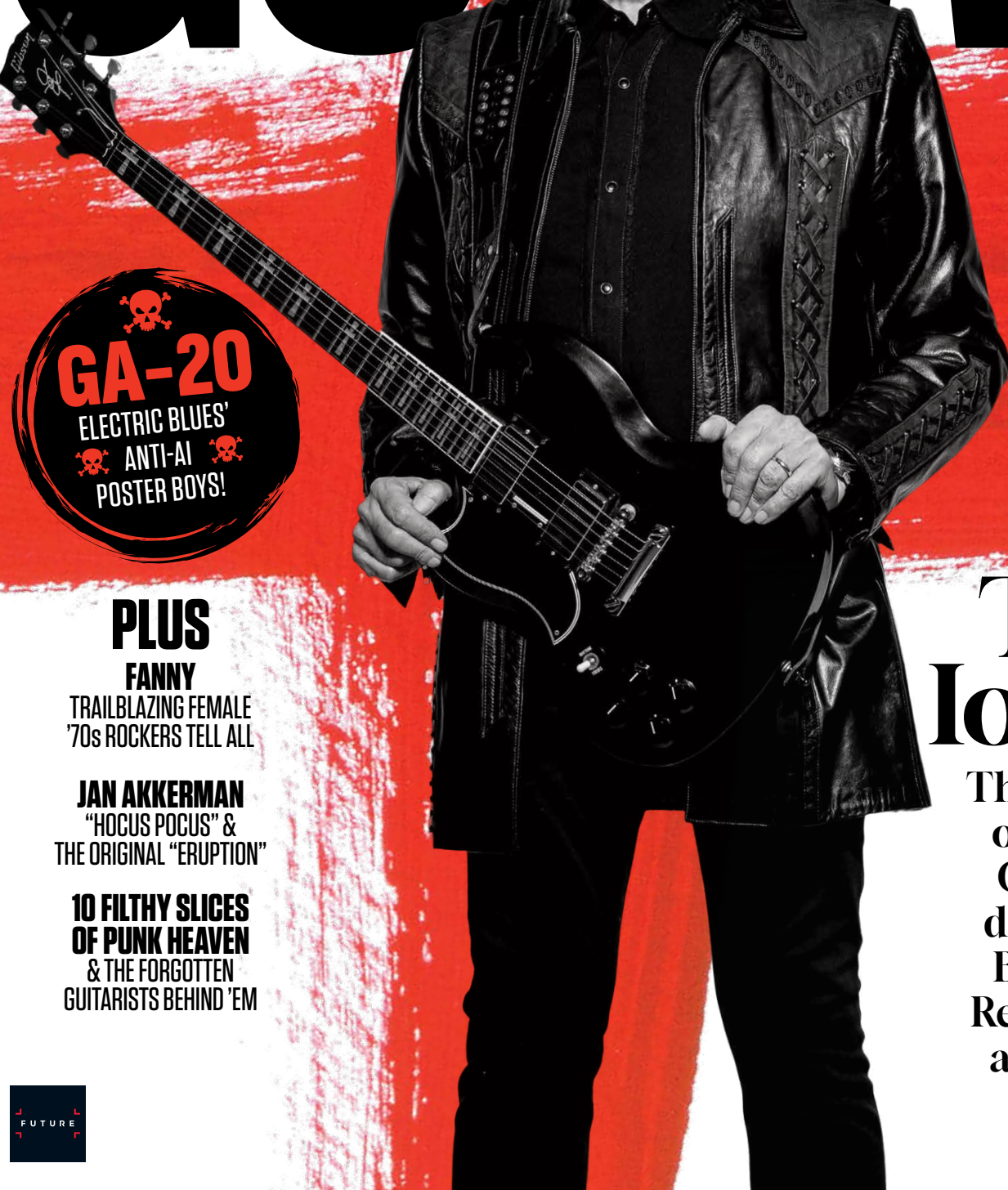


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COVER PHOTOS (TONY IOMMI): ROSS HALFIN | (ZAKK WYLDE): JEN ROSENSTEIN

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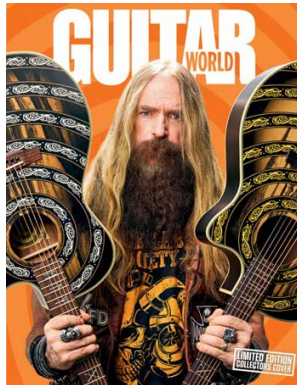
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We're bursting at the seams!



I'M NOT SURE if you can tell from where you're sitting, but this is a packed issue of *GW*. It's packed with stories, packed with ads, packed with pages (four more than usual, for anyone following along at home). It's even packed with covers — sort of. Besides the newsstand/ subscriber cover with Tony Iommi, there's a limited-edition Zakk Wylde cover (200

were made) — sold in a bundle with a custom Black Label Society cassette — that's available at our new store. Problem is, the store is so new that I don't have all the details just yet! But, if you follow *GW* online, you'll have plenty of notice by the time this issue is out and about. Also, for the hell of it, here's a bonus photo of the Laney Iommi signature TI100 amp that's mentioned on page 73. Enjoy!



SPECIAL THANKS: Thanks to Reverb.com seller Brian Baird for letting us use his photo of the VHT Pittbull Ultra-Lead G-100-UL head that appears with Power Tools (page 114). The amp belonged to Baird's father, Lynn Peterson, who taught at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee, starting in 1987, eventually becoming head of the bluegrass department. Peterson recently passed away at age 78 after a lifetime of making and sharing music.

CORRECTION: Due to incorrect info being supplied to *GW*, a photo of Loathe's Erik Bickerstaffe (October 2026, page 18) was credited to the wrong photographer. The correct credit is Arin Austin. Check out his work at arinastuinphoto.com.

— **DAMIAN FANELLI**

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Guitar's armchair QBs

[On Joe Bonamassa implying that "armchair quarterbacks" have turned guitar culture toxic] It's not just in guitardom, my friend. It's everywhere. The internet is a perfect medium for enabling people's coarsest instincts to thrive. It gives people a worldwide forum for being crass, hateful and intolerant while cloaking them in a veil of anonymity. Many people love to hate, regrettably. They love to belittle others and spew negativity. They are the ones who need therapy. Urgently.
ETHEREA (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

A higher Powers

The science that Andy Powers [*Taylor Guitars CEO who also runs Powers Electric*] uses is literally a part of rocket science. In luthiery and rocket design, the physics is governed by the same differential equations for elastic wave propagation, boundary conditions and harmonic oscillation. While the scale and applications are different, Andy's job crosses over into similar areas as aerospace.
@ROGUE3L3PHANT (VIA GW'S YOUTUBE)

On Crües control?

[On Nikki Sixx stating, via X, that Mötley Crüe

use backing tracks on stage] The worst-kept secret in bubblegum rock. I recall seeing a number of videos from their [2022] Stadium Tour (and every tour since) where Sixx is holding his hands straight up in the air – yet the bass keeps playing. Mötley Crüe were never really that good live. I saw them on the *Theatre of Pain* tour as a kid and later on the *Girls, Girls, Girls* tour. Mick Mars was definitely the most talented out of them.
PHANTOM (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

Stop and smell the rosewood

[On George Harrison's 1968 rosewood Tele being owned by his widow and son] I'm glad it's back with the family. I've passed my 1974 Tele Custom to my daughter, who also plays, but I still have one in my arsenal. I bought it cheap in the PX [*Post Exchange*] in Germany for \$220 with the case! I chose that model because of the humbucker at the bridge. I no longer gig but still play regularly.
KBRUNS155 (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

Rush out to see these guys

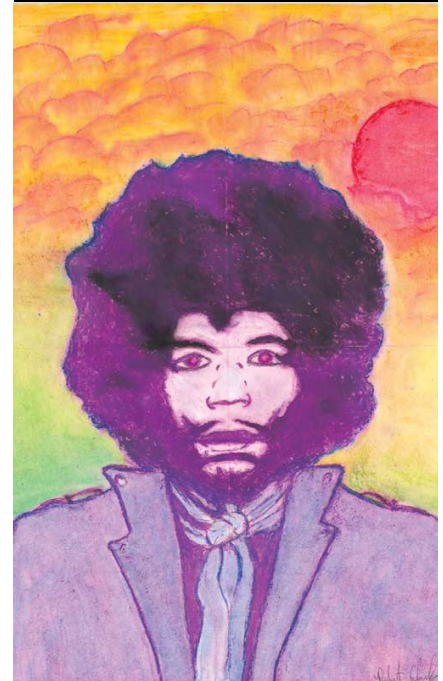
[On GW's review of Rush's July 28 show at NYC's Madison Square Garden] I was at the last Chicago show. I've seen Rush with Neil Peart [*in the past*]. With all the hype, all the great reviews and anticipation, you'd think nothing could live up to all of that. But nothing prepared me for how fantastic this show was. [*It was*] easily one of the best concerts ever, if not the best. It was absolutely incredible. The guys just kicked ass, sounded amazing and were having a ton of fun. As for [*drummer*] Anika Nilles, she literally channeled the Professor [*Peart*], injecting her own sound at times but never missing a beat. If you missed the shows in your town or are still holding out, spend the money, fly to a show and see them. They're that good. Don't miss out.
RUSHKICKSARSE (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

David Grissom, a treasure deep in the heart of Texas

There is simply none better out there today than David Grissom. Why he isn't touring constantly on a bill with Tedeschi Trucks Band or the like, I'll never understand. I'm going to miss flying into Austin for the Saxon Pub gigs! I can recall in 2006, hearing the Dixie Chicks' reconfigured band live (reconfigured by Grissom); it was an eyebrow-raiser – the most rocking band the Chicks have ever had. Frankly, they need him to be on the road with them right now.

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 *GW*, email GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com with a .jpg or screenshot of the image. Obviously, please remember to include your name. Lots of people forget! How? Why?



Jimi Hendrix
BY ROBBIE EDWARDS

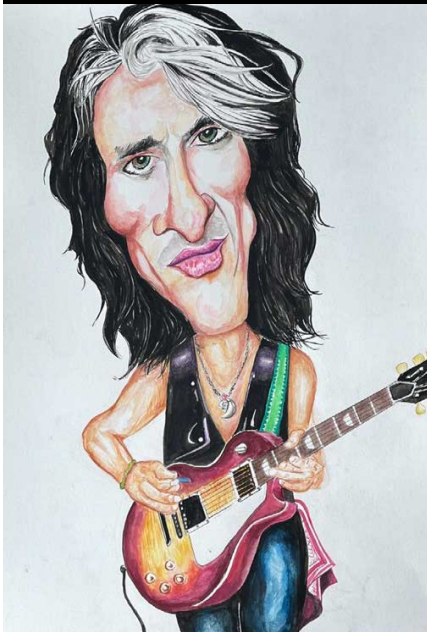
Go listen to one of Grissom's EPs to have your socks knocked off – or anything and everything he did with Joe Ely. One of the [*greatest*] live records ever made is Ely's *Live at Liberty Lunch* [1990], and a huge reason for that is David Grissom. "Letter to L.A." is just one of the best cuts ever. [*It's*] so unknown, it's criminal.
STEVE (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

It's all gravy for the Poitrine

[*Angine de Poitrine's*] music makes the average pop music listener uncomfortable, and they don't like most of it, but there are a few catchy spots that they can't help getting down to. The "tea-bag" dance just felt like a natural way to jive to the music. For me, it is just about the music. It rocks!

ROGKICKSASS (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

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Joe Perry
BY TED MARUSZEWSKI

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Stanley Jordan with
his Vigier in Newport,
Rhode Island,
August 3, 2025

Return Expedition

Stanley Jordan — one of *GW*'s "40 guitarists who changed our world since 1980" — on his brief encounters with Eddie Van Halen, playing two guitars at once and — wait, did he just tease a metal album?

BY JOE BOSSO

▶ **STANLEY JORDAN WAS** never one to flood the market with new music (throughout his career, he seemed to average a new album every three or four years), but even he didn't plan on the 11-year gap between his last album, 2015's *Duets with Kevin Eubanks*, and his latest, *Feather in the Wind*.

"The album was originally made for Mack Avenue Records as part of my deal with them," Jordan says, "but it didn't really fit their

stylistic A&R policy or whatever, so it kind of sat in limbo for a while. The way we resolved it is I now own the rights to the album, and I'm putting it out through my own channels."

Ahead of the album's release, Jordan issued two brilliant — and brilliantly distinctive — singles. On the sumptuous ballad "Meditation," he trades his signature two-handed touch technique for a flatpick. Playing a Vigier electric guitar that beautifully mimics an acoustic, he weaves a joyous

dialogue with legendary Brazilian vocalist Milton Nascimento. By contrast, the high-energy "Flight of the Eagle" is a spectacular, one-take slice of classic jazz-rock fusion that features Jordan masterfully blending pick and touch techniques.

Beyond the stellar musicianship, however, the album carries a profound, bittersweet weight, as several of Jordan's collaborators on the project have since passed away. He points to "Flight of the Eagle," where he is backed by a "dream team" of drummer Kenwood Denard, keyboardist Delmar Brown and bassist T.M. Stevens — the latter two of whom are no longer with us.

But the album's most poignant tribute is a planned duet that never was. For years, Jordan had discussed collaborating with his first guitar hero, B.B. King. They finally settled on an unexpected song choice: a cover ▶



of the Doors' eerie classic, "Riders on the Storm." Tragically, before they could record together, King fell ill and passed away. Rather than scrap the track or hire another guitarist, Jordan completed the recording alone as a tribute, playing King's parts himself.

"It's my imaginary version of my dialogue with B.B.," he says. "Of course, it would've been better to have him do it himself, but this is what I did, and I think people can feel the heart in it." For Jordan, that emotional resonance is the thread that binds *Feather in the Wind* together. "A lot of what the album is about is the things we do to find constancy in the face of loss and change and death and all the stuff that the world throws at us," he says.

We tend to associate you with your touch technique, yet you also play with a pick. How do you make the distinction?

It has to fit the song. My two-handed touch technique is perfect for solo pianistic counterpoint, but on "Meditation" I had a keyboardist covering those textures. Playing with a pick lets me focus purely on a single line to create a vocal-like dialogue with Milton Nascimento.

Did the touch technique conceptually change how you play with a pick?

Definitely. I actually mastered the pick before developing the touch technique. Now, I find myself trying to recreate touch-style ideas using a pick. For example, I've been practicing sweep picking to capture some of that same fluidity.

"I try to recreate touch-style ideas using a pick. I've been practicing sweep picking to capture some of that same fluidity"

In the Eighties, you began a long, professional relationship with record exec Bruce Lundvall. Before you signed to Blue Note, you actually turned him down when he was running Elektra Musician. What was going through your mind?

It wasn't that I turned him down per se — I just wasn't ready. I had a baby on the way and was living in Wisconsin, not New York. Bruce would call me every month and say, "I just want you to know you've got a record deal waiting for you here." People told me I was crazy to wait, but I wanted to make sure the timing was right.

I was also paying close attention to how record labels operated. I had already released my independent record, *Touch Sensitive* [1982], so I was tuned into the manufacturing side. I noticed Elektra Musician was using a two-color print on their otherwise gorgeous album covers. Even though it was elegantly done, it made me question how much the parent label was truly invested in the imprint. I wondered, "What happens if I sign and then Bruce leaves?"

I've never heard of an artist raising the issue of printing techniques when deciding whether to sign a contract.

Exactly! So anyway, eventually, the time came. I walked into Bruce's office with my attorney and said, "Okay, I'm ready." Bruce looked at me and said, "Before we talk, I've got to tell you something. I don't work here anymore. I got a call last night — Capitol-EMI

wants to revive Blue Note, and they want me to run the whole thing. I want you to be the first artist I sign." That's how it happened.

Did Bruce give you total autonomy to record whatever you wanted?

He did. Bruce was incredibly artist-friendly. This was the same guy Bobby McFerrin approached about doing a solo, unaccompanied vocal album. Bruce told him, "I don't think that's a good idea for your first record." Bobby replied, "But Bruce, I have to do the album that way. That's what God wants." Bruce just shrugged and said, "Who am I to argue with God? I guess you'd better do the album your way." The rest is history.

Your first album for Blue Note, 1985's *Magic Touch*, spent 51 weeks at Number 1 on the jazz charts. You were only about 25 at the time. How did that kind of success not completely mess with your ego?

I had a plan. I had been a street musician in New York, and I'd developed a strategy to succeed in the music industry. It worked — even better than I expected — and there was certainly some luck involved, like choosing the exact right day to sign with Bruce. But ever since I was a teenager, I'd viewed myself as an underground musician. I thought of myself as the kind of artist where, if I was lucky, "people in the know" would appreciate me, but not necessarily the masses. When the mass success hit, I enjoyed it, but I never counted on it. My instinct has always been to focus on the art and let the chips fall where they may. To appreciate what I do, it helps to know something about it. It's not just listening. On *Magic Touch*, we had a disclaimer from the critic Bill Milkowski on the jacket: "Don't be deceived. This is just one artist playing."

When we think of guitarists who totally expanded the instrument's vocabulary, we think of Eddie Van Halen and you.

Did you and Eddie ever trade notes?

We did. We participated in a documentary concert honoring Les Paul, where a huge group of us played with him. There was Brian Setzer, B.B. King, Eddie Van Halen, Steve Miller, David Gilmour and me. We jammed together at the end. A while later, Eddie and I ran into each other at a NAMM Show, and he said, "Let's go jam!" But in the chaos of the convention, someone spun him around, he got pulled away and it didn't happen.

During that Les Paul tribute, I played a solo piece of my song "Flying Home." To me, it was one of my best performances ever, though they didn't end up putting it in the final film. Right after I played it, Eddie came up to me and said, "I'm speechless. I had no idea you were that good." Hearing that from him was incredibly special.

How did it come about that you played on a Kenny Rogers record?

I love playing with other people. I treat it like a research project to figure out how to make my style complimentary to theirs. Playing with Kenny Rogers is a great example. I worked with him on a track called "Morning Desire," which ended up being the Number 1 country track of the year. George Martin was producing it. Kenny had seen me on *The Johnny Carson Show* and was looking for something to make his track stand out so it wouldn't be compared to Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire."

Being in the studio with George Martin was incredible. I remember him practically pulling at me going, "I want that Stanley stuff. Give me more of that Stanley stuff!" He was very energetic. He told me, "Pretend this is your album. What would you play?" The song is about a man who doesn't want to go to work. He just wants to stay home with his lover and listen to the rain. So, with my guitar, I became the rain.

Are Vigier guitars still your go-tos?

Oh, yeah. Vigier is still my overall favorite. However, I've recently gone back to my "tandem guitars" setup where I play two guitars simultaneously. For the right-hand guitar, I'm using a PRS Santana. I love its short-scale length. The strings feel loose, which makes the touch technique much easier. I also have an ESP James Hetfield Iron Cross guitar that I'm getting adjusted. It's a great heavy metal guitar with a great feel for the right hand.

Are we gonna see a metal album?

Yes, it's coming! With my tandem guitars, I can run different distortion pedals and wah-wahs on both guitars at the exact same time. It's insane what you can do. I've also wanted to do a flame technique. I once visited a science museum where they hooked me up to a Rubens tube, meaning my guitar was literally controlling and shaping physical fire. You can find the video of it on YouTube.

That we've got to see. So you're going to make a metal record with you operating two distorted guitars, flames and fire and all that. What else are you working on?

I've been developing a concept called Stanley Jordan's Live Tronica. Essentially, I'll act as a DJ and a live guitarist simultaneously. I have a rig with two computers running Ableton Live, which allows for intense, real-time looping. I use a massive array of foot pedals to DJ with while I'm playing guitar with my hands. The secret sauce is that I'm bringing complex, harmonically interesting jazz theory to the electronic music space. I want to bring a totally new, age-diverse audience into the clubs and festivals. It's on the way. **GW**

SYDNEY LEMONS



"Everybody is capable of channeling from the outer realm," says Jackson Hamm [second from right]

Telescreens

How the NYC rockers channel some potentially spooky inspiration

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

IN THE MIDDLE of a July heatwave we're speaking with half of New York City's Telescreens — singer/guitarist Jackson Hamm and drummer Oliver Graf — as they join a Zoom call before their show in Nantucket. The band is on tour supporting their sprawling new album, *Why the Lights Flicker*. It's their third record overall and second with Graf behind the kit. Interestingly, Graf is quick to reveal that when he auditioned for the band, he almost didn't make the cut.

"He was playing quiet and all this shit," Hamm says. "Then Josiah [*Valerius*, keyboards] jumped on the kit and was like, 'Nah, let me show you,' and Oliver goes bright red in the face. He sat back down at the kit and bled and broke the shit out of this practice kit that we were using. It was the moment the band was born. Plus, he's a legend at the pub. He can drink so much!"

"That's actually why I'm still here," Graf says with a laugh.

The album's title, *Why the Lights Flicker*, comes from a phenomenon Hamm experienced writing songs in the house he grew up in, which he believes is

a signal that he is channeling the energy from the universe. For Hamm, capturing that lightning in a bottle comes easy, but the real skill lies in sustaining that magic for the duration of a song.

"Everybody is capable of channeling from the outer realm or getting hit with some sort of pure inspiration from the collective unconscious," Hamm says. "But where you become a musician is whether or not you can sustain that for three or four minutes."

One way that Hamm sustains that magic is by putting the song before his capabilities as a guitar player.

"I can do the scale thing and I can do the shred thing," he says. "It's more about what kind of energy is being emitted rather than [*whether it's*] a fast or impressive part. It's like with Billie Joe Armstrong. You could say all the guitar parts are easy, but I challenge you to sing them and play them perfectly at the tempo that [*Green Day*] sing and play. Do it for 20 songs in a row. It's fucking hard and it's seriously physical."

The band has already begun work on their followup to *Why the Lights Flicker*.

"[*Lights*] is our quintessential record that represents us as a rock band," Hamm says. "A lot has changed since we wrote and recorded it. This next batch of songs is much more in the box. It's just about cleansing the palette and letting the pendulum naturally swing toward things that sound fresh." **GW**

"It's more about energy being emitted than whether it's fast or impressive"



[from left] The Tremolo Beer Gut's the Great Nalna, Yebo, Jengo and Per Sunding

The Tremolo Beer Gut

Guitarists the Great Nalna and Jengo lead the band on a cinematic sweep through "surf and Western" rock

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

SOME ALBUMS ARE built to take listeners on a journey, like *The Dark Side of the Moon* or even *American Idiot*. But the Tremolo Beer Gut don't dabble in conceptual rock — they drop you right in the middle of the movie already playing in their heads.

Drawing from the cinematic worlds created by composers like Ennio Morricone, John Barry and spaghetti Western king Sergio Leone, the band creates instrumental soundscapes that evoke off-kilter creations like David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* and classic works of noir cinema and pulp fiction. According to guitarist and producer the Great Nalna, the influential works of two titans of Eighties alternative rock were also touchstones for the band's self-described "surf and Western" music.

"I was quite inspired by the Pixies. Joey Santiago's way of playing is actually very surf rock, just with a lot of distortion," he says. "I was really inspired by Johnny Marr, too — not the traditional surf influences, but [they're] guitar players that have that twangy thing and do a lot of tremolo stuff."

The opening notes on their sixth LP, *Ask Not What the Tremolo Beer Gut Can Do for You...*, sets up another romp through a musical world that conjures grifters, two-bit gangsters, overfull ashtrays and dirty

"I was inspired by the Pixies. Joey Santiago's playing is very surf rock, with a lot of distortion"

AXOLOGY

Guitars

Fender Jazzmasters ('59 and '67), Fender Jaguars (including Johnny Marr signature), '66 Mosrite Mark V, custom build

Amps

'70s Fender Bassman 50 and 100; '60s and '70s Super Reverbs, Princeton and Vibro Champ

martinis. The Danish band has mastered its swing over a 25-year career to the point where the members work independently on new songs, then convene to hash out the details just before committing them to tape. Their preparation for tours is much the same — "We only meet up to rehearse, like, a single night before we tour."

While Nalna says they prefer to spend their time together "finding funny instruments to do overdubs," their foundation of guitars makes the cinematic elements possible. To that end, Nalna and Jengo employ a cache of flatwound-strung Mosrites and Fender Jazzmasters and Jaguars and, usually paired with a vintage Fender Bassman or Deluxe Reverb. Nalna also relies on a custom-built guitar that combines elements of all three — the shape and scale of a Jazzmaster, the electronics from the Johnny Marr-edition Jaguar, extra-wound Curtis Novak pickups, and upgraded foil capacitors.

But the secret weapon for his sound are the reverb tanks. "I usually use my own homebuilt reverb tanks because they have a longer reverb than the Fender ones. Instead of two springs, I have three to add a bit more low end, but also it's a bit longer." To reference another cinematic masterpiece, he's not the first guitar player to go one louder — er, longer. **GW**

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Dann Huff performs
in Nashville on April 28

From the Dann Huff Files...

The session-guitar dynamo explains how producer Mutt Lange lured him into Shania Twain's orbit in the '90s

BY JOE MATERA

▶ IT WAS WHILE session guitar supremo and producer Dann Huff was working on a Michael Bolton record with uber producer Robert "Mutt" Lange that Huff's life was about to take a fortuitous turn.

"I was over in England when Mutt and I were working on a Bolton record for about a week doing some overdubs," Huff says today. "Mutt asked me if I'd ever heard of a young artist named Shania Twain. I said yes but that I also didn't know much about her. He told me he wanted to do a country record with her. I was like, 'Mutt Lange? A country record? That's kind of an interesting idea!' Turns out he knew so much about country music and was such a student historian on it."

Huff first made a name for himself in the early Eighties with Christian rock group White Heart and later with hard rockers Giant. In between, Huff became an in-demand session guitarist, adding his six-string stylings to records by everyone from Whitesnake to Celine Dion to George Benson. But it was his work with Twain — and Lange — that would bring Huff one of his defining moments.

"I started working with Mutt in the early Nineties," Huff says. "I had just moved back to Nashville, and I thought I wasn't going to do any more studio recordings as a guitar player because I had a band that had some hits out but then crashed pretty quickly. To my surprise, Mutt was in town and was doing

a record, so he called me up for a session. We worked a little bit, got along well and saw things quite a bit the same way. So, he started calling me for other records."

Six months after that initial session in England, Huff received the career-changing call from Lange. "He was in Nashville and called me saying, 'Can you come down to the studio? I need your wrist for this Shania Twain record [1995's *The Woman in Me*],' " Huff says. "He liked the way I played rhythm and stuff like that. He didn't care much about solos — it was more about rhythm for him. The first song I played on was 'Any Man of Mine.'"

When Lange was working on Twain's followup album, 1997's *Come On Over*, he once again called on Huff. "He also brought in Brent Mason, so we were both playing on the tracks and the arrangements," Huff says. "The way Mutt works is, he hears guitar parts

"To me, a guitar is a guitar. You just come up with a good part with it"

TERRY WYATT/GETTY IMAGES

— every part, as a matter of fact. It was like a masterclass. There is just nobody any better than him, and he's the one who pushed me into being a producer. I really hadn't thought too much about that. But he told me, 'You hear guitar parts like a producer would.'"

Lange gave Huff free reign over whatever guitar contributions he wanted to make. "Even if he had the idea really fleshed out, he was always listening for anything that would improve it," Huff says. "He gave you as much leash, so to speak, as possible. If it was an improvement, we'd do it. If not, he had a backup plan."

Lange's approach to recording guitars in the studio was meticulous.

"When it came to tracking, we'd learn the song as a band," he says. "We'd go through every section meticulously, and he'd spend time looking at each player, saying, 'This is what I want you to do. I want you to play this part, this lick or melody or whatever.' Then, once we had the arrangement down, which would take a half-day, we'd start doing takes as a band. Once he got what he felt was the quintessential kind of drum track, he would go back with everybody individually and really dive deeply into the parts. Sometimes even doing an eighth-note part with him could take the better part of five hours."

Surprisingly, Lange wasn't as fastidious in his method for capturing guitar tones for the album. "You'd think that when you hear his records that he was more audiophile-based, but he never was," Huff says. "One of his engineers told me that on the Def Leppard records, a lot of it was just direct, into little boxes and stuff like that. Arrangements were the pinnacle of everything he did. Tones were secondary. As long as they didn't get too bassy and murky, and as long as they could be heard in that perfect space above where the kick drum and the bass guitar were. He didn't seem to be that obsessed with it. But that could've also been because we guitar players all came in with pretty serious guitar rigs and knew what we were doing. It wasn't like he was spoon feeding a band, so to speak."

Huff says he didn't use any single guitar for sessions; his choices were based on whatever the song required — and what was on hand.

"I would just grab whatever guitar and amp were available," he says. "There's a freedom to that. Mutt wasn't so meticulous in [terms of] what we brought to the studio because we all brought top-notch gear. He might have small asks like, 'It's too dirty — clean it up a little bit' or vice versa, but he was pretty loose on the guitar tones. If Brent was playing a Tele, I'd use a Strat or a Gibson or something like that. And I did have a Bradshaw rig, but apart from that, I'm not much of a gear guy. To me, a guitar is a guitar. You just come up with a good part with it." **GW**

Led by Vultures

A-list Ozzy and Whitesnake drummer Brian Tichy pulls a Dave Grohl, grabs a guitar and steps out front and center

BY ANDREW DALY

▶ AS A DRUMMER, Brian Tichy has landed gigs with everyone from Gene Simmons to George Lynch (not to mention Ozzy Osbourne, Whitesnake, Billy Idol, Foreigner and so many, many more). But with his latest project, Led by Vultures, he's making like Dave Grohl and stepping out from behind the kit — but it's not easy.

"Being self-taught — and being a drummer — has left holes in my guitar playing," Tichy says. "But it's an ongoing thing, like anything, to just keep getting better. Hopefully, Led by Vultures will become a priority and take up more time as it grows. I have no excuses to not do this with 100 percent focus."

What's your history with guitar?

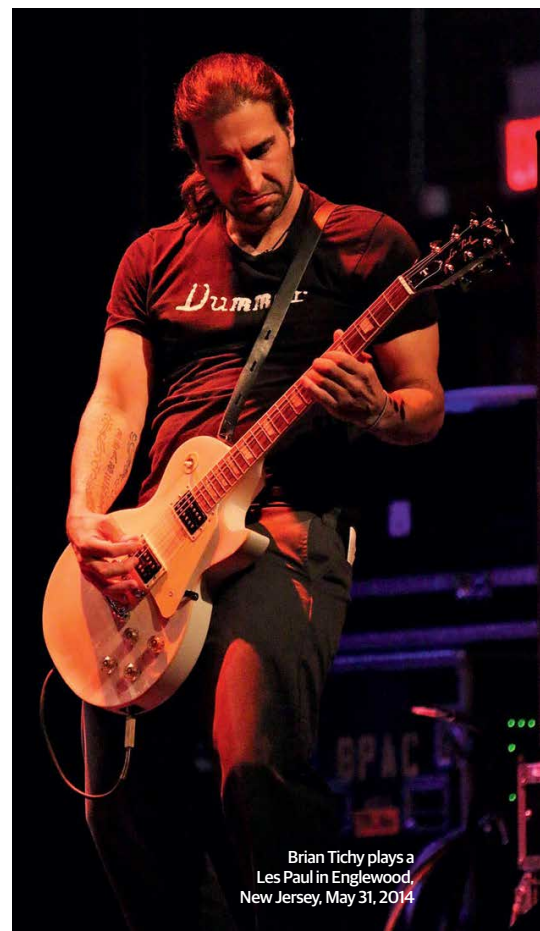
When I was seven, my dad showed me a couple of chords and the riff to the Beatles' "Day Tripper." Then, in 1980, a friend showed me power chords, "Iron Man," "Back in Black," "Smoke on the Water," a pentatonic flat-5 scale and a Phrygian scale. When Ozzy's *Blizzard of Ozz* came out, Randy Rhoads' playing floored me.

Your shift to frontman is reminiscent of what Dave Grohl did after Nirvana with the Foo Fighters.

When I was a kid, the dream was to have your own band and sell out Madison Square Garden. Our cover band in the Nineties packed out the Madison Inn in New Jersey! [Laughs] I was definitely influenced when Dave Grohl came out with Foo Fighters. A year after Nirvana, he was fronting his own thing on guitar and vocals. How can you not be inspired by that?

You've played drums with so many guitar greats. What did you learn?

I didn't geek out as hard as I should have with them. You'd think I'd constantly be picking their brains and asking questions, but drumming has always been the priority. But there've been many times when I've sat with them and talked



Brian Tichy plays a Les Paul in Englewood, New Jersey, May 31, 2014

guitar, jammed guitar or analyzed licks. There are so many details that separate one player from another, but the main thing that makes them unique is touch and feel.

What sort of player are you?

One important thing is vibrato. Mine is average. I try, and I know how important it is, but it's not as good as I'd like. I've also put time into picking and some technical stuff, but it's limited compared to all the freaks out there.

