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Interactive Guitar 78

KISS
TECH SESSION

+ INTERVIEWS
JON GOMM
DIAMOND HEAD
CHRIS LORD-ALGE

Bonamassa

JOE IS BACK WITH 'ROYAL TEA'

BEST OF
2020

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Welcome to ISSUE 78

Hello and welcome to issue 78 of Guitar Interactive Magazine!

In most regards, the last year has easily been one to forget. However, in the world of guitar it's once again been an impressive 12 months when it comes to new and innovative products and i for us guitarists. In this issue's review section we take a look back at the very best of 20120 with reviews handpicked by expert reviewers Tom Quayle, Sam Bell, Nick Jennison and Gi magazine editor Jonathan Graham. We hope you enjoy our look back at Guitar Interactive Magazine's best of 2020 and be sure to let us know if you agree with our choices, or if you feel we missed something out.

Of course, that's not all, as Guitar Interactive Magazine catches up with Joe Bonamassa as he unveils his latest album 'Royal Tea. As usual, Joe has some fantastic stories of rare guitar finds, recording at Abbey Road Studios, the intricacies of 1958-60 era Gibson Les Pauls and much more, including his thoughts on the recent passing and legacy of Eddie Van Halen.

With his new album 'The Faintest Idea' — out now via Kscope — the UK based acoustic guitar virtuoso may have just produced his most stunning work to date. Jonathan Graham chats with Jon Gomm about the new record and more in this exclusive Guitar Interactive feature. Also, Diamond Head's Brian Tatler talks 'Lightning To The Nations 2020' and more, while Nick Jennison interviews 5-time GRAMMY award-winning producer/engineer/mixer and musician Chris Lord-Alge.

As usual, with every issue, we have a brand-new Tech Session. In this edition, Jamie Humphries encourages you to don your spaceman suit and makeup as he takes a look at the guitar style of the legendary Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley, while Nick Jennison, Sam Bell and Giorgio Serci offer some more incredible lessons that we hope you will enjoy.

Guitar Interactive

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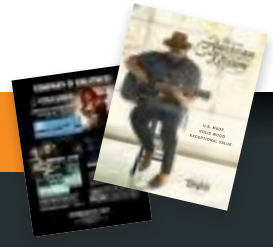

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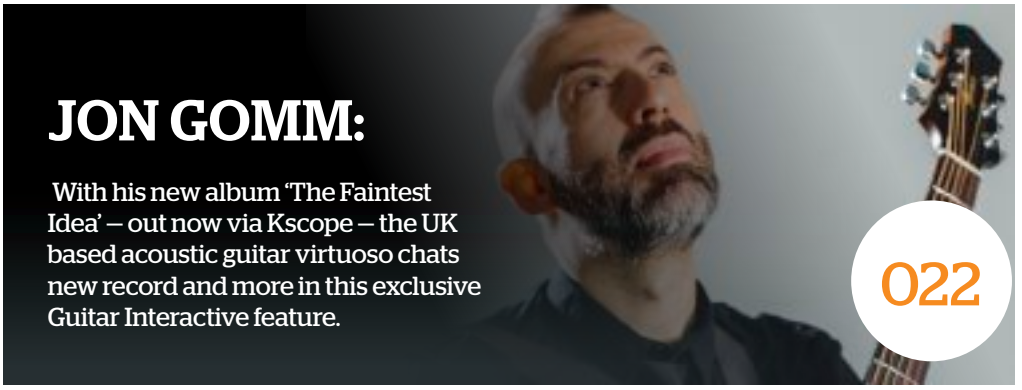

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With his new album 'The Faintest Idea' – out now via Kscope – the UK based acoustic guitar virtuoso chats new record and more in this exclusive Guitar Interactive feature.

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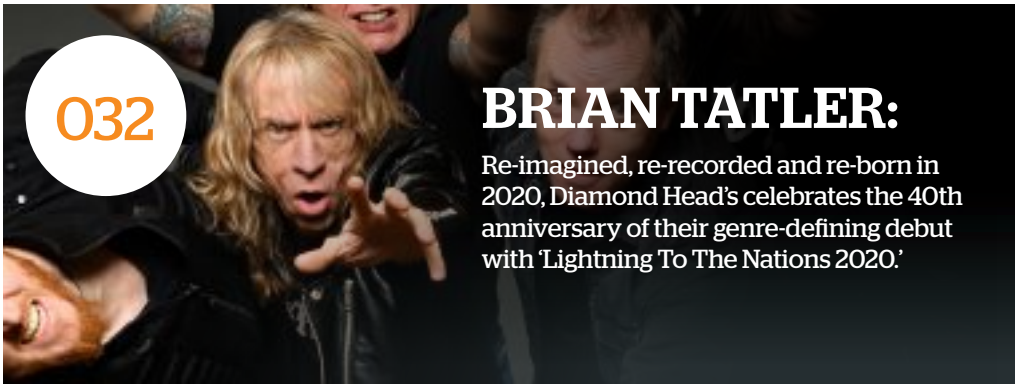

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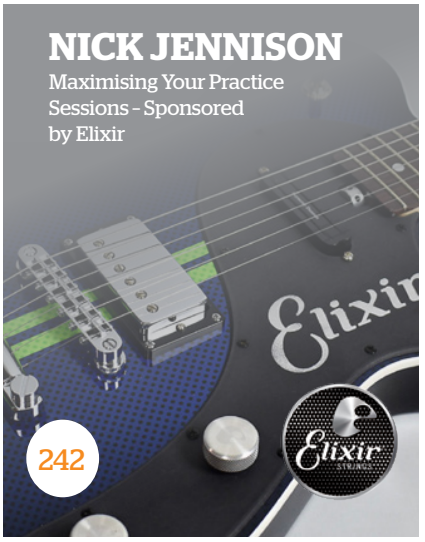

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Guitar Interactive Magazine catches up with **Joe Bonamassa** as he unveils his latest album 'Royal Tea. As usual, Joe has some fantastic stories of rare guitar finds, recording at Abbey Road Studios, the intricacies of 1958-60 era Gibson Les Pauls and much more, including his thoughts on the recent passing and legacy of **Eddie Van Halen.**

With his new album 'The Faintest Idea' – out now via Kscope – the UK based acoustic guitar virtuoso may have just produced his most stunning work to date. **Jonathan Graham** chats with **Jon Gomm** about the new record and more in this exclusive Guitar Interactive feature. Also, Diamond Head's **Brian Tatler** talks 'Lightning To The Nations 2020' and more, while Nick Jennison interviews 5-time GRAMMY award-winning producer/engineer/mixer and musician **Chris Lord-Alge**

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IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

Original Photo ©Robert Sutton

THE RED, WHITE & BLUES

JOE BONAMASSA

The wait is over, Joe Bonamassa's latest solo studio album 'Royal Tea' is here! Inspired by his British guitar heroes Jeff Beck, John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers, Eric Clapton and Cream, 'Royal Tea' was recorded at the legendary Abbey Road Studios and is out now via Provogue/Mascot Label Group. Joe chats with Guitar Interactive Magazine's **Jonathan Graham** to discuss the brand new record. As usual, Joe has some fantastic stories of rare guitar finds, recording at Abbey Road Studios, the intricacies of 1958-60 era Gibson Les Pauls and much more, including his thoughts on the recent passing and legacy of Eddie Van Halen. »

SPONSORED BY ERNIE BALL

IF the walls of Abbey Road Studios could talk, they'd tell some of the greatest stories in rock 'n' roll. From the first Beatles session in 1962, through Pink Floyd's mind-expanding 1973 opus, 'The Dark Side Of The Moon,' to 'The Empire Strikes Back' soundtrack and Radiohead's 'The Bends,' this one-time Georgian townhouse in north-west London is the backdrop to every cultural flashpoint that counts.

But even Abbey Road had never experienced anything quite like Joe Bonamassa at full throttle. "You could hear us from the canteen," smiles the bluesman of 'Royal Tea' sessions in January 2020. "We'd get these weird looks from the orchestra guys downstairs. Because we play really loud..."

If you know anything about the post-millennium's breakout bluesman, and pre-eminent Anglophile, you'll know that blowing the roof off Abbey Road is a lifelong ambition. During his three-decade ascent, Bonamassa has ticked off most of his schoolyard fantasies, from bringing out Eric Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall, to slinging Rory Gallagher's beat-to-hell '61 Strat at the Hammersmith Apollo. But tracking a full album in Studio One, on the same floor where The Beatles once broadcast "All You Need Is Love" to the world? "This whole adventure," admits Bonamassa, "was a bucket-list thing for me."

Bonamassa is known for taking risks and venturing into uncharted territory throughout his wide-ranging career, but now he has found a new way to surprise his fans and music lovers. 'Royal Tea' brings Bonamassa full-circle. "This whole adventure," admits Joe, "was a bucket-list thing for me." This album reconnects the 43-year-old with the guitar-slinging kid from upstate New York, who stumbled across the best of British blues music in his dad's vinyl collection – whose influences have shaped him to be the player he is today. "I would have been about twelve years old, and it was the sound I heard in my head," states Bonamassa. "Like, 'OK, I'm in. That's what I want to be'. If I had a time machine, I'd have been born in '46, turned twenty in '66 – and come here, to London."

Since his 2000 debut, 'A New Day Yesterday,' that founding influence has »

YouTube

Joe Bonamassa - "Royal Tea" - Official Music Video

Original Photo ©Jim Herrington

"We'd get these weird looks from the orchestra guys downstairs. Because **we play really loud...**"

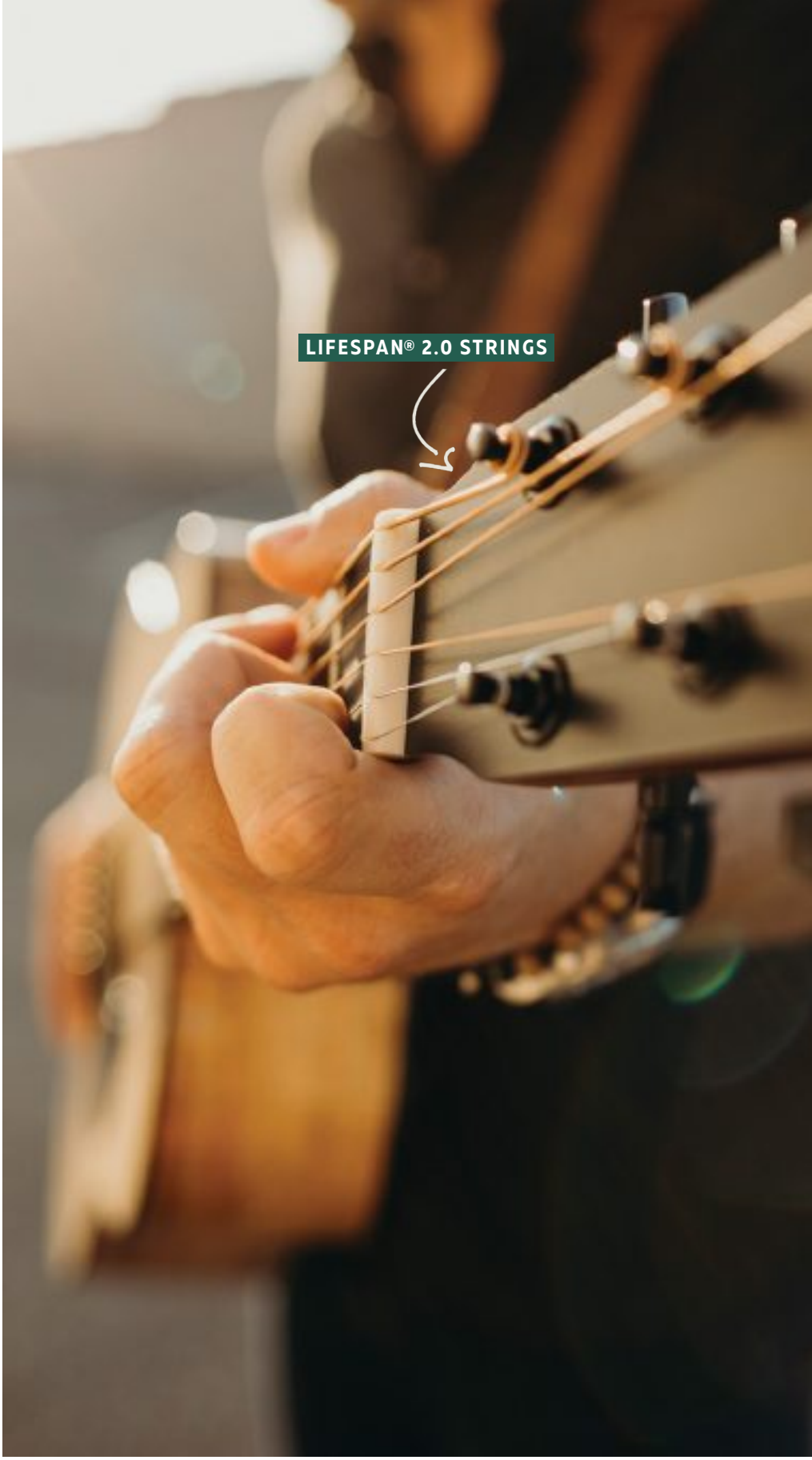
"I **came here with no songs**...just a notepad and some good intentions."

stayed close to the surface of Bonamassa's 14 solo album catalogue. Yet he's always let his choice of studio infuse his work, whether stirring the vibe of the Greek island of Santorini into 2010's 'Black Rock,' placing his bets on Sin City for 2014's Vegas-tracked 'Different Shades Of Blue,' or working with the cream of Nashville on 2016's 'Blues Of Desperation.' "Where you record an album leaves a fingerprint on the music," he points out. "This album is a snapshot, too."

Naturally, the backdrop of Abbey Road demanded an album of British-flavoured blues. But even before the sessions, Bonamassa immersed himself in the culture, living in London over summer 2019 to let the capital's pulse and daily rhythms flow down his antennae, wash over his songcraft and spice his new material. "I came here with no songs," he remembers, "just a notepad and some good intentions." »

Joe Bonamassa Interview

Give your guitar the tone it deserves.



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"even before the sessions, Bonamassa **immersed himself in the culture**, living in London over summer 2019 to let the capital's pulse and daily rhythms flow down his antennae"

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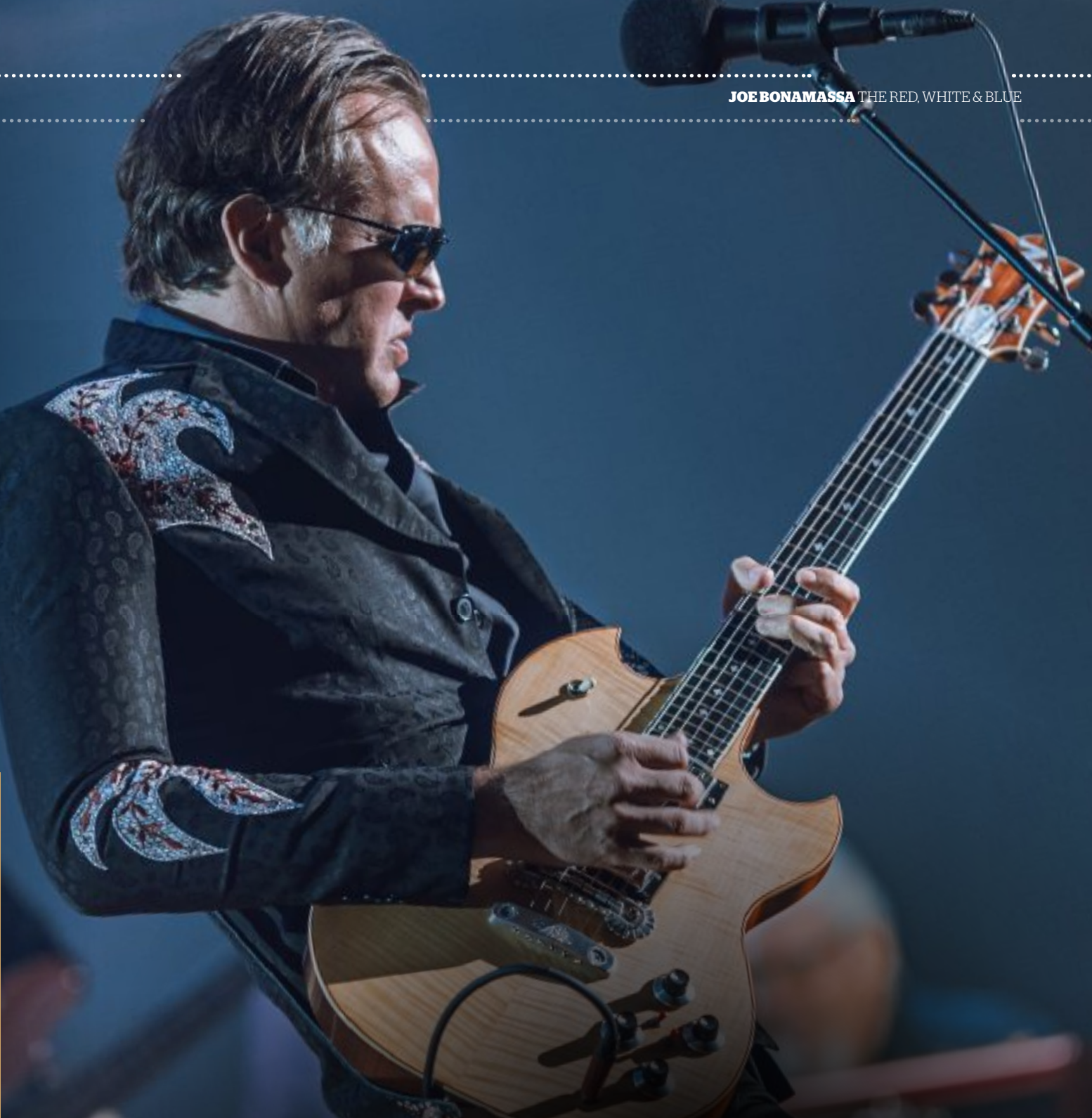
Joe Bonamassa - "Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye" - Official Music Video



Co-writing 'Royal Tea' with a cast of homegrown notables including former Whitesnake guitarist Bernie Marsden, ex-Cream lyricist Pete Brown and national-treasure piano man Jools Holland – not to mention trolley dashing Denmark Street's guitar shops for British-made amps – only added to the vibe. "Writing this record in London has done its job," reflects Bonamassa. "It really does sound inherently British. Bernie and I, we finish each other's sentences. We're cut from the same cloth. One of the things about Bernie is, I just have to ask him, 'What would the British do?' He had all of those chord changes. And I'm like, 'Ah, that's the sound'. And then you get all of these tunes…" »

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'Royal Tea' by Joe Bonamassa is out now via Provogue/Mascot Label Group.

'Royal Tea' Track List:

When One Door Opens

Royal Tea

Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye

Lookout Man

High Class Girl

A Conversation With Alice

I Didn't Think She Would Do It

Beyond The Silence

Lonely Boy

Savannah

ERNIE BALL
POWER SLINKY
BEEFY SLINKY
SUPER SLINKY
SKINNY TOP HEAVY BOTTOM
MAMMOTH SLINKY
MEGA SLINKY
ULTRA SLINKY

In addition to Joe Bonamassa's superb new album release, you can now discover the extraordinary story of legendary bluesman Joe Bonamassa in the inspirational documentary 'Guitar Man,' arriving on Video-On-Demand and for digital purchase December 8, 2020 from Paramount Home Entertainment.

From average Joe by day to guitar hero at night, 'Guitar Man' tells the incredible rise of blues-rocker Joe Bonamassa, whose hard work and determination has made him one of today's top-selling blues artists. With more #1 Blues albums than anyone else in history, Bonamassa pulls back the curtain on his incredible career, allowing us to see his remark pioneering style. Featuring behin concert footage showcasing some kick back and enjoy the exhilarat enal life.

'Guitar Man' showcases Bonamas childhood as a "wunderkind" dis legend B.B. King. At the age of o lustrious career spanning over th lows, Joe persevered, taking his m

GUITAR MAN Official Trailer

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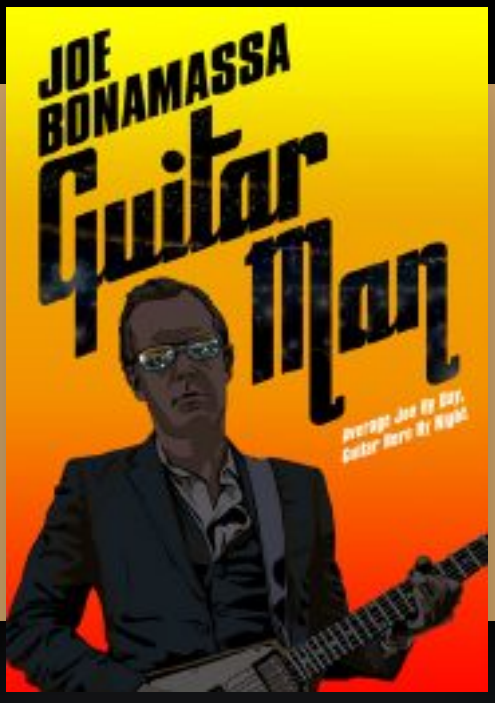
ssa's astounding talent from his
covered and mentored by Blues
nly 43, Bonamassa has an il-
ree decades. Through highs and
nusical journey into his own

hands to overcome challenges and reach his goals. In 2009, Bonamassa fulfilled a lifelong dream of playing at the prestigious Royal Albert Hall and was joined on stage by Eric Clapton, marking a pivotal moment that elevated his music to the next level.

Filled with an abundance of music, live concert footage, and interviews with music industry legends, 'Guitar Man' chronicles a musician growing in his craft, travelling the globe, collaborating with top artists from across the world of music, and ascending to the heights of inevitable success.

END «



Joe Bonamassa's new documentary **'Guitar Man'** is released on video-on-demand and digital by Paramount Home Entertainment. Order the documentary from **https://itunes.apple.com/movie/guitar-man/id1538243933**

For further information on Joe Bonamassa, please visit:
https://jbonamassa.com

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Jon Gomm is no stranger to finding emotional depths in immense melodic pop landscapes, however, with his new album 'The Faintest Idea' — out now via Kscope — the UK based acoustic guitar virtuoso may have just produced his most stunning work to date. **Jonathan Graham** chats with Jon about the new record and more in this exclusive Guitar Interactive feature.

Jon Gomm *The Faintest Idea*

WHEN most people look at an acoustic guitar, they see exactly that – a wooden box with strings. As one of the pioneers of the modern fingerstyle sound, however, Jon Gomm has a rare gift for turning one instrument into what feels like an entire orchestra...

The Blackpool-born singer-songwriter's 2003 home-recorded debut, Hypertension, was nothing short of a musical revelation: drumming beats, tapping chords and striking harmonics on his acoustic underneath that warm, soulful voice. Things changed for Jon when landmark single Passionflower racked up millions of views on YouTube and other media platforms in 2012 – with British legend Stephen Fry describing him on mainstream television as someone "playing the guitar in a way I'd never seen it played before" and "an all-round genius". »

Follow up album Secrets Nobody Keeps arrived in 2013, further cementing his stature as one of the driving forces behind an acoustic revolution – but now, having signed a label deal for the very first time in his career, he's managed to truly refine the pop sensibilities and emotive expression within that unmistakable wall of sound.

'The Faintest Idea's' title is based on the notion that all of us, to some extent, are just 'The Faintest Idea,' "It's an enigmatic title," smiles Gomm. "There's a fine line between a metaphor »

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and a pun, so I guess it dances on that" and explores the contrasts between the warmth of Gomm's acoustic articulation with more icy affairs, thanks to the synth parts and production work from Australian musician Andy Sorenson, together they have created a contemporary masterpiece.

Often cited as one of the most naturally gifted acoustic artists of the modern age, Gomm drew inspiration from his own experiences over the last few years. And while there have been moments of joyous celebration, by his own admission there has also been plenty of personal upheaval: "This album has been a long time coming," he reflects. "I tend to write in a really painstaking way. The last few years of my life have involved a lot of personal trauma – from me and my wife losing a pregnancy, through to losing other people in my life."

The album is complemented by the delicate hand-drawn pen and ink cover art created by Lee Zimmerman.

YouTube

Jon Gomm - Cocoon

"Jon Gomm has a rare gift for turning one instrument into what feels like an entire orchestra."

'The Faintest Idea's' immersive and emotional 11 tracks sees a musician coming to terms with the talents that got him recognised and choosing to evolve into the unexpected and, despite having already gone viral and established himself as one of the modern-day masters of acoustic, this could very well be the release that sees the virtuoso transition to a mainstream audience, and it really just boils down to the magic of one man with his guitar and voice. And what a powerful magic it is. »

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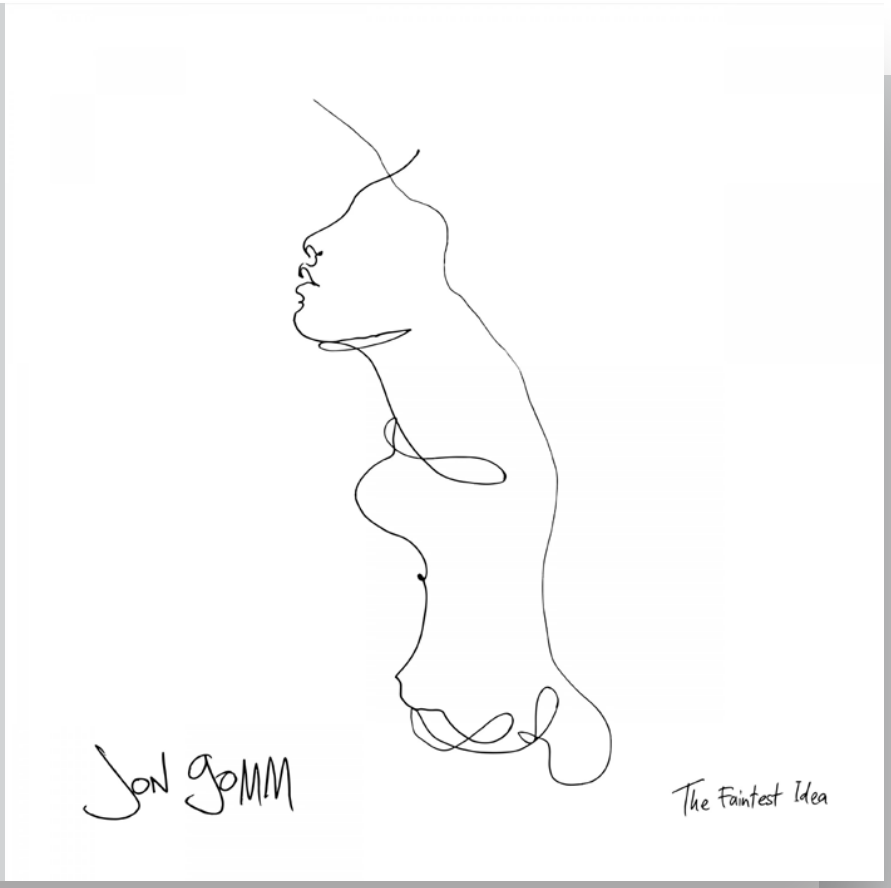

Jon Gomm - 'The Faintest Idea' is out now via Kscope

Jon Gomm 'The Faintest Idea' Tracklist:

1. Deep Sea Fishes
2. Cocoon
3. Dream Factories
4. Tempest
5. The Ghost Inside You
6. Universal Biology
7. Song For A Rainy Day
8. Check You're Still Breathing
9. Butterfly Hurricane
10. Swallow You Whole
11. Until The Sun Destroys The Earth

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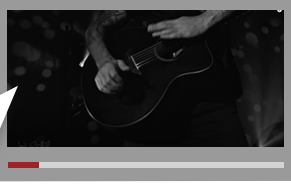

YouTube

Jon Gomm - Dream Factories

Due to the effects of Covid 19, Jon Gomm has postponed his extensive tour across the UK supporting 'The Faintest Idea' until Oct 2021.

"It's not unexpected, but I'm still crushed to announce that I have to reschedule 'The Faintest Idea' UK/Eire Tour,' said Gomm. "I am desperate to play these new songs. They don't feel completely born until I've physically felt a human reaction to them [...] I can't wait for these gigs."

Tickets are on sale now, and any tickets already purchased are transferable.

END «

For more information on Jon Gomm, please **visitjongomm.com**

GLASSWERK PRESENTS

JON GOMM

The Faintest Idea TOUR

Oct 2021
1 – Dublin, Academy 2
8 – Haverhill, Arts Centre
9 – Birmingham, Hare & Hounds
10 – York, Crescent
15 – Trowbridge, Emmanuel's Yard
16 – Swansea, Sin City
17 – Cardiff, The Globe
21 – Bristol, Thekla
22 – Milton Keynes, Craufurd Arms
23 – Nottingham, Rescue Rooms
29 – Huddersfield, The Parish pub
30 – Glasgow, Oran Mor
31 – Newcastle, Cluny

Nov 2021
4 – Liverpool, The Leaf Café
5 – Blackpool, Bootleg Social
6 – Preston, The Ferret
13 – Guildford, Boileroom
14 – Southampton, Joiners
15 – Brighton, Komedia
27 – London, Bush Hall

Dec 2021
4 – Manchester, The Bread Shed
5 – Leeds, Brudenell
16 – Runcorn, Brindley Theatre

TICKETS: JONGOMM.COM

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IT'S [STILL] ELECTRIC

When Diamond Head exploded onto the scene with 'Lightning To The Nations' in 1980, few could have predicted the importance it would carry with regards to heavy metal's new wave and sound. Stacked and packed with riffs, 'Lightning To The Nations' would be one of the prime catalysts for a movement known as the New Wave of British Heavy Metal. Re-imagined, re-recorded and re-born in 2020, Diamond Head's 40-year celebration of their genre-defining debut album sees the band spreading their wings and creating the heaviest of homages to Led Zeppelin, Judas Priest and Deep Purple in the form of 'Lightning To The Nations 2020.' With the new album out now via Silver Lining Music, Gi's Jonathan Graham chats with Diamond Head founding member Brian Tatler.

Jonathan Graham: Congratulations on this new album, Brian. It's fantastic! How did the concept of celebrating the band's 40th anniversary with this re-imagining of the debut album come about?

Brian Tatler: Our drummer suggested it. We knew the 40th anniversary was coming up. So, we wanted to do something different. I mean, in the past, we have done some dates where we've played the whole album live, like for the 30th anniversary, but this time it was suggested that we re-record the debut album in its entirety. At first, I thought, yeah, that is interesting, we could do that. I thought maybe we could do quite quickly as well since the last album took a while to make. So we discussed it and everybody thought it was a great idea.

JG: So did it come together as quickly as you expected considering the restrictions due to the pandemic?

