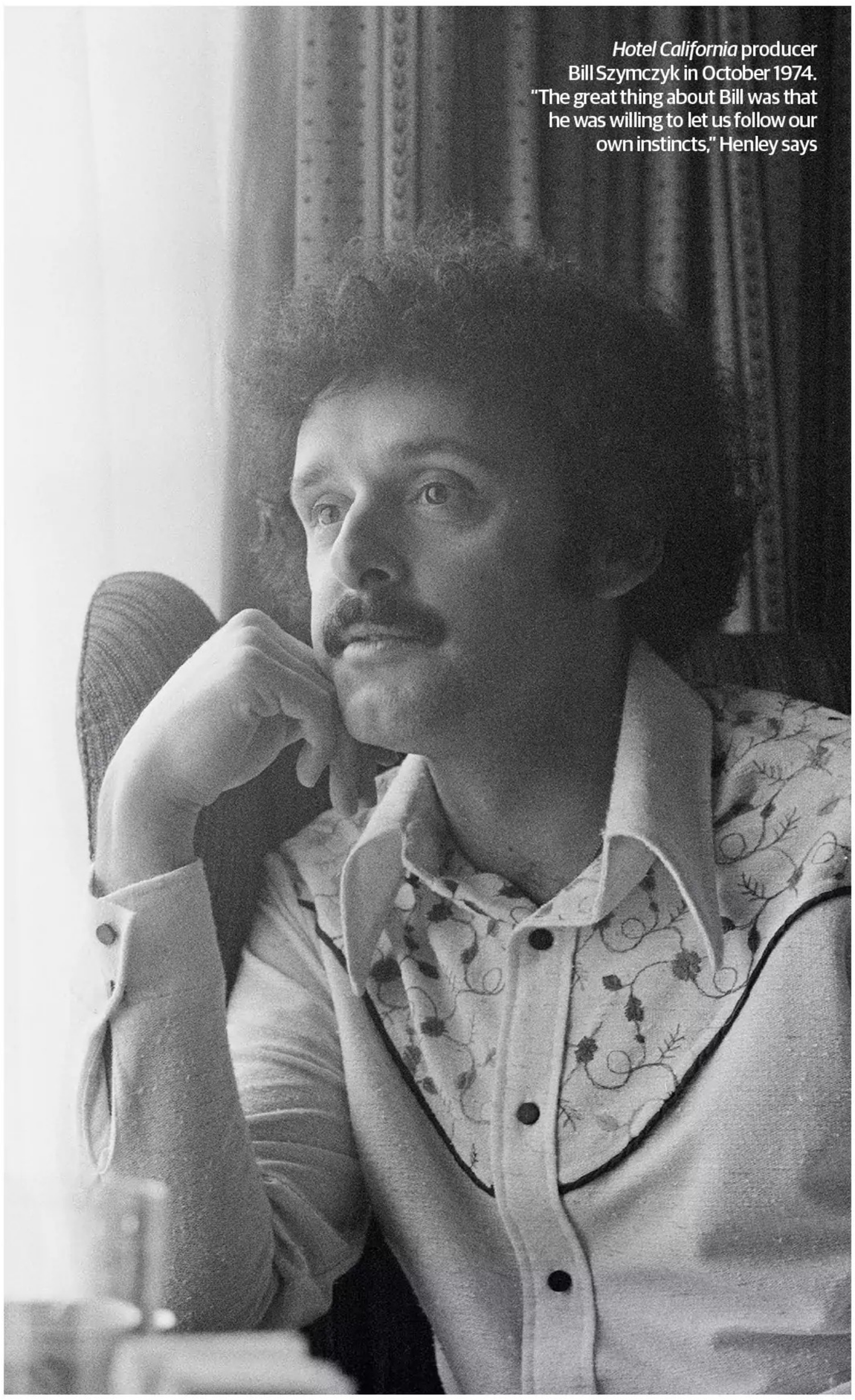
The Eagles on the U.K. leg of the *Hotel California* tour in early 1977; [*from left*] Randy Meisner, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Don Felder and Joe Walsh

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

"*HOTEL CALIFORNIA* WAS OBVIOUSLY OUR CREATIVE PEAK. EVERY BAND, EVERY ARTIST, HAS ONE"
DON HENLEY



Don Henley steps out from behind his drum kit in April 1977



Hotel California producer Bill Szymczyk in October 1974. "The great thing about Bill was that he was willing to let us follow our own instincts," Henley says

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS, MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Henley says. "But our main problem was that we didn't have a repertoire. We had released only one album, and 'Take It Easy' was our only hit song at that point. But somehow we survived. Glenn was right saying so-called country rock had its limitations in terms of commerciality, but I think we defied those limitations as we expanded our stylistic perimeters to include more different veins of music. Ronstadt did that, too."

In the studio, the toughening up got a boost from a new producer. "My first thought was, 'I don't want to do a cowboy band!'" *Hotel California* producer Bill Szymczyk tells *Guitar World*. "But they wanted to rock. They'd started their third album with Glyn, who was one of my heroes. But they weren't happy. Glyn was a taskmaster and had rules about no drink or drugs in the studio. Meanwhile, the guys had heard *The Smoker You Drink, The Player You Get*, which I did with Joe Walsh [*in 1973*], and said, 'Who produced this?'"

"OPENING FOR JETHRO TULL AND YES WAS SUCH A MISMATCH, MUSICALLY, BUT IT DID HAVE THE EFFECT OF TOUGHENING US UP"
DON HENLEY

"Bill was – and is – a lover of rock 'n' roll, blues and funk music," Henley says. "He had produced Edgar Winter and B.B. King, among others. After a long day of grinding away on our own material, Bill would put an Ohio Players or a Parliament album up on the big playback speakers in the studio, and we'd kick back and listen. It was fun. The great thing about Bill was that he was willing to let us follow our own instincts, which, at that time, were leaning more toward rock and R&B."

Szymczyk called Johns to get permission to take over the album. "The answer was, 'Better you than me, mate!'" A week later, they cut "Already Gone," a rousing rocker that gave Frey a chance to bust loose with some razor-tooth lead guitar. Suddenly, the band was getting the edge they wanted. "It was the beginning of a great marriage," Szymczyk says, "with each album doing better than the one before, and then *Hotel California*, which was the high point of their career – and mine."

For 1974's *On the Border*, they added hotshot guitarist Don Felder, who'd been touring with David Blue and Crosby & Nash. Bernie Leadon, who'd played with Felder in high school bands, said, "Felder was a really



Joe Walsh plays slide on a heavily customized Gibson EDS-1275 in 1976. "Joe, being a bona fide rock 'n' roll guitar slinger, was the perfect foil for Don Felder," Henley says

great guitar player, but when he joined, I could see the writing on the wall for me. I thought, if I'm going to leave, better that a friend of mine gets the gig." Leadon stayed for 1975's *One of These Nights*, which further upped the ante on extended solos (the title track and the underrated "Visions" were both six-string showcases). "We were balls to the wall on that album," Szymczyk says. "They wanted to rock, and we proceeded to damn-sure rock."

With each album came more fame, more pressure to outdo themselves and more substances. In the mid-Seventies rock world, cocaine was the drug of choice. "It was a writing tool, but one that brought out the worst in everyone," Frey once said. But even without drugs in the mix, there was always creative friction between Henley and Frey. "It was the Lennon and McCartney thing," Szymczyk says. "Don writes this way, Glenn writes that way, but together they write better than they do separately. There was always a lot of competition. Frey was competitive in everything! Darts, shooting pool, you name it. He wanted to win. Henley wasn't as up front about it, but he knew very well what he had, talent-wise. We called him Golden Throat."

Since the days of cruising around in Gladys, there was one thing the two leaders did agree on; they wanted their band to be the biggest on the planet. And that meant pushing the rock sound to the limit. As Leadon predicted, that put him in their crosshairs. The guitarist had played lead on "Take It Easy" and "Tequila Sunrise." He'd co-written "Witchy Woman." His background with the Flying Burrito Brothers had imbued the Eagles with country-rock cred.

For all that, his relationship with them was never easy. Exhaustive touring (he'd already logged five years of roadwork before he joined) and the drug use (he'd kicked those habits) only deepened his discontent. "None of it sat well with Bernie," Szymczyk says. "The further we went into rock, the less he liked it." He remembers asking the guitarist what he thought of a take of "One of These Nights" with Leadon replying, "I think I'm going to go surfing." Things came to a head one night in 1975, backstage at the Orange Bowl. As Frey was rallying the band, Leadon poured a beer over Frey's head and walked out.

Enter Joe Walsh. Late of the James Gang, Walsh was three albums into a successful solo

"MOMENTUM IS IMPORTANT. ONCE YOU'RE ON A HOT STREAK, IT'S WISE TO TRY TO MAINTAIN IT, OTHERWISE YOU GET FORGOTTEN"
DON HENLEY

RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES







THE ULTIMATE ONE-TWO PUNCH

Hey, why release one multi-platinum album in 1976 when you can release two?

BY BILL DEMAIN

A MONTH BEFORE the Eagles started recording *Hotel California*, Asylum Records released *Their Greatest Hits (1971-1975)*, a compilation of 10 songs from the band's first four albums. Four LPs into a career might not seem like the moment for a "greatest hits" compilation, but, as the band's manager, Irving Azoff, put it, "We decided it was time to put out the first greatest hits — because we had enough hits." Except there was no "we" in the decision.

"All the record company was worried about were their quarterly reports," Eagles founder Don Henley once said. "They didn't give a shit whether the *Greatest Hits* album was good or not. They wanted product."

The album — released February 17, 1976, the same year as the massive *Hotel California* — was the first ever to receive RIAA's Platinum certification. It is now the best-selling album of all time, quadruple Diamond — more than 40 million copies. "The numbers are staggering, and I try not to look at them any more," Frey once said, pointing out that greatest-hits albums are for "kids and people who don't usually buy records."

It boosted sales of all previous Eagles albums and primed the pump for *Hotel California* to be the most anticipated release of 1976. While there's no question that *Hotel California* is a classic, it certainly didn't hurt to have *Their Greatest Hits* riding shotgun.

career in 1975. He was already friendly with the Eagles from crossing paths on the road. When they approached him, his response was, "Being part of a group would take a whole lot of weight off my shoulders."

But it's easy to forget what a mismatch it seemed. Walsh recalled in *The Guitar Greats*, "I think 80 percent of people said, 'That's stupid — there's no way it's going to work.'"

Not only did it work, it changed the band's energy level. "For starters, things got louder," Henley says. "Joe, being a bona fide rock 'n' roll guitar slinger, was the perfect foil for Don Felder. They propelled one another in a friendly-but-competitive sort of way. We had upped our horsepower. This is not to take anything away from Bernie, who was — and still is — a highly skilled musician."

"As we got into *Hotel California*, it was like, 'This is a match made in heaven,'" Szymczyk says. "The friction with Bernie was gone, and it was replaced with somebody that could just blister with a forceful edge."

Speaking of forceful edge, in Walsh, the Eagles now also had a resident bad boy and gleeful wrecker of hotel rooms. His instrument of choice was a chainsaw. Dressers, chairs, tables got sliced, diced and tossed from windows.

"Keith Moon and Joe were good buddies, and that, of course, led to some mischief," Henley says. "It was amusing for a little while, but it eventually became a very expensive hobby, and we were beginning to get barred from some of the hotels we liked to stay in. So, after a while, the chainsaws got locked away in storage and other kinds of dramas replaced the 'remodeling' of rooms and hallways."

He adds, "But, at least Joe got a hit song out of it," referencing 1978's "Life's Been Good."

In 1976, the Eagles played 68 shows worldwide, from Tucson to Tokyo. For most bands, that would not be a year to make a new album. But the Eagles did, grabbing studio time whenever and wherever they could. "

The demands of touring definitely made it more difficult for us to stay in a creative space, particularly in terms of songwriting," Henley says. "But, because we were young — and driven — we managed to learn how to juggle. Did the work suffer? Probably, but we did the best we could, given the circumstances we were in. It's a demanding job, feeding the machine. The machine is always hungry.

"But momentum is important," he continues. "Once you're on a hot streak, it's wise to try to maintain it. Otherwise, you get forgotten or replaced pretty quickly. Back in the Sixties, the Beatles had set an impossibly high bar, both in terms of quality and quantity. So record companies had come to expect an album or two every year. But the Beatles had been able to stop touring and focus solely on recording. Touring was a necessity for us so that we could pay for rent and gas."

"DON FELDER AND I WORKED REALLY WELL TOGETHER. IT WAS COMPETITIVE. WE LIKED TO KICK EACH OTHER IN THE BUTT!"
JOE WALSH

The first sessions for *Hotel California* were in March at Studio C, the coveted big room at the Record Plant in Los Angeles, with Szymczyk back behind the board. "We'd do two or three weeks, then the band would go back on the road," he says, recalling they had only one finished song — Meisner's "Try and Love Again." Beyond that, just a "handful of fragments, licks and phrases." As Walsh said in *Buzz Me In*, "We took all of that, put it on a table and said, 'Okay, let's pretend this is a jigsaw puzzle,' and we started piecing things together."

The jigsaw puzzles could be complex. On the surface, the album's first single, "New Kid in Town," is a soft-rock sigh. But structurally and harmonically, it's one of the most-involved Eagles songs. Henley says, "That one was mostly J.D., with some essential input from Glenn in terms of words, melody and arrangement, and a few lyrical contributions from me. It's a great piece of work."

Modulations, shifting choruses, meticulous ornamentation from Felder on electric and Meisner on the guitarrón Mexicano, wrapped in a harmony cascade that earned a Grammy for Best Vocal Arrangement ("It had parts out the wazoo," Szymczyk says). How did those beautifully complex arrangements get written?

"Well, nobody 'wrote' anything; it wasn't that formal," Henley says. "We did everything intuitively, including vocal harmony arrangements. First, we'd decide who was going to sing the lead vocal and then assign harmony parts around that, depending on the key of the song and where the melody sat within the chord progression."

In the studio, they worked from "2 to 2, with a dinner break at 7," usually at Dan Tana's, a favorite red-boothed old Hollywood eatery, next door to the Troubadour. Though friends dropped by the studio, mostly it was the band and Szymczyk, who they nicknamed "Coach."

They said I was the Don Shula of rock 'n' roll," he says, referencing the Miami Dolphins' legendary honcho (who was at the helm for their perfect 1972 season). "I was a player's coach more than Shula," says Szymczyk with a laugh. He kept a keen eye and ear on the sessions and was a wizard with a tape-editing razor. And on *Hotel California*, he had to lay down what he called "the six o'clock rule" to make sure recreational activities didn't derail progress, including his own.

"Everything was getting a little out of hand by three in the afternoon, so I was like, 'Okay, enough of that. No beer, no blow, no reefer, no nothing until six."

That worked for a few weeks; then the grumbling started. Szymczyk says, "I'd be changing reels in the control room, and I'd hear them muttering, 'Is it six yet?' followed by 'It had better be.'"

On the initial pressings of the album, "It is six o'clock yet?" was etched into the runout groove of Side A.

On Side B, the etched phrase was, "VOL is five-piece live."

"That's because we were proud that we got that song, 'Victim of Love,' in one take without any edits," Szymczyk says. The rocker began with a Don Felder guitar instrumental that he passed to Henley and Frey. They brought in J.D. Souther again, who came up with the concept — that having a broken heart is like being a victim of a car crash. In that



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Don Felder with his 1959 Gibson Les Paul in May 1977. "I played that on just about every Eagles record that I recorded with a Les Paul," he says

ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS

EAGER FOR ACTION

A guide to Joe Walsh and Don Felder's *Hotel California* gear

BY BILL DEMAIN

"JOE WALSH AND Don Felder would show up for a session and unpack a minimum of 30 guitars and five or six amps apiece," *Hotel California* producer Bill Szymczyk says. "It was, 'Let's try this with that.' What I remember most, though, throughout *Hotel California*, was a whole lot of Gibson Les Paul with a lot of Fender Telecaster."

No one can be sure exactly how many — or which — Les Pauls make appearances on *Hotel California*, but we do know about one of them: Felder's famous 1959 Burst, which was painstakingly reproduced by Gibson in 2011. As he told *Guitarist* around that time, Felder bought the original guitar from a traveling dealer who was famous for his superb stable of vintage axes.

"His name was Tony Dukes," he said, "and every time we'd go through Texas, Tony would show up. He was a horse trader, and he always had something in his truck you wanted. He would show up in a station wagon or a truck that was full of Les Pauls, Teles and Strats, and I bought probably 20 pieces from him over the years. It must have been about 1974 or something, right after our first big hit, *One of These Nights*, when I started making money. He came round, and I think I bought three or four pieces from him — the Les Paul, a Tele, a Strat and some other stuff." And, as he told *Guitar World* in 2013, he plugged his LP into a Fender Tweed Deluxe — "just kind of cranked up, with just the guitar into the amp."

"The acoustic guitar in the intro to 'Hotel California' is a Takamine 12-string with a DeArmond pickup," Felder added. "We mic'd the acoustic and put that in the center of the mix. Then we took the pickup's output and ran it through a [*Maestro*] Echoplex and a Leslie. We mic'd that in stereo so it has this left-to-right kind of swirling, ethereal characteristic."

"For recording acoustic guitars, I usually used a Neumann KM84," Szymczyk says. "Don had a pickup on his guitar running to a pair of little Orange amps, and we mic'd them in stereo. The initial opening-guitar intro is an acoustic guitar in the middle and an amp on both sides, with a chorus that is flowing back and forth between the two amps."

"Felder and I always found that if we both used single-coil or double-coil [*guitars*], there wasn't enough contrast to give the songs any personality," Walsh told *Total Guitar* in 2012. "It just turned into a guitar wall." That's why he famously played a Telecaster on "Hotel California," which was perfectly paired with Felder's Les Paul.

"I played a Tele, through — I think — the Roland Cube, which I used a lot back then," Walsh added. It was most likely the same Roland Cube he and his Strat used on "Life in the Fast Lane." On the *Hotel California* tour, Walsh also used a Fender Black Panel Deluxe Reverb, a Fender Tweed Deluxe and a Mesa Boogie Mark I.



The Eagles (probably singing Steve Young's "Seven Bridges Road") in the Netherlands, May 11, 1977

scenario, all three were frequent car crashers, burning through relationships. "Dudes on a rampage" was how Henley described it.

When it came time to do an album, he and Frey would usually move in together. Before *Hotel California*, they were briefly ensconced in a Beverly Hills house that once belonged to actress Dorothy Lamour. With panoramic 360-degree views, it was nicknamed "the Eagles' nest." They were an odd couple — Henley the tidy one, Frey the lovable slob, leaving mountains of cigarette ash everywhere. The togetherness might not have helped their friendship, but it was great for songwriting.

"Victim of Love's" tale of betrayal and disillusionment was paired with a stuttering, crunchy groove. Felder had assumed he would sing lead, but after a week's worth of takes, his vocal was deemed "not up to band standards." Henley recorded the lead while manager Irving Azoff took Felder out to lunch to break the bad news.

In the summer, Szymczyk moved the sessions to Criteria Studios in Miami. "The guys were actually quite happy to be out of L.A. and away from all the partying and the hangers-on," he says. The only challenge in Miami was the occasional ear-splitting squall coming from the studio next door, where Black Sabbath were recording their 1976 album *Technical Ecstasy*.

Meanwhile, in the world outside the studio, the United States was basking in its bicentennial. On the surface, the country's 200th birthday was all stars and stripes, but that was tainted by a Watergate hangover and relentless dark stories in the news.

"The 'peace and love' idealism of the Sixties had faded by the beginning of the decade," Henley says. "The so-called counterculture, due in part to its own excesses, had disintegrated. The U.S. was trying hard to focus on the bicentennial, but the Cold War continued and the Boomer generation had slowly realized that the same corporate forces that had always been in charge were still, in fact, in charge, and there was an air of capitulation. There were now the realities of jobs and families to consider. Gone was the dream of a new kind of America; gone was the appetite for rebellion. 'We haven't had that spirit here since 1969.'"

One of the album's standout tracks was both a celebration and critique of L.A.'s decadence and the band's own excesses — "Life in the Fast Lane" could've been subtitled "Nervous, Edgy Feeling."

"There are a great many of our songs that could be retitled 'Note to Self,'" Henley says. "Excess — too much of a bad thing or a good thing — was a subject we examined, both from a personal perspective and an American cultural standpoint."

The song's classic riff began as what Walsh called his "coordination drill."

"WE KNEW 'LIFE IN THE FAST LANE' WAS GOING TO BE THE MOST ROCK 'N' ROLL THING THE EAGLES HAD ATTEMPTED SO FAR"
JOE WALSH

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

"I had this lick that I played that I would warm up for a show with," he told Paul Shaffer on *Plus One*. "It's an exercise between your right and left hand, faster and faster. I was just playing, warming up for the show, and Glenn comes busting in my dressing room and says, 'What the hell's that?' 'I don't know, it's just this lick I warm up with.' He said, 'No, that's an Eagles song, dude!'"

On *In the Studio with Redbeard*, Frey said the title came one day after a crazy car ride with a drug dealer nicknamed "The Count." Going 90 mph, Frey asked the dealer to slow down, and the answer came — "It's life in the fast lane!" With that title, he and Henley wrote the lyrics and melody together.

"We knew it was going to be the most rock 'n' roll thing the Eagles had attempted so far," Walsh said. "They turned me loose on that one."

And what guitar was he using? "That's a Strat," Walsh told *Total Guitar*, "and the amplifier was probably this little orange Roland Cube I was using a lot back then. I found it to be a pretty darn good little amp for recording with a Strat, by turning it up pretty good to make it work."

The killer riff doubled with guitar and bass, cliff-hanging power chords and trademark four-part harmonies on the chorus. This was a classic Eagles record, yet one that sounded like nothing they'd ever done. And as sonic icing, Szymczyk employed a Jimi Hendrix trick — the "*Electric Ladyland* two-track flange technique" — to add a whooshing sound to the song's off-ramp exit. "When I suggested phasing at the end of the song, Henley and Frey were skeptical," he says. They thought it might sound too much like the Small Faces' "Itchycoo Park," which Szymczyk says was the inspiration. "I just wanted listeners to feel the rush of the wind in their hair!"

An ocean breeze was in Don Felder's hair the afternoon he got the idea that would become "Hotel California." In his Malibu beach house, noodling on a 12-string Martin acoustic, he hit on a Spanish-sounding chord progression. He put it down on a reel-to-reel four-track, then layered on syncopated electric guitars and a samba beat from a Rhythm Ace drum machine. He sent it off to Henley and Frey on a cassette with another dozen snippets. They liked what they called "the matador in Mexico" vibe of it and experimented with lyrical and melody ideas.

Henley took the cassette in the car, his favorite place to write. He says, "I think it has something to do with movement and a constantly changing view. Just sitting in a room and trying to find inspiration can be stifling; it's a static situation. Driving, if you're not in heavy traffic, creates a feeling of flow that can free the imagination and call up memories and images while the music's playing."

A WEALTH OF RICHES

Former Eagles guitarist Don Felder throws open the vault to celebrate a 50-year anniversary of his own

BY ANDREW DALY

DON FELDER IS used to pain when it comes to music. I mean, the guy was in the Eagles, a band that epitomized the idea of seemingly seeking pleasure through agony. He took that to a new level when he was carted off the stage in February 2025 due to a pretty serious case of dehydration.

"My phone has never blown up so much in my life as it did when I had that little thing," Felder says with a laugh.

That laugh is key, as it shows that at 78 — and now incredibly well-hydrated — Felder isn't about to curb his touring career. "I'm going to rock until I drop," he says. "But I didn't think I'd be dropping in the middle of 'Tequila Sunrise'! I thought I'd be dropping during 'Life in the Fast Lane,' and they'd just drag me off the stage."

Happily, there will be many more stages to drag Felder from. He has a slate of shows planned in 2026 and released a new record — *The Vault 1975-2025: Fifty Years of Music* — last year. There is, however, a bit of a gray area when it comes to the word "new," as some, though not all, of the tracks from *The Vault* are, well, vintage. For example, Felder wrote "Move On," which features some tasty slide work, as an offering to Don Henley and Glenn Frey when he joined the Eagles. Henley and Frey didn't dig "Move On," but Felder did — especially when he recently rediscovered the original 1973 demo in a storage cabinet. He loved his slide work on the track, the roots of which date to an evening spent with Gregg and Duane Allman.

"We became friends," Felder says. "One night, Duane was sitting on the floor playing slide. I said, 'You've got to show me how to do that.' He showed me the open tuning and how to pull down the fifth, slide up to the third and have a flat seventh on it. You know, the basics."

After that lesson, as evidenced by "Move On," Felder made the technique his own. "I've never tried to copy or emulate Duane," he says. "He was so far ahead of me. I just felt like, 'Now that I know how to get around on the instrument, I've got to learn to sound like me.' I can't sound like him; no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't do that. But I stole as much as I could from him, watching him play in the old days."

The Vault is actually a perfect marriage of old and new — a middle ground, if you will. And that's just the right fit for Felder, who's sometimes overlooked when it comes to Seventies guitar titans. Not that he cares.

