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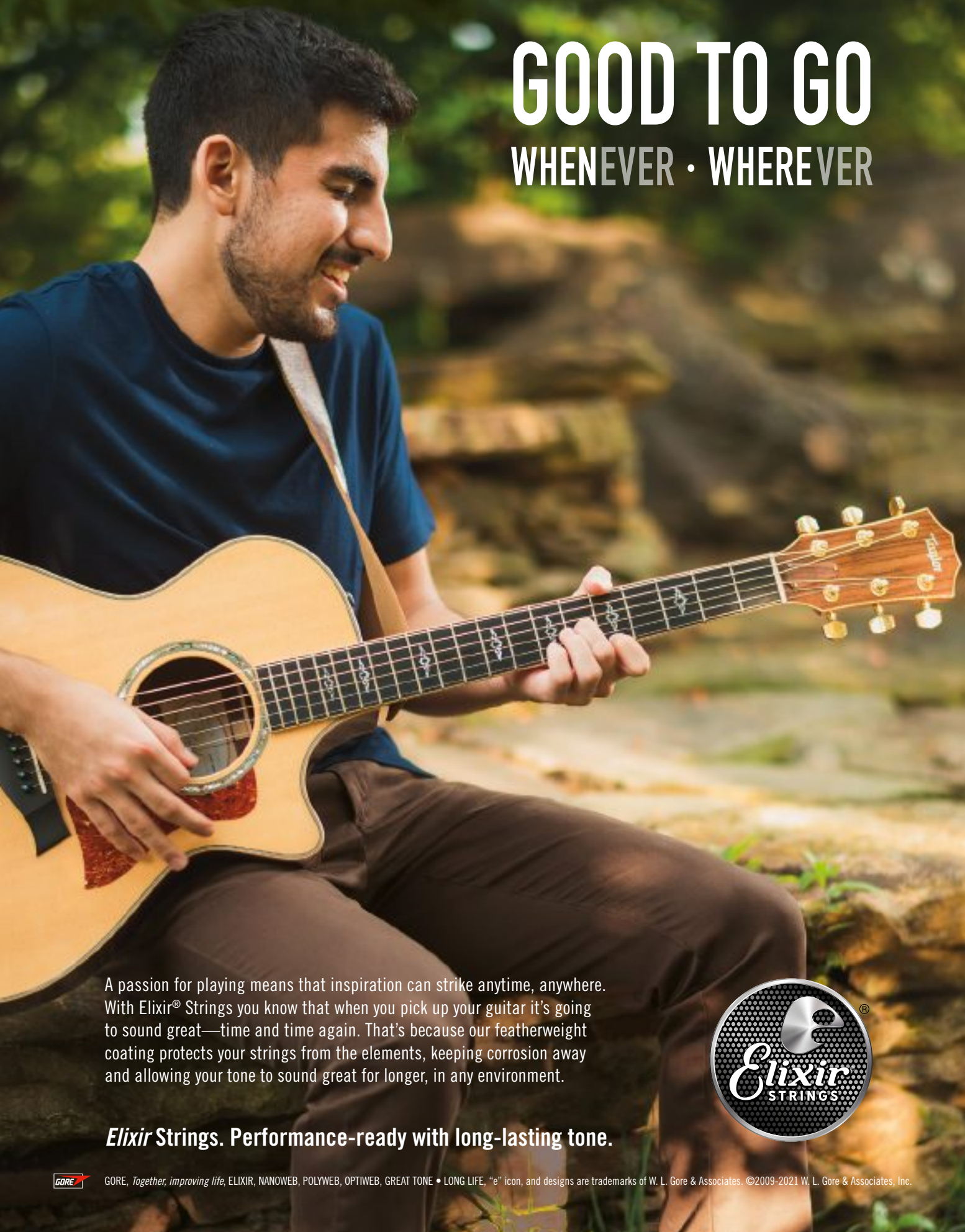
THE BLUES MASTER RETURNS WITH 'THE WOLVES ARE COMING'

TECH SESSION
NEWTON
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WELCOME TO ISSUE 101

Hello and welcome to issue 101 of **Guitar Interactive Magazine!**



Editor
Jonathan Graham

ports of rock and blues' demise are constantly being exaggerated — and Philip Sayce aims to firmly

keep it that way with the release of his new album, 'The Wolves Are Coming' (out February 23, 2024, via Forty Below Records). Guitar Interactive Magazine's Jonathan Graham sits down with the Welsh-born-American-Canadian guitarist during his latest UK tour to discuss his brand new full-length release and much more.

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2023 was particularly historic for Epiphone, as the iconic brand celebrated 150 years as a music instrument manufacturer. To mark the occasion, Guitar Interactive Magazine looks back at Epiphone's storied history — from its humble beginnings to becoming one of the most influential names in the world

of musical instruments. If that's not enough, Connor Thomas delivers an incredible Tech Session this issue breaking down the unique guitar styles of accomplished acoustic guitar player and chart topper, Newton Faulkner.

As usual, with every issue, we have a whole host of the latest and best gear reviews from around the world of guitar, with our team of world-class gear reviewers offering their unique insight, expertise, and personality, which as always, I hope you will enjoy. However, if that's still not enough, don't forget all of our exclusive lessons from, Sam Bell, Andy Wood Nick Jennison & Giorgio Serci.

Guitar

Interactive

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Guitar Interactive

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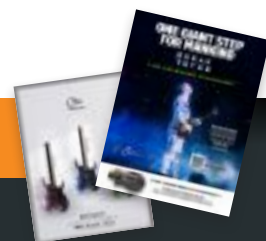
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TECH SESSION

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THE INTERVIEWS

*Reports of rock and blues' demise are constantly being exaggerated — and Philip Sayce aims to firmly keep it that way with the release of his new album, 'The Wolves Are Coming' (out February 23, 2024, via Forty Below Records). Guitar Interactive Magazine's **Jonathan Graham** sits down with the Welsh-born-American-Canadian guitarist during his latest UK tour to discuss his brand new full-length release and much more.*

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IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES





Philip Sayce

THE WOLVES ARE COMING

Reports of rock and blues' demise are constantly being exaggerated — and Philip Sayce aims to firmly keep it that way with the release of his new album, 'The Wolves Are Coming' (out February 23, 2024, via Forty Below Records). Guitar Interactive Magazine's **Jonathan Graham** sits down with the Welsh-born-American-Canadian guitarist during his latest UK tour to discuss his brand new full-length release and much more. ▶

IT'S often been said that it takes many years to become an overnight sensation, and that's the trajectory Philip Sayce has been on in many respects. For over two decades, Sayce has built a reputation as one of the best electric guitarists on the planet, with an uncanny knack for always having something fresh to say with the instrument. The new album is no exception. It's packed with more powerful, unique, and bold tracks than anything he has written or recorded to date. "These songs and stories came into focus during my darkest times," says Philip. "'The Wolves Are Coming' represents a bridge — a connection be-

tween despair and hope — that invites broken spirits to be transformed and healed."

On the new album, songs like "Oh! That Bitches Brew" and "Backstabber" hit like hurricanes, while "Lady Love Divine" explores the light in contrast to darkness with an uplifting, foot-stomping, funk groove that delivers hooks in all the right places. Ballads like "It's Over Now" and the magical instrumental "Intuition" round out Sayce's signature fuzz tones and sledgehammer mountain-sized drum grooves with delicate, intimate, and dynamic performances. ▶



Philip Sayce - Interview



“TO ME, ROCK, BLUES, JAZZ
AND HIP-HOP ALL COME FROM
THE SAME FAMILY TREE.”

THESE SONGS
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FOCUS DURING
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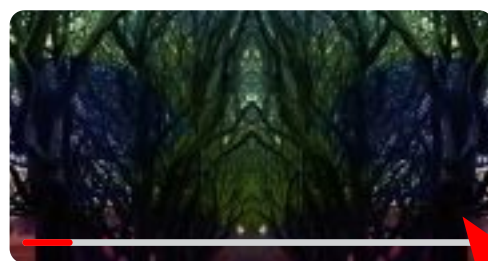


His first new music in over three years, “Oh! That Bitches Brew”, was the first single released from Philip’s highly anticipated new album (on Sayce’s label, Atomic Gemini, with exclusive license to Forty Below Records).

The fiery and brash performance on the track, deeply rooted in blues music, turns out to be a musical interpretation of a memory that came flooding back to Philip one day.

“The song came together quite quickly one evening,” recalls Philip. “I was sitting on the couch and started playing the riff that became the song’s main riff. I dug it and thought, ‘What am I going to say about this? Oh, I know; I

remember that time someone gave me a drink at a party called “The Bitches Brew,” and it totally fucked me up. And that’s what the song became. It came together in about ten minutes.” ▶



Philip Sayce - Oh! That Bitches Brew
[Official Lyric Video]





“THE WOLVES ARE COMING’ REPRESENTS A BRIDGE — A CONNECTION BETWEEN DESPAIR AND HOPE — THAT INVITES BROKEN SPIRITS TO BE TRANSFORMED AND HEALED.”

“The Wolves Are Coming” follows the album “Spirit Rising”, which has over 13 million streams to date. It is a career highlight, exemplifying Sayce’s commitment to his craft and using the power of music as a uniting force to welcome in the light during incredibly turbulent times.

“To me, rock, blues, jazz and hip-hop all come from the same family tree,” Sayce says. “So I most often describe my sound as roots music because it contains influences from all of those elements. At the same time, I want to take my sound in new directions that reflect who I am, where I am, and where I’m heading next. That was the most exciting part about making ‘Spirit Rising.’ Getting to experiment with so many people from different creative backgrounds was a real thrill and a privilege.”

Produced by Philip at Station House Studio in Los Angeles, the track, engineered by Grammy award winner Mark Rains (Rival Sons, Shooter Jennings, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club), mixed by Brian Moncarz (Fantastic Negrito, Alice Cooper, Ian Moore), and mastered by Brian Lucey (Lizzo, The Black Keys, Michael Bublé) features Michael Leasure (Walter Trout, Edgar Winter) on drums, with Philip providing the guitars, bass, and vocals.

Sayce’s love of the guitar started at an early age when his parents introduced

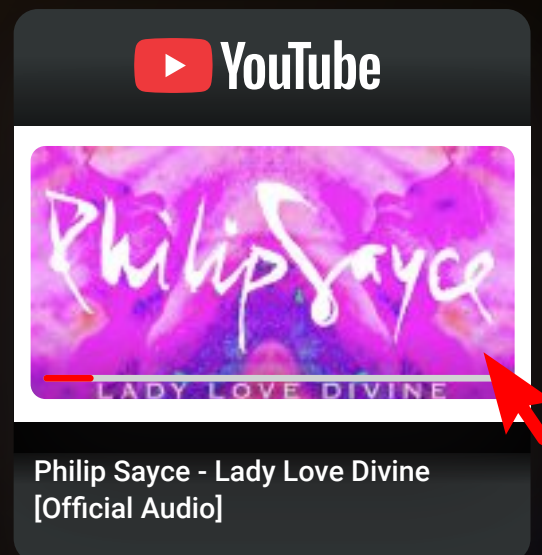
him to all of the greats, notably Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert Collins, Albert King, Freddie King, Jeff Beck, and Jeff Healey. As a teen guitar phenom, Sayce began touring internationally, first with Jeff Healey’s band, performing at the world’s most prestigious festivals. Shortly after, Sayce began recording and touring for four years with musical icon Melissa Etheridge, including performances at The Oscars and The Grammys, before launching a solo career and establishing a rabid fan base in Europe and beyond, opening shows for the likes of ZZ Top and Deep Purple. Sayce is a rare artist, a combination of an outstanding songwriter, unparalleled guitarist, soulful singer, and electrifying performer.

In April 2020, Philip released “Spirit Rising,” his seventh full-length album. The timing couldn’t have been worse. The release coincided with the reality that the Covid pandemic was going to take its toll on the concert tour business and seriously limit promotional appearances that would traditionally follow the release of a new album. Undaunted, Philip turned to Instagram and built on the relationship directly with his fans. He began posting daily videos that showcased his explosive and emotive playing, increasing his following by over 300%, and without touring, promotional visits, or radio play, ‘Spirit Rising’ eclipsed 13 million streams on Spotify alone — ▶

a remarkable feat for any independent blues rock artist.

In the early 2000s, a move to LA landed Philip a gig with Melissa Etheridge, which included numerous recording contributions, including the Oscar-winning “I Need To Wake Up”. While Philip’s time with Melissa Etheridge was jammed with touring, recording, and television appearances, he was able to find some time to get himself in the studio to record his first solo album, “Peace Machine.” Buoyed by guitar fans’ response to the album, Philip turned his attention to his full-time solo artist career, and subsequent releases garnered high praise in both the blues, rock, and guitar worlds. He has since released six studio albums as well as the incendiary live ‘Scorched Earth, Vol. 1.’

On the live performance front, Philip Sayce had a full schedule of tour dates on the calendar through late 2023, including a number of North American dates and a long-overdue and eagerly anticipated return to the UK and Europe. Joining Philip on the road were drummer Bryan Head (Roger Hodgson, Foreigner) and bassist Sam Bolle (Agent Orange, Donavon Frankenre-

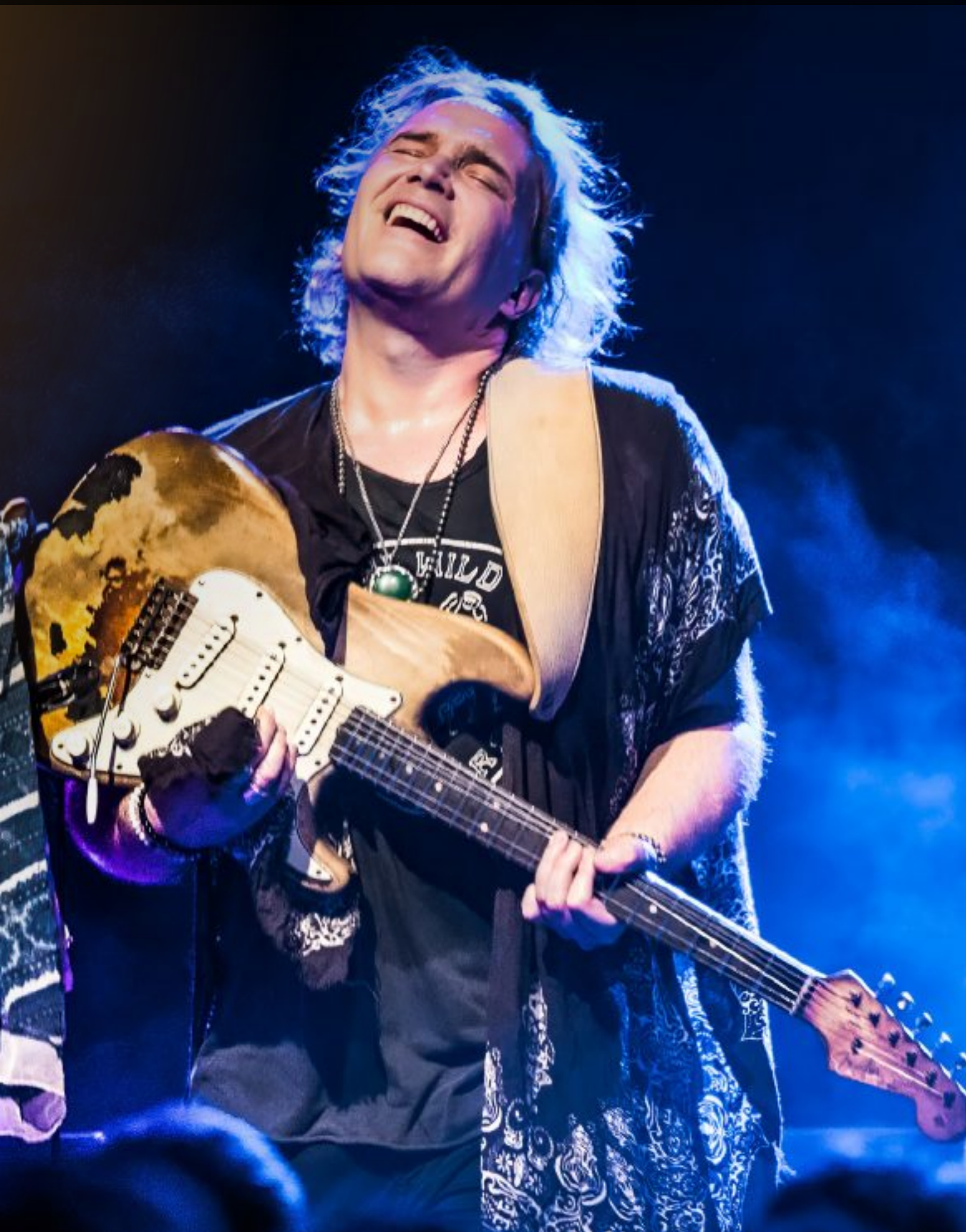


iter), both of whom have played live dates with Philip for the past few years after having cut their teeth together as Dick Dale’s rhythm section.

For UK fans, these sold-out shows were their first taste of a Philip Sayce live performance in almost a decade, and hopefully, with this powerful new album to promote following its release in 2024, he will be back on the road very soon as with artists like Philip Sayce, the future of not only live music but rock and roll is in safe hands.

‘The Wolves Are Coming’ by Philip Sayce will be released on February 23, 2024, on Forty Below Records.







PHILIP SAYCE - 'THE WOLVES ARE COMING' TRACKLIST

1. Oh! That Bitches Brew
2. Lady Love Divine
3. Babylon Is Burning
4. Your Love
5. It's Over Now
6. Black Moon
7. Blackbirds Fly Alone
8. The Moon Is Full
9. Backstabber
10. Intuition
11. This Is Hip

For more information on Philip Sayce, please visit:
philipsayce.com



Troy Redfern

INVOCAT



Hot on the heels of his superb 2022 release, 'The Wings of Salvation,' blues-rock slide guitarist and singer-songwriter Troy Redfern returns with a sneak peek of his upcoming album 'Invocation.' With a release date yet to be announced, **Jonathan Graham** sits down with Troy at his latest London show in this exclusive Guitar Interactive feature. ▶

FROM the outset, Troy Redfern's approach to the guitar and blues music has been characterized by authenticity and a profound understanding and respect for its rich heritage. Growing up listening to iconic blues artists such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Robert Johnson, he absorbed the essence of the genre, internalizing its emotive storytelling and expressive guitar techniques. This early exposure laid the foundation for Redfern's own musical explo

Taking up the guitar as a teen, Troy quickly absorbed his musical influences of the early blues pioneers and the energy of

the 70s and 80s rock icons. The turning point came when he discovered open tunings and slide guitar.

"I immediately felt like I'd come home the moment I put a bottleneck on my finger and started playing slide; it instantly felt completely natural to me. This style of playing helped me find my true voice on the instrument."

His talents quickly realized; he received endorsements from Ernie Ball Strings, Magnatone Amplifiers, and Airline Guitars, and even has his own signature glass blown slide made by world-renowned slide manufacturer Diamond ▶



Troy Redfern - Interview

**"I IMMEDIATELY FELT LIKE I'D COME HOME
THE MOMENT I PUT A BOTTLENECK ON MY
FINGER AND STARTED PLAYING SLIDE."**

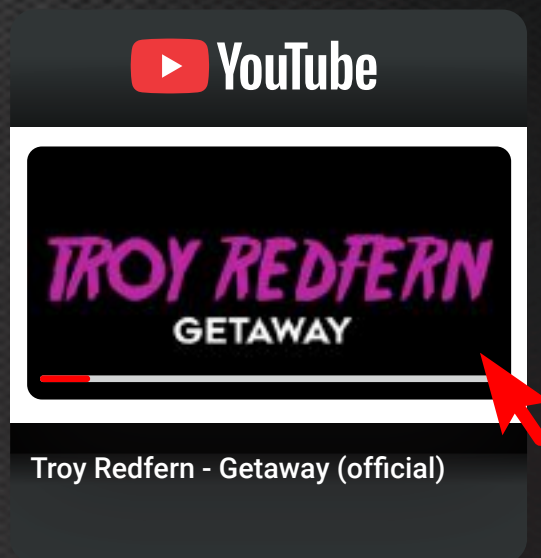


Bottlenecks, whose roster includes the who's who of slide guitar luminaries, including the likes of Mark Knopfler.

Redfern's breakthrough came with his debut album, 'Backdoor Hoodoo,' which was released in 2015. The album served as a powerful introduction to his distinctive style, blending gritty blues riffs with a contemporary sonic palette. The title track, "Backdoor Hoodoo," exemplifies Redfern's ability to channel the spirit of the blues while injecting it with a modern vitality. The album received critical acclaim, establishing Redfern as a rising force in the blues genre.

As Redfern continued to evolve as an artist, subsequent albums like 'Dirt Blues Ritual,' (2016) 'The Fire Cosmic' (2019) and 'The Wings of Salvation' (2022) solidified his reputation as a formidable blues-rock guitarist. 'Dirt Blues Ritual,' in particular, showcased his ability early on to navigate various blues subgenres, incorporating elements of delta blues, slide guitar, and even hints of psychedelia. The album's raw, gritty sound and Redfern's impassioned vocals drew favourable comparisons to blues legends while also establishing his unique voice within the genre.

'The Fire Cosmic' marked a further exploration of Redfern's sonic palette, incorporating elements of rock and alternative



blues. Tracks like "Waiting for Your Love" and "Sanctify" demonstrated his versatility as a songwriter and performer. The album received praise for its rich production and Redfern's ability to seamlessly blend genres — creating a sound that was both nostalgic and contemporary.

One of the defining aspects of Troy Redfern's artistry is his commanding presence on stage. His live performances are electrifying experiences that captivate audiences and showcase his exceptional skill as a guitarist. Armed with a resonator guitar and a soulful voice, Redfern delivers each note with passion and authenticity, creating a visceral connection with his listeners. His stage persona reflects a deep reverence for the blues tradition, coupled with a desire to push its boundaries while bringing it into the contemporary music landscape.

*"I WANTED TO WRITE AND RECORD
BALLSIER THAN WHAT*

Carving out a name for himself by relentlessly touring and blazing a trail across the main stage festival circuits in the UK, Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia, and sharing the stage with the likes of Robert Plant and Dr Feelgood, Troy has worked tirelessly to build a strong following of diehard fans who gravitate towards his passionately honest, fiery performances and visceral slide guitar playing.

Beyond his solo work, Troy Redfern has collaborated with various artists, contributing his signature guitar work to diverse musical projects. His collaborations highlight his adaptability and willingness to explore new musical territories while remaining anchored in the blues tradition.

In addition to his musical achievements, Redfern's commitment to the blues extends to his advocacy for the genre. He actively supports initiatives that promote blues music and its cultural significance, recognizing the importance of preserving and passing on this musical heritage to future generations.

Featuring what is expected to be his strongest material to date, Redfern's album, 'Invocation' will drop in 2024, following his successful Kickstarter Campaign late last year to coincide with the powerful new single, "Getaway." Produced by Dave Marks and mixed by Jo

Webb. The new single features Troy Redfern (guitar, vocals), Paul Stewart (drums), and Dave Marks (bass).

On "Getaway" and the forthcoming album, Troy explains, "I wanted to write and record songs that were bigger and ballsier than what has come before," says Redfern. "The new songs embrace more of the rockier elements of my writing and playing. I've also given myself the creative freedom to explore and feel out other styles or aspects of my writing that have not been heard on any of my other albums."

"As an artist, I feel it's important to keep pushing and striving to refine your art while staying true to your vision, Continues Redfern. "It is important to know who you are as an artist, and on Getaway and the upcoming album, I think I have finally perfected my own contemporary signature sound."

Getaway is a slide guitar, rock 'n' roll tour de force. Lyrically, it deals with themes of freedom and knowing when it's time to leave a bad situation. It's undeniably Troy Redfern full circle blues rock and roll! "Getaway is about cutting yourself some slack," adds Redfern. "It's about transforming your life, even if there are difficult decisions to be made. As they say, from the mud grows the lotus." ▶

**...D SONGS THAT WERE BIGGER AND
...HAS COME BEFORE."**

"THE SONGS ARE STRONGER, THE PRODUCTION IS DIALLED IN, AND I ABSOLUTELY CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU GUYS TO HEAR IT!"

On the successful Kickstarter campaign, the British blues guitarist and singer also shared the following message:

"After the overwhelming success of the Kickstarter-funded 2022 'Wings of Salvation' album, and the incredible support I received from 'you' the backers of that project, I decided to waste no time in getting to work on the follow-up record.

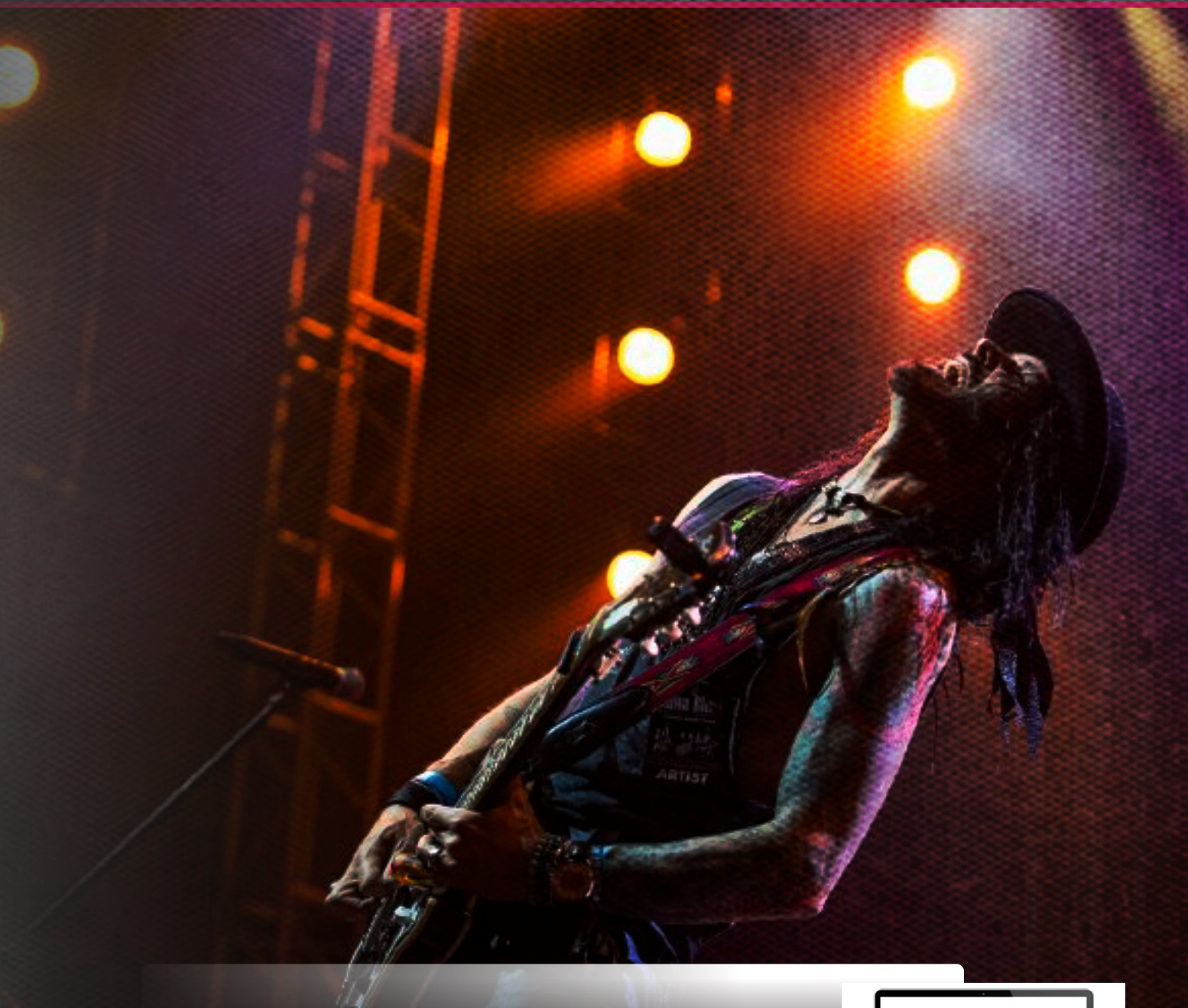
My amazing experience working with producer Dave Marks, drummer Paul Stewart (The Feeling) and mixer Jo Webb on 'Wings of Salvation' meant that these guys were the logical choice to work on the new record. I knew that as a team, we could really build upon the stylistic

foundation we'd created making 'Wings' and would be able to take that to the next level in terms of writing and production.

Now that the album has been completed I can say without a doubt that we've upped the game in every respect! The songs are stronger, the production is dialled in, and I absolutely can't wait for you guys to hear it! This album feels like an evolution from 'The Wings of Salvation'."

If the new single "Getaway" is anything to go by, the rest of Troy Redfern's Invocation album will be a true blues-infused powerhouse — and we, for one, can't wait to hear more.





For more information on Troy Redfern,
please visit: **troyredfern.com**



THE TECH SESSIONS

*In each issue, the **Guitar Interactive** Tech Session shines the spotlight on one of guitar's biggest icons. These in-depth lessons look to break down the style, techniques and individual nuances that make these great players stand out from the crowd in the form of a tailor-made composition.*

All Gi TECH SESSION are accompanied with full tablature and a backing track — to help you learn, practice and utilise these new techniques in no time.



UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES THE GREATS GREAT



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THE TECH SESSION FILES

*Newton
Faulkner*

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Tech Session

After launching onto the music scene in the mid-2000s with his hit single “Dream Catch Me,” Newton Faulkner has carved out a superb career as not only a respected singer-songwriter but also as a distinguished acoustic guitar player. In this issue’s Tech Session, **Connor Thomas** breaks down the various elements of Newton’s style of playing that — often simultaneously — combines melody, rhythm, bass lines, and percussion all in one. ▶

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NEWTON Faulkner is a renowned singer-songwriter and musician from the UK. Newton has captivated audiences worldwide with his unique blend of extraordinary guitar skills, powerful vocals, and unique songwriting. A career marked by hit songs such as “Dream Catch Me” and “Gone in the Morning” shows his innovative style of popular music.

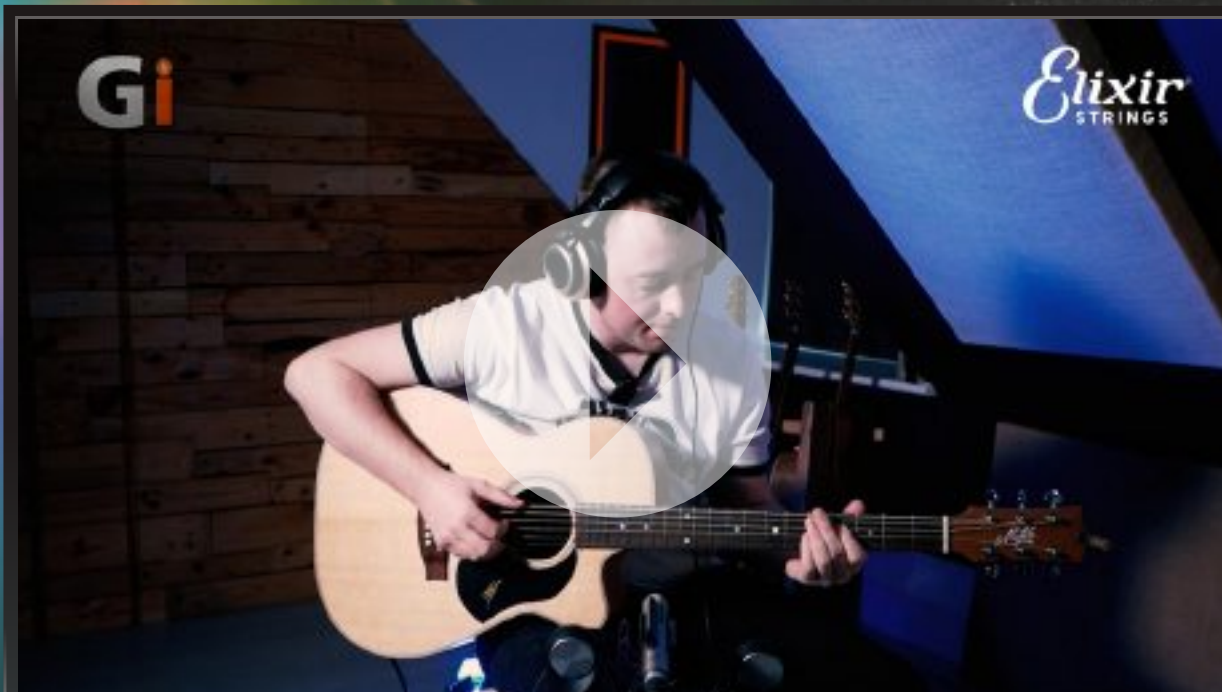
Faulkner has also performed some brilliant covers over the years. For example, his rendition of Bohemian Rhapsody is a testament to his versatility and creative ability.

