

Guitar *Interactive*

111

STEVE STEVENS

EXCLUSIVE *INTERVIEW*

MORE INTERVIEWS



RICKY WARWICK

D'Addario

<>XPND

EXPANDING PEDALBOARD



**THE ONLY BOARD
YOU'LL EVER NEED.**

daddario.com

D'Addario

<>XPND

PEDAL POWER BATTERY KIT

10⁺
HOURS

USB-C
CHARGING

9V
POWER



**POWER THE BOARD.
ELECTRIFY THE GIG.**

daddario.com

WELCOME TO ISSUE

111



WELCOME TO GI ISSUE 111...

Editor
// Jonathan Graham

When Steve Stevens exploded onto the scene in the early 1980s alongside Billy Idol, he quickly became one of rock guitar's most distinctive and innovative voices. Now, with Billy Idol's long-awaited new album, *Dream Into It*, finally out worldwide, Stevens

sits down with Guitar Interactive's Jonathan Graham to discuss the making of the record, his latest signature guitar, the magic behind those classic early Idol albums, and the surprising story of why he once had to turn down a gig with David Lee Roth.

Also in this edition, we sit down with an artist who's career has seen him front The Almighty, lead Black Star Riders, and join the ranks of Thin Lizzy, Ricky Warwick has always

delivered hard-hitting rock with heart and honesty. With his latest solo release, *Blood Ties* (out now via Earache Records), Warwick may have crafted his most personal and powerful album to date. He joins us to talk about the making of the record, collaborating with friends like Billy Duffy, Lita Ford, and Charlie Starr, his ongoing growth as a songwriter, reuniting with The Almighty, and the possibility of another Thin Lizzy reunion.

Plus, as with every issue, we review the latest and greatest guitars, amps, pedals and more shaking up the guitar scene right now. Whether you're a veteran tone chaser or just starting out, this issue's packed with world-class demos and wall-to-wall insight that we hope you will enjoy.

Until next time...

Guitar Interactive
Editor

Jonathan Graham
jonathan@guitarinteractivemagazine.com

Contributors

Jonathan Graham

Review Crew

Nick Jennison, Sam Bell

Advertising Manager

Helen Bavester
helen@guitarinteractivemagazine.com

Design and layout

Simon Gibbs
simon@guitarinteractivemagazine.com

Video Editor

James Masterton

Sound Engineering

Dave Kidd & James Masterton

Cameras

James Masterton

Publishers

Guitar Interactive Ltd

Publishing Director

Kim Waller

Contact

Sales and Information line:
+ 44 (0)1708 757 337

Fax Line: +44 (0)1708 757 528

Address: Unit A, Chesham Close, Romford,
Essex, RM7 7PJ, UK

111 Contents

INTERVIEWS



STEVE STEVENS:

With Billy Idol's long-awaited new album, *Dream Into It*, finally out worldwide, Stevens sits down with Guitar Interactive to discuss the making of the record and more.

008

RICKY WARWICK:

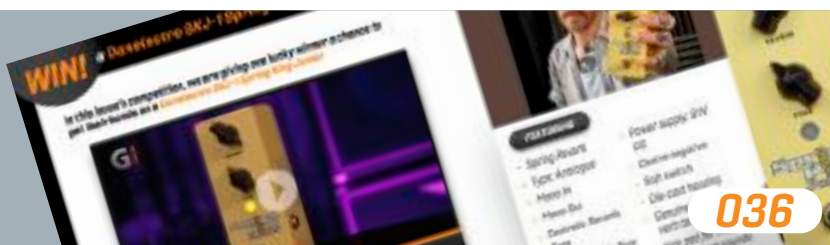
With a career that's seen him front The Almighty, lead Black Star Riders, and join the ranks of Thin Lizzy, Ricky Warwick is back with an brand new album.



024

COMPETITION

Win a Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior



036

REVIEWS - GUITARS, AMPS & FX

040_ Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Standard Reissue

046_ Music Man Valentine HH

050_ Fret-King Country Squire Stealth

054_ Spira S-420

058_ Godin Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany

062_ Larrivee 00

066_ Cort Essence-GA4

070_ LR Baggs AEG-1

074_ Rotosound RFB1 Fuzz

078_ Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior

082_ D'addario Strings XPND Pedalboard

AD INDEX

CIARI 8-23
CIARI 15
D'ADDARIO 2&3

DANELECTRO 31
EPIPHONE by GIBSON
ERNIE BALL 17

FRET KING 31
GODIN GUITARS 53
LR BAGGS 43

ROTOSOUND 61
VINTAGE GUITARS 53

used in Guitar Interactive are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Editor or Publisher.

THE INTERVIEWS

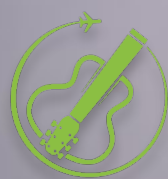
When Steve Stevens exploded onto the scene in the early 1980s alongside Billy Idol, he quickly became one of rock guitar's most distinctive and innovative voices. Now, with Billy Idol's long-awaited new album, *Dream Into It*, finally out worldwide, Stevens sits down with Guitar Interactive's Jonathan Graham to discuss the making of the record, his latest signature guitar, the magic behind those classic early Idol albums, and the surprising story of why he once had to turn down a gig with David Lee Roth.

Throughout a career that's seen him front The Almighty, lead Black Star Riders, and join the ranks of Thin Lizzy, Ricky Warwick has always delivered hard-hitting rock with heart and honesty. With his latest solo release, *Blood Ties* (out now via Earache Records), Warwick may have crafted his most personal and powerful album to date. He joins us to talk about the making of the record, collaborating with friends like Billy Duffy, Lita Ford, and Charlie Starr, his ongoing growth as a songwriter, reuniting with The Almighty, and the possibility of another Thin Lizzy reunion.

IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES



STEVE



SPONSORED BY

CIARI GUITARS



STEVENS

When Steve Stevens burst onto the scene in the early 1980s alongside his legendary musical partner in crime, Billy Idol, he quickly established himself as one of the most distinctive voices on the guitar. From his iconic riffs and genre-bending solos to his continual evolution as a player, Stevens remains at the cutting edge of rock guitar across the decades.



“NOW, with Billy Idol’s long-awaited new full-length album, *Dream Into It*, out worldwide, Steve sits down with Guitar Interactive’s Jonathan Graham to talk about the making of the new record, his latest signature six-string, working on those early Billy Idol albums, and why he once had to turn down a gig with David Lee Roth.

Steve, ‘Dream Into It’ is a fantastic album. It’s been a while since you dropped a full-length release. What made you and Billy feel like it was time to do another one?

Well, Billy says that he has to do as much press for an EP as he does for an album, so he might as well just put an album together.

I think also, you know, we had developed a really good working relationship with Tommy English, the producer of the album. We had written with him before, and he had actually produced a couple of tracks. We thought, “Oh, it was really fun working with him. Let’s try doing a whole album.”

The new tracks balance that classic Billy Idol vibe while still sounding very fresh. Was that a consideration when it came to the writing process?

Well, I think that, yeah, it was, and it’s also the result of working with younger producers. Also, we had a couple of great co-writers that we worked with—Nick Long and Joe Janiak. Billy and I pretty much work—our songwriting process has never changed. We



A promotional graphic for the Steve Stevens interview. On the left, Steve Stevens is shown from the waist up, wearing a black leather shirt and pants, holding a pink electric guitar. The background is a warm orange. In the center, the text "STEVE STEVENS" is written in large, bold, white capital letters, with "ON THE LINE" in smaller orange capital letters below it. To the right of the text is a white microphone icon and a large play button icon. Below these is a white audio waveform. In the bottom center, there is a small album cover for Billy Idol's "Dream Into It". To the right of the album cover, the text "BILLY IDOL 'DREAM INTO IT'" is written in white capital letters. In the top right corner, the "Guitar Interactive" logo is visible. In the bottom right corner, the "Ciari GUITARS" logo is visible. At the bottom of the graphic, the text "Steve Stevens - Interview" is written in orange.



 **YouTube**

Billy Idol - Dream Into It (Official Audio)

**"THE CIARI'S
NOT A GIM-
MICK. THE
TECHNOL-
OGY THAT
GOES INTO
THIS THING
IS MIND-
BENDING."**



sit in a room with a couple of acoustic guitars, and it starts with maybe a little bit of a therapy session, like, “What’s going on in each other’s lives?” But it’s great to get this new energy, and these guys work very quickly. We were able to accomplish a song a day, so we kept the adrenaline and the excitement up, working quickly—not laboring on things too long. If something was good, it stuck, and if it wasn’t, it got thrown out immediately. It was really a lot of fun, I have to say—really, really good fun.

Billy and yourself were both into very different styles of music when you first met. Do you feel that clash of styles led to you creating your unique sound?

Yeah, I would say, yeah. I mean, the thing is, you know, Billy had done three records with Generation X, had moved to a new country. I definitely got the impression that he wasn’t looking to continue that, you know? And he had started working with Keith Forsey, his producer, who came from the Giorgio Moroder camp, doing Donna Summer’s records. The EP that he did before I joined—the “Don’t Stop” EP—was definitely not a punk rock record, although “Dancing with Myself” was on there. But “Dancing with Myself” is not really punk rock; it’s just great rock. Reminds me more of, like, glam rock—Sweet, you know, things of that nature.

But then when we started to talk, I made no bones about the fact that I was a fan of Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix, all that stuff. But I was particularly bored by 1977 with what was happening in prog, and I had started to



listen to—I remember Devo. I was a huge Devo fan because it seemed to me that they were taking technology and doing it in such a cool, unique way. Then I loved Elvis Costello, The Jam, and XTC was a big one for me. I thought they had tinges stylistically of almost Steve Howe, but wrapped up in a different way.

Then when Billy turned me on to John McGeoch from Siouxsie and the Banshees, I went, “Oh!” I think I had the conversation with him and said, “Look, I can play any-

"I'VE NEVER BEEN A FAN OF MUSHY TONES. MY TASTE—EVEN WITH JIMMY PAGE, THE YARD-BIRDS, OR THE KINKS—IS FOR GUITAR SOUNDS WHERE YOU CAN REALLY HEAR WHERE THE NOTE STARTS AND THE TONALITY OF THE NOTE, RATHER THAN JUST COVERING THINGS UP WITH DISTORTION."

thing that a song's going to require stylistically. I've got a background of folk and even flamenco." I said, "I think it's going to suit you better to have somebody who has capabilities for any idea, rather than you always having to push someone. It's better to siphon the goody—maybe I throw out too many ideas, but at least you can pick the good stuff." I think that's what we were able to do, and certainly with "Rebel Yell," I think we kind of went, "Oh, okay, I can see how this could work."

What was the first track you worked on together?

When we first met, it would have been "Dead on Arrival," which was on the first record—a pretty basic rock thing. Then we started to delve into things like "Hole in the Wall," using a lot of echoes. By then, I was listening to a lot of the Andy Summers stuff and, you know, delay lines and things like using delays. I think this is even before YouTube, but I had gone to see The Police and I was just knocked out with what they were doing, so I was using a lot of effects and things. I think Billy liked that.

How long into the sessions before "White Wedding" appears?

"White Wedding" was the last song written for the first album. We didn't have a single, and they locked Billy and our producer, Keith, in the studio and said, "You're not coming out; you can stay there all night until you come up with a single." I remember about nine in the morning, at my hotel—we were recording in Los Angeles—and it's Billy with a boom box. He's got the cassette of his demo of "White Wedding," and he goes, "I think I did it. I think I got the single."

What was your reaction when you heard the demo?

Oh, it was fantastic. All the elements were there—the spaghetti western guitar motif, although I embellished on it, but it was there. That's the thing for me: if you have a song that has a great concept, it's like a great meal for me, because I can really paint with a lot of colors around that.

Can you talk us through some of the gear that you're using on this new album?



CIARI GUITARS ANNOUNCES DEBUT **SIGNATURE SERIES**
WITH GRAMMY AWARD WINNING SONGWRITER AND
GUITARIST **STEVE STEVENS**



Imagine flying with a truly professional, high-quality guitar and not having to worry about an airline damaging it. With my signature Ciari guitar, you just fold it up, stick it in its included backpack, and slide it under your seat. Ciari has changed the game, and I'm proud to put my name on this instrument. —

Steve Stevens



www.ciariguitars.com

Yeah, primarily, the majority of the record was recorded in Los Angeles. I live in Las Vegas, so the guitars that I brought with me were mainly my NAG Signature SSC guitar, and I have one gold top that has the Jimmy Page wiring in it, so you can get out-of-phase, coil-tapping, all of this. It's like the Swiss Army knife of guitars, so any sound that I needed, I could get out of that guitar.

Tommy English had a number of guitars that I used. He's got a beautiful old Martin from the '50s that I used for the acoustic stuff. Then, I did some of the heavier guitar things at my studio at home in Vegas, and that would have been any one of my NAGs guitars—my NAGs. The current model is the SSC, the Steve Stevens Classic.

Are we talking all Friedmans then, amp-wise?

Exactly. My Friedman Signature amp, and also the Friedman BE. Some guitars we really wanted heavily treated, because I was the first to say, "Let's not put a lot of keyboards on here; let me try and take the role that a keyboard would be doing by manipulating the guitar in Pro Tools with plugins and things." Some guitars were recorded direct, and we used some amp sims. I'm a big fan of the Neural amp plugins; they're fantastic.

You have a brand new signature guitar with Ciari, which is a very interesting pro-level travel guitar—what can you tell us about it?

Yeah, I mean, it's not a gimmick. The technology that goes into this thing is mind-bending, but I think the way that working

musicians operate these days is very different than it used to be. It used to be that you'd do recording, then go on the road, then come off the road and write. Now it's more intertwined.

