

EXCLUSIVE LESSONS FROM NICK JENNISON » SAM BELL » GIORGIO SERCI

Guitar *Interactive* 79

ZAKK
WYDLE
TECH SESSION

ROYAL BLOOD

MIKE KERR TALKS NEW ALBUM **'TYPHOONS'** AND MORE

+ **INTERVIEWS**

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Welcome to ISSUE

79

Hello and welcome to issue 79 of Guitar Interactive Magazine!



Editor
Jonathan Graham

After two UK number one albums, over two million record sales and an endless array of international acclaim, you might've thought you knew what to expect from British rock duo Royal Blood. However, the band is primed to push things even further

with the release of their eagerly anticipated third album *'Typhoons,'* on April 30th via Warner Records. Guitar Interactive talks exclusively to the Royal Blood bassist and frontman Mike Kerr in this exclusive feature.

We catch up with Wolf Hoffmann, renowned metal musician and guitarist for German classic metal band Accept. Hoffmann has been in the game since 1976—and shows no signs of stopping, with Accept's latest studio album *'Too Mean To Die'* dropping last month.

For Lee Ritenour, after a dazzling five-decade and counting career, there aren't many 'firsts' left to achieve, however, with his new album *'Dreamcatcher'* he's *delivered* just that; his very first solo guitar record. The man who's done just about all there is talks about his new album and more with Jonathan Graham.

As usual, with every issue, we have a brand-new Tech Session. In this edition, Nick Jennison delivers a breakdown of one of metal guitars biggest names: Zakk Wylde. Also, don't forget about this issue's whole host of the latest and best gear reviews from around the world of guitar, with our team of world-class gear reviewers offering their unique insight, expertise, and personality which as always, I hope you will enjoy. However, if that's still not enough, there's all of our exclusive lessons from Nick Jennison, Sam Bell & Giorgio Serci.

See you next time!

Guitar Interactive

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Guitar Interactive

Welcome to Guitar Interactive Issue 79

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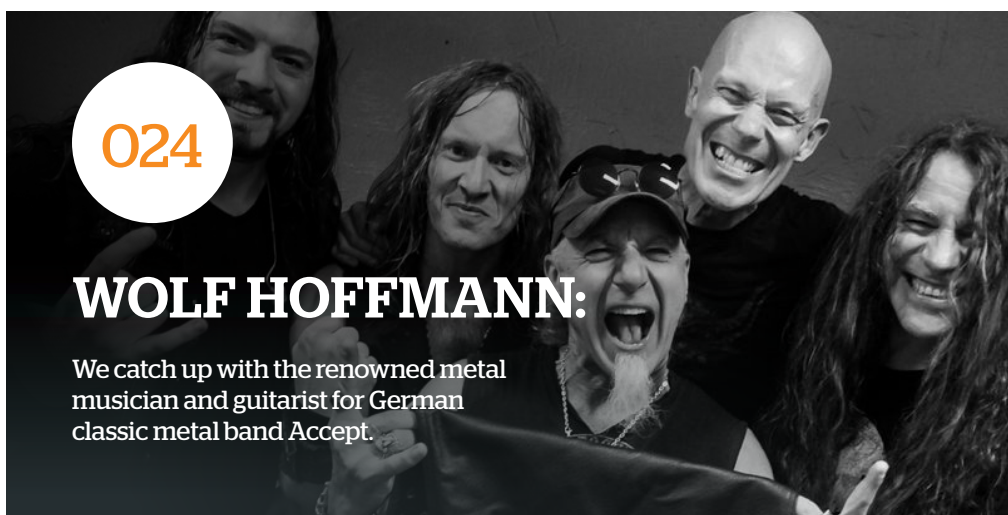
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After two UK number one albums, over two million record sales and an endless array of international acclaim, you might've thought you knew what to expect from British rock duo Royal Blood. However, the band is primed to push things even further with the release of their eagerly anticipated third album 'Typhoons,' on April 30th via Warner Records. Guitar Interactive talks exclusively to the **Royal Blood** bassist and frontman **Mike Kerr** in this exclusive feature.

We catch up with **Wolf Hoffmann**, renowned metal musician and guitarist for German classic metal band Accept. Hoffmann has been in the game since 1976—and shows no signs of stopping, with **Accept's** latest studio album 'Too Mean To Die' dropping last month.

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IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH
GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES

BATTLE

After two UK number one albums, over two million record sales and an endless array of accolades, Royal Blood are living up to the hype. However, those preconceptions were shattered with the release of their third album, *How to Live*, a melting pot of fiery rock riffs, catchy hooks and danceable beats, delivering something completely new. Now, Royal Blood is primed to push things even further with the release of their eagerly anticipated fourth album, *At Your Service*. **Jonathan Graham** talks exclusively to the Royal Blood bassist and frontman Mike Kerr.



ROYAL BLOOD MIKE KERR

MIKE KERR:

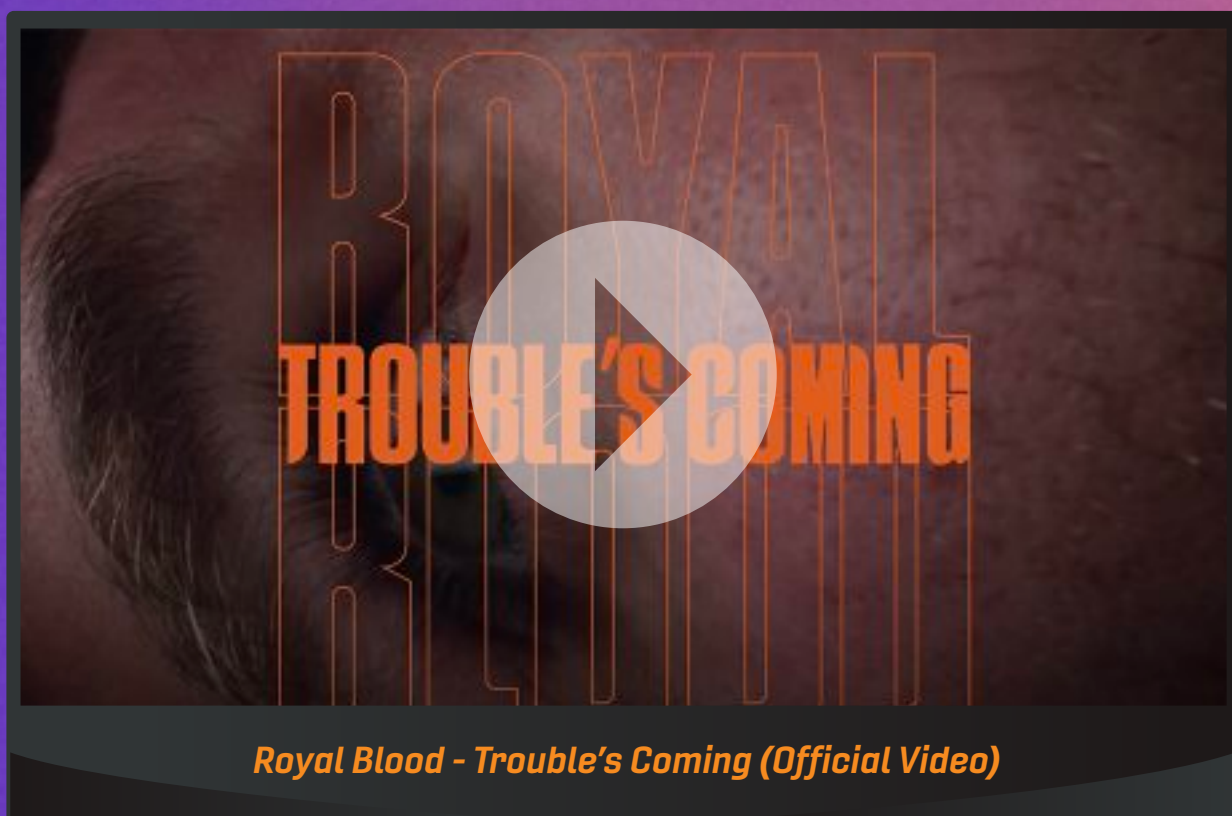
ROYAL

Of international acclaim, you might've thought you knew what to expect from British rock duo. Their hit single "Trouble's Coming" last summer. The band's first new music in three years presents something fresh, unexpected and yet entirely in tune with what they'd forged their reputation on. Their long-anticipated third album 'Typhoons,' on April 30th via Warner Records. Guitar Interactive's exclusive feature. »

THE combination of bass and drums is an undeniable staple in rock music. The challenge posed to many artists is how to make it their own—how to take two instruments and create a sound that has never been done before while at the same time staying true to rock roots. If you're wondering if that is even possible anymore with all the dilution and bastardisation of rock music of recent years, Royal Blood is here to restore your faith in rock music.

Emerging from Brighton, England, Royal Blood is made up of bassist-frontman Mike Kerr and drummer Ben Thatcher. Originally, the band was formed by Kerr and drummer Matt Swan, and they recorded their first EP in Brisbane; however, Kerr decided to move back to the UK, where he reconnected with Thatcher (the two had initially met in 2005, where they were in a band together called Flavour Country). By 2013, Thatcher officially replaced Swan, and for the next year, they would play at multiple festivals and shows, including a supporting slot with the Arctic Monkeys.

What sets Royal Blood apart from so many other rock duos is the fact that they don't sound like a duo. Due to Kerr's creative bass playing and pedal work, the band often sounds like it has multiple players, each with an integral part—which, granted, is not that far



“We like **very dense, lean** songwriting... by the time we get to recording, we’ve already trimmed the fat.”



Original Photo ©Mads Perch

off from reality. Kerr’s bass and pedals do the heavy lifting of a couple of other players. His wall-of-sound mix of bass and guitar-like tones are as powerful as they are original.

In 2014, their eponymous debut studio album ‘Royal Blood’ was released to critical acclaim and was verified as the fastest-selling British rock debut album in three years in the UK. Heralded by rock critics and adored by rock fans, ‘Royal Blood’ was just a taste of what was to come from the band. »

Three years later, in 2017, the duo released their next album, 'How Did We Get So Dark?', which debuted at number one on the UK Albums Chart. 'How Did We Get So Dark?' showcased a slightly softer, more intimate sound than their first eponymous album; however, compositionally, both albums are somewhat similar to each other. Although the album was easily of the same calibre as 'Royal Blood,' some critics began to speculate that the act might be a one-trick pony, but the band has proved themselves to be anything but once again, with their two hit singles from the upcoming 2021 release 'Typhoons,' taking Royal Blood in an exciting new musical direction.

The first single from 'Typhoons' is "Trouble's Coming," a fast-paced, hard-hitting wall of sound that stands out from Royal Blood's previous work. Although it features the heavy bass and strong percussion that avid rock fans have come to associate with the duo, it also takes on a certain kind of danceability—one that is truly welcome. The song juxtaposes lyrics about psychosis and an ominous feeling that trouble is just around the corner with a grooviness and accessibility that Kerr and Thatcher have mastered.

The second single, "Typhoons," the album's title track, features the same spirit that makes you want to drum on your dashboard. The Daft Punk and Justice inspirations are almost palpable in this song, and come together to form a track that is both rock-heavy and club-ready...as soon as they are ready to open their doors to us once again, that is.

We actually have COVID-19 to thank for Royal Blood's reimagined sonic direction—although the band was halfway done with the album when the pandemic halted everything, Kerr explained that the time away urged him towards making something personal to him, yet different from what Royal Blood has released previously.

If "Trouble's Coming" and "Typhoons" have anything in common besides their high energy, it is the way they have ramped up the excitement for this new full-length release, out April 30th, 2021. Mike Kerr talks about the making of 'Typhoons,' and more with Gi's Jonathan Graham:

Jonathan Graham: Mike, I for one, am extremely excited to hear what you've got in store for us all with 'Typhoons.' The «Trouble's Coming» and «Typhoons» singles have given us a hint of a much more sonically layered album than your previous records? Was that the goal from the outset?

Mike Kerr: I would say it's much more of a studio record than before. This time around, we recognised the undeniable difference between the live show and listening to a record at home, and trying to get that energy of what everyone loves about the live show seemed a bit counterproductive. We spent a lot more time trying to figure out how to give everything its own space. In particular, the guitar sounds, which have ended up texturally quite different than previous albums, and not just relying on flat-out distortion the whole time. Sometimes when you just distort everything, it doesn't make it sound very »



**EXIST IN THE
MOMENT**

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heavy and actually starts to become smaller and smaller. So, this time it was like, how clean can we get everything? In a way, cleaner is sometimes much more raw for this type of music.

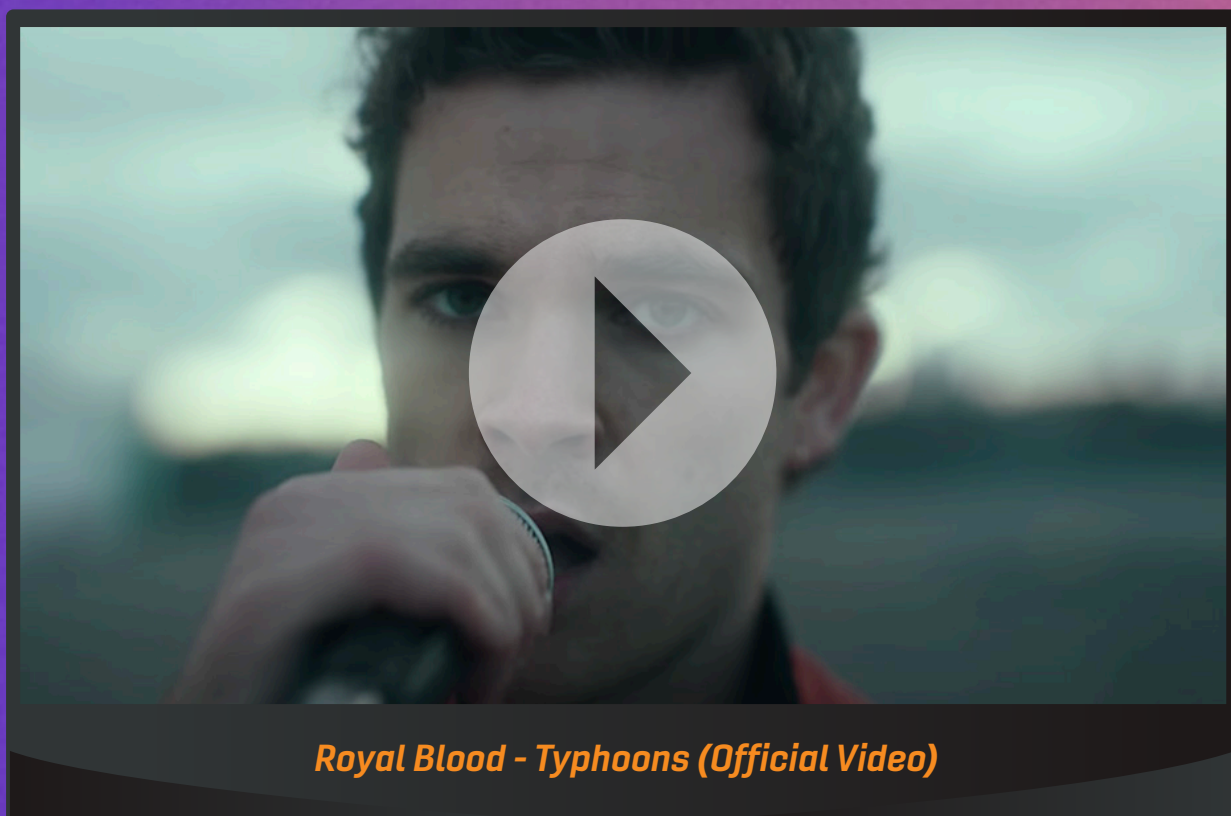
JG: That's always been something that's particularly impressed me about your voice, especially from the perspective that you're never drawn into distorting it just because the music is heavy. Was that always the case, or did it take you some time to get to a vocal style that worked for you?

MK: At the very beginning, I just wanted every effect possible on my voice. I don't think it's an uncommon story that the singer of the band didn't really want to be a singer, but I just did it as I wanted to be in a band,

and we couldn't find a singer. I felt like I was taking one for the team a little bit, so I wanted everything on there, and it needed to be quiet and buried. As time went on, though, my confidence built as a singer and now I just want my vocal louder and dryer. Especially after I realised so many of the records I love have vocals that are all kind of dry...and they're loud. I think it's to do with confidence, but as my writing has improved, I think I've written better vocal parts that, in a way, I'm happier for them to be louder.

JG: What were some of those records that you drew the inspiration from then?

MK: A lot of Rick Rubin produced stuff, like Rage Against the Machine that's just classically dead. There's no reverb on anything, and





Original Photo © Dean Martindale

very dry, which some people don't like, but I've got a theory that this type of sound ages much better. It's harder to identify the era without a reverb sound, I think. 'Songs for the Deaf' is a great example as it's just timeless, and the vocals are so dead. I also enjoy this characteristic in pop music too; I prefer it over the vocals being buried in the mix.

JG: You have a tremendous, and most importantly, a stand-out bass tone on your

tracks. What's been the key to finding that signature sound?

MK: I guess it's grown over time, really. I feel like my production ideas really began with my rig set up, as it's not just a case of plugging in three amplifiers and turning them all up. For every sound and section of the tracks, I've dialled in specific layers and textures and used different pedals to create sounds to suit each part of the song. »

So I feel like my brain was already in production mode with my rig. With the band just being bass, drums and vocals, getting that right felt like 33% of the album was done. Being in the studio and making records makes you realise just how much control someone else has over the sound of your instruments and your vocals and everything else, so as we got to grips with making the first few records, by the time it came to do this one, we really knew what sounds we wanted. I know the tonality of my vocal; I know the kind of take I want to get, so we we're ready to just not have anyone in the way. In a way, the production really comes from the songwriting as well. I think we are very pop-minded, and everything is very lean. Like, suppose something is in the song that is not really doing anything. In that case, we'd just take it out, or if there is any moment in the song where your mind could wander off, it just gets removed. We like very dense, lean songwriting. I guess a producer would be the one removing that, but by the time we get to recording, we've already trimmed the fat.

JG: What have been your go-to's gear-wise during these recording sessions? I'm sure the collection has expanded over the last 12 months?

MK: Yeah, I guess. I mean, I have always just stuck with my "Supers," really. I love my Fender Supersonics.

JG: Talk about the great cleans, eh?

MK: Oh Yeah. I kind of work around them now because I think if there are too many

variables and I could spend all day and just get lost in amps and pedals and not actually get anything done. It's endless, like opening Pandora's Box a little bit. So, yeah, I have kind of stuck with the Supersonics, but pedals are always changing, but to be honest with you, with this record, I tried to make bolder decisions. So, instead of having like eight pedals per song for different sections, I wanted to have two or three sounds per song to make it bolder and sound a little simpler. On the first couple of records, there's a lot of octave pedals and a lot of effects, whereas, on this one, I wondered how far I could strip it back. It probably sounds the most like a bass on this record than it has ever done.