"I never did it for the money, the fame or the legacy," he says. "I did it because I was fascinated with music. I love to play and write. I love to go to the studio when it's dark, turn it on and have no idea what I'm gonna do. I pick up a guitar, see what comes out and put it on record. I don't know what I'd do if I retired; I'd be bored to death! It's fun to have something to be excited about, and I always hope somebody else will be excited, too."



YOU RECENTLY RELEASED *THE VAULT 1975-2025: FIFTY YEARS OF MUSIC*. WHAT'S THE STORY WITH THAT?

I moved out of Malibu in 2000 after going through five major fires — and all the mudslides and road closures — and moved into town. I had a little studio I dismantled and put into storage, and all my tapes and demos were in storage, too. I hadn't seen that storage locker for 20-something years, so it was time to go through it. There were boxes of cassettes, CDs and DAT machines that recorded half-inch four-track, half-inch 24-track, 16-track and all the stuff I'd been working on since 1974 and 1975 as demos. I said, "I don't even know what this stuff is!"

ONE OF THE DEMOS YOU MENTIONED IS "MOVE ON."

I'd just been invited to join the Eagles, and [*ex-Eagles guitarist*] Bernie Leadon told me, "If you want to write songs in this band, just worry about song structure — don't write lyrics or melodies. Give those ideas to Don and Glenn, and they'll write lyrics if they like the track." So one of the very first things I did was, with a four-track, I recorded myself playing on a cardboard box for the drum track, and then I played bass and slide. It was a very basic, raw demo of the idea. I hadn't heard it for 50 years.

WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN YOU HEARD IT AGAIN?

I went, "I remember that slide part! I loved that

slide part." When I submitted it to Don and Glenn, they went, "I like the slide, but there's really not much of a song there," so that's what I heard, the slide part. I said, "I like that track. I'm gonna finish this." I finished it, reproduced it, re-recorded the slide part, did the lyrics and harmonies and brought new life to an old idea.

STEVE LUKATHER PLAYS ON "DIGITAL WORLD." WHAT'S IT LIKE WORKING WITH HIM?

When he comes over — and he's played on just about every solo album I've made except for the first one, *Airborne* [*1983*] — we spend the first 45 minutes to an hour just laughing, telling stories and having a great time before we plug in and tune up. It takes 30 minutes for us to walk through an idea, trade solos and create harmonies. I enjoy working with Steve. He's brilliant, and a lot of fun to hang out with.

YOU RE-RECORDED 1981'S "HEAVY METAL (TAKIN' A RIDE)." HOW'D YOU APPROACH IT?

When I hear the original recording, it sounds technically dated. It was all analog, and just the echo chambers; it doesn't sound up to the level of technology today. I decided I'd re-record it in today's technology, which sounds 100 times better. If you were to play the old two-track version of the stereo version and compare it to today, there's a massive difference.

YOU'VE BEEN AT IT FOR A LONG TIME, WHICH PROBABLY MEANS YOU'VE GOT GEAR YOU'VE HAD FOR JUST AS LONG. IT WOULD BE EASY TO FALL BACK ON ALL OF THAT, BUT YOU'RE LEANING INTO WHAT'S NEW. WHY?

I use vintage microphones, and I have a rack of classic outboard gear I use to record. I just think the process of recording at 96 kHz with high-resolution, quality analog gear on the front end is a wonderful combination. I use some great new guitars and amps, and I've got six or seven amps that Alexander Dumble re-did for me. I've got Bogners and tons of different amps and guitars. It's easy to go in and multi-track. I was looking at something yesterday; I think it's "I Like the Things You Do." There might be 30 guitar tracks on that.

WHAT'S THE REASON BEHIND THAT?

Some of them are doubles; some are split left or right. Some are effects I use. There's just a lot of different ideas and approaches to making a track. Instead of just playing a thing top to bottom with the same rhythm guitar, that, to me, is old school. I was trying to explore, taking old ideas musically and making them sound modern with new techniques and approaches.

DO YOU STILL FALL BACK ON YOUR GUITARS FROM YOUR EAGLES DAYS?

I have close to 300 guitars. They've all been photographed and given a name. They're separated by manufacturer; everything by Gibson is in one rack, everything from Fender is another. If I want to pick up my '57 Strat from the locker, I can open up my spreadsheet, walk into the vault, pull the guitar off the shelf and bring it back — or have somebody go get it.



MICHAEL HELMS

OF THOSE 300 GUITARS, WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?

My '59 Les Paul. I played that on just about every Eagles record that I recorded with a Les Paul. I've recorded with it a lot for my albums, and I used it on a couple of tracks on this record, too. I used it on "I Like the Things You Do" and "Free at Last." It feels like home.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF WORKING WITH GIBSON ON MORE SIGNATURE GEAR?

No, not right now. I've dealt with Gibson since I started playing music, and they released the Don Felder *Hotel California* copy of my '59 Les Paul and the white *Hotel California* [*EDS-1275*] double-neck guitars, probably 10 or 12 years ago. They sold out immediately. I don't know that I'll do many more endorsements. I really respect the fact that Gibson did it, and was honored that they asked me to do it. I work very closely with them; their Custom Shop makes things for me that are spectacular.

YOU TALKED ABOUT ROCKING UNTIL YOU DROP — AND YOU'RE STILL WRITING SONGS.

I write all the time — almost every day. I write, scribble down a little something while listening to something on TV. I'll hear an orchestra and go, "That was a beautiful change, back that up..." I'll grab an acoustic and figure out what chord progression this orchestra was playing, put it on my phone, record it and collect bits and pieces. When I'm on the road, it's hard to write music; I can write lyrics, but not necessarily music. So when I come back home, I'm in the studio writing, recording, producing and coming up with ideas. Not all of them will become finished products, but you never know what's going to come out until you step into it.

After a week or two, the song took shape. "The hotel concept came first, and then the melody," Henley says. "Sometime in May of '76, Glenn and I had gone to see Neil Simon's play *California Suite* in Los Angeles. But that was after we had come up with the hotel concept; seeing the play was a 'field research' trip, just to see if it would help us to flesh out our initial idea. But it wasn't very helpful; it wasn't dark and spooky enough for what we were after."

Or maybe the title influenced them, because their spooky inn became the Hotel California, and in turn, a metaphor for everything from the myth-making of the American Dream to an artist's search for the muse and spiritual meaning.

The recording of the song took some searching, too. "We cut the track several times, first at Criteria Studios, shortly after Felder had given me the demo," Henley says.

"The Miami recording was a rough arrangement with the working title 'Mexican Reggae.' The second time we cut it was at the Record Plant in L.A., after Glenn and I had come up with some ideas for lyrics and melody, but that recording turned out to be in the wrong key, at least for singing. There was often a schism between what key was best for the guitars and what key was best for the lead vocal. At the end of the day, though, the vocal has to take precedence. There are workarounds on the guitar — tunings, capos, etc — but you can't capo a voice. Or at least you couldn't then. So we ended up cutting the final track in Miami in the key of B minor with the choruses going to G major."

"FELDER AND WALSH WERE IN THE CONTROL ROOM WITH ME, ONE TO THE RIGHT, ONE TO THE LEFT, LIKE GUNFIGHTERS"
BILL SZYMCZYK

Szymczyk recalls that the final version consisted of "33 separate tape edits from five different takes."

Aside from being the album's thematic centerpiece and the Eagles' best song, it also rode out on one of rock's most iconic guitar duels, with Felder and Walsh trading sizzle and sting, one-upping each other, then finally merging in triumphant two-part harmony. "We worked really well together," Walsh told *Guitar World* while promoting *Analog Man* in 2012. "It was competitive. We brought out the best in each other. We liked to kick each other in the butt! He would play something, and I'd get an attitude, like, 'Oh yeah? Listen to this.' And he'd go, 'Wow, listen to this!'"

"For two days, we workshopped the hell out of that," Szymczyk says. "We had amps out in the studio, but Felder and Walsh were in the control room with me, one to the right, one to the left, like gunfighters! Felder was the ultimate technician, always a tad on top of the beat. And Walsh was the ultimate 'feel' guy, always a tad behind it. Together, they were



RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

The Eagles on stage in 1977, with Felder [*center*] and Walsh [*right*] sporting the Les Paul/Telecaster combo heard on "Hotel California"



Felder [*left*] and Frey on stage in Los Angles in 1976

RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

phenomenal. Those two days were one of the high points of my career."

"There are at least half a dozen guitar tracks on the original recording," Henley says. "In live concert settings, this required Felder to play a double-neck guitar, with the 12-string neck being capo'd on the seventh fret for the intro and the breakdown, and the six-string with no capo for the single-line phrases and the tag solos. One of the unique things about the song is that it ends with extended dual guitar solos. Skynyrd had done something like that a couple of years earlier."

Another thing it shared with Skynyrd's "Free Bird" was a length that wasn't exactly radio friendly — six and a half minutes, to be exact. "The label wanted us to do a single edit, and we all said no way," Szymczyk says. "Obviously, we were right to."

After seven months of off-and-on recording, the album wrapped in October.

The cover artwork, designed by John Kosh (who also handled *Who's Next* and the Beatles' *Abbey Road*), featured a photo of the Beverly Hills Hotel taken from a cherry picker 60 feet above Sunset Boulevard at dusk. Built in 1912 in a Mediterranean Revival style, the pink stucco hotel had hosted famous guests from Marilyn Monroe to Frank Sinatra.

"THERE ARE AT LEAST HALF A DOZEN GUITAR TRACKS ON 'HOTEL CALIFORNIA' — DON FELDER HAD TO PLAY A DOUBLE-NECK LIVE"
DON HENLEY

A month after the album came out, when the hotel learned that the Eagles had used the image without permission, they threatened a lawsuit, then dropped it when they realized their bookings had tripled because of the record's success.

Hotel California was released December 8, 1976, and certified platinum in its first week. It went to Number 1 on the *Billboard* 200, where it stayed for eight weeks. Reviews were glowing. *Creem* said there were "no weak tracks; the music flows majestically every step of the way." *Phonograph Record* praised its "peerless harmonies" and said it was "pretty and punchy, as the best albums of fellow troubled hedonists Steely Dan and the Beach Boys are." *NME* said, "There's

no laurels-resting, and a lot has gone into its meticulous crafting."

While Szymczyk calls the record a "quantum leap forward," Henley's estimation is more modest. "I don't know if I'd call it a 'quantum leap,'" he says. "*One of These Nights* had three big hits on it. But, in terms of growth and consistency and range, I'd agree that *Hotel California* was an improvement."

But the 10-month, 72-date world tour that followed was grueling, so much so that the band's road crew nicknamed it "The Prison California." Everyone traveled with their own little entourage. Walsh and Felder had their faction, briefly entertaining the idea of forming their own band.

In *History of the Eagles*, Henley said, "Glenn and I saw ourselves as the leaders, but other people saw us as dictators. You just cannot have five leaders in a band. It doesn't work." But according to *To the Limit: The Untold Story of the Eagles*, even the two leaders had stopped talking and would only communicate through second parties. There were also cocaine-induced physical ailments. Stomach ulcers all around. Henley suffered back pain. Frey's nasal lining was shot (he'd have two surgeries before getting his nose repaired with teflon). By the end of the tour, Meisner had become persona non grata after refusing to sing "Take It to the Limit" at one show; he left the band shortly after.

The Eagles managed one more album, 1979's difficult *The Long Run* ("We called it 'The Long One,'" Szymczyk says) then broke up after a benefit concert where Frey and Felder openly threatened to fight each other on stage during the performance. It would be 14 years before they reunited.

Despite one album of new material in 2007, the Eagles have become a heritage act, playing the hits — albeit one of the highest-grossing ones on the circuit. After Glenn Frey died in 2016 at age 67, they soldiered on with his son Deacon and Vince Gill taking his place. And so it's gone over the past decade. Meanwhile, there are at least 10 high-profile Eagles tribute bands who are on the road as much as the Eagles were in their Seventies heyday.

"DON FELDER WAS THE TECHNICIAN, AND JOE WALSH WAS THE 'FEEL' GUY. TOGETHER, THEY WERE PHENOMENAL"
BILL SZYMCZYK

And though classic rock radio has mostly disappeared, subscription services have kept the music playing. "Hotel California" alone passed two billion streams on Spotify in October 2025.

During the Eagles' 2026 residency at Las Vegas's Sphere, Henley confided to *CBS Sunday Morning* that "This year will probably be it. I've said things like that before, but I feel like we're getting toward the end."

Meanwhile, their Sphere setlist contains the three key tracks from *Hotel California* — "New Kid in Town," "Life in the Fast Lane" and the title song. With sold-out audiences singing along to every word and guitar lick, this is music that is now an indelible part of musical culture. It's a reminder of how the world felt and sounded in the mid-Seventies, and also how the American Dream continues to roll along that desert highway, toward the light, but surrounded by the dark.

It makes the album sound just as relevant as it did 50 years ago. "I could make a case for it," Henley says. "The political chicanery, the national delusion, the undoing of decades of environmental progress, the rebirth of the military-industrial complex. I've lived long enough to see that we go around in circles. I think it was Mark Twain who said, 'History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes.'" GW



Neural DSP Quad Cortex Mini

All the power, less than half the size — so what's the compromise?

BY ROB LAING

WELL OVER FIVE years after Neural DSP debuted its first piece of hardware at the 2020 NAMM Show, it remains at the forefront of amp modeling and capture technology. But delivering the sounds for players is only half the story when it comes to hardware, which is why its Quad Cortex remains so popular for professionals and home players alike. It was the first to bring the combination of a touch screen, modeling and capturing to a sleek platform with an intuitive UI. Now, following the capture-only Nano Cortex it has its second Quad Cortex model, the Mini.

So what's changed? In terms of power — nothing. The mini benefits from five years of meaningful firmware updates and the same processing power as the larger (over twice as large) model. The seven-inch screen is the same size but now takes up most of the top space. So the key questions are, what does it lose and what advantages does the smaller form factor offer?

The biggest change is six less rotary footswitches, and Neural tries to negate limitations by allowing one to be held down to activate tap-tempo and doubling up the four switch's roles where they can be assigned to activate four additional options in Scene (so a number of effect and amp parameters can change at once) or Stomp modes (which turns effects on and off like a traditional pedalboard). The compromise is that to activate the other four footswitch actions, you have to hold down footswitch B. Not ideal in the middle of a song.

If you need more than four switchable effects or amps regularly, we think it makes sense to go for the bigger Quad Cortex, but this is where the mini poses an interesting proposition for pedalboards; because it's so much smaller, it fits in better alongside other pedals you may own to make its four-switch layout far less of a compromise. For example, we used the Mini alongside a UAFX Astra for modulation sounds.

The most powerful compact amp and effects modeler out there right now

And you might be wondering about all that glass. Neural assures us it's up to the rigors of life on the road and beyond, and even though it surrounds the rotary footswitches, we saw no reason to doubt them in our extensive testing. And while the touchscreen technology is the same as the 5-year-old Quad, Neural also offers the option to change parameters onscreen or with the rotary footswitches like an Etch a Sketch.

The intuitive feel of this user interface is an ace up the Mini's sleeve in a world where the learning curve with modelers and multi-fx pedals







LUCY ROBINSON/FUTURE



can be steep enough to turn players off. Instead, the Mini soon became the workstation at the heart of our compact but hugely versatile pedalboard. In 15 minutes, we captured two of our favorite overdrive pedals (Wampler Tumnus and TWA Source Code) in their go-to usual set-and-forget control positions, then stacked them with a plexi model on the Quad. You can easily add your favorite physical delay pedals into the onboard effects loop too (there are still two like the bigger Quad, but you need to use a TRS cable for one fewer input and output) so they're part of your signal chain.

The Quad Cortex's modeling and capture tech is still world-leading, and the price here reflects that. In return the features are considerable. Alongside a wealth of effects and utilities, including Transpose and Doubling, there are 90 amp models and more than 1,000 factory IRs covering recognizable classics from iconic builders including Dumble, Fender, Marshall, Bogner and Mesa Boogie, and the online Cortex Cloud community is constantly adding to its selection of thousands of amp and drive pedal captures every day. These are easy to favorite via the Neural app or web-based service, and then download with the QC mini's Wi-Fi connectivity. This is a huge strength with the Quad Cortex, because it allows players to sample and record with captures of rare and dream-list amps they might never get access to otherwise.

Neural's regular firmware support continues to add effects, amps and enhanced usability — including ongoing compatibility with Neural's acclaimed software plugins. The XLR input positioned at the side also makes it a good solution for players/singers who are looking for an all-in-one live solution.

The Mini's compact dimensions make it suitable for a draw in a rack or desktop, but we think it's more desirable as part of a pedalboard, and for further potential mobility we even had it working from a 22.5W, 27,000mAH USB battery pack via a myVolts Step-Up USB-C to 12V Power Tip — impressive stuff, and worth noting that the Mini's power draw is 1.2A in contrast with the larger version's 3A. It also comes with an AC adapter that locks into the input with a twist for onstage security, unlike the original's. So in that respect, it's an upgrade! GW



MANUFACTURER: Neural DSP, neuraldsp.com

PRICE: $1,399

PROS

+ Top-tier modeling and capture technology
+ Compact form factor without compromising processing power
+ Still plenty of I/O options
+ Excellent community for capture downloads

CONS

– The reduced number of footswitches will be a dealbreaker for some
– Two-button volume control is less precise and switches up and down in increments of five

VERDICT: The Quad Cortex Mini is the most powerful compact amp and effects modeler right now — and it's not even close. While you lose physical footswitches from the larger model, you gain a much more compact workstation that might be the missing solution for your pedalboard.

LUCY ROBINSON/FUTURE

Strymon Fairfax Class A Output Stage Drive

Strymon's unexpected departure from its usual DSP-led design is a recreation of Randy Bachman's Garnet Herzog — and the result is something rather stellar

BY MATT OWEN



STRYMON IS ONE of the biggest names in the digital effects world, but the Fairfax we have here represents a completely different prospect. Why? Well, because it's the company's first-ever all-analog pedal.

This isn't just a drive pedal; Strymon itself wouldn't call this strictly an overdrive. The Class A Output Stage Drive was modeled after a vintage Garnet Herzog tube drive, famously favored by Randy Bachman on the Guess Who's "American Woman." In essence, it's a miniaturized tube circuit in a pedal, and who doesn't love those?

The Fairfax is one of Strymon's smallest, most streamlined pedals to date, with a sole footswitch, three controls for Drive, Level and Sag, and an On/Off Bright toggle switch for accessing more pronounced higher frequencies. The Drive knob is the largest of the three, which makes sense, given it probably gets the most use here.

The source material utilized a 12AX7 and 6V6 layout, and here Strymon has aimed to capture that using JFETs and a transformer-based power supply that gives the Fairfax some serious juice.

There are no entry barriers to dialing in tones here, which is always a telling sign of a good workhorse pedal. As mentioned, the control layout is streamlined and it requires little work to get some nice Bachman-aping amp tones from the get-go.

On the whole, the controls are nicely responsive with decent sweeps, but we found the Bright switch to be something of a passenger on the pedal. In our testing, it didn't add too much, nor did it provide anything drastically different, and we think the pedal could have done without it.

An additional tone-shaping knob — for tailoring some of the frequencies, for example — would've been nice. That said, the OG Herzog had only two control knobs, so we can't be too harsh here.

MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE

What we like about the Fairfax is, because of its design brief, it delivers an overdrive flavor that conventional drive pedals can't really recreate — especially with the added Sag control. Unlike the classic mid-boost gain and high-distortion pedals that are absolutely everywhere, the Fairfax focuses more on the old-school amp tones that inject a really unique dimension to a pedalboard.

With Sag rolled all the way off and the Drive around the 2 o'clock position, you can get some fiery gain tones that sound like a cranked vintage amp. Roll back Drive and bump the Level and it tidies up nicely — not really to the point where it can be used as a clean boost, but great for gritty rhythm playing.

In a world of clones and copies, this is a breath of fresh air

Diming Drive, knocking back level will give you proto-distortion tones, but not to the extent where things become overly gain-y. You still get the clarity and character of your clean signal, but it gets dressed in a really nice, thick coating that is infinitely inspiring and fun to play with.

But it's the Sag control here that is the real MVP. The higher you crank it, the spittier the tone becomes. When it's maxed up, you get that lovely dying-battery-esque tone that sounds like your signal is fighting for its life. Paired with a cranked Drive knob and you get some wonderfully strangled, almost gated fuzz-like effects, while knocking back the gain gives it a lo-fi sound that offers plenty of character. It brings something completely different to the table, and in a world of clones and copies, Fairfax feels like a breath of fresh air. GW

MANUFACTURER: Strymon, strymon.net

PRICE: $199

PROS

+ Unique drive tones that offer something fresh
+ Sag control is a great addition
+ Versatile selection of tones, from gritty drives to spitty fuzz
+ Foolproof control layout

CONS

– Bright switch could be more reactive
– Wouldn't say no to an additional tone knob

VERDICT: Strymon's first all-analog pedal is a triumphant success, offering a unique approach to tube-style drive tones that will breathe fresh life into your gain staging.

Fame
Custom ST RW

Fame delivers an absolute fret-burner of a sub-$700 guitar that exceeds expectations

BY PAUL RIARIO



It's capable of delivering everything from metal chunk to fattened lead tones

FAME GUITARS, WHILE an obscure brand, is actually owned by Music Store Professional, a Cologne-based musical instrument wholesaler. This retailer could best be described as Germany's Sweetwater – an Ikea-sized mecca of a music superstore boasting four floors of established instrument and pro-audio brands, a gigantic concert-sized stage, a restaurant and a coffee bar.

And here, the Fame Custom Line is a dedicated series of guitars made overseas for Music Store Professional, and comes complete with modern playability and higher-end components that rival mainstream brands. In our estimation, Fame is redefining value by pushing the boundaries of quality-to-price, and this particular model, the Custom ST RW, has all the elements of a bespoke instrument without a "made-to-measure" price tag.

So, with all this conjecture, what is it about these guitars that makes them so enticing? Well, for one, visually, they make a strong first impression, which is half the battle in winning us over. The finish – especially its overspray over paisley – immediately grabs our attention. Add features like stainless steel frets, dual high-output humbucking pickups and an asymmetrical body shape, and you have a guitar that's almost ready to come home with us.



What strikes us is that the Custom ST RW doesn't necessarily copy any particular brand or existing model, but it certainly borrows popular design cues from what players desire in a modern six-string electric. With so many guitarists gravitating toward asymmetrical body shapes, the Custom ST RW delivers a sleek offset S-style, dual-cutaway design that genuinely highlights the "worn-in" aqua metallic overspray of the soft-coated nitrocellulose finish, revealing its paisley roots underneath (and if you check out the online store, there are many other cool overspray finishes available).



Fame also utilizes a good slab of solid mahogany for its body with the typical belly carve and forearm contours. The quartersawn maple neck, which has a soft satin finish on the back and appears roasted for added stability, feels comfortable and smooth.

Despite the bolt-on construction, a sculpted neck heel provides a fluid connection where the neck joins the body. The guitar features luminescent side dot inlays, while interestingly enough, the Abalone inlays on the rosewood fingerboard are "sunken-in."

On closer inspection, a clear acrylic filler tops and levels the sunken fretboard inlays, giving them a cool, floating appearance. The oversized, beak-shaped headstock adds a bit of character, but for those in the know of Seventies Strats, it contributes to a heftier tone.

Altogether, the guitar looks and feels broken-in, which is precisely the point: you don't need to treat this guitar preciously. The neck is notable for its flat 13.75-inch fingerboard radius and 22 jumbo-sized stainless steel frets, which is a welcome, albeit often pricey, upgrade elsewhere that enhances fret durability.

We continually find that this type of pairing offers the best performance, resulting in smoother playability and bends that don't choke out.

Grasping the guitar's modern "C" neck, it's clear the profile is undeniably fuller, but far from uncomfortable or a deal-breaker. In fact, rest assured, it didn't prevent us from reaching breakneck speeds.

Looking at the modern-vintage vibrato

FAME GUITARS

bridge, it's chrome-plated with a drop-in vibrato arm, and while we're not entirely sure, the six adjustable saddles appear to be stainless steel, which is a solid upgrade. The guitar's out-of-the-box action was fairly standard for string height, and the bridge was positioned for non-floating.

Of note, the guitar comes with Fame's locking tuners, which work perfectly fine for keeping the guitar in tune and facilitating faster string changes, and what's nice is Fame includes a set of strap locks as well.

We should also point out that the volume and tone controls feature heavy-duty knurled chrome knobs, and the 3-way toggle is similarly robust. Plugging into the ignition of its input jack, we fired away through an arsenal of high-gain and classic amplifiers, plus a Fender Tone Master Pro workstation.



MANUFACTURER: Fame Guitars, fame-guitars.de

PRICE: $652

PROS

+ Top-notch construction and hardware
+ Powerful dual humbuckers with coil-splitting capability on both
+ Eye-catching overspray nitro-finishes
+ 22 jumbo stainless steel frets provide prolonged fret-life
+ Remarkable value

CONS

– None at this price, but some might not like the "worn" finish; Fame also offers non-relic versions

VERDICT: This is a super-fast instrument designed for players who demand top-tier performance, paired with a searing tone at a price within reach.