So, I have a little recording setup with me in the hotel room, and I'm able to record album-quality guitar tracks while I travel with this guitar. It fits in a backpack; it goes under the seat of a plane. My model has coil taps, so you can get anything from a Tele sound, a bit of a Stratty thing, to a Les Paul out of this guitar. It's really cool. And of course, the ray gun logo—the light-up ray gun.

And you're not just playing this in the dressing room or in hotel rooms, right? You're taking this on stage?

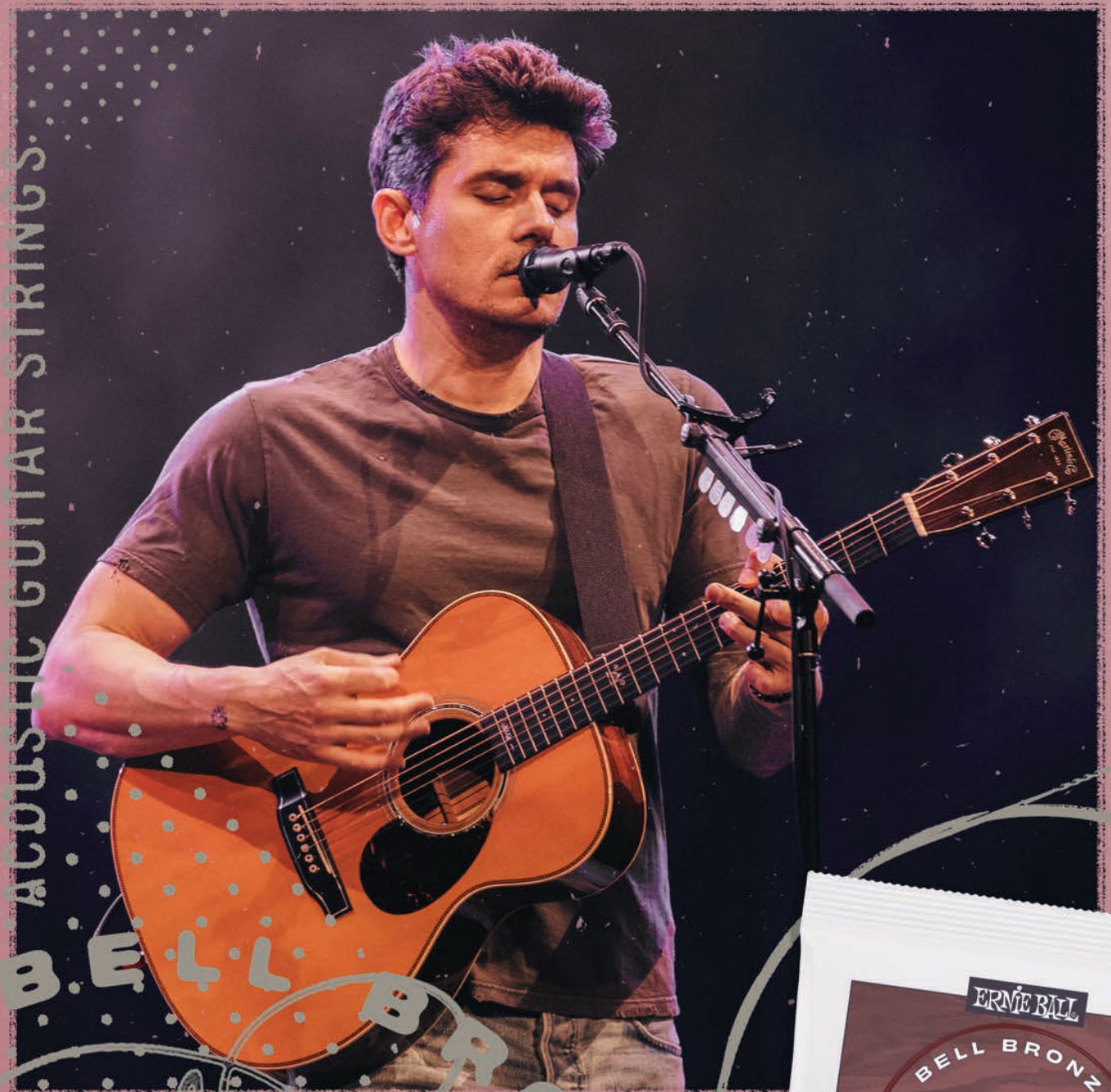
Oh, absolutely. It sounds fantastic. We've got Bare Knuckle pickups in there, designed for this guitar specifically. I always try and tailor the pickups to the guitar, and I think we did a really good job with these.

On the acoustic side of things, you've been using the Godin models for years and years now. How did you get turned on to those guys?

When I decided to do my *Flamenco A Go-Go* album, I was just embracing some technology. I was listening to Massive Attack and Propellerheads and thought, "Wouldn't it be great to combine a nylon guitar with loops and things?" I read about this nylon guitar that could track MIDI and was at the NAMM Show. I knew it was Godin, so I went to the booth, met Robert—or "Robair," as they say—and said, "I'm a guitarist for

ERNE BALL®

MAYER'S CHOICE. YOUR *Acoustic* VOICE.



"A GIANT LEAP FORWARD
IN **TONE**, **PLAYABILITY**,
AND **DURABILITY**."
—JOHN MAYER





Billy Idol. I'm getting ready to do a nylon guitar album, and I heard you have a guitar that can track MIDI." I already had a great relationship with Roland, so I got the latest guitar synth, picked up the Godin, and I was off and running.

In the past, when you've described your tone as having sharp, defined edges...could you explain or expand a little bit more on what you mean by that?

I've never been a fan of mushy tones. My taste—even with Jimmy Page, The Yardbirds, or The Kinks—is for guitar sounds where you can really hear where the note starts and the tonality of the note, rather than just covering things up with distortion.

I learned early on that the cleaner you can get your guitar sound, the better the recording quality. Let the riff or the tune carry the power. My first pro setup was Hiwatts, and I was a big Pete Townshend fan. My cover band did a lot of Who stuff, and I think that kind of got ingrained in me—that Hiwatt big, clean sound.

Sometimes, if the amplifier is too distorted, you can't play

thirds in your chords. You can only play root, fifth, root, because when you start adding thirds into the chord, it starts to sound weird if it's too distorted. So, I like to have a sound that's clean enough to get thirds and sevens and ninths into the chord, so I can create harmonic textures—not just power chords.

Think of The Beatles—why they're harmonically so rich: those clean sounds enabled them to play beautiful chords. Even Hendrix, for the most part, had a pretty clean sound for chordal stuff. I try to have an aggressive rock guitar sound, but clean enough to play complex chords.

Is there any chance we'll hear another instrumental album from you?

I always come around to saying, "Yeah, I'd love to do something that was a classic rock guitar album." But it's hard for me to work without a singer, because I'm spoiled. I've worked with the best—from



Robert Palmer and Michael Jackson to Billy Idol. My standards are really high for singers.

Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I guess because I don't listen to a lot of other—other than Jeff Beck. If Jeff did an instrumental record, I was the first to get it. Satriani and Vai have carved out that instrumental guitar record in such a great way, but a lot of them really bore me, and I'm just so fearful of doing that. I want people—when you think of Blow by Blow, people can enjoy that record whether they know anything about guitar or not. So, I think a guitar instrumental record has to be enjoyable to people who really don't care about guitar. That's the litmus test for me.



When I did *Memory Crash*—that was my last instrumental record—I found it really hard to do. When it came time for my guitar to play the melody, I hated it. I was like, “Oh, this could be so much better if there were words.”

Over the years, have there been projects and collaborations you’ve had to turn down?

David Lee Roth, yeah, but I was still in Billy Idol when he came calling. He flew to New York, and we met where I was living. I was three-quarters of the way through the third Billy Idol record, *Whiplash Smile*, and I said, “I’m not going to bail on the record.

I’m already committed to the record and the tour.”

I would have done it because I was already friends with Eddie Van Halen. I’d performed at NAMM with him, but I was really quite fearful of that comparison—being compared and filling those shoes. Steve Vai was exactly the right guy, because he had such technical ability to cover that and also make his own statement. He was the right guy for that gig.

Is there any music you and Billy have recorded over the years that hasn’t seen the light of day?

Yeah. When Chrysalis Records, his label, folded, and his contract was picked up by

Capitol, we actually did a record that was never released, produced by Glen Ballard—who did Alanis Morissette. That album is still out there. It was Glen's idea to recreate Elvis Presley music. It was all upright bass, and it was ill-fated. It just was the wrong idea, so fortunately it never came out.

Looking back over your entire career, is there a track that you're most proud of?

"Eyes Without a Face," because I think it encompasses everything a great Billy Idol song should be. It's a beautiful melody, it's got this great melancholy to it—which I love—and then explodes in the

middle with this wild, heavy rock guitar, and then this sonic blast of a solo. So, it's got everything. I never tire of playing it, and it's got so much drama to it. That's the thing that draws me to Billy—he loves a bit of drama. On this record, the song that opens the record—people said, "That's an unusual song to open a record with." But we love the drama. We look at it as a movie, and that's the way I look at this record—it's really a movie about Billy Idol.

You have an incredible knack for writing opening riffs that are so distinctively you. What are three other great opening riffs from other





artists that have that type of impact on you as a listener?

Oh, wow. I mean, there's always the obvious, and anything Jimmy Page did is written in stone as far as rock riffs. Hendrix always had that gift too. "Siberian Khatru" from Steve Howe with Yes is a really good opening riff. It's kind of funky, but it's unique to him. The "Wan- ton Song," Led Zeppelin—sure, it's two notes, but it's so amazing. I have to throw Jimmy Page in there. There's also a really good Allan Holdsworth one—I don't know the title, but it's on Tony Williams Lifetime. I'll send the title to Kent so he can pass it along. It's so metal, and you wouldn't expect it coming from Holdsworth, but it's a great rock riff.

Steve, as a guy from New York, what did it mean to you playing at the top of the Empire State Building? That must have been pretty incredible, right?

Yeah, incredible. I've actually never been in that building. I grew up in New York, but to go up there and see all the boroughs—the five boroughs—from one vantage point, pretty amazing. I should

have done it a long time ago, so it's great—absolutely great.

Regarding this year's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction results—is it something that you lose much sleep over?

No. When we were nominated, my answer was, "Well, I still have to clean my cat's litter box and take out the garbage every Tuesday. It's not going to change that." It's nice to be nominated. It was nice that I was nominated with Billy, but I do believe that Billy Idol will get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—he should be in. But I'm genuinely happy for the artists being inducted. They are deserving of it. Last year, we were able to help induct Ozzy into the Hall of Fame. I think for everyone that complains about it, they do go out of their way to honor the real forebearers of rock and roll, the early guys, the blues guys. I think they're trying to do the right thing. Who knows, maybe next year.

Billy Idol's latest album 'Dream Into It' is out now worldwide via Dark Horse Records / BMG.

For more information on guitarist and co-writer Steve Stevens, visit **stevestevensguitar.com**



Ricky **WARWICK!**

#1000 TIMES

A full-page photograph of Ricky Warwick. He is standing in front of a weathered, grey concrete wall covered in graffiti. He is wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket over a black t-shirt. He has dark hair, a beard, and visible tattoos on his neck and chest, including a star. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

Throughout his incredible, decades-spanning career—from fronting the hard-hitting Almighty to leading Black Star Riders and stepping into the revered ranks of Thin Lizzy—Ricky Warwick has always made it a priority to deliver hard-rocking music with heart, grit, and unflinching honesty. But with his latest solo effort, 'Blood Ties' (out now worldwide via Earache Records), he may have crafted his most personal and powerful release yet.

"THE Northern Irish firebrand sits down with Guitar Interactive's Jonathan Graham to discuss the making of the new album, the famous friends he brought in to help bring it to life—including The Cult's Billy Duffy, Runaways legend Lita Ford, Blackberry Smoke's Charlie Starr, and longtime live wingman Ben Christo—his continued evolution as a songwriter, reuniting with The Almighty, and the odds of another Thin Lizzy reunion down the line.

Ricky, you're back with this fantastic new album, Blood Ties. It feels like a particularly personal one—you've got to be feeling proud of it.

"It feels good. It's like Christmas—the run-up to an album. You get really excited, you know? That's the only way I can describe it."

It's been a couple of years since your last solo release, but this one features some pretty special guests, right?

"Yeah, I'm in a very privileged position. A lot of the people who influenced me or

who I've been a fan of have now become friends—and that's one of the magical things about doing what we do.

Billy Duffy and I go way back. I've known him since the early days of The Almighty. We were even in a band together—Circus Diablo—so I've been trying to get him on a record for ages. It never quite lined up until now. This time, it all aligned perfectly, and he played on a couple of tracks, which was amazing.

Lita Ford—I didn't know Lita before the record, but I've always been a fan of The Runaways. When I wrote 'Don't Leave Me in the Dark,' I knew it had to be a duet, and I wanted someone like Joan Jett, Lita, or Chrissie Hynde. By some twist of fate, my management started managing Lita. I said, 'Hold that thought—I've got a track.' She loved it, we met, and she sang on it.

Charlie Starr—huge Blackberry Smoke fan here. I don't know Charlie personally, but he's a good friend of Keith Nelson, my producer. Keith brought him in to play on 'Rise and Grind,' and he absolutely killed it. We haven't met in person yet—we're friends over text now, which is great.

Then there's Tuk Smith, who I'm a big fan of, and our own Ben Christo from The

I'M IN A VERY PRIVILEGED POS
INFLUENCED ME OR WHO I'VE BEEN

Fighting Hearts and Sisters of Mercy. Having Ben involved was a no-brainer.”

‘Rise and Grind’ is such a standout track. Was it always the track you imagined Charlie Starr would be part of?