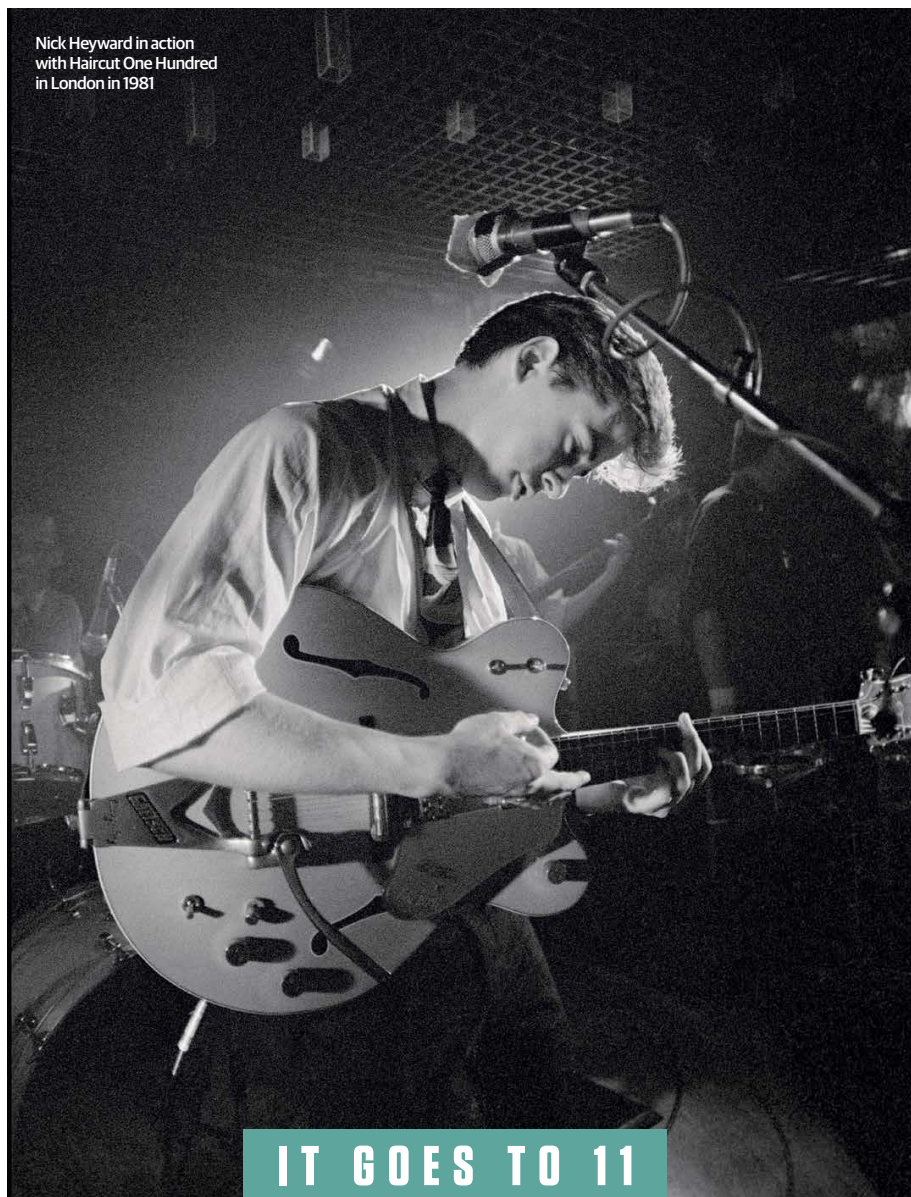
What gear are you using?

I used some Seventies Les Paul Standards, a 1980 Les Paul Custom Silverburst and a 1980 Explorer. I have a Dean ML, a black-and-white-striped EVH, an original 5150, my modded Marshall JCM800 and a 4x12 cab with 30-watt greenbacks.

Does it bother you that some people won't take you seriously as a guitarist?

No. If a naysayer doesn't take it seriously, do I stop because of that? It has no weight compared to the weight I've put on myself to prove to myself I can. **GW**

Nick Heyward in action with Haircut One Hundred in London in 1981



IT GOES TO 11

Nick Heyward

The Haircut One Hundred guitarist on kudos from Paul McCartney, a capo catastrophe and — oh, yeah — that time his entire guitar collection “disappeared into thin air”

BY JOE MATERA

▶ **U.K. NEW-WAVE POPPERS** — and perennial Eighties favorites — Haircut One Hundred have definitely not been put out to pasture. The original (and classic) lineup recently reunited and entered the studio to record a new album, *Boxing the Compass*, which showcases the band’s unshakeable knack for making funky, sparkling pop of the highest order. Still, however, some media outlets prefer to encase them in amber and see them purely as a product of the Eighties.

“I’ll still sometimes read a review that only focuses on that side of the band that was once young,” says vocalist/guitarist Nick Heyward. “That was 45 years ago — a period of about six months in the band’s career! When we first arrived on the scene, we were this young pop band, so we got known for being that rather than for our musicianship. But that can be changed by just being together, and that’s one reason our being together again is much better. If you’re not together, you’re

a bit like a time capsule that’s been put in the back garden.”

1 What was your first guitar and how did you get it?

An Audition that I got from Woolworths. It cost £14. With the action on it, you could literally fit a penny. It was almost like a slide guitar — and almost impossible to play.

2 What was your greatest guitar find?

In 1992, I was playing in a studio in London doing a demo using a borrowed orange Tele-copy Tokai bass. I thought it had a great sound and got attached to it, so I asked, “How much do you want for it?” They said it was hardly worth anything; they only had it on the wall as a decoration. But I loved it so I bought it off them for next to nothing — 50 quid!

3 What are the quirks or habits of your playing that have become part of your style?

Standing up, as it makes me play and write different songs. Some of the best work I’ve done is from having to stand up.

4 How many guitars are in your collection — and how many do you actually play?

I have two new Gretsch guitars — one orange, one green. I go between them. They’re like the tools I can take with me on the road. If anything happens to them, it’s not so bad because I’ve got vintage Gretsch guitars back at home and retired. I also have three Maton acoustics.

5 What was the strangest gear deal you ever did?

I once bought a load of guitars in New York City really cheaply and bought them back home to the U.K. I got them in junk shops — and some for \$20. I was having my flat decorated so I needed to put them into storage with a hire company. I had a lockup, but it was probably the least-safe place going because roadies were in and out of there on a regular basis. I went to get them, and the guy from the company told me the company had never actually received them. All my guitars that I had placed in a van had just disappeared into thin air.

6 Music history is full of “sliding doors” moments. What are the big ones for you?

When I walked through the door to the *New Musical Express* [NME] in 1981 because that was a bold move. That lunchtime walk, through those doors, pretty much changed everything for the band.

7 What's your most memorable encounter with a guitarist or guitar hero?

I was on a plane flying back from holiday and on my way up the stairs. Linda McCartney was coming down the stairs and said, "Nick, what are you doing here?" I went, "I'm just going home." She said, "Paul's just through there in the first-class bit at the front, if you want to go through." I went through, said hello, sat down and started chatting. Paul says, "I really like your new song, 'On a Sunday.'" He particularly liked the guitar work on it. That was a huge compliment and validation from the man himself.

8 What has been your worst onstage moment?

Playing solo acoustic in an arena in America with Graham Parker and Glenn Tilbrook standing at the side of the stage. I was playing my song "Kite," and it was a tone up, so I had a capo on the second fret. I was wracked with nerves because I had my heroes there, along with an arena full of people. Because I was so nervous, I didn't realize my capo had actually pinged off and I was still singing!

9 What's been the hardest/toughest time you've ever had as a musician? How did you get through it?

Those times keep coming. When they do, you've just got to learn to navigate them and utilize them, knowing that the way out is the way through. Any struggle that goes on is an opportunity for growth. I've grown more from those times than I have from all the brilliant things that went right and were great. Know that there is turbulence, and turbulence is part of the journey along the way.

10 Tell me about a time of genuine inspiration. A lightbulb moment in your journey as a guitarist or musician.

When I stood in my bedroom and imagined what it was like to be onstage. And probably just the fantasy of it, not the reality of it. Whereas in your bedroom you're just standing there, on stage you have people's hands going up and everyone's singing along. It's very different when you're actually doing it to when you're imagining and fantasizing about it.

11 What's the best advice you've ever received as a guitarist, and who gave it to you?

It was from my brother who taught me my first D chord. From that I was off and learning C, G, etc., from then on. He also said to keep practicing. I suppose that's all you need, really, as a guitarist; you've got to just keep turning up. As it is in life, where you just need to keep turning up for work. **GW**

Todd Albright

Meet Detroit's arbiter of the blues

BY ANDREW DALY

▶ **"ARE YOU JACOB** with *Guitar World*? You're a fuckin' day early!"

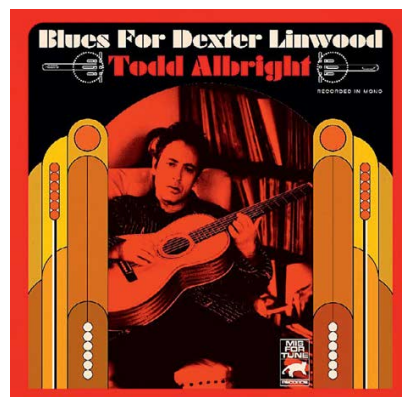
We're standing on Todd Albright's Detroit doorstep on a balmy June morning as he's staring down at us from his second-story balcony. It's from this vantage point that Albright is able to see *GW* pull up a full 24 hours in advance of our scheduled interview. Fortunately, Albright is happy to do our interview a day early.

"Hold on, let me put some pants on," he says.

As we amble up the stairs to the balcony of his second-floor apartment — Albright rents out the lower half — the 12-string country/blues cognoscente has the term "Americana" on his mind.

"It's kind of a lazy descriptor," he says. "Thankfully, I don't fall into that description. I think the thing that bothers me with popular music is the fact that the music has always played second fiddle to how it looks. 'Glam rock.' What the fuck is that? I recorded my last record in just a couple of short hours on one beautiful ribbon microphone. You know — can you play or can't you? That's what it boils down to for me."

As we chat, Albright points out that blues legend Son House had his funeral at Mayflower Baptist Church on Grand Boulevard, which is just a stone's throw from where we're sitting. "Do you know Reverend Robert Jones?" Albright asks, relighting the cigar that he had let go out when he had to let this very punctual journalist in from his front porch.



Todd Albright and [below] the cover art for his new album, *Blues for Dexter Linwood*

"He had a great radio show here in town, on DET," he continues, waving the smoke out of his eyes and sitting back in his chair. "It was a blues show. He's a Missionary Baptist, I believe, and he was a blues singer. He became a professional musician at some point. I was playing MerleFest with him, and I told him this very long story about House's funeral. He's listening intently. At the end, he says, 'I was at that funeral.' It's like, son of a bitch, save me the breath!" Albright says with a laugh.

About halfway through our conversation, Albright's wife, Wihad, appears in the doorway, carrying a plate of lemon poppyseed cookies and dates. As she refills Albright's coffee, he tells me about the responsibility he feels to go see the places where the great Delta bluesmen are buried.

"My pal Roy Book Binder and Paul Jeremiah went halves on Pink Anderson's headstone back in 1974," he says. "Roy always complained that Jeremiah still owed him \$25 for his half of the stone. Now they're both dead. Whenever Roy played MerleFest, he would stop by Pink's [headstone] and clean him up and say hello. I thought, well, I guess I gotta do that now."

"Whenever I'm near somebody, I go," he says. "I always have Windex and some paper towel. I clean them up nice. There's only a couple that have escaped me." **GW**

THE CARS



LOST CLASSICS

The Cars

Dysentery, zeitgeists and Bartolini pickups! Melodic master Elliot Easton discusses the making of the band's eternally fresh-sounding 1978 debut

BY ANDREW DALY

► BY 1978, THE CARS, a young Boston-based band consisting of Ric Ocasek (vocals/rhythm guitar), Benjamin Orr (vocals/bass), David Robinson (drums), Greg Hawkes (keyboards) and Elliot Easton (lead guitar), were a well-oiled machine. The group had cut its teeth in the local club scene and even heard their demos played on local radio. This led to an easy, breezy process at AIR Studios in London with producer Roy Thomas Baker. But Easton wasn't sure the group's debut, 1978's *The Cars*, would be a hit.

"I remember we were just sitting around saying, 'I hope this sells enough so that we can get to do this again,'" Easton says. "Because we just had such a good time making that record."

At six times Platinum and reading back more like a greatest-hits package than a debut album, one could say *The Cars* did, in fact, sell enough. Songs like "My Best Friend's Girl," "Just What I Needed" and "Good Times Roll," as Easton puts it, "captured the zeitgeist."

The Cars' success was one of those magical things that can't be planned, which is funny as Easton's solos were entirely planned. "It's what I'd been playing in clubs," he says. "It was just a matter of doing it and getting it on tape." A lot of that had to do with Easton's mentality when it comes to delivering solos live versus in the studio.

"I could never see the point in not giving audiences what I did on the record," he says.

Elliot Easton (with Benjamin Orr in the background) in New York City, September 22, 1978



"I wasn't winging it, trying to write a better solo. The odds of me writing something better than what I'd already polished were slim. Once I write a solo, that's how I play it because it's part of the song."

Easton's rehearsed approach led to a comfortable recording atmosphere, which comes across in the songs. "I was totally at ease," he says. "You can't believe the treatment we got from the label. We had everything, and we hadn't sold one record yet. [Laughs] The label obviously really believed in us, but that goes back to a lot of people being fans of the band going in around Boston. We were getting reported on nationally, and we didn't even have a record out yet. They had a lot of faith in us."

Easton and his bandmates being left alone to do their thing paid off big time. Upon its release in 1978, *The Cars* was a monster hit. But before then, Easton was just 23 and loving every minute of the process, but had no idea what to expect.

"We made and mixed that record so quickly," Easton says. "They totally left us alone. No A&R guys were coming in; there was none of that. They really rolled out the

red carpet for us. But it's interesting... when it was done, we didn't know what to expect."

"But here we are almost 50 years after recording it," Easton says. "That record is still selling, so we all must have known something! [Laughs] It's really amazing to me that we're talking about this record now all these years later. It was 23 when we made it, so it's really pretty incredible."

The Cars were mainstays on the Boston bar scene, and local disc jockey Maxanne Sartori played the band's demos. It seems you were pretty well-rehearsed going into AIR Studios with Roy Thomas Baker.

We were. We recorded the entire first album in 12 days and mixed it in nine. It was basically our club set, so I'd already worked out my solos and parts. But I'll tell you the truth — and this is not made up! When we got to the guitar parts, I was sick with dysentery and spewing from both ends. I was sick as a dog, but I still did all my parts in a day and a half.

Yikes! What gear did you use?

It was the beginning, so we didn't have

any money or gear. I brought a '77 Les Paul Standard, which had DiMarzio Super Distortion humbuckers because that was the new thing. And I had a '77 Telecaster with a Bartolini in the bridge and a [Gibson] Firebird mini humbucker in the neck. We'd gotten an advance from [Elektra], and I obviously ran out and bought new guitars. [Laughs] I bought a Martin D-35, which I barely used aside from some strums. I also brought a Boss Chorus Ensemble and a Morley Echo Volume — but I didn't use either of them!

Why is that?

Roy said, "For chorus, let's do it the real way, the way we used to do it." He'd have me double-track it with a slight variation in speed for the second part to throw it just a little bit out of time with the first track. That created the chorus effect. I actually didn't use any pedals. I didn't use overdrive, either. I didn't even bring an overdrive! It was all amps. Again, we were broke, but someone got us a deal on Ampegs, and Ric had a [Fender] Twin. I think we might have had a Marshall cabinet, but that was about it. It wasn't really a lot of gear, which is amazing to me.

How did "Good Times Roll" and "My Best Friend's Girl" come together?

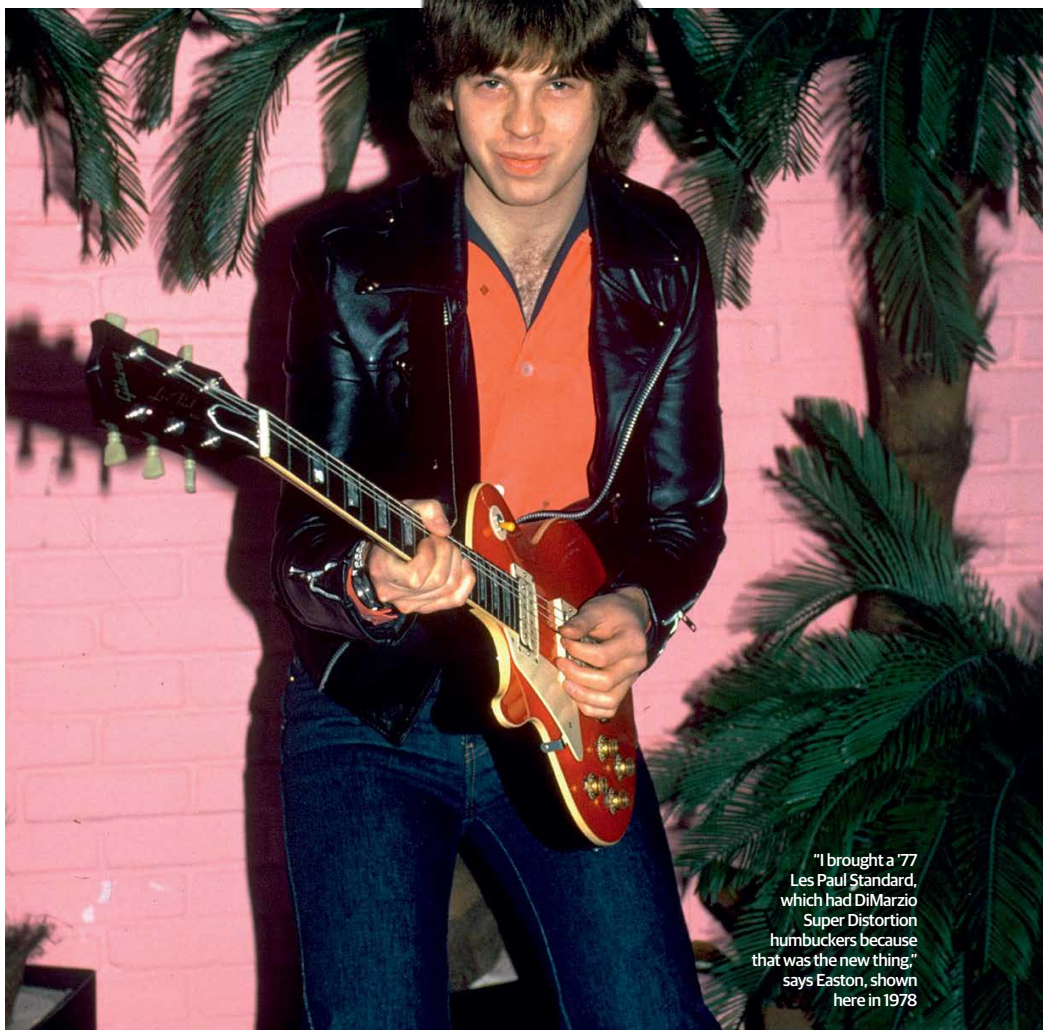
Both of those solos were worked out, so it was just a matter of laying them down on tape. For "My Best Friend's Girl," I used my Tele with both pickups engaged; we got the slapback from quarter-inch recorded tape in the control room. There's a lick at the end of the solo that goes back to the top, and Greg said, "Why don't you do it twice?" So I did!

And then there's "Just What I Needed," which features one of the more singable solos you'll ever hear.

Thanks! That's another one that I'd honed in the clubs. I polished it and moved notes around here and there until it was just the way I wanted it. So, that's how I played it on the record. Some bands believe you should play live differently from the record; I'm not of that philosophy. An audience comes to see you, and they pay a lot of money to hear you, so that's what they want — that recognition, to hear the songs and see you play them the way you did on the record. I always played the solos live the way I did on the record, and you'd see the kids in the front row pointing, saying, "Look! He's doing it!" They'd be so happy.

Of course, there's "Moving in Stereo," which became a pop-culture phenomenon

"I always played the solos live the way I did on the record, and you'd see the kids pointing and saying, 'Look! He's doing it!'"



"I brought a '77 Les Paul Standard, which had DiMarzio Super Distortion humbuckers because that was the new thing," says Easton, shown here in 1978

a few years later after being featured in 1982's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

Yeah... [Laughs] I can remember Ben using an octave divider on that for an octave down. But honestly, we made that record so quickly, and we were just laying it down. We didn't stop to think about it too much. Everyone knew what they were supposed to do, and we had a good time. We didn't know if it would be successful; we just enjoyed the process.

The first time you heard *The Cars*, did you feel it was strong?

I did. I remember coming back to Boston with it and playing it for friends. Everybody was flipping out, going, "This is great. You guys did a great job. You really captured it!" They already knew the songs because we'd been playing them for months in clubs. I really felt like we captured a moment in time for the band, and how we played the songs

then. I thought it was strong then, and it still sounds good to me.

The Cars still sounds fresh. If it came out today, it'd probably be a success. How do you view the legacy and longevity of this record?

I hesitate to analyze it. If people knew what made a hit record, then every record would be a hit, you know? There's an X-factor with that record. It captured the imagination of the public at the time. It captured the zeitgeist. It was of its time, and it felt right for the moment that it came out. From the opinions of millions of people who bought the record, it just seemed to be the right record at the right time. You can't plan for something like that. And we weren't trying to be "new wave" or "punk" or anything like that. We were just five guys, and that record is just what it sounded like when the five of us played music together and worked on those songs. To label it is a journalistic thing. It's for people to decide on their own what they want to call it. But we just called it *The Cars*, and that's what it was — and how we sounded when we played. **GW**

Protest the Hero's
Tim MacMillan (left)
and Luke Hoskin



Within You, Without You

Protest the Hero's Luke Hoskin and Tim MacMillar on the strange — yet oddly endearing — “It takes a village” approach to recording, touring and covering each other's blazing guitar parts

BY GREGORY ADAMS

▶ AS THE LONE studio guitarist on Protest the Hero's new *Within* album — the Canadian progressive-metal veterans' first in six years — Luke Hoskin multi-tracked wizardly scale runs and dizzyingly arpeggiated harmonies by the boatful. Hoskin admits he loves guitar heroics, and it's been a major part of the act's sound over the past couple of decades. Despite this, the writing phase of *Within* found the shredder scaling back his most masochistic whims — not for his own sake, but rather for fellow co-founder Tim MacMillar and touring member Ben Davis, the two guitarists tasked with actually recreating Hoskin's fretboard bedlam on stage. After he sent out the first few demos, his bandmates politely asked him to chill.

“It was definitely a check. Like, ‘That is too fast... the bpm needs to come back on that,’” he says, explaining that he also excised a few ripping but ultimately unnecessary sections that would've got buried beneath the roaring vibrato of vocalist Rody Walker. “I got a lot of feedback from Tim and Rody, and it was a reminder to think about Ben, who has to carry the torch live. You have to exercise some restraint; you can't go nuts and be like, ‘I never have to be in front of an audience doing this.’”

Within remains a knuckle-busting endeavor. “Mouthpiece,” “Fishhook” and “Grandfather's Axe” offer an ambitious and often blistering splatter of progressive heaviness, pure-speed pop-punk-isms and power-metal bombast. Up until formally retiring from the road in 2021, Hoskin would have been hitting those licks on stage with MacMillar. But a few years back — despite his show experience with Protest the Hero — a towering sense of anxiety began to grip the guitarist whenever he thought about performing live. Hoskin hasn't toured with the band since before they put out 2020's *Palimpsest*. He's totally fine with that — thriving, even.

“Part of the reason for me leaving is that I stopped loving performing,” he says, reiterating that his passion lies with writing and recording. “I did the live side for a long time, because I thought it was a necessary part to facilitate me being able to write music.”

Hoskin, MacMillar and Walker have been together since they were teenagers, initially forming in Whitby, Ontario, under the name Happy Go Lucky in 1999 before rebranding as Protest the Hero in 2001. They wanted to keep up the creative connection, which is how Hoskin arrived at the idea of continuing

with two distinct versions of the Protest the Hero. For *Within*, the studio band included chief songwriter and guitarist Hoskin, bassist Cameron McLelland and drummer Nathan Bulla. MacMillar and Davis are the guitar tandem on the road, and they're supported by the rhythm section of bassist Henry Selva and drummer Matt Kidby. Walker handles vocals for both entities.

“The band was so receptive about having a two-pronged approach,” Hoskin says with relief, “I felt like, ‘Oh, cool, I don't have to completely exit altogether.’”

Still, there's a natural downside to having Hoskin off the road; MacMillar is bummed to no longer be traveling the world with one of his best buds, who just so happens to kill on guitar. Davis, of fellow Canadian progressive unit the Kindred, stepped into the fold as their live lead guitarist in 2022. “Those were big shoes to fill,” MacMillar says. “We got really lucky that we found someone who could knock it out of the park live.”

Davis has been devoted to locking into the lines as laid out by Hoskin's dexterous studio performances. Hoskin tried to keep track of his playing throughout the sessions while mapping things out through Guitar Pro software; he also runs sheet music publishing company Sheet Happens, and a member of his team went through the recording stems to double check the accuracy of the tabs.

While Hoskin and Davis share a fretboard aesthetic, MacMillar jokes that the guitarists' similarities extend beyond their playing. “Ben kind of looks like a smaller version of Luke, so on his first tour people thought it was Luke. And we gave him Luke's signature [*Ibanez LHMT*] guitar to play as well, so people would come up and be like, ‘Hey Luke, good job!’”

The *Within* sessions found the studio band tracking their parts at various home-recording spaces around Canada and the U.S. Armed with a grip of Evertune-loaded Ibanez guitars, Hoskin recorded his parts in Boulder, Colorado, under the supervision of Good Tiger member Derya Nagle. Through his hands, the album flows from shred-locked complexity

(“Mouthpiece”) toward orchestral passages peppered with polyrhythmic natural harmonics (“i. above”).

Punk is also a huge part of Protest the Hero's latest LP. The lyrics to “Liberty Spike” recall the days when they would head to their local mall to buy NOFX and Pennywise T-shirts. The chord-forward, speed-barrier-pushing melodicism of “Fishhook” is indebted to their love of Canadian punk progressives Propagandhi. “That's one of the pillars of what we do — fast, fun and melodic,” Hoskin says of the influence, MacMillar confirming of the track's hectic pace, “‘Fishhook’ is at 190 bpm, that fast spot where there's a lot of 16th note palm-muting.”

Hoskin continues: “We idolized those bands and learned everything we could about what they were doing and how they were approaching songwriting. I grew out of that at some point and got more into metal. I came back to punk in my late twenties realizing the songcraft is unbelievable.”

A more self-referential moment on the album arrives with “Grandfather's Axe,” an “all fucking throttle” bang-out that finds vocalist Walker challenging his bandmates to step up their game, in-song (“Play that fuckin' riff, you dickhead/I wanna hear it sing”). Its title alludes to the Theseus paradox, an ages-old philosophical question around whether or not a boat that's been stripped and rebuilt one piece at a time remains the same ship over time. “It's an analogy for the band,” Hoskin theologizes.

In obvious ways, Protest the Hero are not the same band they used to be. It's been more than a quarter century since they formed, and members have come and gone since the early Noughties. The current two-lineup approach means both iterations experience their time in Protest the Hero in vastly different ways. It's perhaps the spirit of friendship that ties things together and keeps the progsters afloat.

“The term ‘It takes a village’ keeps coming up... I think the future of the band is a village,” Hoskin says while not only contemplating the path forward with Protest the Hero's two lineups, but the friends and collaborators that are helping the band plug along behind the scenes. In other words, there's a lot of people helping right the ship.

Hoskin concludes with gratitude, “The only way it can exist is to embrace the help and talents of all the brilliant people that we know.” **GW**

“The only way is to embrace the talents of all the brilliant people we know”

LUKE HOSKIN

[from left] Austyn Wood, Kylie Gaspard, Jo Perillo and Zachary Derouen

Cashier

How an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff fuzz — and a killer boost from rapper/singer Frank Ocean — are changing the trajectory of these Louisiana shoegaze/post-hardcore grungers

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

▶ "FRANK WHO?"

Kylie Gaspard is describing her inbox flooding with DMs from her friends about a guy named Frank sharing "Beginner," a song by her alt-rock band Cashier.

"They were like, 'Frank Ocean!,'" says Gaspard, vocalist of the Lafayette, Louisiana-based band. "He listened halfway through, took a picture and posted it. I think it's in a Rolls Royce. [It's] really crazy, super surreal and really awesome. He's everything."

"He's one of the best artists of the past 15 years, for sure," says Cashier lead guitarist Jo Perillo.

A star like Frank Ocean discovering and sharing one of Cashier's songs validated their DIY philosophy. "It made me feel like we could pop off doing it ourselves," Gaspard says. "It's definitely reaffirming," Perillo agrees.

"I've been borrowing a Squier J Mascis Jazzmaster for seven years from a friend"

JO PERILLO

Cashier wasn't always the alternative rock, shoegaze-leaning band that caught the ear of big-time celebrities. Before Covid, they were a textural indie rock band that Perillo says sounded like Alex G. Then the Electro-Harmonix Big Muff fuzz pedal showed up.

"I feel like that's like the sound of Cashier," Perillo says. "We both have a Big Muff and a [ProCo] Rat. Basically, the Rat is like the normal sound. I have my Big Muff after and Kylie has hers before it, but just for the heavier parts. My always-on is the Fuck Overdrive

by this pedal company called SmallSound/BigSound that doesn't exist anymore."

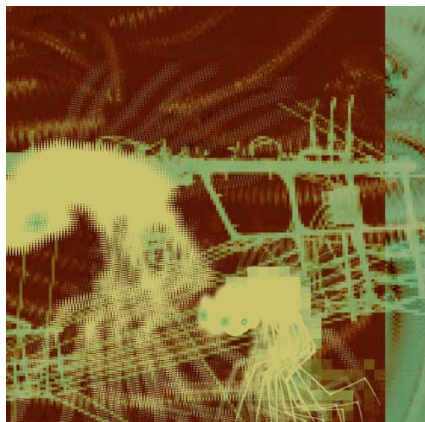
The other key piece of gear that helped push the band toward their heavy sound is a Squier J Mascis Jazzmaster. Borrowed from a friend, Perillo's Jazzmaster became Cashier's version of Metallica's EMG pickups or Kurt Cobain's Small Clone.

"I've been borrowing it for seven years very graciously from a friend," Perillo says with a laugh. "She just told me, 'You can keep using it.' It's a great guitar. I feel like it enabled Cashier to come into its own because I didn't really have a very rock-sounding guitar."

It's these things combined that's helped the band achieve the sound that they have on *The Weight*, their debut on the Philadelphia-based label Julia's War Recordings. The EP is a departure from their shoegaze-influenced singles. "Shoegaze is such an umbrella term now," Gaspard says. "On *The Weight*, we're more obviously alt-rock. The songs don't have much meat to them."

So what's next for the band?

"Hopefully the EP and our singles can feed everyone enough [for now]," Gaspard says. "Contractually, next year there will be an LP. I have a deadline, so I can get it done." **GW**



OLIVIA PERILLO



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Blank Generation

10 killer mid- to late-Seventies punk singles and the guitarists behind 'em

BY MARK McSTEAD

▶ **"BUT THEY CAN'T play!"** was the outraged cry from detractors of the original punk/new wave explosion of 1976 and 1977. True enough, there was indeed a whole new cohort of musicians, emboldened by the radical reset of all previous norms, who thought they could buy a cheap guitar and form a band the same day, but they were very much in the minority. Most of the mainstays of the scene — on both sides of the Atlantic — had put in serious time prior to the year-zero reset.

Here, in no particular order, are 10 of the best singles from that bygone era, proving the point that great musicianship did not preclude entry to the punk party. Be sure to put them on a Spotify (or, yes, Apple Music) playlist for a 30-minute blast of nihilistic nirvana.

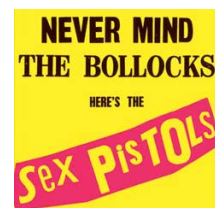


"MARQUEE MOON" TELEVISION (1977)

"Marquee Moon" kicked back against many of the tenets of the punk/new wave orthodoxy — mid-paced, long (over 10 minutes on the album version) and featuring a Grateful Dead-length guitar solo. Even with those anomalies, it was hailed as one of the greatest singles of the era (albeit in the radio-friendly edit, running at 4:30). Fifty years later, it remains one of the high points of the U.S. punk scene. Television was the archetypal NYC band of the Seventies — arthouse punk featuring spikey, jagged riffs; Tom Verlaine's distinctive, yet unconventional voice; and

songs that, lyrically, were a long way from the standard rock fare.

The song's key riff is a hypnotically repetitive trill set against textured layers of metronomic, chopped chords and a simplistic but superbly effective bassline, seamlessly interlocking and relentlessly intensifying the momentum. Richard Lloyd's solo is a classic; his willingness to take chances and takes the track to unexpected places. A brutal assessment might well have concluded that it could have stood to have lost a few minutes in the middle, but there's something thrilling about the return of the main riff, after so long spent in the free-form world of Lloyd's winding guitar lines.



"PRETTY VACANT" SEX PISTOLS (1977)

All four of the original Pistols' singles featured classic riffs, but



The Ramones perform on Don Kirshner's Rock Concert, August 9, 1977

"Pretty Vacant" is the most memorable. Written by bass player Glen Matlock, the riff's influence apparently came from the intro to "S.O.S." by ABBA, and a less-likely source of inspiration would be hard to imagine.

Guitarist Steve Jones captures the quintessential punk tone, i.e. the power and the glory of a Gibson Les Paul Custom (previously owned by New York Doll Sylvain Sylvain) firing up a Fender Twin Reverb. Jones — then and now — is a master of economy, never drifting into self-indulgence; his solos and fills are as anthemic as Johnny Rotten's nihilistic, anti-establishment lyrics. The Pistols were the original punk iconoclasts, yet ironically, Jones' licks were straight out of the old-school rock playbook.

Where the Ramones and the Damned liked to push the bpm envelope — the faster, the better! — the Pistols tended to eschew the smash-and-grab aesthetic, opting to plough their own furrow, riding the waves of Jones' multitracked rhythm parts and refusing to be drawn into the speed-for-speed's-sake trap (cue amphetamine-derived wisecrack).



"BLITZKRIEG BOP"

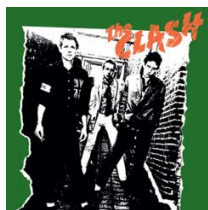
RAMONES (1976)

Although Johnny Ramone never really played a guitar solo as such, the influence of the Ramones is

so immense, much like the influence of Elvis Presley over rock 'n' roll or Muddy Waters over blues, that it'd be inexcusable to leave him off this list. Ramone's driving, sledgehammer, downstroked buzzsaw attack was the trademark of every Ramones song. Pretty much any cut serves as a perfect example, but it's hard to look beyond "Blitzkrieg Bop" — the one Ramones song everybody knows.

The Ramones had to be seen live to be appreciated; the immense wall of sound Johnny could deliver from his budget Mosrite into a couple of Marshall stacks was a visceral experience. His playing — featuring thunderously devastating power chords delivered with metronomic precision — foreshadowed many of the key elements of the thrash metal scene that undoubtedly drew elements from the brutal, aggressive assault of the Ramones at full throttle.