JG: Am I right in thinking that there was a time in the early days when Ben and yourself would have expected to add some more members to the band, but after jamming together for a while just realised that this sounds amazing as it is? At what point did the realisation hit that for you that you could just do this thing, just the two of you on your own?

MK: Yeah, well, It was a kind of slow process really because I had been in bands before where I'd just be playing bass, and before that, I was a keyboard player. I always used to use two amplifiers at the same time, and I would switch between the two amplifiers. So, even then, I was already kind of cooking up this idea of making one thing sound big. By the time it came to me and Ben getting in a room together, which we did a lot, as soon as we started playing, I was just like, well, we don't need to add anything. We didn't even

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“On the first couple of records, there’s a whereas, on this one, **I wonder**”

try anyone else just to find out. It was just » a case of like, first of all, who’s even around? No one we knew wants to be in bands anymore; everyone has gone off and got proper jobs. So, even if we did want someone, we didn’t know anyone, so it was a case of really just working with what we had.

JG: It is amazing when something so great comes out of necessity. I have heard you speak in the past about how moving from the keyboard to the bass was a real revelation for you in the sense that you were kind of looking to get out of your own way and not lock into tried and tested routines that you’d used on the keyboard. With the bass, you felt a little bit freer to explore? How has that developed over the years? I mean, obviously, you must have learned an awful lot of theory just by playing so much. Are you still able to feel that you can be as spontaneous with the bass when it comes to riff creation and songwriting?

MK: Yeah, that’s true. I can’t say I feel as lost as I did at the very beginning. I mean, in the beginning, I was truly lost in the woods and kind of playing by ear and stumbling upon things in a beginner’s luck kind of way. But to be honest, now I find when I am writing, I have to switch off. I’m sure there are some videos of me writing this record where it looks as if I have never written a song or ever played bass before because I am kind of letting my hands do whatever they want to do and stumbling around trying to find the riff. It always comes back to that primal thing for me, like how I want to move around

the beat, and since these songs are more dance-oriented, they were a lot more spontaneous in a way. It was less about theory and more about instincts. I have never written a thing from turning on my bass player brain. I’ve only written anything from actually turning everything off.

JG: Since you’ve had such success with that process, have you ever tried to apply that to another instrument?

MK: That is a good question. I guess I have started doing that with production, really. I don’t know nearly enough about it to be doing it, which is why I like doing it. It’s probably a lot of beginner’s luck has helped it come out the way it has.

JG: Well, that’s an incredibly humble way of putting it. You guys are the real deal, that is for sure and have been from the start. Thinking back to that first EP release and then the build-up to the self-titled album, it definitely seemed like you guys could do no wrong and had such a clear vision of how the band should be marketed. Was there ever any pressure from the studio at that point to work with other songwriters or artists to shape the album in a way that suited them more.

MK: I think one of the reasons that we have had such a good relationship with our label is they have given us creative freedom, and obviously being in the position that we have got the band into opens up doors to writers and producers, and that list is fairly endless. In my experience

lot of octave pedals and a lot of effects, **and how far** I could strip it back.”

of that world, which I've gone into for other things and even written with lots of incredible writers, like these people who just bust out pop songs on the radio. Still, I found it's a personal thing for me because I want it to come from me, whether it is perfect or not. Diluting it with another writer kind of just knocked the edges off. It may have made better songs, but it strayed away from who we are.

JG: Do you think we will ever get to hear any of this material you were collaborating on?

MK: Probably not. Otherwise, it would have made it to the record. But I mean, we definitely don't get any pressure from our label to kind of do those things. It's more like as if you were studying any other profession, or if you were going to be a chef and suddenly someone came into your cafe or restaurant said, hey, go and work with Gordon Ramsey for three days. You'd be like, hell yeah, and that is kind of how I saw it. In many ways, it verified my self-belief, and it kind of gave me the confidence to continue doing my own thing. What is funny though, is that kind of pop sensibility and that catchy kind of thing that's on some of these new songs doesn't come from our label. It comes from us. They are probably more like, can you keep doing your old stuff because it works. There's a weird thing in rock music, where if it starts becoming catchy or sounding good, people automatically don't like it. I am over that kind of concept. I am just like, why would we be afraid of this being catchy? That seems crazy.

JG: It is bizarre that some fans never want to see the band they love evolve or become too popular. In some ways, it seems like they only want the same record again and again. With that in mind, is trying to write for the audience ever something you consider when composing, or are you only happy to put music out if it is something you guys love, no matter what the style?

MK: Yeah, it can only be the later for us really, because otherwise, I would choose another job. I don't want to be in the business of designing music for other people; it is impossible. The only compass we really have is, do we like it? That is the only thing that keeps us going, and the only reason why we do it. In all honesty, I think this record is probably our most indulgent in the sense that it is mixed and finished, and I put it on all the time. That is why we made it. I made it because I felt like that album did not exist in the world, and I wanted it. I wanted it in my life.

JG: That's a beautiful way of putting it. Obviously, as I'm yet to hear the finished article, it still doesn't exist to me. So, as a fan myself, what do you think I'm going to be most surprised about on this release?

MK: My guess is that it's very much like hearing the band in HD colour. Like those kinds of reworks of old war movies, where it is all in black and white, and suddenly, it swipes across and this 4K multicoloured shot appears, like Royal Blood, but in hyper colour. »

INTERVIEWS ROYAL BLOOD

JG: So, from how did we get so dark, to how did we get so colourful?

MK: Yeah, I think exactly that. Yeah.

JG: Well, I am looking forward to hearing that for sure. I feel like, in many ways, you guys are one of the last big bands to really build your following from gigging hard on the live music scene. If you were doing this today, would you feel as confident about taking that approach and what would be your advice to new acts that are looking to make an impact right now?

MK: I still think there is so much value in being a live band. I understand that it's impossible right now to play a show, but it is not impossible for bands to be in the same room within reason. Everyone is making music on their own on their laptop, which

means that even if you did want to be in the same room of view, you shouldn't be doing that with everyone else. Chemistry is, chemistry comes from interacting with people. For that reason me and Ben have had any chemistry, and I believe ultimately people are going to be ship musically. That is part of what makes you a great player. I sucked. I didn't know what to do, I'd lose my voice every three minutes, I was always so nervous. One day you just go, oh, I don't suck anymore. I also think it's important about failing on stage. I've failed in my bedroom and in private, but I think it's important about putting yourself on the front line and



to look at it from a success point of view, that's what makes a great band, and playing with other humans. I think the success is because of our chemistry. People come and watch our friends that they are drawn to. Playing live is a challenge. When we first started touring, I was doing. I couldn't sing in the songs, I was out of time, and I just suddenly get it and realise, I think there is something really special. Anyone can sort of fail in their first attempt. I think there's something about putting yourself out there and taking risks, and that's exactly

what playing lives about. You are kind of putting it all on red and spinning the wheel every night, and that is the buzz; that is the thrill.

JG: Well, with that in mind, I cannot wait until the next time we get to see a live gig from you guys once it's safe to do so again, of course.

MK: You can see me failing miserably in front of a massive audience once again.

JG: Well, I am yet to see that, that is for sure. But look, Mike, thanks so much for taking some time to chat and congratulations on 'Typhoons.'

MK: Thanks again. You too, man.

END <

Royal Blood releases their eagerly anticipated third album 'Typhoons,' on April 30th via Warner Records.

ROYAL BLOOD 'TYPHOONS' TRACKLIST:

Trouble's Coming	Either You Want It
Oblivion	Boilermaker
Typhoons	Mad Visions
Who Needs Friends	Hold On
Million & One	All We Have Is Now
Limbo	

For more tickets or more information on Royal Blood, please visit: royalbloodband.com



WOLF HOFFMANN



Wolf Hoffmann, renowned metal musician and guitarist for German classic metal band Accept is an indisputable driving force in metal. A multi-talented songwriter, instrumentalist, and photographer, Hoffmann has been in the game since 1976—and shows no signs of stopping. From releasing album after album with Accept, to solo albums to working with Skid Row vocalist Sebastian Bach, German hard rock band Skew Siskin, and American musician Joe Lynn Turner, Hoffmann's creative energy and relentless drive have made him a legend in metal. With Accept's latest studio album "Too Mean To Die" dropping last month, Gi's **Jonathan Graham** chats with Wolf Hoffmann about the new record in this exclusive feature. »

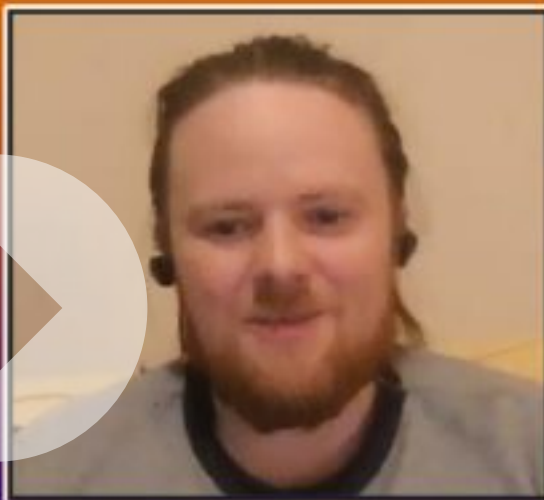


ACCEPT has long since cemented themselves as one of Germany's best and most illustrious speed metal bands; however, truth be told, when the band launched at the end of the 70s, the metal genre didn't even exist—at first the band could only be labelled with the (quality) seal “crazy loud and crazy wild”. Today we know that this was (and is) metal par excellence. And we also know that Accept opened the door to thrash metal, inspiring so many of the most renowned metal acts such as Slayer, Megadeath, Metallica, Guns N' Roses, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, and many, many more.

Following their strong debut in the early 80s, the band went on to become one of the

decade's most intense live acts. Their fifth album, 'Balls to the Wall' (1983) brought them commercial success and was their only album to be certified gold in Canada and the U.S.—significant, as the band was typically viewed as too heavy and extreme for American listeners. Regardless, 'Balls to the Wall' and 'Restless & Wild' (1982) are cited as two of the best heavy metal albums of the 80s. 'Restless & Wild' in particular would go on to define the sound of speed metal.

In late 1989, after the dismissal of vocalist Udo Dirkschneider and the severe back injury of drummer Stefan Kaufmann, the band decided to go on hiatus. Four years later, the core members of the band (Hoffmann, Baltes, and Dirkschneider) and drummer »



Guitar Interactive

Wolf Hoffman Interview



Stefan Kaufmann released a comeback album entitled *Objection Overruled*. The album was a success, and was followed by another two albums, another two tours, and...another hiatus that lasted for years.

Finally, in 2010, the first original Accept album in fourteen years was released. 'Blood of the Nations' debuted at number four on the German albums chart, and was Accept's highest chart position—until, that is, five years later when they released their fourteenth studio album *Blind Rage*, which debuted at number one in Germany.

But Accept did not plan on stopping there. This was not just a suspension of

a hiatus—this was the return of one of Germany's most creative, groundbreaking, and prolific metal bands. Band members came and went, their producer (Andy Sneap) stayed the same, and Accept prepared to release 'The Rise of Chaos' (2017). By this time, Wolf Hoffmann was the only remaining member of the original lineup of the band.

Before Accept's welcomed return from hiatus, Hoffmann was convinced he would never play in the band again. In his time away from the band, Wolf took up photography, another passion of his. However, after hearing Mark Tornillo's voice in the early 2000s, he jumped right back into the metal world that he had »



ACCEPT - The Undertaker (OFFICIAL MUSIC VIDEO)



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“One thing that has always been **important to me** is that you should never settle for mediocrity.”

always considered “the good old days.” For Accept, the good old days weren’t just back; they were better than ever. Hoffmann left everything behind to jump right back into making the music that he loved so dearly.

Last month, Accept released their latest (and sixteenth) studio album, ‘Too Mean to Die.’ The album comprises eleven powerful cuts of quality we’ve come to expect from the heavy metal icons, all with screaming vocals and shredding guitars that Hoffmann describes as “Brand new songs in a familiar sound.”

Hoffmann stated: “From the very beginning, it was clear to us that we would start working with Andy again. “No sooner said than done, the band and Sneap met in March of this year for their first studio recordings in Nashville. What they couldn’t guess at the time was that a certain virus would suddenly turn the world upside down. After only two weeks in the studio—and facing the threat of a lockdown—the band and Sneap decided to interrupt the recording session abruptly.

“The risk that none of us would be able to return home at that time was simply too great,” Hoffmann explained. “Andy couldn’t come from England, so we had to find an alternative way, which went like this: “Andy was sitting at his PC in England, and we recorded the songs and communicated with him online. He produced from a distance, so to speak. Amazingly, it worked better than we thought it would... Fortunately, we had already recorded a large part of the songs before the break, so the experiment with Andy Sneap working as remote producer worked well.” »



ACCEPT - Zombie Apocalypse
(OFFICIAL VISUALIZER)



“The risk that none of us would be able to return home at that time **was simply** too great.”

Special circumstances often lead to extraordinary albums. This is certainly true for ‘Too Mean To Die,’ which of course, alludes to the Corona period, although in a different way than one might assume. Hoffmann says, “It’s to be expected that many musicians will address the Corona situation in their songs. There will certainly be slogans for cohesion, through which positive vibes should be spread, which is also good. But we have decided to not let ourselves be influenced by it. The fans will get a hard, direct and uncompromising metal album, but of course, accompanied with a wink: We are too mean to die! Weeds do not go away! Accept do not let themselves get down!” »

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Even though Hoffmann was all that was left of the original Accept, 'Too Mean to Die' is as Accept as they come. Throughout the album, the tempo stays high, the rocking never stops, and Hoffmann's relentless riffs give each song layers and layers of depth. "One thing that has always been important to me is that you should never settle for mediocrity," Hoffmann explains. And in this case, he is practising exactly what he preaches.

The proof that this band continues to evolve with the new album comes in the form of one of 'Too Mean to Die's' particular highlights: "The Best Is Yet To Come"—a beguiling ballad in which

Mark Tornillo is at his best. The r... can scream like no other, but here... frontman can also sing magnificently... rather unusual song stunningly well... Mark is that he not only masters... can also sing melodically and beautifully in this song," chief guitarist

A singer with whom the character... another "seal of approval" right at... collaboration with the milestone



metal world knows that Mark
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the typical metal screams, but
autifully. He proves this impres-
t Hoffmann raves.

ristic string virtuoso imposed
t the beginning of their 2010
'Blood Of The Nations,' a seal

of quality that is still going strong today. On 'Too Mean To Die,'
the congenial duo Hoffmann and Tornillo deliver the highlight of
their work so far.

In addition, Accept has strengthened their team even further with
newcomers Martin Motnik (bass) and Philip Shouse (guitar),
thus forming an unbeatable team together with "Drum God"
Christopher Williams and "Rhythm Master" Uwe Lulis. There's
no doubt that with "Too Mean To Die" Accept are once again
playing at the top of the Champions League of the genre.

END <<

ACCEPT ARE BACK! The German kingpins of heavy metal
release their new, eagerly-awaited studio album via Nuclear Blast:
'Too Mean To Die.'

Accept – 'Too Mean To Die' Tracklist:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Zombie Apocalypse | 7. Symphony Of Pain |
| 2. Too Mean To Die | 8. The Best Is Yet To Come |
| 3. Overnight Sensation | 9. How Do We Sleep |
| 4. No Ones Master | 10. Not My Problem |
| 5. The Undertaker | 11. Samson And Delilah
Instrumental) |
| 6. Sucks To Be You | |

For tickets and more information on Wolf Hoffmann and
ACCEPT, please visit: acceptworldwide.com





Lee Ritenour Dream

For Lee Ritenour, after a dazzling five-decade and counting career, there aren't just a few solo records delivered just that; his very first solo guitar record. The fabled LA guitarist has taken his place in the rock 'n' roll firmament. He's been an enfant terrible of '70s fusion, a session player, and the fingers behind '90s supergroup, Fourplay, plus thousands of sessions with other artists. The man who's done just about all there is talks about

catcher

At many 'firsts' left to achieve, however, with his new album Dreamcatcher he's taken his music to the outer limits, alighting on every genre and occupying every space. A crossover star of the '80s pop chart, an honorary exponent of Brazilian jazz, and a collaborator with legends such as Frank Sinatra, Pink Floyd, B.B. King, Tony Bennett, among others, Leeritino discusses his new album and more with **Guitar Interactive.** »

“PEOPLE have been telling me for years: ‘Rit, you gotta make a solo guitar record,’” says Ritenour. “In the past, I’ve always been the band guy, the ensemble guy, the collaborative-guitar-player guy. So this was the one project I hadn’t done. And this year, I knew it was time.”

Dreamcatcher might have been born from personal challenges, but the record took shape against the global tragedy of Covid-19. Ritenour had already written several key tracks before shutdown. But as he settled into the makeshift studio at his new home in Marina Del Rey, equipped with little more than seven guitars, a computer interface and good intentions, the guitarist let the context flood into



“Dreamcatcher might have been born from
shape against the global

the music he was tracking. «It was an important album for me,» he notes. «Especially now, with everything going on in the world.»

Weaving tapestries of instrumental guitar and conjuring eclectic moods, the 12 tracks of Dreamcatcher rank amongst the most melodic and tinglingly beautiful in Ritenour's catalogue. But there's a power and purpose

here, too, hinting at the darker circumstances that sparked this new record. «Our house and my studio in Malibu, California burnt down in 2018,» he recalls. «About 100 of my guitars went up in the fire, plus 40 amps, lots of music, the history of my whole career, pretty much. A week after the fire, I went to the hospital, which I'd never had to do before, for surgery to replace an aortic valve. »



...m personal challenges, but the record took
...al tragedy of Covid-19..."



So those incidents and the support from my family and friends absolutely went into this music. Making this record was a life-saver for me.»

Even without lyrics, every track tells a story. Take the molten blues licks of “Abbot Kinney”, named for the fabled boulevard in Venice, California. “One day when everything was shut down,” says Ritenour, “I drove my bike there and was just devastated to find it completely empty. But then I heard this rock guitar start up. I don’t know if it was a kid, but somebody nearby had just turned it up to 10 and said, ‘Fuck it, I’m gonna have some fun’. It brought a huge smile to my face and inspired me to write that song on my Les Paul.”

Likewise, anyone living through the age of Covid-19 will feel a deep affinity with “2020”: a three-part symphony in which Ritenour takes the pulse of the times. “The three parts were a reflection of what was going on this year,” he nods, “when all of a sudden everybody’s life shut down. I was thinking about the young musicians that were out of work – and people in every walk of life.”

Elsewhere Dreamcatcher delves beyond the pandemic. While Ritenour strived to switch up musical styles – from the title track’s dovetailing classical guitars to the Taylor baritone that drives «Starlight»s tumbling folk, and the mad scientist multi-tracking of «Couldn’t Help Myself» – he also ran the gamut of »

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“In a career full of left-turns, Dreamcatcher



Both by necessity and design this latest o

is another thrilling detour for Lee Ritenour...

mood. «Because even I get tired,» he reasons, «of solo guitar albums when it pretty much all sounds the same.»

