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Guitarist

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EXCLUSIVE

MARK KNOPFLER

On his new album, old guitars & timeless tone

“One of the things you find out over time is to play fewer notes. It usually says more”

ARTIST
INTERVIEWS

BILL
KIRCHEN

CARLOS
SANTANA

STEVE
LUKATHER

+ MIKE CAMPBELL

Tom Petty's picker on his favourite vintage guitars

GEAR
REVIEWS

SUHR CLASSIC PRO • FAME FORUM IV SD • MATCHLESS NIGHTHAWK • FENDER '60s JAGUAR LACQUER & ROAD WORN '60s JAZZMASTER • GIBSON CC #18 1960 LES PAUL 'DUTCHBURST' • EC CUSTOM SHOP PEDALS



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Mark My Words



It was a pleasure to interview Mark Knopfler for this month's cover story. As we were talking, a memory from teenage years came to mind. Occasionally, I'd drop by a friend's house, where his elder brother would often hold court dispensing

worldly wisdom to us young 'uns. One day, he declared it was a *scientific fact* that Mark Knopfler was the best guitarist in the world: as if Knopfler had been fitted with sensors in a Swiss institute alongside Page, Clapton, Gilmour and others and come out on top. I was telling a workmate about this and he recalled a family argument that had nearly erupted over the same surprisingly contentious point: is Mark Knopfler the best guitarist in the world?

Lots of people are passionately connected with Knopfler's music, as some are to football teams – and that's not purely down to his playing. It's also the stories he tells in his lyrics. Like good short films, the scenes and people in his songs are rooted in everyday experience, observed with a compassionate eye. I'd like to think that when vocal champions of Knopfler's playing call him the best in the world, they mean he's a wonderful storyteller and songwriter, too. Because all the technique in the world can't make people feel what a great lyric, accompanied by a handful of well-chosen notes, can. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie Dickson **Editor**

Behind The Scenes

This month, we've been recovering from the after-effects of our trip to NAMM. The migraines and sleep deprivation brought on by the cacophony of noise on the show floor, dangerous quantities of Californian pizza, all-night video editing sessions and Air New Zealand in-flight hospitality have been soothed by our West Country neighbours at **Bristol Beer Factory**, who kindly supplied us with a selection of their tasty **Seven, Gold, Milk Stout** and **Southville Hop** ales.



GITARRE & BASS DE

Frighteningly realistic authenticity!

Acoustic quirks, rough edges and nuances of the different amps are audible and palpable.

Technical capabilities that exceed what's possible in "the real world".

An "in your face" sound, so close, direct, dynamic, warm and "breathable". Fantastic sound characteristics.

MUSICMAKER NL

With its endless selection of effects, free updates and simple user interface the Axe-Fx II has become a world-wide standard for everyone from amateurs to studio professionals.

The editor "Axe-Edit" is the most attractive and best-functioning one I have ever seen.

GUITARIST

Revolutionary. The sounds onboard the Axe-Fx II are superb. Trawling through the presets gives the sense that there's an enormous degree of flexibility in sound creation.

Our feeling is that the Axe-Fx II currently provides the closest digital simulation of a valve amp playing experience - not just in the tone but in feel, too - dynamically responsive to your touch and with sounds that clean up nicely as you turn your guitar volume knob down. Impressive? Very.

Guitarist says: The Axe-Fx II offers the most complete and comprehensive signal chain for recording guitar that can be found in one box.



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GRAND GUITARS DE

What's amazing about the Axe-Fx II is the quality of the highs - generally a big problem for amp modeling. There are plenty of them here but they never sound cheap or nasty; on the contrary, pleasant and natural are the order of the day. Another thing we need to mention: the Axe-Fx II can also do loud - very loud if need be. It won't get drowned out by the rest of the band.

The flexibility of the sounds the Axe-Fx II can produce, along with Fractal Audio's highly commendable update policy, define a new level of quality that has set the bar very high for its few exclusive rivals.

PREMIER GUITAR

Premier Guitar has awarded the Axe-Fx II its top honor, the "PREMIER GEAR" award! Exceptional sound quality and a true amp-like feel in a self-contained unit and tube warmth and sweet breakup.

Clearly, the Fractal guys took everything into account when embarking on their mission to create realistic models - even amplifier attributes some might consider less than optimal.

What it offers practical and adventurous players alike in terms of sonic potential is hard to put a price on.

GUITAR BUYER

If just setting a rig up and going is your thing, you'll love it; if you're a hard-core tone twaker you'll think you've died and gone to heaven.

What you get are the most accurate amp and effects models we have heard so far from a unit that is incredibly hard to get a bad sound out of.

Going through the tones available would be impossible; it would need its own novella.

There's no doubting that the Axe-Fx II is simply stunning. It's brilliant in its design and function in a way we haven't seen before. Prepare to be amazed!

IGUITAR

To have all of this power, flexibility and control in one rack unit is insane and I am seriously tempted to drop all of my other gear in favour of this unit - it really is that impressive!

In use the effects sound incredibly pristine and realistic - this really is as good as it gets and the sheer number of options on offer is mind-blowing.

Huge amount of creativity, inspiring you to look for the next new sound.

Fractal's impressive, free, computer-based editor Axe Edit (...) makes editing patches even easier with a great and well thought-out visual interface allowing you to develop new sounds in a very practical way.

XOUND DE

The list of Axe-Fx II users sounds like a who's who of world-class guitarists.

The only limit the Axe-Fx II knows is that of your own fantasy. Its capabilities and range of uses are just about infinite.

Fractal Audio's Axe-Fx II is a dream come true for a whole lot of musicians.

T. M. REVIEWS

This is one of the easiest modelers to use out there. I used it on tour and it was just the easiest tour I ever had.

This thing sounds just like what it models - the quality of tone is amazing.

One other cool thing about this is that the factory presets sound great. Unlike other units: they'll just be like... eh, okay, and you'll have to go in and tweak - the Axe-Fx factory presets you can actually use right out of the box and rock off with them and it sounds amazing.

You can take the amps and make them sound better than the real thing which is really cool. Because when they are set up initially they sound just like the real amp and then you can go in and add EQs, drive pedals, reverbs - tons of different things - to make it sound just like you want it to.

ULTIMATE-GUITAR

To get basic sounds is very easy but you can also go as deep as you want. I really mean that, there isn't a parameter you cannot tweak. Personally I love tweaking, but even if you don't these parameters don't get in the way if you don't need them.

This thing feels and responds exactly like a tube amp. The effects in this unit are top notch and the best I have ever used. There are so many to choose from: Drive/OD/Fuzz/dist., Chorus, Compressors, Delay and Mega-Tap Delay, Enhancer, Flanger, Formant, Vocoder, Gate, Mixer, Multi-Comp, Pitch, Reverb, Quad-Chorus, Synth, Wah, etc.

I really can't say enough about the quality of tone you can get, you really need to hear it in person. This machine is made of the highest quality parts (highest quality converters, gold-plated boards, x2 TigerSHARC Processors, gig-ready case, highest quality headphone output, etc.) and you can really tell.

I really can't say enough how great this thing is, you find new things every time you use it, it is that deep.

Overall this thing has blown me away. It is great for any type of music and I would highly recommend it to anyone. If you go in and add up all the amp models, cab models, and fx models you will see you get so much and it really is a great deal. The best part is the creator Cliff Chase is also the CEO. He does not have to deal with bean counters telling him what to do.

The Axe-Fx II is so much more. If I were to lose this or have it stolen I would immediately purchase another. The only thing I wish this had is the ability to brew me a pot of coffee or maybe drive my car for me. If you have the money this is a no brainer, trust me!

FUZZ SE

There's no other system that is so perfectly complete as the Axe-Fx II and MFC-101.





"The Axe-Fx II has become irreplaceable on stage and in the studio for me and is truly a gift of inspiration for the modern guitar player."

— JOHN PETRUCCI



www.fractalaudio.com

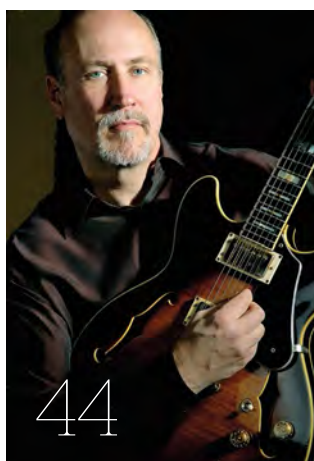
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Mark Knopfler

In a world-exclusive guitar interview, we travel to the former Dire Straits legend's personal studio to talk about his new album, *Tracker*, '58 Les Paul Standards, slide guitar technique, amps and what it's like to sell millions of solo albums

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FIRST ▶ PLAY



SUHR CLASSIC PRO
£1,799

WHAT IS IT? Boutique, classic-style solidbody bolt-on





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TRADITION EVOLVED

A classic double-cut that has more to it than first meets the eye...

WORDS **DARRAN CHARLES**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

Although Mark Knopfler's custom, honey-coloured Pensa Suhr brought the names of both parties to prominence in the guitar world, it was arguably the more recent endorsement of Guthrie Govan that thrust the name of Suhr towards the modern guitar-playing masses and culminated in a Guthrie Govan signature model. Of course, Mr Govan has gone on to pastures new, but Suhr continues to offer guitar players an instrument that can cope with the most rigorous demands.

Up until 2006, Suhr was strictly a custom shop, but as demand increased the 'Pro' series was devised, and featured the most requested custom configurations, including stainless steel frets, a compound radius fingerboard and locking tuners. Nine years on, and with five different body styles on offer, the Pro series now represents a healthy proportion of the USA company's output.



1 70s-influenced single coils provide bell-like clarity on clean, and some seriously good SRV-like neck pickup-style sounds when the dirt is increased

2 Suhr's custom shop history can still be felt in the Pro series' attention to the needs of professional players

3 Locking tuners provide the platform for ultra-quick string changing and addition vibrato tuning stability. A plus for all gigging guitarists

4 Stainless steel frets are hard-wearing, durable, and built to last; it's a common upgrade for many re-frets

Every aspect of the Classic Pro appears to be a compromise between classic vintage-style and the requirements of the modern or 'pro' player. For example, instead of the thin and typically ding-prone nitro finish, or the thick polyester finishes found on so many modern guitars, a 'thin skin' polyurethane coat provides a middle ground – perhaps to cater players who want a hard-wearing guitar but also the tone-impacting 'wood resonance' associated with a nitro finish.

Then there's the body shape: the Fender classic double-cut shape influence is obvious, but closer inspection reveals many modern concessions such as the chamfered lower horn and neatly tapered neck block, designed to enable comfortable left-hand positions higher up the neck. A similar neck block chamfer is a feature found on Fender's Custom Shop Closet Classic Strat Pro, a guitar also designed to accommodate the most popular 'modern tweaks' requested on custom orders.

An obviously modern appointment is found on the headstock with Suhr-branded locking tuners. In our experience, locking tuners can prove invaluable to any gigging guitarist, especially if you change strings before each gig; they at least halve the time you would normally spend winding strings and offer better tuning stability, especially if a vibrato is involved. Unlike some other-branded locking tuners, their manual locking parts are thoughtfully designed with an appropriate amount of girth





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preventing their imprint from being permanently carved into your precious fingers when tightening or loosening.

The two-point Gotoh 510 is frequently present on Suhr's vibrato-equipped guitars and proves a very stable system. Again, a two-point rather than six-point vibrato is a victory for the modernists, but as a gesture to vintage fans we have bent steel saddles and a vintage-spec heavy steel block, which carries tangible sonic benefits over many cast alloy materials in the form of increased sustain and clarity.

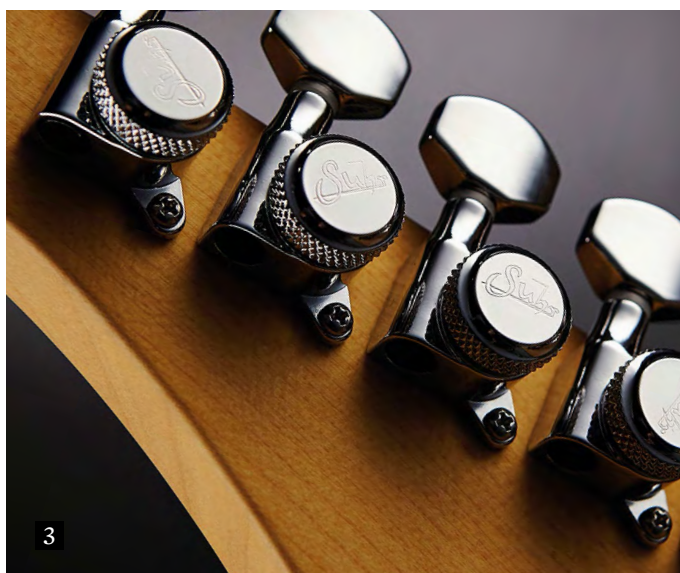
Feel & Sounds

Although pretty much any neck dimensions can be spec'd when ordering a custom model, Suhr actually offers quite a number of its own designs. Here we have what Suhr dubs an "even C medium" neck profile, which, from the profiles offered, sits as a perfect compromise (that word again) between the thinner 'elliptical' carves usually found on the Modern Pro series, and the bigger, rounder 60s-influenced profiles often requested by fans of thicker necks. It's a very comfortable palm-filler and expertly rolled fret edges ensure a pleasurable playing experience for anything from soulful blues to quick legato lines. The increasing girth towards the higher end of the neck may not be to the taste of the modern day 'shredder', but those kinds of players may be more suited to Suhr's Modern Pro series.

All Suhr's guitars benefit from an in-house Plek setup before shipping. Consequently, the guitar feels near-perfect with the tall and expertly crowned stainless-steel frets providing a bright, snappy acoustic tone and a smooth action when string-bending.

As for sounds, at the middle and neck position is Suhr's V70: a pickup that pays homage to 70s-era rock single-coil sounds. Playing the Pro through the dirty channel of a Cornford MK50 II, we couldn't help but bash through some Ritchie Blackmore-style riffs. Classic rock isn't the only genre on the menu, though. With the volume slightly rolled back you can pull off some authentic bluesy SRV-style tones from the neck pickup, and with the overdrive disengaged, welcoming glassy, shimmering cleans are the order of the day. Despite the extra power required for those rock tones, these are very quiet single coils thanks to Suhr's passive SSCII (silent single coil) noise cancelling system: vintage sounds without the vintage hum.

The SSV bridge humbucker is characterful, too, and has plenty of output for any classic



The hot-rodded S-type market has been with us for many a decade - but this model is a thoroughbred



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5

rock amp setting thrown at it, although it's a little underpowered for the modern rock player without help from a pedal or two. A very common problem for guitarists who use humbuckers with single coils is achieving a good balance in volume when switching between the two. Careful attention seems to have been given to this quandary as there is no perceived dip in volume when switching between the five positions, with little compromise being made to the tonal identity of each pickup position. Very versatile indeed, and invaluable to a busy live or studio player.

Verdict

The Suhr Pro seems to be aimed at pros, or at least those who need those 'extras' not always supplied with a more standard guitar of this type, such as increased contouring, a compound radius fingerboard and the detail 'boutique quality' construction that's associated with high-end brands such as Tom Anderson, Tyler, Vigier and many more.

The 'boutique' double-cut bolt-on market is, of course, highly saturated and the Pro faces some serious competition, not least from the similarly priced and spec'd Fender Deluxe Strat. Both are very similar, but the thoughtful design and customised feel of the Pro could well swing the decision in Suhr's favour.

Admittedly, it's not a guitar that immediately sets the pulse racing – the hot-rodged S-type market has been with us for many a decade – but make no mistake, this is a thoroughbred. It's also a very authentic taste of Suhr's custom models and as an owner of a well-gigged custom Suhr, this writer can attest that there's very little difference between the two. **G**

5 Bent-steel saddles give a vintage feel but the two-point vibrato gives a very modern and smooth performance, while the 'thin-skin' polyurethane finish that is used "allows the wood to resonate freely while still providing ample protection", according to Suhr



Suhr Classic Pro

PRICE: £1,799 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solidbody

BODY: Alder, 2-piece

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Tusq/41.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Indian rosewood, dot inlays, 228-305mm (9-12") compound radius

FRETS: 22, medium (stainless steel)

HARDWARE: Gotoh 510 vibrato, Suhr-Logo'd locking tuners – chrome-plated

ELECTRICS: Suhr V70 single coils (neck and middle), Suhr SSV humbucker (bridge), 5-position lever pickup selector switch, volume and dual tone controls, SSCII noise-cancelling system

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.6/8

OPTIONS: Also available in SSS pickup configuration

RANGE OPTIONS: Other Pro models include the Modern Pro, the Standard Pro and the Classic T Pro (£POA)

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISHES: Olympic White (as pictured), 3-Tone Burst, Black, Fiesta Red, Sonic Blue, Surf Green

Select UK dealers

www.suhr.com

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

Guitarist says: A seriously pro instrument for professionally minded players. The single-coil sounds alone are well worth further investigation

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In the decade before PRS Guitars opened its doors, founder Paul Reed Smith made a living as a repairman and custom luthier working tirelessly on creating a guitar that he felt worthy of taking to market. 30 years after founding the company, Paul maintains the passion to discover and experiment with new theories, concepts and designs that continually make our products better.

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FIRST ▶ PLAY



FAME FORUM IV SD
£709

WHAT IS IT? Pretty smart, Polish-made PRS clone

THE FAME GAME

With a name that suggests standout qualities, but a body that looks more than a little familiar, what exactly is this guitar's game?

WORDS **DAVE BURRLUCK**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

Despite its stylistic influence over numerous other guitar makers, PRS has relatively few 'clones' of its instruments in the mainstream market. Fame, however, is one of them. Its guitars are made in Gdańsk, Poland, in a factory that primarily makes Mayones guitars and has been since 1982. A team of 20 people build them, and unlike the guitars that they ape, there's no computer-assisted machinery involved here; they make them in the 'old-fashioned' way. Previously, these instruments had only been available via German retail giant Music Store (incidentally a PRS dealer), but now they're available in the UK, too.

British outlet DV247 may refer to this Forum as having "a familiar double-cutaway body shape", but it's undoubtedly a copy of PRS's Custom outline. Drawing around the perimeter of both, our lines coincide more than they differ – only the cutaway on the PRS has a little more air. Yet with its German-made Schaller hardware, classic USA-made





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Seymour Duncan pickup combo and a piezo-loaded bridge, not to mention its small-factory European production – to anyone’s thinking, it’s a lot of guitar for the money, isn’t it?

Using a denser stock of mahogany than you’d find on a PRS (Korean or USA), the guitar is a little overweight for the style, making it a slightly unbalanced and body heavy, just played seated. Strapped on (you get Schaller strap lock buttons), it’s fine and also features an enlarged belly carve compared to the original. The overall depth at 50mm is just a shade over the Custom; the two-piece centre-joined back around 33mm in depth leaves the maple cap at around 17mm. Its top carve is less dished and violin-like than the USA core carve, but more contoured than the bevelled edge of the S2 or the flatter contouring of the Korean SEs. The PRS-like natural edge is pretty clean, the maple top itself hardly in the 10 Top grade. It also looks slip-matched rather than perfectly bookmatched. The vibrant Trans Red finish is certainly in PRS’s colour palette, and while the clean gloss finish generally looks a little heavier, it’s far from bad craft.

The neck is again two-piece, centred-joined, and the diagonal grain of each piece is matched. There’s a volute under the truss rod access hole, which supports the thinnest point of the neck, while the compact headstock follows a similar geometry to PRS with its virtually straight string-pull over the nut. Shape wise, it’s a little wider at the nut than, say, PRS’s 42.86mm ‘pattern thin’, and slimmer in depth at both the 1st (20mm) and 12th (21.4mm) frets.

With its rather un-rock ‘n’ roll model name inlaid at the 12th fret being the only face markers, the rosewood ‘board is very clean,

with medium gauge PRS-like fretwire, although the ‘board radius is a little flatter, measuring 15 inches. Scale length apes the shorter Gibson scale, not the 25 inches of the PRS, and overall setup was so low it was virtually unplayable without anything but the lightest touch. Still, that’s easily sorted by raising the tune-o-matic, which is sunk into the maple top (like the stud tailpiece), giving a flatter neck angle than you’ll find on a pukka PRS.

Along with the dual Duncans and a two-way mini coil split switch, onboard controls are simply master volume (with pull switch to engage the piezo pickup) and a piezo/magnetic blend. The rear of the guitar even apes the distinctive PRS electronics cavity shape and there’s an additional one for the nine-volt battery to power the active circuit. Inside the cavity, it’s crammed with wires from the piezo outputs and a Mayones MP-1 Polish-made preamp.

Feel & Sounds

Up to a point, it does feel like a PRS, albeit with a more shallow neck and a flatter radius ‘board. But there will be players who prefer this setup. Its acoustic ring is good, though the out-of-the-box setup left something to be desired in the tuning stability stakes. After warming up a lightly crunchy valve amp with a couple of real PRSes, we plugged in the Fame, which offers quite a generic rock voice that would be perfectly usable for anyone working in that milieu. Specifically, it lacks a little resonance and is little hard-edged, but that can be said of instruments far higher in price than this. The magnetic sound is good, and the addition of the piezo output is another plus point. It’s not a

1 Seymour Duncan’s open-coiled JB at bridge and Jazz at neck is a classic combination, while its piezo-loaded saddles offer an acoustic-like voice via a mixed mono output

2 Good ol’ industry standard Schaller M6 tuners, along with Schaller-made bridge and tailpiece, add a touch of quality

3 Very PRS like in position, the volume control also engages the piezo circuit via a pull switch. There’s no tone control, just a magnetic/piezo blend



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



3

As such an obvious PRS clone, what exactly does this Fame bring to the table? Well, you're simply getting a lot of very nicely made guitar for just £700

replica of a Martin D-28 but a stringier 'acoustic-like' voice, which produced a credible sound through either our AER or Line 6 Stage Source with the usual mid and low end EQ adjustments.

Verdict

As an obvious PRS clone, what does this Fame bring to the table? Well, it's simply a case of quality-versus-cost. The factory direct-style pricing means that you're simply getting a lot of very nicely made guitar – with top German and USA hardware and pickups, plus a credible piezo system – for just £700. If only Fame had created something more original, we'd have a potentially major European brand on the horizon. As it stands, it's a PRS with the 'wrong' name on the headstock. The on-sale price of a SE Custom 24 is cheaper, and even though the Fame might be more 'PRS' than the S2 Custom, it still wasn't made in Maryland, but in the Baltic port of Gdańsk. Go figure...



Fame Forum IV SD

PRICE: £709

ORIGIN: Poland

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: 2-piece mahogany back with carved maple top

NECK: 2-piece mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 627mm (24.685")

NUT/WIDTH: Black friction reducing/43.2mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 381mm (15") radius

FRETS: 24, medium

HARDWARE: Schaller tune-o-matic-style bridge (w/piezo pickup) and stud tailpiece, Schaller M6 tuners – all chrome-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51mm

ELECTRICS: Seymour Duncan open-coiled humbuckers: 'JB' (SH4) at bridge, Jazz (SH4) at neck. 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume (w/piezo pull switch), magnetic/piezo blend, mini-toggle coil split switch, mixed mono output

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.85/8.47

OPTIONS: None. A custom order service is available (£POA)

RANGE OPTIONS: The Forum II kicks of the range at £479; Forum Custom models cost around £1,149

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes (some models)

FINISHES: Translucent Red (as reviewed; numerous others available)

DV247

01708 771991

www.dv247.com

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

Guitarist says: *It might be a slavish clone but build quality and sounds mean it's a lot of guitar for the money*

FIRST ▶ PLAY



MATCHLESS NIGHTHAWK 1X12

£2,350

WHAT IS IT? A true point-to-point, all-valve combo that's based on channel two of Matchless's well-known DC-30 amplifier

'LESS IS MORE

15 watts of first-class tone

WORDS **NICK GUPPY**

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOSEPH BRANSTON**

Matchless is renowned for being one of the first and few manufacturers to build modern, true point-to-point amplifiers in any kind of serious numbers. From its debut in 1989 with the jaw-dropping DC-30 – a heavy-duty, money-no-object 2x12 combo inspired by that iconic British amp with a similar name – Matchless played a large part in kick-starting the so-called 'boutique' amp market.

The company has had its ups and downs, but is now stable and well established as one of the world's premier and most exclusive amplification brands. The legendary DC-30 is still in the Matchless catalogue, of course, but it also forms the inspiration for some other models, including the one we're looking at here: the Nighthawk 15.



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>

Matchless Nighthawk 1x12 **FIRST ▶ PLAY**





- 1** The illuminated control panel and logo are hallmarks of the Matchless brand
- 2** The Nighthawk features a simple series effects loop. The valve-powered reverb is an optional extra
- 3** Lurking behind the sumptuous grille cloth is a custom-designed Celestion loudspeaker providing ample volume for recording and smaller gigs

Based on the DC-30's channel two, the Nighthawk 15 features a special preamp that uses the EF86 valve – a small high-gain pentode designed specifically for audio circuits and used in the normal channel of early Vox AC15 and AC30 amps. The EF86's high gain exceeds that of most triodes, the drawback being its tendency to microphony, with some brands more susceptible than others. The best early EF86s came from Mullard and Telefunken, with many of them used in small radios. The rest of the Nighthawk's circuit uses more well-known valves: a single 12AX7 driving a pair of EL84s,

a 5AR4 rectifier and two extra 12AX7's that on this sample power the optional all-valve reverb circuit.

The Nighthawk's build quality is typical Matchless, combining an old-school hand-wired circuit with almost obsessive attention to detail, including rubber 'O' ring shock mounts on the valves to reduce vibration noise. The simple, single-channel design is given style and substance thanks to a beautifully engraved, backlit control panel. There are knobs for gain, tone, master volume and reverb level. The tone control is a rotary switch with six positions that gradually decreases the bass





3

and mids, providing a simple and repeatable means to dial in any guitar. On the rear panel we get a pair of four- and eight-ohm speaker outlets, a send and return for the Nighthawk's series effects loop, and a footswitch jack socket to control the aforementioned valve-driven spring reverb circuit.



Feel & Sounds

As with any pure valve-rectified design, it takes a few minutes for the Nighthawk's voltages to sort themselves out. Once they do, we're pleasantly surprised by how little hum and hiss the amp generates. The master volume and gain control work together to combine preamp gain and power amp clip, while the rotary tone switch is a simple yet effective way to dial in practically any guitar.

We audition the amp with a variety of guitars – three Les Pauls, including a mint '72 Custom, a Fender Custom Shop Nocaster, an old Strat loaded with Duncan Alnico Pros, and an Ibanez AFJ-95 archtop. While the Nighthawk manages to flatter all of them with its blend of classic British and American overdrive, the brighter instruments gave the best results, particularly at higher volumes, where the tone control is less effective as most of the distortion comes from the output stage. The Nighthawk's valve-rectified power supply, Class A output stage and custom transformers produce a gentle, natural compression effect that clings onto each note, rounding the attack and squeezing every last drop of sustain into the custom Celestion loudspeaker. The reverb is one of the best we've heard, with a long, smooth decay and practically no noise.

The Nighthawk is audio dynamite, capable of turning any indifferent guitar tone into something world class

5 Class A and pure valve rectification means there's less need for a standby switch

Verdict

The Nighthawk is simply one of the best-sounding small combos we've ever played. Okay, like many boutique amps it's not particularly versatile, it's quite large and heavy for a 1x12, and the best sounds occur in a relatively small window. There's a tendency for things to get a little mushy at peak volumes, too, but that's not what this amp was designed for. Roll back the gain and master to around one o'clock and the Nighthawk is audio dynamite, capable of turning any indifferent guitar tone into something world class.

Of course, there's a price to pay for this first-class tone trip, and it's a big one. But if you want an amp to end your search for the 'perfect' guitar tone, this might just be the one, making the Nighthawk's exclusive price tag one that's worth saving up for. Matchless by name; matchless by nature! 

Guitarist would like to thank World Guitars customer Tom Woods for kindly lending us his amp for this review



Matchless Nighthawk Reverb 1x12 combo

PRICE: £2,350 (subject to exchange rate)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Valve preamp and power amp, with valve rectifier

OUTPUT: 15 watts RMS

VALVES: 3x 12AX7, 1x EF86 preamp, 2x EL84 power amp, 1x 5AR4 rectifier

DIMENSIONS: 480 (h) x 640 (w) x 240mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 24/51

LOUDSPEAKER: 1x 12" custom-modified Celestion G12-H30

CABINET: 11-ply Baltic birch

CHANNELS: 1

CONTROLS: Gain, master volume, 6-position rotary tone switch, reverb level

FOOTSWITCH: Single-button footswitch, toggles reverb effect

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Series effects loop

OPTIONS: Available in a wide range of custom finishes. Can be ordered without reverb and effects loop if required. Also available as a 2x12 combo (£POA)

World Guitars

01453 824306

www.matchlessamplifiers.com



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

Guitarist says: A stunning small combo for the valve purist, built by one of the ultimate boutique amp builders



The Knaggs Chesapeake Series™ 'Severn Trembuck' featuring double-cutaway, contoured Alder bodies with beveled Sapele tops and Maple caps or two piece book matched Maple tops, available in a variety of unique finishes and color schemes. Our set, figured Rock Maple necks come with Cocobolo or Maple finger boards (8.5" radius on 25.5" scale) and

Diamonds (Tier 2) or 12th fret Chesapeake work boat inlays (Tier 1). All Severn models are equipped with Knaggs' proprietary Chesapeake solid steel bridges, driving increased string vibration into the center of the body thus creating sustain and response only the player can feel. See and feel for yourself at a select Knaggs dealer and let us know what you think.



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A close-up photograph of a dark-stained wooden guitar body. The wood grain is prominent and runs vertically. A single, dark-colored nail is driven into the wood, angled slightly upwards and to the right. The nail's head is visible, and its shadow is cast onto the wood surface to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color, creating a high-contrast, artistic effect.

THE MAN WHO DROVE A NAIL *with a dream.*



MARTY DODSON WAS AN ASPIRING SONGWRITER. ONE DAY, HE DECIDED TO HAMMER A NAIL INTO A WALL. "THIS IS WHERE I WILL HANG MY FIRST GOLD RECORD," HE DECLARED—WHICH WAS A BOLD PROCLAMATION, ESPECIALLY COMING FROM A GUY WHOSE NEXT BEST OPTION WAS A JOB WRITING TOASTER MANUALS. FOR SIX LONG YEARS HE WALKED BY THAT EMPTY NAIL. AND SO DID HIS WIFE AND THREE KIDS. THIS TOOK GUTS. PARTICULARLY AFTER EATING MASHED POTATOES COVERED IN 69-CENT GRAVY. BUT MARTY PERSEVERED. FOCUSED ON SUCCESS. UNTIL ONE DAY, A GOLD RECORD HUNG ON THAT NAIL, AND THEN A PLATINUM NEXT TO IT. HIS STORY REMINDS US THAT THE WORLD COULD USE MORE DREAMERS LIKE MARTY. FOR MORE ON MARTY AND OTHER STORIES OF COURAGE THAT INSPIRE US, *visit taylorguitars.com*

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COMPETITION

WIN!

AN APPLE WATCH

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WITH THIS CHANCE TO OWN 2015'S MUST-HAVE GADGET...



Smart watches are one of the most exciting new technology categories around and there's surely no more eagerly awaited product than the Apple Watch.

Thanks to a combination of Apple's innate ability to make the latest technology accessible and the unrivalled personalisation that wearable technology provides, the Apple Watch is at the top of many people's wish lists.

With an Apple Watch, notifications appear on your wrist, included apps

track your physical activity and exercise sessions, the built-in heart rate sensor enables you to monitor your workout performance, and fashionistas can customise the face of the watch to their heart's content. Naturally, the Apple Watch also integrates beautifully with an iPhone and other Apple devices...

All you have to do to be in with a chance of owning one of these remarkable gadgets is answer the following question:

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE APPLE WATCH'S BRITISH DESIGNER?

A STEVE JOBS

B TIM COOK

C JONATHAN IVE

If you think you know the answer, simply visit <http://bit.ly/watchcompo> to enter. Good luck!

ENTER ONLINE NOW FOR FREE AT: <http://bit.ly/watchcompo>

The closing date for entries is 1 May 2015. Only residents of the UK and Republic of Ireland can enter this competition. After the closing date, five winners will be drawn at random from the correct entries. Only one entry per household permitted; multiple entries will be disqualified. See www.futureplc.com/competition-rules for full terms and conditions.

Frontend

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



Bristol Blues And Jazz Festival

6-8 March, Colston Hall, Bristol

Bristol's three-day blues and jazz celebration was a roaring success last year, and the 2015 line-up promises even more variety. The programme is curated by *Guitarist* contributor Denny Ilett – whose Big Band are also playing – so there are plenty of guitar highlights, including the Aynsley Lister Band and the Matt Schofield Trio. The New Orleans Takeover showcase features three curated concerts: the Louis Armstrong Story, with exclusive access to some of Satchmo's Big Band compositions unheard since 1947, funk from Pee Wee Ellis and Huey Morgan, and a headline set from Dr John. There's also the chance to learn from Schofield, Dom Pipkins, Ellis and more in workshops at Bristol's Folk House. For tickets, see www.bristoljazzandbluesfest.com.