“Not at all—that was all Keith Nelson’s idea. I’d have put Charlie on one of the more Americana-vibey tracks like ‘Angels of Desolation,’ just because of Blackberry Smoke’s sound. But Keith said, ‘No, Charlie will be great on “Rise and Grind.”’ I thought, ‘Really? That’s the heaviest track!’

But Keith sent it to him, and Charlie loved it. What he played was phenomenal. So credit to Keith and Charlie—I’d never have picked that track, but I’m glad they did.”

What’s Charlie’s feedback been like?

“He’s been great. Really gracious. He sent over a lovely quote, and he’s been super kind about me and the track. ‘Rise and Grind’ is actually the next song we’re putting out before the album drops. It’s just a huge honour to have him on the record—such a talented musician and a cool guy.”

So now you’ve got to appear on a Blackberry Smoke record, right?

“That would be huge—but I’m not expecting it! I’m just happy to have Charlie on my record.”



ITION. A LOT OF THE PEOPLE WHO
A FAN OF HAVE NOW BECOME FRIENDS.

Can you walk us through the gear you used on Blood Ties?

“Keith Nelson—former Buckcherry guitarist and my producer—has a killer vintage collection. We’re talking ‘58 Les Pauls, ‘60s Teles, a 12-string Rickenbacker. I used mostly his guitars, not mine.

My sound is a Marshall JCM-800, sometimes a Super OverDrive or Blues Driver. Keith also used a Plexi and a Bogner, I think.

Bass was a Fender Precision through Ampeg. Simple, classic.

A lot of plugins make guitars sound the same. You lose that earthy, vibey tone you get from a real amp. Same thing with AI—it’ll never replace the soul of a human playing or singing in the studio.

I’ve got a guitar sound in my head. It took years to get there. I don’t use the same tone for Ricky Warwick stuff as I do for The Almighty—it’s a different beast.

For solo stuff, it’s almost clean overdrive. I use a Gretsch Broadcaster live—a hollow body—with P90s. It gives me that crunch, that clarity. It’s probably closest to Malcolm Young’s tone—open chords, minor sevens, lots of ringing strings and capo action.”

Your voice, playing, and songwriting all feel instantly recognisable. Did that signature style come

naturally early on, or did it take time to develop?

“I was pretty insecure when I started. I didn’t think I was all that good. I definitely didn’t think I was a great singer, and I certainly didn’t think I was a guitar player. Maybe I could write a half-decent song. But over the years, it’s a confidence thing—like anything, the more you put in, the more you get out.

It wasn’t until the last 25 years or so—around the time of my first solo record—that it all started to come together. The playing, the singing, the writing just leapt forward, and that came with confidence. I started thinking, ‘Maybe I’m OK at this. People are buying the records, they’re coming to the shows.’

Joe Elliott was a big part of that. He gave me a good shake and said, ‘You’re good at this. Be good at it. Be better at it.’ That stuck with me. I might’ve been cocky in The Almighty days, but honestly, that was just hiding insecurity.

These days, I’m comfortable in my own skin. I don’t really care what people think—I do it my way. And that’s OK.”

How was it being back in Japan with The Almighty?

“It was great. We hadn’t been over there for years. We did three shows—Osaka and two in Tokyo. And we were just in the studio last week in Glasgow recording something very, very special. That’ll be revealed soon.”



INSPIRED BY GIBSON CUSTOM

THE INSPIRED CHOICE

Epiphone's game-changing collaboration with the artisans at Gibson Custom brings premium Custom Shop tone and components to every stage. Featuring USA pickups, historically accurate Gibson "open book" headstocks, and one-piece necks, Epiphone's Inspired by Gibson Custom Collection will elevate your playing to a whole new level.

Scan the QR code to visit Epiphone.com and shop now.



I hear you and the band are recording again in Glasgow. I take it that's no coincidence?

"Absolutely. When we reunited in 2023, we were adamant about rehearsing in the same space we used when we started out in Glasgow. That was important to us. We even tried to bring back as many of the original crew as we could.

Yes, three-quarters of the band are from Strathaven, but Glasgow's where we rehearsed, where we started playing—it's a Glaswegian band, like it or not. Andy McCafferty was born and bred in Anderston, and he'd have something to say about that!

We just wanted to reconnect with everything from back then. We've lost people close to the band over the years, and that

really hit home. Life is short. We're all still here, still fit and well—so we thought, let's get back out there. People have been asking for it. Let's give them what they want."

Do you remember the first show you played?

"Yeah—we were signed to Polydor on our 12th gig, but the first was at Rooftops in Glasgow, March 1988. We had five songs and had to headline, so we borrowed every Marshall cab we could find, brought in a smoke machine and two strobes, got drunk, played the five songs, then jammed for 25 minutes.

There were 14 people there, but one of them was Richard Heggie from Kerrang!, and he wrote, 'I've just seen the greatest rock and roll show of my life.' The phone started ringing.

Guitar

**Ricky
WARWICK
INTERVIEW**

"I'D SAY IT'S 50/50"

**THIN LIZZY
REUNION?**

Ricky Warwick - Interview

FRET-King

Blending the familiar
with the contemporary.

FRET-KING COUNTRY SQUIRE STEALTH

★★★★★
ORDER DIRECT
SUMMER SALE
JUNE 2025
25% OFF
FREE Shipping UK & EU
★★★★★

Candy Apple Red

Black

BUY HERE

fret-king.com

@FretKing

@fretkingguitars

Spring King Junior

NOT A SIMULATION...
REAL SPRINGS...

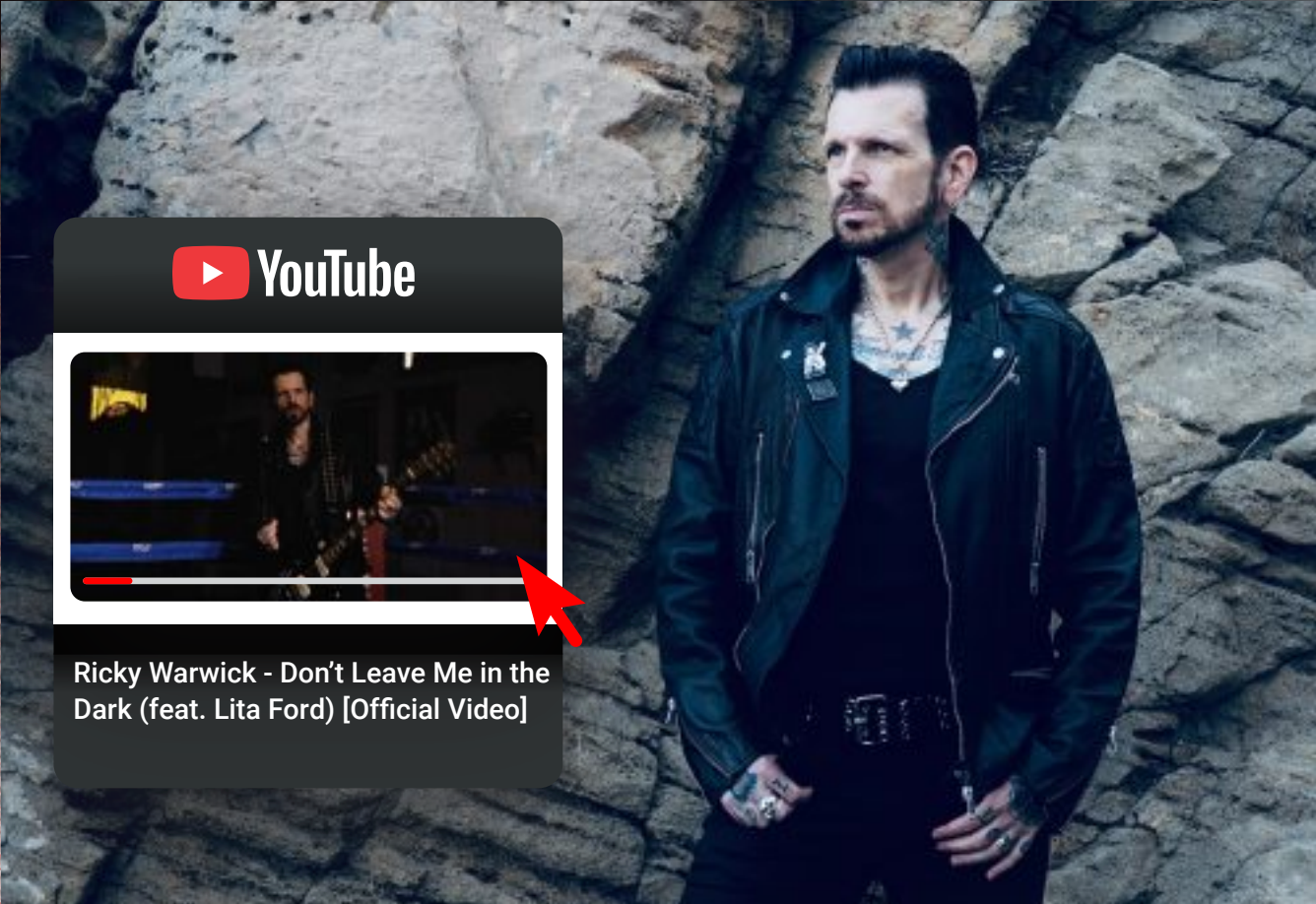
EVEN
BETTER THAN
THE 1999
ORIGINAL!

SEE
MORE



Danelectro

danelectro.com

 YouTube

Ricky Warwick - Don't Leave Me in the Dark (feat. Lita Ford) [Official Video]

By gig eight or nine, we were selling out the Marquee. Still unsigned. We ended up going with Polydor out of loyalty—and the history. The Who, The Jam—it meant something.

Our manager Tommy T orchestrated the whole thing beautifully. That kind of mystique would be impossible now with the internet.”

Could you believe it was all happening so fast at the time?

“It was hard to take in. We were arrogant,

obnoxious, very West of Scotland—we took it all in stride. It really was too much too soon.

We didn’t care about the business—we just wanted to play, get drunk, make noise. Lots of naivety, but that’s part of what made those early records so raw. We didn’t know how to act in the studio, how gear worked—we learned on the job. The mistakes made it what it was.”

Is there a proudest moment from recording that first record?

“Just seeing all the songs finally recorded. Yeah, we were signed on gig 12, but we worked our asses off before that. Rehearsed nonstop, always critiquing the songs.

Just holding the finished record—Blood, Fire & Love—and saying, ‘We did it.’ That was the moment.”

Where are things at with Thin Lizzy? If you were a betting man, could there be another show someday?

“I’d say it’s 50/50. Scott stepped back to focus on his art, which is fantastic. We’re still great friends, we still talk all the time. But I’m not putting any pressure on him. It’s his thing. If he wants to bring Lizzy back, I’m there—he knows that. But there’s no pressure from me.

Even if I’d only played one show, it would’ve been incredible. The fact that it turned into so much more—it’s been an honour to be part of that legacy.”

Sadly, John Sykes passed away recently. Did you guys ever cross paths?

“I never got to meet John. He stepped

away from the spotlight for years. There were rumours about a new record from him, but it never seemed to materialise.

As a musician, a singer, a guitarist—he was phenomenal. It’s a great loss. No one knew he was ill—it came out of the blue and shocked a lot of people.”

One final one—what would be your dream Thin Lizzy lineup, but you have to put yourself in it somewhere.

“I wouldn’t put myself in—I’d want to be there as a fan!

Obviously Phil, I mean, of course. Brian Downey, Scott Gorham. My favourite album is Black Rose. Robbo and Gary both meant a lot to me for different reasons. Robbo was Glaswegian and so young and gifted.

I’d love to see Scott, Robbo, and Gary together—three guitars. But being from Northern Ireland, Gary just edges it for me.”

Blood Ties is out now worldwide via Earache Records.

For more information,
head to **rickywarwick.com**



THE COMPETITION

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

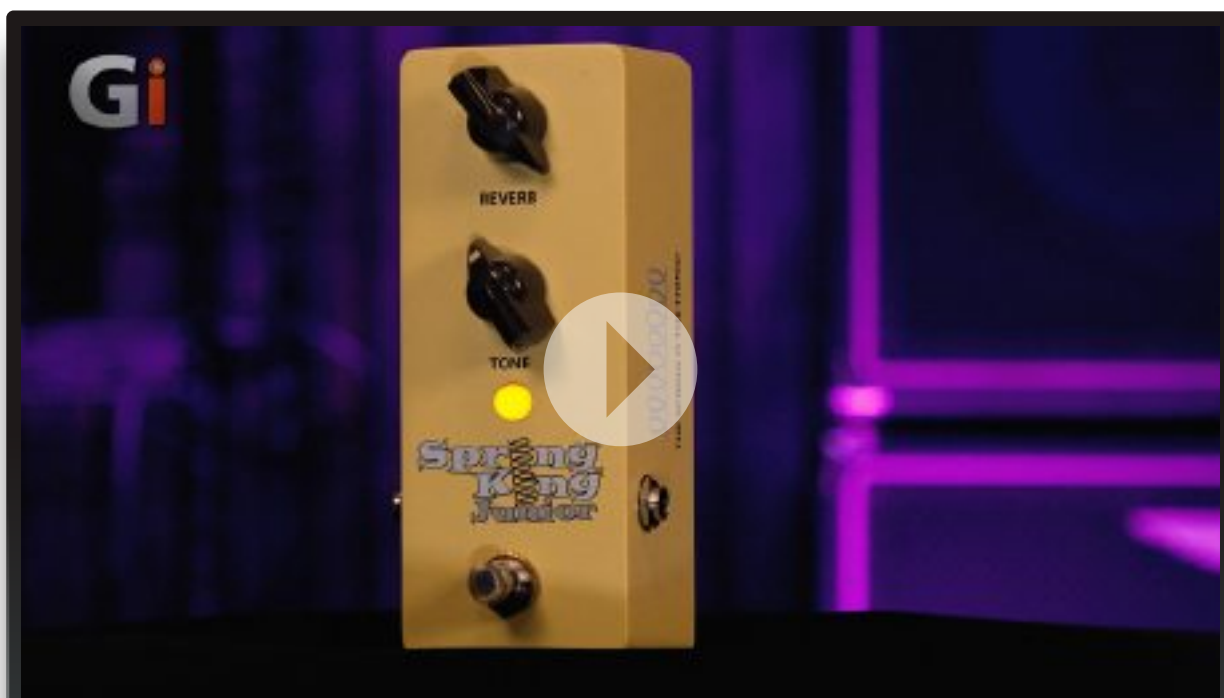
YOUR CHANCES TO WIN

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN
Gi
YOUR CHANCE TO WIN



WIN! a **Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior** in our free

In this issue's competition, we are giving one lucky winner a chance to get their hands on a **Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior**



Competition Time - Your chance to win!

