

BEAUTIFUL NEW LOOK | FINE GUITARS | LEGENDARY PLAYERS

Guitarist

Issue 397

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ONE LOUDER

HOW TO SOLO LIKE
ELEVEN ROCK LEGENDS

Including

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PAUL KOSSOFF

BILLY GIBBONS

VAN HALEN

SLASH

p76

LOUD & PROUD

Anniversary Edition

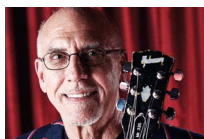
50 Years of the
Marshall Stack



REVIEWED

CRAZY HORSE

Fender Custom Shop
Tele Caballo Tono p92



Larry Carlton on
technique and tone



Rock 'N' Roll
Relics Thunders



Guthrie Govan on
fretboard freedom



Laney L5-Studio
head on test



Justin Hawkins on
barbarian rock



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J-29

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Gibson
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Command Of The Stage



The other week I succumbed to the hype and went to watch Fleetwood Mac at the O2 Arena in London. Let it be said, this 40-year-old

line-up gave one of the most uplifting performances I've ever seen. But it was the bravery of Lindsey Buckingham's solo acoustic rendition of *Big Love* that impressed most. About halfway through the three-hour show, the rest of the band cleared off, leaving Lindsey in the spotlight with an acoustic guitar and a cosy gathering of 20,000 people. And he started to play. Not simple strumming but fiery, complex fingerstyle, singing at the top of his lungs, until the final chord slashed down and the crowd erupted. This fearless performance with no safety net was a genuine tonic, reminding you how guitar playing can be as heart-stopping as any circus act. All you need is talent and nerves of iron...

Another tonic is the return of David Mead to *Guitarist* towers as our deputy editor. David has been, in the past, editor of both *Guitarist* and *Guitar Techniques*, has a host of best-selling books on guitar under his belt and is a superb player to boot. Welcome back, David, you've been missed! Finally, you may have noticed that we've spruced up the mag in lots of other ways recently – so if you want to try out the beautiful new-look *Guitarist*, you can get next three issues for a silly price of just £3. Say what? No, the Marshalls didn't get to your ears – point your browser at bit.ly/git3for3 to take advantage of this genu-wine bargain. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie

Jamie Dickson Editor

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COVER FEATURE

LOUD & PROUD

60 To celebrate 50 years of the Marshall stack, join us as we chart the history and evolution of a rock 'n' roll icon, complete with an in-depth look at a stunning original '64 JTM45. But the stack is more than just valves and wiring – it's also about the legendary musicians who used one. How fitting then, that our technique masterclass will help you nail the style of 11 guitar heroes who've tamed the power of the big black box





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COVER PORTRAIT BY
Joby Sessions

GITARRE & BASS DE

Frighteningly realistic authenticity!

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

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

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

MUSICMAKER NL

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

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

GUITARIST

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

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

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



VISIT WWW.G66.EU FOR MORE PRESS REVIEWS.

GRAND GUITARS DE

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

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

PREMIER GUITAR

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

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

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

GUITAR BUYER

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

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

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

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

IGUITAR

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

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

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

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

XOUND DE

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

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

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

T. M. REVIEWS

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

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

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

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

ULTIMATE-GUITAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

FUZZ SE

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





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

— JOHN PETRUCCI



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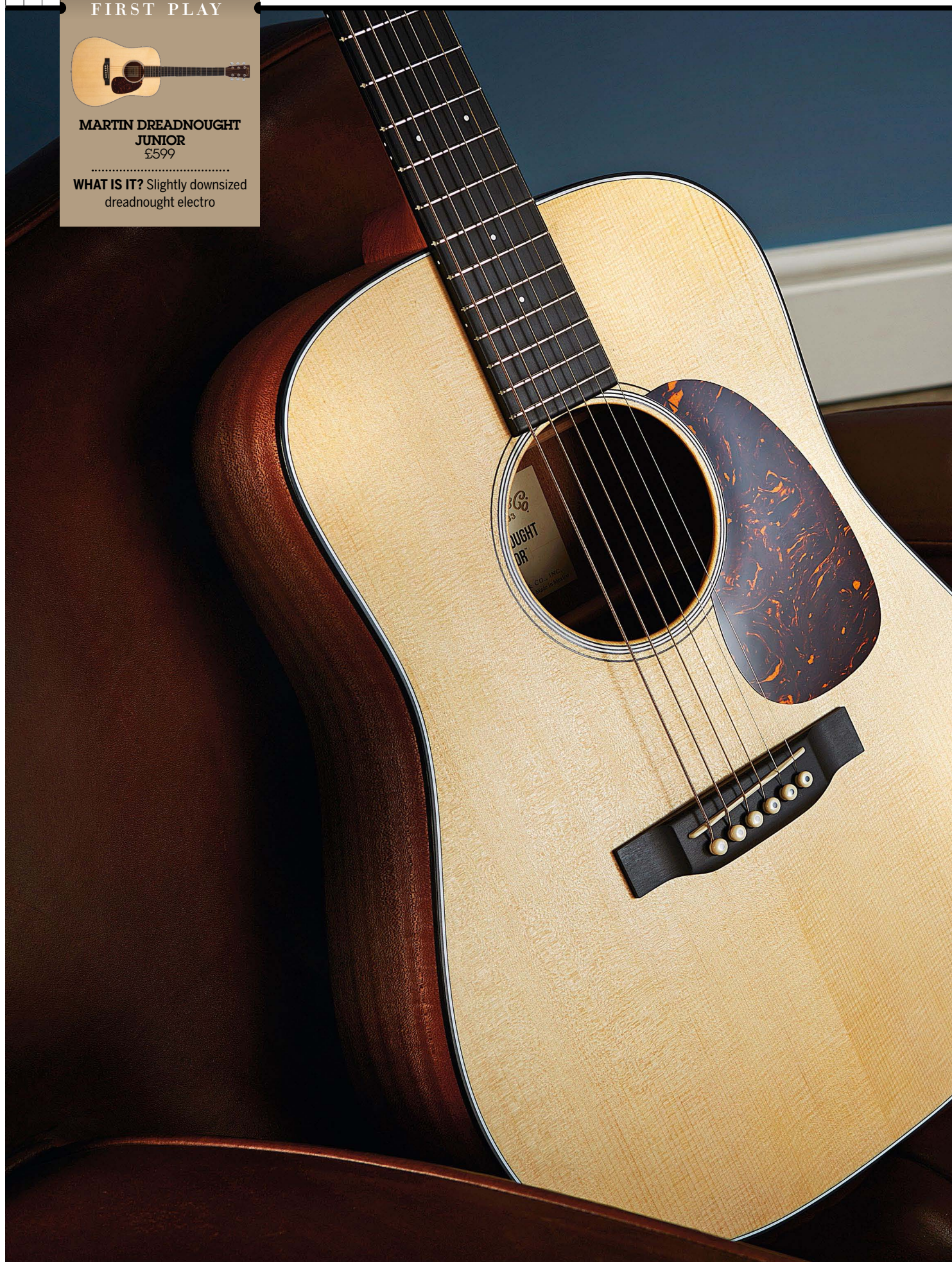


FIRST PLAY



**MARTIN DREADNOUGHT
JUNIOR**
£599

.....
WHAT IS IT? Slightly downsized
dreadnought electro





Junior Genius

Martin's slightly downsized all-solid wood Dreadnought Junior combines affordability with fingerstyle-friendly tone

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Adam Gasson

Launched earlier this year, the 15/16ths size Dreadnought Junior (aka the D Jr) appeared to be Martin's rather late response to Taylor's 15/16ths size Big Baby. In the flesh, it's quite a different proposition.

It's not the cheapest dreadnought offered by Martin – those lie in the X Series in the form of the DX and its variants – but aside from its Richlite fingerboard and bridge, it's an all-solid-wood 'proper' guitar: no high-pressure laminate back and sides or multi-piece necks in sight. In reality, it's a slightly shrunken version of the Road Series' DRS2.

Dimensionally, the D Jr is a shade smaller than Taylor's Big Baby: 360mm (14.17 inches) wide as opposed to 381mm (15 inches). At the rim, it's 112mm deep, the Taylor is 102mm, but that doesn't include the pressed, arched back of the Big Baby compared with a more conventional braced and much less arched back here. The primary difference is its shorter 610mm (24-inch) scale as opposed to Taylor's 648mm (25.5-inch) scale, or the 645mm (25.4-inch) of Martin's DRS2. The nut width is a full 44.45mm (1.75 inches), however, with a wide string spacing of 38.5mm.

Following the spec of the DRS2 is a clean-looking solid Sitka spruce top and solid sapele back and sides. The top edge is bound with black Boltaron and an inner black/white/black purfling stripe; the back edge is unbound. Simple black and white rings surround the soundhole and we get a tortie-like Delmar pickguard. A traditional mortise-and-tenon joint connects the 'select hardwood' mahogany-like and seemingly one-piece neck



1. A smaller headstock matches the slightly downsized body. There's no question that it's still a Martin, though!
2. With no side-mounted preamp, the only onboard controls for the Fishman Sonitone system are soundhole-placed volume and tone (treble roll-off)
3. While Taylor's downsized Big Baby does away with a heel and fixes the neck with two visible bolts, the Junior is much more classic, with a standard heel and mortise and tenon neck joint
4. It might look like very dense black ebony, but the bridge and fingerboard are made from Richlite, an eco-friendly paper-based fibre composite

There's plenty of space for fingerstyle, and strumming and thumb-around fretting is easy

to the body, which has with a subtly V'd C shape (21.5mm deep at the 1st fret, 22mm at the 10th) in profile. In line with its shrunken vibe, the square-topped Martin head is downsized, but the classic logo that's silk-screened onto the HPL rosewood facing retains its size, and the standard tuners with their small buttons are more than familiar.

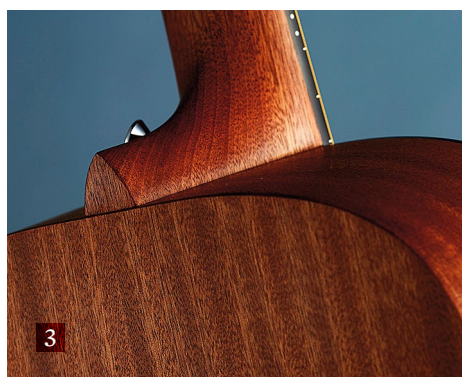
Vintage-style frets are cleanly installed, and only a rather sharp edge to the fingerboard hints at any kind of economy. The finish, for example, is classed as hand-rubbed natural oil, a real nowhere-to-hide finish that requires the sanding of every part to be perfect.

Powering comes from the discreet Fishman Sonicore system with under-saddle pickup. The internal preamp features soundhole-placed volume and tone controls, while the battery is placed in an internal bag.

Feel & Sounds

The downsizing in body size is noticeable: a little less fulsome, yet a very viable size that still retains that oh-so-classic 'square-jawed' outline. The reduced scale length may only bring the first position some 17mm in towards you, but it feels much less of a stretch.





Higher-fret positions do feel a little cramped, especially if you're used to a full Martin scale, but some more complex chords involving bigger spans are certainly easier, plus there's a subtle relaxation in tension that's attractive. There's plenty of space for fingerstyle, too, and strumming and thumb-around fretting is easy.

But it's the sound that's most engaging. It doesn't have the broad depth, width or 'sheen' of a higher-spec gloss-topped Martin dread (there's a little more mid-push and a papery-sounding edge, typical of ultra-thin finishes), but you can't mistake that bold Martin tonality. Does it make older, classic styles more inviting? Well, possibly, but it's just a very nicely balanced voice that, if anything, aids the fingerpicker, over the strummer.

Plugged in, with flat outboard EQ, the Fishman system enhances the highs slightly, but other than that gives a good representation of the guitar. As with most under-saddle

pickup systems, a little outboard EQ tames some of that higher edge, but it's a very clean direct signal that should ensure you get a good sound into a venue's PA without any fuss.

Verdict

This not-so-little Martin represents tremendous value for the player who has to have *that* name on the headstock. As much as we like the bare-bones minimalist design of the cheaper Big Baby Taylor, the D Jr does feel more finished and more traditional, and there's something about the shorter scale and reduced body size that really works together – not least for fingerstyle. The oil finish will need a little care and maintenance, or maybe you'll let playing, sweat and grime take its toll. It's obviously aimed at the younger player, but don't be surprised if you're swayed by its traditional but downsized charm, even if you already own a Martin or two. **G**



MARTIN DREADNOUGHT JUNIOR

PRICE: £599 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: Mexico

TYPE: 14-fret, 15/16ths-size dreadnought electro-acoustic

TOP: Solid Sitka spruce

BACK/SIDES: Solid sapele, 'Dreadnought Junior' profile

MAX RIM DEPTH: 112mm tapering to 90mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 360mm

NECK: Select hardwood

SCALE LENGTH: 610mm (24")

TUNERS: Chrome enclosed w/ Small Buttons

NUT/WIDTH: White Corian/44.45mm

FINGERBOARD: Black Richlite, 406mm (16") radius, w/ Style 28 white Boltaron dot inlays

FRETS: 20, medium

BRIDGE/SPACING: Black Richlite, compensated Tusq saddle/56.5mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman Sonitone OEM-SON-GT2 soundhole-placed preamp w/ volume and tone controls

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.34/5.15

OPTIONS: None

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISH: Hand-applied natural oil

Westside Distribution

0141 248 4812

www.martinguitar.com



9/10

PROS Shrunk version of the DRS2, appealing to younger and experienced hands alike

CONS The scale can be cramped in upper positions; the only onboard controls are volume and tone

FIRST PLAY



ROCK 'N' ROLL RELICS THUNDERS II £1,899

WHAT IS IT? Evocative take on the 'double-cut with P-90s' vibe

Heartbreaker!

If a real 50s Junior is on your radar but off limits due to vintage prices, then perhaps this San Francisco-built gem might just sneak in under budget

Words Neville Marten **Photography** Simon Lees

Luthier Billy Rowe hand-builds his Rock 'N' Roll Relics guitars to an exacting recipe. Each one is constructed using select timbers, then finished in nitrocellulose and aged to three different levels of distress. It's not just the bodies that are meticulously considered either – tuners, bridges, pickups, pots and capacitors are specially sourced and, while hardly cheap, the guitars come in at considerably under the equivalent 'name' model.

Rowe puts his own spin on classic designs, mixing models, hardware and electrics, often creating wonderful hybrids in the Fano vein, so clearly there's a market willing to forego big-brand kudos while retaining vintage vibe.

Named after late Les Paul Junior fan Johnny Thunders of New York Dolls and Heartbreakers fame, the Thunders model comes in single-pickup configuration while our Thunders II boasts an extra P-90 at the neck. Although not a verified signature model – Rowe makes a 'Townshend', a 'Richards' and







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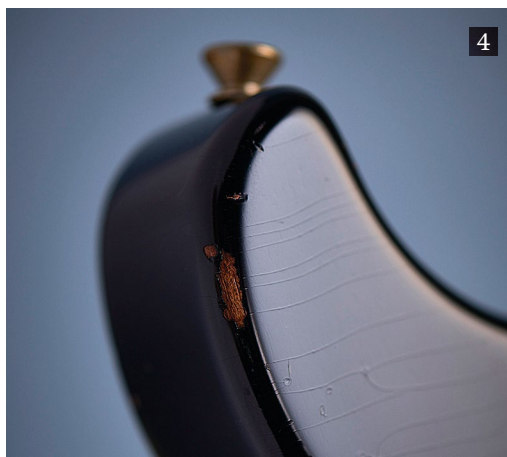
2

others, too – Billy claims the Thunders estate has given it the thumbs-up. “With some of the model names it’s more of a salute to heroes that introduced certain guitar styles to the masses. It is a bit cheeky, but it’s a hats-off.”

With African mahogany body and neck and a 22-fret bound rosewood fingerboard the guitar has ‘cool’ stamped all over it. Look deeper and things get even more interesting.

Rowe has thought carefully about what goes onto, and into, his instruments. Pickups are by a new name to us, David Allen, who is gaining prestige among the pickup cognoscenti. “I was introduced to David through a customer who said that we should meet, since we only lived about 10 miles apart,” Rowe reveals. “Once I heard David’s pickups I was sold; he has captured what vintage pickups deliver in tone but with consistency.”

These are his Philthy Cats P-90s, the highest output of the three sets he builds in this style. You may also notice that the neck pickup is set back somewhat, even further rearwards than Gibson’s original double-cut Special. Billy tells us this is, as it was at Kalamazo, “for structural reasons, but tonally I think it adds something, too.”



3

1. This adjustable wraparound bridge is by TonePros; Junior and Special style guitars were notorious for their lack of intonation adjustment so this should right this vintage wrong in no uncertain terms. The hardware is all aged nickel

2. The twin volume and tone knobs, pickguard, pickup selector switch and ring all look great in this unusual white finish. Beneath them lie Emerson Custom pots and vintage Russian capacitors for maximum tone and feel

3. The ‘stinger’ is the painted rear of the headstock. This feature is most often seen on high-end archtop guitars such as Gibson’s L5 and Super 400, but looks great in this groovy chequerboard finish

4. This is one of the best and most natural ageing jobs we’ve seen; each instrument is individually distressed and there are three levels of ‘relicing’ available. The palette of vintage finishes offered is mindblowing

The three-on-a-plate Kluson-style tuners and adjustable wraparound bridge are both by TonePros, and frets are Jescar medium jumbo. Internally, we find Emerson Custom 500k volume and 250k tone pots, with vintage Russian military capacitors. “Emerson Custom potentiometers are fantastic,” Billy enthuses. “The tolerance when you roll the knobs feels perfect and they meter all their pots so you have consistency with the output.”

Finish is extra-thin nitro and Rowe handles the ageing himself. “We finish to a brand new look,” he adds. “Then I take each one through my time machine to give it that broken-in, played-to-hell look. Another touch is our headstock stinger [the decorated rear, in this case a cool chequerboard finish]. I always loved the look but it’s rarely seen these days.”

Feel & Sounds

Rowe’s necks come in three sizes and ours, in 60s guise, is the slimmest. Add total access due to the 22nd-fret neck join and this slab of rosewood is a veritable playground. Fret-ends protrude over the binding as this prevents potential string catching. The fret-job is perfect and the Thunders gives back whatever



5. This P-90 is moved a good distance back from the neck to give a potentially fragile area greater structural integrity. A welcome byproduct is the warm but bright tone it exudes on its own, and an amazingly musical 'both pickups on' sound

"We finish to a brand new look, then I take each one through my time machine to give it that broken-in, played-to-hell look"

Billy Rowe

you put into it. Using a cranked Marshall JTM45 a host of fabulous tones is soon revealed. David Allen's P-90s retain all the hallmarks of a great original, with bark and girth aplenty. The neck unit's move back lends a most pleasing sound; it goes from chiming to warm with no mushing at all. Flip to the bridge and it's fat and raspy, and while it cleans up beautifully, too, when wound up it really comes into its own.

The big surprise is the middle position: it's sublime, like a Tele meets a Rickenbacker down Gretsch alley! Crashing chords through our Bletchley beast sound mighty indeed. It's a wonderful sounding instrument: David Allen pickups and African mahogany would seem the perfect pairing!

Verdict

Simple is so often best. True, the simplicity here owes much of its charm to another time and another state (Michigan), but we can't fault Billy Rowe's execution of the 'plain mahogany with twin-P-90s' theme. His ageing deserves mention, too: the Thunders really looks like it's worked hard but been cared for over 50 years of toil. It sounds great and plays superbly, so what more could one want?

Of the Thunders Billy says: "I love the simple, no-frills approach and the double-cut Junior style guitars with a wraparound bridge and P-90s have a magical sound. They ooze rock 'n' roll and deliver ultimate tone whether clean or dirty." And who, good people, are we to argue with that? 



ROCK 'N' ROLL RELICS THUNDERS II

PRICE: £1,899 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody

BODY: African mahogany

NECK: African mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 304mm (12") radius, dot inlays

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: TonePros 3-a-side tuners and adjustable wraparound bridge; nickel 'soapbar' pickup covers in aged nickel

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 49mm

ELECTRICS: 2x David Allen Philthy Cats P-90-style single coils, 3-way toggle pickup selector, individual pickup volume and tone controls

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.2/7

OPTIONS: As all the guitars are hand built, the range of options is almost limitless. World Guitars specs its own instruments but from pickups to bridges, tuners and pickguards, most elements are available to custom order. £POA

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, no upcharge

FINISHES: Black (as reviewed).

Numerous classic 50s and 60s custom colours. All nitrocellulose

World Guitars

01453 824306

www.rocknrollrelics.net



9/10

PROS Great take on a classic, with convincing ageing, brilliant sounds and effortless playability

CONS Fairly pricey for a non-original design that doesn't have *that* name on the headstock



Vela



Guitarist
CHOICE

The S2 Vela: A New Breed

Born in our Maryland factory, the new S2 Vela is a wholly unique guitar for PRS. Featuring a brand new plate and barrel style bridge, a Starla treble pickup and an all new type-d singlecoil this guitar has all the spank, sparkle and vintage vibe you could want. American made, reliable, great sounding and easy on the wallet.

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FIRST PLAY



LANEY L5-STUDIO HEAD
£439

WHAT IS IT? Five-watt single-ended class A valve head with a host of useful extras

RED LIGHT FEVER

Words
Nick Guppy
Photography
Adam Gasson

Not just another small valve head,
but a recording tool par excellence

Laney is on the crest of a wave of popularity right now, with its stellar Lionheart amp range offering true boutique tone and features at very affordable prices. With small amps as popular as ever, and the continuously growing popularity of home recording, it was only a matter of time before Laney introduced a Lionheart with all the bells and whistles of its acclaimed Ironheart Studio preamp. And here it is: the all-new L5-Studio head.

Like the rest of the Lionheart range, the L5-Studio is smartly presented. Blue basket-weave vinyl and a chrome control panel with white chickenhead knobs hang together nicely for a cool retro look. The steel box chassis is solidly put together and holds most of the L5-Studio's complex electronics on one large high-quality printed circuit board.



From the front, the L5 head looks reassuringly normal – just another good-looking vintage-styled amp, you think – with controls for drive channel gain and volume, clean channel volume and a shared passive bass, mid and treble tone circuit. A bright switch with its own LED adds extra zing to the clean channel. There's also a level control for the L5's bespoke digital reverb and a global tone control, which is a handy extra that lets you vary the overall response without interfering with the EQ settings.

Move round to the back panel, though, and it's quickly apparent that the L5 is considerably more hi-tech than the front suggests. There's a high-quality balanced direct output on XLR, with a switchable ground lift to stop earth loop hum in its tracks, and switchable

speaker emulation. Sitting next to this is a USB recording interface with its own dry record level and re-amp send output, together with a headphone output that not only has its own level control, but also a source switch that toggles between USB and amp outputs. An Aux In on a mini-jack is there for plugging in mp3 players, while the L5 also boasts a series effects loop with switchable levels and a bypass function, along with two speaker output jacks that offer a choice of either five watts or 0.5 watts of power. That's a lot of functionality in a small package. Nevertheless, the L5's no-frills design ethic means everything is clearly presented and labelled.

The L5's overall impression is one of serious capability for stage or studio, combined with retro good looks and a very high build standard that should take gigging in its stride.

Feel & Sounds

Despite not having the low-noise toroidal style of mains transformer used in many other Laney products, the L5-Studio is very quiet in operation, with no audible hum and just a little hiss in higher gain settings, making it ideal for pro and semi-pro recording use.

The clean channel is warm and voiced nicely for single coils or humbuckers, with the bright switch adding plenty of snap at lower volume settings. This channel sounds great for juicy funk rhythm stuff, with a medium fast

1. The L5-Studio oozes vintage cool with its simple and accessible styling on the front panel

2. Meanwhile, on the rear panel, you'll find some bang up to date features that cover almost any recording need

3. A handy switch on the front panel changes channels when the footswitch isn't in use

The overall impression is one of serious capability for stage or studio, combined with a high build standard that should take gigging in its stride





attack and a nice chimy effect as you push the volume control up past 12 o'clock. The drive channel has enough gain to coax some serious overdrive from even the weediest of single coils, although the best results from this channel came from using a decently loud humbucker, with some great British-voiced modern rock tones.

The L5's recording tools are similar to those found on the recently reviewed Laney IRT-Pulse and IRT Studio preamps, with an easy-to-use USB interface that makes hooking up to any PC or Mac a doddle. Quality speaker emulation means there's very little time spent on EQ tweaking, while the clever re-amp feature lets those who do want to





4. Two output sockets provide a choice of either five watts or 0.5 watts of power

5. The L5-Studio's USB interface works equally well with Mac, PC or iOS devices

The drive channel has enough gain to coax some serious overdrive from even the weediest of single coils

tweak everything record their tracks dry then re-process them through the L5 over and over again with no loss of quality.

The L5 is deceptively loud, too. Using the matching 1x12 cab plugged into the five-watt output provides plenty of volume for small gigs, while the half-watt setting is perfect for home practice or mic'd-up recording.

Verdict

Another potential winner from Laney, the L5-Studio combines all the tools any serious recording enthusiast might need with a good-looking and great-sounding pure class A head that's ideal for home, studio or stage use. Combined with the matching 1x12 cabinet, it's a very portable rig and exceptional value for money, too, covering a lot of bases in one package with not much in the way of competition at this price point. If you need an amp that sounds as good in the studio as it does on smaller stages, look no further. **A**



LANEY L5-STUDIO

PRICE: £439

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Valve/solid-state recording head with digital reverb

OUTPUT: 5 watts or 0.5 watts RMS

VALVES: 3x 12AX7, 1x EL84

DIMENSIONS: 190 (h) x 420 (w) x 185mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 8/18

CABINET: Ply

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Clean volume, drive level and drive volume, bass, mid, treble, global reverb level and tone

FOOTSWITCH: 2-button footswitch (not supplied) toggles channel and reverb

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Balanced direct out on XLR with switchable ground lift and speaker emulation, USB in/out with record level control and re-amp capability, headphone output with level control and switchable source, Aux in on 3.5mm jack, series effects loop with switchable level and bypass, full power and 1/10 power speaker outlets

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The matching 1x12 speaker cabinet costs £299. The Lionheart range also includes the L5T-112 combo, also at £439, while studio enthusiasts should also check out the Ironheart IRT Studio preamp, which has all of the recording technology in a 2U rack package for £399

Headstock Distribution

0121 508 6666

www.laney.co.uk



9/10

PROS A powerful, compact fully featured studio head that easily doubles for practice and small gigs

CONS The overdrive tones, while excellent for the price, aren't as rich as some small boutique amps

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HANDMADE IN THE U.S.A.

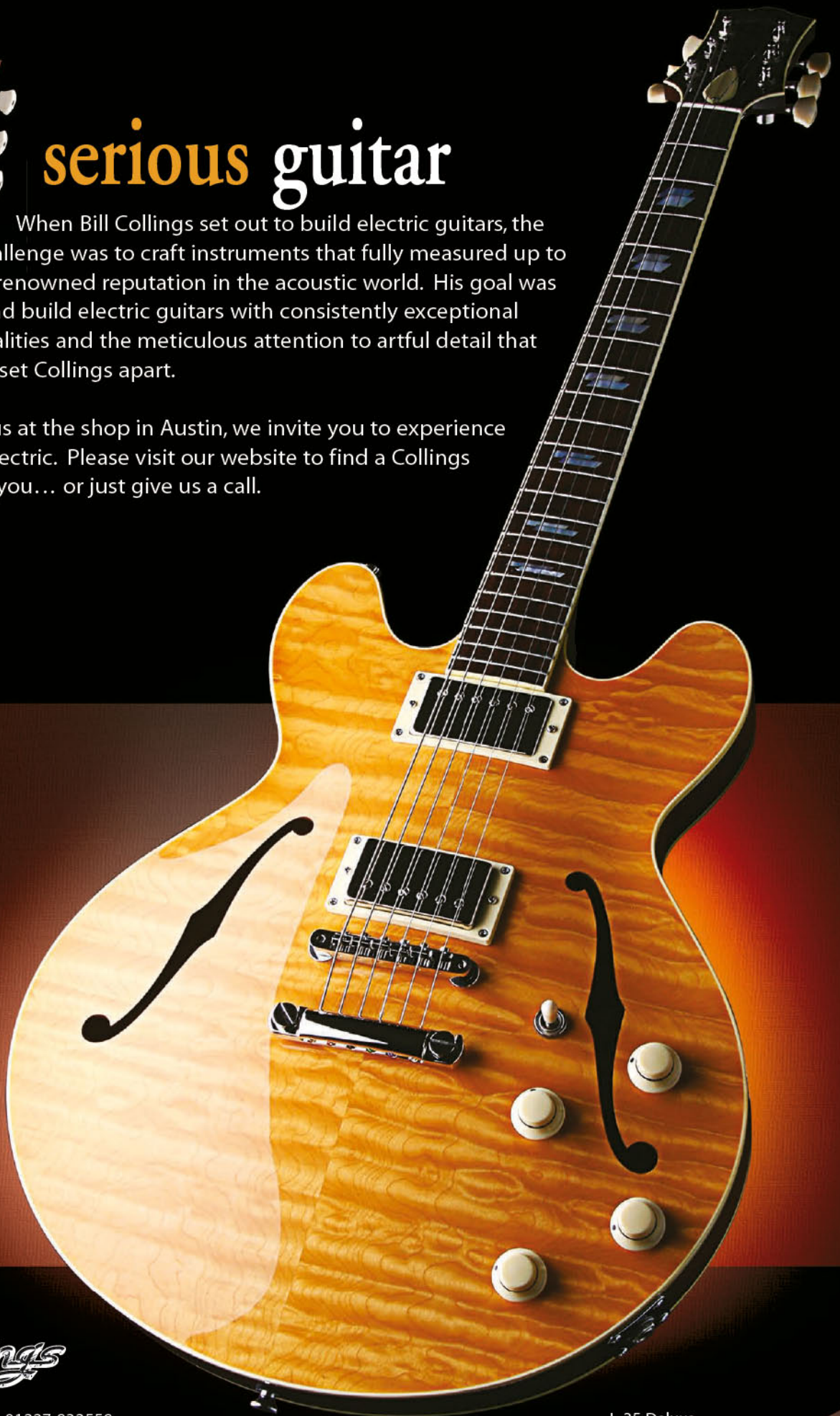
Fender



serious guitar

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Collings

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I-35 Deluxe

Frontend

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

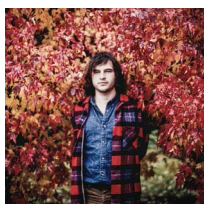


IGF Residential Summer School And Festival 10-16 August, Shrewsbury

The International Guitar Foundation and Festivals Residential Summer School in August offers guitarists a great opportunity to meet like-minded players and gain a deeper understanding of various styles of music. There are six six-day courses, each with an expert tutor: choose from Funk with *Guitarist's* own Jason Sidwell; Blues with Gianluca Corona; Creative Acoustic with Chris Woods; Jazz And Beyond with Dario Cortese; Rock with Tolis Zavaliaris and Classical with Gary Ryan.

There's also a series of classical and contemporary concerts throughout the week, and you'll have the option to take part in the End Of Event Student Concert. All levels and all backgrounds are welcome, so if you've ever fancied jamming, mixing and performing in front of your peers in an encouraging and fun environment, visit the site below for more info.

www.igf.org.uk

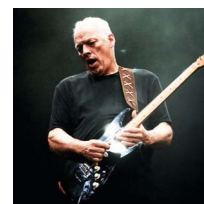
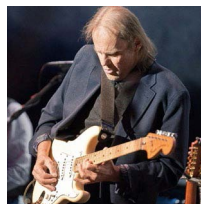


**Green Man Festival
20-23 August,
Brecon, Wales**

Hurry and you may still be able to snaffle a ticket for the Green Man Festival, with its packed and varied line-up ranging from The Fall to Ryley Walker. See www.greenman.net for more information.

**Walter Trout
17-25 November,
various UK venues**

Guitarist is delighted to report that tickets are now on sale for Walter Trout's triumphant return to live playing in the UK in November, for his tour simply entitled 'I'm Back'. See www.waltertrout.com for further info.

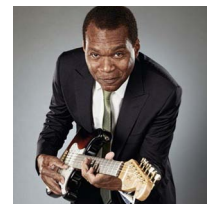


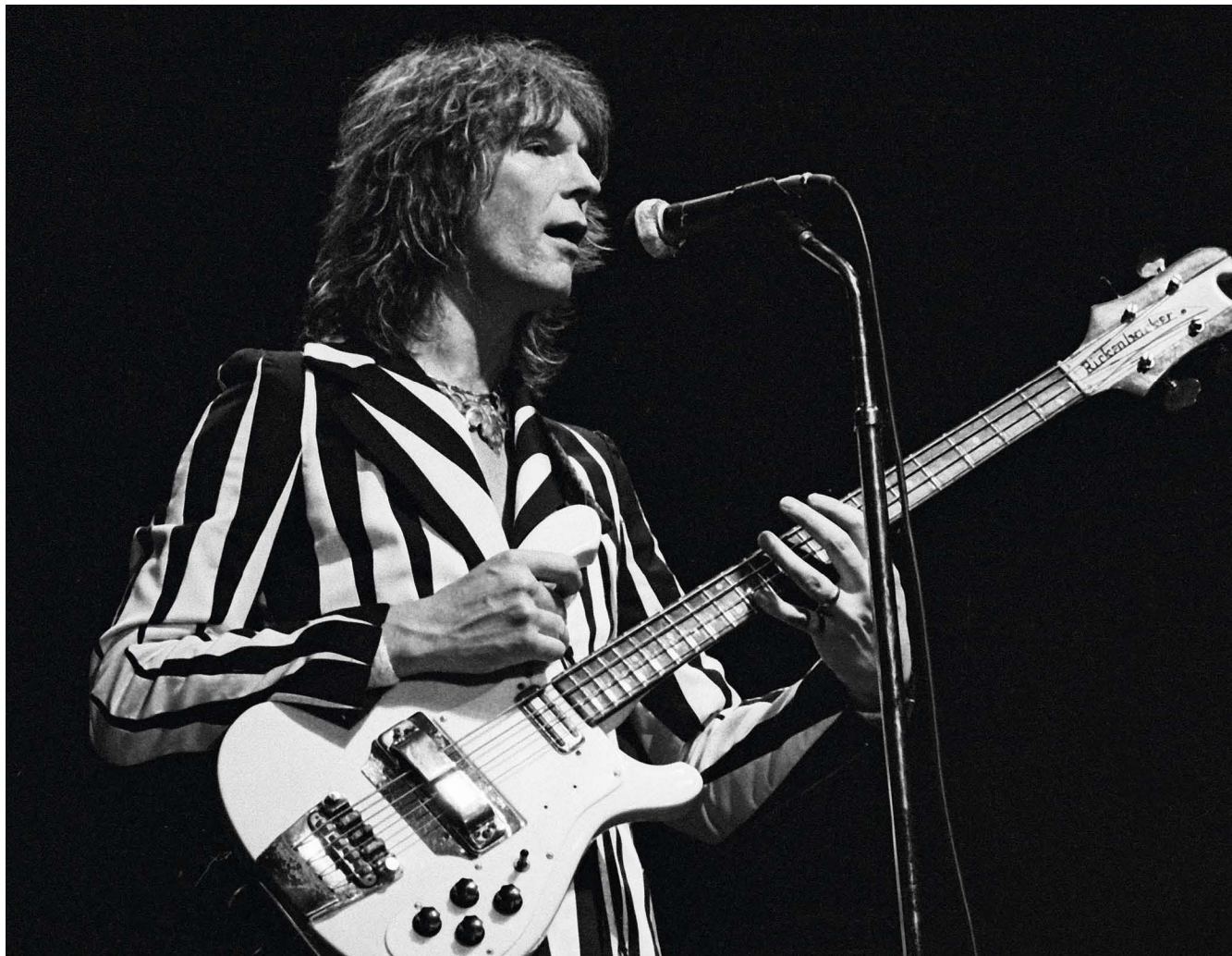
**David Gilmour
September-October,
Royal Albert Hall,
London**

You can still buy tickets for David Gilmour's string of Albert Hall dates in September and October, where he'll play tracks from his new solo album. Head over to www.davidgilmour.com for more.

**Robert Cray
3-23 October, various
UK venues**

One of our favourite Stratocaster wranglers, the slick and soulful gentleman of the blues Robert Cray, is back in the UK for 16 dates in October, and tickets are on sale now. See robertcray.com for early ticket access.





CHRIS SQUIRE

1948 – 2015

Guitarist's Roger Newell pays tribute to his friend and musical influence, Yes bassist Chris Squire, who died in June aged 67 from leukaemia

Once in a while, a musician breaks new ground with their chosen instrument and without a shadow of a doubt, Chris was such a player. Not only did he take bass playing into a whole new area, it was his dominant placing in the mix of those early Yes albums that helped to define progressive music. He was the right player at the right time, and his ability to write great songs was also a major factor in how his band's music evolved.

His interest in music began as a choir boy at St Andrew's Church in North London under the direction of Barry Rose, a truly exceptional teacher, and Chris soon realised you have to work hard to get good results. Chris was greatly influenced by Paul McCartney, and so took up the bass.

"I really put some effort into learning how to play it right from the beginning," he recalled, and soon started gigging using a Futurama bass. During the day, he worked at Boosey & Hawkes music shop and it was here that he bought his famous 1964 Rickenbacker, cannily taking advantage of the staff discount!

The first band of significance for him was The Syn, who were initially into the Tamla Motown style but soon developed into a more psychedelic unit. It was a relatively short-lived act, but being part of the vibrant London music scene brought Chris into contact with Jon Anderson. With their shared musical aspirations, forming a band together was only natural – and in 1968, Yes was born.

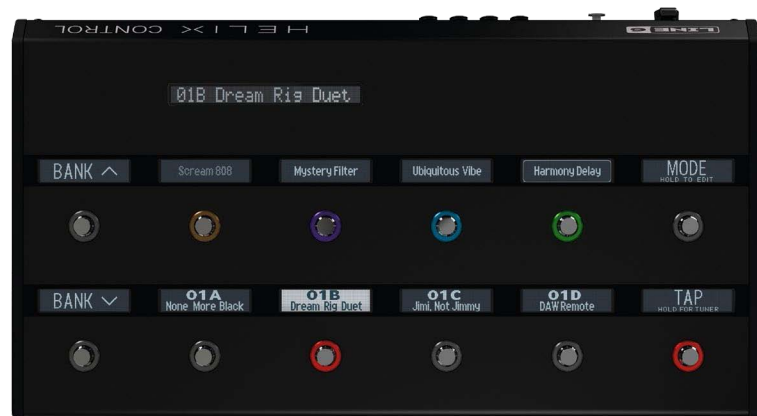
Until May this year, when health issues forced Chris to stop gigging, he was the only member to perform at every Yes concert. And in his last public statement, he urged people to come and see the band's new line-up, as they would still get the full Yes experience; now that's dedication and belief in what you do.

