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THE GUITAR MAGAZINE

ISSUE 394

Guitarist

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Interviews

RONNIE WOOD
NOEL GALLAGHER
JOHN SCOFIELD

SILKY SMOOTH SOUNDS!

GIBSON MEMPHIS
ES-335 & 339 SATIN SEMIS

reviewed
inside...



Clean TONE

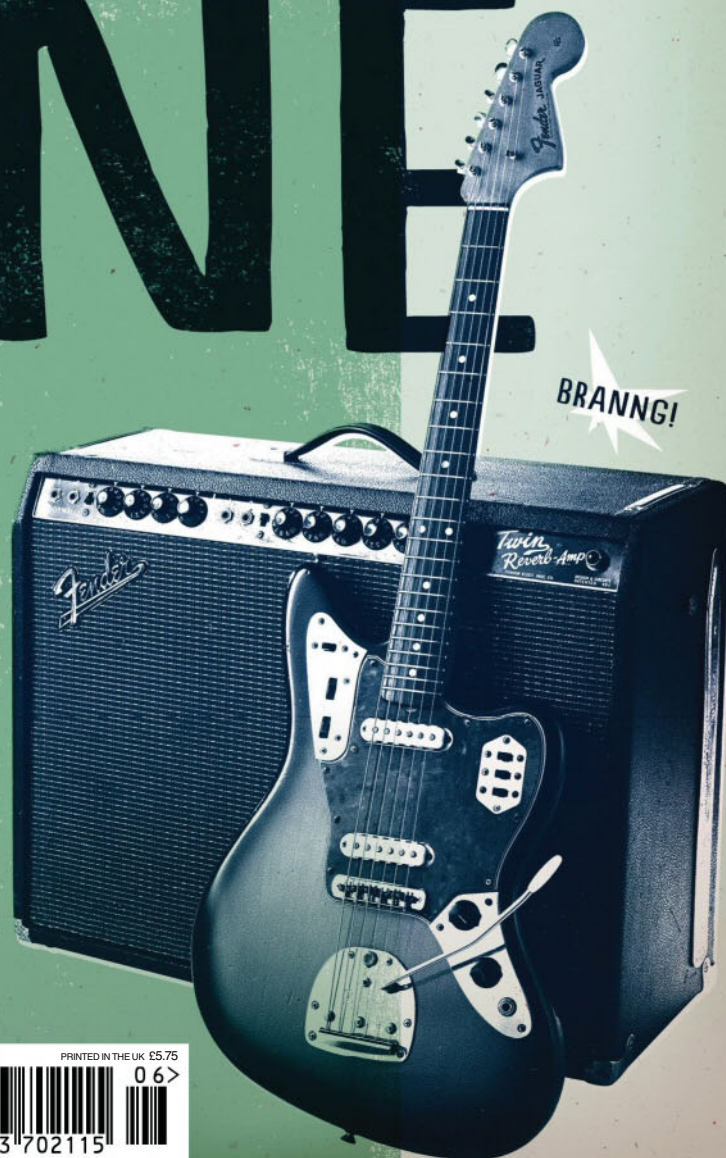
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A HANDMADE ORIGINAL

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Clean Getaway



Back in the 60s, players such as Clapton and Hendrix created, unwittingly, the cult of the modern guitar hero – in which it became an unwritten law that the ability to play a screaming solo, with your face screwed into a rictus of barely governed

emotion, was the highest virtue a guitarist could possess. While we'd never regret for a moment the sublime music that those superb musicians made, it's worth weighing up the power of the guitar to do other things than scream like a scalded angel. A shimmering clean chord, hanging on the air in a hushed room – with maybe just a touch of reverb or tremolo – is one of the most charismatic sounds you can create on any instrument. And memorable, too: think of the three-note melody in the *Twin Peaks* theme tune *Falling*, by Julee Cruise. So if you've never spent much time finding out how things are in the clean world, then, to paraphrase *Blazing Saddles*, why not give it a try? It might scrub up nicer than you thought. On a sadder note, we say goodbye this issue to content editor Chris Vinnicombe. We'll miss our resident Beatles boffin but wish him all the best for the future. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie

Jamie Dickson Editor

Behind The Scenes

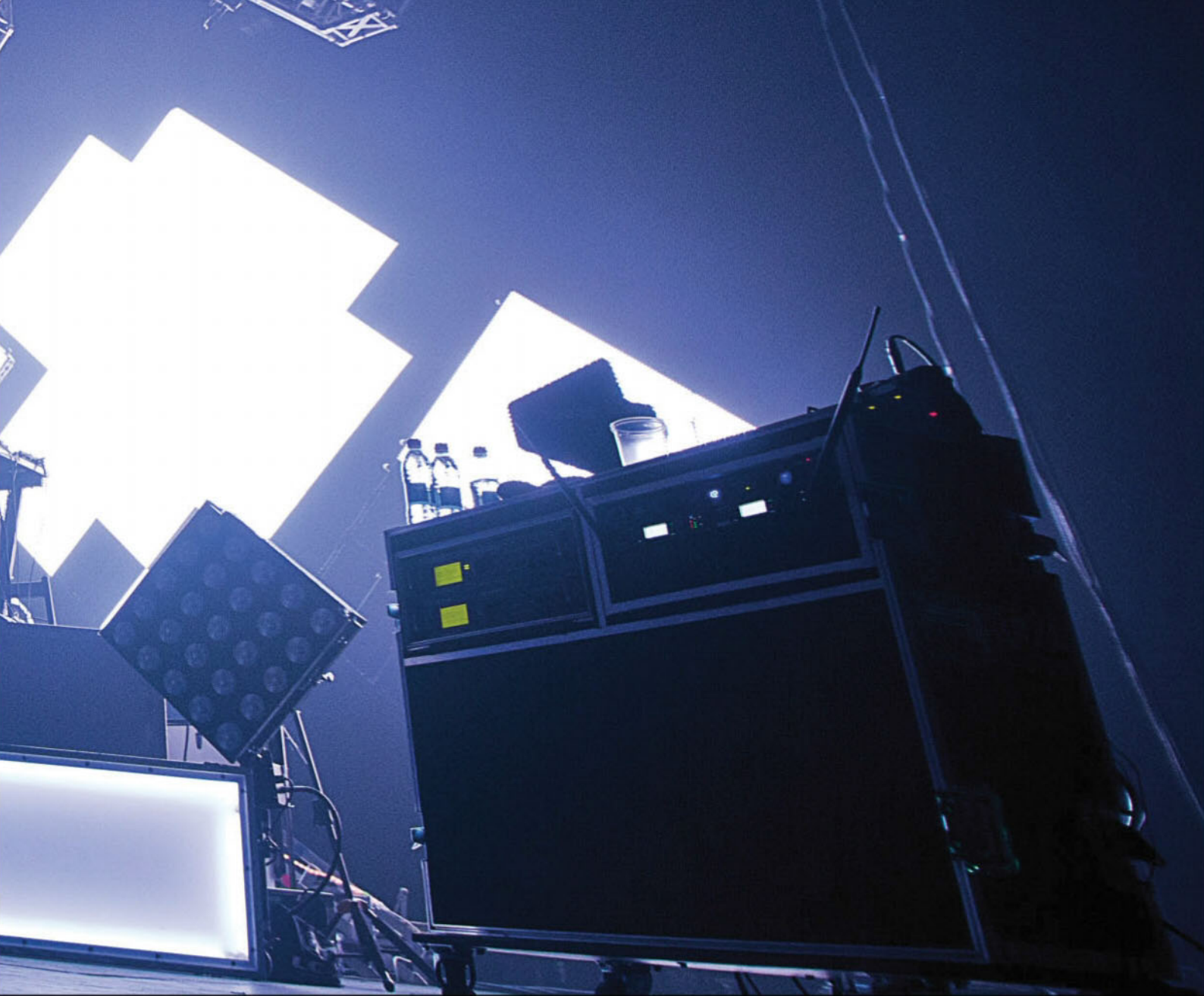
This month, we briefly wiped our brows after completing last issue's monster Pickups feature before skedaddling straight into the world of Clean Tone. Thank goodness we've had some refreshment in the form of some delightful Cornish ale, courtesy of Firebrand Brewing Co, which sent a package of its beers up the Atlantic Highway to our offices. We particularly like the Cross Pacific Pale Ale and Black Saison.





Zach Filkins from OneRepublic on stage with his Axe-Fx II rig.





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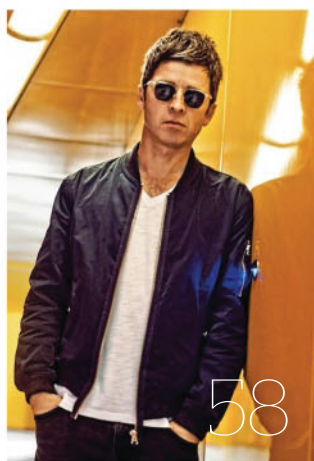
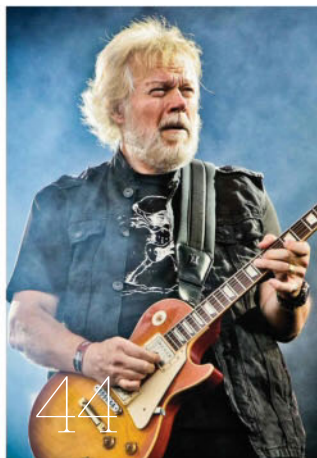


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Clean Tone

Ditch the dirt and give your playing a spring clean as we guide you through nigh-on a century of techniques and essential gear used by some of the greatest names in rock, blues, country and jazz guitar and show you how to introduce some sparkling clean tones to your repertoire.

.....

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How to watch

You can stream all of the video content for this issue from a YouTube playlist, accessible via the short web link below. Simply type it into the address bar of your PC, tablet or mobile device's web browser (typing the link into a search engine won't work) and watch it all from there. In the case of audio files, you'll find a separate direct download link on the page. And fear not, all back-issue Vault content remains available online at vault.guitarist.co.uk.

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FIRST ▶ PLAY



**GIBSON MEMPHIS ES-335
SATIN 2015**
£1,899

WHAT IS IT? The original semi gets a satin finish and some sensible contemporary upgrades



**GIBSON MEMPHIS ES-339
SATIN 2015**
£1,699

WHAT IS IT? A more compact take on Gibson's ultimate all-rounder

SOUTHERN BELLES

Gibson Memphis's 2015 models may have slipped under the radar, but this pair of Satin instruments deserve investigation

WORDS **CHRIS VINNICOMBE**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

While internet forums still smoulder in response to the sweeping changes that Gibson rolled out across its Nashville-made USA line for 2015, a couple of hundred miles west on the I-40, under the watchful eye of Mike Voltz, Gibson's Memphis facility continues its own, quieter evolution. Home of the thinline semi-acoustic and hollowbody instruments that will always rank among the company's most desirable electrics, the Gibson Memphis factory has a number of new



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>

Gibson Memphis 2015 ES-335 Satin & ES-339 Satin **FIRST ▶ PLAY**





1

launches for 2015, including this fine pair of satin-finished semis, which take their styling cues from the block-inlay ES-335 introduced in mid-1962 but incorporate a range of upgrades with the modern player in mind.

You'll find no zero fret brass nuts or faux-handwritten headstock logos here. Although Gibson Memphis has equipped these instruments with an f-hole logo'd truss rod cover for the 2015 model year – a logo that doesn't appear on more period-specific vintage reissues – it's a subtle motif that's barely visible from a distance. This trend continues throughout a range of thoughtful updates, starting at the bridge. The traditional Gibson Tune-o-matic bridge and stud tailpiece arrangement has always been worryingly mobile when not held under tension during string changes, so the decision to replace this with a locking tailpiece and TonePros AVR-II bridge gets our vote.

Not only do the new parts look vintage-authentic enough from afar to appease traditionalists, aside from the practical benefits of having your optimal setup locked down (less rattle, less tweaking required after string changes), there's also more travel on the AVR-II's saddles, allowing for more adjustment range should you need it. Towards the other end of the strings, a bone nut offers improved



1. A little more meat has been added to both models through the headstock transition behind the nut in order to improve general stability and make accidental beheadings less likely
2. Both models share Burstbucker 1 neck humbuckers with unmatched bobbin windings for more of a vintage PAF-style high-end response
3. Through the f-hole, each instrument's maple centre-block sports a 'window' – a feature that was gradually introduced in the first half of the 1960s in order to make the wiring easier during manufacture





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The temptation to give these guitars the T-Cut treatment for more of a vintage-style VOS look would be entirely in keeping with the early-60s aesthetic

durability over synthetic options and some will even profess to hear tonal differences, too. It's certainly true that both guitars here exhibit less of the almost banjo-like 'plunkiness' that characterises the acoustic tonality of even the finest vintage ES-335s.

Other shared specification updates include new, old-style Grover 'Milk Bottle' Rotomatic tuners, lightly-rolled neck binding, lower-profile frets, a Historic truss rod that boasts "superior adjustability" thanks to its Teflon coating, larger rod diameter, original brass anchor and larger washer, and a thicker peghead transition, which should be both more stable and provide more resistance to the dreaded headstock break.

Both instruments are finished in a satin cherry-coloured lacquer – the official spec describes the ES-335's finish as 'Faded Cherry' and the ES-339's as 'Cherry', but there's not a great deal of difference – which is visually very one-dimensional, to the extent that the tops of the guitars almost appear to be flat rather than arched. Though the finish will burnish in certain contact areas over time, the temptation to give these guitars the T-Cut treatment in order to give them more of a vintage-style VOS look is considerable, and it would be entirely in keeping with the early-60s aesthetic.

The ES-339's output jack is located in a position that will be more familiar to Les Paul players but electronically, both guitars are otherwise identical. Gibson has opted for medium-output Burstbucker 1 (neck) and Burstbucker 2 (bridge) pickups with Alnico II magnets and unmatched bobbin windings in pursuit of the high-end detail offered by the better vintage PAF humbuckers. In addition, while a fairly standard 0.022uF capacitor is retained for the bridge pickup, the neck pickup's tone control uses a 0.015uF that, in theory, should mean slightly less of the highs are cut as the control is reduced. Mind you, the +/- 20 per cent tolerance rating of the 500k CTS pots means that any of the pots could be between 400 and 600k in practice, which could certainly have tonal consequences: one guitar may sound noticeably brighter or darker than the next so, as ever, we'd always suggest playing a bunch of these guitars in the flesh and buying the one that you like the best.

Feel & Sounds

The ES-335's mid-1962 to '63 aesthetic is mirrored by an easy-playing Slim Taper neck profile that's not as skinny as any of the real '61s we've played nor as meaty as was typical in 1964 to '65, while the ES-339 has a slightly more rounded neck shape that's 0.76mm



4

4. The Burstbucker 2 bridge pickups are built similarly with Alnico II magnets and mismatched windings, but are rated at 7.98k rather than 7.64kilo-ohms

5. Block fingerboard inlays superseded dot markers on ES-335s midway through 1962

deeper at the 1st and 12th frets. In both instances, the effect of the light rolling to the fingerboard edges is subtle but pleasing, helping each guitar have a comfortable familiarity that allows you to concentrate on the important matter at hand: making music. The fretwork and binding on both guitars is neat and smooth – it's not laser-precise and there are a few stray file marks on the higher reaches of the fingerboards, but there's no aspect of either guitar's finishing that would deter us from parting with our readies.

'57 Classics were long the pickup of choice on modern Gibson semis, and while they are by no means bad-sounding units, we're much more impressed by the Burstbuckers here; in general, there's much more air and clarity in the treble frequencies, which translates into the most expressive, musical-sounding cleans we've heard from new humbucker-loaded Gibson thinlines outside of the ranks of the Historic models. The capacitor changes may seem subtle but we definitely hear a more svelte and less syrupy 'woman' tone when you roll either tone control back and add gain, too. In a direct A/B comparison, the results are almost exactly as we'd expect: the ES-339's smaller proportions make it a little more direct, perhaps a touch louder and certainly punchier in the midrange; it's a step closer to





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a Les Paul compared with the airier, slightly more scooped voice of the ES-335.

Verdict

This writer has always found the proportions, strapped-on balance and upper-fret access of an ES-335 to be just about perfect, but we concede that there are many players – either due to physical stature or a greater familiarity with more compact solidbody designs – for whom wielding a big semi is a daunting proposition. It's certainly true that the more delicately proportioned ES-339 attracted more attention than its bigger sibling during its stay in the *Guitarist* office and with good reason – it's a very good guitar indeed.

If we acknowledge that it's not the size of your semi that counts, it's what you do with it, ahem, then the bottom line is that there isn't a lot that you can't do with either instrument here. Both are sensitively updated, excellent-sounding and highly playable takes on one of the most versatile electric guitar designs ever conceived, providing further proof that while the activity in Gibson's Nashville factory continues to dominate the headlines, the Memphis arm of the company is carrying on quietly with the business of making wonderful electric guitars for touring professionals and discerning amateurs alike. **G**



Gibson Memphis ES-335 Satin 2015

PRICE: £1,899
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Semi-acoustic, double-cutaway electric guitar
BODY: Maple/poplar/maple laminate top, back and sides with maple centre-block
NECK: Mahogany, set
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm/24.75"
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, block pearloid inlays
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Nickel TonePros AVR2 bridge, locking stopbar tailpiece, Grover Milk Bottle Rotomatic tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50mm
ELECTRICS: Nickel-plated covered Burstbucker I (neck) & II (bridge), 2x volume, 2x tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 8.2/3.7
RANGE OPTIONS: Gibson ES-335 Studio 2015 (£1,299), ES-335 Gloss 2015 (£2,299)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Faded Cherry (as reviewed)
Gibson
www.gibson.com



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

Guitarist says: At this price, we'd ignore the gloss version – it's simply a killer-sounding contemporary ES-335 with classic looks



Gibson Memphis ES-339 Satin 2015

PRICE: £1,699
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Semi-acoustic, double-cutaway electric guitar
BODY: Maple/poplar/maple laminate top, back and sides with maple centre-block
NECK: Mahogany, set
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm/24.75"
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, block pearloid inlays
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Nickel TonePros AVR2 bridge, locking stopbar tailpiece, Grover Milk Bottle Rotomatic tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50mm
ELECTRICS: Nickel-plated covered Burstbucker I (neck) & II (bridge), 2x volume, 2x tone, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 7.5/3.4
RANGE OPTIONS: Gibson ES-339 Studio 2015 (£1,299), ES-339 Gloss 2015 (£1,999)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Cherry (as reviewed), Ebony



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

Guitarist says: Compact dimensions with classic tones and styling; if you want the ES-335 experience in a smaller package, then this is it

FIRST ▶ PLAY



**ORANGE ROCKERVERB 100
MKIII HEAD**
£1,499

WHAT IS IT? Heavy-duty 100-watt head with classic British tone in spades



**ORANGE ROCKERVERB 50
MKIII COMBO**
£1,699

WHAT IS IT? Substantial 2x12 unit that's the only combo in the new MKIII range





<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



POWER OF THREE

The third generation of Orange's pro-aimed Rockerverb range is here. Are you worthy?

WORDS **NICK GUPPY**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NEIL GODWIN**

Making its debut at this year's Frankfurt Musikmesse, Orange's new Rockerverb MKIII range builds on its popular two-channel format, adding some significant improvements to the package. The new range includes 50- and 100-watt heads and a 50-watt 2x12 combo, all of which are built in traditional Orange fashion with heavyweight cabinets and enamelled steel control panels, printed with Orange's distinctive graphic symbols.

One immediately noticeable change is the front panel, which is 'pics only', like the classic 'graphic' amps of the early 1970s. This means a modicum of thought may be needed to understand the controls if you don't read the manual first. We like the cleaner, text-free look.

Under the skin there are more significant changes, including a redesigned 'chimier' clean channel with more headroom, and a reworked valve-powered spring reverb. We also get the same footswitchable attenuator found on the Thunderverb and Dual Dark amps. The classic ply picture frame cabinets are neatly covered, too, and feature contrasting black string detail and corner protectors. The combo's control panel is modified with smaller chrome handles, and the panel graphics are flipped so they can be read from in front.

Both amps have a heavy duty steel chassis with welded corners, supporting a pair of huge transformers that make up a significant chunk of the weight. Talking of which, both amps are seriously heavy: the head weighs more than many combos, and if the point of a combo is to be portable, the Rockerverb stretches things somewhat, with a kerb weight of 40kgs – definitely a two-man lift for most. A pair of



1 Behind the graphic symbols is a straightforward two-channel amp with great tone and cool features

2 The Rockerverb's footswitchable attenuator continuously varies down the pre-set output power all the way to zero

3 Channel selection, reverb and the attenuator can all be operated from footswitches, or controlled round the front

4 The basket-weave speaker grille is part of the classic Orange style, and some players believe it slightly softens high frequencies

heavy-duty grab handles makes it easier, although the head should have them, too.

Inside, the electronics are mostly contained on one large printed circuit board, including the front panel controls and valve bases. A smaller board holds the rear panel sockets. The layout and soldering is well up to Orange's usual high standard and the wiring has been neatly routed and terminated. A very tidy job.

The Rockerverbs are proper two-channel designs with volume, bass and treble controls for the clean channel; and gain, bass, mid and treble, together with a master volume, for the lead channel. All the knobs have stepped detents with 20 clicks between full on and full off – a neat way to help repeat that great tone from last night's gig, while hopefully preventing the panels from being covered in marker pen or stickers!

There are global controls for the valve-powered reverb and footswitchable attenuator next to a bank of toggle switches that handle mains, standby and channel switching. The standby switch selects full or half power with a four-valve/two-valve switch on the 100-watt head's rear panel roughly halving these outputs again if needed. A trio of speaker outlets, a pair of send/returns for the fixed level series effects loop and three footswitch jacks complete the rear panel layout.

The toggle switches don't have the satisfying, industrial 'clunk' of the old AD series, but still feel very solid and dependable. Overall, the new Rockerverb range exudes power, reliability and cool, boxed up in a unique package that hasn't lost any of its hip visual appeal since being introduced way back in the late 1960s.





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Feel & Sounds

Both amps are essentially the same with small differences in headroom. The combo is an open-back design loaded with a pair of Celestion Vintage 30 loudspeakers, while the head is designed to work with Orange's PPC range of cabinets, although it's quite tolerant of different loudspeaker types.

While the Rockerverbs sound great with single coils, both amps come alive when

combined with the throatier punch of a good humbucker. The extra warmth and zing of the clean channel is very noticeable – a real improvement over the slightly sterile clean sounds of earlier models. By using the power switches and attenuator (which incidentally works backwards, turning down the volume as you rotate clockwise), you can dial in a really sweet overdriven edge that time warps straight back to the heady days of the 70s.

While the Rockerverbs sound great with single coils, they both come alive when combined with a good humbucker





The lead channel covers a huge spectrum of overdrive, from blues to classic rock and modern metal, with plenty of low-end punch to flatter down-tuned or baritone instruments, and a hint of fuzz that evokes the brand's 1960s origins. This is very refined British guitar tone, with a sweet treble, powerful midrange and tight bass that flatters lead lines as well as chords. Both amps are loud – very loud, in fact – but easily tamed using the power switches and attenuator, blending in real power stage distortion to devastating effect, while the EQ controls on both channels work smoothly and predictably. The stepped detents on all the controls make recalling settings a doddle, and the new reverb circuit sounds impressive with a smooth warm decay and practically no noise.

Verdict

There's no doubt that the extra refinements on these new Rockerverbs have been worthwhile: the amps sound great and should continue to do so for many years. As you might guess from the price and weight, they are aimed primarily at pros and dedicated, muscle-bound amateurs. The weight may well put off casual gigging players who value portability (and their back), but these are roadworthy rock tools, while the new attenuator makes it easy to create stunning tone at any volume level, too, from very authentic early 70s classic rock on the redesigned clean channel, to modern metal.

You're also paying for a UK-made product that's second to none when it comes to build quality and reliability; all in, that represents very good value for money. If you want a commanding, flexible rock amp, but you don't want to spend ages fiddling with presets and parameters, few amps match up to these new Rockerverb MKIIIs. **G**



Orange Rockerverb 100 MKIII Head

PRICE: £1,499

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp

OUTPUT: 100 watts RMS, switchable to 70, 50 and 30 watts

VALVES: 4x 12AX7, 2x 12AT7, 4x EL34

DIMENSIONS: 270 (h) x 550 (w) x 280mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 25/55

CABINET: Ply

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Clean: volume, bass, treble. Lead: gain, bass, mid, treble, master volume. Global reverb level and attenuator level

FOOTSWITCH: Not supplied – separate footswitch sockets for channel, reverb and attenuator

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Footswitchable attenuator, half power (4/2 valves) and pentode/triode switching, series effects loop

OPTIONS: Also available in black

RANGE OPTIONS: The new MKIII range also includes a 50W head (£1,399). The PPC412 matching cabinet costs £739; a PPC212 is £549

Orange Amplification

0208 905 2828

www.orangeamps.com



Orange Rockerverb 50 MKIII 2x12 combo

PRICE: £1,699

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-valve preamp and power amp

OUTPUT: 50 watts RMS, switchable to 25 watts

VALVES: 4x 12AX7, 2x 12AT7, 2x EL34

DIMENSIONS: 530 (h) x 660 (w) x 300mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 40/88

CABINET: Ply

LOUDSPEAKERS: 2x Celestion

Vintage 30 12"

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Clean: volume, bass, treble. Lead: gain, bass, mid, treble, master volume. Global reverb level and attenuator level

FOOTSWITCH: Not supplied – separate footswitch sockets for channel, reverb and attenuator

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Footswitchable attenuator, half power (pentode/triode) switching, series effects loop

OPTIONS: Also available in black

RANGE OPTIONS: See Rockerverb 100 MKIII head

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A loud, versatile head that easily swaps from classic rock and blues tones to modern rock and metal

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A loud combo that weighs a ton, but provides a huge range of great British tones in a reasonably compact package

Background image: Jakko Jakszyk (King Crimson). Photo: Jordan McLachlan



Progressive Thinking

Designed for outstanding versatility, the PRS 'P Series' guitars combine the tone of PRS's legendary 57/08 and new 85/15 humbuckers with the acoustic response of the LR Baggs/PRS piezo system.

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FIRST ▶ PLAY



VIGIER GV ROCK

£2,169

WHAT IS IT? A high quality, innovative single-cut solidbody from the French luthier

VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>

VELVET REVOLUTION

Vigier's GV Rock is a sharp-edged, slick-playing rocker that might just tempt some classic single-cut players to defect

WORDS **DARRAN CHARLES**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NEIL GODWIN**

Vigier's take on the single-cut design was introduced to the world back in 2009 in the form of the GV Wood. Named in honour of Patrice Vigier's late father, Georges, the GV range has since been extended to include the GV Rock and GV Metal, both with different appointments that reflect those respective musical styles. For 2015, there are some eye-popping new colours, too, for the GV Rock: Revolution Green Matte, Yellow Matte, Red Matte and the Revolution Black Matte here – all with attractive natural edge 'binding'.

Vigier refuses to toe the line with fashion or convention: a '59 LP replica this isn't. First off, the body wood is alder (with a trim 51mm centre depth that thins out to 38mm at the rim) and an overall weight of 3.8kg – a lot lighter than many of the single-cuts we've played recently from Nashville. Flip the guitar over and you'll see a bolt-on (not set) neck. It has nothing do to with keeping down manufacturing costs, either – Patrice Vigier







simply believes there are no sonic benefits to a neck-thru or set-neck.

All Vigier guitars feature the patented 10/90 Neck System: 10 per cent carbon fibre, in the form of a central spine, and 90 per cent maple. The carbon fibre reinforcement does away with the need for an adjustable truss rod. We've written about this system in the past, but it can be best underlined thusly: imagine a guitar that no matter what the weather conditions, no matter how far you've travelled, still feels *exactly* the same *every* time? No-one is suggesting that truss rods are a thing of the past, but at the very least Vigier has theoretically created the ultimate travelling guitar for a globe-trotting musician.

Another difference is the scale length, which at 630mm (24.8 inches) is slightly longer than Gibson's actual scale length of 624mm (24.6 inches), while the un-inlaid rosewood 'board sports stainless steel frets. Another Vigier-ism – and one that's often a divisive issue among guitarists – is the zero fret. One downside that both proponents and detractors can agree on is that you might have to replace the entire zero fret if string wear leaves an indentation. To counter this, Vigier's new 'ZeroFret-S' design gives each string its own fret segment, so you only have to replace one piece of it at a time – a reduction in both replacement time and cost.

Feel & Sounds

Many a wonderful guitar neck has been cradled here at *Guitarist*, but we have to say that this one is very special. Described as a 'D' shape, it feels more like a portly 'C', and is ludicrously comfortable; rarely does a neck feel so supportive of your fretting hand. We sometimes don't appreciate just how much support your first finger needs from the underside of the neck. For Vigier to create a profile that provides the necessary leverage for easy bending, but isn't so thick that it encroaches on the posture required for more technical playing, is a real achievement.

Straight out of the case the guitar requires no setup tweaks and is armed with a low action that, despite perhaps being a little low for some tastes, still lets you dig in. Again, the neck proves a comfortable platform for any style you wish to throw at it and, coupled with the ultra-smooth stainless steel frets, enables an effortless journey up and down the fingerboard, allowing you to switch from rhythm to lead with ease.

In choosing pickups for the GV series, Vigier blind-tested more than 60 from a vast array of companies. These Amber humbuckers were chosen, and the bridge pickup has a very punchy, bright character that at first is a little disconcerting when you look down at the

1 A bolt-on neck is an unusual appointment on this body shape, but designer Patrice Vigier claims his bolt-ons provide as much sustain as a neck-through

2 Also new for 2015 is Vigier's new 'ZeroFret-S'. No longer does the entire fret need to be replaced following string wear; replace it segment by segment as necessary

3 Three-a-side Schaller locking tuners adorn the headstock, which has itself received a makeover in 2015, now emblazoned with a shiny embossed metal 'V'

4 A five-way lever switch offers versatility and the middle positions offer some great Strat-like sounds



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



4

single-cut-style body. Through a Marshall JVM410 it certainly underlines its rock credentials: loud and resonant, offering tone chock-full of character and one that will have no trouble cutting through the mix of a very loud band. Positions two, three and four on the five-way selector offer some realistic Strat-like tones not normally associated with this shape. Indeed, no doubt in part due to the sonic qualities of the alder body, some very authentic Nile Rodgers-style funk can be coaxed – it's certainly more than just a rock guitar.

Verdict

If you're looking for that traditional Les Paul tone, the GV may be a little too bright. But the ethos of Vigier is about innovation rather than emulation and the GV Rock is clearly not intended as an other-brand alternative to a Les Paul. Instead, it's a very serious rock guitar in its own right... and then some! With a to-die-for neck, and one that plays the same day after day, night after night, it's beautifully made with plenty of sounds on tap. Let's be honest, isn't that the type of guitar we serious guitarists all claim we're looking for? **G**

Guitarist would like to thank Wildwire Music And Audio (01757 701996) for its kind loan of this guitar for review

No doubt in part due to the sonic qualities of the alder body, some very authentic Nile Rodgers-style funk can be coaxed from the GV – it's certainly more than just a rock guitar



Vigier GV Rock

PRICE: £2,169 (inc case)

ORIGIN: France

TYPE: Single-cut, solidbody electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple/carbon 10/90 System

(10% carbon, 90% wood), bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 630mm (24.8")

NUT/WIDTH: Teflon w/zero fret/41.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 300mm (11.81") radius

FRETS: 22, plus zero fret, medium stainless steel

HARDWARE: Vigier hardtail bridge, Schaller M6-2000 locking tuners – all chrome-plated

ELECTRICS: 2x Amber Custom humbucker, five-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume and tone

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.8/8.3

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The GV range includes the Wood, Wood P90 and Metal. Check prices with distributor

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Revolution Red Matte, Green Matte, Yellow Matte, Black Matte

High Tech Distribution UK

01722 410002

www.vigierguitars.com



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: A versatile rock guitar that sports one of the most playable necks out there

HANDMADE
AMERICAN
LEGENDS



THE
J-29

Play one today at your Gibson
dealer and experience the
next American Legend.

Gibson
Acoustic

Frontend

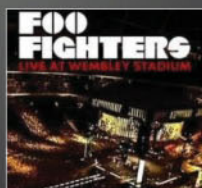
Don't miss it! Must-see guitar goings-on for the coming weeks...



The North West Guitar Show

17 May, Merseyside

Now in its 18th year, this day-long celebration of the guitar is in fine fettle. Running from 10am until 4pm on Sunday 17 May at the Haydock Park Racecourse Exhibition Centre in Merseyside, this year's event will be set across four exhibition halls and will also feature a dedicated 500-seat live music theatre with a great line-up, which includes Rodney Branigan, John Verity and the Paul Bielatowicz Band. There will be dozens of dealers and exhibitors, workshops and demos, plus the opportunity to trade and buy new, vintage and second-hand guitars, amps and effects. Attendees last year were treated to the surprise unveiling of not one, but three historic '59 Les Paul Bursts! Admission is £7, and is free for accompanied under-12s – see www.guitarshows.co.uk for info.



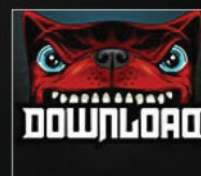
Foo Fighters At Wembley
19-20 June, Wembley Stadium, London
Tickets are still available for the return of evergreen stadium-rock poster boys, Foo Fighters, who will play London's Wembley Stadium on 19 and 20 June. Support is from Iggy Pop and Royal Blood. See foofighters.com for info.

Larry Carlton Tour
16-20 June, various UK venues
Lovers of tasteful tone and technique rejoice – the legendary Mr 335 is back in the UK, to jazz up the summer with his inimitable smooth grooves. Catch him in Birmingham, Cardiff, Milton Keynes, London and Darvel. See larrycarlton.com.



A Date With Grissom
3 May, Darvel Music Festival, Ayrshire
May sees a rare show on these shores from US fretsmith, David Grissom. Catch the talented session player and sideman at the Darvel Music Festival, with support from Sean Taylor. Visit www.davidgrissom.com for further info.

Download 2015
12-14 June, Donington Park, Derby
Headliners Slipknot, Muse and KISS are joined by a demonic host of talent including Slash, Mötley Crüe, Lamb Of God, Black Stone Cherry and many others at the UK's top rock festival. Day tickets and full weekend passes are on sale now at www.download.com.





Guitarist readers enjoy a trip to Guitars: The Museum in Sweden

Guitar Heaven

Readers who visited Guitars – The Museum in Umeå, Sweden as part of *Guitarist's* recent all-inclusive weekend trip share their experiences

As regular readers will recall from our features, Guitars – The Museum in the Swedish town of Umeå houses one of the finest and most extensive collections of to-die-for instruments in the world. *Guitarist* recently offered readers a special all-inclusive weekend break to explore the collection of over 500 extremely rare vintage guitars. The museum's owners, Samuel and Mikael Åhdén, were on hand to take the party on a guided tour, and gave presentations on rare guitars such as the collection of 30-plus B-bender-equipped electrics (and even one acoustic with a B-bender). Here's just some of what the group had to say about their unforgettable experience...

"I came with an open mind, and it's totally exceeded my expectations on every level," said attendee Barry Waples. "And the museum has so much eye candy – too much to take in in a few days – and it was a great bunch of blokes to be with. My favourite guitar was the 1960 Les Paul Standard, closely followed by the Flying Vs – the unobtainable stuff, basically!"

Jules Carter, a busy, gigging jazz-rock guitarist on the Brit club and festival scene, tackled the tricky question of which guitar from the dizzying collection he'd choose, given the chance: "The best thing about the museum for me was just the sheer diversity and scale of it. So many wonderful pieces in one

collection. It's just great to be able to walk from one room full of fantastic guitars into another room full of equally fantastic guitars. You'd spend a lifetime trying to see that many guitars up close. Putting value aside, if I could take one home it would be the '59 Jazzmaster – mainly because I played one last week exactly like it and I've now got a bee in my bonnet about getting one!"

The group was treated to lavish meals and wine in the museum's restaurant, and live music from top-notch Swedish acts in the Scharinska nightclub on the ground floor of the building. Attendee Stephen Nicholls was "gobsmacked!" to win a raffle held as part of the trip to win a

Squier Cabronita, with its custom Brit Blues Invasion-inspired finish specially commissioned by the Museum. "The trip's been fantastic," he said. "The way we've been looked after is just brilliant, as well as seeing the guitars – and especially with the brothers. They're so enthusiastic and it's been so friendly. It's just fascinating hearing how they've built everything up."

Fredrik Fagerlund, the trip's coordinator, summed up the weekend: "To have these gentlemen from England and Germany as our guests has been an honour and everybody's very into guitars and interested in them. And the brothers, they love to talk about guitars! It's like time has no meaning, it's like full-throttle, 100 per cent. And I've enjoyed watching everybody enjoying it."

Live music, great food, great company and a world-class exhibition of unique guitars – what's not to like? If you fancy a trip to Guitars – The Museum to see the collection for yourself, see www.guitarsthemuseum.com to find out more.

NEW FOR 2015



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John Renbourn

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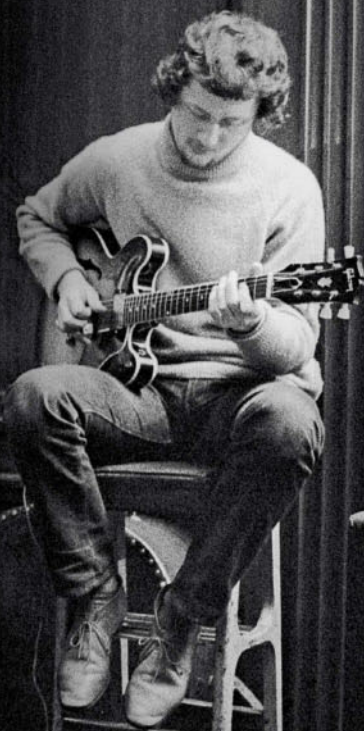
Guitarist was saddened to hear of the passing of folk guitarist John Renbourn, who died in March at his home in Hawick, aged 70. Best known for his work in Pentangle and for his lifelong musical association and friendship with the late Bert Jansch, Renbourn's fingerpicking-based playing was a technically impressive fusion of disparate styles, which included British folk music, medieval tunes, Celtic tradition, jazz, 'world' music and classical guitar.