About the **Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior**

The Spring King Junior follows in the sizable footsteps of the original Spring King reverb, a bestseller that became an instant classic upon its release in 1999. However, the Spring King's large footprint was notorious for taking up a lot of real estate on pedalboards.

Danelectro's new Spring King Junior offers authentic reverb from a real built-in spring tank...but in a more compact pedalboard-friendly size. And the Spring King Junior passes the ultimate spring reverb test with flying colors: bump it and you'll get thunderous reverb sound, just like vintage spring reverbs.

How do you win? It's easy.

Send us an email with the subject "For more information on Danelectro, please visit: lavamusic.com" to competitions@guitarinteractivemagazine.com One winner will be selected random.



FEATURING

- Spring Reverb
- Type: Analogue
- Mono In
- Mono Out
- Controls: Reverb, Tone
- Bypass mode: True Bypass
- Power supply: 9 W DC
- Centre negative
- Soft switch
- Die-cast housing
- Genuine spring reverb tank
- Kick pad for thunderous verb sounds

For more information on Danelectro, please visit: lavamusic.com



ENTER

Good Luck!

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 RECOMMENDED



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Reissue 1960 & 1957

Channelling the golden era of guitar design, Epiphone's Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul and feel of the iconic late-'50s and 1960 Les Pauls—minus the eye-watering price tag. With tops, chunky mahogany necks, and PAF-style pickups—these models serve up timeless tone something in between. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

FEW electric guitars carry the weight of legend quite like the Les Paul Standard. With the “Inspired by Gibson” series, Epiphone is aiming squarely at the hearts (and ears) of players who crave vintage correctness, high-end touches, and a healthy dose of classic rock history—without the corresponding financial commitment. Enter

the 1957 Goldtop and 1960 Les Paul Standard Reissue: two guitars that sit at the very top of Epiphone's range, and with good reason.

The first detail likely to turn heads is the headstock itself. This is Epiphone's take on the iconic “open book” Gibson silhouette—a design feature long overdue on these models. ▶



Epiphone *Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Standard Reissue 1960 & 1957*

Les Paul Standard

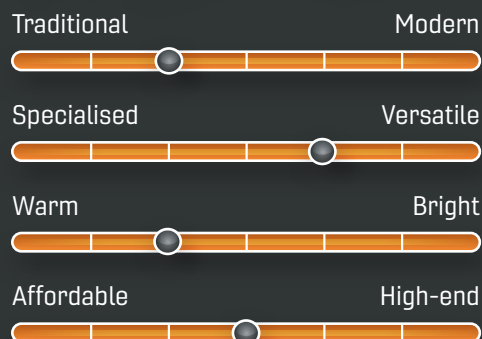
Standard Reissues bring all the classic looks and attention to vintage detail—think carved maple neck and style, whether you're chasing blues, rock, or



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Standard Reissue 1960 & 1957

MSRP: (UK) £1149 | (US) \$1299

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Les Paul Standards
- » Open-book headstocks
- » Not breaking the bank

For more information, please visit:

epiphone.com





What's perhaps most striking is how much guitar you're getting for the money.

It's remarkable how much this one shape change can transform the guitar's visual gravitas. Sure, Epiphone's Kalamazoo headstock has its place (Casino, Sheraton), but on a Les Paul, the Gibson outline just looks right. Combine this with the silkscreened Les Paul script, vintage-correct Kluson tuners (single ring for the '57, double ring for the '60), and the double-diamond serial on the back, and the guitars immediately feel more "Gibson" than ever before.

Of course, aesthetics alone don't make a great instrument. Both models feature the expected mahogany body and maple cap—no weight relief here, just classic construction. The Goldtop's finish is appropriately lustrous, while the 1960's "vintage gloss" iced tea burst (also available in washed cherry) offers a subtle nod to aged guitars, without veering into relic territory. The necks are true to period: the '57 comes with the substantial, rounded 50s profile—a shape with genuine heft and old-school credibility. The '60, on the other hand, sports a slim-taper neck that will feel instantly familiar to players who favour speed and comfort. ▶

Acoustic Electric Guitar, Reimagined



Introducing
AEG-1

L.R. Baggs



Available to order now

Proudly distributed in the UK and Ireland by Strings & Things Ltd



It's not so thin that it disappears, but it glides nicely under the hand, and should appeal to a wide cross-section of modern players.

Hardware is where the value proposition gets interesting. Both guitars come equipped with an ABR-1 bridge and lightweight aluminum tailpiece—parts many would consider upgrades on far pricier instruments. Switchcraft electronics (including the jack and selector), USA pots, and paper-in-oil capacitors round out a package that is impressively true to vintage spec for an Epiphone at this price. The fretwork is tidy, the rosewood boards sport classic trapezoid inlays, and while you won't find fret nibs here, the overall fit and finish is genuinely impressive.

The centrepiece, though, is the pickups. Both models are loaded with genuine Gibson Custom Buckers—the same pickups used in their high-end Custom Shop instruments. These are not mere imitations; they deliver that familiar Les Paul punch and dynamic range in spades. Clean, you get shimmer and warmth in equal measure, with a complexity in the mids that invites expressive playing. Add gain, and the guitars absolutely sing: the bridge is articulate and muscular without excessive harshness, while

the neck is fat and vocal without being muddy. The controls have a vintage-style taper and feel genuinely responsive—a detail often lost on lesser instruments.

What's perhaps most striking is how much guitar you're getting for the money. With just the pickups and pots alone, you'd be spending a significant chunk if you sourced them separately. Here, you get the whole instrument for less than the price of some pickup sets. The fit and finish are genuinely up there with much more expensive guitars, and in the hand—or plugged in and cranked—the

experience is thoroughly convincing.

In short, Epiphone's Inspired by Gibson 1957 and 1960 Les Paul Standard Reissues offer an authentic slice of Les Paul history, dressed up in all the right details and powered by truly excellent electronics. For purists, the Goldtop and Iced Tea Burst capture the soul of two golden eras. For pragmatists, they offer exceptional value. For everyone else, they might just be the best way to get "that" sound and feel—without the vintage price tag.



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Standard Reissue 1960 & 1957

Music Man Valentine HH

Ever wanted a guitar that could cover everything from country twang to indie jangle, all while the HH could be your six-string dream come true. Designed with Maroon 5's James Valentine, it has a maple neck, and two custom-wound humbuckers that dish out punchy, versatile tones. Add in a cool finish, and you've got a seriously gig-ready machine. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

THE Music Man Valentine has long been a favourite among signature guitars—balancing standout looks with serious playability. Now, with the new Valentine HH, Music Man has updated the formula, adding versatility while keeping everything that made the original great.

Gone is the previous HS pickup layout. In its place: a pair of custom Valentine HT

humbuckers. This new setup, paired with a five-way selector, opens up a surprising range of sounds. From thick, punchy humbucker tones to clear, complex split and parallel options, the HH delivers both muscle and nuance. There's some clever wiring under the hood, too; the split coil settings have a unique character, thanks to what seems like asymmetrical winding, offering up something special in every position. **G**



Epiphone Inspired by Gibson Custom Les Paul Standard Reissue 1960 & 1959

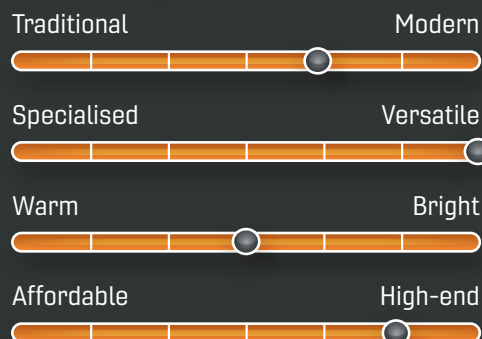
le looking sleek on stage? The Music Man Valentine
sports a lightweight offset body, roasted maple
nfy modern neck and premium hardware, and you've



Music Man Valentine HH

MSRP: (UK) £2699 | (US) \$2999

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Music Man quality
- » versatile guitars
- » James Valentine

For more information, please visit:

music-man.com



The body is classic Music Man—a wedge-shaped ash design that’s both eye-catching and practical. The shape isn’t just for looks; it helps keep the guitar lightweight and naturally angled toward you as you play, making it comfortable for everything from quick practice sessions to long sets. Despite its substantial appearance, it never feels heavy or unwieldy.

Flip it over and you’ll find a roasted flamed maple neck and fretboard. Music Man’s necks are famous for a reason, and this one is no exception: the finish is smooth and inviting, the carve is slim and fast (think Axis vibes), and the 22 stainless steel frets—while

a touch smaller—are comfortable, even if you’re used to bigger wire. Playability is effortless.

You’ll also find a lot of smart, player-focused details. Locking tuners with thumbscrews make string changes a breeze and keep things stable. The compensated nut keeps open chords in tune, and the truss rod wheel at the heel means you can tweak neck relief in seconds—no tools needed.

A standout feature is the onboard volume boost. With a flick of a switch, you get an instant jump in output—perfect for solos or whenever you need a bit more presence.





You still get all the dynamics and touch-sensitivity of lower output pickups, but with that extra punch on demand.

Hardware is solid throughout. The fixed bridge borrows Music Man's "comfort plate" from their tremolo models, so your picking hand stays comfortable, and six individual saddles make for easy intonation. Everything feels sturdy, gig-ready, and thoughtfully designed.

Looks-wise, the Valentine HH walks the line between classic and modern. The Trans Maroon finish, in particular, manages to be bold without being flashy—a guitar that stands out for the right reasons.

So, who's this for? Pretty much anyone who wants a single guitar that can cover a lot of ground. From funk to rock, clean pop, or heavier riffs, the Valentine HH is built to handle it all. It's a signature model that doesn't lean too hard on the celebrity name—it's a genuinely impressive, practical, and fun guitar that lives up to its reputation.

Bottom line, the Music Man Valentine HH is a refined, do-it-all instrument that combines clever design with a player's mindset. Whether you're in the studio, on stage, or just jamming at home, this guitar more than delivers.



Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire Stealth

Nick Jennison reviews the Dustin Kensrue Artist Series StingRay—a stripped-back yet innominate guitar designed in collaboration with Thrice frontman Dustin Kensrue. With a lightweight okoumé body and stainless steel frets, it offers smooth playability and rock-solid tone. A custom humbucker/single-coil selector switch for expanded routing options. Available in Dark Satin Tobacco, TV Blonde, and the new Stealth Gloss Black.

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

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



lth Gloss Black

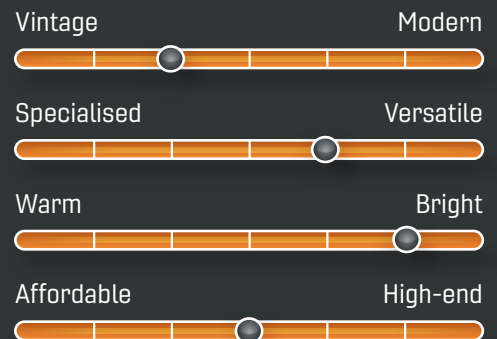
ovative guitar from the folks at Ernie Ball Music
ume body, roasted maple neck, and 22 stainless
combo runs through a clever stereo push-button
v-for-2025 Daiquiri Ice. Fancy!



Fret King FKV27SBK Country Squire Stealth Gloss Black

MSRP: (UK) £699 | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

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

For more information, please visit:

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



If you're in the market for a T-style guitar and want something a bit different, the Country Squire might be worth checking out.

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

Stealth Black might be the name of the finish, but there's another reason for the stealthiness of this guitar. First of all, you might see that the pickups look standard for a T-Type. Two Fret King pickups designed by Trev Wilkinson himself. They sound amazing! However, under the pickguard, there's also the Bukka Phantom Coils, which can be switched on via the push/pull volume pot. This allows us to get hum-cancelled style tones from the single coils, adding a new level to the tonal pallet. If that wasn't enough for you, this guitar, like other Fret King guitars, features the Vari-Coil control. This allows us to 'wind' the pickups either hotter or cooler. In the Country Squire guitar, this allows us to go from a hot tele sound to a more classic T-style sound. And if country

is your thing, you'll be able to dial many different eras of sonic exploration. However, it's not just country this guitar can do. It sounds great with high gain and processed sounds as well. There's a reason why lots of metal bands use Teles on recordings: there's plenty of twang and punch. So, in my opinion, this guitar is incredibly versatile.

The neck feels great: C shape, 10-inch radius, 25'5 scale length—nothing really gets in the way. It's probably a bit slicker than a classic tele without being too "wizard-like." So, no matter what your playing style or needs, it's a great all-rounder. The medium frets feel great... and of course, no dings or rusty edges. Everything feels like the quality you'd expect.