In this tech session, we will break down some of the aspects of Newton Faulkner’s technique and how you can apply it to your own playing.

The Gear:

Let’s start with the gear. Newton Faulkner uses a guitar built by expert luthier Nick Benjamin; they are fantastic instruments that push the limits of acoustic guitar, from the woods selected to expert craftsmanship and high-tech pickup systems.

Although you don’t need Newton’s guitar for this piece, I do recommend using



Newton Faulkner Tech Session Performance

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medium strings (12-56 or 12-53); this is because we're going to detune our guitar a half step. Thicker strings greatly help with tuning stability & tone when detuned. It's also essential that the action on your acoustic guitar isn't too low. Having the action too low will cause buzzing on the fretboard when you detune.

This piece's tuning is the popular DAD-GAD (however, half a step down).

The tuning from high to low strings is C#, G#, C#, F#. G#. C#.

There are no picks or long fingernails needed for the right hand.

Overview of the song:

This original piece we're breaking down is heavily inspired by Mr Faulkner's song "Write it on Your Skin." To learn this style, we have kept the right hand reasonably simple. We are allowing you to focus on the proper hand technique. While learning this, take time to get used to the common 6,4 string pattern. It doesn't come easy to anyone, but with time and perseverance, anyone can get it!

Palm Muting:

Palm muting is used heavily in this piece and much of Faulkner's music. ▶

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The purpose of palm muting is to slightly ‘muffle’ the string as opposed to entirely mute it. Rest the fleshy part of your palm lightly on the strings near the guitar’s bridge. The proximity of your hand to the bridge affects the muting intensity — the closer you are, the less muted the strings will be. Experiment with different wrist positions and varying pressure levels to find the sweet spot. The goal is to apply the least amount of pressure necessary for effective muffling.

Part 1 & Thumb/Finger pattern

Part one is the piece in its simplest form. To play this, place your right hand in a palm muting position and repeatedly play the 6th and the 4th string. Your left hand will play the 7th fret on the 4th string, followed by the 5th fret and then the 4th fret, before playing the 5th fret on the 6th string and leaving the 4th string open. We recommend watching the video and slowing it down to get exact finger positionings.





Part 2 & Incorporating percussion: Snare

Mr Faulkner is highly proficient with his right-hand percussion, and without years dedicated to this style, it can be a little tricky to master! The first fundamental technique is what I like to call a 'snare sound.'

To create the snare sound, you tap your right-hand thumb on the low E string so that it connects with the fretboard and creates a snare-like sound. The string must be muted while you do this; otherwise, the note will resonate.

So, for part two of the song, we will play the same notes we played in part

1. But instead, on beats 2 & 4, we will play the snare sound!

Once you've learned this technique, have fun with it! Incorporate it into other playing styles, and see what you can come up with!

Part 3 & Incorporating percussion: Kick

The other technique Mr Faulkner uses is a kick drum sound. The kick drum sound is achieved by simply tapping on the face of the guitar. For this song in particular, I recommend tapping just above the soundhole using your wrist while strumming the chord. Making sure to hit the top of the guitar on beats 2 & 4. ▶



Newton Faulkner Tech Session Lesson



This third playthrough is about having fun with it! The beauty of the DADGAD style tuning is that most strings sound great; just leave them open in this key!

On this final playthrough, feel free to add your variations to the chord patterns.

Final Part & Harmonics

Congratulations on making it through to the end. On the final playthrough, we toned the song back. We were playing it in a much more straightforward, finger-picked way, removing the percussion.

Newton Faulkner is one of the best at controlling his dynamics. He knows when to play soft and when to play hard. We're playing significantly softer for this last section while adding variations to the melody.

To end the song, we play natural open harmonics on the 7th fret. To play a harmonic, lightly touch the string di-

rectly on the 7th fret and play the notes with the right hand. Once you play the strings, lift your left hand off the fretboard to allow the harmonics to ring. Our Tommy Emmanuel tech session covers harmonics in further detail.

Conclusion

That's it! You've learned the fundamental techniques that Newton Faulkner frequently uses in his music.

If you're looking to learn more songs in style, I recommend you to check out 'Write It on Your Skin' - there are a few different versions of Newton Faulkner playing this live that can be great material to learn.

Use the techniques demonstrated in your own music and have fun with it! Mastering some of this (especially the percussive parts) isn't easy, so persevere, and you'll get there!



SPONSORED BY



5

Newton
Faulkner

THE FEATURES

*2023 was particularly historic for Epiphone, as the iconic brand celebrated 150 years as a music instrument manufacturer. To mark the occasion, **Guitar Interactive Magazine** looks back at Epiphone's storied history — from its humble beginnings to becoming one of the most influential names in the world of musical instruments. Gi also takes a closer look at some impressive new releases that usher in a new era for the company.*

HIGHLIGHTING THE BEST FROM THE WORLD OF GUITAR







World Famous Quality Since 1873

*2023 was particularly historic for Epiphone, as the iconic brand celebrated 150 years as a music instrument manufacturer. To mark the occasion, Guitar Interactive Magazine looks back at Epiphone's storied history — from its humble beginnings to becoming one of the most influential names in the world of musical instruments. **Gi** also takes a closer look at some impressive new releases that usher in a new era for the company. ▶*

FOR some, when they think of Epiphone, they think of a “more affordable” version of a Gibson; however, trying to simplify this historic guitar builder to that notion would be a huge mistake.

In reality, Epiphone is, without doubt, one of the most important early guitar builders, with the likes of Les Paul, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and The Rolling Stones among its players, along with today’s top artists such as Noel Gallagher, Joe Bonamassa, Peter Frampton, Lzzy Hale, James Bay, Jared James Nichols, Gary Clark Jr., Abraham Alexander, Tommy Thayer of KISS and Emily Wolfe to name a few, the brand couldn’t be in a stronger position as it celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Epiphone’s story begins as the House of Stathopoulos in 1873, founded by Greek instrument maker Anastasios Stathopoulos in Smyrna, Ottoman Empire (present-day Izmir, Turkey). In the early days, Stathopoulos’ business initially focused on crafting traditional Greek instruments such as ouds, laoutos and violins. However, in 1903, seeking new opportunities, the Stathopoulos family, including sons Epaminondas (Epi) and Orpheus, immigrated to the United States and settled in New York City. The city’s Lower East Side became the backdrop for their continued instrument-making tradition, with Anastasios’s repair shop serving the local musical community.

Upon Anastasios’s death in 1915, his son Epi assumed control of the family busi-



“I wanted to start playing Epiphones because of the Beatles. I didn’t know anything about guitars then. They looked good; they felt good, I could make them sound good.” – Noel Gallagher



ness. A visionary designer and shrewd businessman, Epi took the company from strength to strength and in 1928, after patenting a line of popular banjos, Epi officially changed the company name to Epiphone. This not only marked a turning point in name alone but also set the stage for the brand’s expansion into the guitar market.

Ironically, Epiphone’s entry into the six-string market coincided with its eventual owner, Gibson. The companies, both crafting American-made hollow-body instruments, engaged in a friendly competition that pushed both brands creatively. Epi’s “Masterbilt” f-hole arch-top acoustics, introduced in 1931, directly challenged Gibson’s L-5. The “Masterbilt” guitars, arguably more ornate than their Gibson counterparts, showcased Epi’s attention to ▶



detail and willingness to stand out from the pack, even in the days when fewer brands were in town.

The mid-1930s witnessed both companies pushing the boundaries of guitar design. Epiphone responded to Gibson's Super 400 with the Emperor. As World War II engulfed the world, the production of guitars took a backseat to the war effort. Tragically, Epi succumbed to leukaemia in 1943 at the age of 50, leaving the company at a crossroads. His brothers attempted to carry on, but somewhat misguided decisions, such as relocating the factory to Philadelphia, led

to internal strife, prompting the departure of many talented staff members. Some of which would go on to establish other guitar brands.

In 1957, amidst financial challenges, Gibson's then-head, Ted McCarty, inquired about buying Epiphone's upright bass section. The Stathopoulos brothers took the opportunity and offered Gibson the entire company. Les Paul even played a crucial role in the acquisition, notably convincing Gibson to purchase Epiphone and keep it as a separate line.

Under Gibson's ownership, Epiphone quickly experienced a revival. While benefiting from Gibson's resources and expertise, the brand retained its identity; however, it would be the 1960s that truly cemented Epiphone's legacy, particularly through the association with The Beatles.

This turning point came in part through the introduction of the iconic Epiphone Casino in 1961 to the guitar market. Manufactured in Gibson's Kalamazoo factory, the Casino gained fame as a favourite of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison, and no doubt played a role in shaping the sound of The Beatles, elevating Epiphone to global prominence.

For Epiphone, its relationship with recording and touring artists has always been key.

Creating quality instruments and getting them into the hands of players who can bring them to life creates a cycle of influence that continues to reverberate today.

"I wanted to start playing Epiphones because of the Beatles," explains Noel Gallagher. "I didn't know anything about guitars then. They looked good; they felt good; I could make them sound good."

Ironically, Gallagher would play that role for another generation of guitarists, including million-selling singer-songwriter James Bay. When asked about his first exposure to the brand, he said, "It was probably Noel Gallagher — before I even knew I was going to play guitar." Although Bay would have only been around five years old during Oasis' peak, the iconic image of a classic ▶



Epiphone 150th Anniversary - Zephyr Deluxe Regent

**“When you hold an Epiphone in your hands, you’re not just holding a guitar; you’re holding history.” –
Abraham Alexander**

instrument had its influence. “I remember being excited by his Union Jack Epiphone Sheraton,” says Bay. “Their songs were inescapable. And since I’ve become a guitar player, I have fallen in love with the sound he made on that Sheraton all over again.”

Dreaming of one day having his own signature guitar (a dream that Epiphone made a reality in 2016), as a teenager, Bay’s first electric guitar was an Epiphone Les Paul Special II. However, it would be another classic Epiphone model that would truly help him find his voice when the opportunity came to launch his own music to the world.

“The Epiphone sound really helped me out when I chose to record my debut album pretty much entirely on my 1966 Epiphone Century,” explains Bay. “That guitar sounded incredible and is responsible for 99% of the sound of that record. I’ll forever be grateful to have found it.”

That hard-to-describe magic, mojo, and overall connection with the instrument are commonplace among the brand’s signature artists, and in playing one, it’s easy to see why.

“When you hold an Epiphone in your hands, you’re not just holding a guitar; you’re holding history,” states recording artist Abraham Alexander, whose first live experience of an Epiphone guitar was in the hands of Gary Clark Jr. at the Crossroads Festival in 2010.

“There was a profound moment where he seemed possessed by the music. It was more than just a performance; he was having an out-of-body experience,” says Alexander. “You could feel the significance of that Epiphone in his hands, a silent testament to the connection between the artist and the instrument, transcending words but speaking volumes through the music.”

American rock musician Emily Wolfe — who has played Epiphone guitars for her entire career — also notes Epiphone’s unique bond with its artists, not only in helping aid the literal creation of music but also in its sense of community and culture.

“The Epiphone brand is family to me,” Wolfe says. “It’s a company of amazing people, but it’s also a pioneering brand that has made it a mission to uplift up-and-coming artists such as myself. Epiphone

guitars are reliable, can take a beating, and will always serve the artist in a way that allows them to create without barriers.”

Epiphone’s journey encapsulates the dynamic evolution of the music industry over the last 150 years. From humble beginnings to The Beatles and beyond, Epiphone guitars continue to make an indelible mark on music. One that Epi and his family would be proud of.

By leveraging its iconic past and leaning into the future, Epiphone has now set the stage for the next era by announcing brand-

new special 150th-anniversary editions of the Sheraton, Wilshire, Crestwood Custom and Zephyr DeLuxe Regent. From U2’s The Edge and Jimi Hendrix to John Lee Hooker and Django Reinhardt, some of the world’s favourite artists have made some of their finest music on these uniquely Epiphone models, which offer something special for every player, whatever the genre.

These special 150th-anniversary guitars are available now worldwide. Explore the Epiphone 150th anniversary collection at epiphone.com. ▶

Epiphone 150th Anniversary Sheraton

Introducing the limited edition Epiphone 150th Anniversary Sheraton — an elegant instrument created in celebration of Epiphone’s 150th anniversary. It features a semi-hollow body crafted from layered maple with a maple centre block for feedback resistance. The 22-fret one-piece mahogany neck has a bound Indian laurel fretboard with block mother of pearl and abalone inlays. The bound headstock has a historic Epiphone logo and tree of life in mother of pearl on the front and a gold Epiphone 150th-anniversary logo on the back.

The Epiphone 150th Anniversary Sheraton comes with premium electronics, including made-in-the-USA Gibson Mini



Humbucker pickups wired to CTS potentiometers, Orange Drop capacitors, and a Switchcraft three-way pickup selector switch and 1/4" output jack. The striking gloss Cherry finish is complimented by gold hardware, including Grover Rotomatic tuners, a LockTone Tune-O-Matic bridge, and a Tremotone vibrato tailpiece. An Epiphone 150th Anniversary Historic Hardshell Case is included.

Abraham Alexander on the Epiphone 150th Anniversary Sheraton:

"I held a Sheraton recently, and it was fabulous. The finish, the sound, and the craftsmanship were truly exceptional. It's more than just an instrument; it's an experience that speaks to the dedication and artistry behind every Epiphone creation."

Epiphone 150th Anniversary Wilshire

Introducing the Epiphone 150th Anniversary Wilshire, a hard-rocking guitar was created in celebration of Epiphone's 150th anniversary. From its introduction in 1959, the Wilshire has been one of Epiphone's most successful original solid-body electric guitars. This special anniversary version features an asymmetrical-style Wilshire double-cutaway mahogany body for outstanding upper fret access, a mahogany neck with a

comfortable 60s SlimTaper D profile, and an Indian laurel fretboard with dot inlays.

The headstock is the popular "Batwing" style, with Wilkinson six-on-a-plate inline tuners with metal buttons. The Wilshire is featured in a custom Pacific Blue finish, which is of the era. The electronics feature a pair of Gibson Mini Humbuckers that are wired to CTS potentiometers and a Switchcraft 3-way toggle switch and output jack. The included hardshell case features nickel hardware and an Epiphone 150th Anniversary logo.



Emily Wolfe on the Epiphone 150th Anniversary Wilshire:

“I absolutely love the Wilshire. I wrote so much of my most recent record on that guitar because it’s smaller and so easy to just pick up and write with. Its size makes it convenient to write a song, travel on the road with, and just play in general. I love two P90s, and the build quality is fantastic. Nothing better than a guitar you can throw around, and it still sounds good.” ▶



“The Epiphone brand is family to me.”

– Emily Wolfe

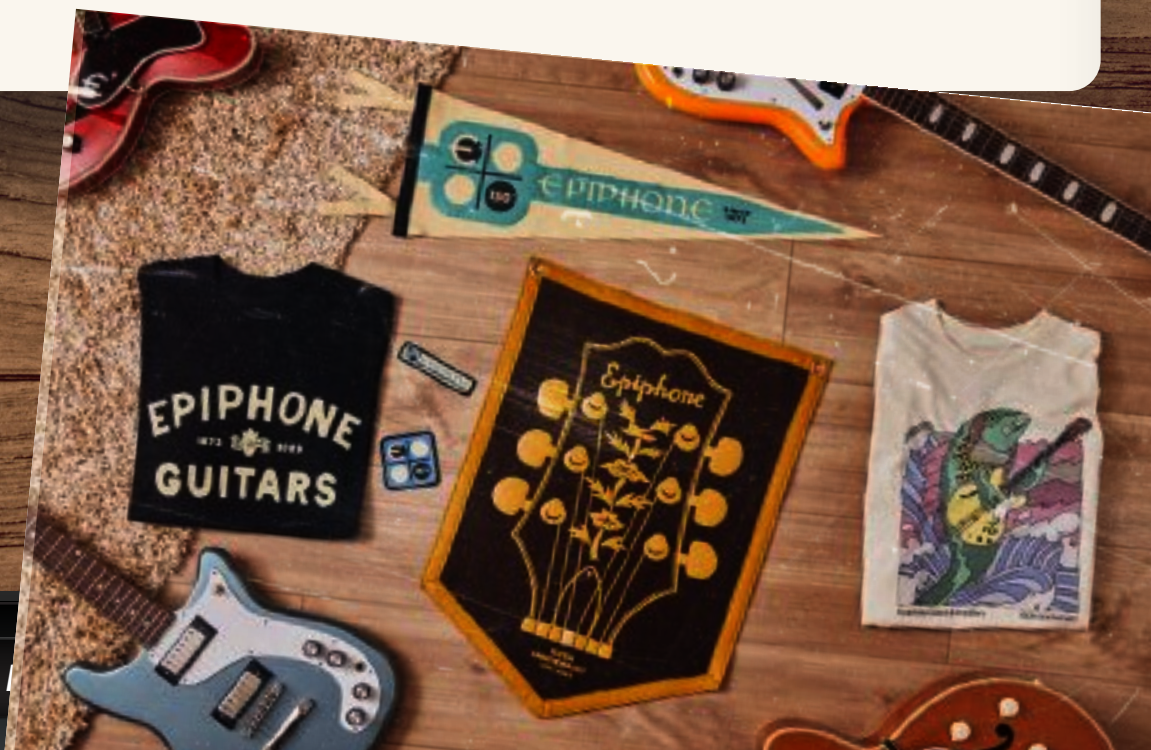


Epiphone 150th Anniversary Crestwood Custom

The Crestwood first appeared in 1958, and it was renamed Crestwood Custom in 1959; it was Epiphone's first two-pickup solid-body electric guitar design. The latest Crestwood Custom celebrates Epiphone's 150th anniversary and features an asymmetrical solid mahogany double cutaway body that gives players unhindered upper fret access, a mahogany neck with a comfortable 60s SlimTaper D profile, and an Indian laurel fretboard with oval inlays.

The headstock is the popular "Batwing" style, with Wilkinson six-on-a-plate inline tuners with metal buttons. The electronics feature a pair of Gibson

Mini Humbuckers that are wired to CTS potentiometers and a Switchcraft 3-way toggle switch and output jack. The Crestwood Custom arrives in a unique custom California Coral finish, which is of the era. An Epiphone Tremotonevibrato tailpiece gives you extra expressive capabilities. The included hardshell case features an Epiphone 150th Anniversary logo.



150th Anniversary Zephyr DeLuxe Regent

A Return of the Classic Archtop. The Epiphone Zephyr DeLuxe Regent was originally produced from 1948 until 1957 and was one of the world's preeminent archtop guitar designs when Epiphone was Gibson's biggest competitor. In celebration of Epiphone's 150th anniversary, Epiphone is proud to release the new 150th Anniversary Zephyr DeLuxe Regent. Built for jazz, blues, and rockabilly and inspired by the highly collectable vintage originals but updated to meet the needs of modern players, the new 150th Anniversary Zephyr DeLuxe Regent is a full hollowbody.

It features a deep cutaway for improved upper-fret access, a multi-layer pressed maple arched top, and a 25.5" scale 5-piece maple and mahogany neck with an ebony fretboard. The inlays include a historic 50s-style Epiphone logo, a Tree of Life headstock inlay, and historic Epiphone Cloud fretboard position markers - all in Mother of Pearl. The electronics are equally impressive, with a pair of Epiphone NY Mini Humbucker pickups. Each has individual volume and tone controls with CTS potentiometers. The Zephyr DeLuxe Regent arrives in a stunning Aged Antique Natural finish. An Epiphone 150th Anniversary decal adorns the back of the headstock, and an Epiphone hardshell case is included.



For more information on Epiphone Guitars, visit: **epiphone.com**



THE REVIEWS

GUITARS, AMPS AND EFFECTS

BEST OF
2023



EDITOR'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2023

Jonathan Graham presents his choices for *Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2023*

IT has been another incredible year for new product releases in the world of guitar! Long gone are the days when any of the world's top brands actually released anything in their range that is genuinely substandard, and it's why it is getting harder and harder to really give a bad review. All of that being said, of course, there will always be a handful of products that rise above the rest and Gi's top reviewers and myself have compiled our Best of 2023 lists for that very reason. Please let it be noted that between Nick, Sam and myself we have deliberately not duplicated any of one another's choices in an attempt to showcase as many of these great pieces of gear as possible. I hope you enjoy our look back at *Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2023* and be sure to let us know if you agree with our choices, or if you feel we missed something out. So, without further ado, here are mine, followed by the full review for each.

Godin Multiac Mundial Nylon Acoustic

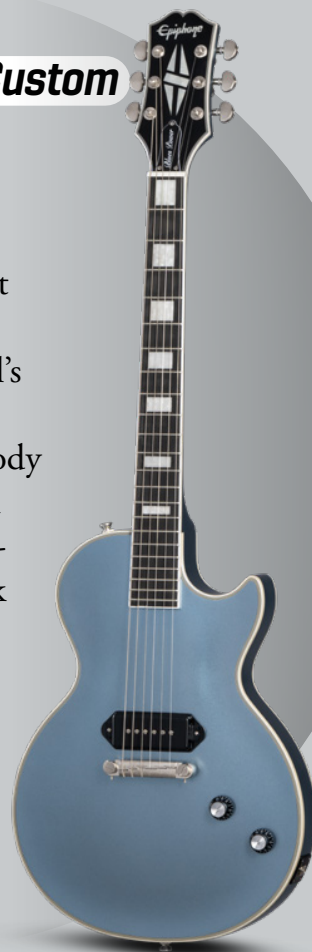
Thirty years ago, Godin introduced the Multiac Nylon SA to the market, which quickly became a worldwide success and the flagship instrument of Godin Guitars. Launched earlier this year, Nick Jennison reviews the new Godin Multiac Mundial. If you are looking for a clean, uncluttered instrument with a natural amplified nylon string sound, look no further.





Epiphone Jared James Nichols “Blues Power” Les Paul Custom

The Jared James Nichols “Old Glory” Les Paul Custom Outfit is the premier signature model by the rising star from Les Paul’s hometown. Featuring a classic 1955-style Les Paul Custom body with a single Seymour Duncan P-90 pickup and an Ebony fingerboard with traditional block inlays, “Old Glory” could very well be the blues machine you’ve always dreamt of.

***Ciari The Ascender Folding Guitar***

The Ascender Standard is the latest in Ciari’s collection of stage-quality, full-size professional electric guitars with patented folding technology. This folding electric guitar features a surf-forward, satin basswood body, “wave top” 3+3 headstock, natural-neck finish with ebony fingerboard, Ciari locking tuners, master tone and volume electronics with pick-up selector, and our back “throttle” actuator. Nick Jennison tells us more.



Vintage Revo Series Surfmaster Quad Guitar – Black

Created in conjunction with world-renowned British guitar builder and designer Alan Entwistle, the Vintage's REVO Series of retro vintage originals brings a quirky, indie edge to the party with guitars and basses in offset, traditional, semi-acoustic and über cool, unique styles. If you're looking for something different from the norm, Vintage REVO might very well be it!



Aria Pro II PE-F80

A budget-friendly version of "PE-R80" which was originally launched in 1980. The PE-F80 inherits the genuine elegance of what "PE-R80" offers, such as a strong curved body top with recessed control knobs and switch, cloud-shaped fingerboard inlays, and a heel-less cutaway neck joint while a contoured flat body back reduces the overall body weight.



Mooer GTRS S801

As the first guitar from Mooer Audio, the GTRS boldly expresses Mooer's philosophy of innovative technology and tonal flexibility with unmatched affordability. The Standard 801 model features an American basswood body, roasted Canadian maple neck, and a maple fingerboard that feels great in the hand and provides all of the functionality of a normal guitar even if the GTRS intelligent process system is turned off.



Tech 21 SansAmp Character Plus Series Screaming Blonde

Taking the concept of its original Character Series pedals a step further, Tech 21 has broadened the range of tonal options in its new SansAmp Character Plus Series—celebrating the unique chemistry between specific historic amplifiers and specific historic pedals and cleverly unites them together in single packages. With tones ranging from a '50s Fullerton to a Blackface and a Silverface, Sam Bell reviews the Character Plus Series Screaming Blonde.



FRET KING Country Squire Stealth

The Fret-King Country Squire is one of the brands' most enduring styles—a friendly and comfortable benchmark blending the familiar with the contemporary. We take a closer look at this update to the classic six-string with the Fret-King Country Squire Music Row.





Donner HUSH-X Headless guitar

Donner has announced the launch of the latest addition to their HUSH lineup, the HUSH-X Headless Electric Guitar, following the release of the HUSH-I Mute Electric Guitar in 2022. Available in maple and mahogany, the HUSH-X features a compact, neck-through, detachable body with screw-free metal hardware and the Donner patented Headless Tuning System, making it comfortable for guitarists of all skill levels to play.

Godin Multiac Mundial Electro-Acoustic

Thirty years ago, Godin introduced the Multiac Nylon SA to the market, which quickly became one of Godin Guitars. Launched earlier this year, **Nick Jennison** reviews the new Godin Multiac Mundial instrument with a natural amplified nylon string sound, look no further.

THE Godin Multiac is one of those “if you know, you know” guitars that most definitely deserves the adoration it receives from switched-on players, but equally deserves to be on the radar of more players than it is right now. If you’re not an “in the know” player, let me fill you in. First released in 1993, the Multiac is a “stage nylon” guitar that offers incredibly natural “plugged in” ny-

lon string sounds while being compact, exceptionally feedback resistant and easy to play in a way that so many conventional nylon string guitars just aren’t.

The new Multiac Mundial is a modern, elegant reskin of this classic design in a suite of clean finishes, along with a unique wood combination of Cedar top, Silver Leaf ▶



Godin Multiac Mundial Electro-Acoustic

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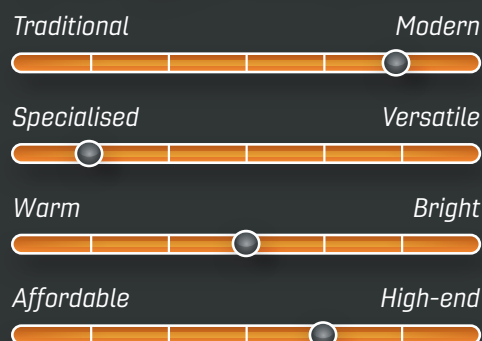
e a worldwide success and the flagship instrument Mundial. If you are looking for a clean, uncluttered



Godin Multiac Mundial Electro-Acoustic

MSRP: (UK) £1455 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Convincing nylon tones, without mics;
- » Supreme playability;
- » Modern, clean looks

For more information, please visit:

godinguitars.com



The first thing that might strike you about the nylon string "native" - is just how well

Maple body and Spanish Cedar neck. These lighter woods make for a guitar that's exceptionally lightweight, which is ideal for travelling and for long-live performances. It produces comparatively little acoustic volume, and that's the whole point - it's designed to be played plugged in!

The first thing that might strike you about the Multiac Mundial - especially if you, like me, aren't a nylon string "native" - is just how well it plays. With more traditional nylon string guitars, a certain degree of stiffness in the setup is necessary for projection and volume. This is usually in the form of higher string tension and higher action, which definitely add power to an unplugged nylon string, but they can be a real workout to play. Because the Multiac Mundial doesn't rely on acoustic projection, it means the setup can be way friendlier, and everything from complex jazz comping to intricate electric-style lead lines are all very easy to carry off, and hand fatigue is a non-issue. That's not to say that it "plays like an electric": it still feels very much like a nylon string thanks to the broad, flat neck shape - just one that's incredibly forgiving to play.

Sounds come courtesy of the Godin Double Source Custom preamp - the same one found on the Multiac Encore models. It incorporates an under-saddle piezo pickup and body sensors located within the fully hollow body, with a slider to blend between the two sources along with a master volume and a three band cut-and-boost EQ. Both sources sound very natural, with the piezo providing punch and definition while the body sensors provide air, size and realism, along with the ability to perform percussive techniques. Wherever you set the sliders, the tone feels and sounds like a great traditional nylon string, only louder. The dynamic range is responsive without being punishing, pick transients are soft and controlled, and you can lay in without fear of distortion or the dreaded piezo "quack".

The Godin Multiac is an all-time classic, and the new Mundial version continues this lineage with a modern look and a lighter body. It's incredibly rewarding to play, comfortable for long performances, and sounds very convincing indeed.



*about the Multiac Mundial - especially if you, like me, aren't a
it plays*



Epiphone Jared James Nichols "Blues Power"

Nick Jennison reviews the Jared James Nichols "Blues Power" Les Paul Custom. Epiphone's Brand Ambassador and blues-rock powerhouse that hails from Les Paul's hometown. The JJN features classic Les Paul Custom styling and cosmetic appointments and a stunning Aged P in the bridge position ensures righteous tone and hum-free performance.

WHEN you think of Jared James Nichols, the words that probably spring to mind are "plays without a pick." While this is true, it's a little like thinking of Eddie Van Halen as "the tapping guy" or Zakk Wylde as "the pinched harmonics guy" - an oversimplification. It's easy to fixate on a single aspect of an artist's identity and miss the big picture. JJN's playing is powerful,

raw, dynamic and nuanced - words that also describe the latest iteration of his signature Les Paul.

The "Blues Power" Les Paul is the third version of the JJN signature model, following on from the Old Glory and the Gold Glory, but it's far from just a palette swap. The hefty '50s neck profile, wraparound bridge and single



Epiphone Jared James Nichols "Blues Power" Les Paul Custom

ver" Les Paul Custom

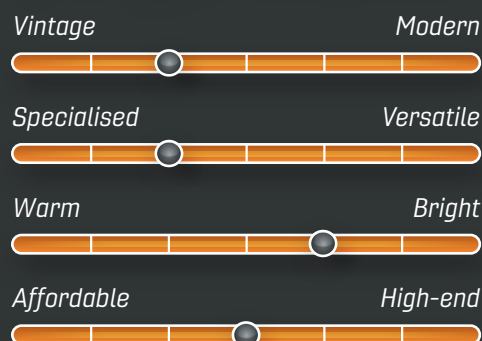
s latest signature model in partnership with Gibson
red James Nichols "Blues Power" Les Paul Custom
elham Blue finish. The brand new JJN P90B pickup



Epiphone Jared James Nichols "Blues Power" Les Paul Custom

MSRP: (UK) £999 | (US) \$999

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » P90 growl without the hum
- » Stripped-back, streamlined performance
- » Classic good looks

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com/en-GB/





Perhaps not killing all of the noise is what allows the silencer to retain that great P90 character.