Born John McCombe in London, early lessons in piano and classical guitar gave him a musical grounding and when the Skiffle craze hit Britain in the 1950s, Renbourn explored its influences. In the early 1960s, Renbourn became involved in the burgeoning British 'Folk Revival', performing at The Roundhouse and recording albums with gospel singer Dorris Henderson. He became a fixture at clubs including Les Cousins, a stronghold for folk musicians, and in 1965, he formed a partnership with Jansch that was to continue, on and off, for the rest of their lives. In 1966, they recorded a duet album, *Bert And*

John, and this mix of their own compositions and a version of Charlie Mingus' *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* is regarded as a classic, which gave rise to the genre 'baroque-folk'.

The pair formed Pentangle in 1967 with Jacqui McShee, Danny Thompson and Terry Cox and over the following five years released four albums, touring and playing festival dates before disbanding in 1973. The full original line-up reformed in 2007, and toured in 2008.

Renbourn was admired for his intricate fingerpicking style, which was unusual in a number of ways. He would use Super Glue to stick pieces of ping-pong ball onto the nails of his picking hand to increase resonance; and his classical training equipped him with a classically 'orthodox' three-fingers-and-thumb picking style. Renbourn used a variety of altered tunings and favoured Orchestra Model guitars (Martin released his signature model in 2011). He remained a keen educator and student of the guitar, publishing books and DVDs as well as albums. His last recording, the eclectic *Palermo Snow*, was released in 2011.



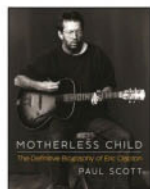
© BRIAN SHUEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Guitarist Books The pick of the best guitar tomes

Motherless Child

Paul Scott

Headline £20

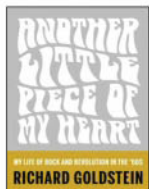


This 'definitive biography of Eric Clapton' was published to coincide with the iconic guitarist's 70th birthday in March this year – and the fact that he's still a household name in the world of music on such an anniversary is a fitting testament to Clapton's instincts for survival over his five productive decades in the business. These aspects of EC – the personality behind the mask of the effortless guitar God – is what author Paul Scott concentrates on above all in his book, attempting to pencil in a bit of colour and detail to the story that Clapton himself told in his excellent, though at times slightly detached, autobiography.

Another Little Piece Of My Heart

Richard Goldstein

Bloomsbury Circus £11.99



Richard Goldstein worked for New York newspaper *The Village Voice* throughout the 1960s, and was one of the first writers to treat rock music seriously as an art form. He interviewed and encountered most of the hippest deities from the counterculture's worlds of literature and music – including Lennon, Hendrix, Dylan, Townshend, Joplin and many others – and in reporting his findings, played a part in shaping the movement's ideals. Having possessed such a privileged vantage point during one of popular music's defining eras makes his analysis of the times a compelling read for anyone interested in the reality of the 60s.

The Gretsch Electric Guitar Book

Tony Bacon

Hal Leonard \$29.99



Celebrated guitar historian Tony Bacon's latest tome celebrates 60 years of Gretsch models, offering a thoroughly researched and entertaining explanation on what it is that makes the brand a sort of Marlon Brando of the guitar world – a rebellious outsider indelibly associated with the golden era of US popular culture. Interviews with the likes of Chet Atkins illuminate the back story behind the brand's sometimes outrageous designs and features, and the 2003 alliance with Fender is catalogued. If you've ever found yourself eyeing a Falcon, Penguin, Gent or even a 'Billy Bo', this book's for you.

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Two Million Dollar Baby

Gibson shows off its astounding, bejewelled 'Eden Of Coronet' SG – officially the world's Most Valuable Guitar

No sooner had we witnessed Fender's astonishingly opulent diamond-encrusted Pine Cone Stratocaster (issue 393), Gibson goes ahead and proves it's not to be outdone by its eternal rival by releasing an even more outrageous showpiece instrument. The 'Eden Of Coronet' is a collaboration between Gibson, jewellery designer Aaron Shum and musician/designer Mark Lui, and

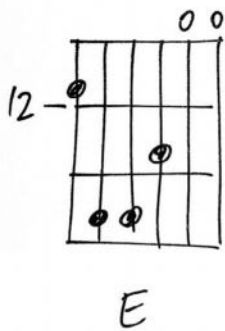
with an estimated worth of \$2 million USD, it's been crowned with the Guinness World Record for 'Most Valuable Guitar'. Incorporating over 400 carats of diamonds and 1.6 kilos of 18k gold, the stunning nature-themed design took 68 people over 700 man-days to create. Perhaps most surprisingly, an Epiphone version has been announced, with gigbag included... Just kidding. See www.gibson.com.

Substitute

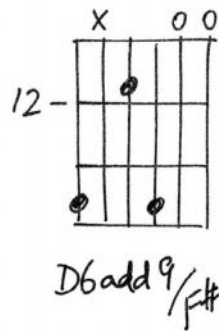
Tired of using the same old chord shapes? These substitutions will freshen up your playing in seconds.

This Issue: Fake Nashville Tuning

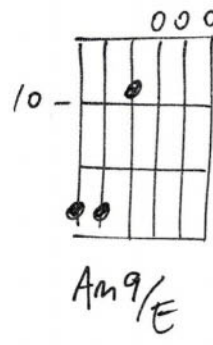
Nashville tuning replaces the E, A, D and G strings with much thinner strings, tuned an octave higher. The B and high E remain standard, so the effect is the same as the 'extra' strings on a 12-string guitar. Try this open E major chord for starters...



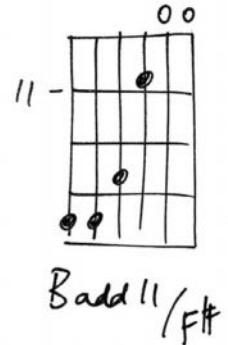
The general idea is most of the notes on the bottom four strings will sound higher than the top two strings, so we're faking that effect by playing high on the fretboard. Strummed chords sound great when played by standard guitar and Nashville guitar together.



You can adapt any standard chord shapes, but we've used some inversions (with the slash showing the bass note) to allow for a hearty strum across all six strings. Also, those B and E strings wouldn't necessarily be open, but it's easier with our cheat version.



You don't have to strum the chords, either. Easy arpeggio patterns sound great, because the contour from high notes to low notes is completely unexpected. Try fingerpicking patterns, too! These chords work together as a sequence, but experiment with others.



And also...



RIP DAEVID ALLEN

Gong founder and Soft Machine guitarist Daavid Allen died in March, aged 77. The Australian

guitarist was a prog-rock pioneer whose commitment to mysticism and psychedelia made him one of the genre's most enigmatic and revered figures. He continued to work sporadically with various Gong incarnations to the present, and contributed to Gong's 2014 album, *I See You*.

GOOD MFS

Moog has debuted two new Minifoogers – the MF Chorus and MF Flange. The former has Feedback and Expression pedal options; the latter has Vocal and Traditional voicings. The SRP is \$209; see www.moogmusic.com.

JIMI FOR SALE

A 1964 Stratocaster given to Leon Hendrix by his brother Jimi in 1968 has been auctioned at Ted

Owen & Co in London. The Sunburst instrument, which has been converted back to its original right-hand format, only, ahem, fetched £216,000 on 1 April. See www.tedowenandco.com for info.

Guitarist Picks Highlights from last issue



Electrics

Patrick James
Eggle Macon
£2,995

We said: "An un-showy boutique electric with a contemporary voice"



Amps

PRS Archon
25 Combo
£1,249

We said: "Ideal for space-starved stages and a great studio amp, too"



Acoustics

Faith PJE
Signature
London Plane
£1,499

We said: "Extremely consistent, with quality at the fore"



Effects

Pigtronix
Keymaster
£239

We said: "A flexible tool, invaluable on stage and in the studio"



Misc

Mesa
Engineering
CabClone
£219

We said: "Practically essential for any gigging guitarist"

And Finally...

'Play guitar anywhere' is the motto of **jamstik+**, a new portable, Bluetooth MIDI guitar for iOS. It's a lightweight, 16-inch-long guitar-shaped controller – or SmartGuitar – that controls a variety of apps on iPad, iPhone and Mac, including **tutorial apps, DAWs** and other **virtual rigs**. It uses infrared light to detect the movements of its user's fingers in real time, and because it has **real strings and frets**, its creator, Zivix, promises a realistic, expressive playing experience. Plus, even though it has only five physical frets, a performance D-pad enables access to double the **note range of a standard 21-fret guitar**. The jamstik+ currently retails at **\$249.99**; see jamstik.com for video demos and more info.

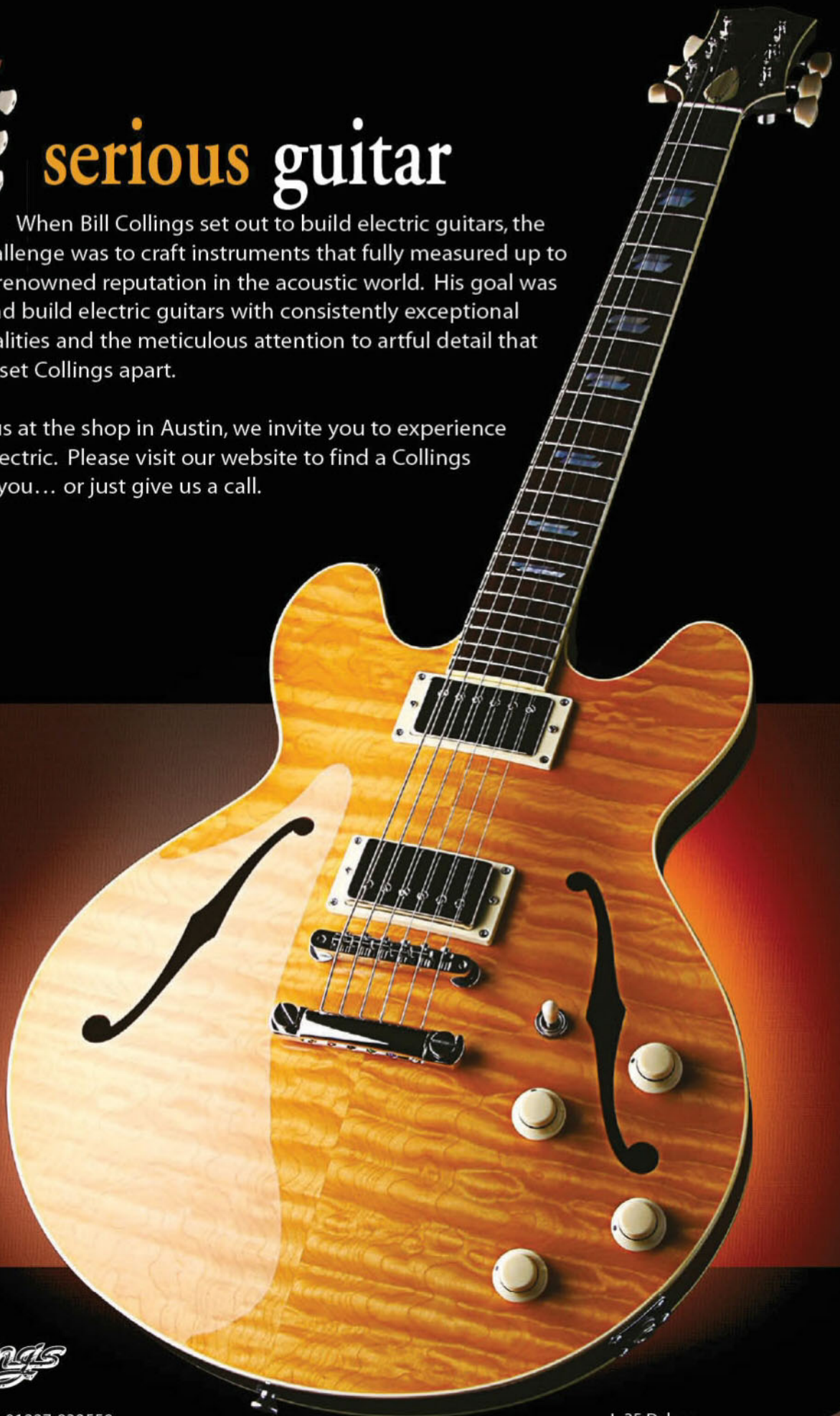




serious guitar

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

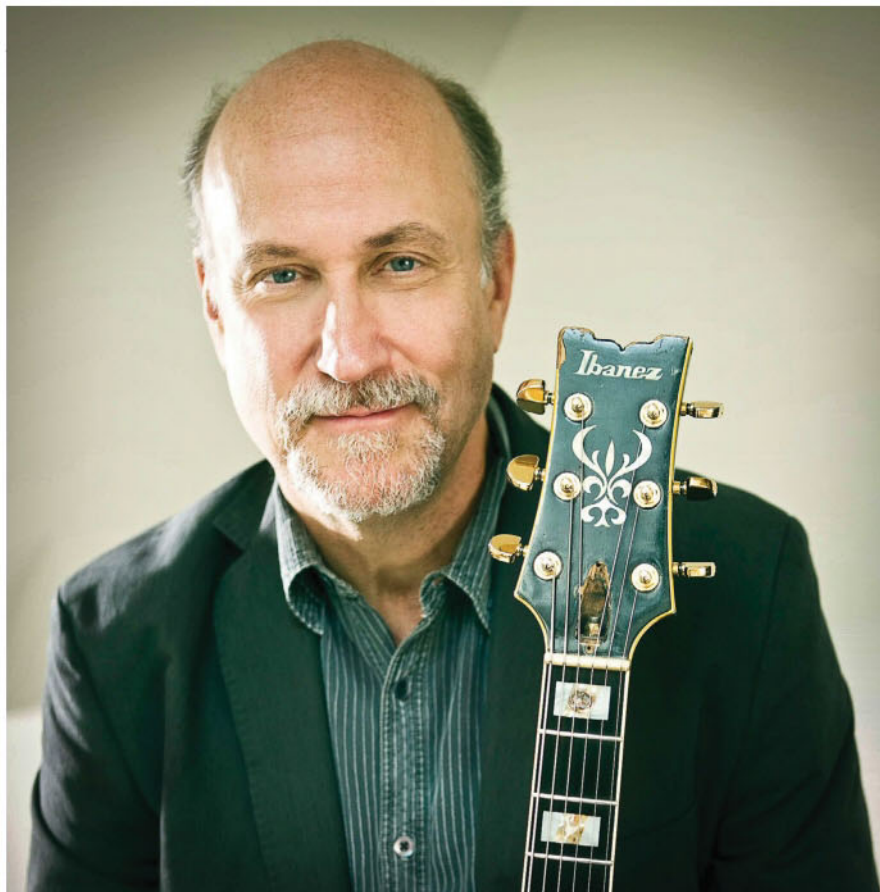
From all of us at the shop in Austin, we invite you to experience a Collings electric. Please visit our website to find a Collings dealer near you... or just give us a call.



Collings

collingsguitars.com 01227 832558

I-35 Deluxe



John Scofield

The formidable New York fusion pioneer talks powercuts, copycats and big, fat jazz guitars – as he stays *Up All Night* to answer the...

10 Questions We Ask Everyone

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

“When I was 11, I had an acoustic that my parents rented from a music store. Then, in 1964, I got my first electric, which was a Hagstrom that looked sort of like a Strat. It was a strange sky blue Swedish guitar, and it had a kind of plastic top, but it was cheap and looked like a Fender. I don’t have it now. All through the 60s, into the 70s, I’d trade one guitar in for the next, like a car.”

2 THE BUILDING’S BURNING DOWN: WHAT GUITAR FROM YOUR COLLECTION WOULD YOU SAVE?

“I’ve got 30-plus guitars – too many. I have a 60s Gibson Howard Roberts, a big, fat jazz guitar, and I should probably save that, but I really like my old Ibanez AS200 from 1982. This is stupid, but if I had to choose one, it would be my workhorse Ibanez.”

3 WHAT’S THE OLDEST GUITAR YOU HAVE?

“A Martin acoustic from the 30s, but my oldest electric is a 1962 Gibson ES-335 I bought in New York in 1975. I bought it for \$600 – now it’s worth a lot more.”

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

“I’m certainly not perfect. Playing the guitar is a battle to try and tame the beast. I’m a little bit klutzy, so guitar is something I have to work on. I would like to be better at all aspects. But I’d really like to be able to play what I hear – and I can’t always do that.”

“Stay true to the music you love – but play everything. Listen to the masters, and copy them – you’re gonna sound like yourself whatever you do”

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

“I’ve had so many mishaps that I’m expecting them at this point. From small mishaps, where the sound is funny, to extreme mishaps where the band starts playing a different song to you, or the lights go out. I’m 63, and I’ve been doing this my whole life. I’ve had fried amps. I’ve had loss of power a bunch of times, especially in Eastern Europe and South America.”

6 WHAT SONG WOULD YOU PLAY ON ACOUSTIC ROUND THE CAMPFIRE?

“Probably some sort of I-IV-V thing, or a slow blues. Do I have a favourite blues tune? No – because they’re all kind of the same!”

7 WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF ABOUT GUITAR?

“Stay true to the music you love – but play everything. Listen to the masters, and copy them – and it won’t hurt you, because you’re gonna sound like yourself no matter what you do. Also, learn songs by singers and by instruments other than yourself. Because then you can copy their stuff, and it’ll come out differently... and nobody will know!”

8 WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PRACTISED, AND WHAT DID YOU PLAY?

“Just before you called. I’m gonna do this tour with a great singer and piano player named Jon Cleary. So I was working on an old R&B song – *It’s Just A Matter Of Time*, by Brook Benton.”

9 WHAT ARE YOU DOING FIVE MINUTES BEFORE YOU GO ONSTAGE?

“Playing a chromatic scale, to get my fingers working. Is it serious backstage? No, I’m just doing that while I’m talking to people. Music sounds best when it’s relaxed.”

10 AND WHAT ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AFTER?

“I’m looking for people to tell me I sounded good. I’m putting my guitar in my case, and heading back to the hotel. The road is so tough that I get out of there pretty quick. It used to be that I was up all night, but not anymore.” [HY]

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



Dunlop

50

YEARS

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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



BY THE BOOK

The practice of book-matching two-piece guitar backs and tops seems to be prized, especially among high-end makers and the result, if done well done, can be stunning. For guitar backs, using rosewood as an example, a beautiful mirror image can be achieved. However, when it comes to maple caps on solid bodies the results are distinctly variable. The more pronounced the figuring (the stripes), the more obvious any misalignment. My question is, should we expect better matched tops, or do makers deliberately not try to match the two sides? I am aware that some people might prefer the less 'perfect' look. I would be interested to know what you and any luthiers think on the subject. Is the mismatch intended? Is it the fact that the sawing and subsequent carving processes cause the misalignment, or is it simply the vagaries of wood grain and figuring?

Graham Osborne, via email

Our gear editor, Dave Burrluck, replies: "In our experience, wood is highly variable and it's not easy to generalise. Just because a maker says something's book-matched it might not be; an awful lot of so-called bookmatched maple isn't: it's 'slip-matched', where two similarly figured pieces of wood are matched by eye. The 1984 PRS Custom prototype featured in issue 391 is a good example – the top was slip matched; Paul wasn't in a position at that time to afford a more expensive book-matched top. How things have changed!"

LOST LOVE

Dear *Guitarist*, I know this is a bit odd, but I have been trying to find my Gibson Les Paul Standard for many years. I bought it from Sound Control in Norwich in 2004 but stupidly sold it on eBay in early 2005. It is finished in Honeyburst and has a 50s neck shape. I sold it to a buyer in Guernsey or Jersey.

This guitar has quite a bit of sentimental value to me and is a token to me of how I managed to get my life back on track after the death of my baby son, Dylan. After a period of grief, I got a job as an apprentice pharmacy technician and got myself out of debt, and treated myself to this guitar – my first ever top-end instrument! To this day, I still don't know why I sold it! If anyone has any information on it, I would be incredibly grateful if they could get in touch! Many thanks in advance for your help.

Nic James, via email

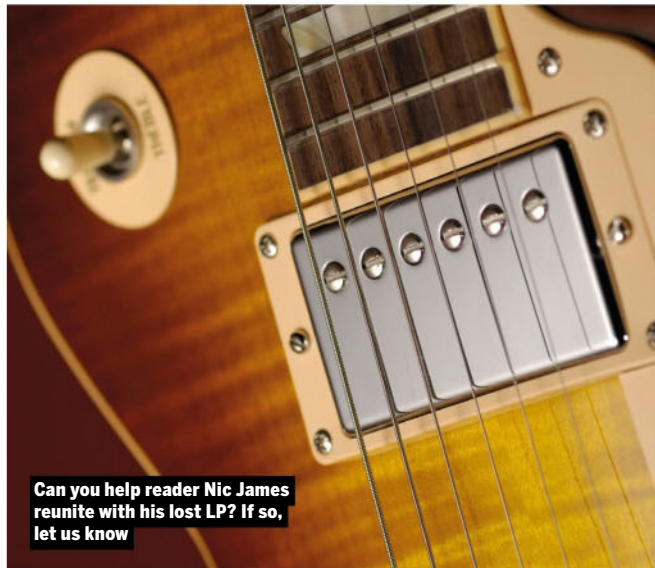
We're happy to try to help you, Nic – if anyone out there has Nic's old guitar and would like to sell it back to him then let

us know, as it sounds as though there'd be a very willing buyer. In truth, we've all done it. The editor of this tome regrets selling a Charvel Model 7 electric that was sold to him by Dan Hawkins of The Darkness when they were pals as teenagers – though more for sentimental reasons than because T-style guitars with pointy headstocks are his thing! Have any other readers got any 'one that got away' stories? Write in...

BOG STANDARD

We live in a digital world. Digital effects, digital amp modelling, digital this, digital that. But when it comes to digital, *Guitarist* magazine, I draw the line. Call me a sad wotsit, but there is nothing better than seeing the postman walking up the drive with a hard copy of the monthly montage of goodies with great shiny photos and excellent articles, and then sitting on the bog for an hour only to get severe pins and needles in my legs, reading it from cover to cover. Total bliss!

Milan Webb, Berkshire



Can you help reader Nic James reunite with his lost LP? If so, let us know



Vexed about pickups? You've come to the right place this issue

Thank you, Milan – the highest compliment that can be paid to a magazine is to be read in the smallest room until feeling is lost in the extremities! We'll try to keep up the good work.

PICKING UP GOOD VIBRATIONS

Thank you, thank you, thank you (you have to say things three times, apparently, to get the message across). I am talking about the brilliant piece on pickups, which was thorough, concise and precise. It was such a relief to read so much hard-earned wisdom, so clearly put, about these wonderful things.

I have managed to fill a good-sized book shelf with books on guitar electronics and, more recently, pickups in particular – unfortunately, the latter have never failed to disappoint. Not so your article, which filled the aching void that has developed in my quest for wholesome information on this fascinating topic – one that has been there since starting to first repair, then upgrade, and now build electric guitars.

I now have a desperate need to build my own pickups, which is crazy I know, but the essential next step. This issue will be encased in lead and buried 10

feet down in my back garden, to protect it from any possible damage. Did I say 'thank you'?

Graham Smith, via email

Glad to be of service, Graham. Pickups are interesting because they're one of the few items of guitar gear that can't easily be tried before you buy. Wouldn't it be great to just wave a wand and be able to instantly audition all the pickups out there, one by one, in your own guitar until you reached just the right set for you? As it is, even with quick-change pickup systems, there's a little elbow grease and fiddling involved before you're ready to rock a new set. That's why it's extra-useful to be clued-up as to how pickups work, so you can make informed decisions before you get the soldering iron out. Still, innovations are still being made all the time – check out the Fret-King/Fishman Fluence review on p94.

GAS ATTACK

While I do very much enjoy the day each month when my latest *Guitarist* edition arrives in the post, I do also just about every month reach for the Cancel Direct Debit button! This is

>



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Guitarist Magazine

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because I think your mag is overweight on the gear, and underweight on other aspects of guitar (eg, playing/inspiration). Please help your readers to focus just a little more on the playing/inspiration side of guitar – less to feed GAS. There are only so many gorgeous guitars and amps one can look at on a regular basis. The challenge is always to become a better player, not to have a nicer guitar.

Rob Kaczmarek, via email

Thanks for your thoughts, Rob. Although we can't agree that there's too much gear, there's definitely always room for more lessons in playing – it truly is a lifelong learning curve, and superb playing is ultimately what inspires all of us here at *Guitarist*. That's why from issue 396 (August 2015) you'll be seeing more lessons in *Guitarist*, because nice gear, after all, means nothing if you can't make music on it that satisfies the soul. We heartily agree that it's the reason there are guitars at all. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy both Nev Marten's Blues Headlines on p153 and the

clean tone licks, classy chords and other playing inspirations in our cover feature.

MORE HOME-GROWN GUITARS

I have been a *Guitarist* reader since the first issue and have followed with interest, lately, your home-build series of letters. Attached is an image of my latest home-build, the Delta 61, based on an SG style – with a twist. It has been built from scratch using an American Black Walnut body with a figured maple cap. I have a background in fine furniture and cabinet making, but have been a guitar fan as long as I can remember, so lately I decided to join the skills with the passion and create a range of guitars.

If your readers are inspired by these home-build projects, I'd offer the following words of advice: one, invest in quality hand tools to expensive tone woods. I always draw out models full-size to provide a working scale template, but also to help with visualisation and aesthetics. Finally, have a go! It's extremely rewarding and the satisfaction in taking rough-sawn timber to that first note out of the amp gives a



Check out Nev's Blues Headlines for some playing inspiration

hand tools to expensive tone woods. I always draw out models full-size to provide a working scale template, but also to help with visualisation and aesthetics. Finally, have a go! It's extremely rewarding and the satisfaction in taking rough-sawn timber to that first note out of the amp gives a

great sense of achievement. I now have three other model designs on the go; Broadway 52, Laurel 54, and Manalishi 58. No prizes for guessing the icons they are based on – with a twist!

Rob Armstrong, via email

In my youth, I made a few electric guitars from whatever came to hand – pine joists, a mahogany staircase, an oak fireplace, you name it. No truss rods; the light strings of the electric guitars caused no problems, but the bass ended up with a banana for a neck. These saw me through my first few bands until I could afford my first proper Fender.

Years later, having acquired a large plank of bubinga and a Carvin neck, and having some old pickups lying about, I decided to have another crack at it with my own guitar design. I had in mind something a bit cartoonish, somewhere between a Mosrite and a Gibson RD perhaps, but with good playability, upper-fret access and balance. This was the end result. The body is a single piece of bubinga and the pickup surrounds are carved from the paler sapwood of the same plank as the body. The Di Marzio X2N is a monster, but when coil-tapped it has quite a sweet Stratty sound, which blends well with the Kent Armstrong single coil.



Rob Armstrong's delightful home-build project



Having problems with tarnishing? Try silica gel

Switching to humbucker mode gives a very useful boost and fatter sound for solos. Controls are kept as simple as possible, just a volume with a push-push switch for coil tap, and a three-way pickup selector. A Wilkinson bridge and Gotoh tuners round it off. The one downside is the weight – because of the dense bubinga, it weighs in at about 5kg/11lb, but it feels immensely solid and the tuning is very stable. It's had a few outings with our band Bluedog, in the Bath area.

Nigel Johnston, via email

Hi Rob and Nigel, thanks for sending in your lovely, and latest, creations. We heartily agree that the satisfaction of bringing an instrument into being from the raw materials is a wonderful experience. If you flick through books of activities for hobbyists from the 40s and 50s, you'll find instructions for building anything from bookshelves to miniature steam engines. It feels as though people had a lot more confidence in their own ability to manufacture for fun back then – and, after all, what was Leo Fender but a practical engineer with an innate sense of can-do? More power to you.

DRY YOUR EYES

I read with interest the Q&A letter from Frank Willis in issue 392, regarding the problem he was having with tarnishing. I had a similar problem with the pickups on my Campbell American Transitone. I think I may have found something that helps. My wife loves shoes and clothes, which she often has delivered. They come with silica gel sachets inside the packaging, to prevent the items deteriorating. I started to pinch them off her to see if they would help, as they work by absorbing moisture. I placed them in the case with the guitar and the deterioration seems not to have got any worse. I now use them in all my cases/bags, and though I can only speak from experience they seem to do the trick with no adverse effects. I also found you could buy them in sizeable amounts for just a couple of quid online.

Kevin Thompson, East Yorkshire

So that's what those sachets are really for. Just remember not to eat the contents, as the warning on the sachet says – seriously, who is ever tempted to try that? We suppose they could be mistaken for a condiment if you weren't paying much attention. Better on pickups than chips, though, we think. Thanks for the tip, Kevin.

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Photo by Katarina Benzova, Art by SavanasArt



WISH LIST

Photography by **Joseph Branston**

Chris George Custom **£2,200**

It seems it's not just the likes of Dennis Fano who can restructure the past into highly playable retro-looking guitars. And it's food for thought that you can commission a one-off custom build from a UK maker and, compared to many a USA shop, have enough money left over to buy a rather good boutique combo, too.

Chris George is no stranger to our pages, having created a diverse range of instruments, from acoustics to Variax-loaded super guitars. This one did make us do a double-take, though. It's based on a custom build for a slide guitarist from some years ago, tastefully aged, and inspired by Tom Anderson's Atom shape. "I didn't know that at the time," laughs Chris. "The customer brought in a single-cut outline and I made the guitar!"

It uses an alder body with a slab-sawn maple neck glued, not bolted, to the body. The lightly back-angled headstock shows some influence from the Fender Starcaster, especially with

its stepped black detail, mirrored on the headstock back and the heel.

The Lollar Gold Foil pickups are controlled by a very retro-looking Kay-like knob on the selector switch. The Bigsby is actually a vintage example from the 60s, but there's a smattering of modernism to the build with the LSR roller nut and TonePros roller saddle bridge. It keeps the Bigsby in tune, while the neck also features dual graphite reinforcing rods.

This really does feel old... though far from knackered. The Gold Foil single coils are hotter than a set of Texas Specials with more thickness and a less pronounced, but still very chime-y high end that calls out for amp tremolo and reverb... and a good overdrive or fuzz. It sounds superb and plays like butter.

Clearly, it certainly isn't just the Yanks who can turn out a cool bashed about-looking axe. It's time to look closer to home, we reckon.

01400 275040
www.chrisgeorgeguitars.com

VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>





1

1 To match the old-school vibe, Chris used a nicely battered original, 50-year-old Bigsby vibrato

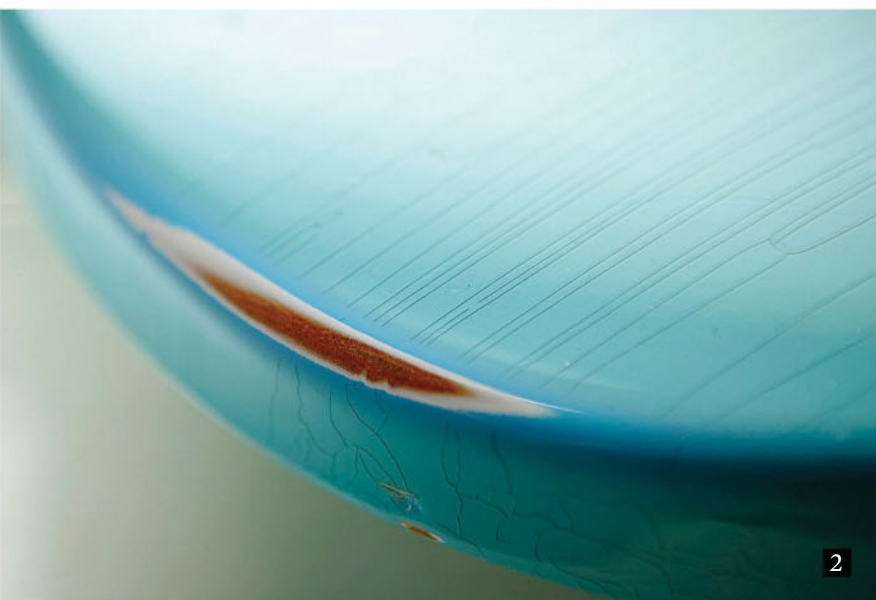
2 The finish crazing and wear is very authentic: it really looks like an old guitar

3 Chris has developed his own method for aging the nickel hardware, using something most of us would put on our fish 'n' chips...

4 Far from just a fashion piece the ebony fingerboard, with its subtly rolled edges, and the fretting are superbly done

5 In a function-over-fashion flourish, there's an LSR roller nut, and the tune-o-matic bridge has roller saddles

6 The trendy Lollar Gold Foil pickups were artificially aged in the USA



2



4



5



3



6

THIS IS **THE SOUND**

R O Y A L B L O O D



Photo: Pat Graham

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Music



James Taylor Before This World

★★★★★

Concord

Poised and poignant songcraft from an unhurried master

There are so many worthy troubadours out there. Drop into any big-city bar and you can find someone serving up the contents of their heart with conviction and an old guitar. That's all to the good, mostly. But it's hard to say what quality it is that enables some singer-songwriters to gleam like a well-lit diamond amid a sea of worthy-but-workaday quartz. The best, such as Joni Mitchell, have

the musicality of a jazz singer but a novelist's eye for human character. For it's the stories in the songs, when all is said and done, that move us most. Without them, we'd just be listening to nice chord changes. James Taylor is undoubtedly such an artist, and the talent that wrote *Fire And Rain* has mellowed beautifully here. Plus, he's still got that voice.

Intimate, impeccably tasteful and warm, what we have here is a series of poignant, writerly reflections on both the small details and mountainous themes of human existence. Typical of the quality is *You And I Again*, the story of a relationship, not without flaws, that finally settles into

tender equilibrium after decades. Taylor's playing, almost harp-like in its melodious simplicity, is just perfect – delivering nicely framed clusters of chords, modulating in deft slides to the next.

At the other end of the scale, Taylor is the latest American songwriter to tackle the painful legacy of conflict, through the song *Far Afghanistan*. To his credit, he manages to handle tough themes with sensitivity and

without jingoism or undue sentiment. But it's in his cover of the traditional *Wild Mountain Thyme* that you can see most clearly his qualities as a master of song, reinvesting Francis McPeake's generations-old Scottish folk tune with sufficient freshness, life and emotion that it might have been penned yesterday. **[JD]**

Download: *You And I Again*
For fans of: Joni Mitchell, Tim Buckley, Crosby Stills & Nash

Taylor's playing is just perfect – nicely framed clusters of chords, modulating in deft slides to the next

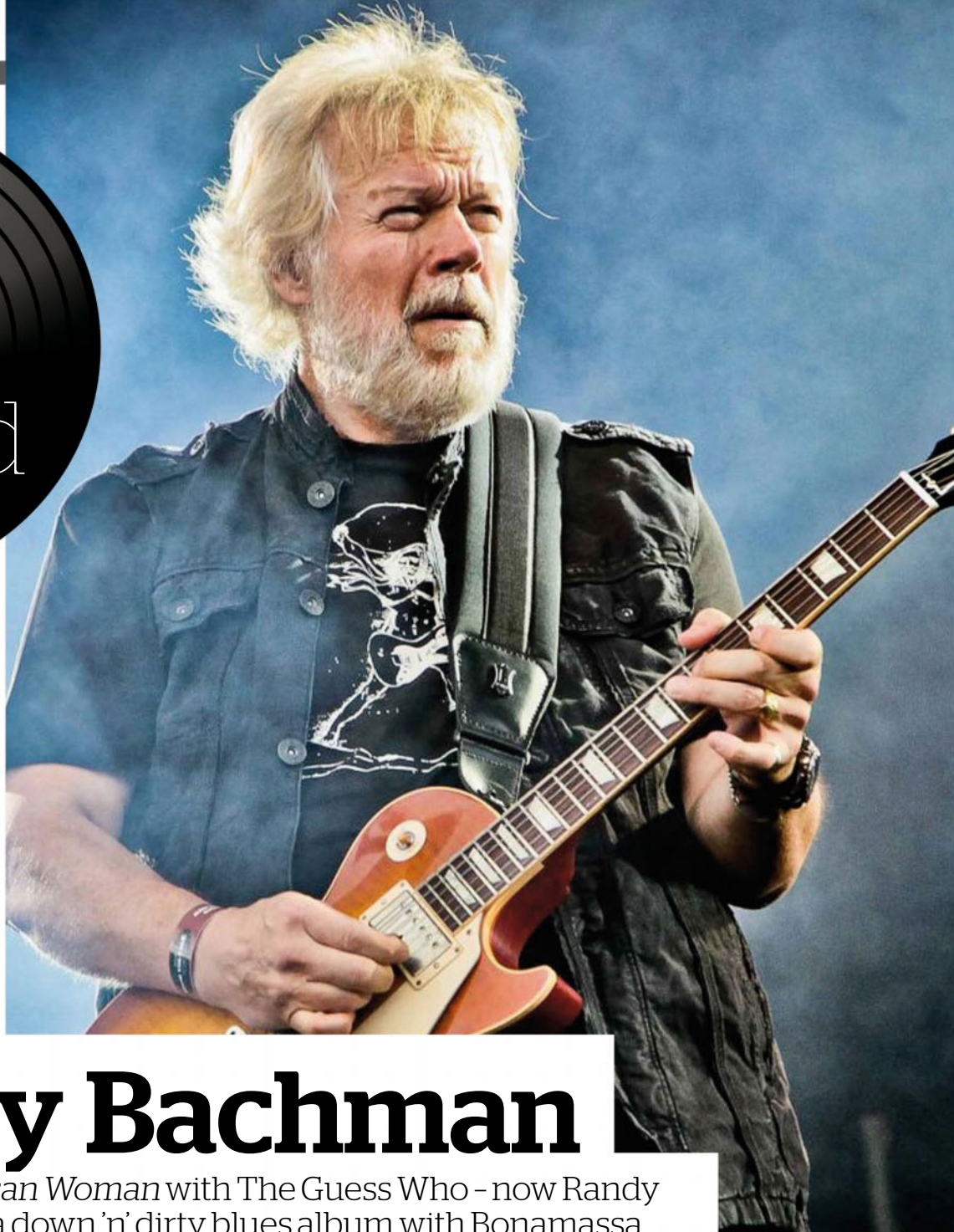
On
the
Record

ALBUM: *Heavy Blues*

STUDIO: Metalworks Studios,
Toronto, Canada

PRODUCER: Kevin Shirley

"Anna Ruddick and Dale Anne Brendon are amazing. Playing with those ladies was like playing with John Entwistle and Keith Moon"



Randy Bachman

Herocked *American Woman* with The Guess Who - now Randy Bachman's waxed a down 'n' dirty blues album with Bonamassa...