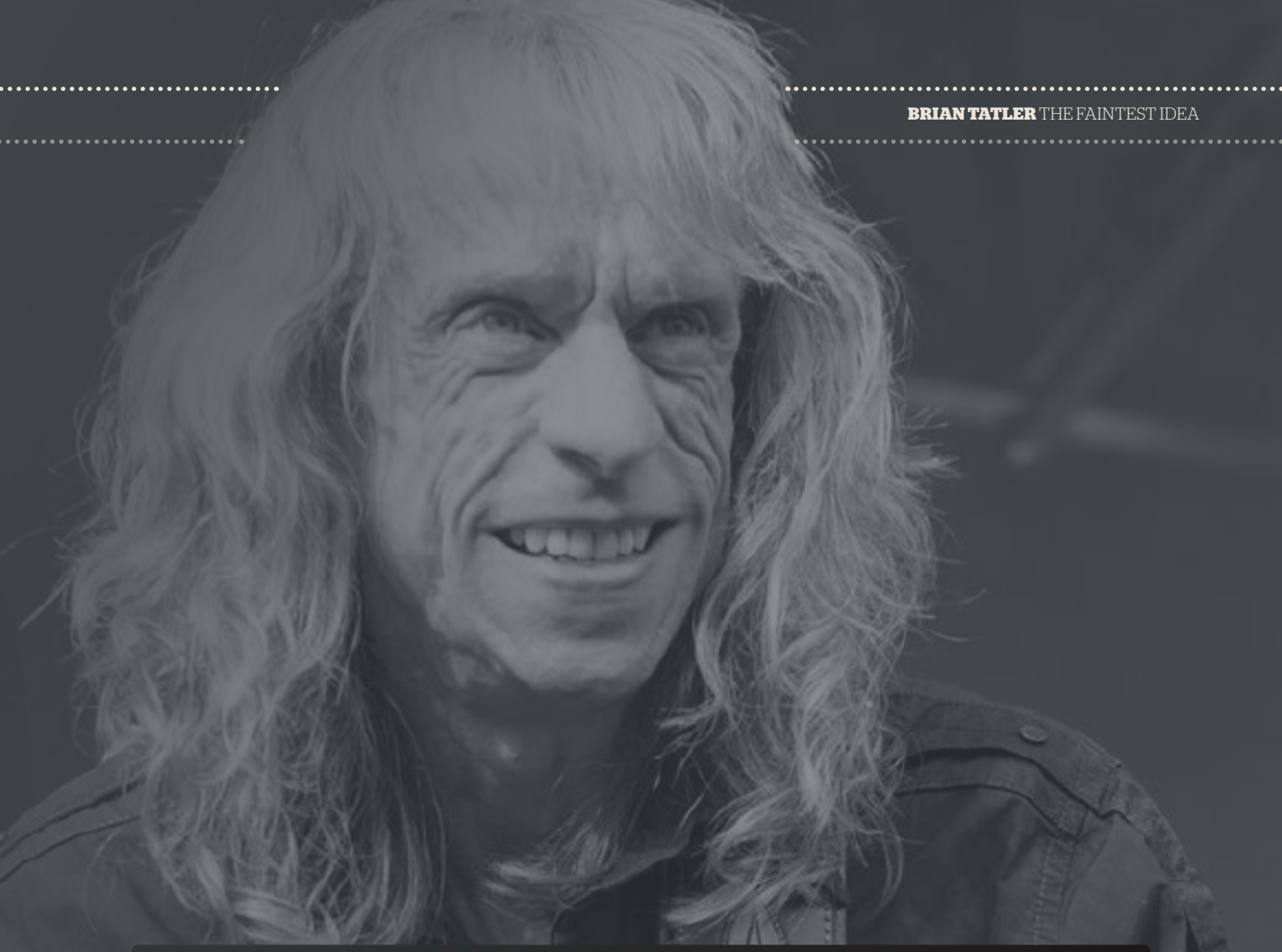
BT: Yeah, we did some rehearsals in December and January, and then the drums and guitars were done before everything went to lockdown in March. We went down to Raz's for the rest of the time doing vocals and mixing as he is also the producer for the record. I mean, we still play most of those songs live in the average Diamond Head set, so we were ready to go.

JG: After playing these songs live for so many years, did you find there were some noticeable changes to how you laid them down on the original version compared with 'Lightning To The Nations 2020.'

BT: They have evolved slightly, but it was really just a case of getting the tempos right. I mean, we changed the ending for "It's Electric" because on the original it just fades out. We worked out a live ending years ago, so we just do that. It's the same with "Sucking My Love," that's evolved over the years and is actually slightly shorter than it is on the original album.

JG: Of course, it's impossible not to notice the absolutely superb and fitting choice of covers on this edition. You've given a little nod back to Metallica after the years of them covering your music which is great to hear. Was there a fair bit of deliberation on which covers you would be adding to the release?

BT: Well, the rest of the guys pretty much left those decisions down to me, which is nice. A few people chipped in ideas like "you should do something off the Black Album," for example, but I wanted to do something of their first album. It has to be "Kill 'Em All' because Metallica only covered our songs off the debut album, like to the nations. And I wanted to do that. I wanted to do something off the debut album. I didn't want to pick a big one l nk it's come out really well on the record.



DIAMOND HEAD - Am I Evil? (Brian Tatler's Guitar Tutorial)

"That would have been lovely if I could have realized quite what we had then. I always thought we were just fans of those incredible '70s bands, and **we wanted to do something** along those lines..."

JG: Oh yeah, absolutely! The tones on this album are stunning, what gear were you using for this particular one? Has your studio set up changed much over the years?

BT: Well, this is the only time I have ever used Axe-Fx on an album. The real reason we did that was just to record the guitars with Axe-Fx as a guide, then when we'd get the chance, we would go into the studio and put down the real amps. On the last album, we used Cornford, Diesel and Marshall's; we've got all kinds of amps between us. Because of lockdown, the original plan went out the window, and we just used an ISO box that allowed everything to be re-amped at home. It is quite a modern sound, and bit more aggressive than I'm used to, but all along we wanted this to sound more modern. Fans have got the original version. It is 40 years old. There is no point trying to recreate that. It's kind of like; you've got the old album, now let's see if we can breathe new life into these songs and bring it into the 21st century.

JG: Well, I think that that is exactly what you've done with 'Lightning To The Nations 2020.' With your positive experience with Axe-Fx in the studio setting, is this, or even an amp profiler something you'd consider using on the road?

BT: Well, possibly our singer loves the Axe-Fx. I have tried a Kemper in the past, but not live, just in the studio. I am still a bit valve-orientated though, I love valve amps. I think it's because I just grew up listening to all the classic seventies albums, which would have all been valve amps, but I am warming to the idea and the convenience of being able to take something abroad with you in your hand baggage rather than rely on whatever you get supplied. I quite liked that idea. I'm sure I'm going to end up exploring it one day.

JG: Just out of interest. If you'd had that technology back in the '80s, do you think you would have toured America more with it being a bit more convenient gear-wise?

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BT: I don't know, I don't think it was about gear. I think that was more to do with our management and you know, not really having a clue how to tour America and the expenses involved. It's a real shame that Diamond Head never got over to the States in the 1980s when we should have done because we were signed to MCA. The album came out in America, but we didn't tour it. It's a weird story, and a shame that we didn't get to where we possibly could have got to if we had big management, professional management, but a lot of bands need that. It's hard to do it yourself. You need somebody guiding you who's done it before and knows who to talk to. You know, the right gigs, the festivals, support slots. Somebody who is going to push you in the right direction. We didn't have that.

JG: I have always felt that it could have been a case of you guys being ahead of your time in many regards, and potentially it being a challenge for labels promoters to know how to market you correctly. Did you feel like Dimond Head were blazing a brand new trail with the ban's music at the time?

BT: I didn't. I mean, that would have been lovely if I could have realized quite what we had then. I always thought we were just fans of those incredible '70s bands, and we wanted to do something along those lines. Not just copy or emulate, but just take it further by picking all the good things about the bands we liked and blend it into one magnificent animal. That is probably an incredibly difficult thing to do, but we tried.

It is the four or five people together that make a band. It's when those guys get in the room, that's what a band is. That's where the original sound comes from.

JG: You've clearly been planning and looking forward to playing some shows to support this new release. Will we see Diamond Head live in 2021?

BT: Yes, we have the UK tour booked for April. Most of the dates that we had last year have all been pushed into 2021, like Bloodstock, for example. Hopefully, things will get back to normal, but nobody really knows do they? We've never experienced this before. From The Rolling Stones down, no one can really guarantee a tour.

JG: Music like this really thrives off the live audience getting fully into it, immersed and jumping all over the place. Could you consider playing these upcoming shows if it meant the social distancing still had to be in place?

BT: I don't really fancy it. I wouldn't want to go and see a band where you have all got to stand two meters apart, and I don't fancy doing a gig like that either where it is all sort of controlled and tame, you know? The atmosphere wouldn't be there. That's one of the things that makes it, is it not? The atmosphere is one of the things you never forget.

DIAMOND HEAD - No Remorse (Official Video)

JG: It is, totally. Reflecting on these 40 years of Diamond Head, the fact that you guys have been so influential and inspiring to the many bands that have followed, what are your thoughts on the evolution of metal over the decades and are you keen on many of the newer metal acts?

BT: I am totally amazed how long it's lasted and how big it's got. Back in 1980, even the biggest bands would only be playing Odeon mid-sized venues. But now with all the metal festivals and the fact that it's gone right around the world, it has become completely incredible; a phenomenon. Once you get into metal, it never leaves you, and you get generation after generation coming along to gigs, from little kids to the grey-haired granddads. I don't listen to a lot of new stuff. I do hear a lot of bands because very often we'll be on bills and festivals and I'll check out bands that way. But, you know, a lot of times with metal, it is so aggressive that I don't want to listen to it for pleasure. At home, I'd probably favour things that are a little softer and lighter because I very often want to relax when I am at home. I don't want to listen to double kicks, and I don't understand a lot of it when it is super fast and super aggressive. I am not sure what they are so angry about truly.

If I was 20, I would be trying to find the fastest heaviest darkest, but now I am 60, my tastes are not as progressive as maybe they were.

JG: With the release 'Lightning To The Nations 2020' going so well, you know that us fans are now desperate for some more original music. Could we see that in the next couple of years?

BT: Yes. Well, while I've been in lockdown, I've been writing because I have literally nothing else to do. I have just been writing and writing. I've done six months' worth of writing, probably the most preparation I've ever done for an album. So, I have transferred everything over to Raz now, and hopefully, he's working on his side, which will be melodies, lyrics and things like that. We are preparing for the next record now this one's done, and since then we've just moved onto the next one because we can't gig. So rather than sit around, let's make use of the time, I am absolutely sure tons and tons of bands are doing exactly the same. They can't tour, so they may as well write the next record instead.

JG: Congratulations once again on the new record, can't wait to see you on the UK tour. Thanks again for taking some time out to talk today.

BT: You're welcome, Jonathan.

END«

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'Lightning To The Nations 2020' is available now, via Silver Lining Music

Diamond Head' Lightning To The Nations 2020' Tracklisting

Lightning to the Nations
The Prince
Sucking My Love
Am I Evil?
Sweet and Innocent
It's Electric
Helpless
No Remorse
Immigrant Song
Sinner
Rat Bat Blue

For more information on Diamond Head, please visit **diamondheadofficial.com**

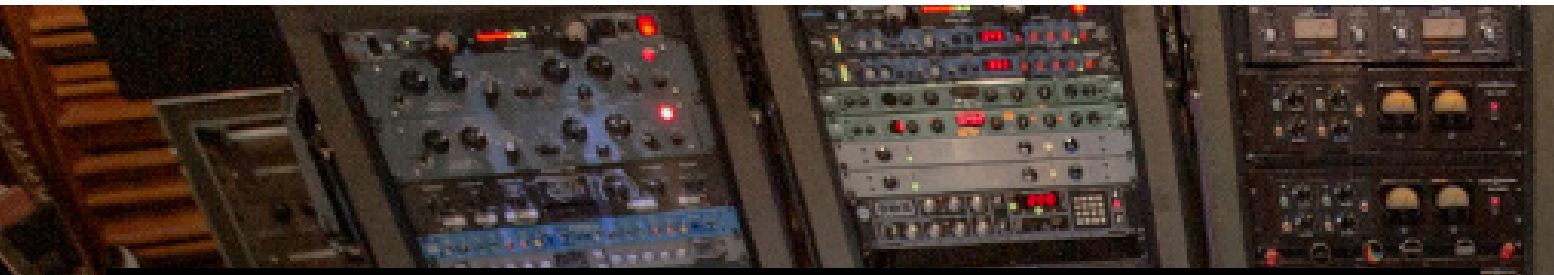
CHRIS LORD-ALGE

The Man Behi

5-time GRAMMY award-winning producer/engineer/mixer and musician with some of the greatest artists in the industry, his in-credibly talented w Rod Stewart, Stevie Nicks, Tim McGraw, Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, B.B King Dion and Aerosmith just to name a few! With the release of a brand new ST man himself, **Nick Jennison** chats

ind The Music

n Chris Lord-Alge, has been apart of the music scene for decades. Working
ork has powered a string of multi-platinum hits from Tina Turner, Prince,
g, Green Day, Snow Patrol, The Black Eyed Peas, U2, Micheal Buble, Celion
TL Tones preset pack, featuring ready-to-use guitar sounds courtesy of the
s exclusively with Chris Lord-Alge.

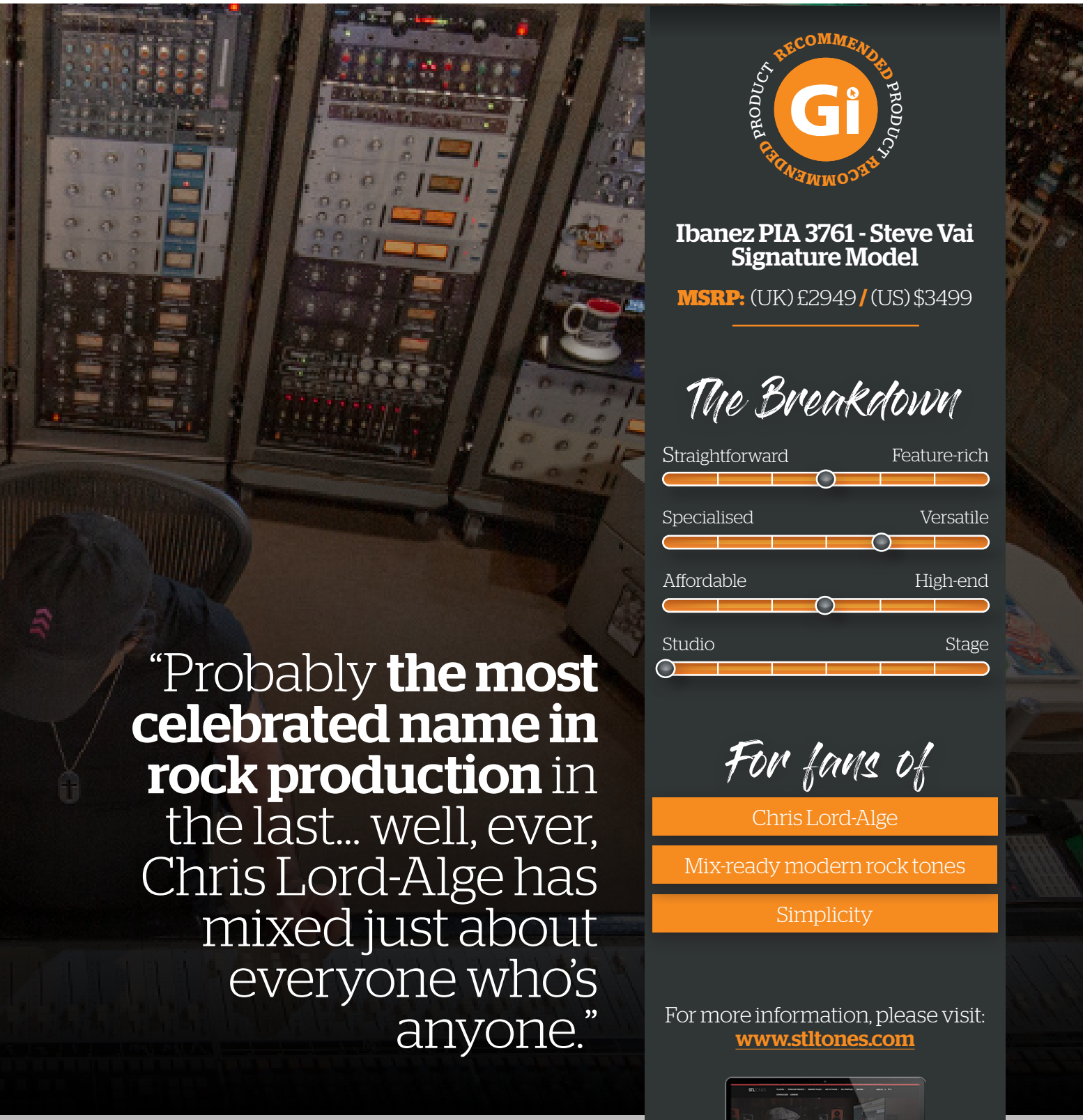


FEW are the musicians in our industry that are so renowned that they can go by their initials alone. SRV. EVH. CLA. Probably the most celebrated name in rock production in the last… well, ever, Chris Lord-Alge has mixed just about everyone who's anyone. James Brown, Prince, The Rolling Stones, Springsteen - the list of A-listers is endless. His huge, in-your-face mixes are the benchmark against which any modern rock production is measured, and at the core of these mixes are his signa-ture guitar sounds.

The STL Tones CLA "Trilogy" preset pack puts these tones at your fingertips. It's a collaboration be-tween CLA, STL Tones and Lord-Alge's long-time partners in crime Howard Benson and Mike Plotnikoff. Using the Howard Benson Tonality plugin as a base, these presets are taken directly from a selection of CLA's mixes - modelling his entire analogue signal chain including his personal SSL console, LA-2A/LA-3A/1176 compressors and his Focusrite mixbus compressor. The result is a col-lection of guitar and bass tones that are brimming with that signature CLA aggression, ready to drop straight into your own projects.

Here's what Chris had to say, "So why did I get involved with STL Tonality? Well thats a simple an-swer, because my partners in crime, Mike Plotnikoff and Howard Benson, we've done many projects together, approached me about taking this plug-in further with my piece of the puzzle and with any-thing they do I opened up my ears and listened. Once I checked the plug-in out and saw what it could do and actually heard what it could do, that's what made me interested, because I make all my decisions based on how something sounds.

This if the first time where the Benson, Plotnikoff, Lord-Alge trio is involved with something digital, creating a plug in for everyone that will give the user the chance to actually get the sounds the grew up listening to, the sounds they hear now on the radio and actually feel like they're getting those sounds from there DI and that to me is amazing. So here I am now, I'm part of the trilogy".



"Probably **the most celebrated name in rock production** in the last... well, ever, Chris Lord-Alge has mixed just about everyone who's anyone."

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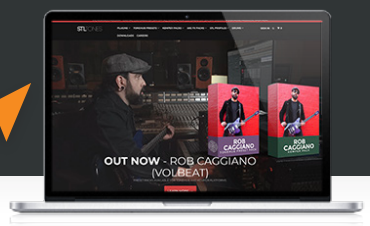
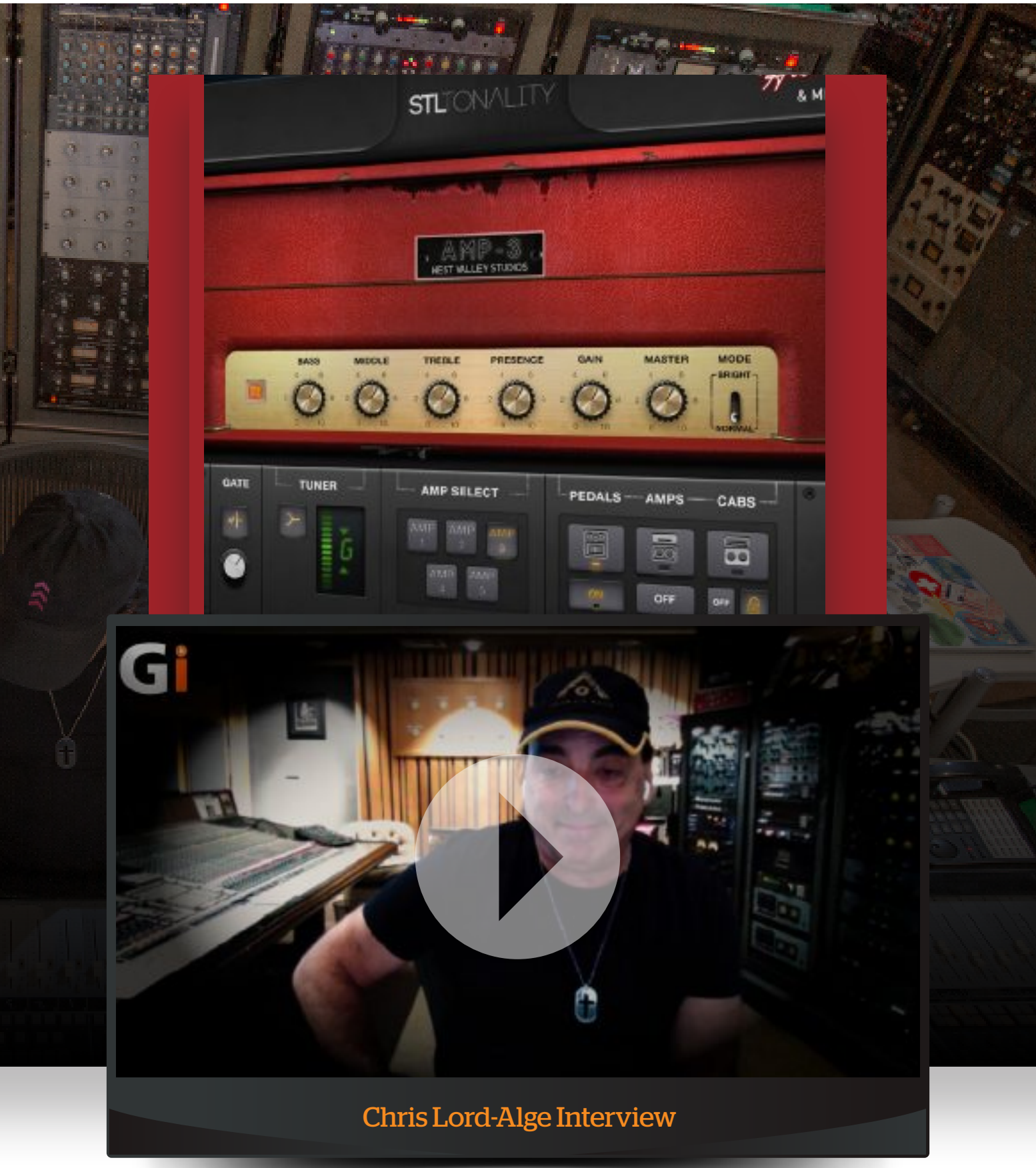
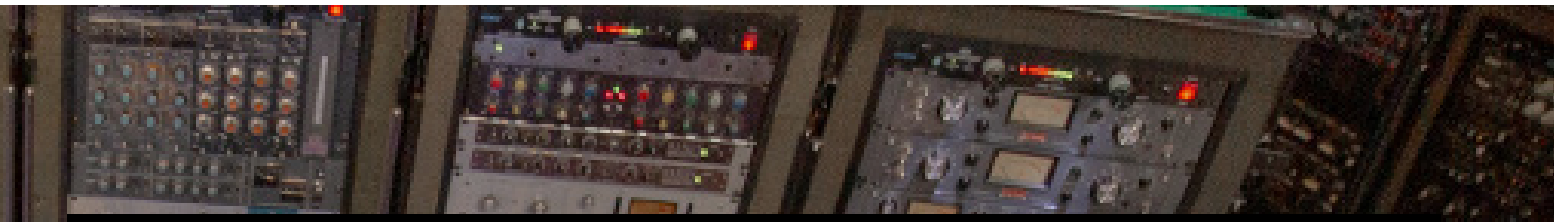


Chris also stated, "So for me the STL Tonality becomes becomes the premier guitar emulator, guitar plug-in. After I heard it for the first time, knowing that Mike and Howard worked on it, knowing Mike's ear towards guitar sounds and Howards ear towards simplicity and organisation of the gui and how the thing operates, it makes it really easy for the guitar player to get the sounds of 1000 hits. There's a lot of guitar plug-ins out there but what STL does verses other ones, is the actual quality of the sound



Chris Lord-Alge Interview

STL Tones Chris Lord-Alge - Trilogy Preset Pack Review



from the DI, what you can get is definitely beyond anything I've heard, its more like a Neve recorded guitar sound, it has that kind of clarity in the top, it's not just an over hyped distortion crea-tor".

In case you've not used the plugin before, it's a fairly simple affair. There are six amps to choose from - three high gain models, two Fender-y clean models and a single bass amp. You also get three pedals (a boost, a reverb and a delay), and a selection of cab IRs - or in the case of the CLA presets, IRs that include the cab and CLA's signal chain.

If you're wondering how much of a dif-ference these presets make, prepare to be surprised. The addi-tion of the CLA sig-nal chain IRs transform an already excel-lent amp sim into something very special. The guitar tones are extremely clear and forward-sounding but never harsh or thin, and the bass tones are something else. I can genuinely see myself reaching for this pl-ugin for the bass sound on any rock mix I'm working on - its just "right".

In addition to the CLA "tones from the mix" presets, this pack also includes a se-lection of "CLA Creations": a number of presets that Chris has created himself using the Howard Benson Tonality plugin, cover-ing everything from squeaky cleans through to pure high gain filth.

The STL Tones CLA Trilogy Preset Pack brings Chris Lord-Alge's legendary guitar tones straight into your DAW. Whether you're looking for mix-ready guitar and bass sounds without the fuss, you're referenc-ing your own tones against the best in the industry or you just want a killer sounding amp sim to noodle through, you need to check this out.

END«

THE Tech Session

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

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

UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES THE GREATS GREAT

TECH SESSION

For close
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Jamie Hu
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Tech Session

e to 50 years, Kiss has been entertaining us in a way that no other band he Rock N' Roll Hall of Famers have released 44 albums and sold more 0 million albums worldwide – not to mention the pyrotechnic and fire eathing filled record-breaking global tours. In this issue's Tech Session, **mphries** encourages you to don your spaceman suit and makeup as s a look at the guitar style of the legendary Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley, as well as the band's influence on rock music.

»

KISS is, without a doubt, one of the biggest rock bands of all time, with over 30 certified gold albums and several platinum and multi-platinum albums. This hugely influential rock act has inspired countless bands, with Ace Frehley being a significant influence on such guitarists as Kirk Hammett and Dimebag Darrell. Ace is ranked as one of the top rock guitarists of all time.

Kiss was formed in New York in the early '70s by singer/guitarist Paul Stanley, bassist/singer Gene Simmons, drummer Peter Criss and guitarist Ace Frehley. This shot to fame and gained notoriety for their comic book character persona's, with each member wearing face paint and outlandish stage costumes. Their live shows were also known for pyrotechnics, fire breathing, and Simmons drooling blood from his mouth. Kiss was very inspired by the stage theatrics of Alice Cooper, making their shows a visual spectacle.

Although Frehley is seen as their best-loved guitar player, several other guitarists have filled the role, most notably Vinnie Vincent, Bruce Kulick, and current guitarist Tommy Thayer. Other notable guitarists including Richie Sambora, Yngwie Malmsteen and even Eddie Van Halen

Kiss Tech Session Performance

were all considered for the guitar job!

During the early '80s the band changed their sound and image, removing their makeup for what would be their "unmasked" period, although they returned to wearing their comic book costumes and makeup during the late '90s. Kiss have announced that they will play their final show in July of 2021.

Kiss has a huge catalogue of albums, with favourites such as "Love Gun", "Destroyer", "Unmasked", "Creatures of the Night", "Lick It Up", "Alive", "Dynasty", and "Crazy Nights".

In 1978 each member of Kiss released a solo album simultaneously and all four were marketed as Kiss albums, featuring similar album artwork with the face of each member of the band.

For this Tech Session, I have chosen to look at the best-loved era of Kiss from the '70s, featuring original guitarist Ace Frehley. I have chosen the classic tracks "I Was Made For Loving You", "Cold Gin", "Detroit Rock City" and "Love Gun" for my reference tracks. Ace is a classic rock guitarist, with several notable signature licks and approaches. With his feet firmly planted in the pentatonic scale, Ace would often connect shapes using repetitive sequences, allowing him to switch between different positions. He also has a certain string bending approach, where he will ben up to a note and re-pick the note with a staccato feel, as he gradually releases the note back to its original pitch. Ace also makes use of Jimmy Page inspired pentatonic repetition licks and phrases.

Bars 1-4 Introduce our groove, with a tight eighth/sixteenth note rhythm, performed on the 7th fret 4th string with tight palm muting. This rhythm sets up the groove for the verse of our demo piece, emulating the pseudo disco feel of "I Was Made For Loving You".

Bars 5-20 includes our verse progression, and follows the chords of E minor, C major, D major and B major. Although the rhythm guitar on the track continues, our main focus is on a two notes melodic, rhythmic figure that outlines a recurring theme throughout this section. Keep this part very tight and clean, as this is vital for retaining the "disco" groove of this track.

Bars 21-28 is classic Rock n' Roll Kiss, with a riff that nods towards "Cold Gin". Here we play a very 70's sounding power chord riff performed on the 3rd and 4th strings. Once again it's important to keep this riff tight. Here we are outlining the chords of A, with a power chord riff outlining A5, G5, and D/F#. This section concludes with the chords of D5 and G5.

Bars 29-30 reintroduces our intro riff, building up towards the next section where we see a time signature change. »

Bars 31-32 introduce our new time signature, shifting to 12/8 for a swing/shuffle feel. This is classic Kiss, inspired by «Love Gun» and «Detroit Rock City». This section includes a tight chord figure that follows a triplet drum fill.

Bars 33-48 introduce our triplet feel riff, based around the chords of B5, E5, G/B, A/C# and D5, performed with a swung eighth note groove. This section concluded with a short repeating harmony figure before repeating the progression.

Bars 49-71 is our guitar solo and is based around the E minor pentatonic scale. I have included the classic "Love Gun" style triplet pentatonic sequence, which is a great way to link scale shapes across the neck. This solo also includes Jimmy Page inspirer repetitive sequences, open string descending pull of sequences, and Frehley's signature stuttering slow-release string bends. The solo concludes with double stops performed with a triplet rhythm following the final drum fill.

When it comes to tone, Ace Frehley is a Les Paul/Marshall guy, favouring a three humbucker Les Paul that has been released as a signature model. He has also had a slightly outlandish Washburn signature model. Frehley has used a wide variety of Marshall amps, going for a more classic tone as opposed to a high gain tone. He also on occasions uses fuzz, namely a Big Muff. For the session, I used my Music Man Axis Super Sport, into my Boogie JP2-C, into a Two Notes Torpedo Studio, using a Marshal style IR. I aimed for a mild gain, trying to achieve that classic 70's rock tone. I dialled in a little extra gain for the solo.

END «

Kiss Tech Session Lesson

THE Competition

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In this issue, enter for a chance to win a Aria Pro II Jet-1electric guitar

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Aria Pro II Jet-1 | Nick Jennison Review

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ar in our free entry competition.

About the **the Aria Pro II Jet-1**

Body: Poplar
Neck: Maple, Bolt-on
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Number of Frets: 24
Scale Length: 628mm (24-3/4")
Pickups: OS-5 (Alnico-5) & CPH-1 (Classic Power Alnico-5)
Controls: Volume x1, Tone x1, PU Selector x1
Bridge: VFT-1 Tremolo
Hardware: Chrome
Finishes:
* SVW (See-Through Vintage White)
* CA (Candy Apple Red)
* BK (Black)

Good Luck!

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THE Reviews

GUITARS, AMPS AND EFFECTS

BEST OF 2020

EDITOR'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2020

Jonathan Graham presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2

ALTHOUGH the last 12 months have been challenging for us all, to say the it has once again been an incredible year for new product relea the world of guitar, however. Long gone are the days when any of the world's top brands actually anything in their range that is genuinely substandard, and it's why it is getting harder and harder ally give a bad review. All of that being said, of course, there will always be a handful of products above the rest and Gi's top reviewers and myself have compiled our Best of 2020 lists for that very Please let it be noted that between Tom, Nick, Sam and myself we have deliberately not duplicate one another's choices in an attempt to showcase as many of these great pieces of gear as possible. I you enjoy our look back at Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2020 and be sure to let us know agree with our choices, or if you feel we missed something out. So, without further ado, here are followed by the full review for each.

Ibanez PIA 3761 - Steve Vai Signature Model

Everybody loves a sequel, right? Well, when it's a good one and lives up to the reputation of the original, the answer is definitely. Enter the Ibanez PIA — less of a follow-up and more of an evolution of the Steve Vai Signature Model (JEM) we've known and loved for over 30 years. Exploding on to the guitar scene back in NAMM, you'd probably have to have been living under a rock not to have heard of its existence,

Joe Doe by Vintage JDV Lucky Buck

Joe Doe Guitars and Vinta collaborated to create a seri custom limited edition guitars that are ha like nothing you've ever seen before! Con using the highly regarded Vintage V6, V5 chassis, Ben Court, the originator of Joe D tars has applied his signature blend of art, and tall storytelling to create guitars with character and soul all of their own. »

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PRS 35th Anniversary Custom 24 SE

As a part of PRS's 35th Anniversary collection, the Paul Reed Smith SE Custom 24 features a 3-piece maple neck, mahogany body, maple top and two impressive-sounding PRS-designed 85/15 TCI S humbucking pickups.

Manson META Series MBM-1 Matthew Bellamy Signature Guitar

The 2020 META Series MBM-1 Signature Guitar is Manson Guitar Works' new and lower-priced model (produced under licence with Cort) that has been extensively modified and developed to reflect the guitars that Matthew Bellamy plays on stage with rock giants Muse without breaking the bank.

