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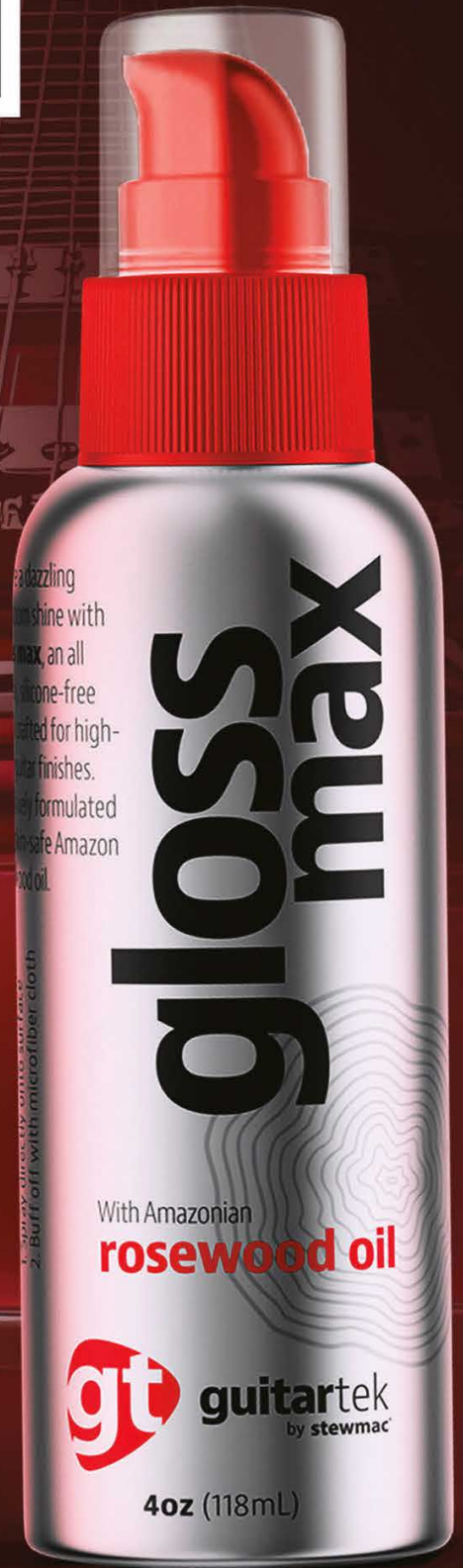
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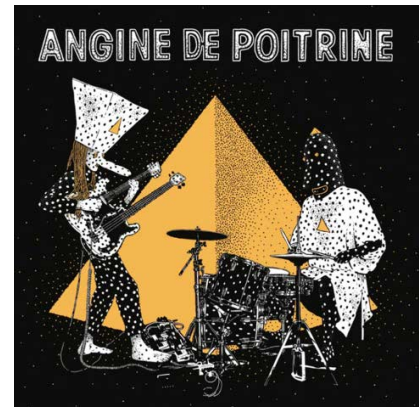
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Microtonal guitar and the unruly rise of Canadian rock

▶ TWENTY TWENTY-SIX IS turning into a big year for Canadian rock.

You've got classic-rock giants like Rush, the Guess Who and Triumph reuniting and/or touring for the first time in years, not to mention new-ish albums by the Dirty Nil, Crown Lands, Ariel Posen, Arkells and Les Trois Accords — and, of course, there's Spiritbox guitarist Mike Stringer's new *GW* column! That said, it feels like the biggest — or at least the most out-of-nowhere and viral — development in Canadian rock is the rise of Angine de Poitrine, an instrumental duo out of Quebec. Thankfully, people aren't focusing on their ridiculous but lovable *papier-mâché* masks and polka-dotted get-ups. The thing that's making headlines in guitar land is the crudely-put-together microtonal guitar that unlocks otherworldly possibilities for guitarist Khn de Poitrine. What is a microtonal guitar, you ask? It's a guitar with a bunch of extra frets; frets are literally added to the space between the frets of a normal guitar, which very quickly takes your ears to some new sonic places. As the drummer, Klek de Poitrine, told *Noize Magazine*, "I built the first microtonal guitar we used myself. I added more frets with a saw... I brought it to Khn, and I told him, 'You have to try this, it makes absolutely no sense.' The moment we started playing with it, we just laughed because of the friction created and the proximity of the notes." Why hasn't *GW* interviewed Angine de Poitrine, you ask? We're working on it! We've actually been working on it since a Quebec-based subscriber nudged me about these guys back in February. Anyway, sit tight; I'm told it's happening soon. BTW, their new record, *Vol. II* (pictured), is out now.



WHILE WE'RE AT IT: I don't normally recommend movies in *GW*, but since we're talking about Canadian bands, track down and check out *Nirvanna the Band the Show the Movie* (2025), one of the funniest, most insane things I've seen in years. And, hey, if you hate it, just stop listening to my movie recommendations!

DAMIAN FANELLI

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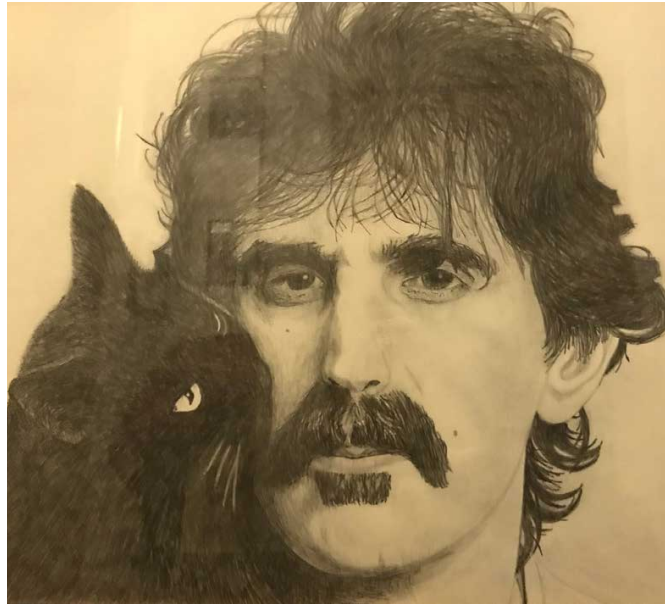
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READER ART OF THE MONTH

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



Alex Lifeson
BY GORDON GRISINGER



Frank Zappa
BY MICK STEVENS

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



Eddie LaValle

AGE: 55
HOMETOWN: Boston, MA
GUITARS: Vintage and Custom Shop Charvels, Fender Strats, Tom Anderson, James Tyler and Suhr
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: I'm just focused on writing and recording original music that I release online.
GEAR I WANT MOST: Soldano X88-IR preamp



Zac Rossi

AGE: 39
HOMETOWN: Saratoga Springs, NY
GUITARS: Larrivee LV-03RE, Cole Clark SRAN2EC-SRE, '96 Fender Strat, Reverend Jetstream HB, Suhr Modern Custom, Godin Multiac
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Seal "Fast Changes," Incubus "Warning," Bee Gees "How Deep Is Your Love?" Stevie Wonder "Too High"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Neural DSP Quad Cortex with a Laney LFR-112



Robert Warren

AGE: 62
HOMETOWN: Elgin, IL
GUITARS: PRS Vela, PRS Tremonti, Fender American Standard Strat, Epiphone Les Paul, Seagull acoustic
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Led Zeppelin "The Rover," Aerosmith "Combination," UFO "Rock Bottom"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Kiesel custom guitar, Gibson ES-335

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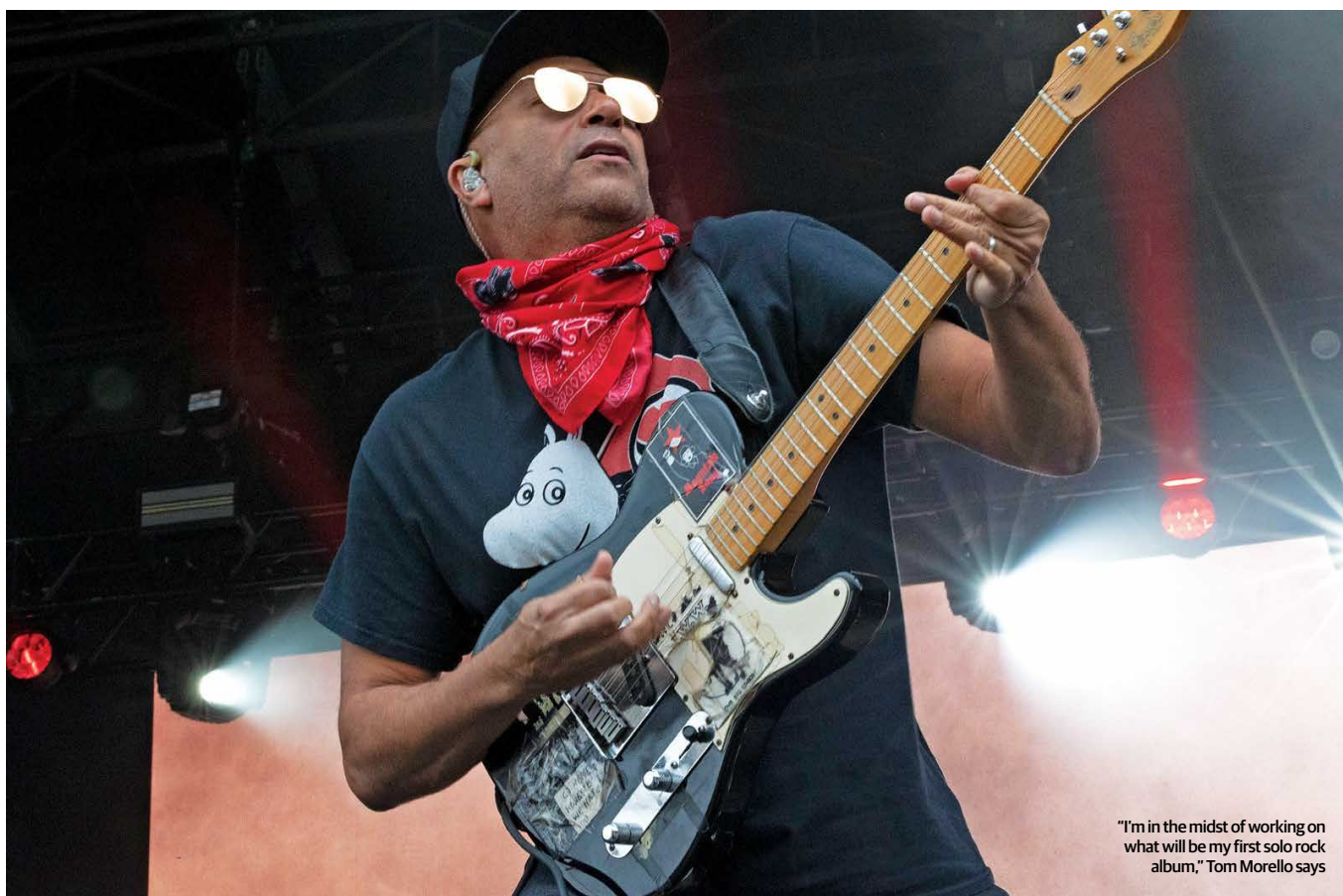
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"I'm in the midst of working on what will be my first solo rock album," Tom Morello says

Morello's Got Game

How — with an out-of-nowhere, 36-hour deadline — Tom Morello contributed a ready-to-go track (with a fearsome riff) to the latest *Final Fantasy XIV* update

BY JOE BOSSO

▶ **"IT HAPPENS ALL day,"** Tom Morello says, speaking about the number of requests he gets from artists looking for him to sprinkle his secret guitar sauce on new pieces of music. "I do a lot of it, too," he says. "I've donated guitar solos to younger bands. They're fans of Rage Against the Machine or Audioslave, and they want me on their songs."

He admits he can't accept every request that comes across his desk. "Hey, I've got a lot

going on," he says with a laugh. "These days, I'm driving my kids to a lot of high school baseball games."

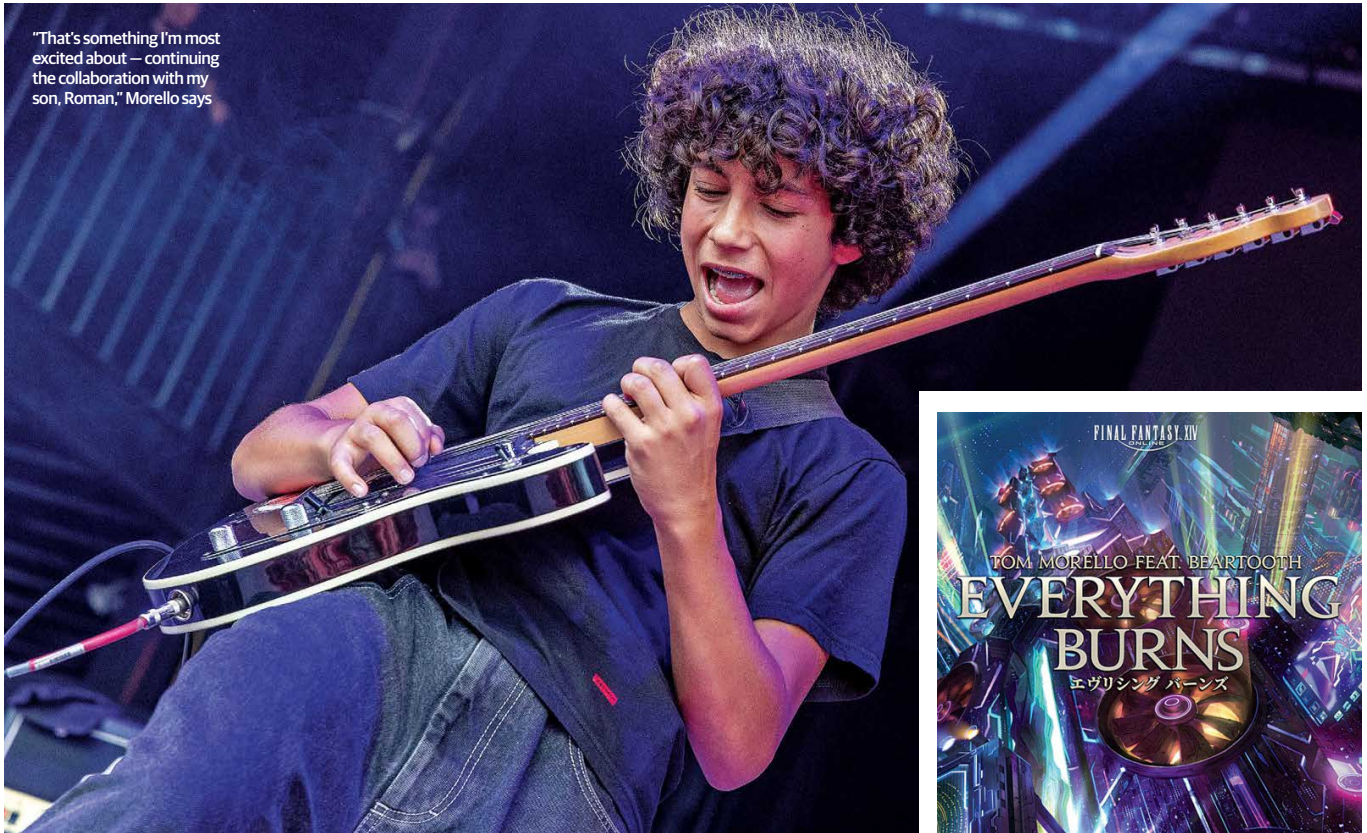
Recently, the guitarist received an offer he couldn't refuse when noted video game composer Masayoshi Soken reached out and asked if he'd consider contributing a song for the latest update of *Final Fantasy XIV*. Morello admitted that he wasn't much of a gamer, but he understood the significance of the *Final*

Fantasy franchise, and he was delighted at the prospect of working with Soken.

There was just one problem, however; Morello would have to turn in a ready-to-go track within 36 hours. Fortunately, the guitarist was already working on some new music with producer Tyler Smyth, so the prospect of banging out a banger wasn't out of the question. "I said to Tyler, 'I've got a hot riff, and you've got some beats. Maybe we can do this,'" he says. The producer then rang up his friend Caleb Shomo, singer with the metal-core band Beartooth, and asked, "Do you want to make a song with Tom Morello right now?"

In no time at all — 48 hours, to be exact — the collaboration yielded the monster jam "Everything Burns," a feral blend of rap-metal and electronica that features, one might expect, one hell of a gargantuan riff. ▶

"That's something I'm most excited about — continuing the collaboration with my son, Roman," Morello says



When you're noodling, do you have some sort of litmus test that makes you go, "That combination of notes does the job"?

It's not overthought. Sometime around maybe 1991 [or] '92, I began to be able to write music that I loved, and was able to tap into some of the essence of the Tony Iommi and Jimmy Page-ness of it all. From that time, these big-ass riffs have kind of been low-hanging fruit. It's like, "Stick to the dots, try a little syncopation and don't be afraid to be equal parts funky and heavy."

Is it deceptively easy? One wrong note could make all the difference between a classic riff and one that's just "eh."

Oh, sure. Some of the longer riffs through my history, like "Testify" or "Down Rodeo," where there was sort of a more simple version of the riff, I said, "Well, if it's going to happen four times in a row, perhaps it's a journey that stays true to coming back to the one, but then adds some extra heavy metal flavor along the way."

So in the case of "Everything Burns," you already had the riff.

It was around in a rudimentary way, and it

was sort of looking for a home. I have a lot of riffs hanging around, and this was one that Tyler and I had been tinkering with. When this opportunity came up, I was like, "Okay, hold on one second. Let's see if Beartooth wants to jump on."

At what point did you realize that the combination of you, Tyler and Caleb was working?

It was maybe two hours after Tyler reached out to Caleb. Caleb dropped everything to do this. He's a great singer, and he's also a producer himself. He's got a studio. He wrote and produced the vocals to it, came back in about two hours with a first draft, and I was like, "Holy shit, that's a jam!"

I did notice the lack of a solo. Is that something you wrestled with?

I wouldn't say "wrestle." There was, however, a version of it that had sort of a more expansive middle section. At the end of the day when we were mixing, it felt like it didn't add to the power of the song. It felt more like I was just sticking a solo in. When I was A/B-ing in my car, I liked the version that, while it doesn't have a guitar solo, it's about as guitar-y

as anything I've ever done. There's no lack of guitar on this song. As for solos, there will be plenty more to come, let me tell you. I'm in the midst of working on what will be my first solo rock album. I made some Americana albums and some EDM-influenced records, but I want to make a record that is going to be an unapologetically Tom Morello solo rock record.

Any idea when we might see that?

In this day and age, what is an album? We've released three singles from this album over the course of the year and a half. There's a lot of intense work ahead. I hope I've got maybe three or four songs in the can and another sort of five or six in the hamper. I've got a lot of touring coming up this summer. I'd love to try to get it out before then.

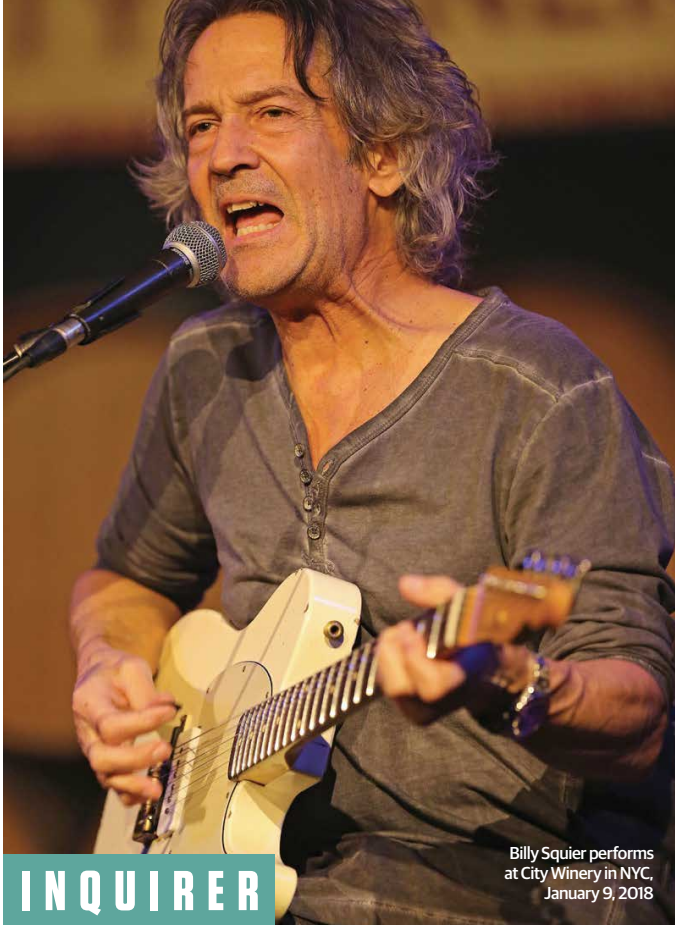
And you've been touring with your son.

That's something I'm most excited about, continuing the collaboration with my son, Roman, who has become quite a technical guitarist. He's been a collaborative partner on a couple of songs, and that will continue. [Laughs] One of my favorite parts about working with Roman is that if we have disagreements, I'm able to send him to his room.

You can't do that with everyone.

No, I can't. [Laughs] **GW**

"While it doesn't have a solo, this song is about as guitar-y as anything I've ever done. There's no lack of guitar on this one"



Billy Squier performs at City Winery in NYC, January 9, 2018

INQUIRER

Billy Squier

The man behind "The Stroke" and "Lonely Is the Night" on his *Don't Say No Tele*, imposter syndrome and the acoustic album he's especially proud of

BY JOE MATERA

Q What was the first guitar you owned?

My first electric was a two-pickup Danelectro I bought along with a little Supro amp. I found out years later that Jimmy Page used the same stuff. I paid around \$75 for both when I was about 13. I bought them from the older brother of a school friend who didn't want them anymore. I'm not sure why he had them to begin with. It was probably just around when the Beatles were hitting, but it hadn't yet become a thing where everybody was playing guitar.

Q What's the first song you learned on that guitar?

I have no idea. My memory has been worn down by copious LSD experiments that I did back then! I remember being told that one thing to worry about with taking acid is that it doesn't do your memory any favors. Maybe I'm

finding that out now. I'd guess it could've been a song from the first Beatles album.

Q What was your first gig?

At around 14, I had a band in high school called the Reltneys. Our first gig was at a dance at a church hall. The first significant gig I can recall was a battle of the bands at my high school gym, where I duked it out with my local rivals, some of whom were my friends.

Q Ever had an embarrassing moment on stage?

I've never been embarrassed on stage. I do have an irrational fear of embarrassing myself because of the way I grew up — certain things happened to me when I was younger that made me feel I was never really good enough, and I was afraid people would find out. At the same time, I developed tremendous

confidence in myself and where I was going with my music. Try reconciling those divergent aspects of your personality!

Q What's your favorite piece of gear?

Amp-wise, my hot-wired Super Lead 100 Marshall heads, which I've had since the Seventies. They're unbeatable — the best Marshalls I've ever heard. But I have a lot of memorable pieces. I still have the 1960 Fender Telecaster Custom I used on most of *Don't Say No* [1981], the one that's on the album cover.

Q The building is burning down. What one guitar would you save?

My '59 burst, which is named "Fanny." In fact, it already happened to me a few years ago. It turned out it wasn't serious, but I live in a large building on Central Park West in Manhattan, and there was a fire in the basement. There was a big commotion — alarms going off and fire engines circling — so I went straight to the closet, looked at my four Les Pauls, grabbed that one and my dog, and trotted down the back stairs and out onto the street. Everything was fine in the end; we didn't lose anything.

Q When was the last time you practiced?

I don't like to sound cavalier about this, but I rarely practice. I stopped seriously practicing a long time ago because the only time I found it to be really valuable was when I was trying to learn something specific to where I wanted to go. When I was 16, I was transfixed by Clapton's soloing on John Mayall's *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton*. There

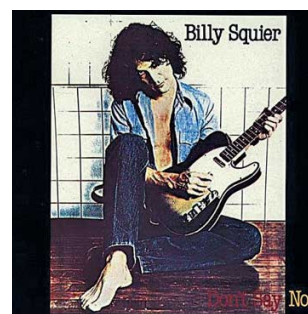
were so many things I couldn't figure out and wanted to play. I'd spend hours dropping the needle on those solos, committing them to memory and working out how he did them. Once I got going, I'd just find myself in situations where I'd be playing a lot of the time, for example, in a tune-up room at a gig or at soundcheck. I'd always have a cassette player nearby, and if I came up with something I thought was good, I'd record it. The rest I'd leave to fate. If I do feel the need to test myself, I play Peter Green's version of Freddie King's "The Stumble."

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

My acoustic playing could be more ingrained. I was never much of an acoustic player. I'm not an adept finger-picker. I could always strum chords and play parts as needed on my records, but it was never something I devoted any time to. When I made my acoustic record, *Happy Blue* [1998], I made the guitar the centerpiece of the album; it's the only instrument other than my voice. I taught myself to play in different tunings and came up with things I never imagined I could play. I probably couldn't play a lot of that stuff straight-off today because it was a one-time challenge I gave myself, and I don't revisit it all that often. I'm very proud of that record; there's some real good playing.

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

That's a tough question. If you ask me about things I'd say to young players today, it'd be something like, don't learn solos from watching YouTube. Figure them out for yourself. I'd use the example of how I learned to play by ear and picture the notes on the fretboard in my mind. If I could visualize the fretboard in my head and memorize solos by ear, I could put the pieces together — and it all made sense. Think of it as a relationship; get as close to the instrument as you can. **GW**



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Wildfire shredding and whiplash licks prove that this Maine-bred gun-for-hire can hold her own. Now based in L.A., she's in extra-high demand

BY JOE BOSSO

▶ **BELLA PERRON BARELY** got a chance to unpack her bags. The 23-year-old, Berklee-trained shredder had recently relocated from her home state of Maine to Los Angeles, and on her first day in town she got a call to audition for pop star Haiden Henderson's U.K. tour. And she nailed it.

"The whole thing was so crazy," the guitarist says with a laugh. "I've been really focused on launching my solo career, but I also want to be open to whatever possibilities come my way. Basically, my attitude right now is just 'go for it.'"

Motivation has never been much of a problem for Perron, who has already toured the U.S. several times with her former band, Plush. Lately, she's been sitting in with Stray Cats drummer Slim Jim Phantom's side band, the Slim Jim Phantom Trio, and performing with the high-octane country rock group the Midnight Cowgirls.

"I'm a rock player at heart, but I want to get my toes in the waters of other genres"

A X O L O G Y

Guitars
Ibanez RG series
Amps
Laney Ironheart IRT120H,
Laney Foundry Super 60
Effects
Neural DSP Quad Cortex,
Ibanez Tube Screamer,
MXR Analog Chorus,
Vox Satchurator

"I've had a great time playing with the Cowgirls," she says. "They wanted some fast lead guitar work with real rock edge. And playing with Slim Jim has been incredible. [Bassist] Jennie Vee, who's also in the Cowgirls, called and asked me to play with her and Slim Jim. We were part of a tribute to Duane Eddy at the Grand Ole Opry. What an honor!"

Perron has been eking away at an instrumental solo record – it could be a full album, but in all likelihood it'll be an EP – that she plans to release this year. Thus far, she's uploaded two music videos on YouTube that offer a pretty good idea of what she's been up to. "Enlighten" is a ferocious, ultramelodic rocker that shows off her supple chops in a highly listenable four-minute package. "Mirrors" is more of a slinky, funky bit of business with a growling, kickass riff and enough twists and turns to keep listeners constantly guessing where she's going next.

If she has her way, she'd love to carve out a career similar to Steve Vai or Nita Strauss. "I've admired them for so long – for their musicianship, obviously, but also how they tour with different artists," she says. "Like them, I'm a rock player at heart, but I want to get my toes in the waters of other genres. I'm exploring my voice as a guitarist, and I'm trying to write in a space without rules – no genres, no time lengths."

She smiles. "I'm just enjoying it." **GW**

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Views of the front and back [facing page] of Prince's Mesa Boogie Coliseum 300 amp, now owned by Eddie Martinez. [right] Prince during the *Purple Rain* era, December 26, 1984

When It Rains, It Tours

How session guitar legend Eddie Martinez wound up with Prince's *Purple Rain*-era Mesa Boogie Coliseum 300 amp

BY ANDREW DALY

▶ **SONGS LIKE "LET'S Go Crazy," "When Doves Cry" and "Purple Rain"** prove that Prince was a pop-music maestro. But Prince — born Prince Rogers Nelson — was also one hell of a guitarist.

Fellow Eighties hitmaker Eddie Martinez (Run-DMC, David Lee Roth, Robert Palmer, Mick Jagger), who knew Prince before he hit paydirt, plays a mean six-string, too. So it's kind of poetic that Martinez ended up — albeit unintentionally — with Prince's most beloved amp from 1984-85 (the *Purple Rain* era), a heavily modified Mesa Boogie Coliseum 300.

Below, Martinez explains how a sudden case of Gear Acquisition Syndrome led him down this Princely path.

When you came upon Prince's amp, were you even in the market for an amp, let

alone an amp with provenance?

It was May 29, 2011. I was at home playing my guitar, and for some reason, acquiring another amp popped into my thoughts. Mind you, this was quite unusual, because when I go to guitar stores, I'm first looking for guitars; so looking back on that day, I believe it was more of a divine impulse.

Why do you think that is?

I already had killer amps, but I was playing clubs locally with my band and needed a combo that wouldn't be a back-breaker; plus, I'm big on redundancies. I also needed something practical for small clubs.

Where did you find Prince's Boogie amp?

I decided to visit one of my local guitar shops and began looking for amps. I had looked



for a good while and didn't see anything that caught my interest. As I was exiting, something caught my eye — a Boogie head that reminded me of the Simulclass series from the Eighties that I'd rent along with a Soldano and modded Marshalls from Andy Brauer when recording in L.A. I asked what model Boogie it was, and the salesperson didn't know. When I saw six 6L6 tubes, I knew it wasn't a Simulclass. The only thing the salesman said was that they bought it at a Seattle guitar show — and that it was allegedly once owned by Prince.

Did you know Prince in the Eighties, and did you know anything about the amps he used?

I had known Prince a bit from when we shared the bill when I was playing with Lenny White

and Twennynine. We both had opened for Rick James in 1980, and we became friends with Dez [Dickerson], Andre [Cymone] and Prince. I recall seeing Boogie amps on that first tour. I was becoming familiar with Boogie because Nicky Moroch, my bandmate and a brilliant guitarist, used a Mark I when we played with drummer Lenny White. But I digress!

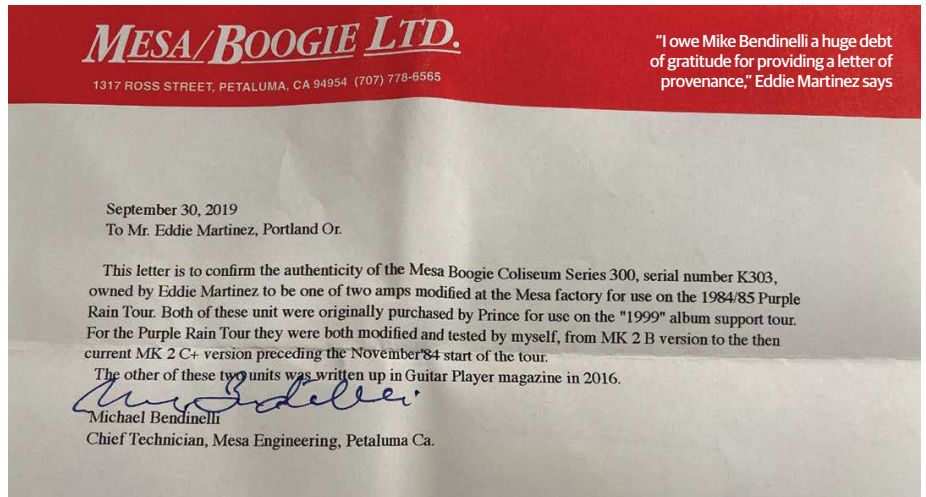
Getting back to the amp in your local guitar shop, how did you confirm that it was Prince's Boogie?