The Sessions

"Cutting this with Anna Ruddick [bass] and Dale Anne Brendon [drums] was amazing. Playing with those ladies was like playing with John Entwistle and Keith Moon, or John Bonham and John Paul Jones. So I got to be, at different moments, Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton or Pete Townshend. I didn't want guests on every song. I wanted to show I could still play. It was all done across the airwaves, because everyone was on tour. There's such a variance of styles. The first guy onboard was Joe Bonamassa, whose solo on *Bad Child* blew

me away. When I gave Peter Frampton the song *Heavy Blues*, I knew there'd be little tastes of Django in there. [The late] Jeff Healey's licks on *Confessin' To The Devil* are very BB King. And nobody sounds like Neil Young. He hardly plays on *Little Girl Lost* - just moments of noise and feeling, almost like Jimi Hendrix."

The Guitars

"I didn't want the normal sound, so I bought these guitars on eBay. A lot of the blues guys used to have Supro, Harmony and Silvertone guitars before they could afford the Gibsons

and Fenders, because they were in all the mail-order catalogues. They have this incredible, weird sound. But they're tough to play. They all have different numbers of frets: some have 21, some 20, some 18. The scale length and string tension is different, and because I used heavier strings, I was really pushing to hold my bluesy notes, and get a little shake on it, like BB King, so I have blisters like I haven't had in years. You can hardly bend a note without hitting the next note because of the small necks. So these guitars made me play different licks, which I wanted to do. I didn't want you to hear

this record and say, 'Oh, that's just Randy Bachman doing an *American Woman* thing...'"

The Tones

"I bought these old Silvertone piggyback amps from the 50s and 60s, and they were on full. When you plug an old guitar into an old amp and crank it up, you get this distortion that is such a familiar sound of old blues and rock 'n' roll. In the room, I had two Silvertone amps, then two National lunchbox amps that just have one big knob. We had these amps up on chairs, and we put mics on each one, and I used the



"When you plug an old guitar into an old amp and crank it up, you get this distortion that is such a familiar sound of old blues and rock 'n' roll"

old big Roland chorus [CE-1] as a signal splitter. When I played, it would come out of four amps at once, and we got such an ambience that when you hear a song like *Learn To Fly*, it sounds like a whole bunch of guitars playing. But it's just me, playing once. It sounds gigantic."

The Mix

"We mixed in four days at Kevin Shirley's studio in Malibu. I said to him early on, 'I want it to sound like late-60s blues' and he said, 'Fabulous, that's what I'm into'. Everything is so fine-tuned and auto-corrected now, even the timing. A lot of music

now is just too damn clean and sterile. But I mean, rock 'n' roll and old blues is dirty. It's like going into a club in the afternoon and you can hardly breathe from the stench of old tobacco fumes, hops and liquor. So we kinda had that in mind. Everything we did, I said, 'I want it dirtier, I want more distortion'. We recorded pretty much live, then went into Pro Tools and mixed on tape. Kevin got all the solos, from Frampton and Neil Young, and he just flew them in. But it sounds like we're all there in the room."

The Lessons

"When I asked Kevin if he'd work with me, he said, 'Yes, but I want you to do something'. And I said, 'What?' And he said, 'Shut up and listen to me'. I've been producing myself for so long, and you get to a point where you say, 'I'm great, I'm fab, that's enough, I'm gonna have dinner and go to sleep'. Kevin told me, 'I'm gonna pull you past that Stop sign. I'm gonna push you down a road you haven't gone down in a long time'. And he did it. He pulled me and pushed me, and I was so amazed, because he did it so gently and so quickly."

The Verdict

"You can hear how thrilled I am with this album. I'm blown away by the whole thing. I only got the final mixes about five days ago, and they're just amazing, face-kicking, home runs. This is a real guitarist's album, and if you're any sort of a guitar player, it's gonna be a great CD to get. And I have enough songs for the next album. I'm gonna reach out to Brian May, Eddie Van Halen, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Billy Gibbons, and see what I can get out of that. I've got some commitments already..."

Heavy Blues will be released in Spring 2015 through Linus Entertainment



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Albums

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Steve Vai

Stillness In Motion – Vai Live In L.A.

★★★★★

Sony



Vai struts his scintillating stuff live over two CDs

This double-CD/double-DVD set captures the instrumental genius on the 49th engagement of a 250-plus date tour. The two CDs run to a mammoth 24 tracks, and if you thought your band's setlist was challenging, wait until you hear this. Backed by bassist Philip Bynoe, Jeremy Colson on drums, Dave Weiner on guitar and harpist Deborah Henson-Conant, Vai intermingles new cuts with fan favourites, dividing the show into a 'rock' half and a more acoustic-focused half – constantly taking the guitar to territory only he's explored, with barely believable expressiveness and control. **[BW]**

Download: *The Audience Is Listening*

For fans of: Joe Satriani, Paul Gilbert

Bert Jansch

Bert Jansch

★★★★★

PIAS



Late Scottish folk picker's debut remastered

This reissue of Bert Jansch's eponymous debut coincides with the 50th anniversary of its release. Sadly, it also coincides with the passing of his picking partner, John Renbourn (see p26). It's been remastered from half-inch tapes (it was recorded in the kitchen of Jansch's flat) and released on various formats. However you listen to it, you're sure to be struck anew by the articulate picking, the dark spectres in his songwriting and the stark emotion in his voice, all of which combined to influence the likes of Jimmy Page, Neil Young, and just about every acoustic player since. **[OB]**

Download: *Needle Of Death*

For fans of: Davey Graham, John Renbourn

Larry Coryell

Heavy Feel

★★★★★

Wide Hive



Gritty excursion into jazz guitar's dark corners

One of the founding fathers of fusion returns with a surprisingly gritty, greasy delve into the gnarlier side of guitar jazz. Opener *Ghost Note* opens with angular, edgy note clusters that evoke a kind of Scofield-meets-Nels Cline vibe, while the title track is swampier still, opening with an almost grungy riff. A kind of blues-bebop agenda then wanders in, a strange cross-current of styles that doesn't quite cohere here. More complete is the excellent downbeat, double-bass and guitar excursion *The Way That It Was*, which is illuminated by Coryell's stunning creativity on the fretboard. **[JD]**

Download: *The Way That It Was*

For fans of: John Scofield, Larry Carlton, Nels Cline

Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell

The Travelling Kind

★★★★★

Nonesuch



Melancholy mastery of folk-roots Americana

There's real magic in the chemistry between country-folk siren Emmylou Harris and Grammy-winning songwriter



Steve Vai delivers explosive, exhaustive live chops on his new double CD

Rodney Crowell here, and a melancholy resignation you could almost drown in on the 'it's complicated' relationship ballad *No Memories Hanging Around*, in which pedal steel mingles with Harris and Crowell's joined voices like the tears in your beer. The electric guitar work is sparse but perfectly phrased and has beautiful, juke-joint echoes of James Burton on the dirty boogie of *Bring It On Home To Memphis*. A rough-grained, grown-up album of fine Americana. **[JD]**

Download: *Bring It On Home To Memphis*

For fans of: Gillian Welch, Gram Parsons, Willie Nelson

Laurence Jones

What's It Gonna Be

★★★★★

Headline Music



Convincing, propulsive Brit blues-rock

He's a rising star of British-blues rock and on this gutsy long-player, Laurence Jones does nothing to dispel the impression he might just be a breakthrough player in an admittedly rammed genre of guitar music. There's a nice Thin-Lizzy style cutting edge to the title track, while *Don't Need A Reason* shows he can groove well, too – so many blues-rockers are so intent on blowing the doors off with their leaden virtuosity, they forget to make it funky; there's a nice nod to Clapton's version of *Cocaine* in the grit and stride of the song here. Jones' chops have flair and fire but he doesn't bury us in superfluous widdling, either. It all adds up to a fine outing. **[JD]**

Download: *Don't Need A Reason*

For fans of: Eric Clapton, Gary Moore, Joe Bonamassa

Halestorm

Into The Wild Life

★★★

Atlantic



Bombastic classic rock with few surprises

Grammy Award-winning Pennsylvania rock act Halestorm decamped to Nashville to record this, their third studio album, yet it's a body of work that pays no homage to the Tennessee city's country-music heritage. 80s hair-metal riffing, ambitious production and the soaring vocals of Lzzy Hale – owner of a Gibson signature model – are the order of the day, with no concessions to subtlety or restraint present. There's bawdy metaphor in tracks such as *Gonna Get Mine* and *Apocalyptic*, while *Dear Daughter* is an earnest piano-accompanied ballad. **[GW]**

Download: *Sick Individual*

For fans of: Evanescence, Bullet For My Valentine

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sounds like percussive click, modulation, attack/sustain, drawbar setting and high frequency content. Both Organ Machines offer something totally different, totally amazing. Best of all, no guitar surgery is required, just plug in and play!

electro-harmonix

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CHRIS SPEDDING

British session ace Chris Spedding gives us some insight into the life lessons, creative approaches and techniques that have helped shape his in-demand axe stylings

Words Matt Frost Portraits Will Ireland

Chris Spedding has packed so much into his 50-plus-year career that we'd pretty much need the whole of this mag to catalogue it all.

After building a rep as one of the UK's best jazz players during the 1960s, Spedding went on to become one of London's most sought-after session guys in the 1970s. Over the past five decades, he's variously cut records and/or played live with artists and bands as diverse as Tom Waits, Bryan Ferry, John Cale, Paul McCartney, Nina Hagen, Jack Bruce, Shirley Bassey, Elton John, Robert Gordon and The Vibrators.

And then there's Chris's fretwork on Jeff Wayne's *The War Of The Worlds* (both on the original 1978 album and on the recent tours), his role as producer for the first Sex Pistols demos, playing in Sharks with the late Andy Fraser of Free, and the not-so-minor feat of cutting 13 solo albums since 1970 – not to mention being one of Mike Batt's Wombles!

Spedding's latest 2015 album, *Joyland*, is truly a sonic joy to behold, featuring guest appearances from Johnny Marr, Arthur Brown, Bryan Ferry, Glen Matlock and Andy Fraser, to name but a few. Welcome to Chris's world...

1 Playing jazz makes you think differently

"Because of my jazz phase, I tend to think of music and guitar differently. I don't think in a pentatonic blues way. I think more in scales and chords and I think that's what

the jazz thing did for me. If you give a lot of rock players a song in a certain key, like if you said, 'Play in A', then they'll just go to the A position on the guitar and they won't really move from there for a while. I think more linearly. I'll hear the music and I'll think, 'Okay, there's a few lines here' and I'll play those lines without being locked into the limitation of the I, IV and V."

2 Your head and your heart are as important as your fingers

"When I've been asked by players how they should go about improvising a solo on a particular chord sequence, I will say, 'Get into the habit of singing a note in your head and then see if you can find that note on the guitar. That's your first lesson. Then sing a very simple melody in your head and see if you can play that on the guitar.' If you can sing the thing in your head and play it with your fingers, then you're creating music, and it's not music that's limited to the fact that you know that the A chord is there and these notes belong in the A chord. You have to know scales and you have to know what they sound like, but it's all about going from your head through your heart down to the end of your fingers so it comes out as music. That's the technique that I advise people to try and follow, and I think that's what I learned from the jazz thing. And never forget that it might start in your head or in your ears and it might end up through your fingers – but try and make sure it always goes through your heart!"

3 Learning a big repertoire helps your songwriting

"[In the mid-1960s], I played with the Nat Temple Band. There were all these guys in their 40s and I was barely 20 years old. It was in the days when you would play selections from all the shows for diners. You had to have such a wide repertoire of standards. You had to know your Cole Porter songs, your Irving Berlin songs, your Richard Rodgers songs and your Hoagy Carmichael songs. But, after you'd learned your first 300 songs, the rest of them were really easy because you realised what the formats were. Some of them of course weren't to a format, but that was fine, because you were able to assimilate them because you'd worked so hard learning those first few hundred. The penny suddenly dropped and you could see how the chords were going and you'd immediately know what the next chords were. When I came to write my own songs, it was as if I'd done a course in songwriting. I knew how writers put together their songs – Burt Bacharach, Lennon and McCartney, Ray Davies and all the great songwriters. Your tools of the trade were right there because you'd studied with the best."

4 George Harrison would have been the ultimate session man

"When I'm on a rock session and I've got to come up with a nice riff or I need something to point the song into the next bit, I always think to myself, 'What would George



Spedding with his James Trussart SteelDevile

Harrison have done on this?" You can't hear those Beatles songs without hearing his licks, like *Please Please Me*. You've got to have the lick that goes 'dah dah dahdah da da da'. He made the next bit stand out and he did it with just three notes. I always think, 'How can I do that kind of thing on this song?' He is kind of a model for me because he was such a good player – very imaginative and melodic with a wonderful sense of time, sense of tone and sense of structure. All his little solos were short and sweet and to the point, and very rarely do you hear him just play a lick that's just a lick. They were always crafted for the moment."

5 Reading music doesn't always make you better

"I lived the session-guy lifestyle from about 1968 to 1978, except for a two-year gap from '72 to '74 when I was in Sharks. It was pretty full on... and it could be three sessions a day, seven days a week. I think, because I'd been involved with these jazz people like Mike Westbrook and Mike Gibbs, everybody just assumed that I was a fantastic sight-reader, but I used to have to fake it sometimes! I'd get on a session and if something was a bit difficult to read, I'd ask somebody to sing it and then I'd be able to play it. Sometimes the arranger would just go, 'That's exactly what I wanted but I didn't really know how to write it! You've really got the right sound...' A guy that was a really great reader would probably play a part a little bit too polite, whereas I'd just play it like a hooligan!"

6 A natural approach to tone gives you more control

"I tend not to use pedals. Live, I'll turn my [1970 Fender Deluxe Reverb] up to number 10 and work from the volume control on the guitar. When I want a fairly clean rhythm, it'll be on about number three and if I want to play a big overdriven solo, I'll just whack it up to 10. Most guitar players will have a pedal for distortion and they'll press a pedal if they want to change the sound, but I don't. I'll mute with my wrist for rhythms and, if I'm playing a solo and I suddenly want to go down really quiet, I'll mute it with my hand. I do it more naturally I think, getting sounds with my hands rather than some sort of pedal. I also have this anxiety about a connecting cord going wrong or a battery running out at the wrong time, so I don't have to think about any of that either."

7 Gigging with an orchestra necessitates gear changes

"When I recorded *The War Of The Worlds* [1978], I just used an amp and a guitar, but when I had to do the live shows, I had to do all these presets in order to recreate the sounds that were on the record. That was really weird, because I was the guy that did the original guitars and I know that I didn't have any pedals or any aids at all! I just plugged straight in and it was either loud or soft... but with the live shows we couldn't have amplifiers on the stage because we had strings and everything. Back in the 70s,

you'd get sustain by just turning your amp up really loud, but we couldn't do that. On the first few [*The War Of The Worlds*] tours, I had great difficulty trying to get that sustain so I would just fake it, play the note again and hope nobody noticed. But then I heard about the Fernandes Sustainer and that worked really well."

8 Valuable guitars can be unplayable

"My main acoustic [including on new album *Joyland*] is an old [Gibson] J-200 from the 50s, which is the only old vintage guitar that I have. It's really nice and I fell in love with the look of that guitar when I saw Elvis playing one in the *Loving You* [1957] movie. I got that at Rose Morris in Shaftesbury Avenue in the 70s for 300 quid. I had work done on it because the bridge was in the wrong place and needed moving, but whenever somebody looks at it and values it, they say, 'Well, if you hadn't had that work done, this guitar would be worth about 20 grand but it's only worth about three grand now!' That's one of those silly things about collectors and the value of guitars. If I hadn't had that work done, it would be unplayable because it wouldn't have played in tune!"

9 Playing slide parts in standard tuning makes things simpler

"I like playing slide quite a bit as well, but I nearly always play slide using a regular tuning instead of an open tuning. It's from the days of sessions when you would have something written and if you used [an open] tuning you couldn't read the parts because the notes are in a different place. Also, with that thing I was saying about using your head, your heart and your hands and singing something to yourself and then trying to play it... if you use an open tuning, you have to sort of re-learn where every note is. I do manage to achieve quite a bit without using a different tuning."

10 Rhythm parts are where the heart is

"When you do sessions, it's about 95 per cent rhythm, so rhythm and playing riffs is what I enjoy the most. It might be the lead that hits you in the face, but most of my time spent playing has been working out those rhythm parts, and that's what interests me. It's so important getting rhythm parts to contribute towards the song as a whole. You shouldn't really be working too hard on the lead parts anyway, because they should be more spontaneous." 

Chris Spedding's *Joyland* is out now on Cleopatra Records

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DigiTech
by HARMAN



Dear Diary

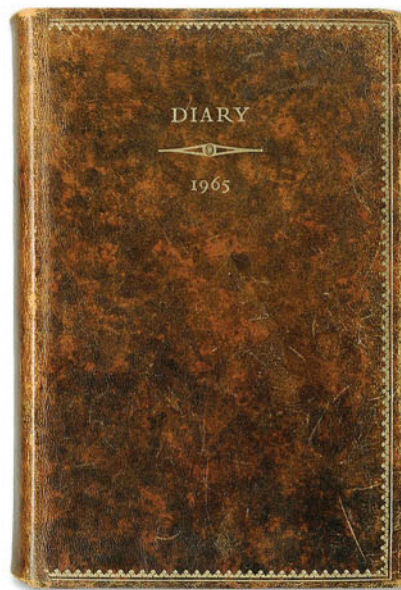
40 years a Rolling Stone, to say that Ronnie Wood has lived a little is a colossal understatement. Yet his swashbuckling rock 'n' roll adventures began way before he hooked up with Keith and Mick, before he was a Face, even before the Jeff Beck Group...

Words Chris Vinnicombe

Rewind the tape half a century or so to 1965 and Ronnie Wood was the guitarist in West London R&B combo The Birds – not to be confused with American West Coast folk-rockers The Byrds, though there was some considerable legal wrangling when Roger McGuinn et al arrived on British shores in the spring of 1965. The Birds with an ‘i’ were a popular live draw in various corners of the UK despite, in Wood’s words, “always suffering” because they never had a hit single. And it’s this formative musical period – in many ways an apprenticeship for what would come later – that Wood recalls fondly as we sit in conversation in The Rolling Stones’ London offices.

Wiry, animated, and powered by Marlboro Golds throughout our interview, the Stones guitarist is here to talk about his latest book, *How Can It Be? A Rock & Roll Diary*, which reprints and annotates the journal that the 17-year-old Wood kept in 1965 while clocking up thousands of road miles and encountering the likes of Eric Clapton and Keith Moon along the way. In the age of social media, it’s rare that any modern teenager would put pen to paper in such a regimented manner.

“To actually sit down and write, it’s a lost art isn’t it?” Wood agrees. “They do it all on their laptop and their phone.” Yet back when London swung, there was much for the teenage guitarist to record for posterity: “There was a lot of camaraderie, really. We were all struggling the same way, all



COURTESY OF GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

doing the circuit, ploughing up and down the lengths of England, starting out of London and then going out into the sticks. The Birds were always suffering from never having a hit record. If we got in the Top 50 it was like, ‘Wow, this is amazing’, because so much stemmed from being in the charts in those days. Whereas The Who would have a No 1 and they’d be in the audience at The Ealing Club going ‘We’re number one,’ and we’re going, ‘You bastards!’.

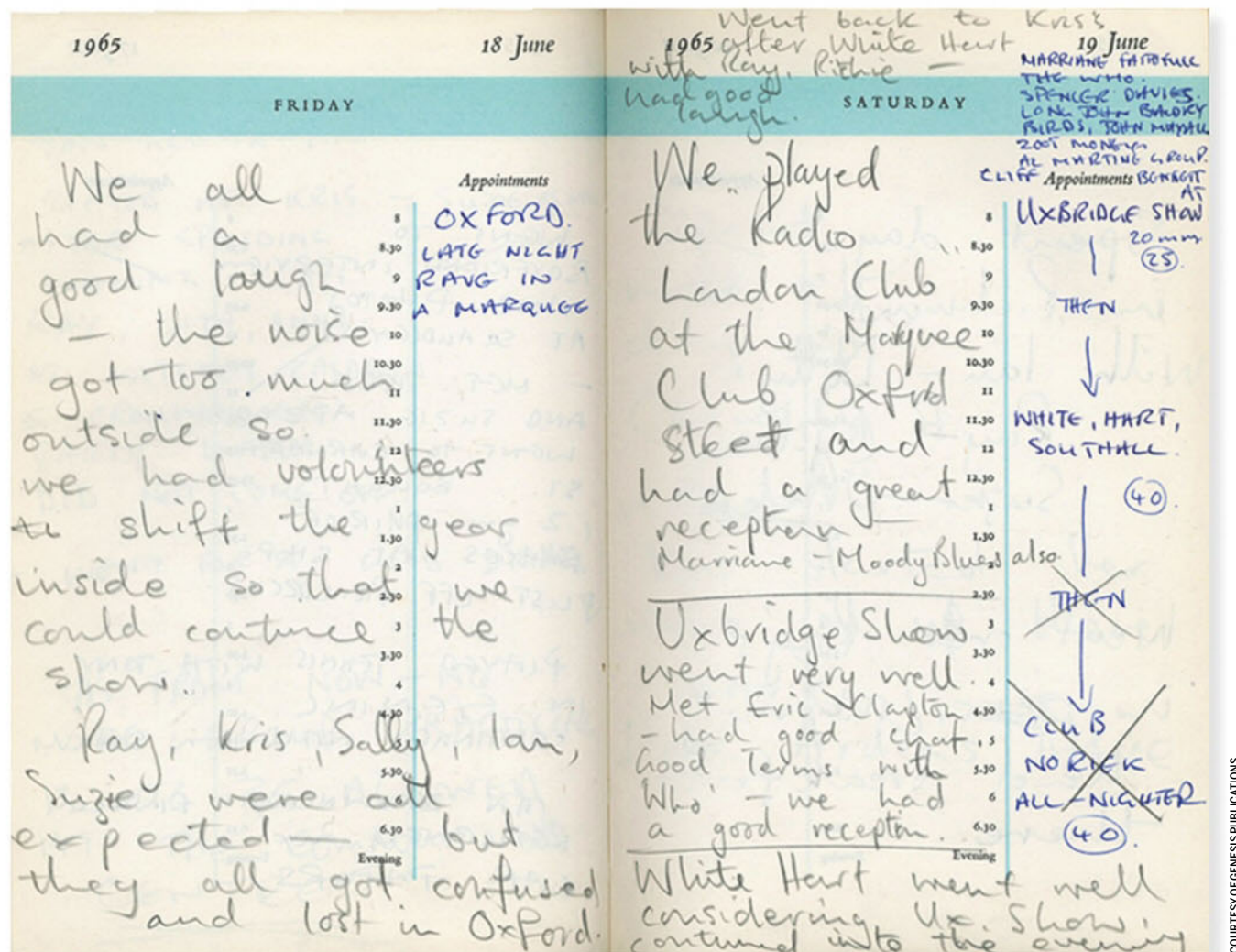
“Moonie would get up and play with us, which really meant a lot. He also came over to my mum’s when I was living with her. I grew up around London Airport way in a

little council house with Keith Moon coming over! Mum and dad were in bed, but he’d be there the next morning on the sofa or something. Or Mitch Mitchell. It was an honour to have these guys over. We knew they were doing something good, and they knew I was doing something good, but they would all take me under their wing and say, ‘Come on Ron, keep it up. You’ll be there one day’.

“I was always younger than these guys, especially the guys that had made it. Eric [Clapton] was a bit older than me. John Mayall, Zoot Money, Georgie Fame and The Stones were that bit older. Later on, when I met Rod Stewart, he was a few years older than me. I always was the youngest and I used to think, ‘Well, my time will come’. And the energy that is in this diary is of totally non-stop hard work, every day of the week, and the girls coming and going, but always the driving force is the music and trying to get better and striving to get better. The same as the art, I always did that as well. So it was nice to find [the diary]. I couldn’t believe it was 50 years ago.”

Who Came First?

How Can It Be? also contains plenty of references to the equipment Wood was using at the time, including a Strat and a Telecaster that he decorated, Pop Art-style, and modified. “The Tele I used with The Birds – I’ve just remembered this – I resprayed the body and put another neck on, a 12-string neck, so it became a 12-string. I’ve lost it now, but it was a great sound.” ➤



COURTESY OF GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

Interestingly, Wood's diary entry for 24 September, 1965 sees him celebrate the arrival of a 100-watt Marshall head and an 8x12 speaker cabinet with "a knockout sound". The date is significant; guitar folklore and Jim Marshall's own recollections credit Pete Townshend as the driving force behind the design of the Marshall 8x12, its angled front section for the top speaker pair providing the blueprint for the iconic look of the Marshall stack that followed. Townshend had already 'stacked' one Marshall 4x12 on top of another beneath his 1960 Fender Bassman head in pursuit of a more imposing backline. But two weeks after receiving his 8x12 cabinets in early November 1965 (their first known live use was 13 November at La Locomotive Club, Paris), The Who's guitarist asked Jim Marshall if they could be cut in half as they were so unwieldy - not to mention hard to topple during the band's riotous concert finales - and it's this moment that's widely credited as the true birth of the Marshall stack. Indeed, the 1960A (angled top) and 1960B (flat base) would go into production by the end of the year.

However, Wood insists that his 8x12 was first: "Jim Marshall's in Hanwell was a big hub. You'd meet other musicians in there.

"You'd get more fearful for your life as you went into Scotland, towards Glasgow, you were lucky to get out of there alive. I saw really terrible things"

Me and Pete Townshend would have an ongoing friendly battle. He'd say, 'I've just had this one made'. When I had my cab made with the eight 12-inch speakers in one cabinet, it was like, 'You bastard'. He was trying to get one made, but I had mine and he actually saw it in the shop. He was advanced on everything else, but I happened to beat him to this special cabinet. He loved it, though, in the end. He has always been a great, supportive influence on me to this day."

Smokestack Lightning

The 17-year-old Wood was embedded in a vibrant music scene, in which there was no shortage of onstage fireworks, as he explains: "Nobody ever bothered to actually get to the finer points of finding out if you were going to get an electric shock and things like that, and I did actually get electrocuted a few times on stage. Once I got sent flying right over the other side of the stage and sent to hospital and they said,

'Well you've got a very strong heart, Mr Wood, you've got to go back and do a second set'. So I did. I had burnt hands."

It's the kind of resilience that would undoubtedly help Wood when he joined The Rolling Stones: "Keith was telling me he did that, too, he got shocked as well like that, 240 volts! You know you got it. So, actually, [never mind the] finer points of sound, you were just lucky to find a socket to get plugged in."

That said, his experiences in The Birds did give Ronnie "a taste" of what would come later during his time with The Faces and The Stones. "Going down to Salisbury, it would be Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich, they were really big down there, and The Birds. For some strange reason, the girls would go nuts and pull their hair and try and get your clothes and pieces of you. There was a little bit of that around Manchester, they used to love us up there.

"Then you'd get more fearful for your life as you went into Scotland, towards Glasgow,

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TO THE GLORY OF GOD
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RANK WHEN V.C. WAS WON	CRIMEA 1854-5	DATE OF DEATH
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SERGE G. SYMONS		18 NOV 1871
LIEUT. F. MILLER		17 FEB 1874
SERGE D. CAMERIDGE		4 JUNE 1882
2ND CAPT. GRONOV. DAVIS		18 OCT 1891
2ND & DRIVER T. MAC ARTHUR (JOE ARTHUR)		2 MAR 1902
1ST LT COL. COLLIER WOOD DICKSON		28 NOV 1904
CAPT. M. C. DIXON		17 JAN 1905
RANK WHEN V.C. WAS WON	KARS 1855	DATE OF DEATH
LIEUT. C. C. TEESDALE		1 NOV 1893
RANK WHEN V.C. WAS WON	INDIAN MUTINY 1857-8	DATE OF DEATH
GNR J. PARK		14 JUNE 1858
ASST COMMY OF ORDNANCE G. FORREST		2 NOV 1859
LIEUT. H. E. HARRINGTON		11 FEB 1861
GNR T. LAUGHERY		1864
SERGE MAJOR P. GILL		1864
BOMBY J. BRENNAN		1864
LT COLONEL H. TOMBS		1864
BRASS COMMY OF ORDNANCE J. J.		1864
GNR H. M. INNES		1864
CAPT. G. A. HENRY		1864
ROUGH RIDER E. JENNINGS		1864
GNR W. CORNOLY		1864
SERGE B. DIAMOND		1864
GNR R. FITZGERALD		1864
ENSIGN P. BODDY		1864
2ND CAPT. F. C. MAUDE		1864
CAPT. W. OLPHERTS		1864
MAJOR H. H. KEATINGE		1864
BOMBY J. THOMAS		1864
2ND P. S. ROBERTS		1864
LIEUT. J. HILLS (AFTERWARDS)		1864
RANK WHEN V.C. WAS WON	NEW	DATE OF DEATH
MAJOR A. E. PICKARD		1864
SERGEANT W. SARGENT		1864
SERGEANT W. SARGENT		1864



"Jim Marshall's in Hanwell was a big hub. You'd meet other musicians in there. Me and Pete Townshend would have an ongoing friendly battle"



The Birds feed the birds in London's Soho Square

COURTESY OF PHIL SNEE/STRANGE THINGS ARCHIVE/GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

you were lucky to get out of there alive. We got out of there alive, so we survived and we didn't get any bottles thrown at us. I saw really terrible things, blood, you know; terrible things happening up there. There were some dodgy areas. I remember Stratford-upon-Avon, getting out of there by the skin of our teeth. The terrible rockers used to come out with gangs, they used to just set on any strangers, it was horrible. Leeds was pretty hard going, and strange areas by the seaside: Blackpool, Cleethorpes... barren, lonely, freezing times, up there with Dave Barry. He had a hit record, but we were up on the bill with him. It was just such an adventure all the time and you're young enough for it all to bounce off – all of the hard work and the not so glamorous side – and get through it all.”

Then And Now

All the time, Wood was unconsciously developing an approach to the guitar that would serve him well as Keith Richards' co-conspirator in what Richards refers to as the “ancient art of weaving”: “It's very unclear to me exactly what I was doing on the guitar in 1965. I enjoyed playing with another guitar player. Tony [Munroe, guitar/vocals] was a rhythm player and I was the lead. I'd have certain parts that I'd

“It's unclear to me exactly what I was doing on the guitar in 1965. I enjoyed playing with another guitar player. I'd always weave with the vocals”

play, but I'd always weave with the vocals. I'd learn from records from Chuck Berry, from Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters, whoever it may be. The Beach Boys, whatever it was, all piled into a melting pot.

“It was all melded together from an early jazz thing through Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke. My brother, Ted, he had all the jazz side, which would weave together with blues and R&B and the Motown and the soul. It was a great way to shape what eventually came out as my own approach. I didn't know it at the time!”

Wood has owned some killer guitars over the years, and his latest squeeze is a heavily modified 1970s Les Paul Goldtop: “I always thought they were too heavy before, I always left them to other people, but I'm really getting off on it. I've had it adapted. I've had a little hole drilled in the top for my slide so I can get it quickly and Mick Taylor doesn't nick it. If I put it down, it's gone, Mick Taylor's got it! I've had the toggle removed because when you're strumming

you always knock it. Pierre de Beauport found it, our roadie. He said, 'I've found this. I'm not quite sure what year it is'. It didn't matter. I just loved the neck on it. I put a pad on it because they cut into you. They're so heavy; they cut into your ribs, so I got a soft thing so it would bounce on your body.”

And when it comes to playing live, there's no need for an 8x10 cabinet. Wood uses “just [Fender] Twins basically. One Twin, and maybe a Boogie, but Dave [Natale] who does the sound out front, he's brilliant because you only need a little amp on the stage and he makes it like a mountain. It peels the lacquer off peoples' teeth. I say, 'Was it loud enough tonight?' He says, 'Yes, the paint was peeling from the ceiling.'”



How Can It Be? A Rock And Roll Diary by Ronnie Wood, the signed limited-edition book of 1,965 copies, is available to order from www.ronniewoodbook.com

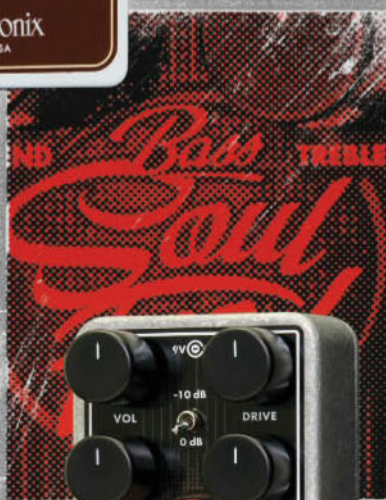


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HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Noel Gallagher's tour supporting his latest No 1 album, *Chasing Yesterday*, is packing them in, doing brisk business in the UK, Europe and now the US. But when *Guitarist* caught up with the former Oasis songwriter, he'd just come from a shaky pre-tour rehearsal and was more than willing to look back on the genesis of the album, songwriting in general and some of his favourite guitars in his considerable arsenal **Words Jeff Slate**

The initial first two weeks is f**king awful," Noel Gallagher confesses, looking back on the past month of rehearsals for what will be more than a year on tour in support of *Chasing Yesterday*. "You get to the end of the second week and think you might have to pull the tour, it's so dreadful. Then it slowly starts to take shape. After about four weeks, we were there, really. It's just fine-tuning now. We're just about to enter the last week, so we're pretty much there now.

"We do two days on and a day off – so Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday – so I give myself plenty of time. Really, we had this nailed a couple of weeks ago, but it's kind of worked out well, because I've got a bit of a cold at the moment. I had a fair few days off. The most frustrating thing is that my band doesn't play on the records, so you kind of have to start again with them, sitting down with a guitarist and bass player to quietly work out the song. Then there's the sounds and the arrangement, who's doing what, even though it's the same line-up as the last tour."

From the reviews that have come in so far, the tour is off to a roaring start and the fine-

tuning was well worth it. So, with catching up and pleasantries out of the way, Gallagher is happy to talk about his music and, especially, his love of songwriting and guitars. In fact, it seems like a welcome relief. "No one wants to talk about the music," he says in defence of his recent headline-grabbing comments about everything from his brother Liam and the state of affairs in and around the Oasis camp to "poor Ed Sheeran", his pal Bono and his now-notorious night out with friends Russell Brand and Morrissey in Los Angeles.

Marr-velous

It's hard not to start out by asking about the dream collaboration between Gallagher and Morrissey's old bandmate, guitar god Johnny Marr, that closes out *Chasing Yesterday*, though. Was there any thought given to Marr joining him on the road?

"He's on the road doing his own thing," Gallagher says, a bit wistfully at the thought of playing onstage nightly with his friend and hero. "Needless to say, if I even had the slightest, one-per-cent thought that Johnny Marr would join my band and play guitar,

I would f**king get on my knees and beg him to do it. He's got a solo thing going on, I think. Rightly so. It's about time he started making records for himself and stopped f**king about.

"I'm about to go on tour for the best part of two years, and he's just coming toward the end of a tour that he's been on for the best part of a year," Gallagher says by way of explaining why the pair, friends since before Oasis even had a record deal, haven't worked together more over the years. "So by the time I get back off this tour, he might be in the studio again. That's the kind of thing that keeps most artists from collaborating, I would have thought. It's the schedule, you know what I mean? It's not the kind of thing that you can just say, 'Okay, we'll meet on Thursday, and what we'll do Thursday is write a song'. We might meet on Thursday, but we might not get anything. You might need a hundred days to write an album, you know what I mean? It's not something you can just knock off on the day. But Johnny's good. If you get him to play on a track, he knows what he's doing."

What was it like to work with Marr in the studio? "Johnny seems to hone in on one

particular thing, like the guitar part on *Ballad Of The Mighty I* that he did for me,” Gallagher says. “He came up with that almost instantly. And then he just refined and refined it until it was perfect. And it didn’t become the Johnny Marr show. He’s very sympathetic to what the song is and what he was going to do in it. He’s not just going to play all over it. He played what was needed, and that was it.”

As for the guitars Marr has reportedly given him over the years, Gallagher brightens when talking about them, almost as if he can’t believe his luck.

“He’s given me three or four guitars down the years,” Gallagher tells us. “He’s given me a 60s Les Paul that used to belong to Pete Townshend, and he’s given me a black Les Paul that was a Smiths guitar that was used on the track *The Queen Is Dead*. He also gave me a Fender Stratocaster. I don’t know what he used it on, but I wrote and recorded *Don’t Look Back In Anger* on it. He only loaned them to me, and I’ve never given them back. He’s not getting them now!

