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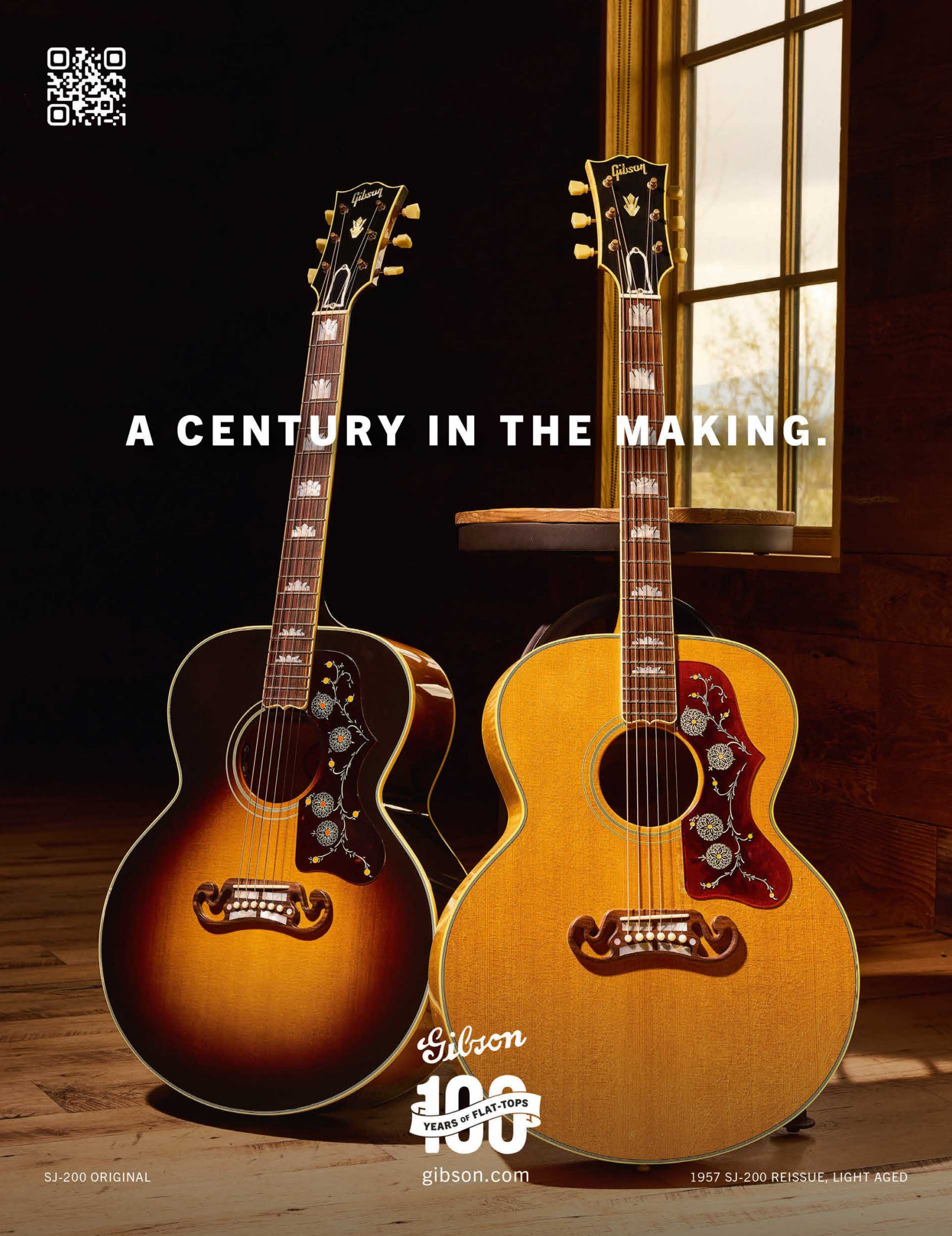
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Barry Goudreau boarded a rocket ship in the mid-'70s with AOR giants Boston. Now, he shares the full 50-year odyssey, from the battle to get signed, through his fiery "Long Time" solo, to the rivalry with Tom Scholz that blew up the band. Meanwhile, Brittany Howard and Heath Fogg discuss the recent return of Alabama Shakes, and Billy Morrison — Billy Idol sideman and best friend to Ozzy Osbourne — relives the treacherous path to his star-studded new solo album. Plus Eddie 9V and a Steve Cropper/Beatles "What if?" moment.

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COVER PHOTO: JEN ROSENSTEIN (*KING KONG* PHOTOS FROM GETTY IMAGES)

JIM STEINFELDT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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Forty years at the *Crossroads*



CYNTHIA MOORHEAD

I LOVE IT when a plan comes together, and that's exactly what happened with this issue. It's a celebration of 33 guitarists from New York state that happens to coincide with the debut album by a pair of phenomenal guitarists from Long Island, the 50th anniversary of NYC legends the Ramones' debut album and the 40th anniversary of *Crossroads*, one of the greatest guitar movies of all time (which happens to star one of those aforemented phenomenal guitarists from Long Island, plus native New Yorker Ralph Macchio).

Still, while spotlighting major players from one state — and not another — might alienate some readers ("Why aren't these East Coast jerks celebrating Utah guitarists?!"), one thing many of us can agree on is the undeniable guitar-smothered fun of *Crossroads*. Besides the Fender Tele, red-sparkle Jackson and Pignose amp that make appearances in the film, there's the unforgettable involvement of Steve Vai, Ry Cooder and Arlen Roth, the details of which have earned their own mythology in our little six-string universe. Our story points out that *Crossroads* wasn't a huge hit in 1986, but it was huge for me. I was already playing guitar at the time — and even had my own teenage blues band — so *Crossroads* felt like some sort of validation (although, if you consider the end of the movie, it did have me wondering if I should be playing classical instead. Spoiler: Besides my slick little version of Bach's Bourrée in E minor, that never happened). In 2026, it's easy to get all misty-eyed about *Crossroads* — you know, stuff like "They just don't make guitar movies like that anymore." But let's not forget the critical success of 2025's *Sinners*, which — like *Crossroads* — is set in Mississippi, feasts on the legacy and mythology of the blues and features an appearance by a hot young guitarist (Christone "Kingfish" Ingram), plus a living legend (Buddy Guy). You've even got vampires, who — while not exactly the Satan-esque character in *Crossroads* — are probably buddy-buddy with Satan and his minions. If you're looking for other recent examples of guitars and amps on the big or small screen, check out 2026's *Heavier Trip*, *Oasis: Don't Look Back in Anger* and *Iron Maiden: Burning Ambition* or 2024's *Norman's Rare Guitars* and *A Complete Unknown*. Enjoy!

— ***DAMIAN FANELLI***

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A nice combo of comments

The four "mini letters" below — all of which are comments posted to guitarworld.com in early September — refer to Greta Van Fleet and Mirador guitarist Jake Kiszka's assertion that more guitarists should be using combo amps when searching for stellar tone [*November 2026*]. To quote him exactly, "I would suggest combo amps. I actually would suggest combo amps overall, in general. Period." We'll let those commenters take it from here...

A good combo amp with an external speaker out (to use when needed) is all that most guitarists should ever need. There are many different combinations between all the combos and cabs out there.
MARTY57

I've used combo amps 95 percent of my 40 years of gigging. One time I brought a 4x12 and the whole band was mad. The synth player said I busted his ears, and the drummer said he couldn't hear a thing. An open-back combo can help spread the sound around the stage. The 4x12s can have a laser-beam effect, depending on room, stage and PA rig.
STEVE K

Well, Jimmy Page did build those Sun Dragon combos. I think every player wants a stack, but I've heard more pros boast about combos over stacks — more than I have the other way around — so Jake's probably right.
TEEB

I'm a huge believer in combos. I have a Sunn T50C that's crazy, and the oddball that I highly recommend is a Crate G40C. The trick is you need a made-by-SLM model, and it has to have the 8-inch Celestion L Series speakers. Trust me, it will be one of your go-to amps. I use it more than my Champ and other Fender combos. Even more than my Marshalls.
JMZ1

Not so fast, Mr. Bach!

Thank you for demonstrating the technical principles behind playing the Beatles' "Blackbird" on acoustic guitar [*October 2026*]. As a longtime guitar teacher, I do not believe that Bach's Bourrée in E minor is the reason for that composition. Paul McCartney may have tried to play this one, as many guitarists did in the Sixties. But it has no similarity to "Blackbird." A much more probable candidate is Carulli's G Major exercise No. 5 in his Method op. 241. It is also a part of almost every beginner's curriculum on the classical guitar and has all the traits of "Blackbird" — parallel motion in tenths, the open G as a pedal note, the picking pattern, a stable and not modulating tonality. All the best...
AXEL (VIA EMAIL)

Ode to the Powers that be

Thank you for your recent [*Gear Hunter feature*] about Powers Electric Guitars [*November 2026*]. I took my first lessons in 1965 and I've played many guitars since, both acoustic and electric. The Powers Electric is the finest guitar I've ever played. I can be picky, but, try as I might, I can't find anything to complain about with the Powers Electric. Kudos to both them and *GW* for the article.
DENNIS STEGMANN (VIA EMAIL)

Grand Funk memories

I think Grand Funk Railroad were making some of their best music with the live 1975 album Caught in the Act, and then 1976's *Born to Die*. I'm not a musician, but I'm impressed with the musicianship of the quartet — keyboardist Craig Frost being a particular favorite. Mark Farner's guitar playing can be really cool. GFR working with Frank Zappa on 1976's *Good Singin', Good Playin'* has, to me, seemed a unique move. "Out to Get You" from that album is probably the coolest, along with "1976."
PETER, IOWA (VIA EMAIL)

Divine interrogative

In a recent issue [*July 2026*], you [*refer to*] Rush [*as*] the "gods of prog rock" on the cover. I'm curious if they signed off on that at some point and said, "Sure, go ahead and call us that on the cover."
THOMAS HAMILTON (VIA EMAIL)

Our token Angine de Poitrine comment

It took me about a minute to go from "What the hell is that?" to "Where can I hear more of that?" Since then, I don't think I've gone a day without listening to at least one song of theirs. Khn and Klek are superb musicians who have a rare gift of making hard-to-play music fun, and that's why they blew up. I never would have predicted it, but neither would they.
JIMMY M. (VIA GUITARWORLD.COM)

READER ART OF THE MONTH



Carl Barry
BY PASQUALE ANTONACCI

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?



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Alabama Shakes' Brittany Howard performs in Madrid on July 11

ALDARA ZARRAOA/WIREIMAGE. WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Shake, Rattle & Roll

Forget the clean tones of Alabama Shakes' 2012 debut — Brittany Howard and Heath Fogg talk *GW* through a third album of "crazy fuzz," psychedelia and amps stabbed with screwdrivers

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

WHEN ALABAMA SHAKES first dropped their retro R&B sound onto the 2010s music scene, the quartet made a seismic impression. Led by the emotive wail of frontwoman Brittany Howard's vocals as they danced over the beat of songs like "Hold On," the band scored a Platinum plaque for their 2012 debut album, *Boys and Girls*.

The foundation underneath Howard's fiery vocal performances, though, proved just as formidable — a rock-solid rhythm section augmented by a pair of guitars that lifted syncopated melodic lines into the stratosphere. One of those guitars belonged to Heath Fogg and the other to Howard herself, and both were dialed deeply into the groove.

"We definitely love rhythm sections," says Howard of the band's most defining collective musical element. Seated on an idling motorcoach two weeks ahead of the release of *I Must Be Dreaming*, the first Alabama Shakes record in 11 years and third overall, she mulls it over for another few seconds. "I do think that's the coolest part of being in a band."

When Alabama Shakes put out their second record, *Sound & Color*, in 2015, critics heralded it as an experimental turn for the quartet that brought Southern soul and the sounds of Muscle Shoals into the 21st century. The band toured it for three years, claimed a second Platinum record, and then went on hiatus while Howard released two successful solo albums. In the intervening years, a reunion was never off the table, but it wasn't forward in anyone's mind until an old friend needed them.

"We have this buddy who owns a brewery in Tuscaloosa, and he was struggling after Covid and asked if I could come down and



[*from left*] Zac Cockrell, Brittany Howard and Heath Fogg

perform at a fundraiser," Howard says. "When we were first starting out, he would put us on his couch. He'd make sure we got fed, make sure we met the community. So, when he called, I was like, 'Yo, we gotta go help.'"

"Brit was gonna play the concert solo, and she just asked, 'What if we do it as a surprise show?'" Fogg says. Quietly, the band members unanimously agreed to reform. To the public, it was billed as a Brittany Howard performance, and it actually was — until a few songs into her set, when the rest of Alabama Shakes joined her onstage.

"I feel like the stars aligned, and I always knew it would be something like that," Howard says. "It felt like old times. It felt good to play together again. It organically grew from there and turned into, 'Oh, I guess we're making an album now.'"

The trio of Howard, Fogg and bassist Zac Cockrell convened in a small room at a house Howard owned in Nashville to see if they could write music together again. "I think it was a lot of, like, 'What are we into now? What haven't we explored that we were into then?'" she says. "Zac had a lot of demos that he was bringing to the table, some unique stuff, and I feel like my curiosity was piqued."

Recorded across the Nashville studios Sound Emporium and Blackbird, as well Sun Drop Sound in Alabama — which Shakes keyboardist Ben Tanner owns with singer-songwriter John Paul White, formerly of the Civil Wars — the songs and sounds of *I Must Be Dreaming* pick up where *Sound & Color* left off. The reverb and slapback echo of "Another Life" sit comfortably next to the gentle tremolo and walking R&B lines of "Garden." On "I Feel Hope Coming" and "How Love's Supposed to Go," brittle chording shares space with the duo's signature rhythmic riffing. The jammy breakdowns in "Time," one of the album's loosest moments, puts listeners as close as possible to the jam sessions that birthed the band's second coming.

We caught up with Howard and Fogg to talk about getting wild tones from off-the-wall guitars and amps, and what it was like to push their sound into psychedelic realms.

Brittany, you had a lot of solo success during the Alabama Shakes hiatus. Did guitar maintain a role in your songwriting even then?

BRITTANY HOWARD: On the Brittany Howard stuff, 99 percent of it came from guitar, and then I would write it over to other instruments. But I do think there's actually a lot of guitar on those albums — some of the songs have, like, five guitars. It's definitely the thing I'm most comfortable with.

There's a temptation to associate Alabama Shakes with clean, old-school Fender tones. But there are many adventurous sounds on this album.

HOWARD: I feel like we've always been interested in tones. I think a lot of it comes from listening to those old sixties records where you had studios trying to figure out how to capture these new sounds that people were coming up with, psychedelia and things like that. A lot of experimentation. And we loved those records, so we would listen to them and be like, how did they get that sound?

We've always experimented with fuzz at the least, but also putting guitars through weird stuff is cool, too. Old microphone preamps. I have a Yamaha RM800 mixing board that I was putting guitar through and recording straight to the tape machine, stuff like that. Even "Hold On" has this pretty crazy fuzz guitar at the end of it.

FOGG: I was kind of anti-fuzz for a while, because I feel like I used it so much all the time. Then I came in on this session, and Brit's just wearing out fuzz. I wish I'd played around with that more, but she was killing it.

What gear inspired you to keep pushing the envelope?

HOWARD: I'm not someone who usually has a big pedalboard. And I've got nothing against pedals at all, I think they're really cool. It's just that when I was younger, I never had the extra money to buy pedals, so I learned how to get a weird guitar and a weird amp and put the two together and figure out what kind of sound you can make out of it.

I have this shitty amp called a Kingston, and it sounds really cool. And I had this triangle amp that Yamaha used to make, and I just stabbed it with a screwdriver and I was like, that sounds cool. Sometimes it's like that. At the end of the day I can get a new cone, but like, I need the tone now. So I just give it a little stabby-stab. But the tones came from that [*and*] from playing an old Teisco with way too many pickups.

What other guitars and amps helped you make the record?

HOWARD: I have a Wandre — I think it's called a Wandre Jet, if I remember correctly. I played that a lot. It's got a reso body and an aluminum neck. I actually play that all the time when I'm in the studio, because I wouldn't trust a guitar like that to be able to make it on the road. So that's usually what I go to. Sounds super cool, plays really bad, but you can work with it. I mostly played that or the Teisco through the Kingston. I just stuck with that and changed the knobs based on what we were doing.

FOGG: Most of my stuff was on a Gibson ES-335. Also, Zac did some trading and he got this Yamaha archtop. It's kind of like a Gibson lawsuit kind of thing. I can't recall which model it's based off — one of the L models. That guitar is amazing, and I played it a lot on this

"When you walk into a studio, anything can happen. It's just like a wide, vast ocean or a blank canvas"

BRITTANY HOWARD

BOBBI RICH [@MAMAHOTDOG]

record. You know how sometimes you pick up a guitar, and they just kind of sing a little bit, and they feel inspiring? Like, it's heartfelt.

What songs or parts did you gravitate to that guitar for?

FOGG: It's on a lot of the embellishments on "Garden." I also played it on this song called "Tied to You," which is really plucky and basically just doubles the bass the whole song. We were trying to get the pluckiest, crispiest tone we could get. I had a foam mute in it, and it almost sounded like a different instrument rather than a guitar.

One of the album highlights, "Time" has this surprising psychedelic coda. How did that find its way onto the song?

HOWARD: Zac had brought in some demos, but sometimes those demos are only 30 seconds or a minute. And so it's like, this is a really cool idea. We have to finish the idea. That was one of those situations where we were in the tracking room, we're playing live, and we ran out of runway, like ran out of song, so we started jamming. And the original jam was like 15 minutes long. It was really fun.

FOGG: We usually like composing and playing these structured parts, so that was a little adventure. You might not see someone



for a long time, or you might not create with someone for a long time, then when you do, it's kind of magical how much you have in common creatively. That jam really felt that way in the moment.

HOWARD: We were never a band that jammed like that. It was liberating; it felt like I was a teenager with my band in the garage.

FOGG: When we were mixing it down, we played with the panning like on those Jimi Hendrix records where it would go all the way to one side, and all the way to the other side, and then kind of crossing where it would phase out. It gets a little strange and feels like you might go underwater for a second or two, then you come back out. I still am kind of rooting for the extended version to come out at some point.

Where do you feel like all three of you complimented each other best?

FOGG: "I Feel Hope Coming," to me, is like everyone being free and exploring the song in their own ways, and it comes together in a really collaborative way. And also the song "Waist Deep." I like how those songs are both kind of strummy – that's something we haven't really done much before. Usually, it's more like choppy parts and single lines and melodies, but it was fun to play that way. On both we were trying to create a groove, which is something we've always been focused on.

HOWARD: Going into the studio, it was like, what can we make? Because when you walk into a studio, it's like anything could happen. It's just like a wide, vast ocean or a blank canvas. We all kind of came together and threw everything in the pot, and it was like either this is working or like, nah, this ain't working. Some songs we never figured out, you know? For later times. GW





IT GOES TO 11

Eddie 9V

The Atlantan guitarist on amp disagreements with Dan Auerbach and recording with blues legend Sean Costello's prized '53 goldtop

BY GREGORY ADAMS

EDDIE 9V HAS a whole lot coming to you on his fifth studio full-length, *Down Here*, and the vibe is downright electric.

Though he's an Atlanta-raised six-stringer who began self-producing music when he was a teenager, he linked up with Black Keys guitarist Dan Auerbach at Nashville's Easy Eye Sound studios to help capture the raw and wide-smilin' sound of his new album. Eddie walks the ledge with exuberantly reckless vibrato on "Whole Lot Coming for You," and on "Blowin' Up" he becomes part of a three-headed hydra of boogie-rocked goodness during a back-to-back-to-back solo section with Marcus King and Dustin McCook. But he also brings daiquiri-sweet falsetto crooning to a cover of KC and the Sunshine Band's "Rock Your Baby" and drawls *laissez-faire* wisdom into "It Don't Bother Me."

Just before slapping a bunch of chicken thighs onto the grill for a cookout at his home in South Carolina, Eddie 9V served up some thoughts on meaty tones, greasy guitar heroes and more.

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

I don't know what brand it was, but it was tiny, and it had a speaker in it — it was one of those old Japanese knockoffs from the Seventies. I wish I still had it. It'd probably be a great-sounding blues guitar, because you could probably distort the speaker.

2 What was in your teenage guitar rig, and what'd you love or hate about it?

I had a Samick guitar, and I tried to relic it, which is a horrible idea when you're 14. It looked like somebody took a hacksaw to it. I got my first good rig when I was 14. My dad sold his Honda 450, and we got a Fender Blues Deluxe and a Highway One Strat, which I still use. I traded the amp. I'm not a big fan of the Blues Deluxe. They're too quick. They don't have any sag like a good Fender two-band.

3 What's a piece of gear you own that might surprise people?

I own a lot of old shit, like Wurlitzers. I'm into old mics. My favorite amp, which I'm [*considering*] selling, is a brown panel '61 Fender Concert. I'd get good money for it, but I'll be kicking my ass in 20 years when they're [*worth*] $30,000.

4 What's your Number 1 tone tip?

Turn the amp all the way up — and turn your guitar volume down.

5 How'd you get your first break in music?

I was doing a lot of dumb gigs for a long time... There's a guy named Tinsley Ellis, a blues cat from the Eighties and Nineties. I sent him my first demo, and he got me a booking agent, which got me on the road. Then the booking agent got me the management, and then the management got me the label. Luck and hard work meet at the crossroads, but I owe all my success to Tinsley.

6 What's the most glorious guitar moment on *Down Here*?

I got to use Sean Costello's 1953 goldtop. He's an Atlanta blues musician, and he was my idol as a kid. He was wonderful. He died when he was 28, and I never got to meet him. Mat Koehler at Gibson ended up buying it — he was a good buddy of Sean's — so Gibson lends it out to people who want to play it. So, the moment was that I was playing that guitar straight into a tweed Champ. Marcus King had his recently acquired '59 Les Paul, an MK Burst. We were in the room for "A Whole Lot Coming for You," lookin' at each other like, "Holy shit, is this really happening?"

7 Tell us about a time you had an argument over tone or gear choices. Did that ever happen with Dan?

They like to use small amps that are turned up, but I need a really big amp. We didn't have any qualms, but there was one time I wanted to bring this amp into the room and dime it, where it bleeds into the other mics. Everybody was like, "Why?" But everyone loved the sound after I got done with it. Me and Dan haven't argued yet!

8 What has been your worst onstage moment (so far)?

One time in Athens, Georgia, I had just bought new shoes, and they were real slick, but I came out and totally slipped on a cable and busted my ass. I almost broke a headstock. That was embarrassing. And there was a show in New Orleans where I ran out and didn't have my guitar with me. The band was playing and everything, [*so*] I went back to the green room, but I didn't know the code [*to get back in*]. The whole venue could see me looking like an idiot. hat was pretty funny.

9 You can only take a Strat or a Les Paul to a gig. Which one — and why?

I would almost always play a Les Paul, because you're gonna have the most meat. You're gonna be louder; you're gonna have more gain in your guitar. I've made the mistake of showing up to a jam with a Strat, and you sound like you're just plinking. Strats are really hard to make sound fat, especially if you're not with your own rig. I'd always pick a Les Paul.

10 If you could absorb the playing skills of one guitarist — and play like that person for a year — who would it be?

Albert King, because there's nobody nastier. Freddie King is like the brisket, B.B. King is the filet mignon, and frickin' Albert King is just a damn ham-hock. He is greasy and nasty. I'm not trying to toot horns here, but Joe Bonamassa did a video basically saying there are only a few guitar players that can do the Albert King bends correctly, and he said my name. I was super honored.

11 Who is the guitarist you'd most love to jam with or collaborate with next?

John Mayer is our generation's Eric Clapton. That'd be awesome. GW



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No Angel

How did Billy Morrison go from a dying addict to the best-connected man on the L.A. scene? In his most candid interview yet, the Billy Idol sideman — and best friend to Ozzy — relives the treacherous path to his star-studded new solo album

BY JON WIEDERHORN



"Humor bonded us," says Billy Morrison about his friendship with the late Ozzy Osbourne. "Sharon would say we were like two 11-year-olds"

WHEN YOUR MAIN gig is a seemingly permanent slot as the rhythm guitarist and co-songwriter for a rock icon, everything else is pretty much gravy. Billy Morrison, who was brought into Billy Idol's band in 2010, has gravy to spare — enough to cover Thanksgiving dinners for everyone in a sold-out stadium. On top of that, Morrison has become a successful painter with a healthy list of wealthy return clients. He has displayed his work in numerous exhibitions, and one of his pieces from a series of butterfly paintings has been hanging in the U.S. Capitol for more than 10 years.

So, when it comes to his solo albums, Morrison doesn't need to write hit songs, address a particular audience or play out live. His sole focus is to write in a variety of rock, punk and metal styles he enjoys, then get together with friends to hang out and jam. Of course, as a fixture of the L.A. scene for more than a decade, many of his friends just happen to be multi-platinum rock stars.

His fourth solo album, *Hollow*, features guitar work by Steve Stevens, Nuno Bettencourt and Duff McKagan, and guest vocals from Sully Erna, Dexter Holland, Marilyn Manson and rappers Chuck D, B-Real and D.M.C. "I love working with musicians I like and admire," Morrison says from the desk in his home studio in Beverly Hills. "That's a thrill for me. I can work with whoever I want and put as many different genres onto a rock record as I want because the only person I have to please is myself."

It's a formula that has served Morrison well. In 2024, "Crack Cocaine," the snarling riff-driven anthem he co-wrote with Ozzy Osbourne, went to Number 1 on the Mediabase Active Rock Chart and fueled the success of Morrison's third album, *The Morrison Project*. The record also featured the Ozzy co-write "Gods of Rock N Roll," an epic, orchestral power ballad that went Top 10 on the Active Rock *Billboard* Mainstream Rock charts. "Becoming," a new brooding, caustic grunge-metal collaboration with Godsmack's Sully Erna and Bettencourt, went Top 20 on Active Rock and created a strong buzz for *Hollow*.

"It seems like it was just yesterday that 'Crack Cocaine' went to Number 1," Morrison says, his hands linked in front of him, revealing colorful tattoos and blue polished fingernails. "And 'Gods of Rock N Roll' was still in the charts while I was writing these new songs. Before I knew it, I had written enough for another record, so I figured while I was having fun, I might as well start recording it."

Morrison's eclectic guitar style and aesthetic are partially rooted in the U.K. punk

and old-school glam he grew up on, which explains the abundance of Sex Pistols and David Bowie nods. The other main inspirations on Hollow are late-Nineties and early-2000s alternative rock. There's a reason for that.

"I was a heroin addict for 15 years, and I only woke up in the early 1990s," Morrison says. "So, everything between the late-Seventies and mid-Nineties was just a blank. It didn't seep in. I caught up to it later, but what really stayed in my blood is drop-D Seattle music, [*industrial*] stuff like Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson, and pop-punk stuff like Blink-182 and the Offspring. That's the kind of thing that gets me excited, and it's pretty different from what I'm doing with Billy, so neither gig ever gets boring."

In a revealing interview, Morrison talked about how he created *Hollow*, his escape from near-terminal addiction, his friendship with Ozzy and the gear and goals he has as Steve Stevens' wingman.

Did you write songs for *Hollow* with particular vocalists in mind?
No, that came later. I'd get two-thirds through writing a song before I figured out who I wanted to sing on it. "The Tailor" had an industrial feel with heavy guitars and electronics, and I went, 'I've got to text Marilyn Manson.' I wrote "Never Gonna Change" in about four minutes. It's a pop-punk song with four chords and I could hear Dexter Holland singing on it, so I texted him. It was like that for everything I didn't sing on.

You combine your influences in creative ways. "Take Me As I Am" sounds like a hybrid of Soundgarden and Oasis.
I'll take it. I'm proud of my influences, but I never said, "Okay, I'm going to rip this off." What you hear is what comes out naturally when I pick up a guitar. It might be a drop-D riff or a jangly open-chord thing. But then, maybe I'll add another guitar or put some EDM samples on top, and if it fits my limited vocal range, I'll sing on it. If it doesn't, I'll call one of my rock-star buddies.

Do different songs demand specific playing techniques?
When it comes to rhythm, I learned everything I know from Steve Jones. If it works, it's good, whatever label you put on it. And you know, the Sex Pistols only wrote 12 songs 50 years ago, but every one of them has a chorus to die for. That band played with anger and venom, which put them in what became the punk genre, but those are pop songs, and they're all about huge choruses, which are what I go for.

***Hollow* moves through a whole range of different emotions.**
There are peaks and valleys because life's like that. Look at [*David Bowie's* The Rise and Fall of] *Ziggy Stardust* [and the Spiders from Mars]. That album is a journey through his mind. I want *Hollow* to be a journey through different areas of my brain, and that includes some energetic stuff and some very dark things.

Do you use different gear for each musical style?
It depends on what I'm going for. Let's say you have a riff that goes G-D-A. You can play that Noel Gallagher style with open chords. For that, I'd probably go to my Marshall JCM2000, which was modified by Dave Friedman and sounds nothing like a JCM2000. I'd play that on my signature Knaggs [*double-cutaway solid body*] with P90s on the bridge. Then I'd go to my Friedman [*BE-100 Deluxe*] head with a Les Paul, and play fifth-fret and seventh-fret power chords and layer left and right. I'm a huge fan of playing the exact same thing twice, so you have four tracks shaping the sound.

To make the sound thicker?
There's that, but also, you want to play it twice because you physically can't play it exactly the same way, so it's more organic. Sometimes, I'll pan the takes at 10 and 2, then do another pair of tracks with a different rhythmic technique hard left and hard right.

You play all the leads — except two — which suggests you've overcome the insecurities you used to have about soloing.
I'm going to be as honest as I can without being narcissistic. I don't feel insecure anymore. I definitely wouldn't try something like "Eruption." I know who I am as a player and who I am not, and on the songs I played lead, I totally enjoyed pushing myself to make them as good as they could be.

You prioritize melody over speed.
I don't care about playing fast. I'm more concerned about having the right notes and the right space between them. Some of the greatest solos to me are things I can hum.

Are you schooled in the seven diatonic modes?
No, I haven't got a clue. I tried, but... it wasn't for me. And you know what? I probably do play them. Clearly, someone could dissect my solos and say, "He was in Dorian, then he went to Mixolydian," but I'm playing with my ears. I have no idea what to call what I do.

"I know who I am as a player and who I am not, and when I play lead, I enjoy pushing myself"

Why did you invite Nuno Bettencourt to play on "Becoming"?
When I first heard Nuno's playing it felt like someone raising the stakes of the game. And Sully and Nuno are both from Boston, and they're friends. When I was working with Sully, a lightbulb went off. Nuno was in town doing a charity gig, and we bum-rushed him in the dressing room and asked him to do it, and he said sure because, you know, you don't want to say no to your friends. It was only later he said, "I didn't even think about what I would have done if the song sucked."

Steve Stevens plays lead on "Another Day."
I didn't even have to think about that one. I love my brother, and if I'm making a record, he needs to be on it.

Why did Steve suggest you to Billy as rhythm guitarist in 2010?
They decided it was time to be a two-guitar band. The two of them wrote "Rebel Yell," "White Wedding" and "Eyes Without a Face." They were like Mick and Keith for a long time. I'm nothing compared to them. I'm fortunate they asked me to play with them — and they didn't say no. Once you have us being a twin-guitar band, we need to play off one another. You can't do that if you're both playing Les Paul-style guitars. You just sound the same. And we're both using Friedman amps, so that's where my signature guitar with Knaggs came in.

Your Knaggs Keya B-M is your primary guitar with Billy Idol. Was it your go-to for *Hollow*?
It's a nod of the hat to Steve Jones, who played a white Custom that was so nicotine-stained from the clubs it was off-white. We called the color "nico-cream," and it has a thick neck profile. Most Les Paul Juniors are really skinny, so you don't get all of the tone from it. I've got big, fat fingers, so I asked for a thicker neck more like a Les Paul, but with Fralin Noiseless P90s. So Steve's on humbuckers and I'm on P90s, and they sound great together.

What made you decide to kick drugs?
I had a moment of clarity. It was an acute realization that I was going to die. I was homeless, living under a piece of corrugated iron propped up on someone's fence. I was shooting in my neck. My body had abscesses and was going septic and shutting down. But it wasn't the thought I was going to die that really affected me, it was the thought I would have done nothing with my life and no one would care. That was the kicker. That's

JANE STUART @JANESTUARTPHOTOS

when I started turning things around, and it was hard. I was a nasty person when I was using. You have to be if you're homeless with a $500-a-day habit. I've been clean for 30 years, and I would hope most people would say I'm not a nasty person.

When you finally kicked drugs, was music your salvation?
Yeah, but I had a lot to catch up on. I felt like I'd been missing for 15 years, which I had been. So, I really got into music again, but I also had to go back and discover what had happened while I was gone. It's funny because I was actually in L.A. during that time and there was all this music happening. I always say I couldn't even get that right. All these other musicians formed a band, got a couple of gold records and then shot heroin. I went straight to shooting heroin. I didn't even get to the "form a band, make the records" part.

The Morrison Project included two co-writes with Ozzy. Was there ever talk of collaborating again on *Hollow*?
No, we did it — twice. So even when he was alive, there was no talk of him being on the record. I got to have my moment with my best friend. That's it. Done.

Back to the Beginning was an incredible tribute to Ozzy. Did you know how ill he was?
Everyone with a heart was crying the day of that show. Obviously, his health had been declining and I had been witness to that. I had seen him in more than one hospital with tubes attached. I visited him coming out of surgery. But you know, you don't go there in your head. Ozzy was so strong and overcame so much. He would text me: I'm in pain. This thing, it's getting me down. I would just say: You're the strongest man I know. So, I expected him to overcome everything like he's Superman because, to me, that's who Ozzy Osbourne was. So I don't know whether it was expected, but I wasn't ready. The hardest day I've ever been through was delivering a eulogy at his funeral.

What made him your best friend?
Humor bonded us. Sharon would say we were like two 11-year-olds. It was difficult taking us to the same dinner because we'd be giggling, making inappropriate jokes and laughing at things no one even vaguely understood. We'd be shuddering with tears of laughter, so we couldn't speak. We understood each other in situations where, perhaps, other people didn't understand us. There were huge life events for both of us where one helped get the other one through. We had a connection. I miss him. GW



Jules Skiffington [*left*] and Jake Regulbuto

CAM CAVAGNARO

Gollylagging

The sometimes katana-wielding band on their new album, *Real Life*

BY GREGORY ADAMS

TEAM SPIRIT AND eclectic songcraft are what got indie-rockers Gollylagging through the making of their debut album, *Real Life*.

Guitarist-vocalist Jake Regulbuto had been the Boston-based quartet's driving force since their formation in 2020 — propelling them through a pair of expertly fuzz-pocked EPs — but he admits he faced a year-long writer's block on the path toward the new full-length. That artistic drought lined up with the lyrical themes he'd been contemplating, about getting stuck in patterns and feeling "powerless to change."

Around that same time, though, co-guitarist Jules Skiffington was experiencing a feverish burst of creativity away from the band. He actually recruited Regulbuto and Gollylagging drummer Andrew Garas to work on a clutch of songs he'd intended for an offshoot project. Then they collectively realized it would be a hell of a lot easier to funnel their talents into a single outlet.

"Part of finishing this album was hanging out with Jules and being like, 'I've got this idea... I just need help to get it finished,'" Regulbuto says. Skiffington is comically blunt about the long-awaited collab; "I was like, 'Yo, dude, I'm sick of not making songs. Why don't I just write some shit?'"

The two songwriters brought five songs a piece to *Real Life*, which bounces from Big Muffed guitar harmonizing ("Giant"), toward strum-centric and fiddle-assisted alt-country ("Real Life"), toward songs that merge watery shoegaze vibes with trunk-rattling lo-fi hip-hop production ("Scarecrow"). While both players cranked up a Peavey Bandit at Boston's Record Co. studio, Skiffington also delivers plugin-powered performances he'd cooked up at home.

Both guitarists went unplugged for their recent "Jacknife" music video. While the clip mostly finds Regulbuto and Skiffington battling each other in a public park while brandishing katanas and plastic pistols, they also trade a few licks on a high-tension acoustic — though Skiffington's lead is easier to bend on his capo'd Tele Deluxe.

There are no musical instruments to be found in their follow-up video for "Comet," where filmmakers captured the band grilling burgers and playing kickball with friends at a local field. They didn't even set the mood by blasting the crunchy slacker anthem on a Bluetooth speaker — the other park-dwellers already provided the perfect soundtrack for the day. "They were listening to old soul music, which I really like," Regulbuto says. "I was telling everybody, 'Don't even take the speakers out.'"

"It was Father's Day, and there were so many cookouts bleeding into each other," Skiffington says of the community-building, slice of *Life* moment. Though the group didn't serve up any Gollylagging material, neighborhood kids wandered over to snack on their burgers. GW



Revolving Doors

Shortly before his death, Steve Cropper revisited the rumor that the Beatles almost tracked *Revolver* in Memphis with the Stax band. *GW* met Cropper's friend and fellow sessioner, Scott Ward, to sort fact from fiction

BY **ANDREW DALY**

IT'S NO SECRET that the Beatles considered recording their landmark 1966 album, *Revolver*, at the Stax Records studio in Memphis. This would've been a major deviation from their established pattern of recording at EMI in London, the studio that was later dubbed Abbey Road.

In 2022, Paul McCartney looked back on this topic via a Q&A on his website, saying, "It could have been – the only reason you want to record in those kinds of studios is because you love the records that come out of the studios. So we loved a lot of Stax stuff, but ultimately, I'm glad we didn't record there. EMI was our home, and we didn't have to deal with anything other than making the record. If you're in a strange studio, there's things you've got to deal with, as you're getting used to the new surroundings and so on. At EMI we knew the space and the people, so it was just a case of concentrating on making the record."

What McCartney didn't elaborate on is – assuming *Revolver* had been recorded at Stax – whether or not Stax house-band guitarist Steve Cropper would've been involved. Or, for that matter, any member of the Stax house band, which also included multi-instrumentalist Booker T. Jones, bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn and drummer Al Jackson Jr., among others. While Cropper, who died in late 2025, is no longer here to discuss this, his good friend and fellow session guitarist, Scott Ward, is.

"I'm sure Steve would've made *Revolver* more guitar-oriented," Ward says. "He felt he probably would've pushed for adding a lot of Hammond B3 and horn parts. I think he thought he could've done a really good job with it. Maybe not better – just different."

Cropper had many conversations with Ward over the course of their decades-long friendship, having met him at a guitar show in 1993. Like most of us, Ward marveled at Cropper's mile-long discography and meat-and-potatoes-driven skillset. "Steve's philosophy about playing guitar was shared by many legendary session musicians," Ward says. "Sometimes, less is more."

If Cropper had played on *Revolver*, which surely also would have featured the six-string talents of John Lennon, George Harrison and Paul McCartney, this "less is more" theosophy could have served him well.

"Steve felt it's the musician's job to make the vocalist sound good," Ward says. "He plugged straight into his amp, and [*his*] sound came from his hands. I told Steve that when I saw him in *The Blues Brothers* [*1980*] – that scene at Bob's Country Bunker where the Blues Brothers Band was playing – his solo on that rosewood Tele was like nothing I'd ever heard." The sound Ward is thinking of is a distinctive tone that defined records by Otis Redding, Booker T. & the M.G.'s, Wilson Pickett and – in another universe, anyway – the Beatles.

"I'm sure the Beatles held Steve in high esteem. How could they not?"
SCOTT WARD


Steve Cropper in New York City, January 21, 1967

"That tone inspired so many people to pick up the guitar," Ward says. "Steve liked to joke around. He talked about pedals and how players liked to use all this 'footwear.' [*Laughs*] He just kept it simple. He was humble and giving. I can see why the Beatles admired him."

As I understand it, Steve recounted the backstory of his potentially appearing on *Revolver*.

When I was at Steve's home in Nashville in January 2024, he was in a storytelling mood. He had mentioned the *Revolver* story years earlier, but on this day, he told me many stories, like how *Revolver* was supposed to have been recorded at Stax.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, BLUEEE/ALAMY

Did he theorize on why it wasn't — or why he didn't play on it?
He simply didn't have time to do it. He was busy producing so many artists. He also told me that he eventually left Stax, moved to L.A. and played on John and Ringo's solo albums [*Lennon's* Rock 'n' Roll *(1975) and Starr's* Ringo *(1973) and* Goodnight Vienna *(1974)*]. One day, I was listening to Ringo's 1975 greatest-hits album, *Blast from Your Past*, and Ringo's cover of the Platters' "Only You" came on. I knew instantly that it was Steve on electric guitar.

Did Steve discuss how he might've handled the guitar parts on *Revolver*?
He said he would've done things a lot differently, so I know it would have been completely different. The tracks I remember from the album had a heavy Ravi Shankar influence. He said that if he'd played on the album, his parts would've added a classic R&B and blues sound to the tracks. Steve was fond of Paul McCartney. He told me he was in the studio with him when Wings' *Band on the Run* was being mixed in 1973.

It's interesting to consider how "Taxman," "Tomorrow Never Knows" or "Doctor Robert" might've sounded had they had Steve's involvement.
"Taxman" would have sounded pretty much the same, but I don't think "Tomorrow Never Knows" would have sounded anything like how it turned out — especially with the use of the sitar, feedback, Mellotron and sound effects. When I first heard that song, it was like nothing I'd ever heard because there were so many things going on. The drums seemed distant. I was blown away, and at that time I hadn't even started playing guitar — and I sure didn't know what a sitar was. I don't think "Doctor Robert" would have been much different because it's a pretty much straight-ahead rock 'n' roll guitar.

Given that the Beatles had three distinctive guitarists in John, George and Paul, how do you think Steve could've fit in?
It would've been interesting! I know Steve was proud of his work on John and Ringo's records. In the end, sometimes he didn't care if he got paid — he just wanted to work with them. [*Ed.'s note: For the purest example of Cropper's work with a former Beatle, check out Starr's 1973 version of "Step Lightly."*]

What do you think the Beatles liked about Steve's playing?
I think about Steve pretty much every day. I listen to his recent recordings and they're amazing. I'm sure the Beatles also looked up to him and held him in high esteem. How could they not? GW



Animeros guitarist Mauro Lopez in action

The Animeros

The Austin trio's widescreen Latin grooves have already caught Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye. Could Quentin Tarantino be next?

BY HENRY YATES

EVERYTHING ABOUT THE Animeros seems to come straight from the movies. Take the Austin trio's cinematic debut album, *¡Qué Bárbaro!*, whose splice of Latin rhythms with soul, funk psychedelia — and beyond — just needs a Tarantino movie to soundtrack. "We're here, Quentin," guitarist Mauro Lopez says. "Hit us up!"

Then there's the Hollywood-worthy story of how they came to record it for Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye Sound label. "We got together for the second time as the Animeros to play South by Southwest," Lopez says. "It was, like, a 30-minute unofficial showcase on a hotel roof patio. Like the Beatles playing on the Apple rooftop, I guess. [Laughs] A week later, our bassist gets an email; Dan saw us play. He came into town and we had breakfast. What shocked us all was his knowledge about Latin music. He's like, 'Hey, do you want to come to Nashville and record?'"

Just as fantastical, Lopez was invited to bolster his workhorse Telecaster Vintera '60s and Cry Baby with the Black Keys man's trove of rare guitars, amps and pedals. "I can't remember the models, but he'd be like, 'Hold on, let me grab this one' and put, like, a vintage Danelectro in my hands. 'What do you think?' He just had an ear for it."

"The rhythm is contagious... You can't help but move"

If their rise sounds almost annoyingly easy, be assured that Lopez, Nicolas Sánchez (bass) and Nick Tozzo (drums/percussion) have individually paid their dues, grinding out a decade-plus on the Austin circuit. But it's as the Animeros that something has clicked, with the trio's melting-pot style meeting their gift for painting vivid pictures.

"With instrumental music, it's like, 'How do you tell a story without words?'" Lopez says. "We might be writing a song and realize it feels like driving through the West Texas desert at night looking for UFOs, or a Tarantino fight scene. Our favorite one is from *Kill Bill*, with Uma Thurman and Lucy Liu in the snow. It starts off with these claps and you just know something's going down."

But as the affable guitarist reminds us, the Animeros are here to make us dance, not fight. "There's enough bad things going on in the world, man. When people hear this music, you forget all that. Something about the rhythm is contagious. You can't help but move." GW

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Boston, backstage in Providence, Rhode Island, October 7, 1976; [*from left*] Brad Delp, Tom Scholz, Sib Hashian, Fran Sheehan and Barry Goudreau

PERSONALITIES

Boston Marathon

Barry Goudreau boarded a rocket ship in the mid-Seventies with AOR giants Boston. Now, he shares the full 50-year odyssey, from the battle to get signed, through his fiery "Long Time" solo, to the rivalry with Tom Scholz that blew up the band

BY ANDREW DALY

BARRY GOUDREAU, WHO founded Boston with Tom Scholz and Brad Delp, admits that while he'd been playing guitar since he was a kid, he didn't come into his own as a player until after Boston's 1976 self-titled debut album. This is interesting, considering Goudreau is credited as playing on only two songs from *Boston* — "Foreplay/Long Time," on which he handled all of the electric rhythm guitars and one totally rippin' solo, and "Let Me Take You Home Tonight."

Then again, Goudreau had taken part in the early demo process, and if it were up to him, he would've played on the entire record. But Scholz, a tinkering perfectionist locked away in his home studio, had a vision. And to his credit, Goudreau set aside his ego and believed in that vision.

"I had a whole lot of confidence in it," Goudreau says today.

The "it" in question is the aforementioned record, *Boston*. The album, which went on to go 17 times platinum in the U.S. alone and features FM radio staples like "More Than a Feeling," "Peace of Mind" and "Foreplay/Long Time," reads more like a greatest-hits collection than a debut LP. Which is why it's shocking to be reminded that pretty much every record label rejected Boston.

"It was very exciting," Goudreau says. "But the fact that labels were still turning it down made absolutely no sense to us. Labels are always looking for what's happening at the time, and what they were looking for was different from Boston, so they wouldn't go for it. Of course, once Boston was signed, they were looking for the next Boston." [*Laughs*]

Once Epic Records released the band's debut in 1976, everything changed. Boston — along with Toto, Styx and Journey — made AOR (album-oriented rock) the flavor of the moment, catapulting the band to the top of the charts.

Goudreau admits to being disappointed that he wasn't allowed to play more on the album, but he takes pride in the fact that he, along with Scholz, vocalist Delp, bassist Fran Sheehan and drummer Sib Hashian, delivered the studio-trickery-filled songs to perfection live. Goudreau also plays on about half of the band's 1978 effort, *Don't Look Back*.

Still, in retrospect, Goudreau hasn't been given his due. Yes, Scholz deserves the lion's share of the credit for his songwriting, guitar playing and production. But Goudreau was — and is — a badass guitarist, and one whose late-Sixties 100-watt Marshall amp and wah pedal would help define Boston's iconic guitar sound. This is why, when Goudreau went solo during Boston's early Eighties hiatus, Epic launched a campaign that pissed off Scholz and got Goudreau kicked out of Boston.

"The fly in the ointment, so to speak, was the first ad campaign the record label put out," Goudreau says. "It was a picture of me, and it said, 'Six million people have heard the

RON POWNALL/GETTY IMAGES



Scholz [*left*] and Goudreau do their thing in New York City in 1977

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

sound of his guitar. Let us introduce you to him.' I took that as, 'Here's the other guy in Boston that you don't know about.' Tom took it as, 'Here's the guy behind Boston.' He had a real problem with that. It's what brought the whole thing down."

This, along with a ton of legal problems between Goudreau and Scholz that cropped up after Delp's 2007 suicide, means that in 2026, there hasn't been — and won't be — a 50-year celebration in support of one of the greatest rock records of all time. Not one that includes Barry Goudreau, at least. But that's not the worst of it for Goudreau, who remained close with Delp until the end.

"For anybody who has a friend who has committed suicide, there's a certain feeling of guilt," he says. "You know, for not realizing what was going on. You think, 'If I had known, I would have been able to do something.' It was really tough. I think he had that in mind for quite some time before he actually went ahead with it. If you listen to the last record we did together, [*2003's*] *Delp and Goudreau*, there's a song called 'What You Leave Behind.' I listen to that now, and it's Brad telling us what's gonna happen."

Despite these extremely sad developments in Goudreau's Boston-related life, at 74, he's put the bad vibes aside and is making music for the love of it and nothing else. Two albums deep with his band, the Engine Room, Goudreau plays regular shows and, of course, celebrates the music of Boston, which he is eternally proud of.

