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Interactive Guitar 86

STEVE VAI TECH SESSION

+ INTERVIEWS

MASTODON'S BILL KELLIHER

STEVE VAI RETURNS WITH 'INVIOLATE'

2021

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Over the course of a more than 40-year career, **Steve Vai** has routinely transformed what would appear to be outrageously impossible into something very, very possible—and still also pretty outrageous. Nowhere is that more realized than on his latest full-length release, 'Inviolate' (out worldwide on January 28th, 2022). Billed as "the culmination of 61 year's worth of inspiration and training," Gi editor **Jonathan Graham** chats with Steve about the incredible new record and much more in this exclusive **Guitar Interactive** cover feature.

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Guitar Interactive

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Over the course of a more than 40-year career, **Steve Vai** has routinely transformed what would appear to be outrageously impossible into something very, very possible—and still also pretty outrageous. Nowhere is that more realized than on his latest full-length release, 'Inviolate' (out worldwide on January 28th, 2022). Billed as "the culmination of 61 year's worth of inspiration and training," Gi editor **Jonathan Graham** chats with Steve about the incredible new record and much more in this exclusive **Guitar Interactive** cover feature.

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IN-DEPTH CHATS WITH GUITAR'S BIGGEST NAMES

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STEVE VAI INVIOLATE

Over the course of a more than 40-year career, Steve Vai has routinely transformed what would appear to be outrageously impossible into something very, very possible—and still also pretty outrageous. Nowhere is that more realized than on his latest full-length release, 'Inviolate' (out worldwide on January 28th, 2022). Billed as "the culmination of 61 years' worth of inspiration and training," Gi editor **Jonathan Graham** chats with Steve about the incredible new record and much more in this exclusive Guitar Interactive cover feature. »

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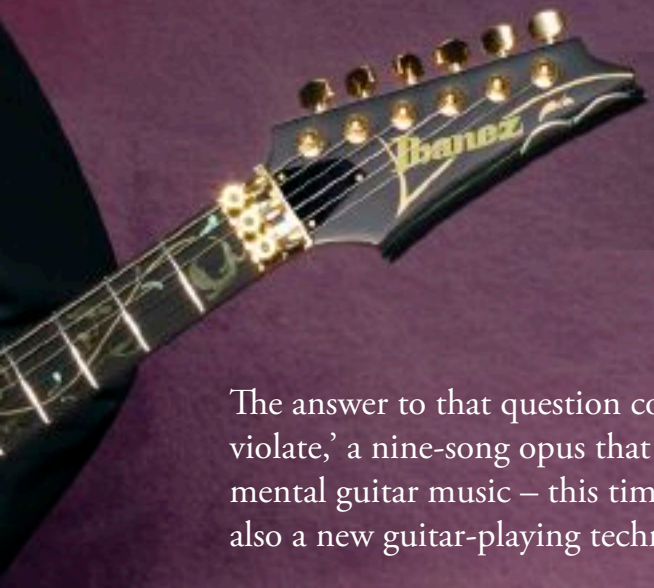
FROM his days as Frank Zappa's "stunt guitar" player to his more recent expansive and exploratory solo work, Vai has continually challenged notions of traditional guitar playing and composition – and on more than one occasion, even reimagined the very instrument itself. Which, he'll admit, is not necessarily his intention.

"I don't sit around and say, 'Okay, what can I do now that pushes the boundaries?," Vai explains about his approach to the guitar. "What I do say to myself is, 'Okay, Vai – what are you going to do now that's going to interest you, that's going to fascinate you, and that's different than anything you've done before?"



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Steve Vai -
Little Pretty (Official Visualizer)

The answer to that question comes in the form of Vai's newest and 10th solo album, 'Inviolate,' a nine-song opus that (sorry Steve) does indeed push the boundaries of instrumental guitar music – this time out, Vai quite literally invented not just a new guitar, but also a new guitar-playing technique.

At the same time, 'Inviolate' presents his most focused, streamlined and perhaps invigorating music in years. "It's very 'Vai,' whatever that means," he says, and then laughs. "Someone else might be better than me at explaining what that is. But it's just very honest music. Because a lot of my records, they're long and there's a lot of concepts and playing around with stories. This one has none of that. This is nine pretty dense »

"I **don't sit around** and say, 'Okay, what can I do now that pushes the boundaries?"

all-instrumental compositions that I wanted to capture and record so I could get out there and play them live for people."

The desire to bring these songs to the stage was central to 'Inviolate's' conception. Early in the pandemic, Vai was deep into the recording of a very different record, one comprised primarily of solo acoustic songs with vocals. But as we've all learned over the past few years, sometimes the universe has different plans for us.

In Vai's case, he was sidelined with not one but two serious ailments – three torn tendons in his right shoulder that required surgery, and a bout of trigger finger in his left thumb that eventually froze the digit entirely, making it exceedingly difficult for him to play his instrument. By the time he got through the recovery process, the world was beginning to open back up, and he was staring down – rather excitedly – a slate of more than 200 tour dates. And so the acoustic album went on the backburner, and the decidedly more made-for-the-stage 'Inviolate' came to life. And to be sure, it's easy to imagine Vai and his band exploding onto stages in 2022 to the electrifying strains of the new album's barn-burning, melodic-shred tour-de-force, "Avalancha," to give just one example.

***Steve Vai** - Interview*

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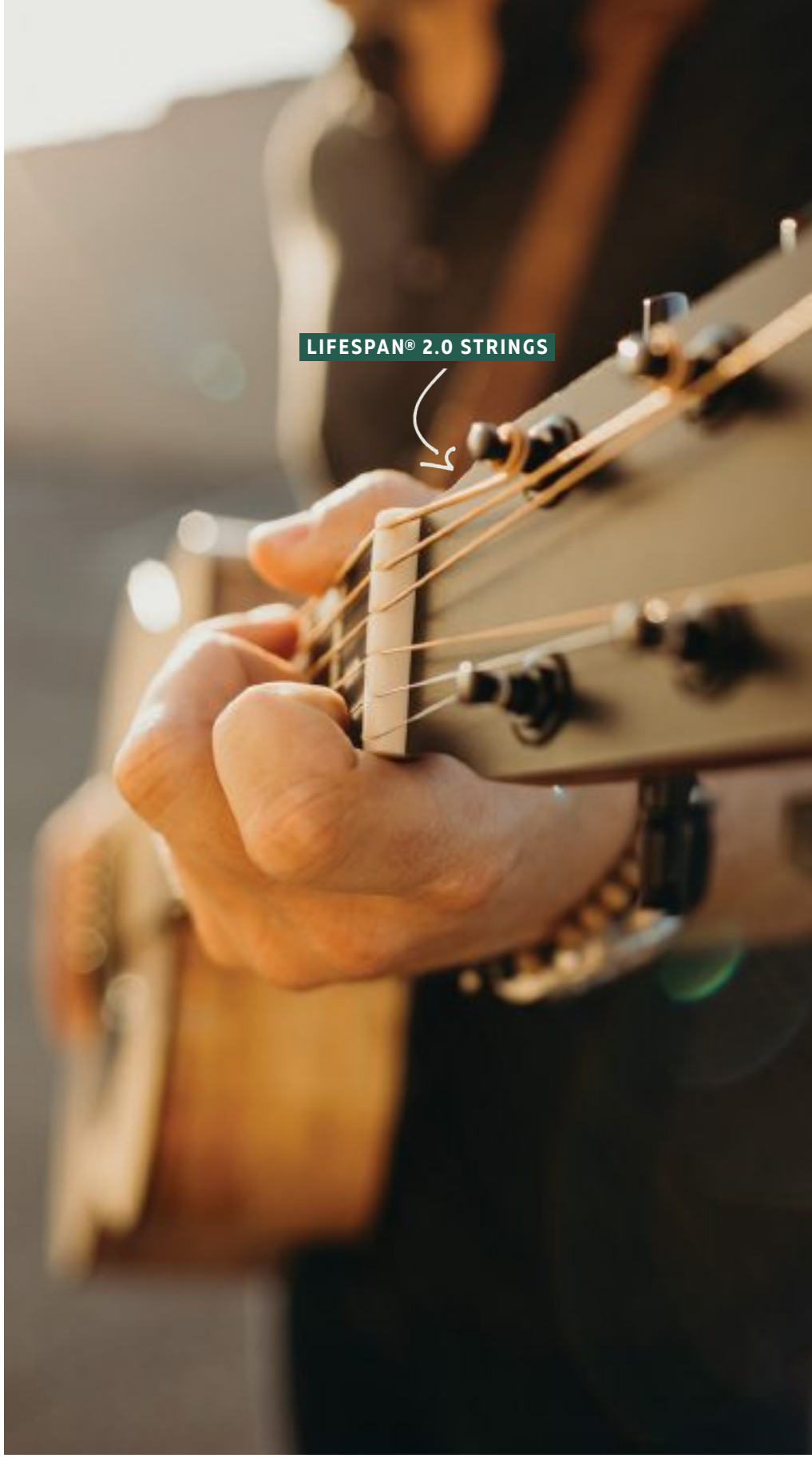

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But while that song, with its alternately grinding and throttling rhythm attack (courtesy of drummer Jeremy Colson and bassist and longtime Vai musical compadre Billy Sheehan) and long, legato strings of exceedingly hooky, high-wire guitar lines, represents the artist at his most straightforward and accessible, much of 'Inviolate' finds him delving deep and wide – in some cases deeper and wider than ever before – to plumb the furthest reaches of his abilities and creativity.

The most fully realized example of this would be 'Inviolate's' mesmeric opener, "Teeth of the Hydra," a sinuous, Latin-fusion-tinged composition that Vai wrote and recorded with a one-of-a-kind custom guitar he coined the Hydra. But calling the Hydra a mere guitar is selling it way, way, way short. Built in conjunction with the designers at Hoshino and based on a "steampunk motif" idea of Vai's, the Hydra is a beast of

Original Photo ©Larry DiMarzio

an instrument – a one-bodied, two-headstock-ed, three-neck-ed creature that encompasses, among other things: seven- and 12-string guitars; a four-string bass; sympathetic harp strings; half-fretless necks; single-coil, humbucking, piezo and sustainer pickups; floating and hardtail tremolo bridges; phase splitters; and much, much more.

"It's an incredibly-built machine," Vai says. "I told the guys at Hoshino, 'Anything that you think is »

"One of the great things about the guitar is you **don't need to be a virtuoso** to express your creative vision."

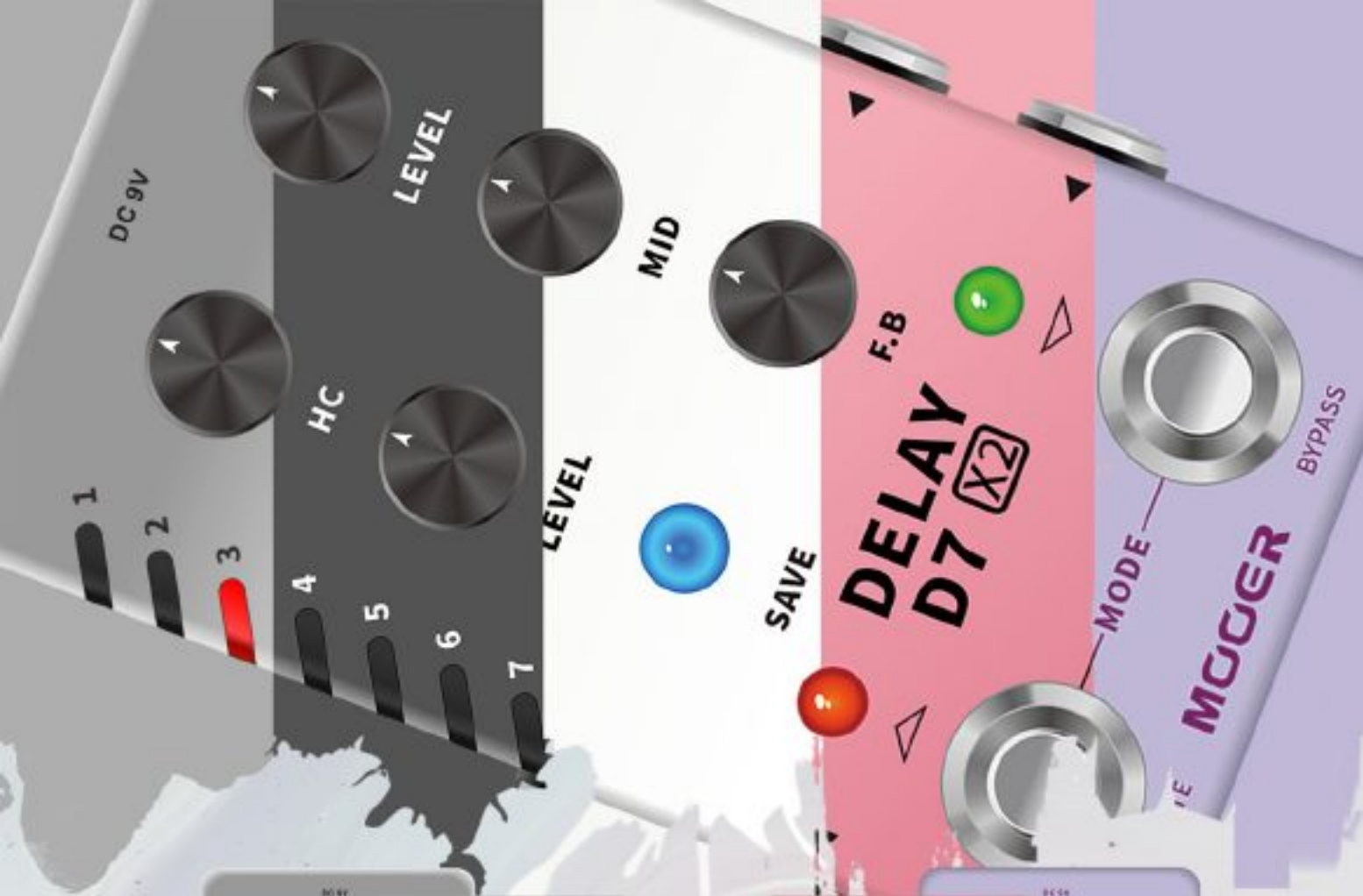
conventional, don't do that.' This was an opportunity to exercise brutal creativity. And they went beyond."

As did Vai in his performance. Throughout the track he employs the Hydra's full range of tone and timbres to craft a guitar part that sounds, in its expansiveness and expressiveness, positively alive. "The interesting thing about the song and the guitar is that it all came at the same time," Vai says. "It was one of those 'inviolate' inspirations – boom!"

That said, he continues, "I knew that I needed to create something with the Hydra that sounded like a real piece of music. It couldn't be just a novelty. Because if you knew what my hands were doing, and how I'm using my left hand to create phrasings that work when I can't pick a note because my right hand is off somewhere else…my god. But the finished piece had to stand on its own. It couldn't sound like I was just trying to juggle stuff."

While "Teeth of the Hydra" pushes the limits of what two hands can do on one instrument, another 'Inviolate' track, "Knappsack," finds Vai taking a more streamlined approach. Vai composed and recorded the song following his shoulder surgery, at a time when his right arm was in a sling (or, as his surgeon, Dr. Knapp, called it, a "knappsack"), and thus was able to use only his left hand when playing the piece. Difficult? Sure. Although when he released a video of his one-handed performance earlier in 2021, he says with a laugh, "pretty soon after, I started to see some clips of young kids pulling it off, too. It's really fascinating."

Those kids will likely face a greater challenge attempting to take on another Inviolate track, "Candle Power." For this one, Vai not only set up parameters outside of his comfort zone (Strat-style guitar; clean tone; no whammy bar; no pick), but also – why not? – developed an entirely new guitar technique that he calls "joint shifting." The core concept there, he explains, is to enact simultaneous multiple string bends in opposite directions, which "requires bending only the top joint of the finger independently from any other finger." And while he acknowledges that bending multiple strings »



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Steve Vai -
Zeus In Chains (Official Visualizer)

is not a new concept in and of itself, "I had not seen any of it done in the way I envisioned it," he says.

Like "Knappsack," Vai released "Candle Power," an accompanying performance video earlier in 2021. But he added a little something extra to the version that appears on Inviolate, with a newly recorded drum track from fellow Zappa alumnus Terry Bozzio (to that end, additional crack players who lent a hand to the record include bassists Bryan Beller, Philip Bynoe and Henrik Linder, keyboardist David Rosenthal and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta).

Other spots where Vai steps outside the lines? Try "Little Pretty," a dark-toned fusion-funk workout played almost exclusively on a Gretsch hollow body guitar. As for what led Vai to the unusual (at least for him) model, he says, "It's on the wall with all the other guitars, and I'd always just look at it and go, 'One day I'm going to play you…'"

Or cue up "Apollo in Color," where Vai's soaring runs on his Ibanez PIA signature guitar (the newly-designed model's first appearance on a Vai studio album, it's worth noting) are surrounded by filigrees of sound played on all manner of exotic stringed instruments. "I thought, 'Okay, what can I do to color this thing up?'" Vai says. "So I pulled out all these little acoustic instruments I've collected through the years and I said, 'I'm going to use every one of them somehow.' " These included a cavaquinho, a saz, a sitar, an oud and more. "Some of the instruments, I don't even know their names," Vai admits with a laugh.

But perhaps the biggest stylistic departure for Vai is the album's seventh track, "Greenish Blues," which, true to its title, is an actual (gasp!) blues song. Or, at least, Vai's version of the blues. "I've never really been an authentic blues player," he acknowledges. Although, he adds, "I haven't really been an authentic anything. You would not turn to me to hear the blues or jazz or classical or fusion or even straight-ahead rock, you know? There's always weird stuff going on with me, and it's always very quirky."

That said, he also points out that, like most players, "one of the first things I learned on the guitar was the blues scale. I thought I had discovered the holy grail. Virtually everything I've played since then is derived from that scale. When I'm 'mode-ing' around the neck, I don't think of Lydian or Mixolydian or finger patterns. I think, 'blues with altered notes.' So, in that respect, I guess everything I do is my quirky version of the blues – 'greenish blues.'"

In essence, it all comes down to finding your own voice, and then having the courage and conviction to follow your »

musical and creative instincts wherever they may take you – something Vai has never been shy about in his playing.

"One of the great things about the guitar is you don't need to be a virtuoso to express your creative vision," he says. "I mean, Bob Dylan plays the guitar perfectly well for his expression. So does John McLaughlin. You just need to decide how much technique you want or need to get there. For myself, I came out of the chute wanting and needing it all. So when it comes to my music, I don't feel like I have to prove anything or conform to anything. I just love to think up creative ideas, and then use whatever skill I have to manifest them."

Which is what he has done, yet again, with Inviolate.

"An inviolate inspiration is one that comes to you completely pure," Vai explains. "It appears almost in its completeness, and there's a recognition of it as being right for you – perfectly right for you. There are no excuses in it. There's no fantasy in it. There's just a recognition of 'yes.' And then you capture that in a way that's authentic to your unique creativity. Hopefully, that's what I've done with this record."

Steve Vai's new studio album 'Inviolate' will be released digitally and on CD January 28, 2022, via Favored Nations / Mascot Label Group.

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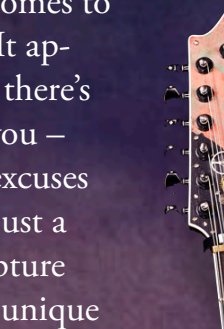

STEVE VAI
INVIOLATE

Tracklist:

1. Teeth of the Hydra
2. Zeus in Chains
3. Little Pretty
4. Candlepower
5. Apollo In Color
6. Avalancha
7. Greenish Blues
8. Knappsack
9. Sandman Cloud Mist

Original Photo ©Larry DiMarzio

In support of his new album' Inviolate,' Steve Vai will h

Steve Vai Inviolate 2022 Amer

9/28: El Cajon, CA – The Magnolia

9/30: Riverside, CA – Fox Performing Arts Center

10/01: Las Vegas, NV – House Of Blues

10/02: Phoenix, AZ – Celebrity Theatre

10/04: Salt Lake City, UT – The Rockwell at The Complex

10/05: Boulder, CO – Boulder Theater

10/07: Oklahoma City, OK – Tower Theatre

10/08: Dallas, TX – House Of Blues

10/09: San Antonio, TX – The Aztec Theatre

10/11: Austin, TX – Paramount Theatre

10/12: Houston, TX – House Of Blues

10/14: Birmingham, AL – Lyric Theatre

10/15: Macon, GA – Hargray Capitol Theatre

10/16: Atlanta, GA – Variety Playhouse

10/18: Clearwater, FL – Bilheimer Capitol Theatre

10/19: Ft. Lauderdale, FL – The Parker

10/20: Orlando, FL – The Plaza Live

10/21: Ponte Vedra Beach, FL – Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

10/22: Charleston, SC – Cha

10/23: Charlotte, NC – The

10/25: Alexandria, VA – Th

10/26: Harrisburg, PA – TE

10/27: Port Chester, NY – T

10/28: Glenside, PA – Kesw

10/29: Red Bank, NJ – Cou

10/30: Huntington, NY – T

11/01: New Haven, CT – Co

11/02: Providence, RI – The

11/03: Boston, MA – The W

11/04: Rochester, NY – Kod

11/05: Albany, NY – The Eg

11/07: Greensburg, PA – Pal

11/08: Warren, OH – Packa

11/10: Detroit, MI – Masonic

11/11: Morgantown, WV – M

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11/16: Chicago, IL – Copernicus Center
11/18: St. Paul, MN – Fitzgerald Theater
11/19: Lincoln, NE – Bourbon Theatre
11/20: Kansas City, MO – The Uptown Theater
11/21: Sioux Falls, SD – The District
11/22: Des Moines, IA – Hoyt Sherman Place
11/23: Fargo, ND – Fargo Theatre
11/25: Bozeman, MT – The ELM
11/26: Missoula, MT – The Wilma
11/27: Seattle, WA – Moore Theatre
11/28: Portland, OR – Roseland Theater
11/30: Turlock, CA – Turlock Community Theatre
12/02: Napa, CA – Uptown Theatre Napa
12/03: Los Angeles, CA – Theatre at Ace Hotel

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BILL KE

MAST

HUSHED

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Late last year, Mastodon returned with an incredible new album titled 'Hushed and Grim
from the sludge-ridden titans, and one that has been influenced by the loss of their friend a
talks with one half of Mastodon's guitar-wielding duo, Bill K

ELLIHER

ODON

AND GRIM

.' Forged over the past 12 months in Mastodon's hometown, it's a lengthy, ambitious effort
nd longtime manager Nick John, who passed away in 2018. **Guitar Interactive Magazine**
Kelliher, about the new record, the art of the riff and more. »

DEATH is inevitable. Time is a precious, finite resource—regret springs solely from our collective inability to square these two truths. A friend suddenly passes away, and you're left to think about all those times where you could have said how much you appreciate them and didn't - because you figured there would always be a next time. A partnership collapses, and you're left to reflect on the moments you took for granted, the ways you could have been more present. A band lacks the foresight to predict that touring will cease to exist for two years and doesn't leave it all on the stage that last night; or, think of the fan that doesn't stick around for the encore because they wanted an extra half hour of sleep.

