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THE GUITAR MAGAZINE

Guitarist

ISSUE 390

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RECORDING THE ENDLESS RIVER

PINK FLOYD

INSIDE GILMOUR'S STUDIO

THE BLACK STRAT
AMPS & EFFECTS
FLOYD GUITARS
TONE SECRETS

Sunburst finish
under black

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INTERVIEW

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Black Magic



This month, we were privileged to be able to take a really close look at David Gilmour's studio rig for the *The Endless River* sessions. The guitar we were all keenest to examine, of course, was the fabled Black Strat. Thanks to its history, it

has an almost supernatural glamour.

As played by Gilmour, it's basically the instrument that made me want to take up guitar – its taloned tone sounding sharp enough to tear canvas on *Money* and so many other giant tracks. So it's salutary to remember that this is one heavily messed-with guitar – see our cover feature for a detailed history of its many mods over the years, including neck changes, a Kahler vibrato and other tweaks. In fact, it's the guitar equivalent of an axe that's had three changes of blade and four new handles – so wherein does the magic live? Where it always has, of course, in the hands of a very fine player.

As Gilmour's tech, Phil Taylor, observes, you'd recognise Gilmour's amazing touch and tone if he was playing a ukelele. So while we'll always jump at the chance to examine such historic hardware, it's only so much ageing metal and wood without a musician – and the unique style of expression that each of us invests a guitar with when we pick it up to play.

Enjoy the issue, and a happy new year to you from all of us here at *Guitarist*.

Jamie

Jamie Dickson **Editor**

Behind The Scenes

This month in the office, we investigated if it was possible to slow time by working powered by a dangerous mix of the Pixies and rocket-fuel-strength coffee. Results inconclusive. Meanwhile, the *Guitarist* Playmobil nativity scene was packed up for another year – but not before it had gained a few extra cast members, including two Transformers and a Ninja Turtle. We also continued our tasting journey around the nation's fine small breweries, toasting another issue's completion with the aid of some rather fine *Velo IPA* from the good people at *Black Sheep Brewery* – we thank them for their generosity.





Finally, a digital panacea for guitar tone which actually works: I never thought the day would come, but the sound and feel of this magic black box are so "real" that witchcraft would appear to be the only logical explanation... Most pleasing!

—Guthrie Govan



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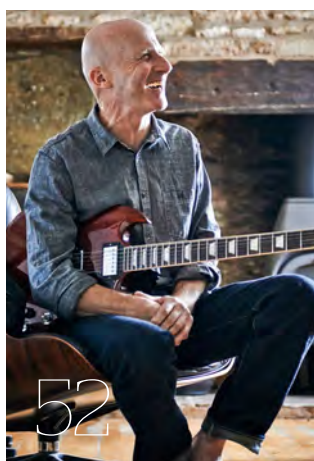
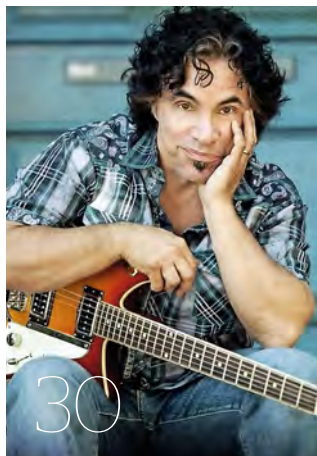
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The Endless River

Co-producer Phil Manzanera talks us through the 20-year journey that resulted in Pink Floyd's final album, plus we get up close and personal with David Gilmour's guitar collection, including the fabled Black Strat

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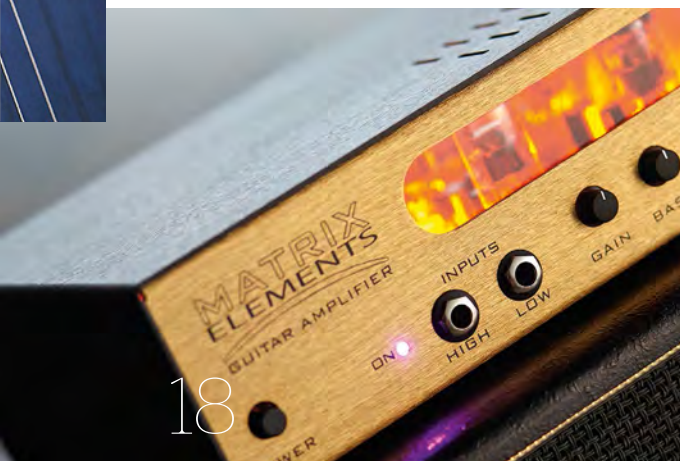
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FIRST ▶ PLAY



**ST BLUES JUKE JOINT
MISSISSIPPI BLUESMASTER**
£1,149

WHAT IS IT: Original design,
single-cut USA-made bolt-on



**ST BLUES JUKE JOINT
SCOUNDREL**
£1,149

WHAT IS IT: Original design,
double-cut USA-made bolt-on

SAINTS ALIVE

St Blues is a name from the past and its guitars are still made in the USA. But are they valid in 2015?

WORDS: DAVE BURRLUCK PHOTOGRAPHY: JOBY SESSIONS

VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

FIRST ▶ PLAY





1

1 Wilkinson's E-Z-Lok tuners have dual height posts and dual holes in each post, so you have a choice of tensions, or you can use the upper hole to lock off the string

2 These Alnico V-loaded Kent Armstrong humbuckers have individual coil-splits that voice the inner single coils of each one

We last caught up with St Blues back in issue 299, in 2008. The brand has its roots in the Memphis musical retail scene and has quite a convoluted history. After its heyday in the latter half of the 80s it disappeared until 2006, when it returned with a small range of Korean-made instruments – hence our previous reviews – and a high-end USA Workshop Series line. That changed again in 2011 when it was decided to make 'em only in Memphis, just like the old days. In January 2013, the affordable USA 'Juke Joint' line was created – on review here – and early in 2014 the Scoundrel joined the line-up.

The Mississippi Bluesmaster is the more Gibson-like version of the standard Fender-scale Bluesmaster. The original Bluesmaster design, which dates back to the 70s and is credited to founders Tom Keckler and Charlie Lawing, was the first St Blues guitar and remains its 'classic'. While the current Workshop Series are more boutique-priced, with USA parts such as Lollar pickups, the Juke Joint models here have satin finishes and non-USA pickups, with hardware from Kent Armstrong and Wilkinson.

With their uncontoured 'slab' bodies, there's something wonderfully uncultured about both of these designs. Both have standard 45mm thick bodies and large-radius Strat-like edges. The Scoundrel's symmetrical horns – like the





2

With their uncontroled 'slab' bodies, there's something wonderfully uncultured about both of these designs

treble half of a Strat, mirrored – give it, in upright position, an oddly unbalanced look, while the Bluesmaster looks like a single-cut Les Paul Junior that's been compressed, squashing and flattening the base of its body. Both have seemingly standard Fender-like bolt-on neck joins, too – the heel platforms of the bodies are left angular; the Bluesmaster's is a little too sharp, and both neck joints feel very rigid. On closer inspection, you can see that the bottom two neck screws sit inside their usual corner placement; this is because the Scoundrel's neck is machined, so there's a small cutaway on each corner that sits into a nicely machined neck pocket that matches that shape and means there's no lip where the cutaway flows into the neck. The Bluesmaster has the same feature but, obviously, being a single-cut, only on the treble side.

Similar class is applied to the necks, and despite the different scale lengths both have that Fender Tele-inspired headstock with an open-hole, easy-to-tweak truss rod adjustment behind the nut and quite a deep but not overly-big rounded C profile that gets pleasantly chunky further up the neck. Dimensionally, that equates to 22mm at the first fret and 22.4mm at the 12th for the Bluesmaster; it's slightly thicker – 23.8mm and 24mm – on the Scoundrel. Fretting is very tidy, a medium wire with well rounded ends – only

the Bluesmaster's fingerboard edges could do with a little more rounding to reflect its old-school 'vintage' vibe.

The satin finishing is done well on both bodies and necks, the Sweet Tea 'Burst of the Bluesmaster really enhances the flecked grain of its mahogany body, with the neck left a more natural lighter hue. The Scoundrel's neck and body are more contrasted: the natural maple against the Blue Suede, again, is slightly burst around its edges. No doubt the finishes will burnish with use, but they do look a little 'entry-level' on these slab bodies.

We're unsure of the origin of the Bluesmaster's bridge, but it's a walled hard-tail Strat-like design with chunky, block-style saddles and strings that anchor through the body. Nice. The Scoundrel's Wilkinson-branded Fender knock-off looks a bit cheap in terms of its finishing and plating, but features a push-in arm; both share the same Wilkinson E-Z-Lok tuners, which means neither guitar should need string trees.

Kent Armstrong's Korean-made pickups offer great value and hugely experienced design: we get zebra-coiled hot vintage 'Rocker' 'buckers in the bridge position of both; the Bluesmaster has a nicely matched Vintage 'bucker in the neck, while the Scoundrel swaps that for a tapped P-90 with slug magnet poles. Both volumes and tones have pull/push



3

3 This Wilkinson bridge is a subtle update of the Fender original, with a push-fit and tension-adjustable arm

4 Another Kent Armstrong design, this single-coil uses Alnico V slug magnets and is tapped to give two sounds

switches to voice the individual coil-splits on the humbuckers and the coil-tap of the P-90. All very logical.

Feel & Sounds

The Bluesmaster looks smaller than it feels, and with its pleasantly chunky neck it's a comfy player; like the Scoundrel, it's nicely weighted. The all-mahogany construction certainly gives a rounder high-end than you'd hear from a more standard Tele-like construction, but that's the point. Its sounds range from bar-room brawling rhythm and blues through hot Texas – that's never too sharp edged – into juicier classic/roots rock. It's a no-brainer for blues, bump 'n' grind rock and even the dirtier edges of country twang via the cleaner-sounding coil-splits: a Gibbo for the Tele player, or a bit of bolt-on twang for a Les Paul owner? It sits in the middle ground but not on the fence.

With a different strapped-on feel to the Bluesmaster, the Scoundrel is definitely more, but not totally, Strat-like. Its sounds are brighter and a little cleaner, though there's a family resemblance in the full and split modes of the bridge pickup. The vibrato brings its own resonance, too – slightly less forceful perhaps? – but the lack of a string tree means the open E and B strings sound a little thin. The stiff vibrato set-up, which sits flat on the body, doesn't feel great either, but with a few minor





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4

tweaks there should be little to worry about here. The neck P-90 is a nice twist with an attractive single-coil percussion that's cleaner and leaner than the Bluesmaster's 'bucker, and the coil-tap creates a lighter, spankier version: very usable, not least with the nicely graduated volume control, which tames the hot vintage-like bridge pickups or lets you slam the front end of your amp a little. No surprises, but good working sounds.

Verdict

If you like your posh guitars, these St Blues aren't for you. They are simply well made, well- but not exceptionally-priced USA instruments that will appeal to the working player in all of us. The trouble is that with Fender, Gibson and PRS producing USA-made instruments at similar or lower retail prices with gloss finishes and more upmarket features (some with hard cases, not to mention auto-tuners!), they do look a little over-priced and under-spec'd.

But the Bluesmaster, especially, is a very likeable guitar that you might prefer, for example, to a Fender American Standard Tele HH, PRS S2 Mira or a 2015 Gibson Les Paul Studio. St Blues was always about doing something different, and as we always say, the 'best' guitar is the one that suits you. If you're looking for a workhorse that you might want to mod and gig to death, don't ignore these. **G**



St Blues Juke Joint Mississippi Bluesmaster

PRICE: £1,149 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Single-cut solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Mahogany, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.7")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic/42.3mm

FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro, pearloid dots, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Chrome-plated bridge with six block saddles and thru-body stringing, Wilkinson Deluxe tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: Kent Armstrong Rocker and Vintage zebra-coil humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume (with pull/push coil-split for bridge pickup) and master tone (with pull/push coil-split for neck pickup)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.05/6.71

OPTIONS: Dual tapped P-90 pickups by Kent Armstrong

RANGE OPTIONS: The standard Bluesmaster (£1,099) has a Fender scale with maple f/board and dual Tele-like single-coils. The Workshop Series starts at around £2,000

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Sweet Tea Burst (as reviewed), Cherryburst, Walnut, Natural and Black

Guitarguitar

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GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: A neat hybrid design that's very tidily made with some good sounds. A gigging workhorse.



St Blues Juke Joint Scoundrel

PRICE: £1,149 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cut solidbody electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic/42.2mm

FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dots, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Chrome-plated Wilkinson vibrato bridge with bent metal saddles, Wilkinson Deluxe E-Z-Lok tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm

ELECTRICS: Kent Armstrong zebra-coil Rocker humbucker (bridge), Kent Armstrong tapped P-90 (neck), 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume (with pull/push coil-split for neck pickup) and master tone (with pull/push coil-split for bridge pickup)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.4/7.47

OPTIONS: None listed

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Blueburst (as reviewed), Tobaccoburst, Honeyburst

GUITARIST RATING	★★★★★
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: Lacks a little of the Bluesmaster's 'mojo' but is an excellent gigging tool with a great pickup combination

FIRST ▶ PLAY



WATERLOO WL-14 X

£1,999

WHAT IS IT? Modern remake of Gibson's depression-era guitars... built by Collings

OLD-TOWN BLUES

High-end, super-deluxe guitar company tackles depression-era budget box? Stranger things have happened, haven't they?

WORDS **MICK TAYLOR**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

By all accounts, nobody quite knew where to look as it was being discussed. Bill Collings was deadly serious about building an authentic remake of Gibson's Kalamazoo-style guitars – glue splodges, matte finishes, vintage playability traits and all – right there in the same factory as his meticulous, high-end instruments. He'd become fascinated by the original Kalamazoos, particularly the way in which they combined utilitarian build with a unique tone and character.

The Kalamazoo range was introduced by Gibson in 1934, as a way of propping up the company's sales during the Great Depression. Given their cost-conscious designs, they didn't bear the Gibson brand, instead using Gibson's home town as a name. These days, while they don't command the value or wow-factor of their vintage Gibson cousins, their simple charm and evocative tones mean they're still loved, cherished and collected by many players and enthusiasts. Finding an old one in playable condition isn't always easy, however, so to complete today's history lesson, we turn to





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‘Waterloo’, a town that some time in the mid-1800s became known as Austin, Texas, home town of the aforementioned Collings Guitars. Everyone clear on how we got here, then?

Body Of Evidence

The Waterloo WL-14 is based on the 375mm (14.75-inch) wide Gibson L-00 shape, and comes in two variants: one with an X-braced, solid spruce top that Collings says has a more even response and definition across the frequency range; the second using a ladder-braced pattern that’s said to be louder, more percussive and with stronger upper-mids. We’d say the latter is more overtly ‘vintage’ based on the ones we’ve heard thus far, though neither sounds in any way ‘modern’!

The WL-14s are also available with an adjustable truss rod in the thick mahogany neck, or the more vintage-correct, fixed metal T-bar arrangement, just like the original Kalamazoo KG-14 models. You can have any combination of bracing and neck reinforcement you like. Interestingly, early in his career as a guitar repairer, Bill Collings discovered that T-bar Martins, for example,

had a very even tonal response across the fingerboard compared with truss-rod equivalents, one reason that his modern Collings instruments have small steel inserts either side of the truss rod to this day.

Our review guitar has the X bracing and the T-bar; with solid mahogany back and sides and the minimal ivoroid binding and soundhole ring, it’s as light as a 1.5kg feather.

Feel & Sounds

Now that’s a vintage V neck! It feels almost triangular in profile, and coupled with a one-and-three-quarter-inch nut and 25.5mm depth at the first fret, it’s not for the feint, um, handed. We like it, but it certainly won’t be to everyone’s taste. There’s Collings-like fastidiousness in the immaculately cut-through bone saddle – again with wide, vintage-like string spacing – and the union of neck and fingerboard is wonderfully inviting, with expertly rolled edges that make it feel like home. The imperfect finish and glue globs around the lining challenge you to dislike it, but the sound... oh the sound!

It’s definitely a small-body voice; a focused midrange, no extensive bass, no glistening

1 The Waterloo’s nut is ebony, just as they were on the original Kalamazoo guitars. They wear more quickly, but are part of the tonal mix

2 The body and soundhole are bound/finished in ivoroid for the merest hint of aesthetic adornment

3 It’s a lot of work to put in a cut-through bone saddle like this. Notice how it’s shaped for intonation compensation

4 If you don’t want a tiger stripe celluloid pickguard on a guitar like this, there’s something wrong with you

5 The Golden Age restoration tuners look fantastic in aged nickel with matte cream buttons



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3



4



5

There's a depth and maturity that brings to mind the best country-blues-roots masters

trebles. In lesser instruments, that would equate to 'boxy' sounding, but there's a depth and maturity to the Waterloo's timbre that immediately brings to mind the best country-blues-roots masters, whether they play(ed) a Kalamazoo or not; anyone from Robert Johnson, Mississippi Fred McDowell and John Hurt to Keb' Mo' and Eric Bibb. Like those artists, this guitar has gravitas; it has substance and character in abundance, and that's got to be down as much to the quality materials selection as it is to the exacting nature of the design and build (notice we didn't say 'finish').

It also records fantastically well – you're never cutting out swathes of bass to get it to sit in the mix, or indeed calming exuberant high end. It's an absolute world away from

a 'modern', hi-fi-sounding guitar. Some people will love that, others much less so.

Verdict

The Waterloo WL-14 X by Collings Guitars is a real bag of contradictions that forces you to re-examine what's important to you about the guitar you choose.

If you weren't of a mind to understand the intention behind this guitar, you'd point to the imperfections in its finish (not its build, just to be clear), and how that could never be justified at this price. You'd probably also point out that it's not much of an all-rounder, either: you might well be right on both counts.

However, if vintage folk/country-blues tone is your bag and you want it as authentic as possible in a new guitar, the WL-14 X is a borderline no-brainer. The sound would sit perfectly well in the vast majority of contemporary rock and folk music, too, it should be said. We've been genuinely surprised at our reaction to a guitar that we were struggling to understand before we played it... and then we played it. And played it and played it and played it. If you get the chance, so should you. **G**



Waterloo WL-14 X

PRICE: £1,999 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Austin, Texas

TYPE: L-00-size acoustic

TOP: Solid spruce

BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 109.5mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 375mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")

TUNERS: Golden Age Restoration, relic nickel with cream knobs

NUT/WIDTH: Ebony, 44.45mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood

FRETS: 19

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood, 54mm (2.125")

ELECTRICS: Optional

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 1.5/3.3

LEFT-HANDERS: To order

OPTIONS: Adjustable truss rod or T-bar; ladder bracing or X bracing (see below)

RANGE OPTIONS: The WL-14 L (same price) uses ladder bracing instead of X bracing

FINISH: Vintage Sunburst, matte nitrocellulose lacquer

Guitar XS

01227 832558

www.waterlooguitars.com

GUITARIST RATING	
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: *Authentic to the last, the Waterloo may divide opinion, but its tone is vintage country-blues pickin' nirvana*

FIRST ▶ PLAY



**MATRIX ELEMENTS
VB800**
£549

WHAT IS IT? A super-light 150 watts-plus head, based on one of the most recognisable sounds in British rock

GOLD RUSH

A lightweight amp that packs heavyweight tone...

WORDS **NICK GUPPY**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

Matrix is well known in the PA field for extremely powerful, yet lightweight power amplifiers. It has scored a big hit with many pro guitar players, too, with a range of stereo power amps, created to be perfect partners for high-end digital gear from the likes of Kemper and Fractal Audio.

Look into any modern pro touring rack, and if you see one of the aforementioned preamps, it's a pretty safe bet that underneath it there will be a Matrix power amplifier, ranging from the compact GT800FX up to the mighty GT1600FX with 840 watts per channel. With a strong presence in the rack amplification market, Matrix's decision to build a 'proper' guitar amp was an obvious next step, and here it is – the Matrix Elements VB800.



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

Matrix Elements VB800 **FIRST ▶ PLAY**





Based on a well-known British head dating back to the 1980s, the VB800 is a simple, single-channel design, with a pair of high- and low-gain input jacks, a series effects loop and not much else. One of the things it doesn't have in common with its namesake is weight – at just under two kilograms, the VB800 is one of the lightest heads we've plugged into. It's also potentially one of the most powerful, using half of a Matrix GT100FX power amp to deliver a whopping 420 watts into 4 ohms, 300 watts into 8 ohms, or a more civilised 150 watts into 16 ohms – the impedance of its specially designed and equally lightweight Neolight 1x12 enclosure that can be comfortably carried in one hand.

The VB800 blends functionality with minimalist looks; a two-piece brushed aluminium chassis is finished half-and-half in gold and black, with a laser-engraved Matrix Elements logo on the top. While the VB800 is undeniably light in weight, the engineering is solid and strong enough to handle anything that non-stop touring might throw at it.

One large printed circuit board holds all of the components, including miniature and surface-mount stuff, next to a pair of 12AX7 dual triode preamp valves. These sit in front of a mirror-finish screening plate and are visible through a window that sits over the front panel, lit by LEDs when powered up. On the other side of the screen sit the less photogenic components that drive the VB800's solid-state power amp. The VB800's controls are easy to understand – gain, volume and a three-band passive EQ, together with a pair of high- and low-gain inputs. On the rear panel, there's a series effects loop with a variable send level, and a pair of speaker jacks.



Feel & Sounds

When an amp is this simple, there's no hiding place. The sounds have to be there the instant you plug in. The VB800 doesn't disappoint: it has the gritty aggression and harmonic richness of a properly sorted original, without the 'foil paper on teeth' highs, nasal midrange honk and understated bass. We're glad Matrix resisted temptation and chose not to over-gain the preamp – there's just enough for serious overdrive effects. Consequently, the VB800 sounds 'real': it's warm and it breathes with the

- 1. Simple, but effective – the VB800's controls are tuned perfectly for great Brit-rock tone**
- 2. Matrix's specially-designed ultra-light 1x12 extension cabinet can be lifted with one finger, but sounds like a 4x12 – it's the perfect match for the VB800**
- 3. The VB800 includes a series effects loop with a variable send level**





kind of dynamic response you expect from a good valve amp. Our regular Strat and PAF-loaded Les Paul both sounded full of character, delivering 80s rock riffs with plenty of authority. Pedals work well, too, either before the input or in the effects loop. It goes without saying that the VB800 is loud. However, because there are no unpleasant artefacts assaulting the senses, it's loud in such a way that you don't realise until after you switch off just how much sound pressure it can generate.

Verdict

Combined with Matrix's Neolight cabinets, the VB800 fulfils a dream for many guitar players: to be able to walk into a gig carrying everything with ease, yet deploy a rig loud enough to handle any stage, with ample power to spare. There are some things we wish were there, such as a speaker-emulated direct output and a proper side-chain effects loop. There's no carry bag or rack adaptor kit either: a little odd, perhaps, given the brand's pro PA heritage. Overall, though, the VB800 provides a lot for the price, and we hope Matrix continues to expand the Elements range. One to check. **G**



Matrix Elements VB800

PRICE: £549

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Valve preamp and solid-state power amp, with solid-state rectifier

OUTPUT: 150 watts into 16 ohms, 300 watts into 8 ohms, 420 watts into 4 ohms

VALVES: 2x 12AX7 preamp

DIMENSIONS: 80 (h) x 304 (w) x 185mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2/4

CABINET: Aluminium

CHANNELS: 1

CONTROLS: Gain, bass, mid and treble, master volume

FOOTSWITCH: None

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: High- and low-gain inputs, series effects loop with variable send level, built-in output protection allows for use without speaker connected, dual speaker outs, fan cooling

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Neolight 1x12 cabinet, as reviewed, is £336. A 2x12 version is available, for £498

Matrix Amplification

0845 108 5449

www.matrixamplification.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★	
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: Immensely portable with great tone and good looks, too.

Smart Recording.

Top audio quality and comfortable control by an iOS or Android app.

DR-22WL



DR-44WL



- ▶ Direct, encrypted wi-fi connection between the recorder and your smartphone or tablet computer
- ▶ The free DR CONTROL app allows you to remote control the recorder and check the recorded material
- ▶ Send your recordings wirelessly from your smartphone
- ▶ Numerous automatic functions can make recording easier
- ▶ Record simultaneously in WAV and MP3 format or with different level settings
- ▶ High resolution (WAV/BWF up to 96 kHz and 24 bit or MP3 up to 320 Kbit/s)
- ▶ Use practice functions, overdubs and a reverb effect
- ▶ Simple scene dial for instant setup on the DR-22WL
- ▶ 4 tracks with mixer and bounce feature on the DR-44WL

DR-22WL



DR-44WL

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TASCAM
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Frontend

Don't miss it! Must-see guitar goings-on for the coming weeks...



The Black Keys

27 Feb to 5 March, various UK venues

On early releases such as *Thickfreakness* and *Rubber Factory* there were few hints of the staggering, world-conquering rise that was to come for the Black Keys. Yet regular *Guitarist* readers will recall from our interviews with them at that fledgling stage of their career that the Akron, Ohio two-piece had something special about them, even as an unkempt and unvarnished blues-rock two-piece. Nowadays, you can barely stream a digital radio station without encountering the analogue sheen of guitarist/singer Dan Auerbach's coveted vintage gear: and we're set for more Black Keys saturation in 2015, as they've lined up headline dates at various summer festivals. Catch them before then on a UK tour in February and March; see www.theblackkeys.com for details.



Robin Trower album and tour March, various UK venues

Robin Trower will celebrate his 70th birthday on 9 March with the release of a new studio album, *Something's About To Change*. Tickets are on sale now for his 17-date tour of the UK, with support from Joanne Shaw Taylor.

Interpol

6-8 February, London

We can't think of a more perfect complement to the icy chill of winter than the dark and sophisticated guitar rock of Interpol. The New Yorkers play a couple of UK dates in support of their fifth album, *El Pintor* – the first without former bassist Carlos Dengler – in February.



Aynsley Lister Guitar Weekends

January and February,
Uxbridge

UK guitarist Aynsley Lister will be taking a break from touring the country to host weekend guitar retreats in January and February. If you fancy some expert tuition and a jam with Aynsley and his band, register and get all the

info you need at:
www.aynsleylister.co.uk

Ryan Adams

19 Feb to 1 March,
various UK venues

2014 was another return to form for eternal US country bad boy Ryan Adams, whose self-titled album was laced with joyous electric guitar and earned him critical acclaim. Catch him live as he tours the UK.



Round-up Modulation Pedals

A dash of tremolo, vibrato, rotary speaker or phasing can elevate your recordings and get you noticed on stage. Here's a selection of some of the best and most innovative recent modulation pedals we've seen...



1



2



3



4



5



6

1 DLS RotoSIM

£239

www.dlseffects.com

This USA-made boutique rotary speaker simulator may have a boutique price tag, but it also has a beautifully simple, uncluttered design and offers lots of adjustment options, including seven inside the chassis.

Authentic voicing and flexibility make this a great pro choice.

We said: "A charmingly uncluttered user interface, cool sound and smooth operation from a great boutique US pedal"

2 Strymon Mobius

£399

www.strymon.net

Strymon makes some of the classiest effects available, and the Mobius tackles a wide range of classic modulations from the last five decades, while extending their versatility. There are 200

presets based on 12 different effects types, which are all easily accessible and tweakable during a performance.

We said: "Vintage sounds in a practical package, the Mobius is a class act"

3 Z.Vex Vexer Super Seek Trem

£266

www.zvex.com

Quirky is Z.Vex's core business, and the Super Seek Trem is definitely way out there. It's best understood seen as a step sequencer with 16 separate volume pots, which creates complex rhythmic patterns. It may not be one for the blues jam, but the results can be spectacular, and your experiments can be stored for future use.

We said: "Tremolo taken an awful lot further than your standard box can go"

4 Source Audio SoundBlox 2 Orbital Modulator

£149

www.sourceaudio.net

This pedalboard-friendly modulation machine offers access to two modulation effects via two footswitches, with the effects chosen from a range of choruses, phasers and flangers. You can mix tremolo in with any effect, and you can even control parameters using Hot Hand motion-sensor rings.

We said: "Compact, affordable and with access to two effects, this is also a highly practical space saver"

5 Amptweaker SwirlPool

£209

www.amptweaker.com

Taking its cue from synchronised tremolo and vibrato circuits from

vintage 60s amp designs, the SwirlPool offers both effects in controllable combinations. Its very musical sounds range from swirly vibes to choppy or throbby trem, and plenty more besides.

We said: "Fantastic vintage trem and vibrato sounds. An inspired deviation from standard pedals"

6 Blackstar HT-Modulation

£199

www.blackstaramps.com

Blackstar's HT range of effects all feature a valve in their circuitry, to add a measure of saturation to their output. You have no fewer than eight modulation effects to choose from here, with adjustable speed, additional effects-specific functions and footswitchable control.

We said: "Offers an easy-to-dial-in range of modulations, with the bonus of added valve warmth"

ARCHON



The Archon was designed to leave you with just the essentials for killer tone. Five gain stages deliver a full and lush distortion while the clean channel's ample headroom is a perfect platform for pedals. The Archon is a powerful, imposing and articulate amplifier that caters to the needs of any player.

100/50W (Switchable)
2 Channels
6L6GC Tubes

Emil Werstler - Chimaira
Zach Myers - Shinedown
Dustie Waring - Between the Buried and Me
Mark Tremonti - Alter Bridge



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GUITARS

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The six new additions to the SE range, which brings the PRS brand to those on a budget

SE Change

A PRS for £399? The SE Standard Series offers just that

The PRS SE line has been updated for the fourth time since its conception, with the introduction of six new models. Prices start from a mere £399. The SE (which stands for Student Edition) models were

originally introduced back in 2001 as an affordable interpretation of maker Paul Reed Smith's original designs; the guitars went on to be regarded as being among the very best 'learner' instruments on the

market, with PRS's trademark build quality, reliability and playability all present and correct across the whole range.

The new models are the Standard 24, with PRS tremolo and tuners and a Wide Thin neck

profile; the Standard 22, with a stoptail bridge and bound neck; the Singlecut Standard, with a 24.5-inch scale; and the artist-endorsed stoptail Tremonti Standard, and vibrato-equipped Santana Standard and Santana Standard Special.

All of the models come in a range of finishes, have rosewood necks and come with a gigbag. To find out more about the SE Standard Series, visit the website at www.prsguitars.com.

WIN!!! An Eventide H9 Max pedal worth £599!

Eventide is a legendary name in pro-audio circles. Since it was founded in New York in 1971, the company has stayed in tune with technological developments to remain at the forefront of pro effects. Products such as the Harmonizer have featured on many a classic recording session, and more recently, flexible effects units such as the TimeFactor and PitchFactor have topped the wishlists of guitarists everywhere.

Thanks to the kind folk at Source Distribution, we have an Eventide H9 Max pedal worth £599 to give away. The H9 contains all 45 of the algorithms behind Eventide's acclaimed sounds, and 500 factory presets – think of it as a Greatest

Hits package containing all the effects from the company's TimeFactor, ModFactor, PitchFactor and Space stompboxes, and more besides, all in one place.

The H9 Max features a one-knob user interface, and its presets can be edited and managed using the H9 Control app. You can also link together multiple H9s and share algorithms between them, for the ultimate live rig. To be in with a chance of winning this fine prize, simply answer the following question:

Q. Which David Bowie album famously features an Eventide Harmonizer?

- A)** *Space Oddity*
- B)** *Low*
- C)** *Earthling*



WIN!

To enter, visit www.futurecomps.co.uk/git390eventide.

The closing date for entries is 5 March. For T&Cs, see www.futurenet.com/futureonline/competitionrules.asp



Muse fans will be able to get close to Matt Bellamy's sound for less than £500 in 2015

Muse Rock

Finally, an official Matt Bellamy signature model - from Cort and Manson Guitar Works

The 2015 NAMM Show will witness the unveiling of the Cort MBC-1, a signature model from Muse frontman Matt Bellamy. Exeter's Manson Guitar Works has long been associated with Bellamy, and continues to produce a range of high-end and limited-edition models, engineered to the demanding specs of the guitarist, many of which carry innovations

including Kaoss Pads and in-built effects. The MBC-1, produced under licence by Cort Guitars, is made in Korea but set up and inspected by Manson in the UK; what's more, at a less-than-supermassive price point of £499, it's a relatively affordable modern rock guitar.

Designed in conjunction with Bellamy, the MBC-1 features a killswitch and newly designed

Manson bridge humbucker and neck single-coil pickups. There's a Satin Black finish, a basswood body and a maple neck with rosewood fingerboard; the headstock features Bellamy's signature. Manson offers further upgrades, including pickup, circuitry and hardware options. See www.cortguitars.com and www.mansonguitarworks.com for further information.