"It was a lot of great years," Goudreau says of his days with Boston. "It allowed me to have a career in music, which is all I ever wanted. I look back, mostly, with good vibes. I wouldn't change anything. I've had a great life."

Q Some of the songs that ended up on *Boston* were initially recorded as demos with you on guitar and Tom on organ, right?

The first original thing I remember was the piece that ended up being "Foreplay" before "Long Time." When Tom and I first met, he was a keyboard player, and he was classically trained. "Foreplay" was something he was playing at the time. Then we went into the studio for the first time and recorded "San Francisco Day," which ended up turning into "Hitch a Ride" on the first Boston record. It was essentially the same song; just the lyrics had changed up. But yes, early on, I was doing some writing, and we recorded a few ideas that I had.

"The Epic executive who first rejected us had the rejection letter framed on the wall in his office"

Q When did it shift toward Tom doing most of the writing?

Everybody knows the story of Tom building his home studio. After that, he started playing more guitar and doing more writing, and his writing really took off quickly. The songs came together pretty fast. So I played a lot of guitar early on, but as Tom got his studio situation together, he played more and more until, at one point, he was playing all of the guitar.

Q Boston was rejected by nearly every record company in the business before Epic signed you guys.

[*Laughs*] I remember at one point, I was driving my Triumph down to New York with Tom, delivering demo tapes to some record labels down there, but we got rejected by everybody. Even Epic, who ended up



Delp [*left*] and Goudreau in Oakland, September 21, 1978

ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

signing us, rejected us. In fact, the executive who first rejected us had the rejection letter framed on the wall in his office. [*Laughs*] It was sort of a lesson for the rest of his staff. But I think the fact that we kept getting rejected gave Tom the motivation to do better, make it better and show them.

Q A big part of Boston's music was the massive guitar sound, which originated from a Marshall amp of yours.

I went to see Cream play here in Boston in 1968. Eric Clapton was playing a red Gibson SG through Marshall stacks. I thought, "I've gotta have that." I was able to buy the SG fairly quickly, but the Marshall took a little longer to afford. I ended up buying a used Marshall 100-watt stack. The first time we set it up, I plugged into the amp, turned it up to around 2 and thought, "That doesn't sound like I expected." [*Laughs*] So I turned it up, like, halfway and said, "It's starting to sound the way I expected now!" Then I turned it up all the way and said, "There it is!" So the next time we got together, Tom showed up with this big black box with a knob on the front of it, and he put it between the head and the speaker. That way, we were able to turn it all the way up and get the sound we were looking for without going deaf. [*Laughs*] I also had a wah pedal, and we put that in front of the amp and were messing around with that. I remember setting it right in the middle setting, where you can see the boost in the mid-range, and Tom took a pencil and put a mark on the pedal so we could set it the same every time. That's really where the sound came from.

Q Is that Marshall the same amp that was used on the first Boston record?

Tom used that on the first record. But when I went in to record my solo for "Long Time," which was on a weekend because Tom still had his day job and would work on the record at night, he'd say, "Come this weekend, and we'll do the solo." Then I'd be all set to go, and Tom would say, "I'm not ready yet. We'll do it next weekend." Then it would be next weekend, and he'd keep putting it off. Finally, I made it into his studio to record, and I was looking forward to playing through my Marshall, but he made me set up through a Fender Champ. [*Laughs*] For "Long Time," it was a Champ through a Marshall distortion pedal. That was the idea, which, obviously, I was a little disappointed about because I didn't get to play through my amp. But it worked out pretty well, and it became one of the more memorable solos on the record.

Q Was the "Long Time" solo done in multiple takes or one pass?

We did the whole thing in one session. I played the rhythm on "Foreplay" during the same session, and all of the electric rhythm guitar on "Long Time." I think maybe we did two or three takes, and then Tom probably did some editing later on. But I had a recording of the song without the lead at home, and I'd been rehearsing it at home. It kept getting put off, and so I just kept putting more work into it. So by the time I went into the studio with Tom, I pretty much had it worked out in my mind with what I wanted to do.

Q You also played guitar on "Let Me Take You Home Tonight," which, unlike most of the record, wasn't recorded in Tom's studio.

We recorded that in California. Tom was in his home studio, and the rest of us were in L.A. with [*producer*] John Boylan. The idea was that the label thought the album was being recorded in California with John Boylan, but actually, Tom was doing it in his basement. [*Laughs*] "Let Me Take You Home Tonight" was one of the songs we recorded in California. I think we recorded three in total, but that was the only one that made it onto the record. Brad wrote that one.

Q What other songs did you record in California?

There was one called "Disco Madness." [*Laughs*] I don't think the third one got to a point where it had a title. I have no idea what happened to those recordings. I hope they don't resurface.

Q The first time you heard finished versions of "More Than a Feeling" and "Peace of Mind," what were your initial thoughts?

I remember going to Tom's house when he was working on the demo recordings and hearing early versions of "Peace of Mind" and "Something About You" for the first time. I was just blown away. His writing skills took off in a big, big way.

Q Given that you didn't get to play on all of the record, along with the sheer

"I saw Cream play in 1968; Eric Clapton was playing a red Gibson SG through Marshall stacks. I thought, 'I've gotta have that!'"

number of overdubs Tom added, was it a challenge to re-create those songs live?
We had done a handful of shows early on, but once the demos got more serious, we turned away from the live thing. Once the record came out, there was immediate pressure for us to get out and start promoting. Of course, we had nothing in place, no [*road*] personnel and no equipment. So, all of a sudden, we're supposed to be in front of crowds delivering this music, which wasn't the easiest thing to do. There was a whole lot of pressure early on, but we did our first tour — a short run through the Midwest — and played some club dates. We started to pull it together.

Q How did things go once Boston started large-scale touring?
We got the gear we needed and some people in place, and we did our first real tour opening for Black Sabbath in the fall of '76. That's when we started fine-tuning the show and getting confident that we could pull it off. A lot of the talk was, "This record is so great, but the band will never be able to reproduce it live," so there was a lot of pressure to do that. The first arena show we played was in Providence, Rhode Island, and Jeff Beck and Joe Perry were there, and Tom and I were huge Jeff Beck fans. We looked out into the audience during the set, and it was Jeff and Joe standing there watching with their arms folded. I was like, "Oh, my God." But after the show, we went and met Jeff. He said, "I wasn't sure you guys were gonna be able to reproduce that record live, but you did. It sounds just like the record." I was just like, "Thank God." [*Laughs*]

Q This raises the question of why Tom didn't let you play more on the record.
Obviously, the way Tom recorded that first record worked out well. When it came to doing the second record, he was looking to do it the same way. As band members, we were hopeful it would be a different situation and we'd have more input, but it didn't turn out that way. Tom was always most comfortable in the studio by himself or with one other person. It was disappointing that I didn't get to play more, but what I did play ended up being pretty memorable. We became the biggest concert draw for three years in a row and were tremendously successful as a live band. I felt like that became my place in the organization.

Q *Boston* is 50 years old in 2026. It's a shame that due to all the legal issues in recent times, you can't be together to celebrate that.
Yeah, that would be great. But Brad is gone, and Sib died from a heart attack [*in 2017*]. That was extremely tough — and so was Brad's death. It was really painful. But looking back on it, 50 years, oh, my God! When we were signed, I was looking months ahead, not years or decades. In fact, the way the royalty system was, we were only paid twice a year. So we wouldn't have made anything from the Boston records until a year after they came out. The label gave us an advance, and I took that advance and bought a car. [*Laughs*] My reasoning was, "If this thing ends next month or next year, at least I'll have the car."

Q Have the negative things that have happened between you and Tom clouded your feelings about Boston?
I look back mostly with fond memories. After Brad's passing, all the people who worked with us, including Boston, played a tribute show. That was actually the last time I played with Boston. I went up and did a song or two. But after Brad's death, there was a lot of controversy and a lot of hard feelings about why he might've committed suicide. That resulted in lawsuits and bad vibes. But, looking back, I'm extremely lucky to have been involved with the band. GW





SHOP OPEN TALK

Maxwell's House of Music

1710 E. 10TH ST. ■ JEFFERSONVILLE ■ INDIANA
MAXWELLSHOUSEOFMUSIC.COM

BY ERIC T. FELDMAN

SOME GUITAR SHOPS are built from the ground up. Others are built over generations. Maxwell's House of Music in Jeffersonville, Indiana, is – proudly – both. When *GW* caught up with owner and namesake Mark Maxwell, it quickly became clear that Maxwell's isn't just a music store – it's a family legacy.

While Mark and his wife, Angie, officially took over the business in 2011, the story began more than 45 years ago when his parents, Marvin and Beverly Maxwell, opened their first music store in 1980. Taking over during one of the toughest economic periods, they started with only 500 square feet of space, limited inventory and a handful of dedicated teachers who believed in their vision.

Today, Maxwell's has grown into one of southern Indiana's premier destinations for musicians. Maxwell is quick to credit the incredible staff who bring passion and expertise to the store every day, along with business partner Whitney McNicol, whose leadership has helped shape the shop into the thriving community highlight it is today. Together, they've built far more than a music store; they've created a welcoming home for musicians of every age and skill level.

We'll let Maxwell take it from here.

How many instruments do you have in the shop right now?
I have about 300 stringed instruments. But that doesn't include the amps, pedals, sound equipment, lights, keyboards and accessories that we carry. Basically, we're a pumped-up guitar store.

What's the coolest guitar in the shop, in your opinion?
That's hard to answer, but we have some amazing custom shop Martins, Gibsons and Fenders. It doesn't suck getting to say that!

What has been your favorite instrument you've ever had in the shop?
A Sixties Fender P-Bass. It sold for about $20K.

What's the most sought-after instrument by customers?
We have a lot of people looking for Martin guitars. Their custom shop guitars are out of this world. We're proud to be the largest – and only – independent dealer for Martin in this region.

What do you think separates a good guitar from a great one?
The individual who's looking at the guitar! I have $200 guitars that play great; I have $10,000 guitars that play great. Beauty – and greatness – is in the eye of the beholder.

MAXWELL'S HOUSE OF MUSIC







What's your biggest pet peeve as someone who runs a guitar shop?
Margins that are set by a manufacturer. Back in the day, it was great — and profitable — to own a music shop. Not these days. It's damn hard. But the reality is, it's all I know how to do!

What do you hope someone feels when they walk into Maxwell's?
I want them to feel comfortable right away. Every person on our team is approachable, friendly and knowledgeable. Playing music can be intimidating if you've never tried it, so we work hard to create a space that feels welcoming, creative and real. Then there's that feeling of "Wow, I just walked into a magical place." This is one of those places where just looking on our website doesn't do it justice. Being in this space is very unique. But more than anything, I want them to walk out thinking, "Yeah, I can do this."

How has your shop played a part in your local music community?
A lot of what happens here goes beyond the storefront. We're constantly reinvesting into the community — through free music education programs, scholarships and connecting musicians with each other — and opportunities — that open doors. We've also worked hard to become a premier guitar and gear destination, which means players can walk in and experience high-level instruments and gear that you don't typically find anywhere. That combination — top-tier guitars alongside real community impact — is a big part of what makes this place unique.

Tell us more...
I've always believed a music store should do more than sell gear — it should create musicians. In fact, that's our motto — We Create Musicians! That's shaped everything we do. Through lessons, community programs and our nonprofit work with the Max Music Well Foundation, we've tried to make music more accessible and more human. We see beginners gain confidence, experienced players find community, and people of all ages realize they're capable of more than they thought. That ripple effect has been one of the most meaningful parts of this journey.

What's the strangest request you've had from a customer?
In the mid-Nineties, a guy came in with a brand-new Tickle Me Elmo. That toy had just come out, and they weren't easy to find around here. He wanted to trade it for a guitar because he knew my kid would want it. I knew that too, so I made the trade!

"I believe a music store should do more than sell gear — it should create musicians"

What's the one piece of gear every player should have?
An electronic tuner. There's nothing worse than an out-of-tune guitar!

What's the best advice for someone looking to buy their next guitar?
The next guitar is always the best guitar. Let's face it, there are much more serious addictions than buying more guitars.

Finally, what's the best part of owning a guitar shop?
It feels like Christmas morning every day when UPS arrives. I love opening those guitar boxes. Trades are a lot of fun, too, because those instruments bring history and so many stories. GW

Eric T. Feldman is the owner of guitarshoptees.com.

THE GEAR HUNTER

Ovation Guitars

Acoustic guitars being manufactured in a helicopter factory might sound a little far-fetched, but that's exactly how Ovation got started. This is the story behind one of the most radical design overhauls in the history of guitar making

BY AMIT SHARMA

IT'S ALL WELL and good redefining how electric guitars are built, and in turn how they look, but when you try applying that same level of experimentation to the world of acoustic guitars, you're guaranteed to ruffle some feathers. Nobody knows this better than Ovation, the New Hartford, Connecticut, company that launched in the mid-Sixties using a composite synthetic bowl instead of the usual wooden back and sides. It was a brave move, given how they chose to leave tradition behind in search of something more robust and sonically dependable. Their guitars certainly made an impact upon arrival and would ultimately end up in the hands of household names like Bob Marley, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ace Frehley, David Gilmour, Brian May and Cat Stevens.

Six decades later, they're still doing good business, using the same patented omni-directional silicone fiber and resin composite material, known as Lyrachord. It was developed by founder Charles Kaman, the aeronautical engineer who launched helicopter company Kaman Aircraft in 1945. As fate would have it, he also happened to be a guitar aficionado and would end up leaning on his scientific skills and qualifications in a completely different way. This is one of many things that makes the story of Ovation all the more unusual, helping the company stand out as one of the most recognizable and storied brands in acoustic-guitar production. Rick Hall, CEO of GEWA Music USA, has been there through thick and thin.



An Ovation Standard Elite photographed in 2012

SIMON LEES

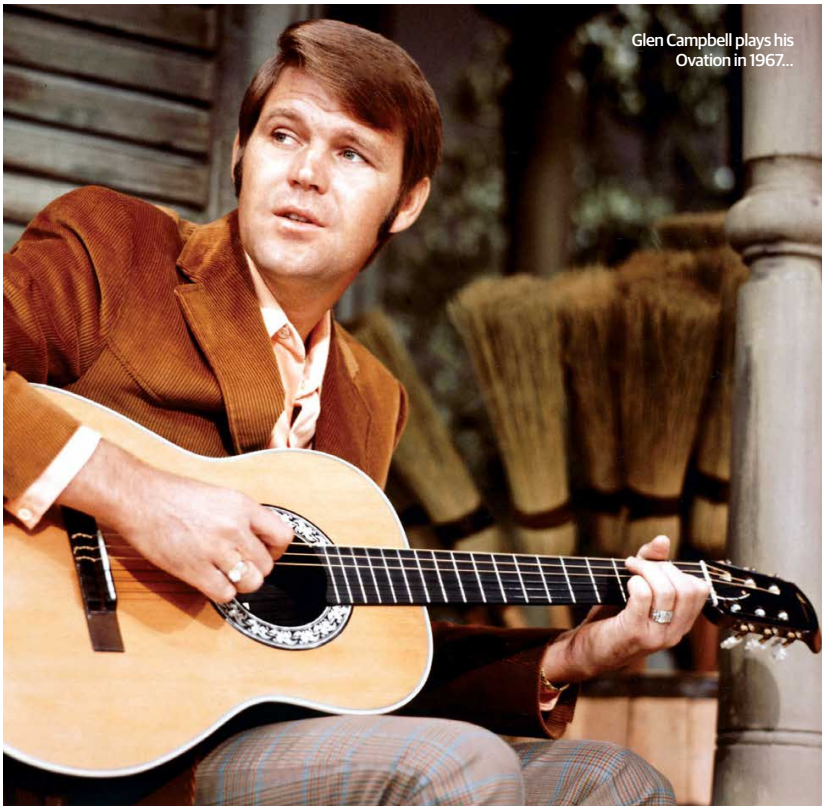
What did Ovation set out to achieve in the beginning?

I'm sort of an "Ovation O.G." after all these years, having been with the company through all the ownerships. At this point, I'm the last guy standing that's had all the lineage. It all evolved out of the Kaman helicopter company. We were right there in the same property. They were flying prototype helicopters right over our heads, and somehow that evolved into guitars. When you think about it, it makes sense. Charles used to say, "When you build a helicopter, it's all about dampening vibration – and you do the opposite with a guitar. It's all about enhancing vibration." Charles had incredible foresight. He was looking at buying a Martin and then decided to make a guitar with his own engineers.

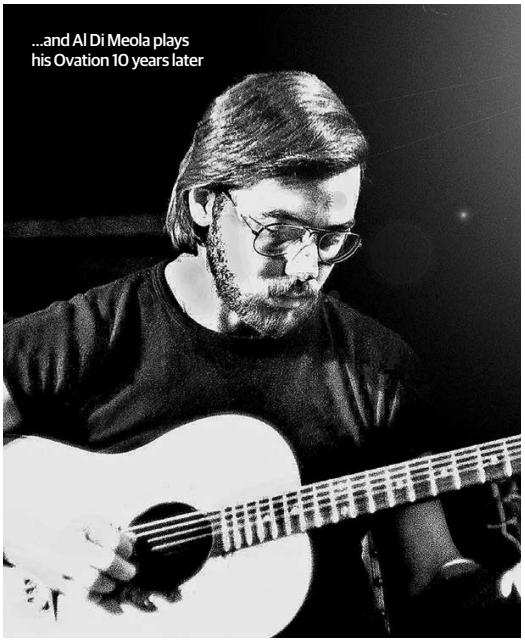
> "If you were going to play an acoustic on stage, you almost had to use an Ovation"

There must've been some interesting feedback when your first model, the Balladeer, was launched.

For that time, it was a weird-looking thing, and there was a high reluctance from dealers. I still have old reports, and nine times out of 10 our salesmen would get told, "We don't want anything that looks like that." We had to find a way around it. Glen Campbell had a TV



Glen Campbell plays his Ovation in 1967...



...and Al Di Meola plays his Ovation 10 years later

"Linda McCartney called the company and wanted to order Paul a birthday present"

show in the late Sixties. Placing our guitars there was great for exposure. Glen didn't want to stand in front of a microphone to play acoustic on stage. That led Ovation to come up with the first successful pickup, the same patented piezo we use today. That's what made Ovation big during the Seventies and Eighties. If you were going to play an acoustic on stage, you almost had to use an Ovation. There was no other choice. Fishman and L.R. Baggs weren't around then; they came later.

Tell me more about Lyrachord.

There was a fiberglass cloth that was being used to wrap helicopter blades in. I guess it does sound strange; how can a cloth be hard? But it was mixed with a certain type of aeronautical resin used on the blades. When it was all cured up, it made a lightweight and strong back for a guitar, which is where the sound gets projected. Lyrachord doesn't break and is impervious to most climate changes. Traditional acoustics tend to be fragile. Woods like spruce, cedar and rosewood move at different rates with humidity or temperature changes. They can work against each other, twist or bend or crack. Along the way, Charles learned how to make his guitars project better sonically with a consistent response.

In the late Sixties, Ovation moved into electric guitars.

There have been a few different eras. The first ones came through the Hurricane series; they were semi-hollows like an ES-335. It got a little bit spread out, because we were making amps, PA systems and microphones. We got a little too complex and ended up deciding to refocus as pioneers of the electro-acoustic. The next phase saw solid-body guitars like the Breadwinner and Deacon. These instruments had a good life. Then there was a series of Korean-made Strat-style solid-bodies in the Eighties.

[*below left*] An Ovation Glen Campbell signature model photographed in 2017 and [*right*] an Ovation EA68 Viper photographed in 2009



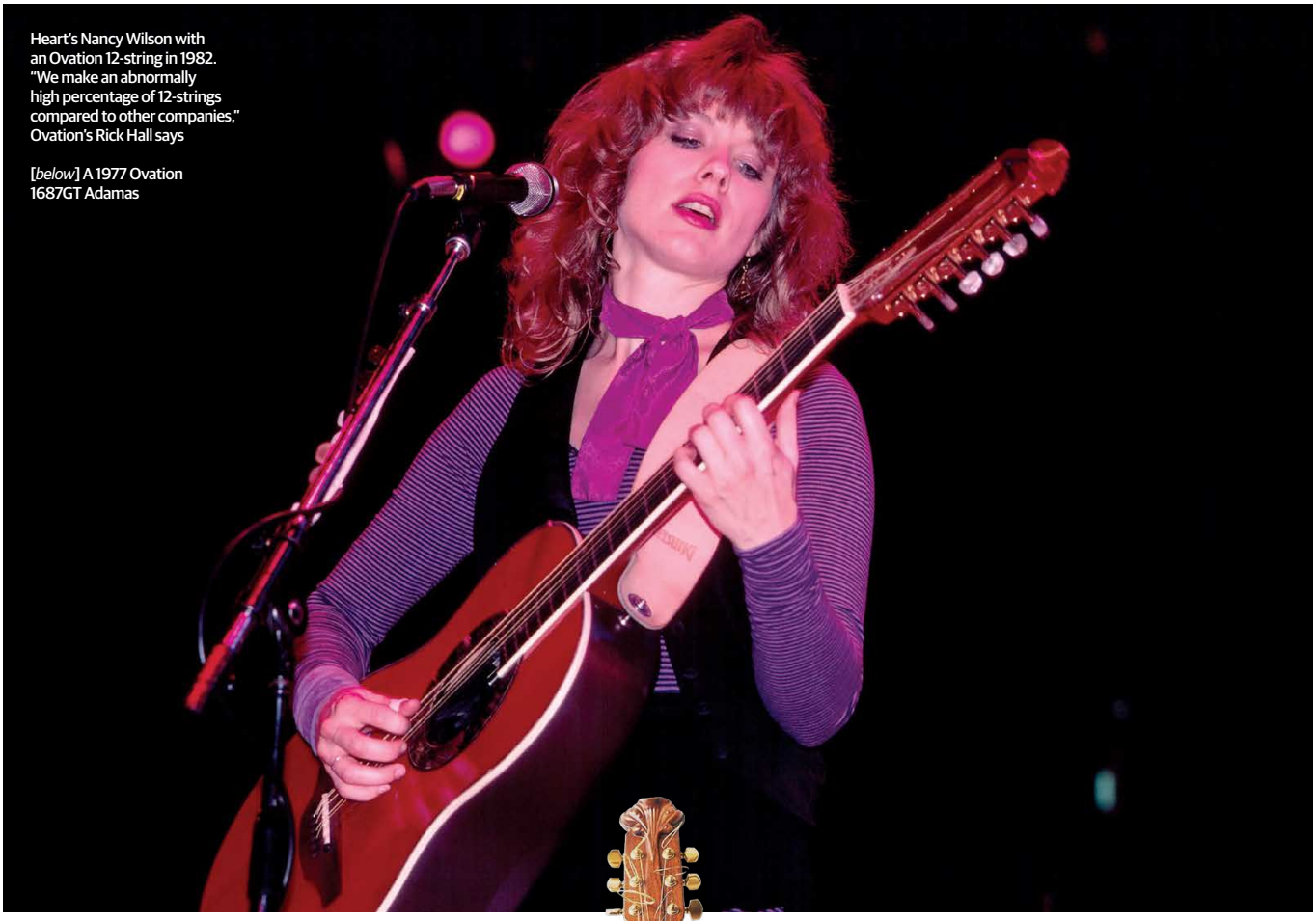
What have been the best-sellers, and why?

One of the top three models is our Custom Legend, a dressed-up version of our Legend. At one point, Linda McCartney called the company and wanted to order Paul a birthday present. She asked for abalone and other upgrades, and that's what became our Custom Legend. It was originally made for a Beatle! That ended up evolving into the Al Di Meola model. Believe it or not, 12-string guitars have become a big deal for us. We make an abnormally high percentage of 12-strings compared to other companies. For most brands, that would be only 5 percent of production. We've had icons like Freddie Mercury and Brian May playing our 12-strings. You can see one in *Bohemian Rhapsody* [*2018*].

What have been some of the biggest challenges over the years?

I've always said Ovation makes guitars you either love – or don't love. You'll either adapt to the looks or you won't. People say our guitars are good for certain things, and I agree. But we do certain things very well. One of the biggest challenges was during the Nineties. I remember seeing this company called Taylor making a bit

SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES, DICK BARNATT/REDFERNS, NEIL GODWIN



Heart's Nancy Wilson with an Ovation 12-string in 1982. "We make an abnormally high percentage of 12-strings compared to other companies," Ovation's Rick Hall says

[*below*] A 1977 Ovation 1687GT Adamas

of noise. I didn't think they'd be much to worry about. I remember talking to Bob Taylor and other people, and they were saying, "Hey, we build acoustics, you guys build electro-acoustics," and it was all cool. Obviously that changed over the years. There was a big trend at the time about wood. Taylor was very influential when it came to educating people about different species and creating acoustic rooms in stores. There was this trend toward the more organic. We were outcasts at that point. It was tough.

That said, the Ovation artist roster over the years speaks for itself. So many names come to mind — Al Di Meola, Yngwie Malmsteen, Mark Knopfler, Paul Simon, John McLaughlin, Steve Lukather, Peter Frampton and Neil Diamond.

Al Di Meola is one of the greatest players of all time. He's told me many times that we need each other, because other guitars don't have that upper-range pop. When you're playing fast, it's almost like a machine gun going off. Then there's the whole experimental approach, with players like Kaki King, who are also embracing that percussive nature. If you dissect how the pickup works, it's not a single element like others. With Ovations, you get these individual little crystals underneath every string that are almost like a mini engine. It creates better string separation; instead of being pressure-sensitive, it's vibration-sensitive.



"In a store, the first thing you notice is the looks. Our guitars always stand out"

There's also been a large number of high-profile female players, including Nancy Wilson, Shania Twain, Shakira and Cyndi Lauper.

I'm always impressed by the number of women contacting us for endorsement. It's great because it's an unproportionally high number of women. I don't know what it is. Maybe it's because we're a little different and have our own identity. When you walk into a store, the first thing you notice is the looks. Our guitars always stand out. It's the one oddball, sitting there looking different from everything else. The guitar you use can become part of your brand.

What can we expect next from the company?

We have some interesting signatures coming out. It's our 60th anniversary as a company and the 50th anniversary of the Adamas. So, you can expect some limited editions of those. We're doing 25 of the older Bob Marley style and 25 of the ND80 modern style with graphite. For the 60th models, 30 will be multi-soundhole and 30 will be single soundhole, paying tribute to the Ovations of old. There's a lot to look forward to! GW

GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES, STEVE CATLIN/REDFERNS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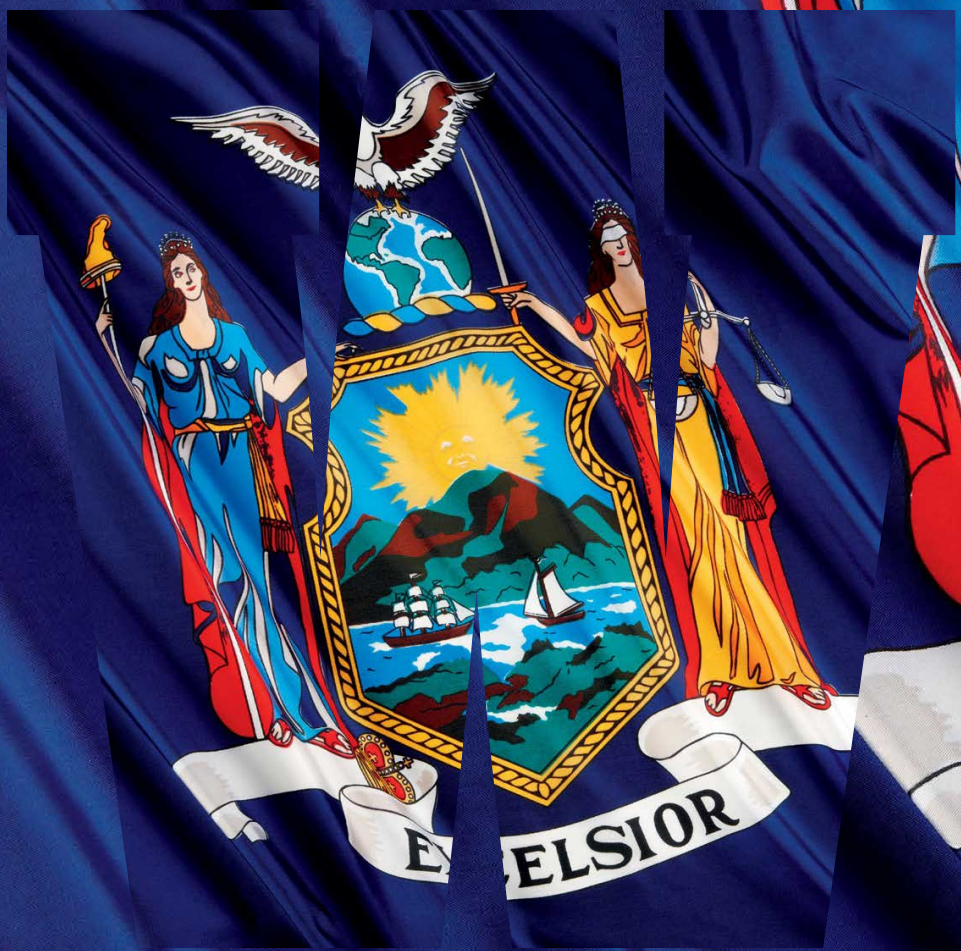
NEW YORK *groove*

Whether they play smooth jazz or scalded metal, New York state's all-time greatest guitarists prove there's something in the water on the East Coast. Here, we salute 33 of the superstars and cult heroes from the music scene that never sleeps

BY JOE BOSSO AND ANDREW DALY



HAVE YOU ever wondered what pot scrubbers and guitar strings have in common? New York state, of course. Constantia, New York, to be more specific — a small town (pop. 4,973) in the northern part of the state in Oswego County (originally part of Albany County back in 1683). It's in Constantia where we find the United Wire Company, which draws wire from all sorts of alloys — copper, brass, silver, bronze, nickel and more. As told to the company supplies wire for 80 percent of the U.S. guitar market. Oh, and they make the wire used for pot scrubbers, too.

We highlight Constantia for the simple fact that it's so easy to focus on New York City, which, in terms of guitar culture, is something akin to Mecca. Back in the 1950s and Sixties, if a guitarist wasn't working in Los Angeles or Nashville, he was no doubt playing sessions in New York City, which boasted a number of top recording studios as well as the Brill Building — home to hundreds of publishers, songwriters and producers who churned out hits by the score.

Beyond those Midtown studio sessions, Manhattan was a breeding ground for historic subcultures that fanned out into the mainstream. Greenwich Village coffeehouses fueled the early-'60s folk revival. A decade later, down on the Bowery, raw power chords exploded in punk rock at CBGB. By the end of the Seventies, downtown's No Wave scene transformed the guitar into an engine for noise and avant-garde

Manhattan likes to [illegible] its cultural weight around, but the [illegible] the Empire State has some fierce [illegible] arts, especially when it comes to [illegible] number of notable native [illegible] as you can see from the [illegible] they're a diverse lot – jazz [illegible] gonzo shredders, punk [illegible] indie-rock adventure seekers. In [illegible] unique and gloriously [illegible] how the [illegible] of the guitar – much like the strings drawn in Constantia – is part of New York's bedrock.

JOE BONAMASSA

Utica, New York, might not strike many as the center of the blues universe, but it's where Joe Bonamassa's journey began. Exposed to the genre at a young age by his father, a respected guitar dealer, Bonamassa absorbed the fiery tones of British blues icons like Eric Clapton, Peter Green and Jeff Beck. At age 11, he was mentored by jazz guitarist Jerry Jemmott and Danny Gatton, and a year later, "Smokin' Joe" Bonamassa was opening for B.B. King.

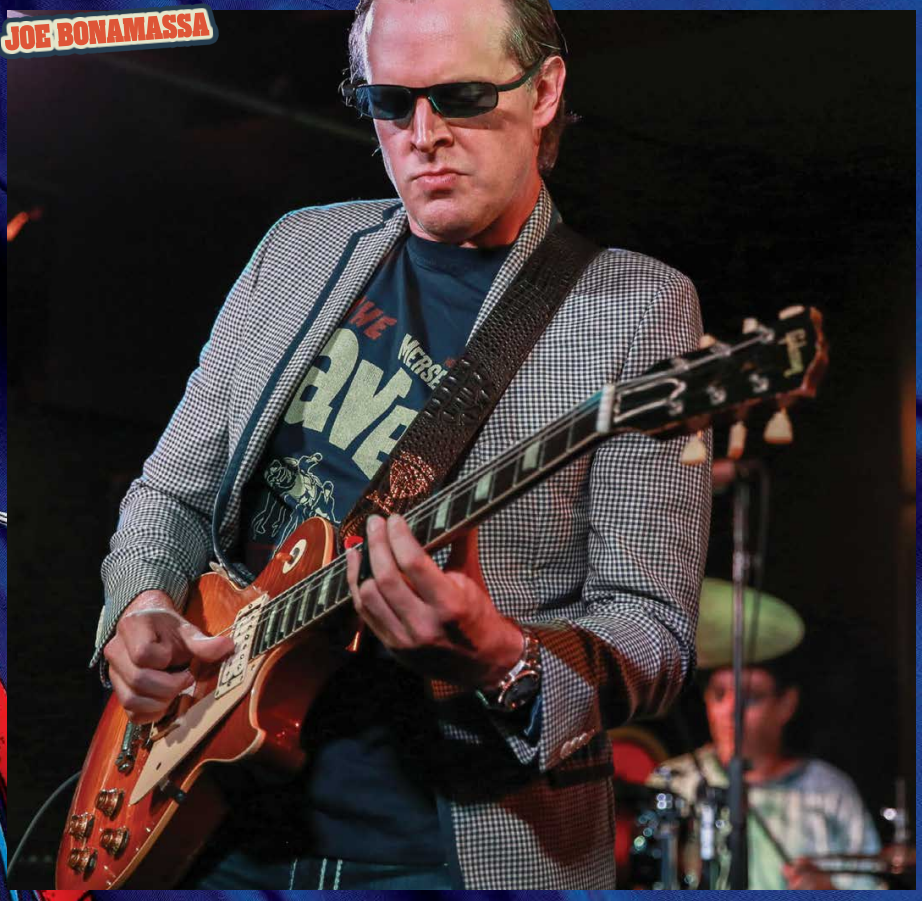
After a mid-Nineties stint in the supergroup Bloodline, Bonamassa launched his solo career with 2000's *A New Day Yesterday*. Since then, he's been unstoppable. His prodigious guitar skills – a forceful blend of Brit-blues breaker grit and Al Di Meola-like technical precision – captivated core six-string fans, while albums like *Blues Deluxe* (2001), *Sloe Gin* (2007) and *The Ballad of John Henry* (2009) broadened his mainstream appeal.

Today, Bonamassa sells out concerts worldwide, and he's topped *Billboard*'s Blues Albums chart more times than anyone, with his recent tribute *The Spirit of Rory – Live from Cork* marking his 31st Number 1 release. Remarkably, he's built this empire entirely DIY: alongside his long-time manager, Roy Weisman, he issues albums and books tours independently, bypassing traditional labels and agencies.

Bonamassa doesn't live by blues alone. Over the years, he's channeled his love of hard rock in the supergroup Black Country Communion (alongside Glenn Hughes, Jason Bonham and Derek Sherinian) and has explored fusion with Rock Candy Funk Party.

REEVES GABRELS

Born in Staten Island on June 4, 1956, Reeves Gabrels is rightly characterized – according to the oracle that is Wikipedia – as "one of the most daring rock-guitar improvisers since Jimi Hendrix." Revisit his catalog and you'll find the evidence, in a unique style that blends angular art-rock bursts of fury with high-speed shredding and unusual textures, all while not straying too far from the blues.



Gabrels has lent his licks to, shared stages with and occupied the same orbit as such visionaries as David Bowie, Brian Eno and Robert Smith. With Bowie, he played guitar on Tin Machine's two albums, and went on to become the Starman's main six-string squeeze throughout the Nineties and early 2000s.

Then there's the Cure, with whom he became acquainted in 1997 at Bowie's 50th birthday shindig at NYC's Madison Square Garden. That same year, Gabrels guested on the Cure's "Wrong Number," leading to him staying in touch with Smith and join the band in 2012.



He remains there today, and at 70, he enjoys a steady solo career, too.

DUANE EDDY

DID YOU KNOW?
DUANE EDDY SHARES AN UNEXPECTED SONGWRITING CREDIT WITH RAVI SHANKAR. CHECK OUT 1987's "THE TREMBLER"

Few guitarists can lay claim to an entire sound, but Duane Eddy owns a term – twang. As the "King of Twang," his low-end, reverb-drenched guitar defined late-Fifties instrumental rock, influencing everyone from George Harrison and Bruce Springsteen to the Ventures and Brian Setzer.

Born in Corning, New York, Eddy picked up guitar at age five, absorbing country and Western swing. After moving to Arizona, he paired with producer Lee Hazlewood and forged his signature sound on 1957's "Movin' n' Groovin'" – playing heavy, melodic leads on the bass notes of a Gretsch 6120, bending notes dramatically with his Bigsby and running his amp inside a 2,000-gallon water tank for echo.

That cavernous sound exploded on the charts with Eddy's 1958 hit "Rebel-Rouser," and that same year, his debut album, *The 'Twangy' Guitar Will Travel*, reached Number 5 on the Billboard album chart. More hits followed; Eddy twanged up Henry Mancini's theme music for the TV show *Peter Gunn*, and his theme for the 1960 film *Because They're Young* reached Number [illegible]



In 1986, Eddy brought that signature sound to the MTV generation via a Grammy-winning remake of "Peter Gunn" with synth-poppers Art of Noise, which was followed by a stunning self-titled album featuring Harrison and Paul McCartney in 1987. Inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, he continued performing well into his 80s. The King of Twang passed away in 2024 at age 86.

VITO BRATTA

Born in Staten Island on July 1, 1961 – and making his mark with glam-metallers White Lion in the mid-Eighties – Vito Bratta was briefly namechecked by shred fans in the same hallowed breath as Eddie Van Halen. His career could have gone in a wildly different direction; at the start of that decade, Bratta was in the frame for the Ozzy Osbourne band (but sent packing by Sharon when he confessed he only knew the Sabbath material), then eyed as Ace Frehley's replacement in Kiss ("But when they asked me about playing a Les Paul, I immediately knew I wasn't into it").

Formed alongside vocalist Mike Tramp, White Lion's strong start seemed like vindication and heralded some stellar playing (revisit the savage pull-off intro of "Fight to Survive," or the cascading arpeggios of "When the Children Cry" and "Wait," both Top 10 hits). But the band never survived the grunge boom, while a wrist injury later that decade has so far prevented a late-career rebirth for this cult hero.

DID YOU KNOW?
VITO BRATTA PLAYED THE GUITAR SOLO TO WHITE LION'S "ALL YOU NEED IS ROCK 'N' ROLL" ON JIMI HENDRIX'S BLACK STRAT



BRIAN SETZER

Growing up in Massapequa, Long Island, Brian Setzer played brass instruments in school bands, but at age eight he picked up the guitar and became enamored with rock 'n' roll, in particular the hot-rodded licks of Fifties stars Eddie Cochran, Cliff Gallup and Scotty Moore. With his drummer brother, Gary, he formed the art-rock combo the Bloodless Pharaohs, and in 1979 hooked up with school pals Lee Rocker (upright bass) and Slim Jim Phantom (standup drums) as modern rockabilly band the Stray Cats.

The New York clubs turned up their noses, so in the summer of 1980 the trio headed to the U.K, where a rockabilly revival was raging. With Rockpile guitarist Dave Edmunds as their producer, the Stray Cats recorded three slam-dunk singles – "Rock This Town," "Stray Cat Strut" and "Runaway Boys." Returning to the U.S., the group's sound and visual appeal (mile-high pompadours, leather jackets and colorful tats) clicked on MTV, turning Setzer and the Cats into early-Eighties platinum-sellers.

Throughout his career, Setzer has rarely varied from playing Gretsch 6120 hollow bodies through Fender Bassman amps. His virtuosic playing style – one that fuses blues, jazz, swing and country – even caught the ear of Robert Plant, who asked him to appear with his rhythm and blues side project, the Honeydrippers.

When he's not a Stray Cat – the band has had multiple breakups and reunions over the years – Setzer plays solo, notably as the leader of his Grammy-winning big band swing revival outfit, the Brian Setzer Orchestra.

STEVE STEVENS

They might each have hailed from a different mean street – Stevens was born in Brooklyn on May 5, 1959, while Billy Idol perfected his sneer on the London punk scene – but the spark and snark between this transatlantic songwriting duo has sustained since the early Eighties. "Rebel Yell," "Eyes Without a Face," "Flesh for Fantasy" – the duckling-blond singer sold these classic songs, but his wingman's guitar work gave them substance,

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, FUTURE



JASON VIEAUX



LENNY KAYE

Stevens equally adept at crystalline chime and frayed crunch.

While the Idol band remains his most visible gig, Stevens has tested himself as a player too, guesting on sessions with Michael Jackson, Robert Palmer, Michael Monroe and Ric Okasek, dabbling in a solo career and – most notably – rocket-fueling the Grammy-winning theme for 1986's *Top Gun*. German composer Harold Faltermeyer wrote the song, but it's essentially a canvas for the NYC guitarist's fanfare lead work, every note seared into the memory of anyone who came of age in the era.

JASON VIEAUX

Described by NPR as "perhaps the most precise and soulful classical guitarist of his generation," Buffalo native Jason Vieaux began playing nylon-string aged seven and never looked back. While attending the Cleveland Institute of Music, he became the youngest winner – at just 19 – of the Guitar Foundation of America competition.

Since then, he's maintained a busy touring schedule, performing with international orchestras and chamber ensembles, thrilling audiences with his crystalline phrasing, effortless virtuosity and flamboyant showmanship.

Vieaux has released more than a dozen albums – solo and chamber – that encompass everything from Bach and Manuel Ponce to French accordionist Julien Labro and Pat Metheny. He won the 2015 Grammy for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for his album *Play*, a set that included pieces by Andrés Segovia and Duke Ellington, as well as an interpretation of Stanley Myers' "Cavatina," known to audiences as the theme from *The Deer Hunter*. In 2021, he recorded "Four Paths of Light," a solo work dedicated to him by Metheny, for the Missouri-born guitarist's album *Road to the Sun*.

DID YOU KNOW? JASON VIEAUX WAS THE FIRST CLASSICAL MUSICIAN TO PERFORM ON NPR'S TINY DESK CONCERT SERIES

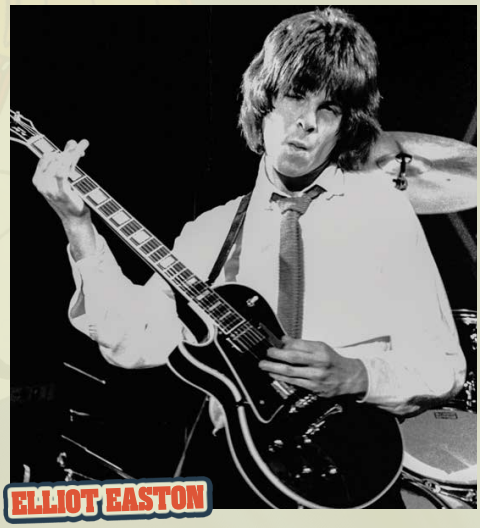
LENNY KAYE

Born on December 27, 1946, Lenny Kaye helped Patti Smith define the art-meets-punk-rock vibe in the Seventies and beyond. Smith's beatnik poetry was beautifully accented by Kaye's six-string garage rock dynamics, leading to classic records like 1976's *Radio Ethiopia*, 1978's *Easter* and 1979's *Wave*.

Beyond the music, Kaye is something of a polymath. He published sci-fi fanzines as a teen, contributed to various music magazines over the years (including *Disc*), edited the men's magazine *Cavalier* and later played a big hand in putting together and releasing the well-loved garage rock retrospective *Nuggets*.

Since his early days on the scene beside Smith, he's released solo music with his band the Lenny Kaye Connection, too. In the Nineties, he hooked back up with Smith, and he later appeared on an R.E.M. track "Alligator Aviator Autopilot Antimatter," and another, "Blue," both from 2011's *Collapse Into Now*. Since then, he has hosted *Underground Garage* on satellite radio and has a solo record, *Goin' Local*, out in 2026.

"I do like to play solos, but it's not going to be a flurry of notes," he told *GW* earlier this year. "I approach them melodically and with a sense of narrative arc, which, of course, ties in with my other hemisphere of the brain as a writer. Just as it is with guitar solos, a well-crafted sentence has rhythm and melody. I'm not going to demonstrate how many notes I can play in a millisecond. I'm going to try to make it sing like a vocalist sings and to compliment how the song understands itself."



ELLIOT EASTON

ELLIOT EASTON

It takes a certain level of nuance and songcraft to perpetually build solos that are as memorable and singable as the songs they inhabit. With the Cars, Elliot Easton, who was born in Brooklyn on December 18, 1953, made a habit of doing exactly that. Cars tracks like "Just What I Needed," "My Best Friend's Girl" and "Magic" are just a few examples of Easton's highly melodic, left-handed six-string wizardry.

Outside of the Cars, Easton made one solo record, 1985's *Change No Change*, and appeared on Cars bandmate Benjamin Orr's solo record, 1986's *The Lace*. And

HIROYUKI ITO/GETTY IMAGES; CHARLIE STEINER - HIGHWAY 67/GETTY IMAGES; GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

let's not forget about the Empty Hearts, his supergroup of (more or less) 10 years ago, and a little something called Elliot Easton's Tiki Gods (chase down "Sir Surfalot" on YouTube).

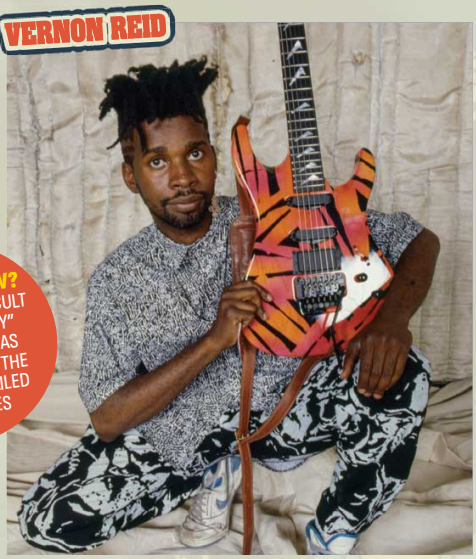
It's a winningly scattershot catalog. But all that other stuff aside, Easton's legacy was cemented the very second the Cars' self-titled debut – which plays more like a greatest-hits album – hit record-store shelves in 1978.

RICHARD LLOYD

If you think post-punk icons Television were solely the brainchild of Tom Verlaine, you'd be wrong. Alongside Verlaine was Richard Lloyd, born in Pittsburgh on October 25, 1951, who was good friends with Velvert Turner, and at one point, rubbed elbows with everyone from Led Zeppelin and Rod Stewart to the Who. Lloyd grew up (and learned to play guitar) in NYC, but it wasn't until he joined Verlaine in Television that things clicked, leading to a relationship that produced timeless music, like 1977's *Marquee Moon* – and a ton of strife, the two guitarists' stunning dovetailed parts belying their fractious relationship.

Lloyd, who was recently diagnosed with cancer, has struggled with bipolar depression and the associated ups and downs all his life. But whatever happens next, his career to date has been prolific, from fabulous solo records like 1979's *Alchemy* to the lending of his licks to Matthew Sweet's *Girlfriend* in 1991.

DID YOU KNOW?
VERNON REID'S "CULT OF PERSONALITY" GUITAR SOLO WAS IMPROVISED ON THE SPOT – AND NAILED IN TWO TAKES



VERNON REID

Like Lloyd, Vernon Reid isn't a native New Yorker, born in London on August 22, 1958. But having moved with his family to Brooklyn in 1959, cut his teeth on the NYC circuit and left an indelible thumbprint on the funk-metal scene, Living Colour's guitarist demands honorary inclusion.

As a statement of intent, the seething guitar work from "Cult of Personality" – opener of 1988's debut album *Vivid* – announced Reid as a virtuoso with attitude, the track's kick-your-teeth-in riff fused to a lightning-fast freak-out solo.

"That album is like a chronicle, almost a journal of the early part of the Eighties," noted this socio-politically engaged songwriter of those bristling early songs. "What wonderful, challenging, infuriating times."

