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Guitar *Interactive* 105



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**RICHIE
KOTZEN**
MORE INTERVIEWS

DUFF MCKAGAN

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WELCOME TO ISSUE 105



Hello and welcome to issue 105 of **Guitar Interactive Magazine!**



Editor
Jonathan Graham

When you think of rock 'n' roll survivors, few have rocked as hard and lived to tell the tale quite like **Duff McKagan**. Fresh off the successful release of his third solo album, 'Lighthouse,' the Guns N' Roses bassist is set to embark on a headline UK and European tour

later this year. The tour, kicking off in Dublin, will see the iconic musician grace fifteen cities across eleven countries. Duff chats exclusively with Gi's Jonathan Graham about the creative process behind 'Lighthouse,' collaborating with Slash, more new music on the way, plus, a Guns N' Roses group chat that might surprise you.

With his new album 'Nomad,' due this September and an extensive series of live shows set to take place across the U.S., **Richie Kotzen** gives an exclusive interview, sharing insights into the creative process that has shaped his career evolution, advice given to him as a musician, and much more.

Also this issue, in the heart of London's Denmark Street, Gi caught up with **Simon Godin**. This exclusive feature, "Meet The Maker," delves into the story behind Godin Guitars, revealing a saga of passion, innovation, and family heritage. And — as well as the 100,000 fans in attendance — the Guitar Interactive team were once again on site at the **Download Festival** to capture all the action and backstage interviews from across the weekend's amazing live event.

If that's not enough, Sam Bell brings us another exclusive Tech Session this issue, exploring the note choices and techniques of Grammy-winning, multiplatinum artist John Mayer. Join Sam as he breaks down the elements that make **John Mayer** a true modern guitar virtuoso.

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, we hope you will enjoy.

Guitar Interactive

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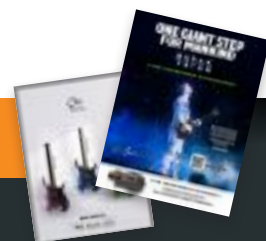
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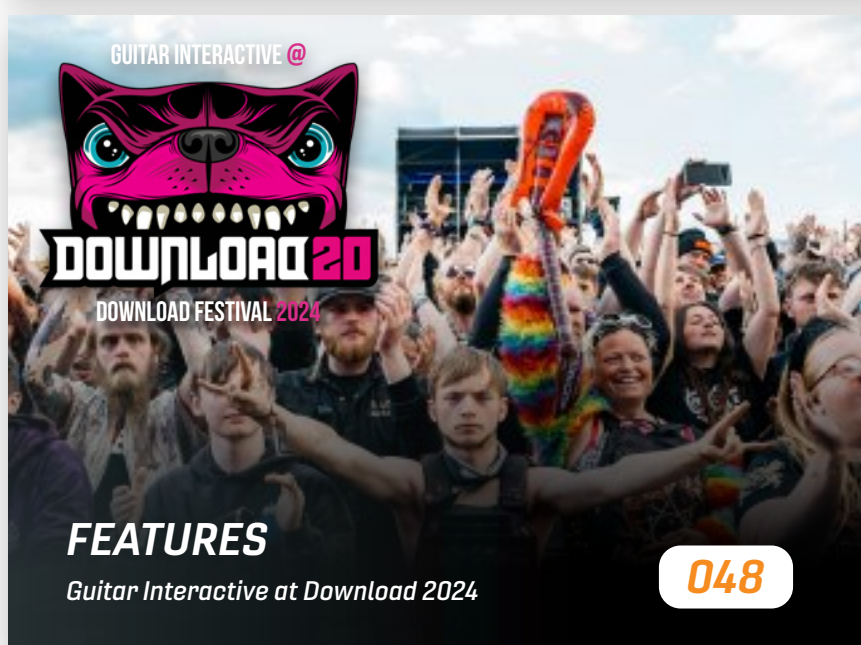
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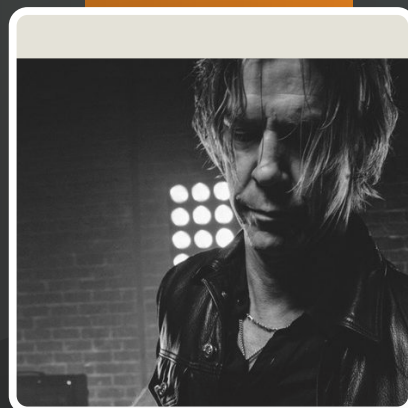


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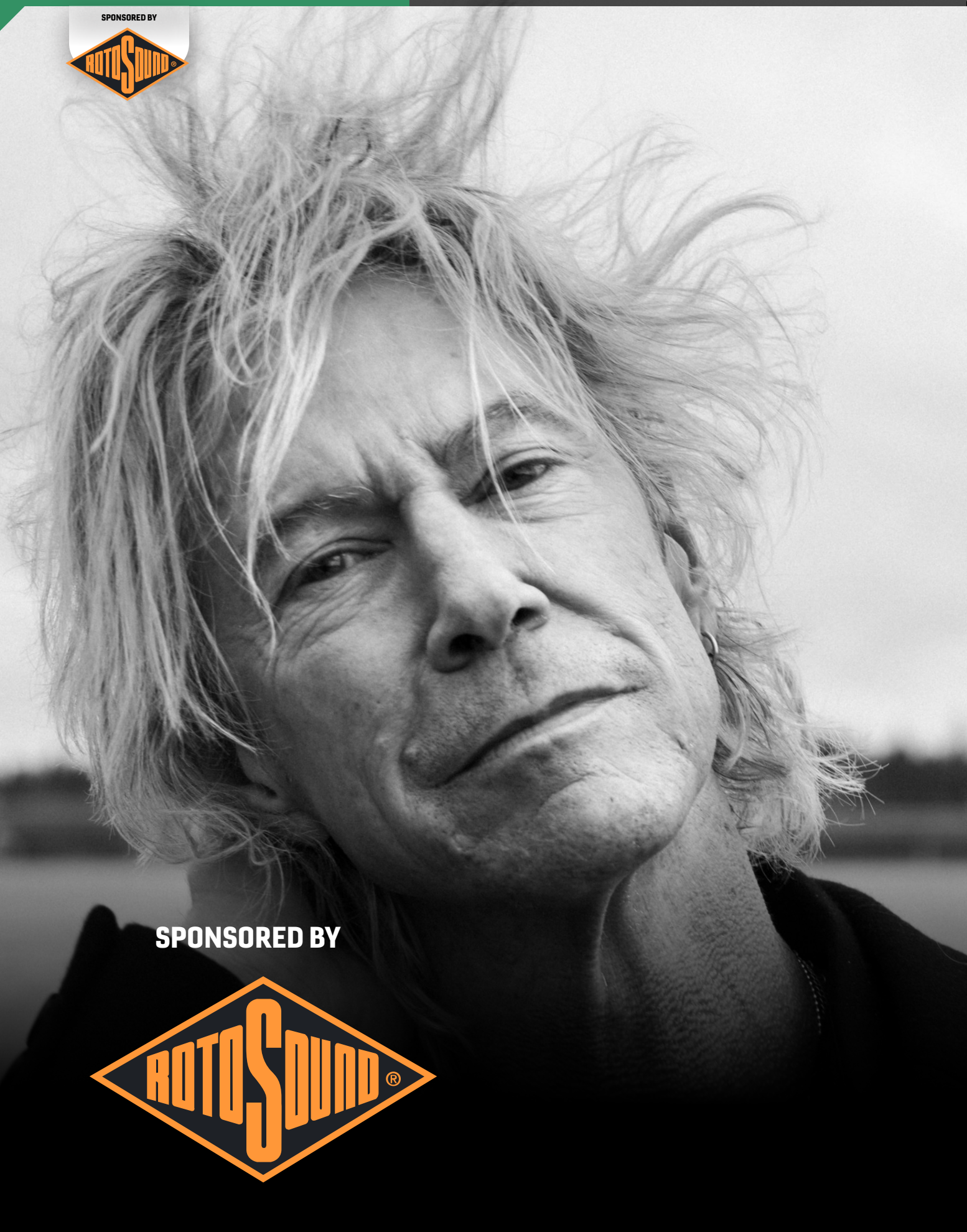
*When you think of rock 'n' roll survivors, few have rocked as hard and lived to tell the tale quite like **Duff McKagan**. Fresh off the successful release of his third solo album, 'Lighthouse,' the Guns N' Roses bassist is set to embark on a headline UK and European tour later this year. The tour, kicking off in Dublin, will see the iconic musician grace fifteen cities across eleven countries. Duff chats exclusively with Guitar Interactive Magazine's Jonathan Graham about the creative process behind 'Lighthouse,' collaborating with Slash, more new music on the way, plus, a Guns N' Roses group chat that might surprise you.*

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IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES



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Duff McKagan: BEYOND THE LIGHTHOUSE

When you think of rock 'n' roll survivors, few have rocked as hard and lived to tell the tale quite like Duff McKagan. Fresh off the successful release of his third solo album, 'Lighthouse,' the Guns N' Roses bassist is set to embark on a headline UK and European tour later this year. The tour, kicking off in Dublin, will see the iconic musician grace fifteen cities across eleven countries. Duff chats exclusively with Guitar Interactive Magazine's Jonathan Graham about the creative process behind 'Lighthouse,' collaborating with Slash, more new music on the way, plus, a Guns N' Roses group chat that might surprise you. ▶

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FOR four decades, Duff McKagan has been an indomitable force in rock music. From his early days with punk bands like The Vains, The Fastbacks, and The Fartz to his seminal role as a founding member of Guns N' Roses and Velvet Revolver, McKagan's influence is indelible. His solo career has only further solidified his reputation as a versatile and introspective artist.

McKagan's latest record, 'Lighthouse,' represents the first full-length collection that was born in McKagan's own studio. This album sees him baring more of his artistic soul than ever before, blending acoustic elements with hard-edged rock to find that sweet spot between introspective reflection and pure energy. Notable tracks include "Hope," featuring Slash, and "I Just Don't Know," with contributions from Jerry Cantrell of Alice in Chains.

Discussing the involvement of GNR bandmate Slash on "Hope," McKagan elaborated, "I got the masters back for this record I did back in '96 called 'Beautiful Disease' that got shelved. I finally got it back... so we listened to the songs, and I thought 'Hope' would work. I re-sang it so that my voice sounds the same on the record, but other than that, it's Abe Laboriel, Slash, and me throwing down a song."

The album kicks off with the powerful title track, "Lighthouse," capturing the essence of seeking solace and guidance

amidst chaos. The collaboration with Slash on "Hope" adds a layer of melodic depth, showcasing McKagan's ability to blend heartfelt lyrics with electrifying guitar riffs.

"Longfeather" stands out with its introspective lyrics and haunting melody that echo themes of home and belonging. "Holy Water" brings a grittier edge, with McKagan's raw vocals and a driving rhythm anchoring the song's message of redemption.

"I Saw God on 10th St" and "Fallen" delve into existential reflections, with the former painting vivid imagery of urban life and the latter exploring themes of loss and trauma. "Forgiveness" is a poignant ballad resonating with McKagan's personal journey of growth and reconciliation. "Just Another Shake-down" injects a burst of energy, reminiscent of McKagan's punk roots, while "Fallen Ones" provides a contemplative counterpoint, examining the fragility of life. The acoustic rendition of "I Just Don't Know," featuring Jerry Cantrell, strips back the layers to reveal the song's deep emotional core. The album closes with "Lighthouse (Reprise)," a hauntingly beautiful collaboration with Iggy Pop, offering a reflective and satisfying conclusion.

As speculation continues to swirl around when Guns N' Roses might release their next full-length album, McKagan's solo projects serve as a testament to his ▶

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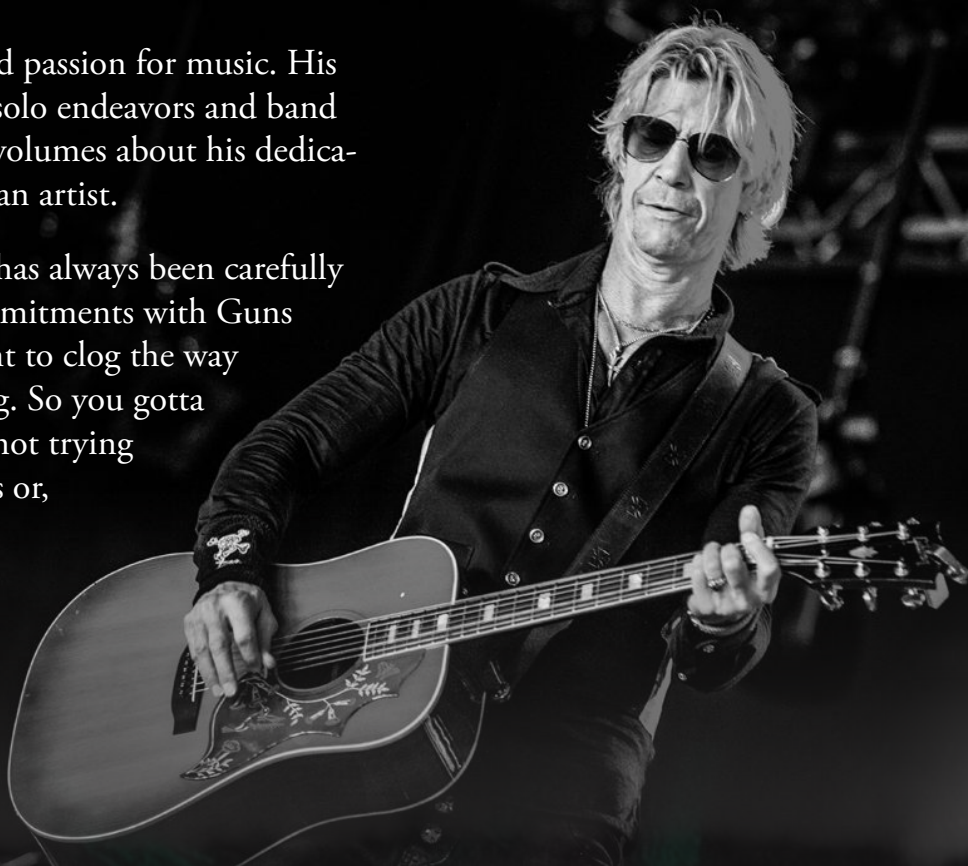
"I DON'T WANT TO CLOG THE WAY OF THE NEXT GUNS THING. SO YOU GOTTA DO IT IN BETWEEN. I'M NOT TRYING TO COMPETE WITH GUNS OR, YOU KNOW, ANY OF THAT KIND OF CRAP. THIS IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT MUSIC."

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relentless creativity and passion for music. His ability to juggle both solo endeavors and band commitments speaks volumes about his dedication and versatility as an artist.

McKagan's solo work has always been carefully timed around his commitments with Guns N' Roses. "I don't want to clog the way of the next Guns thing. So you gotta do it in between. I'm not trying to compete with Guns or, you know, any of that kind of crap. This is totally different music," he explains. This balance is crucial, especially with ▶



Duff McKagan - Interview

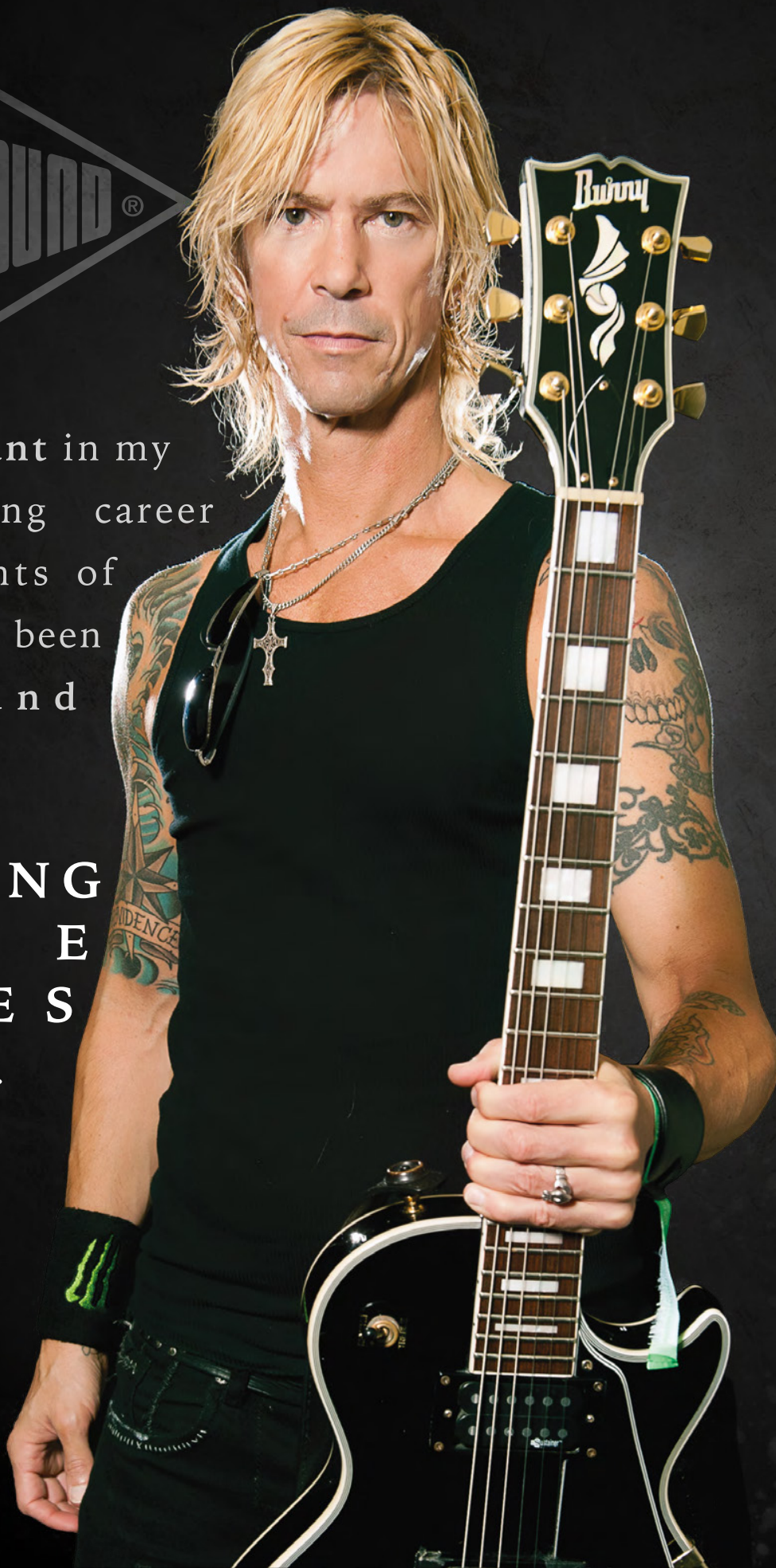


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Duff McKagan



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fans eagerly anticipating new material from Guns N' Roses. Their last release, the 'Hard Skool' EP, dropped in 2021, featuring two new tracks that hinted at the band's ongoing creative vigor.

"I just finished tracking. I'm doing vocals now on 15 more. And there's so many songs," McKagan explains. His songwriting journey has been profoundly personal, often guided by the resonance of an acoustic guitar pressed against his chest. "It was when I started writing songs for what would be 'Tenderness,' and I found that I listened to the resonance that was right down my chest."

Reflecting on his extensive career and the forthcoming tour that kicks off in the United Kingdom, McKagan shared, "There must be some comfort level because, you know, the first place I'm going to come and play these songs with my new band for this is there. So there definitely is a comfort factor." He attributes part of this comfort to the UK's early embrace of Guns N' Roses in 1987. "We came and played the Marquee three nights, and people knew who we were, and the gigs were sold out. It was supposed to be one night, then it turned into two and three. And before we knew it, we were playing Hammer-smith Odeon."

McKagan's approach to his gear for live performances is minimalistic yet powerful, focusing on delivering raw and not

overly processed tones. "I go through a Fender Super Reverb for my electric, but I mainly play acoustic a lot. I have a Hummingbird that Slash bought me for the 'Tenderness' tour that I use often," Duff explains.

No matter the instrument, Rotosound has been Duff McKagan's string of choice for over three decades. "Their guitar strings are great. Their bass strings are great. Once I got those Rotosound Swing Bass strings, why change to anything else? They're part of my sound," he emphasized. The UK string manufacturer recently came to McKagan's aid in relation to a mysterious eight-string Hagstrom bass for an upcoming track. He explained: "There's a new song called 'Trenches' that I thought an eight-string bass might sound amazing on, but the strings it came with were just bad... I asked Rotosound, 'You got eight-string bass strings?' And they said, 'We'll make you some.' I don't know what they did, but they're really good," he recalled.