"One of the finest guitar straps in the world"

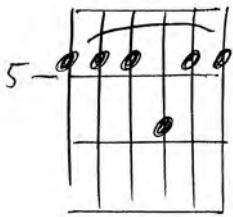
Guitarist Magazine

Substitute

Tired of using the same old chord shapes? These substitutions will freshen up your playing in seconds

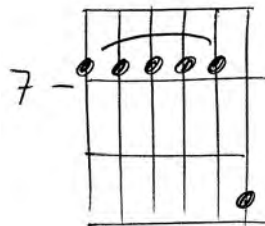
This Issue: Heavenly Harps

With 'harp' harmonics, you alternate between regular notes and artificial harmonics. This A7add11 also works as a Mixolydian fragment. The index finger produces the harmonic by touching 12 frets above the fretted note. Your thumb plucks the harmonic.



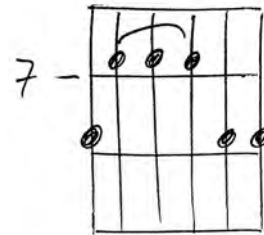
A7add11

This one can also be considered an A Mixolydian fragment, but works, too, as a B minor scale fragment, a Bm11 chord or even a modified version of the Japanese Yo scale.



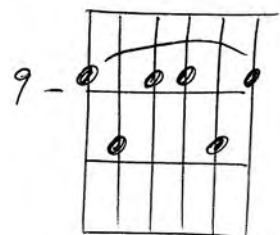
Bm11

How about the A minor pentatonic as a lush cascade? You could also interpret this as the C major pentatonic or a C6add9 chord (although because of the harmonics, the A on the D string is actually the lowest note).



C6add9

Back to a dominant tonality, here's a lovely A9 voicing. To create the cascade effect on all of these, start with the regular note on the D string and the harmonic on the low E, then work up and down, alternating through the strings.



A9

And also...

BE A GUITAR TEACHER

New digital course Be A Guitar Teacher aims to teach aspiring tutors everything they need to start their business. For more, see www.beaguitarteacher.com

HAMMER JAMMER

The Hammer Jammer is a new key-hammering device designed to help disabled guitarists play the six-string guitar. It's being supported by crowdfunding. See www.hammerjammer.tilt.com.



TT RACER

Line 6 has released the TT, a new desktop variant of its AMPLIFI range, which will turn your speaker system into a jam-ready guitar amp via Bluetooth. The TT will be available in January for an SRP of £149. See www.line6.com for info.



Guitarist Picks Highlights from last issue



Electrics

Gibson 2015 Les Paul Studio
£899

"Excellent value and high quality. They'll sell by the truckload"



Acoustics

Pilgrim Mayflower Deluxe
£409

"A well-priced, quality package that packs a punch"



Amps

Mesa/Boogie Mark Five:25
£1,379

"Among Mesa's best-ever amps – a compact killer"



Effects

TC Electronic Alter Ego V2
£134

"Will appeal to just about any player, not just vintage 'verb fans"



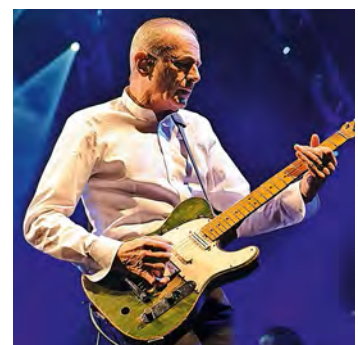
Misc

Mono Guitar Sleeve
£99

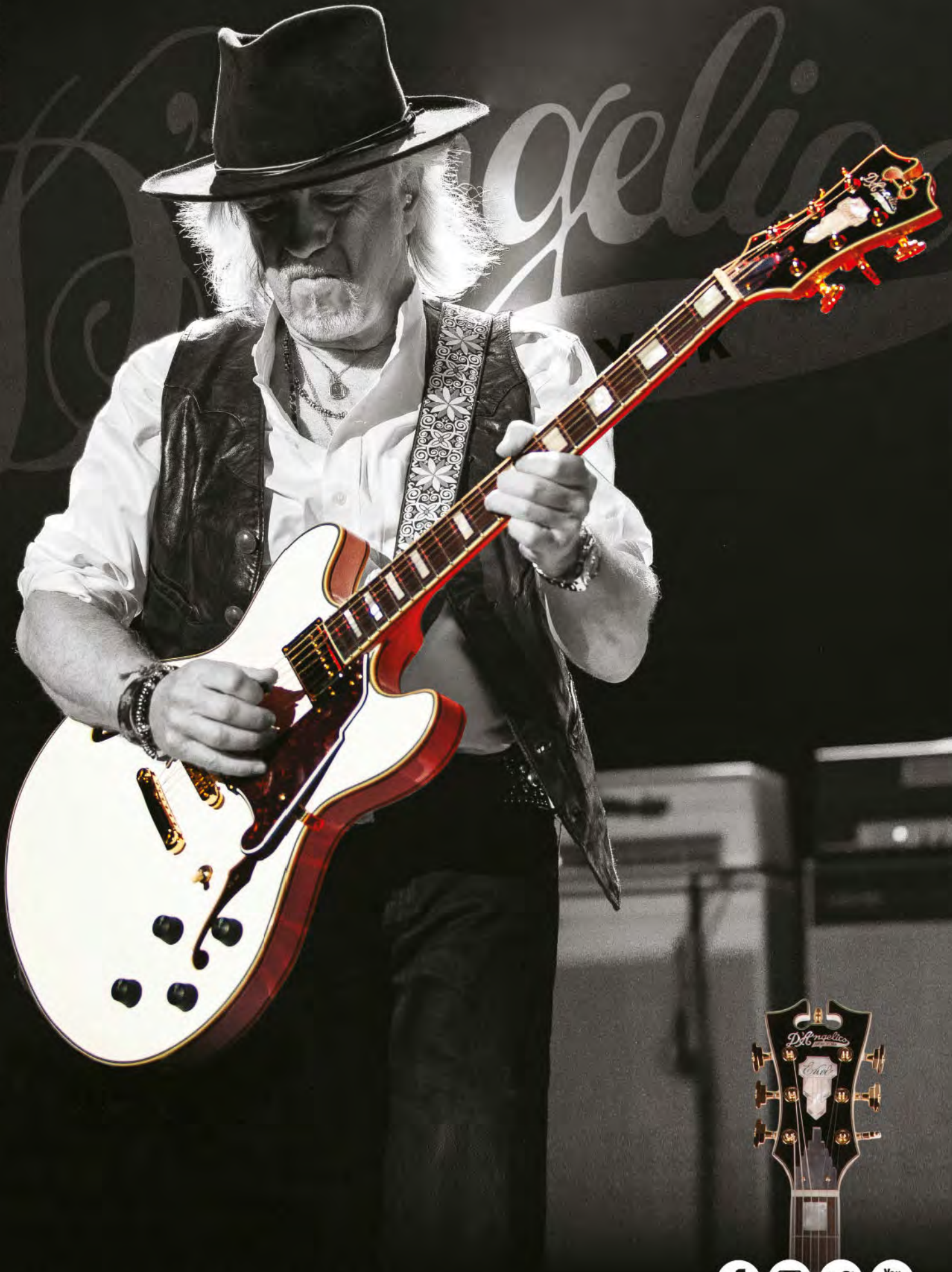
"If you're a travelling musician, just buy one"

And Finally...

There are fewer more iconic sights in the whole of rock 'n' roll, but it seems that **Francis Rossi** wailing away on his **green 1957 Telecaster** is to be a thing of the past. The Status Quo frontman has finally been forced to put the iconic Tele **out to pasture**, as five **decades of wear and tear** have taken their toll. "I've had a love-hate relationship with that guitar for years. It's sad, but it's **past its sell-by date**," Rossi told the *Daily Star*. "I was having more and more issues with it, I've messed about with it so much, but it **just wouldn't stay in tune any more**," Rossi adds that the green Tele's replacement "**sounds fabulous**", but it's reassuring to know that the original guitar **will still be taken along** to gigs to **oversee things** from the side of the stage.



©JOSEPHOPAKO/RED FERNS VIA GETTY IMAGES



BRAD WHITFORD OF AEROSMITH WAILS ON HIS EX-DC PLAYING THROUGH A SERIES OF 3 MONKEYS STACKS FOR AN INCREDIBLE TONE



WWW.DANGELICOGUITARS.COM



John Oates

For over 40 years, he's been one half of the biggest-selling music duo of all time - Hall and Oates - but can he stand up to the...

10 Questions We Ask Everyone

1 WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GUITAR, AND WHEN DID YOU GET IT?

"My first guitar was an acoustic - handmade by my best friend's father when I was six years old. It had hand-painted playing card hearts and spades for fret markers - and the action was so high, I almost gave up trying to learn! So I purchased a simple acoustic from the Sears and Roebuck catalogue, sanded down the finish, then hand-lacquered the top. I put it out in the garden to dry, then my neighbour decided it was a good time to mow his lawn... so it dried with little bits of grass and dust settled into the finish! I still have it - and it plays okay!"

2 THE BUILDING IS BURNING DOWN - WHICH GUITAR WOULD YOU SAVE?

"My 1958 Fender Stratocaster - the same one I'm playing on stage with Daryl every

night. But I'm sure I could get at least one more guitar under my arm as I ran out... that would have to be my custom 000-18 Martin!"

3 IS THERE A GUITAR YOU REGRET LETTING GO?

"Yes - I had a 1964 Guild F40 acoustic in blonde - with a great neck..."

4 WHAT'S THE OLDEST GUITAR YOU HAVE?

"The oldest is a 1923 Martin parlour acoustic. The most recent acquisition is a 1958 Les Paul Junior I just bought recently in Nashville. But the new stuff I play on

stage is a TV Jones Model 10 guitar through a Swart combo."

5 WHAT'S THE WORST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO YOU ON STAGE?

"I fell off the side of the stage back in the 1970s and landed on my back, breaking my collarbone. But my guitar was on my chest so it was okay, and I finished the show!"

6 WHAT SONG WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO PLAY ON ACOUSTIC AROUND THE CAMPFIRE?

"I'd play some Mississippi John Hurt or Doc Watson - fingerstyle tunes... or maybe some Jobim bossa nova!"

7 WHAT ASPECT OF GUITAR PLAYING WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE BETTER AT?

"I'm at the point where my goal when I play is not to think so much, and allow my brain and fingers to communicate freely. Then I can surprise myself with new possibilities beyond habit and pattern."

8 WHO INFLUENCED YOU AS A GUITARIST WHEN YOU WERE STARTING OUT?

"If you combine Chuck Berry, Mississippi John Hurt, Doc Watson and Curtis Mayfield, that would be my style. But I'll never play as good as any of them!"

9 IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT A RECORDING YOU'VE BEEN ON, WHAT WOULD IT BE - AND WHY?

"I don't think like that. Recordings are a moment in time - and are best left that way. However, I have re-recorded a song called *Keep On Pushin' Love*, which was originally on the *Ooh Yeah!* album, and I have plans to re-record a more acoustic version of *How Does It Feel To Be Back*."

10 WHICH SONG FROM YOUR OWN BACK CATALOGUE DO YOU ENJOY PLAYING THE MOST?

"Probably *I Can't Go For That* because the arrangement is open to improvisation every night - and I never try to play it the same way - even though there are some signature riffs that are always there. It's a fine balance to retain the original elements of the song, and then continue to look for ways to let the arrangement evolve..." [BH]

"If you combine Chuck Berry, Mississippi John Hurt, Doc Watson and Curtis Mayfield, that's my style. But I'll never play as good as any of them!"

JESSE

THE DEVIL

HUNTER

EAGLES OF DEATHMETAL

DESERT ROCK



Featured: Rockerverb 100 MKII amp and PPC412 cabs

ORANGE
AMPLIFICATION

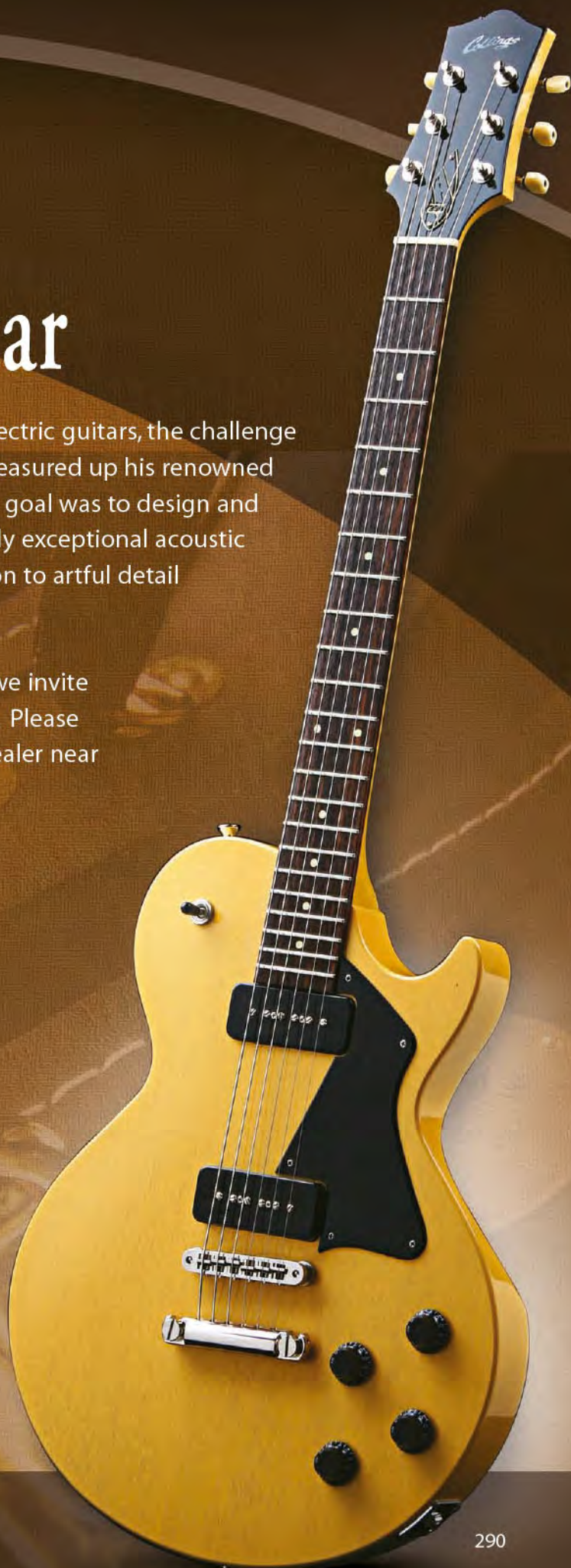
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orangeamps.com

photo: Barna Nemethi/Monica Birladanu

serious guitar

When Bill Collings set out to build electric guitars, the challenge was to craft instruments that fully measured up his renowned reputation in the acoustic world. His goal was to design and build electric guitars with consistently exceptional acoustic qualities and the meticulous attention to artful detail that continue to set Collings apart.

From all of us at the shop in Austin, we invite you to experience a Collings electric. Please visit our website to find a Collings dealer near you... or just give us a call.



Collings

collingsguitars.com 01227 832558

290

Feed**back**

Your letters to the *Guitarist* editor. Drop us a line at guitarist@futurenet.com – you might even win a prize!

Star letter



KORG

Each issue's Star Letter wins a Korg Pandora Stomp – an ingenious compact multi-effects with a wealth of options that's worth £119! www.korg.co.uk



IT'S NOT A COMPETITION...

Dear *Guitarist*, I recently made a trip to a local jam night, which I shall not name in case this letter is taken as an insult – which I assure you is not the intention. For the first part of the evening, I sat listening to a fantastic house-band set, filled with incredible lead from two very talented guitarists, feeding off of one another and using the energy to fantastic sonic effect. However, once the house band left the stage, hell broke loose. It turned into this disheartening dick-swinging competition, with two guitarists thrashing their guitar necks like they were 14-year-olds ogling scenes in *Baywatch*. I'm not a hater of fancy guitar trickery, but I detest competition on stage, especially when the loser is the audience.

Admittedly, this was just a jam night, and certain people on stage had not played together before, but this sort of squabbling happens too often. Some guitarists treat anything as a competition to play the fastest or come off as the best, which to me, and many other gig-goers I'm sure, can be a massive turn-off. So, next time you find yourself on a stage playing with another guitarist, leave the ego in the practice room, open yourself up to what they're playing, and work together to produce something that the audience will enjoy.
Joe Partridge, via email

While we would hesitate to knock anyone brave enough to have a go at an open-mic or jam night, the sound of self-indulgence is fatiguing to the ears. The most famous solos can usually be whistled easily from memory and bear endless listens – such as Walsh and Felder's outro solos in *Hotel California*. Why? Because they have memorable melody at their core, not aimless doodling. If you can't sing or whistle most of a solo you've just played, you may be over-indulging.

STRAPPING LADS

Dear *Guitarist*, I note that reader Michael Arnold, in his letter published in issue 388, refers to how unsatisfactory it is to wear a guitar high up on one's chest. I suggest he take a look at some early Beatles videos to see how high a certain Messrs Lennon and Harrison used to hold their guitars!

Adam Payne, Sydney

Like one's choice of attire, strap height is a deeply personal matter, Adam. In the early 1960s, of course, many fresh-faced pop hopefuls wore their straps high. But can readers suggest who might hold the all-time Guinness record for extreme strap height – at both the high and low ends of the scale? Surely Johnny Ramone is in with a good chance at the 'low' end, while Tom Morello prefers to wear his high and mighty, so to speak. Can anyone beat them?

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Dear *Guitarist*, I was interested to read Dave Burrluck's article in issue 386, regarding youngsters building their own guitars. My interest in music is as a guitar teacher and semi-pro musician; however, my day job is as a teacher of Design Technology in a local school.

Over the years, I have had many students, both boys and girls,



We wish Peter Stone had taught us when we were at school!



Learning to set up your guitar can change everything – but go carefully

who have made their own electric guitars as part of GCSE and A-Level coursework. The enthusiasm of a student building something they really want is highly motivating, and often these students would exceed expectations because of this. A number have gone on to work as professional musicians and some as craftsmen, working with wood. The creative process can be a transforming thing, be it in wood, music, or in this case both. I would encourage those who have thought about DIY guitars to give it a go. There is nothing like the smile on someone's face when they plug their newly built guitar into an amp for the first time... and it works!

I have attached some pictures of guitars my students have built, some from exotic timbers, some from old science lab bench tops!

Peter Stone, via email

Thanks Peter – I'm sure all of us who ended up making letter racks in our technology classes wish we'd made one of these instead! More power to your budding luthiers.

IT'S A SETUP!

Hi, I've been a reader and subscriber for a couple of years now, so firstly thank you for producing an excellent magazine that I look forward to every

month. I always enjoy your letters section, and thought I might share with you some practical learning that I have undertaken.

When I first started playing guitar some 17 years ago, I remember being wholly unconfident. Not just in my playing but in the handling of the instrument as well. I was nervous about the simplest of things – even tuning or changing the strings. Over time, these fears have been lessened or defeated entirely (though I still wince a little inside when tuning the top E!).

Since starting down this path, so many other things in my life have changed, not least becoming a teacher. Part of this role requires me to encourage students to step outside of their comfort zones to address difficult problems. To go and discover tools and processes, and then use these to deal with problems in a way that lead to greater understanding and insight.

At about the same time that I started teaching, I also began working on my own guitars. Friends of mine had taken their guitars to various guitar shops for the magical 'setup', but had come away either unhappy with the result or, in the worst case, with a truly unplayable instrument. I resolved to spend some time and effort learning about what this setup entailed and how to go

about doing it myself. Through lots of reading and research, I came to realise that a guitar setup, like many things in life, is completely subjective. Part of the problem that my friends had been having was a lack of communication with the people doing the work. Fixing or setting up a guitar is not like having your car serviced – you can't just drop it off at the mechanics and pick it up later, knowing all will be well.

But instead of learning how to better communicate my guitar set-up needs to a shop, I opted to continue my investigation into undertaking the process myself. My first time adjusting the truss rod on an Epiphone acoustic scared the living daylights out of me. But having done it once, my confidence grew and the results spoke for themselves. My guitars played better, and pretty soon my friends began to bring their guitars to me rather than the shop (I think the fact that I didn't charge may have helped...).

I feel that sometimes it is worth looking to solve your own problems rather than expecting others to know how to solve them for you, and that time spent learning a skill is always time well spent. It's also worth remembering that the 'specialists' all needed to start somewhere, and that everything is subjective. There is no perfect

setup, the important thing is that it's perfect for you.

Mark Radford, via email

While a degree of care is required when you start getting your hands dirty and tweaking the setup of your own guitar, it can be very liberating – and change your relationship with guitars in general. From that moment on, you gain an extra sense of what possibilities each guitar has within it, beyond the set of attributes it had when you bought it. But let it be said that there's a reason why the services of professional techs cost money: experience, well-honed skill and the right tools will usually mean your guitar's ills, if it has any, are diagnosed correctly and adjusted swiftly and appropriately. Provided, as you say, you can articulate what it is you want and the tech is competent.

When you embark on performing your own setups, however, a degree of trial and error is involved. So read widely from trusted sources, ask advice from luthiers, and proceed carefully – and maybe don't start on your most treasured guitar! How about buying a cheap second-hand instrument with a few 'issues' to fix and learning the ropes?



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Guitarist Magazine

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WISH LIST

Photography by **Neil Godwin**

Casimi C2 Signature

£10,000

You'll need to get to Cape Town, South Africa to meet the guitar-building duo behind Casimi guitars. Head luthier is one Matthias Roux, aided by Matthew Rich, both performing musicians who studied and worked at South Africa's Maingard Guitars before joining forces for Casimi.

This breathtaking instrument is an example of the C2 Signature Grand Auditorium, developed originally for Rice as a highly evolved all-rounder to cover live, studio and unplugged use. It was built as a showpiece, not originally intended for sale, and so has "everything thrown at it," says Roux.

We have a solid Engelmann spruce top over a stunning African Blackwood back and sides. The union of the two timbers is smoothed by ebony bevels, firstly to the forearm area, echoed in the lines of a belly bevel on the back. There's a subtle rounding-off to the back of the deep cutaway around the heel area; a quick glance wouldn't mark it out as a 12th-fret neck-to-body join, but indeed it is.

To the front, the Florentine cutaway has an inner, Venetian-shaped inlay of flamed and red-stained maple, that runs around

the entire perimeter, both front and back, punctuated with abalone-inlaid, sculpted and contoured ebony around the soundhole. Even the sides are inlaid with more red and natural maple coachlines, all of which contributes to a sense of continuously flowing lines, contours and shapes; it's an ergonomic and aesthetic delight.

Befitting its all-rounder status, the body is 16 inches wide and a shade under five deep. It's braced relatively traditionally in an X-style with tone bars, albeit heavily scalloped, sculpted and shaped to the nth degree; the whole thing weighs just 2.4kg/5.2lbs. The result of all this is a spectacular sound that spans a number of apparent contradictions; subtle yet powerful, clear yet warm, intimate yet projecting. You can imagine it in the hands of a modern fingerstyle master such as Andy McKee or Tony McManus, but those of us with more mortal talents have plenty to enjoy across pretty much any style you could muster.

This is a thoroughly breathtaking instrument in every respect, not least the price! 

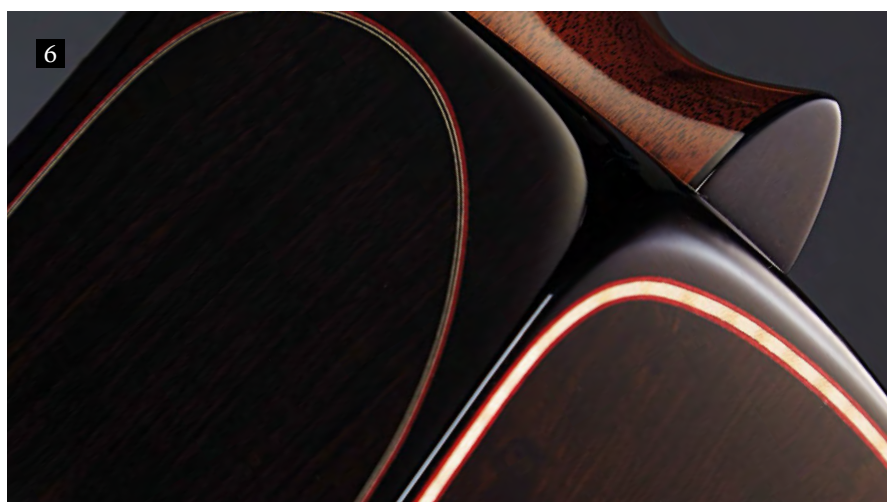
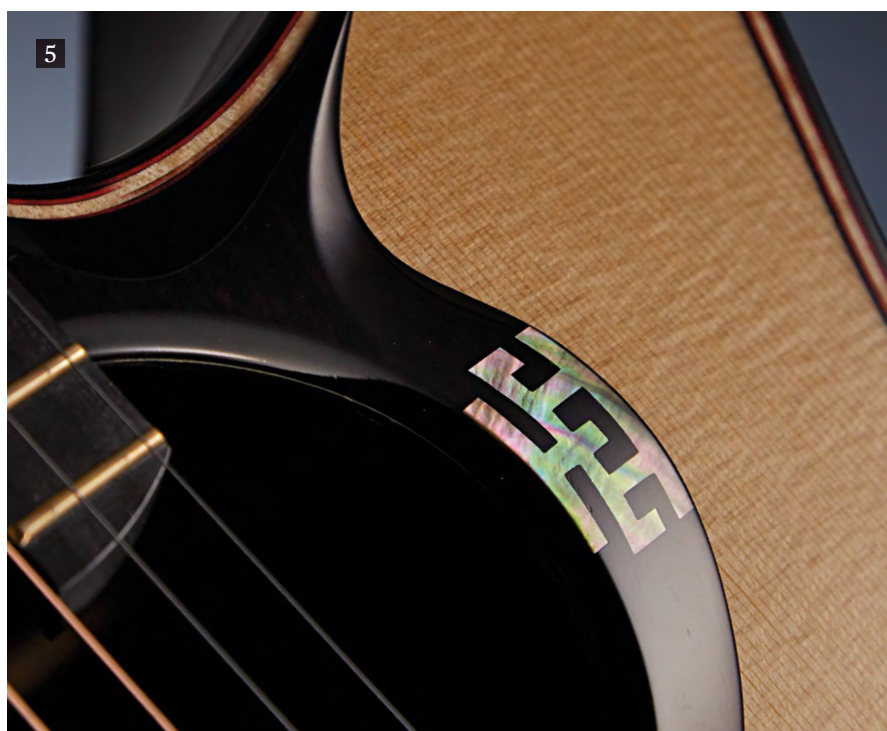
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1. The striking headstock is designed as a simplification of the traditional slotted headstock to reduce mass. It's swathed in ebony all around, featuring yet more flamed- and red-stained maple
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3. The pinless bridge design is unique and undergoing a patent application, so that's as much as we can say about that!
4. Solid African Blackwood back and sides, with ebony bevels and painstaking inlays. This is guitar-shaped art, no question
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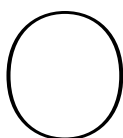


Boz Scaggs

Panorama

★★★★

429 Records



**Id-school R&B
with soulful
chops and
impeccable
songcraft**

We spend a lot of time, in the guitar press, celebrating athletic displays of soloing technique. But what a pleasure it is, too, to hear absolutely spot-on, soulful rhythm guitar supporting songs of substance, heart and style.

Such is *Panorama* by Boz Scaggs. If the name isn't instantly familiar, Scaggs was guitarist in Steve Miller's band for the latter's first two albums, *Children Of The*

Future and Sailor, and went on to record a string of solo albums that slickly channeled Al Green, Muscle Shoals and a host of Texan bluesmen. This culminated in his hit *Silk Degrees*, from 1976 – with the musicians who would later form Toto as his backing band – but not long after he dropped out of sight, taking a break of many years from music. We're happy to say he's back, coaxed out of criminally early retirement by Donald Fagan of Steely Dan, with whom he now plays in yacht-rock supergroup The Dukes of September.

Scaggs is clearly on a roll because 2013's excellent



Memphis was a beautifully warm and gritty soul-blues outing – and *Panorama* continues in the same vein. Recorded in Nashville and propelled

by the wonderful Ray Parker Jr's chops on rhythm guitar, what we get here is a classic blend of wounded-heart soul, as on *Love Don't Love Nobody*, and slick, grown-up funk, as on Scaggs' cover of Al Green's *Full Of Fire*. Guitar-wise, we're often reminded of the smolderingly effective sound of Bobby Womack and tonally it's a Fender playtime, with all those tight little fills and gorgeous rhythm parts chiselled out neatly with single-coil snap

and slink. That said, Scaggs does often play a 335-like semi made by the late luthier Taku Sakashita. Overall, there's less of the arid, gritty blues of 2013's *Memphis*, and a bit more soul-searching – we'd recommend a listen to both to get a feel for Scaggs' understated but so-classy style.

Scaggs is in fine voice, too, his characteristic humble and heartbroken Texas drawl sounding even more characterful in the Indian Summer of his career. If you're looking for a record to warm you through the winter months this is it.

Standout track: *Full Of Fire*
For fans of: Al Green, Bobby Womack, Donald Fagan, BB King



On the Record



ALBUM: *The Killer Instinct*
STUDIO: Rock Falcon Studio,
 Franklin, Tennessee
PRODUCER: Nick Raskulinecz

"We wanted this to be a big step up from the first album, so we took a little more time with the drum sounds, the guitar sounds, all that stuff"



Black Star Riders

Thin Lizzy alumni Scott Gorham and Damon Johnson tell us about duelling banjos and the dangers of swinging from chandeliers...

The Sessions

Damon Johnson: "It was just like being at a summer camp."

Scott Gorham: "You had to drive into the hills to get to this studio, which was almost like a log cabin. The song that was most fun to record was *You Little Liar*, which was almost like *Duelling Banjos*. Nick is always trying to get you out of your comfort zone, so he said, 'Hey, why don't you guys trade guitars?' I said, 'There's no f**king way in hell'. Damon uses much heavier strings, so right off the bat, that was not gonna happen. We worked hard. Three weeks is a short

time to do an album, so it was straight down the line. I don't think I could swing from the chandeliers anymore, anyway!"

The Guitars

Damon: "It was like being in a vintage guitar shop. I think we had 30 guitars – I'm not exaggerating. Every day, Nick would be like, 'Okay, we're gonna do the solo on *Blindsided* – what guitar are you gonna play?' And I'd go, 'Well, let's see... I think today I'll play the Korina Explorer'. The main guitars were my #1 Les Paul – which is a premium Classic Plus with Honey Burst top – along

with Nick's bad-ass late-70s black Custom and a Flying V."

Scott: "Damon likes to experiment. I'm more old-school. On the rhythm tracks, I'd use Nick's Custom, then for lead and harmony stuff, I'd switch back to my Les Paul Axxess. Some people think it's sacrilege to put a Floyd Rose on a Les Paul. Well, I like the fact that it's there if you want to use it. I've seen well-known players drill into their Standards – and I do think that's a mistake. Y'know, if you want a Floyd, get a guitar that actually has one, rather than spoiling a £5,000 guitar."

The Tones

Scott: "Nick stressed the fact: 'Don't bring any amps, because I have f**king everything'. I had Engl send me up a 100-watt amp, just in case, but I ended up only using it on one track. We used old JCM800s and 900s, Rectifiers, and Nick also had this modelling box [Fractal Axe-Fx]. He would be flicking these amps on and off like this mad professor. We also used the Memory Man, the Dunlop Jerry Cantrell Wah, and old favourites like the Tube Screamer."

Damon: "There was my mainstay, a 50-watt Wizard Vintage Classic, for that



Damon with
his white Les
Paul Custom

Malcolm Young tone. I've also got an old '71 Super Lead, and Nick has the best JCM800 I've ever heard. There was no method to the effects. Nick literally had a blue tupperware box, and he'd dig in there like a toybox and pull out some beat-up, jacked-up old Boss pedal. We used the Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress and Big Muff, just going with the vibe."

The Mix

Scott: "One of the things I love is Nick's production. He's a musician, not just a button-pusher. We recorded analogue and digital, and he got a great sound for everybody. You can hear all the instruments."

Damon: "Once we'd spent the first few days with Nick, it was like, 'Okay, this guy completely has his s**t together'. We wanted this to be a big step up from the first album, so we took a little more time with the drum sounds, the guitar sounds, all that stuff. It's not a cluttered sound: you can hear the distinction between the bass and the electric guitars. Who knows what a modern rock record is supposed to sound like in 2015? But I think that's what we've made. It has a timeless element. At the same time, I think it sounds contemporary."