I took a peek at the back and saw Prince's corporate logo, "PRN Music." It was also written in a marker on the chassis – "PrinceNumber 1." And there's a sticker that reads "last tubed 11-88." There's also "Prince I" [Roman numeral I] written on some duct tape. I also knew Prince's middle name was Rogers and his surname was Nelson, hence the "PRN." So I called my friend Artie Smith and he suggested I call JD Dworkow.

Why JD Dworkow?

JD worked closely with Prince and Wendy Melovin with stage gear and the guitar tech backline vibe for the entire *Purple Rain* tour. Plus I've known JD for years, and he's worked with so many huge artists and bands. He's a total pro. I described the amp to JD and told him the serial number, "K303." His mind was blown; he said it was Prince's number one amp on the *Purple Rain* tour. The dots were starting to connect because it was correlating to everything I was seeing written on the chassis of the amp. After JD told me that, I knew it was the real deal and bought it.

You went from looking for a backup amp to most likely owning Prince's most-used



"The clean sound is so good, I can see why Prince dug it, and the crunch is monstrous"

amp on his most iconic tour.

Yes! And although it wasn't a backup combo amp that I was looking for, it was quite historically significant. I had "fallen upstairs" with such an incredible, iconic find. [Laughs]

Once you bought it, did you reach out to Mesa Boogie for more info?

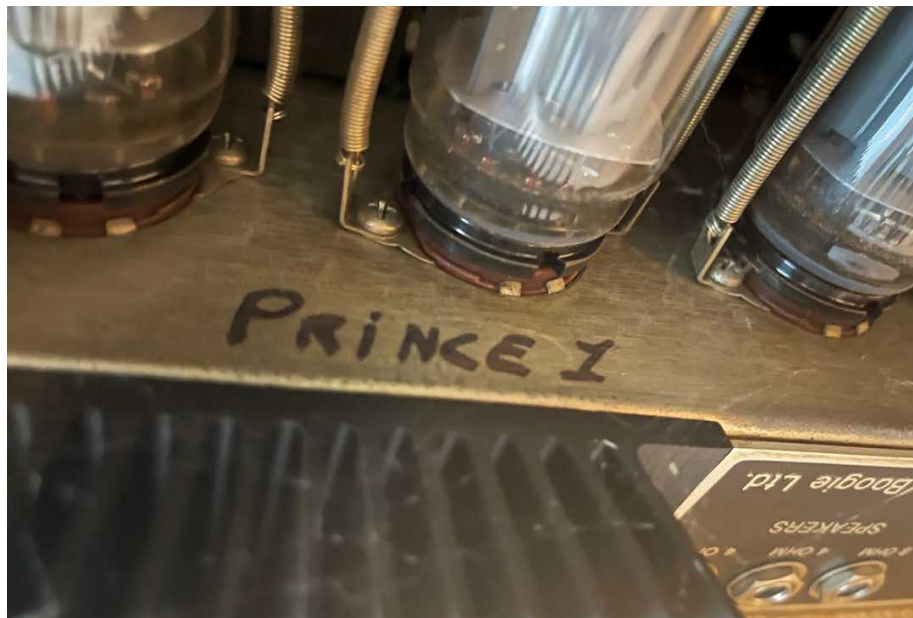
I reached out to Mesa Boogie and to my Boogie rep – who shall remain nameless and who is no longer there. He confirmed that it was an amp that – at one time – had belonged to Prince. He also asked if I knew Prince. I told him I did but it had been years since I'd seen him. My rep suggested that I don't let Prince know about the amp because [Prince] preferred the clean sound on the amp in my possession.

What did he mean by that?

There was a tone of reticence in his dialog with me about digging deeper into the amp's history. That's what I felt, so I stopped communicating with him. Remember, Prince [1958-2016] was very much alive when I first communicated with Boogie about the amp.

Did you dig deeper after Prince died?

It wasn't until 2019 that I reached out to Mike Bendinelli at Mesa, and he gave me the full story. The model is in the Coliseum 300 series. It was later modified by Mike himself to the 2C+, a coveted mod. It's a beast, packing 6x6L6s and delivering 180 watts. The clean sound is so good, and I can see why Prince dug it so much. The crunch side is monstrous. I owe Mike a huge debt of gratitude for providing a letter of provenance and the historical context for such an iconic and important amp. [GW](#)



EDDIE MARTINEZ



Buzzcocks' Steve Diggle [left] and Chris Remington do their thing in Chicago, September 20, 2025

Punks with a Head of Steam

With classic-era guitarist Steve Diggle at the helm, U.K. punk-rock originals the Buzzcocks are nowhere near calling it quits

BY JOE MATERA

▶ **"WHILE WE'VE STILL** got our Buzzcocks identity there, I've tried to take the music to a couple of different areas along the way," says Buzzcocks guitarist Steve Diggle about *Attitude Adjustment*, the U.K. punk heroes' new studio album. The band — which initially formed in 1976, punk's "year zero" — continues to buck the trend of what constitutes the sound of punk rock.

"We were part of that whole Manchester punk explosion," Diggle says. "But while there was this exciting, glamorous thing to the Sex Pistols and the Clash, we were quite avant garde compared to what they were doing."

Since the 2018 passing of founding frontman and guitarist Pete Shelley, Diggle

has remained the group's lynchpin, keeping the Buzzcocks' musical spirit alive by writing, recording and touring. His punk ethos remains as strong as ever, and it's perfectly showcased on the new album.

"It is always good to be spontaneous and work quickly," he says. "If you overthink it, you'll get too involved and lose that

"We were part of the punk explosion, but we were quite avant garde compared to the Sex Pistols"

spontaneity. We've always recorded quickly like they did in the old days. For this album, I rehearsed the bass and drums for two days — with 14 songs — and then it took two days to record the bass and drums. So, seven tracks per day. Then I went back in and did all the guitars and vocals over a week and a half. It was done very quickly."

When it comes to defining the Buzzcocks sound, Diggle spotlights two primary elements — a Fender Telecaster and an HH 2x12 100-watt combo.

"When you plug into the HH, it's like, 'That's the Buzzcocks!'" he says. "That amp must be 50 years old, as it's the one I used on all the early Buzzcocks recordings. I brought that into the sessions for this album because it gave us our definitive sound."

"I have quite a few Telecasters," Diggle explains, "which I also play live, mainly because they're light. In the studio, I'd run the guide guitar, the Telecaster, with the band because it's just quick and easy to use, especially when you're doing guide tracks. Quite often, the guides are buried in the mix because it brings an element of live-ness to the finished tracks."

Wanting to add some color to his sonic template on *Attitude Adjustment*, Diggle brought in some additional gear.

"I had a Marshall and a Vox AC30," he says. "I also brought along two Les Paul Juniors, a couple of Les Pauls, an SG and six- and 12-string Rickenbackers. For effects, I used a Boss distortion, a Boss delay and a wah. Guitars are scattered throughout the album. On 'Poetic Machine Gun,' I used the 12-string Rickenbacker on the jangly middle eight, while the riff was played with a SG going through the Marshall."

Diggle believes that simplicity — which is part of the foundation of all punk rock — allows for a much more boutique approach during the creative process, something that shines through on "Poetic Machine Gun."

"A string broke on the 12-string, and I didn't have time to find a spare," he says. "I left it as an 11-string. But you won't be able to tell because that string wasn't being used so much. There was enough jangle to do what it had to do. I think those types of limitations work for us in a less-is-more kind of way. Knowing you could use your limitations is a good thing when you're starting out too, because you get straight to the point. It's like when I'm coming up with riffs. I never know what riffs I'm going to put down in the studio. I'd do some takes, but by the third take I'd have a definite riff that wasn't just kind of a blues riff to fill in the space, but was part of the tune."

With 2026 being the band's 50-year anniversary, Diggle is pleased that his group have etched a lasting legacy, in particular their immense influence on American hardcore.

"We almost have become a 'band's band,'" he says. "Though there have been bands that have been influenced by the Buzzcocks, it's not something we set out to do. The riffs we did and our idiosyncratic approach wasn't conventional; we'd just go in and make records and that was our message to the world at that time. The amount of people from hardcore bands I've met that have been influenced by the Buzzcocks is incredible." **GW**



"Having one guitar in a band really allows you to do whatever you want," Greg Freeman says

Greg Freeman

This maverick's latest slice of alt-country-indie comes with an attitude that belies his whimsical portraits of small-town America

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

▶ **IN LATE JANUARY**, outside Detroit's Third Man Records, it's zero degrees and falling. Inside, Vermonter Greg Freeman is supporting his sophomore album, *Burnover*. On stage, wearing jeans and a long-sleeve T-shirt, he wrestles notes out of his guitar, a pick wrapped around his right thumb.

"I grew up learning how to play guitar from finger-pickers. When I was a kid, that was all I did," Freeman says. "I've always kind of done a hybrid style."

Freeman sings through gritted teeth, his crackled tenor echoing Stephen Malkmus. Speaking to the crowd, his voice carries the fragility of Neil Young or Elliott Smith.

"I like your haircut!" shouts one audience member.

"Thanks. I did it myself," he quips.

Freeman makes what is widely considered to be "alt-country" music. But on the road and on record, clarinets and baritone saxophones weave weeping harmonies into his songs, pushing his music beyond the genre's conventions.

"I'm so bored of the whole rhythm guitar player/songwriter thing," he says. "Having one guitar in a band really allows you to do whatever you want, and that can be liberating because you don't

have to worry about conflicting with other instruments."

Freeman's main guitar is a Japanese copy, and as the lone guitar player on this tour, he seems to relish the freedom to move around its fretboard.

"The Tokai is just a Japanese knockoff of a Tele, but it's just as good, if not better," he says. "It has a breezy sound. It's simple and sounds better [when] recorded, in my experience. It cuts through. I know what I like when it comes to guitars. I've never owned a Strat. There are some guitars where you'll own them for five years and never write a single thing on them. It doesn't really have to do with how expensive it is or how it feels. It's just kind of a relationship."

As Freeman plays, fretting roots with his thumb, his left hand wrapped around the neck of his Tokai T-style, it's almost as if he's sparring with an old opponent. His playing suggests someone uninterested in rehearsal for rehearsal's sake.

"For many years, I've been trying to unlearn or break out of whatever routines you internalize when you were taught to play," he says. "You get locked in playing the same chords and same scales and stuff, and it's like you can just forget all that. There are no rules." **GW**



Ulrika Spacek

Television, Radiohead, Nineties shoegaze: formidable influences inform alt-rock soundscapes that feature a triple-guitar threat

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

BAND NAMES ARE like tattoos. You have to choose them carefully, otherwise, 30 years later, you'll find yourself with a wrinkled tribal tramp stamp telling people you're in a band called Foo Fighters. Fortunately, U.K. shoegazers Ulrika Spacek won't have that problem; they don't regret their band's name. "I think we still like the name of the band," says Rhys Edwards, Ulrika Spacek's singer and guitarist, with a laugh. "I'm quite glad."

Ulrika Spacek — who, by the way, are named after Sissy Spacek and Ulrike Marie Meinhof, the late German left-wing militant and journalist — fuse electronics and a three-guitar attack into textured indie rock. On their new record, *Expo*, harmonized guitars float over jazz-tinged rhythms — worlds away from their nu-metal roots.

"The first riffs I learned were by Slipknot and Korn," Edwards says.

"I went to see System of a Down play at Brixton," guitarist Joseph Stone adds. "I had drum lessons for a while, and the drums were such a big part of the band. John Dolmayan had these big

mirrors behind him so you could see all the drums. That was quite inspiring, especially for a young teenager."

So what bands bridged the gap for Stone and Edwards to get from nu-metal CDs and seven-string guitars to a band with a record like *Expo*?

"The bridge is Deftones," Edwards says. "They still sound really good to us now. From Deftones we found shoegaze."

"What was really inspiring was My Bloody Valentine," Stone adds. "How [Kevin Shields] processes the guitar so much and makes it sound like it's not a guitar."

Though *Expo* represents a step forward for the band's focus on vocals and lyrics, they rarely build a song from melody and chords. Ulrika Spacek songs begin with texture, leaving Edwards to find the song afterward.

"I think 'Picto' completely fucked Rhys up for a bit," Stone says. "We constructed the song like a collage effect, and I think I probably went too far with writing guitar melodies and stuff before Rhys had a chance to really sit down and form the vocals."

"That doesn't mean our songs can't be stripped back to be played with just chords," Edwards says. "Songwriting is still important, but it's just a bit more interesting when things are coming from different places. We're very rarely a jam band. We kind of love throwing things at a wall." **GW**

"Songwriting is more interesting when things are coming from different places"

ULRIKA SPACEK

COVER MODELS

GUITARIST GUS G

GUITAR 2009/2010 ESP ECLIPSE GUS G "ROCK ART"

GW COVER DATE AUGUST 2010

THIS INTERVIEW DECEMBER 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER ROSS HALFIN

BY ANDREW DALY

Q Where did you get this guitar?

It was made in late 2009 and released in 2010, right around the time this cover shoot took place. Before I played Jackson guitars, I was with ESP for about 12 years. I had signature models out in Japan and Europe, until they released them in America in 2007, I believe. All my models were the star-shaped guitars I've been known to play since forever. When I got the gig with Ozzy, he and Sharon were skeptical about my guitar shape. They felt it looked too weird. I think Ozzy was used to Les Pauls from Zakk Wylde and Randy Rhoads. He kept asking me if I could play a Les Paul for a few tracks. Of course, I understood — this was as big a change for him as it was for me, so I asked ESP to send me a couple of Eclipse guitars, which I played on my first few Ozzy shows.

Right around that time, Patric Ullaeus, my video-director buddy from Sweden, was doing an abstract-art project called Rock Art. We discussed the idea of making a signature model using a print of one of his paintings. We went through a bunch of designs and ended up with this one. It was a cool project, and it gave it a more personalized look.

Q Did you modify it? What rig did you use it with?

Not many modifications were done, except for the pickups. Around that time, I was switching from passive to active, and I had just started using Seymour Duncan Blackouts. Rig-wise, I used Blackstar Series One 200 heads and cabs. I always had a fairly simple pedalboard with an overdrive, a Boss DD-3 Delay and a Morley auto-return wah.

Q How did it make you play? Did it feel right for you?

As much as I loved Eclipse guitars, I always felt my playing was limited on them. Maybe that was because I was so used to playing my Star models that I couldn't get my right arm properly positioned on the Eclipse. I talked to Ozzy about it after a few gigs, and he eventually said, "You're the guitar player; play whatever feels comfortable."

FUTURE

Q Did you use this Eclipse on any notable recordings or tours?

I think I used it in the studio to track my rhythm guitars on my first solo album, *I Am the Fire* [2014]. And, of course, on the Ozzy world tours I did in 2010 and 2011. Although I went back to my star models, I still brought this EC guitar out for the Black Sabbath part of the set. It can be heard on the *iTunes Festival Live EP*, and there's video footage from MTV from the London Ozzfest show at the O2.

But here's a funny story. I had asked for a Custom Shop version of it from the Japanese factory, and I think they got the memo wrong, so instead of printing the artwork on the guitar, they hand-painted the whole guitar, even the back of the neck! [Laughs] It really is a piece of art, but they definitely went too far with it. Also, that guitar probably weighs 10 kilos. [Laughs]

Q What do you remember from the *Guitar World* shoot for this cover?

I brought [the Eclipse] in because I knew Ozzy was a bit uncomfortable with my Star guitars, and since the *Guitar World* shoot was the first world-exclusive presentation of me as Ozzy's new guitarist, I didn't wanna show up and have a moment where he goes, "What the fuck is this?" [Laughs] As for the shoot, that was one of the biggest, craziest rock 'n' roll experiences of my life. It happened in London with the legendary Ross Halfin. As I was sitting to get makeup done for the shoot, I could see from the mirror behind me that Ross was shooting someone else right before us. I couldn't tell who it was because he had his back turned. When he turned around, I went, "Oh my god! That's Jimmy Page!" I literally froze. A few moments later, they were done, and I got to meet him, and Jimmy was so nice and such a gentleman. He asked me if I was

"Ozzy and Jimmy Page are sitting there, so I end up taking a photo with the gods of rock"

the new guy. I said, "Yes," and he wished me the best of luck.

Next thing you know, Ozzy walks in, and you see these two legends just casually shooting the shit. Then Ross goes, "Come on, guys – let's take a pic." Ozzy and Jimmy sit there like the rockstars they are, and then Ozzy asks me to get in there, so I end up taking a photo with the gods of rock. [Laughs] I'll never forget this. I'm thinking what a big-hearted guy Ozzy was. He didn't have to do that, but he gave me this amazing moment and memory. I must have looked pretty

stupid all along, because Ross shouted at me, "Gus! Stop being dumb!" [Laughs]

Hey, Ross – if you're reading this – send me that photo, man!

Q Do you still have the Eclipse?

Yes, along with most of my old ESPs. I don't really play them anymore; I think my "Les Paul-type guitar" days ended around 10 years ago. I always felt [more] like myself with a star-shaped guitar or a Super Strat-type. [Gw](#)

Gus G's new album, Steel Burner, is out now.

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Squeeze's Chris Difford [left] and Glenn Tilbrook

INTERVIEW

Pulling Music (from the Past)

Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook explains why he and Chris Difford shelved their 1974 *Trixies* demo for 52 years — and pulled it out of mothballs for a guitar-heavy 2026 concept album

BY HENRY YATES

▶ FOR GLENN TILBROOK, rediscovering the dusty demo cassette labeled *Trixies* last year was an out-of-body experience. With a heavy clunk setting the tape in motion, and the first songs written by his teenage self crackling from the speakers, the 68-year-old Squeeze singer and guitarist felt himself beamed back to 1974, watching those long-distant sessions unfold. "*Trixies* doesn't even feel like me," Tilbrook says. "But I know it is."

By his own admission, Tilbrook couldn't have released that original *Trixies* demo;

aside from the audio quality, the guitar work by himself (then aged 16) and lifelong writing partner Chris Difford (19) was understandably scrappy. Still, unlike most of our own first compositional efforts — usually three buzzy power chords, round and round — these early songs already show the scope and sophistication that would set Squeeze among the leading lights of Britain's new wave scene in the late Seventies.

A loose concept album, flowing from mellow lounge-jazz to far-out Bowie-flavored space rock, *Trixies* is a fascinating glimpse of

the path Squeeze could've taken in a parallel universe. And with Tilbrook assembling the contemporary band — now seasoned musicians — to re-record it, he tells us he's fiercely proud of this collision between kid gunslinger and elder statesman.

The album is set at a fictional nightclub, isn't it?

Yeah. For the teenagers that imagined it, *Trixies* was a bit like the club from the *Cabaret* movie. A glamorous place full of ne'er-do-wells set in the distant future of the 1980s and populated by rock stars of the Eighties — which we would become, to some extent. A place where you could fall in love or get your teeth kicked in? Yeah, all of those things.

What do you remember about those first days of your partnership with Chris?

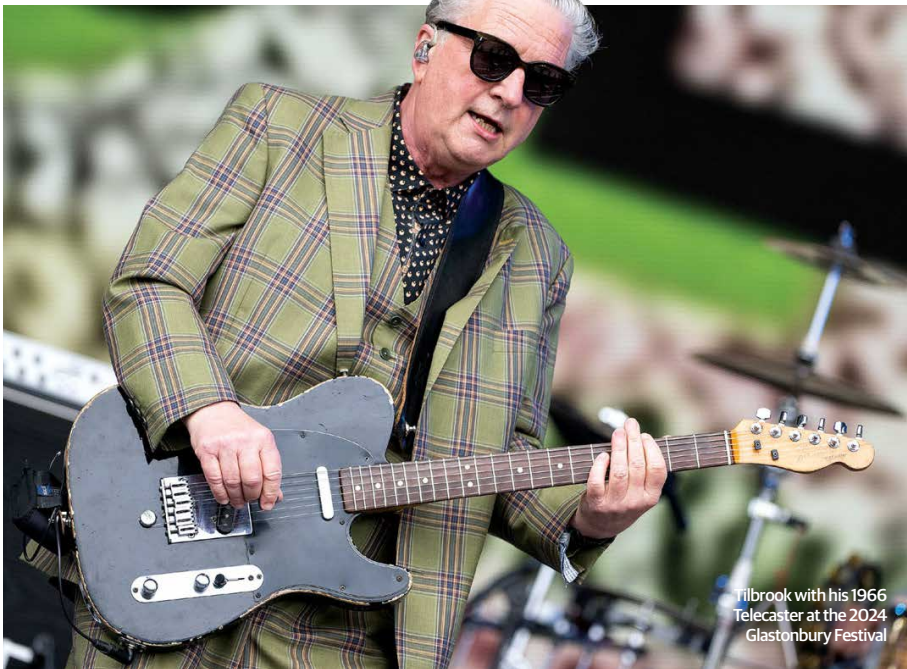
He was three years older, which is like 10 years when you're kids. He definitely had more experience and a different set of influences. You can hear it on *Trixies*. "It's Over" is a beautiful song that Chris wrote, very melodic. "The Dancer" is very Velvet Underground, and I'd never have come up with that. I was a lover of pop music and [piano player] Jools Holland had boogie-woogie, even then, so we pulled that into the mix. We were both keen to get on and do something. The first thing Chris gave me was a lyric called "Hotel Woman," which I immediately wrote a tune for. Then he gave me six more. The lyrics kept on coming, and I could match him tune-for-tune. He was shitting great lyrics, and I was hopefully shitting great tunes.

How did it feel to hear yourself back on the original demo?

It's a mixed bag. The songwriting was the thing we were best at. But my voice is fucking weird. I thought I was Marc Bolan, but I plainly was not. The songs were a good deal more sophisticated than we were capable of playing. If we'd recorded it [for real] back in '74, the producer would have said to us, "Shut the fuck up, you're going to do it this way. Or, if you can't do it, we'll get some other musicians who can, and you're just going to sing on it." And that would have been a horrible experience. It's such a personal thing to have your playing questioned. But the demos prove we couldn't play those songs properly. It's a bunch of kids playing a lot of chords, not always successfully.

What are your own favorite guitar moments on *Trixies*?

"The Place We Call Mars" is great because it's such a tip of the hat to Mick Ronson. And I was proud of the solo because I inverted the WWII song "We'll Meet Again," which I thought was a poignant way to express the



Tilbrook with his 1966 Telecaster at the 2024 Glastonbury Festival

“I probably played more guitar on *Trixies* than any other Squeeze record”

because I didn't have one when we wrote *Trixies*. Later on, I had one of the brown AC30s. But back then, my family used to have a metal electric fire, and I found that if you put the neck of the guitar against it, that would, by osmosis, vibrate and turn into a sound you could listen to. It sounds like I was born in the First World War! [*Laughs*]

How does that compare to your rig on the new recording?

What I've got recently is a Gibson 345, and it's the total opposite of the sound I normally have. It's very sustaining, sort of Les Paul-y, but different. And I used that a couple of times on *Trixies*, like on “The Place We Call Mars” and the rhythm guitar on “Why Don't You.” It just has such a great, meaty sound. I'm not known for a meaty sound, but boy, did I get into that.

I also used my Telecaster a lot; it's a 1966 with a Parsons/White B-Bender. I've got a Gibson ES-125, which I use for the solo on “Good Riddance.” The 125 is a lovely guitar with just one jazzy tone, and that's all it can do. I also used my '79 Strat I got from Manny's Music in New York City on “It's Over,” and for the solo on “Why Don't You.” It's a maple neck, slightly thicker body, one of the most unloved versions of the Strat. I'm really attacking it on “Why Don't You,” and it was such a lovely contrast to the 345 on the chords. ▶

desolation of that song. And “Good Riddance” – it's funny, but to me, that solo is the sound of listening to jazz on a shortwave radio under the bedclothes growing up.

How would you describe yourself and Chris as guitarists at that point?

Chris was meat and potatoes. He's a great rhythm player, and I could play around with embellishments on the top. I was self-taught, but I didn't really solo a lot until I heard Jimi Hendrix. So, y'know, I was good, but I wasn't great. The thing I was best at was songwriting. I knew the chords, but not what they were called.

Who were your other guitar influences in that period?

Hendrix's playing – which was so fluent and light and jazz-influenced – introduced me to Wes Montgomery. As a teenager, my dad took me to see Joe Pass and Barney Kessel at Ronnie Scott's. And although I said [*moaning*], ‘I don't want to listen to jazz,’ I got a lot from it. In fact, when I was 15, I got one of Joe Pass's records and literally spun the record round very slowly to learn one of his solos. It took me a long while, because it's absolutely brilliant – and I was not – but I did get it. It taught me such a lot about where to put your fingers.

How did you approach the guitar parts on this re-recorded version of *Trixies*?

We sat down with Owen [*Biddle, bassist/producer*], played through the songs and worked out how we were going to approach them. I hadn't played them since I wrote them. There were a few moments where we went, “Fuck, this is really good. We've got something we can work with and we can be the adults in the room now.” So it was like mentoring ourselves. There were some little adjustments in recording the songs.

With “You Get the Feeling,” that was done originally as a blues thing, so it didn't have that skip. But then we started imagining: how would Bill Withers have done it?

What do you remember about recording the fingerstyle on “You Get the Feeling”?

[*Laughs*] Asking Melvin Duffy to do it! Melvin is our pedal steel player, and he does all sorts of other guitary things. I can't fingerpick. I'm useless at that. If I get lucky, I can do it, but I'm not always lucky. So Melvin did that part, and he did it brilliantly.

What gear did you play on the original *Trixies* demo from the Seventies?

I would have been using a Guyatone that my dad bought me from a second-hand store in Lewisham – and any amp I could borrow



Squeeze in the late Seventies; [*from left*] Gilson Lavis, Chris Difford, Glenn Tilbrook, Jools Holland and Harri Kakoulli

Did you have physical amps in the studio?

[Pans webcam to show us the Dickinson MkII Combo] That's the amp I used. It's made by Rob Dickinson. And it really is a truly wonderful amp. I don't know if you've ever plugged your electric guitar into a hi-fi. This Dickinson, it can do that sort of crystal-clear sound, right through to a really raucous AC30-type sound, and all points in-between. I also used a Fender Twin and Hot Rod.

How about the key pedals on *Trixies*?

Well, again, for the solo on "The Place We Call Mars," I wanted to get that Mick Ronson sound of having a wah pedal three-quarters open. So it's quite a trebly, distorted sound through which I play my Ibanez fuzz pedal into my Dickinson, on the 345. When you hit the sweet spot on the wah, it has such a weird overtone, and that's what I love.

You've always said a song has to demand a solo for you to play one.

Definitely. If I can do something that elevates the song or sounds like it's a natural thing, that's when I do it. But I don't do too many solos. In fact, I probably played more guitar on *Trixies* than any other Squeeze record. I can compose solos better than I can improvise them. Like, there's a song on *Cool for Cats*

[1979] called "It's So Dirty," and it has what I would call a blistering solo. And that is me doing three takes and comping it, because I was already learning how to use the studio to make the best of myself.

Why didn't Squeeze ultimately pursue the musical direction of *Trixies*?

I think that's down to the time *Trixies* was written. Rock music had been upended by punk and new wave, which we became a part of. We were advised by our manager to get into that. But I have to say that, as an 18-year-old, although we'd done all these

songs with loads of chords and words, punk was very attractive and also was an easier sell for a band like us.

So we sort of dumbed down and then made a debut album [1978's *self-titled*] that was nobody's baby, really. But with our second album, *Cool for Cats*, we already sounded like Squeeze. We had the energy of punk, but we also had songwriting chops to make it a bit odder than other people. After that, we carried on writing at such a velocity that there never seemed to be a good reason to go back.

Why did now seem like a good time to release this material?

The thing that really pushed me to do it was thinking, y'know, who else has this story? Who else can say: here's a set of songs that are 52 years old, and they're fucking good?

Does it feel good to have these songs out there in the world?

Yeah. I feel very proud of *Trixies* because of who we were then and who we are now. You know, the old blokes that Chris and I are now, are very happy to show our teenage selves that they weren't doing so badly. We've already started rehearsing to take it out on the road... [CW](#)



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THE GEAR HUNTER

3rd Power Amps

How Vain guitarist Dylana Nova Scott leaned on an impressive production background to design boutique amps for some of the biggest names in the biz

BY AMIT SHARMA



IF JOE SATRIANI asks you to build an amp to make him sound like Eddie Van Halen – specifically the Eddie we hear and see in Van Halen's *Live Without a Net* (1986) – it's a request you'd better take seriously.

This is exactly what happened to Dylana Nova Scott, founder/owner of Minnesota-based 3rd Power, who was entrusted with handling Satch's tones on this year's Sammy Hagar-fronted Best of All Worlds tour. Together they created the DRGN 100 Custom Shop head, packed with a whole range of new features to bring the legendary tones of Van Halen's 1968 Marshall Super Lead (serial number 12301, to be precise) into the modern age.

The results were so impressive, Satriani continued using the amp in the Satch/Vai band, which then led to Steve Vai switching over to 3rd Power cabinets. For Scott, who rose to fame in the late Eighties as the lead guitarist in San Francisco hard rockers Vain, it's been a true labor of love – helping one of the world's most respected living guitarists pay tribute to one of the world's most sorely missed. Then there are other 3rd Power designs like the Dumble-inspired Aurora 35 and the Fender-golden-era-rivaling Lyra, housing the sounds of a 1962 brown panel and a 1965 black panel in one box.



[top] Joe Satriani's 3rd Power DRGN 100 Custom Shop amp; [above] Dylana Nova Scott, 3rd Power's founder/owner

Here's the story of how a glam-metal guitarist ended up becoming a specialist builder for the likes of Satriani, Lenny Kravitz, Joe Walsh and many more.

What made you want to start an amp company?

I'm a player myself. That's what drives the amp company. You can design a tone in isolation to sound good, but there can be a moment when that isolation blows up. That's where 3rd Power comes in. We live in between the artist and the audience, sitting in a very sacred place. It's the moment the lights come on and the audience is screaming. I also know what it's like when the lights come on and everyone is silent because you have to prove yourself. My job is emotional translation. Whatever comes out of that quarter-inch jack needs to hit the audience.

Where did you learn how to build amps?

I'm self-taught, but I guess I've always been a tone-chaser tinkering with gear. I took electronics and computer programming in high school. As a recording artist, I started paying attention to the engineers working around me. In between tours, I was working at a music store where DigiDesign specialists would train us. I also spent time with legendary sound guy Chip Davis, watching how he would analyze rooms. He would clap and listen to the reflections, asking me if I could hear the flange coming out of the corner. Then I got into wireless systems, which led to me working at Sennheiser and eventually Line 6. But I started to become more interested in tube amps at a time when everyone else was converting to digital. I was the person listening to records while reading *The History of Marshall: The First Fifty Years*.

It clearly paid off. Joe Satriani is a big fan.

Joe has said a lot of wonderful things. Yes, I'm a nice person, but he's not using my stuff because I'm nice. On our first call, he said he'd been talking to Edward's techs, Zeke Clark and Tom Weber, describing the sound he was looking for. The *5150* tour was actually Ed's last tour with the famous Marshall. He had all the candy, but it hadn't moved into the more modern Van Halen tone. On that tour, they played the old catalog next to the new catalog, and it all translated because the energy was right. After that, the rig changed and maybe the old songs didn't sound right – this is according to Sammy – so Joe had to be very specific. Ed's own techs said the only person that could help was this girl outta Nashville called Dylana Scott. Joe called me and said, "Apparently I should be talking to you."

What were the main considerations when designing the DRGN 100?

I said, "Let me build the perfect racecar for you to drive." Did he want more horsepower at this turn or better traction over here or extra acceleration back there? I'm a big fan of his work, so I also explained that I didn't want to watch him play a covers set. He asked what I meant and I answered, "Joe, none of us need to see you play note for note; we need you to interpret the essence of the moment while honoring the king." Obviously I had to make sure he had all the tones he needed — the intro to "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" is like taking a flint and stone to make a spark. It's a two-hour set with moments that also sound creamier. This amp was designed to lift Joe up the whole way through, so that even someone in the last seat of the arena would feel the buzz and stand up.

Some of your other designs, like the Aurora 35 and the Lyra, are completely different.

The Lyra has two classic Fender circuits from the Sixties, alongside tube-driven spring reverb and attenuation. It's a beautifully authentic amp that sounds great.