© CHRISTIE GOODWIN

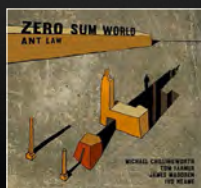
Joe On DVD 23 March

Joe Bonamassa is set to release a live concert DVD, *Muddy Wolf At Red Rocks*, featuring a September 2014 performance paying tribute to Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. The two-and-a-half hour set consisted largely of these artists' songs, and the DVD has 90 minutes of bonus features.

Ant Law On Tour

1-28 May, various
UK Venues

Rising star of the jazz guitar scene Ant Law is on tour across the UK in May this year. The Scottish guitarist's sophomore album, *Zero Sum World*, is out now and well worth a listen: visit www.antlaw.co.uk for a preview of what's in store on the record.



© STEPHEN FOURIE

Joe Satriani Tickets

1-10 November,
various UK venues

Tickets are on sale now for Joe Satriani's nine-date UK tour in November. The Shockwave Tour marks Satch's first UK solo appearance since 2013, and will see him play songs from his upcoming studio album, set for a July release.

Nine Below Zero Unplugged

14-29 March, various
UK venues

Having recently toured with a reformed line-up as a full band, Nine Below Zero's founders Dennis Greaves and Mark Feltham are touring the UK in March as an acoustic duo. For more info, visit www.ninebelowzero.com.



Round-up Back To Your Roots

Here's a selection of great folk and roots instruments we've looked at recently... And there's not a Kaoss Pad in sight



1 Cordoba Guilele

£239

www.cordobaguitars.com

A peculiar-looking beast without a doubt, this 'ukulele for guitarists' is also a lot of fun. Essentially a six-string tenor ukulele that's tuned as though you'd capo'd a regular guitar at the fifth fret, it'll make a great partner to an acoustic in a roots lineup, or add an extra dimension to recordings.

We said: "An ideal starter for micro-sized beginners, or a neat electro uke with bass strings"

2 Andrew White Eos1010

£699

www.andrewwhiteguitars.com

This deceptively large, slim-waisted folk acoustic represents great value for money for a solid spruce and rosewood

instrument. It's also a great fingerpicker for older-voiced bluesy and folky styles, and has stronger bottom-end character than a 000 equivalent.

We said: "This intriguing blend of folk and small jumbo offers something new, both tonally and aesthetically"

3 St Blues Delta Blues Box 4 String

£249

www.saintblues.com

This four-string, ready-rolled cigar-box guitar retains the rootsy simplicity of its DIY forebears, but adds the reliability and quality of a professionally made guitar to a versatile instrument with a unique voice that blends percussive attack and banjo-like 'ping'.

We said: "Far from the cheapest cigar-box guitar out there, but it's the best one we've come across in terms of build and playability"

4 Anderwood Style1M

£549

www.anderwoodguitars.com

Who doesn't love the mournful sound of a Weissenborn-style lap steel? All-mahogany build, unadorned looks and a strident, bluesy voice make the 1M a quality, cost-conscious route into the lap-steel world and the perfect instrument to soundtrack a magazine deadline.

We said: "Extremely hard to fault. A great blend of quality and value, though the pickup adds £229"

5 Freshman SONGTRAVTSB

£399

www.freshmanguitars.net

This all-solid wood mini 14-fret 'mini dreadnought', with its solid Sitka spruce top and mahogany back and sides, has a bright, mid-pushed tonality. Low action

and an almost electric-like playability makes the catchily titled SONGTRAVTSB a great campfire companion.

We said: "A cut above the usual solid top/laminate guitars out there, it looks great and its sounds will get you heard"

6 Nineboys Tonk Bros Parlour Guitar

£399

www.nineboys.co.uk

Nineboys specialises in non-mainstream roots instruments such as cigar-box guitars and diddley bows, but the Tonk Bros is most of the way towards a more conventional guitar. Modelled on pre-war small-body steel-string catalogue instruments, it sounds good through a Fender amp with gain, and is an ideal folk-blues knockaround.

We said: "An affordable Brit-made electro that comes beaten up and bruised if you want"

NEW FOR 2015



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Stack To The Future

New Limited Edition cabinets celebrate 50 years of the Marshall stack

One of the most iconic musical instruments ever, the Marshall stack, turns 50 in 2015. Since Jim Marshall and Pete Townshend's collaboration debuted in 1965, the stack has changed very little in design, and having quickly become an onstage fixture behind the likes of Cream, Jimi Hendrix and The Who in the late 60s, it's been championed by generations of guitar players ever since.

Marshall is blowing out the candles with a pair of Limited Edition 50th Anniversary speaker cabinets – the 812A-50 angled cabinet and the

812B-50 straight cabinet. Both 4x12 cabs are British-made, and feature original cosmetics, sporting authentically reproduced grille cloths, era-correct Celestion G12M speakers with solder tags, leather strap handles and a dust cover. Both cabs also have a commemorative plaque on the rear panel.

The stacks will be available only during 2015, and cost £1,500 each. Marshall has also reissued its beloved Silver Jubilee head, featured in our NAMM 2015 round-up on p84. See www.marshallamps.com for more.

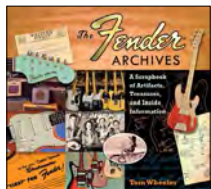


Marshall celebrates half a century of stacks with these Limited Edition speaker cabs and the reissue of the Silver Jubilee head

Guitarist Books The pick of the best guitar tomes

The Fender Archives

Tom Wheeler
Hal Leonard \$45



Subtitled *A Scrapbook Of Artifacts, Treasures, And Inside Information*, this gleeful raiding of Fender's vaults is undertaken in the

company of Tom Wheeler, perhaps the world's foremost authority on Fender history and an entertaining guide. The archaeological dig uncovers fascinating photo archives, drawing-board sketches, extracts from personal diaries and the like – and the book comes complete with several folders containing recreations of posters and obscure historical documents that'll thrill even the most casual Fenderophile.

Prog Rock FAQ

Will Romano
Backbeat \$24.99



The many-headed puppy of Cerberus that is prog rock is dissected in earnest here, in this tirelessly researched and surprisingly entertaining "alternative history" of the genre. Author Will Romano

gamely separates the myths from the facts throughout, crediting lesser-known figures of the genre, exploring the album art and even prog's role in cinema, and charting its eventual (though arguably only temporary) slaying at the hands of punk. Romano's interview roster is impressive, and there's something here for any prog-loving player – not just the ones preoccupied by bootlegs of Eddie Jobson's fabled *Pink Album*.

The Guitar Collection

Tony Bacon
Ear Books £39.99

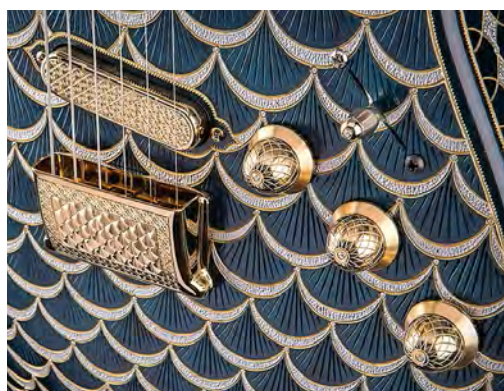


This sumptuous hardcover tome from Tony Bacon (guitar author and long-time contributor to *Guitarist*) is a beautifully presented celebration

of the world's most iconic guitars. With high production values, no shortage of colour and black-and-white photography and an unobtrusive dual-language format, it's an enjoyable coffee-table catalogue of landmark guitars and players that spans all genres. The package comes with a 10-inch vinyl record (and mp3 download) of a star-studded line-up of guitarists playing *Smoke On The Water*, recorded in 1989 for Rock Aid Armenia.



**Diamonds
are forever:
Fender's Pine
Cone Strat**



Million Dollar Baby

Fender Custom Shop unveils a one-off Stratocaster studded with over 500 diamonds

At the January NAMM Show in Anaheim, Fender's Custom Shop showed off its most luxuriant creation yet – the 'Pine Cone' Stratocaster. Created by senior Master Builder Yuriy Shishkov, the one-of-a-kind Strat is based on the jewelled enamel 'Pine Cone' Easter egg made by Fabergé in 1900, and is studded with 550 high-quality diamonds. It also features 10 feet of 18-karat gold ribbon-wire trellis along the fingerboard, which is inlaid with diamonds, finished with a gold-

plated nut and a Fender logo on the headstock crafted from 2mm gold-plated solid silver. The body's artwork was created in 3D and projected onto the guitar before it was hand-carved to emulate the ovoid surface of an egg; the blue hand-stained 'multi-composite' finish was especially created to enhance the effect, and the body finished with silver-inlaid and gilded scales.

The pickups, wound by Abigail Ybarra, feature 'encapsulated' mounting, a new technique that requires less routing – and it

comes with a matching hand-tooled blue leather strap, a lighted display case and a reconstruction of the original Fabergé egg with a miniature elephant inside. Shishkov said of his creation: "The guitar's curves and flowing shape perfectly fit the rounded profile of the Fabergé masterpiece. The goal was to make a very clean and vibrant tribute to old-world craftsmanship." We eagerly await the Yuriy Shishkov Kindercaster... To find out more, visit www.fendercustomshop.com.



"One of the finest guitar straps in the world"

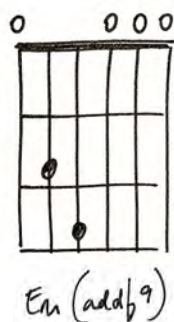
Guitarist Magazine

Substitute

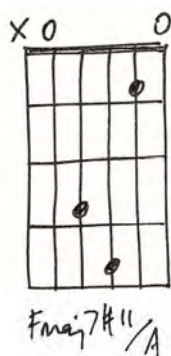
Tired of using the same old chord shapes?
These substitutions will freshen up your playing in seconds

This issue: Bitter And Twisted

As a contrast to the shimmering lushness that's our usual Substitute fare, here are four chords brimming with dissonance, ugliness and bile. These are all perfectly usable open chords; they just got in with a bad crowd. First up is an easy E minor, with the addition of a grating F note.



Working with that unsettling F-B tritone interval, you could interpret this as an Amadd9 with an added $\flat 6$ (F), or as a first-inversion Fmaj7 with an added $\sharp 11$ (Fmaj7 $\sharp 11/A$).



Ambiguity is often a by-product of uncomfortable dissonant chords such as these. This is kind of a G6 with an added $\flat 9$, but it's open to interpretation! By the way, these chords will work together quite well as a sequence... or you can jumble them up however you like.



Adding a major 7th to a minor chord always seems to create a sense of foreboding. An isolated m/maj7 arpeggio can make for a great Cold War spy vibe, and in this progression it simply contributes to the dark, mysterious sound.



And also...

DARLING UKES OF MAY

Brian May Guitars has released a concert model ukulele, designed by Brian May and modelled on the Red Special. The uke has a sapele back and sides and spruce top, an undersaddle piezo and Fishman pickup. It costs £225. See www.brianmayguitars.co.uk for info.

YAMAHA MUSIC LONDON



Following an extensive refit, the new-look Yamaha Music Store (formerly Chappell's) on Wardour Street in Soho, opened

its doors in January. The three-floor store has an extensive guitar section. See the store's website at www.yamahamusiclondon.com for more details.

MEET & JAM

Meet & Jam is a new social-networking website... Wait, come back. This one's for musicians – join up and you'll be able to meet other players, post classified ads and take part in jam nights across the UK, along with lots of other good stuff. Check out meetandjam.com for more.

Guitarist Picks Highlights from last issue



Electric
Cort Manson
MBC-1
£499

We said: "Super design... A modern rock guitar par excellence"



Acoustic
Taylor 618e
£2,721

We said: "A powerhouse jumbo with astonishing bass"



Amps
Suhr Corso
£849

We said: "A fantastic recording amp that looks good in any setting"



Effect
JAM Big Chill
£229

We said: "A practical feature set... A great trem for live work"



Effect
DigiTech Drop
£129

We said: "Pedalboard-friendly dropped tunings to extend your range"

And Finally...

Teenager Diego Corredor always wanted to play the guitar, but couldn't because he **lost his right hand at birth**. However, developers at 3D Gluck got in touch with him and used **3D printing technology** to design and create a **custom prosthetic**, which enables Diego to grip a plectrum, and strum and pick a guitar. 3D prosthetics of this kind **cost only \$50** to make, and 3D Gluck co-founder Andrea Monroy said: "We wanted to create something useful, that could **increase Diego's quality of life**." Find out more and see Diego play at www.twitter.com/3dgluck.



This \$50 prosthetic has changed Diego Corredor's life

THE AMERICAN STANDARD

A **HANDMADE** ORIGINAL



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fender.com

AMERICAN STANDARD STRATOCASTER®
HANDMADE IN THE USA

Fender



Carlos Santana

From starring at Woodstock to winning multiple Grammys, Carlos Santana has seen it all. But how will he cope with the...

10 Questions We Ask Everyone

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

"I got it in 1960 in Tijuana, and my father bought it for me. It was a big, hollow Gibson, kind of like Wes Montgomery's. I liked that it had six strings and I could bend them and learn how to play chords and connect with BB King. I was a violin player before that. The first thing I noticed with the guitar was that you couldn't make long notes like you could by going up and down with the bow. But later on, I discovered you could do that with feedback instead..."

2 THE BUILDING'S BURNING DOWN – WHAT GUITAR FROM YOUR COLLECTION WOULD YOU SAVE?

"My '54 Stratocaster. That was the first year they made those guitars. It's the tone; it has a different resonance."

3 WHAT'S THE OLDEST GUITAR THAT YOU OWN?

"The Stratocaster. I played Stratocasters on some songs on the last two albums. The approach is different with Stratocasters, you have to have a lot more intensity and tenacity or you start to sound a little hokey! Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray or Jeff Beck – when they play, they stand like they have a flamethrower! You can't play a Strat like you are petting a poodle. You've got to stand like Rambo!"

4 IS THERE A GUITAR YOU REGRET LETTING GO?

"I don't really regret giving it away."

"The approach is different with Stratocasters. You can't play a Strat like you are petting a poodle. You've got to stand like Rambo!"

He just passed – he was one of the premier guitar players but he never got his credit like Albert or Freddie or BB – and his name was Bobby Parker. I gave him this incredible cherry '57 Stratocaster. I think later he sold it because he needed the money, but that's okay. I feel good because I gave it to him and I love him. But I loved that guitar."

5 WHAT'S THE NEXT PIECE OF GEAR YOU'D LIKE TO ACQUIRE?

"I have everything that I need. I have Dumble amplifiers, I have a relationship with Mr Alexander Dumble. I stopped looking because I have found everything."

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

"That was where I was at the time. I have no regrets about any playing that I've done."

7 WHAT ARE YOU DOING FIVE MINUTES BEFORE YOU GO ONSTAGE...

"We always meditate, we blank our brains. We ask for the presence of the Holy Ghost. The biggest illusion on this planet is for people to be indoctrinated with the concept of the wretched sinner, unworthy of God's grace. We meditate so that our music will elevate people into not thinking like that."

8 ...AND FIVE MINUTES AFTER?

"I decompress by going home and jumping in a nice pool. I like being inside a pool... I close my eyes and I'm not dealing with Carlos or Santana for a while."

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

"Fortunately, I don't have any dark stories! Every time I go on stage it's like Niagara Falls of good energy and good blessings, and by the grace of God, like Buddy Guy, I can wield my guitar to manifest what I want it to do."

10 WHAT WOULD YOU PLAY ON ACOUSTIC AROUND A CAMPFIRE?

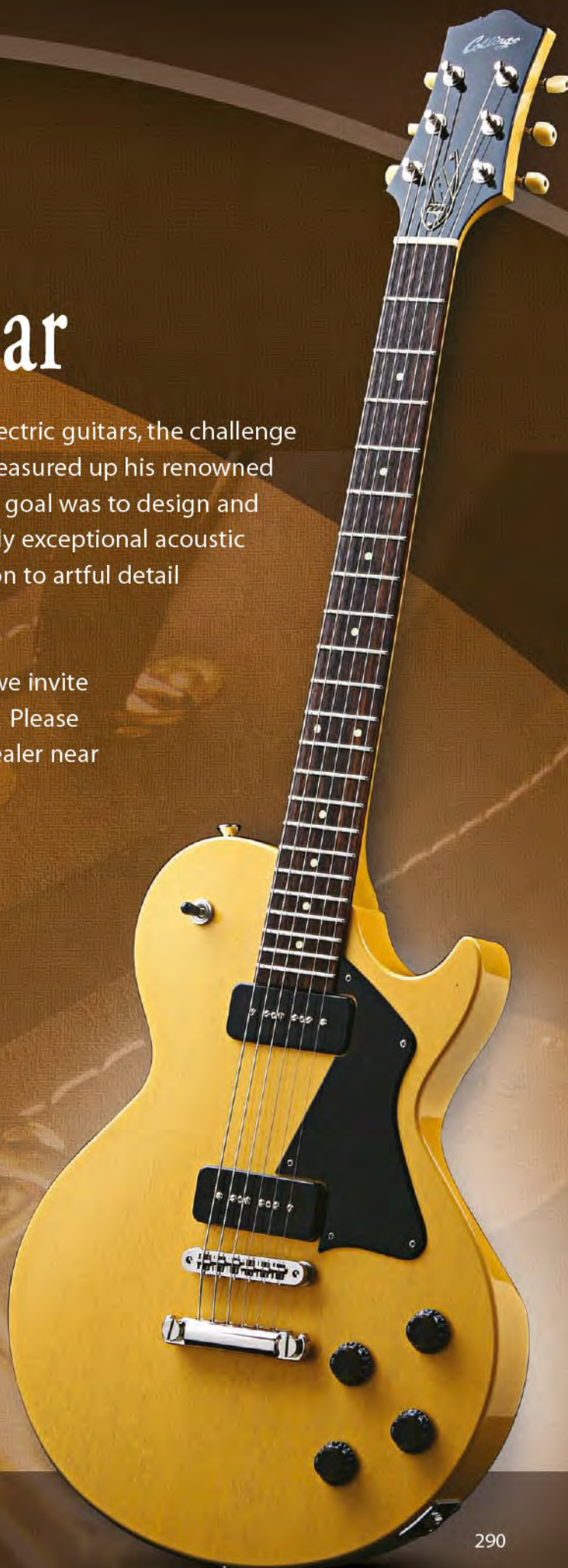
"I would choose to play something very intoxicatingly Spanish... but reggae style!"

Carlos Santana's memoir, *The Universal Tone: Bringing My Story to Light*, is available now

serious guitar

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Feedback

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



CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

After a financially depressing 2013 in which I sold most of my gear to put some food on the table and pay a bill or two, in the summer of 2014 my wife Lisa bought me a Strat to start the replacement (and healing) process. Roll on to January 2015, after looking over my shoulder and watching me drool over a reissue Fender '68 Deluxe Reverb she told me "I want you to buy that amp, you deserve it." My point is that I'm a better player because of her – musically, she can teach me nothing, but supports me in everything. The love of a good woman sure counts, so this one's for you, Lisa.

PS, I'm away to try to learn some mushy power ballad – not my thing, but she's worth it.

Alexander West, Fraserburgh, Scotland

You're a lucky man, Alexander. Behind many great guitarists is a loved one who supports, tolerates and occasionally moderates our six-stringed obsession. We hereby gift you 4,000 Brownie Points (and a Korg Pandora Stomp!) by re-printing your praise for your wife Lisa, who sounds like a lovely woman, as our Star Letter this month. Use the points wisely...

LOST THEIR VOICE?

Has anybody else noticed the apparent censorship that has taken over *The Voice* on BBC One? On Saturday, 14 February two contestants played guitars with large pieces of black tape covering the Gibson logo. Why has the BBC started to do this?

In the first few series of *The Voice*, the 'waiting area' was awash with products exclusively. I recall, from the Gibson group of companies. But on the same 14 February programme, the Fender badge of one amp was in full view during at least one 'tragic back story' contestant interview. And I don't recall any instruments on any edition of *Top of the Pops* ever being covered in tape.

The 'judges' on *The Voice* receive exposure – they gain advantage in their careers by appearing. Perhaps they should be anonymous, with bags over their heads? Shame on the BBC. Think what *Top Gear* would look like if Clarkson and his mates were not allowed to mention the brand or model of a new car they were throwing around the test track. It's idiotic!

Name and address withheld, via email

Well withheld, we've put your question to the Beeb, but at the time of going to press we're still awaiting an answer – we'll keep you posted if we receive any enlightenment from them on why tape covered those headstocks on the telly. It certainly wouldn't be the first time that gaffer tape was involved in a big-budget performance, mind...

CUSTOMS CONTROL

I thought you might be interested to see the custom guitar I have just finished putting together. I wondered what it would be like

to fit four single-coil sized humbuckers into a guitar with two normal humbucker cavities. A bunch of research and a couple of purchases later, I found myself staring at some push/push pots, some three-way switches and four new Seymour Duncan pickups. I opted for the Hot Rails, the Little '59, the Duckbucker and the JB Jr for tonal variety. As I was going to be stripping the donor guitar out anyway, I figured why not go the whole hog, and opted to change the standard tone for a clean boost, just for fun.

Everything came together very swiftly. It took one evening to strip the old electrics out, carve a bit of extra space in the rear cavity for the second three-way switch and the front cavities to fit the pickups. I also modified some spare pickup mounting rings to carry two pickups instead of one. The next evening, I fitted all the hardware and wired it up.

It's wired so that each bank of pickups has its own selector switch that acts as it normally would, ie, left, right or both. The volume control for each bank of pickups is also a push/push switch that acts as a kill switch, meaning that I can choose any combination of one, two, three or all four pickups. The tone control, when pushed in, gives about 10 to 12dB of boost that is powered from a 9V battery in the back.

The donor guitar is an Ibanez ART-120. A guitar that I always enjoyed the look and feel of but was never that enamoured of the Ibanez active pickups it came with. Having jammed with my creation for a few days, I can report that everything works as expected and the variety of tones available is excellent, especially through a valve amp. My friends thought I was nuts when I started talking about building it, but now a few of them have had a go



ABOVE Mark Radford's home-built custom guitar. Do you have a build project of your own you'd like to share with us?

they've hinted they might want me to do something similar to their guitars.

Mark Radford, via email

Congratulations, Mark – she looks like a beauty. This is the second impressive home-build we've featured on these pages in as many months. Keep them coming, everyone, and we might just make a permanent slot for readers' builds.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Firstly, thanks to a dear friend of mine, known as Dr Rubberfunk, for continuing to provide my subscription to this excellent magazine. This had lapsed after a hiatus of about 15 years when children and work took over, and so I started getting the magazine again in 2009 and I can't bring myself to throw any copy away.

My first *Guitarist* was bought for me when I was in hospital in the 80s and featured the solo tab to *Rock Around the Clock*. Of course, the minute I got out of hospital this was all I wanted to learn, and this set the trend for introducing me to different guitarist styles (Vai, Clapton, Benson, Cropper and the like). Picking things up again recently has been very interesting.

I've found you're introducing people born this side of the millennia to where modern guitar comes from, so seeing Quo, Clapton and Danny Cedrone [from Bill Haley & His Comets] re-appear in the mag was initially strange and a bit annoying. I thought I knew how things went,

but ears get better with age and listening again was incredibly revealing. Vibrato, picking styles, strength of conviction, tone don't come across in tab alone, and seeing and playing with people who know songs 'by the dots', it's clear this is one of the reasons why the electric guitar can be such a fantastically unique tool.

Technique can be interesting, musical and humorous, so please give some time to Guthrie Govan; fantastic to listen to on so many levels, harking back without sounding dated and pushing technique without putting it first. And how about Ed Sheeran? Maybe a bit 'pop' for some, but the three-quarter guitar and looping is fantastic and built around some great songs.

Has the guitar got a future? Well, ideas are still coming thick and fast, and so even looking at my young daughter's interest in the instrument, I'm certain it's going to be taken in some direction that will echo Cedrone and Moore while still individual and going somewhere new.

Jim Oliver, via email

We've devoted a cover story and many articles to Guthrie Govan's genius in recent years. We're also increasing the amount of technique in the mag, especially accompanying our artist interviews – as with this month's cover interview with Mark Knopfler. So, dear readers, let us know what you'd like to learn to play and we'll try to find extra space for teaching you the technique.

Join the ReVolution



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Photo by Katarina Benzova, Art by SavanasArt

WISH LIST

Photography by **Neil Godwin**

Michael Spalt 624 HB Custom **£3,750**

Europe is teeming with great guitar makers and if you haven't come across Michael Spalt – now available in the UK, exclusively from The North American Guitar – then you really should. Based in Vienna, and with a diverse background in art and film, Spalt has been making guitars professionally for some 15 years. He creates some pretty 'out there' sculptural designs from wood and metal, but all are fantastically crafted with an ever-present artistic eye guiding the lines. If you want vintage clones, look elsewhere.

This Custom 624 is one of Spalt's more conventional designs, his take on the Les Paul – albeit with a flat front and Fender-like scale length. The top here is zebrawood and gives a striking appearance that's contrasted by the sand-cast aluminium scratchplate. Don't

worry about the weight, though – not least due to its chambered back, the 624 weighs in just under 8lbs. Perfect.

It's such a beautifully conceived and crafted piece – and certainly recalls the work of Tony Zemaitis – that we're really not sure whether it should be in an art display or strapped on and plugged in. If you choose the latter route you'll be rewarded with a sonorous, sustaining single-cut voice played clean and throaty girth with the wick turned up. But there's a semi-like lively snarl in there, too. There's certainly a beautiful, almost 3D-like clarity, no doubt helped by the wenge fingerboard and that exotic wood top. The Lollar Imperials split nicely, too; it's a work of art that sounds the part. **G**

The North American Guitar
0207 835 5597
www.spaltinstruments.com





1 Lollar Imperial humbuckers are the pickup of choice here, bringing a lovely classicism to the guitar's tonality

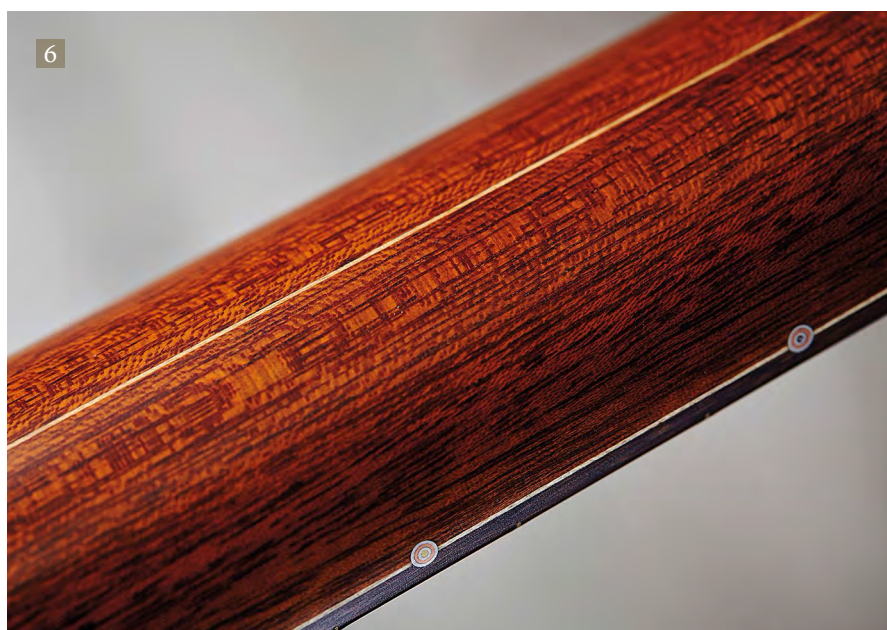
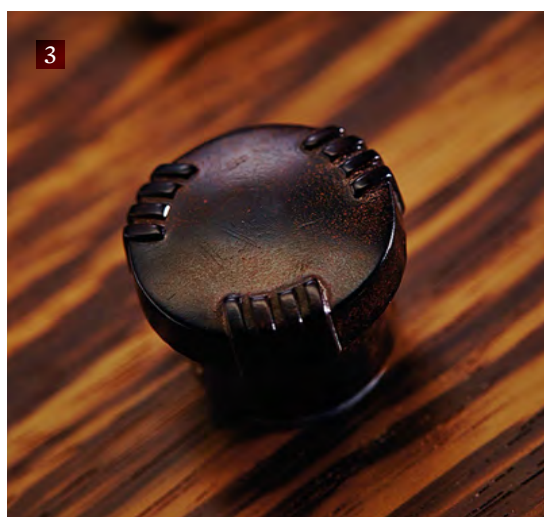
2 Switching is conventional with a three-way toggle, volume and tone, plus pull/push coil-splits for each pickup

3 The Bakelite knobs are from a 1930s radio, apparently!

4 A Bigsby B-5 not only provides its classic shimmer and tonality but fits the aesthetic perfectly, too

5 With Gotoh vintage-style locking tuners, bone nut and ABR tune-o-matic-style bridge, intonation and tuning stability are both excellent

6 The set neck, with a deep tenon, is perfectly in (Gibson) style, although the scale length is Fender-like at 25.5 inches. Old stock Honduran mahogany is used for both the back and neck wood



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Music



Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

Chasing Yesterday

★★★★

Sour Mash

A jazz odyssey? Not quite, but there are saxophones...

Few English songwriters are burdened with the weight of expectation that accompanies a new release by Burnage's most famous son. Two decades may have passed since his Midas touch was potent enough to propel Oasis to Beatle-like levels of cultural significance, but the intervening years have seen Noel Gallagher prove that from time to time he can still strike gold.

The last decade has been something of a wasteland for mainstream British rock, and in 20 years, there's scarcely been anything homegrown on daytime radio fit to rival *Slide Away*, *Supersonic* or *Don't Look Back In Anger* when it comes to starry-eyed melodic brilliance and everyman appeal. Though 2011's solo debut, *Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds*, also fell some way short of the impact of a *Definitely Maybe* or *Morning Glory?*, it's uncharitable to measure any artist in their mid 40s against their late-20s pomp. Regardless, *NGHFB* was the UK's second biggest-selling



rock record of 2011 and contained his most consistent collection of songs in years.

The wryly-titled *Chasing Yesterday* makes for a worthy follow-up, with a broader palette of sonic reference points than might be expected. The smoky, jazz-infused groove of *The Right Stuff* is a highlight, while the four-to-the-floor swagger of *In The Heat Of The Moment* and Johnny Marr cameo *The Ballad Of The Mighty I* prove that attempts to paint Noel as a retro-obsessed curmudgeon are a little unfair. Where he does plunder his own back catalogue, it's a fruitful exercise; *Lock All The Doors* may

have taken 23 years to complete, but it's an adrenaline rush of dense guitar that will transport many listeners back to a smoke-filled indie disco in the mid 1990s.

Happily, there's more electric guitar woven throughout *Chasing Yesterday* than on *NGHFB*, with Noel and multi-instrumentalist sideman/engineer Paul Stacey lighting up the grooves with everything from textural ambience to tasteful melodic soloing. And while track nine proclaims *You Know We Can't Go Back*, there's no shortage of evidence here that fans have plenty to look forward to. **[CV]**
Standout track: *Riverman*
For fans of: Oasis, Paul Weller, Johnny Marr



On the Record



ALBUM: Sco-Mule

STUDIO: The Roxy (Atlanta, Georgia) and The Georgia Theatre (Athens, Georgia), 1999

PRODUCER: Warren Haynes

"It was like a rowdy Southern rock concert, a lot of fun"

Gov't Mule Feat. John Scofield

Jazzier John Scofield recalls his two legendary concerts with the Southern rockers, which are finally being released as *Sco-Mule*

The Shows

"I gotta hand it to Warren Haynes. He thought this could work – and it did. I'd already met him in New York at a club gig, and in 1999, he invited me to come play with Gov't Mule. So I flew down to Georgia for a rehearsal, and it was wonderful. It was never competitive, except in the way that you want, when musicians put you on your toes and you gotta throw down. I had no problem rocking out with Warren. It was taking me out of my element a bit, but it's

not like I'm Joe Pass. I started out with rock 'n' roll and blues, too, so it was fun for me to go into that bag. Y'know, those guys have a fanatic following, so it was a change for me going into this big rock 'n' roll hall. It was like a rowdy Southern rock concert, a lot of fun."