Living Colour tore up the city and beyond. But it was just the start of Reid's compelling career, with last year's kaleidoscopic solo album, *Hoodoo Telemetry*, spiraling from revved-up electro-rock to early-1900s vaudeville played on an old Eko banjo.

LEE RANALDO

As co-founder of Sonic Youth, one of the most influential acts to emerge from the American underground, Lee Ranaldo helped rewrite the rules – some would say rejecting them entirely – of modern rock. The guitarist's embrace of alternate tunings, percussive

ANTHONY BARBOZA/GETTY IMAGES

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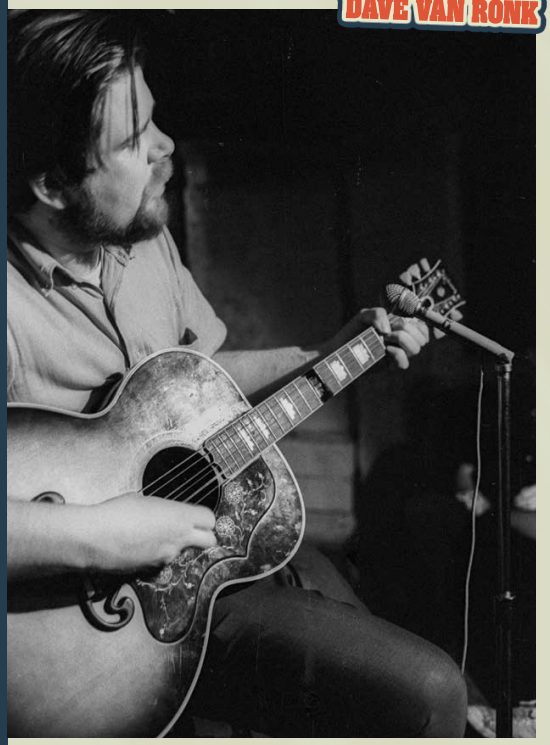

DAVE VAN RONK

playing techniques and daring sound prep (like jamming screwdrivers under guitar strings) forged a sonic landscape that heavily influenced Kurt Cobain, Jonny Greenwood and Ed O'Brien, among many others.

Born in Glen Cove, Long Island, Ranaldo picked up guitar as a teen and was introduced to alternate tunings by an older cousin. Inspired by punk and new wave, he played in the experimental group the Fluks before joining art-rock pioneer Glenn Branca's guitar orchestra. Through Branca, Ranaldo met guitarist Thurston Moore and bassist Kim Gordon, and the trio soon formed Sonic Youth in 1981.

Ranaldo and Moore bonded over their passion for scordatura, churning out massive walls of distortion, feedback, dissonance and other manners of musical chaos. Albums like *EVOL* (1986), *Sister* (1987) and *Daydream Nation* (1988) became instant classics, laying the blueprint for grunge, shoegaze and indie rock. Ranaldo's use of Fender Jazzmasters also kicked off a widespread resurgence of the model among alt-rock players.

Following Sonic Youth's indefinite hiatus in 2011, Ranaldo has kept up a prolific pace through solo recordings, visual art and avant-garde collaborations. Last year, he released the soundtrack to environmental documentary *The System*.

JOHN P. HAMMOND

Born November 13, 1942, in Manhattan – a descendant of 19th-century railroad magnate William Henry Vanderbilt – John P. Hammond was a true "player's player," broaching folk, blues and rock over the course of his 60-plus-year career.

Through the Sixties, Hammond was a staple of the Greenwich Village scene, seen in all the right rooms with all the right people, whether that was Hendrix, Clapton, Levon Helm, Dr. John or Duane Allman. These comrades – not to mention Hammond's hardcore fans – would have considered him an equivalent in terms of touch and tone, with 1963's self-titled debut a masterclass of acoustic barrelhouse (also notable as one of the first full-length folk-blues albums by a white artist).

Fate felt otherwise and major-league commercial success eluded him ("Since I don't make rock star money, I have to play a lot," he said in 1995). But for anyone who saw him drive a live set on his trademark 1930 steel-bodied National, Hammond was the real deal, and his death from cardiac arrest last February was a sad day.

DAVE VAN RONK

The American folk revival of the Sixties would have gone down very differently without the so-called "Mayor of MacDougal Street." Born in Brooklyn on June 30, 1936, this bear-like figure was perfectly placed to become a Greenwich Village staple, a left-wing agitator – and an avuncular presence who supported the artists taking their first steps on the coffee house circuit.

Van Ronk favored acoustic guitar, yet to cast him as a mere "folkie" is reductive. Blending jazz, blues, ballads, gospel and more into his idiosyncratic style, he wrote rare originals but excelled as an interpreter – just ask Joni Mitchell, who once said Van Ronk's rendition of "Both Sides Now" was her favorite version of the song.

DID YOU KNOW? DAVE VAN RONK'S POSTHUMOUS MEMOIR LOOSELY INSPIRED THE COEN BROTHERS' 2013 FILM, *INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS*

KEVIN SHIELDS

Claimed by Ireland – but born in Queens on May 21, 1963 – the architect of My Bloody Valentine's shuddering sound shaped every noisenik band that followed. For three short but seminal years – spanning from 1988's debut album *Isn't Anything* to 1991's universally acclaimed *Loveless* – Shields played like a force of nature, his brutal walls of distortion punishing on record and genuinely painful when the band took the stage.

That pulverizing first act was followed by two decades of silence, during which Shields worked as a producer, songwriter and soundtrack artist. But reassuringly, when My Bloody Valentine resurfaced in 2013 with third album *m b v*, their uncompromising leader was found to have mellowed not one bit. His back catalog might be slim, but his influence rings on like tinnitus.

BOB MOULD

Until his 16th birthday, Bob Mould listened to the mainstream rock on his local radio station. All that changed when he opened a present to find the self-titled debut album


KEVIN SHIELDS

KAI SHUMAN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES, DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS



LLOYD BISHOP/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES, ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

by the Ramones. The raw, unadorned simplicity of the raging sounds, he recalled, inspired him to pick up the guitar and try his own luck: "The music was transparent – you could see and hear everything that was going on. And it was so easy to copy."

Mould left his native Malone, New York, to study at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. There he met bassist Greg Norton and drummer-singer Grant Hart, with whom he formed the hardcore band Hüsker Dü. Like the Ramones, these were fast and loud songs, but the band didn't play party anthems – more often, Mould's lyrics were introspective and inscrutable. The group moved beyond its hardcore wall of sound on its second album, 1984's *Zen Arcade*, experimenting with pop, psychedelia and even acoustic numbers. The double-LP was immediately hailed as a masterpiece.

Following Hüsker Dü's breakup, Mould – famous in the band's early years for playing Flying V-style guitars such as the Ibanez Rocket Roll Jr. – embarked on a solo career, releasing the critically hailed acoustic album *Workbook* in 1989. Soon he scored chart hits with his alt-rock trio Sugar, then embraced dance and electronica. Returning to rock, he's released albums ranging from deeply personal (2009's *Life and Times*) to joyous and poppy (2019's *Sunshine Rock*) and furiously political (2020's *Blue Hearts*).

ERIC GALE

When the conversation turns to classic jazz and jazz-fusion – not to mention the greatest radio hits of the late-Sixties – few names carry the kudos of Eric Gale. Born on September 20, 1938, in Brooklyn, Gale struck gold twice in his early career, planting his flag on Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl," working with Frank Sinatra on "My Way," then riding the momentum into a productive career. Highlights are plentiful. Generally pulling his supple licks from an outsize Gibson archtop, Gale was the secret weapon on Roberta Flack's timeless 1973 record, *Killing Me Softly*, while you'll find his name in the credits of countless classic albums by George Benson, Ron Carter, Hank Crawford, Freddie Hubbard, Bob James and more.

DID YOU KNOW?
ERIC GALE PLAYS GUITAR ON THE THEME SONG FOR THE CLASSIC NYC-SET TV SHOW *TAXI* (AKA "ANGELA" BY BOB JAMES)

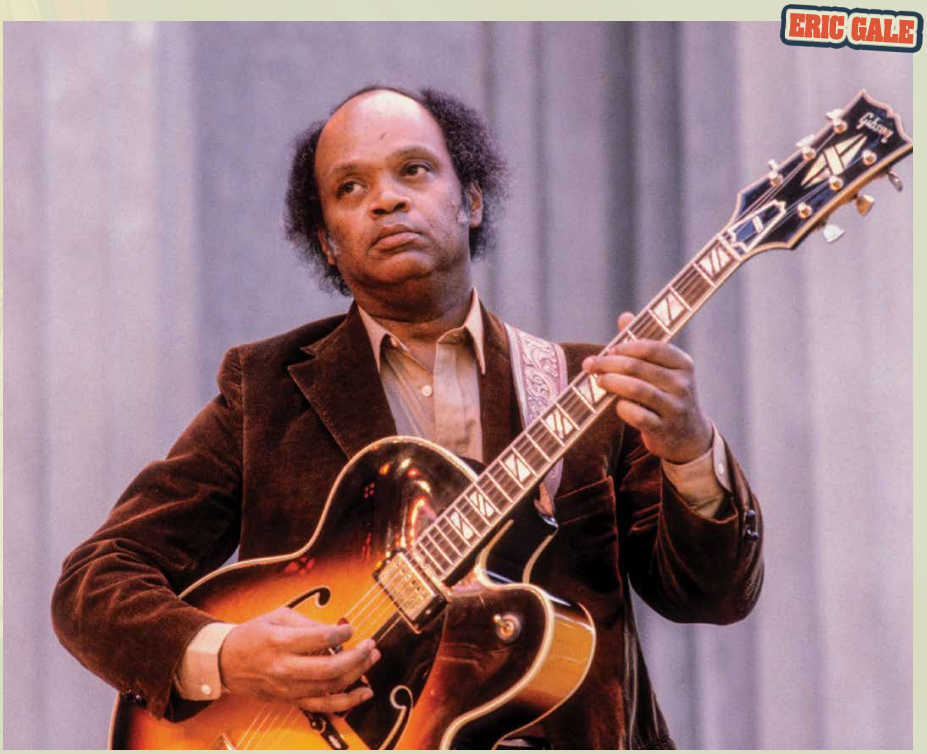
JIM HALL

With his smooth, elegant, understated and lyrical approach to jazz guitar, Jim Hall was rightly dubbed "the emperor of cool." Born in Buffalo, New York, he moved with his family to Cleveland and picked up the guitar at age 10. Greatly influenced by Charlie Christian and Barney Kessel, as well as saxophonists like Coleman Hawkins and Lucky Thompson, he relocated to Los Angeles after college, studied classical guitar, and soon found himself in high demand, touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic and Ella Fitzgerald.

Moving to New York in 1960, Hall performed and recorded regularly with Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins and Art Farmer, and throughout the decade he appeared on albums by Quincy Jones, Big Joe Turner, Lalo Schifrin and Gary McFarland, among others. During this period, he played in the studio orchestra for *The Merv Griffin Show*, eventually leaving in 1968 to concentrate on a solo career.

Hall recorded dozens of solo and collaborative albums, most notably *Concierto* (1975), featuring Chet Baker and Paul Desmond; *Jim Hall Live!* (1975), featuring Terry Clarke and Don Thompson; *Alone Together* (1973), a duet with Ron Carter; and Jim Hall & Pat Metheny (1999).

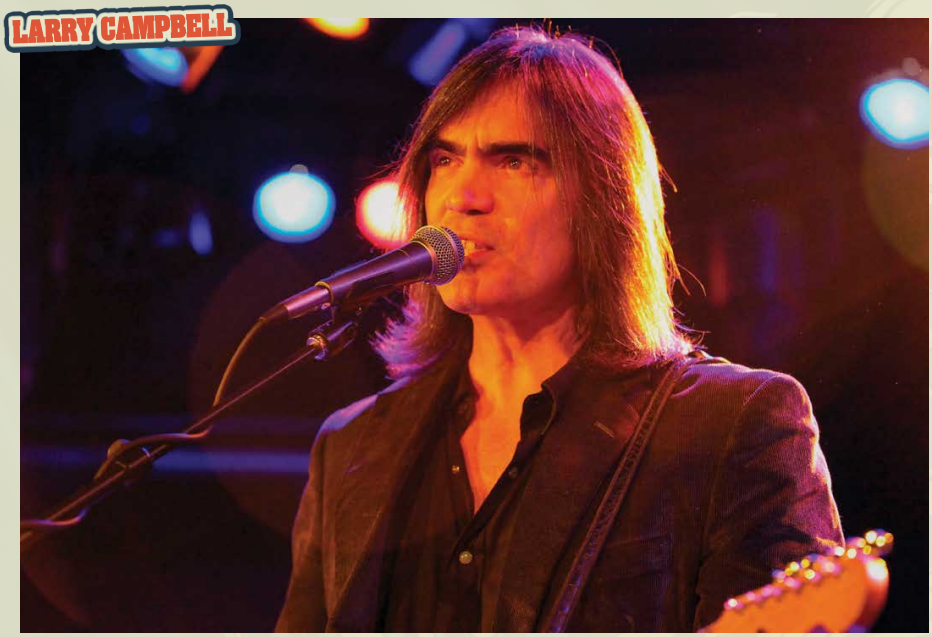
A dedicated archtop player, Hall favored Gibson ES-175 and Jimmy D'Aquisto models, but in the late Nineties he collaborated with Roger Sadowsky on a Jim Hall Signature Model. He passed away in Manhattan on December 10, 2013.



TOM MORELLO

If you're looking for a Molotov cocktail of politics, punk-rock ethos, car-alarm solos and heavy metal riffs delivered via chop-shop guitars, Tom Morello is your guy. Just look back at his sonic vandalism with Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave – but of course, there's much more to Morello, who was born in Harlem on May 30, 1964, and raised in Illinois. He's got his solo work, Prophets of Rage, guest spots with Bruce Springsteen and more, all driven by DIY-looking instruments with rabble-rousing names, like Arm the Homeless and Soul Power. Plus, in the age of the say-nothing pop star, Morello has never shied away from injecting politics and activism into his music, using his platform to enact positive change, leaving his fiery mark on the guitar scene and wider world. His new album, *Everyone Gets Everything They Want*, is out now.

LARRY CAMPBELL



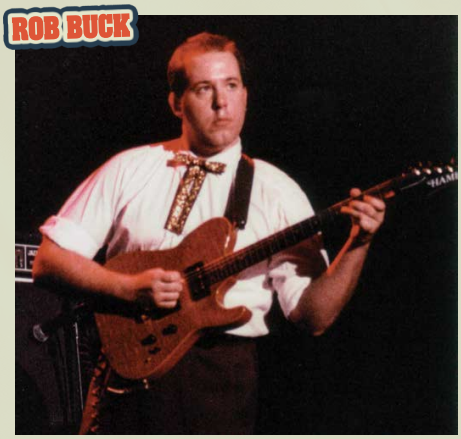
EARL SLICK

The fabled Earl Slick – who was born in Brooklyn as Frank Madeloni on October 1, 1952 – was once an unknown local guitarist who got his big break on a hunch as Mick Ronson's replacement in David Bowie's band for the *Diamond Dogs* tour of 1974. The theatrics of that tour weren't to Slick's taste ("I really wasn't into how it turned out. To me, it turned out to be like a Vegas cabaret act"). But in the studio, his on-the-edge, highly improvised style suited Bowie's mid-Seventies output, and he stuck around for classic albums *Young Americans* (1975) and *Station to Station* (1976), before leaving under a cloud of narcotics and bad contracts. Even then, Slick kept busy, working with Robert Hunter, John Lennon and – after the former Beatle's 1980 death – Yoko Ono.

In '83, Slick rejoined Bowie's band when Stevie Ray Vaughan pulled out of the *Let's Dance* tour, and worked with the singer on and off thereafter until his death. He's recorded solo music (and even sold timeshares in the early Nineties), but seems content to be known as the ultimate sideman. "People look at it as if you're second fiddle," he told *The Guardian*, "but I don't see it like that: it's all about me playing music instead of trying to be something that I'm not."

DID YOU KNOW? EARL SLICK SAYS JOHN LENNON HIRED HIM FOR *DOUBLE FANTASY* BECAUSE SLICK COULDN'T READ MUSIC

ROB BUCK



LARRY CAMPBELL

An adaptable multi-instrumentalist and player's player – as adept at fingerpicked folk as stinging Southern soul – Campbell was born in Manhattan on February 21, 1955, and came up in a resurgent Seventies and Eighties New York country music scene. This led to appearances with Judy Collins, Paul Simon, B.B. King, Cyndi Lauper and more. But Campbell's major claim to fame came via his long-running association with the Band's Levon Helm and his membership in Bob Dylan's band from 1997 to 2004 during the still-ongoing Never Ending Tour. Since then, he's worked with Peter Wolf, Elvis Costello, Roseanne Cash, Emmylou Harris – and even played banjo, fiddle and pedal steel on the Black Crowes' 2009 album, *Before the Frost... Until the Freeze*.

ROB BUCK

Born in Jamestown, New York, Rob Buck began playing guitar at age six, but discovering Hendrix as a teenager convinced him to pursue music professionally. With Dennis Drew (keyboards), Steven Gustafson (bass), Chet Cardinale (drums) and Buck's ex-wife, Terri Newhouse, he formed Still Life in 1981. The lineup soon changed: Newhouse and Cardinale left the group, making way for new members, singer Natalie Merchant and rhythm guitarist John Lombardo. Rechristened 10,000 Maniacs (inspired by the low-budget horror flick *Two Thousand Maniacs!*), they performed up and down the East Coast while perfecting their sound.

Buck's guitar style – a decidedly un-Hendrixian blend of clean arpeggios, sparse melodic leads, atmospheric textures, and alternate tunings – found the perfect home in the band's folk-flavored alt-rock repertoire. Their first two albums, 1983's *Secrets of the I Ching* and 1985's *The Wishing Chair*, performed admirably, but the band hit commercial pay dirt with the Peter Asher-produced *In My Tribe* (1987), which featured the Buck-Merchant co-write "What's the Matter Here?"

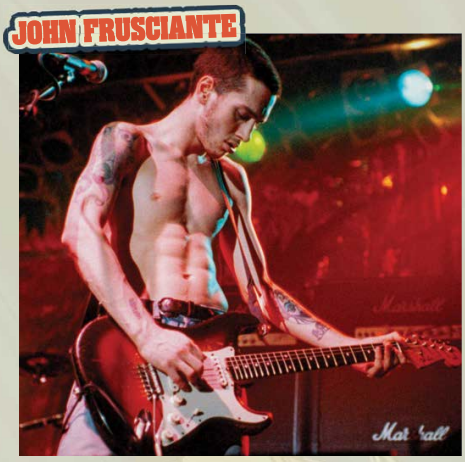
By now, Buck was the sole guitarist in the band, and with Merchant he would collaborate on some of their most popular songs, including "Hey Jack Kerouac" and "These Are Days," widely considered the definitive 10,000 Maniacs tune. After 1992's double-platinum *Our Time in Eden*, Merchant left for a solo career, but the band continued with Mary Ramsey in her place. Buck died of liver disease on December 19, 2000, at age 42.

STERLING MORRISON

Brian Eno famously said, "The first Velvet Underground album only sold 10,000 copies, but everyone who bought it formed a band." Much credit for that is due to guitarist Sterling Morrison, whose sense of melody, structure and rhythm counterbalanced Lou Reed's experimental and freewheeling playing style. When asked to describe his bandmate's musicality, Reed said, "Sometimes, I think his guitar playing is very much like his first name – sterling."

Born Holmes Sterling Morrison Jr. in East Meadow, Long Island, he picked up the guitar

DARIO CANTATORE/GETTY IMAGES, IM STEINFELDT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS, CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE

in high school (after his trumpet teacher was drafted). While in college, he met Reed, who asked him to join a band he was starting with John Cale (which would soon include drummer Maureen "Moe" Tucker).

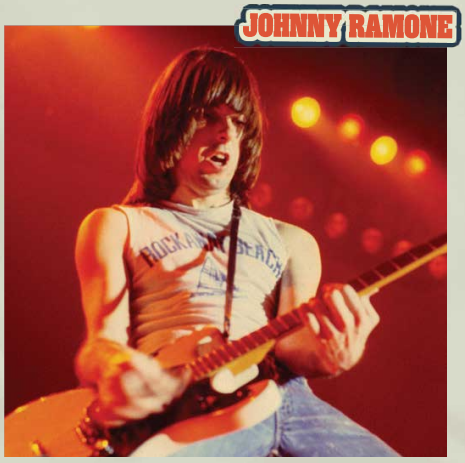
Originally, the Velvet Underground were managed by Andy Warhol, who thrust model/scenester Nico onto their first album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (1967), which yielded enduring cuts such as "Heroin," "Femme Fatale" and "Sunday Morning." Over the next three years, the band issued a trio of albums – *White Light/White Heat* (1968), *The Velvet Underground* (1969) and *Loaded* (1970) – that would serve as inspiration for garage rock, punk and new wave bands.

Morrison left the group in 1971 to go back to school, earning a PhD in medieval literature. During the next decade and a half, he performed occasionally, and in 1992 he joined Reed, Cale and Tucker in a Velvet Underground reunion. The band opened U2's 1993 European tour but broke up again soon after. In 1994, Morrison was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and passed away on August 30, 1995.

JOHN FRUSCIANTE

A master of airtight funk and white-hot solos, whose stadium rock success is offset by his fascination with esoteric Eighties alt-rock, Queens-born John Frusciante has always been a square peg amongst guitar gods. His Strat-driven work with the Red Hot Chili Peppers – which kicked off in 1989, derailed in 1992, sparked for a second time in 1999, burnt out again in 2009 and struck up for a third time in 2019 – is where you'll find the real gold (despite a crazy-prolific solo career and appetite for collaboration). Revisit almost anything from 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* – but especially the cocksure swagger of "Give It Away."

DID YOU KNOW? STERLING MORRISON WAS A TUGBOAT CAPTAIN – AND HE EARNED A Ph.D. IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE



JOHNNY RAMONE

To assess the guitar playing of Johnny Ramone – born John William Cummings on October 8, 1948 – in terms of skill, nuance and technique is to miss the point entirely (nor would the focal point of the Ramones have given a damn about your verdict). All this curled-lip punk pioneer needed to change the course of rock 'n' roll history was a single-coil Sixties Mosrite, a fusion of basic barre and power chords – plus a runaway downpicking speed that still leaves you gasping a half-century later.

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Dying from prostate cancer in 2004 — at the horribly young age of 55 — Johnny's DNA lives on in anyone who slings a cheap guitar with attitude and velocity.

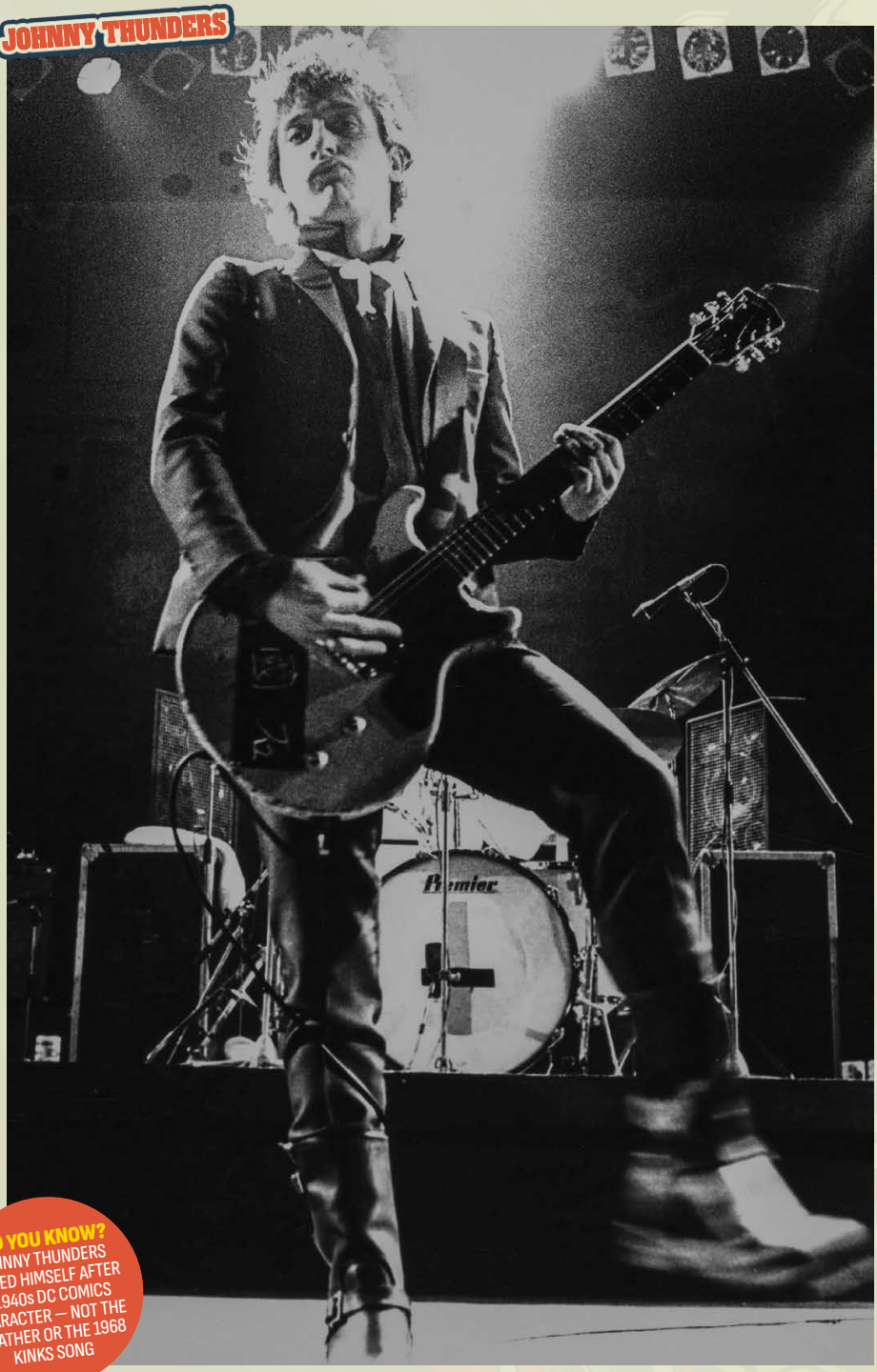
BUCK DHARMA

Regarded as one of rock history's most inventive (and possibly underrated) lead guitarists, Queens native Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser originally started out on drums during the 1964 British Invasion. That changed at age 12 when a broken wrist sidelined his drumming, prompting a shift to guitar during his recovery. He played in various high school bands, but while attending Stony Brook University he formed the hard rock group Soft White Underbelly. Rock critic Sandy Pearlman signed on as the band's manager and pitched them to record labels as "the American Black Sabbath."

After testing numerous names, the group finally settled on Blue Öyster Cult. Pearlman assigned flamboyant nicknames to the band's members, but Roeser was the only one who retained his as a permanent alter ego. Driven by his emotive phrasing, BÖC's unique blend of hard rock, pop, blues and jazz included blasts of proto-punk grit (Patti Smith, then girlfriend of keyboardist and guitarist Allen Lanier, contributed to some material). Over the course of three albums, they developed a loyal following, but it took Roeser's mesmerizing "(Don't Fear) The Reaper" to blow things open. Through the Seventies and Eighties, Roeser wrote or co-wrote more BÖC radio hits such as "Godzilla" and "Burnin' for You."

Throughout much of his career, Roeser relied on a heavily modified Gibson SG, but in the Eighties he began playing Steinbergers, including the custom white "Cheeseberger" Steinberger (with holes in the body made to resemble Swiss cheese).

The longest-serving constant member of Blue Öyster Cult, Roeser released his single "The End of Every Song" in 2024, the same year the band issued what could be its final album, *Ghost Stories*.



GUS STEWART/GETTY IMAGES

DID YOU KNOW? JOHNNY THUNDERS NAMED HIMSELF AFTER A 1940s DC COMICS CHARACTER — NOT THE WEATHER OR THE 1968 KINKS SONG

JOHNNY THUNDERS

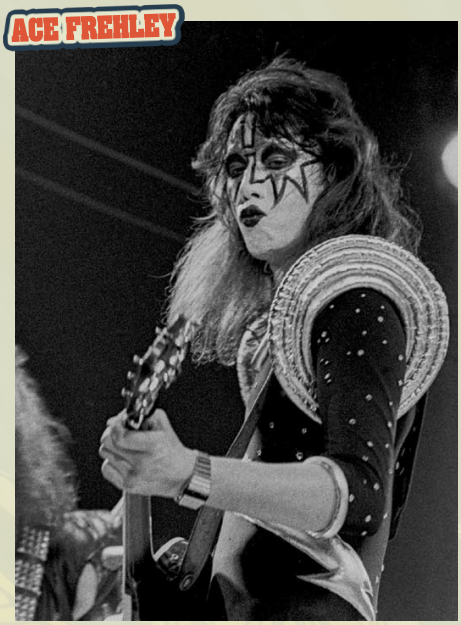
The man born John Anthony Genzale in Queens burnt bright and fast. But Thunders left his musical mark on the city, most notably co-founding and bringing to prominence the New York Dolls, whose glammed-out image and rowdy riff-raff inspired a generation of punk and hair-metal acts as the late Seventies turned to the Eighties. Post-Dolls, Thunders formed the Heartbreakers, continuing to release four-chord rock with his own unmistakable boot print. But rightly or wrongly, it's mostly Thunders' image that has outlived him. From his youth, the guitarist had idolized Keith Richards (even styling his hair and playing after the Rolling Stone). Thunders modeled his lifestyle on Richards, too, but his body didn't have the Human Riff's staying power — and it was sad but not surprising when the 38-year-old was found dead at a New Orleans hotel in 1991.

ACE FREHLEY

As the Space Ace told this writer with a cackle, "If I'd known I'd influence so many people, I'd have practiced more." Of course, the Kiss man's pentatonics-with-attitude playing style was just one side of his appeal — it was almost impossible to be a kid in the Seventies and not feel your pulse race at the sight of this stack-heeled tin man shooting pyro from a smoking Les Paul.

Born in the Bronx on April 27, 1951, as Paul Daniel Frehley — he picked up the "Ace" nickname for his way with the ladies — his frequent school expulsions and dabbles with gang life signposted a dark path. But Frehley remembered being "saved" by watching Cream and the Who, and despite not taking

ACE FREHLEY



a single guitar lesson, he proved vital in Kiss's peak years, contributing the Stonesy "Cold Gin" to 1974's self-titled debut album (and later taking the mic for "Shock Me").

His first run in Kiss ended messily, with the Space Ace spinning out in the early Eighties, leading to car chases, near-death experiences and a redemption arc like no other (read his autobiography, *No Regrets*, for all the gory details). But with or without practice, Frehley undeniably shaped the sound of American rock guitar, and upon his death last year, he was hailed by former bandmates Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley as an "irreplaceable rock soldier."

NILE RODGERS

From the fateful day in '73 when Nile Rodgers laid eyes and hands on the "Hitmaker" Strat in a tiny Miami guitar shop, all bets were off. Before then, Rodgers – born in Manhattan on September 19, 1952 – was a jazz box connoisseur. But the acquisition of that Strat transformed Rodgers' sound and fortunes, the scritchy-scratch muted hits of his fabled right hand driving the Seventies disco boom with Chic – and beyond.

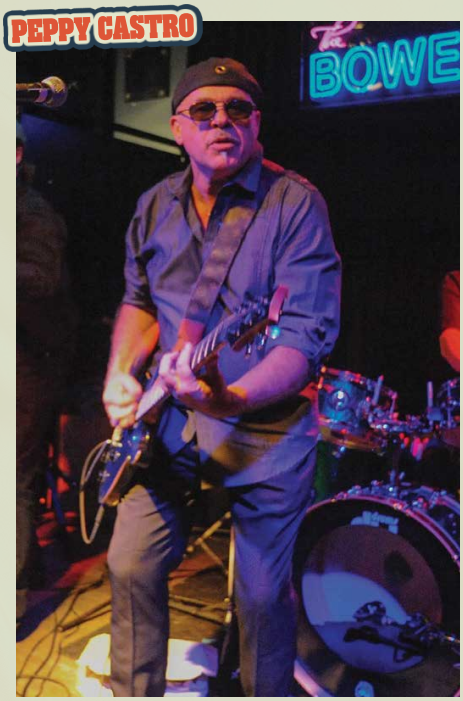
In the years since, with Hitmaker in hand, Rodgers has been the creative engine room behind a flurry of projects that between them have sold 750 million albums and 100 million singles. The numbers alone are unfathomable, let alone the participants: a who's who that spans Diana Ross, INXS, David Bowie, Madonna, Duran Duran, Daft Punk and dozens more. Simply put, if you need a hit, call Nile Rodgers. He doesn't miss.

PEPPY CASTRO

Also from the Bronx – and very much tied to Frehley and Kiss – Peppy Castro, who was born June 16, 1949, came to prominence with the psychedelic rock group the Blues Magoos. But before that, he was Frehley's first guitar teacher. Ironically, Frehley would – and he was very open about this, and Castro laughs about it today – lift Castro's solo from the Magoos' "We Ain't Got Nothin' Yet" for Kiss's "Love Gun." But the Kiss associations don't stop there; Castro reportedly had a hand in writing "Naked City" from Kiss's *Unmasked* and formed a band called Balance with Kiss-adjacent guitarist Bob Kulick.

DID YOU KNOW? PEPPY CASTRO IS AN EMMY-NOMINATED PLAYWRIGHT WHO PENNED JINGLES FOR BUDWEISER, NESTLE AND KODAK

PEPPY CASTRO



JOHN PETRUCCI

With his face-melting speed, surgical dexterity and soaring melodicism, Dream Theater's John Petrucci is widely regarded as progressive metal's supreme virtuoso. Raised in Kings Park, Long Island, Petrucci started playing in earnest at age 12. Relentlessly disciplined, he logged upward of six hours a day practicing along to a wide array of influences including David Gilmour, Alex Lifeson, Steve Morse, Al Di Meola, Eddie Van Halen, Allan Holdsworth and Steve Vai. In high school, he played in a cover band with his pal Kevin Moore. Later, while studying at Berklee College of Music, he formed the prog-rock outfit Majesty with fellow students John Myung and drummer Mike Portnoy, which ultimately became Dream Theater (the "classic" lineup of the band, which included singer James LaBrie and keyboardist Jordan Rudess, was solidified in 1999).

While much of Dream Theater's music is a collaborative effort, Petrucci has anchored a vast catalog of seminal releases, including *Images and Words* (1992), *Awake* (1994), *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory* (1999), *Train of Thought* (2003), *Octavarium* (2005) and *Parasomnia* (2025). His output also extends to three studio albums with side project Liquid Tension Experiment, plus two solo records.

Off the stage – when he's not lifting weights or grilling – Petrucci conducts guitar clinics and masterclasses while staying deeply involved in gear design. Originally an Ibanez player, he partnered with Ernie Ball Music Man in 2000 to produce a wildly successful signature series, highlighted by the best-selling JP6 and the Majesty line.

NILE RODGERS



MARK SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES, BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE, ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS



JOE SATRIANI

Joe Satriani remembers exactly where he was the day Jimi Hendrix died: at high school football practice. The news hit him so deeply that he walked off the field and quit the team on the spot, declaring his intention to become a professional guitarist.

He never looked back – but it took time for the world to discover the artist that fans now know simply as "Satch." After putting himself through rigorous study under jazz guitarist Billy Bauer and pianist Lennie Tristano, the Westbury, New York, native spent years teaching, passing along his knowledge to a teenage Steve Vai, as well as future icons like Kirk Hammett, Alex Skolnick, Larry LaLonde and Andy Timmons.

But Satriani was destined for more than just mentorship. In his adopted home of San Francisco, he played in the new wave outfit the Squares, before joining the Greg Kihn Band. His self-recorded solo debut, *Not of This Earth*, turned heads in guitar circles, but it was 1987's *Surfing with the Alien* that blew the doors wide open, Satch's liquid legato and soaring melodic instincts on highlights like "Always with Me, Always with You" elevating him above the shred drones who followed. Satch was suddenly a mainstay on rock radio, moving units by the millions.

His impeccable technique, coupled with an innate sense of songcraft, yielded a decades-long succession of landmark releases. Alongside Vai (with whom he co-founded the wildly successful G3 tour), Satriani has also been a major force in gear design – his long-running Ibanez JS Series remains a staple in the industry.

DID YOU KNOW?
MICK JAGGER RECORDED A HARMONICA PART FOR SATCH'S "S.M.F.," BUT JOE WOUND UP PLAYING IT HIMSELF

When he isn't filling venues as a solo headliner, Satriani continues to collaborate. Recently, he joined forces with Vai as the SatchVai Band, culminating in their long-awaited album, *The Sea of Emotion*.

STEVE VAI

Back in the early Seventies, Joe Satriani started giving guitar lessons to a kid from the next town over – Carle Place's own Steve Vai. At the time, Vai didn't even know how to string his guitar, but his drive was undeniable. Satch charged $5 a lesson, which quickly turned into hours-long jams, a fierce friendship and a mutual vow to become rock stars.

Things moved fast for Vai. While at Berklee, he began transcribing for Frank Zappa, eventually moving to Los Angeles to join Zappa's band as his "stunt guitarist." From there, he self-funded his offbeat, revolutionary 1984 solo debut *Flex-Able*, replaced Yngwie Malmsteen in Alcatrazz, joined David Lee Roth's post-Van Halen band, then segued into Whitesnake – all while building toward 1990's groundbreaking *Passion and Warfare*.

Since then, Vai has built a singular career, boasting credits that range from PiL to the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra. A self-described "total ham" on stage, his playing is one of the most individualistic expressions in rock. He is to the guitar what Bertolucci was to Seventies cinema: audacious, fearless and constantly venturing forward.

It was only natural that he also worked to reshape guitar design. Partnering with Ibanez, Vai created the signature JEM series (complete with its "monkey grip") and the seven-string Universe – an initial commercial flop that was later embraced by Nineties alt-rockers and modern metal guitarists.

Recently, Vai joined Adrian Belew, Tony Levin and Danny Carey in Beat to reinterpret Eighties King Crimson. GW



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Fifty years after *Ramones*, *GW* assembles survivors and students of NYC's punk scene for a round-table on anger-fueled gigs, revved-up Marshalls and keeping the rebel spirit alive. 1-2-3-4!

BY JACOB PAUL NIELSEN

YOU DIDN'T REALLY think we'd let the 50th anniversary of the Ramones' debut album go by without acknowledgment, did you? With this landmark disc celebrating its big 5-0, of course we wanted to get in on the fun. It's hard to think of another album, besides maybe Nirvana's *Nevermind*, that is simultaneously both genre-defining and yet still completely accessible to a beginner guitar player. Three, maybe four power chords. Downstrokes. Palm-muting. Not too difficult, then... right?

"Punk rock is deceptively difficult to play on guitar," Ale Campos says. We realized that Campos – in the absence of Johnny Ramone, who left us in 2004 – was a no-brainer for this piece. If anyone knows about punk guitar, it's someone deemed worthy enough to play with the man himself – the godfather of punk – Iggy Pop.

"We do a cover of the Jesus and Mary Chain song 'Head On,'" Pixies guitarist Joey Santiago says. "That has to be just downstrokes, but sometimes I have to do an upstroke because it's easier. I feel like I'm doing the song a disservice and I feel like I'm cheating the crowd because they're not getting all the downstrokes, but it's a lot harder on an up-tempo song."

"If I were to downstroke for all of Metallica's 'Seek & Destroy,' my hand would fall off," Campos says. "You really have to pace yourself. I tend to do the downstrokes, obviously, in the beginning or the parts that are palm-muted. Then there are other times where I feel like it's a little more forgiving to go up and down."

A little more forgiving – unless you're Johnny fucking Ramone.

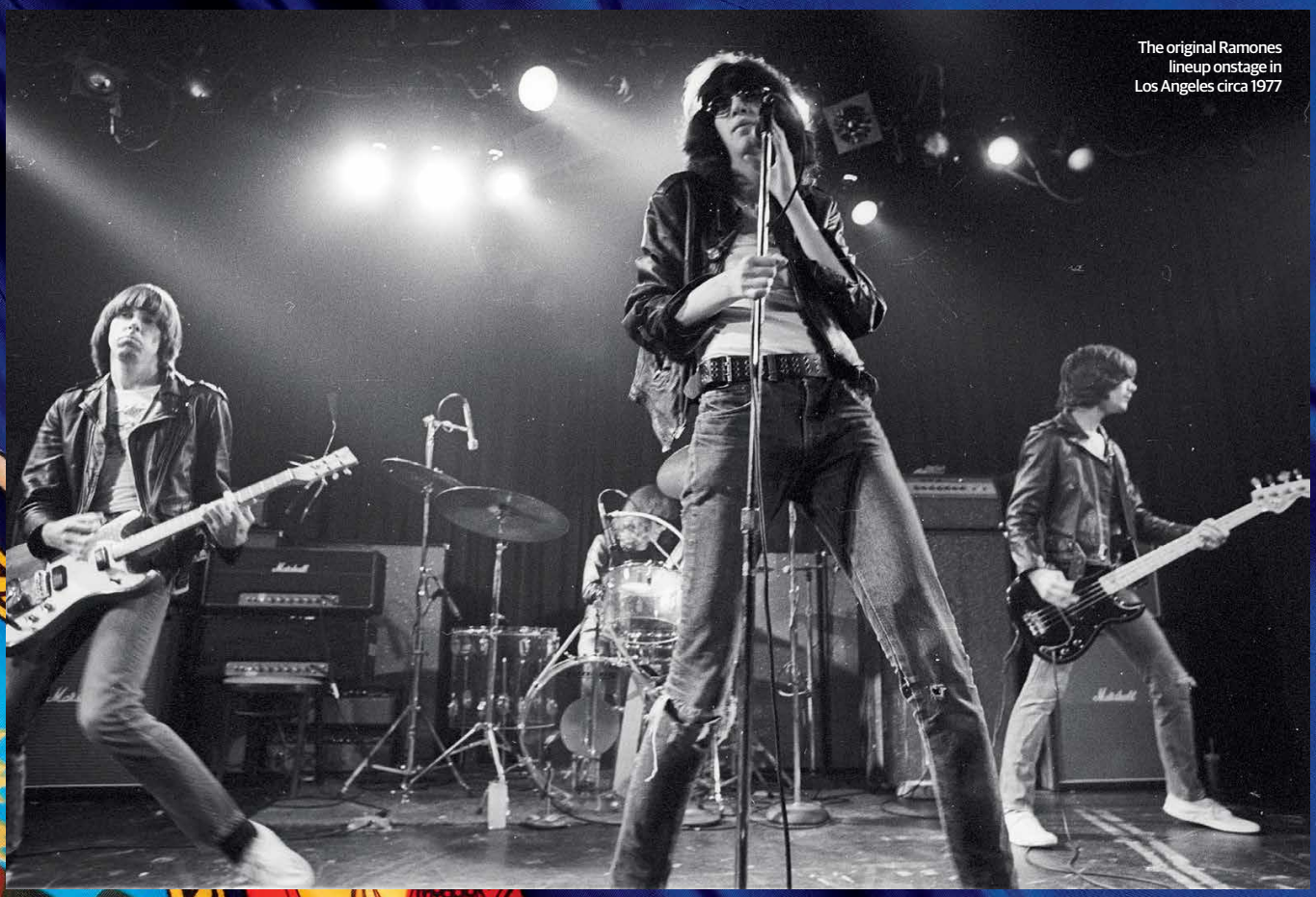
"At one of the last auditions I went to, Johnny said to Mark, 'Count it off' – '1-2-3-4!' – and they launched into live speed," says C.J. Ramone, the ex-Marine who replaced bassist Dee Dee Ramone – in the Ramones, of course – in 1989. "I kept up for about 30 or 40 seconds. Once you sit down and you try to play that fast all downpicking, you realize real quick that it's not a simple thing. Johnny looked at me and said, 'What's the matter? You can't keep up?'"

"Johnny was very competitive," says Linda Ramone, Johnny's widow. "His guitar style, the downstroke – the buzz saw – influenced so many guitar players." Linda joined us over Zoom from the Ramones Ranch in Los Angeles, the house she bought with Johnny when they moved from their apartment in New York City. "The whole house is a theme house," she says. "We have an Elvis room. There's a Disney bathroom and a rock 'n' roll room. There's a horror room full of Johnny's stuff and



Ramones in Los Angeles, August 1976: [*from left*] Joey, Dee Dee, Johnny and Tommy

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



The original Ramones lineup onstage in Los Angeles circa 1977

his guitars. Johnny passed away like, two feet [*away*] over there on the couch. He still lives here."

What was it like hearing the Ramones — especially their 1976 self-titled debut album — for the first time?

LINDA RAMONE: I probably went to the Ramones' second show at CBGB. It was amazing because they come on, they come off. It's so fast.

JOEY SANTIAGO: "Blitzkrieg Bop" was the first song I heard. It was on the radio. It was definitely different. I didn't know how to define it when I heard it.

LINDA: The first record changed everything. It changed everybody. When you look at the cover of the first record and the names of the songs, you realize it was too over the top to hit the mainstream then. And that's fine, because that's what made punk cool.

C.J. RAMONE: I was probably 11 or 12 when I walked back to this girl's house. She asked me, "You ever hear of the Ramones?" We went downstairs to her basement room, and I sat on her bed. She walked over to the record player, dropped the needle, and "Blitzkrieg Bop" came on. She turned around, sat on the bed next to me and used the cover of the first record to clean her weed to roll a joint. My mind was blown. It's so unique sounding.

ALE CAMPOS: I went to a lot of all-ages shows here in Miami, and a lot of the bands would do covers. It was then that I heard the Ramones for the first time ever — a local band of kids my age doing a cover. It was just really ear-wormy. It got stuck in my head immediately.

C.J., can you describe what it was like to audition for the Ramones?

C.J.: My buddy was in a band with Joey's brother, so he called me up and told me the Ramones were auditioning bass players. It was an open audition, so I just went down to meet them, really. Being a Marine, I got there, like, a half-hour early, so I was the very first one through the door. I had just learned "I Wanna Be Sedated" and "Rock 'n' Roll High School." Playing with the Ramones allowed me to physically express how the music made me feel, because I was just playing those root notes. It just allowed me to cut loose in a way that I never could when playing real "notey" stuff.

"The first record, 'Blitzkrieg Bop,' changed everything. It changed everybody"
LINDA RAMONE

When did you find out you got the gig?

C.J.: While I was in the brig. I had already been in some legal trouble, and after the audition I got to trying to figure out what I needed to do to get it straightened out. I called back to base, and 15 minutes later the cops picked me up. I got transferred down to Quantico, Virginia. I was there for six weeks. The first day I was there, I was sitting in the common area with the rest of the fellas, and the guard on duty came out. He says, "Hey, Ward, you got a phone call." It was Johnny Ramone. I was like, "Oh man, listen, Johnny. I'm sorry, I should have told you what was going on." He says, "All right. Well, do your time, and when you get out, you got a job." The only thing I could think to say to him was that they shaved my head. He says, "Don't worry about it. We'll get you a Beatles wig." [*Laughs*]

How did you prepare for the live shows?

C.J.: I actually got a live tape from Marky. They had a specific live tape that they wanted me to practice. That was the speed that they were currently playing at. It just was unbelievably fast. I had to develop these things. I realized that a note on the accent that gives me a second to hit it on the one. It worked out good.

LINDA: On stage, Johnny was fueled by anger. It was very intense. Johnny had a lot of rage



The Ramones — with C.J. on bass [*right*] — do their thing at the Ritz in New York City, December 29, 1991

STEVE EICHNER/GETTY IMAGES; SARAH REINGEWIRTZ/MEDIANEWS GROUP/LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES

in him at that point.

SANTIAGO: It's like beating the shit out of someone. To do downstrokes at that pace is something else.

C.J.: It took me a while to figure out the technique. During the rehearsal before the first tour, I wore my bass kind of on my hip. I was trying to do all downpicking, and my forearm was tightening up and I was getting pain in my elbow.

CAMPOS: I've tried playing low, but it's just not comfortable for me. It feels weird, and it also hurts my fretting hand to play lower. Our bassist, Brad Truax [*Interpol*], plays really, really low. He basically looks like Dee Dee when he plays.

C.J.: I was at home practicing to a tape, and I sat down and my bass kind of slunk down a little bit lower, like on the side of my thigh. All of a sudden, it was a little easier to downpick. I lowered my strap, and it was a lot easier, so I lowered my strap all the way down till my right arm straightened out. I realized with a straight arm you're only using your wrist. I went from trying to organize this whole muscle group in my forearm to grip the pick and do all that downpicking to just flicking my wrist. It's a much smaller muscle group, and it's way easier to play for a long period of time doing that.