Vintage 25th Anniversary V100

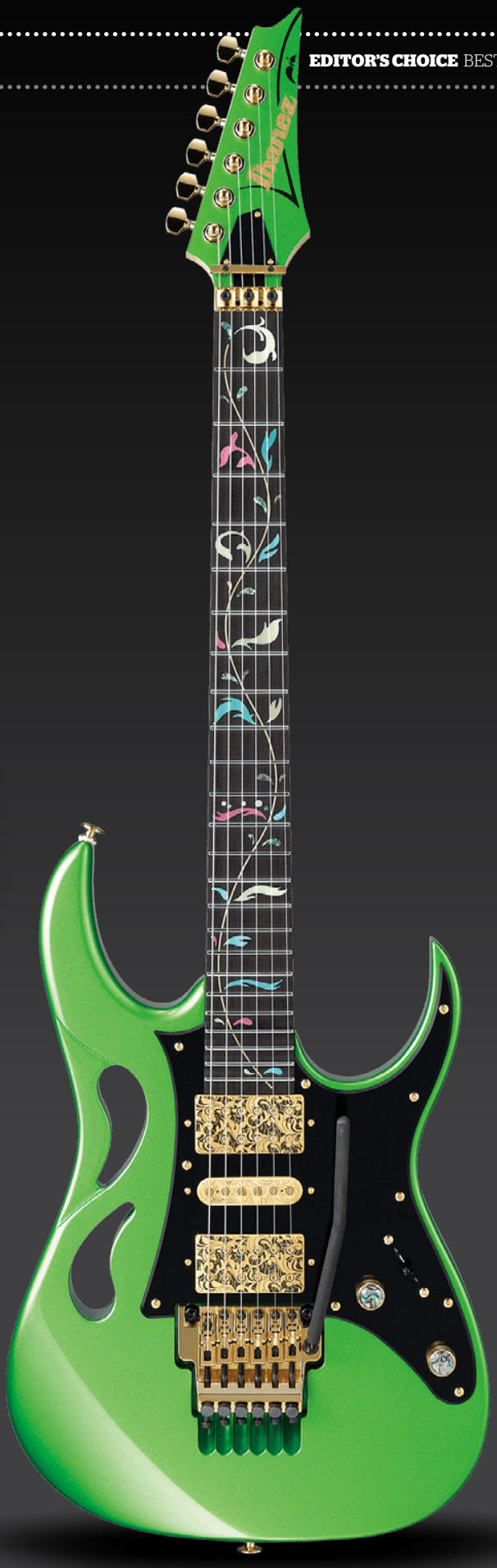
To celebrate and honour their 25th anniversary, Vintage has launched three (very special and limited editions based on the very popular Vintage V6, V75 and V100) electric guitars to mark this milestone in the company's history and success within guitar craftsmanship.

Dean NashVegas Select Floyd Metallic Red

Perfectly combining classic design with contemporary features in one decked out and ready-to-go package — the NashVegas Select Floyd from Dean Guitars is one heck of a professional-level guitar that you don't have to break the bank to enjoy.

Seymour Duncan Powerstage 200

Engineered to attain the best tone and performance from your pedal-based electric guitar rig, Seymour Duncan's PowerStage 200 is a miniature power amplifier that is small enough to fit right on your pedalboard. Complete with built-in speaker cabinet emulation so you can record directly into your DAW, the Seymour Duncan PowerStage 200 is a powerful solution both on stage and in the studio.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POWERSTAGE 200

Ibanez PIA 3761 - Steve Vai Signature Model

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WHEN Ibanez introduced the world of guitar to the JEM back in 1987, it ushered in a new era of performance-driven guitar manufacturing that still resonates to this day. The primary purpose at the inception was to provide the ever-expanding group of fleet-fingered players with an instrument that could keep up with their demands, and arguably no one was doing more to push the limits of guitar playing than the designer of the JEM: Mr Steve Vai. Built to compliment his own idiosyncrasies and flare, the Jem inadvertently delivered the most advanced rock machine the guitar world had ever seen, going on to become the biggest selling signature model of all time too – not counting the Les Paul that is.

The Jem's looks and sheer playability meant that its spin-off range, the eponymous Ibanez RG, took on a life and path all of its own. Forever sealing Ibanez as the kings of pointy guitars and big hair.

Since that date, the Jem has undergone very few fundamental design changes, beyond the plethora of wonderful and at times outrageous finishes and anniversary models. It really hasn't needed to deviate too far from the original design.

Roll forward to 2018/19, and that was still the case when Steve began formulating the ideas for a new signature model, something that would reflect the person he has become and the artist he now is. »

"This is the **best guitar** I've played..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Ibanez PIA 3761 - Steve Vai Signature Model

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The Breakdown

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Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Steve Vai
- Unique design.
- Exceptional build quality.

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The Jem didn't need to change, but it was time to do something new.

Enter the Ibanez PIA, launched by Vai himself earlier this year at NAMM and culminating in a fantastic live event at the House of Blues, with Steve absolutely on fire playing his way through fan favourites on various finishes of the new axe. For anyone who attended the show, it was a rare and special moment.

I had the great pleasure of talking to Steve straight after the show regarding the production of a special demo video for Ibanez, and a month later, I received the first sample of the PIA. The guitar used in this review is the very same instrument that I used in the official Ibanez video and remains the only PIA in the UK at the time of writing this review. I say this

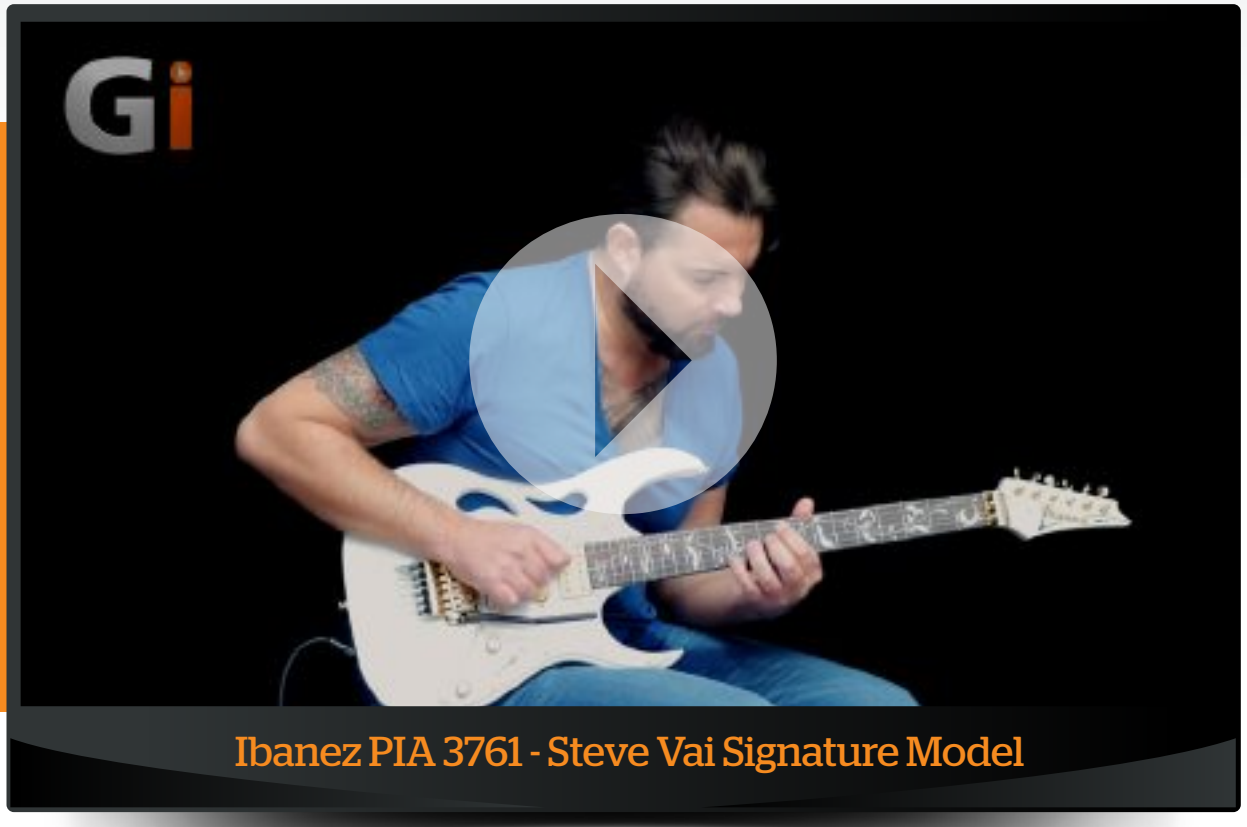
because what you are reading about (and potentially listening to and watching) is not even the final, perfectly produced article that will end up in the hands of all of us mortals who are lucky enough to purchase one. This is a sample guitar and, as is often the case, sometimes they aren't perfect and are still going through a degree of refinement in the production process. Keep this in mind when you read the next line of this review…

This is the best guitar I've ever played.

I have never uttered those words in a review before, whether during the hundreds of guitars I've reviewed for UK dealers, or even my very own Ibanez AZ prototype that I assisted in the design of. So believe me when I tell you, this guitar (even at a sample stage) is truly wonderful, even with a couple of imperfections in the finish in the PIA Blossom grip (yes, that's what it's called!).

So…let's take a look 'under the hood' at all the specifications.

The PIA comes in "Stallion White" as standard, with three limited edition colour variations also available…all named by Steve. Envy Green, Sundew Gold and Panther Pink. »



I recall seeing these PIA models in low-grade images sent over prior to the official public release of the guitar at NAMM (and indeed these very same images were leaked on the internet a week before the show). They were underwhelming to say the least, and I honestly had mixed feelings about them before getting on a plane to La-La Land.

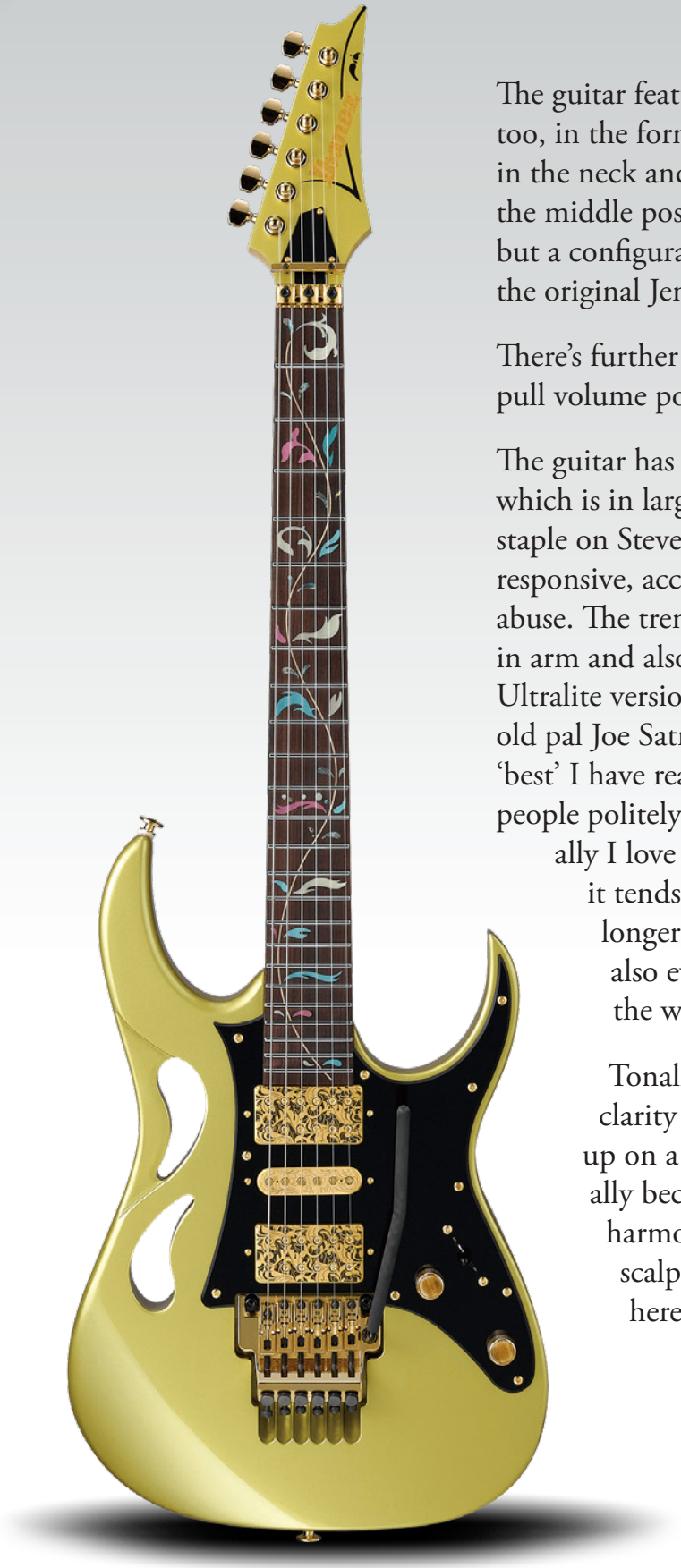
However, when I finally saw the samples at the show, I breathed a sigh of relief! Seeing them up close in person proved to be a game-changer. All the colour finishes are stunning, particularly the Gold one… which I believe is also a favourite of my Guitar Interactive buddy and Legato legend, mr Tom Quayle!

"I highly **recommend that you read** Jonathan Graham's (Gi editor) interview with Steve from issue 71, where he goes into detail about the process and his personal thoughts on the guitar. It's a fascinating insight..."

The guitars feature an Alder body in a Jem format which has been contoured to be super comfortable. The Lion Claw recess for the Lo-Pro trem system has remained but Monkey Grip has been replaced by a beautifully considered dual petal recess, names the PIA Blossom. Steve painstakingly slaved over this design and its position on the body. The very same design is echoed throughout the guitar.

I highly recommend that you read Jonathan Graham's (Gi editor) interview with Steve from issue 71, where he goes into detail about the process and his personal thoughts on the guitar. It's a fascinating insight.

The neck is 5-piece Maple, and Walnut with a Rosewood fingerboard adorned with a truly captivating new Tree of Life inlay, featuring the PIA Blossom design, which is also featured on the headstock in place of any naming protocol after the Ibanez logo. 24 Stainless steel frets are earmarked by luminlay side dot inlays that are increasingly becoming a standard for all Ibanez guitars. With this being a new Vai signature you obviously get the last four frets scalloped to aid with vibrato at the 'dusty end' of the board! »

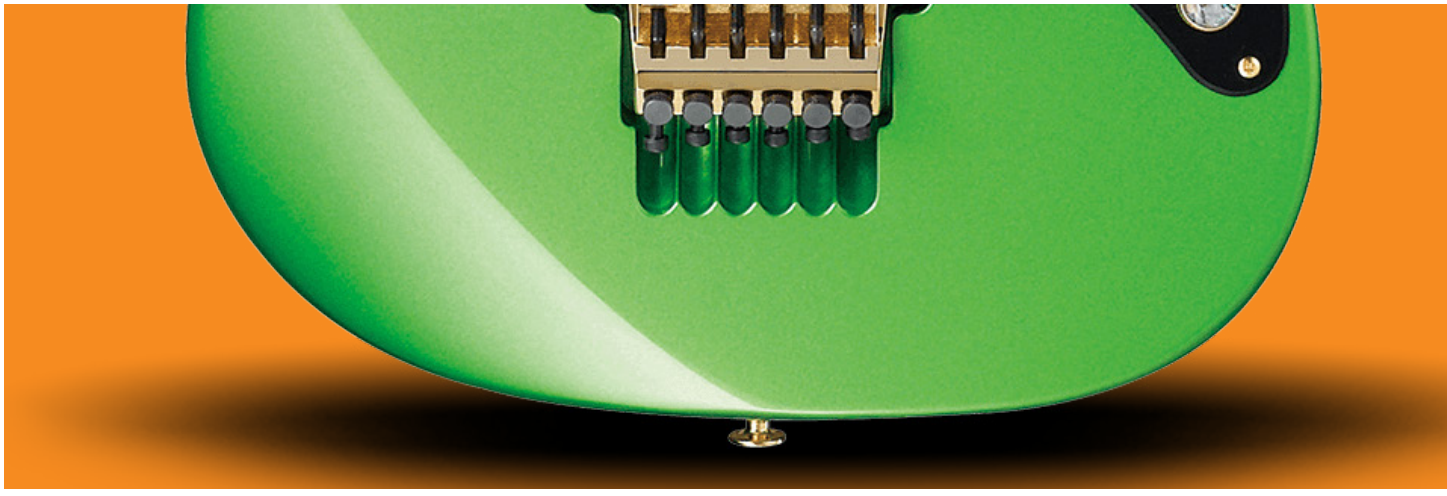


The guitar features brand new DiMarzio goodies too, in the form of stunning UtoPIA Humbuckers in the neck and bridge and a single-coil version in the middle position – now typical for many guitars but a configuration that didn't really exist prior to the original Jem.

There's further tonal witchcraft available via a push-pull volume pot that acts as a high pass filter.

The guitar has a natural resonance when unplugged which is in large part due to the Lo-Pro bridge. A staple on Steve's guitars and one that is incredibly responsive, accurate and stable even during heavy abuse. The trem comes with both a standard push in arm and also the ridiculously light and strong Ultralite version, favoured by both Steve and his old pal Joe Satriani. It's subjective as to which is 'best' I have read many threads on forums with people politely arguing the case for both – personally I love the graphite version and in practice it tends to allow the trem to gargle for a longer period (if that's your thing) whilst also evading gravity when pushed out of the way.

Tonally the UtoPIAs are superb, offering clarity and bite when required and picking up on a full range of frequencies that really become apparent when playing natural harmonics. Full, thick tones through to scalpel-like treble sounds are all on offer here, adjust to taste! »



One of the fantastic things about this guitar is the high pass filter that, when recording with a full band mix, really makes the guitar tone 'pop'. They're very hi-fi sounding, so-to-speak.

One final thing to mention about these pickups is the gorgeously intricate, laser-cut designs, colour matched to the guitar's finish. Similar in style to DiMarzio's Dark Matter pickup design, but less 'Steam punk' and featuring the ever-present PIA Blossom design too.

It wouldn't be a Vai signature without some form of practical innovation. In this case, it's the magnetic backplate. A design that makes you question why it's not already a standard feature on every trem-laden guitar. No more messing about with screws to remove the backplate, a powerful yet tonally inobtrusive magnet holds it in place, and you guessed it; it also has a cut out of the PIA Blossom inlay as a practical way of removing it. Genius!

Gotoh Tuners round the features off and a plush Ibanez hardshell case is also included.

In performance, this guitar truly rips! There's no modern Rock technique that isn't somehow made easier when playing this guitar. The neck is slightly thinker than a standard Jem, but it's a fact that isn't massively noticeable and I would wager that if you weren't already aware of it, you wouldn't notice the difference without paying great attention to it whilst A/B-ing against a Jem. Chords are comfortable, anywhere on the neck. Access to the upper frets is a breeze. Do you personally need the last four frets scalloped? I know I don't, but it makes absolutely no difference either way, and if you're buying a Vai signature model it's a feature I want to see as a fan. I would highly recommend seeing these wonderful pieces of art and craftsmanship in the flesh; they are truly stunning.

I wish I had the Gold one!

END«

TAYLOR
GT
Smaller size.
Bigger sound.
Serious fun.
QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

Joe Doe by Vintage JDV001 Lucky Buck

Joe Doe Guitars and Vintage have collaborated to create a series of eight custom limited edition guitars that are hands down, like nothing you've ever seen before! Constructed using the highly regarded Vintage V6, V52 and V72 chassis, Ben Court, the originator of Joe Doe Guitars has applied his signature blend of art, design and tall storytelling to create guitars with a history, character and soul all of their own. **Tom Quayle** reviews the Joe Doe by Vintage JDV001 Lucky Buck.

JOE Doe Guitars are an incredibly interesting guitar design and customisation company run by Ben Court in Brighton, UK. Ben is a film and TV screenwriter by day while spending his nights and weekends producing custom guitar builds and designs that are totally unique thanks to a concept based on giving each guitar its own back story and associated character. These fictional entities and their stories give Ben's creations a sense of intrigue, warmth and almost comic book playfulness that you don't find with production line guitars, much more akin to the real world rock 'n' roll iconic guitars that we associate with our favourite players. These famous guitars have a history and story that makes them unique and interesting and it's this sense of story that Ben wants to instil into his own creations.

Ben uses high-end custom made bodies and Warmoth necks as blanks for his custom designs, and they have garnered lots of interest

"Our review guitar is the 'Lucky Buck' – a **telecaster inspired** model owned by fictional country musician Leslie Coal..."

as both instruments and art pieces but come with a pretty hefty price tag due to the excellent components, design work and finish. In 2018, after a meeting with JHS owned Vintage Guitars (known for their superb 'bang for the buck' guitar range featuring Wilkinson hardware) the two companies decided to collaborate on a range of guitars that would »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Joe Doe by Vintage JDV001 Lucky Buck

MSRP: (UK) £599 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Rock n roll heritage
- Country music/rockabilly
- Something unique

For more information, please visit: **jhs.co.uk/brands/vintage/joe-doe-by-vintage**

realise Ben's creative visions but at an affordable price point and the Joe Doe by Vintage range is the result of this collaboration.

Our review guitar is the 'Lucky Buck' – a telecaster inspired model owned by fictional country musician Leslie Coal. Leslie's backstory is a great riches to rags to riches again affair that absolutely imbues the guitar with life and this sense of intrigue, giving the guitar reason to exist rather than just being another guitar with a similar spec sheet to a hundred other guitars on the market. The 'Lucky Buck' is adorned with Lucky's signature inlay across the fretboard, a Cactus F-hole and floral scratch plate - all perfect additions to flesh out the feeling of this character and his story. Joe Doe even include custom designed 'case candy' with each guitar to give further life to each character, adding to the back story and sense of intrigue. It's a wonderful concept and, whilst it won't be for everyone, it's fantastic to see this kind of creativity and storytelling within what can, at times, be a bland, copycat market place.

As we've come to expect from a Vintage branded guitar, you get a lot of value for money with the Joe Doe by Vintage »

Joe Doe by Vintage JDV001 Lucky Buck Review

range. The Lucky Buck features a semi-hollow Alder, double bound body available in Black or Honeyburst gloss finishes.

The neck is a Hard Rock Maple affair with a Vintage Slim-C profile and Lignum Rosa fretboard sporting the incredible signature inlay, executed unbelievably well at the given price point. You get all Wilkinson hardware in the form of the WTB 3-saddle bridge, and WJ-55 EZ Lock machine heads, matched to 22 superbly finished medium vintage frets and a Graphtech nut. This ensures great intonation and tuning stability whilst the custom-designed high-output bridge single-coil and darker neck p90 provide wonderful, open sounding tones from the 3-way switch. Tones are definitely of the airy, country type but you can get mean rock and heavier tones from the bridge pickup giving the guitar far more versatility than the looks would suggest.

It's incredible what you're getting for the price here with playability, consistency and tone that should cost at least double the asking price, especially factoring in the deluxe hard case that the guitar ships in. Matching the creativity of storytelling and character creation with the equally creative endeavour of guitar design is a fantastic thing to see in this industry, made even better by the fact that these are great guitars in their own right and excellent value for money.

If you like a good back story, character depth and giving a guitar reason for being more than simple functionality, the Joe Doe by Vintage range will be right up your street. If you just want a great value, good looking guitar then this range is well worth checking out too. We've certainly been won over by Ben's creations both at the expensive and more affordable end of the spectrum.

END«

Kustom®

SIENNA ACOUSTIC SERIES

With attractive tan covering, leather handle and real wood control panel, the Kustom SIENNA 65 PRO combines good looks with great tone.
The speaker has a flatter, Hi-Fi type response that perfectly suits the wide frequency and dynamic range generated by acoustic instruments.
The result is a more natural, less "electrified" sound.
To enhance high-frequency details, the SIENNA 65 PRO uses a high-frequency driver and in tandem with the new speaker design, helps retain the unique harmonic content of the instrument and contributes a sparkling quality to the sound. Features include all-new digital effects section, new algorithms on the reverbs and delays offering heightened effect performance and a greater sense of spaciousness to the sound. Get the natural dynamic tone you've dreamed about with the new SIENNA 65 PRO.

SIENNA series is also available in 16W and 30W versions.

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jhs
www.jhs.co.uk

DANELECTRO® The new '57

The vintage ones cost more than your first car!
This painstaking reissue features our Vintage 50's Lipstick® Pickups, adjustable bridge, and other cool vintage touches.

DGS730 Jade

DGSTLB Lime Black

Danelectro guitars & effects are available from all leading music stores and online retailers

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#OWNTHETONE

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www.jhs.co.uk

PRS 35th Anniversary Custom 24 S

As a part of PRS's 35th Anniversary collection, the Paul Reed Smith SE Custom 24 features a 3-piece maple neck, mahogany body, maple top and two impressive-sounding PRS-designed 85/15 TCI S humbucking pickups. **Nick Jennison** takes this high-quality yet affordable instrument for a spin.

PRS deservedly occupy a seat at the table as one of the "big three" American guitar manufacturers, there's one crucial difference between them and their contemporaries: PRS's best guitars weren't being made in their first decade - they're being made right now. So while many would be tempted to look to the past on their 35th anniversary, PRS is using this opportunity to celebrate innovation.

The 35th Anniversary SE Custom 24 pays homage to the guitar that launched PRS into the stratosphere, but with an updated feature set that reflects the best aspects of the Core and Private Stock lines.

The most obvious upgrade is the exceptional TCI-S pickups. Based on the TCI (Tuned Capacitance and Inductance) pickups found on Paul's Guitar, PRS have taken inspiration from the discreet EQ circuits found on classic British mixing consoles to "tune" the treble, middle and bass response of these pickups. The result is a fat, vibrant and throaty humbucking voice that's reminiscent of a great P90, along one of the most convincing split-coil sounds I've ever come across.

Interestingly, PRS have opted to use a traditional 3-way toggle along with a pair of mini toggles for coil splitting each pickup, rather than the blade switch and push-pull combo that has been the norm of late. While the new setup might seem a bit cumbersome, it's actually much easier to use in practice. Flipping the short-shafted mini toggles is a lot quicker than grabbing a pot and pulling. This setup also allows for much greater flexibility. There are four different middle position blends available, and it's also possible to configure the »

"The pickups are the **superb Fishman** Fluence Modern humbuckers..."

STAR RATING

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PROS

- Exceptional TCI-S pickups.
- Intuitive and versatile switching.
- Great playability.
- Loads of guitar for the money.

CONS

- None

Check THE SPEC

PRS 35th Anniversary Custom 24 SE
MSRP (UK) £899 (US) $999 //

Mahogany Body // Flamed Maple Top // Maple Neck // PRS TCI "S" Humbuckers

For more information, please visit: **prsguitars.com**

guitar as a H/S - switching from neck single coil cleans to fat bridge humbucker tones with a single movement (or vice versa with a split bridge and a humbucking neck).

Of course, a guitar is more than it's pickups, and the SE Custom 24 35th delivers on aesthetics and playability too. The flame maple veneer is resplendent in Black Gold Burst, and the old school abalone birds are a nice nod to the past. The Wide Thin maple neck is noticeably chunkier than Wide Thin necks of yesteryear, but still super fast and comfortable for fast fretwork.

The SE Custom 24 35th Anniversary is probably the best sounding SE Custom 24 ever made, and it plays just as well. If you (like so many) are torn between an SE or a used Core model, this guitar will answer that question for you. Move fast though - PRS is only making 3500 of them…

END«

N.I.R.S
MOOER Non-linear Response Sampling
MNRS technology was developed by MOOER engineers using their years of tone modeling experience. Users can sample any tone from their real-life amps, cabs, and overdrive pedals using the MNRS Engine 2.0 and export them to their GE Series multi-effects pedals!
MOOER Studio
www.mooerstudio.com
An online community specially designed for MOOER users to download and share samples and preset files for their GE Series products. Exclusive amp samples and files created by the MOOER sampling team are also frequently added to provide high-quality tone options for all MOOER Studio users.
MOOER Cloud
The MOOER cloud is designed to connect the GE Labs community with MOOER hardware. MNRS files can be sampled by using the GE Labs APP and uploaded to MOOER Cloud and shared with both GE Labs and GE Series pedal users.
*MNRS can currently only be used with GE200, GE250, GE300 LITE, and GE300 multi-effects pedals.
MOOER
EFFECTS AND AMPLIFICATION
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Download "GE Labs" on the App Store

Manson META Series MBM-1 Matth Bellamy Signature Guitar

Nick Jennison reviews the 2020 META Series MBM-1 Signature Guitar, Manson Guitar Works' new and lower-priced model (produced under licence with Cort) that has been extensively modified and developed to reflect the guitars that Matthew Bellamy plays on stage with rock giants Muse without breaking the bank. Let's find out more.

THE body shape is 100% MB signature and available in the ever-popular Satin Black or a new Starlight Silver finish. A new humbucking neck pickup offers a fuller neck voicing to more closely match the raw and powerful sounding bridge humbucker pickup. A kill-button allows stutter style effects.

When you hear the name Manson, it's very likely you immediately think of Matt Bellamy. The association between the Exeter guitar brand and the Muse luminary had produced some truly unique instruments, with features like built-in Fuzz Factories and Kaoss Pads, sustainer pickups and MIDI functionality. These instruments are very desirable, rare and pretty pricey too.

Enter the Cort/Manson META Series MBM-1. Built by east-Asian guitar manufacturing giants Cort under license from Manson, it's the most affordable Matt Bellamy guitar ever made. While it lacks some of the more outlandish features of its UK-made counterpart, it shares the same offset T-type silhouette, neck profile and matte black finish (also available in "Starlight Silver").

Straight out of the box, the MBM-1 exhibits the build quality I've come to expect from Cort. If you've ever laid hands on an Indonesian or Chinese-made Ibanez or PRS SE you'll know what I'm talking about - flawless finish, tidy fretwork, tight neck join, sturdy hardware and electronics. There are so many excellent yet affordable Cort-made guitars out there »

"It's **easy to forget** how impressive it is for a guitar at this price point to be built so well..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Manson META Series MBM-1 Matthew Bellamy Signature Guitar

MSRP: (UK) £569 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Bright — Dark

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

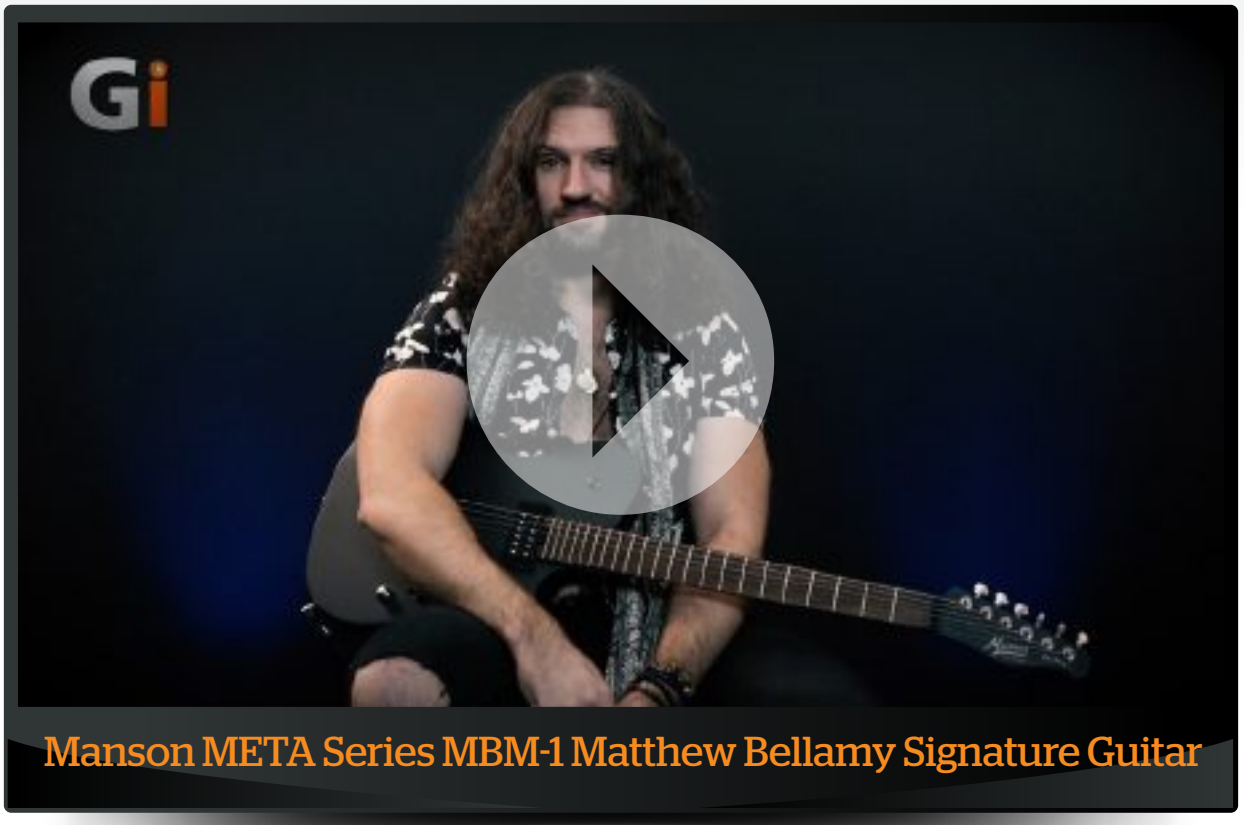
- Thick fuzz sounds
- Noisy killswitch antics
- Muse

For more information, please visit:
mansonguitarworks.com

that it's easy to forget how impressive it is for a guitar at this price point to be built so well.