P90 configuration haven't changed, but the pickup itself has, with the new Seymour Duncan JJN Silencer.

Now, noiseless P90s are, to put it kindly, a mixed bag. They often lack the character and grit that make P90s so special and wind up sounding like a wishy-washy version of a humbucker. The Fishman Fluence Greg Koch signature models are the best I've heard to date, but I've never come across a passive, noiseless P90 that sounds as good as this one. The product of countless revisions and lengthy R&D, the silencer is full of midrange gravel and sparkling high-end bloom, but also rolls off to a glorious "chimey" clean with the guitar's volume control. It's super dynamic and touch-responsive, with a massive range of tones available - if your touch is good enough to coax them out, that is. What's interesting is that it's not a completely noiseless pickup: according to Jared, it eliminates "about 80% of the noise". Certainly enough to make high gain sounds whisper quiet in even the most challenging environment, but perhaps not killing all of the noise is what allows the silencer to retain that great P90 character. ▶

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Art Luthierie Seagull

Full Range available January 2024.

The “Blues Power” Les Paul is not only a very worthy successor to and (in my opinion) best looking of the bunch.

Another new addition is the inclusion of Grover Rotomatic locking tuners. While this may seem a little “belt & braces” on a stoptail guitar, these tuners are rock solid, and not only speed up string changes, but also offer an extra level of tuning stability for big bends and wide vibrato - some of the hallmarks of Jared’s style. They also add a little extra mass to the headstock, which some people believe adds sustain. You’re free to make of that what you like, but they do feel like they’re helping with the guitar’s balance, too.

Lastly, there’s the finish. For my money, Pelham Blue is the coolest standard colour Gibson and Epiphone do, and it looks gorgeous on this guitar. There are hints of teal and green, but in some light, it’s almost “primer grey”. It’s also a very nice-feeling “matte” finish — like a satin guitar that’s been played smooth.

The “Blues Power” Les Paul is not only a very worthy successor to the previous JJN signature guitars but also the best sounding and (in my

opinion) best looking of the bunch.

The new Silencer P90 elevates what was already a very good guitar to another level, both in terms of tone and functionality, and the fact that it comes in at under a grand with a semi-hardshell case is bonkers. If you’re a player with the guts to pull off a single pickup guitar, this is one that should definitely be on your radar!



the previous JJN signature guitars but also the best sounding



Ciari The Ascender Folding Guitar

The Ascender Standard is the latest in Ciari's collection of stage-quality, full-size professional folding electric guitars. This folding electric guitar features a surf-forward, satin basswood body, "wave top" 3+3 headstock, Ciari locking tuners, master tone and volume electronics with pick-up selector, and our back-

CLOSE your eyes and think of the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words "travel guitar". It's probably not great, now is it? Maybe some short-scale atrocity with a body the shape of a half-sucked boiled sweet, frets that require more stronger tetanus shots than the exotic location you're about to travel to and a tone that can charitably be described as "a sound".

Yes, these weird little guitar homunculi have been around for ages, but no serious player would be seen dead with one. Which is where Ciari Guitars come in. The Ascender is not a "travel" ▶



Epiphone Ciari The Ascender Folding Guitar

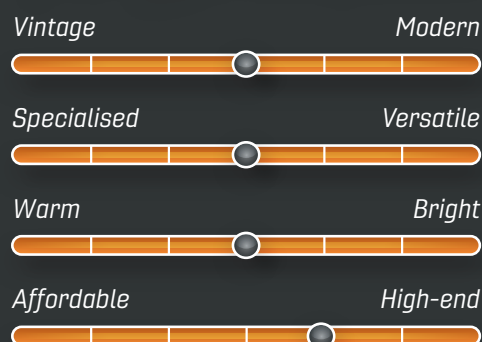
nal electric guitars with patented folding technology.
 adstock, natural-neck finish with ebony fingerboard,
 k "throttle" actuator. Nick Jennison tells us more.



Ciari The Ascender Folding Guitar

MSRP: (UK) £TBC | (US) \$1799

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Great humbucker guitars
- » Effortless playability
- » Travelling light

For more information, please visit:

ciariguitars.com





guitar”, as the Ciari guys are keen to point out, but a legitimate, pro level instrument that just happens to fold in half and fit into a backpack. Yes, you read that right. It folds in half - with the strings on, and tuned to pitch. This is accomplished with some good old fashioned mechanical engineering, and a complex-looking but very elegant set of levers and springs in the back of the guitar’s body. It’s wild to see, but what’s even crazier is just how good the Ascender is as an instrument.

The Ciari Ascender has pulled off something we've all been hoping for for years - it's a legitimate, pro-level instrument that's easy to travel with.

When I say “good”, I don’t mean “good for a folding guitar”, I mean “is an excellent guitar in it’s own right”. It comes Plek’d from the factory, and plays like a dream. The mahogany neck is comfortable, finished in a very tactile satin and with a genuine ebony fretboard and 22 jumbo frets, perfectly level and with no chokes, buzz or sharp ends - even up in the dusty end where the guitar’s “hinge” is. Speaking of which, the hinge mechanism—made entirely from high-grade aircraft aluminum—feels very natural under the hand. It isn’t sharp, distracting or even noticeable while playing.

So it plays great, but what about the sound? Surely the small body size and the big hole in the back “kill the tone” or something like that, right? Nope. The Ascender sounds like a great humbucker guitar. Loaded with a pair of Seymour Duncan ‘59s, there’s tons of vintage-voiced punch and clarity, with excellent touch sensitivity and an even response all across the neck. Of course, metal players may want to spec this guitar with hotter pickups, and Ciari is happy to accommo-

date, but the fact it sounds so “right” with vintage-voiced low output humbuckers is testament to how good the Ascender is.

So yes, it folds in half. But apart from that, the Ascender is a very traditional guitar, and a very good one at that. There’s a traditional headstock. You can use normal strings, and don’t need to cut the ball ends off. It even looks like a traditional guitar, especially from the front where the only clue that it’s a folding guitar are the six tiny slots in the fretboard at the 12th and 14th frets that guide and protect the strings when the Ascender is folded and unfolded.

The Ciari Ascender has pulled off something we’ve all been hoping for for years - it’s a legitimate, pro-level instrument that’s easy to travel with. Whether it’s going in your suitcase or the overhead locker or under seat (yep - it’s the only full-size guitar that qualifies as a “Personal Item”!) on a long-haul flight, or on your back as you traverse a major city on foot/two wheels/public transport, it’s an instrument that can go anywhere without compromise in tone or playability.



Vintage Revo Series Surfmaster Quad Gu

Created in conjunction with world-renowned British guitar builder and designer Alan Entwistle, Vintage Revo Series brings a quirky, indie edge to the party with guitars and basses in offset, traditional, semi-hollow, and more. If you're looking for something different from the norm, Vintage REVO might very well be it! Here's Sa

In my role as a guitar reviewer, it's always exciting to play out-of-the-ordinary guitars. The "Surfmaster" from Vintage's REVO series of guitars is no exception. This guitar takes our imaginations back to the late 1950s and early 1960s of Surf Rock Guitar, The Shadows, etc, but it also brings up a nostalgia for a time that may not exist. It also brings up the image's grunge and alternative

music, washed-out ambient sounds, tremolo tones and slinky chords with the trem bar. Kurt Cobain, WarPaint, Tame Impala and Beyond!

Let's get back to the present moment. What is this guitar? Well, it's made by Vintage Guitars; they make quality and affordable instruments, often with unique designs, everything 🎸



Vintage Revo Series Surfmaster Quad Guitar – Black

Guitar – Black

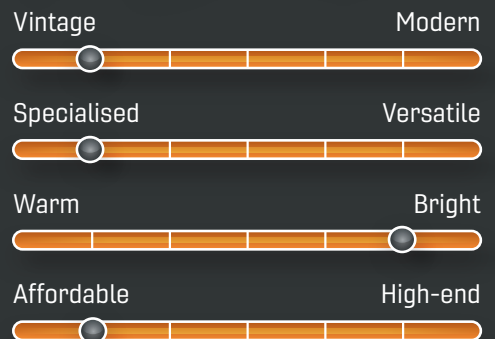
style, the Vintage's REVO Series of retro vintage original, semi-acoustic and über cool, unique styles. If you're **Sam Bell** to tell us more.



Vintage Revo Series Surfmaster Quad Guitar – Black

MSRP: (UK) £549 | (US) \$

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Superb playability
- » Thinline offset body
- » Alan Entwistle pickups

For more information, please visit:

[jhs.co.uk/collections/vintage](https://www.jhs.co.uk/collections/vintage)



*The Surfmaster name is w
whilst the tonal options se*



from polished to relliced; vintage offer a classical guitar for everyone. The Surfmaster promises to make our Surf dreams come true.

From the outside, we can see a very unique-looking guitar. The black double-cut, thinline, offset semi-hollow body, with a single F hole, looks like

it came straight out of America in the 1950s. The block inlays on the fretboard classic S Style headstock all bring up feelings of a Jazz Master guitar. The roller bridge and large tremolo arm (I'm going to try to avoid the term 'whammy bar' for this review!) all feel appropriate for this guitar. What makes it particularly unique is the four single-coil pick-

ell deserved, the clean tones on this guitar sound good, and em endless, I'm sure you'll find your favourites pretty soon.

ups, which are individually selectable and lead to a whole host of potential sounds. The pickups are Alan Entwistle ETS3 Astrosonics, which not only look cool in writing and on the guitar but also sound awesome with clean and slightly broken-up tones. Perfect when drenched in reverb and various modulation effects. The pickups can be further modified via the ATN variator control, which gives us five different frequency notches and offers us even more tonal flexibility. (See the review video to hear this in action for yourself!)

The hardware of any guitar is super important in terms of quality and performance. Especially with something like this, Vintage always bring quality, affordable components to their instruments. The Roller Bridge could lead to tuning issues, but the Wilkinson E-Z-Lok tuners keep everything in check. The Roller Bridge itself is sturdy; it's not meant for Vai Halen stunts, but if you want to add some shimmer to your notes, the length of the bar allows you to gently

add some surf to your sound.

Other features worth mentioning include medium jumbo frets, which help with the intonation of chords and single notes. It's fairly easy to play, and this guitar isn't designed to be a shred machine (which should be obvious!). It's great for chordal and melodic playing. The 24.75-inch scale length makes playing comfortable, however, and the Zero fret keeps open strings sounding crisp and consistent.

The Surfmaster name is well deserved, the clean tones on this guitar sound good, and whilst the tonal options seem endless, I'm sure you'll find your favourites pretty soon. Vintage is a great company for affordable instruments; if you're looking for something quirky and you're into your Surf Rock or Alternative music, The Surfmaster is worth checking out! It'll certainly turn heads, and when you find the sweet spots, it'll turn everything tie-die in no time at all!



Aria Pro II PE-F80

Sam Bell reviews the PE-F80 from Aria. A budget-friendly version of “PE-R80” which was on the genuine elegance of what “PE-R80” offers, such as a strong curved body top with recessed pickguard inlays, and a heel-less cutaway neck joint while a contoured flat body back reduces the

WHEN Aria Pro II first started in 1975, they released a series of guitars a year later known as the PE model series. These guitars were used by prolific guitarists such as Neal Schon of Journey and Andy Summers of The Police. Aria Pro II makes some high-quality instruments with classic yet quirky designs that make them stand out and aren't going to break the bank.

In my recent visit to the Gi studios, I had the pleasure of checking out the PE-F80, which is a classic single-cut LP-flavoured style guitar at the bottom. Let's dive into some of the specs.

The body is an Okoume, Carved Top. Not sure what the tone quality is meant to be for Okoume, but the guitar feels well-balanced, and the carved top is a nice aesthetic feature ▶



Aria Pro II PE-F80

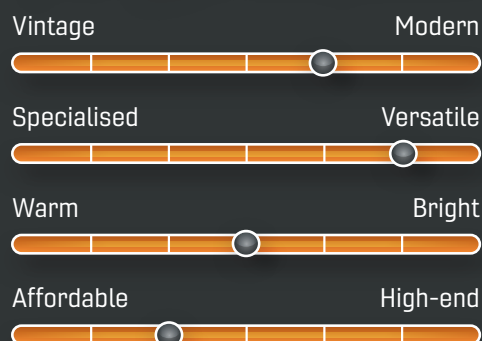
originally launched in 1980. The PE-F80 inherits the control knobs and switch, cloud-shaped finger-plate overall body weight.



Aria Pro II PE-F80

MSRP: (UK) £549 | (US) \$599

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Superb looks and playability
- » Value for money
- » Traditional PE-headstock

For more information, please visit:

ariaguitarsglobal.com





As I demon
range of so

which allows for a more ergonomic experience. The back of the body features a belly cut, and the body is thinner than the average single-cut guitar.

The set neck features a heel-less cutaway and is made from Mahogany, topped with a Rosewood fingerboard. The cutaway allows for better access to the higher frets and also adds some flow to the design of the guitar. The fretboard has a 12' Radius over 22 frets. The neck itself isn't as thick as some single-cut guitars can be, but provides enough beef for balance and ease of chordal playing.

The guitar looks gorgeous, the stained brown finish, the gold hardware, the Aria SPT Bridge & QH Tailpiece, the unique headstock, everything looks well balanced. There's the familiarity mixed with a bit of the unknown in this guitar that makes it tasty!

Electronically, we have two pickups, in the Neck and Bridge are listed on Aria's website as CP-1G "Classic Power II" Alnico-5. After playing these in the studio and listening, I'd say they're modelled on a classic PAF sound, medium output humbucking pickups. Great for many styles. And this guitar honours it, the guitar has a bit of warmth to it, no thinness or dull-ness in the pickups at all. These two pickups are controlled by their own master volume and tone. But there's an added bonus to this guitar, we have the Dual Sound Switch which takes us between Series and Parallel wiring. When in Parallel, give a faux single coil sound. Combined with the 3-way pickup selector switch, the Dual sound switch takes us from two to at least 6 pickup selections, which make very objective differences to the sound and feel. As demonstrated in the video section of this review, there are a whole range of sounds available from this set up!

illustrated in the video section of this review, there are a whole bunch of sounds available from this set up!

The sound is brilliant, it's everything you'd expect from a single cut guitar and more. Warm sustaining leads, thick and punchy cleans and the option to 'thin' out the sound for more single coil escent tones. This guitar could be a session players workhorse. There are lots of brands offering a similar guitar, but there's something special about this one

in the way it plays, sounds and looks. It's an experience. If you like me are looking for a LP-style guitar, but can't get on with the heavy and inconsistent designs of the originals, or simply can't afford it. The PE-F80 is well worth checking out, I can't fault it. Superb guitar!



Mooer GTRS S801 Intelligent Guitar

As the first guitar from Mooer Audio, the GTRS boldly expresses Mooer's philosophy of innovation and affordability. The Standard 801 model features an American basswood body, roasted Canadian maple neck, and is great in the hand and provides all of the functionality of a normal guitar even if the GTRS interface is not. To tell us more.

THE GTRS is an 'Intelligent Processor System' designed in conjunction with digital sound engineers' Mooer – This is the all-in-one solution for the practising guitarist starting out their journey.

What is it? Well, in a nutshell, it's a well-built S-Type HSS configuration Guitar, available in some cool colours, with a roasted maple neck and complete with a Gig bag. It's a solid guitar that I'd say any aspiring guitarist starting out would get a lot of use from. ▶



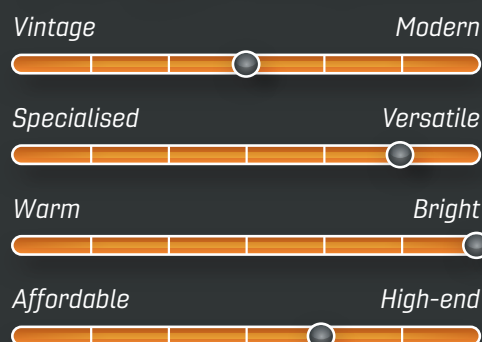
...vative technology and tonal flexibility with unmatched
...an maple neck, and a maple fingerboard that feels
...elligent process system is turned off. Here's **Sam Bell**



Moorer GTRS S801 Intelligent Guitar

MSRP: £485 | (US) \$527

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Built-in guitar effects
- » Getting rid of cables
- » Not breaking the bank

For more information, please visit:

<https://gtrs.tech/>



I think it's impressive how much can be done with this guitar/app combination. It's also a really cool idea to have a built-in amp modelling system going direct out the guitar.



However, the real magic is in the GTRS system that is built into this guitar which works in conjunction with an app.

Once you get your guitar, you charge it up with the included USB C cable, head over to your app store and download the GTRS app. This app pairs by Bluetooth to the guitar and turns it into a tone powerhouse! You can plug directly into headphones or a

mixing desk or DAW from the guitar and control all your amp sounds from the app. No amp or multi-FX board is needed (Although you can also use this like a normal guitar as well!)

The app allows you to cycle through presets, but that's not all. You can edit the presets and create your own. You have access to pretty much everything that ▶

CHEESE YOU PROCESS. TONE YOU BUILD.



Actual size: 7.75"l x 2.5"w x 1.25"h

SansAmp® PSA 2.0

for Guitar, Bass, Vocals, Horns, Drums, you name it.

Craving rich, multi-dimensional tone that's pure, not cheesy? Fed up with over-processed gimmicks you'll hardly, if ever, really use in the real world? The SansAmp PSA 2.0 is the ultimate tube amp emulator for stage and studio, brought to you with pride by Tech 21 --the company that pioneered "going direct" way back in 1989. And to this day, SansAmp is still considered to be the standard of the industry.

- A truckload of tube amps, the size of a candy bar
- 100% analog signal path; digital recall; zero latency
- Performance Mode for the stage to instantly access your 3 most often used presets
- 49 factory presets; 128 memory locations
- Deceptively simple. Just turn the knobs. Hit save. And you're done!

TECH 21

Analog BrillianceSM
tech21nyc.com

Once you're into the app, you also have access to some extra utilities, such as a drum loop player, so you can practice along to a beat.



Moore has made in terms of amp and pedal modelling. You can go through a huge variety of amplifiers and separate cabs. Overdrive, Modulation, Reverb Pedals, EQ and more. You can tweak each of these aspects to dial in your perfect tone.

If this isn't enough, you can also download different Guitar Pick-Up profiles. Want to change the neck single coil to voice it like Les Paul Neck Humbucker, no problem! Through the app, you can download profiles which can be assigned to pretty much all the five positions.

Once you're into the app, you also have access to some extra utilities, such as a drum loop player, so you can practice along to a beat. You can also use the loop functionality to jam along to your own riffs and chord progressions. There's also a rudimentary chord app built in as well; you can find 3 positions of almost all standard chord types there in all keys. Brilliant for beginners trying to find those tricky voicings for their favourite songs. GTRS/Moore also sent us the accompanying wireless Bluetooth footswitch, which allows you to cycle through pre-

sets, tap tempo on delay fx and access the tuner. This is also chargeable by the included USB-C cable.

I think it's impressive how much can be done with this guitar/app combination. It's also a really cool idea to have a built-in amp modelling system going direct out the guitar. It would be cool to see this kind of technology available on more instruments in the future. It's probably been done in some ways, but this is very classy. It's very hidden within the guitar aside from the big switch to turn it onto the app or traditional mode. Having said all of this, this system doesn't come for free. Looking at UK dealer 'Gear 4 Music', the S801 goes for around £500. This isn't bad considering what you get; however, if you are starting out, it might not be your first port of call. However, if you're already playing and have younger people in your life who aspire to play guitar and you want to get them their own all-in-one solution, this is well worth taking a look at. Very impressive!



Tech 21 SansAmp Character Plus Series

Taking the concept of its original Character Series pedals a step further, Tech 21 has broadened the Character Plus Series—celebrating the unique chemistry between specific historic amplifiers and putting them together in single packages. With tones ranging from a '50s Fullerton to a Blackface and a Series Screaming Blonde.

TECH 21 has been making great analogue rig solutions for many years now, coming out with compact, gig-able, all-in-one solutions for the no-nonsense guitarist. In this review, we're looking at one of the excellent new offerings from Tech 21's Character Plus Series. The Screaming Blonde is a Fender Style amp emulation with a Tube Screamer style boost. Also available in the series is the Eng-

lish Muffy, which is a HiWatt + Big Muff. Fuzzy Brit, which is Marshall + Fuzz Face, and finally, Mop Top Liverpool which combines a Vox-style amp and a treble booster. All the classic combinations all leading to very versatile results depending on how you use them.

These units are the size of a chocolate bar, super compact and very easy to use. They are powered by a 9v in (included and high-quality power cable!) They feature an input and an



s: Screaming Blonde

ned the range of tonal options in its new SansAmp
ers and specific historic pedals and cleverly unites
nd a Silverface, **Sam Bell** reviews the Character Plus

output plus an XLR out for going into a Mixing Desk or DAW. This XLR connection has the appropriate speaker simulation for the amp the pedal is emulating. In the Screaming Blonde's case, this is a Jensen 12" speaker. This sounds great; it's well-balanced and interacts nicely with each channel's EQ section. You can also use this pedal in front of an amp, so if you're turning up and using house backline, you can have a way better chance of dialling in your preferred sound. You can also use the XLR out at the same time, so you can monitor your tone on stage from a real amp and send a great-sounding signal from the pedal to the front of the house. Superb!

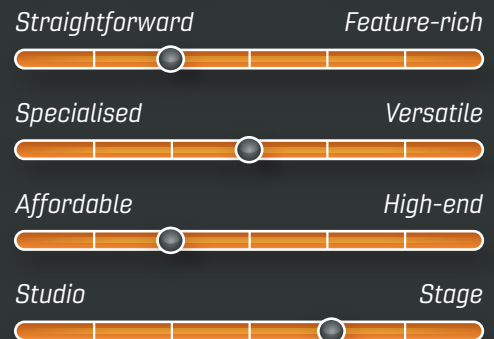
The Screaming Blonde gives you two identical channels, which can be characterised by the 'character' control; you can go from a super clean black and silver face style clean all the way to a pushed tweed and beyond. This way, you can have two very different "American amp" qualities at your fingertips. You can further boost this with the 'Scream' section, which is a classic TS808 style drive which interacts as a boost with the channels so you can further tailor your gain stages, EQ and sustain. ▶



Tech 21 SansAmp Character Plus Series: Screaming Blonde

MSRP: (UK) £329 | (US) \$279

The Breakdown



For fans of

» American-style tube amp with a screaming-style overdrive

» 100% analogue circuitry

For more information, please visit:

www.tech21nyc.com





Tonally, the Screaming Blonde sounds great. Direct into the Mixer at the studio, the speaker emulation sounds great. Thanks to the very interactive EQ on the pedal, you can really tailor your high and low end to the room and your guitar. It also feels very responsive, as there's no latency; it's very fun to play through the different tonal palettes this unit allows you to dial-up. The Black and Silver Face style cleans are punchy, funky, cutting, yet warm. Boosting it leads to creamy, mid-pronounced leads, which are perfect for country/blues-tinged playing circumstances. ▶



Tech 21 SansAmp Character Plus Series: Screaming Blonde

The NAMM Show
January 25/28 2024 ^{California}

Aria Pro II

Got To Rock

The NAMM Show January 25/28 2024 California

See us at #4827

ariaguitarsglobal.com



The only limitation is our ears and playing! Go check one out now.

The all-analogue SansAmp technology really sets this aside from any other 'modelling' style pedal/direct-to-front-of-house solutions...and it can easily fit in your back pocket. Amazing!

If you're a musician on the move and you want a 'direct' solution or something to spice up the house backline without too much faff, gadgets or screens, then check out Tech 21's SansAmp Character Plus Series. They have the active musician in mind. The only limitation is our ears and playing! Go check one out now.



GTRS

WING 900



Aurora Pink



Aurora Purple



Aurora Green

JUST PLAY IT!

GTRS INTELLIGENT GUITAR W SERIES 900



MOOER



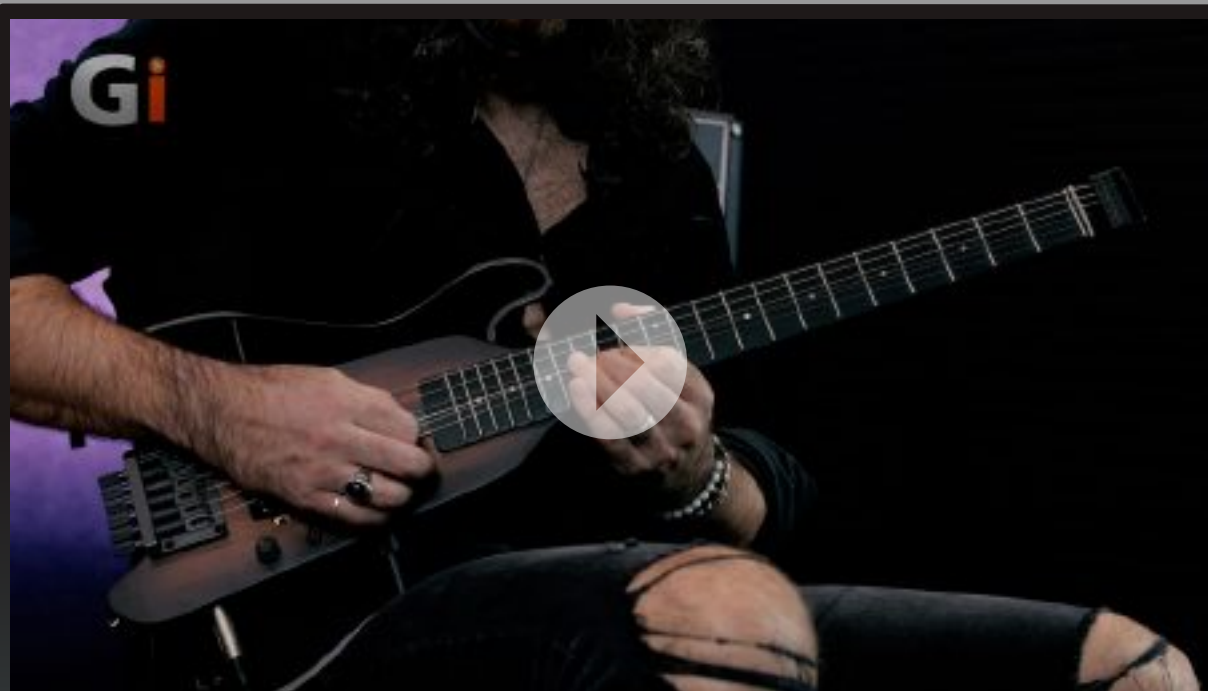
Donner HUSH-X Headless Guitar

Donner has announced the launch of the latest addition to their HUSH lineup, the HUSH-X Headless Electric Guitar in 2022. Available in maple and mahogany, the HUSH-X features screw-free metal hardware and the Donner patented Headless Tuning System, making it comfortable for guitarists of all skill levels to play. Nick Jennison tells us more.

DONNER has announced the launch of the latest addition to their HUSH lineup, the HUSH-X Headless Electric Guitar, following the release of the HUSH-I Mute Electric Guitar in 2022. Available in maple and mahogany, the HUSH-X features a compact, neck-through, detachable body with screw-free metal hardware and the Donner patented Headless Tun-

ing System, making it comfortable for guitarists of all skill levels to play. Nick Jennison tells us more.

2023 has been something of a “glow-up” for Chinese gear brand Donner. Their impressive showing at April 2023’s NAMM show included “super-strats” with roasted maple necks, digital multi-FX, digital pianos... Donner was out to make a statement. ▶



Donner HUSH-X Headless Guitar

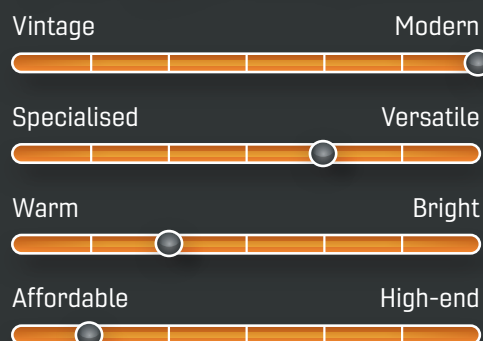
Headless Electric Guitar, following the release of the
a compact, neck-through, detachable body with
comfortable for guitarists of all skill levels to play.



Donner HUSH-X Headless Guitar

MSRP: (UK) £TBC | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Extreme portability;
- » Silent practice;
- » Industrial Minimalist aesthetics

For more information, please visit:

[idonner.eu](https://www.idonner.eu)



One of the pieces of gear we were most intrigued by was the “Hush” line of headless guitars. The “Hush-I” silent acoustic guitar has been out for a minute now, and Sam Bell was pretty impressed with it, but we’d also been promised an electric guitar in the same form factor. Enter the Hush-X - a 25.5” scale guitar that’s not even 30” long!

Composed of a single piece of mahogany that makes up the neck and body (so it’s technically a neck-thru, right?) and detachable “wings” in the form of two metal frames, the Hush-X comes in a semi-hard gig bag that looks more like the case you’d keep a pool cue in. Bundled within



Regarding playability, the Hush-X really surprised me with how good it is! The fretwork is first-class.



is a very impressive package of accessories, including a clip-on tuner, strap, picks, earphones (which are very high quality, albeit with a *really* short cable) and all the tools you might need to adjust the setup on this guitar. That's already a big win for the Hush-X over the Hush-I since the saddle height and truss rod are adjustable, meaning you can get the action just how you like it. Not that you'll need to do much, as the factory setup is very good.

Regarding playability, the Hush-X really surprised me with how good it is! The fretwork is first-class, and the asymmetrical neck profile is very comfortable indeed. It also balances very well on either leg and is equally well balanced on a strap - with or without the body wings. It is very light and did tend to move around on my lap when I got a little too vigorous with my playing, but that's undoubtedly just me being a bit of a lummoX. ▶



Tones come in the form of a bridge humbucker and a neck single coil, with a three-way toggle switch to select either pickup or both. The bridge humbucker is very warm and full in the mids and does tend to dominate the middle position sound somewhat, but it has plenty of punch and weight for heavier styles. The neck single coil (by contrast) is very airy and open, with a deep midrange scoop and lots of clarity for clean playing, but it also does a very convincing bluesy lead tone.

Connectivity is not a subject we often have to broach with guitars, but the Hush-X actually has two modes of operation with two separate outputs. The regular 1/4" jack output connects to normal guitar amps/pedals/processors. Still, there's also a 1/8" headphone output (hence the earphones) and a separate 1/8" input for connecting an aux device like a phone, laptop or tablet. This means you can use the Hush-X as a regular electric guitar or practice silently in headphones. I'm not sure what kind of preamp is being employed for the headphone out (if any). Still, the tone is actually quite enjoyable despite having no built-in effects - usually, the sound of electric guitar pickups is quite dull when played "direct", but that's not the case here.

In the brief time I spent with it, the Hush-X was full of pleasant surprises. I'll be honest; not being the biggest fan of headless guitars, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I'm happy to say my cynicism was unfounded. This is a really fun guitar — ideal for a young musician looking to get started with guitar, but also a great choice for travelling. The price is a little higher than your typical starter package, but the quality of this instrument is exponentially higher too.



This is a really fun guitar — ideal for a young musician looking to get started with guitar, but also a great choice for travelling.



Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire Stealth

The Country Squire is one of Fret King's most enduring styles—a proud benchmark for the brand. The best attributes are sometimes hidden, as they are in the Country Squire Stealth with its humbuckers delivering “Old school”, period-perfect tone, or an “altered state” hum cancelled edge—showcasing Fret King's signature versatility. **Sam Bell** explores the emblematic tonalities and great sustain of this classic design.