The Aurora 35 starts out in the hi-fi Fender spectrum, like a Dumble, and then opens up. The signal path is complicated because of the stacking and gain staging, but you don't need a Ph.D. to get it right; it's super simple. But you still get the mid-switch, just in case you need to voice it differently.

Your amps also have modern functions like the HF Damp and HybridMaster.

The High Frequency Damp is geared toward working professionals. Imagine being a hired gun and the singer says you're too bright. If you walk back to your amp and turn the treble down, you've just made sure you have a bad night. Leave it where it is and you might not get that gig again. The HF Damp will keep all of your articulation but shave a little bit of treble from the power amp. Your gain structure hangs on your tone stacking, and with this all of your sonic decisions remain intact. It's a gig-saver. The HybridMaster is a patented micro



"My job is emotional translation. Whatever comes out of that quarter-inch jack needs to hit the audience"

volume control that I refined over years. I looked at all the soaks out there. Some were good for a 15-percent reduction, others maybe 10 percent, and some weren't good at all. I decided to create a hybrid while only showing the customer one knob. Inside the amp, that knob is controlling a myriad of things. When you turn amps down, you lose the weight of the moment. Everything gets smaller. I found a way to reduce the volume without sacrificing tone. When you attenuate the signal, I increase the volume strategically in different circuits so what remains feels more alive.

You don't just design amps. You also have your own MagFRAG pickup line.

It's my spin on what a pickup could be in this day and age. I jumped on forums and read the arguments, but I didn't think like a regular winder, obsessing over wires, magnets, insulators and turns. Instead, I learned about the variables and tried to imagine the sound of Alnico II on the treble strings, the sound of Alnico IV on the middle strings, which is where chords and chimes open up, and then Alnico V for the bass strings. I wanted one magnet to address each pair of strings. Tracii Guns is a big fan; they're now on his main guitars. The pickups sound beautiful, making your instrument come to life. It's like throwing glitter on what you hear. **GW**



MIKE MASTEL

[clockwise from left] The company's Aurora 35 and Lyra amps — and a set of MagFRAG pickups. "It's my spin on what a pickup could be in this day and age," Scott says



PERSONALITIES

Amir Derakh

Who knew the guy that replaced Craig Goldy in Rough Cutt (and was edged out by Zakk for the Ozzy gig) was an undercover guitar-synth master?

BY JOE BOSSO



Amir Derakh in action with Julien-K on the 2007 Projekt Revolution Tour

"Funnily enough, I get fans from my entire span of career," Derakh says. "I get Rough Cutt fans that come out to my shows, and then there are people who are more into the newer stuff. It's very gratifying to know that people have embraced my work and have followed me through all of these projects. Obviously, I realize that what I'm doing now might not be for everybody, because some of the stuff is completely electronic – there's no guitar at all. But there is some overlap, and it's cool."

Let's go back to when you started on guitar. Who got you interested in playing?

The truth is, I didn't want to play guitar initially. I wanted to play synthesizers. They had become a thing when I was in my mid-teens. My older cousin had a job, so he bought a Moog and started learning how to play keyboards. He kind of stole the idea from me, and I thought, "What the heck am I gonna do?"

I liked the guitar, and I loved bands like Thin Lizzy and Judas Priest – all the heavy metal bands of the time – so I thought I'd pick up the guitar. I got an Ibanez Iceman and started playing.

Did you take to the guitar pretty easily?

At first, it was total failure. A friend tried to teach me how to play, but he quit on me because he said I didn't have what it took. But then I started taking binoculars to concerts, and I'd focus on what the guitarists' hands were doing. That's how I taught myself. I could figure out the chords pretty easily, and then I focused on learning how to play leads. I started following players like Jeff Beck and Allan Holdsworth. Oh, and Alex Lifeson was a big influence.

You quickly became part of the San Diego music scene. It became kind of a thing. Bands and guitarists would get known around town, and then they'd split for L.A.

▶ THE NAME AMIR Derakh is bound to elicit one of two reactions from guitar fans. Some people will light up with immediate recognition, while others will stare blankly and go, "Who?" As it turns out, the guitarist is quite aware of his niche status in the music world, and he's OK with it.

"I realized a long time ago that I was a bit different, and I quite like it, to be honest," he says. "I don't think I'm that obscure or unknown, but I don't go out of my way to conform. I couldn't see being a blues player and that's all I ever did – no offense to blues players." He laughs. "I just like doing different things. I get bored easily."

Derakh's fan base is splintered across a wide spectrum of musical styles. There are those who have followed the guitarist since his mid-Eighties shred days, when the San Diego native replaced Craig Goldy (who replaced Jake E. Lee) in the glam metal band Rough Cutt. Other fans discovered Derakh in the late Nineties, when his guitar synth skills powered the hit industrial rock band Orgy. And still others started took to him via his more recent electronic project Julien-K with Orgy vocalist Ryan Shuck or the alternative rock band Dead by Sunrise, which featured Shuck and the late Linkin Park singer Chester Bennington.

"A LOT OF PEOPLE USED THE GUITAR SYNTH WRONG."

Yeah. I was one of the last people who came out of that whole thing. Jake E. Lee had already left San Diego. I kind of knew Warren DeMartini, but he was pretty much heading for L.A. at the time. They were a little older than me. San Diego became this hotbed for guitarists – I don't know why. Craig Goldy was another one.

How soon after you moved to L.A. did you join Rough Cutt?

[Laughs] They came to San Diego and found me. A couple members had already left – Craig Goldy split to join Giuffria, and Jake left for Ozzy. The band decided to look around San Diego to see who else was around. They met with a bunch of great players, but nobody wanted to leave. They had families or whatever. Finally, [bassist] Matt Thorh and [drummer] Dave Alford went to this music store, Guitar Trader, and said they were going back to L.A. because they were shit out of luck. Everybody in the store said, "You gotta check out Amir."

Matt and Dave came by my house. I plugged into a little Super Champ, played one of their songs, and they went wild. They were like, "Can you get your gear and come to L.A. tonight?" It all happened really fast.

This was right in the middle of the Spandex-and-Aqua Net hair metal thing. You didn't quite go for that all the way.

Not really. I think I've always wanted to be an individualist. I changed my look and my hair style a lot. There was just something driving me to be a little different. Musically, too, I didn't fit in with other guys on the scene. A lot of the guitarists from the Eighties had this shrill, screechy tone, but I always liked darker sounds. I like darker music, darker scales. My lead solos had a warmer, fuller sound. I think it was more melodic.

Do you think that was because of your interest in synths and their warm, atmospheric sounds?

Maybe. It's funny, because I was actually using a guitar synth in Rough Cutt, but I had to keep it undercover because it wasn't considered cool. My band was afraid to say anything about it. But early guitar synths were featured on Rough Cutt records.

What was your first guitar synth?

It was a Roland GR-700. Grover Jackson gave it to me. I was already working with Jackson and Charvel. Grover had gone to Japan and came back with the Roland. He knew I was



Rough Cutt in Chicago in January 1996; [from left] Amir Derakh, Matt Thorh, Paul Shortino, David Alford and Chris Hager

into synths, and he thought, "There's only one person who might know what to do with this."

And did you?

Yeah. It was cool. I think a lot of people were using it wrong. They treated it like a keyboard, but it didn't deliver good keyboard sounds. It tracked poorly and sounded pretty cheesy. I thought, "It's a guitar, so I'll treat it like a guitar." I plugged it into a guitar amp. It gave me a lot of cool added sounds. We downplayed it on Rough Cutt records, but I brought it back with Orgy. I hadn't played it in years, and I thought, "I'm going to really make my mark with this."

Rough Cutt was bouncing around for a while trying to get a deal. Once you joined, Warner Bros. signed the group.

That happened within a few months. We had problems, though: The A&R guy who signed us said that he was going to get Ted Templeman to produce us. We waited and waited for a long time, but Ted was too busy to get to us. Then the A&R guy left and completely abandoned us.

After Jake E. Lee left Ozzy, you auditioned to replace him.

I did. I think [bassist] Phil Soussan and [drummer] Randy Castillo championed me, so I was fast-tracked and avoided a lot of the B.S. They had already gone through a lot of guitar

players, but there were only a few they liked. One of them was this kid, Zakk Wylde.

Oh yeah, I've heard of him. What songs did you play at your audition?

We did a few of the hits, pretty much what everybody knows – "Crazy Train," "Bark at the Moon," "Shot in the Dark," "Over the Mountain." I'm not a finger-tapper, so I thought, "I'll do that stuff, but I'll do it with one hand." Ozzy was really impressed with my playing. He did all the Ozzy stuff you'd think he would do – he got down on his knees and kind of performed. I was like, "Oh, my God. This is so weird." But it was also a dream come true. I was a huge Randy Rhoads fan. I got my ear pierced when Randy died. I got a guitar like him. So to be playing with Ozzy, it was unreal.

On the other hand, there was something telling me that it wasn't right for me. I remember they asked me to do a guitar solo on the spot – you know, an unaccompanied solo. I was like, "Yeah, I'm not really prepared for that." I wanted to put something together and not rip off a bunch of stuff.

How were you told that you didn't get the gig?

I can't remember what they said; it was Ozzy and Sharon. It was kind of like, "Ozzy really likes you..." I pretty much knew that Zakk had the gig. I saw him at the Rainbow, and

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

I THOUGHT, 'IT'S A GUITAR, SO I'LL TREAT IT LIKE A GUITAR'"

I said, "You're going to get it." He was like, "No, no, no..." There were probably a couple of reasons why I didn't get it. One, I was connected to Wendy Dio [*who managed Rough Cutt*], so they didn't want to deal with that whole thing. Two, I wasn't completely unknown. They preferred people who were new.

You and singer Ryan Shuck formed Orgy, and you achieved a fair amount of success. Your biggest hit was a dark electronic cover of New Order's "Blue Monday." Did you ever hear from the New Order guys?

Not directly, but I heard from a friend who had a friend that was playing with New Order, and as it was told to me, somebody in the band has a daughter, and she told Peter Hook in rehearsal one day, "I like Orgy's version of 'Blue Monday' better than yours." I'm told they all laughed.

You and Ryan then formed Julien-K, and the two of you hooked up with Chester Bennington for Dead by Sunrise. What was it like working with Chester?

We were great friends and had been since the recording of the first Linkin Park album. Getting to create a project together was

a dream for all of us. He had a one-of-a-kind voice and was very dedicated to his craft – always willing and able to go the extra mile. I feel lucky to have had him in my life. I miss him terribly.

Had he not passed, do you think the band would have continued?

Yes. He had talked with us about doing more DBS in the future.

Do you feel as if your post-Rough Cutt work has been a truer representation of your sonic style?

I do. Honestly, I wasn't planning to be in Orgy – I was having a lot of success as a producer, engineer and programmer. I was talked into it, though, and I said, "Well, I'm going to play guitar synths." Since then, it's just a continuation of that vision. In Julien-K, I get to play keyboards, but I do play guitar. I've been playing a baritone guitar for the past 20 years. I get a darker sound with it.

I get to engage in a lot of different things with Julien-K. The middle of our set is completely electronic, and I play sounds that I created for the record on an iPad. I use a bullhorn that has a laser and a light on it, and I have my whole getup – it's this different character

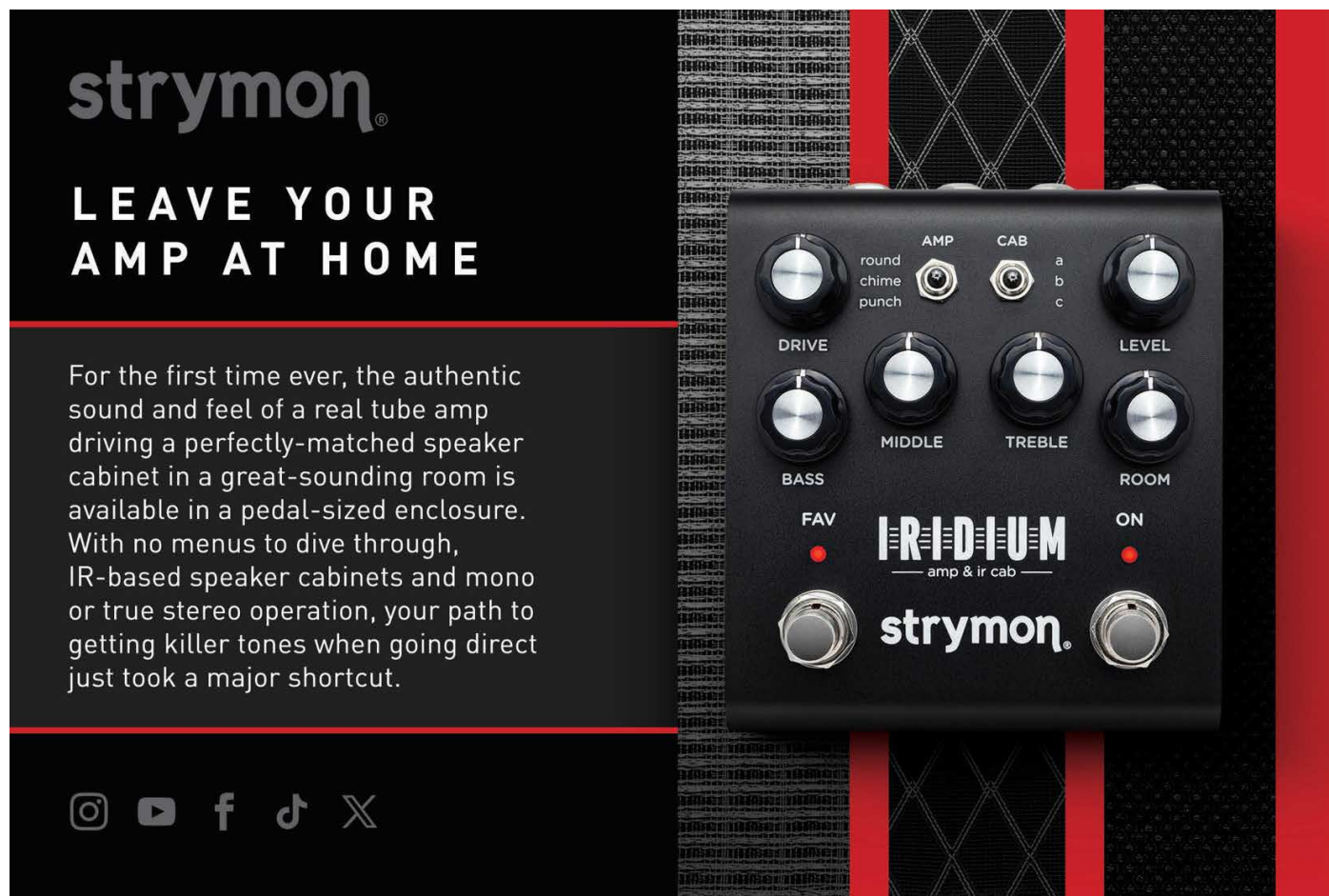
that comes out. All of that owes to my years of DJing in the club and techno scene. I got to do all of that incognito. Doing that stuff really allowed me to up my electronic abilities.

Rough Cutt have gotten back together sporadically over the past few years. The band's latest record, 2021's 3, was pretty solid. Was that a one-time deal?

Pretty much. We've had a very interesting relationship over the years. It was cool to go back and feel like the chemistry was still there. Everything sounded like it did before, even when we wrote some songs. But at this point, yeah, we're kind of done. We're grown-ups, and we all do a lot of different things. I was just like, "I can't do this full time."

Is there a specific non-synth guitar you rely on these days?

Absolutely. It's the Yamaha signature guitar that I designed when I was in Orgy. It's a baritone, but it's not a super-long scale baritone, so it's easy to play. Everything about this guitar is custom, including the pickup that I wound with Larry DiMarzio. It's been my workhorse for so many years. It's an amazing guitar, but there's not many of them. I think there are 75 models in the world. [GW](#)



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Interview **Nili Brosh**



Wielding her signature custom Ibanez RG, and with a new solo album on the launchpad, Dethklok and Danny Elfman guitarist Nili Brosh is set to go interstellar

BY ANDREW DALY

CHRISTINARUSSO

NILIBROSH — A guitarist who's perhaps best known for her work with Dethklok, Danny Elfman and Cirque du Soleil — is beyond excited about her new solo record, *Eventide*. And it's not too tough to figure out why.

"This album reflects more of who I am than any record that I've made before," she tells *Guitar World*. "A lot of these ideas have been in my head for a long time," she says. "Actually, I should say they've been in my iPhone Voice Memos for a long time. It was just a matter of fleshing them out."

Beside the names we conveniently dropped in this story's first sentence, Brosh's brand of hyper-melodic-meets-tasteful-shred has landed her gigs with Jennifer Batten, Tony MacAlpine, and the Iron Maidens, and opened doors to soundtrack work for Marvel's 2024 animated series, *X-Men '97*. But it's her solo work that's most fulfilling, so it goes without saying that Brosh is stoked about taking *Eventide* and her new signature Ibanez RG on the road in 2026. She's got more work with Elfman on tap, too. Beyond that, the sky's the limit.

"One of the things I love is not knowing what's going to happen next or what will be the next part of my musical voice," she says. "Your guess is as good as mine. We'll see."

Bring us up to date on where you're at, playing-wise. It's been a few years since your last solo album.

I try to go where what I hear in my head takes me. That affects the playing, the ideas that come out and what needs to be done to convey them; that's where I end up. But certainly, it's been a few years, and I'm overdue for a new album. This is the first time since the pandemic that I've had a moment to sit down and flesh it out. I've been blessed with a lot of live shows since touring came back. Spinning plates and juggling all that stuff has definitely kept me busy.

"I bridge the gap between the melodic and the shred stuff by focusing on a fairly traditional song form"

What gear are we hearing?

I used my custom Ibanez RG and Ibanez 550 quite a bit, plus the AS93 for some of the jazzier things and a nylon-string Cordoba GK Studio Negra. Amp-wise, it's mainly the Mesa Boogie Triple Crown and a bit of the Peavey Joe Satriani Signature JSX. The Mesa has been my main amp for years, and before that it was the JSX. And I like to have an Xotic California EP Booster in the front, just to kind of thicken the tone. But I tend to record old-school by mic'ing the amps and getting a raw, basic tone, then shaping it after that.

Melody is present throughout your music and playing — along with plenty of shred.

What's the key to that marriage?

The thing that's always helped bridge the gap between the melodic and the shred stuff is to focus on a fairly traditional song form, regardless of how complicated the music is. I think in verse-chorus terms — bridge and that kind of stuff. That helps me zero in on the exact ideas, not overplay and focus on the hooks being hooks and the song feeling like a song. Then, whatever the solo section ends up being, that's time to play more notes, if that feels like the right approach. I've always been a big believer in not shredding for the sake of shredding. If you do shred, I believe in having something to say. Without a tune there, it's kind of pointless. That's helped me maintain structure.

You worked on the *X-Men '97* theme. What was that like?

I was on the road at the time, so I did the session remotely.

I just used my Headrush MX5 effects processor. I got them a DI as well, so between those two sources, they were able to mix the thing nicely. My approach was pretty straightforward. They sent me a mockup of how they had the melody in the new version, and they asked me to do one version that sticks to that, played verbatim and articulated. Then they asked me to do one with a little more freedom. For one of them, I used a lot of bends, which was part of my own interpretation. To my surprise, that was the part that was kept. I thought

Nili Brosh's new signature Ibanez RG was showcased at the 2026 NAMM Show

Interview **Nili Brosh**

they'd keep the thing that was played straightforward.

What's the latest on your work with Danny Elfman?

He has a new album and quite a bit of live stuff coming up. It's a testament to Danny being very loyal to his musicians. He's always seen this as a band from day one and treated us like family. I work very hard to be as reliable as I can to whoever the band leader is. I make sure I'm prepared and that they can trust that the foundation will be there, so they can feel comfortable soaring on top of it and not have to worry about anything. I'd like to think that's something that keeps me around.

How long was your new signature Ibanez RG in development, and what was the process like?

It's been in development for quite a while; close to five years. We started the conversation during the pandemic, and it was very clear that – because of the way production chains were going – it was going to take several years to actually get it out there. In a way, that was good because it gave us plenty of time to figure out what we wanted to do.

I created the Custom RG as a prototype for myself to see if that's what I wanted from a guitar. There were a few things about it – like the burst color – that I wanted to change. We went from prototype to prototype until I felt like we nailed it. Also, making it affordable was definitely important to me. So, keeping it in the premium line, and understanding what that factory is able to do, and where our limitations were – and the middle ground between all those things – took a little while.

Looking at your older guitars, what do you want to improve upon, and where did you pull inspiration from?

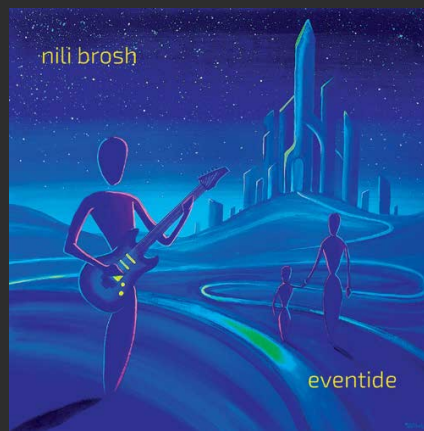
My favorite Ibanez was always the 550. That's not to say I felt I needed to improve on it, but I wanted to make one RG that had all my favorite variables. The humbucker-single-single configuration was really important to me. I basically wanted to make it a Fat Strat RG and add to the versatility. So I did keep a lot of the variables of a standard RG – that's pretty obvious there. But I wanted to put my favorite aspects into it, like the Edge bridge, for example.

Is the body and neck construction pretty traditional?

A lot of those aspects were taken from a standard RG; it has a basswood body and a Super Wizard maple neck. Those are two things I've always felt very strongly about, especially the type of neck that has contributed to the playability of the music that I play.



Brosh rehearses with Danny Elfman in 2023. "He's always seen this as a band and treated us like family," she says



How about the hardware and pickups?

Same with those. But the original Edge bridge was important to me. That's something Ibanez does very well. It's a really stable floating bridge. It's been reliable for a very long time. With the pickups, we talked about the humbucker-single-single configuration, and even though they're EMGs, they're passive, which is something that not

"If you do shred, I believe in having something to say"

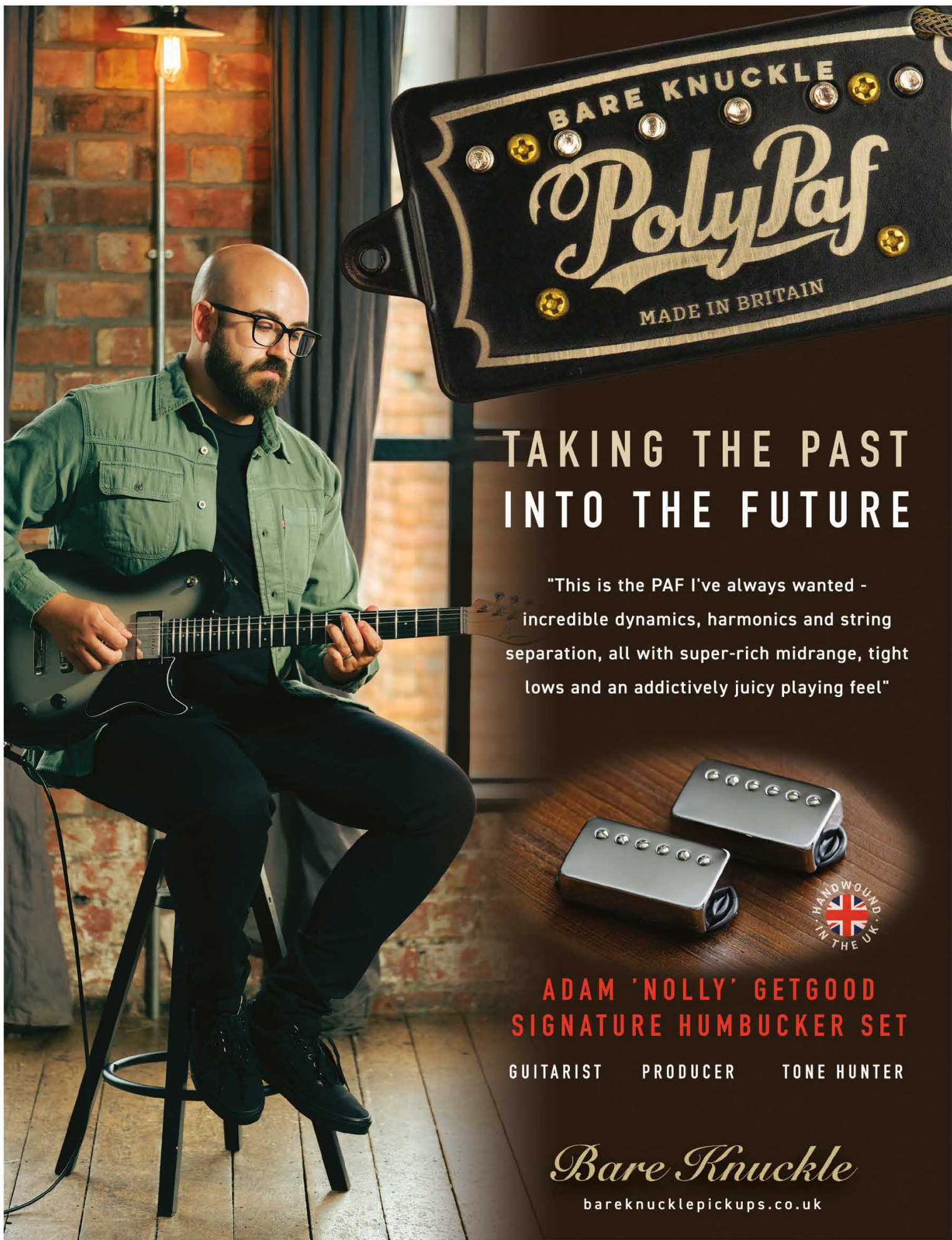
everybody is aware that EMG even does. It's something I've been using for several years, and it's a nice combination of variables.

Your new RG and Eventide's cover art definitely share a similar aesthetic. Was that intentional?

Absolutely. It all reflects back to how I see the music in my mind. I don't know if I have actual synesthesia, but I have some sort of connection between sounds and colors. A lot of the music on this record went in that direction in my mind. So I wanted to reflect it in the visuals and give people a sense of what I see in my head when I hear this.

How do Eventide and your new RG reflect who you are as a player now, and where do you see yourself going in the future?

I really feel like it was very much primarily my voice on this record, and me conveying what I hear. It's a good reflection of me and how I hear melodies and vocabulary. But I can't tell you about the future. I definitely like to explore new sonic directions every time. Who's to say? Maybe I'll latch onto that. I'm enjoying that direction, but a lot of people say the inspiration comes back around full circle. I hear different kinds of music all the time, so you never really know where that's going to take you or how that's going to reflect back. **GW**



TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

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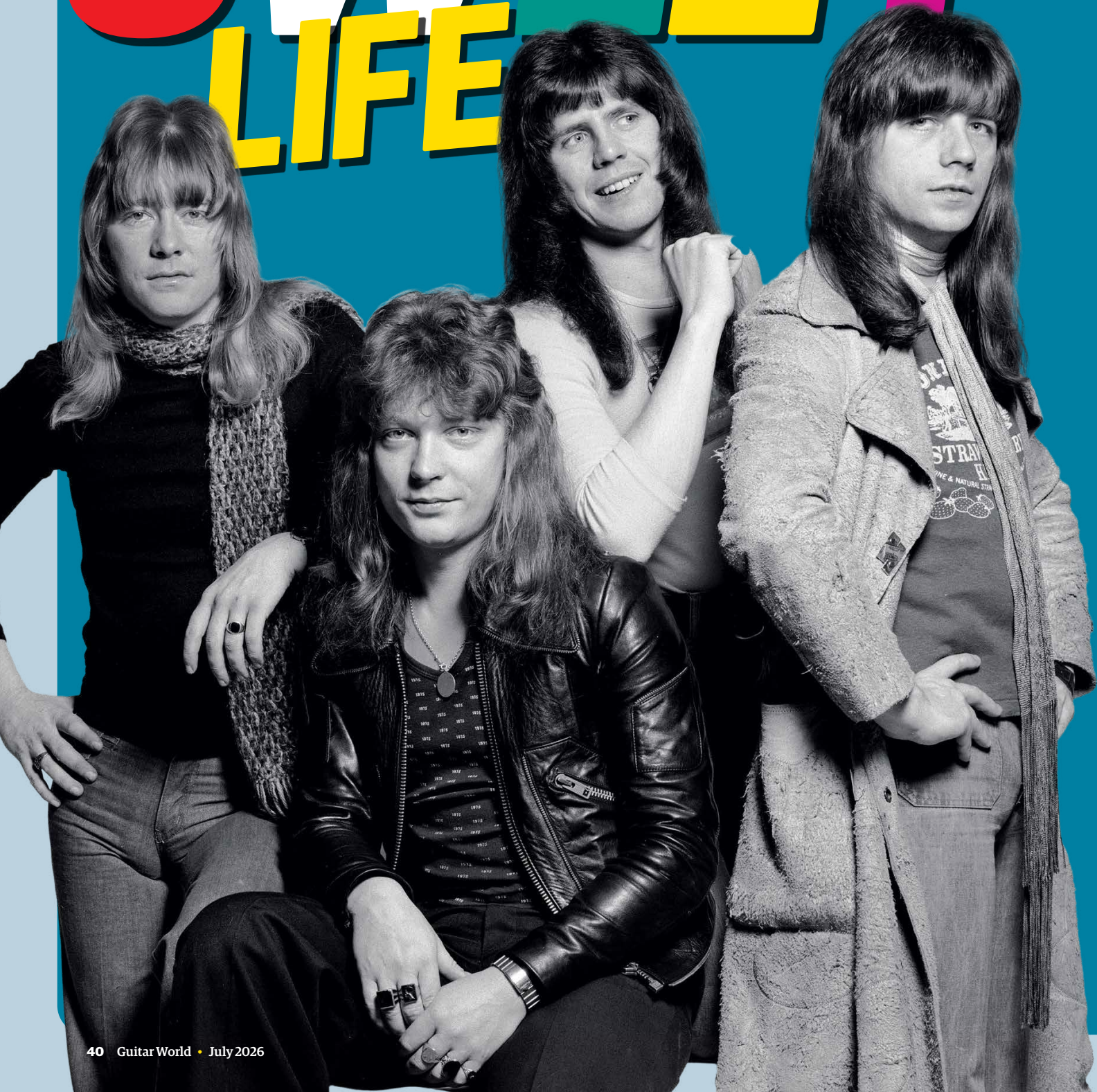
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THE SWEET LIFE



The Sweet, one of the best-loved bands of the glam era, splashed color, fun and rock-solid riffs across the '70s pop world. Guitarist Andy Scott, sole surviving member of the U.K. icons' classic lineup, looks back at good times and bad

BY JON WIEDERHORN

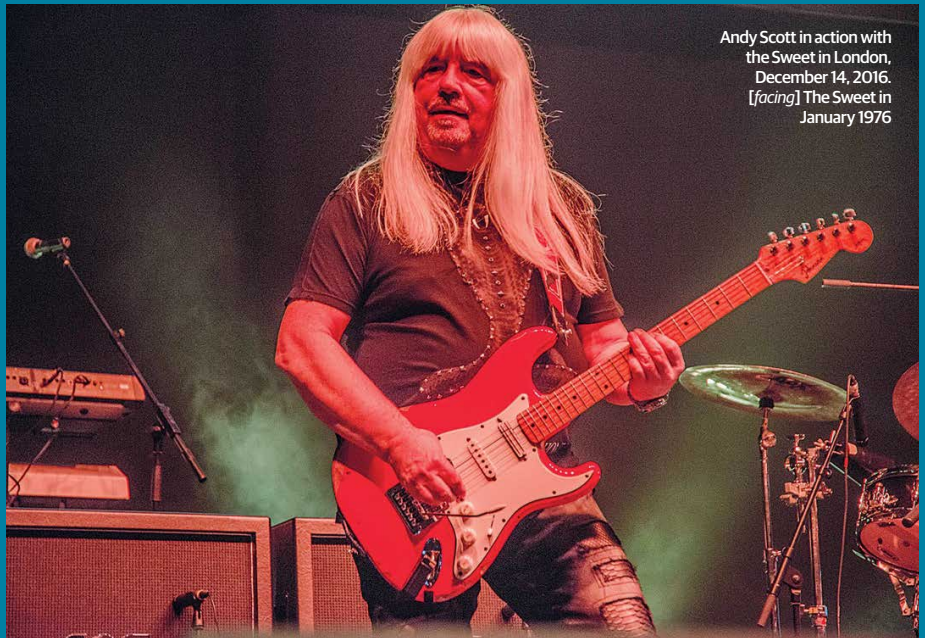
IN THE UNITED States, the Sweet are commonly thought of as that Seventies band that released the singles "The Ballroom Blitz" and "Fox on the Run," and springboarded a movement that promoted satin jumpsuits, hot pants, silk blouses and high-heeled platform boots. Those more familiar with the history of glam know there's far more to the Sweet than spiky guitar riffs, bubblegum vocals and a flashy wardrobe.