With new music promised to be on the horizon, McKagan's latest release, 'Lighthouse (Expanded Edition),' includes eight additional tracks and three exclusive live performance videos filmed at Easy Street Records in McKagan's hometown of Seattle, WA. A standout track is the stripped-down acoustic rendition of "I Just Don't Know," which showcases McKagan's vulnerability and vocal prowess.

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‘Lighthouse’ has proven to be a worthy follow-up to 2019’s ‘Tenderness,’ an album that started a powerful new chapter for McKagan. Produced by three-time GRAMMY Award-winner Shooter Jennings, Duff’s sophomore effort tackled societal issues and personal transgressions against a rich sonic backdrop of Americana-fueled arrangements.

The album’s track “Chip Away” received extraordinary praise from Bob Dylan, who called it a personal favorite. “There’s a Duff McKagan song called ‘Chip Away’ that has profound meaning for me,” Dylan told The 



Duff McKagan - Chip Away (LIVE)

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"I WOULD HAVE TOLD MYSELF MAYBE AT 20, LIKE, FUCKING WATCH OUT, DUDE, YOU DON'T NEED TO DRINK, YOU KNOW, STOP. BUT I DIDN'T. AND THAT WAS PART OF MY PATH LEADING TO MY PANCREAS BURSTING."

Wall Street Journal. "It's like my own songwriting, I overwrite something, then I chip away lines and phrases until I get to the real thing."

"I started getting texts and emails from friends who wake up earlier," McKagan recalls with a smile. "Friends in England were like, 'Dude, there's a thing in Wall Street Journal. Axl sent me a link first thing in the day. 'You see this?'" Reflecting on Dylan's praise, McKagan added, "Put yourself in my shoes. You write some songs you believe in. You think you got it right. You go record. You put the thing out. And somebody like that pays that compliment... I mean, he's the godfather of that music."

In addition to his music, McKagan is a New York Times best-selling author and co-host of Sirius XM's popular "Three Chords & The Truth" radio show. He is also a member of the modern-day "Wrecking Crew" alongside musician/producer Andrew Watt and Red Hot Chili Peppers' Chad Smith, contributing to albums by Ozzy Osbourne and Iggy Pop.

Despite all the accolades, achievements, and rock legend status, Duff and his fellow GNR bandmates apparently still find time to share a light-hearted side through a WhatsApp group that's largely dedicated to dad jokes. "So many dad jokes," McKagan laughs. "Dad jokes are so great because they're so fucking dumb. You try to get the dumbest joke you can. Like, hey, Bono and the Edge walk into a bar, and the bartender says, 'Not U2 again.'" Even rock icons need a good laugh.

Having recently celebrated his 60th birthday, McKagan remains a vital force in the music industry. When asked what advice he would give to his younger self, McKagan responds with a mix of humor and sincerity. "I would have told myself maybe at 20, like, fucking watch out, dude, you don't need to drink, you know, stop. But I didn't. And that was part of my path leading to my pancreas bursting." It was a lesson learned the hard way for McKagan, but he needed the wake-up call, as he explained: "I learned from that. I didn't get out of the hospital and start drinking again. ▶

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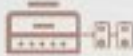
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Fuck that. I learned I'm done. I drank enough. I wanted to stop for years in my 20s."

Looking back on his career spanning decades, with excitement for the road that lies ahead, McKagan shares insights on the lessons learned — especially when it comes to sobriety and personal growth. "My life has turned out well, and I think it's because of me getting sober at 30. It really changed a lot of things. I was able to get to a straighter line to that truth and the truth in yourself." He continues by underscoring the importance of maintaining and mending relationships, adding, "Keeping friendships has been a key in my life. If you fuck up a friendship, make amends and get it back online."

Duff McKagan's latest album, 'Lighthouse,' is available to stream on all major platforms worldwide. ▶

"MY LIFE HAS TURNED OUT WELL, AND I THINK IT'S BECAUSE OF ME GETTING SOBER AT 30. IT REALLY CHANGED A LOT OF THINGS. I WAS ABLE TO GET TO A STRAIGHTER LINE TO THAT TRUTH AND THE TRUTH IN YOURSELF."

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"I JUST
FINISHED
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I'M DOING
VOCALS NOW
ON 15 MORE.
AND THERE'S
SO MANY
SONGS."



Duff McKagan - Breaking Rocks
(LIVE)



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Tracklist for 'Lighthouse'

- Lighthouse
- Longfeather
- Holy water
- I saw God on 10th St
- Fallen
- Forgiveness
- Just another shakedown
- Fallen ones
- Hope (feat. Slash)
- I just don't know (feat. Jerry Cantrell)
- Lighthouse (Reprise) (feat. Iggy Pop)

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2024 UK & Europe Tour Dates

Mon 30th Sep – Dublin, Academy, EIRE

Wed 2nd Oct – Glasgow, Oran Mor, UK

Thur 3rd Oct – Manchester, Academy 2, UK

Sat 5th Oct – London, Islington Assembly Hall, UK

Mon 7th Oct – Utrecht, TivoliVredenburg, NETHERLANDS

Tue 8th Oct – Cologne, Kantine, GERMANY

Wed 9th Oct – Munich, Freiheitshalle, GERMANY

Fri 11th Oct – Brno, Sono Centrum, CZECH REPUBLIC

Sun 13th Oct – Warsaw, Stodola, POLAND

Mon 14th Oct – Berlin, Heimathafen, GERMANY

Wed 16th Oct – Milan, Magazzini Generali, ITALY

Thur 17th Oct – Solothurn, Kofmeh, SWITZERLAND

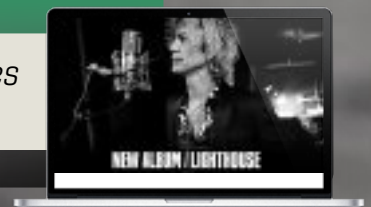
Sat 19th Oct – Liege, OM, BELGIUM

Sun 20th Oct – Paris, Trianon, FRANCE

Tue 22nd Oct – Stockholm, Nalen, SWEDEN



For more information on Duff McKagan, tour dates and tickets, please visit: **duffonline.com**



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Richie Kotzen Nomad

Richie Kotzen has long been a formidable force in music. His latest single, "Cheap Shots," not only reaffirms his musical mastery but also sets the stage for an electrifying new album, 'Nomad,' due this September. With an extensive series of live shows set to take place across the U.S., Kotzen gives an exclusive interview with Guitar Interactive Magazine, sharing insights into the creative process that has shaped his career evolution, advice given to him as a musician, and much more. ▶

FROM his early days as an instrumental guitar prodigy to his current status as a seasoned singer-songwriter, Richie Kotzen's story is one of relentless passion, hard work, and undeniable talent. Born and raised in Reading, Pennsylvania, Kotzen's ascent in the music world began in 1988 when he inked a deal with Shrapnel Records, quickly earning a reputation as a guitar virtuoso. His early records were a testament to his extraordinary technical skills and innovative approach. "I was exactly who I was in that moment," Kotzen reminisces about his self-titled debut album. "I was a terrified 18-year-old kid in a room with guys like Marty Friedman, Jason Becker, and Mike Varney. But I was also determined to prove myself."

Despite his initial success, Kotzen soon realised his artistic vision extended beyond instrumental guitar music. "I

knew very quickly that I did not want to be in the instrumental guitar game. I wanted to write songs, have a band, and be a singer," he explains. This pivotal decision steered him towards a prolific career as a songwriter and vocalist.



However, long before Kotzen had picked up a six-string, his love affair with music began with the soulful sounds of American R&B and soul. "I loved Stevie Wonder—that was probably my first proper concert. I saw him in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania," he reminisces. Shortly after discovering Stevie Wonder, Kotzen was captivated by the guitar theatrics of Kiss, notably Gene Simmons. "Seeing Gene breathing fire and spitting blood made me ▶



Richie Kotzen - Cheap Shots (Official Music Video)



"I was a very scared 18-year-old kid in a room with guys like Marty Friedman, Jason Becker, and Mike Varney. But I was also determined to prove myself."

think, 'I want to do that.'" Highlighting Kotzen's varied tastes from the outset.

With his solo career on the rise, Kotzen made significant contributions to iconic rock bands Poison and Mr. Big. In the early '90s, Kotzen joined Poison, replacing guitarist C.C. DeVille. His tenure with the band included the release of the album 'Native Tongue' in 1993, showcasing his impressive guitar work and hit-making prowess. Following his stint with Poison, Kotzen joined Mr. Big in 1999, replacing guitarist Paul Gilbert. With Mr. Big, Kotzen recorded the albums 'Get Over

It' (1999) and 'Actual Size' (2001), further cementing his reputation as a versatile guitarist and songwriter.

Joining Stanley Clarke's band at 29 was a key moment for Kotzen in terms of how he visualises the fretboard; as he recalls, "Stanley took the bass and said, 'All these notes are available to you. Pick some and play them.' Karen Briggs, the acclaimed violinist for the group, told him, 'The right note is either a half step up or down.' Those two things clicked," he recalls. This experience reshaped his approach to the fretboard and ultimately enhanced his improvisational skills. ▶



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Richie Kotzen - Interview

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In recent years, Kotzen has also fronted The Winery Dogs and formed a dynamic duo with Iron Maiden's Adrian Smith in Smith/Kotzen. Despite being involved in all of these projects, Kotzen's eclectic solo career has never been put on hold. Over the years, he has released more than 20 solo albums, each showcasing his ability to transcend genres, from rock and blues to soul and jazz. "I've broadened my scope because I've lived more and had more life experience, so I have more to write about," he says, encapsulating the evolution of his sound. This versatility has garnered Kotzen a loyal following worldwide.

When it comes to gear, for Kotzen's upcoming tour, he'll be wielding the Marshall 59HW — a hand-wired amp that's been his mainstay for years. "There's something magical about this amplifier," Kotzen enthuses. "A lot of other stuff sounds good, but there's something in that original circuit and the simplicity of it." He pairs this amp with Celestion Creambacks, favouring these 60-watt speakers for their unique tone. His pedalboard is anchored by the RK5 Fly Rig, a floor unit he co-developed with Tech 21. "I wanted something simple that I could throw down without a big cumbersome pedal board. It came out of necessity," he explains. ▶

"I've broadened my scope because I've lived more and had more life experience, so I have more to write about."

The Richie Kotzen Signature RK5 Fly Rig, known for its compact yet powerful design, encapsulates Kotzen's approach to live performance. The pedal features an overdrive section that captures Kotzen's signature tone, a delay, a reverb, and a boost function. "The Fly Rig is my go-to on the road because it has everything I need in one piece of gear. It's practical and sounds incredible," Kotzen says. Continuing his collaboration with Tech 21, Kotzen is currently developing a new wah pedal. "We're beta testing the wah pedal right now. I've recorded with it, and I really like it," Kotzen ▶



reveals. The development of this new pedal once again highlights Kotzen's hands-on approach to anything he puts his name to.

"The wah pedal is an exciting project because it's designed to complement my playing style. It's about finding that sweet spot where the expression and tone meet," Kotzen explains. This new addition promises to offer fans another way to capture Kotzen's unique sounds.

Kotzen's approach to songwriting is as organic as it gets. "Ideas come at random times," he reveals. "I've been woken up out of my sleep with an idea, dreamt songs, heard a melody in a restaurant and ran outside to put it in my recorder." His latest single, "Cheap Shots," is a testament to this process.

"I had the riff and drum beat, started playing, made a form with a beat to get some emotion and feel, then put up the mic and started freestyling," he recalls. The result is a track that hits hard both sonically and lyrically.

Set for a September release, Kotzen's upcoming album, 'Nomad,' is poised to be another masterclass in musicianship. "It's done in the old-school classic way—eight songs, like some of my favourite albums," he notes. "It's not about jamming as many songs as possible onto a CD. I thought about how it would play on vinyl." The album promises to be a rich tapestry of rock, blues, and soul, reflecting the diverse influences that have shaped Kotzen's career. "It really shows the pendulum swing of who I am as a solo artist," ▶

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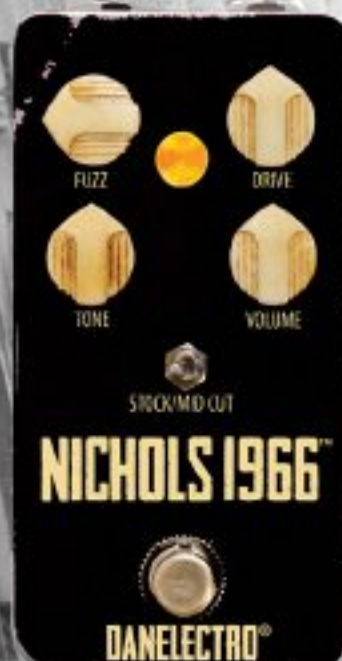
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"Ideas come at random times. I've been woken up out of my sleep with an idea, dreamt songs, heard a melody in a restaurant and ran outside to put it in my recorder."

he says. "It covers the scope of what I do artistically and represents it very well."

As Kotzen prepares for his tour and the release of 'Nomad,' he remains grounded in his artistic philosophy. "Progress, not perfection," he says. "Obsessing over making something perfect doesn't mean anything. You create something that never existed before, and it maybe doesn't need to be better. You like it, so you're done."

Kotzen's live performances are legendary for their unpredictable energy and musical brilliance. One of the most memorable live performances of Kotzen's solo career took place in Argentina in the mid-2000s. "That show in Argentina was incredible. The audience was so alive, and the connection we felt on stage was something truly special," Kotzen recalls. "I remember looking out into the crowd and seeing a sea of faces singing along to every word. It was one of those nights where everything just clicked." This concert stands out as a testament to Kotzen's ability to connect with audiences

worldwide, delivering unforgettable performances for those in attendance.

His latest U.S. solo tour kicks off on September 13th at The Coach House in San Juan Capistrano and will traverse the nation, culminating on November 2nd in Dallas, TX at the Granada Theater. Before heading stateside, he'll conquer Europe with dates throughout June and July. "I'm very much looking forward to playing 'Cheap Shots' live with my band," Kotzen says. "From Montclair, California, we go off to Europe for all of June and a bit of July. Following those dates, I'm doing an extensive USA run starting this September, and by then, my new studio album will be released. This is turning out to be a very active year for me."

See Richie Kotzen's blend of technical mastery, captivating performance and soulful songwriting at the following shows.



Richie Kotzen 2024 U.S. Fall Tour Dates

SEP 13: The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano, CA

SEP 14: Whisky a Go Go, West Hollywood, CA

SEP 19: Goldfield Trading Post (Roseville), Roseville, CA

SEP 20: Tower Theatre, Fresno, CA

SEP 21: Count's Vamp'd, Las Vegas, NV

SEP 25: The Black Sheep, Colorado Springs, CO

SEP 26: HQ Live Denver, Denver, CO

SEP 27: Barnato, Omaha, NE

SEP 28: Knuckleheads Saloon, Kansas City, MO

SEP 30: City Winery St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

OCT 2: The Blue Note, Harrison, OH

OCT 4: The Magic Bag, Ferndale, MI

OCT 5: The Arcada Theatre, St. Charles, IL

OCT 7: Jergels, Warrendale, PA

OCT 9: The Ridgefield Playhouse, Ridgefield, CT

OCT 10-12: Iridium, New York, NY

OCT 15: City Winery Boston, Boston, MA

OCT 17: Tupelo Music Hall, Derry, NH

OCT 20: The Suffolk Theater, Riverhead, NY

OCT 22: Rams Head on Stage, Annapolis, MD

OCT 23: Sellersville Theater, Sellersville, PA

OCT 24: The Beacon Theatre, Hopewell, VA

OCT 25: Backseat Bar & Grill, Winchester, VA

OCT 29: City Winery Atlanta, Atlanta, GA

OCT 30: City Winery Nashville, Nashville, TN

NOV 1: The Haute Spot, Leander, TX

NOV 2: Granada Theater, Dallas, TX

For more information on Richie Kotzen, new releases and tickets, please visit: **richiekotzen.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.

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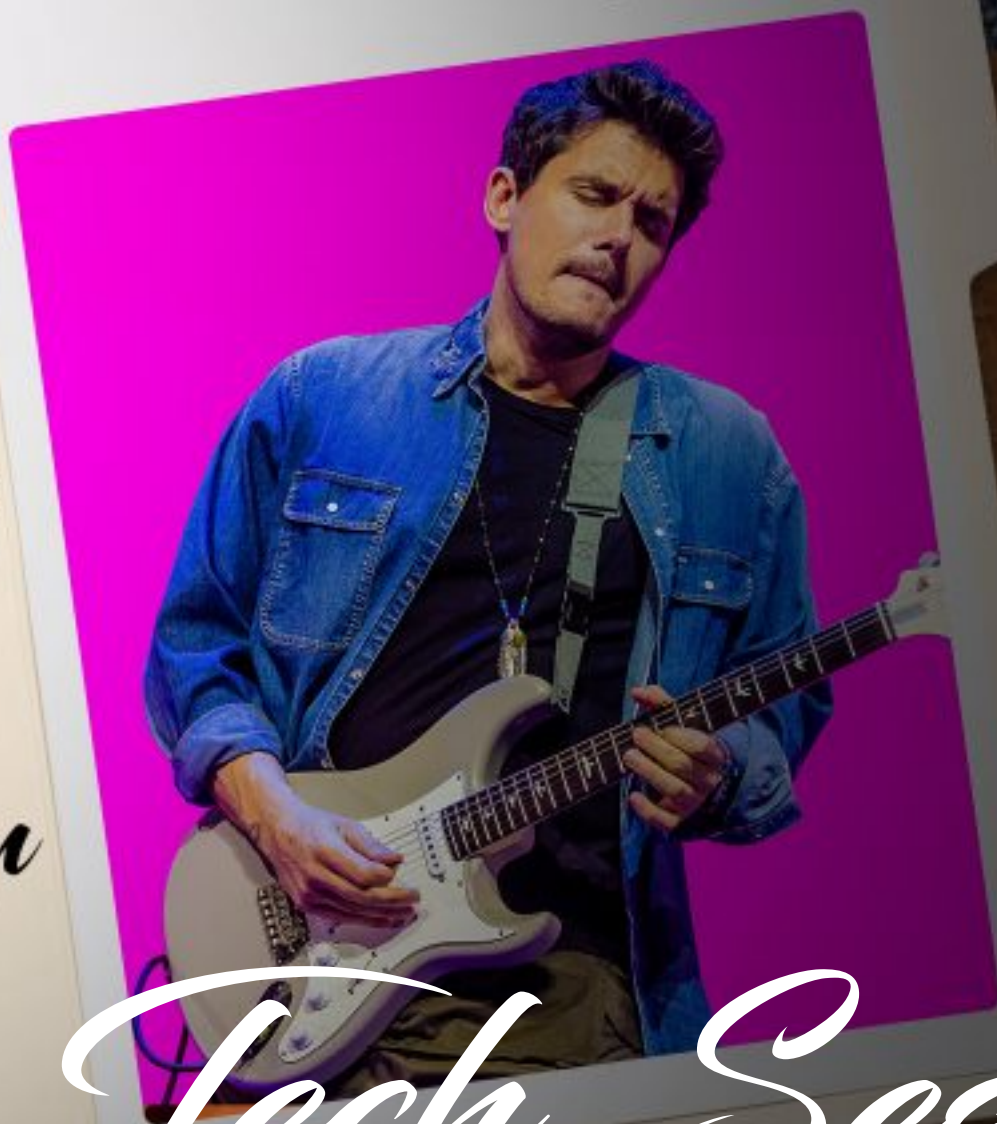
THE TECH SESSION FILES

*John
Mayer*

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Tech Session

Sam Bell brings us another exclusive Tech Session this issue, exploring the note choices and techniques of Grammy-winning, multiplatinum artist John Mayer. Known for his emotive playing style and deep musicality, Mayer has captivated audiences worldwide with his blend of blues, rock, and pop influences. This Tech Session aims to unravel the secrets behind his expressive guitar work, and the subtle nuances that define his sound. Join Sam Bell as he breaks down the elements that make John Mayer a true modern guitar virtuoso. ▶

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IN this Tech Session, we will break down some of the core elements of John Mayer's expressive guitar style. It's clear that he is a stellar musician with a focus on musicality, songwriting, and expression, whose influences draw heavily from the blues. As far as 'Tech Sessions go, this one is tricky to write. It's not necessarily what he says but how he says it in most circumstances (playing-wise). So please refer to the video performance and breakdown to get the most from this tech

session. A lot of Mayer's playing is about touch, tone, articulation, and intonation.

To get started, let's talk tone. I'm using an S-Type Guitar going into a clean Fender-style amp with the slightest bit of gain from a boost pedal. This makes the 'clean' guitar tone a bit more edgy and sensitive to touch, meaning I can get more shades of dynamic from the pick attack and the finger attack. A lot of Mayer's tone literally comes from the fingers, sometimes ditch-



John Mayer Tech Session Performance

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ing the pick altogether to get a softer, more rounded attack and bloom to the note.