The Ramones had the hooks, the looks and the smarts to have become a major-league stadium band, yet inexplicably, they remain to this day the most significant cult band in the history of rock. If T-shirts were record sales, they'd have all been millionaires.



"COMPLETE CONTROL"

THE CLASH (1977)

"Complete Control" would be worthy of inclusion if only for singer Joe Strummer's impromptu "You're my guitar hero" outburst at the start of Mick Jones' short but anthemic lead break.

Jones was an experienced guitarist, having played in a number of bands before forming the Clash, with his roots in classic Sixties U.K. rock — the Stones and the Who — and in Seventies legends such as Mott the Hoople and the New York Dolls. Golden guitar nuggets can be uncovered across the entirety of the band's catalog — think the chordal riffing of "Clash City Rockers" — showing a distinct Pete Townshend/Kinks vibe, through to the sublime breaks on "Jail Guitar Doors," a song way too good to be buried on the flip side of a single.

Strummer was no slouch either, with a relentless, driving right-hand rhythm style that was as influenced by Dr. Feelgood's Wilko Johnson as it was by the amphetamine-fueled antics of the Ramones. The Clash may have famously sung "No Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling

Stones" on "1977," the flip side of "White Riot," but it wasn't long before they were fully embracing their true influences, musically and visually, with the arrival of their third album, *London Calling*. Released in late 1979, it enabled Jones and the band to stretch out, regardless of the narrow constraints of the "punk police" tastemakers of the music press.



"BORN TO LOSE"

THE HEARTBREAKERS (1977)

The Johnny Thunders-led Heartbreakers, as opposed to Tom Petty's

conventional, more sedate and mainstream appropriation of the name, featured a bona fide punk legend in the persona of Thunders, having made his rep as the ultimate cool rock 'n' roll gunslinger in the New York Dolls.

Thunders shared vocal and guitar duties with Walter Lure, who was the better guitarist as judged by the traditional norms, with influences drawn from blues and classic rock. Thunders, however, was very much a punk icon, and "Born to Lose," which was actually titled "Born Too Loose" according to Thunders, was a prime showcase for Johnny's Les Paul Junior/Twin Reverb, sleaze-fueled take on his favorite Chuck Berry licks, spiced up with his trademark glissandos — something he often used in his Dolls solos.

The heavy weight of decades of substance abuse took their toll on Thunders, who died in questionable circumstances in a cheap hotel in New Orleans in 1991 at age 38. Thunders' live shows were often chaotically shambolic, with Johnny struggling to stand up at times, berating audiences morbidly fascinated with his impending doom. Even through those turmoil-strewn years, his innate stylistic essence would still reveal itself — firing off low-slung rock 'n' roll licks that encapsulated the epitome of the guitar-hero mystique.



"ANOTHER GIRL, ANOTHER PLANET"

THE ONLY ONES (1978)

Arguably the greatest guitarist on the U.K. punk scene, John

Perry's licks in the intro and solo would have been worthy of a place in any classic rock band from the "dinosaur" old-school acts. In fact, Perry is unquestionably the most underrated guitarist of the era — no doubt due to the fact that the Only Ones are probably only known for "Another Girl, Another Planet," their solitary hit single. A deeper dive into their catalog reveals a band straddling

the unlikely twin influences of the Stones and the Velvet Underground. "The Beast," from their self-titled 1979 debut album, sounds like a Seventies Stones outtake — though Peter Perret's unconventional vocal approach and lyrics could only have flourished in the no rules punk years. That debut album is utterly schizoid in its diversity, covering everything from sophisticated jazz to two-chord punk thrash. The breadth of its audacity and ambition is more than matched by the results achieved. In common with many bands from the time, on both sides of the Atlantic, the Only Ones had been playing for several years before the happy accident of the arrival of punk. With a readymade audience hungry for change and the unconventional, Perret & Co. chanced upon a welcome home for their idiosyncratic tendencies.



"BLANK GENERATION"
RICHARD HELL & THE VOIDOIDS (1977)

Cut from the same angular, jerky cloth as *Television* —

unsurprisingly, as Hell was the original bass player in the band — "Blank Generation" managed to sum up the entire philosophy of the punk movement in under three minutes. Indeed, Blank Generation became a catch-all term for devotees of the punk movement. Guitarist Robert Quine's epileptic, abrasive solo hits exactly the right tone of excited, fractured otherness — creating the only sonic foil that could make sense against Hell's yelping vocal and often obtuse lyrics.

The U.S. punk scene was divided between the intellectual, art school vibes of bands like *Television* and *Talking Heads* and the more traditional stylings of the *Heartbreakers* and *Ramones*. Uniquely, Hell managed to bridge that divide, having been a founder member of the *Heartbreakers* after leaving *Television* before forming the *Voidoids*. As with every other entry on this survey, the song still has a freshness and relevance that resonates half a century after its creation.



"NEW ROSE"
THE DAMNED (1977)

The first U.K. punk single, "New Rose" opens with a driving four-chord riff before the band kicks in for

some Stooges-fueled maximum punk rock 'n' roll. The Damned's first releases were harder and faster than their contemporaries' records, fired up by guitarist Brian James' SG plugged straight into a Hiwatt stack — then plugged straight into the punk mainline.

James himself was way ahead of the curve, having had a band with the punk-approved moniker *Bastard* in 1973, years before the punk scene developed. From singer Dave Vanian's whispered, "Is she really going out with him?" to Rat Scabies' thundering drums chased by James' scathing four-chord riff, everything about the song instantly repudiated all the tired clichés of the plod rock mainstream — a new vision, a new sound and a new audience. The band's debut album, one of the indispensable records of the era, *Damned Damned Damned*, is overloaded with thrill power, including "Neat Neat Neat" and the punk-worthily titled "Born to Kill."



"ALTERNATIVE ULSTER"
STIFF LITTLE FINGERS (1978)

SLF mainman Jake Burns thought he'd created a winner when he wrote

"Alternative Ulster" as a nod to the Irish punk fanzine of the same name, with a view to creating a free giveaway flexidisc. As he told *GW* in 2024, "We played it at a show, and I asked the owner of the fanzine what he thought, and he said he thought it was shit. [Laughs] We were a little crestfallen; I remember saying to the guy that I thought it was pretty good and, of course, it's probably our most-loved song. The version you hear on the record was recorded as a demo for Island Records. We just recorded it as we did it live, and Ed Hollis, the

producer, said we needed to double-up the guitars. There was no click or count-in for the riff, so I had no way of knowing when it was about to start to try to double it. [Laughs] I had to totally guess where the first guitar came in. It took forever to try to get the second guitar close to the first guitar."

That intro is, alongside "Pretty Vacant," one of the most iconic of the glory years of punk. There may be no solo, and the bulk of the song is textbook punk ramalama rhythm guitar, but the power of an anthemic intro far outweighs a great guitar solo.



"BOREDOM"
THE BUZZCOCKS (1977)

We finish with a masterclass in minimalism — the simple two-note solo played by Pete Shelley on

the band's self-financed debut single. It was a stroke of genius, championing the DIY play-in-a-day idealism while also lampooning the excesses of the rock guitar hero. Remember, this was the time when the new bands were essentially rejecting — publicly, at least — everything that went before them. Several years later, they weren't afraid to 'fess up that they'd always liked the old guard after all; even Johnny Rotten admitted to having a soft spot for Pink Floyd.

True to the "reject all rock conventions" ethos, Shelley eschewed the mainstream guitar options for the cheapest-of-the-cheap Woolworths model — with the self-added mod of sawing a chunk of the body off. Steve Diggle, the band's other guitarist, usually handled the majority of lead breaks. He told *GW* in 2024, "There was no real set formula for who played what. Often, we'd both play exactly the same thing, but something about the way we played against each other made our sound what it was. Maybe it was almost like an in and out-of-phase effect as we weren't totally locked in together."

As for the bargain basement guitars, "Our gear was really primitive when we started the band, but it got the job done, just about." *GW*

1-2-3-4, Now I Wanna Hear Some More!

"SONIC REDUCER"
DEAD BOYS (1977)

From the Genya Ravan-produced album *Young, Loud and Snotty* — what better description of the punk movement? Guitarist Cheetah Chrome & Co. give good MC5.

"SHOT BY BOTH SIDES"
MAGAZINE (1978)

Nothing but sinuous, spiralling riffage and snarky, sinister singing. Future Banshee guitarist John McGeoch's singular six-string skills hit the mark.

"IN THE CITY"
THE JAM (1977)

Future Modfather Paul Weller channels classic Pete Townshend, repurposed for the punk age, complete with auto-destruction wall-of-feedback middle eight.

"WHIPS AND FURS"
THE VIBRATORS (1977)

All things considered, John Ellis shares the unsung axeman award with the Only Ones' John Perry for the most underrated guitarist in this entire feature.

"THE STAIRCASE"
STUCCO (1978)

John McKay invents goth. He can be forgiven, though, as the influence of his unique vision was felt across multiple genres for decades to come.

GATORCASES

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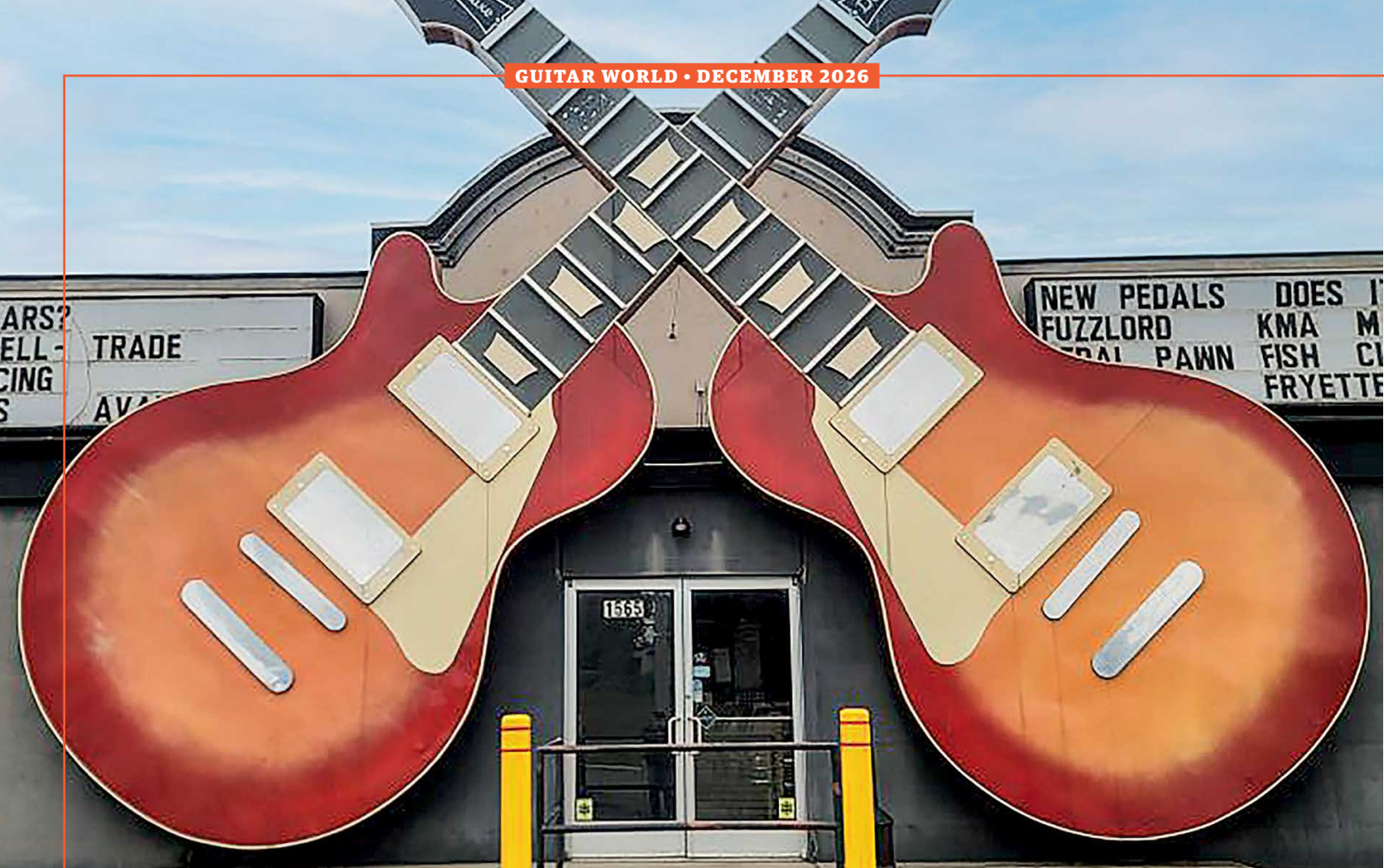
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BY ERIC T. FELDMAN

 **SOME GUITAR SHOPS** are carefully planned businesses. Others grow out of pure passion, determination and a willingness to figure it out as they go. Michigan's Motor City Guitar is one of the latter — and proudly so.

Since opening its doors in 1988, Motor City Guitar has grown from a dream into a serious Michigan guitar institution. Founder Marty Minui, along with his wife, Melissa, launched the shop fresh out of high school with nothing but limited funds and a passion for cool guitars. But word spread quickly, fueled by local students, musicians and a growing community of players. Through multiple expansions and nearly three decades at its current home in Waterford, a northern suburb of Detroit, Motor City Guitar has remained a trusted destination built on hard work, local roots and a love of the guitar biz.

We'll let Marty take it from here.

How many instruments are in the shop right now?

It hovers at around 3,000. Around half of them are on display, and the other half are in our warehouse.

What's the coolest guitar in the shop?

We recently took in five or six Seventies Les Pauls — all from different people — within two or three weeks of each other, and all of them are really, really cool. We found out after the black Custom sold that it was previously “celebrity owned.” A few weeks before that, we took in a collection of 24 sweet guitars, four of which were double-necks. Again, all of them were really cool, especially for Jimmy Page and Alex Lifeson fans like us.

What has been your favorite instrument you've ever had in the shop, and what happened to it?

It would probably be what we call “The Magic Strat.” It's a '55, all original and beat to within an inch of its life, like Rory Gallagher's Strat. If any guitar ever had “mojo,” this is it. Paul Reed Smith was here, and the second that guitar was in his hands, he lit up! He loved it so much that he borrowed it and made an identical duplicate of it just to see if he could capture its magic. I must say he did an incredible job. Then he actually gave it to us! That was a year or two before the PRS Silver Sky came out. I've got some cool photos of Eric Johnson, Mark Tremonti and others playing the '55; it really does feel like there's something magical about it. I still have it — and the PRS-made replica.

What's the most expensive instrument you've ever sold?

A Van Halen Custom Shop Bumblebee, one that Eddie held and signed just a week or so before we got it. Someone ordered it

MOTOR CITY GUITAR



a day or two after we lost Eddie just a few months later [October 2020]. It was still in the box, and when we took it out, there was an indescribable feeling in the air. During those 30 minutes or so, several of Eddie's biggest local fans randomly showed up at the store and gathered around it. It was magical.

Guitar-wise, what separates the good from the great?

How much you bond with it — that means everything, and that's something that's different for everyone. There's some real truth to the saying "It's all in the fingers," so whichever guitar brings out the best from those fingers of yours is a great one.

What's your biggest pet peeve?

I wish some manufacturers were more consistent with their pricing. Some of them do this rollercoaster thing where an item will be \$1,400 one month and \$799 the next. They act as if nobody who just paid \$1,400 last month will be bummed out. Consistency also protects customers' resale value and brand loyalty, and that ultimately helps them and the manufacturers.

Any fun celebrity encounters?

We've had a bunch, from Detroit legends like Bob Seger to heroes like George Lynch, Paul Gilbert, John Petrucci, Mike Portnoy and

Stanley Clarke. The list is really long. Rival Sons played a show at the store once. Deftones came to the store and borrowed a bunch of gear because their truck was stolen when they were on tour. But my Number 1 has to be the time my lifelong brother, Dave Friedman [Friedman Amplification], invited me to the Palace [in Auburn Hills] because he was in town to work on Eddie Van Halen's amp. Nobody said anything about Eddie being there — and Eddie gave me a hug! That was a shock and thrill that I still can't get over.

When someone walks in for the first time, what do you hope they feel?

Welcome, appreciated and listened to. We're proud of our crew, who are all previous MCG customers, and they treat customers the way they liked to be treated. Our job is to ask questions and pair people up with the gear that's right for them.

What's one fact everyone should know about your shop?

"There's a camaraderie around people who love music and love playing music"

We are long-term thinkers. In other words, we'd rather earn happy, lifelong customers who recommend us to their friends than try to sell every person who walks through the door something they don't need.

How has this shop shaped or played a part in your local music community?

We've been around a long time, so we know many people on a first-name basis. After 38 years, we're welcoming the kids and grandkids of our earliest customers. We've hosted at least 100 clinics and meet-and-greets to try and share knowledge and advice from the people who inspire us to play.

What's your best advice for someone looking to buy their next guitar?

Let it find you. Don't think too hard — you'll know the right one when you play it. I can say from personal experience — after tens of thousands of guitars have passed through my hands — that all my favorites found their way to me that way. Customers come in with something specific in mind, but many times they fall in love with something totally unexpected.

What's the best part about owning and operating a guitar shop?

There's a camaraderie around people who love music and love playing music. It doesn't matter if you're a 75-year-old country singer, a 25-year-old metal drummer or an 8-year-old kid picking up your first guitar; all musicians are part of a family. Working with people who share a love and interest is a blessing.

It's a personal thing, too. Many of us couldn't even imagine life without music; it changes lives, including ours. I can't tell you how many funerals Melissa and I have been to where the one single thing right next to the casket was that person's guitar. It's an honor to play a role in providing something that holds that much meaning in another person's life.

Eric T. Feldman is the founder of guitarshoptees.com. [GW](#)

THE GEAR HUNTER

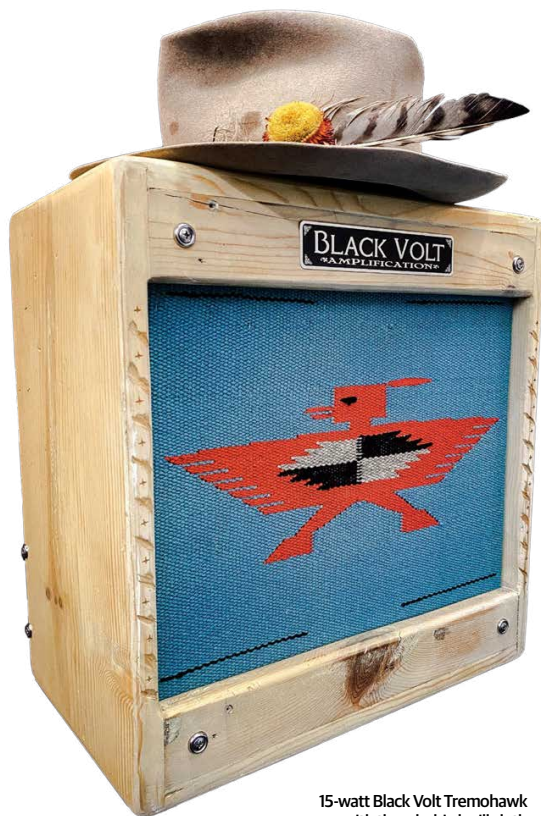
Black Volt Amplification

He started out as an aspiring brain surgeon and morphed into a session player for Black Eyed Peas and Jack Johnson. But these days Black Volt mastermind Giovanni Loria is arguably best known for building the sustainable guitars and amps used by Aerosmith, the Black Crowes and Muse

BY AMIT SHARMA



Giovanni Loria in the Black Volt barn in New York's Catskill Mountains, just outside of Woodstock



15-watt Black Volt Tremohawk with thunderbird grill cloth

▶ **GIOVANNI LORIA IS** something of a legend in the boutique-gear world. You might not find his products in your strip-mall music store, and many might say that's part of the appeal. His operation is as bespoke as it gets, given how the Woodstock, New York-based builder works on just one single product at a time. His hand-made and hand-wired amps have been used by artists as revered as Guns N' Roses, Muse, Aerosmith, the Black Crowes and At the Drive-In — the kind that

"I guess building is in my blood"

need no help in the tonal department and still choose to plug into a Black Volt on stage and/or in the studio.

His vintage-inspired designs are also highly sustainable, with Loria sourcing reclaimed American hardwoods up to 100 years old for his heads and cabinets, as well as old Navajo blankets and rugs for aesthetically charming grill cloths.

It doesn't stop at amps, either. Black Volt produces pedals and guitars — the latter of which sharing the same ethical approach to materials, as well as the reassuring romance of nostalgia, focusing mainly on Tele- and Firebird-style shapes. As he explains on his brand's website, the Black Volt philosophy is the very antithesis to "mass production" and instead nurtures "a conversation between builder and player."

What were you doing before you got into building amps?

I was born in Fullerton, California, in the shadow of the Fender factory. I moved to Hollywood when I was about

ILYA MIRMAN (LORIA), BLACK VOLT AMPLIFICATION (AMP)



Loria solders an amplifier circuit for a U.K.-bound Gold Rush Reverb combo

[left] A Black Volt Raven leans against a Custom Whitey MKIII head with 2x12 cab



Black Volt Raven in Aged Pelham Blue

[left] Black Volt Model-X in Pelham Blue



ILYA MIRMAN (LORIA), BLACK VOLT AMPLIFICATION (AMP/GUITAR), BRAIDEN DAVIES (GUITARS)

20, playing in bands while making jewelry and painting. I also wanted to become a brain surgeon, so I ended up studying biology with a focus on how electrical charges could go through a patient's nervous system to help them remember things. I was trying to get into people's brains using electricity — and now I'm working on electrical circuits that affect our bodies in a different way. In between that, I was playing with Black Eyed Peas, Jack Johnson and Everlast.

When did you begin your journey as an amp designer?

I started taking amps apart and manipulating circuits, even though I didn't have enough experience to understand. Friends started asking me to restore and modify their gear. A vintage shop in Los Angeles asked me to be their tech, so I started collecting five amps a week to repair at home. I wasn't qualified to do that and sought out old-school mentors to get help, like Aspen Pittman, who wrote *The Tube Amp Book* and

[left] Loria outside the Black Volt barn. Black Volt moved across the country — from Los Angeles to New York's Catskill Mountains — this past April

"Alexander Dumble was a big fan of my amps because they're unique and original"



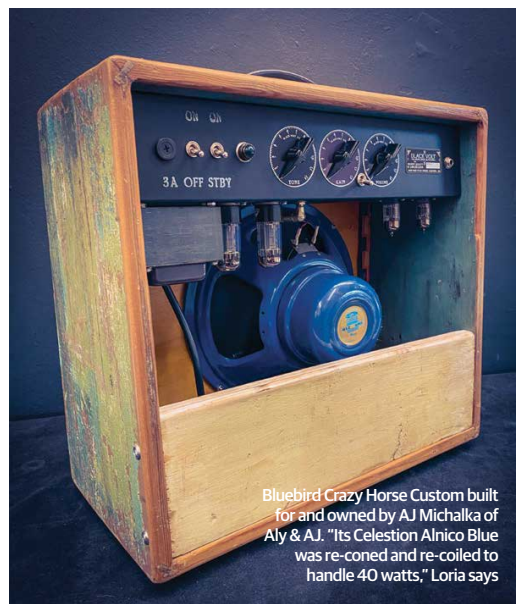
Loria with Slash and a Black Volt Veronica

[below] A Black Volt Model-X, one of six limited-edition "Concrete Blonde" guitars built with wood from an old, salvaged concrete form. Three of these guitars—including this one—are owned by Jason Momoa

invented Groove Tubes, which eventually got bought by Fender. Launching Black Volt in 2014 was a very organic move. I've always been a hands-on person. My family had a huge woodshop in southern Italy. I guess building is in my blood.

Tone always comes first, of course, but another big draw is your commitment to ethical sourcing.

I think the sustainable concept gets lost on most people. I've always loved the idea of recycling. I've seen a lot of deforestation, especially on the West Coast. It's devastating; there's nothing but tree stumps and trucks, like a nuclear bomb went off. Instead of new wood, I prefer to use the materials already around us. Something like recycled furniture can be such a blessing. I recently found a wood supplier who had old tabletops made out of South American mahogany from the Sixties. A furniture manufacturer went out of business and left it all in storage. It was such amazing wood—it sounded great and was already 60 years old.



Bluebird Crazy Horse Custom built for and owned by AJ Michalka of Aly & AJ. "Its Celestion Alnico Blue was re-coned and re-coiled," Loria says



A row of Black Volt FDR FET Overdrive pedals

The Crazy Horse Custom is your flagship amp. What inspired its sound?

It's a 5E3 circuit that I modified. I wanted to use solid pine, which is what Leo Fender did with his early Telecasters, known as Pinecasters. A lot of the houses around Southern California had old pine on the roof rafters and panels, stuff that had been cooking in the sun for decades. The cabinets would resonate in a specific way—the closest I could get to classic tweeds.

In terms of inspiration, I've always loved chimey Fender cleans. You can overdrive them with pedals, but I'm a purist. I went back to the source and dug into Marshall, hoping to introduce more grit. That's what the rockers used, from Jimmy Page to Jimi Hendrix. It had to be a pure and honest way of bringing Fender and Marshall tones together.

Clearly you're doing something right. Some huge names are using Black Volt.

A lot of it came from word of mouth. Sometimes it's just a random phone call. That's how it happened with Rich Robinson; I had no idea he would be calling. He sent his tech to the shop to borrow things. He then started sending me videos of him playing a 1964 Firebird through my Crazy Horse, making it sound glorious. With Slash, I met him after working on his 100-watt



BLACK VOLT AMPLIFICATION



The Black Crowes' Rich Robinson with a Black Volt Veronica (old-flame koa top and flame maple back)

[below] A reclaimed-pine Veronica with an African mahogany neck, Old Brazilian fretboard and Tom Holmes PAF-style humbuckers

Silver Jubilees. One time I got invited to his house to bring some guitars, pedals and amps, which was terrifying. When I did, he plugged into all of my stuff. He was so humble and cool, so real and inquisitive.

How'd you end up getting your amps in the hands of U.K. artists like Muse and Biffy Clyro?

They came through producer Rich Costey. He asked to borrow one of my amps for a Muse record in 2015 and then told me it sounded like no other amp. He also used it with At the Drive-In, who made a whole record with a Black Volt and a Vox AC15. And then the same thing happened with Biffy Clyro, which led to Simon Neil ordering the Brooklyn Special, which is the 60-watt head and cab. Black Volt is all about that extra 10 percent most people never reach. I go into the fine details – the layout, the lead dress, the types of components like solder. Specific types of specific metals. I'm good friends with the guys who inherited the Dumble brand. I've known Drew Berlin for over 10 years, and he's brought me amps belonging to Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana to work on. He once told me that Alexander Dumble was a big fan of my designs because they're unique and original instead of copies of his stuff.

You make an overdrive, a fuzz and a treble booster. Was it easy to transfer the knowledge

from amps to pedals?

Pedals were an easy transition because I build my pedals like amps. It's the same kind of circuits and components. The FDR FET overdrive is the most unique; it's the one everyone gets. Rich Robinson has four and uses them all the time. The fuzz is great and has a transistor circuit so gearheads can swap them out by hand. You can choose to go for a Mullard OC75 or a silicon thing or whatever. And the Silver Bullet is a Rangemaster-style boost.

Designing and building guitars must've been a very challenging move.

I wasn't known as a luthier, so yeah, it was completely different. During the pandemic, I partnered with Carlos Lopez, who was a Fender Custom Shop master builder for 15 years and now owns Castedosa Guitars. I told him I had all these old woods for guitars but didn't have enough experience. We built a bunch of T-styles in his home shop. I'm all about the golden age – the Fifties and Sixties stuff everybody wants. Having Carlos instruct me was a dream. I was fortunate; there was no other way I'd be making Custom Shop-level guitars in just a few years. The next thing for me is to do a Catskills collection, using woods sourced around me. The plan is to avoid launching new products regularly and stick to the things that work. **GW**





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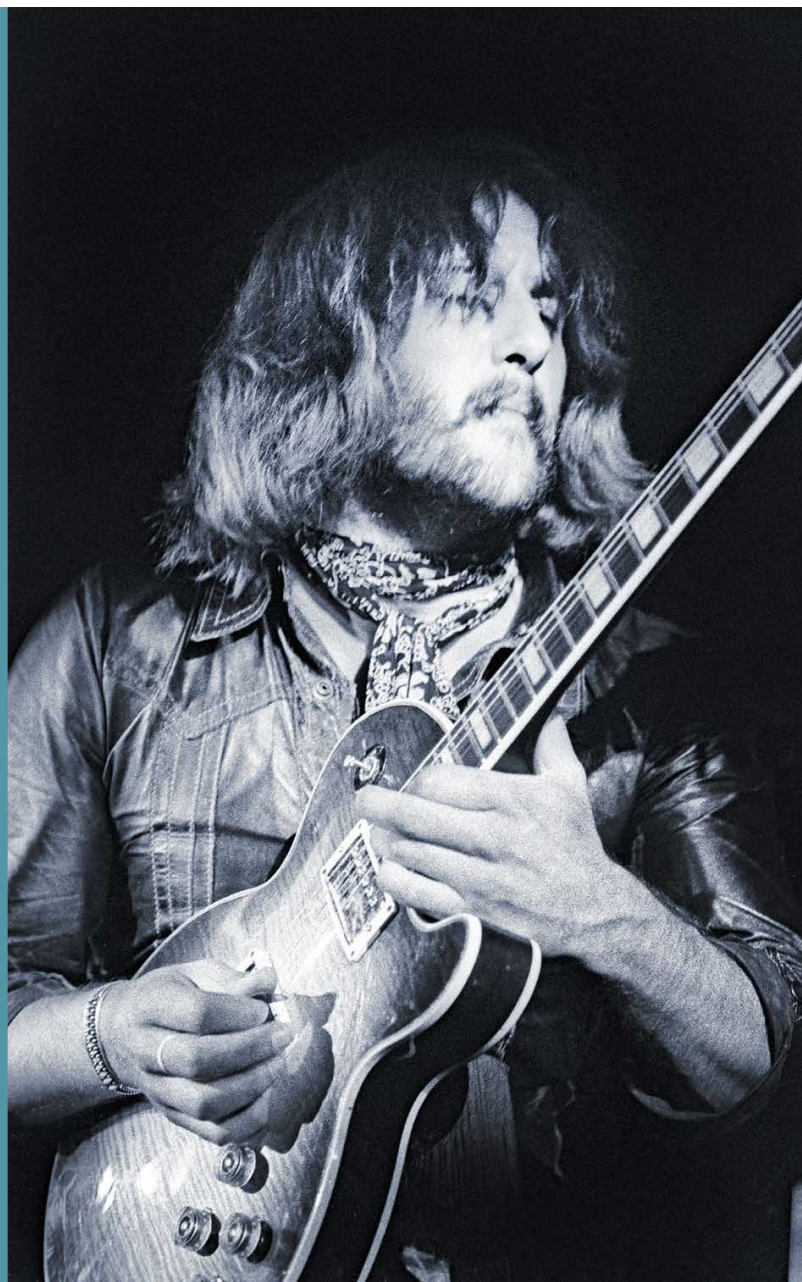
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PERSONALITIES

Jan Akkerman

At 79, the Dutch master says “life was never boring.” From his apprenticeship in Amsterdam’s red-light district, through the toxic brilliance of prog trailblazers Focus, to cutting heads with B.B. King, this career-spanning interview tells all

BY ANDREW DALY



POLL A CIRCLE of prog-rock lifers on the bands who built the genre and the usual suspects – Pink Floyd, Genesis, Jethro Tull – will loom large. Certainly, there’s no arguing with the guitar contributions of David Gilmour, Steve Hackett and Martin Barre. But let the conversation roam, and Jan Akkerman’s name will soon drop.

Born in the Netherlands in 1946, and playing accordion through his formative years, this classically trained alumnus of the Amsterdam Music Lyceum was a fascinating dichotomy, drawn to both the roar of Sixties rock and the delicate renaissance music inspired by his love of Julian Bream.

That musical curiosity was writ large in Akkerman’s breakout band of the early Seventies, Focus, who interwove jazz, classical, blues and hard rock into a technicolor tapestry. Albums like *Focus Plays Focus* (1970) and *Focus II*, aka *Moving Waves* (1971), were game-changers, as was their much-underrated live record, *At the Rainbow* (1973). “We certainly did not realize,” Akkerman tells *Guitar World*, “that what we were doing would cause the shit to hit the fan.”

One song in particular, “Hocus Pocus,” from *Moving Waves*, earned the most attention. “The thing with ‘Hocus Pocus’ is that after playing it five million times, I got fed up,” Akkerman says. “For a moment, I said, ‘No more ‘Hocus Pocus’ because I felt there were other things in the world.’”

Akkerman duly moved on, finding further success with *Focus 3* (1973), featuring another hit, “Sylvia.” Then came *Hamburger Concerto* (1974) and *Mother Focus* (1975), after which the guitarist quit Focus to kick off his solo and session career.

Back then, he never considered himself a prog talisman. And to a degree, he still doesn’t. “I never thought about it in that sense,” he says. “For me, music is music. If it’s progressive, or whatever they want to call it – that’s fine. They can give it that name. But I never stick to one form of music.”

True to his word, since leaving Focus – and even after reuniting with the band in the Eighties and Nineties – Akkerman has run the gamut. Scan his activities through the decades and you’ll find him winning a Dutch Edison Award in 1976 for his solo concept album, *Eli*, experimenting with parallel fifths and guitar synths, even stretching himself in the

GIE KNAEFS/GETTY IMAGES

“WHAT OTHER FOLKS HAD EXPERIENCED WHEN LISTENING TO HENDRIX, I HAD LISTENING TO AN ORCHESTRA”

studio with Jack Bruce, Phil Collins, Paco de Lucia, Ice-T and B.B. King.

A nasty back injury from a car accident in '92 nearly took him out of the game for good, but Akkerman returned, rattling off more solo music, with even more on the way. "For me," he says, "new music is an open field..."