As such, “For DG” salutes the harmonic sensibilities of the great producer, pianist, and long-time comrade, Dave Grusin. But it couldn’t be further from “Charleston”, whose mellow slink is laced with bittersweet

thoughts on the ebb and flow of US race relations. “A few years ago, I played in Charleston, South Carolina,” recalls Ritenour, “and it was charming and the people were warm, and it was a very mixed, soulful audience. Charleston has a history of the beginnings of slavery, but this was modernday Charleston, y’know? But then, a few years later, »



album represents music in its purest form..."

I'm writing this tune while watching the continuation of the struggle. As musicians who travel all over the world, we go, 'What? This shit is still going on in the US?' So it was appropriate to dedicate that song to Black Lives Matter."

Dreamcatcher not only confronts the here-and-now: it also slips back into Ritenour's rich history. Long-standing fans will recognize «Morning Glory Jam» as a rework of the guitarist's classic 1977 tune. «On 2015's *A Twist Of Rit*, I had revisited a lot of older material, so I wanted to keep this record fresh. But one day, I remembered when I did sessions for Barry White and how there had been four or five guitar players all playing these incredible rhythm parts. That's the kind of groove I had in my head for this new version of Morning Glory."

Casting his mind still further back, The Lighthouse shares its name with the storied LA jazz club where the teenage guitarist was to be found most nights in the mid-'60s. "I'd started playing guitar at eight, and by 12, I was very serious. Everybody's number was in the phonebook back then, right? So my dad – who was an amateur piano player and always very supportive – called up Joe Pass and Barney Kessel and asked them to give me a guitar lesson. Barney ended up recommending this incredible teacher, Duke Miller, and that was the foundation of all my playing. The Lighthouse was this very funky jazz club where I met Wes Montgomery. By

the age of 16, I'd take the car over there in the late afternoons and just watch the bands soundcheck."

Whatever genre you were into, recalls Ritenour, the guitar scene at that magical juncture in the mid-'60s was hard to beat. "In every field, there were legends. In jazz, you had Joe Pass, Wes Montgomery, Barney Kessel, Howard Roberts, Jim Hall, Pat Martino. In Blues, B.B. King, Albert King, John Lee Hooker. In Rock, Jimi Hendrix was coming, Clapton and Beck were already there. In Country, you had Chet Atkins, and the all time great classical guitar master, Segovia, and Sabicas, and Paco de Lucia for Flamenco! Great guitar playing was everywhere you turned, and I loved them all...How could you not?"

Those eclectic early tastes served Ritenour well. The jazz giants at The Lighthouse were a passion for life: just check out his love-letter to the great Mr Montgomery on 1993's *Wes Bound*. But from the day he lucked into his first session for The Mamas And The Papas at age 16, Ritenour had the widescreen musicality to forge a career as one of LA's busiest session men. "I remember John Phillips had this incredible studio in his Beverly Hills mansion and I just thought, 'This is what I want'. As for my favourite and memorable sessions, I remember getting called by Bob Ezrin to record on "One Of My Turns" and "Comfortably Numb" on Pink Floyd's, *The Wall*...incredible. And then there was Quincy Jones producing George »

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Benson's, "Give Me the Night" album and all of us waiting 'til 4am for Stevie Wonder to show up and play a song he'd written for George's album...Ha! Too many memories!"

Like close friend and fellow session ace, Toto's Steve Lukather, Ritenour was always more than a gun-for-hire. In '76, he launched his own solo career with First Course, and managed the magic trick of following his muse while finding enviable commercial success, especially in the '80s. "On the West Coast, fusion was just starting," he remembers, "and we were beginning to combine the melodies of pop music, but with the sophistication of jazz. We were listening to people like John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, and then at the same time, Grover Washington Jr, David Sanborn, Bob James. So it was really a natural evolution for my own records to evolve out of that. When I finally did win a Grammy in 1985 – for "Early A.M. Attitude" – I think I was actually stuck on the freeway. But awards aren't the reason we're making music."

Likewise, while the jazz supergroup Fourplay scored a commercial hit with their eponymous 1991 debut album. For Ritenour, the attraction was all about the chemistry between the band members. "The magic was immediate between me, Bob James, Harvey Mason and Nathan East. You can't draw that sort of thing up on a chart – it either works, or it doesn't. We did three albums, but then the business got so complicated that I took a pass in 1997. But there was always friendship

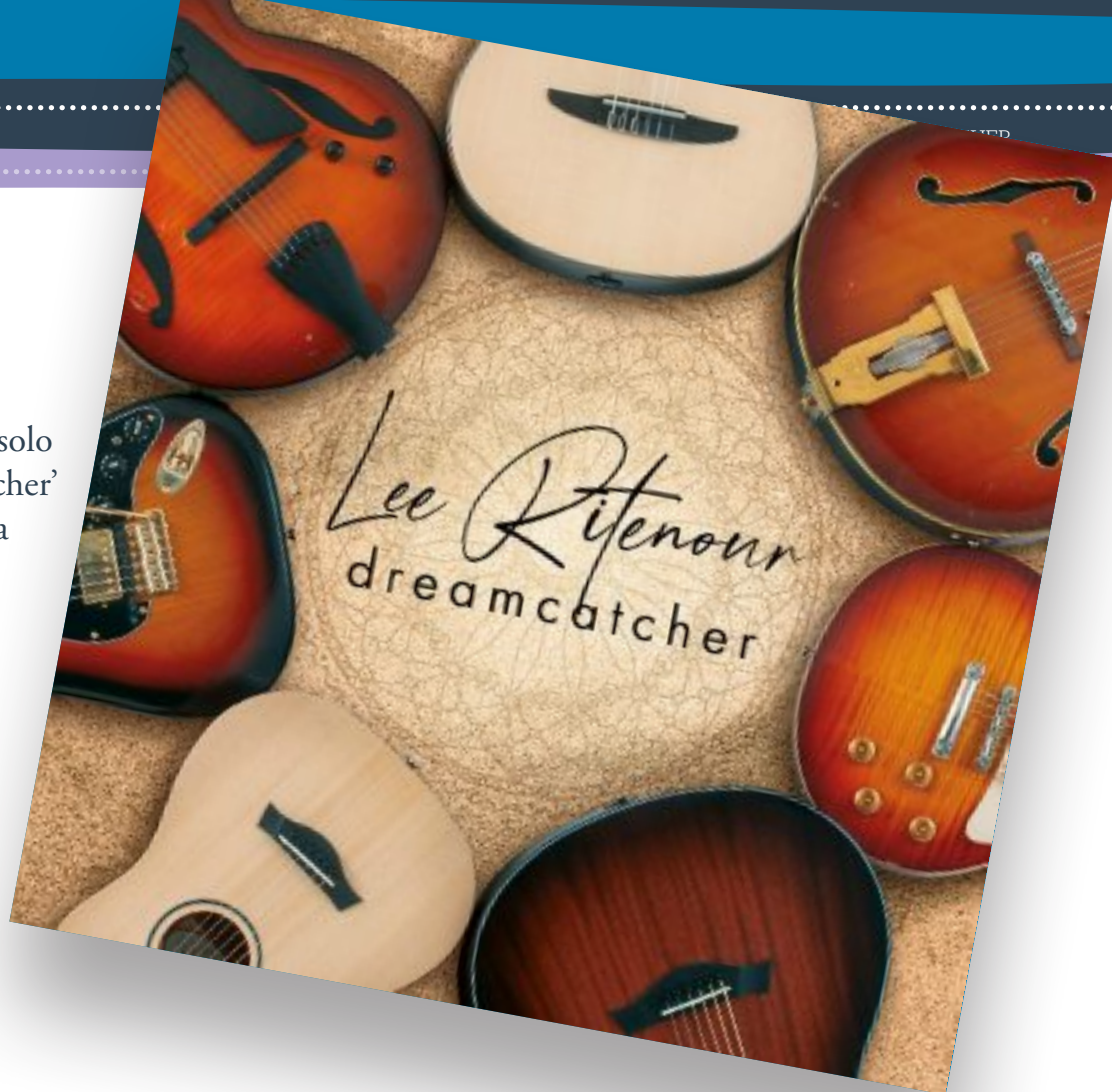
and musical respect, and we are talking about doing one last reunion project together."

Respect was palpable, too, when Ritenour made the 2010 album, Lee Ritenour's Six String Theory: an all-star album that drafted many of the famous friends he'd picked up along his path. "In the early days, you could never put Country, jazz, rock and all these styles on the same record. The record companies would say, 'No, you've got to have one theme'. But by 2010, the labels weren't as powerful as they were, and they were looking for interesting projects. I went to my buddy Steve Lukather, and George Benson and B.B. King, and they all said yes. We opened it up to players like Joe Bonamassa and John Scofield – and everyone played their ass off."

Collaboration might be a constant, but in a career full of left-turns, Dreamcatcher is another thrilling detour for Lee Ritenour. Both by necessity and design, this latest album represents music in its purest form: one man, channelling his headspace and the history unfolding around him, using the instrument that has sustained him all these years. There is a first time for everything, and there has never been a better time for "Dreamcatcher". "I've never done anything like this before and it's an important missing piece in my guitar history. It was inspiring, and it was meant to happen this year, in these times – after a lifetime of playing the guitar," he considers, "this project reaffirmed just how much I love the guitar."

Lee Ritenour's first-ever solo guitar record 'Dreamcatcher' is out now worldwide via Mascot Label Group.

END «



Lee Ritenour - 'Dreamcatcher' Tracklist:

Dreamcatcher
Charleston
The Lighthouse
Morning Glory Jam
Starlight
Abbot Kinney

Couldn't Help Myself
For DG
Via Verde
Low & Slow
Storyteller
2020

For more tickets or more information on
Lee Ritenour, please visit: leeritenour.com



THE Tech Session

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

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Tech Session

In this issue's Tech Session, **Nick Jennison** takes a closer look at the style of our cover artist. Probably the most exciting and intense guitar player of a generation, Zakk Wylde is part of a proud lineage of Les Paul-toting rock players dating back to the birth of heavy metal. Rising to prominence in 1988 as the sideman for Ozzy Osbourne, Zakk's ferocious pentatonic-based playing stood in stark contrast to the neo-classical shredders of the age. Like John Sykes and Gary Moore before him, Zakk fused a blues-rock inspired vocabulary with next-level chops and unparalleled intensity to create a sound that drips with reckless abandon but is in fact tightly controlled and calculated. It might sound like the product of sheer brute force, but Zakk knows precisely what he's doing, and his playing is remarkably well organised. »

GENERAL PRELIMINARY GUIDANCE

WHILE Zakk's vocabulary is undoubtedly distinctive, his style is less about what's being played and more about how it's being played. Keep the following in mind as you go forward.

- Perhaps the most immediately recognisable aspect of Zakk's playing is that monstrous vibrato. Moderate in speed, the intensity comes from the sheer width. A tone in width at the very least, Zakk's vibrato is often a tone and a half wide

(that's three frets). Be careful with your muting, and unless you're also a man-mountain with hands to match, consider light strings!

- Zakk's right-hand touch is often a lot lighter than you might imagine. Picked runs are certainly aggressive, but those howling sustained notes require a more deft approach. The best way to achieve this is by relaxing the right-hand index-finger-and-thumb assembly to allow the pick to "brush" the strings.
- On the subject of brushing the strings, the flesh of Zakk's right-hand index finger



Zakk Wyld Tech Session Performance

and thumb will usually slightly graze the strings as he picks. This is critical for creating that signature “meow-ing” tone, but it also helps with gauging the depth of the pick on the strings - especially useful with using the larger, elbow-driven picking movements Zakk is known for.

PICKING

It probably hasn't escaped your attention that Zakk is a phenomenal picker. His accuracy, tone and intensity are pretty remarkable. His technique is actually quite unusual, and if you're interest-ed in authentically reproducing his style, you'll have to get on board with it.

- Zakk's faster picking lines are usually elbow-driven (rather than wrist-based). Contrary to what some would have you believe, there's absolutely nothing wrong with picking from the elbow - it's actually one of the fastest ways you can move the pick!
- Zakk is a pretty strict downward pick-slant (see the video for a more detailed explanation). This is most likely a product of the way he wears his guitar, which is low enough to make Jimmy Page blush. The upshot of this is that upstrokes are free to move from string to string, but downstrokes require some special attention.
- “Swiping” is a big part of Zakk's string change strategy when moving to a new

string after a downstroke. See the video for a more detailed breakdown, but be aware that a relaxed pick grip is what makes this work.

With all that that in mind, let's stuck in!

BARS 1-4:

We begin with a rather nasty sounding semitone figure. This sort of line is one of the few times you'll see Zakk performing some subtle vibrato, as you shake the B string note to create a clashing texture against the static E string note. Kick on a Uni-Vibe type effect (Zakk uses a Dunlop Rotovibe) for extra eeriness!

BARS 5-11:

We launch into a crushing drop D riff (inspired by 2000s Ozzy) with a big slide, which you can use to mask turning off your Vibe. The pinched harmonics on the low string need to scream and not “ping” - a lighter attack will really help with this.

BAR 12:

A Hendrix-inspired exchange bend - use your second finger to grab the g string as the b string goes up. Huge vibrato on the last note of this phrase is a necessity!

BARS 13-19:

There are a few quirks that make this »

BLS-inspired riff tick. First are the semi-harmonics on the low string. These aren't fully-fledged pinches, but the execution is similar. Start with the pick close to the bridge and move it gradually towards the neck. Big vibrato on the D7#9 chords will keep things nice and aggressive. Lock your fingers in

place and move the whole left forearm to get the desired effect. Lastly, the rakes behind the bridge can be replicated on a guitar without a tune-o-matic by holding a 2nd fret natural harmonic and raking across the E to D strings.



BAR 20:

A classic downward pickslanting pentatonic lick to kick off the first solo, which is inspired by Zakk's work with Ozzy Osbourne. Bury your pick in the strings on the downstrokes, and let it rise up on the upstrokes. It's an efficient way to play this kind of line with the kind of rock-solid timing that characterises Zakk's pentatonic work.

BAR 21-24:

Starting out with some sweeping unison bends, this passage quickly moves into a descending version of the lick in bar 20. The same principles apply here. Use a sneaky pull-off on the D string to give yourself time to get into position for the "chicken-pickin'" idea that closes out this phrase. »

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BARS 25-26:

This four-note figure is very common in Zakk's faster playing, and once you have the mechanics down, it's surprisingly easy to carry off. Use your second finger to fret the G string notes, and concentrate on getting the upstroke on the B string in time with your left hand - the rest should take care of itself.

BAR 27:

Another downward pickslanting pentatonic lick. Don't worry about sticking rigidly to the quintuplet rhythm - as long as you get all the notes in before the next bar; everything will be fine

BARS 28:

A fun little trick for creating Whammy-type effects on a stoptail guitar. Slide down the g string with your right hand, while hammering and pulling off with your left hand. Try to stay about 2 frets above the right hand with the left, but don't worry too much about being entirely accurate with this one.

BARS 29-36:

Switch your overdrive pedal off and your chorus on for some sombre BLS-inspired balladry. The chord changes can be a little tricky and require some tidy left-hand fingering. Get right up on the tips of your fingers to make sure everything rings out as it should.



Zakk Wylde Tech Session Part 1

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ZAKK WYLDE TECH SESSION



BARS 37-41:

Soaring melodic leads are a big part of Zakk's repertoire, and that's the vibe we're going for in the second solo. Be sure not to overcook the right hand with this one - a gentler touch will let the notes bloom and sing. These slower passages also give plenty of time to use the right-hand thumb and fingers to mute adjacent strings when using super wide vibrato.

BARS 42-44:

Ramping up the drama with some Schenker/Moore inspired blues lines. You can pick the faster notes pretty hard, but ease up on the sustained notes to let the vibrato sing. The faster passage in bars 43-44 can actually benefit from being a little scrappy - too tidy, and there's no sense of danger. Be aggressive, and consider the lick in the transcription a "guideline" rather than an absolute instruction. »

BARS 45-48:

Howling bends in the vein of fellow Les Paul slinger John Sykes, be quick on the way up and slow on the way down, with the most intense wailing vibrato you can muster. Kossoff would be proud!

BARS 49-50:

We're firmly back in Ozzy territory with this No More Tears inspired passage. In stark contrast to bar 44, this has to be perfectly clean and in time to achieve the desired effect. Get your downward pickslanting happening, and consider a little gentle palm muting on the d string notes for added tightness.

BARS 51-21:

We're making use of the four-note mechanic from bars 25-26 to create some dramatic arpeggio furries at the climax of this second solo. The bend at the end should be short and fast so that you can get back into the riff as quickly as possible.

BARS 53-59:

The same riff that we opened with get those legs spread wide, and if you've got the hair for it, bang that head! Or use this time to catch your breath - things are about to get a bit shreddy!

BAR 60:

The third solo is inspired by Zakk's more recent work with BLS. When he's not behaving himself with Ozzy, Zakk's playing can be downright vulgar! Stomp on your wah to really set things off.

This is also where we start to see Zakk's swiping mechanic in action. This section is still downward pickslanting all the way, but the outside string changes on the a-to-d strings and d-to-g strings are accomplished by simply battering through the muted higher string on the downstroke. If you keep your pick grip relaxed but apply plenty of force from the elbow, it should sound completely clean! These changes are marked with an (x) on the tab.

BAR 61:

More swiping here, including some tricky two-string swipes. Make the upstrokes on the higher strings your focus, and keep the grip loose. Although this is an example of Zakk's Al Di Meola in-fluence, Al would achieve this same line very differently. If you can't make the swiping work for you, you can still carry this lick off using two-way pickslanting like Al would.

BARS 62-64:

A monstrous flurry of alternate picked notes, don't worry if things get a little garbled at times - it only adds to the excitement. Some

notes are doubled up to facilitate the picking more easily, and there are swipes galore! We're not trying to be John Petrucci here - keep it intense, and consider the tab a "guideline".

BARS 65-66:

Some intense "chicken-pickin'" around a nasty sounding flat 5 note. Don't sweat the exact timing here - just go as fast as you can manage, and make sure you get that double stop idea in on beat 2 of bar 66 to bring the whole thing back into step. Use the ring and middle fingers on your right hand and roll

your left-hand pinky finger to execute the country style pedal steel lick, pre-bending the g string note as you do.

BARS 67-68:

Just when you thought things had gone completely off the deep end, we bring everything back home with something bluesy! Zakk has a tenacity to finish his solos with more "tasteful" ideas like this, and that's something we can all learn from. Grab the b string as you re-pick the last bend, and over-bend like crazy! »



Zakk Wylde Tech Session Part 2

BARS 69-75:

Home stretch now, and I'm not ashamed to say that this fourth solo was inspired by Zakk's work on the Rock Star soundtrack! Give the lower string on the unison bends and some heavy vibrato, but don't worry about going as far as a tone - just enough to make them "crackle". The lick in bar 74 is best thought of as "trilling and tremolo picking at the same time", and is a John Sykes main-stay. Move both hands as fast as you can and concentrate on the downbeats - things have a habit of syncing up nicely if you do.