The example is in the key of G Major and follows this chord progression in 12/8:

G – C – G – C – Am – D – G – C – G – D

Each of these chords is gently arpeggiated, with the G and C chords focusing on the open D and G strings to get a hammer-on to the 2nd fret G note. This groove can be

heard in many of John Mayer's tunes.

The solo itself focuses on the G Major Blues Scale and turns to the G Minor Pentatonic in the last few bars. Let's take a look at some of the phrases.

Bars 1 – 3

This opening bend sits around the top portion of a C-shaped G chord between the 7th and 10th frets. The bend ascends from

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the root of the chord up to the 9th, which is bent up to the Major 3rd. This bend is then repeated rhythmically. We then have an 'answer' style phrase relating to the first one, with some slide articulations and very subtle hammer-ons.

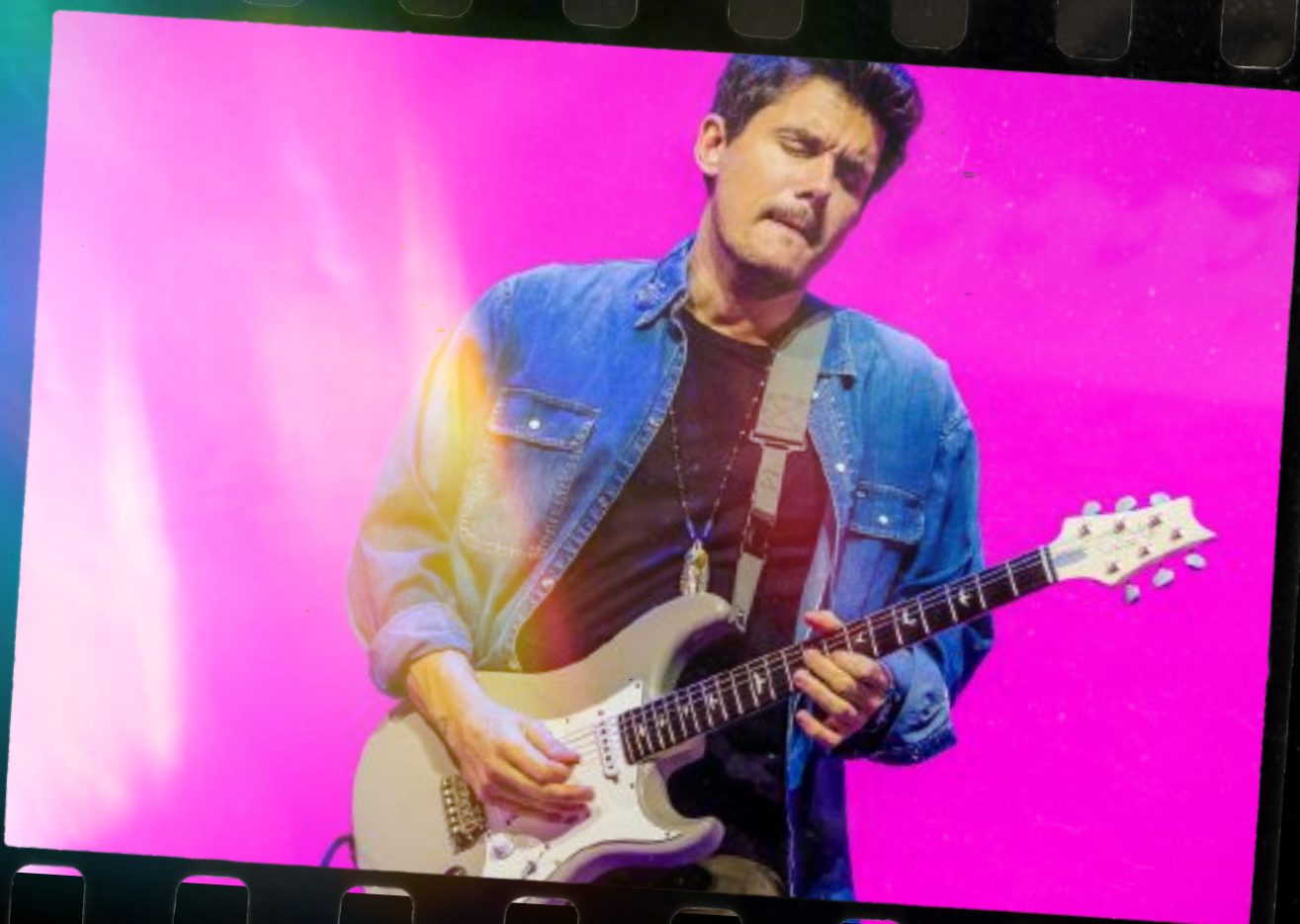
Bars 4 - 5

Here's another classic BB King-style phrase, which can be heard a lot in Mayer's playing. Again focusing around the G Triad. Repeat-

ing the phrase, we end with another bending phrase, this time around the top E string before going into the next Hendrix-style lick, which takes us into the Am chord in the next bar.

Bars 6 - 7

The Hendrix-style phrase descends around the Am chord before going into a bluesy sliding phrase that outlines the D chord in the next bar.





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Bars 8 - 10

This phrase brings us back into the G chord. However, we're going to use the G Minor Pentatonic. This is a great way of shifting the direction of the solo after a very 'Major' sounding soundscape. This phrase uses some 'sweep' picking, but not as we would normally come across in guitaristic examples. The sweeping here is more of a texture to outline clusters of a Gm7th arpeggio. The solo ends with some slides from the minor 3rd up to the Major 3rd of each chord before finishing with an open G chord with some open G string hammer-ons from the root up to the 3rd of the chord.

Final Thoughts:

So, as you can tell, the phrases are very cool! But it's not simply about nailing the phrases note for note; focus on getting the attack, timing, and mood right. The best way to practice this kind of thing is to play along, keep playing along. Even record yourself, listen back, and make the judgment if it's really keeping in line with the original phrase. This will teach you a lot about the subtleties that can't necessarily be written down. I recommend practising this way for any style of phrase learning, from Blues to Metal, Jazz, and Beyond! Have fun, see you soon.



John Mayer Tech Session Lesson

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THE FEATURES

*Since its inception in 2003, the **Download Festival** at Donington Park has become an essential pilgrimage for rock and metal aficionados. This year's 21 edition of the event held a special significance, as it saw the torch passed to a new generation of headliners — with Queens of the Stone Age and Fall Out Boy topping the bill for the first time, alongside the seasoned (and previous headliner) Avenged Sevenfold. Download 2024 promised to be a transformative experience. Despite relentless rain and mud, the festival showcased metal's enduring spirit and evolution. As well as the 100,000 fans in attendance, the Guitar Interactive team were once again on site to capture all the action and backstage interviews from across the weekend's amazing live event.*

*In the heart of London's Denmark Street, where the echoes of rock 'n' roll legends linger, Jonathan Graham of Guitar Interactive Magazine caught up with **Simon Godin** at Wunjo Guitars. This exclusive feature, "Meet The Maker," delves into the story behind Godin Guitars, revealing a saga of passion, innovation, and family heritage.*

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Mud, Rain, and Rock 'n' Roll at The Download

REPLACE*** The finest acts in hard rock and metal descended to the hallowed annual Download Festival. As well as the 100,000 fans in attendance, the **Gui** backstage interviews from across the weekend's amazing live event. ▶

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Roll — Guitar Interactive and Festival 2024

and grounds of Donington Park, Leicester, across the weekend for the 20th
Guitar Interactive team were once again on site to capture all the action and

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SINCE its inception in 2003, the Download Festival at Donington Park has become an essential pilgrimage for rock and metal aficionados. This year's 21 edition of the event held a special significance, as it saw the torch passed to a new generation of headliners — with Queens of the Stone Age and Fall Out Boy topping the bill for the first time, alongside the seasoned (and previous headliner) Avenged Sevenfold. Download 2024 promised to be a transformative experience. Despite relentless rain and mud, the festival showcased metal's enduring spirit and evolution. As well as the 100,000 fans in attendance, the Guitar Interactive team were once again

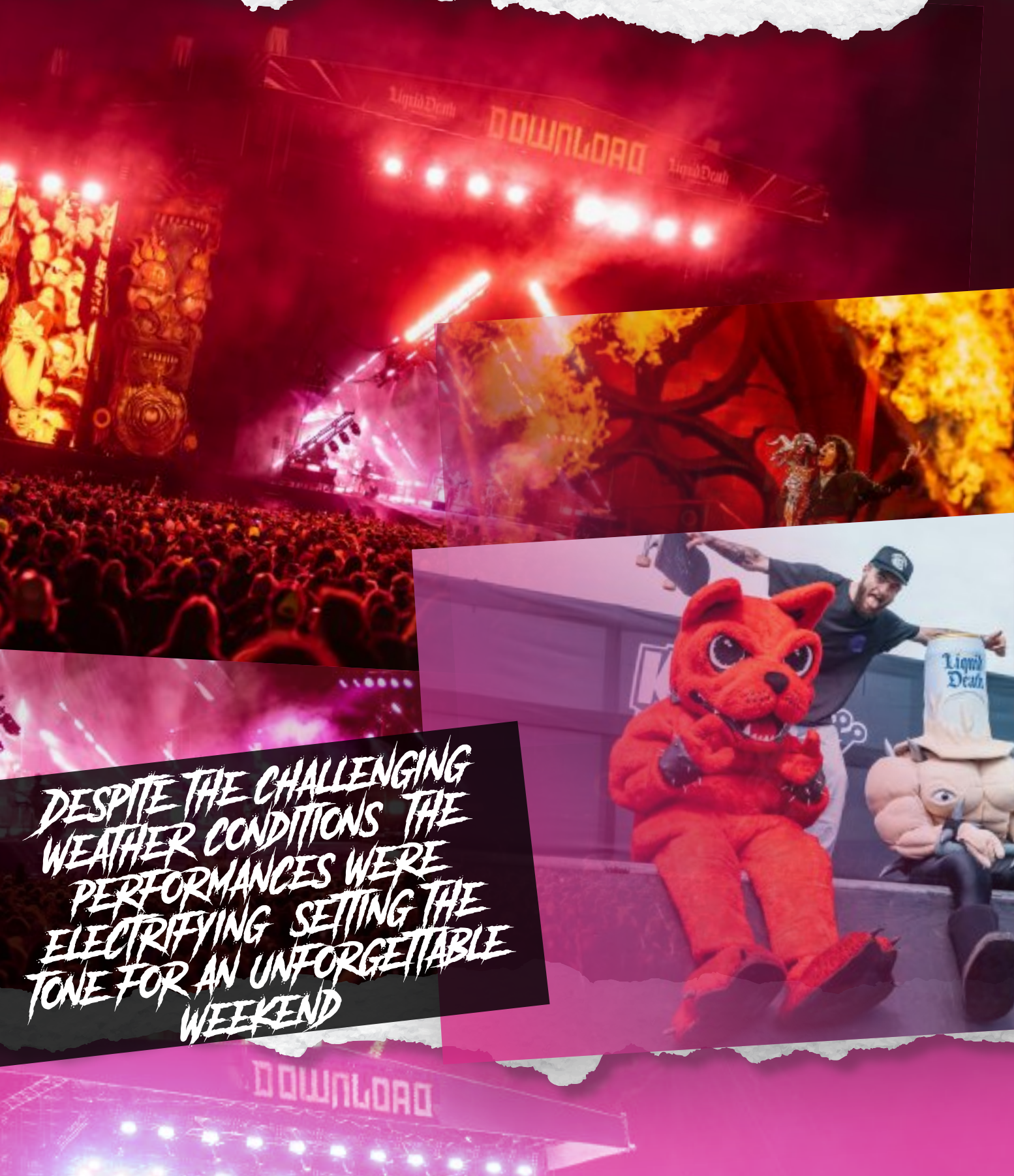
on site to capture all the action and backstage interviews from across the weekend's amazing live event.

Friday at Download Festival 2024 started with a somewhat familiar scene for veteran attendees: torrents of rain transforming the festival grounds into a muddy quagmire, earning it the affectionate moniker "Drownload." Yet, the weather did little to dampen the spirits of the die-hard fans.

Apex Stage highlights on Friday included The Struts, who brought their unique blend of glam rock and theatrics. Frontman Luke Spiller's flamboyant attire and infectious energy won over the crowd, with Spiller strutting across the stage in a



Tom Morello on New Single With His Son, The Last Time he Saw Chris Cornell & Beating Simon Cowell



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ELECTRIFYING SETTING THE
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half-wedding dress, engaging the audience with hits like “Primadonna Like Me” and “Too Good At Raising Hell.” Their charisma and stage presence were undeniable, making them a standout act on the first day of the festival.

Dream State graced the Download stage with an emotional and high-energy performance. Their set included fan favourites like “Chin Up, Princess” and “Primrose,” with frontwoman Jessie Powell delivering powerful vocals that clearly resonated with the crowd. The band’s

journey to this moment was evident in their passionate performance, and the audience responded with equal fervour.

The day also featured a packed tent for Wheatus on the Avalanche Stage. The pop-punk band drew an enormous crowd, with many fans unable to squeeze inside the tent, proving their surprising but welcome fit at Download. The crowd sang along passionately to hits like “Teenage Dirtbag,” making it clear that Wheatus had made a lasting impression.

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Headlining the main stage, Queens of the Stone Age made their highly anticipated Download debut. Frontman Josh Homme's raw showmanship and the band's powerful setlist captivated the audience. The performance was a relentless barrage of their greatest hits, starting with "Little Sister" and moving seamlessly through to "Go With The Flow," "No One Knows," and "The Lost Art of Keeping a Secret." Despite Homme's admission

of being "stoned and fucked up," their performance was nothing short of spectacular. The set showcased the band's evolution and solidified their place as festival headliners.

Further delights on Friday included Black Stone Cherry, who braved the torrential downpours to bring some stateside sunshine to the proceedings. Their set featured hard-hitting tracks like "White Trash Millionaire" and "Blame It On The Boom Boom," which kept the crowd

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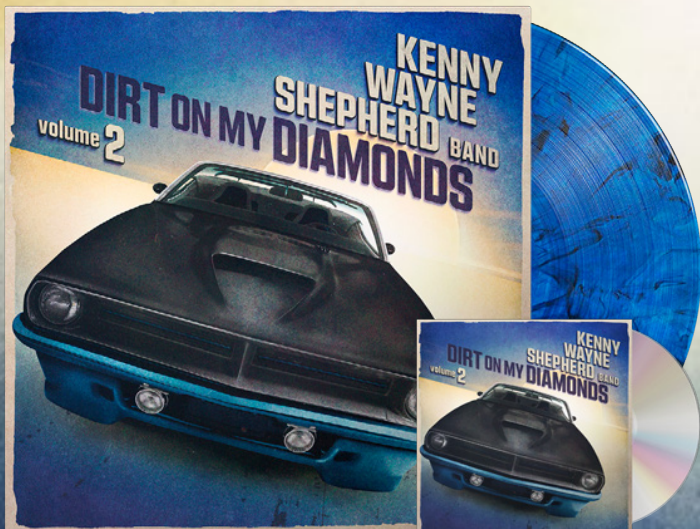


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Those Damn Crows Talk "Let's Go Psycho," More New Music & Upcoming Headline Show in Cardiff

energized despite the relentless rain. Wheatus provided a nostalgic trip down memory lane with their cover of Erasure's "A Little Respect" and their timeless anthem "Teenage Dirtbag."

Mr. Bungle's eclectic set shook the Opus Stage with its blend of thrash, experimental metal, and quirky covers. Mike Patton's eccentric presence, coupled with the intense performances of Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian and Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo, created a

show that was as unpredictable as it was powerful. The technical issues did little to dampen their spirit, making the performance one of the day's highlights.

Despite the challenging weather conditions, the performances were electrifying, setting the tone for an unforgettable weekend. The combination of seasoned veterans and newer acts showcased the festival's commitment to embracing the evolving landscape of rock and metal music.

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Saturday continued the trend of weather woes but with a line-up that promised no shortage of high-energy performances. Glaswegian metallers Bleed From Within exploded onto the Opus Stage, delivering a fiery set that included a surprising cover of Metallica's "Enter Sandman" featuring comedians Rob Beckett and Romesh Ranganathan.

The day's nostalgia trip was heightened by sets from Billy Talent and The Offspring, who took fans on a journey back to their youth. Billy Talent's powerful anthems, like "Devil in a Midnight Mass" and "Red Flag," resonated deeply, while The Offspring's high-energy renditions of "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)" and "The Kids Aren't Alright" kept the crowd buzzing.

Enter Shikari's performance on the main stage was a masterclass in audience engagement. Frontman Rou Reynolds — sporting a pink St





Albans City football shirt — connected with the crowd in ways few others could. His mud dive was emblematic of the band's immersive show, blending old and new hits with calls for peace and justice.

Corey Taylor's solo set on the Opus Stage was another highlight. Despite battling illness, Taylor's performance was a testament to his resilience and dedication. Opening with Stone Sour's "Made of Scars" and Slipknot's "Before I Forget," Taylor's energy never wavered. His heartfelt dedication of "Home" to his wife, Alicia, highlighted the emotional depth of his performance. The set concluded with the epic "Duality," leaving the crowd in awe of Taylor's unwavering spirit.

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly Pantera's set — a colossal spectacle, drawing one of the largest crowds of the weekend. Fans packed in shoulder-to-shoulder, eager to witness the legendary band's performance. Featuring Zakk Wylde and Charlie Benante, the band paid tribute to the late Dimebag Darrell and Vinnie Paul with powerful renditions of "Cowboys from Hell" and "Walk." The sheer intensity of the crowd and the band's relentless energy made it a stand-

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out moment of the festival. Zakk Wylde's blistering guitar solos and Benante's thunderous drumming reverberated through the massive crowd, reminding everyone that even though they disbanded over two decades ago, Pantera remains a giant of heavy metal.

Fall Out Boy's headline set was another high point. From the opening notes of "Disloyal Order of Water Buffaloes" to the final chords of "Saturday," the band delivered a career-spanning performance filled with fireworks, balloons, and confetti. Pete Wentz's ascension into the

air during the closing song was a visual spectacle that left a lasting impression on the audience. The band's journey from emo darlings to pop-punk legends was celebrated in a set that balanced nostalgia with their ever-evolving sound.

Incredibly, sunshine and renewed energy graced the festival grounds on Sunday. Bowling For Soup kicked off the day with a lighthearted, pop-punk party on the Apex Stage, complete with a surprise guest appearance by Brendan B. Brown of Wheatus for a sing-along of "Teenage Dirtbag."





Sum 41's emotional farewell performance marked their final UK festival appearance. Frontman Deryck Whibley's heartfelt interactions and high-energy renditions of "In Too Deep" and "Fat Lip" created a poignant goodbye, softened by the promise of future tours. Do these bands ever really retire?

Limp Bizkit's set was nothing short of a spectacle. Drawing one of the weekend's largest and youngest crowds, the band proved their music's timeless appeal. Fred Durst's playful charisma and the band's infectious energy turned their performance into a

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massive party. Hits like “Rollin’” and “Nookie” had the crowd in a frenzy, while their cover of Nirvana’s “Come As You Are” added a nostalgic touch. The sheer size and enthusiasm of the crowd hinted that a future headline slot for Limp Bizkit is a strong possibility. The mix of old-school fans and a surprisingly young audience underscored the band’s cross-generational appeal, proving that their music still resonates deeply.

Machine Head closed the Opus Stage with a powerful performance that included fan favourites like “Davidian” and “Halo.” Frontman Robb Flynn’s interac-

tion with the crowd, including a beer-throwing competition, added a personal touch. The band’s use of fire and confetti made for a visually spectacular end to the weekend.

As the sun set, Avenged Sevenfold’s headline set on the main stage was somewhat marked by a sound system meltdown that led to an impromptu sing-along of DJ Ötzi’s “Hey Baby” by the crowd. Once the technical issues were resolved, the band delivered a dynamic performance that included tracks from their latest album, “Life Is But a Dream...,” as well as classics like “Hail to the King”



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XXI*"It's like Chinese Democracy now" Karnivool's Mark Hosking & Ian Kenny Talk New Album Status & More*

and "Bat Country." Despite the hiccup, the band's command of the stage and connection with the audience ensured a memorable finale to the festival.

Despite the challenges of weather and technical issues, Download Festival 2024 proved to be another win for fans of rock and metal. As mud-caked festival-goers headed home, the festival's electrifying performances, unexpected collaborations,

and emotional farewells made the event an unforgettable experience.

And so we have it—the Download Festival is over for another year. However, tickets are already on sale for next year's epic event, and here at Gi, we're already counting down the days!