These concerns were not hypothetical for Mastodon. The core lineup has been in place for 21 years, an eternity in the highest echelons of metal, where even the most legendary band names eventually become brands staffed by a rotating cast of hired guns. And yet, Brann Dailor, Brent Hinds, Bill Kelliher, and Troy Sanders experienced enough individual and collective tragedy to threaten their adamantine bond - the death of their longtime friend and manager Nick John after battling pancreatic cancer, a devastating global pandemic that put their faith, families, and livelihoods in jeopardy. Mastodon's decades of success and the brotherhood between its four members had not made them any more immune to the possibility that it could all splinter tomorrow. Mastodon had a glimpse of the end and committed to a new beginning - and 'Hushed And Grim' does not take a single moment for granted.

And there are more of these moments than on any previous Mastodon release. It initially feels reductive to simply describe 'Hushed And Grim' as Mas-

"Mastodon **fundar**
the course of 21st c
2004's classic Lev
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todon's ninth album - at 88 minutes, their first double-LP boldly defies conventional assumptions about attention spans in the streaming era. With the expanse of a studio film, the texture of a novel and the breadth of a Greatest Hits, 'Hushed And Grim' is Mastodon paying tribute to John by building an eternal monument. "He's always been an influence when he was alive," Hinds wistfully states. "And he's even more of an influence now."

Consider why double albums are frequently called "monumental." Mastodon is very much aware of what this format says about their legacy in heavy music. Dailor recalls his formative teenage years absorbing every note of world-building epics like The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway, Physical Graffiti, and The Wall, milestone works from bands whose inspiration and craft have simultaneously reached a zenith. "It takes some balls to put out a double album these days or takes some ovaries," Dailor quips. "I've been trying to say ovaries because I think it's more powerful."

Mastodon fundamentally altered the course of 21st century metal on 2004's classic Leviathan, and every album thereafter continued to shape the genre in their image. In 2018, five-time nominees Mastodon won their first GRAMMY, with "Sultan's Curse" earning Best Metal Performance. Arguably more impressive was Emperor of Sand being nominated for Best Rock Album, with lead single "Show Yourself" hitting the top five on Billboard's Mainstream Rock chart. Without sacrificing an iota of their intensity and intelligence, Mastodon's imprint on pop »

culture has spread from Adult Swim to late night network television, from the History Channel's Counting Cars to HBO's Game of Thrones, from DC Comics Dark Knight Metal to Bill and Ted Face the Music.

But as Sanders points out, "the most solid representation of us is when we get in our cycle and craft a wholesome, dynamic and beautiful record from top to bottom. That's what we ultimately thrive on." 'Hushed And Grim' only emphasizes what the band's many accomplishments has expressed to this point - Mastodon have transcended genre of any kind, animated by an unwillingness to compromise that results in their most expansive and accessible release yet. There are no interludes, no filler, none of the stereotypical bloat that accompanies even the most revered double albums. With the spirit of Nick John coursing throughout its entirety, "every song has a place in our hearts," Kelliher stresses.

Throughout, Mastodon travel through time and space, through memory and imagination, drawing on their experience and formative influences to open new portals. On "Pushing the Tides," they exist at the thrilling intersection of metal and post-hardcore, "The Beast" 's heaving Southern rock, replete with a countrified contribution from guitarist Marcus King, creates an alternate history of the Allman Brothers sharing a bottle of Jack Daniels with Black Sabbath, "Had it All" features a guitar »

***Bill Kellihe** - Interview*

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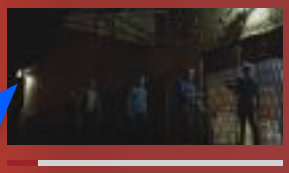

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Mastodon - Teardrinker [Official Music Video]

solo from Soundgarden's Kim Thayil and some classical French Horn by Jody Sanders, Mother of Troy, reimagining Mastodon as a band intermingling with the monsters of Headbanger's Ball. It's all overseen by the legendary producer David Bottrill now, including 'Hushed And Grim' alongside his prior progressive pop landmarks from Peter Gabriel, Tool and King Crimson.

Yet, for all of their technical mastery and ambitious musicianship, the most daring aspect of 'Hushed And Grim' comes from the voices of Mastodon themselves. It's not just in the tremendous growth all members have made as vocal performers, exemplified in the explosive shouts of "The Crux" and the aching refrain of "Skeleton of Splendor"; there's an unmistakable expressive grit that cannot be coached, that takes years of endurance and pain to unlock.

As Mastodon's music continues to expand outward, each member traveled inward, more deeply to unearth their most emotionally transparent lyrics yet. "One thing I've noticed about longevity is that you kind of eliminate layers of bullshit and become more honest," Sanders muses. In the past, Mastodon albums were so memorable in their metaphorical heft that it threatened to swallow them whole - they're the Moby Dick band, the Rasputin band, the guys who wrote about wolves and skulls. "We pull authentic emotion from our life experiences," Sanders explains. "And we channel that through the art that we call Mastodon." And the themes of

Original Photo ©Jimmy Hubbard

heartbreak, of joy and hope that have always underpinned the band's most referential work, are pushed to the fore on 'Hushed And Grim.'

Look, they're still called Mastodon - the metal is here, Kelliher and Hinds' riffs are still massive, Sanders' bass can level a mountain and Dailor's drumming is every bit as dazzling in its intricacies. Yet, the towering "Had It All" was originally built from Sanders' simple acoustic strum, Kelliher and Hinds' interplay impresses with a newfound, nimble sense of melody and Dailor's restraint is as thrilling as his blinding fills as "The Beast" brings a slow Southern shuffle to their repertoire. But 'Hushed And Grim' dares you to see Mastodon as what they've always been - four friends from Atlanta who are subject to the same struggles as you and I. "I've turned the grief to medicine," "I feel the pressure," "death comes and brings with him sickle and peace," "leaving you behind is the hardest thing I've done," these are their refrains, to be shared between Mastodon and the listener as equals. "My love, so strong/The mountains we made in the distance/Those will stay with us" - these are Mastodon›s parting words on the closing «Gigantium," and we is all-inclusive, to themselves, to the fans that have stuck with them throughout the years, and the new ones to come. And to Nick Johns'. Our time together can't possibly last forever and, inevitably, Mastodon may one day be no more. 'Hushed And Grim' will remain.

Mastodon's latest full-length album 'Hushed And Grim' is out now worldwide via Reprise Records. **END«**

YouTube

Mastodon - Pushing the Tides [Official Music Video]

Mastodon — 'HUSHED AND GRIM' Tracklist:

1. Pain With An Anchor
2. The Crux
3. Sickle And Peace
4. More Than I Could Chew
5. The Beast
6. Skeleton Of Splendor
7. Teardrinker
8. Pushing The Tides
9. Peace And Tranquility
10. Dagger
11. Had It All
12. Savage Lands
13. Gobblers Of Dregs
14. Eyes Of Serpents
15. Gigantium

See Mastodon live in 2022 at the following dates.

JUN 01
PARKBÜHNE CLARA ZETKIN PARK
LEIPZIG, GERMANY
WITH KVELERTAK AND BARONESS

JUN 02
MYSTIC FESTIVAL 2022
STOCZNIA
GDANSK, POLAND

JUN 03
ROCK AM RING 2022
NÜRBURGRING
NÜRBURG, GERMANY

JUN 07
SALLE PLEYEL
PARIS, FRANCE

JUN 09
013
TILBURG, NETHERLANDS

JUN 13
FZW
DORTMUND, GERMANY

JUN 14
PIER 2
BREMEN, GERMANY

JUN 17
HELLFEST 2022
HELLFEST
CLISSON, FRANCE

JUN 20
PUSTERVIK
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN
WITH BARONESS AND BOKASSA

JUN 21
KULTURBOLAGET
MALMÖ, SWEDEN
WITH BARONESS AND BOKASSA

JUN 23
TONS OF ROCK 2022
TONS OF ROCK
OSLO, NORWAY

JUN 28
TVORNICA KULTURE
ZAGREB, CROATIA
WITH KVELERTAK AND BARONESS

For more information , visit
www.mastodonrocks.com

THE Tech Session

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

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

UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES THE GREATS GREAT

TECH SESSION

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THE
TECH
SESSION
FILES
Steve
Vai

Tech Session

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Passion and Warfare, **Jamie Humphries** delves into Steve Vai's bottomless bag of licks and tricks and presents GI's tribute to this landmark guitar album and Mr Vai's very special Alien Guitar Secrets.

THE 1980s saw a huge jump in technique for Rock guitar, and also saw instrumental guitar music become a credible and popular genre of music. There was a host of prominent players throughout the decade, many of them signed to Mike Varney's Shrapnel Records but two names that launched instrumental guitar music into the mainstream, and even scored chart success, were Joe Satriani and his former pupil Steve Vai. Both artists took guitar instrumental music to the next level, and instead of simply shredding over a hard Rock backing track, crafted beautifully rich compositions, with the guitar featured as if it were a vocal. Both Satch and Vai were the undoubted leaders of the genre, and continue to fly the flag for instrumental guitar.

Steve Vai had started out as a hired gun working with the likes of Frank Zappa, Alcatraz, David Lee Roth and Whitesnake, but had always been active as a solo artist as well. His first two albums, Flexible and Flexible Leftovers, included an eclectic blend of styles ranging from hard Rock instrumentals, to power pop vocal tracks, to out and out psychedelia. For a long time Vai had wanted to just lock himself away and do what many artists dream of doing;

***Steve Vai** - Tech Session Performance*

writing and recording an album for himself, with absolutely no outside influence, or any concern for musical fashion. In short, totally free artistic expression!

Vai had wanted to document the guitar in a similar way as what he had with the track The Attitude Song, but was convinced that no one would care, or even listen to, his new sonic creations, yet he felt he had to do it. He'd begun working on material for this project as far back as 1982 and the result was possibly the most important instrumental Rock album in history - a collection of instrumental gems, showcasing the guitar in all its glory. But these weren't pointless songs acting as a vehicle for gratuitous shredding; these songs featured strong vocal-esque melodies, as well as elaborate production. Stand out cuts included Liberty, Erotic Nightmares, The Animal, The Riddle, For the Love of God and Blue Powder.

So here we are, 25 years on, and Passion and Warfare is as important today as it was back in 1990, and a credit to Steve's passion and drive for the guitar. It also proved that many audiences want exactly what Steve did - a totally honest record. With Sony releasing the 25th Anniversary of Passion and Warfare, along with Modern Primitive, Vai and his band are for the first time performing Passion and Warfare live.

If you have read my piece on Steve Vai in this issue you'll know by now that I am a huge Steve Vai fan and have been for many years. I was one of the legions of young guitarists who owned an original Floral Ibanez Jem from the late '80s, as well as having the Passion and Warfare poster on my wall, so when GI's editor asked if I was interested in producing a Vai Tech Session, I jumped at the chance. But if I was going to do this, I was going to do it properly, and try and put a little something into the track, other than just playing licks over a half-hearted backing track! I wanted to pay tribute to Passion and Warfare and be inspired to compose a tribute piece that reflected the sound and style of the album. I wanted to focus on what I consider to be two sides of Vai's playing; his aggressive hard Rock pyro technique side, and his ethereal, soulful side. I looked at two of my favour tracks for inspiration, The Animal, for its grinding harmonised riffs, and Blue Powder, for its mood evoking chord progression.

Our song begins as a I, IV, V riff progression based around a heavy 16th note swing groove, and concludes with a straight half time ethereal progression, that mixes Aeolian, Lydian, and Lydian Augmented scales.

Bars 1-6 kick things off with an A minor pentatonic riff that uses a sixteenth note groove. This riff has a harmony added a 5th lower, courtesy of an original Digitech Whammy pedal, which adds extra weight to the riff. As the riff concludes the Whammy pedal is turned off and we exit the riff with a whammy bar dive on the open 3rd string.

Image Copyright ©Larry DiMarzio

Bars 7-10 introduce the solo over the A riff, chord I, and is based around the A minor pentatonic scale, using bluesy bends and sliding phrasing. The first solo section concludes with another whammy bar dive and a tapping and bending style lick similar to something you would hear in The Attitude Song.

Bars 11-12 are performed over the D riff, chord IV of our riff progression, and kick off with a signature A Dorian string skipping tapping lick. This lick uses two tapping fingers, so be sure to study the instruction portion of the video. Also take care with the open strings when string skipping. Bar 12 features an ascending tapping arpeggio figure based around G major 7th and A minor 7th

arpeggio's, performed on the 1st and 2nd strings.

Bars 13-14 see us heading back to the chord I riff, and kick off with a wide interval sliding lick, and a tapping lick, that borrow ideas from the track Juice. The interval lick produces a very effective sound, but again take care when jumping strings.

Bars 15-16 conclude our first solo with a wide stretch picking/pull off lick that uses the E minor pentatonic with an added 2nd. This is followed by a descending legato and tapping lick based around the E Aeolian mode.

Bars 17-18 conclude the first half of our track with some 4th intervals and some whammy bar "gargles" produce by flicking a floating bridge.

Bars 19-20 demonstrate Vai's use of metric modulation, with the feel of our track shifting from a swing 16th groove, to a straight half time feel. We kick off with an extended B minor 9th arpeggio, performed with sweep picking. This arpeggio covers a very large portion of the neck, and appears to flow across the beats. The lick concludes with some whammy bar slurs and scoops, and a descending A minor pentatonic run.

***Steve Vai** - Tech Session Part 1*

Image Copyright ©Larry DiMarzio

Bars 21-22 features a bending phrase performed over the Em9 chord that concludes with a descending E Dorian string-skipping lick, reminiscent of a lick heard in Die to Live.

Bars 22-24 include a signature ascending 5th interval run that covers a large area of the neck, and concludes with a slurring C Lydian figure.

Bar 25-27 conclude our Vai style track with some classic licks, and kick off with a descending sweeping figure based on stacked 4th and 5th intervals, reminiscent to a lick heard in the solo to Ladies Night in Buffalo. Our final lick is performed over the F# augmented chord, and is based on shifting augmented arpeggios, implying the Lydian Augmented scale, the third mode of the Melodic minor scale.

For this lesson I used a Sterling by Musicman John Petrucci signature guitar, fitted with DiMarzio pickups. This was plugged into an MXR 5150 pedal, for some extra crunch, and then into a Mesa Boogie combo. For the verse harmony I used a Digitech Whammy pedal. For this track I would aim for a fairly high gain sound, with a thick low end, but some boosted upper mid range to aid pinched harmonics when on the bridge pickup, but retains a warm rich tone when switched to the neck pickup.

END«

***Steve Vai** - Tech Session Part 2*

THE Reviews

GUITARS, AMPS AND EFFECTS

BEST OF 2021

EDITOR'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2021

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

ALTHOUGH the last 12 months have once again been challenging for us all the least. it has been another incredible year for new product r in the world of guitar, however. Long gone are the days when any of the world's top brands actual leased anything in their range that is genuinely substandard, and it's why it is getting harder and h to really give a bad review. All of that being said, of course, there will always be a handful of produ rise above the rest and Gi's top reviewers and myself have compiled our Best of 2020 lists for that reason. Please let it be noted that between Tom, Nick, Sam and myself we have deliberately not du ed any of one another's choices in an attempt to showcase as many of these great pieces of gear as I hope you enjoy our look back at Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2021 and be sure to let us if you agree with our choices, or if you feel we missed something out. So, without further ado, her mine, followed by the full review for each.

Ibanez Q54 - Q Series Headless Guitar

Part of Ibanez's boundary-pushing Quest series, the Q54 vaunts a headless design built from the ground up to maximize tone, performance, and playing comfort. While this solidbody electric guitar is extremely lightweight, its ergonomic nyatoh body resonates with rich, woody tones that belie its compact profile—the Ibanez Q54 is guaranteed to unlock unlimited creative possibilities.

PRS Fiore Mark Lettieri S ture Electric Guitar

From his time with instrun ensemble Snarky Puppy to studio sessions and his acclaimed solo wor Lettieri knows a thing or two about guitar their constant journey to innovate the elec tar, PRS decided to tap into Mark's vast ex and knowledge, a collaboration that result Fiore. »

TALIA RIMINI 12

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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.

Vox Bobcat S66

Vox is synonymous with the British Invasion bands of the 1960s. Those classic AC30 tones of the era are instantly recognisable, from The Shadows to The Beatles to The Stones. We're all familiar with Vox's legendary '60s amps - but I'd guess that perhaps not as many of you will be familiar with Vox's guitars from the same era.

Cort G280

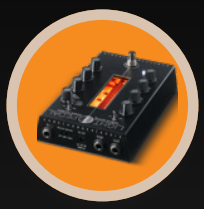
The new Cort G280 Select is a revamped follow up of the previously popular G280DX model, with newly added pearloid pickguard, Rosewood fingerboard—and Voiced Tone VTH-77 hot humbucker with a metal cover for that high-grade boutique looks and solid build quality. Designed with the best possible playability and sonic performance in mind, the G280 Select comprises of Alder body with Flame Maple top and HSS pickup configuration.

Mooer Audio X2 Series R7 Reverb

The R7 X2 Reverb combines MOOER's best digital effects algorithms from the A7 Ambiance and R7 Reverb pedals and combines 14 different types of high-quality stereo reverb into one ultimate pedal. Parameter knobs include High Cut, Low Cut, and Mix for adjusting the EQ and Decay and Pre-Delay knobs for adjusting the intensity of each effect. Unique features of the R7 X2 include the Infinite and Trail-on functions to customize how each effect fades out.

BOSS Nextone Special 80W Combo Amp

Billed as a modern boutique experience for serious players—with the BOSS Nextone Special you get a professional 80-watt stage amplifier, that features authentic tube sound, feel and response. Thanks to the inclusion of BOSS's critically-acclaimed Tube Logic approach, the Nextone Special produces the kind of tones and versatility that regular stage performers dream of.



Gamechanger Light Pedal

Serving up a truly unique creative platform for adventurous tone chasers and stompbox fanatics, Gamechanger Audio's Light Pedal is the world's first optical spring reverb system—bringing the potential for adding new sonic textures to your playing. Though it has a traditional spring reverb tank at its core, the Light Pedal adds an innovative array of infrared optical sensors aimed at different points of the spring to harvest unique overtones and harmonics produced along its length.

Ibanez Q54 - Q Series Headless Guit

Part of Ibanez's boundary-pushing Quest series, the Q54 vaunts a headless design built from the ground up to maximize tone, performance, and playing comfort. While this solidbody electric guitar is extremely lightweight, its ergonomic nyatoh body resonates with rich, woody tones that belie its compact profile–the Ibanez Q54 is guaranteed to unlock unlimited creative possibilities. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

IT'S very important when reviewing gear to express one's biases up-front. For example, if I'm reviewing a piece of gear from a company I endorse, I'll always go out of my way to tell you. So let's get my bias out in the open here: I don't like headless guitars.

Let me explain why. Firstly, I'm a pretty big chap, and normal-sized guitars already look like toys when I play them. Take away the headstock and I look even more ridiculous! It's not just pure vanity though. I like a guitar with a bit of "meat", and it's been my experience that (at least to a point), more wood = more resonance. Before we dismiss this as "tonewood voodoo", let's recall the famous story where Eddie Van Halen cut a huge chunk out of his Explorer and ruined the tone in the process. Wood matters. It's been my experience that many headless guitars just don't have the same acoustic resonance that more traditional models possess, and it shows in the tone. Then there's the play feel. For example, if the guitar is too light, I can't get my arm involved in bending and vibrato without pushing the guitar off my leg. I could go on… So, it was with some degree of cynicism that I reviewed one of Ibanez's forays into the world of headless guitar - the Q54. And you know what? I actually really quite liked it!

> Tonally, it's clear that these **guitars are designed to be** clean, loud and articulate..."

Aimed squarely at contemporary instrumental players, the Quest series is a line of ultra-modern headless guitars with small, thin bodies and slim, flat necks - purposely designed to be worn high and played fast. While slant-fretted models are available, I resisted the urge to review one of these guitars for fear that I'd get too lost in adjusting my technique to form an accurate impression of the tone, feel and build quality of the instrument, but I will say this: »

tar

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Ibanez Q54 - Q Series Headless Guitar

MSRP: (UK) £TBC / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

Modern, non-traditional playing styles.

Precise, "produced" tones.

Looking like a giant.

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ibanez.com

they feel weird. When your muscle memory is as deeply ingrained as mine, angled frets throw everything off. However - and this is super important to remember - I am NOT the kind of player that these angled-fretted models are intended for. Looking outside of my "traditionalist" lens for a moment, it's easy to see how a player like Sarah Longfield, Yvette Young or lead Quest series artist Ichika Nito would benefit from this layout. Thankfully for old dogs like me though, there are straight fretted models like the Q54.

It goes without saying that the Q54 plays well. The 20" fingerboard radius and tall Jescar EVO frets allow for a very low action while still giving plenty of clearance from

the fretboard for grabbing bends, as well as providing that all-important tactile feedback on fast legato lines. Fretboard radius aside though, the neck profile is a fairly traditional "slim C". It's nice to see that Ibanez have resisted the urge to re-invent the wheel with the neck shape into some angular monstrosity that forces the player into a single hand posture. As a result, the technical adjustment period when going from my regular guitars to the Q54 was basically zero - not something I can say about most headless guitars, where the form factor can be very distracting.

Tonally, it's clear that these guitars are designed to be clean, loud and articulate. There's a lot of output from the pickups, but (unlike may traditional high output passive pickups) the low end is tight, the midrange is slightly tucked and well balanced and the highs are percussive and sparkling. »

Ibanez Q54 *- Q Series Headless Guitar*

While the tones are very "refined" and smooth, there's plenty of resonance from the nyatoh body to keep the guitar from sounding anaemic and sterile. Played clean, there's plenty of piano-like clarity, while distorted tones have a "produced" feel that's perfect for a particular modern aesthetic. That said, you can coax convincing tones for just about any style out of this guitar, so if you're not necessarily a hyper-modern instrumental player and just want a lightweight, high-quality guitar to save your back on long gigs, the Q54 has you covered there too.

As you'd expect from Ibanez, the quality of the hardware is first class. The String Lock nut does away with the need for fancy double ball-end strings, which not only make strings easier to find, but also allows for more experimentation with custom gauges and different materials. The Monotone bridge allows for a much greater range of intonation adjustment than many similar designs, and sport legitimate geared tuners instead of fine tuners. Not only does this make tuning feel more positive, but it also prevents you from accidentally knocking the tuners with your right leg when playing in the classical position.

With its resonant body, rock-solid hardware and excellent playability, the Ibanez Q54 has quite thoroughly debunked my claims about headless guitars being inherently lifeless and uncomfortable. I'm still not in a hurry to run out and buy a headless guitar, but that's just because I look like an ungainly giant playing one. But ignoring my own vanity and focusing solely on the Q54 as a tool for making music (especially if no one was looking), I'd happily play one all day long.