The Sweet – vocalist Brian Connolly, guitarist Andy Scott, bassist Steve Priest and Drummer Mick Tucker – were skilled musicians and energetic performers who landed 15 Top 40 hits in the U.K. and five in the U.S. between 1971 and 1985. While they've widely been categorized as a part of a trendy scene that included David Bowie, T. Rex, Slade, Roxy Music, Mott the Hoople and Gary Glitter, the Sweet leapfrogged genres and spanned decades, indelibly marking the look and licks of Kiss, Quiet Riot, Def Leppard, Mötley Crüe and the Darkness. The Sweet also influenced non-metal acts such as Joan Jett, Cheap Trick, Europe and the Ramones, all of whom have sung the band's praises and borrowed a tone, riff or piercing lick.

"I'm proud that there are people who thought enough of the Sweet to try and emulate us on some level," says 76-year-old guitarist Andy Scott from his converted barn home in All Cannings in Wiltshire, England. "For any musician to be influenced by us doesn't upset me in the least. It's actually quite a compliment."

Scott, the lone survivor of the band's powerhouse lineup, regularly performs as the Sweet with backup musicians and oversees the release of live albums from all eras of the band's career. The band's last studio album, *Full Circle*, came out in 2024, but it's the Sweet's back catalog that continues to draw crowds.

During their prime, the Sweet were one of the most energetic and misunderstood glam bands. When they formed in 1968 as Sweetshop, they were widely considered a manufactured outfit in the vein of the Monkees and didn't play on their first nine singles; they just sang. They were only allowed to play on the B-sides they wrote.



Andy Scott in action with the Sweet in London, December 14, 2016. [facing] The Sweet in January 1976

With time, they gained the confidence of producer Phil Wainman, who agreed to let them play instruments on their 10th single, "Wig-Wam Bam." The Sweet met the challenge and injected the track with a previously missing level of attitude and edge.

"The guitar sound on 'Wig-Wam Bam' could have come from any of the heavier rock bands that were around then," Scott says. "That's the point where we changed as a band in terms of heaviness. From then on, we played all the songs."

Other tracks – like "The Ballroom Blitz" and "Block Buster!" – are faster and more raucous, rivalling the aggression of Deep Purple and Rainbow. With the release of the U.S. version of *Desolation Boulevard* in 1975, the Sweet made an even more dramatic change, parting ways with songwriters Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman ("Little Willie,"

"We loved having hits, but it was more important to make music without compromise"

"Wig-Wam Bam," "Hell Raiser") and taking over all writing duties. Wainman also left and Scott became the band's producer.

"I went out to dinner with Phil and we had a good chat," Scott says. "I said, 'If we're going to make a break, now is the time.' I said, 'I'd love you to still be the producer, but I think we need to have a go on our own, and now that I've managed to get in the producer's seat, I don't want to get out of it.'"

Having cleaned house and taken control, the Sweet changed gears again, downplaying confectionery melodies and focusing more on Scott's chugging riffs and rhythmically diverse songwriting. Considering their mainstream success, it was a risky move that tested their fan's devotion.

"Of course, we loved having hits and playing for big screaming audiences, but we felt it was more important to make music we wanted to hear without compromise," Scott says.

Their first self-produced banger, "Action," was a big success, yet only two of the band's next singles charted. At the same time as their fortunes were fading, the Sweet were stymied by an alcoholic, unstable singer, media-fueled rivalries with other bands and accusations



The Sweet in the Netherlands in 1974. [from left] Andy Scott, Mick Tucker, Brian Connolly and Steve Priest

of exhibiting style over substance. Even so, they powered on and landed one more memorable singer before splitting up in 1981.

In this revealing, career-spanning conversation, Scott addresses the rise of the Sweet, their uneasy position in the pop-rock hierarchy, the gear that helped drive their bristly sound and the turmoil that accompanied their wild ride.

You were a bass player before you joined the Sweet.

I was the bassist in a band that can only really be described as *America's Got Talent* back in the Sixties in the U.K. Every week, the audience voted, and my band won five weeks in a row. The sixth week, we were knocked out by a guy who went on to become one of Britain's top comedians. We were a seven-piece soul band with a bit of jazz and blues thrown in, and we supported Jimi Hendrix on his first U.K. tour. We thought we were pretty great, but when we saw Hendrix, the singer and I turned to each

other and said, "Well, that's the future." So, in 1967 we became a four-piece called the Elastic Band. That's when I became a guitarist full time. I could already play guitar, but I was so blown away by Hendrix that I took over on guitar and my brother played bass.

What were your other major influences?

I loved Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. I loved the soul aspect of Booker T. & the MG's. I loved Vanilla Fudge and Spirit. I also loved Wes Montgomery and his octave playing. So, by the time the Elastic Band formed, I was a mixture of psychedelia, soul, blues and rock, and I found my own style.

"When Bowie did 'Starman' on Top of the Pops in July 1972, everything kicked off big time"

What did the band sound like?

It was a mixed bag. We'd play "Born to Be Wild," but also soul and R&B songs. We played quite a bit in Florida and the Bahamas, where I heard a lot of American music that seeped into my playing as well. While I was in the Elastic Band, I met the Sweet.

Did that grease the wheels for you to join the band?

The BBC used to do outdoor broadcasts from seaside resorts, and they'd have a live band backing an artist that had a single to promote. I met the Sweet when the Elastic Band was backing them for one of their early songs. Lucky for me, the single [a cover of the Archies' "Get on the Line"] wasn't a hit, and their guitarist, Mick Stewart, moved on. I lived down the road from the auditions, and when I walked into the room, they recognized me from the Elastic Band, which definitely helped.

Is it true you maxed out your amps and blew everyone away at the audition?

GJUSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY IMAGES

Yes, because I wasn't used to stacks. The previous guy that auditioned turned the amp way up, and when I plugged in, it was howling. I was using a Gibson ES-335 because I'd seen Clapton play one. The amp was turned to 11, and I played a few notes and hammered out a few licks. Suddenly the bass player, Steve Priest, was awake — and he and I were off.

Did they care about how you looked as well as how you played?

Very much so. When I walked in, my hair was long like Ian Gillan's. Nicky Chinn thought I looked like a scruff. The first thing he did after I passed my audition was to send me to Vidal Sassoon on Bond Street to get my hair sorted out.

The Sweet were initially a bubblegum pop band. Where did the harder edge come from?

It came from my love of Ritchie Blackmore and Tony Iommi. Tony's sound was smooth and clean, but also filthy. Blackmore didn't use fuzz — he got his sound from the amp — and he used a Strat, which inspired me to get one as well. Sweet only had one guitar player, so I had to fill a lot of space. When we recorded, I doubled identical guitars left and right. There wasn't much palm-muting going on back then, so I relied more on ringing strings. The sound was big and fell somewhere between pop and rock.

As a skilled guitarist, it must have been frustrating to defer to session musicians in the studio.

When I joined the band, producer Bill Wainman and the studio guitar player, Pip Williams, had already started work on the first Sweet album. The band wrote three B-sides, and those are the only ones we were allowed to play on. We weren't happy with the album because we had no control over it. We started playing on all the music after we did the single "Wig-Wam Bam," and we insisted on playing our own instruments. After that, everyone realized the songs sounded better when we played them.

What gear were you using at the time?

I had my red 1963 ES-335 and an old John Hornby Skewes treble booster, which I'd put into a pedal. I also had a Copicat echo unit made by Watkins that had a boost in it. So I had two boosters and I went into a Jennings [Electronic Industries] AC40, which is like the Vox AC30 but slightly louder and more well-rounded. Plus, I'd been given amps by a new British company called H&H. I had one of their combos, which was a prototype that was quite dirty. My sound came from getting a mix between something slightly dirty and something slightly cleaner.



Scott [left] with bassist Peter Lincoln in Berlin, June 9, 2018

Was there a united glam community, or were you, David Bowie, T. Rex and Slade all doing your own thing?

At first, people were doing their own thing. David Bowie had metamorphosized three or four times before he hit the Ziggy Stardust thing. When I saw Marc Bolan in Tyrannosaurus Rex, he was playing psychedelic folk. They had a tom-tom player and an acoustic guitarist, and they sat on tuffets. Then, all of a sudden, they're T. Rex, the songs are all electric, and they sound really good. I bumped into Marc at the end of 1971 at an awards ceremony in Germany. We were voted Best New Band, and he won for the Best Band of the Year. He was dressed up and had silver makeup under his eyes and sparkles in his hair. Next to him, we looked like guys hired to carry his equipment. In a bar afterwards, we asked him where he got his clothes, and he referred us to people who made cool stuff for us. Something was already happening, but when Bowie did "Starman" on *Top of the Pops* in July 1972, everything kicked off big time.

Were Slade on the scene as well?

They were doing something not dissimilar. And it became a race between T. Rex, Slade and Sweet for who would have the biggest hits. Really, Bowie was in his own world.

Was there any kind of rivalry between Slade and yourselves?

Since we were both doing well, there was a sense among some people that you were either a Slade fan or a Sweet fan. Before they

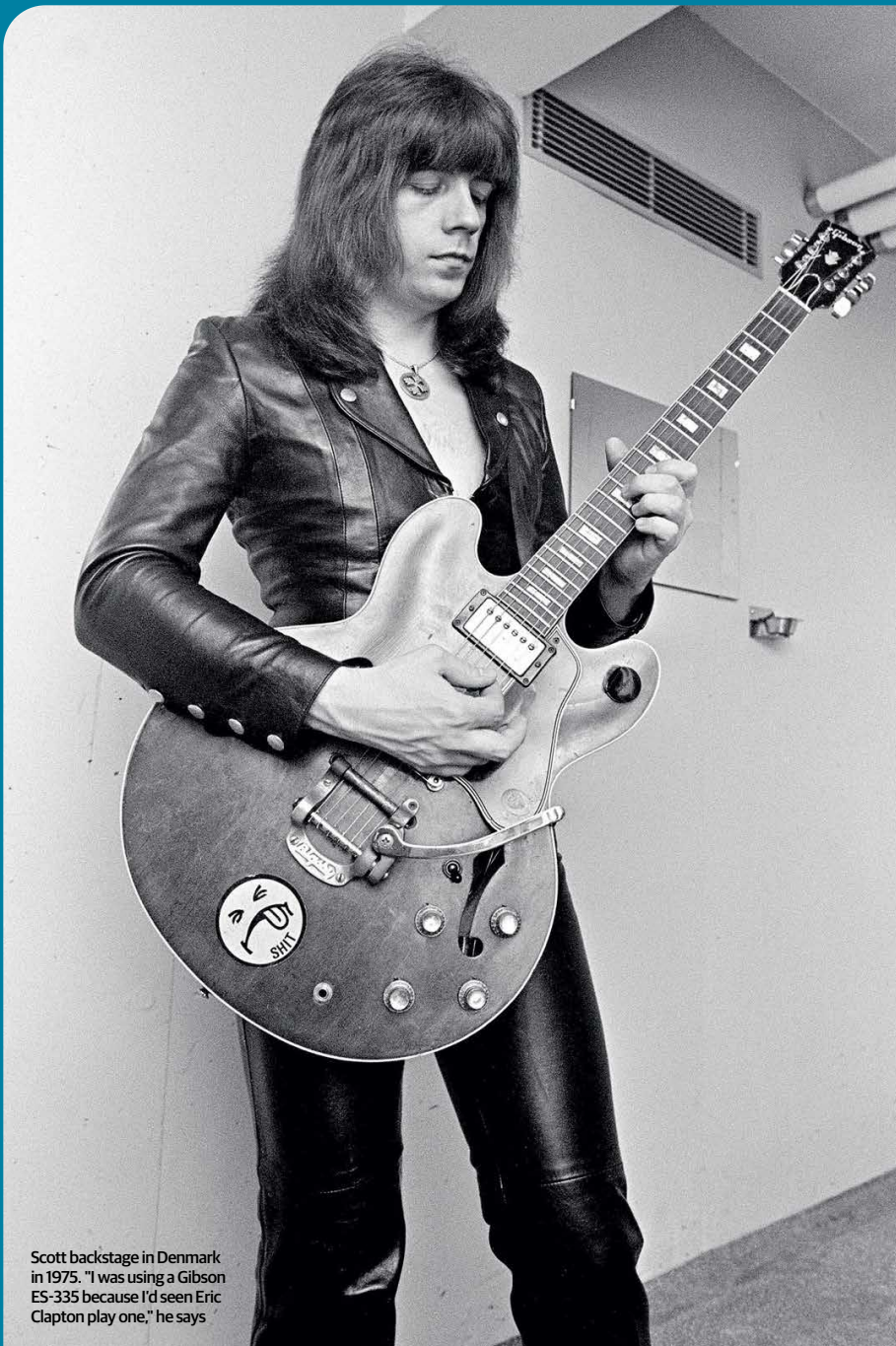
were Slade, they were called the In-Betweens and, funnily enough, they were in the Bahamas and Florida when I was there in the Elastic Band, so we got to know each other. Fast forward a bit, and we were both having hits and competing for the charts. At the same time, we were friends.

Like many glam bands, you flirted with androgyny and cross-dressing.

We wanted to get people's attention. When he was interviewed once, Mick was asked, "Oh, you're part of this androgynous thing? Girls or boys — which are you?" And he said, "We're the slightly villainous ugly sisters." That was about right, but we couldn't keep it up. Brian Connolly still wore a sparkly white suit, but Steve and I started wearing leather and studs more like Judas Priest.

By late 1973, you already had eight U.K. singles in the Top 40 and one in the U.S., "Little Willie," which peaked at Number 3. What was the chemistry like in the band?

Sometimes we argued, but from 1973 to 1976, we were definitely a unit. When we got into town, we were an entourage of six — four in the band and two tour managers. We would arrive in town and be like a mini army. When anybody attacked us verbally from the outside, we would have the back of whoever was being attacked. And we never felt threatened because we had big roadies. If anybody wanted to get physical, they quickly changed their minds. Having said that, Brian was beaten up [in 1974 while working on Sweet Fanny Adams]. A couple of journalists were



Scott backstage in Denmark in 1975. "I was using a Gibson ES-335 because I'd seen Eric Clapton play one," he says

saying his voice would never be the same and that the band was over. Then we made our best album.

Sweet Fanny Adams was a turning point for you in the U.K. Yet, like your first record, it didn't come out in North America.

Half of the album came out in America on a different version of *Desolation Boulevard*, which also had "The Ballroom Blitz" and "Fox on the Run" on it, so no wonder it went double Gold over there. That was good for us, and we were able to tour America.

When did your relationship with Chinn and Chapman begin to sour?

Mike was the driving force all the way through songs like "Block Buster!," "Hell Raiser" and "The Ballroom Blitz." Then they did "Teenage Rampage" and "Turn It Down,"

"There was a race between T. Rex, Slade and Sweet for who would have the biggest hits"

which were also good. But when they moved to America they didn't do anything for a while. They finally wrote "Turn It Down," which was inspired by a Cheech & Chong thing, and it wasn't a hit. That's when we knew something had to change. The record company phoned me up and said, "You need a new single, and we think 'Fox on the Run' from *Desolation Boulevard* is perfect, but it's not recorded properly."

Is that why the U.S. version was different from the one on the U.K. pressing of *Desolation Boulevard*?

The U.K. version was very stilted. It sounds like a quick recording, which it was, but it had a little bit of a vibe going on. So when Nicky and Mike were in America, we went into Ian Gillan's Kingsway Recorders under the cover of darkness over a weekend and redid the song. I told Mick and Steve, "Look, I've got an idea for the intro. Just go to the pub, and in the morning you'll hear what I've done." I had just gotten these ARP 2600 synthesizers so I created this part that brought the song to life. We also did a three-part guitar solo, kind of like Steely Dan, and it came out as the perfect pop-rock song.

There are parallels between the rhythm and lead guitar tones and vocal styles of the Sweet and those of Queen.

Mick and I were out in London one night, and somebody said, "There's a decent band playing in this place in Fulham." We went down there, and it was Queen without Freddie Mercury, back when they were called Smile. I thought they were terrific, and I said to the guys, "Maybe we should see if we could produce them." About a year later, the Queen album came out. I thought it was brilliant, and every time I met them, they were affable. Then, *Melody Maker* put out a cover where Brian was on one side with his mic and Freddie was on the other side. There was a big "Vs" between them, which encouraged this rivalry thing. And when you listen to "Keep Yourself Alive" and "Stone Cold Crazy," you can hear similarities to us. So, just as Queen were getting huge, I said in an interview, "Well, sometimes you open the door, and you're left holding the handle." That bothered some people.

After you parted ways with Chinn and Chapman, you released a couple of direct rock albums composed entirely by the band. Then, in 1978 you released *Level Headed*, which featured some of your most eclectic, experimental songs, including the ethereal, proggy "Love Is Like Oxygen," which became a staple of U.S. classic-rock radio. It seemed like a comeback, but it was one of Brian's last

recordings with the band.

When we recorded "Love Is Like Oxygen," we had to do it in the morning when none of us were at our best because we knew that by afternoon, Brian would be drinking so heavily he wouldn't be capable of singing. The reason Steve and I each sang a song on *Level Headed* was because Brian was in no condition to do them. That continued, and in 1978, he collapsed a couple times on tour. And, somewhere in Alabama, Brian lurched onstage and knocked his mic over. Then he almost fell down. Within seconds, our manager grabbed Brian and rushed him off. Then there were shows when Brian was only part there. He'd start singing and I'd have to finish. We got through the concerts, but it wasn't a good look. So we put on the brakes and Brian was sent to a place to dry out.

After a few days, our tour manager went to check in on Brian and the people at the rehab place said they hadn't seen him all day. The tour manager checked Brian's room. He wasn't there and the window was open. They launched a search and found him in the nearest pub about half a mile away.

What was the straw that broke the camel's back?

When we were recording [1979's] *A Cut Above the Rest* at Clearwell Castle [in the Forest of Dean, U.K.], we couldn't get a single usable master vocal out of Brian. We did everything we could, but he was beyond control. At one point, he fired a shotgun out of a window into a bird sanctuary. When we heard the bang, we said to the tour manager, "You need to take that gun off him!" He said, "I'm not going in there." Steve said, "Well, If we go in there, he might shoot us." Eventually, the owner of the castle took the gun away and told Brian he wasn't welcome there anymore. After Christmas, we were called into our management's office. They said, "There's only one way the band survives. Brian has to go." And the rest of us kept the band going as a three-piece.

Did you ever consider a replacement lead vocalist?

We played some shows in America with Rainbow, and at one point, Ronnie James Dio came into the dressing room and said, "You can see what's going on here. Brian isn't going to last the distance. If you need some help with the vocals, I'm your man."

Did you follow up with him?

He called me later and said, "I don't like what's going on with Ritchie Blackmore and I'm looking for an escape." Brian was gone at that point, so I talked to the guys. Steve was so against it. He said, "We've been singing our own songs without Brian. Why would we



"My sound came from getting a mix between something slightly dirty and something slightly cleaner"

need someone else?" I told Ronnie how Steve felt, and he said, "You could always leave and join me." I thought, Well, that's an interesting idea, but I couldn't do it. I knew that if I left the Sweet, that would be the end. The other guys weren't band-leader types. Then Ronnie formed Dio, and that was that.

The Sweet broke up in 1981, and you and Mick toured Sweet songs starting in 1984.

When Mick and I agreed to get back together I thought we were going to talk Steve into it. We booked a tour of Australia to see if the band was still capable, and we were, but Steve didn't come. It was just Mick and I, and that lasted until 1991.

Is that when Mick became ill?

He got too sick to tour, and then he was diagnosed with leukemia. He was never the same after that and went into retirement. He died from the disease in 2002.

Brian formed his own version of the band, the New Sweet, in 1984. To avoid confusion, you changed your band name to Andy Scott's Sweet and he toured as Brian Connolly's Sweet. Was that frustrating?

There were times when Brian's band and mine were touring [separately], and it got a little difficult, especially when someone with Brian phoned a venue that had booked us and told them, "We can do it cheaper."

Then Brian got sick and stopped touring and they did shows without him, which wasn't right. People think we had a falling out and stopped talking, but we never did. He used to phone me up and ask for advice. In 1996, I called Brian and told him we were about to do another tour around Christmas. I asked him if he would come along and sing the hits with us for the last half-hour of the show. He agreed to do it, but by Christmas, he was too sick. In January he went into hospital, and in February he died [from alcohol-related heart and liver problems].

Steve Priest formed a different version of the Sweet in 2008 to tour North America. Did you stay in touch with him?

Not as much as I did with Mick and Brian, but I've never fallen out with anybody. The thing about Steve that was frustrating was that he ranted at me because six months after Mick fell ill, I continued the band. So I phoned Steve and said, "Mick's not well right now. Why don't you come back and do some dates with me, and when Mick gets better, all of us can continue together. He said, "I hate it, I don't want to do it." But he also didn't want me to do it.

Steve died in 2020 from pneumonia when he was 72.

That was terrible. I remember phoning and talking to his wife. I said, "Is there no way of talking to him?" And she said, "No, he's

in a medically-induced coma." He never recovered. I was gutted. I've been gutted every time one of them passed away. Brian was in his early 50s. Mick was just 54. I'm the last one.

You had a health scare around the same time Steve got ill. How are you holding up?

I'm still going. In 2009, I had just turned 60 and I was having bad stomach problems and had to see someone. They tested for everything, and it turned out I had prostate cancer. When they told me, the room swelled, and all I heard was white noise. They found out the cancer was quite advanced, but it hadn't left the prostate. I was really lucky. I didn't need chemo, so I had hormone and radiotherapy. The only thing I can't take is intense heat. So the summer festivals aren't good for me.

You're in the middle of a six-month tour to support your most recent album, *Full Circle*. Does your touring rig differ substantially from the rigs you used in the Seventies?

[Laughs] You can't even compare them. When we started to tour America, I had a Fender set up, an H&H set up and a Marshall set up, plus two Leslie cabinets, one on either side



of the stage, and they were driven by an H&H 100-watt head. We set up three heads on the bottom and the speakers on top of them so they were at body-level instead of at our waists. Normally, I'd run the H&H and the Marshall together for the majority of the

"I'm proud that people thought enough of the Sweet to try and emulate us"

set, and I'd bring in the Fender amps when I used the Telecaster on a couple of songs. The Fender amps and the Marshall amps were a great combination.

And now?

I just use a Marshall 50-watt head with the 2204 circuits I've used for the past 20 years. Sometimes I also use a [BluGuitar AMPI], which is a [100-watt] hybrid amp that has a great punch. It was invented by German guitarist Thomas Blug. It's about the size of an iPad and it's got microvalves (aka nanotubes), so it sounds like a tube amp. I don't take expensive equipment on the road anymore.

I've got a Strat and two early, well-modded Japanese Squiers from the Eighties that sound fantastic. And then I have another Strat and practice amp that I bring just to play in the hotel or dressing room. I've got a volume pedal and Boss ME-5 from the early Eighties, which has got all the original effects built into it. Whenever I see one of those, I buy it in case the one I'm using stops working. And I've got an Eventide H9 built into the effects chain, which gives me some extra octaves, echoes and tremolos. But that's about it. It's pretty simple – especially when you look at all the stuff we used to cart around. **GW**

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ALLIED FORCES

Against all odds, beloved Canadian power trio Triumph are hitting the road this spring – but they're not a trio anymore. **Rik Emmett** discusses this old/new **Phil X**-enhanced version of the band

BY ANDREW DALY

IN THE LATE Seventies and into the Eighties, Triumph proved to be a mighty force as a power trio. The Canadian band, which featured Gil Moore on drums and vocals, Mike Levine on bass and Rik Emmett on guitar and vocals, reeled off a string of memorable songs, including "Lay It on the Line," "Fight the Good Fight," "Magic Power" and "World of Fantasy." But, despite their sublime blend of hard rock, prog and fantasy-inspired vibes, they never quite reached the heights of Canada's other beloved power trio, a little band called Rush.

For those reasons, combined with age and health, Emmett thought that – when it came to Triumph – that proverbial ship had sailed.

He was wrong. When Triumph announced their 2026 reunion tour last December, Emmett was shocked by the wave of love and adoration that came his way.

"I had no idea there would be this kind of hunger," Emmett says. "There really is an appetite for nostalgia."

But this version of Emmett's band isn't your father's Triumph. The group is dropping the power-trio format and adding Toronto-born Bon Jovi guitarist Phil X – who played and recorded with Triumph in the early Nineties (becoming the only guitarist besides Emmett to do so) – to the mix. Along for the ride are Slash solo-band veterans Brent Fitz (drums) and Todd Kerns (bass/vocals). What's more, word is that while Emmett and Moore will be full participants in the reunion, due to health issues, Levine's participation will be extremely limited.

"I think a lot of people are thinking, 'Oh, my God, they're defying reality,'" Emmett says. "They're probably thinking, 'Will Emmett make it to the end of the tour?' I'm curious too! I'm kind of going, 'We'll see!'"



TREVON MARSH

Rik Emmett [left] and Phil X during Triumph's tour rehearsals in March



It's fair to wonder about such things, given Emmett's 2024 cancer diagnosis (a cancer he says he is free and clear of), not to mention arthritis in his hands.

"It might prove to be too much for a 72-year-old guy," he says. "I feel like if I get myself in shape over the next few months and we get the script together the way I really like it, we'll be fine. It's a marriage of a rock band and technology now. We've got screens, lights, pyro, lasers and all this stuff. It takes a lot of coordination, and I think it's going to be fun."

Modern tech and light shows aside, Emmett also needs to grapple with adding three new musicians into the mix. "The more you get involved with this stuff, the more it's like getting a shot of whoop-de-doo juice every day," he says with a laugh. "You go, 'Maybe this is the secret — having a daily goal of having to sing, perform and play.' But we're gonna find out. I like the level of talent and experience these guys bring. I think it's going to be something that rejuvenates me in a huge way."

"Playing with these younger musicians is gonna be a challenging kick in the ass!"

In the past, you've said you wouldn't tour with Triumph again, but here we are.

I know I've said this would never happen, so I'm sitting around laughing at the fact that I've turned myself into a liar. [Laughs] I didn't imagine it would happen, but it's been kind of a circumstance of serendipity. They started playing "Lay It On the Line" at NHL events, and Gil Moore started making noise, saying, "I wanna put out a big tour, but it's gonna be virtual..."

Virtual?

Yeah. He said, "Don't worry, all you'll have to do is show up for a day of filming on a green-screen set," So there was that stuff, and we were asked, "Do you guys wanna come out

and play in Edmonton?" So we played with the three guys — Phil X on guitar, Todd Kerns on bass and Brent Fitz on drums — and Gil played drums, too.

Did that spark the idea for this tour?

We played three songs to a plaza of hockey fans, and it was fun. We kind of went, "This could work, you know?" And then Live Nation is saying, "We think we could make this work. Do you wanna put some shows up for sale?" One thing led to another, and then we got into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and sat in with Phil X again [October 2025], and it was a riot.

Now you'll be sharing guitar duties with Phil — who, in a sense, replaced you in the early Nineties.

Phil is unbelievable. I love the guy and his energy. I can't wait to get on the road and get my ass kicked by these guys. [Laughs] It'll be fun. But will it be fun for just the first week, and then I'll go, "I've had enough! I wish I hadn't agreed to 24 dates in 60 days." [Laughs]

You've been dealing with a cancer diagnosis as well as arthritis. Are you feeling strong as far as your playing is concerned, all things considered?

I don't know, but we're gonna find out! I'm cancer-free, which is lovely. And the medication I take for my arthritis seems to be holding it in check. But arthritis is a weird thing. If you know anybody who has had it, you'll know you have good days and bad.

What's the trick to keep yourself in playing shape?

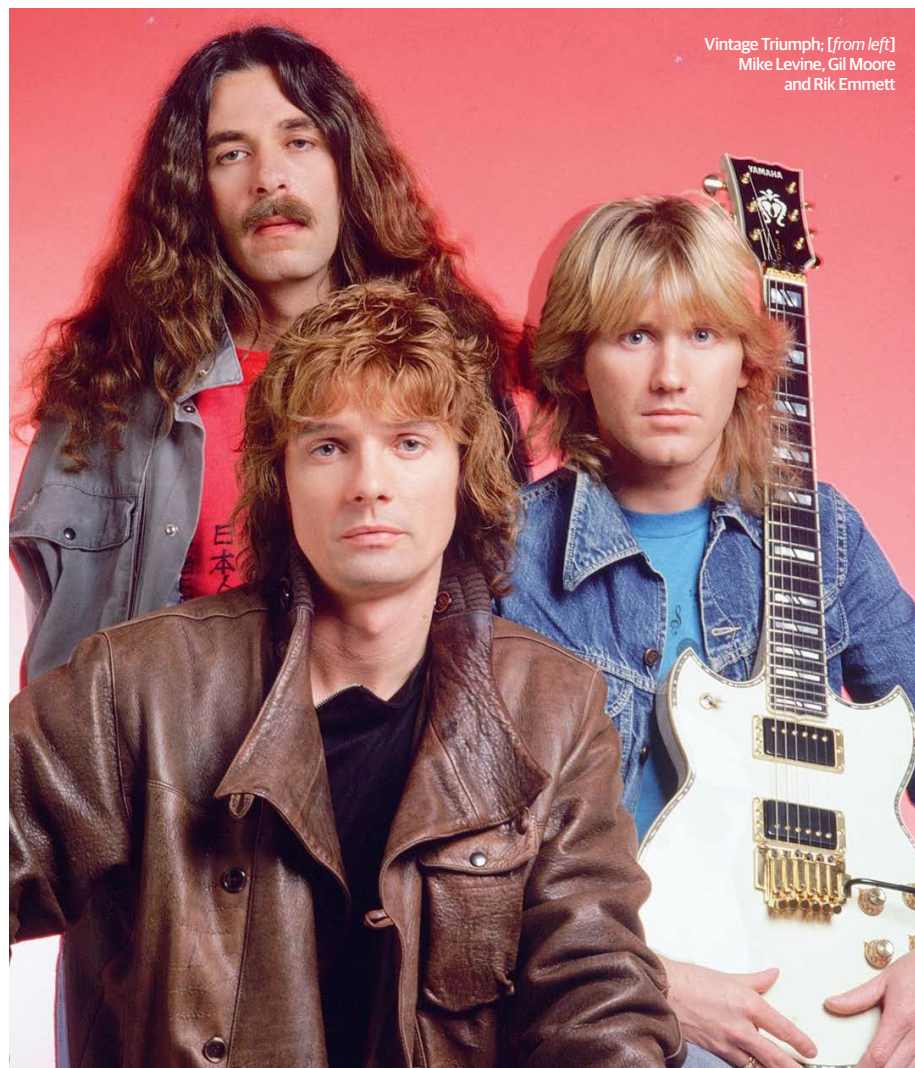
On a bad day, if you force yourself to work out, do your routines and push yourself, it actually makes it better. It seems counterintuitive when you feel like your hands aren't doing well, and you'd like to take a day off, but that's the day you try and play more.

You play through the pain.

Yes! That seems to be working. But here's the test; I'm sitting here in December, and the tour doesn't start until April. So how disciplined is Rik Emmett going to be in January, February and March? [Laughs] Then, when we get to March and April, how disciplined is Rik going to be?

Since Phil, Brent and Todd are part of the line-up, a lot of people are wondering if Mike and Gil will be participating.