In 2025, Download Festival will return to Donington from Friday 14 June – Sunday 16 June.

For more ticket information on Download 2025, please visit: www.downloadfestival.co.uk



MEET THE SIMON

In the heart of London's Denmark Street, where the echoes of rock Magazine caught up with Simon Godin at Wunjo Guitars. This exclusive Godin Guitars, revealing a saga of passion, innovation, and family

THE MAKER: GODIN

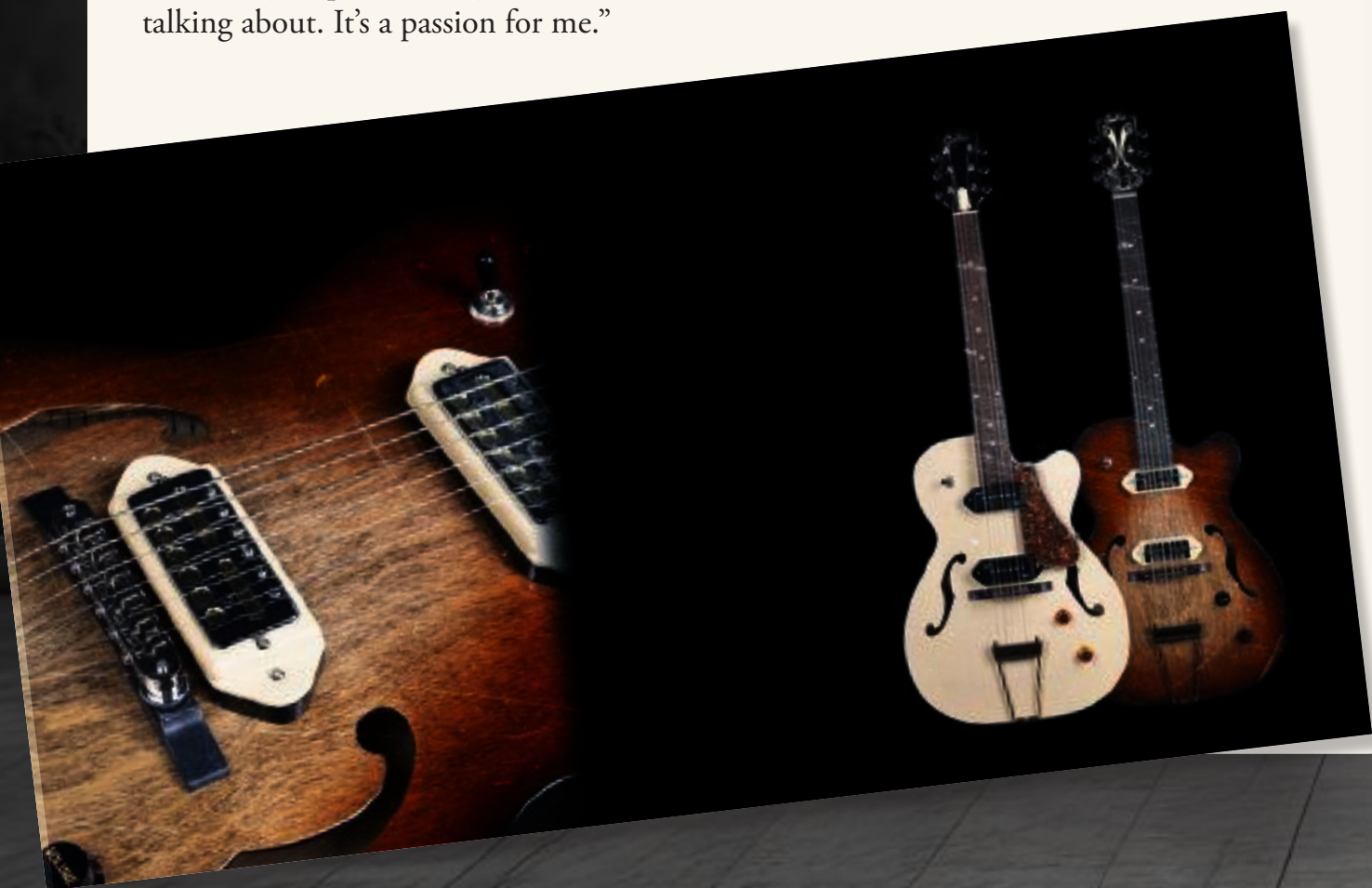
As rock 'n' roll legends linger, Jonathan Graham of Guitar Interactive's exclusive feature, "Meet The Maker," delves into the story behind Epiphone's heritage. ▶

THE tale of Godin Guitars is a compelling story of craftsmanship and dedication. In 1972, Robert Godin began crafting guitars in a modest workshop in La Patrie, Quebec. His vision was simple: to create guitars that could rival the best in the world. The company's early years were marked by relentless dedication to quality, and word of their exceptional acoustic guitars quickly spread among musicians.

"My dad started the company in 1972. Here I am, second generation," Simon Godin recounts, his voice a mix of pride and nostalgia. "I've been in the business for 21 years. My dad taught me how to make guitars when I was 20, and since then, I've done every step. So I really know what I'm talking about. It's a passion for me."

A particularly poignant chapter in this story is the first guitar Robert built for young Simon. "I was maybe eight," Simon recalls with a smile. "He made me a single cut solid body sparkle blue guitar. That guitar is now in my son Nolan's room. He's two and a half, and it's a very unique piece. It represents our family's legacy."

Godin's reputation as one of the finest guitar builders in North America has only been enhanced by its high-profile collaborations, each adding a new dimension to the brand's legacy. One of the most recent celebrated partnerships is with Alex Lifeson of Rush. Initially, Lifeson approached Godin, impressed by their neck designs, which led to a simple custom neck request. But as the





"Steve Stevens has been an incredible partner," Simon says. "His performances at such iconic locations highlight the versatility and excellence of our guitars."

relationship deepened, it blossomed into the creation of the Lrxst guitar series.

"Alex reached out and said, 'Simon, can we meet?'" Simon recalls. "He was so impressed with our guitars that he wanted to partner with us." The result was nothing short of spectacular. "Big news, we're launching the new version of it," Simon teases. "It's gonna be a Candy Red Sparkle with a chrome pickguard. So that will be something pretty unique, yeah." ▶

Steve Stevens, the guitar maestro behind Billy Idol, is another star in the Godin constellation. Known for his electrifying performances and technical prowess, Stevens has showcased Godin guitars in iconic settings—playing atop the Empire State Building and at the Hoover Dam. “Steve Stevens has been an incredible partner,” Simon says. “His performances at such iconic locations highlight the versatility and excellence of our guitars.”

Despite their global acclaim, Godin Guitars maintains a boutique ethos, balancing large-scale production with artisan craftsmanship. “We find we’re still like a boutique company, but we’re the largest manufacturer in

North America,” Simon explains. “My dad started the company, and here I am, ensuring that the legacy continues with the same passion and dedication.”

Godin’s meticulous approach to guitar-making is a testament to their commitment to excellence. With factories just a short drive from their Montreal headquarters, Simon keeps a close eye on production. “Having the factory two hours from where I live, I go there twice a week,” he says. “We have five factories now, all outside of Montreal. Making a guitar for us, acoustic or electric, takes a minimum of 8 to 10 weeks. We don’t make a guitar in two hours, and that’s why when you play one of our 



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instruments, it's solid, it sounds good, and it's a value which will stay for a long time."

Simon is not one to rest on his laurels. The future of Godin Guitars shines brightly with new models and artist collaborations. The upcoming Steve Stevens signature model is already generating buzz. "It's going to be a multi-ac ACS with the flame purple, so pink to purple burst," Simon reveals. "This is coming out very soon too."

For Godin fans worldwide, the brand's new partnership with distributor JHS means their guitars are more accessible than ever. "We just changed the distributor to JHS, and that was the best move we ever made. They're a big company, able to bring containers here in the UK and supply music stores," Simon shares. "You're going to see more and more Godin, Seagull, and Art & Lutherie products here in the UK."

In a nod to their storied past, Godin is reviving the classic Artisan series, blend-

ing vintage charm with modern enhancements. "For the fans of Godin, when my dad started the first solid body, it was called the Artisan series. I'm launching back the Artisan with some new body carved tops and slight changes. But you're going to see some versions with two humbuckers and three singles, coming out, hopefully, in 2024."

With innovative models, iconic collaborations, and a steadfast commitment to quality and sustainability, Godin Guitars is poised to continue its legendary journey. Under Simon's passionate leadership, the brand stays true to its roots while pushing the boundaries of guitar-making.

As Simon Godin confirms, "There's more to come, indeed." Keep your eyes peeled for the latest releases and experience the exceptional craftsmanship that defines Godin Guitars. The legend continues, one meticulously crafted guitar at a time.



*For more information on Godin Guitars,
please visit: **godinguitars.com***



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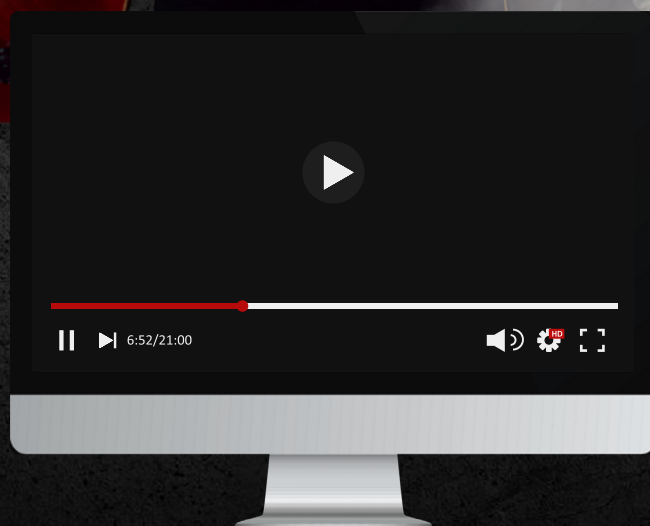
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*With each new edition of **Guitar Interactive Magazine** comes the chance of winning a fantastic prize in our free to enter competition.*

YOUR CHANCES TO WIN

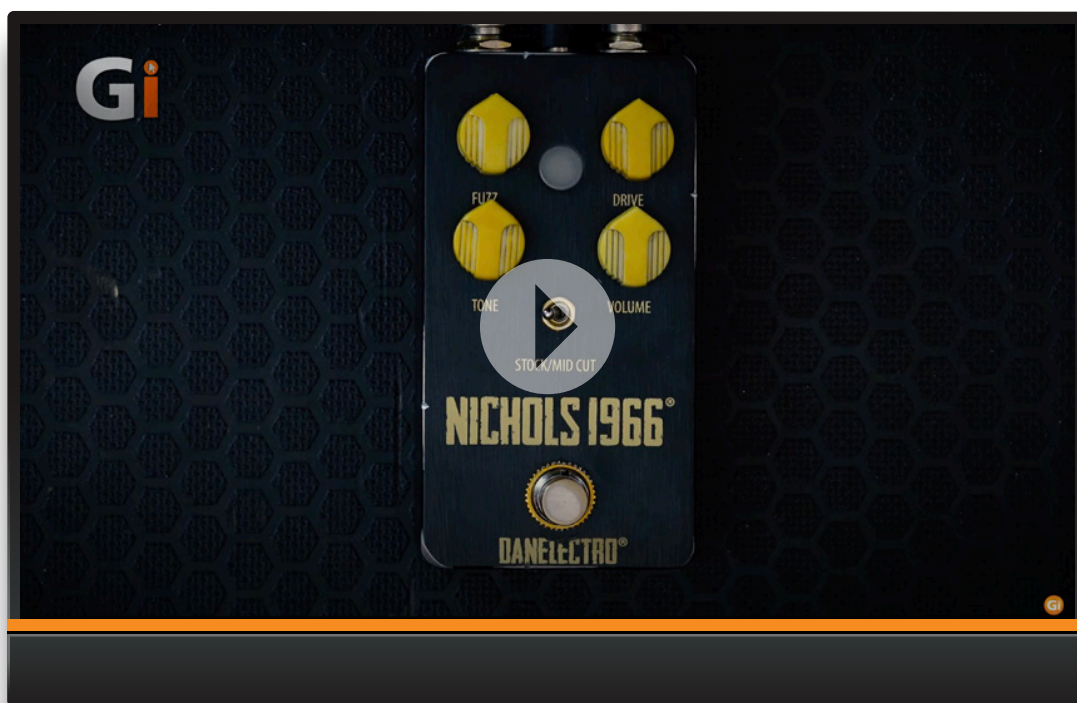
YOUR CHANCE TO WIN
Gi
YOUR CHANCE TO WIN



WIN!

1 of 5 Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz entry competition.

In this issue's competition, we are giving 1 lucky winner a chance to get their hands on a *Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz*



About the *Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal*

IN THE HILLS ABOVE HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA... sit several well known canyons. Beachwood Canyon, to the East of Hollywood, is home to the famous HOLLYWOOD sign. To the West sits Nichols Canyon, where Foxx pedals founder and current Danelectro owner

How do you win? It's easy.

Send us an email with the subject "Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal" to competitions@guitarinteractivemagazine.com One winner will be selected random

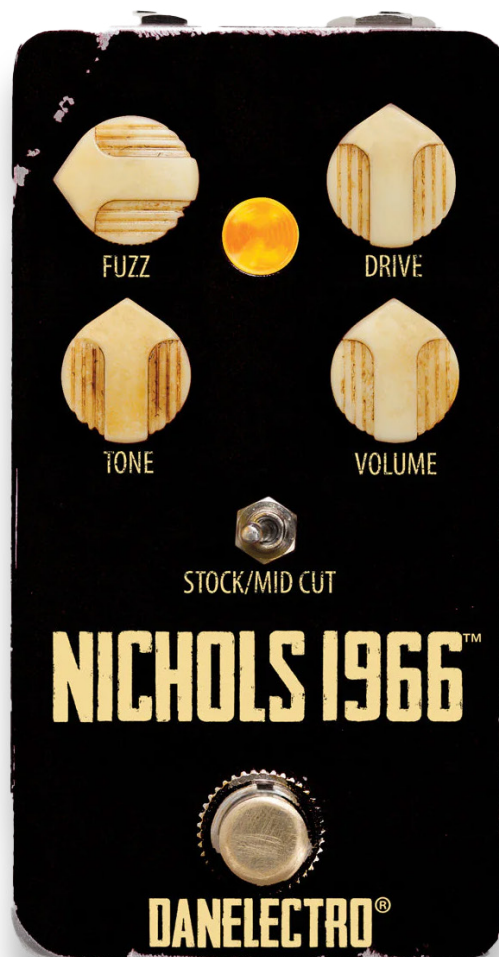
6 Fuzz Pedals in our free

Steve lived with his parents in the mid 1960's. It was in the garage of that home on Nichols Canyon Place that Steve created his first effects pedal, which he named "The Liverpool Fuzz Tone". Steve had no money to buy a fuzz and no access to any schematics. So he created a completely unique circuit architecture that has never been seen again.

Although he called his box a "fuzz", it was in fact half way between a distortion and a fuzz. This incredible box dishes out delicious tones unlike those of any pedal ever made. While Steve labored to create this new box in 1966, less than 2 miles away in Laurel Canyon musicians were collaborating on what would become the most famous songs of the 1960's.

ENTER

Good Luck!



For more information on Danelectro products, please visit: jhs.co.uk/collections/danelectro



THE REVIEWS

*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.

GUITARS, AMPS AND EFFECTS

PRODUCT RECOMMENDED
Gi
PRODUCT



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les

The Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Custom seamlessly blends iconic design with modern playability. With its open-book style headstock, this guitar features a mahogany body and neck paired with an elegant aesthetic. Equipped with ProBucker pickups, it delivers rich, vintage tones. Gold hardware, perfect for any genre, this guitar combines timeless design with modern craftsmanship. Here's **Nick Jennison** to tell us more.

WHILE the list of players we associate with the Les Paul Standard is long and storied, the roster of “Les Paul Custom players” is just as long and just as illustrious. Randy Rhoads; Mick Ronson; Steve Jones; Adam Jones; Mick Jones (and the OTHER Mick Jones); John Sykes; Peter Dinklage; Zakk Wylde; and (lest we forget) Les himself, with his black and gold beauties and matching tux.

They're beautiful, elegant instruments that simultaneously exude both class and rock & roll, but they're not cheap. Enter Epiphone, with their new “Inspired by Gibson Custom” range. As the name would imply, these guitars are made in close collaboration with Gibson's Custom Shop in Nashville but produced in Epiphone's own East Asian plant. They're made with the highest care and attention to detail using premium woods ▶



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Custom

Paul Custom

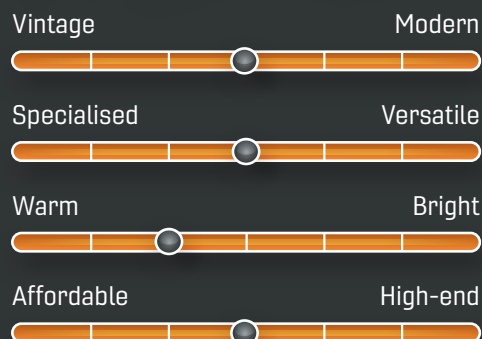
with top-tier performance. Showcasing the classic bony fretboard for unparalleled sustain and smooth block inlays, and multi-ply binding elevate its craftsmanship at a price that doesn't break the bank.



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Custom

MSRP: (UK) £1199 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Authentic Les Paul Custom looks
- » Powerful, tight gain tones
- » A lot of guitar for your money

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com



and electronics, but despite occupying the absolute apex of the Epiphone range, these guitars are still very reasonably priced - at least in the grand scheme.

Undoubtedly the first thing you'll notice is the headstock. These are among the first Epiphones to feature a Gibson-style "open book" headstock shape, and I'm shocked at how much of a difference this makes to the overall aesthetic of the guitar. The "Kalamazoo" Epiphone headstock is a very attractive design for sure and looks great on a Casino or a Sheraton, but somehow it never seemed "right" on a Les Paul.

Of course, there is still a version of the Les Paul Custom available with the Epiphone headstock, and it's significantly cheaper than the "Inspired by..." model.

This might lead some to suggest that the Inspired by Gibson Custom is just a £500 headstock upgrade, but that could not be further from the truth. For the extra spend, you're getting a full-thickness maple cap, a one-piece mahogany neck (so no scarf joints), a genuine ebony fretboard with genuine MOP inlays, a hard case, and (perhaps most importantly) Gibson USA electronics throughout in the form of CTS pots, Mallory capacitors, and a set of Gibson 490R/498T pickups. Considering the case and the pickups alone will set you back over £500, it's actually something of a bargain.

This leads us neatly onto the sonics, which are excellent. This guitar exhibits all the hallmarks of a good Les Paul Custom and excels at medium to high-gain tones. The



bridge position is muscular and punchy with plenty of high-end bite, but the extreme highs are a little rolled off in comparison to, say, a Burstbucker Pro. Similarly, the neck position is round and fat without being excessively dark and is just made for those creamy lead tones we all covet. There's a reason Gibson has been putting these pickups in their Les Paul Customs for decades - they're tight, aggressive, and articulate, and while the Custombuckers in the new "Inspired by..." 1959 Les Paul Standard might be a better choice for folks seeking the most authentic vintage PAF tone, the "49s" are a great choice for those of us who live at the heavier end of the tone spectrum.

It's no secret that Epiphone guitars have been the equal of their USA-made counterparts in terms of playability and fit-and-finish for some time now, and there were even a handful of difficult years for Gibson in the late 2010s where high-end Epis were eclipsing all but the most expensive Gibsons when it came to play feel. The "Inspired by..." Les Paul Custom is no exception, and while the factory setup was a little on the conservative side, a quick bridge height adjustment was all it took to get this guitar absolutely ripping with an effortlessly low action and not a hint of buzz or rattle. The neck shape (which Epiphone is calling a "Modern Medium C") sits in the "goldilocks zone" between a slim '60s neck and a fat '50s carve. It's very fast, but there's still plenty of meat if you're a "thumb-around"

kind of player who likes a guitar you can wrestle with.

The Epiphone "Inspired by Gibson Custom" Les Paul Custom represents a significant step forward for Epiphone's already excellent Les Paul Custom range. If you handed me this guitar and told me it was a Gibson Les Paul Custom, I'd believe you on feel alone - and it has the tone and playability to match. It's very much the "rocker's guitar" of the "Inspired by..." range, and vintage purists might prefer the 1959 Les Paul Standard, but for everything from the heavier end of blues through to roaring high gain, this guitar is superb.