From the early material on the debut Yes album, right through to *Heaven And Earth* from last year, Chris still produced amazingly fluid and melodic bass lines; they were never what you'd expect and were always laced with effects, which he loved. His music remains and he will never be forgotten. **G**



Guild
EST. 1953

Line 6's Helix is designed for hands-free editing, with touch-sensing footswitches and a large LCD display



The Helix also comes in rackmount format (above), with a separate footswitch controller (below)

Tone DNA

Line 6 releases Helix, a major new guitar-processor unit boasting pro-level design and tour-ready tones

Helix represents “a giant leap forward in guitar processing”, according to the company blurb – and that’s no throwaway claim when your new product is entering the same territory as Kemper’s Profiler and Fractal Audio Systems’ Axe-Fx II, the industry-standard guitar and amplifier modellers relied upon by many a modern touring band.

However, Line 6’s pioneering POD, HD and Variax product lines prove the company has an impressive track record in the field of modelling and simulation, and Helix certainly promises to be an impressively spec’d, flagship addition to the legacy.

The Helix is available in floor-based or rack-and-footswitch formation, both with the same control and audio capabilities, and Line 6 emphasises the power of the Helix’s hands-free editing mode. The unit has 12 touch-sensing footswitches, each with a multi-colour LED ring and dedicated graphic

display, plus a large colour LCD, and also features integration for the Variax, MIDI control and four assignable effects loops for use with regular stompboxes. So far, the company hasn’t revealed too many specifics about the onboard sounds, but says that Helix’s HX modelling engine uses impulse responses, convincingly simulates amp bloom and compression, and “uses dual-DSP processing to deliver a level of realism that hasn’t been previously attainable from modelling, and brings along with it an entirely new playing experience”.

The floor-based Helix costs \$1,499 and will be available shortly. The rack version (\$1,499) and foot controller (\$499) will be available in the autumn. Look out for a review next issue, and in the mean time, you can see an impressive video demo of the Helix at uk.line6.com/helix.

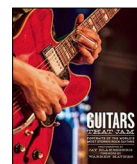
uk.line6.com

Books

Guitars That Jam

Jay Blakesberg

Insight Editions \$29.99



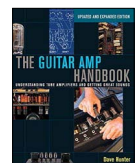
Photographer Jay Blakesberg presents his archive of shots of famous and not-so-familiar guitarists playing live, and

adds commentaries from more than 60 artists, all with a common theme – their love of their guitars. Because the focus of these is on the personal connection between each musician and their instrument, the book succeeds in going beyond a mere exhibition: it’s by no means essential, but goes some way to unravelling the intricacies of the special bond that performers develop with their guitars.

The Guitar Amp Handbook

Dave Hunter

Backbeat Books \$29.99



If you’ve ever been baffled (no pun intended) by the complexities of valve-based amplification, then rectify the

situation with this in-depth book. Featuring explanations about all the major models, amp designs and their components, as well as tech-talk with the world’s best amp designers, this newly updated edition covers all the fresh developments in the industry as it continues to develop at a rate of watts. In short, an excellent guide that will undoubtedly improve your tone.

The History Of Canadian Rock 'N' Roll

Bob Mersereau

Backbeat Books \$24.99



This tome charts how the explosion of US pop music was reflected in the musical culture of neighbouring Canada, and explains how the

country’s music was exported. It’s a tale with very specialist interest, but the fact the rock’n’roll call of noteworthy Canadian artists and producers includes the likes of Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Rush, Leonard Cohen, Nickelback, Arcade Fire, Bob Rock, Daniel Lanois, and Bob Ezrin makes it an intriguing read for musicologists.



Class Of '84

Vintage releases its vibrant and affordable Rock Series of nostalgic glam-metal axes

Is it too soon to think of mid-80s guitar designs as 'vintage'? 30 years have passed now, after all... Regardless of where you straddle the monitor on that particular conundrum, Vintage's new V6M24 Rock Series model will catch the eye of any player with a fondness for twin-humbucker S-types, divebombs and spandex.

Coming on strong in day-glo Daytona Yellow, Laguna Blue and Ventura Green

finishes, the low-profile contoured alder body has a quadruple-bolted maple neck with 24 medium-jumbo-frets, a 25.5-inch scale and Wilkinson WJ07LH E-Z-Lok machineheads working in tandem with the VS5011K vibrato system. The pickups are Wilkinson Double Coils, controlled with a three-way selector, volume and tone controls, and at £249, the V6M24 is considerably cheaper than a trip to Sunset Strip. See www.jhs.co.uk for more.



"One of the finest guitar straps in the world"

*-
Guitarist Magazine*



Leather Transmitter Pouch

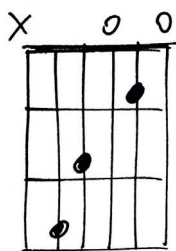


www.heistercamp.co.uk

Substitute

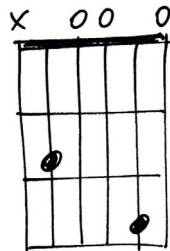
Tired of using the same old chord shapes? These substitutions will freshen up your playing in seconds. **This Issue: Chromatic Descent**

This one is all about inversions and chromatic bass lines. But don't worry, it's designed for beginners! In most chords, the lowest note (the bass) is the root note. That's the case with this very familiar opening chord...



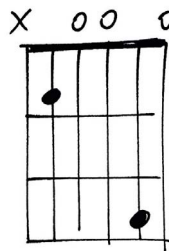
C

But in an inversion, you have one of the chord's other notes at the bottom, and this gives you great control over the shape of the bass line. This is a G chord, but the bass is B, descending from the C of the previous chord.

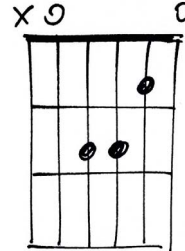


G6/B

Now the bass drops further to B $\flat$, at the bottom of an inverted G minor. Note the extra open E on top of both G chords, making them G6 and Gm6. It creates continuity between the four chords.

Gm6/B $\flat$

Finally, the chromatically descending bass line takes us to A minor. This technique is well known in folkie fingerpicking, especially from Davey Graham's *Anji*, which was a huge influence on Jimmy Page.



Am



The New Boss

Boss's new DD-500 digital delay features new algorithms, a looper, 12 delay modes that include emulations of the Roland SDE-2000 and 300, a graphic display and MIDI control. The price is £259; see uk.boss.info for more.

Remember Rory

June saw a series of events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the passing of Rory Gallagher, and unreleased Taste material will be out in August. See issue 398 of *Guitarist*, where we'll be running an in-depth retrospective.

Meatbox Revisited

DigiTech has released new versions of two 90s DOD stompboxes: the Gonkulator Ring Modulator and the Meatbox Subsynth. The former adds an adjustable carrier signal to the original featureset, and the latter recreates the original's low-end enhancement capabilities. Both pedals cost £154; see www.soundtech.co.uk for info.

Guitarist Picks *Highlights from last issue*



Electric
Nik Huber
Dolphin
Surfmeister
£3,699

We said "Not just for surf players, it's a brilliant all-rounder"



Acoustic
Yamaha
SLG200S
£515

We said "The Silent Guitar is better than ever – the ultimate practice tool"



Amp
Marshall JCM
25/50 2555x
£1,199

We said "A great reissue of one of the most coveted Marshalls"



Effect
Laney
IRT-Pulse
£199

We said "This is a one-stop-shop desktop preamp with a great feature set"



Misc
DigiTech TRIO
Band Creator
£149

We said "An invaluable tool for practice and songwriting"

And Finally...



The guitar industry never ceases to surprise us with ingenious new designs, and here's the latest clever idea we've come across: the Submarine. It's a pickup from singer-songwriter Pete Roe that attaches non-destructively to your acoustic or electric, effectively acting as a pair of micro pickups, which amplify two strings independently of the others. This enables you to apply separate effects and amps to this signal via the supplied cable; possible applications include using a sub-octave pedal to turn your acoustic's bass strings into bass-guitar-style accompaniment, or adding a reverb or delay effect to the top strings of your guitar to bathe your fingerpicking in ghostly shimmer. The Submarine has been launched on crowdfunding site Ulele: head to www.submarinepickup.com to see it in action.



ORANGEAMPS.COM/DUALDARK

**“MAKE NO MISTAKE,
THESE AMPS ARE NOT
FOR THE FAINT OF HEART”**
4.5/5 - GUITARIST MAGAZINE



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DUAL HIGH GAIN CHANNELS
SWITCHABLE OUTPUT POWER MODES
LOW IMPEDANCE VALVE EFFECTS LOOP
FOOTSWITCHABLE ATTENUATOR

**Total
Guitar**
Guitar Amp of the Year 2014

MIA Awards 2014



Steve Hillage

The psychedelic guitar maestro tells us tales of unlistenable vinyl, an invisible guitar and why his teenage self had it sorted as he fields the 10 questions we ask everyone...

1 What was your first guitar and when did you get it?

"My first guitar was a six-string Spanish guitar and I got it when I was nine. It would have been around 1960 and the first song I learned to play on it would probably have been a Lonnie Donegan song like *My Old Man's A Dustman*. But my dad bought me the Strat on the front cover of *Motivation Radio* because I went to a public school – the City Of London School – and I did quite well on my O Levels and I won a scholarship, which meant that my father didn't have to pay fees any more and he bought me that guitar. We found it through *Exchange & Mart* or *Melody Maker* – one or the other, I don't know.

"It was originally white, but I tired of the whiteness and so I scraped it all off and varnished it and my dad helped me a bit. That was the main guitar I used with Gong, but I also had a Les Paul that I used a lot and an SG; they were the three guitars, really. I'd say I probably used the Strat around 50 per cent, Les Paul around 30 per cent and 20 per cent SG."

2 The building's burning down; what one guitar from your collection would you save?

"My Steinberger. Although I wonder if it might come away unscathed with all that carbon fibre. You never know!"

3 What plectrums do you use?

"I use Jim Dunlop Tortex, 0.73mm thickness. They're sort of medium, I don't like them too light or too hard. If they're too light, they're too bendy, and if they're too hard, they're just too heavy for me."

4 If you could change one thing about a recording you've been on, what would it be and why?

"The vinyl version of *Rainbow Dome Musick* was completely unlistenable because of the scratches. It was only when we got the CD that we could actually listen to the thing. The LP came out originally in 1979 and it was clear vinyl and generally, coloured vinyl is not as good as black because of the way they have to clear out the pressing thing – there's a whole esoteric explanation for that. There were just a lot of 'Rice Krispies'



on it, but we couldn't really change that because that's all there was in those days."

5 What are you doing five minutes before you go on stage and five minutes after?

"Five minutes before I go on stage, I'll check my tuning, go to the toilet, crack a few jokes... and afterwards, I'll normally have a drink."

6 What's the worst thing that has happened to you on stage?

"I did a gig on acid and my guitar disappeared while I was playing it. It was rather unpleasant, but I lived to tell the tale. It was a Gong gig in a Spanish town near Barcelona called Terrassa and it all went a bit pear-shaped! Miquette [Giraudy, keyboards/vocals] was there, but she wasn't actually on stage and she helped me keep it all together."

7 What's the closest you've come to quitting music?

"Never for a moment have I ever thought of quitting music. At school, we had a band and the other guys wanted to do it professionally and left the school to do that and that band eventually became known as The Egg. For various reasons, partly because of the fact that my father had bought my guitar, I couldn't leave the school. I couldn't do it; it was just impossible for me – I just didn't want to,

it didn't feel right. Later, I went to Kent University and found that I was suddenly at the epicentre of the Canterbury music scene and music became increasingly important in my life and I left the university. So I did what the other guys did but a few years later."

8 What aspect of playing guitar would you like to be better at?

"I'd just like to keep improving what I do. It's an overall thing; I wouldn't say that I'd like to pick better or use my left hand better or play chords better or lead better. I think it's an overall holistic thing, I'd just like to keep improving and discovering."

9 What advice would you give your younger self about the guitar if you had the chance?

"Without sounding too conceited, I think I had it pretty worked out by the time I was about 14. So I would just say, 'Stay with your thing,' which was the wondrous advice that Daevid Allen heard from Jimi Hendrix – 'Stay with your thing, man...'. I would just say that."

10 Is there a myth about you or your guitar playing that you'd like to set the record straight on?

"There's nothing too colossal. Two little snippets I could give you: there's a Gong live album called *Gong Est Mort*, based on a Paris concert we did in 1977. It was a kind of brief reunion, and my face on the artwork is whited out and a lot of people think it's because I had some sort of nuclear row with Daevid Allen and it's absolutely not true.

"Another one to do with Gong: it used to irk me that, in 1975 when Daevid Allen left the band, people were saying, 'Steve Hillage is the new leader of Gong.' But I had nothing to do with Daevid leaving at all. I wasn't even around at the time, I was finishing the *Fish Rising* album, but people were talking like I'd made some sort of coup d'état, which was absolutely not the case." [DM]

Steve Hillage's System 7 are playing numerous UK dates throughout August. For more information, see www.a-wave.com/system7



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- 5-Layer Laminated Maple Top and Body
- Rosewood Fingerboard with "Block & Triangle" Inlays
- Grover® Rotomatic: 18:1 ratio Tuners
- Epiphone LockTone™ Bridge and Frequensator™ Tailpiece
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www.epiphone.com

Feedback

Your letters to the *Guitarist* editor. Drop us a line at guitarist@futurenet.com

Star Letter



LEAVING ON A JET PLANE

Dear *Guitarist*, having been quoted £100 by a well-known budget airline to take my guitar to the Costa Brava for this year's holiday got me thinking.

Could I make one that fitted inside my cabin bag for under £100 myself?

A quick scour of the internet and £35 later, I was the owner of an old CSL Les Paul copy, made in Japan. This provided me with a neck and all the hardware I needed. A further £6 later, I had a hardwood block that would form the body. Plenty of practice and a lot of sawdust later again, the guitar was complete. What I needed next was a good micro amp. This was solved by taking out a subscription to *Guitarist* with the free gift of a Blackstar Fly3!

The end result is a very playable electric guitar that can be assembled in under two minutes and which cost less than the price of one return trip to Spain. With my new skills, I am already working on Mk II. I have learned much about guitars and more about myself.

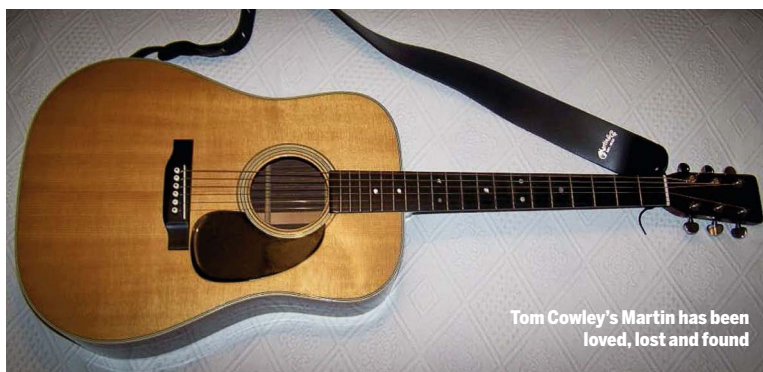
Mike Warren, via email

We commend your ingenuity, Mike; good to hear of your budding luthiery. Plus, the fact the final piece of the puzzle was solved by taking out a subscription to this noble organ means it's certain you have hit upon the right solution. We therefore award you an equally portable Pandora Stomp pedal to round out your small but perfectly formed rig for future Spanish adventures. Olé!

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Tom Cowley's Martin has been loved, lost and found

HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

Just got my copy of *Guitarist* in time to read at lunch and dived in before I read Jamie's Editor's note. As the pages flew by, my eyes widened and a feeling of joy washed over me. What a great job the new design is! Well done to all involved. As a (retired) designer myself, I often thought the last working over was one of the best of any mag I subscribe to, but this knocks it out of the park, round the back of Asda and down into the lake. Hope the team heads to the pub to celebrate.

Nick Powell, via email

Nick, many thanks indeed for your kind words, and thanks too to everyone else who wrote in to praise the spruce-up we've given the mag. We won't lie, we did go to the pub.

LOST AND FOUND

I thought you'd be interested in the 'lost love' story of one of my guitars. I bought my Martin in 1993 from a dealer who regularly crossed the Atlantic to buy and bring back quality guitars to sell in this country. It was, and still is, in pristine condition and, inside the case in the small compartment, I discovered the original bill of sale. I found that it had been bought brand new in 1971 in Orlando, Florida, by a Joseph W Norris and had

all the relevant documents relating to the guitar from Martin. On the bill of sale there was also Mr Norris's address.

Fast-forward to 2003. I chanced on the envelope that I'd placed there some 10 years before and opened it to read its contents. A rogue thought entered my head and, before I'd thought much more, I'd composed a letter to the address on the bill of sale to Joseph W Norris who had lived there in 1971! I said what my history with the Martin was, and that I would like to find out more about it. I enclosed my email address and posted it to the USA with a great deal of hope but not much conviction, to be honest.

A few weeks later, I received an email from Joseph W Norris! Not the Joseph Norris I had hoped it to be though, but his son who was living at the same address in their family home, which he had inherited on the death of his father in 2001. My letter had been quite a shock to him and his mother. He related their story to me.

His mother bought it for his dad for a Christmas present in 1971 and his dad absolutely loved the Martin and would play it in a band in and around Orlando. By 1990, he'd had a change in circumstances; things had to be sold and it had broken his heart to sell the Martin, but that's what he did in 1991, some 20 years after he had got it. By the turn of the century, his circumstances had improved and he tried to find out what happened to the Martin, and to see if he could even buy it back. They

Send your letters to: guitarist@futurenet.com



The prices of Steinberger models are on the rise

LOSING OUR HEADS?

I've had lots of electric guitars over the years – Gibson, Ibanez, Fender – but the one I always regretted selling was my Steinberger GM-5S. I did a lot of gigs around the country back then when I was 18 (now 38) and it never went out of tune. The TransTrem was a piece of design genius, the way I could lock it into different tunings. The graphite body and neck were solid as a rock and the EMGs sounded huge. I could change a broken string (which was rare) between songs because the double ball-end strings were so easy to change and tune. Unfortunately, at least in my experience, Steinbergers seem to be increasingly hard to get hold of. This is a real shame, as Ned Steinberger's designs are amazing. Well, I took the plunge, sold my Ibanez and ordered a Steinberger ZT3. I've watched all the videos on YouTube and it looks like another amazing Steinberger guitar.

Dan Horne, Stevenage, via email

The headless guitars of Steinberger are loved by many, but make some guitarists shudder – mainly for aesthetic reasons. If you have a piece of gear you feel is unfairly overlooked or extremely rare, write in and let us and other readers know why.

made strenuous efforts to trace it, which sadly ended when his dad died in 2001. They thought that was the end of that chapter in their lives until my letter arrived.

The son told me that when he read out my letter over the phone to his mother, she had cried, starting him off too, and they spent the evening reminiscing and were able to put closure to something in their lives that had never quite seemed to have been finished off properly. I felt quite humbled. Playing my Martin has now become more than a mere pleasure, it has become a celebration of Joseph W Norris's memory of when he owned and lovingly played it. I feel we are making some kind of contact across the ether.

Tom Cowley, via email

Thanks, Tom, that's a remarkable and poignant story. Instruments, perhaps more than any other object owned by loved ones who pass away, evoke strong memories of that person in life. Mr Norris's family must certainly have been touched that you took the trouble to write and explain what became of his old guitar. Have any other readers been re-connected with much-loved instruments after many years? Let us know.



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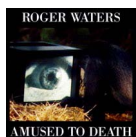
The month's best guitar music, plus top players in the studio



Roger Waters

Amused To Death (Columbia/Legacy)

10/10



The best album Pink Floyd never made?

Roger Waters' *Amused To Death* album was originally released in 1992 and is now enjoying something of an enhanced and expanded rebirth 23 years later. Dealing with the world population's obsession with entertainment via the TV – and now, of course, the internet in all its various forms – much of what irked the Floyd bass man back then rings true today. In fact, we'll go as far as to say that this record could very well have been recorded this year...

So what's new, exactly? Apart from refreshed artwork, the album has been remixed into 5.1 surround sound with a remastered stereo mix by the eminently capable ears belonging to long-time Floyd collaborator, James Guthrie. So whereas the album was originally recorded in Q-Sound, a mysterious process by which an ordinary stereo recording could be given an extra aural dimension, this version can

positively fill any space you care to aim it at. Not only that, one of the release options for the album is an accompanying Blu-Ray audio disc ensuring that Waters' masterwork is available to even the most pernickety audiophile.

Guests on the album include the Eagles' Don Henley, the soulful Rita Coolidge and some of the most exquisite playing ever to emanate from a Stratocaster, courtesy of Jeff Beck.

Given that 20-plus years have passed since its original release, *Amused To Death* has lost none of its gloomy, dystopian power; in Waters' mind, the human race is headed for extinction and he's not afraid to say so with lyrical condemnations of war, media and big business. Cheerful, it's not. All said and done, though, it's certainly one of his greatest works, post Floyd. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Too Much Rope*

For fans of: Pink Floyd, Jeff Beck

Ozric Tentacles

Technicians Of
The Sacred

Madfish

7/10



Space-rock psychonauts go exploring again...

Marrying the galactic guitar solos pioneered by Steve Hillage to tripped-out but tightly executed prog instrumentals is a niche that Ozric Tentacles almost have to themselves, and over the years, thousands of zorched festival-goers have bathed in the cosmic rays of their immersive sound. *Technicians Of The Sacred*, their 15th studio album, marks a return to form, with Ozrics' trademark blend of lithe dynamics, propulsive riffage and exotic soundscapes hitting its mind-warping peak on tracks such as *Epiphlioy* and *Zenlike Creature*. The waspish yet soaring tone guitarist Ed Wynne achieves was originally courtesy of an Ibanez Artist solidbody, then JEMs, but on this album he's moved on to another of the Japanese company's shred-focused models, using a Herman Li signature through a Marshall and Boss effects to get those stratospheric tones. Most closely akin stylistically to 1994's *Arborescence* with nods to the classic *Erpland* in its North African souk-evoking acoustic parts, Wynne's deft guitar work carries the whole beyond earth orbit and onward to distant realms. **[JD]**

Standout track: *Epiphlioy*

For fans of: Hawkwind, Steve Hillage, Mahavishnu Orchestra

Lindi Ortega

Faded Gloryville

Last Gang Records

6/10



Country chanteuse plays the femme fatale

Lindi Ortega was born in Canada with Irish and Mexican forebears and if you're wondering what sort of music that might naturally produce, we'll add the addendum that she now resides in Nashville. Factor all of that information together and you'd be right in thinking that this is country music with a few intriguing twists and turns along the way – check out the new take on The Bee Gees' *To Love Somebody*, for instance.

Faded Gloryville is Lindi's follow-up album to 2013's Juno Award-nominated *Tin Star*, and mixes together her influences from straight country – Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash – with soul music's finest – Ray Charles, Otis Redding – to produce an arresting, breathy vocal-powered mélange. **[DM]**

Standout track: *When You Ain't Home*

For fans of: Alabama Shakes, Patsy Cline

Samantha Crain

Under Branch &
Thorn & Tree

Full Time Hobby

6/10



Americana in safe hands

Hailing from Shawnee, Oklahoma, Samantha Crain has been attracting attention in the US as a singer-songwriter with something to say. This is her fourth album, and one that displays a rare talent for songs with a strong narrative and powerful arrangements that often contrast the sparsity of a lone acoustic guitar against lush strings. Crain lists her influences to include Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Woody Guthrie, but you get the feeling that there's an almost indiscernible modern element being brought to the fore, too, giving the music a slightly experimental edge. Fans of Southern-fried folk roots music should keep watch for her UK dates in August. **[DM]**

Standout track: *All In*

For fans of: Melanie, Alison Krauss

Warren Haynes

Ashes & Dust

Provogue

8/10



The Allman's guitar man flies solo

Crowning a career that not only includes The Allman Brothers but also the celebrated Gov't Mule, Grammy-winning Mr Haynes unleashes his third – and quite possibly his strongest – solo album to date. It's not quite what you might be expecting, though, as there are a few surprises here; some of the music on *Ashes & Dust* wouldn't sound out of place on BBC Four's excellent *Transatlantic Sessions*, for instance. Acoustic and slide guitar, violins and even banjo decorate songs that are obviously intensely personal but come across as being every bit as powerful as any Gov't Mule performance you've ever witnessed. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Blue Maiden's Tale*

For fans of: The Allman Brothers, Jerry Douglas

Los Plantronics

Surfing Times

Jansen Plateproduksjon

8/10



Zombie surf meets Tex-Mex

Listening to this album, you'd swear that what you were hearing had emanated from a shady nightclub somewhere on the US/Mexican border, having been recorded by Ennio Morricone-obsessed punk surfers. Imagine our surprise when we found out that Los Plantronics actually come from Norway! Apparently, this album represents something of a diversion for the Nordic nine piece, who wondered if they could reach across the Atlantic's cultural divide and produce a true celebration of 50s surf music. They've done it – and it's serious fun, too. If Quentin Tarantino ever hears this album we expect that he'll make a film specially to feature it! **[DM]**

Standout track: *El Jeffe*

For fans of: Dick Dale, Los Lobos, Flat Duo Jets

Gren Bartly Magnificent Creatures Fellside

6/10



Fingerstyle with fire and originality

Gren Bartley's fine acoustic fingerstyle playing underpins this, his third album on the Cumbrian based Fellside Recordings. To label it as 'neo-folk' is a temptation, but it wouldn't really tell the whole story as the music encompasses so much more. With engaging lyrics and sensitive arrangements featuring violin, cello and percussion, *Magnificent Creatures* also benefits from the production talents of Gavin Monaghan, whose work with artists as diverse as Robert Plant, Kings Of Leon and Paulo Nutini brings an edgy presence to the songs. It all adds up to a fascinating ride through 11 highly original compositions that beg for repeated listening. Watch out for Gren on the road this autumn. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Strange Times*

For fans of: Rufus Wainwright, Badly Drawn Boy, Richard Thompson

Godsticks

Emergence

Independent Release

8/10



Virtuosic riffy prog from Cardiff

Earlier this year, Welsh power trio Godsticks spent a while on the road supporting The Aristocrats and shortly afterwards, headed into the studio to produce this, their third album. We don't know exactly what rubbed off while touring with Guthrie Govan's band of merry men, but *Emergence* sees the heavier side of Godsticks' oeuvre come very much to the fore. First track, *Below The Belt* sets the trend with drop-tuned guitars and syncopated riffs very reminiscent of King's X's excellent *Dogman* album. *Guitarist* contributor Darran Charles' layered guitars then take us through a mighty tour de force of tip-top riffery, ably supported by fellow 'sticksmen Steve Roberts and Dan Nelson. Excellent stuff! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Much Sinister*

For fans of: King's X, Rush

Neal Schon

Vortex

Music Theories Recordings

8/10



The journey's not over yet!

It's a brave move for anyone to release a double-disc of guitar instrumentals in the current climate, but ex-Journey man Neal Schon has said that despite his past success, he feels this album wholly represents him. *Vortex* is a suitably swirling collection of contrasting guitar music that moves from the heavy opening tribute to Miles Davis, *Miles Beyond*, to the gentle piano stylings of *Eternal Love* and back again via the ballad *Lady M (Our Love Remains)*. If scorching, soulful guitar is your thing, head into the Vortex! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Airliner NS910*

For fans of: Joe Satriani, Journey



CLASS ACT

Albums worth cranking all the way up

© LAURENCE HARVEY

Jared James Nichols

Old Glory & The
Wild Revival

Listenable Records

8/10



Southern fret-melt blues-rock

The story goes that Lynyrd Skynyrd's Gary Rossington was so impressed by Jared James Nichols' playing that he invited him onstage to play *Sweet Home Alabama* with the band – unprecedented. 25-year-old Jared certainly wears his influences where everyone can see them: years listening to Skynyrd, Grand Funk Railroad, Mountain and The James Gang have certainly given both his songwriting and guitar style a fierce, unrelenting edge. Furthermore, the involvement of both Aerosmith's engineer, Warren Huart, and legendary producer Eddie Kramer have added additional fairy dust to make *Old Glory And The Wild Revival* a forceful and confident debut. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Crazy*

For fans of: Black Label Society, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Ted Nugent

Buddy Guy

Born To Play Guitar

RCA

7/10



Blues legend lives life on the edge

With the pipes of a man half his age and his mercurial, risk-taking approach to phrasing, 77-year-old Buddy Guy is a phenomenon, all right. Not for him the glossy, slick production that usually airbrushes all of the reality out of records by elder statesmen of the blues, this is Buddy playing as he always has – flying by the seat of his pants, wearing down the frets of his polka-dot Strat. There are some great collaborations, too, with the likes of Billy Gibbons, Van Morrison and Kim Wilson, whose grimy harp licks are a reminder of Buddy's timeless recordings with Junior Wells. **[OB]**

Standout track: *Smarter Than I Was*

For fans of: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, BB King



Joe Hollick

The Wolf People guitarist tells us about Polish practical jokes, and why Firebirds rule his rig

Words

Jamie Dickson

Portrait

Adam Gasson



What was your first gig?

"My first ever gig as a kid was at primary school. We did a term in music on the blues, and I grew up with my dad feeding me blues and folk records so I felt like I had some sort of inside knowledge at the age of six or seven. We had to do a school concert and I practised for about three months for this big moment of playing in front of the school on a borrowed Encore electric – and then spent the entire first five minutes in front of the entire school fiddling with a faulty jack on this guitar. It was literally the most embarrassing moment of my life, and my dad had got out of work to come and watch it. I can remember afterwards just being inconsolable with grief."

Describe your current stage rig?

"There's a '67 Firebird that I've had forever, and I've just bought a 1971 Fender Super Reverb to replace the Marshall that I had, because I can't seem to live without the reverb circuit from Silverface-era Fender amps. I think they're absolutely wonderful. But yes, that's original with, like, stock speakers and I've just bought an Analog Man Sun Face fuzz. I have a Cry Baby, an MXR Uni-Vibe pedal, and an MJM Octavia pedal. I think it's a Roctavios or Roctavios [It's Roctavios – Ed], I can't remember. It's like a prototype one and

it's that worn, I can't see the label any more. And then I got a really nice old Dynacord tape echo that had been restored: it's quiet and the echoes are very clean and lovely. And I just use it mainly as a preamp, so that sits on top of the Super Reverb."

How do you warm up before a gig?

"A while ago, we started doing weird stretches together, because Dan, our bassist, is a Taekwondo instructor, and with everyone being in vans and driving around means we often get bad backs and necks and everyone's feeling pretty ropey. So he gets us in a huddle and makes us do all sorts of weird yoga moves and stuff like that. I hope no one ever sees it, because it would be horrendously shocking."

What's the best way to get a crowd on your side?

"Well, we're kind of just four blokes, really boringly standing there with guitars! So we tend to try and make the playing the focus: if we're playing well, then the gig is going well and the crowd respond to it. But it can really go flat if things aren't quite right. So I think the key is to just play as hard as possible, and get so into playing that time can pass without you noticing. It's that kind of feeling. If that happens, then you can feel that the audience

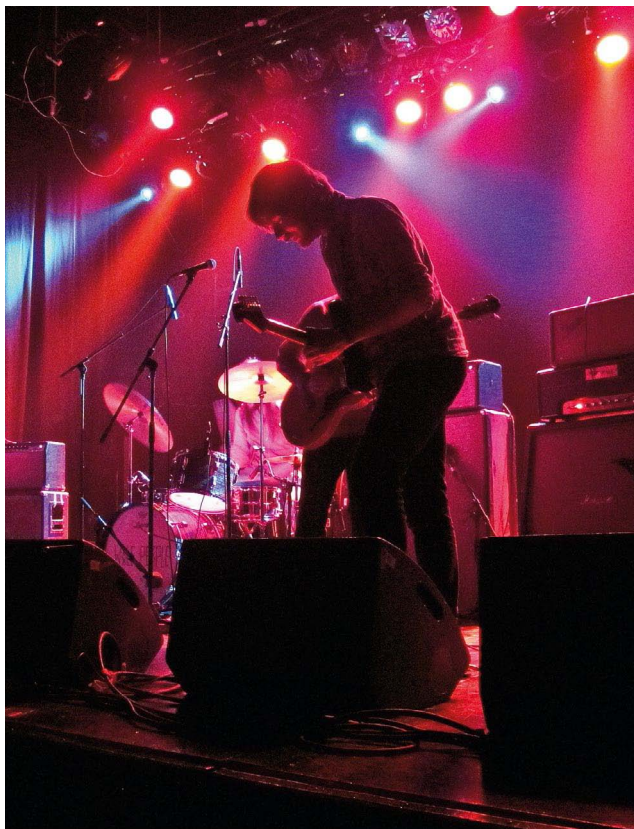
are also noticing that you're really into it and losing yourself, and they really like to see that."

What would you say was your best ever live experience?

"That's a tough one. We played in Chicago with Unknown Mortal Orchestra, and I think having grown up listening to so many blues greats from Chicago... I don't know whether the aura of being in Chicago and actually playing a gig there for the first time maybe made the venue even better, but the venue was entirely wooden. Wooden floor, and sort of like wooden rafters and, I don't know, just something really felt magical about it, and the crowd were really responsive."

What's the worst journey you've had to or from a gig?

We had to drive from Stockholm to London after a gig once, which was an amazing piece of planning [laughs]. It took about 21 hours' drive or something. And we ended up on this service station that was basically a boat: it just looked like any normal services, but it was floating. So we drove onto this platform, and then the sat nav was moving up and down. We were like, 'Are we on water or what?' I think we were all too tired to realise what the hell was going on."



ABOVE There's plenty of tasty, mostly Fender-flavoured backline to spot at a Wolf People live show

"We try and make the playing the focus: if we're playing well, then the gig is going well and the crowd respond to it"

What's the strangest thing that's happened to you on tour?

"We played the Ino-Rock Festival in Inowroclaw, Poland, and arrived really late in the night. The contact who met us at the airport bundled us into the back of a beaten-up Transit and we drove the three hours to the site. It was great, they had loaded the van with loads of pizzas and Polish lager to drink, and after an hour and a half we were comfortably fast asleep.

"Suddenly, the driver, who didn't speak any English, veered sharply off the main road and down a dirt track into a wood. After a mile or two, he made us all get out in a clearing, and as the full moon shone down on us, we all looked at each other and thought, 'Well lads, this is it... this is how it ends.' He then went over to the other side of the van, and shouted 'Piss stop!' and laughed manically as he relieved himself against a tree – knowing full well he had scared us witless. And then, in pidgin English, he explained, 'I do this to all the bands'..."

What's your favourite live album?

"I'd have to say it's by far the *Boston Tea Party* by Fleetwood Mac. Is it 1969 or something? I can't remember. Anyway, the Peter Green Fleetwood Mac *Live In Boston* album, when they do a sort of 25-minute *Rattlesnake Shake*. Also, I don't know if it's from that gig but he does a solo in *Jumping At Shadows* that is just beyond compare: I don't know how any human could play guitar so ferociously and beautifully at the same time." **G**



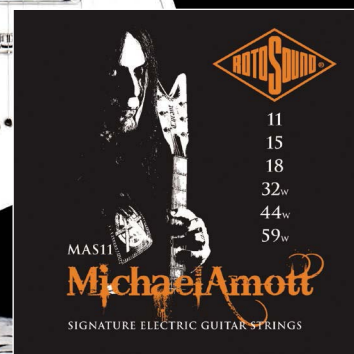
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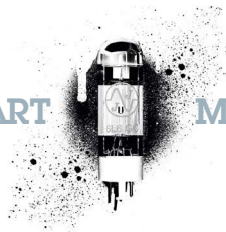
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KIRK FLETCHER

New and notable guitarists you need to hear

Who Is He?

Born in Bellflower, California in 1975 and currently rated as one of the hottest blues players on the planet. He's played with The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Mariah Carey and Snoop Dogg, but now this soul-fired bluesman is hitting the solo trail...

Who Has He Listened To?

Kirk Fletcher's fascination with the guitar began at the age of eight when his elder brother Walter introduced him to the instrument. Initially, he was drawn to the gospel music he heard in his father's church, but soon found himself listening to the rock guitar virtuosos of the 1980s. After a while he discovered BB King and a lifetime's fascination with the blues was set in motion. Kirk began hanging out at a guitar shop in Redondo Beach, California, where he met Robben Ford's guitar tech, Jeff Rivera, and became unofficially enlisted into Ford's backstage crew.

"I was just out of high school... Jeff would take me along to help out, change guitar strings and all that kind of stuff, but for me it was invaluable to see Robben play."

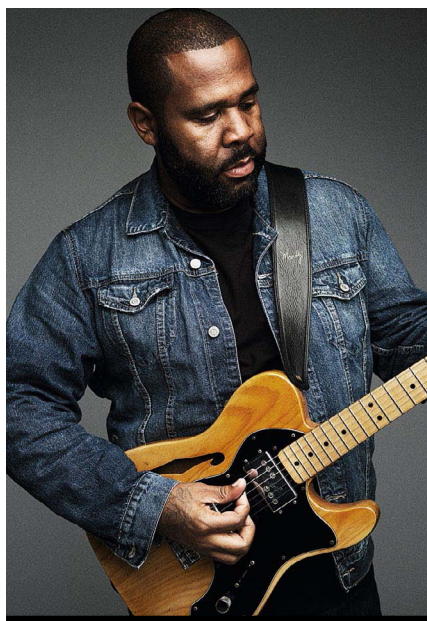
What's So Great About His Playing?

After a while, Kirk met Al Blake of the Hollywood Fats Band who took the young guitarist under his wing, playing him records and introducing him to the blues' rich tradition. Soon, Kirk was gigging wherever and whenever he could, learning his craft and developing a style that embodied the playing of BB King, Albert Collins and Freddie King, but included a tip of the hat to the blues' more soul-influenced players such as Robert Cray.