Right from the start, the Fame humbuckers deliver a noticeably hotter output and a beefy character, resulting in a tone with serious density. The bridge pickup is aggressively focused, excelling with distorted textures while maintaining surprising articulation and percussive tightness. Pulling up the tone control splits the bridge coils, yielding a bright, clear single-coil chime.

The neck humbucker offers vigor and body, handling clean and saturated tones with a clear attack and balanced output. We also split the neck coil by pulling up the volume knob for triggering some plucky and focused notes. Together, Fame's pickups are a heavy-hitting combination. Paired with its fast-feeling neck, the Custom ST RW is a scrapper of a six-string capable of delivering everything from metal chunk and classic riffage to fattened lead tones, and solidly hitting on all fronts. GW


VOICE
OD 2
GAIN
VOLUME
BASS
MIDDL
GATE
RESONANCE
SAVE
MANUAL
SHIFT
CABRIG


DELAY
REVERB
CH 3
ID:X FLOOR
THREE
TAP
(HOLD: TUNER)


EFFECTS
PRE FX
MOD
DLY
REV
01-3
ARENA LEAD
MASTER
TYPE — PUSH — PAGE
AMPS 1
AMPS 2
AC/BASS
REVERB

Blackstar ID:X Floor Three

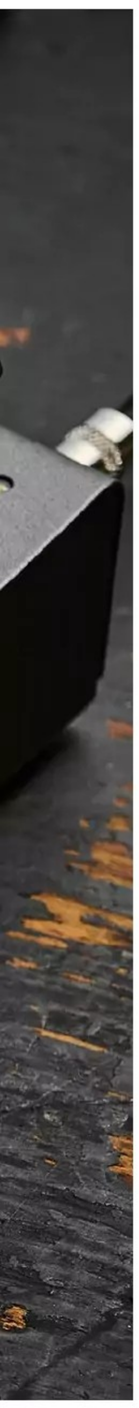
Blackstar swerves the touchscreen for a tactile, amp-style workflow

BY MATT MCCRACKEN

THE ID:X FLOOR series seems like the natural evolution from Blackstar's existing ID:X amps and Amped pedals, with the idea of giving guitarists everything they need in a single unit. The Floor Three is the full-fat version of the lineup, but there's also the Floor Two, which features three footswitches and an expression pedal, and the Floor One, which has no expression pedal and three footswitches. All the versions feature the same sounds, but as you go up the range, you add flexibility with additional controls.

This unit focuses on giving you a decidedly more guitar-amp-style workflow, so there's just a tiny screen offset to the right for visual cues when changing the settings of individual effects or amp models. Seven knobs deliver control over your amp tones, following a very similar path to that of the Blackstar ID:X 50 practice amp. You can select your voice with the left-most knob before tweaking the overall tone with gain, volume, bass, middle, treble and Blackstar's patented "ISF" control, which changes the tonality from an American to a British sound.

There are eight footswitches across the front, with the bottom row handling channel switching, preset banking, tap tempo and the tuner, plus an expression pedal. On the back panel, there are plenty of connectivity options, and it can be run with a pedalboard power supply-friendly 9V, 500mA power supply.



MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE

The ID:X Floor Three feels surprisingly heavy as we pull it out of the box, so much so that we nearly drop it on our kitchen counter. It's just shy of 2 lbs. heavier than the Quad Cortex, and that's noticeable from the moment you unwrap it. The heftiness implies a certain durability, though, which means it's without a doubt well built enough for live performance.

The surfeit of knobs and switches means minimal menu diving when it comes to the amp tones, and every time you make a change to the knobs, the screen displays not only where you're moving it, but the original position it held on the preset. This is super handy if you're moving through a lot of presets and only want to make incremental changes, as the knobs will always be in different positions depending on what you've got selected.

For us, Blackstar has been doing an awesome job when it comes to making great-feeling and sounding amp models. We really loved the tones on the Blackstar Beam Solo recently, and it's no different here. With some other amp modelers, we feel a constant need to tweak, but setting up with a baritone guitar and a pair of Sennheiser HD 490 studio headphones, the ID:X Floor Three just makes us want to keep playing.

Starting with — as is customary these days on pretty much every amp simulator — a classic Fender clean tone, the sound and response are just so amp-like that we don't feel like we want to change anything. Cycling through the presets, it's immediately obvious that serious work has gone into crafting usable tones, and whereas with so many other modelers in the price range we want to immediately reach for the settings knobs, here it's so tastefully done that it encourages us to play more and tweak less.



This unit focuses on giving you a decidedly more guitar-amp-style workflow

MANUFACTURER:
Blackstar,
blackstaramps.com

PRICE: $399.99

PROS

+ Superb amp and effects tones, on par with more expensive units
+ Amp-style workflow means you don't need to use software to sculpt sounds
+ Additional footswitches add a lot of flexibility versus smaller versions
+ Focuses on a smaller number of quality amp models, which means less option paralysis

CONS

– Heavy compared to other multi-effects pedals
– We're not convinced by the low-profile footswitches, which make banking up and down difficult

VERDICT: Some of the usability could be an issue for players wanting to use the Floor Three as a live rig, but we can foresee that many will be swayed by the excellent quality of tones on offer, with amp and cab models that surpass some expensive units from bigger brands.

Switching to our Gretsch semi-hollow guitar to get a different viewpoint on the modeling, the response is there to picking dynamics, and it feels super natural. Its mimicry of an amp's ability to respond immediately to how hard or soft we attack the strings is fantastic, and while the phrase "It cleans up nicely" is so overused these days, it's absolutely the case here.

The cabinet response is often overlooked when it comes to floor modelers and multi-effects pedals, and we've had success making an average amp sim sound a lot better with third-party impulse responses with other units. It's a credit to Blackstar then that for once, we don't feel the need to switch out the already existing CabRig emulations (the company's editable take on IRs) to get something that feels and sounds more realistic to our ears.

The Floor Three does key things really well — the intuitive immediacy of the controls, the sounds; it's an excellent-value all-in-one solution. The downsides? The low-profile footswitch design on the front row makes bank switching difficult when you're not playing in shoes or if you have smaller feet. There are a few gawky flaws, like the tuner being a bit unresponsive at times and the modulation sounds giving a big jump up in volume versus the other effects, but these could most likely be solved with a software update. If, like the big boys of modeling do these days, Blackstar continues to update this unit, it could have something very good on its hands indeed. GW

Victory MKX Lunch Box Head

The British amp specialist unveils its most advanced lunchbox amp to date

BY AMIT SHARMA



VICTORY HAS CERTAINLY come a long way in just 13 years. The brand launched by Chief Engineer Martin Kidd — whose prior work with Cornford resulted in partnerships with six-string luminaries including Guthrie Govan, Justin Hawkins and Dweezil Zappa — now sits among the big players of the guitar-amp world.

This latest lunchbox head, inspired by 2024's handwired flagship MK Overdrive, is undoubtedly his most daring design to date, squeezing in the most functionality we've seen on an amp head of this size. The company says the MKX "redefines what a compact amplifier can achieve," and although it's a bold statement, Victory has proved that it's not a brand to be underestimated.

The overall design is exactly in line with the other Victory lunchbox heads. There's a classy cream-on-black aesthetic with the upper grill giving users a glimpse into the magic encased within. If you like seeing tubes glowing next to a big transformer, this will put a smile on your face. More importantly, this is one robust piece of gear. The metal chassis will protect the circuitry well enough on the road and should guarantee many happy years of playing.

This is undoubtedly the most versatile lunchbox amp Victory has ever made



Although the MKX is very much a three-channel amp, its two overdrive channels share the same three-band EQ located directly underneath the clean controls. The interface is pretty straightforward, perhaps a bit much for the kind of player who wants an ultra-streamlined two-knob design, but we think the majority of users will welcome the possibilities for tonal shaping. That said, this amp isn't trying to compete with the digital world. It's an old-school tube amp at heart, so you won't find any USB connectivity or direct-recording outs.

A big plus with all of the Victory lunchbox heads is the ability to run them in high or low power modes, this particular model coming all the way down from 50 watts to just nine, which means it will be loud enough for live shows while also being quiet enough to use comfortably at home. And at just over 15 lbs., it's pretty light and easy to move around, so you won't need the additional gym membership to help you get around from gig to gig.

For this review, we plugged a Schecter USA Nick Johnston HSS into a Kingtone The Duellist twin overdrive, with the head going into

a Victory 2x12 cabinet loaded with Vintage 30 speakers, as well as a Boss RE-202 Space Echo providing some delay in the loop. The clean channel is impressively punchy with the gain set fairly low, but as you increase the amount of signal running through the three ECC83 preamp tubes, it becomes even more lively. If you want that glassy Stevie Ray Vaughan sound heard on famous tracks like "Lenny," this is a high-gain amp that can actually do it — and even provide the right kind of reverb at the same time.

That sense of depth also runs through both overdrive channels, the first of which focuses on more of a crunch variation that will suit all of your favorite AC/DC and Guns N' Roses riffs. If you are more accustomed to metal riffing and screaming leads, OD II will probably be your go-to.



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE

MANUFACTURER: Victory Amps, victoryamps.com

PRICE: $1,659

PROS

+ Uncompromised versatility
+ Lots of footswitchable functions
+ Two built-in digital reverbs

CONS

– May have too many features for some users
– Still probably best suited to higher-gain players

VERDICT: Given that the handwired MK Overdrive retails for over three times as much, it's amazing just how close Victory has got here. The MKX Lunch Box combines the same kind of features and controls with breathtaking tones at a fraction of the cost, while also adding in two types of reverb.

With a pair of EL34 tubes in the power section, the MKX has a distinctly British voice that harks back to the modded Marshalls of the Eighties, but you could always scoop the mids and use a pedal in front to get a more American kind of flavor.

This is undoubtedly the most versatile lunchbox amp Victory has ever made, and we're pleased to report it performs incredibly well across the board. High-gain amps rarely come with clean channels this good — many have tried to house the sounds of Fender and Marshall inside one product and very few have come this close.

The functionality is very impressive, given how you get four footswitchable controls plus two types of stunning digital reverb, high and low power modes, plus more knobs at the back.

Another plus is just how sonically tidy everything is; even when you have the gain high up, there's very little buzz or electronic interference but still plenty of sustain, feedback and saturation. In short, it screams every bit as well as it sings. GW

Crumar Burn rotary speaker simulator

A convincing Leslie sound isn't easy. Can a keyboard maker provide the solution for guitarists?

BY CONNOR FLYS



THOUGH INVENTED FOR the organ, the Leslie speaker sound gained a whole new fanbase as the electric guitarists of the Sixties started experimenting with effects – not least when Japanese engineer Fumio Mieda created the Uni-Vibe, a rotary speaker emulator geared specifically toward guitar.

Since then, the difficult job of capturing the vibrant sound of the Leslie speaker, or indeed the idiosyncrasies of the later Uni-Vibe, has occupied the minds of many of the effects industry's big players. This is where Italian organ and synth brand Crumar comes in. This pedal, the Burn, is an in-depth Leslie emulation replacing an earlier unit by fellow Italians Genuine Soundware.

The product page for that discontinued pedal still exists, the PR lingo seeming to confirm that the Burn is named for Deep Purple's organ-heavy 1974 track. Rock 'n' roll credentials, for sure – so, of course, we need to find out what it's like when you pluck it out of the keyboard player's signal chain and plug in a guitar instead.

The silver, black and red color combo looks classy, and the unit is reassuringly sturdy, as you'd expect when spending $300-plus on a pedal; it's a chunky metal case with good hardware and very clear, purposeful printing. One potential issue? The knobs might fall within nudging distance of your shoes when operating the footswitches. If it's more of a studio tool for you, it's not such an issue.

A well-built enclosure packed with vibey organ-esque sounds

Unlike its Genuine Soundware predecessor, the Crumar's layout is refreshingly upfront; no editor required – everything you need is right there. We have a suite of controls for some quite granular tweaking of the modulation's finer points, an additional knob for the dual-mode onboard reverb and two footswitches – one to switch the pedal on and off, the other to select Slow or Fast rotary speed. Stereo outputs allow you to create the width you need from a rotary sound. We plugged the Burn into the clean channel of a Laney VH100R with an old SG/Les Paul Junior. From the first press of the footswitch, the signal was enveloped in rich, 3D modulation.

The Fast setting is a pitch-perfect, Hammond organ-esque rotary sound, with minimal tweaking required to perfect the settings. Slow is relaxed but effective, akin to a very slow phaser or flanger. A delightful feature is Ramp, which controls the speed at which the slow and fast settings change; you can hear the modulation speeding up and slowing down, rather than sounding as though it is simply latching from one digital algorithm to another. Then, if you hold the footswitch, the spinning stops and you have a subtle, tone-coloring preamp stage without the modulation. This provides a warm push to the clean channel.

We tried a humbucker-equipped Les Paul and our single-coil James Tyler, as well as the P90 of the Junior, and came away thinking that, for the Hammond-like sounds the Fast setting conjures, fatter pickups are the order of the day. The reverb is excellent, too – a pre-effect spring emulation, and a hall reverb that is a subtler post-modulation setting, with a huge amount of each effect available. Bear in mind that the reverb remains active even when the pedal is switched off; if you want it gone, you have to turn down the knob. GW

MANUFACTURER: Crumar, crumar.it

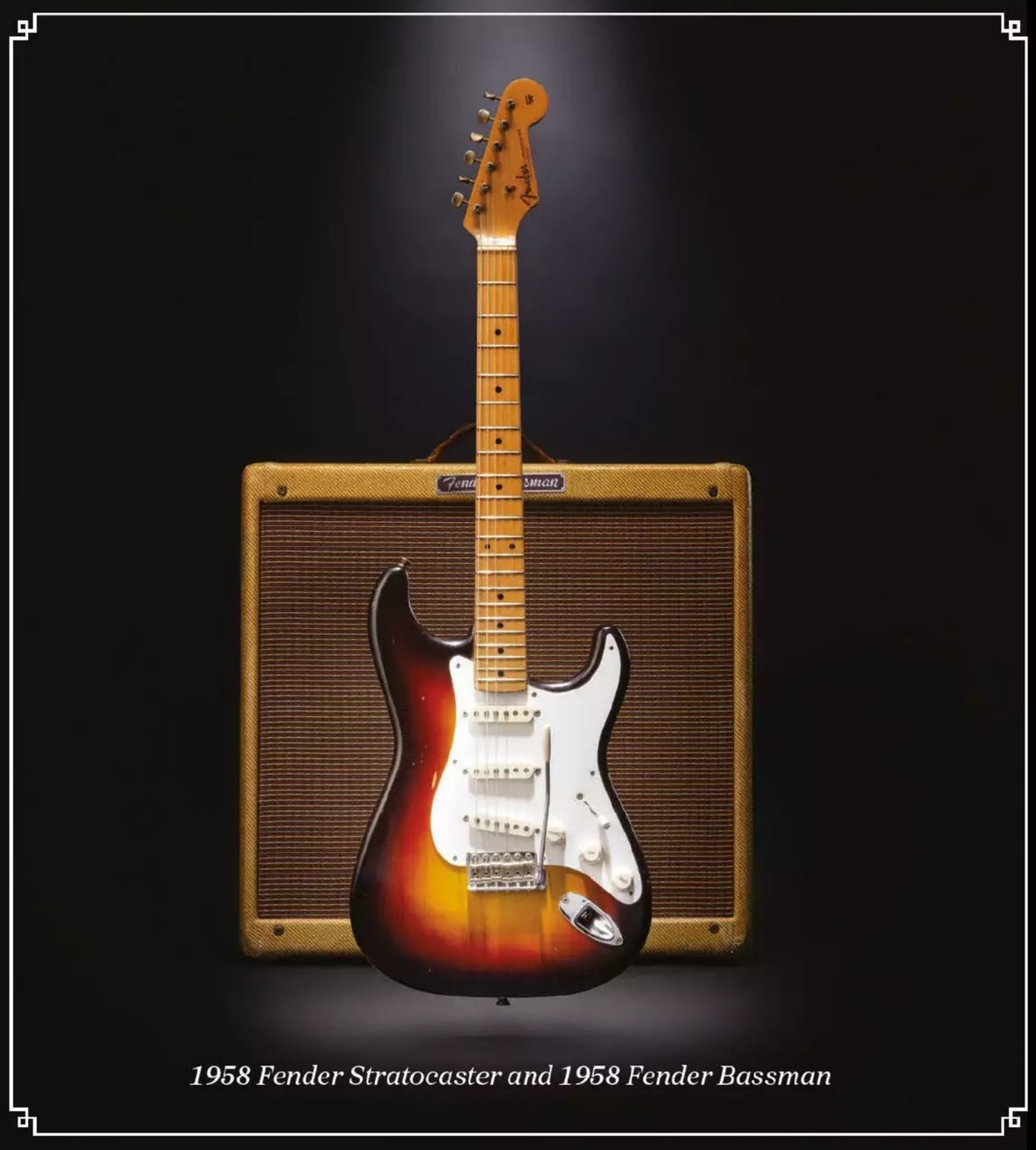
PRICE: $309

PROS
+ High-quality form factor
+ Plenty of sonic range and adjustability
+ Fabulous organ sounds

CONS
– The reverb can't be bypassed properly
– The controls might be easy to knock

VERDICT: With a slew of controls for adjusting sounds to a fine degree, the Burn is a well-built enclosure packed with superb, vibey organ-esque sounds. It's got plenty of utility for fast and slow modulation, as well as hidden talents for tone coloring and reverb.

PHIL BARKER/FUTURE



1958 Fender Stratocaster and 1958 Fender Bassman

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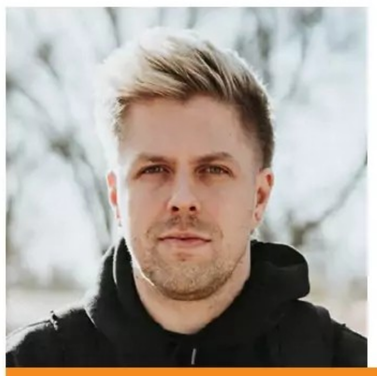
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THE DEEP END
BY MIKE STRINGER

Hammers of the Gods

Combining power chords with hammer-ons and pull-offs

IN CRAFTING THE primary riffs for Spiritbox songs, I'll often combine aggressively strummed, atonal power chords with fast single-note phrases and some hammer-ons and pull-offs. A good example of this approach is heard in "Angel Eyes," from our 2023 EP *The Fear of Fear*.

I play this song on a seven-string guitar in the tuning I use most often, which is drop-A transposed down a minor 3rd, commonly referred to as "drop F♯" (low to high: F♯, C♯, F♯, B, E, G♯, C♯). "Angel Eyes" is an unapologetically heavy track that's pretty simple, in terms of the fret hand. It's more of a pick-hand exercise, in terms of the rhythmic precision required to give the riffs the right amount of intensity.

FIGURE 1 shows the verse riff, which combines eighth- and 16th-note rhythms. In bars 1-3, I play palm-muted two-note chords on the bottom two strings, with the 6th string open and the 7th string fretted at the 1st fret. These two notes form a ♭5 interval (B♭ and E), which has an atonal sound.

In bar 4, on beats 3 and 4, I perform a series of hammer-ons and slides on the 7th and 5th strings that roll into bar 5. I follow this with a pair of strummed natural harmonics (N.H.) on the top three strings, located a point a little ways past the 3rd fret, as indicated by 3.2.

I use a moderate amount of palm-muting here, so that the strings aren't too choked. I like the notes to sustain a bit, which goes hand in hand with how much force I'm using while striking the strings. My suggestion is to pick really hard and dig in with the pick hand.

FIGURE 2 focuses on the quick hammer-on/slide phrase from bar 4 of **FIGURE 1**. I fret the notes on the 7th string with my index finger and the notes on the 5th string with my middle finger. To make the riff "pop," I palm mute the 7th string while allowing the notes on the 5th string to ring

FIGURE 3 illustrates the chorus riff. In bars 1-4, after initially sounding the open low A note, I play B♭ octave shapes on the 7th and 5th strings, followed by B♭ octaves on the 6th and 4th strings, sliding up to the 6th fret on the 6th string each time. In bar 4, the phrase ends with a gradual whole-step bend at the 5th fret on the 6th string.

In bars 5-8, I drop the phrase down a half-step, sounding an A octave on the 7th and 5th strings, followed by additional A notes higher up the fretboard, including a fast slide up to the 12th fret of the 7th string.

The first seven bars then repeat, and in bar 9 of the example, I close out the phrase with alternating two-note ♭5 power chords on the bottom two strings, before restating the first two bars of the verse riff.

There's a lot of string-skipping here. Strive to jump between the strings with economy of movement. The goal is to make the octaves sound as clear and seamless as possible. Try to keep your pick hand moving quickly and decisively throughout the figure. GW

Seven-string guitar, in drop-A tuning, down one and one half steps (low to high, F♯, C♯, F♯, B, E, G♯, C♯).
All notes and chords sound a minor 3rd (one and one half steps) lower than written.

FIG. 1 B♭(♭5)
P.M. bottom two strings throughout.

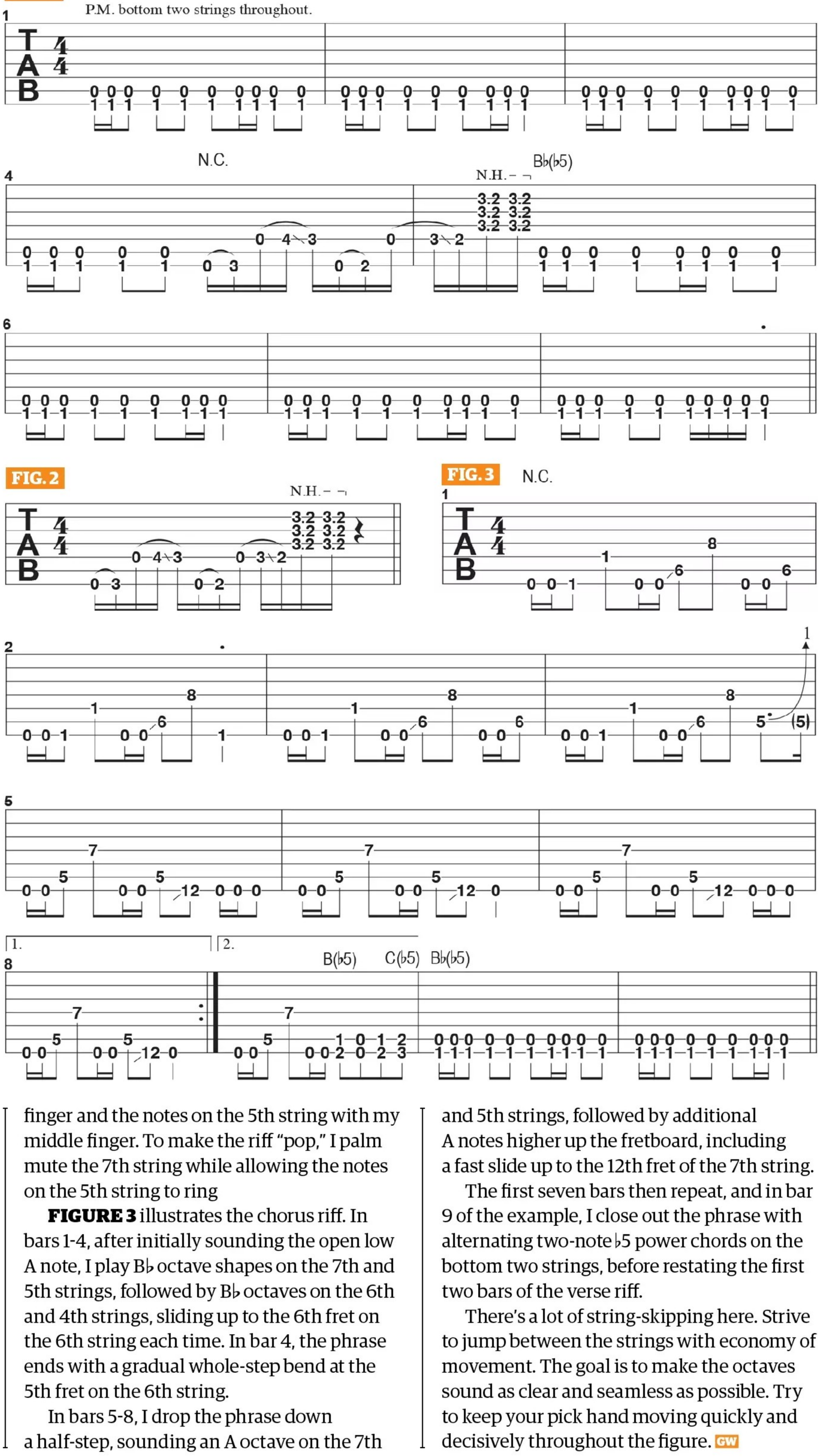


FIG. 2

FIG. 3 N.C.