END«

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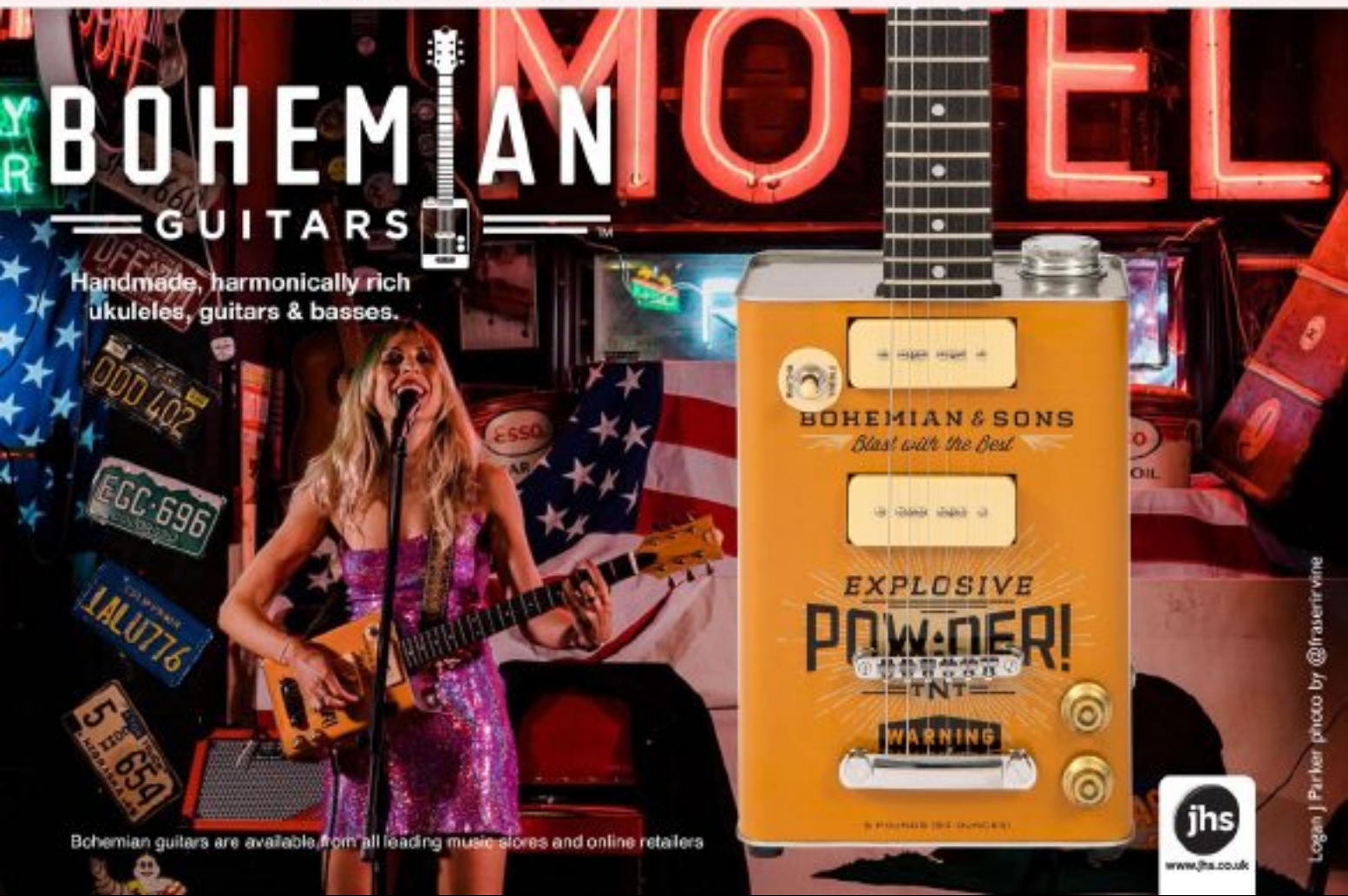
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Logan J Parker photo by @fraserirvine

Fiore Mark Lettieri Signature Electr

From his time with instrumental ensemble Snarky Puppy to countless studio sessions and his acclaimed solo work, Mark Lettieri knows a thing or two about guitars. Amid their constant journey to innovate the electric guitar, PRS decided to tap into Mark's vast experience and knowledge, a collaboration that resulted in the Fiore. Here's **Nick Jennison** to tell us more.

CAST your mind back to January 2018. It's the NAMM show, and PRS and John Mayer have just dropped the most controversial guitar of the last 10 years - the Silver Sky. For what is fundamentally quite a conservative three single-coil, vintage-inspired instrument, it REALLY got some people worked up. Well, three years have passed, the Silver Sky is very much here to stay, and PRS have just released their next bolt-on, single-coil instrument: the Fiore.

Designed in collaboration with musical polymath Mark Leitteri, the Fiore looks similar in silhouette to previous bolt-on models like the DC-3 and Brent Mason signature, but with a few notable cosmetic and functional differences. The most obvious is the lack of a pickguard and pickup rings - a first for PRS's flat-topped bolt-on guitars. The result is very elegant, like a classier update on a 90s Charvel.

The HSS layout is something that usually fills me with dread, if I'm honest. Because humbuckers and single coils usually have very drastically different frequency content and output, and that they usually like to "see" different put values (typically a warm-sounding 250k pot to take the edge off single coils vs a clearer 500k pot for humbuckers). While it's a great idea in principle to have beefy humbucking tones in the bridge position for gainy tones and vintage single coils for everything else, but the reality is usually a humbucker that's way too loud and dark, and single coils that are too quiet and ear-piercingly bright. It's an incredibly hard pickup configuration to balance, but PRS has absolutely nailed it. Part of this could be down to the loud, thick-sounding single coils, which are notably fuller and hotter than those found on the Silver Sky (which are already meatier than a typical Strat single-coil). »

> "I **can't overstate** the crazy versatility on offer here..."

ric Guitar

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

PRS Fiore

MSRP: (UK) £2599 / (US) $2499

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Incredible versatility.
- Best-in-class build quality.
- Clean lines.

For more information, please visit:
prsguitars.com

All of the tones you'd hope to find on this sort of guitar are there in abundance, with great clarity and authority in all five pickup selections. That's not all though. The two-tone controls have push-pull functions that greatly expand the Fiore's tonal palette. Pulling the bridge tone control switches the humbucker from series to parallel, which produces an airy chime that's somewhat reminiscent of a Filtertron - it's single coil-esque, but still with the firm low end punch of a humbucker. Pulling the second tone control gives access to either neck and bridge pickups together, or all three pickups at once.

I can't overstate the crazy versatility on offer here. The bridge humbucker alone can give you either mid-forward PAF power or hollow Gretsch clang, while the various single-coil combinations offer everything from clean Strat cluck in positions 2 and 4 (with the humbucker parallel) to muscular Texas blues in positions 2 and 5 (with the humbucker in series), right through to two very convincing Tele tones that cover everything from country twang to Keef depending on how you set the bridge pickup. It's hard to conceive of a style, a tone or a gig that this guitar couldn't cover. »

PRS Fiore

THE YEAR
21

Acoustic Power

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A full-featured instrument preamp and DI that delivers accurate sonic detail for any acoustic instrument.

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"I could take this guitar blind into any gig, **safe in the knowledge** that not only could I achieve any tone I'm ever likely to want.."

Playability is predictably excellent, thanks to a super comfortable maple-on-maple neck and 22 tall-but-slim frets. As many of you know, I'm a PRS artist and love their guitars, but their factory setup is usually a little stiff for my tastes. I was all set to make my usual setup adjustments, but honestly, the Fiore played "just right" out of the box. It also balances beautifully on either leg and feels reassuringly weighty without being heavy and cumbersome.

If (heaven forbid) all of my guitars were lost to a bizarre gardening accident, and I had to choose just one PRS guitar to replace an entire collection, the Fiore would be at the top of the list. I could take this guitar blind into any gig, safe in the knowledge that not only could I achieve any tone I'm ever likely to want, but that I can play anything I'm ever likely to want to play on it, too. I'll be sad to see this one go.

END «

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

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

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-Flyers, 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 »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Aria Pro II DM-206

MSRP: (UK) £399 / (US) $499

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

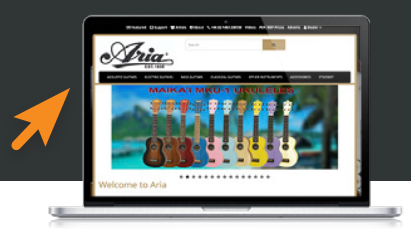
Warm — Bright

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«

Aria Pro II DM-206

GTRS
Intelligent Guitar
The GTRS Guitar is the next generation of guitarproducts, offering a complete, lightweight digital and analog guitar system built from the ground up. This system starts off with a one-of-a-kind guitar equipped with the GTRS Intelligent Processor designed in conjunction with master guitar builders and MOOER's digital sound engineers.
The GTRS Intelligent Processor System includes 11 classic guitar simulations, 126 guitar effects, 40 drum grooves, 10 metronome variations, and an 80-second looper.
MOOER

VOX BOBCAT S66

Vox is synonymous with the British Invasion bands of the 1960s. Those classic AC30 tones of the era are instantly recognisable, from The Shadows to The Beatles to The Stones. We're all familiar with Vox's legendary '60s amps - but I'd guess that perhaps not as many of you will be familiar with Vox's guitars from the same era. **Nick Jennison** explores the brand's rich history as he reviews the new Vox Bobcat S66

ORIGINALLY produced in Italy at the height of Beatlemania, Vox's Bobcat and Lynx models were semi-hollow guitars with a similar outline to other classic semi hollow-models of the era, but with unique cosmetic appointments and pickup configurations and placements.

New for 2021, the Bobcat S66 is a faithful recreation of its classic namesake, albeit with some modern updates to improve playability.

> "The Bobcat S66 is a very cool and inspiring instrument for players looking for something a little **different from the norm**..."

It's a semi-hollow design, but with what feels like a much larger centre block than you'd find on a guitar like a 335. Cosmetically, it has the same headstock design, distinctive logo and unique pickguard design as the original guitars, as well as the binding and block inlays found on '60s models. Unlike those guitars, the S66 is a set neck design with a tune-o-Matic style two-post bridge - two very welcome updates.

Tones come courtesy of three single-coil pickups - certainly unusual for a semi-hollow guitar, but it's actually a really cool configuration. If you're expecting "Strat" tones, think again. While there's plenty of wiry, chiming character, the tone is very different. There's more midrange punch, less low-end extension and a little more grit in the highs - a little like the difference between an AC30 and a Deluxe Reverb. It's less Buddy Holly and more Brian Jones.

Another interesting feature is the control layout. There's a three-way toggle that selects between neck, bridge or neck and bridge »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Vox Bobcat S66

MSRP: (UK) £1299 / (US) $1399

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Retro styling.
- British Invasion tones.
- Unique sounds and textures.

For more information, please visit:
voxamps.com

pickups together, and a separate volume control for each of the three pickups. The volume control for the middle pickup works independently to the pickup selector, effectively allowing you to blend the middle pickup in to any position, and with the pickup selector in the middle position, you can blend all three pickups to taste for some really interesting tones.

Vox Bobcat S66

While there are a practically unlimited number of tonal blends available, this guitar is very much a "vintage" style instrument. If you're expecting tight percussive metal, piano-like cleans or smooth lead tones; you're best off looking elsewhere. However, for rockabilly, surf and garage rock, this guitar has an outstanding and unique voice. If you're quick with the volume controls (or you can live with a bit of hum) it's also a fantastic choice for fuzzed-out grunge and noise rock.

The Bobcat S66 is a very cool and inspiring instrument for players looking for something a little different from the norm. Whether you're a '60s nut looking for those authentic British Invasion tones, or you're looking for an instrument that's as unique as your music, the Vox Bobcat S66 is a fine choice.

END «

Cort G280 Select

The new Cort G280 Select is a revamped follow up of the previously popular G280DX model, with newly added pearloid pickguard, Rosewood fingerboard– and Voiced Tone VTH-77 hot humbucker with a metal cover for that high-grade boutique looks and solid build quality. Designed with the best possible playability and sonic performance in mind, the G280 Select comprises of Alder body with Flame Maple top and HSS pickup configuration. **Sam Bell** tells us more.

I'VE always been impressed with Cort; since playing a friends Cort at a rehearsal back in 2005, I couldn't believe such a guitar could be available at such an affordable price. It just blew my mind. In this review, I have the pleasure of taking a look at the G280 Select; this is a modern HSS configuration S-Type Guitar with lots of high-quality features for the modern player, looking for a guitar to bridge the gap between different genres. Let's dive into the features.

The Cort G280 Select comes in two colours, Amber and Transparent Black. In the review, I had the pleasure of playing both and I'm undecided which was my favourite. However, the aesthetic of the guitar is pleasing. The alder body is complimented with a flamed maple top; the sleek design of the body where the arm comes over the bridge is unique to this design; it looks and feels great.

The neck is a modern compound radius, going from 12 inches to 16 inches higher up the neck, making chordal work in the lower regions of the neck much more natural, and in the higher ranges, the fretboard keeps out the way for the bigger bends and legato techniques you might employ. We have a classic scale length of 25.5 inches, this is what is to be expected from S-Type guitars, and we have 22 frets. Cort's website doesn't list the exact type of frets, but in my opinion, they

"Playability wise, **this guitar shreds**. It's super easy to play, and it's reasonably balanced on the leg and weight wise..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Cort G280 Select

MSRP: (UK) £579 / (US) $850

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

Tremendous versatility.

Boutique looks at an affordable price.

For more information, please visit:
cortguitars.com

are tall and medium. Very easy to play! They go great with the Rosewood fingerboard and the Canadian hard maple neck, which glides very easily behind the thumb.

Hardware-wise we have Cort's staggered locking tuners; the lower string posts are taller than the » upper string posts; this helps with intonation and tuning stability. We also have a really responsive CFA-III Tremolo system made by Cort, which gives us the ability to raise and lower pitch with the push-in whammy bar. Even subtle movements give a nice shimmer vibrato to chords and single notes.

Electronics, we have Corts own voiced tone VTS63 single coils in the neck and middle position, these sound great in the split positions particularly, however, the neck pick up is quite dark for a single coil, however, it had a lot of punch and clarity despite this. The bridge pick up is the VTH77; this is a very hot humbucking pickup, good tight low end/lower mids. Great for rock and metal styles. These are controlled with a classic 5-way switch, volume and tone control.

Cort G280 Select

CORT

"Definity check the G280 Select series out. **I'd be happy** to take this to a gig with me for sure..!"

Playability wise, this guitar shreds. It's super easy to play, and it's reasonably balanced on the leg and weight wise. I had no playing issues with it myself when testing it out, this guitar is designed for ease of use, and it delivers in every aspect of that. Looks-wise, I personally think this is a great looking guitar, especially for the price point; it feels of good quality. And of course, in terms of construction and hardware, it's very good! Definitely, something that could be gigged with, taken into a studio and used for various applications. I can certainly imagine players who are looking for a versatile workhorse guitar on a budget; they should Definity check the G280 Select series out. I'd be happy to take this to a gig with me for sure!

END«

THE YEAR
21
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.
Elixir STRINGS
Elixir Strings. Performance-ready with long-lasting tone.
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Mooer Audio X2 Series R7 Reverb

The R7 X2 Reverb combines MOOER's best digital effects algorithms from the A7 Ambi different types of high-quality stereo reverb into one ultimate pedal. Parameter knobs the EQ and Decay and Pre-Delay knobs for adjusting the intensity of each effect. Uniqu Trail-on functions to customize how each effect fades out. Here's **Nick Jennison** with

THERE are really two "schools" of delay user in my experience. There's the first camp, who just want a little bit of "space" in their tone with the least possible level of fuss: the kind of player who buys a Carbon Copy or a DD3 and never looks back, happy that they'll never have to delve through a menu, save and recall a preset or (heaven forbid) figure out how MIDI works.

Then there's the second camp: the players who thrive on options and tweakability, who draw on their gear for inspiration, producing grand ethereal soundscapes and textures that go way beyond what we typically think of as "guitar sound". It's this second group of players that Mooer have in their sights with the D7 X2.

In a pervious edition of Guitar Interactive Magazine, we took a look at the D7 - a mini-pedal format "ambient delay" that boasted a whole host of outlandish delay types in a tiny pink package. The D7 X2 is its bigger sibling, with twice as many delay types ranging from the positively conservative digital, analogue and tape delays we're all used to hearing through to otherworldly modulated, pitch-shifted and bit-crushed repeats. It also offers stereo I/O for maximum spaciousness and compatibility with both stereo effects pedals and with other instruments like synths, drum machines, or even as studio outboard.

Other notable new features include a dedicated tap tempo switch, along with a preset scrolling mode that allows you to switch delay types mid-performance without having to take your hands off the guitar.

In terms of sounds, we could be here literally all day talking about the 14 delay modes included in this powerful little pedal, so it's probably best you watch the video for a full run-down of every preset. What does separate this pedal from the original D7, however is the inclusion of five more "normal" delay types - namely "digital", "tape", "analogue", "ping pong", and "dynamic". This means the D7 X2 is a fine choice for players who want a range of delay sounds but aren't heavily into the ambient "thing". »

iance and R7 Reverb pedals and combines 14
include High Cut, Low Cut, and Mix for adjusting
ue features of the R7 X2 include the Infinite and
the full review.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Mooer Audio X2 Series R7 Reverb

MSRP: (UK) £169 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Straightforward — Feature-rich

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Highly tweakable delay sounds.
- Ethereal soundscapes.
- Great sounding "normal" delays.

For more information, please visit:
mooeraudio.com

Beyond that, things get progressively more whacked-out, ranging from beautifully modulated echos to the bizarre-sounding “rainbow” and “liquid” modes.

Here’s another consideration for those looking to get into the world of luxurious, outlandish sounding delays: the price. Compared to the industry standard multi-delay units, the Mooer D7 X2 is less than a quarter of the price - barely scratching three figures at some outlets here in the UK. If you’re just wanting to dip your toe into this type of delay pedal, it’s really hard to go wrong with the D7 X2 at that price.

***Mooer Audio** X2 Series R7 Reverb*

The Mooer D7 X2 is a hugely powerful and versatile delay pedal for very little money. With tap tempo, 14 presets, and stereo I/O, it's well equipped to fit on any guitar player's board. Whether you're into 40-minute ambient guitar meditations, or you just want a bit of slap-back behind your solo, this pedal has you covered.

END«

BOSS Nextone Special 80W Combo

Billed as a modern boutique experience for serious players–with the BOSS Nextone Sp amplifier, that features authentic tube sound, feel and response. Thanks to the inclusio approach, the Nextone Special produces the kind of tones and versatility that regular **Billy Campbell** tells us more.

APPEALING to the vintage amp enthusiasts and pure tube tone aficionados, BOSS release the Nextone Special guitar amplifier. Featuring a loud 80-watts of power with authentic tube amp sound and feel thanks to BOSS's continually evolving Tube Logic Technology and Enhanced reactive drive power amp circuitry. There is a rich and robust low end and low mid-range delivered by the Custom Waza B12W 12-inch speaker that packs the classic "bluebell" tone, with rich lows, mellow mids, and clear highs.

Amp

pecial you get a professional 80-watt stage
on of BOSS's critically-acclaimed Tube Logic
stage performers dream of.

For each of the two independent clean or lead channels, you can choose between Four analogue Class AB power amp circuits: 6V6, 6L6, EL84, and EL34. The independent Clean and Lead channels have a selectable American and British EQ option, built-in effects, and advanced power amp voicing controls.

Each channel has a huge amount of control over everything from tone settings, effect settings (including on/off, rate, mix, etc.) level, power tube model, and voicing. On top of all this, there is a Five-way power control for getting authentic cranked-up amp sound and dynamic response at any volume. There is also the option of engaging the Extra Headroom switch for added punch when the power control is wide open. A switchable Solo function with level control gives you the ability to make your solos jump out of the mix by adding clean decibels to any of your tones.

The onboard effects include boost, a highly customizable delay, and reverb effect, plus an FX loop on the back panel for using your favourite external effects as well. Once you've got your preferred settings dialled up, you can easily save them to any »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

BOSS Nextone Special 80W Combo Amp

MSRP: (UK) £805 / (US) $899

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Straightforward — High-end

Studio — Stadium

For fans of

- Vintage tones with a modern twist
- Onboard versatile effects
- Exceptional build quality

For more information, please visit:
boss.info

one of the three Tone Setting memories for storing and recalling customized amp and effect settings by simply holding the corresponding button down.

External control can be achieved via the GA-FC foot controller, any of the standard BOSS footswitches, and MIDI. There are convenient XLR and 1/4-inch line outputs for sending a direct line to a PA or console, complete with three selectable mic'd cab IR voicings featuring Boss's Air Feel. A headphones/recording output is also available for silent practice or tracking sessions. Also on board is a USB port for direct recording and communication with BOSS's Nextone Editor software, Which allows for deeper editing and extensive control of the Nextone Special. External speaker jacks are included as well, letting you connect up to two 16-ohm 4x12 cabs for even bigger tones.

***BOSS** Nextone Special 80W Combo Amp*

This feature-heavy amplifier combines classic tube tone, BOSS's industry-leading construction and quality, with all of the modern features that make this an excellent choice for anyone wanting to jam at home, on stage, or at your next recording session.

The Boss Nextone Special retails for $899 in the US and £805 in the UK. Plug one in at your local retailer and check it out!

END«

Gamechanger Light Pedal Optical S

Serving up a truly unique creative platform for adventurous tone chasers and stompb
Pedal is the world's first optical spring reverb system–bringing the potential for adding
it has a traditional spring reverb tank at its core, the Light Pedal adds an innovative arra
ferent points of the spring to harvest unique overtones and harmonics produced alon
more.

SPRING reverb is a thing of beauty, no question. It was the first "effect", pre-dating fuzz, wah, tape echo and even tremolo. The digital arms race of the '80s, '90s and '00s and the pursuit of clean, perfect-sounding "studio-grade" reverbs led many guitarists to overlook the humble spring tank and its glorious imperfections, but the last decade has seen legions of guitarists embracing the drippy, splashy vibe-y-ness of the most primitive of artificial reverbs. But don't call it a comeback…

Spring Reverb

ox fanatics, Gamechanger Audio's Light
g new sonic textures to your playing. Though
ay of infrared optical sensors aimed at dif-
g its length. Here's Nick Jennison to explain

Enter Gamechanger Audio - the Heston Blumenthals of the guitar pedal space. Not content with using plasma tubes to power fuzz pedals, the Latvian boffins have decided to take a crack at spring reverb… using the power of light!

The Light Pedal is a unique and highly innovative take on a reverb pedal, using a combination of a traditional transducer-driven spring tank and an array of optical sensors. These sensors capture the output of the springs with much greater fidelity than the output transformer of a common-or-garden spring tank.

That's only the start of it, though. This highly tweakable pedal allows you to blend the cruder sound of the transducer (via the "springs" knob) in with the more lush and ethereal optical sensors to create a completely unique reverb that's somewhere between a clanky, resonant spring and a lush plate-like wash.

The real fun begins when you start messing with the various modes of operation, though. "Optics" allows you to select between various combinations of optical sensors for subtly different reverb textures, while "Sweep" will cycle through the sensors to create a gorgeous modulated reverb. "Tremolo" »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Gamechanger Light Pedal Optical Spring Reverb

MSRP: (UK) £299 / (US) $349

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

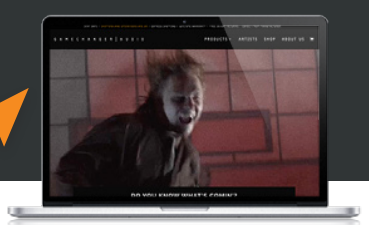
Straightforward — Feature-rich

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Spring reverb.
- Experimentation.
- Pedals that look gorgeous.