The Lessons

Scott: "On the last record, we still had our road faces on,

so basically we walked in, bolted the gear down, Jimmy [DeGrasso, drummer] counted us in and we did a song a day. This time, we were determined not to go that way. We didn't record live. This record was done in more of the traditional sense, where we would put down a basic guitar track, the drums after that, Robbie [Crane] put his bass on – then Damon and I would just attack it.

It felt really good to go back to that system. It gave me some breathing space. With [2013's] *All Hell Breaks Loose*, it was like, 'You'd better get it right, because this is it...'"

The Verdict

Damon: "I don't think I could be happier, bro, with the songs we're writing and the sound we've developed."

Scott: "Well, obviously, the youngest child is always gonna be your favourite, but with *The Killer Instinct*, I really think that we've bumped things up a few notches from the first album. There's probably only a couple of spots where I'd want to go back and change some things. But it's always gonna be that way. I'm always gonna walk away from an album saying, 'God damn it, I wish I had just five more minutes on that...!'" [HY]



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Albums

Our pick of the finest fretwork committed to wax this month...

The Aristocrats Culture Clash Live

★★★★

BOING Music



Guthrie lets rip live with lordly chums

A holy trinity of virtuosity. The Aristocrats are Guthrie Govan on guitar, Bryan Beller (Dethklok) on bass and Marco Minnemann (Steven Wilson, Joe Satriani) on drums. Genres are mashed, speed limits crashed and minds warped in a blizzard of ultra-chops. From the trad-jazz-on-speed of *Louisville Stomp* to the ribald rock of *Sweaty Knockers*, it's delivered with panache and formidable technical prowess. Prepare to be awed. [JD]

Standout track: *Louisville Stomp*

For fans of: Frank Zappa, Steve Vai, Feodor Dosumov

Dave Kilminster ...And The Truth Will Set You Free

★★★★

Killer Guitar Records



Nuanced, virtuosic rock from a dazzling player

Dave Kilminster is a former Guitarist Of The Year winner, who now plays with Roger Waters and Guthrie Govan among others. This album reveals him to be a fine songwriter, too, fusing sophisticated Steely Dan-style arrangements on tracks such as *Thieves* and *Cassiopeia*, with playing that is tasteful and dazzlingly deft. It adds up to an absorbing, intelligent album. [JD]

Standout track: *Thieves*

For fans of: Guthrie Govan, Steely Dan, Skunk Anansie

Dan Mangan + Blacksmith Club Meds

★★★★

City Slang



Woozy grandeur from Vancouver folkie 'gone electric'

Renowned in his native Canada as a solo acoustic troubadour, *Club Meds* sees Mangan step into a full band with maturity and confidence. Amidst a stormy seascape of acoustic and electric guitars, moody electronica and creative rhythms, Mangan's weather-worn vocals are the star. An unexpected gem. [CV]

Standout track: *Kitsch*

For fans of: Radiohead, The National, Elbow

Blackberry Smoke Holding All The Roses

★★★★

Dixiefrog Records



Southern-fried country-rockers step up

For their fourth studio outing, Blackberry Smoke enlisted the services of Pearl Jam producer Brendan O'Brien. As a result, *Holding All The Roses* feels like the band's tilt at the big time, with the kind of layered vocals, greasy guitars and high-budget sound that didn't do The Black Crowes much harm in the 1990s. [CV]

Standout track: *Living In The Song*

For fans of: The Black Crowes, Aerosmith, Zac Brown Band

Carl Carlton Lights Out In Wonderland

★★★★

Caroline



Grizzled songcraft with tidy, tasteful fretwork

If you haven't heard of him, German-born guitarist and producer Carl Carlton has worked with some greats over the years, from Robert Palmer to Joe Cocker. Here, he's doing things on his own account, and the substantial, gritty songcraft throughout shows Carlton has class. From the Springsteen-esque *Moonlight In New York*



Dave Kilminster blends stellar chops with songcraft

to the grizzled soul of *Cool My Heat*, it's enjoyable, tasteful and mature fare backed by tidy, effective playing that supports each song perfectly. [JD]

Standout track: *Moonlight In New York*

For fans of: Bruce Springsteen, Mark Knopfler, The Rolling Stones

Two Gallants We Are Undone

★★★★

ATO Records



San Franciscan duo make welcome return

Adam Stephens and Tyson Vogel have wowed audiences for over a decade with their intense fusion of folk, rock and country-blues. Stephens' remarkable lyrics and intricate fingerpicking are still the band's trump cards, and album five sees them blend the raw indie-rock of 2012's *The Bloom And The Blight* with the rootsy desolation of their earlier work. [CV]

Standout track: *Invitation To The Funeral*

For fans of: Neutral Milk Hotel, Mississippi John Hurt, Bright Eyes

Michael Casswell Complaints About The Noise

★★★★

Valley Cat



Instrumental flights of fusion from session ace

From the moment you open the album sleeve and see veteran session guitarist Michael Casswell posing beside a Klon and a beaten-up Strat, you have an idea what's on offer here! *Throw Me A Bone* kicks things off with a torrent of wah-scorched solos replete with trem gargle – it's accomplished, but we've been here before. We're in more intriguing territory with *Slide Over Me* and *Force of Nature*, with their Jeff Beck-esque lead lines, which are the high point of a spirited album of instrumental rock. [JD]

Standout track: *Slide Over Me*

For fans of: Jeff Beck, Joe Satriani, Steve Vai

Zun Zun Egui Shackles' Gift

★★★★

Bella Union



An original long-player with myriad influences

Zun Zun Egui (the name is Basque for a group of trees) were formed in Bristol in 2008 by Mauritian singer/guitarist Kushal Gaya and Japanese keyboard player Yoshino Shigihara. Now a five-piece, the band fuse Tropicália, punk-funk, Afrobeat, Ethio-jazz and no-wave into a sound that's both very much their own and considerably more accessible than first impressions might suggest. In addition, there's inventive guitar woven throughout. [CV]

Standout track: *African Tree*

For fans of: Public Image Ltd, Fela Kuti, Battles

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CADILLAC BLINDSIDE

Blending heavy rock and bluegrass beats, barn-storming Nashville three-piece The Cadillac Three seem to have sprung from nowhere. In reality, it's been a lifetime coming...

Words *Matthew Parker* **Photography** *Will Ireland*

The story of Nashville's country-fuzz trio The Cadillac Three begins, as with so many southern bands, with that institution of country radio, the Grand Ole Opry.

"There's The Ryman," explains Cadillac Three frontman Jaren Johnston. "That's the church of country music, and that's downtown Nashville. They used to do six months at The Ryman and six months at The Opry, though they're both technically 'The Opry'. The other Opry was across the river, where I grew up, in East Nashville. At the time, there was a big amusement park attached to it called Opry Land and it was bigger than life. There's this big red barn, a big stage and these church pews behind the band that face the crowd. As a kid, I would come and sit in the church pews behind my dad when he was playing drums, and you'd see 3,000 people out there watching you."

Jaren's father, you see, was in the enviable position of playing back-up to just about every country great that rolled through the Opry's venerable doors, and the young

musician understandably took full advantage of the situation.

"Dad would bring me along because it was cheaper than having a babysitter and I loved it there," he explains. "He'd just turn me loose backstage. It was a very influential time in my life. You were walking around backstage and seeing Garth Brooks play for the first time and just falling in love with the whole thing."

The country dream lasted throughout his childhood and saw him meet the likes of Alison Krauss, Faith Hill, Don Williams, Clint Black and Shania Twain before the onset of early teenage angst brought both metal music and guitars crashing into Jaren's life.

"I think my first two cassette tapes, that make a lot of sense for why I'm doing what I do, were Skynyrd's *Greatest Hits* and Metallica's *...And Justice For All*," he recalls. "They were the only two tapes I had, so I would just listen to those over and over and over again."

These two bands – while both Hall Of Famers in their own right – don't

necessarily make the most natural of bedfellows. The Cadillac Three's talent, therefore, lies in their ability to take the essence of country and bluegrass and marry it with the raw, riffy power of grunge and heavy rock. A case in point, debut album *Tennessee Mojo* is snotty, almost punk, in its delivery, yet lyrically it worships country and southern rock's holy trinity: whiskey, women and the south.

"When we first started this band, we just said, 'We're going to do what we want to do and we're not going to go to anyone else,'" explains Jaren. "If people come to us, that's great. But you can pull yourself in so many directions trying to fit in, and we don't want to be a member of someone else's club."

After the trio's wearing major label experience with previous band American Bang (six years of A&R meddling, resulting in only one diluted, disappointing album to show for it), Jaren is keen to ensure their latest endeavour remains uncompromised – and their simple instrumentation is a direct result of that ideal. It's just drums, ➤



"It's weird, it's a catch-22 for us, because you want to get your songs out there, but also you want to give your band the biggest chance, too"

guitar, vocals and pedal steel (albeit cleverly split, via two volume pedals and a couple of amps to handle bass duties).

Even Jaren's rig – Fender Joe Strummer Telecasters and Gibson SGs run through Budda amps with just a Boss Blues Driver and a slapback delay in the chain – is reflective of a minimalism not often associated with country and southern rock's grand line-ups.

"If you look at all of those [big southern] bands, notoriously there were like six or seven members," says Jaren. "Like Marshall Tucker, The Doobie Brothers, The Allman Brothers, 'Skynyrd – there are nine people in that band and two back-up singers! We're kind of doing the opposite of that."

Some country purists will no doubt consider it sacrilegious, but from Johnny Cash to Steve Earle, southern music has often required a kick up the breeches from an outlaw-type in order to update itself. Jaren himself has a regular sideline writing

for a formidable roster of superstars, including Keith Urban and Tim McGraw, so is better placed than many to judge the state of the scene.

"Tom Petty said it best in that documentary they put out a few years ago, *Runnin' Down A Dream*," says Jaren. "He's a big old country fan and he said, 'Country music these days is just a bad college alt-rock band with a fiddle'. It's not all of it, but I thought that was really funny, because – to an extent – I think that's very, very right-on. There are a lot of things happening in country that I'm very proud of – like Eric Church and Keith Urban and, obviously, I work with a lot of those guys – but country music's very important to me because it's pretty much my life. It's what I do."

It's an almost contradictory position, where Jaren finds himself earning both a decent living as a songwriter to the establishment and becoming part of a

growing, almost leftfield, threat to its status quo with The Cadillac Three. "I kind of wished I'd kept *Raise 'Em Up*, which is a Keith Urban song [I wrote]," admits Jaren. "But I'm nominated for a Grammy for it, and I don't know that we would have got that chance with our band this early. It's a catch-22 for us, because you want to get your songs out there, but also you want to give your band the biggest chance, too."

Nevertheless, The Cadillac Three are getting their chances – in both the country and rock spheres. "We did Sonisphere and played The Grand Ole Opry in the same month [this year]," surmises Jaren.

"It was the two different ends of the spectrum! [The Opry] was crazy. Dad had the night off and he was out there [in the audience] – so, this time, I got to take him. We all teared up a little bit – and then we got hammered drunk afterwards!" **G**

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Rhodes Well Travelled

Imagine the phone rings and you get the call to play the highest-profile musical happening of 2014 alongside a bona fide national treasure. It's all in a day's work for one of Britain's finest art-rock guitarists...

Words Chris Vinnicombe **Photography** Joseph Branston

Like many English musicians of his generation, David Rhodes' musical journey began in art school. "It's all a terrible mistake!" he laughs, "I thought I was going to be a carpenter. I went to art school, but I thought the only way I'd make a living was as a chippy. It all went a bit wrong on that front..."

In many ways, it all went a bit right for Rhodes, whose early forays into experimental music led to more than 30 years as Peter Dinklage's go-to guitarist, as well as myriad other collaborations with artists as disparate as Roy Orbison and New Order, not to mention two long-players with his own, eponymous band. In addition, the affable guitarist was also enlisted for guitar duties at *the* musical event of 2014: Kate Bush's return to the stage after an absence of 35 years.

Bush sold out 100,000 tickets for her 22-night stand at Hammersmith Apollo in a matter of minutes, but preparation for the performances in August and September began many months earlier. "I was in Germany with Peter in October 2013, and

were doing shows," David explains. "I got an email from her manager and he said, 'Could you call me tomorrow?' Actually, I didn't know what it was about... I had no idea what was going on! I called him as soon as I could and he said, 'Kate's going to be doing some shows, would you be interested?' I went, 'Hmm, yes'. It was great.

"I guess I was enthusiastic, and he said, 'Can she call you tomorrow?' I said, 'Of course'. I get up at 9am, have breakfast, and she calls at 9am, English time. I'm back in my room reading the paper and my phone rang, and you know when those unknown numbers come up and you think 'Oh f**k, it's more PPI or the bank,' it's never good! I picked up the phone, and I went, 'And what do you want?' She went, 'Oh, it's Kate'. We got talking and I spent 10 minutes apologising. It wasn't good. It wasn't the best start!"

Happily, sailing was plainer from there on in: "We just had a little bit of email contact leading up to Christmas 2013. She gave me the list of songs and [bassist] John Giblin was also going to be doing it, who's worked with her a lot over the years. Actually, he

was also on Peter's third album, so I've known John for a long time and we've done a lot of things over the years.

"I still hadn't met Kate, and I didn't meet her until February 2014. I finally met her, and she started describing what the show was going to be. I was like, 'Blimey'. I'd been learning the songs over the New Year just because I had nothing else on, which was nice. I was quite far inside the material. In March, we did three days, myself, John and her, just running through a few tunes, which was great.

"She has a studio at her house, and she sat at a piano. Actually, she just sang into a corner for a bit, not out into the room, which was quite strange. You're playing with her and she's got her back to you! So that was a bit odd, but we had the multi-tracks up as well for a lot of the material. She still has everything on tape. It took a while to get transferred into Pro Tools.

"Kate's very analogue, which is nice. We just ran through a few tunes. There was one tune, *Prologue* from [2005 album] *Aerial*, for which I was tasked with playing one note for a few minutes, which is great. ➤

Interview David Rhodes

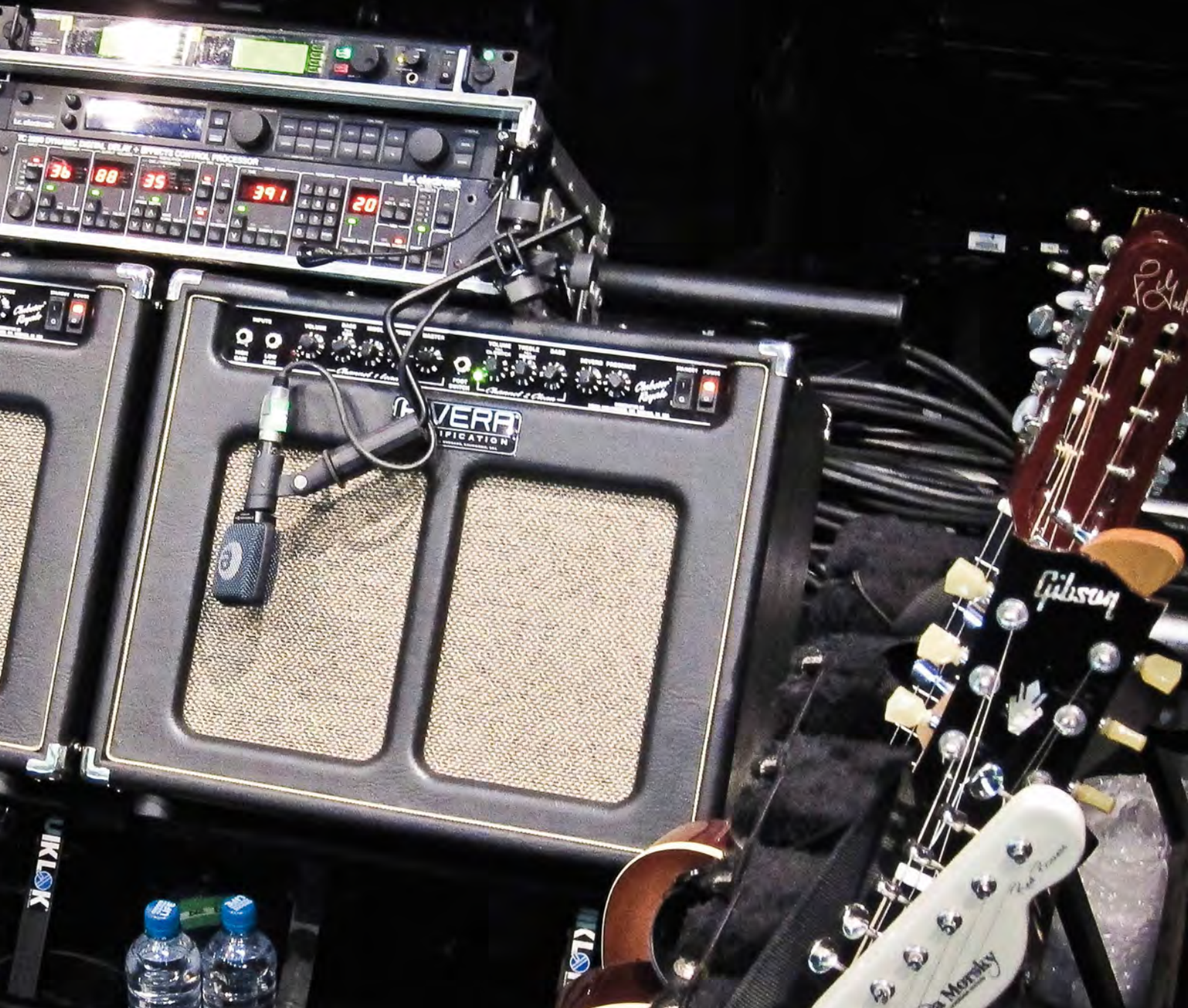
1. For the Kate Bush shows at Hammersmith Apollo, David used a pair of Rivera Clubster Royale combos running in stereo, with an old TC Electronic 2290 digital delay unit that's "on its last legs" as a key component of his sound. "I first got the 2290 back in the early 90s; there was a tour that Peter did called *Secret World*, which was a big whizz-bang show again. I'd often run two amps. In the old days, I used to have a Boogie and a [Roland] JC-120, so I'd have the attack from the Boogie and the chorus from the Roland, and that

seemed to work quite nicely. Then I just started using different things..." Rhodes favours the Sennheiser E906 when it comes to cabinet mic'ing, finding the Shure SM57 "a bit too pointy"

2. When he's playing with Peter Gabriel, David's amplifier of choice is another Rivera, the Knucklehead Reverb

3. David's pedalboard was put together by TheGigRig's Daniel Steinhardt. "He's great; a real enthusiast. He normally does his boards right to left, but I like mine left to right, so that's a pain in the arse!"







I like doing that. She was sitting playing the piano and I was thrumming away on F#. She started singing and a tear came to my eye. I'm in a room, she's singing beautifully, John's playing amazingly. I could be an observer. It was lovely."

Taking Shape

Band rehearsals began in April, resumed in June and continued through July and August until the shows commenced. "The whole thing was intense," Rhodes remembers. "With those big shows – it's the same with Peter – there's not a lot of room, well there's no room, to change anything. Once you've done things and they've been approved, you kind of go, 'That's it'. Things get pretty much set. That's just the nature of things. It's more of a production, and certain things have to happen at certain times."

We wonder how specific the legendary songstress was when it came to guitar parts. "Kate was tougher on the keyboard players than on the guitar section [which also included Icelandic guitarist Friðrik Karlsson]," David reveals. "I think she felt there were signature sounds from the keyboards that she wanted. A lot of the material really isn't that guitar-heavy. She let me do pretty much what I wanted in most things. Then, just occasionally, she would call me up on a sound and say she

"She was sitting playing the piano and I was thrumming away on F#. She started singing and a tear came to my eye. I'm in a room, she's singing beautifully, John's playing amazingly. It was lovely"

wanted more wobble on it, or something like that. It was pretty loose, actually.

"There are specific little parts, and there are quite blurry things that we tried to figure out that her husband, Dan McIntosh, played; he's done all the guitars for the last 15 or 16 years. So I was sometimes trying to unpick these really quite simple things, but actually there's quite a lot of clash and rub in them and we had to find out what works.

"There'd also be the keyboards playing those chords. So we were trying to hear it and figure out what the rub should be. And then if the rub is sweet enough to still use live. That was the most awkward thing. Often, it's not actually complicated material, but there are lots of odd bar lengths and just dropped bars here and there, additional bars, stuff like that. In fact, we all had to know it from the vocals and just know the songs, but she's incredibly consistent. She doesn't make mistakes."

When it came to the performances themselves, the format began with

something that most rock musicians would recognise and was then transformed: "The first part of the show was half a dozen songs just played flat out, and we were near the front of the stage. That was very traditional rock concert – singer down the front and the rest of us lined up between. Then, in a noisy tune called *King Of The Mountain*, there was meant to be, like, a storm swept up. So Omar [Hakim, drums] was playing pretty crazily and so was I, and it was quite noisy. Then the whole stage or the risers were all pulled back to the back of the room, and then the whole scene dropped in front of us. Then it went very West End. They could have just buried us in an orchestral pit. It's great to be part of [the show] and supporting the visuals and stuff. It was fun."

Rhodes's contribution to the show was visual as well as sonic, with one section requiring the guitarist to don an elaborate bird mask. "That was right near the end and I wore it with pride!" he laughs. "Searching for Trill! We knew we were going to have to



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Solo Flight

From bird masks to flying without a parachute...

2014 also saw Rhodes release a second album under the David Rhodes Band monicker. Featuring bassist Charlie Jones and drummer Ged Lynch, with David handling all guitars and vocals, the 10-song, self-titled set was recorded with Tears For Fears producer Chris Hughes, with whom David had been in a band when the pair were teenagers.

"We came up with a plan, which was to make it quite a traditional record, and then hope that the moods of the songs would give it enough variety, but that it should be muscular at times, and delicate at other times," David reveals. "Chris was very good. He'd talk about the temperature of a song, and not to overdo it because you want people to listen to it again. So, sometimes, Jed would be very thrashy, which was exciting for us, but then Chris would go, 'Actually, do you know what? You need to bring that back because it'll just be too much.' So he was just cleverer at gauging what's cool and what isn't."

After the Kate Bush dates, Rhodes and his band hit the road: "Going from the cosseted environment of Kate, where you have a tech looking after you, to going on the road with two other people, doing all our own driving. It's very different..."

Visit www.david-rhodes.uk for more information on The David Rhodes Band

wear bird masks, that had been discussed a couple of months before. There's a guy who designed all the masks. They're quite beautiful objects and he's quite an obsessive character. So we knew about the masks, but it was only about four days before the preview show we did that Kate said, 'Oh during this song, David if you can put on your mask and we'll do a dance.' 'Oh, alright'. Unfortunately, I'm shameless! I do like that sort of thing and it's fun."

The Show Must Go On

The Hammersmith performances were received with almost universal acclaim, but inevitably there was no way that 22 dates would pass without a handful of technical

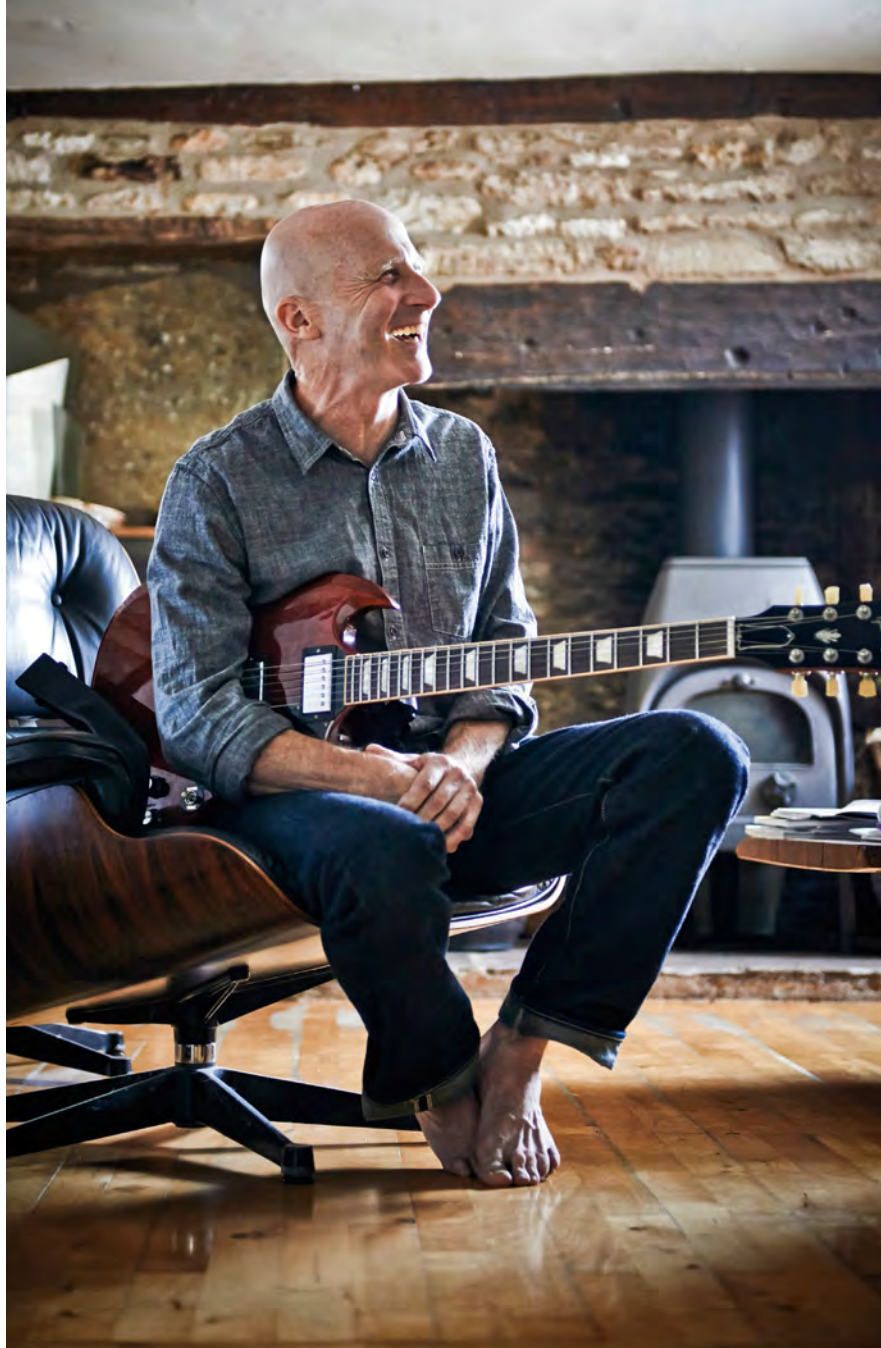
hitches. "I had two horrors, real horrors," David shudders. "One was on the preview night. Because of access to the stage, I just had a rack of guitars next to me on my riser. There was one tune that I started along with a keyboard. I picked up the wrong guitar, which was a semitone out. I couldn't hear the keyboard, so I ploughed on. It was just like, f**king almighty, and Kate was looking unhappier and unhappier, and she went, 'No, we've got to stop'. I went, 'Oh f**k'. Just in the heat of the moment, I picked up the wrong instrument. I had no harmonic reference.

"Then there was something quite late on in the run. I've got two Gibson auto-tune guitars, one is the first-generation Robot

Les Paul and the other is an SG with a Min-E-Tune. They're very handy when I'm doing solo things or when I don't have a tech; when there's nobody there to help. There's a tune of Kate's called *Somewhere In Between*, off *Aerial*, which starts with a lovely guitar arpeggio, like three chords, and then goes into a little figure. We'd just done an acoustic song before that, and I went back and picked up my guitar and it must have been knocked or something. As I went to play my arpeggio, the strings were just floppy, and it's like, 'Oh f**k'.

"My tech could see the lights on the Min-E-Tune, and apparently they were all flashing. I was trying to play this thing and it had just undone itself! Of course, I went into a blind panic and I forgot what tuning it should have been in, so I picked up the Les Paul, which again was a semitone wrong, and I started to play the first note...

I recovered it in the end but it took about a minute and a half of no guitar. So you have those wonderful moments. Two's not bad though, with all those shows!" **G**



"We knew we were going to have to wear bird masks, that had been discussed a couple of months before. Unfortunately, I'm shameless. I do like that sort of thing and it's fun"

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EBB & FLOW

The Endless River, says David Gilmour, is the final Pink Floyd album. Yet its roots lie in 20-plus year-old recordings. *Guitarist* asks co-producer Phil Manzanera about its source and meandering soundscapes. Plus, Gilmour's fabled guitars up close and explained...

WORDS
MICHAEL LEONARD

PHOTOGRAPHY
JOBY SESSIONS

“Do you want to listen to some stuff?” Roxy Music’s Phil Manzanera is recalling the seemingly mundane moment when David Gilmour was sipping tea in Manzanera’s kitchen. Gilmour’s casual question happened to kickstart *The Endless River* – the final Pink Floyd album.

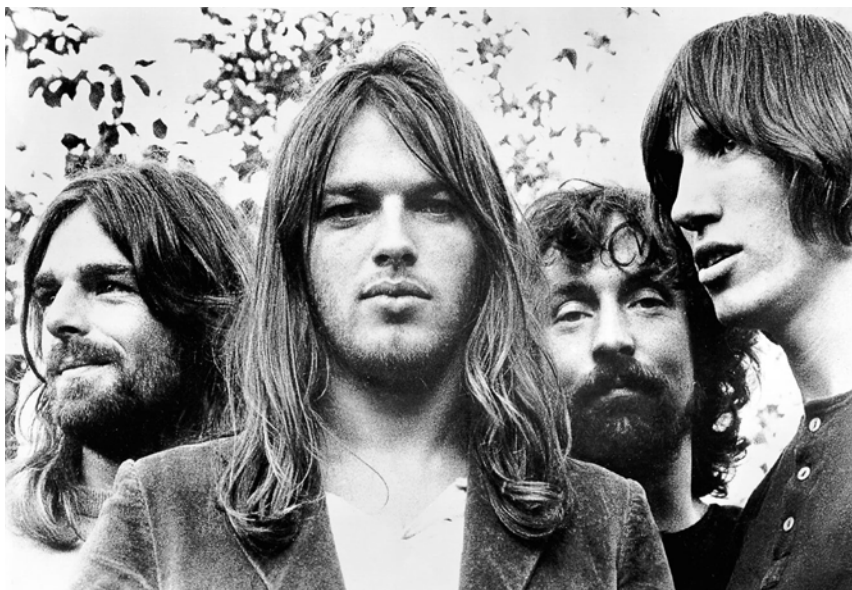
Having Gilmour around for tea is not ordinary for most, but for Manzanera it is. The two legendary guitarists go back 40-plus years. They are now “next-door neighbours” in Sussex homes. Manzanera, today in his Gallery recording studio in London, says he has become David Gilmour’s “extra pair of ears”. He has co-written with him since the 1980s, as well as co-producing Gilmour’s sublime *On An Island* album of 2006. But the Manzanera/Gilmour axis goes back further.

“It was 1968,” Manzanera recalls, “when I was taken by my brother to have lunch. My father had died in Venezuela in 1967, and my mother moved back to England. I was at boarding school in Dulwich, south London, and I suddenly announced to my mother that I wanted to be a professional musician. My mother was a lovely lady from Columbia, but knew nothing about ‘pop music’.

“But my brother was at Cambridge University. He called me: ‘I know this guy who’s just joined a band. Let’s go and ask him how you can become a professional musician.’ And it was David Gilmour. After our lunch, David went off to Abbey Road to work on *Saucerful Of Secrets* – the only Pink Floyd album that has both Syd Barrett and David on it.

“David can’t remember what he said to me. I can’t either. But it must have been bloody good! I got myself into Roxy Music five years later, and we found ourselves at Air Studios, Oxford Circus. Pink Floyd were in Studio 3 mixing *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Roxy were recording *For Your Pleasure*. We just reconnected: ‘I’m in a band now, David – Roxy Music!’ We stayed in touch.”

Manzanera co-wrote, with Gilmour, the song *One Slip* for Pink Floyd’s 1987 album *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*. After co-producing *On An Island*, Manzanera joined his touring band. But Manzanera’s role on *The Endless River* was even more pivotal.