KYLE JOINSON

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2026

Mike Stringer is the guitarist for Grammy-winning Canadian metallers Spiritbox. Their latest album is 2025's *Tsunami Sea*. For more information, check out spiritbox.com.



TALES FROM NERDVILLE
BY JOE BONAMASSA

Steppin' On It

Navigating an uptempo blues, a la Eric Clapton's "Steppin' Out"

AS A GUITARIST that plays a lot of blues, I find myself performing many different kinds of shuffles, from slow to medium to fast. One of my all-time favorite blues recordings is "Steppin' Out," as covered by John Mayall on *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton*. (The original version is by Memphis Slim and features Matt "Guitar" Murphy, of *The Blues Brothers* fame, on guitar.) "Steppin' Out" is a hard-driving medium-up shuffle in the key of G, and Clapton's guitar playing on that track is just incredible. He plays with so much fire and creativity, as well as this distinctly youthful British exuberance.

FIGURE 1 is a two-bar phrase along the lines of the signature lick in "Steppin' Out." It's played in the key of G and is based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B♭, C, D, F), with an abundance of quarter- , half- and whole-step bends on the G string.

I love the way Eric draws from his Freddie King influence, in terms of his melodic phrasing and articulation, as demonstrated in the pickup bar and bar 1 of **FIGURE 2**, into the Freddie-style reverse-rake "slurs" at the end of bar 2 into bar 3. Throughout the example, notice all of the subtle, expressive bends on the top three strings.

In bars 8-12, the melody and phrasing is so simple — just swinging eighth notes — but the lines are delivered in a way that is also a nod to the great T-Bone Walker, in the use of hammer-ons from the minor 3rd, B♭, to the major 3rd, B, as well as the inclusion of the 2nd, or 9th, A.

In bar 12 into bar 13, I switch to G major pentatonic (G, A, B, D, E), moving back into G minor pentatonic in bar 16. In bar 17, I play a series of D notes on the B string, all on the eighth-note upbeats, that are bent in increasing increments, ending with a one-and-a-half-step bend that is shaken. In bars 19 through the end of the example, I move freely between G minor and major pentatonic ideas.

Clapton also loves to go up high on the neck and hit you with aggressive unison bends on the top two strings, a la the phrases that kick off **FIGURE 3**. This lick begins with F, at the 18th fret on the B string, bent up a whole step to G while a G note at the 15th fret on high E string is strummed together with the B string, ultimately adding aggressive vibrato to the unison bend. The remainder of the example is played in the 15th-position G minor pentatonic box and features fast hammer-ons and pull-offs as well as vocal-like, wide and fast vibratos.

When soloing over a shuffle like this, it's wise to hold back some ideas at first, so that you don't play everything you know in the first chorus! Take your time, hold and shake some notes and let the solo build in a musically natural way. Follow your stream of consciousness and use dynamics to tell a musical story.

Just about every blues show I attended in the Eighties and Nineties started with an uptempo shuffle like "Steppin' Out," and the Mayall-Clapton version is a great vehicle for learning what blues soloing is all about. GW

FIG. 1 N.C.(G7)

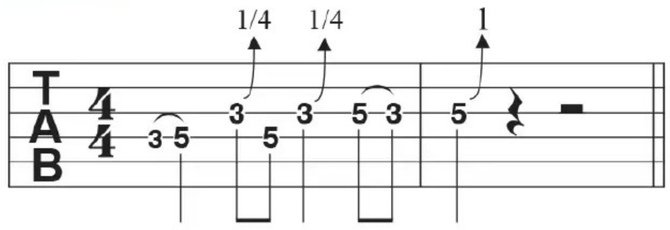
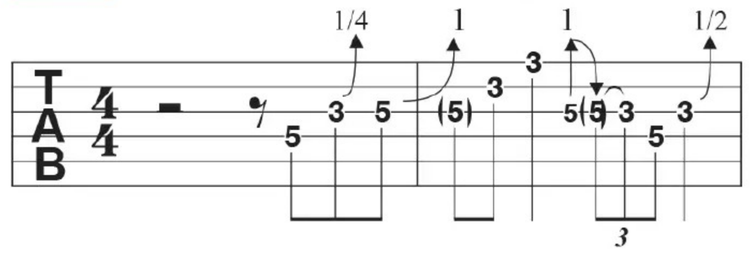
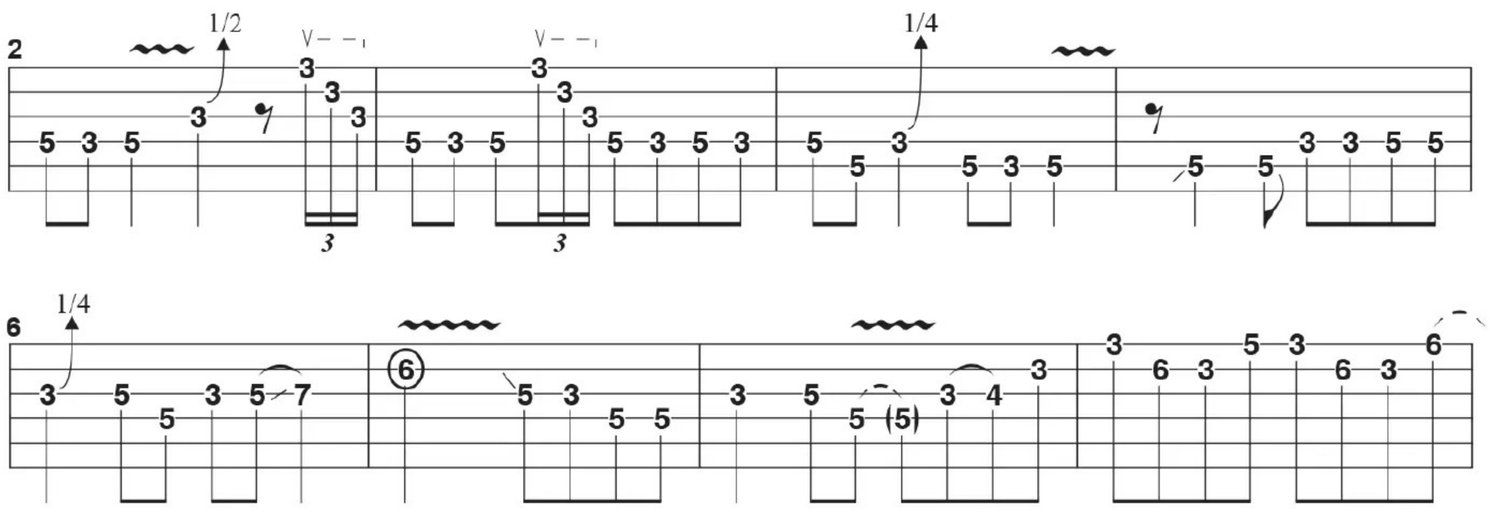


FIG. 2 N.C.(G7)





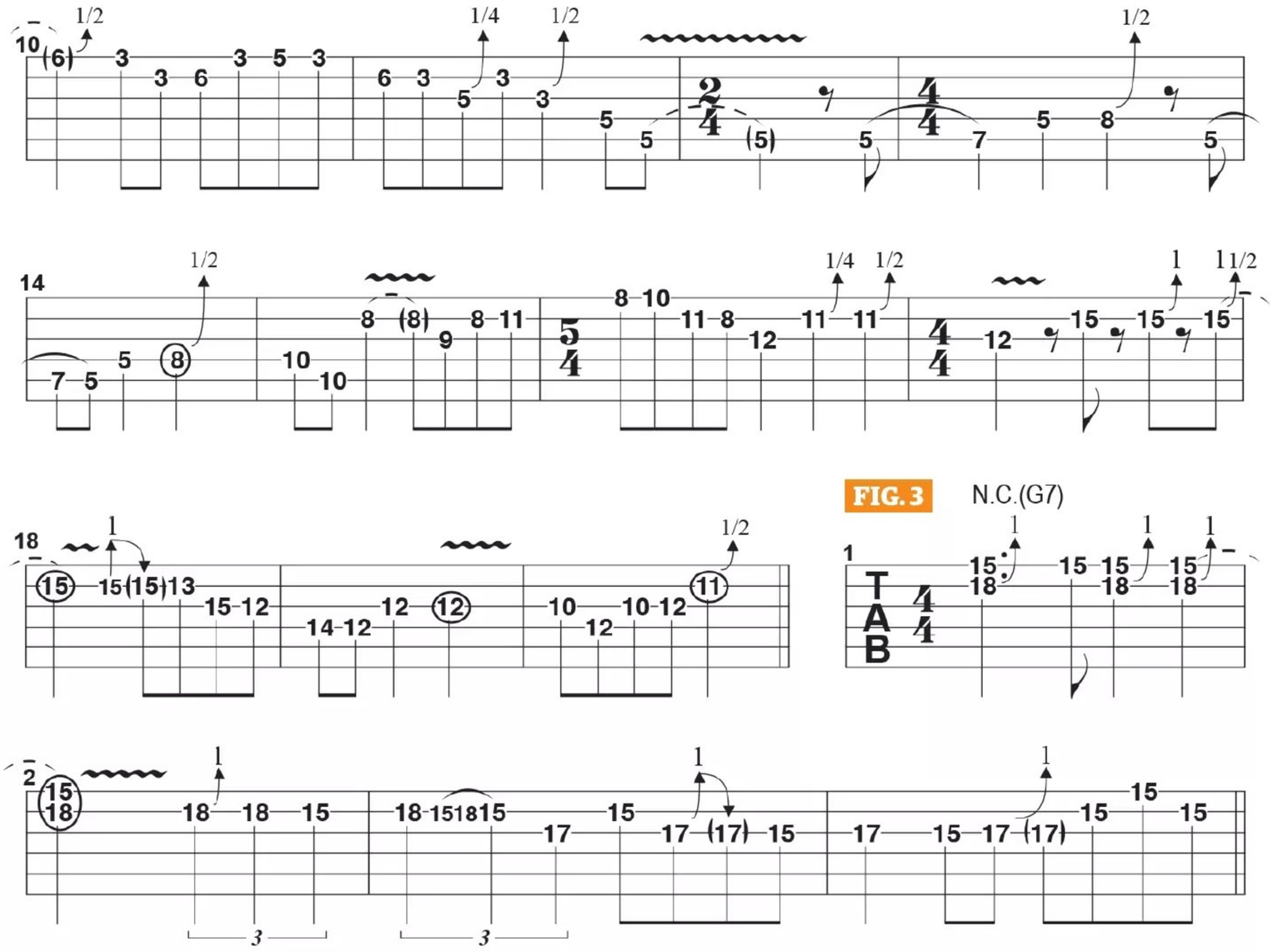


FIG. 3 N.C.(G7)

JEFF FASANO/GUITAR WORLD

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2026

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 albums are 2025's *Breakthrough* and 2026's *B.B. King: Blues Summit 100*. For more information, head to jbonamassa.com.



WORKIN' MAN
BY CHARLIE STARR

From C to Shining C

Fingerpicking in open Csus2 tuning

LAST MONTH, I delved into the world of fingerpicking in the Piedmont/Mississippi John Hurt/Rev. Gary Davis/Blind Blake style, with a look at the basics of this technique. As I detailed, it's built around alternating-bass figures picked with the thumb in a steady eighth-note pattern while rhythmically syncopated melodies are fingerpicked on the higher strings. A great example of this technique is heard on the Blackberry Smoke song "Ain't Got the Blues," from *The Whippoorwill*. I'd now like to continue covering this technique and demonstrate an unusual Csus2 tuning that opens up a whole new world of sounds and chordal possibilities.

This tuning was taught to me by my good friend Levi Lowery. He grabbed a guitar and strummed it, and I said, "What the hell tuning is that?" As he explained, it's a slight variation on an open C tuning, which is Csus2. As shown in **FIGURE 1**, start by tuning your A string down a whole step to G, your D string down a whole step to C and your low E string down two whole steps to C. Leave your G string as is. Finally, tune your B string up a half step to C and your high E string down a whole step to D. Strumming all six open strings in this tuning yields a Csus2 chord, as shown in **FIGURE 2**. Since most of the strings are tuned down, you might want to put medium gauge strings on your guitar to avoid it sounding like a mousetrap!

When Levi played in this tuning, he said, "You can just use one finger!" He used mostly barre chords on the bottom three strings while leaving the top three open, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 3**. He said, "There's not a bad chord anywhere — everything works!"

I developed a fingerpicking pattern based on this tuning and came up with "Azalea," which we recorded for our 2024 album *Be Right Here*. As shown in bars 1-3 of **FIGURE 4**, I thumbpick alternating eighth notes on the open 6th and 4th strings below a syncopated melody on the higher strings.

In bars 4 and 5, I switch to E♭ and F chords, for which I thumb-fret the 6th string and barre my index finger barres across the top three strings. The 4th string, tuned to C, remains open throughout.

FIGURE 5 illustrates the alternating bass pattern, after which the full fingerpicking pattern from **FIGURE 4** is added. **FIGURE 6** focuses on the E♭ and F chords formed with the thumbed bass notes on the 6th string and index-finger barres across the top three strings. The droning C note on the open 4th string ties the whole pattern together.

You might think you're "stuck" in this tuning — surrounded by C notes — but there are other great voicings to discover. **FIGURE 7** shows the song's bridge, which starts on the V (five) chord, G: these chord shapes are built from pairs of notes played at the same fret on the 4th and 2nd strings along with the open 5th, 3rd and 1st strings. In bar 3, the pattern resolves back to C.

It takes practice for this fingerpicking pattern to become second nature, so take your time with it. Start slowly and gradually increase the tempo until it sounds smooth and even throughout. GW

All examples are played in Csus2 tuning (low to high: C, G, C, G, C, D).

FIG. 1

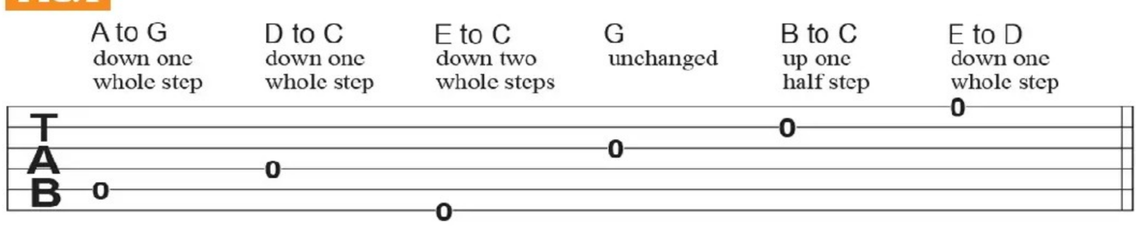


FIG. 2

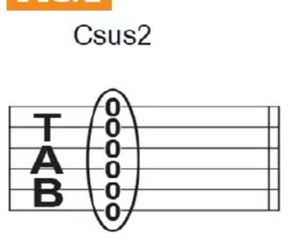


FIG. 3

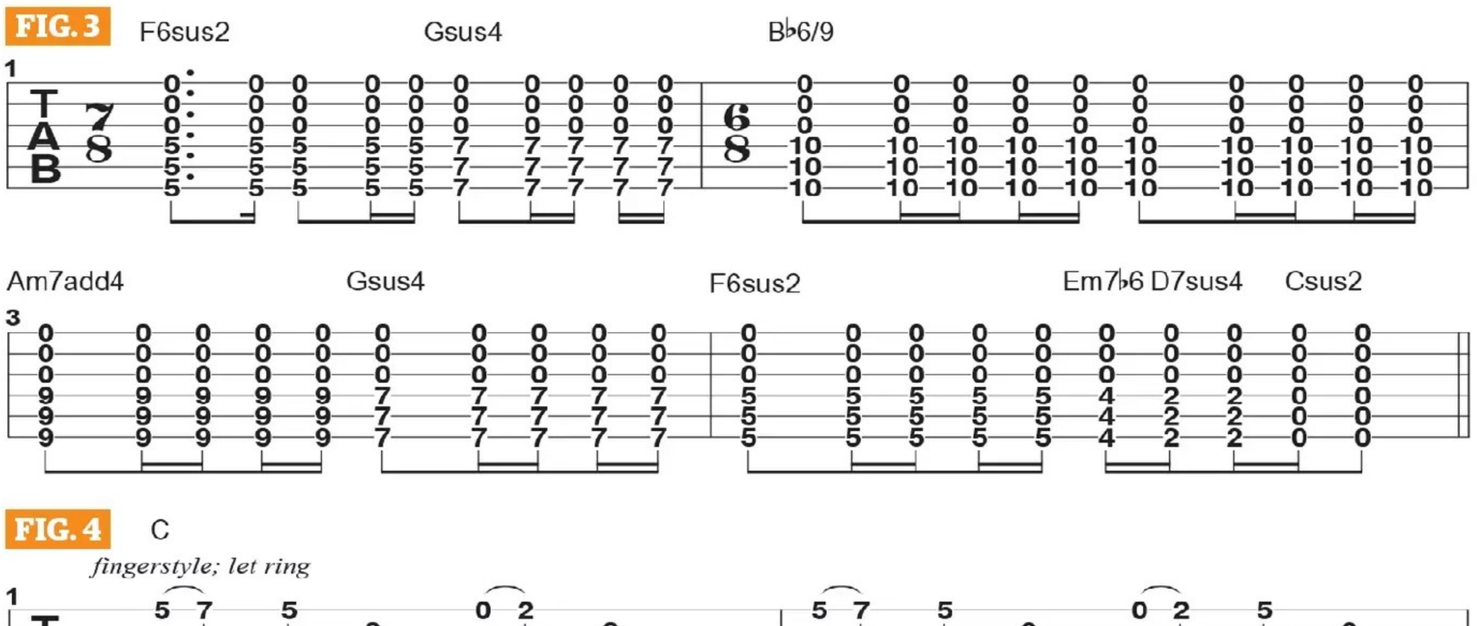


FIG. 4

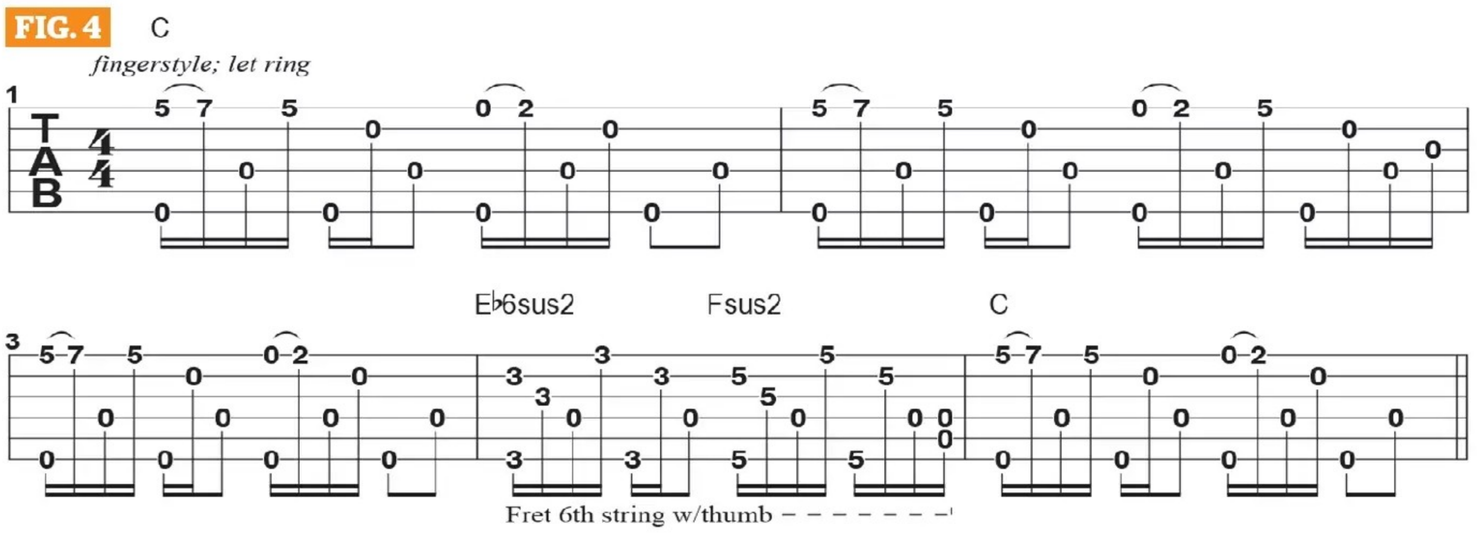


FIG. 5

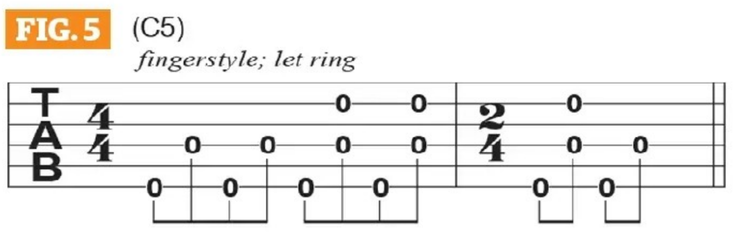


FIG. 6

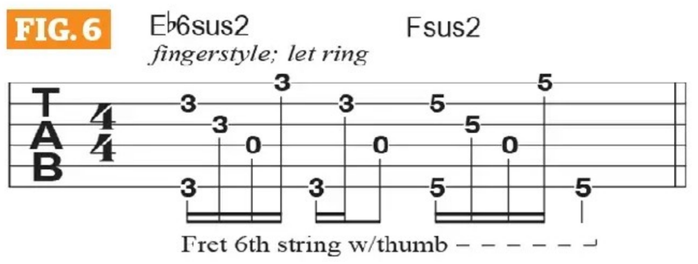
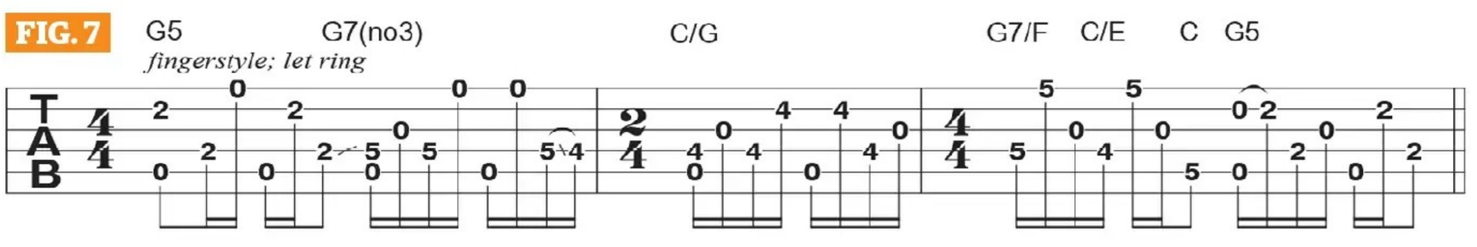


FIG. 7



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2026

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 albums are 2024's *Be Right Here* and 2025's *Rattle, Ramble & Roll: The Best of Blackberry Smoke, Volume 1*.

JOBY SESSIONS/FUTURE



BLUES EXPANSIONS

BY COREY CONGILIO

The Five Spot

Playing a five-minor-7 arpeggio over a dominant 7 chord

IN THIS LESSON, I'd like to share a cool way to add harmonic color to a melody played over a dominant 7 chord, and that is to play a minor 7 arpeggio that's rooted a 5th higher. To demonstrate, I'll use Dm7 arpeggios over a G7 chord.

D is the fifth note, or degree, of the G major scale. When playing in the key of G, a D major chord is the V (five) chord, and a D minor chord (Dm) is the Vm (five minor, alternatively indicated by a lowercase v).

FIGURE 1 shows a 3rd-position G7 barre chord, as well as the individual notes that make up the chord — G, B, D and F. G is the root, B is the major 3rd, D is the 5th and F is the minor, of "flatted," 7th (m7, or ♭7).

FIGURE 2 illustrates a Dm7 arpeggio, built from the notes D, F, A and C. Relative to a D tonal center, D is the root, F is the minor, or "flatted," 3rd (m3, or ♭3), A is the 5th and C is the minor, or "flatted," 7th (m7, or ♭7). But when you play these four notes over a G chord or G bass note, D is heard as the 5th, F becomes the minor, or "flatted," 7th, A is the 2nd, or 9th and C is the 4th, or 11th.

FIGURE 3 begins with a descending riff built from these notes that sounds great over G7. In bar 2, I initially ascend a Dm7 arpeggio and then end the phrase with a descending line that's based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B♭, C, D, F) with the inclusion of the major 3rd, B.

To me, it always sounds pleasing to resolve the Vm7 (or v7) arpeggio to a bluesy line based on the tonic or home key. For example, in **FIGURE 4**, the Dm7 arpeggio is moved down to 2nd position and begins on the 5th string, and is followed by a G minor pentatonic line.

A good way to practice incorporating Dm7 arpeggios over a G7 chord is to set up a G7 vamp with a looper. **FIGURE 5** illustrates a simple, funky vamp based on a repeating G7 voicing, with a hammer-on from B♭, the minor 3rd, to B, the major 3rd, each time.