If you're in the market for a T-style guitar and want something a bit different, the Country Squire might be worth checking out. It's not a bad price for what you get (check out Fret King's website for the current RRP), and you get a gig back; what's not to love? Fret King makes unique yet classic designs affordable for the practising musician, and I'd say they are worth considering if you're looking for a great T style in your collection.



Vintage

ANNIVERSARY 30 Years

Available instore and online....

Coaster Series

Alan Entwistle Pick Ups
British guitar builder and designer

Coaster Series
From £179



www.vintageguitarsrus.com



@VintageGuitarsOfficial



@VintageInstruments



@vintageguitars_official

Godin

GUITARS

Power, precision and tone
unmatched in any setting!

Godin Multiac Mundial
Grand Concert
Mahogany

Find Your Nearest Dealer Here



www.jhs.co.uk/godin

Spira S-420

Nick Jennison takes a look at another new addition to Spira Guitars' 420 range with the sup the S-420 introduces key upgrades aimed at the modern rock and metal player. Constructed design allows easy upper-fret access to a super-fast roasted Canadian maple neck, while th control and divebombs without compromising tuning—no matter how far out you want to go

SPIRA might not have the decades of legacy behind some big-name guitar brands, but with the S420, they've come out swinging. This is their first model with a double-locking tremolo system, and it's clear from the start that they're aiming high.

The first thing you'll notice is the chameleon finish. It isn't just pretty—it's genuinely striking, shifting from turquoise to blue to deep purple depending on the light. It looks every bit as good in a home studio as it does under stage lights. ▶



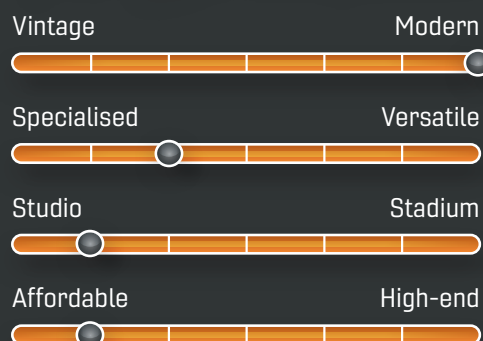
erb S-420. Building on the foundation of the S-400,
d with a roasted poplar body, its double-cutaway
ne locking tremolo system delivers excellent pitch
0.



Spira S-420

MSRP: (UK) £409 | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



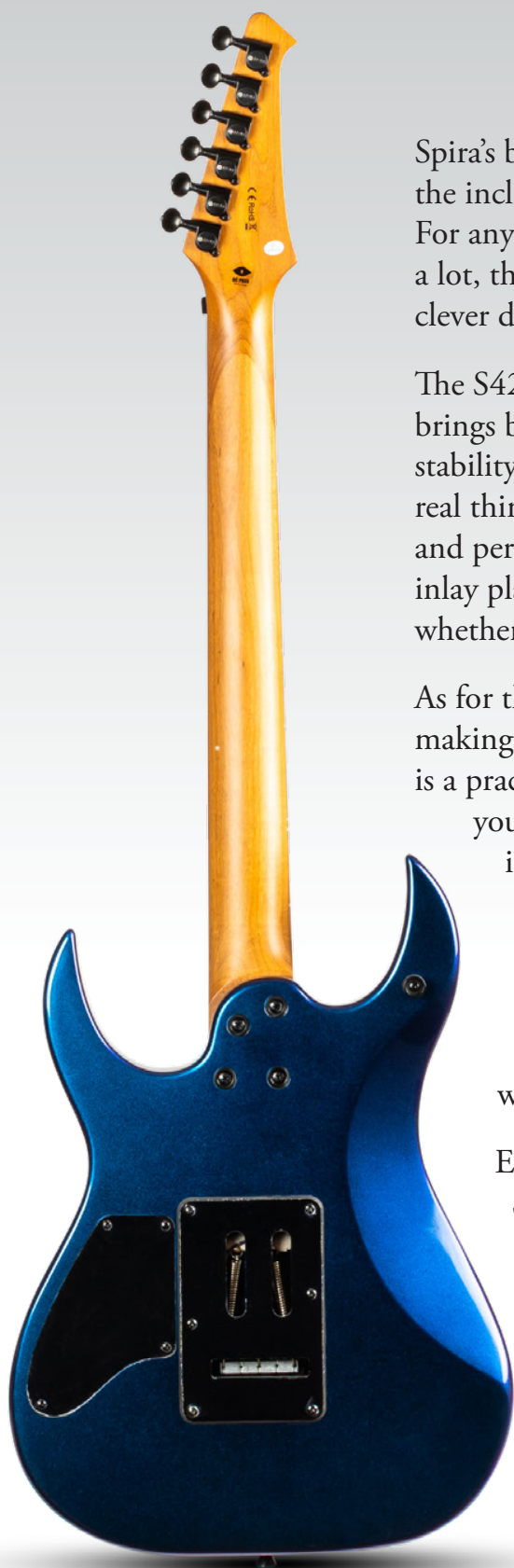
For fans of

- » Shred machines
- » Hot Pickups
- » Bargins

For more information, please visit:

spiraguitars.com





Spira's bold reverse headstock ties the whole look together, and the inclusion of a locking nut means tuning stability is a given. For anyone playing heavier styles or just using the whammy bar a lot, there's even a removable string dampener—one of those clever details that keeps stray string noise at bay.

The S420's neck is made from Canadian roasted maple, which brings both a sleek satin feel and a healthy dose of tuning stability. The “tech ebony” fretboard looks and feels like the real thing, and the fretwork is top-tier—big, comfortable frets and perfectly finished edges. There's also a lot of thought in the inlay placement, making it easy to keep track of your position whether you're riffing or soloing up high.

As for the body, you get Spira's aggressive double cutaway design, making upper fret access a breeze. The repositioned strap button is a practical touch that helps the guitar hang comfortably when you're standing, though it might take a little getting used to if you play sitting down a lot.

The double-locking tremolo, made by Sungil in Korea, is a real highlight. It's easy to set up, feels stable, and keeps your tuning rock solid, even with the most expressive use of the trem arm. The screw collar lets you choose whether you want the bar floating or locked in place.

Electronics are often where budget guitars stumble, but Spira's “villain” humbuckers are a pleasant surprise. The bridge pickup is hot and tight (12.4K), perfect for riffs and leads, while the neck (8.3K) is full and smooth, just right for solos and clean tones. The middle position gives you a lively, sparkling clean. There's no coil split from the factory, but the pickups are wired for it, so it's an easy upgrade if you want even more versatility.



What's impressive is how well the S420 handles different styles. It's clearly built for modern rock and metal, but it's equally at home with clean funk, bluesy licks, or classic rock leads. The factory setup is dialed in, so you can get playing right away.

Then there's the price. For everything you're getting—roasted maple neck, quality hardware, that unique finish, and great pickups—the S420 is extremely affordable. It's a guitar that punches well above its weight.

Bottom line: The Spira S420 is a standout in the crowded world of modern electrics. With thoughtful design, solid hardware, and real sonic versatility, it's a serious option for anyone looking for pro features without the big-ticket price. Spira might be the new kid on the block, but the S420 proves they know what today's players want.



Godin Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany

For players who need nylon-string warmth without leaving behind their electric roots, Godin has more. **Nick Jennison** reviews this hybrid six-string that blends the feel of a classical guitar with a Baggs preamp system—for stage-ready, feedback-resistant performance. Comfortable, far body round out this pro-level package.

WHILE the world of nylon-string guitars may not be as jam-packed with legendary names as their steel-string or electric cousins, Godin's Multiac series has quietly become a benchmark for stage-ready nylon performance. The new Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany continues that tradition, blending classic looks with modern playability and gig-ready practicality in a way that's both subtle and smart.

Right out of the case, this guitar just feels special. The chambered body is slim and comfortable, sporting a solid cedar top and a beautifully glossy mahogany back. The look is understated, with just enough three-ply binding to hint at its high-end status without feeling flashy. Made in Canada, the fit and finish are everything you'd expect from a premium instrument.



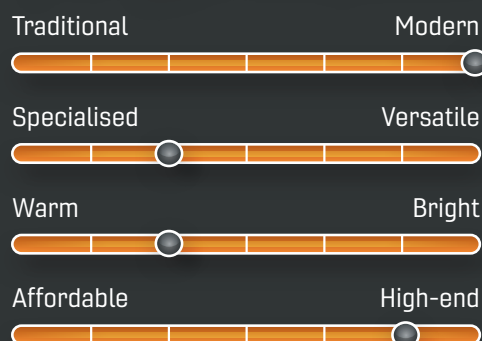
n's Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany nails it... and with high-end electronics—including a custom LR familiar neck dimensions and a gorgeous mahogany



Godin Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany

MSRP: (UK) £2699 | (US) \$2999

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Inspiring playability
- » Beautiful plugged-in nylon tones
- » Luxurious looks and feel

For more information, please visit:

jhs.co.uk/collections/godin-guitars



The neck is where the Multiac really stands out from traditional nylons. Sure, it's wide and flat like a classical guitar, but it's noticeably slimmer and features a gentle asymmetrical carve that fits the hand nicely—whether you're playing fingerstyle or coming from an electric background. And for those used to electrics or steel-strings, side dot markers are there to help you navigate, so there's no feeling lost in unfamiliar territory. The Richlite fingerboard is a clever upgrade over ebony: it's slick, consistent, and won't throw a fit when the weather changes.

On the hardware front, Godin has kept the player firmly in mind. The bridge uses individual saddles for each string, which means intonation and note separation are genuinely excellent—especially noticeable when you plug in. The truss rod is a rare (and welcome) feature on a nylon guitar, letting you adjust neck relief easily without needing to see a tech. And if you've ever had to fight with strap locks on an acoustic or nylon, you'll be pleased to know this one's compatible with popular locking systems straight out of the box.

The electronics are, simply put, where this guitar earns its keep. Godin and LR Baggs have put together a system that blends a piezo pickup with a Lyric microphone, all controlled by a center-notched blend slider. Want natural, resonant body sound? Slide toward the mic. Need clarity and punch? Head for the piezo. EQ sliders and a phase switch are right there for extra control, but honestly, the default sound is already so balanced and natural you might not even need to touch them. And with its chambered body



and clever design, feedback on stage is the least of your worries.

What's most impressive is how accessible the Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany feels. Even if you're not a classical player, the learning curve is gentle, and it's just plain fun to play. Whether you're fingerpicking, flatpicking, or somewhere in between, the guitar responds beautifully and always sounds inspiring through an amp or PA.

In short, the Godin Multiac Grand Concert Mahogany is the kind of nylon-string that welcomes all comers. It's built for the modern player who wants classic sound and looks, but needs the reliability and comfort of a high-end gigging instrument. Plug it in, and it just works—no fuss, no drama, just great tone and rock-solid performance. If you're curious about what a truly stage-ready nylon can do for your playing, this one deserves a serious look.



VINTAGE FUZZ REBORN

In response to an ever-growing demand from players, **Rotosound** has sourced a limited number of N.O.S. germanium transistors and is hand-building pedals from its factory in Kent. Once again, players can lose themselves in the **RFB1 Fuzz**'s chewy fuzz tones that was first heard in 1967 at Rotosound's Denmark Street showroom.

Find out more at rotosound.com



Larrivée Simple 6 00

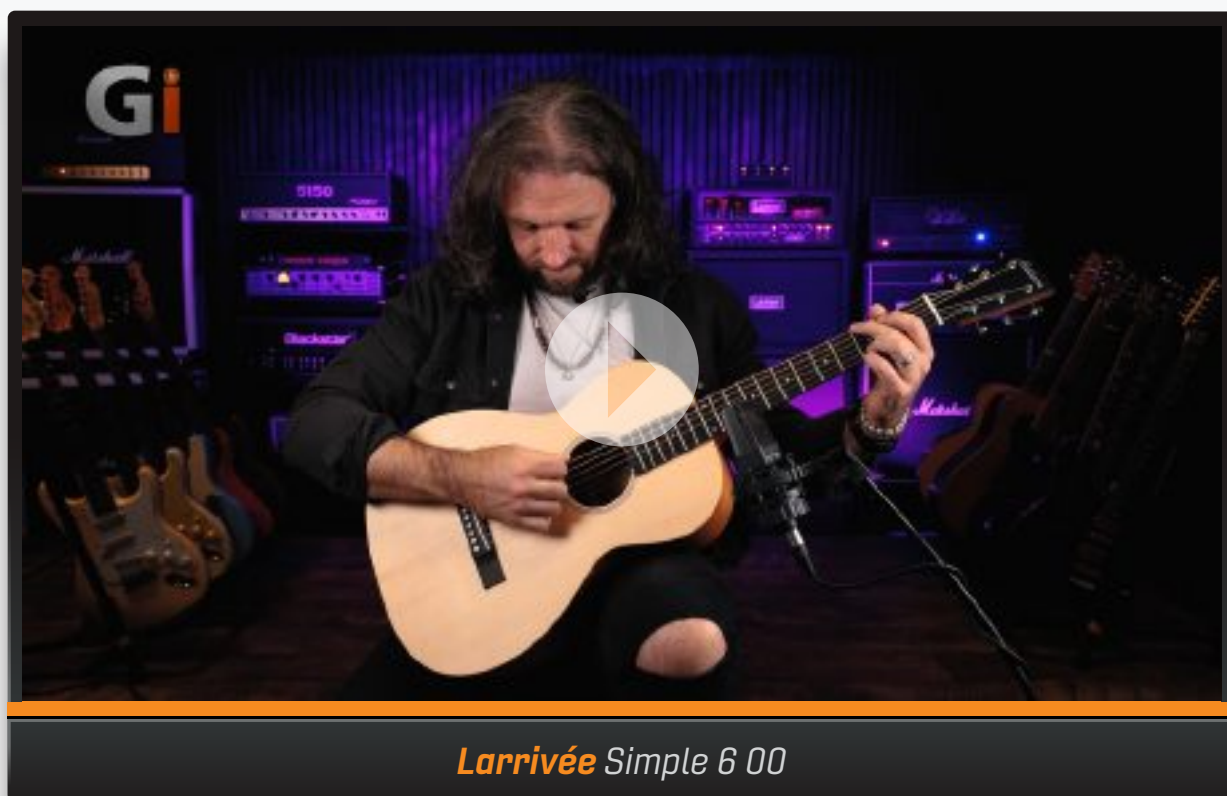
Compact but mighty, the Larrivée 00 is a fingerpicker's dream. Built with all-solid woods and small-bodied acoustic rings out with a clear, balanced tone—ideal for couch strumming, so elegance, and top-notch North American craftsmanship make it a real standout. **Nick Jenni**

WHEN you think of small-bodied acoustics, there are a lot of classics out there—but the Larrivée Simple 6 00 easily earns a spot on that list. Built in Oxnard, California, this guitar is Larrivée's answer to the player who wants real quality and character without any unnecessary flash.