The Guitars

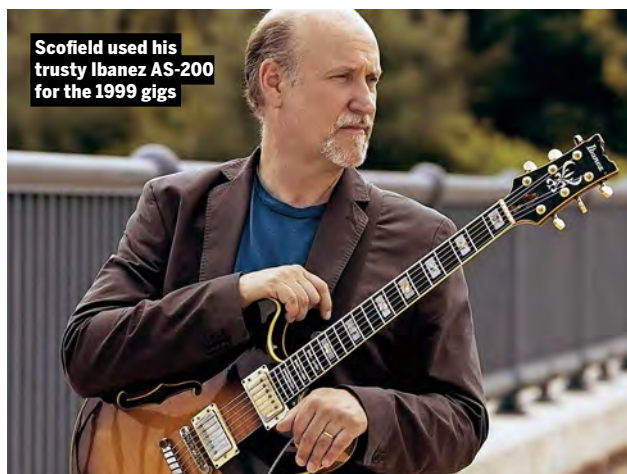
"I played my same old 1982 Ibanez AS-200. It's like a copy of the ES-335, and it's a certain animal that's in between a solidbody and a real big jazz

guitar. On the tour that I'm about to do with those guys, I'll probably bring that one, plus a Telecaster. Warren switched between his Gibson 335 Dot and some sort of solidbody, maybe even an Explorer [most likely a Firebird – Ed]. I thought our guitars worked well together. If I'd played a big fat jazz guitar, it would have been harder, because of the volume. I think a solidbody might actually have worked a little better, but then, I listen back to the record now – and it sounds fine, y'know?"

The Tones

"I'd have used the same amp that I've been using for years, which is a British-made Vox AC30. It's just different from Fender-style amps. In a way, it's maybe not as big a sound, but I like the way it's compressed. It just gives it an evenness all over that I really like. And I love the way it breaks up; you don't have to use a distortion pedal, you just turn it up. There's one track on the bonus disc called *Afro Blue*, where I used my DigiTech Whammy to take it up





Scofield used his trusty Ibanez AS-200 for the 1999 gigs

“It was a thrill to be involved in that sort of sound, with two wailing melody guitars, y’know?”

an octave, and then I had my Boss CE-3 that I put on for an organ sound. There’s a song called *Kind Of Bird*, and it was a thrill to be involved in that sort of sound, with two wailing melody guitars, y’know?”

The Mix

“To tell you the truth, the record probably sounds better than it did to me on stage. It was a big hall, and on stage, there were a lot of weird overtones that make it hard to hear when you’re playing that loud. There may be some editing on there, but there are no fixes. I don’t think you can do that, because it was live. Y’know, you can’t really go in and change your part, because your sound bleeds into all the other mics. So if you change your part, then it would come through all the other instruments’ microphones, and you’d hear the old parts, too. It’s pretty much just the concert that we played, y’know?”

The Lessons

“Any time that I put myself outside of the straight-ahead jazz idiom and play with guys that are artistic but are basically rockers, singers or R&B players, I learn something, because it’s a slightly different form of expression. The thing about Warren and Gov’t Mule is that there’s a certain directness to the music, where they just

throw down. Those guys play with a certain force all the time. They’ve just developed those muscles. It was a little different for me, and I really liked that. So I found myself incorporating that, and playing a little harder. Because, y’know, those guys play loud...”

The Verdict

“When Warren said he wanted to put this out, he sent me a copy to revisit while they were mastering it. So I listened to it, and I thought it was great. I was surprised that it was as good as it was. I just really enjoy hearing their beautiful, direct, rock ‘n’ roll approach. It’s not like I have any aspirations at all for this thing going into big sales – it’s such weird time in the industry for that, anyway. But I think there’s a larger market for rock ‘n’ roll, rock-blues and Southern rock than there is for jazz, so it’ll certainly make people hear about me that haven’t heard about me, and so that’s good. But mainly, I’m not thinking about that. Because we did it for a musical reason. We really did.” [HY]

Gov’t Mule & John Scofield’s *Sco-Mule* is out now on Mascot/Provogue



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He's back and the songcraft has weathered beautifully on this almost literary series of song-portraits that movingly chart the lives of people as diverse as retired road-diggers and the under-celebrated novelist Beryl Bainbridge. Knopfler's touch on guitar is sparse but powerfully eloquent and he's also backed by a band, including stellar bassist Glenn Worf and singer Ruth Moody, that is absolutely first-rate. **[JD]**

Download: *Basil*

For fans of: John Martyn, Van Morrison, Ry Cooder

Ryley Walker Primrose Green

★★★★

Dead Oceans



We didn't think they made them like this anymore

Illinois native Ryley Walker assembled a band of Chicago post-rock and jazz veterans to accompany him on this heady brew of jazzy folk that tips its hat in the direction of Nick Drake, Bert Jansch, John Martyn and Tim Buckley. Hypnotic interwoven acoustic and electric picking is adorned by upright bass, airy drums, keys and strings; the result is an immersive collection best consumed in one sitting that recalls Van Morrison's masterpiece *Astral Weeks* in its sun-dappled, lysergic embrace. One to watch and no mistake. **[CV]**

Download: *Primrose Green*

For fans of: Nick Drake, Van Morrison, Bert Jansch

Steve Earle & The Dukes Terraplane

★★★★

New West Records



Country rebel gets the blues

Steve Earle's 16th studio album sees the Texan delve into the foot-stomping, barroom blues of his home state, with a nod North towards Chicago thrown in for good measure. The loose and sleazy arrangements largely owe more to Howlin' Wolf and Hubert Sumlin than they do to the Delta or the Kings, but it's not all rambunctious stuff; there's heartbreak here, too, in the raw strains of *Better Off Alone*. **[CV]**

Download: *You're The Best Lover That I Ever Had*

For fans of: Howlin' Wolf, Tom Waits, John Lee Hooker

Zervas & Pepper Abstract Heart

★★★★

Zereodeo Records



Harmonious echoes of Laurel Canyon

This Cardiff duo impressed with their 2013 debut, *Lifebringer*, with its echoes of Joni and America, and their follow-up album mines the same rich vein of song even more deeply. Their vocal harmonies are a closely-woven delight while the acoustic songcraft on standout tracks such as *Miller* and *We Are One* is committed and sincere. Paul Zervas rings deft changes on his Guild flat-top throughout – and there's some tasty, Carlton-esque lead work to be found, too. One or two tracks on the record do veer a little close to the high gloss of easy listening, but there's heart enough here to keep things real. **[JD]**

Download: *Miller*

For fans of: CSN, Joni Mitchell, America, Larry Carlton



Ryley Walker's talent blooms on *Primrose Green*

© DUSIN CONDREN

Lotte Mullan Love's Bonfire

★★★

Raindog Records



Brit goes West and saddles up

Suffolk's Lotte Mullan travelled to Nashville and enlisted American rockers Band Of Horses to make *Love's Bonfire*. The result is an endearing country record with hints of British indie-folk and earnest lyrics covering heartbreak, addiction and family turmoil. The Seattle band add some light and shade, with atmospheric delay and pedal-steel guitar lending epic dynamics to songs such as *Bad For Me*. **[GW]**

Download: *Bad For Me*

For fans of: Joni Mitchell, Devon Sproule, Band Of Horses

Calexico Edge Of The Sun

★★★★

City Slang



Latin-infused alt-country from the American Southwest

With 20 years in the game, Tuscon, Arizona-based Calexico are cult indie heroes with a long history of collaboration, continued here on their ninth studio LP. Relocating to Mexico City for the sessions, the band invited the likes of Ben Bridwell (Band Of Horses), Sam Beam (Iron & Wine) and Neko Case along for the ride, and the result is an album of warmth, diversity, affecting melodies and wiry guitar. **[CV]**

Download: *Tapping On The Line*

For fans of: Iron & Wine, The Handsome Family, *Desire*-era Dylan

Cameron Blake Alone On The World Stage

★★★★

Silver Slant Records



Folk troubadour goes it alone

While he may not have the fire of a protest singer, there's an old-school vibe to this collection of stripped-back acoustic-and-voice songs. Hardship, poverty and industrial decline are the thematic driving force here, such as on delicately fingerpicked standout, *North Dakota Oil*. Blake's sparse solo acoustic and haunting vocals make for a melancholy blend, but it's a pretty compelling one. **[JG]**

Download: *North Dakota Oil*

For fans of: Bob Dylan, Sufjan Stevens, Bright Eyes

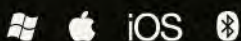
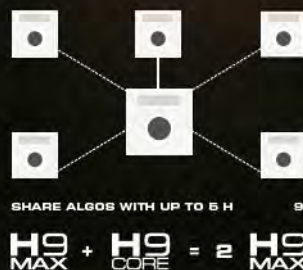
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STEVE LUKATHER

He's one of the finest, most eloquently melodic guitarists in rock music – and has played on some truly leviathan hits, from Toto's *Rosanna* to Michael Jackson's *Beat It*. Yet Steve Lukather is still full of humility and a thirst to learn when it comes to guitar. With a hard-hitting new Toto album, entitled *XIV*, out now, we quiz Steve on how to play guitar that combines emotional punch with technical elan

Words Jamie Dickson

As a guitarist, Steve Lukather is a wonderful paradox. Despite abundant evidence to the contrary, he doesn't class himself as a wizard of the fretboard, and although he's a technically adept player, he places far more faith in heart and taste than blinding chops. So we got in touch with Steve shortly after he'd finished waxing stadium supergroup Toto's first studio album in a decade, classically entitled *XIV*, to ask him what makes him tick as a musician. His answers, disarmingly frank and often irreverent, cut straight to the heart of what it means to make music on guitar – not just sterile displays of technique. Though he's certainly no slouch when it comes to navigating the frets with fire and flourish – you can hear it on powerful tracks from the new album such as *Chinatown* and *21st Century Blues*. Read on to find out what Steve thinks is important to know – and what to let go – when you play guitar.

1 Push Hard For The Best Performance

"Making [the new Toto album] was blood, sweat, tears, love, pain, tears, f**k-yous, hugs, laughter... it was all that. And that's why I brought in CJ Vanston, to kind of be a liaison between me, Dave [Paich – vocals and keyboards] and all the guys. Because he's a great musician, somebody we respect,

a great engineer and he helped so much. And of course we had fun – but we kept pushing each other, man.

"We had a couple of times when we almost killed each other but without any tension you make pussy music. Tension sometimes makes you work harder. Sometimes I get mad, like on the solo on *Holy War* I was really pissed off at Dave – he kept messing with me and I got pissed off and played that solo. You can hear it's like, 'F**k you, Dave!' But I say that with love – I'm just kidding. When you've been playing with each other for over 40 years you get to know them and it's hard to surprise my friends. And yet I try to do that. You think you've heard every lick. You gotta dig deep when you play with guys who have heard all your s**t, you know?"

2 Make Each Note Mean Something

"I really try to play to my strengths, man. I'm never going to be Guthrie Govan: he's a brilliant player. I'm not going to be Joe Satriani – I wish I was – or Petrucci and all the guys that play like that. I love 'em all but I figured I'm an older guy now, I'm not in a race. There are a million guitar players better than me – there's no bulls**t about that. So I wanted to say, 'I'm going to try to dig deep with phrasing and choice of notes' rather than, 'Oh, look how fast I can play'

because there are guys that do that a million times better than me. If you get caught up in that 'Fastest Gun In The West' s**t it can bury you. So I was like, 'Let's just slow down and play the meaningful s**t.'"

3 Learn To Laugh Off Criticism

"I've been guilty of the 'athletic guitar' aspect of things myself, particularly when I was drinking too much and that was almost six years ago, but – thanks to the miracle of YouTube – every humiliating thing I could have done in my life is there for all to laugh at. I had lunch with Eddie Van Halen the other day and we started laughing and going, 'Will they leave us alone?' We had a couple of bad years! Look back at 40 years, it wasn't all bad, you know?"

4 Do Your Own Thing

"My son is a professional musician now. But when he was starting out he was doing the tapping thing – and I said, 'If I see you do that again I'm going to get a bolt-cutter and cut your f**king finger off. That's for uncle Eddie – that's his s**t. Nobody's allowed to do that any more – we all had a chance at it one time but no man, no more. Develop your own thing. Develop your vibrato and your time – the rest is easy, you know?' So he consequently went a completely different way."

"What happens is people go, 'I want to play the guitar' and the first thing they do is hit Google: 'How can I play this?' and the next thing you know you've learned all these tricks but you've never learned how to play rhythm guitar with a groove. So, therefore, you can sit on the edge of your bed and play all this s**t but if you play with a drummer, or, God forbid, you're put in the position where you have to record with the red light on, you're going to fall down the stairs, break your arms, your neck, everything else because you don't know how to do it. It's like cutting into a cake that's all frosting and no cake."

5 Practise What You Don't Know

"Don't practise what you know – practise what you don't know. Don't make it easy for yourself when you're sitting at home alone. Then when you're on the gig you can do whatever you want, because you'll have taken the time to enhance your vocabulary. I would say that's really what it is: enhancing the harmonic content of your playing. But play from your heart not your mind. Start out simple and work your way through it, because it's like having sex for the first time – you don't want to climax in two seconds."

6 Train Your Ears Carefully

"Having a good ear is really important. What I used to have to do painstakingly was lift the needle off records. So not only did I get the ear training that is required to learn things off a vinyl record, I also got to learn the solo and the mechanics. It was a lot longer and more

methodical process – very frustrating at times – and it nearly drove my parents crazy.

"Now, the internet has made learning easier, but in some ways it's a shame, because it's like a magician: when you find out that the guy doesn't saw the woman in half and you see what it is, you go, 'Really? That's all it was?' The internet has taken the

mystery out of a lot of stuff and also the quest for it has become much easier – and therefore it's churned out a lot of generic guitar players."

7 Hit The Back Wall

"A lot of times playing fast is bulls**t. It's great to impress your friends in the living room or in a club, but if you get in a big place you're never going to connect. Playing fast in an arena-sized venue is meaningless. You don't hear the articulation even if you have a great PA system. You gotta hit the back wall – guys like Dave Gilmour, they have that: the 'money note'. You can play a million notes, but they're meaningless until you hit the money note."

8 Try To Make It All Connect

"What gives me the most pleasure? When it all connects with the right phrase and the right note, the right vibrato at the right time. It's that pleasant, satisfying surprise when you wind up a solo and know that you took the journey and landed on your feet. Even if you thought you weren't going to. That's when it feels good."

Toto's new album *XIV* is out now on Frontiers Music Srl. Their world tour kicks off in Glasgow 21 May. Head to www.totoofficial.com for details



Hard practice makes for an easy gig, says Steve

© CAREY BRANDEN

"In an arena-sized venue, you gotta hit the 'money note'. You can play a million notes, but they're meaningless until you hit the money note"



XIV is Toto's first studio album in a decade

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INTERVIEW MARK KNOPFLER

WORDS JAMIE DICKSON

PHOTOGRAPHY JOBY SESSIONS

Mark Knopfler's covered a lot of miles since the days when he walked the *Telegraph Road*. His new solo album, *Tracker*, is an essay in understated, eloquent playing – but it's the songs and the characters that inhabit them that linger in the mind long after the record has stopped turning. In a world-exclusive guitar interview, we joined Mark – one of the most down-to-earth rock stars you could hope to meet – at his London studio to talk about everything from songcraft to slide technique, amps and old archtops, and learn why a '58 Les Paul Standard is something you can rely on in life...



“SOME SORT OF INSTINCT LEADS YOU TO THE SONGS. AND THEN YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW THEM DOWN AND FINISH THEM”

It's a cold, bright morning at British Grove, Mark Knopfler's big, airy studio in West London. Outside, traffic angrily inches forward on a choked arterial road, but inside it's a haven of hospitable calm as we wait for the man himself to arrive. In the corner stands a '58 Les Paul Standard – a real one – with a plain top and a sherry-red tint still lingering in the Sunburst. There's a fireplace and a long oak table; yards of neatly varnished floorboards. It's all very low-key but, undeniably, the haunt of a guy who's sold one or two records in his time.

And, without any fanfare, here he is, greeting us with a handshake and a steady, cautiously friendly gaze. He's just come from a Pilates session, a discipline he says he gets a lot of benefit from, which quickly leads us on to a discussion of how muscle tension can stifle your playing.

“I'm still learning to relax my left arm, when I'm playing,” he says. “The more you can learn to relax that left arm, the more fluid you'll be. If you tense up, you're just gonna slow down. And for a long time I played that way – and I used to get pain all down my forearm. I used to play *Sultans*... like that a lot. It's just habit. Getting the urgency into the playing gets translated into tension, unfortunately. But you've got to stop associating emotion with tension.”

Tension. The Zen-like calm of British Grove studios seems calculated to reduce it to a background hum, like the traffic, and leave Knopfler free to be creative in his own time, on his own terms. The colossal success of Dire Straits' *Brothers In Arms* album in 1987, which sold 30 million copies, must have been giddy, even troubling, for a musician who today prefers to go unrecognised in the street. It sold and sold, and as it did Knopfler's thoughtful writing and richly melodic playing were reduced, by the shorthand of fame, to thumbnail icons in the popular imagination: the headband; the intro riff from *Money For Nothing*; the shining '37 National Style O guitar on the album's cover

that looked as if it was being thrown into heaven by an unseen hand.

Nearly 30 years on, Knopfler is about to release his ninth solo album, *Tracker*. Tender and downbeat, the songs are a portrait gallery of people and places: odd nooks and corners of life as it's lived by deckhands and writers, penniless musicians and Bentley-driving chancers. With far less fanfare than in the Straits years, his solo albums have sold in their millions and, arguably, it's Knopfler's preference for a (relatively) down-to-earth lifestyle that means his music still connects. He's got the same eye for character that made the London nightclub life in *Sultans Of Swing* come to smoky, jostling life, but the writing on *Tracker* seems to have acquired, with the years, extra patina and depth like the checked lacquer of an old guitar.

“You could see it in terms of time – tracking time,” Knopfler says of the album's title. “You get to that kind of age and you have to follow something through to finish it. You're not necessarily sure of what it is that you're going after. But some sort of instinct leads you to the songs. And then you have to follow them down and finish them. So you're the one that brings the stuff back, who's tracked it down and got it.”

CHARACTER FORMING

The album – co-produced by former Dire Straits keyboardist Guy Fletcher – features top-drawer performances from an exceptional band, and from Knopfler himself, who sounds immersed in its sparse but warm soundscapes. When he takes a lead, it's generally just a few judicious notes, perfectly placed.

“One of the things you find out over time is that if you're choosing between a few different passes over a song, you learn to go for the one with fewer notes,” he observes. “It usually says more.”





SULTAN OF STRINGS

Tech Glenn Sagers on fettling Mark Knopfler's guitars for studio and stage

"The setup of individual guitars depends on what we're doing," explains Glenn, who's been Mark Knopfler's tech for nearly 20 years. "If he's a semitone down, for example, we go up a gauge on the strings, or half a set depending how it is. Basically, all the acoustics are 0.012 gauge, the Nationals are 0.013, because they're tuned down, and everything else is 0.010 gauge in standard tuning. But that's about it really – specific guitars for specific jobs. Mark decides he wants something a certain way and he relays it to me and, ultimately, he makes the decisions about what sounds best, and it's always song-driven.

"The guitars generally don't need much maintenance while they're in the studio because the building's so well designed. The only thing that really needs doing from time to time, because we also use these live, is that we have to clear out the pots. We very rarely have to tweak anything. Obviously, if there's an alternate tuning or what have you, we might have to relax the truss rod or whatever every now and again. But that's about it. When we're out on the road it's a different thing because it's a different building every day.

"In terms of Strats, he mainly uses his signature model for everything that's not slide-related. Then we have a '64 Strat that's set up specifically for a couple of [open-tuning] songs he does. Those are the only two Strats we take out, plus the Pensas [see p58], a couple of Groshes and the Les Paul.

"The resonators are really quite solid – they don't cause you any problems at all. Unless the actual cone collapses, which is pretty rare. But we hardly have any problems with the Les Paul. I don't want to tempt fate, though! The tuning pegs are new because the old ones were about to disintegrate, so we took those off and replaced them. We still have them, they're just not on the guitar.

"This Les Paul has a lot of output; the neck pickup has a lot of output as well. More so than any other Les Paul that I've had to deal with. But this one is a bit of a beast. And so is the Grosh guitar, the ElectraJet. Mark has two. And the main white one, that has the Fralins in it, just like the Pensa. That has got a lot of output to it, too. But again, because live they run in-ear systems, it doesn't have to be deafening."

"It's too late for that," chimes in Knopfler's manager, Paul Crockford, dryly.

Likewise, the subjects of the songs themselves – ranging from the Newcastle poet Basil Bunting to the broke-but-happy London musicians of *Laughs And Jokes And Drinks And Smokes* – are all brought to life with understated skill.

"The characters that I'm interested in are usually not sorry for themselves," he explains. "If you're talking about a retired navvy, or you're talking about a young man who works on a barge who's alone at Christmas time in a strange city, they're not sorry for themselves. You've just got to watch for being sentimental about it. You're interested in the truth."

Does he reject a lot of songs? Or does he just turn material over in his mind until he finds a way to make it work?

"I certainly have a lot of songs that take their time putting their hand up. So what I'll do is I'll just look at them every now and again. Just drop in on them, you know? And see if I can make them happen. Or see if anything *can* happen. And sometimes something does and sometimes it doesn't.

"And I'm not sure if it's part of the enjoyment of it, but it's the *mystery* of it that some things just happen in their own time. And they manage to stand up and go out into the light of day. But I don't worry too much if a song isn't wanting to leave home just yet. I suppose what I ought to do is just delete the damn thing, but I don't [laughs]."

TRACKING TRACKER

The album abounds not only in memorable characters, but timbres, too. Most of the amplified sounds live in that just-breaking-up zone in which all the clarity of clean tone is retained, but with a cushion of extra warmth and grit to lend character to each phrase, notably on standout track *Basil*. It's a tone some will know from the intro to *Brothers In Arms*, almost a signature sound. What amps did he turn to for the sessions?

"There were various amps. With something like that, you're talking about the Les Paul through something like the Reinhardt Talyn, which is a great amp that Bob Reinhardt built for me. Also Ken Fischer, who built the Trainwreck amps, made me a Komet before he passed away, a fantastic thing that he christened 'Linda' when he built it. And I think he wasn't 100 per cent happy with the way Komets then went on to be. But this one was personally built by him. It's extraordinarily loud, so for stage you'd have to find a way of calming it down. Because it's just such a beast. But in the studio, of course, you can just let her rip. That's a fantastic-sounding amp.

"And for clean tones I've been using the Tone King Imperial a lot. And I use the rhythm channel for that, not the lead channel. I always go into the rhythm

ABOVE LEFT Mark owns two golden-era Les Paul Standards including the '58 pictured above. "I've got a beautiful '59 that I also like and I play that '58 a lot. I've also got a '59 Reissue that's a really great guitar – so they can get pretty close. But I don't know what it is about Les Pauls from that era but, on stage, I've never had to touch a single tuner on the '58. Ever. It's had plenty of time to settle"



69

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BLUE VELVET

The Pensa 'Blue' (pictured) is the latest guitar to be made for Mark by Rudy Pensa, who owns the famous New York guitar emporium Rudy's Music. Mark calls the Pensa Blue, which features a maple cap on a conventional S-type body, a "mighty, mighty guitar", which is in regular studio and live use. The first instrument of this type, dubbed the Pensa-Suhr MK-1, was made for Mark in 1980 as a means of combining the power of a Les Paul with the comfort and playability of a Strat. This example is much more recent, as Knopfler's tech Glenn Saggars explains:

"Rudy has a dating system that he inscribes on the back [of the neckplate]. This one's from 14 December 2011. This is one of the best, although there's been a few over the years."



channel to play lead on it. It's very, very clear. For that kind of sound, like the one I use on *Beryl*, with a Stratocaster, it was always going to be a toss-up between the Tone King and my old brown Tolex-covered Vibrolux.

"But on the road, I was playing slide through the Tone King as well – it's great. And when I was playing with Bob [Dylan], on his sets, I would just go straight into the little Tone King. It's a killer amp. And Mark Bartel has made a new one [the Mk II version], which I tried yesterday and it's great – it's right up there with my old one, I'd say. So that will be coming on the road with me. And I suppose Richard [Bennett, guitarist in Knopfler's band] will have one, too, because they're terrific amps."

SLIDE RULES

Another striking feature of the album is how much slide playing there is. It's something Knopfler says he's enjoying more and more with time, adding that he made a few minor breakthroughs in his slide technique during *Tracker's* recording sessions.

"I've been using the white ['64] Strat for slide," he explains. It's just been beautiful to play, I realised I could fret notes a little bit in front of the slide, too. And that sort of just fell into place. I never thought I'd be able to do that."

Despite his association with vintage Stratocasters, Knopfler says he doesn't make a fetish of period-correct details and is content if he can play a decent Strat that has a few of his preferred features.

"I think I get on better with rosewood fingerboards. Although having said that, I like heavy strings on my old '54: I hit them with a pick for tone and use the tremolo arm for that style of playing. But for most of the ordinary stuff I don't. I think they're all much of a muchness really. I don't think it matters too much. Early 60s ones are great, and I don't think they've ever got much better than that. I think my signature Strats have been good and that's what I use. It was just a good combination of the bits they were making – because they don't incorporate anything particularly special."

Does he play electric slide in standard tuning?

"No, never – I'd like to and I ought to really get on with it. Because I love the possibilities of that. But normally it's either the open G tuning or an E tuning. But playing slide in normal tuning is something that I'm really looking forward to getting into. But I'm always doing something else [laughs]."

It's gratifying to hear that one of the world's best guitarists can't, like most of us, find enough time in the day to advance his technique as much as he'd like – although you'd have to say he seems to have muddled by okay, so far.

"The slides I use are a glass composite material," he continues. "But they're the best ones I've ever used. And I had a beautiful one that I dropped and smashed, but the other ones that they've replaced them with are just about as good. My favourite ones ever so slightly taper; the hole is slightly offset, so you can have different thicknesses. But I never really bother about that too much, I just put it on and play it."

“I WHEN I WAS PLAYING WITH BOB [DYLAN], I WOULD JUST GO STRAIGHT INTO THE LITTLE TONE KING. IT'S A KILLER AMP”

"And the Coricidin bottle slides, I've tried them and they're good, too, but they're a little bit lighter. Originally, I started with a lot of steel and brass and my dad, bless him, he made me some from brass tubing. He made me my first slides. And so, every now and again, yeah, a piece of steel will do it – but I think I prefer these ones that this company Diamond Bottlenecks makes."

ARCHTOP AFICIONADO

Touching on slide, we ask if the well-known '37 National Style O Resonator that has been with Knopfler ever since his formative days playing blues with Steve Phillips in Leeds made it onto the new album.

"It nearly always does. I don't know whether it did this time but I tell you what has, on a couple of the songs, is my mid-30s D'Angelico, and that's just been a fantastic guitar to record with. It's an amazing thing, sound-wise. But yeah, the National would always get on things. Sometimes, it just occupies that ground between a piano and a guitar."

"But I love using archtop guitars on records, too. They just sound so good. And in fact I picked the D'Angelico on a song called *Silver Eagle* and it sounds like a flat-top with a pick on it – but it's just that D'Angelico speaking. And on *River Towns* I'd be strumming that, too. But yeah, those mid-30s ones are just unstoppable. As good as anything can be."

His praise for archtops, often under-used in a purely acoustic role, stems partly from his admiration for master luthiers in the grand old Italian archtop-building tradition, such as New Yorker John Monteleone, whose patient skills Knopfler paid tribute to in the song *Monteleone* from the 2009 album *Get Lucky*. Today, Knopfler worries that the craft is so exacting that it may die out for want of fresh blood.

"It's a shame. John Monteleone is such a brilliant builder but he doesn't have an apprentice. Because D'Angelico used D'Aquisto as his apprentice," Knopfler explains, speaking of the two most celebrated makers in archtop history. "And D'Aquisto would do repairs when D'Angelico didn't want to be bothered with

repairs – when he wanted to be getting on with his own ideas instead. And so the same thing happened with D'Aquisto: when he wanted to get on with his own ideas, he gave his repairs to John – Monteleone being the only one he could trust to do them properly, to his standards.

“And I was asking John about that. I said, ‘Who’s your apprentice?’ Never found him. And I was also asking [luthier] Stefan Sobell about that in Northumberland a couple of years back. There was a young guy making a guitar in Stefan’s workshop, and I said, ‘Is this your apprentice?’ and he said ‘Oh, no – he’s a perfectly nice young man. But no, I’ve never been able to find anybody.’ And I think this is the story of modern times: when you get somebody of that level of excellence, they can’t find the youngsters capable of being disciplined up to that level.”

SONG MAKERS

You can hear in Knopfler’s strong performances with these archtops an echo of his early days playing trad-blues on unyielding acoustics in pubs of the North. Knopfler’s a naturally left-handed musician who grew up playing the guitar right-handed, so that in itself has shaped his style to a degree, meaning he’s not daunted by vintage guitars that require some old-fashioned elbow grease.

“Oh yeah, there’s no question that playing cheap acoustics and Nationals certainly played its part,” he says. “Because they’d usually be strung up with stair rods. You need to get some strength into your fingers. When I was little, I was [miming] playing left-handed guitar with a tennis racquet and my older sister, Ruth, turned it round and made me play the tennis racquet the other way instead. But the thing that really clinched it was some unsuccessful violin lessons – although they were successful in that they got me playing the guitar right-handed. That can help you develop a style where you have a strong left hand. I find that I can get vibrato on three strings at once, that sort of stuff.”

The reputation he won as a guitar hero in the classic mould, during the Straits years, will be how some always think of him. But Knopfler says that he’s closer to the plain acoustic songcraft of his early days than ever.

“I think with me there’s two sides to it. Most of the time I just use the guitar as something to help the songwriting,” he explains. “It tends to be not particularly demanding. But every now and again if I’m sitting down and trying to learn something, moving it forward a little bit, you realise the *depth* of the thing – but that is more to do with being a musician.

“It’s a whole different thing being a musician from being a ‘guitar player’. I think if I’d had to make a living with the guitar as a guitar player, I think I’d have spent a lot more time trying to achieve a rounded position with it, where I could do more with it. But there was a spell back there – a long time ago now – where I realised I had to. I had to improve the vocabulary, just because of the kinds of things that I was doing.

“And when you go into more sophisticated chordal stuff, you’ve got to *make yourself* learn all that stuff.



Just like you did when you were a teenager. And then you can start to put more complex constructions together, and in my case I just became used to the sound of those things. Almost like learning a language and starting to use longer words. So that a lot of their mystique and the impossibility of it, this foreign language... you start to slowly put it together a little better.”

CORE VALUES

The point Knopfler makes about the distinction between being a musician and a guitar player is an interesting one. In common-sense terms, to be a guitarist is, by default, to also be a musician. But on another level, what instrument someone chooses to play is not as important as the prime virtues of musicality that exist in all of us to a greater or lesser degree: being able to listen sensitively, to play only what’s appropriate, to sound notes that have a magical quality.

He’s generous with his praise for the musicians who contributed to *Tracker*, and says they all possess that high degree of musicality, including the extraordinary Canadian singer Ruth Moody with whom he duets on the album’s closing track, *Wherever I Go*.

“It’s always a joy to have great players around you,” he adds. “And they let me get away with murder. So if I make a mistake somewhere, the band will never comment on it. And I said that to Richard one time: I said, ‘I’m sorry about the greeny’ and he said, ‘The singer is always right!’ So they let me get away with it,” he concludes, with a smile. **G**

ABOVE “I tend to play the old Martin D-18 quite a lot, which a friend very generously gave me,” Mark says of his go-to acoustic. “It’s a mid-30s Martin with a very dry, slate-y kind of sound. Beautiful guitar. But I’ve also been playing two other acoustics at home, which are both beautiful guitars, just to get them played in a little bit. One of them is a Froggy Bottom parlour guitar, which is a beautiful thing that was given to me by somebody very generous, and the other one is a Stefan Sobell flat-top guitar. It’s a beautiful guitar and you’re conscious that to be worthy of a thing like that you’ve got to play it. So I pick that up and try and play it a little bit. It’s like getting a guitar from John Monteleone or something. You’ve got to play it in to try to bring it on, which is what I’ll try to do every now and again. But they’re all so beautiful”

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STYLE FILE MARK KNOPFLER

Get some of the Sultan's secrets under your fingers with this four-lick lesson on the stellar guitar style of Mark Knopfler

Not many guitarists are instantly recognisable from just a few notes; we usually need to hear the context of a song or signature riff. But along with such luminaries as Brian May and Hank Marvin, even non-guitarists can instantly identify Mark Knopfler's playing from just one bubbling filigree from *Sultans Of Swing*.

A major part of this is his determination to forge his own musical style. Most of the Dire Straits albums, for example, come from an era of flash rock solos, whammy

bars and meaty distortion, so Knopfler's fingerpicked clean tones and modest approach to solos stood in stark contrast to the norm.

These examples cover a few elements of Knopfler's playing. For a start, put down your pick and get used to the feel of those strings under your fingers. Mark uses his thumb and first two fingers, unusually anchoring his other two fingers below the strings. He's used loads of guitar tones over the years, but here we've used the classic old 'in-between' pickup settings on a Strat.

EXAMPLE ONE

WE'LL start slowly. Knopfler's crisp 'in-between' Strat tones lend themselves to spacious soundscapes, and you can find plenty of those in the Dire Straits back catalogue. You may find it easier to count in half-beats here, as the tempo is pretty slow.

