

• TONE & TECHNIQUE | FINE GUITARS | LEGENDARY PLAYERS

Guitarist

Issue 399

Oct Ober 2015

“I tend to play
more with my fingers
than a guitar pick these
days, for some reason
that I don’t quite
understand”

The Guitar Interview

DAVID GILMOUR

*On how Gretsches, Goldtops and Twins
shaped the tone of his new solo album* p70



INTERVIEW

DAVE MURRAY

Inside Iron Maiden's
classic metal sound



John Etheridge
fusion masterclass



Clean Machine:
a unique '54 Strat



Vintage Trouble's
Nalle Colt on tone



Oz Noy on
progressive blues



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All That Jazz



The role of blues in shaping rock guitar is well acknowledged, but guitarists do themselves an injustice if they overlook what jazz has brought to the table, as we were reminded by this issue's interview with John Etheridge (see *Jazz Conversations*, p94). For example, a while back we interviewed Don Felder – the Eagles guitarist who co-wrote *Hotel California* – and he told us that the sound of the horn players of the 40s, whose music he grew up around, helped him understand what good phrasing was. The horn players of jazz had to stop and pause between phrases to take a breath and the natural gaps this created gave them room to consider the next move and then make it, with feeling and deliberation.

Now think about the closing solo on *Hotel California*: most of us could sing every note that Felder and Joe Walsh play in that solo from memory. That's not just because we've all heard it a lot; it's because every lick makes a memorable melodic statement that outlines the chord changes of the song through apt note selection. This is, of course, something that jazz players have always done. Thinking in terms of forming solos from elements of a song's melody, rather than wallpapering over a song with flashy, set-piece licks that 'just about' work within the immediate musical context, is the start of real musicianship – and a reminder of why the jazz tradition is still a wellspring of inspiration for many great guitarists. Enjoy the issue...

Jamie Dickson **Editor**

Editor's Highlights



John Etheridge

He's forthright, funny and a lynchpin of British jazz-rock guitar – and this month he's shared some of his best licks with us. Nice **Page 94**



First of the Breed

Sleeker, fiercer and finer than its long line of descendents, getting up close with a clean '54 Strat was a revelatory experience **Page 86**



Oz Noy

If you haven't heard this exceptional New York guitarist yet, you really should. A worthy heir to John Scofield's warped-blues crown **Page 56**

Guitarist

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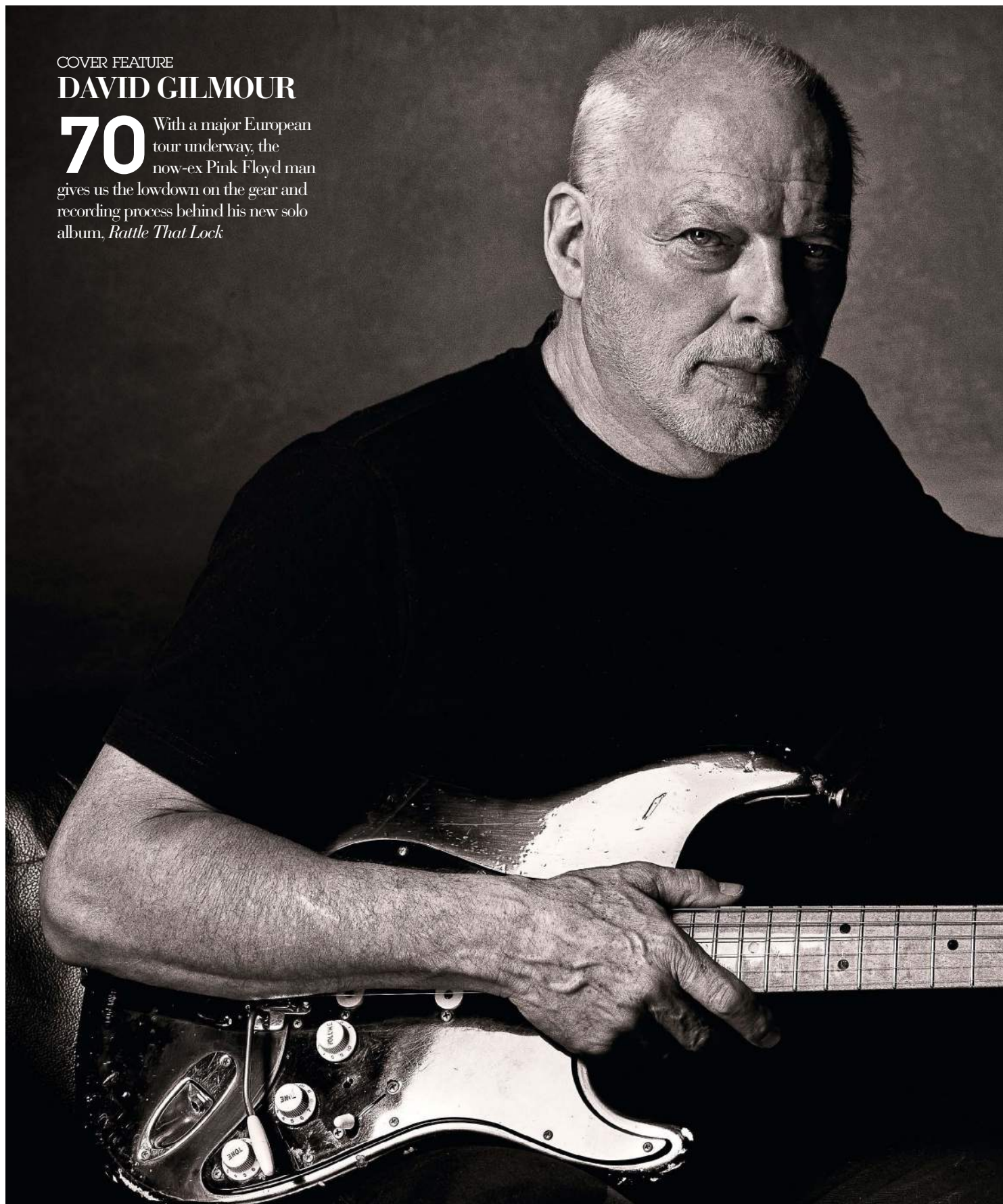
*For device compatibility please see the App Store.

Contents

COVER FEATURE

DAVID GILMOUR

70 With a major European tour underway, the now-ex Pink Floyd man gives us the lowdown on the gear and recording process behind his new solo album, *Rattle That Lock*





REGULARS

- 003 Editor's Welcome
- 027 The Lineup
- 039 Readers' Letters
- 042 Competition
- 044 New Music
- 129 Subscribe
- 148 Longterm Test
- 153 Gear Q&A
- 160 Old Gold
- 174 Reader Ads

FEATURES

- 046 Jennifer Batten
- 048 Fabian Holland
- 052 Mark Tremonti
- 056 Oz Noy
- 062 Vintage Trouble
- 070 David Gilmour
- 086 Fender 1954 Stratocaster

NEW GEAR

- 010 **Rick Turner** Model 1 C-LB
- 016 **Fender** Kingman ASCE
& Roosevelt Resonator CE
- 022 **Driftwood** Mini Nightmare 45 Head
- 104 **Schecter** Hellraiser Hybrid Tempest
& Keith Merrow KM-7
- 112 **Yamaha** THR100HD Head
- 122 **Boss** SY-300

PEDALBOARD

- 132 **Fractal Audio Systems** FX8
- 134 **Round-up** Tremolo pedals
- 140 **Delay pedals** Strymon & Free The Tone
- 142 **Xvive** Golden Brownie & Tube Squasher

AUDITION

- 144 **PRS** SE Custom 22 Semi-Hollow
- 146 **Faith** PJ Signature Neptune Cutaway
- 147 **One Control** Crocodile Tail Loop OC10
& Chamaeleo Tail Loop V2

TECHNIQUES

- 162 **Guthrie Govan** Masterclass
- 169 **Blues Headlines** Rory Gallagher



COVER PORTRAIT BY
Kevin Westenberg

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WHAT IS IT? Innovative electric design that's good enough for Lindsey Buckingham

MAC'S KNIFE

Words
Dave Burrluck

Photography
Joe Branston

Rick Turner is a seminal figure in the development of modern instruments. Back in 1979, he made a guitar for Lindsey Buckingham: the rest is history

Rick Turner isn't exactly a household name, but many musicians have been touched by his guitars and his basses. Lindsey Buckingham has famously used Turner's guitars throughout his career, and John Mayer is a recent adoptee. Turner co-founded the hugely influential Alembic company in 1970, and also co-founded Highlander Musical Audio, and D-TAR (with Seymour Duncan), focusing on acoustic amplification. Today, based in Santa Cruz, he employs four luthiers to make his Compass Rose ukes, Turner Model 1s, Electroline basses, and Renaissance guitars and basses, outputting around 24 instruments a month.

"We are essentially a custom shop," he tells us. "Every instrument we build has a very complete work order with every possible option listed that my guys and I follow."

Turner's famous Model 1 – still the most consistently ordered guitar he makes – is instantly identifiable.

"I got to know Lindsey Buckingham and the band when they were recording *Rumours* in Sausalito," he continues. "John McVie was using, and buying, Alembic basses, and I was working on Lindsey's guitars. Lindsey and I have similar musical roots. He plays with his fingers,





1

The guitar is quite similar to the one – number three – that Buckingham bought back in 1979

not a flatpick (well, usually); he's basically an acoustic player gone electric. Me, too. So the idea of designing a guitar that would feel right to an acoustic player, would deliver the kind of detailed tone that you get from a fine acoustic, but then be able to go toe-to-toe with any Les Paul, but maintain more of the clarity of a Strat: that was the goal."