BARS 76-84:

We couldn't look at Zakk's playing without exploring his country and southern rock influences, and this final solo is inspired by some of his best-loved playing with Pride & Glory, with nods to Ozzy mega-ballad Mama I'm Comin' Home. Keep things strictly in time, and back the intensity down just a little.

The pedal steel bend that kicks things off is the same as the one found in bar 66, but slower and more stately, and in a major key. The remainder of the solo blurs the line between major and minor pentatonic scales that hints at Zakk's Skynyrd influence. Tasty stuff, and a nice way to end this intense tech session!



Zakk Wylde Tech Session Gear & Tone

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ZAKK WYLDE TECH SESSION



THE TAKE-HOME:

As rock players, there's a lot we can learn from Zakk. Yes, the vocabulary might not always be the most original - it's largely pentatonic based, and very rooted in traditional blues and rock phrase-ology - but it's not what you say, rather how you say it. Zakk's supremely authoritative delivery is something we could all do with a little more of from time to time, and his tightly organised and structured playing is something

that even non-guitarists can appreciate and understand. It also provides a stark contrast to the more chaotic aspects of his style, and makes the crazy stuff feel even more dangerous!

I think more than anything though, the fundamental take home is that you can play as simply or as complex as you like in rock, as long as you make it exciting.

END ◀

THE Competition

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

In this issue, enter for a chance to win a an amazing set of four VOX Valvenergy guitar pedals in this issue's free giveaway!

GI79

YOUR CHANCES
TO WIN

CHANCE TO WIN YOUR CHANCE TO WIN



WIN!

an amazing set of four **VOX** Val

The clever folks at VOX have long since been a leading force in tonal excellence, and this tradition continues in the form of their Valvenergy Series guitar pedals that one lucky winner can take home in this fantastic free to enter competition.

About the **Vintage 25th Anniversary** **Series V100 - Silver Burst**

The Valvenergy series offers four effect pedals that provide the perfect response and harmonic distortion of a tube amp, putting popular amp sounds into a pedal.

COPPERHEAD DRIVE

The Copperhead valve distortion pedal recreates the classic full stack amp tone, used for the powerful sound of hard rock in the 80s. Use it for lightly overdriven tones or thick distortion.

CUTTING EDGE

The Cutting Edge valve distortion pedal offers aggressive saturated and precise modern metal tones in a compact pedal format, powered by Nutube for warm and responsive amp-like tones.

MYSTIC EDGE

The Mystic Edge valve distortion pedal offers the chime and midrange of the VOX AC30 in a compact pedal format.

SILK DRIVE

The Silk Drive valve overdrive pedal offers the dynamic clean and creamy overdrive tones of classic boutique amps.

What is Nutube?

Nutube is a new vacuum tube that KORG Corporation developed in conjunction with Noritake Itron Corporation as an application of vacuum fluorescent display technology. Like a conventional vacuum tube, a Nutube has an anode grid filament structure and operates as a complete triode tube. It provides the same rich overtones and responses that are distinctive of conventional vacuum tubes.

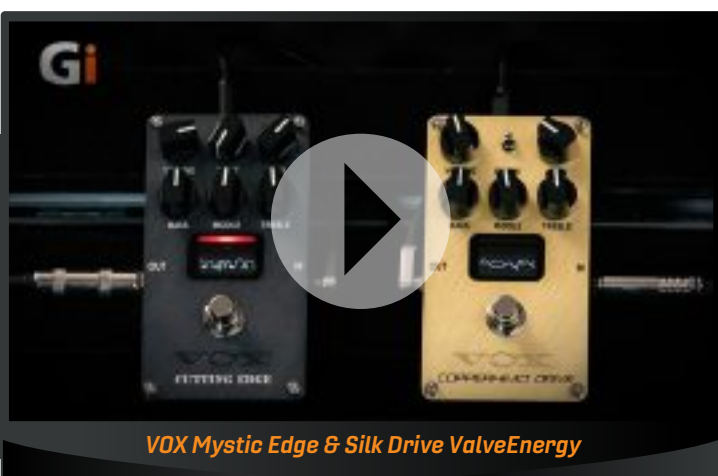
How do you win? It's easy.

There are loads of ways to enter! Click enter to gain more entries and have a better chance of winning this incredible prize.

Good luck and thanks for taking part.

ENTER

ValveEnergy guitar pedals in this issue's free giveaway!



VOX Mystic Edge & Silk Drive ValveEnergy



VOX ValveEnergy Cutting Edge & Copperhead Drive

THE Reviews

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

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

GUITARS, AMPS
AND EFFECTS

Vintage 25th Anniversary V75SVB

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 V6HSVB.

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 guitarist's 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 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 an 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. 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 V75SVB is a T-style design based on the company's excellent V75 model. This is a modern take on a classic design with some fantastic appointments for the 2020s whilst »

“These are some of **the best pickups** in the more ‘affordable’ guitar world right now...”



Vintage 25th Anniversary V75SVB

MSRP: (UK) £419 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

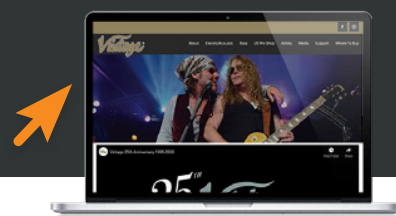
Classic T-type tones

Collecting historic guitars

A bargain

For more information, please visit:

vintageguitarsus.com



remaining true to Vintage's stylings ethos. As with the other guitars in this anniversary range, the V75SVB is finished in a lovely two-tone silver burst with a subtle sparkle in the silver paint. The 2-piece American alder body and hard rock maple neck are finished in gloss, whilst the maple fretboard and neck feature an attractive amber stain and simple black dot inlays. Chrome hardware and a black, 5-hole scratch plate complete the design featuring an 'Anniversary' decal on the headstock to let you know that this is a special guitar within Vintage's range.



“Offering a guitar with these specs **at this price point is remarkable** but would mean nothing without playability and build quality to match....”

In true Vintage form, the V75 excels when it comes to hardware thanks to the addition of Wilkinson products throughout. Before coming across the Vintage brand, this reviewer associated Wilkinson exclusively with boutique or custom build guitars, so seeing it consistently appear on all of Vintage's guitars is a huge bonus for the brand, especially at these prices. »





The standard 2-pickup design is » retained for this style of guitar with Wilkinson WVTN and WVTB alnico single coils in the neck and bridge position respectively. The 3-saddle (made from half-hard brass) WTB bridge features individually adjustable intonation for each string and thru-body stringing configuration for excellent sustain and string resonance. Finally, the deluxe Wilkinson WJ55 tuners offer fast string changes and excellent tuning stability matched with the GraphTech NuBone nut.

Offering a guitar with these specs at this price point is remarkable but would mean nothing without playability and build quality to match. Thankfully the V75SVB delivers both in spades with quality finishing, fretwork and setup straight out of the included canvas gig bag. The 22 frets are polished for great feel, and the neck and body are beautifully balanced and resonant, thanks to the choice of quality tonewoods.

Tonally the V75 is a guitar that delivers some of this reviewer's favourite tones from the anniversary line up. The pickups sound fantastic with clean or dirty tones thanks to bags of clarity and dynamic range from all three positions. It's a simple but tried and tested setup that is enhanced by the modern hardware and build quality. At this price point, the V75SVB is a superb achievement from Vintage and very easy to recommend. If you can find one, you can be sure you're getting a great piece of history at an even greater price.

END «

SD50A ACOUSTIC AMPLIFIER

- Bluetooth 4.0 support and auxiliary audio input for audio playback
- OTG support for smartphone and tablet recording
- Dual-channel preamp: Guitar input & Microphone/Guitar input
- One 8-inch FRFR(full range,flat response)speaker, One 1-inch treble speaker
- High-precision tuner
- Individual digital EQ/Chorus/Delay/Reverb effects
- Double XLR balanced output mode: D.I, direct output; PRE, preamp and effect output to Mixer
- 150-second looper with support for instrument and microphone
- Drum machine with 16 different grooves
- Wireless footswitch support



SD30



- 25 Digital preamp models
- Coupled with a Class A/B power amp
- 29 integrated stompboxes and a precision chromatic tuner
- JAM section, a looper, syncable drum machine, AUX IN and Bluetooth connections for audio playback
- 40 preset slots
- Independent control knobs for main amp parameters
- Optional balanced output with integrated cabinet simulation
- Independent headphone output with cabinet simulation
- Serial FX LOOP
- SPEAKER OUT for connection to external speaker cabinets

SD75

MOOER
EFFECTS AND AMPLIFICATION



mooeraudio.com

Aria Pro II DM-206

Aria's highly regarded DM series initially launched back in the 1960s and has remained an offset legend thanks to a few choice appearances within popular culture. Continuing that great legacy sees the birth of the DM-206, which fully inherits the heritage and tradition of the original Aria DM; however, with some updated specs that features a combo of two mini-humbucker pickups and a wrap-around bridge, to name a couple. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

YOU'LL no doubt have seen a number of Aria guitars grace the pages of this magazine over the last few years, and it's no secret that I'm a huge fan of theirs. They make some outstanding guitars for often unbelievably low prices and are some of the best value-for-money instruments I've come across in recent years. They're basically the affordable guitar market's best-kept secret.

Aria also has a rich and storied history that many of their new guitars pay homage to, including this latest offering - the DM-206. At first glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a Mosrite clone, and in some ways, it is. Throughout the 1960s and into the "lawsuit" era of the 1970s, Univox produced their Hi-Flier guitars, aiming to capitalise on the popularity of the Mosrite Ventures guitar - particularly in Japan, where The Ventures were very popular. A number of these instruments were ghost-built for Univox by Aria, and even sold in Japan under the Aria name. Notable users include Kurt Cobain (check out the white hardtail model in the video for "Heart Shaped

"I happen to think that this guitar **looks absolutely gorgeous...**"

Box" or the sunburst one from Nirvana's 1993 appearance on SNL).

The DM-206 is a loving tribute to the Hi-Flyer, but with updated specifications to suit modern guitarists' needs. The pickups resemble the P-90s found in the original "Phase 1" Hi-Fliers, but they're actually mini-humbuckers. There's also a wrap-around one-piece bridge with adjustable saddles (instead of the borderline-unusable tremolo system that featured on many of the originals).

While I appreciate that quirky vintage designs like this can divide opinion, I happen to think that this guitar looks absolutely gorgeous. It's a shape I've always been attracted to, but so »



Aria Pro II DM-206

MSRP: (UK) £399 / (US) \$499

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

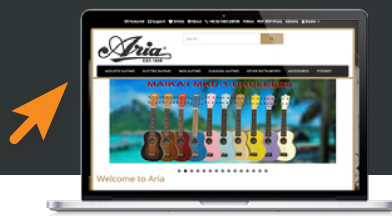
Snappy, bright tones

Vintage "pawn shop" guitars

Standing out from the crowd

For more information, please visit:

www.ariauk.com



many of the vintage models I've come across have been absolute pigs to play. By contrast, the DM-206 absolutely rips. The action is low, and even, the neck is slim but not *too* slim, and the fretwork is immaculate. Right away, it's a winner for me.

Tonally, the guitar is bright and snappy in a way that you only get from mini-humbuckers. If you're expecting PAF-style grunt from these pickups, then you're in for a shock. To my ear, mini-humbuckers sit somewhere between a brighter P-90 and a slightly more robust Telecaster single-coil, but obviously

without the hum associated with either. It's a sound that's great for wiry classic rock, throaty blues soloing, country, surf, funk - you name it. These pickups also holds up surprisingly well for metal riffing - especially looser, more primal styles like doom metal.

The Aria DM-206 is a guitar that combines vintage charm with modern playability, and costs less than some high-end overdrive pedals. It's a fitting tribute to a piece of rock and roll history, but it's also a great workhorse for the modern player.

END◀



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**SUPER
WIDESTEREO**



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6 HIGH DEFINITION VOICES ■ 12 PRO EFFECTS IN SUPER WIDE STEREO ■ USB RECORDING INTERFACE ■ PATENTED INFINITE SHAPE FEATURE (ISF) ■ STEREO LINE IN
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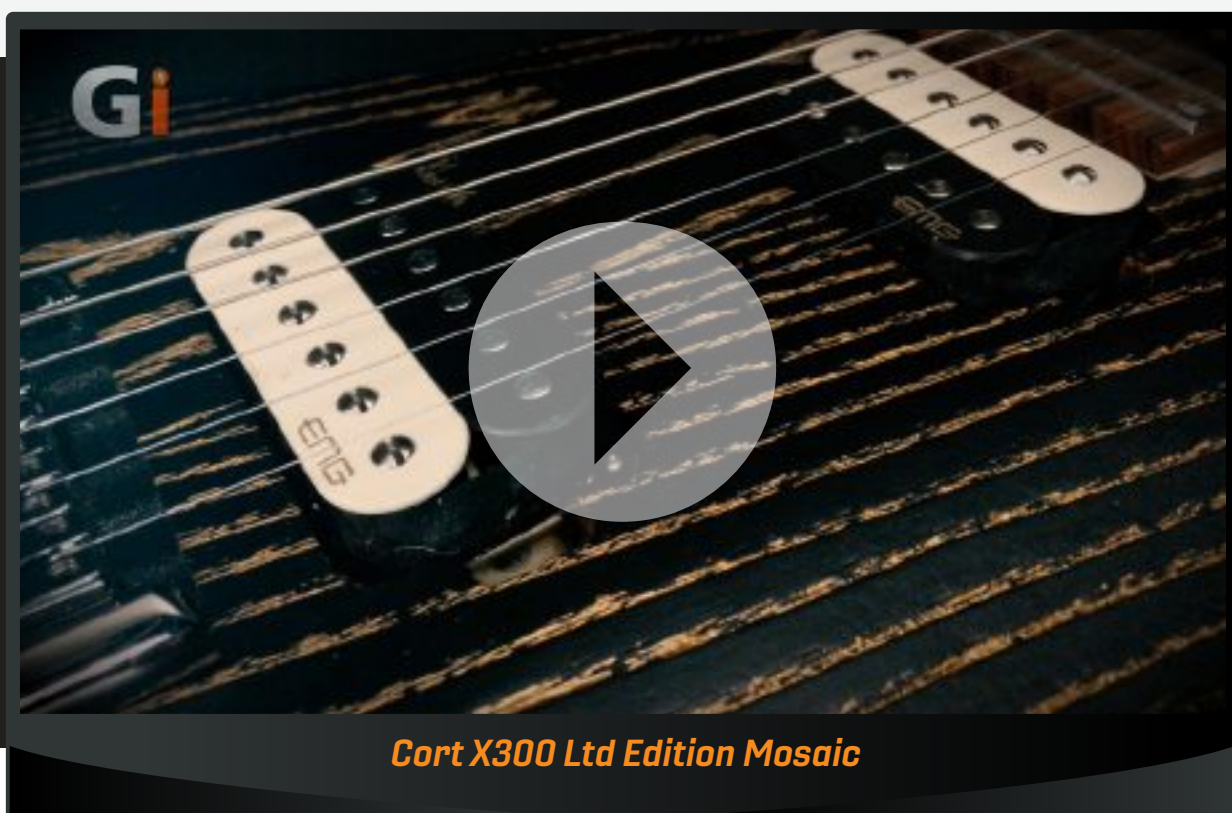


Find your nearest dealer at
www.blackstaramps.com

Cort X300 Ltd Edition Mosaic

Sam Bell reviews the Cort KX300 Etched. Covered in matte black with accented gold paint that is only applied on the wood grains of a beautiful ash top to exude an organic vibe, this stunning guitar is also equipped with matching coloured EMG RetroActive Super77 humbuckers that have been tested and proven by the existing KX300 models to be an excellent match for the Mahogany body.

CORT has delivered again in making aesthetically unique, quality guitars at an affordable price range. In this issue, I have the pleasure of looking at the Cort KX300 Etched. A Hard Tail Super Strat-style guitar with awesome features, big tone and great looks. Let's dive in! »





Cort KX300 Etched

MSRP: (UK) £499 / (US) \$749

The Breakdown



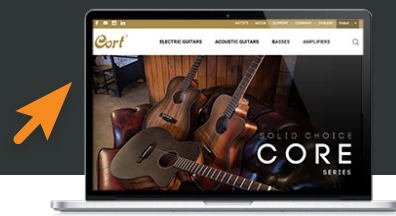
For fans of

Superb playability

Striking looks

Not breaking the bank

For more information, please visit:
cortguitars.com





“Yet again, another
quality, unique
and **affordable**
instrument..”

The body features an Ash top and Mahogany Body. The Ash top keeps the top end of the tone in check, adding clarity to the large mid-range that the Mahogany provides. This is great for modern high gain metal sounds and much more. The Ash Top features a cool etched design; the Cort Website shows a Red Etched guitar in the promo shots; however, the one we had in the studio showed a Warm Yellow Etched design. It looks great! »



STETSBAR

professional tremolo systems

THE RETRO-FIT VIBRATO SYSTEM

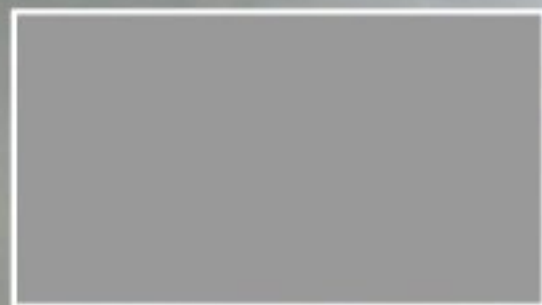
Great Range, Great Feel,
No Mods, No changes

Mounts for

Stop-Tail
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"Amazing tremolos.
The best retrofit on the
market by miles!"