I don't count on Mike necessarily being there much. He might show up on some of the dates that are within driving distance, but I don't expect him to get up and play much of the set. He might play a song or two, and we're definitely gonna get him to play some keyboards and have him show up on the



Vintage Triumph: [from left] Mike Levine, Gil Moore and Rik Emmett

COURTESY OF CHIPSTER PR AND CONSULTING, INC.

Phil X [left] and Rik Emmett in action at the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame induction show in Toronto, October 17, 2025



screens because he's part of the history of the band. But we've got these three other guys, so we've got every base covered.

Have you worked out exactly how Phil, Brent and Todd will fit into the line-up with you and Gil, who will presumably be playing?

An excellent question – and I don't have the full answer. [Laughs] I can only tell you we've been sitting around working on things, like which songs, running order and special effects. And with what songs, like Gil said, "I wanna do 'No Surrender,'" and I'm like, "Fuck, I can't sing it in that key anymore."

[Laughs] We used to use E minor concert pitch, but now the guitars are gonna be down a full step, and we'll do that in B minor. And then there's "Magic Power," which used to be in concert D, but now it's going to be in concert A, which works great. You can really "Pete Townshend" it up in that key. So I've

"With detuned guitars, the bending is so much easier. Why didn't I do this a long time ago?"

been on the phone with my D'Addario guy, saying, "I think I'm gonna have to move my string gauges up, like, two or three; send me some sets for drop D." [Laughs]

Is the plan to have Todd and Phil sing some songs as well?

We're figuring it out. I think there will be songs where I might sing the first verse and then look over at Todd or Phil and go, "Take it from here." I can still play the guitar parts, so that won't be an issue. And with the guitars detuned, it's great, and the bending is so much easier. I think, "Why didn't I do this a long time ago?" But singing? Who knows? ▣

DOMINIK MAGDZIAK PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



Emmett with his new custom signature Godin Montreal Premiere. As he said on Facebook in February, "This will be my principal instrument on the Reloaded tour"



There might be songs assigned to Todd, Phil or Gil.

In Triumph's heyday, you were the only guitarist. It must be a load off to have Phil around.

It's pretty great to contemplate, isn't it? The sky is the limit. There are things that exist from youth, like Wishbone Ash and Judas Priest, who had harmony guitars, and with Phil, there's unlimited potential. But he's a different kind of player; I'm from a different era – more of a prog guy, you know, Steve Howe, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck. Phil is more from the Eddie Van Halen school. He can do the tapping, sweep picking and all those things that aren't really my bag. Imagine the luxury, if you will, of the guy who recorded

"I'm kind of bemused by all this. I never imagined the reaction would be as positive as it's been"

"Rock & Roll Machine" being able to start a solo and then go, "Ladies and gentlemen, here's Phil X." It's interstellar.

What gear will you be bringing on tour?
I just tried my double-neck the other day

for more than 10 minutes, and I went, "It's too heavy." I said, "What's plan B?" But I've just got a new electric acoustic from Godin, and it's phenomenal. So I'll maybe use that 12-string for the intro of "Magic Power," "Fight the Good Fight" and maybe "Never



Emmett in 1984. "I just tried my double-neck the other day for more than 10 minutes, and I went, 'It's too heavy,'" he says

TREVON MARSH, PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES



Drummers Gil Moore [left] and Brent Fitz



Bassist Todd Kerns

Surrender.” And I tend to be very old-school, so I’m happy with my Line 6 Pod Go; I don’t run it with a giant rig. I used to use a backline where the backline company would provide me with a Fender combo, like a Deluxe, but it could be anything because I was gonna set it up and run it flat, clean. And then I’d let my pedalboard be the thing that gave me different [sounds]. But in the Pod, you’ve got Marshalls — you can do anything! I tend to like that sound because in the old days, I used a Marshall plexi, a 50-watt head that didn’t even have a master. But it was souped up and had power tubes.

Will you be using Godin guitars across the board?

I have a relationship with Godin, and they’re making a Rik Emmett model, which is gonna be called the 24/7. It looks like the Godin Stadium ‘59, so I’m sort of using that body design, which is like a Fender Telecaster that has Gibson SG sculpting around the edges, and with a belly cut. Mine is going to have 24.75 scaling, so it’s like a Les Paul scale length with a higher bridge. It’s taking

TREVON MARSH

PERSONAL TRIUMPH

Bon Jovi guitarist Phil X — the guitar star of Triumph’s final studio album — won’t be holding anything back when he joins Rik Emmett front and center this spring

BY ANDREW DALY

ALTHOUGH CANADIAN ROCKERS Triumph were traditionally a power trio with one guitarist — Rik Emmett — if the band were to add an extra six-stringer for, say, an unexpected but very real spring 2026 tour, Toronto-born Phil X is the guy. Yes, he can rip it up with the best of them, but — in 1992 and 1993 — he actually was in Triumph, even supplying all the guitars to 1992’s *Edge of Excess*, the only Triumph album that doesn’t feature Emmett, who had left the band in 1988.

As you can tell from this feature’s main interview, Emmett truly respects X’s playing. Unsurprisingly, the feeling is mutual. “Rik is 72, and sometimes people slow down, but he’s amazing,” X says. “I think to myself, *This guy still has it*. It’s amazing to see, and he’s fun to talk to and hang out with.”

X knows Triumph’s augmented 2026 lineup might face scrutiny, but he’s not worried. “We’re going to rise to the occasion,” he says. “The teamwork is mind-blowing. Everybody wants to be great. Rik told me, ‘Don’t hold back. Do your thing. I don’t want people to see a diluted Phil X, so be you.’ He’s right. I’ll be me. Regardless of what people expect, it’s going to be an amazing deal when you see Triumph.”

Given that Triumph was traditionally a power trio, how do you see yourself fitting in?

A friend was filming us doing soundcheck, and I did one lick, and then Rik would go, and then I’d go, and he’d go, and Rik was saying, “Don’t hold back!” So that’s what he wants; I like that, since I once took his spot for a minimal amount of time — and now we’re on the stage together — he’s sort of passing the torch. He wants everybody to know I’m worthy. [Laughs]

Which song are you most excited to play?

“Lay It on the Line” is a blast. I’m gonna talk to Rik about this because I started my solo for that song, where I’m bending up to G, and that was the intro. And then, come



showtime, he started like that... he stole my intro! We’re gonna have a discussion about that. [Laughs]

Rik seems energized by your presence, which is a change, since for a long time, he said he’d never tour with Triumph again.

He’s gung-ho. It’s really cool talking to him. Some of our text threads are like, “What is he saying?!” [Laughs] It’s all coming from enthusiasm, which is amazing. They’re already working on the set, telling me, “This is what we’re going to do,” and “This is where Phil and I will do this and that,” and “Here, we’re going to work on a harmony spot. It’s crazy awesome.

It’s an interesting dynamic, since you and Rik are such different players.

I’m a fan of melody. No matter how quick it is, there’s got to be melody. Melody always rules. I think there are more people in the audience who prefer a little feedback and the arm up in the air to pyrotechnics, you know? With that, I just can’t say how excited I am.

Are your Triumph and Bon Jovi rigs similar?

I’ll bring my Friedman X amp in both situations. I’ll have two with me; one is a spare. And I love blending in a smaller amp, even if it’s a supplied backline. I need a Marshall JCM800 half-stack, a Supro combo or a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe. I’m a minimal guy, so it’s, “Hey, sound guy! Delay, reverb — that’s you.” [Laughs] I need fewer effects for Triumph than with Bon Jovi, where, for example, I need a Leslie and a talk box. But either way, I’m straight in. I like it when the sound guy says, “Whatever guitar you plug into your rig, it sounds like that guitar.” I go, “That’s how it should be.” I don’t want to plug in and have a Tele not sound like a Tele or a Les Paul not sound like a Les Paul.

Do you see room for more Triumph in the near future?

It’s up to them. Gil Moore might be 72, but he’s like a kid in a candy store. This could be the beginning of something. We’ll see.

a Tele and a Les Paul and creating a hybrid between the two. They're also making me – from their Montreal Premiere Supreme – one that I call Soupy, which is the first incarnation of that guitar.

Will that be a one-off or a signature production model?

They're making me a custom one, so it's a one-off. They're not gonna introduce it as a retail line item. It's gonna be white, but semi-acoustic, so it's very much like a Gibson ES-335, except the Godin folks are good at coming up with their own ideas. It's got a block in the middle, but it's arched so it's very acoustic and can give jazz-guitar sounds. I like those guitars because when you turn them up, it's like the old days when Ted Nugent used to use a [Gibson] Byrdland or Steve Howe would have a [Gibson ES-5] Switchmaster or ES-175. Back in the day, I had the Ackerman and a Framus, which had blocks in them, but they looked like a Les Paul with a thyroid condition or an ES-175 that had been in the dryer for too long.

Do you see yourself breaking out a Les Paul?

I like the idea of hybrid, semi-acoustic guitars. I have a feeling I'll be using the Godin quite

a lot. They're only 6.5 lbs. With that and the 12-string, I think I've covered the spectrum. But there's bound to be a Les Paul or two. I have two Gibsons with Sixties necks, and they're chambered. I think they're from 2006 or 2009; Gibson gave me a couple of those back in the day. I've bought three or four of those, so there will probably be a Les Paul, like when we play "Rock & Roll Machine." I think I've gotta play that on a Les Paul!

Are you open to more dates, or do you see this as Triumph's last hurrah?

I'm kind of philosophical right now. I'm bemused by all of this. I never imagined the reaction would be as positive as it's been. Live Nation is so happy with the ticket sales, and I'm going, "They're gonna wanna add more shows." We're playing a 4,000-seat venue in Chicago, and it sold out in one day. They added another day, and I think by the time we finish this call, that'll be sold out, too.

"I didn't think I'd enjoy the tour prep, but I'm recapturing the energy of my younger days"

The metaphor I've been using is it's like a game of golf. I'm just gonna hit the thing and then go find it and play it where it lies. Whatever happens next is what happens next. It's a philosophical thing. From this vantage point, I'm just gonna enjoy it. I think it's gonna be fun, and playing with these younger musicians is gonna be a challenging kick in the ass. You know, a can of whoop-ass kinda fun. But I don't know; I could get out there and think, "I think I hate this guy," you know? Or I could get out there and go, "I think these guys should just do it, and I should just stay home because my arthritis is flaring up, and this isn't fun anymore." I don't know!

The outpouring of love has to be energizing, considering the underrated nature of Triumph.

I used to think of myself as a glass-half-empty kind of guy when it came to projecting into the future. And a huge surprise to me is, apparently, no – at 72, my glass is half-full. I didn't think this would happen. I didn't think I'd enjoy all the tour prep, working out every day and doing interviews every half hour, but I am. I'm recapturing some of the energy of my younger days. The answer to it all is, I don't know. But I think I'm going to like it. [GW](#)

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COVER FEATURE
R U S H





RE-ENTER...

STAGE LEFT

Rush's Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee give us the inside story on their utterly unexpected return to the limelight

BY JOE BOSSO

SO, GUYS, ANYTHING new? Here at *Guitar World*, we believe in hitting artists with the hard questions first.

"Not much at all," Geddy Lee deadpans. The bassist is speaking via Zoom from his home studio, a wall of basses behind him. "I've just been playing a lot of cards with Al, trying to win some money off him."

"He always does," says Alex Lifeson, joining in on Zoom from his own home music sanctuary. "He's vicious at Go Fish."

While we're on the subject of games, suffice to say that nobody – including, for the longest time, Lee and Lifeson – had "Rush going on tour in 2026" on their bingo cards, and it wasn't until the spring of last year when the idea started to look like a distinct possibility. Even after the two had finally come to a decision that yes, this was going to be a thing, they kept word from leaking out for months.

"Nobody knew," Lee says emphatically. "I didn't even tell my kids."


"In this day and age, it's so difficult to keep a secret," Lifeson says. "We did our best to keep it quiet, and we were pretty successful, I think."

The announcement was made almost casually, during a private event for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, last October, when, responding to an intentionally placed "fan" question asking if the band would ever tour again, Lee answered, "I kind of think we should tour next year."

Initially, the tour, dubbed Fifty Something, was a relatively short run of seven major cities, but following near-instantaneous sell-outs, more cities were added, and then more, and as it now stands, the tour will encompass North America, South America and Europe, 86 concerts in all, and won't wrap until April 2027 in Helsinki, Finland.

"It was very surprising," Lifeson says of the reaction from fans.

"We knew there were fans that wanted us to come back," Lee says. "We'd get messages from fans all the time and they want to see Al and me playing together again in whatever form we had chosen. We're very fortunate we have such a loyal fan base, but I don't think Al or I or anyone associated with us expected the overwhelming response to the very first announcement. It's very nice, very gratifying."

Lee admits to feelings of frustration following the conclusion of Rush's last tour, R40, in 2015. In his view, the band was playing at peak form, and both he and Lifeson wanted to keep going. Drummer Neil Peart, however, had other ideas about how he wanted to live the rest of his life. "He was so happy being a full-time dad," Lee says, "and his body just said to him, 'That's enough as a touring musician. I can't do it anymore.'" 

Over the next few months, Lee and Lifeson accepted Peart's decision. "That's life — no hard feelings," Lee says. "The man certainly earned a break from the madding crowd."

Following Peart's tragic death in 2020 from glioblastoma, Lee and Lifeson gradually occupied themselves with various activities. Lee, who already published his first book, *Geddy Lee's Big Beautiful Book of Bass* in 2018, cranked out two more: 2023's *My Effin' Life: From Holocaust Roots to Rock and Roll Stardom* and *72 Stories: From the Baseball Collection of Geddy Lee*. "Writing my first book was very gratifying," he says. "It taught me that instead of banging out notes, I can bang out words. It sent me down a different path."

Lifeson posted a couple of solo instrumental tracks, "Kabul Blues" and "Spy House," on his website before forming an alt-rock band called Envy of None with bassist Andy Curran, guitarist Alfio Annibalini and lead singer Maiah Wynne. The group issued a self-titled debut in 2022 and a follow-up, 2025's *Stygian Wavz*, but played no live shows. "I really didn't have any interest in going back on the road," Lifeson says. "I felt like I was really done with that."

The former bandmates reunited on stage a few times in 2022, first with Primus to celebrate *South Park's* 25th anniversary (the show's co-creator, Matt Stone, played drums on "Closer to the Heart"), and they performed mini-sets of Rush classics at a pair of tribute concerts for the late Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins, during which they were backed by a number of drummers: Dave Grohl, Tool's Danny Carey, Red Hot Chili Peppers' Chad Smith and former David Bowie sticksman Omar Hakim. "The Taylor Hawkins tribute shows were pivotal for a lot of reasons," Lee says. "Obviously, we got a chance to pay tribute to Taylor, but also we got a chance in our own way to pay tribute to Neil, which was long overdue. To play our songs again with some other brilliant musicians, it showed us that our music is still alive."

Riding high from those shows, the two briefly considered taking things a step further and playing together in an official capacity. "But it didn't work out," Lee says. "No sense dwelling on it, just move on with your life."

For Lifeson, that meant tending to his health. Stomach surgery to correct a hiatal hernia resulted in gastroparesis, a chronic condition in which the muscles in the stomach don't move food as they should for it

"We always saw each other anyway every couple of weeks for dinner or drinks"

GEDDY



Geddy Lee (with his Seafoam Green 1962 Fender Jazz [left] and Alex Lifeson (with his Gibson Custom Les Paul Access) in the band's rehearsal space

to be digested. The guitarist visited a wellness clinic in Austria and learned to manage the condition through strict lifestyle changes (alcohol, smoking, gluten, lactose and junk food are out). Once he was back home, he would get together with Lee, just like always, and soon they began jamming. Then they began jamming on Rush songs, just two old friends having a blast.

Only it wasn't that simple. This wasn't just two old friends having a blast. It was

something more than that... but what? Could they really tour once again as Rush? Should they? Warming up to the idea took some time, especially for Lifeson, who had previously stated that Rush's touring days were over. And the biggest question of all was, if they did play live again, who would sit in that drum seat? As Lee says, "How do you ask someone to replace a guy who's irreplaceable?"

Through his bass tech, John "Scully" McIntosh, Lee was tipped off about Anika



Nilles, a German composer, producer and music educator, and as it turns out, a virtuoso drummer (her resume includes a 2022 tour with Jeff Beck). As Lee recalls, "We did a Zoom call together and said, 'Look, we're thinking of going on the road, and obviously we need a drummer. Would you be interested in playing some Rush songs with us?' That's really all we asked. She was totally game for it and said, 'That sounds great.' So she hopped on a plane and played with us for a week, and it was on

the last day Alex and I looked at each other and went, 'Wow, I think we have a drummer... Now what the fuck do we do?'"

When was it exactly when you two started playing Rush songs together again?

GEDDY LEE: I would say it was in late 2024. I had just finished my third book, and I was sitting down here looking at all these bass guitars, and they were making me feel very, very guilty. So I started getting my fingers

"I really didn't have any interest in touring. I felt like I was done with that"

ALEX

back in shape – and they were really out of shape. I came down every day and played, and I was having dinner with Al one night and I told him, "Yeah, I'm getting my fingers back in shape. I've been writing a bit of lyrics and stuff. Maybe we should jam." We always saw each other anyway every couple of weeks for dinner or drinks or something.

Al came over and we just started jamming and having fun the way we always do after we drink too much coffee. [Laughs] We're having a laugh. Then Al, I think, or one of us suggested, "Let's play a Rush song for fun and see if we can remember it without doing any homework." Of course, we could only remember parts of them. That's kind of how it started.

Aside from Rush songs, what else were you jamming?

LEE: We were just jamming, making shit up. That's what jamming is.

When two guys from Rush get together to play Rush songs, what do they play?

ALEX LIFESON: There are only like a thousand songs to choose from. We tried to get the easiest ones –

LEE: There are no easiest ones. [Laughs]

Was it just the two of you playing on your own, or did you have any sort of rhythm loop for accompaniment?

LEE: It was just the two of us. Sometimes we'd pull up the song and play along with it just to see – "What the fuck does that sound like?" That would help you remember all the things you forgot. I think Al remembers "Freewill" being the first song we tried.

LIFESON: Sure it was, yeah.

LEE: Which for a bass player is not a walk in the park. That was interesting to see my fingers tell me to fuck off. But it was fun. We ended up really laughing. And when we walked away from that goofy session, not only had we put some interesting jams down on tape, which I don't know what'll ever happen with them or they'll remain in the bin, but we walked away with this smile. Playing our songs was so much fun.

The next time we got together to jam, we started challenging each other – "Can you remember this one?" Then we would flail through it. After enough of that, we started getting this sheepish grin at the end of our sessions. It was like, "What are we doing

Lifeson [left] and Lee with new drummer Anika Nilles. "She's a bit younger than us, and she likes to remind us of that," Lee says



here? Are we doing something? Are we quietly tricking each other into going back on the road?" But that was still a ways away before we could agree to that.

What was that moment like when one of you finally said it out loud? Who was the first to say it?

LEE: I don't know how that went. In the past, it was usually me who would say, "Hey, Al, do you want to do some shows? Do you want to think about this?" But I was a bit sheepish to do that because we've already been down that road and it didn't work out after the tribute shows for Taylor. We went down that road a little bit, but Al wasn't into it for a lot of reasons. I don't know who... I think we both just kind of gravitated to looking at each other saying, "This is kind of fun."

LIFESON: I remember Ged saying, "We should get together. You should come over, have a coffee. There's some stuff we need to talk about." I went over and we did exactly that. We kind of talked about, "Why don't we just play one of these days? Just play some stuff, maybe work on some stuff or whatever." That's what led to that. I think Ged knew I was not really enthusiastic about even considering going back on the road, doing a tour,

especially something that's turned into this size of a tour. I think he was cautious and just wanted to have... I mean, we've been playing together for 60 years, and he just wanted to play together. That's what we did the first day, and we were laughing and smiling and really enjoying it.

Like he said, we were jamming. We were playing bluesy stuff and whatever, and that led to playing a Rush song or two. That eventually led to playing maybe more Rush songs, and then the ball started rolling and it started to grow on its own, and it seemed to have a life of its own and an energy of its own. Everything started falling into place and moving toward ultimately getting together and doing this tour.

I needed convincing, for sure. Once I felt better — I got my health in order at the beginning of 2025, and that was one big hurdle for me. I was not feeling well enough

"Kirk Hammett gave me one of his Greenies. I've been having fun with that"

ALEX

health-wise to go back onto the road or to commit to doing anything with that sort of thing in mind. But as the time went by and I felt good, and we started playing more and other ideas came up, it seemed natural that we would follow through with this and really start playing together. It's one thing to do one song, but it's a whole other thing to do 40 songs. And I'll tell you, it's hard. It's hard, hard, hard, but it's really exciting, and it feels really good when the songs start coming together, and the fingers start going to the right places and it all comes back to you. Muscle memory is a mysterious thing, but it's beautiful.

That must have been a strange and incredible process. As you said, you needed convincing...

LIFESON: It was gradual. When we started really sounding good together again, like more recently, when I could see a faint light at the end of the tunnel, it almost turned a switch on for me. I went from having self-doubt and not being really positively sure that I really wanted to do it... but I'd made the commitment. It was at that moment that I realized that, yes, this is going to be a good thing. It's going to be a good thing for me personally and for us.

HEAVY LIES THE CROWN

Rush are still Canada's prog-rock kings, but Ontario duo Crown Lands could be poised to one-up them (or, in this case, one-down them)

BY RYAN REED

WHETHER THEY'RE BEING praised as torch-carrying titans or derided as classic-rock cosplayers, Canadian duo Crown Lands are often cited as the modern-day Rush. But Kevin Comeau — their guitarist, bassist, keyboardist and now primary producer-engineer — isn't concerned about the endless comparisons. They'll certainly receive more upon the release of their third LP, the conceptual sci-fi epic *Apocalypse*. But they're expecting that chatter; after all, the reference point was consciously baked into the band's DNA back in 2015, when he met his long-lost brother in prog, drummer-singer Cody Bowles.

"When we started the band, we joked to ourselves, 'What if the White Stripes covered Rush?'" Comeau tells *Guitar World*. "We just kept leaning more into the Rush than the White Stripes as time went on. I still think, sonically, Rush's *Moving Pictures* is as perfect a record as you can get. As a producer, I'm always chasing the clarity of something like *Power Windows*."

In fact, connecting these virtuosic Canadian bands feels like the ultimate accolade. "We're not worried about people comparing us to Rush," he says. "I don't think you can get more complimentary than a comparison to Rush. I love seeing the discourse online — 'I don't like them. They sound too much like Rush.' Or 'I don't like them. They don't sound enough like them.' I've always loved Rush's [*philosophy of thinking*] — 'We want to be the world's smallest symphony orchestra.' Trying to do that with two people is like trying to one-up our heroes — or one-down our heroes."

Apocalypse is their most grandiose adventure into this symphonic realm, building on the proggy template — and interstellar good-and-evil storyline — they established with 2023's *Fearless*. The album balances spacey balladry ("Through the Looking Glass") with heavy, punchy rockers ("Blackstar"), all building to the 19-minute climax of the title track, which also pulls inspiration from the Allman Brothers Band and the bonkers 1974 Yes piece "The Gates of Delirium."

Their long-form centerpiece, with its textural shifts and cinematic key/tempo changes, offers plenty of space for Comeau on guitar — from crunching power chords to jittery arpeggios to bluesy leads that sound beamed in from *The Wall*. That fluidity and constant surprise keeps the piece engaging, much like "Echoes" or "Supper's Ready." "When you have a record about going through a black hole and fighting your arch villain through time and space," he says, "the music ends up writing itself. You end up pushing all the crazy polyrhythms even further."

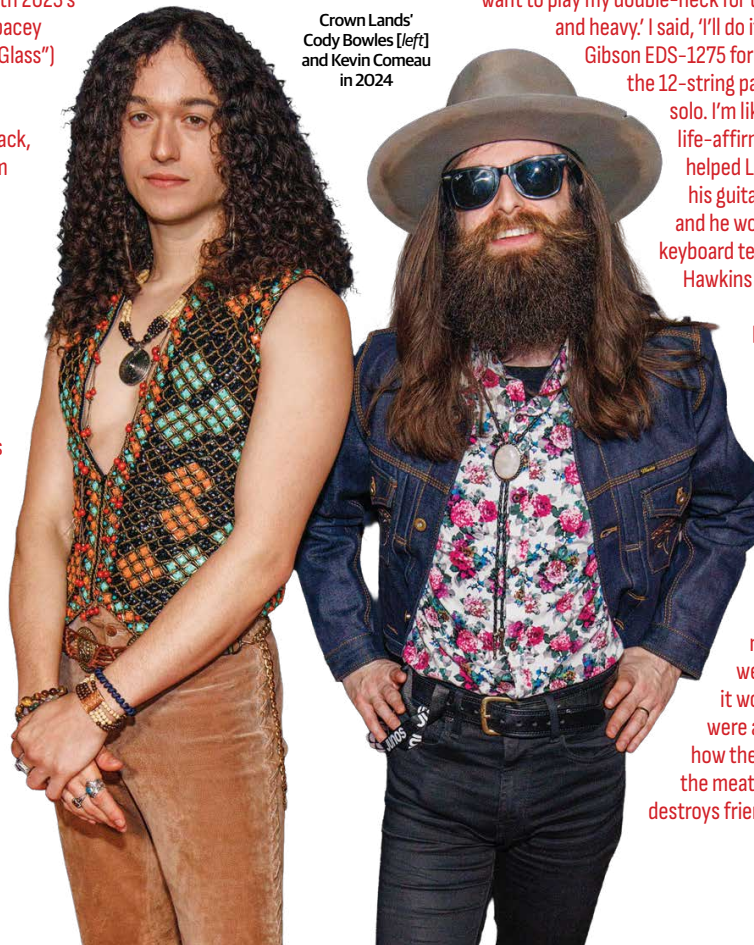
But the monster runtime wasn't the ultimate goal, even if Comeau gets a nerdy thrill out of seeing the track tick past the 19-minute mark. "You're chasing length a lot of the time in prog," Comeau says. "I'm always chasing the 20-minute opus. When we sent the final mix to Ted Jensen, it was 19 minutes and 1 second. Mastering engineers will often lop off any dead space, and the master came back at 18:58. It's the first time I've ever had to send a revision — 'It sounds great, but can you restore the four seconds of silence at the very end so that it stays past 19 minutes?' It's so stupid, but that's progressive rock, baby!"

Even if all of these tunes had been short, Comeau would've had his hands full on *Apocalypse*; along with playing guitar and producing the bulk of the material, he also continued to handle all of the bass, synths and bass pedals. To put it in Rush terms: part Alex Lifeson, part Geddy Lee. To pull off that crazy feat on stage as a two-piece, especially with their songs growing more complex, Crown Lands would either need to scale back dramatically or get super creative. They've chosen the latter route, with Comeau often playing a double-neck guitar/bass custom-built by luthier Brock Stoyko. (There was also a major assist from Lee's bass tech, John "Skully" McIntosh, who helped him wire it. And to land on a suitably "ergonomic" design, Comeau went to Lee's home and took measurements of the Rush legend's own double-necks.)

Comeau's admiration clearly extends well beyond "casual fan." In 2021, Crown Lands joined Lifeson on stage during the annual Andy Kim Christmas Show in Toronto, joining for an all-star Led Zeppelin medley. "In rehearsals, I'm playing every Rush riff I know, like 'The Necromancer,' and Alex is just laughing," Comeau says. "He was so cool. He said, 'I don't want to play my double-neck for this song — it's too long and heavy.' I said, 'I'll do it!' He leant me his white Gibson EDS-1275 for 'Stairway,' so I'm doing the 12-string part while he's doing the solo. I'm like, 'Holy shit, this is life-affirming.'" Later, Comeau helped Lifeson catalog and tune his guitars for a charity auction, and he wound up being Lee's keyboard tech ahead of 2022 Taylor Hawkins tribute show.

Prog is in Crown Lands' blood, and their Rush worship is pure. "When I found Cody, it was like, 'It's perfect!' We're so deep into this niche; I don't know where we'd be if we didn't have each other to fill in [*our*] musical holes. I see that in Rush. They're such singular musicians that, if they were in any other context, it wouldn't work. The way they were able to last for 40 years, how they've stayed friends when the meat grinder of the industry destroys friendships, is so special."

Crown Lands' Cody Bowles (left) and Kevin Comeau in 2024



No doubt you were also considering your health and wondering, "Physically, should I do this?"

LIFESON: Well, I just concentrated on my digestive system. [Laughs] That was the main problem I was dealing with. I've had arthritis for years, and I'm pretty successful in dealing with that, but it was the digestive issues that were the real problem. Millions and millions and millions of people go through that sort of thing. I managed to find a good way to mitigate some of the worst parts of it, and I just feel so much better about my energy and everything in my life, really.

Would it be right to assume that numerous drummers have approached you two over the years?

LEE: Well, yes. I mean, people who are close to us – good friends that are successful drummers – would never infer something like that because they have too much respect, not only for Neil and for the situation... They were grieving as well, so they wouldn't be so selfish as to say something inappropriate like that. There were many other drummers who reached out to me in the aftermath of Neil's passing that were pushing themselves, and that was most distasteful to me. It was completely inappropriate timing.

Of course, we have some great pals who are amazing drummers in their own right, and they're in very successful bands. We didn't really know where to begin to look when it was time to choose a drummer. We started with Anika because she had been recommended to me, and I had done some research on her. I loved her vibe and her diverse style, and I had her in mind in case I was going to do some kind of project.

We didn't have a list. We never, ever accumulated a list of drummers. When Al and I finally said, "Okay, I guess we're getting serious. Who's going to sit in that impossible seat?" How do you ask someone to replace a guy who's irreplaceable?

It's daunting. We started with the name that was already on my mind. We called her up, she came, and we hit it off. Once we were sure... She brought a lot to the table, but more than her chops, more than her guts and her willingness to sit in that hot seat, she brought

an intelligence and a story. I love her story. This is someone who grew up in Germany in a family of musicians. Her dad was a drummer. She's played drums her entire life. She doesn't even remember the first time she picked up sticks. It's who she is. I thought, "Wouldn't that be nice to bring someone so fresh in our midst to inspire Al and me?"

She's a bit younger than us, and she likes to remind us of that. Every time we tell a story about a gig in 1971, she goes, "Wow, I wasn't even born yet." I'm just a big fan of hers, and I think Al has become a big fan of hers. Part of this little journey we're on now is about rooting for her. I really want her to succeed in this moment because she's taking all the heat. The fans love her right now, but they're going to scrutinize her, and she's up for it. I just love that about her.

Did you give Anika a big list of Rush songs to prepare for when she came to play with you?