How did your interest in jazz, classical and rock form you as a player?

I come from an environment of business people, like scrap-metal merchants, secondhand car dealers, etc. I grew up in the middle of the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam and right around the corner from the red-light district, where music oozed out of bars at every corner. It was not boring. [Laughs] There was a very famous button accordion player, a man called Johnny Meyer, who played all the jazz standards but also J.S. Bach. I was so mesmerized that I wanted to play the accordion. I was 5 or 6, and that music turned me on.

How did classical music impact your playing?

It led me to grow up. I was very curious. That's a good way for everyone to be. I was very interested in discovering more types of music and instruments. I ended up going to [Amsterdam Music Lyceum], and found I'd rather learn about new things all the time. My dad once took me to a cafe where an orchestra was rehearsing. They put me on a chair right in front. I was 12, and what other folks must have experienced when listening to Jimi Hendrix, I had listening to that orchestra.

Your first proper band was Brainbox. What gear were you using then?

I played a Gretsch White Falcon, a gift from my father because he had seen on TV a guitarist named Van Wood. By coincidence, my "uncle" became the importer of Gretsch drums and guitars. After that, I had a brown Country Gentleman and a '63 White Falcon. My old man told the importer, the "uncle" man, that if he wouldn't make a gesture, let me have that White Falcon, he wouldn't buy one screw, amp or drum kit from him because all our instruments were bought from him. So we made him an offer... [Laughs]

How did you first meet Pierre van der Linden?

I had gotten sacked by Brainbox, which wasn't so bad, as I was only in the band for seven months. For some reason, probably because of envy, jealousy and all the other feelings one has in this world, I got kicked out. But before this, I was in a band with Pierre called Johnny and his Cellar Rockers, so I knew him from there.

Moving on to Focus, what gear were you playing?

I played a Tele on the first Focus LP because I loved the clear sound and sustain. But after a while, I started fiddling around and wound up with a body in the shape of a tulip because after my Gretsch, nothing could touch my White Falcon, so I wound up using my White

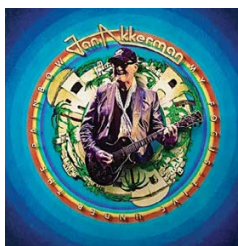


PREVIOUS PAGE Jan Akkerman in action with Focus in Belgium, August 15, 1974

ABOVE Akkerman trades licks with B.B. King in the Netherlands in 1998



HIS FIRST WITH FOCUS
FOCUS PLAYS FOCUS
(1970)



HIS LATEST
MY FOCUS — LIVE UNDER THE RAINBOW
(2025)

Falcon again. But then, the manager of Focus at that time showed up with a 1954 Les Paul Black Beauty. I embraced that guitar like my old lady, but there was something missing. I came to realize that I missed my Gretsch sound so much. So, I took my White Falcon pickups and put them in the black Les Paul, but I forgot how the wiring was done. So, I rewired them in the wrong way, which triggered this whole customization business. Nobody said thank you. [Laughs]

What amps did you use back then?

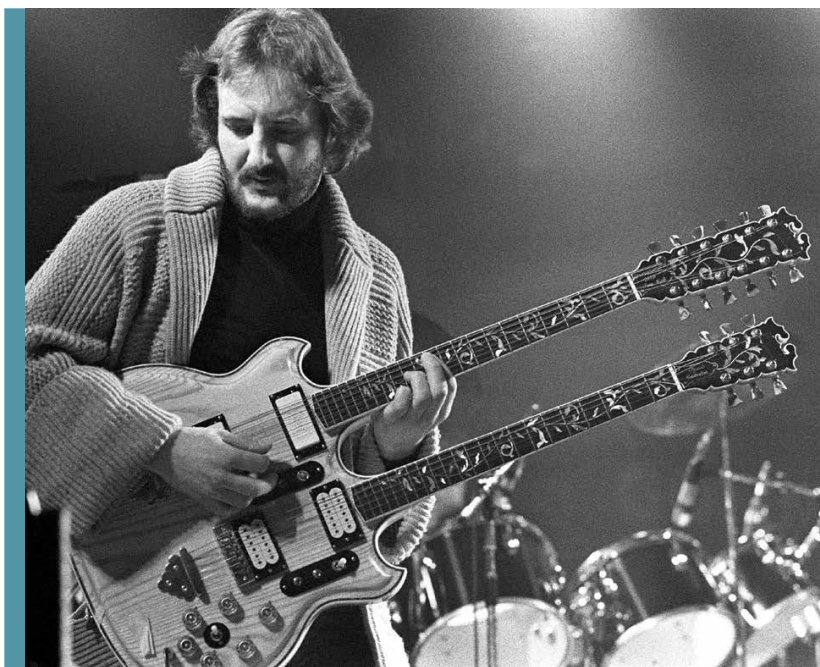
In the old days, I played a lot on German-made amps like Dynacord suitcase amps. Later, I started using a Cordovox Leslie, and then a 60-watt white Marshall with a separate top, and after that, a Fender solid-state with two cabinets and 4x12-inch speakers and a bass cabinet with eight 10-inch speakers. Even later, I had 40 Leslie cabinets. Great sound, but they were only 30 watts each, so I replaced them with two large cabinets powered by two 1,000-watt Crown amps, plus crossover filters... just to cheer them up. And I had a Colorsound preamp, which gave me all the FM and radio stations as an extra.

Focus II, also known as Moving Waves, ended up being a pillar of prog. What are your memories?

In those days, even before Focus, I listened to a lot of John Coltrane, Django Reinhardt and all sorts of things. And with "Hocus Pocus," I remember I was listening to a lot of the Beatles' 'White Album'. I loved the craziness of that album. I'd be listening to that with one ear while

PAUL BERGEN/REDFERNS

"THE MANAGER OF FOCUS SHOWED UP WITH A 1954 LES PAUL BLACK BEAUTY. I EMBRACED THAT GUITAR LIKE MY OLD LADY"



having the other fixed on the television while sitting on the floor with a guitar. I'd come up with a heavy lick, and through that sort of process, tracks like "Hocus Pocus" and that album came together. That album has a lot of different influences layered in.

By then, was it still Fender amps and your Black Beauty?

Yes, in those days, it was mostly just my Les Paul. At first, I used big solid-state Fender amps, but the studio was too small, so I found smaller 30-watt amps for the recording. But I still felt like I needed amps with more sustain, so I went for a walk in London to Shaftesbury Avenue and I found some great gear. I saw this thing called Colorsound [Supa Tonebender Fuzz], which had boost, treble and bass. Instinctively, I felt that gadget would do the trick, and it did. The problem later, when touring the States, was that I had every radio station in the neighborhood because this thing not only boosted the guitar sound but also worked as an inductor.

What's your tried-and-true secret for guitar tone?

The secret to my tone is purity of sound and balance, just like the old bebop players. I keep the bridge pickup full and the switch in the middle and use the neck pickup as a volume pot with the little finger.

How did "Hocus Pocus" come about?

I heard a song by Frank Zappa called "Willie the Pimp," which was in the same category as the Beatles or Rolling Stones but more genuine. This triggered the old R&R feel in me, not realizing how good it felt playing it, and of course, Thijs Van Leer started to yodel – with the result everybody knows now.

ABOVE Akkerman in 1979 with an Ibanez 2670 Artist
BELOW Focus members Thijs van Leer (left) and Akkerman on stage in London, January 13, 1973

Did its success take you by surprise?

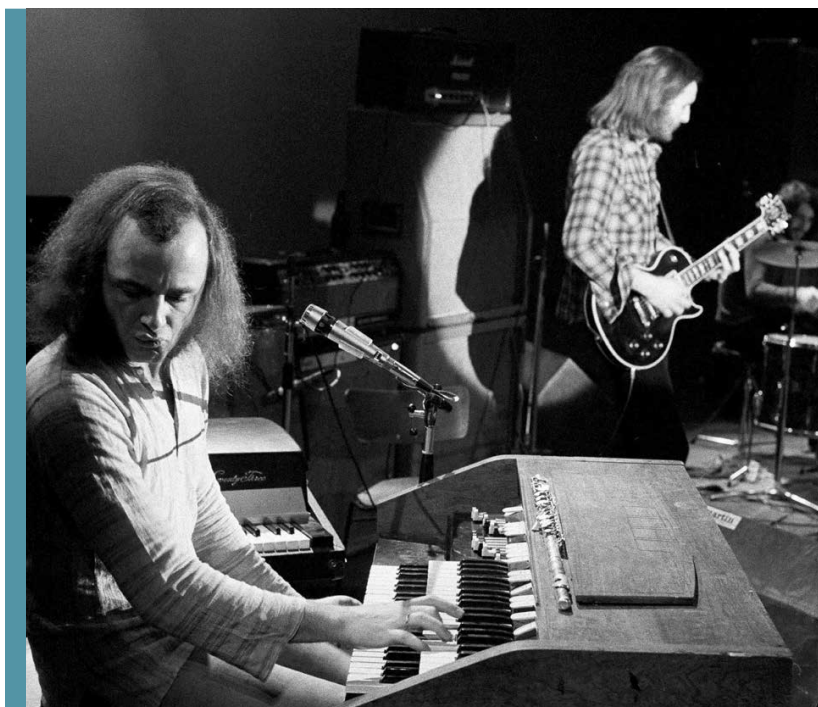
In a way, yes. I guess it did alright in the polls, right? It's a funny album because there's a lot of heavy rock on there, but also yodeling to the point where it's almost half opera. [Laughs] It was kind of like a big opera-type story; the only thing missing was stabbing a knife in each other's back, but that happened later anyway. As for me, I like the opening lick – what comes after that, it's beyond my budget.

I've always loved the 15-part suite, "Eruption."

With "Eruption," that was kind of this weird, patched-together thing. It was a true conglomeration of ideas. That's the nice thing about fusion, jazz and even rock – there's things you can't calculate in advance, but sometimes, in the right place, or at the right time, they come together. "Eruption" was a sort of liberation. Drummer Pierre van der Linden always wanted to experiment with different styles, just like me. And I wanted to surprise him and gave him a copy of "Concerto for Orchestra" by Béla Bartók. That triggered van Leer and the form for *Moving Waves*! The second Focus album was set.

Another classic was "Sylvia" from *Focus 3*.

Funnily, the only thing I remember about recording "Sylvia" was that I added depth with a second guitar part to make it sound like a Doppler effect. I didn't want to use effects, so I just played the part a second time, doubled it, and got what I wanted. It was easy and only took me maybe five minutes. I never expected the song to be so popular; I thought it was a song with a nice melody, and that was it.



"THE NICE THING ABOUT FUSION, JAZZ AND ROCK IS THAT THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN'T CALCULATE IN ADVANCE"

What led you to hook up with Framus for one of the first-ever signature guitars, the Akkerman?

Well, I liked the Framus because I designed it myself. It's a similar shape to a Les Paul, and they were making them at a good factory. I loved my Les Paul, but I also loved my Tele and my Broadcaster, so I liked guitars that were less about luxury. At the time, I was very happy with my Framus and played it as much as possible.

You added more guitar synths as a solo artist in the Eighties. What led to that?

My experimental period! It goes back to what I said earlier – I like to experiment. At the time, those things were fairly new to Europe, where it was almost like the Renaissance in the 14th or 15th centuries, you know? I even got into drum machines and, like you said, guitar synthesizers because I liked the sounds I could make with them. It's like, "Oh, I can make a cow's 'moo' on a guitar," which was something I never thought possible but also thought was funny. [Laughs]

What are your memories of working with B.B. King?

He was fantastic. He invented that type of blues, right? While playing with him, I realized I had picked up more things from him over the years than I ever realized. Working with a guy like him was like learning a new language – one which makes you wiser, though not luckier. [Laughs]

"I GOT INTO GUITAR SYNTHS BECAUSE I LIKED THE SOUNDS I COULD MAKE, LIKE A COW'S 'MOO' ON A GUITAR, WHICH WAS SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE BUT FOUND FUNNY"

How did your car accident in 1992 impact your guitar playing?

It's always difficult to overcome a sickness or injury. I had broken my back in several places and found myself in a wheelchair. The recovery was slow to the point that I felt like I could only move maybe a 10th of a millimeter, and if I did so the wrong way, I'd never walk again. It was hard, and I couldn't play for over a year. To that, I always say, "Thank God it's over."

Which record means the most to you?

It sounds cliché, but they're all good! The problem for me is not in the music. Let's put that upfront. I love the music of Focus. The problem is the right or wrong synergy – or whatever you want to call it – that's involved. I said earlier that envy and jealousy are factors, and those feelings are often underestimated. So, that's the stuff that factors in for me rather than how good the music was – it's all good. Every album is like one of my babies. I have two albums out – *Live Under the Rainbow* by My Focus, recorded in the U.K. – and the one I'm working on now is a studio album that has no title yet.

I don't suppose a Focus reunion is in the cards?

No. I mean... the idea is, of course, very tempting, but there are plenty of other tempting things in life. Life is basically one risk after another. To get involved in that again, part of me thinks that would be crazy. You don't have to be crazy to make music, but maybe it helps! [GW](#)

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RAGGED

Tracking nose-to-nose with red-hot tubes — and leaving the mistakes in — GA-20's spit 'n' grit Chicago blues is the anti-AI. **Matt Stubbs** and **Cody Nilsen** talk blues haters, recording with their hero and reclaiming Ibanez from the shredders

BY HENRY YATES

▶ **IF YOU'RE LOOKING** for slick-as-an-eel blues with a digital sheen, warns Matt Stubbs, keep walking. The hirsute leader of Providence-based power-trio GA-20 makes no apology, for either the fact that his cultural clock stopped a half-century ago ("From the Fifties until '72 — that's the sweet spot"), or that his band's deep dive into Chicago blues is the kind of tube-torn, freight-train clatter that made the city's mid-century dancefloors groan.

That warts 'n' all approach is working. Formed in 2018 by former sideman Stubbs, and scaling the *Billboard* Blues Chart with all four of their studio albums to date, GA-20 (named for a mid-Fifties Gibson tube combo) now feel like a thrilling rebuke to AI music, showcasing the primal punch of analog fleshsacks moving air.

As blues scholars to a man, you can imagine the buzz when veteran Windy City harp-blower Charlie Musselwhite stepped in for new album *Blues Now*. But as Stubbs and fellow guitarist Cody Nilsen assure us, even hosting this VIP guest hasn't sanded their rough edges.



ELIZABETH ELLENWOOD

GLORY



What would we have seen as a fly on the wall at the *Blues Now* sessions?

MATT STUBBS: A lot of old amps, old guitars, old microphones and all of us in one room, standing in a half-circle. All the records I love, that's how they were recorded.

Most of these songs were two takes, not a lot of punching in or fixing things. It's a conversation. You play off of each other, and hopefully each time it's different. What you hear on this record is what you'd have heard if you poked your head in.

CODY NILSEN: There's one point when Matt lets out a yell of excitement, and it wasn't planned, but we're recording live, so it's like, "Well, it's staying." Those unrehearsed moments of synchronicity really excite me. If Matt makes a move and I like the way it sounds, we follow him down that road. It's about eye contact, talking without speaking, rolling the dice and saying, "I'm gonna play this now, I hope it works 'cos we're all playing together." No risk, no reward.

You tracked the record in six days. That's actually quite generous for this band, right?

STUBBS: Yeah, all our other records were done in two days. We didn't have a lot of money back then. We don't have a lot of money now, either! But ▶



The team behind *Blues Now*:
[from left] Charlie Musselwhite
with GA-20's Matt Stubbs,
Josh Kiggins and Cody Nilsen

Charlie told us his debut record [*1968's Stand Back!*] was recorded in less than three hours. He said that if they went a minute over, the union was double scale or something. On this one, the engineer was a great guy named Brian Charles. That's important in the studio. Sometimes with engineers, if they don't move fast, you can lose eight hours pretty easily.

How do you split the guitar parts?

STUBBS: I'm pretty simple and primitive. Cody's a bit more intricate and probably uses a lot more technique than I do. He even played lap steel on "*Cristo Redentor*." I don't think there's ever been a version like that before. We did two tunes off of *Stand Back!* just to tip the hat to that record. The others are classic blues songs, mostly from Chicago. But it goes a little deeper; for every one of them, it relates to a story of Charlie's. Like, I told him, "Man, you talk about Jimmy Reed a lot." So we did "I'll Change My Style."

Matt, you started playing in Charlie's band back in 2008. How did that happen?

STUBBS: I was living in L.A., playing with another harmonica player named John Németh. June Core was on a bunch of those tours, and that's Charlie's long-term drummer. So when the guitar chair in Charlie's band opened up, I got a random call – "Hey, June says you're pretty good. Wanna do some gigs?" No rehearsal. I just got on stage. It was pretty scary, actually. There's a vocabulary, a way to back up a Chicago harp player. You're playing behind them but

also weaving around them. At first, it might not seem super-exciting for a young player. But as you get into it, you learn all these beautiful voicings.

What are your impressions of working with Charlie on *Blues Now*?

STUBBS: He's a historian at this point. He's got a million stories, about all these guys I never even got to see, but they're heroes. He had a great one about watching Earl Hooker in Chicago. Every time the solo came around, Charlie would be like, "That's the greatest thing I've ever heard; he can't top that." But Earl just kept topping it. And Buddy Guy was in the audience, just freaking out each time the solo got elevated.

You play an Ibanez, Cody. It's not really a brand associated with the blues.

NILSEN: No. I'm trying to reclaim it from the shredders! We were joking the other day, like, how funny it'd be if Matt and I started shredding on blues stuff. My main guitar is a 2335 from 1977. It's [*like*] a Les Paul Custom with P90s. I found it online, a half-hour from my house, and it was love at first sight. It's one of those instruments that resonates so well;

"My Les Paul goldtop fell on the ground before a set. I played the whole thing with a broken headstock"

CODY NILSEN

it thumps like no other. Those lawsuit-era guitars – Greco, Burny, Tokai – they're such high-quality instruments that I'm always pleasantly surprised. I'm also touring a big red 2457 from the same year. It was actually a wedding gift from the band. I opened the case, thinking it was a guitar Matt needed me to work on. And boom – there it was.

STUBBS: In some ways, they're probably better than the Gibsons [*from*] that time.

What's the appeal of your Waterslide signature model, Matt?

STUBBS: I had it built when we started flying with GA-20. At the time, I was using an older Silvertone hollow-body 1454, with the gold foil pickups. But it's rough flying with guitars, so I wanted something more durable that could take a fall if I had to gate-check it – 'cos we try to always carry our guitars on. I'd never played a Waterslide, but I'd seen them online a lot. So I called them up and explained that I love old Teles and Silvertones, and I wanted a cross between the two – basically a Tele with gold foil pickups and a nice springy Bigsby. And I'll tell you what, man – I haven't played a new guitar I like better.

Have you ever regretted letting a guitar go?

NILSEN: I had a 2003 Les Paul Classic goldtop. It was a magic instrument, but I needed the money at the time. I keep an eye out for it to this day. That same Les Paul once fell on the ground before a set. Everything seemed fine and I made it through the show without a problem. Turns out I played the whole set with a broken headstock.

How about your worst onstage mishap, Matt?

STUBBS: I was in the middle of a long tour and one of my vintage Bassman heads stopped working, so I found a local amp guy to do a rush-repair for the gig that night. He came to the show, and a couple of songs in, the amp burst into flames in front of him. Luckily, I had a backup and he fixed it up right that night. All good.

Given your name, do you feel any pressure to use the Gibson GA-20?

STUBBS: We don't use them live much anymore, but we still record with them. This record, probably 80 percent was recorded with the GA-20. But we've had some amps built by a great company out of Nashville called West Side Amplifiers. Diego Rotondo is the owner, and he specializes in building Fender-style stuff. I have in my collection a great-sounding 1960 Tweed Deluxe. So he's like, "I can build you an exact-to-spec amp so you don't have to bring the old one out." So we both tour with one of those. And then we both have '68 Bassman heads when we're home, with 2x12 cabs. When GA-20 started,

we were pretty quiet. Now we're pretty loud.

NILSEN: We're not a lounge act, y'know?

Are you glad you didn't name the band after an amp-modeling software package?

STUBBS: Yeah. We could be called Line 6.

Where are you guys on modeling?

STUBBS: I don't touch the stuff. If I'm on my iPad demoing a song, I might plug into GarageBand. But no, man, I love old or vintage-inspired amplifiers.

NILSEN: There were certain bands I was a part of where the things I care about were not as important to the bandleaders. So I was using a Boss Katana. And it's like, I'll get through the gig, it's cool, but man, that was not inspiring.

Could you actually tell the difference in a blindfolded test?

STUBBS: I'll say that recording with modeling amps, you can get pretty close. In the studio, you can manipulate things in post-production. But for me, it's about feel, especially onstage. The way it feels under your fingers, the way it jumps off the speakers. There's a lot of new amps — even tube amps — I just can't get on with, and if we get 'em as backline, it's rough. In GA-20,

we haven't got a bass player, so we got to cover the low end and it has to sound tight. But then we also want a distorted guitar tone happening. So the amp has to sound good for me.

You've said mistakes are tolerated — even encouraged — in this band.

STUBBS: That comes from learning old blues songs coming up. With Little Walter songs, I always wondered, why did he play it like that? Then you realize, "Oh, it was probably just a mistake." A lot of times those end up being the cool moments. This is definitely

not AI music. It's humans in a room playing. Quantized, "perfect" music has its place — in pop music. I'm sure they sell a lot of records. But it's not my thing. I like raw music.

Presumably, you're staunch opponents of AI-created music?

STUBBS: There's nothing I like about AI music. It's the direct opposite of what I like. No soul. I hate AI in art. I don't like the AI promo posters. All of it.

NILSEN: I don't see any situation where I'd listen to AI music. Music created by humans is the only way for me.

Some people say all blues guitar is just a variation on the same old licks...

STUBBS: They obviously haven't spent enough time digging in. That's someone that either doesn't like blues or never learnt the language. A lot of blues songs are only three chords, but what can you do with that? People who don't listen might think blues is down and out, sad and slow, but it ain't really that. It's feel-good music, too.

NILSEN: Blues is so powerful, even now, because it's three chords and the truth. And it doesn't need external factors to improve on what can be found within it. The best blues is magic just the way it is. **GW**



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Fanny blazed a trail
for female-fronted rock
in the Seventies. But as June
and Jean Millington tell *GW*,
it's only now — after years
of misogyny, roadblocks and
breakdowns — that they're
getting their flowers

BY JANELLE BORG



HEY MAY NEVER have topped the charts, but they won fans in the Beatles, David Bowie, Barbra Streisand, Todd Rundgren and Lowell George.

One thing is for sure — San Francisco-via-Manila sisters June and Jean Millington were always destined to break the mold. They co-founded one of the world's first rock bands — composed entirely of women, that is — to sign a multi-record deal with a major label, namely the Frank Sinatra-founded, Warner Records subsidiary Reprise Records, bringing their own unique brand of technical prowess and art-rock, blues-inflected, unmistakably rock-through-and-through sound to crowds in the U.S., Europe and beyond.

And it all started from what June calls “a handmade, small guitar from the southern Philippines,” which the pair’s mother got for them. “When we got here to the U.S., hootenanny [*an informal party or folk music concert, often featuring open-mic performances*] was all the rage. Jean and I played a lot of those.”

As June aptly describes it, guitar music also served another role: “[*It was*] our sort of pathway into having friends and joining society in America.

“Guys got into music or rock ‘n’ roll for sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll. We just wanted to make friends. We loved playing music. I mean, we’re Filipina. Filipinos are incredibly, incredibly musical. It’s in our DNA for sure.”

A casual “Hey, you want to start a band?” from a drummer at another high school quickly snowballed into Jean and June’s mom taking them to a music store to get proper equipment — despite their dad’s initial hesitancy.

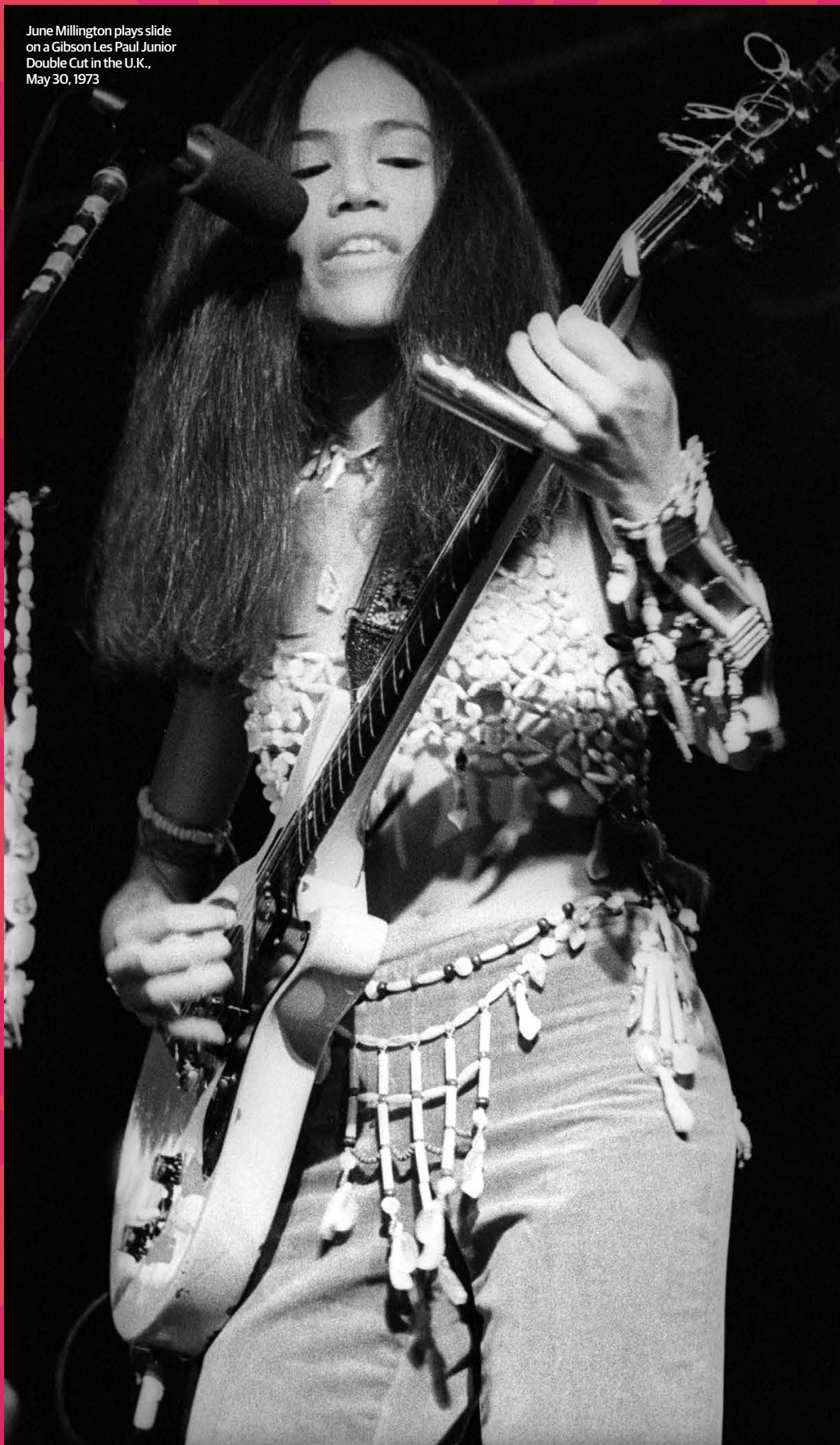
“My mom, she didn’t say anything, but she took me and Jean to a music store, and that’s when it all changed,” June says. “She bought Jean an electric bass and an amp, and me an electric guitar and an amp. I had a small electric guitar I bought in a pawn shop with my dad, from Sears or something like that. But now we got the real gear. I think we were copying the Beatles. We wanted their equipment.”

Fast forward to the early Seventies, and the band that would become Fanny — June on guitar, Jean on bass, keyboardist Nickey

“We loved playing music. Filipinos are incredibly, incredibly musical. It’s in our DNA for sure”

JUNE MILLINGTON

June Millington plays slide on a Gibson Les Paul Junior Double Cut in the U.K., May 30, 1973



Barclay and drummer Alice de Buhr – would end up recording at the Beatles' Apple Studios in London, with the famous Liverpool band's seminal engineer, Geoff Emerick.

"We got down to work," she says. "And although we were recording every day, when we had the time, we flew to Germany to record *Beat-Club* [a West German program that aired between 1965 and December 1972]. We did the BBC, we were playing gigs around London... Every single day was an intense schedule.

"We did it because, well, number one, we were young. I don't think we got that much sleep, but we had worked so hard to get to that point."

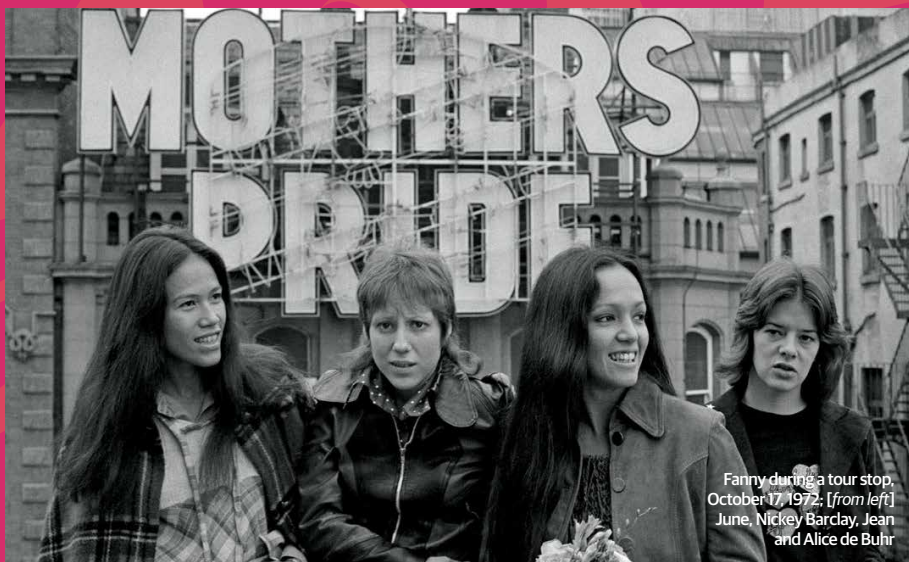
Active between 1969 and 1975, the band toured relentlessly, released five studio albums and was admired by the *crème de la crème* of the industry. Yet, as the sisters and co-founders tell *Guitar World*, it was a journey marked as much by misogyny as by sisterhood and musical innovation – decades ahead of its time.

"Do you remember the sneers we got from the boys?" June asks her sister.

"For the longest time, we had to first prove that we could actually play," Jean says. "[For] the first 10 minutes, people [would] not believe me. Then they understood that we actually play. But that went on for a long time – having to prove [ourselves]."

"Nuance is what we had," the lead guitarist says. "Every gig we did was a success. We never failed. That was not an option because we knew we were holding up for future generations."

In 1965, you started the Svelts, and the choice of who would play bass famously came down to a coin toss. Looking back, how significant was this small decision on your sound?



Fanny during a tour stop, October 17, 1972. [from left] June, Nicky Barclay, Jean and Alice de Buhr

JUNE: When you hear Jean's bass parts, they're totally amazing and electric. Bass is not something you should take up if you're not going to be serious about it, because it's a very powerful instrument, and you have to simplify everything down, yet be complicated...

JEAN: You tailor your parts. I did. And the other thing is, a lot of bass players don't sing. I was the lead singer of a lot of material, so to play bass and sing at the same time, you really have to split your brain. I mean, it's so hard.

How did the Svelts transform into Fanny?

JUNE: Wild Honey [the band preceding Fanny] is actually the band that signed the deal with Reprise, and after we signed the deal, Addie [Lee] – she was the lead guitarist, I was rhythm and singer – she left the band, and I had to learn how to play lead in a year.

JEAN: I have to say that for June, seeing her make the transition to being the lead guitar

player within a year was really incredible. She sat in her room every day, playing with cassettes and learning how to play the guitar. Quite a phenomenal achievement!

JUNE: Richard [Perry, the producer who signed Fanny] told us he was getting us a deal in late '68 when we went down to the Troubadour, and we got to Fanny Hill, our house, in May of '69. We were girls, we were going to move into that house and just start playing. We cleaned that whole house, and I wrote to my mom, saying, "Richard Perry is coming over tomorrow, and we're having our first rehearsal together."

What gear were you using at that time?

JUNE: I think I had gotten my Gibson ES-355 by then. I exchanged whatever guitar I was playing with a guitar player in a band from San Jose. The 355, let's face it, is the original guitar sound of Fanny. I had a Fender amp. Jean, what bass did you have then? Because your final bass was under a chair at some recording studio...

JEAN: I kicked something underneath, and it turned out to be my bass, the Fender Precision I've had all this time. The Jazz – that's what I played for a long time, but when I got the P-bass, I just melded with that sound.

Did you have any pedals?

JUNE: No. Jimi Hendrix was using a wah, but all that stuff [pedals] wasn't even invented yet. We didn't even have tuners. We just created our own sounds. And by the way, that ES-355 was a stereo guitar, and I am deaf in one ear. That's why I'm always on the left side of the stage. I even tried to play it through two amps.

Richard came back from London because it was 1970, and we were in the studio, and he had a tape of the Beatles, and it wasn't finished yet, but it had George Harrison



A pre-Fanny June [left] and Jean perform aboard a ship circa 1961

INTERVIEW

playing the "Let It Be" guitar solo through a Leslie speaker — and I freaked out. I couldn't believe it. It wasn't done, but it was so powerful, and I went right out and told our roadies we had to create my rig to include playing through a Leslie. I had a pedal, and I could turn it on and vary the speed also. So I did have two amps on stage. I had my Fender, and I had that Leslie, and nobody else was doing that at the time. That Leslie was heavy, but we carried it everywhere.

I had friends who were creating what we call the "classic rock" sound now, and those were Lowell George and Jeff Baxter. They were literally creating those sounds, and I would hang out with them, or I'd go with Lowell, and he would check out everything. So we were in the right place at the right time. Moving to L.A. in '69 was really incredible for a young band to get into the mix.