“Actually, I didn’t write *Don’t Look Back In Anger* on a Strat,” Gallagher says, correcting himself. “I wrote it on an acoustic guitar. That was the first time I’d used a Strat on any Oasis track, and then I didn’t use one again, ever, until I went solo. Now I can’t stop f**king using them.”

Strat’s Entertainment

So will Gallagher, known for the array of vintage Gibsons he uses live, be using a Strat on tour?

“I can’t really bring myself to use one live,” he says. “No, is the answer to that. I do like them. I’ve got a copy of a 1963 Fender made by that company Nash. I’ve got to say that if push comes to shove, it might be the greatest guitar I’ve ever played. It’s f**king unreal. The reason I got that guitar is I had an original 1960 cream-coloured Strat that I bought years ago. It’s worth maybe \$25,000. Probably more now. My stupid f**king c**ksucker of a roadie, who has since been fired, lost it – he either stole it, or he lost it, I don’t know – so I was looking around for one. And I was like, ‘F**k, I’m not spending \$25,000 on one.’ I heard about this company, Nash. I bought one off the internet from their website. I’d never seen it or played it. I only knew that somebody had told me they were good, and they were about a third of the price. I figured I’d get one. Anyway, it arrived, and straight out of the f**king box, it was amazing. And I mean

“The Les Paul got damaged on my last tour... My drummer jumped off his drum riser, knocked it off the stand, and snapped the headstock”



Johnny Marr collaborated with Noel on *Chasing Yesterday*

amazing. The neck is f**king outrageous. I could play it all day and night, and I do. I’ve written most of my next album [the follow-up to *Chasing Yesterday*] on it.

“Anyway, the setup that I’ve got is really set up for Gibson 335s. When you plug a Strat in, it just sounds a bit weird, and I don’t really like having a shitload of amps on stage to get different sounds for stuff. Because I’m a lazy f**ker. I’m just like, ‘You know what, I’ll just keep the Strat at home.’”

As for the rest of his live setup, Gallagher likes to keep that simple as well.

“I use a Martin, a modern D-28 – about five years old now – and my [Gibson] J-150, which I’ve had since ...*Morning Glory* days, and the rest is all a Gibson 355 and a couple of Gibson 345s. That’s it, really. The Les Paul got damaged on my last tour, because the f**king idiot guitarist I loaned it to didn’t put it on a stand properly, and my drummer, who is the size of Mount Rushmore, jumped off his drum riser, knocked it off the stand, and snapped the headstock.”

Everybody needs good neighbours

Johnny Marr guests on *Chasing Yesterday*, but close friend and neighbour Paul Weller has also collaborated with him in the past. Noel shares how the two icons’ processes compare.

“Working with Weller? Well, Paul has never really worked on my stuff. I’ve only worked with Paul,” Gallagher says. When we point out their collaboration on *Champagne Supernova* on Oasis’ monumental (*What’s the Story*) *Morning Glory*?, Gallagher scoffs.

“F**king hell, I can’t remember that,” he exclaims, in all seriousness. “That was a long time ago. Jesus. Paul is a kind of ‘let’s throw enough shit at the wall and see what sticks’ kind of guy. Johnny will hone in on a thing quite quickly and develop it until it’s perfect. Paul is a bit more Pop Art, like a collage kind of guy. He throws down lots of different ideas and then goes through a process of elimination. Paul’s a f**king brilliant songwriter and composer. He’s not one for just doing things for the sake of it... The song is the king, and you’re just a part in it.”



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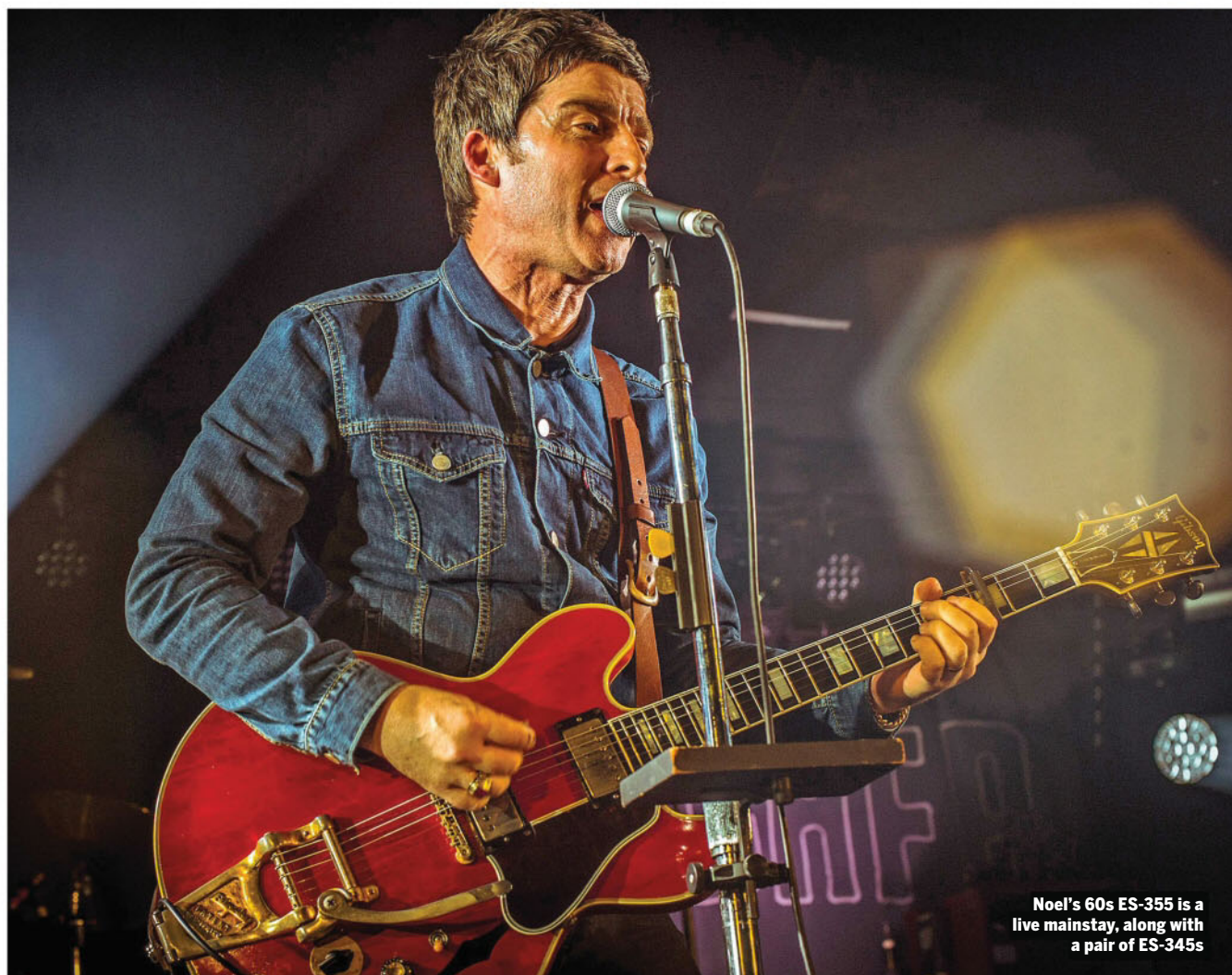
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Keep It Simple

When it comes to the process of songwriting, Noel's equally keen to keep things simple and straightforward. "Before I start the record, I'll do acoustic demos," he says. "I listen to them for quite a while before I actually commit to going in and recording the songs properly. I listen to them in all sorts of different guises, when I'm on a train, a plane, with headphones, in the bedroom, in the shower, I listen to them all over the f**king place. By the time I get in to record them, I've got a fair idea of what I want to do with them. I've never really second-guessed anything, because I'm not really making records for my fans. You can't do that. My fans would want 12 versions of *Wonderwall*. You've got to make records for yourself and be confident that your taste in what you do will turn other people on. Really, you don't get to stick around the way Paul Weller has stuck around and be winging it. I'm sure Paul Weller's record label would love him to write another *Stanley Road*. But I can assure you of this now, if he ever writes another *Stanley Road* it'll be completely by accident, because it's not what he sets out to do. I know him. I know him well as a songwriter and a guy. He is all about f**king looking forwards. He will not repeat himself once."

Considering how different *Chasing Yesterday*, or even 2011's *Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds* for that matter, are to anything Oasis ever tackled musically, does Gallagher feel freed from the artistic constraints of that group, or does he simply subscribe to Weller's idea of constant forward motion? "Yeah, but for me, personally, I just look at the song," Gallagher explains. "If it's a good song, I don't give a f**k what it sounds like. If someone says to me that it's a bit similar to *Wonderwall*, I'll say, 'F**king great.' I don't care. As long as it's a good song, I don't care. If *Lock All The Doors* [a song that Oasis demo'd in the early 90s that's featured on *Chasing Yesterday*] takes 23 years to finish off, the 23 years are worth the wait. By the same rule, when I played people *The Right Stuff*, they were going, 'Well, that's a bit brave, isn't it?' I'd say, 'Really, I don't know what you're talking about.' If it's a good recording of a great tune, that's all that matters to me. I wasn't thinking while employing the saxophone player, 'Wow, this will really f**k with people's brains.' I wouldn't do that just because I thought it would be cool, anyway. It worked with the song. That was it. That's all that matters to me, the song."

Lock All The Doors is a barn-burner, coming right in the middle of *Chasing*

Yesterday, and delivering a glimpse of what Oasis might have sounded like in 2015. "It was a song I wrote in 1992," Gallagher says, matter of factly. "The verse of it, I gave away to The Chemical Brothers for a track I did with them (*Setting Sun*). I kept the chorus and was always kind of meaning to finish it off, for every album we ever did. It didn't make it to *Definitely Maybe*, but I don't know why. I would always revisit it, but I'd never quite get to the place where I could tie a verse to the chorus. I was always playing it at home. What I'd do was start with the chorus and then see if that took me into a second verse. It never did. Then one afternoon, it just fell out of the f**king sky while I was in the supermarket. I was just humming it in the supermarket queue. I knew what key the following line would be, and it just came to me. It was just magic."

Record Machine

As for the process of making records, Gallagher feels confident that his co-production credits on all of his previous albums, each of which has gone Platinum, gave him the tools to fill the producer's chair on his own this time around.

"I'm very good at starting an album and really good at finishing it," he says. "I know when it's finished. I feel my last two records ➤



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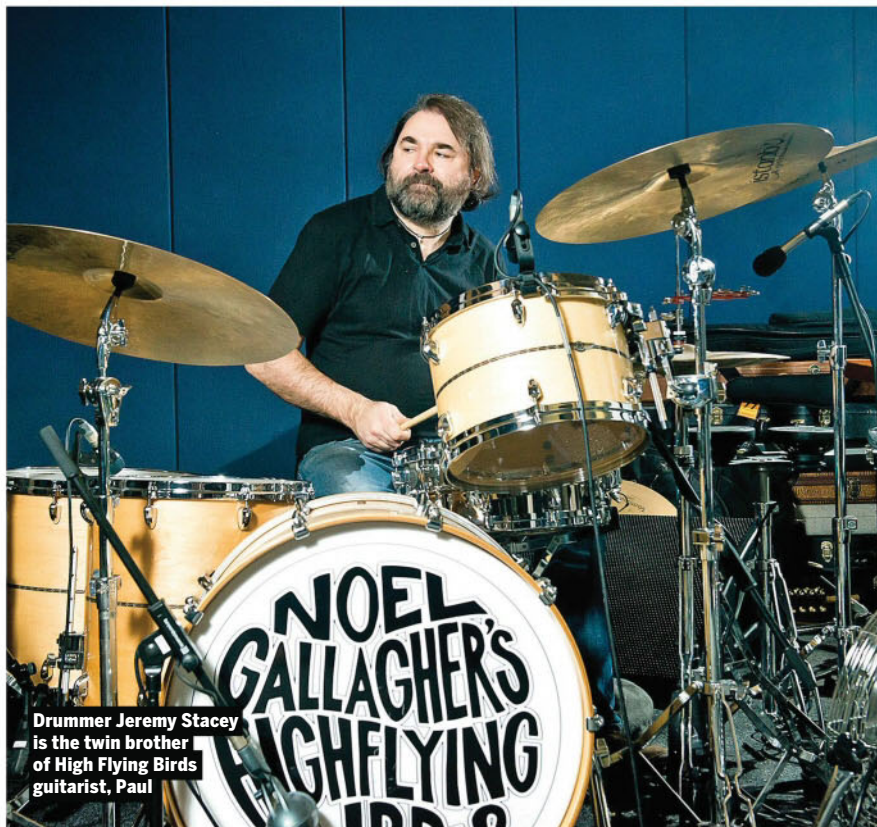
bear that out. I don't think there's much of anything on there – or even from the past, for that matter, except for some obvious spots – that I still wouldn't stand by. That's really the acid test: as the years go by, can you really get behind the song that you wrote 10 years ago? Some of them I can, and some of them I can't. But the two solo records I really can."

Gallagher also gives credit to engineer/guitarist Paul Stacey and his twin brother, drummer Jeremy, who, along with Gallagher, form the backbone of what sounds remarkably like a band on *Chasing Yesterday*.

"Let me say that, on some of them, listening back and doing the credits to find out who played what, Paul and I were listening to some of the tracks, going, 'Is that me or you?'" Gallagher confides. "We had no idea. We thought we each sounded like the other, arguing who had done it, and insisting that it was each other. That's kind of unique, because people usually say, 'No, that's definitely me'. But usually, all the tracks are all me until I get to a point where I'll sit and go, 'I don't f**king like the bass line.' Then I'll try something else, and if I can't get it, I'll hand it to Paul. And nine times out of 10, he comes up with something better.

"Same with the guitar solo on [album opener] *Riverman*. I did that guitar solo a dozen times. Not the actual notes. I did a guitar solo, and I thought, 'I'm not good enough to pull this off. It needs to be a cross between Santana and Peter Green with a little David Gilmour at the end.' I asked if he could do it, and he did it. It'll be like that. It all starts with me until I reach the point where I become aware of my limitations. I'm aware of my limitations as a guitarist, and I'm lucky enough to have a guy who's a fantastic engineer who is also a virtuoso on the guitar. He can play anything. You can throw anything at him. You can say you've got a song that sounds like David Bowie but that you want the guitar solo to sound like *Ashes To Ashes*, and he'll just put it on and that's it. I'll play it, the guitar solo, and I'll think, 'I can't do it.' I hand it to him, and he'll do it.

"He came up with the bassline for *Ballad of the Mighty I*, because we had the track, it was all going swimmingly, and then you listen back and start to pick holes in it. I was thinking that the bassline wasn't memorable enough. It wasn't great enough. I changed it around, did this and that. He



would never ask me if he could play it. He waits. I just handed it to him and asked. Of course, he'd seen me try different styles and fail, and so he could do something that I hadn't thought about. Plus, he comes from a jazz background, so where he comes from is usually in that realm."

Band On The Run

Gallagher has recently made headlines, bemoaning the state of the UK charts and the lack of bands coming up through the ranks. He puts much of it down to the lack of cheap rehearsal space and the fact that the major labels have gobbled up the indie labels that were the birthplace of much of the best music that dotted the charts in the past. But when we ask him about his recent comments in the press it's clear that, in Gallagher's mind, the musical heyday of the 90s is dead and gone.

"Well, I'm sure that if bands were given a chance there'd be a lot out there," Gallagher says. "There's a band called Neon Waltz from Scotland. They're great. But, you know, I get asked for my opinion on these things, and there's a reason there are loads of singer-songwriters. Because no one wants to be in a f**king band anymore. No one wants to be in a band because you can buy enough technology to have a recording studio and a pressing plant in your own bedroom. It's easy for people, for singer-

songwriters. It's convenient. That's why the music sounds easy and convenient."

So would he consider revisiting his glory days, seeing as he seems to miss the band dynamic?

"I did all the interviews anyway," Gallagher says flatly, explaining how little his life has changed as a solo artist. "I wrote all the songs anyway. I co-produced all the albums anyway. So it doesn't really matter to me. What I'm doing now is the same as what I did in Oasis, only it's a lot more peaceful. And the older you get, the more you value shit like that. Anyway, once you've been in a band for 20 years, why would I want to be in another band now at 47?"

As we wrap up, we ask Gallagher to rank *Chasing Yesterday*, and tell us why both his fans, and fans of guitar music in particular, should check it out.

"I've got to say, I'd definitely put it alongside the previous record," he says, proudly. "The previous record I didn't listen to for quite a while, but during rehearsals I went back to revisit it, just to check on songs and all that. I listened to it for the first time in years and thought, 'F**king hell, that's still great.' And I think this one is easily as equal. It's a bit more eclectic. And it is more of a guitar record, I think. I think that 50 per cent of my audience will think this is a better album. The other 50 per cent will think that it's the previous album's equal. I'm not sure that any of my audience wouldn't like it. Why does the world need another Noel Gallagher album? Well clearly it doesn't. Why should it want another Noel Gallagher album? Because it may make them a better person if they listen to it." **G**

"No one wants to be in a f**king band anymore... It's easy for singer-songwriters, it's convenient. That's why the music sounds easy and convenient"



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50 SHADES OF CLEAN

The way we use the term 'clean tone' is clearly a huge grey area. For proof, head to your internet music source of choice and call up previews of these tracks: 'Round Midnight played by Wes Montgomery, *Mr Sandman* played by Chet Atkins, *Wonderful Land* by The Shadows, *Walking On The Moon* by The Police, *Me Neither* by Brad Paisley, and *Lenny* by Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble. These six songs use what we might describe as 'clean' sounds, but in reality those sounds are all vastly different. What binds them together is less that they conform to some observable definition of 'clean', and more that they're *not* heavily overdriven or distorted, and that's where it starts to get really interesting. On the following pages, you'll find a (very) selected history of wonderful guitar sounds that we'd roughly call clean. No doubt you can add many of

your own favourites. It's worth looking right back, because this rich history of tone runs parallel to the development of the electric guitar and its pioneering players. The first challenges for early electric guitarists were to achieve enough volume and fidelity in order to stand out within a band and be heard by the audience. Remember that before amplification existed, bands – like orchestras – relied purely on the acoustic projection of their instruments to be heard. As band sizes dropped due to cost and practicality issues, so did the level of noise they were able to make. Meanwhile, the steel-string guitar was becoming a popular replacement for the banjo, but it didn't project nearly as well, especially for the emerging style of melody playing. It needed to be louder; it needed to be electric.

Early electric guitar amps, however, were small and pushed easily into overdrive by the jazz, country and

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The Devil, as personified by filthy drive, may have the best riffs, but it's clean tones that tug the heartstrings and make simple melodies shimmer. Here's our pick of the finest clean tones



CHET ATKINS

Mr. Sandman

Mr Guitar's take on the Pat Ballard tune saw him use a DynaSonic-loaded Gretsch 6120 to weave his Travis-picked magic around the song's infectious melody.



THE EVERLY BROTHERS

All I Have To Do Is Dream

If ever a clean tone was sympathetic to a lyric, this is it. Chet Atkins once again provides the understated, none-more-50s backing.



DUANE EDDY

Rebel Rouser

Rock riffing at its most primal, but not really distorted – you just need a Gretsch 6120 with DynaSonic, a 100-watt amp and plenty of swagger.



THE VENTURES

Walk Don't Run

This surf instrumental was written by Johnny Smith six years earlier. Don Wilson's Strat chords, and Bob Bogle's Jazzmaster lead are an inspired pairing.



THE SHADOWS

Wonderful Land

Apache is Hank Marvin's best-known riff, but we like this Jerry Lordan-penned hymn to clean Strat tone best. Hank's sound is made lush by tape delay.



THE BEACH BOYS

Surfin' U.S.A.

Is there anything that evokes the thrill of wave-riding in Pacific surf better than Carl Wilson's chiming intro lick to *Surfin' U.S.A.*?



THE BYRDS

Mr. Tambourine Man

Roger McGuinn was the only Byrd allowed to play on the band's debut single, but he instantly coined the archetypal jangle sound of a Rickenbacker 360 12-string.



ROY BUCHANAN

Sweet Dreams

On the dirtier side of clean, but piercingly beautiful in its clarity, this instrumental cover of Don Gibson's song is a lesson in licks, phrasing and tone all at once.



STEVE MILLER BAND

Rock'n Me

Miller's nod to Free's *All Right Now* was played on a Strat; he's still playing the No 1 song today on a '62 Relic model.



STEELY DAN

Josie

Steely Dan's album *Aja* set a new benchmark for pristine production, and the tight rhythm riff on closing track *Josie* is as cool, clean and slippery as an ice cube.



SISTER SLEDGE

Thinking Of You

Nile Rodgers is the force behind Chic, but this might be his greatest playing. Underpinned by Bernard Edwards' badass bass, this is a clean masterclass.



DIRE STRAITS

Sultans Of Swing

Mark Knopfler's finest hour sees him exploit his hybrid picking technique and country-blues leanings to evoke London's smoky, grimy music scene.



SRV & DOUBLE TROUBLE

Lenny

SRV's ode to his wife owes a debt to Hendrix, but cleaned up thanks to Stevie's pairing of a mid-60s Strat with Dumble and Fender amps.



THE SMITHS

This Charming Man

The lead line in Marr's jangly classic wasn't played on Johnny's Rickenbacker, but a 1954 Telecaster tuned up to F#, which gives those 3rds a highlife-style sound.



CHRIS ISAAK

Wicked Game

On Isaak's biggest hit (featured in David Lynch's movie *Wild At Heart*), James Calvin Wilsey played the distinctive twang on his 1956 Fender Strat.



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

Scar Tissue

John Frusciante played his '62 Strat retro-fitted with Seymour Duncan SSL1 single coils on this – a gift from Anthony Kiedis.



ERIC JOHNSON

East Wes

This tribute to Wes Montgomery shimmers with superb playing. Its influence is heard in Guthrie Govan's playing on *Flatlands* by The Aristocrats.



RICHARD HAWLEY

Darlin' Wait For Me

The Gretsch-wielding songsmith is on majestic form on this ballad that recalls Duane Eddy and Scott Walker.



JOHN MAYER

Queen Of California

Mayer often pushes his Two Rock amp heads with Ibanez Tube Screemers and a Keeley Katana Clean Boost, but this is the sweetest of clean Fender tones.



JIM CAMPILONGO

Heaven Is Creepy

Although influenced by Roy Buchanan, NYC's Campilongo has his own touch and tone courtesy of his '59 Fender Tele and Princeton combos. Proof that clean can be heavy! ➤



There are few more evocative examples of surfy clean tone than The Beach Boys' *Surfin' U.S.A.*

“ANY AND EVERY CLEAN SOUND YOU CAN IMAGINE IS RIGHT THERE IN THE PLETHORA OF MODERN AND VINTAGE GEAR ON THE MARKET”

swing players who used them. Small cabinets, small speakers and primitive circuits meant the frequency ranges weren't as wide as later amps. Ironically, we've come to love the 'imperfect' characteristics of those early amps – the sounds they were never supposed to make – but back in the 1940s and 50s, the race was on to just make a louder and cleaner sound. Consider Charlie Christian's late-30s dark and plummy tone, the result of his electrified Gibson ES-150 (or 250) archtops played through a low-power Gibson amp.

By the time of Wes Montgomery's most noted output, Gibson's humbucking pickup and far more powerful amps had appeared on the market. With leaps forward in recording fidelity to boot, Wes's clean jazz tones of the 1960s were very different from Charlie's, quite apart

from their differences in playing style and technique.

And so it went in popular music and the nascent rock 'n' roll: solidbody electrics arrived in the early 1950s with thinner strings, paving the way to a different kind of twang. More powerful amps with more efficient speakers, partnered with both hollow- and solidbodies to open up a whole new world of sustain and response. Effects were in their infancy; physically-created reverbs, echoes and tremolo were about the extent of it, and you can hear Duane Eddy, for example, putting them to fantastic use in his seminal *Rebel Rouser* from 1958. For anyone under 30 years old, it's probably hard to imagine a time when you simply couldn't buy an effects pedal or processor, such has been their subsequent profound influence on guitar tones since the last third of the

20th century. Would The Edge's complex clean rhythms, for example, have had the same impact without the dual, modulated delays?

ANY CLEAN YOU WANT

Over the past 70 years, the 'clean' electric guitar sound's evolution has been defined as much by the available technology as by the creative vision of players and composers. They used what they had and worked with the gear's limitations; you might even argue that those limitations were an essential part of the whole creative process.

In 2015, we find ourselves in a subtly different place. Guitar players still want to sound fantastic and discover 'new' sounds, but no longer are we constrained by technology or available gear. Any and every clean sound you can imagine is right there in the plethora of modern and vintage gear on the market, be it an amp, pedal, guitar, digital algorithm or any combination thereof. Our great advantage – or disadvantage, depending on your point of view – is that wonderful history of sound from which we can learn and draw inspiration. Is this love or confusion, as one pioneering exponent of clean sounds once put it? That's to say, what kind of clean are you today? **G**

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Five Steps To A Clean Setup

You won't get a great clean tone if your gear isn't fit for purpose. Follow our tweaks and tips to get your guitar ready for that sparkling sound



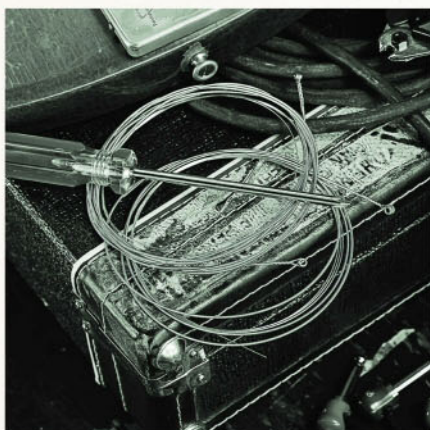
1

PREP YOUR 'BOARD & FRETS

Lay your guitar on a table or bench in front of you. Ideally, support the neck, especially if you have a back-angled headstock. Remove all your strings. Firstly, you need to clean any gunk off your fingerboard. If it's a maple fingerboard, it'll already have a finish on it, so you can use any silicone-free cleaner or polish. If you have a rosewood or ebony 'board, it will be unfinished.

There are numerous fingerboard-cleaning products – lemon oil is one. Apply a little oil to a clean cloth or paper towel and rub it into the 'board. Pay special attention to the edges of the frets. Your fingernail, a stiff toothbrush or the edge of a credit card can help to remove stubborn gunk build-up. Use as little oil as possible and when it's all clean-looking, give it a good final rub with a clean cloth or kitchen paper. Oil-finished maple 'boards can be treated in the same manner; relic'd maple 'boards, too – the wear and dirt, even after cleaning, is part of the appeal.

Fret wear can cause buzzing, and that's not clean! If you have noticeable wear, take your guitar to a pro for stoning and/or refretting.



2

CONSIDER PICKUP OPTIONS

Clean tone invariably means lower-powered pickups to avoid driving the front end of your amp. If you don't have the budget to change pickups, you can simply lower them away from the strings. There is no set rule here, but if you fret the outer strings at the top fret, you're looking to have a minimum clearance between the underside of the string and the top of the pickup or pole piece of around 2.5-to-3mm for a humbucker. It should be around 2.5mm on the treble side and 3.5mm on the bass side with a Strat-style single coil. Experiment with these heights, you won't do any harm. The 'best' sound is simply the one that you like most.

Once everything is clean, remember to give your guitar and strings a good rub down with a clean cloth after a playing or practice session. It ain't very rock 'n' roll, but it will keep things clean and prolong the life of your strings.



3

CHANGE YOUR STRINGS

Fresh strings are crucial to clean tone. Long-life coated strings are a good choice. Yes, they are more expensive but they'll stay brighter for longer. We'd recommend Elixir Nanoweb, and have had very good results with D'Addario's new NYXLs, which aren't coated but are, seemingly, longer-lasting. But there's no such thing as 'the best' string; that's simply the one that best suits you and your guitar.

Most electric guitarists favour .009 or .010 string gauges, although some like .008 or .011. With clean-tone playing being very exposing, make sure the gauge isn't too light; we've heard guitarists with a heavy fretting technique put a perfectly tuned guitar badly out of tune! Tip: play one fretted note and keep reducing pressure until the note buzzes. The stage before this is an ideal amount of pressure to apply.



4

CHECK YOUR INTONATION

Every time you change string gauge, or brand, and/or change your action, you need to check your intonation – more important than ever in these Auto-Tune times. Digital tuners are highly accurate these days and most good ones will do for setting your intonation. We still swear by our much-loved Peterson Virtual Strobe... Compare the harmonic at the 12th fret with the fretted note at the same fret. If the fretted note is flat, the saddle needs to be moved forwards, towards the nut. Just remember FRET-FLAT-FORWARD. Of course, if the fretted note is sharp to the harmonic, move it away from the nut.

5

SET THE ACTION

Consider raising your action (the height of the strings above the frets) slightly to avoid any fret buzz. Always slacken your strings before raising the height of the saddles. If you're comfortable adjusting your truss rod, you want to go for a very slight amount of relief, especially if you have any buzzing in lower positions. If you have no idea what we're talking about, go to a pro.





MAKE ROOM

IF YOU WANT GREAT CLEAN SOUNDS – OR
SOMETHING CLOSE TO CLEAN – YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT HEADROOM. WHAT IS IT?
AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

WORDS MICK TAYLOR

Have you ever found the 'headroom' knob on your amps or pedals? No, neither have we – but we're always talking about it, extolling its virtues, and often wishing we had more or less of it. Headroom is the elusive entity that we can hear but not see; feel but not touch. It also lies at the heart of setting up a guitar sound that you love, not just in terms of gain and EQ, but in the all-important areas of feel, dynamics and sustain. There's no right and wrong, and every guitarist uses it in a slightly different way – intriguing, huh?

THE 'BELS, THE 'BELS

Guitar amps, pedals and processors are audio systems; they take a signal in, amplify it (among other functions), and push it out again. Every audio system has two key levels: the first is the noise floor (below which you can't hear anything when measured at particular constants); the second is where the signal clips and goes into distortion. If we're talking about television audio, mastering an album or recording a voiceover, for example, the ideal place

for your audio level is somewhere above the noise floor (obviously), but well below the distortion point of that particular device. How far below? Well, that gap is your headroom.

Here's a definition, then, and while it's crucially important in recording and subsequent playback and broadcast, it's not especially helpful for guitar amps and pedals themselves. 'Headroom is the space between your maximum metered level and the point at which distortion/clipping occurs in a specific device. It's a section of dynamic range that you don't deliberately use, but is there to accommodate peaks in sound without clipping.' The pro- and broadcast-audio worlds have various guidelines on specific levels for headroom, around which your VU meter is based.

When it comes to guitar sounds, however, the term tends to be used in a different sense, not least because we spend most of our lives deliberately clipping signals into distortion within amps and pedals. Take a common-or-garden 50-watt Marshall Plexi, for example. If you turn everything up to

maximum and hit it with a Les Paul Standard, you'll eventually hear two audio sections – the preamp and the power stage – well past their respective clipping points; they've both run out of headroom. If you then step on a boost pedal to add 20dB of gain, the output level certainly won't jump by anything like 20dB; it will just get more mushy and distorted.

Now take that same Marshall Plexi and set the volume controls to between two and three. It's working above the noise floor but below the clipping points in both pre- and power sections. If you step on the boost pedal now, guess what? The amp gets much louder because it has the dynamic range – the headroom, as we'd call it – to increase the level before clipping.

As you can tell from our Marshall example, guitar amps and pedals aren't really designed for staying out of the headroom zone, they're about getting in there and deliberately manipulating it. You may well want to slam the front end of your amp to create distortion, yet require far more dynamic range in the power section to make sure that

Optimised Amps

Here are nine amps that will get those clean tones singing loud and clear*



FENDER
ML HOT ROD DEVILLE £1,054

Pretty much any Fender amp over 40 watts will be good for clean tones. This latest Hot Rod series amp is a 2x12 DeVille tweaked to ace guitarist Michael Landau's specs, removing the overdrive channel and adding a second clean (but driveable) channel with a volume boost and new Celestion V-Type speakers, too.



TWO-ROCK
STUDIO PRO PLUS SERIES £1,799

John Mayer is the poster boy for this Californian boutique brand. The Studio Pro is the best-selling range, here in 'Plus' mode with tremolo circuit and expansion control for extra gain. The 35-watt is loud enough for most, while the 50- and 100-watt models offer massive 3D cleans.



VICTORY
V40 THE DUCHESS £829

This *Guitarist* Choice-winning compact head concentrates on clean and low-gain sounds, aimed at blues, roots, country and jazz players. It will drive if you push it, but its 40 watts give voice to a range of old-school sounds at real-world modern volumes. Built in the UK, easy to carry, loud enough to gig and great with pedals.



MESA/BOOGIE
RECTO-VERB 25 HEAD £1,199

Boogie's clean sounds may live in the shadow of its distortion, but you can get high-headroom Fender-like cleans out of pretty much any Boogie's first channel. While this one boasts 'only' 25 watts, it puts them across confidently for live use, and there's built-in reverb, too.



VOX
AC30 CUSTOM C2 £959

While Fender was evolving more powerful amps in 1950s America, Vox was doing the same in the UK, albeit with a different circuit and sound. Its legacy is in the music of The Shadows, The Beatles and more. This variant adds a master volume, so it sings at real-world volumes.



JACKSON
AMPWORKS BAKERSFIELD £TBA

Brad Jackson is a rising star of the amp world. Introduced at 2015's NAMM show, this all-valve head packs in 120 watts of high-headroom, 6L6-powered cleans. It has a half-power switch for the times when peeling paint off walls isn't what you're after, plus a reverb and tap tremolo.



HENRIKSEN
JAZZAMP 112-ER £899

This amp is optimised for archtop jazz guitars but also works well with flat-top and nylon-string acoustics. Designed to offer the most 'pure' and 'natural' reproduction of your guitar, you get 120 watts of clean, solid-state power with a five-band EQ section and reverb.



ZT AMPLIFIERS
LUNCHBOX £299

130 watts RMS from a 10-inch-wide chassis that weighs just 4.5kg is a compelling proposition. This solid-state 6.5-inch speaker-equipped mini-marvel has a simple top panel featuring a lone tone control alongside gain, master and 'ambience' for a more closed- or open-back feel.

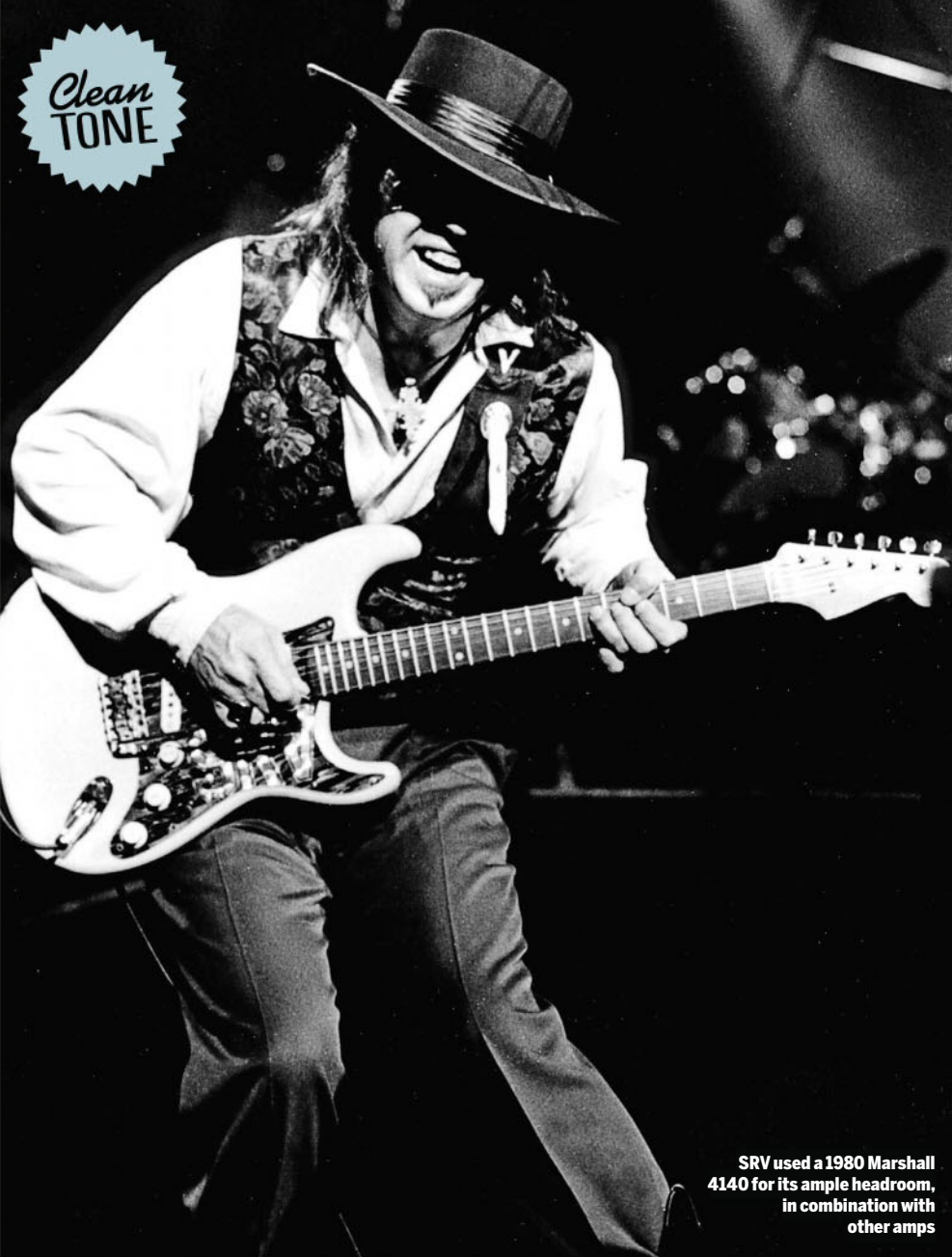


FUCHS
CLEAN MACHINE 150 £TBA

Headroom, headroom, headroom: this single-channel monster is part-inspired by Dumble's fabled Steel String Singer, using four 6550 power valves. The output stage has more in common with a big bass amp than a traditional valve guitar amp, and the reverb is to die for.