Although plenty has changed in the way Turner makes his guitars today, not least CNC technology, the guitar is pretty similar to the one – number three – that Buckingham purchased back in 1979. The compact body shape, inspired by what Turner believes was an old Stauffer, measures just 298mm across its lower bouts; the body length is 410mm, with an overall depth of 60mm. It's weighty at 4.15kg (9.13lb) and that reflects its solid mahogany construction – two halves, top and bottom, which have their outer curves shaped, then the interior electronics cavities cut, before they're joined and bound on both top and bottom edges. The maple neck is glued into the body and it's a multi-laminate design, the main spine having two purple heart stringers while the heel is an additional piece with contrasting heel cap. Likewise, the headstock, is faced back and front before being joined to the main neck.



1. Yes, the humbucker can be rotated to find the sound that suits you and your setup. We liked the workshop setting – it's wound directly onto a ceramic magnet, but, says Rick, "I've tamed the tendency for ceramic pickups to sound harsh"

2. True to its time of origin, the Model 1 uses a multi-laminate neck with maple/purple heart laminations. The sliced-on headstock is laminated on both the back and front, too

3. Turner's distinct headstock is also used on his Renaissance range of thin-body steel- and nylon-string electros

4. Unlike the 3D 'violin'-like arch of a Les Paul, the Turner is arched, back and front, across its body, not along it



2



3



4

Aside from the compact design, the most notable feature is the neck-placed, Turner-designed-and-made passive pickup set in a circular hole. The idea is you can place this where you want and an Allen key bolt on the reverse side allows you to rotate it and then lock it in place. The key is finding the 'sweet spot' for your rig and ears.

Various versions of the Model 1 are available, not least in terms of electronics. Here we have probably the best-known setup with volume and tone, then, via a small toggle switch, you can switch in the 'quasi' parametric circuit (the red LED lights) with one knob to sweep the frequency range; the other, with a centre 'flat' position detent, is a boost/cut. The battery compartment, for the two block batteries that power the active electronics, lies under that plastic 'tailpiece'.

Feel & Sounds

Despite the small size, it's a nice player seated and strapped on – although there's a slight neck pull – but it's easily balanced by your right forearm resting on the body. Yes, it's weighty but feels very comfortable, with the arched back pushing the face of the guitar and fingerboard up towards you. There's a Gibson-

esque, mid-pushed acoustic ring unplugged and the neck has plenty of depth and a slightly D-shaped profile with quite a bit of shoulder. We didn't mess with the pickup positioning and initially played with the parametric circuit switched out. You have to forget it's got a slanted 'neck' pickup, because what you hear tells you a different tale. The range on the tone control is very wide from some high treble lift to, completely rolled off, a fairly typical guitar tone control-like character and you use that to direct your sound between your imagined 'bridge' and 'neck' pickups that you're used to. There is some background hiss, which sounds a bit intrusive, but roll the volume down (which doesn't seem to have much tonal effect in terms of the high end) and that hiss disappears, especially in a band context. The coil split turns off the neck-facing coil and creates a leaner edged, more sparkling 'bridge' tone, or an almost P-90-ish rounder nose 'neck' pickup with the tone control reduced. With a loudish Fender-style amp, we're hearing some juicy Americana-like tones that, well, just sound good: ringing and clear.

With the gain knob set in its flat position, there's virtually zero hum increase as you switch in the parametric circuit and that red



LED lights. Add a little boost and sweep the frequency control, which seems focused on quite a broad midrange, and in its lower positions some fatter – indeed, quite fat with the gain increased – tones emerge, like a boosted Les Paul. As you raise the frequency knob, it's like adding a volume boost to your Strat or Tele, especially in single-coil mode. Again, there is some background hiss but although concerning initially, if we're honest, watching your volume level – and there's plenty of poke here – and not over-boosting that parametric gain, it didn't bother us. A hugely creative guitar.

Verdict

Occasionally, along comes an instrument that breaks the rules. There's a charm to its design, and it doesn't sound like, well, anything else we can think of, taking us from really stringy, acoustic-y single coil voices to full fat creamy Les Paul. It's far from cheap, but apart from being a real road horse, it's the undeniable creativity of the guitar that wins us over. You don't have to be a Mac fan to enjoy it: any creative guitarist, in virtually any style, could use this versatile instrument. Nice to have you back in the UK, Mr Turner. **G**

5. Not your normal four controls: here, we have volume, tone (with pull/push coil-split), two-way toggle to engage the quasi-parametric EQ circuit with frequency control, and 12dB cut/boost control

You don't have to be a Mac fan: any guitarist, in virtually any style, could use this versatile instrument



RICK TURNER MODEL 1 C-LB

PRICE: £4,950 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Single-cut solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Maple with purple heart laminates and spliced headstock

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.3mm

FINGERBOARD: Black bound rosewood, abalone dot inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 24, medium/jumbo

HARDWARE: Tune-o-matic-style bridge with brass saddles, custom tailpiece, Gotoh 510 tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: Rick Turner hot-wound magnetic hum-cancelling pickup. Volume and tone with pull/push coil split. Onboard active preamp with w/ quasi-parametric circuit sweep controls

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 4.15/9.13

OPTIONS: Optional LR Baggs / D-TAR piezo system and blending electronics. Numerous custom options are available (£POA)

RANGE OPTIONS: The Studio Special has a solid mahogany neck and a satin finish; the Stage Standard, is top-bound only, with plain maple neck. Others available

LEFT-HANDERS: To order

FINISHES: Shaded gloss (as reviewed), catalyzed polyester over a catalyzed urethane sealer

The North American Guitar
0207 835 5597

www.rickturnerguitars.com

8/10

PROS Undeniable heritage and mojo. A versatile, creative electric guitar with plenty of 'acoustic' onboard

CONS Even as a custom instrument from a fine maker, it's still an expensive proposition

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FIRST PLAY



FENDER KINGMAN ASCE
£549

WHAT IS IT? Vintage-inspired cutaway dreadnought electro



**FENDER ROOSEVELT
RESONATOR CE**
£549

WHAT IS IT? 14-fret, cutaway electro resonator with dual pickup system





Diverse Duo

Fender's slowly expanding acoustic line is becoming big news in store. We find out why

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Olly Curtis

Not too long back, Fender had acquired – or inherited – quite a collection of acoustic brands under its worldwide distribution arm. There was Guild and Ovation (USA and import), Takamine, a smattering of Gretsch acoustics, and a growing number of affordable Fender-brand acoustics coming from China and Indonesia. We even saw some Fender USA models, too. Cut to the present day, however, and it's a very different Fender. Having shed those other acoustic brands (Gretsch excepted), Fender is focusing on its own acoustic brand, albeit with no current signs of any USA acoustic production.

This new duo sums up the current Fender acoustic world: a mix of original-style Fender flat-top designs alongside more everyday fare. So, the Kingman harks back to the first wave of Fender acoustics from 1963, not least with its big Strat headstock, although here the neck is glued-in, not bolted. The Roosevelt Resonator has no place in Fender's past and aside from the Telecaster headstock and 'f' holes (Fender holes, geddit?), it seems like a bit of blanket rebranding. And yet both are highly affordable: the Kingman is made in China and comes with a tidy hard case; the Roosevelt is manufactured



in Indonesia, but you'll have to buy your own bag for this one.

As well as that, both models are Fishman-powered electros, too. The Kingman has its simple under-saddle and side-mounted Presys preamp – with volume, bass, mid and treble rotary controls, and push buttons to engage the onboard tuner and change the phase. The Roosevelt goes for a magnetic/piezo hybrid setup with a Telecaster-style magnetic neck pickup and Fishman pickup on the resonator cone, with volume and tone for the former and just volume for the piezo. The two sources are balanced by a Fishman Powerchip active preamp. The output is mixed-mono only on a side-mounted plate that also holds its necessary battery.

The lightweight Kingman is all solid wood, spruce and mahogany, which again ups its value-for-money rating. It's gloss finished,

The Kingman will find plenty of friends: it's outgoing, projects well and is lively, too

too – clearly quite thinly on the rippled, wide grained front and straight-grained back. Both are two-piece, centre-joined. Despite the Fender motifs – such as that gold plastic-faced pickguard and wide 'Viking' bridge – construction of the cutaway dreadnought body is pretty universal with scalloped X braced top and a clean interior. The much heavier, smaller bodied Roosevelt is made entirely from laminates, spec'd with a flamed maple-faced top, though through the mainly opaque black there's virtually no flame visible. The back and sides are laminate mahogany here, with a wide-heeled mahogany neck.

Scale lengths differ between the two models on test, too. The Kingman goes for 643mm (25.3 inches), while the Roosevelt is shorter at the Gibson standard of 629mm (24.75 inches). Both have tidily bound rosewood 'boards: the Kingman's with a 305mm (12-inch) radius; the Roosevelt with a more acoustic-like 406mm (16-inch) curvature. We get a bone nut and compensated saddle on the Kingman, and the same nut features on the Roosevelt, but the bridge, which sits on top of the Dobro-like aluminium spider, is a two-piece design of maple pieces topped with thin rosewood strips. Tuners on both are like old-style Klusons, and the Roosevelts have rather

1. That logo, that headstock shape. It can't be anything else but a Fender. Its original acoustics featured a bolt-on neck, unlike here
2. Bound fingerboard and block inlays bring a late 60s/early 70s vibe to the Kingman
3. No bolts here. Instead we have a very typically acoustic heel with ivoroid heel cap. Note the strap button, with reinforcing inside block, on the shoulder, too
4. The ubiquitous Fishman preamp is pretty well spec'd with accurate tuner, three-band EQ and phase control. Not the easiest to see on dimly lit stages, though...