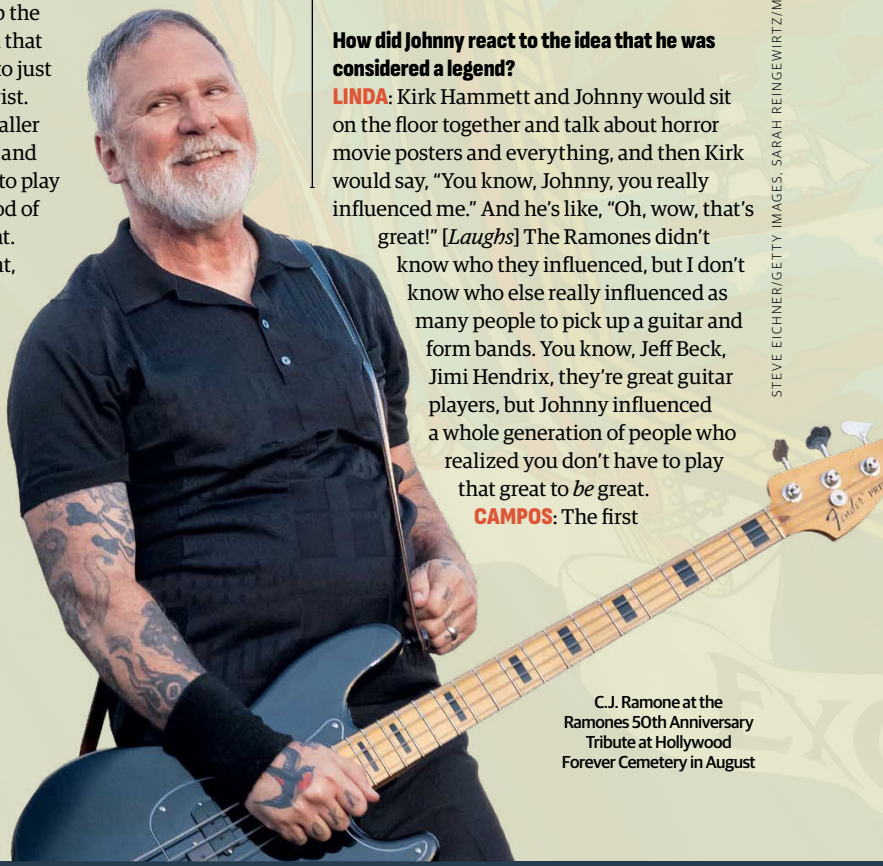
At that point, I was basically relearning how to play bass to try to employ this new technique so I could play that Ramones style at the pace that they played it. When I lowered the bass down, I was picking almost directly over the pickups, and because I was picking directly over the pickups, I was getting a more aggressive sound.

"Johnny influenced a whole generation of people who realized you don't have to play that great to *be* great"
LINDA RAMONE

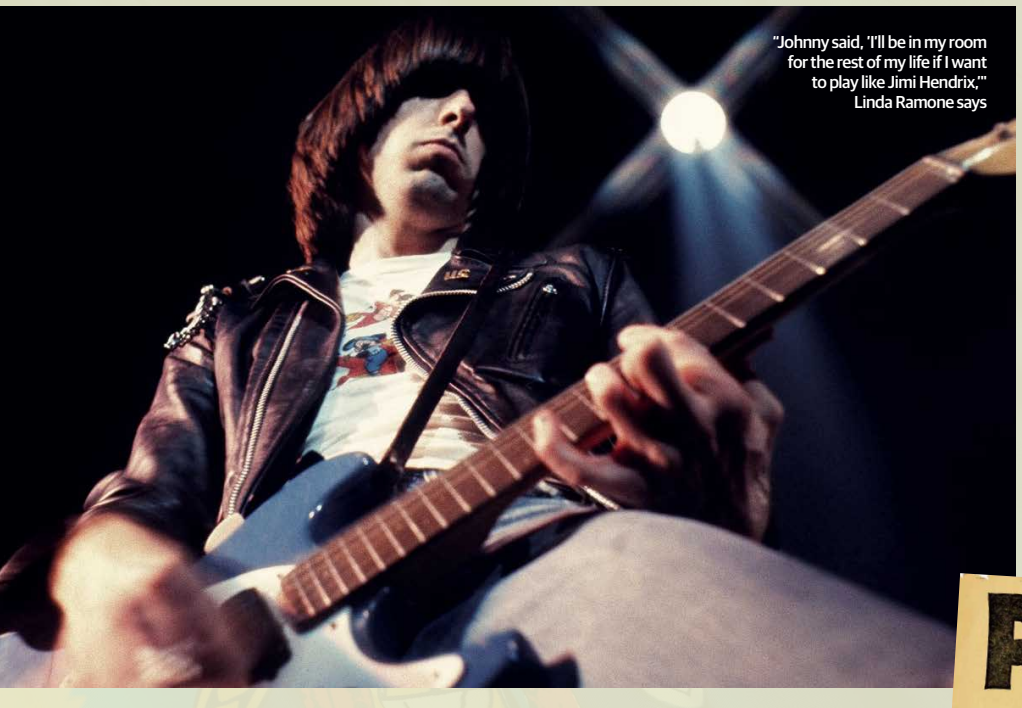
How did Johnny react to the idea that he was considered a legend?

LINDA: Kirk Hammett and Johnny would sit on the floor together and talk about horror movie posters and everything, and then Kirk would say, "You know, Johnny, you really influenced me." And he's like, "Oh, wow, that's great!" [*Laughs*] The Ramones didn't know who they influenced, but I don't know who else really influenced as many people to pick up a guitar and form bands. You know, Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix, they're great guitar players, but Johnny influenced a whole generation of people who realized you don't have to play that great to *be* great.

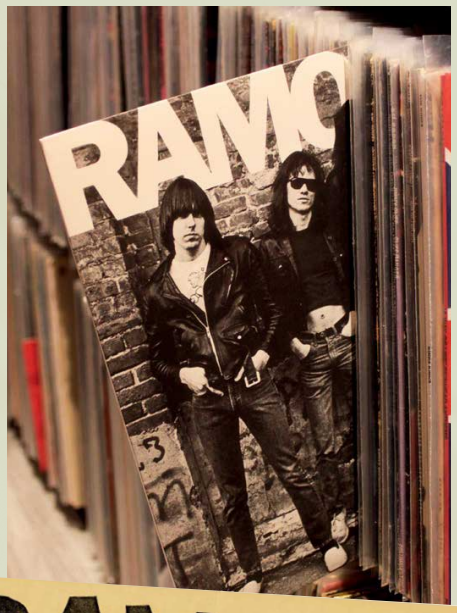
CAMPOS: The first



C.J. Ramone at the Ramones 50th Anniversary Tribute at Hollywood Forever Cemetery in August



"Johnny said, 'I'll be in my room for the rest of my life if I want to play like Jimi Hendrix,'" Linda Ramone says





song I ever learned how to play was "Purple Haze" by Jimi Hendrix. The second song I learned was "Blitzkrieg Bop."

LINDA: Johnny said, "I'll be in my room for the rest of my life if I want to play like Jimi Hendrix." It wasn't what punk was about, which is great.

CAMPOS: I think every single member of the Ramones was batshit crazy for doing what they do, because not only do you have the guitarists playing downstrokes the whole time, you have the fucking drummer playing 16th notes on the hi-hat. It makes for fucking awesome classic songs.

They walked in both the pop world and the heavy world, didn't they?

SANTIAGO: Yeah, the songs are pop. It is very melodic.

LINDA: They liked Iggy Pop and the British invasion. They all came together because they all loved music, and they all grew up liking the same music. Everybody was on the same path. They were all going to see the [*New York*] Dolls.

C.J.: If you listen to "Do You Remember Rock 'n' Roll Radio?" obviously that's a pop song, but "Commando" isn't.

What made Johnny pick up a Mosrite guitar?

LINDA: He wanted something he could identify with. Fred "Sonic" Smith from the MC5 played a Mosrite and Johnny was a fan.

C.J.: Those Mosrites don't have incredibly hot pickups, so in order to get that kind of crunch sound that Johnny liked, he had to play at a loud volume. He was always playing through Marshalls. There were three or four of them on stage. I asked Johnny's tech if his amps were hot-rodded or anything, and he said no, he just plays at full volume. You know how loud Marshalls are, especially those old JCM900s and 800s. It was unbelievably, punishingly loud.

LINDA: The Ramones were all about the energy and excitement, and the audience coming to him and him giving that back. Johnny wanted to be in the biggest band in the world.

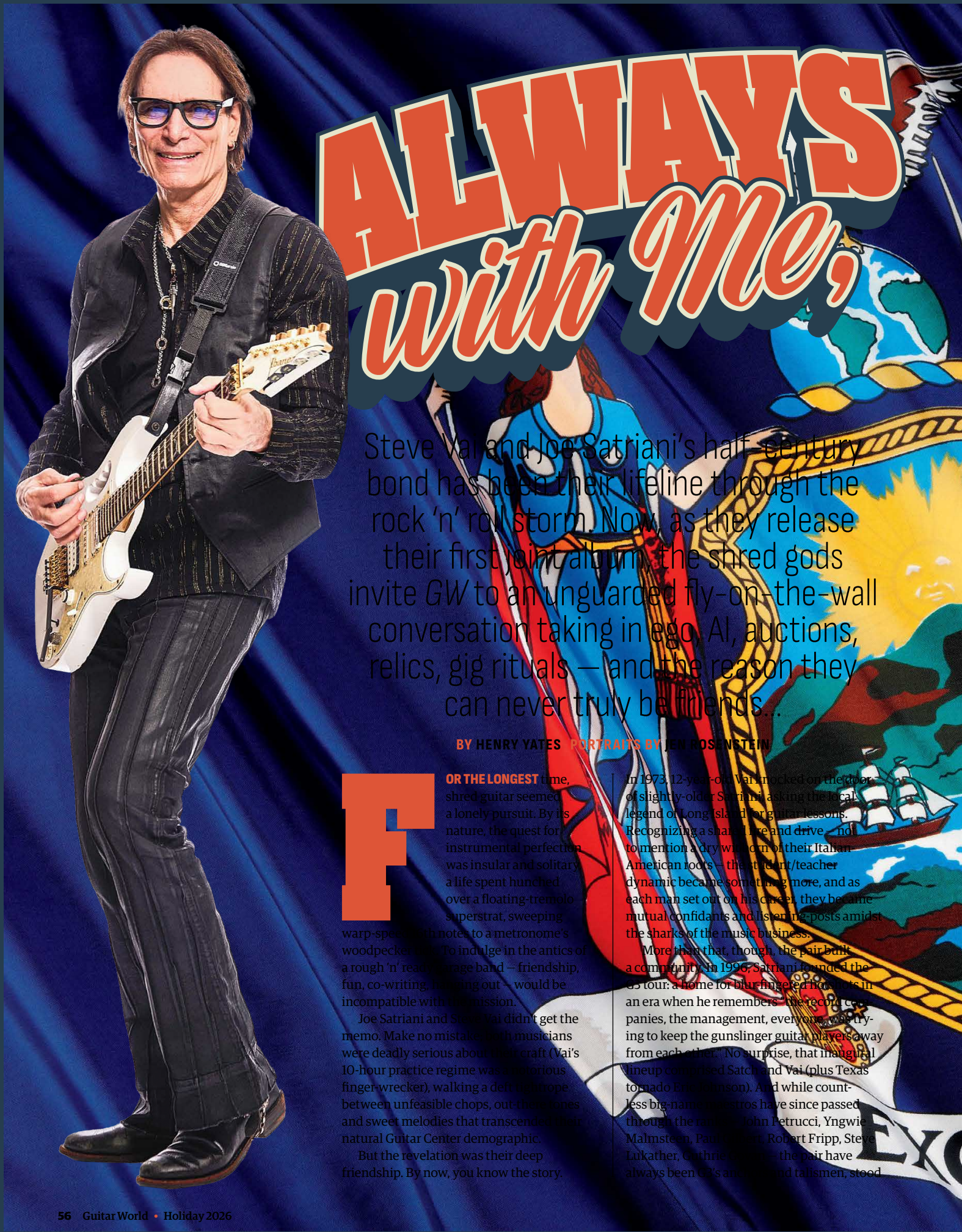
CAMPOS: I'm Argentinian, and they were fucking huge in Argentina. There's a video of them driving through Buenos Aires, and people are pulling up next to the van, banging on the windows to get autographs.

LINDA: When the Ramones went to England, at their first show, the Clash came, the Damned came, the Sex Pistols came. So, is it the start of punk? Yeah, it's the start of punk. I'm going to go by what Joe Strummer said: "If that Ramones record hadn't existed, I don't know that we could have built a scene here." That's why the Ramones are the Ramones. GW



[*from left*] Tommy, Linda and C.J. Ramone at the fifth annual Johnny Ramone Tribute in Los Angeles, October 3, 2009

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS, PAUL REDMOND/WIREIMAGE, ALAMY



ALWAYS with Me,

Steve Vai and Joe Satriani's half-century bond has been their lifeline through the rock 'n' roll storm. Now, as they release their first joint album, the shred gods invite *GW* to an unguarded fly-on-the-wall conversation taking in ego, AI, auctions, relics, gig rituals — and the reason they can never truly be friends...

BY HENRY YATES PORTRAITS BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

FOR THE LONGEST time, shred guitar seemed a lonely pursuit. By its nature, the quest for instrumental perfection was insular and solitary, a life spent hunched over a floating-tremolo superstrat, sweeping warp-speed arpeggios and notes to a metronome's woodpecker tick. To indulge in the antics of a rough 'n' ready garage band — friendship, fun, co-writing, hanging out — would be incompatible with the mission.

Joe Satriani and Steve Vai didn't get the memo. Make no mistake, both musicians were deadly serious about their craft (Vai's 10-hour practice regime was notorious finger-wrecker), walking a deft tightrope between unfeasible chops, out-there tones and sweet melodies that transcended their natural Guitar Center demographic.

But the revelation was their deep friendship. By now, you know the story. In 1973, 12-year-old Vai knocked on the door of slightly-older Satriani, asking the local legend of Long Island for guitar lessons. Recognizing a shared fire and drive — not to mention a dry wit born on their Italian American roots — the student/teacher dynamic became something more, and as each man set out on his career, they became mutual confidants and listening-posts amidst the sharks of the music business.

More than that, though, the pair built a community. In 1996, Satriani founded the G3 tour: a home for blur-fingered hotshots in an era when he remembers "the record companies, the management, everyone, was trying to keep the gunslinger guitar players away from each other." No surprise, that inaugural lineup comprised Satch and Vai (plus Texas tornado Eric Johnson). And while countless big-name maestros have since passed through the ranks — John Petrucci, Yngwie Malmsteen, Paul Gilbert, Robert Fripp, Steve Lukather, Guthrie Govan — the pair have always been G3's anchors and talismen, stood

ALWAYS with You





shoulder-to-shoulder for the much-loved jam finale too many times to compute.

Given how closely Satch and Vai's musical lives have entwined over the past many decades, you'd almost can't believe they haven't already recorded a studio album together. But it's true, and SatchVai's official debut is this year's *The Sex of Emotion*, a dazzling 10-track tug-of-war between their opposing styles, entirely wordless except for a Glenn Hughes guest-shriek on "I Wanna Play My Guitar."

It seems the perfect opportunity for one of *GW*'s fabled head-to-head interviews (an occasional format in which two guitar legends play music journalist for the day). But the message comes back that's not going to work. Satch and Vai don't want to "interview" each other, exactly, concerned it would feel unnatural to rattle through a stiff set of prescribed questions. Instead, they'd prefer to keep things simple, inviting *GW* to sit in on a candid hour-plus conversation that wanders where it will.

It's a deal, we tell them, with one caveat: in keeping with this issue's overarching theme, we'll kick them off on the subject of coming up in New York.

JS: Those times in Long Island seem so ancient now. There was no Internet or social media, and the guitar scene was word-of-mouth. Someone would say, "I know this guy seven blocks away who has a Telecaster and I heard him play 'Good Times Bad Times.'" So we'd all get excited – "Let's go find this person." You'd spend an hour knocking on doors. It sounds ridiculous, but that's kind of the way it was.

SV: As a teenager in the Seventies, did you feel like Long Island was a bubble? Like that's all we knew? I was just so totally ignorant to what the rest of the world had. I still remember when you kicked off your band Tarsus at our high school. I was a few grades lower and you guys were, like, real. I'd go see you play at the Carle Place High School dance. It was hard to get in 'cos we were in junior high. But you guys used to smoke that gymnasium, man. And, of course, we wanted to be like you. We even named our band Sus Kat, which was Tarsus backwards. Do you remember your ritual on the day of a gig?

JS: Yeah. In the morning, we'd have eggs and Coca-Cola. Skip school, go the record store at Roosevelt Field...

SV: So we started doing that too, of course. And do you remember the battle of the bands at Malverne High School?

JS: Yes! That was the first time I saw all these other bands from different towns. It was wild because I had never been to anything like that, and it was only a couple of towns over. It was a predominantly Black school, so a lot of the bands were really funky, cool-sounding – and we're this little rock band. I remember saying, "All these bands are on Long Island?" As I got older and was allowed to wander about on my own, I saw there were so many more guitar players on Long Island and in the city. That really opened my eyes. When I saw Steve Miller, Albert King, J. Geils at the Fillmore – or Led Zeppelin at Madison Square Garden – I thought about those experiences for months afterwards.

SV: I remember when Al Di Meola first hit the scene.

JS: It culminated in me seeking these people out. Like John Abercrombie. I literally found his number in the phone book, called him up, said, "Can I come over and take a lesson?"

"I'm sorry, Joe. We'll never be friends in the conventional sense. You're always gonna be my hero"
STEVE VAI



Satriani [*left*] and Vai in action at the Limelight in Chicago, June 27, 1987...

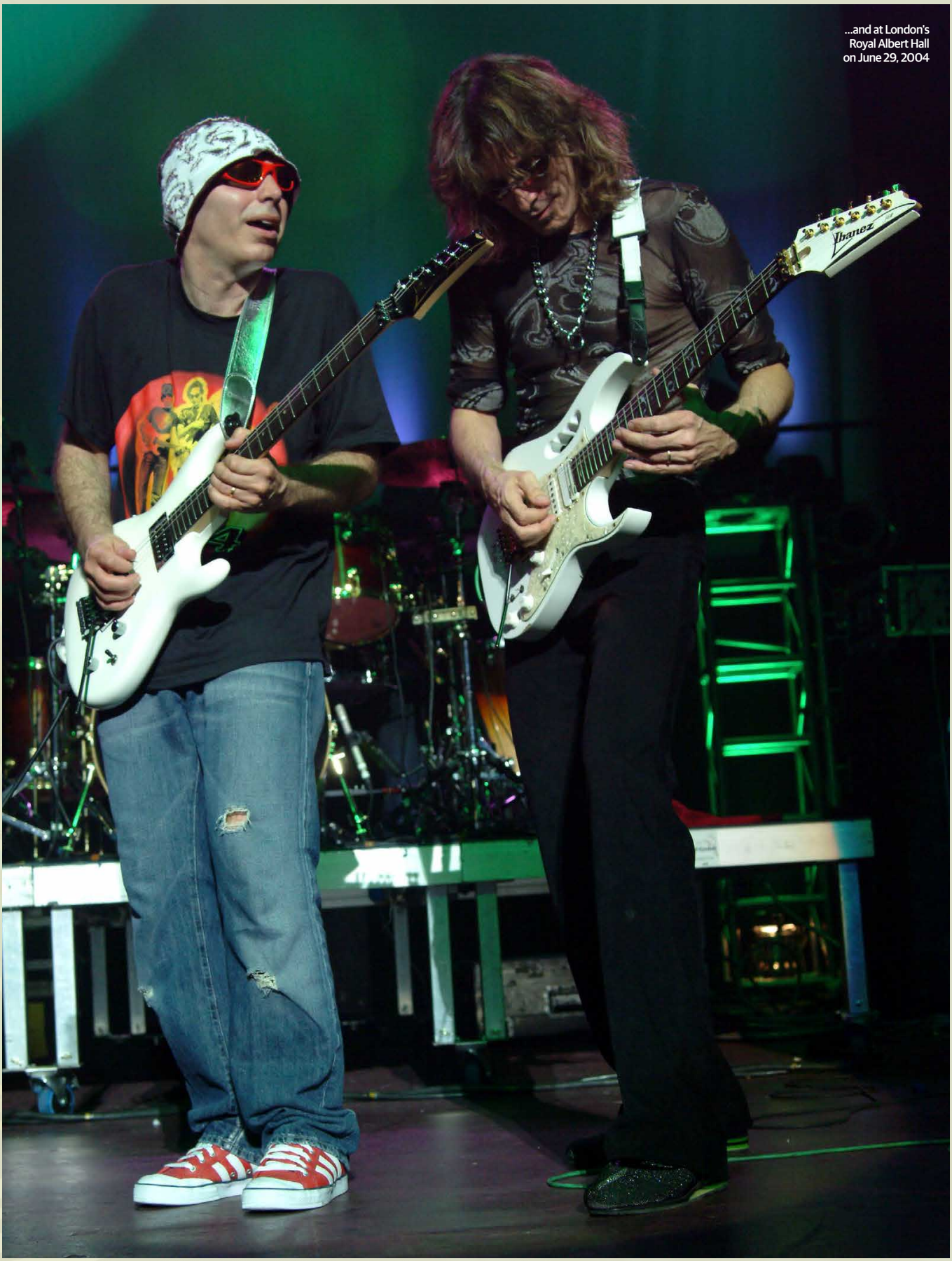
I remember hopping on the train, going into the city and it was fascinating to sit down with an older musician. But I played him a bunch of stuff, and he was like, "Well, I don't have anything to show you." And I thought, "No, you definitely do." But I couldn't explain what it was because it wasn't really technical. Our friendship is based on the Long Island thing, isn't it? Y'know, we both come from these Italian-American Long Island families.

SV: And our mothers were so cute together, too. I mean, the public sees us joined at the hip in our careers, but there's so much more going on under the hood. Having you as a guitar teacher, it was like you held the keys to the kingdom, y'know? Like, you had all the answers, and you gave me everything. You were a mentor. So developing a friendship with you was different. I almost didn't feel worthy. And I know it sounds odd coming from a 66-year-old, but it was always nice to retain that mentor mentality. So I'm sorry, Joe. We'll never be friends in the conventional sense. You're always going to be my hero.

JS: [*Embarrassed*] Oh, God... It's great that we have that foundation. And I think it's allowed us to weather the weird crazy rock 'n' roll storm we've made a career in.

SV: I will say this, and I know this again might be a surprise, but you've helped to keep me grounded. I've worked with crazy people and have learned how to navigate insanity. I've seen my own ego explode. I'll be honest; there've been people in the back of my mind through the years that I may have used as competition. I mean, we were really only ever competing against ourselves. But your ego is always in the background going, "Why are they so good? I can't do that!" But it was always different [*with us*]. Anybody I've ever seen who started with little and received so much, it's almost impossible that it doesn't have a negative effect. But you've always

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES



...and at London's Royal Albert Hall on June 29, 2004

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been solid, my brother, through it all. And it's helped me because it's like, "Well, Joe wouldn't be that much of a dick."

JS: There's your headline! I guess we did live in this wonderful bubble back in Long Island. Time was stretched out, and there was a lot of opportunity to reflect on the small amount of information we had. Music was really an experience of sound. There were no videos, like you get today on an hourly basis. We just weren't so influenced. I think that's really important. There is no separation now. If you have an internet connection, you're inundated. It's either inspiring or distracting, depending on the constitution of the artist.

SV: What do you think that's going to do to the culture of music in the long run?

JS: Well, we see this when we tour, right? The more we travel the world, the more it seems it's becoming homogenized. There's a McDonald's on every corner.

SV: And the ice cream in McDonald's is the same all around the world.

JS: And that, unfortunately, is pretty much what happens to certain segments of music.

SV: It gets a little squashed.

JS: On one hand, it's homogenizing because everyone's influencing each other. But then, on the other hand, the freaks are going, "Oh, this is exactly what I've been waiting for. I get to be freaky in front of everybody!" When it comes to the evolution of guitar, I think what'll happen is that someone will get fed up and do the complete opposite, and it will capture the imagination of the rest of us. A perfect example would be Jimi Hendrix just completely flipping the table upside down. He wasn't exactly burning all the bridges because he was open to all influences. But if you step back before Hendrix, and look at all the jazz, classical and flamenco players, it took someone to use the same notes and the same six strings – but do something different. It's always right around the corner.

SV: I would assume that we're kinda peaking, to a degree, at intense guitar technique. And in the past, what I've seen happen is a rebellion against that, and it resolves into a very simplified form of playing. But there's always those individuals. They'll always be there. And it's impossible to predict what [*the next leap on guitar*] is going to be. For instance, when I saw Jacob Collier, I saw brain muscles at play that I didn't think were invented yet. I think the future of the guitar is undetermined until it happens. And the real innovator feels they have no choice. It's natural to them. If it wasn't natural to Hendrix or Prince, you'd know it right away. It'll be someone who comes into the world, looks around and says, "I'll take a little of this, a little of that, but everything else everybody else is doing – that's crap."

Have you heard any of those pop hits that are completely AI-generated?

JS: Yeah. It's really terrible. And it's so discouraging to see so many of our comrades using AI as a shortcut and thinking it's okay. I don't know what the fascination is, or why somebody thinks they accomplished something, or it was a good use of their precious life, to manipulate stolen elements and say, "Look how cool this is, everybody." To me, that's a total waste of life. Besides writing music, I also paint, and it's a dirty, messy series of mistakes. But it's really happening. I'm alive on Planet Earth.

SV: I think people will get out of AI what their intentions are going in. I'm in the middle of composing all this music for a festival in Holland, and there are really no AI tools for composers. I was talking to the head of an AI company, and I could see the advantage of being able to open up a score and just tell it what to do, then have it spit it out. That, I could see being an aid to my compositional creative process. I know what you're saying, though. It took me a long time to know what those little black dots represent and I enjoy writing those dots, y'know? So I think there's things that musicians are just not going to give up. What we're hearing with these pop songs is just the boneheaded thing of someone pushing a button – "Make me a song like this." But hopefully, people will [*harness*] the power of AI to create something that's not just this superficial ripoff. To talk about our new album, how did you get those first three *The Sea of Emotion* tracks done so quickly? It seems like it was just a thought in our heads to write some material, and then, boom, my email has these three virtually completed, beautiful pieces of music. I'm like, "He's not that fast!"

JS: But it did happen that fast! You know me. Sometimes I can write songs super fast. Other times, it takes a decade or two. But I was so inspired, just by the thought that we were going to do a record. I remember sitting right here, at this desk, thinking to myself, "What's this album going to be about?" I kept going back in time, through all the G3s we did, and I landed all the way back at Carle Place High School, and I thought, "That's what it's going to



"We did live in a bubble back in Long Island. Time was stretched out, and there was a lot of opportunity to reflect on the small amount of information we had"
JOE SATRIANI

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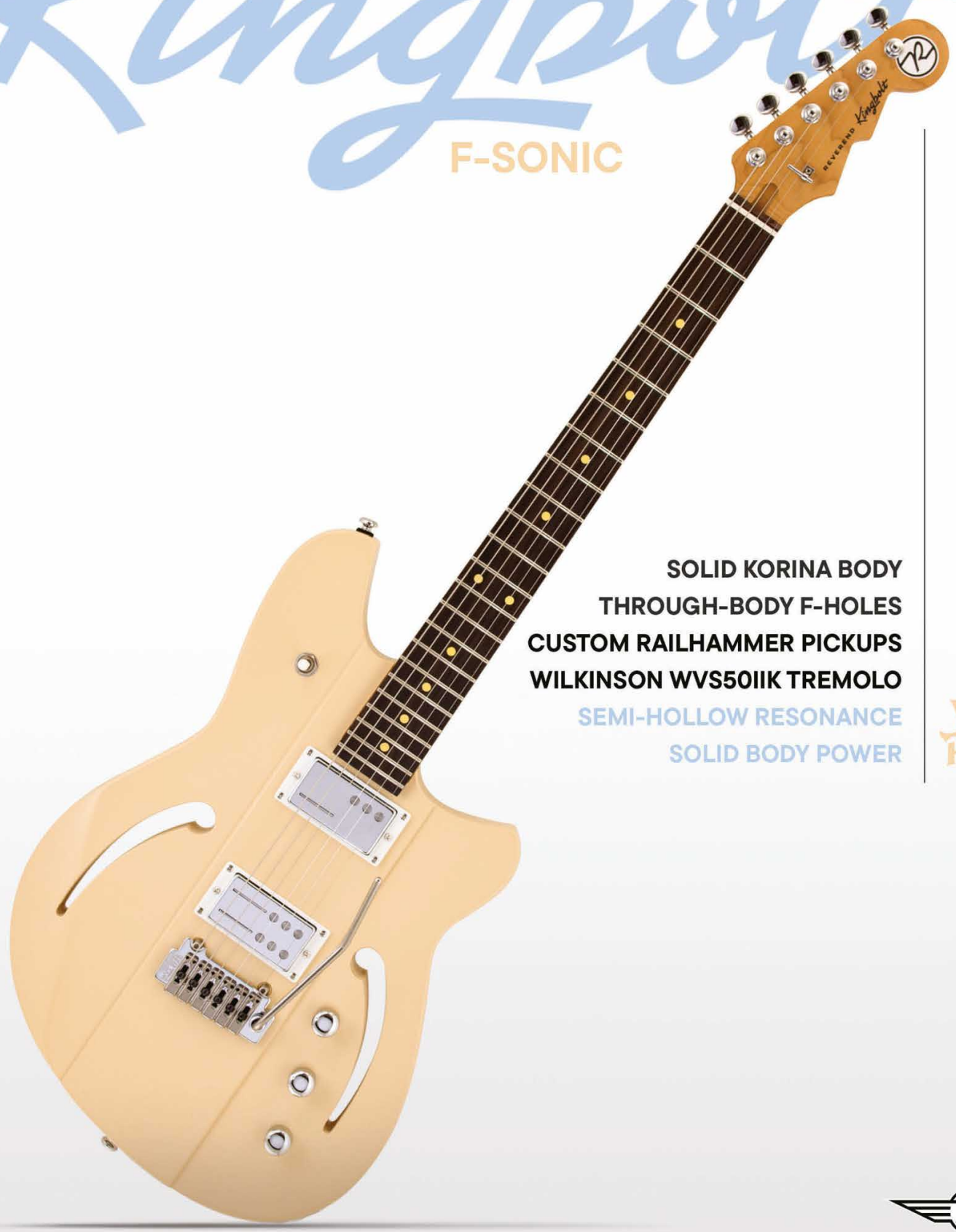

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Three Satch/Vai *Guitar World* magazine covers from the distant and recent past [*from left*]: April 1990, October 2007 and June 2024

be about." So that means the music's going to be based on Seventies music. That's what we grew up on. That's our core as musicians.

SV: My first reaction — and this is just the voice of my own insecurity — was "I gotta deliver something that satisfies Joe." When I get a track from you, I'm thinking, "How do I contribute to this? I don't want to insult anybody!" Plus, I have some peculiar tastes.

JS: [*Mock-incredulous*] Really?!

SV: But I didn't want to police them, because I figured, "Joe wants to do this with me. He wants my peculiar tastes." I've been stuck in this world, for so many years, of thinking, "What I just wrote is precious." So at first, for me, it was like, "How collaborative are we gonna get, really?" Like, if I said, "I don't like this melody for the B section here" — which I would never say. But it was so nice to see how open you were about everything. And honest too, I believe. Because I've known you, and you don't play around. If something's not there, you're not going to waste your time. A lot of times, our musical instincts go in different directions. But something that really developed as we were working was this kind



Satriani and Vai on stage in London with Brian May [*center*] in 1997. "We were just looking at each other, going, 'There it is!'" Vai says

FUTURE; SIMON RITTER/REDFERNS

of "mastermind" between the two of us.

JS: I can point to certain guitar parts and go, "I remember the day you sent that to me, and I went, 'What the fuck is this?'" But you have to let go – don't bring your world into it right away. Wait and see what happens if you do what your partner says. And so much of it really worked out, even though we were throwing songs out we maybe wouldn't have done on our own records. I'm thinking about, like, "Zoot Suit Riot." I just remember thinking, "I'm supposed to solo here?!"

SV: And now it's one of my favorite solos on the whole record!

JS: It's so weird when I listen to it now. I was listening to the record yesterday, and just thinking, "What possessed me to do that?" And it was you. It's your fault!

SV: There were so many instances like that. Like, I remember when I got "Bronco Freight Train," and you had put that whammy bar on there. I'm thinking, "What should I do with this?" Because it's so different. It really is its own part. Then I thought, "I know, I'll double it in harmony." I would never have done anything like that ordinarily...

JS: No one else would have either. Only you. I watched you play the Hydra on tour every night. You wrote "Teeth of the Hydra." You recorded it. And then you played it every night. Totally insane...

SV: Some nights, not as good as others. [*Laughs*] Let's talk about "The Sea of Emotion Pt. 2." You sent me that beautiful, classical-sounding intro. And at first, I'm thinking, "I can't touch this. This is done. It's beautiful. Don't pollute it." Then my mind said, "Well, wait a minute..." It's that kind of high-information, weird, complex part of me that says, "I know, I'm going to take each third note from the melody..."

JS: When I first heard what you did, I was convinced it was Eric [*Caudieux, producer*] doing something with processing. But you're like, "No, that's me. I spent forever on it, doing it one string at a time." Of course it's you. Who else would be that oddly forensic?

SV: What's also interesting is that we relied a lot on plugins.

JS: Yeah, me entirely.

SV: So my thought is, how do you think plugins translate to the stage? It just wouldn't deliver like amplifiers. Those tube amps, they definitely have a voice and a dimension.

"When I get a track from Joe, I'm thinking, 'How do I contribute to this? I don't want to insult anybody!'"
STEVE VAI

JS: Stage is a totally different thing. The tools have to be different, because when you stand next to a drummer, if you're using a modeler and it comes in at 98dB, the drummer can bury you in a split-second, and suddenly you're like, "I can't hear myself!" I just finished another tour playing with the 3rd Power amps, and that's totally old school, human-put-together, analog-loud amplifier world.

SV: Also, if it's generated from a strictly digital source, onstage, it's just a different smell.

JS: It is. There's this weird latency...

SV: But I was so surprised how well the plugins delivered in the studio. You really get the sound of your fingers on it, and there's, like, zero phase canceling. You get it right in your face, and of course you can play around with microphone placements in the app. But what I do notice is that it's not just the plugin determining the difference in our tones. I mean, your tone on the record, and in general, it's so beautifully fat and round, and has fuzz and hair on it. I seem to have all these spikes at, like, 4k – I think it's in my picking. [*Laughs*] But even with plugins, it's so obvious to hear the difference in the tones in our fingers.



JS: Yeah, you can't help that. That's always going to happen. We just did a gig in Colorado Springs [*on Sammy Hagar's Best of All Worlds tour*]. Vic Johnson just walked out and plugged into Sam's amp, and it was remarkable how different he sounded. Same stage, nothing changed, y'know?
SV: Do you remember when Billy Gibbons came up and played with us on G3? We're doing a jam lineup. It comes to Joe and he does his beautiful melodic stuff. It comes to me and I do my crazy thing. And then Billy, he just hits a few notes...
JS: ...And suddenly we're in Billy Gibbons World. He'd plugged into one of my amps and you, me and John Petrucci were just stunned. Like, how is it even possible that he could sound so much like himself?
SV: Same thing with Brian May. We're just looking at each other, going, "There it is!" So I guess we're going to find out if there'll be another quantum leap with gear. Would you want to own Paul McCartney's bass if it came up at auction?
JS: That's the one that was stolen, right? And then he finally got it back after years and years. I remember hearing that McCartney purposely tuned a little flat, and I found that so fascinating, how freaky it is that the Beatles always sounded so beautifully in



tune, even when the instruments were out of tune. It's a kind of magic that no other band has ever been able to harness. It transcends equipment somehow.
SV: But do you want to own that bass?
JS: Yeah, I'm gonna call Paul as soon as this interview's over; "Bring that thing over here!"
SV: I remember, I was doing a gig with Experience Hendrix in New York. We had reached out to Paul Allen to see if he would send the Woodstock Strat. And he did, y'know? I remember feeling it and thinking, "This is hard to play." Like, it put up a fight. Would I want to own it? Not really. I don't have a romantic attachment to antique guitars or stars' guitars. I like guitars that maybe have a special or unique feature, like quarter tones, or 16 frets to the octave, or two whammy bars. I collect weird stuff like that.
JS: How about three whammy bars?
SV: The night is still young.
JS: I'm like you. I'm not really a guitar collector. You and I, we have our favorite-shaped neck and fret height. Like, we'll play two guitars for, like, the entire tour. So I understand how when you pick up Hendrix's guitar, you might go, "Wow, it's hard to play." Because you're not instantly Hendrix. A guitar would need some special connection for me to be able to get over its foreign feel. I don't own any relic guitars either. I don't think I've ever purchased, like, a Tom Murphy $14,000 Les Paul or something like that. I tend to like doing all the distressing myself, which I seem to have a great talent for. Give me a brand-new guitar, and after two gigs it looks like someone put it in the dryer. I have literally gotten new guitars and scratched them as they come out of the case.
SV: When that happens to me, I immediately feel a sense of relief. Now that's over with...
JS: ...We can start the music! [*Laughs*] GW

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DEVIL'S Highway

A spooky blues fantasy penned by a high-school dropout, 1986's *Crossroads* made guitar players of the VCR generation. Ralph Macchio, Steve Vai, Arlen Roth and screenwriter John Fusco tell *GW* about faking chops, getting thrown off-set — and why they snubbed Jimmy Page for Satan's guitarist

BY **ADAM KOVAC**

THE SCENE IS burned into the memory of generations of guitar players. On one side, a skinny, stoic kid named Eugene "Lightning Boy" Martone, holding a blonde Fender Telecaster, ripping finger-style pentatonic licks with a slide. On the other, a long-haired wildman in tight leather pants, coming back with his own blinding shred phrases on a bright-red Jackson. A dancer flails around the stage as the two engage in musical battle. Looking on in a dapper suit is the Devil himself as Eugene fights for his very soul.

It's the culminating 10 minutes of the movie *Crossroads*, which celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. Released to largely apathetic audiences in 1986, it has since become a cult classic for those who play, or who just appreciate, guitar.

The script has its origins in an unlikely place — a Connecticut-born kid named John Fusco making the decision to drop out of high school at 16. Fusco was a devotee of the Allman Brothers Band and, while his classmates were wrapping up their degrees, he was heading to Daytona Beach to seek out the venues where his idols had first cut their teeth.

It was at a venue called the Wreck Bar — previously known as the Martinique, site of the first Allman Brothers Band gigs — that he had a chance encounter with Gregg Allman himself. The teenager introduced himself and discussed his dream of becoming a musician and his interest in the blues.

"I sat down with Jimmy Page, and he was like, 'I wanted the role of Jack Butler so badly!'"
JOHN FUSCO

"[*Gregg*] says, 'That's where it's at, man, that's where it's at. Elmore James, Willie Dixon — you've got to really lean into that stuff if you want to know what we do and where that stuff can go and take it somewhere and make it your own."

After a brush with local law enforcement, Fusco headed to New Orleans before eventually, having gotten his own kind of education, heading back north, intent on using what he learned to make his own music. But despite getting into a few bands and heading out on the road for gigs, he soon determined that his destiny lay elsewhere.

"It was while I was on the road with a band called the Dixie Roadducks from Virginia that I had this epiphany, and that was, I was really meant to pursue writing and filmmaking," he says. "It was the first — and original — dream that I had abandoned at a young age because I just couldn't find an outlet for it."

After getting a GED, he applied — and was accepted — to New York University's prestigious film school. In one class, he

COLUMBIA/ALAMY



Before starring in 1986's *Crossroads*, *The Karate Kid* star Ralph Macchio had never even picked up a guitar



Macchio in a scene from *Crossroads*. He still owns the blonde Fender Tele and Pignose amp his character uses in the movie

COLUMBIA/ALAMY

was assigned to write a 10-page short film, but, misunderstanding the task, Fusco instead ended up writing a full-length movie. Following the old advice of writing what you know, he penned a script he called *Blues Water*, a Southern music drama set in Florida.

While the script might have been around 10 times longer than what was expected, Fusco's instructor was so impressed by the result that he encouraged the young man to enter it into a national competition, which it ultimately ended up winning. He sold the grand prize — a new Nissan — to keep paying his tuition.

Searching for his next idea, he was struck by an anecdote that his then-girlfriend-now-wife told him about an elderly Black man in the assisted-living facility where she worked who would bust out his harmonica. She invited him to meet the man, and the wheels in his head started spinning.

"I had this kind of fantasy," he says. "I was like, 'What if he turns out to be an obscure master or has some connection [*to one*], and he's got unfinished business? My writer's mind was going crazy! But when I got there, he had pretty advanced dementia and would just pipe on one note on the harmonica."

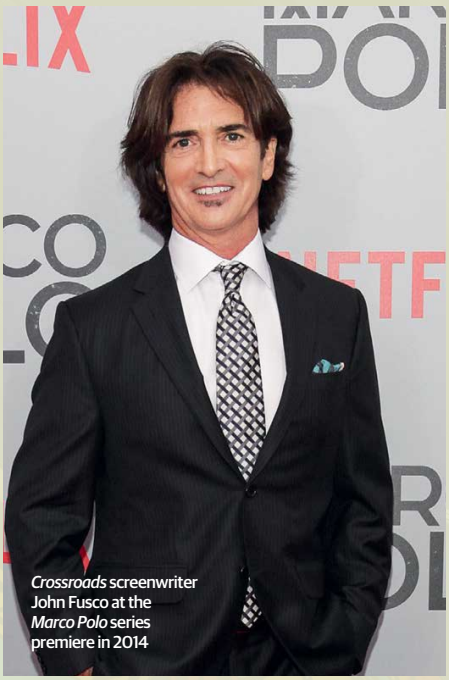
On the advice of one of his teachers, *Serpico* and *Midnight Cowboy* screenwriter Waldo Salt, Fusco began to flesh out his vision: the old master, stuck in an old-people's home, setting out on a road trip with a young, classically-trained blues lover, in search of a lost song from the original bluesman, Robert Johnson.

"I'd always been an old-time rock 'n' roll fan, so there was a passion there for that story"
RALPH MACCHIO

"I was so pumped to be writing that script, and I had felt that this is what my six years on the road was all about," Fusco says. "It's all leading to this. This is the distillation of my passions and obsessions."

The end result was a story about the deep river of the blues through American culture. Eugene Martone meets an old harmonica player, Willie Brown, and helps him escape from an assisted-living facility. The two head off on the road in search of a lost Robert Johnson song. But Brown has an ulterior motive; like in the actual Johnson "standing at the crossroads" myth, he had sold his soul to the devil for his musical talent and now wants to call off the deal.

The completed script was picked up by Columbia Pictures. The studio had a few directors in mind, including Walter Hill,



Crossroads screenwriter John Fusco at the *Marco Polo* series premiere in 2014

"I don't know how many views there are of the duel on YouTube, but it's become iconic"
JOHN FUSCO

who had already hit paydirt with 1979's *The Warriors* and the 1982 Eddie Murphy/Nick Nolte buddy-cop action comedy *48 Hrs.*

"I was a Walter Hill fan because I loved the muscularity of his style, and I particularly loved his 1975 film *Hard Times* with Charles Bronson," Fusco says. "I felt like Walter could really bring something to this."

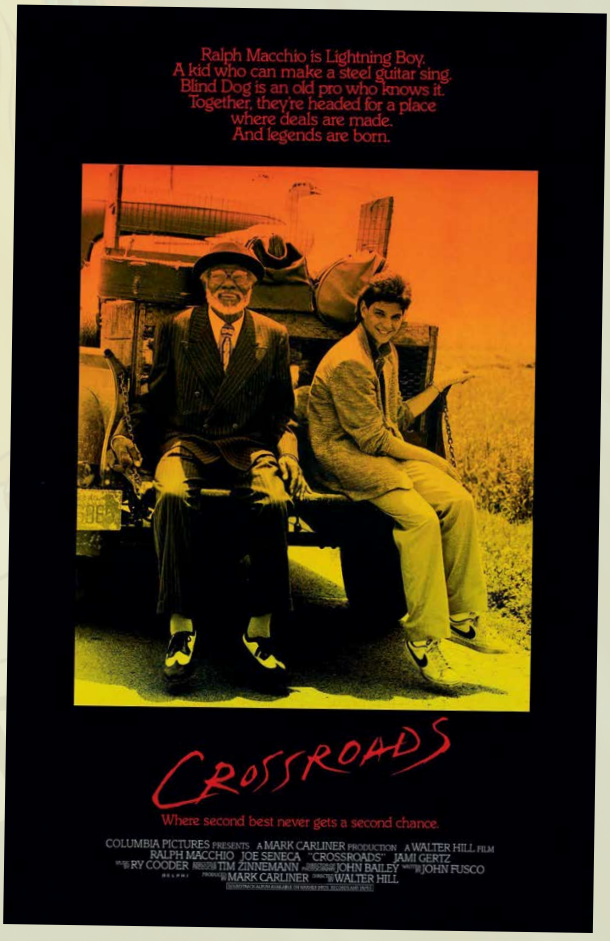
The two met up and started to talk about music — the old Delta blues that would need to make up the majority of the soundtrack. Hill pointed out that one of his most frequent collaborators was the guitarist, composer, producer and all-around musical encyclopedia Ry Cooder, who had played with everyone from John Lee Hooker to the Rolling Stones to Neil Young (Cooder declined to be interviewed for this feature).

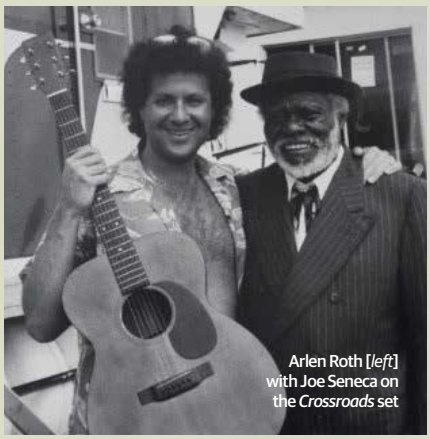
After recruiting Cooder, the movie needed a lead actor to play the role of Eugene. There were a number of hot young actors who got bandied about — Sean Penn wanted the role (and Fusco liked his gravitas), and Tom Cruise was considered. But Hill was set on Cruise's co-star in the 1983 film *The Outsiders*, Ralph Macchio, who had just had a huge hit in 1984's *The Karate Kid*.

For his part, Macchio was thrilled at the prospect of working with Hill. It didn't hurt that, like *Crossroads*, *The Karate Kid* had been a Columbia Pictures film. But business aside, the decision to do the movie was "creative as well," Macchio says. "Having someone of [*Hill's*] caliber of a filmmaker and the blues, to me, I'd always been an old-time rock 'n' roll fan — the Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen early on, and Eric Clapton. So there was a passion there for that story."

Macchio might've had passion for rock and blues, but what he didn't have was any kind of chops; he had never so much as held a guitar before. As the movie picked up steam, it became evident that, for there to be any kind of credibility to his performance, he'd have to at least look like he could play Eugene's classical and blues riffs. Hill recruited Arlen Roth — a sideman who had a slew of notable touring and recording gigs under his belt, and who had worked with Cooder in the past — to see if he could get Macchio's hands into shape.

"Ralph thought he could just turn into a guitar player, because I was going to teach him for two months before the movie, but I'm not going to give him 50 years of my experience in two months," Roth says.





Arlen Roth [*left*] with Joe Seneca on the *Crossroads* set

With the concept of "turning Macchio into a guitar player" out of consideration, the task shifted to turning him into the world's best guitar mime. Eugene's background added a wrinkle; in the movie, he's a classically trained guitarist who longs to play the blues. The two genres require very different approaches to the instrument, which basically resulted in twice the workload for Macchio. He and Roth spent hours at Macchio's Long Island home, focusing on specific movement and posture. There were some bad habits that required breaking; Macchio initially insisted on wearing his slide on the wrong finger.