"That was just being a young guy that was hungry and just wanted to play and so I would just try to make myself available to play with whoever, whenever. I was just trying to stay as busy as possible and I would take a million \$50 or \$25 gigs just to be out playing – and that's really how it all started."

Why Do You Need To Hear Him?

You won't hear the blues played with more zest and energy! Al Blake introduced Kirk to Kim Wilson from The Fabulous Thunderbirds, who immediately invited Kirk to join him on a solo project entitled 'Kim Wilson's Blues Revue'. One thing led to another and pretty



"I was just trying to stay as busy as possible and I would take a million \$50 or \$25 gigs just to be out playing and that's really how it all started"

soon Kirk found himself taking over the lead guitar role in the Thunderbirds – a gig he held for four years, before deciding to bite the bullet and embark on a solo career fronting his own band.

"I was coming on the scene, going out to play with everybody, so it all kind of started right then. At the same time I put out a solo record, too, and so it was all happening at the same time."

What Gear Does He Use?

Kirk's choice of amp is an old Blackface Super Reverb and a stock 1964 Fender Stratocaster. He's also often seen in the company of a '52 parts Telecaster that he got from Larry Carlton's son, Travis, the body of which is a real '52 body with a neck that was made by renowned custom builder Chad Underwood. Other guitars in the Fletcher entourage include a Suhr T-style and a Collings I-35 and, as far as effects are concerned, Kirk employs a Lovepedal Tchula and occasionally an old Ibanez TS-808.

"I'm associated with the Telecaster, but I guess that my desert island guitar would be a Stratocaster. The Telecaster thing is down to Albert Collins and seeing Robben Ford play his old Tele and hearing how much sound he can get out of it..."

Where Should I Start?

Kirk's latest recording is titled *Burning Blues – Live At The Baked Potato*, featuring 11 tracks of electrifying playing, available via Kirk's website or iTunes and Amazon.

As far as live work is concerned, Kirk will be taking part in Joe Bonamassa's Three Kings tour in the US this summer, followed by a solo tour of the UK beginning in Folkstone on 17 September. For full details of all the solo UK dates, see Kirk's website.

Meanwhile, you might want to check out some footage on YouTube filmed at London's Borderline during Kirk's last visit to the UK...

"That was such a fun gig. We had a really good tour last year and so it was great to be in the UK – half my guitar heroes are from the UK!" **[DM]**

Kirk's UK tour starts on 17 September in Folkstone and concludes on the 27 September in London

www.kirkfletcherband.com

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DEREK TRUCKS

The Southern slide maestro tells us why gear doesn't make a player, why mediocre guitarists should pipe down, and why he'll never be satisfied

Words Henry Yates Photography Kevin Nixon

The first time the wider world became aware of the Derek Trucks phenomenon was a piece on American TV news in the early 1990s. The duckling-blond kid in the baseball cap might have been swamped by his instrument, yet his touch and feel were sufficiently dazzling to make fellow slide guitar maestro Sonny Landreth snap to attention. "I saw this clip on the news, this little kid playing slide," Landreth later remembered. "Me and my bass player, we just looked at each other and said, 'Yep, that kid's got it...'"

Landreth's prediction was right on the money. Born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1979, the precocious slide man might have been the nephew of Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks, but any sense of Southern rock nepotism evaporated as he ascended through the ranks on his own merits. By the late 90s, Trucks was juggling his Grammy Award-winning solo band with stints as the planet's most celebrated sideman, sprinkling bottleneck fairy dust over the oeuvre of everyone from the Allmans to Eric Clapton. Yet for many, his greatest creative outlet came in 2010, when he joined forces with wife Susan Tedeschi to form the genre-blurring Tedeschi Trucks Band. "When this band is firing on all cylinders," he tells us, "it's hard to beat."

Never forget your first records

"For me, it was *At Fillmore East*, the *Layla* record [*Layla And Other Assorted Love*

Songs], *The Best Of Elmore James*, and then BB King's *Live In Cook County Jail*. That's what really got me, and you can still hear those influences in my playing today, without a doubt. I go back to them from time to time, and you kinda drink from the well again, and you reconnect. Y'know, playing in The Allman Brothers for 15 years, I would often go back and listen to those early recordings, or bootlegs of Duane, just to reconnect with what that music was all about. It's good to go back to your influences. I mean, it's good to get away from them, too. You don't want to lean too much on one thing, but I feel like anything that moves you, that keeps that flame lit, can't be a bad thing."

Be your own worst critic

"I don't often sit back and listen to my playing, but when I do, I find plenty to tweak. I feel that way about the band and everything else. After every show, you're kinda picking it apart and thinking about what can be better. It's very much a work in progress that way. There's not a lot of backslapping going on. It's funny – sometimes I hear the really early stuff, like, from when I was 13, and there's something about the freedom and the unhinged nature that I enjoy. Then there's certain things I'll hear myself do where I'll think, 'Wow, I haven't changed a bit – I'm doing that same shit now!' When I listen back, I can tell the things that I fall back on. I can tell the things that are clichés in my playing. But

I think I heard more of it early on. Y'know, you start weeding that stuff out as you go."

Big is best

"We travel with a full 11-piece band. It's a powerful sound. There's a lot of talent onstage, and a lot of different places for the inspiration to come from. There's nothing like it. I've been part of a lot of groups, and when this band is firing on all cylinders, it's really hard to beat. I get addicted to that. Luckily, the way that me and Susan think, we've never been driven by career-oriented or financial goals. We're stubborn enough to just put a band together that we want to play with. The accountants and managers, they often wonder why we have so many people on the road. It's a labour of love, y'know?"

Keep it in the family

"Susan is a damn good guitar player. She can get it done. Especially when it comes to that Johnny 'Guitar' Watson or Magic Sam-style, that real stinging thing. I really don't know too many people that can do it the way she does. I just saw Jimmie Vaughan at the thing for Clapton's 70th birthday, and it hit me that he must have had a big influence on her, because it's coming from a similar place. He's one of the few people that has that same thing where it's really angular and muscular, and it feels like it's on the edge of destruction, but it always makes it. There's something heroic about that sound. It keeps you on the edge of your seat."

“When you pick up an instrument, your personality comes through. It’s in your hands. Good guitars, good amps – all that stuff helps. But it doesn’t make a player”



Speed kills

“I feel like as you get better, you pare it down a bit. Once you’ve played with guys like BB or Eric, who are such masters, you learn how to breathe. That’s what I want to hear. I mean, I want to hear the edge of that, where you’re pushing and trying things. But then there are times when it needs to breathe – and I feel like that’s the part that’s lost with a lot of the new generation of musicians and blues players. It’s like, ‘You know what, I don’t want to be in a conversation with anyone that’s talking that much – and I certainly don’t want to listen to it. I want it to feel like we’re in this thing together!’”

It’s all under the fingernails

“When you pick up an instrument, your personality comes through. Some people, it doesn’t matter what instrument they pick up. I remember seeing early footage of Hubert Sumlin with Howlin’ Wolf, and he’d be playing these really strange amplifiers and guitars, and I always used to think you could only get that awesome sound with that weird combo. But then, years later, we were in this dressing room together at some festival, and there was this brand-new Fender amp and this Gibson with a tag on it that was off the shelf. Hubert started playing and it was the exact sound I remembered. So it kinda blew that theory out of the water. Then it hit me. It’s in your hands. Good guitars, good amps – all that stuff helps. But it doesn’t make a player.”

The SG isn’t just for metal

“That’s the first image people think of, but for me, it was seeing a picture of Duane

Allman playing a Gibson SG that got me interested in them. And then later on, I found out that Johnny Jenkins was playing an SG on all of those early Otis Redding records, where it sounds like a cross between a Stratocaster and a Les Paul. So it’s a great guitar for that sort of sound. Visually, it’s a mean-looking instrument, with the horns on, so it’s easy to think about hard rock and heavy metal, for sure. But I think there are a lot of things you can do with it.”

Walk the tightrope

“You’re always trying to find new things, keep pushing, keep searching. I guess it could be scary that I try to never play the same thing twice, but most of my heroes played that way. You enjoy the tightrope walk. The beauty for us is that it’s not like actual tightrope walking, where if you fall you’re gonna die. As long as you’re okay with mild embarrassment from time to time, you’ll get by. And often times, the things that come right after a slip are the most brilliant, because then the musical adrenaline kicks in and you go to your best shit!”

It’s not all about slide

“I go back and forth. There are times when I enjoy regular guitar playing more. Often, I feel like some of my more creative ideas are coming out that way. And then, other times, I go more to the other way, and I feel like I want to play slide guitar. And then there’s times when it really is a good balance, where I can kinda go back and forth, even within a solo. That’s when I feel like it’s working the best, when it’s just kind of an afterthought. Y’know,

when you’re hearing things and you’re just playing them.”

Turn off the autopilot

“This band is different to a lot of other groups. I feel like a lot of musicians try to find a formula. You know the buttons that you can push to make a crowd react, the easy hits, the things that work, that are no-brainers. We really try to avoid that. We try to really create moments from night to night, and not rely on a bag of tricks. If the band is inspired, and real things are happening, then people certainly feel that. It’s a different feeling. You know when you see an artist and it’s happening for them, too. The music levitates, the crowd feels it, and those are the things that you remember for years and years.”

Guitar is the future

“If you become a master of your craft, and you keep working at it, and you take it to levels that people haven’t, there are always gonna be people listening. I feel like so much of the things that are going on now, it doesn’t matter how well they’re doing now, how many tickets they can draw – I think a lot of that stuff is just gonna fall by the wayside. Because it doesn’t hold water. There’s gaping holes in it, and no matter how much you pour into it, it will always drain out. But when something is legit and solid, it’s always gonna be there. I still feel like, if it’s real, it’ll last, y’know?”

The Tedeschi Trucks Band perform at the Prudential BluesFest at The O2 in London from 7 to 8 November

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Room Service

Larry Carlton's fretwork has been the magic ingredient of so many great albums, it's ridiculous. From his graceful, jazzy playing on Joni Mitchell's *Hejira* to the ecstatic solos on Steely Dan's *The Royal Scam*, he is the heavyweight champ of ES-335 artistry

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Olly Curtis

The weathered '69 ES-335 sitting on its stand on an empty stage this afternoon has certainly earned its keep over the years.

Its owner, Larry Carlton, has played this guitar to such dazzling effect, on so many albums, that every hairline check in the lacquer of its headstock might stand for a hit. From Michael Jackson to Joni Mitchell, Larry Carlton's playing has added grace and sophistication to career-apex albums by some of rock's greatest artists. Today, however, he's touring his own material. Carlton has recorded over 30 solo albums, which gives him the luxury of wandering at leisure through his sizeable back catalogue, changing gears between stately blues and energetic fusion as the mood takes him.

"I'm playing songs that I have been doing for the last five or six years, kind of a broad cross-section of material," he says. "Some of it is very jazz, some of it is very blues and some of it is fusion. This is my third or fourth tour with these particular musicians: Klaus Fischer on bass, Jesse Milliner on keyboards and Hardy Fischötter on drums."

During soundcheck, we get a taste of what the quartet is capable of. Together, the band combines finesse with heavyweight chops and Larry's playing against their backing is characteristically unhurried and tasteful, with easy flourishes of invention that seem to just flow out of the amp. Interesting to notice, too, that the lower fingers of his right hand are in play almost as often as the pick. "As a jazz-influenced player, my comping is done commonly with the pick and two

fingers," Carlton says. "And then, for just a different tone and a different attitude, sometimes I'll just not use the pick when I'm playing my blues lines, so I can snap the string a little harder. Just gives me a different attack."

A big part of great playing, he continues, is in treating the space between licks as an opportunity, not a chasm that might swallow you up if you don't fill it with notes.

"I learned over the years that you play something and you leave a space," he says. "Well, a number of things can happen in the space. One, you can get another idea. Two, somebody else in the band might play something in that space that inspires you. Or somebody in the band plays something that is so appropriate for what you just played. Or you are going to play what you just played again except barely vary it. The space is an opportunity for something to happen."

Harmony Lessons

A particular hallmark of Carlton's playing is the easy way he marries a jazz guitarist's ear for harmony with the gutsy phrasing of blues and rock, a style he developed – perhaps surprisingly – without formal lessons.

"For me, it started by learning standards," he recalls. "I remember that when I would learn a four-bar phrase from a Joe Pass record, I'd then go back and learn the chords that were happening underneath it, not just the solo. Then I had the opportunity to analyse it in my head: why could he play

those notes against that chord? I think it's important that once you learn the solo, learn the chords, then think about why that could happen."

In the past, Larry has spoken about building solos not around scales but simple clusters of notes that can be played, then re-stated and mutated up and down the fretboard. Does he still approach improvisation in that way?

"That's the motif approach of making a small statement and then developing that statement," he says. "It always shows up in my solos. I haven't abandoned it but I am not really aware of it. To me, that is just the musicality that comes out of me. Play something and wait a second. If nothing else comes, imitate what you just did. It is a patience thing."

Guitar players, we suggest, sometimes have trouble staying cool and pacing themselves in solos. Any tips?

"Well, it's really about being a musician, not being a 'guitar player'," he observes. "For example, sax players have to take a breath. They can't just run on, sentence after sentence, like we can on a guitar. So take a breath."

The patient approach also served him well as a session player, he adds.

"There are a lot of guitar players that play along on the first run-through of a track, because they want to make sure that they are going to find something, so they can be heard. But my approach was always: don't even play on the first run, through, just listen to the song. We have time."

One of Carlton's cardinal virtues as a player is that ability to size up a track and then produce improvised guitar parts that stand the test of decades of listening, most notably on sessions with Steely Dan and Joni Mitchell. His two ecstatic solos on the former's *Kid Charlemagne*, a kind of musical *Breaking Bad* that tells the story of illicit LSD factories in 60s San Francisco, is seen by some as the high-water mark of Carlton's soloing on any record.

"I had prepared the chord charts and we had already cut the track," Carlton recalls of the session. "I don't know if it was weeks before or months before," Carlton recalls. "I really don't remember but then it was time. They had the tracks in a place that they now wanted to put the lead guitar on. I am sure there was vocal and something. I can't remember why but I decided to take my little Tweed Deluxe with my 335 and that became my lead sound with Steely Dan.

"Once we found a tone that we all agreed on, Donald Fagen and Walter Becker would say, 'Yes, that's cool,' then really it was just a case of, 'You want to try one?' And they would hit the red button and it'd maybe be, 'How you doing?' and I'd say, 'Yes, let's try it again.' Then all of a sudden some magic starts happening. Very patient, there were no suggestions of licks or anything like that."

The song's first solo is a masterpiece of coolly poised improvisation. By contrast, the outro solo is almost recklessly exuberant, with the 335 singing all the way to the fade. Unsurprisingly, the solos were waxed on separate takes.

"I am pretty sure that I made the solo section in two parts," Carlton recalls. "It



seemed like I was flying along pretty good and then something happened and we stop and he says, 'Pick it up right there,' I continued on and finished the solo and played through the ending maybe, but there are vocals that come in from there."

On other standout sessions from *The Royal Scam*, however, a little discussion with Donald Fagen and Walter Becker helped get round awkward spots, notably on *Don't Take Me Alive*, a hard-boiled siege thriller in the form of song, which starts with a searing solo from Larry Carlton. Launching into full flight right on the first beat wasn't working out right, Carlton

remembers, and it was Donald Fagen who suggested the jagged, drawn-out chord that precedes the song.

"There was no chord in front of the beginning of the song, nothing. Just 'wham'. I don't know what else we tried, but Donald was the one who finally just said, 'Why don't we just put a big chord in front of it?' It was that simple.

I went into the room where my amp was and stood in front of it and tweaked until there was [the right tone] and then I did four or five or six of those chords to where everything rang. They adjusted the limiter and everything so it really

"On 'Don't Take Me Alive', Donald was the one who finally just said, 'Why don't we just put a big chord in front of it?' It was that simple"

sat like they wanted it to. But Donald was right."

Carlton's playing with Joni Mitchell, on mid-70s classics such as *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* and *Hejira*, took place against the more mysterious backdrop of Mitchell's enigmatic open tunings. He recalls that the same approach applied.

"For her to use those tunings... was like playing with a jazz player who's using different voicings. I still hear what the chord is – even though it sounds unique and beautiful the way she tuned her guitar. But, no, it was not a special challenge. She would just have me play. And I remember that on the album *Hejira* that had *Strange Boy* on it – that album with me and Jaco [Pastorius] – she already had her guitars recorded and at least a rough vocal. And I was in the studio by myself and she said 'Just play, Larry.' And so I would play three, four, five approaches

Backing BB King

Larry Carlton on playing with the late, great King of the Blues

"I met BB King in 1974 in Zaire, Africa [now the Democratic Republic of the Congo]. I was there with The Crusaders and BB had his band there," Larry recalls. "James Brown was there, Bill Withers. It was the Foreman/Ali fight. I believe that was the first time and I played rhythm guitar in his set, which was a thrill. He needed a rhythm guitar and I was there. Later, in '84, I was doing the album that ended up being *Friends*. I got a hold of BB and he came to my house and came downstairs to 'Room 335' and it was Joe Sample, Jeff Porcaro and Abraham Laboriel. We had a chance to spend the afternoon together and play the blues. I saw him a couple of more times after that... he was just so giving. He always had time to talk to a guitar player. He was a great example to all of us of how to be a gentleman and still be in the music business. He is going to be missed."



LEFT According to Larry, the Tanabe Zenkudo Overdrive on his touring 'board is a great match-up for a 335

RIGHT Larry on his spare Blues Deluxe: "I played it on the first song that night and realised it wasn't going to have the tone that I wanted so I plugged back into my Bludotone [pictured]"

and then she later would choose the goodies that she liked. So it was very free."

Tone On Tour

The tone of many of Carlton's classic 70s cuts may have leapt from the low-wattage, cathode-biased heart of a 50s Tweed Deluxe, but his stage rig for the current tour is a far more gutsy setup, built around a Bludotone Bludo-Drive 100/50 head and closed-back cab with a single EVM12L 12-inch speaker.

"I have a Bludotone that I leave in London and for European tours I also bring a small pedalboard with a reverb, a delay, a volume pedal and a wah-wah [see picture]. There are a few countries, though, where I can't take my amplifier because the airplanes are too small so I get stuck with a hired backline. I am not a fan of Twin Reverbs for my playing, but I can usually have a nice enjoyable evening with a Fender Blues Deluxe with reverb as backline, though. It lets me respond somewhat as I like to."

Larry Carlton is one of those players whose tone is always at a simmering half-crunch, right on the cusp of a full-throated wail. He says he dials in the preamp of the Bludo-Drive carefully to keep himself in the right zone to suit the 335.

"The front end is really important to me. I have found with both my Dumble and with the Bludotone – and by the way, my Bludotone is an exact clone of my Dumble – my preamp volume is usually about four, then my tone controls and midrange are down a little bit. That amp sounds best set at four going in and four coming out. But it is too loud for me now: I want Brandon Montgomery who makes the amps to get it



•

“There is going to be a season, I think, in every guitarist’s progress where it is just fun to play fast because you can. But it shouldn’t be, in my opinion, the end result”

•

so I am happy with it on [a master volume of] two. Because the amp wants to breathe at four but it doesn’t want to breathe quite as much at two. But four is just getting too loud for me!”

Another key element of Carlton’s tone is having the perceived level remain the same when switching between his clean and lead tones, and his amps are customised to make this easier to achieve. “I don’t like the level to change. That was an adjustment with Dumble and then with Brandon for the Blutotone. They have a little green button that kicks in the preamp. Originally, when you kicked that in there was like a two or three dB boost. But I don’t want to be louder, I like where I am at right now, but I want that different tone. So that has been adjusted for me. The volume is perceived to be the same but the tone has been slightly altered, a little more aggressive.”

Also on hand for an additional layer of gain, or an alternative to the overdrive voicing of hired backline, is the Tanabe Zenkudo Overdrive pedal on his touring ‘board. “It seems to work really good with a 335. I tried the Zen Drive but for my ear, it was totally inappropriate playing the 335 through it. I seem to always be looking for the same tone – that sweet, singing distortion that’s not so driven that it’s not musical,” he concludes.

335, Alive And Well

One thing that hasn’t changed a lot, of course, is the hard-toured ’69 ES-335 that Larry has used on most of his recordings. As it hasn’t broken, Larry hasn’t fixed it – beyond a switch to a different bridge and Schaller machineheads.

“Obviously, over the last 35 years or something it’s had a number of fret jobs or level and dress,” Carlton says. “It came with normal Gibson frets and over the years, I’ve

gone through the process of trying Dunlop frets that were very big and very high but now I’ve switched back to whatever the normal Gibson fretwire is for a 335. Other than that, it has that graphite nut that we put on back in the 80s and it originally came with the trapeze tailpiece. But I don’t know that I’ve ever changed the pickups.”

As showtime draws near, we wind things up talking about the high standard of technical ability among players coming up not through gig venues but on YouTube and elsewhere. What does Carlton, whose playing blends feel with technical elan beautifully, think about the outrageous displays of technique that even a casual browse of the internet can yield? “I think it should just be part of the process but not

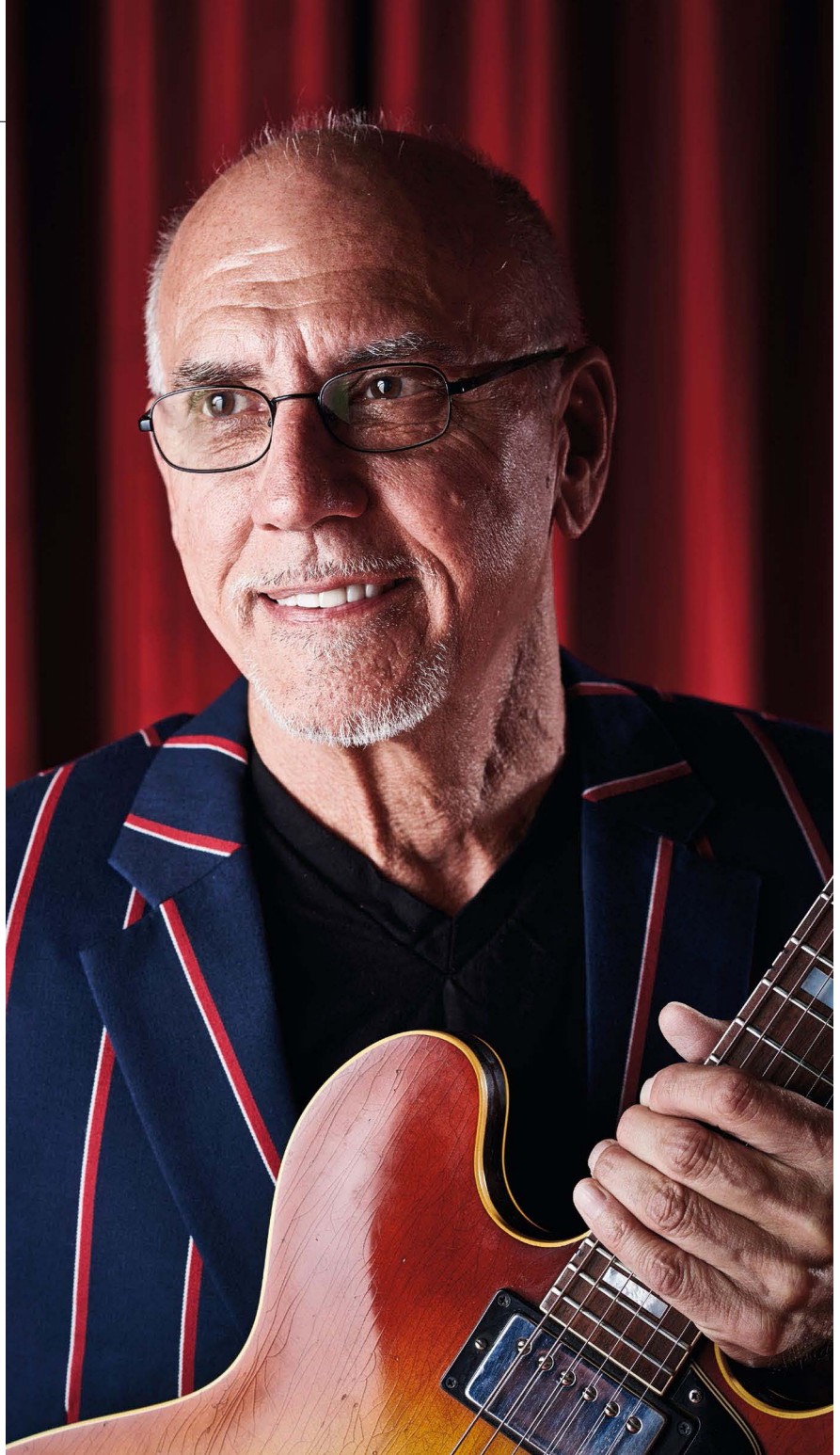
the end result,” he reflects. “As a young musician, and you could be 35 years old and only playing the guitar 15 years... to me, you are still a young musician. There is going to be a season, I think, in every guitarist’s progress where it is just fun to play fast because you can. But it shouldn’t be, in my opinion, the end result.”

Better to have it and not need it?

“It was fun,” he concedes, with a grin. “To get to where you could play really fast. It was fun.” 🎸

Larry Carlton is currently on a worldwide tour and will return to play numerous dates in Europe from this October. See his website for details.

www.larrycarlton.com



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Justin Time!

We chew the fat with The Darkness's Justin Hawkins and hear all about the band's new album, his love for Marshall stacks and the downsides of taking barbarians on the road

Words Matt Frost Photography Will Ireland

When we hook up with Justin Hawkins – The Darkness's ever-eccentrically attired front man – at Gibson Guitars in London's Oxford Circus, we find him in characteristically effusive mood. During our photo shoot, he bounces around the studio space pulling absurd poses. One second he's doing the splits with a single eyebrow raised, *à la* Roger Moore, the next wielding a Flying V like a cricket bat. Despite admitting he's shattered, the man is seemingly all energy.

As our interview begins, however, Justin's innate sensitivity, self-awareness and heartfelt passion all come to the fore. It's a few weeks before the release of The Darkness's fourth album, *Last Of Our Kind*, and Hawkins couldn't be prouder of the results. The impressive long player was produced by Justin's brother and Darkness co-guitarist Dan at his own Leeders Farm studio in Norfolk, which has now sadly closed its doors.

Aside from the new record, Hawkins has other reasons to be in an upbeat frame of mind. The night before our chat saw the band rock a small crowd in the same building, Gibson's London HQ, that we are currently camped out in. Not only did The Darkness have a selection of barbarians onstage with them for the performance (their new single is called *Barbarian*, so you can see what they did there), but the gig also marked the debut of their new drummer Rufus, son of Queen's Roger Taylor. Exciting times all round...

How do you feel about *Last Of Our Kind* now it's all finished and mixed?

"I'm quite realistic about albums. I wouldn't have been able to say that I was really proud of the last one [*Hot Cakes*, 2012], but I think the last one did a job. We had to get something out in a timely fashion because we had some live opportunities that we couldn't turn down. As far as I'm concerned, this is the proper comeback. We've taken another year away to really concentrate on having the strongest material that we could have and for the first time – possibly ever – we're all 100 per cent proud of every song on this album. It's the one Darkness album that I still enjoy listening to. I still work out to it. All the others, including the first one, it was like, 'Once it's done, it's done.' You move on and never listen to them again. Recently, I was sat in the car and something from *Permission To Land* [2003] came on the radio and I didn't even recognise it. There were all these harmonies and I thought, 'I don't even remember recording those!' But with this one, I just haven't stopped listening to it. I think it's a very good body of work and I'm very proud of it."

Did the band have a particular concept for the album?

"It was more that we wanted to feel unanimously proud of what we'd done for once! We wanted to make something that we could honestly say was a valuable part of our legacy. But, when it comes to the music, I think Dan wanted there to be more riffs in it. I also think that Dan and

I have increasingly established what our roles are as guitar players. In the olden days, there were certain times when I might have wanted to have a solo and he wanted to have a solo and so then we'd argue about who was doing the solo. If anything, it's the other way round now. It's like we know what we do now in an 'Oedipus know thyself'-type way. We've finally unlocked the mysteries of our roles and we know who's supposed to do what and it's very instinctive."

And how would you define those differences in your roles as guitarists?

"Well, if there's a song that requires a sort of a filthy edge-of-the-seat rock 'n' roll solo that doesn't adhere to traditional scales and is just a guy expressing himself, then that's Dan. If it's a solo that is perhaps a bit more technical or maybe it's got some faster work in it, then it's me. If it's a solo that's more like Lindsey Buckingham or something like that, it's Dan. If it's an Angus-y thing, it's me. If it's a Brian-y thing, it's me and if it's a Thin Lizzy thing, it's Dan."

"We're just much better at working out what each song needs. For example, there's a song on the album called *Sarah O'Sarah* and it's got this ludicrous sort of LA 1980s thing at the top of it, but then, after that, there's mandolins and it almost becomes a Fleetwood Mac-y song... but without that sort of LA lead guitar stuff at the top of each verse, it would be a bit too much, so we pulled it back in the most uncool way you can. That is a Darkness thing, really. If something's sounding too much like we're



climbing up our own arses, then the best way out is an electric guitar solo. That's a Darkness trick isn't it, I suppose?"

Are all of your guitar solos spur-of-the-moment things?

"Well, they're all improvised to the point where I sort of stumble on something and then Dan goes, 'Yeah, do that!' and it's like, 'Okay, I'll do that... what was it again?' Then I have to try and remember what it was. Some of it is a bit contrived. When we do a demo, we usually just leave the solo section blank and you don't even think about it for months. Then it comes to the album recording and that's when you actually write the solos."

Which amps did you and Dan plug into during the sessions?

"For me, it was all Marshall, but my brother experimented a lot with different stuff because he's got to do a lot more of the textures. My role in the recording process is just to make sure the solos kick ass! Dan has got a Gibson combo that he really likes for some things because it's very small and has

a certain bark to it. I think he's got a Fender Twin and some Wizard amps, and all kinds of stuff really... but I'm a Les Paul into a Marshall guy almost every time!"

Did any effects go into the mix?

"With Dan, on *Mighty Wings* there's some sort of synthesizer intro but it's not a keyboard. It's a Line 6 POD with a special patch on there that turns guitars into Giorgio Moroder synthesizers. Dan was much more involved in the sort of pastoral colours and all those tones whereas I'm 'notes guy'. I did use an old Tube Screamer for solos, though."

Dan produced the record at his old studio, Leeders Farm. How does it feel having him as producer?

"Well, we wanted him to do it. We were doing the demos and were just really enjoying the process of recording them. He's got the experience, too. We have done it before. On the first album, Dan was sort of co-producing, but it interfered with the band relationships a little bit and made things strained between Dan and the band,

Taming The Beast

Justin on how to wring the most from Marshall stacks...

"When I first started playing, I used combos because I couldn't afford stacks, but I used to look longingly at them through the music shop windows in Lowestoft! I've actually only recently got back into the Marshall stacks and now I'm playing the Mark II Super Leads. I actually have two so I'm living my childhood dream now... in stereo!"

"Going back, I didn't want a Marshall stack because of the guitarists that used them, actually, although I am aware that everybody that I like plays through them, or at least pretends to! It's partly because they're so iconic, isn't it? It's just a brilliant colour scheme, a really great design and even if the cat's pissed on the grille at the front, it'll still look cool! Whether it's beaten up or brand new, it's something that you always enjoy looking at."

"Marshall stacks have a much more precise sound than anything else I've used. And I think you have to become a better player to justify owning one. They don't do any of the work for you. They just present a very honest interpretation of what you're doing. They don't saturate in a way that conceals shortcomings so you're very much exposed and it makes you play harder, it makes you more involved in your playing... and they're fucking loud!"

"There was a trend actually to have all the amps underneath the stage and then have fake [stacks] on the stage with in-ear monitoring but, in my opinion, that's cheating. I think part of the glory of the Marshall stack is to stand in front of it and control it and be master of it. It's like a Siegfried & Roy thing [lion-taming American magicians], because a stack is just an untameable beast. I think the most impressive thing about people who use them is that you know not everybody can. You aspire to be one of those players because until you are, you really shouldn't have one!"

"For anyone buying a stack, I would say get some sort of power soak like an old Power Brake. Power soaks are really good because you can have everything as cranked up as it would normally be but instead of sort of destroying buildings, you can actually manage it incrementally. There isn't another sound like it in the world so you really need to have it cranked up. Either invest in ear defenders or get a power soak of some sort!"

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Justin's a Les Paul man through and through, but he can occasionally be tempted to pick up one of Gibson's other rock 'n' roll classics

Casino Royale

Justin is rarely seen without his favoured white Les Paul Custom, but during the *Last Of Our Kind* sessions, he grabbed a semi for one particular song....

"On one of the tracks, I played a '64 Epiphone Casino, which belongs to Dan. I used it because it just had this particularly good rhythm sound for this thing that ended up being a bonus track. I'm not sure why I picked it up in the first place. Maybe I just liked the colour of it or something. I'm not really sure that there was any rational reason, but I think I picked it up when we were doing the run-throughs and it had a certain twang to it. Rather than fiddle with the amps and try and make the Les Paul sound like that, I thought I'd just play that on the track. But everything else – all the other solos and everything – were the white Les Paul Custom, my usual one I always play."

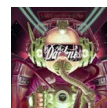
"If something's sounding too much like we're climbing up our own arses, then the best way out is an electric guitar solo. That's a Darkness trick isn't it, I suppose?"

you know. I think now Dan's able to wear the two different hats in a more effective way, really, and the results are that you end up with a warmer-sounding record. I don't know whether it's because there's less nerves or less tension, but it feels like you're able to sort of express yourself a bit more freely when you really know the person. In some circumstances, we've played

really well in front of a producer but we're doing that to impress the producer. Really, you should just be trying to make the best record you can and the performance should be coming out of a love for the music as opposed to a desire to impress. With Dan, I think we're able to achieve that a little bit more."

The Darkness are going to be touring the UK with the Blast Of Our Kind tour this winter – are the barbarians going to be joining you on the bus?

"Well, we're looking at the live shows at the moment, but I think [the barbarians] were just a one-off thing really. We can't afford to keep them on the road, because they just eat and pillage, and then you just end up picking up the pieces all the time. Throwing chicken bones over their shoulders and stuff? We don't want that on the tour bus!" **©**



The Darkness' new album, *Last Of Our Kind*, is available now.

thedarkness.co.uk



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LOUD & PROUD

Five decades have passed since Jim Marshall created the iconic Marshall stack, and with it a thunderous legacy of British tone that lent Eric Clapton's Cream-era playing its barbed, unfettered power and later put the steel into heavy metal. Although the earliest Marshall heads owed a significant debt to Leo Fender's Bassman, the innovations and evolutions Jim made soon transformed Marshall into an utterly unique voice in rock. Here, we commemorate not just five decades of the towering, twin-cabinet stack but the technical evolution of the Marshall head, from the JTM45 to hot-rodded heads tweaked to summon yet more tonal sorcery from those brooding black towers. Finally, in a masterclass tutorial, we celebrate the greatest Marshall players by putting their soloing secrets in your hands

Words Jamie Dickson **Photography** Adam Gasson



TOWERS OF POWER

Guitarist talks to Marshall's head of heritage and archive, Phil Wells, about the background to the birth and the early days of the iconic 100-watt stack...

Words David Mead Portrait Neil Zlozower

Time-travel back to the early 1960s and the choice of amplifier for the up and coming rock 'n' roll guitarist was not in any way as extensive as it is today. Recognising that an expensive import was practically the only choice for a player looking to emulate the gain-laden sounds on LPs from the USA, Jim Marshall set up his own manufacturing business. The rest, as they say, is history.

And if you want to go poking around the company's archives in search of the story of how the stack came to rule the world, there's no better person to ask than Phil Wells, head of Marshall's heritage and archive...

THE AMPS

What were the first moves towards making the 100-watt head?

PHIL WELLS: "When Jim started in 1962 he was producing one amplifier, which we now know as the JTM45. When you went in to see him you told him what you wanted it for – lead, organ or PA – and we'd make it accordingly. It wasn't until probably '66 or '67 that Pete Townshend and Hendrix turned around and said that the JTM45 was okay, but there just wasn't enough of it! They wanted more power and so we came up with the idea of basically strapping two JTM45s together, which is effectively what the first 100-watt was. One mains transformer but two JTM45 output transformers, so it actually didn't give you 100 watts; on a good day, you'd get 80 to 85 watts out of it. But, saying that, it was more

than twice the volume of a JTM45 and so that was great, because it was what people wanted. The first prototypes were around late '66 or early '67 – that's as close as we can get – it's very difficult to date that sort of thing – but it was around that time.

"That ran for probably about a year because, at the time, we couldn't get hold of the right output transformers – there just wasn't stock. So Jim found a company who could make the transformers for us, and in 1968 we started making a true 100-watt amplifier, which used a 100-watt mains transformer, a 100-watt output transformer and four EL34s giving you 100 watts RMS."

The supply of valves back then could be pretty hit and miss, couldn't it?

PW: "Originally, the first amplifiers we made had KT66s or KT88s in. It wasn't until the advent of the 100-watt head that we went over to using EL34s exclusively. The KT66 was used in the first 100-watt, but it didn't really cut it as far as the sound was concerned and so it was one of the things that was changed. Plus, it became easier to get EL34s; at first it was easy to get hold of KT66s and harder to get good quality EL34s, so we just didn't use them initially."

Who was it that road-tested those first prototype models?

PW: "Unfortunately, that information has been lost over the years. But certainly people like Pete Townshend, Hendrix and probably Clapton had them. I've been reliably informed by Jim that Townshend and Hendrix used them as prototypes and, from what Jim told me, Pete Townshend

loved them because they gave him that extra bit of grunt and they were very quickly taken up by most people who were playing heavy rock at that time."

THE 4X12 CABINETS

Nothing says 'rock' louder than a backline of Marshall 4x12 speaker cabinets. But even here, there were a few changes before the final design was settled upon...