♩ = 45 Dm

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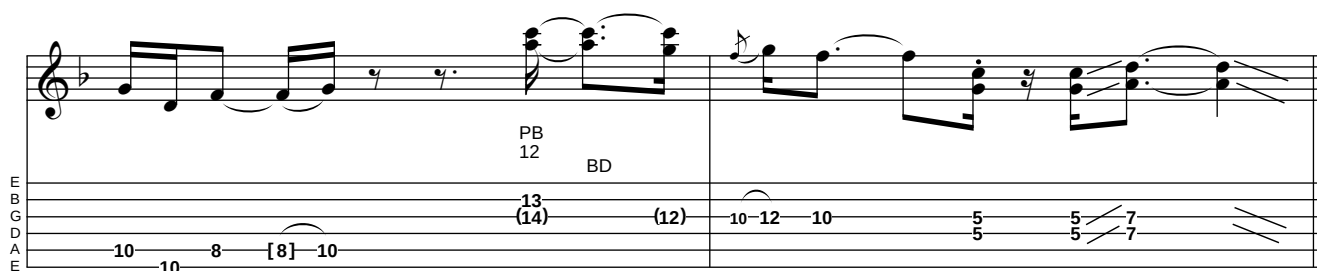
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EXAMPLE TWO

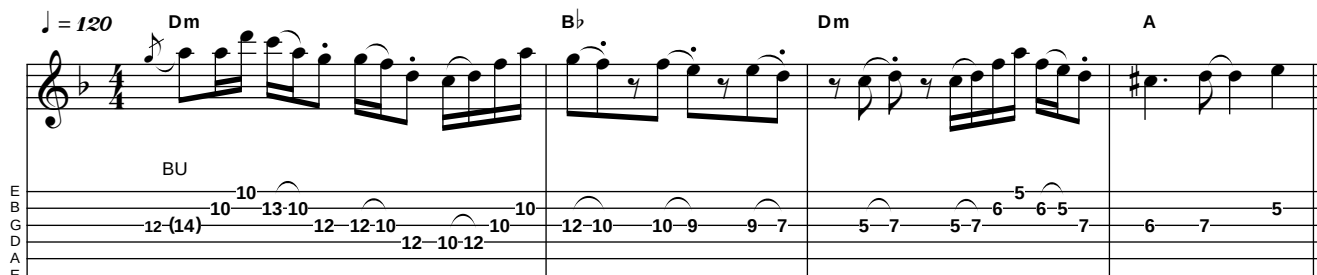
HERE'S another take. Although Mark has a strong connection with country music, there's lots of blues in his playing. These first two examples are primarily built from D minor pentatonic (D F G A C) with the addition of the 2nd (E) and the bluesy flat 5th (Ab). And hey, put down that plectrum and stop cheating!

Dm

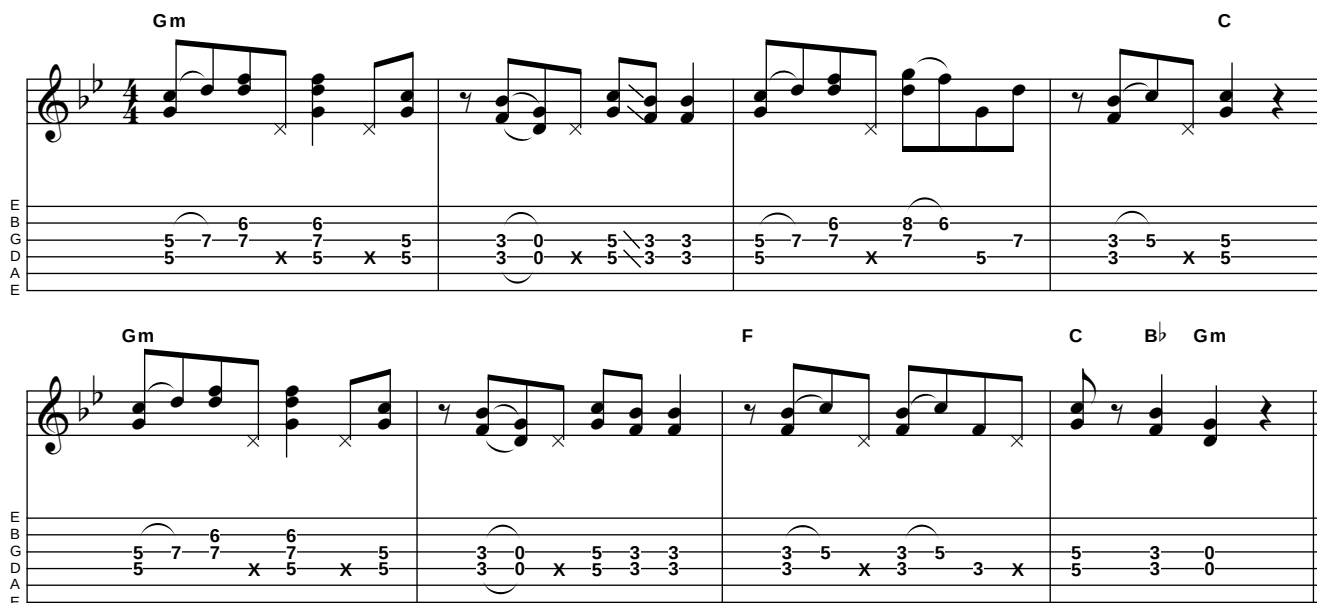
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BEGINNERS often have trouble playing fills over the verse part (Dm-C-B $\flat$ -A) of Sultans Of Swing. It's mostly D Aeolian (D E F G A B $\flat$ C) or minor pentatonic, but the C note clashes with the C# in the A chord. The solution: a temporary swap, resulting in D harmonic minor (D E F G A B $\flat$ C#), a bit like this...



IT'S not all about clean tones, though. Knopfler used a Les Paul Junior with overdrive and lots of midrange to create an iconic guitar sound on *Money For Nothing*. Like a cross between Billy Gibbons and Ry Cooder, it's all about using partial chords (especially root-5th diads) and notes from the minor pentatonic (G minor, in this case: G B $\flat$ C D F).



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Gretsch G6136T Falcon
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Rickenbacker 360
- Midnight Blue



ESP Eclipse I CTM (with Bigsby)
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TELE TITAN

Texan Twangmaster Bill Kirchen has rocked with everyone from Link Wray to Danny Gatton, but English musicians still get his vote

Words Julian Piper

A quick glance at the cover of Bill Kirchen's 2007 album, *Hammer Of The Honky Tonk Gods*, with its seriously road-worn Sunburst '59 Telecaster, suggests that the subject of his six-string affection certainly must have stories to tell. "I tell people that I only keep the Telecaster in the guitar case so it won't be in contact with other people's instruments and muss them up!" he laughs over the phone from his home in Austin, Texas.

A staggeringly inventive player in the finest tradition of Telecaster wizards, Kirchen kicked off his career in 1967 with a bunch of misfits from Ann Arbor, Michigan calling themselves Commander Cody And The Lost Planet Airmen. "We were mining 40s boogie-woogie and hard blood and guts country from the 50s," he says, the band's inspiration being the rambunctious sounds of country renegades such as Ernest Tubb and Ray Price. After several years playing around sleepy Ann Arbor, the band moved out to California, where The Byrds and Flying Burrito Brothers were already taking traditional country music and turning it on its head. And it was Bill Kirchen's steely Telecaster licks and tricks that eventually propelled Commander Cody And The Lost Planet Airmen into the Billboard charts in 1971, with their record *Hot Rod Lincoln*. In the decades that followed, the list of Kirchen devotees with whom he's worked included Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello, Paul Carrack, Link Wray and just about every rockabilly guitarist on the block.

School Days

As a kid, Bill grew up listening to country-blues players such as Son House and Skip James, but it was between 1965 and '67 that he received his 'crash course in country'



LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

with the Commander Cody band. "It was a great era for the music," he says. "I'd been hearing bluegrass and the old country stuff going back to the 40s, but when I heard Merle Haggard and Buck Owens, I just tried to learn it all. Then I watched James Burton, Roy Nichols and Don Rich, loved their sound and realised those guys all played a Telecaster, so I thought, 'Right then – I'll be needing one.' I traded a gentleman an SG for mine, and it turned out to be the guitar I ended up playing for the next 45 years."

After the Commander Cody band broke up, Bill began a decades long friendship with Nick Lowe, recording two albums with their band The Moonlighters before moving to Washington DC. "Someone even wrote a song called *Washington's A Telecaster Town*, and it was certainly true! I worked with Roy Buchanan and played in bands with Danny Gatton and Redd Volkaert. They were both such stunning players that it was a treat to just watch them. I had to be careful because sometimes I'd just be watching them and forget to play myself," he admits.

"Working with those people, there was no way you were going to compete; if you did you knew you were going to lose, so it was a relief in a way because I thought I'd just have to do what I do. And there's a lot of room in this world for different approaches, but sometimes I'd think, 'Oh my God. Why do I even call myself a guitar player?'"

"I traded a gentleman an SG for my '59 Telecaster, and it turned out to be the guitar I ended up playing for the next 45 years"

That '59 Sound

These days Bill's prized 1959 Fender Telecaster stays in its case. "I wore out everything, acidic sweat from my hands wore the bridge ferrules until you could see the adjusting screws. I think it changed when I gave up drinking 30 years ago. I haven't worn out any bridge pieces since!"

On his upcoming tour Bill will probably be using a Tele-style guitar made by New York luthier Rick Kelly. Made of old pine reclaimed from demolition skips, the guitar has a huge neck and no truss rod. "Rick says the lack of truss rod produces a fatter tone, and I'm not one to argue with the guy, because it really does have something special. Unplugged, it has a tremendous resonance. His theory is that the truss rod leaves a hollow underneath the third and fourth strings, which affects the tone."

Brit Connection

For his last three albums, Bill has worked with a nucleus of British musicians including Nick Lowe, Geraint Watkins on keyboards and drummer Robert Trehern. It's unusual for a US musician so steeped in roots music. "Working with touchy

Englishmen?" he chuckles. "I've learned so much from Nick Lowe, I can't begin to tell you. He produced one of my albums and I think the world of him, value every minute I spend with him chatting or being on stage."

And although Kirchen has been dishing out those lightning-fast licks to *Hot Rod Lincoln* for more than 25 years, he's clear that he's much more than some revisionist. "Some people are great at recreating stuff, but I like to mix it all in," he says. "Jeff Beck made that great Gene Vincent album [*Crazy Legs*], fantastic, but I'm not sure I'd be the man for the job. We played with Gene on several shows, and I ended up on what turned out to be his last album. It was the last year of his life, and he'd just returned to the States from England. He was a very nice guy, but wasn't in the best of health, and a bit disconnected. We rehearsed in this place that just had a dirt floor, but he didn't care, he was just delighted to sing. But I don't believe the woman he was with was too impressed by our living situation!" 📺

Bill visits the UK in early March. His latest album, *Seeds And Stems*, is out now on Proper Records.



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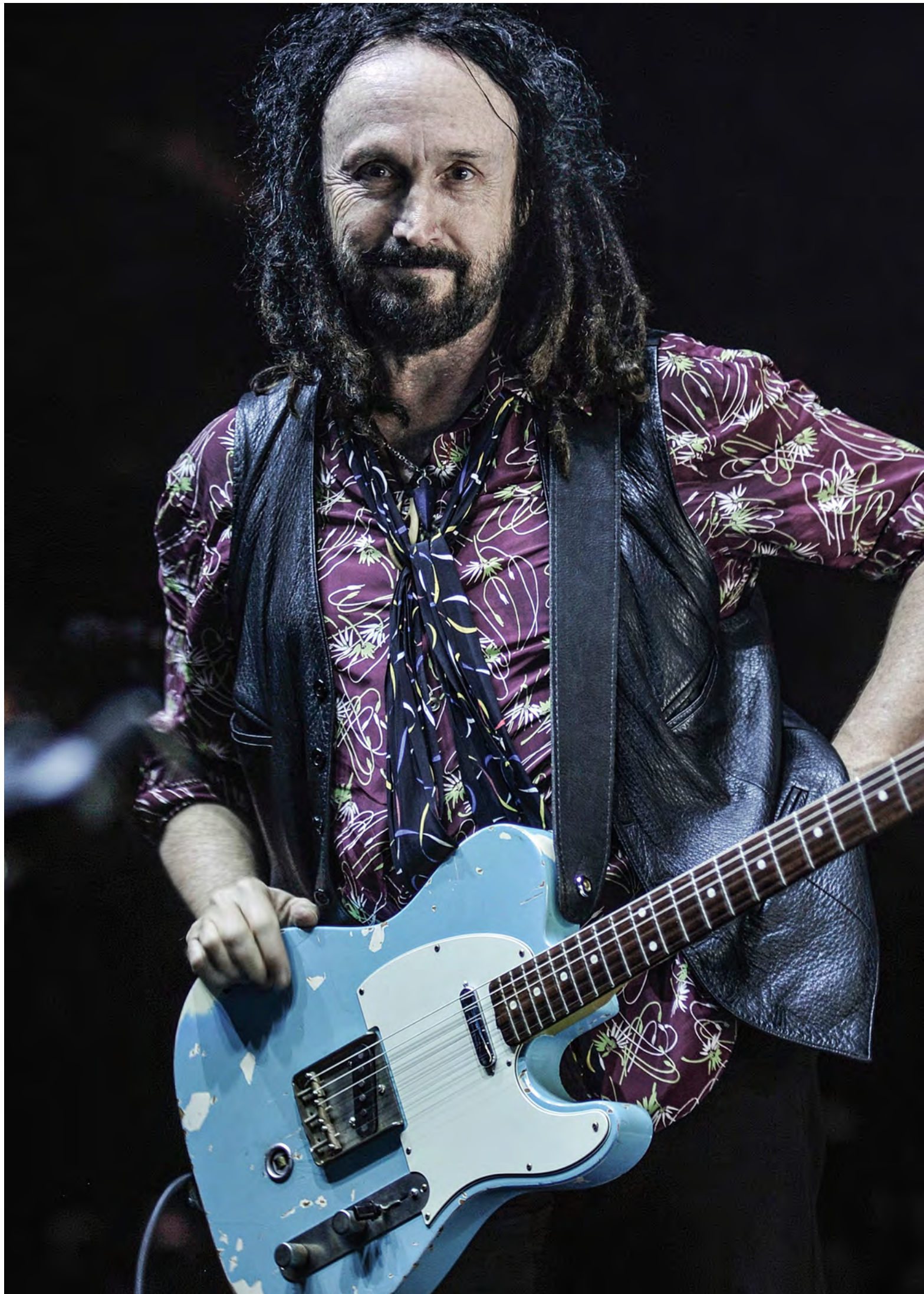
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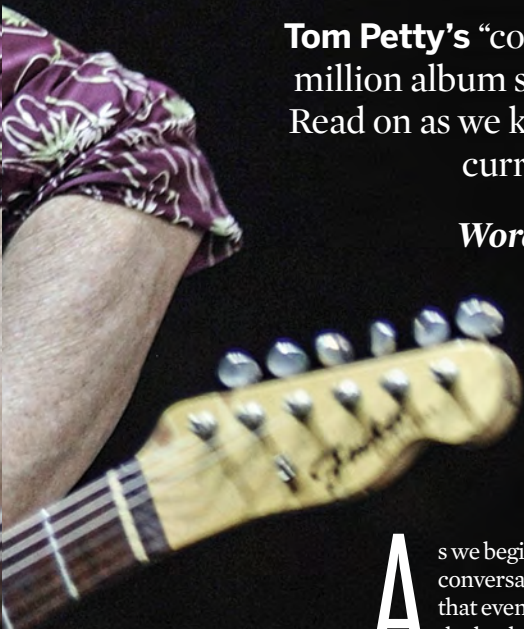
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MAKIN' SOME NOISE

Tom Petty's "co-captain" is a confirmed guitar nut with more than 80 million album sales under his belt in four decades as a Heartbreaker. Read on as we kick back with Mike Campbell and discuss some of his current favourite six- and 12-string squeezes...

Words Jeff Slate Photography Andy Tennille



As we begin our nearly two-hour conversation, Mike Campbell admits that even after more than 40 years as the lead guitarist in the venerable Heartbreakers band, the pressure is still on him.

"Madison Square Garden is a big deal," he begins, ticking off the most memorable shows of their recent 30-date US tour with an almost childlike enthusiasm. "I was telling somebody the other day, the only place I feel pressure when we tour is the Garden. The Garden has always been one of my favourite places. It's got so much history. I'm always proud to play there. Also LA, because that's sort of our home town, maybe Chicago and, on this tour, Seattle and Fenway Park in Boston. We'd never played Fenway and that was epic. So I feel pressure to be at my best. But throughout the whole tour I felt the band played really well, and I was very proud of everybody."

Campbell should be proud. The band are playing better than ever and they scored their first No 1 album with last summer's *Hypnotic Eye*, as much of a back-to-basics rock 'n' roll album as they've made since

breaking through the New Wave clutter in the late 1970s.

"I think especially the singing sounded really young," Campbell says when we ask him what, after making so many albums, was different this time around. "I told Tom that and he was really happy. As long as we've been doing this, we still draw from the same places and people who inspired us when we were young. But we also draw from what we've already done, and we try not to repeat ourselves. As we've gone along, that's become a bit of a good problem to have. But there was no specific discussion when we came to make *Hypnotic Eye* that we're going to draw from a specific part of the well, because each song just comes in from wherever it comes. If it fits into a certain bag or feel, I think generally that's an accident! I believe strongly that you just take whatever the gift has given you that day. You don't say, 'Oh, this is the wrong well, so I'm not going to take it!' You take what you're given, and hope it's from a good place."

The well that Petty, Campbell and company draw from certainly is deep. With





This '67 Rickenbacker is Mike's favourite 12-string

more than 80 million albums sold worldwide, and countless anthems – from *Refugee* to *American Girl* and *Free Fallin'* to *Mary Jane's Last Dance* – under their belts, the Rock And Roll Hall Of Famers are in the DNA of an audience that encompasses all ages and walks of life. But it all started playing friends' parties and school dances in Gainesville, Florida. Campbell has been at Petty's side throughout. And, like any guitar lover, he remembers it all via the guitars he crossed paths with along the way.

Baby's A Rock 'N' Roller

"My dad always used to play Elvis records," Campbell recalls of his first musical inspirations. "He was in the Air Force, and he'd come home from work, take off his uniform, and put on an Elvis record. Meanwhile, I fell in love with Scotty Moore's playing. Then, of course, a few years later, I saw The Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* like everybody else my age, and I figured, 'Well, that's what I want to do!'"

"My very first guitar, when I was 14, was pretty much unplayable. My mom went to a pawn shop and got me a Harmony acoustic. It was an f-hole model and it wasn't a good one. They do make some good ones, but this was not a good one. But I didn't know any better! I thought that it was just the way guitars were. I could hardly push the strings down, and I figured, 'Man, these guys I'm watching play the guitar must be strong!' Then I went to my friend's house and he had an SG. He handed it to me and I pressed the strings down and was like, 'My God, you don't have to bleed!'"

Soon, Campbell graduated to electric and met Petty. "My dad was on tour in Okinawa and sent me a \$60 Goya electric six-string," he tells us. "It was... playable. I actually

auditioned for Tom on that thing. They laughed at me when I walked in and played it, but once I played *Johnny B Goode*, they quit laughing."

Campbell and Petty connected, and he became a member of Mudcrutch, Petty's band at the time who were part of the burgeoning Southern rock scene (and who reunited for an album in 2008).

"The first nice guitar I got was a Gibson Firebird at a pawn shop when we were on tour in Alabama," says Campbell of his earliest days as a professional musician. "The guy who ran the shop said they had a really ugly one in the back, and then brought out this red, three-pickup Firebird. That was my guitar for several years until Tom sat on it and broke the neck off of it. Then I got a '64 Strat, which I still have, and we've played on almost every record we've done. It was Tom's guitar in the early years for quite a while. Once we started making money, we were just buying them left and right. We were out of control!"

A Certain Vintage

Over the years, Campbell has picked up a laundry list of dream instruments. Some were iconic, on his wish list from his earliest days playing the guitar. Others he and Petty made iconic, such as the Fender Broadcaster he played on *Breakdown* and most of the Heartbreakers' early records.

"That's my favourite," Campbell admits. "I bought and used it on the early records and I still use it on some records. It's just a

magic guitar. It's kind of a Butterscotch Tele. That's my favourite. Fender's doing a reissue of that Broadcaster. They've cloned it for me and are going to reissue that soon. I've seen the prototype and it's incredible. But I also have a '59 kind of Jimmy Page one that's really great, and I have one that's a '56, too. I didn't know better and put a string bender in it! That's one of my favourites as well, but the Broadcaster is the one. On a lot of records, you hear certain chords, and that's what makes the record, that tone. I don't take it on the road anymore. It's just too valuable now, and I'm afraid it'll get damaged. I did take it out to one of the local gigs back when we were doing a soundcheck in LA, and [front of house engineer Robert] Scovill came out and said, 'What's that? It sounds better than any of your other guitars!' I told him I leave it at home but I use it in the studio. I just don't want to have someone damage it or drop it."

As for the infamous Rickenbacker that accompanies Petty on the cover of 1979's *Damn The Torpedoes*, Campbell says it's as important to him as it is to every guitar lover who's stared at it over the years.

"That's my original 12-string," he explains. "It's a little-body one. I got it for \$120. Later, I took it to Rickenbacker, and they said it was the next guitar off the assembly line after George Harrison's. So it has the same wiring and sound as George's. That's a beautiful-sounding guitar, too, but it's so valuable now that I leave it at home."

Two other Rickenbacker guitars in his arsenal, however, are never far from reach.

"There's a special story behind that guitar," Campbell says of the black Rickenbacker he plays on *American Girl*, closing just about every show. "It's a six-string. We used to call it the mystery guitar. I bought it like it looks now, with the three pickups and the John Lennon body. But looking at it closely, we figured out that it was probably a red guitar that's the same model as the small-body one from the *Torpedo* cover. We think whoever had it filed the horn down to make it look like John's and painted it black. I use that on *American Girl* because it's got the right tone, and we lowered the key on that song a half step over the years. When you turn down the other Ricks, they get a little sloppy with the lower pitch, but this one sounds great."

His favourite 12-string at the moment is also, of course, a Rickenbacker.

"It's a '67, which I actually bought a couple of tours ago in New Jersey,"

"Then I got a '64 Strat, which I still have. Once we started making money, we were buying them left and right. We were out of control!"



The now pale blue Gretsch
Clipper Mike bought for \$200



The Rickenbacker six-string Mike plays on *American Girl*

Campbell says. “The North East has been good to me! That guitar has the tone. I have another one from the mid-60s that I use on *Free Fallin’*, Roger McGuinn-style [a 360 with single, rear binding]. But the ’67 is George-style [double-bound] from *A Hard Day’s Night*. It’s just like heaven. It sounds incredible. If I had to pick one, I’d pick that. I use the ’67 on [So You Want To Be A] *Rock ’N’ Roll Star*. It sings. It’s so easy to play. No matter what you hit, it sounds beautiful.”

The Right Voice

Campbell is famed for the wide variety and sheer number of guitars he brings along to a show. Another favourite we have to ask about is his mysterious pale blue Gretsch.

“I bought that Gretsch on tour for \$200 one day from a video store,” he says with a laugh. “I was walking around in Hartford, Connecticut and saw they had an SG Junior and the Gretsch Clipper. I bought those two guitars for \$200 a piece. The Clipper had one pickup in it; a bass pickup. I added a treble pickup and it became a really nice guitar. I’ve refinished it since that day. It had a weird kind of Formica finish when I got it, but I put a pale blue finish on it.”

With so many guitars, is there one that Campbell would choose if he had to?

“The truth is, I could do our whole show with one guitar if I wanted to,” he admits. “I could play the whole show with a Tele or a Les Paul or an SG. I could make it work. It’d be okay. But there are certain songs where I use a certain guitar on the record

that just has a certain colour and when I use the same guitar as I did on the record, it just sounds better because it’s perfectly right for that song. For instance, on *I Won’t Back Down*, I have the Gretsch Clipper tuned to an open tuning that I use for that slide part. When I play it on another guitar it sounds okay, but it just doesn’t have the same magic it does in that key with that voice. So I always use that guitar on that song. Then there were certain songs that were done on a 12-string, so you kind of need the 12-string to make those songs sound special. Those are the things that come to mind. I need different guitars for different things. As the setlist starts to take shape, though, I try to minimise the number of guitar changes as much as I can. But I also won’t sacrifice [tonal] colour for convenience.”

Precious Time

As we wind down, we ask Campbell why he doesn’t take to the producer’s chair more often. He’s been a co-producer on some of the most successful albums in rock history. Clearly, he knows a thing or two about what it takes to make great records.

“It’s been a while since I’ve done that, because I realised it’s really a lot of work,” Campbell says with a laugh, though he’s clearly serious about his work ethic. “The part about production I’m a little apprehensive with is that when people come to you to produce their record, you’ve taken responsibility for their career. It’s in your hands. If I’m going to produce

something, I’m trying to make it the biggest hit I’ve ever made. If it’s not, I’ll feel like I didn’t do my job.

“I realised that when you produce somebody, you really need to give it 100 per cent of your energy. As artists, they have to go on with their career and live with it, while I can produce it and move on to something else. Occasionally, I hear something that I think I can add to, but for me to bring that artist out the way I think will do them justice is going to take some time out of my life and my career. First of all, I don’t have that much time. Second of all, I don’t know if I want to be responsible for their career, you know? I’ll maybe do a song here and there, but to do a whole album is really taking on their life.”

His reluctance, and his clearly busy schedule, leads to an obvious question: with the Heartbreakers on such a high after *Hypnotic Eye* and a successful tour, how long does he think it will go on?

“The truth is that to have a harmonious group is not easy to do, and we do,” Campbell says, evidently feeling lucky at the longstanding and successful relationship he has with Petty and the other Heartbreakers. “Look around you. All those bands that broke up far earlier than we did, or all those bands that are still together but just hate each other – that’s not us. We actually still like each other and, when we play together, it’s still like the first time in the garage. We still have that kind of awe about what we do.” **G**



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Every year the MI industry meets up in Anaheim, California for a four-day, new-gear fest. We reflect on some of the key kit you'll be seeing this year...

NAMM 2015

WORDS & PICTURES DAVE BURRLUCK, JAMIE DICKSON, ROB LAING, CHRIS VINNICOMBE & TREVOR CURWEN



Electrics

1 COLLINGS 360LT ASH from £3,249

Along with Collings' sumptuous acoustic flat-tops and archtops, and its new pre-war-style 'economy' Waterloo brand, are the increasingly fabulous electrics, such as this new offset 360LT Ash with its body made from, you guessed it, lightweight ash. You also get Lollar Gold Foil pickups and optional – we'd say essential! – Bigsby. There's also a new SoCo, as yet un-named, with trestle-style bracing instead of its standard maple centre block, and therefore lighter in weight with a different resonance and again with Bigsby. Start saving...

2 DANELECTRO BABY SITAR £TBA

Clearly expecting yet another summer of love, Danelectro has released this down-sized electric sitar with suitably "sizzling" sound. Less trippy additions to the line this year include the '63 and '67 – both

with new '56 Lipstick single coils – a new Baritone with six-in-a-line headstock and higher output Lipstick pickups, and '56 Single-cut short-scale bass. As ever, expect prices to be sub-£500.

3 EASTMAN ARCHTOPS from £739

Eastman makes guitars the old way in China and offers some of the most affordable solid carved and laminate jazz boxes available anywhere. New additions include the non-cut AR405E 16-inch archtop from laminate maple with Kent Armstrong neck-placed humbucker at £739; the modernist Trans Blue-finished Venetian cutaway AR580CE (£1,100); and the AR380CE – in the John Pisano Signature range, all-maple laminate with nitro finish at £1,149.

4 EPIPHONE GARY CLARKE JR 'BLAK AND BLU' CASINO from £619

Is there any end to our desire for thinline semis? No. Here's an affordable corker from Epiphone: a Casino with a

translucent 'Blak and Blu' finish makeover to suit new bluesman Gary Clarke Jr. It's available with or without Bigsby (£649 and £619 respectively) and is powered by a pair of Gibson USA P-90 single coils.

5 ESP 40TH ANNIVERSARY £975

If there's one thing the guitar industry loves it's a party, so let's raise a glass to ESP's 40th birthday. Along with a massive display of one-off 'Exhibition Limited' special guitars, ESP had some more affordable celebratory models such as the LTD 40ths, the H7-2015, EC-2015 and MH-2015 along with the ESP Custom Shop Eclipse 40th in Tiger's Eye with Seymour Duncan 'buckers and See Thru Black and EMGs – just 20 of each will be made.

6 FANO ML6 from £2,450

"Discovered on the road somewhere between Kalamazoo and Fullerton, the ML6 represents the missing link between the working

man's slab guitar from the 50s and the refined contours of an early 60s SG/LP," says Dennis Fano of his latest retro-vibed creation. As ever, numerous options – body, neck and fingerboard woods, Bigsby and pickups, not to mention distressed or 'clean' nitro finish – are offered: another Fano that we desperately want.

7 FENDER CUSTOM SHOP CABALLO TONO TELE £3,574

With Fender veteran Mike Lewis now at the helm of Fender's prestigious Custom Shop, the range has been reorganised into three distinct areas: 'Time Machine', the contemporary 'American Custom' (previously Custom Deluxe) range, and the looks-old-but-with-modern-features 'Post Modern' range, which replaces the previous Pro Series. Within the Time Machine range there's a new 'old' finish called the Journeyman Relic – a low gloss with subtle checking, and a few small nicks – that sits between the Closet Classic and the more aged-looking 'Relic'.



The Caballo Tono Tele is the latest development of the beloved Cabronita with a Tele bridgeplate and TV Jones in neck, while the new Ancho Poblano Strat pickups are overwound with heavy Formvar wire and graduated outputs, the neck and middle pickups feature custom staggered alnico III pole pieces, and the bridge pickup has flush-mount Alnico V pole pieces.

8 GIBSON CUSTOM & MEMPHIS £various

If Gibson's USA production models continue to polarise opinion, the Custom and Memphis divisions just carry on making great guitars. Custom's repro of McCartney sideman Brian Ray's '63 SG Standard (£3,399) with Bigsby B5 in 'Silver Fox' (black with white grain highlights) would do nicely, and don't get us started on the Collector's Choice Les Pauls (see p102). But it's not all about the past as a new so-called 'Solid Formed 17-inch Venetian Cutaway' archtop (£4,599) proves. The 'Solid Formed' name refers to a

technique where the spruce top wood is sliced into three layers then pressed into shape, a sort of solid wood-meets-laminate, cheaper and more eco-friendly than traditional carving. Our love affair with Gibson Memphis continues, not least the surprisingly cost-effective ES-335/ES-339 Studio (both £1,299) with black binding and '57 Classics. Then there's this year's ES-335/ES-339 in satin (from £1,899/£1,699) or gloss with small block inlays and Burst Buckler I and 2s. Looking pretty fab, too, are the f-holed 'ES' Les Pauls (approx £2,299) in various 'hit and run' limited-editions such as the VOS Goldtop... We had to be removed from the stand.

9 GODIN CORE CT & SUMMIT CLASSIC CT £799 & £1,299

A new design for Godin that clearly apes a very old one! This single-cut design is typically Godin with a light chambered construction (contoured maple top over Spanish cedar) and Graph Tech ResoMax wrapover bridge. Two pickup formats are offered: dual

Seymour Duncan P-90s or Godin GHN1 (neck) and Seymour Duncan '59 humbucker (bridge). The Summit Classic CT shares the same shape/construction and the 24.75-inch scale but with a fully carved top along with Godin's High-Definition Revoicer system and either Seymour Duncan dual P-90s, dual humbuckers or P-Rails, which offer humbucker, single coil or P-90-like tones. Spoilt for choice.

10 GRETSCH G6120SH BRIAN SETZER HOTROD £2,902

Stripped down and more than stage ready, the latest Setzer Hotrod features just a three-way pickup selector and master volume to control its Brian Setzer Signature TV Jones pickups. The body features 1959-style trestle bracing and we get Schaller locking tuners, pinned Adjusto-Matic bridge and Bigsby. Oh, and four '2-Tone' colours over the flame maple-faced laminate body – Harbour Blue, Highland Green, Roman Red and Tuxedo Black. The G6136SLBP Setzer

Black Phoenix (£3,382) is essentially the same guitar but with black lacquer finish, flared headstock silver sparkle body bindings and silver plexi pickguard. Also updated this year is the G6120SS Setzer Nashville (from £2,998) with either three- or five-ply laminate construction and lacquer finish option.

11 GUILD NEWARK ST T-50 SLIM £959

Guild's new owners, Cordoba, took the wraps off a couple of new additions to the Newark St Collection: the very retro, non-cut thinline T-50 Slim with its single neck-placed P-90, and the even-more ES-335 aimed Starfire IV ST (£1,059) with centre-block, laminate maple (on Natural and Trans Emerald Green) or mahogany (Trans Red) construction and standard tune-o-matic/stud tailpiece bridge combo.