"I said, 'Ralph, the minute you start doing it on your second finger, I know that I [*as a movie viewer*] wouldn't believe it,'" Roth says. While acknowledging the majority of audiences wouldn't care, the actor took the criticism to heart.

"I learned how to play the basics, but really, it's another set of muscles to not be able to really play, but to look like you're really playing," Macchio says. "You know, it's body language, it's everything else. And I took a great deal of pride in that." While some of the closeup shots are of Roth's hands, the instructor only had to fill in for the student on a handful of occasions.

For his part, Roth was impressed by his pupil's work ethic. While *Crossroads* was in pre-production, so was *The Karate Kid Part II*, meaning Macchio often would wrap up a grueling session preparing for one movie, only to head out and start training in martial arts for the other. In the end, the practice paid off so much that, according to Roth, Hill revised the script to add in even more guitar playing scenes, in order to up the authenticity.

SHOOTING AT THE CROSSROADS

THE ACTUAL SHOOTING of the movie was relatively painless, according

COLUMBIA/ALAMY, STEPHEN VAUGHAN (COURTESY OF ARLEN ROTH)

to those who were on set. What Macchio remembers is it being "hot, very hot," as the production moved to shoot on location in Mississippi. Beyond the hard work Macchio put in to pull off the look of a guitar player, there was an effort to fit in as much authenticity as possible by casting actual blues players in some of the small roles. Cooder, Fusco, Roth and harmonica player John "Juke" Logan took a trip to the Delta to "look for some of the real-deal guys, and bring them out and put them in the movie, in the jukehouse scenes, and bring them to L.A. and have them record and put it on the album and create something special with the soundtrack," Fusco says.

Even more blues was happening offscreen. Roth had come down to help on music scenes as the shoot went on, but often found himself with downtime. He ended up spending his time off checking out local guitar shops and venues; that led to chance encounters like hanging out with Albert King and driving around in Little Milton's power blue Cadillac convertible.

"That was the real fun part of it; [*it was*] like we were busy living the real life in Mississippi, while the movie was sort of mimicking it," Roth says.

Fusco even found time to visit the movie's namesake — the actual crossroads at the intersection of U.S. highways 61 and 49 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, where Robert Johnson supposedly sold his soul. While that location's historical and cultural significance is now marked by a monument made up of two guitars, at the time, it was just a thoroughfare near a dusty old Baptist church that had recently been wrecked by a fallen oak tree.

> **"I was very intense, and that intensity was something I reached for in the role of Butler"**
> **STEVE VAI**

The church had so much personality that Hill insisted on shooting footage there, though it ultimately didn't make the final cut. A crew came in to restore it, with a plan of giving it back to the community once shooting was done. Instead, it was decided to use an actual service as a setting; Eugene and Willie Brown (played by Broadway veteran Joe Seneca), along with Jami Gertz's drifter love interest, Frances, take in a fire-and-brimstone sermon alongside actual parishioners.

"It was one of the most rewarding experiences of the whole *Crossroads* journey for me," Fusco says.

STEVE'S TRICK BAG

WHILE THE MOVIE has some fine performances and themes — it even touches on the racial tensions inherent to Black music made in and inspired by the Deep South — its creators knew it would live and die by its ending. In the most pivotal scene, the Devil offers a deal; if Eugene can beat his guitar player in a duel, Willie gets to keep his soul. If he loses, the Devil gets Lightning Boy's soul as well.

While played very straight in the end result, the original draft of the script left it all much more up to interpretation on whether this was real, or all in Willie Brown's head. In Fusco's head, this was meant to be a pure blues battle, with Eugene facing off against a series of players, culminating in his one-on-one with Jack Butler, Satan's personal guitarist. There was even footage shot that had singer/guitarist Shuggie Otis coming in as a sort of undercard. Ultimately, Cooder and Hill decided the whole concept needed to be rethought, due to the optics of a white man beating a Black artist in a blues competition.

A number of names were tossed out to play Butler; Fusco says Johnny Winter, Frank Zappa and Keith Richards all expressed interest in the role, as well as one other legend. One night in a resort in the rainforest of St. Lucia, he was in the bar with his wife when he noticed someone else hanging around.

"I said, 'Hey, look, even Jimmy Page is here.' And she started laughing, and said, 'You know, you're always seeing people that you think are somebody, and it always makes me laugh, because it doesn't look anything like them. But for once, you're right.'"

It was, in fact, the legendary Led Zeppelin leader. Gathering his courage, he walked over and mentioned as an icebreaker that he had once shot a movie near the Scottish mansion of occult figure Aleister Crowley, a home that Page had once lived in. "I sat down with him, and he finds out that I wrote *Crossroads*, and he was like, 'I wanted that role so badly.'"

All those players, who had their roots in the blues, would have fit with the initial musical concept, which had Lightning Boy facing off against someone playing the same genre as him — Roth says a recording session was actually held where he and Cooder battled on slide. But Hill thought it was lacking a bit of punch and Butler's part needed to be more aggressive, and he worried that a major rock star would be too distracting to audiences.

"Ultimately, Walter and Ry felt that if any of those guys played, it would break the spell," Fusco says.

Whoever was going to play Butler needed to be able to convincingly play complex licks while simultaneously giving off an air of pure evil — and also being relatively unknown to audiences.

ENTER STEVE VAI

WHILE ALREADY FAMILIAR to guitar aficionados, having spent time as a sideman with Frank Zappa, released his landmark 1984 debut instrumental album *Flex-Able*, and undergone a stint replacing Yngwie Malmsteen in Alcatrazz, Steve Vai wasn't a familiar face to general audiences (though that was soon to change; he was just about to join up with David Lee Roth, one of the defining rock frontmen of the Eighties).

According to Vai, his name came up after Cooder gave a call to *Guitar Player* magazine



Macchio — as "Lightning Boy" Martone — jams with locals in a scene from *Crossroads*

COLUMBIA/ALAMY

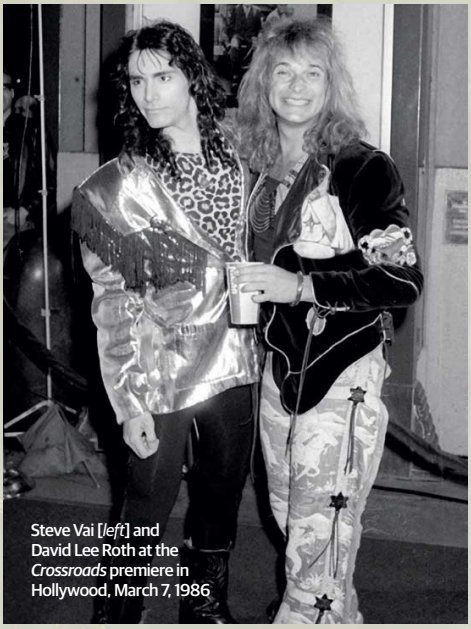
asking who the newest hot shot on the scene was.

"I had recently submitted 'The Attitude Song' from my first solo record to *Guitar Player*, and they were putting it in the magazine," Vai says. "So they played him 'The Attitude Song' over the phone, and he said, 'That's the guy.'"

Vai immediately took to the script – his outgoing personality made him a natural for a theater-like production and instinctively knew playing Lucifer's favorite guitarist would require a little bit of hamminess, as well as the deep, occasionally fearsome, fervor that had driven him to master his instrument.

"I was very intense in my head, very intense, and I took that with me to California in 1980, and that sort of intensity was something that I reached for in this role," Vai says. "You know, it's a deep darkness, it's a devil-may-care attitude for everybody and anything."

But while the scene takes the form of a jam, the music needed to actually be meticulously planned out and recorded ahead of time. Vai and Cooder got to work mapping out how it would all work – Eugene's bottleneck licks versus Butler's shredding, with the intensity gradually getting upped. While there were notes in the script about what should be going on musically – at one point, Vai says, there was direction that Butler make his guitar sound like a freight train, resulting in Vai using a riff that later appeared on his song "Bad Horsie" – Vai and Cooder were tasked with turning those sentences into real music.



Steve Vai [*left*] and David Lee Roth at the *Crossroads* premiere in Hollywood, March 7, 1986

RON GALELLA/RON GALELLA COLLECTION VIA GETTY IMAGES

"No one could have done Butler better than Vai – his strut, his playing, what he brought to the music..."
JOHN FUSCO

"We would talk about it and come up with things," Vai says. "There were a lot of different pieces through that whole dual section. Some of them I would record, and then he would take and do the answers, because Ry was playing all the slide."

As the two switch off harmonizing with each other and going head-to-head, the band cuts out and Vai unleashes a frantic flurry of dive bombs, blazing legato runs and frantic alternate picking. All seems lost, until Eugene responds with his own solo – eschewing the bottleneck he'd been relying on to that point, he falls back on his formal education, flawlessly executing a classical run that spanned the entirety of the guitar's neck, a composition that has become known to guitarists as "Eugene's Trick Bag."

That run was written by Vai, but was greatly influenced by composer Niccolo Paganini's Caprice No. 5 and a classical guitarist named William Kanengiser, who had actually stood in for Macchio in a scene

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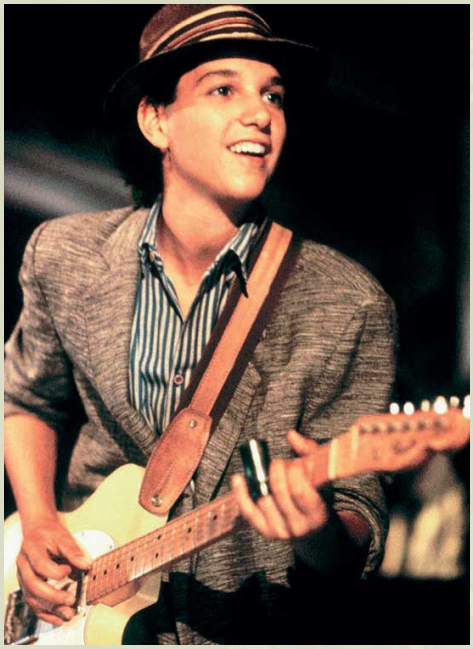
early in the movie where Eugene is practicing some arpeggios.

"It's a very common kind of a classical guitar thing, so I took a piece of that, and I mixed it with Vai-type blues," Vai says. "Something I wanted to clarify is, a portion of that was composed by Bill."

While composing the music was a challenge, working in music hadn't prepared Vai for life on a movie set, where "hurry up and wait" is a way of life. Though the two would find themselves getting on famously later on, bonding over their shared Long Island backgrounds, Macchio remembers keeping his distance from Vai during the shoot – both to focus on nailing his mimed slide playing, and also because Vai's character was "the enemy. Just a guy who was in the way, kicking my ass."

Instead, Vai found a partner in mischief in Roth, leading to a lifetime of inside jokes between the two guitarists. Roth remembers Seneca struggling with a line – "This is the mojo bag" – leading to a temporary breakdown in discipline on the set.

"He kept flubbing the line, and the more he messed it up, the more me and Steve just started cracking up so much," he says. "To this day, we still keep calling each other 'Mojo Man.' The assistant director, whose name I don't remember, threw me and Steve out."



Just when the scene appeared to be done, when the footage was reviewed, Hill felt like Eugene hadn't won decisively enough. The entire set had to be rebuilt for a quick reshoot.

"I had to re-record the ending, when I lose, to make it more obvious, and they had to get all the extras back, for like, one day, for just one scene that was me losing," Vai says. "So I kind of didn't deliver well enough the first time. I guess I just couldn't allow myself to look that bad!"

To make his defeat more obvious, Vai slipped in a few more subtle bum notes, ultimately leading up to his screeching, painful out-of-tune bend, which, quite literally, brings him to his knees.

"I go down, and, of course, it's appropriate for something like that, but a part of me sees it's just ridiculous," Vai says. "It felt ridiculous to do it, because it was all fake. So I would go down and I'd find myself laughing, and once I started to laugh, Arlen would start. You ever been in a situation with somebody where once you're just humoring each other, you just can't stop?"

After all the hard work of composing and shooting, what was left was a tight six minutes, featuring some of the most fearsome guitar licks ever to hit the big screen.

"The music and the cinematography in that scene, everything comes together," Macchio says. "I still can't look away when I watch it. I could still watch that and be proud of what we were able to pull off."

Classic rock aficionado Fusco was initially skeptical of how the scene was reframed, and had been eager to work with Winter or Richards or any of the other potential Jack



"I learned how to play the basics, but really, it's another set of muscles to not be able to really play, but to look like you're really playing," Macchio says

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Butlers. While inserting any of those players would've been exciting for rock fans, Fusco now believes ultimately the right man got the job.

"No one could have done it better, man," he says. "His slithering-serpent strut, his playing, what he brought to the music. I don't know how many views there are of the duel on YouTube, but it's become iconic."

That iconic status was not immediate; the film was not a box office success. It pulled in just below $6 million during its run in theaters, making it the 112th highest-grossing movie of the year.

Perhaps that's fitting; plenty of bluesmen died penniless, only to enjoy posthumous celebration as American treasures. *Crossroads* has enjoyed a lengthy afterlife, slowly growing its reputation as a cult classic among guitar players and blues lovers. None other than Tom Morello has called it his favorite movie with a guitar player – heady praise for a genre that includes *This Is Spinal Tap*.

The movie got passed around in various forms. While today the headcutter scene is still racking up views on YouTube, older viewers had to find *Crossroads* in different forms, such as via DVD or file-sharing websites.

"I was 12, and VCRs were a new thing," remembers Charlie Starr, vocalist and guitarist for Blackberry Smoke. "In fact, I don't know the details of the VCR, but I do know this – my family did not have one. We had a single mom working two jobs to make ends meet. We'd go to the Kroger in town to buy groceries, and they had a brand-new movie rental section, and they also rented VCR machines that were enclosed in big plastic boxes. I don't remember the first time I saw *Crossroads*, but I do remember the next 500 times I saw it! Every time we went, I rented that movie to the point where my mom was like, 'Son, you know there are other movies that you can rent here.'"



"I had to re-record losing the duel, to make it more obvious. [*At first*] I couldn't allow myself to look bad!"
STEVE VAI

The film's lack of immediate financial success also didn't seem to have any negative effects on the careers of those who worked to bring it to life. Macchio's other 1986 film, the first sequel to *The Karate Kid*, was third in that year's movie earnings, behind only *Top Gun* and *Crocodile Dundee*.

While the Karate Kid movies were the peak of his career as a leading man, Macchio has worked steadily to this day, including starring in another stone cold classic in 1992's *My Cousin Vinny*. He may have been in more celebrated and widely remembered films, but *Crossroads* remains a sentimental favorite. He's literally brought a piece of it with him – he's still in possession of Lightning Boy's blonde Telecaster, slide and Pignose amp.

"Musicians would love to have that guitar," he says with a laugh. "Well, when I can't



keep the lights on, I have that and the yellow '47 Ford convertible from *The Karate Kid*."

While we're at it, the tale of Vai's red movie-prop Jackson is a whole other mythical story unto itself; for more on that, seek out the June 2021 issue of *Guitar World* or do a Google search for "Tracking down Steve Vai's elusive *Crossroads* Jackson – the most famous guitar that was never heard."

Vai, of course, went on to become one of the preeminent shredders of his day, and still gets recognized by fans as the Devil's guitar player. Roth continued as one of the most sought-after sidemen in music, and eventually taught another Hollywood star how to be a convincing guitarist on screen; he was actor Michael Shannon's teacher for the 2022 George Jones/Tammy Wynette bioseries *George & Tammy*. Hill continued directing and producing movies.

Fusco hit paydirt with his next movie, the 1988 western *Young Guns*, and later created the Netflix series *Marco Polo* (2014). But, like the protagonist of his first movie, Fusco couldn't shake the music bug. In recent years, he's put out a number of blues-rock albums. Alongside gigs with his band, he can be found sitting in with bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd.

But despite long, accomplished careers, the story of Lightning Boy has been hard for its creators to shake. There've even been rumblings of a sequel – and why not? Macchio had a huge hit with Netflix's *Cobra Kai*, which brought back the characters from the original Karate Kid movies and found new, engaging stories to tell. Despite that career, *Crossroads* lingers as a high mark, one of the major pieces of his body of work that people still approach him on the street about.

And, as Fusco points out, blues music is hot in Hollywood right now; the themes of blues, racial politics and deals with the devil that ran through *Crossroads*' veins are also the lifeblood of 2025 smash hit and critical darling *Sinners*.

The writer and the star have stayed in touch over the years, bonding as much over the pain of their New York Jets fandom as anything.

"Ralph and I, we call... and he's like, 'Man, you know we should do some kind of anniversary thing.' And I said, 'We should do the freaking sequel.' He's like, 'No shit, really? Do you have an idea?' I said, 'Yeah, I have an idea for it.' So Ralph and I have talked about it. We've got a plan."

"I don't remember the first time I saw *Crossroads*, but I do remember the next 500 times I saw it"
CHARLIE STARR

Exactly what a *Crossroads 2* would look like is a secret, but Fusco allowed that it would be "exciting to music fans, to blues purists."

"It would be years and years later, less about Eugene Martone and more about someone relevant today," Macchio says. "I can't go into deep dive on that stuff, but I haven't given up on it."

For his part, Vai is down to reprise the role of Butler; after going down so humiliatingly, he feels that some payback is owed.

"I know Ralph wants to kick my ass," he says with a laugh. "Jack Butler needs his revenge!"

Even if the sequel doesn't come to pass and Lightning Boy's story ends as he walks away from the crossroads with his soul intact, its legacy is secure. A movie written by a high-school dropout, who chose to venture into the Deep South in search of the origins of music that is pure and real, has lived on, and no deal with the Devil was required.

"*Crossroads* gave so much to my soul – because of all of this stuff we're talking about," Fusco says. "I wouldn't trade that." GW



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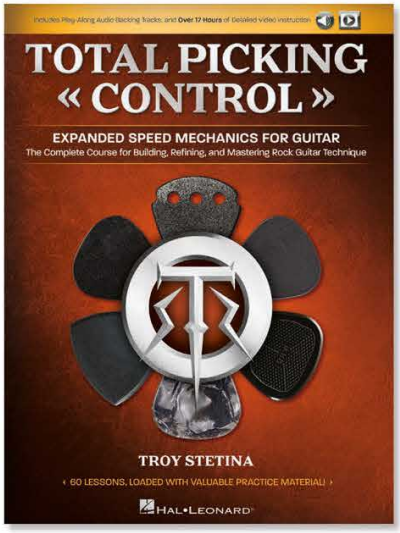

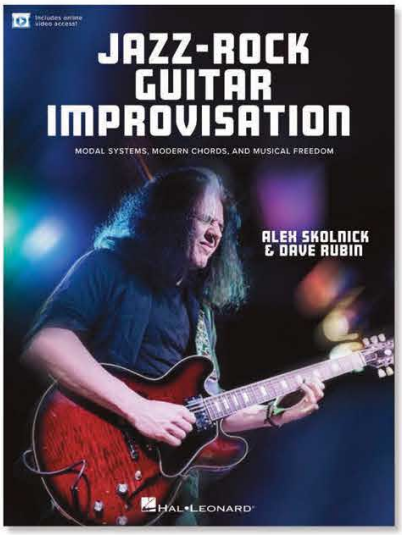

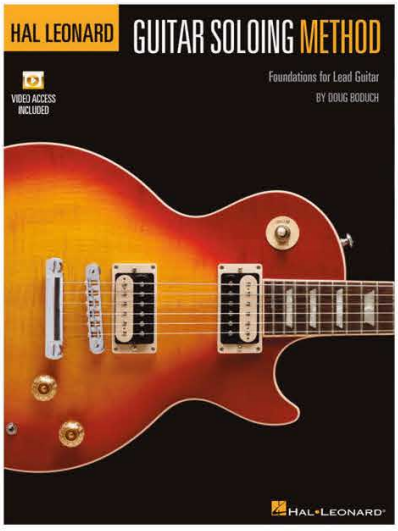

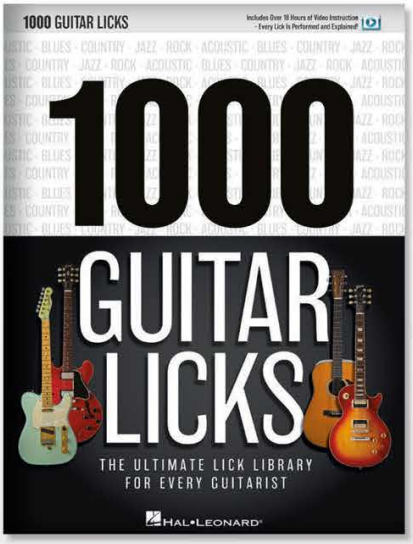

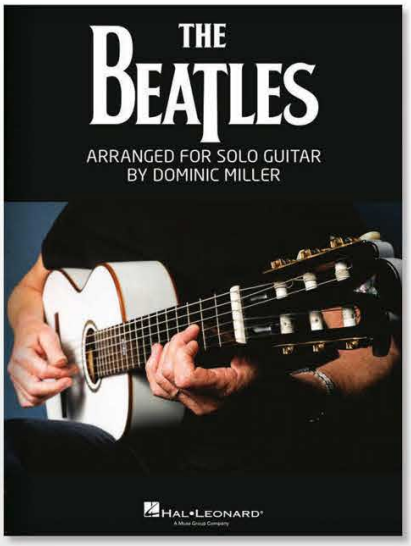

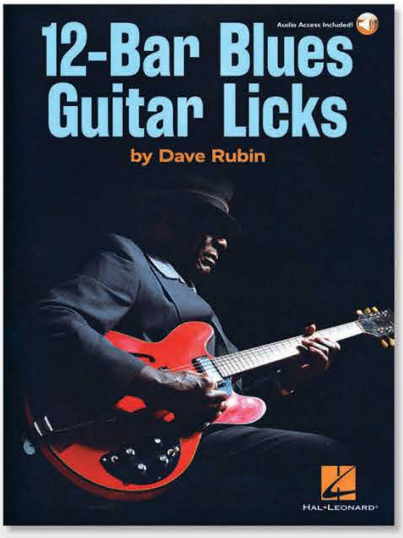

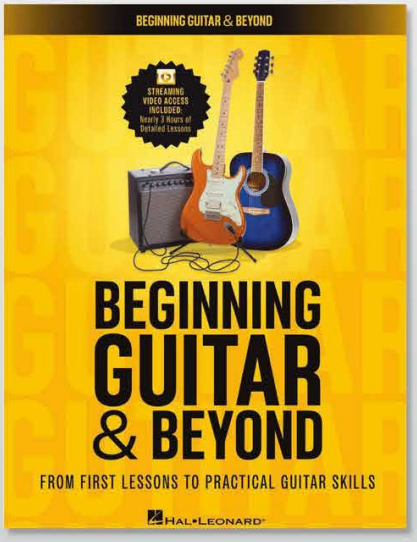

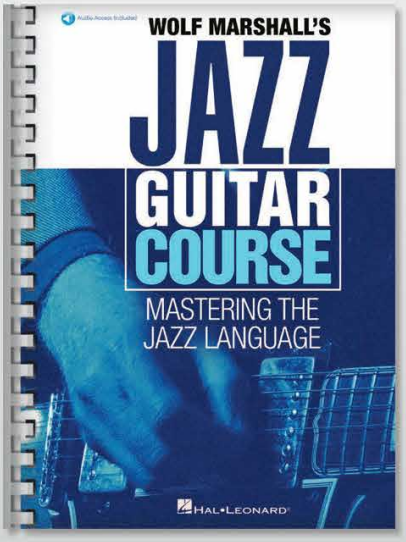

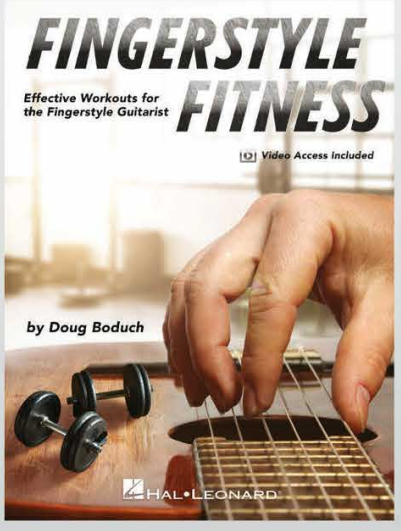

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Epiphone Marcus King El Dorado

Epiphone revives its early 1970s Japanese-made model in the form of a very special signature edition

BY DAVID MEAD

THE HISTORY OF the Epiphone El Dorado might seem a little convoluted, but bear with us while we offer a thumbnail sketch of this model's past.

Originally made in Gibson's Kalamazoo factory in Michigan, the El Dorado was introduced into the USA catalog in 1963, its square-shouldered dreadnought shape and large 16.25-inch (412.7-mm) body width mimicking Gibson's own recently released Hummingbird and Dove acoustics.

It was dropped from the USA line at the beginning of the 1970s, when Epiphone manufacture was switched to Japan, and was subsequently built at the Matsumoku factory. Here it became known as the FT-350 and enjoyed a few cosmetic changes while keeping its large dread credentials.

It was a Japanese El Dorado that became the soulful, genre-straddling guitar virtuoso Marcus King's first guitar. And in honor of this, Epiphone has released a time-limited, made-in-China edition that sits just underneath that all-important $1K price point.

Casting a casual eye over the Epiphone El Dorado we have in front of us, it doesn't exactly scream "signature guitar." But then the eye is drawn to the outline of King's home state of South Carolina in mother-of-pearl on one side of the bridge and Tennessee's Tri-Star emblem on the other.

The pickguard is modeled after the one on King's original Seventies guitar

Flip the guitar over, and just above the neck volute it's possible to make out King's signature in gold. All very subtle touches, devoid of any unnecessary flash. We like it. Meanwhile, if you were wondering about the somewhat "mod art" pickguard, this apparently is modeled after the one on King's original Seventies guitar.

Perusing the El Dorado's spec, we find a spruce top, unspecified as to which exact type, but Sitka would be very high on the list of suspects as it's a fairly common timber to find on Chinese-made instruments. In any case, it looks very fit for purpose, and the Antique Natural gloss finish sets it off nicely and offers a subtle helping of vintage chic along the way.

The guitar's back and sides are rosewood (again, no precise







PHIL BARKER





designation, but we suspect Indian), but the finish hasn't done the grain pattern any favors on our example as it's barely visible. That's a shame, because rosewood can be a beautiful wood to look at.

But, of course, results may vary from guitar to guitar, and so on other models it might be more apparent. The neck is mahogany, with a rosewood 'board, festooned with real mother-of-pearl block inlays.

From what we've seen so far, the fixtures and fittings on the El Dorado reach far beyond its modest retail price, especially when we mention that the guitar comes in a very attractive black hard guitar case, itself embossed with King's signature in gold.

Elsewhere, we find bone used for both the 43mm nut and compensated saddle, plus Epiphone's own Kluson-like Deluxe tuners with metal buttons and a headstock shape that once again doffs its cap to King's original Japanese-made model.

There's also an onboard pickup in the form of an LR Baggs Element Bronze VTC, with the controls tucked away out of sight at the top of the soundhole. Overall, it's an attractive package, especially if you're a fan of larger dreadnought guitars. And if you're curious as to what it sounds like, so were we.

Turning the guitar over in our hands, there are no badly polished frets to contend with and no sharp edges as we run our fingers along the neck, so we can assume that Epi's Chinese-based quality-control department is up to speed.

There were a couple of "pings" from the nut when we were tuning the guitar, but these soon disappeared after a while, and afterwards it held its tuning well while we had it.

The neck is what Epiphone refers to as a "rounded C" and feels slightly chunkier than a Sixties Strat but is far from being unwieldy. We did notice that the guitar feels weightier than we would have expected. At approximately 5.5 lbs., it's certainly a lapful, but that's far from a deal-breaker.

Experimenting with a few campfire chords, we found a full and strident voice — if you've ever picked up and strummed, say, a Gibson Hummingbird, you'll know what we mean. There's quite a reserve of power to the dynamic range, and the guitar remained perfectly musical from a whisper to a roar.

We tried some fingerstyle as well, and the El Dorado gave a very good account of itself here, too. If we were being hypercritical, we'd say there are a few notes around the F# in the lower register that don't ring out quite as stridently as the rest, but these weren't dead spots as such and possibly merely a foible with this particular instrument.

It's always difficult to foretell how an acoustic guitar will develop given the passage of time. But, from what we hear today, there's every chance that the El Dorado could turn out to be quite the investment.

We tried it through the acoustic channel of our handy Boss Katana-50 EX and hit our first hurdle as the battery that comes with the guitar was dead. This has happened often in the past — and it's not really anyone's fault — so we always have an emergency battery standing by just for this sort of eventuality.

It did remind us what a mini-pain it is to slacken off all the strings and wrestle with the little Velcroed pouch attached to the neckplate, though. But all the detuning and re-tuning got rid of those "pinging" strings we mentioned earlier and so the journey was worthwhile. What we heard before we retrieved our precious Duracell was what we expected. The LR Baggs does a very good job of enhancing the natural sound of the guitar and setting a sound we enjoyed was quick and trouble-free.

The Marcus King El Dorado easily hits the benchmark Epiphone has set in that it's a nicely built guitar with a set of very capable sounds that compares well with instruments costing at least twice as much. GW

PHIL BARKER



MANUFACTURER: Epiphone, gibson.com

PRICE: $999

PROS

+ A well-made and nicely voiced dreadnought
+ It has an extra helping of collectability
+ Quality electronics

CONS

– A little weighty, and not everyone is a fan of larger dreads

VERDICT: If you ever find yourself in the market for a fully-equipped and stage-ready dreadnought, the Epiphone Marcus King El Dorado should definitely feature on your shopping list.

Steadfast Stopbar

If you have a guitar with a stopbar tailpiece, this changes everything

BY PAUL RIARIO

WHEN FLOYD ROSE commercially introduced his double-locking bridge-and-nut system at the dawn of the Eighties, it was a genuine gamechanger, thanks to its ingenious locking design that kept strings remarkably stable under heavy abuse.

So, what the hell does Floyd Rose have to do with the Steadfast Stopbar tailpiece we're reviewing here? Well, for starters, Floyd Rose's original invention showed guitarists that locking down the strings is key to tuning stability — whether behind the nut or at the bridge. Steadfast takes that same basic concept and flips it on its head, locking the strings in reverse at the stopbar tailpiece — particularly on guitars equipped with the traditional TOM-style bridge design.

Is the Steadfast Stopbar a gamechanger? In some ways, absolutely — but it comes down to how you prefer to keep your strings locked in place and whether using a tool to secure them is a method you find comfortable and convenient.

The Steadfast Stopbar looks exactly like, well, your typical Gibson-style stopbar tailpiece — except for a few ingenious details and, more importantly, a build that seems like it could last forever. It's a direct drop-in replacement for a standard stopbar, but instead of the usual die-cast zinc alloy, Steadfast uses CNC-machined billet 6061 aluminum, resulting in an exceptionally lightweight, corrosion-resistant tailpiece that, according to Steadfast, can also provide a tonal upgrade. There's a range of colors, finishes and Custom Shop configurations to suit almost any top-mount stopbar-equipped guitar. Here, we're testing out the 24kt gold-plated Custom version ($169).

The Steadfast retains the familiar string-entry and -exit points of a conventional stopbar, but is essentially engineered in reverse to accommodate its locking system. Six top-mounted holes house stainless-steel set screws that clamp the strings in place using the included 2.5-mm hex wrench (the Pro and Faded versions use black-oxide-coated steel set screws). Their flat bottoms and rounded edges securely clamp the strings without digging into or cutting them, while their corrosion resistance ensures long-term durability.

MANUFACTURER: Steadfast, steadfaststopbar.com

PRICE: from $99

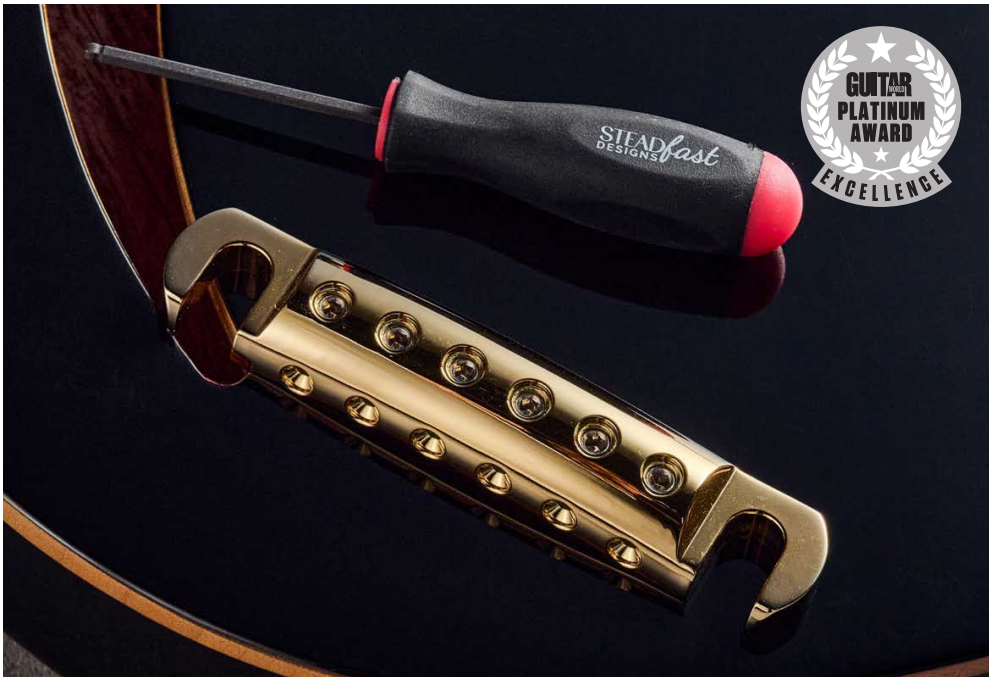
PROS

+ Reduces string stress and cuts restringing time by up to 75 percent
+ Innovative double-locking system for tuning stability
+ Easy drop-in upgrade fits U.S. and metric spacing

CONS

– Traditionalists will never think of swapping out their original stop bar
– Some may not want the hassle of using the included tool to lock strings

VERDICT: You get a locking system that keeps your strings secure while preserving the original look of your instrument. Its rock-solid design makes string changes quick and keeps tuning remarkably stable, much like a locking tremolo.



LUCY ROBINSON

You thread the ball ends into the tuning posts, align the strings toward the tailpiece and feed the loose ends through the Steadfast. Once you pull them through, simply tighten the set screws to lock everything in place. Essentially, the Steadfast turns the stop bar into a locking nut — only in reverse. By anchoring the ball ends at the tuning posts, you reduce string drift and slippage from excess winds, allowing you to tune up faster and maintain better tuning stability. We know it sounds counterintuitive, but trust us, it works.

One particularly clever design detail is the Steadfast tailpiece's downward-sloped rear edge, which angles toward the body, so that when you cut the excess string wire, it keeps the trimmed string ends safely tucked downwards and away from slicing open your picking hand.

We outfitted our Gibson Les Paul Custom with the Steadfast Stopbar Custom, which looks almost identical to the original tailpiece save for the six locking holes on top. Swapping tailpieces is a little tricky at first because there are no strings to hold the Steadfast in place, but once the first string is installed, changing strings becomes a breeze.

We installed a fresh set, pulled the strings through, locked them down, stretched them and trimmed the excess. The low E slipped and slackened considerably during its first few stretches, but we suspect the string was still seated at the ball end, rather than slipping at the set screw. It's a little unnerving to think those small screws can do the job, but boy, they securely lock all six strings in place.

Once everything was stretched and tuned to pitch, the guitar stayed remarkably in tune. Even more surprising, we could hear a tonal difference. The Les Paul sounded more lively and felt springier, and the entire restringing process took just a few minutes.

We'd considered swapping our standard tuners for locking ones, but not anymore. Instead, we swapped the stock stopbar for the Steadfast, and now our guitar plays better than ever and stays in tune. We have a feeling you're going to start seeing Steadfast tailpieces on plenty of pro players' guitars. It's that good. Right now, it's on our main stage guitar, and it ain't coming off. GW



Steelyjam Delta Junior

Is aluminum the future of guitar bodies?

BY MATT McCRACKEN

STEELYJAM IS A two-person Belgian operation helmed by Arthur Devreux and Jean-Baptiste Demarcin. The initial concept of the steel-body guitar was first conceived in 2005, but it wasn't until 2022 that aluminum replaced the steel construction. Now there's a selection of shapes and series, all combining aluminum bodies with wooden necks. The Delta is part of the company's raw hand-brushed Junior range, alongside the Alpha and Junior.

The body itself is hollow aluminum, made via CNC machining and laser cutting into a welded structure. This gives the Delta extremely stable construction, resistant to humidity and temperature changes. It also creates a Faraday cage, which shields the interior from electronic interference. In theory, that means no 60-cycle hum from the single P90.

The neck is African mahogany with a modern "C" profile, while on the front face there's a rosewood fretboard with a 12-inch radius. Acrylic trapezoid inlays complete a much more traditional neck setup. It's a 24.75-inch scale with a bone nut, and atop the headstock are Steelyjam's standard tuning machines.

At the opposite end, we have a Steelyjam standard hardtail bridge with six saddles and a pair of chrome knobs for controlling volume and tone. A single Steelyjam P90 pickup completes the electronics lineup. Everything is wired to a SteelyJam universal wiring board that takes plug-in components, meaning no soldering is required if you need to swap parts.

With the Steelyjam Delta Junior out of its plush gig bag, we were really taken aback by the design of the body.

OLLY CURTIS





OLLY CURTIS

The raw, scratched aluminum of the Delta Junior's body looks like the surface of some far-away planet

The raw, scratched aluminum looks like the surface of some far-away planet, unable to protect itself without an atmosphere.

It's a very well put together instrument, and surprisingly lightweight at 7.1 lbs. considering that a large portion of it is made from metal. The edges are smooth all over, and nowhere did we find even a hint of sharp metal. Unsurprisingly, it's very cool to the touch.

It comes fitted with 10-46 electric guitar strings, but the Gibson-style scale made it feel very slinky when played. It didn't take long for us to start flying around the fretboard, and it's really easy to bend full tones and more. The medium jumbo frets offer that nice middle ground of giving us something to push against when bending up, while still letting us feel the wood.

With the Delta Junior going through our pedalboard and into a Orange Rocker 32 tube amp in a band rehearsal, we were very enamored with the sound of the guitar. The P90 felt very high-output, and managed to cut nicely through our typically effects-laden sound.

The clarity was fantastic from the pickup overall, cutting through the full mix nicely without us having to adjust our existing setup, which is geared for a Telecaster. Though unfortunately there wasn't much flexibility from the volume pot, which didn't clean up all that well, and got duller as we turned it down.

With the guitar in our home studio, we were able to put it under the microscope in isolation and learn more. The Delta Junior resonated really nicely acoustically, to be much preferable over a typical solid body.

Plugging into our audio interface alongside Line 6's Helix Stadium Native, the single pickup delivered a lovely mid-range tone with a little hint of that natural acoustic resonance running underneath. It wasn't as pronounced as you'd find with a classic semi-hollow guitar, but it added a little extra something to the tone of the Delta Junior.

Is it noiseless? Well, not entirely. It was certainly less noisy than our single-coil-equipped Strat, but we could hear some noise when we got the P90 really close to the screen of our laptop. On a clean amp, it was hard to hear, but there was noticeable noise when we switched to an Orange emulation and stuck a fuzz pedal in front of it.

With a heavy amplifier engaged, we ran into the limitations of the single pickup. For palm-muting and single-note licks, there was some nice clarity when we ladled on the gain. For those slower, doomy power chords, however, it's a bit lacking in low end, which is where a neck pickup would come in mighty handy. That said, you can pay more ($2,425) for the Delta Standard, which does have a neck pickup. GW

MANUFACTURER: Steelyjam, steelyjam.com

PRICE: $1,060

PROS
+ Resonant aluminum body
+ Great range of tones from the single P90
+ Very playable neck profile and well-balanced on a strap

CONS
– Some will find the single pickup limiting
– Needed some extra setup work to get it playing perfectly

VERIDCT: It's not perfect, but the Steelyjam Delta Junior offers something truly unique, which is hard to come across these days. The resonant aluminum body really adds something to the sound, and it looks amazing as well. The P90 delivers a range of versatile tones that can cover most bases, although some players may find it limiting.





PHIL BARKER

Gretsch Electromatic CVT Baritone

Forget surf; this baritone is designed to deliver at the meatier end of the rock spectrum

BY STUART WILLIAMS



PHIL BARKER

IN 2025, GRETSCH reignited its solidbody Corvette design – spurred on by the success of the Jack Antonoff Princess CVT – with the production model Electromatic CVT Double-Cut. This dual-humbucker rock machine turned heads worldwide, proving once again that there's more to Gretsch than grease.

However, while the retro looks and middleweight tones ticked a lot of boxes for standard-tuned players, the overall identity of the CVT (especially when decked-out in Havana Burst and Wychwood finishes) positively screamed for a trip downtown.

On the face of it, this is the Electromatic CVT Double-Cut with a longer neck – it obviously features the same CVT outline, here cut from mahogany and bevelled at the edges, producing a weight of 8 lbs., edging toward the hefty end of manageable for some. This 27-inch scale baritone uses the same Twin Six humbuckers as the regular-size version, too. But look a little closer and you'll discover a few spec changes. First up is the fingerboard, which is rosewood for the baritone version, marked neatly with Neo-Classical "Thumbnail" inlays and bound tidily at the edges.

Next up, the humbuckers are wired to enable coil splitting via the single volume and tone pots. These, along with the selector switch, feel purposeful with their chunky metal design, making quick engaging/disengaging easier than some plastic control knobs. They're fastened with grub screws, so you're not going to end up yanking it off the guitar by mistake when you go looking for single-coil tones. The bridge has been swapped as well, changing from the wraparound bridge of the regular CVT to an Adjusto-O-Matic bridge and tailpiece.

There really isn't a lot to complain about here, that is, until you realize that the Bristol Fog finish (a sort of trans-brown 'burst we've seen throughout Gretsch's lineup) is the only available color option. That's right – no Wychwood, and no Havana Burst that caught the eyes of so many with the Electromatic CVT. To counter that, Gretsch has done a superb job. It's a bit of a chameleon, stylistically, being simultaneously dark, moody and totally beardcore-friendly, while also unlikely to look out of place in classic settings. So, a limited palette, but a potentially diverse application.

The "Performance C" neck profile is a continuation of that offered on the normal CVT, which to our hand felt like the Goldilocks C-shape found on many guitars from the Fender stable, but slimmed down a touch to feel a bit more "modern."

Played clean, the Twin Six pickups react "fine" in humbucker mode. These are Alnico V magnets, and while the output is punchy, they are a touch on the dull side. This guitar is fitted with a treble bleed circuit, so turning down the volume control allows the higher frequencies to pass direct to the output jack. Doing this helps to even out the balance slightly. The biggest impact, though, comes from splitting the coils.

Removing some of the low-end heft makes for a much more satisfying clean tone, bringing back the definition and giving some of that scoopier articulation to the neck position. But it's when you start feeding the Twin Sixes to some overdrive that the CVT Baritone reveals its heartland. That extra wool that's a slight hindrance to clean tones comes into its own with big, beefy overdrive. We played the CVT through a Way Huge Pork & Pickle – a bass gain box that provides selectable overdrive and fuzz, as well as the option to blend some of your clean tone in parallel – and the result was huge, doomy tones that still had some clarity.

One of our favorite things about baritone guitars is their ability to make ordinary progressions sound immediately more interesting, in the same way that a capo does, but in reverse. It makes exploring tunings a lot of fun. Take that B down a tone and you're into drop A, making all of those Nineties one-finger power chords sound fresh again, with the added benefit of being more menacing to boot. Go the other way and the CVT excels in C-standard, too. Add some fuzz, start chugging and you'll feel like you're riding along with Josh Homme's desert road trip.

At this register, the CVT's heavy, hairy firepower is given plenty of room to stretch out, and playing it through the Universal Audio Knuckles (a Mesa Boogie Dual Rectifier amp and speaker sim) and EVH 5150 models on our Line 6 HX Stomp, it was a joy to play way down without fear of the strings giving out.

Dedicated metal players might want to investigate a pickup upgrade if that's the full-time aim of this guitar, but there's no denying that it's tailored for rock and metal straight out of the box. GW

There's no denying that the CVT Baritone is tailored for rock and metal straight out of the box

MANUFACTURER: Gretsch, gretschguitars.com

PRICE: $599.99

PROS
+ Affordable
+ Great for rock and higher-gain styles
+ Coil splits add extra value

CONS
– Clean tones are a little dull sounding
– Only available in one finish

VERDICT: For many, a baritone guitar is a commitment rather than a "play it for a couple songs" type indulgence. But here, Gretsch has managed to check both boxes at once by delivering a quality example of the baritone configuration at what is rapidly becoming the new "affordable" price point.



Eventide H9 Harmonizer Gen 2

All the algorithms from the flagship H90, now for less

BY MATT McCRACKEN

THE EMERGENCE OF Eventide's latest multi-effects unit into its lineup begs an immediate question — why buy this over a used H9 Max or the H90? Well, from the specs alone, the H9 Gen 2 blows the H9 Max right out of the water. Not only does it feature all of the algorithms from that popular pedal, but it also has all the same effects found on the H90. It only runs one at a time, though. For the ability to run two, you'll need to spend an extra $300 on the H90.

Despite the huge feature set, the Eventide H9 Gen 2 is relatively tiny for a multi-effects pedal. It's slightly narrower than two Boss pedals side by side, and shorter in height than the most popular of pedal enclosures. It weighs about the same as a single Boss stompbox and is wedge-shaped to provide a better angle for pressing the footswitches when it's pedalboard-mounted.

Plugging the H9 Gen 2 into our Universal Audio audio interface with our trusty Telecaster at the other end, we found navigating the unit is fairly easy on the surface. The large knob changed presets, with a click to confirm our selection. The three knobs below the screen have parameters already dedicated to them, while in the default mode the left footswitch changes to the next preset while the right footswitch engages or disengages the effect.

The rest of it was a lot harder to decipher without having to dive into the manual. Hitting the Perform button allows you to change what the footswitches do, whether that's assignments such as tap tempo, momentary/latching operation, as well as "HotSwitches," which allow for multiple parameter changes at the same time. You can dial in timings, effects changes, mix amounts, pretty much anything you like. We're not sure we'd want to do this with the hardware controls though, to be totally honest.

We preferred to do this through the intuitive Eventide Control app. Dialing in our sound here before taking it to the rehearsal room and making some final tweaks alongside our band worked much better. For studio users, you'll probably just want to keep it hooked up to your laptop for quicker changes — though Eventide says Bluetooth connectivity is also coming for the pedal in the future.

The H9 Harmonizer Gen 2 bucks the recent trend in multi-effects pedals and doesn't try to be a do-it-all unit

MANUFACTURER: Eventide, eventideaudio.com

PRICE: $599

PROS

+ A full suite of stunning, studio-grade effects
+ Unbelievable depth of tweaking available
+ Superb companion app and Bluetooth on the way
+ Compact enough to fit on pedalboards or in a busy studio

CONS

– The ins and outs are very tightly packed together
– It's a huge investment for something that only does effects

VERDICT: Packing some of the very best effects algorithms into a pedalboard-friendly format, the Eventide H9 Harmonizer Gen 2 is an absolute triumph. It requires deep diving and knob twiddling to get the most out of it, but the level of customization on offer is huge, and it's a pedal that can play in pretty much any genre you can think of.

There are more sounds packed into the Eventide H9 Gen 2 than we could possibly fit into the constraints of this review. Our favorites include the H910 harmonizer algorithm, a recreation of the famed studio rack unit favored by Eddie Van Halen that seems subtle until you turn it off. Our favorite licks sounded fuller and fatter than ever with it.

The Polyphony algorithm is set to fifths by default and tracked remarkably well no matter what we played. Chords held up spectacularly well, as does bending, with the pitch tracking staying incredibly accurate.

Alongside the more out-there stuff, there's a selection of overdrives which feel like a waste with the power of this pedal, to be honest. But there are also great fuzz tones, flangers, phasers, room reverbs, delays, all of which are delivered in superb quality. It's a one-stop shop for effects of all kinds, with the ability to work in pretty much any genre you can think of.

Overall, we like that the Eventide H9 Harmonizer Gen 2 bucks the recent trend in multi-effects pedals and doesn't try to be a do-it-all unit. It's a multi-effect in the truest sense, providing supreme-quality effect tones without the added complication of amp and cab simulation. It does that job stupendously well, too, with some of the best effects algorithms we've come across. GW

LUCY ROBINSON

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RAW DAWG
BY ERIC GALES

In the Spirit

Drawing inspiration from gospel music

AS A CHILD, I spent a lot of time in church hearing gospel music performed during services. We would play a lot of gospel music at home, too. So the sound and the spirit of gospel has been with me from my very earliest days, and it continues to inspire me in many different ways.