PW: "Initially, the first cabinets we made were column speakers – still 4x12s, but the speakers were stacked on top of one another as opposed to side by side and they lasted for the first year or so. The first official 4x12s were different to what we make now, too. Instead of being in a square, the speakers were offset in that the two at the top were slightly to the left and the cabinet was wider, but lower. It was just the way we made them. There was never any technical reason for the 4x12 as such. Jim came up with the basic idea and the cabinet that we now associate with the 4x12 was conceived around the end of '64. Initially, it came with 15-watt speakers, so it was literally just a 60-watt cabinet, running a JTM45. It was designed for either lead or bass, so it wasn't what you would class now as being just a 'lead' cabinet, it was designed to run just about anything. In '65 we just uprated the speakers because we were getting slightly more output from the amps as we were prototyping an amplifier without a GZ34 rectifier valve. So instead of getting a 30-watt output, you were getting closer to 45 watts. It wasn't until the advent



of the 100-watt head, which was around '67 or '68, that the 4x12s jumped from 75 watts to 100 watts almost immediately."

What about the legendary 8x12 cabinet – was this ever a reality?

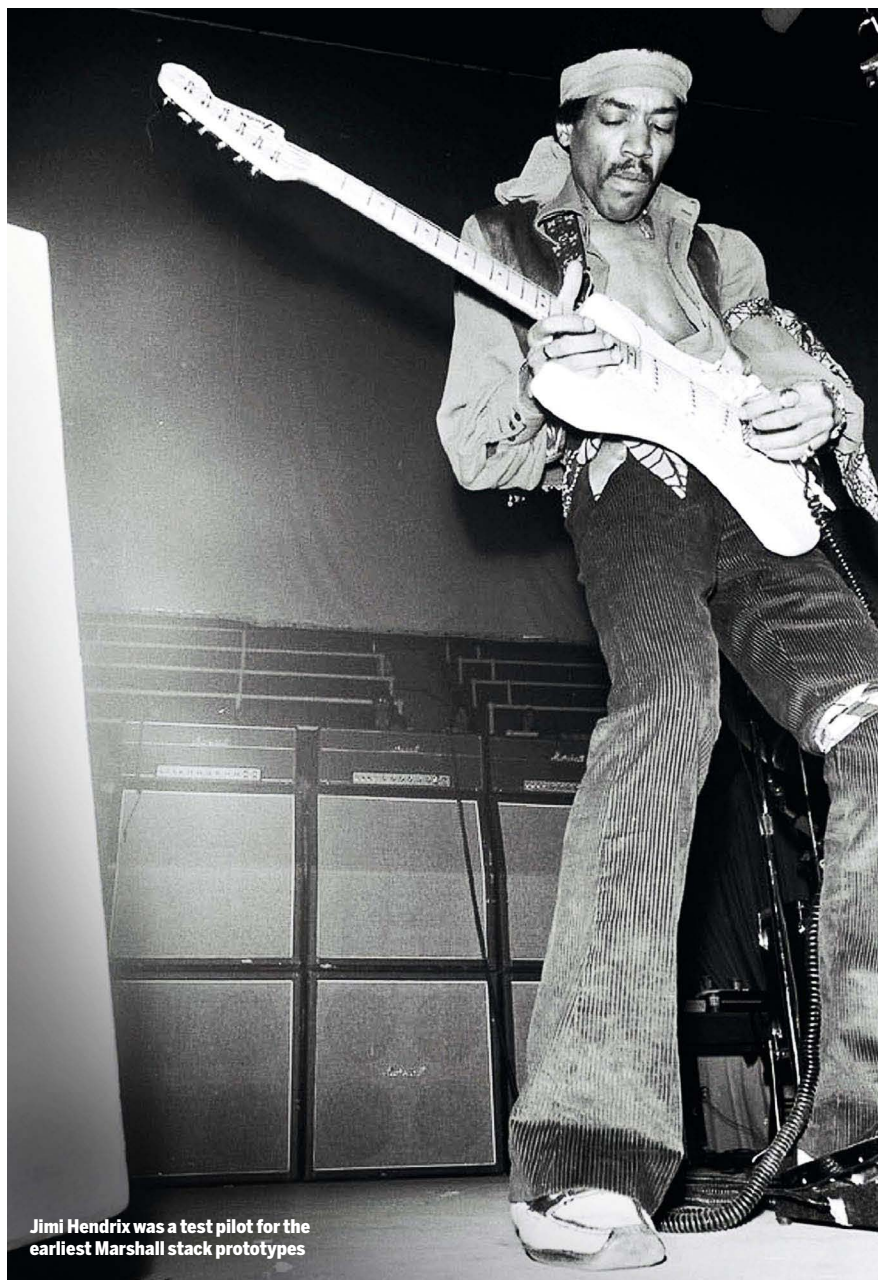
PW: "The reason why people like The Who wanted an 8x12 was because a 100-watt head couldn't be used with one cabinet. So that's when, as legend would have it, we made the 8x12, which I think never went into production as such. To my knowledge, only around eight or 10 were ever manufactured. People quickly realised that you couldn't carry them; the average person is around five foot eight to six foot and so the handle had to be low to accommodate being picked up, otherwise your arm would be permanently bent and you wouldn't have any strength in it. By having it too low, the actual handle worked out as being roughly in line with the second row of speakers, so there were two rows of speakers above you. So it would either tip backwards or tip forwards – and that's why the stack was born."

What about the angled top cabinet – where did that idea come from?

PW: "Jim came up with the idea of a full stack with the top cabinet angled, whereas the first 4x12 cabinets that we made were what we would class as 'B' cabinets – straight fronted because they were easy to make. People ask if the slanted cabinet was done to increase the spread of the sound, but initially, Jim did it because it looked nice – and I got that straight from him. I was talking to him about it and the angled cabinet on the 4x12 was done so that when you put the head on top, it didn't just look like it was stuck on top; the angle made it look like the head was part of it. As it happened, when you played through it, because the top was angled back, the sound was pushed over the top of the audience and gave a bigger spread. Purely coincidental."

So you needed two cabs to run a 100-watt amp, initially?

PW: "That was the reason we made an 'A' and a 'B' cabinet, because basically we brought out the 100-watt head and you needed a full stack; you couldn't use one cabinet at the time, you had to use two. From 1965 until 1970 they were classed as 75-watt cabinets – the speakers were actually 20 watts each, but for some reason we called it a 75-watt cabinet. In 1970, it went up to 100 watts because that's when we started to use the 25-watt Greenback that everyone still associates with the amplifier. That lasted until '79 because we were making more powerful amplifiers by then – 200-watt heads – and people wanted



Jimi Hendrix was a test pilot for the earliest Marshall stack prototypes

© TS/NESTOR USA/REX

a half stack as opposed to a full stack, so we brought out a 250-watt cabinet."

So when did it become possible to run a half stack?

PW: "When we started doing the 100-watt heads, there was the standard 1960 75 watts, but then we brought out the 1982, which looked exactly the same, although it was actually 100 watts. Physically, to look at they were identical, but they just had more powerful speakers fitted. In the late 60s, when the 100-watt head started to sell, we were producing the 1960 and the 1982, so if you went to a dealer and you wanted a 100-watt head but you only wanted one cabinet, you bought the 1982, because that was capable of running a 100-watt head. If you wanted a half stack with a 50-watt head you bought a 1960, and if you wanted two cabs with a 100-watt [head] you could buy a 1960 full stack."

Was the 100-watt stack an instant hit with musicians of the time?

PW: "It was popular with people like Townshend and Hendrix, but it wasn't immediately taken up by your average man in the street because it was too big. Up until the early 70s, the column speakers were still popular and when the 4x12s first came out, the column speakers were selling more, especially the 2x12 version, because they were easy to cart about. Back in the 60s, unless you had something like an old Bedford van or a Transit or whatever, the problem with the 4x12 was that it wouldn't have gone in the average car very easily, whereas you could stick two column speakers on the back seat and go off to the gig. So the stack didn't exactly burst on to the scene unless you were in a major rock band and had the roadies and transport to take them. Other people were a bit wary, but it soon fell into place." 

MILESTONE MARSHALLS

What Jim Marshall started with the JTM45 rapidly evolved into a family of classic amps with their own, commanding voice. Here's our pick of epochal Marshall heads

Words Nick Guppy



JTM45

Created by Jim Marshall and backroom boys Ken Bran and Dudley Craven in 1962, the very earliest JTM45 made rather less than 45 watts of clean output and had an off-centre aluminium control plate. By '65, they had changed to a gold Plexiglass panel, with the script logo following by '66.



SUPER LEAD 1959

Dating back to 1965, the original Super Lead 'Plexi' is the amp behind some of rock's greatest guitar moments. Page, Hendrix, Clapton, Kossoff, Van Halen, Young, Gibbons...the list stretches on. Originally introduced in 1965 with KT66s, and changed to four EL34s in 1967.



Major 200-watt

Released in 1967 as the '200', the rare Major delivered 200 watts from four KT88 valves. Early models had active EQ, revised to the standard passive network later. The Major's most famous user is Ritchie Blackmore; a modified version was key to his tones on Deep Purple 70s albums.



2203 Master Volume

Introduced in 1975, the 100-watt 2203 presented the master volume concept. With two inputs instead of four, and large rocker switches, the early 2203's were among the best early Marshalls, with much of the sweeter, more transparent tone of the JTM45 and 1959 models.



JCM800 2205 Dual Channel

Introduced in 1982, the 2205 featured split channels and reverb. It was also one of the first to feature the infamous diode clipping circuit that added extra overdrive grind. This amp, along with the earlier JCM800 Lead head, typifies the brutal 80s rock sound that kick-started the NWOBHM.



2555 Silver Jubilee

The Silver Jubilee amps were made in 1987 to celebrate 25 years of Marshall amp production and Jim Marshall's 50th year in the business. Pentode/Triode switching reduced the output by half, and it also had a dual-voiced rhythm channel. Slash was among its many devotees.



Dual Super Lead 100

Introduced in 1997 as the big-hitter of Marshall's JCM2000 Series, the twin-channel DSL100 married the high-gain performance of the earlier JCM900 Series to a classic palette of Marshall tones, via its Classic Gain (Super Lead-like) and Ultra Gain (JCM800 and beyond) channels.



JVM410H

Introduced in 2007, the current Marshall flagship has no less than four channels, each with three modes, MIDI control, silent recording and much more. In some ways it harks back to earlier models: despite the addition of a digital reverb, the main signal path is all-valve, with no LED clipping.

WAKING THE BABY

The JTM45 was first-born of the Marshall breed and the earliest examples of this amp, featuring an Art Deco-style 'Coffin' logo, are very scarce. So when vintage-amp restoration specialist Neil Perry was tasked with restoring a long-dormant '64 example to life, he had to tread very carefully indeed. Join us as *Guitarist* puts all his hard work to the test by cranking this fully fettled vintage beauty all the way up

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Adam Gasson

It's the kind of find we all dream about: a historic vintage amp, bought in the years before such things became sought-after, that has been quietly dwelling in a cupboard for years and has now come to light once again, in time-machine condition.

The 1964 Marshall JTM45 MkII we're looking at hails from an era when music was on the brink of a revolution. It was built only months after The Beatles released their debut studio album, *Please Please Me*. Two more years would pass before Eric Clapton recorded the 'Beano' album with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, while Hendrix's Woodstock performance was still half a decade away. And while its quaint Art Deco 'Coffin' badge harked back to the swing bands of the 1930s, the sounds it was capable of generating ushered in a very different era of music: that of blisteringly powerful blues and rock, delivered at volumes that you could feel in your bones as much as hear.

The JTM45 was, undeniably, heavily based on Leo Fender's 5F6-A Bassman. But the use of British KT66 output valves in place of the Bassman's 6L6s (5881s were also used), plus differences in the spec of preamp valves (ECC83s in place of 12AT7 and 12AY7s), transformers, caps and, of course, cabinets make Jim Marshall's baby a very different amp.

This particular example returned to the light of day when its owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, brought it into Vintage & Rare Guitars in Bath to see if it was worth

putting on sale. Rod Brakes, the shop's proprietor, takes up the story:

"The owner originally bought the amp when they weren't worth very much," Rod explains. "I don't think he was the first owner but he bought it fairly early on. And it was just one of those classic stories: he'd used it and gigged it and he also had a '62 ES-335 with PAFs and all the rest of it. But unfortunately, he can't play any more and he's getting on a bit, so he phoned up and said, 'Can you help me with this at all?'"

Rod told the owner that early JTM45s were now highly sought after. "It's very unusual to see those amps – they're almost more few and far between than a lot of vintage guitars," Rod comments. "And it's even more unusual to find them in a state where you can play them."

FIRING BLANKS

Despite its promising condition, the amp hadn't been fired up for many years and, without a careful inspection, there was a real risk an ageing component might blow – including the original RS Transformers that are so important to the amp's sound and feel. So it was crucial to ensure that the amp was in sound condition, electronically, before powering it up. Enter Neil Perry of Raw State, who specialises in restoring vintage amps to working condition. Neil counts the likes of Adrian Utley from Portishead among the star guitarists who entrust their old amps to his care and so he

was the perfect person to undertake the painstaking inspection that would tell the amp's owner whether it could even be safely switched on.

"It hadn't run for quite a while," Neil recalls, "so the first thing you want to do is make sure you're not going to blow it up just by turning it on, which is the easiest thing in the world to do with any old amp, or any old piece of machinery. For example, if you had a beautiful old Ferrari, you wouldn't just get in and try and start it up and drive off because you'd probably wreck it.

"So, instead, you build the old capacitors up again with a slow trickle of voltage to make sure that everything's okay. Then you test each component, to make sure that they're not so far out [from their original performance envelope] that they're just going to pop – because obviously if you blew an output transformer or something then that would be serious. After that, you check the valves and clean every contact. Then you've got a chance of firing the amp up safely."

It was quickly apparent that Neil's caution was justified, as the amp's dormant years had taken a toll on some of its parts.

"The switches, for instance, were completely useless," Neil says. "They didn't actually switch. So we just soaked them overnight with a little bit of contact treatment oil, so they'd actually work. Also, the output valves were old but they didn't really match. Both were Marconis but they're not from the same year and don't even represent the same version of the



“When I got the amp going it had this huge amount of gain on the mid control – absolutely bonkers – and then nothing at all on the top and bottom!”

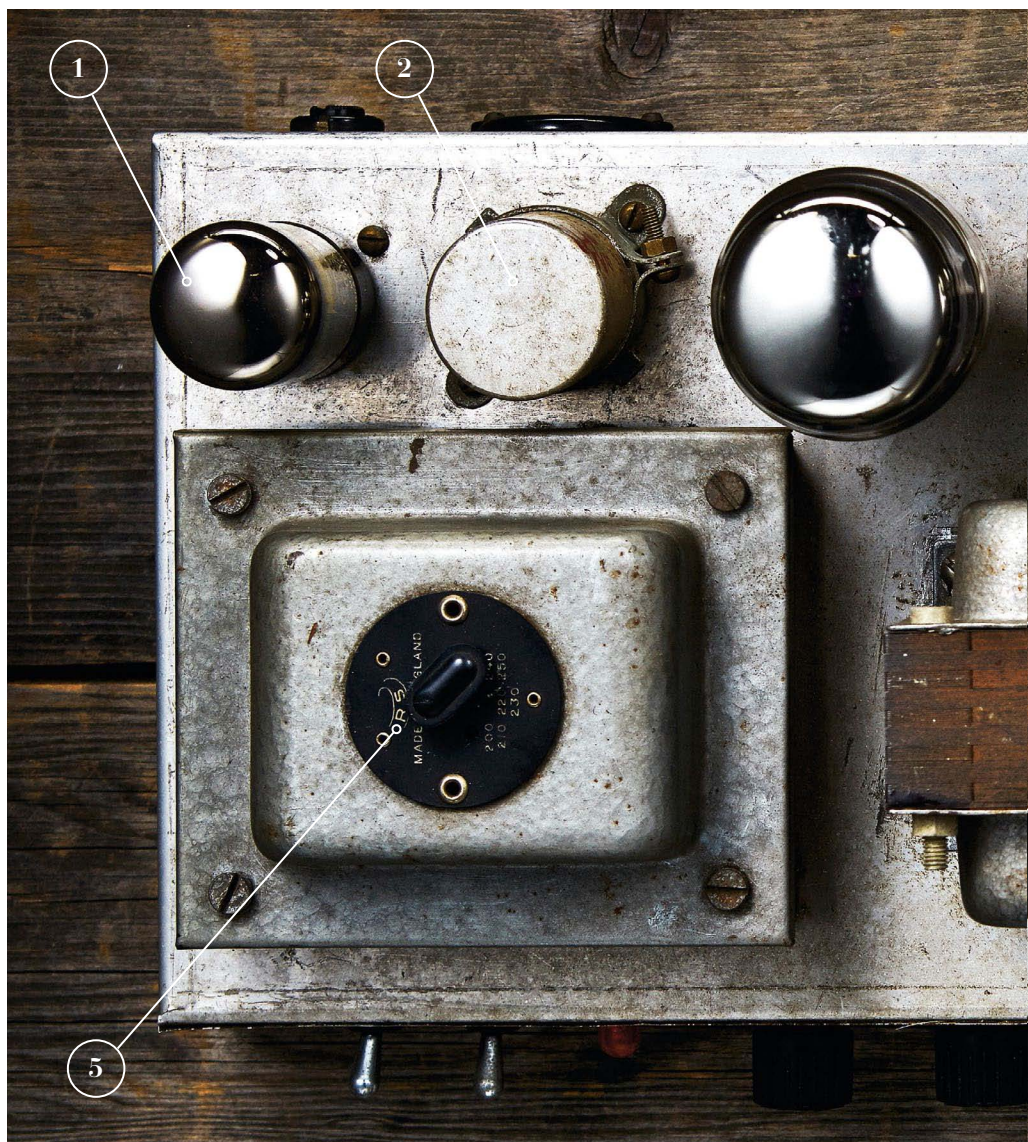
KT66. And, in fact, they mismatched quite badly, so they wouldn't really do the amp any favours tone-wise. Possibly one was original, and one added later – but you just don't know. So that's why we're running on some Genelecs now, although we kept the originals.”

Overall, however, the amp – a Second Series JTM45 with aluminium panel and Vynair white cloth front – was in remarkably good, near-complete original condition. Neil replaced a couple of iffy resistors with era-appropriate NOS replacements, carefully balancing practicality with the need to keep the character of the amp as original as possible. When working on vintage amps, this involves a careful assessment of whether to replace parts that are functioning safely but not necessarily to ‘textbook’ values.

“Things ‘drift’ over time – but sometimes the effect of that drift can sound cool,” Neil says. “So when you work on an amp, sometimes you don't actually want to lose that amazing thing that's happened. So you've got to be careful.

“Nonetheless, when parts are on the brink of failure, prudence dictates that they're replaced before they blow and cause catastrophic damage to other parts of the amp,” he adds.

“I had another Marshall in for repair where the output valves were completely wrecked,” Neil recalls. “And I thought it was strange because the guy who owned it didn't use it *that* much anymore. And what had happened was that all the components in the bias section had drifted right off spec, so the valves were running really, really hot. So if you'd left that much longer they might have just popped and then you'd risk losing your output transformer and that's a big problem. So if you just change those few resistors for a few pence, your amp will be fine.”



1 Rectifier valve

“This is the rectifier valve, a GZ34,” Neil Perry explains. “So that's converting alternating current power from the wall supply to DC or direct current power. And that's important from the point of view of how the amp responds – the amount of compression and sag it has.”

2 ‘Smoothing’ capacitor

“This capacitor is designed to get rid of the jagged waveform that comes out of the rectifier. It comes out as a big triangular waveform and so this cap starts to clean it up. It's a reservoir of charge and works in conjunction with the inductor [7] further down the amp to become a filter as well. On these early amps, these will be quite small

and that again really affects the way the amp feels, the way it reacts as much as the sound.”

3 Output valves

“These are KT66s, the output valves, which were later exchanged for the better-known EL34s in Marshall's amps. In a way, you could say the KT66 was the British counterpart of the American 6L6, and it's certainly more comparable to a 6L6 than an EL34. KT means ‘kinkless tetrode’, and any amp fitted with KT66s would have different harmonic distortion characteristics to one fitted with EL34s. Generally, you'd say 66s are harmonically richer.”

4 Preamp valves

“Moving on to the preamp valves, it's ECC83s all the way

down. The first valve in line is what you call the phase-splitter, which is the valve that would be splitting the signal to drive the KT66s. The next one along from that powers the EQ buffering and everything else. The next one is the first actual preamp valve, which is the main gain-forming valve.”

5 Power transformer

“This is where the mains come in and gets transformed into three sets of voltages: high voltage, which goes to the rectifier, while the rectifier itself has a five-volt heater, the bit that glows; and then you've got your 6.3-volt heaters for the preamp and power-amp stuff.”

6 Output transformer

“This is an RS Deluxe output transformer.

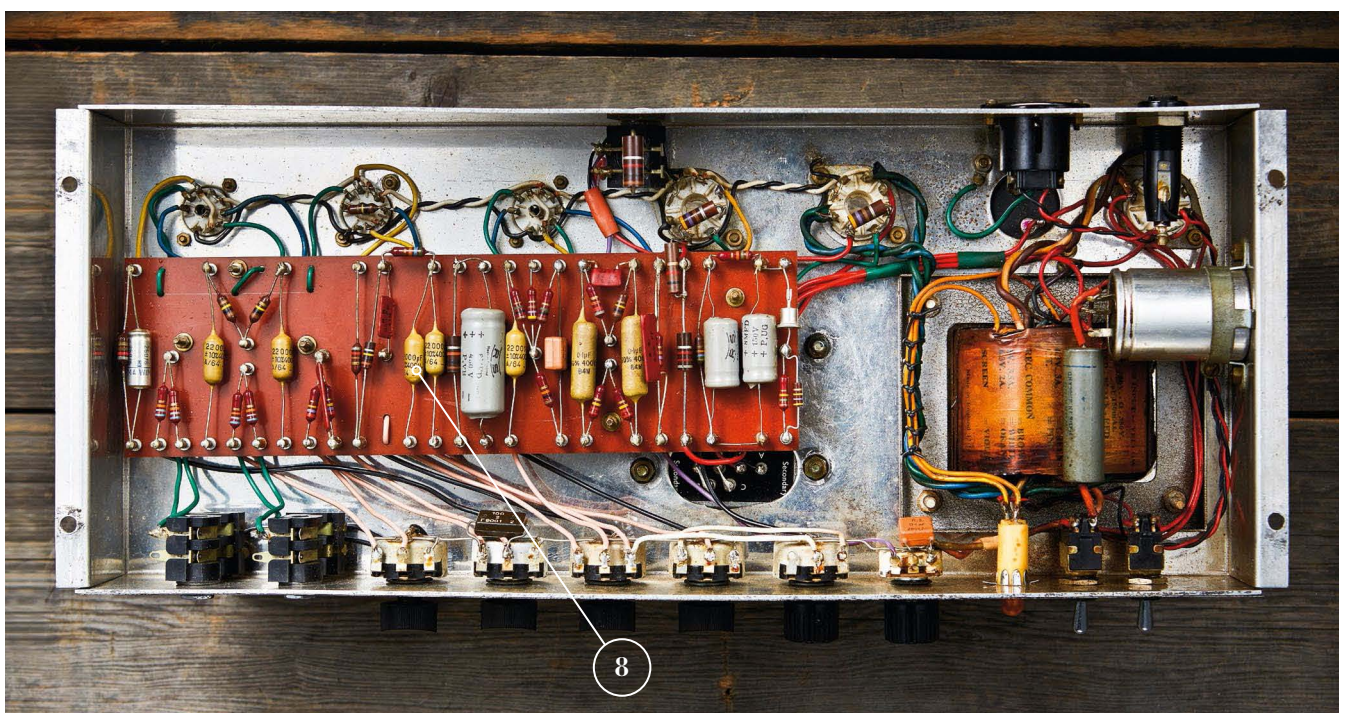
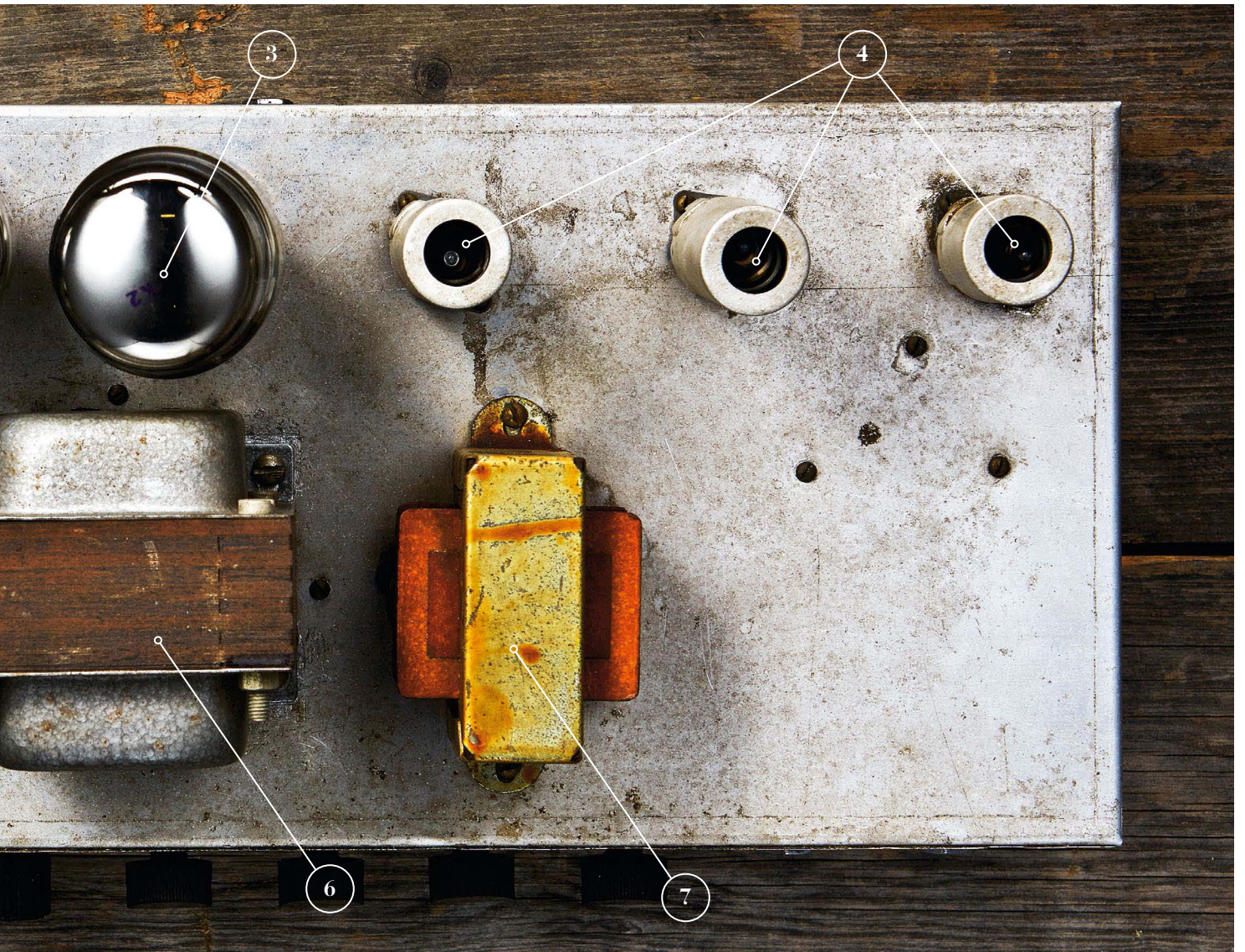
These were used from the very early Marshall amps and also early Vox and Wallace amps, as well. This handles the signal from the big output valves, very high voltages and impedances on one side, and on the other [loudspeaker] side it's producing very low voltages to drive the speakers in the cabinet and so on.”

7 Inductor

“This is what we call an inductor – they used to call it a choke in the old days – and that works in conjunction with the smoothing capacitors to smooth the nasty waveform that comes out of the rectifier.”

8 Mustard caps

So-called ‘mustard’ capacitors fitted to the amp help date this amp to around early '64.



PUSHING THE LIMITS

Neil's job was made harder by the fact that some of the amp's quirkiest 'flaws' were probably built into it in when it was first assembled back in 1963, when manufacturing was less stringently controlled than it is today.

"The weirdest thing was the tone controls were fitted incorrectly, in back-to-front order," Neil recalls. "So the only thing that worked was the mid. When I got the amp going it had this huge amount of gain on the mid control – absolutely bonkers – and then nothing at all on the top and bottom. So you think, 'Am I missing the point?' But then I checked all the values again and eventually realised they were not in the right order. I'm pretty sure that was original – because I couldn't find any evidence of it having come apart. So this particular JTM45 has always been an amp that's had a huge mid-boost on it and nothing else!"

Likewise, although the swampily rich tone of the amp is a delight, some of its components are performing right at their design limits. "The output transformer is only rated at 30 watts," Neil says, "which is always a worry, because the amp is capable of doing 45 watts, obviously. But the fact it's a small transformer really influences the sound. You're not going to get the same amount of bottom end you'll get off later amps, and the output stage does distort a lot more on this kind of Marshall amp than on a later model. It's a more complex distortion – and in fact, the harmonic content of the amp is incredible." 

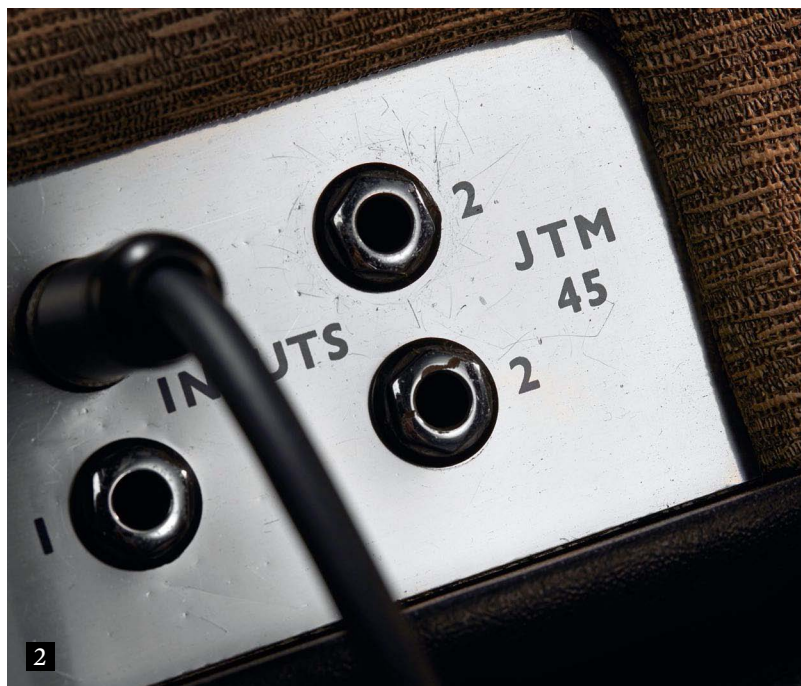
Guitarist would like to thank Vintage & Rare Guitars of Bath, where this amp is currently on sale, for its help in making this feature

1. An inscription on the back of the badge indicates it was made on Vittoria Street, Birmingham by funeral suppliers Butler, hence the moniker 'coffin badge' given to this style of badge

2. The quad of inputs are more widely spaced on this MkII JTM45 than on the very earliest examples

3. The pitched-top Bulgin knobs shown here are original, although this amp also sports some later, retro-fitted knobs

4. Crudely hand-etched 'Bass' probably indicates this left the Marshall line optimised for bass, not lead, although the spec difference is quite small



Mojo Machine

We crank up the newly restored JTM45 MkII to hear what this 50-year-old slice of rock history can do...

No matter how carefully a vintage amp is restored, the proof is in the playing. Luckily we had bluesman Innes Sibun, a former member of Robert Plant's band, along for the ride. Innes has just released a powerful new solo album of blues-rock, *Blues Transfusion*, and kindly agreed to act as our Les Paul-toting test pilot when we cranked up this newly refurbished slice of Marshall history to 'patent applied for' volume.

"It's down to the individual personality and character that they have," Innes said of the amp's vintage Marshall mystique. "And also just the mojo, the history... you look at that amp and you think, 'Wow, who's played through that? What records has that been on?'"

We plug in and with Neil Perry looking on like an anxious father, turn the volume up to the point where the amp is sounding loud and full-throated. Innes strums a chord or two, then embarks on a 20-minute solo blues jam with scarcely a break as he plays a medley of classic riffs and sections of pure improvisation.

And the sound? In a word, wonderful – but not what many people would associate with Marshall amps today. Swampy, grungy and rootsy, the bottom end is loose but gut-churningly powerful. The lower mids are all splintered, woody richness. This is a dark, bluesy mojo machine, to be sure. As the amp seems to be bearing up well, Rod Brakes bravely suggests dimming all the controls. With some trepidation we do so, and the result is not a dramatic increase in output but yet more layers of mudslide overdrive. This amp may be 50 years old but its sound is eternal.





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HOT RODDED

With shred pioneers such as Eddie Van Halen pushing amps to the brink in the late 70s, Paul Rivera began hot-rodding Marshall heads to squeeze ever more from them. Here, this now-revered amp maker recalls how he sought to make the “ultimate Marshall”

Words Nick Guppy Photography Neil Zlozower

Paul Rivera's career started in New York, but took off when he relocated to California in the early 1970s, working from a shop located over Valley Arts Guitars in North Hollywood on the edge of Studio City. While most of us in the UK remember him for his association with Fender, Rivera's custom work on Marshall amps and pedalboards is just as significant. *Guitarist* meets Paul for a rare interview in which he explains how he got into modifying amps and gives us a unique Californian perspective on the Marshall sound.

When did it all really start for you – was Valley Arts the beginning?

PAUL RIVERA SR: “At that time, Valley Arts was the epicentre of the whole LA studio scene. I didn't realise it back then, but it was a golden era for the guitar and guitar players. My work for those guys started with Dean Parks and he turned me on to Larry Carlton, who in turn introduced me to Jay Graydon, then Lee Ritenour. This was alongside some of the top jazz cats like Thom Rotella, Mitch Holder and, of course, the infamous Wrecking Crew, which included Dennis Budimir and Tommy Tedesco.”

What drove the amp-modification business for you back then?

PR: “Well, having gotten established at Valley Arts, pretty soon it seemed that if you showed up to a session and you didn't have a Princeton or a Deluxe or a Marshall

modified by Paul Rivera, you didn't have the latest thing. There was definitely an element of competition between some of those session guys to have the latest, coolest sounds, which kind of drove my modification business forward. I started doing pedalboards, too, because the pedalboards these guys were using were so primitive. Nobody knew about buffer stages and that stuff. I think, to some extent, I was mirroring what Pete Cornish was doing in the UK.”

What kinds of mods were players requesting, and how did you provide them?

PR: “I brought a lot of mods to the Marshall and did a lot of R&D on them, which led me to guys like [former Van Halen bassist] Michael Anthony and Eddie Van Halen in around 1979, where I did a lot of stuff on their effects racks. When Eddie did *Beat it* for Michael Jackson, he was using one of my modified Marshalls. Then came Steve Lukather, and Eric Johnson whose Marshall amp I worked on in 1980 and '81, which was at the very tail end of my stint at Valley Arts, just before I got hired by Fender.

“By this time, I had a range of different modifications, called Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4, leading up to my ‘ultimate Marshall’, which had true dual-channel switching and effects loops with bypasses. That was all done with silent optical switching and dual-concentric stacked control knobs on the front panel, which I did to save drilling extra holes and keep the appearance as stock as possible.

“On the sound front, some players were more articulate than others with regard to what they wanted. Jay Graydon was technically very articulate. He'd play me a note on his 335 and say, ‘You hear how it goes skinny up there? Can you put more body on that, and maybe do something to mask the fret noise?’ That's how things often got done.”

Was reliability an issue on some of those old amps?

PR: “To get some of the high-gain dual channel stuff, sometimes you'd wind up with six or seven tubes in a preamp that started with two, and if you didn't pay any attention to the power supply, reliability would suffer. So yes, at the extreme I would be replacing power supplies, adding regulated DC heater supplies and so on. Probably the finest and most reliable hand-wired amps I ever saw were the early Hiwatts. The lacing on the wires and the solder joints was just a delight to see. I don't think I ever made a hand-wired amp as pretty as a Hiwatt, but I always tried to make it as bulletproof. Reliability was always – and obviously still is – vital to my customers. Back then, if a session guy's amp went down halfway through a date, he would sacrifice his money and probably wouldn't get called the next time.”

How much did you experiment with loudspeakers and cabinets?

PR: “A lot. Loudspeakers are the ultimate mechanical filter. For guys who were going



Mod squad: Paul Rivera making his sought-after amp mods in the 80s

out on the road and needed the ultimate in reliability, we often used the Electro-Voice EVM12L, because if you have a 25-watt amp running into a 200-watt loudspeaker you know you aren't going to have a problem. The issue there was more about getting the cone moving. Those EVMs have very stiff cones and spiders. At low level, they were the coldest, least inspiring loudspeaker you ever heard, but turn them up and they were magical."

What do you think are the essential elements of the Marshall head-and-closed-back-cab sound?

PR: "Where Marshalls are concerned, the classic pre-1972/'73 1959 Marshall is basically a 4x10 Bassman circuit with a few tweaks. In around 1972 or '73, Marshall changed their transformer spec to get a little more reliability, because pre-change, with the power transformer at full whack, they probably exceeded the thermal capacity of the tubes they were using. In spite of that they certainly sounded fabulous, all the way up to where they exploded!

"From what I could see, there wasn't so much attention being paid to reliability on early 1959s, because those tubes were being pushed so hard. Mullard and Valvo EL34s can handle 600 or 700 volts on the plate, as long as the screen voltage is kept down, but it wasn't. I think on some amps there's a collision of different things that add up to a particular tone and response that's almost voodoo, and the early Marshall 1959 has that. Partly in the lower gain preamp, which results in the output stage providing some

of the drive, partly in the transformers, and, of course, the speakers and 4x12 cabinets."

What about some of the later amps, such as the JCM800?

PR: "The JCM800 was interesting, because it was a more modern take on that classic Marshall tone. I designed a lot of tweaks for it – nothing that would necessarily make it sound better, just different. 'Better' is a very subjective thing. I didn't find the JCM800 to be very consistent, but a lot of

•

"In Japan... you can go from Tokyo to Osaka and your amp will sound different"

•

that was down to the valves they used at the time. Also, Marshall tweaked the JCM800 several times over its lifespan, so they varied quite a bit coming from the factory.

"I fitted 'fat' switches and there was also some tailoring to the EQ in between gain stages, to smooth out the top end and tighten up the bass so it didn't sound so ratty or bloated. So a Les Paul with humbuckers wouldn't sound flabby, while a Strat could still sound fat with the pickups wound down to where you didn't get the magnets interfering with the strings. On a lot of old

Marshalls I would get them with the filter capacitors shot and then we'd work on the power supply to take a little bit more of the ripple out and that would assist in removing ghost notes from power chords and so on.