RE-ROLLING THE BIG SPLIFF

Like seemingly every Pink Floyd album, *The Endless River* has somewhat convoluted origins. After cutting *The Division Bell* (recorded 1993, released 1994), Floyd – Gilmour, drummer Nick Mason and keyboardist Rick Wright – had hours of left-over jams and improvisational pieces of music, composed mostly by Gilmour and Wright. Album engineer Andy Jackson later mixed an ambient ‘album’ of this music, notionally called *The Big Spliff*, and Floyd did consider releasing it. Eventually they decided not to.

But when Gilmour more recently asked Manzanera to “listen to some stuff” from those days, it soon went beyond *The Big Spliff* mix.

“There was no great plan,” says Manzanera. “But soon I was on (Gimour’s boat studio) Astoria, having a listen, and him asking me what I thought. Andy Jackson was there, and he talked about *The Big Spliff* mix. I immediately said, ‘Stop there. I want to hear every single bit that was recorded’. It was 20 hours of music. Andy thought I was joking. I said: ‘No, I’m not!’

“I didn’t even know *The Big Spliff* existed. But Andy had all the details of recordings, big notebooks, so we just went through it all. I did

ABOVE Pink Floyd at a London publicity shoot from 1973, the year of their masterpiece, *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, five years after David Gilmour had advised Phil Manzanera of Roxy Music on the best way to make it in a band. Gilmour and Manzanera remain friends today

“I immediately said, ‘Stop there. I want to hear every single bit that was recorded’. It was 20 hours of music. Andy [Jackson] thought I was joking. I said: ‘No, I’m not!’”

PLAYING GILMOUR'S GUITARS

PM: "I've played them all, I think. The Black Strat, the 0001 White Strat... I never sound like David, though. Playing live, I've doubled-up his parts from albums. It's funny. I had to play his intro chords of *Wish You Were Here* live on the very guitar he recorded it. I hadn't learned how to play it, really. And every bloody hippy backpacker knows how to play that! But I had to sit down with David and ask: 'how, exactly, do you play it?' I had the feeling that everyone in the audience knew how to play it, and I could be getting it wrong. Even halfway through the tour, I was still asking David: 'Can you show me one more time?' I eventually got it right. When I was mixing *Live In Gdańsk* (Gilmour's solo album, with Manzanera on supporting guitar), I made sure I got my best take."

ABOVE Phil Manzanera with the red Firebird he used throughout his time in Roxy Music. Manzanera's 'proof of concept' guitar parts showed that there was further potential to be unlocked from material recorded during *The Division Bell* sessions

at first think, 'What the hell am I going to do with this?' But I just pulled out any bit that I thought was good, and hadn't been used before, and made my own notes. It was six weeks of just listening, again and again. So I had a lot of time to think."

THINK: FLOYD

The Endless River, despite its disparate sources, flows out as the most 'Floydian' album since the 1970s. Apart from one track, it's instrumental. The late Rick Wright's keyboards loom large, punctuated by the gliding guitar solos of Gilmour. It's 'post-modern', if you like. It's *musique concrète*. Without getting too Spinal Tap, it is musical threads made into a tapestry, finally made 'whole'.

"In my head was: what would a Pink Floyd fan like to listen to?" says Manzanera. "I'm a Pink Floyd fan, of all different eras, so I tried to

get an idea of all those different eras with the music we had. I love early Pink Floyd with Syd Barrett. I love *Echoes*. I love *Live At Pompeii* for the groove. Obviously, I love *Wish You Were Here* and all of it.

"So I went through all of this unreleased music. And I found that, with Rick especially, there were bits I just loved. Example: he hadn't used the Farfisa Duo Compact keyboard since *Wish You Were Here*... until these 1993 jams. Rick hadn't revisited his famous 'French horn' sound, and that was also really good.

"It became a case of organising. It sounded like classical music, to me. So let's have four movements, right? Andy Jackson and I were going: 'let's put that bit in there, this bit in here.' With modern technology, these things are possible. If the key isn't right, you can change it. You can change the tempo.

"It was great, but at the time I was only working with what was available. And I took some diabolical liberties.

Continued on p76 ➤

W E L C O M E T O T H E M A C H I N E S

We join David Gilmour's long-serving tech Phil Taylor to examine in full detail the instruments, amps and effects that the Pink Floyd legend used to summon up the rich soundscapes of *The Endless River*

David Gilmour clearly likes water. His famed houseboat studio, Astoria, is moored on the Thames near Hampton. Today, *Guitarist* is at his other studio, Medina, near Brighton and overlooking the Channel. Aptly, it was these two venues that were employed to record the bulk of the final Pink Floyd studio album, *The Endless River*. Gilmour has declined to talk any more about *The Endless River*: he thinks there's been "too much fuss" already. But he has sanctioned his guitar technician Phil Taylor to guide *Guitarist* through some of his studio set-up. Prepare to be bogged.

Medina is smaller than you may expect for a musician of Gilmour's legendary status, but size isn't everything: Medina is bespoke to Gilmour's needs. "It was a derelict storage unit when David bought it three years ago," Phil Taylor explains. Once the building's 'shell' had been renovated, Taylor got to work on bespoke appointments. The control room's mixing desk is hand-built and on wheels so Taylor can access its rear for servicing. Gilmour has his own custom control room rack, with switching that allows him to turn on any combination of amps in the live room – if he fancies recording in the control room. Even the wiring of Medina is custom-designed by Taylor.

He explains: "Because David records with single-coil guitars – his Strats, his Teles – particular attention was paid to the electrical installation to avoid creating mains power 'radiating' and interference. The entire building was wired in shielded mains cable. All earthing is connected to the regular main 'company' earth – except the audio-technical earth, which has two 60-foot copper rods sunk into the ground. All lighting systems are run in 12 volts DC, and the technical studio power is derived from a balancing transformer."

THE BLACK STRAT

We start our studio tour with what is unarguably David Gilmour's most celebrated guitar – which is something of a 'mongrel'. He bought the Fender from Manny's Music store

in New York in May 1970 during Pink Floyd's USA tour. Gilmour had, just weeks earlier, bought his first black Fender Strat at Manny's, but it was soon stolen, along with much of Floyd's rig. Floyd cancelled their remaining US dates, but David again visited Manny's and bought this before returning to the UK. The Black Strat was first played by Gilmour at the Bath Festival in June 1970. Serendipitously, Phil attended the show as a punter – four years before he began tech'ing for Floyd. Gilmour replaced a lot of his older Fenders in the 80s with Fender's then-new 1957 reissues, and The Black Strat was on display at the Dallas and Miami Hard Rock Cafes until 1997, after which Gilmour played it for Floyd's 2005 *Live 8* show. It remains his most iconic instrument.

HARD KNOCK CAFE

As mentioned, the Black Strat hasn't remained by David Gilmour's side continuously. Phil Taylor explains that it was a switch of vibrato system that prompted the guitar's temporary fall from favour. "When we put the Kahler on, it seemed to deaden the sound somewhat. It just fell out of David's favour when the new '57 reissue Strats came out. So David agreed to loan the Black Strat to the Hard Rock Cafe.

"We were on tour with Pink Floyd, '87 or '88, and went into Dallas Hard Rock Cafe and saw it on the wall. [Editor's note for Black Strat spotters: it was later displayed in Miami's Hard Rock Cafe]. In time, we asked for it back.

"I called the Hard Rock head of memorabilia, but they said, 'But we own it, now.' No you don't! I had all the paperwork that said it was a loan. So we eventually got it back. But it came back with the *Animals* tour-case missing, the knobs gone, and filthy. But I put it all back together and put it in the studio." Would David play it? He was used to the Red Strats by then.

"David didn't use the Black Strat again until I suggested he try it at the *Live 8* rehearsals. 'Oh, alright!' David says. But when he started playing it again... we suddenly went from that EMG sound to the single coils. That was it. He was back to the Black Strat."



PHIL TAYLOR

Phil Taylor has been David Gilmour's guitar technician since 1974. He is also Pink Floyd's warehouse and studios manager. He oversaw Fender's 2008 introduction of the David Gilmour Signature Stratocaster. Taylor's definitive book, *The Black Strat*, is now in its third updated edition.

www.theblackstrat.com



MOD SQUAD

As a close-up examination of the original Black Strat attests, it is a much-modded guitar. It was originally a Fender 1968 to '69 alder body with black painted over the original Sunburst. It had a Fender late '60s maple neck (large headstock) and 21 frets, but a rosewood-necked version features on *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Wish You Were Here*. To muddy the waters still further, it later had a Charvel neck fitted! When it came back from Hard Rock Cafe, it was damaged and with knobs missing, so the mods have continued. See the opposite page for a rundown of the current features of this changeling Strat. In terms of prior discography, this guitar features on some huge tracks, including *Money*, *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, *Comfortably Numb* and many other Floyd classics. See it in the concert film *Live At Pompeii* when it was 'new' for Gilmour, with white scratchplate.

1. Examining the guitar, you can clearly see evidence of old routing work, which has since been filled in for the once-fitted Kahler vibrato

2. In the 70s, Gilmour fitted an edge-mounted XLR socket to send the signal to a fuzzbox then back to the guitar – also since removed and filled in

3. The black scratchplate was added in 1974 and was custom-made, as Fender didn't then make them. The 5-way pickup selector (replacing the original 3-way) arrived in 1985. The mini-toggle just below the pots allows independent switching-in of the neck pickup "for a more Jazzmaster-like tone"

4. The neck and middle pickups are dated 1971 – while the whole pickguard assembly comes from a '71 'bullet truss rod' Fender Strat in 1973. Meanwhile, the bridge pickup is a Seymour Duncan custom-wound SSL-1C, installed in 1979. It replaced a DiMarzio FS-1

5. After the tonal properties of a Kahler vibrato fitted to the Black Strat were found wanting, the original three-spring vibrato was fitted to the guitar. Note the extensive

belt-buckling that the body's reverse has picked up during years of hard use

6. Currently, the Black Strat is fitted with a Fender 1983 '57 reissue C-shape maple neck (from one of DG's cream Strats) with 7.25" radius fingerboard and 21 vintage-style frets. Tuning is handled by Fender/Gotoh vintage-style machineheads

7. Note the shortened vibrato arm, which measures 4.25-inches. "They're nothing special. They're nothing special. Fender make these short arms now, but I originally just hacked the ends off. The arms are screwed in tight so it never 'flops', that's one thing. And David likes to have the end of the tip in the crease of his palm. He doesn't seem to plan whether he plays finger vibrato or arm vibrato, or a combination of the two, at any one time. But with a longer arm, he may have to play closer to the neck. That would be more of a separate action to David. This is more 'integrated' in the way he plays. He doesn't often play electric guitars without a trem"



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

SEEING RED

Like the Black Strat, the Red Strat has been extensively modded. Gilmour eventually replaced the single coils on his main Red with active EMG pickups – 1979-made forerunners of what became the signature DG20s (DG still employs the originals). The EMGs feature an EXP control boosting treble and bass and an SPC control, boosting the midrange for a humbucker-esque tone. Gilmour also added his 'custom' 4.25-inch vibrato arm. As well as being used on *The Endless River*, it also featured extensively on *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* and *The Division Bell* albums and tours, and some of *On An Island*. It was also used in solo live shows for *Shine On...*



FENDER CUSTOM-
MADE BARITONE TELE

PT: “David has a 1963 Fender Bass VI. It’s strung relatively light for a baritone. But it’s still a 30-inch scale, so I thought I’d get him a new one made. I wanted it to be more like a guitar, shorter scale, but it also had to have a vibrato on it. I talked to Fender, and they made two.

“They have a 27-inch scale, so between a guitar and a bass. You can put lighter strings on these, it feels very nice. But I had to change a few things – I put a Vibramate String Spoiler on the back-end of the Bigsby and replaced the electronics with Callaham Cryo electronics. I wanted to get as much detail out of the strings as possible.

“The strings were unbalanced on the regular Fender Tele pickups, so I got Ron Ellis to make some custom baritone pickups. I was very pleased, thought it was marvellous. But it sat here for a year before David even picked it up! Only for *The Endless River*, was it played. We were here with (co-producer) Youth, who said David maybe needed a more baritone sound. David shrugged and says, ‘Okay... have I got a baritone?’ Finally, he played it.”



ROGER WATERS' FENDER
PRECISION BASS

When Roger Waters exited Pink Floyd, there were several ‘band-owned’ instruments. One of them was this 1970s Fender Precision played by Waters. David Gilmour kept it.

PT: “This was the bass Roger had from 1974 to ’78. It was his main bass. It was played on *Wish You Were Here* and *Animals*, mostly. I replaced the pickguard to be black just before the *Animals* tour, 1976.

“Roger had three black basses – one with a rosewood neck, two with maple. But this was his main one. I just asked him if he fancied changing the pickguard to black, just like David’s Strat. Late ’76, I think. It’s a good bass. David plays it on *The Endless River*.”

“Roger had three black basses – one with a rosewood neck, two with maple”



1956 GIBSON
LES PAUL GOLDTOP

PT: “We got this because it had an original Gibson factory Bigsby on it. He has his ’55 (hardtail) Goldtop – that’s the one on *Another Brick In The Wall (Part 2)*. But David wanted a Bigsby one. And he didn’t want a modified one, with a later-added Bigsby. He played this a lot on *On An Island*.

“It’s got P-90s. The only humbuckers David uses are the Gretsch Duo-Jet – and although they are humbuckers, they sound more like single coil pickups. He also has a reissue Gibson Les Paul from about 2009, which has Rolph pickups and a Duesenberg trem.”

You can hear this guitar on *On An Island*’s title track, in the first part of the first solo. Note the P-90 pickups: “David generally doesn’t like humbuckers,” says Phil Taylor.

Key cuts for Gilmour Goldtops are the solo of *Another Brick In The Wall (Part 2)*, *Round And Around* and *Poles Apart* on *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, *A Great Day For Freedom* from *Division Bell*, *This Heaven* from *On An Island*, *Happiest Days Of Our Lives* and *One Of My Turns* (The Wall ’80 to ’81 tour).



1958 FENDER TWEED TWIN

1976 YAMAHA RA200
Rotary speaker with
Alembic preamp

WIRED FOR SOUND

"These were David's main amps on *The Endless River*," comments Phil Taylor on the beautiful array of vintage and modern amps in the studio's live room. "He also used the Leslie Studio 12 cab with the Alessandro Redbone Special 55-watt model."

The set-up is made more flexible by the addition of a rig that allows the amps to be operated from the control room (pictured, right). Note the Fender Tremolux and Champ amps.

PT: "If David wants to record in the control room he can, without being in the live room. This [effects] rack is not a mirror of his main rack, it's a system in its own right. But you can select the studio amps in the live space or

from here. He can use the effects in here, or play in here and send the signal to the effects in the live room.

It all means he can monitor what he's recording in the control room. He can alter the speed of his Leslie cabinet, or the speed of the Yamaha RA200, all from here.

"The Tim de Paravacini board (wall-mounted) is custom-made: 24 tracks into 12. Once David's selected his amps, he can then control the amp mics, too, plus a couple of ambient mics as well. And he can send all this direct to Pro Tools.

Is it complicated? "Not really. It's actually very user-friendly. David can come in, hit four switches and the whole place powers up. Ready to go."



1970s HIWATT SA212

ALESSANDRO
REDBONE SPECIAL

LESLIE MODEL G27 CAB



BLACK TO FRONT

In addition to the real thing, David began using two replica versions from 2008 onwards – a Relic (with all the battered bruising of The Black Strat) and a cleaner-looking NOS (New Old Stock) model. They're as close as most of us will get to the iconic original.

Phil Taylor explains, "Fender asked me and David about this over 20 years ago. But David just wasn't interested. But when they asked in 2006, David finally said: 'Well, what do they want to do?' Fender wanted to do 200 or so really high-priced models. But David didn't want to do copies of The Black Strat that were only available to rich people who'd buy it and just put it in their closet. If Fender were going to do it, David insisted it had to be of that same quality, but affordable. So there was a bit of negotiation.

"And David didn't want to make the guitar a limited edition model, either – he wanted it to be available over a number of years. So all credit to David for insisting that it wouldn't be a limited edition, and both the NOS and

signature versions of the guitar were all available at the same time."

Of Fender's replicas of The Black Strat, Phil Taylor adds: "Fender first sent a test guitar, which was quite interesting. Fender's master builder, Todd Krause, sent this guitar that had the side of the body removed in order to be able to swap out pre-wired pickguard assemblies in seconds to enable us to do pickup comparisons. They sent seven versions for us to try.

"I spent some time with David going through these until he was happy with the pickups in relation to his original. They do sound very close, though the neck unit he settled on was slightly brighter

"David was not so bothered about the exact replication of the body wear. It was left to me to ensure it was correct. When we finally had an acceptable prototype and we were happy with it, David said that he liked the idea of having one without all the wear – this became the NOS model. David insisted both were put on sale at the same time to give people the choice."

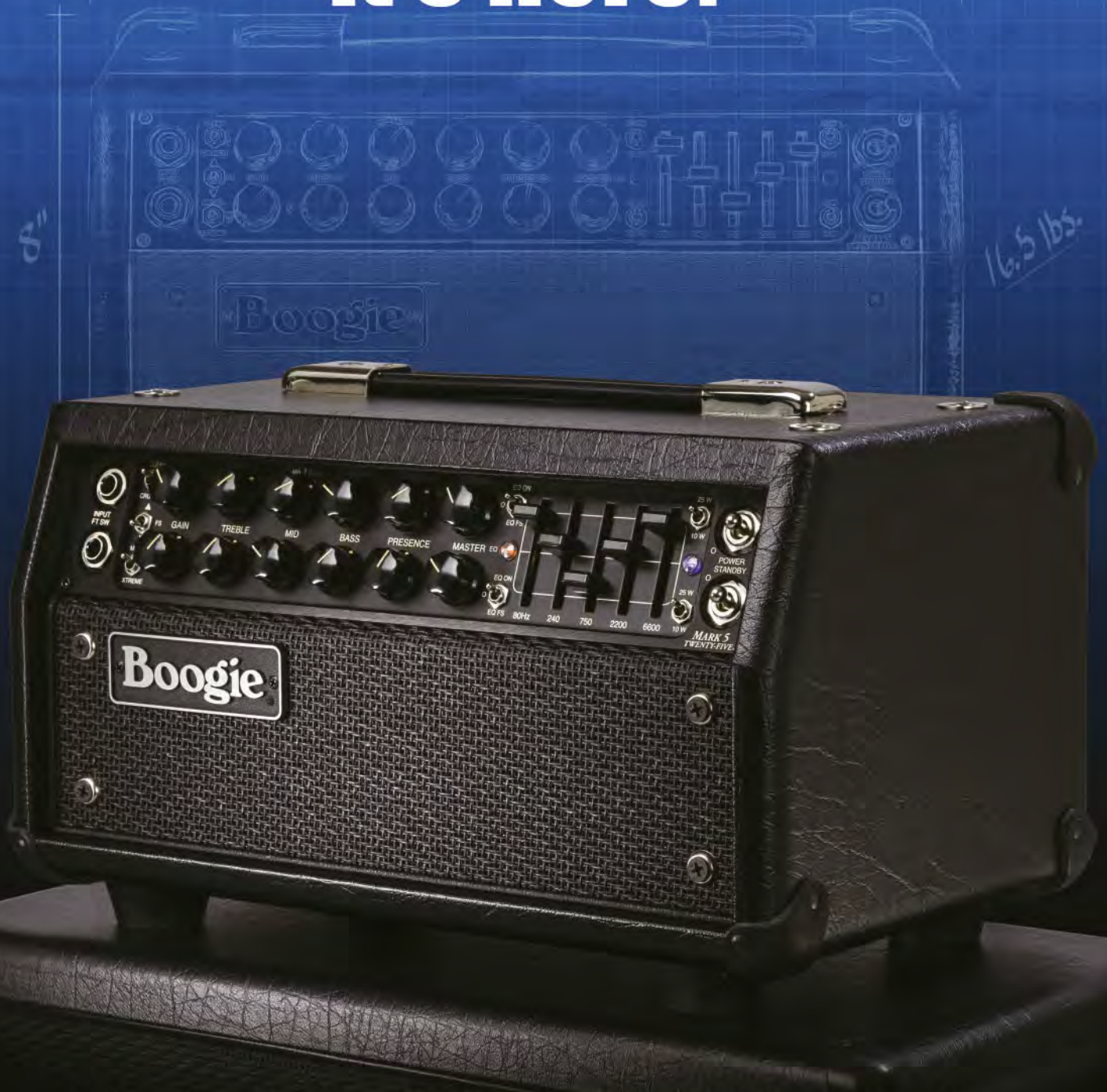
1. PT: "I don't know the exact date of this Fender Lap Steel Deluxe. But if David is playing slide now, it's usually on this. He doesn't play 'stand-up' with a slide on his finger, he just doesn't do it. The Fender is easier to sit down with and play." Gilmour also has an early 1940s Gibson EH-150 lap steel, played on *High Hopes* and *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, plus *Take A Breath*. A Weissenborn Hawaiian-style lap steel was played on the song *Smile*. On *Jam #166*, featured on the *Live in Gdansk* DVD, he plays a Rickenbacker A-22 "frying pan" lap steel

2. PT: "David bought this 1971 Martin D-12-28 second-hand off a friend of his. I don't know exactly when – '73 or '74 – but prior to *Wish You Were Here*, obviously." Note that Gilmour played the lead parts of the song *Wish You Were Here* on another six-string Martin

3. The Conn ST-11 Strobotuner has been a regular fixture of Gilmour's rig for years

4. This well-used but beautiful 1958 Fender Twin, complete with weathered tweed finish, formed a tonal component of *The Endless River*

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THE RED STRAT

Associated with post-Roger-Waters-era Floyd and solo work, Gilmour bought a bunch of new Fender Strats before his 1984 *About Face* solo album and tour, as he didn't want to take the Black Strat and others on the road. Purchases included a Fiesta Red 1983 '62 Reissue with white pickguard and a rosewood neck, two Cream 1983 '57 Reissues [see the current Black Strat neck] and a Candy Apple Red 1983 '57 reissue with white pickguards and maple necks. His main Red Strat is the Candy Apple Red guitar pictured on p68.

Phil Taylor: "We went up to the Arbiter warehouse in London and we tried them and bought a few. Very nice guitars. David just started using them instead of his Black Strat. For a long time, he was happy with that sound. Then again, David can get a good sound out of anything."

The '57 reissues are denoted v57 by Fender, but that refers to "Vintage", not the neck – these '57 reissues have C-shaped necks, not V-profiles. Got that?

"For a long time David was happy with that sound [of the Red Strat]. Then again, he can get a good sound out of anything"

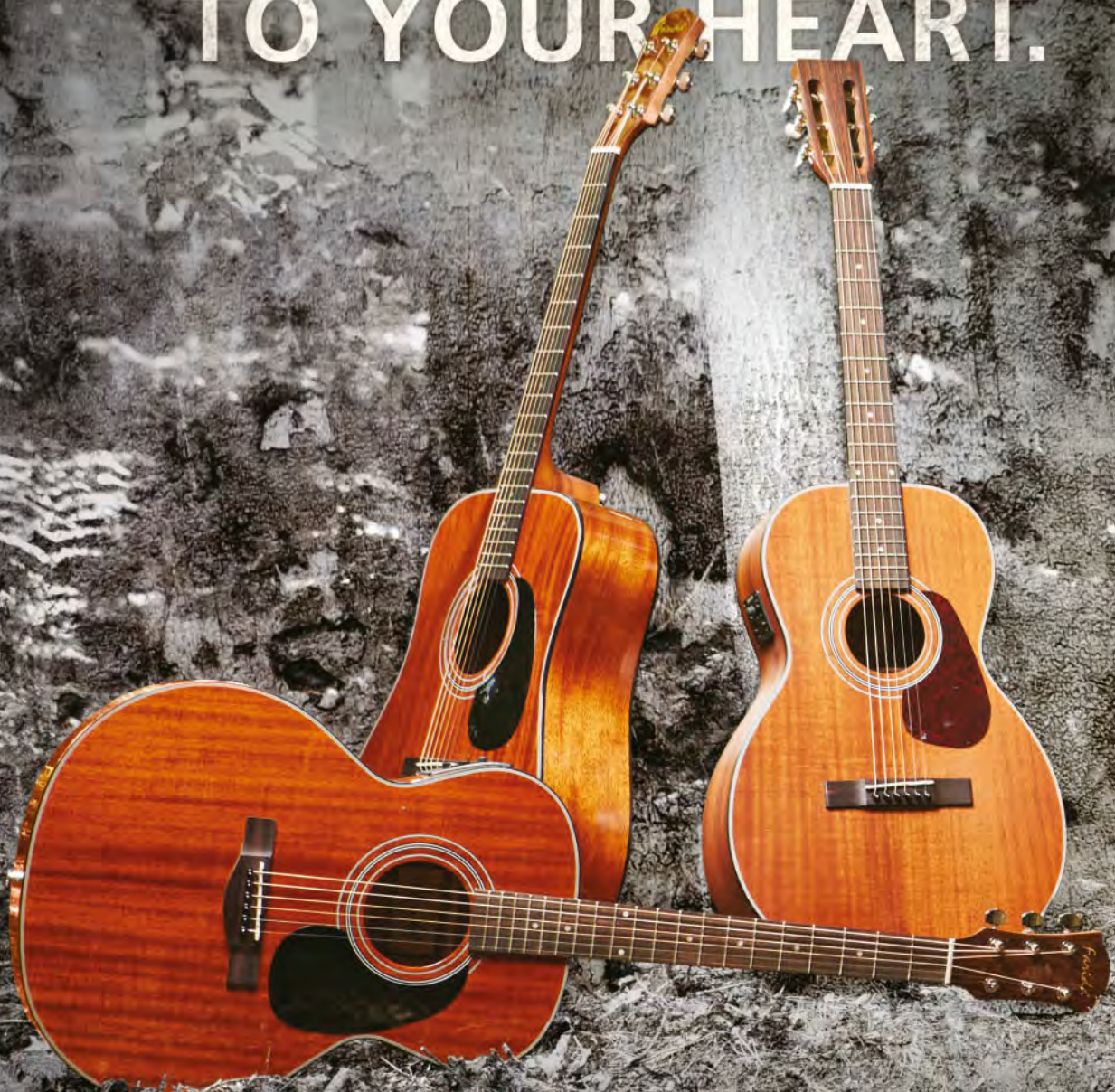
1. A number of Gilmour's go-to pedals are mounted on racks at hand-adjustable height in the live room, for convenience during use, but can be accessed from the control room, where – in case these weren't enough – a second, variant rack of pedals is located

2. Echo and reverb effects are central to Gilmour's sound, including this Binson Echorec 2 reissue that evokes the tone of vintage Floyd tracks

3. A custom switching system on the floor allows the racked pedals to be engaged easily via conventional footswitches

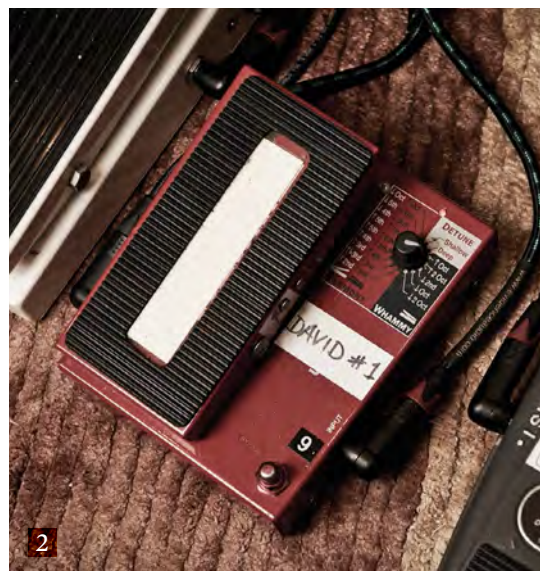


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Continued from p63 Something might have sounded like *Echoes* but with no rhythm. Okay, let's put on a beat. I found a recording of Nick (Mason, drums) just warming up in Olympic Studio and took a loop. I had tapes of Rick Wright playing the organ at the Royal Albert Hall from 1968. After six weeks, I had something."

Gilmour eventually put the proto-project in others' hands, also. Alongside Manzanera and engineer Andy Jackson, Youth (Martin Glover) was involved. Youth (ex-member of Killing Joke and The Orb, producer of The Verve) had also produced *Us And Them: Symphonic Pink Floyd* in the 90s: based on Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman's reworking of classic Floyd songs. Youth is a massive Floyd-head. It helped that Youth was behind 90s techno/house music duo Blue Pearl with singer Durga McBroom... who had also contributed vocals to Floyd's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*.

"It was Polly (Samson, author and Gilmour's wife) who suggested: 'Why don't you play this to Youth?'" says Manzanera. "Youth heard a couple of parts, and he just loved it. That got them excited. But David still didn't like some bits."

But Gilmour thought it had "possibilities". Nick Mason, says Manzanera, didn't know about any of this at the time. But Manzanera invited him to his Gallery studio in London and played him some of this old "stuff" that was slowly flowing into *The Endless River*.

"Lights off, psychedelic screen-saver on..." Manzanera laughs. "Nick thought there were possibilities for this, too. But that was always between Nick and David. We left it for nine months. But, eventually, they decided it could be a Pink Floyd album."

It was after this that Gilmour and Mason agreed: they would add new guitar and drum parts to complete *The Endless River*.

"David said they would have done this if they'd had the time back in '93. So that's what happened, in January 2014. It was only finished a few months ago. Many things have been chopped and changed."



Manzanera doesn't play on *The Endless River*. He did play, on the tracks he was trying to construct and make sense of, but knows better – when David Gilmour is around, you should let the captain take over. "I never try and play on Pink Floyd or David's songs. I'll play bass, keyboards, demos, I produce. I did record, but then it was all replaced by David. I think my role was showing there was a structure that could be achieved. And that could result in a 21st century Pink Floyd album."

"You couldn't have done this in 1993 because of the way technology has changed. It was all analogue, but now we use the studio as a palette, an instrument. It enabled us to weave the whole thing together. All the links between tracks are made of hundreds of little sounds we found on those jams. It's a real tapestry."

1. A custom switching unit that is used to select the amps in the live room – this can also be done from the control room

2. PT: "I'm sure *Guitarist* readers can work out what this 1990s Digitech Whammy pedal is on. At the 1993 recording sessions that became the basis of *The Endless River* – recording *The Division Bell* at the time – I changed a couple of pedals in David's set-up. Just so he had something else to try. He'd never used a Whammy before. But out of that came *Marooned* – which won a Grammy. And there are bits of Whammy on *The Endless River*. He generally uses it in the 'one octave up' position. And that's it. Is David playing slide, or is he playing a Whammy? Let's leave a bit of mystique!"

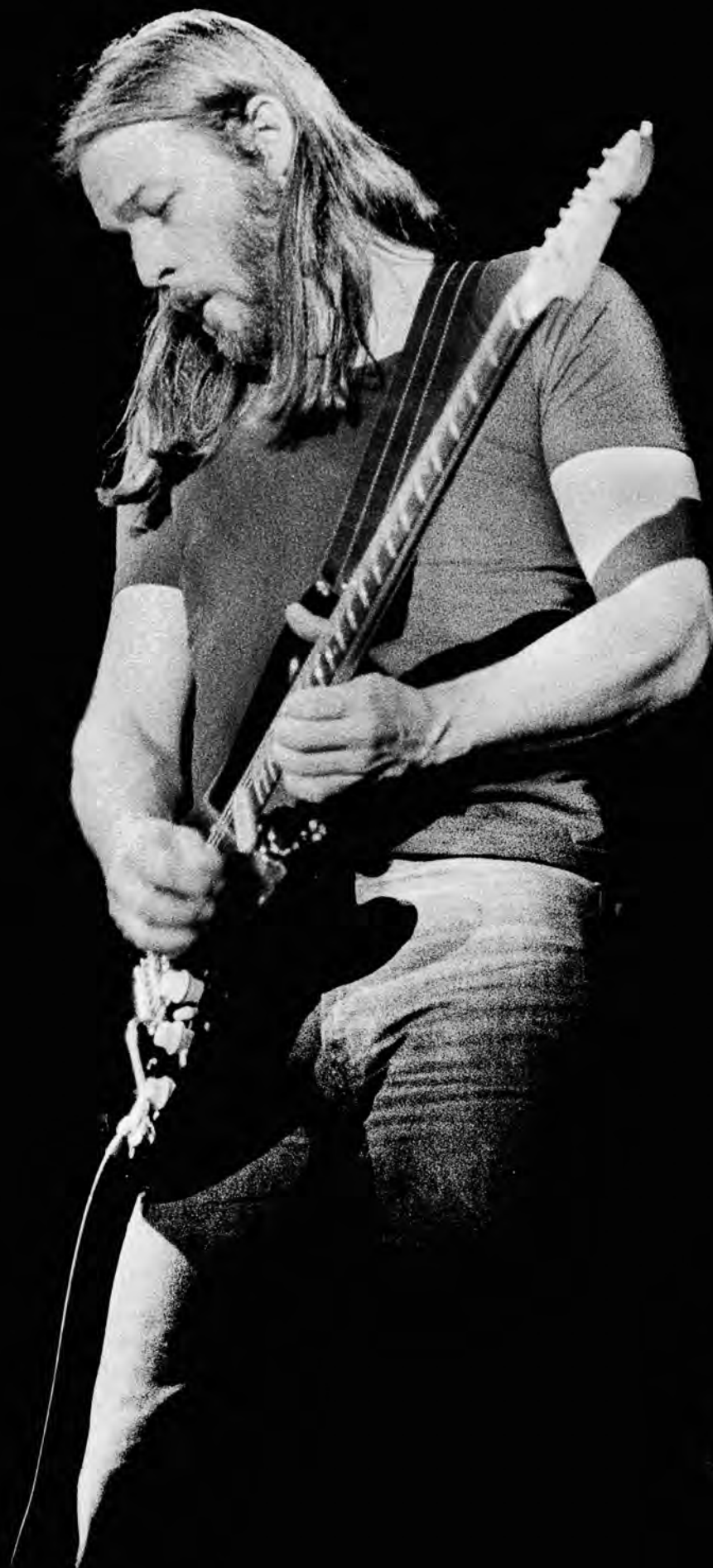
3. A vintage Magnatone 260 combo joins the Hiwatts and Fenders in the live room, further evidence of the regard in which amps by the US company, recently revived, are held

GILMOUR'S GUITAR VOICE

PM: "Does David realise he has a unique 'voice' as a guitar player? Yes, he does. He just doesn't make a big deal of it. I've always noticed he's got very thick fingers. I've got slim fingers. And I think Jimi Hendrix had big fat fingers! Strong hands. The difference in guitarists is often in the touch, to me. People write PhDs on the 'touch' of musicians, don't they? And David's ability to make his own sound is, I think, down to his touch."