4

attractive aged white plastic buttons, which tie in with the clean double body binding.

Feel & Sounds

Both necks have quite a rounded and quite deep C section with pretty electric-like string spacing at both the nut and saddle. Acoustically, the Kingman will find plenty of friends: it's outgoing, projects well and covers a wide response from pretty big basses through to bright but not overdone highs. It's lively, too, with an upper-mid push and nice dynamic, but there's seemingly also a compression roof when you dig in. The completely different physics of the resonator produce an entirely different sound: honkier, more nasal with a relatively short, rather banjo-like sustain.

Both models have similar setups with the same 0.012-gauge strings, so the resonator really isn't aiming for serious slide. It's easy enough, but in drop tunings (not least with its shorter scale), we'd be upping the string gauge to increase tension, and likely the action, too.

Plugged in, the Kingman sounds a little vanilla, needing some mid reduction both onboard and outboard to open the sound. It's not overly zingy, so you may want to lift that area a little (which is easily done on the well-centred EQ controls on the preamp), although





5

watch the bass end, because it can run away with you. And, yes, you can fingerpick, but we spent most of our test time with a plectrum in hand – it just seems to suit the guitar.

Plugged into our stage rig, the Roosevelt immediately gives us a wall of feedback. The cone's pickup is, err, very lively. It also needs a completely different signal path that actually keeps the EQ more linear. In fact, a little mid boost helps both magnetic and piezo sounds, and it helps getting an authentic electric slide sound. On its own, that cone sound is very tinny – a huge contrast to the almost soft-edged neck single coil. The tone control is simply a treble roll off (which would have been more help on the piezo side), but add a little of the piezo to the magnetic and you have a pretty usable pseudo-'acoustic' resonator voice. Of course, it's only a mono output, but switch the signal path into some rootsy distortion for that

Add a little piezo to the magnetic and you have a pretty usable pseudo-'acoustic' resonator voice

5. The Roosevelt's controls are volume and tone for the neck pickup and just volume for the resonator cone's pickup

6. Aside from those F-for-Fender soundholes, this Tele headstock is the only Fender DNA here...

7. ...well, apart from the Tele-style neck single coil, of course, which when mixed with the much brighter cone pickup creates a pretty good hybrid sound





6



7

neck pickup and you've got quite a stage buddy. Just take care with the piezo pickup.

Verdict

Many may find it a surprise that, in terms of units, Fender is frequently in the top three acoustic brands sold all over the world. While it does have a smattering of vintage-inspired models such as this Kingman on its books, it's also a surprise that its other acoustics (such as the Roosevelt electro-resonator) appear much less Fender, much more generic. Nevertheless, we all know the power of the big name on the headstock and with perfectly competent guitar making – and at these prices – there's little to complain about here aside from, perhaps, character: the Kingman has it in elegant sufficiency; the Roosevelt, while still a pretty valid instrument, has very little. **G**



FENDER KINGMAN ASCE

PRICE: £549 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: 14-fret dread' cutaway electro

TOP: Solid spruce with scalloped

X bracing

BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 124mm tapering

to 99mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 396mm (15.6")

NECK: Maple

SCALE LENGTH: 643mm (25.3")

TUNERS: Nickel-plated vintage-style

tuners with aged white plastic buttons

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.7mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearloid block inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 20, small

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with

compensated bone saddle/55mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman pickup system

with Presys side-mounted preamp,

3-band EQ and onboard tuner

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2/4.4

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Sonoran SCE

is £270; left-handed at £280. The

Villager 12-string is £340

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: All gloss urethane 3-Color

Sunburst (as reviewed)

Fender GBI

01342 331700

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8/10

PROS Lively sounding, affordable cutaway dread that has character aplenty with good sounds to match

CONS Its quite electric-like playability won't suit every player; definitely more of a strummer



FENDER ROOSEVELT RESONATOR CE

PRICE: £549

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: 14-fret cutaway electro

resonator

TOP: Laminate figured maple

BACK/SIDES: Laminate mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 96mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 371mm (14.6")

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

TUNERS: Nickel-plated vintage-style

tuners with aged white plastic buttons

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood,

white pearloid snowflake inlays,

406mm (16") radius

FRETS: 20, small

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood-

tipped-maple 'spider' bridge/55mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman piezo pickup for

resonator, Tele single coil (neck);

volume and tone (magnetic), volume

(piezo), with Fishman Powerchip

mixing preamp

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.96/6.5

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The other

resonators in the Fender line are

the Brown Derby (£5280) and the

metal-bodied FR-55 Hawaiian (£659)

– both are acoustic-only

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: All gloss urethane Moonlight

Burst (as reviewed)

6/10

PROS A perfectly good stab at this style of guitar – a grab, go and gig electro-resonator

CONS More thought in the electrics department would make a difference. A bit of character might help, too...





FIRST PLAY



**DRIFTWOOD MINI
NIGHTMARE 45 HEAD**
£1,350

WHAT IS IT? A compact but very powerful metal-cased head from German amp builders Driftwood

Sweet Dreams

A new high-spec head from Germany with more gain than anyone could possibly need. Ever...

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Adam Gasson

There doesn't seem to be any let-up in the popularity of small metal-cased guitar amps and, to underline that, it's time to welcome another new brand to the UK. Driftwood Amps' products are designed and made in Bautzen, Germany by Marek Drozdowski. His range includes a full-size head called the Purple Nightmare and this one, a smaller, metal-jacketed head, appropriately named the Mini Nightmare.

This little Nightmare may be smaller than its bigger brother, but there's been no compromise in features or build quality. The case is satin-black paint on steel, and would be in danger of looking somewhat boring if it wasn't for a dazzling flamed maple front panel finished in something Driftwood calls 'Lava Burst'. All Driftwood amps are built to order and there's a very long list of finish options to cater to all tastes. Inside the steel chassis, the Mini Nightmare's electronics are mostly contained on one large high-quality printed circuit board, with short flying leads to front and rear panel items for ease of servicing and improved reliability. The layout is clean and economical, using relays for switching with high-quality components including orange

drop and Wima capacitors, with a mix of metal film and carbon comp resistors, indicating a deep knowledge of old-school valve circuit design. Overall, it's a very high-quality product intended for pro use and should last a lifetime.

The Mini Nightmare's distinctive layout has two separate preamp channels for clean and overdrive sounds, with an assignable built-in TS-type overdrive circuit, which sits at the front of the signal chain and can be set to work on either channel, or footswitched. The clean channel has a bright switch, while the overdrive channel has a boost switch that adds a substantial dose of extra gain and volume. There are two sets of gain, master volume and EQ controls, together with Rumble and Sharp controls that fine-tune the output stage tone.

On the rear panel, there's a trio of speaker outlets, together with a series effects loop and a recording output that features a switchable speaker simulation circuit with a choice of two voicings. There's also a power amp off switch for silent recording. The Mini Nightmare comes with two footswitches that handle channel, TS-overdrive and effects loop operation: these last two can also be assigned using a pair of rotary switches. A handy nine-volt DC outlet enables pedals to be powered directly from the amp without the need for separate power supplies. Neat.

Feel & Sounds

The Mini Nightmare powers up quietly and smoothly, often an early indication of good circuit design. The clean channel is warm and very responsive with smooth tone controls that interact in a very pleasing manner



with no unwanted peaks, making the Mini Nightmare far from a nightmare to dial in. The bright switch adds significant extra snap, helping balance out guitars with high-output humbuckers, which often sound muddy when played clean. The overdrive channel has a very wide range of gain with a high/low switch that adds an extra stage for very thick distortion tones; this is ideal for modern rock and metal players and very much in tune with the Euro-rock sound, which has a touch more midrange than you'd hear in the States.

Added to this, the Mini Nightmare's secret weapon is a built-in overdrive pedal based on a certain very well-known design. This overdrive circuit has separate controls for gain, tone and volume and can be assigned to either channel as well as being footswitchable,

1. All Driftwood amps are built to custom shop standards, with impeccable build and finish quality
2. Both the effects loop and the TS drive circuit can be assigned to either channel, or made footswitchable
3. A noise gate and a quality nine-volt DC outlet for pedals add to the amp's versatility
4. The Sharp and Rumble controls on the front panel fine-tune the Mini Nightmare's high- and low-frequency response





2



3



4

adding significant extra versatility. With all this gain on tap, noise could be an issue. However, our sample comes with an optional noise-gate circuit that holds everything in check quite effectively. We like the Mini Nightmare's American-influenced clean sounds just as much as the different overdrive textures – although it's aimed primarily at modern rock players, there's a lot of subtlety lurking in there, too, making it equally rewarding for playing that relies more on expression than speed.