"Marshalls in the States sound different to the way they do in the UK, because of the difference in the mains frequency – it's not apparent when you play clean, but with distortion there are all kinds of intermodulation effects. In Japan, where half the country is on 50Hz and the other half is on 60Hz, you can go from Tokyo to Osaka and your amp will sound different."

What are your favourite Marshalls?

PR: "My favourites are the original 1959s and JTM45s before the early 1970s transformer changes. If you had good valves you could keep them working and they were so musical and they had a lot of magic. Unlike them, our amps have a lot of gain, but it's still about keeping them musically responsive so they do what a player asks them to do. I tend to think that Marshall somewhat bottle-necked themselves, because they had this concept of 'The Marshall Sound', which they continue to chase, but on the early amps it wasn't about that, it was their transparency and response that made them work so well. As guitar players we're all on a never-ending quest for great tone, and that's really what Rivera has always been about, helping players find a way to get closer to that sound they hear in their heads, whether it comes from a small combo or a 120-watt stack. Great tone is a universal truth for us all!" **G**

HEAD TO HEAD

Need to get some air moving? We take a look at nine muscular modern takes on the high-performance head that will shake you to the bone

Words Nick Guppy Photography Matt York



Hughes & Kettner
Puretone 25-watt head £1,699

The Puretone is a special amp. Known for complex, multi-function designs, H&K blew us away with this no-frills hand-wired monster powered by two EL34s. If you don't care for the illuminated Plexiglas front, our advice is to close your eyes and just listen. Sensational.



Marshall
JVM410H £1,799

Marshall's current flagship head is a four-channel, fire-breathing monster. In typical Marshall fashion, it's capable of wreaking sonic havoc; however, it's also capable of great subtlety, with the muscle to compete with any of the world's super amps at an attainable price.



Fargen *Olde 800 MkII*
50-watt head £1,999

Hard-as-nails old-school build quality and extreme attention to detail are the Fargen's trademarks, combined with a clever 'decade switch' feature that lets this amp emulate 60s, 70s and 80s Marshall-style voicings. It translates into superb JTM45-, JMP- and JCM-esque tones.



ENGL *Artist Edition*
E651 Limited Edition £999

A specially voiced version of Engl's regular 100-watter, developed from its Ritchie Blackmore signature model combining two channels of tone for a revelatory modern-rock experience. This was the last amp to be used by the late Gary Moore; definitely one for the collectors.



Mesa/Boogie *Dual Rectifier*
100-watt head £2,361

Nearly 20 years on from its introduction, the Dual Rec remains one of the ultimate modern rock heads. It spawned a new genre of rock, which went on to become modern metal. It's also capable of surprising tonal range that makes it a capable choice for blues and country, too.



Riviera *Knucklehead Reverb*
100-watt head £1,499

The current Riviera flagship has three channels and a host of functions all aimed at squeezing out every last ounce of tone and sustain. Aimed at the top of the pro market, users include Steve Lukather, Mick Thomson and David Rhodes. The Knucklehead is staggering value.



Orange *Rockerverb*
Mk III 100-watt head £1,499

The recently unveiled Mk III version of the Rockerverb has a built-in attenuator circuit as well as a choice of output settings from 100, 70, 50 to 30 watts, which makes it easy to get the classic Orange Brit rock tone at any volume. The clean channel has also been re-voiced for more 'chime'.



Blackstar *Artisan 100*
Hand Wired head £1,129

The Artisan 100 is a hand-wired 100-watt monster inspired by the classic Marshall Super Lead design, with burgundy vinyl covering and some clever twists. Plexi tone that can sound vintage or modern, the Artisan's superior build quality makes it exceptional value for money.



Magnetone
Super 59 head £2,499

The revived Magnetone brand impressed us greatly with this superbly built and finished Plexi tribute head, which features the classic Magnetone frequency modulation vibrato effect. Designed with input from Billy Gibbons, the Super 59 offers superlative tone – but at a price.

MARSHALL MASTERS

No survey of the Marshall stack's five-decade reign would be complete without honouring the players who have made them howl like fallen angels. Here, we present 11 essential licks in the style of 11 masters of the big black box

Words Adrian Clark

The licks we've presented here trace the development of rock technique in the hands of key players as it developed in step with the ever-increasing shovelfuls of gain available from Marshall's ever-evolving amps. Certainly, there are many more legendary guitarists we could have included – Angus Young and Zakk Wylde come to mind – but getting these licks under your

fingers will help you master the principles of getting air moving while retaining articulation, feel and speed. And while unleashing what guitarist Joel O'Keeffe of Airbourne called "the Marshall wind" is a rite-of-passage experience for any guitarist, any decent high-gain head and closed-back cab will do the trick for getting to grips with the full girth and grunt of these examples, so plug in, turn on and rock out.

EX1 JIMI HENDRIX



You can't talk about Marshall stacks without mentioning the man who did more work stress-testing them than most Marshall employees! This lick uses E minor pentatonic (E G A B D) and there are a couple of things to listen out for. Push the G to A bend (bar 3) a bit sharp, almost to the B $\flat$. Then, while holding that last B-string bend in bar 4, catch the G string under your finger and release it.

EX1 JIMI HENDRIX

Tempo: ♩ = 116

Chords: D, Em7

Techniques: BU (Bend Up), PB (Push Bend), BD (Bend Down), 8va (Octave Up)

Staff 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Measure 1: D chord, 15-15, 14-14, 15-15, 14-14, 15-15, 14-14, 15-15, 14-14
- Measure 2: Em7 chord, 15-(17), 15-(17), 15
- Measure 3: PB 15, 15, 12, 15-(17)
- Measure 4: BU, 15-(17), 15-(17), 15

Staff 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Measure 5: 8va, BU, 14-(16), 12, 12, 12
- Measure 6: BU - - further!, 15-(17), {17}, (18), 15, 12, 12, 12
- Measure 7: PB 14, BD, 15-(17), (15)-(14), 12
- Measure 8: 15, 12, 12, 12, 15-(17), (15)-(14), 12



His career was tragically cut short in 1982, but Randy was a hugely important player in the time between Van Halen and Yngwie, combining an elegant classically influenced melodic sense with meaty classic-rock licks. Remember, you don't have to play these licks over the suggested chords. Be creative!

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. It includes a guitar part and a piano part, both with tablature. The guitar part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 120. The piano part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the guitar part playing a descending eighth-note pattern, while the piano part plays a similar pattern. The second system shows the guitar part playing a descending eighth-note pattern, while the piano part plays a similar pattern. The score is written for a guitar and piano duo.

Guitar Part:

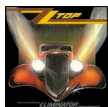
- Tempo: 120
- Key: Bb
- Time: 4/4
- First System: Am, F
- Second System: C, E

Piano Part:

- Key: Bb
- Time: 4/4
- First System: Am, F
- Second System: C, E

Tablature:

The guitar part includes a 6-string tablature. The piano part includes a 6-string tablature. The tablature is written in a standard format, with numbers 1-6 representing the strings and numbers 1-9 representing frets. The guitar part includes a 6-string tablature. The piano part includes a 6-string tablature.

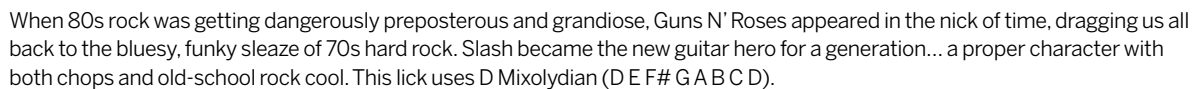


Over their long career, ZZ Top have gradually added more stylistic elements to their original swampy blues, but the Billy Gibbons guitar style has remained constant. Billy's playing is always concise, measured and phrased for maximum impact. Never a note wasted! This lick is in G minor, and uses just the minor pentatonic (G B $\flat$ C D F).



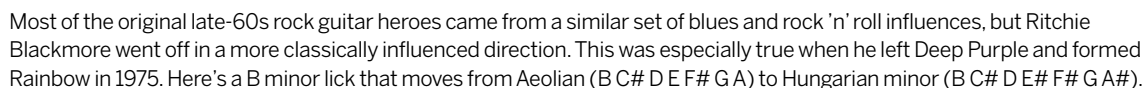
This is all about the Marshall stack, so we're concentrating on Eric's Cream period. This was perhaps when he strayed furthest from his blues roots, with the raga influence of the time and the jazz background of his bandmates pulling his playing in new directions. We're primarily using E minor pentatonic (E G A B D) adding that C# from the Dorian mode (E F# G A B C# D).

Musical score for "E B B D A E" in 4/4 time, tempo 132. The score includes a melody line and a bass line with fingerings and a "BU" section. The bass line includes a "PB 16 BD" section.



E

1000000



3

EX7 JOE SATRIANI



One of the world's most admired and respected guitarists for over 25 years, Joe's playing is an effortless mix of classic blues-based rock and more modern technical styles. I've combined a bit of both here – some gritty doublestop work in E Dorian (E F# G A B C# D) followed by something a bit more stretchy and challenging.

♩ = 138 **E5** *S_{va}*

E B G D A E

1

3

BU

NH

Quickly lower bar then raise slowly

EX8 PAUL KOSSOFF



While Cream took power-trio blues rock into virtuoso improv territory, Free went the other way, exploring deep funk grooves and leaving lots of breathing space in their music. This was particularly true in the case of Paul Kossoff's guitar playing. Not only was it sparse and minimal, but he played every note with such intensity and passion. And don't forget that ferocious vibrato!

A5 **D/A** *S_{va}*

E B G D A E

1

3

BU

PB 15

BD

BU

hold bend

RP

BD

BU

hold bend

RP

BD

(S_{va})

EX9 EDWARD VAN HALEN



As with Jimi Hendrix, it's impossible to overstate the importance of Eddie Van Halen. At a time when rock-guitar playing was settling a little too comfortably into slick blues-rock auto-pilot mode, Eddie added both an angular punk energy and phenomenal technical advances. This lick uses the B blues scale (B D E F# A) to combine supercharged blues lines with the tapping technique that turned so many heads back in 1977.

♩ = 200 ♩ = $\frac{3}{4}$

BU BD PB 10

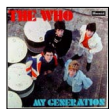
10 (12) (10) (12) 7 10 7 9 7 10 7 10 9 7

12 7 10 12 7 10 12 6 9 12 6 9 12 5 8 12 5 8 7-0

dive

1 3

EX10 PETE TOWNSHEND



A different tack for this one! While Pete Townshend certainly played a lot of solos with The Who, the primary focus of his playing was his aggressive rhythm parts in support of the songs. Here's a little chord pattern that uses a pedal tone (the repeating D bass under the first three chords) and the sus4 chord sound that became something of a calling card for him.

♩ = 126

D G/D C/D G/D D G5 Asus4 A

2 2 3 3 3 2 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 2
3 3 3 3 3 2 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 2
2 2 4 5 5 4 4 2 2 0 2 2 2 2
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 3

EX11 STEVE VAI



Let's go back to the mid 80s. While Yngwie was building on the classically influenced developments of Ritchie Blackmore, Steve Vai and Joe Satriani followed the Van Halen path, retaining some of the classic blues-rock energy in a diverse stylistic melange. This lick is in C, and starts with one of Vai's favourite scales, the Lydian Augmented (C D E F# G# A B), moving to a slippery tapping lick in F Lydian (F G A B C D E).

1

Cmaj7#5
♩ = 70

E B G D A E

3

Fmaj7#11

E B G D A E

4

E B G D A E



IS THE STACK BACK?

Half a century after Jim Marshall first crowned a 412 cabinet with a JTM45, do we still need the bulk and muscle of a stack? *Guitarist's* staffers offer their opinions

HEADS STACK UP



Jamie Dickson
Editor

"My first 'stack', if you can dignify it

with that name, was a venerable 50-watt Sound City PA head with four identical channels sitting proudly astride a Trace Elliott 412 cab. This unlovely rig actually sounded okay – or at least it didn't cost very much and carried on working despite the spilt beer it picked up during teenage gigs. But after that eventually died, I switched to Fender combos for many years.

"However, the recent boom in compact heads such as the Victory V40 and Mesa's Mark Five:25 has made me reconsider the stack. Small enough to carry anywhere, you can match lunchbox heads with a compact 112 cab for pub gigs, and even start GAS-ing at the thought of collecting a few, with contrasting tonal virtues. Given a compact, modern twist the stack starts to stack up again."

STACKED FOR SPACE



Dave Burrluck
Reviews Editor

"I certainly used to enjoy my Roost

head atop two 412s – one for the look, it didn't have any speakers in it! – but that was with a band van, which also transported a Hammond, a 'manager' (he owned the van) and a couple of schoolmates acting as roadies. Known as the loudest band in town, that stack was essential.

"After that, the only time I plugged into a stack was in a rehearsal studio or a support slot where we'd have to use the main band's gear. A head and 2x12 became my new 'stack', which gradually morphed into a combo and extension cab, then just a combo. That directly links with a change in playing style from heavy rock, to classic rock, through blues and jazzier styles with a distinct drop in on stage volume (and using ear plugs). Long live the stack but, honey, mine's shrunk."

NO SUBSTITUTE



Mick Taylor
Contributor

"Once upon a time a stack was all

about volume, and it was the only amp you had. Then small super-combos came along: I'd out-shout pretty much any traditional half-stack with an EV-loaded 1x12 MkIII Boogie in the first half of the 90s. Then PAs, monitors and in-ears all got so much better – and so did little amps. It was no longer all about volume.

"What it's about is tone, feel and response. A 50-watt plexi on a Greenback-loaded 4x12 is a truly magical thing. They're not that loud either: inefficient speakers, tons of power-amp compression... that old 1x12 Boogie is (still) way louder. Smaller amps may have taken over in pubs, Fractal and Kemper have been added to stadium rigs, but the dear old stack is still the beating, thumping heart of rock 'n' roll."

THE COMBO IS KING



David Mead
Deputy Editor

"Back in the days when I was a little

more rock 'n' roll than perhaps I am today, I owned a Marshall half-stack comprising a Super Lead 100 and a basketweave slanted cab, plus a 50-watt JCM800 1x12 combo. I loved the sound of the stack – put a Tube Screamer in the front end and it had that instant Page roar.

"But there was one thing that made me choose the combo every time: the stack was heavy and a two-man job to load and unload at gigs. So I wimped out – the JCM sounded great and was certainly loud enough but, better still, it was compact and portable. Eventually, I reached a compromise and bought a Marshall 4x10 cabinet in order to give the combo a little more spread on gigs where I thought it was needed – and so I guess I did end up playing a sort of stack, after all!"



Attention! Your guitar is not a fridge

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Los Caballeros, Por Favor!

In June this year, The Aristocrats released their highly anticipated third album – and what an album it turned out to be. *Tres Caballeros* is a heady mix of musical styles, from all-out, balls to the wall fusion, to country twang in the flick of a pick, the record features the latest fret-melting extravaganza from custom Charvel-wielding guitar guru Guthrie Govan. With all those notes out there on the loose causing havoc among the guitar community, *Guitarist* had to bring him in for questioning

Words Darran Charles **Photography** Victor Peters & Adam Gasson

There's a very well known syndrome among musicians called 'that difficult third album', but it doesn't seem to have troubled The Aristocrats in the slightest. Far from it, in fact. *Tres Caballeros* appears to have had an easy birth, Guthrie admitting that he believes it to represent the band far better than anything else to date. Recorded at LA's legendary Sunset Sound studios, which has seen the likes of Led Zep and Van Halen pass through its hallowed doors, the new record is every bit as intense and powerful as you'd expect with some guitar solos that boldly go where no fretmeisters have gone before. One of the first things we noticed is that there's considerably more overdubbing on the new disc...

"The overdub approach was very much an intentional thing," Guthrie explains. "We were tentatively starting to veer in that direction on the previous album anyhow,

particularly on Marco [Minnemann]'s *Dance Of The Aristocrats* and the middle section of *Ohhhh Noooo*, but this new album marked the first time all three of us went in the studio with absolutely no qualms about adding additional layers wherever we felt it might benefit the overall impact of the song.

"Given that live playing is such a big element of what we do, we were obviously keen to ensure that the new material would translate well in a gigging environment, so we decided to prepare for our studio sessions with a week-long residency in Alvas, a small and splendid fusion club in San Pedro, California. We spent three days there working on, rehearsing and arranging the new material and were then able to road test it for a further four days in front of actual audiences. This turned out to be a really effective approach. At the end of that week I think we were all kicking ourselves for not having adopted it sooner!"

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“It feels liberating to know that there’s really nothing I could write that Bryan and Marco wouldn’t be able to play”

•

All three of you write songs for The Aristocrats – how does the process work?

“Each of us is capable of recording a fairly detailed demo of how we think the tune should sound, and we all write with the whole band in mind, rather than focusing on our own instrument. Oddly enough, Bryan [Beller] tends to write guitar tunes, whereas I’ll often spend more time working on the bass line. Meanwhile, Marco is undoubtedly the most prolific composer in our operation; he’ll send us enough tune options to fill up a whole album, whereas Bryan and I will tend to focus more on just honing our three tracks.”

The dynamics were obviously very important in *Pig’s Day Off*. Was it particularly difficult to convey the overall sound you wanted to create?

“Not particularly. Both Marco and Bryan seemed to understand exactly what I was going for when they heard the demo, so the mixing process for that one was more challenging than the actual tracking. I should probably add that it’s not easy to make that song work live; its dynamic ups and downs require a fair amount of juggling in the tonal department. But we had the luxury of adding some overdubs in the studio, so I just kept adding splashes of extra guitar here and there until it felt finished.”

Did you have particular tones in mind before you set out to record in the studio?

“Every time I write a batch of tunes for an Aristocrats album, I try to look for a slightly different mindset, in a quest to keep things fresh and generally avoid repeating anything we’ve done before. For this album, I deliberately wrote all three of my contributions on a single-coil instrument. I have a Custom Shop Charvel, which basically looks like a Strat and has N3 noiseless pickups, so that became my official *Tres Caballeros* writing guitar.

Different guitar tones always tend to make me write and play in a slightly different way, so I suppose the one preconceived notion I had about tones was that the single-coil character should play a larger role on this album, as indeed it did. On the final recordings, *Stupid 7* and *Jack’s Back* were mostly played on a cedar-bodied Tele, which I borrowed from the Fender Custom Shop, and I used a US Deluxe Strat for *Pig’s Day Off*, *The Kentucky Meat Shower* and *Smuggler’s Corridor*.”

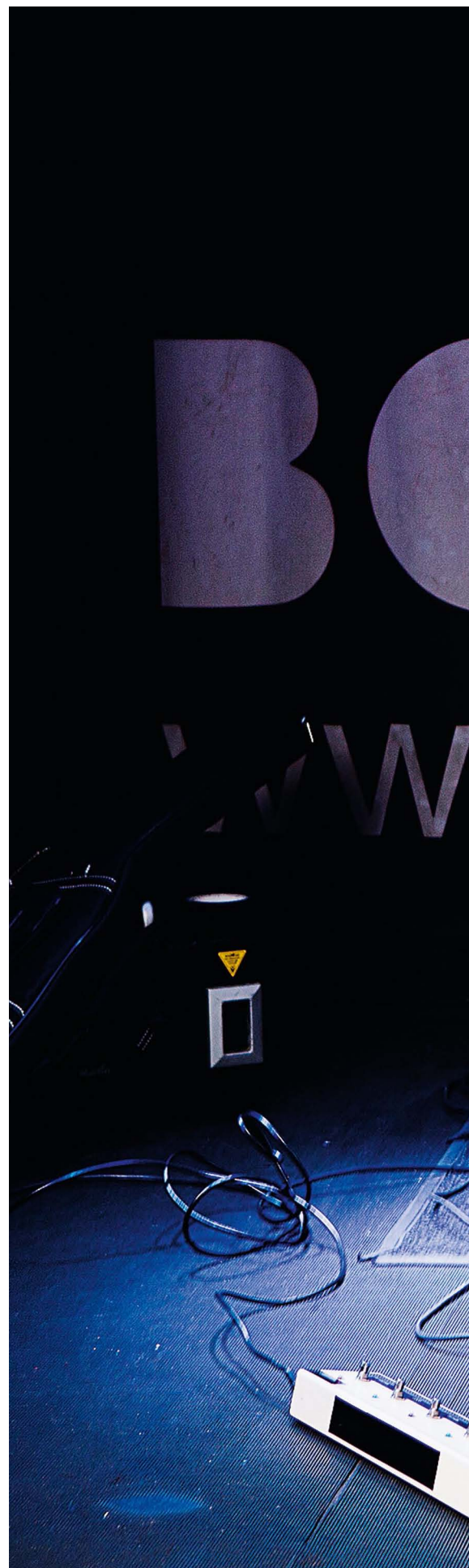
Do you think you’ve benefited as a musician and songwriter from playing with Bryan and Marco?

“Oh, absolutely. For a start, it feels liberating to know that there’s really nothing I could write that those guys wouldn’t be able to play. Also, the raw trio format has probably made me think differently about composition. In the past, I’ve certainly tried playing material from my *Erotic Cakes* solo album with a trio, but I never really felt that the music came across properly in that format because it was originally composed in a much more layered manner.

“One of my big missions when writing for The Aristocrats is to strive for an arrangement in which a single guitar part and a single bass part can come together to sound harmonically complete. I like the idea of being able to do the trio thing live and not leave the audience with the nagging feeling that some element is missing, so I think this band has led me to experiment more with various ways in which the guitar and bass parts can interlock harmonically and share the melody. Above all, though, we’ve done so much live playing together that hopefully I’ve become a better Aristocrat as I’ve grown more familiar with the overall chemistry of the band.”

Your construction of solos is not particularly formulaic with either The Aristocrats or your solo stuff. How do you usually approach writing solos and how does that approach change when working for other artists?

“I suppose I have a slightly jazz mentality when writing that kind of material. For me, it’s fun to have some thoroughly composed sections in the main body of the song and then contrast those with free-for-all sections where improvisation and interplay are the key factors. Consequently, I prefer not to write solos at all. Hard though it is for me to be totally objective about this, I think I play my best stuff when I’m trying to tap into some kind of spontaneous flow rather than adhering to a script. Having said that, I’m certainly not opposed to doing multiple takes, if necessary, and in certain studio situations the solo might well start to write





•

“Years ago, it took a lot of effort and not a little luck to discover that extreme players like Shawn Lane or Scotty Anderson even existed. Now, inspiration like that is just a mouse-click away”

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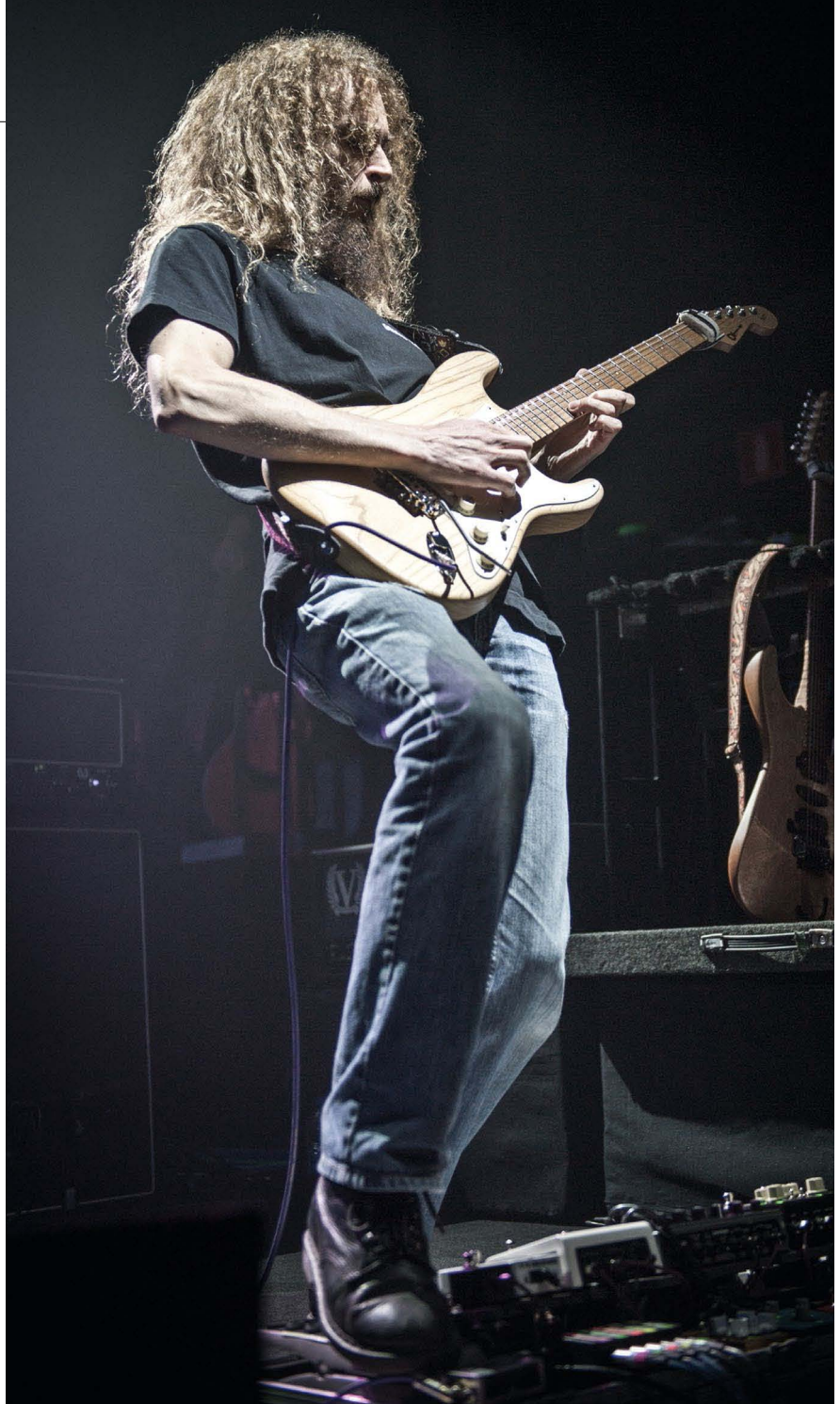
itself after a few takes. Maybe the opening phrase will become set in stone, or the overall arc of the solo will gradually become more defined.”

Live, you prefer to improvise rather than play a written solo...

“I just like the idea of striving to create something unique every night. If every note in the set is predetermined, I sometimes find myself encountering a kind of ceiling in terms of how much the material is able to grow throughout a tour, and I do think that magic is much more likely to happen if you’re willing to allow it to happen. Perhaps this is just a by-product of all the old blues-rock stuff I listened to when I was growing up, but there’s something exciting about taking risks when you solo. For me, that’s part of what makes someone like Jeff Beck so compelling; you never quite know what he’s going to do next and you occasionally get the feeling that perhaps he doesn’t know, either!”

How does it feel to be at the mercy of amateur videographers at gigs? Does the lack of quality control bother you?

“Most of the time, I do my best not to dwell too much on anything that I’m clearly powerless to change but, seeing as you asked, I don’t like the whole filming thing at all. Improvising in front of an audience carries with it a certain element of risk, and I’ve always liked the idea of just trying to create a unique moment. I find it can be disruptive to that mindset to think that whatever I’m trying to do, regardless of whether it works or not, could end up on YouTube mere hours later, without any sense of context. Feelings like that can definitely inhibit spontaneity – the performance being captured by the iPhone-



wielding army in the front row can’t possibly sound the same as the performance that would have occurred if everyone just put their iDevices away and made an effort to engage fully with the music instead.”

Do you think you’d be the guitarist you are if the sheer volume of guitar-related learning resources was available at the time when you were learning?

“My technical development would almost certainly have been spared from a lot of dead ends and wheel-reinvention. I’m sure I would also have discovered a lot of new playing approaches much sooner. Years ago, it took a lot of effort and not a little luck to discover that extreme players like Shawn Lane or Scotty Anderson even existed. Now, inspiration like that is just a mouse-click away, which can only be a good thing.

Get Better With Guthrie!

Attention all noble warriors of the fretboard! Beginning in the next issue of *Guitarist*, Guthrie Govan will be kicking off a series of five monthly masterclasses that focus on the aristocratic art of string bending.

With tab in the magazine and video out there in the nebulous regions of the interweb, Guthrie will teach you how to push steel in various genres including blues, rock, country and more, month by month. You’ll be able to see in fine close-up detail the sort of string bending techniques that GG uses in his own hair-raising solo outings. Prepare for sore fingers when issue 398 hits the streets on the 21 August!

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“Nonetheless, I’m entirely happy that I learned the way I did. If information is less readily available then sometimes necessity makes you become more resourceful in the way you seek it and perhaps there’s something to be said for earning at least some of your knowledge rather than having it all spoon-fed to you. The biggest potential casualty in this age of information overload is surely the development of a good ear. This is a vital asset for any serious musician and the only way to nurture it, alas, is to force yourself to work things out the old-fashioned way every now and then.”

Why did you learn to play so many different guitar styles? Are you interested in all aspects of guitar playing or did you learn some styles purely for tuition or session work related reasons?

“I’ve always felt that music is a language and that styles are just analogous to different dialects or regional accents, rather than being totally disparate entities. I’ve always enjoyed listening to a wide range of music so my instinct has always been to absorb everything I liked, rather than restricting myself to one specific area. That’s not necessarily a good or bad approach – I have a lot of respect for anyone who has the self-discipline to devote their whole musical life

to, say, bebop – but I guess the range of stuff I chose to learn is just an honest reflection of what music means to me personally. Even beyond the guitar styles thing, I remember being very young when I had a lightbulb moment and realised that perhaps I could learn something from what all the other instruments were doing on a record, or that there was actually nothing stopping me from trying to work out how to play a TV theme, or the music I heard coming out of the ice cream van.”

What guitarists continue to inspire you?

“All the guitarists who ever did inspire me, pretty much. If I’m about to listen back to some album that I found inspiring in my formative years but I haven’t checked out for a long time, there’s always that slight worry that I might have grown out of whatever it was that initially appealed to me. In reality, that tends not to be the case. My familiarity with various melodic minor modes has in no way detracted from my ability to be amazed by *Electric Ladyland*!”

Marty Friedman said in a recent interview that it makes him cringe to be termed a ‘shredder’ and that he does not like being associated with the scene. Does such a description offend you as well?

“I suspect the meaning of the word ‘shred’ has actually changed slightly over the years. My original understanding of it was derived from a kind of underground community in the early 90s, and at that time, the word ‘shred’ seemed to represent the concept of pushing the boundaries of what was possible on the instrument. Put that way, it sounds like a noble enough pursuit, but now the same word mostly carries ugly connotations of playing fast purely for the sake of it, and there’s a widespread assumption that extreme technique and actual music-making are mutually exclusive, which I think is a shame.

“In reality, fast playing can range all the way from the tedious to the sublime, and it’s intriguing that no other instrument really seems to need a word like ‘shred’. Was Art Tatum a shredder? How about Michael Brecker? Eliot Fisk? Paco de Lucia? Well, perhaps the more imaginative technical players need to reclaim the word, or perhaps it would be simpler just to come up with a new one.” 🎸



The Aristocrats’ new album, *Tres Caballeros*, is available now on Boing! Records

www.the-aristocrats-band.com



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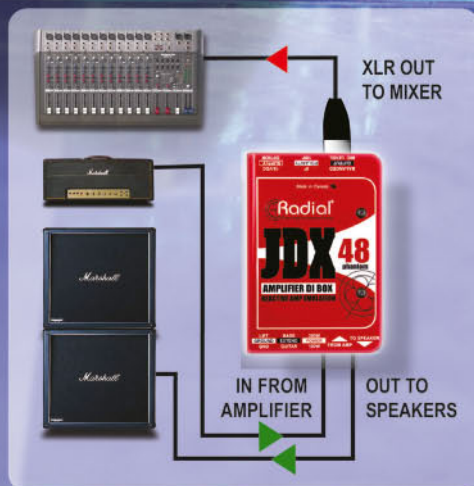
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Macho Libre





It's 20 years since the Fender Custom Shop controversially started bashing up its guitars so we didn't have to. With a sniff of celebration then, we take a look at two of its latest masterworks

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin



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What You Need To Know

1 More bashed up Strats and Teles!? What's new?

There's plenty new from Fender's Custom Shop for this year, albeit centred on the big four designs. This Ancho Poblano Strat, for example, uses new-design pickups – the neck and middle have heavy Formvar wire and custom staggered Alnico III magnets, while the bridge uses heavy enamelled wire with Alnico V flat magnets. They aim to offer a big, balanced sound.

2 What about the Tele?

Well, it's the latest iteration in the hugely popular Cabronita-style, but is more Tele-like with TV Jones neck pickup, the Fender RSD intonated bridge and Greasebucket tone circuit.

3 They're not cheap!

No, but they are Custom Shop guitars with highly detailed build and specs, not too mention the artificial ageing. They feel really vintage-like and at least you can gig them – if you ding 'em, unlike other 'collector's' guitars, you won't notice!

We've had a couple of decades to get used to new 'pre-aged' Fender guitars now, and in that time these Time Machine models have taken the guitar world by storm. As Custom Shop director Mike Lewis notes, the relic'd guitars now make up a big chunk of their output. "The lion's share of what we do is custom: custom orders where an end-user or dealer will order something with their own specs," he says. "It's more than half of what we make."

Each year a new selection of instruments arrives: "We call it our annual collection," says Mike. "The only thing that stays the same from year to year are the artist models. Everything else that you see on the web or price list changes every year. Someone might see the Ancho Poblano Strat, for example, but want it in red – we'll do that. A different neck shape? No problem."

So, the Ancho Poblano Strat is, effectively, a vehicle for the new-recipe Custom Shop Ancho Poblano hand-wound single-coil pickups that, obviously, aim to add a little more 'spice' to your sound. But it's not the only new idea here.

Up to this year, the Time Machine ageing consisted of various levels, in order of distress: the clean NOS (New Old Stock), the very mild Closet Classic, the bashed-up a bit Relic, and the very bashed up Heavy and Extreme Relics. New this year is the Journeyman Relic, which sits between the Closet Classic and Relic, and is classed as 'used but not abused'. Here, the usually opaque White Blonde finish is classed as 'Shattered Journeyman Relic' with dings around the top and bottom edges and on the ridge of the rear belly cut. It's far from excessive, though.

But as big a talking point here is the neck: it's huge! With its '51 baseball bat profile – so *wrong*, vintage buffs – it's clearly aping an early pre-Strat Tele neck, with big full shoulder and subtle flattening to the back as you move upwards. While the neck back is beautifully worn and satin feeling, the actual nitro lacquer on the head and around the heel is more glossed. The face looks like an old Strat that's been re-fretted with big jumbo frets and re-lacquered because of the maple face, so, again, it's glossed.

To imagine its history, the re-fret was clearly done a few years ago because there's visible wear in the lower positions and a darker line either side of the frets, which looks a little odd in terms of authenticity. The rear vibrato cover plate has long since been removed and lost (actually, it's in the case), while the scratchplate is a single-ply 'Bakelite' – again a Tele, not Strat, reference. The nickel hardware of the vibrato and tuners is very authentically aged. The brighter, less aged chrome of the jack dish is quite authentic, too, because chrome-plating is a lot harder than nickel. Aside from the new pickups, there are no tricks in the electronics with the two tones effecting neck and middle (tone one) and bridge (tone two) – not original spec but very useful.

The Tele Caballo Tono – the name apparently translates to 'Tone Horse Tele' – is another diverse bitsta, and like the AP Strat, is part of this year's Limited Edition series. Sharing the same two-piece alder body and one-piece quartersawn maple neck/fingerboard, it's actually a shade lighter, and its black Relic finish doesn't seem as trashed than the Journeyman. The white single-ply pickguard displays



1. The guitar gets its name from the Custom Shop's all-new Ancho Poblano single coils – hand-wound units that are designed to offer a big but balanced sound

2. The Ancho Poblano Strat features the Custom Shop's new Relicing level – the 'Battered Journeyman Relic'. It's pretty dinged and worn, but not as excessively as the Heavy Relic level



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its Cabronita DNA, which continues with the TV Jones Classic neck pickup that's screwed down hard onto the body with no intended height adjustment. It's paired with a hand-wound Custom Shop Texas Special bridge pickup and standard Tele control setup with the addition of the 'Greasebucket' tone network. Of course, the control plate is reversed here to add another modded spin.

Like the AP Strat, we get a more modern, flatter fingerboard radius in line with a typical re-fret scenario – here, the 'new' wire is slightly smaller (in Dunlop-speak, 6105 as opposed to the AP's 6100), but it's still pretty big compared to original-spec thin wire. Again, the neck is glossed (with the exception of the nice-feeling worn neck back) and the fingerboard face gives the impression that the re-fret has happened more recently – the only visible wear being on the top four frets.

The modded hot-rod vibe continues with modern Schaller strap lock buttons, non-locking Sperzel tuners, with tasty pearl buttons, and most obviously a Fender RSD bridge with its distinctive Tele coverplate outline, a lower profile wall and three offset 'intonated' brass saddles. The outer two saddles are machined with bullet-like ends; the middle one looks like a two-piece design, but it's just some clever machining.

Sounds

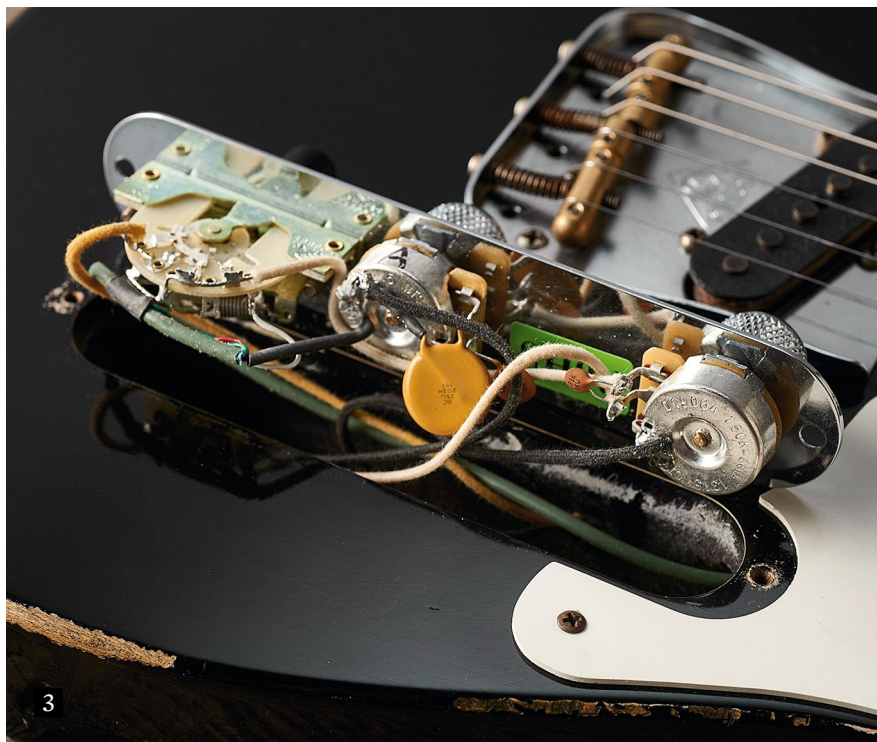
Big and beefy is an apt description of the AP – and that's just the neck. On a mainstream guitar it'd be laughable, but here the engagement brings a smile to our face: a sense of power that even just played unplugged makes it special.