For more information, please visit:
gamechangeraudio.com



turns the sensors on and off for a pulsing optical tremolo that only affects the wet signal.

"Reflect" and "Feedback" both feed the signal back into the tank multiple times - the former producing a lo-fi sounding delay that blurs the line between delay and reverb, the latter producing chaotic, resonant feedback that's perfect for drones, washes and other noisy goodness.

Finally, "Harmonic" produces a shimmer-like effect, but unlike digital shimmer reverbs where a pitch-shifted signal is fed back into the reverb, the Light Pedal achieves this effect by driving the springs using a special circuit that emphasises the upper harmonics of the signal. »

***Gamechanger** Light Pedal Optical Spring Reverb*

THE YEAR

21 SE®

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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

© 2020 PRS Guitars / Photos by Marc Quigley

PRS PAUL REED SMITH GUITARS

25TH ANNIVERSARY

‘If your imagination is big enough, there’s **endless fun** to be had...”

There are a bunch of other useful performance features, too. You can create gated or ducked reverbs with the centre-notched “Gate” knob. The footswitch can be set to latching or momentary operation (especially useful in “Feedback” mode), and there’s a three-position “shock sensor” that shuts off the wet signal when an impact is detected to/near the pedal. This means you can stomp around on stage as hard as you like without the springs sounding like a cannon going off, but you can still get that sound, too if you so desire. Lastly, the “Ctrl”, “Springs”, “Optics” and “Gate” knobs can all be assigned to an expression pedal for real-time control.

The Light Pedal is a truly unique reverb pedal - in concept, execution and sound. It’s capable of a huge range of sounds that go far beyond the constraints of a traditional spring reverb, but stays firmly in the analogue domain with all the immediacy and organic lushness that comes with it. It’s a tweaker’s pedal for sure, but if your imagination is big enough, there’s endless fun to be had.

END «

LIGHT PEDAL
optical spring reverb system
tails
off on
latch
off on
dry
optics
sweep
trem
reflect
feedback
harmonic
spring
ctrl
optical
drive
tone
gate
GAMECHANGER | AUDIO

BEST OF 2021

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

WELL, what a ride 2021 has been! While I'm sure you don't need me to recount the we've all faced, I will give you a gentle reminder that 2021 has been a banne guitar gear. Musical instrument sales soared across the world, and we've seen some seriously exci ferings from all of the usual suspects - and a few newcomers too! Allow me to share some of my from this year with you, starting with…

PRS Archon 50 Watt Head

Amongst high gain enthusiasts (like myself), the PRS Archon is rightly held in high esteem. Sitting somewhere between the two sonic "poles" of heavy guitar tone - the 5150 and the Dual Rectifier - but with perhaps a dash of Uberschall thrown in for good measure, its ferocious mid-focussed grind has found favour with metal guitar luminaries like Mark Tremonti, Jeff Loomis, Mark Holcomb and Jason Richardson.

You may be wondering, "if this amp is that good, how come it's not more popular then?". Well, as with all things PRS, quality comes with a price. For the 100w model with the flamed maple front, you wouldn't even get enough change out of £2000 to buy a beer, and the 50w model wasn't much cheaper. I say "wasn't" because these models have been discontinued for a while, so even if you could afford the hefty price tag, getting hold of one was a challenge in itself.

Neural-D Quad-Co

If you've in this ind long enough, you'll've see waves of "amp-replaceme guitar tech come and go: claiming to be the solutio the woes of the valve amp First came solid-state amp then digital rack units, th infamous "kidney bean," culminating in the latest of modellers/profilers. As of a "modelling sceptic", have to admit that this cu generation is pretty close real thing.

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NICK JENNISON'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2021

Imagine my surprise when plugin mavens Neural DSP an
they were venturing into the world of hardware amp mod
the Quad Cortex. The queues to test the beta version at N
extended around the block, but when I finally had a chan
and try it on the Sunday afternoon (literally while the sta
disassembled!), I was in full cynic mode …and you know
floored. The feel, tone and response was staggering. I kne
that I was dealing with something special. Fast forward 1
a global pandemic) and finally, it was time to review a pr
Was it as good as I remembered? In a word, yes.

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NAMM 2019
nce to sit down
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what? I was
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8 months (and
oduction model.

Fishman Greg Koch Gristle-Tone P90 Signature Pickups

A wise man once said that P90s are the ultimate guitar pickups, apart from the fact that you can't use them in 80% of venues because of how badly they hum… and that boy was Albert Einstein. No, wait. Guthrie Govan. It was Guthrie Govan. Basically the same, right?

The point stands, though: P90s are the dog's proverbials. I often hear them described as being "between a single-coil and a humbucker", but to my ear, they're like having both on at once. There's the grind and sparkle of a great single-coil pickup, but there's also the punchy, meaty low end and nasal "poke" of a great PAF.

PRS Archon 50

Following in the footsteps of its predecessors, the second version of PRS's coveted Arc of saturated distortion that today's modern metal guitarists crave. Its 50-watt design co room levels, with master volumes on each channel to find the perfect level without af

AMONGST high gain enthusiasts (like myself), the PRS Archon is rightly held in high esteem. Sitting somewhere between the two sonic "poles" of heavy guitar tone - the 5150 and the Dual Rectifier - but with perhaps a dash of Uberschall thrown in for good measure, its ferocious mid-focussed grind has found favour with metal guitar luminaries like Mark Tremonti, Jeff Loomis, Mark Holcomb and Jason Richardson.

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"On to the sounds then, and the Archon 50 **absolutely does not disappoint** in this regard..."

hon 50 tube amplifier delivers the full spectrum onjures unabated sonic fury at bedroom and head- fecting your tone. **Nick Jennison** Reviews

od, as . ont, 2000 ve ould vas a

Enter the re-issued Archon 50. It's essentially the same amp as its predecessor, but you can pick one up for less than a grand. I know! It's nuts! If your first thought is, "well, it can't possibly be as good as the original for that price", I'd encourage you to check out some of the detailed comparisons of the old and new models online. There's literally no difference. »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Gi

PRS Archon 50

MSRP: From £995

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

World-class high gain tones.

Huge, expansive cleans.

Bargains.

For more information, please visit:
prsguitars.com

So what are we dealing with here? Well, the Archon 50 is a two channel, 50w amp available in both head and 1x12 combo formats - the inner workings of the amp are the same in both. Each channel sports a "volume" (read: gain) control, master volume, three-band EQ and bright switch, along with a shared presence and depth control. Power comes courtesy of a pair of 6CA7 power valves, with no less than SIX ECC83s in the preamp section for a frankly insane amount of gain.

PRS Archon 50

Channel switching comes courtesy of a single TS footswitch, and thankfully PRS has done away with the custom DIN socket found on previous models. This not only means that if you lose the original footswitch you can replace it with any standard one-button footswitch, but it also means you can control the amp from your G3/ES-8/Helix etc, without having to use a custom cable. While I wish the bright switch was foot-switchable, too, this is a huge step in the right direction, in my opinion.

On to the sounds then, and the Archon 50 absolutely does not disappoint in this regard. The clean channel is broad, open and expansive with great note separation and a nice touch of compression, making for a really pleasant playing experience. Often these "cleaner than clean" sounds can feel a little stiff and anaemic, but not here. Flip on the bright switch, and you're presented with some beautiful »

"So yes, **the Archon is back**, and the new model is just as outrageously good as the originals..."

high-end sparkle, but there isn't a huge gulf between the "bright" and "normal" sounds like you often find on older Fender amps. Each setting is beautifully balanced and works well with a variety of drive pedals. To be honest, the amp is worth the price for the clean channel alone.

The lead channel, by contrast, is positively furious. When I say there's a LOT of gain, that's not an understatement. In fact, I'm struggling to think of an amp with more distortion on tap. It's enough to take a low output single-coil pickup (like the Silver Sky featured in the video that accompanies this review) and turn it into an all-out, thickly saturated modern metal tone. Crucially however, even with the gain dimed and more filth than you could ever conceive of using, the Archon 50 remains tight, focussed and easy on the ears. With the bright switch disengaged, the tone is thick and buttery smooth with an incredible harmonic sustain, but flipping the bright switch on will reward you with a massively articulate and touch-responsive sound that cuts like a laser beam, but never sounds harsh or fatiguing even at extreme gain levels.

Interestingly, the combo version of the Archon 50 comes loaded with a Celestion V-Type as opposed to the industry standard Vintage 30s (like the ones in our studio 4x12). This does somewhat soften the attack of the amp's dirty channel and bring it into more "old school" territory, but for my money, the real magic happens when you run this amp through a larger, closed-back cab.

So yes, the Archon is back, and the new model is just as outrageously good as the originals - except now it's much easier to fit into your budget. If you're into high gain tones, you need this amp in your arsenal.

END«

NOT NEW!

SansAmp GT2 (1993)

Affectionately referred to as the "desert island" pedal, the SansAmp GT2 is unchanged (except for the DC input very early on). Consistently in production since introduced, it enables you to "architecturally" create your own rig in seconds.

SansAmp Classic (1989)

B. Andrew Barta's unique invention was the catalyst for the whole "going direct" movement over 30 years ago. Since then, SansAmp has evolved into an extensive line of pedals and racks, as well as being the heart of our Fly Rig® Series. Of the pedal formats, the SansAmp Classic is the most sophisticated.

EXCITEMENT NEVER GETS OLD

SansAmp Bass Driver DI (1994)

Often unseen, it's hardly a secret that the SansAmp Bass Driver is the secret weapon behind mammoth rigs on arena stages around the globe. It is also widely recognized as a studio staple for virtually every genre, and will make any FOH engineer smile.

DOES SOMETHING HAVE TO BE "NEW" TO BE EXCITING?

In a world of planned obsolescence and constant upgrades, it's rare an electronic music-related product can survive a lengthy lifespan. Yet these 3, in particular, have done just that. (We have more, such as the MIDI Mouse since 1995, but let's stay focused on SansAmp.)

For over 30 years, SansAmps have been used for every kind of music style from hardcore metal to commercial jingles and with all kinds of instruments, not just guitar and bass. Engineered for both recording and live applications, all SansAmps are 100% analog, multi-dimensional, user-friendly devices that deliver he warm, rich, organic tones of the most desirable mic'd up tube amplifiers on the planet. Is it any wonder SansAmp is regarded as the standard of the industry? Now go check out which one is right for you.

TECH 21

Analog Brilliance℠

tech21nyc.com

Neural DSP Quad Cortex

The Quad Cortex floor processor from Neural DSP fuses high-precision studio guitar and bass tones with real-world gigging flexibility. This slim, self-contained floor processor is powered by Quad-Core SHARC DSP and Neural's proven sound-modelling technology to bring today's players the ultimate in grab-and-go session accessibility. Inside, more than 50 amps, 1,000 cabs, and 70 stomps serve as building blocks for crafting your favourite rigs. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

IF you've been in this industry long enough, you'll've seen the waves of "amp-replacement" guitar tech come and go: each claiming to be the solution to the woes of the valve amp user. First came solid-state amps; then digital rack units, the infamous "kidney bean," all culminating in the latest crop of modellers/profilers. As a bit of a "modelling sceptic", even I have to admit that this current generation is pretty close to the real thing.

Imagine my surprise when plugin mavens Neural DSP announced they were venturing into the world of hardware amp modelling with the Quad Cortex. The queues to test the beta version at NAMM 2019 extended around the block, but when I finally had a chance to sit down and try it on the Sunday afternoon (literally while the stand was being disassembled!), I was in full cynic mode …and you know what? I was floored. The feel, tone and response was staggering. I knew right then that I was dealing with something special. Fast forward 18 months (and a global pandemic) and finally, it was time to review a production model. Was it as good as I remembered? In a word, yes.

Ok, let's zoom out a bit here and talk about what we're looking at. The Neural DSP Quad Cortex is a floor-format amp modeller with the ability to create "captures" of your amp, pedals, speaker cabinet, etc. "Sounds like pretty much every other modeller on the market then", right? Well, there are a few key differences that set the Quad Cortex apart from the crowd. First of all, the processing power under the hood is way, way in excess of anything else out there short of a high-end studio computer. Running out of DSP is a common problem with modern modellers, but with four of the most powerful processors available providing the juice, you'll never bump up against this with the Quad Cortex.

Second, and more interesting in my opinion, is the way the "capture" function works. On the surface, it's pretty similar - you connect the Quad Cortex to your amp/pedal/microwave etc, it plays the sounds of whale song and dial-up modems through your gear and records the result. What sets it apart is the way the resulting sound is captured and interpreted by the Quad Cortex. It uses a neural network that operates in

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Neural DSP Quad Cortex

MSRP: (UK) £1599 / (US) $1849

The Breakdown

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

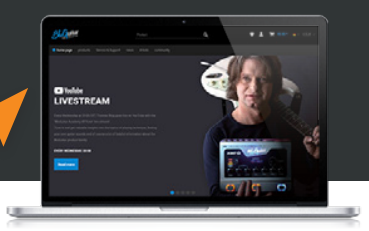
Straightforward — Feature-rich

Traditional — Innovative

For fans of

- Supremely lifelike amp capture
- Processing power
- Slick UIs

For more information, please visit:
neuraldsp.com/



a very similar manner to human hearing to decode the Dr Who noises into something that sounds like your rig, and the result is unbelievably natural. The machines are coming for us.

As if that wasn't enough, because there's so much power on tap, you can have multiple captures active in a single preset. You don't have to capture your entire overdrive > compressor > amp > cabinet signal chain in one go: you can capture the individual elements of your rig and put them together in any way you'd like. If you want to have the same fuzz capture feeding two different amp captures, that's no problem. Why not make it four? Each with their own stereo reverbs? The Quad Cortex won't break a sweat.

If that sounds a bit like hard work, don't worry. The Quad Cortex comes with a host of factory captures that sound and feel incredible. I've owned a number of the amps they've captured and playing these captures felt so lifelike that I'm confident I could tell you where the knobs were set. But if amp models are more your speed, there are a ton of those available too: all based on Neural DSP's award-winning plugins. It's

"The Quad Cortex comes with a host of factory captures that **sound and feel incredible**..."

also a dream to edit, thanks to the gorgeous touch-screen display and the clever footswitches that double as encoders. If delving through menus has put you off modellers in the past, fear not: if you can operate a smartphone, you can operate the Quad Cortex.

***Neural** DSP Quad Cortex*

QUAD CORTEX
VOLUME
A
B
C
D
E
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G
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MODE
TEMPO

On to the effects, and this is where the Quad Cortex falls slightly short, in my opinion. Don't get me wrong, the included modulation effects, delays, and reverbs sound very good, but they aren't as "next-gen" sounding as the amp sims and captures are. There's also a significantly smaller selection than you'd get with some competitors. That said, it's very important to remember that this is a very new unit from a very new company - there are no doubt going to be regular updates, with more toys for you to play with.

I was a little concerned that I was too hyperbolic in the video portion of this review when I announced "the future is here", but on reflection, I stand by that statement. I've never played a modeller that has sounded and felt as convincing as the Quad Cortex, and I've never been so tempted to retire my amps to the studio. If it can convince a crusty rocker like me, I'm certain you'll dig it too. I highly recommended.

END «

Fishman Greg Koch Gristle-Tone P9

Fishman artist and six-string wizard Greg Koch has garnered a well-deserved reputatio masterful technicians, and respected guitar clinicians. Fishman previously tapped Gr er pickup set, and now they've reconvened to put Greg's madcap spin on the P90. The ture P90 pickup set presents a panoply of drool-inducing P-90 sounds, from jangly cle **Nick Jennison** reviews.

A WISE man once said that P90s are the ultimate guitar pickups, apart from the fact that you can't use them in 80% of venues because of how badly they hum… and that boy was Albert Einstein. No, wait. Guthrie Govan. It was Guthrie Govan. Basically the same, right?

The point stands, though: P90s are the dog's proverbials. I often hear them described as being "between a single-coil and a humbucker", but to my ear, they're like having both on at once. There's the grind and sparkle of a great single-coil pickup, but there's also the punchy, meaty low end and nasal "poke" of a great PAF.

"So if these pickups are so great, how come they're not in every guitar?" I hear you cry. Well, there are downsides. First of all, it's notoriously difficult to balance the tones of P90s in the bridge and the neck positions. Secondly, the kind of P90s that are killer for muscular rock and blues are usually too honky and dark for more subtle styles, and vice versa, the beautiful underwound P90s with extended highs and lows can sound a little-washed out when you hit the gain. But worst of all is the noise. Oh my goodness, the noise. Imagine an unshielded Strat… now imagine five of them all at once. Unfortunately, my list of "venues where I can take my P90s" is about a tenth of the length of my list of "venues where P90s will get me fired".

Enter Fishman and Greg Koch. Hot off the heels of their partnership, they produced the frankly outstanding Gristle Tone Fluence Telecaster pickups; the smart people at Fishman and the Gristle King have given us a set of P90s that address literally all »

"T

90 Signature Pickups

on as one of today's finest contemporary pickers, eg for their wildly popular Gristle-Tone Telecast- Fishman Fluence Greg Koch Gristle-Tone Signa- ean tones to muscular overwound-coil punch.

"The point stands, though: P90s are the **dog's proverbials**..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Fishman Greg Koch Gristle-Tone P90 Signature Pickups

MSRP: (UK) £249 / (US) $289

The Breakdown

Vintage	Modern
Specialised	Versatile
Warm	Bright
Affordable	High-end

For fans of

- Authentic P90 tones.
- ALL of the authentic P90 tones.
- No noise

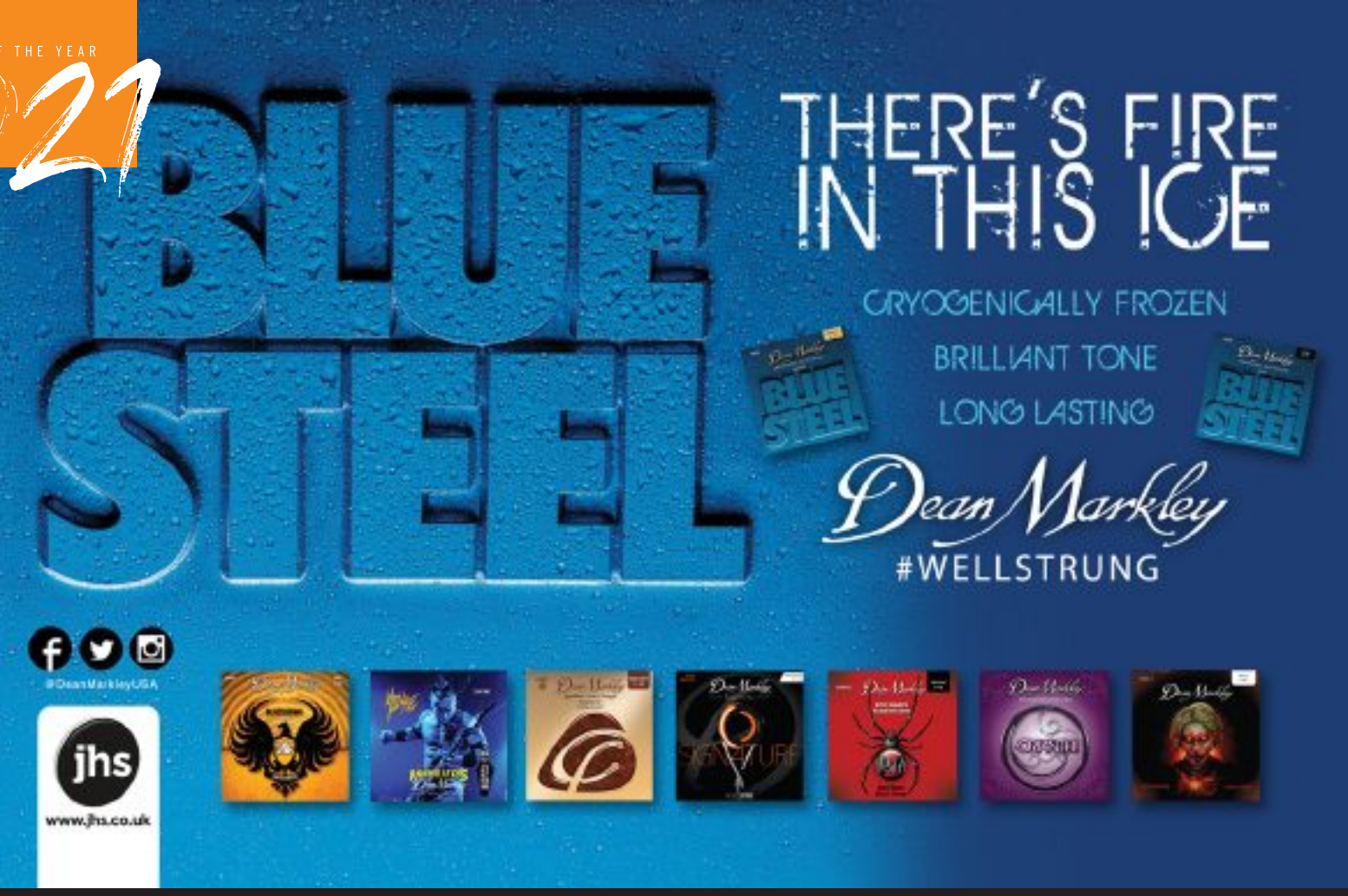
For more information, please visit:
fishman.com

of the issues that usually plague traditional soapbars.

First of all, like all Fluence pickups, they're completely noiseless. And not in the way that P100s are, where all of the noise is removed along with most of the tone and character, leaving what's basically a slightly rubbish humbucker. No, these pickups retain every inch of that tonal signature and response we love about P90s, but even the most questionable lighting rig won't trouble them.