A typical tried and true approach is to play straight blues over this vamp, like the riff in **FIGURE 6**, which is based on G minor pentatonic.

Now, let's kick off the line with a Dm7 arpeggio and then hand off to G minor pentatonic. In **FIGURE 7**, I begin with the straight Dm7 arpeggio then end the phrase with a lick based on G minor pentatonic.

Next, we'll try moving the concept to different areas of the fretboard. In **FIGURE 8**, I begin in bars 1 and 2 with a Dm7 arpeggio in 10th position. In bar 3, I move down to 7th/8th position for the arpeggio and then wrap up the line with G minor pentatonic in 3rd position. Bar 5 starts with Dm7 in 2nd position then gradually shifts up to 6th position, before once again resolving the line to G minor pentatonic in 3rd position.

As you can see, starting on a Vm7 arpeggio and then resolving to the tonic with a more conventional blues phrase sounds really cool and satisfying and offers a great way to add harmonic depth to your solo improvisations. Try doing this in different keys. GW

FIG. 1 G7

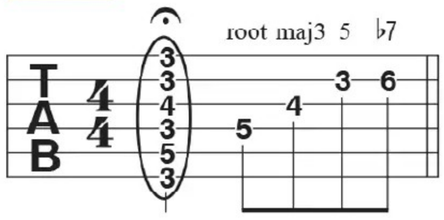


FIG. 2 (Dm7/G)

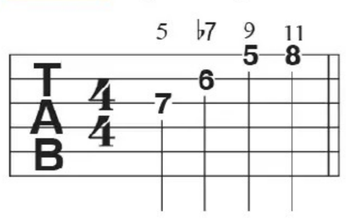
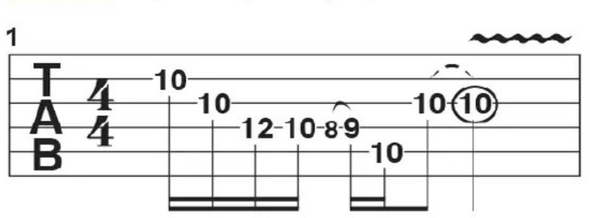


FIG. 3 (Dm7/G) (G7)



(Dm7/G) (G7)

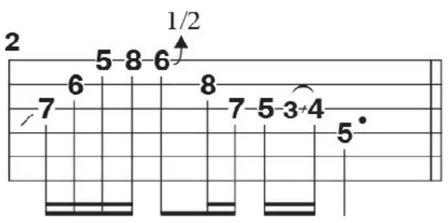


FIG. 4 (Dm7/G) (G7)

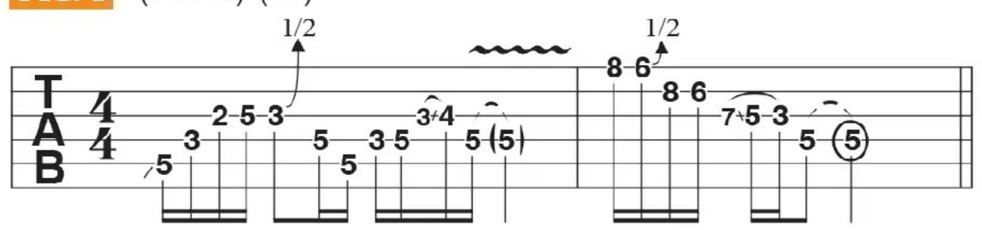


FIG. 5 G7

fingerstyle

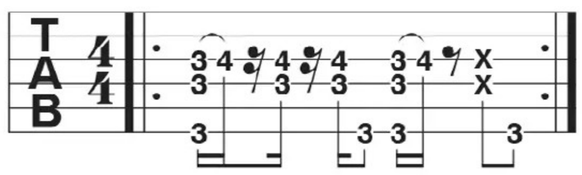


FIG. 6 (G7) Swing 16ths (♬ = ♬³)

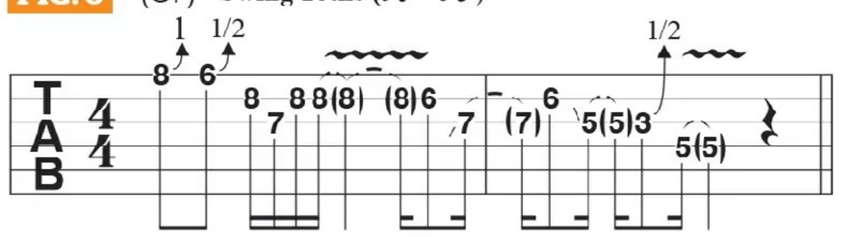


FIG. 7

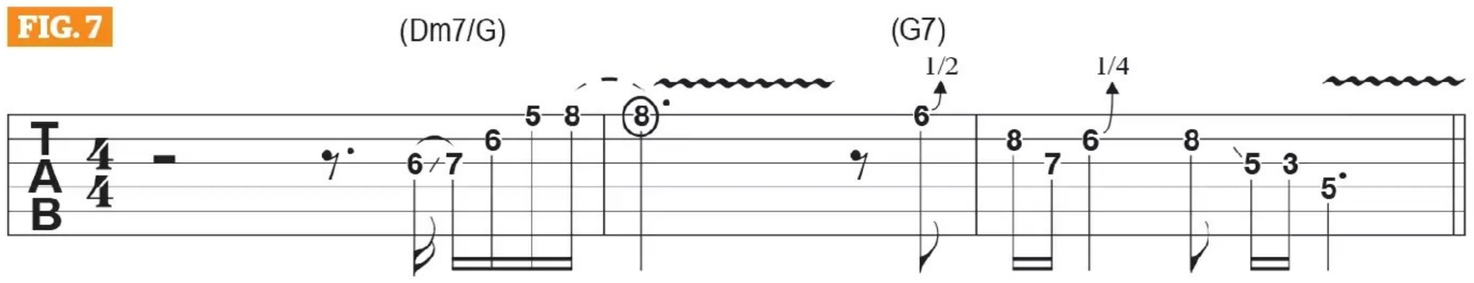
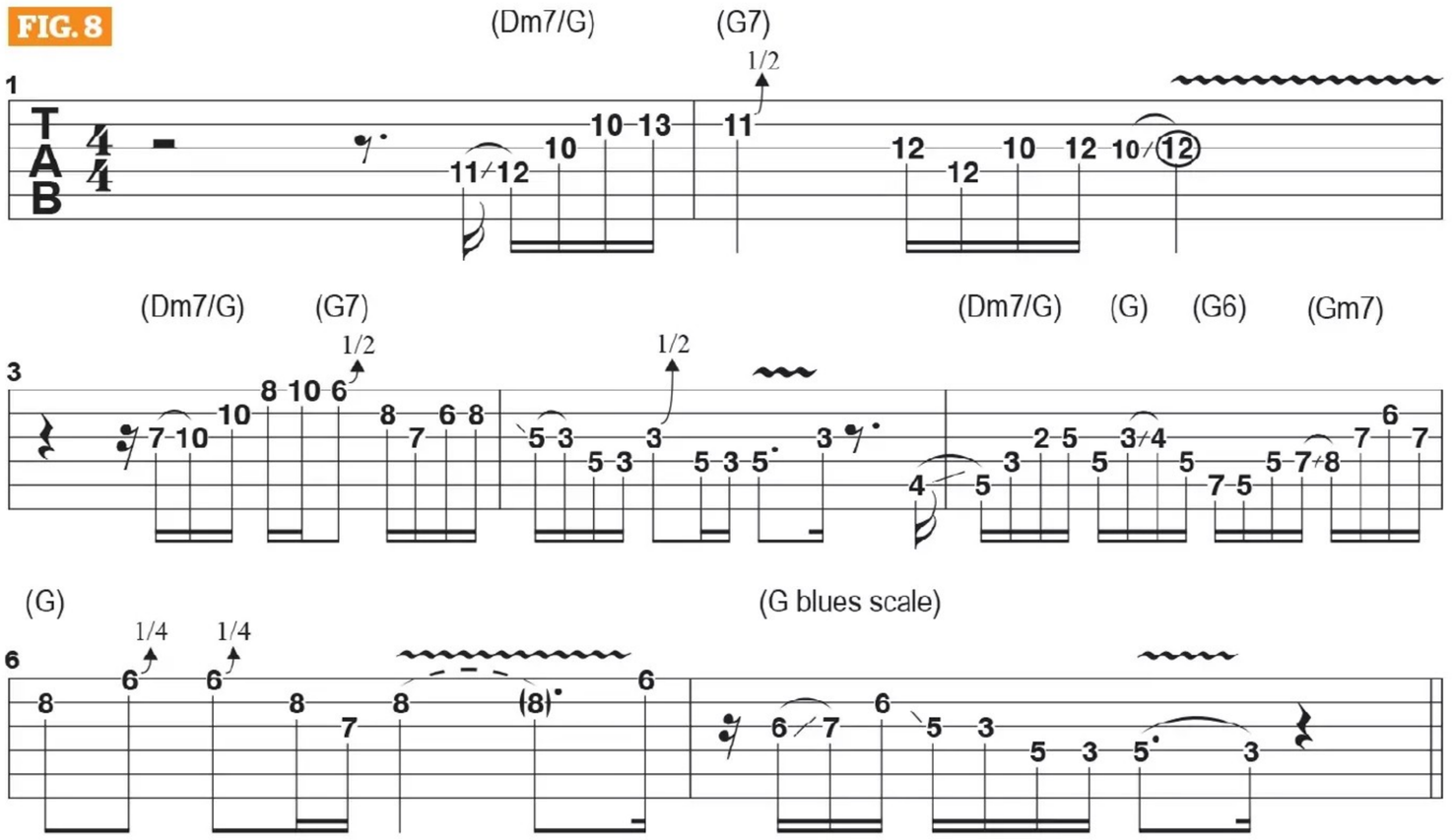


FIG. 8



JAMIE GLASGOW

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/june2026

Corey Congilio is recognized as a top-tier touring guitarist, session musician and educator, creating content for his lesson website, workingclassguitar.com. Find out more at coreycongilio.com.

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS

BY JIMMY BROWN

EAGLES
"Hotel California"



THIS 10-GUITAR MASTERPIECE was crafted from a darkly beautiful chord progression in B minor that never resolves. Don Felder begins the song by gently arpeggiating chords on a 12-string acoustic, using a capo at the 7th fret to easily finger 1st and 2nd-position voicings with ringing open strings. Felder plays this Gtr. 1 part as if the song were in *E minor*, which was its original key, before the decision was later made to transpose it up a 5th to B minor, to accommodate Don Henley's vocal range. You'll notice that we've included two sets of chord names throughout our transcription, with the names in parentheses indicating the changes in the key of B minor, for all the other guitars.

"Hotel California" is a tasteful, ingenious, and inspired collaborative arrangement crafted by Felder, co-guitarists Joe Walsh and Glen Frey, bassist Dandy Meisner and Henley. Note the layering of complimentary guitar parts as the song unfolds, beginning with the low, lyrical nylon-string acoustic melody at section B (Gtr. 2 part), followed by the percussive, reggae-flavored 16th-note figures played by the bass and Gtrs. 3 and 4 as the 1st verse begins at section C. The textural contrasts between these punctuated parts and the sustaining harmony lead fills played by Gtrs. 5 and 6, entering at section D, and additionally by Gtrs. 7 and 8 in section G, create a rich sonic tapestry.

"Hotel California" is a tasteful, ingenious collaboration

The arrangement's climactic highpoint is Felder's and Walsh's brilliantly conceived and executed dueling guitar solos that begin at section K (see Gtrs. 9 and 10). Both axmen make exquisite use of precise string bends, as well as vibratos, hammer-ons, pull-offs, finger slides and muted rakes. One of the trickiest licks to finger and pick cleanly is Felder's cascading 16th-note line during the harmonized melody in bars 101 and 102 (Gtr. 9 part). Note the quick jump from the 7th fret up to the 12th on beat 2 of bar 102. Make sure you stick the landing with the pinkie here, then pull-off to the middle finger at the 10th fret.

ENGLISH TEACHER
"The World's Biggest Paving Slab"



BUILT AROUND A straightforward eighth-note groove and simple, catchy riffs, this fun, quirky song by the rock band English Teacher makes great use of textural contrasts and open space from section to section, effectively showcasing singer Lily Fontaine's sardonic lyrics and appealing vocals and guitarist Lewis Whiting's ringing chordal figures in the song's choruses.

Drummer Douglas Frost and bassist Nicholas Eden kick off the tune by establishing a steady beat and E pedal tone. Note the bassist's colorful finger slide up to the 13th-fret B♭ note, the ♭5 of E, in bar 4, and the tricky-sounding ensemble rest that follows on the downbeat of bar 5, with both musicians silencing their instruments on beat 1 and coming back in on the eighth-note upbeat (on "1 *and*"). Whiting, using a clean tone, joins in here, playing a hooky, boogie-style single-note riff (labeled *Rhy. Fig. 1*) over Eden's continuing E pedal, implying an E7 tonality to the proceedings. Note the sycopation in the guitar line here, as all the note changes occur on the upbeats, anticipating the following downbeats.

In bar 8, the guitarist plays a simple but cool and colorful fill that drops down to the ♭2, F. Like the ♭5 bass note in bar 4, this fill adds a dark element to the song and also brings to mind Dick Dale's famous "Misirlou" riff.

The song blooms at the chorus (section C), where Whiting strums a dissonant, enigmatic-sounding Aadd♯11 chord that builds tension for four bars, followed by a roaring and satisfyingly consonant big open E chord. Notice that he arpeggiates the Aadd9 chord in bar 30, which is one of the few spots in the song where the guitarist employs a couple of upstrokes. Eden's bass line opens up here, too, as he jumps across strings to play octaves, 10th intervals and other notes.

Speaking of picking, it's interesting to point out that Eden employs alternate picking for his E pedal-tone bass line in the intro and verses, whereas Whiting uses all downstrokes, creating a "pumping," or "jabbing" effect and a decidedly punk feel. The guitarist similarly downstrums the big open E chords during the chorus, except for the pairs of 16th notes, for which he strums down-up.

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE
"Welcome to the Black Parade"



LIKE "HOTEL CALIFORNIA," this masterfully arranged modern rock anthem is similarly based on a repeating chord progression that's played gently at first before building in intensity and texture. But that's where the similarities end. In this case, the arrangement expands much sooner, after the first 16 bars, where MCR guitarists Ray Toro and Frank Iero layer ringing power chords and harmony leads behind Gerard Way's impassioned lead vocals (section B).

At section C, the song kicks into high gear with a driving beat and much faster tempo. Here, the guitarists crank on a simpler but more driving version of the eight-bar intro progression, pairing power chords with strummed octaves. As the first verse gets underway at section D, notice that Toro and Iero employ palm muting (P.M.) to tame the roar of their instruments behind the vocals, intermittently letting up on the muting to accent select chord punches. Both guitarists mostly use thrash-style downpicking for their power chords here, which is technically very demanding at this brisk tempo. This ability is something that requires a great deal of stamina and practice to develop. It's also crucial to dial in a high-gain bridge humbucker tone, so that you can actually pick with a lighter touch and don't feel like you need to pick any harder than necessary to get the desired chunky attack.

Practice downpicking these power chords slowly at first, gradually ramping up the tempo. If, when playing these eighth-note strums, your pick hand starts to become fatigued, you can always revert to down-up alternate strumming. Note that the strummed octaves are played this way, as down-strumming them at this tempo is just too arduous.

Toro employs deft alternate picking to cleanly perform the ascending triplet runs in bar 79. As there are three notes per string here, you'll pick down-up-down, up-down-up, down-up-down, up-down-up.

When performing the bends in bars 80-84, be sure to nail the indicated half-step and whole-step ("1") pitch rises, with a half-step bend being equivalent to the unbent note one fret higher and a whole-step bend matching the unbent note two frets higher. GW

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EAGLES

"Hotel California"

AS HEARD ON **HOTEL CALIFORNIA**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **DON HENLEY, GLENN FREY** AND **DON FELDER**

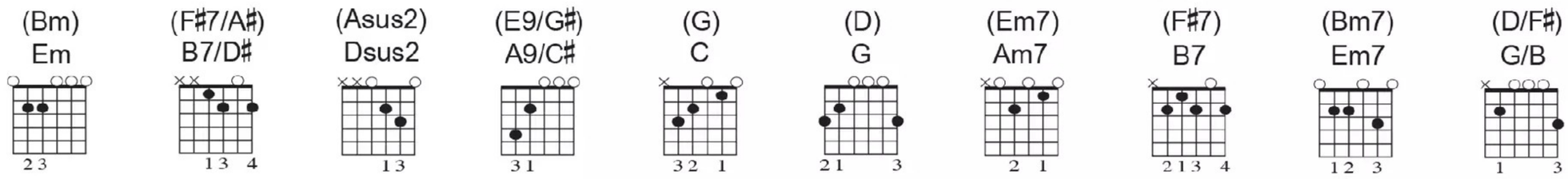
TRANSCRIBED BY **PAUL ROBINSON** AND **JEFF PERRIN**

Chord shapes shown below are for Gtr. 1 (12-string acous., capo 7).

All chord shapes and fret numbers for Gtr. 1 are relative to the capo ("0" = 7th fret).

All notes and chords for Gtr. 1 sound in the key of B minor, a perfect 5th higher than written.

Chord names in parentheses are for all the other instruments and indicate concert-key harmony throughout (key of B minor).



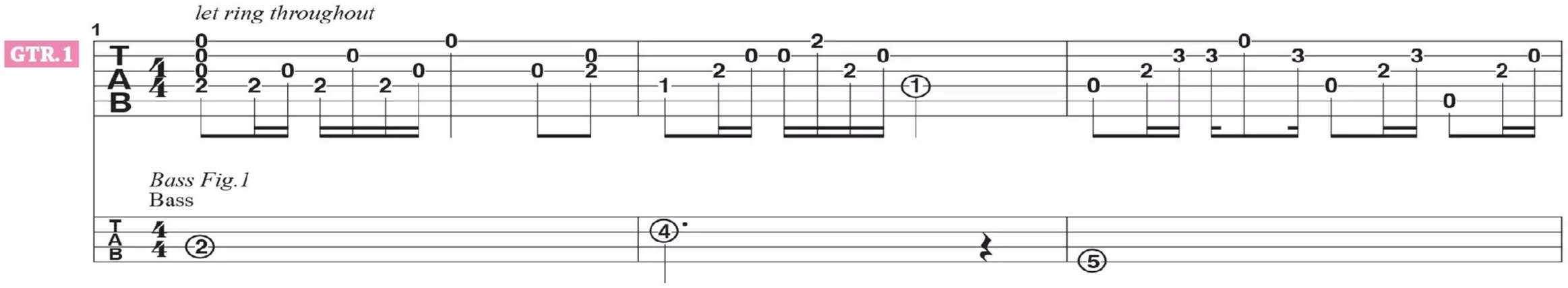
A **Intro** (0:00)

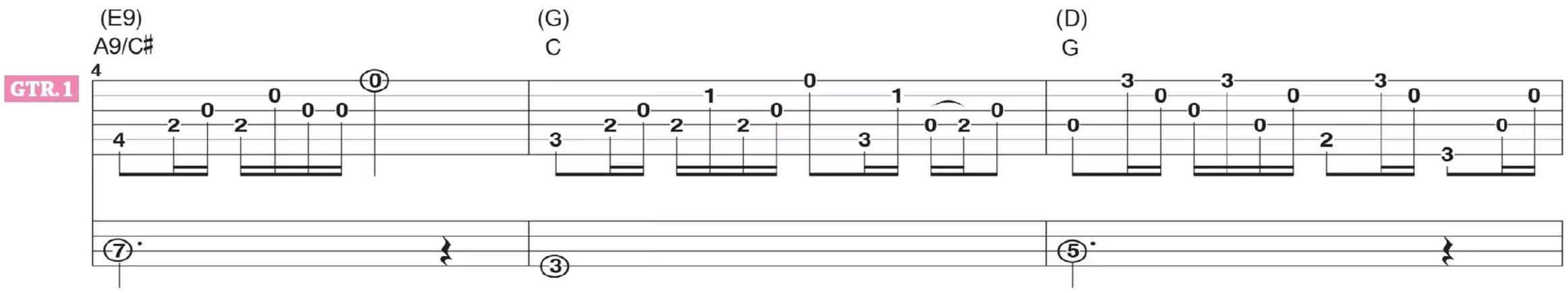
Moderately Slow ♩ = 80

(Bm) Em — (F♯7) B7/D♯ — (Asus2) Dsus2

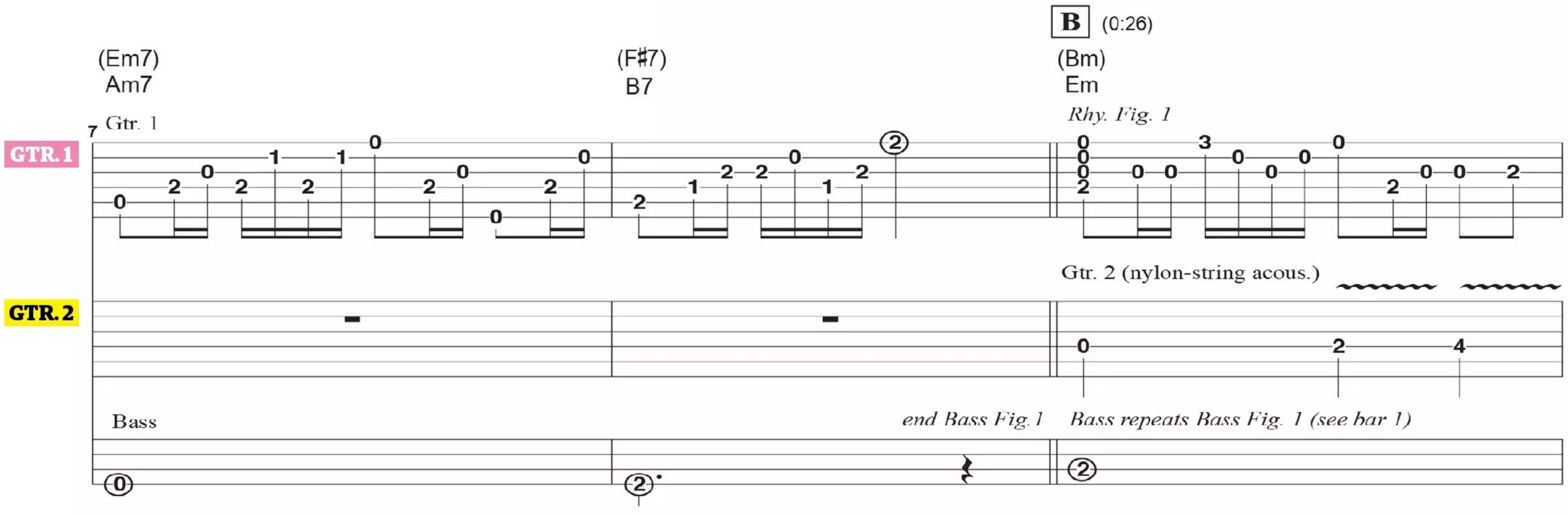
Gtr. 1 (12-string acous., capo 7; doubled w/slow rotary speaker effect.)