How did you maneuver being part of such a male-dominated industry, especially at the time and at such a young age?

JUNE: First of all, we stopped listening to people. We shouldn't have read the reviews, because there was always so much condescension, but we literally stopped listening to what people were saying about us because it wasn't helping things.

I actually didn't survive the terrible misogyny that was coming at us. It was so big and so strong that I finally broke, and I had to leave the band to learn how to become a real person [Editor's note: June was replaced by Patti Quatro before recording Fanny's 1974 album, *Rock and Roll Survivors*]. That was my intuitive feeling. I didn't know how to grow up. It was hard to leave Jean, and it was hard to leave the band. It was almost impossible. But my mom was afraid I was going to die because I couldn't eat or sleep. I think I was in grief. We should have had at least four hits by the time *Fanny Hill* [1972] came out, and then we did that album with Todd [Rundgren, who produced 1973's *Mothers Pride*]. So we did those four great albums, but we didn't have a Top 30 hit. Top 40, but not Top 30, and that doesn't get us into the history books. What gets us into the history books is that we were really good, and people can't deny that now — but they ignored us for so long.

"For the longest time, we had to first prove that we could actually play. People would not believe me"

JEAN MILLINGTON

JEAN: I stayed in the band longer than I should have because I was so wrecked. But that only shows how much Fanny really meant to me. People didn't see that aspect. [Instead] it was like, "What does it feel like to be a girl and play bass? What do you eat? What's the makeup you use?" I mean, are you kidding me?

You were also working as session musicians and even recorded with Barbra Streisand at one point. How did that happen?

JEAN: Richard Perry produced Barbra Streisand, so that's how we got the gig. Two songs were rock tunes. We learned them, and then she came in and sang over them. And the thing about Barbra, every time she sang, it was different. She was such an incredible vocalist. But she was very respectful of us.

You've mentioned working with Richard Perry, who obviously played a big role in your career. But you also recorded with Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick and Todd Rundgren. In what ways did the two influence your sound?

JUNE: Richard was developing his production chops when we got signed. We were learning how to record and figuring out how this whole thing was going to work. We would go into different studios in the middle of the

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night, when it was cheap, and we'd record demos and work on songs. We did that for a year. He was learning how to become a great producer while we were learning how to record and become a great band in the studio. To become studio savvy, you've really gotta work on it. And also, in those days, I think it was still eight-tracks, so if we wanted to sing a backup part, we would have to learn how to position ourselves around one microphone to get the sound we wanted.

By the time we met the Beatles, I think they were thrilled to meet us. We didn't meet them *en masse* at the same time, but it was clear that they really liked us, and they liked us in part because we were women who could play, and we knew what we could do well.

We recorded *Fanny Hill* at the studio at Apple [the studio that formed part of Apple Corps Limited, which members of the Beatles established], and their engineer, Geoff Emerick, was ecstatic when he realized A: we could play, and B: we knew how to record.

So we were very skilled by 1971 – between 1965 when we started the Svelts, and December '71 when we got to Apple in London – and Geoff Emerick realized, "Wow, these girls are really doing it!" He was so happy. He just broke out in a huge smile. He was the only engineer I've ever seen who



Jean in 2010
with a vintage
Fanny poster

literally was so into it that he would run from station to station – setting up a mic for Alice [de Buhr], for example, to capture the cymbals and toms. And then he would run to my station and do whatever he had to do. He's the best engineer I've ever worked with.

Now, with Todd Rundgren, we recorded with him because we liked "Hello It's Me" [the Rundgren-penned song released by his group, Nazz]. We loved that recording. I don't know that that was actually the right decision, but we chose him, and we ended up with *Mothers Pride*. We all met at a place where we really wanted to show our art.

That was January '73, and after we finished recording that album, we went straight on the road with Chicago for three weeks, and then the album came out, and it was just gig after gig after gig. I left in October of that year, and we did a whole European tour that summer. Like I said, we never failed, but it was never enough. That's where it broke me. We were at the top of our game, and it was not enough.

David Bowie publicly championed Fanny. How'd you end up meeting him?

JUNE: We met him in Liverpool. We played in Liverpool the same night, different gigs. We didn't even know that he was in town.

JEAN: In fact, he stayed in the same hotel.

JUNE: I didn't even really know who David Bowie was, although apparently he had sent us his first record as a fan and said, "I love you – and here's my first record." When we got to the hotel that night after the gig, the concierge said, "You have a note here from Mr. David Bowie. He would like to invite you to a party in his penthouse." So we said, "Sure." We got on the elevator up to the penthouse, it opened, and it was like a movie. There was a party going on, and it was a really nice party. There were a lot of people there, but it wasn't raucous. There weren't people yelling and shouting and screaming and drinking too

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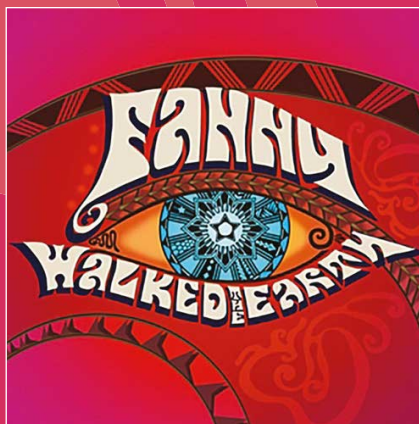
much. It was very convivial. And that's how we met David.

In early 1975, Fanny released "Butter Boy" as a single. It hit Number 29 on *Billboard*. How did it feel to finally have that hit just as you were about to go your separate ways?

JUNE: Jean was sitting in my living room. The phone rang, and we picked it up and it was a call for Jean from L.A. I had just asked Jean, "So what's happening with the band?" She said, "We have finally broken up. That's it." Fanny is finally broken up, and then the phone rings. It was like a movie — telling her that she had a hit and she had to come back to L.A. because they could now make some money by going on the road. About two weeks later, she called me up and asked me to play on that tour. So it was very interesting that it came back together. We had a great time playing, and it led to a lot of things, but it was almost comical.

You've obviously mentioned a lot of challenges that you faced. So, on the flipside, what were some of the biggest highlights?

JUNE: Really, the most successful gig was the night we played the Troubadour [fall of 1968], because no one believed in us. The manager said to Jean, "You can only play for a few



minutes." So we played three songs, and at the end of those three songs, we never had an audience reaction like that before or since, because the entire audience jumped up on their tables. They were banging their feet on the tables, going, "More and more and more," clapping, screaming, going crazy. And that poor manager had to run up to Jean, and he said, "Yeah, would you play some more?" Jean looked down at him and said, "Well, you said five minutes..." I would hate to be that guy!

So it was really incredible. I looked over at Addie, who, at the time, was our lead player, and we didn't need to say a word — well, we

couldn't have said a word because the crowd was so noisy. But that, to me, was the apex of our career because of the audience reaction. Now, if audiences would have kept doing that, and the radio stations had followed that feeling... That, to me, is the tragedy. They were just too ignorant; [there was] too much misogyny.

You eventually reunited and released a new album, *Fanny Walked the Earth*, in 2018. What was it like to play as Fanny after so long?

JUNE: For us, the really big thing was that we felt like we were 17 again. We felt like we were playing in a club. It was basically that same orb of us on stage, our own world, our own way of playing. You never know where the miracle is going to come from — the fact that the three of us [Jean, June, and Brie Howard-Darling, one of Fanny's early drummers] got together to play again in our late 60s and early 70s. There was only one Fanny, and it will never be replicated. We were our own creation. We created ourselves. We were not created by a company, a man, a group of men — nothing. We created ourselves, and went down to L.A. and kept creating ourselves, and in that way we succeeded, because we have something that people are freaking out over even now. **cw**



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He might be launching a new Wylde Audio Grand Auditorium acoustic — but Zakk Wylde ain't going soft. Metal's great berserker tells *GW* about the power of acoustic guitar, the future for Pantera and why a souped-up cinder block might just be your next electric

WORDS BY AMIT SHARMA PORTRAITS BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

WHEN MANY OF us conjure a mental image of Zakk Wylde, there's probably an electric guitar somewhere on his person — whether it's the Gibson Les Paul Customs he swore by for the majority of his career or the Wylde Audio instruments he launched through Schecter a decade ago. You might envisage a line of amps stacked up behind him, running hot to fully convey the sheer sonic weight of his riffs, as well as overdrives and modulations to add extra muscle and color in the right places. He might be holding his guitar over his head, drenched in sweat and grinning like a Viking at the first sighting of green shores after endless months at sea. This, in many ways, feels like the man's default setting.

That's not to say he's been an exclusively electric player over the years, however. Wylde's 1994 *Pride & Glory* album had moments of reprieve from the electrified Southern rock at its core, and Black Label Society cuts like "Spoke in the Wheel," "The Blessed Hellride" and "T.A.Z." allowed the guitarist to showcase his talents in more of an unplugged setting with a great degree of success. Then there are entire albums tailored toward his more acoustic-based writing, from his *Book of Shadows* solo debut, now celebrating its 30th anniversary, to its 2016 follow-up, as well as Black Label Society's aptly titled *Hangover Music Vol. VI*.

On balance, here's a metal god who has committed himself to the acoustic world more than most of his peers — someone who understands the importance of fragility

and vulnerability amid the maelstrom of screaming distortion and hellfire. As he's said himself time and time again over the years, the loud wouldn't feel quite so loud without the quiet.

Until now, however, we've only seen guitars, pickups, pedals, amps and strings with the official Zakk Wylde seal of approval, so the launch of his very first signature acoustic guitar through Wylde Audio feels like a long time coming. And, as he explains to *Guitar World*, in the short gap between playing stadiums with Pantera as main support to Metallica and dates with Black Label Society, it's something he's been wanting to do for quite some time.

"I've been thinking we should start doing acoustics for a while now," says Zakk, as the steam rises from the fresh cup of coffee in his hands. "For the [July 5, 2025] Back to





the Beginning show, I was playing my old Alvarez acoustics. I still have all my Epiphone Masterbilts, which are great guitars, just like the Alvarez ones. They're all 'lights out' guitars as far as I'm concerned. We've been making all these electrics since 2016, and I thought we should do acoustics as well, using them on the records just like I do with the electrics. We actually used some prototypes on the new BLS record [2026's *Engines of Demolition*]. This is the sound of Wylde Audio evolving into its next step, and it's a natural progression."

You've dipped your feet into acoustic tones more than a lot of other metal players. What is it about the unplugged sound that speaks to the human soul?

Acoustics are like this whole other world of guitar, and I absolutely love it. I like to listen to things like "Heart of Gold" by Neil Young or "Angie" and "Wild Horses" by the Rolling Stones, plus loads of Allman Brothers and Eagles. It's interesting when electric players introduce more of that stuff into the mix. Look at Jimmy Page on Led Zeppelin's "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You," "Gallows Pole" or "Going to California." The acoustics add this whole other element to those albums. Look at what we did on [Ozzy Osbourne's] "Mama, I'm Coming Home" and how it affects what came next on *No More Tears*.

What made you choose mahogany back and sides with a flame maple top for the Wylde Audio

Grand Auditorium?

There are tried-and-true woods for guitars, even more so with acoustics than electrics. When I was younger, I remember reading a thing with Yngwie Malmsteen where he was talking about the different tones that come out of Strats made out of different woods. He also spoke about how he'd change from a maple neck to a rosewood neck and notice how the sound changed. On electrics, your pickups work as a microphone. I saw this one guy who did a test where he took the pickups out of his guitar, put them on a cinder block attached to a neck – and it sounded identical.

That's hilarious.

It was just to test the theory of how important a pickup is for an electric guitar. That's where a lot of the tone is coming from – just to disprove all the people who spend their lives arguing about which sounds better out of ash, maple, alder, mahogany or rosewood. One guy even recorded a microwave with some pickups on it and a guitar neck. And when he A/B'd that against his actual electric, it sounded the same. Like you said, it is pretty hilarious.

The Norse Dragon soundhole rosette is a nice addition to the aesthetics.

If you listen real hard, you'll be able to hear the difference in tone. My friends come round and say they can't tell the difference. But they're not listening hard enough. [Laughs] It just might depend on how many adult bever-



ages you'd had that evening – because I heard that can affect how you hear things!

Which acoustics have you relied on most over the years?

I still have my old Gibsons. There's a J-200 with the bullseye on it; I've always loved that one. I also have some Chet Atkins models, like the nylon-string one I've used on a bunch of Black Label things over the years. Then there's the Chet Atkins steel-string I used on "Mama, I'm Coming Home," and there's the 12-string version that's also on there. I've had those Alvarez guitars since forever and chose them for the Back to the Beginning show. It's been mainly about the Gibson and

"Acoustics are like this whole other world of guitar, and I absolutely love it. This is the sound of Wylde Audio evolving into its next step, and it's a natural progression"

Zakk Wylde with the new Wylde Audio Grand Auditorium acoustic in four finishes



Alvarez acoustics with me. My Epiphone Masterbills have an EMG pickup. Basically it's a single-coil, like a Strat. Sometimes people try it and say, "My electric doesn't even sound this heavy."

What's the oldest one in the collection?

I don't really have an old Martin or anything like that. I don't have vintage classics or ancient Gibsons from 1927. A lot of my acoustics came from when I was doing *Book of Shadows*. A Gibson Dove got used on the album. That guitar still sounds great. Finding a good acoustic is like finding a good electric. You don't plug it in; you just hit a G chord and if it sounds nice, you're good to go.

Do you think a good electric player makes for a good acoustic player?

It's a different approach. Some acoustics can be hard to play because of the high action. You might have a rough time shredding because acoustics can be a different sort of beast. If you're just playing cowboy chords, anything around the bottom of the neck, it's usually fine. A lot of acoustic rhythm doesn't go into the higher frets. I keep the action on my acoustics like my electrics — nice and playable. If it's five feet off, it doesn't matter how many years you've been practicing with your metronome. I don't care if you're John McLaughlin, you're going to have a rough time with that. You'll be sitting

there wondering, "Why don't I like myself?" It'll be torture!

It's the 30th anniversary of your *Book of Shadows* solo debut. What made you want to start writing folk-rock songs?

When I was writing that record, we were working on *Ozzmosis* [1995] with Ozzy in New York City. Right next to where we were staying was this old pub called Brew's. Every day after tracking I'd head there and hang out until closing. The jukebox was amazing; it had Neil Young, Bad Company, the Band, the Eagles, the Stones — everything classic rock. I'd drink until 6 a.m., walk back to my room, pick up my guitar and start writing. By the



"There are tried-and-true woods for guitars, even more so with acoustics than electrics," Wylde says

time *Ozzmosis* was finished, I had *Book of Shadows* written.

That album has a song you wrote about Shannon Hoon from Blind Melon, who died in 1995. You've also written tributes to the late Layne Staley, Dimebag Darrell and, much more recently, Ozzy Osbourne.

I only met Shannon Hoon a few times, but he was the inspiration for "Throwin' It All Away." Sometimes I wake up and think, "I've got to stop writing these songs for my friends." We need everybody to stick around longer. "In This River" [a tribute to Dimebag Darrell] and "Ozzy's Song" are odes to my buddies. They're both on the setlist every night when we're out doing headline shows with BLS.

Your solo in "Ozzy's Song" begins with this descending theme. The notes feel as emotionally heavy as the words you're singing.

I'd be interested to see how Randy Rhoads would sit back and write back in the day. Would he have a cassette and work it all out? I tend to sit down with everything. The only thing that was more spontaneous was "No More Tears." That was a one-off built out of an improv, apart from the ascending lick at the end. The majority of that song was just one take, and I think it came out pretty okay. But on "Miracle Man" and other songs, I would try to work out a beginning, middle and end, as opposed to just blazing through everything. You want your solo to have parts people will remember. I think that descending line from

"Ozzy's Song" is one of those. I might just have a practice amp at low volume and keep thinking up ideas until I find something I'm happy with. I'll crank the reverb to sound like I'm headlining Madison Square Garden. It has to sound great at low volume.

It's a bit of a cliché, but guitar players can sometimes say more with fewer notes. B.B. King was — and is — the often-cited master of that.

Exactly, and then you have what David Gilmour played on "Comfortably Numb." That solo is just tremendous. You could say the same about "Stairway to Heaven" or "Hotel California." Obviously there are still songs that call for more blazing runs, like what Randy played on "Mr. Crowley." Dimebag was like that, too. If you listen to parts of "Walk," "I'm Broken," "This Love" or anything like that, Dime worked out melodic lines that would end up becoming a big part of the song.

Sometimes your pentatonic runs sound close to what Eric Johnson, Eric Gales and Joe Bonamassa are known for — rhythmically breaking up the scale into groups of four, five or six.

Totally. For me, it extends all the way back to John McLaughlin and his work in Mahavishnu Orchestra. You had Jerry Goodman and Jan Hammer playing all these fast ideas with McLaughlin [starts humming riffs high in tempo]. That's where it all came from. I had a guitar teacher called Leroy [Wright], and he was hugely into Mahavishnu, Frank Marino and Dixie Dregs. There's something about those super-fast pentatonic ideas that are, to my ears, complete McLaughlin. Later in life I heard Eric Johnson and was like, "Wow!" When the pentatonic scale is played like that, it has a different sound to three notes per-string, which is the Al Di Meola and Yngwie style. That's also awesome but more diatonic. If you break up the pentatonic scale into these short phrases at fast speeds, it completely has its own thing.

You played an acoustic gig at Amoeba Records in Hollywood in February. What kind of gear do you rely on for those kinds of performances? Is there a certain amp or pedal you need?

For that thing, I had my ToneWoodAmp. It fits on the back of your acoustic and it's a great little device. It has different reverbs, delays, chorus and everything. You attach it to the back of your guitar and it amplifies your acoustic. Whenever I have to do a promotional tour for the album, which might involve stuff like radio and small shows, I will take one of my Epiphones with the ToneWoodAmp. It sounds great. Sometimes me and Dario [Lorina, Black Label Society co-guitarist] will jam, so we might use a couple of Roland Jazz Chorus amps. As far as clean tones go, those amps sound like magic, just absolutely beau-

tiful. I don't really change my pedalboard. It's the same for acoustic shows, Pantera, Ozzy, BLS, Experience Hendrix or Generation Axe. Just a wooden board with my Dunlop pedals.

Who are the true masters of acoustic guitar, in your opinion?

I think between the legendary trio Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin and Paco De Lucia, it's 'lights out' right there. You can play *Friday Night in San Francisco* to anybody, and it will blow their mind. It's an unbelievably amazing record. That one will stand the test of time for sure. Then there's Tony Iommi doing stuff like "Laguna Sunrise," "Fluff" and all that stuff. Those tracks are the perfect setups for the next songs. Randy had "Dee," which worked like that, too. Acoustic tracks can act like a prelude into the next heavy song. My favorite acoustic tones on record would be "Angie" and "Heart of Gold."

There's a lot of crossover between you and Alice in Chains, both musically and personally. Like you, they are masters of combining electrics and acoustics to create music that is that much more detailed, universal and compelling.

You could put Jerry Cantrell up there, too. He's got a whole batch of amazing songs. Writing stuff like "Heaven Beside You" is

"Finding a good acoustic is like finding a good electric. You don't plug it in; you just hit a G chord and if it sounds nice, you're good to go"

phenomenal. They always had that acoustic element in with the electrics. Jerry knows how to crush it. He's all about layering things, and it's something he does very well. You record the acoustics first and then add all the heavy bits on top of it. If the acoustic wasn't in those layers, you'd really miss it. Even if you don't use acoustics live, they can be really valuable in the studio. I played with [*Alice in Chains* bassist] Mike Inez in the Ozzy band, including the final gig. When Alice took a break, we asked Mike if he wanted to come out with BLS, so he did, and the comedy continued.

You performed "Would" with them in 2023.

I remember hearing "Would" for the first time. Back in the day, we would just sit around in a hotel room drinking. Jerry had his guitar and Layne Staley started singing along. It was just one unplugged electric, and somehow it sounded pretty much just like the record. I'd watch their band every night when they played with us, loving all the harmonies. But the amazing thing is those guys could duplicate all of that powerful music just

sitting around in a hotel room drinking. As far as I'm concerned, Jerry is the complete package. He's great at everything to do with songwriting — he's an incredible lyricist and singer, then there's all the melodies and harmonies. He does it all. He'll probably do your laundry and taxes while cooking up a mean chicken piccata. He's an all-round great musician, not just a guitar player.

What do you think about the next generation of players? Is there anyone who feels like a cut above the rest?

I'm friends with Richie Faulkner, who I think is the full package. We've toured with Judas Priest a bit and he's a phenomenal player. He also has his own band, Elegant Weapons. He's got vibrato, technique, tone, everything. I feel that way about Dario from BLS. He's also in Dark Chapel, where he sings his ass off and plays piano. Jared James Nichols is awesome. I love hearing younger guys like him and Tyler Bryant playing the blues. They clearly love it and have such an amazing grasp of it. Tosin Abasi has been doing it for a while ▶



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INTERVIEW

now, but he's phenomenal. I think Tim Henson is insane. My son Hendrix is a huge fan of Polyphia and Tim's playing. Whenever I hear people saying, "Guitar is dead," I think, "What are you talking about? What rock do you live under?" Guitar is doing just great. There are so many young players who love the instrument, and they're really going for it.

Matteo Mancuso definitely feels like a guitar star in the making.

Matteo is awesome, too. I just saw a video of him playing with Eric Johnson doing some crazy stuff. And yes, he's got great technique, but he also keeps it so musical. Seeing someone like him play like that is so inspiring. All you need to do is play what you love and what moves you. At the end of the day, that's what it all comes down to.

Circling back to Pantera, you've clearly proven yourselves by this point. Maybe there were a few raised eyebrows to begin with, but that's certainly not the case anymore.

It's an honor getting up there every night. I look at the fellas and know I'm among lions. It's a powerful feeling. All we're doing is honoring Dime and Vinnie. Everybody sings the songs and takes a trip down memory lane. Some of them will have seen Pantera



playing at a bar in front of five people back in the day. Younger kids might have only heard of Pantera's legend through their parents. We're playing Dime and Vinnie's music to this awesome community. We make people happy by playing these songs; it's a beautiful thing.

Recently we've been doing stuff like "10s" and "Floods" with the mellow sections. The solos in those are always fun to play.

There's been talk of bringing some of Dime's demos and ideas to life. Has there been any progress with that?

It all comes down to Phil [Anselmo] and Rex [Brown]. It's for them to say what's next. Me and Charlie Benante are there to lend a helping hand. Allied forces over here. I know originally there were talks of unfinished things that Dime had written, maybe just a riff or a full song or something on acoustic. He had a lot of riffs just laying around, single riffs like the one to "I'm Broken" as well as some that were finished and structured but never properly recorded. Phil could obviously come up with a melody and write some lyrics around it. We could finish a song that was already written – that kind of thing. But not new stuff. That was the germ of an idea, looking at it as an unfinished thing. As if Jimi Hendrix recorded "Purple Haze" but just on acoustic and then gave it to Eric Clapton, who teamed up with Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding to finish as it had never been recorded properly. It was that kind of idea. Would I like to record something like that? Of course I would. **GW**



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THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

Black Sabbath might be buried — but Tony Iommi's late-period renaissance gathers pace with a seismic new solo album. The godfather of metal tells *GW* about Ozzy's last days, tracking with Brian May's *Red Special* and the blind panic of losing his false fingertips

WORDS BY JOEL McIVER

PORTRAITS BY ROSS HALFIN



TONY IOMMI, 78, has been a bona fide celebrity for more than half a century and should, in theory, be enjoying a well-earned retirement. In reality, it's hard to think of a comparable musician of his demographic who is anywhere near as busy as Iommi, who has spent the last few years working

on box-set reissues from his old band, Black Sabbath, playing with and promoting a Sabbath-themed ballet, recording songs to accompany an Iommi-branded line of perfumes by Xerjoff (yep, you read that right), guesting with the pop singer Robbie Williams – and, of course, playing at the Back to the Beginning concert in Sabbath's hometown of Birmingham, England, in July 2025.

That landmark event, held just 17 days before Sabbath's singer, Ozzy Osbourne, died on July 22 at age 76, marks a dividing line between one era of heavy metal and another, specifically because it was the last performance by the group's classic lineup of Ozzy, Iommi, bassist Terence "Geezer" Butler and drummer Bill Ward. A year after Ozzy's death, many of his fans are still struggling to comprehend a future without him or Sabbath in it; fortunately, the creative heart of the band, if not its most visible face and voice, is still present and productive in the form of Iommi, whose new solo album, *From the Dark* – his first in 21 years – is out in October.

It's a highly accomplished set of songs, with the music written by Iommi, lyrics and vocals by Norwegian singer Jorn Lande, bass by Mercyful Fate's Becky Baldwin and drums by Karl Brazil of Robbie Williams' band. Iommi's long-time collaborator, Mike Exeter, co-produced the record and mixed it alongside Judas Priest's Andy Sneap, and none other than Sir Brian May of Queen delivered a guest solo on "Death Wakes." This is an elite team, and it shows, with ambitious, multi-layered arrangements underpinning the songs as well as plenty of dynamic range, from atmospheric moments to full-on metal storms.

As for guitar? Iommi is on fire, supplying riffs that range from the expected Sabbath-like doom ("Black Times") to mid-tempo chug

("Over the Violent Sun") and soloing throughout like a man possessed. Whatever is in the water supply at his home studio near the Cotswolds in southern England, we want some.

When Iommi calls us from his home to discuss *From the Dark*, England is in the middle of the hottest summer on record, a situation for which most Brits are completely unprepared.

"There's wildfires not far from here," he says with concern, but as anyone knows who has read any of his interviews, Iommi tends to be pretty relaxed about most things. It's no

different today, presumably because he spent 50 years in one of the most eccentric bands of all time, and it takes a lot to shock him these days. This is helpful, because we have all the big questions to ask, including whether he invented the two-octave fretboard, what Ozzy was really like – and if he's really responsible for heavy metal.

We're really enjoying the new album.

Thank you! This one's not been like the other albums I've done, where I've generally had a month to write the stuff and then record it for six weeks. Normally we work five days a week, but for this album I'd get my engineer over, we'd put something down, work a couple of days and then have a week off and come back again. There was no pressure because there was no release date or anything.

That sounds ideal.

Well, it works because you can just take your time with it and do it when you really feel like it, you know. I've got a normal life

Tony Iommi with his signature Gibson Custom Shop SG. "Also, Brian May had one of his Red Special guitars made for me, and I used that on a couple of bits," Iommi says



"When writing riffs, I generally start off with doomy stuff and then go into something else..."

like everybody else, and I've got loads of other things happening.

How close was *From the Dark* to completion by the time of *Back to the Beginning* last July? I imagine preparation for that event took up a lot of time.

A lot of things have taken a lot of time. The *Back to the Beginning* rehearsals took quite a while, because we had Bill Ward come over, and we hadn't played live with him for 20 years. And also, of course, I had the Robbie Williams thing and the ballet [*Ed. note: Black Sabbath – The Ballet was created by the Birmingham Royal Ballet under the direction of Carlos Acosta; it premiered in 2023*].

What were the original goals for the new music?

With this record, to be honest, I was thinking, "This is an instrumental album," like I did with the two tracks for the perfume [*"Scent of Dark" and "Deified," both 2021*]. But then I thought, "Maybe I should think about writing stuff for a vocalist" and changed my mind and started again. I've always liked Jorn Lande's voice, and it's been great working with him.

How did you recruit Becky Baldwin and Karl Brazil on bass and drums, respectively?

Karl came through Mike Exeter, who's been my engineer and producer for many years. I was down at my other house on the south coast, and I was walking along the seafront, and this guy came up to me and went, "Hello, I'm Karl." I thought he was a fan, but he said, "We've got mutual friends." I went, "Oh, who?" and he went, "Mike Exeter – and I'm the drummer with Robbie Williams." There was a point when Mike and I said, "We need a drummer" and I wanted somebody local, somebody who was good and somebody who could get over and start work straight away, so I said, "Let's try Karl." We used him on one of the perfume tracks, and he was great, and he's really good to work with – a lovely guy. The same thing happened with Becky [see sidebar]. Mike told me about her, so I looked her up and watched some of her videos, and we said, "Let's see if she's interested." She was, so she came over to my house, and that was it. She worked out really well. The great thing is that she's a big fan of Geezer, so she's playing in Geezer's style, which I wanted.

What was your songwriting process?

We put general ideas for the song structures down, and then we got Jorn over from Norway and showed him what we'd got. He took the songs away and came back and recorded them. He'll go on all night, Jorn. He'll do a take and we'll say "That's good," and he'll say, "I could just do a better one," and we'll say "No, that one was fine!" And, of

TECHNICAL ECSTASY

Mike Exeter, Tony Iommi's longtime producer and engineer, sheds more gear-centric light on *From the Dark*

BY JOEL MCIVER

What were your audio goals with this album?

First off, I don't think Tony should be defined by Black Sabbath when he's making a solo album. There's nothing on *From the Dark* that sounds like, say, "War Pigs." It sounds much more like a 21st-century album, such as *Fused* [Iommi's 2005 album with Glenn Hughes on vocals and bass]. It was put together over a few years, which is why it has a current sound; it wasn't put together by a band going into a studio and jamming. That's not what this album's about. It's funny – there was someone commenting on social media, saying something like, "Tony should have done this and he should have done that to sound like old Sabbath" and then added, "I didn't even like *Dehumanizer*" [1992 Black Sabbath album]. I thought to myself, "Well, you're clearly not the target audience here!"

The guitars sound amazing. What's the secret?

It's about matching the guitars to the right amp. A lot of the recent recordings are the JayDee Old Boy going into Tony's [signature] Laney TI100. The way the JayDee pickups push, they work really well with that amp, which was designed about the time he came off the Heaven & Hell album [2009's *The Devil You Know*]. The Gibsons sound particularly good with Tony's [signature] Laney GH100TI, which was his previous amp.

What role did the Kemper Profiler play, if any?

When we started getting together and doing some writing, we didn't really have a studio as such, so I said to Tony, "I'll bring my Kemper Profiler down, and you can plug in your Gibsons and JayDee and see if you like it." I brought up one of my favorite patches, which was probably a Peavey 5150, and – because it had drive and sustain – it was perfect for the songwriting. If we needed a sound and we weren't sure where it was going to go, I just dialed up sounds on it, which I could do remotely from my computer.

Which pedals or effects did you use on the album?

Tony doesn't really need that many effects, to be honest. There's a Leslie rotary-speaker effect on the opening riff of the first track, which I did either in the Kemper or in ProTools. For some of the clean parts we used an Analog Man Chorus, which I could go on about all day. It's got a shimmer that works on distorted guitars as well as clean parts.

And the distortion?

The distortion is just the amp circuit. The amps aren't being driven that hard. There's plenty of gain, but everything else – presence, bass, middle and treble – is at 12 o'clock. Every now and again I'll try a treble booster, but it's mostly very simple, as it should be. Sometimes music should just be bare-assed rock 'n' roll!

course, Mike played his keyboard on the album. There's endless amounts of bloody bells on it.

I noticed a doomy bell in "Legacy." Was that a nod toward the song "Black Sabbath"?

Yeah, absolutely! And also we brought in Andy Sneap, just to help, because it's always nice to have another opinion from somebody who is good at engineering.

How do you write riffs? Do they just come out of thin air?

You know, it's always a strange thing. It's just one of the things I can do – probably one of the only things I can do. [*Laughs*] Generally, we'll go in the studio and start playing and something comes up. I'd better not go on about it too much, because the next time I do it, I won't be able to

do anything... But that's generally how it is. I go into a particular studio and start playing, and the sound sets me up for what sort of riff I'm going to play, or what mood I'm in. I generally start off with doomy stuff and then go into something else. I'll think, "That's a good riff," so I'll leave that one and then play something else and go, "Oh, that's good too." And then I'll listen back to them an hour or so later and work on a few of them.

After writing hundreds of riffs by this point, how do you avoid repeating yourself?

I don't know. I might have repeated myself; there are so many riffs on different albums. I tend not to listen to other people because you never know, subconsciously you might come up with a riff that's somebody else's. ▶



What guitars did you use this time?

I used different ones. I used my Gibson SGs, the copies of the Monkey that Gibson made [Gibson Custom Tony Iommi "Monkey" 1964 SG Special Replica]. I used that for a bit, and then I went back to my JayDee [Custom] Old Boy and used that, because I'm so used to that guitar, so I shuffled from one to the other. Also, Brian May had one of his Red Special guitars made for me, and I used that on a couple of bits. There are so many different combinations on that guitar — I haven't played it enough yet to find out what they are. There's a few little bits of acoustic guitar in the background here and there, too; I played a Taylor, and I might have used a Gibson.

What happened to the original Monkey SG? We heard there was some sort of chat with the Hard Rock Cafe...

Years ago, the guy who buys all the memorabilia for the Hard Rock Cafe arranged to

come over to England and visit me. He said, "Look, if you've got anything, I can give you up to a million for it." At first I said, "I don't really have anything I want to sell," but then I thought, "Hang on, I have got my original Monkey guitar, which I don't use now. It's in a box and I don't use it, because I don't want it to get nicked if I take it on the road, which has happened a couple of times with things." And the man said, "If you ever want it back, let me know, give me the money back and you can have the guitar back." I said, "Fine, that's a great deal." Anyway, that's what happened, but later the guy passed away and nobody had any idea of what arrangement we'd made!

"I wasn't trying to invent heavy metal, but I liked the sound of it tuned down. It gave it a lot more guts"

The Hard Rock Cafe apparently didn't know that was the deal. They contacted me and said, "We don't know anything about that." So that was it — but I'd rather it be on show than stuck in a box.

You told *Guitar World* in 2024 that you were experimenting with a Kemper Profiler. Did you use it on this record?

I started off with the Kemper, which is great for what I need to get. I've never used anything like that before. I've always used amplifiers, but when we were first putting ideas down, I hadn't got my studio built yet. We were working on the top floor of my house, and that's when Mike suggested this Kemper and we started using it. I liked it, I thought it was really good, but when we had the studio built in the winter, I used my Laney valve amp, the Iommi TII100. But the Kemper has been really, really useful.