Now, if you think Strats aren't always the 'biggest' sounding guitars you've ever experienced, this one might change your opinion. The graduation from dark (neck) though bright (bridge) and the near-perfectly balanced middle pickup is really noticeable. We've all had Strats that have a great neck pickup sound, for example,

and then are let down by a weedy, scything bridge pickup. Yes, there's plenty of cut here, of course – especially picking close to the bridge, it's an almost Tele-like honk – but as you move into the rockier side of roots, with some crunchy gain, there's a sparkle with some power that you don't always hear from Fender's finest. Tough Texas blues voices fall out of the guitar. It's not actually over-hot – there's slightly less apparent output compared with our Texas Special-equipped Strat, and also slightly less upper mid spike, too. What we get, though, is an open classic Fender voice but with a subtle fullness and richness that's especially noticeable on the neck and middle pickup.

By comparison, the flavour from the Tele is, well, more Tele-like with that direct honk from the bridge and a softer, more muted neck voice. Here, obviously, it sounds

On a mainstream guitar, a neck as big as the Ancho Poblano's would be laughable, but here the engagement brings a smile to our face





3. Underneath the Caballo Tono's standard Tele control plate is Fender's Greasebucket tone circuit, controlled by the tone knob
4. The Caballo Tono's Texas Special bridge pickup adds some classic Tele twang to the Cabronita recipe
5. The Tele's standard Relic level is not quite as extreme as the Journeyman Relic job on the Strat
6. The Ancho Poblano is a curious mix of Strat and Tele hallmarks, such as the Tele-like single-ply black Bakelite scratchplate
7. The Custom shop has looked outside for the Tele's tuners, opting for a set of Sperzel non-locking units with pearloid buttons



8

The TV Jones neck pickup works with your amp and pick attack to create a very dynamic and complex voice

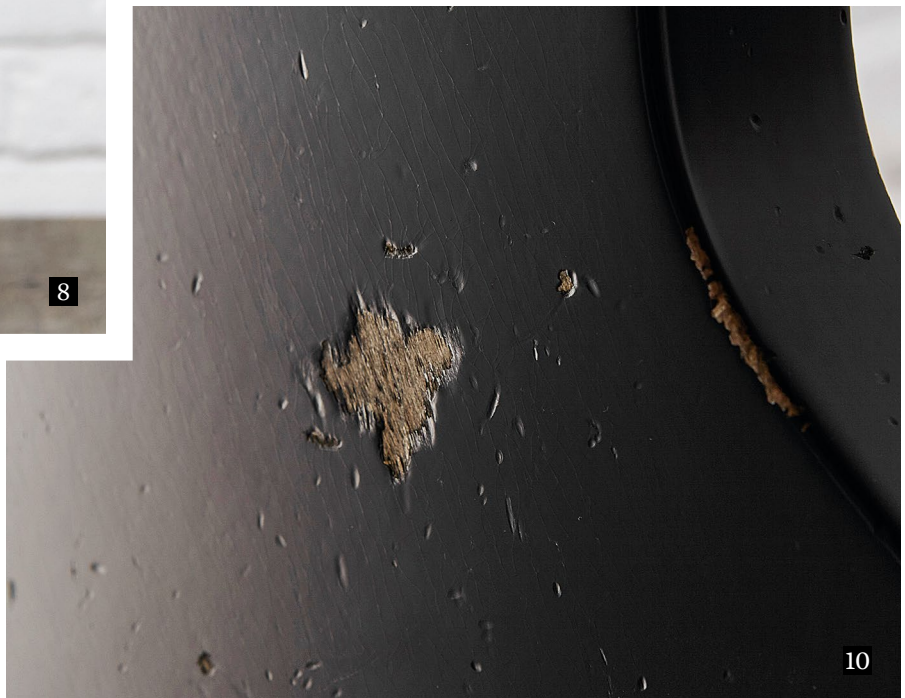


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8. Putting the two guitars side by side really shows off what a monster neck the Ancho Poblano Strat's 1951 U shape is – the Tele's large C shape neck isn't small either!

9. The Tele's low-profile RSD bridge features a trio of intonated brass saddles to keep things in tune

10. Even if you're not into the whole relicing thing, you have to appreciate the craftsmanship and attention to detail that goes into making these new guitars look convincingly old



10

more humbucker-like, but we're on the low output side of the tracks and it's the balance that's all-important, with the TV Jones bringing a touch of rubbery thwack to the bass notes, and warmth without too much cloud to the highs.

Comparing it with a more standard Tele neck pickup, the TV Jones has more clarity, a touch smoother than the Strat's neck voice. It's really touch sensitive, too, which works with your amp and pick attack to create a very dynamic and complex voice.

But with a level boost it edges into a more tube-like vocal lead tone. Wind the gain back a little bit and hit the bridge pickup, and the Tele's grinding, grainy sparkle comes to the fore.

The Greasebucket tone control is more selective with what it's removing. Whereas a more standard treble-cut tone control removes progressively not only the highs but mids, too, leaving a very bassy, muffled tone (obviously depending on the valve of capacitor used), the Greasebucket dials in

on the upper frequencies that, as you reduce it, bring down the highs and seems to progressively pull down the mids. It means that in the middle travel of the pot there are some interesting mid-focus tones, which work really well on more gained sounds, or just knocks the spike off when played cleaner. How much fun can you have?

Verdict

Yes, just another Stratocaster and Telecaster. But, heck, what a pair they

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11. The Ancho Poblano Strat's Journeyman Relic finish option also means that it comes out of the box without the vibrato cavity cover plate, but if that's one relic step too far for you, don't worry, because it's in the case and can easily be fitted

are! If you just don't get the pre-aged Relic thing, well, chances are you gave up reading this a long time ago! If you do get it, however, be prepared to pay. Neither is a cheap: the Tele is more expensive, presumably because of its non-Fender neck pickup and non-vintage-style hardware – it all adds up. But if you check out the numerous other 'relics' out there, these don't seem over-priced, do they?

Does either change the world sonically? No, but that's the thing, that balance and fullness of the Ancho Poblano pickups, or the cleaner neck pickup of the Tele shade the tones we love and perhaps take us, as players, to a more comfortable or creative zone. Then there's the playability: the bonkers neck on the Strat will be missed – this writer's other Fenders now feel like ukuleles. If you're a old-guitar addict, here are two new fixes. **G**



FENDER CUSTOM SHOP ANCHO POBLANO STRAT

PRICE: £2,639 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Offset double-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple, 1951 U shape, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.62mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dot markers, 241mm (9.5") radius
FRETS: 21, jumbo (Jescar 6100)
HARDWARE: Chrome/nickel-plated American Vintage vibrato, vintage-style Fender logo'd tuners
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm
ELECTRICS: 3x Fender Custom Shop Ancho Poblano single coils, 5-position lever pickup selector switch, master volume, tone 1 (neck/middle pickup) and tone 2 (bridge) with new white Strat knobs on 1-ply black Bakelite scratchplate
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.47/7.6
OPTIONS: It's a Custom Shop: you can order what you want!
LEFT-HANDERS: £POA
FINISHES: White Blonde 'Shattered Journeyman' Relic body; Heavy Relic neck back with lighter fingerboard wear. All nitrocellulose. Other standard colour is 2-Colour Sunburst



9/10

PROS Big sound and huge neck. One of the most evocative Strats we've played for some time

CONS The neck might be too big for many. Mind you, you could always order a different profile...



FENDER CUSTOM SHOP TELE CABALLO TONO

PRICE: £3,069 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Single-cutaway solid electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple, large C shape, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/41.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dot markers, 241mm (9.5") radius
FRETS: 21, narrow jumbo (Sanko 6105)
HARDWARE: Chrome/nickel-plated vintage RSD Tele bridge with three intonated brass saddles, Sperzel non-locking tuners with pearl buttons
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 55.5mm
ELECTRICS: Fender Custom Shop Texas Special Tele single coil (bridge), TV Jones Classic (neck), 3-position lever pickup selector switch, master volume and tone (with Greasebucket circuit), 1-ply white pickguard
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.26/7.2
OPTIONS: Again, whatever you like! Speak to your dealer
LEFT-HANDERS: £POA
FINISHES: Black Relic body; Heavy Relic neck back with lighter fingerboard wear. All nitrocellulose



9/10

PROS The latest in the Cabronita family, this one puts some Tele tone back into the mix. Exceptional

CONS It's not cheap, but then it is the Fender Custom Shop and can you really put a price on mojo?



VINTAGE PICKS



1964 FENDER
JAGUAR REFIN
£2,495



1972 FENDER
TELE THINLINE
£3,650



1973 FENDER
TELECASTER BLONDE
£2,250



1968 FENDER
MUSICMASTER II
£1,395



1966 FENDER
MUSTANG OLYMPIC
WHITE £1,695



1955 GRETSCH
JET FIREBIRD
£5,250



1957 GRETSCH
CORVETTE
£1,295



1968 HARMONY
ROCKET
£750



1956 GIBSON
ES-125
£1,495



1964 GRETSCH
COUNTRY GENT
£3,250

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STRATOCASTER
£1,333



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '59
STRATOCASTER 3TSD
£1,449



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '56
STRATOCASTER AGED
WHITE BLONDE
£1,333



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '56
STRATOCASTER BLACK
£1,333



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '65 JAGUAR
SONIC BLUE
£1,850



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '65
JAZZMASTER
FIREMIST SILVER
£1,362



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '65
JAZZMASTER
OLYMPIC WHITE
£1,362



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '64
TELECASTER
FIESTA RED
£1,266



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '52
TELECASTER BLONDE
£1,266



NEW AMERICAN
VINTAGE '58
TELECASTER
AGED WHITE BLONDE
£1,266

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'59 VOS LES PAUL
STD - LEMONBURST
Was £4,699
NOW £3,759



'59 VOS LES PAUL
STD - WASHED CHERRY
Was £4,699
NOW £3,759



'59 VOS LES PAUL STD
- SUNRISE
TEA BURST
Was £4,699
NOW £3,759



'59 VOS LES PAUL
STD - FADED TOBACCO
Was £4,699
NOW £3,759



'59 HEAVY AGED LES
PAUL STD -
LEMON BURST
Was £5,099
NOW £4,719



#20 COLLECTORS
CHOICE '58 "STP"
BURST -
RONNIE MONTROSE
Was £4,499
NOW £3,599



'58 VOS LES PAUL STD
- ICE TEA
Was £3,399
NOW £2,719



'56 VOS GOLDTOP
Was £3,399
NOW £2,719



'59 VOS ES-335 -
VINTAGE SUNBURST
Was £3,799
NOW £3,039



'59 VOS ES-1750 -
VINTAGE SUNBURST
Was £3,499
NOW £2,799

NEW GRETSCH



NEW GRETSCH
G6129T
1957 SILVER JET
£2,399



NEW GRETSCH
G6136T
WHITE FALCON
£2,899



NEW GRETSCH
G6120
SHLV - BRIAN SETZER
HOT ROD
£2,509



NEW GRETSCH
G6122
1962 CHET ATKINS
COUNTRY GENT
£2,619



NEW GRETSCH
G5622T
ELECTROMATIC CENTRE
BLOCK GEORGIA GREEN
£759



NEW GRETSCH
G5420T
ELECTROMATIC
HOLLOWBODY
SILVER SPARKLE
£719



NEW GRETSCH
G5420T
ELECTROMATIC
HOLLOWBODY
ORANGE
£719



NEW GRETSCH
G5422TDC
ELECTROMATIC
HOLLOWBODY
£749



NEW GRETSCH
G5435T
ELECTROMATIC PRO JET
£445



NEW GRETSCH
G5441T
ELECTROMATIC
DOUBLE JET
£445

ACOUSTIC PICKS



1930 GIBSON
L-0 BLACK
£3,995



1942 GIBSON
L-0 BLACK
£3,250



1965 GIBSON
LG-0
£850



1957 GIBSON
LG-1
£1,395



1965 GIBSON
DOVE
£3,250



1950 GIBSON
L-50
£1,795



1966 EPIPHONE
FRONTIER
£3,650



1954 MARTIN
000-18
£3,995



1954 GIBSON
J-45
£3,850



1963 GIBSON
J-50
£3,095

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ERNIE BALL, D'ADDARIO, SQUIER... & more!



Ragged Glory

Fender veteran Mike Lewis has been the director of the Custom Shop for just over a year. He gives us the skinny on reinventing retro tone

Just how does Fender keep coming up with new spins on designs that originated over six decades ago? Well, the Ancho Poblano Strat, named after one of the most popular peppers grown in Mexico (called 'Ancho' when dried and 'Poblano' when fresh), started with a tone quest. "I wanted to create something that had a spicy flavour but not overly hot," says Mike Lewis, sounding like a celebrity chef.

"Sometimes hot pickups can cross the line in terms of tone, lack some highs and don't have that clear, classic Fender sound. So I wanted something that was a little bit hotter and I thought, 'What if we went progressively warmer from the neck to the bridge, then on the neck and the middle pickup we could somehow calibrate them for a string-to-string balance so the first two strings could be a little more accentuated?' Then on the bridge pickup we went to a completely different design from the other two with flat-pole magnets, which are Alnico V versus the Alnico III of the neck and middle, and we're using enamel wire on the bridge as opposed to Formvar wire on the neck and middle. The flat poles, magnet type and enamel wire creates a different sound, a little more aggressive. With the flat poles – even if you

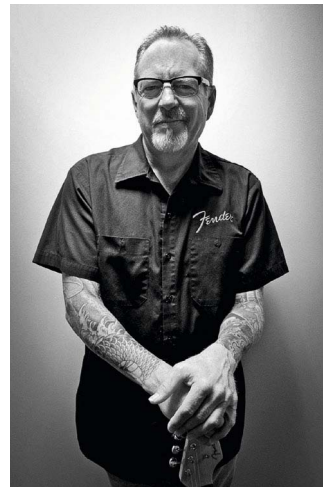
set the pickup up to spec, meaning the distance from the top of the pole to the bottom on the string – the bobbin is closer to the strings compared to a staggered height pickup. It creates a little different sound. It kind of reminds me a little of a tasty Tele bridge pickup.

"From there, the idea was simple: we've got big-sounding pickups, let's focus on big. Big is better: big neck, big sound; big frets, big sound – so let's do it."

Ah, yes, *that* neck. "It's almost the biggest neck we've ever made," laughs Mike. "It uses virtually all the neck blank in terms of depth.

"I also wanted something different for the white finish, so I asked the painter if he could do something more opaque, not transparent. He said, 'Of course.' The pickguard is actually the same black phenolic material that's used on, say, a '52 Tele. It's not something we've done a lot of, or you see a lot, but it's just a cool look – the way the edges are bevelled."

The Caballo Tono comes from the Cabronita, which Mike says "was very well received. But here, we injected a little more Telecaster into it; it's got Cabronita DNA and some original Esquire prototype DNA, which is where the Cabronita evolved from. It's simple. Put a



ABOVE Fender's Custom Shop creations employ many of the company's original tooling and finishing processes, all done under the watchful eye of new Custom Shop head honcho, Mike Lewis (top right)

Tele pickup in there, keep the TV Jones, put on the Tele control plate and change the name to reflect what it is: a real tone horse!"

But the hardware is far from vintage. "The original Tele bridge has a certain sound quality that's hard to replicate – it's the whole thing. So how do you make something better without changing what it is? The RSD bridge retains all the things that make the Tele bridge sound the way it does. But the tray isn't as tall, so it's easier on your hand. The saddles are still brass so you get that sound, but you can intonate them better. It's a really good job; it was designed by Scott Buehl, one of the master builders."

Journeyman

The Custom Shop is probably best known for its Time Machine guitars, or 'Relics' as they are invariably called. Our review guitars have different treatments, all part of the imagined 'story' behind the guitar. "Every guitar has a story – that's the beauty of these things. People acquire them, play them, write music on them, perform that music, record it. It's like a life story. People have personalised Fender designs since day one. Some people do it themselves, some were done by Fender. Even back in the early days, we did custom guitars for people.

"On the Ancho Poblano we started with the new Journeyman Relic on the body, which is very lightly aged – like it's been passed around, handed down through generations but very well taken care of: used not abused, played around the house, the occasional jam session or gig. Like when you find a nice vintage

guitar in really good condition. There'll be some nicks, no heavy playing wear but finish checking, discolouration here and there. I think I looked up journeyman online and one of the definitions was 'the occasional hard worker'," laughs Mike. "Some of the journeymen out there might take offence at that, but it kinda hit a chord.

"So we took that finish and added a few extra dings around the edges and applied some extra finish checking – so we call it a 'Shattered Journeyman' – like it's been really looked after... then kinda hits a brick wall! An accident or something. We get a lot of requests for a Heavy Relic on the neck back where the finish is worn off from the top to the 13th fret – smooth, years of skin oil and stuff in it. The fret is not so heavily worn.

"The Caballo Tono has a standard Relic treatment again with heavy wear on the neck back, less on the front. This year is the 20th Anniversary of the Relic and the original guitars were very much like the Journeyman – pretty lightly aged. Over the years, our customers have asked us to beat 'em up more, that's why we have the Heavy Relic and Extreme Relic, but the Journeyman takes us back to our roots and our standard Relic, well, we've pulled that back a little bit, too.

But whatever you choose, a standard model or complete custom design, "the most important thing is to build it right, the way the customer wants it", concludes Mike. "We have people who've been at Fender for decades. We use original tooling for much of the hardware and bits so when we use that it's not like we're making a replica: it's the real thing, it's it! It's all built in. Mojo included." **G**





CAPARISON DELLINGER PROMINENCE & ANGELUS M3B £1,995 & £1,875

From quirky tandem pickups to clockface fret markers, Caparison's take on contemporary rock guitars is a blast of fresh air – but will we be blown away?

Words Darran Charles Photography Adam Gasson

What You Need To Know

- 1 Another high-end rock guitar?**
Well, yes. Rock players are generally spoiled for choice, but Caparison instruments are made in Japan and designed by Itaru Kanno, a former member of the Charvel/Jackson Japanese division from the late 80s – some true pedigree. The company claims to favour quality over quantity, though that comes at a price.
- 2 Are these new models?**
Yes and no. The Prominence is a new addition to the Dellinger series and it's the first carved top version. The Angelus M3B has been vastly updated, including a string-through-body bridge and new aesthetics. Both models feature Caparison's M3 composite body construction.
- 3 Can they do anything but rock?**
Caparison's aim seems to be pretty clear: rock and metal guitars for rock and metal players! It's refreshing to have a brand specialising in a particular genre, but both of these guitars are quite adept at catering for other styles and are two of the more versatile models in the company's catalogue.

Since it acquired the brand in 2011, the UK-based Caparison Guitar Company has been responsible for focusing the aim in a distinctly mainstream direction. Although still preferring a low-volume but high-quality output, these rock and metal guitars are beginning to emerge as serious contenders to the higher-end models of rock aristocrats such as Ibanez, ESP and Jackson.

To correlate with this growth, 2015 sees the expansion of each of its model ranges, including new additions and upgrades to existing models, a couple of eight-string guitars and a new signature. Here, we're reviewing the new Dellinger Prominence and an extensively re-spec'd Angelus M3B.

In Caparison's world, the Dellinger model is a mainstay model with this new Prominence version being the first carved top version. In reality, the spec is very similar to the MJ3 we reviewed in issue 389 with the most notable differences being that carved top and a strikingly unusual pickup configuration. Also present here is Caparison's 'M3 composite tonewood' body, comprising two different tonewoods, mahogany and maple. Under the new-for-2015 transparent finishes, including our review model's Spectrum Red, you can see how these woods have been combined: a central section of maple flanked on each side by mahogany.

The ebony fingerboard is super-smooth and along with jumbo frets provides a platform popularised by rock guitar

brands such as Jackson in the late 80s and which many rock players gravitated to. If it ain't broke...

The Angelus range has also been expanded and updated for 2015 and now includes a new 'Custom Line' and a few new colour options. However, it's this M3B that received the most significant changes, including anchoring the strings at the back of the body so they pass through it on their way to the bridge. There's a new five-way pickup selector switch, new neck and headstock binding and a full set of new fingerboard inlays.

Fundamentally, it's the new string-through setup that is the most radical of these changes, which aside from the increased sustain associated with this feature, Caparison adds that it has been "carefully positioned to maximise the tension and stability of the guitar". That aside, the set-neck design and body shape draw inevitable comparisons with a PRS Custom 24 (in strange coincidence, both Caparison and PRS have a model called the Angelus and have a signature artist called Ace, though not the same one!), but the Cap's maple neck, ebony 'board, jumbo frets, and shorter 629mm (24.75-inch) scale length promise a different feel and tone.

There's also a new Dark Ale finish (which could also be referred to as simply 'brown') that may divide opinion, but the black chrome tuners and tailpiece provide a classy touch, especially when compared with the sometimes cheaper-looking black



hardware found on a lot of today's rock and metal guitars.

Sounds

Starting with the Prominence, we have a Dellinger neck profile that is stunningly comfortable and with the slick oil finish on its back enables effortless movement without any inherent 'stickiness' associated with some high-gloss finishes. As its appearance suggests, this is an unabashed balls-to-the-wall rock guitar and the extended cutaway, upper-fret-friendly neck join and jumbo frets are taunting you to unleash the flashiest, most finger-twisting licks in your arsenal.

The body shape will, of course, be familiar to most guitarists, but the forearm contour is very subtle here. While it's not in slightest bit uncomfortable, some players may miss the extra comfort that a more pronounced contour can provide.

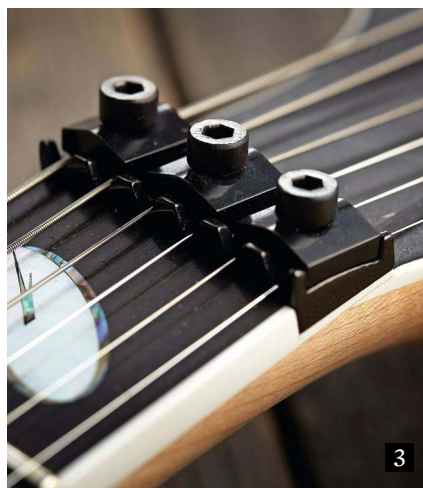
At first glance it's difficult not to be captivated by the unusual pickup configuration, which features not one, but two Caparison-designed neck pickups, both vying for control of the warm-end of the sonic spectrum. But is it a gimmick? Well, if you're predominantly playing rock music then it can sometimes prove difficult to cut-through the mix when using single coils – especially in the neck position, and especially when switching between that and a humbucking bridge pickup. So, having both a single coil and a single-coil sized humbucker in the neck position could prove a welcome feature for a rock player, looking for maximum versatility. The neck humbucker, though capable, is just a tad underpowered for producing the thick, creamy rock tone that would fully justify its position alongside a single-coil pickup, and yet on a clean setting the single-coil neck pickup doesn't quite produce those warm, springy chords it promises either. However, the single coil is infinitely usable in a studio environment, and we'd wager that this was the thought behind its inclusion.

Despite the myriad configurations on offer from the five-way lever switch, we find it difficult to wander too far away from that bridge pickup. When it's accompanied by a dirty amp setting, the pickup immediately provides a rousing full-bodied rock tone with enough output and character for crunchy rhythm work and sufficient high-end to make solo work stand out. It's hard to fault.

A rotund C shape best describes the Angelus's neck carve and it's similar in feel to a 'regular' PRS profile. It's a generically comfortable shape that along with the ebony fingerboard and jumbo frets provides a super-smooth ride. A 24-fret neck with a 'short' 629mm Gibson scale can justifiably fill the fuller-fingered guitarist with trepidation, but although this particular reviewer does not possess particularly large hands, the fear of cramped fret space never really revealed itself, perhaps due to

As its appearance suggests, the Dellinger is an unabashed balls-to-the-wall rock guitar

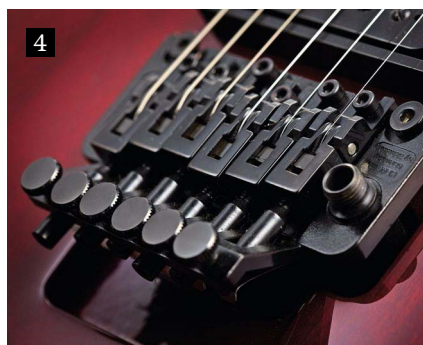




1. The Angelus's PH-F neck humbucker is warm and powerful – it's surprisingly effective for funky clean chops, and of course, metal soloing

2. The Dellinger's neck pickup is actually two in one – the single coil-sized VS-1A humbucker and the true single coil SH-N(S) – an unusual but interesting choice

3. The Prominence's neck profile is unbelievably comfortable and shred-friendly at any point on its scale



4. The locking Schaller S-FRT II is the vibrato of choice here, and features corrosion-resistant screws for those of us who are sweaty of palm

5. The Dellinger's fretboard features Caparison's hallmark 'clock face' inlays – either you love 'em or you hate 'em!

the large fretwire that provides a healthy distinction between notes.

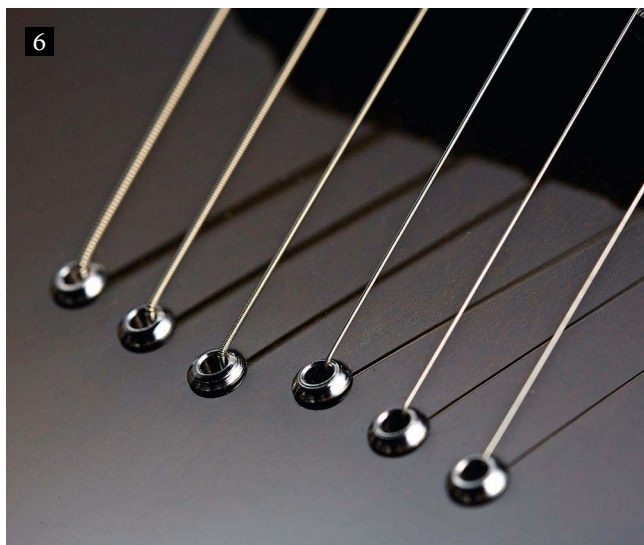
As its model number suggests, the Angelus also has Caparison's M3 Composite body construction, although unlike the Prominence it has a maple top. It also eschews the appointment of name-brand pickups, again favouring Caparison designed PH-R and PH-F pickups. These are no mere substitutes, however, and an excitingly tight and aggressive metal tone makes an immediate appearance when plugged into a Mesa Mark IIC profile. A/B'd with a PRS Custom 24, it offers comparatively more output and high-end. No doubt the ebony 'board in conjunction with the central maple block and carved maple top are providing some snap and crispness but, all in all, we have a very rounded tone with an extra bit of bite.

The neck pickup is as warm and powerful as we were hoping for and provides the perfect tonal offset to the bridge pickup. The pickup selector's second and fourth positions show off some spanking funk tones on a cleaner amp setting, which while very usable, probably won't prevent you from quickly switching to the dirt and resuming more metal-inspired activities!

Verdict

If rock and metal is your bag then Caparison should rightly be considered specialists. There are many variants of rock and metal guitars throughout the Caparison range, and kudos has to be given to the company





6. The Angelus's new strings-through-body bridge setup has been carefully engineered to maximise string tension and stability

7. Both guitars feature Gotoh tuners – in the Angelus's case it's the MG-T locking variants

8. Also new for the Angelus overhaul are these new split-oval inlays – they're probably less polarising than the clock faces

for sticking with what it knows best, given the temptation of most brands to cater to guitarists of every conceivable style.

The Angelus's construction and design has proven, in both models reviewed to date, to excel for rock and metal (especially the latter). You can turn the volume and gain up on your amp as much as you like, but sometimes that true metal tone comes from the guitar itself. The Caparison pickups, too, were a surprise package and provided a perfect example of why EMGs are not necessarily the sole rulers of the metal kingdom.

The Prominence may be the sleazier looking of the two, even in this posher carved-top incarnation, but if you've been browsing through the higher-end models of Ibanez, ESP, Jackson et al then add it to your list. Again, the Caparison humbuckers more than stand up to their big-name rivals, giving an instantly gratifying rock tone without the sometimes over-saturating gain of a high-output pickup that can all too often mask the tonal character of a guitar. It's impressive work from Caparison once again. Here's to more... 



CAPARISON DELLINGER PROMINENCE

PRICE: £1,995 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Japan
TYPE: Solidbody electric
BODY: Mahogany/maple/mahogany
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: 42mm/Schaller R2 locking
FINGERBOARD: White bound ebony, 350-400mm (13.8-15.75") compound radius
FRETS: 24, jumbo
HARDWARE: Schaller S-FRT II vibrato (with special corrosion resistant screws), Gotoh SG381-07 HAP tuners
ELECTRICS: Caparison SH-N(S) and VS-1A (neck), Caparison PH-R (bridge), 5-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.6/8
OPTIONS: None
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Translucent Spectrum Black, Spectrum Blue and Spectrum Red (as reviewed)
Caparison Guitar Company
www.caparisonguitars.com

8/10

PROS An infinitely playable hand-crafted rock guitar that should definitely be on shredders' radar

CONS The dual-neck pickup concept is unusual, but it seems best suited to studio use



CAPARISON ANGELUS M3B

PRICE: £1,875 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Japan
TYPE: Solidbody electric
BODY: Maple top, mahogany/maple/mahogany back
NECK: Maple, glued-in
SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Black Tusq/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Ivory bound ebony, 350-400mm (13.8-15.75") compound radius
FRETS: 24, jumbo
HARDWARE: Cosmo Black Gotoh GE-103B-T bridge (with through-body stringing), Gotoh SG381-07 MG-T locking tuners
ELECTRICS: Caparison PH-F (neck), Caparison PH-R (bridge), 5-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 3.8/8.36
OPTIONS: None
FINISHES: Black, White and Dark Ale gloss (as reviewed)



9/10

PROS A finely made, well spec'd and versatile double-cut with some fantastic pickups

CONS When we say versatile don't forget that metal work is its bread and butter!

Meet the Córdoba MINI

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



Córdoba

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Rock Idol

Retro might be the tone police's choice in the quality guitar market, but for those of you who want to widdle, shred and push some boundaries, there are options aplenty



PRS CUSTOM 24 30TH ANNIVERSARY £3,125

The classic mahogany/maple double-cut Custom is one of PRS's most famous models. Of the 30th Anniversary model reviewed in issue 391, we said it's "the most classic-sounding custom to date". The 'out-of-reach' status has also now been addressed with the introduction of the much more affordable, but still American-made, S2 series, at less than half the price of the USA core range.

VIGIER EXCALIBUR 13 £2,229

A brand that often flies under the radar, Vigier continues to produce high-end rock guitars featuring an innovative carbon-reinforced neck system that stays forever straight. The 13, reviewed in issue 387, came from the idea to create an Excalibur that was "versatile and an ideal choice for players of any style or genre", although the ballsy bridge humbucker and modern-rock kill switch are reminders of its true musical home.

FAME FORUM £709

Although the allegation of a 'PRS clone' will be a difficult one to shake off, it could also prove to be a back-handed compliment. Built in Gdansk, Poland, almost 3,000 miles away from its spiritual home in Maryland, the Fame Forum, reviewed in issue 392, featured a startlingly good build quality and spec, especially when considering the low price. Shockingly good value for money, even if it's shockingly unoriginal.

**IBANEZ JEM7V £1,999**

Considered as one of the most iconic guitar designs of the last 30 years, the JEM still represents the ultimate shredding tool for many rock players who grew up in the heyday of guitar virtuosity – a time when Steve Vai ruled the roost. Sporting a Vai-designed fast and thin neck carve, a triumvirate of powerful DiMarzio pickups, it's still perhaps one of the finest examples of the 'rock guitar' out there and spawned the equally influential RG series.

EVH STRIPE £682

Despite a whole new generation of guitarists barely knowing who he is, Eddie Van Halen is still an influential guitarist if recent sales figures of the EVH Stripe are anything to go by. Built in Mexico, the EVH mimics the DIY 'Superstrat' Eddie put together himself, and despite the stripped-down nature of its appearance, it's a virtuoso's rock machine that gave a £3,500 Jackson Soloist reissue a run for its money back in issue 381.

ESP E-II ST-2 ROSEWOOD £1,529

Given the 'Guitarist Choice' award back in issue 384 the E-II series takes the place of the former ESP Standard series. Similar in concept to the PRS 'S2' Series, they're still built in ESP's Japanese factory but use less expensive woods than those constructed in the nearby Custom Shop. The ST-2, with its flamed maple top, basswood body, skinny neck and Floyd Rose, possesses all the hallmarks of a modern-day rock guitar.

Johan L., quality check guitar



**PLAY IT.
FEEL IT.**



th•mann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION





CÓRDOBA FUSION 12 & IBERIA GK STUDIO £663 & £518

With a substantial presence in the USA and now available in the UK, Córdoba is making many of us rethink the nylon-string guitar's potential

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Adam Gasson

What You Need To Know

1 Córdoba? Isn't that a city in Spain?

It is, and Córdoba does make guitars in Spain (the España Series is made in Valencia), but the majority – the Iberia, Fusion, Luthier and the beginner Protégé series, along with the steel-string Acero guitars – are made in China. The high-end Master Series is handmade in Oxnard, California, not too far from Córdoba's HQ in Santa Monica.

2 Why should we be interested?

Córdoba's masterplan is to make the traditional classical and flamenco guitar available to all guitarists, not least with our pair of modern 'crossover' guitars on review.

3 Classical, flamenco... What's the difference?

A 'flamenco' guitar will have a very light build and traditionally uses light-coloured cypress back and sides. Its action is lower than a concert classical. You should expect a brighter tonality, with a little 'buzz' from the lower action, especially when played in vigorous flamenco style.

While the steel-string acoustic seems very sorted in terms of its style and sound, the nylon-string continues to evolve, especially outside its flamenco and classical roots. One intriguing era is the 'crossover' guitar: a nylon-string designed to appeal to steel-string players. It isn't intended to appeal to scholarly classical players, but by narrowing the neck, adding a radius to the fingerboard and shaping a more steel-like neck profile, the concept has allowed many traditional nylon-string brands to appeal to a much broader audience. Córdoba may have only been founded in 1997, but it proudly states that it "seeks to guide the evolution of the nylon-string guitar, blending traditional craftsmanship of the early master luthiers with modern developments".

"Every guitar is lightweight, responsive and a direct descendant of the Spanish tradition," the company continues. "Córdoba continues to challenge the definition of the acoustic guitar without sacrificing the authenticity of its heritage." It's a pretty bold claim, so is there some substance to it? Let's put them to the test.

Fusioneers

There's lots to choose from within Córdoba's current catalogue that, of course, includes more conventional classical guitars. But both our review models fall into the crossover category, although they come from different sides. The Fusion 12 aims to make a steel-string player more

comfortable with its 48mm nut width, 16-inch radius'd 'board and quite steel-string-like C shaped neck profile. You can choose either a 14-fret or, as here, a more classical-style 12-fret neck join.

The GK Studio hails from the Iberia series and is a Gypsy Kings signature guitar – a band full of guitar players that seem a perfect fit for Córdoba with their crossover appeal. The Studio, however, draws from a slightly different well and echoes the flamenco guitar more than the classical. Here, we have a slightly slimmer-depted body, a more classical-like nut width of 50mm, and a similar C profile neck, but with a flat fingerboard. Both guitars feature a solid European spruce top. The Studio has laminated cypress back and sides, the Fusion uses extravagantly figured, honey-toned maple.

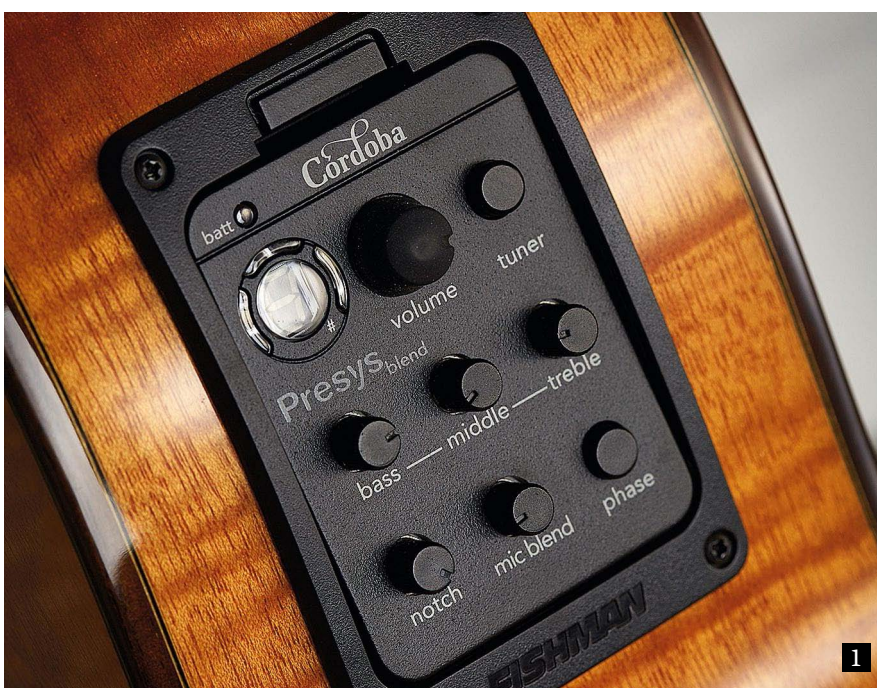
Both guitars have a standard classical 650mm scale – close to Fender's 648mm – and the body shapes are slightly different, resulting in the extra full fret on the Fusion to go with its slightly different bridge and soundhole placement in relation to the outline. Both are cutaway electros powered by the almost ubiquitous Fishman Presys Blend system that mixes an under-saddle transducer with an internal mic and offers four-band EQ (if we include the notch filter), mic/pickup blend and tuner.