let ring throughout

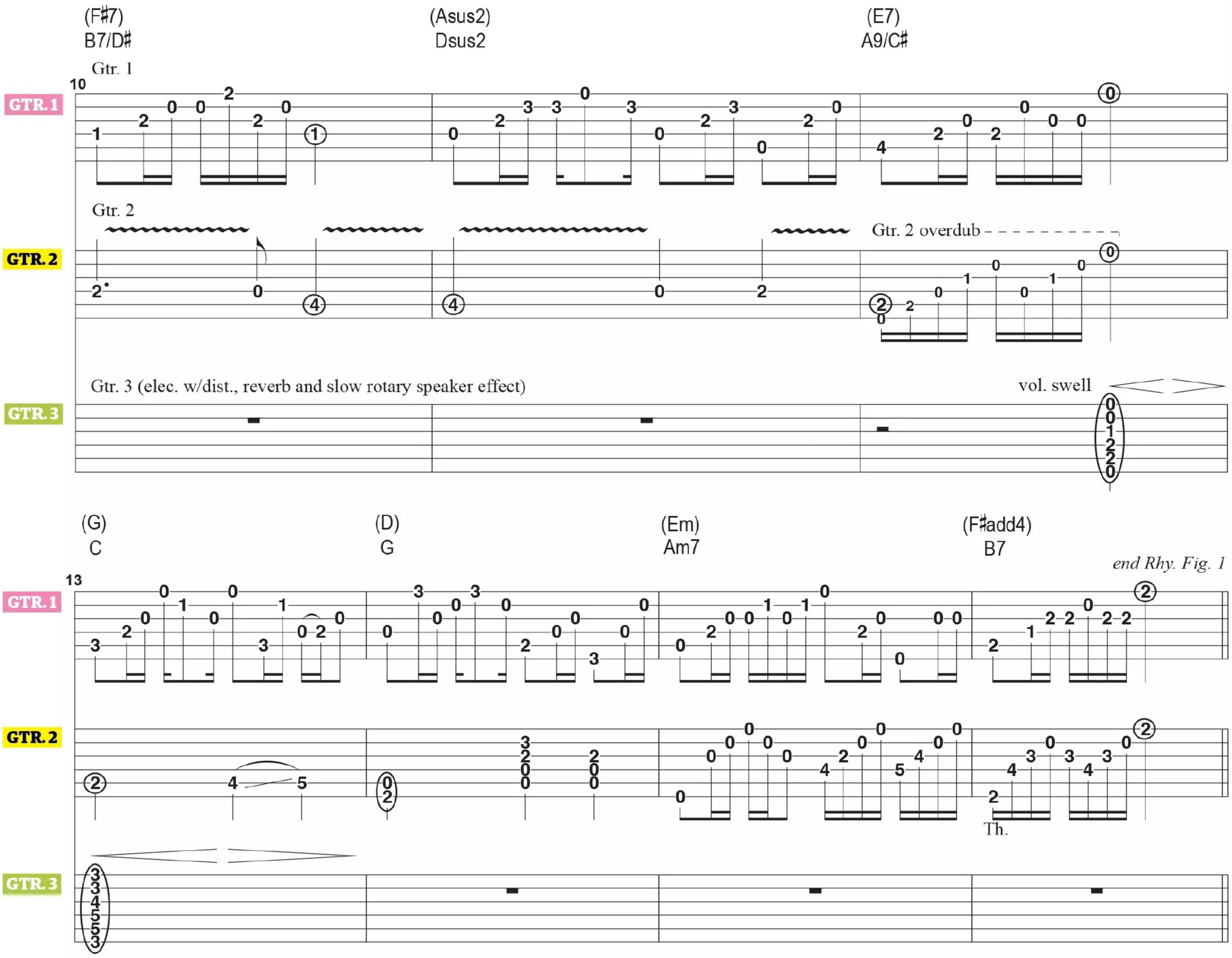




B (0:26)



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C **1st Verse** (0:52)

1. On a dark desert highway **Cool wind through my hair** **Warm smell of colitas** **rising up through the air**

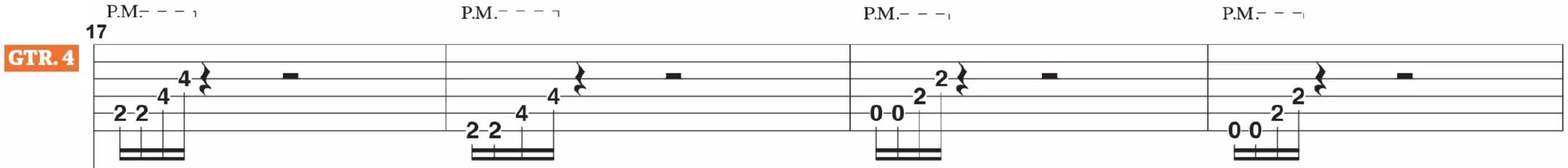
(Bm) Em (F♯7) B7 (Asus2) Dsus2 (E9) A9/C♯

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)

Rhy. Fig. 2

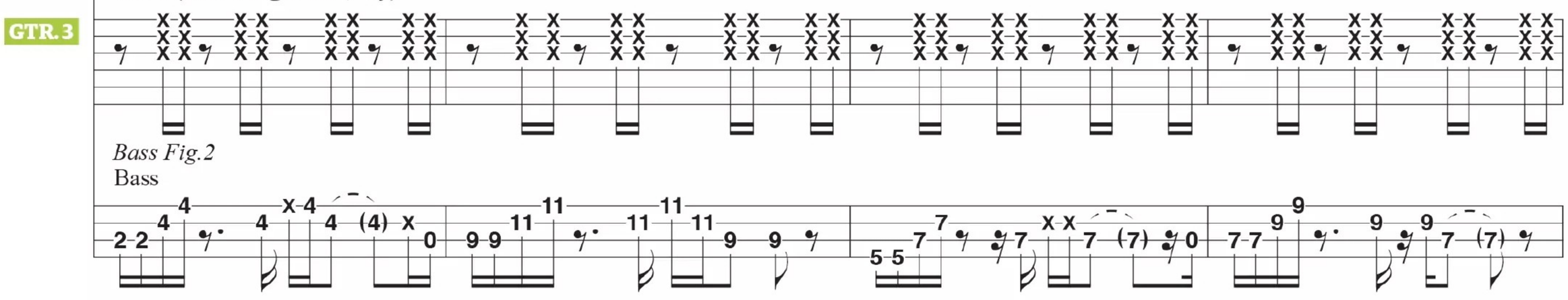
Gtr. 4 (elec. w/light dist.)

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.



Riff A

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/light dist., dry)



Bass Fig.2

Bass

Up ahead in the distance | I saw a shimmering light | My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim | I had to stop for the night

(G) C | (D) G | (Em7) Am7 | (F♯7) B7

Gtr. 3 repeats Riff A (see bar 17)

Gtr. 4

end Rhy. Fig. 2

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

21

GTR. 4

Bass

D **2nd Verse** (1:18)

2. There she stood on the doorway | I heard the mission bell | And I was thinking to myself, this could be Heaven or this could be Hell

(Bm) | (F♯7) | (Asus2) | (E9)

Gtr. 3 plays Riff A twice (see bar 17)

Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 17)

Rhy. Fig. 3

Gtrs. 5 and 6 (elec. w/dist.; two single-note lead parts arr. for one gtr.)

25

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

Em | B7 | Dsus2 | A9/C♯

Rhy. Fig. 4

Gtr. 1 (doubled by clean 12-string elec.)

GTR. 1

Bass

Then she lit up a candle | and she showed me the way | There were voices down the corridor | I thought I heard them say

(G) | (D) | (Em7) | (F♯7)

29

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

1/2

end Rhy. Fig. 3

*These four notes are not played when Rhy. Fig. 3 is recalled during the solos.

C | G | Am7 | B7

end Rhy. Fig. 4

GTR. 1

Bass

end Bass Fig. 2

E **1st Chorus** (1:44)

Welcome to the Hotel California — Such a lovely place (such a lovely place) — Such a lovely face

(G) (D) (F♯7) (Bm)

Gtr. 3 plays Riff A twice (see bar 17)

33

GTR. 5
GTR. 6
GTR. 1

C G B7 Em

Bass Fig.3

Plenty of room at the Hotel California — Any time of year (any time of year) — You can find it here

(G) (D) (Em7) (F♯7)

Gtr. 6

37

C G Am7 B7

end Bass Fig. 3

F **3rd Verse** (2:10)

3. Her mind is Tiffany-twisted — She got the Mercedes-Benz Uh — She got a lot of pretty pretty boys — that she calls friends

(Bm) (F♯7) (Asus2) (E9)

Em B7 Dsus2 A9/C♯

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A twice (see bar 17)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 17)

Gtrs. 5 and 6

41

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 17)

How they dance in the courtyard — Sweet summer sweat — Some dance to remember — Some dance to forget

(G) C (D) G (Em7) Am7 (F♯7) B7

45

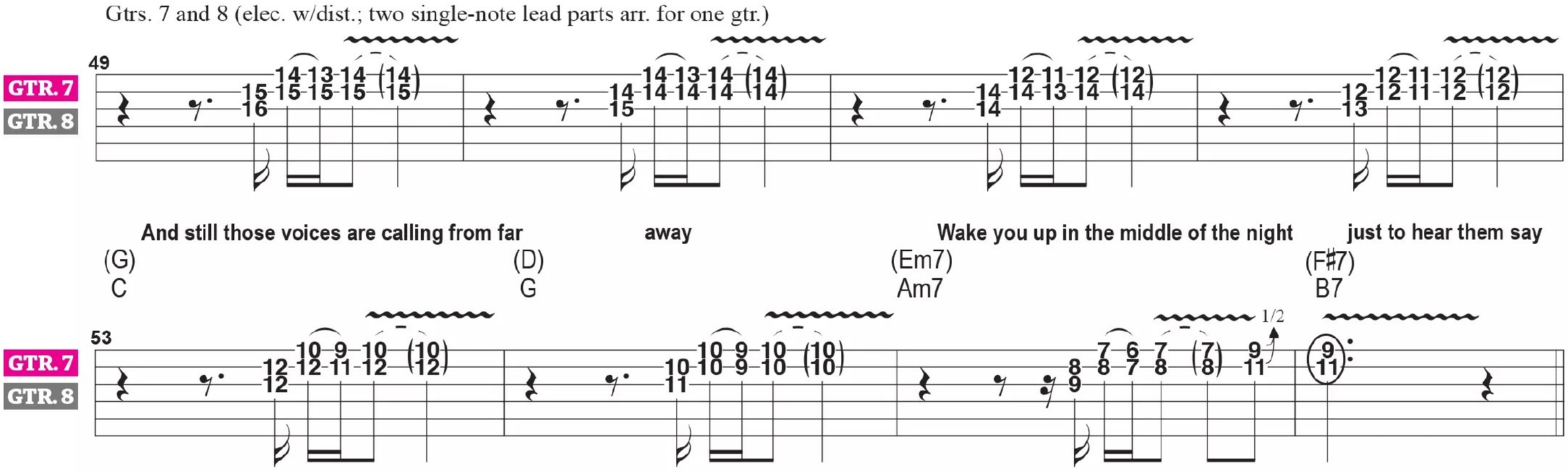
G 4th Verse (2:36)

4. So I called up the captain Please bring me my wine He said we haven't had that spirit here since nineteen sixty nine

(Bm) Em | (F♯7) B7 | (Asus2) Dsus2 | (E9) A9/C♯

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 simile (see bar 25)
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A twice (see bar 17)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 17)
Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 25)

Gtrs. 7 and 8 (elec. w/dist.; two single-note lead parts arr. for one gtr.)



And still those voices are calling from far away Wake you up in the middle of the night just to hear them say

(G) C | (D) G | (Em7) Am7 | (F♯7) B7

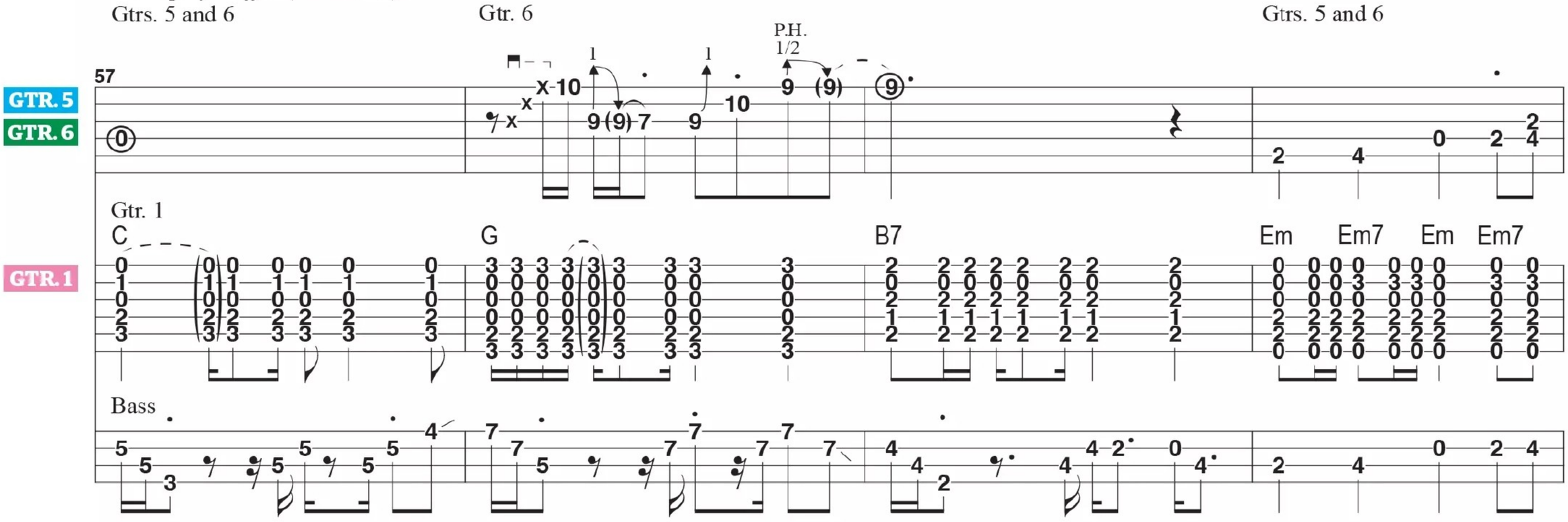
1/2

H 2nd Chorus (3:02)

Welcome to the Hotel California Such a lovely place (such a lovely place) Such a lovely face They're

(G) | (D) | (F♯7) | (Bm)

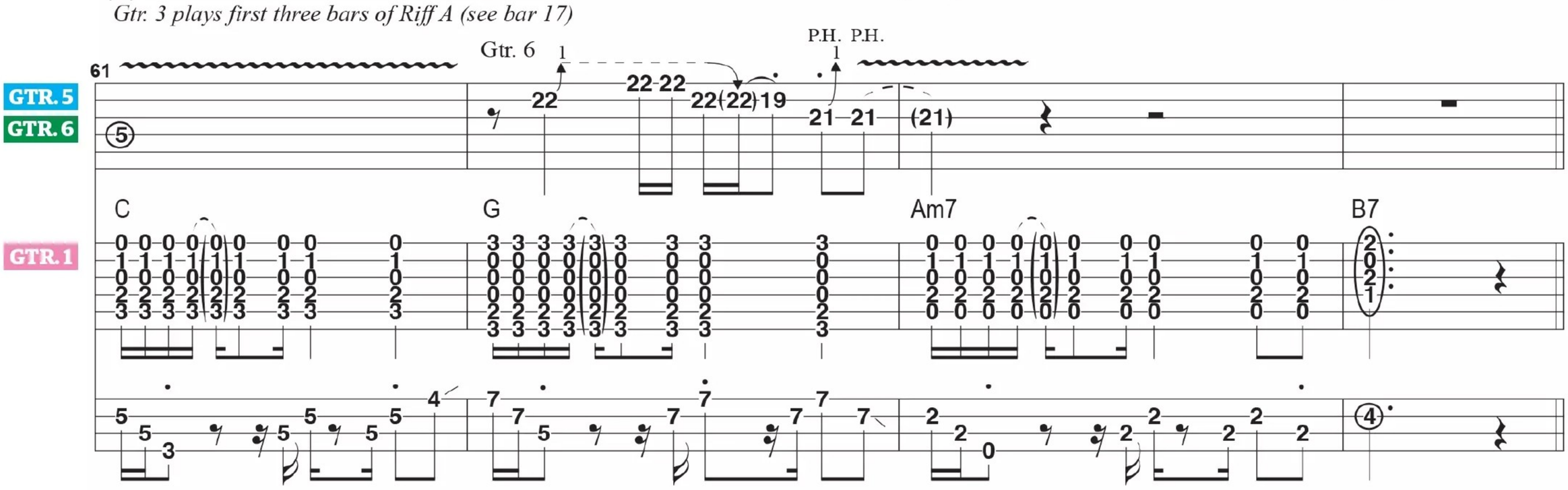
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 17)
Gtrs. 5 and 6
Gtr. 6
Gtrs. 5 and 6
Gtr. 1
Bass



livin' it up at the Hotel California What a nice surprise (what a nice surprise) Bring your alibis

(G) | (D) | (Em7) | (F♯7)

Gtr. 3 plays first three bars of Riff A (see bar 17)
Gtr. 6



I 5th Verse (3:28)

Mirrors on the ceiling — The pink champagne on ice — And she said — we are all just prisoners here — of our own device

(Bm) Em — (F♯7) B7/D♯ — (Asus2) Dsus2 — (E7) A9/C♯

Gtr. 1

65

GTR. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

And in the master's chambers — they gathered for the feast — They stab it with their steely knives but they just can't kill the beast

(G) C — (D) G — (Em7) Am7 — (F♯7) B7

69

GTR. 1

J 6th Verse (3:54)

6. Last thing I remember — I was — running for the door — I had to find that passage back to the place I was before

(Bm) Em — (F♯7) B7 — (Asus2) Dsus2 — (E9) A9/C♯

Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 17)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 17)
Gtr. 1 plays first four bars of Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 25)
Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 25)

Gtrs. 7 and 8

73

GTR. 7
GTR. 8

Gtrs. 5 and 6

GTR. 5
GTR. 6

Bass plays first four bars of Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 17)

Relax said the night man — We are — programmed to recieve — You can check out anytime you like but you can never leave

(G) — (D) — (Em7) — (F♯7)

Gtrs. 7 and 8 — Gtr. 9 (elec. w/dist.)

77

GTR. 7
GTR. 8

Gtrs. 5 and 6

GTR. 5
GTR. 6

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

C — G — Am7 — B7

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

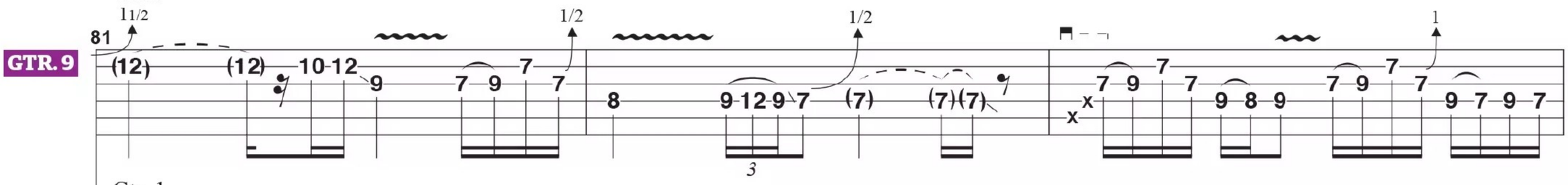
Bass

K Don Felder's Guitar Solo (4:20)

(Bm) (F♯7) (Asus2)

Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 17) through fade-out
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 17) through fade-out
Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 25)

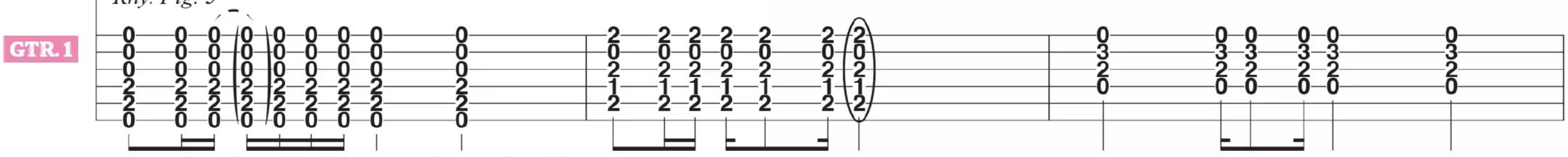
Gtr. 9



Gtr. 1

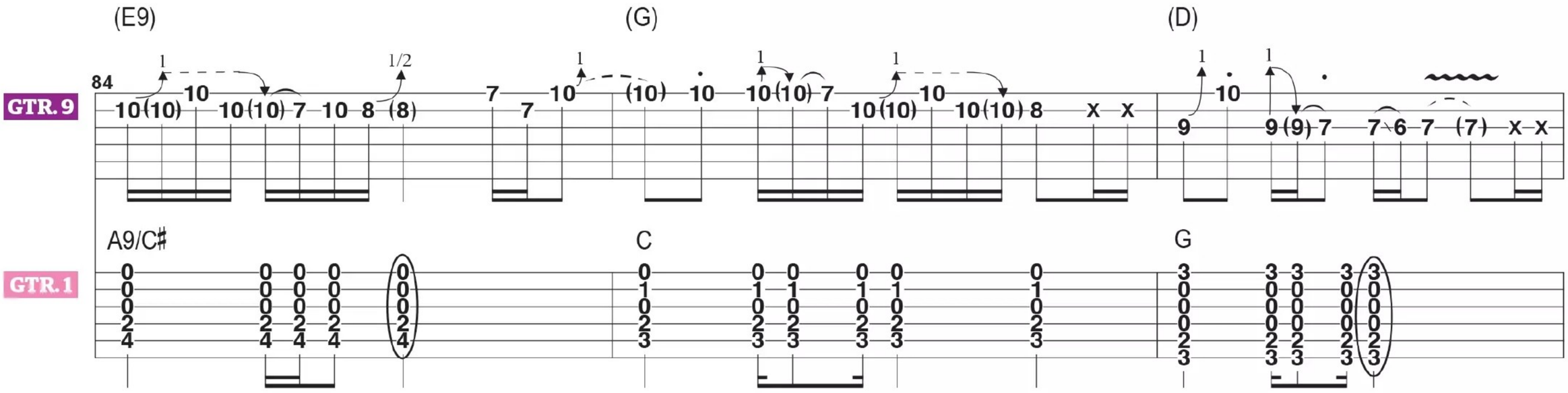
Em B7 Dsus2

Rhy. Fig. 5

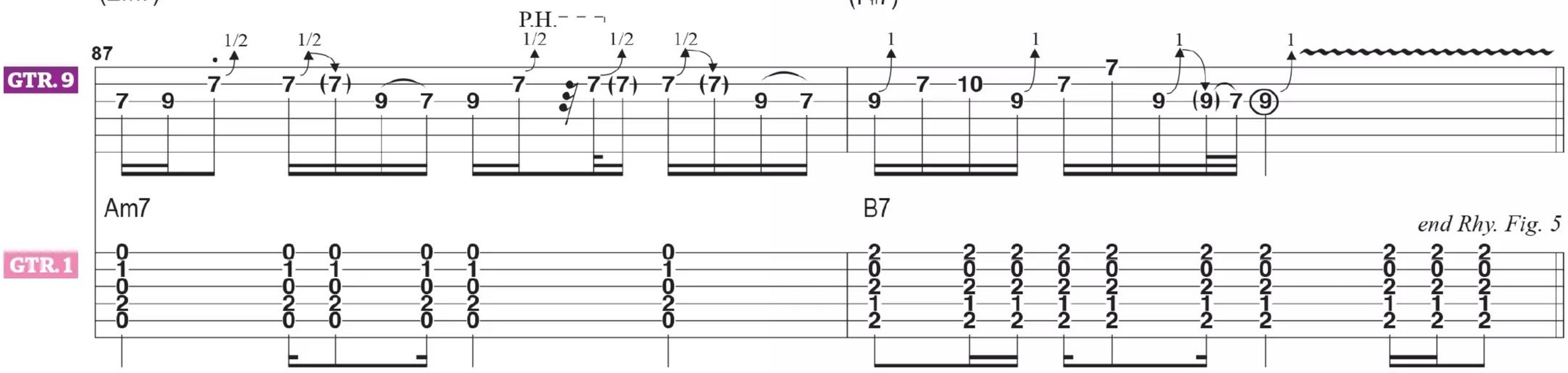


Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice simile (see bar 17)

(E9) (G) (D)



(Em7) (F♯7)



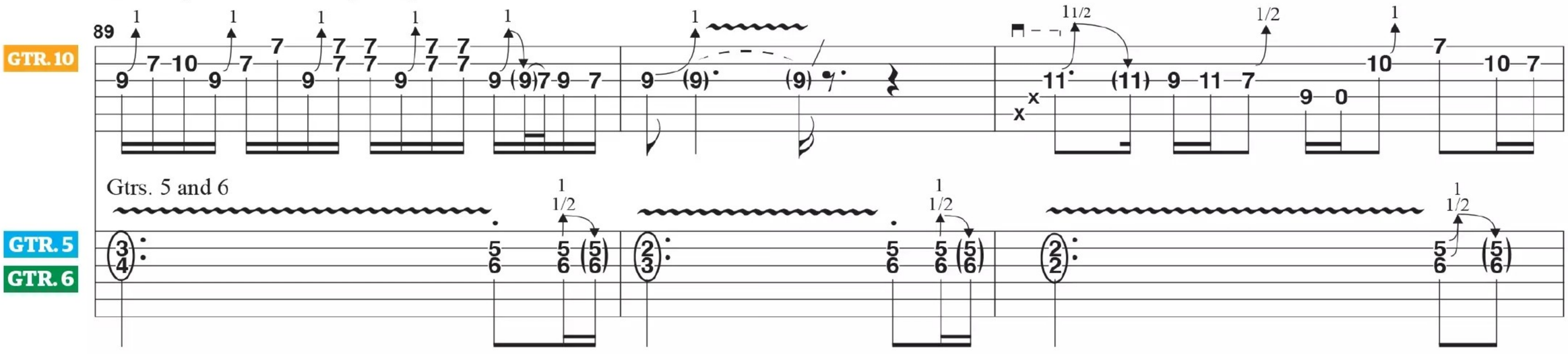
end Rhy. Fig. 5

L Joe Walsh's Guitar Solo (4:46)

(Bm) (F♯7) (Asus2)
Em B7 Dsus2

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 twice simile (see bar 81)

Gtr. 10 (w/dist. and slow phaser)



(E9) A9/C♯ | (G) C | (D) G

92

GTR. 10

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

M Trading Licks (5:12)

(Em7) Am7 | (F♯7) B7 | (Bm) Em

Gtr. 10 (Walsh)