IN this Guitar Interactive review, I'll be diving into a visual and audio treat from Fret King Guitars. This time, I looked at a Tele-style design called the ‘Country Squire’ in Stealth Gloss Black. This beautiful object does more than country, though. Tele's are known for their simplicity and versatility. The Country Squire has a few cool hidden features, cool looks, great sounds and a price tag that isn't too shabby! ▶



Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire Stealth Gloss Black

Stealth Gloss Black

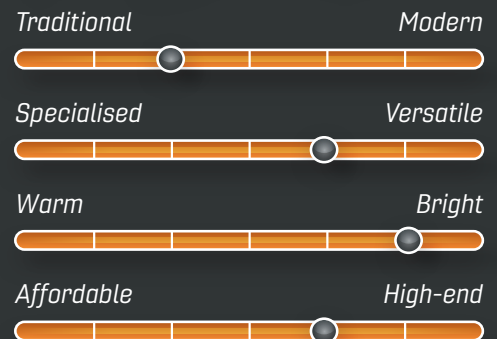
brand, blending the familiar with the contemporary with an intriguing pairing of visible and invisible pick-ups. The Stealth delivers either and more with Fret King of the Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire.



Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire Stealth Gloss Black

MSRP: (UK) £699 | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Superb playability
- » Sleek good looks
- » Blending the familiar with the contemporary

For more information, please visit:

jhs.co.uk/collections/fret-king-guitars



It's probably a bit slicker than a classic tele without being too "wizard-like."

First of all, this is what you'd expect of a T-style design; we have the T-style body, 22 frets, 25.5 inch scale length, Wilkinson Ashtray 3 brass saddle bridge, and 3-way pick-up selector for the two visible pickups. The guitar features a unique pickguard and a strat-style pickup selector placement. The Stealth Gloss black looks awesome in the flesh, and the painted F hole gives the guitar a classic/contemporary vibe.

The body is made from American Alder; it's made from three pieces with a 4-inch centre block. The neck is bolt-on and made from Hard Rock Maple with a light oil finish. It feels almost satin-like to me. The fretboard features an easy-playing 10' radius on an Indian Rosewood fingerboard. The headstock sports Fret Kings' unique, flashy design and is topped off with super sturdy Wilkinson WJ05 tuners. Everything feels solid out of the box, nothing coming loose or looking particularly shabby. Great quality guitar!

Stealth Black might be the name of the finish, but there's another reason for the stealthiness of this guitar. First of all, you might see that the pickups look standard for a T-Type. Two Fret King pickups designed by Trev Wilkinson

himself. They sound amazing! However, under the pickguard, there's also the Bukka Phantom Coils, which can be switched on via the push/pull volume pot. This allows us to get hum-cancelled style tones from the single coils, adding a new level to the tonal pallet. If that wasn't enough for you, this guitar, like other Fret King guitars, features the Vari-Coil control. This allows us to 'wind' the pickups either hotter or cooler. In the Country Squire guitar, this allows us to go from a hot tele sound to a more classic T-style sound. And if country is your thing, you'll be able to dial many different eras of sonic exploration. However, it's not just country this guitar can do. It sounds great with high gain and processed sounds as well. There's a reason why lots of metal bands use Teles on recordings: there's plenty of twang and punch. So, in my opinion, this guitar is incredibly versatile

The neck feels great: C shape, 10-inch radius, 25.5 scale length—nothing really gets in the way. It's probably a bit slicker than a classic tele without being too "wizard-like." So, no matter what your playing style or needs, it's a great all-rounder. The medium frets feel great...and of course, no dings or rusty



edges. Everything feels like the quality you'd expect.

If you're in the market for a T-style guitar and want something a bit different, the Country Squire might be worth checking out. It's not a bad price for what you get (check out Fret King's website for the current RRP), and

you get a gig back; what's not to love? Fret King makes unique yet classic designs affordable for the practising musician, and I'd say they are worth considering if you're looking for a great T style in your collection.



NICK JENNISON'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2023

Nick Jennison presents his choices for *Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2023*

WELL, what a ride 2023 has been! While I'm sure you don't need me to recount many of the continued struggles we've all faced, I will give you a gentle reminder that 2023 has been a banner year for guitar gear. Musical instrument sales soared across the world, and we've seen some seriously exciting offerings from all of the usual suspects - and a few newcomers too! Allow me to share some of my favourites from this year with you, starting with...

Victory Super Sheriff

100 watts of organic, valve-driven British rock tone can be attained with the long-awaited Victory Super Sheriff amp head. Designed to take over from the Sheriff 44, this beast has all of the power and gain you could ever need—simple in design, but with plenty of versatility! Featuring a dedicated 'Vintage' channel, it has two gain modes (clean and crunch), both of which are voiced to capture that late '60s and early '70s blues-rock sound. The 'Hot Rod' channel is where you'll discover the thicker, heavier high-gain tones that transformed rock and metal in the late '70s and early 1980s





EVH Frankenstein Relic

If your playing incorporates the gamut of rock pyrotechnics—the EVH Frankenstein Series Relic was built with you in mind. Paying tribute to Edward Van Halen's revered proto-superstrat platform, draping it in a road-punished, solid-coloured finish and updating it with modern hardware and electronics, the Frankenstein Series Relic includes a comfortable quarter-sawn maple neck and fast-playing compound-radius fingerboard, and its dive-bomb-only D-Tuna-equipped Floyd Rose lets you mimic Eddie's signature trem-work with ease



Maybach Stradovari

German brand Maybach is not shy about innovation in so many of its models; however, with the impressive Stradovari S61 they also prove the classic phrase; "If it's not broken, don't fix it!" Since 1954, guitarists worldwide have been inspired by this unique guitar design: the ST style model. It is still the most successful solidbody electric guitar ever. Thanks to its versatility and sound variety, ingenious tremolo system, and incredibly ergonomic body shape, it quickly became a staple of popular bands of all genres. A remarkable career for an instrument... and it continues with the Maybach Stradovari S61.



Musicman Luke IV

The Steve Lukather line of signature guitars gets an extensive makeover this year with the introduction of the all-new L4. Available in an HT SSS and HT HH configuration, and a limited edition 30th anniversary version featuring an HT HSS pickup configuration with Music Man double-locking floating tremolo. The L4 is the culmination of over 30 years of collaboration with Platinum and Grammy award-winning artist Steve Lukather whose list of accomplishments includes an extensive session career (guitarist on over 1500 recordings), major contributor on the multiplatinum Michael Jackson "Thriller" album, and leader and a significant contributor of the legendary rock band Toto.



Kernom Ridge

The world's first augmented overdrive, boasting an unlimited number of 100% pure analogue clipping options in one circuit. Built on Kernom's unique patented "Analog Morphing Core" technology, the Ridge features powerful pre and post-clipping EQ sections and full MIDI compatibility, giving it all the potential to replace any number of different overdrive pedals in your rig!



Victory Super Sheriff 100

100 watts of organic, valve-driven British rock tone can be attained with the long-awaited VS100, which has moved over from the Sheriff 44, this beast has all of the power and gain you could ever need—simple as that. Featuring a dedicated 'Vintage' channel, it has two gain modes (clean and crunch), both of which deliver a classic '70s blues-rock sound. The 'Hot Rod' channel is where you'll discover the thicker, heavier high-gain tones of the late '70s and early 1980s. Nick Jennison tells us more.

VICTORY Amps has enjoyed incredible success since its founding in 2013. Their American-inspired Duchess family are some of the best-loved “pedal platform” amps on the market, and at the opposite end of the spectrum, the Kraken family has become hugely popular in hard rock and metal circles. But despite the brand's proud British heritage - and lead designer Martin Kidd's heavily modified Plexi that was the unofficial prototype for many of the early Victory designs - the British-voiced “Sheriff” family was historically something of a black sheep.



Victory Super Sheriff amp head. Designed to take
ple in design, but with plenty of versatility! Fea-
n are voiced to capture that late '60s and early
gh-gain tones that transformed rock and metal in

Enter the Super Sheriff - a 100w, 4-channel mon-
ster that covers the entire range of British gain
from the cleanest of cleans through to outrageous
metal tones and everything in between. Where
its predecessor the Sheriff 44, was something of a
“specialist” in ‘60s and ‘70s rock tones, the Super
Sheriff is massively versatile while still retaining
the simplicity and sonic authenticity that made
the older Sheriffs so great.

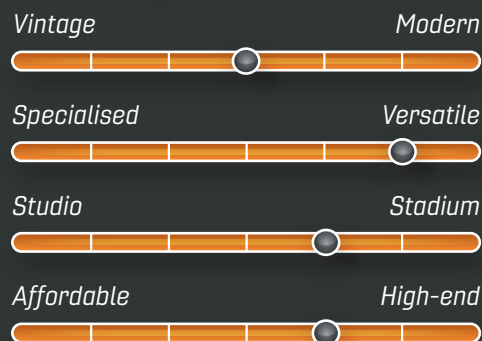
The Super Sheriff has four distinct modes across
two channels (“Vintage” and “Hot Rod”), but all
four are foot-switchable. “Vintage” mode 1 is very
clean indeed, with a lot of sparkle and a pleas-
antly “contoured” midrange. While clean sounds
have historically been a weak point for many
higher-gain British amps, this is absolutely not the
case here, with gorgeous shimmering 80s cleans,
spanky funk and even Hendrix-y breakup on tap.
Mode 2 is much more traditionally “British”,
with shades of JTM45 and Super Lead depending
on where you set the gain control. Feed it some
PAFs, and you have a sound that evokes Kossoff,
early Clapton and Page. With the right guitar,
you’ll find Blackmore and Malcolm Young ones
too. ▶



Victory Super Sheriff 100

MSRP: (UK) £1999 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Killer British amp tones
- » Versatility
- » Ease of use

For more information, please visit:

victoryamps.com



The “Hot Rod” channel is much, much gainy-er. Mode 1 is like the best 800 you’ve ever heard but with even more “saucy” available. It’ll do everything from Van Halen to early “Big 4” Thrash tones via NWOBHM and ‘80s Ozzy, while Mode 2 kicks it up yet another gear for Sykes-approved infinite sustaining leads and even modern metal sounds (with Bill Kelliher and Brent Hinds of Mastodon both using Super Sheriffs as part of their live rigs).

There are a couple of other very useful features in the Super Sheriff, too. It has two master volumes that can either be assigned

per channel, or switched independently for the same tones at two different volume levels. There are also two “depth” and “presence” modes, each with their own knob to fine-tune the high and low-end response. The “tight” depth setting is lean and percussive like a great Super Lead, while the “loose” setting is massive and expansive with room-shaking low end. Presence mode 1 is smooth, refined and very characteristically “Victory”, while mode 2 is brighter and more aggressive. You might think of mode one as “what you wish an 800 sounded like”, while 2 is “what an 800 ACTUALLY sounds like”. ▶



MOOER IAMP - INTELLIGENT AMP SERIES

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MOOER's iAmp app was designed for you - the modern guitarist. We have channeled decades of research into the creation of a system that puts 52 amplifier models 49 effects at your fingertips with ultimate control through your tablet or smartphone using the MOOER iAmp app.

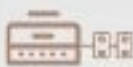
MOOER's Intelligent Amp Series comes loaded with the latest technology to give you what you need as a player wherever you are in your journey. From huge vintage amp tones with touch-sensitive response to dreamlike modern clean textures based on powerful delay and modulation algorithms, each MOOER Tone Library sound is fully customizable to your needs.

For the practicing musician the Intelligent Amp Series offers 40 drum machine varieties and 10 metronome types which sync effortlessly with a colossal 80 second looper so you can explore ideas over your own chord structures or nail that tricky lick you've been working on.

Each model in the Intelligent Amp Series can be paired with the MOOER GWF4 wireless footswitch for preset changes and full control over the looper and drum machine making them powerful tools for practice too.

With MOOER OTG you can record directly onto a compatible device making the Intelligent Amp Series the perfect choice for content creators who depend on immediate results. With MOOER Cloud you can download the latest MOOER signature artist presets as well as uploading your own sounds.


SPECIALIZED APP
FOR MORE ENJOYMENT


101 AMP MODELS
AND EFFECTS


40 DRUM GROOVE
AND 10 METRONOMES


INTEGRATED APP TUNER


80-SECOND LOOPER


OTG DIRECT RECORDING


SUPPORT WIRELESS
FOOTSWITCH
(SWITCHING PRESET/DRUM
OR LOOPER CONTROL)


BLUETOOTH 5.0
HIGH-QUALITY
AUDIO INPUT


MOOER CLOUD
FOR TONE SHARING



SD30i



HORNET 05i



HORNET 15i



HORNET 30i

If British amp gain is your thing, this amp should be at the top of your “must-try” list.





On top of these tone-shaping features, you also have 100w of stadium-filling power, switchable down to a very manageable 30w, a clean and high-headroom effects loop and external bias points for easy maintenance. It's available in Victory's very popular 19"-wide "Heritage" headshell, or in a larger "wide body" format that's the same width as a standard 4x12 if that's the look you're into.

The Victory Super Sheriff is an encyclopaedia of British amp sounds in a compact and simple package. It's easy to dial in every conceivable flavour of "gold panel" gain, and it delivers these with impact, authority and authenticity. If British amp gain is your thing, this amp should be at the top of your "must-try" list.



EVH *Frankenstein Relic Series*

If your playing incorporates the gamut of rock pyrotechnics—the EVH Frankenstein Series. Edward Van Halen’s revered proto-superstrat platform, draping it in a road-punished, solid-ware and electronics, the Frankenstein Series Relic includes a comfortable quarter-sawn maple fingerboard, and its dive-bomb-only D-Tuna-equipped Floyd Rose lets you mimic Eddie’s signature

A strong contender for “Most Important Guitarist Of All Time”, Edward Van Halen’s explosive 1978 debut heralded a seismic shift in not only the way guitar was played, but in the form the electric guitar would take for decades to come. Perhaps the most iconic of Ed’s innovations is his legendary “Frankenstein”; an unholy union of Californian playability and Kalamazoo grunt, and the world’s first “Superstrat”. There’s probably no more recognisable guitar in all of rock history.

Perhaps a little TOO recognisable for some folks, particularly in the striped finishes that adorn the EVH brand’s loving recreations of Ed’s legendary guitars. Fortunately, there is an answer ➔



EVH Frankenstein Relic Series

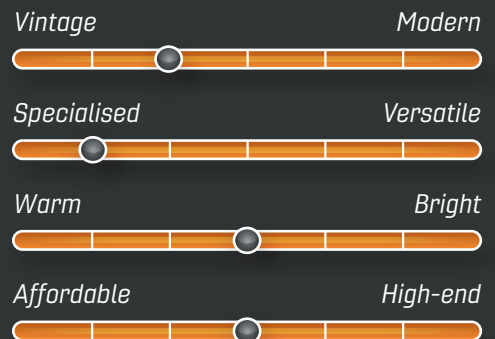
Relic was built with you in mind. Paying tribute to a classic coloured finish and updating it with modern hardware, a maple neck and fast-playing compound-radius finishure trem-work with ease Nick Jennison Reviews.



EVH Frankenstein Relic Series

MSRP: (UK) £1249 / (US) \$1699

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Juicy rock tones;
- » Road-warrior aesthetics;
- » Effortless playability

For more information, please visit:

www.evhgear.com



in the form of the new “Frankenstein Relic” series. Essentially, these guitars are “Frankie” replicas, but without the stripes. Available in black, red and white heavily relic’d finishes, they’re handsome and hugely evocative of Ed’s legendary guitar without being quite so “on the nose” visually.

The body is a classic Strat shape, complete with cut away pickguard and exposed pickup routes, housing a direct-mounted Wolfgang humbucker along with a vestigial neck single coil and a pickup selector that aren’t actually wired in - just like Ed’s original. With only

a single volume pot (with a knob marked “tone”), this is not a guitar that promises an endless array of tones - rather, it delivers one voice with laser-focussed excellence. In the world of the Frankenstein Relic, it’s always rock o’clock.

So yes, one tone, but my word, what a tone! It’s powerful, articulate and very well balanced, with a tight low end that chugs and thumps with the best of them, and is beautifully responsive to your pick dynamics while still being forgiving enough for all manner of shreddy tomfoolery. ▶



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The NAMM Show
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LAVA MUSIC
New Era.



LAVA ME 4
LAVA ME play

The tremolo, an aged, EVH-branded Floyd Rose, is everything you'd hope for in such a unit.

It takes confidence and experience to get the best out of a single pickup guitar like this, but if you've got the chops and the touch, this guitar will reward you with heaps of character and expressiveness.

If you're played any guitars that have bourn the EVH name, the neck profile on this instrument will feel very

familiar. It's not "shredder-thin", but it's very fast and comfy. The 12'16" compound radius makes for a very low action without a hint of buzz, and the jumbo frets make legato and bending an absolute breeze. The relic finish is very good, but the neck really stands out in this regard, with a very authentic "played-in" look and feel.



The tremolo, an aged, EVH-branded Floyd Rose, is everything you'd hope for in such a unit. Yes, there are compromises when it comes time to change strings, but the performance benefits are well worth the extra headache. Where this guitar differs from some previous EVH guitars is that the bridge is floating - meaning you can not only dive, but also pull up. This not only makes harmonic screams even more dramatic, but also facilitates better chord shimmers, bar vibrato and pseudo-slide lines. It also comes fitted with a D-Tuna, making traditions between standard tuning and drop-D an absolute breeze.

The EVH Frankenstein Relic is a "Frankie" through and through, but in a finish that doesn't scream "signature guitar" quite so hard. It plays like a dream, and has a powerful and expressive tone that makes it hard to put down. Funk choppers, jazz cats and blues dads may want to look elsewhere, but if you're a rock player who wants a rugged, handsome and focussed instrument, this guitar will do you proud.



Maybach Stradovari S61

German brand Maybach is not shy about innovation in so many of its models; however, with the classic phrase; "If it's not broken, don't fix it!" Since 1954, guitarists worldwide have been in love with it. It is still the most successful solidbody electric guitar ever. Thanks to its versatility and suitably ergonomic body shape, it quickly became a staple of popular bands of all genres. A remaster with the Maybach Stradovari S61. Nick Jennison takes a closer look.

IF there's one thing we have an abundance of in the guitar gear "space", it's "S-type" guitars. While we're not allowed to use the actual word to describe anything that isn't made by the big boys over in California, we all know what we're talking about here - bolt-on (usually maple) neck, 6-a-side headstock, contoured double-cut body, three single coils, blade switch, tremolo... you get the gist.

Leo's timeless design transcends "classic" and has become an electric guitar "archetype" - potentially THE electric guitar archetype, especially as depicted in non-guitar-centric media. As such, everyone and their dad has had a go at making one, and it takes something quite special for a guitar of this style to rise above the crowd.

This is where German guitar makers Maybach come in. Designed in Deutschland and built by hand by a small team in Europe, Maybach's bread and butter is making loving recreations of classic guitars from the '50s and '60s, but with the benefit of decades of experience, modern production techniques and the same German engineering precision as their automotive namesake.

The Stradovari S61 is a fitting tribute to the most revered of S-types. It sports a two-piece alder body, maple neck with a 21-fret "slab" rosewood board, complete with skunk stripe and single-action truss rod and bone nut. The tuners are a small button "split post" design (aka, the best non-locking tuners for stability), and everything is finished in a tastefully aged nitro. When I say "tasteful", I mean it - so often, relic jobs can look like some kind of unfortunate mishap, but Maybach's ageing is some of the most authentic I've ever come across. Every scrape, knock and crack is in a spot where you'd expect to find one on a real vintage guitar, and the exposed wood, hardware and plastics are all suitably dirty and discoloured.

In terms of playability, the S61 does make some concessions to modernity in the form of a 9.5" radius and medium jumbo frets - discreetly tacking two of the "flaws" common to vintage instruments. The result is an action that's very comfortable, and can accommodate everything from Swedish shred to Texas blues, without disrupting the classic "look". ▶

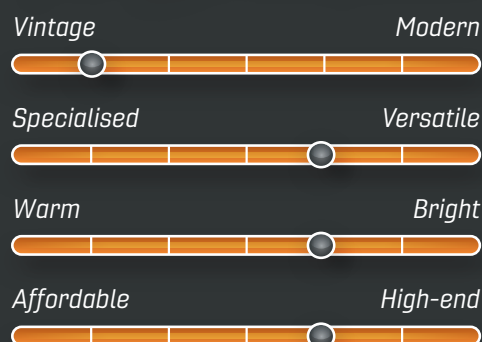
the impressive Stradovari S61 they also prove the inspired by this unique guitar design: the ST style mod-sound variety, ingenious tremolo system, and incredible career for an instrument...and it continues



Maybach Stradovari S61

MSRP: (UK) £1999 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Classic Californian guitars
- » Tasteful relic finishes
- » Amazing pickups

For more information, please visit:

maybach-guitars.de



*The relic-ing is every bit as good, as is the playability, and the pi
Maybach AND a nice amp when compared to a custom shop "S"*

A real standout is the Amber pickups. Hand wound in Germany under the watchful eye of Wolfgang Damm (a student of Seth Lover, and inventor of the Gibson P94), these are without doubt some of the best single coil pickups I've ever played. They're balanced, lively and exceptionally dynamic, with a generous output for a vintage-style single coil. The top end is super sparkly and clear, but somehow isn't piercing or shrill with high gain, and crucially, there's no microphonic feedback



Maybach Stradovari S61

Pickups are definitely better, and you have change for a SECOND



or excessive hum, even under studio lighting with a loud gainy amp. The only way this guitar falls short of sonic perfection is that the bridge pickup isn't wired to a tone control, which means no creamy Eric Johnson leads without performing a (very minor, admittedly) modification. That, and having to take the neck off to adjust the truss rod were the only faults I could find with this superb guitar, and they're both "vintage correct", so I should probably take my complaint up with Leo's ghost.

This leads me to perhaps the biggest plus point for the Stratovari S61 - the price. While this is by no means a "cheap" guitar (tipping the scales at just under £2k at the time of writing, subject to change), it's literally 2/5ths of the price of a custom shop relic from the "F" brand. The relic-ing is every bit as good, as is the playability, and the pickups are definitely better, and you have change for a SECOND Maybach AND a nice amp when compared to a custom shop "S". It feels quite bizarre to describe a hand made, high-end relic guitar as a bargain, but that's exactly what it is - a bargain!



Ernie Ball Music Man Steve Lukather L4 30th Anniversary Steamroller

The Steve Lukather line of signature guitars gets an extensive makeover this year with the i and HT HH configuration, and a limited edition 30th anniversary version featuring an HT HSS floating tremolo. The L4 is the culmination of over 30 years of collaboration with Platinum and whose list of accomplishments includes an extensive session career (guitarist on over 1500 Michael Jackson "Thriller" album, and leader and a significant contributor of the legendary r

WHEN it comes to signature guitars, Music Man go all in. While it's common for some other brands to simply palette-swap an existing model (and maybe change the pickups) and call it a day, Music Man will work with their artists to conjure something completely unique from the ground up. Such is their commitment to giving their artists what they want, that signature models make up the bulk of their range, and the **▶** majority of



4

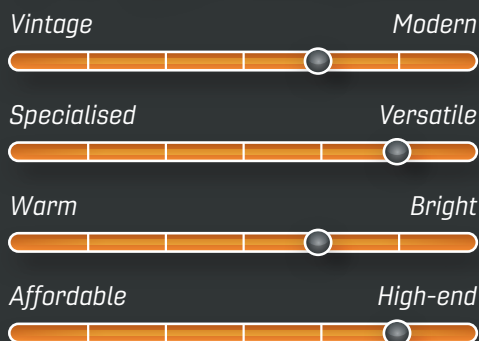
Introduction of the all-new L4. Available in an HT SSS pickup configuration with Music Man double-locking (and Grammy award-winning artist Steve Lukather recordings), major contributor on the multiplatinum rock band Toto.



**Ernie Ball Music Man Steve
Lukather L4 30th Anniversary
Steamroller**

MSRP: (UK) £TBC / (US) \$3999

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » The best necks in the business.
- » Supreme versatility.
- » Floyd Rose antics.

For more information, please visit:

music-man.com/instruments/guitars





Steamroller



Blue Flame



Gator Burst

what we'd consider the "classic" EBMM designs - the Morse, the Axis (yes, this was a signature model), the JP (and now the Majesty), and of course, the Luke.

NAMM 2023 saw the introduction of the fourth iteration of Steve Lukather's iconic signature guitar, and while the outline remains largely unchanged since the Luke I launched in 1994, the new L4 represents a significant evolution of this timeless design.

Aside from the new finishes, perhaps the most significant change is the pickups. Available for the first time with three single coils, alongside more traditional HH and HSS configs, the new L4s all feature Music Man's new HT pickups. Inspired by the processes that led to the development of Ernie Ball's M-Steel and Cobalt Slinky strings, these heat-treated pickups offer higher output than traditional designs, while also offering extended dynamic range and frequency response. This is quite the achievement, since

the hotter a passive pickup gets, the more the constricted the dynamics, high treble and deep bass tend to become, but the clever folks over at Music Man seem to have pulled off genuine alchemy here. It's clearly been a big enough change to catch Lukather's attention, and when you plug these guitars in, it's easy to see why.

Of the five new L4 models announced, the one that immediately caught my eye was the limited edition 30th Anniversary "Steamroller" - not just for its stunning aesthetics, but for how it harks back to the original Luke I with its HSS pickups and recessed Floyd Rose tremolo - a rarity, since most Lukes since the Luke II have come with a standard 2-point tremolo.

Let me tell you, "Steamroller" is an appropriate choice of name here, because this guitar is an absolute monster. It comes straight out of the case with an almost-too-easy setup that practically dares you to shred on it, and the neck feels unbelievably good under the hand. To be fair, that's something that seems to be common to all Music Man guitars, but there's something about the neck shape on the Luke that just *works*. It's crazy fast, but it's not a "shredder's" neck profile, and you can wrap your thumb around it and wrestle it too if that's what you're into. Sonically, those new HT pickups really deliver the goods, while the HSS configuration offers the kind of versatility that a player like Lukather requires - whether it's huge slabs of rock, Texas-inspired blues, "MJ" funk picking or soulful throaty lead tones, the L4 delivers.

The new Music Man L4 is a guitar befitting one of the all-time greats. It offers incredible playability, elegant and eye-catching visuals and a palette of stunning tones that will not only hang in any musical setting, but excel. This is a serious instrument for serious players, and if that's you, you need to check one out.



Kernom Ridge Overdrive

Nick Jennison reviews the Kernom Ridge—the world’s first augmented overdrive, boasting pinging options in one circuit. Built on Kernom’s unique patented “Analog Morphing Core” technology, featuring symmetrical and asymmetrical clipping EQ sections and full MIDI compatibility, giving it all the potential to replace any number of pedals.

If there’s something that unites all guitar players, it’s the Indiana Jones-esque search for the ultimate overdrive pedal. Do I need symmetrical or asymmetrical clipping? Soft or hard clipping? Transparent or coloured? The quest is seemingly endless, and the Tube Screamer is always greener on the other side of the fence...

Enter French pedal builders Kernom - although, to be honest, the term “pedal builders” feels a little bit of an understatement considering the pedigree of the electronics engineers behind



an unlimited number of 100% pure analogue clipology, the Ridge features powerful pre and post-ber of different overdrive pedals in your rig!

“Housed in a Red Dot design award-winning, medical-grade white enclosure, the Kernom Ridge might be the very last overdrive pedal you ever buy...”

the subject of this review: the Ridge overdrive. Described as the “million moods overdrive”, this pedal basically spans the entire spectrum of overdrive and distortion sounds, but rather unlike digital modelling pedals that attempt to do the same thing, the Ridge achieves this with an entirely analogue signal path.

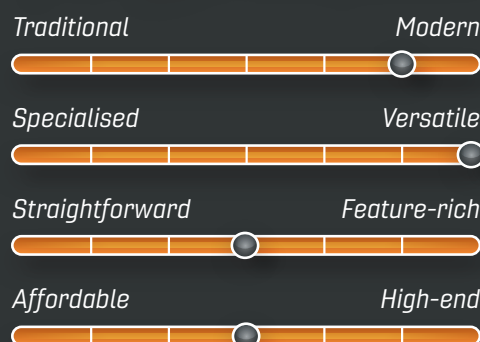
At its heart is the “mood” control. This single knob completely changes the behaviour of the diodes inside the pedal, offering a clean boost, asymmetrical and symmetrical overdrives, high gain amp-in-a-box tones, and blown-out fuzz.



Kernom Ridge Overdrive

MSRP: (UK) £269 / (US) \$299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Amazing overdrive tones
- » Ultimate versatility
- » Beautiful design

For more information, please visit:

kernom.com/en-gb



Crucially, however, these aren't modes that you switch between: you can morph continuously through these colours, offering practically infinite voices. Whether you want a clean boost with just the tiniest hint of 'TS' flavour, or you want a face-melting 800-type sound but with a thuddy fuzz-like transient (or Kaon-like clarity), just turn the mood knob and it's there.

Aside from the usual candidates of gain and output level, the Ridge provides tone shaping in the form of a dedicated mid control and two tone controls positioned before and after the clipping stages. The latter ("post tone") acts like a more sophisticated version of traditional tone control, setting the overall treble and bass balance of the tone, while the "pre tone" control allows you to do the same, but on the way into the clipping. This is huge since the relationship of highs and lows you feed into the overdrive drastically changes the feel of the gain. Turn the "pre-tone" up;



Kernom Ridge Overdrive





you get a tight and chiming sound that's akin to having a TS-style boost or a Treble Booster in front of the pedal. Turn it down, and things get fat, sludgy and thick like a blown-up low-wattage amp. And don't forget; you can do this with any position on the mood control.

As if all of this wasn't enough flexibility, the Ridge also has a "favourite" switch for quick access to a stored preset, as well as MIDI and expression pedal functionality, allowing not only access to 128 presets, but continuous control over any of the pedal's parameters. Conceivably, you could replace your entire overdrive pedal collection with this one pedal - something I'm very tempted to do myself

Housed in a Red Dot design award-winning, medical-grade white enclosure, the Kernom Ridge might be the very last overdrive pedal you ever buy. It's very hard to imagine wanting a tone that this pedal can't produce, except maybe certain fuzz tones (although Kernom has a pedal for that very thing in the works), and for the price of a single boutique overdrive, you get the tones of every overdrive pedal under the sun. As such, I'm giving this one a new award I just made up - the Nick Jennison "I'm Buying One Of These" award. You should check one out too.

END <<

SE[®]

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The PRS SE Hollowbody II Piezo provide musicians with the versatility of wielding both acoustic and electric tones in one instrument. It's designed with two discrete volume controls (magnetics and piezo) that can be run to the same amp with one cable – players can use the volume controls to blend the pickups. Or, you can run two cables and have the magnetic pickups go to your favorite amp while running the piezo signal straight to the board for a huge sound. To find out more and to hear how versatile this guitar is, go to www.prsguitars.com.



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SAM BELL'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2023

Sam Bell presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2023

I always feel fortunate to review some incredible products for this Magazine, and now and then, some of the gear just has that extra Mojo that you can't quite put your finger on. When Jonathan asked me to round up my top five bits of gear from this year, I didn't have to think too hard! For me, I know when I've found something great when I get myself lost in the playing. Each of these pieces of gear are linked by that very factor; they brought something out in me. It's subjective, of course, but I highly recommend checking out the following. I will not take any responsibility for your financial situation after checking out this gear, however.