12 NIK HUBER ORCA 'COPPER TOP' from approx £4,995

Huber's Orca is a well-proven single-cut but this custom



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Copper finish looks like the maple top has been beaten into shape from metal. Powered by Haussel 1959 humbuckers and with aged hardware, it looks exceptional. Combine that with Huber's equally exceptional build quality, sound and feel and you have... well, Europe's coolest guitar maker?

13 IBANEZ SIGNATURES from £365

As ever, Ibanez presented a highly diverse collection, centring on new signatures from Paul Stanley (including the \$9,000 PS10M), Steve Vai and Joe Satriani – whose £4,000 JS25ART models are all hand-painted by the guitarist. Conversely, a very tidy new Satch model is the 24-fret JS140WH at £609. The JEM 77 PFBF recalls Vai's heyday, and the UV71PWH (£999) reminds us of one of the first wave of seven-strings; the JEMJR WH (£365) six-string is a highly cost-effective Vai signature. Fanned-fret guitars are spreading into the mainstream too: Ibanez had a couple of fanned-fret seven- and eight-

string prototypes. Watch this space for more soon...

14 LINE 6 VARIAX STANDARD £599

Now owned by Yamaha, it's little surprise that the new Variax Standard feels like a Yamaha guitar: it is. What that means is that along with the same Variax digital modelling engine as the current models, we get a very nicely built modern rock axe at a very affordable price in either White, Black or Sunburst. And like the current single-cut models, we get the altered tuning selections on a standard rotary switch, like the model select switch.

15 NS DESIGN NS-RADIUS £TBA

Ned Steinberger's minimalist headless, virtually body-less plastic guitars and basses were all the rage for some back in the 80s. Since selling his company to Gibson and forming NS Design, Ned has concentrated on modernist orchestral instruments, and a new bass

design. Now, over two decades since he last designed one, there's a new six-string guitar. Of course it's headless, but features a new-design self-clamping tuning system that uses standard strings and includes a piezo bridge system and EMGs. We won't see it until later this year.

16 PRS PRIVATE STOCK 30TH ANNIVERSARY DRAGON £16,995

The most expensive PRS Dragon to date, it's doubtful this bonkers-priced collector's piece will ever see a blues jam down at yer local. Designed by Jeff Easley, Aulson Inlay reproduced the artwork and recreated it as a highly complex inlay that includes over 285 parts from various materials, including jade, azurite, lapis, pyrite, abalone and mother-of-pearl. It will be limited to 40 pieces and apparently demand has outstripped supply!

17 SCHecter CUSTOM DREAM MACHINE II approx £2,949

Based on a Mark Knopfler-owned Schecter from back in

the 80s, this 'ultimate throwback' version of the original Schecter-style 'parts' guitar features a walnut or black limba body and birdseye maple neck but with numerous modern 'boutique' features, such as graphite neck reinforcement, stainless steel frets and staggered height locking tuners. It's available with either HSS or SSS Schecter pickups in Natural Satin only.

18 VIGIER GV ROCK £2,400

Vigier's classy single-cut gets a matt finish makeover this year with the addition of some new opaque 'Revolution' colour options: Yellow, Green, Red and Black. In addition, the Rock also features an upgraded maple top with scraped natural edge 'binding', new-spec, slightly 'rockier' Amber humbuckers and the new Zero Fret S, which slices up Vigier's zero fret into segments: instead of replacing the whole zero fret if any wear occurs, you can now just replace the single worn section.



Acoustics

19 FENDER ROOSEVELT ELECTRO RESONATOR £529

Fender's affordable acoustic range is becoming hugely successful and the new Roosevelt Electro Resonator looks set to continue that trend. The third resonator offered by Fender thus far, it is a cutaway electro with Tele-style headstock, Tele-style magnetic pickup in neck position and Fishman resonator pickup with onboard volume, tone and blend for the dual pickup system. More mainstream is the Kingman ASCE with all-over Sunburst finish, solid spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides, Fishman Presys pickup system with active onboard preamp and tuner, and case all for around £529.

20 GUILD USA ACOUSTICS £1,439

When Fender sold Guild in 2014 it was seemingly the end of the still-new USA-made acoustic line. But new owner, Cordoba, is building a new Californian

factory, headed by Ren Ferguson (who looked after the previous USA acoustics), and along with the high-end Orpheum line, we'll see the all-mahogany Classic M-20 and D-20, and the Legacy D-55, F-55 and F-512 12-string making a welcome return early this year.

21 GIBSON MONTANA ACOUSTICS £TBA

'Torrefaction' is the buzz-word in the acoustic world with numerous top brands advertising this roasting process that simulates old, 'aged' wood. Gibson calls it 'thermally cured' and uses it on new additions such as the J-45 Vintage and Hummingbird Vintage. Throw in a VOS finish or two and you'll be reaching for that credit card. More modernistic is the Les Paul Acoustic that employs not only G-Force auto-tuning but a unique preamp with 12 different EQ voicings and three pickups: under-saddle, internal mic and end-of-fingerboard-placed magnetic. Headphone and DI outs complete this not-yet 'official' model. Intriguing...





22 MARTIN DREADNOUGHT JUNIOR £599

Along with celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the D-35 (according to Martin the most popular three-piece back guitar ever made), the new OM-28 Authentic 1931 uses a torrefaction treatment of the top *and* braces to simulate ageing. Martin calls its version 'Vintage Tone System' – the Authentic series and other select models are now using this VTS system. At the low-end of its 2015 range is the new 15/16ths size Dreadnought Junior with solid spruce top, laminated sapele back and sides, a sipo neck and Fishman Sonitone electrics. Taylor's long-running Big Baby has some serious competition.

23 TAYLOR BABY, BIG BABY & GS MINI-E from £402

The new maple 600 series took the lion's share of the limelight for Taylor but some changes have raised the game on Taylor's huge-selling start-up guitars. The Baby (£402) and Big Baby (£503) now come with

optional electro powering from the Expression System Baby (ES-B), "which incorporates piezo design elements from the ES2", says Taylor and comes with a side-mounted preamp that includes onboard tuner: open-mic ready, we reckon. Along with the GS Mini-e RW (£604), with layered rosewood back and sides and a solid spruce top, a new 2015 model is the GS Mini-e Koa (£704) with laminated koa back and sides and solid koa top. Both have the ES-T under-saddle system and three onboard controls for volume, treble and bass.

24 VINTAGE PAUL BRETT BARITONE & TENOR £399 & £299

Along with existing six- and 12-string models, plus the Viator travel guitar, Vintage's Paul Brett range is expanded by the all-solid spruce/mahogany Gemini Baritone VGE800N electro and the solid spruce/laminated sapele acoustic Viaten Tenor VTE800N models. Still very niche it may be, but the tenor – typically tuned in 5ths (CGDA) – is making a bit of a comeback.



25 WASHBURN COMFORT SERIES 7-STRING £399

Boutique features seem to be popping up at all price points and although lumped with instantly forgettable product codes, the Comfort Series kicks off at £299 with the laminate koa WCDM55, while the £399 WCDM155 is solid spruce-topped with bevel cutaway and arm rest, and is available at £449 with laminated rosewood back and sides. Plenty of interesting electro additions, too, and in the Woodline and

Woodcraft series there's even a seven-string cutaway dread' with armrest at £399.

26 WATERLOO JUMBO KING £TBA

Collings' in-house-made sub-brand, Waterloo, has proved such a success since launching in 2014, the Austin firm can't keep up with demand. There's now a new design to accompany the original WL-14: the larger-bodied Jumbo King, which comes as either 12- or 14-fretter. Can Collings do no wrong? ➤



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Amplifiers

27 BLACKSTAR ID:CORE BEAM £229

Blackstar's small-speaker, high-tech ID:Core amps have found their way into many a home and practice room. The technology produces girthy, Super Wide Stereo tones out of compact, inexpensive devices and Blackstar has upped the ante again here with a Bluetooth-enabled unit that can be used either as a multi-function electric, bass or acoustic amp with plethora of decent effects, or as a home hi-fi that allows you to stream audio from mobile devices with impressive clarity. Clever, clever stuff.

28 FENDER ML 212 HOT ROD DEVILLE £802

Fender's standard Hot Rod DeVille has sold by the truckful, and this thoughtful adaption to suit pedal-oriented players looks likely to prove a hit, too. Designed to revered LA guitarist Mike Landau's spec (he's used DeVilles on stage for years), it swaps the original's

drive channel for a second clean channel with a volume boost for jumping to three different levels during verse/chorus/solo transitions, without altering the base tone. That's key because the ML 212 is designed to be an ideal 'blank canvas' for drive pedals. Celestion V-Type speakers add a faintly British flavour to this compelling package.

29 HUGHES & KETTNER TRIAMP MKIII £1,959

If you've ever wanted to mix and match the tones of decade-spanning British and American amps at the touch of a button, the MkIII is for you. It boasts six (yes, six) independent channels that govern two pairs of 6L6 and one pair of EL34 power valves, which can be programmed and selected in three freely assignable pairs to conjure everything from bleeding-edge modern metal tones to 70s British 'brown' tone, shimmering 50s cleans and, well, nearly anything else you can think of. The amp's Tube Safety Control system automatically re-biases the

amp if you want to experiment with KT66, KT88, 6550 and other power valves. A truly formidable, programmable amp-tweaker's delight!

30 MARSHALL 2555X SILVER JUBILEE REISSUE HEAD £1,199

Joe Bonamassa is among the many guitarists who rate the original Silver Jubilee amps (launched in 1987) very highly. This 100-watt reissue reprises all the features that characterised the original, such as the pentode/triode half-power switch, authoritative EQ, footswitchable three-mode preamp with Rhythm Clip setting to add heft and edge to riffs, plus a lead mode that remains as hotly imperious as we all remember it. A welcome return for a vintage slice of Marshall heritage.

31 MATCHLESS SC MINI £TBC

Only a prototype as yet but we couldn't help get a bit excited by this 'son of DC-30' eight-watt combo. It's rectified with a 5AR4 valve, while the power

stage consists of a single EL84 output valve. The devil, however, is in the detail of the EF86 valve in the input stage of the preamp, which it holds in common with the Nighthawk combo in this issue (see p18), and which for many players forms an essential component of the Matchless sound. All this drives a 10-inch Celestion Greenback speaker, promising a stonking little studio combo or high class amp for the home.

32 ORANGE CRUSH 35RT £199

While Orange's innovative new 300-watt OB-1 bass amp impressed at the low frequency end of things, also new are its high-gain, Crush-series solid-state practice amps. The twin-channel 35RT is loaded with 10-inch Voice Of The World speakers and features a fully buffered effects loop (useful if you have long-ish cable runs to your pedalboard that can suck tone), digital reverb, plus a built-in chromatic tuner. It also features a new CabSim emulation of an Orange 4x12 cabinet on the quarter-inch



headphone/line output for tone-packed plugged-in play.

33 PRS ARCHON 50 COMBO £1,427

The 100-watt Archon head was a surprise hit of last year, combining well-defined high-gain tones with surprising crossover appeal thanks to its country-friendly, super-clean channel, which has proved a hit in Nashville. The new, tidily compact 50-watt combo version will run either 6L6 or EL34 power valves and promises a more juicy, classic rock character than its big brother thanks to a smaller output stage. A half-power switch allows you to lower headroom even further. The combo is a 1x12 design loaded with a Celestion G12-75T driver, although a head version is also available.

34 PEAVEY 6505 MH £TBC

Following on from Peavey's canny update of its Valve King range, comes this twin-channel, 20-watt 'Mini Head'

version of the company's 120-watt 6505 high-gain amp, a modern classic of metal tone. While a pair of EL84s (not the original's scary quad of 6L6s) is providing the magic here, Peavey claims it has the same brutal gain structure – and handy extras such as XLR and USB 'microphone simulated' outputs promise real home-studio relevance.

35 TWO-ROCK AKOYA £2,961

Pro-favourite Two-Rock has gone retro with its new twin-channel, 50-watt 4x10 Akoya combo. Driven by a duo of 6L6s in the power stage, it is dual valve-rectified and features the same valve tremolo that can be found on Two-Rock's Matt Schofield Signature amp, promising a classic, forgiving vintage feel. Intelligent tweaks raise it above mere homage, however, such as the Tone Boost secondary EQ setting that increases gain over both channels for a more 'pushed' feel. For those a bit scared by its quoted 31kg weight, it's also available as a head.





Effects

36 BOSS ES-8 SWITCHING SYSTEM £499

Like the TheGigRig's pro-grade G2 switching system, the ES-8 allows you to centralise digital control of your favourite stompboxes. Instead of laboriously switching them on and off in a frenzy of tap-dancing, you can program the ES-8 to control up to eight pedals that are left 'always on', each within their own individual effects loops. Via the ES-8's programmable routing system you can then assign favourite combinations of those loop-isolated pedals to 800 user-editable patches, each with fully customisable routing, buffering and grouping options for easy one-touch selection of favourite soundscapes.

37 DUNLOP CBM95 CRY BABY MINI WAH £89.99

Micro-enclosure effects are still very much in vogue, and Dunlop impressed with this scaled-down version of its classic wah. At half the original

unit's size, it's pedalboard friendly, but Dunlop claim the range of the pedal's travel is similar to the full size model, so hypersensitivity to foot movements shouldn't be an issue. Incorporating a Fasel inductor and true-bypass switching, it should be tonally all-grown-up, too. A three-position voicing switch inside the pedal also allows adjustment of the pedal's frequency range.

38 ELECTRO-HARMONIX SUPER PULSAR TREMOLO £169

Atmospheric tones are making a comeback, prompting possibly the world's most heavily-spec'd tremolo from EHX. The analogue Super Pulsar has stereo inputs and outputs and controls governing the tremolo's waveform and wave shape, plus rate and depth, any of which can be assigned to an external expression pedal. It also has a phase control allowing you to shift the phase of the right output by up to 360 degrees relative to the left, and envelope controls that allow picking force to shape tremolo

effects. There's tap-tempo, and a new sequencer function that allows the effect to be used in a complex rhythmic role; up to eight user-defined tremolo sounds can be stored. There's also a retro octave-up fuzz pedal, the Octavix (£99), which can be run at either 9V for a saggy, vintage fuzz tone or at 24V for extra definition and clarity, plus an affordable Holy Grail Neo reverb pedal (£119) that dispenses with EHX's baffling 'Flerb' setting to offer Spring, Hall and Plate 'verbs.

39 HOTONE XTOMP £TBC

Packing more into less is what the Xtomp is all about: this ultra-slim digital stompbox emulates over 300 classic and rare stompboxes using its proprietary Comprehensive Dynamic Circuit Modelling (CDCM) system that, it says, employs complex algorithms to emulate the full, dynamic operating characteristics of a range of classic pedals for more accurate tones than static-state 'snapshots' of the tone of hardware pedals.

The stompbox library can be wirelessly updated via an accompanying iOS app.

40 IBANEZ TUBE SCREAMER MINI £65

Tube Screamer clones in micro enclosures aren't new, so it's no surprise that originator Ibanez has joined the fray with the authentic article of this benchmark 'mid-hump' overdrive. Despite the dinky dimensions, you get an all-analogue TS circuit with JRC4558 IC chip and true-





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bypass. Basic tone, level and large-dial drive controls round out a small but capable Japan-built package – note it's 9V PSU-operated only, though.

41 J ROCKETT AUDIO DESIGNS TOUR SERIES PEDALS £TBC

J Rockett Audio Designs adds to its Tour Series (home of the much sought-after Klon-like pedal the Archer, see p133 for our review) with a trio of new stompboxes. The appropriately named Boing is a spring reverb emulator, The Dude an overdrive and, perhaps coolest of all, the Monkeyman combines Keef-style tweedy overdrive with reverb in one easy-to-use, eye-catching yellow stompbox. UK pricing is currently TBC but expected to be around £150 per unit.

42 LINE 6 FIREHAWK £349

Line 6 is on the charge at the moment, with the Firehawk joining its burgeoning list of capable amp-and-effect modelling devices. Sitting somewhere between Line 6's

top-of-the-line HD 500X and the more lifestyle-focused AMPLiFi devices, the floor-mounted Firehawk multi-effects unit is eminently giggable and comes loaded with models of over 200 amps and effects, both classics from other makers and Line 6 originals. It's wirelessly editable via Android and iOS, too.

43 TC ELECTRONIC VISCIOUS VIBE £99

A brace of new modulation pedals joins the TonePrint family this year. Promising a 1:1 recreation of the Shin-Ei Uni-Vibe, famously used by Hendrix on *Machine Gun*, TC Electronic claims it has pushed the limits of DSP in compact pedals to get the Viscous Vibe one dead on. Like the original, it has both chorus and vibrato functions. Secondly, the Helix Phaser (£99) offers highly tweakable vintage and modern phase tones. Both pedals feature true-bypass switching and analogue-dry-through routing that ensures none of your dry guitar signal gets digitally processed.



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44 T-REX REPLICATOR TAPE DELAY £TBC

Often emulated, but arguably never bettered, genuine tape delay is back thanks to T-Rex. Designed to address the traditional weak points of tape delays, the new Replicator is expected to go on sale in autumn for \$799. Ultra-durable

chrome tape in a quick-release cassette is used, giving a claimed three months of play time without significant signal degradation. As well as tap tempo-enabled tape delay effects, the unit will also produce a warm tape chorus, while saturation controls allow full-fat, chewy analogue tone to come to the fore.

Accessories

45 MXR ISO-BRICK POWER SUPPLY £167

PP3s and multiple wall warts don't cut it for the modern pedalboard but this just might. Compact, but with 10 fully isolated outputs, the Iso-Brick offers six 9V outputs (two each at 100mA, 300mA and 450mA), two 18V 250mA outputs plus two variable (adjustable from 6V to 15V) 250mA outputs that can emulate the sort of voltage sag that makes some pedals sound sweeter.

46 DIGITECH TRIO BAND CREATOR £189

A backing band in a pedal, the Trio follows your guitar playing and automatically generates bass and drum parts that match your chord progressions and rhythmic feel. There's a wide range of selectable musical genres and song styles and, with its onboard guitar effects, you can plug in and send the sound of a three-piece band to amp, PA or headphones. Could be the most fun you've had practising at home in ages!

47 PALMER PDI 03 JB JOE BONAMASSA SIGNATURE MODEL GUITAR SPEAKER SIMULATOR DI £199

Using speaker simulation filters voiced to replicate the frequency response of a variety of cabinets, this connects between your amplifier output and loudspeaker to deliver a

realistic speaker sound for recording or live use, eliminating the need for mic'ing. Long-time Palmer speaker simulator devotee, Joe Bonamassa, has not just lent his name to this one, but has specified the JB switch for an in-your-face sound.

48 LANEY IRONHEART IRT-PULSE £199

A box full of valve-driven tone, courtesy of a pair of high-gain ECC83s, with myriad ways to employ it. For example, it'll function as a booster in front of your amp, or – perhaps with the onboard speaker simulation engaged – straight into the PA for gigs, driving headphones for silent practice or recording and re-amping via the onboard USB interface direct to your DAW. Look out for similar connectivity in new amps, such as the L-5 Studio head (£439).

49 LR BAGGS SESSION ACOUSTIC DI £329

After LR Baggs was impressed with the mastered audio from its Handcrafted Video sessions, the company set about producing a DI that captures that 'studio' sound for your live setup. Interestingly, there is no obvious EQ but it's integral to the saturate and multi-band compression functions. Along with XLR and jack outputs, ground-lift, phase switch and notch filter control, the Session DI can be adaptor, battery or phantom powered.



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FENDER CLASSIC SERIES '60S JAGUAR LACQUER & ROAD WORN '60S JAZZMASTER £1,054 & £1,246
ELECTRICS

Jazzed Up

The Big F's 'other' models get a Mexican-made nitro finish treatment, complete with vintage spec and factory relic'ing

WORDS **Michael Brown** PHOTOGRAPHY **Jesse Wild**





Fender Classic Series '60s Jaguar Lacquer & Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster

£1,054 & £1,246

What You Need To Know

1

What's the deal with the 'Lacquer' tag, then?

Back in the 50s and 60s, Fender applied DuPont 'Duco' nitrocellulose finishes to some of its best-known instruments. Some swear by the tonal benefit of these finishes.

2

So what's all the fuss about nitro?

Whether worn or not, there's just something about the look, the feel and even the smell of a nitro lacquer. It ages attractively, too – and the Road Worn series gives you pre-aged instruments straight from the factory.

3

Aren't nitro finishes only for high-end vintage replicas?

Fender has been gradually rolling out the Lacquer treatment on Mexican-made models since 2013, starting with the Strat and Tele – and now it's the turn of the Jag and Jazz.

Flicking through the Fender catalogue today, it's hard to believe that the company ever discontinued the Jaguar and Jazzmaster. Since those models' popularisation in the early 90s, fuelled by the alt-rock and grunge movement, both guitars have gradually found themselves peppered across the majority of Fender lines, making their addition to the Classic Series Lacquer and Road Worn lines the next logical step.

Whether you think a nitrocellulose finish is integral to the look and feel of a guitar or not, there's no denying that these two offsets look mighty fine. Stood next to each other, they strike quite a contrast, too; while the Classic Series '60s Jaguar's gloss nitrocellulose is buffed to a glorious shine, the Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster is designed to look as if that new-guitar sheen has been abraded over the years – the effect is equally glorious.

Both models echo their USA-made American Vintage counterparts in arguably the key areas. Aside from the finishes, they're also packing the same American Vintage '65 pickups and floating tailpieces –

notably *sans* vibrato lock switch – as well as vintage-style adjustable bridges, where most modern incarnations of the Jazz and Jag have made use of Fender's Adjusto-Matic unit.

The pair certainly look the part, and as we're increasingly noting, Fender's Ensenada factory is putting out some incredibly high standards of construction. The Jag's Fiesta Red finish looks beautiful in the flesh, and feels slightly sticky to the touch, something that should calm down over years of

playing. The Jazz, meanwhile, is designed to look like it's already received a few decades of touring, but Fender hasn't gone over the top here – unlike the first Mexican Road Worn relics – there are a few finish chips on the guitar's top and side, but much of the action is going on in less immediately obvious areas, from the faded rear belly cut and gnarled headstock to the worn chrome and plastic knobs. It looks like a guitar that's been lovingly played over a period of time, rather than one that's been

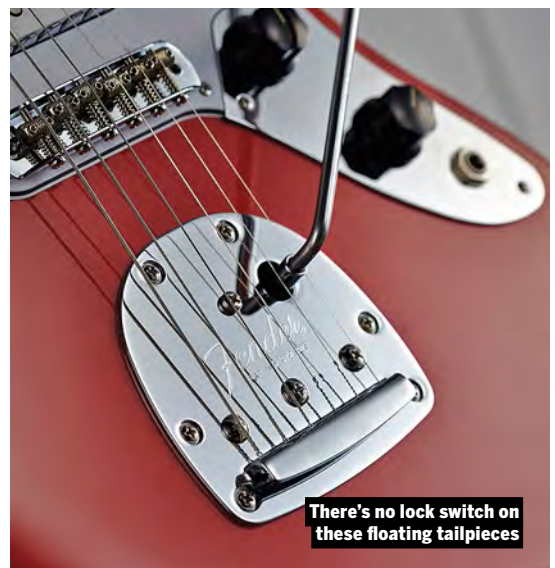




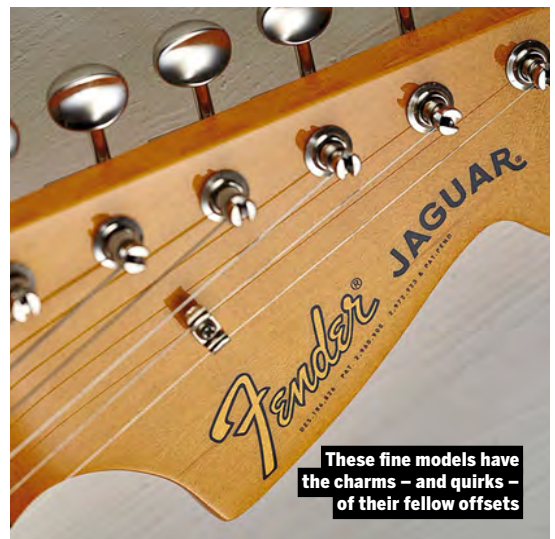
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The Jag only comes in classic nitro Fiesta Red



There's no lock switch on these floating tailpieces



These fine models have the charms – and quirks – of their fellow offsets

subjected to a few random dings and scrapes in a factory.

This more subtle work continues to the Jazz's neck which, again, is beautifully worn with a natural, down-to-the-grain feel that any player could appreciate. It's a different story with the Jag, which also has a nitro finish applied to its neck, again giving it a slightly tacky feel, albeit one that's very different to the gloss urethane you'll find on, say, Classic Player models – with a bit of playing in this should be a beauty. Both

guitars feature fairly generic C-shaped necks, which feel more contemporary than vintage, but produce a comfortable playing experience nonetheless – the Jaguar especially, owing to its 610mm (24-inch) scale length, which makes add9 chords and minimum-effort bends a breeze.

What's less comfortable from a playing perspective is the vintage-style bridge and floating vibrato assembly. We noted above that most contemporary Jags and Jazzes

have Adjusto-Matics and there's a good reason for that: as players of vintage offsets will attest, the saddles on a traditional Jag/Jazz bridge simply don't have deep enough grooves to keep the strings in place. On our review models this was most notable on the Jazzmaster, which came set up with a lower action resulting from a lower bridge and therefore a lower groove. Hit the low E hard, or bend above the 12th fret, and be prepared for the string to pop over to the A saddle and increase in pitch as it does so – not a pleasant mid-gig experience. Of course, upping the string gauge beyond our review models' 0.010s and even employing flatwounds can help, but not every player wants to make that change.

The Jazzmaster's neck is beautifully worn, with a natural, down-to-the-grain feel that any player could appreciate

The Rivals

Aside from the USA-made **American Vintage '65 Jaguar** (£2,074), Fender's closest equivalent is the **Classic Player Jaguar Special** (£1,042), which has an Adjusto-Matic bridge and hotter single coils. Fans of aged finishes will also want to check out the **Kurt Cobain Road Worn Jaguar** (£1,402), with DiMarzio humbuckers. Jazzmasters? The closest alternative is the **Troy Van Leeuwen** model (£1,306), with American Vintage '65 pickups and a Mustang bridge. For a similar but more expensive vibe, check out the **Fano Alt De Facto JM6** (from £2,299)





The pickups and knobs have had the relic treatment, too



Relic'ing on the Jazz is subtle and convincing

We understand that faithful spec is the name of the game here, but the bridge assembly proves that vintage authenticity isn't always the best policy.

Sounds

Of course, the saving grace of Fender's offset oddballs has always been their tones, and as you'd expect with the pair of American Vintage single coils filling the cavities, neither guitar slacks off in this department. You'll struggle to find purer, more pristine cleans than those you'll wring out of a Jag or Jazz, and these pickups make you understand why surf acts became bastions of the guitars in their original lifespan.

The Jaguar's switching system has foxed many a guitarist over the years, but it

also offers a tonal versatility that other single coil-loaded solids struggle to match. Ignoring the rhythm circuit for the moment, the lead circuit's neck single coil delivers sparkling open chords with a sweet, non-invasive high-end that begs for Bondesque 'spy' playing, especially with a touch of the smooth-riding vibrato. Switch in the bridge and engage the low-cut 'strangle' switch, and you get a hollow tone that's ripe for cutting through a crowded mix. Admittedly, the bridge pickup on its own is a fairly thin affair, even without the strangle engaged, but for brash indie barre chords, it's a blast.

Navigating the Jazzmaster's control panel is an altogether simpler business. Like the Jaguar, it features the rarely

The Jag's switching system has foxed many over the years, but it also offers a tonal versatility that other single coil-loaded solids struggle to match

used rhythm circuit, but with a familiar three-way toggle doing the switching business, tracking down tones is easy. And what tones they are. There's more presence and mids to the Jazz in all positions (the increased scale length over the Jag, not to mention the Jazz's wide-wound pickups are playing their part), giving it an almost hi-fi feel.

The mellow neck pickup invites arpeggios and open chords with its top-end chime, which transforms into a more

pronounced funk-ready quack with a flick to the middle position. Engaging the bridge pickup results in the most aggressive tone from either guitar, making this a better fit for alt-rockers eager to avoid retrofitting a higher-output pickup.

Then there's the oft-maligned rhythm circuit, which drops the high-end from the equation, leaving only the neck single coil engaged for a woolly tone that most guitarists struggle to



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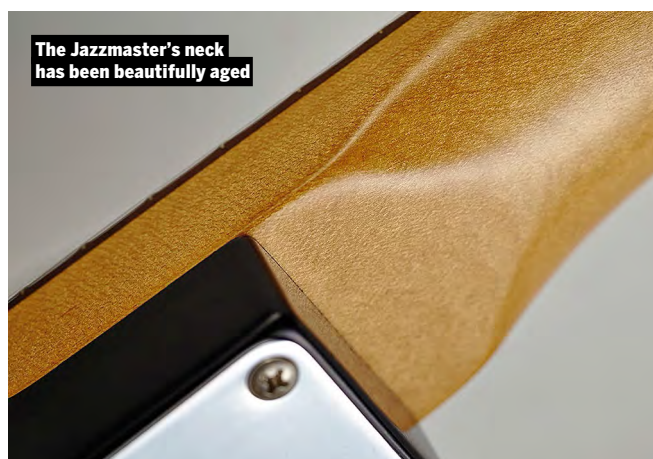
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The vintage-style bridge is a troublesome choice



The Jazzmaster's neck has been beautifully aged

effectively employ. Admittedly, it's hardly suitable for all-purpose playing, but with a cooking valve amp or sufficiently raunchy fuzz it yields a gritty QOTSA-style rhythm honk, again proving these guitars deserving of their alt-rock credentials.

Verdict

As Jaguars and Jazzmasters go, the Classic Series Jag and Road Worn Jazz are hard to fault: both offer sweet, shimmering tones redolent of the originals while delivering looks to match. However, as modern, road-ready guitars, we can't help but worry about those pesky bridges. Maybe we've been spoiled by Johnny Marr's Jaguar and Troy Van Leeuwen's Jazzmaster – both of which

feature the string-pop-combatting Mustang bridge as standard – but part of us wishes Fender would concede to the everyday player, especially with instruments like these, which are aimed at those who can't quite stretch to American Vintage or Custom Shop models.

Nevertheless, the wealth of tones on offer make both guitars superb recording instruments, if not onstage mainstays. For offset newcomers, we'd recommend you start with something a little more user-friendly (see Rivals), but for connoisseurs who don't mind a bit of playability unpredictability, or are handy with DIY setups, this is as close as you'll get to the real deal for around a grand. **G**



Fender Classic Series '60s Jaguar Lacquer

PRICE: £1,054 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Offset, double-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple, C shape
SCALE LENGTH: 610mm (24")
NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 184mm (7.25") radius
FRETS: 22
HARDWARE: 6-saddle vintage-style adjustable bridge with floating vibrato tailpiece, vintage-style tuners – nickel/chrome plating
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 55mm
ELECTRICS: 2x American Vintage '65 Jaguar single coils; lead circuit: master volume, master tone, neck pickup on/off slide switch, bridge pickup on/off slide switch, normal/low cut slide switch, 3-way toggle pickup selector; rhythm circuit: master volume, master tone; 2-way rhythm/lead circuit selector
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.4/7.5
OPTIONS: None
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Fiesta Red only – nitrocellulose lacquer
Fender GBI
01342 331700
www.fender.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A beautiful-sounding, looking and playing example of Fender's short-scale cat, and faithful to the last detail, whether you like it or not



Fender Road Worn '60s Jazzmaster

PRICE: £1,246 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Offset, double-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple, C shape
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Synthetic bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 184mm (7.25") radius
FRETS: 21
HARDWARE: 6-saddle vintage-style adjustable bridge with floating vibrato tailpiece, vintage-style tuners – nickel/chrome-plating
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 55mm
ELECTRICS: 2x American Vintage '65 Jazzmaster single coils; lead circuit: volume, tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector; rhythm circuit: volume, tone; 2-way rhythm/lead circuit selector
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.3/7.3
OPTIONS: None
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: 3-Colour Sunburst only – worn nitrocellulose lacquer

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: An elegantly put-together offset, complete with wonderful tones, looks and vibe – for an old-school Jazzmaster at a reasonable price, look this way

Meet the Córdoba MINI

The world's first miniature nylon-string guitar is the perfect companion for all ages, road trips, vacations, or just hanging out at home!



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Renowned finish expert and pickup maker Curtis Novak uses these blocks as a workshop reference for old Fender colours

Lacquer Respect?

Environmentally unfriendly, volatile and a total sod to work with... But enough about Jeremy Clarkson - what's all the fuss about nitrocellulose? And why do guitar players still want to have their instruments covered in it?