True to its name, the Simple 6 00 is refreshingly minimal. You won't find ornate inlays or fancy finishes here. Instead, you get an understated, elegant design that puts the

focus firmly on materials and craftsmanship. Up top, there's an ebony headstock overlay with the Larrivée logo and a set of beautifully etched open-gear tuners that look vintage but feel rock solid in practice.

The neck—satin-finished mahogany with a slim, comfortable profile—really hits a sweet spot. It's fast and inviting, whether you have big hands or small, and the ebony fretboard and matching bridge plate not only look sharp but make for a smooth playing surface. ➤



Larrivée Simple 6 00

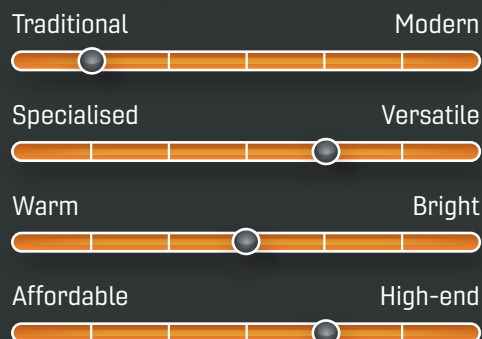
and an ultra-comfortable small-body shape, this
 ngwriting, or open mics. Classic looks, understated
son tells us more.



Larrivée Simple 6 00

MSRP: (UK) £TBC | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » *Legendary Larrivée quality;*
- » *Stripped-back aesthetics;*
- » *00 sweetness and comfort*

For more information, please visit:

larrivee.com





This isn't the cheapest acoustic you'll find, but the cost is clearly justified by what's on offer.

This is a 00-sized body joined at the 12th fret, so it's compact and comfortable, perfect for playing at home or on the go. Despite its smaller size, the Simple 6 00 stands out for its impressive low-end response. It delivers a punch and fullness you wouldn't expect from a guitar this size, and there's plenty of clarity in the highs and mids thanks to the classic spruce and mahogany tonewood pairing.

That lively resonance isn't an accident—it's the result of Larrivée's scalloped bracing, a construction detail that helps the guitar respond beautifully to everything from heavy strumming to delicate fingerstyle. You can even feel the guitar vibrate against you as you play or talk nearby, which is always a good sign with acoustics.

While the Simple 6 00 doesn't come loaded with decorative extras, it still uses the same high-grade materials and construction techniques you'd find in Larrivée's more expensive models. The all-solid mahogany back and sides, responsive spruce top, and meticulous build ensure you get real value—especially if tone and playability are at the top of your wishlist.

This isn't the cheapest acoustic you'll find, but the cost is clearly justified by what's on offer. Larrivée has managed to make a guitar that feels and sounds like a high-end instrument, just without the ornate

trimmings. For players who care more about how a guitar feels in hand and how it responds to their playing, the Simple 6 00 is hard to beat.

If you're after a no-nonsense acoustic that nails the fundamentals—playability, tone, and honest craftsmanship—the Larrivée Simple 6 00 is well worth your attention. Sometimes, less really is more, and this guitar proves it in all the ways that count.



Cort Essence-GA4

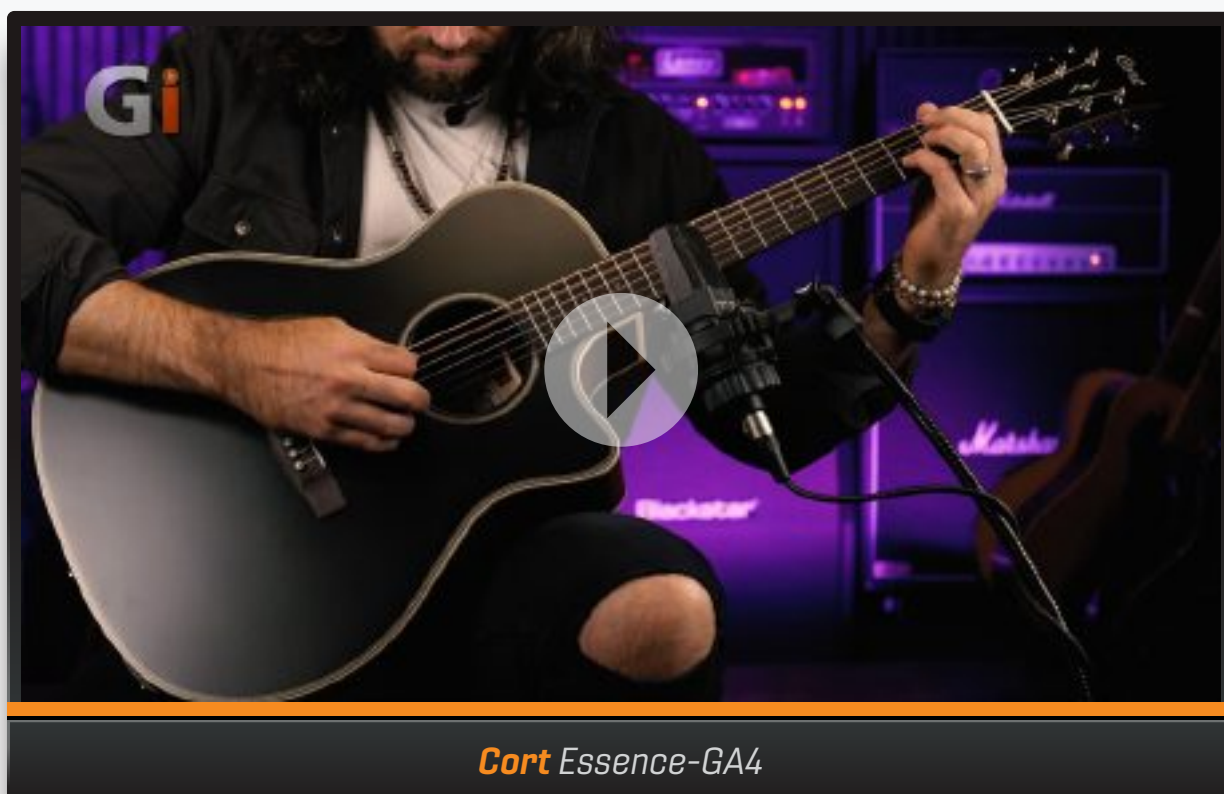
If you want rich acoustic tone without breaking the bank, the Cort Essence-GA4 is a hidden gem. With a spruce top, and mahogany back and sides, it delivers warmth and punch that belie its price. The only downside is its price. Here's **Nick Jennison** with the full review.

IN the world of affordable acoustics, there are plenty of guitars that look the part, but few that actually feel and sound like a serious instrument. The Cort Essence GA-4 stands out as one of those rare exceptions—a guitar that punches well above its weight in tone, feel, and features, all without breaking the bank.

Right away, the GA-4 catches your eye with its grand auditorium body shape

and tasteful black semi-gloss finish (other colors are available, but the black is a real showstopper). The herringbone inlay around the top and soundhole is subtle but stylish, keeping things classy rather than flashy. No over-the-top binding or ornate inlays here—just an understated elegance that suits pretty much any player.

The mahogany back, sides, and neck are all finished in a smooth, open-pore satin that ▶



Cort Essence-GA4

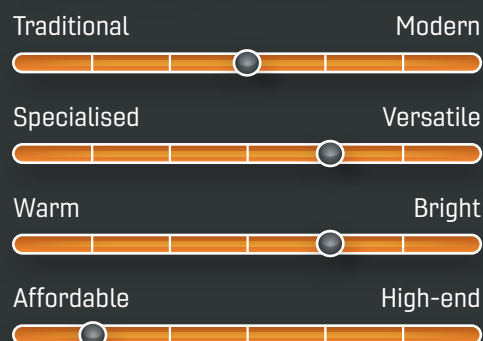
gem. With a Grand Auditorium shape, solid spruce
board Fishman electronics mean you're ready for the



Cort Essence-GA4

MSRP: (UK) £399 | (US) \$499

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Bright, balanced tones;
- » Elegant modern looks;
- » Guitars that should cost way more

For more information, please visit:

cortguitars.com



Aesthetically, the T420 stands out.

feels great under your hands. This neck is slim and comfortable, making everything from thumb-over chords to quick runs feel natural. Thanks to the 14th fret neck joint and the thoughtfully-sized cutaway, you get easy access all the way up the neck—a real bonus for players who like to venture into higher registers.

What truly sets the GA-4 apart is its use of torrefied wood. Cort has heat-aged both the solid Sitka spruce top and the internal bracing—a process usually reserved for much more expensive guitars. The result? The GA-4 sounds and feels “played in” right out of the box, with a lively, open, and balanced character that you usually only find in vintage acoustics. It’s equally at home whether you’re strumming big open chords, picking delicate fingerstyle, or laying into the strings with a heavy hand. The proprietary scalloped X-bracing helps this guitar sing with excellent sustain and projection, so every note speaks with clarity and warmth.

Hardware is another area where Cort over-delivers. The open-gear tuners with art deco-style buttons are both good-looking and reliable—much better than the generic tuners you often see at this price point.

Plugged in, the Fishman VT pickup system makes life easy. Volume and tone controls are tucked away in the soundhole, and the active electronics ensure your sound stays clear and natural whether you’re on stage or recording at home. It’s the kind of setup that lets you focus on playing, not fiddling with gear, and it responds beautifully to further processing if you’re the type to use effects or IRs.



Of course, you don't get everything—there's no gig bag or case included, and you won't find luxury extras. But Cort has clearly put the money where it counts: sound, playability, and build.

Bottom line? The Cort Essence GA-4 is proof that you don't need to empty your wallet for a quality acoustic experience.

If you're after a guitar that delivers real vintage vibe and modern reliability at a price that makes you do a double take, this one absolutely deserves your attention.



LR Baggs AEG-1

Who says acoustic-electrics have to look traditional? The LR Baggs AEG-1 brings cutting-edge guitar that's as eye-catching as it is sonically impressive. With its offset body, innovative sound system, this is an instrument made for modern players—on stage or in the studio. **Sam Bell**

THE acoustic/electric guitar market is filled with options, but the LR Baggs AEG-1 genuinely stands out. It doesn't just add a pickup to an acoustic—it rethinks the whole concept, resulting in a guitar that feels thoughtfully designed from top to bottom.

Right away, the AEG-1's natural Engelmann spruce top catches your eye. Paired with an Indian rosewood back and composite poplar sides, this guitar strikes a balance between classic looks and modern durability. The finish shows off the wood's subtle grain, while a practical backplate makes it easy to access the electronics—no more fumbling mid-gig if you need to swap a battery. ▶



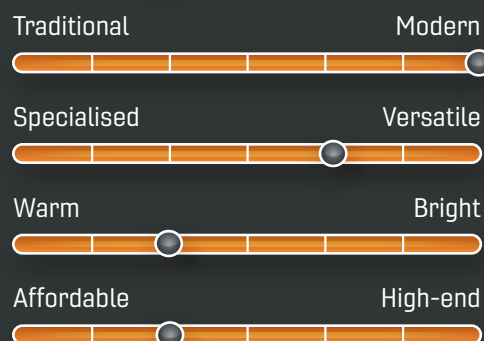
ge design and top-shelf electronics together in a
undhole placement, and custom LR Baggs pickup
reviews.



LR Baggs AEG-1

MSRP: (UK) £1299 | (US) \$1599

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Authentic tones
- » Innovative design
- » LR Baggs quality

For more information, please visit:

lrbaggs.com





The neck is worth highlighting. It's African mahogany with a slim C-shaped profile, bolt-on construction, and a deep cutaway—features you'd expect on a good electric, but rarely see on an acoustic. The 16-inch radius Indian rosewood fretboard and medium frets make it just as comfortable for leads and single-note runs as for open chords. Add in closed-back tuners and subtle inlays, and it's clear this guitar was made for players who appreciate attention to detail.

Where the AEG-1 really shines is its electronics. Under the bridge, you'll find

two hi-fi bridge plate pickups designed for clarity and balance, and a built-in silo microphone that captures the kind of "mic'd up" sound you'd normally only get in a studio. A simple preamp—volume, tone, and a mic blend knob, plus a phase switch—keeps everything easy to control. Power comes from a standard 9V battery, accessible through the backplate, and the output is a regular jack, so you're ready for the stage or the studio.

Plugged in, the AEG-1 is versatile. Roll the blend towards the pickups for a direct, punchy sound that easily cuts

through a band mix, or dial in more of the microphone for that airy, natural acoustic character. The tone control lets you easily shift from bright and lively to warm and mellow, and the phase switch helps keep feedback at bay.