This year I was delighted to be able to review some brilliant gear, so what follows is my personal top 5 products that I looked at. Some of the products are new for this year, some have been out for a while, but I had the opportunity to try them out for the first time this year at Guitar Interactive. I'd like to thank Jonathan for having me on board with the Gi team, it's always a pleasure! I hope everyone reading is safe and well. Here's to better times, the quest for tone and all things musical! ▶







Maybach Lester 57 Gold Rush

Modeled after specific dimensions used between 1957 and 1959 in terms of body and neck profiles, this iconic design paired with the creative guitar work of British Blues-Rock in the 1960s, forever etched the nimbus of this type of guitar into music and guitar history.

There's a lot of mythology around guitar gear; superstition and nostalgia fuels the gear industry. We are all seekers at one level or another. However, there's something to be said for a classic guitar. Maybe because amplified music is very young compared to the age of recorded humanity, we all see Les Pauls, Teles and Strats as symbols of "the dream."



Marshall Guvnor and Bluesbreaker

No longer will you need to peruse second-hand gear sites or pay eye-watering amounts to get your hands on an original Marshall Guv'nor Bluesbreaker pedal, as the legendary UK brand has reissued its pedal range, delivering all of that mojo and style once again! Meticulously designed and hand-built at Marshall's famous Bletchley factory, you can now own the real thing—but which one is right for you?



Eventide Riptide

The Riptide is part of the Dot9 range of Eventide stompboxes and comes as the result of the brand's thorough research into overdrives and Uni-vibes. The Riptide Drive and Vibe pedal has stereo overdrive and vibe; each effect features dual voicings versatile enough for funky bright tones to explosive and warm lead tones.



UA Heavenly Plate Reverb

Born out of the award-winning Golden Reverberator, the Heavenly Plate Reverb gives you the haunting ambience of the classic 1950s studio plates heard on countless hit records in a compact stompbox. Featuring selectable Vintage Bright, Vintage Dark, and Modern Full plate settings, the Heavenly Plate is perfect for effect sculpting endless reverb textures.

BOSS Katana Artist MKII Head & Katana 212 WAZA Cab

The Katana Artist MkII Head brings you the BOSS premium sound and features in a powerful 100-watt amplifier head. Cover any style with five amp characters and five variations, and colour your tones with a wide range of onboard effects—and rock the stage with a roaring presence using the companion Katana Cabinet 212 Waza or your favourite external speaker cabs.



Maybach Lester 57 Gold Rush

Sam Bell reviews the Maybach Lester 57 Gold Rush Aged. Modeled after specific dimensions and neck profiles, this iconic design paired with the creative guitar work of British Blues-Rock in guitar into music and guitar history.

THERE'S a lot of mythology around guitar gear; superstition and nostalgia fuels the gear industry. We are all seekers at one level or another. However, there's something to be said for a classic guitar. Maybe because amplified music is very young compared to the age of recorded humanity, we all see Les Pauls, Teles and Strats as symbols of "the dream."

The fact is, however, no matter how many innovations are made with guitar, we come back to simplicity and connectedness. The classics work; they work very well. We recognise the symbols, both visually and sonically. However, the companies that made them have had to ▶



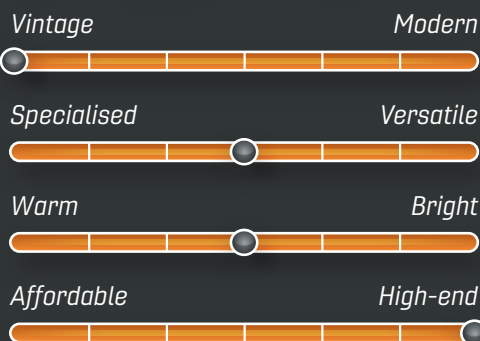
s used between 1957 and 1959 in terms of body and
n the 1960s, forever etched the nimbus of this type of



Maybach Lester 57 Gold Rush

MSRP: (UK) £2249 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Stunning tones
- » Tremendous playability
- » Vintage LP design

For more information, please visit:

maybach-guitars.de



The Woods, the Neck is Mahogany, the Body is Mahogany, the top is Maple, and the Fingerboard is Rosewood.



survive and keep the legacy going. Rightly so, however, this leads to a big dip in quality and consistency. Compromises have to be made. The search for a nice vintage guitar becomes the fuel for the search. This can mean getting your hands on a vintage classic guitar that works and sounds good, which is both rare and incredibly expensive. Thank goodness we have companies like Maybach who are making high-quality offerings and homages to these classic vintage instruments, made with love, care and attention at a relatively competitive price (compared to a custom shop ‘insert brand here’), and you can gig them properly!

Maybach Guitars are a family-owned business established in 2008 and based in Bavaria/Germany. Guitars are built in their workshop in the Czech Republic and set up in Germany. They use only the best tonewoods, parts, hardware and pickups to bring the best tone to players' hands. I first played a Maybach guitar at 42 Gear Street in Germany back in 2021 and was blown away. Fast forward to July 2023, I'm at Guitar Interactive HQ and presented with the opportunity to review 1 of the 3 Maybach guitars that arrived. They were all lovely. But this one took my heart. In this review, I'll be taking a look at Maybach's 'Lester 57 Gold Rush.

This is a homage to the classic 57/59 Les Paul Gold Top. First of all, the guitar looks amazing. The Gold looks gorgeous, everything is pristine, it's special! It also smells amazing, which was something I wasn't expecting. Picking it up, it's not heavy by any means (coming in at 3.7 KG). It's not as heavy as some of the guitars that this is modelled on.

The guitar has a played-in feel, it's not 'relic'd' per say, however, it has some natural ageing. It's almost as if you're playing the original guitar from someone's very expensive private collection. Except, it could be yours for a comparatively reasonable price.

Plugging it in, instantly, there's the sound. It's the LP sound. The 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch scale length, the 'Gibson' string spacing, the sus-

tain, the sweetness. It's right there, at your fingertips. I honestly felt like I couldn't get a note wrong (I probably did!) but the guitar felt connected. Not too heavy, it didn't really fight back in any way. It was a dream!

The Woods, the Neck is Mahogany, the Body is Mahogany, the top is Maple, and the Fingerboard is Rosewood. The pickups, the 'Amber Spirit of 59' set, give us that Vintage Humbucker vibe, clarity, and warmth. There is plenty of warm bite in the bridge, a slow burn on the neck pickup and when using the middle position, there is plenty of size and cut.

The guitar comes with a stunning hard case and a certificate of authenticity; this particular Lester 57 Gold Rush was Assembled on 25/04/23 and had its final checks on 09/05/23. All are handwritten in a string-closed envelope. Guitar companies try this sometimes to create an air of authenticity but often miss the mark. But Maybach has heart; you can hear it, smell it, feel it, see it. No matter how much I talk about it or someone else talks about it, nobody will get it. Until you actually play it and sense it. Maybe this is a message for all of us trying out gear: forget what I have to say and focus on what feels good to you. Maybach guitars feel good to me. Yes, its expensive, but not as expensive as the real thing and lightyears beyond in terms of quality, feel and playability.



Marshall Guv'nor & Marshall Bluesbreaker

No longer will you need to peruse second-hand gear sites or pay eye-watering amounts to own a Marshall blues breaker pedal, as the legendary UK brand has reissued its pedal range, delivering all of that classic Marshall sound and hand-built at Marshall's famous Bletchley factory, you can now own the real thing—but

MARSHALL

has listened, and they have brought back some of their legendary drive pedals from the 80s/early 90s! In this review, I'll be looking at the Guv'nor and the Blues Breaker pedal. I've also taken a look at the Drive Master and Shred Master, so be sure to check those reviews as well to get the full story and as always, check out the video section of this review to hear these pedals in action!

It all starts with 'The Guv'nor'. This is a drive pedal that Marshall released in 1988 and named after Jim Marshall himself. This changed the definition of a distortion pedal could be. This

GUV'NOR REISSUE



aker Reissue

Get your hands on an original Marshall Guv'nor Blues-mojo and style once again! Meticulously designed which one is right for you? **Sam Bell** tells us more.

became a sought-after pedal from weekend warriors to groundbreaking pro guitarists. It was the first time that the public could get a 'Marshall' in a box sound all in the stomp of a foot. How could we guitarists possibly resist? Fast forward 50 years, and we're here today celebrating the reissues of this pedal and its siblings. All these have been re-created faithfully from the aesthetics of the unit itself all the way through to the circuit. This is as authentic as it can get, plus the price isn't too shabby!

The tone of The Guv'nor is what you'd expect, it's very Marshall, and it's very versatile. On low drive settings, you can get a nice breakup all the way through the shades of gain until we reach maximum drive for a cranked Marshall sound that can be tailored with the pedals' Bass, Middle and Treble controls. It's very fun to play through, there is a natural and musical compression that comes with the distortion, and this is perhaps one of the reasons this pedal is so popular with guitarists. Notes sustain as if you were channelling the great Gary Moore himself.

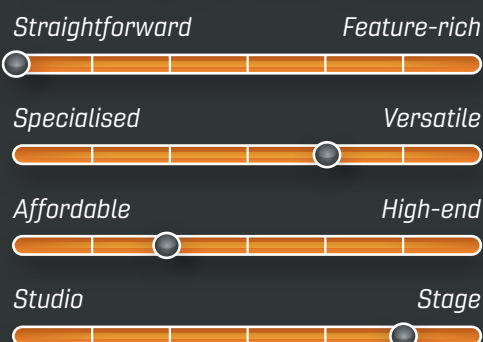
Feature-wise, the pedal is very simple; I've already explained the main control knobs. But in terms of extras, it's straightforward. You've got 1x ¼ inch jack input, 1x ¼ inch jack output and a Y- Insert send/return loop for adding effects post EQ (Y- Insert cable not included) The pedal is powered by



Marshall Guv'nor Reissue

MSRP: (UK) £169 / (US) \$249

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Snarling bite of a cranked Marshall JCM800 amplifier
- » The original pedal's iconic graphics, robust metal construction

For more information, please visit:

marshall.com





9v battery or 9v DC power supply (this isn't included with the pedal).

Moving onto the Blues Breaker Pedal. After the success of The Guv'nor and a variation of this pedal, Marshall went on to release the 'Blues Breaker' pedal in 1992. This pedal sought to capture

the spirit of Marshalls' legendary Blues-breaker amp, which has been used by almost everyone that you'd associate with Blues and Marshall, maybe starting with Clapton himself. Once again, everything about build quality, aesthetic and design is the same as I men-

tioned for The Guv'nor pedal. Except this pedal is a little bit simpler and has its own unique character.

First of all, the Bluesbreaker sound is a powerful crunch sound with a unique and lovely mid-range. Having heard Robin Trower play through a Bluesbreaker amp only a few meters away, it's like an ice pick; it's incredibly detailed and cutting whilst still having a blooming sustain. It's almost clean whilst having some stubble to it. The BluesBreaker pedal captures this wonderfully.

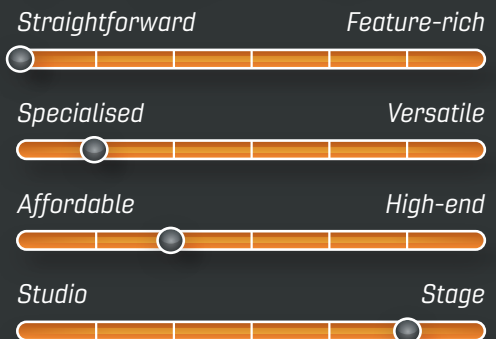
BLUEBREAKER REISSUE



Marshall Bluesbreaker Reissue

MSRP: (UK) £169 / (US) \$249

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Character of a 1962 Bluesbreaker
- » 90s-era amp-in-a-box distortion pedal

For more information, please visit:

marshall.com





Very simple controls on this pedal, just gain, tone and volume. The gain doesn't really come into any 'drive' until we get past the 2 o'clock setting. The tone gives you everything from maximum warmth all the way to ice pick. The volume sets the volume! And unlike the Guv'nor, this pedal features a simple ¼ inch jack input and output. This sounds great as it is in front of a clean amp, or could be used to drive a crunchy amp even further. This pedal works brilliantly for Bluesy single note soloing and also as a 'pushed' clean sound with plenty of sustain.

I have to say both of these pedals are seriously great, and no wonder Marshall is making reissues of them. Coming in at around £169 RRP, this isn't too bad at all, considering an authentic original MK I 'Guv'nor pedal can go for more than £300 on some websites. You might as well get a brand spanking new one, with new wires and your own stories to share with it. Go check them out!

END <<



Eventide Riptide Drive and Vibe Effects Pedal

Sam Bell reviews the Eventide Riptide Drive and Vibe Effects Pedal. The Riptide is part of the result of the brand's thorough research into overdrives and Uni-vibes. The Riptide Drive effect features dual voicings versatile enough for funky bright tones to explosive and warm

EVENTIDE makes some of the finest professional-grade FX in the world. In this review, we'll be taking a look at a unique new offering from them. The 'Riptide' This is two sounds in one pedal, a superb and very versatile Overdrive and an incredibly lush Uni-Vibe, which can help us re-live our tie-dye dreams in a click of a switch and a turn of a knob.



edal

e Dot9 range of Eventide stomptboxes and comes as and Vibe pedal has stereo overdrive and vibe; each lead tones.

Let's talk about sounds. I was seriously impressed with the overdrive tone, specifically the green drive, by itself is a superb drive!

Technically, there are four effects in this pedal, two flavours of overdrive and 2 flavours of Uni-Vibe. The Green Overdrive is a British-voiced overdrive with smooth mid-range and natural compression. The Red Overdrive has a modern sound, punchy in the bass and top end; this drive can get pretty high gain! Green Uni-Vibe is a classic Uni-Vibe feel, and Red gives us a little extra phase to the Vibe. The two main effects can be run in different orders, so you can have drive into Vibe, and Vibe into drive.

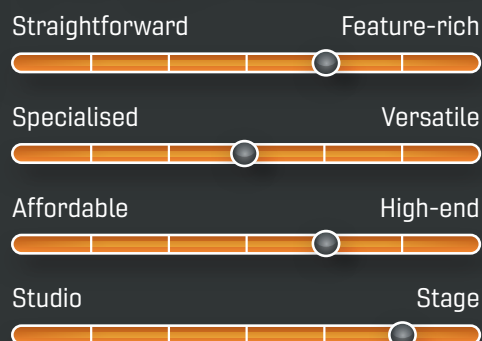
Each effect has its own controls, the overdrive has Drive, Tone and level controls, and the Uni-Vibe has Vibe, Speed and Intensity. The vibe control takes the user from a Chorus like swell in lower settings up to vibrato like pulsation. The pedal can be used mono or stereo for super wide surf-like sounds. The pedal also has midi capability over USB, the USB also gives you the ability to download software updates and use Eventides software for editing presets. Finally, you can connect an expression pedal to further enhance the performance of this pedal. The Expression pedal can be set to change any grouping of parameters in one smooth movement. ▶



Eventide Riptide Drive and Vibe Effects Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £329 | (US) \$299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Drive & Vibe at the press of a button
- » No Deep Dives: 3 Drive Knobs, 3 Vibe Knobs
- » Five presets at your feet

For more information, please visit:

eventideaudio.com



Build-wise, it's super solid, quality knobs and switches, cool design, and doesn't take up a huge space on the pedal board but is well-balanced for stage use.

It's important to say here that Eventide makes professional grade units, so there's a lot of extra stuff you can do system set-up wise. But plugging the pedal in right out of the box, it's super easy to use and understand. Recalling and saving presets is relatively easy and intuitive, and the way Eventide presents its 'Quick Start' guides makes getting down to making music nice and easy.

Let's talk about sounds. I was seriously impressed with the overdrive tone, specifically the green drive, by itself is a superb drive! Plenty of sustain and natural compression, very clear harmonic richness. Great for neck pick-up, glassy bluesy tones. Mixing this with the classic Uni Vibe reminds me of Robin Trower's watery tone. Turning the gain up, we can get into super grungy tones, which are reminiscent of artists like Kevin Parker (Tame Impala) harking back



Eventide Riptide Drive and Vibe Effects Pedal



to the 90s grunge and alternative rock moment. The Red Drive brings a modern twist to the drives tonal pallet; tighter low end and higher gain leads to a quicker attack on notes, perfect for heavier sounds. In either case, mixing these channels with the vibe channel as intended leads to a whole host of potential tones, from psychedelic blues riffs, to alternative grunge single-note melodies with fast vibrato settings. There's a lot here to play with!

Build-wise, it's super solid, quality knobs and switches, cool design, and doesn't take up a huge space on the pedal board

but is well-balanced for stage use. The pedal is powered by 9V centre negative power, keep this in mind if you're using any pedal power, the unit does come with its own power supply.

If you haven't done already, check out the video section of this review. The pedal talks for itself; the sounds are deep, rich and satisfying. The Vibe effect really adds a whole new dimension to riffs and leads. It'll take your playing down new paths of inspiration. The Eventide Riptide is a superb pro level Drive/Vibe in one!



Universal Audio Heavenly Reverb

Sam Bell Reviews Universal Audio's Heavenly Plate Reverb. Born out of the award-winning Golden Reverberator, the Heavenly Plate gives you the haunting ambience of the classic 1950s studio plates heard on countless hit records. With three distinct settings: Vintage Bright, Vintage Dark, and Modern Full plate settings, the Heavenly Plate is perfect for any style of music.

IT'S quite possible I've been living under a rock, but I had no idea until recently that the amazing team at Universal Audio are making instrument pedals. I know of UA from their amazing interfaces and plugins, which I've never had the chance to own, but had the pleasure of hearing on many recordings. So when I saw this on the review list, I was very curious to check it out.

The Heavenly Plate Reverb is a compact and pretty straightforward Plate Reverb Pedal. UA say that this was born out of the award-winning Golden Reverberator. This reverb is meant to model the ambience of classic 1950s studio plate reverbs which we've heard on countless records, all within a stomp box.

The pedal features three distinct vintage plate reverbs, which can be modified further by the

use of the onboard controls. Decay allows you to determine the length of reverb, and mix allows you to wash your tone in reverb or bring it back for subtle ambience. The pre-delay sets when the reverb takes effect after striking a note, the EQ takes us from very dark and bold to shiny and crisp tones, and the mod control gives us the option to add some modulation to our reverb (which can be set to slow or fast via a switch). The pedal is well built, looks lovely and the switch is super soft. You can set it so the trails keep going after turning the pedal off, or you can have it so it cuts the reverb off straight away.

Promises of studio-grade reverb effects for a pedal board often make me frown, often, reverb is created in the environment that the instrument is being recorded in or is added in post. So when using reverb through an

If you're looking for a high-quality plate reverb, then this is the one in my opinion.

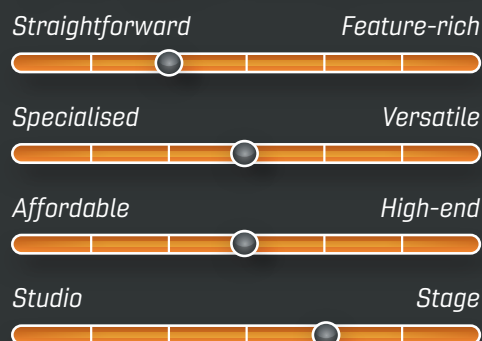
Golden Reverberator, the Heavenly Plate Reverb records in a compact stompbox. Featuring selecta-
ct for effect sculpting endless reverb textures.



Universal Audio Heavenly Reverb

MSRP: (UK) £199 | (US) \$219

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Three vintage studio plate reverbs
- » Authentic emulations
- » Endless reverb textures

For more information, please visit:

uaudio.com





Universal Audio *Heavenly Reverb*

amp, it can get squished, flattened, or it can turn the core tone to mush. However, this is UA. They know a thing or two about effects and possibly how to best translate them to a pedal device. If you're using this with a clean amp, straight through the front, or through the FX loop, the clarity and depth of the reverb is very impressive. Washed-out surf sounds, Motown chop chords, lonesome-sounding single note leads all sound gorgeous. With drive the pedal works great as well, getting into the classic 70s VH territories, adding that studio sound to the amp.

If you're looking for a high-quality plate reverb, then this is the one in my opinion. The modulation really adds a lovely twist of versatility to the pedal, allowing for more modern and contemporary reverb sounds. There's a lot of depth here, UA has done a brilliant job. It's also worth noting that this is part of a series of new pedals that UA are releasing, so keep your eyes and ears peeled for those. Check one out now!





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IK MULTIMEDIA



BOSS Katana Artist MkII Head & Katana

The Katana Artist MkII Head brings you the BOSS premium sound and features in a powerful amp characters and five variations, and colour your tones with a wide range of onboard effects using the companion Katana Cabinet 212 Waza or your favourite external speaker cabs. **Sam Brown**

THE king of pedals, BOSS is back with a new range of Katana amplifiers packed with many new features and possibilities. There is so much to cover here, so be sure to watch the video review to hear it in action and check out BOSS's website and take a look at that manual, is there anything this range of Amplifiers can't do!?

In this review, I'll be taking a look at the Katana Artist MkII 100-watt head and its matching Katana 212 cabinet. The head has all of the features of the combo versions of the same amp, but all within a powerful 100-watt unit. The idea behind the Katana range is to offer the guitar player an incredibly wide range of tones, a sword that truly cuts through anything.



a 212 WAZA Cab

100-watt amplifier head. Cover any style with five presets—and rock the stage with a roaring presence us—ell tells us more.

We have access to 5 amp ‘characters’, which are further tweakable with the addition of a ‘variation’ mode for each one, cab resonance control (for deep, modern and vintage EQ ranges), an overall amp contour, standard EQ and Global EQ. So the amount of tonal control from the basic amp models is already fairly limitless! These amp models are ambiguous but familiar, they aren’t presented as recreations of anything we know but they do cover the main amp archetypes most guitarists use. We have acoustic for acoustic’s or making your electric sound acoustic. A clean channel, which can cover anything from a pristine JC-style clean to a warm tweed amp. Crunch takes off where clean finished, going into vintage crunch breakup to modern glassy tones. Then we have Drive and Brown, which gives us everything from a cranked Marshall-style tone all the way to a high-gain ENGL-like metal tones.

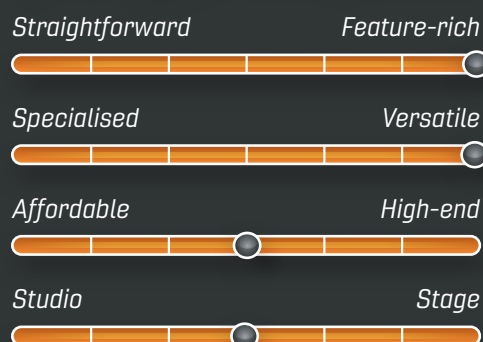
On first plug and play, these amp models can seem fairly limited, but as soon as you start playing with the other deep tone shaping tools the Katana has to offer, the only limitation becomes your ears and playing! The CAB resonance feature allows us to change between Deep, Modern



BOSS Katana Artist MKII Head & Katana 212 WAZA Cab

MSRP: (Head) £605 / (Cab) £579

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Enhanced tone and exclusive features
- » BOSS Tone Studio editor
- » Mic'd cabinet emulation

For more information, please visit:

boss.info/uk/



and Vintage responses, which immediately has a huge impact on these five core amp models. Deep really expands the low end, modern gives a more USA EQ curve, perfect for modern metal and contemporary tones, and the Vintage gives us a warmer, more mid-focused sound with a softer low end. You can further tweak this with the contour control, which allows us to choose from 3 different mid-range contour options which we can further modify with the BOSS Tone Studio app.. which is another thing that really blows this unit apart! So many things we can do, so little time! We can also further modify the

unit's volume and feel by the wattage switch; we can adjust the volume from 0.5 to 100 watts depending on our playing situation. BOSS has made it so it responds like a valve amp at higher volumes, so you can really find that headroom sweet spot for your tonal and technical preferences.

We also have a ton of FX from Reverbs, Modulations, Delays, Octave, Drive/Boost pedals which are all accessible on the front panel and are further modifiable through the tone studio app. Each of these FX is modelled on well-known classics, most of which are BOSS's own!





Once you've got your dream tone, you can save that tone as a preset/channel on the front panel; it can also be controlled via an external footswitch (not included, but BOSS have a wide range of footswitches for different situations and needs)

If you're not using a Cab, you can get great 'ready to mix' direct tones. Line, USB and phones/recording outputs all have a miced up cabinet emulation for

sending a quality, mix-ready amp tone to a PA system, computer DAW or headphones. You can shape the direct sound further by using the selectable Air Feel settings on the rear panel, including three presents and two custom settings you can further modify in the BOSS tone studio. Two-channel USB audio is supported, allowing you to track in true stereo with many of the amps modulation, EQ, Delay and reverb FX.

The Katana Artist MkII also includes integrated dual amp support. If you're lucky enough to own two of these amps, you can get them working together with dual link. You can configure each amp with its own settings and control them from a single GA-FC or GA-FX EX foot switch. You can blend different tones, create wet/dry setups and much more. Stereo expand allows you to use one Katana as a primary amp with stereo FX like chorus, delay and verb distributed across both amps for a super hi-fi stereo sound.

You're probably wondering what kind of Cabinet and Speaker would complement such a versatile set up. How could one speaker do it all? BOSS have the answer, this is the Katana Cabinet 212 Waza craft. This is a fairly lightweight, robust cab with a 2x12 speaker config leaded with custom

Waza speakers which are voiced for a British rock tone based on classic greenbacks from the 1960s. The cab also comes with a removable back panel for closed or open back options, which affects the tone even further! If you have two 2x12 you can stack and link them to make a nice 4x12 set up.

What do I think of all of this? I truly think it's awesome, it's amazing how far technology has come, this Katana range is really great for new generations of guitarist. Solid-state amplifiers have never sounded so good, and had so much power and options. For it all to be available, quality and easy to use is a dream. Katana is the sword that cuts all delusion! Check out the range where you can, and you'll be surprised!

END <<



GO BEYOND...



The H90 Harmonizer® has the power to take you beyond the effect horizon into uncharted sonic territory. Packed with 64 effect algorithms, including groundbreaking effects like Polyphony, Prism Shift, and Wormhole, the H90 is a powerhouse. Capable of running two effects at once (with spillover), it features an intuitive user interface designed with players in mind. The H90 is Eventide's Next Step and is destined to sit at the heart of your rig for years to come.

Eventide®

eventideaudio.com

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STUDIO TO STAG

*At **Guitar Interactive**, we pride ourselves on bringing you in-depth reviews and demonstrations for only the best products the world of guitar and audio electronics has to offer.*

If it's in Gi, then it's gear we'd buy! All of our written reviews and breakdowns are accompanied by a detailed video — so you can see and hear for yourself if it's right for you.

E

**PLAY IT - RECORD IT -
PERFORM IT**



Hit'n'Mix RipX Deep Create (Update: Now

Nick Jennison reviews the newest member of the RipX family. DeepCreate is a unique, easy generate original ideas and create music from scratch using any instrument, MIDI/MPE control seamlessly with the DeepRemix stem separation & DeepAudio pro-editing and clean-up workflow. What you see is what you hear, and once your music is inside DeepCreate, you won't need to imagine endless possibilities and boundless creativity!

BACK when I was working full-time as a lecturer, one of the questions I'd regularly get from my first-year production students is "can I remove (X instrument) from this song? My answer was always the same: "unless you have access to stems, it's impossible". I'd usually use an analogy like "trying to remove the drums from a finished mix is like trying to remove the flour from a cake - unless you do it at the mixing stage, it's not possible".

Well, turns you you don't know what you don't know, and as the

kids (translation: people in their 20s) would say: "we have an app for that now". RipX is the brain-child of the clever folks at Hit'N'Mix, and it essentially uses the kind of digital wizardry I haven't a hope of understanding to take an audio recording and separate it out into its constituent parts. Drop an AC/DC song into the "Ripper" and (after a minute or two of witchcraft) you'll get a version with independent tracks ("layers" in RipX parlance) for Angus, Malcolm, Phil, Cliff and Bon/Brian which you can manipulate to your heart's content. Doing a guitar cover of

Thunderstruck? You can mute just Angus's guitar. Karaoke? Mute the vocals. Wanna learn exactly what Malcolm is playing? Solo his guitar. Wanna use the drums from If You Want Blood for a demo you're writing? Solo those.

RipX comes in a bunch of different flavours, with various levels of complexity. We've covered the most basic version ("DeepRemix") in a previous edition of GI, but today we're taking a look at the version aimed at musicians and songwriters: "DeepCreated". This edition keeps all of the same powerful features as

part of RipX DAW)

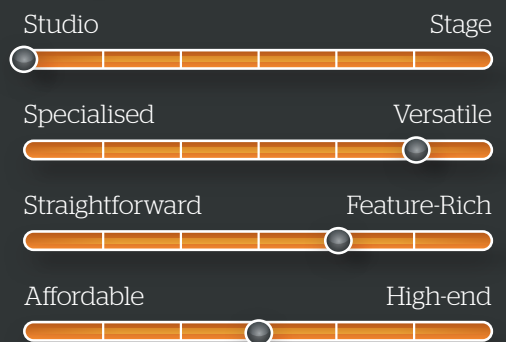
-to-use, yet powerful audio system that inspires you to troller, microphone or samples. DeepCreate integrates workflows. Use alongside your DAW or as a standalone app. think about audio and MIDI—they become one, inspir-



Hit'n'Mix RipX Deep Create (Update: Now part of RipX DAW)

MSRP (MSRP (UK) | £ (US) \$

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Getting creative with audio
- » Learning hard-to-hear guitar parts
- » Having fun with sample libraries

For more information, please visit:

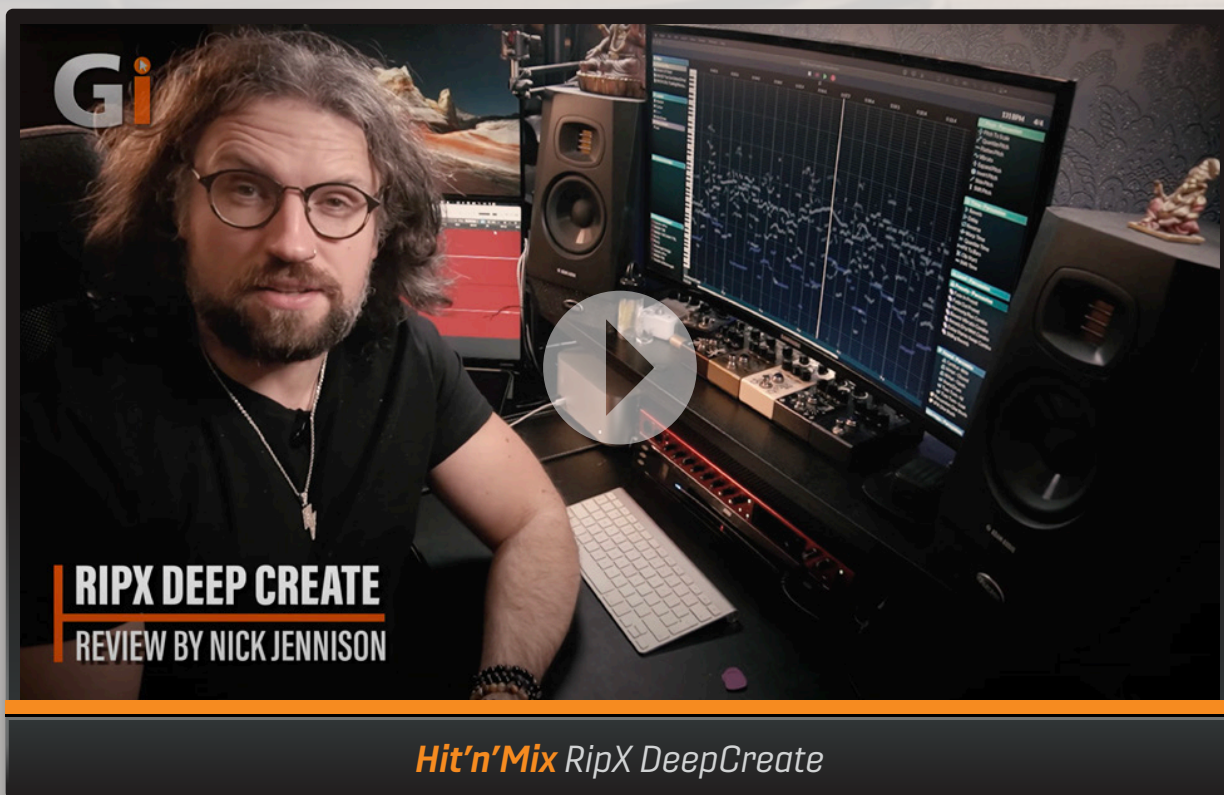
hitnmix.com



DeepRemix, but with several new creative tools. For example, you can take any “layer” and manipulate the pitch, timing and inflexion just as you would in DeepRemix, but you can also use these layers to trigger virtual instruments. There are several of these included, but you can of course use your own favourite VSTi plugins too. For example, if you don’t own a bass, but want to play a part in on a recording you’re working on, you can play the idea in on your guitar, drop it by an octave, then replace it with an electric bass sample. Then, if you weren’t happy with the notes you’d played, you can

tune them, adjust the timing, change the pitches... whatever you can dream up.