There's a strong connection between gospel-type vocal melodies and the melodic lines I play on guitar. My song "Make It There" is a good example of this influence in my music. On this track, which is in the key of E, I play and sing a gospel-style melody simultaneously, with a subtle 16th-note triplet feel, which creates a warm, swinging, soulful groove.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the integration of the rhythm part and single-note melody in the song. Bar 1 establishes the recurring rhythm part, which I hybrid pick as I bounce between the low, high and middle strings. The "hook" is found on beats 2 and 4, as I resolve a two-note voicing of A/C♯ on the A and D strings to E7, using a decorative ascending finger slide.

If you look at the whole figure in pairs of bars, you'll see that the single-line vocal melody lines fall in the second half of every other bar (bars 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10) and spill into the beginning of the next bar. I play these melody lines primarily in 3rd position and utilize my open top three strings and notes from the E blues scale (E, G, A, B♭, B, D).

Bar 11 into bar 12 allude to a shift to the V (five) chord, B, and the IV (four) chord, A, followed by C7 to B7 (♭VI to V) and then a resolution back to the tonic, E7.

Playing the vocal part on the guitar provides a nice balance between what I'm singing and how I accompany myself with a complimentary rhythm part. I utilize this approach in many of my songs, whether or not there are specific lyrics that are part of the tune. I love to sing those single-note lines as I play them. This is something I experienced in church. Oftentimes, the performers would sit on a groove like that all day long.

Going down the rabbit hole of the gospel music I was exposed to, I realized that a lot of it was very rare stuff that I don't know if you could even find today. Much of the gospel music I experienced was essentially the same as standard blues. One of the better-known traditional tunes is "Come Out of the Corner (You Can't Hide)," which has a bluesy feel.

Another standard gospel song I love is "What Is This?," which is basically a slow blues. **FIGURE 2** offers a similarly styled guitar part, played in the key of A. Here, I move from the I (one) chord, A7, to the IV (four) chord, D7, to E♭dim7 (♭Vdim7, or ♯IVdim7), followed by a I - VI - II - V (one-six-two-five) progression of A7 - F♯7♯9 - Bm7 - E, which resolves back to the I chord, A7. I could play that all day long!

Old traditional blues and gospel are almost the exact same thing, the main difference being the lyrical content — secular versus religious-spiritual. GW

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

FIG. 1 (E7)

Swing 16ths (♫ = ♫³)

w/hybrid picking

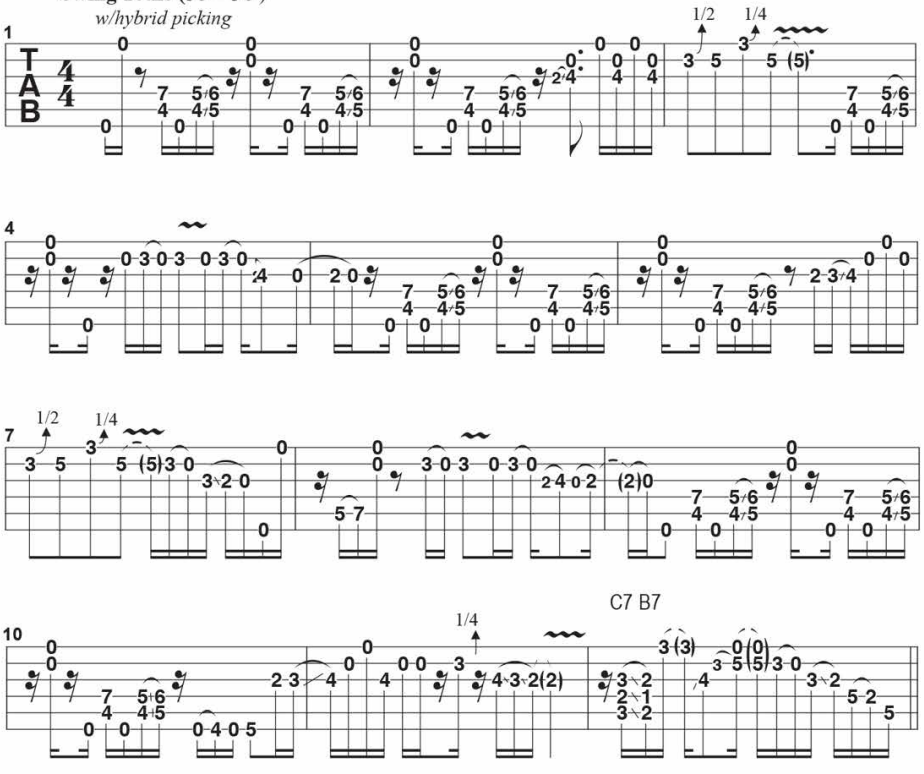
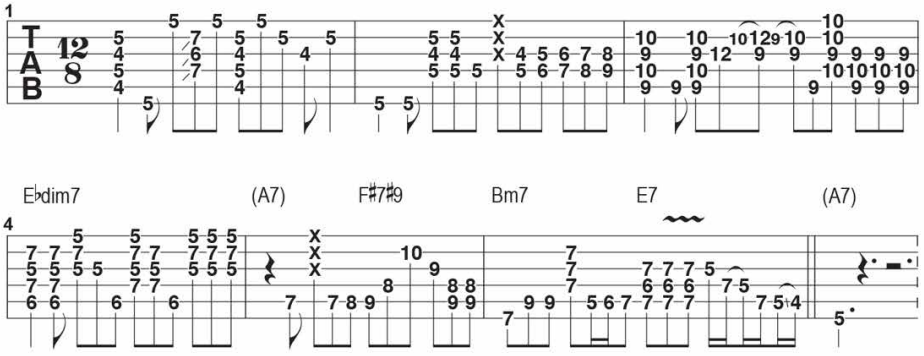


FIG. 2 A9 D9



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/holiday2026

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



JEFF FASANO

TALES FROM NERDVILLE
BY JOE BONAMASSA

Flip the Switch, Part 1

A guide to navigating pickup selection

AN IMPORTANT ASPECT of soloing, and guitar playing in general, is the use of the toggle switch to change the sound and the vibe of what you are playing. Switching from one pickup selection to another at the right moment will add great expression, spontaneity and musicality to your performance.

Every guitar is different, of course. This month's axe of choice is a Gibson Les Paul Standard, which is fitted with two humbucking pickups, one in the neck position and one in the bridge position. The toggle switch allows the use of the neck or bridge pickups alone, or both pickups together. There are also tone knobs for each pickup, which serve to widen the overall timbral possibilities available.

Another trick with the Les Paul Standard while both pickups are engaged is to lower or raise the volume of either the neck or bridge pickup, which will yield either a darker or a brighter tone. Warren Haynes is a master of this technique, as I witnessed numerous times on our tour together this past summer.

Oftentimes when playing a Les Paul, I'll start a solo on the neck pickup, as shown in **FIGURE 1**. In bars 1-4, I play lines based on the D minor pentatonic scale (D, F, G, A, C) in 10th position. On beat 3 of bar 3, I switch from the neck to the bridge pickup as I strike the high F note (1st string/13th fret) in order to add some intensity to the sound, and I remain on the bridge pickup throughout the remainder of the example.

At the end or bar 4 into bar 5, I use rakes and reverse rakes (dragging the pick across multiple strings in either a downward or upward motion) as I sound two-note forms with hammer-ons and pull-offs as played in 12th position. Bar 5 ends with the use of double-stop 6ths, which serve to shift my fret hand down to 5th position.

In **FIGURE 2**, I switch to the sound of both pickups engaged, which delivers a nice balance of bass and treble tones. I begin with lines based on D minor pentatonic in 10th position, moving up quickly to 13th, 15th and 17th positions. At bar 3, I switch to my bridge pickup in order to emphasize the lines played in bars 3 and 4, and in bar 4, I switch back to the neck position to play some softer lines.

Switching between pickup positions is a great way to build intensity in a solo, if you are looking to exploit the many tonal possibilities to be discovered. In **FIGURE 3**, I start with the aggressive, biting sound of the bridge pickup then switch mid-phrase to the neck pickup in bar 3.

There are a million ways to twist the knobs, and don't be shy! Hit that switch hard and incorporate the effect of the tonal shift into the lines you play. As the years have gone on, I find myself experimenting more with the sound of both pickups engaged and the subtle variables one can discover by altering the volume and tone of each pickup. GW

FIG. 1 (D)

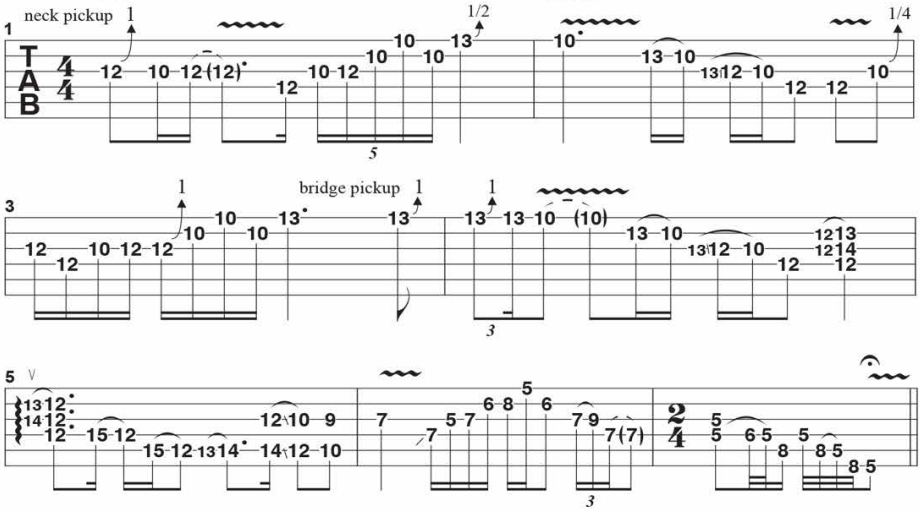


FIG. 2 (D)

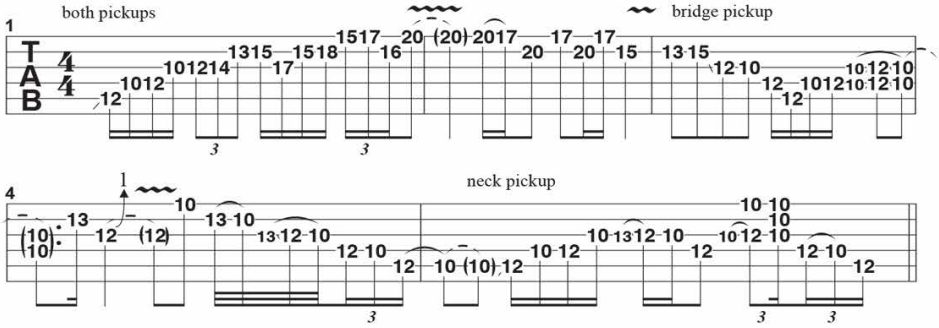
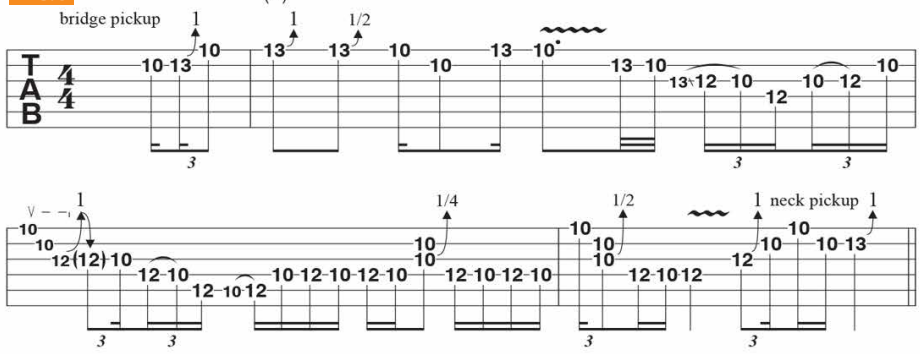


FIG. 3 (D)



For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/holiday2026

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.



FREE SPIRIT
BY AUDLEY FREED

Move It On Over

Using rhythmic displacement

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my new column for *Guitar World*! In these lessons, I will cover a variety of my approaches to both soloing and rhythm playing.

I'd like to begin by talking about a phrasing device that I have found to be very useful: *rhythmic displacement*. Take any rhythmic or melodic idea and shift it backward or forward so that it starts at an earlier or later point in the measure, in terms of where it begins in relation to the underlying beats in $\frac{4}{4}$, or whatever meter you're playing in.

One of the first licks I applied this concept to is a 16th-note run built from the A Dorian mode (A, B, C, D, E, F♯, G), shown in **FIGURE 1**. The line begins on beat 1 with C, 1st string, 8th fret, followed by a hammer-on to D. The phrase then continues in a cascading, saw-tooth descending pattern, dropping to the next lower note in the scale then ascending one degree – C-D, B-C, A-B, G-A, etc. – with hammer-ons used where possible.

We can craft a new melodic phrasing scheme by taking the same run and beginning it a 16th note earlier, with the first note, C, now played as a pickup note, as shown in **FIGURE 2**. In this way, we have derived two licks from one.

Also phrased as rolling 16th notes, **FIGURE 3** is inspired by Ritchie Blackmore's solo in Deep Purple's "Space Truckin'." Using my fret hand's first three fingers only, I begin with two pickup notes, D sliding up to E♭, followed by an E, on the B string's 5th fret, played on the downbeat of beat 1. This lick has that great slinky feel characteristic of Ritchie's soloing style. I feel that Ritchie is considerably underrated, and does a lot more than just the blues-rock or modal "snake charmer" stuff that he's so well known for.

FIG. 1 (Am)

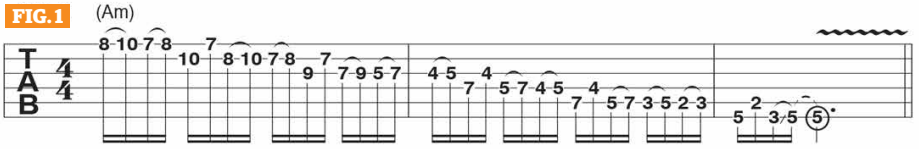


FIG. 2 (Am)

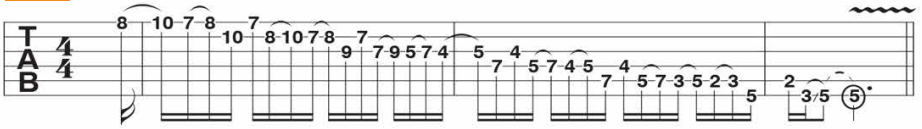


FIG. 3 (A or Am)

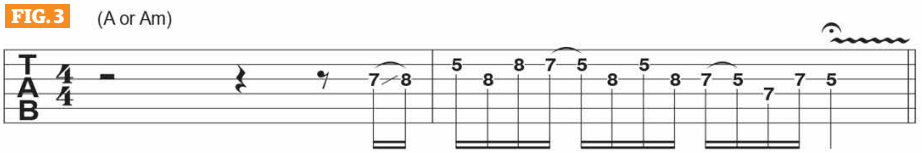


FIG. 4 (A or Am)

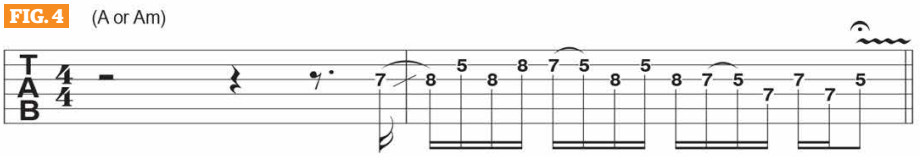


FIG. 5 (A or Am)

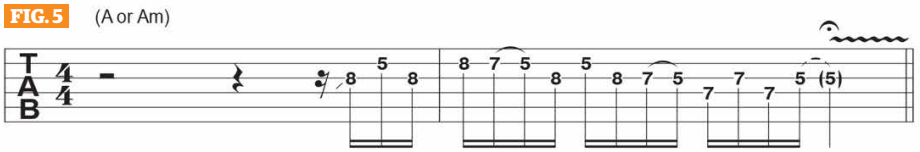


FIG. 6 (D)

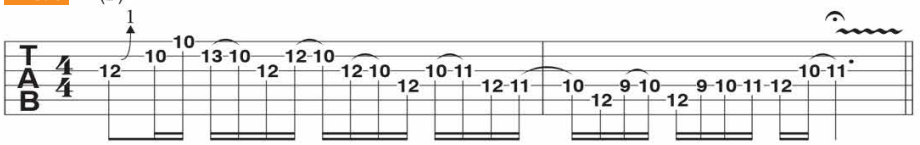
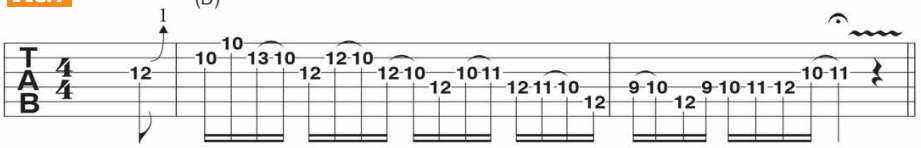


FIG. 7 (D)



We can rhythmically displace this phrase to create a new one. Here, we'll move everything forward and start the line a 16th note later, as demonstrated in **FIGURE 4**. Notice that now only the D note is played as a pickup, with the E♭ falling on beat 1.

Moving in the opposite direction, we can begin the phrase a 16th note earlier, as shown, with slight variation, in **FIGURE 5**. Here, we have three pickup notes and G (2nd string, 8th fret) now falling squarely on beat 1. So that's three different phrasing schemes generated from one idea. These licks become even more musically interesting by employing hybrid picking and/or pick-hand palm-muting.

Our last two examples are inspired by legendary Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia's soloing in a live version of "Black Peter." Based primarily on D Dorian (D, E, F, G, A, B, C), **FIGURE 6** begins like a D minor pentatonic (D, F, G, A, C) blues lick, after which elements of chromaticism are brought in, with the inclusion of the notes B, C♯ and F♯.

In **FIGURE 7**, the phrase is rhythmically displaced back one eighth note (earlier), so that the A at the 10th fret on the B string now lands on beat 1. That phrasing shift makes the lick hit you in a completely different way.

Rhythmic displacement is a straightforward and highly useful concept that can yield great results. It's like the first lick is a seed from which you "farm out" new melodic phrases by shifting it to begin at different places in the bar. This approach can serve to broaden your improvisational vocabulary and help you discover and develop your own unique musical voice. GW

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/holiday2026

Best known as a founding member of Cry of Love, Audley Freed is a world-renowned American rock guitarist who has recorded and performed with the Black Crowes, Sheryl Crow, Peter Frampton and others.

MICHAEL WEINTROB



MULTIDIMENSIONAL GUITAR
BY ALEX SKOLNICK

On Tap, Part 2

More on colorful legato phrasing with tapping

IN MY LAST column, I demonstrated how I combine tapping with fast legato phrasing in the beginning of my solo in the Testament song "The Pale King" (*Brotherhood of the Snake*, 2015). The solo's legato quality is achieved primarily by my abundant use of hammer-ons and pull-offs. This month, I'd like to continue breaking down this solo, covering what I play next.

As I stated previously, I begin the solo over a B5 chord with fast legato phrases based on the B minor pentatonic scale (B, D, E, F♯, A), implying a Bm tonality. I begin by moving from the 1st string to the 2nd, and then from the 2nd string to the 3rd. Once the pattern has been played twice, which constitutes all of bar 1, the backing chord changes from B5 to B♭5.

At this point, I considered just transposing the lick down a half step and altering a couple of notes to imply a B♭ major sound. Instead, I took an approach I often use in jazz tunes, which is to move up a half step, in this case changing the implied harmony to a more colorful B♭maj9, or B♭maj7add2, sound. **FIGURE 1** shows the B♭5 chord followed by the opening note of the phrase, C.

FIGURE 2 illustrates the two approaches. I begin over B5 with notes from B minor pentatonic, and then in bar 2, over B♭5, I move up to the notes C, D, F and A, which can be looked at as being sourced from the F major scale (F, G, A, B♭, C, D, E) or the B♭ Lydian mode (B♭, C, D, E, F, G, A). For both licks, the high tapped note is A, on the 1st string's 17th fret. **FIGURE 3** depicts F major pentatonic (F, G, A, C, D), which is a subset of the F major scale. **FIGURE 4** shows the B♭ Lydian mode played in 6th-7th position.

Although the melody notes change with the chords, I employ the same articulation techniques. As shown in **FIGURE 5**, I begin with a high A tap then pull off to F, D and C, followed by a fret-hand "hammer on from nowhere" with my middle finger to A on the B string's 10th fret. The pinkie then hammers on three frets higher, followed by a tap on F, at the 18th fret.

FIGURE 6 shows the pattern I play over B♭. I begin with three pickup notes – C, D and F – all hammered on, leading to a high A tap on beat 1 of the next bar. This is followed by the aforementioned pull-offs on the 1st string and hammer-ons on the 2nd string. The up-and-down shape then repeats on the 2nd string with hammer-ons and a high F tap, followed by pull-offs and a "hammer-on from nowhere" to F on the G string's 10th fret.

The best way to get the pattern flowing is to cycle it repeatedly, as shown in **FIGURE 7**.

Now let's put the Bm and B♭ licks together (see **FIGURE 8**). Focusing on these two initial phrases will clarify the intricate details of each.

On the recording, I continue the Bm phrase on the 3rd string, as shown in **FIGURE 9**. The fretboard tap here is to a high B note at the 16th fret. **FIGURE 10** shows how the lick ends, with a fret-hand hammer-on to B on the D string's 9th fret. GW

FIG. 1 B♭5 (C note)

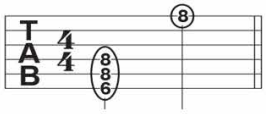
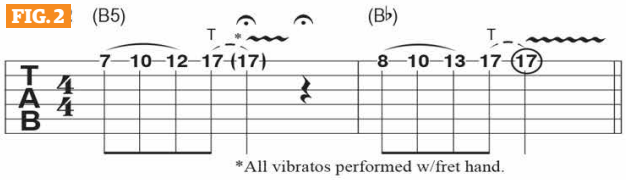


FIG. 2 (B5) (B♭)



*All vibratos performed w/fret hand.

FIG. 3 F major pentatonic scale

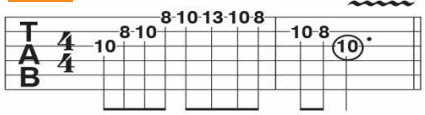


FIG. 4 B♭ Lydian mode

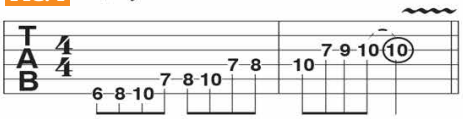
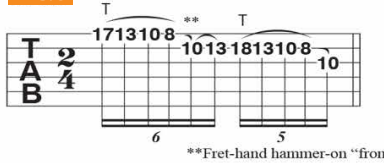


FIG. 5



**Fret-hand hammer-on "from nowhere"

FIG. 6

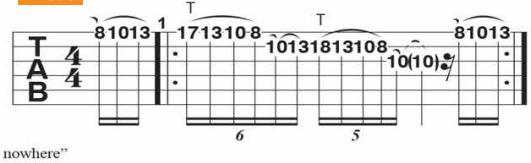


FIG. 7 (B♭5) (play 5 times)

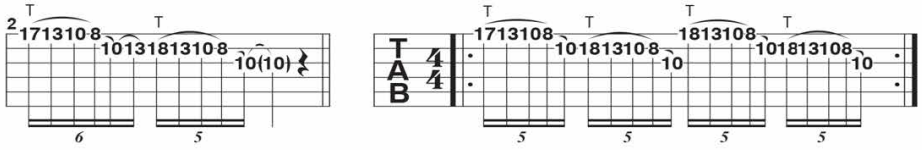
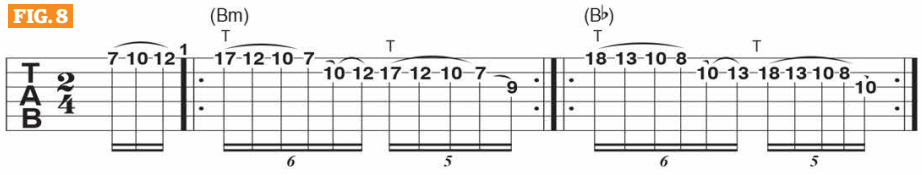


FIG. 8 (Bm) (B♭)



(Bm)

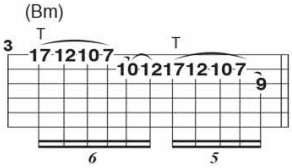


FIG. 9 (Bm)

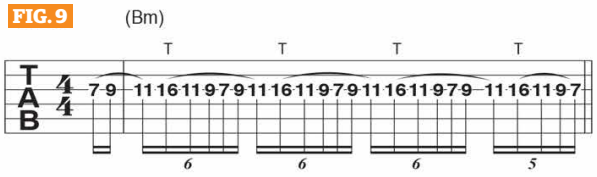
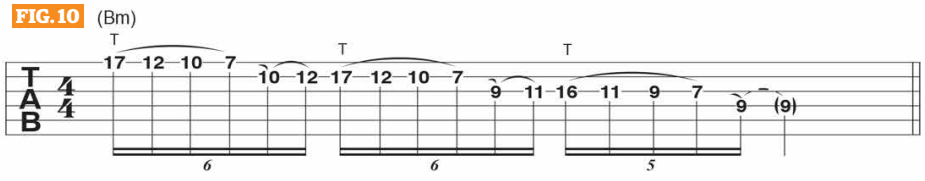


FIG. 10 (Bm)



ADAM GASSON

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/holiday2026

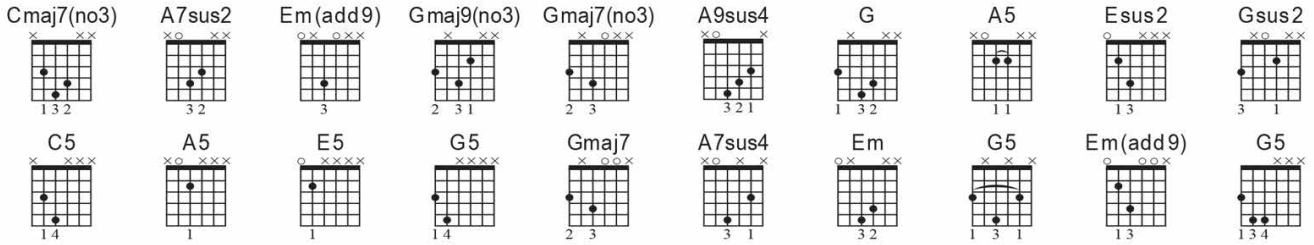
Alex Skolnick is best known for his work with Bay Area thrash legends Testament (not to mention Trans-Siberian Orchestra and Savatage), but you're just as likely to see him in action with his modern-jazz/instro-rock unit, the Alex Skolnick Trio. Check out alexskolnick.com.

DEXTER AND THE MOONROCKS

"Freakin' Out"

AS HEARD ON **FRIENDS THAT I DON'T LIKE**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY **RYAN ANDERSON, TY ANDERSON, RYAN FOX** AND **JAMES TUFFS** TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**



A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately w/half-time feel ♩ = 124

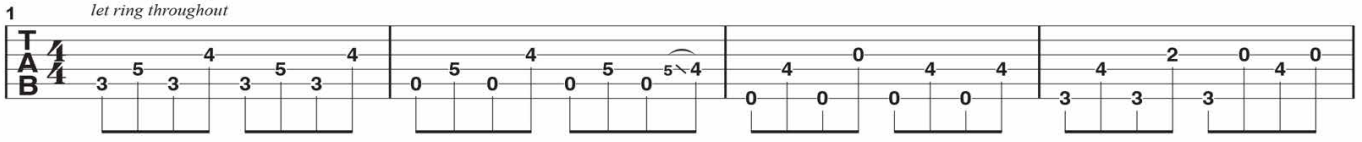
Ooh

Cmaj7(no3) A7sus2 Em(add9) Gmaj9(no3) Gmaj7(no3)

Gtr. 1 (acous.)

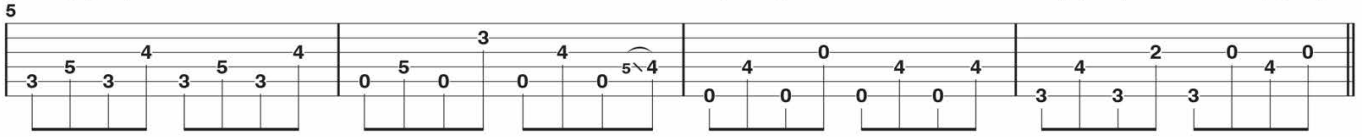
let ring throughout

GTR. 1



Ooh

Cmaj7(no3) A9sus4 Em(add9) Gmaj9(no3) Gmaj7(no3)

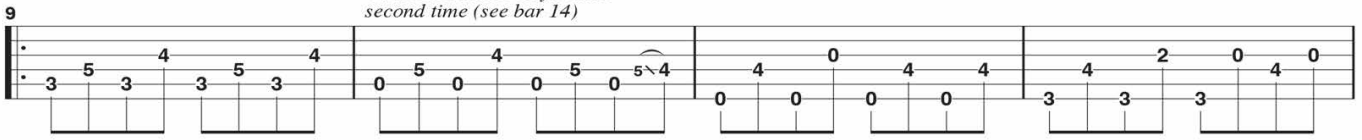


B **1st Verse** (0:15)

In the cold to warm me up again The
Let me out so I can get back in I'm

Cmaj7(no3) A7sus2 Em(add9) Gmaj9(no3) Gmaj7(no3)

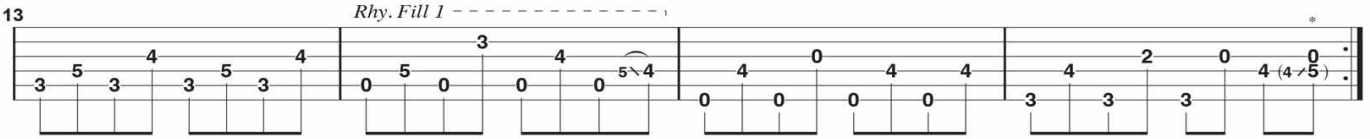
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 1 second time (see bar 14)



weather's coming in
freakin' out again

Cmaj7(no3) A9sus4 Em(add9) Gmaj9(no3) Gmaj7(no3)

Rhy. Fill 1



**Substitute notes in parentheses on repeat.*

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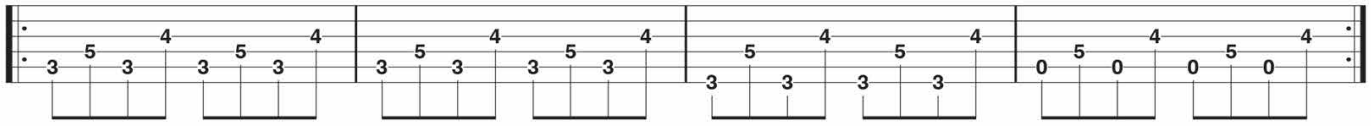
C **1st Chorus** (0:46)

Got something in my system
far Excuse me I'm outta rhythm
She said Why you gotta take it so
Takin' pills and sleeping in a car

Cmaj7(no3) G A7sus2

17 *Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 first time (see below bar 41)*



D (1:02)

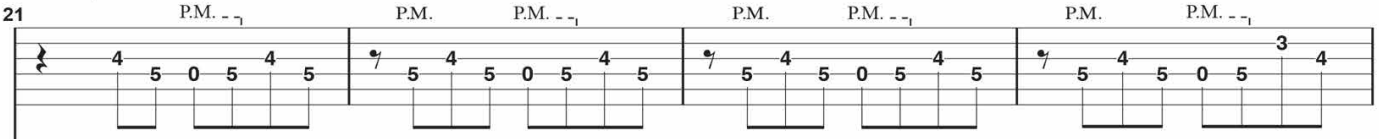
Oh

Cmaj7(no3) A5 Esus2 Gsus2

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

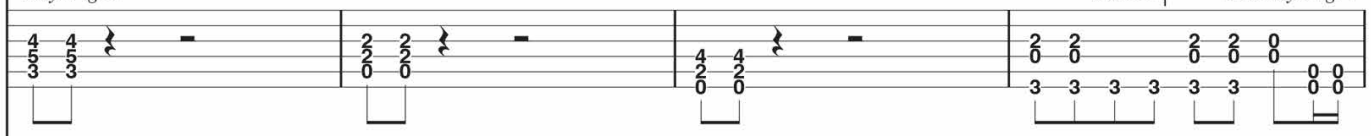
21 P.M.

GTR. 3

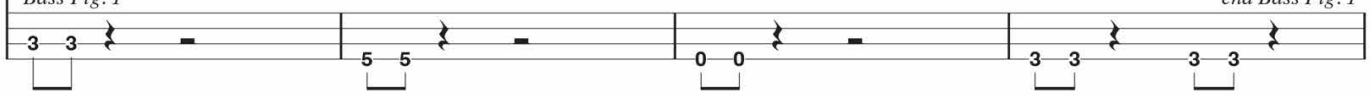


Gtrs. 1 and 2 (elec. w/dist.)
Rhy. Fig. 1 P.M. *end Rhy. Fig. 1*

GTR. 1
GTR. 2



Bass
Bass Fig. 1 *end Bass Fig. 1*



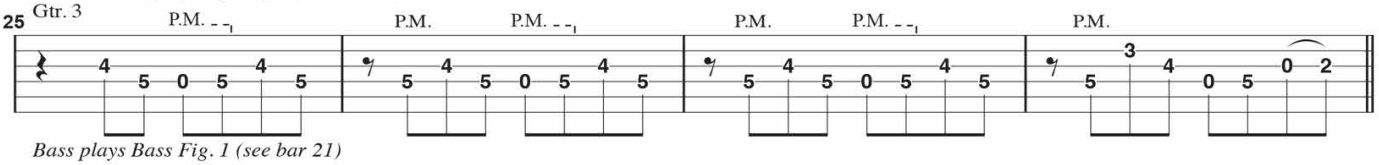
Oh

Cmaj7(no3) A5 Esus2 Gsus2

Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 21)

25 Gtr. 3 P.M.

GTR. 3



Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 21)

E **2nd Verse** (1:17)

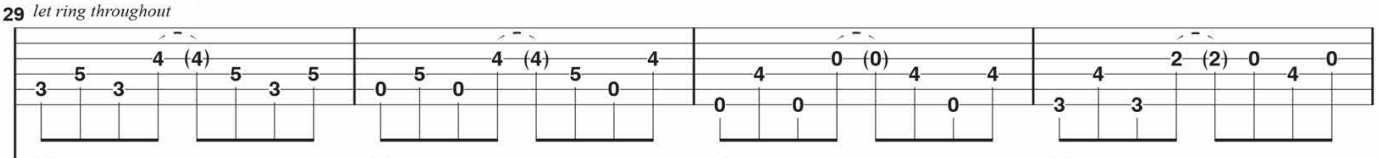
Breathing out or forced to breath back in The

Cmaj7(no3) A7sus2 Em(add9) Gmaj9(no3) Gmaj7(no3)

Gtr. 3 (w/clean tone)

29 *let ring throughout*

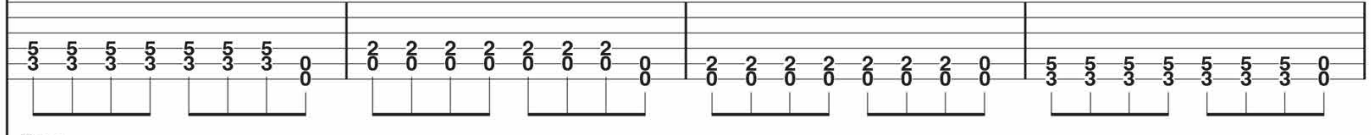
GTR. 3



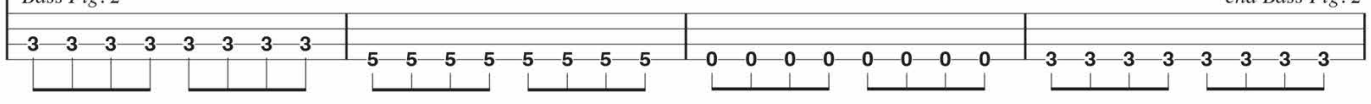
C5 A5 E5 G5

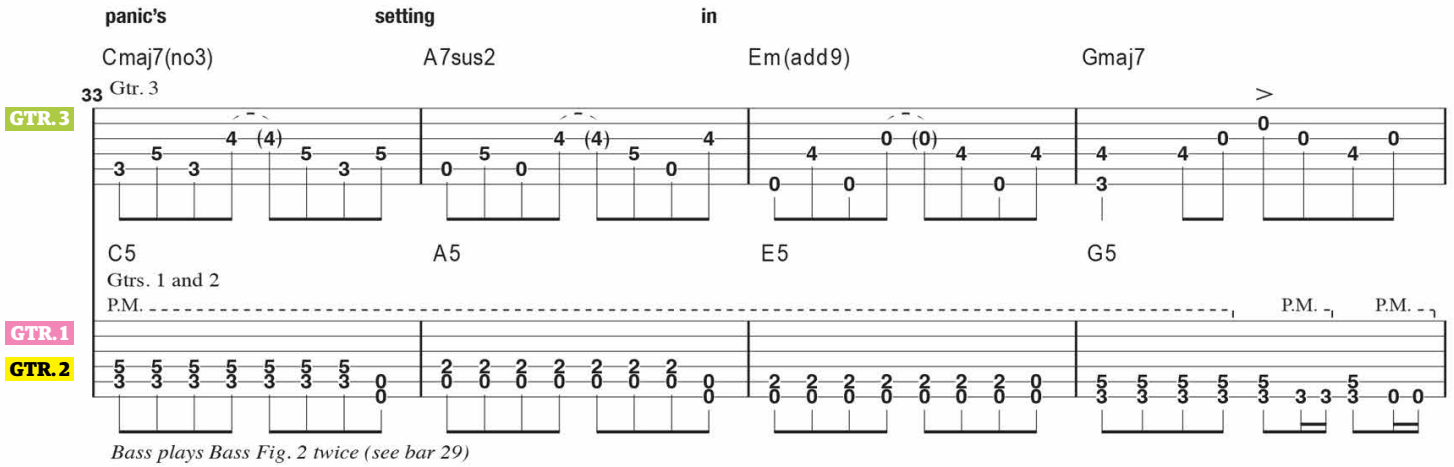
Gtrs. 1 and 2
P.M.

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

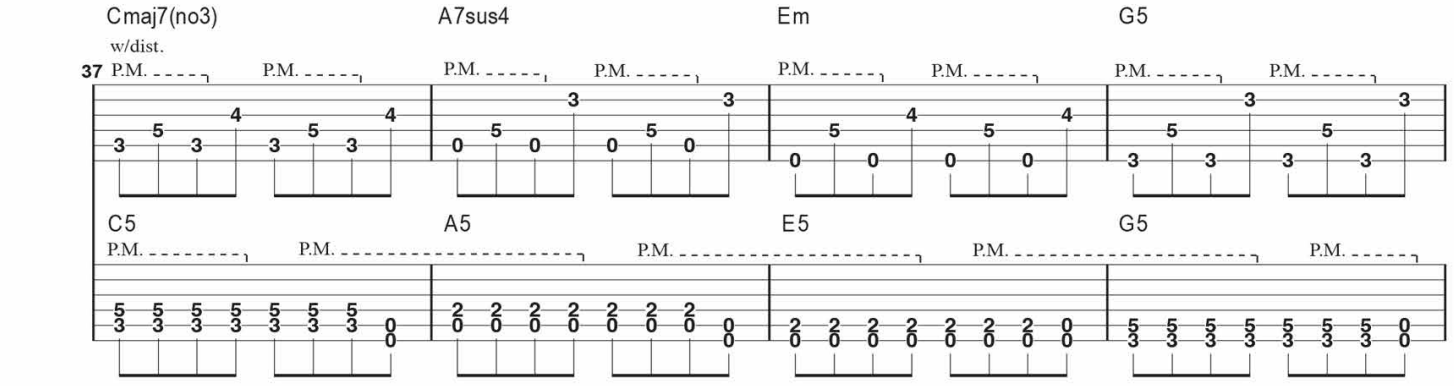


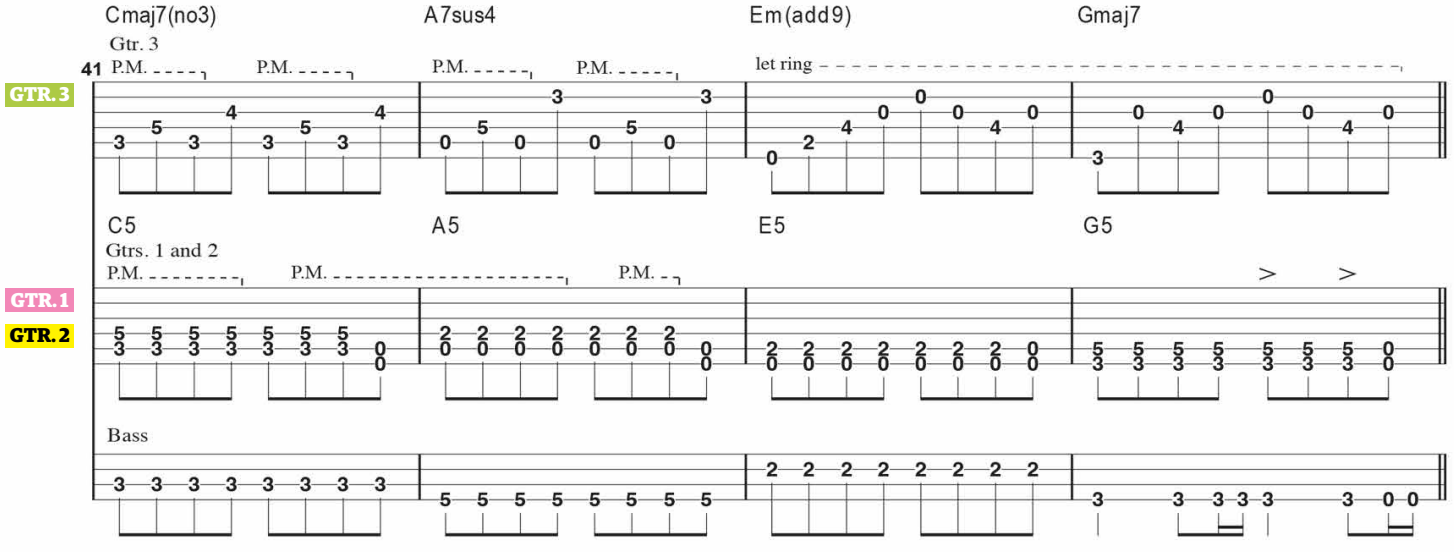
Bass
Bass Fig. 2 *end Bass Fig. 2*

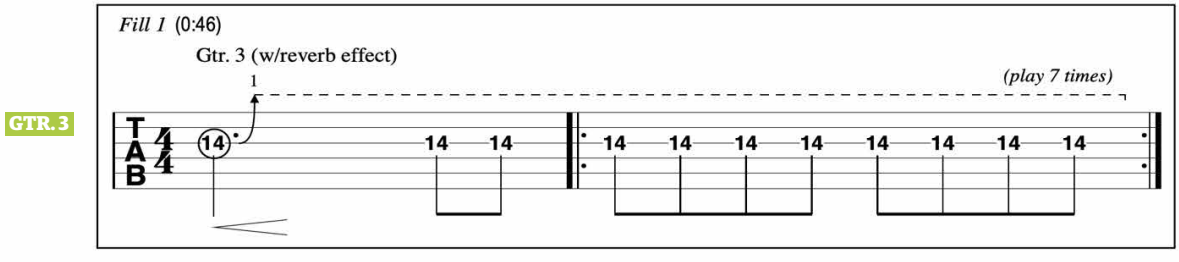




Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see bar 29)







F **2nd Chorus** (1:48)

Got something in my system — She said Why you gotta take it so
far Excuse me I'm outta rhythm — Takin' pills and sleeping in a car

Cmaj7(no3) Esus2 Gsus2

Gtrs. 1 and 2

45

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

Bass

What's the use in being alone — if I'm never home I'm one the road
Can't reach me I'm off the phone — 'Cause I'm all alone I'm not home

Cmaj7(no3) G5 A5

49

G **Guitar Solo** (2:19)

Cmaj7(no3) A5 Esus2 Gsus2

Gtr. 3

53

N.H.