Despite the factory action being a little high, it only took a quick adjustment to have the MBM-1 playing beautifully. The 10-14" compound radius fretboard means the action can be set very low without fear of high bends choking out, while chord playing at the lower end of the neck is still very comfortable thanks to the tighter curve. It's more labour intensive to carve and fit frets to a compound radius board than one with a single radius across the entire neck, so it's inclusion on a guitar at this price is laudable.

The electronics are relatively straightforward compared to the custom-shop instruments Bellamy uses on stage and in the studio, with a pair of humbuckers and a simple volume, tone and three-way toggle control layout. I'm surprised that there isn't an option to split the humbuckers for a single-coil voice, but that's not something you'll find on the high-end versions of this guitar either. Another feature the MBM-1 shares »



Manson META Series MBM-1 Matthew Bellamy Signature Guitar

GOOD TO GO
WHENEVER · WHEREVER
A passion for playing means that inspiration can strike anytime, anywhere. With Elixir® Strings you know that when you pick up your guitar it's going to sound great—time and time again. That's because our featherweight coating protects your strings from the elements, keeping corrosion away and allowing your tone to sound great for longer, in any environment.
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Elixir Strings. Performance-ready with long-lasting tone.
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"The Cort/Manson META Series MBM-1 is **a lot of guitar** for the money..."

with it's bigger brothers is the kill button mounted on the upper shoulder. This highly entertaining feature greatly expands the sonic possibilities of the instrument, giving access to stuttering textures that are distinctly un-guitar-like, and the use of a button instead of a toggle switch makes using this feature more tactile and immediate.

Sonically, the MBM-1 is super-massively (see what I did there?) fat and chewy, and is clearly designed to punch through walls of fuzz and distortion. The bridge humbucker has a throaty midrange honk that's reminiscent of a JB, and is perfectly voiced for gained-out sounds. Using just your pick attack, angle and the amount of fingernail/skin you strike the string with, it's easy to control the harmonic content of a screaming high gain amp or raging fuzz pedal. By contrast, the neck pickup is thick and plummy, sounding almost synth-like under heavy saturation. It's also a pretty satisfying clean voice, with a jazzy warmth and smoothness and just a hint of sparkle. Played clean, the bridge pickup alone is a little too nasal for my liking - not that I'd change it, since this is the very quality that makes it so good when played distorted - but the middle position blend is very pleasant, with plenty of clarity and snap.

The Cort/Manson META Series MBM-1 is a lot of guitar for the money, and while it lacks some of the crazier features of its big brothers, it still retains the essence of what makes those guitars so great. If you're a Muse fan or even just a fan of thick fuzzy walls of sound, you need to check one of these out.

END«

Manson
META SERIES

Vintage 25th Anniversary V100 Silver Burst

To celebrate and honour their 25th anniversary, Vintage has launched three (very special and limited editions based on the very popular Vintage V6, V75 and V100) electric guitars to mark this milestone in the company's history and success within guitar craftsmanship. **Tom Quayle** reviews the Vintage 25th Anniversary V100 Silver Burst.

WE live in a golden age for guitar players. Never before has so much fantastic gear been available at such affordable prices across the entire spectrum of guitarists tonal needs. Here at Gi Magazine, it's incredibly rare for us to find a product in the 'budget' bracket that doesn't excel at its intended purpose. However, this hasn't always been the case. 25 years ago (when this reviewer started playing) it was very rare to find more affordable products for guitarists that didn't have significant flaws or compromises and a gulf »

Vintage 25th Anniversary V100 Silver Burst

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Vintage 25th Anniversary V100 Silver Burst

MSRP: (UK) £449 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

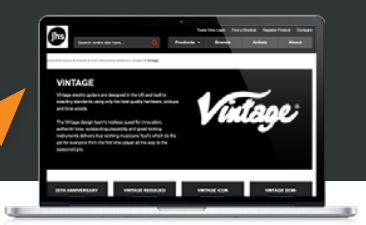
Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- A bargain
- Classic rock and metal
- Collecting historic guitars

For more information, please visit:
jhs.co.uk/vintage



between 'pro' and 'budget' priced guitars in terms of quality and features

Back in 1995 buying a guitar for £199 that could rival one costing three to four times as much was practically unheard of, but when Vintage released their Encore Vintage VC1, sporting and Alder body, Indian Rosewood fretboard, Lace Sensor Pickups, Grover Tuners and a Wilkinson VS10 bridge all of that changed. To this day the company is producing some of the best price to performance guitars on the market and this year celebrate their 25th anniversary with a limited edition run of three custom versions of their most successful models, the V100, V6 and V75. With only 100 pieces of each model available to buy, they represent a great piece of history whilst staying true to Vintage's core ethos of affordable guitars with pro-level features and playability.

The V100SVB is based on the Vintage V100 model, a classic, single cut, dual humbucker design in a custom two-tone Silver Burst finish. Following the tradition for this style of guitar Vintage have chosen hand-selected Mahogany for the body and neck with a carved Maple top and Rosewood fingerboard. Having genuine classic woods at this price point is a fantastic plus point for the V100SVB and shows how much value Vintage are aiming for in this limited edition run of guitars.

The finish is beautifully executed with a subtle sparkle and the addition of cream binding running all the way around the body, neck and headstock for a striking monotone look that wouldn't be out of place at a jazz or rock/metal gig. The design is completed with an Anniversary headstock decal and '25' truss rod cover logo, Trapezoid inlays, black control knobs and pickguard and chrome hardware.

Speaking of hardware, the V100SVB excels in this department too thanks to Vintage's long-running association with hardware legends Trev Wilkinson and Grover. A pair of Wilkinson WOCHB ceramic humbuckers offer up some superb tones at any price point, let alone a budget one and a Wilkinson Tune-o-matic bridge provides rock-solid intonation with individual string adjustments. Grover 102C Rotomatic tuners are included, providing a 14:1 ratio for accurate and consistent tuning whilst the GraphTech NuBone nut ensures friction-free bends and vibrato. This level of hardware is normally reserved for the most expensive guitars in a manufacturers range, but Vintage is offering all of this at a price point that pretty much any guitarist can afford.

None of this would matter if the playability and build quality was compromised to satisfy spec sheets, but the V100SVB excels here too thanks to excellent craftsmanship and a playing experience normally the preserve of much more expensive instruments. Fretwork is expertly finished, and the neck is comfortable with a nicely carved neck joint for upper fret access. This is a heavy guitar, especially compared to the other two guitars in this limited edition range, but for Mahogany single cut guitars, weight is often seen as a bonus from

a tonal perspective, and this is a fantastic sounding guitar.

The Wilkinson WOCHB pickups are pretty high output thanks to their ceramic design, but maintain lots of air and clarity even with buckets of gain applied. They clean up nicely with the volume rolled off and have great dynamic range considering the output strength.

Vintage has really knocked it out of the park with this 25th anniversary celebration line up. Each guitar comes with an embroidered canvas gig bag and individually numbered certificate of authentication. Many companies would charge a premium for their limited run guitars, but Vintage have stuck to their guns and produced some truly professional level and historically significant instruments at a fantastic price point. Highly recommended if you can get your hands on one.

END «

Dean NashVegas Select Floyd

Perfectly combining classic design with contemporary features in one decked out and ready-to-go package – the NashVegas Select Floyd from Dean Guitars is one heck of a professional-level guitar that you don't have to break the bank to enjoy. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

FLORIDA'S Dean Guitars are synonymous with some of the best hard rock and metal players of all time - from metal juggernauts like Dimebag Darrell and recently Kerry King to uber-shredders Vinnie Moore and Michael Angelo Batio and rock pioneers like Leslie West and Michael Schenker. Dean Guitars is also known for the outrageous shapes and finishes that favoured by the aforementioned rock giants.

It's not all spikes and flames though. Dean Guitars produce a whole range of more "traditional" shapes, exemplified by the Nashvegas Select Floyd. It's a rare breed of guitar: a "Supertele". It shares the same combination of bolt-on neck, humbuckers and tremolo that define its more common cousin, the "Superstrat", but with the distinctive silhouette of Leo's "other guitar". It's a look that screams 85'-95' rock, and that's a good thing.

It's not just skin deep either. With a wickedly fast maple and ebony neck and a great setup from the factory (including a set of 9s - top marks for that, Dean!), the Nashvegas Select Floyd is a joy to rock out on, and shreddy lead passages are a breeze. This, along with the comfort contours on the body and the perfect weight distribution add up to a guitar that practically plays itself. »

"The simplicity is the **name of the game** with the controls on this guitar..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Dean NashVegas Select Floyd

MSRP: (UK) £TBC / (US) $849

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

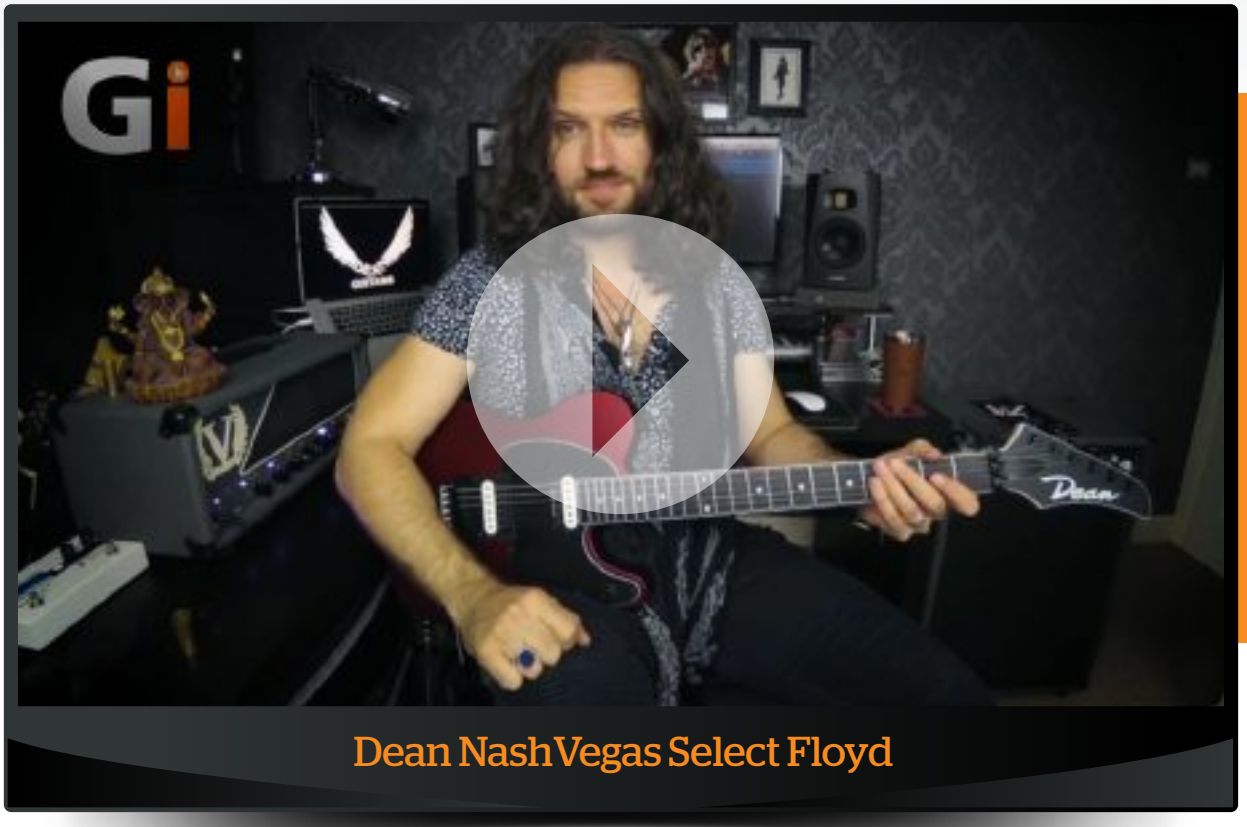
Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- 80s/90s hair bands .
- Screaming lead tones.
- Dive bombs..

For more information, please visit:
deanguitars.com

The simplicity is the name of the game with the controls on this guitar - there's a three-way toggle on the lower horn (a nod to Dean's iconic ML), a master volume and a master tone and that's it. It's such a "given" these days that humbucker guitars will come equipped with coil splits that I instinctively tugged at the pots in search of one and was surprised when I didn't find it, but on reflection, the decision to keep the Nashvegas Select Floyd "humbuckers only" adds a sense of focus to the instrument. Also, the two pickups are different enough to provide plenty of tonal versatility. The Duncan Custom in the bridge is mid-focussed and biting with a pronounced "aw" vowel, almost like there's a Tube Screamer hiding in there. It's a fabulously aggressive and vocal rock voice, and while it's a little obnoxious when set clean, it positively wails through even moderate levels of crunch. »



Dean NashVegas Select Floyd

"The Dean Nashvegas Select Floyd is a straight-up, **no-nonsense rock machine** that plays great and looks eye-catching without being gaudy..."

By contrast, the Alnico Pro II in the neck is wide open and chiming, with a great vintage character and plenty of sparkle up top and air in the low end. Great for cleans and lead lines alike, this pickup also seems to dominate the middle position, producing a pretty convincing voice for country, soul and even reggae.

The "Floyd" that gives the guitar its name is a Korean-made Floyd Rose 1000 series tremolo that's solid as a rock when it comes to tuning stability, but as lively and responsive as any trem I've laid hands on. Guitarists of a certain age may remember the raging internet debates surrounding the merits of "licensed Floyds" vs "USA Floyds", but if the unit in this guitar is anything to go by I can confidently say that the argument is over.

The Dean Nashvegas Select Floyd is a straight-up, no-nonsense rock machine that plays great and looks eye-catching without being gaudy. It comes with some killer appointments (including a hard case), and it's capable of more tonal diversity than you might imagine. Most of all though, it's a lot of fun.

END«

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market by miles!"
Nick Jennison
Guitar Interactive

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Eric Stet's Gibson ES335 with Stop-Tail Stetsbar

Seymour Duncan Powerstage 200

Engineered to attain the best tone and performance from your pedal-based electric guitar rig, Seymour Duncan's PowerStage 200 is a miniature power amplifier that is small enough to fit right on your pedalboard. Complete with built-in speaker cabinet emulation so you can record directly into your DAW, the Seymour Duncan PowerStage 200 is a powerful solution both on stage and in the studio. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

GUITAR players are famously conservative when it comes to gear. Keyboard players long ago abandoned dragging B3s with Leslie cabinets around in favour of sleek red Nords and a laptop. But in spite of how great modelling technology is these days, guitarists just won't let go of their expensive, heavy, fragile valve amplifiers.

"Speaking of cabs, it's **worth noting** that 200w of output is a LOT of power..."

The reason? The guitar and amplifier are not separate entities, but rather a system. The air being pushed by the amplifier interacts with the guitar in a way that stage monitors just can't recreate. If you've ever heard the familiar refrain that "modellers sound great but don't *feel* right", this what it means.

Enter Seymour Duncan and the Powerstage 200, (Sitting squarely in the middle of their Powerstage line) this compact and brutally powerful unit is small enough to mount directly to your pedalboard, and pumps out 200w of power to the speaker cabinet of your choice. It shares a similar form factor with the Powerstage 170, but with a few clever features that it's little sibling lacks.

There are a single master volume knob and a four-band EQ (bass, mid, treble and presence) for sculpting your tone. If you're using a modeller, you can leave this flat and tweak from there, but if you're using the Powerstage 200 as a clean platform for your drive pedals then a slight midrange scoop puts the Powerstage well in the ballpark of a traditional valve amplifier. The EQ is extremely powerful, so you'll have no trouble matching your tone to whatever cab you plug into.

Speaking of cabs, it's worth noting that 200w of output is a LOT of power. If you're intending on pushing this »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Seymour Duncan Powerstage 200

MSRP: (UK) £449 / (US) $712

The Breakdown

Vintage	Modern
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High End
Studio	Stadium

For fans of

- "Loud amp" feel with your modeller
- Shrinking your pedalboard rig
- Travelling light

For more information, please visit:
seymourduncan.com

thing up to its limit, you're probably going to need a 4x12, or if you're going to use a smaller cab then you'll want some seriously powerful speakers (like a Celestion Copperback). That said, you're highly unlikely to push the Powerstage 200 anywhere near its limit without incurring the wrath of even the most tolerant sound engineer - this thing is barbarically powerful!

Speaking of sound engineers, the Powerstage 200 also features a balanced XLR output, complete with a cab sim. You can defeat the internal cab sim at the press of a button if you'd rather use your favourite IR pedal instead (or if you're running IRs in your modeller and powering an FRFR cab), but the built-in sim sounds excellent. There's also a headphone output with its own level for silent practice, or for running IEMs on stage. There's also a switch that defeats the EQ on the DI and headphone amps, which leaves you free to tweak away and get your stage sound just right without affecting the signal you're sending to FOH.

Whether you're a modeller user who wants to claw back that elusive "amp feel", or a pedal aficionado who wants to ditch your bulky amp head, the Seymour Duncan Powerstage 200 has got you covered. It's insanely powerful, versatile and offers a ton of tweakability.

END«

Seymour Duncan Powerstage 200

SoundSation
Shadow series
Character, the real one.
12 models
Stunning Satin Black finish
Hi quality craftmanship & hardware
100%
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MJB
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DELTA CROSSROAD
Slide that blues away
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TOM QUAYLE'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2020

m Quayle presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2020.

20 has undoubtedly been a year to forget, but that hasn't prevented some truly stunning products come through our doors here at Guitar Interactive. The guys upstairs have asked come up with my top three – a task that should be very tricky, but there are three absolute stand- or me from this excellent year for innovative gear.

Martin SC-13E

Without a doubt, the Martin SC-13E was the most g acoustic release of 2020, or the last few years for hen it was announced at M in January, it caused stir thanks to its claim iding genuine electric evels of playability with- mpromising the fantastic c tone and build quality artin are known for. Boy did they deliver on those The low profile Veloc- gn neck shape and 'Sure olt-on neck joint pro- duced a guitar that played like your favourite electric, creating the perfect realisation of a true 'hybrid' electric/acoustic guitar. This is a guitar that you can genuinely shred on in one moment, before switching to some delicate fingerpicking the next, without feeling like you're ever fighting the instrument.

Martin also designed a unique, asymmetrical body shape for the SC-13E in order to reduce feedback at stage volumes, whilst retaining a great sounding acoustic tone thanks to the Solid Sitka Spruce top and Koa Veneer back and sides. Combined with the excellent Fishman MX-T pickup and electronics, we got a guitar that is incredibly versatile, good looking and so much fun to play. I can't wait to see what 2021 holds for this product line from Martin.

Two Notes Torpedo Captor X

Two Notes' Torpedo Captor X was a real highlight of 2020 for me in the tech department. Combining a high quality reactive load box, virtual cabinet and mic simulator, attenuator and »

Impulse Response loader into one affordable and portable box was a complete masterstroke that suddenly made the likes of Universal Audio's OX Box and Boss' Tube Amp Expander seem both very large and very expensive. It certainly came to occupy a unique spot in the market place with a feature set that was and still is unparalleled at the price point.

The Captor X also has some very unique tricks up it's sleeve in the form of Two Notes' highly customisable dynamic IR technology, a very powerful post-effects section with EQ, Exciters and Reverb/Room Simulation, plus a fantastically useful Twin Tracker mode for simulating double-tracked guitars in the studio or on stage. It ships with some great speaker and mic simulations that sound superb in stereo or mono operation, and these can be expanded by Two Notes' ever-growing library on their store.

In-built Bluetooth allows for easy remote control via a phone or tablet and the onboard hardware controls offer access to six presets with many more available via the onboard midi port. It's built like a tank and is the ideal, and just as importantly affordable, recording and live solution for getting the most from your tube amps. It's a device I use on a daily basis now with my 100w heads, and I couldn't be without it.

Dover DA-50 Amplifier

Dover's year started as a sort of prelude of things to come in 2020 when their Namm show products were stolen before the show opened. With typical British fortitude they still managed to have a great show and caused quite the stir with their new line up of surprisingly affordable, amazing sounding, boutique amps. I had the pleasure of reviewing the DA-20 and DA-50 heads from their line up and was blown away by both, but the DA-50 really made an impression on me from a tonal and looks perspective.

TOM QUAYLE'S CHOICE:

OF 2020

Designed as a 50w high-gain monster, the DA-50 is a stunning sounding and looking beast with two identical channels that can go from crystal cleans to searing Djent tones with ease and authority throughout. All of Dover's amps are handmade in the UK and built with the highest quality components, but somehow don't require a remortgage or the selling of a vital organ to fund. As a tonal to value proposition, the DA-50 is unrivalled and is built with so much care and attention to detail and looks that could kill.

This was definitely one of those review products that is painful to return and I'm determined to get one for myself at some point soon. The DA-50 leaves a lasting impression, and it's so good to see a new British amp brand flying the flag so proudly for the fantastic heritage and future of our amp industry.

Here's hoping that 2021 is a better year all round. One thing is for sure; we'll see plenty more exciting products from this industry that never sits still and is always innovating.

Martin Guitars SC-13E

Martin guitars return to the pages of Gi with arguably the company's most significant release since they created the dreadnought. With its offset cutaway shape and innovative Sure Align neck joint, the SC-13E is a bold new direction in design for the company, but does it live up to the hype? Here's **Tom Quayle** with his in-depth review.

AS far as acoustic guitar lineage and history goes, you'd struggle to find a more iconic and influential company than Martin guitars. Such is their authority and impact on the acoustic guitar market over nearly two centuries that their classic models have become the benchmarks by which many other manufacturers and players gauge their own instruments. This has certainly led to Martin having a focus on maintaining and cultivating the vintage designs that have brought them such praise, whilst innovation has taken somewhat of a backseat – not a bad thing at all when your history is so strong and still immensely successful and popular.

Of course, Martin has been innovating, as shown by our recent reviews of their Modern Deluxe series. But, the core components of body shape, wood choices and construction techniques have remained historically bound for decades now. At NAMM 2020 Martin unveiled something completely different, the SC-13E; possibly the most innovative acoustic guitar to be released in years, if not ever.

Unlike any other Martin in the past, the SC-13E utilises a brand-new body shape and construction techniques to produce a guitar that is primarily designed as an electric instrument without sacrificing the acoustic tone that Martin is so loved for. Other manufacturers have tried this in the past, creating 'hybrid' designs that all too often overly sacrifice the acoustic tone, look and feel in favour of 'plugged-in' performance. The SC-13E is the first guitar that gets this balance just right and is an incredibly exciting instrument to play and admire.

The first thing you notice upon taking the SC-13E out of the included softshell case is that deep cutaway. It tails away from the neck at an obtuse angle, offering upper fret access that rivals that of an 80's Super-Strat. Martin has created an entirely new neck joint, never seen before on an acoustic guitar, that removes the heel, utilising a 'bolt-on' type setup called the 'Sure Align Neck System'. You can now reach up to the 20th fret with more ease than many electric guitars allow, while left-hand comfort remains »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Martin Guitars SC-13E

MSRP: (UK) £1599 / (US) $1,899

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

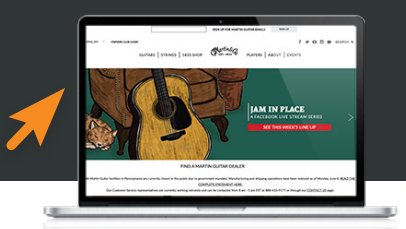
Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Guitar innovation.
- Fast acoustic necks.
- A Martin for a great price.

For more information, please visit:
martinguitar.com



supreme throughout the guitar's range. This is thanks to a subtle, progressive neck taper that guides your thumb around the back of the neck as you progress up the fretboard towards those previously unplayable upper frets. The neck feels very similar to an electric guitar thanks to the low-profile velocity design, to the point where you can genuinely shred and play longer without fatigue on this guitar, even with heavier gauge strings.

The innovation doesn't end there though, as Martin has designed a brand-new a-symmetric body shape that provides a more balanced output, thus reducing feedback when the guitar is on loud stages. It works wonderfully whilst still providing superb, pure acoustic tone that would be worthy of any traditional Martin. Martin demonstrated the guitar through a pedalboard and Marshall-style stack at their NAMM presentation, and the results were convincing to say the least. Keeping somewhat with tradition, the SC-13E features a solid Sitka Spruce top and Koa veneer back and sides. The Koa veneer provides a stunning look to the guitar whilst keeping costs affordable – a huge positive here, since we have a feeling the SC-13E will be very popular with live musicians.

Martin Guitars SC13-E

Visually, the guitar looks very much like a traditional acoustic, albeit with some striking shapes at play in the design. The subtle blue in the Rosette and fretboard inlays give the SC-13E a classy edge, but there is nothing here that would make this guitar look out of place in even the most traditional of musical settings.

Martin has included the popular and excellent sounding Fishman MX-T electronics in the SC-13E, providing a hidden chromatic tuner mounted in the lower part of the soundhole and volume and tone dials in the upper part. The acoustic tone provides excellent projection and tonal balance with a strong low-end presence and plenty of sustain. There is none of the 'plasticky' tonal nature often associated with other electric-minded acoustic designs on the market. Plugged in, the SC-13E really comes into its own, allowing you to take on the playing mindset of an electric guitar whilst having the tone and volume of a great acoustic. It's a truly liberating experience and makes you wonder why you've had to struggle and compromise for so long.

Martin has achieved something that no other company has been able so far. They have genuinely created a fantastic, hybrid Acoustic-Electric guitar, combining their incredible heritage with modern innovation, for an instrument that will change the way many players approach their acoustic playing and performance. Amazing stuff and we can't wait to see what's next with this design!

END «

Two Notes Torpedo Captor

Two Notes is the industry-leader when it comes to guitar cabinet emulatio range of studio-grade products is just about essential for any professional Captor X; a compact reactive load box, tube amp attenuator, miked cab sim home, live and studio use. Sounds like another must-have? **Tom Quayle** g

OVER last few years a totally new category of guitar related product has entered the market allowing guitarists to utilise their beloved tube amps at sensible volumes with the added flexibility of digital cabinet and microphone modelling and DSP effects for recording and live use. These 'smart' reactive load boxes, such as Universal Audio's OX and Boss' Waza Tube Amp Expander, have proved massively popular thanks to a ton of useful features for both live and stu-

r X

on and guitar cab impulse responses. Their guitarist. Now they back with the Torpedo mulator, IR loader and stereo expander for gives us the full breakdown.

dio work, but these market leading products are really large and heavy, very expensive and have features that are potentially overkill for the most guitarists.

Two Notes Audio Engineering's Torpedo Captor X is the newest 'smart' reactive load box, fitting into this product segment in a very interesting and unique place. It offers the bulk of the meaningful feature set from the previously mentioned products but in a far more compact and affordable package with no compromises to build or sound quality, even throwing in some unique skills of its own to differentiate it further from the competition.

At it's heart the Torpedo Captor X is a high quality 100w 8ohm reactive load box and attenuator. Being a reactive load, it provides your tube amp with a much more accurate and true playing response compared to plugging into a fixed load, so you can attenuate your amp's output without compromising the playing or tonal experience. There are three levels of attenuation available taking your amp from stage volume to whisper quiet as required. Built into the compact metal chassis you will also find a high powered DSP unit offering up virtual cabinet and mic technology, »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Two Notes Torpedo Captor X

MSRP: (UK) £469 / (US) $549

The Breakdown

Straightforward	Feature-Rich
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-End
Studio	Stage

For fans of

- Tube amps
- Value for money
- Reactive Load Boxes

For more information, please visit:
two-notes.com

an impulse response loader and high quality EQ, enhancer, stereo reverb and simulated twin tracker effects. Cramming all of this technology into a device roughly one third the size of and significantly more light weight than either the Universal Audio Ox or Boss Waze TAE is no mean feat.

Unlike the UA Ox, which only has line level jack outputs, Two Notes provide balanced stereo XLR outs for connection to professional recording equipment or a PA. There is a headphone jack on the front panel with USB and midi connections (of the mini TRS variety – with the appropriate adapter included in the box) around the back, allowing users remote control over preset switching and editing from either a computer or mobile device via Bluetooth, USB or a midi switching device such as the GigRig G2 or Boss ES8.

The remote control software, Torpedo Remote, is free to download on all devices and offers a very intuitive and attractive user interface for selecting and positioning of a vast selection of mics and cabs, EQing, adding ambient reverb or room simulation and enhancing your tone as desired. A single mic or pair of mics can

Two Notes Torpedo Captor X

"The Captor X's stereo outputs allow for a **highly flexible** routing system with dual mono or true stereo operation..."

be selected per cabinet and moved around and mixed in virtual space using Two Note's dynamic IR technology (including captures of the back of many cabinets too). The Captor X allows users to select from 6 presets via a hardware dial on the front of the unit, but up to 128 presets can be stored and recalled via midi or the remote control software with an unlimited number stored on a mobile device or computer for sharing or backup purposes.

The Captor X's stereo outputs allow for a highly flexible routing system with dual mono or true stereo operation. In Dry/Wet mode the onboard reverb can be routed to one side for monitoring whilst the other channel is left dry for recording or sent to the PA with a hardware 'Space' control on the front panel dialling in the amount of reverb on the wet side. You can also route an unprocessed dry signal with no cabinet or mic simulation to one side for re-amping later in your DAW. In the normal stereo mode you get beautiful stereo reverbs with the width mapped to the same 'space' control, offering up expansive stereo tones or tighter reverbs as required. The reverbs might not quite be up there with the stunning plate reverb on the Ox, but they generally sound excellent and can be tweaked to taste from short room sounds to expansive caverns. The Dual Mono mode offers up a 'Monitoring EQ' on the right channel, allowing users to send a different EQ'd signal to in-ears or wedges on stage for example whilst the un-EQ'd signal goes to front of house.

The truly killer feature however is the stereo Twin Tracker mode, utilising some clever time based DSP effects to simulate the sound of double tracked guitars from a single source. It's possibly the best version of this effect we've ever heard with controls for the tightness and stereo balance of the second guitar part for even more flexibility. As usual, Two Notes also provide their 'Voicing' dial on the front panel, giving users a master 'EQ' for the whole signal chain. This allows you to change the overall sonic characteristic of your amp from a more mid-focussed sound to a scooped, more modern tone.

The Captor X ships with an array of 1x10, 1x12, 2x12, 4x12 and bass cabinets with all manner of mic combinations on »

board, but you also get access to the Two Notes Store via the remote app where the company sell a massive range of cabs covering all possible requirements at a very reasonable price so, combined with the Impulse Response loader, the tonal possibilities of the Captor X are virtually limitless, particularly compared to the Ox which cannot be expanded in any way. It's also worth noting that there is a bass specific EQ and Enhancer in the Captor X, so for anyone doubling on guitar and bass, this represents even further value for money.

In it's price category there is nothing to compete with the Captor X on the market. It achieves many of the same flagship features as products costing more than twice as much and does so in a product a third of the size. Needless to say we are all highly impressed here at GI with this superb device and feel confident in recommending it whole heartedly as the perfect addition to your tube amp collection for recording and live use. It's also worth mentioning that Two Notes will be releasing a 16ohm version of the Captor X in the future – they deserve great success with both units.

END«

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TASCAM's Model 12 is a compact all-in-one integrated mixer designed for music and multimedia creators, songwriters and performers. Features include TASCAM's critically acclaimed multi-track recorder, USB audio/MIDI interface, DAW control functions, and unique podcasting capability including mix-minus and smartphone inputs. The Model 12 supports your creative process, production, and work-flow from start to finish including podcasting.

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Dover's DA-50 and DA-20

Dover describes their work as a "result of an obsessive pursuit of tonal perfection," and from what we've heard so far, that hard work has indeed paid off. Following on from his review of the DA-20CE in the last issue of Gi, **Tom Quayle** takes a look at two more models in the Dover range packed with creamy, chiming cleans tones and aggressive, all valve-driven overdrive: Dover's DA-50 and DA-20.