Verdict

Driftwood is carving a niche in Europe as the go-to custom-amp builder for many top players. We like the high standard of design and build, and the extra level of attention to detail that rivals the best that California can offer. Compared to some other metal-case amps it's not so cheap, but the quality of what's on offer here more than justifies the price, with flexibility and features that some amp companies charge considerably more for. **G**

The amp's secret weapon is a built-in overdrive pedal based on a certain very well-known design



DRIFTWOOD MINI NIGHTMARE 45

PRICE: £1,350

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: All-valve head

OUTPUT: 45 watts RMS

VALVES: 5x 12AX7, 2 x 6L6

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

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 8/18

CABINET: Steel

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Gain, bass, mid, treble, master volume. Global Rumble and Sharp controls for output stage.

TS-overdrive volume, tone and gain **FOOTSWITCH:** 2x footswitches toggle channel, loop and TS operation

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Bright switch on channel 1, hi/lo gain switch on channel 2. Recording out with switchable speaker emulation, noise gate, assignable tube-screamer-type boost, assignable effects loop, 9V DC pedal supply

OPTIONS: Choice of baffle and covering options, flamed maple insert (£50), noise gate (£50). Customers also have a choice of knob style/colour and pilot light jewel colour

RANGE OPTIONS: The Mini Nightmare is also available in a 22-watt, 6V6-powered version at £1,075

Driftwood Amplification
info@driftwoodamps.com
www.driftwoodamps.com

8/10

PROS Excellent build quality, great tone and good looks. The built-in TS circuit adds extra flexibility

CONS Extra gain adds hiss if you push it too far, making the optional noise gate more of a necessity

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The Lineup

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



Mansons Guitar Show

3 October, Exeter Corn Exchange, Devon

Mansons Guitar Shop and the Manson Guitar Works custom builders in Exeter have had their busiest period ever over the last few years, and now we're pleased to see that they're bringing the Manson's Guitar Show back to the South West, this year sponsored by Rock Organic. And it's returning bigger and better than ever, with an extensive range of big brands and boutique names, plus some great artists, too. Mansons' David Edwardson lets us know what's in store.

It's really good to see the show return. What gear can players expect to find?

"The show's stands have sold out for us in record time this time. People have really got on board and a couple of the companies will be launching new products at our show, which is pretty exciting. In terms of new products, Marshall will have the Astoria amp series, which was launched at NAMM, so this will be the first time other people will be able to try them. Yamaha and Line 6 are bringing new products that we aren't even allowed to talk about just yet, and Origin Effects will have their new Compact series, too."

So, will there be a good blend of smaller companies to see along with the big names at the show?

"Yes, it's a really good mix of bigger names like Gretsch, Orange, Ibanez and Fender with more boutique UK companies like Origin and Heistercamp Straps, even Star Singer Slides, which is pretty much a one-man operation making handmade ceramic slides. We've got names like Taylor and Framus, but also Tanglewood and Freshman, too. So it's not an exclusive, boutique show; it's a day out for every guitar and bass player."

What about artists who will be playing or in attendance?

"We have Steve Howe from Yes, who is a friend of the shop, but this is the first time he's been available for the show, which is really exciting for us. There will also be Manson artists Martin Grech and The Stranglers' Baz Warne, plus Aziz Ibrahim, Nick Beggs. Mikey Demus of Skindred will be at the show, too, with Orange, and Yolanda Charles will be there with Elixir Strings. Elixir will have a separate room within the show with artists, and we're still working on confirming one or two more."

Anyone who has been to the Mansons shop in Exeter will know it has a really inclusive atmosphere for players of all levels – will the show reflect that?

"The vibe of the show will definitely follow that. Everyone who works in the shop is a down-to-earth player, and we're used to helping mums and dads with starter kids, as well as regular customers and the occasional known face. So the products will be there for all players to demonstrate and there will be representatives from all the companies exhibiting for people to ask questions direct."

What about Manson Guitar Works' presence at the show?

"We will hopefully have some full custom Manson guitars and special-edition Matt Bellamy models for sale on the day. Players will also be able to meet Hugh Manson and ask questions about the guitars Manson Guitar Works builds." **G**

Manson's Guitar Show takes place at on Saturday 3 October from 10am to 5.30pm at Exeter Corn Exchange, Devon, EX1 1BU. Visit www.mansons.co.uk for updates

What's Goin' On

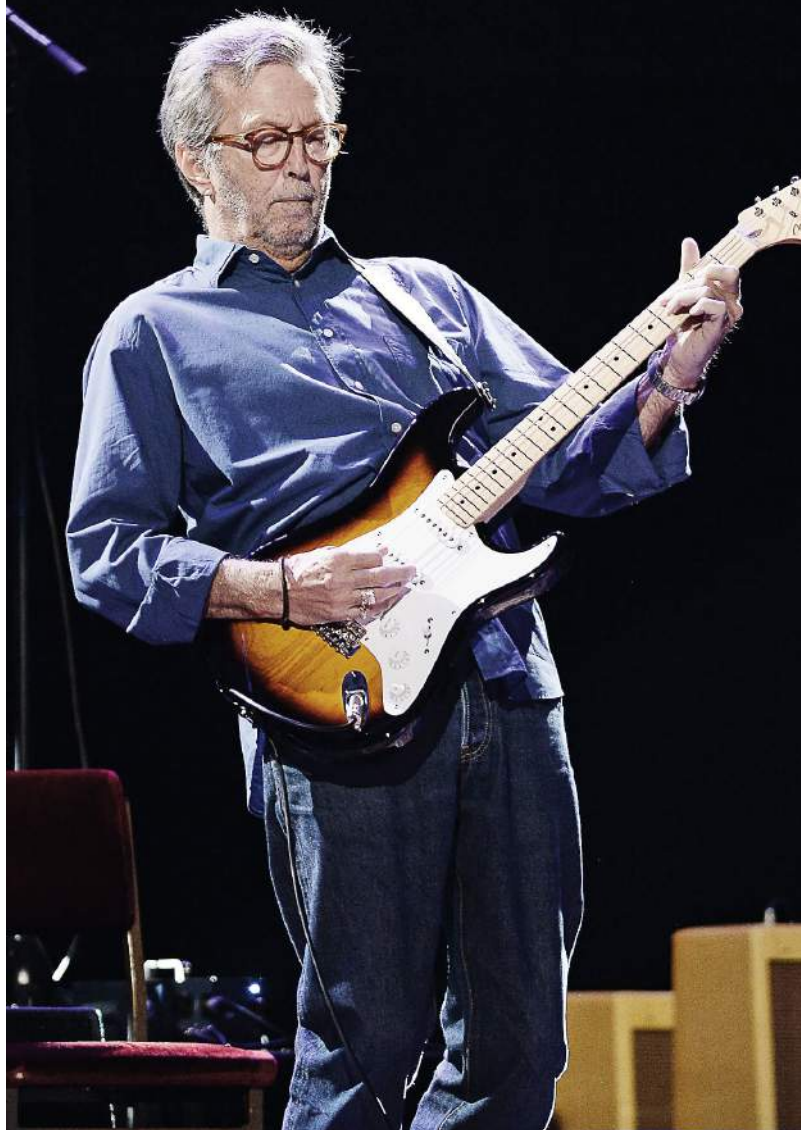
All the best guitar events happening over the next few weeks, in one place

Eric Clapton Live At The Royal Albert Hall: Slowhand At 70

In cinemas worldwide from 14 September

When **Slowhand** celebrated his 70th birthday in May with a myriad of friends and fans in a seven-night residency at the hallowed dome of the Albert Hall, he was in very familiar surroundings. The iconic bluesman has played over 200 shows at the venue, 178 of them as a headliner. But even by Clapton's standards, these performances marked a huge milestone after 50 years at the forefront of the guitar world. Now fans will have the chance to share the night in a cinema experience that will frame the live performance with a featurette filmed exclusively for audiences, presented by respected music broadcaster Paul Gambaccini and interviews with renowned musicians and Clapton collaborators including Paul Carrack, Andy Fairweather Low and Chris Stainton, as well as journalists Hugh Fielder and Paul Sexton.

www.ericclaptonfilm.com



Joanne Shaw Taylor 22 Sept to 27 October Various UK venues

The British blues artist continues her support of last year's assured fourth album, *The Dirty Truth*, with an extensive UK tour starting in Exeter and St Ives. She'll be playing contemporary cuts and back catalogue favourites with rising Manchester blues rockers Federal Charm in support.

www.thegigcartel.com

Johnny Marr 4 to 22 October Various UK venues

He recently confirmed that an autobiography is in the works for release next autumn, but the indie icon has no plans to rest just yet as he heads out on his second UK run in support of *Playland*. The tour's a family affair, too; his son Nile's trio Man Made will support.

www.ticketmaster.co.uk

The Llyn Acoustic Guitar Festival 2 to 4 October Llanbedrog, North Wales

Now in its fourth year, the festival offers a great opportunity to learn from fine players across two intimate venues in a village setting. Gordon Giltrap, Elliott Randall and John Etheridge are among the world-class artists attending this year, and there are even open mic slots available.

www.llynacoustic.co.uk

Donovan 3 October to 15 Nov Various UK venues

Billed as 'an evening with', this UK tour will see the 60s troubadour celebrate his 50th anniversary in the industry. Expect all the hits and hopefully some great stories, too, from the influential acoustic artist who taught Lennon and influenced McCartney with his clawhammer fingerpicking.

www.ticketmaster.co.uk

King King 21 October to 15 Nov Various UK venues

The kilted soulful blues rockers are riding high with four nominations in the British Blues Awards, including two for frontman Alan Nimmo. They continue their ascendance with UK dates this autumn, before heading to Germany in support of acclaimed third album, *Reaching For The Light*.