What were the tunings on the record?

Out! [Laughs] I played a couple in drop D and the rest a semitone down, which I've done for many, many years.

Do you find that you can still solo as quickly and fluently as ever?

I've had problems. I broke a tendon in my arm, and I've never been able to repair it, but I get by and I do what I can. I'm not one for playing technically, like the other guitar players of today, who are really technical and very, very good. I still play in the old style, and I don't even realize what I'm playing. It's weird. I generally put a solo down, and if they say, "Can you repeat that?" I go, "No, I don't know what I did!"

So if you then have to play the song live, you have to relearn the solo as it was recorded?

Well, yeah, to a point, I have to do it, and it's difficult. When I did the video for "World Alone," I thought, "God, what did I play in that?" I had to listen to it again and try to get it in my head. You get other guitarists who can play a solo the same way all the time, but I just can't do that. I play exactly how I feel at that time, so it's never really the same.

Are you planning any live dates to promote the album?

We haven't planned anything yet, but I wouldn't mind doing a couple of them again. I'm not going to be doing world tours or anything like that. That finished with Sabbath, but it'd be interesting to do some on-and-off stuff.

I would think that any of the big festivals next summer would happily put you on as headliner.

Yeah, but nobody would come. [Laughs] I enjoy playing live. But who knows?



Brian May plays guest guitar on "Death Wake." Did you just call him and say, "Want to play on my album, Brian?"

[Laughs] I landed it on him. I said, "Bring a couple of guitars over." "Why?" "Just bring them..." We've always had that relationship of just playing together. It's been a great friendship, over the last 60-odd years.

We'd love to see a May & Iommi album come out sometime.

Yeah, I would as well, and we keep talking about it. That's as far as we've gotten.

You've been an innovator in guitar design over the years. Is it true that you were the one who came up with two-octave fretboards before anybody else?

I came up with a lot of ideas like that. I went to various companies – big companies, you know – but they weren't interested. They said, "What's the point of that? Nobody's going to use [the extra frets]. It's always 21 or 22 frets," so I invested in a guy in Birmingham, John Birch, who made guitars. I said, "Can you make me a 24-fret guitar?" He said yes and made me one. After I used it, of course, companies caught on. I did it with a locking nut as well, which used an Allen wrench. My other idea was an interchangeable pickup. The idea was that you had half a dozen pickups, and you could pull them out from the back of the guitar and then snap a different one in – if you were in the studio and you wanted a different sound. I suppose nowadays you've only got to press a button and you get the sound you want.

You famously lost two fingertips in an industrial accident in 1965, obliging you to fret the strings with prosthetic fingertips. How are the injured fingers holding up?

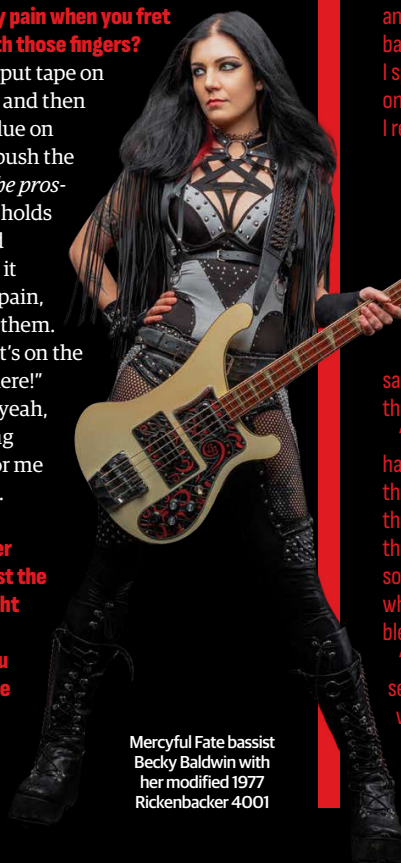
They're all right. I have to keep the fingertips in shape when I'm on tour. I change the leather parts every couple of weeks, and it's a bit of a hassle, but I've got used to it.

Do you feel any pain when you fret the strings with those fingers?

No, because I put tape on those fingers, and then I put a bit of glue on the tape and push the thimble [i.e. the prosthesis] until it holds on. They used to fall off, and it was a bloody pain, trying to find them. "Where is it? It's on the floor somewhere!" [Laughs] But, yeah, the same thing has worked for me since day one.

If, for whatever reason, you lost the prostheses right before stage time, could you get through the gig just using your actual fingers?

No, ▶



Mercyful Fate bassist Becky Baldwin with her modified 1977 Rickenbacker 4001

WHAT WOULD GEEZER DO?

Bassist Becky Baldwin explains how she approached a particular technique on Tony Iommi's *From the Dark*

BY JOEL McIVER

"GEEZER BUTLER'S BASS playing has always been an inspiration for me. It's very free, and when Sabbath were just jamming in E minor pentatonic or whatever for huge sections of a given song, he would play so many interesting ideas that weave in and out. I was always blown away by the freedom of how he improvises, but also how his riffs are just so heavy, and the way that he and Tony approach the instrument in the same way, like the bends they do together.

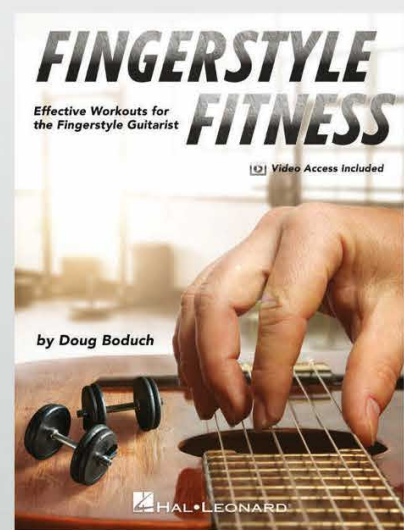
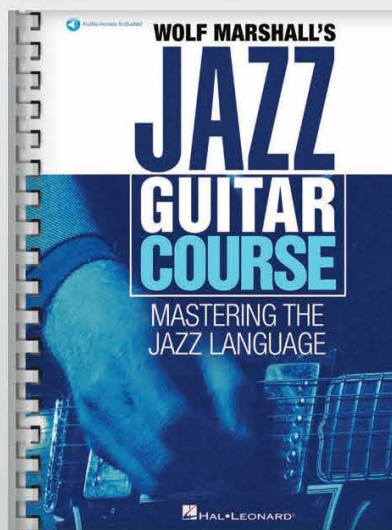
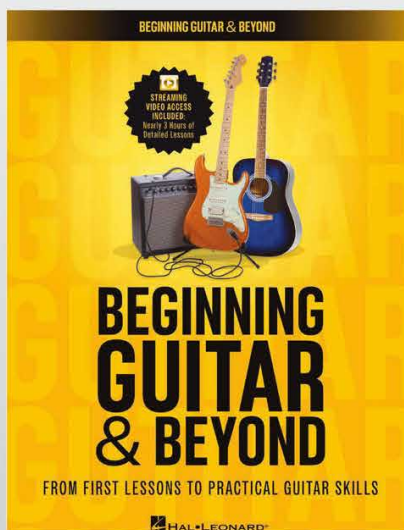
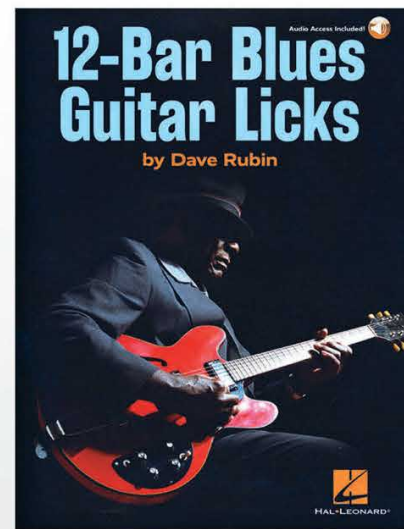
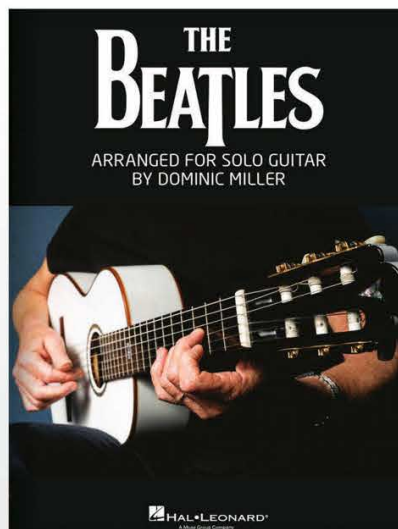
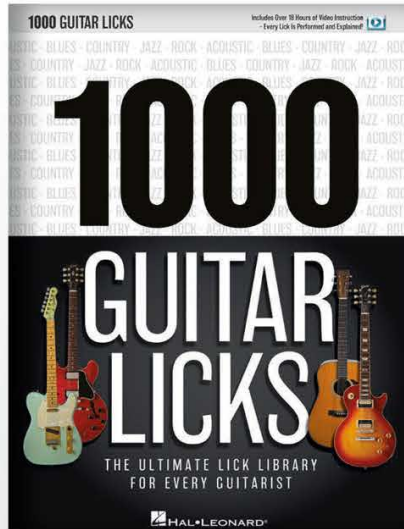
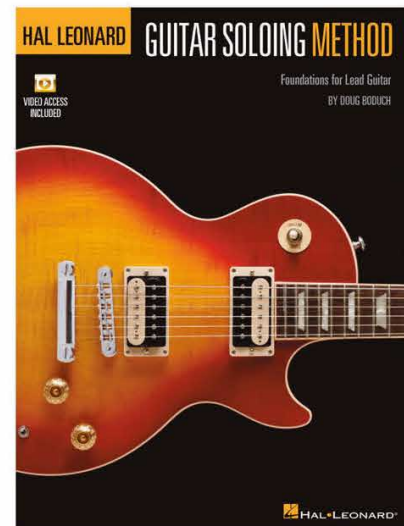
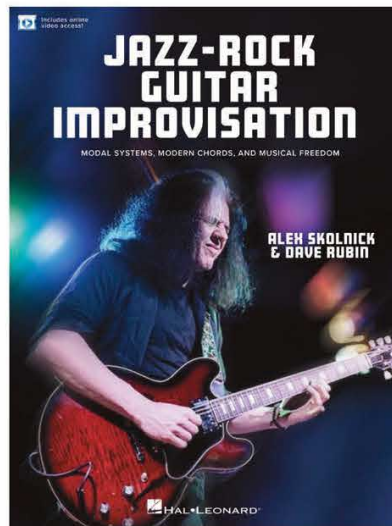
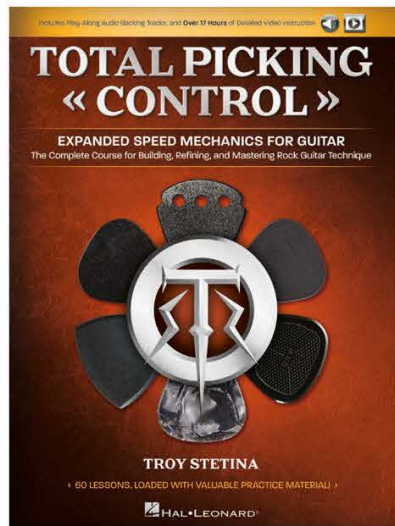
"I think most bass players don't bend notes quite like Geezer does, and actually, when I was recording the bass part for 'Death Wake,' Tony and I spent quite a while trying to get this one bend perfectly in sync together. If I remember rightly, it was just under a semitone – a bit more than a quarter tone, but not much. Also, it

was a very slow bend, and it had to bend up at a certain rate and then be released at the same rate. It took us a while to get into the same mindset of how to do it.

"Tony told me that he and Geezer had played together so much that their note bends had become unique; they had the same approach to how they did it. He played the riff to me so I could get the feel of it and see where he played it on the neck. That blew my mind.

"I wish my teenage self could have seen that happen. I'm face to face with Tony Iommi, working on his album, and he's showing me his riffs and teaching me how to bend like he does. And this is my job!"

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I couldn't get through the gig, because I couldn't touch the strings with those fingers. The bone is right under the skin. One time, years ago, when it did come off, I fretted a string and it sliced right through my finger. There was blood all over the place. But I can play with the two other fingers – I learned to use my little finger [*pinky*] in the early days because I had to.

It's constantly written, including by *Guitar World*, that you invented heavy metal by tuning down. Do you agree with that?

That's what they say. I mean, I did it for me. I wasn't thinking, "I'm going to invent heavy metal today." I actually liked the sound of it when it was tuned down. It gave it a lot more guts.

I remember Rick Rubin, when he produced Black Sabbath's *13* in 2013, telling you guys, "You're not a metal band, you're a blues band."

Yeah, well, Rick Rubin said quite a lot of things. [*Laughs*] I don't know. Many years ago, I thought we were a hard rock band. And then, when I did an interview for *Melody Maker* or something, the guy said, "So, of course, you play heavy metal." "Heavy metal? What's that?" I suppose it was, really, because we come from a city where people work in

factories with machinery and stuff like that, so I suppose you can relate it to that sort of thing.

Ozzy Osbourne was your friend for 50 years. What kind of person was he, from your perspective?

We got on really well. He'd always look up to me and ask me if this was all right or that was all right. He was a bit insecure at certain times, but at other times when he'd go on stage, he'd be more confident. He loved what he did. He loved getting on stage. We had a laugh – a great laugh. He'd always come up to me and Geezer on stage and pull a funny face, to make us laugh. We had some good fun over the years.

How was the *Back to the Beginning* show for you?

Difficult. Initially, when it was mentioned to me, I said no, because we'd done *The End Tour* [2016 to 2017] and I didn't want

"Ozzy would always come up to me and Geezer on stage and pull a funny face, to make us laugh"

to be like, "Here we are again, another tour." But when it was mentioned about it being for charity, then yes, I was into it. Still, I thought, "What's it going to be like? We haven't played with Bill for years," and when we got into rehearsal, I hadn't seen Ozzy since we'd done the Commonwealth Games in 2022. That was the last time I'd seen him, because he was in the States and he couldn't get over because of his health situation; they wouldn't let him fly. Eventually, when he came over, and we met for rehearsals, we were floored, because he was carried in, basically. I couldn't believe how he'd deteriorated. We were all in shock, really. He sat there, and I said to him, "You know, you don't have to sing, we'll just run through it instrumentally," but he said "No, I'll have a go" and he'd sing for a bit. And then we'd finish for the day and I said, "Don't bother to come in tomorrow, we'll just run over the songs instrumentally with Bill." He said, "All right," and then he might turn up the next day – or not.

And how was the actual gig?

The hard thing for me was when we got on stage. I couldn't see Ozzy, because he was in his chair and I was at the back, because Bill wanted me to stand back by him to give him any clues if something went wrong. ▶



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So I couldn't see Ozzy at all, apart from when I did go to the very front and I could see him for a second. It was very difficult, because I was so used to Ozzy jumping around and running up to me and grabbing me. It was just a terribly different thing altogether, and it was very hard to do it. But, you know, I'm glad we did it, because it was the original band and we won't be doing it again. I'm really glad we did it for Ozzy and for the fans.

The final song on your new album is called "Legacy," about a musical artist and his legacy. Does it refer to you?

I don't know. That's a question you'd have to ask Jorn.

So what is your legacy?

I think we started something that wasn't around at the time. I think that's mainly what we get credited for, because nobody was doing this sort of music, so when we did it, we had a hell of a job getting accepted in the early days. You had to prove yourself. There was no MTV, so it was all word of mouth, and we were limited to where we could play because there were only a couple of blues clubs in Birmingham. That's why we used to go abroad — to Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, all over.



What are your goals at this point?

I'll just take things as they come. I'm open to a lot of different things and I enjoy it all. I enjoyed doing the Robbie Williams thing because it was something different. I enjoyed

"Brian May and I keep talking about making an album together, but that's as far as we've gotten"

doing the perfume tracks because that was something very different. I really enjoyed doing this new album, too, and I'm very excited to see what happens when it comes out. Hopefully people will like it.

We mentioned Sir Brian May earlier, who is, of course, a knight of the realm. When are you going to be "Sir Tony Iommi"?

[Laughs] I don't know, that's up to the King. I did get an MBE [Member of the Order of the British Empire, a prestigious British honor] a couple of months ago.

Did that mean a lot to you?

Yeah, absolutely. All the awards I've had, I really do take them seriously. They show that people like what you've done, and they think you deserve it. To get an MBE is just fantastic.

Especially when you think about where Black Sabbath came from.

Exactly, yeah. Funnily enough, Geezer emailed me when they announced it, and he said exactly that — about looking back where we came from. It's unbelievable, really. **GW**

Iommi's new album, From the Dark is out via BMG on October 23.

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Jackson Pro Plus Signature Sleep Token IV Monarkh SC

A surprisingly versatile 30-inch extended-scale guitar built for crushing, low-tuned modern metal riffs

BY MATT McCRACKEN

▶ DESPITE NEVER SHOWING

his face or speaking publicly, Sleep Token's IV is among the most-searched-online metal guitarists of the past few years. The Roman numeral-ordered quartet is arguably the biggest band in metal right now, so it was only a matter of time before IV got a signature model.

There are likely some players who will be disappointed this isn't the same eight-string that IV has been wielding on tour for the past few years, but this guitar isn't as far away from that as it looks at first glance. Both carry a 30-inch scale length, featuring a girthy .084-gauge low E string. The Monarkh archtop

single-cut body is the same, along with that distinctive "Pale Moon" ebony fretboard. Both models also feature Luminlay side dots and an EverTune bridge for stability on the low strings.

Dual Fishman Fluence Open Core Classic humbuckers are a less modern choice than you might expect, with Fluence being Fishman's more vintage-voiced tone. It's got a single push-pull volume knob that accesses the additional voices on the

It's a real stunner with the dark, quilted maple top and Pale Moon ebony fretboard

Fishman, plus a classic three-way toggle selector.

The fretboard has a compound radius, moving from 12 to 16 inches as you get closer to the body. It features 22 jumbo, stainless-steel frets with pearloid teardrop inlays, topped by a composite phenolic nut with a 42.86 mm nut width. Atop the neck is the 3x3 headstock with a set of Jackson locking tuners.

Eagerly opening the box, we expected the case for a signature model of such an image-focused band might contain some unique Easter eggs or details, but alas, it's just a standard Jackson gig bag. It doesn't fit the guitar very well, and considering the cost, we'd have expected at least one of those semi-hard foam cases — like the one the Christian Andreu Rhoads signature model came in.

The guitar looks phenomenal. It's a real stunner with the dark, quilted maple top, but that Pale Moon ebony fretboard is the star of the show. It's a unique color combination, looking like an almost-white maple with near-black ebony streaks across it. The look is natural, from the *Diospyros malabarica* species often called black and white ebony.

The sharp-eyed will note there's no Sleep Token logo at the 12th fret, as we see on IV's Custom Shop eight-string, which again is a little disappointing. Likely the cost of the fretboard outweighed that of adding in the additional work to spec a custom inlay of such complexity. For super fans, this might be a loss, but for those who just want a drop-tuned metal guitar, it could absolutely be a plus that there's no obvious ST branding on it apart from the "IV" on the headstock.

The build here was as we hoped, but one odd choice is that there's an unsightly block of black gloss that partially covers the neck from the heel. Perhaps done to cover up the neck joint, it's not on the Custom Shop model and feels a little odd terminating diagonally across the maple neck just shy of the 15th fret.

Sitting down to play, our first impression was that it's impres-







sively playable considering the huge scale and behemoth string gauge. All the strings are wound, which tells you that the gauge is monstrous, yet we found the string tension to be relatively low. As a Bass VI with thicker strings rather than an eight-string guitar, this was not a shreddy experience, but we could fret barre chords on it, and bending the strings is absolutely achievable once you set the EverTune to the correct mode.

As IV is a Quad Cortex user, it made sense to test it with some of the Neural DSP plugin suites. While there's not much info on exactly what amp models IV is using, we opted to

use Gojira X and Nolly X, both of which are designed for modern metal tones. But from our initial playing using one of our own presets, we found there was a lot of work needed to tame that low E string.

It's unruly out of the box, so we started with a high-pass filter on the way in to help tame the low end. Next, we needed to mess with the amp controls, particularly the resonance on the 5150-inspired amp sim. It was still a bit much, though, so our last adjustment was to lower the bass side of the humbucker a touch. It helped a lot, and we were able to get a much tighter, modern metal tone out of it.

If you like heavy music, this guitar can do it all, providing you make the right adjustments. Switching to the neck position was perfect for sludgy doom power chords, whereas the bridge position was ideal for djent tones or more prog metal-inspired stuff. Our final fix was to pinch a Gruv Gear Fretwrap from our own baritone and place it behind the nut to tame some of the extraneous noise.

It won't be as precise as some players might want, and that's

MANUFACTURER:

Jackson,
jacksonguitars.com

STREET PRICE: \$2,299

PROS

- ✦ Great downtuned modern metal riffing
- ✦ Pale moon ebony fretboard is absolutely stunning
- ✦ Dual-voice Fishman humbuckers sound great for clean and dirty tones

CONS

- ✦ Half-painted neck joint is a weird choice
- ✦ Gig bag is disappointing
- ✦ Smaller players may find it awkward when playing sat down

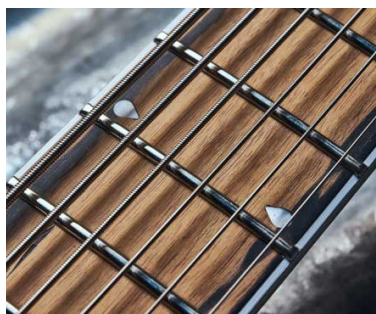
VERDICT: If you love drop-tuned metal and want to focus on riffs rather than shredding, the Jackson Signature Sleep Token IV Monarkh is a great alternative to a seven- or eight-string guitar. The pickup choice is flexible enough for djent riffs as it is cowboy chords, and the looks are distinctive enough to make it appealing to ST fans without putting off the wider metal community, who perhaps aren't so obsessive about the band.

because the pickups themselves are more vintage-voiced. Jackson has opted to fit the Fishman Fluence Open Core Classic pickups rather than the Modern ones, which makes it more versatile overall, but may not satisfy those looking for that super compressed, modern djent tone.

Due to this, the Monarkh sounded surprisingly good when played clean. We were impressed at how well-behaved it was through lower-gain presets and totally clean ones. It turned standard chord progressions into really ominous-sounding passages, and we wonder if part of the thinking here with the Classic Fluence was to prioritize flexibility over the often more sterile-sounding modern-voiced Fishmans. It can certainly handle those softer, cleaner Sleep Token moments.

Each pickup has two voices: a modern active and modern passive. Pulling the volume knob up activated the passive mode, which sounded a bit more open and had a more treble response versus the very midrangey active mode. There's not a huge difference between the two, and the single-coil voice isn't wired in on this guitar, which would've given it a more definitive secondary voice.

Nevertheless, this guitar surprised us with its versatility. It wasn't quite as good for low-tuned clean stuff as a baritone, but it was playable enough to do open and barre chords, and you can get some lovely sounds out of it with the clean channel of your amp alongside some reverb and delay. **GW**



Warm Audio x Dirty Boy Jr. Fuzz

Warm Audio teams up with boutique builder Dirty Boy to shrink the coveted Afro Fuzz circuit into a compact, wallet-friendly stompbox

BY CHARLIE WILKINS

FOUNDED BY ALEX Saraceno, who started out building pedals for his son, virtuoso guitarist Blues Saraceno, Dirty Boy built its reputation on boutique, hand-assembled circuits that have quietly turned up on the 'boards of Neal Schon, Phil X and John Frusciante.

Under current owner Danny Gomez, the brand's reputation has held up well, but buying a hand-built Dirty Boy pedal has never been easy; they sell for \$349 and typically move fast whenever a batch appears.

The Dirty Boy Jr. Fuzz is the product of a new partnership between Dirty Boy and Warm Audio, a company that has built its own name recreating expensive or hard-to-find gear at accessible prices. It's one of three "Jr." pedals launching together, alongside the Booster and Overdrive, all built by Warm Audio. The Jr. Fuzz is based on the original hand-wired Dirty Boy "Afro Fuzz" circuit, which uses premium

transistors and vintage-voiced components, on a classic British fuzz pedal format.

Warm Audio has built its reputation on hitting a price point without visibly cutting corners, and that holds up here. The yellow-on-black Dirty Boy graphics are a nice nod to the original pedal's boutique styling without looking like a cheap sticker job, and the single LED gives a solid read on whether the pedal is engaged.

This is a simple, fully analog pedal, and it wants to stay that way. Fuzz and Level do exactly what their names suggest and run from a lightly ragged breakup to full-on saturation.

We tested the pedal with a Strat and a Les Paul, both into a Fender '62 Deluxe reissue set for a warm edge-of-breakup sound. The six-position Frequency selector is really doing the work of turning this from a basic two-knob fuzz into something with genuine range, and that's where it pulls ahead of similarly

MANUFACTURER:

Warm Audio,
warmaudio.com

STREET PRICE: \$169

PROS

- ★ Genuine boutique circuit at a fraction of the original's price
- ★ Six-position Frequency selector adds real tonal range beyond a typical two-knob fuzz
- ★ Compact, true-bypass, gig-ready build

CONS

- No onboard bias or gate control for players who like to get under the hood
- Six-position switch means stepped, not sweepable voicing changes

VERDICT: Warm Audio and Dirty Boy shrink a \$349 cult-favorite circuit into an affordable, gig-ready package.

priced single-knob rivals like the EarthQuaker Erupter.

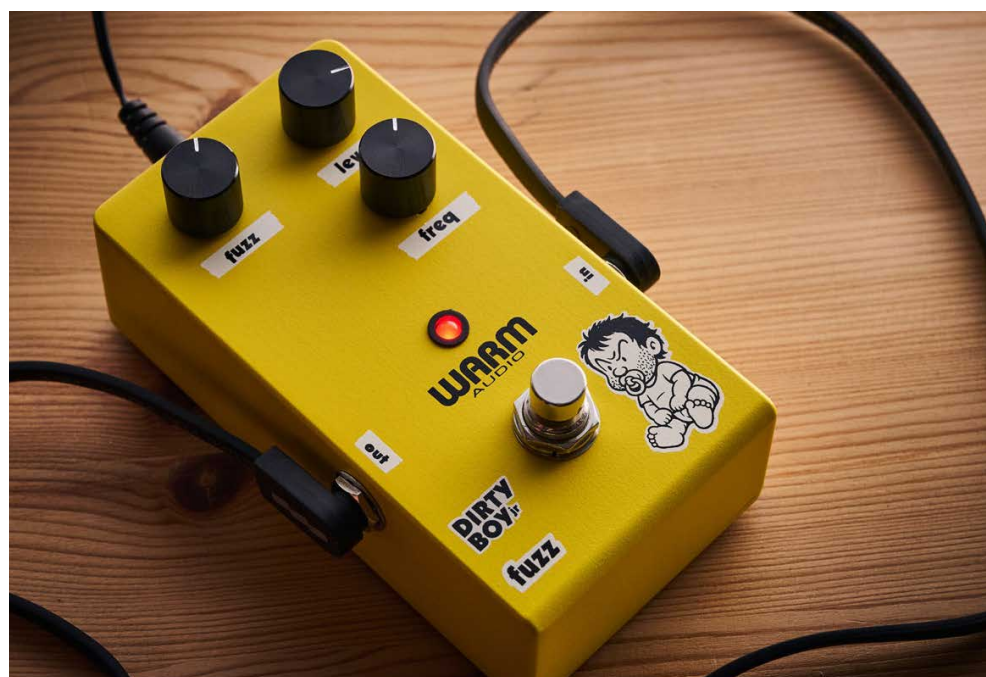
It doesn't offer the continuously sweepable tone control of a full-featured drive pedal, and it can't match the JHS 3 Series Fuzz's dedicated Bias knob for players who like gated, sputtery textures, but for players who want more usable voicings without more knobs to manage on a small board, it's a good trade-off.

We started with the Frequency selector in its middle position and Fuzz and Level around noon. With the '62 Deluxe already sitting at a warm edge of breakup, the Jr. Fuzz immediately brought the amp to life, adding a slightly compressed, midrange-forward growl without taking away the feel of the amp underneath. It responded to pick attack in a way that rewards playing dynamics rather than just compressing everything into saturation.

Rolling the guitar's volume back to around 7 brought out the party trick with both guitars; the Jr. Fuzz cleaned up into something between a soft overdrive and a slightly sharp-edged clean tone, without losing top-end clarity or turning muddy. That's the real test for this kind of vintage-voiced fuzz, and the Jr. passes with flying colors, more so than the EarthQuaker Erupter, which loses a sparkle as you back off the volume.

Our favorite setting came with both Fuzz and Level turned all the way up. From there, we worked through all six Frequency positions, and every setting remained musical while changing the way the fuzz sat around the guitar and amp. **GW**

Warm Audio has built its reputation on hitting a price point without visibly cutting corners





Washburn Hawk

The Seventies model returns — but can it fly high again?

BY PAUL RIARIO

▶ FOR WASHBURN, WHAT'S old is new again. Once relegated to the rearview mirror, the brand is paving a road ahead with the revival of its classic Wing Series, bringing back the Hawk guitar alongside the Raven and Scavenger bass. Originally introduced in the late Seventies, these distinctive designs return with a welcome modern refresh while retaining the character that made the originals so memorable.

For Washburn aficionados, the original Hawk has been recognized as a fan favorite — an elegant neck-through design compared to other similar vintage guitars of the time such as the Hamer Sunburst and Special, Yamaha's SG series, and even the B.C. Rich Eagle. Now, Washburn offers the Hawk as an import model in two finishes, the Tobacco Burst option we have here and Trans Black, as well as a 12-string model, and finally, an American Hawk '78, which is a USA-made Custom Shop version.

It's not hard to say Washburn's revitalized Hawk looks and feels as if it were transported through a portal from the Seventies. It has the super-cool, old-school vintage gold Washburn logo adorning the headstock's narrow crest, period-correct neck volute, cream binding around its top, gold speed knobs for its dual volume and tone controls, top input jack (instead of on its side) and, of course, that unmistakably gorgeous Tobacco Burst in a smooth, glossy finish that doesn't feel tacky.

The streaked grain of its Swamp Ash body — or "wings" — is equally striking, complemented by a neck-through construction that sandwiches three pieces of hard maple, walnut, and hard maple. We've seen Hawk guitars where the contrast between the body wings and the neck-through woods is much more pronounced, but on this Tobacco Burst model, the finish blends almost seamlessly with the neck-through

design, leaving only the center walnut strip to stand out prominently.

The top is flawlessly carved, and while the Hawk's flat back lacks a belly contour, the area around the rear of its wings is generously scooped and shaped for easier access to the upper frets. But there's a slight hiccup here; this is also where the palm of your hand meets the body around the 17th fret, effectively stopping your fretting hand from traveling any farther.

The guitar also features a nondescript, sturdy hardtail steel bridge with a string-through body design, Grover tuners with a precision 18:1 gear ratio, large strap buttons, a three-way pickup selector and two custom-voiced high-output zebra humbuckers that can be coil-split via the tone controls.

The Hawk's setup and playability were nearly perfect; you are absolutely soaring on this guitar with its impeccable fretwork and nary a choke spot to be found across its fretboard. The guitar's 25-inch scale length splits the difference between Gibson and Fender scales, and it feels very much like a sweet spot, combining Gibson's easier string tension with Fender's snappy response.

The rosewood fingerboard is richly dark and tight-grained, accented by pearloid dot inlays (we dug the dot at the first fret) and features a pleasantly flat 12-inch radius and 22 medium-jumbo frets that are immaculately polished and crowned. This Hawk's fretwork is so astonishingly pro-level that you'd swear the guitar had been Plek-treated.

The Hawk's neck profile is a very chunky 'C' that you can really feel in the first-position cowboy chord area, gradually tapering into a more comfortable contour as you move toward the higher registers of the fretboard. Personally, we didn't mind the heft — in fact, we believe it contributes to the Hawk's thicker and fuller tone. That said, players with



smaller hands may not immediately bond with the neck, particularly across the first five frets, where most of your chord work tends to happen.

Overall, the Hawk is a supremely well-balanced guitar for its 7.4 lbs. Whether it's resting on your lap or hanging from a strap, there's no hint of neck dive.

We rounded up an NUX MG50Li modeler, a Fender Deluxe Reverb, a Marshall Jubilee and a Vox AC30 to hear how this raptor sounds plugged in. The custom humbucker delivered the kind of tonal recipe we think every guitarist searches for in a humbucker; both were undeniably high-output without sounding aggressive, remarkably articulate and balanced without turning harsh, and delivered a focused bite without honky mids. The attack was clear but never piercing, while the neck pickup has a subtle mid-scoop that gives it a warm, throaty voice.

We're of the mindset that the Hawk is a perfect vehicle for exploring whatever tonal options you want to throw at it. This guitar is simply so solid and well-made that it will reward you with tone, no matter what pickups you choose.

One other thing: what happened when we split the coils on these humbuckers? Well, it does pretty much what you'd expect — it cleaned up the output without any significant drop in volume and added some split-coil snap to the tone. Did it sound like a true single-coil guitar? No, the Hawk's coil-split tones aren't going to fool anyone, but they're perfectly usable and add another worthwhile tonal option to the guitar. **GW**

MANUFACTURER:
Washburn, washburn.com

STREET PRICE: \$999

PROS

- ✦ Powerful dual humbuckers with coil-splitting capability on both
- ✦ Eye-catching tobacco burst complemented with a neck-through design
- ✦ Excellent build quality

CONS

- ✦ Smaller hands might not appreciate the chunkier 'C' neck for chording in the first five frets

VERDICT: This Hawk soars high as an exceptionally well-made, undeniably cool-looking guitar that's remarkably faithful to the spirit of the original without feeling like a relic. For a refreshed reissue from Washburn's past, there's very little to fault — and plenty to love.