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355

The Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355 is a nod to one of the most iconic guitars of all time. With its mahogany neck, and ebony fretboard, this guitar is designed to deliver the rich, resonant tone that players have sought for over 60 years. The appointment of the open-book style headstock and USA-made components ensure an authentic, vintage sound—warm, smooth, and full of character—while also capturing the spirit of the original. Here's Nick Jennison to tell us more

FOR many, the Gibson “ES” (“Electric Spanish”) is the shape they imagine when they think of an electric guitar. These beautiful, slim-bodied semi-hollows have a reputation not only for their good looks and exquisite craftsmanship but also for their versatility, finding favour with players as diverse as BB King, Larry Carlton, Chuck Berry, Joe Perry, and Richie Blackmore.

Built in close collaboration with the Gibson Custom Shop, Epiphone's new Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355 encapsulates all of the elegance, class, and craftsmanship of the originals, but at a much more appealing price point. Given Epiphone's history of building Sheratons, Casinos, and the like, it should come as no surprise that the 1959 ES-355 is excellent. ▶



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355

9 ES-355

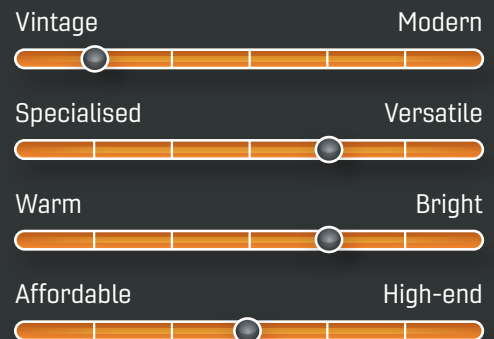
ars in history. With its semi-hollow maple body, nes that have made the ES-355 a favourite among e Gibson Custombucker pickups ensures you get e timeless aesthetic that the ES-355 commands.



**Epiphone Inspired by Gibson
Custom 1959 ES-355**

MSRP: (UK) £1199 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Classy "ES" looks
- » High-end PAF tones
- » Premium quality at an affordable price

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com



The body is a centre block design with a maple block and 5-piece layered maple and poplar body, with the same contours as the original. The long-tenon neck is a single piece of mahogany with no scarf joints, and it comes with a genuine ebony fretboard. It's a super comfortable neck shape, with plenty of beef (and the tuning and tonal benefits that come with a bigger neck), but it never feels clubby or cumbersome—nor is it heavy enough to cause the dreaded “neck dive.” And of course, it comes with the Gibson-style “open book” headstock.

The difference between the 335 that we're all familiar with and the more high-end 355 is largely cosmetic, with the latter sporting an ebony fretboard, more elaborate binding (3-ply on the back, 5-ply on

the headstock, and 7-ply on the top), and more “premium” inlays—block position markers and the classic “split diamond” on the headstock. Just like the Gibson Custom version, the Epiphone 1959 ES-355 uses genuine mother of pearl for all of these inlays.

Perhaps the most “premium” feature on this guitar (and all of its Inspired by Gibson Custom stablemates) is the electronics. It comes loaded with CTS pots, Switchcraft jack and toggle switch, Mallory capacitors, and—most importantly—a set of Gibson USA “Custombuckers.” Costing about half the price of this entire guitar, these pickups are Gibson's latest (and best) attempt to capture the magic of the PAF humbuckers found on their '50s and '60s guitars. Given how varied the originals



The Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355 is a very attractive and high-quality recreation of an all-time classic.

were, the “PAF sound” means many things to many different people, and the Custombuckers are an aggregate of the best qualities of all of the many original ‘50s and ‘60s PAFs that Gibson collected and examined during their development. They’re un-potted, with a fairly low output and a beautiful airy high end and a fast transient “smack.” The result is a guitar that sounds beautifully balanced for both clean and dry tones, with plenty of “sting” for bluesy leads and more than enough warmth and articulation for intricate jazz lines. They’re not the best equipped for modern metal tones, but I’m assuming you aren’t buying a 355 to play djent. For everything else, the 1959 ES-355 really delivers with class, poise, and tons of vibe.

The Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom 1959 ES-355 is a very attractive and high-quality recreation of an all-time classic. The inclusion of a set of Custombuckers really elevates this instrument beyond similar offerings, and the construction and attention to detail are first-rate. It’s also worth mentioning that, for the price of a Gibson Custom 355, you could have an Epiphone 355 in each of the three colours it comes in. A very appealing proposition!



PRS NF3 SE

Nick Jennison reviews the PRS NF3 SE — the new standout in the PRS lineup. Featuring three humbuckers, the NF3 SE's poplar body, 22-fret bolt-on maple neck, and rosewood fretboard ensure the NF3 SE delivers a focused, powerful tone with taller bobbins and extra metal pieces between the pickups. It offers smooth bending and fluttering. Perfect for rock, blues, gospel, country, or jazz, the NF3 SE is a down.

BEFORE we go any further, allow me to address the elephant in the room. As avid GI readers will be aware, I'm a PRS artist. I love PRS guitars, and they're very good to me. That said, no guitar maker is perfect, and I've never shied away from criticizing things I don't like about PRS guitars, and if I'm not into a guitar I won't say otherwise.

One such guitar that I've been critical of in the past is the original PRS NF3. As much as I wanted to love this guitar, it just felt like "neither nowt nor summat". The tone struck me as having the worst aspects of single coils and humbuckers: a rare "swing and a miss" from PRS. ▶



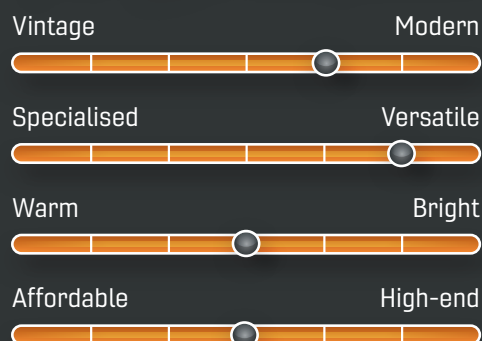
ee PRS Narrowfield pickups (a first for the SE series) for versatile playability. The Narrowfield DD "S" pickups feature magnets. Anchored by PRS's patented tremolo, the NF3 SE is a versatile workhorse that's hard to put



PRS NF3 SE

MSRP: (UK) £799 | (US) \$799

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » The best aspects of single coils and humbuckers;
- » Exceptional playability;
- » Massive versatility

For more information, please visit:

prsguitars.com



So I approached the SE NF3 with a cynical mind, expecting another guitar that didn't do it for me. I am very happy to report that this instrument proved me very, very wrong. In fact, it might be the best SE guitar I've ever played.

The SE NF3 is a bolt-on design with a maple neck and a body style that's in the vein of the older EG guitars which informed the Silver Sky (among others). It sports a PRS SE floating tremolo, and a trio of Narrowfield DD "S" pickups - the "DD" meaning "Deep Dish", while the "S" refers to the East Asian construction. These pickups are fully hum-canceling, but PRS claims they sound just like single coils. We'll get to that, but what I will say is that they are unquestionably this guitar's biggest strength - in the same way that they

were the biggest letdown in the original NF3. Whatever PRS has changed between the original Narrowfield pickups and the "Deep Dish" versions, it worked!

Do they sound like traditional single coils? Honestly, not really. In a direct comparison to an SE Silver Sky, the SE NF3's tone is significantly fatter and louder, with a robust low end that's similar to a good PAF, combined with a bright and sparkling high end that is very "single-coil-esque", but a little smoother and more refined. If I had to liken the sound to anything, I'd probably compare it to Andy Timmons's "Strat but bigger" tone. All five positions sound beautiful and elegant when played clean, powerful and characterful with overdrive, and completely noiseless. It's trivially easy to coax throaty blues, spanky funk, ➤



MOOER

GE1000/GE1000Li

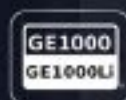
Intelligent Multi Effect Pedal



The GE1000 comes preloaded with an impressive bank of guitar effects and amp simulations, but this is augmented further through MNRS GE Cloud support.

GE1000 also includes a cutting-edge AI-driven automatic equalizer, a first for MOOER. This automatically adjusts a 5-band EQ based on the user's playing and music style choice, providing further possibilities for creativity whilst still providing the flexibility of a manual-controlled EQ interface.

MOOER has always excelled at providing innovative UI experiences, and the GE1000 is set to continue this trend. The pedal features a 5-inch high-quality colored touch screen designed for intuitive multi-effect workflows while keeping some fan favorites from previous GE pedals. The pedal will be sold in two formats: the standard GE1000, and the GE1000 Li. The latter option is installed with a Lithium-ion battery, enabling guitarists to use the pedal even when mains power is unavailable.



Optional Battery
Version



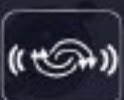
5-inch
Touch Screen



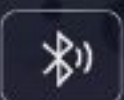
Numerous MNRS
Files Available



Up to 2048
Points IR



Stereo
FX LOOP



Bluetooth
Audio



MIDI
Features



ASIO USB
AUDIO



Support for
Mobile App



AI EQ
MASTER

country twang, and punchy high-gain tones out of this guitar, despite the minimalist control layout. It just works.

Playability is exactly what you'd expect from PRS, in that it's flawless. Notably, the factory setup is significantly more "friendly" than you'd find on PRS guitars from a few years ago. I could never understand why PRS would opt for a fairly stiff action from the factory, given how immaculate the fretwork is on their instruments, but I'm pleased to see them moving away from this spec toward something more imme-

diately playable. The neck has a great feel that's listed as "Wide Thin", but feels just a hair fatter to me, putting it in a sweet spot for a wide variety of playing styles.

The PRS tremolo is one of the best in the business, and the one on the SE NF3 is a great example of this. It's set up floating, but with only enough room to pull up by about a semitone. That's not a huge issue though, since there's still plenty of travel for chord shimmers, bar vibrato, and even Jeff Beck-style flutters. Tuning stability is predictably excellent, even without lock-

The PRS tremolo is one of the best in the business, and the one on the SE NF3 is a great example of this.



ing tuners (although PRS does sell drop-in locking tuners to fit this guitar for a relatively small price).

Available in four attractive solid finishes, each with the option of maple and rosewood fretboards, the PRS SE NF3 is a guitar for all seasons. It's perfectly at home in just about any musical setting, plays beautifully, and looks sharp as a dart. Is it the best SE that PRS has made to date? I think so.



Music Man Majesty Arctic Aurora

Nick Jennison reviews the Music Man Majesty Arctic Aurora — a guitar designed in collaboration with John Petrucci. The instrument features a sleek, contoured body with an eye-catching Arctic Aurora finish. Through design, it combines mahogany and basswood for superior resonance and sustain. Equipped with two humbucker pickups, it delivers a versatile range of tones, from warm cleans to searing leads. The custom-tuned bridge ensures precise tuning and stability, making it the ultimate tool for serious musicians.

I'VE long thought of guitars as being like cars, to the point of making comparisons that are probably a bit too specific. LPs, for example, are like American muscle cars: they're heavy, loud, look amazing, and break all the time. They aren't much use in the corners, but they make an absolutely righteous noise. Japanese superstrats

are like modded Subarus: well-built, a little gauche, but they'll roast almost anything over a quarter mile. Then there's the Music Man Majesty, which is a Formula 1 car.

It's not just me who thinks this, by the way: according to the High King of Shred himself, John Petrucci, the Majesty was designed ▶



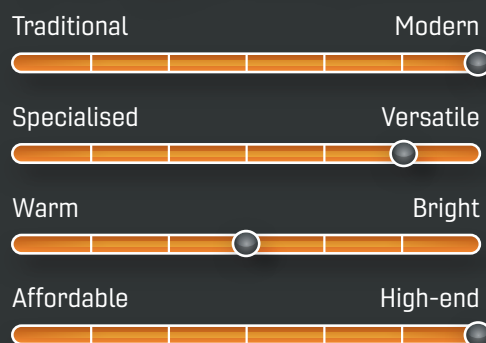
collaboration with the legendary John Petrucci. This stunning guitar shifts from icy blue to deep purple. Its neck is topped with DiMarzio Dreamcatcher and Rainmaker pickups, a floating tremolo bridge and locking tuners en-



Music Man Majesty Arctic Aurora

MSRP: (UK) £6299 | (US) \$6399

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Peerless craftsmanship
- » Huge versatility
- » Unparalleled playability

For more information, please visit:

music-man.com





with this kind of ultra-high-performance track monster in mind. It's viciously elegant, faultlessly ergonomic, and you'll never find a guitar that's faster. If you have the chops to handle this much guitar, you'll be rewarded with an instrument that can go wherever your imagination can take you.

The BFR version of the Majesty takes this highly refined formula and adds a level of luxury and craftsmanship that's on another level entirely. Available in three new finishes for 2024 - Red Nebula, Blue Ink, and Arctic Aurora (the model we're looking at in this review) - each is strictly limited to 100 six-string and 50 seven-string models worldwide. Each finish comes with its own combination of premium

woods, with Arctic Aurora sporting Black Limba body wings, a Honduran Mahogany and Flame Maple neck-through, all capped with a thick and intensely figured Burl Maple top. I'm lucky enough to lay my hands on a lot of very premium guitars in my line of work, but even I couldn't help but let out a little "ooof" when I laid eyes on this guitar. Visually, it's something else.

In terms of performance, it's "business as usual" - and by that, I mean it's flawless. The fit, finish, and setup are so perfect, it feels like an iPhone in a world of payphones.

The ebony fretboard and 24 stainless steel frets feel like playing on glass, and the controls are perfectly laid out so that you can access any of the plethora of sounds this guitar has to offer without missing a note. The trem flutters, dives, and gargles with perfect return to pitch, and the feel under the palm is

Quite apart from delivering a pretty convincing acoustic sound, the piezo adds an unreal sparkle to 80s-style cleans

smooth and tactile with no sharp edges or protruding screws in sight. The level of refinement here is beyond even Music Man's usual incredible standards.

Apart from his revolving door of overdrive pedals, Petrucci seems to have changed his pickups more over the years than any other part of his rig. The fact that the Dreamcatcher/Rainmaker combo has been standard in his Majesty guitars for as long as they have likely means that John has finally settled on something he's completely happy with, and it's easy to see why. The three "cardinal Petrucci tones" of "tight bridge pickup crunch," "liquid neck pickup lead," and "piano-like split middle position clean" are perfectly encapsulated in this set, with the addition of an "un-split" middle position voice that's great for fatter cleans and character fusion leads.

That's not all though - there's also the piezo and the switchable boost. Quite apart from delivering a pretty convincing acoustic

sound, the piezo adds an unreal sparkle to 80s-style cleans. The piezo tone can be tweaked with the mini pots on the rear control cover, but I didn't feel the need to - it sounds "right" straight from the factory. There's also the on-board boost, which at the tap of a push-push switch adds up to 20 dB of clean output to the guitar's signal. It's easily enough to take an articulate crunch sound into a hyper-saturated lead tone, or to blow up an edge-of-breakup amp into roaring distortion.

The Music Man Majesty is already at the bleeding edge of guitar construction, and it's hard to imagine how it could be possible to elevate this guitar beyond the incredible heights of the production model... but Music Man has done it. If you need the ultimate in high-performance guitars, get a Majesty, but if only the best of the best will do - and you can afford it - you need a BFR.



Music Man Majesty 6, 7 & 8 String

Unleash your inner guitar god with the Music Man Majesty, available in 6, 7, and 8-string models. These guitars feature sleek, contoured bodies for optimal comfort and playability. Constructed from basswood, they offer exceptional resonance and sustain. Equipped with DiMarzio Dreamcatcher pickups, they provide a versatile tonal range from clean and warm to aggressive and powerful. The custom floating tremolo system ensures stability, making the Majesty a top choice for serious musicians across genres.

JOHN Petrucci is known for many things: his incredible facility as a guitar player, his genius-level musical intellect as a composer and producer, his impressive beard, being absolutely jacked, and the memes (oh my, the memes). But for us gearhounds, he's equally well known for his relentless pursuit of perfection with his

equipment. The Majesty line of guitars is a reflection of this commitment to excellence from both Petrucci and Music Man, resulting in the apex of guitar ergonomics and performance.

For the unfamiliar, the Majesty is a purpose-built shred machine, taking inspiration 🎸



Music Man Music Man Majesty 6, 7 & 8 String

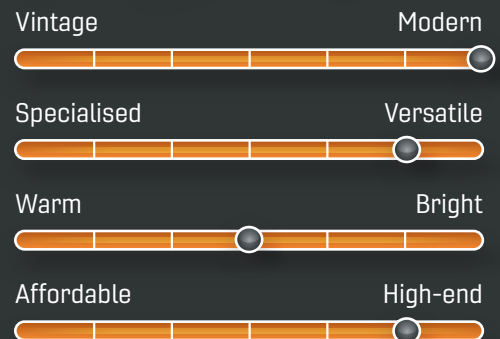
models. Designed in collaboration with John Petrucci, equipped with a neck-through design using mahogany and Rainmaker and Rainmaker pickups, they provide a versatile bridge and locking tuners ensure precise tuning



Music Man Majesty 6, 7 & 8 String

MSRP: (6 String) \$3699 | (7 String)
\$3899 | (8 String) \$4099

The Breakdown



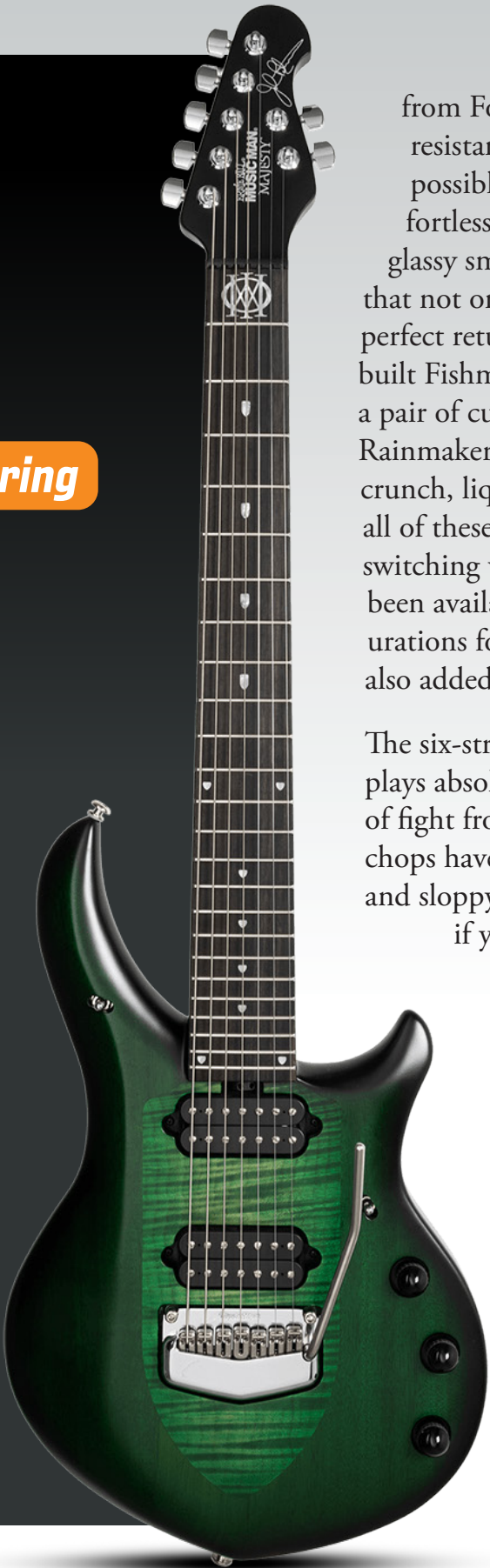
For fans of

- » Effortless playability
- » A massive palette of tones
- » Super articulate extended-range sounds

For more information, please visit:

music-man.com

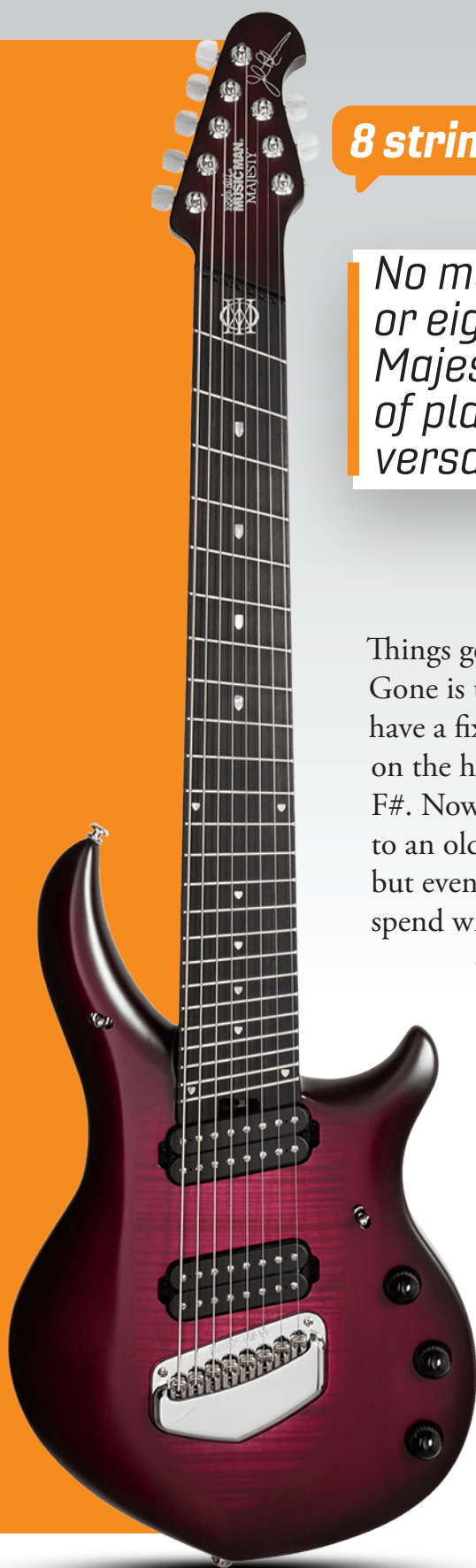



7 string

from Formula 1 cars and built to offer as little resistance to the player's creativity as humanly possible. It's perfectly balanced, with an effortlessly slim through neck, capped with 24 glassy smooth stainless steel frets. It has a trem that not only has a massive range of travel and perfect return to pitch but also houses custom-built Fishman piezo saddles. It comes loaded with a pair of custom DiMarzio Dreamcatcher and Rainmaker humbuckers that deliver articulate crunch, liquid leads, and beautiful cleans, and all of these tones are laid out to enable effortless switching via the ergonomic control layout. It's been available in both six and seven-string configurations for a while, but recently Music Man has also added an eight-string variant to the range.