*OKAY, 11 THEN. THE FENDER '65 TWIN REVERB REISSUE AND ROLAND JC-120 SIMPLY GO WITHOUT SAYING!

Clean
TONE



SRV used a 1980 Marshall 4140 for its ample headroom, in combination with other amps

distorted sound remains loud and clear; moreover that it responds to the dynamics in your playing style. Equally, you may want to set your preamp much lower – or indeed find an amp with a greater degree of dynamic range – so that you have the headroom to handle additional level from pedals. Either way, understanding where that dynamic range is and how it reacts to your guitar is crucially important in getting a sound that you love and, most important of all, inspires you to play.

PEDALS, VOLTAGE & HEADROOM

Let's take another practical example that explores how headroom works in analogue devices. You may be aware of pedals that can operate at different voltages. The Fulltone Full-Drive 2's manual, for example, encourages you to experiment with either nine- or 18-volt operation. Running at nine volts, when the pedal is getting to the limit of the power supply's voltage, the pedal will

“HEADROOM IS THE ELUSIVE ENTITY THAT WE CAN HEAR BUT NOT SEE, FEEL BUT NOT TOUCH”

distort and – here's another term – ‘sag’ more. It's the same reason why some players like slightly depleted batteries in certain pedals, or use the power ‘sag’ function on certain power supplies: less voltage means more compression; more voltage sag. Back to the Full-Drive 2: if you leave the pedal with the same settings and hit it with 18 volts, you'll notice it sounds bolder, and possibly louder. Why? Because the increased power supply has increased the pedal's headroom before clipping. Likewise, the fabled Klon Centaur and the many pedals it inspired use a voltage charge ‘pump’: more headroom for a bigger, more dynamic sound.

Practical advice

WANT a bigger, cleaner tone with more headroom? Try these...

- Use a more powerful amp
- Set your amp's preamp level lower, and your master volume higher
- Same goes for pedals: low gain/high output
- Be judicious with your EQ – valve amps drive harder when you push the EQ harder
- Choose a clean boost pedal instead of an overdrive or distortion
- Find pedals that can run at higher voltages, or that have an internal voltage boost
- In valve amps that will take it, try a lower-gain valve in position 1 or 2: for example, a 5751 in place of a 12AX7
- Consider a more powerful, more efficient speaker for your amp
- Using a compressor and boost together can create the impression of a big sound at low volumes
- Try a boost pedal in your amp's effect loop if it has one

MORE HEADROOM: MORE CLEAN

Our short overview has hardly provided a scientific discussion on the subject of headroom. If you want that, there are plenty of websites and textbooks that can fill in the theory gaps. What we hope you'll do, instead, when exploring clean sounds is to dive deep into the different combinations of gain/volume/master/output controls in your rig in order to gain a better understanding of where it works best for you. Of course, you may already be there, or you may be a long way off. It would be good to know, wouldn't it? 

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Enhancing Pedals

Fancy a pedal or three to make the most of your clean tones? Try these...



J ROCKETT
ARCHER £149

We all want that elusive boosting pedal that doesn't overdrive to the point where the core tone is lost. Well, this is our current fave. Based on the unobtainable Klon Centaur, the Archer sounds very similar at a fraction of the cost.



TC ELECTRONIC
HALL OF FAME REVERB £120

There was a time when reverb pedals were to guitarists as ready meals are to fine diners. No longer: you'll find this digital delight on 'boards everywhere, offering a selection of space-inspired 'verbs. There's also a Mini version.



STRYMON
FLINT £279

There are two essential clean-tone effects in one pedal here: tremolo and reverb. You get three different styles of each effect, but perhaps most usefully of all, you're able to change the order of the effects.



MOOER
TRELICOPTER £49

If you want an entry point to tremolo, this is great value. It's based on an optical circuit, with 'depth' and 'speed' controls, and has a 'bias' pot to alter the feel and pulse of the waveform. For absolute quality, try a Demeter Tremulator.



KEELEY
4 KNOB COMPRESSOR £235

Robert Keeley's award-winning two-knob compressor was based on the now-hard-to-find Ross Compressor. This 4 Knob model adds 'attack' and 'clipping' controls to 'sustain' and 'level'. Try it with country, funk and blues styles.



TC ELECTRONIC
FLASHBACK TRIPLE DELAY £235

Almost any delay will sound good with a clean tone, be it for retro slapback, or stereo ping-pong madness. This pedal offers the ability to use three different delays separately, or stacked next to (or on top of!) one another.



FULLTONE
MDV-1 MINI DEJÁVIBE £199

Mike Fuller's latest evolution of the Uni-Vibe design uses a photocell-based circuit for phase-y Hendrix, Floyd and Trower-type tones in chorus mode. In vibrato mode, it's pitch modulation, with a modern/vintage switch, too.



BOSS
CE-5 CHORUS £80

There was a time in the late 1970s and early/mid-80s when you couldn't escape chorus, and as a result it can sound dated. That said, you can coax some evocative tones from the effect, especially this range-topper from Boss.



MESA/BOOGIE
TONE BURST BOOST £169

We like this boost for its bass and treble pots, enabling you to tailor your EQ and signal level. Boosts can push an amp into light overdrive, add punch and clarity after a long chain of pedals and make clean sounds bigger.



Clean Up Your Act

Crystalline clean tones are beautiful but unforgiving – so you'll need to buff up some basic techniques to get the most bang from your twang

WORDS JASON SIDWELL

1

ARTICULATION IS KING

Unlike distortion, which can even out volume discrepancies, playing with a clean tone will expose the differences between picked notes and hammer-ons/pull-offs. Dynamic variations are musical – indistinct or fluffed notes not so much! This is why it's really worthwhile focusing on articulating notes clearly by practising simple chromatic or scalar patterns that rely on your fretting hand to sound the notes. Come stage time – or the studio's red light – you'll be glad of your crisp fretting technique!

2

USE FINGERS EFFECTIVELY

Players from a classical or acoustic guitar background tend to always fret with finger tips unless barre chords (or similar such) are needed. Using fingertips promotes good note production and allows accompanying open strings to ring out clearly. For many electric-guitar players, though, using the finger pad has real benefits, as the exposed fingertip can butt up against the lower string down from the one fretted, stopping unwanted string noise that (perhaps) the picking hand hasn't sorted out.

3

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE ATTACK

How notes are sounded can often seem more important than how long they sound for. This is as noticeable for rock legato-based players (legato really means smooth and connected, not notes played mostly with hammer-ons and pull-offs) as it is for funky chord players. Experimenting with how long and how clipped chords are sounded is as musically valid as how well you can alternate-pick a scale. For example, can you make a chord so clipped it sounds like a drummer's closed hi-hat?

4

NIX THE NOISE

Unwanted handling noise breaks the spell of serene clean tone, so you'll want to keep it to a minimum. A good rule of thumb is to rest your picking hand on the strings below the string you're picking: low-string resonance is the commonest (and loudest) generator of unwanted string noise. If your guitar part involves precise high-string playing, this muting technique will prove invaluable. The next important consideration is controlling unwanted string noise that occurs above the string you're picking. This task falls to the underside of the fretting hand's fingers, resting one or more fingers across the idle strings to mute them. If you've a low-string riff, this approach will clean your performance up nicely.

5

PAY ATTENTION TO PICKIN'

Having a versatile approach to picking strings can aid both clarity and timing. Your picking options are strict alternate picking, as mastered by Deep Purple's Steve Morse; consecutive down-and-up strokes, a hallmark of James Dean Bradfield's playing; hybrid picking using pick and fingers, a favoured technique of Yes's Steve Howe; or fingers alone, which Nick Drake preferred. Also, put some time into practising arpeggio-based songs such as The Manic Street Preachers' *Design For Life* or The Police's *Every Breath You Take*. A lot of clean rhythm parts rely on tight arpeggiation and while it may seem simple, if you don't have a few options up your sleeve, you can come a cropper!

6

SCULPT YOUR TONE TO FLATTER CLEANS

Consider playing chords without the lowest two strings; bass strings will drive your amp harder than high strings, so not playing them can further 'clean up' your part. Using a touch of compression can tighten your guitar tone, too, increasing sustain and evening out picking dynamics – an area that will be more exposed when playing clean. Be careful not to set sustain settings too high, otherwise you may blur the part's overall clarity: try attack at one o'clock and sustain at 10 o'clock for a cutting part without OTT sustain. Check out players such as Johnny Marr and Andy Summers as well as country guitarists such as Brent Mason for crisp, tight and focused compressed cleans.



"I never found a distortion pedal I liked. They always detracted from the musical qualities of a great amp. The Elevator makes distortion pedals obsolete."

~ G.E. Smith
(Bob Dylan, Roger Waters, Hall & Oates, Mick Jagger)



"After all the years of searching... no need to look further. The Elevator is it!"

~ Jerry Donahue
(The Hellcasters, Gerry Rafferty, Elton John, Warren Zevon, Bonnie Raitt)



"The Elevator's transparency is stunning, with great fidelity that doesn't ever make the guitar sound harsh as often happens with gain-changing boxes. The Elevator-it's a gain changer!"

~ John Jorgenson
(The Hellcasters, Bob Seger, Johnny Cash, Barbra Streisand)



"The Elevator can do any number of cool things. It drives my amp without adding too much gain or artificial character - like a hi-fi Tube Screamer."

~ Scott Sharrard
(The Allman Brothers, The Gregg Allman Band)



"The Elevator is the cleanest, most dynamic boost pedal I've ever used. It heats up the amp just enough to growl, yet pushes the gain channel enough to soar above the mix! And here's the kicker...it leaves the tone you worked so hard to get intact! This thing's amazing!"

~ Jeff Bihlman
(Bihlman Brothers)



"The Elevator is now THE boost pedal in my touring rack. It's absolutely great. Very flexible sonically.... the perfect solo boost pedal."

~ Steve Stevens
(Billy Idol, Michael Jackson, Vince Neil)



"YES! I wanted a clean Strat tone with more sustain, but retaining the inherent sparkle and shimmer of the guitar. The Elevator worked perfectly as a boost and made the sum of the parts better than anything on its own."

~ Carl Verheyen
(Supertramp)



"The Elevator is the ultimate clean boost. It sounds fantastic. As soon as I turned it off, I was shocked at how wimpy everything sounded! I'll be leaving it on from now on."

~ Michael Thompson
(LA Session guitarist - David Foster, Babyface, Seal, Michael Buble)

"The Elevator... it's a gain changer!!"

~ John Jorgenson

Elevator...a multi-level booster that leaves your tone alone!



Level-6:

3-position Mid-Boost to add sustain and increase your stage presence.

Level-5:

Power booster to unleash up to +18dB of natural clean gain for solos.

Level-4:

Baseline boost drives your amp's input stage for extra punch and control.

Level-3:

Drag™ control sets the load on your pickups for optimal performance.

Level-2:

Pure Class-A Buffer with 100% discrete electronics for ultimate tone.

Level-1:

True Bypass sends pure guitar signal to the amp without effect.

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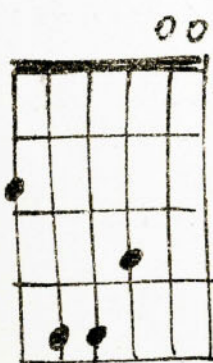
Clean
TONE

CAPTIVATING CHORDS

A CLEAN TONE ENHANCES ALL THE
HARMONIC SUBTLETIES OF A CHORD. SO
GRAB YOUR GUITAR, PLUG IN TO YOUR
CLEAN CHANNEL AND SHIMMER AWAY...

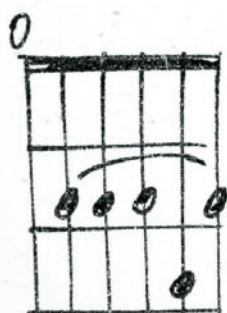
WORDS ADRIAN CLARK

When you've spent time crafting a shimmering clean tone, the first thing you want to do is hit a lush, expansive chord and bathe in the overtones. Here's an unashamedly luxuriant selection – if you're using effects, try adding a rich 'hall' or 'plate' reverb and a wash of stereo chorus...



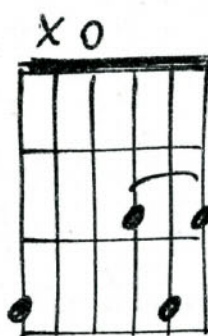
F#11

Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson is probably responsible for introducing quite a few heavy-rock guitarists to the world of interesting chords, with his extensive use of chiming chorus-laden suspensions. Here's a nice easy way to play F#11. Turn up the chorus depth control!



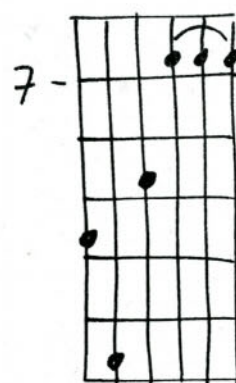
Em9sus4

This one lacks a 3rd, so will work in either an E minor or E major (Mixolydian) context. This ambiguity gives it a kind of static, open sound that's somewhat reminiscent of mid-60s modal jazz. Lop off that bottom E and you have a movable minor 11 shape... Bm11 in this position.



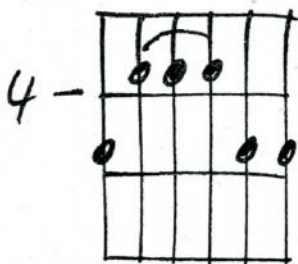
Gmaj7sus2

Shimmering clean-tone chords don't have to have open strings, but as you'll see, it helps. You can have a wider range of notes without tying your fingers in knots and the open notes always sustain so well. This chord functions either as a D major over a G bass, or as a modified Gmaj7.



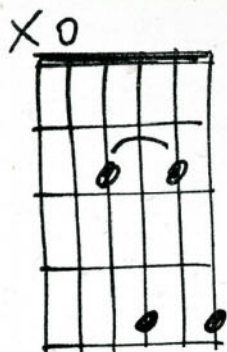
D6

This one is a bit of a stretch, so let's move up the neck to save your tendons. The sweet sound of the major 6th gives this a kind of fake Hawaiian sound, so try using subtle tremolo-bar scoops and vibrato to simulate a lap-steel sound. Maximum cheese!



A6add9

The 6th interval adds a sweetness to the chord, totally unlike the rather detached mystery of the added 9ths and suspended 2nds. This movable shape adds both 6th and 9th for a rich complexity. This chord is very popular in Western swing and other styles related to country and jazz.



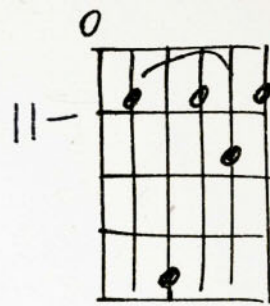
Amaj9

Although this is very similar to the previous chord in terms of construction, the major 7th gives it a totally different sound... wistful and slightly sad. Unfortunately, it's not movable, so you get only the full effect in the key of A.



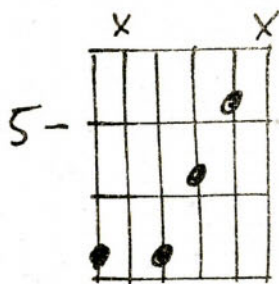
F#9sus4

This isn't comfortable, but it's worth it for the sound! It seems to work best in an F# minor context, but the lack of 3rd means it'll also work in F# major. In the long run, the easiest way to play it is to barre the 2nd-fret notes with the pad of your second finger. Practice makes perfect...



Emaj9

Here's another major 9 chord, with a lovely shimmer. Again, it's not movable in this form, but it can be, if you can do without the bass note. You'll then be playing a chord without a root note – but hey, that's what bass players are for, right?



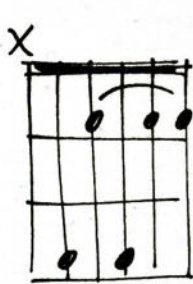
B9sus4

Somehow, the dissonance of most dominant 7th-type chords doesn't lend itself to shimmering clean tones, but here's a compromise. This 9sus4 will work in both B major and B minor contexts, as a substitute for a regular B7, or even as a substitute for A major.



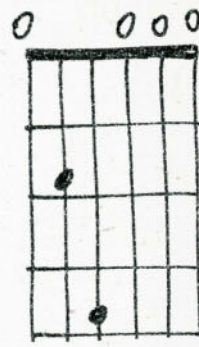
Cadd9

The key to this sort of sound seems to be a certain level of complexity. Simple major, minor or powerchords don't work quite so well. More notes create a wider range of complex overtones, adding to the lushness. Here's a nice, easy Cadd9 to start with...



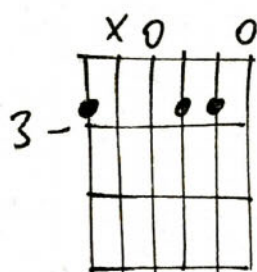
Cm7add11

We'll now skip to some of the 'flat' keys, where you may sacrifice some of the open strings, but you're still left with plenty of possibilities. This movable shape can easily be used in place of the standard minor 7 chord, with the added 11th providing a hint of mystery.



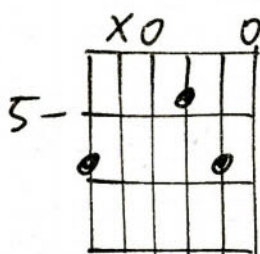
Emadd9

As you can probably imagine, the keys of E major and E minor are great for big shimmering chords, simply because of the pitch range of the open strings available in standard tuning. Let's have just one more add9 chord, eh?



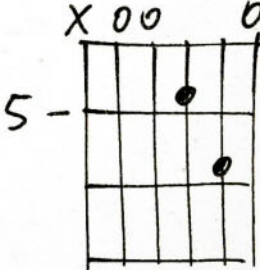
Gm6

While the major 6th chord is known for its 'sweet' qualities, the minor 6th is a very different beast. Is there a hint of Cold War espionage in here? Like all the chords here, this should work well with its neighbours above and below, but also try alternating with a D major (even better with F# in the bass).



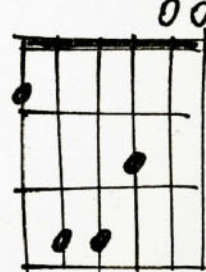
Bbadd9/#11

You can use this with or without the high open E note. Without, it's a standard Bb add9, and you can use it in place of pretty much any Bb major chord. Add the high E note, and you're dealing with the Lydian mode (Bb, C D E F G A), a far more exotic soundworld!



Dm9

Here's the easiest of the lot – and note the similarity to the previous chord. You need only two fingers for this Dm9, although strictly speaking, it's Dm9/A, because the lowest note isn't the root.



Fmaj7#11

Here's another chord which may remind you of Alex Lifeson, but it crops up in loads of other musical styles (one of those, sadly, being really bad fake flamenco). Like the Bb chord above, it also has a #11, meaning it works with the Lydian mode (F G A B C D E).



FINGER-TRICKIN' PICKIN'

TUTOR STUART RYAN PUTS THE PEDAL
TO THE METAL WITH FOUR SLIPPERY AND
SPECTACULAR COUNTRY LICKS TO LEARN.
HOLD ON TO YOUR STETSON...

WORDS STUART RYAN

With country music being at an all-time high in terms of popularity, it felt only fitting to show you four 'hot country' licks as part of our special Clean Tone issue. This style is fast and furious and creates some real challenges for both the picking and fretting hands. However, get these techniques in place and you will find your general speed and fluency increase dramatically. What's more, the techniques you encounter here – hybrid picking, open-string runs and chicken picking – can also cross over to any other style you play, hugely increasing your range on the guitar as a result.

1

This first lick incorporates two of the most common devices in country guitar soloing – open-string licks and hybrid picking. Hybrid picking, also known as pick-and-finger playing, involves combining the plectrum with the middle (m) and ring (a) fingers on the picking hand. Some players will pick with the plectrum and middle finger, while others will use the plectrum, middle and ring fingers together. We've indicated where to use the plectrum and middle finger throughout this lick.

$\text{♩} = 272$ A

E B G D A E

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

1 m m m v m m a a m

2

Doublestops are another mainstay of any country guitar solo, and this lick is based around them. The challenge here is to get used to fretting two notes simultaneously and then move them around the fretboard at speed. A great exercise for familiarising yourself with this is to practise any major scale in intervals of 3rds and 4ths all over the neck. The last phrase is especially common, and combines the use of doublestops with hybrid picking.

3

Another doublestop lick over the IV chord, D, here. This classic phrase is a hallmark of the great country guitarist Brent Mason and also derives from the style of Jerry Reed. Watch out for the muted notes on the fourth string in the second half of this lick; these 'dead' notes are what give rise to the 'chicken picking' sound. You can be quite arbitrary with which notes you fret cleanly and which ones you mute when going for the chicken-picking effect.

4

This Chet Atkins-influenced lick combines a rapid ascending open-string run with hybrid picking throughout – also, look out for the first string, which is picked with the ring (a) finger. Preceding that is a pedal-steel type effect – you'll see this in the doublestop on the seventh and sixth frets of the fourth and third strings respectively. Here, you must pre-bend the note on the third string up a semitone and then release this note while still sustaining the note on the fourth string.

Clean
TONE

COMING CLEAN

AS WE'VE SHOWN THROUGHOUT THIS
FEATURE, CLEANING UP YOUR ACT HAS
BENEFITS FOR ALL AREAS OF YOUR
PLAYING – AND CLEAN TONES CAN BE
FOUND IN THE UNLIKELIEST OF PLACES

WORDS JAMIE DICKSON

A while back, in issue 361, we caught up with Ozzy Osbourne's former guitarist Zakk Wylde. With his wild-man-of-metal credentials, you'd presume he used demonic amounts of saturated gain. In fact, nearly the opposite was true. His rig at the time consisted of 100-watt Marshall heads, super-efficient 200-watt EV speakers (in other words, much less likely to distort than, say, Greenbacks), and EMG pickups. In short, a clean rig for a super-heavy player.

"When any of my friends play through it they feel like they're playing an acoustic guitar. They're like, 'Dude, it's so f**kin' clean! Because it really is a clean sound.'"

Clean tones project, they have clarity and they have punch. Fuzzed-out, swampy drive tones, by contrast, often melt into the mix. Ever kicked in a hot distortion pedal in the middle of a gig and wondered where your volume suddenly went? That's what the compressing effect of heavy drive can do, and the most authoritative drive tones are often surprisingly clean. The cleaner

you go, the fewer hiding places there are. But taking a risk and dialling down the gain will encourage you to value each note you play, develop a strong thread of melody in every solo, and increase the clarity and richness of rhythm parts. Those qualities always command attention, so here's to good clean fun.

Guitarist would like to thank Vintage & Rare Guitars, Bath for the loan of the '65 Fender Jaguar and '63 'blackface' Twin amp that grace the cover of this issue.

WIN! This trio of lavishly lush effects from T-Rex



THE naked tone of an electric guitar plugged straight into a vibey old valve amp will never get old. But if you want your clean tone to be lushier than a country club lawn, a few top-drawer effects will work wonders. If you're currently lacking in that department, what could be better than this trio of shimmering tone-sculptors from high-end Scandinavian effects maker, T-Rex?

First, to add smoothness and sustain, there's T-Rex's studio compressor in a stompbox, the four-knob Neocomp (the circuitry of which is based on the David Blackmer-designed Voltage Controlled Amplifier found in classic recording consoles). It offers fine control over the level of gain, compression, attack and release – use it as a clean boost or a refined compressor for luscious lead.

Next, there's T-Rex's Creamer reverb, with spring, room and hall settings plus fine control over reverberation level, decay and tone. Finally, what would clean tone be without delay? To round out this

mini-effects rig, we have an excellent T-Rex Replay Box to give away as the third tone-plumping portion of our prize. It has up to three seconds of delay on tap, true stereo operation, tap tempo and a subdivision switch that'll allow you to choose between quarter-, triplet- or dotted eighth-note values.

To enter, simply answer the question below correctly:

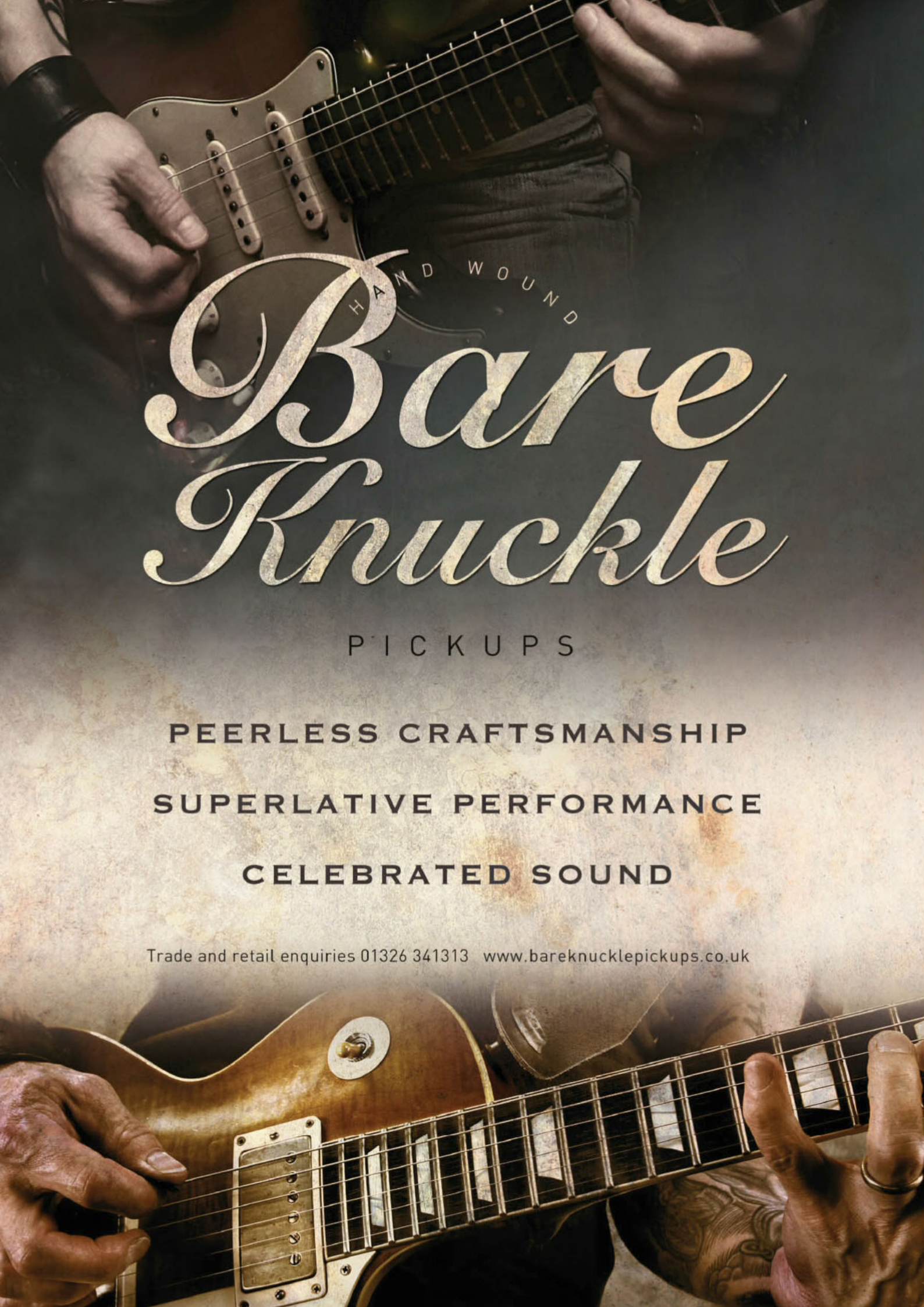
Where in the world is T-Rex Effects based?

- A)** The Netherlands
- B)** Denmark
- C)** Norway

To enter visit:

www.futurecomps.co.uk/git394clean

The competition is open to UK entrants only. Answers must be received between 25/4/2015 and 28/5/2015. The winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received between the relevant dates and will be sent the prize free of charge. Each winner will be notified within 28 days of the closing date and will be required to give details of a delivery address in the UK to which the prize should be sent. By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future and T-Rex Effects which may be of interest to you. For full terms and conditions, please go to: www.futurenet.com/futureonline/competitionrules.asp



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CIRCUIT BREAKER

Death threats. Beatings. Natural disasters. Dan Patlansky might be the breakout talent of 2015 – but don't call the Johannesburg blues-rocker an overnight success...

Words Henry Yates **Photography** Yolanda Saayman

We join Dan Patlansky on his second shot at world domination. The first, as the Johannesburg bandleader reminds us, ended in natural disaster. “I moved to New Orleans in 2005. There was this whole plan. I had management there. I was supposed to be the support act for BB King. I was going to have Stevie Ray Vaughan’s rhythm section on my album. Then Hurricane Katrina rolled in. My manager said we had to get out of town, and the worst part was there wasn’t room in the car for my ’62 Strat. So I left that guitar in the flight case, on top of the fridge, in my ground-floor apartment – and wrote it off.” Patlansky gives a gallows chuckle: “Terrible timing, man.”

A lesser talent might have taken fate’s hint and resigned himself to the consolation prize of a domestic career in South Africa, where Patlansky has flourished since 1999’s *Standing At The Station*. No chance. Today, the 33-year-old is back on the international scene, armed with a seventh album so good that he practically disowns its predecessors. “I can’t listen to my first three albums,” he says. “They sound terrible. I’m puking when I’m listening to them. *Dear Silence Thieves* would be a great introduction.”

Pipping Joe Bonamassa’s *Different Shades Of Blue* to top spot in a recent album poll by

Blues Rock Review, *Dear Silence Thieves* might just be good enough to infiltrate a blues scene that has rarely been so competitive. “Don’t get me wrong,” considers Patlansky. “It’s daunting. There’s some players out there, man. I’m still a fairly small fish in Joe Bonamassa’s universe. Obviously, I believe I’ve got a slightly different thing going on.”

He does. A thumping, funk-inflected album with lean solos and vocals recalling Lenny Kravitz, *Dear Silence Thieves* is the sound of a blues scholar who knows the set texts but isn’t afraid to rip out a few pages. “Hendrix and Clapton were massive,” recalls Patlansky of his influences aged 14. “The three Kings, Albert Collins, even old guys like Son House and Robert Johnson. But also rock guys like David Gilmour, Jimmy Page and Ritchie Blackmore.

“On my first album, I was simply trying to be Stevie Ray Vaughan. In those days, it was all traditional 12-bar stuff, but I’ve broadened my horizons and now it’s more blues-rock. I still eat and sleep guitar, but now I’m concentrating on the songwriting.”

Crazy Nights

When it comes to the songs, Patlansky chooses not to address his country’s turbulent history (“In South Africa,

everything is politics. It gets old, man”). Instead, his material gets personal, drilling into his hopes, fears and close-shaves on the road. “There’s *Hold On*,” he says. “When I was in my 20s, I always imagined that by the time I turned 30, I’d be touring the world. I’m 33 now, and that song is about how the older you get, the faster life goes by. How it feels like life is slipping away, and there’s things you want to achieve but there’s not enough time.

“We’ve been touring our asses off for 15 years,” he adds. “Blues-rock is a niche market everywhere, but in South Africa, it’s miniature. It was tough to find anyone my age that was prepared to play the blues. Jeez, man, this was the 90s, so most people were listening to the Backstreet Boys. So I tapped into my parents’ generation, found an older bass player and drummer who would actually play with me at 15. But there still wasn’t much of a circuit.”

As such, Patlansky couldn’t afford to be picky. “There was one town we played 11 years ago,” he shudders, “and it was real conservative, still almost living in apartheid. We arrived and realised we’d been booked for the spring dance, and we kinda knew we were going to ruin everyone’s evening. And let me tell you, man: we did. We got onstage with this guitar-driven blues-rock and for





these people, it was the Devil's music. These guys were throwing crap at the stage, doing that throat-slitting movement. It was scary. That one stands out as the most life-threatening show I've done."

Others run it close. "*Pop Collar Jockey*," says Patlansky, "is about that particular kind of gentleman in South Africa who wears a tight golf shirt with the collar popped. That song was a dig at those guys, written about a time I got hardcore punched in the face outside a theatre in Johannesburg. I was packing up the van, and some guy clocked me in the face. I got 24 stitches."

That song's stinging fretwork gives the sense of Patlansky letting off steam, and it's a recurring theme on *Dear Silence Thieves*, with the guitarist's playing driven more by impulse than scale patterns. "Man, to be honest, I'm a pentatonic box guy. I did study music as a kid, learnt all the modal stuff, but I always battled to play them. I found an easier way to look at all that is just to play your pentatonic scale, and if you add the odd darker or more exotic note, you can outline anything you want."

"I was chuffed with the solo of *Your War*," he continues. "We kept the solos short on this album, rather than rambling on for hours, but that's the longest, and I was pleased at how it built from mellow to in-your-face. I'm a sucker for a slow blues ballad, and I really enjoyed the solo on *Hold On*. But for the most part, I'm always happiest with my playing when it's in a live

situation. I just find that I open up more, let loose more."

Trio's Company

Bassist Clint Falconer and drummer Andy Maritz also push him beyond autopilot, says Patlansky. "Playing in a trio has ups and downs. The upside is, as a soloist, you've got this immense freedom, because often the bass player is playing root notes and he's not

Talking Tone

Patlansky gives his personal tips for getting killer tone down on tape

"I don't really like a close mic on an amp. It depends on how the producer and engineer want to do things, but I like a roomy sound. So normally, we have a close mic just for detail, then we kinda walk around the room and find a real sweet spot where the guitar is sounding incredible. Then we normally put a mic up exactly there, like, where your ear was. We'll do that in a couple of places all over the room. Like, maybe a mic gets put a yard or two away from the amp, or maybe one could be 10 metres away from the amp. Live, too, I really like to hear the room, and onstage I never, ever point my amp towards me – because I don't like when it's shooting daggers at you!"

dictating whether it's minor or major; there's not necessarily a chord behind it to play over, so you can take it wherever the hell you want. The downside is that it's hard work. When you have a bad show and you're not feeling it, it stands out like a sore thumb."

Ask Patlansky about his trademark techniques and he squirms a little: "I can't really think of anything that's incredibly technical or special. Vibrato and string-bending are massive for me. A few years ago, I really sat down and focused on my vibrato, because it sounded like a goat squealing. So I tried to get out of that and emulate a Clapton or an Albert King vibrato."

"But for me," he counters, "the most important thing about guitar playing is your tone. If my sound isn't happening, shows feel like wading through syrup. I've spent a lot of time just concentrating on getting the right tones, because it feels like you can almost play anything if you nail that, y'know?"

Strat's The One

For Patlansky, the starting-point is always a Strat. Miraculously, like Indiana Jones's fedora rolling back after a tank crash, the bandleader was reunited in 2006 with the '62 he'd assumed was lost to the flood. "I thought I'd never see it again," he sighs. "But I was playing a festival in Cape Town, and my American band flew out and actually brought my Strat back. It had



"In South Africa, the scene is miniature. It was tough to find anyone my age that was prepared to play the blues. Jeez, man, this was the 90s, so most people were listening to the Backstreet Boys!"



literally just missed the water. There was a waterline on the fridge an inch from the bottom of the case.”

Even so, that '62 was far from pristine. “It looks like a dog’s breakfast,” laughs Patlansky. “It’s a stock Strat. It’s never been resprayed or refinished. It’s Sunburst, but there’s not much paint left. It was shagged-out when I got it and obviously it’s taken a hammering on the road. But it’s like nothing else I’ve ever played. The neck is its selling point. It’s obviously a 60s C-neck, but a small C, which is good, because I don’t have the biggest hands in the world.

“Two years ago, the original pickups died,” he continues. “I got them rewind, but they just didn’t sound great afterwards. I went through every pickup manufacturer on the planet. I tried Fender ones. Seymour Duncan. But they always kinda sounded too modern and hard on the ear: they didn’t have that bell-like tone. Eventually, I found the greatest pickup builder in Sydney, called Slider’s. I tell you something: it’s the closest I’ve ever heard to a vintage Strat pickup. That’s really opened up what pickup selections I can play with.”

Patlansky’s backline has also liberated him. “I’ve been using the Dr. Z EZG-50 for a couple of years now, which is kinda like a take on a Fender clean American circuit. It would cost a fortune to ship a Dr. Z cabinet, so I’m just using a cabinet built for me by a guy down here. It’s kinda like a hand-built cab, with a Dr. Z size and spec,

“My '62 Strat looks like a dog’s breakfast... It was shagged-out when I got it and obviously it’s taken a hammering. But it’s like nothing else I’ve played”

and I’ve loaded in two EVM 12L speakers. They weigh a metric ton, but they’re the most incredible-sounding speakers. I’ve always had this problem with front-of-house guys telling me I’m too loud, so I just decided that 2x12 onstage is a good idea.”

All A’Board

His pedalboard helps there, too: “I have the MI Audio Blues Pro, which sounds like a Tube Screamer, but way better, and I discovered this pedal called Mr. White, from Sabbadius,” he enthuses. “It’s great for a guy who plays loud, like me. Last year, we were in Holland, where they have a law that you can’t have more than 90 decibels or something. Which isn’t loud at all. And, man, it was hard, because I had the amps on one and it was too loud for these guys. I really battled to get a sound. So I decided to buy this Mr. White, because it simulates the front end of a Fender amp being smashed really hard.”