GTR. 3

pitch: G F♯ D G G F♯ D G G

Gtrs. 1 and 2

Rhy. Fig. 2

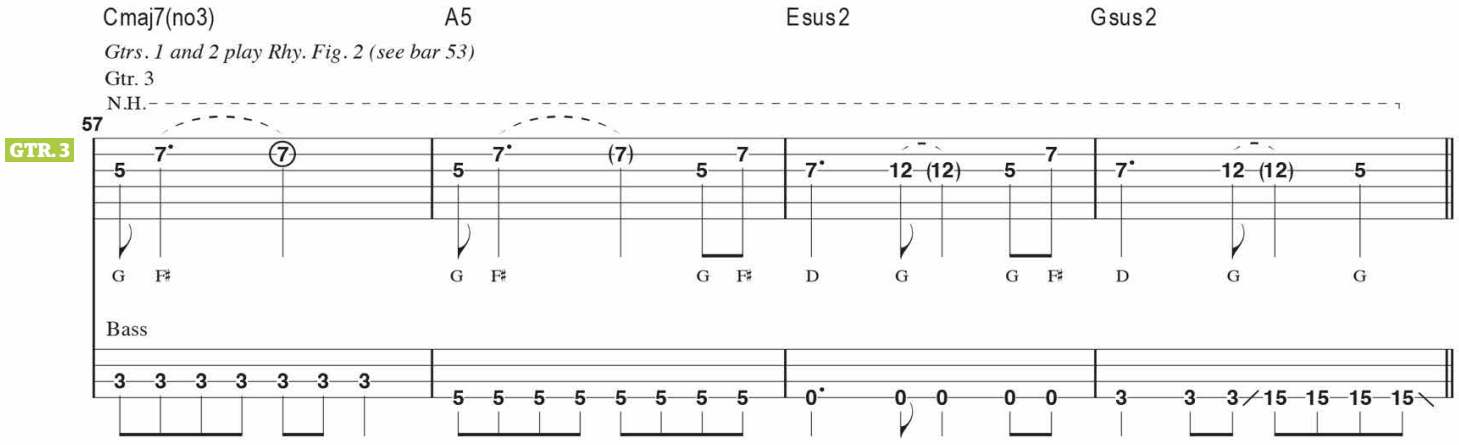
end Rhy. Fig. 2

GTR. 1
GTR. 2

Bass

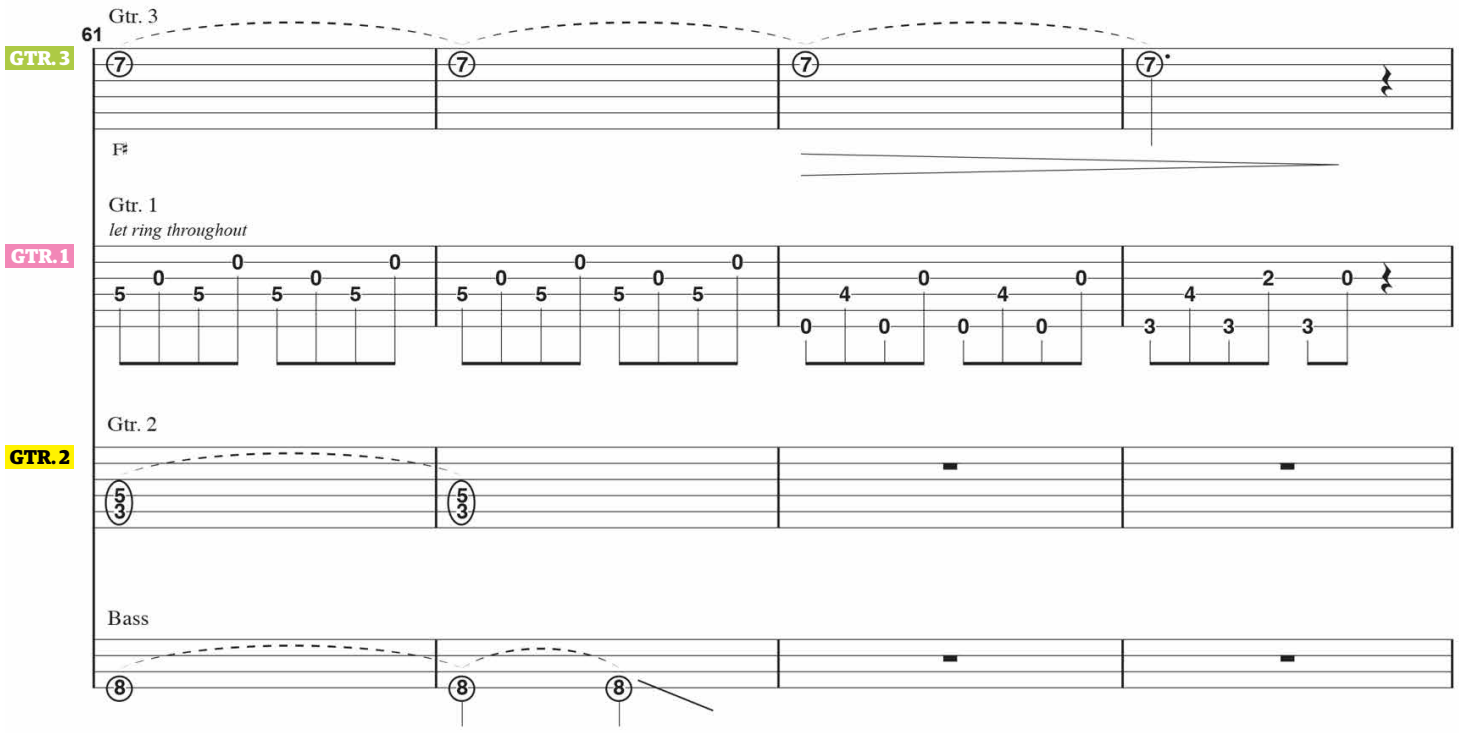
Bass Fig. 3

end Bass Fig. 3

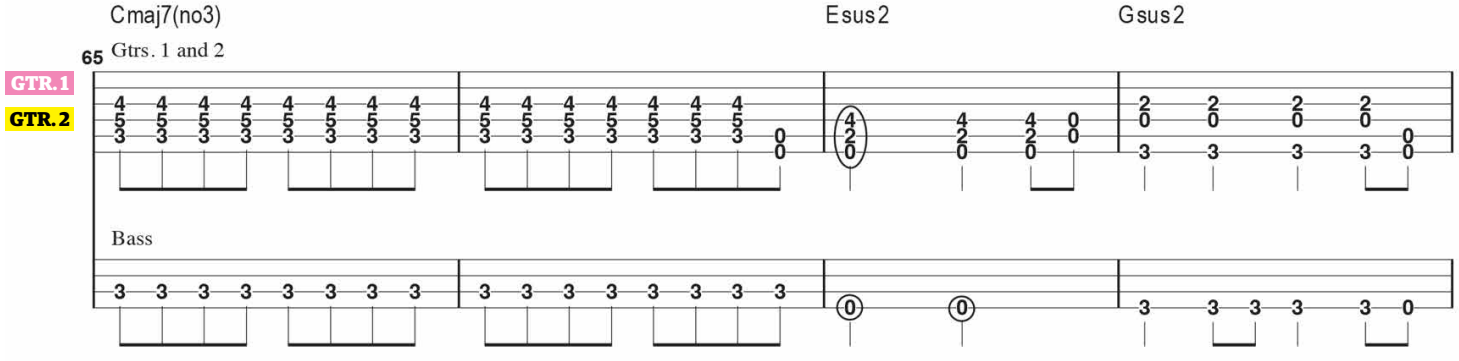


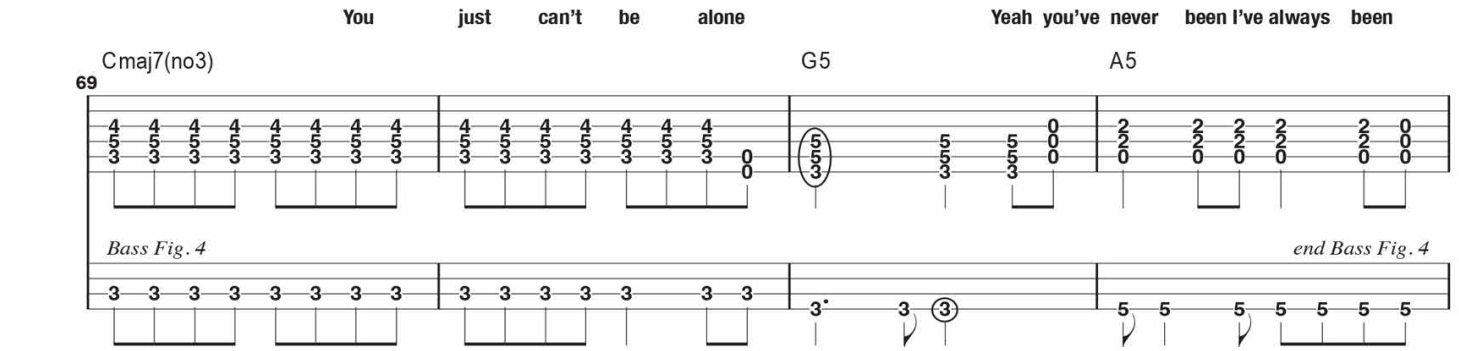
H **3rd Chorus** (2:35)

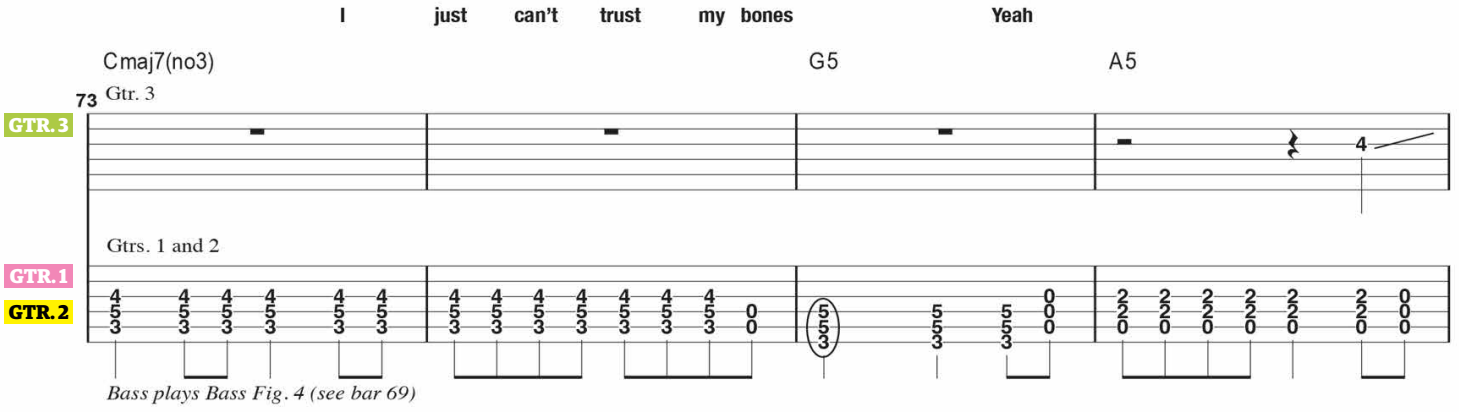
Got something in my system She said Why you gotta take it so



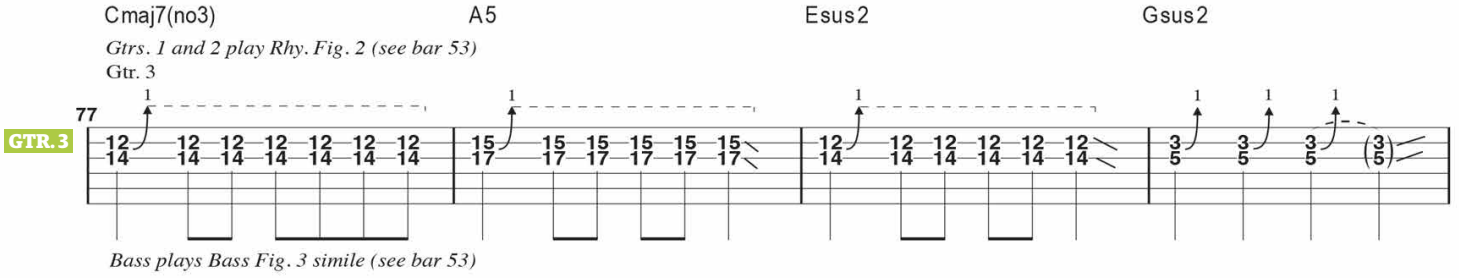
far Excuse me I'm outta rhythm Takin' pills and sleeping in a car

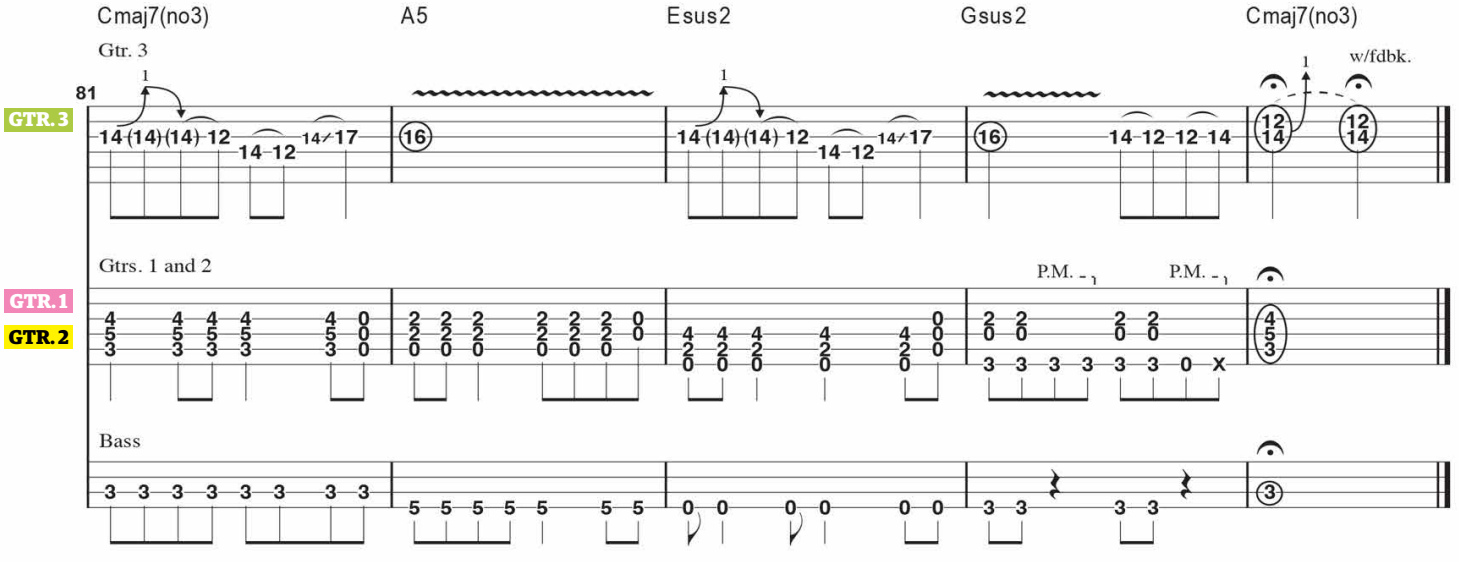



You just can't be alone
Yeah you've never been I've always been
Cmaj7(no3)
G5
A5
69
Bass Fig. 4
end Bass Fig. 4


I just can't trust my bones
Yeah
Cmaj7(no3)
G5
A5
73
Gtr. 3
GTR. 3
Gtrs. 1 and 2
GTR. 1
GTR. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 (see bar 69)

I Outro (3:06)


Cmaj7(no3)
A5
Esus2
Gsus2
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 53)
Gtr. 3
77
GTR. 3
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 simile (see bar 53)


Cmaj7(no3)
A5
Esus2
Gsus2
Cmaj7(no3)
Gtr. 3
w/fdbk.
81
GTR. 3
Gtrs. 1 and 2
GTR. 1
GTR. 2
P.M.
P.M.
Bass

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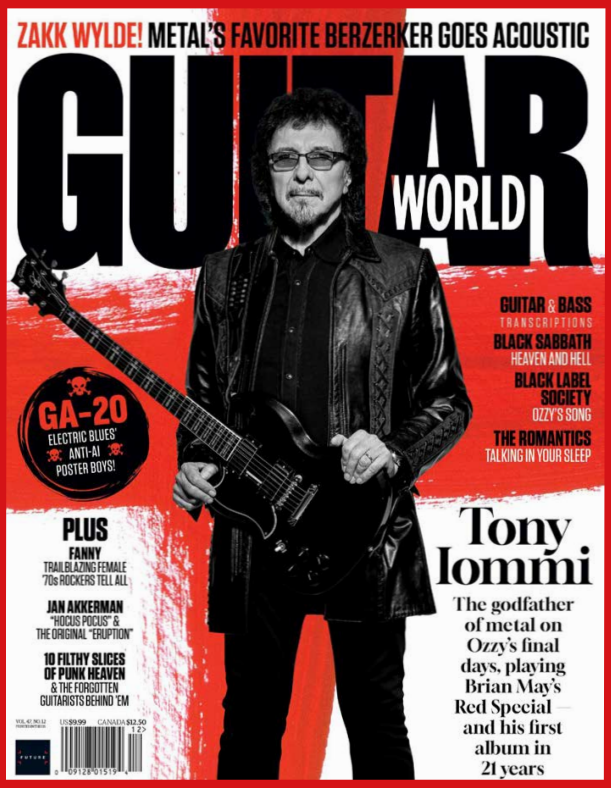





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B6AMAG

SONIC YOUTH

"Bull in the Heather"

AS HEARD ON **EXPERIMENTAL JET SET, TRASH AND NO STAR**

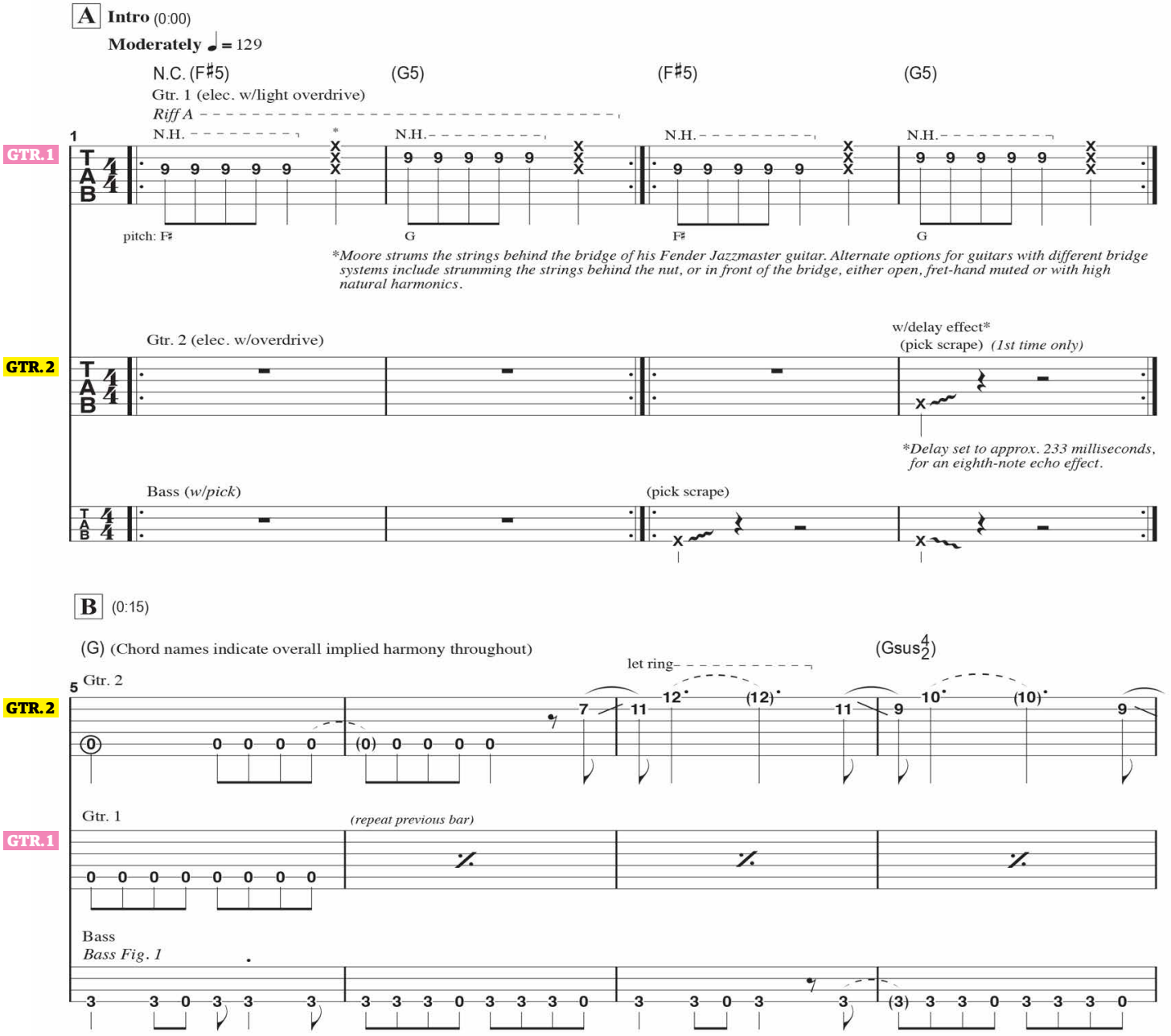
WORDS AND MUSIC BY **KIM GORDON, THURSTON MOORE, LEE RANALDO** AND **STEVE SHELLEY** TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

up down

Gtr. 1 (Thurston Moore) is tuned, low to high, to: G, G, D, D, E♭, E♭).

Gtr. 2 (Lee Renaldo) is tuned, low to high, to G, G, C, G, C, D).

Bass (Kim Gordon) is in standard tuning (low to high: E, A, D, G).



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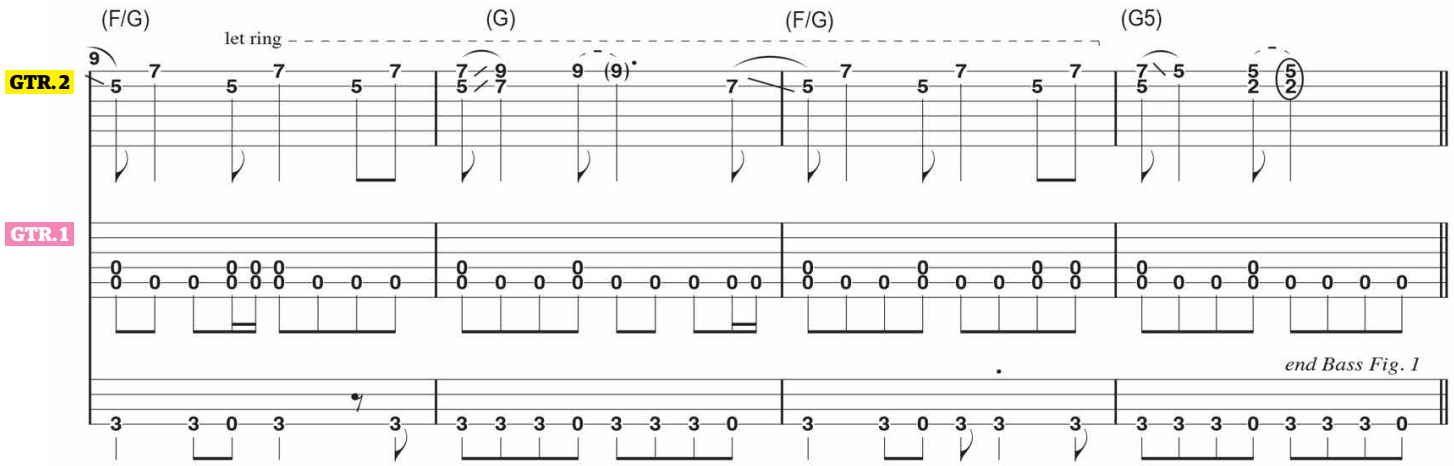
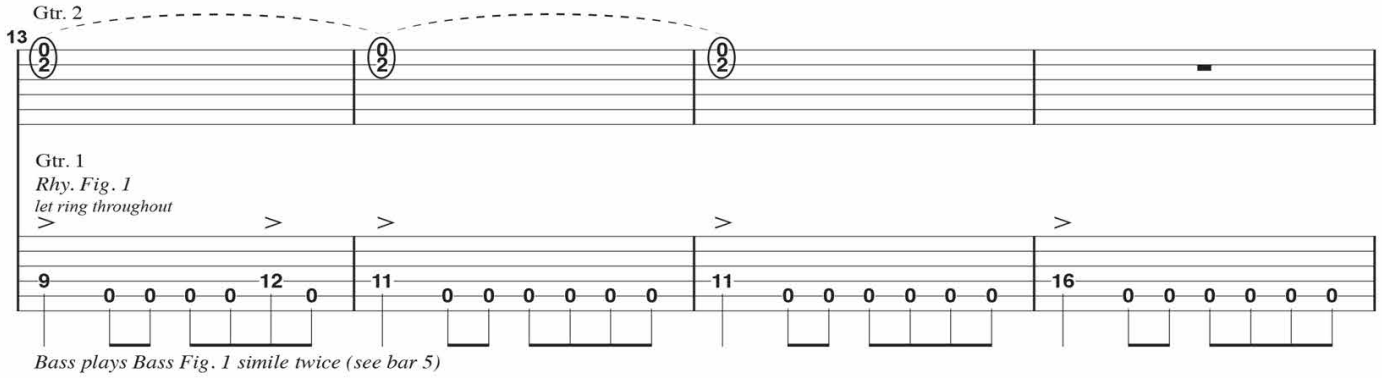


C **1st Verse** (0:30)

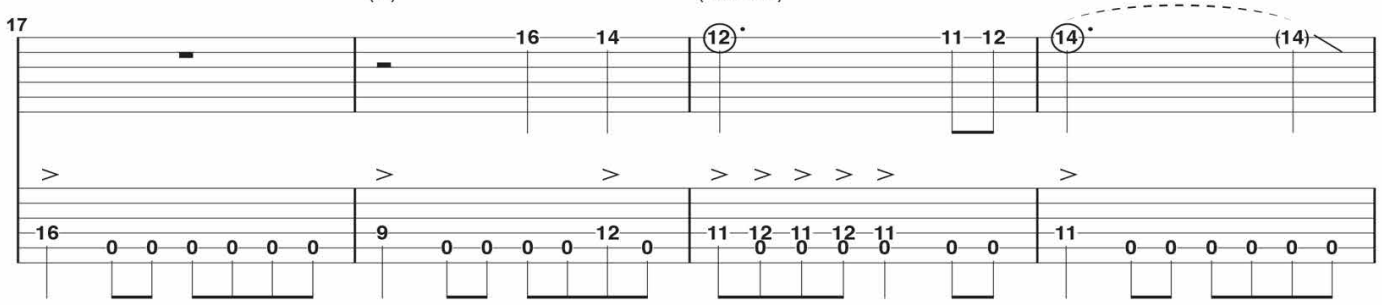
Ten twenty thirty forty Tell me that you wanna hold me

(G) (G5) (Gadd♯4) (Gmaj7no3)



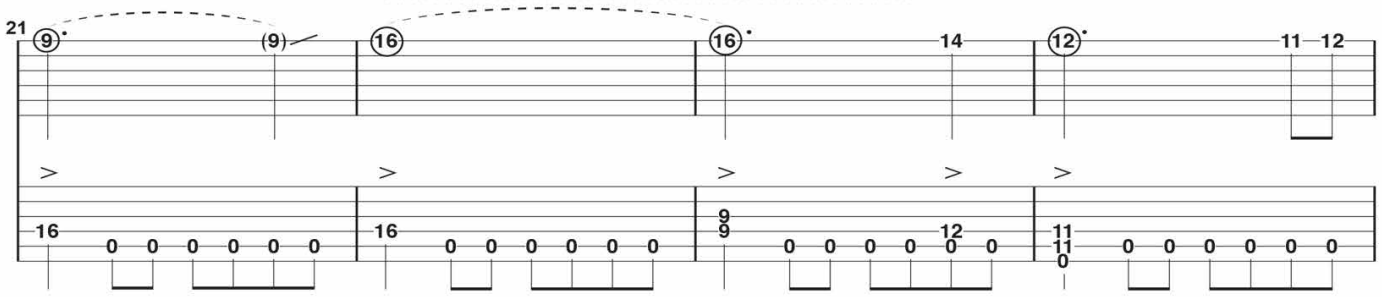
Tell me that you wanna whore me Tell me that you gotta show me

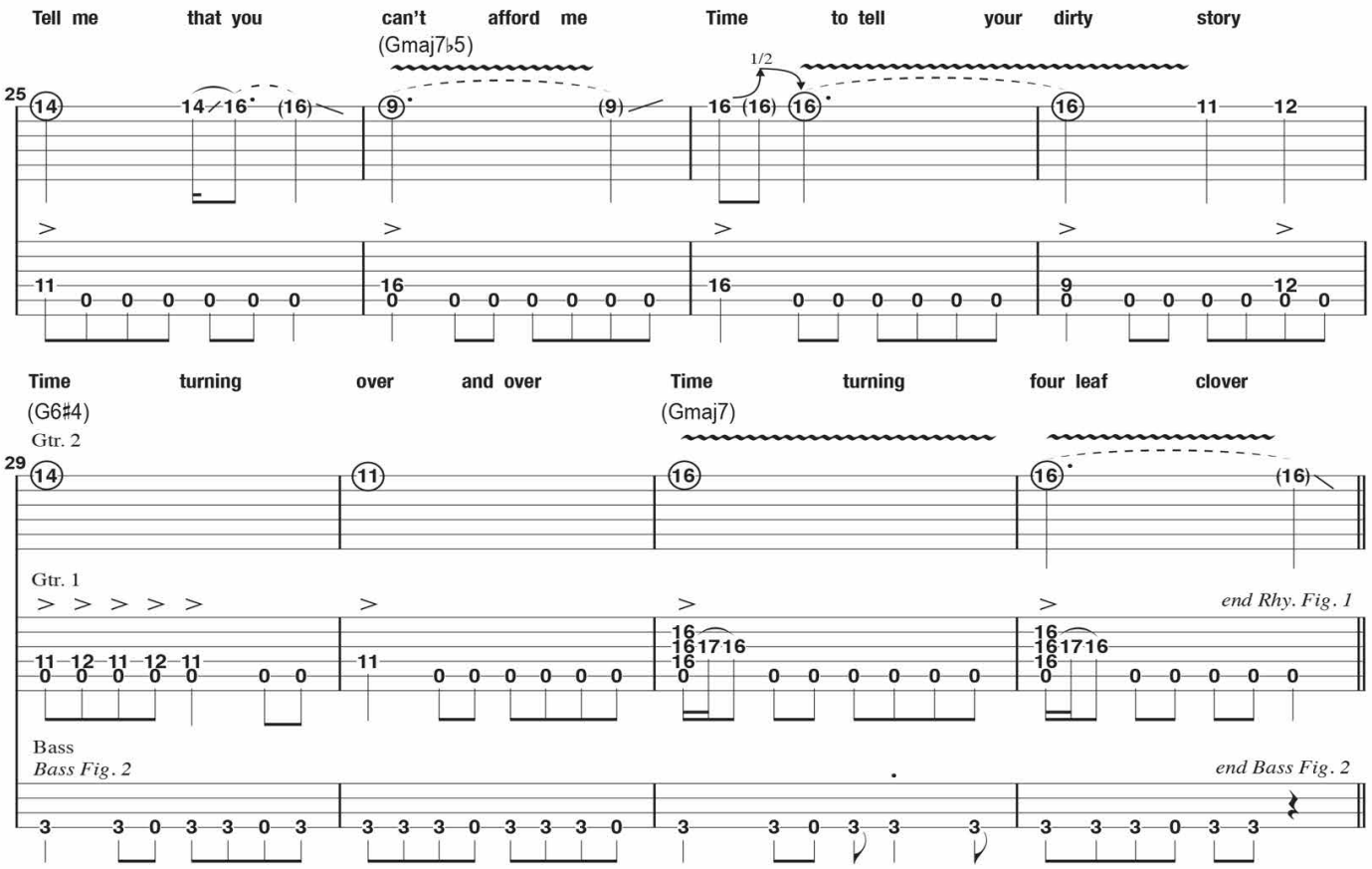
(G) (Gadd♯4)



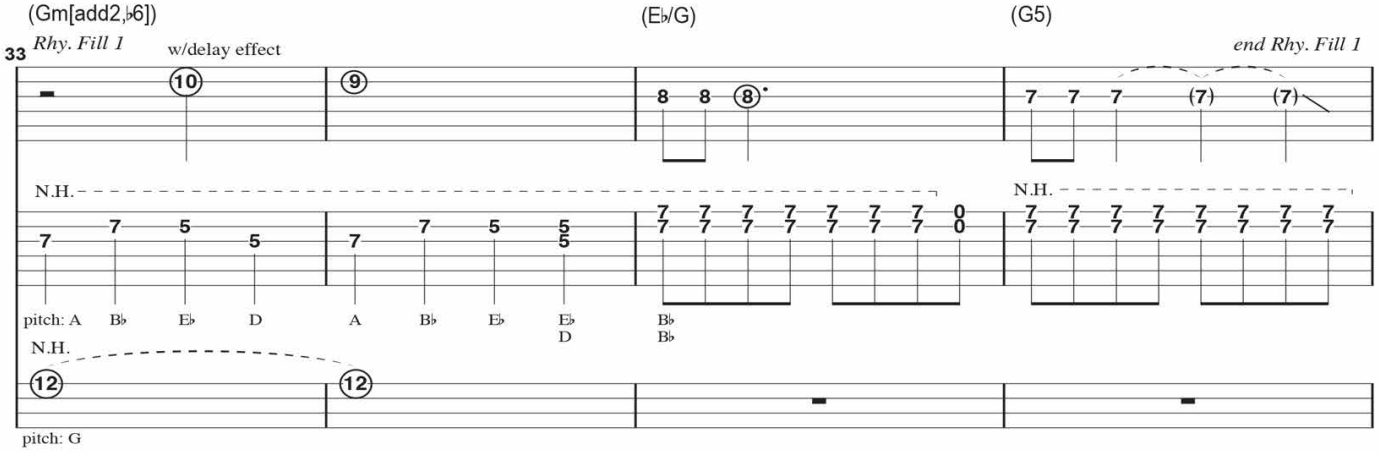
Tell me that you need to slowly Tell me that you're burning for me

(Gmaj7) (Gadd♯4)

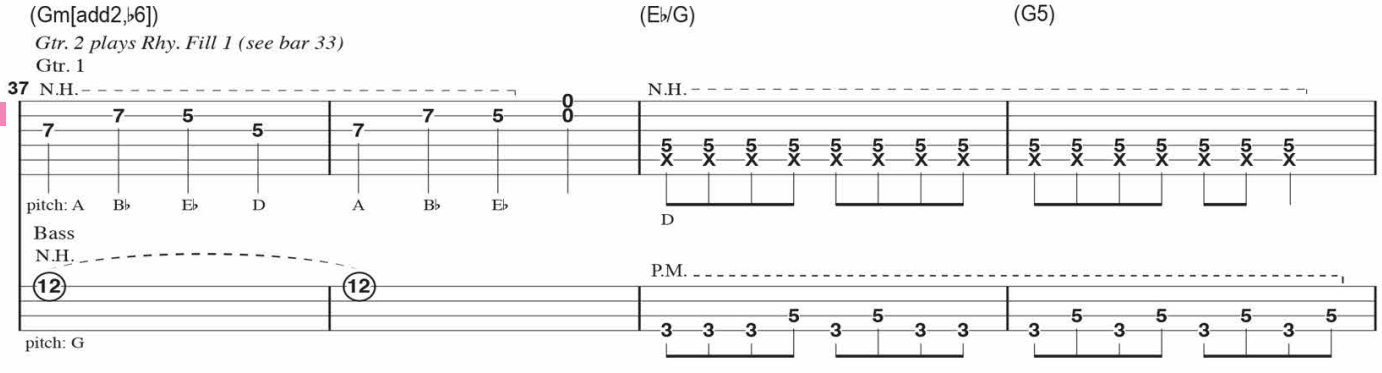


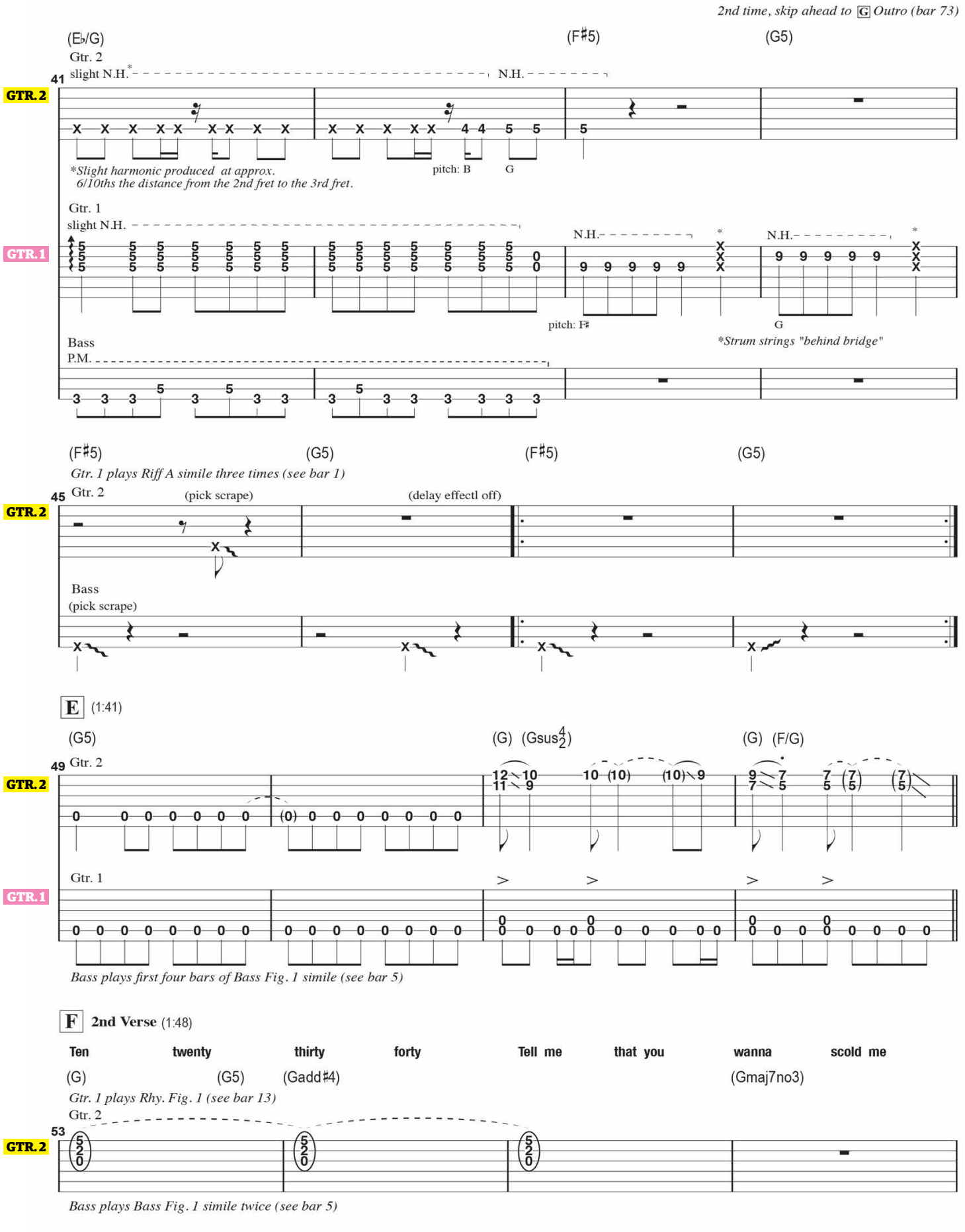


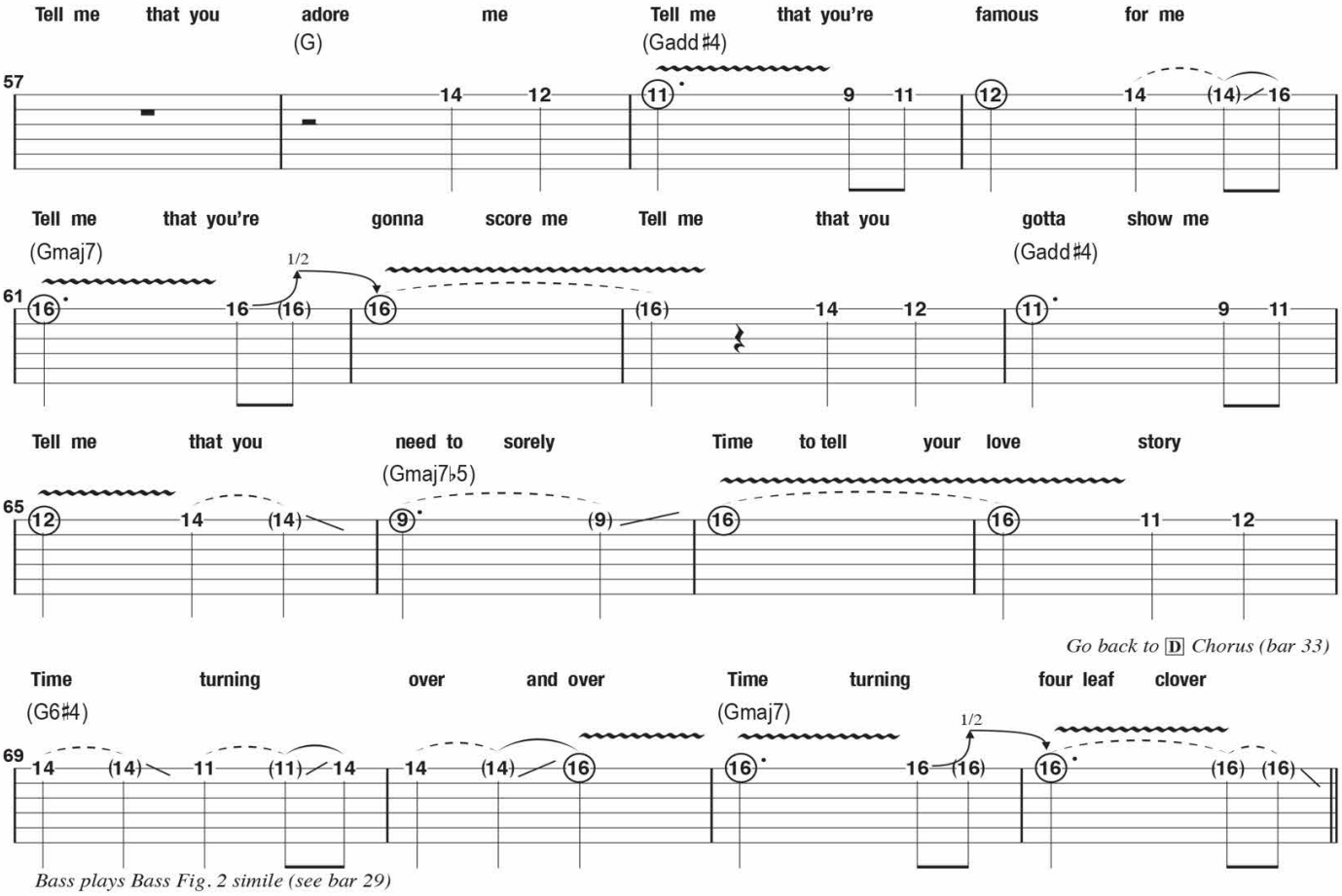
D **Chorus** (1:07, 2:25)

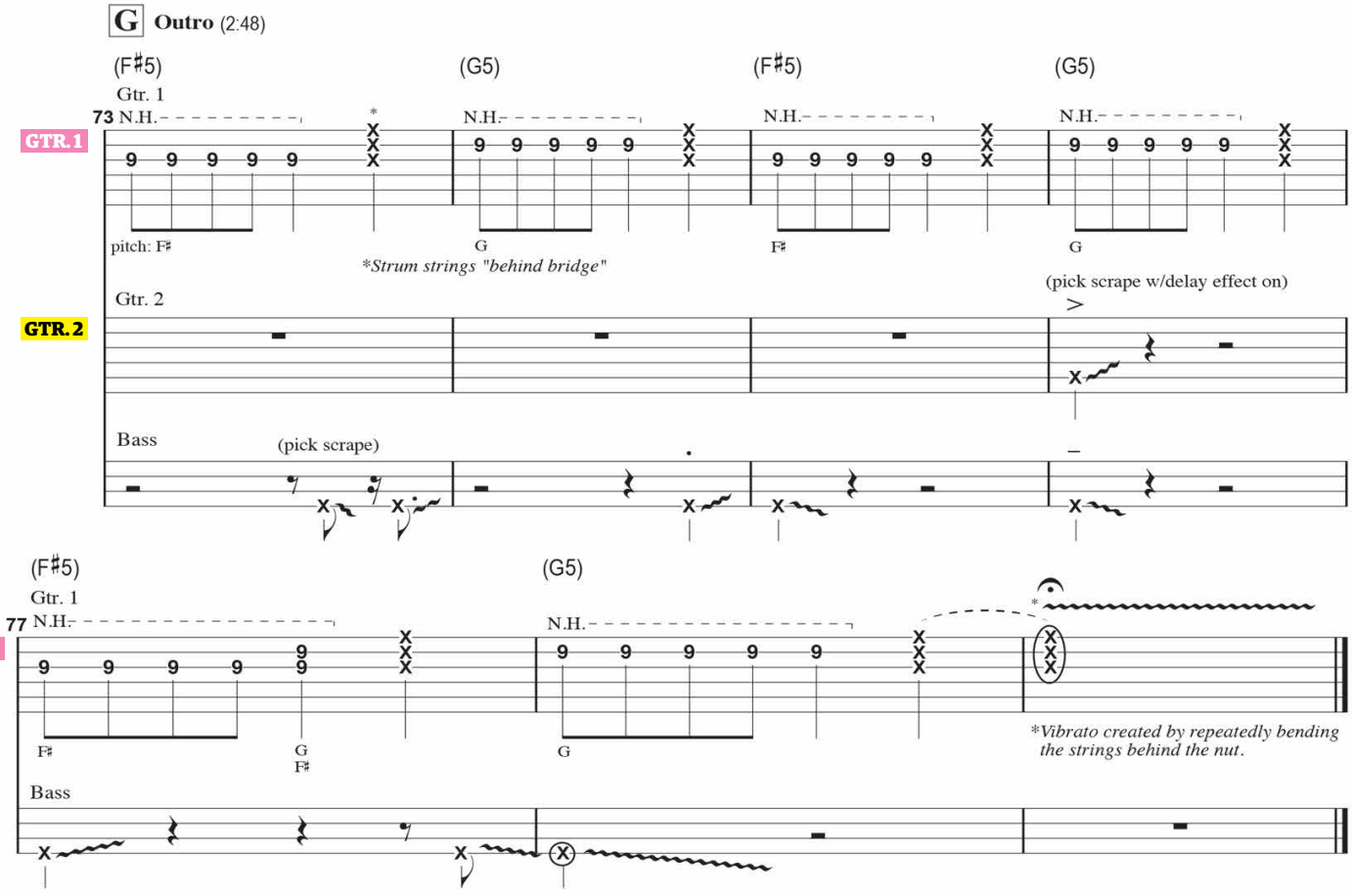


Betting on the bull in the heather




2nd time, skip ahead to G Outro (bar 73)
(E♭/G)
(F♯5)
(G5)
Gtr. 2
slight N.H.*
N.H.
41
GTR. 2
*Slight harmonic produced at approx. 6/10ths the distance from the 2nd fret to the 3rd fret.
pitch: B
G
Gtr. 1
slight N.H.
N.H.
N.H.
GTR. 1
pitch: F♯
G
*Strum strings "behind bridge"
Bass
P.M.
(F♯5)
(G5)
(F♯5)
(G5)
Gtr. 1 plays Riff A simile three times (see bar 1)
45
Gtr. 2
(pick scrape)
(delay effectl off)
GTR. 2
Bass
(pick scrape)
E (1:41)
(G5)
(G)
(Gsus4/2)
(G)
(F/G)
49
Gtr. 2
GTR. 2
Gtr. 1
GTR. 1
Bass plays first four bars of Bass Fig. 1 simile (see bar 5)
F 2nd Verse (1:48)
Ten
twenty
thirty
forty
Tell me
that you
wanna
scold me
(G)
(G5)
(Gadd♯4)
(Gmaj7no3)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 13)
Gtr. 2
53
GTR. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 simile twice (see bar 5)


Tell me that you adore me
(G)
Tell me that you're famous for me
(Gadd♯4)
57
Tell me that you're gonna score me
Tell me that you gotta show me
(Gmaj7)
1/2
(Gadd♯4)
61
Tell me that you need to sorely
Time to tell your love story
(Gmaj7♭5)
65
Go back to D Chorus (bar 33)
Time turning over and over
Time turning four leaf clover
(G6♯4)
(Gmaj7)
1/2
69
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 29)


G Outro (2:48)
(F♯5)
(G5)
(F♯5)
(G5)
Gtr. 1
73 N.H.
GTR.1
pitch: F♯
G
F♯
G
*Strum strings "behind bridge"
Gtr. 2
GTR.2
(pick scrape w/delay effect on)
Bass
(pick scrape)
(F♯5)
(G5)
Gtr. 1
77 N.H.
GTR.1
F♯
G
F♯
G
*Vibrato created by repeatedly bending the strings behind the nut.
Bass

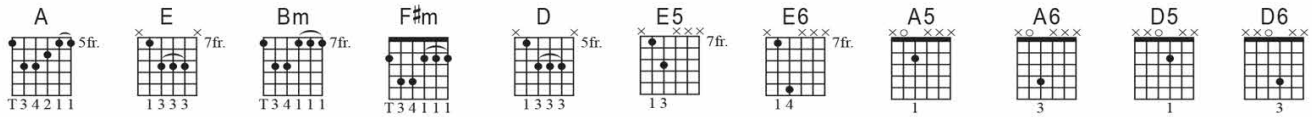
RON WOOD

"I Can Feel the Fire"

AS HEARD ON **I'VE GOT MY OWN ALBUM TO DO**

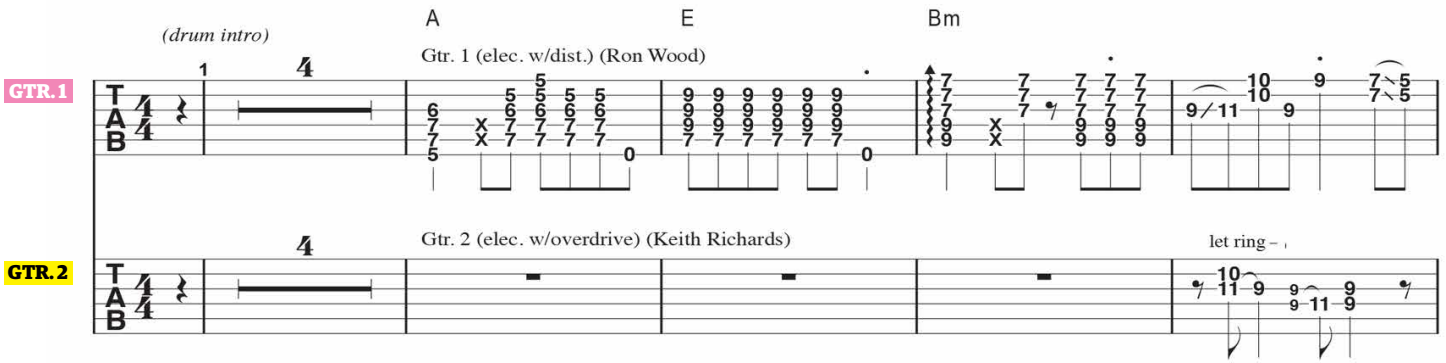
WORDS AND MUSIC BY **RON WOOD** TRANSCRIBED BY **JEFF PERRIN**

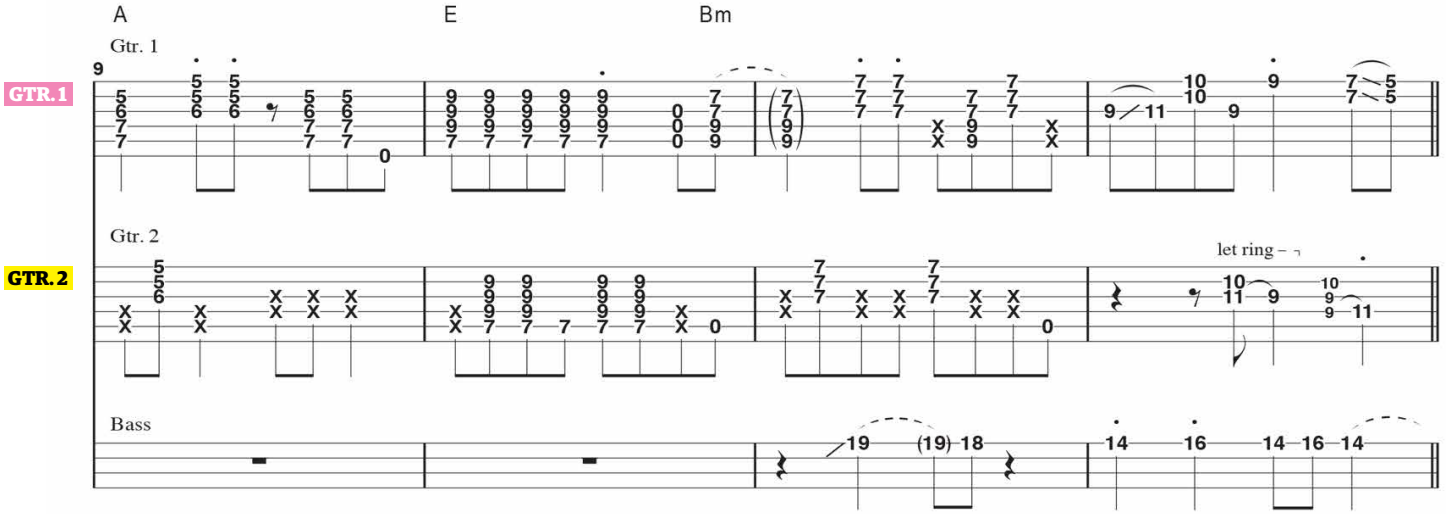
Note: As a result of the tape playback speed being slowed down during the mastering process, all pitches on the recording sound slightly flat (approx. 40 cents). To play along, tune all strings slightly flat.