It's blues-based, but echoey... and his sense of being 'in tune', finding the sweet spot of any note, is brilliant. "This is all difficult to describe, of course. It's intricate, if you want to analyse it. In a straight 4/4 beat you can play a note before the beat, in the middle, or after. Where to put the note, when to play, when not to play... David doesn't intellectualise this, of course. He just plays. We *all* just play. But he has something special. It's down to the touch. Nuanced. I've heard hundreds of people trying to play the solo of *Comfortably Numb*. No-one sounds the same. David owns that sound."

"He might do four or five takes on something. I'll listen, advise, and he's happy with that. When you improvise like David does, there's always a point when one can suggest things like: keep that part, but then lock it onto this part. But for *The Endless River*, David was actually very dedicated in 'constructing' his solos."





WEAVING A RIVER

Manzanera's use of the words 'weaving' and 'tapestry' are apt. Apart from closer *Louder Than Words*, there are no words: just sound that weaves in and out over four suites of music. Much of it highlights the contributions of late Floyd keyboardist Rick Wright.

As Manzanera notes, "Two people here – Nick Mason and Rick Wright – straddled the whole era of Pink Floyd. And I guess this album shines a light on Rick. David's guitar playing, singing, and Roger Waters' writing, were always talked about. But no-one ever really talked about Rick. And there were only four of Pink Floyd at any one time.

"But I do think Rick's choice of chords and sound provided a wonderful context for a singer or a guitarist to play. You can play simple notes, as a guitarist, if there's this wonderful ever-changing sound beneath you. You don't need to be John McLaughlin and The Mahavishnu Orchestra when you have that behind you. I think that has highlighted David's playing and tone. His sound needs to have that context."

And *The Endless River* serves up classic 'Floydian' guitar. It's *What We Do* and *Surfacing* boast archetypal Gilmour-isms. *The Lost Art Of Conversation* even has shades of *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*.

Manzanera: "In the back of my mind, I was always thinking: 'legacy'. It couldn't be opportunistic, it had to have thought, musicality and construction. It was like having a documentary point of view, the context of the music that these three people provided. And David worked a lot on constructing his solos to reflect that. To me, it bookends Pink Floyd's career. It's not all guns blazing. It's a chill-out



"To me, it bookends Pink Floyd's career. It's not all guns blazing. It's a chill-out farewell, maybe. It's a different, immersive listen"

farewell, maybe. It's a different, immersive listen. Not fashionable. I do think it's like classical music. But if you put in the time, you will drift off and have a fantastic listening experience.

"In this day and age, everyone's bombarded by 'singles' and playlists. I do it myself. But this is an alternative. It's like Brian Eno's ambient music in that respect. It's totally great for Pink Floyd fans. Whether anyone else likes it? I have no idea... 

1. The Hiwatt SA212 combo is a staple of Gilmour's recording rig. Powered by a brace of EL34s, it is fitted with Fane Crescendo drivers

2. A handful of picks tells you who's normally at home here in Medina



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When Eric Johnson, one of the most revered guitarists in the world, got “out of his comfort zone” to trade licks with jazz heavyweight Mike Stern in the studio, it looked like a clash of the titans. We caught up with Eric and Mike to talk about their new album *Eclectic* and pick the brains of these two modern masters – who are now firm buddies

Words Jamie Dickson



Eric Johnson and Mike Stern initially seem an unlikely duo. Johnson's the pioneer of a virtuosic yet gutsy style of blues-fusion guitar that Joe Bonamassa and many others have since emulated. By contrast, Stern (see interview, p88) is one of jazz guitar's most imaginative and energetic players. A former musical sparring partner of Miles Davis and Jaco Pastorius, he's "a real seeker on guitar", to quote Johnson. So what happened when the thinking person's shredder met the jazz maverick? The fine results can be heard on the duo's new album *Eclectic*. Ranging from rockabilly-meets-bebop wig-outs to serene tone poems, there's plenty any guitarist can learn from listening to Johnson and Stern's sparky interplay. Here, we catch up with both players to talk about tone, gear and how to become a better, more capable picker every day. We've also included a lick-by-lick tutorial (see p84), showing you how to get some of their signature techniques under your fingers. First, we discover Eric's top tip for learning jazz guitar in the "most efficient" way, how he sets up Marshall amps and why, despite his famed pickiness about vintage hardware, he's curious about modelling amps...

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX GRACE

How did you come to start playing with Mike Stern?

"Well, I worked on his record, *Big Neighbourhood*. He asked me to do a cut on it, and so we just kind of met then and did that song, and then decided, 'Well, we ought to do something some day'. We never planned anything, but then the Blue Note Club in Manhattan called up and said, 'Hey, you guys want to come and play a week in New York?' and we thought, 'Ah, that'd be fun', so we started to put a band together and just played the whole evening together."

What do you admire about Mike's playing?

"Well, firstly I think he's just a great songwriter – I love the ballads he writes. He's very sensitive and careful about writing a good composition. That's very important to him, and so I think the big picture is that it's about music and it's about the composition. And then if you can figure out a way to play some good instrumental soloing or whatever within that, that's all good. But you don't want to sacrifice or lose a song, and I think that's kind of the way he operates. So I admire that about him, and he's a great player. He knows just so much of the old-school Charlie Parker and Coltrane stuff. He knows it backwards and forwards."

Does playing alongside Mike, with his focus on jazz, push you out of your comfort zone to any degree?

"Well, yes. I mean, I think it pushes me to try to think more harmonically. And it's more fun to get out of your comfort zone, really, because I guess a comfort zone is just re-doing everything you know, over and over, and that is maybe not as stimulating."

A lot of players who start in blues end up wanting to venture into jazz, but don't know how to get started. What are your tips?

"Well, you know, really it's just about chord changes and playing the notes that are within those chords. And it's more about that than it is about playing lead and then putting chords on later. If you were to just re-think your thought process, to 'forget everything but chords', then the sky's the limit. You start to realise, 'Oh well, if you wanted to play lead, it's just about extracting the notes that are in those chords'. Then there are what you'd call 'passing tones', where there are notes not in the chords, but they're recessive notes that just lead into the dominant notes in the chords. So, really, if you come at it from a rhythm player direction and just study the





“I’ve got miles and miles to go to really learn what the heck I’m doing. I learn a little more each year, or if I’m around a really great jazz player like Mike, I learn a lot from them, but the more I learn, the more I see”

chord changes, that’d be the quickest, most efficient way, I think. You should also check out Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt and all the old guys, Kenny Burrell, Jo Pass... they play a lot of simpler stuff. Not simple, but not fast and furious, where you can’t get inside of it, you know?

“But I’ve got just miles and miles to go to really learn what the heck I’m doing. I mean, I learn a little bit more each year or whatever, or if I’m around a really great jazz player like Mike, you know, I learn a lot from them, but I think the more I learn, the more I see, you know? The path ahead to really assimilating more is just to get the chord thing together – because from that comes the soloing, which is kind of backwards to the way we often think about it.”

Did you and Mike record your parts separately – or did you play in the same room, trading licks as you might on a stage?

“Most of those solos are all live. We’d maybe go back and fix a little section here and there, but not a lot of it. So when we did start recording, we were playing solos live and everything – we tried to keep it as live as possible, with as few overdubs as possible.”

Does that give a guitar album more energy, in your view?

“Yes, it does, but also it’s me kind of wanting to go in that direction. I’m seeing a bit of the dead-end folly in the way I’ve made records over the years. I think if that becomes the way you always make records, where you



Eric with his Strat alongside his good friend Mike Stern with his Yamaha Pacifica

take years and you play everything 5,000 times, something gets lost. And I’m starting to hear that more and more, and so I’m thinking, ‘Well, the real antidote to that is to really become more live and spontaneous’. So I think going in that direction is just going to produce better music. I mean, there are solos on this record that I would have redone and maybe played them better. But rather than playing it 10 more times to make the solo better, why not keep walking forward – and just make your live performance better?”

What kind of rig did you take into the studio?

“I use pretty much the same thing all the time. The only thing I change is the amplifiers. It’ll be the same kind of



amplifiers, but I'll just scale them down wattage-wise. So with this thing with my four-piece, instead of using a 100-watt or 50-watt Marshall for dirty rhythm I use this 18-watt amplifier that Bill Webb built, which is really wonderful. It's kind of like an 18-watt Marshall on steroids or something. And then I use a 50-watt Marshall for lead instead of a 100-watt Marshall, and a couple of old Deluxe Reverbs instead of Twin Reverbs, so it's kind of the same set-up, just scaled down wattage-wise.

"The board, the pedals, are exactly the same. The only thing I do is I add a volume pedal when I play with Mike, because sometimes when he's soloing, I like to use the volume pedal swells for the rhythm because it seems to kind of add a kind of orchestral thing behind it."

Guitar-wise, was it all on Strats?

"Yes, except for I used an ES-335 on *Red House* and I used an ES-175 on *Tidal*."

How do you set your amps up, in terms of gain and EQ?

"Well, I use two different types of Marshalls. Usually, I'll use the earlier JTM Marshalls, like a mid-60s for my dirty rhythm tone – which is really more like a Tweed Fender. The circuitry in those is a whole lot like a Tweed Fender, where they have that really nice glassy top and a lot of bottom, and then I'll run those with the EQs on about halfway up, and the volume about seven or so, and then use a Fuzz Face on that, or whatever.

"But then for my lead tone, I kind of prefer the JMP circuitry, which is late-60s, because it has a little more of a mid-focus and it's gain-ier, so I can kind of articulate the sound a little bit more with this gain-y kind of middle sound, like more like a kind of violin thing, and then I use the Tube Drive on that. Oh, and I put those controls all the way up. I turn the amp on 10 for them. Actually, on that, I run the amp on 10 but I turn the tone controls down."

What is it you like about drive pedals, as opposed to just plugging straight in?

"I would like to just plug straight into the amp, they just don't have enough gain, you know, to get that real sing-y thing. So what I do with the two Tube Drivers, really, I'm trying to get the Marshall to stay as much like it sounds as possible, just with more gain. But then, also, I like using a fuzz tone – I like getting the kind of Hendrix thing – but you know, I love the way the amp sounds just straight in, if you just had more gain on it or something."

You're known for being quite particular about authentic, organic tone – so what do you make of the recent advances in modelling amps?

"I think it's a great idea, and the stuff I've heard is getting better all the time. To me, it doesn't quite work with what I like to do – there's still something missing to me. But I believe it's going to happen. It's kind of like digital recording, you know, it gets better all the time, and I think it's just a matter of the points of the sound at which you sample.

I'm actually doing a project with a company where they have a brand-new, revolutionary type of sampling, and we're going to do an experiment sampling some of my stuff, and see where that leads. I love the idea – I would love to be able to show up with two tiny amplifiers and have all the sound I wanted. It'd be great." 




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Dynamic Duo

STYLE FILE

We show you how to add some formidable jazz-rock licks in the style of Mike Stern and Eric Johnson to your repertoire

NOT many people would have predicted a collaboration between Eric Johnson and Mike Stern, but these diverse players have plenty of common ground. They were both heavily influenced by Hendrix, Beck and Wes Montgomery at an early age, blending these influences into their early fusion styles... Eric with the Electromagnets and Mike with Billy Cobham.

You can hear both the common ground and the huge diversity on the album *Eclectic*, so here we're going to look at some of the key aspects of each player's style. Tonally, they both like a meaty overdriven tone, but their clean sounds couldn't be more different. Compare Johnson's crystal Strat tones with Stern's neck humbucker and slightly detuned pitch-shifter effect.

Technically, both like to pick most notes rather than using legato, but there's a big difference between Johnson's elegant balance and Stern's ferocious bop-blues. Here are six short examples – three in each player's style, starting with Stern – to give you a taste.



© MAX CRACE

Example 1

MIKE Stern started out as a blues and rock player, and this is still clearly audible in his jazz and fusion playing. He has made use of plenty of funky bluesy riffs such as this one, and all three of our Stern-style examples fit this flexible E7 tonality.

Example 1: Mike Stern-style riff in E7 tonality. The riff is shown in standard notation and guitar tablature. The key signature is E major (three sharps). The time signature is 4/4. The riff consists of four measures. The first measure is marked E7 and contains a bluesy riff. The second measure is marked BU (bluesy) and contains a similar riff. The third measure is marked A5/E and contains a similar riff. The fourth measure is marked BU and contains a similar riff. The tablature shows the fret numbers for each note.

Example 2

THIS lead line starts in a general hybrid Dorian/Mixolydian shape, but look what happens in bar 3 – there's a chromatic descent, a one-fret slide and then we're using the half-whole diminished scale (E F G# A# B C# D), a favourite of Mike's.

Example 2: Lead line in E7 tonality. The lead line is shown in standard notation and guitar tablature. The key signature is E major (three sharps). The time signature is 4/4. The lead line consists of four measures. The first measure is marked E7 and contains a lead line. The second measure is marked BU (bluesy) and contains a similar lead line. The third measure is marked BU and contains a similar lead line. The fourth measure is marked BU and contains a similar lead line. The tablature shows the fret numbers for each note.

Example 2 continued

8va

E
B
G
D
A
E

Example 3

GOING back a long way, here's a pattern-based lick a bit like the way he played with Miles Davis in the early 1980s. Essentially, you're pulling off from the high B note into an E major triad and then an F major triad. All of these notes are from a favourite Miles scale, the Phrygian Dominant (E F G# A B C D).

E7

E
B
G
D
A
E

BU

1/4

Example 4

THERE are just so many facets to Eric Johnson's style, even before you tackle the phenomenal technique. His clean pop rhythm playing is an encyclopedia of tones and chord voicings. Here are a few ways to decorate a simple chord progression (A B E A B C#m). I used pick and fingers for bars 1-2, then strummed the power chords close to my fretting hand (this gives a crisper sound).

Asus2 Bsus2 E/G# E 8va B/D# A/E B5 C#madd9

E
B
G
D
A
E

Let ring

Example 5

ERIC also uses a clean Strat tone for more specialised effects. To play the 'harp harmonics' in bars 1 and 2, touch the string 12 frets above the fretted note with your index finger and then pluck the string with your thumb. Pick the regular notes with your 2nd or 3rd finger. For the 'koto' effect in bars 3 and 4, the circled notes aren't actually tapped as normal – fret them with the index finger of your picking hand, and pluck them with your thumb for a twangy tone. Use your fretting hand to bend the strings where necessary.

Freely

AH 19 AH 19 AH 19 AH 19 AH 19 AH 19 AH 19

7 7 7 9 9 7 7 10

a p a p a p a p a m

Fret with 1st finger

BU BD BU BD BU BD BU BD BU BD BU BD

14 12 14 12 14 16 14 11 14 11 12 11 9 9 12 14 12 10 11 9 11 9 11 9 11 9 12

p p p p p p p p p p p p p p

Example 6

NOW turn on the Fuzz Face and let rip! Eric's lead lines often make extensive use of pentatonic scales, but he rarely sticks to the boring old blues box shapes. By working with the full range of the fretboard, he's able to vary his melodies and phrasing much more than you'd expect from the pentatonic (in this example, we're mostly using B minor pentatonic).

Freely

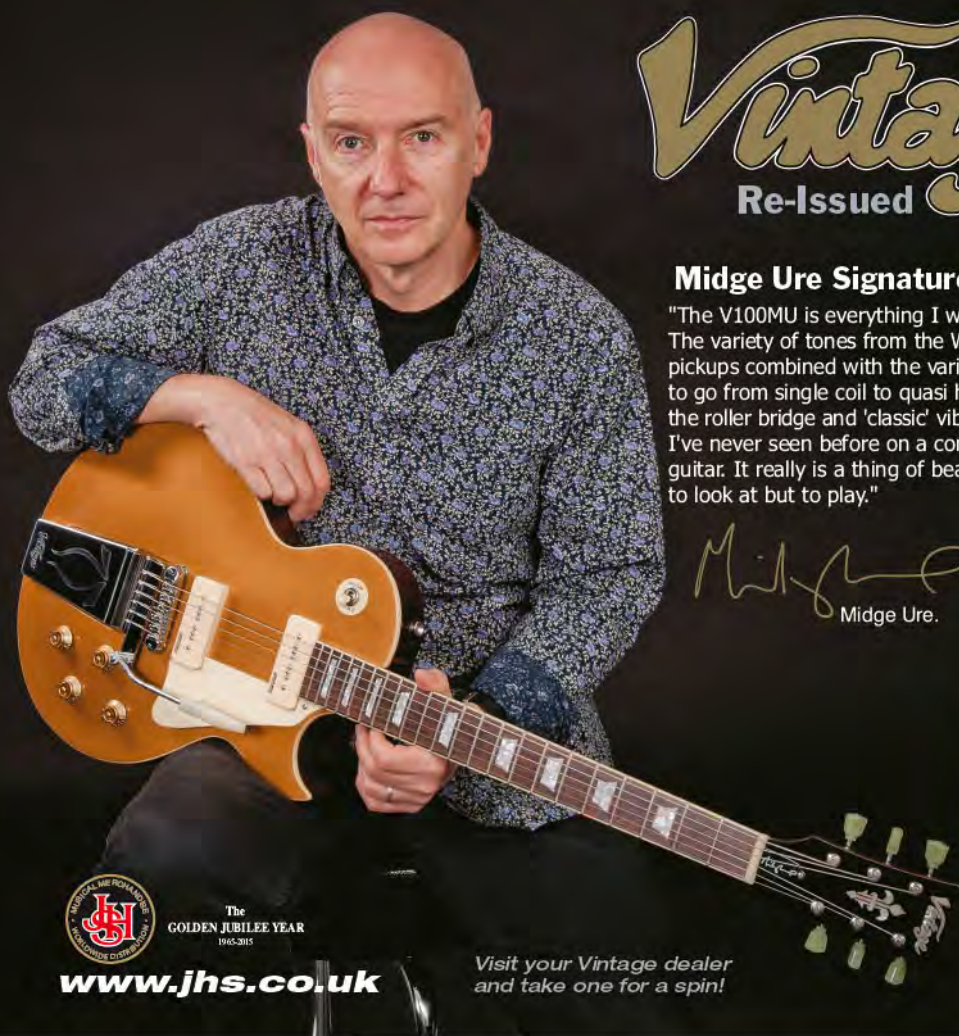
BU

10 12 7 10 7 10 9 10 7 9 7 10 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 10

3 3

PB 14 BD

10 9 12 9 12 11 10 12 11 14 12 15 15 14 15 12 14 15 12 14 15 12 14 11 12



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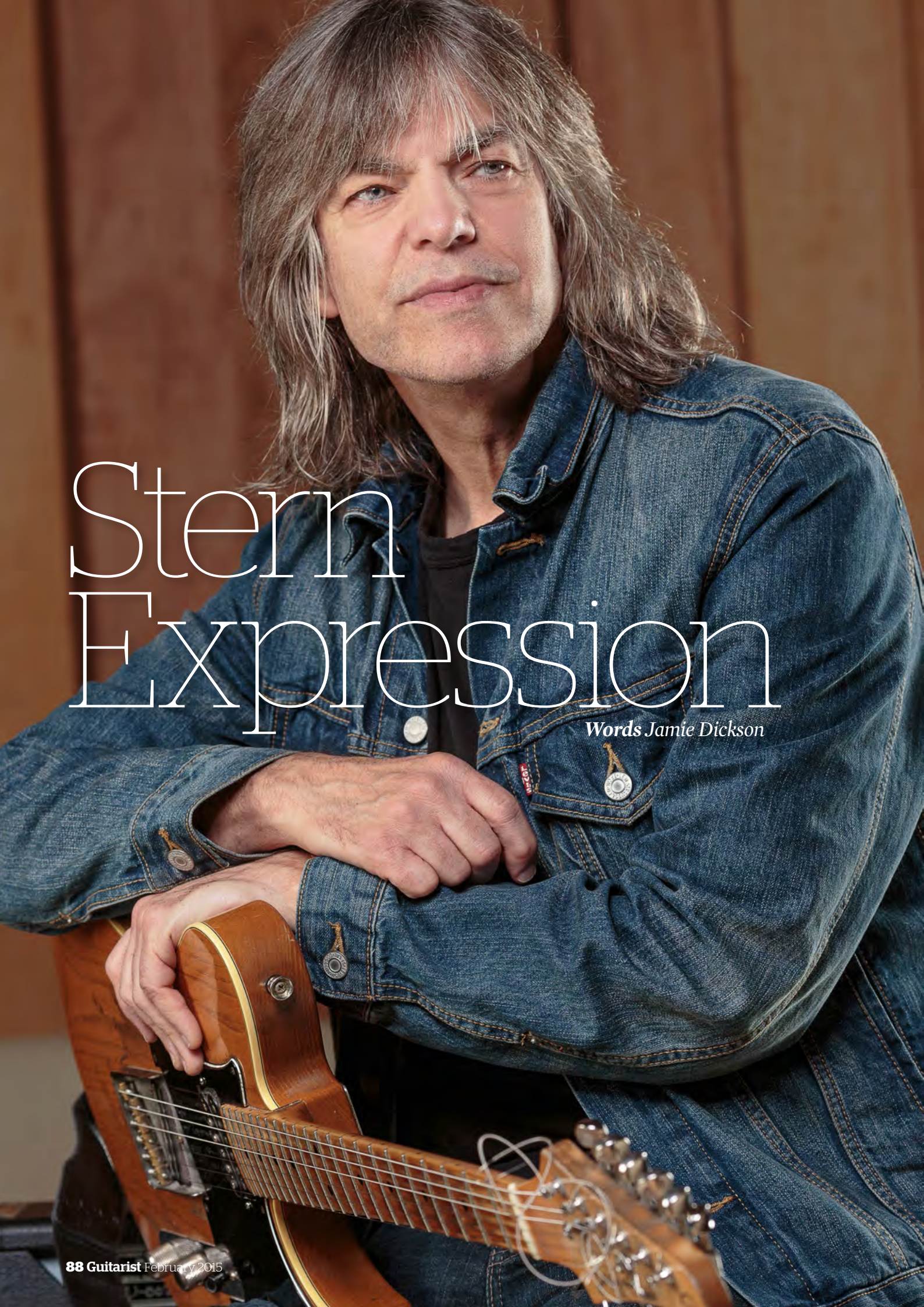


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Stern Expression

Words Jamie Dickson

The other half of *Eclectic*'s dynamic duo (see Eric Johnson interview, p80) is jazz heavyweight Mike Stern, whose guitar style is super-creative, articulate and assertive. Here, Mike explains how to make mediocre licks great, why Eric's playing reminds him of the late Danny Gatton, and recalls epic sessions with bass legend Jaco Pastorius...

The blues-jazz soloing on *Eclectic* fizzles with invention. But what's most impressive is how great the phrasing is. How do you avoid the trap of just 'doodling' when you solo?

"At first, I was just a rocker and blues player. And I really just learned by ear, to a point. But jazz is harder music. That doesn't make it better for me, because some of my favourite s**t is the simplest stuff in the world, but that is also music that I love.

"And there are some very simple jazz things that I love, too. But a lot of times, jazz is more intricate; there's more harmony, more changes going on. But like I said, the fact that jazz is harder is not the reason I love it. To learn the language took a lot of studying, but when I did get into jazz, my blues and rock playing, everything... my whole musical potential went up some, just because I was taking on a new challenge.

"And when I was learning, it was always strongly recommended to me to go really slow. I wanted to play effortlessly, like I could play blues at that point: with some heart, you know? But I had to be very self-conscious at first and phrases weren't being completed at that point [laughs]. I was just learning how to get into that world.

"But, anyway, the more I've gotten into it, the more I've realised that the greatest jazz players that I listen to, like Sonny Rollins or Wes Montgomery, or Jim Hall... some of them played a lot of notes, some of them played a few notes – but they all went for different ideas, and sometimes they'd miss stuff, but they would usually complete their [musical] sentences and their phrases. Not 100 per cent of the time, because sometimes they would stammer and go for some other s**t. And I kind of liked that, too; some rough edges. But I certainly try to phrase in such a way that it sounds like sentences, like you're having a conversation. Me and Eric, sometimes we trade off each other, and I'm really trying to take off from where he left off and converse with him more directly."

Expressive solos are often described as having a vocal quality. Is there a connection between singing and good soloing?

"You know, I've been singing for a while now. I tell my students sometimes to try to

sing what they're playing on the guitar. You know, just to sing, to try to get the notes from their chest – kind of from their heart. You know?

"I know Jim Hall used to kind of sing very, very softly when he played and you couldn't hear it, but I could hear it because I played with him some. And you could hear it, him singing along. To me, when you play an instrument that's not a horn, it's really good to do that kind of stuff. And Eric has that sensibility anyway because he sings as well. You know, he's been singing for a while on his gigs. So he definitely has that kind of sensibility which, to me, makes his playing sound more like singing and more like a horn, kind of. We both have that in common."

On the evidence of tracks such as the serene *Tidal*, you both seem to favour lush-sounding chords, such as add9 and minor 9 chords, too...

"The chords, as you say, are kind of fat-sounding when they need to be. But then sometimes you barely hear them, because we don't want to crowd the song – just because you know a great voicing, you don't want to just throw it everywhere. You know what I mean: when somebody else is playing their s**t? So Eric's got a good sense for space as well, and I always try to do that, too, behind him.

"So there was plenty of room to play, but also to add some more orchestration in our playing where it was appropriate. And I love the way Eric does that. He comes up with this really cool stuff: Bill Frisell kind-of chord voices. I used to play with Bill absolutely non-stop when we were in Boston together, and I used to do the same thing with Jaco [Pastorius], too. You know, we'd like get together in a room and forget time passing – it would just be like 12 hours later. Well maybe not quite 12 hours. But actually with Jaco, maybe it was because we had a lot of... help from Peru in those days [laughs]."

When you're playing alongside other guitarists, do you borrow ideas from their style that stay in your toolbox thereafter?

"I just try to copy as much stuff from... usually from horn players I'm playing with, or other guitar players – I did this tour with John Scofield, and that was really fun. But this thing with Eric is more involved. I just dig what he knows. Maybe he doesn't know all the jazz – I mean, he's a good jazz player. Really good. But he's not a good reader. He's got a great ear: he's got perfect pitch. I didn't even realise that until like four weeks after we'd been playing together.

"And it [playing alongside Eric] reminded me of earlier days before I got into jazz, when I was checking out Roy Buchanan a lot. I had his old guitar years ago – I bought it from Danny Gatton. And Danny was repairing guitars, in Washington DC where I grew up. I used to hear Danny play and he was un-f**king-believable. There was this country band [that Gatton played in], I wish they had recorded more. Because it was country, but he would sound like a banjo player and a pedal steel player and all kinds of s**t. An amazing accompaniment, because it was coming from this weird-ass place. And Eric has some of that s**t going on, too. So *Eclectic* has kind of taken me back in some ways to that: he's got some pedal-steel licks that he does and some amazing 'singing' stuff that I love. And his playing floats over the time sometimes. My tendency is to dig into the time; that's kind of my natural tendency. But he kind of floats over the time sometimes. And it's beautiful.

"When I'm pushing and just trying to learn more, it makes me play with more heart and passion. It's like watering the flowers, you know? It's a gift to love music, and then you've got to water the flowers. You've got to nurture the gift to keep it alive. And that's how I do it. But it's fun as hell – keeps me from stealing hubcaps [laughs]."

***Eclectic* by Eric Johnson and Mike Stern is out now on Concord Music**

"It's like watering the flowers. It's a gift to love music, and then you've got to water the flowers. You've got to nurture the gift to keep it alive"

In The Key Of HH

Launched in late 2014, this pair of twin-humbucker guitars expands the Fender American Standard line, offering a hot-rod vibe distinct from the more traditionally appointed Strats and Teles in the range

WORDS **Chris Vinnicombe**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

FENDER AMERICAN STANDARD STRATOCASTER HH & TELECASTER HH £1,438 & £1,438
ELECTRICS





What You Need To Know

1 Dual-humbucker American Standard Strats and Teles... Not very 'standard', then?

Fender's USA Standard range contains plenty of options for the more traditionally minded single-coil player. These guitars were launched in late 2014 to provide more sonic girth, though they retain existing player-friendly features such as modern C neck profiles, medium jumbo frets and the off-white 'aged' plastics that arrived back in 2012.

2 Don't they have split-coil settings?

There are no five-way switches here! Single-coil fans will have to look elsewhere in the range, as the HH models provide full-fat humbucking tones only.

3 Where did the pickups originate?

Fender's Twin Head humbuckers were developed for the high-end Select Series production models and feature modern solderless connectors.

Fender American Standard Stratocaster HH & Telecaster HH

£1,438 & £1,438

On its arrival in 1986, the brand-resurrecting American Standard Stratocaster established 22 frets and a 241mm (9.5-inch) fingerboard radius as the modern Fender norm, along with the two-pivot vibrato bridge, while the last major overhaul of the range in 2012 saw the notable additions of Custom Shop single-coil pickups, 'aged' off-white plastic parts and six vintage-style bent-steel bridge saddles across the board, with the Telecaster also getting a Strat-like ribcage contour into the bargain.

Although Fender has resisted the temptation to 'do a Gibson' and ring dramatic changes for 2015, the company intends to make its American Standard instruments a major focus for the year ahead. Why? Well, it's easy to imagine that the sheer value for money offered by the Mexican-made Classic Player series and the knock-out desirability of the Custom Shop models means that many Fender buyers bypass the middle ground offered by the company's US Standards entirely. That would certainly

chime with the experience of retailers in the industry as a whole over the last few years, too. While boutique and budget models continue to sell well, the mid-price market remains a struggle. Whatever the motivation, it's clear that these new HH guitars offer the same blend of vintage and modern features that characterises the American Standard range, but throw in a different sonic

flavour aimed at those with rockier leanings.

Stratocaster HH & Telecaster HH

Both the HH Tele and Strat come loaded with a pair of Fender's Twin Head Vintage humbuckers, and the Telecaster embraces the aftermarket hot-rod aesthetic even further with its uncovered bridge unit. Designed for Fender's top-tier



Both guitars come with a pair of Fender's Twin Head Vintage humbuckers



The slimmed-down back of the Tele is sure to divide opinion



Fender's modern staple satin-finished slim C-profile neck

The Rivals

Fender's Mexican-made **Classic Player Strat HH** (£838) was reviewed in issue 388 and offers great value for money, thanks to aggressive street pricing. There's also a wider variety of tones on offer than with either of the American Standard HH models, thanks to a five-way switch and coil-split options. Away from the Fender catalogue, the **Saint Blues Juke Joint** guitars (£1,149) reviewed on p8 offer supreme tonal versatility from swampy Billy Gibbons-isms to Strat-like spank for those who dig their stripped-down aesthetic.

production guitars – the Select Series – and first appearing in 2012, Twin Head humbuckers have been available in Vintage and Modern incarnations as standalone units for retrofit purposes since early 2014.