Of course, one show where volume most assuredly wasn’t an issue was at the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg, where Patlansky supported Bruce Springsteen last year. For many, it was the tipping point that sparked

his hot-tip status in 2015. “One of the highlights of my career,” he nods, “but also one of the most daunting things I’ve ever done. Because you’ve got 80,000 people and the scary thing is that not one is there to see you. We got a fantastic reaction to the first tune, but then I made the mistake of looking to the wings, and there was Bruce Springsteen and Tom Morello, watching us. Like, if there wasn’t enough pressure on your shoulders!”

You sense Patlansky can take the pressure. This interview began with a musician on the ropes, but it ends with an artist on the cusp of the big time. Having tasted the stadium league, we ask if the experience has whetted his appetite. “Thinking in terms of stadiums,” he smiles, “it almost hurts the head. Clapton is one of the few guys who have ever done the blues thing to that level. The dream, for me, is to sell out a venue like the Royal Albert Hall. It’s mind-boggling to think that way. I don’t know what it entails, to be that famous. But I’m prepared to test the waters...” 

Dear Silence Thieves by Dan Patlansky is available now.

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Johan L., quality check guitar

A full-page photograph of a man with dark hair and a goatee, wearing a black tank top and a wristband, performing in a wrestling ring. He is holding a guitar and making a rock hand gesture with his right hand. The ring has red ropes, and the background is dark with blue lighting. The text "PLAY IT. FEEL IT." is overlaid on the image.

PLAY IT.
FEEL IT.



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Wireless is more

Trevor Wilkinson teams up with Larry Fishman's latest pickup invention to produce a pair of super guitars. Fluence has landed

WORDS **Dave Burrluck** PHOTOGRAPHY **Joseph Branston**





Fret-King Corona 60 & 70 Fluence Equipped £1,699 each

What You Need To Know

- 1 What the heck is Fluence?**
It's the name of Fishman's first entry into the electric guitar pickup market. Our review Fret-Kings are loaded with the 'single coil' Single Width pickups and a pair of Classic Humbuckers.
- 2 They don't look very different...**
Outwardly, no, but via a solid core, instead of a coil of wire, not to mention active powering and multiple voices, they represent a pretty fundamental redesign of the magnetic pickup as we know it.
- 3 Active? They're more metal then...**
You're thinking of EMGs, which, originally, weren't designed for metal players. And while Fishman does offer the Modern Humbucking Fluence pickups that certainly look to that genre, our review guitars and their pickups, are much more classic.

Think Fishman and the majority of us think of pickups and preamps for our acoustic guitars. 'Fishman-equipped' has become a standard for many major brands' electros, but that's certainly not all that the Boston-based company creates. Aside from pickup systems for most stringed instruments, there's the innovative Triple Play Wireless MIDI guitar controller, the Loudbox acoustic amps, the SA220 solo performance vertical PA system, the Aura acoustic imaging system (both onboard and outboard) and standalone preamps, such as the Platinum Pro EQ and ToneDEQ preamp with effects. And last – but we feel far from least – we have a whole new range of pickups for the *electric* guitar: Fluence.

Fishman is distributed in the UK by JHS, the company behind the Trevor Wilkinson-designed Fret-King range, which is the first guitar brand to fit these new pickups onto production models. In concept, both Fishman's and Wilkinson's designs centre on the same re-imagining of the classics. Wilkinson's Corona, for example, takes the Fender Stratocaster, alters a few lines, adds a few tweaks and creates something that's a good guitar in its own right. Fishman,

meanwhile (as our interview on p102 details) has re-imagined the classic Fender single coil and Gibson humbucker. But perhaps 're-imagined', which suggests a facelift or a subtle redesign, isn't going far enough: Fluence represents one of the most significant redesigns of the magnetic pickup in its entire history.

Multi Voices

Our Corona 60 is fitted with the only set of Single Width Fluence pickups currently offered by Fishman. They might be single-coil sized, but they are hum-cancelling and use two of the solid cores (instead of conventional coils) that lie at the heart of the concept – stacked on top of each other with a spacer between. They also use conventional Alnico IV rod magnets. The three pickups share one preamp, which is mounted to the base of the bridge pickup. Irrelevant of the technology, these pickups are unique in offering two voices. Voice 1, 'vintage single-coil', is described by Fishman as having

"vintage tone, clear and present, seamlessly fused with a sweet warmth". Voice 2, selected by pulling up the second tone control, is called 'hot Texas single-coil' and is described by Fishman as "muscular, beefy, 'overwound' tone without losing the highs or the 'Strattiness' we all love".

There is a third option, that can be used with either, or both, of the Voice selections – and that is High Frequency (HF) Tilt. It's not wired on our Corona 60, but it effectively offers a preset high-end roll-off and might be handy if you find these Single Width pickups to be too bright.

Our Corona 70 is fitted with a pair of Fluence Classic Humbuckers, again with dual voicings (once again, the HF Tilt option isn't wired in). Voice 1 on both is 'Vintage PAF', albeit with the "dynamics and output level you want," says Fishman. Voice 2, on the bridge pickup, is 'classic hotrod' – a hotter-style voicing – and on the neck pickup, Voice 2 is called 'clear, airy chime', which Fishman

Perhaps 're-imagined' isn't going far enough. Fluence represents one of the most significant redesigns of the magnetic pickup in its entire history



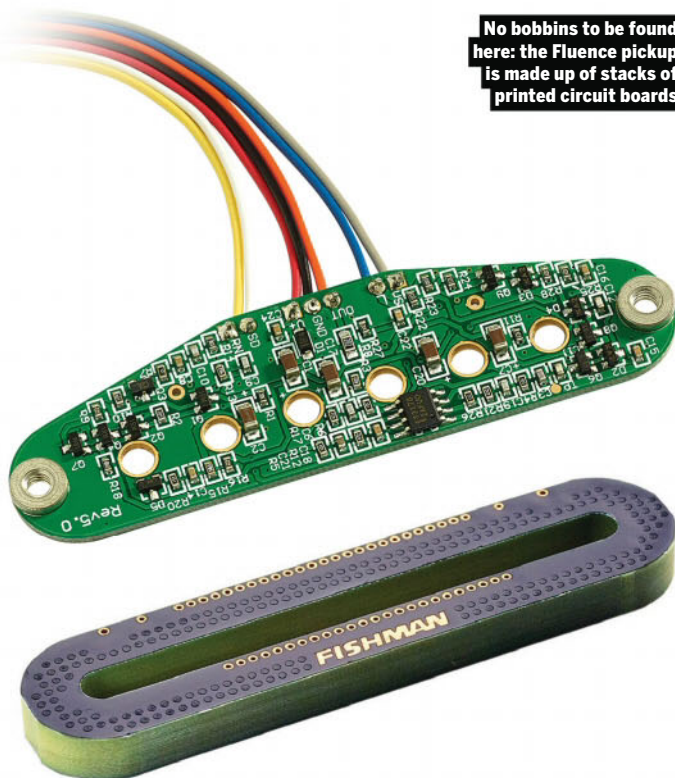
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The Rivals

Fender doesn't make an active pickup-loaded Stratocaster, so you might be best looking at the perennial **American Standard** (£1,438) and fitting your own active pickups – it's not that difficult! The obvious rival to the Fluence pickups is **EMG**. Its single-coil sized humbuckers, like the **SA**, retail at £69.99 each; a set of three costs £199 including five-way selector, volume and two tone pots, output jack and battery clip – all with solderless connections. Individually, the full-size humbuckers, like the **81, 85** and **60**, cost £74.99. The metal-covered '**Metal Works**' humbuckers are £109 each – sold in pairs for twice the price. Again, they come with the necessary wiring, all solderless. While EMG doesn't offer a rechargeable battery pack, you can power them offboard with a pedal-sized power supply and stereo lead. The nine-volt supply retails at approx £89; the 18-volt is £140

No bobbins to be found here: the Fluence pickup is made up of stacks of printed circuit boards



states has “unreal highs, vocal midrange and tight lows”. As supplied, with just one pull switch on the master tone, in down position we have Voice 1 of both pickups; pulled up, we get Voice 2 of both.

Available with black or white covers (as here), the Single Widths look quite modernist with their protruding staggered height rod magnets, but not overly so. The Classic Humbuckers have metal tops – in a choice of gold, black or chrome plating (as here) – and a single row of adjustable poles. They use Alnico V magnets, and the gubbins is all encapsulated in the otherwise plastic covers; mounting is via inset, threaded nuts at the end of the bases of the Single Width pickups and on protruding plastic legs on the Classic Humbuckers.

Moving away from the pickups, both guitars are eminently fit for purpose. Fret-King's Green Label series sits at the top of the brand's range and

the guitars are created in small numbers by Wilkinson and his team in the UK. The specs of both guitars are very similar to the non-Fluence equipped Corona models with the exception of the hardware, which is from Wilkinson's cost-effective Korean-made range, as opposed to Japanese-made – which might cost less but are typically good. The switch is to ensure that the guitars still hit the market at well below £2,000, despite the cost of the Fluence pickups compared with usual passive pickups.

However, it raises a valid point about the Fluence pickups: they're not cheap, and that fact alone may well limit their appeal to the numerous brands that use EMGs, Duncans, DiMarzios and the like. At their suggested retail prices, they're more expensive than EMG (see The Rivals, above), especially the humbuckers. Still, while the Single Widths are nearly twice



the price when purchased individually, the gap narrows considerably when sold as a three-unit set with that shared preamp.

Sounds

Evaluating a guitar pickup isn't straightforward. Unlike a microphone, which you can line up next to your reference mic and listen to how it sounds capturing your voice or guitar, for example, you can't just compare a Fluence-loaded instrument with another guitar. Well, perhaps you can, and that's what most of us will do. So let's start there...

In Voice 1, the Corona 60 exhibits a clean, bright, pretty balanced Strat-like voice that sounds a little polite; it is very quiet in terms of noise pick-up. There's a marked difference in Voice 2: noticeably higher in



Like the Single Width units, the Classic Humbucker (neck shown here) offers two voices

output, thicker and more ballsy. We'd be very tempted to either hard-wire this second voice or swap them around so Voice 1 is activated when you pull up that switch. Pulling out a first-generation, and now well-gigged, Fender Road Worn Strat, it sounds bigger, tougher

and darker. We also throw another custom-made Strat-alike into the mix, which sits sonically between the Fret-King and the Road Worn.

But, of course, we're not just listening to the pickups, are we? There are the different woods, ages and finishes, string gauges,

string condition, hardware, and last but not least, the pickups themselves, how they are placed height-wise, and so on and so forth. It's 50 shades of subtlety that can add up to a substantial difference in what we're hearing. After our initial listening test, we restringing our three guitars with the same gauge strings and set each of the pickup sets as close as we physically can at the same distance from the strings. It certainly narrows the field a little, but, for example, our Fender Road Worn still has the 'bigger' sound, while the Corona 60 sounds a little more 'produced', as if we've EQ'd it to maximise that 'Stratty' high-end sparkle and tightened up the lower mids. The more we play the Corona 60, however, the more we like it, especially that Voice 2 tone. In anyone's book, it's a good single-coil tone.

One deal breaker might well be that volume control. Of our passive guitars, the Road Worn is pretty classic in that as we turn down we lose highs and there's quite a steep hump: we



The Corona 70 comes with a pair of Fluence Classic Humbuckers



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



Fluence pickups can be powered by mounted rechargeable battery packs



Power Packs

FLUENCE pickups need power, and they can use either a standard nine-volt battery – which offers 250 hours' continuous use for the Single Widths and 200 for the Classic Humbuckers – or three optional rechargeable battery packs. One, as fitted to our Coronas, is like a thicker vibrato backplate; the second pack functions as the rear control cavity cover for a Les Paul, and there's also a smaller universal pack that can be mounted, for example, inside a back cavity. All are rechargeable via USB, a complete charge from zero taking three hours or less, and continuous use time is similar to the quoted nine-volt times. While we can't complain about these quoted battery use times, EMG – Fluence's obvious competitor – quotes far longer times: 1,500 hours for its full-size humbuckers and 3,000 for the 'single-width' pickups, such as the SV. EMG also offers outboard powering.

go from full-on to quite a reduction with only a small travel of the pot. The Fluence's volume control on both Fret-Kings is like a fader on a mixing desk: it's very nicely graduated and reduces the volume without tonal change. But, if you want to lose some highs as you turn down, you can't. The tone controls could be a little more effective, too: the high-end roll off, especially on the lower bridge pickup tone, takes time before it's noticeable.

Think 'classic humbuckers' and you immediately imagine a Les Paul. As good as the Corona 70 is, it isn't a Les Paul – although, for many a player, a Strat-style body with humbuckers... Well, it's a pretty classic hot-rod recipe, isn't it?

While the Yamaha suggested classic Kossoff, the Corona 70 jumps a decade and suggests early EVH

For reference, we loaded a set of the Fluence CHs onto a Yamaha SG1820 and with just Voice 1 it's a thumpingly huge single-cut voice with all that low end and lower midrange girth of a good 'Paul. Back to the Corona 70 and we hear a tightened low end with a little more upper midrange push. Either would be welcome in this writer's collection. While the Yamaha suggested classic Kossoff and the like, the Corona 70 jumps a decade and suggests early EVH. Switch to Voice 2 and, with

some classic rock amp gain, it's subtle but noticeable: the bridge's second voice is mid pushed with a high-end roll-off, a little juicier hitting the front end of your amp, too. The neck's Voice 2 is slightly more open in that it seems to bring down the upper mids a little – a very vocal lead voice indeed, especially with some more gain underfoot.

Switch hats and plug directly into a small PA or acoustic amp and, well, if pristine cleans or clipped funk are your thing this is the way to go. On the Yamaha,

it really nails an older jazz tone, especially as we'd wired in the HF Tilt, again subtle under gain but more pronounced in this 'studio'-like setting. Both the Corona 60 and 70 sound superb here, too.

Verdict

Our host Fret-King Coronas are seriously good guitars. If you can't find your fit with their obvious competition, we suggest you check 'em out. But the real innovation here is the Fishman Fluence pickups and the question is, does the world need yet another electric guitar pickup, especially one that bucks the zeitgeist and is active? So many of us 'hear' pickups by looking at their specifications and simply won't touch an



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



The Corona 60 is fitted with Single Width pickups, but they are hum cancelling

With their potentially three different voices, the Fluences are unique, along with their solid cores

active pickup with a barge pole. Of course, many players will – certainly those of a more metal persuasion – and Fishman is catering for those players with the Modern Humbucking set and just-released seven-string sets. Then there are some of us who actually *like* active pickups, such as EMGs, for their response, balance and quiet operation, not to mention their low impedance.

However, with their potentially three different voices, the Fluences are unique, along with their solid cores that allow incredible consistency from pickup to pickup – something Trevor Wilkinson has observed while building these and other Fret-King Fluence-equipped guitars. It's that consistency, and the

other attributes of the active pickup, that make these units very valid for the recording guitarist, or indeed any player who wants to expand the voices on their guitars beyond the usual coil-splits or rarer coil-taps. Of course, the very inconsistency of a passive pickup is what appeals to many of us. Some good vintage PAFs exhibit a slight bell-like microphony that some like. Others don't. Some makers purposely unbalance the coil windings of their humbuckers. On it goes...

It'll be very interesting to watch the progress of these pickups. In the meantime, check out our Longterm Test section from the next issue onwards to see how we get on with them in the real world. **G**



Fret-King Green Label Corona 60 & 70 Fluence

PRICE: Both £1,699 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Assembled in UK
TYPE: Double-cutaway, solidbody six-string electric
BODY: American alder
NECK: Canadian hard rock maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm
NUT/WIDTH: Wilkaloïd/60: 41.6mm; 70: 41.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, cream dots, 254mm (10-inch) radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: 60: Chrome-plated Wilkinson WVC SB vintage-style vibrato. 70: Chrome-plated Wilkinson WVPC SB vintage-style vibrato. Both use rear-wheel locking tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm
ELECTRICS: 60: 3x Fishman Fluence Single Width, 5-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume neck/middle tone, bridge tone w/ pull-push switch to engage Voice 2; 70: 2x Fishman Fluence Classic Humbucker, 3-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume and master tone w/ pull-push switch to engage Voice 2
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 60: 3.5/7.7; 70: 3.78/8.3
RANGE OPTIONS: See website
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: 60: Laguna Blue with white s/plate; 70: Classic Burst with tortoiseshell s/plate (as reviewed). Numerous other finishes are available
JHS
01132 865381
www.fret-king.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: *Classy versions of a classic recipe that, with Fluence's unique attributes, make both first-class choices*



Fishman Fluence Single Width

PRICE: £115 individually; £235 for 3
TYPE: Multi-voice, active single-coil-sized humbucker
COVER COLOURS: White or black
VOICE 1: Vintage single coil
RES PEAK FREQUENCY: 4kHz
VOICE 2: Hot Texas single-coil
RES PEAK FREQUENCY: 3kHz
MAGNETS: Alnico IV rods
POLE SPACING: 52.2mm
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE: 2k ohms
POWER: 9V block or rechargeable battery pack (£109)
BATTERY LIFE: 200 hours
OPTIONS: None
www.fishman.com

Fishman Fluence Classic Humbucker

PRICE: From £149; from £279 for two
TYPE: Multi-voice, active full-size humbucker
COVER COLOURS: Nickel; black and gold (both £159 each; £289 for 2)
VOICE 1: Bridge and neck: Vintage PAF
RES PEAK FREQUENCY: 2.25k (bridge); 2.6k (neck)
VOICE 2: Classic Hot rod (bridge); Clear, airy chime (neck)
RES PEAK FREQUENCY: 1.6kHz (bridge); 4.5kHz & 350Hz (neck)
MAGNETS: Alnico V bar magnet with pole pieces
POLE SPACING: 52.6mm (bridge); 49mm (neck)
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE: 2k ohms
POWER: 9V block or rechargeable battery pack (£109)
BATTERY LIFE: 277 hours (bridge); 200 hours (neck)
OPTIONS: See website

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: *One of the most innovative pickup concepts in decades, Fluence isn't cheap, but it is unique. Time for a change?*

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Sculpting Sound

When it comes to amplifying the acoustic instrument, there's little that Fishman doesn't know. But the 'dark art' of the electromagnetic pickup is another story...

“I’ve been avoiding the electric guitar pickup for over 30 years because Seymour Duncan, Rob Turner [EMG] and Steve Blucher and Larry DiMarzio, they were doing just fine,” states Larry Fishman in his whiskey-toned East Coast twang. “I didn’t have anything extraordinary to say, so I just stayed out of it and did my thing with acoustic stuff.”

If you didn’t know better, you’d think Larry was an old-school pro musician who’d just got up after a late-night session. He is a very fine upright bass player, but we know him as the head and driving force of Fishman Transducers. Acoustic stuff is his business, but at the winter NAMM show in 2014, he entered the electric guitar pickup market. Why?

“Well, over that 30-year period we became very good at measuring things, measuring guitar response – we certainly know about electronics, both analogue and digital, and we were building the company. Because of that, I got approached by an aerospace company. One of their physicists was a guitar player and he figured you could make a pretty interesting coil without winding wire. They had filed a patent on it then shopped the idea around to see if someone was interested in turning it into a guitar pickup.

“So, basically, the Fluence core is a 48-layered stack of printed circuit boards, with race track-like coils etched on each layer, and all interconnected with little taps. We have a solid-

mass coil that replaces the usual bobbin. That intrigued me.

I said, ‘It’s certainly *different*’. I loved the way it looked and felt especially in terms of potential manufacturing. So, I signed a licensing deal with them not knowing, at that point, if I could actually make a pickup out of it: a good electric guitar pickup.

“We made up a bunch of the coils with these cores and I started about an 18-month process of trying to turn that into an electric guitar pickup. We looked at all the great electric guitar pickups, going back to George Beauchamp

80-something years ago and, you know, nothing has really changed: everything that has come since is sort of a variation on a variation. I looked at this [electric guitar pickup] industry and realised there is so much voodoo going on; people don’t know this from that. It seemed to me that it was time to bring some sensibility to the game.

Not change the way they sound – I love the way a good set of Seth Lover’s humbuckers in a Les Paul sound. Or the Telecaster, it’s bright, it’s chiming, it’s magical. I love all that, but there’s bad things that come with all these pickups...

“Number one, single coils hum and buzz; people have been trying to get rid of that forever, but doing that can kill the pickup. All passive pickups are subject to cable loading, volume pot loading, tone pot loading. It’s like... it’s archaic. You can’t use your volume control on your electric guitar

“The Fluence core is a 48-layered stack of printed circuit boards, with race track-like coils on each layer”



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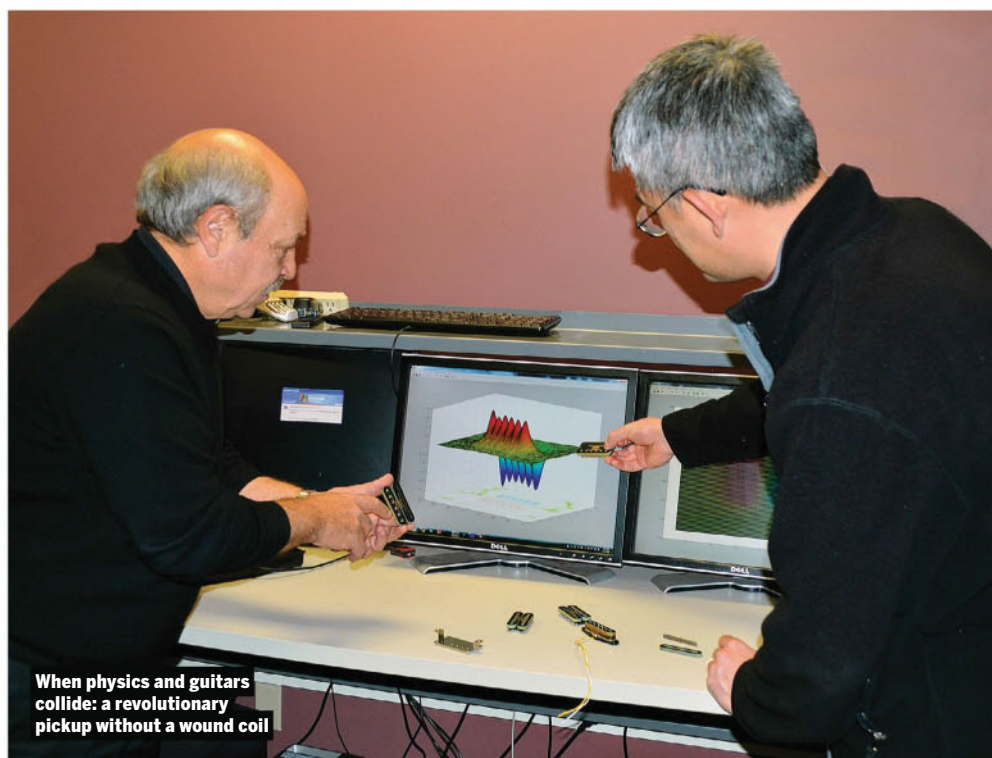
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*Define
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When physics and guitars collide: a revolutionary pickup without a wound coil

'cos it's going to change the sound. Now, plenty of people do exploit that, but many don't. So, even the greatest-sounding pickups have this negative side."

Getting powered

"I said, 'Okay, let's fix that,' Larry remembers. "The first decision – and it was a tough one because I know how reticent this industry is to change – was to go active. We're going to power these pickups because I can solve a thousand problems that way and bring so much to the table. But before we got there, I wanted to get in some zone where I could standardise the coil – I didn't want a different stack for every pickup design. Going powered allowed me to do that: it was a blessing in disguise and was the beginning of this whole system.

"We decided, for a variety of reasons, to go with a 48-layer stack, which makes it a relatively low-inductance pickup. That brought a lot to the party, as the coil is dead flat in terms of response. That alone would be a horrible-sounding electric guitar pickup, but it's a great place to start sculpting. Also, because they are low inductance, if I want to stack

them for hum cancelling, the mutual inductance is so low they don't talk to each other. So even our 'single coil' [the Single Width] has a hum-cancelling stack on the bottom. But that doesn't affect anything, because that stack isn't 'seeing' anything, like the string. There's a spacer [between the two coils] – so they don't talk to each other."

Learning the art

"The thing we didn't know about too much in the beginning is that there are two circuits in a pickup," adds Larry. "There's the electrical circuit, the resistance, capacitance and inductance of the coil, there's the magnetic circuit. We started looking at these and bought some great sounding pickups and started to analyse them.

"We have a great guy, head of R&D, driving the research – Ching-Yu Lin. I was driving him crazy with these different designs and asking him to map their response. He ended up creating a three-dimensional magnetic field 'mapper' that we can look at on a computer screen and see, in 3D, the shape of all the fields of all the magnetic pickups you'd ever want. It was astonishing how

small differences can make a huge change. Over time, we learned a lot about the shape of the magnetic fields that make a great vintage pickup.

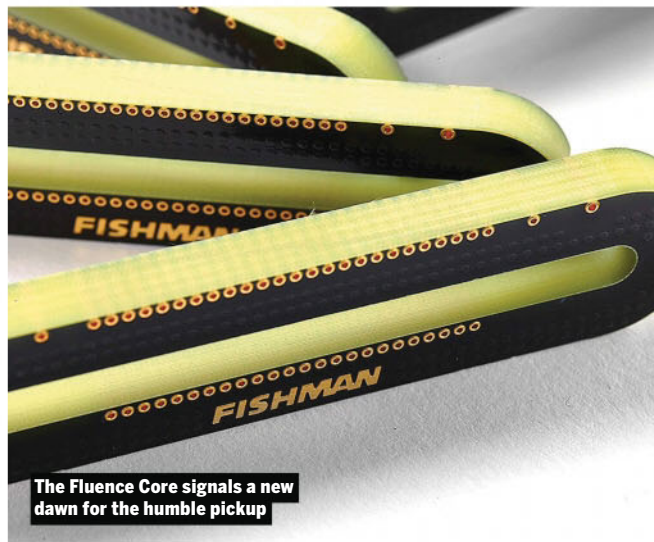
"So, having understood that and having our low-inductance coil [that has no microphonics] when we put them in a humbucking pair, they balance within half a per cent of each other: they *are* humbucking. All – I say *all*," laughs Fishman, "we had to do was make them sound good! They had to have the right frequency response, and they also had to have the right

dynamic response to make a great pickup.

"I pulled in a bunch of great guitar players and some other people from the industry that had experience in traditional magnetic pickups, and guitars in general. So we'd take an original pickup, do our analysis, then we'd build the circuit that gives it the resonant response, the high- and low-frequency roll-offs. I also built another real-time digital system for R&D that we could run our pickup through and put in our target filter and actually have dials to tweak the resonant frequency to a few Hertz. By the way, that would take my friend, Seymour Duncan, about three months and about 50 variations of winding to get to the same place: we can do it in 10 minutes. Basically, we went from zero to 125mph in that 18-month period.

"While we were at it, putting that 'voice' into the pickup, we said, 'Let's put two voices in there, so Fluence are actually multi-voice pickups.'"

"It's a modern world," concludes Fishman. "We pay great homage to those old sounds we grew up with, and many of the more modern ones the metal guys are using, but you don't build a house with a hammer any more: you use a nail gun because it's faster. You don't fly aeroplanes in bad weather without radar any more. And this is *not* rocket science, this is basic stuff." **E**



The Fluence Core signals a new dawn for the humble pickup



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PRS SE A15AL Alex Lifeson Thinline & AE10E

£899 & £579

Another artist joins PRS's SE ranks, this time in the form of Rush's evergreen Alex Lifeson, while the standard SE electro also gets a mahogany makeover

WORDS **Dave Burrluck** PHOTOGRAPHY **Neil Godwin**

What You Need To Know

- 1 These are cheap for PRS... what gives?**
Yes. Like the SE electric line, these acoustics are made in Korea, but by a company called Wildwood: the electrics are made by World Music.
- 2 Are they based on the USA-made Angelus?**
Yes, in terms of outline and bracing they are similar to the USA model and the now discontinued SE Angelus Standard and Custom. Both these new electros have soundhole-placed volume and tone controls instead of a side-mounted preamp.
- 3 What's 'thinline' about the Alex Lifeson model?**
The Lifeson model's body depth is reduced, which can help reduce feedback compared with a full-size acoustic.

Back in 2009, PRS surprised us by launching high-end acoustics, with the intention of becoming a major force in the acoustic guitar world. The reality proved different and after weathering the global financial turndown, it decided to invest in the new USA S2 electrics and let the USA acoustics continue to make their mark with artists and high-end collectors. While we did get the Angelus Standard and Custom in the much more affordable SE line, the electro models still came in around the £1k mark – a little too hot, price-wise, to make any kind of serious dent in the cut-throat world of the Asian-made electro-acoustic guitar.

The second phase of PRS's SE electro attack looks better aimed with this new pair of guitars much more competitively priced. Alex Lifeson has been a PRS electric player for many years, though he's never been a signature artist until now, with this

affordable version of his £8,600 Private Stock model. Although the previous Angelus Standard and Custom have been ditched in favour of this and the non-signature A10E, just to confuse us, both guitars still have the SE Angelus logo on their headstocks, despite PRS making

no mention of the Angelus in either new instrument's model name. Odd. Anyway...

Both these not-called Angelus models are indeed based on the USA Angelus with a 394mm (15.5-inch) wide body that sits between Taylor's Grand Concert and Grand Auditorium



The Lifeson's back and sides are interestingly figured dao laminate



sizes and Martin's 000/OM and dreadnought with a bit of mini-jumbo thrown in. They're every bit the model cutaway electro.

There are plenty of similarities beyond the outline in terms of the electric-like headstocks, tuners, bone nut and compensated saddles, the rosewood 'boards and bridges and the under-saddle pickup system with its discreet soundhole-placed volume and tone controls. Both have bird inlays, too – although those on the Lifeson are a little more subtle and offset. The primary differences, however, are more profound. The AE10E is full depth; the Lifeson is, as its name implies, thinline. In hard benefit it equates to an approximately 14mm reduction in depth on the

Both have plenty of acoustic clout, with the Lifeson's construction creating a bit more midrange push

Lifeson, which reduces the amount of soundbox air and also makes the guitar a little more comfortable, especially played seated. Internally, both use spruce braces, back and top, the latter with hybrid X/classical fan bracing that's crucial to the original USA Angelus design.

Then there are the wood specs. Whereas the previous SE models used solid Sitka spruce tops and either solid mahogany or rosewood backs with matching laminate sides, here

the Lifeson retains the solid spruce top but with laminated dao back and sides – a fairly attractive light-brown striped wood – with contrasting tortoiseshell-like mottled binding. The A10E swaps solid spruce for a quite trendy solid mahogany top, paired with laminate mahogany and either a white binding on the black gloss-finished guitar, or a less contrasting black on the Tortoise Shell deep burgundy translucent. The Lifeson's soundhole decoration is a little

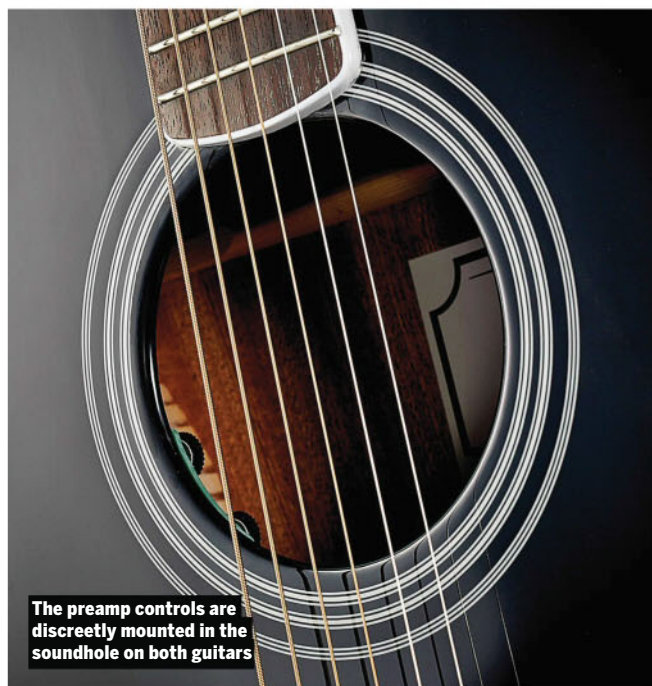
more upmarket, too, with an inlaid wood centre, while the AE10 goes for concentric white and black plastic rings.

Necks are very similar with a quite electric-like nut width, broader saddle spacing and similar depths that average out at 22.6mm at the 1st fret and 24.6mm at the 10th, with a deep rounded 'C' profile and very subtly V'd sloping shoulders in the lower positions. Both necks are three-piece with the headstock spliced on and an additional heel piece, and both have strengthening volutes behind the nut.

Fretting is very tidy and it's hard to fault the construction at all in terms of detail. The over-glossy finish, although clearly not over-thick, does hint at the



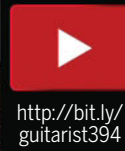
Both bear the Angelus logo on the headstock, but nowhere else!



The preamp controls are discreetly mounted in the soundhole on both guitars



The A10E's Black gloss finish hides a solid mahogany top



The Lifeson's soundhole sports a classy looking wood-inlaid rosette

guitars' origin and give both a very 'import' feel.

Sounds

Acoustically, neither will have you blubbing with emotion. Certainly, if you've had a strum on the USA models then these are much more run-of-the-mill. If there is a similarity, shape aside, we have to say while hardly cannon-like (an often used term to describe the projection of the USA models), there's plenty of acoustic clout here, especially the Lifeson – its different construction creates a bit more midrange push. The A10E's mids are less forceful, and the lows, while not hugely enhanced, create more depth and a strummier, almost dread-like tonality as opposed to the more 'small body' voice of the Lifeson.

Both guitars offer onboard controls, but they're of limited help in a stage environment. We audition both through a Fishman Platinum Pro outboard EQ going directly into Line 6's StageSource. With our EQs set flat and the volume and tone fully up (which, like most soundhole controls, means you turn them 'down', away from you), there's an ear-wearing amount of hard-edged highs, a very strong and hard midrange and limited lows. Backing off some of the tone control, even fully off, is a pretty good start but then you have to go outboard and pull out some of those hard mids – around 1kHz

on the Fishman – and some thickness in the lower mids from the StageSource's sweepable midrange. As you'd expect, while the electronics are shared, the acoustic character of both guitars also comes into play. The A10E has noticeably more lows than the tighter Lifeson, and because of that we'd certainly favour it for louder stage use.

Verdict

There are no shortage of electros at these price points and although these will sell at lower street prices, it's a little hard to see exactly what PRS is bringing to an already crowded table. Regardless, both are smartly made, include a hard case, and each one has slick playability with a clean, strong acoustic voice. The A10E is a perfectly viable at-home acoustic, though it does lack some of the darker resonance that you'd expect from its mahogany construction. The Lifeson's thinline body may be more comfortable for some, and this combined with its wood choice gives it subtly tighter lows and a bit more upper mid push – it feels the more resonant of the two. Both will need some extra help on stage, but with fairly typical outboard EQ settings the electro sound was perfectly acceptable at this price-point. Irrelevant of its signature status, it'd be the Lifeson model we'd take home. **G**



PRS SE A15AL Alex Lifeson Thinline

PRICE: £899 (inc case)

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: 14-fret grand concert-size cutaway electro acoustic

TOP: Solid spruce with PRS X/classical hybrid bracing

BACK/SIDES: Laminated dao

MAX RIM DEPTH: 98mm tapering to 79mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 394mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 644mm (25.35")

TUNERS: Individual PRS-logo'd enclosed, chrome-plated

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.3mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, pearloid 'birds in flight' inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 20, medium

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with compensated bone saddle/54.5mm

ELECTRICS: Under-saddle pickup system with sound-hole mounted volume and tone control

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.27/5

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Just the A10E in the SE line, the USA Private Stock Lifeson model, with LR Baggs Lyric pickup costs £8.6k

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Natural gloss (as reviewed)

PRS Europe

01223 874301

www.prsguitars.com

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: It'll need some help on stage, but this is a classy thinline electro that makes a great at-home guitar



PRS SE A10E

PRICE: £579 (inc case)

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: 14-fret grand concert-size cutaway electro acoustic

TOP: Solid mahogany with PRS X/classical hybrid bracing

BACK/SIDES: Laminated mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 112mm tapering to 93mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 394mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 644mm (25.35")

TUNERS: Individual PRS-logo'd enclosed, chrome-plated

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.3mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, pearloid bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 20, medium

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with compensated bone saddle/54.5mm

ELECTRICS: Under-saddle pickup system with sound-hole mounted volume and tone control

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.4/5.28

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Just the A15AL

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Black gloss (as reviewed) and Tortoise Shell gloss

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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

Guitarist says: Equally well made, the A10E is just a little ordinary in the sound department compared to the Lifeson



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£361



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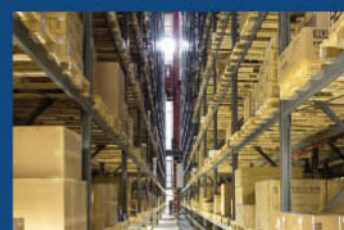
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Workhorse Power

PRS's new SEs face plenty of stiff competition from some of the mainstays of the low-to-mid electro-acoustic market. Here are some options...



Tanglewood TW130SMCE £369

An all-solid mahogany orchestra electro cutaway, the exhaustively named Tanglewood TW130 SM CE might lack the refinement of the A10E, but it still boasts a good quality B-Band Crescent electro system with soundhole-placed controls and Natural satin finish. There's no case either, but at this price, who's bothered?

Farida R-15E £399

This classy non-cutaway, 14-fret OM-style electro has a solid mahogany top, laminate mahogany back and sides and sonokelin fingerboard and bridge. Its power comes from a Fishman Presys Blend system with under-saddle piezo and a built-in mic. That said, it might need a little TLC to the frets and fingerboard, and doesn't come with a case.