If you’re doing a cover of, say, a live Jimi Hendrix track, but you feel like the drums aren’t punching hard enough, you could isolate the kick drum and blend in a sample with the original for more “oomph”. Or, you could take the original kick drum and turn that into a sample, which you can then layer over another instrument. If you want the “When The Levee Breaks” kick as an instrument you can play, or just the guitar chucks from “In The Midnight Hour”, you can grab them with absolutely minimal effort.





In to fully explain the feature set of this incredible piece of software in a written review would take the entire magazine, so instead, I'm going to recommend that you go grab a trial version and start playing around. The interface is simple enough that you'll have it figured out in minutes, and the results you can get will leave you amazed - I certainly was!

END◀

IK Multimedia AXE I/O ONE

Sam Bell reviews IK Multimedia's AXE I/O ONE USB recording interface. Each knob, feature, selected for the demanding guitar and bass player. A JFET input with continuously variable Z-T and passive pickups, provides the ideal front end for each of your instruments in the included ers and a low-jitter clock deliver your performance in full 24-bit/192kHz hi-fi to your DAW of put make the AXE I/O ONE the only piece of gear you'll need on your desk.

IN this review, I'll be taking a look at the latest offering from IK Multimedia. With the recent release of their new TONEX software, they keep pushing the bar forward with new hardware and software solutions for Musicians.

In this instance, I'll be diving into the new AXE I/O One interface. An interface specifically designed for Guitarists/Bassists. The AXE I/O isn't a totally new thing for IK Multimedia. However, they have the regular AXE I/O, which is a powered interface with two channels. The I/O One is a

USB-powered interface with one channel in a compact unit, perfect for the guitarist on the go or the musician starting out their home recording journey.

The interface is very straightforward but has a few unique twists that will interest guitarists and bassists alike. We have a ¼ inch jack/XLR input; we can use normal or phantom-powered mics with this unit as well as instruments. There's a headphone out and a ¼ inch jack L and R output for studio monitors. These have their own volume controls, one master for

the studio monitors and one headphone level. Aside from these useful and standard items, we have a switch for the 48v phantom power and a gain control for our input level, which can be visually monitored using the rainbow colour strip on top of the unit.

Where things start to get a bit different with the AXE I/O One is the ability to send line level back out the unit to an Amp if you're looking at re-amping or getting creative in other ways. Around the back of the unit, there are also two ¼ jack inputs for external controllers ▶

and component on the AXE I/O ONE was carefully selected to match the impedance, alongside switchable settings for active and passive pickups, alongside switchable settings for active and passive pickups, alongside switchable settings for active and passive pickups. Transparent conversion and features such as a dedicated re-amp out-

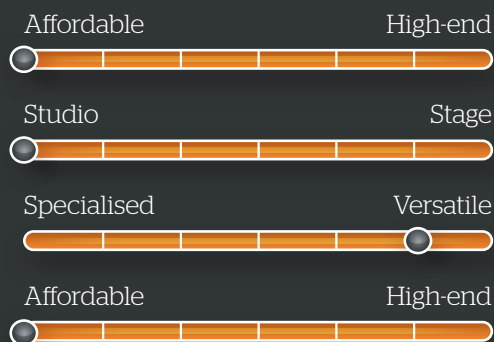
The AXE I/O One is a **great bit of kit** if you're starting out your recording journey



IK Multimedia AXE I/O ONE

MSRP (UK) £139 | (US) \$129

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » 1-in/3-out Guitar Interface—Complete with AmpliTube 5 SE
- » 24-bit/192 kHz conversion

For more information, please visit:

www.ikmultimedia.com



such as footswitches or expression pedals. This interacts perfectly with IK Multimedia's amp software Amplitube 5, of which an introductory copy of the software comes free with the unit alongside the TONEX and Ableton Live Lite software. This means you can get recording those master compositions right away with studio-quality amp sounds.

Taking the Guitar and Bass thing further, IK Multimedia has spent time giving us the best tools to shape our input signal. When working with Direct Input guitar, going into amp modelling software, it can be helpful to be able to really dial in

the right line level, impedance, and tonal shape from your pickups. First up, there is a Passive/Active switch, which allows us to optimise the input topology for our pickups. If this isn't enough, we also have a 'JFET' switch. This allows us to add a little bit of emulated tube warmth to our input signal; if we don't like this, we can switch it to 'Pure', which gives us the full tonal range of our input signal.

Then there is the Z-Tone control. This is an impedance control which will interact with our pickups in unique ways, depending on what we have in our instrument. The control allows us to move



IK Multimedia AXE I/O ONE



from 'Sharp' to 'Bold'. Turning this affects the brightness or the fatness of the input signal. This could be very useful when recording DI Bass or dialling in an 'alive' sounding tone. IK Multimedia has mentioned in the manual for this interface that this control is to be experimented with rather than being a set' thing' that happens every time. On plugging into the unit at GI HQ, it seemed to have sweet spots (as mentioned in the video), so it's worth keeping this in mind when using this, use your ears!

The AXE I/O One is a great bit of kit if you're starting out your recording journey;

the software and the tonal shaping options are very useful. The fact it's powered by USB makes it convenient for on-the-road usage. Turn your hotel room or local coffee shop into a studio! (maybe not the latter..) The interface gives you a very quick transition between input to output, with barely any noticeable latency. The interface is designed to work well with Amplitube, so you know you'll be getting the best out of the amp modelling. All within a very reasonable price range. Highly recommended!



Boss Gigcaster 8 Streaming Mixer

Boss' Gigcaster 8 is a powerful all-in-one audio command powerhouse, purpose-built for music content. Plug in a guitar or bass and play with flagship-level GT amps and effects. Connect m from the VE series. Or bring in a keyboard or drum machine using the line inputs. The Gigcaster is creating music-focused media. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

WHEN

the world closed in 2020, I (like many other musicians) was thrust into the world of live streaming. The learning curve was pretty steep, and much of the gear I was using was pretty janky, but I quickly came to love it. Our weekly education streams on the GI YouTube channel quickly grew into a community of like-minded guitar players, and Monday nights quickly became a highlight of my week. As much fun as the streams are, though, I'd be lying if I said the

tech always cooperated, which is why I was so excited to check out the Boss Gigcaster 8.

While the Gigcaster 8 is ostensibly digital mixer aimed at streamers, it's way, way more powerful than its name suggests. On the surface, it has four combo XLR/jack inputs on its back along with a single jack input for a guitar on the front. It also offers a stereo output along with four headphone outputs, one of which is compatible with a headset mic. Each input has its own fader, and each headphone output

has its own dedicated volume control, along with faders for a USB input, the "mobile" aux input jack, a device connected via Bluetooth and the 8 "pads" (these are VERY cool - more on this later). Each of these faders can be easily assigned to the main mix and headphone mixes via the "mute" and "headphone" buttons, and each comes with a full suite of EQ, compression and effects, accessed via the channel's top button or the large touch screen. Yes, touch screen. ▶



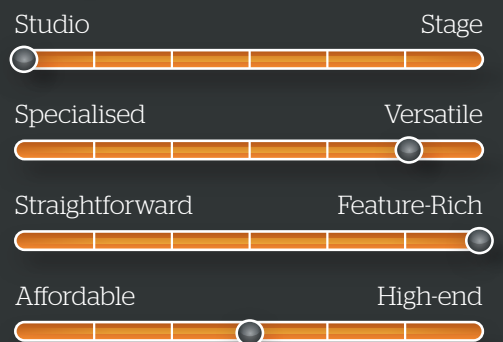
musicians who livestream and create audio and video
 nics and process voices with studio-grade processing
 ter 8 could very well be an essential partner for anyone



Boss Gigcaster 8 Streaming Mixer

MSRP (UK) £665 | (US) \$699

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Great audio for streams and content creation
- » Easy, intuitive user interfaces
- » Massive versatility

For more information, please visit:

boss.info



This bright and generously proportioned display is the heart of the Gigcaster 8, and it's how you access its more detailed features. It affords huge "tweakability" for all of your inputs via a very intuitive and easy-to-navigate interface - something that's absolutely invaluable in a live broadcast, especially if you're doing it solo, like most of mine are! Mic inputs can be easily configured for singing, dialogue or console-style processing that's appropriate

for synths, drums, acoustic instruments or any other source you might want to connect. There are reverb, delay, modulation, and even special effects presets for things like radio and telephone vocals. These effects are not just for musicians - they're great for adding interest, humour and drama to your live content.

The most powerful effects suite in the Gigcaster 8 is definitely on the guitar





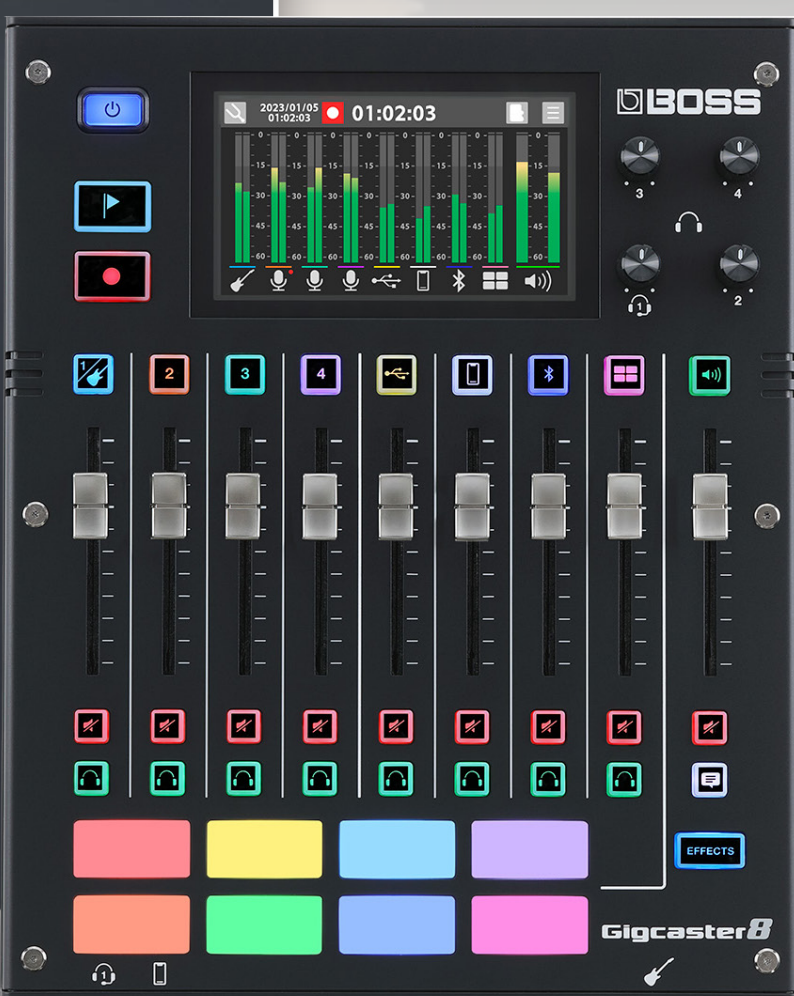
input though. This channel comes loaded with an entire guitar signal chain, using BOSS's latest amp and effects models taken directly from the GT-1000. There is a huge range of tones available in the bundled presets alone, from fantastic feeling high gain amps to beautiful ambient cleans, acoustic simulation, rotary speakers, you name it. Of course, you're not limited to the presets - you can get as deep with your signal chain as you'd like in the edit window, or using the dedicated Gigcaster app.

Perhaps my favourite feature - and perhaps the most misunderstood feature, based on the other reviews I've seen - is the 8 touch pads. They fulfil two functions - triggering sound effects, and also for quickly and easily controlling both the built-in features on the Gigcaster, but also external software and hardware via MIDI. You can assign these pads (in banks of 8) to do all manner of things, from switching guitar presets to enabling and disabling vocal effects, all the way through to switching scenes and playing effects and overlays in software like OBS. ▶

All in all, the Gigcaster 8 is a hugely full-featured unit that's perfect not just for streamers, but also for online guitar teachers, podcasters... you name it.



and very well thought out device
content creators, video professionals,



What's more, you can also mirror these pads on a GA-FC footswitch! This gives guitar players the option of controlling everything from their tones to their camera angles without having to take their hands off their instrument!

So yes, the Gigcaster 8 is a fantastic live-streaming audio tool, but it also works wonderfully as a recording device. It functions as a 20x18 USB interface, compatible with any modern DAW, but it also records both stereo and multitrack audio to a micro-SD card. There's also a large button to write markers to the audio being recorded, to greatly speed up your workflow when it comes time to edit.

All in all, the Gigcaster 8 is a hugely full-featured and very well thought out device that's perfect not just for streamers, but also for content creators, video professionals, online guitar teachers, podcasters... you name it. Perhaps my only criticism is that the name "audio streaming mixer" doesn't come close to describing the capabilities of this unit. It's fantastic, and I will most certainly be adding one to my streaming setup.



MOD AUDIO - AIDA DSP JCVM, Tweaker & Vibro

Developed in collaboration with AIDA DSP, MOD Audio has announced the release of three new plugins. Utilising AI technology, Vibro, JCVM and Tweaker promise to redefine amp modelling and processing capabilities with significantly enhanced sound quality by processing audio data with advanced algorithms and more.

In a recent edition of Guitar Interactive Magazine, I had the pleasure of looking at the MOD Dwarf from MOD Audio. It's a very clever take on the "do it all" signal processor - it's tempting to use the term "modeller", but that's not really what it is. The MOD Dwarf hosts plugins and links them together in chains referred to as "pedalboards". It's an elegant and well-realised ecosystem, but there was one very noticeable "weak link" in the chain - the amp tones.

Now, for all but the most avant-garde guitar players, a great amp tone is make-or-break. You can have the most powerful, best thought-out processor, but if the amp tones aren't great, forget about it. This is where the new Aida Audio JCVM, Tweaker, and Vibro plugins come in. Available for a nominal fee in the MOD Audio plugin store, these amp modelling plugins

take advantage of the latest machine learning technology for maximum authenticity of tone and feel.

The highest gain of the bunch, the JCVM is essentially every flavour of Marshall in one plugin. It runs the gamut from mid-forward British cleans (that aren't very clean, but that's Marshalls for you!) through to Plexi-ish "Crunch" mode, 800 grind in the "Rock" mode, and more modern over-the-top gain in the form of the mid-pushed "Lead" mode and the more aggressive and scooped "Metal" mode. Each of these modes offers not only a different level of gain, but an entirely different voicing and EQ signature, which can be further tweaked with the 3-band EQ and presence controls.

Speaking of tweaking, the "Tweaker" is basically an Egnater Tweaker re-imagined ▶

Vibro Amp Plugins.

new plugins for their range of amp modelling devices, and provide users with a range of advanced tone-shaping post-machine learning techniques. **Nick Jennison** Tells us



MOD AUDIO - AIDA DSP JCVM, Tweaker & Vibro Amp Plugins.

MSRP Priced at €19.90 each

The Breakdown

Studio Stage



Specialised Versatile



Straightforward Feature-Rich



Affordable High-end



For fans of

- » Killer amp tones
- » Simple user interfaces
- » The MOD Audio ecosystem

For more information, please visit:

mod.audio/neural-modelling/



in a plugin. These surprisingly intuitive little amps are known for covering the entire spectrum of classic guitar tones, and you'll find all of these tones in this plugin too. The "AC" and "USA" modes handle cleans through to breakup tones, with a distinctly "Voxy" and "Fendery" flavour depending on which mode you've chosen, while the "Brit" mode is much higher gain with a very smooth high end and a chewy, lively midrange that's perfect for blues and rock soloing.

The cleanest of the bunch, the Vibro is Aida Audio's take on a Fender Vibrolux. The three modes represent the two channels (Normal and Bright), as well as an option to bridge both channels for a little more hair and compression. Both "Norm" and "Bright" modes offer a beautiful vintage chime and punch, with an added dose of sparkle from the "Bright" mode, and both modes start to break up nicely when you push them. The "Bridge" mode, even more so, with a healthy dose of Keef-esque bite and SRV-ish clean-but-dirty sustain.





Because there's so much going on under the hood, these plugins are quite CPU-hungry, with loads up as high as 75% with just one amp plugin and a cab sim, and to ameliorate this, each plugin comes with "light" modes. There are several settings on each, allowing you to determine how much CPU power you want to dedicate to the amp sim. There is a tradeoff in tone, but in a mix, you're unlikely to spot the difference. That said, it's nice to have

the option to run these plugins at their highest resolutions for recording or for "amp only" applications.

The JCVM, Tweaker & Vibro by Aida Audio have addressed the biggest weakness of the MOD Dwarf in a big way. They all sound fantastic, and feel super realistic. They also hint at exciting things to come for the MOD Audio ecosystem. Definitely one to watch!



Xvive T9/U4T9 IEM system

Since the 1950s, the term “twang” has been used to describe the typical, overtone-rich sound and rock ‘n’ roll sound formulas of the time. This success manifested an unparalleled timeless sound that never goes out of fashion. With that in mind, **Nick Jennison** takes a closer look at Maybach’s

BUILDING on the success of its U4 In-Ear Monitor Wireless System, Xvive launches its own in-ear monitors. The T9 In-Ear Monitors have been designed by top IEM engineers in the USA to offer customers pro-level audio quality — previously only available from custom in-ears. Bundled with Xvive’s U4, the new U4T9 set includes the U4, T9 in-ears, and a CU4 carry case for unbeatable monitoring value for live performance and studio applications. Nick Jennison reviews.

The days of loud backlines and unprotected ears on stage are past. While some may lament this and pine for the days when Marshall stacks and tinnitus were omnipresent, I most certainly don’t. In the last few years, I’ve had the dubious pleasure of “civi-

lising” a loud heavy metal band. By this, I mean converting them from indecently loud 5150s, having to watch for inaudible hi-hat counts and only a dim awareness of what was happening on the other side of the stage, to the clarity, precision and convenience of IEMs. After we got over the initial shock of how “loose” we were playing, we quickly became a tighter, more powerful-sounding live unit, with the added benefit that we were no longer beholden to wedge monitors and hired backline that may or may not work.

There are three components to a good IEM setup. The first is the mix. In many cases, this will be out of your control, but assuming this is good, the next two elements are the earpieces themselves and the device you use to deliver the mix to them - usually a ▶



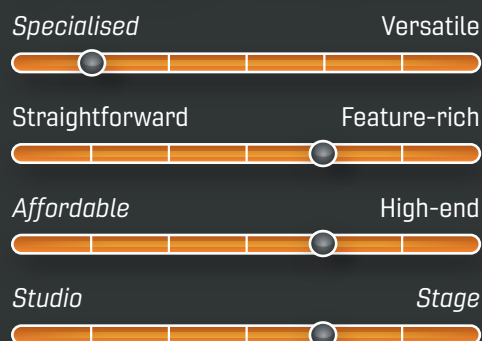
nd of the T-style guitar, which redefined the country
ssness for this type of guitar, which simply never
T-style six-string: the Maybach Teleman T54.



Xvive T9/U4T9 IEM system

MSRP: (UK) £349 | (US) \$399

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Hearing yourself
- » Hearing your bandmates
- » Hearing into old age

For more information, please visit:

www.jhs.co.uk/collections/all/brand_xvive



wireless system of some kind. I've been a fan of XVive's U4 system for some time now, thanks to its simplicity, ruggedness, and reliability. This system is now available as a bundle that includes their new T9 earbuds.

When worn, these universal-fit earbuds look very much like a custom moulded set, with clear plastic housings showing the inner workings and a long "nozzle" that places the replaceable tip deep within the ear canal - noticeably longer than the ones found on universal-fit designs from

the big brands. This not only improves isolation, meaning you don't have to crank the volume as loud to hear yourself, but it also reduces the likelihood that the buds will slip out of your ear mid-performance. This is an inconvenience for a guitar player, but if it happens to a drummer who's listening to a click track, it can derail an entire performance. It's also something that Matt (the drummer in the aforementioned heavy metal band) wrestles with, and he was understandably overjoyed at how securely the T9 buds stayed in his ears.





Sonically, the T9 earbuds are leagues ahead of the most common universal-fit IEMs (which are, quite frankly, dreadful). They employ a dual driver design with a massive (for an IEM) woofer that produces rich and extended bass frequencies that “feel” powerful, and the micro-tweeter handles the high-end extension for crisp vocals, airy cymbals and clear articulation on guitars - particularly with ambient effects like reverb and delay, which are noticeably easier to pick out in a mix when compared to the “industry standard” buds.

The U4 system is very compact and elegant, with a “bug” style transmitter that connects directly to your mixer and a small bodypack receiver. Both are extremely rugged and have controls for volume channel selection, and that’s it - and frankly, that’s all you need! Both are rechargeable via USB, meaning there’s no need to keep buying batteries, and XVive has even included a handy USB splitter cable, meaning you can charge both units from a single port. ▶



Both the T9 and U4 come with very robust hard cases that will protect them in transit, and there's plenty of room in the U4 case to store a set of T9 IEMs if you'd like to condense your setup further. In fact, it's potentially the most compact complete IEM system I've ever come across - short of just carrying everything loose (NB: do not do this - you'll break them, and you'll be sad).

IEMs are a must for any modern musician, and the XVive U4T9 bundle is the perfect package for getting into the world of IEMs without breaking the bank or having to deal with complex setup and configuration. The T9 buds sound fantastic, and the whole system just works - and who could ask for more than that?



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Aurally Sound's Song Master Pro

Billed as software that gives you the tools to learn your favourite songs directly from the real thing, Aurally Sound's Song Master Pro uses advanced machine learning and deep learning algorithms to identify song structure, bars, beats, time signature, key, and tuning. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

WE all know how important practice is. Whether you're the kind of obsessive character that spends hours on end in the woodshed, or you have a similar attitude to practice as you do vegetables (you know you don't get enough, but you're not about to break the habit of a lifetime), we can all recognise that there's one route to getting ahead with your playing, and it's practice.



recording and to practice them efficiently — Aurally Sound's Song Master Pro can determine a song's high-level sections, chords,

It can be a little laborious, though, and this is where apps like Song Master Pro come in. It's an all-in-one suite of carefully thought-out practice tools designed to make your practice sessions more streamlined, more efficient and ultimately more enjoyable.

You begin by importing a song, either by dragging and dropping or with the side menu. The AI almost instantly detects not only the song's key and tempo but also marks out the various sections of the song as colour-coded regions and even detects the chord changes and displays them under the sections. The detection is very accurate and makes learning the outline of a track an absolute breeze - if you know your stuff, you can have a song learned in less time than it takes to listen to it all the way through!

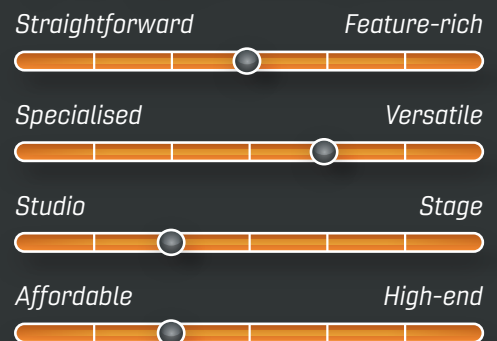
That's just the beginning, though. The next set of tools pertains to pitch and tempo. You can easily adjust the speed of your imported song with the speed slider, which does a very impressive job of preserving not only pitch but also tone and quality, all the way down to 10% speed, which is frankly nuts. You can also adjust the pitch in both full semitones ▶



Aurally Sound's Song Master Pro

MSRP: (UK) £85 | (US) \$99

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Making practice easy
- » Learning songs

For more information, please visit:

aurallysound.com



It's a very well thought out and easy to use, and offers some really powerful practice and performing tools.

but also in cents - very useful for learning those classic AC/DC (or Stones, or Beatles, or whoever) tracks that are in something like “A five-eighths flat”, or even Pantera tunes from their “we tune down a quarter tone” era.

The next tool available to you is the ability to separate a complete mix out into stems, which you can solo, mute or remix. This is accomplished with AI, and is shockingly good for such a simple process. I you want to solo the

guitars so you can hear those fine details without the drums, bass and vocals getting in the way, you can do that. You can then mute those guitars and play along with the original rhythm section and lead vocal. Once you're done, and you've decided on a key that works for your preferred tuning (or your vocal range, if you're singing), you can export the resulting remixed track as an audio file for practicing to or even playing live to if you're doing clinics or solo shows.





That said, you're probably better off just keeping the file in Song Master Pro and using that to play back your audio. It's easily stable and lightweight enough for live use, but it also allows you to trigger external devices via MIDI and OSC commands, meaning you can automate patch changes on your effects, trigger your light show or even switch cameras in a streaming setup, all hands-free and automatically at just the right point in your song. You can also stack

up several of these tracks in a playlist, which you can use as a setlist for your show.

Song Master Pro promises a lot, and delivers much more. It's a very well thought out and easy to use, and offers some really powerful practice and performing tools. It's definitely something I can see myself using in the future, and if you're curious you can check out a free demo version today.



THE **QUIETROOM**

*At **Guitar Interactive**, we pride ourselves on bringing you in-depth reviews and demonstrations for only the best products the world of guitar and audio electronics has to offer.*

If it's in Gi, then it's gear we'd buy! All of our written reviews and breakdowns are accompanied by a detailed video — so you can see and hear for yourself if it's right for you.

**WHEN ONLY
ACOUSTIC WILL DO**



SPONSORED BY



FISHMAN AFX Mini Pedals

Infused with over four decades of acoustic-centric design experience—Fishman's new AFX simply plug in and create new textures without losing the core sound of their instrument. EL electric tone, and when used on acoustic instruments, tend to muddy-up your sound. AFX M amplified acoustic guitar, so players don't get unexpected results when playing at higher vo impressive new range.

WHEN it comes to pedals, it's no stretch to say that acoustic guitarists are somewhat under ing floor preamps and a number of cheesy multi-effects units out there, but to my the latter feels like an afterthought.

Enter Fishman with their new line of AFX pedals. These four pedals are compact, affordable, and, most tar. They're simple to use but have a number of clever hidden features to make gigging with your acous

**AFX Broken Record
Mini Looper-Sampler**

**AFX Pocket
Mini ABY P**

**AFX AcoustiVerb
Mini Reverb Pedal**



Mini acoustic effect pedals allow players to electric guitar effects are designed to alter your tones. **Nick Jennison** takes a closer look at this

er-served. Sure, there are expensive all-singing-all-dancing mind, the former always feels a bit over the top, and

t importantly, designed specifically for the acoustic guitar much more pleasant. ▶

**Blender
Plus DI**



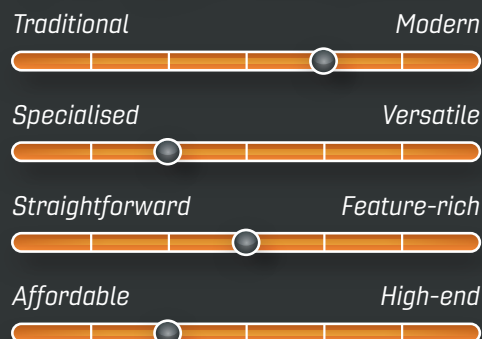
**AFX Pro EQ Mini
Acoustic Preamp & EQ**



FISHMAN AFX Mini Pedals

MSRP: (UK) £99 - £139 (US) \$89 - \$119

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Great plugged-in acoustic tones;
- » Ease of use;
- » Clever routing options.

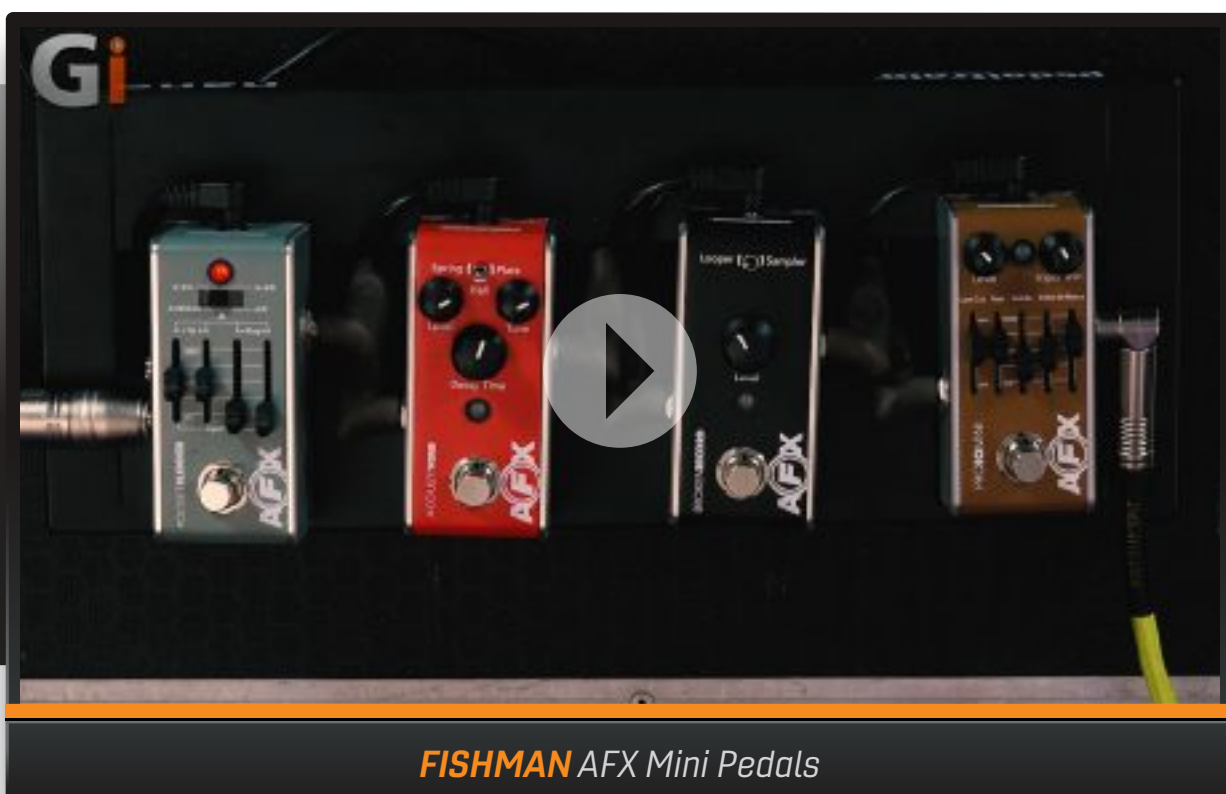
For more information, please visit:

www.fishman.com/afx/



AFX Pro E
Acoustic Pre

The Pro EQ Mini is a compact graphic EQ pedal with five sliders for low cut, bass, middle, treble and brilliance. The low cut progressively rolls out boomy lows, while the bass control is perfectly voiced for adding some much-needed resonance to weedy piezo pickups. Likewise, the mid and treble controls act on the “honk” and “bite” parts of the frequency spectrum, allowing you to take out some midrange clog and dial in the perfect amount of cut. Brilliance you might think of as a “string age” control - turn it up for some zing and air, back it down for some old string warmth (or even pseudo-nylon tones). It also sports input and output volumes, which may seem a little re-



Q Mini amp & EQ



dundant at first, but given this is an all-analog unit, it's possible to overdrive the internal preamp. This can actually be quite pleasant and round off some transient attacks, but if you want the cleanest of clean sounds, it's easy to achieve.