The six-string is shred perfection personified and plays absolutely effortlessly. If you're used to a bit of fight from a guitar, you'll find none here. Your chops have to be "on it" to make this guitar work, and sloppy technique will be starkly revealed; but if you can handle it, the Majesty will encourage your playing to new heights.

The switch from six to seven strings can often throw off players who aren't used to extended range instruments. Myself, I played seven strings for a while in my youth, but it's been almost twenty years since I spent more than ten minutes with one. Even still, the transition was surprisingly natural. The pickups sound very close to their six-string counterparts, and the low B is clear, rich, and punchy.



8 string

No matter whether you're a six, seven, or eight-string player, the Music Man Majesty offers the absolute pinnacle of playability, construction, and versatility for the modern player.

Things get really crazy on the eight-string model, though. Gone is the trem, gone is the 25.5" scale, and instead, we have a fixed bridge, multiscale monster with a 25.5" scale on the high E, fanning out all the way to 27" on the low F#. Now, fanned fret instruments are basically kryptonite to an old hand like me, and eight strings already baffle me, but even with the relatively short period of time I got to spend with this monstrous instrument I could feel myself quickly adapting to it. I'd imagine in a day or two, it'd feel like second nature, and the crushing chugs and piano-like cleans have to be heard to be believed - especially if you layer the piezo pickup on top of the split middle position.

No matter whether you're a six, seven, or eight-string player, the Music Man Majesty offers the absolute pinnacle of playability, construction, and versatility for the modern player. You'll need to have your sh*t together, but if you can go, the Majesty can keep up with whatever you can throw at it and then some.



Jackson Pro Series Signature Jeff Loomis

Unleash your inner shredder with the Jackson Pro Series Signature Jeff Loomis Kelly HT6. Designed by himself, this guitar boasts a sleek, angular body with a stunning gloss black finish. It features Seymour Duncan pickups and an ebony fingerboard for exceptional sustain and playability. Equipped with powerful Seymour Duncan pickups, it delivers crushing tones with incredible clarity. The hardtail bridge ensures rock-solid performance in the studio, the HT6 is built to meet the demands of high-speed, high-gain performance. **Sam**

JEFF Loomis needs no introduction; he's a highly influential musician in the metal sphere of guitar. His searing guitar work can be heard in Nevermore, Arch Enemy, and in his solo projects. Jackson has released a Jeff Loomis signature guitar which is incredibly slick to play and looks like it means business.

The Jeff Loomis Signature Kelly is based on the Kelly design. Think of an extreme version of a Gibson Explorer, just way pointier and meaner looking. The gloss black finish, accented by the white binding, makes this guitar look startling. It's certainly eye-catching but also subtle. It looks like a sci-fi weapon. The fingerboard is made from ebony and is ▶



is Kelly HT6

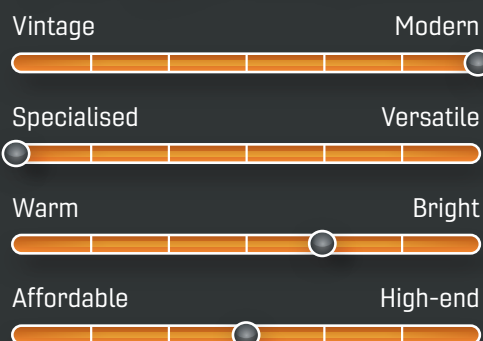
Designed in collaboration with the metal maestro is an alder body, maple neck-through construction, Seymour Duncan Jeff Loomis Signature Blackouts solid tuning stability. Whether you're on stage or in **Bell** reviews.



Jackson Pro Series Signature Jeff Loomis Kelly HT6

MSRP: (UK) £1399 | (US) \$1549

The Breakdown



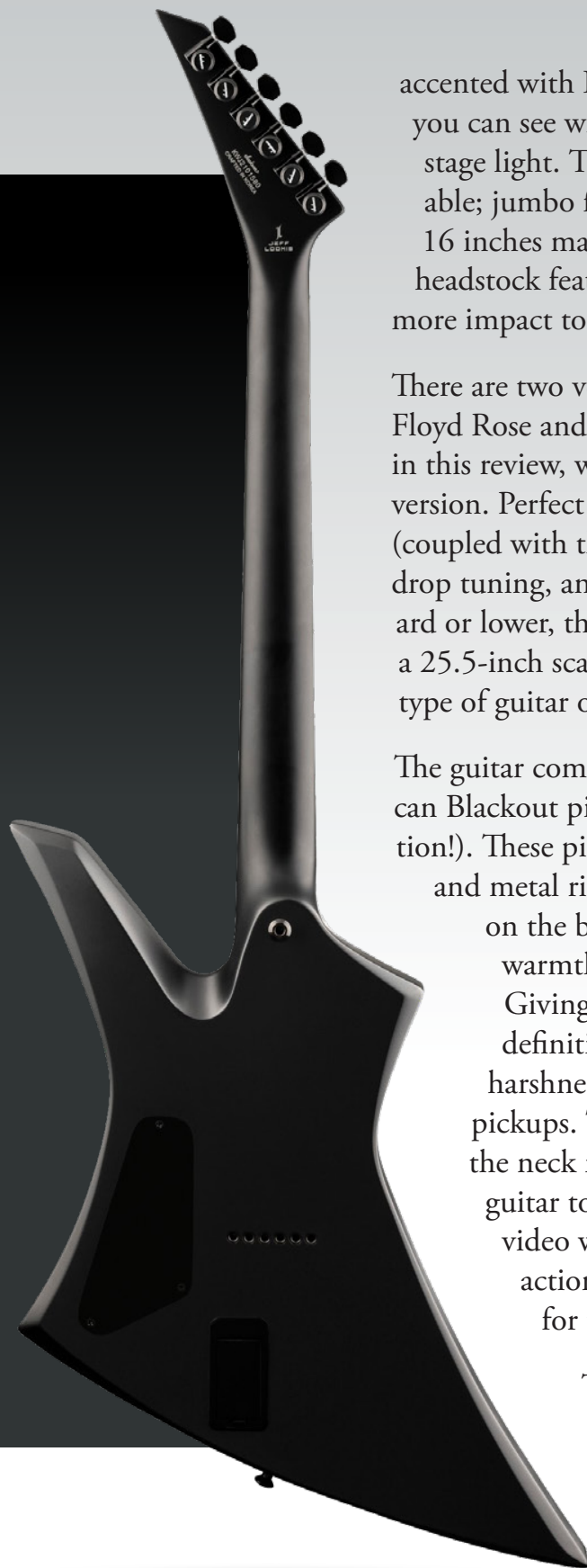
For fans of

- » Exceptional sustain and playability
- » Sleek design
- » Jeff Loomis

For more information, please visit:

jacksonguitars.com





accented with Luminlay fret dots on the side so you can see where you are on the fretboard in low stage light. The neck itself is dangerously playable; jumbo frets and a compound radius of 12-16 inches make soloing and riffing a breeze. The headstock features a 3D Jackson logo, adding a bit more impact to the design.

There are two versions of this guitar. The one with a Floyd Rose and one with a hardtail Hipshot bridge; in this review, we're taking a look at the hardtail version. Perfect if you want superb tuning stability (coupled with the Jackson locking tuners!) great for drop tuning, and if you want to tune to D standard or lower, the guitar will take it. The guitar has a 25.5-inch scale length, which is standard for this type of guitar over 24 frets.

The guitar comes loaded with some Seymour Duncan Blackout pickups (Jeff Loomis signature edition!). These pickups are phenomenal for shred and metal riffing. Super tight low end and growl on the bridge pickup, high gain squishy warmth, and clarity on the neck pickup. Giving high gain riffs and speedy phrases definition, and clarity without any plastic harshness that can come out of high gain pickups. These pickups in combination with the neck make this an absolute beast of a guitar to play. I got a bit carried away on the video with various shred licks. To hear it in action, check out Jeff's promotional videos for this guitar! Wow.

The electronics are very simple, with a three-way switch (bridge, both, and neck). The bridge is great for riffing and soloing (legato and sweeping come to mind!).



The middle position is great for clean tones, and the neck is perfect for searing leads and picking runs. This guitar is so metal that it doesn't have a tone control, just a volume. The volume isn't super responsive; it can be rolled back a bit to tame the gain if needed. But I feel like the volume on this guitar is more of an off-and-on switch than a 'tone' shaper, which is cool! It's designed for metal.

What else have I missed? Well, it has cool shark tooth inlays. But aside from that, I really feel it has to be heard and played to see how great this guitar is. Maybe the

'Explorer' design might be a put off to some players who might opt for a traditional shape, maybe due to practical reasons of traveling with the guitar (cases/damage etc.) or because they may find that where the arm rests on the guitar for picking may feel unusual. However, as a seasoned Strat/Tele player, I found this guitar very comfortable and natural to play!

If you're looking for a mean, keen, shred metal machine, check out the Jeff Loomis Jackson Signature Kelly!



Godin Stadium Pro Electric Guitar - Ozark Cream

Step into the spotlight with the Godin Stadium Pro Electric Guitar in stunning Ozark Cream. Modern playability, featuring a rock maple neck and a rosewood fretboard for smooth, comfortable play. With a Godin humbucker at the neck and a Godin coil pickup at the bridge, it offers a versatile range of tones. The high-gloss finish not only looks great but also enhances durability. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

I HAVE a friend who swears by Teles. They're all he'll play, and he sounds fantastic playing them. Shred, jazz, blues, fusion, country - with a Tele in hand, he can do it all. I'm forever envious of his killer twangy tones and the clean, rugged lines of his guitar of choice. "So why not play a Tele," I hear you ask? Because, dear reader,

they're brutally uncomfortable. Call me a princess, but I cannot make that slab body work for me. The lack of contours and low-profile bridge makes it feel impossible to find a comfortable picking hand position, and I keep stubbing my fingers on the volume pot when I try to switch pickups in a hurry. ▶



Godin Stadium Pro Electric Guitar - Ozark Cream

Ozark Cream

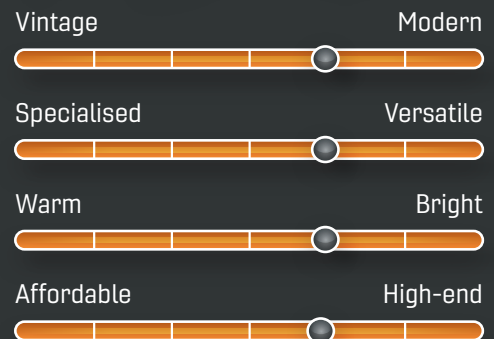
This guitar combines classic aesthetics with modern playing. Equipped with a Custom Cajun single-coils from bright and twangy to warm and full. The more.



Godin Stadium Pro Electric Guitar - Ozark Cream

MSRP: (UK) £1799 | (US) \$1799

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Tele twang;
- » Comfort and playability;
- » Clean modern styling

For more information, please visit:

jhs.co.uk/collections/godin





This comfort extends to the neck, which has a comfortable “Goldilocks” profile that’s thin enough for fleet-fingered shred, but with enough meat for a thumb-over grip.

Godin may have the answer to my T-type woes in the form of their Stadium Pro. At its core, it’s a T-style guitar, but every detail has been pored over to improve the “quality of life” for the player. The lightweight Canadian basswood body is gently contoured - not so much that it looks or feels alien, but enough to make it a much more comfortable playing experience. The compensated 3-saddle bridge has recessed grub screws so it doesn’t eat your hand up on palm-muted lines. The neck joint and lower horn allow for easier upper fret access. The control plate is massively elongated, allowing for much wider spacing between volume and tone controls and an angled selector switch. All of these little upgrades add up to a much more comfortable playing experience.



This comfort extends to the neck, which has a comfortable “Goldilocks” profile that’s thin enough for fleet-fingered shred, but with enough meat for a thumb-over grip. The 12” radius allows for a low action without bends choking out, and the satin finish feels very fast and tactile. ▶



The Godin Stadium Pro is an elegant, comfortable, and killer-sounding take on the classic Tele platform. If, like me, you love the tone of this kind of guitar but can't get along with the body style or playability, the Stadium Pro might be the answer.

It's available with rosewood and maple fretboards, which is more than just a cosmetic difference. It's become trendy to suggest that wood types make no difference to a guitar's tone, but whatever your stance on this contentious topic is, one thing that's undeniable is that these woods feel different under your fingers. Having this option at no extra cost is a blessing if, like me, you can't stand the feel of a finished maple fretboard - or maybe you're the opposite! Either way, Godin has you covered.

While the wood debate is controversial, what's unquestionable is the importance of the guitar's electronics. The pickups on the Stadium Pro are legitimately top-shelf, with a Lollar T Special in the bridge position and a TV Jones Starwood in the neck. It's not terribly common to see a mix of pickup brands in a new "off the shelf" guitar (usually for economic reasons, and not necessarily tonal ones), but this combination is absolutely killer. The Lollar in the bridge is muscular and twangy with a robust low end that fills out clean tones and adds authority to dirty sounds. T-style neck pickups can be very hit or miss, but this one is excellent, with lots of clarity and chime.

The Godin Stadium Pro is an elegant, comfortable, and killer-sounding take on the classic Tele platform. If, like me, you love the tone of this kind of guitar but can't get along with the body style or playability, the Stadium Pro might be the answer.



Mooer MSC10 Pro

Nick Jennison reviews the Mooer MSC10 Pro. Featuring a poplar body, roasted maple neck, 24 frets, it offers superb playability. The HSS pickup configuration delivers versatile tones, from vintage to modern. With a vintage-style tremolo, sealed gear machine heads, and high-gloss finishes like Black Cherry, it's a total package. Plus, it includes a Mooer gig bag for easy portability, all at an incredible price point that makes it a real contender.

MOOER'S GTRS line of “intelligent guitars” has been perhaps the most impressive piece of guitar technology to come out of East Asia in recent years, marking another step by Mooer towards dominance in the “high tech” guitar space. But the most surprising part for us (that is, myself and GI Editor Jonathan

Graham) was not the excellent on-board processing, but how nice the guitars themselves are. Feeling like the out-of-touch Elder Millennials we are, we asked, “what would one of these guitars look like without the processing?”, confident we were missing the point entirely. ▶



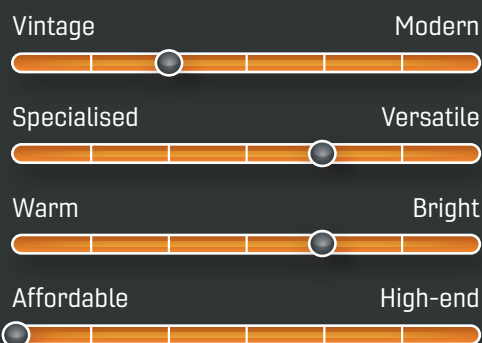
and Tech ebony fingerboard with 22 nickel silver
m crisp single-coil clarity to rich humbucker warmth.
and Surf Green, this guitar is as stylish as it is func-
that makes it accessible for musicians of all levels.



Moorer MSC10 Pro

MSRP: (UK) £162 | (US) \$199

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Classic looks
- » Great feeling necks
- » Bargains

For more information, please visit:

www.mooreraudio.com/





Turns out we weren't, and Mooer has an answer to this question in the form of the MSC10 Pro. Quite unlike the GTRS line, the MSC10 is a simple, straight-up instrument at a price that boggles the mind. It's a Strat-style HSS guitar with a poplar body, roasted maple bolt-on neck, a five-way blade switch, master volume, and two tone controls. It's standard stuff, but if it ain't broke, why fix it?

Visually, the MSC10 drips with classic style in a way that so many "budget" Strat-style guitars do not. The plastic parts are aged cream instead of "kitchen appliance" white, and it's available in six very fetching finishes with matching traditional finishes, including the three-tone sunburst we're looking at here. The tortoise pickguard and black humbucker have strong "California custom" vibes, and the exposed poplar has a grain that looks similar to a nice piece of ash. We could argue about the tonal implications of poplar compared to the more standard wood choices, but considering this guitar costs less than a nice overdrive pedal (and in some cases, the pedal-board you're going to put that pedal on), it seems a bit silly - especially given how many people don't believe it even makes a difference!

The neck is probably my favorite thing about this guitar, but also my biggest criticism. It's a super comfortable C-shaped roasted maple neck with a "Tech ebony" fretboard (I'm not sure what that means, but it looks and feels like ebony to me) that's reminiscent of some of the best feeling necks I've played from the likes of Music Man and EVH. It's a legitimately great-feeling neck, with 22 very nicely finished tall frets. Unfortunately, the fret edges are a little sharp on both sides, and the fretboard edges are pretty sharp too. Now, I personally don't notice this when I'm playing because I usually have a little space between my hand and the edge of the board, but that's not the case for everyone. It's a super easy fix though, and should take you no more than ten

minutes with some fine grit sandpaper to remedy - and given how good the rest of the guitar is, it's worth doing.

The electronics are a classic HSS Strat layout, with a meaty sounding humbucker in the bridge position and a pair of well-balanced single coils in the middle and neck positions. There's no option to split the bridge pickup, but I can't say I missed having this option. What I did miss was having a dedicated tone control for the bridge pickup: not because it's harsh and needed taming, far from it - I just missed being able to do the "EJ" bridge tone. Again, this

is a minor niggle, and if this is the worst I can say about the electronics on a sub-£200 guitar, Mooer must be doing something right!

The MSC10 Pro is a guitar with an unbelievable spec sheet for a preposterously low price. Like every guitar at this price point, it would benefit from a "once over" by an experienced tech, but after that, you'll be left with an instrument that can stand up to pretty much any production guitar in the real world.



Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups

Nick Jennison reviews the Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups. Available in both Strat and Tele styles, these pickups are ideal for players seeking aggressive, punchy tones with outstanding clarity. Featuring ceramic magnets and a hot coil, they deliver tonally rich sounds ideal for rock, metal, and high-gain styles. Expect crisp highs, tight lows, and a snappy midrange. Perfect for both rhythm and lead playing. Transform your Strat or Tele with the dynamic, searing tones of the Hot Chicken.

WHEN I say “country guitar,” what sort of tone springs to mind? If you’re like most guitarists, you’ll think of a twangy, heavily compressed clean tone that’s closer to a pedal steel than a typical clean amp sound. Maybe there’ll be some slapback echo (ok, who am I kidding, there’s

no “maybe” about it), but the beautiful, round clean sound is non-negotiable, right?

Thing is, country guitar has changed a LOT since the days of “classic country.” A modern country player needs to be able to turn up the heat, whether that’s for Brad Paisley-style



and Tele sets, these high-output pickups are crafted for treble and overwound coils, they deliver powerful, harmonious, and a pronounced midrange, making them versatile tones of Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups.

bite or full-on Dann Huff scream, and many of the vintage single coils that are treasured for their clean sounds just won't cut it for the dirty stuff. That's before we talk about noise - if you're a working player in Nashville and you turn up to a session with a guitar that goes "bzzzzzzzzz" as soon as you hit your green overdrive of choice, you can be sure you aren't getting a call back.