www.gigantic.com

Ilfracombe Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival 13 to 15 November Ilfracombe Holiday Park, Devon

This year's three-day North Devon event at will be headlined by The Blockheads, Connie Lush & Blues Shouter, plus former Mountain drummer Corky Laing. With weekend tickets on sale for £119 (day tickets are £25), this is a promising package.

www.ilfracombebluesfestival.co.uk

Joe Satriani 1 to 10 November Various UK venues

Satch's recent instrumental opus, *Shockwave Supernova*, finds him playing as the alter ego it's named after, so the transfer of the concept to the live stage is an intriguing proposition. Be sure to get there early; South African bluesman Dan Patlansky will be a special guest.

www.satriani.com

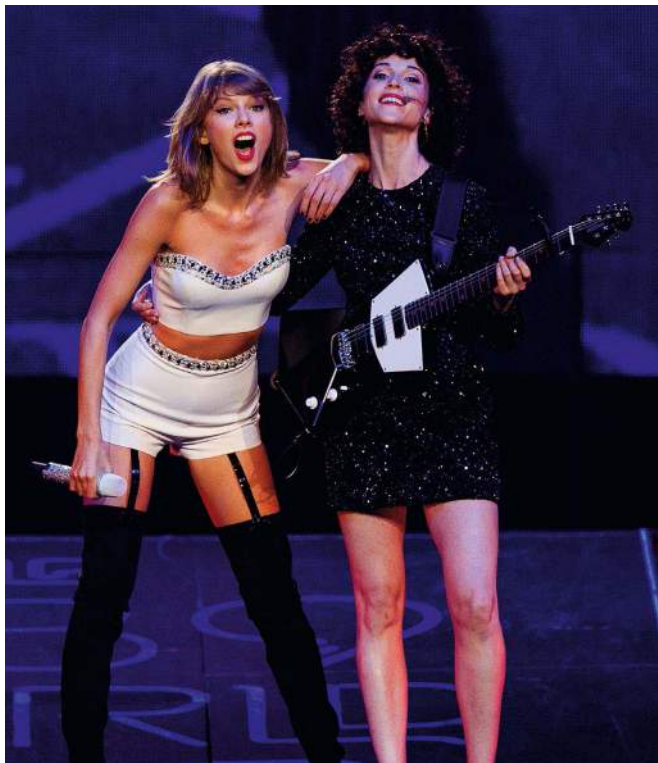
Blood And Roses: The Songs Of Ewan MacColl 3 November Liverpool Philharmonic

It's difficult to overstate the role MacColl's music played in British folk, and this concert marks 100 years since his birth. His sons, Calum and Neill, will play guitar in a core band, with guests including Martin Carthy, Norma Waterson and Seth Lakeman.

www.liverpoolphil.com

The Players

News and happenings from the world of your favourite guitarists



St Vincent Signature Ernie Ball Music Man

Inventive indie player's signature model revealed

We'd heard credible murmurings about the project as early as last summer, and now the signature guitar collaboration between contemporary indie rock's most fascinating player, Annie Clark (St Vincent) and Ernie Ball Music Man has been realised with a bold design and high-profile premiere.

St Vincent debuted the guitar with a spotlight blues solo in her guest appearance at Taylor Swift's Los Angeles Staples Center show on 25 August to perform a version of Beck's song *Dreams*, alongside the man himself.

The Ernie Ball Music Man St Vincent signature (\$1,899) is available in black or custom Vincent Blue, a colour hand-mixed by Annie, and it has an African mahogany body, rosewood neck and fretboard with St Vincent inlays, Schaller locking tuners, and a five-way pickup selector for three mini humbuckers.

"I'm extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to design a guitar this personal with this company, this family, in whom I believe so completely," says Clark. "The entirety of my experience as a guitarist is invested in this instrument. I sought to create a tool that would help and inspire those who share my priorities in a guitar, namely that it be comfortable and lightweight and that it exhibit clean lines, all without sacrificing tone flexibility."

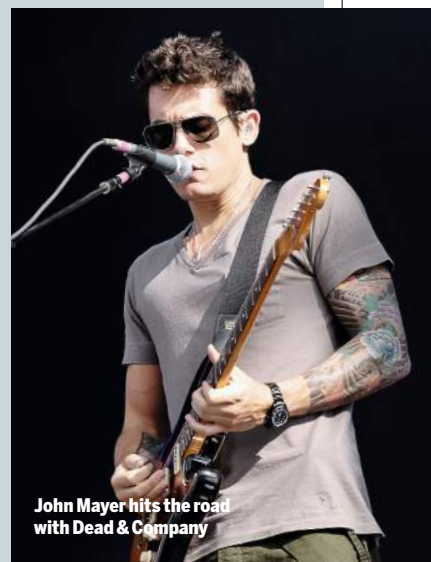
www.music-man.com

It's going to be an interesting autumn for **John Mayer** as his search for a main-squeeze guitar continues. He's playing US dates between October and December with Grateful Dead members Bob Weir, Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, alongside Allman Brothers' Oteil Burbridge and Ratdog keyboardist Jeff Chimenti under the banner Dead & Company. "I've followed the guitar wherever it pointed, and it's never steered me wrong," Mayer said on Instagram. "I hope you'll ride along with me, because we're going to have some fun." But what guitar will it be? Recent Twitter posts have revealed he's moving away from the guitar he's been most associated with, responding to a fan's Twitter question, 'So no more Strat?' with a succinct, 'That ship has sailed.' Meanwhile, Mayer is currently on the list of PRS artists and has taken delivery of a semi-hollow custom model, describing it as "the closest thing to a violin you can get".

Instrumental virtuoso **Tony MacAlpine** is undergoing treatment for suspected cancer. Following a statement in August that he was postponing previous scheduled tours in Asia and Australia, he added: "I was taken to the hospital with severe stomach pains... Medical doctors discovered a large mass in my intestine, and it seems likely that we are dealing with cancer." He continued, saying that if all goes well, he hopes to be back for his European in October. *Guitarist* wishes Tony all the best for his treatment and recovery.



Is another Sabbath album in the works?



John Mayer hits the road with Dead & Company

Guitarist is also saddened to hear British blues-rock artist **Larry Miller** has recently suffered a stroke and is currently undergoing an intensive rehabilitation programme. We wish Larry all the best in his recovery.

Ozzy Osbourne guitarist **Gus G** has let slip that **Black Sabbath** may well have one last album up their sleeves following 2013's *13*. "We're doing Japan in November," he told told webzine My Global Mind. "However, I don't think there's going to be a lot coming out of Ozzy because he's going back to Sabbath to make another one."

Tony Iommi and co have been quiet on the subject so far...

Following the news that **DJ Ashba** and **Bumblefoot** have parted ways with Guns N' Roses, **Slash** has revealed he may no longer be estranged from Axl Rose following a period of hostility after his departure in 1996. "It was probably way overdue," he reportedly told Sweden's *Aftonbladet* newspaper in an interview. "But it's very cool at this point... You know, dispel some of that negative stuff that was going on for so long." This seemed to light the touch paper for reunion rumours that are mounting as we go to print, but we'll only cautiously hope at this point.

Headroom

New gear and guitar arcana you need to know about. This month: special editions

1 Fender Special Edition Classic Series Stratocasters £559

These special-edition Fenders have finishes that were real car colours from the 50s and 60s that were not chosen for guitars the first time round by company icons Leo Fender and Messrs Tavares, Fullerton, Randall and White. Now Canary Diamond, Apple Green, Jetstream Blue (shown), Lilac, Rangoon Red and Cerulean Blue are finally getting their chance to shine. The six finishes are split evenly with three each in 50s and 60s specs. www.fender.com

2 MXR Custom Shop Joe Bonamassa FET Driver \$169.99

Available in a limited run of 300 and sold exclusively through the guitarist's official online store, the FET driver aims to capture the rich tones of an overdriven tube amp by cascading an op-amp gain stage into a FET stage and this edition features a unique circuit design and finish. "This pedal glued the loose ends of my rig together," Joe says. "It's very focused and very fat, and it cuts through without being too bright. That's a hard sound to achieve." www.jbonamassa.com

3 Yngwie Malmsteen's Fury Collection £on request

The Swedish neo-classical maverick is now moving into the world of art with his debut collection, *Fury* – a collaboration with Los Angeles creatives SceneFour, who have previously worked on rhythm-on-canvas projects with former Black Sabbath drummer Bill Ward and Def Leppard's Rick Allen.

The process involves abstract art being created by the musician's playing, in this case the strokes are generated by Yngwie's guitar performance, with the resulting eight pieces including *Rising Force* and *Far Beyond The Sun* (pictured). The numbered canvas works are strictly limited and individually signed by Malmsteen. www.yngwiemalmsteenart.com

4 PRS 58/15 £Requested

After Paul Reed Smith Guitars introduced the 58/15 vintage-voiced PAF-style pickup

to mark this year's 30th anniversary, it seems fitting to see a Custom 24 named in its honour.