95

GTR. 10

Gtr. 9 (Felder)

GTR. 9

Gtrs. 5 and 6

Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 25)

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

Bass

(F♯7) B7 | (Asus2) Dsus2 | (E9) A9/C♯

Gtr. 10

98

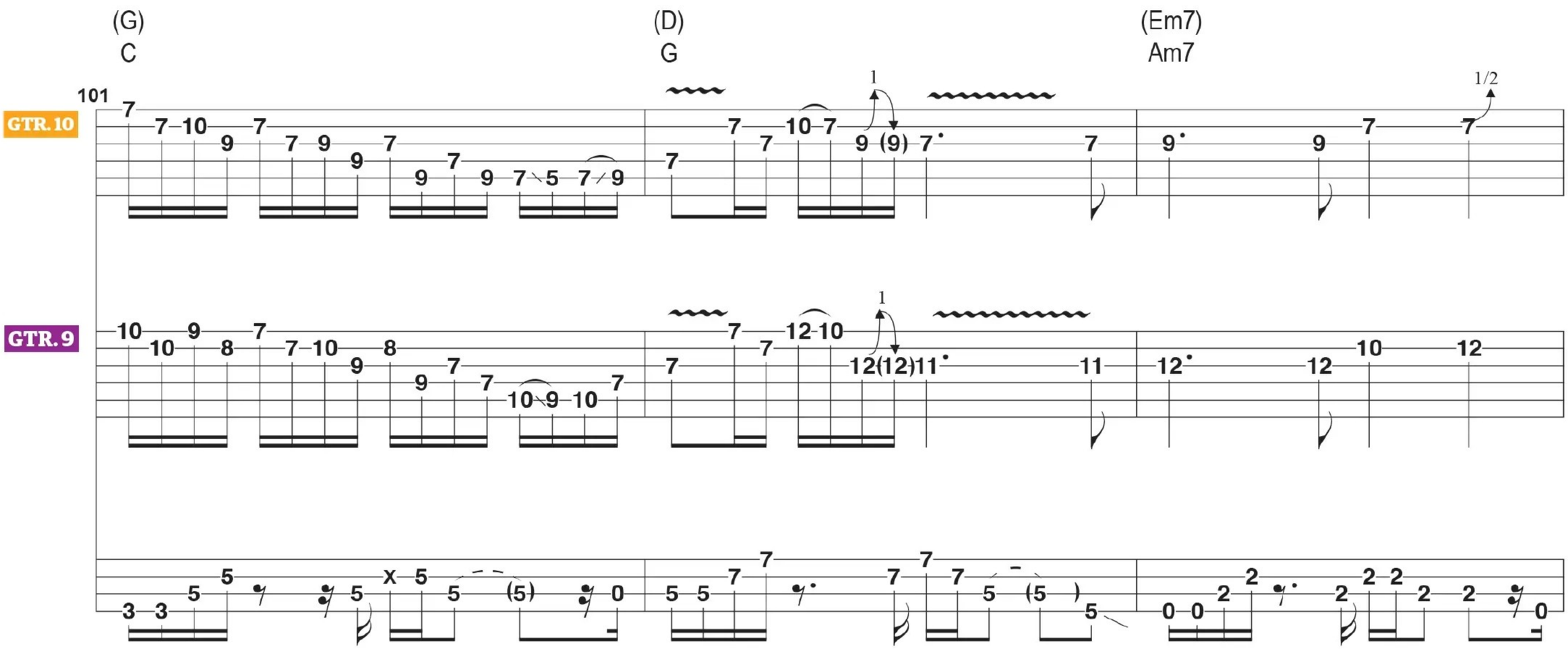
gradual release

GTR. 10

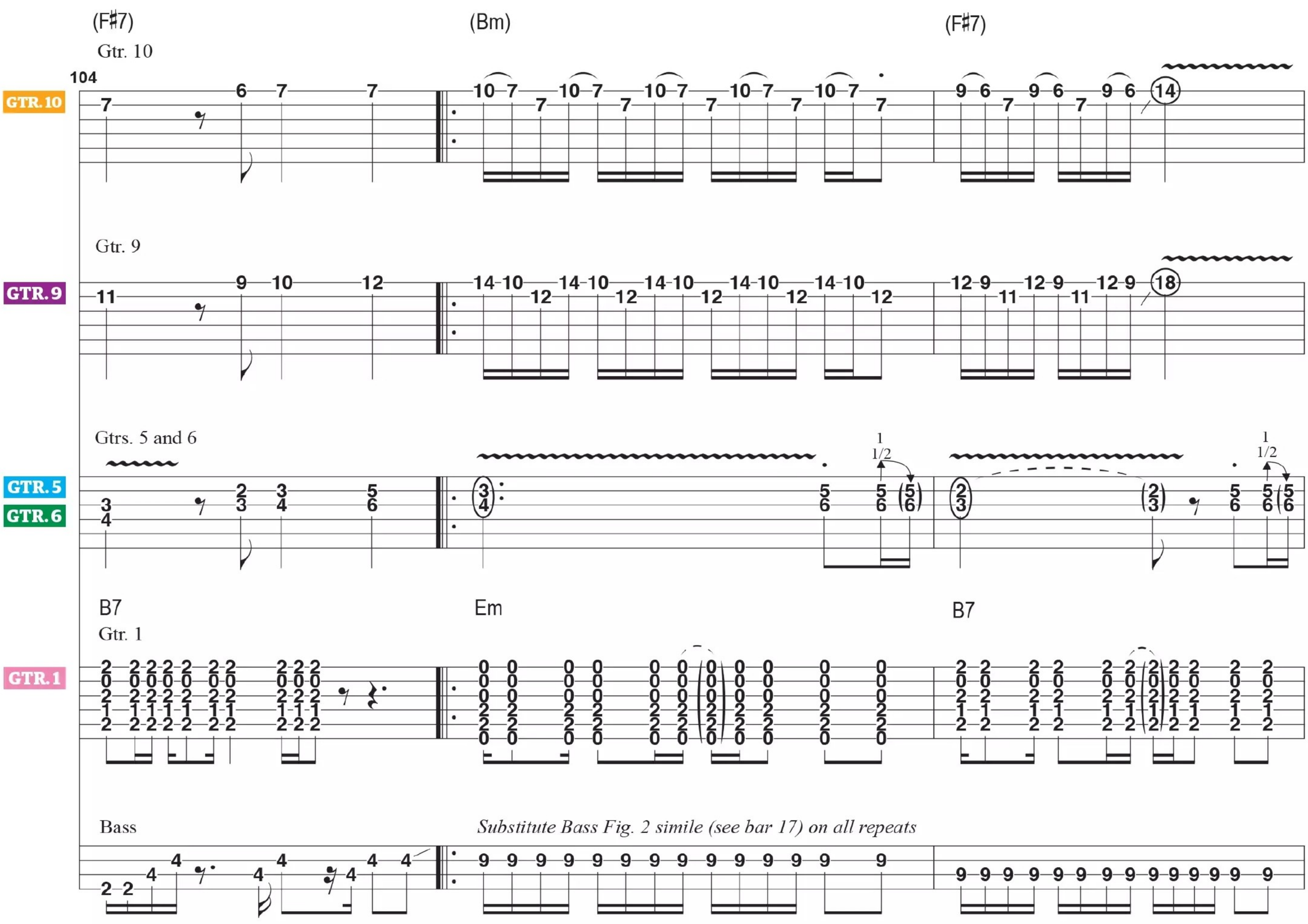
Gtr. 9

GTR. 9

Bass


(G)
C
(D)
G
(Em7)
Am7
101
GTR. 10
GTR. 9

N **Outro** (5:38)


(F♯7)
(Bm)
(F♯7)
Gtr. 10
104
GTR. 10
Gtr. 9
GTR. 9
Gtrs. 5 and 6
GTR. 5
GTR. 6
B7
Em
B7
Gtr. 1
GTR. 1
Bass
Substitute Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 17) on all repeats

(Asus2) (E9) (G)

107

GTR. 10

GTR. 9

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

GTR. 1

Dsus2 A9/C♯ C

Repeat and fade

(D) (Em7) (F♯7)

110

GTR. 10

GTR. 9

GTR. 5

GTR. 6

GTR. 1

G Am7 B7

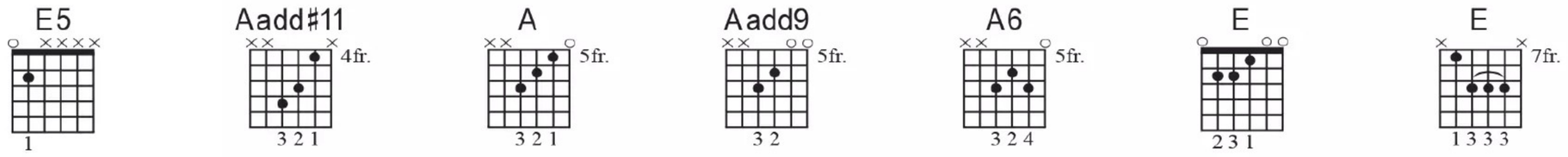
ENGLISH TEACHER

"The World's Biggest Paving Slab"

AS HEARD ON **THIS COULD BE TEXAS**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **LILY FONTAINE, LEWIS WHITING, DOUGLAS FROST** AND **NICHOLAS EDEN**

TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

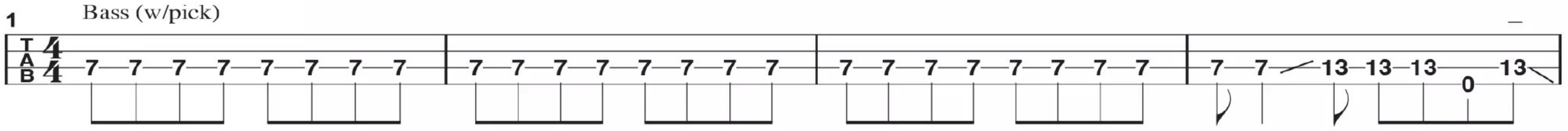


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 130

N.C. (E5)

1 Bass (w/pick)

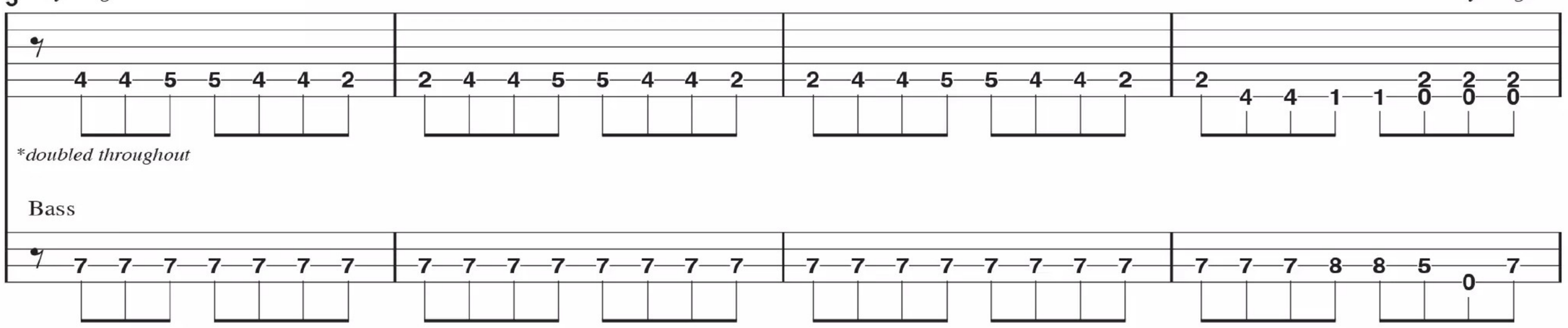


E5

*Gtr. 1 (clean elec.)

5 *Rhy. Fig. 1* *end Rhy. Fig. 1*

GTR. 1



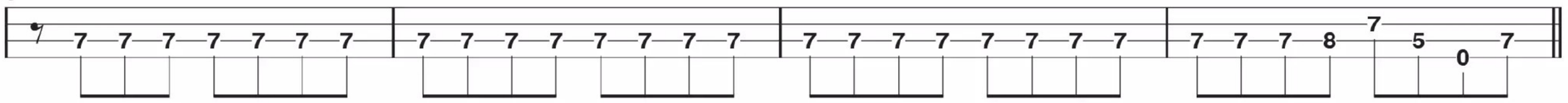
**doubled throughout*

Bass

N.C. (E5) E5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

9 Bass

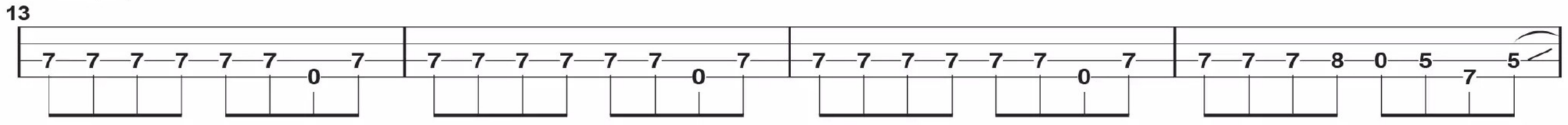


B **1st Verse** (0:22)

biggest paving slab but no one can walk over me I am the

N.C. (E5)

13



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Pendle Witches John Simm And I am Lee Ingleby I am the bank

17 Gtr. 1 N.H.

GTR. 1

Bass

of Dave Golden Postbox and the festival of R & B And I'm not

E5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

Bass

21

the terrorist of Talbot Street but I have apocalyptic dreams

N.C. (E5) E5

25

C Chorus (0:51, 2:06)

You should see my armoury

Aadd♯11 A Aadd9 Aadd♯11 A A6 A Aadd9

*Gtr. 1 *let ring throughout*

29

GTR. 1

**Composite: Two guitars arranged for one part.*

**Bass (w/chorus effect)

Bass Fig. 1

***Composite: Two bass lines arranged for one part in the spirit of a live performance.*

2nd time, skip ahead to F (bar 69)

E

33

GTR. 1

end Bass Fig. 1

spoken: **I am the world's biggest paving slab** **so watch your fucking**

Aadd♯11 A Aadd9 A6 Aadd♯11 A Aadd9

37 Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 29)

feet

E

41

GTR. 1

D (1:21)

N.C. (E5) E5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

45 Bass

I am the world's

N.C. (E5) E5

49

E **2nd Verse** (1:36)

biggest paving slab but I sit here quietly No

N.C. (E5)

53 light P.M.

one ever looks down at the ground Yeah no one ever notices me I wish I were born

57 Gtr. 1

let ring

GTR. 1

Bass

light P.M.

a stone I made Wycoller my home Haunting with Charlotte Bronte I'm not

E5

61 light P.M.

GTR. 1

(5)

Go back to C *Chorus (bar 29)*

the terrorist of Talbot Street but I think that ruins have beauty

N.C. (E5) E5

65 light P.M.

GTR. 1

F (2:20)

You should walk all over me

Aadd♯11 A Aadd♯11 Aadd♯11 A

69

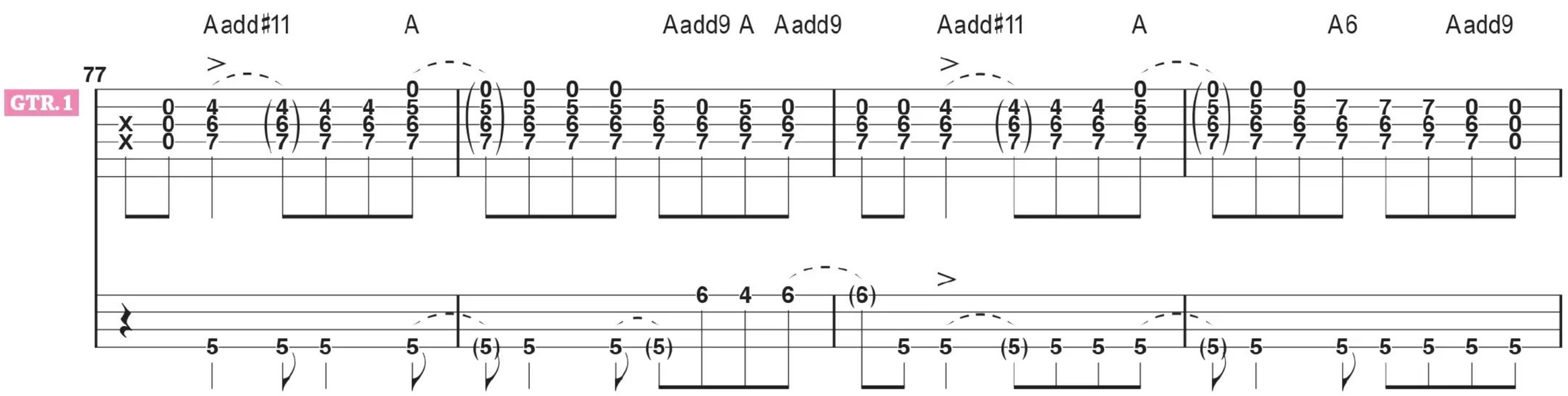
GTR. 1

E

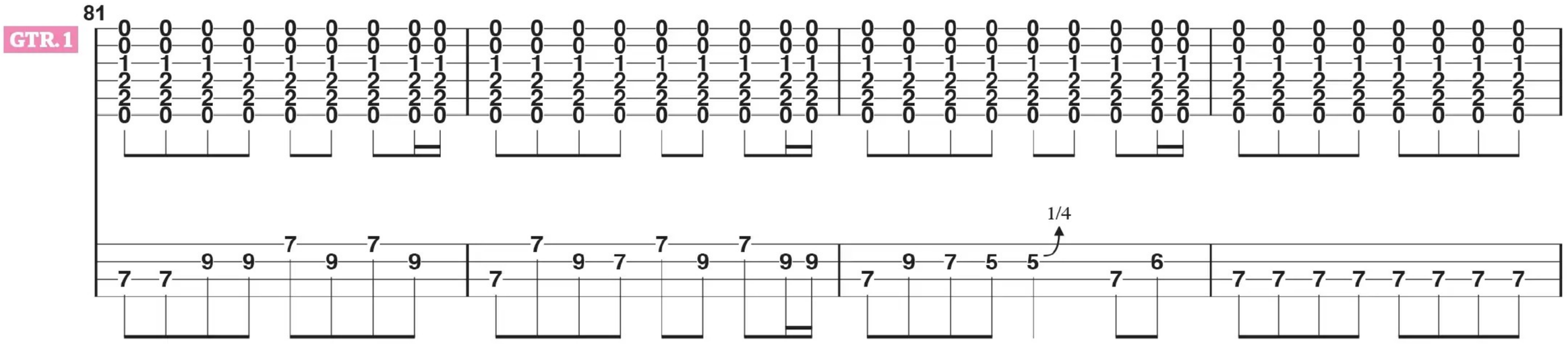
73

GTR. 1

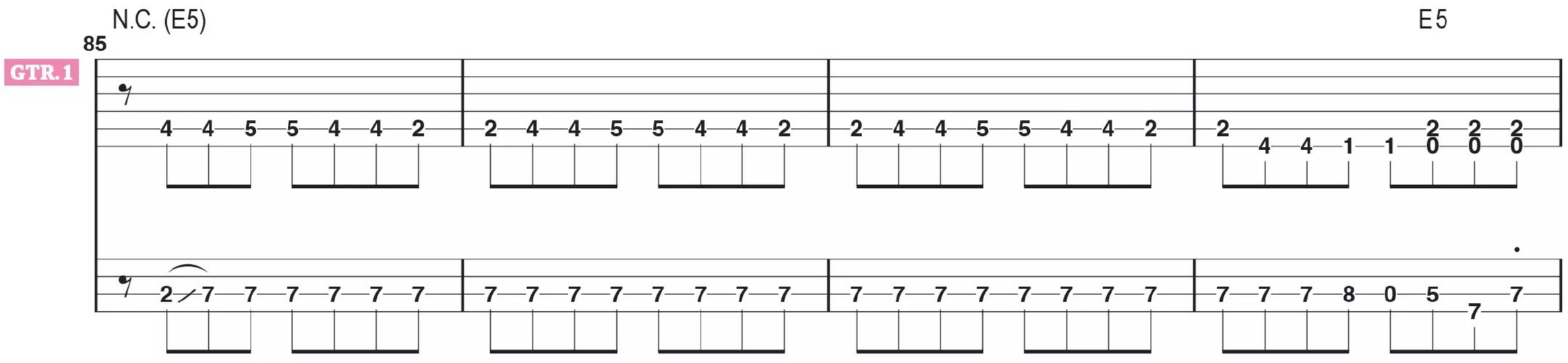
spoken: **I am the world's biggest paving slab** **And the world's smallest celebrity**

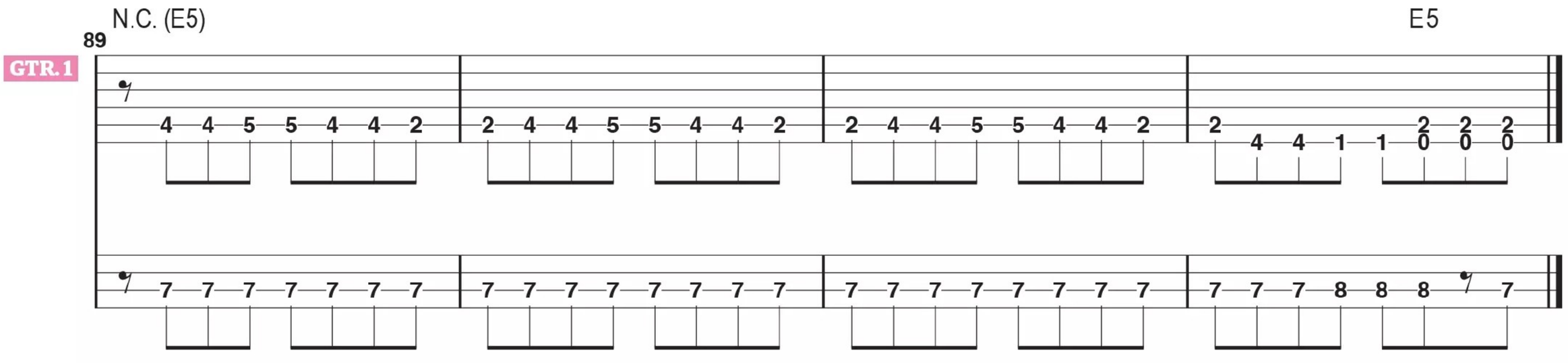


E



G **Outro** (2:50)





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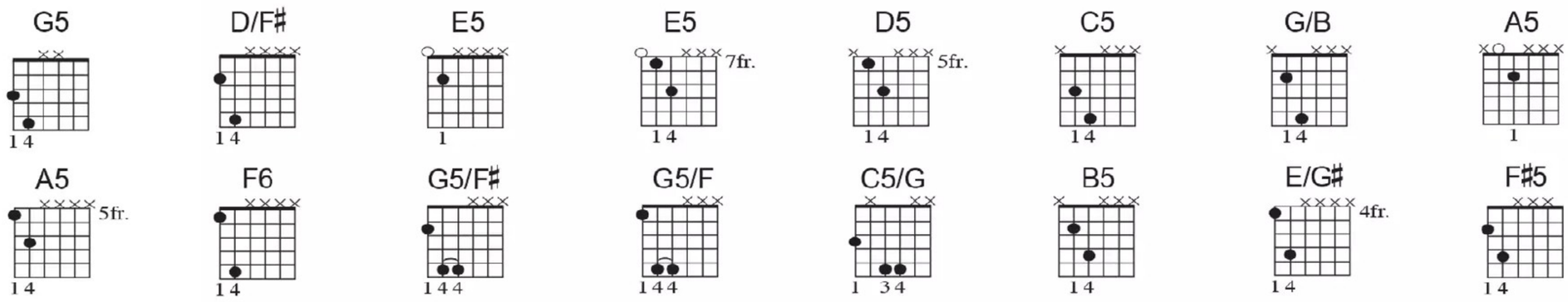
MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

"Welcome to the Black Parade"

AS HEARD ON **THE BLACK PARADE**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **BOB BRYAR, FRANK IERO, RAY TORO, GERARD WAY** AND **MIKEY WAY**

TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A **Intro** (0:00)

Slowly ♩ = 75

(1.) When I

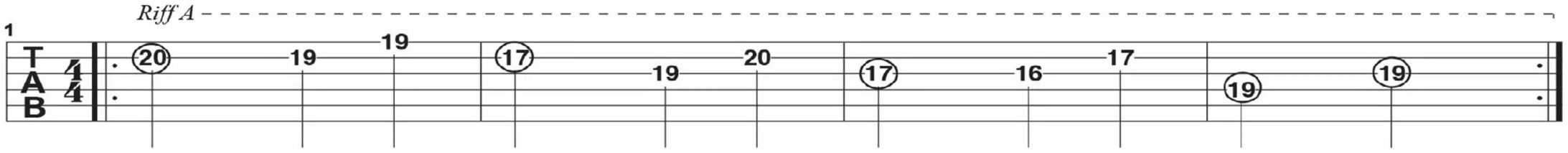
(2.) was a young boy my father took me into the city to see a marching band He said