Nick Jennison
Guitar Interactive



visit madisonandfifth.co.uk

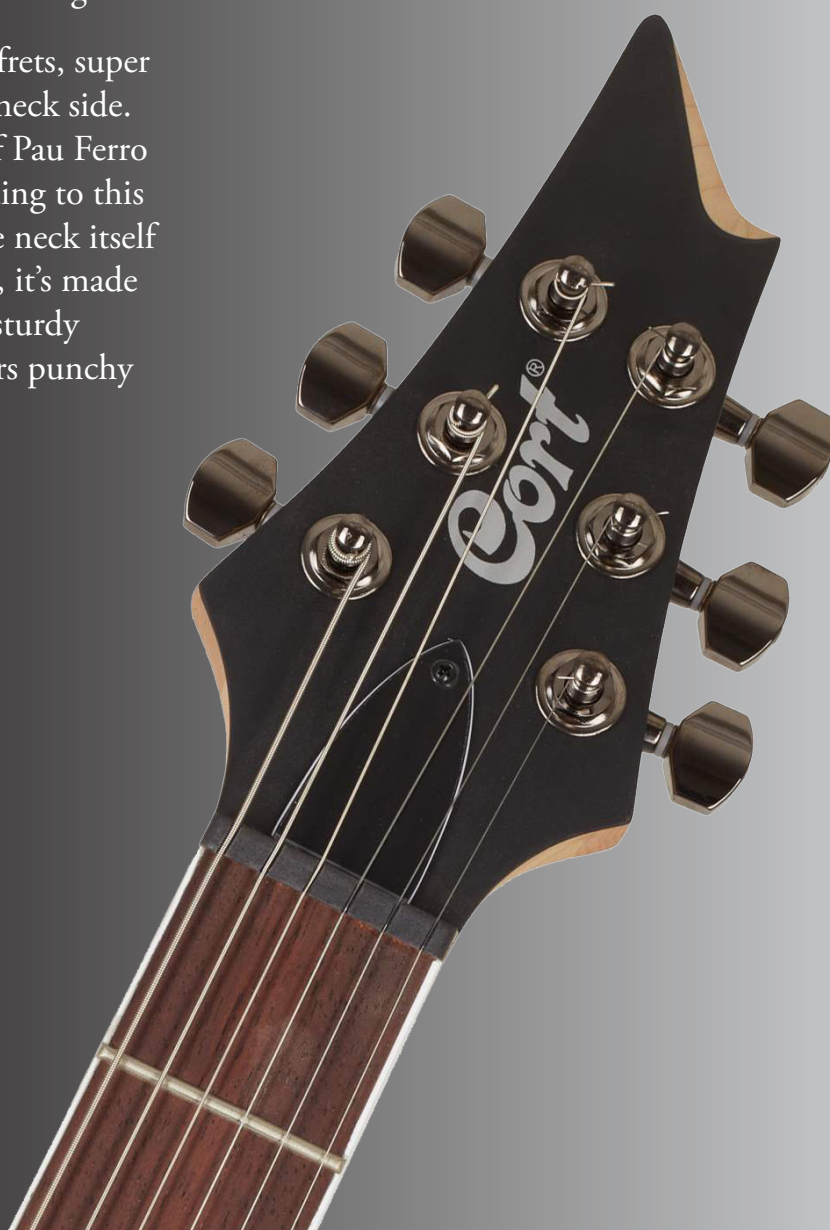
Eric Stet's Gibson ES335 with Stop-Tail Stetsbar

The Pickups are Active EMG 'Retroactive Super 77's in both neck and bridge position. These are voiced to be modern high gain pickups for modern riffing and soloing whilst also maintaining a classic aesthetic of a passive pickup 'look'. The 9V battery is easily accessed via a hatch on the rear of the guitar body. The pickup switch is three-way with a volume and tone knob for further tonal tweaking.

The neck is a slick and fast 24 frets, super flat radius and smooth on the neck side. The fingerboard is made out of Pau Ferro wood with raindrop inlays adding to this guitars' warm woody look. The neck itself is super smooth, as mentioned, it's made from Canadian Maple, a very sturdy wood, and adding to the guitars punchy sound and feel.

The bridge is a Cort made bridge, nice and smooth feeling, adding some weight to the body and more string contact, adding to the overall size and tone of this instrument. This guitar would be perfect for modern metal styles, drop tuning and much more. Yet again, another quality, unique and affordable instrument.

END«





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



Victory V4 Copper Preamp

Based on Victory's 2019's Copper amplifier, the Victory V4 Copper Preamp pedal is designed to emulate the late-1950's British amplifiers. Chiming EL84 cleans, expressive mid-gain sweetness and a touch of reverb make this pedal for exceptional all-valve overdrive. Just like the rest of Victory's V4 Preamp range, it can be used in front of your amp or recording interface, or alternatively use it in conjunction with your existing amp for a whole new sound experience. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

EVERY once in a while, a product comes along that just makes you go, "I need one of those". While it's no secret that I'm a bit of a Martin Kidd fanboy, their V4 line of preamp pedals is just such a product. While they are essentially "amp in a box" pedals, they differ from typical offerings of this type in two key ways: Firstly, they're powered by four legit, high voltage preamp valves; Secondly, they don't use EQ to try and make your Deluxe Reverb sound like a Plexi (or whatever amp you have and are trying to emulate) - they completely replace your amp's preamp at the touch of a footswitch.

"Plugging in through the normal, non-treble boost channel, the tone **is every bit as complex** and chiming as you'd expect..."



signed to sound like the chime and rock of
and rich classic rock roar are packed into this
e, the V4 Copper can be used straight into the
ur amp's FX loop to bypass the front end of your

It's basically like adding two extra channels to your amp.
If you have a clean amp and want some legit British grind,
the V4 Sheriff will do that. If you have a high gain monster
and want a great clean and lead tone to compliment it, the
V4 Jack (formerly the V4 Countess) has you covered.

The V4 Copper is the latest addition to the series, sporting
the same preamp circuit as the hugely successful Copper
and Copper Deluxe - Victory's AC-inspired line of amps. »



Victory V4 Copper Preamp

MSRP: (UK) £369 / (US) \$519

The Breakdown

Specialised Versatile



Affordable High-end



Straightforward Feature-rich



Traditional Innovative



For fans of

Classic AC-30 tones through any amp.

Killer clean and mid-gain tones.

Adding channels to your existing amp.

For more information, please visit:

www.victoryamps.com

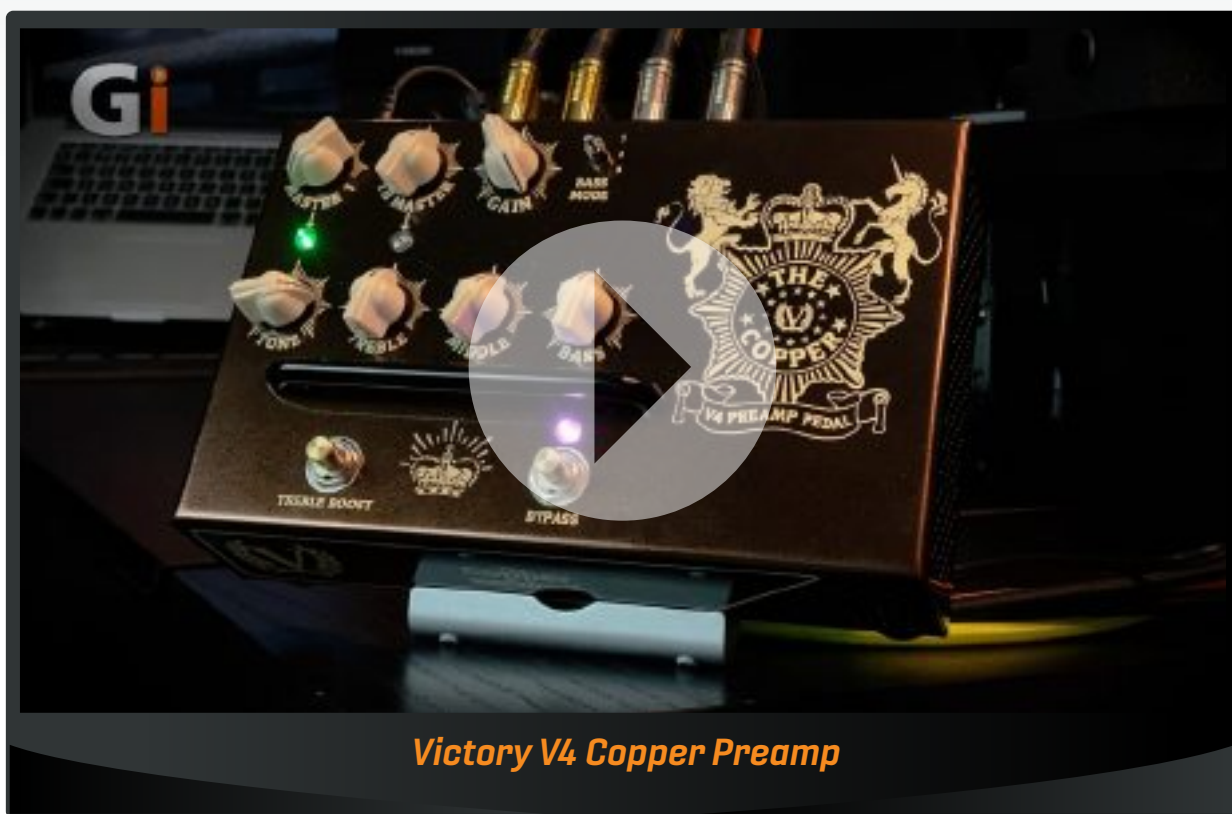


In essence, it gives you an idealised version of the AC-30 sound (with Victory's signature fatness) from any amp, with the addition of a built-in treble booster for that classic, vocal "Rangemaster-into-AC30" tone made famous by the likes of Rory Gallagher and Brian May.

Features-wise, it's pretty simple on the surface, with a shared gain, tone and three-band EQ, along with independent volume controls for the normal and treble boost sides. There are two footswitches - one for engaging the treble booster, another for bypassing the pedal. If you're hooked up using the four cable method, then bypassing the V4 Copper will give you your amp's tone completely unmolested, while engaging the pedal will

completely bypass your amp's preamp stage. There's a jack for remote operation (be it with a simple footswitch, a pedalboard switcher like a Boss ES-8 or GigRig G2/G3, or as part of a more elaborate rack setup) and a three-way "bass mode" switch that cuts some of the low end into both channels, just the treble boost channel or neither.

Plugging in through the normal, non-treble boost channel, the tone is every bit as complex and chiming as you'd expect. It's clean most of the way up, with a little bit of Bryan Adams crunch available at the top of the gain range. The tone control will take you from a smooth and round voice that's perfect for blues soloing through to '80s U2 chime with that instantly recognisable harmonic »



Victory V4 Copper Preamp

SE

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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



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structure. With the bass mode switch in position one, it's much fatter in the lows than the typically lean AC-30 tone (making it a great base for all manner of drive pedals), but if you want that authentically "tucked" low end, then switching to "Bass Mode 2" will give it to you.

You'd be forgiven for thinking the Treble Boost switch would give you something reminiscent of an AC-30's "top boost" channel, but in actual fact, it engages a built-in treble booster that's tonally reminiscent of a Rangemaster in that it's chewy, vocal and incredibly responsive to your pick attack. If you're looking for Brian May's iconic lead sound, this will get you pretty close, but it's also a killer voice for classic rock riffing and bluesy solo lines - especially with a slide. With the gain maxed out and a humbucker-equipped guitar, it can get a little muddy, but cutting the lows with the Bass Mode

switch completely cleans this up without ever being thin or harsh - it's tuned just perfectly.

In terms of integration with your existing rig, the V4 Copper is on the large side for a pedal, but when you compare it to bringing an extra amp to the gig/session (along with the variety of devices you'd need to switch that amp in and out of your chain), it's a no-brainer. It's also very power-hungry, needing a 12v 800mA supply. You can run it off the included wall-wart, but there are a number of commercially available power supplies that will power the V4 from the likes of Strymon, Cioks and Voodoo Lab - although you will likely need to chain two 12v outputs together with a current doubler.

Like any AC-type tone, the V4 Copper is at it's most authentic through Alnico speakers, but it also sounds killer through Greenbacks, Vintage 30s or any stand-

ard guitar speaker you may be used to. This is crucial because while Alnico Blues may be the gold standard for AC tones, they're expensive, only handle 15 watts each and sound pretty dreadful for many higher gain applications (including many higher gain pedals like fuzzes). This way, you can combine your main amp with whatever speakers flatter it the most and use the V4 Copper for that killer AC-30 flavour, regardless of which cab you're using.

The Victory V4 Copper is without question the most convenient way to add that must-have AC tone to your existing rig. It'll cover everything from Bryan Adams to Brian May, by way of Rory Gallagher and The Edge. It costs way less than buying another amp, and it integrates beautifully with any modern guitar rig. You owe it to yourself to check one out.

END <<

“The Victory V4 Copper is **without question** the most convenient way to add that must-have AC tone to your existing rig...”



Kustom KG100FX212

Tom Quayle reviews the Kustom KG100FX212 Amplifier - a 30-watt guitar combo with two 12-inch Kustom speakers, two channels, and reverb, delay and chorus effects. Designed to offer a wide range of clean and dirty tones while providing rugged dependability and intuitive operation, The KG100FX212 offers some inspiring, versatile and dynamic tones that are perfect for a wide variety of musical styles without breaking the bank.

THERE'S here's a general misconception in the guitar world that solid-state equals bad and tubes always equals good. There are some huge benefits to using solid-state amps, such as lower weight, greater reliability and tonal consistency, but one of the biggest upsides of going solid-state is cost. Kustom may not be a household name in the amp world, but they are producing some of the most affordable and genuinely giggable amps on the market right now (think the price of the average boutique pedal for a 100w amp) and, whilst they'll never replace your beloved high-end tube amps, they actually sound good too - albeit with some small caveats due to the price.



“The KG100FX212 **might just surprise** you with what a solid-state amp can achieve...”

The Kustom KG100FX212 is a 100w 2-channel combo amplifier featuring a pair of 12” Kustom speakers, built-in delay, reverb and chorus effects and a variety of ins and outs for all manner of tonal situations. The Rhythm (clean to mild crunch) and Lead channels share a three-band EQ but have independent volume and gain controls whilst both channels can have either delay or reverb switched on, as well as the chorus effect, with an overall level control tailoring the amount of wet signal required.

The front panel also includes an aux input for jamming along with tracks (which sound surprisingly decent through these guitar voiced speakers) and a headphone out for silent practice or recording. On the backside you’ll find a single extension speaker out and an effects loop plus a footswitch input for channel switching.

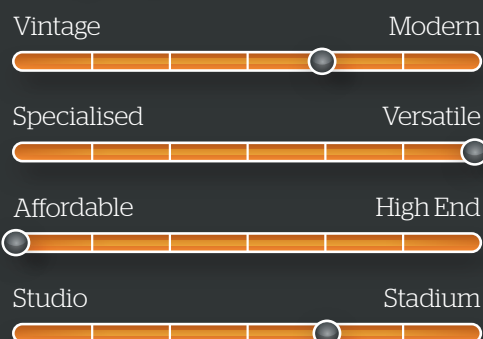
Considering the price, this is a very well built piece of kit that feels very solidly constructed with quality workmanship and controls. Nothing feels particularly cheap or corner-cutting, the only real external indicator that this isn’t a more expensive tube amp being the lightweight for such a large amplifier. It’s an attractive design that wouldn’t look out of place next to an amp costing three or four times it’s asking price. »



Kustom KG100FX212

MSRP: (UK) £279 / (US) \$429

The Breakdown



For fans of

Versatile Two-channel amps

Getting more for your money,

Having no back pain!

For more information, please visit:

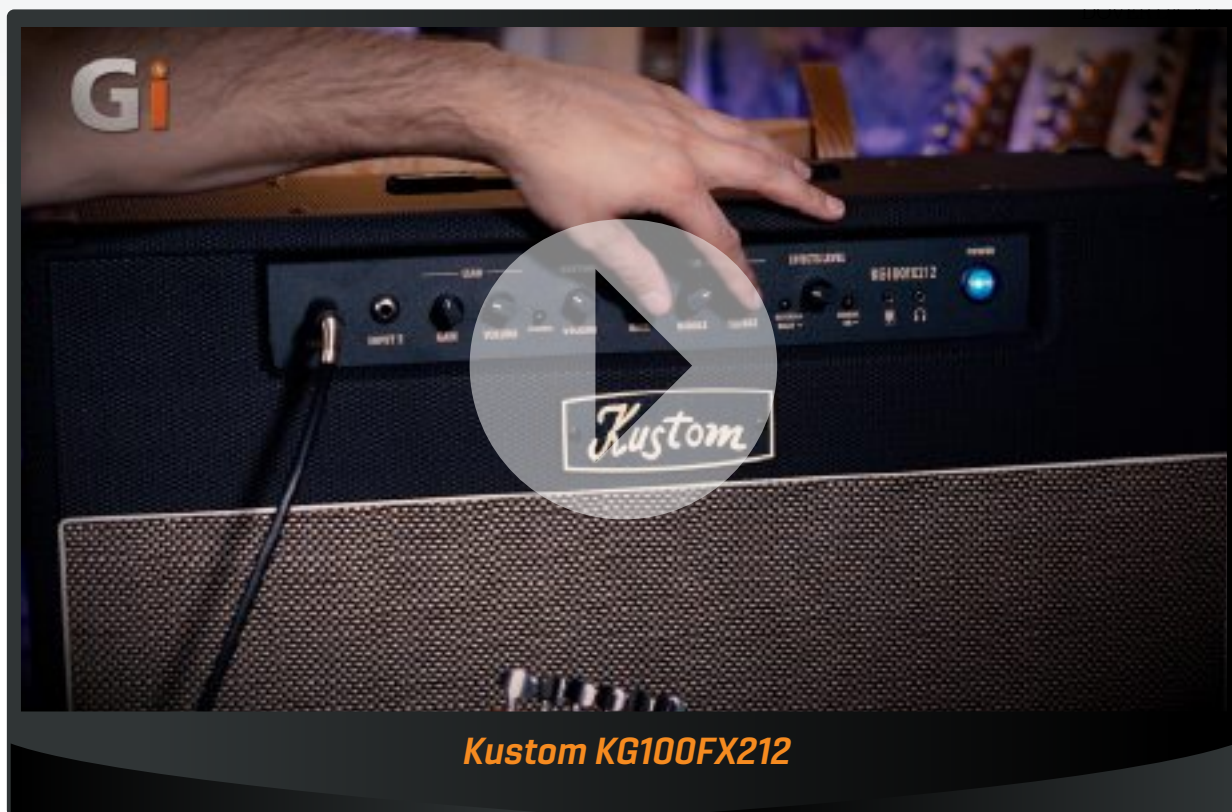
kustom.com



Where things get really surprising though, is when you plug into the rhythm channel for the first time. Here you'll find a highly articulate, rich-sounding and dynamic clean tone that has bags of character and is a genuine pleasure to play through. The KG100FX212 would make for a great pedal platform with its powerful EQ section and decent onboard reverb/delay, taking drive pedals well and offering much of the playing feel and articulation you'd expect from a far more expensive amplifier. The Lead channel isn't quite as impressive, thanks to a high level of hiss and noise at even moderate gain levels, although it still sounds way better than many other amps

in this price range, especially at this power rating. This could be easily fixed with a noise gate, although if you're buying an amp at this price point, you maybe don't have the extra cash for a pedal to go alongside it.

Inevitably, at this price point, there will be some compromises and, if you can live with the noisy hiss from the Lead channel and pop sound whilst switching channels, you'll find an array of quality tones on offer here too with tons of gain on tap for saturated lead tones or scooped metal sounds that respond well to volume changes on your guitar or pick attack. The



Kustom KG100FX212



KG100FX212 might just surprise you with what a solid-state amp can achieve from a tonal and feel perspective in 2021. Many guitar teachers across the land would kill to have something like this in their practice/teaching rooms compared to the hideous, cheap solid-state amps that we've all had such negative experiences with.