The model nods to PRS history with its solid shell bird inlays, which are similar to those on Paul's Pre-Factory and early production guitars. The 58/15 will have a limited run of 150 split between three different finish combinations; 50 each in Faded Whale Blue with natural back, Black Gold Burst with natural binding and Charcoal Burst. www.prguitars.com

5 Queen: The Studio Collection £285

Vinyl enthusiasts can now have their *Night At The Opera*, and more besides with this 18-disc collection. Five years in the making, the coloured vinyl set offers the complete collection of Queen's studio albums, remastered, with the cutting process undertaken by Abbey Road engineer Miles Showell. It looks like a great deal of thought has gone into it for fans, too; for example, *Queen II* originally never had a designated 'A side' or 'B side' – but 'Side White' and 'Side Black'. And this set acknowledges that with two separate black and white discs. The collection will include a 12 x 12-inch 108-page hardback book with introductions for each album from Queen members and handwritten lyrics, rare photography and information from the band's archives. www.queenonlinestore.com

6 Fender FSR Amp '65 Princeton Reverb Lacquered Tweed £1,009

This limited-edition run screams vintage in look as well as tone, with a lacquered tweed cover, brown faceplate and Bassman grille cloth. Core features are dual 6V6 output tubes, one 5AR4 rectifier tube, three 12AX7 preamp tubes, one 12AT7 tube, and tube-driven Fender reverb, tube vibrato, plus a two-button footswitch with controls for reverb and vibrato on-off. Aside from the aesthetic touches, the speaker is also unique to this model, a Jensen P10Q Alnico promising "sparkling, articulate cleans and growling alnico crunch". We'd expect nothing less from this heritage. www.fender.com



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THE TONE DIARIES

Fine details

We continue our forays into the world of tone-shaping with a look at how wire shaped the brash but brilliant Rickenbacker sound **Words Jamie Dickson**

At Green Man festival in Wales recently one of the best guitar tones we heard all weekend belonged to J Willgoose of Public Service Broadcasting. The band, in case you're not familiar with their work, set old public information films and NASA spaceflight footage to their own original synth and guitar soundtracks. The effect is oddly uplifting and at times even moving – and in their homage to the famous World War Two aircraft, *Spitfire*, there's a thrilling moment when Wilgoose hammers out eight open chords on a Rickenbacker 330 that evoke the power and the glory of early tracks by The Who perfectly. The sound is as unmistakable as the roar of a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine – but why do Rickys sound so distinctive? Clearly, a big part of that brash, ballsy sound comes from the unique pickups that Rickenbacker developed.

Curious, we called innovative British pickup maker Jaime Campbell of The Creamery to get his take on what it is about Ricky pickups that's so different...

"They're wonderful pickups. Essentially, they are single coils that are similar to those of a Strat but with really thick rod magnets that can protrude quite a long way down underneath the pickup and deep into the body of the guitar. But the main point is that they use a much thinner wire than is usual – it's typically 44 American Wire Gauge," Jaime says, meaning Rickenbacker's pups employ wire two sizes finer than the more typical 42 gauge used in many pickups.

"That's a very fine wire that is damn hard to wind well because it's so thin," Jaime continues. "It's thinner than a human hair. But it adds to this unique sound: by adding more and more turns of thinner wire you're kind of bringing the resonances down towards midrange. So you're essentially creating a sweeter-sounding pickup, but with a healthy output reading. But bear in mind that a pickup with finer-than-usual wire may have a deceptively high output reading [because of the extra coils of wire that use of finer wire entails], but it won't

necessarily be louder because physically it doesn't work that way."

The consequence of all this, Jaime argues, is that Ricky single coils have plenty of edge, but tempered with a certain sweetness thanks to the assertive mids generated by all those turns of fine wire.

"Yes, it's a very bright, jangly pickup, but by using the thinner wire they've leant a sweetness and warmth to it. Not warmth in the thick conventional-humbucker sense – but it just takes away a certain brittleness from the natural sound of the pickup. That's especially important if you consider that they were designed to work well in guitars with all-maple bodies," Jaime says.

"The wire in Ricky pickups is thinner than a human hair. It's damn hard to wind well but it adds to this unique sound"





ABOVE Ricky single coils do suffer from hum, but for their owners, it's all part of the Rickenbacker charm

LEFT As Jaime Campbell explains, the extra wire turns create a sweeter-sounding pickup without the thickness of a humbucker



"Later, as amp technology changed, Rickenbacker realised that people wanted to push amps more and get higher output, so later on in the 60s, Rickenbacker released a high-gain pickup that is a broadly similar design but with higher output to really push the amp more," he adds.

All the same, the design isn't without its foibles. But Jaime Campbell believes that devotees of the Rickenbacker sound would put up with a lot of quirks to get that sound.

"Like any guitars with single-coil pickups, you can get hum, although Rickenbacker did make humbucking pickups. Very few people have developed hum-cancelling pickups for a Rickenbacker, because if you've spent decent money on a Rickenbacker you're probably not going to want to do much to it; it is what it is. Whenever you hear the sound of those pickups on a record, you know it's a Rickenbacker," he concludes. 



www.worldguitars.co.uk



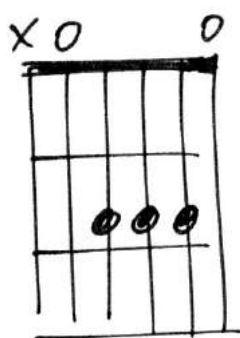
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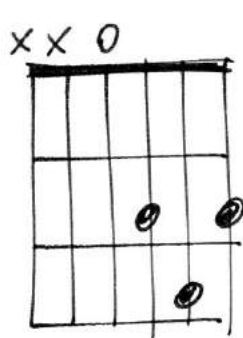
Substitute

This Issue: Pedal Bass

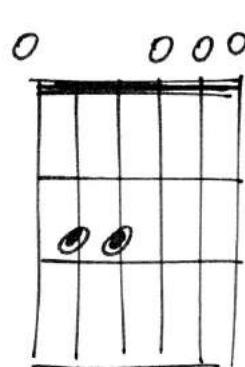
You often don't have to add anything to freshen up old chords; you just have to look at them from a new angle. This A-D-Em-D progression is very simple and crops up in loads of songs, notably *Louie Louie*. It's an interesting substitute in itself, because it'd be even simpler to play E major rather than E minor (a straight I-IV-V-IV in A). So we'll bear that in mind, too...



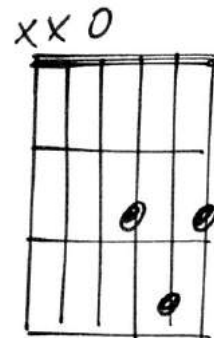
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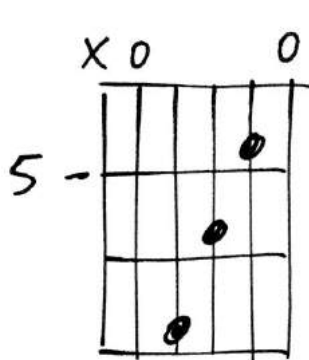


Em

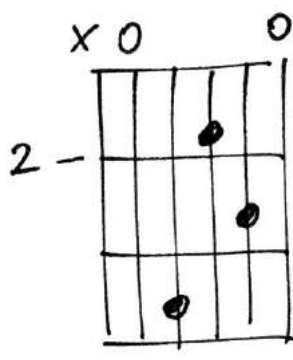


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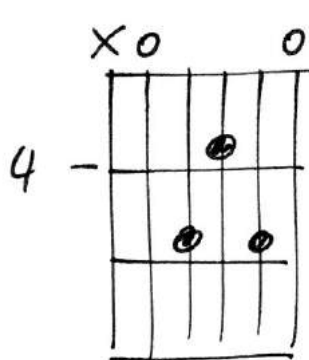
BUT first, remember how we sustained open strings through multiple chords in last issue's *Substitute*, like an 'aural glue'? The advanced version of this is the pedal tone, a note that remains static, sustaining or repeating, while other notes and chords change. Pedal tones can be low or high, but they're really common as bass notes – think of any number of old-school 80s metal riffs. Let's give *Louie Louie* a new lease of life...



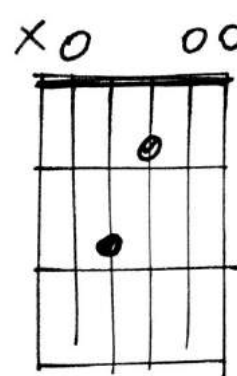
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Dadd9/A



Em/A



E/A

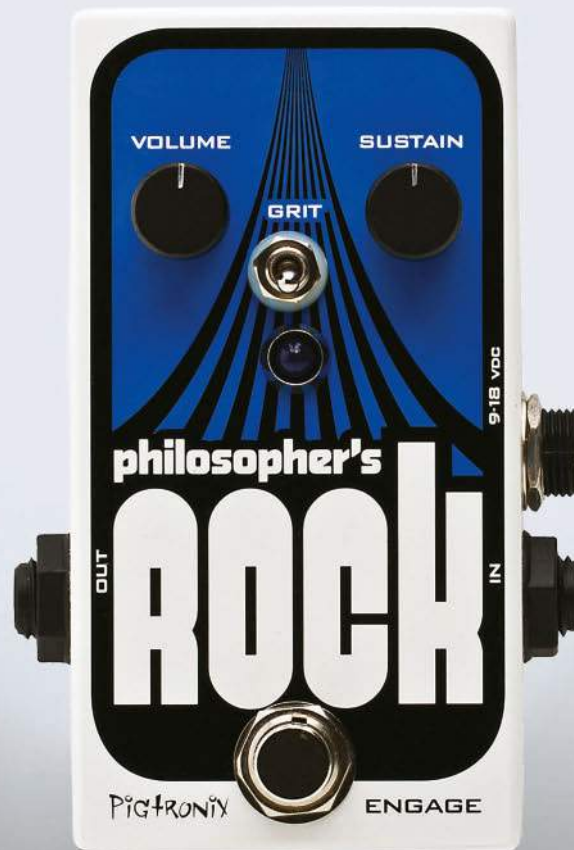
AS we said, sometimes you don't need to add anything. This is still an open A major chord, but just trying a different voicing (the exact combination and arrangement of the component notes) can make a difference. Note the open fifth and first strings.