LEE: We just picked a few classic Rush songs. I said, "Learn these as best you can and let's see what happens." It was very casual, very relaxed, and it wasn't an audition. We said to her, "We're not auditioning drummers, but your playing really interests us. So just come and let's see what happens." ■

"We said, 'Let's see if we can play a Rush song without doing any homework'"

GEDDY



SPLIT BLADES

BY LINDY FRALIN

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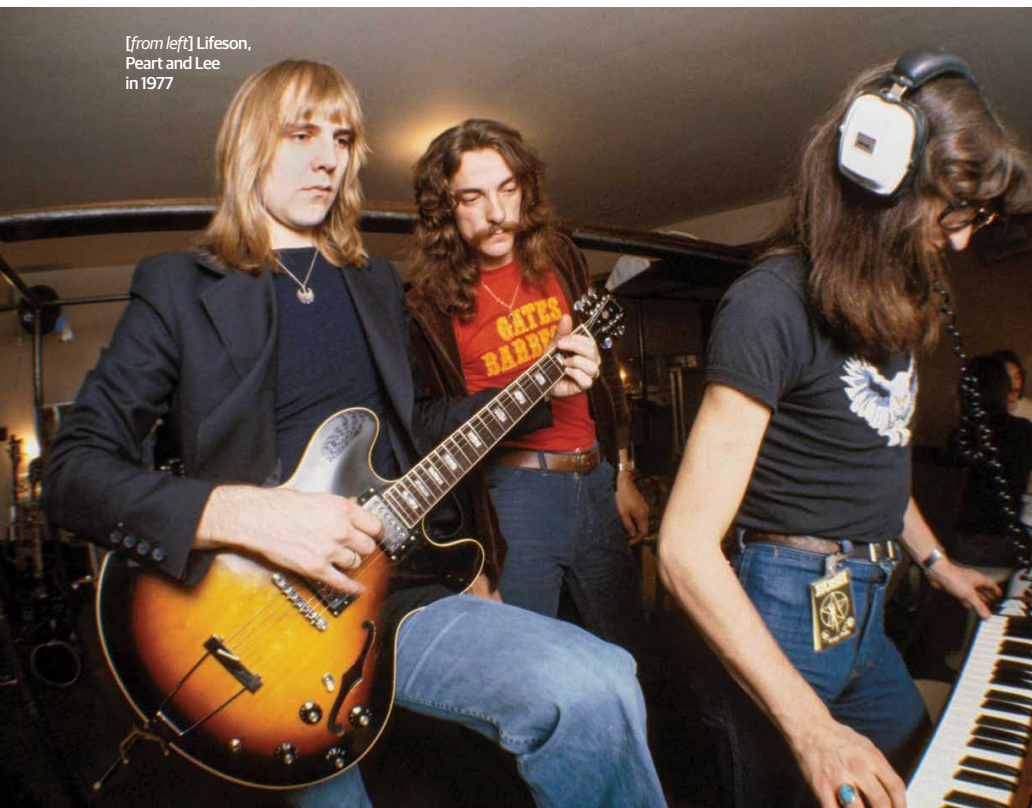
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[from left] Lifeson,
Peart and Lee
in 1977



LIFESON: I didn't know what the expectations were. I probably thought, "She's very good. She seems to have a good grasp of the songs technically." But there was something that was just not quite there. It wasn't really until the last day that suddenly she sort of blossomed and understood better what we were kind of looking for or going after. And then after that, it's just been better progressively through the whole year of

rehearsals we've been doing.

LEE: On the fifth day, this is what happened: We'd gone four days and Al and I hadn't even talked about her. We only had her for a few days, so we wanted to work through all these songs and see her reactions. See her gut feel, learn a little bit about it. We didn't know her. She was a complete stranger, really. She was a bit intimidated when she first arrived, of course, because she'd heard of the band,

but she wasn't a Rush fan. She didn't know the songs intimately. Of course, she knew songs like "Tom Sawyer," and she knew of our reputation, and of course, there's no drummer on the planet that doesn't know who Neil Peart is and doesn't revere that name. It was a tall order for her, but we were so busy working through these songs that we hadn't chatted.

On the last day I said, "Al, can you pop into my house? We have to talk about what's going on here." [Laughs] He came over and I said, "What do you think?" And he said, "I don't know. What do you think?" I said, "I don't know. What the fuck are we doing?" [Laughs] We talked about her pros and cons. There was a sliver of doubt. Her technique was incredible, her facility... Playing the fills was the last problem she would've had. She nailed the fills. That's not the thing. There's a lot more to playing a Rush song than the fills. It's the feel. It's the nuances. Our music is idiosyncratic, and that just takes time.

We've played Rush songs with maybe five or six different drummers over the last few years. Every time you sit and play a Rush song with a drummer, I don't care who they are, there's an adjustment. There's a little translation that Alex and I have to do with the drummer about this little part or that little part. That's normal. But we just weren't sure because this was all new to us. So we went to that last day with an open mind, but a little doubt. And song after song we played with her, she just killed it. I mean, she understood all those little things that Alex and I had been telling her all that week, and she processed it and delivered. That's when we looked at each other in the studio and went, "Yep, we have a real problem, because now we have a drummer and we're going to make a commitment."

For Anika, it wasn't just about recreating the records. It was about bringing her own perspective to the music.

LEE: I don't know if Al feels the same way, but I think she's very respectful of whose parts she's playing. She understands that air drummers for the last 45 years have been out there mimicking some of those parts. She wants to do that justice. At the same time, she's a completely original and independent creative force, but she's sublimating a bit of that for the sake of a tribute to Neil. At the same time, the more she knows the songs, the more confidence she has with the songs. There are moments where she's now able to put her own special sauce on this song or that song. We'll start looking for moments to let her stretch out. We already have a couple in the set where I look at her and go, "Anika, this is free time. You go wherever you want to go, and I'll be there. We'll meet you there."



Nilles makes her Rush
debut at the 2026 Juno
Awards in Hamilton,
Ontario on March 29

I look at it like this: There have been phases to this adventure. Phase one was her understanding Neil's role in Rush. Phase two is like, we've learned all the songs, now let's have some fun with them. Now we're massaging the arrangements and seeing how they can go. At the same time, we're not out there to turn it into a new thing. We're there to represent our songs with our hearts and with our best playing fingers forward. And we want fans to celebrate that music with us. The mandate isn't to change everything. The mandate is to be respectful of the arrangements of the song at the same time elevate from the norm.

You've hired Loren Gold as a touring keyboardist, so it's something of a new presentation.

LEE: That's correct. That's what we wanted. When people come in and look at the stage setup, it's not a trio. It's not Rush 2.0. It's a new time and we've got a different vibe, but the music is treated respectfully.

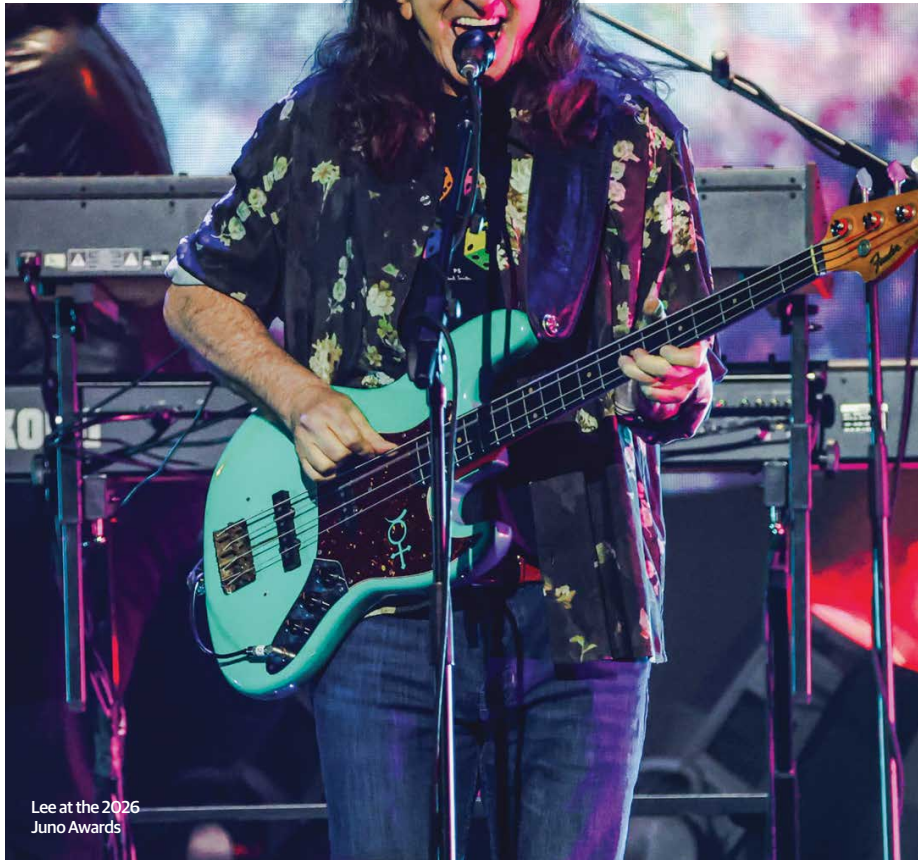
Alex, are there any new guitars you'll bring out on the road?

LIFESON: Yeah, a few. Kirk Hammett gave me one of his Greenies. I've been having fun with that. It's a pretty raunchy Les Paul, for sure. The Gibson Custom Shop did such an amazing job on it. The relic'ing is just spectacular. It sounds really, really great. There's a couple of other Les Pauls. [*He gestures to an Explorer on the wall*] Oh, and I just got this from Gibson. This is a guitar that Cesar [*Gueikian*], CEO of the company, made with some of the craftsmen there. He sent that along for me to check out, so I've been fiddling around with that. It's so different for me in terms of its shape and style. I've got to get used to it.

My original ES-355 has gone to someone else, but I have one of the reissues that I'll have on the road. I'm still sort of building that arsenal. I think I had 23 guitars on the last tour. I'll probably have 15 or 16, something like that. I don't know how many Ged's going to take out this time around. Ged, I think you had probably 25 basses on the last tour.

LEE: Last tour, I had 27 vintage bases that I played. I don't know if I'll get through 27 this time, but it's a slightly shorter show and I've fallen in love with my beautiful '62 Jazz Bass. I'm going to play that on quite a few songs, but I'm also planning to bring some unusual things out. I've got a couple of classic Rickies that I'll bring out. I've got some Hofners and T-birds that I've fallen in love with. I'm going to have, I don't know, maybe 10 to 15 instruments I'll try to work into the set.

At the end of those five days you did with Anika, if things didn't work out, for



Lee at the 2026 Juno Awards

whatever reason, would that have been the end of this experiment, or would you have regrouped and tried something else?

LIFESON: Who knows? I mean, it's impossible to say.

LEE: My gut tells me we would have regrouped and looked elsewhere, but I'm very happy we didn't have to do that. We're really lucky. And also with Loren Gold, our keyboardist – I met him in 2014 when I did a charity show with the guys from the Who in London for their 50th anniversary, ironically. We kind of hit it off. Again, he was one of those names that just stuck in the back of my mind. And when we talked about adding a keyboard player, his was the first name that came to mind. We're very fortunate that the two people who were top of our minds both have worked out really, really well. That's a little bit of a blessing from above, I think. Someone's looking after us there.

Of course, as you said, Neil is irreplaceable, and he's beloved by the band's fans.

"It feels good when it all comes back to you. Muscle memory is beautiful"

ALEX

That said, people seem to be very excited to see Anika play with you guys.

LEE: We're very gratified with how well she's been welcomed by the Rush family, so to speak. They haven't even heard her play one note with us yet, and there's already this kind of outpouring of love for her, and they've shown her tremendous kindness, which I know is inspiring for her. It's been very gratifying to see the response.

She must be a real inspiration to female drummers around the world.

LEE: Yeah. I think that's a great part of her story. I love that part of her story. I've gotten mail from young girls, older women saying, "Right on, man. Thank you."

And now she's part of your story.

LEE: Totally. But let's be clear: We did not hire Anika Nilles because she's a woman. We hired her because she's an incredible drummer, and not just an incredible drummer – an intelligent, hardworking, responsible... I couldn't even get her drunk last night! [*Laughs*] I tried. She's a unique individual. In many ways, she reminds me of the big goof who sat on the throne before her. She's a total professional, a work-first person. The fact that she's female and she's doing that for women musicians around the world, that's a bonus. It's not the reason she's in that seat. **GW**

CLOSEST TO THE HEART

The 20 greatest Alex Lifeson guitar moments
from Rush's studio catalog

BY RYAN REED

I'VE NEVER BEEN very confident, to be honest with you, as a player," Alex Lifeson told *Guitar World* in 2025. "I've always felt like I had to work hard, and maybe I didn't appreciate that I have a natural talent for playing guitar."

Anyone who's heard his work as one-third of the prog-rock institution Rush — from those crashing, Pete Townshend-like chords to his dramatic, shimmering arpeggios — knows he's being charmingly modest. That, or maybe he just needs to re-examine his own songs.

But that's where we come in. To celebrate his 2026 reunion tour with bassist Geddy Lee — which follows the 2015 R40 run, their final outing with late drummer-lyricist Neil Peart — let's take a closer look at 20 of Lifeson's finest studio guitar moments.

"WORKING MAN" (FROM 1974'S RUSH)

Rush were still in their embryonic Led Zep-worship mode in 1974, but they did scrape together one genuine classic for their self-titled debut — an overdriven riff monster with icked power chords, bluesy shredding and a nimble, octave-ascending riff halfway through that feels worthy of spawning its own song.



"FLY BY NIGHT" (FROM 1975'S FLY BY NIGHT)

"Fly by Night," the bruising title track from Rush's second LP, opens with a flurry of guitar moves that wound up becoming Lifeson signatures. The triumphant D major, the resounding sus chord, the beautifully tense and chromatic arpeggio — there are so many little moments, just in the first 10 seconds, that can make any Rush fan smile and nod with recognition. Guitar-wise, it's all building to a killer post-chorus solo, stacked with bluesy bent notes and pinched harmonics.

"THE NECROMANCER" (FROM 1975'S CARESS OF STEEL)

In a 2018 *Guitar World* feature, now-former Gwar guitarist Pustulus Maximus broke down his love for "The Necromancer," a nearly 13-minute psych-prog fantasy behemoth from Rush's third LP. "The beginning sounds very much like Pink Floyd, but Lifeson's solo in the rock part has an amazing groove and feel," he said, describing the epic's ebb and flow. This one's definitely unique in the band's catalog — from that stoner-ific intro section, with reversed guitars and chorus-y guitars rising like weed-smoke plumes, to the sheer ferocity of the solo and the clean-tone jangle that follows. "The Necromancer" is (understandably) a divisive Rush song, but no one can doubt its merits as a well-rounded guitar showcase.

"2112" (FROM 1976'S 2112)

It almost feels unfair to cite "2112" as a song, given that it sprawls out over seven sections and nearly 21 minutes — occupying the entire first side of Rush's titular breakout LP. But Lifeson really swings for the fences throughout this grand conceptual work: nailing those enormous delayed chords in Overture, bathing his arpeggios in cinematic chorus throughout "Oracle: The Dream," adopting an almost punk-like energy during the

climactic attack of "Grand Finale." One of his most genius moments actually involves the technically weakest playing; at the beginning of "Discovery," his out-of-tune plonking approximates our protagonist stumbling upon a guitar ("What can this strange device be?" Lee sings) and figuring it out in real time.

"CLOSER TO THE HEART" (FROM 1977'S A FAREWELL TO KINGS)

Despite being heralded as an elite of heavy prog guitar, Lifeson has a real knack for gentle, pastoral playing. As he explained to *GW*'s Acoustic Nation, the band workshopped their earliest material using acoustics and a cassette recorder — then bringing in the amplification and energy later on. "Closer to the Heart" shows the best of both worlds, as Lifeson builds from chiming 12-string to, eventually, anthemic harmonized solos.

"XANADU" (FROM A FAREWELL TO KINGS)

The mighty "Xanadu" expertly illustrates how Rush did so much with so few pairs of hands: Lifeson and Lee tag-team the driving main riff with maximum creativity, tackling the descending lines in unison or veering apart for added color. The standout guitar section happens immediately, with Lifeson adding ambient volume swells over Peart's drifting chimes.

"LA VILLA STRANGIATO (AN EXERCISE IN SELF-INDULGENCE)" (FROM 1978'S HEMISPHERES)

The winking subtitle points to the band's underrated sense of humor — and on this hypnotic instrumental, Rush use Lifeson's ever-vivid real-life dreams as a launching pad for some of their wildest genre flips and tightest ensemble playing. Across nearly 10 minutes, the trio explore everything from psychedelia to hard rock to jazz-fusion, with Lifeson the obvious star of this dreamscape. His solo

swells during A Lxrxst in Wonderland might be the most evocative playing in his catalog.

“JACOB’S LADDER”
(FROM 1980’S *PERMANENT WAVES*)

After a bright, strident opening march, Rush chase the storm clouds into one of their heaviest-ever riffs. Lifeson is at the top of his game here, layering his guitar theme into octaves for even more impact. Rush were rarely more intense than they were on “Jacob’s Ladder.”

“FREEWILL”
(FROM *PERMANENT WAVES*)

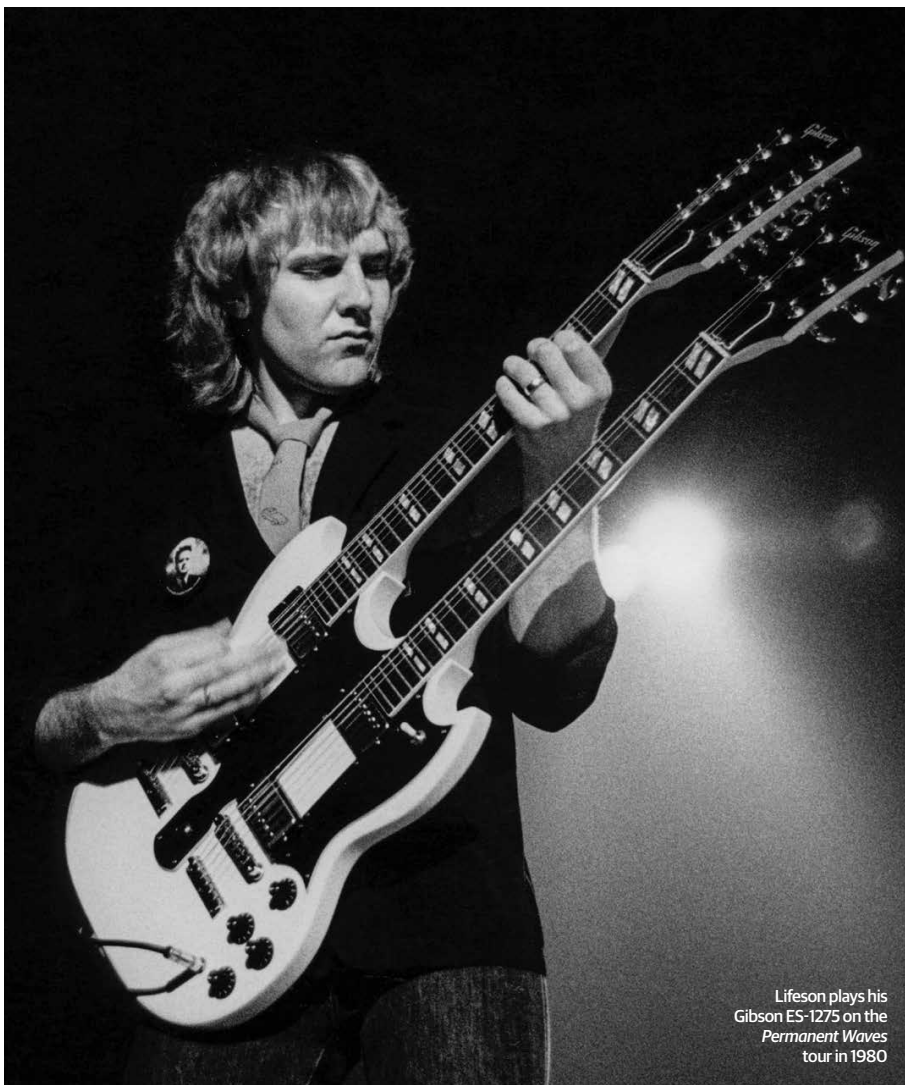
Despite all the recorded evidence to the contrary, Lifeson and Lee are mere mortals. When they started jamming again after a long hiatus following the R40 tour, the guitarist told *Ultimate Classic Rock* that they sounded like a “really, really bad Rush tribute band.” The toughest nut to crack was reportedly the surging fan-favorite “Freewill,” which features one of the most frenetic guitar solos he ever tracked. “There’s a lot of notes,” he said. “The solo is crazy.”

“YYZ”
(FROM 1981’S *MOVING PICTURES*)

It’s the most fittingly proggy sidebar in Rush history; the band’s first Grammy nomination came with “YYZ,” a track built around a rhythmic Easter egg nodding to Morse Code for a Toronto airport. Just perfect. The song’s main riff is already ace enough, showing just how much mileage you can get out of two notes if you put your mind to it. But the piece becomes a classic when Lifeson stretches out – the solo at the midway point is deliciously disorienting, peaking with a virtuosic run of finger-tapping.

“LIMELIGHT”
(FROM *MOVING PICTURES*)

“Limelight” is up there with the most poignant Rush tracks, channeling Peart’s fame-induced isolation into four minutes of sleek (if still proggy) radio-rock bliss. Lifeson’s dreamy arpeggios and chunky chords are



Lifeson plays his Gibson ES-1275 on the *Permanent Waves* tour in 1980

already enough – it’s just a bonus that he churned out a god-tier, whammy-filled solo on his Hentor Sportscaster, a Strat outfitted with a Gibson humbucker and a Floyd Rose tremolo. “It was the perfect selection to create the soulful, elastic and unstable character for the solo of that song,” he told *Guitar World*.

“THE ANALOG KID”
(FROM 1982’S *SIGNALS*)

“*Signals* was a weird record for me,” Lifeson told *Guitar World* in 2025, noting that their heavier use of keyboards created “more of a fight for space with the guitar.” But that argument shouldn’t apply to “The Analog Kid,” which saves most of its synth presence for some booming pads on the chorus. Elsewhere, Lifeson takes charge – including on the solo, which features a nifty harmonizer-type effect.

“DIGITAL MAN”
(FROM *SIGNALS*)

Upon first listen, “Digital Man” sounds more

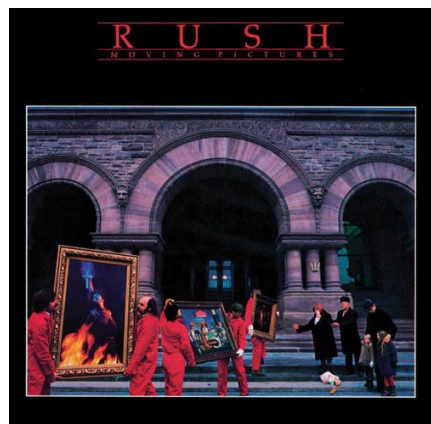
suited to a list of Geddy Lee’s finest moments, given his wildly melodic and grooving bass line. You might even look first to Peart, who adds some tastefully placed tom-tom fills and fierce hi-hat work. But Lifeson also deserves marquee mention, anchoring the track with his stabbing, Police-like chords and a woozy solo with a touch of David Gilmour in its bluesy bends.

“KID GLOVES”
(FROM 1984’S *GRACE UNDER PRESSURE*)

Is this Lifeson’s ultimate guitar solo? The tremolo-bar madness, the blue-sky harmonics, the brushes with ska and rockabilly – all packed into one blistering run that somehow feels both composed and improvised.

“HAND OVER FIST”
(FROM 1989’S *PRESTO*)

Why did Rush never play “Hand Over Fist” live? Why did they refrain from releasing it as



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a single? No great answer. This punchy rocker is a highlight from the sadly overlooked *Presto*, with Lifeson leading the charge. He does a bit of everything – that trebly funk-rock intro, the busy bluesy groove, the squealing pinched-harmonic leads, a less-is-more solo with some majestically sustained notes.

“LEAVE THAT THING ALONE”
(FROM 1993’S *COUNTERPARTS*)

As the Eighties wore on, Lee’s keyboards grew to be a little controversial, both within and outside the band. After a series of more atmospheric, synth-heavy LPs, *Counterparts* arrived like a welcome punch of heaviness, offering more of an overall sonic balance – and much-needed presence to Lifeson’s riffs. “Leave That Thing Alone” is a perfect example, highlighted by his skyrocketing, psychedelic solo.

“TEST FOR ECHO”
(FROM 1996’S *TEST FOR ECHO*)

Lifeson was so enthused about his guitar tone on “Test for Echo” – a roiling, textured wave of acoustic and electric – that he gave *Guitar World* a thorough, multi-paragraph breakdown. He used a Les Paul Custom and a Godin Acousticaster, tuned down to D standard, through a variety of heads and



cabinets. But the most important element here is the vibrancy of his riff writing, which suggests that perhaps Rush had been soaking in Tool’s recent work.

“EARTHSHINE”
(FROM 2002’S *VAPOR TRAILS*)

Lifeson once again sounds like he’s channeling Tool and other modern prog-metal throughout *Vapor Trails*, often exploring ultra-dark guitar tones via modern-sounding production. Of course, the album’s sound was, to put it mildly, polarizing, and Rush released a remixed edition in 2013.

“Earthshine” might be the album’s sonic and songwriting peak, with a choppy riff pogoing off Lee’s high, yearning vocal.

“BRAVEST FACE”
(FROM 2007’S *SNAKES & ARROWS*)

When you’ve been a rock band for three decades – especially one with a sizable fan base – it’s hard finding new pathways to explore. It’s admirable, then, just how different Rush sound on “Bravest Face.” Here, Lifeson often zigs when you expect him to zag, moving from a grungy atmosphere into a raw acoustic riff and a solo with a strangely laid-back, bluesy vibe.

“CARNIES”
(FROM 2012’S *CLOCKWORK ANGELS*)

“Carnies” is easily one of Lifeson’s simplest guitar riffs – but it also might be his heaviest, built on some borderline-metal harmonics that carry the entire song. But he also manages to work in some experimental flourishes, including a kaleidoscopic tremolo effect that lends itself well to the subject matter. “It’s almost like a carousel,” he told *Guitar World* upon the album’s release. “Ged and I were like, ‘Oh, my God, that’s so cool!’ It really sounds like you’re on this horsey going up and down.” **GW**

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Fender 75th Anniversary American Professional Classic Cabronita Telecaster

The Tele's "asshole cousin" trades traditional twang for a boutique growl that looks as sharp as it sounds

BY MATT MCCrackEN

▶ DESPITE THE SENTIMENT that Leo Fender "got it right the first time," we've seen hundreds of different versions of the Telecaster over the years. And the Cabronita might just be one of the boldest. The first Cabronita was a Custom Shop model created by Mike Eldred. In his own words, it was created to be the "asshole cousin" of the regular Tele, combining a simpler aesthetic with a style that was more aggressive than a standard T-type. A prototype was sent out to names such as John Mayer, Keith Urban and Billy Gibbons, and when the first concept was released, many players opted to copy the design with their own mods as the price wasn't accessible for most.

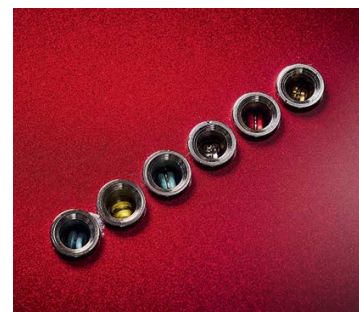
This Fender 75th Anniversary American Professional Classic Cabronita Telecaster is the odd one out in the lineup of five instruments Fender has launched to mark 75 years of one of the most popular electric guitar designs in the world. It's the only one that eschews the classic dual-single-coil pickup format (or the HS of the Ultra II model) in favor of two TV Jones TV Classic humbuckers.

It's also the only one to feature the diminutive Cabronita pickguard and come in a choice of colors, with Candy

The Cabronita is stunning looking, and this model is impeccably finished

Apple Red and Ice Blue Metallic finishes. The deluxe tuners feature striking pearloid buttons, and interestingly, there's just a single master volume knob paired with a three-way toggle switch to change between bridge, neck and both pickups. On the back, a limited edition 75th Anniversary neck plate boasts an engraved diamond with the dates 1951 to 2026, and a small hole for Fender's underrated Micro-Tilt adjustment to change the neck angle.

This Cabronita is certainly a stunning-looking guitar, and this model is impeccably finished. The metallic, Candy Apple Red looked resplendent in the early spring sunshine beaming through our



PHIL BARKER/FUTURE





patio doors, and the combination of the maple neck, chrome hardware, and those pearloid tuner buttons makes it stand out in a different way from the garish Liquid Gold of the Ultra II model.

Plugging into a Mesa Boogie Mark VII combo amp, we started on the clean channel with the bridge pickup engaged to begin sound testing. With

the amp settings replicating a Fender-esque mid-scoop and a touch of spring reverb, the sound was articulate and chimey, with every note of the open chord progression we played ringing out superbly. Switching to a country-inspired pedal note lick, the feeling was the same, a lovely balance that didn't get drowned out by the drone notes.

STREET PRICE: \$1,999.99

MANUFACTURER:
Fender, fender.com

PROS:

- ✦ Incredibly playable neck profile and low action out of the box
- ✦ TV Jones pickups deliver super articulate tones
- ✦ Versatile enough to handle a decent variety of sounds
- ✦ Looks absolutely incredible and well finished

CONS:

- Some will wish for a master tone knob
- The middle position was a little underwhelming
- Rolling off the volume knob led to a big loss of treble

VERDICT: This Cabronita Tele delivers a high-octane character that's occasionally stubborn, but it stands out from the crowd thanks to the bright attack of the TV Jones pickups. It'll reward players who love aggressive tones and like to dig in with their picking hand, but could frustrate those who like to ride their tone and volume knobs.

In the neck position and moving to some jazzy, descending arpeggio licks, the trademark light/dark balance Teles are well known for was still present. Here, the tones are on the warm side of dark, with a bit more presence than you'd get in the typical Tele neck pickup position. It sounds wonderful, and there was a nice bite when we dug in with our pick on triads further up the neck.

With the crunch channel of the amp set with all the EQ knobs just shy of the 12 o'clock mark, brash open chords were again nice and articulate on the bridge setting. It's low-gain drive heaven here, those TV Jones pickups letting us chug aggressive palm mutes without getting so hairy that they delved into metal territory. However, backing off the volume knob revealed a flaw; the lack of a treble bleed circuit dulled the tone a little too much for our tastes. We could recoup a bit of this with the treble knob on the amp, but then when we pulled the volume back up, it was too trebly.

Trying the middle position for the first time, it felt a little dull on softer playing, but we could eke out more of the attack of the bridge pickup by striking the strings harder with our pick. Played aggressively, the treble bloomed really nicely, giving a nice balance of the darker neck position and bright bridge sound. It was a bit lackluster when we switched back to the clean channel, as the neck pickup slightly overpowered the bridge, resulting in a sound that was skewed darker rather than balanced between the two.

Finally, we moved to the high-gain channel of the amp to see if the Cabronita Tele could get heavy. It wasn't bad at all for rhythm playing, and we found ourselves able to coax out Rage Against the Machine-inspired single-note licks in the neck position, and even some Mastodon-esque palm-muted power chord riffing that sounded great in the bridge. Lead work with the bridge humbucker was overly bright, however, and here we found ourselves wishing for a tone knob to dial it back a touch. In the neck position, it sounded incredible, with a nice bite to it, enshrouded by an overall feeling of thick warmth that never descended into overpoweringly muddy, no matter how far we moved down the fretboard. **GW**

PHIL BARKER/FUTURE





Gibson L-00 Century 12-Fret

Gibson harkens back to its past with a 12-fret version of an acoustic classic

BY DARYL ROBERTSON

▶ TO MARK 100 years of acoustic guitar design, Gibson has launched the Century Collection, a family of instruments that reaches back to the very roots of the company, pairing retro aesthetics with a vintage tone to match. The series spans everything from an L-1 to a J-45 and J-185, plus the L-00 we tested here. This parlor-style can often fly under the radar when discussing Gibson's famous flat tops. Dating back as far as the Thirties, the Gibson L-00 has found favor with blues players and folk singers thanks in part to its compact feel and mid-forward tone.

As you'd expect, the compact body sticks to the tried-and-tested formula of a mahogany back and sides, a Sitka spruce top and a single-ply cream binding running around the perimeter. Where things get interesting, though, is the shift to a 12-fret neck-to-body joint rather than the familiar 14-fret layout. That change nudges the bridge into a more

central position on the soundboard, and Gibson reckons it makes a real difference, helping the top work more efficiently, improving playing comfort and delivering a warmer, more articulate, livelier tone. Let's find out for ourselves.

The satin nitrocellulose finish looks the part for this lightweight 4 lb. instrument, lending the guitar an understated, almost worn-in quality straight out of the box. We can already imagine how good it'll look with a few years of honest playing on it. That said, the black satin finish does have one notable weakness: it picks up grease and fingerprints at an alarming rate. A quick wipe-down after every session is going to become part of the routine, whether you like it or not.

When we sat down with this L-00 on the sofa, and it just felt right. The compact body tucked in naturally, the scale length felt effortless to maneuver around on, and the SlimTaper neck profile was comfortable and familiar from the first chord. It's a guitar we found ourselves constantly going back to, meaning to noodle for 10 minutes and then put down an hour or two later.

The 12-fret neck join does change the geometry slightly compared to a standard L-00, and if you spend a lot

of time above the 12th fret, you'll notice the body gets in the way sooner than you might expect. We think fingerstyle players in particular will love this guitar the most, though. Everything about the way this guitar is set up feels tailored to that style of playing.