Unplugged, the guitar holds its own thanks to the spruce and rosewood combination. It's responsive, with good sustain and an inviting acoustic tone—perfect for songwriting, recording, or just jamming at home. The body contour and deep cutaway make it easy on your hands, whether you're strumming or exploring the upper frets.

Who's the AEG-1 for? If you're a working musician who needs a reliable, great-sounding acoustic/electric for the stage, or a player who's just tired of the compromises most hybrids force you to make, this guitar is a compelling option. It combines forward-thinking electronics, classic materials, and real-world playability into an instrument that feels fresh, inspiring, and ready for anything.

In short, the LR Baggs AEG-1 takes the acoustic/electric hybrid concept and makes it practical, player-friendly, and genuinely musical. It's a standout choice for anyone serious about their sound.



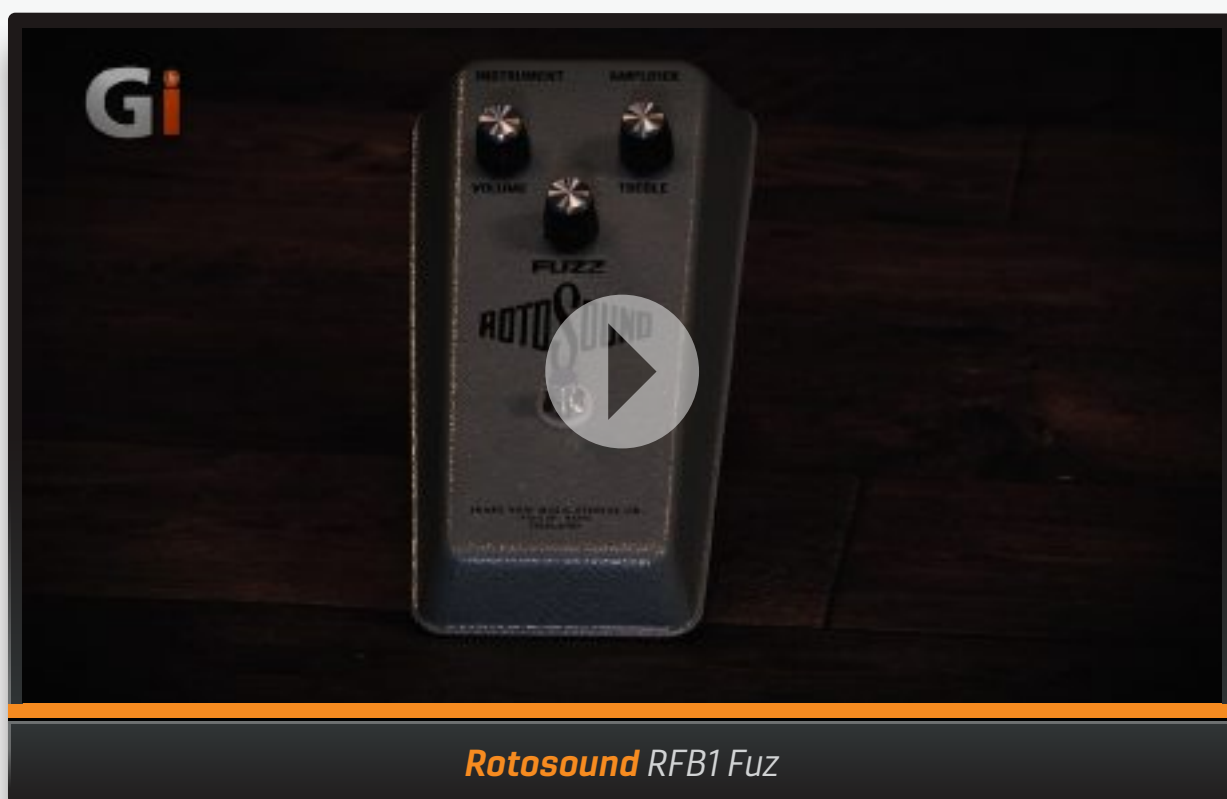
Rotosound RFB1 Fuz

Nick Jennison gets stuck into some classic '60s and '70s fuzz goodness with the Rotosound bulletproof, stompbox-sized enclosure, the RFB1 Fuzz features plenty of gain on tap, and a way to full-on psych meltdown with a flick of your foot.

WHEN you think of classic fuzz, certain names always pop up: Fuzz Face, Tone Bender, Big Muff. But there's another legend that never made it to the masses—the original Rotosound Fuzz from the 1960s. It was made in tiny quantities, never sold to the public, but somehow still ended up in the hands of players like Jimmy Page and a few other big

names (one of whom apparently won't let anyone know he still relies on his reboxed Rotosound as his secret sauce).

Rotosound's RF-B1 Fuzz Reissue brings that secret weapon out of the shadows. This is not a modern reimagining—it's a genuine recreation, using the original circuit and germanium capacitors, just updated with ▶



Rotosound RFB1 Fuz

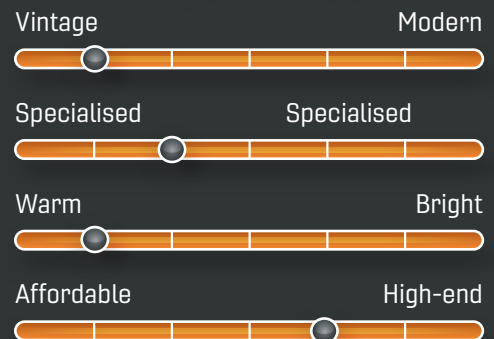
RFB1 Fuzz. Packed with vintage-inspired filth in a warm, thick voice means you can go from subtle grit



Rotosound RFB1 Fuzz

MSRP: (UK) £279 | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » The most authentic of 60s fuzz tones
- » Excellent amp compatibility
- » Vintage correct aesthetics

For more information, please visit:

rotosound.com



The Bottom line is that the Rotosound RF-B1 Fuzz Reissue isn't just a collector's piece—it's a true player's pedal.

a more reliable PCB. You won't find a power supply jack here; this pedal runs on a 9V battery, just like its ancestor, which is exactly how many fuzz fans like it. It's not the most forgiving with buffers, so it prefers to be first in your chain.

The controls are refreshingly simple: Fuzz, Volume, and Treble. Don't be fooled by the minimalism—the Treble knob is much more than a simple high-end roll-off. It works like a tilt EQ, letting you shift the character of the pedal from thick and full at the low end to bright and cutting when you turn it up. Through a clean amp like a PRS-DGT, you get a velvety, sustaining fuzz that always sounds big and musical. There's not much in the way of Fuzz Face-style clean-up when you roll back your guitar's volume, but you can still get some interesting, gated textures at lower settings.

Where the RF-B1 really shines is into a classic British amp—a Marshall Plexi or a modded JCM800, for example. Here, that Treble knob becomes your best friend, letting you sculpt everything from vowel-like midrange tones to lead sounds that cut straight through the mix. There's plenty of output on tap to push your amp into saturation or keep things at unity for pedal stacking.

This pedal isn't just a one-trick pony for classic rock. Run it into a high-gain amp and you get harmonically rich fuzz with a ton of sustain, plus some wild, oscillating textures when you really crank the controls. It never turns into unusable fuzz—there's always a musical edge.

If you like to use your guitar's controls to shape your tone, you'll find plenty to explore. The RF-B1 doesn't clean up completely, but rolling back your guitar's volume introduces new shades, from gritty breakup to subtle, gated fuzz. The Treble control works interactively with your guitar's tone knob, so you can dial in a huge range of textures on the fly.

Looks-wise, Rotosound nailed the vintage vibe. The pedal is big, sturdy, and proudly retro, complete with the original '60s logo and an old-school box.

The Bottom line is that the Rotosound RF-B1 Fuzz Reissue isn't just a collector's piece—it's a true player's pedal. With its classic circuit, unique tonal character, and real-deal vintage feel, it's an inspiring tool whether you're after legendary sounds or something all your own. If you're a fuzz enthusiast or just want a pedal with serious rock 'n' roll heritage, this one should be at the top of your list.





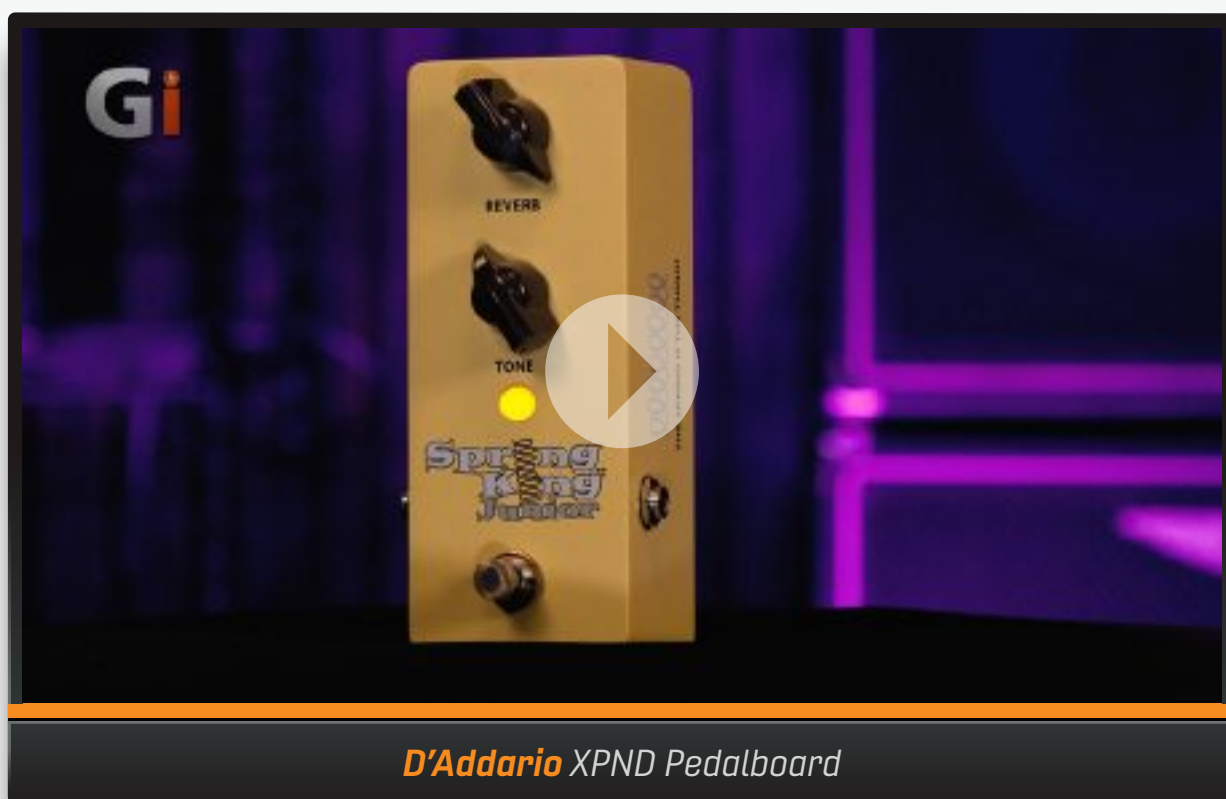
Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior

Packing genuine spring reverb into a pint-sized pedal, the Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior board. Analogue circuitry, a real spring tank, and straightforward controls make it easy to drench—without taking up much room. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

WHEN it comes to real spring reverb in a pedal, there's nothing quite like the Danelectro Spring King Junior. While digital reverbs do a fine job, there's just something about an actual spring tank that digital can't fully capture—and that's exactly what this pedal brings to the table. Inside its compact, retro-styled enclosure, you get three genuine springs, making for an authentic, tactile reverb experience.

One of the first things you'll notice is the classic Danelectro look. It's got that vintage vibe, a big LED, and a soft-touch footswitch, all without any artificial relic treatment—thankfully. The controls are simple and familiar, so you'll get the hang of it straight away.

Plug it in and you'll immediately hear the difference. Instead of endless, cavernous “drip,” the Spring King Junior delivers a ▶



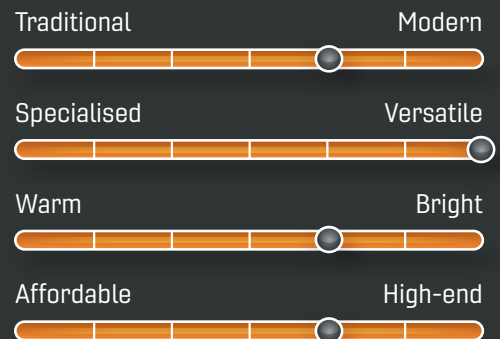
ior brings a splash of vintage ambience to any
ial in everything from subtle space to surfy



Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior

MSRP: (UK) £179 | (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Quality reverb tones
- » Great build quality
- » Small footprint

For more information, please visit:

jhs.co.uk/products/spring-king-junior



The Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior is a rare find: a compact, affordable pedal that delivers true spring reverb, not a digital copy.

lively, slappy reverb—closer to what you'd hear from a smaller amp tank, with those percussive, immediate echoes that feel alive under your fingers. It shines with clean amps like a PRS DGT or a Marshall Plexi, adding just the right vintage sparkle. Kick things up with a dirty amp or run it after a fuzz, and the pedal responds in kind, getting rowdy and chaotic in all the best ways.

What really sets the Spring King Junior apart is its physical interactivity. You're not just dialing in your sound—you can pick up the pedal, kick it, or give it a gentle smack for those classic, warbly spring crashes. It turns your reverb into a performance tool, not just a background effect.

The built-in tone control is genuinely useful, letting you tame the high end if things get too splashy or dial it back in for that full surf-rock sizzle. This extra flexibility makes it

easy to find your sweet spot, no matter what style you're after.