Washburn's revitalized Hawk looks and feels as if it were transported through a portal from the Seventies

Valeton GP-5

Valeton takes the miniature to the extreme with a fully capable amp modeler and multi-effects pedal — with NAM compatibility to boot

BY PETE EMERY

▶ AS GUITAR PLAYERS, we have been on quite the journey when it comes to digital amp modelers. We now find them at the center of many rigs — pro, home and weekend giggers alike. They have also provided a means through which the budget-conscious can get access to some pretty impressive tones. Products like the Quad Cortex Mini have also seen the tech shrink to sizes that will please those looking to incorporate such gear into their pedalboards. The Valeton GP-5 takes all of this to the extreme.

It's an amp modeler and multi-effect unit that packs a maximum of 100 rigs, featuring up to nine blocks each, all in a tiny, one-footswitch package and for around \$79. It also runs NAM captures... sort of. More on that later, but the point for now is that this does an astonishing number of things for such a small price and size.

The GP-5 looks to get around its streamlined approach to controls by relying on a mobile Bluetooth app, which could make this the perfect space-saving, entry-level modeler.

Comfortably fitting into the palm of a hand, at .5 lbs., the GP-5 is light by conventional pedal standards, but surprisingly weighty for a small thing. Its metal chassis feels robust enough to withstand the abuses that often come with life on a pedalboard.

We have a grand total of two controls named Parameter and Volume, plus a footswitch. All feel premium, with the exception of the Parameter encoder, which has a little bit of horizontal movement, but not problematically so.

With this type of affordable product, there are usually restrictions in the signal chain of effects and amp in order to reduce the amount of processing power the unit needs, and this is the case here. There are 10 blocks (up to nine active at once) that cannot be moved around and are preset to different effect types.

These effect types are Gate, Pre, Dist, Snaptone (NAM), Amp, Cab, EQ, Mod, Delay and Reverb. Pre is a selection of compressors, boosts, pitch and auto-wah effects; Dist presents a selection of 10 drives; then there are 32 amps, 20 cabs/20 user IR slots, five EQs, 10 delays and 10 reverbs. So, although the signal chain is restricted, it's a pretty full complement of guitar effects and amp models.

A lot of the current buzz around the GP-5 centers on its ability to run NAM (Neural Amp Modeler) amp and drive pedal captures. But it can't actually run NAM files directly; instead, it converts them into its proprietary Snaptone format for use with the GP series pedals. Turns out,

it cannot currently convert the latest new NAM A2 files for the GP-5 at the time of writing, so we were restricted to the older A1 architecture.

We love a Fender Twin Reverb, so we started with the Dark Twin model and were impressed by the lovely clarity in the high end and the scoop in the mid range. The low end was a tad muddy, but not unforgivably so.

The Foxy 30TB model also does a fantastic job of imitating the famous mid-forward Vox AC30 sound, but weirdly the EQ controls on this model didn't do much (not the case for other models). For high gain, we were immediately drawn to the EV 51 (EVH 5150) model because of its super-tight low end. This was perhaps the highlight for us, as we couldn't stop having fun chugging through some hard rock riffage.

Something that was apparent through all the amp models is that they didn't clean up particularly well on our guitars' volume controls, so they were not the most dynamic of things. And while the aforementioned amp models were great, this wasn't universally the case, as exemplified by the Match CL model, which had a plasticky midrange that sounded cheap to our ears.

In this criticism, however, we will refer you again to the low, low price. The fact that we have plenty of decent models to choose from, even among the not-so-great, is a win at \$79.

The drives were particularly impressive, with highlights including the Green OD bringing the Tube Screamer tone, that is a pre-requisite for every multi-effects. and Darktale distortion did a great job of imitating the ProCo Rat.

As we were in the land of high gain, it was worth turning that noise gate on, which did its job without feeling like it was cutting off too much sustain. What more can you ask for from a gate?

It wasn't all good news, though, as there were some effects that were bordering on unusable. The Autowah, for example, while it sounded good, dropped way too much volume with

MANUFACTURER:

Valeton, valeton.net

STREET PRICE: \$79

PROS

- ✦ Tiny
- ✦ Fantastic value for the money
- ✦ NAM compatibility via Snaptone

CONS

- ✦ Bluetooth connection was patchy during testing with an Android smartphone
- ✦ Not all sounds are great
- ✦ App required for adjusting effect parameters and signal chain

VERDICT: For such a low price, it's hard to complain too much. While there are some compromises, there are enough good tones in the GP-5 to cover all of the sounds a beginner will need, and having the option to run Snaptone versions of NAM captures is a real boon. In short, the GP-5 is great value for those getting started with modern, digital guitar multi-effects.





our clean tone, and the pitch-shifting effects all added dissonant artifacts that were unpleasant to listen to.

Then we had some at the opposite end of the scale that offer fantastic value for money. The M-Vibe is an effect we would happily pay the \$79 for alone. It retains plenty of low end while adding the movement that only uni-vibe type pedals can, making breaking out those Jimi Hendrix tunes a joy.

Effects like the two Chorus options fell between these, both adding some rewarding movement, whilst perhaps being a feeling a little too artificial to blow us away with the lush wobbly tones we get from pedals like our (much more expensive) Way Huge Blue Hippo.

We were, of course, not limited to just Valeton's models, as we had the aforementioned Snaptone versions

of the totally free and potentially market-disrupting NAM captures to play with, too.

NAM is its own thing and worth looking into for high-quality amp and drive pedal captures at the grand total of \$0. Our experience of it so far – via other pieces of hardware – is that the captures are impressively touch-sensitive and genuinely representative of the amps they are using, if you get the right capture. And there are plenty of great ones available via the Tone 3000 website.

But the GP-5 Snaptone is a converted version of this tech, presumably to reduce the processing

It does an astonishing number of things for such a small price and size

power needed to run it. To test the difference it made, we ran a full A1 legacy (as previously mentioned, the GP-5 can't run the new A2) capture of a Sundragon Jimmy Page signature amp on the Darkglass Anagram Guitar Essentials, and compared it to the Snaptone version of the same thing in the Valeton.

First impressions were that Snaptone is a step up from the factory Valeton amp models. It reacted much better to our playing dynamics, and as a result felt more alive under the fingers. Compared to the full NAM capture, the full thing was more dynamic, had more high-end detail, and was a little less gainy. So, Snaptone wasn't quite the same quality as the actual NAM captures, but still undeniably improved the tones available on the affordable GP-5. **GW**



Positive Grid Spark Pedal

The tech-savvy practice amp gets the pedalboard treatment

BY DARYL ROBERTSON

▶ POSITIVE GRID TOOK a little detour away from the Spark family of amps earlier this year with the AI-powered Reactor, but with the launch of the new Spark Pedal, the brand is back to expand its most famous line once again. Ever since the original Spark hit the scene, fans have been crying out for a compact, pedalboard-friendly version, and, well, Positive Grid has finally listened.

Billed as a “gig-ready” solution, this tiny stomp looks to bring all the power of the Spark amps into a three-button floor unit. As you’d expect, the Spark Pedal runs on Positive Grid’s acclaimed HD Tone Engine, which is the same DSP architecture housed inside the latest Spark 2 practice amp. As such, it includes 33 amp models and 43 effects and has access to more than 100,000 tones through the online ToneCloud.

You can run the Spark Pedal in a few ways. It can be used as an all-in-one option directly into a PA system, becoming your entire amp and effects rig, or you can bypass the amp modeling and use it purely as a traditional multi-effects into an amp. You can even use it as an audio interface for desktop recording or with headphones for an at-home practice rig. Like other Spark amps, the pedal has Bluetooth audio, so you can jam along to your favorite tracks. Other features include a 60-second looper and, of course, a free companion app that helps you dive deeper into tone creation.

Turning our attention to the build, while it’s not groundbreaking, it is a sleek, well-built pedal that fits right into the Spark lineup. To us, it feels perfectly sturdy and robust, and as this new product is positioned to be a pedalboard staple that is now more important than ever. The dials come straight from the Spark amp, and as expected, they feel tactile and smooth to operate, while the trio of footswitches along the front are soft-click in their response and feel nice underfoot. So far, so good.

As for connectivity, there’s everything you need on the rear of

the pedal, with a single input, stereo outs, an expression in and MIDI control. It has a headphone out and a button to pair a Bluetooth device.

For power, the unit also comes with an internal rechargeable battery, and you charge it via a USB-C port. According to Positive Grid, the battery lasts seven hours on a full charge, and after many hours of testing, it is still going strong for us. Personally, we would’ve preferred the option to power it with a standard pedalboard supply. Positive Grid notes the unit can be used while charging, and that many modern pedalboard power supplies now have USB outputs, which is a fair point, but if you want to run it on your old power brick, you might need to upgrade.

Moving on to the usability, we’d say it’s a bit of a mixed bag. We have been using and reviewing Spark products since they launched, and this writer uses a Spark Mini most days for practicing at home. So, we’d say we know how to navigate them pretty well. The Spark Pedal is mostly intuitive and quick to dial in, but we’d argue that the dials have too many functions. The large central knob controls nearly everything, being the main control for volume, mode switching, cab sim and the tuner. This is too much for one dial.

To know exactly what you’re adjusting, you need to know what the different LEDs mean, so you’ll want to poke your nose into the manual. The other four dials also have secondary functions. In FX Mode, they select your effect and adjust its level, while in Amp Mode, they shape your tone with Gain, Bass, Mid and Treble.

Arranging the dials like this certainly saves space and keeps the unit streamlined, and we think it works fine when you’re sat at home practicing, but it’s a different story if you’re standing on stage looking to make quick adjustments in the heat of the moment. The thought of having to

MANUFACTURER:

Positive Grid,
positivegrid.com

STREET PRICE: \$199

PROS

- Good looking, well-made unit
- Stellar range of tones and effects
- Runs on the same app as other Spark products

CONS

- Can’t be powered with a standard 9V pedalboard supply
- Navigation could be better

VERDICT: For those seeking a compact version of Positive Grid’s innovative amp that keeps the best of its features, the new Spark Pedal is an attractive package; it most certainly has all the sounds and practice aids you’ve come to expect from the series. However, running off a standard 9V pedalboard power supply would be a massive win – and easier EQ access, would make it better to use live.

switch from FX Mode to Amp Mode – just to adjust the bass on a preset – in the middle of a song – is enough to bring us out in a cold sweat. We’d prefer a small global EQ section to make adjustments on the fly in the middle of a gig without switching modes. That said, the pedal uses the same app as other Spark products, which makes tweaking easier, whether you’re swapping pedals or trying amp voices. If you’re not opposed to AI, you can also use Positive Grid’s Text to Tone feature to generate any guitar sound you can imagine or describe.

Tonally, the Spark Pedal sounds exactly as expected – and that’s a good thing. Positive Grid is known for its incredibly polished clutch of tones, and the Spark Pedal shows them off in full force. From sparkling cleans to full-throttle high-gain tones, there’s a huge palette on tap here. We have noted before that Positive Grid presets can be a touch too bassy for some tastes, and again, it’s the same story with the Spark Pedal – but that’s to be expected; it’s the same tone engine.

As for the effects, there’s everything you’d ever need. We’ve got a variety of different delay options, plenty of reverb sizes, a slew of modulation sounds and more drive than you can shake a stick at. They all sound lush and inspiring. Like all PG products, this is incredibly satisfying to play through.

Over the last couple of years, we’ve seen Positive Grid take more and more steps toward stage-ready units, with the Spark Live and Spark Cab, and the Spark Pedal is just the latest product primarily geared toward live musicians. But in typical PG fashion, it’s more than that. We get a pedal that can be a practice rig with headphones and Bluetooth streaming, a clever recording interface and an amp-sim and effects pedal all in one – and for the most part it works pretty well.

This is a welcome addition to the Spark family, and it does a good job bridging the gap between an at-home practice solution and a stage-ready modeler, all in an affordable, convenient package. **GW**

Bridges the gap between an at-home practice solution and a stage-ready modeler

Beetronics Seabee Lite

A new, streamlined version, but still capable of delivering some seriously out-there modulation tones

BY MATT McCRACKEN

THE CHORUS PEDAL that preceded this one was all busy fascia, haphazardly named controls and hidden secondary functions. There's a case that the full-fat Seabee Harmochorus was, at times, a lesson in form over function. Can the Lite version address that?

The pedal has essentially been split in half, with all of the "Harmochorus" functions gone; there are no arp, mod or dual modes – and no chord-based arpeggios. The three dual-purpose knobs on the Harmochorus are still there, but they're now just single functions that'll be familiar to most modulation users. Feedback, rate and depth give control over the modulation you set with the switches below. Yes, it's still three controls, but they've been simplified. The left switch is an EQ with flat, bandpass and high-pass filters. The middle switch changes the modes from Classic, Flange and Wobble. The last switch moves between chorus and Vibee modes. It's all done to match the simpler knobs and fewer features.

The two footswitches have been repurposed, too. The left switch controls tap tempo, and when you hold it down, it ramps the rate upwards. The right switch bypasses the pedal when you click it and sets the depth to maximum when you hold it down. These are some handy features for live use. Pressing both together lets you select savable presets. It's capable of stereo output and has a 1/4-inch connection for MIDI or an expression pedal.

Things get really extreme when pushing the settings, with truly wild sounds



We loved having preset compatibility that's not hidden behind MIDI, especially in a pedal where so many different sounds are available. It's accessible by pressing the two footswitches together, and it gives you a generous four banks with four presets each, with corresponding colored LEDs.

We started our testing on the clean channel of our Orange Rocker 32 tube amp and a trusty Telecaster with all the pedal settings at 12, EQ off, Classic mode engaged and the third switch set to chorus. Unsurprisingly, it's a classic chorus sound we got in return. Turning down the rate gives that watery "Come As You Are" sound, with a nice warble to it that thickened up the tone.

MANUFACTURER:
Beetronics,
beetronicsfx.com

STREET PRICE: \$249

PROS

- Covers everything from subtle to wobbly chaos
- 50/50 wet or full-wet mix options make it super flexible
- Footswitch hold unlocks dual ramp effects

CONS

- You'll need to read the manual to get the most out of it
- Removes all of the pitch-shifting modulation of the Seabee Harmochorus

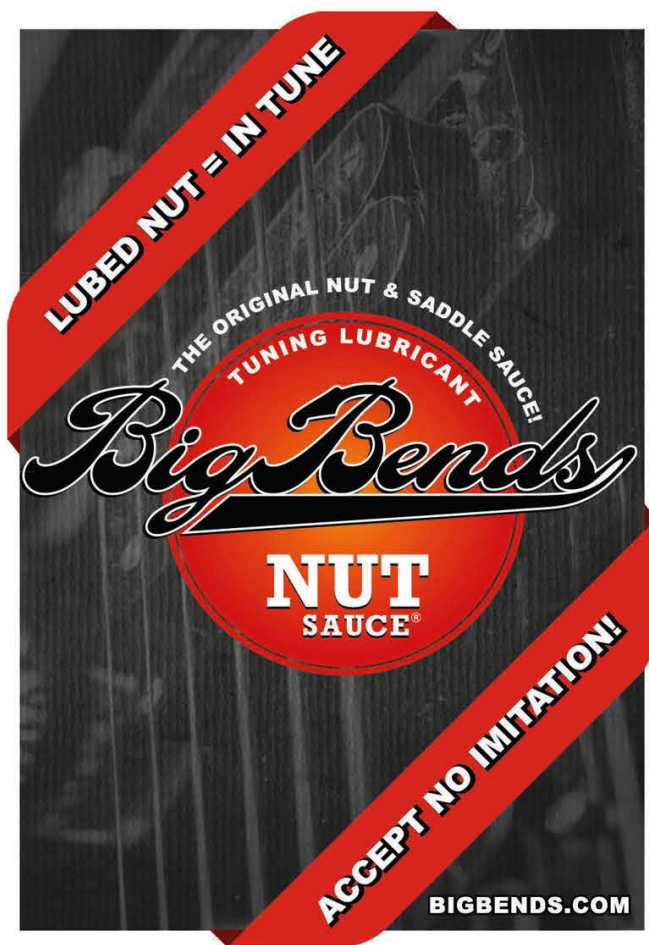
VERDICT: Despite literally being half the pedal the Seabee Harmochorus is, the Seabee Lite is a great chorus pedal that treads its own path. Having presets unobscured by MIDI is a real winner, while MIDI and expression connectivity make it a very flexible addition to a pedalboard indeed.

Turning up the knobs gives a very seasick sound, and here we realized it's a mix of wet and dry tones rather than an outright colored setting. To our ear, it sounded pretty much a 50/50 mix. To get it wetter, flicking the third switch from chorus to Vibee unlocked a fully wet mode, making the modulation sound much more intense and obvious.

Changing to Wobble, things got a little more chaotic. It didn't bounce around as evenly as Classic, making it super fun for more out-there tone hunters. It made our tone feel off-balance, bouncing around in ways we didn't expect. The Seabee Lite got really extreme when we pushed the settings, delivering truly wild sounds.

Moving to Flange, turning the rate down and the feedback up gave that classic metallic flange sound. It's not quite as even as a traditional flanger; there's a little offset to the rhythm of it so it doesn't quite land where you'd expect, but it's the closest to a traditional flanger sound we could get. On the 50/50 chorus mode, it was quite subtle even when we added a drive pedal to the front of the amp, but switching to Vibee made it much more pronounced. **GW**





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RAW DAWG BY ERIC GALES

Expanding the Palette

My jazz and classical influences

AN ESSENTIAL PART of my approach to guitar playing is the incorporation of chordal sounds, melody and harmony that I've picked up from listening to jazz and classical music, as well as gospel. Utilizing elements of these rich musical traditions offers one such a wide range of sounds and emotions that you don't usually find in blues and provides access to some of the most beautiful sounds and harmonies that can be discovered.

I learned a lot about creating new and unique chordal sounds on the guitar from listening to keyboard players. As is always the case, I let the muse guide me and try to maintain an open mind as to what I can discover harmonically while in the midst of improvisation. In **FIGURE 1**, I begin by sounding my open A string as a pedal tone and then play sliding 3rd intervals, first on the G and B strings then on the D and G strings. I then shift to the $\flat$ VI (flat six major) chord, F(6/9), followed by a low C/F, making use of my open D and G strings.

The line in bar 3 is based on the A natural minor scale, also known as the A Aeolian mode (A, B, C, D, E, F, G), followed in bar 4 with a shift to the more classical-sounding A harmonic minor scale (A, B, C, D, E, F, G $\sharp$). Some of the notes of A harmonic minor can be played as a diminished 7 arpeggio superimposed over E7 $\flat$ 9 (E, G $\sharp$, B, D, F), with the notes G $\sharp$, B, D and F. The figure ends with the chordal resolution of E7 $\flat$ 9 to Am7add4.

I should remind you that I play the guitar "upside down"; in other words, I take a guitar strung for a right-handed player and play it left-handed, so the order of the strings is reversed, with the high E string closest to the ceiling, and the low E string closest to the

Tune down one half step (low to high: E $\flat$, A $\flat$, D $\flat$, G $\flat$, B $\flat$, E $\flat$). All music sounds one half step lower than written.

FIG. 1 (Am) (F6-9) (C/F)

Freely

(Am) (E7 $\flat$ 9)

Am7add4

FIG. 2 (Am) F6sus2

(Am) (Fmaj7) (E7 $\flat$ 9)

FIG. 3 (Am)

floor). Additionally, I tune down a half step (low to high: E $\flat$, A $\flat$, D $\flat$, G $\flat$, B $\flat$, E $\flat$).

Playing with the strings "flipped over" like this allows for some chord voicings that may feel a little awkward and unnatural with the guitar strung and played in a conventional manner. The Am7add4 that ends **FIGURE 1** is a prime example, because, for me, I can fret my high E and B strings with my thumb, as others sometimes do with their low strings.

FIGURE 2 offers another example of different ways to move between the tonalities of Am and F. Notice the use of ringing open

strings in bars 1-3. At the end of bar 3, I use natural harmonics (N.H.) on the A, D and G strings as a transition point between Am and Fmaj7. In bar 5, I bring in E7 $\flat$ 9 once again as a transition chord to resolve back to Am7sus4.

One can also melodically describe the wider harmony of these chords using only single notes. In **FIGURE 3**, the lines in bars 1 and 2 are based on A natural minor. In bars 3 and 4, I shift to a bluesier sound with fast descending phrases based on A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G), phrased in groups of five and six, wrapping up with a return to Fmaj7sus2. **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/december2026

According to Eric Gales' website, the Memphis-born southpaw is "widely regarded as one of the best blues guitarists in the world" — and we do not disagree! His latest album is 2025's *A Tribute to LJK*. For more info, check out ericgales.com.

JEFF FASANO



TALES FROM NERDVILLE

BY JOE BONAMASSA

On a Jag

The glories of a 1967 Fender Jaguar

A FENDER GUITAR that doesn't get the same kind of reverence as a Stratocaster or a Telecaster is the Jaguar. The company introduced the model in 1962 as Leo Fender's response to the West Coast surf craze that was happening at the time, with the emergence of "surf music," as exemplified by Dick Dale's "Miserlou" and the Chantays' "Pipeline." Initially, surf music was largely instrumental with the guitar as the point of focus, always dripping with reverb and featuring an abundant use of the tremolo, or vibrato, bar.

Leo Fender developed a very distinct tremolo unit for the Jaguar, fitted with a very long arm to facilitate slow, wide vibratos and a deep drop, more akin to a Bigsby tremolo than that of a standard Stratocaster. You can also lock the tremolo in place if you prefer. You'll also find the same tremolo unit on the Jazzmaster.

Leo also added an automatic mute (string dampening) system on the bridge along with completely redesigned electronics that allow for a wide variety of tones from the instrument's two single-coil pickups.

In **FIGURE 1**, I'm improvising in the key of E, sticking with primarily small chord voicings to reference a progression that basically moves between E, B, C#m7, A, F#m7add4 and A/B. Utilizing fingerpicking throughout, I begin with a two-note E chord, with my index finger at the 9th fret, and hammer-on with the middle and ring fingers up to an A/E voicing. This is followed by references to B, C#m7, A and Am, resolving back to E in bar 3.

Every time I allow a chord to sustain, I apply either subtle bar vibrato or add an expressive dip with the bar. Combined with the heavy reverb, a beautiful ethereal quality can be achieved in this way.

Guitar is tuned slightly flat of concert pitch.

FIG. 1 E B5 C#m7 B A Am E B5

w/fingerpicking w/bar (all vibratos and dips)

Measures 1-6: E (9-10-9), B5 (11-11), C#m7 (9-8-7), B (6-7), A (5-7), Am (9-10-9), E (9-11-9), B5 (11-11).

Measures 7-12: E (13-14-13), A5 (2-4-6), C#5 B5 (6-4-2).

Measures 13-18: C#m (4-6), B5 (2-4), A5 (0-2), E/G# (2-4), F#m7add4 (2-4), A/B (5-7).

FIG. 2 F#m B/D#

Measures 1-6: F#m (9-10-11), B/D# (12-14-12), E (14-13), B7/E (5-4-2), E (4-5-4).

FIG. 3 F#m (Am) Am

tremolo picking

Measures 1-6: F#m (2-2-2), (Am) (4-4-4), Am (12-12-12), (Am) (13-13-13), Am (14-14-14).

The Jaguar I'm using for these examples is from 1967, which I can prove because, when I bought the guitar, it came with the original purchase receipt, from August 17, 1967, for \$265 plus tax. The instrument still had the "hang tags" as well as a Fender custom color chart. Gotta love these vintage accoutrements from a bygone era!

The Jaguar was the second most expensive guitar in the Fender catalog: the Jazzmaster was the most expensive, followed by the Jaguar, Stratocaster, Telecaster, Esquire, Mustang, Duo-Sonic and the Music Master. There was also the rarely seen Swinger from the late-Sixties.

Jaguars are great to use in the studio, and you can really rock out on them; check out Johnny Marr's and Sonic Youth's use of the Jaguar. They are very cool-looking guitars and also have a very distinct sound.

In **FIGURE 2**, I start with an F#m chord treated with a bar dip, followed by B/D# and then some single-note passages based on the E major hexatonic scale (E, F#, G#, A, B, C#), culminating with B7/E to E.

In **FIGURE 3**, I begin with a low F#m chord and another bar dip, followed by some fast tremolo picking on ascending single notes on the A string, similar to what Dick Dale played on his low and high E strings in "Miserlou." **GW**

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/december2026

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 2026's *B.B. King: Blues Summit 100* and *The Spirit of Rory Live from Cork*. Point your eyeballs at jbonamassa.com.



WORKIN' MAN

BY CHARLIE STARR

Depth of Field

The art of overdubbing

LAST MONTH, I began describing my approach to layering and overdubbing complimentary guitar parts, using the Blackberry Smoke song “Morningside,” from our 2021 album, *You Hear Georgia*, as an example. This month, I’d like to continue detailing the way I arranged complimentary guitar parts in this song, specifically during its solo section.

FIGURE 1 shows the rhythm part behind the solo. I begin by arpeggiating a 2nd-position Dsus2 chord voicing, allowing the notes of the chord to ring together, followed by an alternating “low string/high string” approach for the subsequent chords, A/C#, C#7, F#m7 and E.

I love the challenge of making multiple guitar parts work together, especially if it’s not a “big riff”-type of song. I like the sound of the single-note arpeggiations and smaller chord voicings here, as this approach serves to leave more sonic space for the featured solo guitar.

Musically, this song meanders a bit, so we needed an orchestrated approach between the guitars and keyboard to make everything work well together. When we get to the guitar solo section, Benji Shanks plays the first solo, I play the second, and then Paul Jackson and I play harmonized lines to close out the section.

It’s so much fun to put these different parts, played by different guitarists, together; it’s sort of like a football or basketball team, because there are so many of us! There have been a variety of great three-guitar bands over the years, and, like the best team players, Benji and Paul are so good at staying out of each other’s way.

During Benji’s solo, I arpeggiate the progression Dsus2 - A/C# - C#7 - F#m7 - E, allowing all the notes of each chord to ring together, as shown in **FIGURE 2**.

Swing 16ths Feel (♩ = ♩)

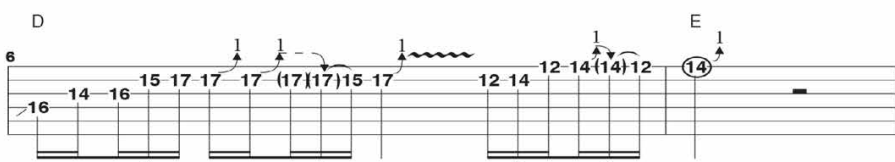
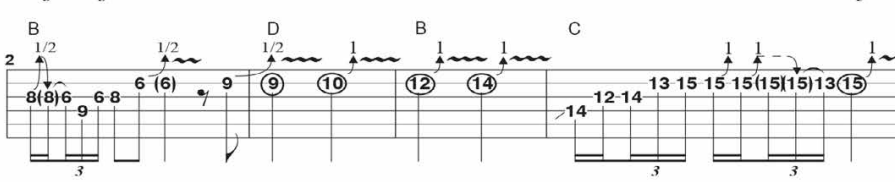
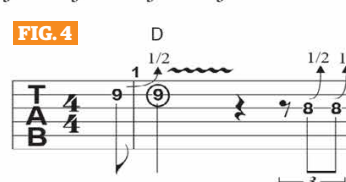
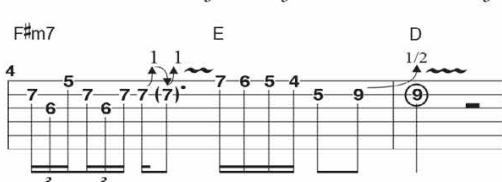
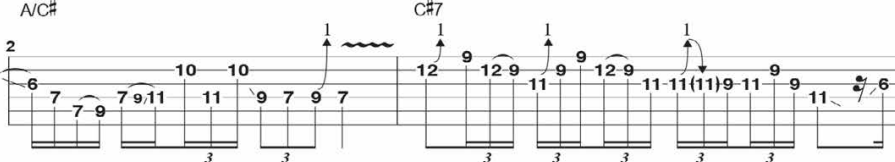
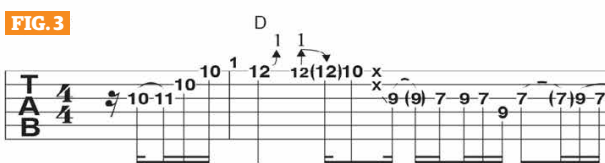
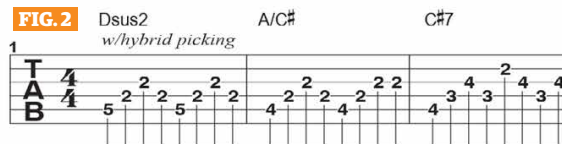
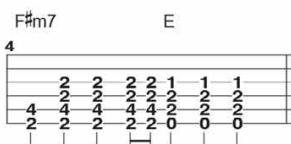


FIGURE 3 presents my solo. Over D, I begin by playing the notes of an ascending D major triad – F#, A and D – in 10th position, followed by lines based on the D major pentatonic scale (D, E, F#, A, B). Notice the reverse rake and slide at the end of beat 2 into beat 3. Over A/C#, I rely on A major pentatonic (A, B, C#, E, F#) and play 6th intervals between the notes A and C# on the upbeat of beat 2.

Over the following C#7 and F#m7 chords, I stick with the tried-and-true blues-rock approach of playing notes from C# minor pentatonic (C#, E, F#, G#, B) and F# minor pentatonic (F#, A, B, C#, E), respectively, bringing in chromaticism (notes half steps apart) over E into the return to the tonic, D.

FIGURE 4 shows the part I play for the harmonized solo, where Paul plays the main melody line and I play a harmony to it. In bars 1-4, the progression alternates between D and B, so my lines target the triadic chord tones: D, F# and A for the D chord and, for the B chord, B, D# and F#.

The section ends with a twist in the progression, of C to D to E, and here I simply rely on notes from C major pentatonic (C, D, E, G, A), D major pentatonic and E major pentatonic (E, F#, G#, B, C#), respectively.

Altogether, this myriad of guitar parts weaves a wide musical picture that serves to bring the song to an entirely new place before returning to the pre-chorus section. **GW**



MULTIDIMENSIONAL GUITAR

BY ALEX SKOLNICK

On Tap

Legato phrasing with tapping

LAST MONTH, WE explored legato phrasing techniques with a look at those I use in my solo in the Testament song "So Many Lies." To recap, the term legato means "smooth and connected," and, on the guitar, legato phrasing can be achieved via the use of such techniques as hammer-ons, pull-offs and finger slides, which can be used instead of picking to articulate notes.

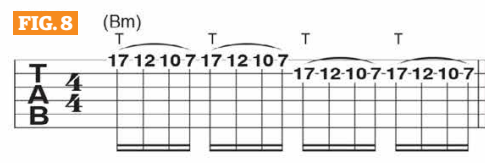
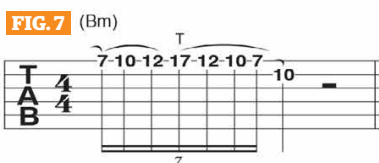
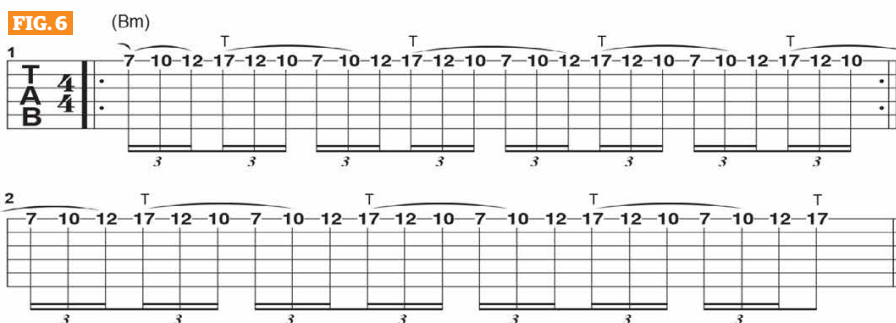
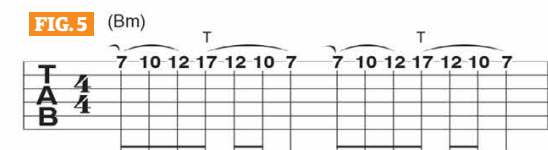
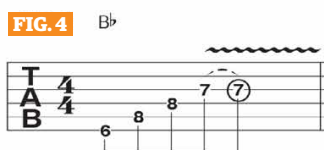
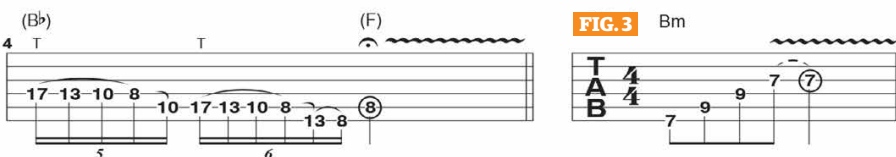
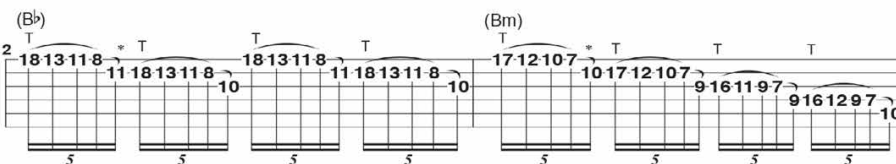
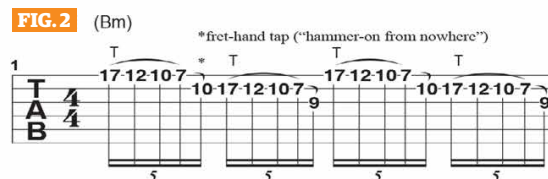
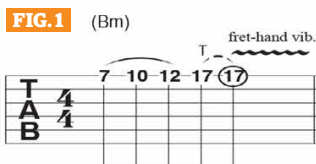
Another solo of mine that features legato phrasing, and, additionally, fretboard tapping, is the one I play in "The Pale King," which I recorded with Testament for 2015's *Brotherhood of the Snake*. On the recording, the guitars are tuned down a half step, but for this lesson my guitar is in standard tuning at concert pitch.