The Broken Record is a one-knob loop pedal and sampler. The humble looper has become a “must-have” for every gigging acoustic guitarist, and this one does everything you'd hope it did without requiring a manual the size of a phone book to figure out. You can start, stop, overdub and undo all with the click of a single switch, and it can also be used to play back a sample which you can load via USB, which is as simple as dragging and dropping. ▶

AFX Broken Record Mini Looper-Sampler



AFX AcoustiVerb Mini Reverb Pedal

The AcoustiVerb is a reverb pedal with three modes (spring, plate and hall) and three controls (time, level and tone). Super straightforward, and very easy to use, but oh man, does it sound good. The hall mode, in particular, adds a gorgeous depth for solo playing, while the plate and spring settings are great for adding a touch of characterful ambience.



AFX Pocket Blender Mini ABY Plus DI

The Pocket Blender is an interesting addition, taking two input signals via a TRS jack and allowing you to switch between two different “blends” of these sources - the result of which can be output either as individual A and B sources over another TRS output for your FOH engineer to process separately or as a single mono DI source.

Speaking of TRS cables, this is where we get to talk about the clever routing possibilities afforded by the AFX range. Because all of these pedals are TRS in and out, you can run two sources in (say, a mic and a piezo, or a tap pickup and a soundhole pickup) and “assign” each pedal in the chain to either the “tip” or “ring” signals using switches on the back. For example, you could have two Pro EQ Minis (one for your piezo, one for your tap pickup), an AcoustiVerb that just affects the piezo, and then go into the Pocket Blender to set up two different “mixes” of the two - all summed and outputted into a Broken Record for looping. The Pro EQ Mini and AcoustiVerb footswitches can also be assigned

to work either as bypass (true bypass or buffered bypass, selectable on the rear) or as a mute switch, meaning your second Pro EQ Mini can also work as a mute for your tap pickup.

The Fishman AFX range is exceptionally well thought out and allows you to use them in as simple or as complex a manner as you'd like. Whether you just want some simple tone shaping for your piezo pickup or you're a multi-source wizard looking for clever signal routing in an elegant and compact form, these pedals have you covered. They sound great, too!

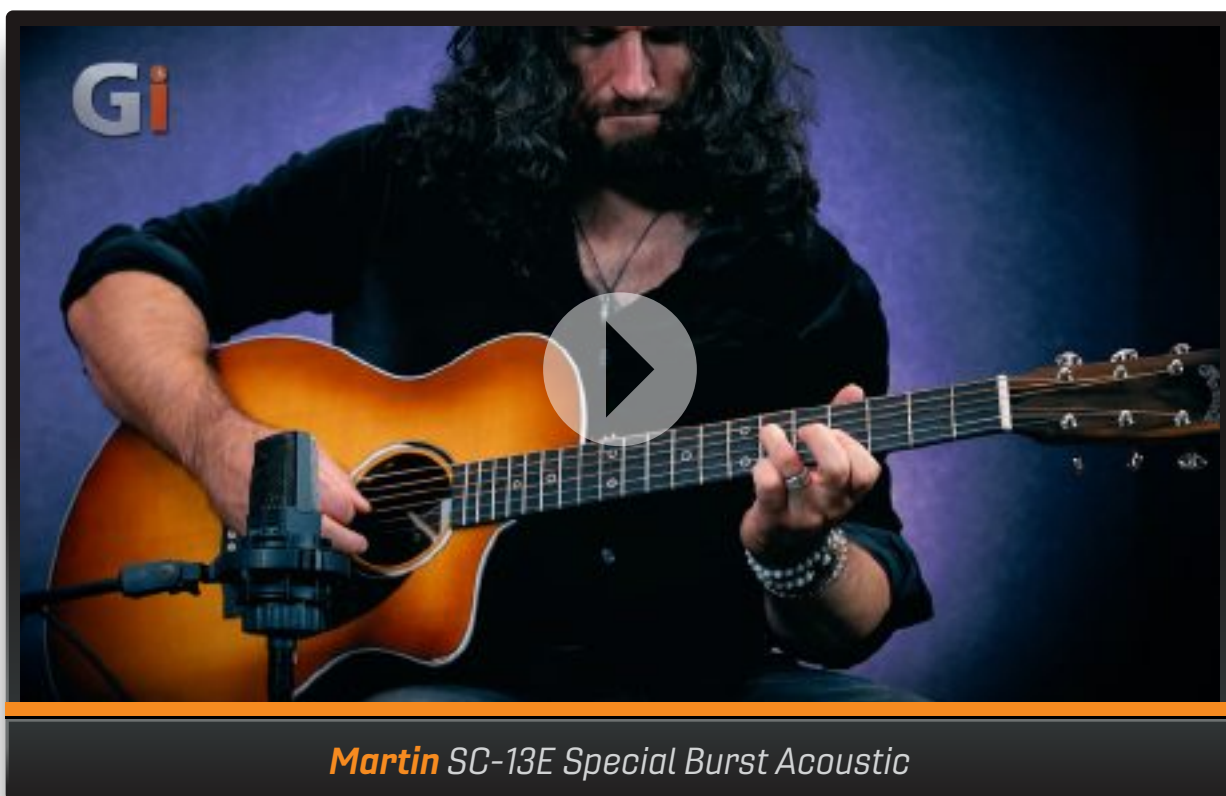


Martin SC-13E Special Burst Acoustic

Do you want to play leads all the way up the neck on an acoustic guitar? Well, your prayers for the SC-13E—with its patented Sure Align neck system—gives you full access to all frets so you can play like an electric. Equipped with a new, low-profile velocity neck barrel that ergonomically accommodates your hand for the comfort and playability of an electric. **Nick Jennison** takes a closer look at the Martin SC-13E Special Burst Acoustic with its zircote fine veneer gloss finished back and sides.

WHEN the Martin SC-13E dropped at NAMM 2020, I was lucky enough to be in the room for the “big reveal”. In fact, I think I was the first person to play one post-launch (I was so excited I literally ran and grabbed one). My first thoughts were, “Oh wow, Martin has made a guitar for me!”...

Let me explain. I love the “Martin sound”. We refer to it here at GI towers as “the sound of the records” (© Jonathan Graham). I think it’s reasonable to say that most Martins don’t exactly play like butter though. They make you work. Don’t get me wrong, it’s always *worth* 🎸



have been answered with the SC-13E. Martin Guitars' can comfortably reach those high notes. It's also ur hand as you move up the neck, giving you the com-ecial Burst acoustic, featuring a spruce gloss top and



Martin SC-13E Special Burst Acoustic

MSRP: (UK) £2099 / (US) \$1999

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

- » Effortless playability
- » Exceptional plugged-in performance
- » Still sounding like a Martin

For more information, please visit:

martinguitar.com



Speaking of the piezo, the pickup system on the SC-13E is the excellent LR Baggs Element system.

the work, but being a pretentious shredder I always find myself gravitating to acoustics that are easier to play, even at the expense of the sound.

Well, the SC-13E is the answer to this conundrum. It sounds like a Martin, but it plays like an electric. If you've played enough acoustics, you'll know how impressive this particular magic trick is. The SC-13E Special is basically the same recipe, but with some extra fanciness in the form of ziricote back and sides, without a significant increase in price.

Spec-wise, the SC-13E has an offset body style that uses some special bracing wizardry (technical term) under the solid spruce top to make it not only resonant and powerful beyond its small size, but also extraordinarily feedback resistant, meaning that when you play live you

can crank it louder, compress harder and even use a healthy amount of distortion if that's your bag. The 25.4" scale "sure align" neck is a slim asymmetrical design with a 13th fret join, although the high frets are still easily accessible thanks to the generous cutaway - and unlike many cutaway acoustics, the higher register sounds just as good as the lower octave.

Rather than a glued-in join, the neck attaches via a unique bolt-on mechanism. Far from a cost-cutting measure, this is actually a very clever piece of design that allows for much greater setup tweakability without having to adjust the guitar's saddle (which comes with a whole host of problems, not least of which is how the saddle affects the response of the piezo pickup). ➤

BEST OF THE YEAR 2023

BEST OF THE YEAR 2023

BEST OF THE YEAR 2023

BEST OF THE YEAR 2023

BEST OF THE YEAR 2023



The SC-13E Special is, in my opinion, a perfect example of a “player’s acoustic”.

This is how Martin are able to get the action so bonkers low, and still have the SC-13E sound great, even when you dig in with a heavy pick.

Speaking of the piezo, the pickup system on the SC-13E is the excellent LR Baggs Element system. It’s a very natural sounding pickup, but also exceptionally feedback resistant. If you play live with an amp, this will allow you to get the guitar’s top “going” way before the onset of feedback, and it also takes effects exceptionally well.

The SC-13E Special is, in my opinion, a perfect example of a “player’s acoustic”. It works with you rather than against you, which means no musical idea is off-limits because of the guitar. But it also sounds like a Martin, which is a huge deal on a guitar this playable.



THE ULTIMATE PRACTICE ACOUSTIC AMP

FISHMAN

MICRO

Loudbox Micro packs 40 Watts of clean acoustic power into a lunchbox-sized acoustic combo at just over 9 lbs.

Featuring two channels with Master Volume, Digital Reverb & Chorus, balanced XLR DI output, Aux input, and a headphone jack for quiet practice.



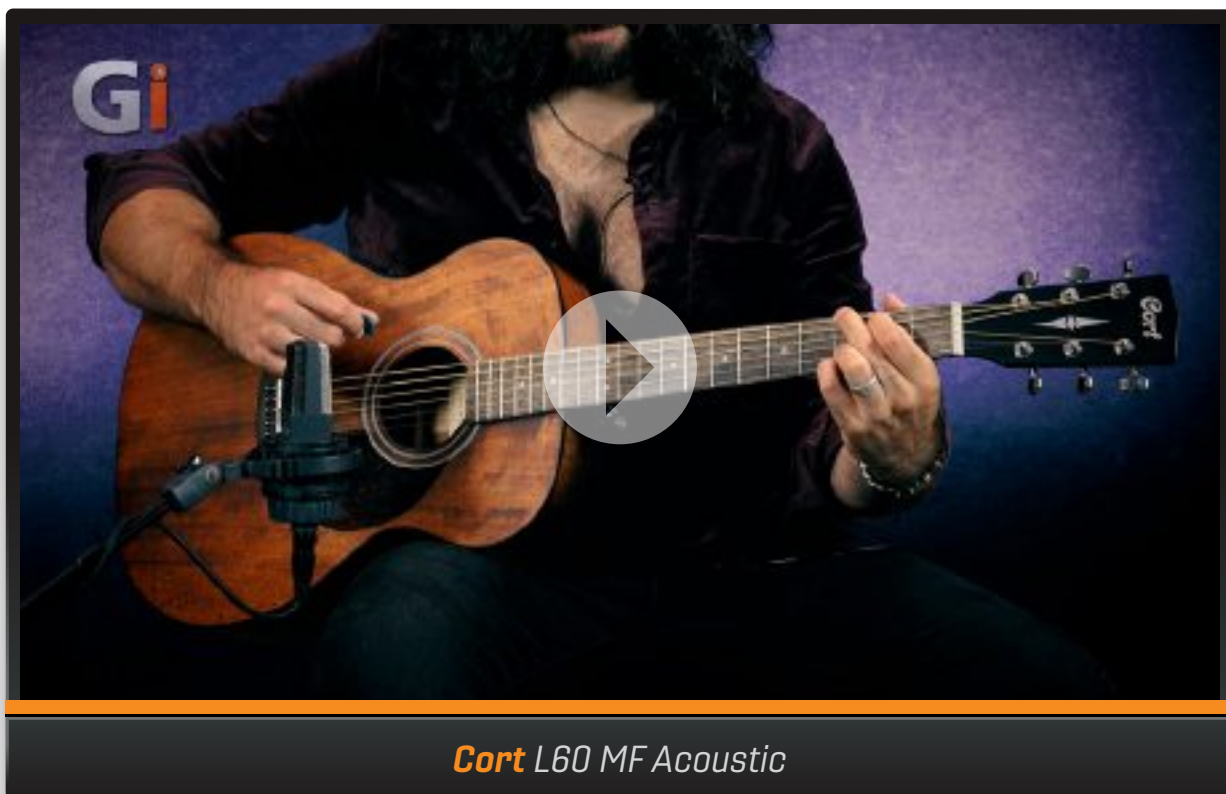
LOUDBOX  **MICRO**

fishman.com/micro

Cort L60 MF Acoustic

Nick Jennison reviews the Cort L60 MF Acoustic—Cort's homage to great vintage acoustic those fine instruments with uncompromising quality and excellent value. The dark, open-pore nates naturally—providing balanced dynamics, with ample bottom-end response that does

EAST Asian guitar manufacturers par-excellence Cort have been making some exceptionally impressive acoustic guitars lately. Sam Bell was very impressed with the Gold series guitar he looked at recently, and I couldn't resist taking the Flow OC I reviewed home with me. While they're by no means cheap, these higher-end guitars easily compete with instruments twice their price, and hint at the kind of work Cort can do when the constraints of cost are removed. ▶



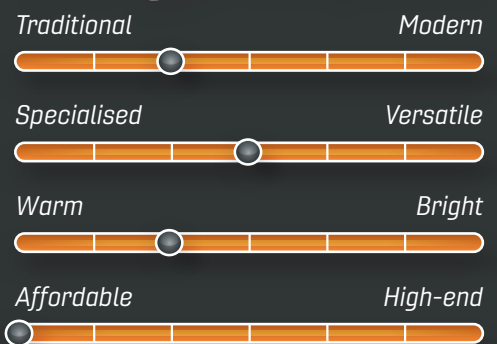
e guitars with the look, sound, feel and playability of
re finish of the L60 MF ensures the wood choice reso-
n't inhibit the top-end.



Cort L60 MF Acoustic

MSRP: (UK) £259 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Easy playability
- » Warm tones
- » Value for money

For more information, please visit:

cortguitars.com





The Cort L60M It looks attractive a tone that w

Of course, not everyone is looking for a guitar close to a grand for a guitar. The quality more than makes up for the asking price, it's still a very good value outlay. Fortunately, Cort has a range of great quality guitars in the sub-£200 mark, and the L60M is just such an instrument. It's a large, extra-sized all-mahogany guitar with an open pore finish that looks like it's been set apart from the "Standard Dreadnoughts" that dominate the lower end of the market, but with a sound that's outlandish in a way that appeals to traditionalists.

Like its pricier siblings, the L60M sports a very playable, slightly slanted great action straight from the factory. It might not have the asymmetrical, highly ergonomic neck profile of the more expensive models, but it's still a very comfortable instrument to experience right up to the 12th fret. This is refreshing to see, as many acoustic guitars can often play better in the open position, but develop a sharp fret that's positively finger-breaking as soon as the 5th fret. It's the overall playability of the higher frets that has made it to the L60M.

M is an entry-level guitar with a lot to offer. Active in an unfussy way, plays great and has will deliver in most musical settings.

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Sonically, the L60M is balanced, softly spoken and on the warm side. Mahogany body guitars are always more mid-forward than spruce-topped models, and that's definitely true of the L60. It doesn't have the bel- lowing punch of a dreadnought, nor the extended highs of a jumbo, but it does have a sweet, warm voice that compliments fingerstyle and flatpicking very well, and will still perform well as a strumming guitar if you pair it with a lighter gauge pick.

The Cort L60M is an entry-level guitar with a lot to offer. It looks attractive in an unfussy way, plays great and has a tone that will deliver in most musical settings. Considering the asking price, the quality is quite exceptional. If you want to get in on Cort's growing range of fantastic acoustics without breaking the bank, the L60M is a great choice.



Takamine FT341

Manufactured in very limited numbers capped at only 300 units worldwide — Takamine is p features a solid spruce top with maple sides and back and is featured in Takamine's exquisite ments that are much like the iconic EF341SC. For ease of amplification, Takamine's retro-ins reviews.

TO my mind, no acoustic guitar manufacturer is more synonymous with live performance than Takamine. Prior to the launch of Takamine's legendary Palathetic pickup in the late 1970s, amplifying acoustic guitars was a chore. Go and watch some footage from Woodstock, for example - there is no shortage of acoustic guitars, and no shortage of howling feedback either. That's if you can actually hear the guitar at all!

In 2023, we're a bit spoiled on this front - even the most basic of entry level acoustics seems to come with a perfectly serviceable pickup system - but there's still something magical about the OG "Tak" sound. It's evocative of Springsteen, Bon Jovi, and the Eagles: an era when ▶



leased to introduce the FT341 black dreadnought. It has a black gloss finish and white binding, with appointed CTF-2N preamp is installed. **Nick Jennison**



Takamine FT341

MSRP: (UK) £1495 / (US) \$1799

The Breakdown

Traditional Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

- » Classic 80s & 90s live tones
- » Comfortable playability
- » Untouchable Japanese craftsmanship

For more information, please visit:

Takamine.co.uk/FT341





It's also one of the most playable Takamine guitars right out of the box.

stadium rock dominated the airwaves, and one perfectly encapsulated by the Takamine FT341.

Dressed head to toe in the iconic Takamine gloss black, the FT341 is a large-bodied dreadnought with the classic Tak silhouette of square shoulders, broad waist and expansive lower bout. It's a body style that's synonymous with thunderous lows and massive projection, and while the FT341 is no exception, it marries this explosive power with a clear and cutting high-end presence. This is no doubt due to the unusual combination of a solid spruce top with bright-sounding maple back and sides in place of the usual mahogany or rosewood. It's a fantastic sounding combination with a "produced"-sounding sheen in the highs that sits beautifully in a rock or modern country mix, and sounds clean and articulate when played solo.

It's also one of the most playable Takamine guitars I've laid my hands on, with a very comfortable action right out of the box. As someone who's messed up more than a few saddles trying to get the action right on an acoustic, I'm very grateful. It also speaks to Takamine's confidence in their craftsmanship, since higher actions tend to "travel better".

Takamine guitars I've laid my hands on, with a very comfortable action

Plugged in tones come from the “retro-inspired” CTF-2N preamp. It’s a FET preamp that’s evocative of the classic “Brownie” preamp favoured by Ry Cooder, James Taylor, Glen Frey and so many others. It’s not exactly a “natural” sound in comparison to more modern designs, but it has a classic voice that’s totally unmistakable. The CTF-2N retains the character of the originals, but adds a few important modern features like a chromatic tuner, a notch filter with -6db and -12db settings for defeating feedback and a more easily accessible battery compartment (although this was pretty stiff to get open for the first time!).

Strictly limited to 300 units world-wide, the Takamine FT341 is not only a fantastic-looking and sounding guitar, but it’s also an instrument that evokes one of the most beloved eras in guitar music.



It has the look - and the sound - of so many of those legendary performances we grew up watching. If that’s something that excites you as much as it excites me, you need to check one of these guitars out. You’ll need to move fast, though, because when they’re gone, they’re gone!



Taylor AD12e-SB

Nick Jennison reviews the Taylor AD12e-SB—as it continues the US brand’s American Dream line of solid-wood acoustic guitars that match great tone with an accessible price. This compact G has a spruce top and V-Class interior bracing—culminating in a warm, woody sound with bold v that will grow richer over time as the wood matures.

IF you’re a regular GI reader, you’ll know all about my love of Taylor’s American Dream line of guitars. The most affordable USA-made Taylors, they’re the perfect example of an “entry-level premium” guitar done right. No sacrifices have been made when it comes to tone, construction or playability, with the savings being made through the exclusion of “vanity” appointments like fancy binding and inlays, figured woods and exotic materials. In short, you get a legit V-Class USA Taylor for less money because it doesn’t look as fancy. ▶



m Series tradition of high-performance, US-made, all-brand Concert fits the bill with walnut back and sides, volume, blooming sustain and a low-end response that



Taylor AD12e-SB

MSRP: (UK) £1799 / (US) \$1999

The Breakdown

Traditional Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

- » Superb looks and playability.
- » Delicate, articulate tones
- » Simple, but brilliant

For more information, please visit:

taylorguitars.com



The Taylor AD12e-SB is a fine addition to the A with a more delicate approach...."



American Dream line, and a perfect option for players

One of the newest additions to the American Dream line is the AD12e-SB. It's a petite Grand Concert (read: parlour) guitar with a shorter 24-7/8ths" scale length, finished in a very tactile open-pore satin sunburst. It sits very comfortably on the lap, it plays a little looser than its bigger siblings, and its softly spoken, smoky voice adds to the overall feeling of intimacy and comfort.

Starting with the construction, this is very much a USA Taylor. It sports all-solid construction with a Sitka spruce top and walnut back and sides - a very dense wood with a similar high-end brightness to maple, but with a deep and earthy low end that emerges with age. It sports Taylor's hugely acclaimed V-Class bracing, which allows for the best elements of both stiff and soft bracing styles - plenty of sustain from the stiffly braced centre, with projection coming from the more loosely braced edges.

Under the hand, the AD12e-SB is very comfy with an easy, loose playing feel. It has the kind of slim neck profile you'd expect from Taylor, with an action that's low enough for intricate fingerings while

still having enough clearance for heavy-handed strumming - although bashing away on big open chords isn't really where this guitar shines.

Sonically, this guitar is bright, detailed and gentle - it doesn't boom like a dreadnought or bellow like a jumbo, but rather has a complex, articulate and sparkling tone that lend itself to finger-style, intricate flatpicking and even single note passages. You can certainly use it as a tool for accompanying a singer (especially plugged in, thanks to Taylor's excellent Expression 2 pickup system), but it's most at home during quieter moments.

The Taylor AD12e-SB is a fine addition to the American Dream line, and a perfect option for players with a more delicate approach. If you're after bold, authoritative strumming, then you may be better off with the AD17e (my favourite Taylor guitar), but for finger-style, chord melody playing and other more thoughtful styles, the AD12e-SB is an excellent choice.



LAVA ME4 Carbon Acoustic

LAVA has revolutionised 'Smart Guitars' with its range — allowing musicians to play at home with board effects and recording facilities, without the need for additional hardware or weighty pedals. Its latest release, the ME4 Carbon.

GUITAR players are famously slow to embrace change. With the most popular electric designs dating back to the previous century, and acoustics the century before that, folks often decry the lack of innovation in the guitar space. Well, if there's any manufacturer that we can't level that criticism at, it's Lava.

The fourth in their line of carbon-bodied, touch-screen-equipped acoustics, the ME4 is about as far away from a traditional acoustic guitar that it's possible to get and still be able to call it a guitar. It has a neck with frets (and now, a truss rod - a relatively new addition!), six strings, a bridge and a guitar-shaped body with a hole in it. That's where the similarities end. ▶



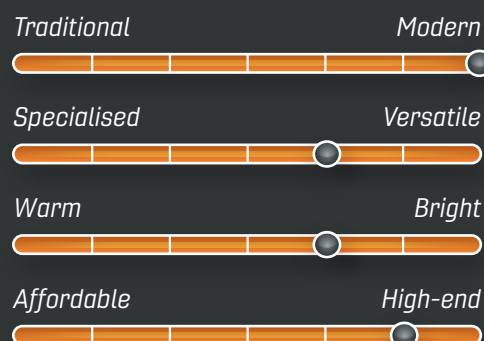
and perform live with an enormous selection of on-pedalboards. **Nick Jennison** takes a look at the brand's



LAVA ME4 Carbon Acoustic

MSRP: (UK) £1149 / (US) \$1099

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Gadgets
- » Gamified practice
- » Going anywhere with your guitar

For more information, please visit:

jhs.co.uk/collections/lava



The Lava Me 4 is a very unique and forward-looking guitar. It offers make you work for your results - you press a button and you get re

The Lava ME4 is made entirely of carbon fibre, making it exceptionally rugged and resistant to temperature changes. It features Plek'd frets (which are excellent) and a 2.3mm factory action, which is advertised as "effortless to press." I'm not sure I'd agree with that since 2.3mm falls firmly into the "medium-high" end of the action range, but the ME4 is certainly not a chore to play, and the smooth, slim neck feels very comfortable.

These are fairly uninteresting features compared to the star of the show, though - the processing. The ME4 features a touch screen and a SHARC audio chip, which provides everything from effects to backing tracks all the way through to Lava's own social media network where you can take part in playing challenges, share your improvisations, like and comment on

other people's playing and much more! The interface will be very familiar to anyone who's used an iPhone recently - perhaps a bit TOO familiar, but it's certainly intuitive to use. That's not to say there aren't a few design issues that need looking at though - backing tracks and drum loops won't play in the background, meaning you can't change effects without stopping your track. You also need to enter a separate menu to adjust the balance between guitar and "media" volume - which also stops the track, so you sort of have to "guess" where the media volume should be set. There are a few other issues too, but these are all UI-related, and the actual functionality is very good. Also, these are only a firmware update away from being fixed - not something you can say about a traditional guitar that won't stay in tune.

The actual sounds are presented in the form of "effects" - presets and patches that are loaded using the touch screen. They all have very cool (if slightly ambiguous and uninformative) names like "Moon Jumper" and "Freddie Prince" and exciting graphics. There are a few fairly standard sounds like Reverb and Chorus, but the majority of these effects are WILD. Auto-wah with pitch-shifting delays. Cavernous reverbs with square wave tremolo and bit crushing. You get the idea. They're clearly designed to spark creativity with the minimum of time spent tone-chasing, but I did find myself wanting some more traditional tones to go along with these more outlandish sounds - but then again, I'm an ageing Millennial with several tube amplifiers too many, so take what I have and say with a pinch of salt.

*s a ton of creative tools, and it doesn't
results *now*.*

One of the best features the ME4 has to offer is the suite of learning and practice tools it offers. As well as the metronome, drum loops and easily accessible backing tracks, the ME4 also provides lessons for all ability levels and practice tracking tools to “gamify” your practice sessions. You can even take part in practice challenges and see how you rank on leaderboards of Lava players worldwide.

The Lava Me 4 is a very unique and forward-looking guitar. It offers a ton of creative tools, and it doesn't make you work for your results - you press a button and you get results *now*. It's intuitive to use, and made of very high-quality materials. It's not cheap, but it is a lot of fun, and a great way to get creative with minimal barriers to entry.



THE BASSMENT

At **Guitar Interactive**, we pride ourselves on bringing you in-depth reviews and demonstrations for only the best products the world of guitar and audio electronics has to offer.

If it's in Gi, then it's gear we'd buy! All of our written reviews and breakdowns are accompanied by a detailed video — so you can see and hear for yourself if it's right for you.

Sponsored by Rotosound



THE PLACE FOR BASS



SPONSORED BY



Tech 21 YYZ Geddy Lee Shape Shifter

Creating a hard-hitting bass tone is a breeze with the Tech 21 YYZ Geddy Lee Shape Shifter S... Lee's tone — and his gargantuan rack rig — into a compact preamplifier/DI pedal. And best... ficing an ounce of tone. To top it off, you can even pipe this massive tone straight into a PA. M

LET'S get something out of the way before we get over in our heads here. I am not a bassist — certainly not a bassist of Geddy Lee's epic stature (although we do look a little alike when viewed in profile; that's where the similarity ends). So why, oh why, I hear you ask, am I reviewing a Geddy Lee signature SansAmp pedal? Well, I *am* a producer, and it's my job to get great-sounding bass tones that work well in a mix. And one of the tools I'll reach for nine times out of ten to achieve this is a SansAmp. So, the YYZ Geddy Lee Shape Shifter is right up my alley...And probably yours too. Let me explain.

Rush fans and tech-savvy bassists alike may already be familiar with the GED-2112 — a 19" rack unit boasting massive scope for tonal shaping ranging from deep, dubby cleans to snarling distortion that would make a JCM800 blush. The new YYZ Shape Shifter bundles all of this tonal power into the same petite pedal format of the YYZ pedal but with the addition of a new "Shape Shifter" mode to make the distortion even more aggressive.

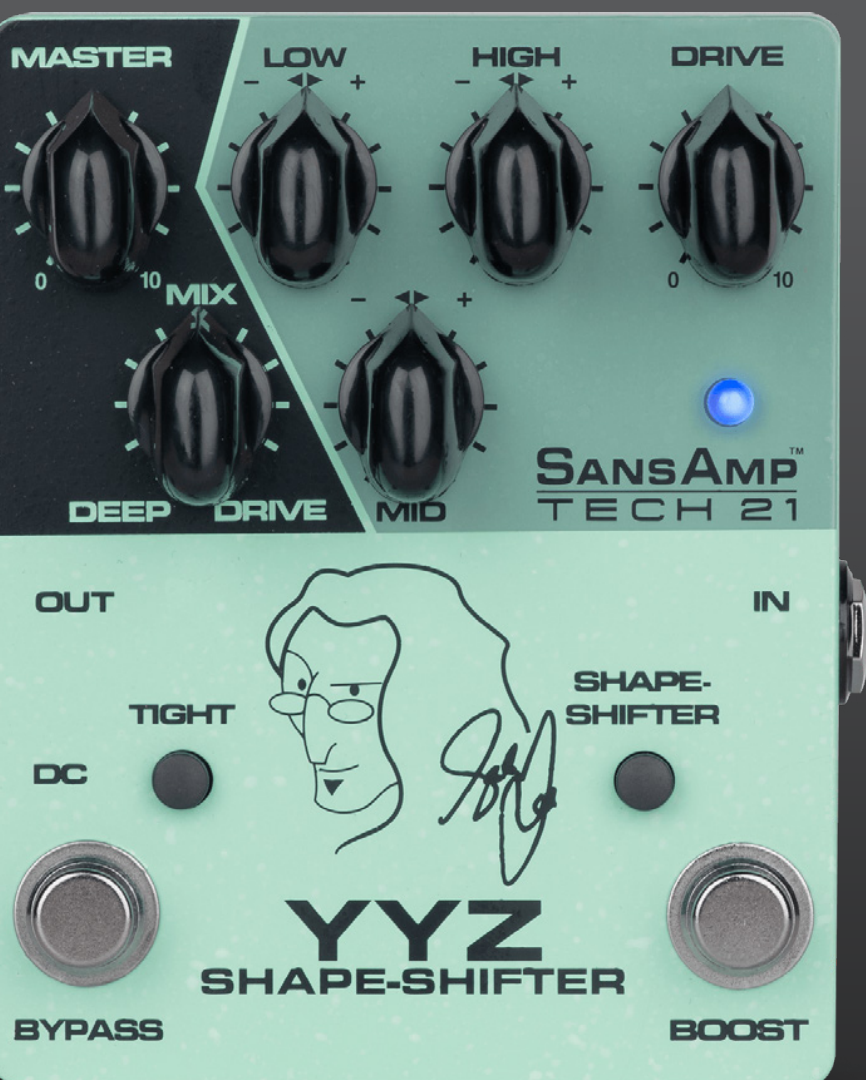
In essence, this pedal has two parallel signal paths - one fat and clean labelled "Deep", the other aggressive and distorted labelled "Drive". You have a blend control to set the balance

between the two, meaning it's easy to dial in just a hint of growl to make a clean tone cut through a mix, evoke a classic SVT-esque bark, or conjure a wall of distortion underpinned by a thick and clean low end.