Faith FNCMGNeptune £799

Made in Asia but designed by the UK electric and acoustic luthier extraordinaire Patrick Eggle, this is a great all-solid mahogany choice. Other notable enhancements include a Maccasan ebony fingerboard, Shadow Performer tuner/preamp and Shadow under-saddle pickup. The finish is satin and, like the PRSs, a case is included.



Yamaha CPX700II
£584

Here's another mainstream solid spruce/laminated nato cutaway electro, classed as a mini-jumbo by the Japanese acoustic giant. It is heavily spec'd on the electro side of things, too, with a single ART under-bridge contact sensor and the System 64 preamp with three-band EQ and onboard tuner. Again, it doesn't come with a case.

Vintage VE2000DLX
Gordon Giltrap
£599

The VE2000DLX was originally designed by Brit-maker Rob Armstrong, and tops a mini-range of Gordon Giltrap signature guitars. It comes with solid spruce top paired with solid rosewood back and laminate rosewood sides, and features a Fishman Rare Earth Blend soundhole pickup and comes with a case.

Martin Performing Artist
GPCPA5 Grand Performance
£799 (street price)

Big name and big value electro, especially at its street price, this one features a solid Sitka spruce top with mahogany laminate back and sides and Stratabond neck, Richlite fingerboard plus Fishman F1 Analog electronics. There's no case included and it's not fancy, but it's still very roadworthy.

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For more information, visit www.danelectro.com



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>

BLACKSTAR ID:CORE BEAM ~~\$229~~
AMPS



BEAM TICKET

The latest addition to the ID:Core line shrinks the dimensions and adds Bluetooth music playback, plus acoustic and bass models - BEAM us up...

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



Blackstar ID:Core BEAM

What You Need To Know About

- 1 What's the idea here?**
The BEAM is a compact tabletop entry in the ID:Core line, but offers Bluetooth music streaming, plus acoustic and bass voicings.
- 2 So, I can play all types of guitars through this?**
You can: Blackstar has included two acoustic, two bass and two acoustic simulations into the ID:Core recipe here.
- 3 Why the Bluetooth?**
The Bluetooth is there to let you wirelessly stream music from your phone or computer so you can jam along with your tunes.

Increasingly, compact combos are becoming much more than just low-volume amps. Since the advent of Yamaha's THR series and its 'third amp' concept in 2011, tabletop amps with full-range speakers are becoming commonplace, and they're just as at home playing music from your phone as they are notes from your guitar. Last year, Blackstar's ID:Core series brought full-range speakers to a traditional compact combo outline – but the BEAM takes it to an even more living room-friendly level.

BEAM stands for Bass Electric Acoustic Music – the first three letters represent the types of guitar you can plug in, while the latter refers to the unit's Bluetooth capabilities, which allows you to play music

wirelessly from phone or tablet. With a more compact enclosure than its ID:Core siblings (291 x 169 x 166mm as opposed to the Stereo 10's 340 x 265 x 185mm), and a pair of three-inch speakers, the BEAM is designed to sit comfortably on a tabletop,

too, with acoustically tuned designs to usurp your current desktop speaker setup. It's also durable enough to chuck in a bag for occasional jam sessions, thanks to a reassuringly chunky particleboard construction and smart-looking grille cloth, while





<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



The BEAM has 12 voices spanning three instruments



Bluetooth means the BEAM streams music wirelessly



Controls are basic, but they can be fine-tweaked on computer

the recessed plastic control panel and knobs feel like they can withstand a knock or two. The unit's weight is kept down by the use of an external laptop-style power supply.

In terms of catering for extra instruments, Blackstar has expanded the original ID:Core's six electric voices (two clean, two crunch, two distorted), and added two acoustic and bass voices apiece, as well as two acoustic sims for electrics, all of which are accessed by pressing the voice control. That's in addition to the bevy of effects (four delays, four reverbs, four modulations) selected using a four-way rotary selector and trio of buttons, with speed adjusted via a tap tempo button. You can save sounds to any of the 12 available onboard presets and easily switch between them

using the optional FS-11 ID:Core Footcontroller.

Elsewhere, Blackstar's hallmark ISF control functions as the lone tone control on the top panel, adjusting between British mids and American muscle. These tones can be further adjusted by hooking the BEAM up to your computer via USB and tweaking hidden parameters using Blackstar's free Insider software. What's more, the USB connection also functions as an interface for direct recording with your DAW, and even re-amping a pre-recorded dry guitar signal. Finally, a pair of 3.5mm sockets offer headphone outputs and a line in for audio devices. As with previous ID:Core offerings, it's a sleek, uncomplicated control panel, which allows you to get straight to the point: playing.

Sounds

If you've used any of Blackstar's previous ID:Core offerings, you know what to expect here. Starting at the lower end of the gain spectrum, the cleans are sweet and Tweed-y, and retain their warmth even when things get treble-heavy on the Clean Bright setting. Working your way up, it's clear that the BEAM is most at home with the crunch voices, which are highly touch-responsive across gain levels, from a glassy Plexi-ish break-up to a compressed, boosted overdrive channel-type sound.

The two OD settings, meanwhile, provide a decent enough chug, with more than enough gain to get your 80s virtuoso juices flowing, but you may find your notes cut a little prematurely owing to the somewhat over-excitable noise gate. It's here that the limitations of the sole ISF control rear their head, too: when turned fully right (ie, maximum British), the low frequencies have a tendency to

The Rivals

The **Line 6 AMPLiFi TT** (£149) requires separate speakers, but also features Bluetooth, as well as its own app and tone matching for your music.

Yamaha's ever-popular **THR10** (£280) doesn't offer wireless playback, but is a similarly spec'd twin-speaker desktop amp, while the **IK Multimedia iLoud** (£239) is a dedicated Bluetooth speaker with built-in iRig circuit for use with iOS devices running AmpliTube

The BEAM is most at home with the crunch voices, which are highly touch-responsive across gain levels

take over, and while some tinkering on the Insider software remedies that, an extra tone control wouldn't have gone amiss on the top panel.

Less tweaking is required with the excellent assortment of effects, which are all pedal-worthy. Blackstar's Super Wide Stereo tech is also present in the BEAM – it makes your guitar sound as if it's coming from



The onboard effects are very impressive

There's no better demonstration of the Super Wide Stereo's ear-bending magic than the amp's built-in effects

either side of the speakers, and there's no better demonstration of its ear-bending magic than the amp's effects. The modulation section comprises phaser, flanger, chorus and tremolo, all of which swirl around the stereo field. Adding in one of the four vintage-voiced delays (linear, analogue, tape, multi) only emphasises the effect further, while the four reverb types provide an ambience you won't find short of running a stereo reverb pedal into two amps.

Switching over to the new settings, we were pleased to note acoustic sims for both single coils and humbuckers. As you might expect, the softer, subtler single-coil sim was the more convincing, and while neither voice is going to have you ditching your dreadnought, they're more than passable as

providers of percussive flavour in a song mix. The acoustic side of proceedings, meanwhile, is effective. You get two flavours: one with a flat response for preamp-equipped acoustics and another more hi-fi sound, like a traditional acoustic amp. While the former is fine for unaffected sonic reproduction, the latter really sings, especially with a generous helping of reverb, although you'll need to watch the high-end with piezo-loaded acoustics.

The bass voices offer a similar choice of fairly flat and more hi-fi sounds, and thanks to the BEAM's ported construction, serve up plenty of punch for low-volume playing. Blackstar has also reconfigured the effects line-up for bass voices, replacing the four reverb types with four blendable drives, while an envelope filter takes

the place of the guitar's tremolo. These effects – particularly the gnarly, gated fuzz sound on the drive dial – sound great on guitar, too, so they're well worth experimenting with.

Verdict

With sound quality that capably competes with similarly priced speaker systems and no-fuss Bluetooth music-streaming capabilities, the BEAM is a no-brainer, particularly if you're a player who does a bit of everything. There's enough volume here to fuel living room get-togethers and impromptu jam sessions, while the recording capabilities make getting quick demos together easy, too. While it doesn't offer the same range of sounds as, say, Line 6's AMPLIFi TT, it's simple to dial in a great tone without much tinkering, which gets you playing more – and thanks to Bluetooth, jamming along with your music more, too. And at this price, that's something well worth investing in. **G**



Blackstar ID:Core BEAM

PRICE: £229

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Bluetooth-enabled desktop modelling amp

OUTPUT: 20 watts

DIMENSIONS: 169 (h) x 291 (w) x 166mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.9/8.6

CABINET: MDF

LOUDSPEAKERS: 2x 3" full-range drivers

VOICES: 12 (6 electric, 2 acoustic sim, 2 acoustic, 2 bass)

CONTROLS: Voice, gain, volume, ISF, mod, delay, reverb/dist, tap tempo buttons; effects type, effects level; manual/store button, Bluetooth button

FOOTSWITCH: Optional Blackstar FS-11 ID:Core Footcontroller (£24.99)

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Bluetooth music streaming, USB recording, additional adjustments via Insider software, built-in tuner

OPTIONS: Also available in red

Blackstar Amplification

01604 817817

www.blackstaramps.com



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

Guitarist says: A well-thought out addition to the lifestyle amp market, delivering serious sound quality for both guitars and music – a living room essential!



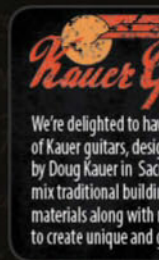
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Home Truths

While some bulky stage amps are struggling to sell, digital amps for living-room use, which double as your hi-fi and even recording interface, are on the up. So is guitar losing touch with its gigging roots? We ask the experts...

Like a guest who came to stay for the night but never quite left, the 'third amp' that Yamaha pioneered with its hit THR series has taken up permanent residence in our homes, and is now evolving into highly capable second-generation devices such as Blackstar's ID:Core BEAM, reviewed on page 116.

Originally designed to be a lounge-friendly companion to your stage amp and standard practice amp, the idea behind THR was to give guitarists something that would look good on a bookshelf or sideboard but offer a variety of credible tones and effects for the times when you just want to have a bit of a noodle, without having to retire to the shed, den, garage or rehearsal room (delete as appropriate) to play through a 'real' amp. Add sharp styling and a small footprint and you end up with a package

that can be tolerated in the living room by the non-guitarists in your life, too.

The Magic Number

The 'third amp' concept has come a long way in a short time since 2012 and recent offshoots of that idea, such as Blackstar's ID:Core BEAM and Line 6's AMPLIFI 75, double as hi-fi units with small-but-potent full-range speakers and Bluetooth compatibility, which allows you to stream music from your phone or tablet. It's so simple to convert the amp from Beggar's Banquet to dinner-party duties that it's tempting to wonder whether – with live music on the decline – such devices are no longer a fun accessory but the only amps some guitarists will ever plug into? And if so, is the heartland of the amp – the visceral beer-and-sweat knockabout of pub gigs – in

danger of being abandoned? We asked Joel Richardson, head of marketing at Blackstar, what his take on it is. He argues that amps such as the ID:Core BEAM act as a stimulus to daily involvement with guitar, which hopefully means more players will feel confident to make music more often, even if the audience is simply family and friends.

"We did a lot of research with our customers and distributors and we found that people are playing guitar a lot at home. So the ID:Core BEAM is really meant to be the ultimate home-use amp, so that you don't need anything else. You've got your regular six channels for guitar, but you've also got your two bass channels and your two acoustic simulators and two acoustic channels, Bluetooth compatibility, the Insider software for recording... It's just all there, really.

"Also, as we all know, if you take a big amp home and put it in the living room, your missus might have a bit of a go at you because it looks ugly and takes up a lot of space. So we did a lot of work on the cosmetic look of the BEAM, which means it's the sort of amp you can have in your living room or your bedroom and your family are going to use it as well because the audio playback is great, too – we've A/B'd it against BOSE stereos and other high-end docking stations and it's on a par with them."

Tiny Terrors

But he argues that the rising popularity of amps such as the BEAM doesn't mean that players are rejecting stage-capable amps. "We're still selling mid-size amps, we're still selling HT Venue amps and the ID Series is selling extremely well. So there is obviously still a market there for people going out and gigging and we absolutely encourage that – it's our bread and butter," he says. "So we still see BEAM as a solution for recording and playing at home, but our own real goal is to get people out there, playing live."

But Martin Adam, guitar product marketing manager at Yamaha Europe, believes there's a silent majority of hobby guitarists who don't necessarily think of the stage as the natural home for their amp. He argues that so-called 'third' amps such as THR and more recent devices from other makers answer a need that's existed for a long time.

"I think the industry identified it late, rather than steering a trend," he says. "Because I always felt there was a reluctance to take people who were recreational players seriously. The majority of the marketing [for amps] was always from the viewpoint that everybody would use them on stage.



Yamaha's slick and powerful THR

"THR was always destined to be a 'third' amp for the home, aimed at players who also owned other [stage-capable] amps. How much they actually used those other amps is open to question, and we did think that THR was probably going to end up being the amp they used most. Because even if you're gigging regularly, you still want to practise and play a lot at home. But, when it was under development, it was always aimed at experienced users of valve amps. That's why the feel and tone of it was so important."

So is it true to say that convenient, digital home amps such as THR or the next-generation offerings from companies such as Blackstar, Line 6 and others are also helping to legitimise digital guitar tone? Valves remain the ultimate tone-forgers for many players,

but there's no doubt that the raft of modelling amps and apps now on the market are getting close enough to the real thing to gain a bit of kudos of their own.

"Technology has moved on a lot – and I don't think digital is a dirty word anymore," Joel Richardson of Blackstar says. "And it shouldn't be: we accept digital products in every other area of our life apart from guitar amps. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing quite like a valve amp and if you're a professional, you'll probably want to use valves. But, yes, I think digital amps are becoming more accepted."

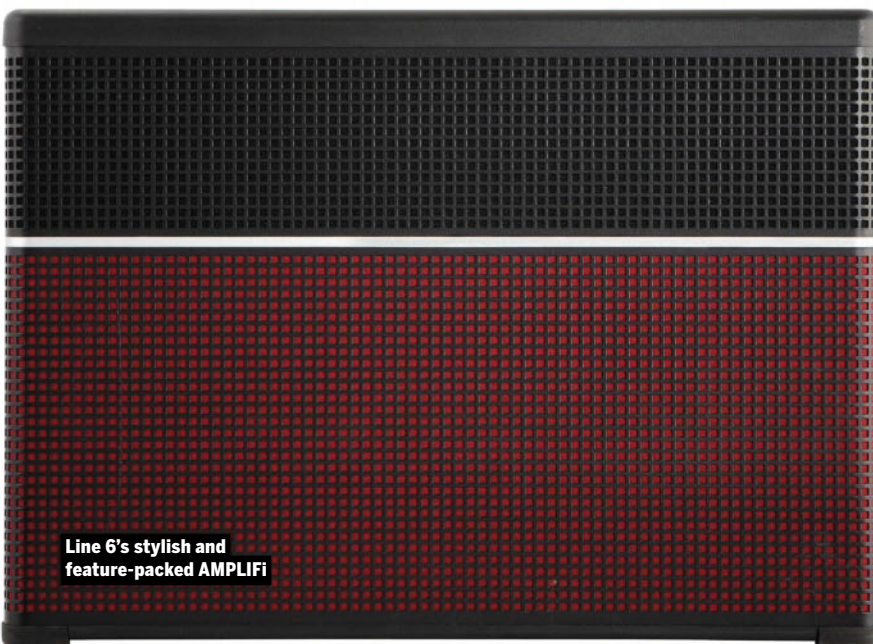
Ohm Alone

So what does it all mean? Perhaps the best interpretation is not the negative view that digital amps that also act as entertainment centres are watering down involvement with guitar music.

Instead, the more intriguing suggestion is they might actually be converting thousands of people with a passing interest in guitars into becoming daily players.

"THR was designed as a 'third' amp, but latterly you have this realisation that [in aiming it at gigging guitarists who own larger amplifiers] we were still looking at the smaller proportion of players, overall, rather than the bigger proportion," Adam says. "A lot of people like the idea of going on stage and like the idea of being rockstars but don't seriously entertain the idea of going that way. But they do want to foster their interest in guitar in lots of other ways. So if THR has made any contribution, it's in acknowledging that it's cool to play at home, too."

"There's a huge community out there that is having a huge amount of fun with instruments – but not quite in the way the music industry has imagined," he concludes. **G**



Line 6's stylish and feature-packed AMPLIFI

Nemphasis Pedals **£149 each**

We take these Italian stallions out for a quick gallop....

WORDS **Trevor Curwen**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

Although Italy was a source of effects pedals for many a UK guitarist in days gone by with the likes of the JEN Cry Baby and some Vox wahs and Tone Benders, we haven't seen an awful lot of Italian stompbox action in recent years. Nemphasis, however, is determined to change that, with a range of boutique pedals covering most of the common genres. The pedals feature quality components and are constructed to a high standard. Let's dive in...



Nemphasis Silver Box

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Booster pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Level, gain, treble, bass

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (10mA)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 120 (d) x 55mm (h)

Madison & Fifth

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No, we've never heard of Marco Tafelli either, but the Silver Box is his signature booster and it offers a four-knob control surface and up to 22dB of boost. The boost is dialled in with a combination of level and gain knobs. Gain down and level up, with the bass and treble knobs set fairly neutrally, gives you a useful incremental jump in your normal sound. Those tone knobs, if set to add treble and/or bass, also add a touch more perceived volume and the sort of better-on-than-off tone conditioning certain preamp pedals are lauded for. Gain and level maxed gives the most boost, of course – plenty for coaxing a clean valve amp into overdrive – but with the gain knob seemingly delivering a little more dirt than the level, juxtapositions of the two offer subtle variations at different boost levels.

Verdict

A useful little box for instant volume and/or tonal adjustment and a viable substitute for an overdrive pedal if you have a drivable valve amp.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: A versatile boost with useful tonal shifts



Nemphasis The Muff

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass,

CONTROLS: Sustain, tone, level

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (10mA)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 120 (d) x 55mm (h)

No guesses for where the inspiration for this came from, but isn't the name a bit too cheeky? With the graphic alluding, no doubt, to David Gilmour's use of a Big Muff, what you are getting is a pedal that offers a similar range to EHX's most famous stompbox, but has two voices. There's an internal switch to engage Fat mode, which beefs up the lower mids. Great, if fat sustained leads are your thing, but maybe a little too murky for chording. All those classic sounds are here, though, from the out-and-out grunge to the more refined, smooth-as-velvet liquid lead tones.

Verdict

This is an optimised idea of a Big Muff. It sounds lovely, like a well-sorted vintage unit, is robustly constructed and will look good on your pedalboard while not taking up much space. There are Big Muff clones out there that cost much more and real ones that cost much less, but if the extra features are something that appeals, give this Muff a try.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Familiar name, familiar sound, enhanced features





<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



Nemphasis Liquid Mind

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Analogue chorus pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Speed, depth, color

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (25mA)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 120 (d) x 55mm (h)

A true Bucket Brigade Device, the Liquid Mind harks back to the early 80s heyday of chorus pedals. For control, there are the usual speed and depth knobs, but there's also some useful tonal shading available via the Color control. Sound-wise, we're in that 80s analogue chorus zone: put next to a vintage Boss CE-2 – pretty much a yardstick for mono chorus in compact pedals – the sound is very similar, with that familiar shimmer and spaciousness. Keeping the Liquid Mind's Color knob at a low setting mirrors the midrange warmth of the Boss, but turning it clockwise brightens the sound, imbuing it with a little more bite that could suit some musical contexts.

Verdict

While a multi-modulation pedal will give you a range of flavours, sometimes a focused single pedal can nail it better. If you're specifically looking for vintage analogue mono chorus sounds, you'll find them here, with a modicum of tonal control for added versatility.



GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: Languid 1980s-style modulation revived

Nemphasis VT Comp

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Optical compressor pedal

FEATURES: True bypass
CONTROLS: Compress, attack, level

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor (20mA)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 120 (d) x 55mm (h)

Designed for studio-style compression, the VT Comp uses optical circuitry to achieve its aims, which it delivers through knobs for adjustment of the attack as well as the amount of compression and output level. The attack knob offers slower attack times as you advance it. To the left, it clamps down quickly on your signal putting a real snap and pop on the front edge of a note. Further round, that becomes less pronounced: the compression is still there but its onset is not as obvious. Overall, the compression is smooth and transparent – you might not notice it in action but you'd miss it if you turn the pedal off. A bonus is that there's plenty of output level available, and with compression right down and level up, you can use the pedal as a very natural clean booster. With higher amounts of both knobs together, it's a great amp driver.

Verdict

Keeps your signal consistent and under control without messing with your tone.



GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: Compression that's as smooth as gelato



Nemphasis Mr Q Driwah

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Auto-wah/
overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Gain, volume,
bass, treble, Q

CONNECTIONS: Standard
input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or
9V DC adaptor (15mA)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x
120 (d) x 55mm (h)

Driwah? Is this a new pedal genre? While the name suggests a combined overdrive and wah, what we get is an odd hybrid. While the volume knob turns up the output, and bass and treble offer sympathetic tonal shadings, it's the gain knob and the Q knob that control the action. Kick in the pedal and you'll get a throaty overdrive that gets more saturated as you turn up the gain. This is always affected by the position of the Q knob and sounds closest to straight overdrive at that knob's lowest position. The Q knob controls a filter, emphasising higher frequencies as you advance it. We wouldn't describe the results as wah (although emulation of a 'parked' wah is possible), it's more a chewy talkbox sound for leads that easily take off into upper octave harmonics.

Verdict

It's niche, but the Driwah will give your guitar a different voice that some players will undoubtedly like. We would have liked it more if the Q knob could be put under control of an expression pedal.



GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: Not for everyone, but this pedal has a unique, quirky sound

Nemphasis X7 Tube Overdrive

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Valve-driven
overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass,
12AX7 valve

CONTROLS: Gain,
tone, level

CONNECTIONS: Standard
input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor
(not supplied) (320mA)

DIMENSIONS: 90 (w) x
130 (d) x 60mm (h)

The X7's wedge-shaped housing comes complete with vents on the side to aid heat dissipation from its single valve, but isn't so bulky that it takes up too much 'board real estate. There's no clean boost – with gain right down and level at about one o'clock, it adds a raunchy second channel to your clean sound with plenty left in reserve for volume jumps. Bring in the gain knob and the saturation builds for rich, fat distortion with singing harmonics aplenty, delivered via a tone control that zeroes in nicely on the amount of throaty upper-mid and top-end presence that you desire. Nicely touch sensitive, too.

Verdict

While there are shedloads of solid-state pedals that promise the sort of overdrive you'd get from a valve amp, there are far fewer that offer a valve as part of the circuitry, so it's always good to see a new one, especially one that's as much of a pleasure to play through as this. There should be an included a power supply, though.



GUITARIST RATING



Guitarist says: Ace overdrive! It seems that, sometimes, only a valve will do...



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WORDS **Trevor Curwen**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

Maybe better known for its guitars, or indeed its amps, Suhr has also made pedals for several years and has recently introduced new reworked versions of some of its designs under the 'Reloaded' banner. Its pedals have the unique ability to be operated via a remote footswitch plugged into its FX Link mini-jack. This works in conjunction with a three-way switch: one position allowing use of the remote footswitch, the other two determining whether the pedal powers up in a bypassed or active state.



Suhr Shiba Drive Reloaded

PRICE: £179

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Drive, level, tone, Smooth switch, FX Link switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, FX Link stereo mini-jack

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC power supply (8mA)

DIMENSIONS: 64 (w) x 114 (d) x 32mm (h)

www.suhr.com



The Shiba Reloaded tweaks the overdrive circuit of Suhr's 2009 original to create a pedal that is more amp-like, has a tighter low-end, focused mids, and features 50 per cent more gain. Balancing drive and level knobs, the range runs from a clean boost to raunchy driven amp sounds, taking in shades of light crunch along the way. It's full-bodied, without overdoing the mids, yielding a naturally open sound that will keep your basic tone intact and serve as a way to 'transparently' take your amp up a gear – whether that's adding crunch to a clean amp or making a driven amp sing. The tone knob lets you crisp up or tone down the upper-mids, while a three-way Smooth switch lets you subtly roll off two different amounts of top end: useful to take some of the sharpness out of a Telecaster's bridge pickup.

Verdict

One of the most naturally playable overdrives around. What's the easiest amp mod to enhance your tonal options? Putting one of these in front of it...

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Amp-enhancing overdrive with a choice of smoothness

Suhr Rufus

PRICE: £179

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Fuzz pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, switching between 2 modes

CONTROLS: Fuzz, level, bass, mid, treble switch, FX Link switch,

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, FX Link stereo mini-jack

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC power supply

DIMENSIONS: 64 (w) x 114 (d) x 32mm (h)



Silicon transistor-based, the Rufus has more tonal tweaking power than many fuzzes as it features both a three-band EQ, and a three-position treble switch, which can be used to cut or boost the amount of high frequencies. It also has two modes of operation: normal or fat (with increased low end) that can be switched between by holding down the footswitch – the LED lights up green or red respectively. Alternatively, this can be carried out by an external footswitch, which can be set to latching or momentary action.

Delivering great-sounding fuzz whether you like thick sustain or edgier garage/grunge-type sounds, this pedal has practical options and is not finicky about positioning on your 'board, as it accepts the output of a buffered device.

Verdict

Fuzz pedals can be very 'niche' but the Rufus transcends that by virtue of its tonal variation, twin voices and signal chain flexibility. It's not cheap but it's a fuzz that's more versatile than most.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: A fuzz for all seasons, with variety and versatility in spades



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



Suhr Riot Reloaded

PRICE: £179

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Distortion, level, tone, voice switch, FX Link switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, FX Link stereo mini-jack

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC power supply (8mA)

DIMENSIONS: 64 (w) x 114 (d) x 32mm (h)



The Riot Reloaded is another re-worked pedal, this time adding 30 per cent more gain than the original and three voicing options via a toggle switch. As well as distortion and level knobs, the tone knob focuses the distortion in an optimum range: never too dull or too fizzy. The Riot can not only sit in front of a clean amp to deliver driven and high-gain amp tones, making a Fender Deluxe come over all Marshall JCM800, but also offers an extra dimension for a already driven amp. The first of the voicings (presumably based around Germanium diodes) is naturally responsive to instrument volume; the second offers more bottom-end girth and midrange clout; while the third yields scooped-midrange clarity. These are ideal choices to complement various rock and metal styles, but all have an effective upper-mid presence that will let you be heard... whatever your music.

Verdict

A stack-in-a-box with practical voicing options for classy amp-style distortion.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Natural amp-like distortion that will transform a clean amp

Suhr Koji Comp

PRICE: £179

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Compressor pedal

FEATURES: True bypass (switchable to buffered), traffic light LED for compression strength

CONTROLS:

Compression, level, attack, mix, voice switch, FX Link switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, FX Link stereo mini-jack

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC power supply

DIMENSIONS: 64 (w) x 114 (d) x 32mm (h)

Besides the standard compression and level knobs you'd expect on any compressor, the Koji Comp also offers a mix knob, which lets you mix some direct sound in with the effected one for parallel compression blends. It also has enough output gain to boost your amp into overdrive, which combines well with a voice switch that can deliver extra top end. There are two distinct EQ boosts: one in the upper-mids only, the other offering upper-mid boost combined with a glassy top end. This counteracts compression-created dullness and also adds a sweet chime that's particularly effective on clean notes and chords. There's a wide range of compression here, from a smooth evening of dynamics to the thick squash of a vintage Dyna Comp, with plenty of scope to dial in a percussive edge to your note via the attack knob.

Verdict

With a neat blend of facilities, not least the mix knob's subtleties, this should take care of all your compression needs.

GUITARIST RATING

★★★★★

Guitarist says: Versatile compression with extra top end if you need it





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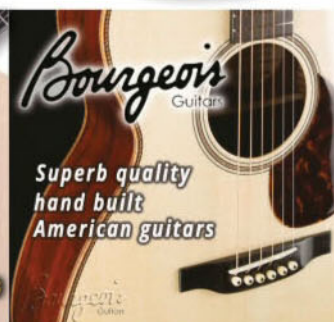


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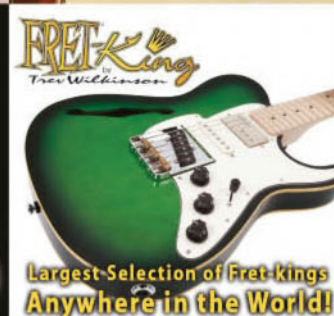
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Strandberg Boden 8 From \$3,350

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Thanks to the rise of 'djent', seven, eight and even nine-string guitars are becoming more and more widespread. Often mistakenly perceived as a novelty, these guitars are fast becoming a mainstay in the realm of progressive metal.

A company that has catered to the prog-metal community for quite some time is Strandberg, based in Uppsala, Sweden, whose impressive user base includes Periphery's Misha Mansoor and Animals As Leaders' Tosin Abasi, and the Boden 8 reviewed here has its specs taken from the made-to-measure Strandbergs of those very two players.

Visually, the vast majority of us guitarists will be taken aback by the space-age appearance, including fanned frets, no headstock, and the strikingly unusual body shape. Yet perhaps the most unsettling feature aspect of all occurs

when flipping over the guitar to reveal the trademarked 'EndurNeck': a neck that has a back surface made up of three intertwining flat surfaces instead of a round profile.

This 'EndurNeck' system is no novelty, however: it has been borne out of extensive research into hand posture at various points on the neck, and the knowledge that your hand is much stronger when gripping something thick than when gripping something thin. So, when your fretting hand is in a position where the first finger needs support, such as the higher end of the neck, you'll find the appropriate girth underneath to provide it, and vice versa for the thumb at the lower end of the neck. After playing it, you'll soon realise it makes perfect sense, and enhances playability on an already challenging eight-string.

Sounds

Those who have dabbled in lower tunings will already appreciate that the greater the scale length, the better the tension and intonation of the lower strings. Because the scale length is increased from high to low, the frets fan out, too. There are numerous pickup options available when custom-ordering a Boden 8, and our review model has Lace Aluma X-Bars installed. We find them just a tad underpowered for immediately capturing that progressive metal sound that this type of guitar demands, but after a few amp tweaks, we've got a very well balanced sound, with enough power to project ultra-low riffs without overpowering higher strings.

Verdict

However unsettling the appearance of the guitar, rest assured that every seemingly

radical feature is a triumph for function over 'style', and none more so than the unique EndurNeck neck, which really is an ingenious feat of design. While the thought of a non-elliptical neck shape will be horrifying to most of us, it's precisely on such a wide neck that this system offers some serious benefits.

For players who creatively demand the sonic benefits of an eight-string instrument, but are perhaps still feeling apprehensive about swapping to a much wider neck, the radical, innovative Boden 8 may prove to be the ultimate platform to finally make the transition. **[DC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: If you're serious about eight-string instruments this is one of the most innovative and intuitive designs out there



Red Witch Factotum Bass Suboctave Drive £249

Analogue bliss from Red Witch's first bass unit

CONTACT: Wunjo's PHONE: 0207 379 0737 WEB: www.redwitchpedals.com

Much loved by guitarists, Red Witch has at last released an effects pedal aimed at bass players. Continuing the company's blend of art and technology into its products, this analogue unit is presented in a bright chrome finish and, as the name suggests, the Factotum has the dual function of introducing a sub-octave note and distortion. Naturally, these can be used individually or together from independent switches, but of the five on-board rotary controls, four are concerned with the drive section and the other is used to blend the sub-octave into your regular note.

Sounds

Sonically, this is a joy from start to finish, as both functions are extremely effective in their own right. Analogue sub-octave is by no means an easy feat to achieve, yet this does the job with authority – and the single

control proves more than enough to achieve a good ratio of wet-to-dry signal.

The drive section is far more sophisticated: whether used in moderation or for full-on Armageddon, there's plenty of control and a natural valve-like warmth to the sound, that makes you want to use it more and more. With full blending abilities available, the combined sounds are high-quality and never seem thin.

Verdict

The Factotum is an extremely roadworthy unit with two great sounds that will appeal to most bass players. Red Witch has chosen a great way to start – let's hope more bass pedals are in the cauldron. **[RN]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: If you want to add distortion and/or sub-octave effects, check this out



Korg Sledgehammer & Sledgehammer Pro Clip-on Tuners

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Clip-on tuners are 10 a penny, but this pair stand out from the crowd

CONTACT: Korg UK PHONE: 01908 304600 WEB: www.korg.co.uk

These new lightweight Sledgehammers share a wide-jawed plastic clip and fully rotating tubular head. The Sledgehammer has a recessed flat screen with thumbwheel controls at each end. The left wheel, moved up, turns the power on; turned down, you select chromatic, guitar or bass modes. The right wheel, moved up, calibrates the tuning reference from 436-445Hz; moved down, you enter the flat (down five semitones) or capo (up seven semitones) modes.

On its rounded '3D' display, the all-black Pro has a choice of read-outs (regular, strobe and half strobe) but does away with the specific guitar and bass modes. It has improved accuracy (+/- 0.1 as opposed to +/- 1 cent) and increases battery life from eight to 14 hours.

In Use

Accuracy and quick response here are extremely good. The

standard Sledgehammer's more basic display is better for students; yet it's a little slower and seems very slightly less accurate. The Pro, however, especially in strobe mode, is on a par with a Peterson Virtual Strobe – we achieved excellent results with both a troublesome nylon string and gigging a bass.

Verdict

Accurate and lightweight they may be, but both are on the steeper side, price-wise, of the clip-on tuner market. The Pro, however, is the most accurate tuner of its type we've yet encountered, and the most visible, in terms of that '3D' display. **[DB]**

GUITARIST RATING

Sledgehammer ★★★★★
Sledgehammer Pro ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Not the cheapest, but in terms of accuracy, the Pro is the way to go

Cort CGC7 Electro nylon cutaway £389

Need a nylon-string 'crossover' guitar, but strapped for cash?

CONTACT: Proel **PHONE:** 0208 761 9911 **WEB:** www.cortguitars.com

Cort, like the majority of huge Asian brands, offers a diverse range of guitars. We last caught up with its collaboration with Manson guitars here in the UK and Muse's Matt Bellamy. This cutaway electro-nylon string couldn't be more different.

It has a few things in common, however, with that Bellamy signature in that it's very crisply made with an attractive price-point. Combine a narrower nut width (44.9mm), some 6mm thinner than a concert classical, but with a wide classical-style string spacing at the tie-block bridge of 60mm, not to mention a lightly cambered fingerboard and reduced depth, and you have an intentionally stage-friendly, 'crossover' guitar. It seems ideal for any player wanting to don nylons who doesn't want to go down the hardcore classical guitar route.

Construction-wise, it's classed by Cort as having an SFX outline, which falls into the grand-auditorium bracket and certainly isn't many millimetres away from Takamine's NEX outline, not least the upturned, round-nosed cutaway horn. The body is wider than a conventional classical at 402mm and, as we say, the depth is reduced from a more classical dimension of approx 100mm, to 85mm.

Typical of the modern electro-nylons, we have an adjustable truss-rod although the three piece mahogany neck has a noticeable slight V to its profile in lower positions – much more steel-string-like. However, the crisp, tidy bracing at least includes proper classical-style fan bracing. Typical of the modern Chinese-made style, the fingerboard is bound with black plastic and, again quite typical at this price, the small frets, though very nicely

installed, haven't been properly polished, giving a scratchy feel to any slight bend.

Powering comes from a simple Fishman setup: a Sonico under-saddle married with a Presys preamp featuring volume, bass, mid and treble mini-rotary controls, plus a feedback-defeating phase switch and onboard tuner.

Sounds

Slackening off the strings and giving a good rub to the frets and fingerboard dramatically improves the feel of the guitar and takes all of 10 minutes. Acoustically, well, it's far from the loudest nylon-string we've ever played, and lacks some richness in the lower end and lower mids. But as an amplified stage guitar – not to mention a perfectly good at-home practice instrument – it justifies its cost. It really has quite a percussive 'Spanish' tonality: crisp highs, a quick attack and not a huge sustain. The D and A strings are a little underpowered, which might be the strings, or more likely a slight imbalance caused by the fitting of the under-saddle. Plus, the onboard tuner on our model doesn't work.

Verdict

A little fingerboard TLC goes a long way, and the non-functioning tuner would immediately be sorted by any dealer. For a student, or a player wanting to experiment with the nylon 'crossover' genre without breaking the bank, certainly for onstage use and at-home practice, it's a very valid instrument. **[DB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Affordable and stage-friendly, a good starter for nylon-string wannabes



VIDEO DEMO



<http://bit.ly/guitarist394>



Electro-Harmonix Pitch Fork £113

Meet EHX's latest compact polyphony epiphany

CONTACT: Electro-Harmonix **WEB:** www.ehx.com



With Royal Blood's octave-doubling riff onslaughts dominating mainstream rock, it seems pitch-shifting is finally reaching widespread acceptance among guitar – and bass – players, especially since the development of polyphonic tracking. It's good timing, then, for the Pitch Fork, the latest evolution of EHX's own polyphonic pitch-shifting technology, which started with the POG back in 2005.

Where the POG deals primarily with octaves, the Pitch Fork gives you the full range of intervals from one octave down to one octave up, plus two and three octaves in either direction, via a toggle switch. EHX has also enabled two harmonies at once; set the toggle to dual, and as well as one up-shifted signal, you also get a preset 'musically useful' harmony alongside, including a POG-like octave-up and octave-down doubling.

The Pitch Fork encroaches on the territory of its pitch-shifting stablemate, the Slammi, by offering external expression pedal control. This is in addition to a non-latching mode, accessed via the latch button, which allows the footswitch to be used for momentary glitches and shifts. In momentary mode, you can also use an expression pedal to adjust the rise/drop time of the footswitch. Elsewhere, the Pitch Fork features a high-quality buffered bypass, and can run from its included nine-volt power supply or a nine-volt battery – the latter is a genuine option, too, given its relatively low current draw of 30mA.