The use of tapping in this solo was inspired by Eddie Van Halen, but, as was the case with my solo in "So Many Lies," my overall legato phrasing approach here was informed by the brilliant style of Allan Holdsworth.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the initial fretboard shape that kicks off the first phrase of my solo in "The Pale King." Played over a Bm chord and on the 1st string in 7th position, the notes B, D and E are fretted with a double hammer-on, followed by a high A note that I tap with my pick-hand middle finger. These notes reference the B minor pentatonic scale (B, D, E, F#, A).

FIGURE 2 shows the complete opening lick. I begin by tapping the high A note then pull-off to E, D and B, followed by a fret-hand "hammer-on from nowhere" to A on the B string's 10th fret. On beat 2, I move the five-note sequence over to the B and G strings and use the same shape, with the slight variation of ending on the G string's 9th fret (E). I then repeat these 10 notes on beats 3 and 4.

In bar 2, I play the very same thing one fret higher, as if I were transposing it to C minor



pentatonic. But the backing chord here moves down to Bb (major), which completely changes the intervallic relationships between the notes and the chord.

Going back to Bm, bar 3 begins with a restatement of the initial B minor pentatonic phrase, but here I continue to descend through the scale on beats 3 and 4, moving over to the G and D strings.

The phrase ends in bar 4 with tapped lines based on Bb across beats 1 and 2, followed by an F half note that sustains through beats 3 and 4.

FIGURES 3 and **4** outline the backing Bm and Bb chords, played as arpeggios. **FIGURE 5** focuses on the individual solo notes played on the 1st string, and **FIGURE 6** illustrates

this specific pattern played repeatedly, which offers a great way to develop good fret-hand legato "traction." Make each hammer-on and tap quick and firm, and, when pulling-off, flick the string downward.

During the solo, I do the "hammer-on from nowhere" onto the A note on the B string's 10th fret, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 7**.

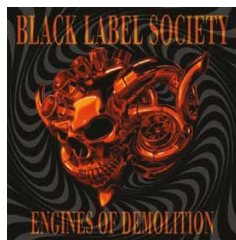
FIGURE 8 offers an effective way to practice the beginning of the solo and get your tapping motor running, by simply moving the same tapped pattern across the top two strings.

Next month, I'll break down the shift to the phrases I play over the Bb chord, as well as how this riff culminates on the low F note. **GW**

BETWEEN THE LINES

BY JIMMY BROWN

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY "Ozzy's Song"



WITH THIS SIMPLE, well-written ballad, a tribute to his dear friend Ozzy Osbourne, shredder-singer-songwriter Zakk

Wylde expresses deeply emotive artistry. Using a handful of chords that live in the key of A, the versatile musician composed two repeating foundational progressions – one for the song's intro and chorus and one for its verses. Over these changes, Zakk crafted soulful vocal and guitar melodies, poetic lyrics and a dramatically ripping, passionate solo.

To achieve the desired feel for the acoustic part, use 16th-note "pendulum" strumming, keeping your pick hand continually moving back and forth over the strings – down-up-down-up on every beat – as if you were

strumming an unbroken stream of 16th notes, even though you'll be playing various combinations of quarter-, eighth- and 16th-note rhythms. Doing this will ensure a smooth, flowing, natural groove with no awkward "stop-start" hesitations. Any chord that falls on the first or third 16th note of a beat is to be strummed with a downstroke, as are any quarter or eighth notes. Correspondingly, any chord that falls on the second or fourth 16th note of the beat – on the "ee" and "uh" counts, as in "one-ee-and-uh, two-ee-and-uh," etc – would be strummed with an upstroke. Whenever there's a quarter note, the hand should still move down-up-down-up, with the pick hitting the strings only on the initial downstroke then passing over them with "phantom" upstrokes and downstrokes.

If you watch the song's official video, or any live performance video, you'll see that Zakk

Wylde expresses deeply emotive artistry in this song

opts to finger the 2nd/3rd-position "C shape" D chord throughout, as opposed to the open D chord he played on the original recording, with its sus2 embellishments. This no doubt has to do with the fact that, as a singing guitarist, he's multi-tasking, which is more challenging to do than *only* playing guitar, as half of your focus is on the singing. The "C shape" D chord grip seems to make for a smoother, minimal-motion switch to the Bm chord that follows. This also benefits the pick hand, as the root note of each chord is on the same string, the A string.

Zakk builds his solo nicely, starting out with lyrical phrases, using finger slides and mostly downstrokes to achieve a pretty and consistent articulation as he tenderly glides from note to note. When he cranks up his guitar volume and the energy level in bar 56, the burly axman flexes his celebrated alternate picking chops and uses bold string bends and finger vibratos to perform fiery runs and wailing lines.

When playing these high solo licks, be sure to palm-mute the lower unused strings to keep them quiet. Doing so will help make you sound like a true guitar hero. **GW**

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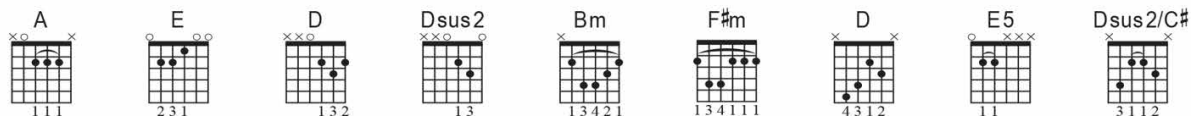
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BLACK LABEL SOCIETY

"Ozzy's Song"

AS HEARD ON **ENGINES OF DEMOLITION** WORDS AND MUSIC BY **ZAKK WYLDE**TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN****A** Intro (0:00)

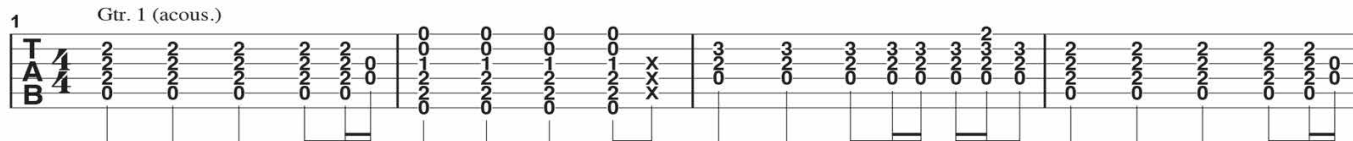
Moderately Slow ♩ = 62

Skies may cry I'll be holding on 'Cause

A E D A

Gtr. 1 (acous.)

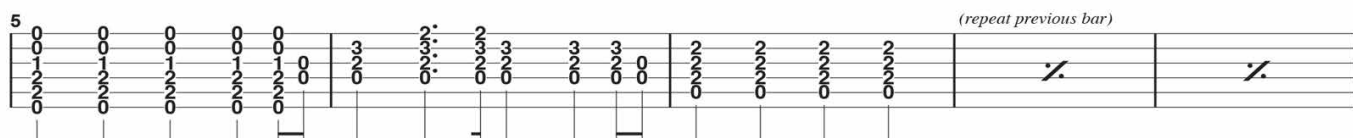
GTR.1



I'll be oh holding on Ooh oh I

E D A

(repeat previous bar)

**B** 1st Verse (0:35)

saw you yesterday before you went away Remember when never thinking it would end Blue

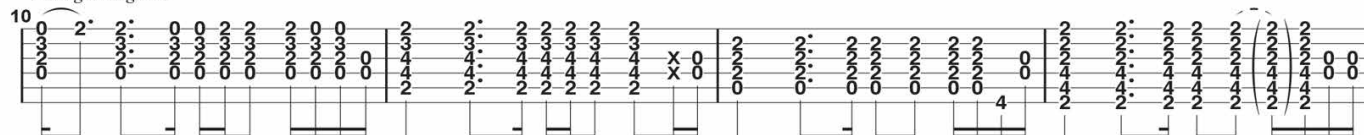
Dsus2 D Dsus2 D Dsus2 Bm

A

F#m

Rhy. Fig. 1

let ring throughout

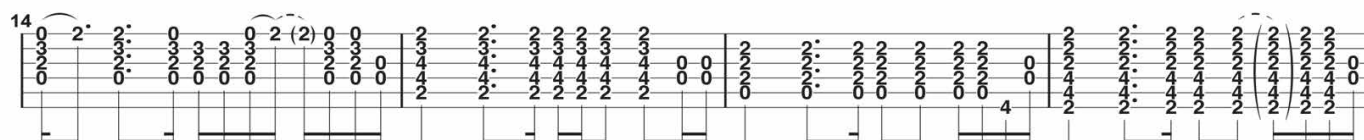


skies up above But soon we'd feel the cold Although we knew We chose not to know not to know

Dsus2 D Dsus2 D Dsus2 Bm

A

F#m



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C 1st Chorus (1:10)

But it's okay The skies may cry But I'll be holding on holding on

D A E D Dsus2 D

18 *end Rhy. Fig. 1* *Rhy. Fig. 2*

The skies may cry Now the race is run All the chaos and all the wars When all

A E F#m E5 D Dsus2/C#

22

is said and done I couldn't ask for more

Bm A

26 *end Rhy. Fig. 2*

D 2nd Verse (1:49)

Enjoy the ride before it's gone Enjoy the ride It doesn't last for long Just trying to get by

Dsus2 D Bm A F#m E Dsus2 D Dsus2 D Dsus2

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 10)

29 *Bass*

Trying to survive Broken down yet I'm still alive Speak of me It's alright

Bm A F#m E D

34

E 2nd Chorus (2:23)

The skies may cry But I'll be holding on holding on

A E D Dsus2 D

38 *Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile (see bar 19)*

The skies may cry Now the race is run All the chaos

A E F#m E5

41

and all the wars When all is said and done I couldn't ask for more

D Dsus2/C# Bm A

44

Bm

A

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 10)

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.)

GTR. 2

48 **2**

*Gtr, volume low

F#m

E

Dsus2 D

Bm

A

51

9 11 11 (11) (11) (11) 10 9 9 9 (9) 11 11 (11) 9 9 (9) 7 9 11 9 9 (9) 7 7 (7) 6 6 (6) 9 7 9 11 11 (11) 9 10 9

F#m

E

D

*Crank up
Gtr. volume*

55

D

Dsus2/C#

Bm

Gtr. 2

GTR. 2

57

*2nd string note 'caught' under ring finger.

Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 3

GTR.1

[illegible]

Bass
Bass Fig. 1

⑤ 5 5 5 4⁺ | 2 2⁺ 2 2 2 2 2

A

F#m

The first system of the musical score for 'The Little Boat' consists of two staves. The upper staff contains the melody, and the lower staff contains the accompaniment. The melody begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first measure is a half note G4 (labeled 59) with a circled 9 below it. This is followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note X (labeled 14). The next measure is a quarter note (labeled 14) with a 1/2 above it, followed by another quarter note (labeled 14). The melody then has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note (labeled 12) with a 1 above it, and another quarter note (labeled 12). The system ends with a double bar line. The accompaniment in the lower staff consists of a series of chords: a half note G4 (labeled 59) with a circled 9 below it, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note X (labeled 14), and another quarter note (labeled 14). The system ends with a double bar line.

end Rhy. Fig. 3

Year	epidemiology	epidemiological	epidemiologic	epidemiology and	epidemiological studies
1980	1	1	1	1	1
1981	1	1	1	1	1
1982	1	1	1	1	1
1983	1	1	1	1	1
1984	1	1	1	1	1
1985	1	1	1	1	1
1986	1	1	1	1	1
1987	1	1	1	1	1
1988	1	1	1	1	1
1989	1	1	1	1	1
1990	1	1	1	1	1
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2012	1	1	1	1	1
2013	1	1	1	1	1
2014	1	1	1	1	1
2015	1	1	1	1	1
2016	1	1	1	1	1
2017	1	1	1	1	1
2018	1	1	1	1	1
2019	1	1	1	1	1

end Bass Fig. 1

5 5 5 5 5 4⁺ 2 2⁺ 2 2 2 2 (2) 2 2 2 2

TRANSCRIPTIONS

D Dsus2/C# Bm

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 two and one half times simile (see bar 57)

Gtr. 2

GTR. 2

61

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 two and one half times simile (see bar 57)

A

(w/light wah pedal usage throughout)

63

F#m

64

D

Dsus2/C#

Bm

65

A

67

*2nd string note 'caught' under ring finger.

F#m

68

D

Dsus2/C#

Bm

Slight P.H.

69

"OZZY'S SONG"

A F#m D

Gtr. 2
 71 GTR.2

Gtr. 1
GTR.1

Bass

The musical score is for the songs "F#m" and "D". It consists of three staves: Gtr. 2 (top), Gtr. 1 (middle), and Bass (bottom). The Gtr. 2 staff has a yellow label "GTR.2" and the Gtr. 1 staff has a pink label "GTR.1". The score includes various guitar techniques like triplets, bends, and slides, as well as fret numbers and chord symbols.

G **Outro** (4:42)

The skies may cry But I'll be holding on holding on The skies may cry

[illegible]

Now the race is run All the chaos and all the wars When all is said and done I couldn't ask for more

E F#m E5 D Dsus2/C# Bm A
 Gr. 1
 78
 GTR.1
 Bass

C 1st Chorus (0:55)

on and on and on it's heaven and hell Oh well yeah

C5 Gtrs. 1 and 2 D5 N.C.(E5) P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

21

GTR.1

GTR.2

Bass

*repeat previous chord

25 (repeat previous two bars)

2

let ring

grad. decrease tempo (♩ = 86)

The

Bass Fig. 3

D 2nd Verse (1:17)

lover of life's not a sinner The ending is just a beginner The

Gtr. 2

29

GTR.2

Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 13)

closer you get to the meaning the sooner you'll know that you're dreaming So it's

33

E 2nd Chorus (1:39)

on and on and on Oh it's on and on and on

C5 Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.) D5 C5 full full

37

GTR.3

Gtrs. 1 and 2

P.M.

GTR.1

GTR.2

Bass

TRANSCRIPTIONS

F Bridge (2:17)
(Ah) Oh (Ah) ooh
Am(add9) D5 Dm7 C/G
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Rhy. Fig. 2
51 *let ring* P.M. *end Rhy. Fig. 2*
Bass *Bass Fig. 4* *end Bass Fig. 4*
(Ah) Yeah yeah yeah
G5/D D^V A5
55 P.M. P.M.

G (2:38)

Well if it

N.C.(E5)

Gtrs. 1 and 2

59 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. 2

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 four times (see bar 25)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 four times (see bar 25)

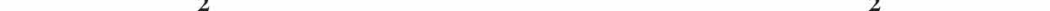
H 3rd Verse (2:49)

seems to be real it's illusion For every moment of truth there's confusion in life
Love can be seen as the answer but nobody bleeds for the dancer And it's

63

2

2



Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 eight times (see bar 25)

[illegible]

Gtr. 3

67

GTR. 3

Gtrs. 1 and 2

GTR.1

GTR.2

[illegible]

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 13)

I 1st Guitar Solo (3:18)

N.C.(E5)

Gtr. 3 (w/delay and reverb effects)

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Fill 1 (see below)

[illegible]**GTR. 3**

74 *Gtr. 1 plays Fill 2 (see below)*

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a single system with two staves. The upper staff is for the vocal melody, and the lower staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff.

Bass plays first four bars of Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 13)

Gtr. 1 plays Fill 3 (see below)

78 full

(15) (15) (15)* (15)

X X

12 15 15 12 14 14 12 14 12 14 14 12 14 12 14 14 10 12 12 9 10 9 10 12

P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 five times (see bar 25)

82

12/14 12-12-12-14 12-12-14 12-14 14-12 12-15-15-15 12-15-15-15 12-15-15-15 12-14-14-14-12-14 12-14 (14)-12-14 12-14-14-14-12 14-14-14 12-12

Fill 1 (3:21)

Gtr. 1 (w/lush reverb)

Fill 2 (3:29)

GTR

Gr. 1

6 6 6

Fill 3 (3:40)

GTR

GTR.1

GTR.2

TRANSCRIPTIONS

GTR. 3

GTR.1

GTR.2

GTR.3

GTR.3

GTR.1

GTR.2

GTR.1

GTR.2

GTR.3

GTR.1

GTR.2

TRANSCRIPTIONS

tell you black is really white the moon is just the sun at night and
E5 D5

Gtrs. 1 and 2 repeat Rhy. Fig. 4 simile (see bar 116)

128 Gtr. 3

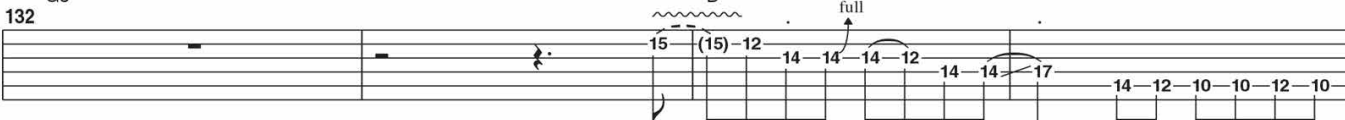
GTR. 3



Bass repeats Bass Fig. 6 simile (see bar 116)

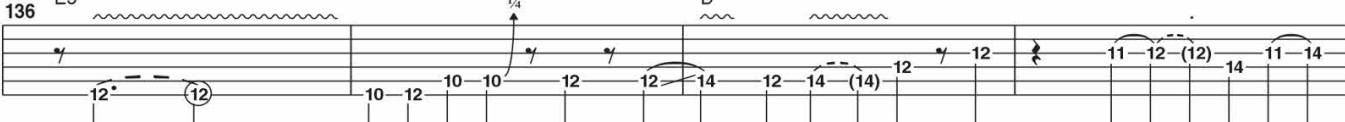
when you walk in golden halls you get to keep the gold that falls It's

132 G5^{III}



heaven and hell

136 E5



[M] (5:13)

Fool fool

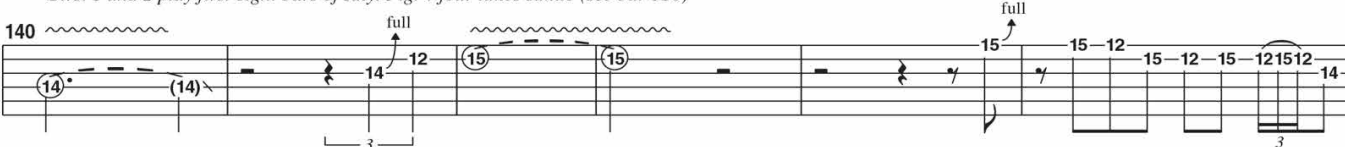
You've got to bleed for the dancer

E5

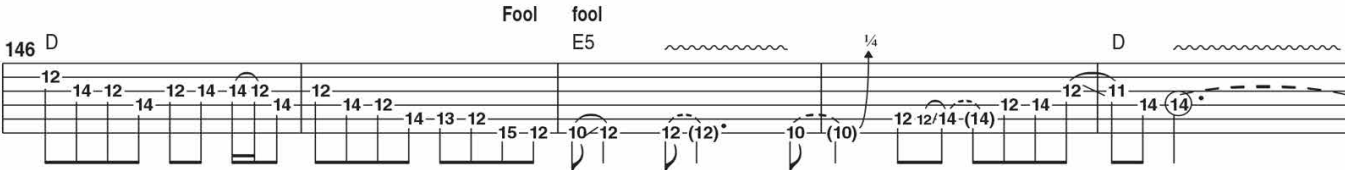
D

G5^{III}

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play first eight bars of Rhy. Fig. 4 four times simile (see bar 116)



Bass plays first eight bars of Bass Fig. 6 four times simile (see bar 116)

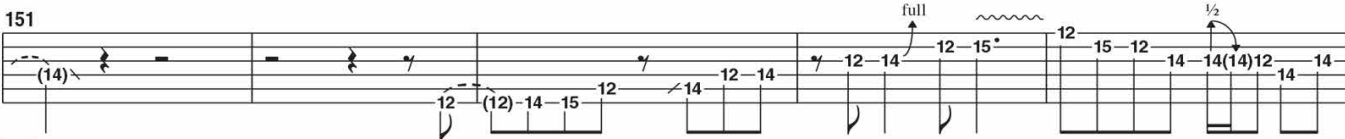


Look for the answer

G5^{III}

Fool

fool



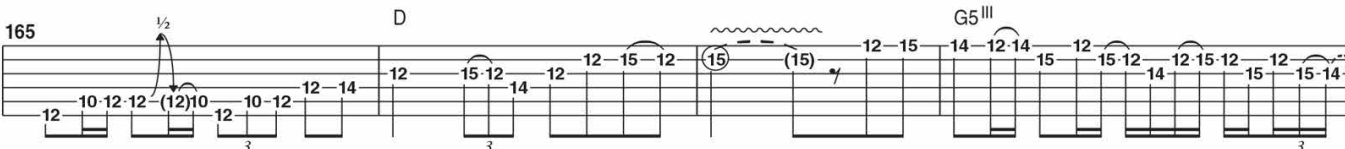
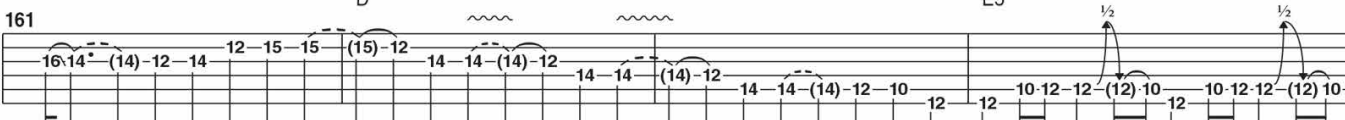
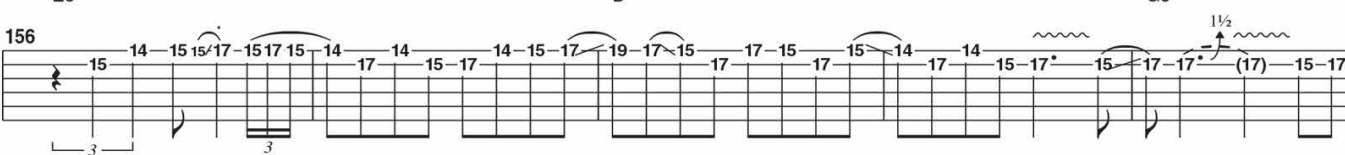
[N] 3rd Guitar Solo (5:32)

fool

E5

D

G5^{III}



172 Gtr. 3

full

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

Gtrs. 1 and 2

10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10

full

(fade out over next 4 bars)

Diagram 1: Musical notation for the Bass line of 'The Sound of Silence'. The notation is on a five-line staff. The first measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The second measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The third measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The fourth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The fifth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The sixth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The seventh measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The eighth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The ninth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The tenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The eleventh measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The twelfth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The thirteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The fourteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The fifteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The sixteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The seventeenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The eighteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The nineteenth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The twentieth measure contains a circled '2' above a circled '0'. The notation is labeled 'Bass' and '(fade out over next 4 bars)'.

176 *fingerstyle*

Gtr. 4 (nylon-stg. acous.)
fingerstyle; let ring throughout

Rhy. Fig. 5

180 Cmaj7 Am (Em) Asus2 F#m7 Em

end Rhy. Fig. 5

[illegible]

192

Em/F# Em/G Cmaj7 Am > (Em) Asus2 F#m7 Em

7-8-10 7-8-7 9 8-7 10-8-7 9 8-7 7-8-7 9 8-7 10-8-7 9 9-7-8-10-8-7 9 9-9 9-7-8 9-7 9-9 9-8

199

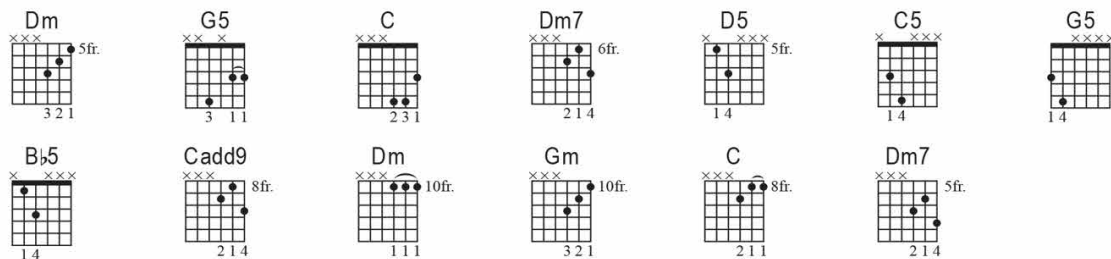
Em/F# Em/G Cmaj7 Am (Em) Asus2 F#m7 Em *fade out*

9 7 8 7 9 8 7 10 8 7 9 9 7 8 10 7 8 7 10 8 7 9 10 8 7 8 10 10 8 7 9 8 7 9

THE ROMANTICS

"Talking in Your Sleep"

AS HEARD ON **IN HEAT** WORDS AND MUSIC BY **COZ CANLER, JIMMY MARINOS, WALLY PALMAR, MIKE SKILL AND PETER SOLLEY** TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A Intro (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 130

Dm

Gtr. 1 (clean elec.)

Rhy. Fig. 1

G5

C

Dm

end Rhy. Fig. 1

GTR. 1

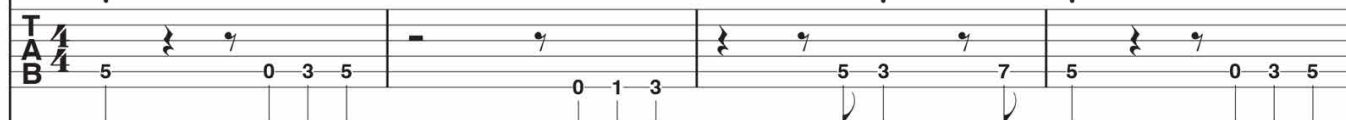


Gtr. 2 (clean elec.)

Rhy. Fig. 1a

end Rhy. Fig. 1a

GTR. 2



*Bass

*Doubled by synth bass throughout.



G5

C

Dm

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 three times (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2

5 Rhy. Fig. 2

end Rhy. Fig. 2

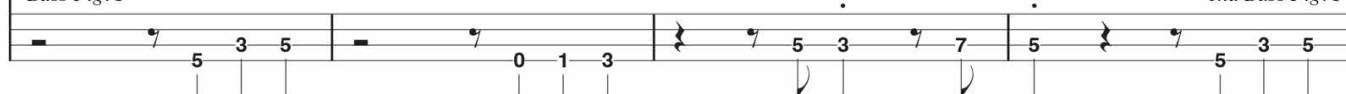
GTR. 2



Bass

Bass Fig. 1

end Bass Fig. 1



Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 5)

Gtr. 3 (clean elec. w/light chorus and reverb effects)

9 *Rhy. Fig. 3*

GTR.3

[illegible]

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

When you

13

13

G5 C Dm

end Rhy. Fig. 3

The musical score for 'end Rhy. Fig. 3' consists of a single staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into four measures by bar lines. The first measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4. The second measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4. The third measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4. The fourth measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, Bb4, followed by a double bar line. Above the staff, the chords G5, C, and Dm are indicated above the first, second, and third measures respectively. The number 13 is written above the first measure. The text 'end Rhy. Fig. 3' is written above the fourth measure.

end Rhy. Fig. 3

B 1st Verse (0:29)

close your eyes and you go to sleep

And it's

Dm
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 5)

17 Gtr. 1

GTR.1

[illegible]

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

down to the sound of a heartbeat

I can

21

(3rd Verse: 2:43)

hear the things that you're dreaming about
(3.) close your eyes and you fall asleep

When you
Everything

25 *Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)*

25 *Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)*

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

open up your heart and the truth comes out }
about you is a mystery }

You tell

29 Gtr. 1

GTR.1

29 Gtr. 1

G5 C Dm

Gtr. 2

GTR.2

Gr. 2

0 3 5

0 1 3

5 3 7 5

Rhy. Fill 1

Rhy. Fill 1 - - - - -

Bass
Bass Fig. 2

end Bass Fig. 2

Bass Fig. 2 *end Bass Fig. 2*

The bass line for Figure 2 consists of four measures. The first measure contains a whole rest followed by eighth notes 5, 3, and 5. The second measure contains a whole rest followed by eighth notes 0, 1, and 3. The third measure contains eighth notes 5 and 3, followed by a quarter note 7. The fourth measure contains eighth notes 5 and 7, followed by quarter notes 7, 5, 8, and 7. The line ends with a double bar line.

C Pre-chorus (0:59, 1:58, 2:57)

You tell

Gtr. 3
let ring throughout

33

7 6 8 8

7 6 8 8

C5

7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

A number line from 0 to 100 with tick marks every 1 unit. The line is divided into four groups of 25 units each by vertical bars. The first group (0-25) has the number 5 written above each tick mark. The second group (25-50) has the number 5 written above each tick mark. The third group (50-75) has the number 3 written above each tick mark. The fourth group (75-100) has the number 3 written above each tick mark. The final tick mark at 100 is labeled '0' and '1'.

3rd time, skip ahead to **F** Outro Chorus
(bar 57)

'cause I hear it in the night

Cadd9

[illegible]

B65

C5

[illegible]

D 1st and 2nd Choruses (1:14, 2:13)

When you're talking in your sleep

Dm

Rhy. Fig. 4

end Rhy. Fig. 4

end Bass Fig. 2

"TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP"

After repeat of 2nd chorus, go back to bar 25 for 3rd verse.

I hear the secrets that you keep When you're talking in your sleep ^{*}(2. When I)
(3. When you)

Dm Gm C Dm

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)
Gtr. 4

45 (No repeat on 1st chorus)

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

^{*}Lyrics in parentheses sung at end of 1st and 2nd choruses, respectively.

E 2nd Verse (1:28)

hold you in my arms at night Don't
all your dreams that you keep inside You're

Dm G5 C Dm

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 5)
Gtr. 1

49

GTR. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 5)

On repeat, go back to [C] Pre-chorus (bar 33)

you know you're sleeping in the spotlight And
telling me the secrets that you just can't hide You tell

Dm7 Dm G5 C C Dm

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 on repeat (see bar 1)
Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 1 on repeat (see bar 32)

53

Bass substitutes Bass Fig. 2 on repeat

F Outro Chorus (3:12)

I hear the secrets that you keep When you're talking in your sleep

Dm G5 C Dm

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a (see bar 1)
Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fig. 2 on repeats (see bar 5)
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 9)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 41)

57

Gtr. 1

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 41)

Repeat and Fade

I hear the secrets that you keep When you're talking in your sleep

Dm7 Dm G5 C Dm

61

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

POWER TOOLS

VHT/Fryette Pittbull Ultra-Lead G-100-UL

1993-2017

CATEGORY: AMPLIFIER HEAD

BY CHRIS GILL

▶ IN OUR HUMBLE opinion, the VHT Pittbull Ultra-Lead was the greatest amp to emerge during the high-gain amp “wars” of the early Nineties. Introduced in 1993 as a three-channel, ultra high-gain alternative to its predecessors, the Pittbull Classic and CL/X, which debuted the previous year, the Ultra-Lead offered singular tones, highly sensitive dynamic responsiveness and distinctive character unlike anything before (or since, for that matter). Its aggressive personality and beastly tones intimidated many players, which might explain why it was never quite as commercially successful as many of its competitors, although the model enjoyed a successful continuous 24-year run nonetheless. However, we’re certain that quite a few guitarists and producers used an Ultra-Lead as a secret weapon in the studio but never divulged the details to maintain an advantage over imitators.

VHT (or Fryette, as the company became known in 2009 when Steve Fryette sold the VHT name) made a few upgrades and modifications to the Ultra-Lead’s features and specifications over the years, but at its core it always remained a 120-watt all-tube head powered by a quartet of robust KT88 tubes that could handle the circuit’s extremely high voltages (more than 500 volts on the plates). The footswitchable Rhythm and Lead channels each are driven by four gain stages courtesy of 12AX7 tubes, while the Clean channel has two gain stages to provide textures from crystalline clean to thundering crunch. Although the gain sections for the Rhythm and Lead channels are individually voiced and feature separate volume and gain controls and an Edge switch (making the Ultra-Lead’s three channels virtually independent), the Rhythm and Lead channels share the same bass/middle/treble EQ controls. However, Ultra-Lead heads with the switchable six-band graphic EQ can completely change either channel’s tonal character with a stomp on the EQ footswitch. The effects loop can be set to series or parallel operation and includes a level/mix control, and it is also footswitchable to provide maximum flexibility for gigging.

The Pittbull Ultra-Lead’s tonal personality is like a Hiwatt with ‘roid rage. The Clean channel delivers super-punchy, immediate attack and



The VHT Pittbull Ultra-Lead’s aggressive personality intimidated many players. [below] Static-X guitarist — and Ultra-Lead fan — Koichi Fukuda in 2022

Even at its most saturated levels of gain, the amp’s note-to-note definition remains crisp and precise



shimmering, glass-like textures. The Rhythm channel’s overdrive is like a hi-fi Marshall with gut-pummeling bass, screaming mids and sharp, cutting treble that explodes like a safety glass windshield in a high-speed collision. The Lead channel piles on generous heaps of gain, but the bass remains ultra-tight with percussive, pounding pick attack. Even at its most saturated levels of gain, the amp’s note-to-note definition remains crisp and precise throughout the guitar’s entire range. The amp pairs especially well with baritone and down-tuned guitars to deliver massive tones where the strings sound like heavy iron rods clanging in a steel mill.

Because the Ultra-Lead delivers some of the most aggressive high-gain tones known to mankind, its list of users is predominantly players who specialize in extreme forms of metal. Page Hamilton of Helmet has used an Ultra-Lead as the core of his meltdown tones since the Nineties, and Slipknot’s Mick Thomson plugged into an Ultra-Lead to record early albums like *Iowa* and *Vol. 3: (The Subliminal Verses)*. Rob Caggiano used his Pittbull Ultra-Lead heads with Anthrax and Volbeat, and as a producer he’s certainly convinced numerous guitarists he’s worked to plug into one while recording. John Christ (Danzig), Koichi Fukuda (Static-X) and Aaron Turner (Neurosis) are also Ultra-Lead fans.

Fryette discontinued the Pittbull Ultra-Lead in 2017, but earlier this year the model was updated and resurrected as the Ultra-Lead II, which greatly expands the Pittbull’s tonal palette for modern players. **GW**

BRIAN BAIRD (AMP); RICK KERN/GETTY IMAGES (FUKUDA)

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