WITH the three fretted notes, we're doing the same again. It's still a D major chord, just a different shape. But wait... that open-A bass note is still there, giving a different sound to the chord, and there's also the high E, making the 'add9'.

THE A bass continues, only this time, it's not one of the component notes of the chord, so we're making even more of a powerful change to the chord's sound (admittedly without much effort). After this, just go back to Dadd9/A.

ALTERNATIVELY, try playing this in place of Em/A. This is just the major equivalent and gives a whole different feel to the progression. For soloing, you'd use A Mixolydian (A B C# D E F# G) for the standard *Louie Louie* version, and A major (A B C# D E F# G#) for this tweaked version.

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Derek Trucks

He's the ultimate slideman and the A-list sideman – but can Derek keep trucking through the 10 questions we ask everyone?

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

"My very first guitar was a Kay knock-off acoustic, and it was called a Jay. I got that one in a garage sale back when I was eight or nine years old. I think it was only about \$5. But, y'know, it got me started. I still have it, and it's almost playable – but it's really not a great guitar."

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

"I have a Gibson SG that I've had signed by a lot of people that I've been lucky enough to play with – and a lot of them are no longer with us. I played that guitar for years, and I had Hubert Sumlin and BB King and Little Milton sign it: a lot of my heroes that have passed on. I'm not that possessive about guitars, but I think, that one, I'd probably grab."

3 What's the oldest guitar you have?

"I have a few late-1920s Gibson acoustics. A friend had an old 30s Gibson L-00, and it was the best-sounding acoustic I'd ever played, so I got on that kick for a little while. There are guitars from that era that are amazing, but not super-collectible, so they're not that expensive. For the same price as a new, good acoustic guitar, you can get this old 1920s instrument, and when you think about what that guitar has seen, it gives it a whole different level."

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

"As lame as it sounds – all of it. I try to keep all aspects of my guitar playing growing at the same rate, but when I play with Doyle Bramhall or Jack Pearson – the way they play rhythm guitar, the way they comp behind things, it's pretty amazing. Maybe I'd like to be better at harmony, y'know, so I could think around the corner a little bit more. I should quit hoping and just do it!"

5 When did you last change your own strings?

"If I break a string on stage, I'll change it, just because I like having the instrument in my hands. Y'know, Bobby,



"I feel like the best lessons I ever learned were from messing up. Some things you can only learn through experience"

my guitar tech, will leave a few guitar strings on my amp, and if it's in a portion of the song where I can just pass it off and somebody can solo while I'm stringing up, I'll do it on stage. I did that about two gigs ago. It doesn't happen all that often. I guess we're lucky that way."

6 What are you doing five minutes before you go on stage?

"With an 11-piece band, I'll be rounding everybody up. I write out a setlist an hour before the show, so if you're throwing in tunes that you haven't played in a while, I'll be going over it with Susan [Tedeschi], and just reminding people of some segues or changes in the solo sections. So a lot of times, you're just rapping about musical things that are gonna happen during the show."

7 And five minutes after?

"I'll probably be critiquing all the things that we fucked up! We break it down, and I'll speak to certain people individually, y'know, not barking things but just like, 'Hey, we gotta remember this for the next time we get to that section' or whatever. It's best to do that while you're thinking about it. If you get too far away from the show, something that seems life-or-death while you're on stage, we'll totally forget about."

8 What strings do you use?

"I use DR Strings, like, an 11, 14, 17, 26, 36, 46, and always an unwound third, acoustic or electric. DR Strings have been pretty consistent for me. I change strings every show because I break a lot of them, and they just seem to be consistent. But I don't overthink that stuff too much, either. I'm not as much of a gearhead as I should be, I guess."

9 When was the last time you practised, and what did you play?

"In the middle of making a record, sometimes I'll leave certain solo sections to do last, and certain tunes that I want to give a lot of thought to. So I'll practise those. A few days ago, there was one section in a tune, and I wanted to make sure that it would be memorable, so I was triple-tracking guitars, coming up with lines, finding different harmonies. In making a record, I spend a lot of time practising."

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

"I don't know if I would give myself any advice. In a lot of ways, I feel like the best lessons I ever learned were from messing up. Some things you can only learn through experience, by playing things wrong, or not being aware enough, or not being prepared for a gig. If you get bruised, you're gonna remember it, and you're probably not gonna do it again. I feel like those things are as important as the successes." [HY]

Tedeschi Trucks Band perform at Prudential BluesFest at The O2 in London from 7 to 8 November. www.prudentialbluesfest.co.uk.

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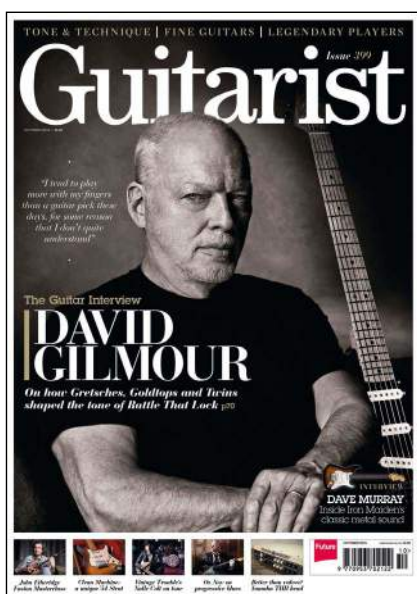
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Star Letter



A LIFE LESSON

Dear *Guitarist*, I'm 60 and have played guitar in a blues-rock band since the age of 17. I recently got a call from a 22-year-old local guy who asked if I would teach him how to play a bit of rock and blues, after he'd seen one of our gigs. I hadn't taught anyone before, but I decided to do so, for an agreed hourly fee, with the first lesson free to see if it worked out.

Well, I can tell you, it's one of the most satisfying things I've ever done in my guitar-playing history! This young guy totally loves the music I grew up with and is incredibly enthusiastic when I show him classic songs we guitarists love. I'm introducing him to Cream, Free, Bad Company, Taste, early Mac, Thin Lizzy, Led Zeppelin, Rory Gallagher and many others.

He arrived at my house with a real cheapo Strat copy and a tiny buzz-box practice amp that cost £99 new, and I played a USA Fender Stratocaster through a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe valve amp with a DigiTech Bad Monkey pedal (Tube Screamer clone) and my Cry Bay Wah. Honestly, the look on his face when I said, "This is how guitars sounded in the 1950s..." His gob was well and truly smacked! The power, volume and tone was, he said, "Un-be-lievable!"

As the lessons went on, I found that I was looking forward to the lessons as much as he was and I relished each session, where I'd show him a new song/video and then how to play it. It was like I'd rediscovered the enthusiasm I had when I was young all over again. I've now managed to source him a Marshall MG50DFX and a Vintage V100 LP-style guitar for £250 secondhand, and he is 100-per-cent hooked. The cheap Strat copy's now set up for slide so he can try that, too. Seriously guys, I can't tell you how much of a kick this is – and I'm now passing on back issues of *Guitarist* to him to study, read and learn. So if you ever get the chance to be a teacher or mentor to someone who loves music, my advice is go for it and enjoy the process and the knowledge you are keeping the music alive. Cheers!

Ken Morton, via email

Nice one, Ken. Passing on fretboard skills and respect for the great players who have gone before is massively important. Learning guitar is a long road and it really helps to have a guide, especially when you're starting out. That's why in issue 401, we'll be publishing a special feature on why one-to-one learning from a local guitar tutor is still one of the best ways to get ahead in guitar.

NO-SEE DC

I thought your initial revamp was already good, but 398 is so much better than the past; more meat and really useful features on playing, too. Have you ever thought about publishing a compendium of, say 12 months' worth, of the Blues Headlines, Masterclass, chord Substitutes, techniques etc? I'm a subscriber, but I'd still pay extra to get all these in a compilation format? I see from Jeff Pumfrett's World Guitars website that Neville has ditched his DC-30. Wondered what he's using now? Perhaps he could describe his decision process?

Gordon Boath, via email

Thanks for the kind words, Gordon – to kick things off, we'll be compiling Denny Illett's excellent series of *Aces* lessons and articles on great jazz guitarists into a stand-alone special edition later this year. Look out for more tutorial compilations after that. Regarding the disappearing Matchless, Neville Marten replies: "Hi Gordon, I've been using Matchless amps since my first one in 1994 – a green DC-30 that I sold because it became too heavy for me to cart around. I replaced that with the SC-30 and that was great; but all of us at *Guitarist* have been bowled over by Morgan amps and when Jeff at World Guitars got a second-hand SW22R (their 'Dumbified Deluxe Reverb'), I bit the bullet and traded in the Matchless. The Morgan is a fairly clean amp – 6V6 tubes – and works brilliantly with pedals. I adore it. That said, I may well be Matchless-bound again as the Nighthawk could be the ultimate 'pub amp'. And so, it never ends!"

FLAMENCO FLAVOURS

Having spent the 90s totally peed off with poodle perms and MTV, I spent a while wandering in what we used to call World Music. So if any of your readers are looking for some contemporary flamenco action [see Cordoba review, issue 397] they should perhaps try going beyond the Gypsy Kings to sample some Ojos De Brujo. Their album *Bari* fuses flamenco, hip hop and, yes, even a bit of rumba. Start with *Ventilator R-80* and you will be clicking your heels in no time.