They're also perfectly balanced between the bridge and next positions, both in output and in frequency content. The bridge position is full and beefy, while the neck pickup is sparkly and clear… and that's only Voice 1. There are no less than three distinct voices on tap in each pickup, and because of the unique way Fluences are designed (and the discerning ear of my Koch), they're all absolutely killer. Basically, you have access to a beautiful, perfectly balanced vintage P90 set in Voice 1, an overwound mid-pushed P90 set in Voice 2, and super authentic Tele-style single coils in »

Fishman Greg Koch Gristle-Tone P90 Signature Pickups



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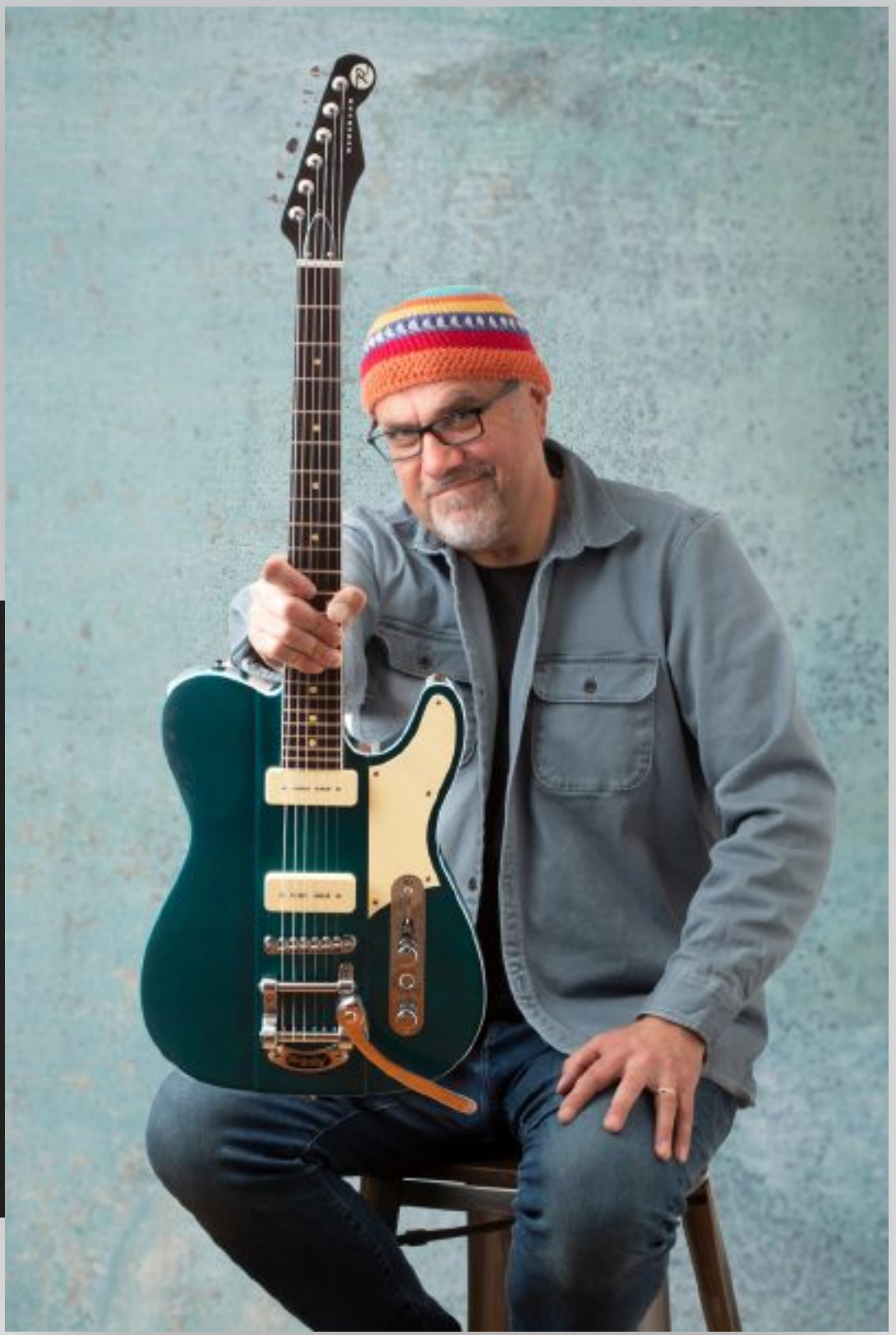
Voice 3. Critically, unlike in Fishman's other multi-voice pickups, the single-coil voice is the same volume as the other voices too.

Because of these features, you can use these pickups in situations where regular P90s would be unusable. Stacking on tons of amp gain or a massive-sounding fuzz sounds incredible, and you're only a click of a switch away from clean sparkle or country twang. They even look like "normal" P90s, too.

I could wax lyrical about these pickups all day, but I'll leave you with this thought: I put these pickups in my McCarty Soapbar for this review, and I have absolutely no intention of taking them out. If you're into P90s, you need to check these out. If you're not into P90s, you're wrong.

END «



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SAM BELL'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2021

Sam Bell presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2021.

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

s a year which will go down in history. Jobs es have been changed significantly, and we're g into a new era, things won't quite be the And as the bigger picture changes, so does ning else within it to accommodate, grow and evolve. Now I know what you're thinking. It's a bit twee of me somehow to link the events of 2020 and 21 with guitar gear, however, in a loose way, I'd say that in our world of guitar things have also changed and evolved. Gear companies are finding new ways to be innovative, to deliver tone and flexibility in ever-smaller packages, to help get peoples expression out there from home.

This year I was delighted to be able to review some brilliant gear in 2021, so what follows is my personal top 3 bits of gear that looked at. Some of the products are new for this year, some have been out for a while, but I had the opportunity to try them out for the first time this year at Guitar Interactive. I'd like to thank Jonathan for having me on board with the Gi team, its always a pleasure! I hope everyone reading is safe and well. Here's to better times, the quest for tone and all things musical!

Eventide MicroPitch Delay:

Eventide has been pushing the boat out recently with the release of some of their most ground-breaking effects in pedal format. The Blackhole Reverb pedal arrived in late 2020, allowing guitarists to access some truly gravity-defying Reverb sounds. Eventide llowed up with a few more of their mind-bending effects with the MircoPitch Delay and UltraTap release.

Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS:

Vox has historically been known for their incredible amps—but let me tell you, they are no slouch in the guitars department either. In this review, I'll be taking a look at the Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS. This is a single-cutaway archtop acoustic/electric guitar, mixing between a classic Jazz Archtop design and modern features and playability. On unboxing this guitar, I was immediately inspired by the beautiful classic design and the warm stringy tones of the Vox Giulietta.

Cordoba Friederich Luthier Select:

Cordoba has been making guitars for over 15 years, specialising in nylon string instruments. Their focus has always been on building traditional instruments of high quality with a modern touch.

The Luthier Select series is Cordoba's homage to some of the Legendary Luthiers from around the world. The model I'm playing in this review is the Friederich model, aptly named after Daniel Friederich, who is one of the most respected and influential luthiers in the world. Based in France, his work has been heavily influenced by another legendary French Luthier Robert Bouchet.

SAM BELL'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2021

Eventide MicroPitch Delay

By utilising subtle pitch shifts to create a rich stereo spread, Eventide's MicroPitch Del ble. This pedal is the key ingredient to help serve up some full-fat flavorful tones. **Sam** in this exclusive review.

EVENTIDE has been pushing the boat out recently with the release of some of their most ground-breaking effects in pedal format. The Blackhole Reverb pedal arrived in late 2020, allowing guitarists to access some truly gravity-defying Reverb sounds. Eventide has followed up with a few more of their mind-bending effects with the MircoPitch Delay and UltraTap Delay release.

In this review, I had the pleasure of checking out the Mirco Pitch. This pedal is basically a Stereo Delay with some unique and fantastic features. The Miro Pitch allows you 'tune' each delay. Delay A anywhere from 0 to +50 cents. Delay B anywhere from 0 to -50 cents. This effect can be used to create awesome stereo 'still chorus' effects. Great for creating faux double-track sounds all the way up to mind-bending modulation sounds when mixed with the mod and rate controls on the unit. In many ways, this pedal is more than just a delay pedal, as we can already see.

If we are to use it for more typical delay sounds, we can get detailed with the different lengths, feedback rates, EQ of each delay. One of the presets is a great example of mixing a fast feedback delay which creates a faux reverb sound and a regular 8th note delay. Great for creating ambient textures in a track or for adding size to single-note lines. The delays are easily controlled via the TAP function switch (which also doubles as a preset, select switch). For further controllability, we can connect an expression control to the pedal, which can be assigned via the Eventide Device Manager Editor software to different parameters of the pedal.

I personally really loved the faux stereo effect you can get from this pedal. Eddie Van Halen has been known for "stereoising" his mono guitar sound using similar effects. To have this in one unit is awesome. I also find being able to mix two delay types very useful for ambient work. »

ay makes anything you cook up sonically delecta-
Bell savours the MicroPitch Delay's secret sauce

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Eventide MicroPitch Delay

MSRP: (UK) £279 / (US) $279

The Breakdown

Straightforward	Feature-rich
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-end
Studio	Stage

For fans of

- Lush fat tones
- Rich detuned delays
- H910 and H949 Harmonizers

For more information, please visit:
eventideaudio.com

The pedal itself has a very small footprint. It does require a bit of time to get used to how controls interact with each other. But once you get the gist, it's easy to navigate, and there are tons of sounds to be found. You can store presets on it; you can switch between five of them on the pedal itself. It also has full MIDI capability if you want to grab some more preset places. And not to forget, you can also plug this pedal into your computer and use the Eventide Device Manager Editor software to further get into the mechanics of the pedal and the sounds.

This is definitely a high-end pedal, a fairly specialised yet versatile, high-quality unit. If you're looking to get the most of your stereo rig, then definitely check out the Micro Pitch. You get a lot of bang for your buck. To get even more out of this unit, a stereo rig or some way of sending out each signal to a separate amp or monitor (depending on how you want to use this) would be ideal. You can switch the outputs to line level if you wish to use this in a studio set up; this also means we can use this effect with other instruments. Great news for those multi-instrumentalists among us!

END «

Eventide *MicroPitch Delay*

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DEPT.10

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CAB RIG SIMULATOR TECHNOLOGY

PRO CONNECTIVITY AND INTEGRATION

STANDARD 9V POWER

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Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS

The new Giulietta VGA-3PS from Vox is an evolution of the classic, full-hollow archtop guitar. A single-cutaway archtop acoustic/electric guitar designed with the contemporary player in mind–its unique design features classic archtop styling, yet offers modern playability and cutting-edge sound quality thanks to Vox's new Super Capacitor Preamp System. **Sam Bell** reviews.

VOX has historically been known for their incredible amps—but let me tell you, they are no slouch in the guitars department either. In this review, I'll be taking a look at the Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS. This is a single-cutaway archtop acoustic/electric guitar, mixing between a classic Jazz Archtop design and modern features and playability. On unboxing this guitar, I was immediately inspired by the beautiful classic design and the warm stringy tones of the Vox Giulietta.

Let's take a look at the core features that make this guitar what it is!

The body features a Laminated Spruce arched top and laminated Mahogany back and sides. The neck is set Mahogany with a tilted headstock. For the review, I had the pleasure of playing the Transparent Black model. The guitar is also available in Transparent Red and Natural. The fingerboard is made from a baked Jatoba, which has been stabilised through a special drying process. This helps with the stability of the wood for tuning and intonation. Fret wise, we have 22 medium-jumbo size frets 24 ¾ in scale length neck; the radius is a nice balance between classic and modern feeling at 310mm. Licks and phrases felt very natural on this instrument; the percussive nature of the archtop design inspires a certain type of playing that lets you be free with articulations and dynamics.

> Tonally, it's clear that these **guitars are designed to be** clean, loud and articulate..."

The Giulietta VGA3PS comes equipped with a Piezo Pickup on the bridge saddle; this is controlled by a supercapacitor preamp with USB charging feature (no batteries here!) where you can get 10 hours of use with 15 minutes of charging! The preamp section gives us some hidden controls under the pickguard for Master Volume, Master Tone, Active/Passive Switch (turn on and off the preamp) and a low cut trim pot which can be adjusted with a small flat blade screwdriver. »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS

MSRP: (UK) £649 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Bright — Dark

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Superb playability
- Classic archtop styling
- Value for money

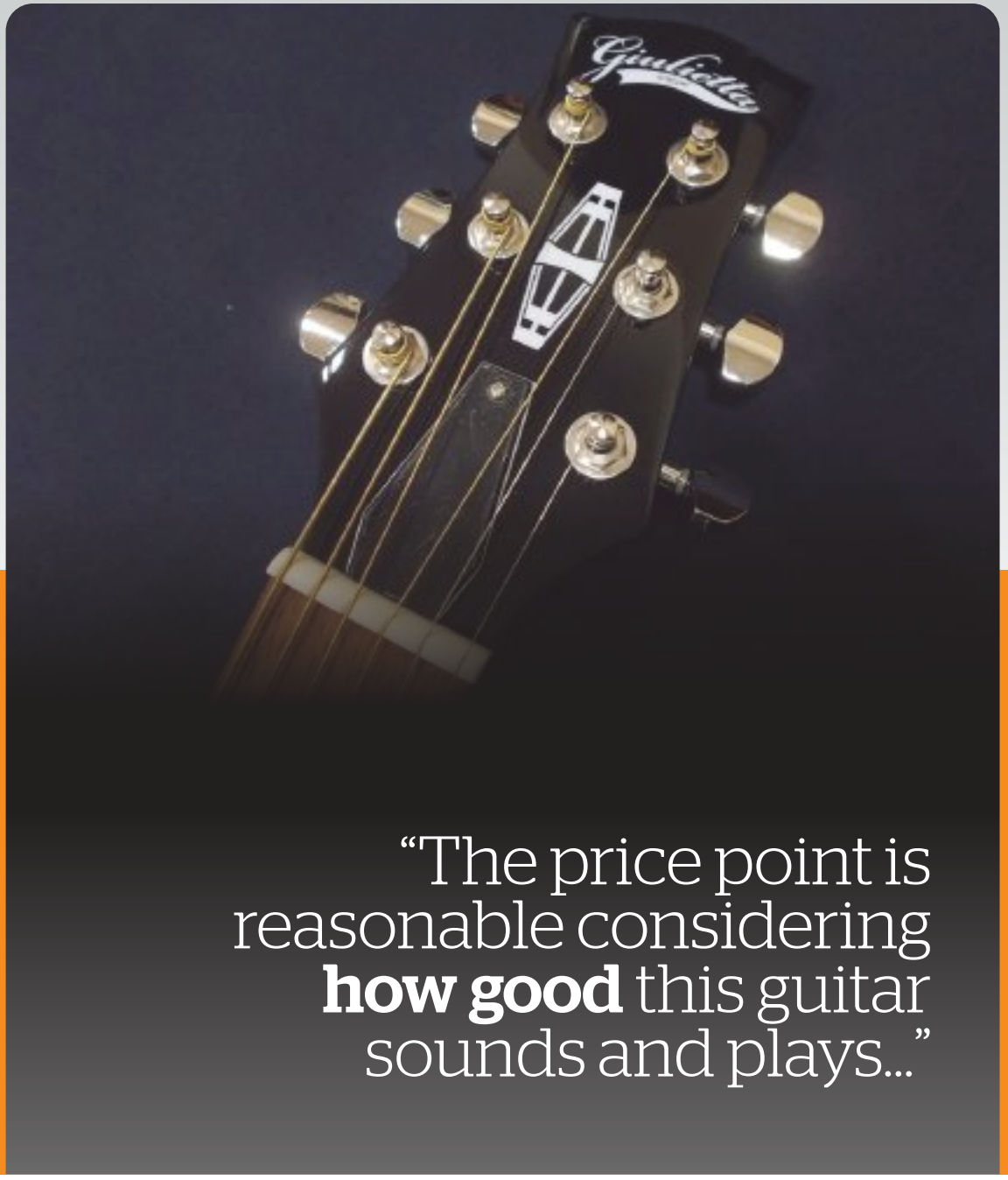
For more information, please visit:
voxamps.com

Inactive mode, the tone control is very responsive to your playing style.

Rolling the tone down for more single note/flat pick playing and bringing it up for more jangly acoustic sounds. The guitar comes with acoustic strings (wound G string etc.) however could easily sound great with round wound strings as well for an even smoother tone. The tonal quality brings to mind classic Jazz/Gypsy Jazz recordings.

The price point is reasonable considering how good this guitar sounds and plays. It looks the part as well. If you're looking for an archtop/hollow body in a compact de-

Vox Giulietta VGA 3PS



"The price point is reasonable considering **how good** this guitar sounds and plays..."

sign, this is well worth checking out. Vox has delivered yet again with a great guitar, great design and sound. Players looking for something a bit classy and classic sounding should definitely check the Giulietta VGA3PS out!

END«

Cordoba Friederich Luthier S

Billed as the marriage of peak instrument design and fine craftsmanship, hand-crafted by a team of elite luthiers in small batches–the Luthier Select series guitars bring new life to the designs that shaped the modern nylon string guitar. **Sam Bell** reviews the Cordoba Friederich Luthier Select.

IN this issue, I've been given the pleasure of checking the Cordoba Luthier Select Series, Friederich Model Traditional Classical Guitar.

Cordoba has been making guitars for over 15 years, specialising in nylon string instruments. Their focus has always been on building traditional instruments of high quality with a modern touch.

The Luthier Select series is Cordoba's homage to some of the Legendary Luthiers from around the world. The model I'm playing in this review is the Friederich model, aptly named after Daniel Friederich, who is one of the most respected and influential luthiers in the world. Based in France, his work has been heavily influenced by another legendary French Luthier Robert Bouchet.

Daniel made a name for himself as a Luthier by crafting beautifully designed instruments with intricate headstock carving and soundhole rosettes. The Luthier Select 'Friederich' features these two signatures calling signs from Danial's work. The sound of Friederich's instruments have been quoted as having a 'silky response' to playing dynamics, and it has been noted the sound carries in even large halls and arenas. The combination of craftsmanship and artistry has inspired many players to gravitate towards his instruments.

It's worth mentioning that this is a specialist instrument designed for the Classical Guitar connoisseur. There are no pre-amps or extra gizmo's; this is a purely traditional classical guitar; the focus is on the quality, playability, design and sound of the guitar. »

The neck itself is also Rosewood, and it **feels solid and balanced** with the body of the guitar. .."

elect

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Cordoba Friederich Luthier Select

MSRP: £3144 / (US) $3099

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Silky, responsive tones.
- Powerful bass.
- Distinctive carved headstock.

For more information, please visit:
cordobaguitars.com

This guitar looks stunning; the fine wood grain looks beautiful, the detailed rosette around the soundhole, the signature carved headstock, the fretwork and binding. It may look like a regular classical guitar at a far distance, but in the flesh, it really pops. The body features a solid Canadian Cedar Top, which is supported by another Friederich signature feature, the bracing pattern below the top, built with had carved spruce branches. The Cedar Top is supported with Rosewood back and sides, giving the guitar a beautiful light, crisp and resonant sound.

The neck is super smooth, with no scratchy resistance or blemishes, really satisfying to

***Cordoba** Friederich Luthier Select*

fret from the nut to the bridge. The neck itself is also Rosewood, and it feels solid and balanced with the body of the guitar.

The legendary 'Silky' Response, as quoted on Cordoba's website, is no myth; the notes bloom from the guitar neck and resonate through the body in a very pleasing way. It's at this stage I must admit that I'm not a seasoned fingerstyle player, so my soft fingertips and short fingernails aren't going to give the 'full' sonic picture of what this instrument would sound like in the right hands; however, in the video portion of this review, I have played fingerstyle and "pick style" to show various aspects of the tonal range. I hope this at least gives a broad outline of the capabilities of the guitar.

If you're a Classical Guitar fanatic, specialist or an artist looking to find an instrument to inspire and you have the budget, the Cordoba Luthier Select' Friederich' is well worth checking out. It might be on the expensive side, but if you're serious about traditional instruments, this is definitely a builder and instrument to consider. **END«**

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TOM QUAYLE'S CHOICE:

BEST OF 2021

m Quayle presents his choices for Guitar Interactive Magazine's Best of 2021.

021 has undoubtedly been a year to forget, but that hasn't prevented some truly stunning products come through our doors here at Guitar Interactive. The guys upstairs have asked come up with my top three reviews from the last 12 months—so here they are.

Laney/Black Country Customs Spiral Array Chorus

Country Customs has the pedal business for ears now as the custom/ ue wing of Laney Ampli- . These great-sounding, -rich and affordable ped- all made here in the UK ort the same form factor sic control layout for a design approach that has ently impressed us here at

test addition to the BCC ange is the Spiral Array - the company's take on the classic chorus sounds of the '70s and '80s in a compact pedal format. As with the Secret Path Reverb, Monolith Distortion and Steel Park Boost pedals, there are three distinct modes on offer here through the central 3-position toggle switch. The upper position provides an analogue, Boss CE-1 style chorus, while the middle and lower positions offer Roland Dimension D and Dytronics Tri Stereo Chorus style tones. These are, of course, ballpark starting points for the chorus sounds in the Spiral Array, but you can get a whole swathe of other sounds using the Depth, Rate, Mix and Tone controls in each mode.

Kustom KG-100FX 212

There'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 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.

Vintage 25th Anniversary V75SVB

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

TOM QUAYLE'S CHOICE:

T OF 2021

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.

Laney/Black Country Customs Spir

The Spiral Array is a chorus pedal with a difference–it's actually three distinctly differ ated from the classic chorus era of the mid-70s to the mid-80s. Featuring chorus sound digital chorus of the 1979 Roland Dimension D, and the renowned uber-rich-sounding try Customs Spiral Array could be all the chorus you'll ever need at your feet. **Tom Qu**

BLACK Country Customs has been in the pedal business for a few years now as the custom/boutique wing of Laney Amplification. These great-sounding, feature-rich and affordable pedals are all made here in the UK and sport the same form factor and basic control layout for a unified design approach that has consistently impressed us here at Gi.

The latest addition to the BCC pedal range is the Spiral Array - the company's take on the classic chorus sounds of the '70s and '80s in a compact pedal format. As with the Secret Path Reverb, Monolith Distortion and Steel Park Boost pedals, there are three distinct modes on offer here through the central 3-position toggle switch. The upper position provides an analogue, Boss CE-1 style chorus, while the middle and lower positions offer Roland Dimension D and Dytronics Tri Stereo Chorus style tones. These are, of course, ballpark starting points for the chorus sounds in the Spiral Array, but you can get a whole swathe of other sounds using the Depth, Rate, Mix and Tone controls in each mode.

As with the rest of the BCC range, the Spiral Array is a fully buffered design to prevent high-end signal loss but is very transparent in use and can act as a high-quality buffer in an otherwise all true bypass pedal chain to preserve your tone for long cable runs. True stereo operation is provided for wide, lush chorusing thanks to independent left and right outputs. An expression pedal input allows you to control the chorus mix level from an external controller. A tri-colour LED allows you to easily see which mode you're using in dark environments, and all the controls are easy to read and dial in.

Quality components are used throughout, as evidenced by the silent switching and noiseless controls, excellent build quality and good looks. Even the packaging is of a quality that feels well thought out and premium, especially at the generous asking price.

Tonally, the Spiral Array is every bit as good as its build quality and looks, with the three modes offering up a great selection of classic chorus tones from analogue lushness to super thick 80's Landau-Esque studio tones. »

ral Array Chorus

ent chorus pedals in one box, painstakingly recre-
ds based on a thick, lush 1976 Boss CE1, the spatial
1985 Dytronics Tri Stereo Chorus; the Black Coun-
ayle tells us more.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Laney/Black Country Customs Spiral Array Chorus

MSRP: (UK) £159 / (US) $199

The Breakdown

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

Straightforward — Feature-rich

Traditional — Innovative

For fans of

- Classic 70/80s chorus tones
- Value for money
- Not needing to read the manual!

For more information, please visit:
https://www.laney.co.uk/effects/guitar-effects/bcc-pedals

The controls interact in very cool and interesting ways, so experimentation can yield some nice and unexpected results, but it's really easy to dial in some classic sounds, and each mode is distinct enough to warrant its inclusion in the package.

If you have the luxury to run this pedal in stereo, it's highly recommended as you can achieve some wonderful width and depth to your tones, especially in the Tri-Chorus mode, but the Spiral Array is very comfortable running in Mono using the left output only and still sounds thick and warm. Pseudo rotary speaker effects are easily achieved, too, and you can even get doubling and mild flanging effects with the mix at lower levels if required.

The Spiral Array is a worthy addition to the Black Country Customs pedal range and represents the same great value for money that the rest of the range offers. These are extremly well built and designed pedals that provide a ton of tone for not a great deal of financial outlay—highly recommended if you're after a versatile but easy to use chorus pedal.