If you already have an amp with built-in spring reverb, you might wonder if you really need this. The answer is yes—if you want the option to run real spring reverb into drive pedals or stack it with your amp's onboard tank for a richer, layered sound. The Spring King Junior brings a flavor and placement flexibility that amp reverb just can't match.

The Danelectro SKJ-1 Spring King Junior is a rare find: a compact, affordable pedal that delivers true spring reverb, not a digital copy. It's fun, hands-on, and sounds great, whether you're after subtle ambience or want to make the reverb itself part of your show. If classic spring sound is your thing, this pedal is more than worth a look.



REV

TONE

Spring King Junior

EVEN BETTER THAN THE 1999 ORIGINAL!

Danelectro®

D'Addario XPND Pedalboard

Tired of having to rearrange your pedalboard every time you add a new stompbox? D'Addario has the answer with the XPND Pedalboard. This expandable design lets you resize your board on the fly, whether you're adding a new pedal or removing an old one. Rugged construction, lightweight rails, and intuitive setup mean you can spend less time fussing and more time playing.

WHILE we may see the name D'Addario and think of the near-ubiquitous XL string sets, there is much more to the legendary NYC brand than coloured ball-ends and a challenging pronunciation. They also offer what is potentially the most complete and comprehensive range of guitar accessories on the market, with everything from everyday essentials like picks and straps through to

modular multicore cables, grip trainers and luxury backpacks - and every single item is meticulously engineered from the ground up in the pursuit of player-focussed perfection.

The same design wizardry is evident in D'Addario's XPND pedalboard system - and I say "system", because that's exactly what it is. You'll find everything you need to build the board of your dreams, including the pedalboard itself, bags to transport it in,



o may just have the answer for you in the shape of your pedal collection is growing or shrinking. Missing and more time playing. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

power supplies, and even a mic stand that bolts directly onto the pedalboard. I was going to say “everything except the pedals themselves”, but D’Addario even offer an excellent pedal tuner too!

The boards themselves come in the form of the XPND1 and XPND2, with space for a one and two rows of pedals respectively. I can hear your objections now: “Only two sizes?”. Well, yes and no. Both of these pedalboards expand horizontally to almost double their width - effectively taking the larger XPND2 from the width of a Pedaltrain JR to a Pedaltrain Pro, or any width you’d like in between. I’ve been having a lot of fun with this myself. With the XPND2 folded up to its smallest size, it’s a perfect fit for my Quad Cortex, expression pedal, tuner, wireless and TC MimiQ (a sleeper pedal if there ever was one), in a format that fits perfectly into my hand luggage for fly dates with Blitzkrieg or trips down to GI headquarters in London. When I’m back in my studio, I can stretch it out to full size and mount all of my favourite fuzzes and a Victory V4 amp for a hugely gratifying jamming and recording rig.

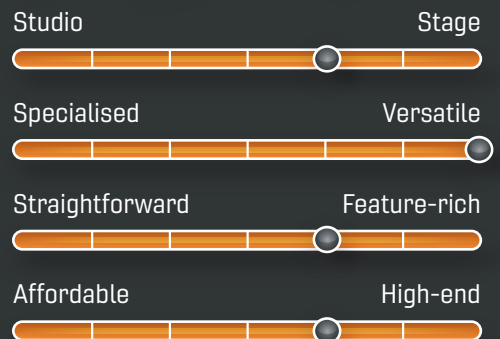
Power is always going to be a big consideration for any pedal user, but even more so for the travelling guitarist. The



D’Addario XPND Pedalboard

MSRP: (XPND 1) £79 | (XPND 2) £149

The Breakdown



For fans of

- » Big pedalboards;
- » Small pedalboards;
- » Fully tricked-out pedalboards;

For more information, please visit:

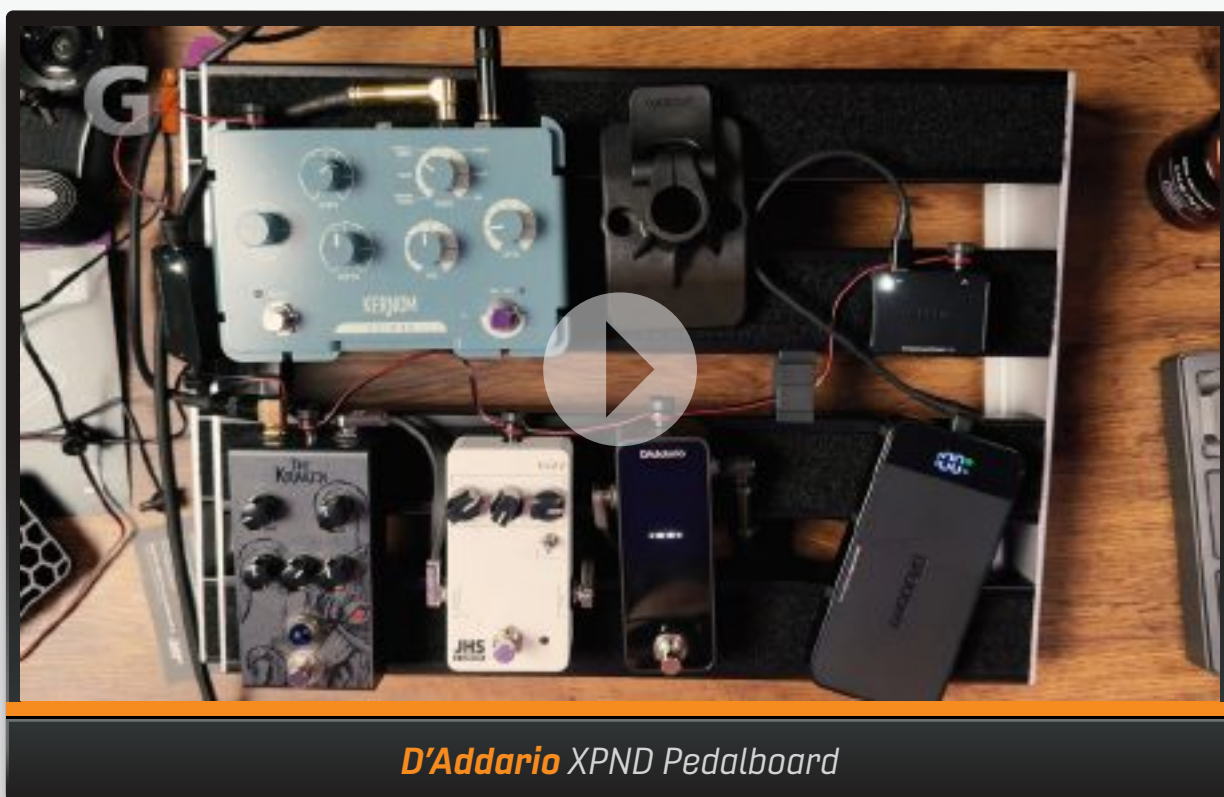
daddario.com

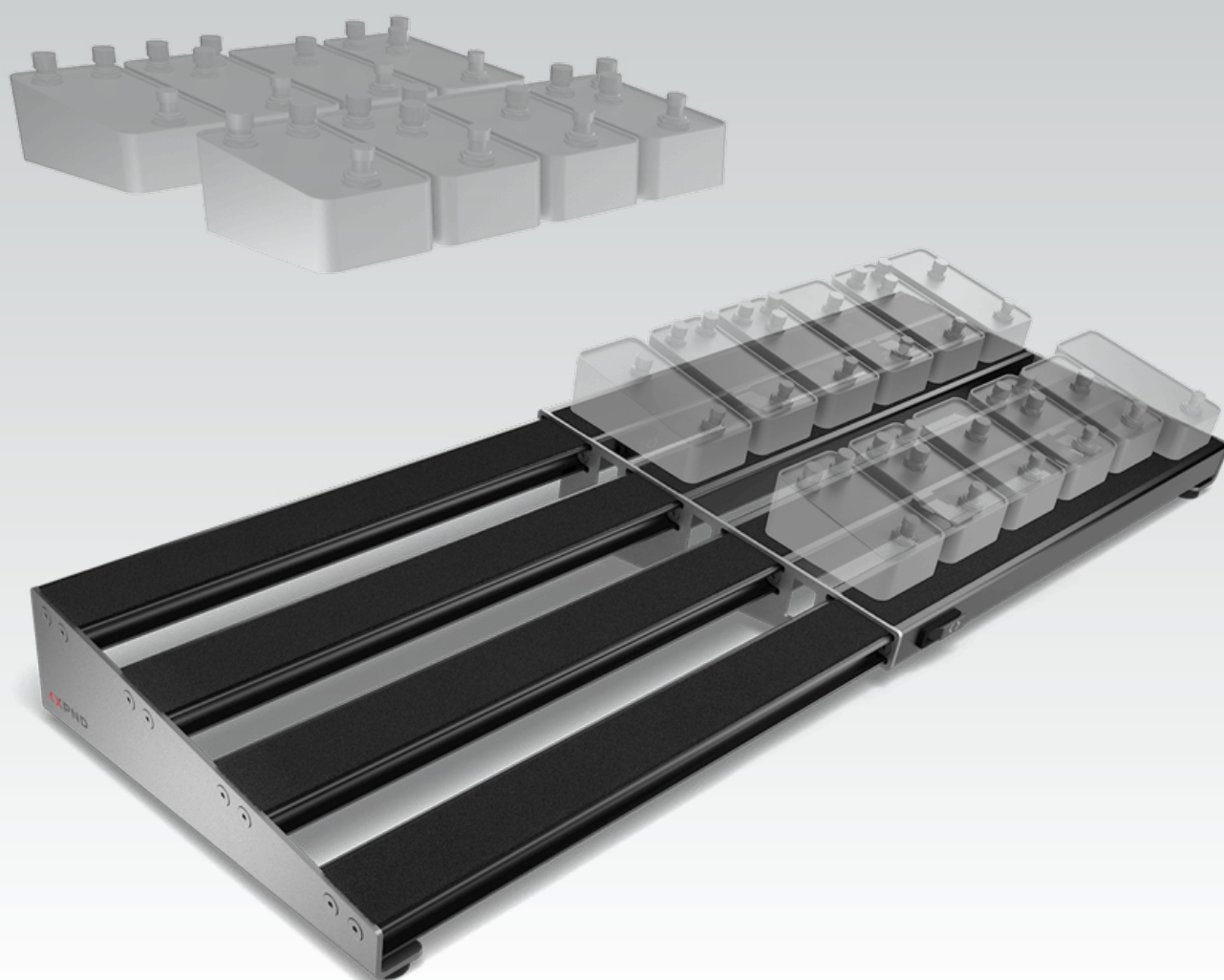


XPND pedal power kit will provide up to 1500mA of power - enough to run pretty much any standard sized pedalboard, including the Strymon "Big Three" and as many traditional pedals as you can throw at it. For reference, 1500mA is enough to power 30 Boss digital delays, or 187 Ibanez Tube Screamers. You'll run out of pedalboard space before you run out of power - even on the XPND2. It's a modular daisy chain design with moveable plugs and a proprietary system for managing noise - including an optional isolator for using digital pedals, which historically do not get along with daisy chains. That's not the best part though: it also comes with a battery

pack that'll allow you to run your pedalboard without plugging it into the mains for up to 10 hours. This is a bit of a game changer for everyone from buskers to players doing run-and-gun gigs like festivals and radio sessions, all the way through to media bods like us dashing around trade shows pointing microphones at amplifiers.

XPND Pedalboard Mic Stand is a genius addition to the system. The base of the stand clamps to your XPND pedalboard, takes up the space of one standard-sized pedal, then the boom stand itself simply clips in and out in seconds. Not only will this speed up your setup and teardown times (especially on busy multi-band bills), but it





means you no longer have to struggle to fit your pedalboard around the base of a tripod stand on a crowded stage. D'Addario UK product specialist Luke and I actually tried to engineer a pedalboard mic stand like this years ago to limited success - they all laughed, but look at us now, Luke!

D'Addario's XPND range is truly all things to all guitarists. Whether you're a run-and-gun player with a trimmed down compact board or a pedal fetishist with a veritable spaceship at your feet, the XPND range delivers - and delivers both with a single board.



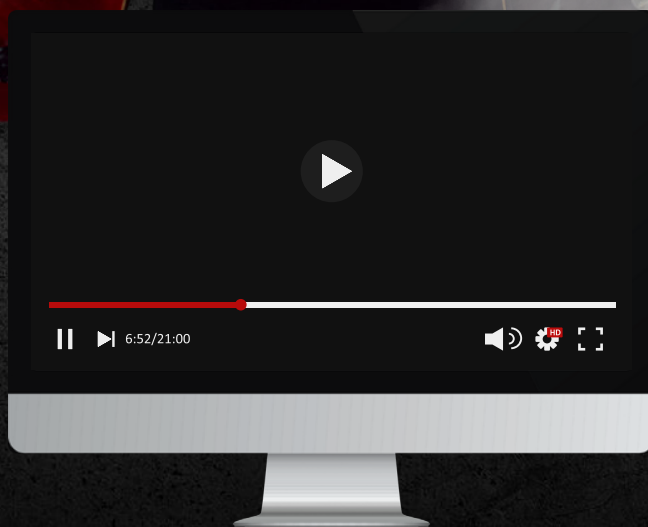
lick **LIBRARY** & **Guitar** Interactive
P R E S E N T S

THE MONDAY GUITAR SHOW

**CLASS
IS IN
SESSION**

**EVERY
MONDAY
8PM(UK)**

**WATCH
THE
LATEST
STREAM**



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE [LICKLIBRARY](#) & [GUITAR INTERACTIVE](#) YOUTUBE CHANNELS