In a Chinese factory context, Córdoba has made a very good stab at aping traditional Spanish construction. Both use seven-fan braces, with a thin piece of bridge



The Rivals

Yamaha's classical-style NCX and crossover NTX start at £620 for the spruce/laminated nato 700s; £581 for the cedar-topped versions. Excellent gigging guitars, not least with System 61 electronics with the ART two-way soundboard transducer pickup system. Originally a non-cutaway design, Admira's Virtuoso has been upgraded to an 'EC' cutaway at £625. It's Spanish-made with solid cedar top, laminate rosewood back and sides, plus Shadow's Nanoflex Pickup and 4Plus preamp. If that flamenco sound is in mind, then check out the Camps CUT-500S electro cutaway (£615) made in the Catalonia region and featuring solid spruce top with laminated sandalwood back and sides, ebony fingerboard, golpeador tap plate and Fishman Clásica pickup system



The Studio is a delight, from its feather-light weight, to its un-classical neck, which makes thumb-around positions easy

reinforcement and machine-kerfed linings, top and bottom. The internal soundhole rosette reinforcement is nicely carved and both guitars use a traditionally shaped 'slipper heel' neck block (traditionally part of the neck, not a separate piece) that connects all the parts: neck, sides, top and back. The visible curved shape gives the necessary reinforcement to the top, under the fingerboard, while the extended foot spreads the load of the strings' tension onto the back.

Both are light in weight, too, especially the Studio, which at 1.64kg makes this writer's Yamaha NCX900FM feel like a tank in comparison with its 2.04kg weight.

The lightweight dual-action truss rod is a nod to modernism – again, not a feature of traditional Spanish instruments, but they weren't exported all around the globe. In the modern age, a truss rod makes sense. Typically for a Chinese build, we see very

tidy 'board edges bound with matching ebony and rosewood to hide the fret tangs. Rosettes are inlaid wood – concentric black/white wood rings on the Fusion and a more traditional multi-piece ringed design on the GK Studio. The body edges are rosewood-bound, and the Fusion features slightly more ornate inner purfling strips.

Bone nuts and saddles are used, though slightly oddly the Fusion's saddle is forward-leaning, the Studio's noticeably backward leaning – the more conventional style to maximise down-pressure on the under-saddle pickup. Action seems slightly lower on the Studio model, but actually measures the same: 2.5mm on the treble side, 3mm on the bass at the 12th fret – lower than a traditional concert classical.

Sounds

So many lower-end nylon-strings seem overbuilt, relatively heavy and a little



2

1. The Córdoba's plugged-in sound is provided by the familiar Fishman Presys Blend system, which mixes an under-saddle piezo with an internal mic. It's a proven performer

2. Of course, the headstock here is slotted in the traditional style, with just a few touches of subtle ornamentation at the top

3. The GK studio's soundhole rosette is a traditional multi-piece ring design, whereas the Fusion 12 opts for a more unconventional concentric black and white wood rings style

4. The 'slipper heel' neck block is a traditional classical construction feature, and connects the neck, sides top and back together to reinforce the top and spread the load of the string tension onto the guitar's back

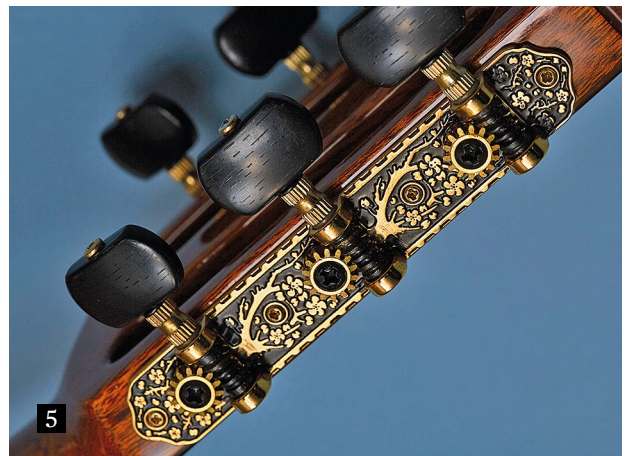
5. The Córdoba-made traditional three-a-side tuners are the same on both guitars, with the ebony-like buttons giving a moody, luxurious vibe to the peghead



3



4



5

unresponsive acoustically: not these. The Studio is a delight, from its feather-light weight to its quite un-classical neck that, despite its width, actually makes thumb-around positions relatively easy, chumbly in lower positions. The Fusion's narrower but similar-profile neck looks and feels a little deeper – it is, but only by a whisker – while the slightly narrower width and radius'd 'board bring their own feel.

Neither style is necessarily 'better' than the other – it's about personal preference, so all the more reason to get out and try both. For this writer who is more used to a classical-width nylon-string electro, the Fusion does feel a little cramped in lower positions and the top strings are almost too close to the fingerboard edge, certainly compared with the Studio and our reference (and well-gigged) Yamaha NCX. From that personal perspective, the Studio sits nicely between the Fusion and the NCX.

The Fusion, however, is a nicely balanced, more 'all round' guitar. There's a linearity to the sound that's appealing, not hugely complex but nicely direct and clear. The Studio doesn't quite have the low-end fullness, but has more 'give' on the higher strings, making it more dynamic, which would be very noticeable for some players. With some visible slight distortion of the Studio's spruce top ('telegraphing' as Córdoba calls it), we'd guess its top is the thinner of the two here, which might potentially give you problems amplified. But acoustically, and certainly for mic'd recording, the thinner top gives the Studio that sort of tonal lift that might make you choose one guitar over another.

The Studio is designed for a more 'flamenco' -type sound and it might surprise some players just how much bite it can have, especially played with some gusto with fingernails rather than your fingerpads.

It might be a little too attacking for mellower Latin and jazz, but then you can back off your attack. Again, possibly a personal cut, but it's nice to have that dynamic thing when you put your foot down.

Amplified, not least due to the identical electronics, the sounds homogenise, but the Studio still exhibits a little more cut and percussive edge. The Fusion 12 has a slightly 'hot' G string output. The Studio is more balanced, though if anything the sixth string is a little softer than the others. Under-saddle pickups can be tricky buggers in this regard – another reason to plug in before you pay up. However, the onboard controls and the tuner all work effectively. As usual, the internal mic can only be used sparingly, with adds a soupçon of realism and a little ambience, but even using the notch filter and phase control, it's very prone to feedback in more crowded spaces and in proximity to monitors. Both guitars



6. The Fusion 12's laminated maple back and sides are heavily figured, in stark contrast to the clean, spruce top

benefit from leaving their EQ controls flat and plugging into either a LR Baggs Venue DI or Fishman's Platinum Pro outboard EQ. Of course, for playing more dynamic flamenco styles, check you have enough headroom in your signal path if you're going to hit hard.

Verdict

For the money, these are both very well-sorted guitars, intelligently conceived and very nicely made. Yes, as supplied, the fret tops were a little rough and needed a little work and that slight unbalance of the Fusion's output would need to be checked. But that Spanish influence is very welcome both in feel and acoustic sound, although the light build could present problems in louder amplified settings. Still, for more moderate volume gigs, home, studio, practice and, well, just enjoyment, they have a lot going for them. Prices include a decent soft gigbag and both are shipped with high-quality (and expensive) Savarez strings. While both are highly recommended for anyone who wants to or already is enjoying the nylon sound, it's the GK Studio that has the edge, and for a change, it's the cheapest of our duo. **G**



CORDOBA FUSION 12

PRICE: £663 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Medium-bodied cutaway, nylon-string electro-acoustic
TOP: Solid European spruce
BACK/SIDES: Laminated figured maple
MAX RIM DEPTH: 99mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 365mm
NECK: Mahogany, 12th fret join
SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6")
TUNERS: Córdoba Silver 3-a-side with black ebony-like buttons
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/48.2mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, side dots only, 356mm (16") radius
FRETS: 22, medium/small (top fret partial)
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with bone saddle/59mm
ELECTRICS: Fishman Presys blend with under-saddle pickup, internal mic and tuner
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 1.73/3.8
OPTIONS: Available with 14-fret neck join, same price
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: High-gloss polyurethane w/ honey amber tint back and sides
Electron UK
01795 419460
www.cordobaguitars.com

7/10

PROS Flamenco-influenced nylon-string electro with fast playability and authentic sound

CONS The ultra-light build can cause feedback problems at higher volumes; fret tops are a little rough



CORDOBA IBERIA GK STUDIO

PRICE: £518 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Medium-bodied cutaway, nylon-string electro-acoustic
TOP: Solid European spruce
BACK/SIDES: Laminated cypress
MAX RIM DEPTH: 89mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 370mm
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6")
TUNERS: Córdoba Black & Gold 3-a-side with black ebony-like buttons
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/50.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, side dots only, no radius
FRETS: 19, medium/small (top fret partial)
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with bone saddle/59mm
ELECTRICS: Fishman Presys blend with under-saddle pickup, internal mic and tuner
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 1.64/3.6
OPTIONS: Available as the GK Studio Negra with rosewood b/sides (£545) and as the Limited with laminated ziricote b/sides (£614)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: High-gloss polyurethane finish, honey amber tint back and sides with clear Spanish golpeador

8/10

PROS Well-priced, well-made nylon-string with great 'crossover' playability and 'Spanish' sound

CONS There's a slight unbalance to the electro output; again, the fret tops are a little rough



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Things About The (Flamenco) Guitar

In his small volume, *Things About The Guitar*, the maestro José Ramirez III muses on the development of the flamenco guitar

José Ramirez III (1922-1995) was the third-generation 'maestro' luthier of the Ramirez dynasty that still continues in Madrid to this day, headed by his daughter, Amalia. In his small book, *Things About The Guitar*, a collection of 'essays' about the history and construction of the classical and flamenco guitar, he offers a unique insight into guitar making as it was. Ramirez takes us back to the roots of the instrument and how, originally, it was used in the middle of the 19th century. "To listen to genuine flamenco, the only people needed are those that can be sheltered under an umbrella," he quotes, to illustrate why the flamenco guitar was small-bodied without the need to project in a concert hall. "I have a guitar built by Antonio Torres in 1862 (of cypress) with a string length of 650mm, a body width of 238 and 312mm [upper and lower bouts] and sides with an average depth of 94mm." Flamenco players needed "small and light instruments that were easy to handle".

Flamenco on the rise

By the end of the century, however, flamenco was becoming more popular and performances had larger audiences. Even "four or five guitarists did not suffice to make their music heard in a flamenco group, since they were drowned out by the 'palmas' (clapping of the hands) and 'taconeos' (heel-clicking)".

His grandfather, José Ramirez I (1858-1923), "possibly the most outstanding guitar maker of his time... Torres had long since passed away", around this time, on requests from flamenco guitar players, created the 'tablao' guitar to "produce a more ample sound". Citing a guitar built by his grandfather in 1918, JR III states that while the internal structure was in keeping with Torres' standards, its dimensions were larger with a string length of 650mm, body widths of 280 and 380mm and sides with an average depth of 84mm – a shallow depth familiar to existing players.

José Ramirez I's younger brother, Manuel Ramirez (1864-1916), who had apprenticed in the Ramirez workshop, struck out on his own in 1891, aged 27. He set

up his own 'shop in Madrid that "gave rise to a deep antagonism between the two brothers", says JR III, "which became more acute as time went by... and lasted till the end of their days."

Initially, Manuel's guitars were very similar to his brother's, including his 'tablao' flamenco, but slowly, he began his own journey and, states JR III, "created a guitar that would become established as the ideal model". JR III refers to an example from 1911, which again follows Torres's internal construction but has an extended scale of 655mm, body widths of 278 and 364mm, and an average depth of 90mm.

After the death of both Manuel and José Ramirez I, José Ramirez II, "with great insight on his part" adopted the ideas of Manuel Ramirez, not his father, in terms of the flamenco guitar. JR III did likewise. "The flamenco guitar is built of the same types of woods as the classical guitar (with the exception of the sides and back which are made of cypress): a spruce belly, an ebony fingerboard, a cedar neck and purflings and a rosewood bridge," he states, adding, "its weight (a most important factor) should be from 900 to 1,000 grams."

And along with its specific construction, JR III states it should have a "piercing sound, sweet and deep especially on the bass side, and high and brilliant, almost to the point of being metallic, on the trebles".

Of its low action, JR III offers: "Not too many years ago, the action of a flamenco guitar used to be measured by inserting a five peseta silver coin between frets and strings at an intermediate point between the 12th fret and the soundhole. This coin had a thickness of about two millimetres or more, perhaps two and a half, and it had to graze the strings and fit perfectly between frets and strings." If this requirement wasn't met, quotes JR III, "the derogatory sentence was no less than the following: 'two dogs fighting could easily fit under the strings of that guitar!'"

***Things About the Guitar* by José Ramirez III is available from Soneto Edicions Musicales, www.sonetoediciones.com, priced €22**

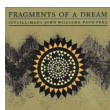
ABOVE The story of the flamenco guitar's evolution is covered in depth in José Ramirez III's book, *Things About The Guitar*

Flamenco Masters

If you don't know your flamenco from your face flannel, then you need to read this. Jason Sidwell guides us through the masters...



Jorge Strunz and Ardeshtir Farah have released 20 albums of rhythmic and virtuosic flamenco-esque music as Strunz & Farah



Paco Peña (1942-)

For those in the know (and indeed, those not so in the know!), Paco Peña represents the essence of traditional flamenco guitar. Making his first professional appearances in 1954, he gained a great reputation for accompanying singers and dancers before gaining fame as a soloist in the late 60s and onwards. Since then, he has performed all over the world (including at the Royal Albert Hall), founded the annual Córdoba Guitar Festival, instigated a flamenco course at Rotterdam Conservatory Of Music and collaborated with numerous musicians including classical guitarists such as John Williams and Eliot Fisk.

In 2012, he was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington. His dynamic range on the guitar is jaw-dropping; from reflective moments such as *Misa Flamenca* (1991) to vibrant rhythms and *rasgueado* strums in Phrygian Dominant (R, ♭2, 3, 4, 5, ♭6, ♭7)-based pieces like *Solea De Córdoba*.

Recommended: *Fragments Of A Dream* (1987, with Inti Illimani and John Williams), *Misa Flamenca* (1991)



Paco de Lucía (1947-2014)

While Paco Peña represents traditional flamenco, Paco de Lucía championed New Flamenco where flamenco meets a variety of musical styles ranging from jazz to Latin via Middle Eastern influences. Certainly, his work with various big-name musicians including Santana, Eric Clapton and Bryan Adams helped his crossover appeal. For many, Paco came to be revered largely from one album: *Friday Night In San Francisco*. Performed by The Guitar Trio consisting of John McLaughlin, Al Di Meola and Paco, it's a milestone for virtuosic acoustic guitar playing. The standout track combines Meola's *Mediterranean Sundance* and Paco's *Rio Ancho*. This medley has it all: intricate rhythms, unison lines and exotic chords where Paco's fiery *rasgueados* and blazing *picados* (fingerstyle runs) meant he could match Al's superhuman alternate picking. While Paco achieved much in his career, it is the *Friday Night In San Francisco* album that is recommended for newbies.

Recommended: *Friday Night In San Francisco* (1981), *Concierto De Aranjuez* (1991)



Juan Martín (1948-)

An ex-student of Niño Ricardo (revered flamenco who influenced many guitarists, including Paco Peña) and Paco de Lucía, Juan Martín has spent most of his career in London. His 1981 debut, *Picasso Portraits*, featured impressive guitar with decidedly non-flamenco drums and synthesizers. For many, Juan is best remembered for the nylon-string melody on Henry Mancini's *Love Theme* from the TV series, *The Thorn Birds*. Fans of Rory Gallagher will also have heard him on *Wheels Within Wheels*. For specific pieces, try *Rumba Nostalgica* and *La Feria* as both are very melodic with dashes of flamenco fire.

Recommended: *Picasso Portraits* (1981), *Musica Alhambra* (1996)



Gipsy Kings (1978-)

This band of French musicians mix flamenco elements with salsa, rumba and pop styles, often referred to as Rumba Flamenco. Listening to hits like *Volare* and *Bamboleo* provides a good impression of their sound: a rich blend of nylon-string guitars precisely strummed, impressive chordal flourishes and tasty solo lines. While they've released over 10 successful studio albums, they've also found success providing music for films. Their arrangement of the Eagles' iconic *Hotel California* is masterful: steady chord picking, rhythmic strumming and impressive bursts of single notes.

Recommended: *Gipsy Kings* (1987), *Mosaïque* (1989)



Strunz & Farah (1979-)

Costa Rican guitarist Jorge Strunz and Iranian guitarist Ardeshtir Farah teamed up in the States during 1979, championing a blazing style that fuses elements of world music and jazz with a dash of Flamenco. Like Rodrigo Y Gabriela, both are adamant they're not about flamenco, although to many they do sound flamenco-esque. They've released 20 albums: we'd recommend *Frontera* (1984) and *Américas* (1992) as their instrumentals are rhythmic and brimming with blazing nylon-string alternate picking.

Recommended: *Quetzal* (from *Frontera*), *El Jaguar* (from *Américas*)

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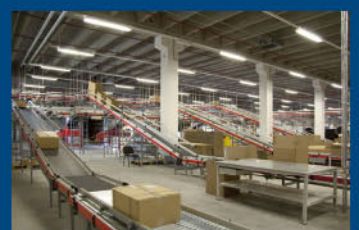


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PEDALBOARD

From boutique overdrives to painstaking recreations of classic fuzz boxes, we test the effects that matter in an all-new section

The great divide in effects widens, with affordable multi-effects units such as the **Line 6 Firehawk FX** (p124) moving ever-closer to the kind of capabilities that 'brain the size of a planet' professional modelling effects units such as Fractal Audio System's **Axe-Fx II** offer. Line 6's **Helix**, aimed at pros and serious enthusiasts, reviewed soon in *Guitarist*, will likely be a step closer still. Which of the tribe suits you best will depend not only on budget, but ultimately on what your priorities are: seamless live operation or having ultra-configurable tones on tap in the studio. Or both? Meanwhile, **DigiTech**

has gone the other way and embraced the warped individualism of boutique pedals, with its excellent **Obscura Altered Delay** (p130), which could be a psychedelic warrior or noisenik's best friend. Finally, if you're looking for something a little different that still serves those meat-and-potatoes pedalboard needs for chunky, detailed drive tones, boosts (mid-focused and otherwise) and such, then you should definitely take a look at the deftly styled **One Control** pedals on review this month (p126). Thoughtfully designed, with a small footprint, they're the epitome of progressive modern stompbox design. 



LINE 6 FIREHAWK FX £348

The now Yamaha-owned company shows no signs of slowing down on the innovation front. Here's a multi-effects unit that you can edit from your phone

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Adam Gasson

Introduced at the NAMM show earlier this year, Line 6's Firehawk FX is a large and rugged amp and effects modelling floor pedal with a similar size and form factor to the company's POD HD500X. Indeed, it shares many of that pedal's sounds and features, the main difference being that it eschews the POD's built-in editing capability, instead relying on the Bluetooth wireless technology that Line 6 has been utilising in the AMPLIFi series. Editing is carried out by an app running on an iOS or Android device, making the actual hardware better streamlined.

There's just a guitar input into the Firehawk, but the rest of the connectivity is fairly comprehensive, including a full stereo effects loop, main stereo/mono outputs on both XLRs and standard jacks, headphone output, USB and connections for a Variax guitar and to add a second expression pedal. There's no proprietary L6 link, nor XLR input if you wanted to plug in a microphone when using it as a recording interface.

Essentially, the Firehawk FX delivers its sounds in the form of recallable presets, but it's flexible in that you have the ability to turn individual effects within each preset on and off. Two footswitches at the far left scroll through the preset banks while the lower set of four footswitches calls up the individual presets in the bank – the last footswitch in the lower row operates tap tempo or calls up the Firehawk's onboard tuner. Each of the upper row of five footswitches turns off whichever effects block in a preset is assigned to it, and these are fitted with LED rings that cleverly light up in the colour associated with a particular effects type – blue for modulation, green for delay and the like. Other stage control is provided by the treadle, which carries out volume or wah duties or the adjustment of any parameter assigned to it.

For on-the-fly tweaks you get six knobs for drive, bass, mid, treble, FX and reverb, while there's a large dial to turn up the output volume or blend your guitar

ABOVE The LED rings around each of the Firehawk's numerous footswitches light up in different colours depending on the type of effect currently being stored there



sound with any music you care to stream to the unit from your device.

Sounds

Each preset is made up of a series of effects blocks populated by models of 108 amps, 120 effects and 24 cabinets (29 amps and 25 effects are HD models). We find that editing is easily carried out using our iPad – the top section of the editor shows the signal flow through the blocks (gate, volume, wah, stomp, amp/cab, comp, EQ, delay, modulation, reverb, looper and external effects loop), some of which can be moved to different positions. The looper, for example, is operated by a single footswitch and can be either at the start or end of the chain.

You don't get the full flexibility of the POD HD500X's dual signal paths, but there is still plenty of scope for sound creation. You can simply tap on any block to get all of its parameters laid out in the 'Block Inspector' for instant finger-drag edits. Here, you can also assign the Firehawk FX's footswitches to individual effects blocks and assign the FX knob or expression pedal to a parameter. If you have a Variax guitar you can also control which Variax tuning and preset is active and save it within a Firehawk preset – not all of the Variax models support the full available functionality, mind you, so check the Line 6 website for details. While the 128 onboard factory presets cover a lot of options, access to Line 6's Cloud-based Tonecloud facility – which has a large ever-increasing library of tones, many

based on popular songs – allows you to create, save and recall an unlimited number of presets.

Taking the unit and gigging with it is a breeze once you've loaded your preferred presets. If you have a different effects order for each preset, the coloured LEDs immediately let you know which footswitch will call up your overdrive, for example. Our only concern is that switching between presets isn't seamless, so if you need to change presets during a live song, you'll have to choose your moment well. Hopefully the switching lag will be improved with a firmware upgrade but whether you'd find it a problem depends on how you'd use the unit – many users will stick to just one preset during a song and switch that preset's assigned effects in and out as needed.

Verdict

With familiar Line 6 tones, the Firehawk FX covers plenty of sonic territory and has a feature set equally suited to home practice and gigging. It won't, of course, suit anyone who doesn't have a smart phone or tablet, but that wireless connection offers some distinct advantages over more conventional floor processors. **G**

PROS Fully featured multi-effects that won't leave you short on sounds or features, not least its wireless editing

CONS Time lag when switching presets needs sorting; not everyone has a smart phone or tablet to edit from

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China

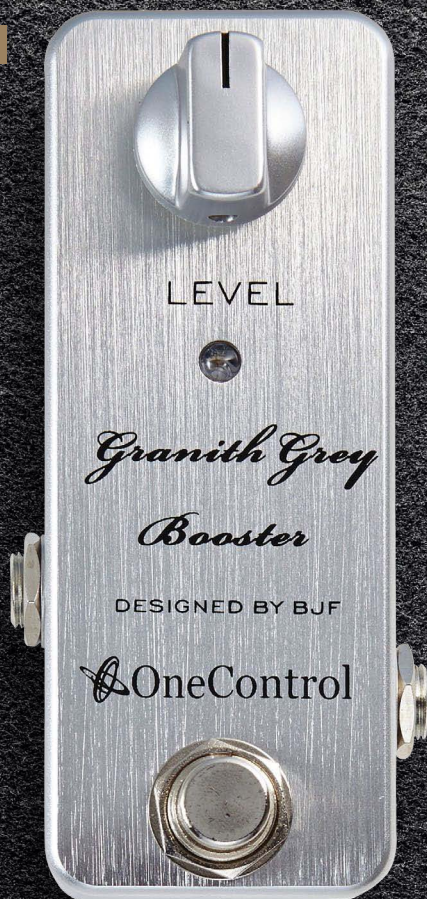
TYPE: Multi-effects floor pedal with iOS/Android app control

FEATURES: 128 presets, Bluetooth streaming, USB audio interface, 29 HD amps, 25 HD effects, 78 POD Farm amps, 95 POD Farm effects, 24 POD Farm cabinets, single-switch looper, Live Edit
POWER: 9V adaptor (supplied)
DIMENSIONS: 280 (l) x 510 (w) x 80mm (h)

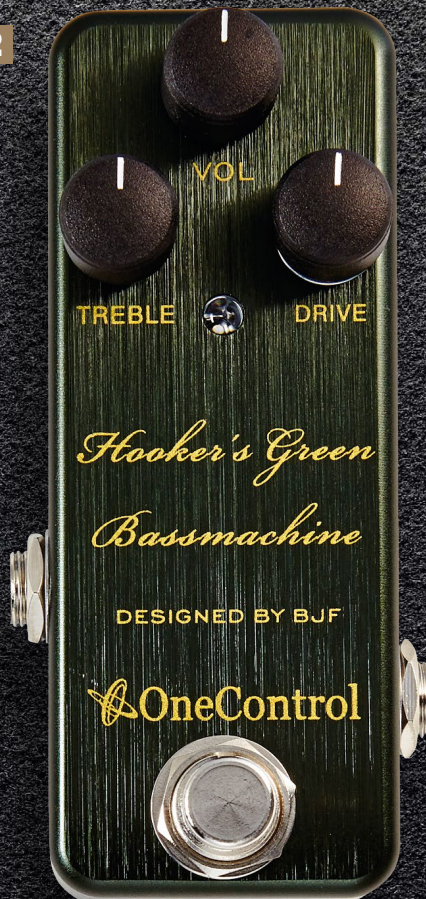
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7/10

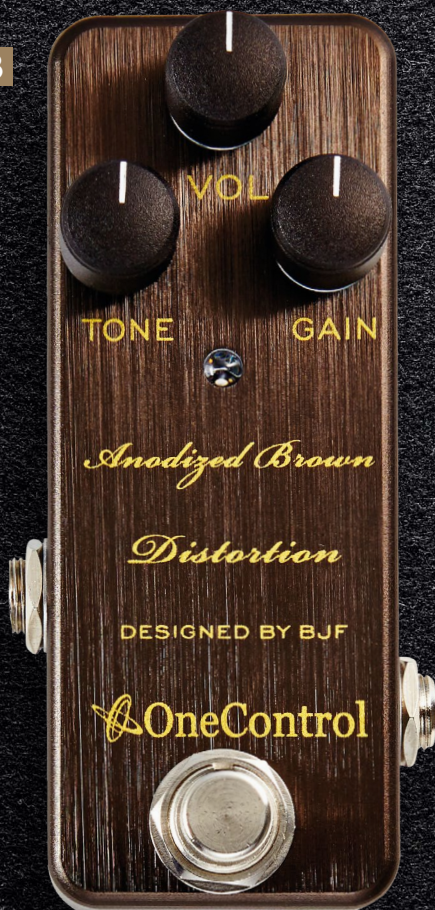
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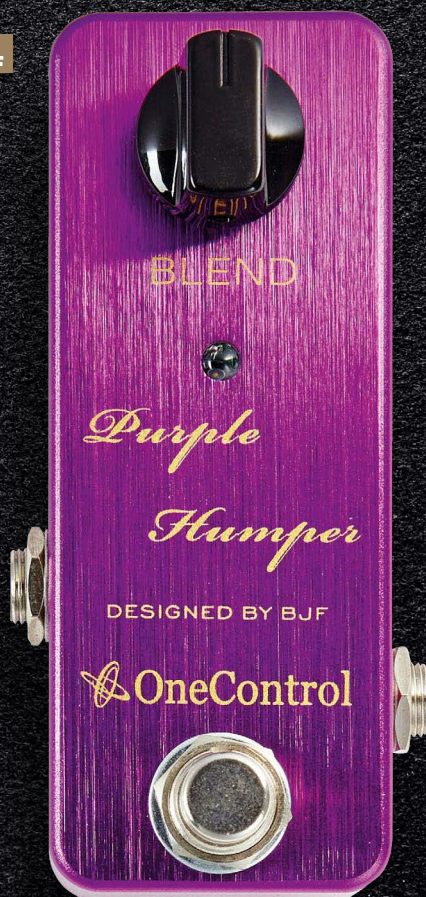
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3



4



1 ONE CONTROL GRANITH GREY BOOSTER £109

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Boost pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Level,

bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V

DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x

100 (d) x 48mm (h)

Zoom UK

08432 080 999

www.one-control.com

The first of our quartet of pedals from Japanese effects maker One Control is very fitting because it comes with just one large knob! The Granith Grey Boost is a clean boost pedal with a design emphasis on low-noise operation.

Designer Björn Juhl says that the pedal achieves the same signal-to-noise ratio as a high-end audio amplifier, and we can vouch that it adds very little in the way of noise. At the lowest level of the knob you get silence, unity gain being achieved somewhere near the 11 o'clock point and the boosts beyond that, which means that you can use the pedal to reduce volume as well as boost it, which is useful for making a driven valve amp instantly a touch cleaner.

With a maximum boost of around 16dB, it's not as extreme as some, but there's plenty here to drive an amp or take a dirt pedal up a notch. **[TC]**

VERDICT An immensely practical add-on for your signal chain. A very clean boost with a hi-fi sheen

8/10

2 ONE CONTROL HOOKER'S GREEN BASS MACHINE £129

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Bass

overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume,

treble, drive, low

adjustment,

bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V battery or

9V-18V DC adaptor

(not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x

100 (d) x 48mm (h)

Bass players probably have a right to feel hard done by when it comes to stompboxes, because there are far more pedals designed for guitar than specifically for bass. While bassists can use guitar pedals, there's often the likelihood of compromising bass tone, as some guitar overdrive pedals have built-in bass cut when engaged.

Not so, though, with Hooker's Green Bass Machine – there's plenty of bottom end and a trim pot on the side to adjust it to suit your instrument. One Control says that this pedal is designed to give a modern transistor bass amp more of a valve-amp sound, or the tones of an older transistor model, such as a Sunn transistor bass amp.

We reckon it adds a great growl to your bass sound – think Stranglers or Lemmy. It works great with guitar, too, for a darker overdrive. **[TC]**

VERDICT A brilliant add-on for bassists needing more bottom end, or for guitarists looking for a darker drive

6/10

3 ONE CONTROL ANODISED BROWN DISTORTION £129

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume,

tone, gain, bypass

footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V battery or

9V DC adaptor

(not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x

100 (d) x 48mm (h)

All six pedals here come from One Control's BJF series, which uses a BJF buffer to enhance signal clarity on long signal chains. The use of the English language in some of One Control's descriptions of the BJF pedals can raise a smile, but the gist of what is said about the Anodised Brown Distortion is that it's designed to provide cranked stack distortion while retaining amp 'feel', rather than feeling flat and undynamic like some pedals do.

We'd say that's about right: it will go from crunchy raunch to stack at full pelt, all with loads of touch sensitivity and with bags of sustain with a harmonic edge under your fingertips on higher settings of the gain knob. It also features a tone knob that works over a completely useful range – no nasty extremes here, just differing degrees of top-end content. **[TC]**

VERDICT An extremely good distortion that does rock and metal brilliantly, but suits other styles just as well

7/10

4 ONE CONTROL PURPLE HUMPER £109

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Midrange

boost pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Blend,

bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V battery or

9V DC adaptor

(not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x

100 (d) x 48mm (h)

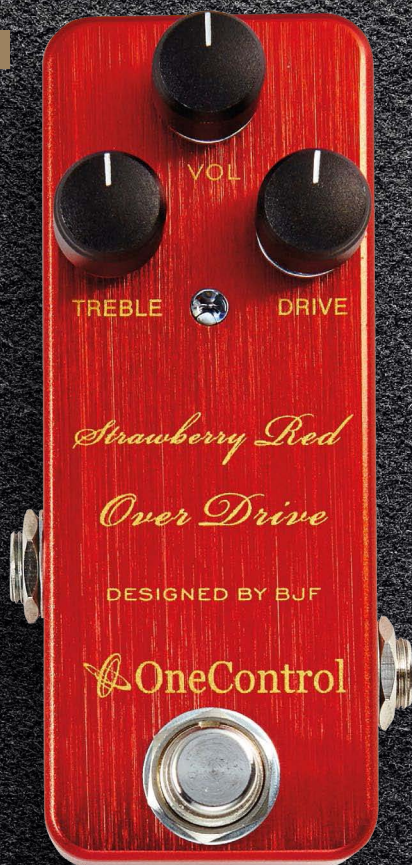
While we've all seen plenty of treble boost pedals from manufacturers at pretty much every price point, midrange boost pedals are a bit thinner on the ground. The Purple Humper is one such beast and is based on the now out-of-production and rare BJFE midrange booster, originally developed by BJF for someone who wanted his Stratocaster to compete with an ES-335.

That extra output combined with a tonal shift is what the pedal offers: up to 15dB of midrange boost, delivered via a single Blend knob. While it can be used to get a more strident sound out of a clean amp, this is a pedal that is at its best in front of an already dirty amp or in conjunction with an overdrive or distortion pedal, where it will not only kick things up a level but will also introduce a bit of a Marshall-y vibe to proceedings. **[TC]**

VERDICT A fat boost in a slim box: a 'secret weapon' to fill out single coils for a more humbucker-like tonality

6/10

5



6



5 ONE CONTROL STRAWBERRY RED OVER DRIVE £129

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES:

True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, treble, drive, Low cut trim-pot, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x 100 (d) x 48mm (h)

The **Strawberry Red** Over Drive is an original, designed for use with any amp. There's lots of headroom here – with volume up and drive down it can be used as a clean boost, offering about 6dB of gain for a volume kick. That can have a tonal shift if you want it, as the treble knob operates in the 700Hz to 7kHz range to offer a small but crucial cut or boost in your amp's upper frequencies.

The overdrive is nicely touch sensitive, too, and offers richly organic, cranked valve amp-like tones (not unlike certain pedals that are designed to offer Dumble-like tones), and cleans up really well with guitar volume if you want to tone things down that way. The low end is pretty tight anyway, but there's a bass trim pot to compensate if you're using a bassier amps, and the option of 18-volt operation for more dynamic range. **[TC]**

Guitarist CHOICE

VERDICT A naturally responsive, amp-friendly drive pedal that's among the cream of compact overdrives

9/10

6 ONE CONTROL PERSIAN GREEN SCREAMER £129

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES:

True bypass

CONTROLS: Level, tone, drive, Vintage/Modern switch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 47 (w) x 100 (d) x 48mm (h)

Ibanez's legendary Tube Screamer circuitry has been the basis for loads of pedals over the years, but each designer who tackles one must be convinced that they can 'improve' on it or at least bring something new. Björn Juhl's take on it is one of the more inspired we've encountered, building in two selectable modes: Vintage and Modern. The mode switch is tucked away where you'll need a small screwdriver to move it, which is fine, as you'll probably choose one mode and stick to it.

Vintage mode is pure TS-808, with the midrange lift that the pedal is known for, but the Modern setting is something else again with less drive and a neutral sound that just keeps your amp sound intact. Considering all the fuss made about a certain 'transparent' overdrive, we'd say that having this facility and classic TS sounds in one pedal makes this something special indeed. **[TC]**

Guitarist CHOICE

VERDICT A great pedal with two distinct flavours of overdrive. An asset to any rock and blues pedalboard

9/10



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DIGITECH OBSCURA ALTERED DELAY £139

Clean 'analogue' repeats or deliciously deconstructed delays, the Obscura has it all. A pedalboard essential? Let's see...

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Adam Gasson

Digitech's Obscura is a delay pedal with a difference: it has the facility to EQ, degrade and distort the repeats. The Obscura retains a compact footprint by packing four of its six adjustable parameters into a pair of dual concentric knobs, Time/Repeat and Tone/Degrade, both exhibiting clear marking and not at all fiddly to operate. Of the remaining two knobs, one sets the level of the repeats, while the other is a rotary switch to select Analog, Tape, Lo-Fi and Reverse delay modes. A toggle switch sets whether the delay dies away naturally after the pedal is bypassed or cuts off abruptly. There's also a tap tempo mode, entered or exited by holding down the footswitch for three seconds with eighth note, dotted eighth note and quarter-note beat divisions.

Sounds

With a maximum delay time of two seconds, you can go from the shortest slapback through to the longest delays where you can play off yourself. For straightforward delay, the Analog setting works best, starting off with unsullied repeats not unlike those that you'd get from a quality digital delay. The key, though, is to use the Tone and Degrade knobs to get those repeats exactly as you'd like them to sound. Rolling the Tone knob back reduces the treble content in successive repeats, while advancing the Degrade knob takes them from a straight copy of the guitar signal to something

less pristine. Between them, these two knobs can give the repeats a character that will either help them meld seamlessly into your sound, or stand out as an obvious effect. The Tape mode offers the sound of a single-head tape echo with the degrade knob ramping up its wobbly nature, while the Lo-Fi mode is the place to be if you want really degraded grainy repeats. Reverse is as wacky as you'd expect.

A lot of players like to twist dials in real time to get outrageous delay effects and the Obscura's hands-on control is tailor-made for that. The manual even lists the various knob manipulations that can be carried out, including the Repeat/Hold function that will loop a phrase indefinitely, so you can morph it with the knobs.

Verdict

There are two sides to the Obscura, the first being as a conventional delay with unprecedented fine control over the sound of the repeats. Its other side is as a knob manipulator's dream machine – if aural mayhem is your thing, you'll love this freakfest of a pedal. **G**

PROS Highly useful all-round delay made special by the tweakability and deconstruction of its repeats

CONS If you're just after clean delay sound, you'd be better off looking elsewhere

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Delay pedal

FEATURES: 4 delay types, tap tempo with beat divisions, Stomplock knob guard

CONTROLS: Level, Delay Type, Time, Repeats, Tone, Degrade, Delay Tails On/Off, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input 1 (mono) & 2, standard output 1 (mono) & 2

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 112 (l) x 67 (w) x 51mm (h)

Sound Technology

01462 480000

www.digitech.com



9/10

CRYOGENIC

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|||||

Audition

We test the best of the rest
of the month's new gear

Photography Neil Godwin & Joe Branton

|||||



IBANEZ JS140WH £609

CONTACT **Headstock Distribution** PHONE **0121 508 6666** WEB **www.ibanez.co.jp**

We guitarists are always looking for ways to improve the gear we use; it's part of the fun, after all. But when a cornerstone of a world-renowned manufacturer's Artist Series decides to overhaul his gear requirements and go in a new direction, it can cause headaches for the brand.