END «

***Laney/Black Country Customs** Spiral Array Chorus*

440 DISTRIBUTION

440distribution.com

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. »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Kustom KG100FX212

MSRP: (UK) £279 / (US) $429

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High End

Studio — Stadium

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«

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..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Vintage 25th Anniversary V75SVB

MSRP: (UK) £419 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

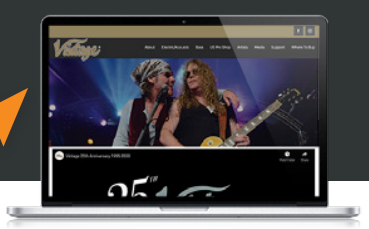
Warm — Bright

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. »

Vintage 25th Anniversary V75SVB

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 reviewers 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«

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Studio to Stage

PLAY IT - RECORD IT - PERFORM IT

BEST OF 2021

Vox-VH-Q1-Headphones

Nick Jennison reviews Vox's VH-Q1 Smart Noise Cancelling Headphones listening to music or using them for chatting over a Bluetooth device, thes developed with the guitar player in mind giving you an adjustable, power 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 "modelling" 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 headphones 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

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Vox-VH-Q1-Headphones

MSRP: (UK) £349 / (US) $400

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Specialised — Versatile

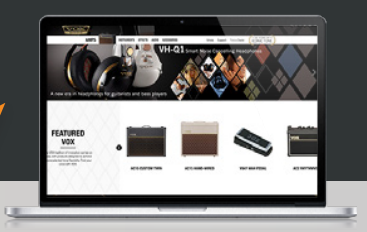
Affordable — High-end

Studio — Stage

For fans of

- High-end noise-cancelling headphones
- Acoustic guitar
- Peace & quiet

For more information, please visit:
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 «

Vox VH-Q1-Headphones

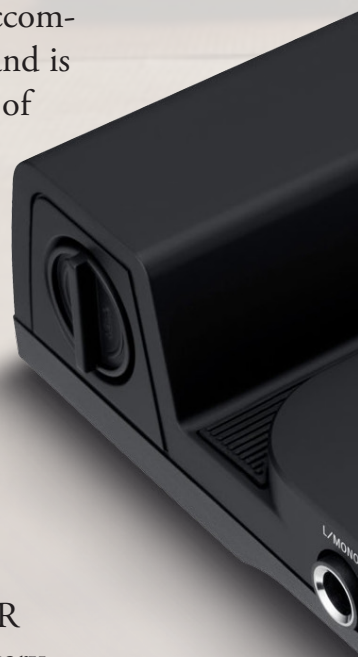
Roland MIXER PRO-X

The latest addition to Roland's GO:MIXER series is here in the GO:MIXER P
This compact 9-channel audio line mixer is perfect for the musician or co
to please even a small ensemble. The GO:MIXER PRO-X pre-mixes multipl
tracks, microphone, and more) down to a stereo track that's instantly expo
service. Here's **Rodney McG** with the full review.

THE Roland GO:MIXER Pro-X is a compact one-stop unit for live streaming, mobile recording, practicing, and collaborative video and audio recording. The unit is based on using a smartphone as a single source for all video and audio recording, with the unit being the single interface. The GO:MIXER Pro-X offers multiple ins and outs, including mono and stereo options, as well as a phantom power option for using condenser mics for high-quality recordings on the go.

You can track multiple instruments at once or perform them in layers. Record each one at a time,e and then using Roland's app available on Android and iPhone to compile them into a multi-window simultaneous performance. You can also use this option if you have other artists in your collaboration that can send you their recordings to be compiled with your completed work. This can be accomplished inside the app quickly and is able to be streamed in a matter of minutes. You can combine and a number of different layouts and window options to get the best version of your multi-layered performance.

Simple, compact, and light, it would easily fit in a small personal bag, or the front pocket of a gig bag. For power, the GO:MIXER Pro-X can be powered by a battery loaded in at the top left-hand of the unit, or the entire unit as well as the phantom power can be powered from your smartphone. »



PRO-X – now with even more great features!
ntent creator on the go, with enough inputs
le sources of audio (guitar, keyboard, backing
ortable to your favourite streaming media

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Roland MIXER PRO-X

MSRP: (UK) £129 / (US) $149

The Breakdown

Vintage	Modern
Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-End
Studio	Stadium

For fans of

Versatile, lightweight an compact design.

Grab-and-go convenience

For more information, please visit:
roland.com

The GO:MIXER Pro-X opens up a number of different on-the-go options aside from just streaming. Being able to demo songs with multiple instruments while on the road, keeping all your recordings inside your phone to be later dumped into your home studio for final processing and editing. You can also record and overdub instruments you're performing on while live-streaming simultaneously. Another option is to do small performances by playing into the unit while also having pre-recorded music to accompany yourself coming from an outside source into the inputs, or even played through your phone while simultaneously recording to it.

"**You can also** record and overdub instruments you're performing on while live-streaming simultaneously..."

The GO:MIXER Pro-X has enough inputs to even record even a full ensemble at once with vocal mics, stereo in for other sources or keyboards, multiple guitars or bass, and a number of other possible simultaneous configurations.

Versatile, lightweight, compact, and feature-loaded, the go mixer Pro-X is a hard to beat package, especially at its low price point.

END«

***Roland** MIXER PRO-X*

On-Stage Influencer Starte

We frequently receive questions from Gi readers about how to get started we'd set Nick Jennison the task of showcasing some of the more affordabl will give you just about all you need to get your videos looking their best v

WHILE we're lucky at Guitar Interactive to have a fancy studio, expensive lights and cameras and a dedicated team of professionals that handle the filming and editing (and who helpfully remind me that 6 minutes of finger-ending shred might not be the best way to demonstrate a new piece of gear), you absolutely do not need all of that stuff to make great looking and sounding videos.

Here's what you DO need:

- A camera
- A source of light (you can't film what you can't see!)
- Something to capture the audio
- Something to stand in front of

Let's start with the one you should worry about least, but the one everyone fixates on the most: the camera. Even as recently as 4-5 years ago, you needed an expensive camera to even come close to capturing pro-quality video. Now, just about any modern smartphone can do it. Even with the superb cameras at our disposal, we still occasionally use an iPhone for certain shots at GI. If you have a phone, you have as much camera as you need right now.

So what about the rest, then? Well, On-Stage have some great tools to get you started. Let's start with the VLD360 Ring Light. Ring lights are great because they produce an even, diffuse light that looks flattering on the subject - there's a reason so many "beauty" YouTubers use them! This one is a fine choice because it offers three different "temperatures" of light from warm to cool, as well as adjustable brightness. Crucially, it doesn't flicker, »

r Kit

making videos. With that in mind, we thought
e options from leading brand On-Stage that
without breaking the bank

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

On-Stage Influencer Starter Kit

MSRP: Varies, head to more info below

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Specialised — Versatile

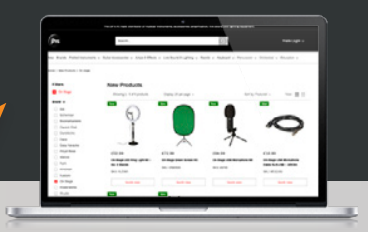
Affordable — High-End

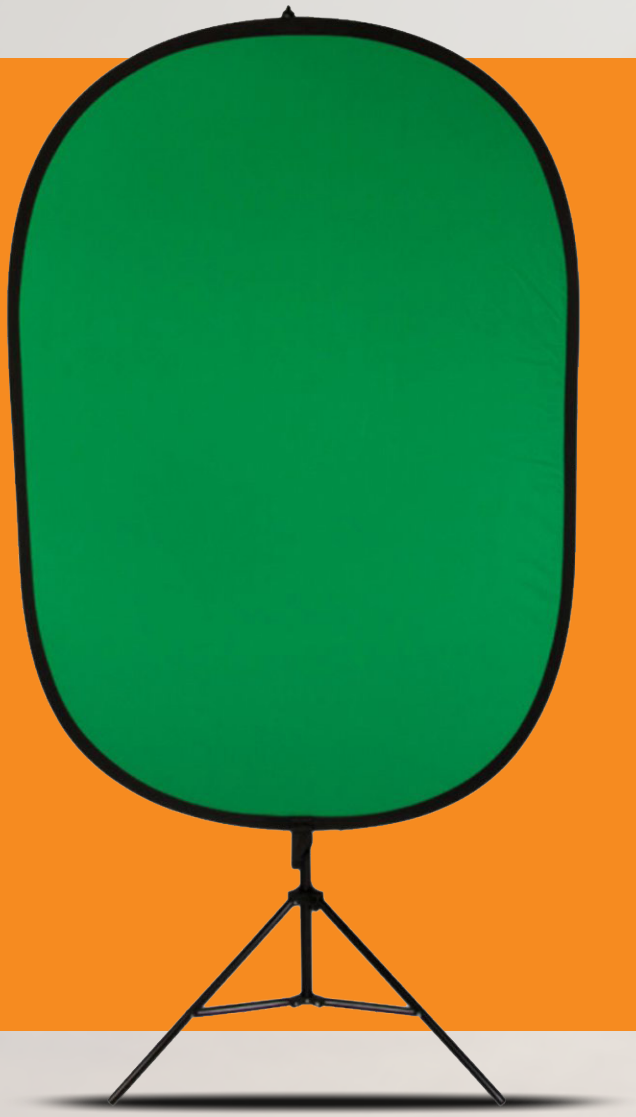
Studio — Stage

For fans of

- Making video content
- Simplicity
- Reliability

For more information, please visit:
https://www.jhs.co.uk/collections/new/brand_on-stage





meaning you won't need to worry about matching your shutter speed to the light source - you can just point and shoot. It also comes with two adjustable stands for desktop or floor mounting, as well as a phone mount to save you from having to buy a separate phone stand.

For audio, there are a few choices here. Ideally, you'd have an audio interface and some dedicated mics, but if that's a little out of your budget/skill level, you can always use a USB mic like the AS700. This large-diaphragm condenser plugs directly into a USB port and is absolutely perfect for capturing dialogue, with a robust low end for that "voice of the heavens" vibe you hear in professional productions. It also works well for singing, acoustic guitar and even micing up electric guitar amps,

"So what are you waiting for? I wanna see your videos - **get cracking**..!

but for electric, you could always opt for a USB cable like the IC-10U. Plug this into your guitar and your computer, load up one of the countless excellent free amp sims out there, and you're good to go!

That just leaves "something to stand in front of". If you have access to a cool-looking space, or even just somewhere you can hang a backdrop, you're good to go. But if everywhere you have access to looks sub-par on camera, you might try a green screen. The VSM3000 Green Screen Kit »

***On-Stage** Influencer Starter Kit*

is a portable pop-up screen that's easily big enough for most applications without being so big that it becomes cumbersome. It folds into a handy carry bag for easy storage and clips onto the included stand in seconds. If you're tight on space, this is a great option. If you'd prefer, you can always use the blue screen on the reverse of the green screen, but it's usually a bit trickier to key out. That said, the blue actually looks quite cool as a backdrop on its own!

So there you go! All the tools you could need to start producing your own content, and all in one place. Sure, if you shop around, you

might be able to find similar items for slightly less money, but take it from someone with experience buying this stuff on the cheap: the quality of "no-name" gear is… mixed (and that's putting it politely!). When you buy from a brand like On-Stage, you know what you're getting, and nothing here is going to break the bank. So what are you waiting for? I wanna see your videos - get cracking!

END «

On-Stage®

Kam Power Party Bar WFS

The Kam Power Partybar WFS is a powerful all in one DMX lighting syster wireless footswitch to make this unit even more versatile and give total st some light on this hot new product for the stage.

AFTER a long, long wait, gigs are finally back on! In the excited fervor of getting ready to play to people again, it's easy to overlook one crucial aspect of a successful live show - lighting. While some of us are lucky enough to play on festival stages or in purpose-built music venues, illuminated by dedicated lighting engineers, I'd wager that the majority of gigging musicians out there are in self-contained bands playing at bars, weddings, parties and similar events. Talking to these musicians, the same things come up time and time again - I want lights that will do the job, look good, are lightweight and easy to set up, don't cost a fortune and don't need a complex controller to operate.

Enter the KAM Power Partybar WFS. Now, if you're an experienced lighting engineer running hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of moving heads, follow spots and audience blinders, you may scoff, but for the self-contained performer this compact, powerful and easy to use package is absolutely ideal.

First up, control. You want to be able to control your lighting to control the mood of your show - moody blue lights for the quiet bits, strobes for the loud bits, blackouts at the end of songs and solid white for talking to the audience, setting up and tearing down. Sure, you could learn DMX and put together a show-stopping lighting rig (the Power Partybar WFS actually offers crazy levels of control if you hook it up this way), but if you're reading this, you're probably a »

Lights

n with a compact portable design and a
age freedom. Here's **Nick Jennison** to shed

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Kam Power Party Bar WFS Lights

MSRP: (UK) £229 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Straightforward — Feature-rich

Specialised — Versatile

Studio — Stage

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

More engaging live shows.

Being visible.

Not having to figure out DMX.

For more information, please visit: **https://www.jhs.co.uk/products/kam-power-party-bar-wfs-lights-inc-lights-stand-footswitch-bag**

guitar player and not a lighting engineer. That also means that you don't have your hands free to operate a DMX controller during the show. Fortunately, the Power Partybar WFS comes with a wireless footswitch that's easy to set up and very rugged indeed - I have a friend who breaks literally EVERYTHING (I've seen him stomp Boss pedals to death), and his KAM footswitch is still going strong after years of heavy-footed abuse.

Secondly, setup and teardown time. If you've ever played a wedding or a party, you'll be familiar with the mad rush to set up between dinner and reception. You might get an hour to set up and soundcheck if you're lucky - sometimes it's more like 30-40mins. This is not the time to be messing about hanging lighting trusses. The Power Partybar WFS is ready to go in seconds, and if you have two or more of them, the same wireless controller will work on every unit, so you don't

"It's powerful, easy to control, compact and **very affordable**..."

even need to run cables to link them up. They're also lightweight enough for one person to set them up, and small enough that you won't need to hire a van just to transport your lights.

Lastly, the light itself. The Power Partybar WFS has 4 bright, easily adjustable LED heads that rotate fully, so you can throw light exactly where you need it. If your drummer is the most handsome member of the band and needs lighting up (like mine), that's easy. Bass player hate having light glaring in his eyes? No problem - you can easily angle one head down towards the floor without affecting the others. Have you agreed to do a "DJ set" at the end of the night while you pack down? No problem - rotate all the heads 180 degrees and light up the dance floor while you tear down in peace.

Kam Power Party Bar WFS Lights

For the self-contained band where space and setup time is at a premium, the KAM Power Partybar WFS is a no-brainer. It's powerful, easy to control, compact and very affordable. If you've been ignoring the lighting at your gigs, there's no excuse anymore.

END «

TO DAW

TASCAM's newest line of USB audio interfaces – the **US-HR Series** – offers three models for every type of home studio environment. Whether you need one or four inputs, the US-1x2HR, US2x2HR, and US-4x4HR provide a variety of great-sounding versatile I/O options for producers, engineers, podcasters, live streamers, and musicians of all skill levels.

When creativity strikes, you don't want frivolous technology to get in the way. But you also want a powerful easy-to-use multi-track than can do the job. That is the concept of a TASCAM **Portastudio**.
Choose from the powerhouse DP-32SD or DP-24SD, to the compact but tactile DP-03SD eight track, to the portable DP-08EX or DP-006.

OR, NOT TO DAW

DP-32SD

DP-24SD

DP-03SD

DP-08EX

DP-006

Plug, Play, Create.

TASCAM 50th ANNIVERSARY 1974 2024

TASCAM
TASCAM.com

THE Quietroom

WHEN ONLY ACOUSTIC WILL DO

BEST OF 2021

Cort L200F Aged to Vintage

Vintage instruments are often considered the holy grail of acoustic guitar tone. The wood on the top cures and opens up more over time, and this unleashes a tonal quality that's often missing in new instruments–until now. Using a special process called ATV (Aged To Vintage), Cort uses unique torrefaction techniques designed to give you "that" fantastic tone right out of the box. So, just how good is it? **Tom Quayle** tells us more as he reviews Cort's L200F Aged to Vintage Acoustic.

CORT'S L200F is the company's take on the classic OM body shape at an affordable price point. This is classic 1920's small-bodied acoustic territory with a surprising array of features for the money and a look that would suggest a far higher asking price. Cort is well known for its value proposition, but the L200F might have taken that even further for those wanting vintage good looks and tone at an affordable price.

The L200F's OM body shape is constructed using a solid Sitka spruce top and beautiful rosewood back and sides with white binding and a classic tortoiseshell effect pickguard. The neck is mahogany with a period-correct ebony fretboard, small dot inlays and stunning gold finish, open-gear Grover tuners and machine heads. Cort have used their ATV (Aged to Vintage) torrefication/wood baking system to artificially age the Sitka spruce top, providing a vintage tone straight from the factory and an aged colour to the wood that looks wonderful and sounds even better. This is a tried and tested approach to ageing tops used by quite a few manufactures now, and the L200F certainly has all the hallmark characteristics of an older guitar visually and tonally.

Cort has produced a beautiful guitar here enhanced by the choice of a semi-gloss finish that is smooth and wonderful to play whilst offering excellent protection of the lovely wood choices. It plays a well as it looks, too, thanks in part to the slightly wider 45mm nut, offering string spacing that will suit fingerstyle players well without alienating anyone else. The OM body shape is supremely comfortable without compromising tone, and the neck is slim enough to suit even smaller hand sizes with ease.

Tonally, the L200F is a match for those good looks thanks to the aged solid top, excellent construction and use of the ebony bridge and bridge pins. Sustain and resonance are as

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Cort L200F Aged to Vintage

MSRP: (UK) £449 / (US) $8TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Classic 1920's OM guitars
- Fantastic value for money
- Fingerstyle blues

For more information, please visit:
cortguitars.com

***Cort** L200F Aged to Vintage*

good as anything costing two or three times the price, and the dynamic range provides a highly rewarding playing experience, especially for styles requiring dynamic subtlety.

Cort has also paired the L200F with the excellent Fishman Sonitone pickup system, installed in the soundhole to prevent any wood from being removed from the guitar. The Sonitone has become the go-to pickup system at this price point for good reason and serves the L200F very well with a realistic acoustic tone and response plugged in that compliments the stellar acoustic tone very well. The simple tone and volume controls will appeal to purists or those not wanting to read an instruction manual, but for more sophisticated EQ and anti-feedback controls, you'll need to factor in an external preamp.

Cort has really knocked it out of the park with the L200F acoustic. It's a fantastic value instrument that competes well with much more expensive guitars and never reveals its budget-conscious roots. If you want a high-quality OM style guitar but can't afford one from the high-end builders in the guitar business, you can get a LOT of guitar for your money here with the L200F that won't make you regret not spending the extra cash. Well worth a look and another winner in the Cort acoustic range.

END «

Guild Marley A-20

The Guild Limited Edition Bob Marley Signature A20 Dreadnought is a wonderful tribute to a man who left an incredible impression on music and the world. Modelled after Bob Marley's at home songwriting guitar, Guild has crafted an instrument that's full of heart and soul, a true must-have for any fan Bob Marley fan. **Nick Jennison** tells us more.

THERE'S no question that Bob Marley was one of the greatest and most beloved songwriters of all time. His impact, both musically and culturally, was profound and resonates with music lovers around the world to this day. So what better way to honour his legacy than by recreating his favourite acoustic guitar.

Based on Marley's at-home songwriting guitar, the new Guild A-20 is a great sounding dreadnought at a very appealing price. The recipe is one that's stood the test of time - spruce top; mahogany neck, back and sides; 25.5" scale length; 14th fret neck join. It's a classic combination, and the A-20 is a fine example of this style of guitar.

Straight out of the box, the A-20 feels classy in a way that far exceeds its modest price. The satin finish feels great under the hand and adds a rich lustre to the mahogany back and sides. The open-gear tuners look fantastic, and the understated binding and rosette look beautiful without being gaudy. Despite this being a tribute guitar, it doesn't exhibit too much "signature-itis", with just a small Marley signature on the pickguard, an "M" logo on the truss rod cover and a golden lion logo inside the soundhole.

Sonically, the A-20 is very big and bold, with great forward projection and a nice balance across the frequency range. It comes set up with what I'd describe as a "strummer's action", with plenty of »

The Marley A-20 **is a fine tribute** to one of the great songwriters of our time..."

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Guild A-20 Bob Marley Signature

MSRP: (UK) £359 / (US) $399

The Breakdown

Traditional — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

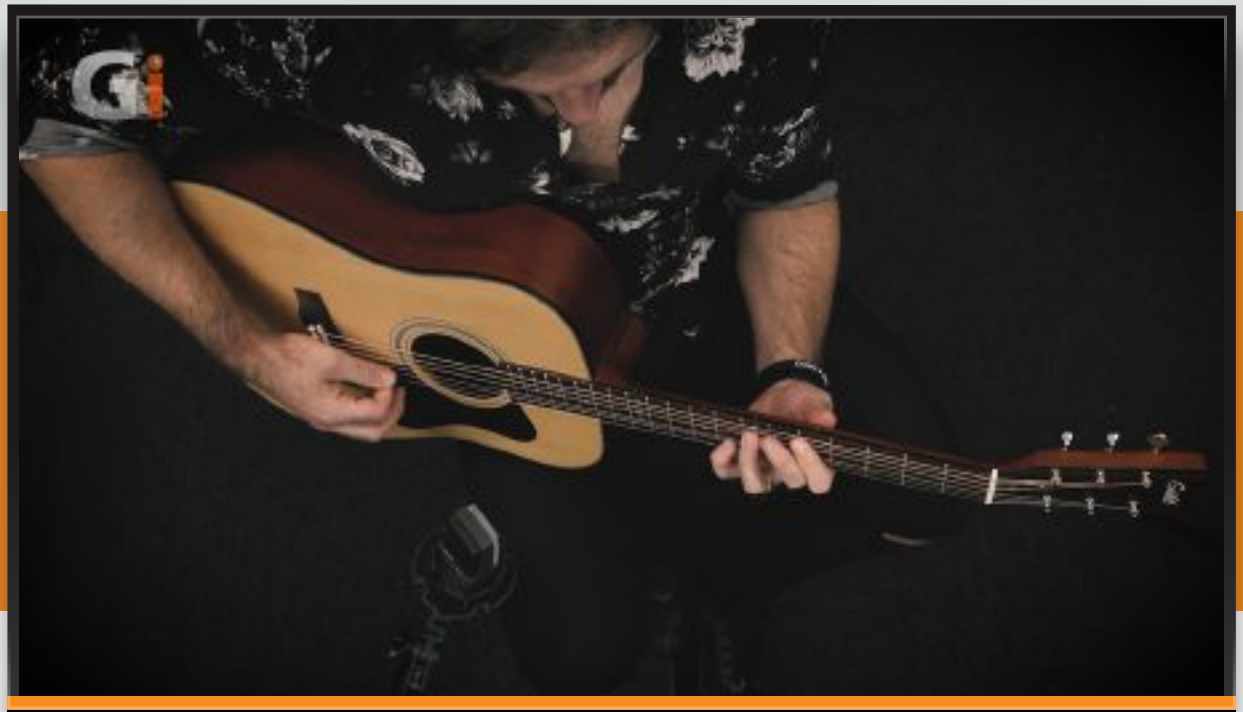
Bold sounding dreadnoughts.

Environmentally conscious building practices.

The great man himself.