The Alnico V bridge units have a pokey DC resistance of 10.5k ohms, with the Alnico II neck pickups weighing in at a more restrained 7.3k ohms. They may be Vintage by name, but the Twin Heads here are no slavish PAF clones; thick aluminium base plates are designed to reduce magnetic

interference, while a solderless PCB hook-up at the rear is a nod towards modernity.

Both guitars are pleasing middleweights when strapped on, with the Stratocaster the lighter of the pair, despite the Tele's belly cut giving it a more svelte feel than the slab bodies of old. The jury is still out on whether a Telecaster 'should' be cut for comfort in this way, but Fender attempting to slim down the backside of a double-humbucker loaded Telecaster is nothing new; this was a feature of the Deluxe in 1972, after all.

In common with the love-it-or-loathe-it 70s Deluxe, the American Standard Telecaster HH also features a Strat-style six-saddle hardtail bridge. It's well-behaved, but quite removed from the look and experience offered by an old-school 'ashtray' unit. Like the rest of the American Standard electrics post-2012, both guitars here feature staggered-height tuners that negate the need for a second string tree for the D and G strings. A reduction in friction usually equates to an increase in tuning stability, and both instruments here are reliable in that regard, even the whammy-equipped Strat.

Set up with 0.009-gauge strings at the factory, playability is as easy and fluid as you'd expect in combination with bend-friendly medium jumbo

frets and a 241mm 'board radius. One thing to watch out for in the heat of battle is that the relatively high string tree in combination with a light high E string means that there's not a huge amount of tension over the nut and, when strummed hard, the string can pop out from under the tree and out of the nut slot altogether as a result. Those of us with a heavy right-hand technique are likely to prefer heavier-gauge strings – the extra tension of which should counteract this – but it's something to consider.

Both guitars share the same satin-finished, slim modern C neck profile that's a fixture of the contemporary Fender catalogue. That said, it should be noted that the gloss-finished fascia of the Tele's neck has some pooling around the frets,

Both guitars share the same satin-finished, slim modern C neck profile that's a fixture of the contemporary Fender catalogue



Playability is smooth, as you'd expect, but vintage fans may look elsewhere

which slightly widens the fret size and reduces the height of the fret above the playing surface, as it did on the American Standard Stratocaster we reviewed back in 2012. It's a low and slinky feel; however, if you love the Tele but prefer the rawer feel of an unfinished rosewood 'board then you have options (see spec, opposite).

Sounds

When is a Stratocaster not a Stratocaster, or a Tele not a Tele? Despite the decals on their headstocks and their body outlines, there's very little tonal crossover here with the first instruments to bear Leo's surname. That's not necessarily a criticism, of course; if you want a more traditionally appointed Strat or Tele you are hardly short on options. That said, for players used to the explosive dynamics of single coils, even on the bridge pickup with the tone control wide open, there's a thick midrange and soft high end exhibited by both guitars that even had this die-hard ES-335 user reaching for his amp's tone control to dial in more treble.

The Strat is the more compressed-sounding of the pair, while the combination of the Tele's uncovered 'bucker and hardtail bridge give it a little extra punch. It's still thick, though, and as such makes for a

great riff-rock rhythm guitar. The Strat's individual pickup volume controls allow for a greater degree of shades between the full-throated neck and bridge settings, but we'd argue that Fender has perhaps missed a trick by not including a five-way switch with coil-split options in the in-between settings on either HH model – especially when the Saint Blues Juke Joint Mississippi Bluesmaster reviewed elsewhere in this issue reveals just how much range well-sorted coil-splits can bring to an HH guitar. We certainly didn't expect a mahogany singlecut with a Gibson-style 628mm (24.7-inch) scale length to be capable of more Strat-like sounds than either of these Fenders, but it is.

Verdict

Given the Fender American Standard's reputation as everyman (or woman) guitars, it's a little surprising to get these instruments out of their cases at a rehearsal and find their tonal strengths so specific. For fat rock, liquid lead and moody indie there's lots to love, but fans of twang, spank and jangle should look elsewhere in the American Standard range. It's more a smooth cruise than a rollercoaster ride, but for some players that's just the ticket...



Fender American Standard Stratocaster HH

PRICE: £1,438 (inc hard case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Solidbody double-cutaway electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, modern C profile, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42.8mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 241mm (9.5") radius, aged white dot inlays

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: 2-point Synchronized vibrato bridge with vintage-style stamped steel saddles, Deluxe Staggered cast/sealed tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: 2x covered Twin Head humbuckers with individual master volume controls, master tone, 3-position blade selector switch

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.2/7.1

OPTIONS: Available with a maple fingerboard in Olympic White and Ocean Blue Metallic (both £1,438)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Black polyurethane (as reviewed), Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,498)

Fender GBI

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GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: A Strat as far removed from its tonal source as any we've heard



Fender American Standard Telecaster HH

PRICE: £1,438 (inc hard case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Solidbody double-cutaway electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, modern C profile, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42.8mm

FINGERBOARD: Maple, 241mm (9.5") radius, black dot inlays

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: 6-saddle American Standard hardtail bridge with bent steel saddles, Deluxe Staggered cast/sealed machineheads

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51.5mm

ELECTRICS: Uncovered Twin Head humbucker (bridge) and covered Twin Head humbucker (neck), master volume, master tone, 3-position selector switch

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.4/7.6

OPTIONS: Available with a rosewood fingerboard in Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,498) and Black (£1,438)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Ocean Blue Metallic (as reviewed), Olympic White

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: There are fat rhythm tones aplenty to be had from this slinky player



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A Guitar For All Seasons

As we journey into 2015, Fender might just have something for everyone in the American Standard range

ALTHOUGH specifications have remained consistent since their 2012 makeover, the single-coil equipped American Standard Stratocaster and Telecaster now appear in a huge array of colours with a choice of maple or rosewood fingerboards, and ash body models available too.

The Strat comes with a base price of £1,438 in Olympic White, Bordeaux Metallic, Black, Jade Pearl Metallic, Ocean Blue Metallic, Mystic Red, Mystic Blue or Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,498) and Sienna Sunburst (ash body, £1,498), all with rosewood or maple 'board options. Lefties are well served for a change, with three colour options – Olympic White, Black

(both £1,498) and Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,570) – coming with a choice of 'board material, plus the rosewood 'board-only Mystic Blue and maple 'board-only Mystic Red (both £1,495).

The Telecaster comes with an ash body and maple fingerboard in Two-Colour Sunburst, Natural and Crimson Red Transparent (all £1,498), a rosewood 'board and alder body in Three-colour Sunburst (£1,498) or Black, Jade Pearl Metallic and Ocean Blue Metallic (all £1,438). There's also a rosewood 'board and ash body combination in Natural and Crimson Red Transparent (both £1,498). For left-handers, there's the choice of a maple 'board and

alder body in Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,570), Mystic Red, Mystic Blue or Black (£1,498).

The Diamondback humbucker-equipped American Standard Stratocaster HSS comes in Bordeaux Metallic, Black, Jade Pearl Metallic, Ocean Blue Metallic (all £1,462), Three-Colour Sunburst (£1,534) and Sienna Sunburst (ash body, £1,534). Again, there's a choice of maple or rosewood 'boards in all finishes, but there are no left-handed versions this time.

Including the HH guitars, that makes for a choice of 38 Strats and 23 Teles for right-handers and 12 guitars for left-handers. Got that at the back of the class? Phew...



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Ibanez RGKP6 £319

The Japanese shred veteran equips the RG outline with a Korg Kaoss Pad, putting 100 effects at guitarists' fingertips for little over £300. But is it future perfect?

WORDS **Michael Brown** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

What We Want To Know

- 1 What's that screen doing there?**
It's a Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S: an effects processor, sample recorder and audio player, aimed originally at DJs but equally usable across a range of instruments, including guitar.
- 2 This isn't a new idea, though, is it?**
Well, Muse's Matt Bellamy has been playing X/Y pad-loaded custom electrics for years, but this is the first guitar to put the tech in the hands of cash-strapped mortals.
- 3 What are all those knobs for, then?**
The RGKP6 packs tone and gain controls, plus an on/off switch for the guitar's built-in distortion circuit, which runs before the MKP2S in the signal chain, and helps to drive the Kaoss Pad's effects for an extra dose of compression and sustain.

Over the past decade of electric guitar production, a few brave manufacturers have injected their instruments with tech that goes beyond the regular hardware fare (see p102 for a small selection) and guitarists have paid a premium in the process. Ibanez and Korg are the latest names to sign up to this technologically enhanced

list – the Ibanez RG series provides the outline, while the Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S delivers the tech – but in a noted departure from convention, the RGKP6 is more affordable than many of the more conventional guitars we regularly feature.

But don't let the price tag fool you: the Mini Kaoss Pad 2S packs 100 effects, comprising filters, modulation, LFO, delay,

The Rivals

The most obvious point of comparison is the **Manson MB-1S Matthew Bellamy Signature**, which comes fitted with a custom Manson MIDI controller, but with prices starting at £3,703, it's a very different market. The **Misa Tri-Bass** features a touch-sensitive screen and neck, but no strings – it's only available direct from the company, for \$649 (£412) plus shipping

reverb, a looper, a vocoder and synth/sound effects, plus – with the use of a micro SD card – the ability to record and sample your playing for playback and triggering of effects. The effects are navigated using the value



The RGKP6's Wizard-aping neck is a fast and comfortable player



You'll need to fit the Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S to the guitar's dock yourself



These switches control distortion and take the Pad in and out of the signal path

slider, while the tap tempo button dials in effects rates, the hold button freezes the current sound and the play button plays back recorded or stored sounds.

The guitar itself also includes a built-in distortion circuit, positioned ahead of the MKP2S in the signal chain, which allows you to drive the Pad's effects. The distortion is controlled by an on/off switch, plus tone and gain knobs at the base of the guitar, while the switch nearest the Pad takes it in and out of the signal path, and the adjacent knob controls overall guitar and Pad master volume. An additional mini-jack headphone output for amp-free playing rounds off the RGKP6's unique feature set.

Given the low price tag, it's unsurprising that a number of

compromises have been undertaken in order to keep costs down.

The RGKP6 has just the one pickup (a stacked IBZ-KP humbucker), no selector switch, no tone control and a no-frills black finish. The Kaoss Pad isn't quite as integrated as you might think, either; the guitar is shipped without the Pad installed, revealing a substantial rout on the treble side, housing a plastic dock, plus two short cables. A boxed Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S is included with the guitar, but it's up to you to fit it by removing the unit's back, clipping the Pad into the guitar's dock and connecting the cables to the headphones and line-in jacks. It's a little rudimentary, but it does the job – and it's certainly preferable to the

alternative of gaffer-taping a Pad to your guitar and drilling the holes yourself.

Sounds

Since the Mini Kaoss Pad 2S was originally aimed at DJs, some sounds are more applicable to guitar than others. The Slicer's tremolo chop, the manual phasers and flangers, and various filters make perfect sense, offering the ability to manipulate the depth and intensity of the sound via the touchpad. However, pressing the hold button freezes the currently selected sound,

meaning you don't have to touch the pad at all, essentially transforming the MKP2S into a traditional multi-effects unit. With a micro SD card inserted, you can also record short sections of playing as samples for triggering and looping, and even load up your own tracks to jam over – but since the RGKP6 combines the Pad and guitar output into one signal, you'll have to run the backing through your amp.

The less, ahem, conventional sounds are a mixed bag. The various loopers – which sample a split-second of your playing

Freezing reverbs and delays make for atmospheric intros. Then there's the pure noisemaking territory...



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



The RGKP6's fixed hardtail bridge keeps things stable while you wreak sonic havoc

for pad-adjustable stutters and glitches – are great fun for (whisper it) dubstep and dance crossovers, while freezing reverbs and delays make for atmospheric intros and middle eights.

Then there's the pure noisemaking territory via vocoders and synths, which rely on your pad finger for pitch rather than your fretting hand. Pressing the exact same spot on the pad to maintain the correct pitch is easier said than done, though, making these sounds somewhat difficult to use in a musical context.

It's also frustrating that only three of the 100 presets can be assigned to the value slider for instant access, making live use potentially problematic. And with no individual adjustable

parameters for each effect, the MKP2S isn't hugely customisable, either.

Amid all the Kaoss, it's easy to forget about the guitar itself. While our review model could have done with a truss rod adjustment, its sleek Wizard-aping neck is as shred-ready as they come, with a typically flat radius'd rosewood fingerboard, primed for swift legato. The stacked humbucker's moderate output makes it better suited to both clean and distorted tones than many of Ibanez's higher-output humbuckers, although we would have liked at least a tone control to smooth out the top-end on cleans. That said, the Kaoss Pad likes a consistent signal, and in conjunction with the somewhat metallic distortion circuit – don't go

throwing away your drive pedals just yet – the stacked humbucker certainly serves its purpose.

Verdict

Like the technologically enhanced models that came before it, the RGKP6 is as divisive as guitars get. It requires you to comprehensively adjust your mindset to accommodate an entirely new approach to the guitar, but if you are willing to experiment you'll find a wealth of inspirational sounds. It's not the most flexible solution for getting guitar-meets-DJ sounds, nor is it the most elegant, but it's certainly the most affordable – and that alone makes it well worthy of your attention. **G**



Ibanez RGKP6

PRICE: £319

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric with additional rout and cabling to accommodate Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S (included)

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Maple

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Plastic/43mm (1.69")

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with 400mm (15.75") radius

FRETS: 24, jumbo

HARDWARE: Fixed bridge – Cosmo Black

STRING SPACING: 53mm/2.09"

ELECTRICS: One IBZ-KP stacked humbucker; master volume for guitar and MKP2S, Mini Kaoss Pad 2S on/bypass switch; distortion on/off, distortion tone, distortion gain

EFFECTS: 100 (15 filters, 15 modulation, 20 LFO, 10 delay, 5 reverb, 20 looper, 5 vocoder, 10 synth/sound effect)

POWER: RGKP6: 9V battery; Korg

Mini Kaoss Pad 2S: 2x AA batteries, 4.5V power supply (not included)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.6/5.73

LEFT HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Black only

Headstock Distribution

0121 508 6666

www.ibanez.co.jp

OVERALL RATING ★★★★★

Build quality ★★★★★

Playability ★★★★★

Sound ★★★★★

Value for money ★★★★★

Guitarist says: While flawed in some areas, this is a brave attempt to reinvent the guitar, at a price most can afford

Special effects

The RGKP6 is the latest in a long line of effects-laden electrics – here are a few of our faves from years gone by...

1 Vox Phantom VI Special

The Phantom line was expanded throughout the 60s to include the Special, as played by Joy Division's Ian Curtis. It came with six onboard effects, activated via pickguard-mounted buttons: treble boost, bass boost, top boost, mid boost, fuzz and repeat, while there were also controls for mid boost frequency, fuzz sustain, repeat speed and volume – it could even sound an E for tuning!

2 Guyatone LG-23R

Built in the early 70s, the LG-23R looked like most common-or-garden Strat-a-likes, but with one key difference: a built-in drum machine, with five patterns chosen via a rotary selector and start switch, while volume and tempo controls fine-tuned the rhythms.

3 Electra MPC X320 (modular powered circuits)

In 1976, while the guitar effects biz was just beginning, Japanese brand Electra was offering guitarists the ability to load their instruments with them, courtesy of its modular effects system – you'd simply slot one of the 12 available cartridge-style modules into your guitar, activate its switch and adjust the intensity with the effect knob.

4 Alesis X Guitar

When it launched in 2005, the X Guitar sold for only £229, and included 40 digital effects derived from the Alesis GuitarFX multi-effects unit. An extra set of controls on the side of the guitar scrolled between sounds and adjusted parameters, and you could plug in an expression pedal for real-time control.

5 Gibson Firebird X

Even without the added effects, Gibson's 2011 innovation was divisive – following in the dubious footsteps of the active-circuitry RD Artist of the 1970s. As well as auto-tuning, comprehensive pickup switching and a piezo acoustic mode, the X offered a comprehensive assortment of DSP effects, all adjustable via onboard faders.





MIGHTY WHITE

This custom guitar builder is bringing his boutique-designed models, made in Korea, within reach of the masses

WORDS **Mick Taylor**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

ANDREW WHITE EOS 1010 & FREJA 1010 £699 & £699
ACOUSTICS





Andrew White Eos 1010 & Freja 1010 £699 & £699

What We Want To Know

1 Who is Andrew White?

A guitar builder from Annapolis, Maryland, who has been making custom and high-end instruments since the mid-2000s. These days, he's based in Morgantown in nearby West Virginia

2 £699 doesn't sound 'custom' or 'high-end'...

Nope. White has teamed up with a production facility in Korea to be able to offer some of his designs at much more affordable prices

3 Yet more cheap, Asian-made guitars then?

Not really: White's designs are unique and aimed specifically at not being 'just another dreadnought, 000' or what have you. That's good news if you ask us

Andrew White was a new name to us when a very enthusiastic Ben Montague from London's The North American Guitar got in touch a few months back. The people of TNAG were mightily enthused about the West Virginia guitar maker, and even better news was that there was an all-new, value-for-money offering in the pipeline.

"I think there are a lot of people who want something different from the usual dreadnoughts, OM's, 000's and so on," Montague reasons. "We all love those guitars, but if you do want something different, it's not that easy to find well under £1,000." We concur.

Thus, White's new models are called the 'Production Series'. To read more about their genesis turn to p110.

Eos 1010 & Freja 1010

There are three body sizes in the Production Series; Cybele (the smallest, not on review), Eos (middle-size) and Freja (you guessed it, the largest). They all share White's contemporary styling, with unique outlines and relatively tight waists. When asked about their design, White explains he finds it hard to compare them to

the well-known shapes, in fact his three designs overlap the spaces between the four dominant styles in the current market: Cybele straddles parlour and 000; Eos lies between 000 and dreadnought; and Freja between dreadnought and jumbo. While it's not the whole story, it helps to locate the start line.

White has worked with a new facility in Korea to bring his guitars to this attainable price point, and for £699 you'd have

The Rivals

The Eos 1010 finds itself in **Taylor 214** (£755) territory, although the Taylor has a laminate back and sides. **Faith** looms large at this price too, the **Neptune Baby Jumbo** (£699) has solid timbers throughout. The **Sigma SOMR-28H** (£629) is a traditional, all-solid take on Martin's legendary OM-28. For the Freja 1010, the all-solid **Faith Trembesi Jupiter** (£669) is popular for good reason. Quite different but ultra competitive is **Yamaha's LJ16 ARE** (£804), while the **PRS SE Angelus Custom** (£799) is a different take on a modern jumbo-ish design.



Both guitars' string spacing is 55mm at the bridge – a little tight for fingerstyle



Maple binding on the wooden purfling and soundhole rosette defy the price tag



The black enclosed tuners typify the cool, low-key vibe of these instruments

to say the specs impress. Both instruments have scalloped X-braced solid Sitka spruce tops over solid rosewood backs and sides, making a comparison between the body sizes easier than were they vastly different timbers. With their honey-tinted gloss finish, you might wonder from afar if the tops are cedar (especially the Eos): they're definitely spruce.

The aesthetic is all about modern, understated cool, though the lovely looking maple binding to the front and back of the body, wooden purfling and soundhole rosette make it far from an austerity instrument.

For variety, White has chosen pau ferro (also known as morado or Bolivian rosewood,

but it comes from Brazil, too) for fingerboards and the slightly asymmetrical pinned bridge. Because true mahogany is in such high demand/limited supply, he's gone with Spanish cedar for the dovetail jointed necks – Martin uses it along with mahogany on many guitars, and has been doing so for many years.

Unusually at this price point, the main meat of the satin-finished neck and the headstock is one piece of wood with a tidy and simple volute adding mass and strength at the weakest point. The heel is blocked, using just one extra piece of wood and while it's almost imperceptible until you look closely under good light, the fingerboard is

also bound with pau ferro. While they don't display the kind of ultra-fastidious finishing of certain £2,000-plus brands, judged on their spec, build and finish alone in the context of the current market, these guitars could easily cost twice as much.

Sounds

Both guitars' string spacing measures 35.3mm over a 43.2mm nut. These things are about personal preference, but that spacing, particularly, will feel tight for those who like to play fingerstyle. Likewise, 55.5mm isn't expansive at the saddle, but it's no different from many modern guitars. The benefit is comfortable first-position chording, made all the

more inviting by the slim (around 21.4mm deep at the first fret), easy-playing satin-finished C-profile neck. It'd be even more so with some extra fingerboard-edge rolling – perhaps a bit much to expect at £699!

In any case, if you're not a long-time/dedicated acoustic player, making the jump from your electric to either of these guitars won't be a struggle when it comes to the neck dimensions and profiles, or indeed the scale length: 648mm is the same as a Fender Stratocaster or Telecaster. More experienced acoustic players may well want more meat in the neck and wider string spacing: it's a matter of personal preference. ➤



<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



Pau ferro is the wood of choice on both guitars' fingerboards

The smaller Eos doesn't immediately strike you as a small-body guitar... and that's because it isn't! The looks are deceptive; the lower bout is 15.75 inches across, which is as wide as many dreadnoughts, but the tone is markedly different. There's notably more midrange prominence, that makes it a promising fingerpicker, either for more contemporary, altered-tuning stuff or older-voiced bluesy and folk styles, albeit with a stronger bottom-end support than you'd expect from many 000-type designs. Those who played the Eos in the *Guitarist* office kept using the term 'woody' as a point of difference from the often tight, superficial tones of many mid-priced, identikit acoustics: 'not generic', you might say. Its strident projection isn't a million miles away from Taylor's 214, though the Eos has more complexity: they're two guitars you should definitely A/B demo.

The larger Freja is better suited to more contemporary fingerstyle playing, if you can deal with the tight string spacing at the nut. It has more extended trebles with more presence than the Eos, more bass and, as a result, a less obvious midrange dominance. It's a satisfying strummer, yet has a distinctly different voice

from the rosewood-body Martin dreadnought we have to hand. There's still plenty of vocal midrange and string separation there, however; just what you need to get middle-of-the-fingerboard notes projecting strongly, the trade-off being that kind of fall-into-it strumming sweetness of a classic rosewood-body dread or, even more so, jumbo. That's no criticism, as it's designed to be a different voice, remember.

Verdict

Andrew White has succeeded in offering something different to the mid-price market with his Production Series. That's good, firstly for us as players and secondly for his business because more than ever, anyone making identikit Martin- and Taylor-alikes at £700 to £1,000 (where those brands now dominate) is surely facing increasingly tough times.

£699 is exceptional value for a solid rosewood and spruce guitar, not to mention the high-quality construction and contemporary design. The Eos will be popular with folk and blues-inspired players looking for a projecting guitar, while the Freja's extended bass and treble will appeal more to modern-minded all-rounders. Refreshingly different and worthy of investigation. **G**



Andrew White Eos 1010

PRICE: £699 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Larger 'folk-sized' acoustic
TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 106.3mm (4.1875")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 400mm (15.75")
NECK: Spanish cedar
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
TUNERS: Black enclosed, 18:1 ratio
NUT/WIDTH: GraphTech NuBone, 43.2mm (1.7")
FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro
FRETS: 21
BRIDGE/SPACING: Pau ferro with GraphTech NuBone saddle, 55.5mm (2.19")
ELECTRICS: Optional
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2/4.4
LEFT-HANDERS: No
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: There are two other body sizes in this spec: Freja (see right) and the Cybele small body (£649)
The North American Guitar
0207 835 5597
thenorthamericanguitar.com
www.andrewwhiteguitars.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: This intriguing blend of folk and small jumbo offers something new, tonally and aesthetically



Andrew White Freja 1010

PRICE: £699 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: 'Small jumbo' acoustic
TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 114.3mm (4.5")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 406.4mm (16")
NECK: Spanish cedar
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
TUNERS: Black enclosed, 18:1 ratio
NUT/WIDTH: GraphTech NuBone, 43.2mm (1.70")
FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro
FRETS: 21
BRIDGE/SPACING: Pau ferro with GraphTech NuBone saddle, 55.5mm (2.19")
ELECTRICS: Optional
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.2/4.85
LEFT-HANDERS: No
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: There are two other body sizes in this spec: Eos (see left) and the Cybele small body. All £699.

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Guitarist says: Sits between dreadnought and jumbo norms, yet has strong midrange projection, too: unique

Gibson USA

Les Paul Classic 2015 Fireburst

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Figured Maple Top, Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Zebra '61 Tribute Humbucker Pickups With 15db Turbo Boost

Code: 212021

£1599

Gibson USA

SG Special 2015 Translucent Ebony

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Slim Profile Maple Neck, 24-Fret Rosewood Fingerboard With Dot Inlays, Zebra '61 Tribute Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212041

£799

Gibson USA

Les Paul Studio 2015 Wine Red

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Figured Maple Top, Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Taped '67 And '57 Plus Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212015

£899

Gibson USA

Les Paul Standard 2015 Honeyburst Perimeter Candy

6-String Electric Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body, AA Figured Maple Top, Asymmetrical Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard, Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Tapped BurstBucker Pro 1&2 Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212033

£2449

Gibson USA

Les Paul Special Double Cutaway 2015 Translucent Yellow Top

6-String Electric Guitar, Flat Mahogany Body, Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Dot Inlays, Alnico P-90SR & P-90T Pickups

Code: 212008

£799

Gibson USA

Les Paul Standard Premium Quilt 2015 Ocean Water Perimeter

6-String Electric Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body, AAA Quilt Maple Top, Asymmetrical Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Tapped BurstBucker Pro 1&2 Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212038

£3199

Gibson USA

Les Paul Traditional 2015 Heritage Cherry Sunburst

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, A+ Figured Maple Top, '50s Profile Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, '59 Tribute Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212028

£1999

Gibson USA

SG Standard 2015 Heritage Cherry

6-String Electric Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body, Cream-Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Pearl Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Tapped '57 Classic Humbucker Pickups

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£1369

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Gibson USA

Les Paul Less + 2015 Desertburst

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Figured Maple Top, Rounded C-Profile Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Tapped '57 Classic And Classic Plus Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212018

£1499

Gibson USA

Firebird V 2015 Vintage Sunburst

6-String Electric Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body Wings, 9-Ply Walnut & Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Steinberger Tuners, Mini-Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212048

£1499

Gibson USA

Les Paul Junior Single Cut 2015 Vintage Sunburst

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Slim Taper Mahogany Neck, Rosewood Fingerboard With Dot Inlays, Single Alnico P-90ST Dog Ear Pickup

Code: 212006

£699

Gibson USA

Les Paul Supreme 2015 Seafoam Green

6-String Semi Acoustic Guitar, AAAA Maple Top, AAA Maple Back, '50s Profile Mahogany Neck, Bound Fingerboard With Pearl Crown Inlays, Floating Mini-Humbucker And 492T Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212040

£4299

Gibson USA

Derek Trucks Signature SG 2015 Vintage Red Stain

6-String Electric Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body With Deeper Scarf Joint, Slim Profile Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Faux Lyre Tailpiece, '57 Classic Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212047

£1449

Gibson USA

Les Paul LPM 2015 Translucent Ebony

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Carved Maple Top, Rounded Profile Maple Neck, Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Zebra '61 Tribute Humbucker Pickups

Code: 212011

£799

Gibson USA

Les Paul Deluxe 2015 Gold Top

6-String Electric Guitar, Mahogany Body, Plain Maple Top, Asymmetrical Mahogany Neck, Bound Rosewood Fingerboard With Trapezoid Inlays, Coil-Tapped Mini Humbucker Pickups With 15db Boost

Code: 212023

£1799

Gibson USA

Thunderbird Bass 2015 Vintage Sunburst

4-String Bass Guitar, A-Grade Mahogany Body Wings, 9-Ply Walnut & Mahogany Neck, Rosewood Fingerboard With Dot Inlays, Coil-Tapped Alnico V Pickups

Code: 212050

£1899

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The White Stuff

We meet the man who puts his name on these guitars

AS Andrew White was a new name to us, we caught up with him to ask about his inspiration as a guitar maker and how he arrived at the Production Series.

"The sounds I strive for is a tough question," he offers, "because I try to not allow my goals to be too involved with my handmade instruments. My goal is to do what I can to understand what the client is trying to communicate. Our spoken language has boundaries that stunt our ability to communicate, but our guitars can go beyond those lines. What's difficult to understand is how a person will explain, with words, what they really can only communicate with the guitar: I strive to understand those things."

"The Production guitars that you are reviewing are designs that have been inspired by 12 years of working with, and listening to, really great guitar players. They offer unique characteristics in comparison to other instruments on the market. It's not a coincidence, it's the result of listening to guitar players and honing my craft."

What enabled you to be able to build guitars in Korea?

"The concept behind the move to produce guitars in Korea is similar to what

I mentioned above, but adds the all-important need for affordability. We recognised that the designs had value; that they can have an impact on the current status quo in the market. They're not radically different, but they are different and we believe they do have the ability to be a part of the evolution of the acoustic guitar. To that, we wanted to make them available to every guitar player.

"There are a great deal of challenges that come with this move, but I'm fortunate to have excellent partners that help handle much of the business side"

Are they built entirely in Korea?

"Yes, at a brand-new facility with highly trained staff. The instruments and building processes have gone through extensive testing, modifications, and improvements over several years of study. I put the early models under a microscope and found every single thing I could that could be improved. The production facility was able to correct every last detail... In order to build the best possible guitar, someone has to have the vision of what that guitar is."

Kaki King is a customer of yours – how did she discover your instruments?

"I met Kaki years ago when she played a small show here in Morgantown. I talked with her after the show and she had an issue with one of her instruments that needed repair. At the time, I was living in a small, two-bedroom apartment. I was just out of college and I had the larger of the two bedrooms as my shop, where I built about 50 guitars."

"I wanted to work with her to build an instrument, so we spent several months deciding on her dream guitar. We built a seven-string, fanned-fret nylon with a crop circle theme. It's nothing like you have ever seen – still today one of my favourite builds. Kaki is a wonderful gal and still plays that instrument today."

Where do you see your company in 10 years' time?

"Oh, you know, it's hard to share your real vision, but I'd like to see guitar players have more options, and where they can choose from different types of candy, not just between different flavours of the same candy. Most important to me is to continue to provide great musical instruments for artists who depend on their instrument as an expression of themselves. At the end of the day, that's what we're here for!"



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Empress Effects Pedals

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Boutique quality from Canada

WORDS **Trevor Curwen**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

Canadian company Empress Effects was launched in 2005 with a remit to come up with a tremolo effect with a set of features that were unavailable on the market at the time. After that first pedal, the range has expanded greatly to cover most effects types. Empress pedals are constructed to a very high standard and feature heavy-duty footswitches and metal knobs and jack sockets. The company can count Adrian Belew, Andy Summers, Dan Auerbach and Prince among its many users.



Empress Heavy

PRICE: £259

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Gain, mid, output, weight, gate switch, mid freq switch, hi, low, gate threshold trim pot

FOOTSWITCHES:

Heavy, heavier

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (200mA)

DIMENSIONS: 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

First Line Distribution
01626 853876
empresseffects.com

Designed as a source of high-gain tones, the Heavy features two independent channels (one with slightly more gain) that can either be voiced similarly so one acts as a boosted version of the other, or can be set up for two quite different sounds. Each channel sports gain and output knobs, a weight knob that changes the character of the low end, and a mid knob that offers a powerful 10dB of cut or boost at a frequency (500Hz, 250Hz, 2kHz) selected by a switch above it. Each channel has a selectable noise gate with a choice of natural or aggressive settings, while the whole output can be tonally tweaked by high and low shelving filters. Whether you want to scoop out some midrange or add girth to your high-gain distortion, the Heavy will cater to your needs, with or without the noise gate to keep hiss in check and your riffing tight and controlled.

Verdict

Tailor-made for metal players and useful for anyone seeking aggressive distortion.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Never has a pedal been more appropriately named...



Empress Tremolo2

PRICE: £215

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass, tap tempo, 8 presets, MIDI control

CONTROLS: Depth, rate/ratio, rhythm, output, mode switch, save switch, waveform switch

FOOTSWITCHES: Tap/preset, bypass

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, control port

POWER: 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (100mA)

DIMENSIONS: 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

The latest version of the very first Empress pedal, the Tremolo2 offers a choice of three

waveforms – a standard triangle with a smooth ramp from loud to soft, a gorgeous asymmetrical throb, as found in a 'brownface' Fender Vibrolux amp and a choppy square wave. There's also a choice of eight rhythms for the undulations. Rhythm 1 on the rotary switch is standard tremolo as we all know it, but the others offer musical variations by putting an accent on, say, every fourth beat – there's even one rhythm in 5/4 time! You can set the tremolo rate with a knob or via a tap tempo footswitch, and there are eight footswitch-recallable memory slots. On top of all this, there's an advanced configuration mode, where you can customise the pedal's functionality and control of parameters by expression pedal, CV, external tap switch or MIDI.