Sounds

No matter what extended chords you throw at it, the Pitch Fork delivers spot-on tracking in every shift, even when tracking dual harmonies. Compared with, say, a DigiTech

Whammy (5th Gen), there's a fraction more latency, but it's barely noticeable, especially with some gain engaged, and it's a price worth paying for the sonic potential on offer.

As well as three variations on chorus, courtesy of the detune mode, the full complement of harmonies work a treat, while the upper octaves are well-voiced, doing away with the sometimes shrill quality of lesser shifters. The dual functions are awfully generous, too: we're big fans of the flute-y two-octaves up and one-octave down setting, and although not every combined harmony is musically practical, you can hardly complain with so many options on the table.

By cranking the blend to maximum, instant drop-tunings are also available, and although the treble content drops slightly the lower you go, a dash of dirt makes for seriously convincing baritone-style results. The plug-

and-play expression pedal control is a big plus, too: hooking up a Roland EV-5, we had no problems instantly conjuring classic pitch-shifting highlights, such as Tom Morello-type sweeps and Floyd Rose-esque divebombs.

Verdict

With street prices hovering around the £100 mark, the Pitch Fork packs a tremendous range of sounds for the money. While every pitch-shifter has its strengths, the flexibility, superb tracking and overall tonality of the shifts make the Pitch Fork a safe bet for just about any pitch-based application, and the Nano enclosure serves to seal the deal. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: With myriad shifts, formidable tracking and pedalboard-friendly dimensions, this is a handy do-all pitch-shifter

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Choice #18 1960 Les Paul
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Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports



Victory V40H 'The Duchess' head

Jamie Dickson

HEAD-TO-HEAD It's Duchess versus Countess in a clash of tonal toffs, with gigs and studio dates to decide



When guitarists talk about tone, it's often spoken of in the same way as a fine wine – as something that you savour. But it's arguably more apt to think about tone as a dynamic, interactive quality, not a kind of sonic nectar to be passively imbibed: the sum of how your playing style gels with a particular piece of gear. There's an analogy with motor racing here, perhaps: a few years back in MotoGP, the premier class of motorbike racing, the Australian rider Casey Stoner seemed to be the only person who could tame Ducati's fearsome Desmosedici bike.

Where others failed to get results on the GP07 machine, Stoner's maximum-attack riding style seemed to transform what was widely regarded as a beast of a bike, awesomely powerful but

turbulent to ride. In his hands, however, it won championships.

When it comes to amps, I believe a similar principle applies. Take Victory's twin-channel V30 'The Countess' head for example. It was designed as Guthrie Govan's touring amp – light, but capable of generating powerful, well-defined tone from its clean and drive channels. It throws notes like javelins: fast, carrying, clear. That means it can articulate what a stellar talent such as Guthrie, or any hard-rock or fusion guitarist, throws at it with formidable clarity and projection. The definition and directness of its clean channel means it's also a good 'blank canvas' platform for effects. But for a bluesier player who likes to plug straight into the amp, and who prefers to occupy the scrunchy zone between glassy clean and all-out drive, it

can come across as a bit abrupt and fierce. In that sense, the V30 is rather like that championship-winning Desmosedici – and not all of us are Casey Stoners (nor yet Guthrie Govans), after all.

Enter the V40. Think of it as the older, more sophisticated sister to the V30. In direct contrast to the V30 (a 30-watt, dual-channel, high-gain amp that's actually pretty single-minded), the V40H is a 40-watt single-channel amp with a surprising degree of tonal versatility, thanks to voicing switches that alter its character between 50s- and 60s-era Fender-style tones, plus a 'mid-kick' switch intended to usher in a more British persona. However, the V40 is optimised for lower-gain tones, so it requires pedals to make it all-terrain, whereas the V30, with its dedicated lead channel, is fully armed for high-gain battle. Both amps can operate in either high- or low-output mode and both can run in either single-ended (typically looser in feel and harmonically richer) or push-pull mode (louder and tighter), opening up yet more avenues for tweaking. The upshot is that you can get a range of useable, non-fizzy, tones from either amp in lower-volume

studio or bedroom scenarios. I've set myself the challenge of taking both the V30, which I've already used quite a bit, and the new-arrival V40 – both £829 – to upcoming gigs, using one head for the first set and the other for the second. I'll also be taking both amps into the studio. I'm hoping I'll either find the stark simplicity and clarity of the V30 makes it a winner, or that the incoming V40's low-gain tinker-potential really does make it the more flexible friend. Let sibling rivalry commence!

Victory V40H 'The Duchess'



First reviewed: 391

Price: £829

Type: Valve head with onboard reverb and voicing circuits

Output: 40 watts, switchable from 40 to 0.5 watts RMS

Valves: 3x 12AX7 (preamp), 2x EL84 (power amp)

Victory Amplification
www.victoryamps.com



**Fender Road Worn
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Josh Gardner



**Larri   OM-03
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Dave Burrluck



**Victory V40H The
Duchess Head**
Jamie Dickson

Gibson Les Paul Collector's Edition #18 'Dutchburst'

Neville Marten

NEW PRODUCT Neville and his Dutch friend are plunged in at the deep end



Playing live in front of 150 Aynsley Lister fans in Wiltshire, the very week I took over the Dutchburst as my longterm test, was not quite what I'd had in mind. But Aynsley and I are mates and, the gig being local, he kindly invited me up for a blast. And what better way to try out a guitar about which I'd already waxed lyrical in print and on video (issue 392). Aynsley brought along a spare 50-watt Marshall and I felt determined to go for it, not a pedal in sight.

Luckily, I could make it to the soundcheck, so I had at least a fighting chance. Aynsley set 'my' amp next to his and I aped his settings exactly: we ran through *Steppin' Out* and the Dutchburst was clearly displaying its 'mojo'. A quick pub meal and it was back to the venue for the show.

The band was brilliant, as always – great songs and great playing. When it came time for my bit, I sneaked backstage, tuned up and went on. The tone was huge and dark and, given the combination of Gibson Les Paul,

Marshall and me, the result was pure Bluesbreakers. The guitar sang its way through two tunes: the aforementioned Memphis Slim instrumental, and Aynsley's excellent rendition of Muddy's *Champagne And Reefer*. Being in A, the latter was a proper test for the Les Paul's high-end accessibility (as mentioned in the review); it didn't disappoint, and if you want to hear a grainy 'warts-and-all' iPhone clip, then visit the *Guitar Techniques* Facebook page, where I've posted one of my solos. See you soon!

Gibson Les Paul Collector's Edition #18 'Dutchburst'



First reviewed: 392

Price: £5,799 (inc case)

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

Pickups: 2x Gibson scatter-wound Custom Buckers

Hardware: Lightweight aluminium stud tailpiece and tune-o-matic bridge, Kluson-style tuners

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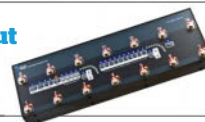
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Gary Walker



**PRS S2 Singlecut
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Dave Burrluck



TheGigRig G2
Jamie Dickson



PRS S2 Singlecut Semi-Hollow

Dave Burrluck

NEW PRODUCT Our reviews ed attempts to make a PRS guitar sound better than PRS did



Back in issue 385, I wrote about PRS's new S2-level Semi-Hollow guitars. It was one of the more difficult reviews I've ever had to write. Having enjoyed the previous S2s, I was really looking forward to these, not least because a few players had really been bigging them up. But while the guitars had few, if any, build issues, phrases such as "a little over-crisp" and "a little underpowered" don't usually crop up in any PRS guitar I've played or owned. I concluded with "if we're honest, the sounds are a little less 'dialled in' than the solidbody S2s, or indeed the

majority of PRS's core-line instruments we've tested." Hmm.

After the guitars had gone off to be shot and demoed, I wondered if I was right. After a bit of a restless night, I called PRS Europe and asked if they'd send me down another S2 Semi-Hollow. I lined up a few other ES-335 guitars, and the trusted ears of a fellow 'semi' fan and, yes, sonically, it was the same: far from bad, just not quite right.

Paul Reed Smith has always taught me how important the acoustic sound of an instrument is. Listening to the S2 Semi, acoustically, compared with a

core-level all-mahogany PRS Singlecut Hollowbody, the S2 really did sound thinner and much crisper. Could I narrow the gap? I whipped off the strings and replaced the unplated Stoptail bridge with an older, nickel-plated Stoptail I had in my bits box. Restringing the S2 with D'Addario NYXL .011s and giving a little more 'air' to the setup seemed to subtly bring down the real high-end and drive the guitar a bit more. Interesting.

But, amp'd, things still didn't quite sound as they should... or should that be 'could'? Time to warm up the soldering iron and put in a call to Mr Smith.

PRS S2 Singlecut Semi-Hollow



First Reviewed: 385

Price: £1,485 (inc. gigbag)

Type: Single-cutaway, semi-hollow electric

Body: Semi-solid one-piece mahogany with 'asymmetric bevelled' figured maple top

Neck: Mahogany, glued-in, 635mm (25-inch) scale, 22-fret rosewood fingerboard

Pickups: PRS S2 #7 Treble and Bass

Hardware: PRS S2 Stoptail, S2 locking tuners (w/brass posts)

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Q&A

Guitarist's expert panel



Dave Burrluck

is *Guitarist's* assiduous reviews editor and is also the author of numerous guitar books. Very handy with a fret file and indeed any aspect of a finely fettled six-string.



Mick Taylor

ex-editor of *Guitarist*, has wielded Allen keys, screwdrivers and sandpaper and from an early age; he also has a worrying obsession with pedalboards.



Neville Marten

edited *Guitarist* for 13 years, after working for both

Fender and Gibson as a repairer. From desirable Les Pauls to dream Strats, he's owned and worked on the lot.



Nick Guppy

is *Guitarist's* amp specialist with a wealth of experience gained from

collecting, repairing and restoring all kinds of guitar-related audio.

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com or write in to *Guitarist* magazine, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. If you can include photographs of the problem area, so much the better!



Gold Foil pickups on your Strat? Remember they're surface-mounted

You foiled me

How come I've never heard of Gold Foil pickups before? I read about them in your last issue [393, May 2015] and now I'm starting to notice them everywhere. Where can I buy them, and will they fit in my Strat?!

Dave House, via email

Ha! Us too, Dave. They've been something of a revelation, having played them in a variety of modern guitars, including the Chris George Custom in this issue (review on p38, demo on our YouTube channel) and also a Collings 360ST. For anyone who didn't read last issue, these are the Teisco- and DeArmond-style pickups much loved by left-fielders including Ry Cooder and Dan Auerbach.

They use a different coil/winding structure from the more common single coil and humbucking pickups that we know best, and offer a tone character that's different from either. Mounting them isn't straightforward; even though they're not very deep, they are surface-mounted, which means not enough string clearance to simply sit on top of the Strat pickguard (or body with the pickguard cut out). This may depend on their maker and vintage, however, so get the pickup before you do anything! Jason Lollar and Mojo Tone Pickups make superb, modern repro Gold Foils.

Oomph-pah

I've owned a 100-watt Marshall JCM2000 head for many years

now and have always found the sound to be a little bit too bright when used live. Even when playing gigs with other JCM2000 users and using the same 4x12 cab, I found that mine just sounded a bit brighter, and I began to suffer terribly with JCM2000 envy. I recall and cherish a time when the amp seemed to sound a bit more responsive in the low end and there was an overall darker sound, but about a week later, the amp stopped working and the power amp valves needed changing. As a result, the darker sound vanished.

I replaced the valves with a set of matched JJ EL34s, as I noticed that these were the valves that came fitted in the amp and I figured that I would stick with those. I was wondering if, in your

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?

Amp for small jazz gigs

Q My five-watt Blackstar is great for using at home, but I've recently put together a new group to do jazz standards. The sound gets too crunchy at the volume I need, so I need a bigger amp. I'd like a combo to make transport easy; small so that it doesn't take up much space, a low-power mode, but also enough clean headroom to work at modest volumes live, with unmic'd drums and a horn or two. The Mesa/Boogie Recto-Verb Twenty-Five would be everything I want, and while I don't mind investing in a 'keeper', it would be the most expensive bit of musical kit I've ever bought!

Matt Bedford, via email

A Whether it's jazz or not, Matt, you've just described the amp that so many of us want and, as you say, Mesa Boogie's Recto-Verb Twenty-Five ticks a lot of boxes, as does the newer Mark 5:25. A small head and cab can be just as portable as a combo, not least in that each individual item is lighter than the whole thing. We'd also say don't worry too much about low-power modes – they're there for overdrive tonal dynamics at low volumes, rather than just being quieter per sé. For clean tones at home, just turn it down. Here are the three amps we'd advise you try alongside the Recto-Verb...



2. Fender GB Hot Rod Deluxe £789

In standard form, this 40-watt valve amp is the most widely used combo on the planet: it's loud, portable, versatile and great sounding. This George Benson signature variant uses a different valve complement and a different speaker to make it work for Benson's style: more headroom and cleaner at higher volumes.



1. Roland Cube 80GX £229

Roland's Cubes are very popular among jazz guitarists: they're simple, lightweight, cost-effective and, perhaps most importantly, have a solid clean tone evolved from the revered JC-120. There's stuff here you don't need – super-gained distortion sounds – but delay and reverb are always useful. 12-inch speaker, bobbins money: winner.



3. ZT Lunchbox £229

The ultimate in portability and power. Less than a foot long and eight inches tall, it kicks out a claimed 200 solid-state watts through a single 6.5-inch speaker. It's not the most refined, to-die-for sound you'll ever hear from a guitar amp, but for price and practicality, it's worth a look.



experience, you knew of any particular brand/type of valve that I could use in my JCM2000 that may assist in my search for more low-end response from my amp? I did have a look online at some of the forums, but it seems like quite a convoluted world full of conjecture and subjectivity. Can you please help, or do I just have to accept that my ear might seem to prefer the sound of a valve amp right before it goes kaput?

Scott Butterfield, via email

There's a logical diagnosis here, Scott. You liked the sound of the amp just before the output valves went, then you replaced them and liked it less. So our first question is: did you have the amp rebiased for the new valves? If not, get that done immediately because one possibility here is that the amp is over-biased for that particular set of valves (too much negative voltage across the control grid of each valve, which means the amp runs too 'cold' and may sound 'weak' or 'sterile' as a result).

If you're going to the trouble of getting tech work done, think about going the extra mile and finding a really good tech. He/she will also be able to suggest a mod or three that will tweak up the amp so it's more to your liking. Caps, resistors, etc: there's a great history of

fabulous-sounding modded Marshalls, remember.

If you did have the amp rebiased properly when changing valves, you have another range of options. Different valve brands can sound different, but keep in mind that they're made in a critically small number of facilities, so regardless of brand name, it's really the selection and matching that makes all the difference. Your JJ Electronics valves are made in Slovakia and are extremely well regarded as 'good' sounding valves, though these things are always subjective and, as we say, down to selection and matching. Also, don't ignore your preamp valves: they can make a big difference, especially a decent phase inverter (the last valve in the preamp). Again, a decent amp tech will be able to advise you on what will work best in your particular amp. Techs are a bit like accountants: the benefit of using a good one will always outweigh the cost.

We could get into things such as changing your pickups and speakers as well, but everything you've said points to the issue being in the amp.

Finally, turn down the treble and presence. That might sound like an impossibly condescending thing to suggest, but we know of people >



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who just can't get their heads around running a pot outside of its 'middle' ranges. Strange but true!

Practice vs live?

Warm greetings from chaotic Mumbai! I play guitar in a blues trio, alternating Strat and SG. I try to keep a clean amp sound and tend to bring the dirt with a couple of stacked OD pedals. I have to manipulate the sound quite a bit in order to boost my signal when I use a higher-gain OD (OCD) over the lower-gain OD, in order to cut through the mix during solos. To alleviate the situation, I use a (MXR CAE Booster-Line Driver) booster and that usually does the trick into a Line 6 modelling amp set to the Fender-y tones.

When it comes to playing live through a Fender Twin Reverb reissue, however, my practice settings were totally ineffective, as whenever I dialled in any type of gain pedal (OD, distortion, fuzz) the boost was dramatic. This is a good thing, you'll tell me, and I'd agree after having turned down all my volume settings. Why is there such a difference of response and volume from dirt boxes over clean amp settings between practice and live? Is this because of the nature of the amps; or perhaps of volume, dynamics and headroom? Finally, how could I assure more consistency between the two playing conditions: why does it sound so muffled in practice?

Marc Biefnot, Mumbai, India

You've already diagnosed the issue, Marc, and it's all the things you mention. Firstly, a Fender Twin Reverb (we're assuming it's a '65 reissue, but this would stand for every valve-powered Twin) is a vastly different beast from the Line 6 modelling amp, regardless of model. The amount of headroom in both pre- and power sections, its power, its ability to shift huge variances of dynamics through that pretty hefty output transformer and speaker combination, mean that it's far more sensitive to

variances in level from your pedals. That's part one.

Part two is down to how your ears perceive volume. A 20dB jump at low levels will be a small lift. Put 20dB on at gig level, however – especially through an amp that has the available headroom – and you're talking a massive hike in volume (loudness being a logarithmic curve and all that).

Part three is about EQ. One of the reasons you're perceiving the Twin to be far louder is because of the way it handles mid frequencies, particularly. In our experience, most modelling amps tend to have a pretty 'guitar shop-friendly' EQ in general; that's to say plenty of bass and treble, and scooped back, friendly mids. When you turn that sound up, we find it doesn't cut through a band mix in the way a more traditional valve amp does. If you'll allow us a reductive analogy, it's like owning a 1.4 litre petrol practical family car, alongside a three-litre twin-turbo diesel Audi, BMW or Merc. Clearly, they're going to feel very different while you're on the drive to work.

Your question about consistency is a thorny one. Our answer is to forget about it, unless you can practise at near-gig volumes, with the same (or similar) gear. Use practice for playing and gigs for tone, we'd say, all the while learning how to manipulate your gear for different situations.

Cream confusion

In my never-ending search for a better sound, I'm thinking of upgrading the speakers in my Fender Hot Rod Deville 2x12.

I quite like the idea of Celestion Creambacks, but I'm slightly confused by the fact they come in two types – a 65- and a 75-watt version. Have you tried them, and what would you say are the main differences? Would they be a good fit for the Hot Rod?

John Holcombe, via email

Indeed we have, John, in fact we've had a very close listen to



them as a part of a potential review, given that the 90-watt Celestion Alnico Creams are due out as well, but we won't complicate the issue with that!

The basic spec differences are that the M-65 uses a 'medium', 35-oz ceramic magnet, while H-75 uses a 'heavy' 50-oz one. The 75 is also a more efficient driver; 100dB compared with 97dB for the 65, according to Celestion's specs.

In practice – and this will vary from amplifier to amplifier of course – we've found that the 65 is sort of like a Greenback on steroids, with plenty of character and life in the low and midrange frequencies. Celestion uses the term 'woody', and it certainly goes a long way to help describe that more vintage feel, if you think about old-style 2x12s and 4x12s. By contrast, the 75 has a tighter bass response and seemingly less of that chewier, mid-range warmth, alongside stronger treble frequencies. In short, it sounds more 'modern' to our ears.

For more vintage-leaning low- to-medium gain tones, we really like the 65 for its character. If you want cleans with a sharper, more crystalline edge and super-strong bass, especially at higher volumes, we'd go with the 75. We haven't tried them in a Hot Rod Deville, unfortunately. The new Michael Landau Deville 212, we should mention, uses the new

V-Type drivers. They may be worth a listen, too.

Picking it back up

I was recently gifted a new Fender Strat! Having not played guitar for a very long time, I became worried that I would not be worthy of the guitar. However, once I started playing, the sound was crisp and clear and brilliant for virtually any style of music. Now, what I'm wondering is, what practice amp should I get to help showcase the sheer talent of the guitar? I don't want an extremely cheap one that will barely send sound from one side of the room to another (like my current one), but I don't want one that is extremely expensive and unrealistic on a student budget. Hopefully, I will be able to find a decent one soon, so I can rock around the house!

Saffy Mitchell, via email

Hmm, a bit more info would be good Saffy – what is 'my current one'? and how much is a student budget these days? In our leafy locale, plenty of the students live in penthouses and drive new BMWs... But we digress.

We'll make some assumptions and leap straight for the decision jugular: a Line 6 AMPLIFi 75 for well under £250. It's packed with great sounds and has Bluetooth, so you can run your smartphone, tablet or computer through it as a stereo system. Practice amps are not what they used to be. **G**

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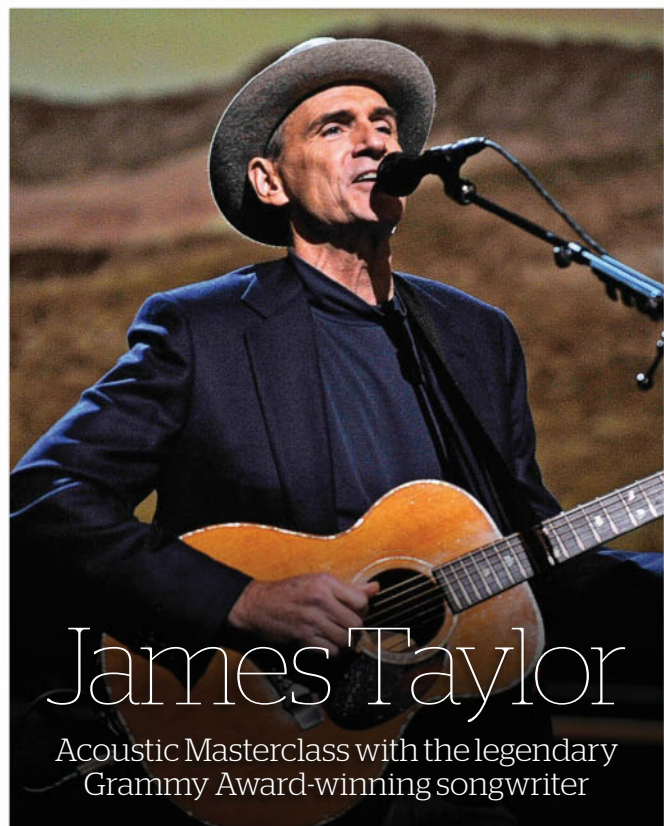
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OLD GOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY **JOBY SESSIONS**

'58 Gibson ES-225T

It was in production for only a handful of years, but along with the Byrdland and ES-350T, the ES-225 was one of Gibson's first thinline hollowbodies when it launched in 1956. While its outline, complete with Florentine cutaway, was borrowed from the ES-175, its slimmer body depth made it a more comfortable proposition for players.

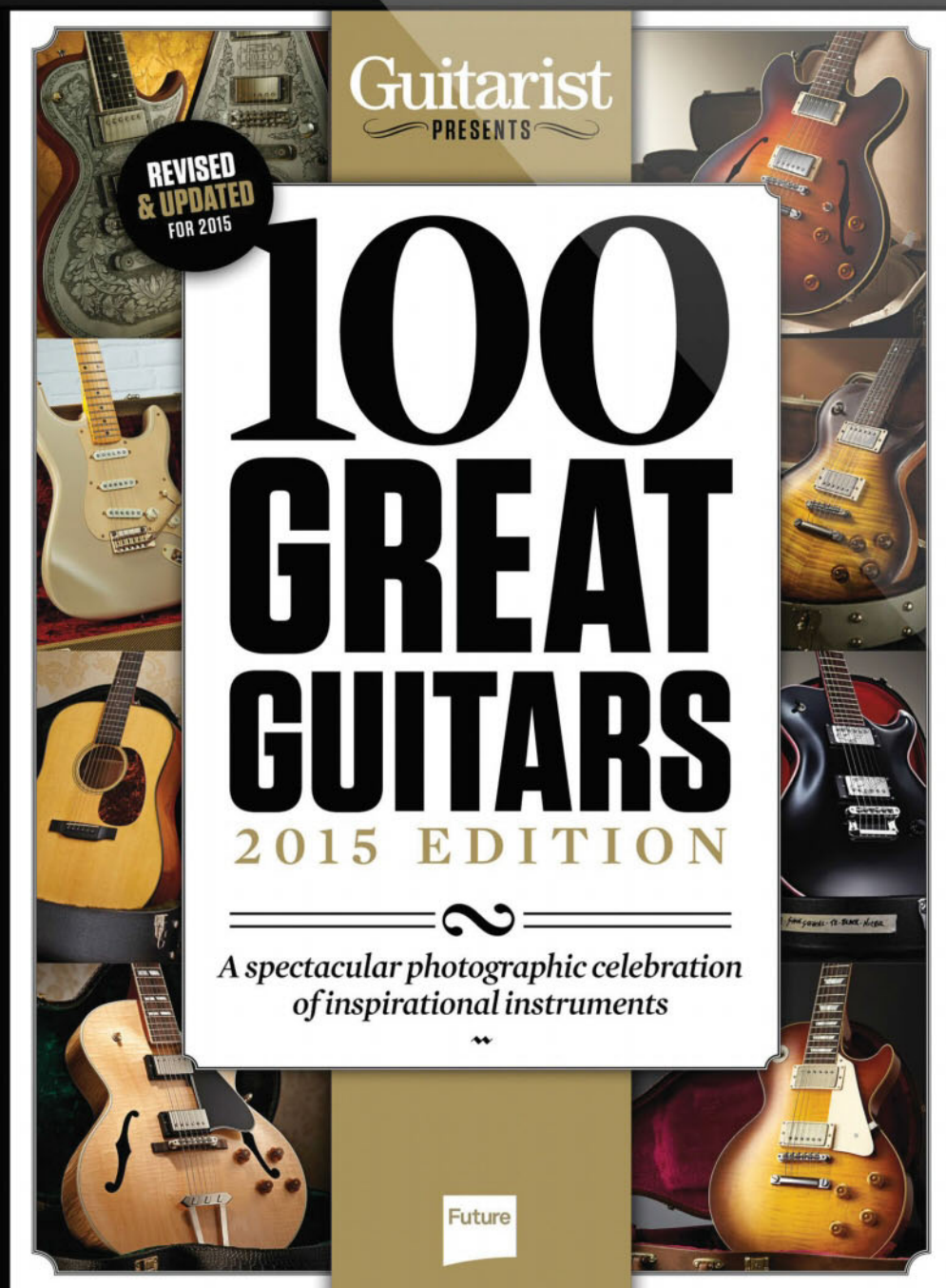
The 225 offered different tonal possibilities, too, thanks to a single P-90, which – as on this example from Guitars: The Museum in Umeå, Sweden – was positioned slap-bang between the bottom of the neck and the bridge, as opposed to the usual single-pickup bridge placement. Related ES-225TD models (1956-1958) featured a pair of P-90s in the usual positions, as on the recent reissue from Gibson Memphis.

Aside from the glorious yellowed cream binding around the Sunburst finish, one of this 225's most eyecatching figures is the almighty wrapover 'bail' bridge and tailpiece, a similar configuration to P-90-equipped Les Paul Goldtops of the early 50s (but note the strings pass *over* the bar here), which delivers a slightly looser playing feel when compared with a typical tune-o-matic-style arrangement. But while the 225 was off the production line by the end of 1959, the guitar's under-the-radar status means that, with a bit of luck, you can snag original 50s examples for around the £2,000 mark.



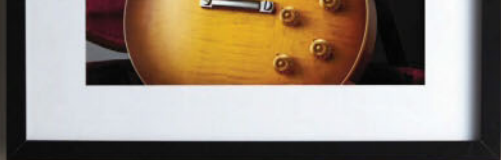
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Blues Headlines



Neville Marten is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks available to download online



A quick rundown

Difficulty ★★★★★

20 mins per example

Tutor: Neville Marten | **Gear used:** Gibson '56 Reissue Les Paul, Vox AC15

OVER the last couple of months, we've looked at different types of string bends and done what we usually do, which is to place them within licks, and generally around the common blues 'box' shapes. This month, we're doing something slightly different...

Sometimes, it's nice to have a lick or a phrase that you could pull out as a real 'moment' within a solo. I was listening to *Talking Book* by Stevie Wonder recently and was reminded of Jeff Beck's lovely solo in *Looking For Another Pure Love*. In it, he plays a lick that cascades down the fretboard on a single string. Jeff quite likely got the idea from Les Paul, who may well have got it from

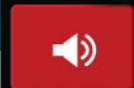
Django Reinhardt; Gary Moore used it later, too. These aren't licks that you can use too often (certainly not on record or to the same live audience every night). It's a bit like a white tuxedo and red bow tie: perfect to wear on special occasions, but you wouldn't dress that way every day!

So, these four licks all use the first, or the first and second strings, and go from around the 12th fret all the way down to the bottom. The piece we're playing over is a four-chord vamp that goes: Em-D-A-B7, and the licks are all based around E Dorian (essentially the E major scale with a flattened 3rd and 7th, so the notes are E-F#-G-A-B-C#-D).

These licks were a little outside my comfort zone, as I generally don't play in this style at all, so you may struggle with them at first, too. My problems were mainly with stamina – keeping the fretting fingers down as the lick progresses, staying in time and so on – and concentration – these are long licks, and it's remarkably easy to 'fall off' halfway down, or think you've made it and mess up at the end.

See if you can learn one or two of my licks, then have a go at creating some of your own. In a major key, you could use the major scale (R-2-3-4-5-6-7); or over dominant 7ths, the Mixolydian (R-2-3-4-5-6-7) would work great. Have fun! See you next issue.



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Example 1

THIS is the type of thing you'd hear a jazz pianist play. It's a bit Django-ish, too. Essentially, it's a standard four-note 'pick, hammer-on, pull-off, hammer-on' move, but converted into relevant shapes to follow the scale down the neck. It's not hard to do, but you need to make sure your fingers are off one shape and on to the next in a way that doesn't sound rushed or lumpy.

Example 2

THIS is one that I got from Gary Moore. Unless you're a great alternate picker (which I seriously am not!), this is hard to play across the neck, since changing strings can throw up obstacles that make accuracy a real problem. Going down a single string sounds just as good and is a whole lot easier. Within the context of a solo, it would be a great way of shifting from one area of the neck to another.

Example 3

HERE'S the fabled Les Paul/Django/Beck/Moore lick. This is such a statement that you might find you can use it only once in its full form (unless you gig all over the country to different audiences every night), but again you could shorten it and use it as a means to connect licks in different areas of the neck. To stay in rhythm, I found it best to count the two-fret 'cells' two at a time – 'one-two, two-two, three-two, four-two', etc, rather than 'one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight', etc.

Example 4

FOR this final lick, you might want to crank up the gain a few notches, since the whole thing is played legato – apart from the initial picked note. It's quite an impressive lick and gives the impression that you might be tapping; but in fact, it's all done with two fretting fingers going down the neck in scale tones. The trick is to keep the fingers on the string at all times, releasing the pressure only enough to change from one 'cell' to the next.

Hear It Here

Stevie Wonder *Talking Book*

Unless you're a Stevie Wonder fan, you might not feel inclined to buy the whole album for one track (although it's one of his best, and I'd say go for it), but check out Jeff Beck's brilliant solo in *Looking For Another Pure Love* – which, incidentally, also has Buzz Feiten playing superb rhythm and fills; on it, he plays Lick 3. This is also the album that featured *Superstition*, a signature song that both Jeff and Stevie Ray Vaughan later recorded.

Django Reinhardt *Anthology*

Although I included this one last issue, it really needs to be here, too. What a genius he was, having to invent a completely new way to play following severe hand burns – what Django came up with almost defies belief. One of the ways he got around his disability was to fly up and down single strings, or pairs of strings, to give the impression of real speed (he could do 'real' speed, too, of course). All the standards are here – *Tiger Rag*, *How High The Moon*, *Minor Swing*, *Night And Day* and many more. Wonderful!

Chet Atkins and Les Paul *Chester And Lester*

An album containing two players of this calibre – while in no sense a blues recording – is bound to throw up dozens of neat guitar tricks that can be taken, twisted around and made one's own. Les Paul was, of course, the king of snazzy tricks (Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page are renowned fans), and here, he and Chet show what they're made of, trading licks and amazing ideas at every turn. Every track's a gem, but check out *Caravan*, *Birth Of The Blues* and *Lover, Come Back To Me* for starters.

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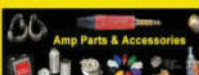
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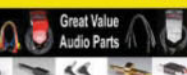
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Guitars
Guitars
Guitars



Readerads

Free Adverts for *Guitarist* readers to buy, sell and exchange

Electrics

Fender 1998 USA Standard Strat, Inca Silver, rosewood fingerboard, home use only, guitar and case like new. £675ovno. Call Mike on 01983 740005.

Fender American Standard Stratocaster in mint condition, Deep Red body colour, rosewood fingerboard. Fender hard case. £625. Call Mike on 01273 588685 or mobile 07771 753386 Peacehaven, East Sussex

Fender Stratocaster, Japan, 1996. Black with maple neck. Very good condition, great player. £400. Call Jack on 07979 366229 Berkshire

Fender Stratocaster, Mexican, 2006. 60th Anniversary model. Blizzard Pearl finish, maple neck. Virtually unused, complete with original gigbag and tags. £450. Call Jack on 07979 366229 Berkshire

Fender Stratocaster, Mexico, new condition, vibrato, Two-Colour Sunburst, maple neck. Offers around £420. Call 01224 576678

Fender Telecaster '50 vintage reissue, Japan,

Sunburst with Gibson pickup in the neck and Seymour Duncan Quarter Pound in the bridge, great guitar.

£425ovno. Call 07817 529427 or email dambrosistefano@gmail.com

Gibson ES-335, 1964, Cherry Red, neck replaced 1968, 1959 PAF in bridge. Great instrument. No collectors. Offers. Call 01224 576678

Gibson ES-335TD 1971 in Walnut, all-original with original case in immaculate condition, a piece of history. £2,250ovno. Call Stefano on 0781 7529427 or email dambrosistefano@gmail.com

Gibson Firebird V, OHSC, rare and gorgeous. Ebony nitro, chrome hardware, like new, £900, pics available. Call Richard on 01233 712169 or email richardtheprofessor@yahoo.co.uk Kent

Gibson ES-175 Herb Ellis, serial number 02304703. Professional player, owner from new. Closet classic condition. £1,350. Call 0141 647 1806 Glasgow

Gretsch Round-Up, Japan,

1990-91. Solidbody with Orange finish, gold hardware, Bigsby and Filter'Tron pickups in GC. £1,250. For details, call Ron on 07740 587 979 or email ronnieandjeanbu@btinternet.com Kirkcaldy

Peerless Retromatic, OHSC, black/white tuxedo, chrome hardware, like new, £500, pics available. Call Richard on 01233 712169 or email richardtheprofessor@yahoo.co.uk Kent

PRS SE Custom, semi-hollow body, P-90s, natural gloss finish, double cutaway, rosewood neck, half-moon dot markers. Pro setup, superb player and condition, PRS gigbag. Can send photos. £300ono. Call 01245 320847 or email derekpasquale@talktalk.net Essex

Seventy-Seven Albatross Jazz Semi, OHSC, Seymour Duncans, rare high-end MIJ, mint, £650, pics available. Call Richard on 01233 712169 or email richardtheprofessor@yahoo.co.uk Kent

Squier Vista Series Jagmaster, Japan, approx 1997, black body. Twin

humbuckers and Fender vibrato arm. Beautiful slender neck. £350. Call Ron on 07740 587979 or email ronnieandjeanbu@btinternet.com Kirkcaldy

Acoustics

Yamaha APX9C Natural. As new, without dings and bumps. Piezo pickup and internal condenser mic, brilliantly amplified acoustic sound, comes with hard case. £495. Call 01704 831730 or email eddie@switchgearengineering.co.uk

Amps

Cornell-Plexi Seven hand-built valve amp with 10-inch Celestion Vintage 30 speaker. An amazing, versatile amp in VGC. £450. Call Ron on 07740 587979 or email ronnieandjeanbu@btinternet.com Kirkcaldy

Fender Blues Junior III 15 watts, all-valve (Groove Tubes!), six months old. Stunning clean sounds. Totally mint, home use only. Must be heard! £325ono. Call 01245 320847 Chelmsford

Marshall G10 MKII 10W.

Gain, contour, volume, switchable clean/boost, headphone out. From sparkling cleans to heavy dirt. Ideal starter/practice amp. £25. darcythecat@aol.com Bedford

Vox AC50 guitar amplifier, 1965 grey panel. Good nick, creamy sound. £590ono. Call 01224 576678

Bass

Gretsch Electrotone Bass G6073 with Gretsch case and paperwork. Owned from new. Excellent condition, lightly gigged over 10 years. £1,100ono. Call 01530 411234

Harley Benton six-string bass guitar in brand-new unplayed, unused condition. Very low, easy-to-play action; looks, sounds and plays fantastic. £125, no offers. Call 01482 345494

Effects

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Guide example to formatting your adverts (upper caps are not required in the description):

Category: Electrics

Advert: Fender Stratocaster, USA Standard, 2001, black, white scratchplate, three Lace Sensor pickups, vgc, never gigged, Fender hard case, £435ono. Call Joe on 01234 567890 E-mail joebloggs@youremail.co.uk Runcorn

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GRETSCH FSR G6120 CHET ATKINS HOLLOW BODY



Cadillac Green **£2192**

GRETSCH G5422TDC ELECTROMATIC DOUBLE CUTAWAY



Black **£661**

GRETSCH FSR G5420T ELECTROMATIC HOLLOW BODY



Silver Sparkle **£701**

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Bourbon Burst **£2375**

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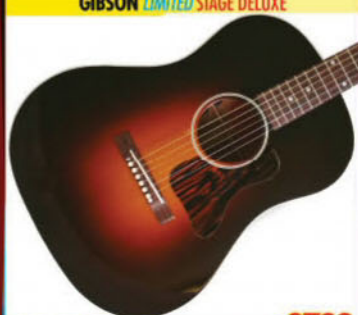


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