Enter Seymour Duncan, with their new Hot Chicken pickups. Aimed squarely at the modern country player, these noiseless single coils are available in both Strat and Tele formats, and have the best of both worlds when it comes to tone. They're round, twangy, and characterful for clean sounds, but have enough output and punch to work equally well with high-gain sounds - and thanks to their stacked construction, they're totally noiseless.

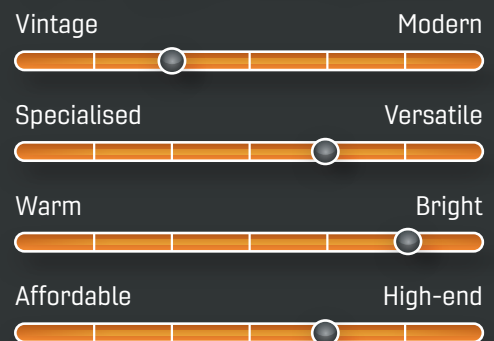
It's important to say at this point that the spec sheet on these pickups will likely deceive you. The stated DC resistance numbers on these pickups are frankly preposterous, but in reality, they're only slightly hotter than "vintage" spec. It just goes to show, you can't judge a pickup by the resistance alone. They're also very well balanced across the two sets that are available, with slightly hotter bridge pickups for a little extra punch and bite.



Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups

MSRP: (Strat) \$129 | (Tele) \$129

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Vintage country cleans;
- » High gain lead tones;
- » Noise-free performance

For more information, please visit:

seymourduncan.com



Whether you're a Strat or a Tele main, the Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken set delivers beautiful vintage clean tones with enough beef to handle the high-gain demands faced by the modern country player...

The Strat set has a little more low end and low midrange than I'd expect from a legitimate vintage single coil set, and that's a good thing. After all, there's a reason Teles are the weapon of choice for classic country players, and it's the muscle and punch the

bridge pickup provides. The Hot Chicken Strat bridge pickup is a little closer to this, but is still distinctly "Stratty" in its character. The neck and middle pickups are fat and tubular, and balance very well. The "in-between" tones aren't quite as sparkly and



Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups Strat

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Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken Pickups Tele



quacky as some vintage spec singles out there, but they do have a very healthy output that works great with gain sounds.

The Tele set, by contrast, is overtly “classic,” with a muscular bridge pickup that’s reminiscent of the “Broadcaster”-style models I’ve tried. It’s quite hot, but not monstrously so. The neck pickup, by contrast, is dark and full - a little too much for my tastes if I’m being honest, but that’s the nature of classic Tele neck pickups. It’ll do jazz and western swing tones very convincingly, with plenty of meat when it’s time to lay down some thick lead lines.

Whether you’re a Strat or a Tele main, the Seymour Duncan Hot Chicken set delivers beautiful vintage clean tones with enough beef to handle the high-gain demands faced by the modern country player - but they’re also versatile enough to hang at your rock, blues, or metal gig too!



Orange Valve Tester MK II

Keep your tubes in top shape with the Orange Valve Tester MK II — the ultimate tool for guitarists. This user-friendly device allows you to quickly and accurately test the condition and performance of your vacuum tubes. With clear indicators for emission, gain, and matching, it simplifies tube maintenance and troubleshooting. For all tube types, the Valve Tester MK II is incredibly versatile. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

THERE are many modern guitar arguments I'm prepared to entertain. I can see what both sides of the "tonewood debate" are saying. The same goes for the age-old "relic or no?" question. There's only one such argument that I take a hard-line stance on: valve amps are superior to everything else when it comes to guitar tone.

I love valve amps, you (I assume) love valve amps, everyone loves valve amps. If we didn't, there's no way we'd put up with the weight, heat, expense, and maintenance that are part and



arists and guitar techs alike. This compact and
ce of vacuum tubes. Featuring an intuitive interface
oubleshooting. Compatible with a wide range of

The Orange Valve Tester MK II might not be cheap, but it makes up for it by being incredibly useful, robust, compact, and easy to use.

parcel of valve amp ownership. Thankfully, Orange has a terribly useful bit of kit that helps with the latter. The Valve Tester MK II is a simple-to-use device that tests every aspect of a valve's health using DSP and outputs a score of "Good," "Worn," or "Fail" depending on the results of the tests being performed. If the valve fails, it'll even tell you why, although this information is likely much more useful for a tech than for your typical guitarist just checking if their valves are working.

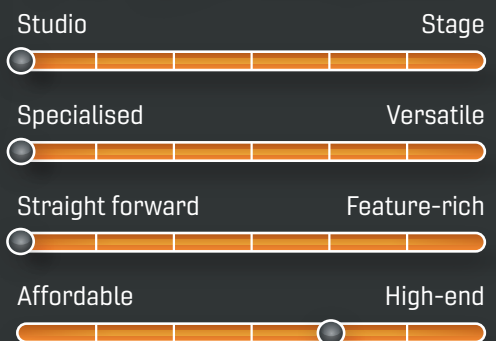
Performing the test could not be simpler. You plug in the valve you want to test, use the arrow buttons to select the appropriate type (out of a huge selection, with UK and US names provided), and hit "OK." Lights flash, computers beep and boop (figuratively, no actual noises are made), and the digital St. Peter within determines your valve's worth. It does take a while, but you're left with no doubts about the health of the valve in question. If you find yourself starting to question whether your amp's tone has "gone off"



Orange Valve Tester MK II

MSRP: (UK) £850 | (US) \$1075

The Breakdown



For fans of

» Tube Amps

» Keeping them working a peak performance

For more information, please visit:

orangeamps.com



The Orange Valve Tester MK II might not be cheap, but it makes up for it by being incredibly useful, robust, compact, and easy to use.



Orange Valve Tester MK II



and you're thinking of paying out for new valves, this is an objective way to find out.

Another super useful feature is the “match” score. For valves to perform at their best, they need to be matched with their counterparts. The valve tester provides an easy-to-interpret score for a valve's operational parameters, which you can use to determine which valves out of a batch to use in a particular set,

or where to place them in a quartet, octet, or similar.

The Orange Valve Tester MK II might not be cheap, but it makes up for it by being incredibly useful, robust, compact, and easy to use. If you're a valve amp fan with a collection of glass-powered tone machines — or a hi-fi enthusiast for that matter — it's a tool you should really consider adding to your kit.



Universal Audio UAFX Orion Tape Echo

Sam Bell takes a closer look at Universal Audio's Orion Tape Echo. This meticulously crafted classic tape echo machines. Featuring authentic tape modulation and adjustable delay times. The Orion Tape Echo boasts a rugged, road-ready design with intuitive controls for easy two subtle depth or expansive, atmospheric delays, this pedal delivers with precision and character. In short, the Universal Audio Orion Tape Echo is your gateway to timeless, echo-drenched sound.

UNIVERSAL Audio is well known for their high-quality effects for DAW and hardware. The Orion series brings these high-quality effects to the stage with their series of compact pedals. In this review, I'm going to take a look at the UAFX Tape Echo. This is a '70s tape echo delay effect pedal with tons of personality, and it's not going to totally break the bank. Let's dive in.

The UAFX Tape Echo allows users to get an authentic tape echo sound in their signal chain. Back in the '70s, studios would create delay/echo effects by feeding signals into tape machines, which would create the echo effect. Because of the use of tape, the repeats would be modulated slightly, and depending on the age, condition, and recording level of the tape, these repeats would have all kinds of natural inconsistencies that sound musical!

The pedal is fairly straightforward, but there are lots of subtle variations we can dial in thanks to its interesting controls. The Delay control changes the speed of the repeats up to 700 ms. The Mix allows us to gradually bring in the delay effect as a wet/dry control, so on full settings, you'll only hear the delayed effect.

Below these two main controls, there's a Tape Switch. This allows us to choose between Mint, Worn, and Old tapes. A Mint tape would be a brand-new '70s tape, Worn means it would have been recorded over a few times, and Old means it is old and worn, perhaps subject to environmental damage. Using the Wonk and Rec Level controls, we can change how extreme the tape's artifacts are on the repeats. Wonk changes the intensity and randomness of the Wow and Flutter, which in layman's terms could be seen as

Turning this up will enable it to repeat forever, which can lead to some interesting textures when combined with creative use of the Delay and Mix controls.

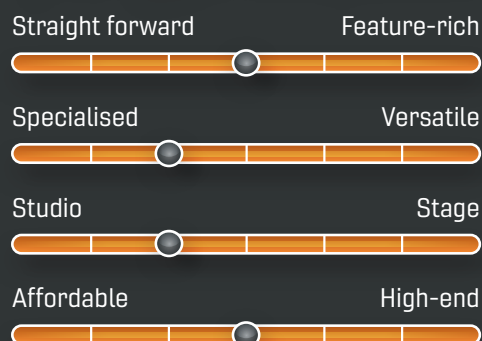
effect unit recreates the warm, lush delays of
s, it brings a rich, analogue warmth to your tone.
aking on the fly. Whether you're looking to add
acter. Perfect for studio recordings or live perfor-
oundscapes.



Universal Audio UAFX Orion Tape Echo

MSRP: (UK) £175 | (US) \$199

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » High-quality delays
- » Authentic tape modulation
- » Road-ready design

For more information, please visit:

uaudio.com





modulation. This changes the pitch and EQ of the repeats, adding a warm, almost 'record'-like sound. The Rec Level adds a bit of natural distortion to the repeats, so if the level into our virtual tape deck was too hot, it would lead to some grit on the delayed repeats. Finally, we have the Feedback control, which allows us to choose how much the delay repeats after a note is struck. Turning this up will enable it to repeat forever, which can lead to some interesting textures when combined with creative use of the Delay and Mix controls.

On the back of the pedal, we have two switches. The Bypass switch for Trails means if the pedal is turned off during its use, the trails will continue for whatever was being played right up to the moment it was switched off. Alternatively, you can have it so it cuts off the delay the moment you switch the pedal off. There's also a Preamp switch, which is meant to emulate the preamp of a '70s tape deck. This adds a different characteristic to the overall delay sound.

The pedal is well built, looks modern, and is powered by 9-volt DC power. Users can also plug the pedal into their computers for firmware updates from Universal Audio. It's really top-notch.

The sounds are great for ambient swells on chords, single-note melodies, and much more. To be able to get an authentic '70s tape echo sound on your pedalboard with a small footprint is superb! It's not too complex; it does what it says on the tin and does it incredibly well. It works best with cleaner sounds, in my personal opinion, especially as this is meant to be emulating a more vintage effect. However, it's a tool to be used however you wish. It's a really great thing that UA is doing with this Orion series of pedals, and I think they are lighting a fire under other companies making high-end products for much higher costs. The Orion series makes these quality effects available to more guitarists, and that's a great thing.



Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal

Unleash vintage tones with the Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal, a nod to the classic fuzz rich, warm fuzz perfect for capturing that iconic rock sound. True bypass switching keeps you ensures it looks as good as it sounds. Whether you're after the gritty tones of yesteryear or is your key to timeless sonic adventures. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

DRIVE or fuzz? It's a question that's up there with "Strat or Les Paul?", "vanilla or chocolate?", and "Prince or Michael Jackson?". For folks in the know, it's a question that can create deep tribal divides. Of course, the right answer is "why 'Or' when you can 'And?'". It's not politics or football, and you don't need to choose a side.

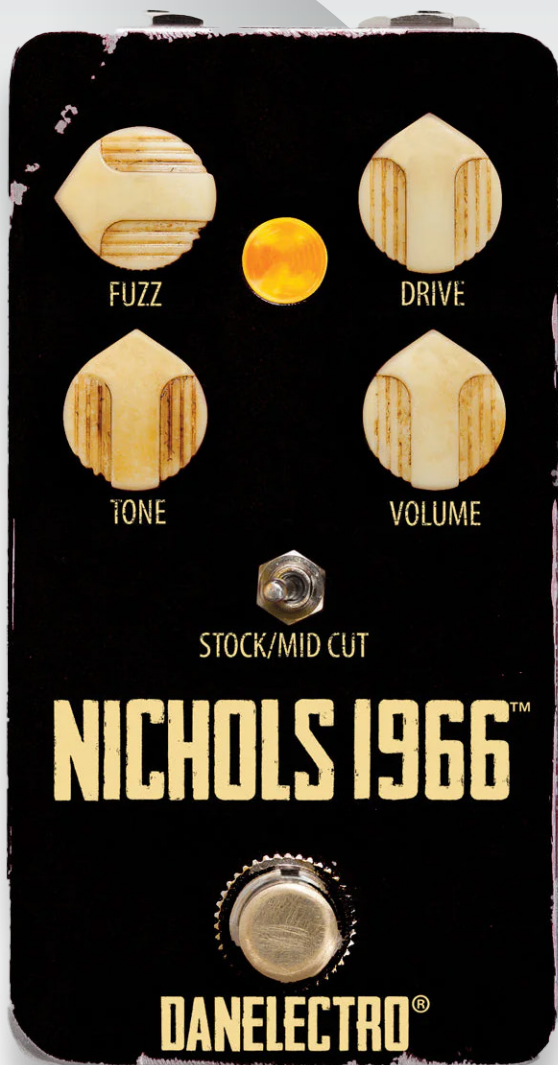
The Danelectro Nichols 1966 is a pedal that's both a drive and a fuzz, but also neither, in that it has a tone and feel all of its own. Named after the Nichols Canyon that Foxx Pedals founder and current Danelectro owner Steve Ridinger called home in the '60s, it's a take on his first pedal, which he named the "Liverpool Fuzz Tone" - a completely unique circuit that's part fuzz, part drive, and not based on any of the classic designs that so many dirt boxes are derived from.

Despite its simple control layout, it's a pedal that's capable of a huge range of tones - and feels. The "fuzz" and "drive" controls are highly interactive, with the drive adding a smooth, fat overdrive with a compressed and

very playable feel, while the fuzz is hairy, spitty, and deeply characterful. Set the drive low and the fuzz high and you get a fatter and more friendly fuzz face. More drive and less fuzz and you have super fat lead sustain with just a hint of muff-y splat on the front of the note. Turn them both up, and it's doomy, blown-out filth that's so much fun that it feels illegal.

The "stock/mid cut" switch and single Tone control offer a good range of tone shaping, but they really influence the way the pedal feels. Turning the tone control up is less like turning up your amp's treble knob and more like turning on a Rangemaster. The feel becomes wiry and articulate, but the tone stays super thick and warm. Similarly, dumping the tone down low makes everything feel sludgy and bloated in the best possible way. I expected the "mid cut" switch to function like a "Big Muff switch", but instead of sucking out all of the 500 Hz and sinking the tone to the back of the mix, it just makes the pedal feel tighter and snappier, in a way that I'm actually very likely to use.

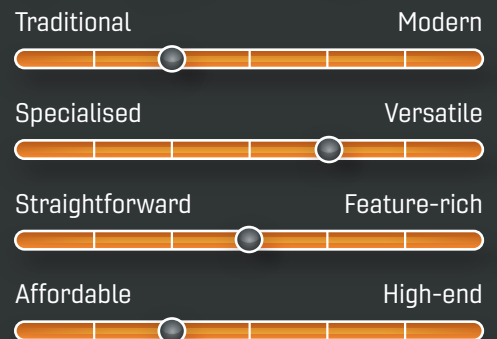
z of the '60s. Its germanium diode design delivers
our signal clean, and its durable, retro-styled build
adding nostalgic flair to modern setups, this pedal



Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £199 | (US) \$199

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Fuzz
- » Overdrive
- » The cursed offspring of the two

For more information, please visit:

**[jhs.co.uk/collections/
danelectro](https://jhs.co.uk/collections/danelectro)**

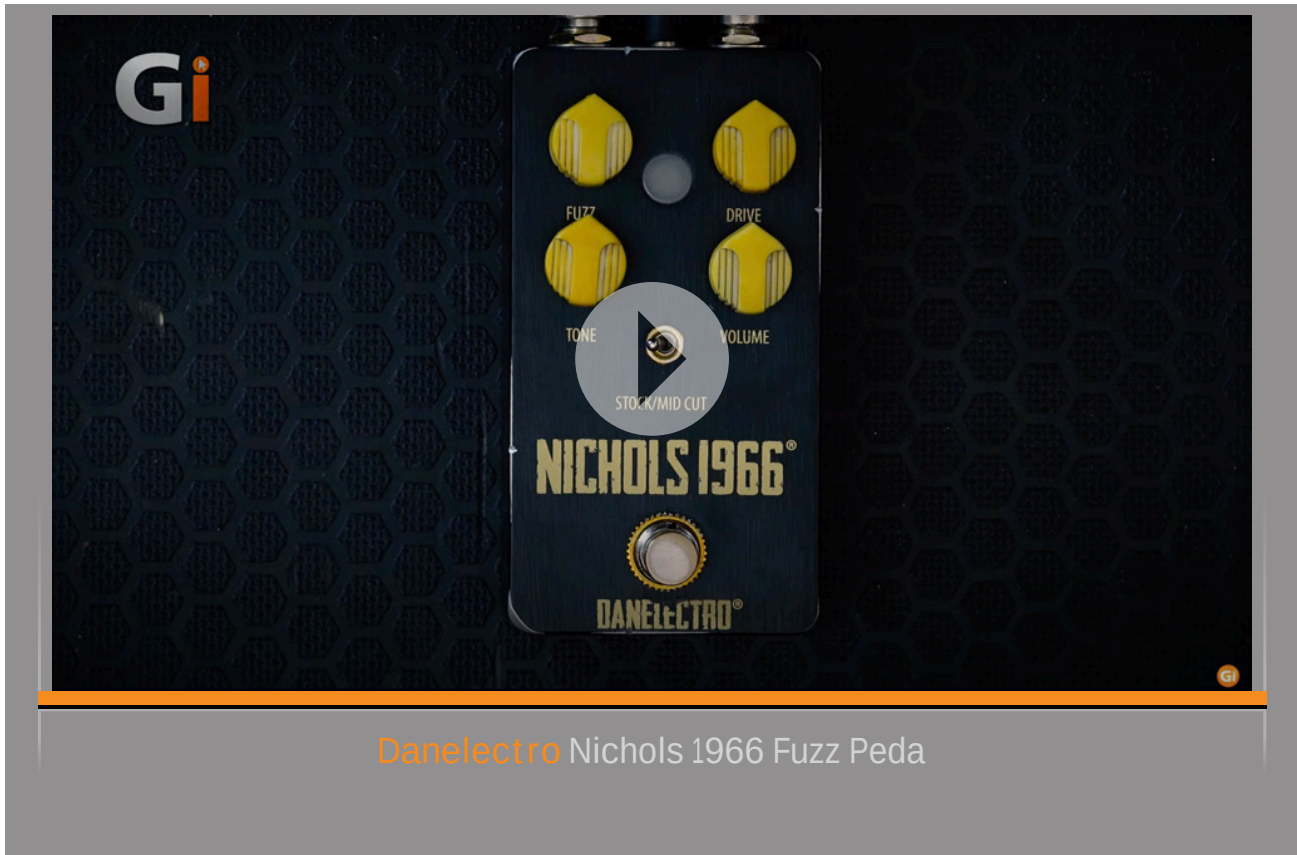


The Danelectro Nichols 1966 is a pedal with a distinct vibe all of its own.

Surprisingly for a pedal without the ability to drastically alter the high and low frequencies, the Nichols 1966 seems to be practically impervious to different amps. We tried it with a warm and fat California clean, a bright AC30 (on the top boost channel, no less), and a broken-up, mid-pushed Marshall - three VERY different amps, one of which is bound to upset pretty much any overdrive or fuzz pedal, but the Nichols 1966 sounded great through all of them! If you've spent any time testing pedals through different amps,

you'll know what a feat this is - especially for a high-gain pedal.

The Danelectro Nichols 1966 is a pedal with a distinct vibe all of its own. It treads the boundary between fuzz and overdrive but lets you fall off the fence on either side whenever you like. It works with every amp we threw at it, cleans up beautifully, and I'm a big fan of the way it looks too.



Danelectro Nichols 1966 Fuzz Pedal



Hiwatt Custom Filter Fuzz MK II

pedal's transient response, but the star of the show is the foot-switchable "Filter" control. This notched three-position switch emphasizes different areas of the pedal's midrange, which influences the way the pedal feels as much as how it sounds. All the way to the left, and you have biting "take your head off" upper mids. The center position is vocal and throaty, and the right pushes the lower mids

for a sludgy bark that's perfect for beefing up single coils.

Fuzzes are famously picky beasts when it comes to how they respond to different guitars and amps, but the Filter Fuzz MK II was completely unfazed by the gear I threw at it. It seemed equally comfortable with single coils and humbuckers, and even hot active

pickups couldn't fluster it. Similarly, it sounded equally killer through a mid-pushed Deluxe-style amp, a scooped Super, a bright AC, and a hairy Marshall tone - all without any controls to "sculpt" the highs or lows. That's quite an impressive feat!