IN THE last issue we checked out the Dover DA-20CE, and we're hugely impressed with the boutique, versatile, pedal platform tones on offer from this new, high-end British amp manufacturer. For this issue Dover is back again with two amps sporting a much more modern, high gain take on the British tone.

The flagship DA-50 is a large format 50w head voiced with a quartet of ECC83 preamp valves and a pair of EL34s in the power stage, whilst the smaller DA-20 head takes a similar approach, but with two EL84s in the power stage for its 20w power rating. Both amps are based around a 2-channel design but differ in their implementation of the channels in terms of sonic territory and aims.

DOVER DA-50

The DA-50 is, in some ways, the simpler of the two with a pair of identical channels each with independent gain and master controls with a single purpose in mind – giving you access to Dover's idea of the best, modern high gain sounds on the market. Sure, both channels can offer you relatively clean and edge of break up tones at the lower gain settings, but this amp is really designed to chug, and it does so with incredible authority and tonal excellence. The two channels share a three-band EQ in the preamp and Presence and Depth controls for the power stage, giving you added bite and low-end thump as required. A switchable pre-gain boost can be engaged for the selected channel, offering incredible amounts of modern gain at the upper ends of the dial and both channel selection and boost can be operated by front panel switches or via a foot switch.

This setup allows the DA-50 to be much more versatile than you might expect and effectively operate almost like a 4-channel amp. You can set Channel 1 as a clean or edge of breakup tone and then boost it for a crunch, whilst channel two can be setup with more gain as a heavy rhythm tone that can be boosted for saturated leads. The cleans are not quite as dynamic and pedal-friendly as the boutique voiced DA-20CE, but they are way better than most other high-gain amps on the market and backing off the volume control on your guitar cleans even saturated sounds up nicely.

This is a much more dynamic and expressive amp than you might imagine, given the intended tonal purpose. It's also exceptionally loud, even in »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Dover DA-50 and DA-20

MSRP: (DA-50) £1599 / (DA-20) £1149

The Breakdown

Vintage	Modern
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-end
Studio	Stadium

For fans of

- Boutique modern amps
- High-gain tones
- Value for money

For more information, please visit:
doveramplification.co.uk

"Its smaller sibling, the DA-20 is also a 2-channel, **high gain beast** but in a smaller, all metal head shell and slightly different configuration..."

Dover DA-50 and DA-20

DOVER DA-20

half-power mode so will suit even the loudest heavy bands out there. A high quality, transparent FX loop and external power tube biasing points also add to the pro, boutique feel of this amp and thanks to the company's UK location (at least for the UK and European customers), the price point is incredible given the tones and exceptional build quality and materials on offer.

Its smaller sibling, the DA-20 is also a 2-channel, high gain beast but in a smaller, all metal head shell and slightly different configuration. Channel one is a dedicated clean/crunch channel with a push/pull gain knob to select between clean and low to medium gain crunch tones. The second overdrive channel is where the Dover high-gain magic happens and it has a similar voicing to the higher gain settings on the DA-50, with more than enough gain to satisfy even the most hardcore Djent fans. Both channels have the same shared EQ design from the DA-50 with an overall presence control, but there is »

no depth control here. There is also no switchable boost on the DA-20, but you can achieve similar results with a Tube Screamer or boost pedal in the front of the amp.

Like its bigger brother, the DA-20 has a low power output mode for smaller venues and home/studio use. Still, it's more than loud enough for large venues in full power mode and has plenty of clean headroom thanks to the dedicated clean channel, and independent master volume controls for each channel. You also get the same high-quality FX loop and external biasing points from the DA-50 to sweeten the deal. Both amps sound exceptional with a wide variety of modern British tones from sparkling cleans to incredibly saturated lead, and rhythm sounds with a ton of low end regardless of which amp you go for. The DA-50 is obviously the more chunky sounding of the two thanks to the extra thump provided by the EL34 power section, but the DA-20 is no slouch in that department either and should provide plenty of trouser flapping action through a good 4x12 or oversized 2x12 cab.

Both amps feature superb, handmade build quality using high-end materials such as Sheffield Steel, environmentally sustainable wood sources and military-grade electronic components. As such, they feel as good as they sound and are priced in a very refreshing way given the cost of other similarly spec'd boutique or handmade amps in this category. Neither will break the bank considering what's on offer here and are a superb way to get phenomenal tones in your arsenal without sacrificing build quality, components or features—highly recommended!

END«

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BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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

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PRS PAUL REED SMITH GUITARS

25TH ANNIVERSARY

BEST OF 202

Nick Jennison presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2

WELL, what a ride 2020 has been! While I'm sure you don't need me to recount the we've all faced, I will give you a gentle reminder that 2020 has been a banne guitar gear. Musical instrument sales soared across the world, and we've seen some seriously exci ferings from all of the usual suspects - and a few newcomers too! Allow me to share some of my from this year with you, starting with…

BEST ACOUSTIC GUITAR: Taylor American Dream AD17 Blacktop

Watching Taylor gradually roll out their revolutionary V-Class bracing across their American-made guitars has been like peering into the future. But their most affordable V-Class model isn't a guitar for the future - it's a guitar for right now. Taking everything that makes USA-made Taylors so special, but stripping away all of the fancy appointments that make them so expensive, the AD17 puts a legit, pro-level acoustic guitar within reach of the working musician.

Sporting Taylor's super comfortable Grand Pacific body shape in a gorgeous matte blacktop finish, the AD17 exudes a timeless cool that I just love, and for my money it's probably the best sounding V-Class Taylor I've ever laid hands on. A bold claim for sure, but the combination of the body shape, woods and ultra-thin finish just seem to "click". A hugely impressi instrument that punches way above it's price.

BEST AM Victory Duchess

Ok, decla of bias here: you guys kn I'm a Victory artist, and a fan of their amps. But the Duchess is something rea unique. At about one-and a-half Strymons in size (t official unit of measurem for all pedals), and weigh in at only 1.7kg, this 180 powerhouse is part of a

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NICK JENNISON'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2020

growing class of amplifiers that mount directly on your p
Where the V4 Duchess separates itself from the pack, ho
in it's sound. Instead of being just a neutral power amp, t
Duchess includes the preamp, reverb and tremolo from V
hugely popular V40 Duchess amplifier, powered by four
spec preamp valves.

In a back to back comparison with it's big sister, the V4 I
sounded every bit as sweet and warm, rich and sweet as it
namesake. It's also cheaper, lighter and louder (or quieter
the linear nature of the class-D power section). Pair this v
of Victory's growing collection of V4 preamp pedals and
a three channel valve amp that weighs less than a gallon c
Or you can feed it your favourite drive pedals for the sam
results you'd expect from a V40, and you can even power
pedals from the included 500ma 9v output.

For the travelling musician this amp is a blessing, and wh
starts up again I expect we'll see a lot of these tiny amps i

Who knows, maybe we'll see V4 Amp versions of each of Victory's families - can we have a Kraken one please, Victory?

BEST ELECTRIC GUITAR: Aria Jet 1

Ok, so we've not exactly been short of great electric guitars this year, but there's something about the Aria Jet 1 that just spoke to me. Aria's return to form has been very inspiring to watch, and they've been producing some truly killer guitars at prices that are frankly absurd. Where the Jet 1 differs from the rest of their line is that it's a new, unique design that's somewhere between an offset and a Tele with the lower horn form an Ibanez RG - but in a way that's both totally original and actually very pretty!

It's also a 24 fret, 24.75" scale guitar with one humbucker, one single-coil and a tremolo - not a recipe I've ever come across before, but it just.. works! It balances beautifully, the tones are great, and it plays like butter - and all at a price that's frankly unbelievable.

I really feel like more people should know about the killer guitars Aria are making right now, and given how totally unique and unbelievably affordable the Jet 1 is, there's no excuse not to have one in your collection.

HONOURABLE MENTION: New Ernie Ball Slinky gauges.

Ok, so the new Slinkys launched in 2019, but last year saw Ernie Ball expand their Slinky range yet again. With a totally comprehensive lineup offering half-gauge increments from 8s up to 11s, a massive selection of hybrid gauges (including two of my favourites, the 9.5-46 Turbo Slinkys and the 10-48 Ultra Slinkys) there's a perfect gauge somewhere in the range for every guitarist - regardless of style, tuning and guitar of choice. If you're a tinkerer like me, it's a godsend.

Taylor American Dream AD17

Utilising Taylor's beloved Grand Pacific body shape, the American Dream series is a modern take on the classic round-shoulder dreadnought that retains the powerful yet warm sound of a dreadnought but with more clarity and note-definition, particularly in the low-end. The American Dream series is Taylor's entry-point for those looking for an American-made, all-solid wood acoustic guitar. **Nick Jennison** reviews the Taylor American Dream AD17.

I'VE had the pleasure of looking at a number of Taylor's V-Class guitars since they were introduced in 2018, and I'm yet to play one that I haven't been impressed by. This innovative bracing pattern improves sustain, projection and even intonation, and it seems to enhance every guitar Taylor use it on - regardless of body style or wood selection. This labour intensive process is reserved for Taylor's more expensive solid wood American-made guitars found in the 300 series and up.

Named after the guitar shop where Taylor was founded in the '70s, the American Dream line of guitars puts solid woods, USA constriction and V-Class bracing within reach for players that want a bonafide pro-level instrument, but perhaps can't quite stretch their budget to a 314ce.

Right out of the box, the blacktop-finished AD17 had my heart racing. It's elegant, simple and very chic, with more than a little Johnny Cash cool. While I'm normally not a fan of finishes on acoustic guitar (being of the opinion that more paint tends to dampen the resonance of the timbers), the matte finish here is thin enough to get a pass from me - which is good news, since I'm so taken by how it looks.

> "The playability is **as good** as I've ever felt on a Taylor guitar..."

The construction here is all solid woods, with no layered or laminate timbers in sight. The AD17 sports a Sitka spruce and a mahogany neck. Taylor has selected ovangkol for the back and sides and eucalyptus for the fingerboard - two kinds of wood that are very similar in tone to rosewood, but more »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Taylor American Dream AD17

MSRP: (UK) £1429 / (US) $1499

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Bright — Dark

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Warm, balanced acoustic tones
- Effortless playability
- Not breaking the bank

For more information, please visit:
taylorguitars.com

ecologically friendly and cost-effective. These bright and crisp wood choices are offset by what has become my favourite Taylor body shape: the Grand Pacific. This round-shouldered dreadnought design has a warm, seasoned tone and balances beautifully on either leg.

Tonally, the AD17 is warm and authoritative, with a lot of volume and a top end that's more silky than snappy. The lows are deep and three dimensional, but without the bloat that larger dreads sometimes exhibit. If you lay in with aggressive strumming, it's right there with you. By contrast, more delicate fingerstyle work has enough oomph and projection to carry without sacrificing sustain, detail or harmonic complexity. It's just a really well-balanced instrument.

The playability is as good as I've ever felt on a Taylor guitar. The action is low right up to the 14th fret neck join, and the neck is extremely comfortable with both thumb-around and thumb-behind playing positions. Most notably, however, the superb balance »

Taylor American Dream AD17

and chamfered body edges made sitting with this guitar very comfortable. Often with acoustics, I'm faced with either "supporting" the guitar with my left hand (which impedes dexterity) or "holding" the body with my right arm (which dampens the tone). With this guitar, I didn't have to do either, which meant I could play a lot more freely than I usually can on larger-bodied acoustics.

Out of all the Taylor guitars I've played, I like the AD17 the best. It looks fantastic, plays effortlessly and the tone is superb, but it's also relatively affordable. If I were to buy a Taylor guitar, this would be the one - you should check it out too!

END«

Taylor

Victory V4 The Duchess

Nick Jennison reviews the Victory V4 The Duchess. Partnering a V4 Series all-valve preamp with a solid-state, 180-watt Class D power amp; The Duchess V4 is ultra-compact in size making it perfect for home and studio players as well as touring musicians who need a great sounding, dependable pedal platform amp.

DUCHESS family of amps are some of the most popular "clean platform" amps in the world. With notable users including James Bay, Joey Landreth, Ariel Posen and GI's own Phil Short and Chris Buck, along with legions of blues/soul/roots players, pedal users and working pros. Part of what makes these amps so beloved is how well they take pedals, and the V4 Duchess represents the natural evolution of this: it's a Duchess amp that will fit on your pedalboard.

Weighing in at 1.7kg (or if you prefer, a little less than 3 Tube Screamers) and a footprint that's similar Victory's highly acclaimed V4 series of preamps, the V4 Duchess is easily the most portable amp in Victory's already famously travel-friendly range. It's also the most powerful amp they offer, boasting a crushing 180w of solid-state power (when running into a 4-ohm cab).

For a touring musician like myself, this is a game-changer. Travelling with a conventional amp head is laborious at best, and frequently not even an option (for fly dates, overseas touring, or in large cities where taking public transport to the gig is more common than you might think). Trust me when I say, it doesn't matter how good your pedals are - if the hired/house backline sucks, no combination of Klons, Kings Of Tone or Strymons is going to improve things. The V4 Duchess totally remedies this, since it'll fit in your gig bag or carry-on luggage and barely tip the scale.

It's also a great way to expand your rig if you've ever fancied trying stereo or wet/dry but the prospect of hauling a second heavy amplifier to the gig puts you off. If you're concerned about volume, don't be - I tried the V4 Duchess as the second amp in a stereo setup through a pair of 16ohm 4x12s, and the V4 Duchess was easily able to hang with my 100w Super Kraken up to brutal decibel levels, despite "only" putting out 45w into 16 ohms.

There are some additional benefits to a solid-state power section besides volume and weight though. Firstly, the response is fairly linear, meaning you get the same amount of compression and sag at any volume level - it won't fall apart at high volumes, and it won't sound anaemic at low volumes. Secondly, »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Victory V4 The Duchess

MSRP: (UK) £699 / (US) $799

The Breakdown

Vintage	Modern
Specialised	Versatile
Straightforward	Feature-Rich
Traditional	Innovative

For fans of

- Amazing clean and breakup tones
- "Pedal platform" amps
- Surviving upstairs load-ins

For more information, please visit:
victoryamps.com

"A **very cool addition** is the Power Level dial, allowing users to dial the output power from zero to 50w and anywhere in between..."

Victory V4 The Duchess

and perhaps more interestingly, the V4 Duchess and happily run without a speaker load. This means you can plug the line output straight into your audio interface, load up your favourite IR and record killer tones in silence.

Speaking of killer tones, all of this versatility, portability and power is worthless without great tones, and the V4 Duchess really delivers here. In a direct comparison with a V40, the V4 Duchess sounds remarkably close to its big sister. There's a little less power amp sag and more punch, but that's about it! The warm, full cleans and classy breakup are there in spades, and the onboard reverb and tremolo are very musical. »

When it came to pedals, I tried very hard to "upset" the V4 Duchess, but it lapped up everything I threw at it. Mid heavy Tube Screamers stay articulate and clear, but flat-EQ distortions and scratchy fuzzes sound full and rounded. Running a V4 Countess preamp in the 4-cable method gave me a three-channel, 180w amp with reverb and tremolo, fits on a Pedaltrain JR with room to spare, and the board will still weigh less than the hard case it comes in. It's nuts.

The V4 Duchess packs all the tone of it's bigger sisters into an unbelievably portable format, while still offering more power than you'll ever need. Paired with your favourite drive pedals or one of Victory's V4 preamps and you can have any tone you'll ever need in a package that you can take anywhere in the world. I can see this little amp becoming very, very popular indeed.

END«

INTRODUCING THE NEW
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Aria Pro II Jet-1

Nick Jennison takes a look at the latest release from Aria in the form of the Aria Pro II Jet-1. Continuing the brand's resurgence of late, the Jet 1 is another superb six-string at a price tag that's hard to believe.

IT'S no secret how impressed I've been with the guitars Aria has been producing of late. For one, It's great to see a brand with such a legacy-making a serious return to form. It's also really impressive to see how much guitar can be had these days for relatively little outlay. So far, the Aria range has offered seriously spec'd-out takes on familiar designs, from "California-custom" style superstrats to traditional dual-humbucker single cuts. But their new Jet line of guitars is something different. It's a band new design that takes cues from a bunch of classic guitars to create something unique, but still familiar.

The first thing you'll notice about the Jet-1 is the body shape - it's an offset single-cut shape with a sharp Florentine cutaway: somewhere between a Jazz Bass, a Manson and a PRS Vela. It's also surprisingly small and comfortable, with comfort contours front and back and absolutely impeccable balance on either leg. It's quite difficult to get an unconventional shape to look "right", but I think Aria has done a great job here with the bold line of the horns matched by the pickguard and the rear bout.

"The 24-fret maple neck is a **comfortable modern "C"** that's slim without being "Wizard-thin"..."

The 24-fret maple neck is a comfortable modern "C" that's slim without being "Wizard-thin". It's actually rather unusual to find a 24 fret neck on a "vintage"-style guitar, but it really works here, both aesthetically and functionally. A criticism I had of the very first Aria guitar I looked at was the fret size, which they've definitely remedied here. The frets on this guitar are very modern feeling and finished beautifully without any sharp edges.

The pickup layout is a very effective but fairly uncommon H/S configuration, with an Alnico-5 single-coil in the neck and a Classic Power humbucker in the bridge. There's a master volume, master tone and a three-way toggle on the lower horn - a very comfortable spot for rapid pickup changes, but it does tend to get knocked by your leg when you play this guitar sitting down. »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Aria Pro II Jet-1

MSRP: (UK) £249 / (US) $TBA

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

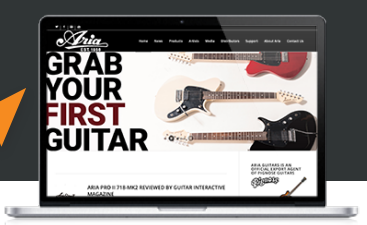
Affordable — High-end

Studio — Stadium

For fans of

- Classic tones
- Offset body shapes
- Unique-yet-familiar designs

For more information, please visit:
ariaguitars.com



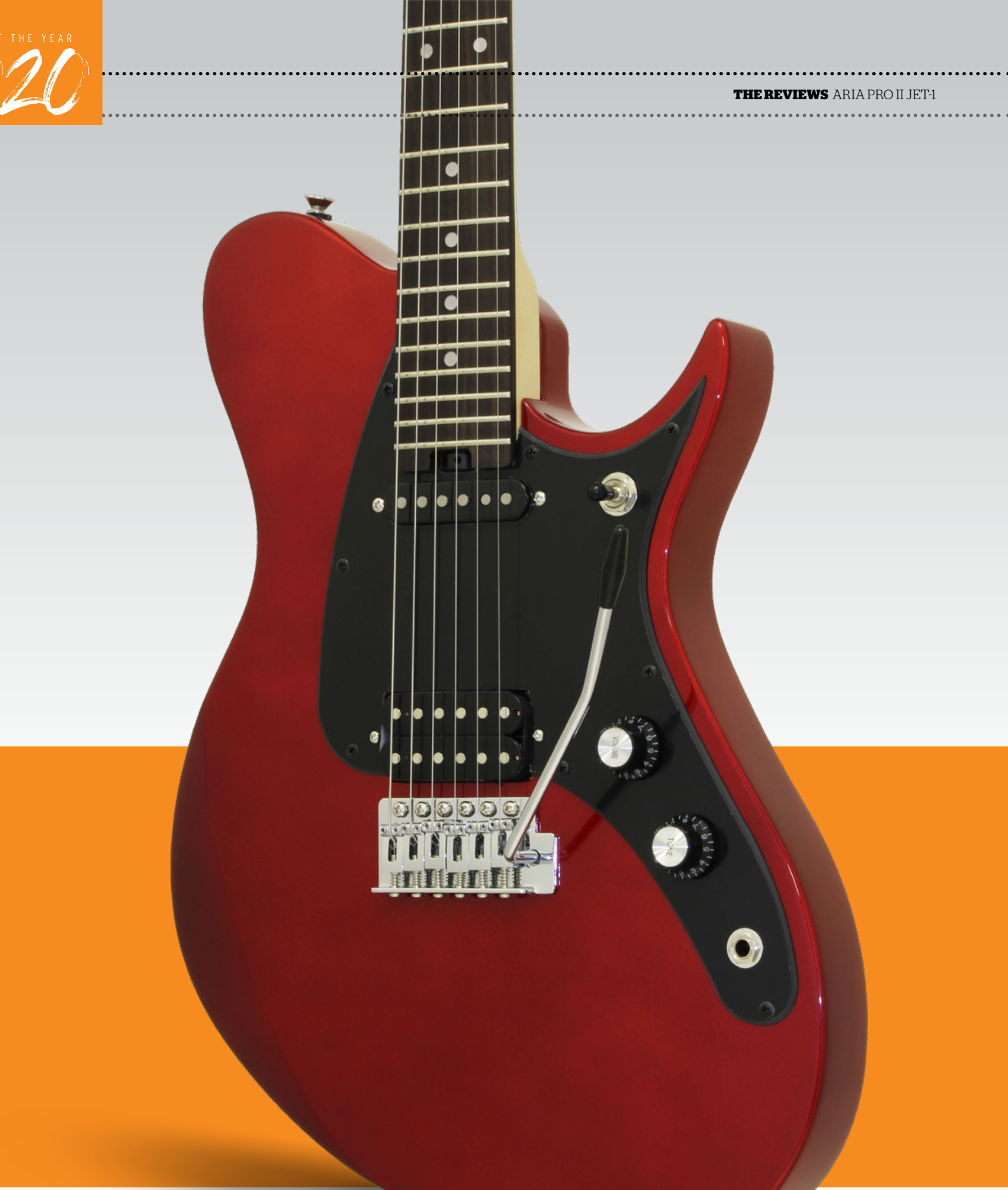
It can be a challenge to make humbuckers and single coils get along since they generally benefit from different pot values, but the pickups in this guitar balance very well. The humbucker is thick and fat, but retains enough presence to be cut, while the single-coil is clear and glassy with a great throaty "clang" when you wind up the gain.

There are two models in the Jet range, a hardtail and the tremolo model featured in this review. The tremolo is a traditional six-screw design, but it functions very well thanks to a well-cut nut and straight string pull at the headstock. Floyd-esque histrionics are probably too much to ask, but for everything else, the tremolo on the Jet-1 performs admirably.

The Jet-1 is a fine addition to Aria's ever-growing guitar line. It offers a unique combination of features while still feeling and sounding like an old school instrument.

END«

Aria Pro II Jet-1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SAM BELL'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2020

am Bell presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2020.

ways feel fortunate to review some incredible oducts for this Magazine, and now and then, of the gear just has that extra Mojo that you uite put your finger on. When Jonathan me to round up my top 3 bits of gear from ar, I didn't have to think too hard! For me, when I've found something great when I rself lost in the playing. Each of these pieces are linked by that very factor; they brought ning out in me. It's subjective, of course, but y recommend checking out the following. I ot take any responsibility for your financial on after checking out this gear, however.

s a year which will go down in history. Jobs es have been changed significantly, and noving into a new era, things won't quite same. And as the bigger picture changes, s everything else within it to accommodate, grow and evolve. Now I know what you're thinking. It's a bit twee of me somehow to link the events of 2020 and guitar gear, however, in a loose way, I'd say that in our world of guitar things have also changed and evolved. Gear companies are finding new ways to be innovative, to deliver tone and flexibility in ever-smaller packages, to help get peoples expression out there from home.

This year I was delighted to be able to review some brilliant gear in 2020, so what follows is my personal top 3 bits of gear that looked at. Some of the products are new for this year, some have been out for a while, but I had the opportunity to try them out for the first time this year at Guitar Interactive. I'd like to thank Jonathan for having me on board with the Gi team, its always a pleasure! I hope everyone reading is safe and well. Here's to better times, the quest for tone and all things musical!

Eventide Blackhole Reverb:

Eventide is all about quality, controllability and innovation. They don't release products often, but when they do, they are perfect. The Blackhole reverb is a sort after Reverb sound in most DAW's; however, Eventide has made it into a Guitar pedal. The Reverb/ sounds that come out of this unit are inspiring, creative and incredibly flexible. If you're looking for ereal ambient Reverb, look no further! This is a game-changer.

Two Notes Audio CAB M+

I'm a little bit late to the party on this one. Two Notes have this year released their Captor X (which is an amp attenuator and cab simulator) which is outstanding! However, in 2020 I had an opportunity to review the CAB M+, which is a pedal sized Cab Simulator. Two Notes make incredible speaker sims which are super flexible, and you can load your own IRs and have them on your pedalboard. Use it with a pre-amp pedal, or (as I do) just put your pedals into it, use the onboard reverb/eq/cabs/mics to shape a ready to go sound. It turns my pedalboard into an 'analogue' style multi-fx unit. Perfect for home recording, working at Guitar Interactive Magazine and live sessions.

MOOER GE300 Lite

This small amp modelling multi-fx pedal really did impress me. Tons of amps, effects, cabs and extras loaded into a super small unit. It's very easy to use and get around and has a fair number of ins and outs for various setups. Plus, it's pretty affordable considering what you get! If you're looking to get into the amp modelling/multi-fx world on a budget, this is definitely worth considering!

SAM BELL'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2020

Eventide Black Hole Reverb

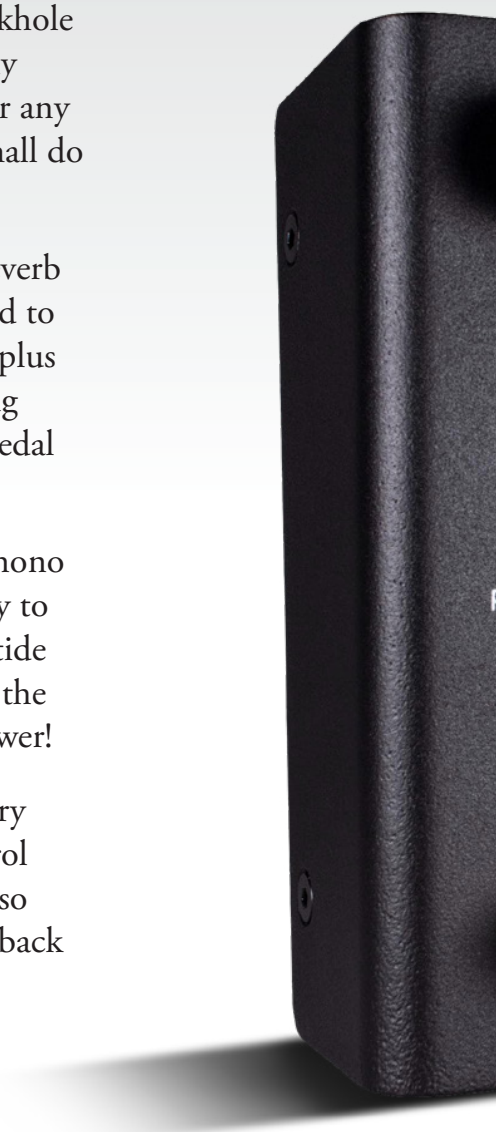
Transcend typical reverb sounds and explore unique soundscapes with the Eventide Blackhole reverb pedal. Create massive drones with two different types of infinite reverb, allowing you to layer sounds over a suspended reverb tail–dial-in modulation for multi-voice, chorus-like animation. **Tom Quayle** gives us the full breakdown.

EVENTIDE is well known for its innovation in guitar effects technology. The Blackhole reverb is no exception to their outstanding output; this pedal is truly out of this word. Packed with tons of features, it would be tricky for any reviewer to cover everything about this amazing unit. However, I shall do my best!

First off let's discuss what the pedal actually does, the Blackhole Reverb is a very expressive and diverse ambient effects pedal. Whilst referred to as a Reverb Pedal; this also has options for Delay and Modulation (plus more!) From adding a slight bit of ambience to your tone to creating huge ethereal pad-like sounds, the aptly named Blackhole Reverb pedal really does take you beyond.

The pedal has a stereo out (can be used Mono or used stereo with mono switch on depending on how you want to run it) USB Connectivity to further get into your sounds and how the pedal works via the Eventide App. There's also an expression pedal input for further control over the parameters of the pedal in real-time. All this with a 9v input for power!

The control knobs feature a Mix knob (to move between wet and dry effect, this works well in stereo for wet/dry setups) the gravity control changes between a reverse/forward reverb/delay sound, this knob also doubles as the Delay control knob to control the Delay effect. Feedback affects the feedback of the Delay and Reverb; this can be Frozen »



RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Eventide Black Hole Reverb

MSRP: (UK) £279 / (US) $279

The Breakdown

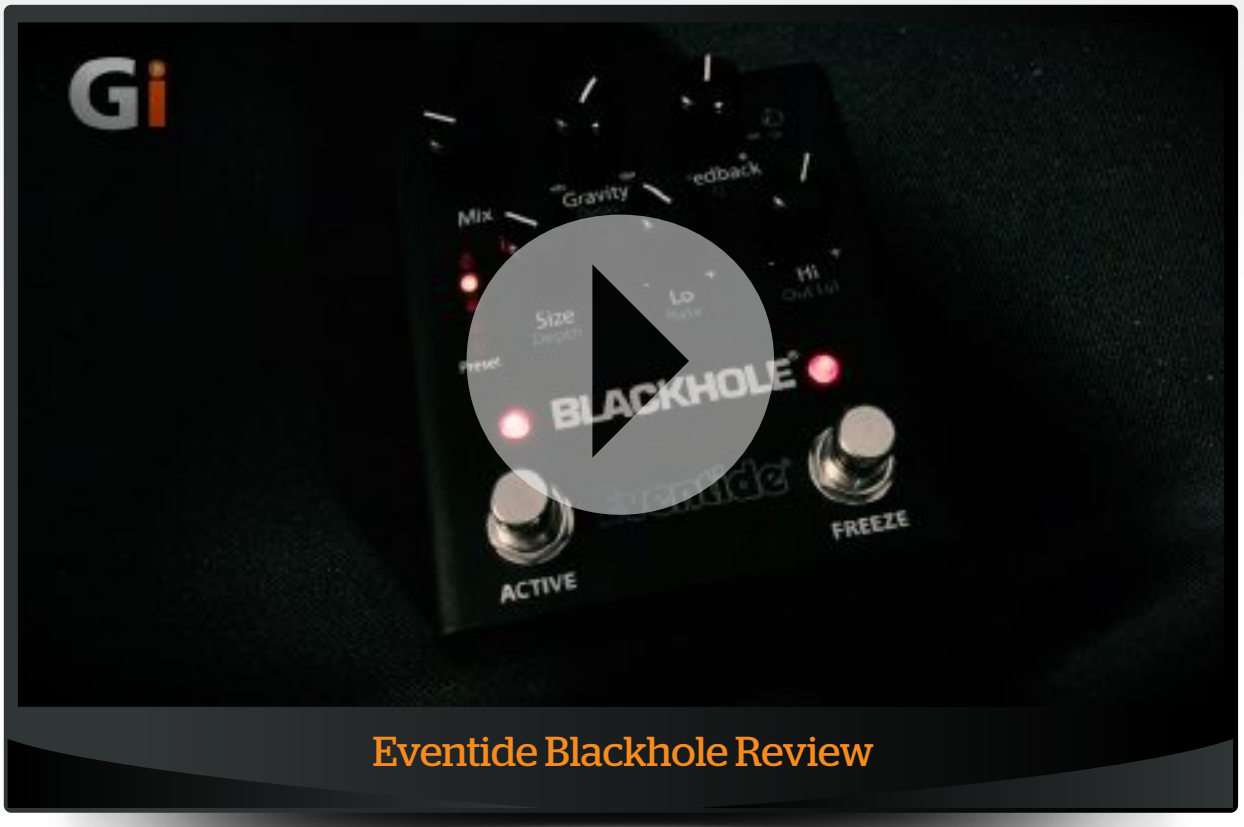
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High End
Straightforward	Feature-rich
Traditional	Innovative

For fans of

- Incredible reverb options
- Tremendous customisation
- Great looking gear

For more information, please visit:
eventideaudio.com

using the 'Freeze' foot control. This knob also doubles as a Q control for the Low and High EQ knobs. The Size knob controls the size of the reverb (how big the imagined room is, this can go extreme!) This also doubles as a Depth control for the modulation on the Verb/Delay sounds. The Lo knob focuses on the Low end of the ambient effect; this also doubles as a Rate control on the modulation. The Hi knob controls the high end of the ambient effect but also doubles as the overall effect output level vs the dry level. We're also able to save pre-set sounds on this pedal, up to 5 on the unit itself and up to 127 if you're using midi. These controls all can be further tweaked when coupled with the Eventide Device Manager.