Verdict

As good a trem as we've heard, with an impressively versatile range of facilities.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: An upgraded version of one totally tasty tremolo





<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



Empress MultiDrive

PRICE: £259

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Fuzz/overdrive/distortion pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Gain volume, 3x filter switch, hi, low, mid, output, mid freq. switch, distortion type switch, internal DIP switches

FOOTSWITCHES:

Select, bypass

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (180mA)

DIMENSIONS: 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

The MultiDrive is designed to create a sound from a blend of up to three elements: fuzz, overdrive and distortion circuits running simultaneously in parallel through a master output section that features a three-band EQ. Each section has a gain knob to set how distorted it sounds and a volume knob to control how much of the effect appears at the output. Each also has selectable high-pass and low-pass filters so you can have just high or low frequencies from any section. The distortion section lets you choose from crunch, mild and lead sounds. The select footswitch toggles between two unique fuzz/overdrive/distortion combinations set by internal DIP switches. Each of the effects types sounds really good, but it's the creation of blends that's the MultiDrive's unique feature, with a huge range of layered tones available.

Verdict

Some unique tone combinations and practical switching options. An excellent, versatile pedal.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Three-in-one dirt blender that saves pedalboard space



Empress Phaser

PRICE: £299

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Phaser pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass,

tap tempo, MIDI control

CONTROLS: See website for full details

FOOTSWITCHES:

Tap, bypass

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output, control port, blend/exp socket

POWER: 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (120mA)

DIMENSIONS: 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

If you are used to a phaser with one sound and a single knob to change the speed, it's time to be amazed by this pedal. The Empress Phaser has five knobs and five three-way switches, as well as tap tempo, MIDI control and the possibility of using an expression pedal to control parameters. There's a choice of two- and three-stage phasing besides the more standard four-stage, and you also get a choice of eight different waveforms that offer more angular options than the normal rounded sweep. There are plenty of phaser flavours here, from really subtle to the more obvious, with a defined 'wow' switched in with a resonance switch that offers 'little' or 'lots'. You also get an Auto mode with eight different options for changing parameters in response to picking strength and volume, that's capable of funky auto wah among other things.

Verdict

Possibly the most comprehensively adjustable pedal delivering a single modulation effect we've seen.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: All phases of phasing in one impressive pedal





Empress Nebulus

PRICE: £259

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Chorus/vibrato/flanger pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass, 8 presets

CONTROLS: See website

FOOTSWITCHES: Preset, bypass

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor (300mA)

DIMENSIONS: 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

An all-in-one modulation stompbox, the Nebulus delivers chorus, vibe or flange, each with three variations for a total of nine effects (basic or multi-chorus, chorus with tremolo, univibe, vibrato, rotary, tape flanging, 70s pedal flanger or thru-zero flanging). On top of that, each can have a switched tonal character of 'bright' or 'warm' besides the normal sound, and can likewise have 'little' or 'lots' of an effect-specific modification, such as regeneration for the flanger. There are standard rate, depth and output knobs, plus a mix knob that sets a dry/wet blend. Eight onboard presets can save all knob and switch positions, and these can be scrolled through with the preset footswitch – each indicated by a different coloured LED. Chosen well to cover the most favoured modulation types for guitar, the sounds are classy, and offer real flexibility for gigging.

Verdict

A great choice if you want a single pedal with a relatively small footprint.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: A modulation get-out-of-jail card



Empress Vintage Modified Superdelay

PRICE: £389

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Delay pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass, tap tempo, 8 presets

CONTROLS: See website

FOOTSWITCHES: Tap tempo, presets, bypass

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, exp pedal input

POWER: 9-12V DC adaptor (300mA) supplied

DIMENSIONS: 145 (w) x 100 (d) x 70mm (h)

The Vintage Modified Superdelay is a tweaked version of the standard Superdelay pedal with enhancements to the tape delay emulations. You get several delay types, including reverse, a rhythm mode where you can set the intervals between multitap repeats with the tap tempo footswitch, and a looper. Each delay type also has three selectable variations. The tape delay mode has standard tape delay, tape delay emulating an old machine with wow and flutter and tape delay from a tape that's past its best. All repeats can have either top or bottom end rolled off with a filter switch and can have slow or fast modulation applied. Come across a sound you really like and you can save it – the pedal has eight preset slots – and you can plug in an expression pedal to control delay mix or feedback.

Verdict

It's expensive, but it's a practical all-round delay with a range of sounds, including some of the best single-head tape echo emulations around.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Multi-faceted delay with great tape echo emulations





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DOD Pedals

£85-£89

Popular brand gets a reboot 40 years on

WORDS **Trevor Curwen**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

DOD pedals first appeared in 1974, but by about 2009 had shut up shop. DigiTech has now revived DOD with a series of pedals that it says pay homage to the vintage pedals in terms of the look and sound, but are endowed with improvements that better serve the needs of today's players – notably true-bypass, bright blue bypass LEDs and 9V power adaptor jacks. All of the pedals will also run from a battery, accessed by removing four screws and the baseplate.



DOD Phasor 201

PRICE: £85

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Phaser pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Speed

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 119 (d) x 57mm (h)

Sound Technology

01462 480000

www.dod.com

A single-knob configuration, as on MXR's Phase 90, may well be the classic design for a guitarist's phaser: if the phasing's core sound works for you, the only thing you need to tweak is its speed. The Phasor 201, DOD's first 70s-era phaser design, follows that as-simple-as-it-comes format, although as a two-stage phaser the 201 has more in common with the Phase 45 than the four-stage Phase 90.

While two-stage phasers are generally perceived to have milder, less pronounced phasing than designs with more stages, it is a sound that suits some players and sits well with various playing styles. The 201 delivers musical phasing with a mellow character that starts from an otherworldly watery haze and goes through to a fast warble that emulates a fast rotary speaker sound.

Verdict

Whether you're recreating classic rock sounds or creating something new, a phaser can cover a host of possibilities, and the 201 will do just that.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: A welcome return for a mellow-voiced phaser



DOD Bifet Boost 410

PRICE: £89

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Boost pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, tone, buffer on/off switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 119 (d) x 57mm (h)

The Bifet Boost 410 sports a switch to change its bypass state from true to buffered – a smart option, as in unbuffered mode you could use it at the start of the chain in front of a fuzz box, which needs to 'see' a direct guitar connection. Alternatively, you could have it in buffered mode elsewhere, perhaps at the end, where it could be useful in countering signal loss.

The volume knob can deliver up to 20dB of boost via a tone knob that lets you sensibly increase or reduce the top end for a brighter or darker sound presence. As the volume knob starts from silence, with unity gain being reached at about 10 o'clock before you start boosting, the pedal can also be used as a mute switch to kill your signal. It's not squeaky clean, there's just a touch of valve-like warmth and grit in there, and it excels at driving already cooking amps just that little bit further.

Verdict

A boost pedal with a very nice character and a thoughtful feature set.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: A practical boost – great for kicking in for solos





<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



DOD Envelope Filter 440

PRICE: £89

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Envelope filter pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Level, range, voice up/down switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 119 (d) x 57mm (h)

DOD's 440, in its 2014 incarnation, offers 70s-style swept filter sounds, not so much auto-wah, more of a triggered 'quack' at the start of a note and a 'wow' on a sustained chord. Two knobs control the effect. Counter-clockwise, the range knob focuses on lower frequencies; there are more high frequencies in the clockwise direction, and these are the more obvious effects for guitar. Level sets how the pedal responds, so at its minimum you can exploit playing dynamics, but you have to hit hard for the full effect.

Turned up full, there's not much dynamic response, but a frequency-squeezed compressed sound – there are plenty of sweet spots between these extremes. A toggle switch offers more variation, emphasising different parts of the frequency spectrum.

Verdict

You may not utilise the 440 all the time – Jonny Greenwood apparently uses it for one solo in Radiohead's live set – but this pedal has a practical range of variations.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Triggered filter for funk and further



DOD Overdrive Preamp 250

PRICE: £89

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Gain, level

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 119 (d) x 57mm (h)

The Overdrive Preamp 250 is a 70s-designed overdrive pedal, with a gain knob turning up the dirt and a level knob setting the volume of the output signal. With the level set high and gain at minimum, you can use the pedal as a clean-ish booster with a semblance of grit to the sound.

That grit turns into more amp-like overdrive, with not much in the way of tonal shift as you turn up the gain, delivering a wide range of possibilities depending on how you combine the two controls. Basically, it adds crunch to a clean amp or drives a driven amp further – which it does very well. There's more, though: turning the gain knob past vertical and on to its final reaches sees the distortion get brighter and more aggressive as the nature of the diode-clipping circuit starts to offer some of the character you'd get from a fuzz pedal.

Verdict

There's a schizophrenic feel to this pedal, but that's not a bad thing: just set the gain for the sound you want.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Provides boost and dirt for your amp, with a fuzzy edge as you turn up



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What you need to know about...

iPad Amp Sims

Apple's iPad is firmly established and lends itself to being an ideal recording and practice tool for guitarists. Here's what you need to know about using it with amp simulators...

OKAY, WHAT IS AN AMP SIM?

It's a digital simulation of the sound you'd get playing through a guitar amp with a mic'd cabinet. Many guitarists were introduced to the world of amp simulation by hardware such as the Line 6 POD and software such as IK Multimedia's AmpliTube and Native Instruments' Guitar Rig, running on a computer. The iPad was the most recent platform to adopt this type of technology, and there are loads of amp sim apps available, allowing an iPad or iPhone to function as a portable practice aid, or even for live performances. Apps are generally inexpensive and many are expandable via in-app purchases of more amps, etc.

HOW DO I PLUG IN AND GET ANY SOUND OUT?

You'll need an audio interface that is compatible with your particular model of iPad – there are several portable models built specifically for guitar. These usually plug into the 30-pin port on older models or the Lightning port on newer ones. There are some that can plug into the headphone socket, but the quality is not as good. Other USB audio interfaces can be plugged into an iPad if you have an adaptor, such as Apple's Camera Connection Kit. Some interfaces will have a headphone output, but you generally monitor

through the iPad's headphone output or speaker.

CAN I CHANGE PATCHES AND SWITCH EFFECTS WHILE PLAYING?

Switching presets and manually controlling parameters is quite possible with some apps, possibly opening up the way for live use. It's done by MIDI and you'll need an iOS-compatible MIDI controller such as IK Multimedia's iRig BlueBoard footswitch, which works via a Bluetooth connection.

WHAT ABOUT RECORDING?

Some apps have integrated recording facilities, but you can also integrate amp sim apps with an iPad-based digital audio workstation (DAW) using Inter-App Audio (IAA), which allows you to connect the output from one app to the input of another. Audiobus is a third-party app that allows for real-time audio routing between apps – you can connect your Audiobus-compatible music apps together.

BUT WHAT IF I HAVE AN ANDROID DEVICE?

Android is at a disadvantage when it comes to hosting apps of this nature, due to technical stuff that we don't have the space to go into! But there have been developments lately in that AmpliTube can now run on certain Samsung devices.





iPad Amp Sims

IK Multimedia AmpliTube

Old favourite, new platform

IK Multimedia's AmpliTube amp sim seems to have been around forever on computers, and is available for the iPad in several guises including Fender and Orange versions, plus Jimi Hendrix and Slash editions. The signal chain offers four effects spaces running into an amp head, plus speaker cabinets; with a basic purchase you get five amps and 11 effects. You can expand on this number through in-app purchases. You also get a single-track recorder that can be expanded.

Verdict

The basic model ticks plenty of boxes, but the costs of building up a system can add up.

IK Multimedia AmpliTube for iPad

PRICE: £6.99

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Amp simulation and effects app

AMPS: 5

EFFECTS: 11

FEATURES: Tuner, metronome, song player, single-track mixer/recorder (expandable), Audiobus, IAA

COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPad.

MIDI compatible

IN-APP PURCHASES: Yes

IK Multimedia

0800 0934 066

www.amplitude.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A decent range of sounds, coupled with a practical feature set

PositiveGrid BIAS

Build your own iPad amps

BIAS is the first iPad app to offer deep editing of amps to the extent that you can build your own by swapping components such as the preamp, tonestack, power amp and transformer, as well as changing valves and editing parameters. Packing an initial 36 amp models, all with speaker cabs and adjustable mics, plus a noise gate and room simulator, there's a massive range of options. There are no effects, but you can use the BIAS amps with other apps via IAA – particularly seamlessly with PositiveGrid's JamUp (a fine app with amps, effects, recording and practice aids).

Verdict

A practical way to greatly expand your iPad amp options.

PositiveGrid BIAS

PRICE: £13.99

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Amp simulation app

AMPS: 36

EFFECTS: None

FEATURES: Audiobus, IAA

COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPad.

IN-APP PURCHASES: Yes

PositiveGrid

www.positivegrid.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Amp tweaking on an iPad

db Audiware Flying Haggis

See you, Jimi...

It has been around on desktop systems for some time, but Flying Haggis is now available for iOS. What you get is a colourful but simple interface that offers a single amp with drive, distort and compress knobs and three-band EQ. This feeds a choice of six cabinets with various mic'ing options and reverb. You also get six stompboxes – noise gate, auto wah, phaser, tremolo, echo and chorus. A bunch of well thought-out presets give you access to a range of amp and effects tones.

Verdict

There might only be one amp, but it's capable of a wide range of sounds.

db Audiware Flying Haggis

PRICE: £4.99

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Amp simulation and effects app

AMPS: 1

EFFECTS: 6

FEATURES: Audiobus, IAA

COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPad.

MIDI Compatible

IN-APP PURCHASES: None

db Audiware

www.db-audiware.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Easy interface with a tasty range of sounds

Yonac ToneStack

Newcomer to the market that stacks up

The newest of these apps, ToneStack offers six amps and cabs and 21 effects, and can be expanded via in-app purchases to 24 and 71, which Yonac says is the largest collection on iOS. What's more (CPU limitations permitting), you can run up to 64 amps and effects simultaneously, giving plenty of scope for creating new sounds, particularly as there's a signal splitter to run dual-amp setups or switch or blend effects. You also get a two-track recorder (expandable to eight) and a 'Tapedeck' that features looping and phrase training facilities – record into it or play songs from your music library.

Verdict

At £2.99, it's a bargain buy that covers many bases.

Yonac Tonestack

PRICE: £2.99

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Amp simulation and effects app

AMPS: 6

EFFECTS: 21

FEATURES: Tuner, metronome, Tapedeck, 2-track studio (expandable to 8), Audiobus, IAA

COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 7.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. MIDI compatible

IN-APP PURCHASES: Yes

Yonac

www.yonac.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A great set of facilities for not much outlay

iPad Amp Sims

Line 6 Mobile POD

A POD on your Pad for peanuts

Originally, the Mobile POD app was available only as a free companion to Line 6's Sonic Port (£69.95) and Sonic Port VX (£139.95) interfaces, one of which was required to be plugged in. It's recently been updated, however, so can be enabled to work with third-party audio interfaces via in-app purchase (£13.99). What you get is an amp and cabinet and up to eight effects, four in front of the amp and four after, all of which are easily tweakable.

Verdict

If you've yet to invest in a mobile guitar interface, one from Line 6 might suit and will give you instant access to POD sounds, but £13.99 ain't too bad for the app if you've already got one.

Line 6 Mobile POD

PRICE: Free

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Amp simulation and effects app

AMPS: 32

EFFECTS: 16

FEATURES: Tuner, music player, Audiobus, IAA

COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 7.1 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

IN-APP PURCHASES: Yes, enables use with 3rd-party interfaces

Line 6

01788 566566

www.line6.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: POD sounds for your iOS device

Apple GarageBand

Open the DAW to great guitar sounds

If you are a musician with an iPad, having GarageBand is a no-brainer. Apple describes GarageBand as a collection of touch instruments and a fully-featured studio, and that's about the size of it: you get keyboard, drum and even guitar instruments to play with your fingers, a collection of loops and a multi-track recorder. The amp sims (nine amps and 10 stompboxes that can be used in a signal chain comprising of one amp and up to four effects pedals), are all very usable, but if you want more sounds, or just something different, you could incorporate amps from another app via IAA.

Verdict

What else this useful could you buy for £2.99?

Apple GarageBand

PRICE: £2.99

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Complete music production app

AMPS: 9

EFFECTS: 10

FEATURES: Tuner, multitrack recorder, AudioBus, IAA

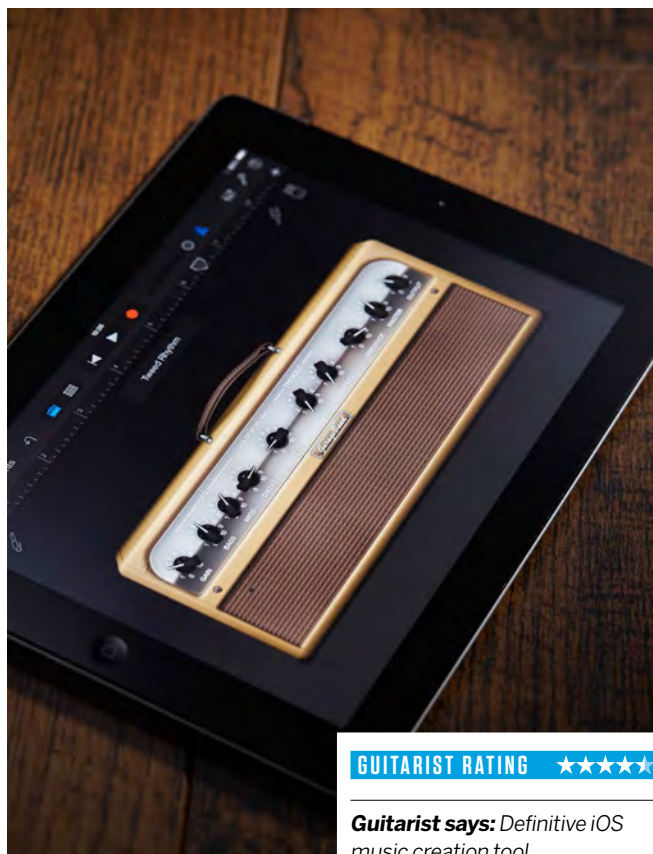
COMPATIBILITY: Requires iOS 8.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. MIDI compatible

IN-APP PURCHASES: None

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GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Definitive iOS music creation tool



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We first came across BIAS as an iPad app that took amp simulation on that platform to new levels of detail, offering the chance to get in and tweak amps at a deep level, change valves and the like.

Now, while iPads are great for many things, not everybody has one, so it's very welcome news that Positive Grid has released a computer-based version of BIAS in AU, VST, RTAS and AAX plug-in formats to use with your Mac or Windows DAW. BIAS Desktop is the basic version, but there's also a BIAS Professional, which sports additional features.

In Use

There are no effects as such in BIAS, just pure amps covering plenty of well-known makes and models, generally sounding richly authentic and feeling good to play through. You get 36 amps to start with, grouped in sound categories such as Clean, Metal, and so on. Each amp's signal path is constructed from a string of components – a customisable panel, preamp, tonestack, power amp, transformer and a cabinet with a choice of two moveable mics.

In addition, you get a couple of eight-band EQs that can be inserted at various places in the

chain, plus a noise gate and room simulator. For editing, you can swap whole components: change a Fender tonestack for a Marshall one perhaps, or get into the adjustable parameters of a component, such as changing the valves or moving the plethora of knobs for some very subtle tonal shading. You can save any amps you make into the memory and assign eight favourites to a front-panel grid for instant recall with just one mouse click. Any amps you create can be shared online with other BIAS users via the built-in ToneCloud facility, and, likewise, you can download

amps that others have created. BIAS Professional takes things further by adding three Amp Design Expansion Packs (Glassy, Crunch and Insane), but its unique feature is Amp Matching Technology, where you can make any BIAS amp match the tone of a real-world amp/cabinet/microphone setup. First off, you need to choose a BIAS model that's closest to your target sound, take a quick sample of that target sound by either playing live through a mic'd amp or playing it back from a recorded track on your DAW, and let the software carry out the tonal compensation and enhancement needed to make the BIAS amp model accurately match it. This works really well, allowing you to effectively model your own amp but, more than that, you can also get access to exclusive models on ToneCloud that others have matched, with all the possibilities that that entails.

Verdict

Virtual amp building on a computer isn't a new concept: Peavey's ReValver started and continues the trend, but BIAS takes it in another direction, especially with the opportunities that the amp matching facilities and ToneCloud opens up. If you are looking for a general amps and effects plug-in for your computer, the lack of effects could direct you elsewhere, but if you want open-ended, quality amp modelling to expand your tonal horizons you'll find it here. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: An amp sim plug-in that goes a step further



Livid Instruments Guitar Wing £165

MIDI controller that attaches to your guitar

CONTACT: SCV Distribution PHONE: 03301 222500 WEB: www.lividinstruments.com

MIDI can offer plenty of functional benefits for guitarists, such as changing presets and adjusting parameters on hardware digital effects and software amp sims. The Guitar Wing aims to give you that MIDI control, wirelessly, straight from under your fingertips. It's designed to slot over the lower horn of your guitar and, while it's not suitable for use on every type of guitar, has adjustments that will allow it to fit a wide range of popular instruments: Strats, Teles, Les Pauls and Fender basses included.

Working via a Bluetooth connection to a USB dongle that you plug into the device that you want to control, the Guitar

Wing can output MIDI note and Control Change information via an array of switches, buttons, pads, touch faders and a 3D motion sensor. Templates for the MIDI mapping are available for popular software platforms – you can remotely control Logic Pro X's recording functions from across the room, and switch effects and adjust parameters in real time in Guitar Rig, for example.

You also get the WingFX software, for standalone use or as a DAW plug-in, that offers a range of effects (delay, reverb, pitch change, and the like) that can be controlled directly from the Guitar Wing. Hardware such as an Axe-Fx or Eventide

stompboxes can also be controlled via a suitable USB-to-MIDI host.

Verdict

It may look a little odd attached to your guitar, but if you have access to MIDI-controllable

effects, the Guitar Wing can add a whole new dimension to your performance. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: MIDI control direct from your picking hand



Dickinson D1 Overdrive Pedal £399

British steel and old-school valve know-how equal stellar tone

CONTACT: Dickinson Amplification PHONE: 0208653 5285 WEB: www.dickinsonamps.com

Jon Dickinson is the man behind those wonderfully mad aluminium-cased amps used by Muse's Matt Bellamy and Squeeze founder Chris Difford, among others. Dickinson also makes an all-valve overdrive pedal called the D1, which combines similar audiophile-grade electronics with recognisable design and bomb-proof build quality. Originally, D1s were available only with point to point hand-wired circuits; however, increasing demand has prompted Dickinson to make them more efficiently, resulting in this production D1 version

Sounds

The production D1 uses a printed circuit board and swaps rotary switches for standard pots, but is otherwise similar, with the same stainless steel casing, custom-milled aluminium knobs and two 12AX7s. There are controls for gain, tone, boost level and output, with a second footswitch for the D1's boost function.

In use, the D1 provides exceptional clarity and low-noise performance, combined with some wicked overdrive effects – there's a slight hint of fuzz at higher gain settings,

which is instant ZZ Top with a decent Les Paul plugged in.

Verdict

It's far from cheap, but the D1 has a rare ability to transform a so-so amp into something quite special. Lower non-boosted settings add valve warmth and dynamics with a particular presence that makes a guitar part sit nicely in a mix, while the

overdrive sounds are a match for other top valve products. If you own a classic non-master valve amp, the D1 could be just the pedal partner you need to add class and versatility. **[NG]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: An amp expander/booster of the highest order. Looks cool too, huh?





<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



Way Huge Swollen Pickle Jumbo Fuzz Dirty Donny Edition & Havalina Germanium Fuzz **£139 & £99**

Two sides of the fuzz coin from Way Huge

CONTACT: Westside Dist. **PHONE:** 0844 326 2000 **WEB:** www.jimdunlop.com

Original Way Huge pedals (produced until 1999) are rare and sell for silly prices but, since designer George Tripps teamed up with Jim Dunlop to produce a new range, you can get new versions of many of those cheekily-named oldies.

One revived pedal is currently available not only as the Swollen Pickle Mark II (£99) but in a new more compact version, featuring limited-edition artwork by rock artist Dirty Donny. It's not just the size and look that's different, though: the clip control, available as an internal trimmer in the Mark II, now manifests itself as a mini knob on the front panel, along with similarly-sized crunch, scoop and filter knobs and normal-sized level and sustain knobs (the Mark II's internal 'voice' trimmer has been

dropped). Towards the other end of the fuzz spectrum is the Havalina Germanium Fuzz, a three-transistor germanium-powered fuzz box inspired by a vintage 1960s design. A three-knob unit, based on hand-selected Russian transistors and a passive tone circuit, it's essentially a pedal in the Tone Bender vein, but not a clone.

Sounds

Described as a 'Jumbo Fuzz', the Swollen Pickle provides high-gain fuzz with a tremendous amount of bottom end and all the grunge sounds you could wish for. The filter knob sets the overall tone from woofy to razor-sharp, while the scoop knob does a number on the midrange and crunch tweaks compression. There's a massive range of possible tones courtesy

of those four fiddly mini knobs, which can dial in some radical stuff that may not always be musically useful. However, a bit of experimentation will soon have you dialling in intense distortions and aggressive fuzz with a shiny modern sheen.

The Havalina offers a range of overdriven tones at lower settings of the fuzz knob, but you can turn it up for nice thick fuzz. Not as syrupy smooth as some vintage Tone Benders, the Havalina stakes its sonic territory with a tone knob that covers a wide range and gets sizzly in the top end. It's possibly beyond 'tasteful', but good if you need it, and plenty to cut through a band mix. It cleans up wonderfully from your volume control, with a complete range of expression straight from your guitar.

Verdict

Smartly finished in anodised aluminium, these robustly put-together pedals deserve a spot on hard-working pedalboards. If you think the extra £40 over the standard edition is worth paying, the Dirty Donny has a massive range of sounds, some in Big Muff territory, some more radical. The Havalina? You can pay a lot for a boutique Tone Bender clone, so to get something similar for less than £100 is sound indeed. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING

Way Huge Swollen Pickle Jumbo Fuzz	
Dirty Donny Edition	★★★★☆
Way Huge Havalina Germanium Fuzz	★★★★☆

Guitarist says: Fuzz in two different flavours: both tasty!





<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>



MXR CSP204 Custom Comp Deluxe £134

A CSP with an extra tonal control USP

CONTACT: Westside Distribution PHONE: 0141 248 4812 WEB: www.jimmdunlop.com

The Custom Shop line has taken MXR into the upper echelons of the pedal market and it shows no sign of stopping with this Custom Comp Deluxe – it promises to be MXR's best compressor yet, thanks to the addition of the CA3080 IC, as found in vintage Ross comps, plus RF suppression components to reduce noise and interference.

Alongside sensitivity, attack and output controls, the CCD also boasts a low knob, which allows you to cut the compressed signal's low-end. Elsewhere, it's business as usual, with nine-volt battery and power supply operation, plus true-bypass switching, all in the robust MXR enclosure.

Sounds

From the off, the CCD offers an uncoloured, lightly squeezed take on your tone – not as squashed as a Dyna Comp, but not as hi-fi as, say, the Empress Compressor. Always-on compressor users will

appreciate the low noise floor, too – hiss becomes apparent only once you're into heavily compressed territory.

The low cut control is the real sell here, though: it removes some of the woolliness of highly compressed tones, for record-ready sounds that sit well in a mix. It's great for funk players, but also humbucker users; stick your pickup selector in the middle position and cut the lows, and you have a passable single-coil impression.

Verdict

MXR has a long line in compressors, but we reckon the Custom Comp Deluxe is its best yet. It's easy to get a great tone, and with the low control, it functions as a master tonal shaper, too – brilliant! [MB]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A warm, vintage-voiced compressor that does subtle to squash, all with utmost tonal clarity



Apogee JAM 96K £105

Get a quality guitar signal into your iPad

CONTACT: Sonic Distribution PHONE: 0845 500 2500 WEB: www.apogeedigital.com

Plugging your guitar into an iPad, iPhone or computer requires an audio interface, but converting that precious guitar signal to digital depends on the quality of that interface and, in particular, its A/D conversion. Apogee is the go-to name in that field for professional audio, and following 2011's JAM has introduced a new model – the JAM 96k. This takes things to a new level by offering up to 24bit/96kHz operation and a Class-A JFET input stage, designed to emulate the warmth and character of a valve amp circuit.

At one end of JAM there's a guitar input and at the other there's a socket for the cable that connects to your device; JAM ships with three cables – Lightning, 30-pin and USB. Power is derived from your device or computer, a single multi-coloured LED lighting up blue to show you that

everything is working. A knurled wheel on the side lets you set the gain for your guitar, with the LED glowing green, amber and red to guide the way.

In Use

Plugging into an iPad and using JAM with Garageband, BIAS, AmpliTube and others, as well as into a Mac running Logic, we were treated to a natural-sounding signal with lots of dynamic range that brought the best out of the apps.

Verdict

A robust, portable plug-and-play connection that accurately translates your guitar tone and dynamics and provides quality sound all the way. [TC]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: The perfect connection between guitar and iOS/Macs



Gibson

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Koll

Koll Troubadour II in Fiesta Red or Olympic White £1799.
Koll Troubadour ST Namm 2014 Show Guitar Surf Green £2099.



EarthQuaker Devices

Founded in Akron Ohio in 2004 EarthQuaker Devices have become one of the hottest names in the boutique effect pedal market. With a host of celebrity axe slingers adorning their artist roster and a passion for continuing to push the envelope on guitar pedal design.



Two-Rock

Two-Rock are incredible sounding, hand built boutique guitar amps, made in Rohnert Park, California. Two Rock Bi Onyx Head, Two Rock Studio Pro Plus Heads & Combos, Two Rock Sensor Heads & Combos. **Huge selection in stock, from £999. New Two Rock Crystal models just released. Prices start at £2299. New Two Rock Bi-Onyx 40 just released. Prices start at £2559**



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GUITARS

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guitars

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RedPlate

RedPlate Amps, established in 2006 is a sole proprietorship located in Phoenix Arizona. The Owner, Henry Heistand has been involved with playing and servicing tube amplifiers for over 41 years. Redplate are true boutique amps, hand built with an uncompromising attention to detail combined with a final tweaking process that gives the player that last extra amount of tonal excellence. Great selection in stock, prices start at £1699

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Lowden

GUITARS

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The integrity and passion - recently described as "Olympic guitar making" - which goes into each and every Lowden guitar, has never been stronger. Coda Music in Stevenage has a great selection of Lowden guitars always in stock. Come into the shop or see them on our website. New Wee Lowden and Pierre Bensusan Old Lady on order. New 40th Anniversary models on order including: Wee Lowden 38 Brazilian Rosewood, Wee lowden 35 Indian Rosewood & F38C Brazilian Rosewood.





Fishman Platinum Pro EQ £289

A multi-function outboard acoustic preamp to solve your electro woes

CONTACT: JHS PHONE: 01132 865381 WEB: www.fishman.com

There's little doubt that the ongoing trend for electros is to have as few as possible onboard controls: for many, the side-mounted preamp panel is an antique. Yet us stage-aiming acoustic players still need some help, and the outboard preamp is becoming more essential. Fishman is no stranger to acoustic amplification, and the Platinum Pro EQ is one of three outboard preamps it introduced in 2014.

It certainly crams a lot into its 153mm by 142mm footprint. The single jack input, with its side-mounted input trim control, allows you to set your best level, and to the right of the volume control there's an LED input monitor. The volume control affects the overall output from the standard jack

out, plus we have an XLR DI out – with a pre or post switch.

In terms of EQ it's carefully considered with treble, bass and sweepable midrange augmented by low cut and brilliance controls. A guitar/bass switch alters the frequency centres to suit either – unlike the similar LR Baggs Venue DI, which is very guitar-specific, this preamp is designed for any acoustic instrument, from bass to violin, uke to mandolin. Along with this, we have a single-knob analogue compressor (with LED active indicator), as well as a tuner that offers a chromatic and four instrument modes and is engaged by the left-hand footswitch. The right-hand footswitch engages a level boost, which can be preset via

another side-mounted control from 3 to 12dB. We then have both a phase switch and viable notch filter to tackle feedback issues, oh, and an effects loop should you want the Platinum Pro to be the 'brain' of a larger set-up. Power comes from a 9V mains adaptor or a block battery – neither of which are supplied.