N.C.(G) (D/F♯) (Em) (G/D) (C) (G/B) (Am) (D)

Gtr. 1 (piano arr. for elec gtr. w/clean tone)

Riff A

GTR. 1



"Son when you grow up would you be the savior of the broken the beaten and the damned" He said

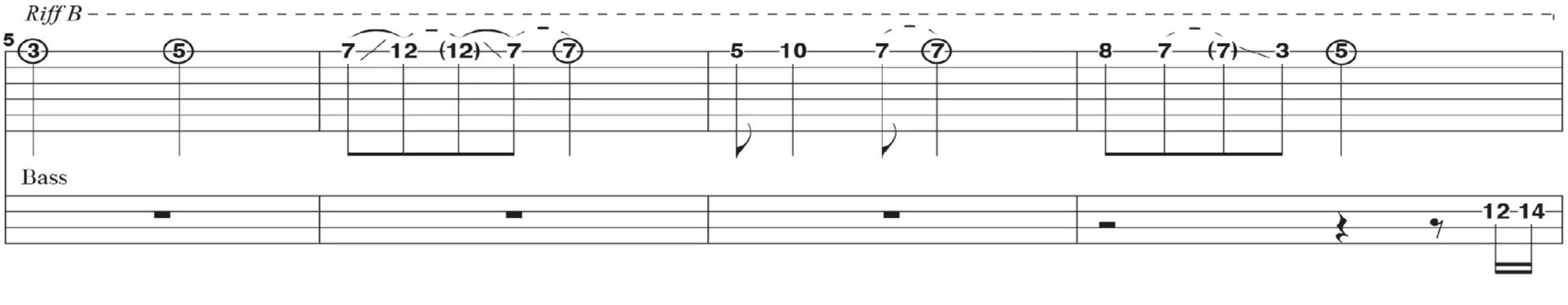
(G) (D/F♯) (Em) (G/D) (C) (G/B) (Am) (D)

Gtr. 1 plays Riff A three times (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/clean tone)

Riff B

GTR. 2



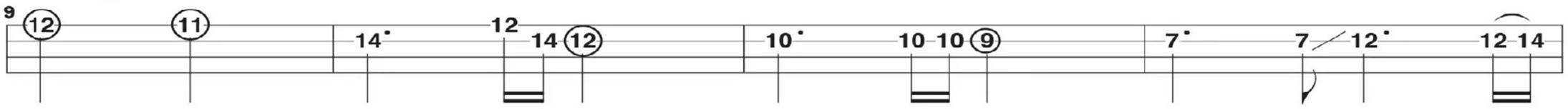
"Will you defeat them Your demons and all the non-believers The plans that they have made Because

(G) (D/F♯) (Em) (G/D) (C) (G/B) (Am) (D)

Gtr. 2 plays Riff B twice (see bar 5)

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

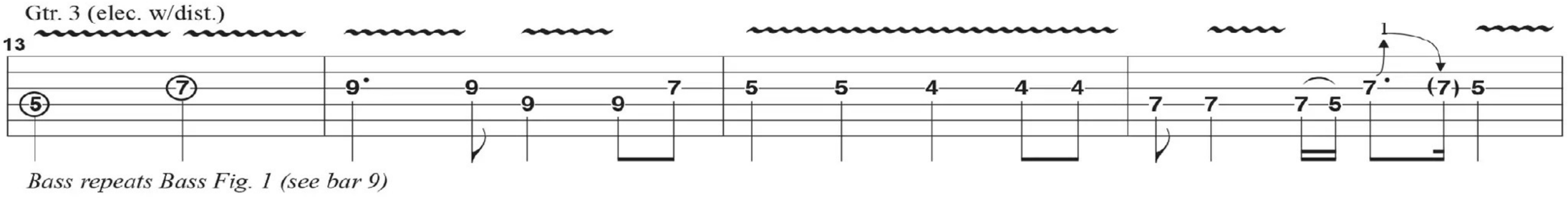


one day I'll leave you a phantom to lead you in the summer to join the black parade"

(G) (D/F♯) (Em) (G/D) (C) (G/B) (Am) (D)

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR. 3



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)

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B (1:04)

(*play 3 times*)

(1.) When
He said

(2.) I was a young boy my father took me into the city to see a marching band
(3.) "Son when you grow up would you be the savior of the broken the beaten and the damned"

G5 D/F♯ E5 D5 C5 G/B A5 D5 G5

Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR. 4

17

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

Gtr. 1 (w/dist.)

GTR. 1

Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)

GTR. 2

Bass

C (1:48)

Fast ♩ = 194

G5 D/F♯ E5 D5

Gtr. 2

GTR. 2

22

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

1. Some-

C5 D5

GTR. 2

26

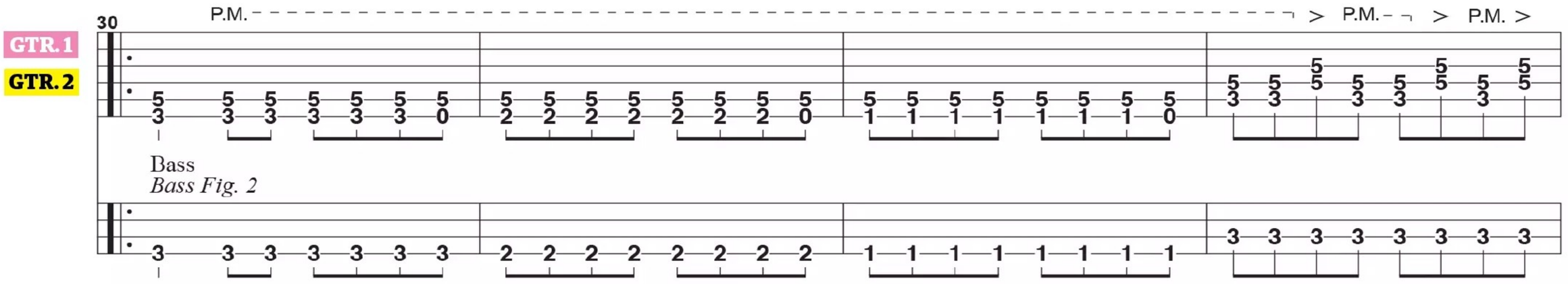
GTR. 1

D **Verses** (1:58, 2:37)

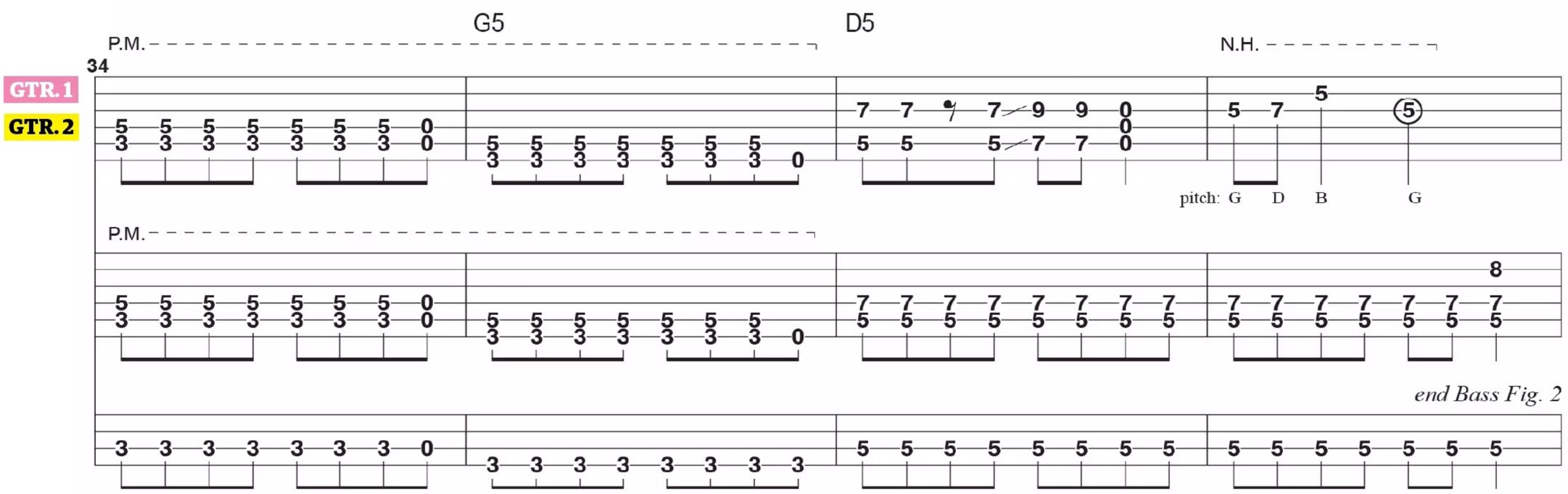
times I get the feeling she's watching over me and
(2.) world that sends you reeling from decimated dreams Your

G5 D/F♯ F6 C5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (w/dist.)



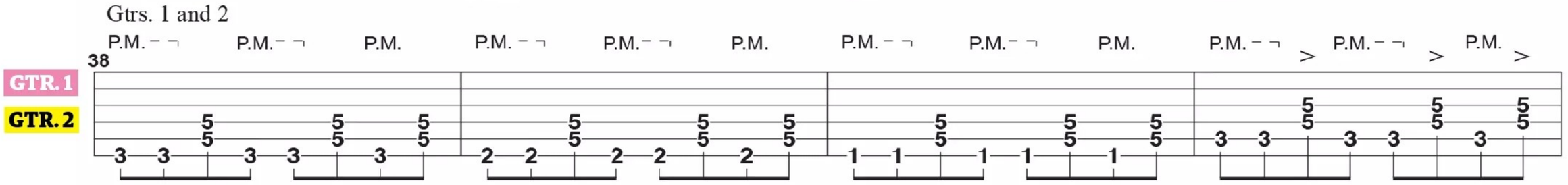
other times I feel like I should go When
misery and hate will kill us all So



through it all the rise and fall the bodies in the streets and
paint it black and take it back Let's shout it loud and clear Defiant

G5 G5/F♯ G5/F C5

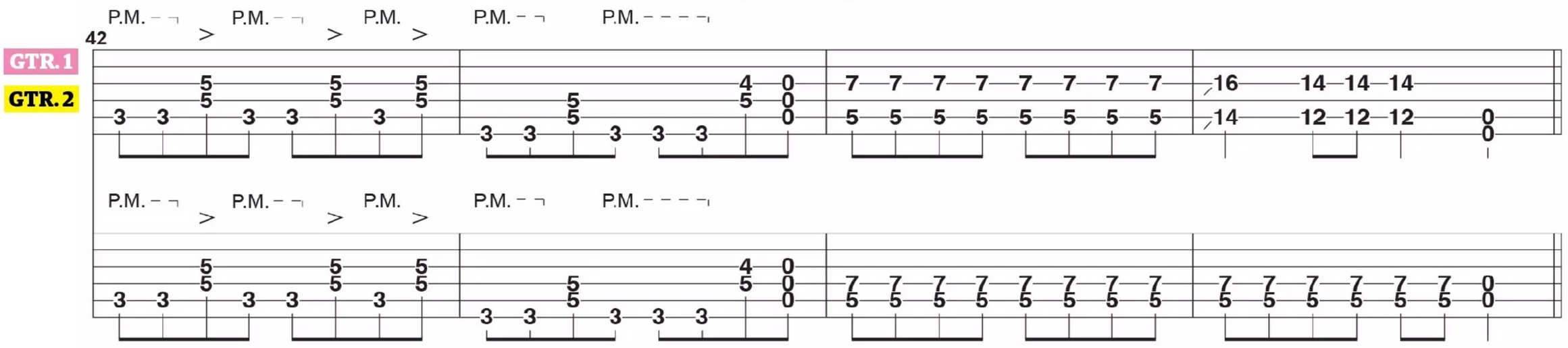
Gtrs. 1 and 2



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 30)

when you're gone we want you all to know we'll carry on
to the end we hear the call to carry on

G5 G D5



E **1st and 2nd Choruses** (2:17, 2:57)

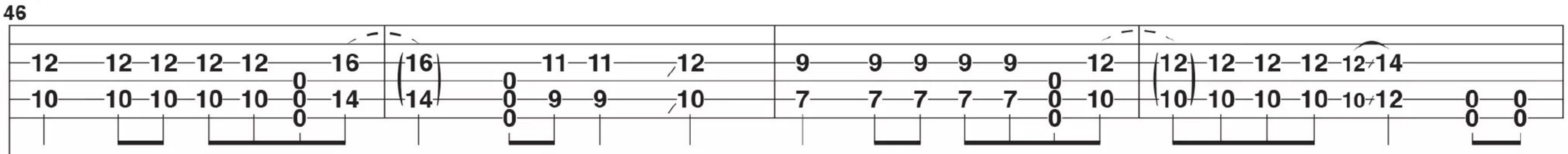
We'll carry on and though you're
We'll carry on and though you're

G5 D/F♯ E5 D5

Gtr. 2

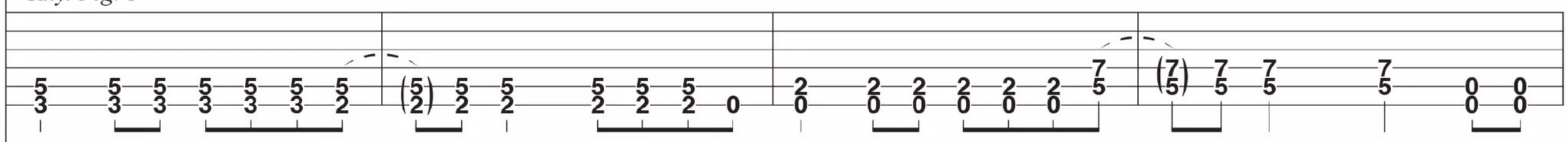
46

GTR. 2

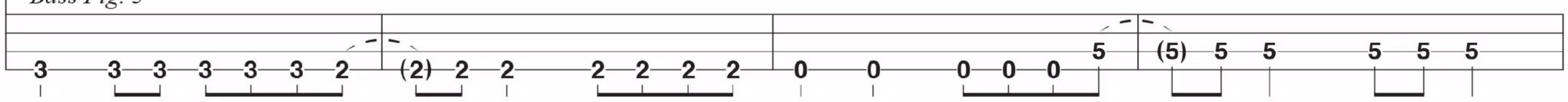


Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1



Bass
Bass Fig. 3

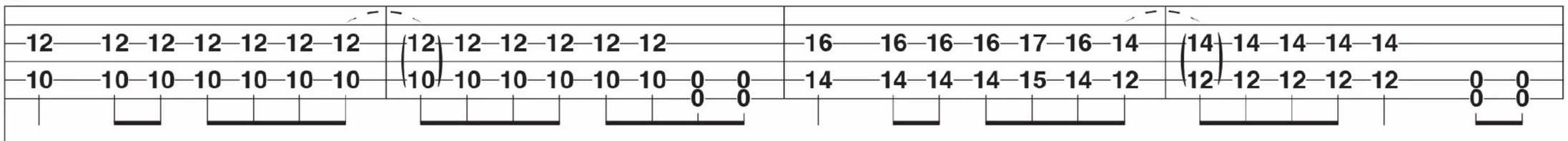


dead and gone believe me your memory will carry on
dead and gone believe me your memory will carry on

C5 D5

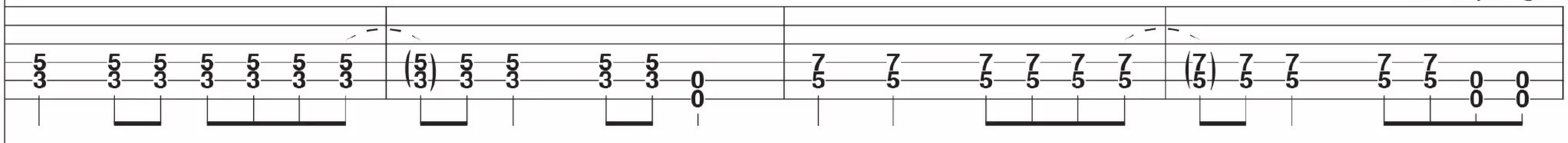
50

GTR. 2

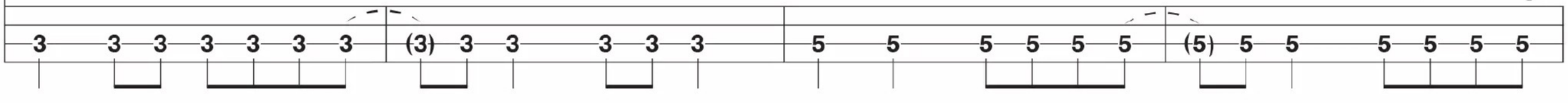


end Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1



end Bass Fig. 3



We'll carry on and in my
We'll carry on and though you're

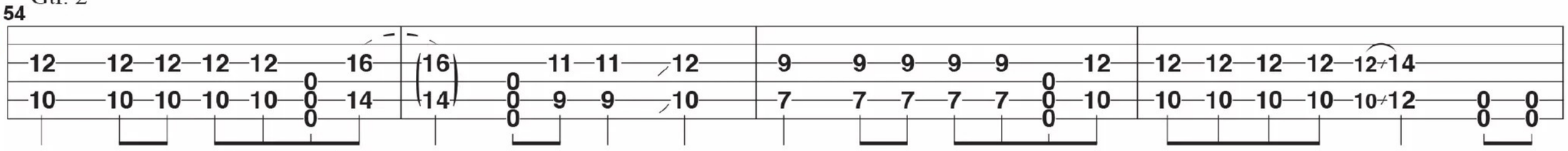
G5 D/F♯ E5 D5

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 46)

Gtr. 2

54

GTR. 2



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 46)

1.

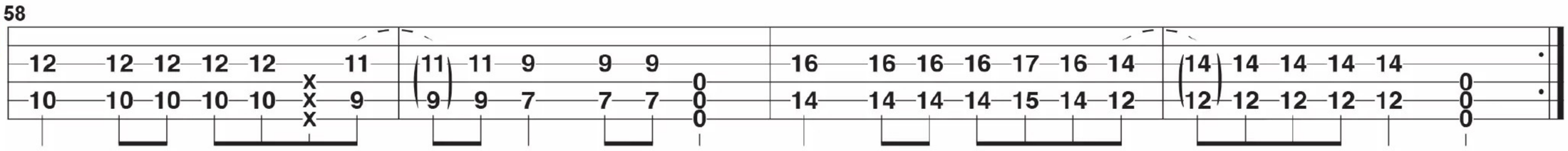
Go back to **D** *2nd Verse (see bar 30)*

heart I can't contain it the anthem won't explain it 2. A
broken and defeated your

C5 D5

58

GTR. 2



2.

F **Bridge** (3:17)

weary widow marches on and on we carry through the years oh
Disappointed faces of your peers oh

D5 C5 B5 E5

Gtr. 2

62

GTR. 2

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

ha ha
ha ha Take a look at me 'cause I could not care at

C5 N.C.(E♭) (Dm) (Cm) B♭5

67

GTR. 2

GTR. 1

G (3:32)

Slower ♩ = 88

Do or die You'll never make me because the world will never take my heart Go and try You'll never break me You want it all You wanna play this
(all)

N.C.(G) (D/F♯) (E5) (D5) (C5) (G5) (C5) (D5)

72

GTR. 2

GTR. 1

Bass Fig. 4

part Won't explain or say I'm sorry I'm not ashamed I'm gonna show my scar You're the chair for all the broken

(G5) (D/F♯) (E5) (D5) (C5) (G5)

Gtr. 2 plays Riff A (see below bar 81)

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

76

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 4 (see bar 72)

H Modulation (3:54)

Listen here because it's only I'm just a man I'm not a hero

(C5) (D5) (A5) (E/G♯)

Gtr. 4 (w/dist.)

GTR. 4

79

Gtr. 3 (w/dist.)

GTR. 3

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

just a boy who's meant to sing this song Just a man I'm not a hero

(F♯5) (E5) (D5) (A5)

Gtr. 5 (w/dist.)

GTR. 5

81

Gtr. 4

GTR. 4

Gtr. 3

GTR. 3

P.M.

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

Riff A

Gtr. 2

(G5) (D/F♯) (E5) (D5) (C5) (G5) (C5) (D5) (A5) (E/G♯) (F♯5) (E5) (D5) (A5)

GTR. 2

(4:02)

Previous Tempo ♩ = 194

I

don't care We'll carry on

E5

let ring

Gtr. 5 Gtr. 4

83

GTR. 5

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

Bass

I 3rd Chorus (4:07)

We'll carry on and though you're

A5 E/G♯ F♯5 E5

Gtr. 2

87

GTR. 2

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 2

GTR. 1

Bass

Bass Fig. 5

dead and gone believe me your memory will carry on

D5 E5

91

GTR. 2

end Rhy. Fig. 2

GTR. 1

end Bass Fig. 5

We'll carry on and

A5 E/G♯ F♯5 E5

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 87)

Gtr. 2

95

GTR. 2

Bass repeats Bass Fig. 5 (see bar 87)

though you're broken and defeated your

D5

98

GTR. 2

J (4:27)

Slower ♩ = 88, w/half-time feel

weary widow marches on

(Do or die You'll never make me because the world will never take my)

E5 A5 E/G♯ F♯5 E5

Gtr. 2

101

GTR. 2

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

We'll carry on

(heart Go and try You'll never break me You want it all I'm gonna play this part Do or die You'll never make me)

D5 E5 A5 E/G♯

105

GTR. 2

GTR. 1

We'll carry on We'll carry We'll carry on

(because the world will never take my heart Go and try You'll never break me You want it all I'm gonna play this part)

F♯5 E5 D5 E5 A5

108

GTR. 2

GTR. 1

POWER TOOLS

Maestro Phase Shifter PS-1, PS-1A, PS-1B

1971–75

CATEGORY: PHASE SHIFTER

BY CHRIS GILL

DURING THE LATE Sixties, Tom Oberheim earned notoriety among Los Angeles musicians for the ring modulators he built for everyone from the experimental electronic psychedelia band the United States of America to film composer Leonard Rosenman, who used Oberheim's ring modulator on the soundtrack for 1970's *Beyond the Planet of the Apes*. By 1969, Gibson's Maestro division contracted Oberheim Electronics to build his ring modulator for them, which was marketed as the Maestro RM-1A.

The ring modulator had limited appeal to the masses (especially after the U.S. government outlawed LSD in 1970), but Oberheim's follow-up was an incredible success — the PS-1 Phase Shifter, introduced in 1971. The PS-1 technically wasn't the first phase shifter on the market (the Shin-ei/Univox Uni-Vibe preceded it by four years), but it was the first effect unit called a "phase shifter" as well as the first to produce the steady rising and falling sweep effect that musicians now recognize as the standard phase shifting effect.

Oberheim designed the PS-1 as a compact substitute for a Leslie rotating speaker cabinet for keyboardists. As a result, it was housed in a rather large, boxy enclosure with only three large rocker switches on the top panel for selecting slow (blue), medium (yellow) and fast (red) sweep speeds. One especially cool characteristic of the Maestro phase shifter effect is how the LFO speed ramps up or down to the selected rate (similar to the mechanical function of a Leslie) instead of changing abruptly. The unit itself had no bypass switch, but an optional foot controller provided bypass/slow, medium and fast footswitches.

Despite its bulky, keyboard-centric design, the Maestro Phase Shifter quickly gained popularity with guitarists, who were mesmerized by the deep, trippy swirling textures produced by the six-stage circuit where six JFETs provide a cascading all-pass filter network.

Maestro produced three different versions of the Phase Shifter — the PS-1, PS-1A and PS-1B. The PS-1A is basically an improved version of the PS-1 that fixed a flaw with the input buffer amplifier that produced popping noises. The PS-1B features a variable speed knob, which is a very useful upgrade, but because this version was introduced near the end of Oberheim's contract with Maestro these units are very rare and command significantly higher prices on the vintage market.



George Harrison on German TV in 1977 promoting late 1976's *Thirty Three & 1/3*. [*below*] A vintage Maestro PS-1A

Maestro sold an estimated 60,000 units to guitarists and keyboardists alike during its brief four-year lifespan



Maestro sold an estimated 60,000 units to guitarists and keyboardists alike during its brief four-year lifespan. When smaller phase shifter pedals emerged around 1974 that were much more guitar rig-friendly, the bulky Maestro unit was soon rendered obsolete. However, it still sounds great today and is great for studio applications. If you don't want to bother with a vintage unit, Heptode Virtuoso replicates the Maestro's vintage tones for players who want a modern pedalboard-friendly update.

Some of the most dedicated early fans of the Maestro Phase Shifter included Ernie Isley, who ran an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff in front of his to create the synth-like lead tone on Isley Brothers classic "That Lady"; Alex Lifeson, who used his Maestro on the first four Rush albums up to and including *2112*; George Harrison, who plugged into a PS-1A on his *Extra Texture* and *Thirty Three & 1/3* albums; Waylon Jennings on numerous mid-Seventies outlaw country singles, plus John Cipollina, Steve Howe and Terry Kath. GW

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