Eventide Blackhole Review

In the short time I had with the pedal, it was easy enough to get around and start making inspiring tones. I'm sure with more time I could start to use this pedal like an extension of the instrument itself, and there is where I think the beauty of this pedal lies, you can create incredibly surreal ambient spaces with this unit. I found the quality of the pedal in a 'basic' reverb setting enough to inspire new chord progressions and soundscapes. I'd love to have one on my board for sure! Definitely worth checking out for the Tone Physicists out there!

END«

Two Notes Torpedo C.A.B. M Simulator Pedal

The Torpedo C.A.B. M+ takes Two Notes' acclaimed cabinet emulation tec friendly enclosure. Thanks to this speaker cabinet emulator pedal, you ca net while preserving every ounce of your tone and spatial dimension. He

TWO Notes Audio is well known for their speaker emulation unit 'Torpedo' which could be found rack-mounted in studios around the world. They have pushed the boundaries of Speaker Emulation and now we're able to have all this technology within a pedal sized unit which can fit onto your pedalboard or on top of your amp. Before I commence this review, I must state that this is not a load box or attenuator (They have the Captor X for this exact thing with the same technology) however you can plug this in between an amp and speaker. Let us begin.

The CAB M in its simplest form is a way of putting your signal (either from your pedals, amp, DI) through an authentic mic'ed up speaker cabinet situation and then direct to a DAW or Desk. The CAB M comes loaded with 32 cabinets, however you can buy more on the Two Notes Website. You can also load in your own Impulse responses as well. Each cabinet has an array of moveable microphones, you can have up to two mics on any one cab. The cab emulation and the mic's are fantastic, there's a lot you can do tonally with just this element of the CAB M. However, Two Notes have taken it a step further, you're also able to select a Power Amp feature (great if you're running a pre-amp style pedal or unit into the CAB M), you can select many different kinds of Power Amp valves and tweak the dampening, volume/saturation etc. There's also a pre-amp option built in based on a 74 Fender Bassman. You can further enhance your tone by using different room/reverbs, from a super clean/dry studio, to a basement all the way to a cathedral—tons of options for adding ambience to your tone. Then you can further tweak the EQ by using the EQ options or the Enhanser to get more out of your sound. Also, I almost forgot to mention; it has a built-in noise gate and tuner! So tons of features! All of these can be controlled by Bluetooth or USB using the Two Notes app on your Android, IoS, PC or Mac.

Many guitarists are finding that they are spending time gigging with just their pedalboards, often with no idea of what backline will be at the venue, or in situations where »

M+ Speaker

chnology and packs it into a pedalboard-
an bypass your guitar or bass amplifier's cabi-
re's **Sam Bell** with the full review.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Two Notes Torpedo C.A.B. M+ Speaker Simulator Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £239 / (US) $319

The Breakdown

Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-End
Straightforward	Feature Rich
Traditional	Innovative

For fans of

- Superb speaker emulation
- Great value for money
- Limitless customisation

For more information, please visit:
two-notes.com

you'll be asked to go Direct. In the past it wasn't too desirable to go direct from your pedalboard, but the CAB M and its many features now make that option painless and inspiring to playthrough. I personally use the CAB M at the end of my pedalboard chain, I use a nice Plexi Style pedal as my pre-amp core tone and the Power amp feature on the CAB M. A little bit of room reverb and I'm set!

I highly recommend this pedal/unit to all guitarists (and bassists, yes it does that too!) it is very quickly becoming a standard on many pedalboards around the world. It's very sturdy and easy to use as well. The price is also very reasonable considering what you get and the quality, it's a worthwhile investment for any serious guitar player!

END«

Two Notes Torpedo C.A.B. M+ Speaker Simulator Pedal

Mooer GE300 Lite

Sam Bell reviews the GE300 Lite by Mooer. Billed as the ultimate portable guitar station for any guitarist, whether in the studio or on the stage and featuring 108 digital amp models based on Mooer's non-linear amp modelling technology, 43 factory cab sims, full-featured IR loader, and a full complement of classic and modern effects, the GE300 Lite gives you the best of Mooer in a new compact package.

MOOER is quickly leading their way to creating some of the most affordable Guitar effects units on the market. Starting with their vast range of micro pedals all the way through to their multi-effects and amp modelling unit the GE300. In this review, I had a chance to check out the latest offering from Mooer, the GE300 Lite, which is technically very similar to the standard GE300, except its smaller. How much smaller? Well, I

can legitimately fit it in my gig bag, from the starting gate this unit is going to be very popular with travelling musicians needing all their sounds on the go.

The GE300 Lite features 108 Amp Models, 43 IR based Factory Cab Sims (also the ability to load up to your own Impulse Responses onto the unit), 13 effects block per patch, up to 255 patches which can be controlled via 3 control switches. There are also 164 high-quality effects, which can easily be accessed for in-depth parameter editing. There is also a TONE CAPTURE feature which allows you to capture your favourite amp, guitar or effects sounds. And if that's not enough, its got a fully functional Looping feature within each pre-set for easy looping and practice.

The unit has a quality array of in›s and out›s as expected from a modern modelling/effects unit, stereo XLR and ¼ Inch Jack out, FX Loop (so you can integrate your own pedals alongside the unit and control them in the patch. There are also two expression pedal inputs to expand on the three control switches that you already have access to. The expression pedal inputs allow further control of Wah, Volume and effects parameters, further expanding this already packed full of features unit!

Navigating the GE300 LITE is super simple, each effect block (including Amp, Cab, EQ etc) can be accessed with their own individual switch, making the blocks easily accessible on the go. Then the parameters of each block can be manipulated via 5 sturdy parameter knobs and the main selector knob. The depth of each effect/block's parameters is definitely in-depth, there's so much to go at with just the amp modelling and CAB simulations alone, including the ability to change the Power Amp Valves/Saturation of Amp Models or moving two different mic placements on any given cab. »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Mooer GE300 Lite

MSRP: (UK) £529 / (US) $549

The Breakdown

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

Straightforward — Feature-rich

Traditional — Innovative High-end

For fans of

- Chimy clean and edge of breakup tones
- AC30's without the budget required
- Do-it-all amps

For more information, please visit:
mooeraudio.com

The amp models and cabs themselves sound great; they feel as real as you can get, they are all based on well-loved classic and modern amps. The amp models also boast some particular amps that are rarely seen on other amp modelling units, of course the names have been changed for legal reasons, but it's very easy to find the specific amps you may be looking for. Everything from warm and crisp clean amps to full metal and everything in between, the GE300lite has it.

The effects pedals within the unit are extensive, there is a lush range of Reverb's and Delays, and Moore's own signature synth emulations. Each of these of course just like the amps and cabs are easily edited, featuring lots of easily accessed parameters that give you further tonal flexibility. There's also a range of boosts, drives, compressors, EQ's, a healthy amount of Modulation style effects and much more.

The presentation and build of the unit is quality, and the screen makes for easy navigation, nice and clear for onstage use. The build feels very sturdy and like I've already mentioned it's a very small unit (hence the 'LITE') It has everything its bigger brother has, except for an expression pedal. I think this unit is certainly worth a look for the discerning travelling guitarist looking to keep their tone close to them at all times. Go check it out!

END«

"There's also a range of boosts, drives, compressors, EQ's, a healthy amount of Modulation style effects **and much more**..."

Mooer GE300 Lite

Studio to Stage

BEST OF THE YEAR

2020

Boss Pocket GT

The Boss Pocket GT could very well be your one-stop-shop when it come even playing live. Built on the legendary BOSS GT sound engine to give yo effects models in a pocket-sized portable format. **Tom Quayle** gives us th

SINCE it was launch back in 2005, YouTube has grown to become one of the biggest and most useful teaching and practice resources for guitar players. It's a bit of a minefield trying to find the best material, but with all the songs, backing tracks, lessons and edutainment videos available on the platform, it's incomparable as a free learning and practice resource.

This phenomenon hasn't gone unnoticed by Boss and, with their Pocket GT, they are aiming to integrate YouTube use with a truly pocket-sized amp modeller and multi FX for the ultimate portable practice and learning setup.

At its heart, the diminutive Pocket GT is based on the same core technology as Boss' GT1 floor unit. This GT sound engine offers up over 100 amp models and effects, allowing you to create pretty much any tone you can imagine and save your sounds to 99 user memories. There are three small rotary dials on the front of the unit allowing you to assign and control up six parameters directly from the hardware. By default they're mapped to Gain, Level, Reverb, OD/DS amount, Mod and Delay levels, but can be re-assigned if required to whatever you use the most. A small LED display shows you the current patch number and basic tuning info for the onboard tuner, whilst a larger main dial allows you to browse and select between your presets.

Mobile devices can connect via Bluetooth allowing you to edit the sounds in more detail from the free Pocket GT Tone Studio app (iOS, Android, Mac and PC compatible). Selecting effects and amp models is a breeze and the signal path can be rearranged if you need some effects »

s to recording, jamming, song learning, and
ou more than 100 assignable amp, stomp, and
e full breakdown.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Boss Pocket GT

MSRP: (UK) £219 / (US) $359

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-End

Studio — Stage

For fans of

- YouTube practice/learning
- Portable practice setups
- Making life easier!

For more information, please visit:
boss.info

before or after your amp block. The Bluetooth connection also streams audio from your mobile device to the Phones/Rec output of the Pocket GT so you can play tracks from your phone or tablet for jamming along with. The integrated USB connection allows for the same functionality from a desktop or laptop computer and even turns the Pocket GT into a fully-fledged, guitar-based audio interface with ASIO and Core Audio compatible, low latency operation in your DAW.

The real power and fun comes from the app's integrated YouTube session view, where videos can be added and then controlled using the hardware transport controls on the unit. Adding videos is a simple case of copying and pasting the relevant URL from your browser or the YT app and multiple videos can be added to create longer practice or learning sessions as required.

Controlling the playback of videos is cool, but Boss has gone a step further by allowing you to add custom markers »

Boss Pocket GT

at any point in a video that will automatically switch the preset on the Pocket GT wherever a marker is placed. This functionality allows the user to set up different sounds for different sections of a video or practice session without ever touching the hardware. Let's say you're learning a Pink Floyd song - paste the relevant video URL into the app and then setup all the sounds you need for the intro, verse, chorus and solo section. Then place markers at the exact spot in the video that you need the sounds to change and then hit play - all the sounds will now change automatically for each section of the song!

The possibilities here are limitless and represent some fantastic opportunities for streamlining your practice sessions and learning without having to change sounds on the fly. Just plug in your guitar, grab your mobile device and press play! No more excuses for not practising. Boss also allow you to setup A/B loops for a particular spot in the track that you might be struggling with. There's no slow down function for now, but hopefully, that will come in a future update.

Once you've set up your markers you can save the video URL and marker information as a file or to the app itself so that you can recall everything for your next practice session or share everything with a friend or student. Tones can be saved or exported for recall or sharing too, so you could send all the sounds you've programmed for a particular YouTube video

"The Pocket GT **really is** a fantastically useful practice and learning tool..."

plus all the marker information for when those sounds should change. A fantastic addition!

Boss has also included an aux input for any devices without a Bluetooth connection and a useful centre cancel function that aims to remove vocals and guitar solos from most tracks. The built-in rechargeable battery gives you around four hours of runtime (slightly more if you're not using the Bluetooth connection) and takes around three hours to fully charge from flat.

The Pocket GT really is a fantastically useful practice and learning tool. Being able to carry such a useful device, with some great tones onboard, around in your pocket is amazing, allowing you to practice in any environment with just a guitar, cable, headphones and your phone! Having the recording functions and superb YouTube integration makes this package pretty irresistible for anyone looking for a portable and powerful practice setup. Another great release from the guys at Boss. Highly recommended!

END«

Tascam Model 12

Whether you use it for rehearsal, live shows, or studio production, the Tas
recording solution. The Model 12 boasts a classic analogue mixer-style des
Tom Quayle tells us more.

HERE at Gi, we've already checked out Tascam's Model 16, a fantastic and fully-featured analogue mixing desk featuring an inbuilt SD-card based multi-track digital recorder and USB audio interface capabilities. Now Tascam have released their Model 12 – a smaller sibling to the Model 16 and 24 mixers, sporting a more compact design whilst padding out the already impressive feature set even further thanks to the addition of a DAW remote-control mode.

As with the larger 16 and 24 variants, the Model 12 is a great quality analogue mixer comprising six mono channels, two stereo channels and a pair of TRS insert points for a total of 12 inputs. You also get the same 12 track (16/24bit, 44.1/48kHz) multi-track digital SD-card recording capabilities and USB audio interface functionality of the larger models, this time upgraded to USB-C for the most up to date connection standard (backwards compatible with USB-A for older PC's and Macs).

Unlike the Model 16 and 24, Tascam have integrated basic DAW control into the Model 12 (using the HUI/MCU protocol), allowing you to use the onboard 60mm faders, REC arm, Solo, Mute, Pan, Jog Wheel and transport controls in all the major DAWs on the market whilst in DAW Mode. The control on offer is limited due to the lack of motorised faders and infinite pan pots, so don't expect to be doing complex automation tasks or recalling mixes with the Model 12, but for basic use it is superb and a highly welcome additional feature. Tascam provide walk-through information for connecting the Model 12 to all the popular DAWs such as Cubase, Logic, Pro Tools and Digital Performer and whilst the ever more popular Studio One isn't explicitly supported, the Cubase mode works fine for basic mixing tasks. »

cam Model 12 is a great-sounding, multi-track
sign that's both intuitive and immediate.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Tascam Model 12

MSRP: (UK) £199 / (US) $229

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Specialised — Versatile

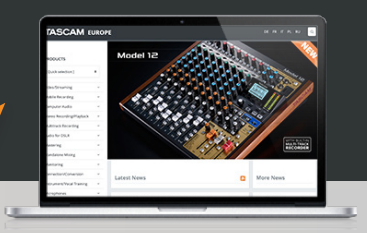
Affordable — High-End

Studio — Stage

For fans of

- Easy-to-use multi-track recording solutions
- Lightweight yet rugged gear
- Portastudios of old

For more information, please visit:
tascam.eu



"The Model 12 is an absolute **powerhouse of a device** with an amazing feature set..."

Using the 'Mode' switch, each channel can be assigned to listen to the live analogue inputs (featuring Tascam's superb Ultra HDDA preamps) in Live mode, the outputs of your DAW in PC mode or the various tracks of the Multitrack recorder in MTR mode. These modes can be switched independently per channel allowing the user to combine the live, DAW and Multitrack recorder inputs in a single session, all of which can be output to the Main balanced XLR outs or TRS Sub outs and Aux's as required and mixed using the onboard faders, EQ, compression and effects sections.

The I/O section has been moved from the front/top of the mixer to the back panel to keep the Model 12 as compact as possible and each of the analogue inputs features a combi XLR/Jack socket that can be set to balanced line or Hi-Z input as required. Global +48v Phantom Power can be »

Tascam Model 12

switched on for condenser mics and there is a ton of gain available on every channel for running even troublesome mics like the Sure SM7b or Royer R-121 that require a lot of gain.

Each of the channel strips provide 100hz low cut switches, single knob compression and a 3-band EQ with a sweep-able mid frequency with up to 15dB of boost or cut. A 3-band master EQ with semi-parametric Mid control is also provided that can be assigned to either the Main Mix or Aux 1 output as required.

The Aux outs have been cut from 3 to 2 on the Model 12, but for most people this will be more than enough with Aux 2 assigned by default to the excellent onboard effects section, featuring 16 effect types covering all the expected bases from reverbs to delays and modulations that can be edited and stored as presets.

As with the Model 16 and 24, both the internal multi-track recorder and DAW outputs can be mixed and summed to the main mix, sub mix and Aux outputs using the analogue channel strips, allowing you to mix with real controls and the built in analogue compression, EQ and digital effects out of the box. A pair of Headphone outs with independent level controls allow users to collaborate on or hear individual mixes via the Aux or Main Mix busses as required. Full PFL, AFL and solo-in-place options are available for each of the channels too.

Combining the various input modes allows you to create complex live or studio setups combining live instruments or vocals with DAW and/or MTR tracks at the same time, all running through the analogue channel strips for real-time mixing or recording. The possibilities are enormous for anyone wanting to combine live playing with pre-recorded tracks and the fully integrated MIDI in and out allows for full midi timecode synchronisation or triggering of midi devices from the Model 12.

The brand new 'Vamp' mode adds even more creativity to live performance or practice, allowing users to loop up to ten sections of a song or recording with selected in and out points. Setting loop points is very straight forward, and these can be saved per song and recalled or set to loop in real-time for all manner of creative possibilities on stage or in the studio. You can extend a chorus or solo section, loop a small piece of audio for special effects or practice a difficult section over and over before recording a take.

All the powerful multi-track recording capabilities of the Model 16 and 24 are included with the Model 12, such as Over-

"The Model 12 is an absolute no-brainer. **Highly recommended**...!"

dubs, Punch in and out, stereo bounce downs and exporting of Wav files for editing and mixing in your DAW. You can even import WAV files into your session from an SD card or playback/record external audio using the built in Bluetooth connection or dedicated Mobile Device input.

A highly customisable click/metronome has also been included with the Model 12 that can be routed to its own dedicated output or the Main/Sub/Aux outs. The time signature, tempo, click type and a count-in mode can all be selected and customised using the in-built screen and controls. The screen provides an excellent and flexible metering operation with a bright, segmented master L/R hardware LED showing the Main Mix output level.

Tascam have also included some powerful features for live streaming too, allowing users to sum all 12 channels down to a single stereo pair over USB for use in whichever streaming app is being used. This allows for complex real-time mixes utilising any combination of the analogue, MTR or PC inputs that can be streamed with pristine audio and real-time control over levels, EQ, compression and effects. The mobile device input even has a mix-minus feature, removing vocals or guitar solos from a mix to create ready-made play-along tracks.

The Model 12 is an absolute powerhouse of a device with an amazing feature set, build and sound quality for such an affordable price point. As we said with the Model 16, to buy each of the standalone devices required to get this level of functionality would cost a small fortune and, with the addition of DAW control, the Model 12 only enhances this value proposition further. For live streamers and performers wanting to record their sessions or have the flexibility of real-time mixing with superb preamps, EQ, effects and compression, or those looking for a compact and powerful standalone multitrack digital recorder and audio interface, the Model 12 is an absolute no-brainer. Highly recommended!

END«

Xvive U4 Wireless In-Ear Monitoring System

Xvive's U4 Wireless In-Ear Monitoring System in-ear monitor wireless syst
providing additional high-quality monitoring. It works brilliantly, no matte
band-wide mix. Pair this receiver and transmitter and take your live perfo
astounding clarity and reliable wireless architecture, this portable, afforda
each and every time. **Tom Quayle** and **Nick Jennison** tell us more.

GOOD monitoring is essential both on the stage and in the studio – ask any musician and they'll tell you that the difference between an okay gig or session and a great one can often be down to the monitoring setup on hand. With stages getting quieter and technological improvements year on year, in-ear monitoring is becoming more and more popular these days, meaning good wireless in-ear monitoring solutions are becoming an essential part of every live and studio musician's toolkit.

In the world of wireless in-ear monitoring people are generally looking for accurate sound, great wireless range, low interference, and long battery life. Traditionally these requirements have come at a steep price point, but the Xvive U4 In-Ear Monitoring Wireless System aims to change that with its superb feature set at an affordable price point.

Most wireless in-ear systems are based on small, pocket-sized receivers paired to a large transmitter base, often half or full sized rack units with delicate, flimsy antennas that are both heavy and awkward to transport. The Xvive U4 offers the most compact wireless IEM system we've ever seen, more akin to some of the wireless microphone or guitar setups on the market. It features a tiny receiver and incredibly compact transmitter that functions as an XLR connector that plugs directly into your chosen output with the wireless transmitter unit attached to the back. Xvive include an XLR to Jack convertor in the package for those that aren't using XLR as their output of choice. It's a very tidy and compact solution but does stick out quite a way from whatever it's plugged into, giving cause for concern if someone were to walk into it, potentially damaging either the transmitter itself or whatever its plugged into. A short extension cable would solve

em is the perfect solution when it comes to
er whether you're using it for an individual or
rmances to the next level! Boasting sound of
able option ensures excellent performance

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Xvive U4 Wireless In-Ear Monitoring System

MSRP: (UK) £199 / (US) $229

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-End

Studio — Stage

For fans of

- A good monitoring experience on stage
- The same in the studio
- Reliable gear

For more information, please visit:
xviveaudio.com

this problem and the compact nature of the setup is certainly very welcome as long as you won't be bumping into it.

Both units are incredibly well built to stand the rigours of gigging or travelling and could be thrown in a gig bag with confidence thanks to all metal construction and drop proof sturdiness with no controls or vital components sticking out from the design or feeling fragile. Operation is very easy with only the necessary controls for channel switching, volume and power plus the ability to switch between Line and Aux levels depending on what you're plugged into.

The U4 is a 2.4Ghz device with 6 wireless channels available. For some users this may be a concern given how crowded

"Both units are **incredibly well built** to stand the rigours of gigging or travelling ..."

the 2.4Ghz space is with consumer devices, but we experienced no drop out or interference issues in a studio environment with multiple smart 2.4Ghz plugs, phones, iPad, computers and various smart enabled devices in the same room. Your mileage may vary of course and if you regularly play in very large venues you may be better off with a higher bandwidth 5Ghz device. For most users the U4's 2.4Ghz operation will more than suffice and offer great stability with the 6 channels on offer.

Xvive U4 Wireless Review - Tom Quayle

Latency and sound quality are superb for such an affordable setup. Xvive quote 5ms of latency for the U4 and our own tests, measuring the figure in a DAW, confirm this figure. The vast majority of users will never be able to feel 5ms of latency given that it's similar to standing a normal distance away from a guitar cab on a large stage and in use this reviewer couldn't detect any feeling of lag even with fast legato runs through an Axe FX unit that has its own inherent analogue to digital conversion latency.

The U4 is a mono monitoring solution with 24bit/48kHz operation for excellent sound quality. Since Xvive doesn't ship a pair of cheap headphones with

Xvive U4 Wireless Review – Nick Jennison

the unit you need to use your own and, paired with a set of custom moulded ACS triple driver in-ear monitors, it's a total pleasure to listen to music, guitar or any other source through the U4. With a dynamic range of 107dB and full range 20Hz-20kHz operation your listening experience isn't compromised in any way and represented accurately, allowing you to play at your best with inspirational sound at all times. If you're wondering why the U4 is mono, remember that most monitoring systems are mono too. Stage wedges, mixer Aux outputs and fills are all mono so it's the most appropriate setup for consistency and means half the bandwidth of a stereo monitoring setup. You need to be sure that your chosen output is setup as a mono sum, but almost all mixers, audio interfaces and guitar modelling units allow you to do this with ease. There is also a great deal of volume on tap should you need it on a loud stage thanks to the headphone driver built into the receiver unit.

Wireless range and battery life are also very good at this price point with over 90ft of range on tap before drops outs (again tested as an accurate claim by us here at GI) and just over 5 hours of battery life from a full charge. Both units feature internal batteries charged via the included double USB micro cable. It's a shame that the more modern and flexible USB-C connector wasn't utilised here and those internal batteries could be a future source of concern if they start to lose charge capacity over time or if you forget to charge the units before a show. But, from a single charge you should have enough juice for a couple of normal gigs or a long studio session – just don't forget to charge them when you get home!

All said and done, the Xvive U4 is a fantastic wireless IEM solution that doesn't break the bank and offers superb sound, build quality and features without much compromise. Those playing really big venues might need to look at higher-end and more expensive 5Ghz solutions, but the average user would do well to check out the superb value proposition that the U4 offers. Highly recommended.

END«

THE Quietroom

BEST OF THE YEAR

2020

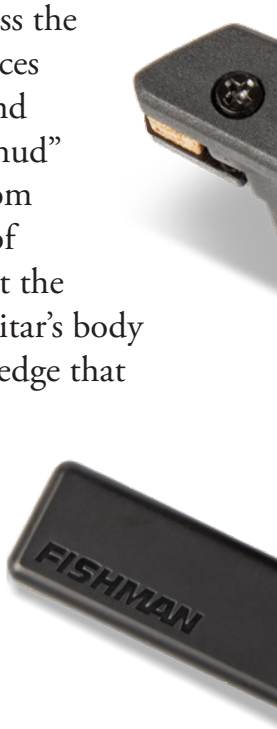
Fishman PowerTap Acoustic

Earlier this year, Fishman unveiled the all-new PowerTap Earth and PowerTap Infinity pickup system for acoustic guitars. Featuring the new Tap body sensor, that when combined with either a Matrix Infinity (PowerTap Infinity) or Rare Earth (PowerTap Earth) pickup, opens up a new palette of sounds, interaction, and colour for players of all styles. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

IF like me, you've been playing the guitar for a long time now, you may remember electro-acoustic guitars from the 90s and 2000s. While there are undoubtedly tons of some superb instruments from that era, the pickups from that era can leave a lot to be desired. Most of them were quacky, excessively dynamic, lacked sustain, had a very bizarre frequency response and were generally an unpleasant necessity that gigging guitarists had to endure rather than enjoy.

Technology has advanced by a frightening amount since those days. Modern acoustic pickups are everything their forebears weren't: they feel natural, preserve your playing dynamics and touch and they sound fantastic… for most things. If you're playing the strings of the guitar, you're golden. But if you're playing percussive parts on the guitar's body, even the best pickup system will leave you wanting.

Fishman to the rescue. Their new Powertap systems combine some of their most popular pickups with their new Tap body sensor - a contact pickup specifically tuned for percussive playing. Now, soundboard transducers have been around a while, but they don't always work that well (or sound that great). The new Tap pickup, by contrast, is fantastic. It has an even dynamic response all across the guitar's soundboard and produces an authoritative and tonal sound that's a far cry from the dull "thud" you may be used to hearing from a contact pickup. The upshot of this is that you can fully exploit the whole range of sounds your guitar's body can produce, safe in the knowledge that Powertap will reliably put out what you're putting in. It's also incredibly resistant to feedback, especially the low howling "whale noises" that can plague some contact pickups. »



Pickup Series

"Powertap Earth is very warm with a smooth treble response and a long sustain, and installs **without any drilling** or having to pull your bridge saddle out...."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Fishman PowerTap Acoustic Pickup Series

MSRP: (Earth) £229 / (Infinity) £229

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Warm, transparent sound
- Ease of use
- Gear that inspires

For more information, please visit:
fishman.com

Each of the two Powertap systems pairs the Tap sensor with one of Fishman's most popular pickups: the Powertap Infinity system incorporates their Matrix Infinity under-saddle pickup, and the Powertap Earth uses their soundhole-mounted Rare Earth Humbucker. As we've come to expect from Fishman, both systems sound excellent, but there are differences in performance between the two. Powertap Earth is very warm with a smooth treble response and a long sustain, and installs without any drilling or having to pull your bridge saddle out. Powertap Infinity has more top-end sparkle baked in, along with a tone control that scoops the mid-range as it boosts the lows and highs for more of a "modern" sound. It also has a "voicing" switch for more low end, which is great for filling a room when playing unaccompanied.

Both systems offer the same clever routing options. The jack socket automatically senses whether you're using a mono or stereo jack, and changes the output accordingly. With a mono cable, the blend control adjusts the balance between the

Tap pickup and the Matrix Infinity/Rare Earth pickup. Things get really interesting when you connect a stereo jack though, which routes each pickup to its own output, allowing you to apply different EQ and effects to each pickup. It also allows your sound engineer to balance the two out front for the perfect live sound.

Fishman's Powertap systems are as far beyond the previous generation of contact pickups as their regular pickup systems are beyond the piezo systems of 30 years ago. They reproduce your percussive playing with accuracy and authority while still sounding superb for more conventional styles. If you're into percussive playing, you need to check these systems out.

END «

Martin X Series D-X1E & 00-X2

Billed as affordable, eco-conscious instruments without compromising on legendary t the newly reimagined X Series utilizes high-pressure laminate (HPL) coupled with sele hardwood to make these models some of the sturdiest, scratch and weather-resistant models in Martin's lineup. **Nick Jennison** reviews the Martin X Series D-X1E & 00-X2E.

AS much as I love looking at Martin's exceptional high-end guitars, they're not exactly within reach for the majority of guitar players. Fortunately, Martin's X Series instruments offer a very affordable way to get your hands on a guitar made with almost 200 years of innovation and expertise.

The X Series lineup is like a Martin "greatest hits", with D, 0, 00, 000/OM and GPC body styles offered in a variety of woods including all mahogany, mahogany/spruce and koa. Prospective buyers are spoiled for choice, but the options can be a little overwhelming unless you're already familiar with both Martin's model history and acoustic guitar construction in general. With this in mind, we decided to take two of the most iconic styles in the range and compare them - the all mahogany D-X1E dreadnought and the smaller-bodied spruce/mahogany 00-X2E. »

D-1XE: With a larger dreadnought body and all mahogany construction, I'd expect loud projection and a warm, thick tone from the D-1XE, and it certainly doesn't disappoint. Laying in with a heavy pick produces a full and rich voice with lots of authority. There's still plenty of detail in the highs though, especially for softer moments with both flatpicking and fingerstyle playing styles. There's a strong midrange presence, but it's more of a low mid warmth than the upper mid sparkle the 00-X2E has.

2E

tone,
ect

.

STAR RATING

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

PROS

- Two great acoustics with their own distinct personalities.
- Excellent Fishman MX pickups.
- Signature Martin tone with a very appealing price tag.

CONS

- Workmanlike aesthetics may not be fancy enough for some...

Check **THE SPEC**

Martin X Series D-X1E & 00-X2E
MSRP (D-X1E) $649 (00-X2E) $799
//

HPL back and sides **//** X Bracing **//** Fishman Electronics

For more information, please visit:
martinguitar.com

Martin X Series D-X1E & 00-X2E

00-X2E:

With it's smaller body and sitka spruce top, the 00-X2E has a lighter and brighter tone than the D-X1E, and while it might sound a little less immediately impressive in head to head comparisons with it's dreadnought-bodied sibling, the 00-X2E has the kind of upper mid detail and clarity that's ideal for more intricate playing styles. It's also great for sitting in a mix, where the low end of a dreadnought can be a little overwhelming. It's also a little easier in terms of playability thanks to the smaller body style and shorter scale length.

Both guitars sport Fishman's excellent MX pickup system. It's a very simple system, with volume and tone controls tucked away in the soundhole along with a bright and accurate tuner that's easy for the player to see while being hidden from your audience. This is a very useful addition even when mic'd up in the studio, and saves having a clip-on tuner or a large preamp cut into the side of the guitar's body. The pickup itself is very natural sounding, with an even dynamic range that allows you plenty of room for expression without loud notes taking the listener's head off.

Either of these guitars would be a fine choice for any guitarist, whether you're a beginner looking for your first proper acoustic, a gigging musician looking for a great sounding guitar that you won't be afraid to play live, or even an experienced player looking to add another flavour to your acoustic arsenal.

END «

Faith Blue Moon Neptune Cut

Featuring natural tonewoods that individually vary in natural colouration and particu terns, The Neptune Blue Moon from Faith Guitars is a genuinely individual instrumen least. Here's **Sam Bell** with the full review.

FAITH is well known for their outstanding acoustic instruments, the looks are often breathtaking, quality is super high and the overall sound and playability is top draw. Especially for the very reasonable price for such high standard instruments. In this issue of Guitar Interactive I have the pleasure of checking out the Blue Moon Neptune Electro/Cut Away Acoustic model from Faith. This is a prime example of what Faith Guitars has to offer to the gigging musician. This unique guitar features a large body and a unique wood. Lets take a look at some of the Guitars properties, please also be sure to check out the video portion of this review to hear it in action!

The Guitar features a Solid Figured Java Mango Top, Back and Sides. This wood provides a darker tone to the overall guitar, this with the Macasan Figured Ebony Fingerboard creates a thick, resonant tone. The wood itself is finished off with gloss and accented with Flamed Maple Binding. The Neck, Bridge, Pins are all made from a lovely warm Mahogany. Even the Grover Rotomatic Tuners are accented with Mahogany Machine Heads. The quality and detail is wonderful.