Case in point: when Joe Satriani made the switch from 22- to 24-fret necks on his guitars a few years ago, Ibanez was forced to overhaul the entire JS range. The first 24-fretter, the JS2400 (£1,749), was released in 2010 and we got our hands on the more affordable JS24P (£1,019), an Indonesian-built member of the Premium Series, in 2013. However, this new JS140 takes affordability one step further and is intended to be the first 24-fret signature Satch for all, replacing the old JS100.

Needless to say, price constraints equate to a stripped-down spec, namely the use of an Edge-Zero II locking vibrato on a JS for the first time, and Ibanez Infinity and Quantum pickups in place of DiMarzios.

That said, we applaud the inclusion of the new extended lower cutaway here and the basswood body is of just about the same ilk as those of more expensive JS guitars. Only available in white as we write, the finishing is spot on and you certainly don't feel like you're playing a cheaper instrument.

The neck, too, is of a high quality and is composed of a single piece of maple alongside a rosewood 'board. Needless to say, the feel of a guitar's neck is a personal thing, but the classic JS narrow yet deep profile is perfectly apparent and it does play like a genuine Satch.

Sounds

The Ibanez pickups are both based around ceramic magnets and as such have a very

high output. This means that dialling in a suitable Satch-esque drive setting takes mere seconds, and we're ready to get to work. If you have the technique to tame such a high gain roar, you'll find recreating Satriani's massively crushing yet articulate rhythm tone a doddle. The basswood body goes some way to smoothing things off, but be aware that the sheer amount of harmonics can add harshness.

The Infinity neck pickup does a good job of providing a throaty character to solos, and reducing the gain gives a lovely deep sound for playing those bluesy licks Joe often favours. It's not all about rock, however. Switch to a clean tone, add some delay and phaser to the coil-tapped central position, a combination of both central coils, and you've got a truly inspiring tone.

On the other hand, the Edge-Zero II vibrato can be tricky to set up sweetly and, straight from the box, ours needed a fair bit of fettling before the guitar would sit in tune nicely. As with Floyd Rose vibrato systems, a pro setup and carefully stretching-in your strings should iron out such niggles.

Verdict

We'd like to think the JS140WH offers enough for most rock players to appreciate, but anyone who truly enjoys the music, let alone the wonderful tones, that Satriani produces will be fascinated by the potential of this guitar. Okay, so it's hardly in the same league as a JS2450, let alone the JS25ART, but at £609 it's difficult to see any downsides to at least plugging one in. **[SB]**

7/10



MAYSON P-310 £1,172

CONTACT **Jackson International** PHONE **01751 477656** WEB **www.maysonguitars.eu**

You've never heard of Mayson? Neither had we. Its instruments are made in Huadu, China and designed by Alex Wang who worked "on the Mayson philosophy for years", says the brand, before production started in 2011: "He reinvented the acoustic guitar, combining the soul of old fashioned luthier skills with the accuracy and consistency of modern hi-tech machinery." Mayson promotes various improved features that all amount to a "NASA meets Stradivarius" approach. On test here we have the Performer P-310, a thinline stage electro, which certainly looks the part.

Its 366mm (14.4-inch) body width puts it into the modern small-body size while the body depth is reduced to 77mm at the base tapering to 69mm by the heel: that's pretty thin. The neck joins the body at the 14th fret and the scale measures 648mm (25.5-inch): pretty conventional. But the body is severely cut with a graceful dropped cutaway – which reminds us of Breedlove – allowing pretty easy access to the top, 24th fret. Yes, 24! Only 18 are full-width; the remainder are partial frets that become

narrower due to the long curved tip of the ebony 'board. Is that a soundhole? Yes, it's small but again very cleverly shaped. There's a larger elliptical soundport on the upper bout's bass-side, just north of the Fishman Pro Blend preamp.

There's something of the Maccaferri design in the less modern-looking slotted headstock and the individual tuners are recessed into the side of the head, which prevents the need for mounting screws (a bolt holds it, like a Schaller electric tuner). The nut is bone, as is the compensated saddle, and there's a complex 'invisible' head-splice and separate heelpiece. The neck itself has a reasonably deep, well-shaped C profile and the medium frets are ultra tidy; position dots are side-only.

Sounds

Played seated, it's very comfortable. There's no deep low end, but an almost Maccaferri-like midrange focus, with a modern sparkling high end. That sloped cutaway means there's a tendency for it to slip off your right leg but it's an easy adjustment.

Plugged in, the Fishman preamp is well featured with treble and bass sliders, plus mid contour, along with pickup/mic blend. On top of that we have small rotaries for volume, notch gain and frequency, plus a slide switch for phase. The only thing missing is a tuner. Plugged in with the sliders set in their mid position, it's a pretty good sound – the bass end is compensated for, certainly in line with say Taylor's similar-sized Grand Concert. Even so, the lows can get over-strong, but tuned down to D, the small P-310 starts sounding rather big – especially in a fingerstyle solo setting.

Verdict

This P-310 is superbly made and conceived, and as a onstage electro with a modernistic twist, should really make numerous bigger brands sit up and take notice. Remember the Mayson name. **[DB]**

8/10

TC ELECTRONIC POLYTUNE CLIP £35

CONTACT **TC Electronic** PHONE **0800 917 8926**
 WEB www.tcelectronic.com

The Clip is the world's first polyphonic headstock tuner. Based on the PolyTune pedal tuners the Clip is little longer than a nine-volt block battery, about half the thickness, and is attached to a stainless steel clip with rubber pads designed to protect the headstock you clip it to. Its jaws are wide, too – even thick classical guitar headstocks are no problem.

The tuner moves through one plane – it doesn't swivel 360 degrees – but the display does reorientate depending on if you have it on the face or rear of your headstock.

In Use

In PolyTune style, you strum all the strings to instantly tell which ones are sharp or flat. When you start tuning the individual notes it displays in either needle chromatic mode (with an accuracy of ± 0.5 cent), or the strobe mode (± 0.02 cent). You can change the standard A440 reference and you can switch to bass mode (not polyphonic). The only oddity is that when you've tuned up according to the chromatic or strobe displays, the polyphonic display says you're still not 100 per cent in tune.

Verdict

This should be a 10/10 product, but the polyphonic display disagrees with a PolyTune pedal and our ears. It's far from the cheapest headstock tuner, but aside from that polyphonic display, it's *extremely* accurate and rather cool! **[DB]**

6/10



TC-HELICON VOICESOLO FX150 £189

CONTACT **TC Helicon** PHONE **N/A** WEB www.tchelicon.com

It might be called a VoiceSolo but it's the "all-in-one personal PA, vocal monitor, instrument amplifier and vocal reverb unit" bit that should interest performing acoustic guitar players. With a face not much bigger than an iPad, the wedge enclosure is rigid and lightweight (3kg) with a full-range 6.5-inch Tannoy two-way coaxial ICT Driver and 150 watts of Class-D power.

You can use it, via two neat rear clips, on a music or mic (adaptor supplied), table or floor. There are two channels (with combi jack/XLR inputs), plus a third auxiliary with mini-jack input for your mp3. That third channel has a Voice Cancel feature for vocal practice; the main two have a Vocal Tone preset (EQ, compression and de-essing). Each channel has three-band EQ; channels one and two have reverb. Output can be wet with effects (and full or channel one-only output selection) or dry if you're plugging into a bigger system.

There's phantom power and a USB port, too, plus optional carry bag.

In use

It's extremely easy to use, and with surprising low end, you could easily use it as sound reinforcement in a small room. As an acoustic amp the EQ is a little basic, but if you already have onboard EQ, it's up to the job giving you a personal mix while you can connect into a bigger PA as you need.

Verdict

For smaller gigs, the FX150 has bags of potential for both guitarists and, obviously, singers. Placement is crucial, but in typical TC-Helicon style, it sounds superb. **[DB]**



9/10

Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports



Yamaha SLG200S
Silent Guitar
with Jamie Dickson



Writer

JAMIE DICKSON
Editor, Guitarist



In his first report on Yamaha's SLG200S, silent guitar – a highly portable, crossover instrument with hidden depths – our Editor has a spiritual experience in the shadow of Glastonbury Tor...



"The Silent Guitar becomes almost invisible when you play it"

It's the weekend and my wife, Jen, and I are heading out to the countryside. The car is loaded high with food and wine, rucksacks, walking boots and a bunch of things we probably don't need. Naturally, a guitar's coming, too. The Roy Rogers choice would be an OM-45 or something to sing along to round the campfire, but space is tight and I can't remember how to play *Home On The Range* anyway, so I decide to bring Yamaha's SLG200S Silent Guitar instead.

"What's that?" Jen asks, as I wedge its slender case on top of our other stuff in the car. It's a good question: the skeletal Yamaha breaks down into two pieces for maximum portability and in its skinny gigbag, resembles a saxophone more than a guitar. I'm hoping she doesn't think I'm going to break out some Kenny G to celebrate our holiday. To be fair, she's probably hoping I don't do that, too.

Styling aside, the key update from the old Silent Guitar is the Studio Response Technology housed in its slender 'body'. Basically, SRT allows you to blend the guitar's piezo pickup with an aural 'image' of a top-spec Yamaha LS26 recorded with a

Royer R122 mic in EastWest Studios, LA. Add high-quality onboard reverb and what you get is a strikingly accurate studio acoustic sound in your headphones. Alternatively, you can plug the guitar straight into a sound desk for feedback-free live work.

The sounds are impressive and, in a minimal way, the guitar is even quite pretty. But the real reason you should try one of these goes a bit deeper. For starters, at 24.9 inches the guitar has a relatively short scale, making it very comfortable to noodle around on. It also has more natural sustain than a normal acoustic guitar, too, so in play it's poised almost perfectly between the character of an electric and an acoustic. And because of that, the guitar doesn't come with any particular musical baggage. Pick up a Les Paul and, chances are, you'll start playing blues or classic rock on it. Pick this up and you have a blank canvas in front of you. The effect is strangely compelling: I found myself meandering at length among all sorts of styles on the fretboard, in a way I haven't done since I was a teenager – fully absorbed in just playing the instrument. Watching the morning

sun climbing over Glastonbury Tor, the guitar was so light in my arms that I hardly noticed it. Yes, I could have sat there with a conventional acoustic guitar and done much the same thing, but that strangely liberating blend of electric-style playability and featherweight handling would have been absent. The guitar becomes almost invisible when you play it.

All the same, it isn't a replacement for an acoustic guitar exactly. Practising with an acoustic duo gig for a little festival near Bristol, I weigh up whether to use the SL200S instead of my workhorse Yamaha LL16 dreadnought. After a bit of thought, I decided to stick with the LL16 for the time being. A lot of the set is folk covers and the percussive physicality of a genuine acoustic is useful for that – you can thump on the guitar's top and drive along the tunes, which you can't do on the Silent Guitar. Also the longer scale and higher string tension of the LL16 gives you something to kick against in those strummy riffs. But then again, if I used the lightweight SLG I wouldn't need to worry about feedback or sound quality? It's clear I've got some more decisions to make before our festival gig... **G**

Reviewed 369 **Price** £515 **On Test Since** June 2015 **Studio Sessions** Not yet **Gigged** Not yet **Mods** N/A

www.yamaha.com



© PAUL WYNN-MACKENZIE

Matrix Elements Vintage British 800

with Michael Brown

Writer

MICHAEL BROWN
Content Manager, Guitars, MusicRadar



MusicRadar Guitars' digital whiz has been after a portable rig, and found it in the VB800.

Now, he takes this valve/solid-state hybrid amp on its debut outing at a local pub residency – but will its lightweight frame deliver heavyweight tone?

A quick recap: my covers band has landed a weekly residency that's walkable from my flat, but my weighty ol' valve combo is too heavy to lug down the road. The ultra-lightweight Matrix VB800 head (1.8kg) and Neolight NL12 cab (7.7kg) were the solution, and the first part of my test was simply to get them home, first on a busy train, then on a mile-long walk. Owing to the NL12's robust top-mounted plastic handle (not to mention weight, or lack thereof), this proved no problem whatsoever, even for my pre-pubescent physique, so I knew hauling the rig to the gig would be fine.

I set off on my journey to the pub, new cab in tow – which I was slightly disturbed to find weighed less than my admittedly well-catered-for pedalboard – with the head tucked away in the front pocket of my gigbag. In terms of sheer weightlessness, it's hard to imagine a more portable head 'n' cab setup. Immediately after plugging in, several bandmates commented on the Matrix rig's sharp looks, and while it felt somewhat diddy next to the bass player's oversized 2x12 cab, it held its own in a full band mix. Considering the NL12's compact dimensions, it was surprisingly bassy, too, owing to the bass port located near its base – I found myself dialling back the thump on more than one occasion.

My usual rig philosophy is a good clean sound, with pedals providing the dirt; that might make the VB800 seem an unusual choice, given that its sonic template is based on the JCM800, an amp famed for its saturated grit. However, the Matrix's ace in the hole is its flexibility to run dirty or clean via the use of two inputs – the low input, which I employed, cuts out a gain stage, cooling the VB800's expected firepower into

a surprisingly effective pedal platform. It has plenty of clean headroom at gig volumes, while the hearty mids mean there's no loss of cut from the smaller enclosure.

What's more, my main distortion pedal is an MI Effects Super Crunch Box – itself based on JCM dirt – so as you might expect, the pairing worked rather well, especially in conjunction with the NL12's closed-back configuration, delivering a more direct distorted attack than my chimier go-to Laney LC30 ever could. And while I'd be unlikely to turn to the blank-canvas clean sounds for recording, throwing a compressor into the mix ensured they channelled my single coil-fuelled Nile Rodgers impersonations in a live setting, no problem.

Although I sought the VB800 and NL12 out of convenience (and they deliver that in spades), the no-nonsense tone is rapidly winning me over, even without running the amp to its full fire-breathing potential. However, I know in my heart of hearts that pedals are no substitute for full-throttle amp gain, so next time, I'm going to ditch the dirt boxes, plug into the high input and rock the Matrix for all it's worth – wish me luck... 

Reviewed 390 Price £549 (cab £336) On Test Since April 2015 Studio Sessions No Giggled Yes Mods None

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Q&A

Technical trouble? *Guitarist* will sort out your gear dilemmas

Expert Panel



Jamie Dickson

Guitarist editor Jamie is as happy with steel wool in his hand as he is with Steely Dan in his headphones, and loves vintage-gear restoration and ambitious signal chains.



Dave Burrluck

Guitarist's assiduous reviews editor 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*, Mick has wielded Allen keys, screwdrivers and sandpaper 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

Guitarist's amplifier specialist has built up 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.

LP STAY OR LP GO?

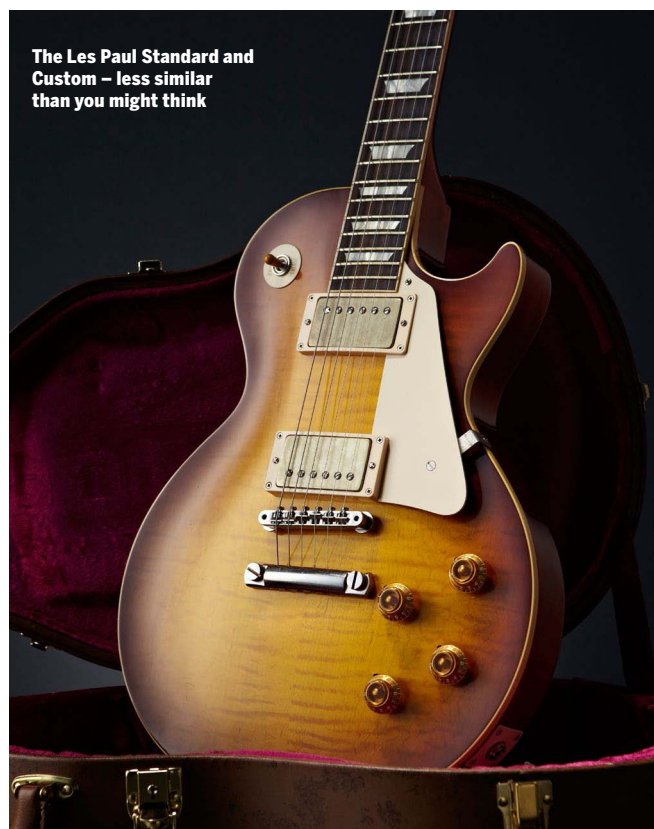
When is it the right time to let a guitar go? I have a long-standing and frustrating problem. I was primarily a Fender Strat player before buying new my Gibson Les Paul Custom limited edition Silverburst in 2006. It felt and looked fantastic and though I was advised by the shop that it was one of the best-sounding guitars they'd had in a while, it wasn't really giving me the classic Les Paul rock sound I bought it for, plugged it into my Mesa/Boogie Nomad 45. I waited to get more used to it, and over the years I tried different strings, varying strengths of picks, all manner of settings on my amp and solely playing the Les Paul for a set period to really focus on getting that sound.

I love the look, feel, vibe and pure pleasure from just owning a real Gibson Les Paul Custom, and it doesn't sound bad per se, but I just can't seem to get it to really sing for me. It is more of a collector's ornament at present.

David Carpenter, Gateshead

Your full letter would have filled up the whole of Q&A David, so we're (quite literally) cutting to the chase. Sell it: not every great guitar suits every player. You explain in great detail that it doesn't inspire you as much as another LP-style guitar you own, and life is just way too short for guitars you don't love, especially when somebody else might!

Customs do tend to sound different from Standards (although both have varied massively over the years and still do), and it's the Standard that really defined the sound of rock. If you really can't bring yourself to sell it, have a decent set of vintage-style PAF



The Les Paul Standard and Custom – less similar than you might think

pickups installed, the absolute most vintage-correct you can find (Lollar or Bare Knuckle is where we'd start). Also, have it wired to late-50s spec, including 500k pots and decent Bumblebee-type caps. It will make it sound more 'classic'; more old-school, shall we say.

If you do sell it, however, try a Gibson Custom 1958 or 1959 Les Paul Standard reissue. They may be the same shape as your Silverburst and have the same name on the headstock, but they are radically, radically different guitars.

CRACKING!

I'm a mid-40s man and I've just got back into guitar. I bought a Fender Mexican Strat about six weeks ago and would like some

advice about a crack that has appeared on the neck after about five weeks. I took it back to the shop and they were great and said they would order me another one, but would take a week or two, so just enjoy the one I had till then. When I went to exchange guitars the new one they got me was nowhere near as nice, so I decided to keep the old one as I thought it looked the nicer guitar. My question is: should the lacquer have cracked that early, and will it cause any problem? The guys in the shop said that Strats were renowned for it – 'Strat crack' was the term they used. Your advice would be very much appreciated.

Austen Farrow, via email

Ideally, it wouldn't crack anywhere, Austen. We think

Email us your questions: **guitarist@futurenet.com**

What Should I Buy?

Amp for small gigs and studio

Q I am a girl, so let's get over that. Guitars and gear is a big boys' club and I get a bit tired of all the geekery. BUT... I get out there, I play and I LOVE the sound of guitars. To this point in my gigging life, I've used an electro-acoustic plugged into whatever PA is available, but I want to play electric more because I find certain clean/reverb/delay/tremolo tones so beautiful. My guitar will probably be a Gretsch, or maybe a Guild semi-acoustic, but what amp should I buy for small gigs and recording?

Beth Charles, via email

A We know the sounds you mean Beth, and we love 'em too. So, if you'll forgive the potential blatant sexism, we're guessing you don't want anything prohibitively heavy (who does?!) and preferably with reverb on board. Maybe even tremolo, too, and then add delay from a pedal. Fender used to make a near-perfect contender, the Pawn Shop Excelsior that was also great value for money. It's now discontinued, but second-hand might be an option. Failing that, here are the amps we'd suggest you try...



1. Fender Blues Junior III

Phenomenally popular for good reason, for £610 you get a great-sounding 15-watt valve amp with in-built spring reverb. There's plenty of post 50s and 60s twang and warmth on offer, and it'll scream, too. Add a tremolo and delay pedal and you're there.



2. Fender Mustang III

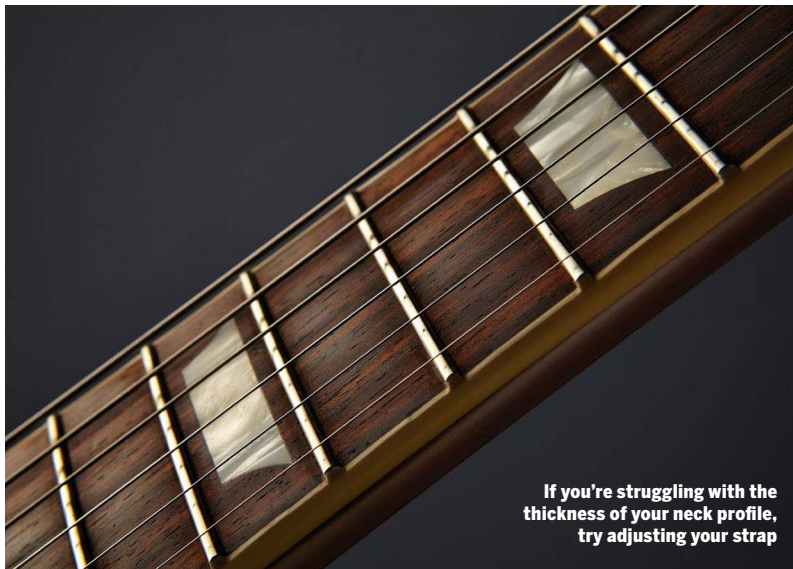
If the Blues Junior looks pricey, Fender's Mustang series is a great-value alternative at £322. Even better, as a digital amp it also contains plenty of in-built effects, so you don't need to buy pedals. Not as refined/rich sounding, but still very effective and fantastic value.



3. Supro Saturn Reverb S1648T

If your budget will stretch, Supro's return to the world stage brings us this ultra-cool 1x12 15-watter with lovely valve reverb and output valve tremolo. It overdrives quite quickly, so more clean headroom can be found in the 2x10 Royal Reverb (£1,249), along with much more weight.

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com



If you're struggling with the thickness of your neck profile, try adjusting your strap

the shop guy is referring to a finish crack on the body of the guitar around the heel area. These are very common and usually pretty harmless, the result of the neck moving slightly in its neck pocket, causing stress on the body. The finish cracks, but the wood itself rarely does.

However, you're saying the finish crack is on the neck, not the body? Depending on what sort of Mexican Stratocaster it is, the neck finish types vary. On most Standards, for example, you have a very thin satin urethane, which really shouldn't crack. On the Classic Series guitars, it's a thicker, colour-tinted gloss urethane (or nitrocellulose depending on model), so you would notice cracks (more likely chips) in that much more readily; it's most common on the fingerboard edges around the frets on maple neck/board guitars. The important thing is to just be sure that it's a finish crack and not a wood crack. The first thing is cosmetic, the second may well be structural!

SHAVE OR TRADE?

I have a dilemma. Having wanted a Les Paul since my teens but never being able to afford one, I was shocked to receive a Gibson Les Paul Traditional 2014 for my 40th birthday! I've owned the guitar for several months now, and I realise the chunky '50s neck is simply not for me (the slimmer '60s would be perfect) and so I've reverted back to my Classic Player '60s Stratocaster. I wanted advice on whether a reputable luthier could shave the neck down to a thinner neck profile at a reasonable cost, or am I just stuck with a fat neck? Trading in or selling the LP Traditional privately and upgrading to LP Standard with a slimmer neck is going to be very expensive and I will also have the guilt of having sold my 40th gift along with the sentimental value of the LP. Also,

will any work done to reduce the neck size destroy the value of my LP?

Peter Samuel, via email

Ooh, that's a chewy one, Peter. So, obvious things first: if the neck shave and subsequent refinish were perfect to the point of being undetectable, it shouldn't harm the value of the guitar in purely logical terms. Nothing is logical when it comes to guitars, however, so even revealing that it's been done will set alarm bells off in any prospective buyer's mind. Ergo, it will harm but not destroy the value of the guitar.

Secondly, the cost of having it done perfectly by a reputable professional with a strong track record and plenty of customer recommendation (don't even think about using anyone else) is likely to outweigh whatever you'd lose via sale/trade-in route. That's for you to chew over. Our advice would be to search for a guitar you really do like (don't buy blind) and trade in for that. Your 40th gift was about the spirit of giving you something fantastic that you love – this Les Paul is helping you get there.

In the meantime, try two things. First, play the guitar both one notch higher and one notch lower on your strap than you would with your Strat. You might find it makes a big difference to your hand position, and therefore the feel of the neck. Second (and this is much harder), try to reset your expectations of the guitar itself. If you're expecting to just do the same stuff with it and have the same experience as your Strat (but with a different sound), you're always on a hiding to nothing. Now we're really going to sound like hippies, but try to find out what the guitar wants to do, rather than what you want it to do. That way lies inspiration. It might just work!

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Board Games

Pedalboard problems solved

The background

Dave Dewick, Guitarist reader: "I've added a clean boost in order to play clean lead and clean fingerpicking without having to adjust the volume on my amp. I opted for the TC Electronic Spark Booster, but after a lot of testing, I'm still not sure where I want it in my pedal chain.

"I love the combination of the Tube Screamer and the Mudhoney, so don't need the added boost for that. There seems to be more presence if the Spark is placed after the delay, but it's also harsher in that position. I should add that the pedal is great at lifting the volume for clean lead."

The questions

1. Where is the best place for the Spark, used as a clean boost?
2. If the Spark boost is placed near the start of the chain, is there any chance of it damaging the pedals after it?
3. After using the clean boost, I feel like I've temporarily damaged my hearing, particularly my left 'sensitive' ear. Why does a loud clean tone seem to have a worse effect than a strongly overdriven tone? Is it due to a wider frequency?

Boss TU-2 Tuner > Ibanez TS-9 Tube Screamer > T-Rex Mudhoney > Boss CE-5 Chorus > Boss DD-6 Digital Delay > EHX Holy Grail Max > DigiTech JamMan Stereo Looper



The answers

1. Three possible places: first, try it right at the end of the chain as the final pedal **[A]**; second, try it after the Mudhoney **[B]**; or try it in the effects loop of your amp if you have one. The thinking here is that you want it after any distortion devices, boosting the overall level of the signal, rather than increasing gain and compression into a distortion pedal.

With that in mind, the front end of your amp is also critically important as the Spark Booster may drive your amp's preamp into overdrive and compression, lessening the effect of a 'clean' boost, because it's sending your amp into overdrive. For that reason, more and more people are trying a clean boost in the effects loop of their amp (if it has one), as the loop usually comes after the amp's preamp in the signal chain. You're bypassing the front end of the amp, giving the boost the maximum possible headroom potential. Start quietly as this can have a dramatic effect!

2. Nope.

3. It's to do with dynamic range and transients. Distortion happens when a waveform is clipped and the signal is compressed. So it gets louder to a point, and then it gets compressed because the pedal/amp/transformer/valve what have you runs out of clean headroom. The transients (essentially the loudest part of the signal) are reduced because of that compression and clipping.

Where there's more available headroom (what you need for clean sounds), the boost will simply lift the level and the transients come through much stronger and louder because there's enough dynamic range to accommodate them without as much distortion or compression. That's what's hammered your left ear, with which we wish you a speedy recovery!

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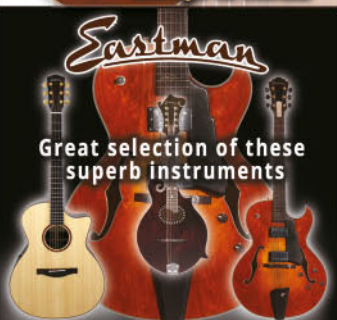
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Old Gold

1965 Gibson ES-345

Photograph by *Neil Godwin*

Launched in 1959, the ES-345 was aimed to sit in between the 335 and the slightly more luxuriously appointed 355 models in the Gibson catalogue. Like its stablemates, the 345 was originally designed to summon up the mellowness of an f-hole jazzier and combine it with the raunch of a solidbody. In order to achieve this, the 335-style instruments had a maple block running the length of the body to add warmth and sustain as well as eliminate troublesome feedback in one fell swoop. One thing that set the 345 apart was its Varitone switching and stereo wiring, the former having achieved some notoriety in guitar circles, with many players insisting that it did more harm than good!

The model has seen some variations in its livery since introduction – for instance, on early models, the ring around the Varitone switch was black, with the upgrade to gold being introduced during the second year of production. The pickguard was also shortened in 1961 so that it no longer extended beyond the bridge and Gibson dropped the 'jazz style' tailpiece in 1982 in favour of the Les Paul-type 'stop' variety.

This gorgeous '65 Sunburst model features a single-bound rosewood fingerboard with double parallelogram inlays, a trapeze tailpiece with raised diamond motif, gold hardware, PAF pickups and the longer, non-rounded horns prevalent on the 60s 335 series. Notable ES-345 players include guitar connoisseur Steve Howe, who can be heard playing his Sunburst model on the Yes prog masterpiece, *Close To The Edge*.



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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



Two Steps Forward...

Difficulty ★★★★★

15 mins per example

Tutor: Neville Marten | Gear used: Gibson 1963 ES-335 50th Anniversary Reissue, Vox AC15



THIS column was originally intended to be last issue's Blues Headlines as a continuation of our 'repetitive or sequential licks' series. But with the sad passing of BB King it had to take a back seat while we rightly took a look at some of what made BB such a genius.

Although there's nothing wrong with you learning any of these licks note for note if you like them, the real point is that almost any 'cell' of a few notes can be repeated from one string or string-pair to the next. There will need to be a bit of jiggery-pokery where the second to third string interval is concerned – due to it being a 3rd as opposed to all the

others being a 4th – and, of course, you need to maintain key/scale, and so on. But essentially any short lick you know on one string or pair of strings can be repeated and extended into a much longer one.

The licks don't always have to be descending. Even though most of mine have been, they can go bottom up, too, or turn around on themselves. It's another one of those situations where one little clump of notes that you think are usable for only one situation can be expanded into a whole new lickbag. Try it: play any three notes on one string then see if the same shape fits on the adjacent one, and the next. You'll have to

tweak the shape to make it work here and there, but it's a simple and effective exercise.

One of this issue's licks includes bends, and there's a whole raft of ideas to be had here. Mine's a simple minor pentatonic idea, but try bending from each note in a scale to the next – major pentatonic, major scale, natural minor, etc – and seeing how many great new sounds you come up with. It's the semitone bends that I always like. Again, as with all the licks in this series, you can then break them back down into smaller clumps that can fit into your regular playing to enliven it, should it need a bit of a fillip.

Have fun, and I'll see you next time.

Example 1

THIS lick starts on a semitone first-string bend at the 14th fret and then syncopates its way down the minor pentatonic with a kind of 'six' feel. It's an idea that Eric Johnson has taken to infinite extremes (he uses quintuplets, too) and you'll also hear it in Joe Bonamassa's playing. These guys use it to devastating effect, but there's nothing wrong with we mere mortals getting a bit of the action, too.

Musical score for "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. The score includes a guitar part with chords (Em, D, A, B7, Em) and a fingerstyle guitar part with fret numbers (14, 15, 12, 14) and a capo on the 8th fret. The tempo is marked as J = 110.

Example 2

I THINK of an idea like this as minor pentatonic with added notes like the 6th, 9th, 11th and major 7th all as passing tones. It really takes advantage of the guitar's physicality and shape 1 of the minor pentatonic, which helpfully places the first finger on the same fret at the start of each phrase. It's all about pull-offs, too, so make sure your fingers really 'snap' the notes as each cluster descends.

The musical score for "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel is presented in a standard musical notation format. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The guitar part is written on a single staff, with chords indicated above the notes: Em, D, A, B7, and Em. The fingerstyle guitar part is written on a six-string staff, with fret numbers (15-14-12, 15, 12, 14, 13-12, 14) indicating the specific frets to be played. The score is divided into two systems, each containing a guitar part and a fingerstyle guitar part. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The guitar part features a melodic line with triplets and a final measure with a 1/4 note. The fingerstyle guitar part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a final measure with a 1/4 note.

Example 3

THIS lick also takes advantage of fingerboard patterns; essentially, we are going across the neck in fours. But each subsequent four-note phrase begins on the second note of the previous one so we're going down four notes, skipping back up three, down four again and so on. This approach can be made to work with loads of other simple ideas to make them sound more complex than they really are.

The first system of the musical score for "The Sound of Silence" is shown. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The melody is written on a single staff, and the guitar accompaniment is indicated by fret numbers (15, 14, 12, 14, 12, 12, 15, 14, 12, 14, 12, 12) on a six-string staff. Chord symbols (Em, D, A, B7, Em) are placed above the melody. A dynamic marking of $8va$ is present at the beginning. The system ends with a repeat sign.

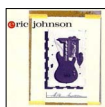
Example 4

HERE'S my bendy lick. It's very straightforward and simply bends from one minor pentatonic interval to another in shapes 2, 1 and 5. It's a good little bending exercise on its own, because it utilises semitone, tone and minor 3rd bends all in the one lick. Try the same type of idea with the major pentatonic and other scales you know – it's a great way of making a bigger statement than the initial idea suggests.

Hear It Here

Eric Johnson

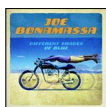
Ah Via Musicom



This album, containing Johnson's Grammy Award-winning masterpiece *Cliffs Of Dover*, should grace every guitarist's record collection. It shows what a superbly musical mind the man has, and his ability across many musical genres. But it's that amazing opening track that contains so many of his trademark sextuplet minor pentatonic licks that gives it its place here.

Joe Bonamassa

Different Shades Of Blue



While the superb title track could be Bad Company with Gary Moore guesting, the whole album is packed with great songs and full of Joe's tremendous soloing and singing. The gorgeous *Oh Beautiful!*, *So, What Would I Do* and others show his ability to straddle blues and rock with consummate ease and panache. The album is also littered with Joe's cool repetitive licks.

Stevie Wonder

Songs In The Key Of Life



I'm presuming you all have this amazing chunk of genius. If you do, run and put on *Contusion*: this is Stevie's heavy fusion track that harks back to a serious car crash in which he was involved. Michael Sembello plays lead guitar and the main feature is an intervallic rundown that Mike got from his lessons with Pat Martino and could well have influenced Eric Johnson.

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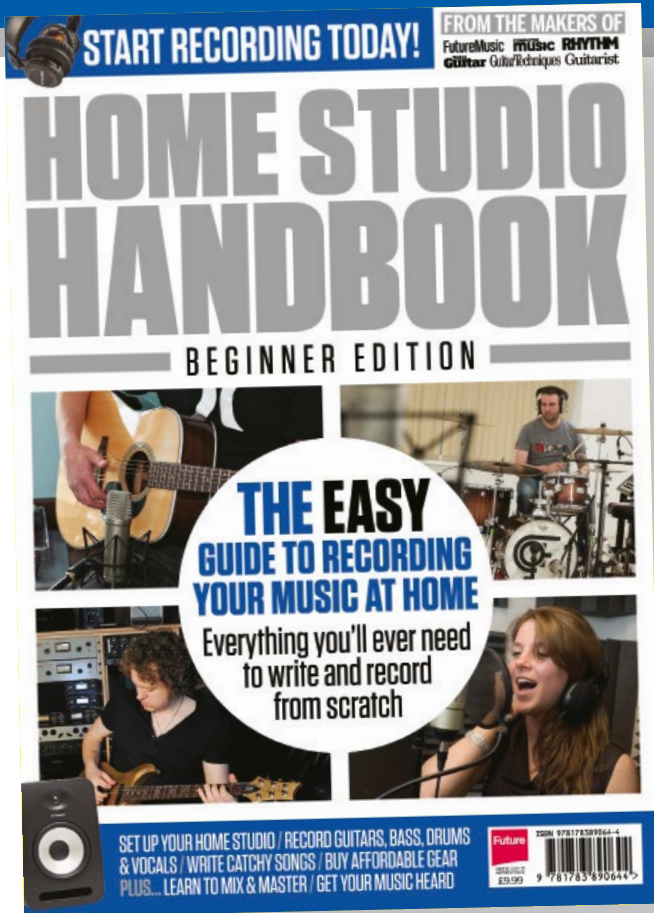
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SHOP OPEN
MONDAY TO SATURDAY
9:30AM - 5:30PM
SUNDAY
11AM - 4PM

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL STANDARD (CANDY)



Honeyburst Perimeter / Wine Red / Tobacco Sunburst / Heritage Cherry Sunburst / Trans Amber **£2149**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL LESS PLUS



Heritage Cherry Sunburst / Fireburst / Desert Burst **£1299**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL SPECIAL DOUBLE CUTAWAY



Trans Yellow / Heritage Cherry / Vintage Sunburst **£699**

GIBSON USA 2015 DEREK TRUCKS SIGNATURE SG



Vintage Red Stain **£1399**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL TRADITIONAL



Tobacco Sunburst / Placid Purple / Honey Burst / Ocean Blue / Heritage Cherry Sunburst **£1699**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL DELUXE METALLIC



Gold Top / Pelham Blue Top **£1549**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL DELUXE



Wine Red / Heritage Cherry Sunburst **£1499**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL STANDARD PREMIUM QUILT



Ocean Water Perimeter / Honeyburst Perimeter **£2699**

GIBSON USA 2015 SG STANDARD BASS



Heritage Cherry **£1099**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL CLASSIC



Vintage Sunburst / Fireburst / Heritage Cherry Sunburst / Seafoam Green **£1399**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL STUDIO



Wine Red / Desert Burst / Manhattan Midnight **£799**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL SUPREME



Heritage Cherry Sunburst Perimeter / Seafoam Green **£3799**

GIBSON USA 2015 FIREBIRD V



Vintage Sunburst **£1299**

GIBSON USA 2015 SG STANDARD



Heritage Cherry / Translucent Ebony / Fireburst **£1199**

GIBSON USA 2015 SG SPECIAL



Fireburst / Translucent Ebony / Heritage Cherry **£689**

GIBSON USA 2015 LPM



Vintage Sunburst / Heritage Cherry / Trans Ebony **£699**

GIBSON USA 2015 LES PAUL JUNIOR SINGLECUT



Vintage Sunburst / Gloss Yellow / Heritage Cherry **£599**

GIBSON USA 2015 THUNDERBIRD BASS



Vintage Sunburst **£1649**

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