For more information, please visit:
cortguitars.com

clearance for aggressive chordal playing. That's not to say that more intricate playing styles don't sound great on this guitar, but your left hand might have to work a little harder to make complex fingerstyle and flat-picking passages work. That's the price you pay for a big, bold, strumming voice, though, and that's really where this guitar excels.



***Guild** Marley A-20*

In keeping with Marley's environmentalist values, the A-20 makes use of sustainable building practices - both the guitar (with Guild pledging to plant a tree for every Marley A-20 they make) and the gig bag, which is made of recycled nylon. It comes with a bunch of cool accessories that commemorate Marley's life and works, and it retails at a price that puts it within reach of most players - empowering aspiring musicians to get their songs out into the world without a huge financial barrier to entry.

The Marley A-20 is a fine tribute to one of the great songwriters of our time, and it's also a great sounding guitar for not a whole lot of money. Whether you're a Marley enthusiast, or just a guitar player looking for a killer affordable dreadnought, this guitar is definitely one to check out.

END«

Martin DC-X2E Rosewood

Another eye-catching and resonant model within Martin's X series line focused on maximising performance and tone for every player's budget. **Billy Campbell** takes a closer look at the features of the Martin DC-X2E Rosewood in the Gi review.

THE Martin DC-X2E is the Dreadnought sized model within the X series. The classic and comfortable cutaway body design with X-bracing as standard has a Sitka spruce top, with figured Rosewood patterned, high-pressure laminate back and sides. The whole guitar has been done in a Hand-Rubbed finish that not only looks and feels fantastic but makes this a very rugged and stable build. A real standout in the X series line. The level of durability, playability and consistency, all at a very accessible price point. That combination of features addresses many of the concerns of travelling with a guitar that may be more delicate, or sensitive to environmental changes, or have a huge custom shop price tag without losing the quality or tone!

Thanks to the cutaway, even with the neck joining the body at fret 14, the extra access lets you easily get right up to fret 20. A welcomed feature that appears on many of Martin's models is the Performing Artist neck profile, which is a very comfortable, slender neck shape, that feels good in a variety of hand positions, whether in the lower or higher register.

Thanks to the cutaway, even with the neck joining the body at fret 14, **the extra access** lets you easily get right up to fret 20.

The DC-X2E Rosewood has a 25.4" Scale length, 1 3/4" nut width, and 20 vintage sized frets. The DC-X2E has a two-way adjustable truss rod and has been set up using a Plek machine, »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Martin DC-X2E Rosewood

MSRP: (UK) £739 / (US) $699

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

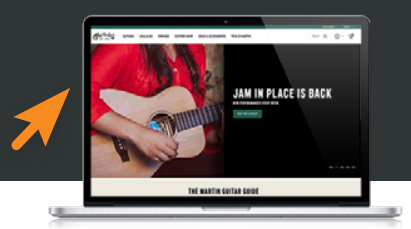
Affordable — High-end

Studio — Stadium

For fans of

- Martin quality at an affordable price
- Slimmer neck profiles
- Impressive looks

For more information, please visit:
martinguitar.com



which uses the most modern technology to provide measurements and real-world playing conditions for very precise and consistent fret dressing. The process scans and dresses the guitar under actual playing conditions, strung and tuned to pitch. The result is every guitar coming out of the factory being well intonated, with no dead or buzzing frets.

The DC-X2E houses Fishman's MX electronics with fine-tunable volume and tone knobs concealed on the inside of the soundhole.

Martin *DC-X2E Rosewood*

These are very clear and balanced pickups. Delivering a natural acoustic sound, and very useable adjustment ranges. Very convenient for adding variety to multi-tracked acoustic parts or tweaking your sound to the room or house PA.

The DC-X2E Rosewood Ships with Martin's Acoustic Lifespan 2.0 strings, featuring their anti-corrosion treatment, keeping the strings feeling smooth and maintaining the high-end chime of fresh strings for longer.

This guitar will also come with Martin's soft gig bag, with the added headstock, bridge, and endpin protection, a water-repellent exterior, and foam padding.

The DC-X2E retails for $699, so go check one out at your local Martin dealer.

END«

Orange Acoustic Pedal

Orange's Acoustic Pedal combines the best of their Acoustic Pre TC pre-amp and Crus
low-noise pedal. Designed as an all-in-one solution for live acoustic performance, the A
well as a balanced XLR out for plugging directly into a PA system – no DI box necessar

ORANGE is well known for its earth-shaking electric guitar amps, huge control knobs, vintage design, simplicity and power. But they also do a great job with acoustic instruments as well. Today I'm taking a look at the Orange Acoustic Pedal.

The Orange Acoustic Pedal is an Acoustic Pre-Amp that is designed to work well with other pedals, offering players high headroom and tonal flexibility. The pedal itself is based upon a mix between Oranges' Crush Acoustic 30' amp and their Pre-TC pre-amp in a compact unit.

Orange says that one of the advantages of the pedal is its tonal clarity, preserving the natural voice of your instrument. The Class-A pre-amp & JFET circuitry, which features a single-ended design, gives us a clean sound that delivers extremely low noise, even when the Treble knob is at its highest setting. It's also worth mentioning the pedal uses an 18V operation which gives us even more headroom and tonal clarity. And I'd have to agree; the pedal does have a nice crisp clarity to it; it really does the job well of translating your guitar's tone direct to the PA.

The EQ is detailed yet simple to operate, featuring Bass and Treble controls to shape the outsides of your tone. Then the Middle range control brings in the body of the sound, which can be further tweaked with the notch and Q-Factor controls. Perfect for emphasising the character of your beloved acoustic guitar & dialling out any troublesome feedback through a PA system when you turn up to the venue. Plus, we also have a phase cancelling switch to get rid of any issues with phasing that we might have depending on the playing situation.
All of this goes to a high-quality XLR out. »

The pedal also comes equipped with its own

h Acoustic 30 amplifier into a highly versatile, Acoustic Pedal sports a 1/4-inch mono output as y! **Sam Bell** reviews.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Orange Acoustic Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £499 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Straight forward — Feature-rich

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

Studio — Stage

For fans of

- Psychedelic design
- Highly versatile pedals
- Exceptional build quality

For more information, please visit:
orangeamps.com

FX Loop, so you can bring in your favourite reverbs/delays/modulations/extra effects into the pre-amp before sending it out to the XLR. This is very cool; it would have been nice to have a simple Reverb or something similar built in for flexibility; however, most modern PA systems have you covered on that side of things.

The unit itself features Oranges hallmark classic control knobs, funky psychedelic paisley design, and it's very easy to navigate and well built. And it's incredibly affordable. If you're looking to give your acoustic signal the integrity it deserves, and you're on a budget, this pedal is well worth checking out. It's straightforward, affordable, and perfect for the gigging acoustic guitarist.

END«

Orange *Acoustic Pedal*

Ovation
GUITARS

CELEBRITY TRADITIONAL PLUS

CS24P-FMYR-G

EXOTIC
Celebrity
Edition 2022
SELECTION

The Limited Edition
Flame Myrtlewood Top

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THE
Basement

THE PLACE
FOR BASS

BEST OF
2021

Tech 21 SansAmp Bass Driver DI V

Considered by many to be the industry standard bass overdrive and DI: Tech 21's SansAmp to drive power amps, recording desks, PA mixers, or simply enhance your current rig—the direct box. Capable of dialling up big vintage tube tones, bright modern slap sounds, gnarly **McG** tells us more about this versatile unit and compares it with a classic from the SansAm

TODAY we take a look at a comparison of one legacy and one more recent version of the flagship SansAmp bass units. Both built on the same classic tone engine—but with different available options. The legacy device is the rackmount SansAmp RBI unit. A studio and live fixture for decades. The newer variation is the SansAmp Bass Driver pedal version 2. The most recent version of the same SansAmp Bass Driver classic includes new options for EQ and tonal control.

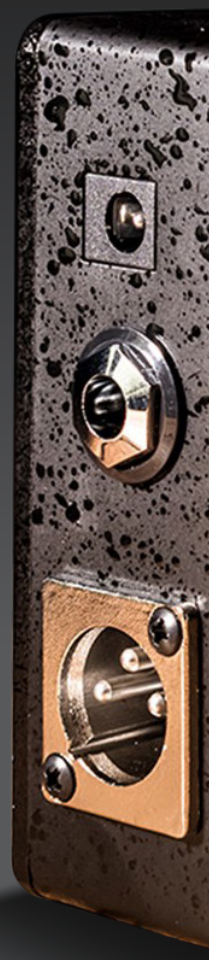
The differences between the units outside of the obvious form factor are that the RBI has much more extensive connection and interface options, while the Bass Driver version 2 has more extensive EQ controls.

They both share the same fundamental control set. Level, drive, mid, mid-frequency, blend, bass, treble.

The RBI also includes a separate level control for the XLR connections.

From there is where our differences begin. While the Bass Driver version 2 has an XLR and quarter-inch out for the affected sound, it also includes a quarter inch out for an unaffected. The RBI rear panel offers quarter-inch and XLR out for both affected and unaffected signal. The RBI has a secondary input with a pad on the rear of the unit as well as a footswitch and an effect loop that can be 100% wet or 50/50 mix with the toggle selection.

The version 2 Bass Driver offers a few variable controls on EQ that aren't shared by the RBI. Both are controlled by front panel pushbuttons. The mid can be switched between 500 Hertz and 1 kilohertz, offering a different boost and cut frequency for the mids where the RBI is locked at 1k. »



2

p Bass Driver DI V2 features three different outputs
SansAmp Bass Driver DI is much more than just a
y distortions, and a whole lot in between, **Rodney**
mp line.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Tech 21 SansAmp Bass Driver DI V2

MSRP: (UK) £212 / (US) $229

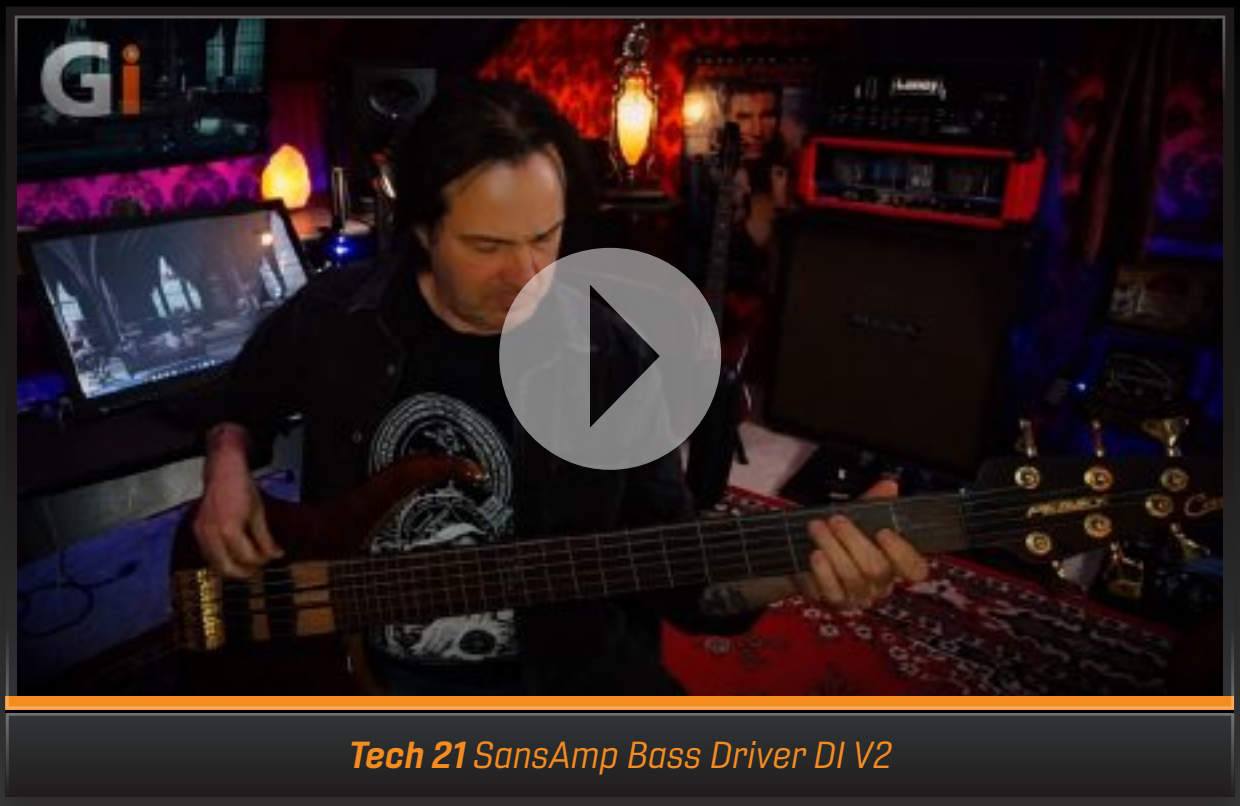
The Breakdown

Specialised	Versatile
Affordable	High-end
Straightforward	Feature-Rich
Traditional	Innovative

For fans of

- Superb build quality
- Sonic versatility
- Huge transparent tones

For more information, please visit:
tech21nyc.com



Tech 21 *SansAmp Bass Driver DI V2*

The other variable is that the low/bass knob can be set to 40 or 80 Hertz, where the RBI bass is locked at 80.

So, let's get into actual sound differences. Are there any? With the push buttons on the SansAmp Bass Driver version 2 set to the same locked settings on the RBI and all dials at a neutral position, the sound will be nearly identical. Very slight variations based on how exact the neutral position of the knob is, and small differences that can affect analogue circuitry like power supply may be noticed (the RBI runs off of a three-prong standard connector for power, where the Bass Driver uses a 9-volt pedal style connector or battery or phantom power) but the variation is minimal, especially in a mix, or life ensemble.

So, if you're choosing between these two units, the choice comes down to one of two items realistically. Do you want the additional connectivity, interface, and form factor that the RBI offers, and does it fit better with your gear set, or the Bass Driver v2's compact form factor and additional tone controls?

Personally, I look at them both less as competing units but more complementary. The RBI is the studio fixture that has the

expandability I'd want to go out to multiple recording and effect units. The Bass Driver v2 being my portable and easy to carry live unit to replicate that tone, and have larger adjustability to adapt to live environments where I may need to adjust to room acoustics and backline gear. However, given the option of only having one, I could be completely comfortable having either unit in either environment and know that I'll be getting the same core sound of the classic SansAmp bass series.

END «

Modern Vintage MVP-62 Surf Gree

Every Modern Vintage instrument is painstakingly crafted with the finest materials availabl correct materials are sourced, and the modern updates are the result of many years of res refinement. Keep the old-school sound, feel and vibe, while 'tweaking that elusive formula serious demands. **Dan Veall** takes a closer look at the Modern Vintage MVP-62, a nod to a

YES of course, we know that the marketplace is absolutely swamped with P's, J's and MM look-alike instruments. Testament to the absolute brilliance and marketable designs of one Leo Fender.

So is there really enough room for yet another brand having a go at dishing out another example? Well, in my experience of over 30 years geeking out over bass design, there have been the hits and definitely the misses. This one, I think, could be on your shopping list.

Modern Vintage, a collaboration lead by John Files of Sonata Marketing with Robert Elrick of Elrick guitars, delivers delicious recreations of two of the most well-known bass designs: The precision and the Jazz bass. Indeed, John's own vintage Fender basses were the inspiration behind the P and J models available. John then went on to iron out a few niggles that could be easily fixed with modern manufacturing techniques as well as some nice upgrades to boot for a real modern version of a vintage classic, "Modern Vintage".

In my hands here is a wonderful '62 inspired instrument. Starting with the vintage appointments, the alder body comes in a range of classic finish colour choices with a high grade 4 ply pickguard. Note that there's a decent-sized truss slot there for no-nonsense neck adjustments - well, I can tell you this bass needed no adjustments whatsoever out of the box!

Vintage voiced low noise pickups and control harness takes care of getting a rich sound out to your amplifier and a quality bridge with (my preferred) steel saddles for this type of instrument.

Over to the maple neck, and it gets the bang-up-to-date ageing treatment in the form of a modern "roasting" process that h the wood but is sa tonal qualities of a on a vintage instru years. At this poin nounce that the to example absolutely studio rig. That's e up with some plec tone control dialle Those harmonics r

The neck is home rosewood fretboar slice there, too, no stuff thrown at ch on the market her look! Clay dot ma installed as well— detail.

Reaching up to th colour matching c looks great - and v looking place to h no surprise to see

en Precision

ble. Period-
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to meet today's
1962 era staple.

helps to stabilise
id to bring out the
a neck that has been
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rkers are expertly
a small but welcome

e headstock and a
cap on each model
with such a good
ave tuning keys, it's
that Modern »

RECOMMENDED PRODUCT
Gi
RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Modern Vintage MVP-62 Surf Green Precision

MSRP: (UK) £1399 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

- Superb Playability
- Indian Rosewood Fingerboard
- Lightweight instruments

For more information, please visit:
modernvintageguitars.com

Vintage has opted for super accurate and rock-solid, clover-top lightweight tuners from Hipshot - all the looks out front without the neck dive.

The fretwork is exemplary, meaning that the bass also came with a really comfortable action and a very smooth and fast playing platform. The neck profile I would describe as thinner than the chunky '76 I own, which is great news for those of us who are looking for something that delivers the articulate P bass tones but without the boat anchor proportions. A speedy negotiation of the neck is practically effortless.

For the money, when you compare against the prices of at least one signature P I can

***Modern** Vintage MVP-62 Surf Green Precision*

think of, this bass represents serious value for money with the modern appointments on board. There's no reason to be put off with the basses made in South Korea either, as a number of brands are having work carried out in high-quality manufacturing complexes with stunning results.

It's a solid thumbs up here, a most enjoyable instrument to play; I wonder if a custom order is possible?

END«

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Nordstrand Acinonyx Short Scale

Lovingly nicknamed the "Cat Bass" in the Nordstrand workshop—the Acinonyx is an insan somewhat weird, and deceptively menacing instrument. This bass has all of the playabilit tone you would expect from a short scale, plus the added fun of the tone control switches are available with a simple push of a button. Here's **Dan Veall** to tell us more.

ON opening up the box of this 30" delight, a very helpful fold-out leaflet dropped out. I suddenly felt like a teenager opening up the gatefold of a brand new purchased vinyl album from a favourite artist. I quietly read the entire thing from start to finish with the half unwrapped Acinonyx perched on my leg. "The Acinonyx is a reimagined homage to the Goya Panther. In case you missed that day in biology class." the leaflet goes on to say, "Acinonyx is a genus in the cat family with only one living member, the Cheetah.

If only I could pronounce it, "ah-SIN-uh-nix" the leaflet explains further, or as Nordstrand Audio like to call it, "The Cat Bass"!

The story goes that bass supremo Juan Alderete brought his own vintage Goya Panther bass in to the Nordstrand workshops and, Carey Nordstrand, who you should already know has incredible knowledge and love for pickups and electronics, also has a deep interest in all things bass (as do I!)

It wasn't long before, I guess, the mental cogs were turning and, fast forward in time, out pounced Acinonyx from the Nordstrand empire like a wild beast.

The bass itself is lightweight and short scale which means that sat on your lap it is more Garfield than its beast namesake suggests.

The Alder body has a downsized outline that feels quite skinny in comparison to a standard P bass. Its quirky shape is eye-catching but also well behaved on the lap.. unlike Garfield!

On the subject of Nordstrand, well known for some of the best pickups available in the world today, Acinonyx gets a strong tone, and voice care of two custom P90-like pickups with Ceramic magnets wire {Carey} could balanced sound. Y too!

Departing from th for a moment, this strument has some options up its slee brilliant. I don't m despite having lots it's the programma on stage. "A set an instant" process. S the knob-twiddlin two sets of physica super-fast tone acc selection and the c useful EQ options these are all passiv

The pickup selecto tional bridge and solo as well as pair like a jazz bass in p fourth button is a

Bass

ely cool,
y and "phat"
. Tone choices

and "the largest
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RECOMMENDED PRODUCT Gi RECOMMENDED PRODUCT

Nordstrand Acinonyx Short Scale Bass

MSRP: (UK) £899 / (US) $TBC

The Breakdown

Vintage — Modern

Specialised — Versatile

Warm — Bright

Affordable — High-end

For fans of

Vintage-inspired instruments using modern-day tech

More sounds than you can shake a stick at!

Short scale basses

For more information, please visit: https://www.bassdirect.co.uk/bass_guitar_specialists/Nordstrand_Acinonyx_Bass.html

that a fun addition, actually, but not as much fun as pushing all the buttons in at once: the two pickups are configured for series wiring, offering more output and that familiar bump in the mid-range.

This, coupled with the four-position equaliser tone buttons, offers everything, including a mid-scoop for a modern like tone to a low 60's thud that would have any mudbucker lover reaching for the tissues. (To mop up tears of joy :-))

Hardware on this 30" scale treat comes courtesy of Hipshot USA, including the custom design bridge - and even then, given the vintage vibe of the instrument, lightweight tuning keys and slots in the bridge for fast string changes are still included.

Colour choices available for Acinonyx cover enough ground to keep everyone happy. We are looking at the Dakota Red version here, but Black, Olympic White and Surf Green as well as Lake Placid Blue,

***Nordstrand** Acinonyx Short Scale Bass*

look superb in the advertising blurb. Oh, and you'll need to choose between a tortoiseshell or parchment pickguard to top off the look!

The maple neck features an Indian rosewood fretboard and has a slim, jazz-like size with what feels like a C profile in my hands. The compound radius to boot makes the bass feel super comfortable to play and, with the 3x1 headstock means it's balanced both on the knee and on the strap. The whole package weighs in at around 3Kg! It's a small parcel packed full of fun with enough bite to keep you on your toes.

END «

Source Audio Ultrawave Multiband

If you're a bass player with an ear for nontraditional fuzz/distortion sounds and synthy cas character tones to be discovered in the Source Audio Ultrawave Bass pedal. The Ultrawav up to 10 bands and lets users crank and saturate each to taste, yielding some of the filthies Ultrawave Bass does doom, desert, and industrial with aplomb; however, it's this pedal's so **Rodney McG** to tell us more.

THE Source Audio Ultrawave for Bass has a similar characteristic to other Source Audio units, in that it is deceptively simple from the outside. With an interface containing only four knobs and a small toggle switch, it could easily be looked at as just another simple Bass Distortion unit with a few tone-shaping options. But when we look underneath the hood, there's much more going on.

Essential to using the Ultrawave is the Source Audio Neuro app. The app can function from a phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop system. Hooking the Ultrawave up to the app unleashes its true potential. The Ultrawave boasts 44 different Distortion types. These can be combined, blended, and morphed in a mind-boggling amount of ways. They can also be applied to specific frequency bands by setting split points across the EQ spectrum, and applying the Distortion to some, or all in varying degrees.

It also includes a number of other tone-shaping effects onboard. If controls, an 8 band graphic equalizer, noise gate, and ring modulator are available in every preset. All these options can be used in conjunction with stereo ins and outs that can be configured in a number of different ways outside of traditional routing.