If you're after something that'll fill a room and compete with a belting singer, look elsewhere. That said, what it lacks in volume it more than makes up for in character. The mid-range sits in a frequency range that supports rather than overwhelms a vocal, and the natural compression of the small body means your voice can sit on top of the guitar without having to fight for space.

The tone is warm and woody, with a mid-forward quality that sits beautifully for blues and fingerstyle playing. The mahogany back and sides give the low-end a rounded, mellow thump rather than a booming bass response, and the Sitka spruce top adds just enough brightness to keep things from getting muddy. For blues players, it's almost unfairly well-suited. Play a slow Delta shuffle on it with your fingers, and it sounds like it was built for exactly that purpose, because, in many ways, it was. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$2,299

MANUFACTURER:
Gibson, gibson.com

PROS:

- + Very playable
- + Perfect tone for blues and fingerstyle
- + Comes with a nice tweed case

CONS:

- The black satin finish gets greasy quickly
- Fret ends on our test model could be better (needed additional dressing)

VERDICT: This new L-00 is a handsome, small-bodied acoustic that sings with a retro voice. This model is effortless to play and makes the perfect sofa companion. Okay, yes, it's not the loudest guitar in Gibson's lineup, and it certainly doesn't have the depth or body of something like a J-45, but it has bags of character and plenty of charm.

Fingerstyle players in particular will love this guitar the most

PHIL BARKER/FUTURE

Danelectro Dan O. Cool Baritone

This retro-inspired semi-hollow baritone offers a refreshing departure from your typical extended-range guitar

BY MATT MCCrackEN

THIS YEAR, DANELECTRO has launched a wave of new, retro-inspired guitars under the moniker Dan O., looking to inject some Fifties vibes into the lives of the modern guitar player. And with more affordable baritones becoming a theme in 2026, this model is well timed.

Featuring a semi-hollow body with a center block, it has an aluminum nut with a rosewood fretboard and a gigantic 29.75" scale length, which is large even for a baritone guitar. It also boasts "skate key" tuners, which look very vintage and are arranged in a 3x3 format. At the opposite end is an aluminum bridge piece, which is raised from the body and has a rosewood saddle, as you'll find on

A very playable guitar indeed, despite its absolutely huge dimensions

a lot of Danelectros, but is quite rare to see on an electric guitar.

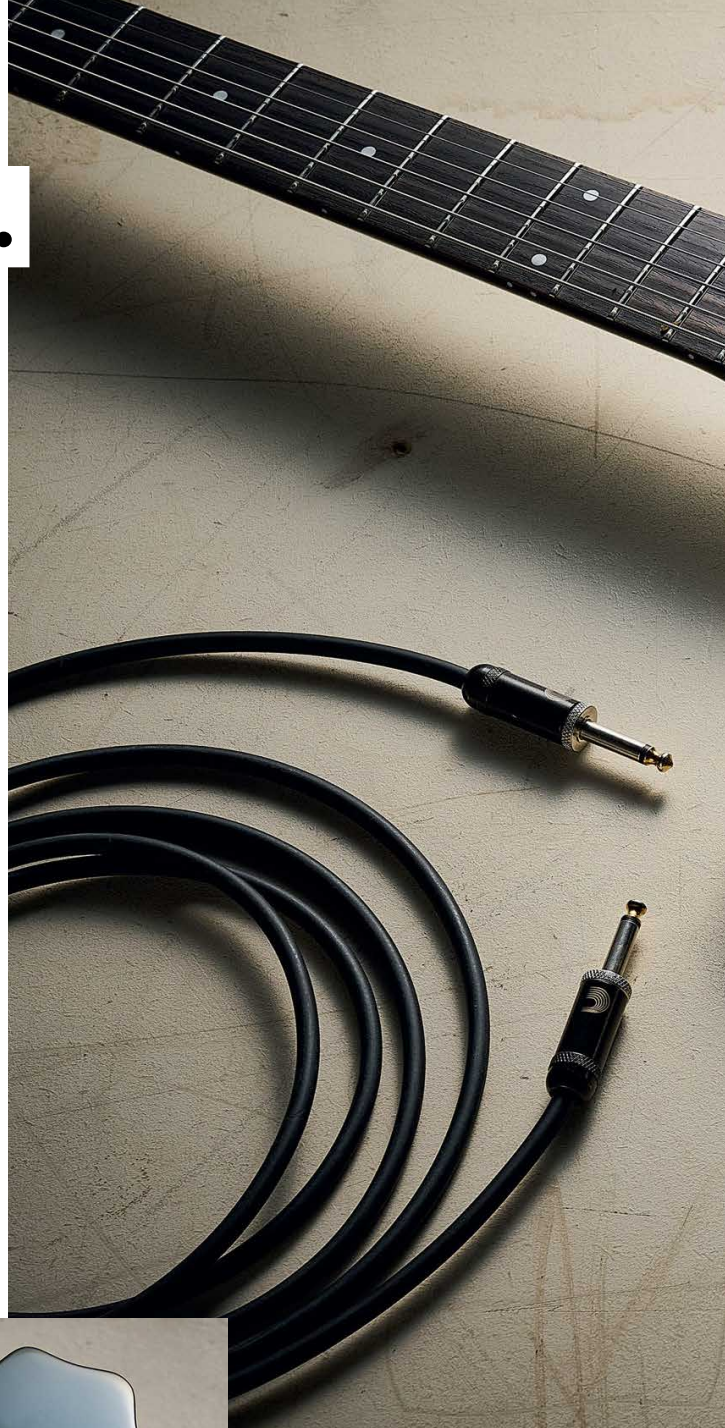
In terms of electronics, we have two Fifties lipstick single-coils, modified to be a little hotter than Danelectro's typical offering. These are controlled by a single master and single tone control, while a 3-way pickup switch handles switching duties. The body's frame is made of solid spruce – with hardwood top and bottom panels – which is very similar to Danelectro's Fifties construction. There's a rosewood fretboard with a hard Canadian maple bolt-on neck, with the whole guitar finished in a very Army-esque olive drab green. The exterior of the body is wrapped in a textured gold that's very unusual but well applied here.

The nut sits ever so slightly proud on the bass side of the neck, but it doesn't get in the way, while similarly, on the back of the guitar, the control plate hasn't been sunk into the guitar body but instead sits on top of it. The screws for the pickups and those for the neck are also non-recessed,

presumably as a way to save on costs. There are a couple of dark spots on the fretboard, but these small niggles aside, our review model is well put together overall.

When we sat down to play it, we were impressed with the monster scale length. It's absolutely huge at 29.75", and we found ourselves having to make some adjustments when playing larger stretches near the neck. It also took us a while to warm up just playing power chords there, such is the size of the thing. Despite that, the action is pretty friendly out of the box, measuring around 1.5mm at the 12th fret with a finger on the 1st fret, and we could quite easily clamp down

MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE





STREET PRICE: \$649

MANUFACTURER:

Danelectro,
danelectro.com

PROS:

- + The neck pickup is particularly standout, offering some inspiring tones
- + Semi-hollow build with center block makes it lightweight and resonant
- + Long scale length offers excellent stability for drop tuning
- + Distinctive looks set it apart from other baritone guitars

CONS:

- The bridge pickup was a bit too bright for us
- The strap button placement is awkward
- If you use baritones for heavier styles, this isn't ideal

VERDICT: If you're looking for a baritone guitar that thrives in metallic territory, this ain't it. But for nearly every other low-tuning duty, the Dan O. Cool Baritone is a great-value extended-range instrument that can cater to a wide variety of styles.

with some barre chords when playing near the nut.

Moving onto some lead work, it was surprisingly slinky for legato runs after the 12th fret, but we definitely needed a supporting finger or two for the bends, thanks to that 14-gauge high B string. They're not impossible, but players new to baritones will need to build up some stamina for full tone bends and beyond here. Despite our hands getting tired a little sooner than might be expected, we found it to be a very playable guitar indeed, despite its huge dimensions.

Plugging into a Fender Princeton, our first impression of the lipstick pickup in the bridge position is that

it's incredibly bright, to the point that we immediately reached for the tone knob and dialed it back most of the way. Paired with some spring reverb and a hint of tremolo, it sounded incredibly inspiring whether we were playing open chords or picking single-note licks. It's a very bright and dynamic sound, with a hint of that sitar-like twang from the bridge and nut combo. It doesn't sustain particularly well, though.

Switching to the neck pickup, this quickly became our favorite position versus the spikiness of the bridge sound. It was still bright, but lost a bit of that icypickiness in the upper registers that made it great for long

open chords with plenty of depth on the tremolo knob from our amp.

Pairing it with some slide guitar licks, we spent a good few hours experimenting with different playstyles, finding the sound to be endlessly entertaining no matter what we played on it from a back catalog of rock, country, and blues in our repertoire. For less precise stuff, it can moonlight as a good metal guitar with sludgy power chord licks and loosely played riffs sounding pretty good. If you want those super-tight breakdowns of modern metal however, the single-coils are just a bit too noisy, even with a decent noise gate engaged. **GW**



MATT LINCOLN/FUTURE

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe 30th Anniversary

Fender celebrates 30 years of the Hot Rod Deluxe with an edition that boasts a speaker change and a classy aesthetic

BY PETE EMERY

▶ THE FENDER HOT Rod Deluxe is a guitar amp almost every guitarist will be familiar with. Famed as a high-headroom pedal platform, it is a common sight in venues all over the world, as well as within the rigs of the serious hobbyist and the professional guitar player. This year, the Hot Rod Deluxe turns 30 years old, and – given its impact – it deserves to be celebrated. So Fender has marked the occasion with a limited, 30th Anniversary edition.

This version takes the current 40-watt 1x12 iteration (the Hot Rod Deluxe IV) and spruces it up a bit with what Fender calls a “Black Western” vinyl, but also swaps out the Hot Rod Deluxe IV’s usual Celestion A-Type speaker for a Celestion G12M-65 Creamback. So the question is, is it worth the extra \$250?

The lightweight pine chassis felt up to the challenges of a hard-gigging life. We say “lightweight,” and that is relative. This is a tube amp, and as such is a hefty 41 lbs., but, as the “lightweight pine” moniker would suggest, it is on the lighter side for tube-driven, 1x12 combos.

The appearance of the 30th Anniversary Hot Rod Deluxe is striking in a classy sort of way. This is

completely subjective, of course, but we much prefer the Western stylings of the black, textured vinyl and the brown grill cloth here compared to the understated, plain black and grey of the original, though the textured finish is slightly lost in the black of the material. We’d have liked to have seen the footswitch reflect the anniversary styling, though; it’s the same as the usual IV model’s.

The joy of the good ol’ tube amp is that, in general, they are fairly simple beasts. This holds true with the Hot Rod Deluxe, as it’s a case of plug in, tweak the four EQ controls to your liking and go. Switching between the clean and drive channels is facilitated by the Channel Select button, the Normal/Bright button added more high-end, the More Drive button added, well, more Drive to the Drive channel, and the amount of reverb is adjusted via a single Reverb control. So far, so self-explanatory.

Of the amp’s two inputs, most of us are going to be using Input 1, while Input 2 is a low-gain input, primarily for the purpose of preventing the preamp from breaking up too early when using high-output pickups. While this is understood to be the usual function of multiple inputs on a



tube amplifier, there’s nothing on the front panel to indicate this is the case.

The Hot Rod Deluxe’s clean channel is renowned as a high-headroom, incredibly loud amplifier, perfect for showing off your pedalboards, and this held true with the 30th Anniversary edition. Standing around seven feet away, and using a Fender Telecaster, we were hitting roughly 103dB with the Volume control at three, and the channel didn’t break up until around seven. But there are some real changes when it comes to tone. The standard Hot Rod Deluxe is known for a mid-forward sound, with a tight bass that perhaps lacks a little life in the highs, but is great for showing off your carefully curated collection of pedals.

In the 30th Anniversary edition, the Celestion G12M-65 Creamback speaker results in a less mid-forward and more open sound, making the high end feel a little more lush. By the time the clean channel started to break up for us, it was way too loud for all but the biggest of stages, so it was time to get some overdrive pedals out. In our case, a T-Rex Mudhoney II and RYRA Klone, supplemented with the Wampler Cory Wong Compressor and an MXR Carbon Copy Delay. The 30th Anniversary version did an even better job of the pedal platform thing than the standard model, as, due to that more open nature, it allowed extra detail to be heard. If the special edition aesthetic here appeals too, it could be well worth the extra outlay.

However, just like the standard model, we found the Drive channel usable but far from the highlight of the Hot Rod Deluxe IV as it can verge on bright and spikey with single-coil pickups, especially. That said, the low end is tight, and you’ll be heard in a live mix. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$1,299

MANUFACTURER:
Fender, fender.com

PROS:

- + Loud!
- + Excellent pedal platform
- + The Celestion G12M-65 Creamback speaker results in a more open sound compared to the standard model
- + Classy aesthetic

CONS:

- The drive channel will still be a bit too spikey for most
- The carry handle is a little uncomfortable
- The footswitch does not reflect the limited edition colors

VERDICT: The 30th Anniversary Hot Rod Deluxe sports a speaker change that enhances what the well-renowned amp was already good at – showing off lovingly constructed pedalboards. It’s the same loud, high-headroom sound but with a more open, clean tone that boasts a little extra life.



Laney Prism-Mini

This 6-watt mini practice amp doesn't tether you to your smartphone, but there are some growing pains

BY MATT MCCrackEN

THIS ISN'T THE first time this Birmingham, England-based amp maker has forayed into the fast-growing market of tiny practice amps, with the Prism being preceded by the Laney Mini-Lion, Lionheart Stereo and the Supergroup Mini. But this is the first time Laney has gone fully wireless and digital; previous offerings required you to physically connect your phone to the amp to use additional software.

The Prism-Mini boasts 100 presets, dual 1.5" speakers outputting three watts each in true stereo, and the ability to run six different effects at once. Bluetooth connectivity allows for connection to the Tone-Wizard companion app for deeper editing, as well as allowing you to stream music from your phone. The app also features a drum machine and a built-in guitar tuner, and, of course, the Prism-Mini is equipped with a headphone output for silent practice.

Housed in a handsome navy blue enclosure (a black version is also available), the Prism-Mini is one of the better-looking mini amps we've tried. The front grille features an interlocking pattern of navy and mustard yellow that features on the

Laney Lionheart. White piping rounds off a cool-looking amp; it's a welcome change from the typical black we see in this category of combo.

The Prism-Mini does away with most of the physical controls you'd typically see on a guitar amp, like gain/volume and EQ knobs, and instead opts for a purely digital experience. There's a Volume knob, plus an endless encoder for navigating the menus and changing parameters. A dedicated "Back" button allows for navigation back through the menus, and pressing the encoder and Back button together unlocks the built-in tuner.

Turning the amp on and diving straight into some sounds, we started sans-app, choosing to navigate the tones via the physical controls. It's pretty simple to navigate, even with just the single encoder. Turning the knob initially cycles through the presets, with a single press getting you deeper into the signal chain. From then on, you can dive into each individual amp or effect block and tweak at will.

There are 17 amp models to choose from, and obviously, the focus is on Laney's own amps with the

Lionheart, Ironheart, Digbeth and Cub featuring. You get seven effect blocks, two of which are Volume and EQ, with Preamp, Drive, Modulation, Delay and Reverb making up the latter. The Drive, EQ and Volume blocks are fixed alongside the Amp and Cab blocks, but the others can be moved pre or post, which opens up some options for sound exploration.

We downloaded the somewhat amusingly named Tone-Wizard app to our Google Pixel smartphone without any serious issues. Pressing the Bluetooth button paired it instantly with our phone, and we could access a different way to amend the tone settings. It's pretty simple looking, but we didn't mind that.

Beginning by cycling through the presets, we found some really great sounds straight off the bat. From spanky clean funk tones through to full-on metalcore, the Prism-Mini is a capable little amp indeed, and it doesn't suffer from the boxiness that often plagues these smaller amps. The mid-gain stuff handled very well, and it responds nicely to picking dynamics as well as rolling-off the volume knob of the guitar. There are enough different amp sounds that the vast majority of playing styles are well accounted for here.

The dual 1.5-inch speakers definitely help with the sense of space offered by the reverb and delay tones here, and there's some really nice ambient stuff with endless reverbs and long delay tails that sound absolutely huge considering the size of the amp. The quality of the effects is overall really fantastic, and the flexibility with tweaking, while not as in-depth as some, still gives you plenty of room to maneuver.

At higher volumes, the lack of low-end did become more noticeable, but that's a natural limitation of such a small speaker design, and it's not a deal-breaker when this amp's primary use case is for jamming at home. That said, the lack of a passive radiator means that other amps like the similarly priced Positive Grid Spark Go sound a bit fuller when cranked. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$149

MANUFACTURER:
Laney, laney.co.uk

PROS:

- ★ Super easy to use and navigate via the built-in screen
- ★ Great amp tones and excellent effects selection
- ★ Very sharp looks and solid build quality
- ★ Lightweight and compact enough for travel use

CONS:

- Distinct lack of low-end at higher volumes
- The top-mounted screen isn't easily visible if you play sitting down

VERDICT: Overall, the ease of use makes the Laney Prism-Mini a really fun practice companion. The fact that it doesn't rely on the companion app is a boon in our book, making it easier to put down the distracting smartphone and focus on actually playing.

From funk tones to metalcore, the Prism-Mini is a capable little amp





Act Entertainment Sterling Vermin

This pedal impressively presents itself as an evolved and cultivated ProCo RAT dressed in shining armor

BY PAUL RIARIO

▶ THE PROCO RAT'S signature molten saturation has captivated countless musicians, from gutter-rocking punks to doom metal players, who have incorporated its unique, sludgy distortion into their music. Because of this, its enduring appeal has also led to a few boutique brands offering modern and authentic takes on the classic RAT circuit.

Now, Act Entertainment has taken up the mantle of the RAT brand and introduced a more refined and outwardly ornate RAT pedal called the Sterling Vermin. In all but name, this pedal still has the soul of a RAT, but it now transcends its predecessors in a shiny, refined form with selectable clipping diodes that expand its dynamic range and signature distortion.

The Sterling Vermin presents a surprisingly elegant appearance. Unlike the original mil-spec RAT pedal, the SV features a polished mirror finish on its stainless steel housing, accented by laser-annealed decorative calligraphic swirls around its chunky, lowercase name.

According to its designers, Shawn Wells and Matt Gates, who refined it, the Sterling Vermin is built in small batches and hand-soldered in their Jackson, Missouri, facility, further cementing that the pedal occupies both a “boutique” vibe and space. The pedal features an LM741 Op-Amp and a pair of clipping diodes selectable by a mini-toggle.

Essentially, the Sterling Vermin is a more refined RAT, offering two subtle variations on the classic hard-clipping circuit. The SV's most notable feature, setting it apart from other RAT pedals, is its selectable

It still has the soul of a RAT, but it transcends its predecessors in a shiny, new form



clipping diode mini-toggle switch. This switch provides two distinct tonal options: “SI” (traditional silicon diode) and “BAT41.” The “SI” setting offers a familiar sound, delivering that aggressive, heavy-midrange grind similar to a standard RAT pedal. In contrast, the new “BAT41” option yields a smoother response and improved dynamics.

We found the pedal nearly identical in tone to the vintage examples we compared it to, and it successfully preserves the RAT's shaggy distortion and fuzz blend on its selectable “SI” diode setting.

RAT pedals always had a raucous nature when you attenuate their higher frequencies via the Filter control, and the Sterling Vermin is no exception. As you turn the Filter control counterclockwise past two o'clock toward noon, the distorted textures can become overly bright and grindingly sharp. Conversely, pushing the Filter past three o'clock introduces the more desired, darker, and bottom-heavy tones that flesh

out its wall-of-sludge saturation. We found having both the Distortion and Filter set somewhere between the 2 o'clock range is the hallowed middle ground and sweet spot where the SV sounds wonderfully thick, heavy and spongy – all the hallmarks that make this pedal a bona-fide classic.

Frankly, we don't hear too much of a contrast between the “SI” and its newer “BAT41” diode setting. What we do hear is the frequencies soften a bit, and there's an ever-so-slight drop in output in the “BAT41” mode. Here, the SV's thickened distortion sounds smoother, tighter and more defined, even when we turn the Distortion clockwise toward fuzzier textures. But if you're not looking for doom and gloom as your tonal backdrop, dialing back the Distortion knob is where the Sterling Vermin can become more of a “Sterling Screamer.” With less grind, the SV imitates a soft-clipping stance, which works best for drawing out nuanced amp-like, overdriven tones, adding perceived weight to chords and single notes. **GW**

STREET PRICE: \$349

MANUFACTURER:
Act Entertainment,
actentertainment.com

PROS:

- + The traditional RAT circuit has been refined into a boutique-quality stompbox
- + Two selectable clipping diodes
- + Hand-soldered construction and premium looks

CONS:

- Undeniably expensive

VERDICT:

Act Entertainment has taken a worthy stab at transforming its lowly rodent pedal into a veritable rat king.



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THE DEEP END
BY MIKE STRINGER

Bottoms Up

Creating dissonance with low voicings on an 8-string guitar

ALTHOUGH THE 7-STRING guitar is my go-to instrument for virtually all of the music I write for Spiritbox, there have been instances where I was inspired to expand my range to 8-string guitar. Even though I'm not all that familiar with the 8-string, I look at it as a cool tool that can enable me to compose riffs that are lower than anything else I've ever played. To that end, I used an 8-string to come up with something powerful, to serve as the opening track to our 2025 album *Tsunami Sea*, "Fata Morgana." We've been opening our sets with this song for the last year, and it has proven to be a fantastic way to kick off the show.

The 8-string tuning I use here is standard 7-string tuning down a whole step, and the eighth string is tuned down to a very low B. So, low to high, it's B, A, D, G, C, F, A, D. In this tuning, I can play a B octave with the open 8th string and the B at the 2nd fret on the 7th string, using what looks like a power chord.

FIGURE 1 shows the song's primary riff, which revolves around that low B octave figure sounded along with the tritone, F, sounded at the 3rd fret on the 6th string.

In bars 1-6, I alternate between this Bdim(no3) voicing and a high natural harmonic (N.H.) sounded between the 2nd and 3rd frets on the 7th string, notated as 2.4. In bar 4, I sound natural harmonics in this same position across the top seven strings with a quick upstroke rake. While lightly resting a single fret-hand finger across these strings at the theoretical 2.4 location, I drag the pick in an upward motion, resulting in an aggressive "scrape" sound.

To me, the articulation of the Bdim(no3) chord needs to create a specific type of bloom wherein all of the notes morph together in an effective way. It needs to sound warm, heavy and disgusting! This is achieved by

8-string guitar, tuned (low to high) to B, A, D, G, C, F, A, D.

FIG. 1 Bdim(no3) N.H. N.H. N.H.

1
T
A
B

4
N.H. N.H. N.H.

7
21/2 21/2 N.H. N.H. N.H.

10
N.H. N.H. N.H.

13
N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H.

FIG. 2

T
A
B

21/2 21/2 21/2 21/2 21/2 21/2

4* (4) 3* (3) 4* (4) 3* (3) 4* (4) 3* (3)

FIG. 3

T
A
B

1/2 1/2 21/2 21/2 21/2 21/2

9 8* (8) 9 8* (8) 4* (4) 3* (3) 4* (4) 3* (3)

positioning the pick-hand with a slight amount of palm-muting while striking the strings in just the right place, which is above the bridge pickup.

At the end of bar 6 into bar 7, I play a series of big two-and-a-half-step bends on the 8th string, moving between the 4th and 3rd frets.

FIGURE 2 offers a look at these bends and releases. Proper intonation of these bends is essential; as shown in **FIGURE 3**, the notes we are looking to sound are G#, followed by a half-step bend and release on G one fret lower.

The manner in which one strikes the strings when performing these bends and releases is very important, in order to achieve the type of clarity necessary for the phrase to jump out. The way to attain the right sound is by picking very hard. This is also true for the natural harmonics, in order for them to properly cut through the mix.

Overall, focus on your pick-hand attack throughout, and strive for consistency in sound as you move from one pattern to the next. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/july2026

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.

KYLE JOINSON



TALES FROM NERDVILLE
BY JOE BONAMASSA

Why I Sing the Blues, Part 1

The core element of my guitar playing

THE FOUNDATION OF virtually every genre of modern, guitar-driven music is the blues. I'm known as a blues-rock player, and even within the rockier side of my music, I always start and end with the blues.

For example, if I'm playing in the key of F, I will very often rely on melodic single-line figures that originate from my love of and time spent listening to single-note blues guitar improvisation. **FIGURE 1** illustrates five bars of improvised soloing that are very vocal-like. I begin in the 6th-position "B.B. box," which positions the index finger on the F root note on the B string's 6th fret. The surrounding notes – D, G, A♭, B♭ and C – make reference to both the F major pentatonic (F, G, A, C, D) and F minor pentatonic scales (F, A♭, B♭, C, E♭).

Bars 2 and 3 shift up the board to focus more on F minor pentatonic, but at the end of bar 3 into bar 4, I move from F major pentatonic back into F minor pentatonic. Switching between these two scales is a staple of blues guitar that I learned from listening to all of my heroes: B.B. King, Otis Rush, Eric Clapton, Peter Green and many others.

With that familiar ground firmly established, it feels like a natural transition to broaden the harmony into other modes. In **FIGURE 2**, I add the notes G♭ and D♭ to F minor pentatonic while substituting the major 3rd, A, for the minor 3rd, A♭. The result is the F Phrygian-dominant mode (F, G♭, A, B♭, C, D♭, E♭), which is the fifth mode of the B♭ harmonic minor scale (B♭, C, D♭, E♭, F, G♭, A), made up of the same seven notes. In bar 3, I move back into blues territory with a phrase based on F minor pentatonic.

FIG. 1 (F7)

Figure 1 shows five bars of guitar and bass notation. The guitar staff (T) and bass staff (B) are in 4/4 time. The key signature is one flat (F major). The notation includes fret numbers (e.g., 6, 8, 7, 9, 6, 8, 7, 6, 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 11) and rhythmic markings such as triplets (3) and half notes (1/2). The bass staff shows a simple accompaniment pattern.

FIG. 2 (F7)

Figure 2 shows five bars of guitar and bass notation. The guitar staff (T) and bass staff (B) are in 4/4 time. The key signature is one flat (F major). The notation includes fret numbers (e.g., 11, 13, 13, 11, 13, 14, 13, 11, 11, 14, 13, 11, 10, 11, 10, 13, 10, 10, 8, 7, 5) and rhythmic markings such as half notes (1/2) and quarter notes (1/4). The bass staff shows a simple accompaniment pattern.

FIG. 3 (F7)

Figure 3 shows six bars of guitar and bass notation. The guitar staff (T) and bass staff (B) are in 4/4 time. The key signature is one flat (F major). The notation includes fret numbers (e.g., 10, 13, 15, 16, 13, 13, 15, 15, 13, 15, 15, 13, 18, 18, 18, 18, 18, 16, 18, 18) and rhythmic markings such as half notes (1/2) and quarter notes (1/4). The bass staff shows a simple accompaniment pattern. Chord changes are indicated by (C), (B♭), and (F) above the staff.

I'll begin most solos with lines rooted in the blues, even if it's not a blues song. I learned that from Eric Clapton; I saw an interview where he said, "I always start with the blues." You will certainly hear great examples of this in his recordings with John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers and Cream.

To my mind, it's not just about the scales; it's about the phrasing and how tactile you are in your articulation and execution. The thought process is, which notes should sting, which notes should moan, and how can I effectively express emotion.

FIGURE 3 picks up at the fourth bar of an improvised phrase, kicking off with an F major triad (F, A, C). This is a good example of how a triad can function as a "stepping stone" when moving from one phrase or area of the neck to another. In bar 5 and into bar 6 of the figure, I lean a bit heavier into the gas pedal with fast phrases inspired by another one of my big influences, Eric Johnson.

I've found it very useful to have built a foundation in the blues, which helps me to move into broader musical territory. Next month, we'll explore this further. **GW**

JEFF FASANO/GUITAR WORLD

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/july2026

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

The Almighty Riff

The guitar as a catalyst for songwriting

IN THIS COLUMN, I'd like to talk about guitar playing as it relates to songwriting. And as every guitarist knows, it's all about the riff!

All great riffs have that instant allure that immediately captures the listener's ear and attention. This is true in every style of guitar-based music. Songs like "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," "Purple Haze" and "Walk This Way" are all great examples of the power of the almighty riff.

I wrote a song called "Let It Burn" for our 2017 album, *Like an Arrow*, that is built from a simple, catchy riff based on an open G chord. It all started, as is often the case, during a soundcheck. I was playing a Fender Telecaster or Esquire, and I said to our late drummer, Brit Turner, "Hey man, play the 'train' beat!"

I began playing **FIGURE 1**, which became the main riff in "Let It Burn." With my fret-hand in a 3rd-position G chord shape, I begin by repeating the low G root note in a syncopated, punctuated rhythm, followed by oblique bends and releases on the G and B strings. In these bends, the note on the G string is bent while the note on the B string remains stationary. These bends are followed by single-note riffs based on the G major pentatonic scale (G, A, B, D, E).

We jammed on that for about five minutes, setting up the "runka-runka" feel of typical Chuck Berry-style rock and roll. I then went home and put the verse section together by singing over the G5 - G6 rhythm part. As shown in **FIGURE 2**, I moved from the rock and roll figure to a ringing C/G chord, and then back to the runka-runka part.

This is how I began to put the lyrics and melody together, and a song evolved from the initial riff idea. This prompted me to map out

Moderately Fast ♩ = 164

FIG. 1 (G)

1. 2. G5

FIG. 2 G5 C/G G5

FIG. 3 G C/G

G5 C/G D5

C5 D5

FIG. 4 Em D#aug G/D A9/C#

FIG. 5 C5 F5 G5

FIG. 6 D5 Bb (F) (F#) (G)

the first half of the verse section, shown in **FIGURE 3**. The alternating G and C/G chords in bars 1-5 led me to the D5 - C5 - D5 in bars 6-9. At that point, I felt that it'd be great to bring in some kind of harmonic twist. When it comes to mixing rock and roll with the unexpected, in my opinion, the three of the greatest bands are Rockpile, NRBQ and, of course, the Beatles.

I thought, "What would they do?," and came up with the musical curve ball shown in **FIGURE 4**. Starting on the relative minor chord, Em, I arpeggiate the chord and then chromatically drop (descend) from the E root note to D#, D and C#, resulting in the progression Em - D#aug - G/D - A9/C#. The verse section then wraps up with a return to rock and roll in **FIGURE 5**.

All of this set up the chorus, and I now had my story; the protagonist in the song's lyrics had had enough of this town and wanted to see it in his rearview mirror, and, preferably, on fire, so the vocal line is, "Let it burn!"

FIGURE 6 illustrates the end of the chorus section, which balances the rock and roll approach of the D5 - D6 chord movement with a heavier Bb - F figure in bar 2, which then brings us back to the intro.

Now that all the elements were there, I had to put on my arranger/producer hat and give the song some order and structure and sharpen the picture so that it would work as effectively as possible. And herein lies the balance between initial inspiration and a completed, fully realized song. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/july2026

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*.



BLUES EXPANSIONS
BY COREY CONGILIO

Three's a Charm

Building a rhythm part from triads

A GREAT WAY to devise a creative and unusual rhythm part is to superimpose a variety of triads over a static one-chord vamp. As you may know, a triad is a three-note entity that, in its most universal function, represents a specific type of chord. The most common types of triads are major – built from a root, major 3rd and 5th – and minor – built from a root, minor 3rd and 5th.

When playing over a one-chord vamp, that chord represents a key center from which many different triads can be built. Let's begin with a simple, funky rhythmic vamp built on an A7 chord, as shown in **FIGURE 1**. This is a repeating one-bar pattern that starts with hammer-ons on the A and G strings, followed by syncopated accents on the top four strings.

One could just play different voicings and inversions of A7 over this groove all day long and it'll sound great. But the way to get the most out of this approach is to recognize A7 as a chord derived from the A Mixolydian mode (A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G), which is the fifth mode of the D major scale (D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#). This means one can use all of the scale's triads – D, Em, F#m, G, A, Bm and C#dim – to discover new rhythm patterns to play over A7 that are even more colorful and interesting.