The Hiwatt Filter Fuzz MK II is an absolute monster of a fuzz pedal, capable of vintage '60s sustain, doom grind, and blown-up gated noise, all infused with its own unique flavor. It's a pedal that deserves to be on every fuzz lover's board.



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***

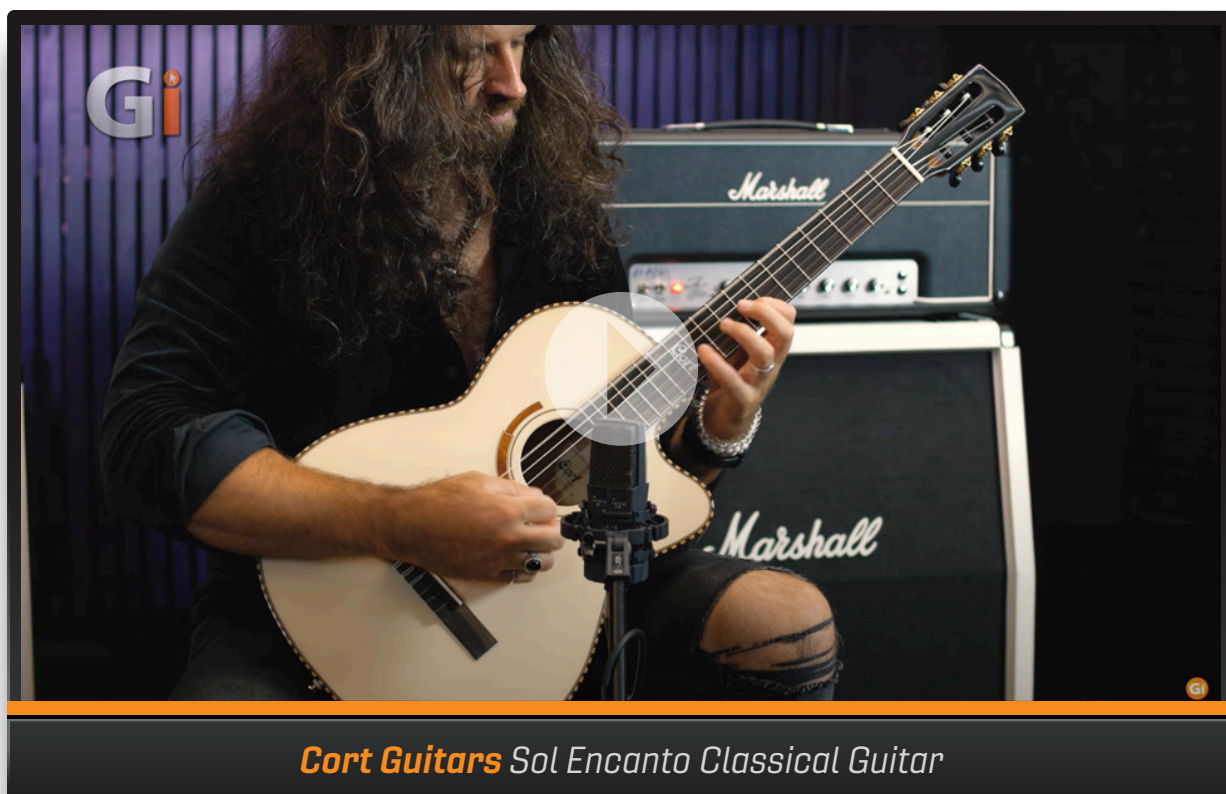
PRODUCT RECOMMENDED
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PRODUCT



Cort Guitars Sol Encanto Classical Guitar

Nick Jennison reviews Cort Guitars' Sol Encanto Classical Guitar, a blend of traditional craft. The instrument features a solid spruce top for bright, resonant tones, complemented by mahogany. The mahogany neck and rosewood fretboard offer smooth, comfortable playability, while the sound. Designed for both beginners and experienced players, the Sol Encanto combines elegant aesthetics with a versatile choice for any classical guitarist.

CORT acoustics never fail to impress" has become a statement as certain as "the sun sets in the west" in my world. I've looked at so many of them now that it's bordering on a mathematical certainty that they'll eventually send us a stinker, yet here we are - talking about another charmer from the East Asian guitar brand. The biggest change is that this one is a nylon string. ▶



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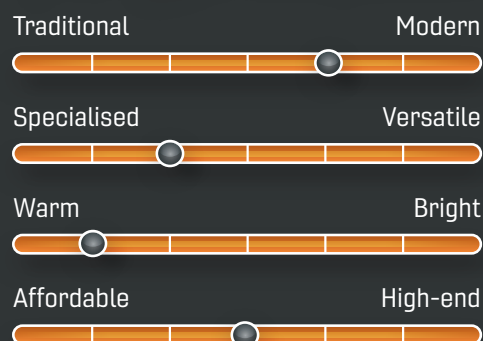
tsmanship and modern innovation. This exquisite any back and sides that add warmth and depth. e classical fan bracing enhances its rich, balanced gant aesthetics with superb tonal quality, making it



Cort Guitars Sol Encanto Classical Guitar

MSRP: (UK) £1099 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Warm nylon string tone
- » A friendlier playing experience
- » Chic, arty design.

For more information, please visit:

cortguitars.com



Deriving its name from the Spanish words for "sun" and "charm," it's a guitar that is warm, inviting, and full of life.





Now, I'm not a classical guitarist; I don't have nails, my PIMA technique is untidy enough to give the purists a case of the vapors, and I even have the audacity to play with a pick. Basically Satan, am I right? Seriously though, I bring this up to highlight that neither you nor I should be afraid of nylon-strung guitars, regardless of our classical pedigree (or lack thereof).

For folks like me (us?), the Sol Encanto is an ideal form of classical guitar. Deriving its name from the Spanish words for "sun" and "charm," it's a guitar that is warm, inviting, and full of life. It's an all-solid construction with mahogany back, sides, ►

and neck with a solid Engelmann spruce top in place of the traditional cedar, hinting at this guitar's status as a "hybrid" or "transition" classical - that is to say, a guitar that's appropriate for steel string players making the transition to nylon.

This is further reflected in the neck shape. While the Sol Encanto features a traditional 12th fret neck join with a classical-style cut-away, it also sports a 48mm nut width and a 60mm string spacing - wide enough that complex passages can be executed cleanly, but not so wide as to be alien or excessively fatiguing for us steel-string types. The neck itself is comparatively slim, and while it's definitely on the flatter side, it does feel like there's a gentle radius to the fretboard (in the sense that it doesn't feel concave in the way that legitimately flat radius guitars can). The frets are noticeably taller than a typical classical guitar too, which I'm a fan of.

Speaking of fan, the Sol Encanto employs a fan bracing pattern. This traditional bracing style allows for a wide dynamic range and an earthy low end - perhaps at the expense of projection, but since we're dealing with a modern electro-acoustic here, the need to project to the back of a hall over an orchestra is secondary to the sweetness, evenness, and responsiveness of the guitar's tone. This may be why Cort has elected to use brighter-sounding spruce over cedar for the Sol Encanto's top, since fan bracing can make

a guitar a little bass-heavy. Either way, the result is an instrument that's poised, well-balanced, and which speaks well all across its dynamic range. The addition of an extra side port directs more of this tone towards the player's head, which not only improves the playing experience but also helps with gauging the nuances of your touch.

Electronics come in the form of a Fishman Flex Blend system, which makes use of an under-saddle piezo element and an internal microphone which can be blended in for a little extra air, and to enhance percussive playing styles. It also features a beautifully tuned one-knob EQ which scoops out some nasal midrange and boosts the guitar's presence frequencies. Now, I have several guitars with this system, and my instinct is always to set this control to the "most EQ'd" position, but the Sol Encanto wanted a gentler treatment. In fact, the plugged-in sound was at its best with the EQ either set flat or with just the very slightest hint of contour applied.

The Cort Sol Encanto is another point in Cort's long acoustic guitar win streak. It's a super playable, attractive, and toneful "transition" classical that's perfect for bridging the gap between steel and nylon string playing without sacrificing the authenticity of the tone or expressiveness of a great classical guitar.





Since we're dealing with a modern electro-acoustic here, the need to project to the back of a hall over an orchestra is secondary to the sweetness, evenness, and responsiveness of the guitar's tone...



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop

Nick Jennison reviews the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1942 J45 Banner—a homage to a legendary design. Featuring a solid spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides, it offers great projection. The mahogany neck and rosewood fingerboard offer smooth playability, while the vintage-style finish adds a touch. Perfect for a wide range of musical styles, this acoustic combines inspiring tones, high-quality craftsmanship, without breaking the bank.

THE quality emerging from the Epiphone factory in recent years has truly been remarkable. The attention to detail and craftsmanship in each new release has helped elevate the brand into a new era of excellence, and this new acoustic model continues that tradition.

Enter the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1942 J45 Banner. This beauty brings the revered legacy of Gibson's Custom Shop to a more accessible price point, making it a ▶



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1942 J45 Banner

Epiphone 1942 J45 Banner

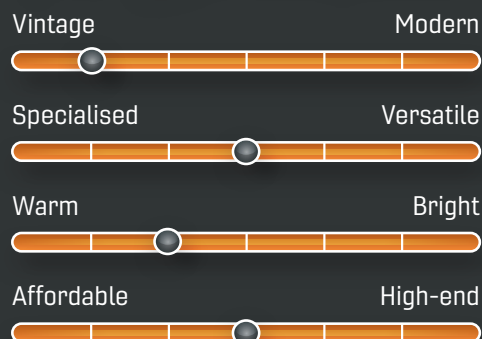
A meticulously crafted acoustic guitar that pays homage to the past. It delivers rich, warm tones with impressive vintage-style "banner" headstock adds an authentic historical accuracy, and modern craftsmanship all



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1942 J45 Banner

MSRP: (UK) £1199 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Timeless design
- » Rich, warm tones
- » Excellent playability

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com



must-have for guitarists who crave that vintage sound and look.

First off, let's talk headstocks. Epiphone has nailed it by bringing the classic Gibson open book design—complete with the “Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop” banner logo—to this model. Combined with button-style tuners and the intersecting diamonds logo on the back, it's all about meticulous attention to detail. It's a small touch that makes a big difference in the overall aesthetic.

The neck on this thing is a dream. Crafted from mahogany with a soft V shape, it's comfortable for thumb-over players and traditional grips alike. The satin finish, polished to a gloss, gives it that well-loved, broken-in feel right out of the box. Top that off with a Laurel fretboard and simple dot inlays, and you've got an elegant yet understated instrument that's ready for anything.

Now, let's get into the body. The J45 Banner features an all-solid wood construction with a thermally aged Sitka spruce top that enhances resonance and delivers that vintage tone we all love. The mahogany back and sides add depth and power, especially in the low end, which hits you right in the chest. And that vintage sunburst finish? It's the only finish option, and honestly, it's the only one you need.

The bridge, made from Laurel to match the fretboard, is solid and consistent in design. The LR Baggs VTC system is

tucked away neatly inside the soundhole, keeping the guitar's classic look intact while providing modern electronic capabilities. The output jack is discreetly located at the strap pin, ensuring a clean and convenient setup.

When it comes to performance, the J45 Banner truly delivers. Whether you're strumming with a flat pick or picking out fingerstyle passages, this guitar offers rich, balanced tones. The low end is particularly impressive, offering a powerful punch that you can feel. And when plugged in, the aforementioned LR Baggs VTC system faithfully captures its acoustic goodness, making it perfect for live gigs.

So, what's the catch? There isn't one. The Epiphone J45 Banner combines quality, features, and affordability in a way that brings the look and feel of a 1940s Gibson J45 within reach of both aspiring musicians and seasoned pros.

In conclusion, the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1942 J45 Banner is a masterclass in blending vintage aesthetics with modern playability. Its robust build, stunning design, and exceptional sound make it a standout in any collection. Whether you're jamming at home, recording in the studio, or performing on stage, this guitar has got you covered. If you've always dreamed of owning a classic Gibson but couldn't swing the cost, this Epiphone is your golden ticket.





Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop

Introducing the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200, an acoustic that blends a solid Sitka spruce top and solid maple back and sides for a big, bold sound, the two-piece neck for playability. With its iconic moustache bridge, vintage-style tuners, ornate pickguard, and open back, as it sounds. Here's **Nick Jennison** to tell us more.

THE Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200 is here to turn heads and win hearts, embodying everything we love about the legendary Gibson Jumbo but at a price that doesn't break the bank. Known affectionately as the "King of the Flat Tops," the SJ-200 has powered countless hits in country, rock, and folk music. Epiphone's recreation of this icon is nothing short of spectacular.

First things first, the headstock. Epiphone has brought the classic Gibson open-book headstock design to its lineup, and it makes a world of difference. This headstock shape, adorned



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200

Epiphone 1957 SJ-200

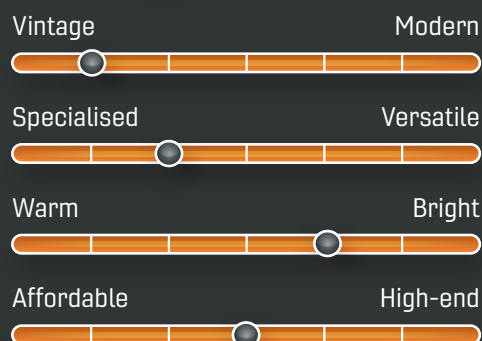
ends vintage vibes with modern playability. Boasting maple neck and rosewood fretboard ensure smooth open-book style headstock, this guitar looks as good



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200

MSRP: (UK) £1379 | (US) \$1449

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Jumbo Acoustics
- » Vintage Tones
- » Classic Gibson Open Book Headstock

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com





with the Epiphone logo and graduated crown inlay, fits perfectly on a guitar like this. Flip it over, and you'll find Cluson-style tulip tuners in gold and the intersecting diamonds logo of the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop—a subtle nod to its storied heritage.

The neck is a masterpiece in itself, crafted from flame maple with a walnut stripe running down the middle. It has that familiar satin finish that feels like an old friend from the first time you play it. The neck's comfortable grip is perfect for long playing sessions, and the graduated crown inlays on the fretboard, combined with single-ply binding, add a touch of class to this already elegant instrument.

This guitar isn't just about looks, though. It's built with premium materials: a solid Sitka spruce top and solid maple back and sides, delivering that bright, powerful sound characteristic of jumbo guitars. The sunburst finish is a showstopper, though if that's not your style, there's an antique natural finish available. The iconic open moustache bridge and engraved floral pickguard are the cherry on top, both aesthetically and functionally integral to the SJ-200's identity.

Under the hood, the SJ-200 features an LR Baggs VTC system ensures that the guitar's impressive acoustic properties are

faithfully reproduced when plugged in. Whether you're laying down tracks in the studio or performing live, this system captures every nuance of the guitar's rich, resonant tones.

Performance-wise, the SJ-200 excels. Strummed with a thin pick, it produces a warm, full-bodied sound. Switch to fingerstyle, and the delicate, nuanced tones shine through. Flat-picking brings out punchy, powerful single notes. It's a big guitar, no doubt about it, but the sound it delivers makes the size worth it.

Considering the competitive price, the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200 offers extraordinary value. It brings the look and feel of a legendary Gibson Jumbo to a more accessible price point, making it a fantastic option for both aspiring musicians and seasoned players.

If you've always wanted a classic Gibson but couldn't quite justify the cost, the Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Shop 1957 SJ-200 could very well be the perfect alternative. Whether you're jamming at home, recording in the studio, or performing on stage, this Epiphone masterfully blends inspiring tones with vintage charm and modern playability—making it a standout in any collection.



Fishman Loudbox Acoustic Amp Range

Nick Jennison presents an in-depth look at the Loudbox range, Fishman's award-winning line of acoustic amplifiers. Whether you're at home or out on the road, Nick explores why you might need an acoustic amp and how it can help meet your needs.

THE Fishman Loudbox acoustic amplifiers are truly impressive — offering a range of options that cater to various needs and preferences. However, with some models sharing features and others boasting unique specifications, the toughest challenge in using one of these amplifiers is deciding which one is right for you in the first place. Whether you need the ultra-portable Micro for on-the-go practice, the battery-powered Mini Charge for versatile busking, the powerful Artist for serious gigs, or the robust Performer for maximum output and flexibility, there's a Loudbox model designed to meet your specific acoustic amplification needs. Let's dive into each model, starting with the smallest.

Fishman Loudbox Micro

The Fishman Loudbox Micro is the tiniest in the range, weighing just 8.7 pounds and measuring a compact 12" H x 13.7" W x 9.7" D. Despite its size, it boasts the same preamp circuitry as its larger counterparts, making it an excellent practice amp. Its 40-watt power and XLR-DI output mean it can also function as a gigging amplifier when connected to a larger PA system. This compact amp packs a punch volume-wise, making it perfect for small, discreet performances such as wedding gigs or intimate venues. It includes built-in reverb and chorus effects, and you can plug in both a guitar and

a microphone, offering versatility in a compact package. Whether practising at home or playing in a small venue, the Micro has you covered.

Fishman Loudbox Mini

Next is the Loudbox Mini, with 60 watts of power and a larger speaker for fuller bass response and more projection. Weighing in at 19.8 pounds and with dimensions of 12" H x 13.7" W x 9.7" D, this model is suitable for gigs and rehearsals, providing ▶

...e of acoustic amplifiers. Whether you only play
...s you decide which of these five models suits

For more information, please visit:

Fishman.com



Fishman Loudbox Micro



***Fishman Loudbox Mini***

enough power for louder settings while still being a practical home practice amp. The Loudbox Mini features Bluetooth connectivity and an aux input, allowing you to play tracks through the amp. It also has an XLR output to send a combined signal of both channels to a front-of-house system. One notable feature is the IEC inlet, which replaces a wall wart power supply, making it easy to use standard power cables globally. For musicians needing a bit more oomph, the Mini is an excellent choice.



Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge

The Loudbox Mini Charge is essentially a Loudbox Mini with the added benefit of a built-in battery, offering up to 18 hours of playtime without being plugged in. This is ideal for busking musicians or gigs where power access is limited. It includes a 12-volt car charger, ensuring you can charge it on the go. With all the features of the Loudbox Mini, including Bluetooth and aux input, the Mini Charge provides the ultimate portability without compromising sound quality. Despite its extra features, it remains portable, weighing 21 pounds and maintaining the same dimensions as the Mini. Whether on the streets or in a venue without easy power access, the Mini Charge delivers. ➤

Fishman Loudbox Mini Charge



***Fishman Loudbox Artist***

Fishman Loudbox Artist

The Loudbox Artist steps up the game with 120 watts of power and a bi-amp design, suitable for serious gigs even with a drummer. It features two identical channels that can function as either instrument or microphone inputs, each with a combi TRS input, a three-band EQ, and dual feedback control. The Artist offers a wider range of effects, including two reverbs, a delay, an echo, two choruses, a flanger, and a slap echo. It also has Bluetooth connectivity and phantom power. One standout feature is the independent XLR outputs per channel, allowing separate mixing for instruments and vocals, which is invaluable for professional musicians. This model, though more powerful, remains manageable at 25.5 pounds and 15.5" H x 13.5" W x 11.5" D. For the gigging musician who needs flexibility and power, the Artist is a top contender.

Fishman Loudbox Performer

The Loudbox Performer is the largest and most powerful, with 180 watts and a three-speaker design (tweeter, mid-range, and woofer). This amp delivers detailed mid-range and high volume, suitable for any stage setting, from small venues to larger gigs. It shares most features with the Loudbox Artist, including dual independent channels and a variety of effects, but with more power and a three-speaker system for enhanced sound quality. The Performer is versatile, handling acoustic and electric instruments with ease, making it a robust choice for professional use. Despite its power, it remains portable

at 30 pounds, with dimensions of 21" H x 14" W x 15.5" D. By plugging in an electric guitar with a Fishman power bridge, you can even achieve impressive acoustic and electric tones independently. This added versatility ensures that the Performer can adapt to various musical needs, offering a comprehensive solution for diverse performances without having to cart around more gear than necessary. If maximum power and versatility are what you seek, the Performer will not disappoint. ▶



Fishman Loudbox Performer



Fishman Loudbox Performer

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Fishman Loudbox range offers a solution for every acoustic guitarist's needs, from the ultra-portable Micro and Mini models to the professional-grade Artist and Performer. Each model delivers exceptional sound quality, user-friendly features, and robust build quality. Whether you're playing at home, busking, or performing on stage, Fishman Loudbox amps provide unparalleled flexibility and sound excellence. Hopefully, this overview has helped you decide which one would be best suited to your needs. For a hands-on experience, visit your local guitar store and try them out for yourself.



Fishman Loudbox Acoustic Amp Range

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