In Use

Engaging the tuner mutes the output, so it's not only ideal for its main purpose, but also when you're plugging in/unplugging. It's not the brightest LCD screen we've seen and the red flat/sharp arrows are at the bottom of the display, so you really need to be on top of it to tune accurately. Bass, mid, treble and brilliance all have central 'flat' notch positions and

work very well, offering musical EQ, and unless set stupidly it's hard to get a bad sound. That brilliance control really helps reduce finger noise from nylon strings or that often ear-wearing hi-fi edge of so many modern pickup systems. Equally handy is the low cut – a high-pass filter that is really useful with bigger PAs and passive pickups.

Along with this efficient EQ, the compression certainly helps fingerstyle, while the level boost is very handy for solos or quieter passages if you're playing in any kind of band setting.

Verdict

If you're serious about your live sound, this is an exceptional preamp that allows you to dial in your sound, compress and boost it, and sort your feedback. LR Baggs' Venue DI finally has a competitor. **[DB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Superbly considered preamp plus for the gigging acoustic player

COBRA

Bare Knuckle



"The Cobra is your answer to high gain, single coil tone without compromising dynamics or frequency response."

Tim Mills, founder and managing director,
Bare Knuckle Pickups

With the Cobra you get the radical look and construction of the Black Hawk humbucker but the Cobra coils are very much true single coil pickups. Each pair of uniquely annealed nickel plated steel blades are powered by a pair of custom size ceramic magnets ensuring an even string-to-string balance of magnetism for optimum driving of the coil windings. These pickups may be single coil by design but they play with all the output of a humbucker. Despite having massive amounts of power on tap, the emphasis is firmly on dynamic response for a precise and expressive tone.

The frequency response is surprisingly balanced for a high output coil set; the bass notes track precisely with plenty of snap and mids are smooth while retaining a lot of punch. High end response is extremely articulate and remains clear as you roll off the volume pot for exceptional clean tones.

The Cobra is designed to replace any standard size Strat style single coil. They are available in 6 and 7 string formats as a fully calibrated trio or as individual coils for use in HSH or HSS formats.

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Strymon BigSky
Gary Walker



Gibson 2014 SG Standard
James L'Esteve



Gibson Memphis 1959 ES330 VOS
Jamie Dickson

Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports

Gibson Memphis 1959 ES-330 VOS

Jamie Dickson

INTERMEDIATE It's proved itself in the studio, but will the ES-330 be gig-friendly?



It's a new year, and there are new jobs for the 330 to tackle.

A friend, Jonny Velon, is performing his debut album in Bristol later this month. I played on the album, recorded at the city's Toybox Studios, using a Tele and plenty of pedals to cover

all the sonic demands of a varied record. But with the live show looming, I'm wondering if I might perform a couple of the songs using the ES-330 instead of the more brittle-sounding Tele?

Particularly the slower ballads that require a sumptuous clean tone and tremolo. So, at our first

rehearsal for the show, also at Toybox, I plugged into an old AC30 that I'm told belongs to Eels producer and PJ Harvey collaborator John Parish. It sounds so good with the 330 – warm and expansive with a beautifully jagged crunch if you dig in – that I'm sold on the idea

straight away. One thing I won't need, though, is the Dyna Comp compressor I use as an 'always-on' clean boost for the Tele.

It sounds too squashy with the 330's plump-sounding P-90s, and causes feedback to loom up malevolently from the hollow body like a poltergeist trapped under the f-holes. Likewise, the 330 can deal with hot-ish drive okay, but it's a bit of a handful, so the Tele's a safer bet for tracks that involve sudden transitions from clean to heavy drive. But for warm, vintage crunch the 330's unbelievable. Next? Convince John Parish to sell me that AC30!



Unlike the ES-345 (right), the ES-330 is a fully hollow design

Gibson Memphis 1959 ES-330 VOS



First reviewed: 387

Price: £2,699

Type: Double-cutaway, thinline hollowbody electric

Body: Maple/poplar/maple laminate

Neck: Mahogany, glued-in, 24.6" scale

Electrics: 2x Gibson underwound Alnico II P-90

Gibson

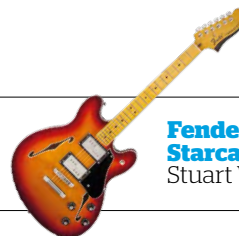
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Fender '68 Custom Deluxe Reverb
Joseph Branston



Eventide MixingLink
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Fender Starcaster
Stuart Williams



Less a stompbox and more a whole world of inspiration

Strymon BigSky

Gary Walker

NEW PRODUCT Our production editor falls in love with the BigSky's stratospheric atmospherics



In the short time since its arrival, the BigSky has made a huge impression, splashing its sonic majesty all over my two-piece band's humble demos.

Until now, I've relied on my amp's onboard reverb and VST plug-ins for recording. However, the BigSky has slotted in next to my Line 6 DL4 and instantly raised the bar. Its 12 reverb machines are of astounding quality, and while the Room and Plate settings are impressively realistic, it's the more ambient 'verbs that have struck a chord.

The Cloud mode is a thing of heart-rending beauty, lending

grace and definition to my fingerpicking and arpeggios, while the Swell function, with the decay cranked, produces glorious post-rock soundscapes and textural beds to build upon.

The BigSky has a remarkable glacial clarity that positively sparkles in a mix, where mere mortal reverbs would get lost in the mud. It's an inspirational tool, and has already sparked several ideas in our band – not least a song bearing its name.

With so many parameters to tweak, it's easy to get diverted – I surrendered most of an evening to altering the shape of the vowel sounds in the Chorale mode – but that simply suggests that

further time to experiment will yield even greater rewards.

The BigSky does, sadly, come at a sky-high cost, but what price a pedal that becomes central to your sound, prompting songwriting invention? I'm already trying to justify the outlay because, since its arrival, the momentum of our project has increased rapidly, and suddenly we're looking for a bassist and drummer to play live with.

I can't wait to hear the BigSky gracing a full-band rehearsal, and I've been talking to violinist Becky Leach from Bristol band ARTELS about laying some of the BigSky's ethereal splendour across her playing and adding some

orchestration to our songs. After all, why confine something so beautiful to one instrument?

Strymon BigSky



First reviewed: 377

Price: £429

Type: Digital reverb stompbox

MusicPsych 0207 607 6005

www.strymon.net

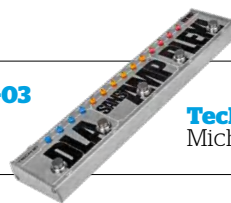
Guitarist's test products



TC Electronic Alter Ego X4
Chris Vinnicombe



Larri ve OM-03 Silver Oak
Dave Burrluck



Tech 21 Fly Rig 5
Michael Brown



A suitably retro companion for the ES-335 and Swart AST combo?

TC Electronic Alter Ego X4 Vintage Echo

Chris Vinnicombe

NEW PRODUCT Will some great echo sounds of the past rekindle our content editor's long-forgotten passion for delay?



In another life, during the first half of the noughties, delay was a huge part of my guitar sound. A significant percentage of the pedalboard I used in my band at the time was taken up by the mighty Line 6 DL4, which I'd have set up with Sweep Echo and long and short analogue-style delay in the three available preset slots. That chunky green beast racked up a lot of road and studio miles – I'm referring to the pedal, by the way – but as the decade and

I grew older, I began to develop a taste for less effected tones, preferring the subtlety and simplicity of a single-function analogue delay with a little slapback dialled in, with the option of occasional sci-fi on tap.

All that said, when news of the Alter Ego X4 emerged, my retro-biased interest was piqued thanks to the overtly vintage nature of the tones on offer. Could this unit's library of emulated classics tempt me to make echo effects a major part of my set-up again? First

impressions are that there's a lot of fun to be had here, with the Watkins Copicat model a particular highlight, and there are hours to be lost in looper mode.

Initial reservations come in the form of the unit's sheer size – do I want a behemoth such as this taking over my streamlined little 'board? – and TC's choice of knobs; the chunkier examples on the original Flashback X4 are easier to grab hold of in hot and sweaty conditions. Next time, we'll see how the Alter Ego X4 fares in the studio...

TC Electronic Alter Ego X4 Vintage Echo



First reviewed: 384

Price: £209

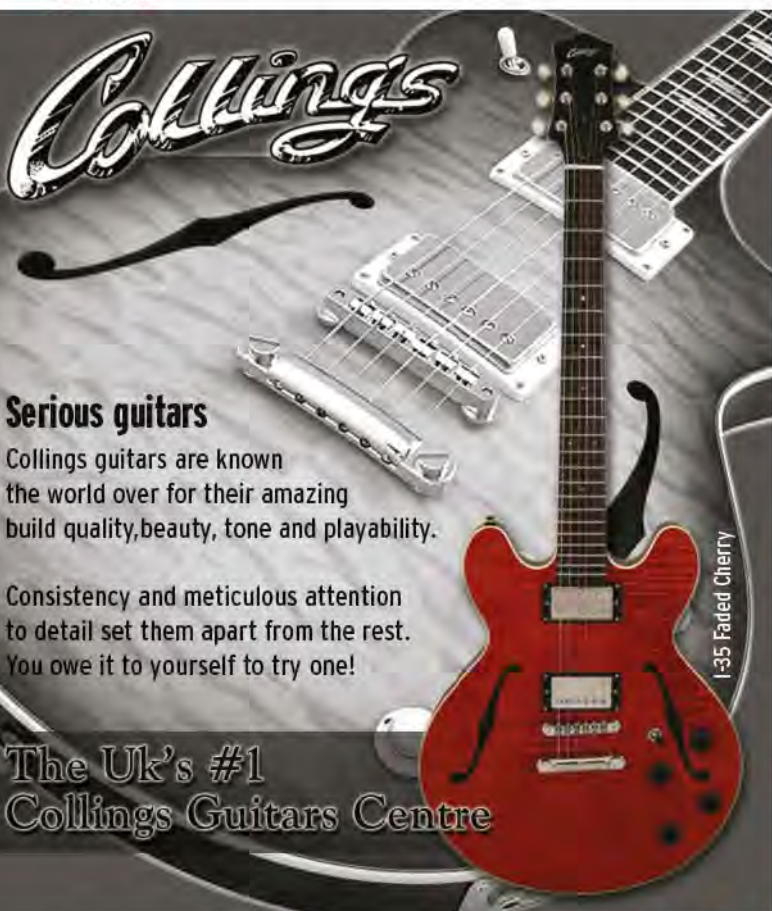
Type: Digital delay and looper stompbox

TC Electronic
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Q&A

Guitarist's expert panel



Dave Burrluck

is *Guitarist's* assiduous reviews editor and is also the author of numerous guitar books. Very handy with a fret file and indeed any aspect of a finely fettled six-string.



Mick Taylor

ex-editor of *Guitarist*, has wielded Allen keys, screwdrivers and sandpaper and from an early age; he also has a worrying obsession with pedalboards.



Neville Marten

edited *Guitarist* for 13 years, after working for both

Fender and Gibson as a repairer. From desirable Les Pauls to dream Strats, he's owned and worked on the lot.



Nick Guppy

is *Guitarist's* amp specialist with a wealth of experience gained from

collecting, repairing and restoring all kinds of guitar-related audio.

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com or write in to *Guitarist* magazine, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. If you can include photographs of the problem area, so much the better!



Having us Klon?

Like many of your readers (I suspect), I'm intrigued by the near-mythical Klon Centaur Professional Overdrive, for the obvious reasons. Firstly that it causes such a ruckus on most forums I read, and secondly because of what I've read/seen about the J Rockett Audio Designs Archer pedal in *Guitarist* and online generally. Do you really think the Centaur is that good? And how similar is the Archer in comparison, in your opinion? I watched the Tones For Tache video [on the *Guitarist* YouTube channel], and it sounded very similar, but with all the silliness going on, I'm not sure there was a conclusion.

Dan Brewer, via email

We're lucky to have had Mick's Centaur on hand for the last few years, Dan and there's no doubt that it does wonderful things to certain amps, if you like that kind of part-overdrive, part-

boost thing that just makes everything sound 'bigger'. Like any bit of gear, it's not universally loved, and the laughable prices for which they're selling on eBay is really about hype and rarity, not about ultimate performance. So, yes, we think the Centaur is good – great in fact – but there are plenty of other great boosty drives out there, too. One of which is... The J Rockett Archer. Here's Mick's conclusion from the Tones For Tache comparison video: "Even though I know the Klon well and we were goofing around in the video a bit, there were times where I honestly couldn't tell the difference between it and the Archer. Listening back through the studio monitors, I can, but really, both the feel and the sound while playing are almost indistinguishable."

Daniel Steinhardt (also in the video) adds: "I think the Centaur might have a hair more

bottom end; or maybe the Archer is a tad more pronounced in the midrange, but it's so, so slight. The way that the gain responds and breaks up is spot on."

Bright you are

As soon as I saw your review on the Godin Montreal Premiere (humbucker version) some time ago [GIT366] I had to have one. I'd been looking for a compact, centre-block semi in the ES-339 ballpark, and this fitted the bill. I generally play blues and chord-melody jazz standards for enjoyment, and also in the rhythm section of a 20-piece swing band.

I love the compactness and understated elegance of the Montreal, and also that it only has one volume and tone control – I rarely play anywhere but on the neck pickup. The problem, however, is that it's just a bit too bright. I have A/B'd it with a Gibson ES-335, -339 and

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What Should I Buy?

Best all-round Jaguar

Q I'm thinking about getting a Fender or Squier Jaguar. Part of the reason is that I just bought a Squier Bass VI and love the body shape. I'm looking at the Fender Kurt Cobain and Classic Player and the Squier Vintage Modified Jags. So, which Jaguar would you recommend for that all-around jangly Jag tone? Also, would you recommend raising the action and using 0.011-gauge flat-wound strings? Are the flat-wound strings really necessary? I have a PRS Stripped '58 and an American Standard Stratocaster and Telecaster. Which Jag do you think would fit better with that modest collection?

Erin Skinner, Christchurch, NZ

A The strings question is interesting, Erin. It's said that Jaguars (given that they use the same bridge as the Jazzmaster) were designed to be used with heavy-gauge flat-wounds. Flat-wounds kill the jangle pretty quickly, but the heavier gauge (flat-wound or not) gives more downforce across the bridge to help keep strings in the saddles. There's no 'right' way – try it all and see what you like. The money-no-object, vintage-correct choice is the American Vintage '65 Jaguar (£2,446), while the Kurt Cobain Jaguar (£1,462) is cool if you want powerful humbuckers. Our top three all-round choices are these... [MT]



2. Middle of the road

Fender Classic Player Jaguar Special (£1,042) is where you find the most compelling blend of spec, quality and price. This updates the traditional design with a flatter fingerboard, hotter pickups and a more reliable bridge-and-saddle design. The neck is also angled back slightly, which really helps with the whole shallow-string-angle-over-the-bridge issue.



3. Bargain banger

Squier Vintage Modified Jaguar (£346) has a 9.5-inch radius fingerboard, original quirky switching and vintage vibrato. A basswood body and Duncan Designed pickups aren't as grown up as the Classic Player, but for the laughably low price it's a fun and accessible way to step into Jaguar ownership.



1. Ideal choice

Fender Johnny Marr Jaguar (£2,134) is hands-down our favourite new Jag, with custom-designed Bare Knuckle Pickups single coils, improved vibrato, Mustang saddles and some wiring/switching changes that make the Jag's original electronics arrangement far more usable (in our opinion), yet don't spoil the classic looks. American-made, cool colour options: fantastic guitar.



a Collings I35LC, and at the same settings through several amps it has a much more treble-heavy sound. Should I be looking for a different pickup, at least for the neck? Seymour Duncan Jazz, Lollar Imperials – have you any suggestions? I have changed pickups in thinline f-hole semis in the past, so I'm okay with the DIY keyhole surgery!

John Niblock, via email

There are a number of approaches here, John. In our review, we noted that the Montreal Premiere was a lively, airy-sounding guitar, mostly due to the nature of its construction, also the bridge and maybe the pickups: it's a combination of everything, of course.

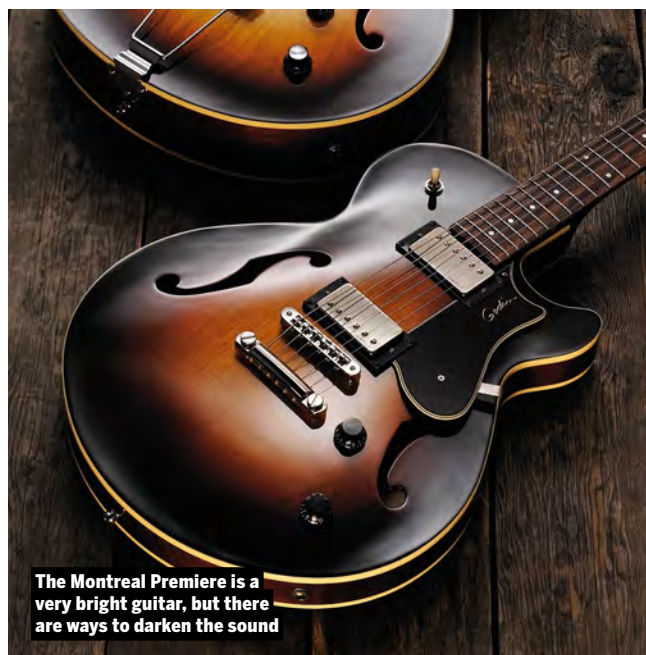
The first course of action is to not spend any money at all: it sounds obvious, but first try turning down the treble and presence on your amp, and perhaps boosting the midrange a little bit. Also, try rolling off the tone pot on the guitar to around halfway. You might find that this solves all of your problems. You don't say what amp you use, but that may not be well suited to the guitar. Something such as a Fender Blues Junior or Victory V40 would be our first choice.

Also, try some different strings. You don't mention what you're using currently, but we'd recommend trying some 'pure nickel' strings, as they sound slightly softer than regular nickel-steels. If you're feeling adventurous, D'Addario's half-wounds are worth a shot, too – they sit between regular round-wound strings and flat-wounds.

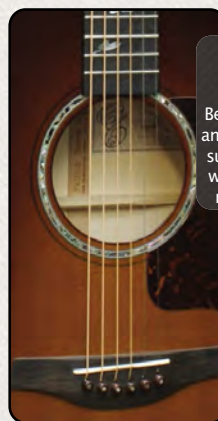
If none of that is doing it for you, head on towards the pots, tone cap and bridge. You might find that simply changing the capacitor on the tone pot darkens things enough for you – use a higher value than what's already in there and you'll lose more top as you roll the tone pot back.

The Graph Tech ResoMax bridge is designed specifically to accentuate some of the tone you perhaps like less, so it could be worth trying a heavier bridge and tailpiece, maybe even nylon saddles – as you'd find on certain ES-335s.

As for pickups, the Montreal Premiere has Alnico V-loaded humbuckers, so shouldn't be overly bright-sounding. You might think the Seymour Duncan Jazz model would be a good choice, but they're actually pretty bright-sounding (to get the brightness



The Montreal Premiere is a very bright guitar, but there are ways to darken the sound



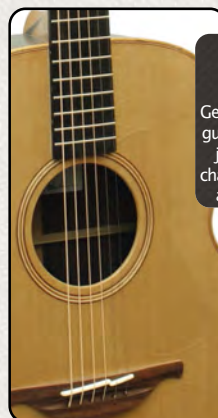
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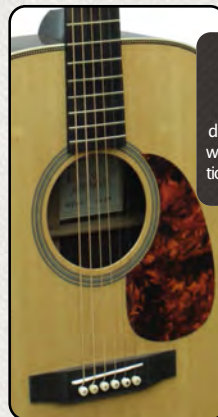
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into that neck position), so don't come recommended for you. We really like the Gibson '57 Classics, and think they'd work better in your Godin. We've also really liked Lollar Imperials in every guitar we've heard them in, but again, they're designed to be clear-sounding with an airy top end. We think the treble pot on your amp and the guitar's tone control are the solution.

Plane sense

I'll be going to the USA early in 2015, and I'm thinking about buying a guitar to bring home, what with the dollar being quite weak against the pound at the moment. The airline requires that a guitar goes in the hold, so what is the minimum sort of protection, in your experience? You guys must travel with guitars all the time?

John Bagshaw, via email

There are a few options, John. If it's a Fender/bolt-neck guitar and you're proficient with such things, you could just whip the neck off and pack it safely in a normal suitcase. We should also mention that you'll be required to pay VAT at 20 per cent, plus a customs import charge of around four per cent. If you decide to declare it, of course. If you don't and you get caught, oops – big trouble.

As for cases, we'd probably trust Fender's SKB-style cases, just about, but better would be a Hiscox Liteflite or Calton case, the latter being extremely expensive. One trick we learned recently was sticking an indestructible case in a big golf club outer bag. Golfers are seemingly hated less by airlines than musicians in our experience. That said, as long as it's your only bag, we quite often walk on with just a gigbag – it rather depends on the airline and how polite/confident you are with the nice people at the counter.

Poles parts

Has anyone else experienced a variation in string sensitivity with six-pole pickups, where the

thinner strings are not as loud? Just over 12 months ago, I found some small-diameter neodymium magnets on the internet, 1mm and 0.5mm thick, which I fixed to the relevant polepieces to balance this out. While using this arrangement, I have not noticed any degradation in the pickups to date but wondered if it could, in the long term, damage the existing magnets. I actually have split-coil humbucker pickups on my guitar, and this has helped not only to balance the volume but has improved the tone balance, particularly of the neck pickup. I would welcome any comments you have on this.

Howard Booth, Macclesfield

We've never heard of that approach before, Howard, and given that the vast majority of guitar players can live with the string balance across their pickups, we think you have a unique set of circumstances, maybe even some problem pickups. It goes without saying that the thicker strings create more 'power' than the thin ones, and if your amp is set to accentuate those frequencies, or perhaps it's not strong in the treble strings' key frequencies, the bass strings will indeed sound louder. It's also worth just checking the height adjustment of your units in accordance with the pickup manufacturer's manual/online recommendations.

Proximity to other strong magnets can cause degaussing (loss of magnetism) in Alnico pickups. The common example is when you lean your guitar close to the speaker in your amp, and is sometimes more apparent in the neck pickup, where that pickup ends up closer to the speaker.

That said, we've been playing collectively for a couple of hundred years in the *Guitarist* office, and not one of us has ever had to re-gauss a pickup. How many guitars have been leant against amps? Millions.

We asked Tim Mills of Bare Knuckle Pickups for his

opinion, and he said that putting the neo magnets on will produce a brighter tone, but distort the magnetic field of the original bar magnet and, over time, alter its charge. We hope that helps.

Artisan or Plexi?

I'm after a new guitar amp head, and the sound I hear in my head is pretty much that of a 'classic' Marshall, either a JTM45 or a Bluesbreaker combo, a 1959SLP or even a 1987x – Led Zep, Cream... all those tones.

Trouble is... my wallet can't really stretch to one of those Marshall heads. I've heard really good things about the Blackstar Artisan 100-watt head (EL34s), but am struggling to find a decent demo of it online. The ones I've seen just show the different voicings, which is cool, but I want to know if it will produce that rich, vocal quality for solos that you often hear with a Les Paul plugged into a Plexi.

Also, do you know how responsive it is to a guitar's volume control? I played an Artisan 30, and while it was great, it was basically clean by the time my Lester was on eight. I much prefer the Plexi, which had a real 'linear' response and didn't clean up until the guitar was below five. I use my tone and volume quite a bit, so this is fairly important.

I'd appreciate your input. These heads are surprisingly affordable for a hand-wired amp, and it

would make the wife very happy if I didn't have to spend a grand on the one with black tolex and white lettering.

Keith Moody, via email

We're slightly confused Keith, as the Blackstar Artisan 100 is still well over a grand (albeit less than the Marshall 1987x/1959SLP, and much less than the Marshall Hand Wired stuff). In any case, we liked the Artisan 100 a whole lot when we reviewed it years ago. It's more 'versatile' than a straight-up Marshall Plexi, though does veer slightly from the pure experience of a cranked 1959 or 1987. It's a very different beast from the Artisan 30 in pretty much every respect but, of course, you really have to play one.

One of our principle demo amps at *Guitarist* is a bog-standard Marshall JTM45 head (2245, £1,229). It has real-world usable volume (we're sincerely jealous if you get to crank a 100-watt Plexi with any regularity), so that's definitely the other amp to try.

The final advice is more general: we guitar players always seem to have the money to make the wrong choice, multiple times. Isn't it odd, then, that we rarely have the money to make the right choice just once? The wife may or may not be sympathetic to that argument. Good luck!



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OLD GOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY NEIL GODWIN

1972 Les Paul Deluxe

The chequered history of the Les Paul Deluxe model began with the demise of what is today regarded as the Holy Grail for collectors: the '58 to '60 Sunburst Les Paul Standard. Ironically, it wasn't a commercial hit at the time, and was discontinued in favour of the SG-shaped Les Paul model. Yet by the mid-1960s, Eric Clapton and other notable players started praising the quality of the original 'Bursts, causing demand for 'old' examples to shoot up.

By 1969, faced with declining sales, Norlin-era execs decided to capitalise on this demand by resurrecting the Les Paul. With a surplus stock of Epiphone mini-humbuckers to use up, Gibson elected to fit its new Sunburst LP, dubbed the 'Deluxe', with these pickups, changing both the visual identity of the guitar and its tone and alienating many of the purists it had no doubt hoped to entice. A four-piece maple/mahogany laminate 'pancake' body further distanced the Deluxe from its heritage, while the optional 'Standard' version with two full-sized humbuckers, offered from '72 to '76, was too little, too late.

These days, however, we can perhaps enjoy the Deluxe on its own merits as an often formidable-sounding variant of the breed, with abundant bite. Scott Gorham was a notable player of the model, and it's hard to imagine Thin Lizzy's steely, harmonised lead lines without the wiry presence of his Deluxe in the mix.



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Blues Headlines



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Turn, Turn, Turn

Difficulty ★★☆☆

30 mins per example

Tutor: Neville Marten | **Gear used:** Fender '53 Relic Telecaster, Vox AC15C1



FROM this issue, we've changed the format slightly. Rather than a single solo, I've played four individual licks that are hopefully more accessible than a full guitar break, which you may not feel you want to learn. They won't be random, but will focus on specific areas or styles that should be of interest. As usual, they'll be improvised in order to retain as natural a feel as possible, but my goal is to make them sound authentic and interesting enough for you to want to have a go. For our first foray into the new BH, I'm looking at four-bar turnarounds.

I particularly like 12-bars that begin with a guitar intro on the turnaround, as it sets the

song up perfectly and gives you a hint of what the guitarist might do later on. So there are already two potential uses for a single lick – and with a slight modification of a couple of notes you can use it as an ending idea, too.

My four intro/turnarounds are not supposed to directly ape any particular player – although I do hint at several via the general approach – or the use of a particularly favoured fretboard position. And to that end each of my intros is based on one minor pentatonic shape. We're in the key of G minor and use shapes 1, 2, 3 and 4, gradually moving up the neck as we go. I also plan to play with guitar and amp tones, as these can evoke a

huge amount – whether implying certain players, eras, or even geographical areas where styles originated or were refined.

Some of this month's intro/turnaround licks virtually ignore the underlying chords, since that's the nature of their style, but in future columns I'll be concentrating specifically on targeting chord tones in order to better outline the harmony. Also, watch the video, where you'll get visual information that's impossible to detail here.

If you have any areas on which you'd like me to focus, email me at neville.marten@futurenet.com and I'll do my best to accommodate them. See you next month.

<http://bit.ly/390audio><http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

Example 1

ALTHOUGH I reference this as vaguely Hendrix-like, it's not really, but as Jimi played blues with a mostly conventional and largely pentatonic approach, there's a degree of him in here. But you could equally say T-Bone Walker or Robert Cray. Note how the G minor pentatonic (G B $\flat$ C D F) gets 'filled in' by chromatic notes, and how the major 3rd's appearance (B) homes in to nail the upcoming song's tonality. The way it ends on the $\flat 7$ (F) lends an air of tension, waiting for resolution.

Example 1 is a guitar solo in 12/8 time, starting at a tempo of 165 BPM. The solo is written in G major (one sharp) and features a mix of pentatonic and chromatic lines. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 12/8 time signature. The solo is divided into three systems, each with a guitar staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram. The fretboard diagrams show the strings (E, B, G, D, A, E) and the fret numbers for each note. The solo starts with a D7 chord and a BU (bend up) on the 5th string, 7th fret. It then moves through various chords and frets, including C7, G7, and D7. The solo ends with a G7 chord and a BU on the 5th string, 7th fret. The fretboard diagrams are labeled with the strings (E, B, G, D, A, E) and the fret numbers (1, 3, 5).

Example 2

ALBERT King and SRV played with such conviction that their notes could override the underlying harmony, to such an extent that you'd never realise that sometimes things were technically 'wrong'. The key facet to this lick is its insistence on maintaining a single sonic imprint – those few notes on the top three strings of shape 2; the key technique is the secondary bend that comes from a fret below the initial bend (fret 7). This lends an almost 'out-of-tuneness' that I love. You could start the secondary bend from the B $\flat$ note (fret 6), but this would require a semitone pre-bend with the first finger, which is tough! The classic SRV ending line hints at an absent D7#9 V chord, and sounds great!

Example 2 is a guitar solo in 12/8 time, starting at a tempo of 165 BPM. The solo is written in G major (one sharp) and features a mix of pentatonic and chromatic lines. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 12/8 time signature. The solo is divided into three systems, each with a guitar staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram. The fretboard diagrams show the strings (E, B, G, D, A, E) and the fret numbers for each note. The solo starts with a D7 chord and a BU (bend up) on the 5th string, 7th fret. It then moves through various chords and frets, including C7, G7, and D7. The solo ends with a G7 chord and a BU on the 5th string, 7th fret. The fretboard diagrams are labeled with the strings (E, B, G, D, A, E) and the fret numbers (1, 3, 5).

Example 2 continued

Example 3

JIMMY Page would often climax a solo in shape 3 minor pentatonic. This is also BB King's favoured area of the neck, hence my referencing of both players. Using the first finger as a pivot on the second string (in this case 8th fret) gives a lot of harmonic scope, since the intervals of the scale and underlying chord lie in convenient places under the fingers. The first top-string bend takes us from root (D) to 2nd/9th (E) of the V chord (D); can you locate the intervals in all three chords?



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Example 4

THE doublestop that opens this lick features the root (D) of the V chord (D) on the top string, plus an edgy #5 with a blues 'curl' beneath. This musically pre-empt's the I chord (G), as it's the 3rd and 5th thereof. Note the Clapton-esque root-maj7-root move that occurs later over both I and V chords (G-F#-G and D-C#-D).

1

3

5

Hear it here

Led Zeppelin

Led Zeppelin

The band's debut album is crammed full of bluesy rock, and showcases Jimmy Page at his raw best. Tracks such as *Dazed And Confused*, *You Shook Me* and *I Can't Quit You Baby* see him exploring pentatonic- and blues-scale repertoire in the most exciting way anyone had heard up until that point. Page was always on the edge, but here his youthful exuberance and advanced chops (for their time) pulled him through on every occasion.

Robert Cray

Nothin But Love

Cray is here because he's an exceptionally 'correct' and conventional blues guitarist. Never flashy, he relies on tried and trusted blues vocabulary to underpin his brilliant vocals and stamp further authority on the songs. 2012's *Nothin But Love* shows the man in top form – once the young pretender, he's become one of blues's most important and influential ambassadors. *I'm Done Cryin* and *Won't Be Coming Home* are stand-out tracks on this Kevin Shirley-produced album.

Stevie Ray Vaughan

The Sky Is Crying

The title track of this posthumous release from the modern master of blues is full of the kind of licks found in Example 2. Borrowed straight from the hands of the great Albert King, but nurtured and refined until the style became his own, Stevie essentially milks a single lick for an entire song. Add a guitar tone sent from heaven and finger control that's been matched by only a handful of others – Gary Moore perhaps being one – and you've got to say it's pure blues genius.

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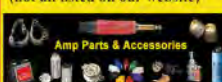
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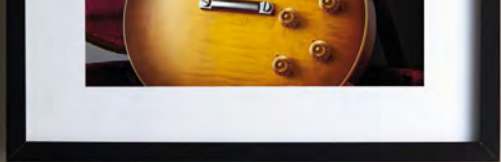
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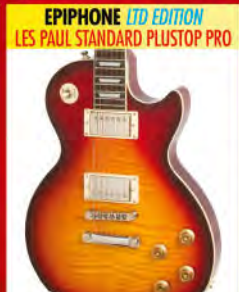
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