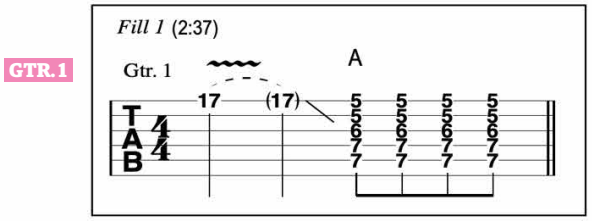


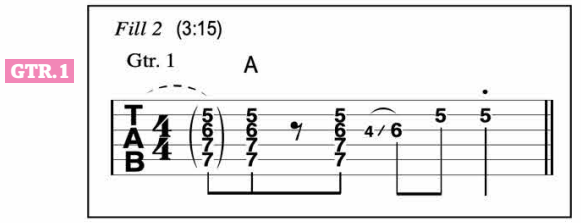
A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 146









"I CAN FEEL THE FIRE" WORDS AND MUSIC BY RON WOOD. © 1974 WB MUSIC CORP. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED BY PERMISSION. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF HAL LEONARD LLC.

B **Verses** (0:20, 1:00, 2:37)

1. I can feel the fire
2. I can feel the fire rising Oh yeah Oh yeah
3. I can feel the fire burning Oh yeah Hm

A E Bm

Gtr. 1 plays Fill 1 on 3rd verse (see below bar 9)

13

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

(All gtrs. play repeats w/ad lib variation.)

I can feel the fire burning
I can feel the fire raging up inside
I can feel the fire burning up inside

A E Bm

17

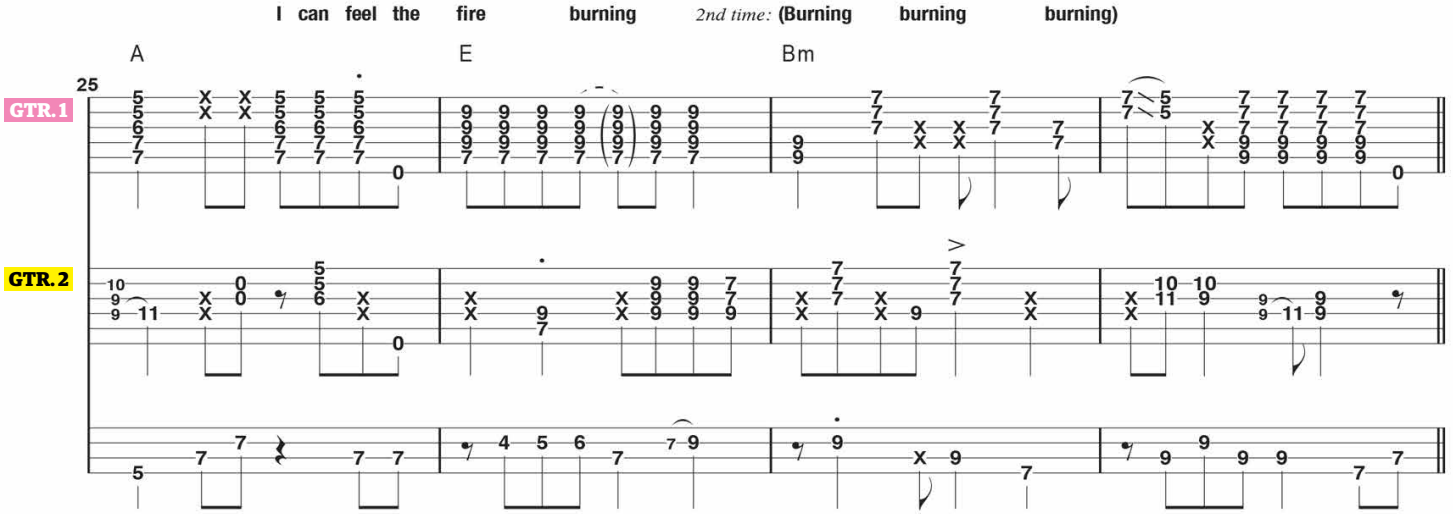
let ring

I can feel the fire burning
I can feel the fire burning Oh yeah Oh yeah
I can feel the fire burning Up inside

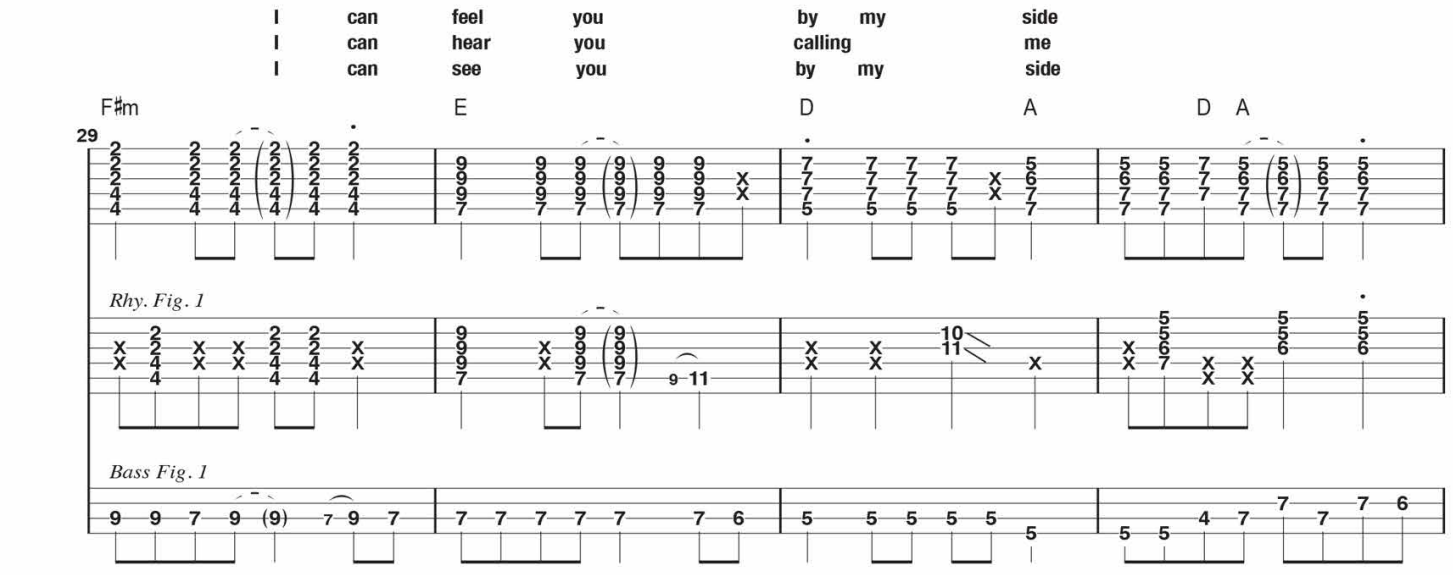
A E Bm

21

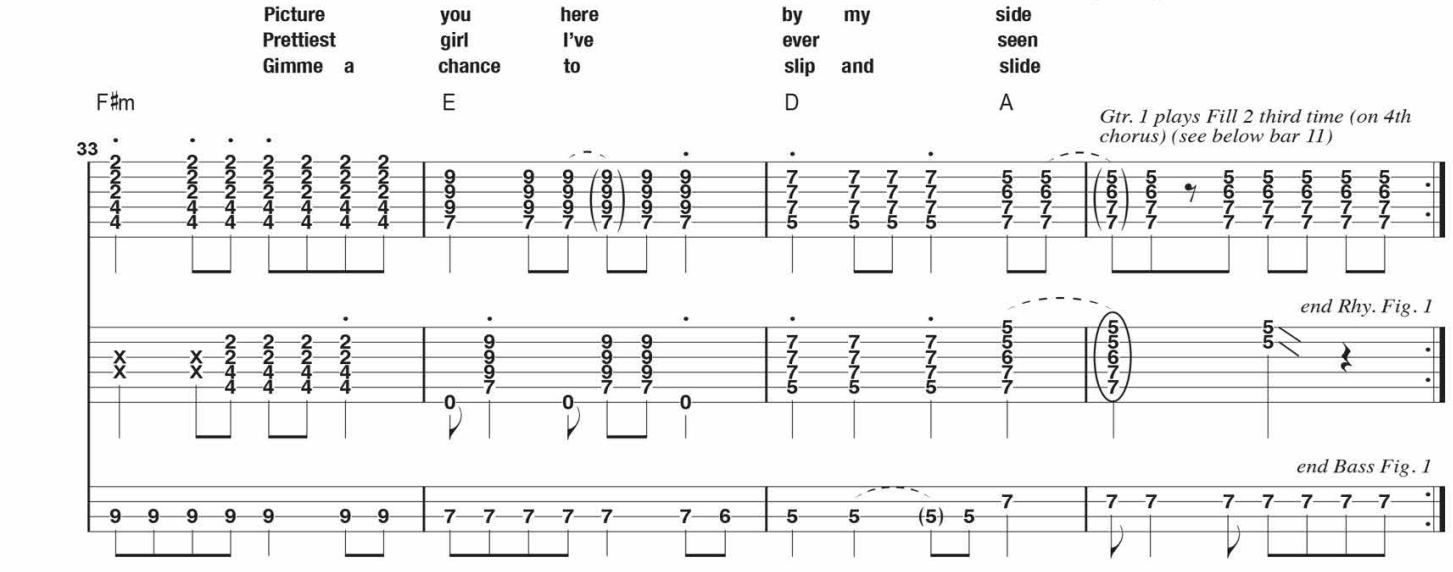
let ring



C **1st, 2nd and 4th Choruses** (0:47, 1:26, 3:03)



On 1st chorus, go back to **B** *2nd verse (bar 13)*
On 4th chorus, skip ahead to **G** *Outro (bar 72)*



D **Bridge** (1:39)

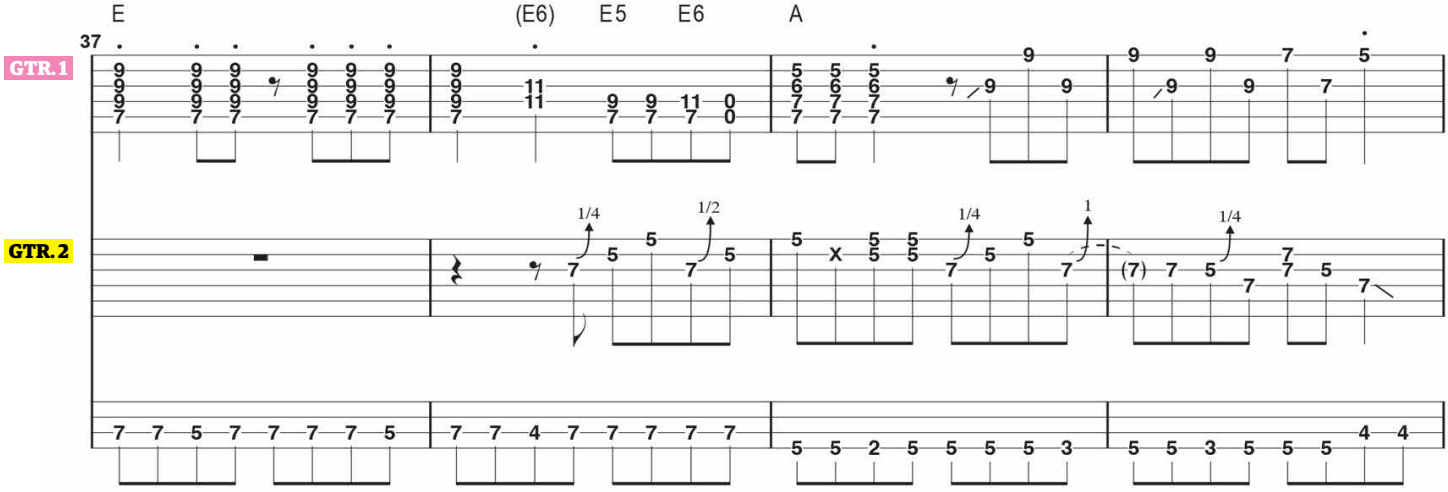
I can see her in the alley (What you doing down there

E (E6) E5 E6 A

37

GTR. 1

GTR. 2

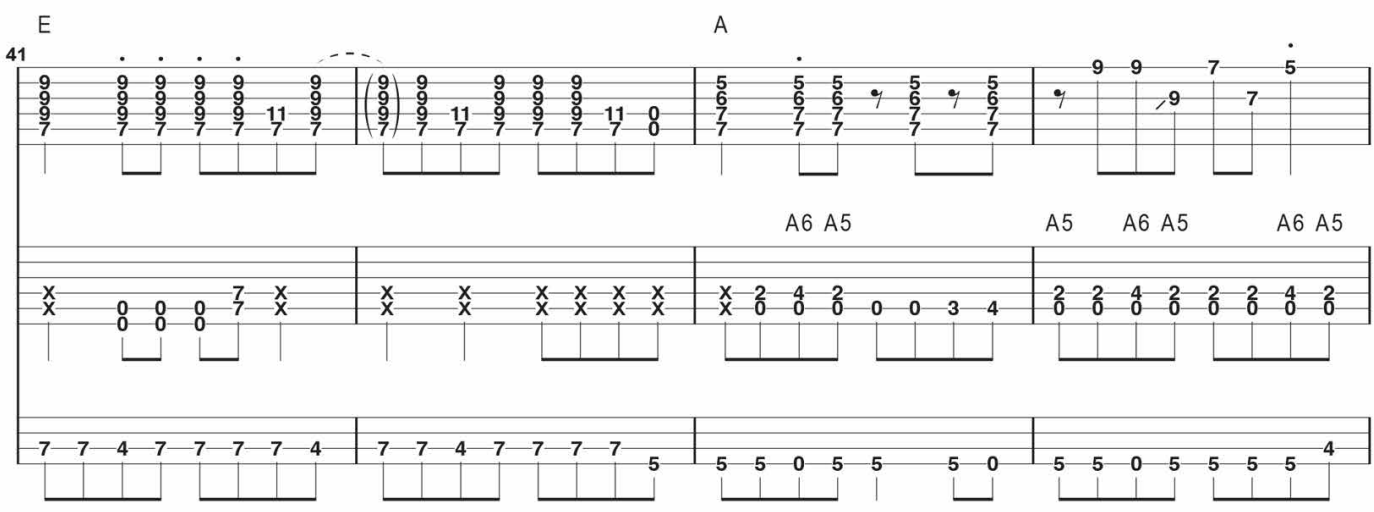


baby) I can see you in the alley (Got to help my mama)

E A

41

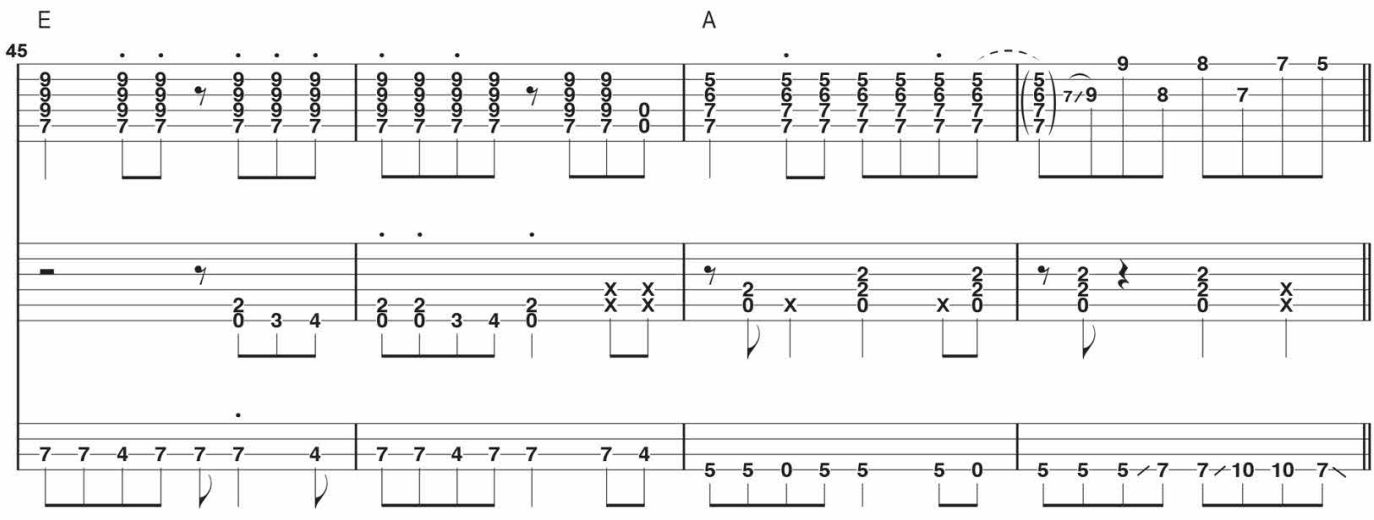
A6 A5 A5 A6 A5 A6 A5



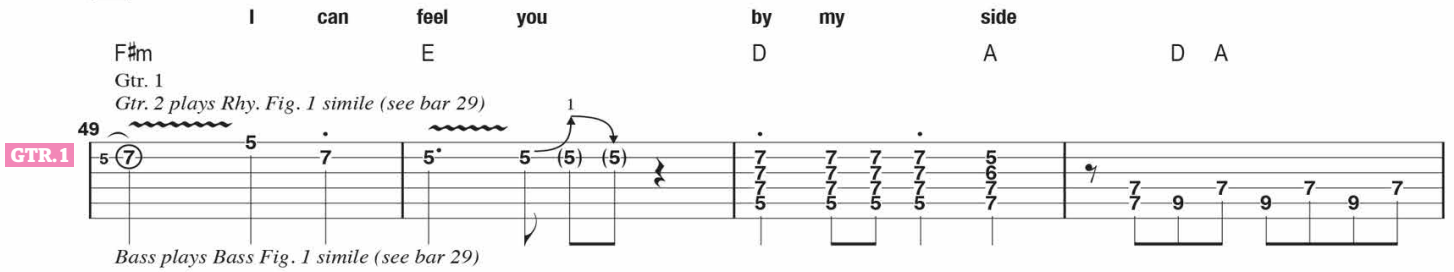
I think I can hear you in the alley (Woo ah - ha)

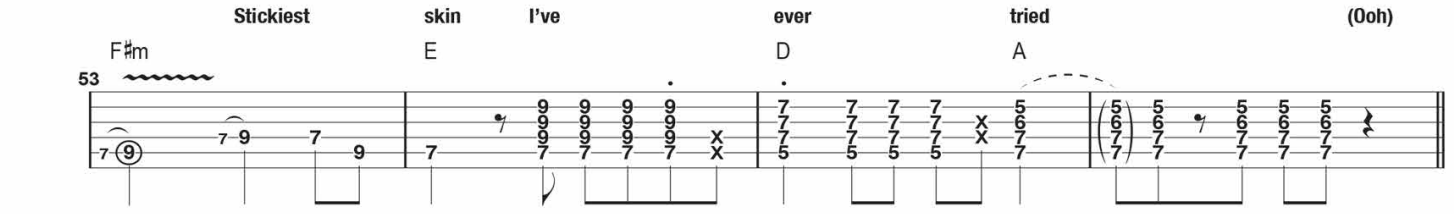
E A

45

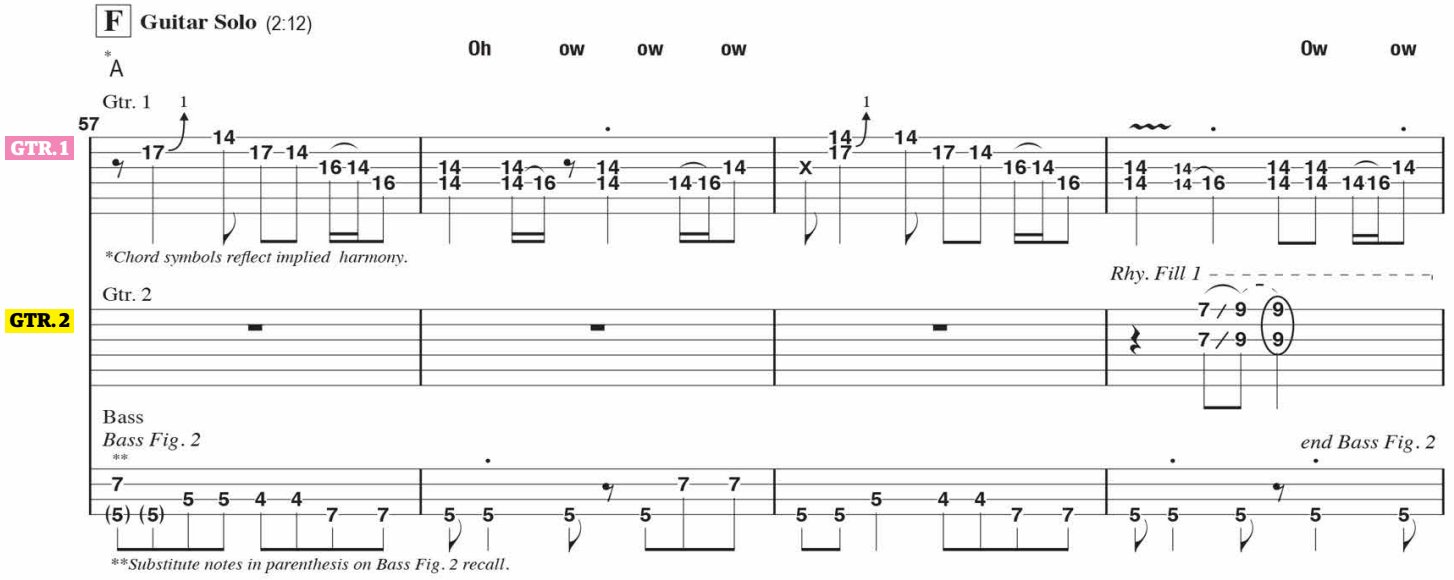


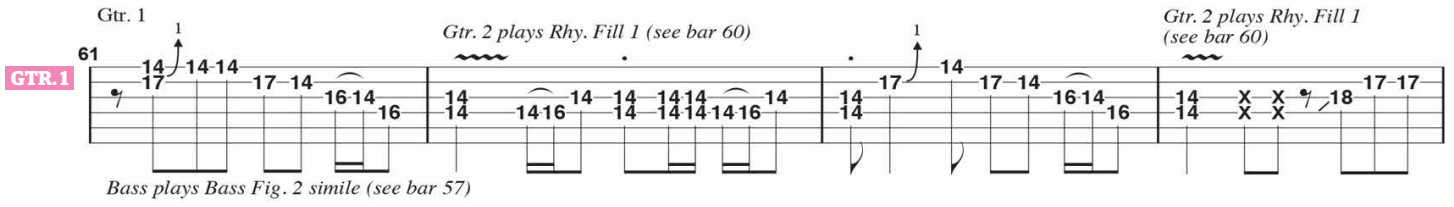
E **3rd Chorus** (1:59)

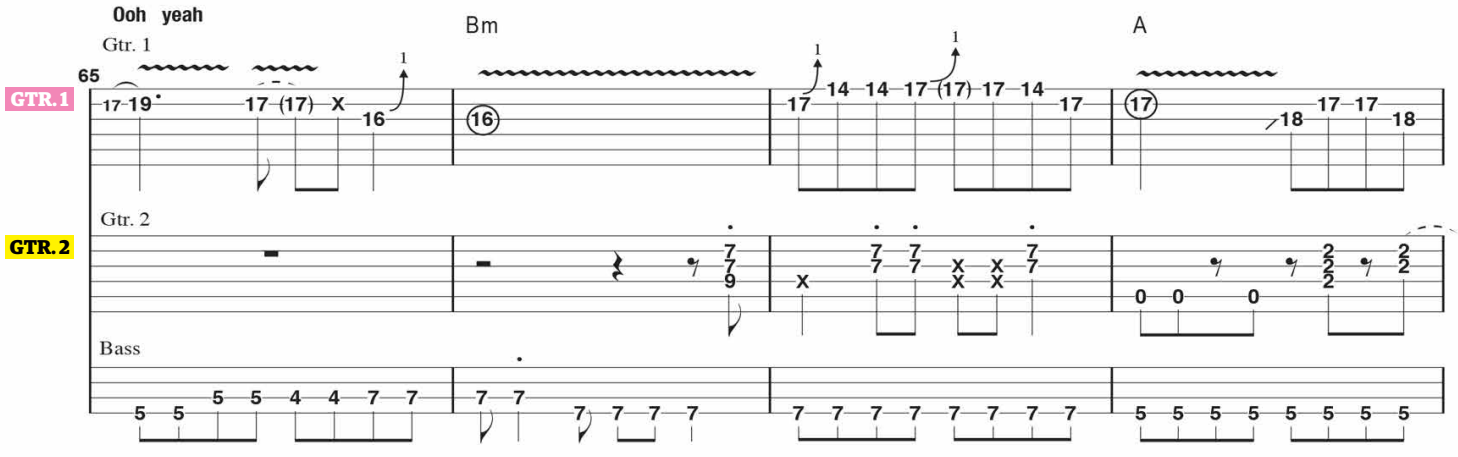




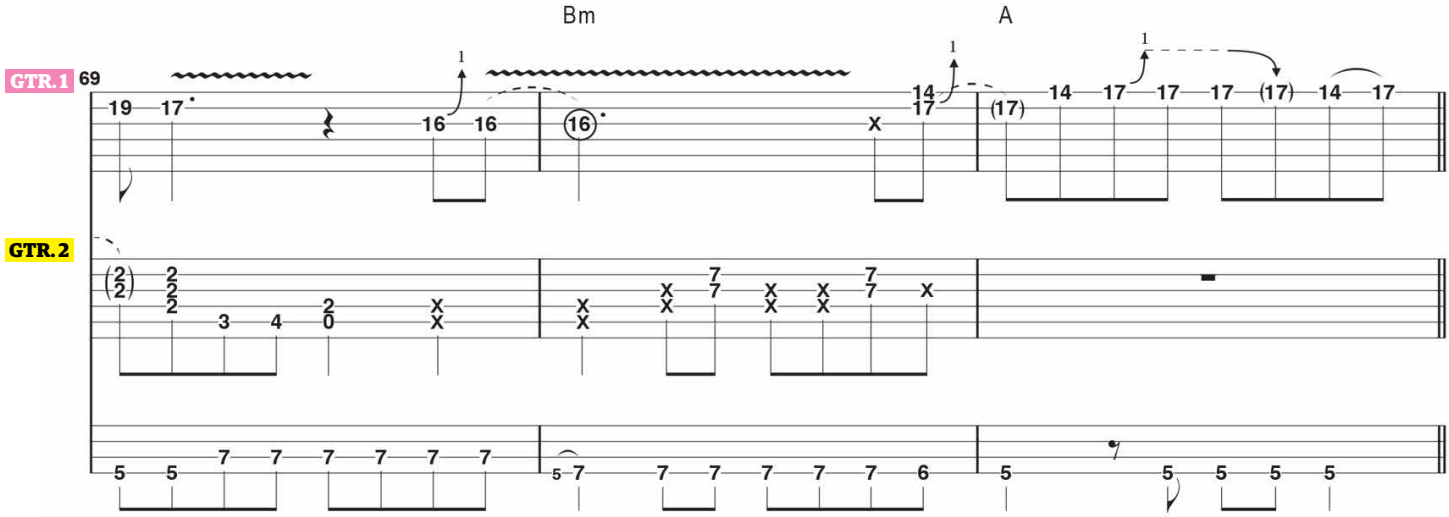
F **Guitar Solo** (2:12)



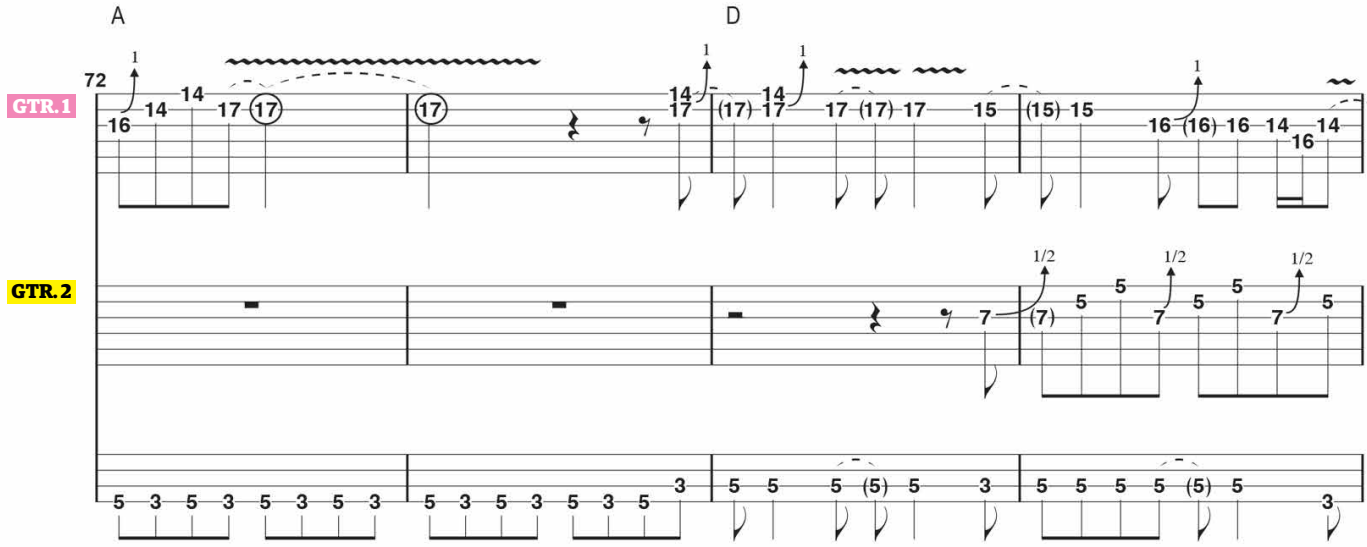


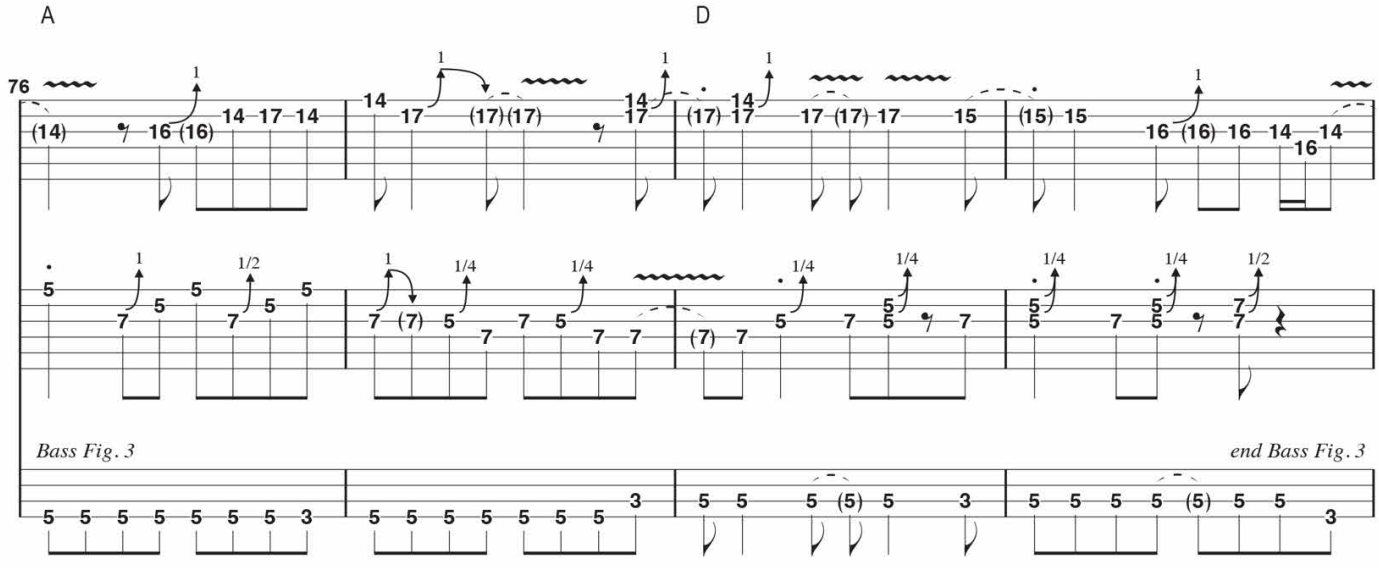


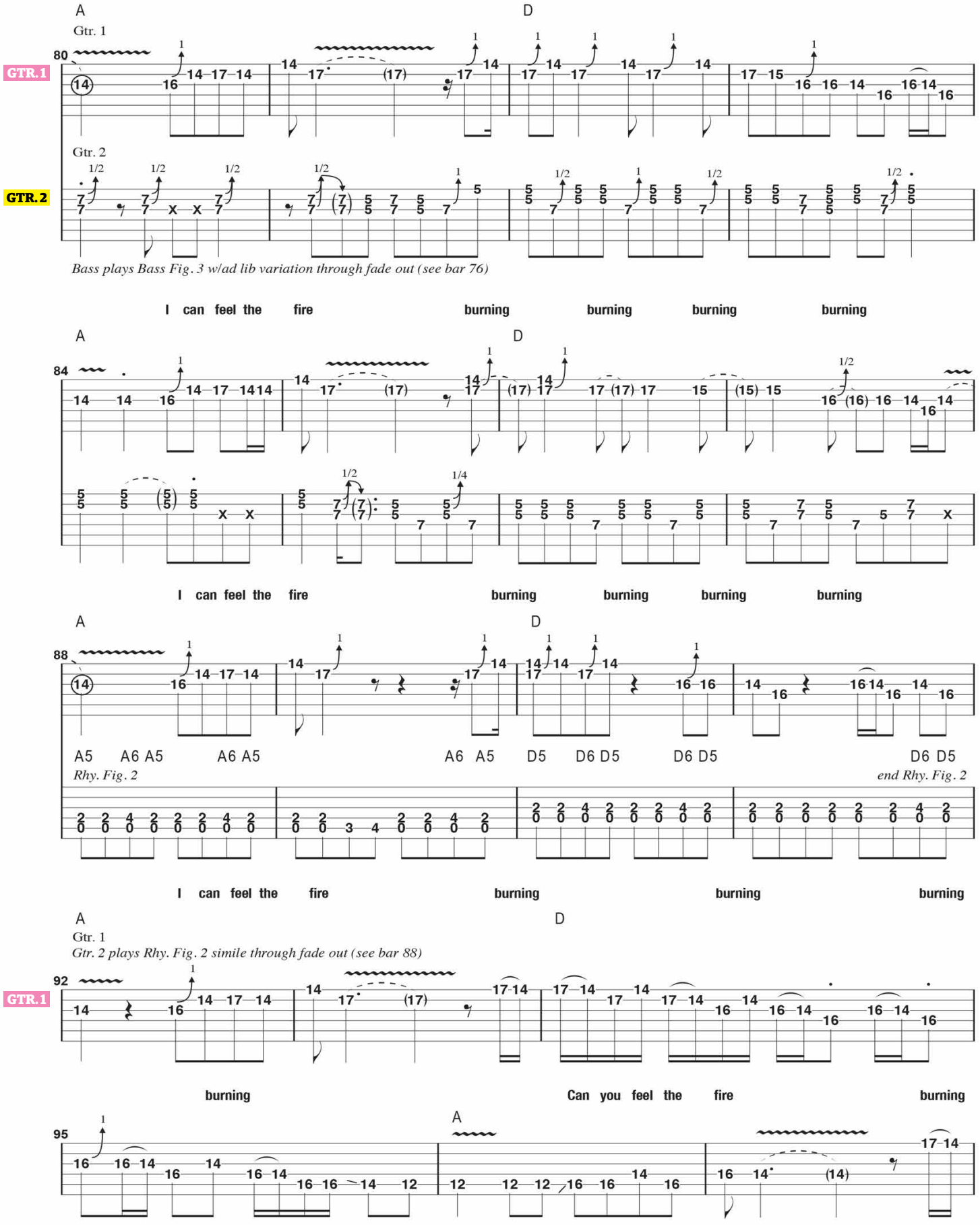
Go back to B *3rd Verse (bar 13)*

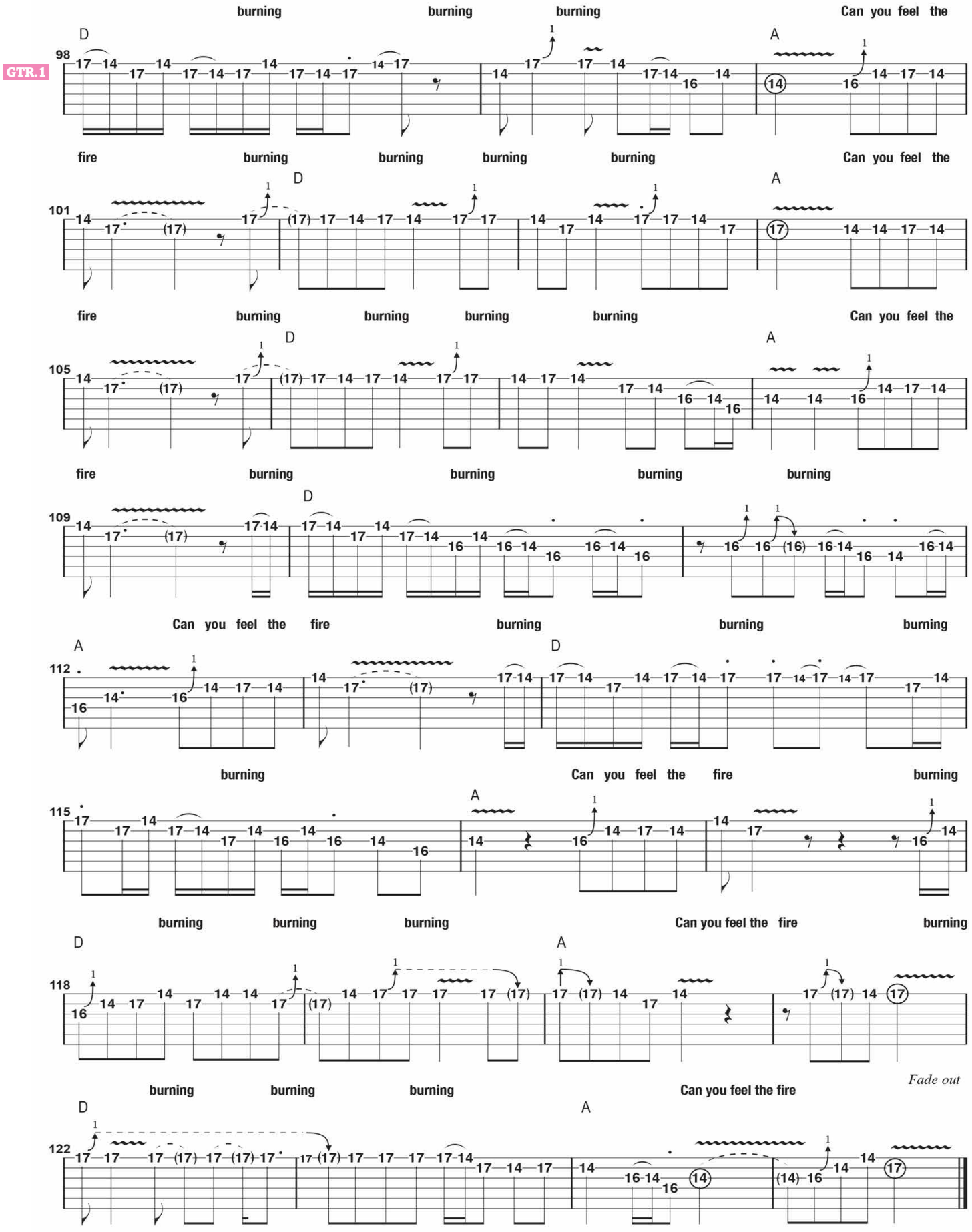


G Outro (3:16)






A
D
Gtr. 1
80
GTR. 1
Gtr. 2
GTR. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 w/ad lib variation through fade out (see bar 76)
I can feel the fire burning burning burning burning
84
I can feel the fire burning burning burning burning
88
A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5
Rhy. Fig. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 2
I can feel the fire burning burning burning
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile through fade out (see bar 88)
92
GTR. 1
burning Can you feel the fire burning
95


GTR. 1
98
D
A
burning burning burning Can you feel the
fire burning burning burning burning Can you feel the
101
D
A
fire burning burning burning burning Can you feel the
105
D
A
fire burning burning burning burning
109
D
Can you feel the fire burning burning burning
112
A
D
burning Can you feel the fire burning
115
A
burning burning burning Can you feel the fire burning
118
D
A
burning burning burning Can you feel the fire
Fade out
122
D
A

POWER TOOLS

Hamer Standard

1975–1985, 1995–2008

CATEGORY: ELECTRIC SOLIDBODY GUITAR

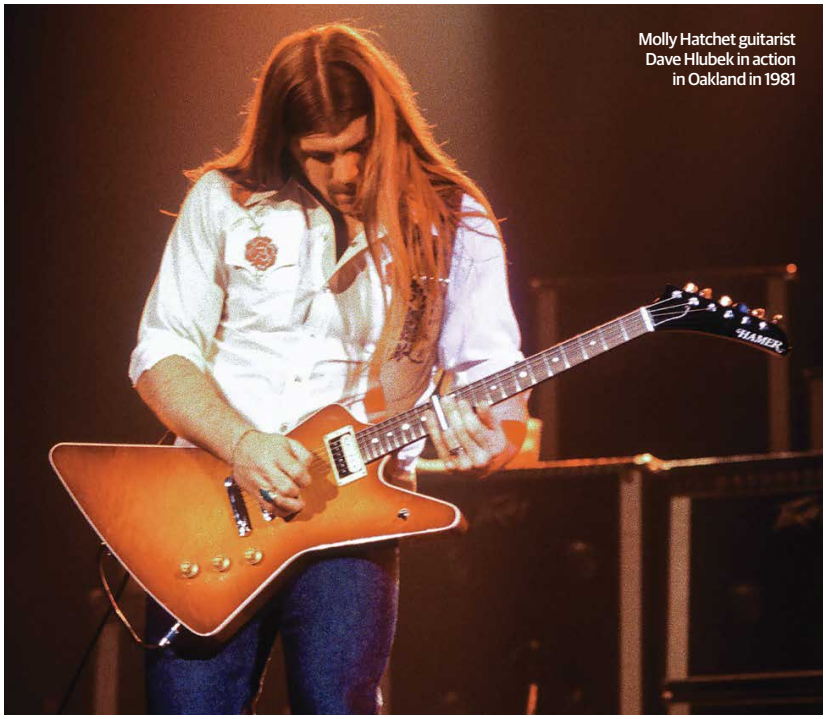
BY CHRIS GILL

ALTHOUGH THE MID-SEVENTIES is generally considered a dark period for the American guitar industry, a few glimmers of brilliance still existed. Perhaps the brightest hope during this era was the emergence of Hamer Guitars. This era's guitar market consisted primarily of new or used instruments, with electric guitars from the Fifties becoming increasingly desirable (and expensive) as dealers started categorizing them as "vintage" instruments. A few custom shops scattered across the United States offered high-quality guitars, but Hamer became the first of what would later be known as a "boutique" manufacturer, building guitars that combined production model consistency with numerous customization options.

The Hamer company started with a custom solidbody built in 1974 for Paul Hamer that combined the angular body shape and scimitar-style headstock of a Gibson Explorer with a cherry sunburst finished flame-maple top over a mahogany body inspired by the 1958-60 Gibson Les Paul Standard. The following year, Hamer and his friend Jol Dantzig decided to start producing this design on their own, calling it the Standard. Appearing a year before Gibson reissued the Explorer (albeit as a plainer version with a mahogany body instead of the original Korina), the Standard became an instant sensation amongst pros who could afford its rather hefty price.

Originally, Hamer offered the Standard with natural, opaque white, opaque black, cherry sunburst or tobacco sunburst finishes. An unbound neck with dot inlays was a standard feature, while a bound neck with crown inlays ("bound and crowned" to Hamer aficionados) was offered as an optional upgrade. Pickups were a pair of DiMarzio PAFs, although some of the earliest examples featured genuine Gibson PAFs. In 1978 the dot neck Standard sold for $1,200, which was $300 more than the list price of a Gibson Les Paul Custom. However, it was less than half the price of what a vintage 1958-60 Les Paul Standard was selling for at the time, and many guitarists considered it a much more desirable alternative than Gibson's current production models.

The Hamer Standard earned cult status during the Seventies and Eighties as an impressive list of pros embraced the model. Notable players include Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick, who owned more than a dozen, including several with dazzling graphic finishes like his iconic checkerboard model, Lita Ford, who played a black Standard, Gary Moore, Adrian Smith of Iron Maiden, Martin Barre of Jethro Tull, Dave Hlubek of Molly Hatchet, Andy Summers of the Police, Aerosmith's Joe Perry and Brad Whitford and Def Leppard's Steve Clark and Pete Willis. Hamer removed the Standard from the catalog as a production model in 1985 during the height of Super Strat mania, but it still remained available as a custom order.



Molly Hatchet guitarist Dave Hlubek in action in Oakland in 1981

LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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In 1995, the Standard made its comeback as a production model, where it remained until 2008 when FMIC gained ownership of Hamer/Kaman and production of Hamer guitars shifted to a custom order-only basis. Seymour Duncan pickups, usually a JB in the bridge position and a '59 at the neck, replaced the previous DiMarzio models. In 1996, Hamer offered a limited run of 100 Standards with Korina bodies that quickly sold out.

The total production of Hamer Standard guitars is unknown, but from the very beginning only a limited number of models were built each year. The Standard could possibly be as rare as the original 1958-60 Les Paul Standard and Gibson Explorers that originally inspired it, and prices on the vintage market are rapidly increasing. Like those vintage icons, the Hamer Standard delivers stunning sound, extraordinary playability and impeccable craftsmanship that makes playing one an unforgettable and highly satisfying experience. GW

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