While the "Deep" side is essentially a nice clean DI signal with no controls to speak of, the "Drive" side has a ton of options. The Drive control has a massive range of gain on tap, with even more courtesy of the foot-switchable 12db boost and a further 6db from the Shape Shifter switch. You can easily dial in everything from B15 to B7K here, and the three-band active EQ gives you massive sculpting options without ▶



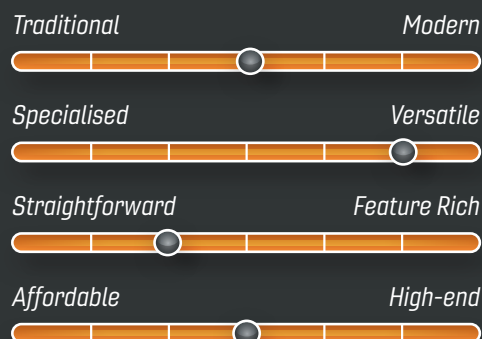
SansAmp. The YYZ packs the essence of Geddy Lee of all, this fly-by-night setup does it without sacri-
lick Jennison Tells us more.



Tech 21 YYZ Geddy Lee Shape Shifter

MSRP: (UK) £265 | (US) \$249

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Massive, aggressive distortion
- » Clean, powerful lows
- » Ease of use

For more information, please visit:

tech21nyc.com



SPONSORED BY



impacting the dry tone. The “tight” switch pulls a lot of sub out of the distorted tone, leaving plenty of room for the clean “Deep” side to carry the lows for a modern, bi-amped metal tone.

The Geddy Lee YYZ Shape Shifter is an absolute Swiss army knife of rock bass tones in a compact package. The boost footswitch can take you from vintage

to vicious in one tap, while the clean blend keeps your lows defined and present. It’s compact, runs on either a 9v battery or a standard centre-negative PSU and because it’s all analogue, there’s zero latency. It sounds killer both DI and into an amp. And, of course, it’s good enough for Geddy, so it’s definitely good enough for me!



Guitar Interactive
GEAR REVIEW

TECH 21
YYZ GEDDY LEE
SHAPE SHIFTER

Tech 21 YYZ Geddy Lee Shape Shifter



The Geddy Lee YYZ Shape Shifter is an absolute Swiss army knife of rock bass tones in a compact package.



SPONSORED BY



Aria FEB-F2M STBK

The Aria FEB-F2M offers superb performance and playability for an instrument of its price range. Incredibly versatile, the FEB-F2M has an intuitive four-band EQ, which allows for full customization of your sound, allowing it to be adjusted to your needs. A flame nato construction gives a beautiful natural sound — fully accentuating the acoustic aspects of the tone. **Nick Jennison** tells us

ACOUSTIC bass guitars are unusual beasts. Unlike regular 6-string acoustic guitars, the low-end projection on an acoustic bass is “make-or-break”, and considering the “gold standard” for low bass notes in stringed acoustic instruments is the upright bass, achieving this sort of sonic girth in an instrument small enough to be played on someone’s lap is no mean feat. ▶



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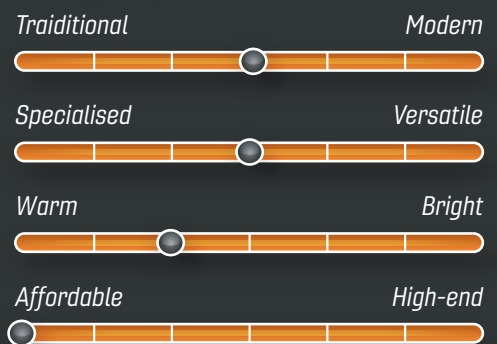
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Aria FEB-F2M STBK

MSRP: (UK) £325 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

Easy playability

Low-end projection

Not having to play upright

For more information, please visit:

ariauk.com



SPONSORED BY



The FEB-F2M is a great example of what affordable acoustic basses can do

This relegated affordable acoustic basses of old to something of a novelty - unpleasant-sounding, clacky carbuncles that bassists would be forced to endure (rather than enjoy) on the rare occasion that their bands decided to do an acoustic number. You had to pay a lot of money to get a good one, and unsurprisingly nobody was interested in doing that.

I'll be honest, I was expecting to add the Aria FEB-F2M to the "this is bad, don't include it" pile of products that we get in for review but don't make the cut. I'm happy to report that my prejudices were proven to be very wrong.

The FEB-F2M is a medium-scale acoustic bass, constructed of flamed nato and finished in a very attractive open-pore black stain. It's an F-hole design (rather than the traditional soundhole style), which allows for more top wood on that crucial space under the strings between the bridge and the neck join. If an acoustic instrument were a speaker cabinet, then the top would be the speaker and the back & sides would be the cabinet itself, and instruments

like this one live and die by how well the top vibrates. Too loose and you have no sustain. Too tight and the low end won't project. I'm happy to report that, despite this being an affordable instrument made of more affordable tonewoods, Aria has got it just right. The FEB-F2M has plenty of lows to be thoroughly satisfying to play, while still providing ample sustain.

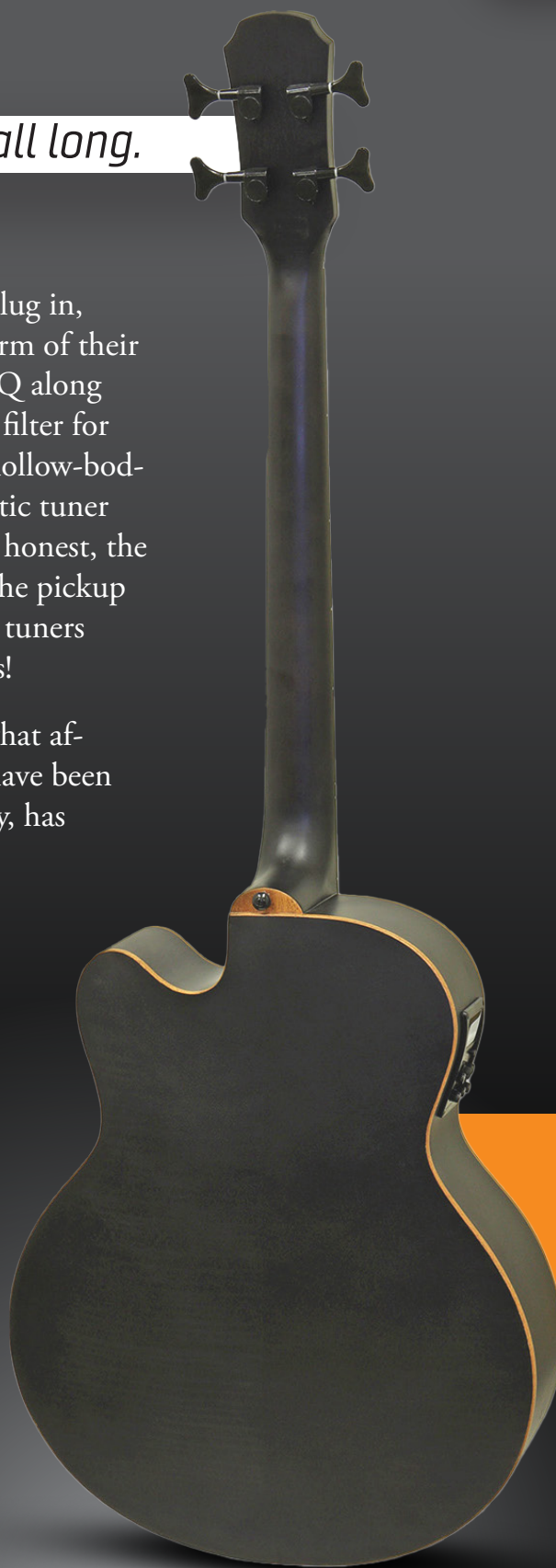
The shorter scale and medium-low action all make for a very comfortable playing experience, whether you're chugging away on root notes or playing more involved chord passages or solo lines. On an instrument like this, you're never going to be able to achieve the sort of "breathe on the string to fret it" action found on some modernist electric basses, because the physicality required to make an acoustic bass "work" requires a slightly higher setup to allow the string to "breathe". That said, this is far from the brutal, "unplayable above the 5th fret" action found on many affordable acoustic instruments, and you can quite happily noodle away right up into the higher frets with ease.



ass guitars should have been like all long.

Should you find yourself wanting to plug in, Aria has provided electronics in the form of their AEQ-4B preamp. It offers a 4-band EQ along with a phase reverse switch and notch filter for defeating feedback (must-haves on a hollow-bodied instrument this big) and a chromatic tuner that's clear, bright and accurate. To be honest, the tuner alone is worth the inclusion of the pickup system, given how so many headstock tuners struggle with the low E on bass guitars!

The FEB-F2M is a great example of what affordable acoustic bass guitars should have been like all along. It plays very comfortably, has ample projection where it counts, and looks very attractive to boot. If you need a bass for an acoustic number (or set, or tour), or you just fancy a quality instrument to noodle on without having to plug in, this is a great choice.



THE COLUMNS

Inside each and every issue, we have a host of exclusive lessons — with our team of world-class contributors offering their unique insight, knowledge and expertise to help you get the most out of your own playing.

CLASS IS BACK IN SESSION



EXT



PART 4

TENDER

GUITAR

by Sam Bell

Sam Bell here, welcome to the fourth installment of my extended range guitar series. In the last issue we looked at tapping arpeggios using two notes in the left hand, and one note tapped in the right hand. In this lesson we are going to take that technique a little further with an example from my song Gravity.

HI, The riff is based around a descending bass line: F#, F, E, and D#. When I wrote this riff I originally had the main accents of the rhythm however I wanted to spice it up a little. I was very inspired by some early Daft Punk I was listening to. One of the key features in their music is the use of interweaving parts, and the clever use of space for each part to stand out on its own. I wanted to re-create this idea using the descending bass line, and a

melody line that flows over the top descending back down to the bass line on the original accents that I had written. I also wanted to be able to play this on one guitar, and one of the things I love most about the 8-string guitar is the option of being able to have lots of low range with lots of high range within one position on the guitar neck. In this riff I utilise the use of the 8-strings range, and the tapping techniques we looked at last issue in order to create one riff that gives the listener

the illusion of listening to two very different guitar parts.

Before I break down each section of the riff, I will explain some of the theory behind the notes used in the riff. The tapping parts use an F# Blues scale with an added 9 giving us 7 notes: F#, G#, A, B, C, C#, and E. I am visualising most of the left hand portions of the tapping runs using 3 note per string pentatonic with the middle note omitted to create a wider interval spacing. For example, the first tapping run starts with F# (root) hammer-on to B (5th) on the B string with the left hand, so we missed out the A (b3) in this particular segment of the lick. Hopefully all of this becomes clear once we start breaking down the riff section by section, I encourage you to study the tab whilst going through this description and watching the accompanying video.

First section:

We start on the low B string with the left hand playing 7 hammer-on to 12 with a tap on the 14th fret. We then skip over to the A string and play the same frets with the same technique however this time we roll back down the string to the 7th fret before picking the 12th fret on the low F# string. This marks the first accent in our descending bass line riff. I like to hammer-on from nowhere when skipping strings and playing these wide interval licks, so spend time making sure these hammer-on from nowhere notes are clear and watch out for any excess string

noise by keeping the left hand relaxed and the index finger flat across the higher strings.

Second section:

This next section follows directly on from the last section. We are going to use the same tapping idea from the first section however we are going to lengthen the phrase by taking it up an octave. So we play the same tapping phrase on the low B and A string as we did in section one, however once finishing the phrase on the A string 7th fret we slide up with the left hand index finger to the 9th fret and play the same notes an octave higher. However I make a slight variation in this octaves tapping, I slide up and back down between the 16th and 17th fret on the G before descending with the left hand on the same string. We then descend back to the A string with the left hand little finger hammering-on from nowhere on the 14th fret pulling-off to the 9th fret then we have our next descending bass line accent on the 11th fret low F# string. As I mentioned near the start of this installment, please refer to the downloadable tab that is available in this column.

Third section:

The third section of this riff features the longest tapping phrase between the bass line accents. We ascend the second of the two octaves that we ascended in section two

however once we get to the G string we will skip again onto the high E string. With the left hand we hammer-on between the 9th and 14th fret with a tapping hand slide up and down between frets 16 and 17 before rolling back down on the E string, skipping back down onto the G string and further onto the A string before ascending back up to the G string portion with a quick tap slide back and forth between the 16th and 17th frets descending back down on the G string and A string, this time the rhythm feel changes from 16th notes to 16th note triplets. We then come to our next descending bass line accent on the 10th fret F#. We

repeat this accent note again after ascending the same pattern as we did in section one, however an octave higher. Followed by a two octave descending pattern starting on the A string 9 hammer on to 14 with a tap on 16, skipping over to the G 9 hammer onto 14 with a tap slide between 16 and 17 and back down again on the G. We then play this lick an octave lower starting on the 7th fret low B string following the same notes and sequence. This leads us to our last note in the descending bass line D# which is found on the 9th fret low F# ▶



Fourth section:

Following on from the 9th fret F# we have a repeat of our first phrase from section one starting on the 9th fret low B string however this time we re-accent to the 9th fret on the F# string before ascending up our final tapping lick which utilises the same octave patterns from the last part of the third section which starts on the 7th fret low B string hammer onto 12 with a tap on 14, skipping over to the A string with a hammer-on

between the 17th and 12th frets with a tap slide between 14 and 15 followed by a roll back down on the A before sliding up to playing the same phrase an octave higher except this time we completely descend from the tapping on the G string with a hammer-on from nowhere on the A string 14th fret pulling off to the 9th fret A string. This marks the end of this riff, however in my song Gravity this riff is repeated twice before going into another variation.

So there we have it, a Daft Punk inspired 8-string, tapping, metal riff! It is certainly a

lot simpler to play than it is to explain, so I hope with a combination of this description, the tab and the video you will be able to get the riff under your fingers in no time at all. Remember to take each section really slow, there are a lot of stretches in this lick, especially if you are playing a 27 inch scale length Ibanez 8 string, so take it easy, be sure to warm up slowly before attempting any stretches that you initially feel uncomfortable with. If you want to see a full play through of the song this riff came from then please be sure to check out LickLibrary's YouTube channel and look out for 'Sam Bell Gravity Performance'. The song will be featured on

the future Mask of Judas album next year with full vocals and production.

Good luck with the riff, and as always be sure to try and come up with your own variations and ideas using the basic concepts of this riff underlined. I think it's very healthy and important to look into different styles of music for inspiration when coming up with your own music, you never know what you might be missing out on otherwise. I shall see you next issue for more extended range guitar concepts!



Giorgio Serci

CREATIVE FINGERSTYLE

Momentum

HELLO there and welcome to this edition of Creative Fingerstyle.

In this column I would like to share a composition of mine, originally recorded for my CD 'Silver Lining' under the name of 'Momentum' and also later re-arranged with a feature solo from the legendary trumpeter, composer and arranger Kenny Wheeler for the CD 'Scaramouche'.

This composition has been sung and played by many wonderful artists and, as a result, the arrangement has slightly evolved and morphed, incorporating a few stylistic nuances deriving from the performers' interpretations.

Lately, the wonderful singer and author Basia, with whom I have been honored to play guitar for the last 9 years, as well as record and tour worldwide, liked the tune and not only did she decide to sing it, but she also

wrote some lovely lyrics dedicated to my elder son. The song is now called 'Matteo' and has been climbing on the most prestigious charts internationally, including the US Billboard chart, reaching n.4 since May 2018.

The one presented in this column is an arrangement for solo guitar, which I thought would serve the great purpose to demonstrate the creative potentials of using harmonic inversions, to enhance the melodic qualities of a composition.

Any of you who have been following my previous columns would know that I normally use a Yamaha classical guitar for these fingerstyle sessions, which is my favourite guitar for nylon string recordings.

I thought it would be useful to do a few fingerstyle columns on an archtop guitar, to stimulate the GI readers/viewers' appetite in this wonderful area. ▶



This piece was specifically written for this lovely archtop guitar made by Fibonacci, a formidable instrument that makes you want to play non-stop thanks to its tone quality, sustain and general feel.

Let's look at the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic content of 'Matteo'.

Melodic and harmonic ingredients:

The melody mainly gravitates around the key of C minor, however, it travels through a few closely related tonalities with the purpose of adding tension and release.

The harmony features many inversions and slash chords, with the main purpose to add melodic qualities to the bass line. The harmony in the first few bars for example, could be described as follows:

Cm	Ab	D7	G7
C7	F	Fm	Gsus4 G7

However, with the harmonic inversions these morph into the following:

Cm	Ab/C	D/C	G/B
C/Bb	F/A	Fm/Ab	Gsus4 G7

NB. Please note (play & sing the new bass line: it descends chromatically from C to G. Furthermore, I do love the effect of pedaling over a C bass for the first three bars.

Here are all the chords utilized in the piece, described in a concise manner, omitting a few passing notes.

Cm	Ab/C	D/C	G/B
C/Bb	F/A	Fm/Ab	Gsus4 G7
Cm	Ab/C	D/C	G/B
C/Bb F/A	Bb/Ab Eb/G	Ab/Gb G/F	G7 G/F
C7/E	Fm	F#07	G7 G/F

C7/E	Fm	F#07	G7 G7b9
Cm	Ab/C	D/C	G/B
C/Bb F/A	Bb/Ab Eb/G	Ab/Gb G7	Cm
G7b5			

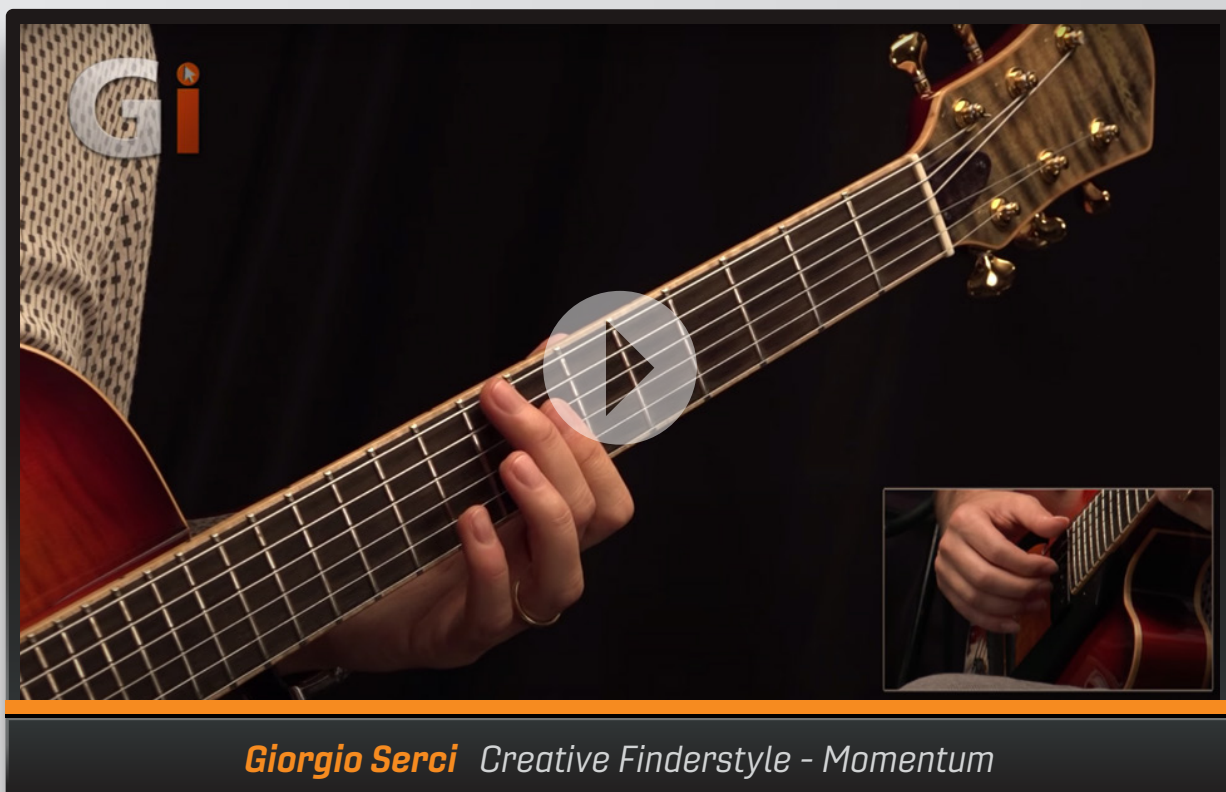
Rhythmic ingredients:

The rhythmic qualities are inspired by the style 'Bossa Nova', therefore the melody is often pushed and syncopated.

As always, I would like to recommend exploring the above-mentioned techniques in order to compose your own pieces. We have to allow ourselves to make mistakes and reflect on the reasons why we like or not a particular sound, a chord progression or modulation. Eventually, these sounds will become part of your musical lexicon and you'll be able to use these with fluidity and effectiveness.

The picking-hand pattern is predominantly as follows:

(Please note E=low E string, e= high E string) ▶



'p' focuses predominantly on the bass lines, while 'i, m, a' play the melody and counter-melody or harmony part. The melody is predominantly played with the 'a' finger, so it is important to use the appropriate velocity for the note to cut through.

Play this part in a relaxed and clear manner, making sure your thumb is a little forward compared to the 'i, m, a' fingers, in order to prevent it from colliding with the 'i' finger. As always, focus on attack and tonal consistency. The melody and the supporting harmonies will be played with the 'a' finger, so more attack is needed to outline the melody.

Next we are going to look at the fretting hand part:

Bar 1: Index n fret 3 of A, ring f on fret 5 of D and little f on fret 5 of G to start a melody, followed by fret 3, 4 of B (with index and middle f), then little f on fret 8 and 9 of B.

Bar 2: Middle f on fret 8 of E, index on fret 6 of D, ring f on fret 8 of G and little f from 9 to fret 8 of B.

Bar 3: Play fret 7 of D, G and B with index and middle f on fret 8 of E.

Bar 4: Same shape used in bar 2, down one fret. Middle f plays F on fret 6 of B.

Bar 5: Same shape used in bar 3, with index on fret 5. Index plays fret 5 of G.

Bar 6: Same shape used in bar 2, down three frets. Middle f plays Eb on fret 4 of B.

Bar 7: Same shape used in bar 3, with index on fret 3 and little f on fret 5 of G.

Bar 8: Index on fret 3 of E, D, B with little f on fret 5 of G, replaced by ring f on fret 4 of G.

Bar 9-12: As bar 1 till 4.

Bar 13: As bar 5 and 6 (harmonic rhythm=double time)

Bar 14: As bar 7 and 8

Bar 15: Index on fret 1 of D, G and B with middle f on fret 2 of E. Next, index on fret 1 of E, open D, G and little f on fret 3 of B, followed by index on fret 1 of B.

Bar 16: Ring f on fret 3 of E, open D, G and B. Index on fret 1 of E, open D, middle f on fret 1 of G, open B.

Bar 17: Open E, middle f on fret 2 of D, ring f on fret 3 of G, index on fret 1 of B. Open e, ring f on fret 3 of 'e'.

Bar 18: Barre' on fret 1 of E, D, G, B and little f on fret 4 of 'e'. Ring f on fret 3 of e and index on fret 1 of e.

Bar 19: Little f on fret 4 of B, middle f on fret 2 of E, index on fret 1 of D and ring on fret 3 of G. Little f on fret 3 of B.

Bar 20: Ring f on fret 3 of E, open D, G and index on fret 1 of B. Index on fret 1 of E, open D, middle f on fret 1 of G, open B. Descending countermelody, with index from fret 1 of G, open G, ring on fret 3 of D and middle f on fret 2 of D.

Bar 21-23: As bar 17-19

Bar 24: As bar 8.

Bar 25-30: As bar 9-14.

Bar 31: Index on fret 1 of D, G and B with middle f on fret 2 of E. Next, open B, G, D and little f on fret 3 of E.

Bar 32: Index on fret 1 of B, open G, D and

little f on fret 3 of A. Countermelody with open D, index on fret 1 of D and open D again.

Bar 33: Middle f on fret 3 of E, ring f on fret 3 of D, little f on fret 4 of G and index on fret 2 of B.

Congratulations, you have completed 'Matteo'.

As always, you will be able to download a transcription by selecting the menu option in this page.

I strongly recommend experimenting with a few picking variations, changing the chords as you wish in terms of voicing (higher or lower), as well as trying the same picking pattern on a different chord progression, or using a 'capo' on fret 2 for a brighter outcome.

When repeating any section twice or more, you may want to play 'sul ponticello', (closer to the bridge) or 'sul tasto' (over the frets) for more contrasting results.

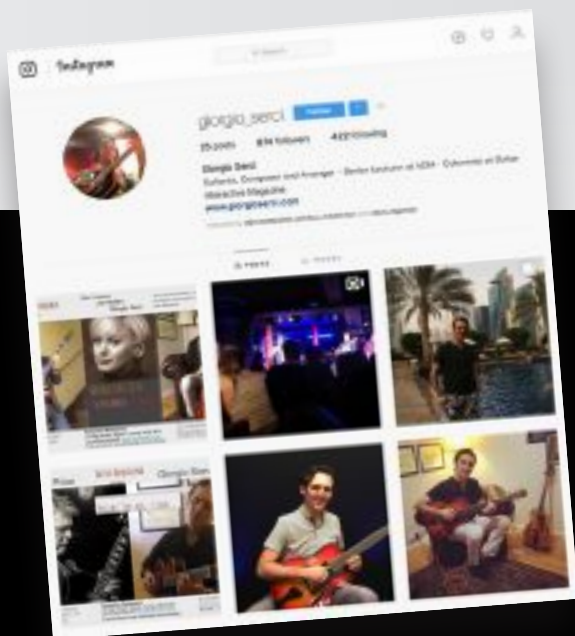
Make sure you highlight the melody (singing is a great strategy to play the melody in more assertive and singing-like manner)

Focus on minimum-movement approach, as this will help delivering the piece in a more accurate and consistent manner, while saving energy.

This will complete this creative fingerstyle lesson.

I hope you will enjoy playing this study piece and that this will give you some ideas on how to write your own solo guitar compositions. If you would like to listen any more of my compositions, please check the previous issues of Guitar Interactive Magazine as well as any of my CDs, available from my website:

www.giorgioserci.com



You can also find me on **instagram** on **giorgio_serci** or **twitter** **@giorgioserci** as well as on **facebook.com/giorgiosercimusic**

*Until the next time -
Good-bye.*

Check me out here at
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**NEW**
COLUMN*with Andy Wood*

Country

Triplets

A huge part of playing in any style is to have an understanding of the clichés. That word can often have a negative connotation associated with it, but in my mind, that doesn't make sense. Yes, a cliché might be something that is overplayed, but they're a big part of making anything sound authentic. You might argue that the same repetitive sentence structures used over and over with the same words is a cliché, but without them, you might

question if I know how to speak hoping for the best.

A sure fire way to get you some of that sound into you playing is to master those approach triplets.

Guitar Interactive is proud to welcome back Andy Wood with the fourth instalment of his new column!

y Guitar

the language at all, or if I'm just

of that classic chicken pickin'
ter the way Country players ap-

The best way to do this would be to understand why players use these triplets, so before learning the notes to play, you'll know the best place to use them.

When you think of long flowing 8th or 16th note Country lines we're repeating that

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + etc.

but adding a triplet in there gives a feeling of acceleration which is exciting.

1 + 2 + 3 + a 4 +

This can be even more effective when the triplet is followed by a single note rather than more 8th notes, it gives a feeling of accelerating to a note then really accentuating that note.

1 + a 2 3 + a 4

There are obviously multiple ways we can approach this concept, and it's been done numerous ways by countless players over the generations. The first way might be to just treat the triplet on the D string as a palm muted slide which you articulate rather loosely then accent the note on the B string. This is the oldest way of doing it, and you'll hear it from players like Roy Nichols, Jerry Reed and James Burton.

As the years went by, players came along and made this concept a little more articulate.



Rather than sliding and muting the triplet, they would treat these 3 notes as melodic content in their own right. This can be a little harder as you need to be considerably more accurate, but it results in a sound that feels a little different from the previous one, especially if you remove the muting. Think of guys like Brad Paisley, Keith Urban or Jerry Donahue for this thing.

The final way comes from the real hot pickers, rather than playing 3 notes on a single string, they'll ascend a pentatonic scale, or arpeggio to create some more melodically intricate ideas and options. So if we're in the key of A, before we might have played B C C# A (chromatic on the D string) but playing scales or arpeggios might result in C# E F# A. This is something you would hear

from the real technical players like Brent Mason, or Albert Lee.

The final thing you might add to this would be to accentuate the single notes as double stops on the higher strings. This is really tricky at first, but adds some real authentic spank and sparkle to your lines. So rather than hitting just an A on the B string, why not play A and C# together to sound like an A chord? This can lead you perfectly into the double stop ideas we looked at previously.

There's a lot to digest here, so take your time looking at the tab, and try to come up with your own ideas combining the triplets and double stops to really make them your own.

Good luck and I'll see you next time!



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A video player thumbnail showing a man with long brown hair and glasses playing an acoustic guitar. A large play button is centered over the image. In the top right corner, there is a 'Gi PI' logo. In the bottom right corner, the text 'PRO LEVEL' is visible in a stylized font. Below the video player, there is a black bar with orange text that reads 'LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER! PT1 | Pro Level Guitar Technique | Gi Livestream'.

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LET'S PRACTICE TOGETHER! PT2 | Pro Level Guitar Technique | Gi Livestream

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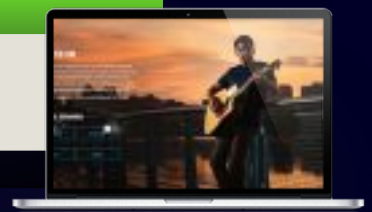
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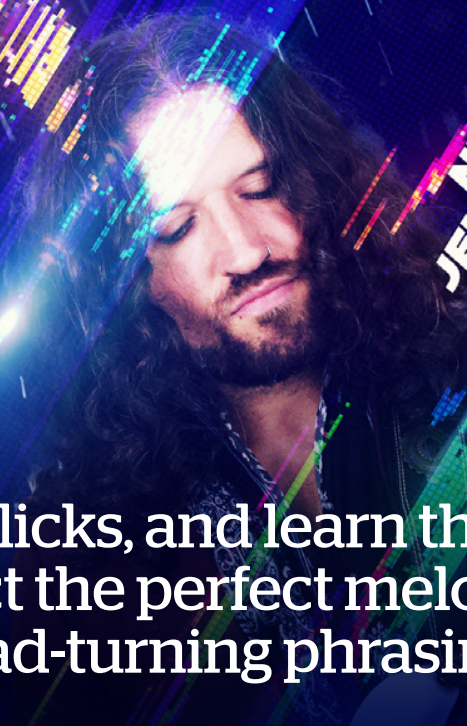
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