Kustom have created somewhat of a bargain with the KG100FX212 - it's amazingly affordable considering what's on offer, sounding and feeling great to play and plenty loud enough for any standard gig you might throw at it. You'll certainly have

no issue competing with even the most vociferous of drummers. It's easy to dial in some great tones, and the lightweight, solid-state design has some big benefits compared to heavy tube amps - especially if you're carting your gear around a lot (although who's doing that these days!?). If you want a good sounding amp at a bargain price, look no further - it will make a great backup, too for when your beloved tube amp blows a fuse or ruptures an EL34 mid-song! Well worth checking out.

END ◀

VOX Valvenergy Cutting Edge & Co

In addition to producing traditional tube amps that use conventional vacuum tubes, the good people at VOX have also been developing revolutionary amplifiers that use Nutube. Taking advantage of the technology obtained through the research of these amps, VOX has now developed a line of pedals: the VOX Valvenergy series.

Nick Jennison continues our look at this range with his reviews of the VOX Cutting Edge & Copperhead Drive Pedals.

IT'S become common practice for guitarists to use gain pedals as the core of their tone. Not only does this approach make travelling way easier, but it offers tons of tonal versatility. In the good old days, going from an AC-30 tone to a hot-rodded Plexi required you not only to own and maintain both amps but to carry them to and from the gig, hook them up without getting lost in a sea of buzz and hum and endure the withering scorn of both the sound engineer and your bandmates as you crank both amps up to find their “sweet spot” - assuming both amps sound great at the same volume, that is. Nowadays, we just stomp on a pedal. A more enlightened time, for sure.

Of course, the reason loud, lairy valve amplifiers still exist is because they sound and feel fantastic in a way that most pedals can't touch. Some pedals will use traditional vacuum tubes to capture some of the magic, but this comes with its own problems - heat, voltage, size, fragility and expense, to name but a few.

Vox to the rescue. Parent company KORG's Nutube technology behaves in a very similar

way to a vacuum tube, but because it's based on fluorescent display technology, it doesn't require a heater. This means it takes up way less space, doesn't require ventilation and can run happily on a standard 9v power supply. This technology is at the heart of the four pedals in their new Valvenergy range: the Dumble-ish “Silk Drive”, AC-30 inspired “Mystic Edge”, and two flavours of high gain - the British sounding “Copperhead Drive” and American “Cutting Edge”. Being the gain-hound I am; naturally, I decided to look at the latter pair.

Both pedals share a number of common features, with knobs for gain, volume and three-band EQ, with a “bright” switch on the Copperhead Drive and a “tight” knob in its place on the Mystic Edge. There's also a very cool waveform display that shows you precisely what the Nutube is doing to your tone. On the top, there are a couple of features that greatly expand the functionality of these pedals.

Firstly, there's a switch to select between three operation modes: “Standard” (for running into the front of an amp), “Preamp” »

Copperhead Drive

COPPERHEAD DRIVE



VOX Valvenergy Cutting Edge & Copperhead Drive

MSRP: (UK) £169 / (US) \$249

The Breakdown

Specialised Versatile



Affordable High End



Straightforward Feature-rich



Traditional Innovative



For fans of

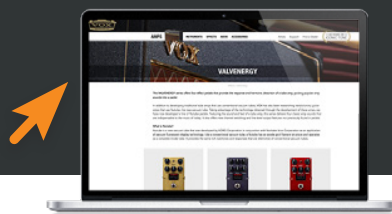
Killer high gain tones

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Versatility

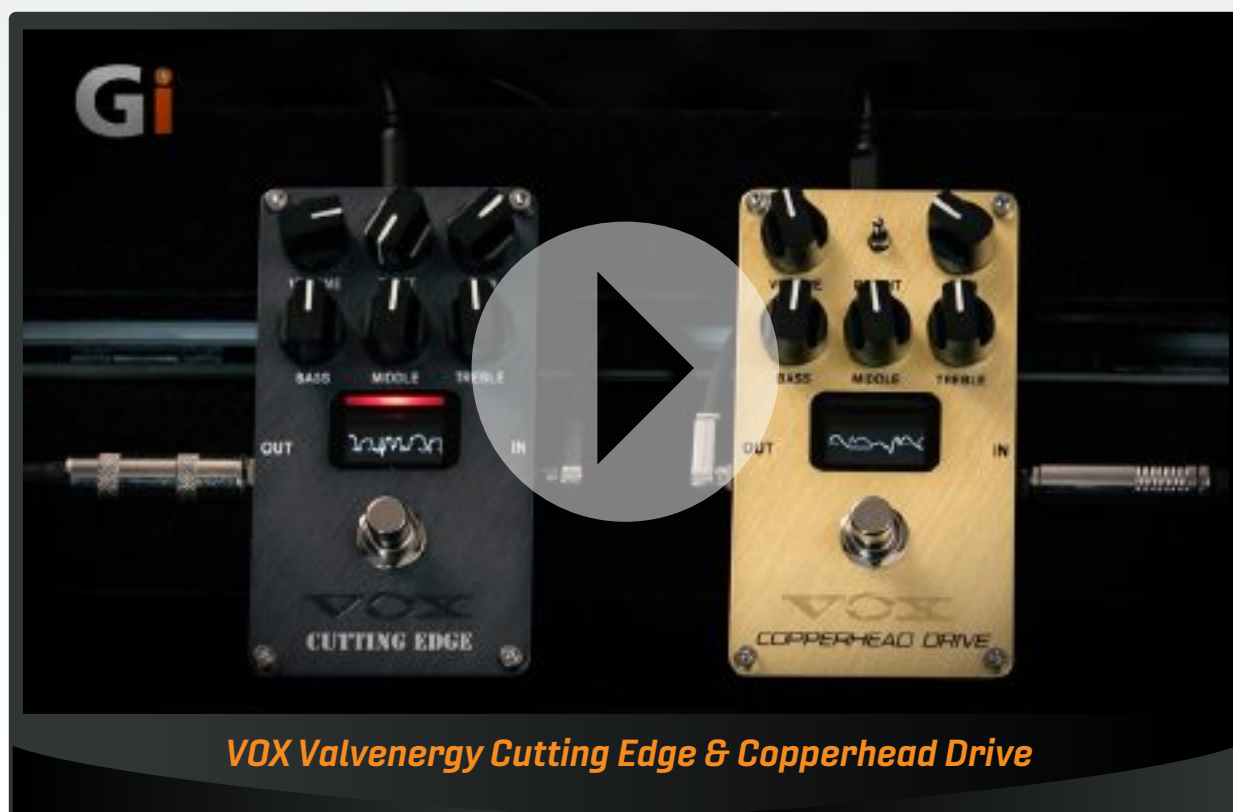
For more information, please visit:

[voxamps.com/en-gb/series/
valvenergy-en-gb/](http://voxamps.com/en-gb/series/valvenergy-en-gb/)





(for running into your amp's FX return or with your favourite cab sim/IRs) and "Cab Sim" (for going direct without needing additional hardware). This unprecedented level of versatility means you can run these pedals as part of a traditional guitar rig with your favourite amp, but if your amp goes down in the heat of battle, you can flip the switch to "Cab Sim" and go straight to FOH and finish the gig. It also



CUTTING EDGE DRIVE



opens up a ton of possibilities for recording, either with the built-in cab sim or your favourite IRs in “Preamp” mode.

The second unique feature is the “Link” function. By connecting two or more pedals using the 1/8” jack, switching one of the pedals on will automatically bypass the others - just like switching channels on a traditional guitar amp. »



Of course, all the impressive features in the world are no good if these pedals don't sound good - and oh man, do they sound good! Vox has long been the unsung heroes of amp modelling, with some of the most organic sounding and feeling models out there, and these pedals are no exception. Both pedals have a superb, bouncy response that's both dynamic and very forgiving under the fingers. The Copperhead Drive will take you from snappy Plexi and 800 tones through to a modern Friedman-like roar, while the Cutting Edge has Rectifier sludge at one end of the "tight" knob and ENGL-style focus at the other. Perhaps most importantly, though, both pedals feel "right", no matter where you set the controls. Extremely impressive.

Vox's Valvenergy pedals are some of the most inspiring gain pedals I've ever played. They sound killer, feel amazing and offer unreal levels of versatility. If you're a gain freak like me, you need these pedals in your arsenal - and if you're not, you need to check out the other two! Very highly recommended.

END «

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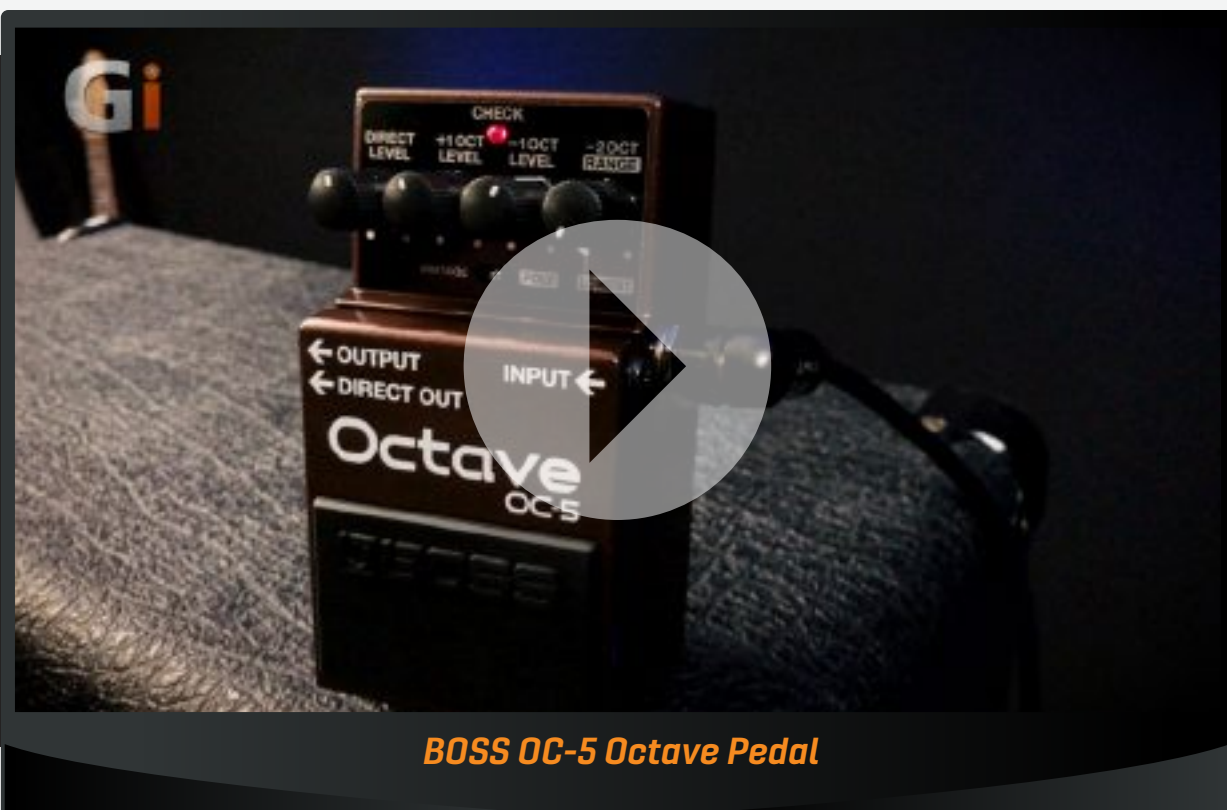
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BOSS OC-5 Octave Pedal

Octave pedals of the past decade have presented guitar and bass players with a tough choice: do you want vintage-style octave effect – the sound most of us guitar and bass players associate with the old-school walking lines? Or do you want modern tracking and polyphonic capabilities to help flesh out your sound? The BOSS OC-5 Octave pedal, now you don't have to choose. **Sam Bell** tells us more.

WHO'S the Boss? Well, it's safe to say BOSS is, that is, the Guitar Pedal manufacturer Boss Pedals. In this issue of Guitar Interactive, I have the joy of taking the latest generation of BOSS's famous Octave Pedal. Back in 1982, the company released the OC-2. This pedal gave users the option of having a monophonic (single note at a time) 1 or/and 2 octaves below the pitch they were playing. This opened up the sonic landscape for Guitarists. Enabling users to create blackhole inducing heavy riffs all the way to laser-like octave »



BOSS OC-5 Octave Pedal

decision: Are you searching for that classic OC-2-
octave pedal – to add weight to your leads and
resh out chords in a solo setting? Well, with the



BOSS OC-5 Octave Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £122 / (US) \$134

The Breakdown

Straight Forward Feature-rich



Specialised Versatile



Affordable High-end



Studio Stage



For fans of

Adding low-end to your tone

Modern tracking and polyphonic capabilities

Low-latency octave effects

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www.boss.info/uk/categories/stompboxes/





solos when playing in the upper octave's. Check out Prince's very famous guitar intro to 'When Doves Cry' to hear this effect used in this context. It's been said that Prince was an avid user of BOSS's effect pedal, so this could have possibly been the use of one of the early Octave Pedal models.

Later on, as Shoulder Pads started to become uncomfortable, BOSS released the OC-3, which featured a Polyphonic Octave option. This enabled users to play more than one note at the same time whilst using the effect; this created almost Organ sounds. It's quite an incredible and inspiring sound. However, all this romanticising about the old octave pedals sets the tone for the NEW OC-5 Octave Pedal from BOSS, which makes this one different and unique from the previous generations.

For a start, we don't have to worry about losing any of the classic features. The OC5 includes our Monophonic (Vintage Mode) octave and our Polyphonic Octave Mode. We're also now treated to two excellent new modes. The first option is to have a 1+ octave up, which is super useful to have within this

pedal. This can add clarity and definition when combined with the -1 and -2 octaves. All the octaves can be used on their own, mixed in together however you wish. The pedal even gives you the option to send a direct signal to another amp so you can have a Wet/Dry set up.

The most notable new feature of the OC5 is the option to 'isolate' the lower range of the guitar. You can have the pedal only pick up on a certain range of notes. For example, you can set it so that it picks up notes on the Low E and A strings and lets any notes higher in pitch through without the octave effect. This way, you can really separate the two sounds, on one guitar, through one pedal! Amazing!

It's also important to note how well the OC5 tracks what you're playing. From super-low, dense chord voicings to fast legato runs, the pedal will keep up effortlessly. This is what the pedal is known for and one of the reasons why the BOSS Octave pedal holds its own today, almost 40 years later after the release of the first Octave pedal.

END◀

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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Black Country Customs/Laney Secret

Based on the classic vintage and studio sounds of the past, the BCC Secret Path Reverb spring and reverb sounds mixed with contemporary reliability. Billed as a reverb that o with a sublime, brooding, dynamically evolving shimmer, **Sam Bell** takes a closer look

LANEY is well known for its genre-defining amps, which deliver crunchy British tone and attack. They are now going to be well known for making great pedals with their Black Country Customs series of Guitar Pedals. Their aim has been to make fantastic sounding pedals with plenty of character that doesn't crowd your tone, budget or pedalboard! They have certainly delivered.

In this issue, I'm taking a look at the BCC Secret Path Reverb pedal. I've been using the Secret Path as part of my own rig for a little while now; it's safe to say it still blows my mind. If you're wanting some classic reverb sounds with depth, versatility and some extra ambient mojo, the Secret Path is well worth searching out for. Let's take a look at some of its features.

The pedal is based on three distinctive reverb sounds, Plate, Spring and Secret Path. Plate being a classic plate reverb, Spring being Spring and the Secret Path. The Secret Path reverb is a unique reverb to this pedal; it's a dark, broody reverb. Fantastic for ambient and deep soundscapes.

“The footswitch is silent, and the build quality **is fantastic...**”

Each of these sounds can be manipulated via the four control knobs, which allow us to change the reverb's mix, tone, pre-delay, and size. If that's not enough, when holding down the main footswitch, the pedal enters 'enhanced' mode, which allows us to add some modulation to the Plate and Spring Reverbs and an excellent ethereal shimmer effect to the Secret Path reverb. We can control the amount and intensity of the enhanced mode by pressing the 'edit' switch in the middle of the pedal, which allows the 'size' control to be used as an 'enhance' control. Super awesome and very simple.

The Reverb modes are easily switchable with a toggle switch between the control knobs, the three colour LED clearly shows which reverb you're currently on. It also pulses when in »

Secret Path Reverb Pedal

is a boutique pedal from Laney filled with lush
can provide a deep, dark, mesmerising ambience
at this exciting new stompbox.



Black Country Customs/Laney Secret Path Reverb Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £139 / (US) \$199

The Breakdown

Straight Forward Feature-rich



Specialised Versatile



Affordable High-end



Studio Stage



For fans of

Inspiring ambient tones

Easy to operate pedals

Affordable costs

For more information, please
visit: [www.laney.co.uk/products/
collection/black-country-customs](http://www.laney.co.uk/products/collection/black-country-customs)



enhanced mode. The footswitch is silent, and the build quality is fantastic. My only loving critique would be that whilst the knobs themselves look very cool, it's hard to quite make out where you are, especially in a dark stage or studio setting. This pedal, however, is certainly something that can be set and left on as part of a rig, so once you've found your sweet spot, you can leave it and get on with creating music, which is great!

What I love most about this pedal is that it's not afraid; whilst it can add subtle amounts

of ambience to your tone, it also can give other famous reverb pedals such as The Blackhole Reverb from Eventide or even the Blue Sky by Strymon (both costly pedals comparatively). Even when we compare it to the similar cost levels of the Boss RV6, the Secret Path still stands out with its features and depth of sound.

END «



Black Country Customs/Laney Secret Path Reverb Pedal

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GI79

PLAY IT - RECORD
IT - PERFORM IT



Vox-VH-Q1-Headphones

Nick Jennison reviews Vox's VH-Q1 Smart Noise Cancelling Headphones. Whether listening to music or using them for chatting over a Bluetooth device, these headphones were developed with the guitar player in mind giving you an adjustable, powerful listening experience.

IF you're yet to experience the joy of a great pair of noise-cancelling headphones, you're missing out. I get it - guitar players are notorious "late adopters" when it comes to technology. While bass players are rocking up to gigs with ergonomic, body-hugging instruments and feather-weight class D amplifiers, we're figuring out how to get that half stack into the family saloon. Keyboard players can cover any session imaginable with just a £100 MIDI keyboard and a laptop, but the mere mention of "modeling" will have many guitar players' toes curling.

I was pretty late to the noise-cancelling party too. I'd endure long haul flights with nothing but earplugs to keep the world at bay, and on tour I'd sleep wearing my IEMs if I was bunking with snoring bandmates. Let me tell you; I'm unbelievably glad I made the jump to a noise-cancelling set. In fact, I'm wearing mine as I write this - blissfully tuning out the world in the delightfully "meta" act of telling you about Vox's new noise-cancelling cans, the VH-Q1.