WORDS **Mick Taylor** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions & Curtis Novak**

Clarance 'Leo' Fender, would be bemused by today's guitar market. Legend has it that he was always looking forwards; that the next guitar and the processes used to make it would always improve on the last. Quite what he'd make of Fender's desire to introduce nitrocellulose lacquer to its most modern facility in Ensenada, Mexico, is open to debate. As a pragmatist and problem solver, his first question would almost certainly be, "Why?"

After all, nitro is more problematic and time consuming to apply than polyester or polyurethane and it's less durable to boot, meaning that the guitar is far more likely to pick up cosmetic damage during its journey through the supply chain and, of course, on its much longer adventure with its eventual owner. Who would want that?

Hue really got me

Whatever the pragmatist's view, 65 years after the first production solidbodies rolled off Fender's line, many players and pundits believe passionately that the old-style,

thinly-applied, solvent-based lacquers are the 'best' choice for authentic vintage feel, looks and, yep, tone. Detractors argue that it's pure nostalgia-driven hogwash.

Either way, the facts are that Fender used both nitrocellulose and acrylic lacquers for 1950s and 60s standard and custom colour finishes. Originally developed for cars of the period, you can identify which is which by the associated Dupont paint codes (widely available online) that are prefixed with either 'Lucite' (acrylic) or 'Duco' (nitrocellulose). Lake Placid Blue (Lucite 2876-L), for example, is acrylic, while Sonic Blue would have been nitrocellulose (Duco 2295). Clear top coats were always nitro, but not all custom colours had clear coats; if you see a white Strat with a yellow-ish hue, for example, it probably has a clear nitrocellulose top coat. If it still looks very 'white', chances are there's no top coat.

The same effect happens on Lake Placid Blue guitars that can appear more green with age. In fact acrylic paints were developed because they were more colourfast and didn't crack and check as

easily as the older nitrocellulose paints. Nitro, however, made a nicer gloss by all accounts so what to use where was an ongoing process of trial, error and learning.

The nitrocellulose and acrylic components themselves act as binding agents in the paint that then need to be mixed in solvent in order to be sprayed properly onto a guitar, or indeed a car. It's this solvent - acetone - that denotes the 'lacquer' part of the name, creating a highly flammable, extremely environmentally unfriendly cocktail in the process. Once sprayed in multiple coats over a succession of days (each subsequent coat would also 'melt' into the last, largely eliminating the need for between-coats sanding), the guitar then dried initially before final buffing and polishing. As we now know, that guitar would continue to 'cure' over the ensuing years, as the solvent in the finish continued to evaporate and harden. On some guitars, it never really did and the finish is still soft, but if you look at many a 50s or early 60s Fender today, the finish is often extremely thin and almost as one with the wood.

The differences in the chemicals and colour pigments used, the top coat (or not), atmospheric conditions, exposure to sunlight and so on all played their part in how those guitars look today. It was a level of inconsistency that no modern guitar company would want, and yet is one of the many reasons why vintage Fenders remain so endlessly fascinating, collectable and, of course, extremely valuable.

Lacquer progress?

These days the use of high-VOC paints (volatile organic compound) such as nitrocellulose lacquers is strictly regulated, though those regulations differ significantly depending on where you are in the world, not least in which US State. As a result – and also due to their ease of use compared with old-style solvent-based lacquers – more

robust, easier-to-apply, quicker to cure, low-VOC finishes (notably polyurethane and polyester) were developed and are now the modern norm for most brands, including Fender.

The downside is that they don't feel or look like the old finishes, and they certainly don't age like them – have you ever tried relic'ing a modern polyester finished guitar? It's like scratching glass in some cases. Many people would see that as a great advantage – the late Leo Fender included – because your guitar remains shiny and new-looking for much longer. For some others, however, it's just a straight no-no: it's lacquer or nothing.

Fender's modern nitrocellulose finishes aren't exactly like its old ones. Forum debates rage about different grain fillers and sealers – worthy of an article in its own right

– as detractors contest that they really aren't anything like the old ones. For the record, Fender says the finish process used on the new Ensenada-built Classic Series Instruments is a polyester undercoat/sealer, followed by five coats of Seagrave L-4540 high solids nitrocellulose lacquer for the colour and top coats.

Buff of dreams

So, why nitrocellulose at all? It's absolutely not for everyone but as far as this writer is concerned, ultimately it looks great, it can help a guitar sound great, it ages how vintage fans want it to age and, of course, it evokes the spirit of those world-changing instruments to which many of us aspire. No, modern nitro finishes aren't exactly as they used to be, but we'll take them over glass-like polyester any day of the week. We all know that the way your guitar makes you feel has a direct effect on how you play. There's no logic to it and it may well be entirely psychosomatic, so with that in mind, we'd ask what you'd rather pay for: counselling, or the finish you really want? **G**

Many believe that the old-style, thinly-applied, solvent-based lacquers are the 'best' choice for authentic vintage feel, looks and, yep, tone



Two 60s Lake Placid Blue Jazzmasters – but the left guitar has a nitro top coat, which has yellowed over time



VIDEO DEMO



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GIBSON COLLECTOR'S CHOICE #18 1960 LES PAUL 'DUTCHBURST' £5,799
ELECTRICS

Going Dutch

The Collector's Choice series recreates actual instruments – some famous, some simply awesome. The Dutchburst pays homage to a 1960 Standard that lived its working life between the Low Countries and the high seas...

WORDS **Neville Marten** PHOTOGRAPHY **Jesse Wild**





Gibson Collector's Choice #18

1960 Les Paul 'Dutchburst' £5,799

What You Need to Know

1 Another play to sell us dented guitars for twice the price?

Well, you either like aged guitars or you don't. But, like Formula 1 cars, the R&D that goes into these high-end guitars filters down through the rest of the range. And that's good for us all.

2 Do they feel as good as they look?

It's uncanny! These are the nearest that any of us lucky enough to have played an original or two have yet seen – and the closest it feels to actually holding the real thing.

3 How does Gibson recreate an actual instrument that's 55 years old?

Much of it is secret, but we do know that Gibson Custom laser-measured each guitar to ensure microscopic accuracy. The woods are then matched for grain pattern, the colour tones assessed and copied, and each dent and wear mark meticulously recreated.

While the Historic Les Paul reissue has been around since 1993 and has undergone numerous changes and upgrades during that time, the desire for the perfect 1958 to '60 'clone' has been around much longer. This reviewer worked for Gibson when the fabled, but ultimately inaccurate, Standard 80 and Elite models surfaced in 1980. But even prior to that time certain US dealers, concerned that then current Les Pauls were a far cry from their origins, had been ordering 'custom' runs with narrower headstocks, better body shaping and more accurate binding detail. And when Gibson finally got it together to do its own official 'reissues', a vast font of knowledge had accrued.

Experts such as Edwin Wilson and Tom Murphy pooled years of expertise, making each incarnation better than the last. Be it introducing the long neck tenon, using 'bumblebee' capacitors, ever more accurate shaping and colour of plastics, or improved pickup voicing, the reissues we see today represent the pinnacle of those years of toil.

Or they did until now. For Gibson has recently gone a stage further. The Collector's Choice series presents a limited-edition run recreating a specific '58 to

'60-era instrument. Each is numbered, and limited in quantity by the availability of timbers good enough to make as near-perfect a match as is possible when using living species such as maple, mahogany and rosewood.

The instrument we have for appraisal is Collector's Choice #18, known as 'Dutchburst' due to its own unique history.

The Story

The thing about any good vintage guitar is that it has a story to tell. The Dutchburst is no exception. Ordered into Holland in this beautiful dark Sunburst, it was bought by a professional guitarist (we know him only as 'Jan') who played jazz in his trio, mainly on cruise ships. You could say it worked its passage! So what we have is a

replica of a working instrument, with battle scars to prove it. That said, it was clearly cared for – as any 'tool of the trade' should be – with wear marks coming from hands flying up and down the neck, over the body and around the controls. The Dutchburst is about 'use' not 'abuse'; one can almost picture our jazz hero finishing a gig, wiping down the strings, cleaning the neck and polishing the top before placing it respectfully in its case for the night.

And that's one of the things that we like so much about Ol' Dutch: it has not been dulled down as so many VOS models are. Old guitars actually don't go dull. If anything, they get even more shiny where the lacquer remains and has been looked after. Here, the mildly flamed





<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



The finish is less dulled than on most VOS guitars

The Rivals

Gibson's own excellent **Vintage Reissues** (from £3,199) offer very similar quality for thousands less. Plus, look around and you'll find the neck profile, grain, ageing style and colour that 'speaks' to you. **Nik Huber** makes superlative instruments and the **Orca** (from £4,500) is his take on the single-cut theme – Nik offers a variety of options, plus new and aged finishes, and his timbers are spectacular. Should you want a real Les Paul but don't like the vintage hype, **Gibson's 2015 Les Paul Standard** (£2,499) has G Force auto tuning, a brass zero fret, out-of-phase and coil-tap switching options and a variety of finishes on its AA-grade maple top



The neck is heavily relic'd with convincing player wear



The biggest clue that the Dutchburst isn't a real '60

maple ripples understatedly beneath its moody 'tobacco fading to burnt umber and caramel' finish, while the nutty-coloured mahogany back, sides and neck glow under a patina of simulated age.

It's interesting to assess each dent, ding and wear mark and imagine what went into creating it. What songs did Jan play? We presume it was the jazz/pop repertoire of the day. Did the lack of finish on the lower rim reveal that he played seated? Does the wear on the back of the neck mean he wrapped his thumb over the top? Or played mostly in the

jazzy key of Bb? The aging does look convincing, although one hawk-eyed *Guitarist* pundit pointed out that some edges of the worn areas have a distinct 'step', rather than blending smoothly into the bare wood. Without seeing the original we can't say, but Gibson finish can flake, as well as wear through, and this does leave this kind of ridge. The Dutchburst looks so good that we'll offer the benefit of the doubt.

The fingerboard is an attractively dark, single slab of Indian rosewood, but as ever would benefit from a light oiling at the first string change.

Regarding the guitar's nuts and bolts it's as you would expect: twin Custom Buckers (scatterwound as per the original units), a lightweight aluminium stud tailpiece with ABR-1 bridge, aluminium strap buttons, Kluson-style 'green button' two-ring tuners and a stepped-edge black-on-white truss rod cover. The pickups run through the standard Gibson complement of two volumes and two tones (the words suitably worn off the inserts of the gold top-hat knobs). The aforementioned, vintage-style 'bumblebee' capacitors complete the picture.

As this is a recreation of a 1960 guitar, it boasts that era's shallow neck profile. While some prefer the meatier '59 shape, or the even beefier '58, others will relish this slinky sliver of mahogany. Several here who usually revel in the bigger neck experience have picked it up and remarked: "Actually this is really comfortable." It's light, too, coming in at a meagre 3.2kg (8lbs), so you should finish the gig still standing.

What is most interesting is how the removal of a couple of millimetres of wood near the heel lets the fretting-hand thumb tuck further in, allowing

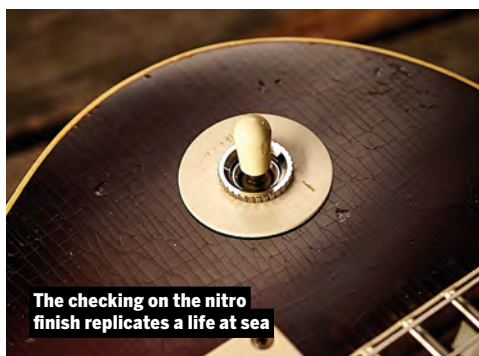




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Every bit of wear replicates Jan's original 1960 model



The checking on the nitro finish replicates a life at sea



The fingerboard is a lovely dark Indian rosewood

the fingers slightly better access to the upper frets. Playing 'blues box one' at the 17th fret is not quite the usual struggle, and may well be enough to turn the staunchest fat-neck fancier's head. Gibson's setup is impeccable, too, aided no doubt by the Plek system that optimises nut-slot depth, fret profile and string height.

Sounds

We've tested guitars loaded with Custom Buckers before – notably 2013's R9 – and they don't disappoint. The thing about vintage Les Pauls is that they were sweet-toned animals from which you could tickle tones, but then, with the crank of a volume control or the kick of a pedal, push them into beautiful, natural overdrive.

While Dutchburst lacks the luxury of 50-odd years of

natural 'tone ageing', Gibson's ongoing nips and tucks mean it's a lot closer to an original than those Standard 80s and Elites of 35 years ago. All the clichés apply: expressive, dynamic, woody, powerful-but-not-mushy, bright-but-not-piercing. And if you've ever watched Gary Moore turning his neck pickup down to two or three and 'whispering' to you through his Les Paul, then flicking to the bridge and cranking it to 10... that's what you have here. Watch our video demo to get a clearer picture!

Verdict

Having spoken to top Les Paul dealers, it seems that Gibson's prices, while scary to most, don't deter those who love them and are fortunate enough to be able to enjoy them. And the work that's gone into the

Dutchburst and the other Collector's Choice models is always going to be reflected, cost-wise. So, like it or not, it's a fact of life.

But what do you get for your almost six grand investment? Well, exactly that. These guitars are likely to hold their value and even increase with time. More importantly, it's a great musical instrument that demands to be played. Let it languish like a museum piece and you'll be betraying the man who made it the instrument it is today.

If you're a guitarist who gets the whole vintage thing – and we unashamedly do, especially that glorious tobacco hue – a guitar like this is a joy to behold, a thrill to play and exhilarating to hear. And let's face it, put another dent in it and who's to know? **G**



Gibson Collector's Choice #18 1960 Les Paul 'Dutchburst'

PRICE: £5,799 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Solidbody single-cutaway electric

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Mahogany with long tenon, 'hot hide' glued, with 17-degree headstock pitch and original style truss-rod assembly

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Nylon/42.4mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 305mm (12") radius, trapezoid inlays

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Lightweight aluminium stud tailpiece and tune-o-matic bridge, small strap buttons, Kluson-style 'green button' tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 49mm

ELECTRICS: 2x Gibson scatterwound Custom Buckers, 2 tones, 2 volumes, 3-way toggle selector switch, 'bumble-bee' capacitors

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.6/8

OPTIONS: None

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Dutchburst

(dark nitrocellulose sunburst)

Gibson

www.gibson.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Build quality ★★★★★

Playability ★★★★★

Sound ★★★★★

Value for money ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Prohibitively expensive, but one of the most droolsome guitars we've seen

"The Bassbone® OD is a game changer."

~ Mike Kroeger
Nickelback

"What a frickin' awesome pedal!"

~ Mark King
Level 42

"The Bassbone OD is absolutely brilliant!"

~ Dennis Crouch
Diana Krall,
T-Bone Burnett

"The Bassbone OD is my new choice."

~ Victor Wooten
The Flecktones

"The Bassbone OD is a game changer."

~ Mike Kroeger
Nickelback

"AMAZING!!!
BRAVO!!!
No more compromising!"

~ Danny Miranda
Queen, Paul Rogers

"Are you kidding me? I'm loving this thing!!!"

~ Ric Fierabracci
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"It's so clean and doesn't 'color' my sound."

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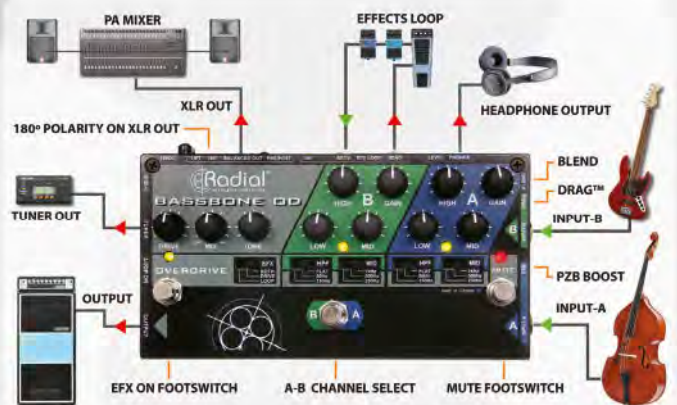
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Choice Cuts

The Collector's Choice series recreates specific vintage guitars down to every scratch and ding, with Gibson Custom even sourcing wood that's as close as possible a visual match for each original instrument's top. Every Custom Buckner is constructed to replicate the unique tone of an original, the hand-ageing is painstaking and model runs are limited to a maximum of 300 by the availability of suitable materials. Here are six of the best from the collection...



Collector's Choice

#12 1957 LES PAUL GOLDTOP

The original 1957 Goldtop (serial number #7-3939) on which this model is based is owned by Gibson Brands CEO Henry Juszkiewicz. One of the recreations was used by none other than Joe Bonamassa for our Private Lesson feature in issue 384. The spec sheet boasts a "slightly cheeky" neck profile with the optimum 50s feel. Hear it in action on the *Guitarist* YouTube channel.

Collector's Choice

#15 1958 LES PAUL 'GREG MARTIN'

A faded 'Dirty Lemon' Burst features on this understated '58 model, which is based on Les Paul Serial #8-6756, the longtime go-to guitar of Grammy Award winner Greg Martin of Southern rockers The Kentucky Headhunters. With a rounded neck profile that isn't clubby, #15 also boasts a pair of Custom Buckers with alnico III magnets.

Collector's Choice

#28 1958 LES PAUL 'STP BURST'

Another '58, the STP Burst is based on the Les Paul owned not only by Ronnie Montrose but also Peter Weihe, a German sessioneer who has performed and recorded with artists as diverse as Jack Bruce, Sarah Brightman and Milli Vanilli. Weihe describes the instrument's tone as "intense in its midrange, and the most flexible guitar I've had the pleasure to play".



Collector's Choice

#26 1959 LES PAUL
'WHITFORD BURST'

Aerosmith legend Brad Whitford is a player who requires little introduction, and this Collector's Choice model is based on #9-0653, the '59 that's been a favourite of Whitford's for the last couple of decades. The wonderfully road-worn 'Whitford Burst' finish is one of our favourites in the series.

Collector's Choice

#30 1959 LES PAUL 'GABBY'

The name 'Gabby' here is a shortened take on 'Gibson Appraisal Burst', and it's based on one of the best-preserved '59s on the planet, which surfaced as a genuine 'one-owner' model back in 2008 and now resides in the hands of a Texan collector. Some gentle ageing and a strong Cherry 'Burst finish contribute to one seriously handsome-looking Les Paul.

Collector's Choice

#14 1960 LES PAUL
'WADDY WACHTEL'

Selected by session legend Waddy Wachtel from Stephen Stills' collection in 1968, the instrument on which this is based saw him through gigs with Linda Ronstadt, Warren Zevon, Keith Richards, Stevie Nicks, James Taylor and more. Yes, his guitar is fitted with the 'wrong' Bigsby, but when it looks, plays and sounds this good, who cares?





LTD TL-6 & TL-6N

£469 & £469

ESP's LTD division takes the wraps off a pair of thinline semi-solid electros. Born to rock? We find out...

WORDS **Dave Burrluck** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

What You Need To Know

- 1 LTD? Don't they make hard-rockin' electrics?**
Yes, LTD primarily makes solidbodies based on ESP and E-II models. A range of acoustics was mooted but these thinlines are the only 'acoustic' models to have actually appeared.
- 2 Are they acoustics or are they solidbodies?**
LTD calls them "thinline transducer-electric" models that feature an "Acoustic Resonant chamber". There's quite a lot of air inside the bodies.
- 3 Do they have magnetic pickups as well?**
At the moment, aside from our two electro acoustics on review, and a 12-string steel version, there are no 'hybrid' style magnetic electric and electro-acoustic versions. Mind you, if ESP's design team is reading this...

Doing live sound, especially in makeshift venues with often makeshift gear, can be a scary job: you have a whole band counting on you to, basically, make them sound as good as they can. But a serious dilemma, towards the end of last year, prompted this review. A four-piece band doing some post Britpop era songs shouldn't have presented a problem, but the singer turned up with his Yamaha electro-acoustic and we struggled to get a sound out of it. Let's rephrase that: we struggled to get a sound at the *volume* the rest of the band were playing without feedback. He had no acoustic amp, so was relying on the two stage front-placed monitors to not only hear his voice but his guitar, too.

As part of a small festival line-up there was no time for a lengthy sound check. Plug in, line check... play! Out front, the acoustic sat in the mix nicely with the kit and electric rhythm guitar but we just couldn't get enough in the monitor, without feedback. Fair play, then, to the

singer/guitarist – he barely heard a note he played all night!

When LTD's distributor, Selectron UK, called us to say they had advance samples of a new thinline electro-acoustic range, we immediately thought of that poor singer. If he'd have had a more solid thinline electro, especially one that didn't cost the earth, feedback

The Rivals

Compared with conventional electros, thinline semi-solids are scarce. **Taylor's T5z** is a thinline hollow-body steel-string that starts with the **Classic** at £1,259 on the street, has two transducers and a visible magnetic pickup, and five sounds that voice them individually or in combination. **Godin's Acousticaster 40th Anniversary** (£1,099) is solidbody-sized, but again hollow inside with a neck humbucker and under-saddle pickup. The **Multiac Steel Duet Ambiance** (£1,499), is primarily hollow with Fishman Aura electrics and an under-saddle. The numerous nylon models start with the **Multiac Nylon Encore** at £849



The bridge is a tie-block design, so isn't ideal for the steel-string TL-6



might have been less of an issue and that difficult gig might have been saved.

The LTD TL-6 and nylon string TL-6N are completed by the 12-string TL-12: a compact range with each model offered in gloss natural or black. All three guitars share the same geometry, a slightly upsized version of ESP's Eclipse electric. Across its lower bouts it measures 368mm (14.5 inches) and in depth a very solidbody-like 49mm. Scale length is PRS-like at 635mm (25 inches) and, in electric solidbody style, both necks join the body at the 16th fret rather than the more acoustic-standard 14th or 12th.

Yet despite a light solidbody weight, the TL design has plenty of air inside: the centre-jointed mahogany slab is routed out to leave back, sides, a centre block under the acoustic-like bridge and a pocket for the glued-in neck. This is capped with the quoted maple top on the steel string and a spruce top on the nylon string. A sizeable 'slash'-shaped soundhole is placed on the bass side; the

treble side is a little more solid and there's a rear 'control' cavity that holds the 9V battery that powers the electrics in a rather archaic fashion. No easy-action, flip-top compartments here.

Obviously, the primary difference between the steel and nylon models is the neck width and string spacing. Both guitars use the same bridge with a 54mm string spacing. The steel-string nut is typically

narrower at 43.45mm with a string spacing of 35mm, while the nylon string's neck broadens out to 48.9mm with a string spacing of 41mm. The different widths influence the shape yet both feel nice and mainstream, and like the fretting and binding, it's a pretty clean job. Both instruments use a 350mm (13.78-inch) radius, too, which will please steel-string players crossing over to nylon strings

The all-black TL-6 is a striking and elegant-looking instrument that certainly fits in with a more show-off rock or modern country electro-acoustic intention



The B-Band preamp is the heart of the TL line's design



The guitar's back is sculpted to enable better upper-fret access



Both guitars use B-Band's Electret Film under-saddle transducer

but probably won't endear the TL-6N to classical players wanting to go electric.

The heart of the TL's design is the B-Band pickup and preamp in the form of its Electret Film under-saddle transducer and side-mounted TP-7. The latter is well spec'd with volume, three-band EQ, tuner and phase switch. A metal football jack-plate is side-mounted and very stage-ready. Nice.

Sounds

There's little doubt that in its all-black finish, the TL-6 is a striking and elegant-looking instrument that certainly fits in with a more show-off rock or modern country electro-acoustic intention. The natural-finished nylon string is more classic-looking and really wouldn't look out of place in any setting aside from a classical recital. The relatively small body means they feel more like solidbodies played seated but with two supplied strap buttons also work well strapped on. That being said, the TL-6N is nearly a half kilo heavier, which points to less-than-careful wood selection. This means

that, of the two guitars, the steel-string has the better feel.

Acoustically, despite the semi-hollow body, we don't have too much to play with. Whether or not it's the lower tension of the nylon strings and their lower energy, the TL-6N seems the most compromised of the pair, and while both have enough volume for practice neither is the most inspiring and both lack the acoustic response of higher-priced instruments like Godin's Multiacs or indeed Taylor's T5z. But, again, by design this is an electro made to be used at higher volumes than simply a standard acoustic with a pickup.

The TL-6 certainly sounds nicely acoustic-like plugged in. It's not the hottest in terms of output of our electro arsenal, and like any active EQ, background hiss can be a little intrusive if you boost all the EQs. Used sensibly, however, there was no more obvious hiss than, for example, our Yamaha NCX900FM's preamp. Sonically, it's pretty even without an overly piezo-like response. The low E is a little underpowered and we can't help questioning the bridge.



The TL-6N has a slotted headstock that's befitting its nylon strings



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>

Essentially, it's a tie-block bridge, as used on the nylon string, but because the strings aren't tied there's a really steep angle up to the top of the bridge saddle – you need to curl the end of the string to get it there and even then it wasn't easy. What effect this over-sharp back angle has on the under-saddle (or the string) is anyone's guess but we got a little more conventional response when in drop D. But again, mixing an acoustic in with a band invariably means trimming the lows so if it's a little deficient it's in the right direction.

The TL-6N in that regard sounds more balanced, although the low end is far from over-egged. What we have is certainly a nylon string character; it's a nice player for those looking for a crossover feel and responds well with fingers or pick.

And, yes, both are very feedback-resistant and the onboard phase switch certainly helps. Of course, the TL's design still has plenty of air in it and although the bridge block is damping a lot of the top's

movement, feedback will always be potentially possible. But with a decent onboard EQ like LR Baggs' Venue DI or Fishman's Platinum Pro EQ, you'll achieve perfectly usable results in a band setting with either guitar.

Verdict

Either of these would get you through a noisy pub band gig no problem, and unless you play at insane volume, feedback should be kept under control, too. For the solo artist playing in a hear-a-pin-drop environment, or in a studio setting, well, you'd probably want to use something more accurate-sounding.

Conversely, for the more adventurous among us who like to use effects, loopers and percussion as part of our live acoustic sound, both designs have a lot of legs, not least with their more electric-like playability. Simply put, in louder stage environments either would be a good 'acoustic' buddy to have, and neither is going to break the bank. **G**



LTD TL-6

PRICE: £469

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: Single-cut, semi-solid steel-string electro-acoustic

TOP: Maple

BACK/SIDES: Mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 49mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 368mm

NECK: Mahogany, 'Thin U' profile

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

TUNERS: Enclosed Grovers with plastic amber-coloured buttons, chrome-plated

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Nubone XB/43.45mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood with small abalone dot inlays, 350mm (13.78") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood w/ compensated Graph Tech Nubone XB saddle/54mm

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.82/6.22

ELECTRICS: B-Band under-saddle Electret Film transducer with B-Band T-7 Preamp with volume, 3-band EQ, tuner and phase switch

OPTIONS: Aside from colour, none. The 12-string TL-12 costs £519

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Black Gloss (as reviewed), Natural Gloss

Electron UK

01795 419460

www.espguitars.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A classy looking and affordable stage electro-acoustic that does what it says on the tin



LTD TL-6N

PRICE: £469

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: Single-cut, semi-solid nylon-string electro-acoustic

TOP: Spruce

BACK/SIDES: Mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 49mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 367mm

NECK: Mahogany, 'Thin U' profile

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

TUNERS: Classic style with plastic amber-coloured buttons, chrome-plated

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Nubone XB/48.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood with small abalone dot inlays, 350mm (13.78") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood w/ compensated Graph Tech Nubone XB saddle/54mm

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.2/7.06

ELECTRICS: B-Band under-saddle Electret Film transducer with B-Band T-7 Preamp with volume, 3-band EQ, tuner and phase switch

OPTIONS: Aside from colour, none

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Natural Gloss (as reviewed), Black Gloss

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A nylon-string stage electro that's very good value in its class, and has immense crossover appeal



Both guitars join the body at the 16th fret – unusual for an acoustic guitar

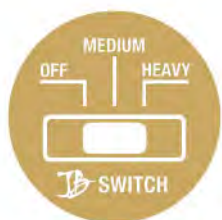
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What You Need to Know

1 Presonus? What's that?
Presonus makes a range of audio and live sound equipment out of Cajun Country, Louisiana, USA.

2 So, can I start recording straight away with this?
Yes, you can, but you'll need a computer to run the software or an iPad to run the free recording app. This equipment will let you record your guitar onto your computer's hard drive or your iPad's unused memory.

3 Will the Studio One Artist software work with any computer?
There are certain requirements including 4GB RAM (8GB or more recommended). Check the Presonus website for full computer system and iPad requirements.

Presonus AudioBox iTwo Studio **£229**

A full recording kit to partner your computer or iPad

WORDS **Trevor Curwen** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joe Branston**

If you play guitar, chances are that you will want to do some home recording at some point. Fortunately, these days, this is something that's readily available to anyone who has access to a computer or an iPad, but you will need some extra peripheral gear, namely an audio interface, headphones, microphone and some recording software.

Now, while there are myriad mix 'n' match choices out there for all of that, Presonus is attempting to make it a lot easier for potential recordists by putting everything that's needed to get started in a single box. The iTwo Studio takes

Presonus' iTwo audio/MIDI interface, M7 microphone and HD7 headphones along with all the necessary cabling, and packages it with its Studio One Artist digital audio workstation software for Mac and Windows. The hardware can also be used with the free Capture Duo stereo recording app for iPad.

In Use

At the heart of the system is the AudioBox i2 audio interface

that connects to your computer – via USB or to an iPad via the 30-pin or Lightning cable – and offers single- or dual-channel recording through inputs that can take microphone, instrument or line level signals. You can monitor through headphones or through any audio system you wish to connect to the rear panel outputs – a mix knob sets the balance between the sound at the input and the playback

This system is all about convenience, giving you everything you need to make quite sophisticated recordings

The Rivals

For a similar all-in-one recording kit, **Focusrite's iTrack Studio** (£179) offers an audio interface for computer and iPad, headphones, mic and cable, and comes bundled with Ableton Live Lite 8 software and the Focusrite Scarlett plug-in suite. The interface, while having two inputs, has one mic and one instrument input unlike the two all-round inputs on the AudioBox iTwo. There are plenty of mics, headphones and audio interfaces available and some audio interfaces come bundled with software: **Steinberg** interfaces, such as the **UR22** (£121), come with Cubase

sound, allowing for latency-free monitoring.

The HD7 headphones are of a semi-closed-back design, so they're suitable for recording next to a microphone as well as general monitoring. They're a comfortable fit over your ears and reproduce sound clearly. The M7 large diaphragm cardioid condenser microphone is basic in features and is at the budget end of things, but does a decent enough job for what you're paying for it. We used it on vocals, acoustic guitar and a guitar amp with results that were fine for a demo recording.

Studio One Artist has a lot more facilities than the basic



The USB bus-powered unit is compact for mobile recording



The bundled hardware includes these hi-def HD7 headphones

free version of the software and there's an upgrade path to the Pro version should you feel the need. It offers a practical working environment to build up your recordings one track at a time and then produce a finished mix. There are unlimited audio tracks, a whole bunch of plug-in effects, plus virtual instruments and bundled loops and samples to help you build backing tracks.

Verdict

This one-stop system is all about convenience. While you could put together your own package from separate manufacturers, this takes the

guesswork out of it. The downside is that you are stuck with one manufacturer's products, but it's a good starting point, and upgrading to a better microphone or using different software is a possibility for the future.

The iTwo audio interface forms a good basis to build any system around and is £149 by itself (software included), so another option is to buy that and add your own headphones and mic of choice. Should you buy the whole package, though, you'll find everything in the box to get you started, which actually makes quite sophisticated recordings. **G**

Presonus AudioBox iTwo Studio

PRICE: £229

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Recording package for computer/iPad recording

FEATURES: 2 in/2 out iTwo audio interface with phantom power, M7 mic with clip and carry bag, HD7 headphones, 9ft/3m XLR cable, USB cable, software download

INTERFACE CONNECTIONS: Combo XLR/Jack x2, standard TRS jack outputs L and R, standard jack stereo headphone output, MIDI in, MIDI out, USB 2.0, Device connection

INTERFACE SPECS: 24-bit resolution; 44.1, 48, 88.2 and 96kHz sampling rate

INTERFACE POWER: USB bus power (Mac, PC), USB power adaptor (iPad)

INTERFACE DIMENSIONS: 192 (w) x 135 (d) x 43.5mm (h)

INTERFACE WEIGHT (KG/LB): 0.62/1.35

Source Distribution

0208 962 5080

www.presonus.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Build quality	★★★★★

Guitarist says: A one-box hardware/software solution gets you started with recording



You can ensure zero-latency monitoring with the Mix knob

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EC Custom Shop Pedals **£99-149**

EC does it - we check out a colourful new name in boutique effects

WORDS **Trevor Curwen**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions & Joe Branston**

Founded by Eldar Cohen, EC is based in Israel and produces a range of handmade pedals, with Mick Box from Uriah Heep and seven- and eight-string metallist Rusty Cooley being notable users. All of the pedals feature very neat construction, are equipped with Neutrik jacks, and are quite distinctive with colourful (some might say garish!) printed graphics covering their top surface. The pedals don't support batteries but will run from any standard nine-volt supply, and feature true bypass switching.