FIGURE 2 illustrates the triads Em (E, G, B) and F#m (F#, A, C#) played on the top three strings alongside the A7 chord voicing. If you know your triads on the neck, you can devise some really cool rhythmic ideas. For example, **FIGURE 3** demonstrates Em and F#m triads played on the D, G and B strings before moving over to the top three strings.

FIGURE 4 offers an example of utilizing the F#m and Em triads over the funky A7 rhythm part. Notice that the triads are

FIG. 1 A7

FIG. 2 Em F#m Em A7

FIG. 3 Em F#m Em F#m Em Em F#m Em Em F#m Em

FIG. 4 (A7)

FIG. 5 (A7)

FIG. 6 (A7)

FIG. 7 (A7)

strummed in syncopated 16th-note rhythms and shift smoothly from one to another via finger slides. **FIGURE 5** switches things up by ending with a dyad/single-note type of riff.

In **FIGURE 6**, I branch out from minor triads by including some triadic inversions: on beat 2 of bar 1, I bring in a 1st-inversion G triad (G, B, D), sounded with B, the 3rd, as the lowest note. On beat 3, I include a 2nd-inversion D major triad (D, F#, A), with A, the 5th, on the bottom.

As one can see, these options provide more sounds than does simply riding on voicings of A7. There are Em and F#m triad shapes to be

found all over the fretboard and on different string groups, so be sure to explore every area of the neck to discover where these triad shapes reside.

As long as we return to our key center of A7, we have some cool options to explore. In **FIGURE 7**, I incorporate some chromatic movement between G and A triads to bring in another variation.

Look to map out all of the voicings of the aforementioned triads that live within the D major scale and try to find inventive ways to move between them when playing over a static A7 vamp. **GW**

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B6AMAG

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS

BY JIMMY BROWN

SLEEP TOKEN "The Summoning"



GUITAR PLAYING FANS of this song have come up with resourceful ways to adapt and emulate its super low and heavy-sounding

8-string guitar parts (see Gtrs. 1 and 2) for 7- or even 6-string guitar, using various altered tunings in conjunction with digital pitch-shifting. We've chosen, however, to present them as recorded in the studio and performed live by guitarist IV, which is on 8-string guitar.

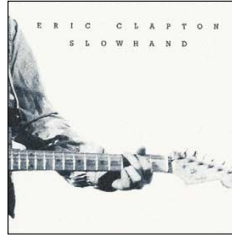
The tuning for these 8-string parts is altered to "drop-A, drop-E," with strings 7 and 8 tuned down a whole step from the expected B and F#, respectively, matching the pitches of a standard bass guitar's A and E strings. So the tuning is, low to high: E, A, E, A, D, G, B, E. Note, however, that all the instruments in the arrangement, including Gtrs. 3 and 4, which take over for the song's outro (section M) and are conventionally tuned 6-string guitars (tuned, low to high, to E, A, D, G, B, E), and the 5-string bass (tuned, to high, to B, E, A, D, G), are digitally pitch-shifted down a half step. This is reflected in the tuning legend at the beginning of the transcription, which adds a flat symbol (b) before each note name.

The song's intro and verse riffs are played almost entirely on the bottom string, with some long, 12-fret finger slides. These parts are fairly easy to play, the biggest technical consideration being keeping all the unplayed higher strings quiet, via some preemptive muting with both the fret hand and pick hand. As the verse gets underway at section B, notice the application of palm muting (P.M.) to the played notes, which serves to subdue the volume and texture of the guitar line behind the vocals.

The chorus (section D) begins with huge-sounding three- and four-note stacked power chords for the first eight bars, followed by a return to single notes.

One particularly tricky aspect of playing this song is the use of odd and shifting meters throughout the intro and elsewhere, with the pulse and beats being counted as eighth notes instead of the usual quarter notes. In all the bars of $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$ and the like, the upbeat "and" counts are written as 16th notes. For example, bars 1 and 2 are to be counted "1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 1 and, 2 and, 3 and, 4 and, 5 and, 6 and."

ERIC CLAPTON "The Core"



FEATURED ON THE same landmark 1977 Eric Clapton solo album, *Slowhand*, as the hit singles "Cocaine," "Lay Down Sally" and "Wonderful

Tonight," this rocking song showcases more of the legendary guitarist's celebrated blues-rock soloing than the other three tracks combined.

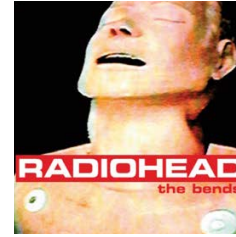
Clapton kicks off "The Core" with a punchy, repeating two-bar riff in E that alternates between single notes and accented E and A chords. Note the unusual voicings the guitarist plays here, with the E chord played on only the 5th and 4th strings. When strumming this two-note shape, take care to keep the unused G string from unintentionally ringing, using your fret hand to dampen it.

During the chorus (section C), notice Clapton's percussive, fret-hand-muted "chuck" strums, indicated by X's, between the main, accented chords. The key to making this part groove is keeping your pick hand moving in a flowing down-up-down-up manner with the underlying 16th-note feel, allowing the pick to silently pass over the strings during the eighth-note rhythms and rests.

Alternating minor and major licks is a Clapton hallmark

Clapton relies on the trusty 12th-position E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D) box pattern for many of his lead licks, using string bends liberally and a variety of syncopated rhythms to craft long, exciting phrases. In bar 60, he momentarily moves up to the "B.B. box" (as in B.B. King) rooted on the B string's 17th fret, to play a series of warmer sounding E major pentatonic (E, F#, G#, B, C#) licks before coming back to the darker flavor of E minor pentatonic in bar 65. Alternating between minor and major pentatonic phrases like this is a hallmark of Clapton's polished soloing style. In the last four bars of his first solo, bars 69-72, the guitarist visits another familiar go-to pattern for E minor pentatonic, in 5th-7th positions on the middle four strings. Note the 3rd-finger slide from the 7th fret to the 9th in bar 69, which is the key to traversing this diagonal fretboard soloing path.

RADIOHEAD "Just"



THIS INVENTIVELY CRAFTED opening track from Radiohead's 1995 sophomore album, *The Bends*, is built around unusual chord

progressions and riffs, crafted mainly by guitarist Jonny Greenwood, that include colorful chromatic movement and other musical twists.

The song begins with vocalist-guitarist Thom Yorke strumming, on acoustic guitar (Gtr. 1), a repeating two-bar progression of major barre chords – C, Eb, D, F – on his middle four strings, supported by co-guitarist Ed O'Brien doubling the root notes in strummed octaves on an overdriven electric (see Gtr. 2, *Riff B*). Meanwhile, another dirty electric (Gtr. 3, played by Greenwood), also plays strummed octaves and additionally provides a harmonious climbing melody while employing fast tremolo strumming to create an exhilarating pummeling-while-sustaining effect.

Notice how, in bars 3 and 4, Greenwood's Gtr. 3 line continues to ascend over the Eb - D - F changes, moving up to the major 3rds of the D and F chords – F# and A, respectively. The line continues climbing in bar 5, completing a walk up the spooky-sounding eight-note C whole-half diminished scale (C, D, Eb, F, F#, G#, A, B), with the same eight notes then repeated an octave higher. When reprising the melody line in bars 50-54, Greenwood creatively employs a DigiTech Whammy pedal on the repeat to pitch shift all the notes up two octaves, creating ever-increasing tension as the line ascends into the Stratosphere.

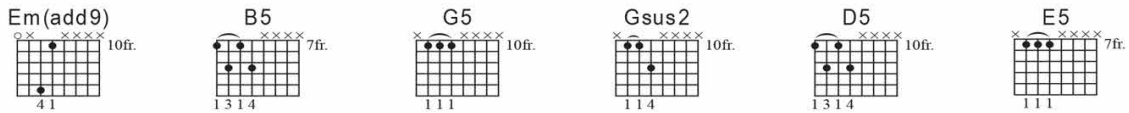
During the interlude (section F) all three guitarists, playing clean electrics at this point, outline and harmonize the song's cool and unusual Am - Ab - Eb - Bb verse progression with different strummed octave figures. As noted earlier in the performance notes for "The Core," notice here how Radiohead's guitarists all use fret-hand muting to sound pitchless, percussive "chuck" strums on certain 16th notes while also employing 16th-note pendulum strumming to keep their strum rhythms flowing with the underlying groove. This same constant-motion (down-up-down-up) pick-hand technique is also applied to the single notes in bars 61 and 62 and the ensuing Outro Guitar Solo at section J. [G.W.](#)

SLEEP TOKEN

"The Summoning"

AS HEARD ON TAKE ME BACK TO EDEN
 WORDS AND MUSIC BY VESSEL
 TRANSCRIBED BY JEFF PERRIN

Gtrs. 1 and 2 are 8-string guitars in altered tuning, pitched down one half step (low to high: E_b, A_b, E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b, B_b, E_b).
 Gtrs. 3 and 4 are 6-string guitars in standard tuning, pitched down one and one half steps (low to high: C_#, F_#, B, E, G_#, C_#).
 5-string Bass is pitched down one half step (low to high: B_b, E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b).



A Intro (0:00) (0:09)
 Moderately Fast ♩ = 172

GTR.1

N.C. (E5) (G5) (E5) (F#5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

(production effects) 1 Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.) (doubled throughout)

TAB 4/4

0 15-15-15-15 0 2^{*} 2 (2) 2 2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 2 2 2 (2) 2 0 3 3 3 3 0

5-string Bass

TAB 4/4

0 15-15-15-15 0 2^{*} 2 (2) 2 2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 2 2 2 (2) 2 0 3 3 3 3 0

GTR.1

(F#5) F#C N.C. (F#5) I've got (E5) (G5) (E5) P.M.-----

5

TAB 6/8

2^{*} 14 (14) 0 2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 2 2 3 3 3 2^{*} 2 0 0 5 6 5 6 5 0 3 3 3 3 0

TAB 6/8

2^{*} 14 (14) 0 2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 2 2 3 3 3 2^{*} 2 0 0 5 6 5 6 5 0 3 3 3 3 0

B Verse (0:22)
 a river running right into you I've got a
 (F#5) (E5) (G5) (E5)
 P.M.-----

GTR.1

TAB 6/8

2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 (2) 2 2^{*} 2 2 2 2 2 (2) 2 2 0 3 3 3 3 0

TAB 6/8

2^{*} 2 (2) 2^{*} 2 (2) 2 2^{*} 2 2 2 2 2 (2) 2 2 0 3 3 3 3 0

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blood trail red in the blue

Something

(F#5)

(E5) (G5)

(E5)

12 P.M.

GTR.1

you say or something you do

The taste of

(F#5)

(E5) (G5)

(E5)

15 P.M.

GTR.1

the divine

You've got

(F#5)

N.C.

18 P.M.

GTR.1

C 1st Pre-chorus (0:44)

my body flesh and bone yeah

The sky

Em(add9)

N.C.

21 let ring

GTR.1

E (1:18)

35 (F#5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

GTR.1

Bass Fig. 2 end Bass Fig. 2

38 (F#5) (E5) (F#5) (G5) (F#5) (E5) (G5) (E5) N.C.

GTR.1

pitch: G#

F 1st Drop (1:30) (♩ = 86)

42 N.C. (E5) (D#5)

GTR.1

GTR.2

(pick scrape) let ring

21 17

Bass Fig. 3

TRANSCRIPTIONS

(E5) (F5)

44 P.M. P.M.

GTR.1

(G5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

46 P.M. P.M.

GTR.1

♩ = 172
You've got

G (1:54)

my body flesh and bone The sky

(F#5) (E5) (G5) (E5)

Gtr. 1

49 P.M.

GTR.1

above the Earth below

52 P.M.

GTR.1

H Guitar Solo (2:04)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 1 (w/dist. and chorus effect)

54

GTR.1

Bass

sign told from God that or are you really that here to cast me off
 you God that I didn't wish that I could be your man

117

GTR. 3

Oh maybe just to turn me on 'Cause
 Or maybe make a good girl bad

Chord diagrams: (E5), (F5), (F#5), (G#5)

120

GTR. 4 (elec. w/fuzz and octave-down effect) *(on repeat only)*

GTR. 3 *end Rhy. Fig. 1*

Bass *end Bass Fig. 4*

I've got a river running right into and you bone
 You've got my body flesh and bone

I've got a blood trail
 The sky above the

Chord diagrams: (B5), (C#5), (E5), (F#5)

123

GTR. 4

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 (see bar 115)

red in the blue
 Earth below

Something you say or something you do
 Nothing to say and nowhere to go

The taste
 The taste

Chord diagrams: D6 [(E6)], (D5) [(E5)], (D#5) [(F5)]

126

GTR. 4

of of the the divine divine

129

GTR. 4 *(1st time only)*

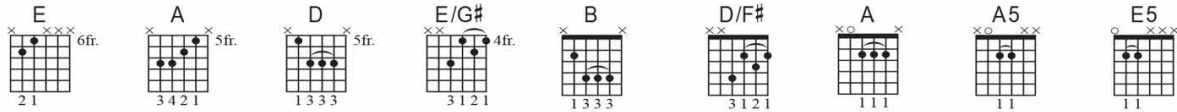
Chord diagrams: (E5) [(F#5)], (F#5) [(G#5)]

ERIC CLAPTON

"The Core"

AS HEARD ON **SLOWHAND**
 WORDS AND MUSIC BY **ERIC CLAPTON** AND **MARCY LEVY**
 TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

Note: As a result of the tape playback speed being sped up during the mastering process, all pitches on the recording sound slightly sharp (approx. 34 cents). To play along, tune all strings slightly sharp.



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 103

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/amp overdrive)

Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

1 let ⑥ ring - - - - . let ⑥ ring - - - - (repeat previous two bars) 2

*Chord symbols in parentheses reflect implied harmony.

(E5) E A (E5) D A (E5) E A (E5) D A

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

Gtr. 2

Rhy. Fig. 2

GTR. 2

5

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

B 1st and 2nd Verses (0:18, 1:51)

1. Every morning when I wake a feeling soon begins to overtake me
 Ringing in my ears resounds through my brain it finally surrounds me
 There is fire there is life There is passion fever and fury Yeah

2. If it should become too cold I know I can endure the frostbite
 blanket then I'll wrap around me and keep myself so close to my side
 no one then can cause me harm Just as the river runs into the sea Well
 Because

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 5)

Gtr. 1

GTR. 1

9 let ⑥ ring - - - - . let ⑥ ring - - - - (play 3 times) 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 7)

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TRANSCRIPTIONS

D (1:19, 2:52)

N.C.

A5

N.C.

end Rhy. Fig. 3 Rhy. Fig. 4

26

GTR.1
GTR.2

end Bass Fig. 3 Bass Fig. 4

2nd time: (Yes it's burning)

E5

N.C.

A5

N.C.

end Rhy. Fig. 4

29

GTR.1
GTR.2

end Bass Fig. 4

E (1:33, 3:06)

2nd time, skip ahead to F (bar 41)

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

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

Bass

33 Bass Fill 1

end Bass Fill 1

Go back to B 2nd Verse (bar 9)

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

37 let 6 ring - - -

let 6 ring - - -

let 6 ring - - -

let 6 ring - - -

GTR.1
GTR.2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 7)

F (3:16)

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

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

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/amp overdrive)

41

GTR.3

Bass

G Saxophone Solo (3:25) (♩ = 104)

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)

Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)

Gr. 3 (1st time only) (play 5 times)

GTR. 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)

H 1st Guitar Solo (3:52) (♩ = 105)

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 12 times (see bar 1)

Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 12 times (see bar 5)

GTR. 3

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 12 times (see bar 7)

(E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3

let ring -----

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A

GTR. 3

(E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A

GTR. 3

let ring -----

*Notes played slightly 'behind' the beat.

(E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) E A

GTR. 3

(E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A

GTR. 3

TRANSCRIPTIONS

(E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3 68

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3 71

I 3rd Verse (4:47)

You can trust me we can laugh Together we can share our sorrow And
 (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

Gr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 eight times (see bar 1)

Gr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 eight times (see bar 5)

GTR. 3 73

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 eight times (see bar 7)

I will give you secrets too An attitude that you may borrow A
 (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3 77

gypsy woman said to me One thing you must bear in your mind
 You are young and you are free But damned if you're deceased in your own lifetime

(E5) E A (E5) (D) (A) (E5) E A (E5) (D) (A)

GTR. 3 81

(play 3 times)

J 3rd Chorus (5:24)

Oh you have a flame
 Feel it in your heart
 And down at the core is the hottest part We can run
 D/F# A D/F# A D/F# A

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 17)

GTR. 3 85

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 17)

K (5:47)

without fuel
 B

A5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 27)

GTR. 3 89

Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 (see bar 27)

(It's burning)

GTR. 3 93

RADIOHEAD

"Just"

AS HEARD ON THE BENDS

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **THOMAS YORKE, JONATHAN GREENWOOD, COLIN GREENWOOD, EDWARD O'BRIEN AND PHILIP SELWAY**

TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

NOTE: All instruments on the recording sound approximately one quarter step higher than written. To play along, tune all strings slightly sharp.

Chord diagrams for the following chords:

- C: 1444
- Eb: 1444 (6 fr)
- D: 1444 (5 fr)
- F^{VIII}: 1444 (8 fr)
- A5: 134 (5 fr)
- Ab: 134211 (4 fr)
- Eb5: 134 (6 fr)
- F5: 134 (xxx)
- F: 13421 (x)
- Bb: 134211 (6 fr)
- G5: 134 (xxx)
- G: 1342 (xx)
- Gb: 1342 (xx)
- C5: 134 (xxx) (8 fr)
- Gb5: 134 (xxx)
- C^{open}: 32 1
- Am: 134111 (5 fr)
- E: 231
- E5: 11 (xxx)
- D/A: 11444 (5 fr)
- C7#9: 2134 (x)

A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 88

C Eb D F^{VIII} C Eb D F^{VIII}

1 Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff A
trem. pick

GTR. 3

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff B

GTR. 2

Gtr. 1 (acous.)

Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1

Bass

B 1st Verse (0:17)

Can't get the stink off

He's been hangin' 'round for days

C Eb D F^{VIII} A5 Ab

Gtr. 1 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 (see meas. 3)

Gtr. 2 repeats Riff B (see meas. 3)

Gtr. 3

Gtr. 1

GTR. 3

Bass

Bass Fig. 1

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G (2:26)
 C5 Gb5 F5 C5 Gb5 F5 You do it to yourself
 Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 twice simile (see meas. 17)
 Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 3b twice simile (see meas. 17)
 Gtr. 4 continues w/ad lib pick scrapes until **I**

GTR. 2

44 Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)

 Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 17)

H 3rd Chorus (2:36)
 C Gb F
 you do and that's what really hurts 'cause you do it to yourself
 just you You and no one else You do it to your -
 Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3a twice (see meas. 17)
 Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 3b twice (see meas. 17)

GTR. 1

48 Gtr. 1

 Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 17)

(1.) { (Ah) self You do it to your - (Ah) 1. self Ow }
 (2.) { (Ah) Self (Ah) 2. }
 C Eb D F^{VIII} C Eb D F^{VIII} D F^{VIII}
 Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 four times simile (see meas. 21)
 Gtr. 2 plays Riff B four times simile (see meas. 3)

GTR. 3

50 Gtr. 3 (w/Whammy pedal 2nd time*)

 *all notes sound two octaves higher 2nd time
 Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 simile (see meas. 21)
 *w/Whammy pedal
 *effect set to raise pitch two octaves
 Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 (see below)

I (3:09)
 N.C.(C5) (C5/Bb) (A°) (Eb5) (C5) (C5/Bb)

GTR. 3

55 Gtr. 3 w/random fdbk. and noise

GTR. 1

Gtr. 1
 Rhy. Fig. 5

 Bass
 Bass Fig. 4

Bass Fill 1 (2:56)

POWER TOOLS

Steinberger GL Series

1984–1998

CATEGORY: SOLIDBODY ELECTRIC GUITAR

BY CHRIS GILL

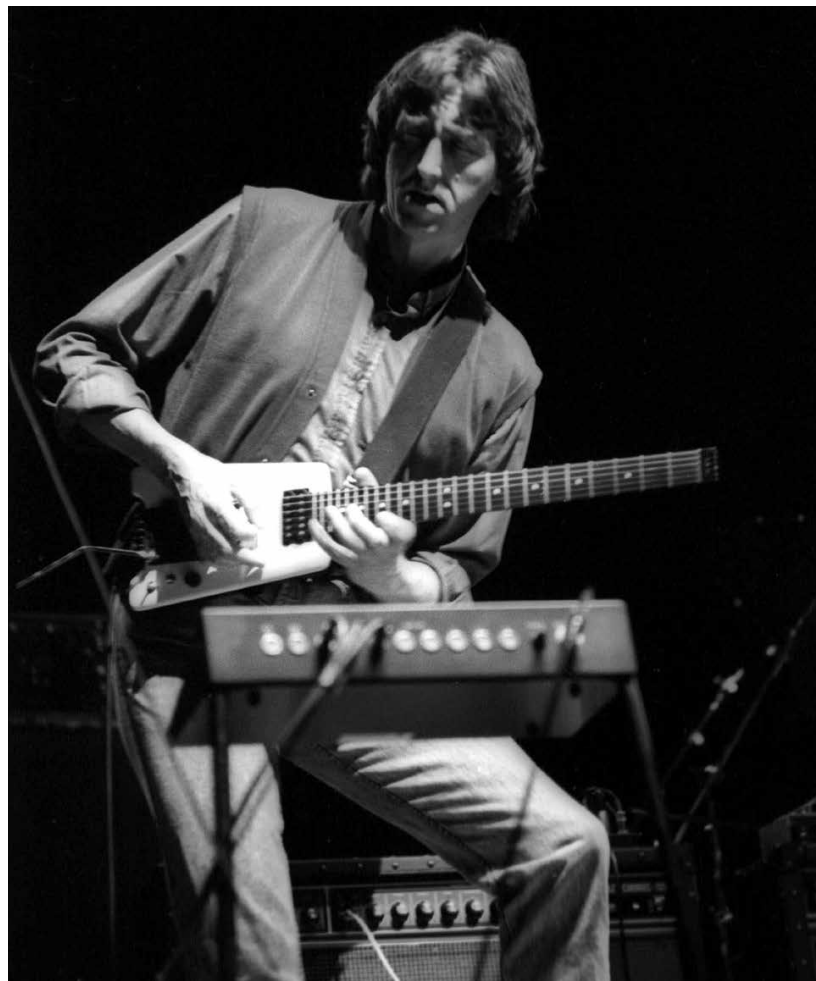
▶ NED STEINBERGER DID not invent the minimalist guitar – the Sixties La Baye 2x4 and the skeletal Gittler introduced during the Seventies both precede his design. Nor was Steinberger the first to make a headless instrument – Les Paul invented a headless guitar with an aluminum body in the Forties, Dave Bunker patented his headless “touch guitar” in the mid-Sixties and numerous Northern California luthiers built custom headless instruments during the late Sixties and Seventies. This writer vividly recalls seeing a few headless guitars and basses at Stars Guitars in San Francisco during the mid-Seventies.

However, Steinberger was the first company to successfully mass produce minimalist, headless instruments. Built from non-traditional composite materials – graphite/carbon fiber blend neck and body, phenolic fretboard – the original Steinberger guitar design is noteworthy for its appealing combination of radical elements, familiar features, brilliantly engineered innovations and comfortable ergonomics.

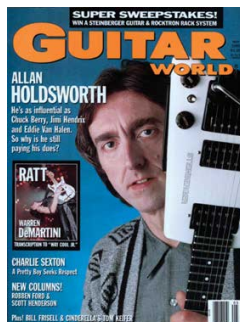
The first Steinberger GL Series guitars appeared on the market in May 1984, starting with the GL2 model featuring EMG 81 and 60 active humbuckers and a stop tailpiece. At 29 ¾ inches long, it was only a few inches longer than its 25 ½-inch scale length. Standard features included 24 frets and master volume and tone controls. By 1985, the lineup expanded considerably, consisting of the dual humbucker GL2 and GL3 with three single-coil EMG SA pickups, both offered with either the standard S-Trem (GL2S/GL3S) or revolutionary TransTrem (GL2T/GL3T) vibrato systems. The popular GL4 model with an HSS pickup configuration then followed in 1986.

An instrument unto itself, the TransTrem is an engineering marvel that allows users to lower or raise pitch while keeping chords in tune. A metal stop piece can lock the strings in six positions that transpose the key to B, C, D, E, F \sharp and G. Both the TransTrem and standard floating S-Trem provide a lever that locks the tremolo arm for non-tremolo performance, which also maintains tuning when a string is broken.

One rarely mentioned feature of Steinberger GL guitars is the Co-x connector system that allows users to quickly swap EMG pickups using snap on-off connectors. The body’s removable rear-mounted faceplate also made it easy to access the electronics and install other non-EMG pickups with minimal hassle. Initially, the GL guitars came with a plug-in leg rest for comfortable playing in a sitting position, but later a simpler, improved fold-out leg rest was adopted. The double ball end string design radically simplified the



Allan Holdsworth in action in May 1987 with his Steinberger GL2T and [below] holding the same guitar on our May 1989 cover

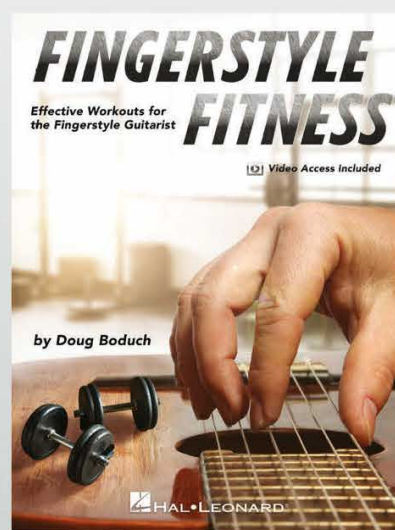
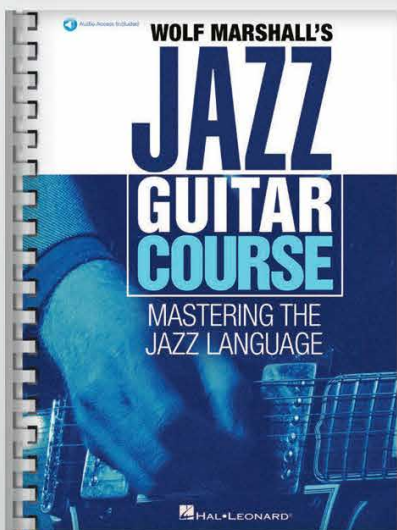
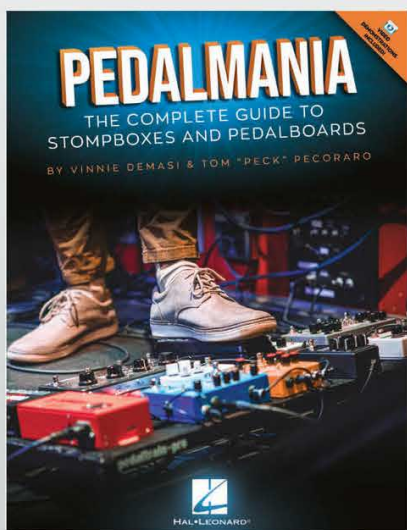
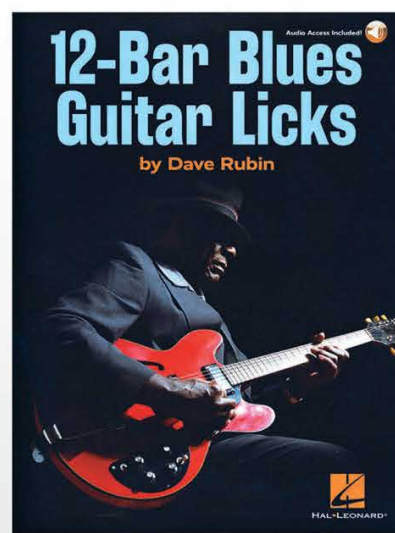
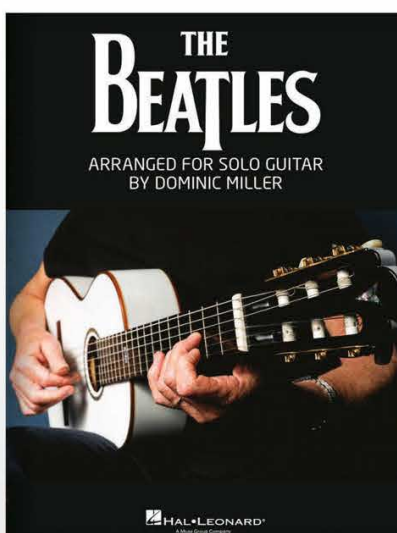
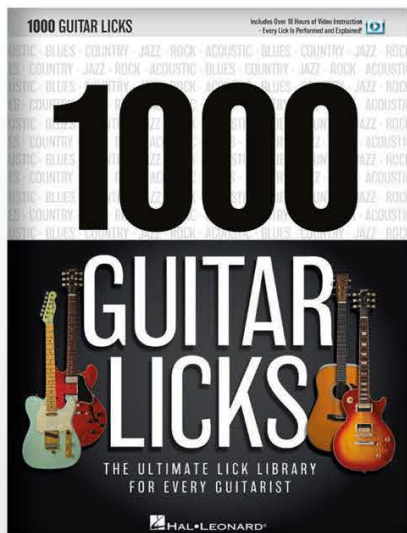
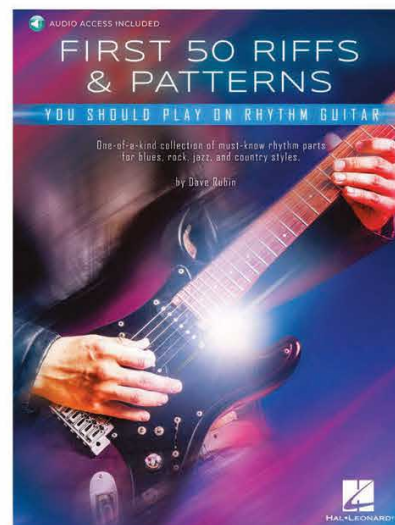
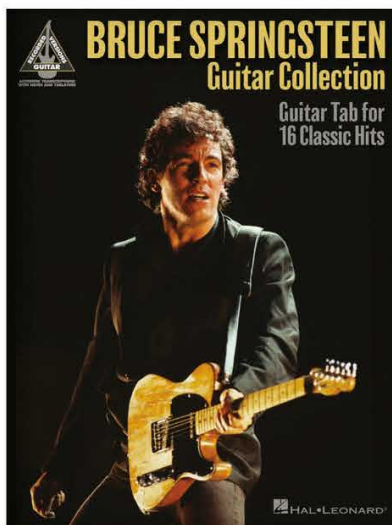
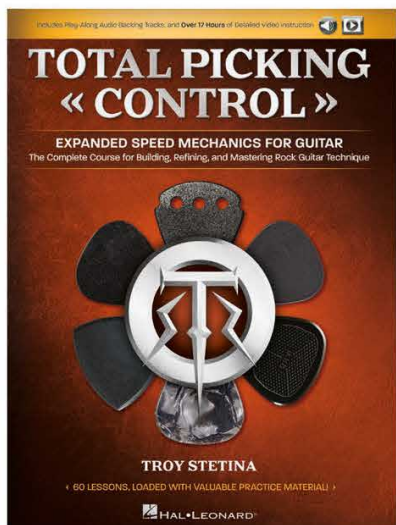


process of changing strings, although the non-standard strings were not always easy to find.

Although Steinberger stopped offering composite versions of their GL models by the late Nineties, the timeless minimal design has become a classic that still lives on today via Steinberger’s budget Spirit line. Thanks to its prominent use by a wide variety of guitarists like Elliot Easton, Reeves Gabrels, Jerry Garcia, David Gilmour, Steve Hillage, Allan Holdsworth, Steve Howe, Mark Knopfler, Mike Score of A Flock of Seagulls, Andy Summers, David Torn and Eddie Van Halen – the latter two being among the few who truly mastered the TransTrem – the Steinberger GL model has become a desirable icon of both Eighties/Nineties nostalgia and futuristic innovation. **GW**

CHRISTIAN ROSE/ROGER VIOLETTE VIA GETTY IMAGES; FUTURE

GUITAR RESOURCES FROM HAL LEONARD



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