The VH-Q1 Silent Session Studio headphones are a pair of premium over-ear Bluetooth head-

phones with a number of features aimed specifically at guitar players. In addition to offering excellent sound quality and noise rejection, they have a very clever feature that Vox is calling "Smart Monitoring". Similar to the "transparency" mode found on many high-end earbuds and headsets, this function brings the outside world into your headphones. The crucial difference is that the VH-Q1 allows you to tune in to the specific frequencies of your acoustic guitar or bass, while still rejecting some external noise. There are five presets to choose from, depending on whether you're »

s. Designed for practicing your instrument,
 se high-quality headphones have been
 ful set of headphones with a great audio



Vox-VH-Q1-Headphones

MSRP: (UK) £349 / (US) \$400

The Breakdown

Straightforward Feature-Rich



Specialised Versatile



Affordable High-end



Studio Stage



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headphones

Acoustic guitar

Peace & quiet

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voxamps.com/en-gb/



looking for a fuller or brighter sound, and the result is very impressive. I found myself playing more dynamically with the headphones on than without, and appreciating the fine nuances of the guitar's tone that might be lost in an imperfect environment.

In general use, the VH-Q1s are great sounding everyday listening headphones, although they're perhaps a bit too "hyped" for use as reference headphones in the studio. The low-end extension is

massive and deep but doesn't suffer from "Beats-itis," where the sub lows dominate everything up to and including the midrange. The soundstage is wide and detailed, with good transient response on snares and ride cymbals and clear separation even when listening to dense modern rock mixes. The mids are slightly recessive, but the upper mids and treble are clear without being harsh and fatiguing. I'd hesitate to mix anything on them, but for practicing, listening to music or watching TV, they sound great.

In terms of comfort, the VH-Q1s are on the heavy side at 320g, and my partner Nina did find them a little uncomfortable after a while, but I was personally quite happy wearing them for hours at a time with no discomfort. The foam pads are thick and comfortable with a generous amount of space in the ear cups, and there's enough adjustment room in the headband to accommodate even my massive head (seriously, I struggle to find hats that fit).



“In general use, the VH-Q1s are **great sounding** everyday listening headphones...”

The VH-Q1s are a great set of premium-quality headphones that offer some unique features that guitarists will really dig and are the perfect choice for day-to-day use as well. They're rugged, look great (especially the white/rose gold pair) and are priced fairly competitively compared

to similar offerings from the likes of Bose, Sony and Sennheiser. If you're in the market for a new set of headphones, you should definitely check them out - even if it means bringing your acoustic guitar to the store with you!

END «



THE Quietroom

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

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

WHEN ONLY
ACOUSTIC WILL DO

Kustom Sienna Pro 35W 1x10

Combining some seriously good looks with great tone, Kustom's Sienna Pro series acoustic guitar amp is perfect for a live or home setting. Featuring brand new speakers exclusively developed for the Sienna Pro series, the amp works to retain each instrument's unique harmonic content while contributing a sparkling clarity to your sound. Check out the full review.

THE Kustom Sienna 35 Pro is a highly affordable acoustic guitar amp, featuring over 30-watts of power, eight built-in Modulation/Reverb Effects three-band EQ, Notch Control and jack two inputs (line/mic & guitar). Around the back, we have a headphone/line out and speaker out options.

The sound from the 1x10 speaker (I accidentally said 8-inch speaker in the video review, doh!) fills the room nicely, and the EQ/Notch control's respond well to your acoustic guitar, giving you flexibility over your tone. The Notch control can also help with dialling out any troublesome frequencies that might cause feedback. The effects give us different types of reverb/chorus combinations, from a lush hall reverb with chorus to a slapback room sound; these FX can be mixed in using the level control. This definitely helps expand on your guitar sound, offering up a wide range of combinations to suit just about any acoustic tone...and all this at a stunning price. »



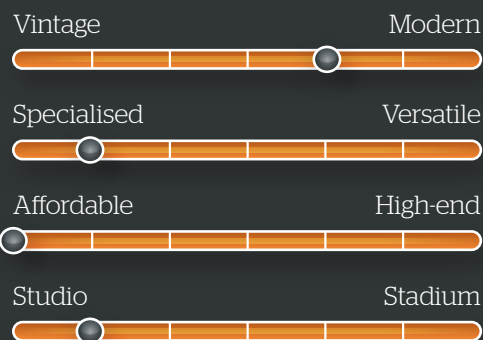
Acoustic instrument amplifiers can easily inspire in the Sienna Pro Series, the Kustom Sienna Pro 35W 1x10 is bringing quality to the sound. Here's **Sam Bell** with



Kustom Sienna Pro 35W 1x10

MSRP: (UK) £189 / (US) \$219

The Breakdown



For fans of

Transparent acoustic tone

Stand out looks

Great value for money

For more information, please visit:
kustom.com



THE QUIETROOM AMP REVIEW

The unit itself is very lightweight and the build is pretty sturdy. I'd easily recommend for some small acoustic gigs filling smaller rooms. Definitely worth checking out if you are looking for your first acoustic guitar amp, it's affordable and it looks and sounds great!

END◀



Kustom Sienna Pro 35W 1x10

— TAYLOR —
GT[™]

**Smaller size.
Bigger sound.
Serious fun.**



QUALITY
Taylor
GUITARS

Rathbone No.5 – Double Top D

Featuring a tried and tested combination of tonewoods crafted with two outer layers of wood and an inner layer of carbon fibre weave, the Rathbone No.5 - Double Top Dreadnought is quite the instrument. For that 'Big Sound,' the No.5 Dreadnought gives you a bold and rich tone with an ideal balance of volume, size and playability. **Nick Jennison** reviews.

I hate to be negative, but let's be real for a moment: spruce-topped dreadnoughts are ten-a-penny these days. Normally, you can expect something beyond the norm from high-end guitars, but the entry-level market can seem saturated with identical spruce/mahogany dreads. So when Rathbone's No.5 "Double Top" Dreadnought arrived at GI towers, I was naturally curious.

At first glance, everything here is pretty standard, but what makes this guitar unique is it's top. Sandwiched between two layers of sitka spruce is a carbon fibre weave - hence the "double top" name. Rathbone claim this layer will improve stability, strength and projection, and while it's hard to isolate things down to a single variable in guitar design, this is an uncommonly clear and articulate guitar - especially for an affordable dreadnought!

Strumming hard with a medium pick produces a big weighty tone that's characteristic of this body style and size, but there's also a bright clarity to the sound that's much less common in guitars of this style and price point. The same articulate quality carries

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

over beautifully to more delicate styles like fingerstyle. Dreads traditionally don't excel at gentler styles, but the No.5 has a great presence and snap that really flatters this kind of playing.

Taking a closer look, this guitar has some high-end appointments that you wouldn't expect to see at a guitar priced this reasonably. The two top layers are sitka spruce, and while it's technically a laminate construction, still quality materials throughout. The back, sides and neck are sapele mahogany, the fretboard and bridge are both rosewood, and the saddle and nut are both bone - all areas where entry-level manufacturers tend to cut corners, so top marks for quality materials here. »

Dreadnought



Rathbone No. 5 - Double Top Dreadnought

MSRP: (UK) £339 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown

Traditional Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

Big, bold tones

Quality materials

Not breaking the bank

For more information, please visit:

www.rathboneguitars.com



The open-gear tuners are a very classy touch, with a real “premium” feel.

In terms of playability, it’s a very comfortable guitar with a familiar feel under the arm and an action that’s set at a comfortable medium from the factory. It’s certainly not a shredder’s action, but it’s a setup that should be very comfortable for the majority of players.

All things considered, the Rathbone No.5 “Double Top” Dreadnought is a guitar that punches far above its price in terms of quality and sound. It’s a big, bold sounding instrument with tons of authority and some nice high-end touches on a very affordable instrument. If you’re in the market for a great entry-level acoustic guitar, look no further!

END «





Cort Core OC Spruce

Designed with simplicity in mind, Cort's new Core Series acoustic guitars are focused on what truly makes acoustic guitars great. **Tom Quayle** reviews the Cort CORE-OC Spruce - an all-solid acoustic guitar, built with Cort's world-class craftsmanship, that looks simple yet elegant with great playability and natural acoustic sound. The new Core Series is billed as delivering the performance and tone every player has envisioned in a great acoustic guitar, but just how good is it? Tom tells us more.

OVER the last few years, most of the more budget-minded acoustic guitar manufacturers have begun producing affordable instruments with all solid wood construction. Using solid woods as opposed to laminate construction (especially for the all-important top) makes a huge difference to the quality of tone and sustain produced by an acoustic guitar but all too often leads to a significantly more expensive price point.

Cort's Core-OC range of electro-acoustics aims to provide another all solid wood design to the market but with their panache for giving customers excellent value for money, something many players will value in the current financial climate.

The Core-OC Spruce is a handsome, modern-looking, cutaway acoustic constructed using solid mahogany back and sides, matched to a solid sitka spruce top.

It's not a flashy looking guitar, adorned with elaborate inlays or binding, but rather a simple and classy design finished in an open-pore trans-black stain for an unassuming but attractive aesthetic. Cort has paired the mahogany body with a mahogany neck and, unusually, an ovangkol fretboard and bridge - a more sustainable relative of rosewood more commonly seen on boutique metal guitars or high-end acoustic bodies, but very much at home on this OC-Spruce. This particular combination of woods is said to give a warm, and full midrange tone compared to rosewood and is very unusual for a guitar in this price range.

Little flourishes of detail add interest to the design with simple white purfling and black binding around the body and a beautiful, subtle abalone inlay on the headstock. Small fretboard dots and black die-cast tuners complete the design for a guitar that wouldn't »



Cort Core OC Spruce

MSRP: (UK) £439 / (US) \$499

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern



Specialised Versatile



Warm Bright



Affordable High-end



For fans of

Comfort and playability without sacrificing tone

Classy, good looks

Amazing value for money

For more information, please visit:

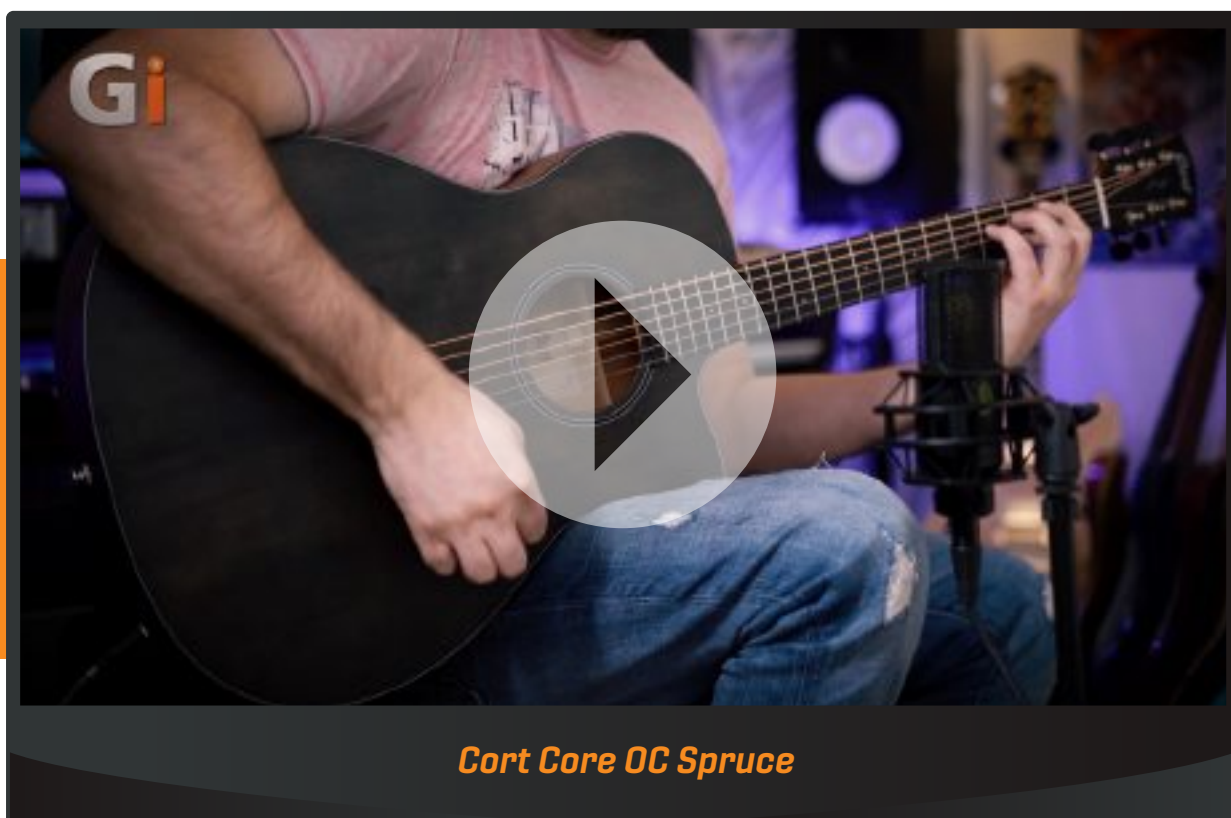
www.cortguitars.com



look out of place in the hands of a high-end fingerstylist or a campfire strummer.

Cort's use of an open-pore finish allows the solid woods to resonate as freely as possible whilst offering some long term protection from sweaty performances and provides a much more comfortable playing experience overall than a sticky gloss alternative. This is an extremely friendly guitar to play all round, actually, thanks to the choice of body size and that generous cutaway, slightly rolled fretboard edges, great fretwork and a quality factory setup. The Core OC certainly gives a great first impression and is a guitar that will improve as it ages thanks to the all solid wood construction.

Tonally, the Core OC Spruce creates an equally great first impression with superb resonance and sustain and a rich, authoritative low end and dynamic range. As mentioned earlier, solid wood guitars always sound better in these regards, and the Core OC has a significantly richer tone than the other laminate top acoustic guitars that we checked out from Cort. The genuine bone nut and saddle offer great string vibration transfer for excellent projection and a quick attack that's great for fingerstyle and pick work. It used to be that this kind of tone was out of the question at this price point, but these days Cort are one of many manufacturers producing such high quality



Cort Core OC Spruce



builds at affordable prices. It's a great time to be shopping for an acoustic.

Equally great is the choice of a Fishman Sonicore pickup and Sonitone preamp system. We're big fans of this setup here at GI due to the excellent tone and hidden nature of the design. Rather than cutting a big hole in the side of the guitar and inserting an ugly preamp box, the Sonitone design is hidden inside the upper part of the sound hole with a simple volume and tone control layout for easy tonal shaping. This prevents any detrimental reduction in resonance and sustain but does sacrifice an inbuilt tuner

- a problem easily solved with a headstock tuner or an outboard pedal solution.

Cort certainly has a great product on their hands with the Core OC range - to be able to get such great tone, construction and playability for such an affordable price is fantastic and, whilst they're not the only company to achieve such a goal in 2021, they are absolutely worth a look if you've never considered them before. You'll be surprised at just how much acoustic guitar you can get for your money these days.

END «

Faith Blue Moon Venus Acous

The Venus Blue Moon from Faith Guitars is a truly individual instrument. One of the beauties of genuinely solid, natural tonewoods is that each piece of solid timber used will vary in its natural colouration and its particular grain patterns. So your every single Faith Blue Moon gets to be as unique as the player's music.

Sam Bell tells us more.

I feel very fortunate to have reviewed a handful of Faith Acoustics for GI Magazine. Each time I'm very impressed with the build quality, aesthetics, tone and playability. Each instrument appears to have been built with love and care, which is awesome!

In this issue, I had a look at the FVBLM – Blue Moon Venus Cut/Electro. The Venus features a rich array of solid natural tonewoods. Solid Figured Java Mango wood is used to build the top, back, and sides of the cutaway body, giving this guitar a rich lower mid-range punch with a warm clarity in the top end. The body is aesthetically accented with a lovely Flamed Maple binding. T

The body is well complimented by the Satin Finish Mahogany Neck with Macassan Figured Ebony Fingerboard, which not only looks great, it feels amazing to play. Your thumb will thank you. The Bridge itself is also made from Macassan Figured Ebony as are the Bridge Pins. This helps add some 'pop' and clarity to the sound. Mixing in with the Mango wood body, the bridge wood works really well in giving the guitar a unique definition and resonance.

In the hardware/electronics department: we have a set of quality Grover Rotomatic Tuners, very steady, industry-standard tuners that feel and look great with the wood finish tuning heads. »

“In my time at GI, **each Faith I've picked up** has been consistent in its quality, playability, looks and sound...”

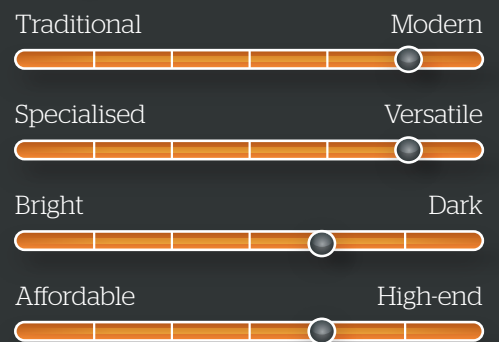
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Faith Blue Moon Venus Acoustic

MSRP: (UK) £1029 / (US) \$TBC

The Breakdown



For fans of

Amazing playability

Stunning looks

Value for money

For more information, please visit:

www.faithguitars.com



These tuners also balance the guitar out well and add to the resonance. We also have two adjustable truss rods for ease of set up; however, out of the case, the 16-inch radius neck felt a dream to play and was perfectly in tune out of the case. Oh, did I mention!? The guitar comes with a high-quality hardcase as well to protect this beautiful instrument.

The guitar has a Fishman Pre-Amp and Pick Up installed. The INK3 preamp features a built-in chromatic tuner, three-band EQ (Bass, Mid and Treble) and a Volume. This is powered via a 9V battery which is located at the rear strap pin near the base of the guitar. The pickup itself is a Fishman Sonicore Piezo pickup which is installed under the saddle.



In the video, I demonstrate the guitar mic'd up at the start; however, later in the video review, I demonstrate the Direct Sound of this guitar for reference. Safe to say that the Fishman Pre-Amp and Pick Up combination sounds fantastic; it's easy to use and maintain. It appears to be in most of Faith's electro acoustic instruments.

I honestly think this is a beautiful guitar, a unique woodgrain finish on each model, high-quality features and a unique brooding tone. Great for many different applications, strumming, fingerpicking and single note pick work. Faith is a fantastic company who clearly care about their products. In my time at GI, each Faith I've picked up has been consistent in its quality, playability, looks and sound. I'd highly recommend checking out Blue Moon Venus Cut/Electro!

END«



THE Basement

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

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

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GI79

THE PLACE FOR BASS

PRODUCT RECOMMENDED
Gi
PRODUCT RECOMMENDED



EBS Stanley Clarke Signature Preamp

When a bassist with a massive catalogue of music, years of professional experience and a signature product with a highly regarded manufacturer of bass gear, it's probably wise to take note of what it is. Well, that's exactly what our very own **Dan Veall** did as he reviews the Stanley Clarke Signature Acoustic Preamp Pedal.