The huge assortment of sonic possibilities will keep even the most serious of tone chasers occupied indefinitely. I could easily see the Ultrawave being used as a sound-shaping tool, or with other instruments as well as bass. I'm specifically thinking of synths and keyboards. The Ultrawave's huge routing versatility and available tone sculpting options definitely make it more than just another bass distortion. »

Bass Processor Pedal

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Source Audio Ultrawave Multiband Bass Processor Pedal

MSRP: (UK) £259 / (US) $249

The Breakdown

Specialised — Versatile

Affordable — High-end

Straightforward — Feature-Rich

Traditional — Innovative

For fans of

- Vintage tones with a modern twist
- Onboard versatile effects
- Exceptional build quality

For more information, please visit:
sourceaudio.net

Source Audio *Ultrawave Multiband Bass Processor Pedal*

If you're not in the market for a distortion, but are looking at filters, and bass synth-style pedals, the Ultrawave is still well worth a look. It fits easily in the sound design category and not just a single item processor. My personal favorites so far are the ability to use multiple compressors at different frequency bands for really interesting textures, and using the stereo outs for the tremolo and ping pong style spatial movements that seem to be a specialty of the Source Audio Units. Truly, the Ultrawave is a unique and impressive piece of tone sculpting gear in an amazingly small package.

END«

DRIVE
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ALT
MIX BASS
TREBLE MID
ULTRA WAVE
BASS
SOURCE AUDIO

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

50 YEARS
67

SOLOING OVER CHORD CHANGES — PART 3

Class is in session. **Tom Quayle** brings you a brand new and exclusive lesson for Guitar Interactive Magazine.

Next Steps

HI guys and welcome back to my column for Guitar Interactive Magazine. I hope you've all been practicing your intervals and enjoying the development of your fretboard knowledge along the way. For this issue we're going to be focusing on scales and their application for practicing over chord changes.

Scales often get a bad rap for being unmusical and certainly not something to focus on during

your improvisations for fear of producing very boring, shapeless lines. However, as I've mentioned before in previous columns, scales are a fantastic way of representing the chords or harmony that you're playing over in a linear fashion. Since each scale contains all of the chord tones and extensions of each chord you'll be soloing over, they are fantastic for training your ears and eyes on the fretboard and creating a linear connection between each chord. Of course, producing good music with this knowledge requires a series of practice techniques and a lot of experience and creativity, but for now, simply playing each scale against the chord will be a great exercise for both your ears and eyes let alone your fingers of course.

For this issue we're going to revisit our II-V-I progression rather than use the more complex chord progression from issue 18 (we will come back to this though). To remind you of which chords we'll be using let's lay down all of the diatonic 7th chords in the key of C major as follows: -

Soloing Over Chord Changes: *Part 3*

Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 Am7 Bm7b5

Now you can see that the II chord is Dm7, the V chord is G7 and the I chord is Cmaj7. From our previous modal studies in earlier issues (please feel free to check out my earlier columns for more information on modes and chord scales) we also know that over the II chord – Dm7 – we need to play D Dorian, over the V chord – G7 – we need to play G Mixolydian and over the I chord – Cmaj7 – we need to play C major or Ionian (two names for the same scale).

For some of you, alarms bells may already be ringing saying 'wait – these are all the same scale, why don't we just think C major over all three chords?' Well, by playing from the root note of each chord we outline the specific sound of that chord giving us the sound of the II-V-I progression in a linear or scalic manner as opposed to a generic C major sound with no definition of each chord. We're trying to develop a chord specific approach here so it's good practice to treat each chord as an individual entity as opposed to a generic part of our C major tonality.

As far as creating a practice regime for this kind of approach goes, we can take this a lot further than simply playing one octave of each scale over each chord from root to root.

Our next step would be to take each scale and play it over its relevant chord from 3rd to 3rd and then from 5th to 5th and finally 7th to 7th. By starting from each chord tone and progressing through one octave like this we develop an ability to see the harmony in a linear fashion from any chord tone of each chord as it occurs. We could now, with lots of practice, thread a line through the progression starting from any chord tone we like and always know where to go next regardless of which chord tone we wished to start from. Now our scalic abilities take on a much more powerful and musical force giving us definite 'routes' through the chord progression and a very strong visual and aural path from which to improvise.

In the accompanying TAB for this issue you'll find multiple fingerings for each scale starting from the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th of each chord. Learn these scales by shape and sound and try to find as many fingerings for each of them as you can. In the next issue we'll develop this further with some limitation exercises to really test your knowledge of the fret board and return to our original chord progression.

See you there and good luck!

END«

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Rhythm Concepts Column 9

Guitar Interactive Magazine veteran, **Sam Bell** continues his new and exclusive column focused on getting the most out rhythm guitar playing.

IN this issues column I am going to continue on the same theme as the previous instalment of this series. I am presenting you with a short etude which once broken down to its core parts give us some inspiring ideas of how to approach chordal playing in our own music or an as accompanist. I want to showcase some unique ways of playing 'Rhythm Guitar' a phrase which denotes there is a difference between a Lead Guitarist and Rhythm. I feel however the lines can be blurred and as a 'Rhythm' player we should be able to play melodically and creatively using our knowledge of Lead technique. In this column we're going to be taking a look at using Tapping to add to our chords and create harp like flurry's, we're not going to get too technical here, but we're hopefully going to tap into some fresh 'Rhythm' guitar approaches. Let's dive in with this columns example:

The Harmony:

This examples chord sequence is very spacious and simple. We have the following chords:

DMaj9 – C#m7#5 (x3) – F#m9

These chords come from the Key of A Major/F# Minor. The D chord is the IV chord of A.

The Example:

This columns example is very simplistic but the focus here is more on space and also implementing the tapping technique into our Chordal playing. We've all seen many great uses of Tapping, this particular concept that we're going to dive into in this column has been used by many great players such as Allan Holdsworth and Tosin Abasi to 'add' to chords in a modern sounding way. It's important to note that even though I am using a clean tone, I am using a touch of compression to even out the notes sound so the voicings ring through more clearly.

If we take a look at the very first chord, we have the essence of today's lesson. I am holding down a DMaj9 chord, I hammer on to the M3rd on the B string my little finger before tapping the 12th fret B string which gives us the 13th over our D Chord. We're using the fretted chord effectively as a Melodic Capo. Visually I am thinking about the chord voicing and what I can technically do with it in terms of fingerings then for the (in my case) right hand tapping, I am visualising inversions and extensions of the chord higher up the neck. We could also go as far as visualising whole scale fingerings higher up the neck in order to find other melodic notes. Check out the video breakdown for further explanation and thoughts on this. Be sure to refer to the TAB that comes with this lesson, analyse where the melody notes are, which ones stand out to you?

The Nature and Sound of tapping mixed with the guitars unique standard tuning gives us the ability to 'add' to our chords whilst they are being sounded. Almost like playing a Piano, playing a chord with the left hand and then adding to it with notes in the right (however Piano players can do much more than that) but on the Guitar it's not as easy as we can only really sound up to 6 notes (depending on the fingerings of the chord voicings) at the same time.

Conclusion:

Tapping doesn't have to be Van Halens Eruption or Michael Romeos Sea of Lies, with the focus on creating lead lines that cascade like molten lava over the musical soundscape (which is awesome) Tapping can be used to add to our chordal playing, give us more freedom of note choice with voice leading in our chordal playing, it also gives us a more piano like tone and attack on the notes which can lead to all kinds of inspiring ideas. Have lots of fun and I'll see you soon at Guitar Interactive Magazine!

END«

Rhythm Guitar Concepts – Part 10

FIN
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Giorgio Serci

CREATIVE FINGERSTYLE

Study n.23

Giorgio Serci treats us to a special lesson inspired by this issue's Quiet Room interview star, interviewed by Giorgio, Peppino D'Agostino.

HELLO there and welcome to guitar interactive.

In this column we'll be looking at another composition of mine called 'Peppin' Blues, dedicated to the acoustic guitar virtuoso Peppino D'Agostino.

When I was asked to interview Peppino for Guitar Interactive I have been listening again his beautiful music, so I decided to write a short solo guitar piece dedicated to him. It is essentially a 12 bar Blues with a slow Ragtime feel to it, so it features most of the idiomatic ingredients one can expect to find in this style.

Harmonic ingredients:

The harmonic content includes a frequent use of dominant 7th chords, following a typically Blues sequence as depicted below:

I7 IV7 IV7 ii iii IV #IVo7	I7 #IVo7 V7	IV7 I7 I7	I7 I7 VI7#9 I7 V7

Another idiomatic harmonic ingredient is the #IVo7 (diminished 7th) chord which create tension and release between chord IV and I, as a result of the ascending chromatic movement from the root of IV (A), of #IV (A#) and the 5th of I (B). This sequence was introduced in gospel music as the #IVo7 chord can be seen as the perfect harmonization of the so-called 'Blue-note', namely the b5 (or #4).

RHYTHMIC INGREDIENTS

The rhythmic content features a variety of 8th note triplets as evident from bar 3 to bar10. Syncopations and pushed chords are also recurrent and the piece is characterised by a swung 8ths feel.

MELODIC INGREDIENTS:

The melodic content has strong Blues connotations, featuring a combination of major and minor pentatonic scales as well as arpeggios and chromatic passages (as evident between bar 9 and 10). Another recurrent melodic devise is creating melodic tension and release shifting from the minor to the 3rd of a Dominant 7th chord. This is evident in bar 1 as well as between bar 10 and 11 and 11 and 12.

The melodic content is to be found both in the upper part or the harmony as well as in the lower part, particularly in the bass line, like for example in bar 1. The bass line in Ragtime often consists of alternating root and 5th of each chord, however, it is effective to add more melodic or singing-like qualities to it for a more contrapuntal effect.

ARTICULATIONS:

The choice or articulations is very important in the construction of any composition, as these can be seen as the 'how we say our story' or to continue using the metaphor of ingredients, we could see articulations as the way we mix and cook the aforementioned ingredients. A few articulations and punctuations including glissando also known as slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs as well as punctuations such as staccato, marcato have been used, 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 countermelody 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):

Pick-up bar: little f on fret 3 of e, middle f on fret 2 of B and ring f on fret 3 of G

BAR 1: Beat 1 and 2: Slide the shape/chord from the previous bar up a semitone and add an open E. Index on fret 2 of A and then of D, with the top three strings played simultaneously. Open D.

Beat 3 and 4: Index on fret 4 of A, open G, little f on fret 5 of B and little f on fret 5 of e. Open e followed by an open A and middle f on fret 2 of B. Open G and D.

***Giorgio Serci** - Study n.24*

BAR 2: Beat 1 and 2: Add and open E and the index on fret 1 of G followed by an open e. Middle, ring and little f to play fret 2 of D, G and B followed by and open D and G.

Beat 3 and 4: Add and open E and the index on fret 1 of G, then an open e. Next ring f on fret 3 of E and little f on fret 4 of E.

BAR 3: Beat 1 and 2: Open A, then open G, ring f on fret 2 of B and little f on fret 3 of e. Add middle f on fret 2 of D.

Beat 3 and 4: Play simultaneously and open A, G, ring f on fret 2 of B and little f on fret 3 of e. Open e. Next, middle f on fret 2 of D, open G and ring f on fret 2 of B. Pull-off to an open B, followed by an open e.

BAR 4: Ring f on fret 4 of G and middle f on fret 3 of B. Play the same double-stop in 8th note triplets, accompanied by a walking bass line including an open E, then ring f on fret 4 of E, fret 4 of A and open D, followed by an open e.

BAR 5: As bar 3.

BAR 6: As bar 3 but with the index on fret 1 of A and subdividing in 8th note triplets.

BAR 7: As bar 4.

BAR 8: Beat 1 and 2 as bar 4.

Beat 3 and 4: Optional percussion on the down beat (on the top of the guitar) followed by a C#7alt played with ring f on fret 4 of A, middle f on fret 3 of D, index f on fret 2 of G, open B and e, followed by an open E.

BAR 9: Index on fret 2 of E, little f on fret 4 of D. Same pattern up a tone, then a semitone, one more semitone and a final one, landing on fret 7 (beat 1 of bar 10).

BAR 10: Beat 2: index f on fret 7 of e, middle f on fret 8 sliding to fret 9, open e and B, middle f on fret 2 of G followed by open G.

BAR 11: Add open E and index on fret 1 of G followed by open e. Next, middle f on fret 5 of A, index f on fret 4 of G followed by e. Next, middle f on fret 4 of A, index f on fret 3 of G followed by e. Next, middle f on fret 3 of A, index f on fret 1 of G followed by open D, G and middle f on fret 1 of A.

BAR 12: Slide from fret 1 to 2 of A and add open E, D and index on fret 1 of G, followed by open e. Next, middle f on fret 2 of D, index on fret 1 of G and ring f on fret 2 of B, followed by and open E, D, index on fret 1 of G and little f on fret 3 of B.

Congratulations, you have completed Peppin' Blues!

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.

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

Until the next time - Good-bye.

Check me out here at **www.giorgioserci.com**

PART 1

Nick Jennison

MAKE YOUR ACOUSTIC GUITAR PLAY BETTER.

Sponsored by **ELIXIR Strings**

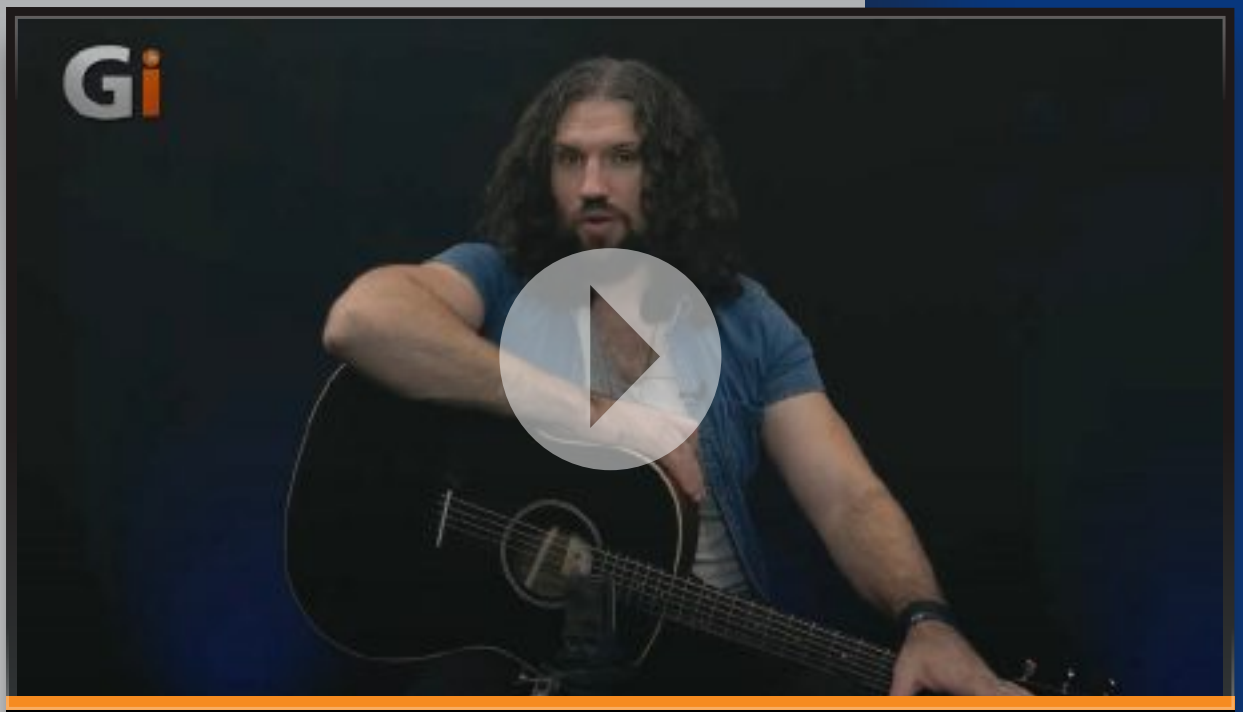
SET-UP YOUR GUITAR LIKE A PRO: PART 3 – ACOUSTIC GUITAR EDITION

SETUP is very individual thing, and there's no one right or wrong way for a guitar to "feel". What feels great for some players will be a struggle for many others, and not enough of a struggle for others still. The way your guitar come set up from the factory is likely a nice balance that suits the "average" player, but - as we've said before - you're not an average, you're an individual. »

Setup (as far as playability goes) generally comes down to two factors: how hard the strings are to press down (string gauge) and how far you need to press them down to get a note (action height). Let's start by discussing the latter:

SADDLE AND NUT HEIGHT:

One of the determining factors for your guitar's action (the distance of the strings from the frets) is the height of the saddle and the nut, and unless something is very wrong with your guitar, you should probably leave these alone unless you're very experienced with guitar repairs (in which case, this lesson probably isn't for you).



Am I using the right string? *Part 1*

While it's possible to file down the slots in your guitar's nut, or sand down your saddle to get a lower action, it comes with a host of risks. First of all, you'll need expensive luthier's tools. Secondly, if you take too much material away, you'll need a whole new nut/saddle. Thirdly, if your guitar has an under saddle pickup, sanding too much off the saddle can impact the way this pickup performs. Probably best to leave well alone here unless there's something very wrong in which case, take your guitar to an experienced tech.

NECK RELIEF:

The other factor that affects action height is neck relief, which is adjusted with the truss rod, and refers to how bowed or straight the guitar's neck is. It might seem counter-intuitive, but a perfectly straight neck is rarely desirable, because the strings need room to vibrate without smacking into the frets (which causes fret buzz, which may or may not be acceptable based on your playing style - more on that later). Generally, neck relief affects the action in the middle of the neck the most, since that's where the "bow" will be most pronounced. If you only ever play down in first position, you can likely get away with a family pronounced relief. If you play all across the neck, probably not so much.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Let's take a look at how two different neck relief profiles work with two different string gauges - 10s and 12s. The former is about as light as acoustic guitar strings get, while the latter is a pretty standard gauge for most new acoustic guitars. We're going to focus more on the playability than the sound here, but we'll discuss that in a future lesson.

The 10s will be much easier to fret, and offer less resistance under the picking hand, but the also vibrate in a larger arc, meaning they're more prone to buzz. By contrast, the 12s require more fretting pressure, but can tolerate a lower action before they start rattling. Some observations from the four setups we looked at in the accompanying video:

10S + LOW NECK RELIEF:

The easiest play feel of all four examples, and a great choice for players with a delicate touch. The low neck relief means the action is similar right across the fretboard, and the 10s are very easy under the fingers. However, with aggressive strumming, this setup is a little prone to buzzing. This might be fine if all you're after is string noise in a dense

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production, but may be a problem for solo guitarists. »

10S + HIGH NECK RELIEF:

Still very easy to play down at the lower frets, but the higher neck relief kills a lot of the buzz - at the expense of fretting ease and intonation higher up the neck. If you're a player who mainly stays in the open position, but has quite a light left hand touch, this setup might be great for you.

12s + low neck relief:
A little tougher to fret than the 10s, but much more resistant to buzz and rattle when it's time to dig in. The action is nice and consistent all across the fretboard, and responds well to both delicate and aggressive playing styles. Probably a good default choice for most players.

12S + HIGH NECK RELIEF:

Easy enough to play in open position, but very tough further up the fretboard. However, this setup is the most buzz-free and open sounding out of all the setups we tried. For "bashers" this is unquestionably the way to go, but it'll take a strong set of hands to venture higher up the neck (even for barre chords).

So clearly, there's a lot of mileage to be had in experimenting with your guitar's setup. It's important to remember that what might play and sound great in the hands of another player might be totally inappropriate for you, so don't be afraid to try things - remember, the best setup is the one that lets you play your best!

Are you an uncoated string player? Now is the time to try Elixir Strings' NANOWEB Coated acoustic guitar strings. A featherweight coating protects your strings from tone-killing elements like corrosion, dirt, oil and sweat.

NANOWEB Coating delivers distinctive phosphor bronze warmth and sparkle together with extended tone life. End result – your strings sound and feel fresher for much longer.

END «

For more information, click here:
https://www.elixirstrings.com/guitar-strings#acoustic

PART 2

Nick Jennison

MAKE YOUR ACOUSTIC GUITAR PLAY BETTER.

Sponsored by **ELIXIR Strings**

SET-UP YOUR GUITAR LIKE A PRO: PART 2 – ACOUSTIC GUITAR EDITION

ELECTRIC guitarists are thoroughly spoiled when it comes to customising the sound of their guitars. Pickup changes, pedals, amps, modelers… is it any wonder so many guitarists spend more time fiddling with their gear than actually practicing?

But what about acoustic guitars? Surely an acoustic guitar sounds the way it sounds and that's that, right? Well, not

so much. Even ignoring the plugged-in sound of your acoustic (we have another lesson on that!), there's plenty you can do to make your acoustic guitar sound it's best.

TECHNIQUE CONSIDERATIONS:

First of all, let's address the human element. How you play your guitar makes a huge difference on the tone. If you're resting your arm on the guitar's soundboard, you can expect it to sound a little dead, since the top needs to vibrate freely to produce the guitar's best tone. Then there's the way you pick the strings - your pick angle, the position along the string's length, how hard you hit - all of these can have a big effect on your tone, and should be considered before you change anything else.

Set-Up Your Guitar Like A Pro: *Part 2 - Acoustic Guitar Edition*

PICKS:

On to the gear then, and we're going to start with the thing that actually strikes the string (unless you're playing fingerstyle of course!) - your pick. Different thicknesses, shapes and materials not only play differently, but they sound different too! A thin nylon pick will have a much different sonic signature than a stiff Ultex pick for example. Likewise, two picks of the same shape and thickness can sound very different - for example, an Ultex jazz III will have a very pronounced "chirp", while the same pick made from Tortex will be relatively "chirp-free". Even how worn the pick is can make a big difference, so it pays to experiment.

STRINGS:

Next up, the strings on your guitar can make a huge difference to your tone. We all know that dead strings sound rubbish, but it goes much further than that. There are three main considerations to make here - gauge, material and coating.

STRING GAUGE:

There's a common thought among guitarists that bigger always equals better with string gauge, but that's definitely not true. Firstly, the best string gauge is the one you can play your best on. But if you want to use string gauge to adjust your tone, you can expect a little more roundness and a more pronounced thump out of heavier strings, while lighter strings usually sound brighter, lighter and more snappy.

STRING MATERIAL:

Probably much more important than string gauge is string material, and the two most common materials are phosphor bronze and 80/20 bronze. The former sounds full, rich and balanced, while the latter is brighter, zinger and more focused. As you'll hear in the video, material has a much bigger impact on tone than gauge, so choose wisely! For poking through a mix with maximum authority, 80/20 bronze is the way to go, but for a richer, deeper tone, reach for phosphor bronze.

COATING:

Lastly, coating can make a huge difference to the way a string sounds. Elixir were kind enough to provide us with two different coatings - their thinner "nanoweb" coated strings and the slightly thicker "polyweb" coated strings. Even with the same material and gauge (12s in 80/20 bronze), the tone was profoundly different. The "nanoweb" set sounds bright, clear and zingy, while the

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"polyweb" has a warmth that's reminiscent of a nylon string guitar, along with greatly reduced finger noise.

So if you're finding yourself dissatisfied with the sound of your acoustic guitar, try some of the suggestions in this lesson. You'll likely find the perfect tone for your personal style, and it's way cheaper than buying a new guitar!

Are you and uncoated string player? Now is the time to try Elixir Strings' NANOWEB Coated acoustic guitar strings. A feather-weight coating protects your strings from tone-killing elements like corrosion, dirt, oil and sweat.

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