EC Rusty Cooley Overdrive

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Israel

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: 2x gain, 2x volume, 2x tone, 2x internal switches

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9-12V DC (power adaptor not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 118 (w) x 111 (d) x 47mm (h)

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0161 436 4799

www.ecpedals.com

This signature pedal for shredder Rusty Cooley provides two independent channels of overdrive, each with its own gain, tone and level knobs, and features a range of sounds not unlike a Tube Screamer. Two footswitches control the action: the one to the right operates as a normal bypass switch, while the one on the left switches between the two channels – which still operates when the pedal is bypassed so you can pre-select the desired channel, ready for action.

Each side also has two internal switches for selecting clipping mode and tone stack for a fuller low end or a leaner vibe.

Verdict

If you like to notch things up in stages, dual 'drive pedals are great for giving you instant access to the same sound with two different levels of dirt/volume. This will do that, but can also give you two distinctly different sounds, making it a practical option for adding dirty and/or boosted sounds to your 'board.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Two of the same, or two different overdrives – your choice



EC Murinae

PRICE: £99

ORIGIN: Israel

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Gain, volume, tone, internal DIP switches

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9-12V DC (power adaptor not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 111 (d) x 47mm (h)

'Murinae' relates to a sub-species of rodent, but although this pedal is based on the LM308 design of Pro Co's RAT, it's no mere clone, as it can go into different sonic territory. Besides the standard gain, volume and tone, you get three internal switches that change the clipping modes (Silicon diodes, LEDs or Germanium diodes with transistors). This manifests itself as several different voices, making it rather versatile as you decide whether you'd like it sounding loud and lean with midrange clarity, or fat and sustain-y with squealing harmonics. We'd rather have seen this switching externally, but chances are you'll choose a favourite setting and stick with it.

This pedal comes very close to the sound of a RAT, but also offers amp-like high-gain distortions that work well with clean and dirty amps.

Verdict

A decent-sounding, practical distortion pedal, and with its range of clipping options, this is a bargain at the price.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Great all-round distortion with choice variations





<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



EC Night Journey Reverb

PRICE: £119

ORIGIN: Israel

TYPE: Reverb pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Mix, tone, feedback

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC (power adaptor not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 111 (d) x 47mm (h)

We've seen a lot of reverb pedals that offer different types of reverb (room, plate, spring and so on), but the Night Journey keeps things simple with just one sound and three knobs to tweak it. The mix knob adds in the spring-like reverb to your dry sound up to a point that would satisfy any Dick Dale wannabes, while the feedback knob dials in the length of the reverb tail over a limited, but practical, range.

Key to the overall sound is the tone knob, which ramps the treble up to a really zingy reverb with sparkly high end. In effect, it's this knob that dials in just how prominent the reverb sounds. At lower levels, you can set a natural ambience around your sound, but you can turn it up if you want to use reverb as an obvious effect.

Verdict

There's nothing complicated about the Night Journey, but if you like a vintage 'verb sound and your amp doesn't have a spring, it will put you in the tone zone.

GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: An uncomplicated solution for adding reverb to your sound



EC Time Traveler

PRICE: £99

ORIGIN: Israel

TYPE: Delay pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Rate, mix, feedback

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC (power adaptor not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 100 (d) x 50mm (h)

A maximum delay time of just 250ms makes the Time Traveler a bit of an oddity in this day and age. Some older analogue delays featured short max delay times because of the limited capacity of their BBD chips, but the Time Traveler is digital and most digital delays give you much longer delay times... So, what gives?

Well, some guitarists are just not that interested in longer delays and are looking for tighter ambiences and slapback. As you advance the rate knob the sounds start with raw reverbs through shimmering ambience, and a range of slapbacks up to the longer delays with repeats that trail away nicely, which – while maybe not timed in sync with a track – offer a good sense of space and air around the guitar sound.

Verdict

If shorter delays are your thing, then the limited delay range of this pedal offers you finer tuning with the delay time (rate) knob, making it easier to zero in on the exact short delay that you want.

GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: Simple but effective delay with the emphasis on shorter delay times



What you need to know about...

Polyphonic Pitch Shifting Pedals

Instant harmonies, instant drop-tuning or real-time pitch bends – we provide all you need to know about pitch shifting pedals

SO, WHAT ACTUALLY IS PITCH SHIFTING?

In the context of guitar pedals, pitch shifting takes the note your guitar is playing and spits out another note at a different pitch. Depending on what pedal you have and the mode in which it's working, the pitch-shifted sound can completely replace your played sound or can exist alongside it as a harmony.

IS AN OCTAVE PEDAL A PITCH SHIFTER?

While an octave pedal could be regarded as a pitch shift pedal, in that it supplies a differently pitched note (an octave above and/or below the played note), that's really a distinct genre of pedals in itself. What we are looking at here are pedals that can offer pitched intervals other than just an octave and ones that are polyphonic in that they can shift all the notes in a chord, for example.



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>

What you need to know about...



AREN'T SOME DEVICES A BIT GLITCHY?

It was more of an issue in older pedals that didn't have the improved DSP of modern units. These days, notes generally track really well, but the pitch shifted sound can still sound somewhat artificial, particularly so when you're working with larger intervals and upward shifts.



IS DETUNING THE SAME THING AS PITCH SHIFTING?

Detuning, now regarded as an effect in its own right, is a form of pitch shifting where the pitch is not changed by a complete musical interval (a semitone and more). Instead, the pitch change is measured in cents (100 cents equals one semitone). Typically, a detuning effect would add a high and/or a low pitch-shifted note a number of cents away from the main note, resulting in a sound not unlike you'd get with a chorus pedal.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PITCH SHIFTING PEDALS?

You can divide them into three distinct types, although some pedals do more than one thing. There are pedals that will give you notes at selectable fixed intervals – these are mainly about adding harmonies and the like. Then there are also pitch-bending pedals, equipped with a treadle, that will allow you to physically bend the pitch of your note(s) up or down a set interval, like an electronic version of your guitar's vibrato bridge. DigiTech's Whammy is the 'daddy' here. Thirdly, with the popularity of drop tunings as well as capos, there's the transposition type of pedal that will kick in a selected drop or raise in pitch without the bend that you'd get with a Whammy-style pedal. One new example is DigiTech's Drop, which will lower the pitch from one semitone all the way down to a full octave.

Pitch shifting pedals

Mooer Pitch Box

A petite pitch shifter

The Pitch Box gives you three switched pitch-shifting modes (Pitch Shift, Harmony, Detune) dialled in with the 16-way rotary switch to choose the semitone shift for the Harmony and Pitch Shift modes, or the amount of detuning. The detune effects are a cool and useful alternative to chorus. With pitch shifting, instant baritone is effortlessly achieved and you can get some nice upper harmonies, although there's no way to adjust dry/wet mix, making the octave harmony perhaps just a little too loud for a 12-string effect.

Verdict

Basic facilities, but it offers some usable pitch effects for those tight on pedalboard space and/or budget.

Mooer Pitch Box

PRICE: £59

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Pitch shifting pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Pitch knob, Harmony/Pitch Shift/Detune switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

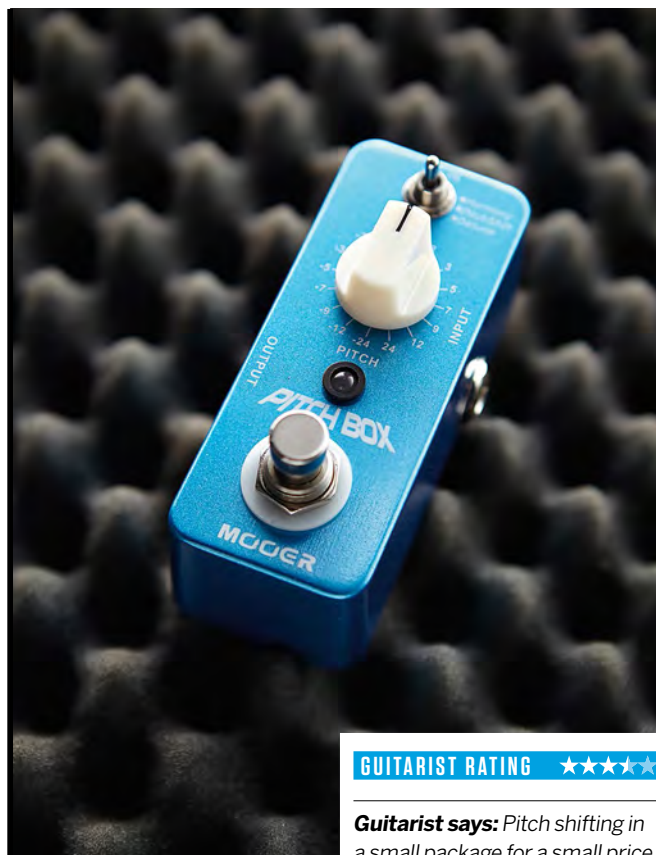
POWER: 9V adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 40 (w) x 93 (d) x 50mm (h)

Mooer Audio UK

01273 440442

www.mooeraudio.co.uk



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Pitch shifting in a small package for a small price

Boss PS-6 Harmonist

Compact and harmonious

The PS-6 offers major and minor harmonies, pitch shift, detune and the Super Bend effect, which delivers Super sweeps. These are triggered by holding the pedal switch down or controlled, Whammy-style, by adding an expression pedal. The Pitch Shift function supports a variety of intervals, as does the set-by-key Harmony. The balance knob sets the blend between dry and pitch-shifted signal, so you can, say, tastefully blend in an octave up for a 12-string effect.

Verdict

A compact choice delivering a tasty range of musical pitch effects to your 'board.

Boss PS-6 Harmonist

PRICE: £139

ORIGIN: Taiwan

TYPE: Pitch shifting pedal

FEATURES: Buffered bypass

CONTROLS: Balance/Rise Time, Shift/Harmony, Key/Fall Time, mode switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard outputs (A and B), expression pedal input

POWER: 9V battery or 9V adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 73 (w) x 129 (d) x 59mm (h)

Roland UK

01792 702701

www.roland.co.uk



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Plenty of pitching power in compact form



Guild
EST. 1953

Pitch shifting pedals

Electro-Harmonix Slammi

It rhymes with Whammy...

EHX's Whammy-style Slammi sits on the floor and rocks on its angled base. You can change pitch up or down to a fixed note selected by an 11-position rotary dial that offers detune, half step, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, minor 7th, one octave, two octaves or three octaves/dive bomb. If you don't want your whole sound to change pitch, a second dial sets the amount of dry sound that's mixed with the pitched signal.

Verdict

The treadle takes some getting used to and selecting intervals can be fiddly, but the lush detune, octave bends and instant baritone are worth it.

Electro-Harmonix Slammi

PRICE: £109

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Pitch shifting treadle pedal

FEATURES: Buffered bypass

CONTROLS: Dry Volume, Max. Bend, Bend up/down switch, calibrate button

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V power adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 92 (w) x 233 (d) x 50mm (h)

Electro-Harmonix

www.ehx.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Treadle-style shifting at a price that won't break the bank

Morpheus Bomber

A bomb-proof bender

Another treadle pedal in the Whammy style, The Bomber is designed so you don't have to use your hands at all to select the pitch shift interval. There's a standard bypass footswitch and another that scrolls through the intervals – dive bomb (three octaves), two octaves down, one octave down, a 5th down, a 4th down, a 2nd down, 2nd up, 5th up, octave up, and two octaves up – almost the same as you'd get with a Whammy, which has a 4th up rather than a 2nd.

Verdict

You don't get the harmony and detune capability of the latest Whammy, but you do get similar pitch bending capability in a pedal that arguably has better functionality for live use.

Morpheus Bomber

PRICE: £219

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Pitch shifting treadle pedal

FEATURES: Buffered bypass

CONTROLS: Trim Level, Effects select footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, USB (for software updates)

POWER: Supplied 12V power adaptor (500mA)

DIMENSIONS: 185 (w) x 206 (d) x 61mm (h)

Sounds Great Music

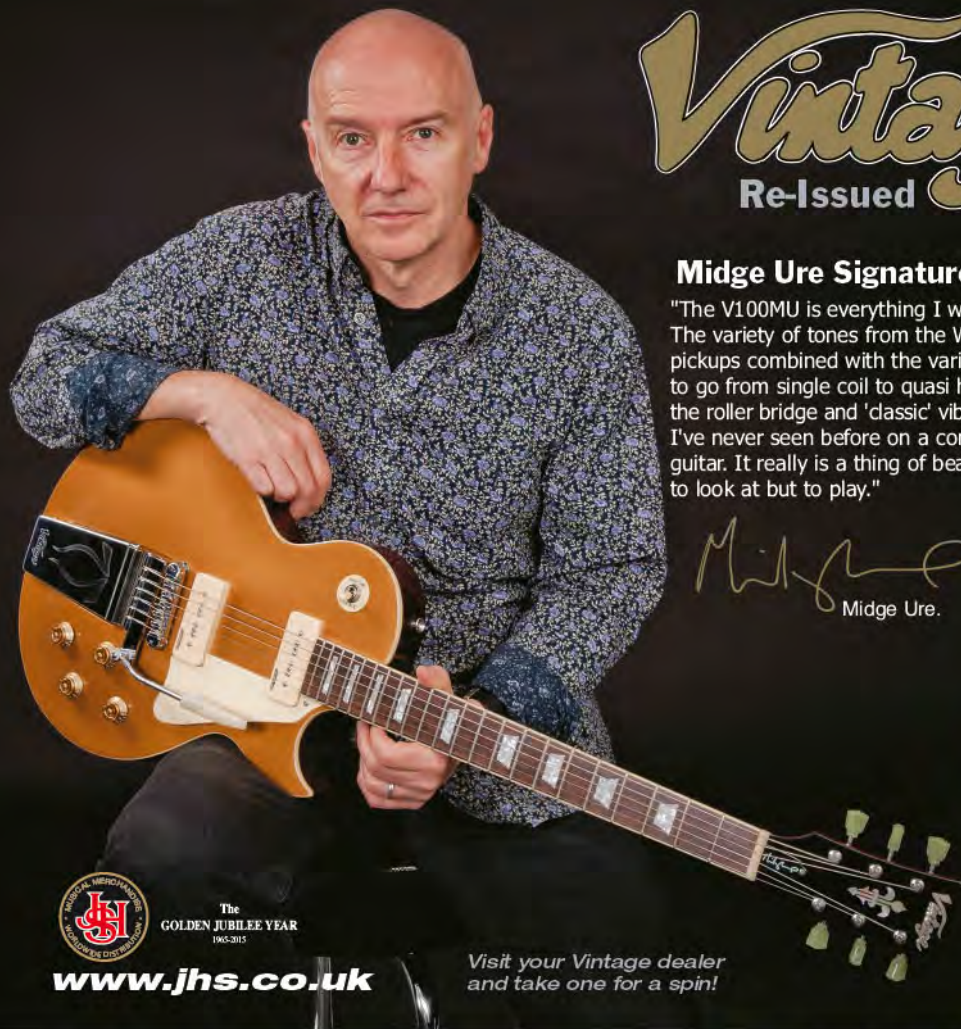
0161 436 4799

morpheusguitarpedals.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Hands-free effect selection and solid construction makes a great stage choice



Vintage®

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"The V100MU is everything I want in a guitar. The variety of tones from the Wilkinson W90SK pickups combined with the vari-coil enabling me to go from single coil to quasi humbucker whilst the roller bridge and 'classic' vibrola is something I've never seen before on a contoured topped guitar. It really is a thing of beauty not just to look at but to play."

Midge Ure
Midge Ure.



The
GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR
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The
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Hughes & Kettner
TECHNOLOGY OF TONE

Pitch shifting pedals

Eventide PitchFactor

Studio-quality from the originators

Eventide were the pitch-shifting pioneers and trademarked the name Harmonizer in the 70s. This unit includes its best pitch-shifting effects: 10 distinct pitch and delay effects based on up to four voices of diatonic pitch shifting, and up to 1.5 seconds of stereo delay. You can overwrite the 100 factory presets with your own sounds, for all manner of effects from the subtle to the freakishly outlandish. You can add further foot switches and an expression pedal – useful for Whammy-style PitchFlex.

Verdict

The most comprehensive and classy array of pitch-based effects for stage and studio.

Eventide PitchFactor

PRICE: £449

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Programmable pitch shifting pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass, 100 patches, 10 algorithms

CONTROLS: Switches for selecting guitar/line level and amp/line level, 11 control knobs, 3 footswitches

CONNECTIONS: Input 1/mono and 2, output 1/mono and 2, exp pedal jack, aux switch jack, USB, MIDI in/out/thru

POWER: Supplied 9V power adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 190 (w) x 122 (d) x 54mm (h)

Source Distribution

0208 962 5080

www.eventide.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Likely all the pitch shifting you'll ever need (plus other stuff) in a single box

DigiTech Whammy

Industry-standard pitch bender

This fifth generation Whammy offers two modes: the classic Whammy algorithm for single notes, and the more modern algorithm from the Whammy DT, which is more suitable for bending full chords. You can choose from 10 settings: bending the input signal to a specified pitch, nine harmony settings where the treadle bends between two specified intervals mixed with your input signals, plus two detune settings where the treadle adds detuned signal to the input signal.

Verdict

The Whammy's signature sound and popularity among pros continues, and this latest version will give you *that* sound and more besides.

Digitech Whammy

PRICE: £199

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Pitch shifting treadle pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Selector knob, Classic/Chords switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, MIDI input

POWER: 9V DC power adaptor (included)

DIMENSIONS: 168 (W) x 196 (D) x 60 (H) mm

Sound Technology

01462 480000

www.digitech.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Still the go-to choice for treadle-controlled pitch bending



Fame

fame guitars are available in the
UK exclusively from dv247.

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Chesham House,
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Gibson

The all new innovative 2015 Gibson guitars have started to arrive. See them on our website or visit either store to give them a go!



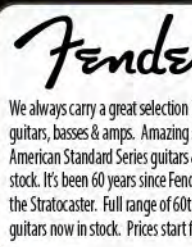
Echopark

With an artist roster including Joe Perry, Josh Homme & Troy Van Leeuwen - these guitars mean business! Coda Music are excited to be the first and only UK dealer to stock these stunning guitars! Due November/December 2014



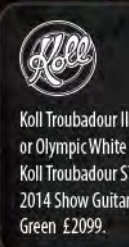
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We're delighted to have our first shipment of Kauer guitars, designed & hand-built by Doug Kauer in Sacramento, USA. They mix traditional building techniques and materials along with modern technology to create unique and great sounding guitars.



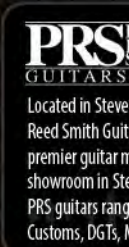
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Koll Troubadour ST Namm 2014 Show Guitar Surf Green £2099.



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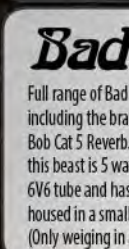
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Two-Rock are incredible sounding, hand built boutique guitar amps, made in Rohnert Park, California. Two Rock Bi Onyx Head, Two Rock Studio Pro Plus Heads & Combos, Two Rock Sensor Heads & Combos. New Two Rock Akoya head and combo's due soon, prices start at £2629



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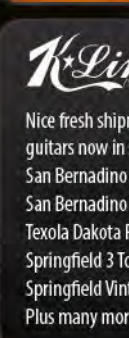
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Full range of Bad Cat amps always in stock, including the brand new for 2015 Bad Cat Bob Cat 5 Reverb. Handwired in the USA this beast is 5 watts, powered by a single 6V6 tube and has a 12" Bad Cat speaker housed in a smaller, lighter poplar cabinet (Only weighing in at 30lbs).



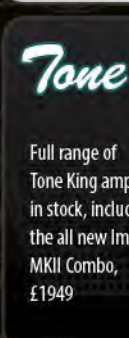
fano guitars

The only place in the UK to see Fano guitars. Currently in stock..GF6's in Pelham blue, candy apple orange, faded tea burst, black over inca silver, amber burst TC6's, black & tan, faded tea burst, SP6's roundup orange, butterscotch blonde, JM6's, faded tea burst, sea foam green, vintage cream, Pelham blue, RB6's bull black, Cadillac green.



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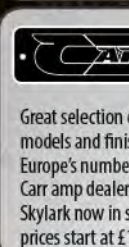
Acoustic Guitars

We are delighted to be opening a new acoustic only showroom in our Stevenage location!!
This new show room and demo facility will be home to an enormous choice of exquisite acoustic instruments from Bedell, Collings, Gibson, Gretsch, Lowden, Martin, National, Taylor, Yamaha and many, many more!!!
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CAN WE BUILD IT? Yes we can! If you have that extra special something in mind, we can work with you to make it a reality. Custom orders can be ready in a matter of months and cost less than you might think - call us, email us or drop in to discuss your perfect combination of features.



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Coda Music bring you the finest guitar effects pedals money can buy!...ready for you to demo with a your choice of amplifier and guitar!!!



Quicktest



Line 6 AMPLIFi TT £149

Latest version of the combined amp modeller and music player

CONTACT: Line 6 PHONE: 01788 566566 WEB: www.line6.com

We've already taken a look at Line 6's AMPLIFi in combo and floor-pedal forms, but now there's a desktop version, TT. The AMPLIFi is designed to aid you when you're practising guitar by not only providing a wide range of modelled amp and effects sounds, but streaming music to play along with over Bluetooth.

The TT has the look of a mini amp head with front panel knobs for drive, bass, mid, treble and reverb. You can use it with headphones, or use the rear jack outputs to connect it to your stereo system or powered monitors. Alternatively, an amp output sends out the processed guitar sound optimised for a guitar amp, operating in conjunction with streamed

audio sent through the stereo outputs. Furthermore, there's an optical output to connect to a home theatre setup and the TT also functions as a two in/two out USB audio interface for computer recording.

In Use

By itself, the TT gives you front panel access to four presets in its internal memory. To use it to its full potential, though, you need to the free AMPLIFi Remote app for iOS and Android (certain devices, version 3.2 or later). This gives access to many more presets (100 onboard and an unlimited number in the cloud) each with up to eight simultaneous effects. There are plenty of good presets that encourage you to play, but

creating your own is dead easy from an iPad touchscreen, making use of the available 70-plus amps, 100-plus effects and 20-plus speaker cabinets, all with plenty of tweakability.

You can stream any song from your music library and blend your guitar with the music using a front panel mix knob. Half-speed playback is available and dialling in a guitar tone to match any song is made easy by a tone-matching facility that utilises a wifi connection to automatically find a relevant tone. You can also search for tones by song title, guitarist or band – there's a growing amount on the cloud and you can submit your own programmed tones for others to download and use.

Verdict

Of the three AMPLIFi form factors, this is the most affordable and perhaps the most practical, in that it can be moved around easily and is compact enough to sit discreetly on a shelf or tabletop, allowing practice in any room where you can plug in its power adaptor. With comprehensive connectivity, music playback and a range of sounds to suit many music types, the TT is one very useful gadget to have around the house. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A feature-packed practice and recording tool that's compact enough to fit neatly into the home environment

Noiise FLUX:FX by Adrian Belew \$19.99

Touchscreen audio manipulation app

CONTACT: Noiise PHONE: N/A WEB: flux.noii.se

FLUX:FX is an effects app for iPad that may be of special interest to guitarists because it was partly designed by quirky guitar mangler Adrian Belew – he of King Crimson, Talking Heads, David Bowie and Frank Zappa, to name but a few.

The basic premise of **FLUX:FX** is that you feed your live or recorded signal through a bunch of effects that you can ‘play’ in real-time by using your finger on an iPad screen, primarily by swiping, dragging or tapping on an XY pad, although there’s also a sequencer that can record the patterns of modulation, for consistent automated effects.

Sounds

There are 31 effects types onboard (distortion, fuzz, flange, tape echo, reverb, and so on) all with a massive range of finely-tweakable parameters – up to five can be placed in any order in a signal chain.

Whether you just plug your guitar into the app and use it on its own, incorporate it as extra effects in a favourite amp sim, or use it in your DAW, an unbelievable amount of sonic sorcery can be carried out. A huge range of static sounds are available anyway, but getting a spare finger onto the XY pad lets you really mash things up, such as sliding from tasteful



ambience to screaming mayhem in an instant.

Verdict

It’s not for traditionalists, but if you want to push the sonic envelope, throw your audience a curveball or animate your recordings, **FLUX:FX** is \$20 well spent. [TC]



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Audio sculpture tool for experimental guitarists and recordists

DigiTech Mosaic £109

12-string sounds with no extra strings

CONTACT: Sound Technology PHONE: 01462 480000 WEB: www.digitech.com

If it plays an integral part in your original music, or if you play in a covers band that does a lot of Byrds and Beatles, taking a 12-string guitar to gigs is pretty much a necessity. However, a different approach is needed for players who favour a little 12-string texture alongside six-string, and since toting a double-neck EDS-1275 isn’t for everyone, it’s usually down to effects to approximate the sound. DigiTech might just have made that effects choice a no-brainer with this new Mosaic 12-string pedal.

Sounds

The Mosaic uses polyphonic pitch shifting and intelligent doubling algorithms to create its sound. With processing

applied to all strings (rather than just adding an octave to the lower four and doubling up the B and E, like on a physical 12-string), the top two strings, although sounding doubled, do have a certain amount of higher octave there, but that’s no problem. Overall, the jingle-jangle flavour of a 12-string is here in spades, instantly delivered on both single notes and chords with excellent tracking. The level knob adds these extra notes to your dry sound, while a tone knob adjusts their high frequency content. Between the two, there’s plenty of variation from a subtle Nashville tuning ‘ghosting’, through that typical chime and sparkle, to brash and in your face.



VIDEO DEMO

<http://bit.ly/guitarist392>



Verdict

Roger McGuinn won’t leave his Ricky at home for this, but the Mosaic represents a great way to get 12-string sounds into a set without swapping guitars. [TC]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A pedal that some players will have been praying for, providing instant 12-string flavour with no faffing

J Rockett Archer £149

A strong scent of Centaur, but is it too Klose for comfort?

CONTACT: Zoom UK PHONE: 08432 080999 WEB: www.rockettpedals.com



Sort of looks familiar, doesn't it? If you've ever lusted after the fabled Klon Centaur Professional Overdrive you'll no doubt recognise the vibe of this stompbox immediately.

J Rockett Audio Designs is the company that worked with Klon designer Bill Finnegan on the first versions of the post-Centaur KTR model. In short, Finnegan resolutely won't build any more Centaurs, so Rockett Pedals has gone ahead with this, the Archer overdrive/boost.

One immediate surprise with the Archer is how small it is. One of the great downsides of the Centaur – apart from the

comedy used prices – is that no matter how cool it looks, it does take up a lot of pedalboard space. Not so here: slightly smaller than a Boss compact pedal and secured in a solid steel box, the Archer fully befits its Tour Series status in that it's super practical and, by looks of things, seems virtually bombproof. Ins and outs are all on the front edge including the Boss-style nine-volt barrel jack; if you want to change the battery, you have to undo four very easy-to-lose screws.

The internals aren't exactly the same as the Klon Centaur but the two-op amp/

germanium clipping diodes/voltage charge pump/buffered circuit format is present and correct. There's no physical dual-ganged gain pot, while the components are surface-mounted on a custom circuit board, including the jacks, pots and mains adaptor socket. The switch sits on its own separate board – easy to replace if it goes on the fritz.

External controls are exactly the same as those on the Klon Centaur: output, treble and gain that in their various settings give you everything from a clean boost to a mid-gained overdrive, to whit...

Sounds

If you head over to the *Guitarist* YouTube channel you'll be able to watch a slightly tongue-in-cheek comparison of the Archer and a Klon Centaur (as part of the Tones For Tache Series). The bottom line is that they sound very similar indeed – perhaps the Archer is a tad more throaty/thicker than the Centaur and that our particular Centaur does aggressive, biting treble slightly 'better'. We're really talking a gnat's whisker of difference, however. They're very, very similar.

The bigger story is that as a clean boost into a decent valve amp, a booster for other pedals or a low-gain overdrive, the Archer offers a remarkably amp-like experience that adds width and fatness to any kind of guitar. While there's a definite midrange kick, it's nothing like an Ibanez Tube Screamer in either EQ or compression. Quite the opposite in fact, as it seems to open everything out in terms of dynamics. There's also definite bite, but not the edge (nor gain) you'd expect of a Fulltone OCD, for example.

Verdict

The Archer is a great-sounding overdrive-boost that's simple, highly practical and solidly built. There's a slight bad taste that it's essentially a clone of a previous design, but given that the originals aren't made any more and we players are crying out for them, perhaps JRAD deserves a break. There are other Klon clones out there (look out for a coming feature), but none with such a direct connection to the original. [MT]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Want the Klon sound but don't want another mortgage? This is for you





Effectrode Mercury Fuzz & PC-2A Tube Compressor £235 & £249

Valve-driven fuzzbox and an improved compressor

CONTACT: Effectrode PHONE: 01782 372210 WEB: www.effectrode.com

Effectrode specialises in valve-driven stompboxes and has just released the Mercury Fuzz, a limited-edition pedal based around NOS components – a Philips subminiature valve and vintage germanium diodes. The Mercury follows on from the now sold out Helios valve-driven fuzz, but uses a different valve, one that Effectrode designer Phil Taylor says delivers “fatter, more robust sounding fuzz”.

We took a look at the PC-2A compressor as part of a What You Need To Know About feature last year, but since then the pedal has been revised. In effect, it's been fine-tuned for extra performance partly in line with some suggestions from David Gilmour's guitar tech. This valve-driven optical compressor pedal has always been a solid design, well-respected and used by many pros, but now it uses a different (higher-spec'd) NOS Philips

valve and a faster photocell for a quicker attack time and has an added 'knee' trimpot in the side-chain, allowing control of the smoothness of the onset of compression.

Sounds

Powered from a supplied 12-volt adaptor, the Mercury sports standard volume and fuzz knobs. At lower levels of the fuzz knob there are some tasty overdrive sounds, but whack it up and you get a lovely fat creamy fuzz sound with plenty of sustain and harmonic content. The sound is naturally vibrant but there's an internal Bright trimpot to roll off or accentuate top end above 2kHz, offering subtle shading. For a different fuzz voice, there's an external Heat switch that allows the second valve stage to be operated at a reduced plate voltage (known as starving the valve). Flick this switch and the fuzz gets harder, tighter and less

squashy, the actual sound depending on how low a plate voltage you dial in with a second internal trim pot, offering a range of alternatives that add to the pedal's versatility.

What you get with the new PC-2A is more transparency – and it keeps your signal level consistent in the most natural way and can thicken up the sound, adding extra punch and sustain. A limit/compress switch switches between light smoothing and a more intense squashy compression, dialled in by the peak reduction knob, while the gain knob sets the output level. Overall, you get smooth studio-style compression that's a pleasure to play through.

Both pedals have excellent silent switching with no thumps or pops, but the necessary circuitry does cause a momentary volume dip, which may require some careful synchronisation for those who

wish to kick them in for solos. However, seeing as these are the sort of tone-building pedals you'd keep on all the time, that may well be an irrelevance.

Verdict

A classy pair. Residing in the upper echelons of the stompbox hierarchy, Effectrode pedals cost a fair whack but if you are willing to spend over £200 on a pedal, we reckon that the price tag is justified – you're not only getting hand-built pedals, ruggedly put together for heavy road use, but you're also getting original valve-driven designs that aren't mere clones. [TC]

GUITARIST RATING

Effectrode	
Mercury Fuzz	★★★★★
Effectrode PC-2A	
Tube Compressor	★★★★★

Guitarist says: Quality valve-driven pedals that could become an essential part of your tone



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Mooer Reecho Pro & ShimVerb Pro £115 & £109

The Chinese pedal giant doubles up

CONTACT: Strings And Things **PHONE:** 01273 440442 **WEB:** www.mooeraudio.co.uk

Although best known for cheap and cheerful mini pedals loaded with familiar circuits, Mooer has been quietly beaver away on a series of larger, feature-heavy units. These twin-footswitch stereo stompboxes have been showcased at numerous trade shows, but the first pair to hit the UK are the Reecho Pro delay and ShimVerb Pro reverb, which boast a number of features that belie their reasonable price points.

The Reecho Pro is Mooer's answer to the likes of the Boss DD-20, offering six delay types (digital, analogue, echo, tape echo, tube echo and galaxy) and three effects (mod, dynamic and reverse), which can be assigned to any of the delay types. You also get a separate ping-pong button for use in stereo, low and high cut filters, plus a built-in looper.

As the name suggests, the ShimVerb Pro focuses on shimmer reverbs, where the 'verb trails are pitch-shifted to create a synth-like halo behind every note. It packs a choice of five intervals (+3, +4, +5, +7 and +9), which can be combined with any of the five reverb types (room, hall, church, plate and spring), while a separate button activates the octave-up shift.