The technical aspects of the guitar include a Fishman INK3 Preamp with Under saddle pickup. The Preamp is simple and effective with volume, bass, middle and treble controls along with a handy tuner. The battery for the pre-amp is neatly tucked away behind the rear strap pin. In the video portion of this review I demonstrate the guitar direct to desk with all the EQ's set 'Flat' or 12 Noon. For reference as well we miced up the guitar with a C451 Condenser microphone around the front of the body of the guitar. »

"This guitar is a **prime example** of what Faith guitars have to offer the budding musician..."

away

ular grain pat-
t, to say the

STAR RATING

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PROS

» High-Quality Build
» Excellent playability
» Great Looks
» Hardcase included

CONS

» None

Check **THE SPEC**

Faith Blue Moon Neptune Cutaway
MSRP (UK) £979 (US) $TBC //

Solid Figured Java Mango Top, Back & Sides // Mahogany Neck // Fishman INK3 Preamp with under-saddle pickup

For more information, please visit:
faithguitars.com

The 16 inch radius neck and medium wide frets make for an easy play across the whole neck, the fret work is pristine. Open chords in the lower register sound full, detailed and resonant whilst playing single note lines in the higher register, notes cut with a nice warm upper mid-range, not too shrill or thin. The mixture of woods in this guitar make for great combination.

In summary, as I mentioned at the start, this guitar is a prime example of what Faith guitars have to offer the budding musician. High quality features, playability, build quality, looks, its got the whole package. This guitar also comes with a highw quality hardcase for safe transportation, all included in the price. Well worth checking out if you're in the market for a new acoustic, a high quality backup, a studio guitar with a different sonic quality to most acoustic guitars or if you like the colour blue!

END«

Faith Blue Moon Neptune Cutaway

Taylor GT Urban Ash

Earlier this year, Taylor Guitars announced the release of its brand-new acoustic body shape – the Grand Theater. Known as the Taylor GT, the company's latest body shape introduces a new category of acoustic guitar in size, feel and sound. The result is a guitar that's incredibly fun and easy to play, with a big sonic personality worthy of any pro player's toolbox. Here's Nick Jennison with the full review.

I'VE said it before, I'll say it again: small acoustic guitars are the best. Don't get me wrong, I love the roar of a dreadnought as much as the next guitarist, but even with my significantly larger-than-average frame I find the sheer size (and squareness) of the body to be off-putting. You can't hold a Jumbo close to you the way you can with a parlour guitar. Smaller guitars are normally sweeter, easier to play and much, much easier to travel with.

Unfortunately, they do tend to lack some of the authority of bigger instruments. So it would seem we're fated to contend with warping our own bodies to fit those of our guitars, and developing a vice-grip playing technique in the process. Unless you have a Taylor GT.

The GT (Grand Theater) is a response to the countless requests for a solid wood GS Mini. It's a whole new body shape that's based on Taylor's Grand Orchestra body shape, but significantly smaller. The width at the lower bout is about the same as a Grand Concert, but the body is shorter and significantly shallower. It's a very comfy size for players of all body types - even big dudes like myself - that isn't so small that it sacrifices punch and projection (more on that in a moment!)

The neck is slimmed down too, sporting a 24.125" scale length - exactly the same as a 25.5" scale neck that has been capo'd off at the 1st fret. This is not by accident, and is intended to give the same slinky play feel of a 25.5" scale guitar tuned to Eb, without having to detune or go down a string gauge. I spend about 95% of my time playing electric guitars, so I have a pretty light left hand touch and find 12s on acoustic guitars to be way too heavy (especially coated strings, where the reduced friction requires more pressure). This was absolutely not the case on the GT, and even shred-inspired lead lines felt effortless. Seriously impressive, when you consider how full-bodied this guitar's tone is. Speaking of which… »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Taylor GT Urban Ash

MSRP: (UK) £1349 / (US) $1399

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Bright — Dark

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Small bodied guitars
- Easy playability
- Sustainable woods

For more information, please visit:
taylorguitars.com

"It's **supremely comfortable** to play without any sacrifices in power or projection..."

The tone. Clear and articulate with lots of sustain across the fretboard. Standard Taylor stuff. But for a guitar this size the low end weight is utterly remarkable. This thing punches like a much larger guitar, especially on the low strings. This is no doubt thanks to the asymmetrical "C-Class" bracing. Details on this are scant at the moment, but it's another of Andy Powers's creations (much like the V-Class bracing introduced a few years ago to much acclaim), this time inspired by cantilever technology. Your guess is as good as mine, but it would seem that the bass side is braced more loosely for weight and projection while the treble side is more tightly braced for sustain and clarity. Whatever it is, it works a treat!

While we're talking tone, we should also talk about the woods Taylor have chosen for this guitar. The top is solid Sitka spruce and the neck is mahogany - again, standard

stuff. However, the fingerboard is eucalyptus and the back and sides are reclaimed urban ash. Both of these urban woods are sustainable, because these trees are felled in cities and not taken from forests, greatly reducing waste. They also happen to be very pleasant looking and sounding woods, with urban ash offering a brilliant treble and articulate midrange that is no doubt offset by the booming lows from the "C-Class" bracing.

Taylor's GT feels like a guitar made for me. It's supremely comfortable to play without any sacrifices in power or projection. It's small enough to take anywhere, it's made of sustainable timbers and it's available with Taylor's superb ES2 electronics. It's perhaps a little pricey for what some will consider a "travel" guitar, but it's actually much much more than that. Go play one and see for yourself.

END «

Taylor GT Urban Ash

Gibson G45 Standard Walnut

Featuring a Walnut body that ensures focused lows, sweet-sounding mids and crisp hi Gibson's G-45 Standard is a whole lot of dreadnought-esque shaped acoustic guitar for money. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

WE often remark here at GI that Gibson acoustic guitars "sound like the records". A few quiet moments with a J-45 and you'll hear shades of Jimmy Page, John Lennon, James Taylor and a thousand other songs from rock and folk's rich history. There's something unmistakable in those smoky highs and brooding lows, but they come with a price tag to match.

Enter the G45 - Gibson's new "entry-level" acoustic guitar. It shares the silhouette of the J-45, with its trademark sloped shoulders and "open book" peghead (ok ok, "moustache" peghead), along with the Sitka spruce top, traditional X bracing and it's origin at the Montana plant (1894 Orville Way, Bozeman, no less!). It's a Gibson through and through - it even smells like one, with the distinctive "marshmallow" aroma emanating from the pink-lined hard case.

Where the G-45 differs from its ancestors is in the look - the G-45 sporting a natural finish with single-ply black binding - and in the body and neck materials. The neck is made of utile - a timber that's very similar to mahogany in terms of weight and tone (much closer than sapele), albeit with a slightly different colour. The back and sides are walnut - a beautiful looking wood with a distinct sonic signature.

You'd expect a walnut guitar to have clear, bell-like highs and a low end that develops over time, and this pretty much perfectly sums up the G-45. If you're expecting the seasoned, smoky tones of a J-45, you may be surprised. This guitar has a bright and crisp delivery that's more California than Nashville. It's a great sound that projects well and records even better, and I'd expect it to "open up" over time and reveal a rich and full low end.

The neck is very familiar if you've spent any time with a Les Paul or a 335. Maybe it's the natural finish, the Grover tuners or the lack of binding but It definitely feels more like a Gibson electric neck, and that's not a bad thing. The slightly flattened-out D shape is extremely comfortable for both classical and thumb-over playing positions, and the action from the factory is perfect - high enough to breathe, but low enough to play very easily.

Electrics come courtesy of a Fishman Sonitone pickup, with tone and volume tucked away in the soundhole. »

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the

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Gibson G45 Standard Walnut

MSRP: (UK) £1149 / (US) $1299

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

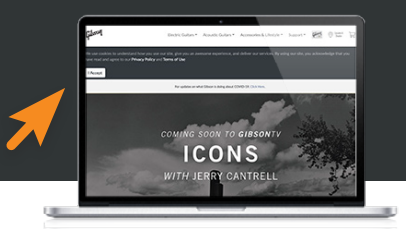
Affordable — High-end

For fans of

Smaller bodied dreadnoughts.

Clean, articulate tones.

For more information, please visit:
gibson.com

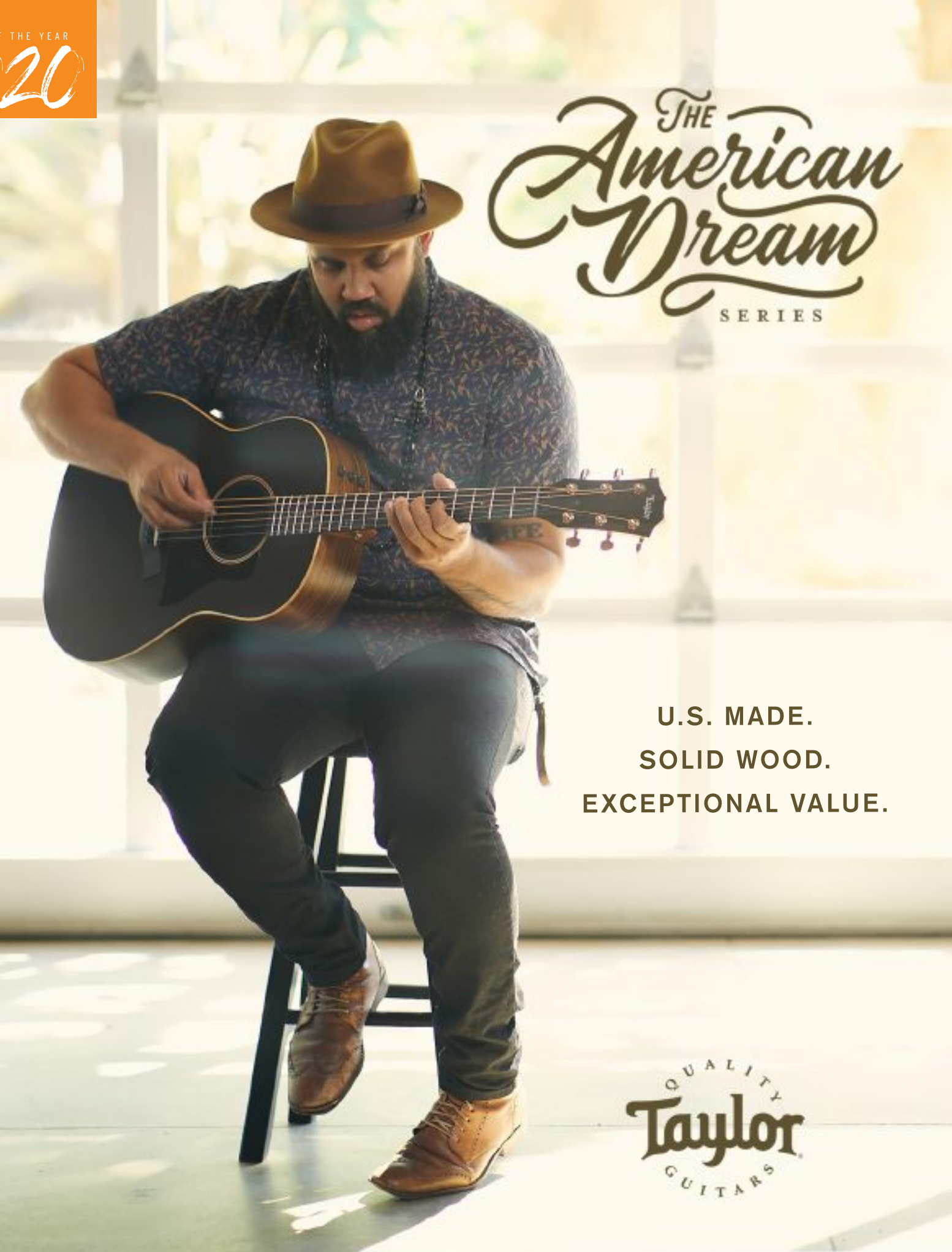


Gibson G45 Standard Walnut

Fishman pickups never disappoint, and this one is no exception. It's very natural and even sounding with enough dynamic range to be expressive without being unwieldy., and thanks to the simple control layout, it's hard to mess this up.

The Gibson G-45 is an excellent introduction to the world of Gibson acoustics. It feels instantly familiar, but with a distinctly modern voice that will undoubtedly mellow with age.

END«


THE American Dream
SERIES
U.S. MADE.
SOLID WOOD.
EXCEPTIONAL VALUE.
QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

THE Basement

BEST OF THE YEAR

2020

Cort Artisan A4 Ultra Bass

Utilising the new approach of adding ash top on a mahogany body ensuring a great balance of full and punchy sounding lows and bright yet clear and transparent highs, not to mention ash's beautiful wood grain for more a natural aesthetic. **Dan Veall** reviews an instrument designed with serious bassists in mind: Cort's Artisan A4 Ultra Bass

ONCE again, Cort delivers us a pair of quality instruments that compete with their market counterparts; modern appointments and an overall solid tone throughout making these a must-try-out for your shopping list.

In this review, I am looking at the A4 Ultra model, one of the more premium offerings in the Artisan range from Cort.

I am pleased to see that Cort refreshes their ranges periodically, not just with name changes but at times entire instrument facelifts as you'll see in this model.

The A4 Ultra's neck-through design is a five-piece laminate of Maple and Panga Panga: a little reading up in the past I discovered that the latter less known wood type is well suited physically and tonally and is said to be similar to Wenge. I've used Maple and Wenge as laminate choices in my own custom basses as it happens.

The striking look of the "sandblasted" Ash top is framed nicely by the mahogany body wings as you turn the bass over to reveal the darker wood and there's a pin-stripe to accent the transition, further adding to the overall sense of quality. It's a nice touch to have the grain contrasting to make it really 'pop'. But no stopping short here, the h
matching facing too.

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rib cage night after ni

The balance of every
reviewed has always b
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Of course this is due

"The A4 Ultra fits the "modern" mould given it's specification but **don't rule it out** if you're looking for some old-school vibes..."

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Artisan I have
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RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Cort Artisan A4 Ultra Bass

MSRP: (UK) £1149 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

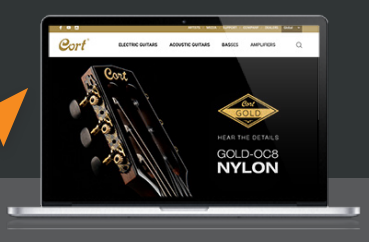
For fans of

World-class materials.

Natural aesthetic.

Panga Panga.

For more information, please visit:
cortguitars.com



designed instrument; the downsized headstock and super light weight quality Hipshot brand tuning keys.

Of course that's very welcome as is the standard 34" scale length, which I would imagine wouldn't feel too much of a stretch given the highly sculpted body offering a downsized feel.

Let's move on to the electronics where this particular configuration shines. On board the Cort A4 Ultra are a pair of Fishman Fluence Bass Soap bar pickups. These are very interesting as they are a little different to what we would call a "standard passive pickup" design. Without going into too much detail due to space, they do a superb job of being able to shape shift their tonal flavours and they "felt" good to play too. The switch from a passive to an active tone and back on these is in fact rather pleasing!

Cort Artisan A4 Ultra Bass

I will make a quick apology that whilst shooting this "lockdown" version of my usual reviews, I missed demonstrating the "single coil tone" option available by pulling up the switch on the volume control. I can tell you though it makes for a distinct tonal transition when engaged. Apologies!

At the time of writing, this review is my first to use Guitar Interactive's new system for summing up. Whether you rate your instruments on how they sound or how they look, I hope that I can confuse your choices more with this particular instrument whose multi-timbral pickup voicing and stylish looks will see it in a wide range of music styles.

The A4 Ultra fits the "modern" mould given it's specification but don't rule it out if you're looking for some old-school vibes. Flick the three way switch to "passive tone" and you'll be right in that pocket. It's a versatile instrument that is for sure.

For fans of: On this particular occasion I'm going to find it easier to list those that won't find a home for it in a particular setting! The A4 Ultra is a good choice for a wide range of genres and styles, you'll love the modern tones at the flick of a switch, but something a bit warmer should you need to go vintage in position 1.

END «

Orange Bass Butler Bi-Amp Pr

The Bass Butler from Orange is the ultimate fly rig, the perfect studio tool, and quite possib you'll ever need. Featuring a sturdy steel enclosure, 18V DC power for high headroom, and ready ruggedness mean that the Bass Butler is willing and waiting for a lifetime in your ser **Dan Veall** tells us more.

IT seems that almost every week a new drive pedal appears on the market, either on shop shelves or through the boutique online marketplace - pretty much every flavour of drive you can imagine is now catered for with us bassists in mind. We no longer have to rely on complex effect loop pedals to be able to dial in the lost low end that is encountered from plugging into a guitar distortion pedal.

Today, Orange has brought us the Bass Butler to get down to business with, and it was immediately obvious from the get-go we were in for a treat as I began effortlessly dialling in my first gritty sounds with the unit.

What makes this pedal of interest to me is that it really feels like you are running into both a bass amplifier and a guitar amplifier at the same time, rather than just a distortion pedal. (FYI, You won't actually damage a guitar amplifier running a bass into the drive channel. That's a video for another day! Just watch your volume and what the speaker comes are doing!)

This isn't a new technique by the way, some of my favourite bassists are well known for recording their bass through both to create a richer sound. In this scenario, the bass amp provides all the low end and depth, lower midrange frequencies and warm grit (should you need that too) - the guitar amplifier with its speakers suited to the upper midrange frequency range will complement nicely when blended. With more gain available to play with from a guitar set up, it's possible to run more drive on the top end than low end thus giving you more control over the resultant tone without the low frequencies becoming less coherent, something I hate! »

eamp Pedal

ly the only pedal
all-round road-
vice.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Orange Bass Butler Bi-Amp Preamp Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £287 / (US) $399

The Breakdown

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

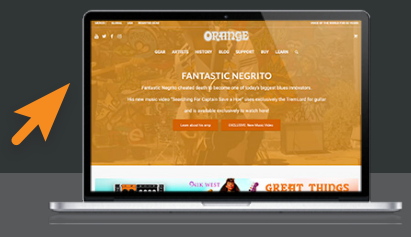
Straightforward — Feature-rich

Traditional — Innovative

For fans of

- Amp-in-a-box pedals
- Orange classic design
- Powerful tones

For more information, please visit:
orangeamps.com



"Distortion naturally compresses a signal, so **it makes sense** that there is a compressor on the clean channel too.."

Orange Bass Butler Bi-Amp Preamp Pedal

The Bass Butler is exactly that - a bass amplifier circuit and a carefully tailored "guitar amp" style circuit - and what's more, both XLR outputs feature speaker simulations from paired configurations - an Orange OBC410 bass cabinet for the bass amp side and an Orange PPC412 guitar cabinet for the guitar side. It's almost too simple! The socket marked "Amp" is a blend of the two signal paths but doesn't include the cabinet emulations, which makes sense as you're going to be running the pedal in to an amp and cabinet anyway - which is what you are hearing in my review - my Bergantino reference rig was mic'd so you could hear what the pedal sounds like through a single amplifier.

As usual, I want you to check out the video review as I explain each control. Simply though, two rows: The top row is your guitar amp sound. The "square wave" icon on the left-hand side suggests a clipped waveform or "distorted" and underneath a sine wave suggesting a clean signal waveform. - the bass amp sound.

Distortion naturally compresses a signal, so it makes sense that there is a compressor on the clean channel too. But, nay, this is no ordinary compressor! If there's something that Orange has seemed to nail (on the Little Bass Thing as an example) is a compressor that changes the colour, character of the amplifier and this is also immediately noticeable in this pedal. Advancing the dial adds level as the make-up gain of the compressor is actually quite severe verses that of a studio compressor. The effect adds tons of midrange punch and an uncanny "tubey" feel and there's an assuring sweet spot to be found. Visual indication that you have hit the effect threshold is via a red LED that flashes within the pedal indicator above the footswitch. It's subtle and we found it difficult to see under the bright lights of the studio. »

"It does sit in a higher price bracket, but then you are **saving the cost** of buying two amplifier rigs :)..."

The clean channel is active all the time and the footswitch onboard brings in the drive channel - which I believe is probably the best way to have the pedal configured, unless of course you specifically wanted the whole device bypassed. I suspect that wasn't the plan from Orange though, seeing this as an "always on" clean signal that would be ran to front-of-house for live use.

Orange has had the foresight to include an external control of the drive channel gain: All you need is an expression pedal connected to this socket. You can throttle back for a mild grit or push the pedal forward to access face-melting saturation!

The pedal itself, as you can expect from Orange is pretty bullet-proof and designed to deal with the rigours of the road. It is much larger than that of other pedals available on the market that offer a similar configuration, but I think you'll forgive that when you hear what it can do. You may even decide to lose a pedal or two off of your existing board that would otherwise be required to offer what this can in one box.

Rounding up then, we have a versatile pedal that concentrates on one specific feature set, I.e. blending amplifier sounds for anything from a very mild «tone warmed up» bite to a full out gain assault.

It does sit in a higher price bracket, but then you are saving the cost of buying two amplifier rigs :)

It is, as I said above, surprisingly easy to use considering the range of sounds available from a well thought out design.

END«

THE YEAR
20

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Tech 21 Steve Harris SH1 Signa

The Steve Harris SH1 features all-analog SansAmp technology, two-channel modes with in active EQ, and a Bite switch to activate a "Steve" boost for extra clank and clarity. Other feat Output to go direct to the PA desk or studio board. Here's **Dan Veall** with the full breakdow

WHEN it comes to classic bands known the world over, do I really need to introduce the bassist of truly one of England's rock royalty? Pounding out countless tracks that have stood the test of time since their forming in the mid-seventies by the man in question, one Steve Harris.

Steve Harris' bass tone has been forever present in every single Iron Maiden release and is surely testament to the very iconic tone we are looking at today, more or less unchanged since the beginning, but in a good way. Unwavering, bold, and in your face.

Steve's playing technique featuring melodic baselines, chords and at times relentless galloping is based on a two finger right hand technique (index and ring) and he uses his nails to get a brighter tone.

His signal path on stage and studio has been a fairly simple set up in comparison to that of other touring artists. Bass, wireless, pre-amplifier, compression, power amplifiers and then in to front loaded cabinets that feature ElectroVoice EVM12L speakers that are not known for their super deep low end actually.

Steve has mentioned that he doesn't want to hear low end sub-frequencies on stage anyway and would rather blend in with the guitars for a brutal tone onslaught - and it works!

Steve's main Fender Precision bass is a mid-70's model with a Seymour Duncan SPB-4 Steve Harris signature pickup, and he uses his signature Rotosound SH77 flat wound strings. We are using my own '76 precision bass strung up with Rotosound's new Ultra-mag string set for this review, though I am choosing to demonstrate "non-Steve" tones as well to show what else this pedal can do.

So, what is it we are looking at today? It's an emulation, a distilled signal path in a pedal. Steve himself has said quite openly how pleased he is with how close it sounds to what he has been used to for so many years.

The pedal offers up a two-channel approach allowing for gain or level boosts as you'll see in my video. There's a pair of each control, and the settings are foot-switchable.

ature Sansamp

ndividual Gain and Level controls, Blend, 4-band
ures include a chromatic tuner and an XLR
vn.

Next, a four-band equaliser is an interesting one, and I immediately smiled when I saw the chosen EQ centres—specifically having two mid-range controls that have low-mid centres rather than going for the usual low-mid / high-mid adjustments. Everyone knows that a good precision bass has lots 'going on in the mid-range', so having these selected centres compliments perfectly.

The "bite" button is the magic though and adds all of that top-end zing and clank shaping we have been hearing on Iron Maiden's releases for nigh on four decades.. and the speaker emulation switch engages an EVM12L tone that Steve has had in his backline for, I guess the same amount of time! »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Steve Harris SH1 Signature Sansamp

MSRP: (UK) £349 / (US) $415

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

Studio — Stadium

For fans of

Galloping fleet-fingered Bass Guitar

All-analog SansAmp technology

Rugged, all-metal housing

For more information, please visit:
tech21nyc.com

"At this price point **it is good to see** the inclusion (and I expect no less) of a worldwide power supply included..."

Tech 21 Steve Harris SH1 Signature Sansamp

Dialling your clean sound is a breeze with the blend knob, though in my video I concentrated on the tonal colour of the pedal itself.

In my video, I endeavoured to dial in a few different sounds that I hope come across in the mix to show that this pedal can do some brilliant 'classic' amp sounds as well as the signature colour, making it so useful - let's not forget you get a tuner thrown in too and a DI output (with ground lift) for running the pedal alone straight to PA or recording device. How easy can this get? It's really rather good.

At this price point it is good to see the inclusion (and I expect no less) of a worldwide power supply included. Tech 21's packaging is a tasteful embossed tin with the Tech 21 logo. A small gesture but something that makes this brand stand out in the boutique market.

This is a modern pedal designed to emulate Steve's classic bass tone. It's not just about that one tone as the pedal is incredibly flexible, but even in Steve's own words it nails what he wants from his sound in one small package. Yes, this is a boutique priced item, but it is built for the road (it's in Steve's set up) but will form the centre of any recording rig easily. It's a great unit.

END«

Rotosound ULTRAMAG Bass s

Dan Veall deals deep into the latest revolution in bass guitar technology from extraordina Rotosound, with his review of the Rotosound ULTRAMAG bass strings.

ROTOSOUND'S history starts long before the brand name was registered in around 1969 and the company have one of the most famous names in bass guitar strings. You only have to look at the long, long list of artists, endorsers and players from across the world to see that these strings are reliable from show to show, gig to gig, night after night.

Zooming up to the present day, the company, based in Sevenoaks, Kent, England employ a dedicated staff manufacturing a huge turn-out of strings every week.

One of my favourite points of note is that Jason How, son of James, the brand founder is every bit hands-on in the running of the company, right down to designing and building the high tolerance precision machines that wind each of the different types of string and their specific gauges. That really is impressive.

- And when he's not looking after machines, or running the company, you'll definitely find him on the stands at the many trade shows connecting with artists and casual players alike.

It's the feedback that he receives from the many players from around the world and keeping an eye on a shift in musician demand that allows for new products to be tested and brought to market - we have said bass goodies in today to look at and try out! »

strings

ary minds at

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT
Gi
RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Rotosound ULTRAMAG Bass strings

MSRP: (4 String) £30 / (5 String) £40

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

Longlasting and reliable stringsl

Inspiring tones

Great value for money

For more information, please visit:
rotosound.com

"Interestingly, long after recording the video, I picked up my '76 Precision featured in the review, and it was still **bang on in tune.** Thumbs up..!"

Rotosound ULTRAMAG Bass strings

Rotosound's Ultramag strings: Advertised in two different gauges of the four-string set and one set for a five-string bass, they come in airtight sealed bags ready to be installed fresh and corrosion-free.

For my review today, I thought, what better way to try out some brand new strings, but to show you one method to install your strings correctly and for them to maintain tuning ready for performance. Watch the video review to see the string install in detail and finish up with listening to the Ultramag Standard Gauge four-string set.

One of the things I wanted to mention in my video is that it is also wise to lay the bass down and apply downward pressure to the strings over the saddles and also either side of the nut too. This can help the strings bend nicely at the correct angle over the hardware. Then, last little string stretches to ensure everything is settled ready for that final tune-up.

Interestingly, long after recording the video, I picked up my '76 Precision featured in the review, and it was still bang on in tune. Thumbs up!

So, what do I think of the Ultramag strings now that I've had a good time to play them?

The strings definitely do sound different to the type I had on the bass before restring. That's understandable as the strings that came off were a different brand and made from different materials. What I can tell you though, is that in comparison, I noticed some extra midrange detail in the sound (as well as that 'new string zing' that I love) - and in some ways the instrument even seemed to be more responsive - which is usually the case when mid-range frequencies are accentuated. The feel of the strings is really nice too. If you can imagine the difference between Stainless Steel strings and their textured finish verses Nickel coated strings that seem smoother - well, you like these for the latter with less friction on softer fingers.

I like what they do for the tone of my bass - well, it is a precision bass after all and the detail is in the mid-range in my opinion - so anything that helps to lift the richness of that tonal area is of interest to me. The low end is nice and beefy without being woolly- which in tandem with the midrange could feel a little like the top end was less bright than say "ultra bright" style strings on the market. The top end is there though and a tweak of your tone control will give you what you need.

The Rotosound Ultramag strings feature 'Type 52 Alloy' that I understand refers to a 52% Nickel mix in the string wire. Either way, numbers aside, the result is a pleasing warmth in the sound.

END «

Strandberg Boden Bass Prog 4

The Strandberg Boden Bass Prog model was developed for bass players who seek a more
sound that can be fine-tuned with the utmost precision. Featuring a lightweight chambere
solid Flame Maple top and roasted Maple neck, the natural acoustic sound is balanced wit
with a bright cutting edge when needed with the bass's onboard preamp equalisation. **Da**

FINALLY! After a rather long time, I get my bass playing hands on what has promised to be a real performer; 'A bass of cutting edge technology, pristine workmanship and tone to die for.'

Slipping this incredibly lightweight machine out of its professional padded case, it was immediately obvious we were looking at a quality instrument … sometimes you just know, after all these years studying and reviewing instruments! (I've quite literally been geeking out for over 30 obsessed years, but that's a story for another day!)

It's an all-star cast when it comes to the components that make up this instrument long before we pop the thing down for a quick spin plugged in. We used the super GR Bass Dual 800 for this review paired with my Bergantino cabinets, mic'd, and DI'd.

Of course, you will notice the body shape and its contours and, for note clarity, string-to-string balance and tone, the fan-fret multi-scale neck.

The Strandberg Boden Prog 4 we have here is crazy light - this is I believe one of the lightest instruments I have ever reviewed. I think the Hofner 500/1 Greenline Bass I reviewed may be in competition for feeling like it is helium-filled!

The Specification of the Boden Prog 4 is impressive; the lightweight Swamp Ash body is carefully chambered for additional weight saving without detriment to tone and deep arm, torso and heel carves aren't just about looking striking, they are ergonomic too. I would already recommend this instrument to those with long term back and shoulder issues even before we plug in and play! So well balanced.

The top is both modest with its semi-gloss polyurethane finish yet

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RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Strandberg Boden Bass Prog 4

MSRP: (UK) £2650 / (US) $2995

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Impressive playability
- High-end features
- Standout looks

For more information, please visit:
bassdirect.co.uk/bass_guitar_specialists

"Interestingly, long after recording the video, I picked up my '76 Precision featured in the review, and it was still **bang on in tune.** Thumbs up..!"

Strandberg Boden Bass Prog 4

stainless steel frets on a 20" radius board is so comfortable! - The neck relief is very close to being flat on this example making slurs of any sort easy; thus legato and fast-playing feel effortless. »

COMPANY OF GREATNESS

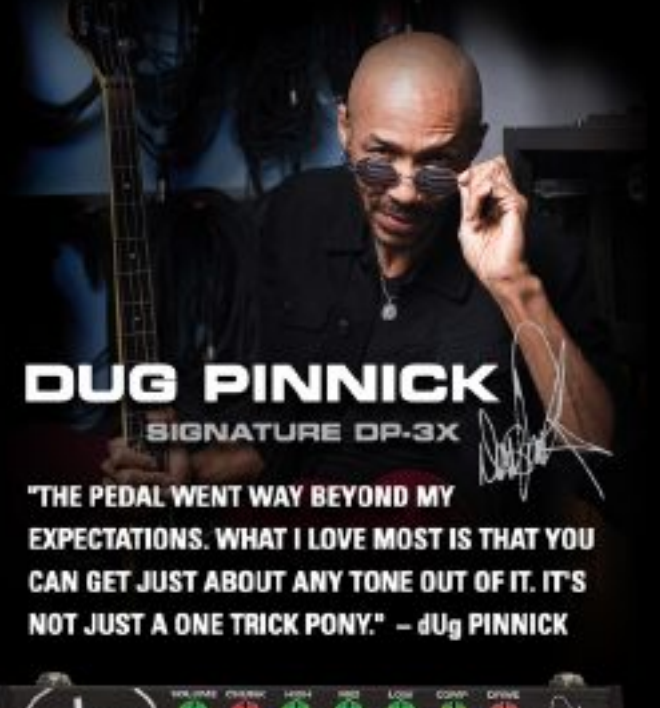
STEVE HARRIS
SIGNATURE SH1

"ANDREW BARTA IS A REAL BOFFIN. WHATEVER HE'S DONE, HE'S MADE THIS THING SOUND LIKE MY SOUND. SO, WELL DONE, MATE." – STEVE HARRIS

[BOFFIN = TECHNICAL EXPERT]

GEDDY LEE
SIGNATURE YYZ AND DI-2112

"THESE AWESOME PEDALS TAKES THE MOST ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FROM MY GED-2112 RACKMOUNT AND POPS THEM INTO REALLY PORTABLE, SMALLER PACKAGES." – GEDDY LEE



DUG PINNICK
SIGNATURE DP-3X

"THE PEDAL WENT WAY BEYOND MY EXPECTATIONS. WHAT I LOVE MOST IS THAT YOU CAN GET JUST ABOUT ANY TONE OUT OF IT. IT'S NOT JUST A ONE TRICK PONY." – dUg PINNICK

TECH 21

Analog Brilliance℠

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.strandberg*

"Topping off the instrument, we have **'glow in the dark'** green Luminlay inlay markers to help you on dark stages, a really nice touch..."