WHILST in our current lockdown, I got my hands on the brand new EBS Stanley Clarke Signature Acoustic Preamp pedal. Owing to the limitations placed on us by social distancing and lockdown, I have taken a slightly different angle with my review, opting to demonstrate the pedal using one main configuration - but I was so impressed that it became obvious to me that the signature pedal we have here for review was more than just a device to be used with double-bass, it's main selling point. So, I set about trying the pedal out with my electric bass, the Gillett Guitars fretless acoustic featured in the video and even my full-bodied acoustic guitar and found so many useful ways of utilising the device.

Let's sweep through the details as smoothly as the fine semi-parametric equaliser available on each channel:

Yes, we have a two-channel preamplifier pedal here with functions that are specifically designed to benefit the acoustic bassist yet, as I pointed out above, useful for a range of other instruments too—even vocals. I must apologise for a little confusion; in my video, I did call channel B 'channel one,' meaning the uppermost channel. Which aside from the master volume on the left-hand side for the amplifier output, features active bass and treble controls for boost and cut at centre frequencies and the semi-parametric as mentioned earlier for the mid frequencies. EBS keep getting this right: I want a semi-parametric mid that dips down into the bass region. The bass and treble controls on most preamplifiers are shelving, but the mids here have a Q of 0.8, and I can reach all the way down to 70hz. Per-



amp Pedal

near for tone launches
stop, grab a coffee and
the EBS Stanley Clarke



EBS Stanley Clarke Signature Preamp Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £359 / (US) \$499

The Breakdown

Vintage Modern



Affordable High-end



Straightforward Feature-Rich



Traditional Innovative



For fans of

Acoustic instruments, especially double-bass

Streamlined signal path.

For more information, please visit:
ebssweden.com/content2/effects/



fect, especially as I have a bass that likes a little more in the 180hz region of low end. The preamplifier has a clever filter section, too, with two modes. The first is a much needed high pass filter with a 12dB/Oct roll off of the lows as the dial is progressed from “off” up to 450hz. Flicking a toggle places the filter into a steep and sharp band cut mode that is very useful for notching out feedback. Alas, somewhat humorously in the absence of any feedback or noise in my studio space, I was unable to capture clearly the notch effect with my own instrument, as feedback tends to be a narrow peak frequency rather than the breadth of tone from a single open string! Yes, there

are limitations to lockdown reviews so bear with me on that one. Notch filters are useful, I promise!

The Acoustic Preamp is a studio-grade device operating at professional signal levels for greater headroom for instruments such as bass guitar that deliver a lot of low-frequency energy. Both channels have a massive 10MΩ input impedance which will overcome any loading issues that other preamplifiers may have on acoustic pickups such as passive piezo elements.

Channel A (or channel two as I misnamed it on screen) carries the same feature set with the inclusion of an Electret Power



EBS Stanley Clarke Signature Preamp Pedal



option at the flick of a switch. Connection via the input socket for that channel on the right-hand side of the device.

On the subject of connections, Channel B will happily receive signal from its 1/4" input, but we have the added benefit of a 48V Phantom Power balanced line input via XLR on the top edge. Again, a toggle switches between those two inputs quickly.

In terms of signal chain configuration, the two channels are separated until blending pre-effects loop, which incidentally is switchable between series and parallel operation. Furthermore, configuration options are extended when selecting different inputs for use in conjunction with the A+B push switch on the side of the pedal. Running both channels in series with each other as well as parallel is just two options available.

If that wasn't enough, not only can I feed an amplifier directly from the 1/4" output,

there's an onboard DI output via XLR (that I am using in my video), an auxiliary input for external audio devices and a headphone socket.

The DI output features the usual ground lift functionality and we are treated to a gentle speaker emulation switchable on the path too. I used it in my video to demonstrate that it doesn't drastically colour the signal leaving my bass tone intact, perfect for acoustic instruments.

Silent tuning is available by the Tuner output and the pedal can be muted whilst doing so.

There's no doubt that EBS has thought of pretty much everything short of the kitchen sink here and probably had to think about space and how to cram everything inside the shell, which is the same size as the MicroBass III, another superb preamplifier I have reviewed. **END**◀

Darkglass Harmonic Booster Pedal

Designed to be the perfect complement to Darkglass' distortion circuits and boasting tremendous headroom, the Harmonic Booster could very well be the perfect one-stop solution for gigging musicians in search of a preamplifier. **Dan Veall** tells us more.

AS I understand it, when Douglas Castro began what has become one of the most exciting brands in bass across the world, one of his first pedals was in fact, an early inception of the Harmonic Booster that we are checking out here in this review.

Back with a facelift and bundled with some very handy features, this pedal has already proved to me that its uses are far wider-reaching than that of the description as a perfect complement to Darkglass' range of distortion pedals and amplification.

The panel features are dead easy to get your head around, and actually, the simplicity of the whole thing is deceptively luring you into thinking that the pedal may be a one-trick pony. That, it is not.

Anti-clockwise around the fascia, we start with a clean boost / cut of 20dB for punching in for solos when the pedal is situated after your drive pedals, or for seriously driving saturation levels when placed before. That alone is a great feature to have on any pedalboard. Booster indeed!

Underneath the boost, Harmonic Booster features a low noise, high headroom three-band equaliser with a semi-parametric mid range control. Bass centred at 80Hz feels really good to me. Low enough that I can get some deepness to the tone, but high enough that the all-important punch is being serviced in the sound too. I also like the Treble boost and cut being centred at 5Khz - which happens to be a great place to boost those harmonics on bass. Push this one up when placed in front of a distortion pedal, and you'll get extra saturation in the top end, allowing the low end to be left with less driven for extra clarity. Cool trick!

Whilst on the subject of tricks, check out my review video for a 'hack' I learned from guitarist David Maxim Micic who made a video placing an overdrive pedal in front of his audio interface, which in turn was running an amp' sim on his desktop. The mid-boost heavy Tube Screamer is well known for being able to tighten up the low end in high gain metal guitar tones (something I often use myself), but it actually works by sculpting the tone from your instrument into a »

al

endous flexibility and portability, the Harmonic
of a precise and harmonically rich clean



Darkglass Harmonic Booster Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £179 / (US) \$279

The Breakdown

Specialised Versatile



Affordable High-end



Straightforward Feature-Rich



Traditional Innovative



For fans of

Driven tones

Clean tone sculpting

Dialling sounds easily!

For more information, please visit:

www.darkglass.com



In my review video, I also suggest this might be a **great way to travel light** if you are an IEM user too....”



Darkglass Harmonic Booster



DAW too. My point? You can do the same with the Harmonic Booster! Dial-in, this mids with the three-band, add some top-end bite, then feed into your favourite DAW plug-in. Watch my video for more thoughts on that one. (Just be aware and keep an eye on your interface gain control, though!)

Rolling around back to the top of the controls and we have certainly the main feature of the Harmonic Booster in the shape of the character dial. In my video I try to describe what I feel the effect is as the knob is advanced - there's undoubtedly some perceived boosting of certain frequencies, and I can tell that some are being dipped out. For my passive P bass that I used specifically to see how far I could get away from its inherent tone, the overall effect was a more modern sound that would blend well in a laden guitar mix, but the accentuating of frequencies would certainly mean that there's still definition to each note. I have a plug-in on my DAW with a 'de-swamper' control on it. It's the sort of description I'd use for this character knob. It kinda makes bass "fit" in a mix sweet spot.

So, you get the idea! Having a powerful three-band equaliser and this progressive

character control (rather than, say, a pre-shape button on an amplifier) is hugely beneficial. Running the pedal before a drive gives you boost options, running it post-chain, well, a superb EQ and clean boost - but as a stand-alone, what a great way to jettison your old school vintage bass sound into a hyper-active modern bass machine without cutting holes in your beloved! It's almost too easy a solution.

In my review video, I also suggest this might be a great way to travel light if you are an IEM user too. Dropping into a Dep' gig, the character control could be particularly useful in dialling an "amp" sound without the difficulties suffered when using in-house gear or "micing up" in an unusual environment.

I can see this pedal getting a lot of use in that respect.

The pedal is very versatile for all the reasons talked about above. It's good to once again see thought going into creating a pedal that really works for the bassist, and considering what it is and how useful it's worthy of your kit bag.

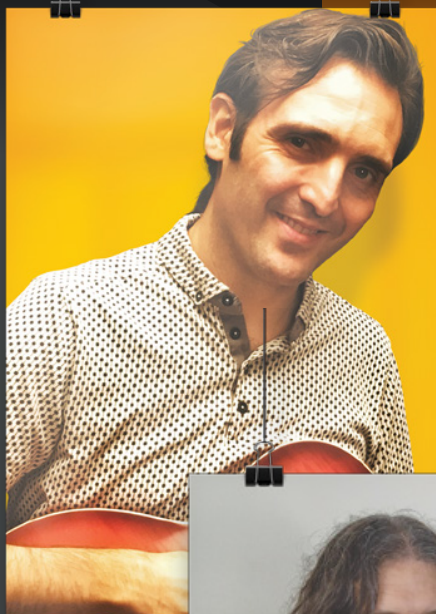
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THE Columns

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

CLASS IS BACK
IN SESSION

EXCLUSIVE COLUMNS
Gi
EXCLUSIVE COLUMNS







SPONSORED BY ELIXIR STRINGS

MAXIMISING YOUR PRACTICE SESSIONS *with Nick Jennison* *Acoustic Edition*

Nick Jennison is back with another set of six essential guitar lessons to help you make the most of out of your practice time. From unique chord voicings to legato drills and much more, Nick has got your acoustic guitar practice sessions covered with this superb series of lessons.

PART 1: MELODIC MINOR PICKING DRILL

Standard tuning
♩ = 100

s.guit.

let ring

TAB





PART 2: 9TH CHORD PIMA RELAY

Standard tuning
♩ = 70

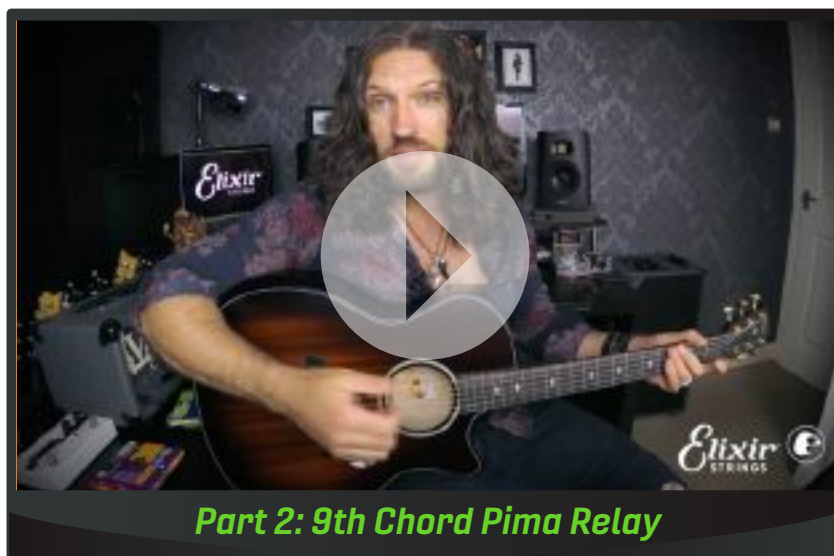
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Part 2: 9th Chord Pima Relay

PART 3: 4TH FINGER EN POINTE DRILL



Standard tuning
♩ = 120

1 2 3 4

let ring

s.guit.

TAB

2	0	5	0	4	0	5	0
3	0	7	0	4	0	7	0
5	0	9	0	7	0	9	0
10	0	0	0	8			

PART 5: CHORD TONE ACCENT DRILL

Standard tuning
♩ = 70

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PART 6: CROSSPICKING FINGER DISPLACEMENT DRILL



Part 6: Crosspicking Finger Displacement Drill



g. An extremely lightweight, yet
natural feel you love, AND the
offer you the best of both worlds.

Rhythm Guitar Concepts



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

Rhythm Guitar Concepts Part 4

WELCOME to the 4th instalment of my rhythm column, so far we have looked deep into ways of practicing our timing and sub-division awareness with 8th and 16th notes. In this issue's lesson, I am going to take a more in-depth look at the decisions we can make to improve our chord choice.

I am going to be using a "Motown Skank" to demonstrate some of these concepts. The Motown Skank is the famous back beat guitar 'chop' style heard on many early Motown recordings, the style is comprised of a few fundamental elements: A guitar playing on the 2 and 4 tight with the snare drum while also playing higher 2 or 3 note inversions of chords. Often these chord voicings would be chosen strategically in order to create different harmonic spaces, for example, a high up voicing with a very staccato upstroke with the pick might cut more in the mix because the upper strings would be struck first with the pick. This would create a high energy urgency to the sound. Or maybe something more subtle is needed and lower slightly muted voicings might be more appropriate for the song. I want to get into how I like to think when it comes to choosing chord voicings for basic chord sequences, I am going to keep it stuck to the basic major/minor triads, and we're going to focus on how the voicing we choose affects the tone of our playing and the sound of the band. »

How many ways can you play a C chord?

First off I think its fundamental knowledge that every guitarist should know their CAGED system, even if they aren't using all the shapes, a basic awareness and fretboard visualisation is key to finding other voicings of chords and breaking open the fretboard. I like to be able to split each CAGED shape up into adjacent string 2 or 3 note voicings, each of these 3 note voicings, in particular, will give you various triad inversions. Being aware of what inversion you are using can be key to creating different harmonic spaces with your bass player. If you choose a root inversion with the bass player you will have a stable sound, and depending on where you play this voicing on the neck you can get a very punchy sound. However if you want to really move some air, try using the 5th in the bass and keeping it either near the top of the chord or out of the chord entirely!

If you are looking for a warmer approach, the 3rd in the bass note of the guitar voicing against the root note on the bass guitar can create a very melodic heartfelt sound. Now I am talking in terms of my own perception. However you can make your own parallels in how these inversions feel and sound against the bass note, but I think it's important

to understand how they sound to you. Of course, you may want to change these inversions through a chord sequence to keep the voicings close together or to complement a top melody. Also if the bass player is playing, for example, the 3rd of a chord, you may wish to stick to a root inversion or play that 3rd rooted inversion somewhere higher up the neck to compliment the basses tone, so things don't get muddy. It's all about keeping out of the way from each other, but subjectively not too far away! Being aware of any bass register in the band or the arrangement is key to finding voicings that either support, expand or pop out of the texture of the tune you are playing. This will help expand your tool bag for live and recording sessions, sometimes you may want your chord voicings to support and not stick out, or maybe you want to build a section by moving between inversions for the same chord on the 2nd repeat of a verse. How about working with another guitarist? It can be very fun to play different inversions of a chord to the other player; this can really widen the sound and depending on the style of music you are playing, you can go crazy with superimpositions and polychords between guitars heading in an almost piano player direction...but maybe I will save that for another column! How you strum or pick your chosen inversion is also important, sometimes you may

want to strum near to the neck joint to help the notes bloom out more and sink into the mix, or you may want to dig in around the bridge whilst doing some ringing out arpeggios of a chord, the choice is yours and a lot of what I am saying here may seem obvious... It's what sets the pro session players apart from the rest of the world. They have been doing for years on records, and it sets their 'basic chordal' to a super high standard.

Next time you are listening to a piece of music with basic chord patterns, there is a lot of production going on in terms of how exactly the part is delivered from the guitarist's hands. So please keep in mind some of the things I have said here, keep your ears open and enjoy opening up a whole world of fun with your chordal playing.

END « V



Lesson 4: C Chord

THE QUIETROOM_ **GIORGIO SERCI**

FIN



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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 my arrangement of what is arguably one of the catchiest tunes ever written by Sting. This was featured in his second studio album 'Nothing Like The Sun' released in October 1987.

HARMONIC INGREDIENTS:

The original version is in B minor but I decided to transpose it to an even more

guitar friendly key that is Am, so that we could make the most of open strings, mainly for the bass line. 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 but also in order to capitalize on open D, A and E strings.

Another important harmonic ingredient is the frequent use of extended chord, such as Dm11 and Em11, which are evident from the beginning. These are

played in a very guitar-friendly shapes to complement the main melody. This is a very effective way of enhancing the melody in a relatively easy way and the open strings sustain will add 'legato' qualities to the piece.

RHYTHMIC INGREDIENTS

More the most part, the guitar implies a Reggae 'skunk' part. In the Middle 8, I have used a 12/8 groove. Take time to familiarize with both for a fluid outcome.

MELODIC INGREDIENTS:

The rather singing-like melodic content is mainly in A natural Minor, with only two passages including notes from A Harmonic Minor, in the Middle 8.

ARTICULATIONS:

The choice or articulations is very important in the construction of any composition or arrangement as these can be seen as the 'how we tell our story'.

A few articulations were used such as grace notes, recurrent hammer-ons and pull-offs often featuring ghost notes, to imply a swung 16th feel and finally the 'campanella' technique, 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.

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

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



BAR 1: Barre' on fret 5 with middle finger on fret 6 of B. Same shape up two frets.

BAR 2: Barre' on fret 5 of D, G and B and open A. Ring f on fret 7 of A and middle f on fret 6 of A.

BAR 3-4: As bar 1-2

Bar 5-22: As bar 1-2 with added melody, as depicted in the score.

SECTION C.

BAR 23: C major (C shape) with melody as depicted in the score

BAR 24: G major (G shape) with melody as depicted in the score

Bar 25: A minor (A shape) with melody as depicted in the score

BAR 26: E7 (E shape) with melody as depicted in the score

BAR 27: Fmaj7 (E shape) with melody as depicted in the score

BAR 28: G major (G shape) with melody as depicted in the score

Bar 29: G# Dim7 with middle f on fret 4 of E, index of fret 3 of D and B and ring f on fret 4 of G.



Giorgio Serci 'Englishman In New York'

BAR 30: Am7, with barre' on fret 5 of D, G and B and open A.

BAR 31-39: As bar 5-9.

BAR 40: A natural minor scale, (descending in 2 octaves) 'a campanella'

BAR 41: Am6/9 with open A, index on fret 4 of D, middle f on fret 5 of G and V and little f on fret 7 of e.

Congratulations, you have completed 'English man In NY'!

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

I strongly recommend experimenting with a few picking variations, changing the chords as you wish in terms of voicing (higher or lower), as well as trying the same picking

pattern on a different chord progression, or using a 'capo' on fret 2 for a brighter outcome.

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

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

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

This will complete this creative fingerstyle lesson.

I hope you will enjoy playing this study piece and that this will give you some ideas on



how to write your own solo guitar compositions. If you would like to listen any more of my compositions, please check the previous issues of Guitar Interactive Magazine as well as any of my CDs, available from my website:

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.*



NICK JENNISON'S THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MELODY & PHRASING

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