The pitch-shifting is activated via a separate footswitch, and, like the Reecho Pro, you can save a preset by holding both switches together. Both pedals operate from a nine-volt power supply only, include stereo inputs and outputs, and offer a choice of true or buffered bypass using the trails switch.

Sounds

Not only does the Reecho Pro offer impressive emulations of classic delay effects, but also

incredible versatility; the ability to apply effects to any delay type, as well as filter the repeats, gives you a lot to toy with. There's no adjustment on the modulation, but its wash of chorus is well voiced, while the tape sounds compete capably with more expensive units. Galaxy, meanwhile, adds a volume swell to repeats, removing your pick attack for a string-type sound. However, the Reecho adds a slight hiss to your signal – a shame given the tonal integrity of the repeats.

The ShimVerb is more of an acquired taste. Its pitch-shifting isn't the most convincing we've heard from a reverb in this price bracket – DigiTech and Zoom do it better – but its versatility does afford some creative harmonies that you'll struggle to replicate on anything other than seriously high-end units. And while the non-shimmer

settings are perfectly usable, the reverb types don't sound too distinct from one another, with the decay length providing the only clear differentiator.

Verdict

With the Reecho Pro and ShimVerb Pro, Mooer has presented a pair of well-spec'd pedals packing some genuinely good ideas at an impressive price point. And while a couple of niggles prevent them from being essential additions to your 'board, these Pros prove that there's more to Mooer than mini pedals. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING

Mooer Reecho Pro ★★★★★
Mooer ShimVerb Pro ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A pair of feature-heavy, twin-footswitch boxes that don't quite deliver on sound, but are big on ideas



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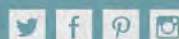
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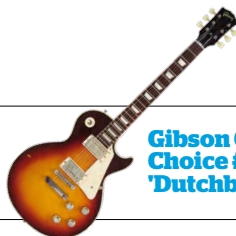
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Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports

Laney A1+

Rob Laing

NEW PRODUCT *Total Guitar's* content editor needs to make himself heard as his band evolves and strips right down



Firstly, a confession.

I'd always viewed acoustic combos with the same kind of disinterest as tumble dryers, bathroom tiles and oven cleaner. A 'need' rather than 'want' kind of affair. I'm still not particularly enthusiastic about the last three, but now I find my Tele taking an extended holiday in its case and I'm fronting a four-piece that has

evolved (or stripped back, perhaps) into a rootsier acoustic band. It's thrown up some distinct challenges, including where my sound sits with drums and a second guitarist who switches between six-string acoustic and – often overdriven – Weissenborn lap steel. Being heard and hearing myself have frequently become elusive luxuries in a cramped practice

room and local gigs as our frequencies collide. Messily.

Still, I've enthusiastically embraced this strange middle ground between driven 'rock' and a more organic tack. I've eagerly assembled an acoustic pedalboard and sourced a soundhole pickup for my – I admit unusual – main gigging acoustic (alongside a Sigma dreadnought with piezo), a

mahogany Taylor GS Mini. But a PA's lack of personal control and inconsistent monitoring for my sound is becoming a real drag. I need an amp to really take acoustic playing seriously and invest in my sound, rather than a halfway house in case I return to the electric world. Can a combo really solve my sound issues? I'm keen/fairly desperate to find out.

I'm also a cautious creature, and the timing of Laney's A1+ seems too good to be true. I'm some way off the budget for an AER and I'd resigned myself to a combo of massive compromise. The Laney seems to tick a lot of boxes: price, output (80 watts), input options, tone-shaping and anti-feedback controls, its wedge shape for monitoring... could my plan B really be an A1?



Laney A1+



First reviewed: 389

Price: £279

Type: Acoustic guitar
combo amplifier

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Guitarist's test products



**Gibson Memphis
1959 ES-330 VOS**
Jamie Dickson



**Larrivée OM-03
Silver Oak**
Dave Burrluck



**TC Electronic
Alter Ego X4**
Chris Vinnicombe

Gibson Memphis 1959 ES-330 VOS

Jamie Dickson

FINAL REPORT How will the hollowbody cope as part of a 24-piece ensemble?



It's gig time and it's an ambitious one. A friend, Jonny Velon, wants to stage his debut album launch in Bristol's capacious Trinity Centre (a former church), with a five-piece string section, four backing vocalists and a sarangi (I hadn't heard of one either). This setup is essentially feedback waiting to happen: a calamity prevented only by our unflappable sound engineer, Andy Bayliss, who had his work cut out with 24 musicians on stage.

Into this equation I, helpfully, introduced the ES-330 – a guitar innocent of a centre block – that sounds wonderful, but needs careful management in high-

volume environments to avoid squeals. But you know what? It was fine. Initially, I had planned to bring a solidbody guitar along for the songs that needed higher gain tones. But after several loud-ish dress rehearsals I was persuaded that I could get away with keeping things simple, playing the 330 throughout with an emergency Tele in the wings.

Some pedalboard tweaking was required to keep things tidy, however. Out went the Dyna Comp that I use as an 'always on' compressor with my Tele, as that tipped the 330 into helpless spasms of feedback every time. Also, I backed off the gain a little on the Providence Red Rock OD that I was using for the hottest

lead sounds during the set. A Marshall Bluesbreaker reissue was my amp for the gig and, together with the Providence and the 330, yielded a really fat-but-defined 70s lead tone that was a pleasure to dig into. Check out the Matchless Nighthawk demo (p18) to hear how the guitar excels in that territory.

The stickiest moments, in terms of feedback from the hollowbody, were on the quiet songs in which the neck pickup and clean amp tones were employed. Every instrument has a resonant frequency, and I found the 330's that night: every time I hit a B, a swell of feedback loomed – requiring me to reach across a pinky to

quell it fast with the volume control. But was that a serious problem? No, just something to manage. The experience of using the 330, in fact, feels a bit like driving a classic car. No, there isn't Sat Nav or traction control, but there's so much *character*. After all, would you rather be driving sedately down the road in a bland modern saloon – or a roaring down it in Austin-Healey 3000 convertible? Any puddles of oil left on the garage floor, metaphorically speaking, are all part of that charm.

If pushed, though, I would say that the 330 shines brightest in the studio. At lower volumes, the relative instability of the non-centre block design translates smoothly into extra texture and personality in the tone. And in the controlled conditions of studio-use, you can get away with using higher-gain drives, too.

But how much fun was it to gig this grand old (new) guitar? Loads. Flaws? Well, I was never bothered by the restricted access to upper frets, but some might be. I think a *slightly* short sustain might be the nearest I come to a reservation about this guitar – that and the price. But take the tone, charisma, performance and sheer musical inspiration of the 330 into account and it begins to look not affordable but certainly good-value as a long-term investment. I've had excellent fun and will genuinely miss this guitar when it goes.



© CHRIS DEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Gibson Memphis 1959 ES-330 VOS



First reviewed: 387

Price: £2,699

Type: Double-cut, thinline hollowbody electric

Body: Maple/poplar/maple laminate

Neck: Mahogany, glued-in

Electrics: 2x Gibson underwound Alnico II P-90

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This issue we discuss speaker mismatches, modelling amps, tarnished hardware and more. Questions, opinion and answers? Exactly that...

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!



We think the Yamaha THR10C is a great small modelling amp

Model choice

I'm looking for advice regarding a small modelling amp (which I very much have not been converted to yet!). I am a rock and blues fan/player (Clapton, Bonamassa, Warren Haynes, etc) and am selling off some gear for an amp that can give good distortion tones at very sensible volumes. I have two valve amps for band/gig situations, so am not worried about loud volume. I was thinking of buying a Yamaha THR10C, but a friend has thrown the Line 6 AMPLIFi into the equation. The Line 6 looks the obvious choice, as it does so much more for only a little more money, but I have never got on with the POD in any incarnation, perhaps just because I like simplicity and don't have the staying power to get the most out of these devices! I still like the look (and sound from demo

videos) of the Yamaha, but am now unsure which to go for. Can you advise which might best suit me for home use? Also, how does each take real pedals? I'm mainly thinking of a boost/drive pedal.

Mark Hewitson, via email

It's a fairly straightforward choice, Mark. If you just want to plug in and go with a couple of decent basic sounds, the Yamaha THR10C is a total no-brainer. We use them and love them for their simplicity, sound and convenient size.

The Line 6 AMPLIFi range also sounds very good, but will appeal more if you're of a mind to get in there and tweak to the nth degree via the excellent remote app editing options. It works with iOS (Apple) and many Android devices, and also works as a good Bluetooth stereo system – extremely

impressive. The AMPLIFi 75 is physically quite a lot bigger than the Yamaha THR Series as well, which may be an issue for you.

Either will take pedals with no problems, though clearly they won't react or sound the same as they do with your valve amps. The amps have so many sounds, you may not feel the need for extra pedals.

Loose threads

I have a Telecaster fitted with a Bigsby that has developed an annoying problem. The grub screws in the saddles are loose to the point where the action of the guitar goes down after playing! Do I need to use glue to stop them moving, or worse, coming out altogether and getting lost?

Steve Brown, via email

To begin with, make sure the two grub screws on each saddle



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!

What Should I Buy?

Semi-acoustic with humbuckers

Q After playing solidbody Fenders for years, I've been won over to the idea that a centre-blocked or hollow semi-acoustic with humbuckers is what I need to complete my gigging rig. I play blues and, more frequently these days, a little jazz and fusion, and I have up to £1,500 to spend. I'm not interested in famous brands to the exclusion of all others, but playability, tone and fundamental build quality are important. Classic looks would be nice, but I'm mainly interested in tone and functionality. Oh, and I need a vibrato, too – don't want much, do I?

James Dalton, via email

A The dream guitar here is a Gibson Memphis ES-335 with Bigsby, but we need to be more realistic with budget. There are Gibson Studio models, alongside some Asian-made guitars that will fit the bill. As you're coming from solidbodies, we'd recommend a centre-blocked guitar rather than a fully hollow instrument, as it will feel and react in a more familiar way. It also increases the vibrato options. £1,500 is an interesting price point. You're at the bottom end of USA and Japanese-made guitars, but way over mid-priced offerings from Schecter, ESP, Epiphone, Fender, Eastman et al.



2. Entry-level Gibson

The **2015 Gibson ES-335 Studio** (£1,199) has a maple, f-holed body, maple neck, torrefied maple fingerboard, just two master controls and a three-way selector. It's very basic, and you'd need to add a Bigsby or Stetsbar. The smaller-body **ES-339** variant is also worth a look, while the entry-level 'full' **ES-335** is the '**Satin 2015**' (£1,799).



3. The other big G

You might associate this brand with super twang, but the **Gretsch G5622T-CB** (£958) lives among its 'centre-block' models, that offer a different tonality and feel from the more traditional, hollow options. It has three dual-coil HiLo'Tron pickups and a Bigsby vibrato. This one rocks (and therefore blueses and jizzes) as well as it twangs!



1. Modded Value

The **Ibanez JSM10 John Scofield** model (£879) is superb value: nice flamed maple top, Ibanez Super 58 pickups, bound ebony fingerboard and extra coil switching options for the neck pickup. You'd have plenty of budget left for a professionally fitted Bigsby or Stetsbar, and top-notch pickups down the line.





are tensioned, Steve. After that, you could use Super Glue; it's brittle, so easy to break for readjusting when you need to, but its maker Loctite also produces a range of threadlocking compounds that are more suitable. It's also worth trying some normal clear nail polish.

You could also think about some newer, high-quality saddles that have a better tolerance fit. It sounds as though yours are either worn too far or, more likely, didn't fit brilliantly in the first place.

The final, high-risk strategy is to improve the tolerance fit between saddle and grub screw by changing/damaging the offending screw's threads by, ooh, hitting them with a hammer, perhaps. As we say, it's a VERY high-risk strategy and not really recommended unless you're handy with such things.

Take a weight off

The subject of guitar weight comes up regularly in *Guitarist*, and in the various forums I stumble on now and again. When I first took up the guitar many years ago I can remember thinking that guitars were good if they felt solid and heavy, but these days it seems that heavy guitars are 'bad'. Is this the case, or is there more to it? Your staff play a lot of guitars, so what are your general thoughts on the

merits of lighter and heavier guitars: what's your experience?
Ken Cromwell, via email

This is purely an opinion based on personal tastes, Ken, but most of us tend to prefer lighter guitars in general, albeit within the conventions of what we'd expect for a particular instrument and timber. Clearly, there's a point where a guitar can be objectively 'too heavy' or 'too light' from a practical/structural point of view. That outweighs all tone discussions.

The lighter guitars we choose as our personal instruments tend to be higher-end guitars, so also get the benefit of the best hardware and parts, super-thin finishes and all those other details that can set great guitars apart from good ones.

Specific examples would include Neville's various Telecasters and Les Pauls over the years; he reports that the lighter guitars tend to sound and feel more responsive with clean to medium-gain sounds, all of which starts to really matter with quality amps at a decent volume. Overly heavy examples tend to 'sap' some of the guitar's resonance and responsiveness, meaning they can sound more 'linear' and less 'alive' for the styles he plays.



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Mick says the same thing with Strats, 335s and his PRS DGT, having had the chance to select the latter from a number of possibles. It's not to say the heavier guitars sound worse, but they do sound different. Some people like that, others really don't. That said, it's no coincidence that Gibson and Fender, to name just two, select their optimum-weight timber for their high-end guitars.

If you get the chance, try some similar models that vary in weight – you'll be surprised how different they feel and sound.

Tarnish trouble

A couple of years ago, I bought a Gibson Custom 1958 Les Paul Standard that I love almost more than life itself. You have probably been asked this many times before, but I would like some advice about the metal parts, especially the pickups, that seem to be getting ever more tarnished as each month passes. I know that you lot at *Guitarist* love guitars with the "patina of age", as you always refer to it, but I don't. What can I do to stop them tarnishing any further, please?

Frank Willis, via email

You're right, Frank, we do love a bit of tarnish, and nickel – the material in which your pickup covers are plated – is perfect for that. We know plenty of PRS owners who have the same concerns. So what's happening is the nickel is tarnishing from

exposure to air, moisture and even your hands. Chrome and stainless steel don't tarnish in this way. You can use a tarnish remover or metal polish to get it shiny again – Autosol from Halfords comes recommended – but be aware that if you use something abrasive regularly, it will wear the plating away over time. If you really don't like it and can't be bothered with the polishing, you could investigate pickups and other hardware that use chrome, not nickel.

10 to 12?

I'm thinking of making my own speaker cabinet and was interested in learning if there was any problem with mixing 10-inch and 12-inch speakers in the same cab? I've always loved the crispness of 10s but the authority and warmth of the 12-inch speaker. I thought maybe I could have the best of both worlds! Failing that, can I mix different 12-inch speakers with different levels of efficiency for a similar effect? Is that possible without harming my amp, a Victory V30?

Robert Mason, via email

No problems in theory, Robert, especially when it comes to mixing two 12-inch speakers. Matchless has done this with its range-topping DC-30 for many years, mixing a Celestion G12H Anniversary and G12M Greenback. You just need to make sure the impedances match (or at least are wired to match the amp's output) and



Can an LP's volumes be totally independent? Not without compromises

that they're wired in phase with one another. It'll sound weak with inconsistent bass if you get them out of phase.

As for mixing a 12 and a 10, again no problems in theory; Gibson made cabinets and combos that did this. It's probably a good idea to make sure that the speakers aren't radically mismatched in terms of efficiency/sensitivity (measured in decibels), or power handling (measured in watts), but they don't have to be matched exactly. They need to be wired in phase with one another, and to a total load (impedance) that matches one of your amp's speaker outputs.

Gibsoff?

Why can't Gibson/PRS-style controls have volume controls for neck and bridge pickups that operate fully independently? I would like to have the volume control operate on the neck pickup, even if I have the bridge volume on zero, and vice versa: is it possible?

Gordon Boath, via email

Indeed it is, Gordon. Gibson's wiring conventions have changed in various ways over the years, but the vast majority of volume pots on two-pickup/four-control guitars are coupled. It means when the pickups are selected individually they work independently, but when the pickups are mixed in the middle

position, they interact so that turning either to zero will silence the whole guitar.

If you want to make the controls work independently, it's a mod to the wiring that involves swapping two wires: one from each volume pot, for which you can find many diagrams on the web. Don't confuse this with the '50s wiring' mod: you can have 'modern' or '50s' wiring with or without truly independent volume controls.

If you're confident with wiring, it might be worth hearing the differences for yourself. However, the majority of opinion (ours included) is that the tonal downsides of truly independent pots in a passive Gibson-style circuit far outweigh the practical benefits. That's to say the taper and reaction of the pots change significantly; the guitar will get very dark sounding as you turn the pots down, for a start.

All that said, why would you want either pickup all the way off, other than for a kill-switch on the three-way? You can still achieve that (position one or three is 'on', middle would be 'off'), while there are myriad other mixing options still available using the standard wiring, either in 'modern' or '50s' variants. If you want either pickup in isolation, select it. If you want them mixed, go for the middle: we're struggling to see what else you might want...



Tarnished off: Frank would prefer his hardware shiny

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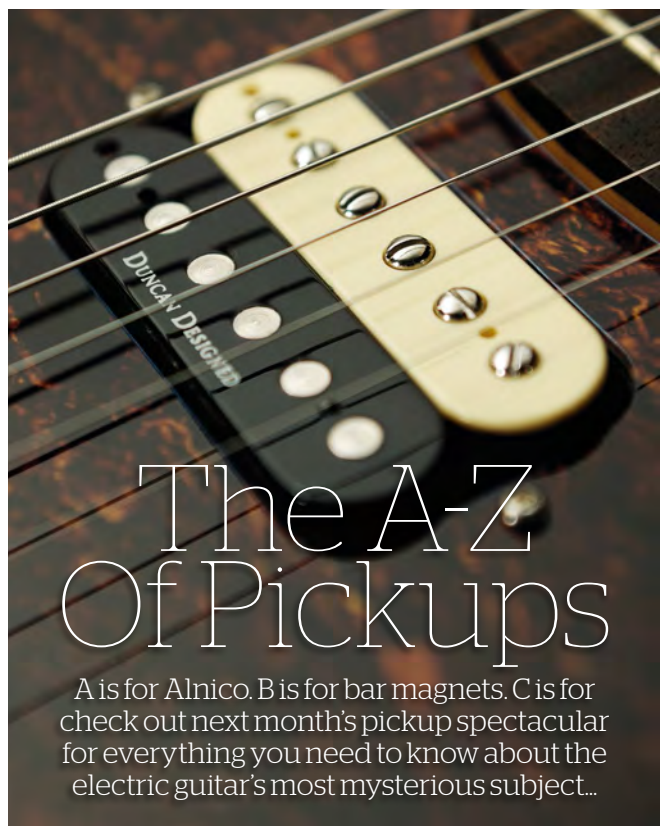
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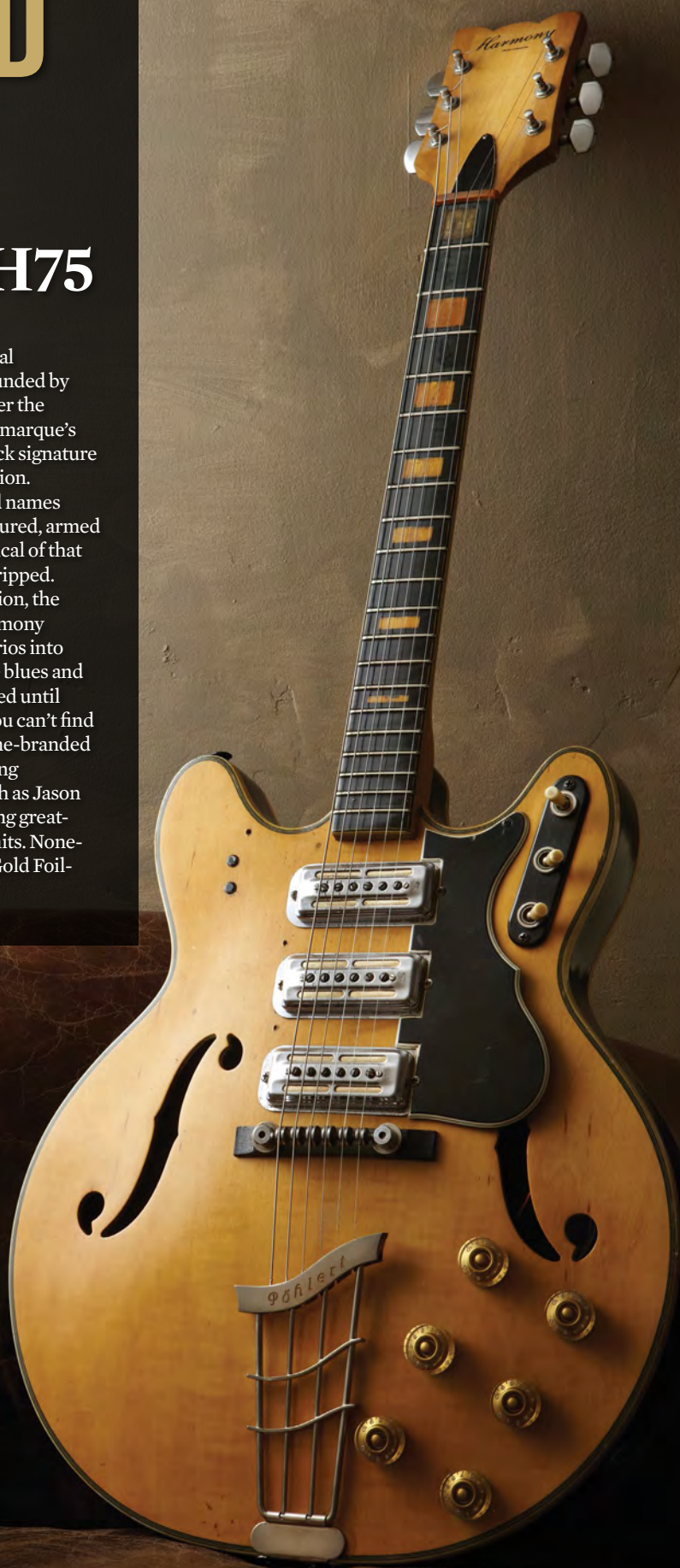
OLD GOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY NEIL GODWIN

1963 Harmony H75

At its peak, Harmony was the largest musical instrument manufacturer in the USA. Founded by Wilhelm Schultz in 1892, it was later, under the ownership of Sears, Roebuck & Company, that the marque's appeal mushroomed as it made hay from Roy Smeck signature models, despite the backdrop of the Great Depression. 350,000 Harmony instruments with various brand names were sold between 1964 and '65 and the guitar pictured, armed with a trio of DeArmond 'Gold Foil' pickups, is typical of that era, though its original Sunburst finish has been stripped.

Dan Auerbach's use of the Bigsby-equipped version, the H78, has played no small part in transforming Harmony guitars of the period from forgotten pawn shop curios into sought-after cult classics for those of a dirty garage blues and indie persuasion. This particular instrument resided until recently at Vintage & Rare Guitars in Bath, but if you can't find a vintage example there's always Eastwood's Airline-branded tribute model. Gold Foil single coils are also enjoying something of a renaissance, with pickup gurus such as Jason Lollar in the US and Mojo Pickups in the UK making great-sounding aftermarket replicas of vintage Teisco units. None-more-boutique Texan maker Collings even had a Gold Foil-loaded guitar on its stand at the NAMM show...



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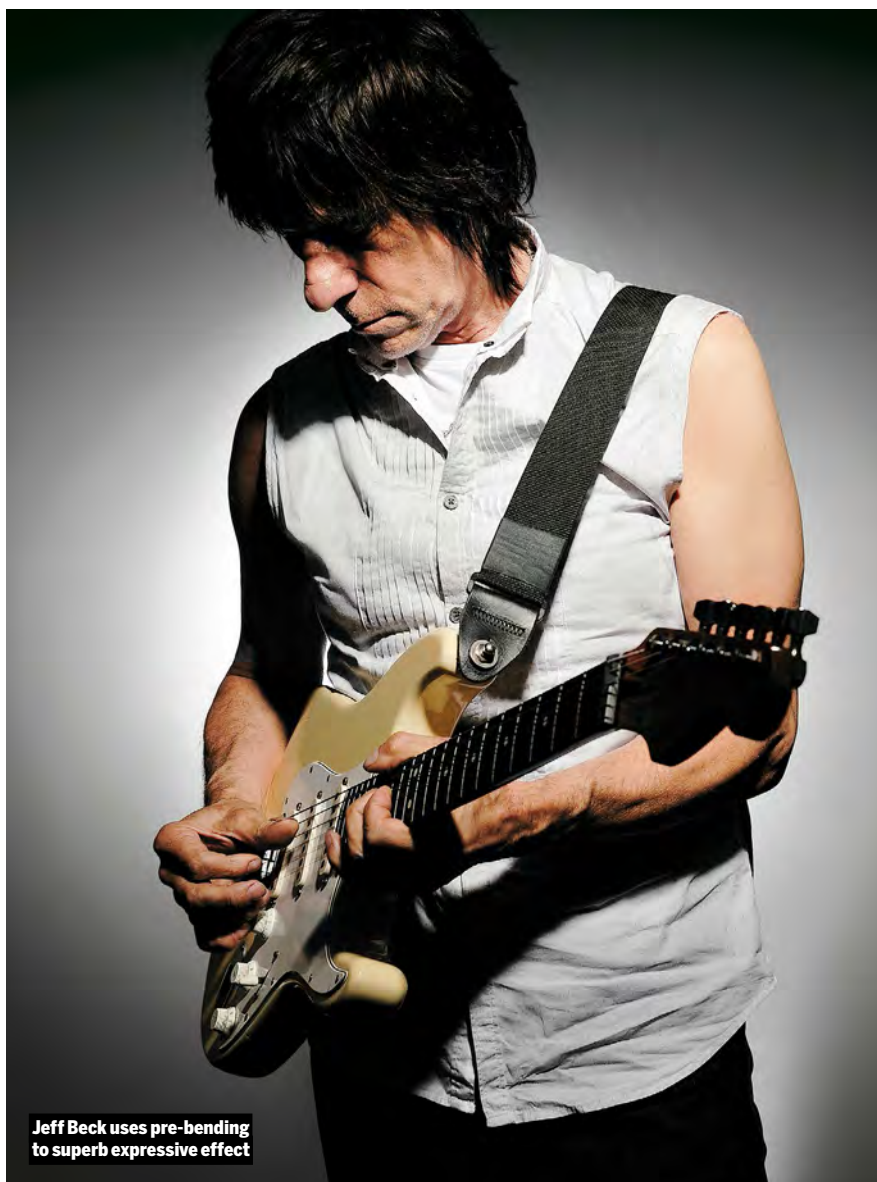
Tutor: Neville Marten | **Gear used:** Gibson CC #18 1960 Les Paul 'Dutchburst', Matchless Nighthawk

WHAT makes the guitar such a brilliant instrument to play and to listen to, and what instantly separates one player from the next, is its ability to play one note in so many different ways. Whereas a pianist is stuck with only velocity to express feelings of emotion, intensity or whatever, we guitarists have an almost limitless supply of techniques at our disposal. You can play a note straight, add finger or bar vibrato; slide into it from below or above (and by any amount of notes); dip it, gargle it, divebomb it, bend it up straight (by any number of different intervals), bend it up and add vibrato... and so on.

You can also manipulate notes on the guitar, using pre-bends. A pre-bend, as you surely know, is when you push the note up to its target pitch before sounding it. But even this seemingly simple device can be manipulated in a number of ways – bend, pick, leave straight; bend, pick, add vibrato; bend pick, let down; bend, pick, volume swell, vibrato; bend, pick, let down and repeat in quick succession; bend, pick, let down, bend back up...

So here are a few suggestions for using pre-bends in your own playing. Personally, I reckon the players that use pre-bends the most are often the most expressive – think of Albert King, Brian May, Gary Moore, Jimi Hendrix, David Gilmour, Jeff Beck, Larry Carlton; all use pre-bends to add an extra layer of personality and 'feel' to their phrases.

What I've done this month is improvise a solo using a variety of pre-bend ideas, then isolate four licks that I feel show an interesting use of the technique. Of course, there are dozens if not hundreds of other ways you can create great licks using pre-bends, and my hope is that my ideas will stimulate you to go off and find a few more of your own – and to recognise them in the playing of others, which is a great way to refine your ear-training skills.



Jeff Beck uses pre-bending to superb expressive effect

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Example 1

NO technique sounds great in isolation – it will tend to sound exactly like that: a technique. So here I've incorporated pre-bends with regular bends, which I think sounds more natural and hence more musical. Notice how cool the semitone bends sound at the front of each phrase and how naturally the regular bends blend in with these – one seems to accentuate the other.

Example 2

THIS is sort of similar, but we've moved from shape 1 to shape 4 minor pentatonic (with an added 9 in the first lick). This has two pre-bends and let-downs following directly behind each other, and then finishes with a first-finger pre-bend to the 4th let down to the 3rd (D to C). I accidentally catch a tiny bit of the bend up and I think it sounds rather cool – yet more permutations on the theme.

Example 3

MOVING up again to shape 1, but this time at the 15th fret, here's a country-style repetitive pre-bend and let-down sequence on the top two strings. But notice how the phrase ends with a regular-style tone bend from the 7th to the root (G to A).

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Example 4

OUR final bend is sometimes referred to as a 'mew' and for obvious reasons. It sounds somewhere between a strangled cat and a rampant herring gull and is the kind of phrase that works great towards the end of a Southern boogie track – think of The Allmans or Lynyrd Skynyrd and it's right in that ballpark. Don't over-use this one, though, or you'll outstay your musical welcome!

The musical notation for Example 4 consists of two staves, each with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff is divided into two measures. The first measure is labeled 'D5' and contains four eighth notes, each with a 'PB 15 BD' (Pre-Bend 15th fret, Bend Down) instruction. The second measure is labeled 'A5' and contains three eighth notes, each with a 'PB 15 BD' instruction, followed by a quarter note with a 'C' instruction. The second staff is divided into two measures. The first measure is labeled 'D5' and contains four eighth notes, each with a 'PB 15 BD' instruction. The second measure is labeled 'A5' and contains three eighth notes, each with a 'PB 15 BD' instruction, followed by a quarter note with a 'C' instruction. The fret numbers for the bends are: (17)-(15), (17)-(15), (17)-(15), (17)-(15) for the first measure of the first staff; (17)-(15), (17)-(15), (17)-(15), 13, 15 for the second measure of the first staff; 16-(15), 13, 15, 13, 14, (15)-(13), 14, 14, 12, 14 for the first measure of the second staff; and 12-14 for the second measure of the second staff.

Hear it here

Queen

A Night At The Opera

While no one would describe Queen as bluesy, Brian May's guitar playing when stripped of its rock surroundings, and notwithstanding its generally 'major' sound, is most definitely bluesy in feel. But check out *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Love Of My Life* to hear Brian's unsurpassed use of pre-bends. Notice how he selects where to use regular bends and pre-bends to gain maximum effect: that's the mark of a thinking guitarist!

Albert King

I'll Play The Blues For You

This King is the master of all types of string bends, and includes full bends (of all reachable intervals), pre-bends and the 'semi-pre-bend', where a small part of the bend does actually sound, but not from its starting point – perhaps 70 per cent of the bend is actually silent and 30 per cent is audible. Check out the magnificent solo in the title track, *I'll Play The Blues For You*, from this funky blues album to hear a giant at work, and to witness all of these bending styles.

Cream

Goodbye

I was running through my brain trying to bring to mind memorable pre-bends, and the lick that Clapton plays in *Badge* after the line "She didn't have time to wait in the queue" popped into my head: Eric pre-bends the second, then the third string (13th and 12th frets respectively) to great effect. Then, thinking about it further, he used pre-bends all over the place – check out the second note in the third phrase in *Sitting On Top Of The World* – it's a brilliant pre-bend and let-down, executed perfectly.

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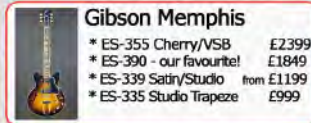


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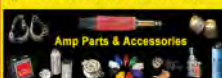
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A black and white photograph of a Blackstar Fly 3R guitar amplifier stack. The stack consists of a head unit on top and two 12-inch speaker cabinets below it. The head unit features a carrying handle, the Blackstar logo, and a control panel with various knobs and switches. The two speaker cabinets each have a large speaker grille and the Blackstar logo. The entire unit is shown against a plain white background.

£499

A black and white photograph of a Blackstar amplifier head. The front panel features the Blackstar logo in the center, a speaker grille on the right, and a row of control knobs and switches along the bottom. The text "100" is visible on the right side of the panel.

£899

A black and white photograph of a Blackstar amplifier. The amplifier is a rectangular, floor-standing unit with a black grille. The brand name "Blackstar" is printed in white on the grille. On the left side, there is a control panel with a volume knob and a power switch. The amplifier is shown from a three-quarter perspective.

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