The deep contours aren't just about sharp looks, it feels to me that a huge amount of thought has gone into comfort and ease of access where it really is needed. Yes, I had to adjust for a short amount of time to become more familiar with the instrument, but by the time it came to roll the cameras I was starting to feel like I could go out and gig the bass without any issues. I've already owned a few fan-fret instruments, so I have a head start on feeling comfortable with those.

Comfort was a huge thumbs up, but what about tones? Electronics?

Prog 4 comes equipped with a pair of very high-quality pickups from Nordstrand. These are the Big Rig models that have a super clear and open sound to them when paired with my own Bergantino reference rig. Strandberg has opted to install the Darkglass ToneCapsule preamplifier which I rather like due to its eq centres that better match bass guitar. The master volume has an EQ bypass too for passive operation should you wish. I pushed both the bass and mids up just a small amount and kept the treble backed off just a little on the EQ and found that the 50/50 blend on the mix pot was spot on for a big sound from a smaller-bodied bass. Nothing is lacking here!

Strung with D'Addario NYXL strings as standard, the hardware is all Strandberg too. I don't need to say that it operates smoothly and accurately as well as looking super cutting-edge. You may already know that I am a fan of headless basses and see the benefits of the design. Can't wait to try the five-string version!

Topping off the instrument, we have 'glow in the dark' green Luminlay inlay markers to help you on dark stages, a really nice touch.

A very impressive instrument that demonstrates that this brand is thinking about comfort and playability without forgetting tone.

END«

THE Columns

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

GI78

CLASS IS BACK IN SESSION

EXCLUSIVE COLUMNS EXCLUSIVE COLUMNS

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Taylor
GUITARS

"OPEN STRINGS LICKS FOR ACOUSTIC GUITAR"

Earlier this year, Taylor Guitars announced the release of its brand-new acoustic body shape – the Grand Theater. Known as the Taylor GT, the company's latest body shape introduces a new category of acoustic guitar in size, feel and sound. The result is a guitar that's incredibly fun and easy to play, with a big sonic personality worthy of any pro player's toolbox. Here's **Nick Jennison** with the full review, while **Sam Bell** brings us another new and exclusive Gi column.

I've said it before, I'll say it again: small acoustic guitars are the best. Don't get me wrong, I love the roar of a dreadnought as much as the next guitarist, but even with my significantly larger-than-average frame I find the sheer size (and squareness) of the body to be off-putting. You can't hold a Jumbo close to you the way you can with a parlour guitar. Smaller guitars are normally sweeter, easier to play and much, much easier to travel with. »

"There are lots of
the video, but it's
experimenting a
can find some..."

Unfortunately, they do tend to lack sor
would seem we're fated to contend with
and developing a vice-grip playing tech

The GT (Grand Theater) is a response
It's a whole new body shape that's based
significantly smaller. The width at the lo
but the body is shorter and significar
all body types - even big dudes lik
and projection (more on that in

The neck is slimmed down too
as a 25.5" scale neck that has be
and is intended to give the same
without having to detune or go c
playing electric guitars, so I have
acoustic guitars to be way too
friction requires more pressu
and even shred-inspired le
you consider how full-bo

The tone. Clear and arti
Standard Taylor stuff. B
remarkable. This thing p
low strings. This is no do
Details on this are scant a
creations (much like the V-

great shapes in always **worth** nd seeing if you

me of the authority of bigger instruments. So it
n warping our own bodies to fit those of our guitars,
nique in the process. Unless you have a Taylor GT.

to the countless requests for a solid wood GS Mini.
d on Taylor's Grand Orchestra body shape, but
ower bout is about the same as a Grand Concert,
ntly shallower. It's a very comfy size for players of
e myself - that isn't so small that it sacrifices punch
a moment!)

, sporting a 24.125" scale length - exactly the same
een capo'd off at the 1st fret. This is not by accident,
slinky play feel of a 25.5" scale guitar tuned to Eb,
down a string gauge. I spend about 95% of my time
e a pretty light left hand touch and find 12s on
heavy (especially coated strings, where the reduced
ure). This was absolutely not the case on the GT,
ead lines felt effortless. Seriously impressive, when
odied this guitar's tone is. Speaking of which…

culate with lots of sustain across the fretboard.
ut for a guitar this size the low end weight is utterly
punches like a much larger guitar, especially on the
oubt thanks to the asymmetrical "C-Class" bracing.
t the moment, but it's another of Andy Powers's
-Class bracing introduced a few years » ago to much

Getting More From Your Open Chords

acclaim), this time inspired by cantilever technology. Your guess is as good as mine, but it would seem that the bass side is braced more loosely for weight and projection while the treble side is more tightly braced for sustain and clarity. Whatever it is, it works a treat!

While we're talking tone, we should also talk about the woods Taylor have chosen for this guitar. The top is solid Sitka spruce and the neck is mahogany - again, standard stuff. However, the fingerboard is eucalyptus and the back and sides are reclaimed urban ash. Both of these urban woods are sustainable, because these trees are felled in cities and not taken from forests, greatly reducing waste. They also happen to be very pleasant looking and sounding woods, with urban ash offering a brilliant treble and articulate midrange that is no doubt offset by the booming lows from the "C-Class" bracing.

Taylor's GT feels like a guitar made for me. It's supremely comfortable to play without any sacrifices in power or projection. It's small enough to take anywhere, it's made of sustainable timbers and it's available with Taylor's superb ES2 electronics. It's perhaps a little pricey for what some will consider a "travel" guitar, but it's actually much much more than that. Go play one and see for yourself.

END «

Elixir

Elixir

MAXIMISING YOUR PRACTICE SESSIONS

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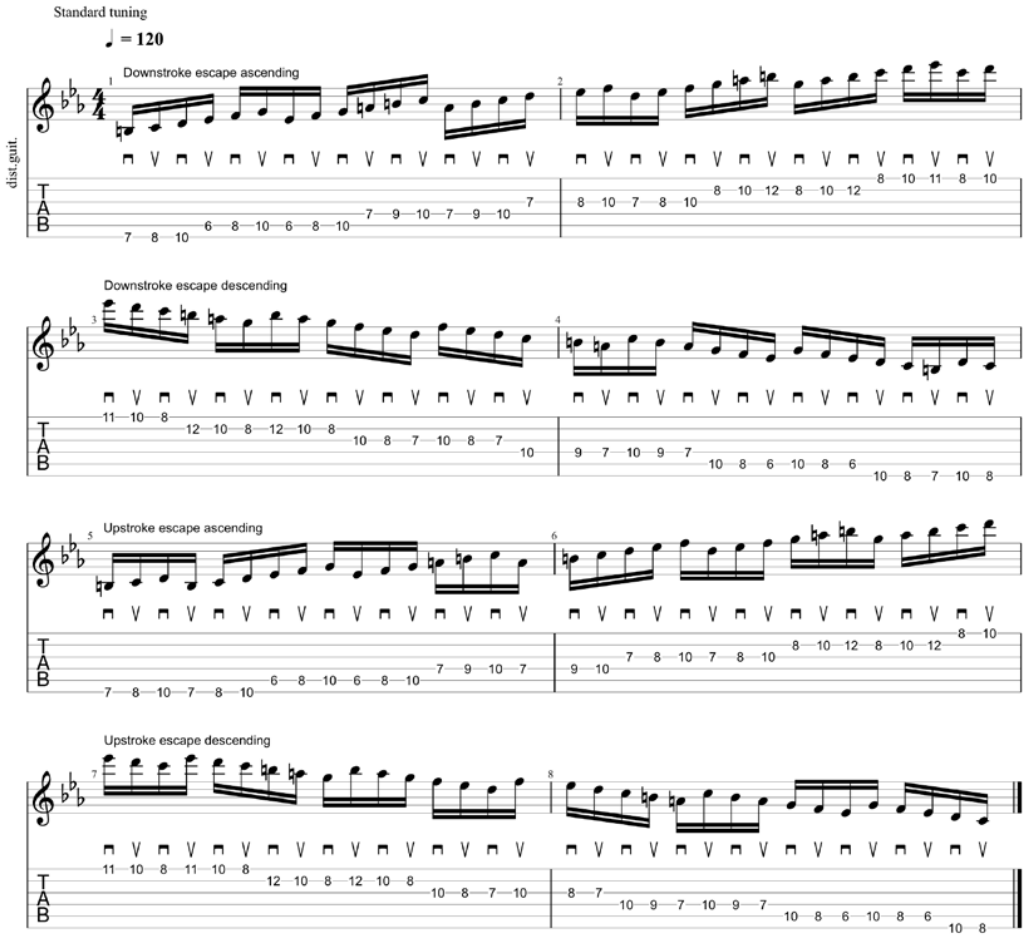
Nick Jennison returns with a series of six essential guitar lessons to help you make the most of out of your practice time. From pentatonic economy picking, legato drills and melodic minor workouts, Nick has got your woodshedding time covered from here to next Christmas with this superb course.

PART 1: MELODIC MINOR PICKING DRILL



Melodic Minor Picking Drill | Maximising Your Practice Sessions - Part 1

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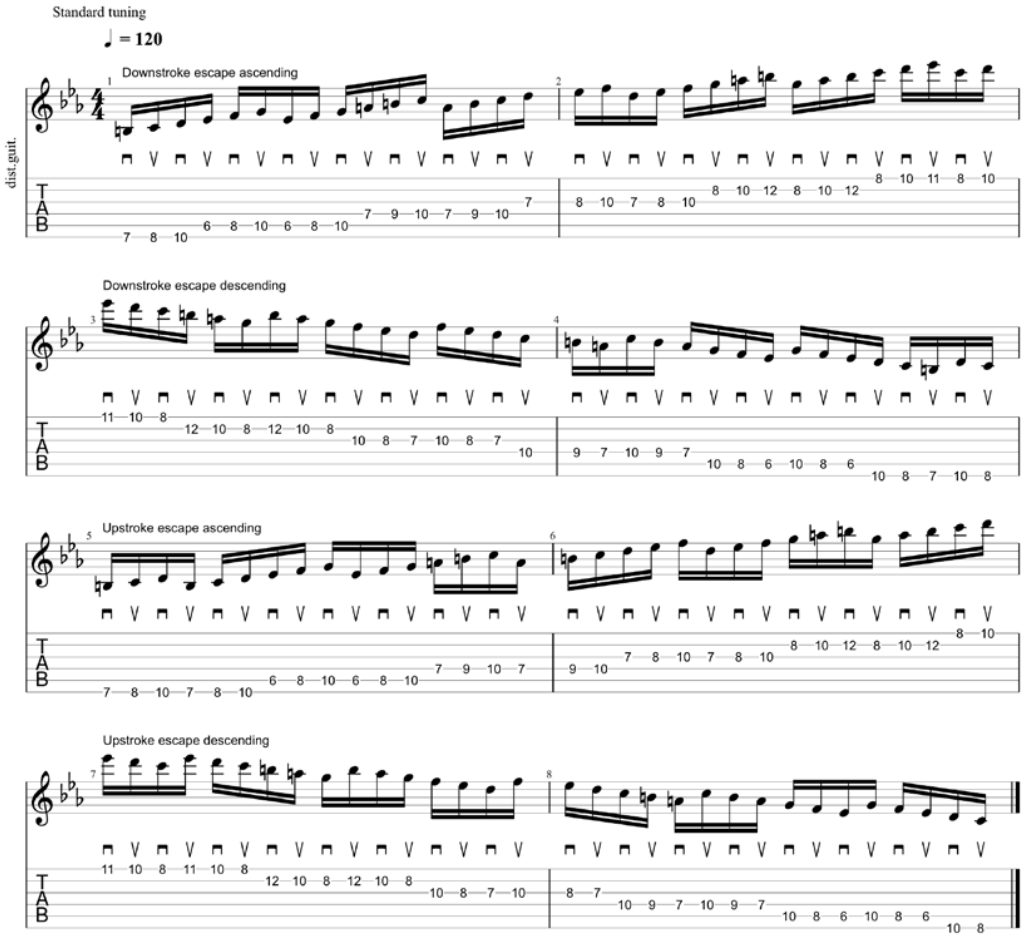
PART 2: PENTATONIC ECONOMY PICKING DRILL



Pentatonic Economy Picking Drill | Maximising Your Practice Sessions - Part 2

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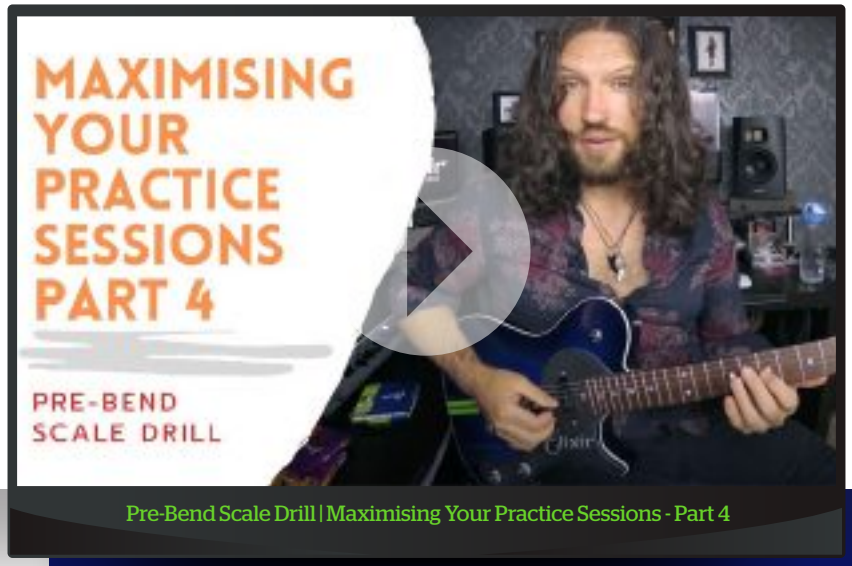
PART 3: PIANISSIMO IMPROVISATION DRILL

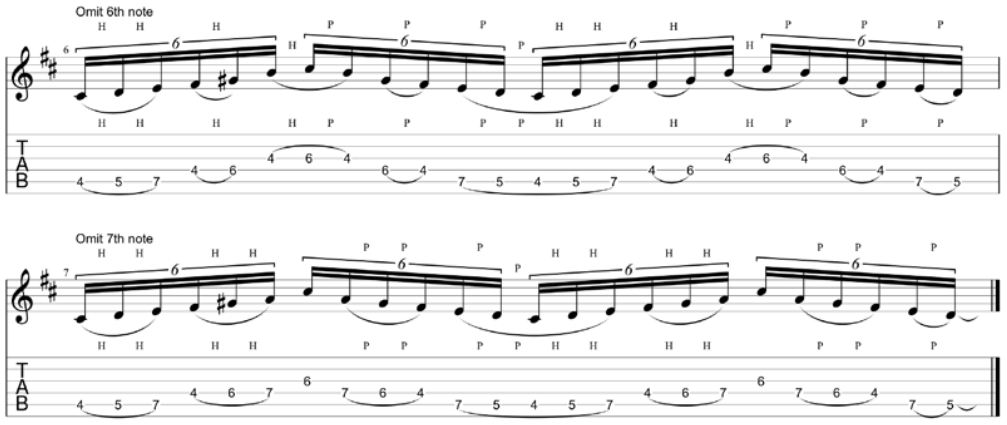
Pianissimo Improvisation Drill | Maximising Your Practice Sessions - Part 3

PART 4: PRE-BEND SCALES



Pre-Bend Scale Drill | Maximising Your Practice Sessions - Part 4

PART 5: LEGATO OMMISSIONS



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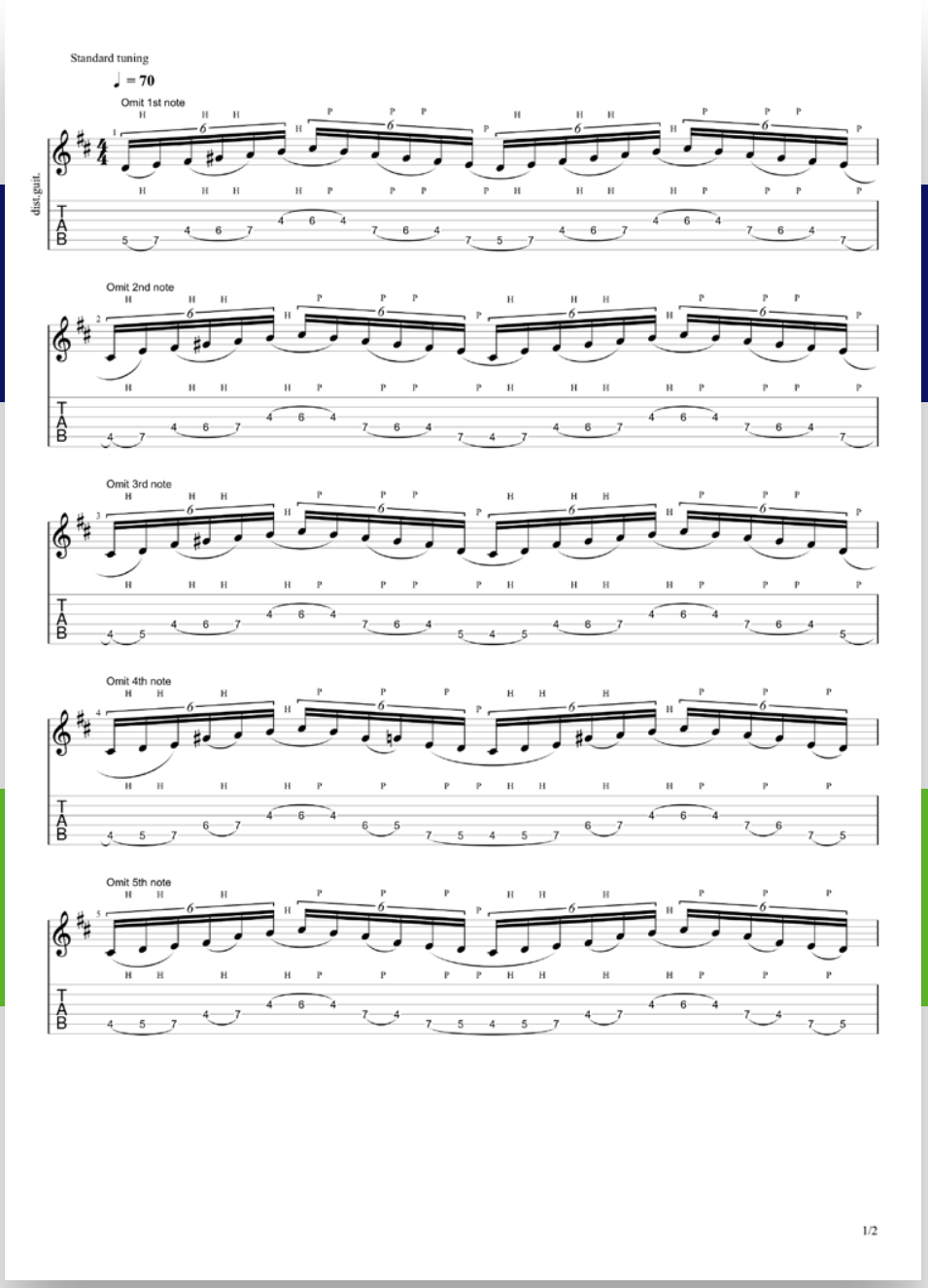
PART 5: LEGATO OMMISSIONS (CONT)



PART 6: CROSSPICKING FINGER DISPLACEMENT DRILL

Rhythm
Guitar
Concepts

Guitar Interactive Magazine regular, **Sam Bell** is back with a brand new and exclusive column focused on getting the most out rhythm guitar playing.

Lesson 3: Feeling 16th Notes

Introduction:

Welcome to my third instalment on Rhythm Guitar Concepts, in the last issue we dived into the world of really understanding and feeling 8th notes as a way of expanding our rhythmic knowledge. As mentioned in the previous column everything we look at from this point in the series I highly suggest is practiced using some of the concepts from the first instalment as this will really help you hone in on your ability to internalise and control your timing! In this column I am going to take a look at the next subdivision along from 8th notes: 16th notes or as your high school music teacher would have called them 'Semi-Quavers'. In this series I am going to use the American system of '16th' notes as I feel it makes a lot more sense in common time (4/4) to divide the bar up into these fractions making it much easier to visualise how our note sub-divisions work. If you are wondering what I am going on about, please first take a look at my previous column in the series 'Feeling 8th Notes' once you have done that, come back here for even more juicy info! If you don't know what 8th notes are, then you are in the right place! If you already understand the basics of subdivision you may well be thinking 'where are you taking this Sam?' and you would be right to ask, you might notice you asked the same question in the previous column, however let me put the emphasis »

here on 'being responsible' for your 8th and 16th note sub-divisions, focusing how well can you feel them if they are displaced and how you can work your whole guitar vocabulary around them in order to create great variations and most importantly increase your ability to groove…

What is a 16th note?

Quite simply a 16th note is dividing the bar of 4 quarter beats into 16ths. This gives us 4 sub-divisions per beat now. We still count the down and up beats (8th notes) but now we have two extra and equal divisions either side of our 8th notes. We can count them like this…

'One E and A Two E and A'

commonly this is shorthanded without sheet music like this:

'1 e + a 2 e + a '

As we learned in the previous column, the numbered beats are the down beat quarter notes and the 'ands' are the up-beats dividing these downbeats into 8ths. With the addition of 16th notes we also have the addition of the 'e' and 'a'. Being able to count these whilst playing will give you a matrix style view into the smaller workings of rhythm. 16th notes are were Funk Guitarists and Shredders alike feel time. This is where things get a little more syncopated than before, this is where groove really begins to reside.

How does this help me get better at rhythm guitar Sam you great looking Man? (Part 2)

Nice question mate, being weary of 16th note sub-divisions whilst playing is very important, you are probably playing a lot of 16th note strumming patterns or riffs already, these are the building blocks of so many styles of playing and groove. But by analysing what you are playing a bit deeper by working out where you are playing your 16th notes in a bar you can really dig into the timing and sound a lot more 'locked in' with the groove. You will also be able to focus in on details such as muted strums, ghost notes etc when deciphering sheet music/TAB. Not only this but your playing will also sound a lot stronger if you can sense where the 16th notes are through the measures of music you are playing. If you are improvising in a funk style or even soloing, you can use these syncopated 'e's and 'a's as a way of bringing some additional groove to your overall playing.

Feeling the 16th notes!

Much like I presented in the previous column on 8th notes, you can practice your 16th note time feel in the same kind of fashion. Treating each 16th in a bar of 4/4 as if it has its own house number, each one will create a certain cool syncopated groove and can really make simple parts with lots of space sound super funky! In the video example of this lesson I count through a bar and only play on certain 16th notes. A practice routine could be only playing on the 'e' of beat two, from

Lesson 3: Feeling 16th Notes

here you could practice feeling the same division at different tempos, you could phrase licks or chord sequences starting on this note and finishing on the same note on the next bar, or you could slowly develop complex single note lines that build on only select 16h notes in the bar. I would love you to try to get to 'know' these places in the bar as well as you know your open C chord or first position pentatonic. It seems very basic and it kind of is, but its something all musicians of any level can benefit from practicing.

Summary:

As with the last column, take riffs and chord strumming patterns that you already know, see if you can count through them. Even transcribe them if you can! Really work out what you are doing. Looking deep into things that come naturally to you can be a great way of really making sense of challenges that come down the line, but also help solidify your rhythm playing. Enjoy all 16 of your 16th notes and I will see you next issue for some tasty rhythm playing!

END«

FIN

TABLATURE DOWNLOADS

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Giorgio Serci CREATIVE FINGERSTYLE

Giorgio Serci, award winning guitarist, composer, arranger and long-time guitar tutor at The Academy of Contemporary Music, continues his acoustic column in this issue of Guitar Interactive Magazine.

Hello there and welcome to Guitar Interactive's Quiet Room.

In this column I would like to share an arrangement of one of the most recorded songs ever, 'Yesterday' by The Beatles. Voted at the best song of the 20th century by a BBC poll and n.1 song of all times by MTV. Not many people know that the original title was 'Scrambled Eggs'! Paul McCartney wrote the music first as a result of a sudden inspiration during his dreams. He quickly got up and sat on the piano to crystallize its melodic and harmonic content. However, he couldn't come up with the right lyrics, for quite a while, until a journey to Portugal where eventually the inspiration came, and the rest is history.

The original version is in F major and it contains a few compositional gems. The first, is that although the song starts in a major key, it morphs straight away to its relative minor key, giving the piece a certain melancholic quality, which is often associated to minor tonalities.

The second, and the most unique in my opinion, is the wonderfully fluid use of »

the 5th mode of D melodic minor (A Mixolydian b6) in the 'all my trouble seem so far away' part.

Next, there are some beautifully effective counterpoints between the melody and the root movement. This is evident in the second bar of the chorus, in the underlined lyrics: 'why she had to go..'

Although a solo arrangement in F would work really well, I decided to transpose it in G, so that I could make the most of open strings and introduce another compositional technique, normally described as melodic imitation or Q&A. This is evident in the opening phrase 'Yesterday' which is repeated up an octave the first verse while the opposite happens in the following verse, but also throughout the arrangement.

In a few passages I have also used one of my favourite melodic articulations, the so called 'campanella' technique.

HARMONIC INGREDIENTS:

The harmonic content of the original is fairly simple, however, not predictable.

In a few passages I have decided to explore a few harmonic substitutions, for an added element of surprise. A recurrent futured is the use of inversions used to enhance the melodic qualities of the bass lines in the lower register.

NB. Please note that (b) next to I, means chord I first inversion, namely with the 3rd on the bass.

Another important harmonic ingredient is the frequent use of open strings to complement the main melody. This is a very effective way of enhancing the melody in a relatively easy way, as the open strings' sustain will add 'legato' qualities to the piece.

RHYTHMIC INGREDIENTS:

Being a ballad, the rhythmic content in the arrangement is quite linear.

MELODIC INGREDIENTS:

The melodic content is mainly in G major/E minor (with natural and melodic minor ideas) and has a singing-like quality throughout.

ARTICULATIONS:

The choice or articulations is very important in the construction of any composition, as these can be seen as the 'how we say our story'. A few articulations were used such as grace notes, and the afore-mentioned 'campanella', as notated in the embedded PDF.

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

The picking-hand pattern is predominantly as follows:

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

'p' focuses predominantly on the bass lines, while 'i, m, a' play the melody and counter-melody or harmony part. »

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

Next we are going to look at the left hand part (chord shapes):

BAR 1: Middle f on fret 3 of E, open D and index on fret 2 of G followed by open G. Next, open D, G and B with ring f on fret 5 of e followed by fret 3 of e.

BAR 2: Middle f on fret e of E, ring f on fret 2 of D, little f on fret 2 of G with open B. Barre' on fret 2, ring f on fret 4 of D, little f on fret 4 and then 5 of B, fret 2 of e and 3 with middle f.

BAR 3: Open E, G and B index on fret 2 and open e. Index on fret 2 of A, little f on fret 4 of D, open G and B. Middle f on fret 2 of D and open D.

BAR 4: Ring f on fret 3 of A, middle f on fret 2 of D, open G, index on fret 1 of B and open e. Middle f on fret 2 of E, open D, ring f on fret 2 of G and little f on fret 3 of B, followed by index on fret 1 of B, open B and fret 2 of G.

BAR 5: Ring f on fret 3 of E, open D and G, and index on fret 1 of B followed by open B. Next, ring f on fret 3 of A, open D and G. Middle f on fret 2 of E, ring on fret 2 of A with open D and then open A.

BAR 6: Open E and G, index on fret 2 of A, middle f on fret 2 of D, little f on fret 4 of D, open G and B. Little f on fret 4 of A, index on fret 2 of D and middle f on fret 2 of G, then fret 2 of D.

BAR 7: Ring f on fret 3 of A, index on fret 2 of D, open G and B. Then, ring on fret 3 of E with B, D, G index on fret 2 of G and open B.

BAR 8: Let the last chord in bar 7 ring.

BAR 9: As bar 1 but swap beat 1 with 2 and add descending 'campanella' passage as depicted in the TAB and score.

BAR 10: As bar 2

BAR 11: As bar 3, but swap open E with C, middle f on fret 3 of A.

BAR 12: As bar 4, but add counter-melody, fret 2, 4 and open D.

BAR 13: Barre' on fret 1 of D and B, middle f on fret 2 of G. Open B, harmonised with middle f on fret 4 of E, ring f on fret 4 of D, index of fret 3 of G. Slide from fret 4 to 2 of G and open G.

BAR 14: Middle f on fret 3 of A, index on fret 2 of D and open B. Barre' on fret 2 of G and D with little f on fret 4 of A. Fret 2 of D.

BAR 15: Ring f on fret 5 of A, open D and G. Ring f on fret 6 of A with open B, index on fret 4 of D, middle f on fret 5 of G and open B.

BAR 16: Arpeggiate the last 3 notes freely.

Congratulations, you have completed section A.

BAR 17: Middle f on fret 2 of A with open Bring and little f on fret 2 of D and G. Middle f on fret 2 of A, index on fret 1 of D, ring f on fret 2 of G and open B.

BAR 18: Index on fret 2 of D with open e, followed by open G and B. Open D with middle f on fret 2 of e followed by open G and B. Middle f on fret 3 of A, ring f on fret 3 of e, followed by open G and B. Fret 2 and open e.

BAR 19: Open D, index on fret 2 of G, ring on fret 3 of B middle on fret 2 of e and open e. Arpeggiate last 3 notes.

BAR 20: Ring f on fret 3 of E with B, D, G index on fret 2 of G and open B. Then pull-off from fret 2 to open G, little f on fret 4 of D and 2 with index.

BAR 21-23: Similar to 17-19 (check TAB)

BAR 24: Middle f on fret 3 of E, little f on fret 3 of e, open G and ring on fret 3 of B. Little f on fret 4 of E, ring on fret 3 of D, open G and index on fret 1 of B. Next, ring on fret 3 of A, index on fret 1 of D, middle f on fret 2 of G and open B.

BAR 25-31: Similar to 1-7 (check TAB)

BAR 32-33: Similar to 6-7 (check TAB) – Add index on fret 3 of B and e, ring on fret 5 of e and little f on fret 7 of e. »

Strum the last note with open B, G and D and Tap fret 3 of E with RH index.

Congratulations, you have completed 'Yesterday'!

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

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

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

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

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

This will complete this creative fingerstyle lesson.

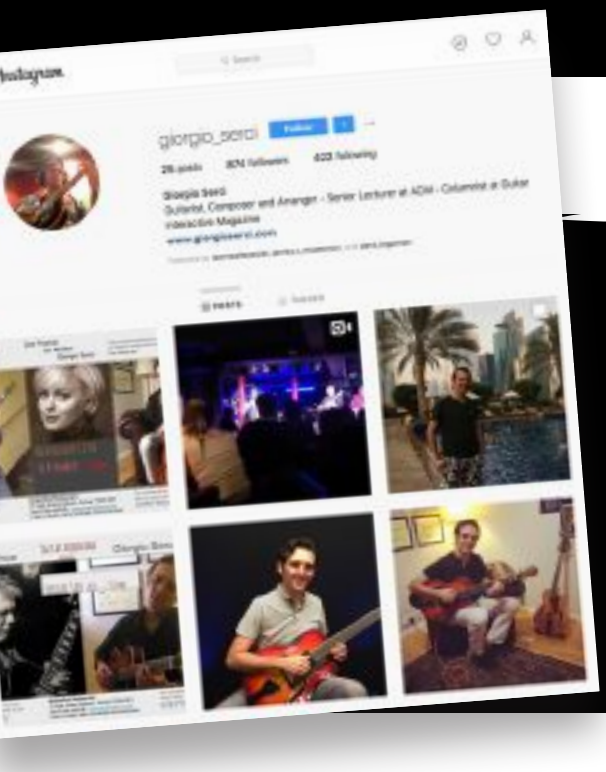
I hope you will enjoy playing this study piece and that this will give you some ideas on how to write your own solo guitar compositions. If you would like to listen any more of my compositions, please check the previous issues of Guitar Interactive Magazine as well as any of my CDs.

Till the next time, Good-bye!

Giorgio Serci

END«

Check me out here at
www.giorgioserci.com



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

Until the next time - Good-bye.

Go beyond just licks, and learn the secrets of how to construct the perfect melodic guitar solo packed with head-turning phrasing.

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