Mark Kimber, via email

Thanks for the suggestion, Mark – we enjoyed delving briefly into the world



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Feedback

of flamenco in that issue. If readers would like to find out more about this fascinating area of guitar tradition, let us know and we'll run some more features on flamenco in future.

MOORE INFORMATION

Dear *Guitarist*, I'd like to take this opportunity to correct a statement that appears on page 75, of issue 397. In the amp-roundup feature Head To Head, Nick Guppy wrote of the Engl Artist Edition E651 head: "This was the last amp to be used by the late Gary Moore."

This is, in fact, incorrect. The UK distributor at the time, via the ENGL head office, were keen to have 'name' guitarists try the amp, which at that stage, I believe, was a modified, un-badged Ritchie Blackmore signature model. As Gary was in the studio, and always keen to try new equipment, I then arranged to have it sent to the studio for Gary to check out at some point. It was tried out, briefly, for 10 or 15 minutes in all, but it wasn't for Gary. So the rep collected it and that was the last I heard, other than I think the amp was going on to Jimmy Page to try. This was sometime in 2006/7. I'm still sorting through the relevant paperwork, to confirm the exact dates. For the record, the last amp Gary used would have been one of his many Marshall amplifiers, either at a rehearsal session in January 2011, or one he kept at his home. Thank you for the opportunity to at least attempt to correct these details.

Graham Lilley, Road Manager, Gary Moore, via email

Thanks for the insights, Graham, we stand corrected. Nick's rare slip has led in this case to a fresh perspective on the late, great Gary Moore's pursuit of fantastic tone, so I think we'll count ourselves the richer for it – and it's certainly no hardship to be reminded again of what a great player Gary was.

PARTS OF OAK

Looking back at some older issues, I now have a better handle on the black art of guitar building. As I read more, I guess I understand more about the guitar making process – especially wood choices. I now understand book-matching and slip-matching, and from your article about Taylor's wood choices, showing a template on a sawn tree, I can see the reason for working from the centre of the tree outwards [in quarter-sawn planks].

The article on Brian May's home-made guitar was fascinating, especially as it was made from reclaimed timber. The choice of fingerboard was oak, stained to look like ebony – this was what he had at the time, I guess, but oak is rarely used in guitar building.



Taylor and Pacific Rim Tonewoods working with a freshly split maple log

That's the confusing part: it's readily available, hard and tight-grained, beautifully figured, and (once seasoned) very stable. I have seen lots of other wood used for necks, fingerboards and bodies, but never the mighty oak. Any ideas why?

Mike Willis, via email

Hmmm, good point. Time to phone a friend or two. "Some woods are 'musical', others are not," says guitar maker to the stars, Hugh Manson. "Oak is one of these, as was elm (before Dutch elm disease). It is very heavy in relation to size and has no resonance to it in comparison to ash, poplar or alder. It does have many other uses in building construction and, of course, beer barrels!" The latter formed the basis of a limited-edition Fylde acoustic, the Single Malt Ariel, which used "seasoned oak from barrels used at least twice before, just too good to avoid trying

out on a guitar." Custom guitar maker Chris George says: "Grain filling would take some serious work too, and it does shrink a lot, maybe too much for a two-piece [acoustic guitar] back. I have never seen any oak sets and haven't even seen any oak taken down to about 1/10-inch." Bog oak, meanwhile, has seen more use by some, including Faith, Patrick James Eggle and Gary Southwell, who says: "Its density is comparable to rosewood and, due to its age, it is very stable once properly dried. The bog oak I am using is radio carbon-dated at 3,500BC, making it 5,500 years old." "Consider bog oak to be quite different to normal oak," says Patrick Eggle. "It has gone through changes over thousands of years that alter its properties – the most important of these being density. Bog oak is about 35 per cent heavier than normal oak and heavier than many rosewoods."

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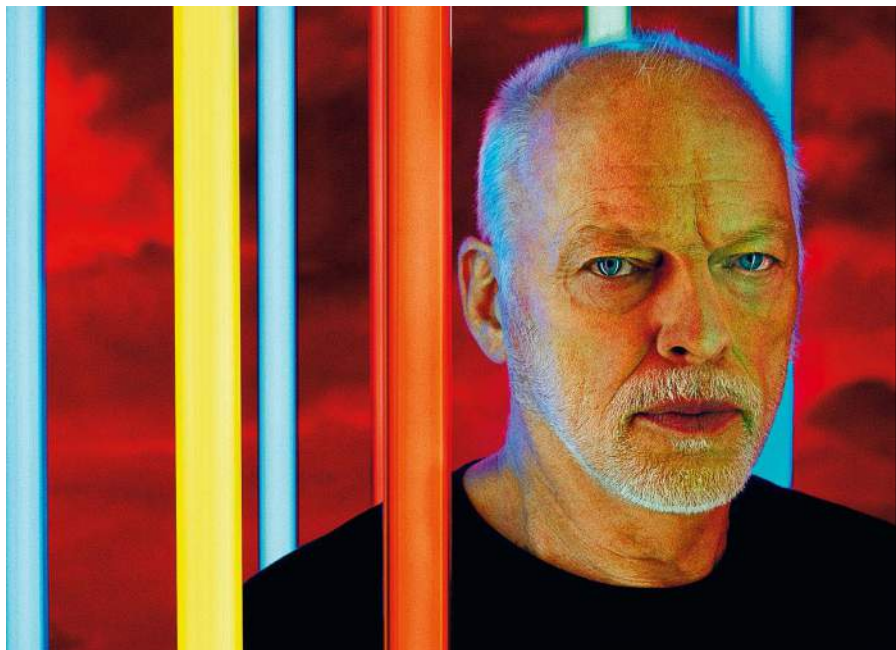
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Music

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



David Gilmour

Rattle That Lock (Columbia)

7/10



Poised but muted return from the Floyd guitarist

David Gilmour's always pursued a reasonably active solo career outside of Floyd, from his brooding, eponymous 1978 debut, through to minor classics such as 2006's *On An Island* for which his new album *Rattle That Lock* is the long-awaited follow-up. During the vintage Floyd years, Roger Waters acerbic, gritty lyrics provided an Epsom-salts whiff of hard reality that counterbalanced the hypnotic grandeur of Gilmour's stately, gravity-defying solos.

And so Gilmour outside of the Floyd context is an interesting study. His achievement, that of creating an utterly distinctive voice on guitar that he uses with supreme economy and taste, is considerable. But the very distinctiveness of that voice is also a kind of trap, inviting a constant comparison with past glories that can be distracting. How has Gilmour set about the task of creating a satisfying stand-alone album this time around? On the evidence of the impressionistic

opener *5AM*, he's taken quite a cinematic approach, painting with rich but bleak tones on a broad sonic canvas, upon which periodic flashes of barbed soloing are the only dazzling touches, as on *Faces of Stone*, with its funereal waltzing acoustic guitars and Cold War spy movie undertones. Polly Samson's lyrics are thoughtful and evocative, if a little oblique for rock, and the track comes to electrifying life only in the lead breaks, as if waking from an indistinct dream.

Elsewhere, there are more complete triumphs. The mistily elegaic *A Boat Lies Waiting* is serene and affecting, while the stormy, sombre ballad *In Any Tongue* has the irresistible, tidal grandeur of Gilmour's best work in Floyd. But the overall impression is rather like being passed by a limousine with tinted windows on the motorway: there's a sense of grace and solid, imperturbable power, but it's hard to tell who, if anyone, is inside. [JD]

Standout track: *In Any Tongue*

For fans of: Pink Floyd, Steven Wilson

James Taylor

The Essential James Taylor
Rhino

9/10



How the West Coast was won

It would be quite reasonable to assume that the word 'quintessential' was coined by somebody who happened to be listening to a James Taylor album at the time. Hot on the heels of this year's *Before This World* album, which saw JT scale the heights of the album charts for the first time in far too many years, comes this new collection of his work.

Just running your eyes down the tracklisting on this new anthology is enough to remind you just how enormous a contribution the man has made to music over the last few decades. Naturally, much of the material here has featured on compilations before, but this time around, the powers that be have devised a cunning plan to ensure that fans who want to buy the CD – as opposed to going via the more à la carte digital-download route – enjoy a measure of choice. Thus, the album is being made available in two different versions: single or double CD packages with a slightly different array of tracks allocated to each. The former focuses on JT's hits from the 70s, whereas the double pack spans his entire career and represents a veritable feast of both studio and live recordings. [DM]

Standout track: *Millworker*

For fans of: Joni Mitchell, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

Chantel McGregor

Lose Control

Tis Rock Music

7/10



Rock on the dark side?

For a while now, Chantel McGregor has been treading the boards around the world delivering high-octane blues, but now she's decided to release a no-holds-barred rock album. She says, "I've always been interested in the dark side of Southern Gothic literature... I wanted to create an album that reflected the imagery and themes of that genre." As such, *Lose Control* does have an inky central core to it, both lyrically and musically, with overdriven guitars and riff-heavy themes throughout. But it's the more progressive-rock influenced side of the album that contains the best work. *Anaesthetize* and the Steven Wilson influenced *Walk On Land* shine as the real gems in this collection. [DM]

Standout track: *Anaesthetize*

For fans of: The Runaways, Joan Jett

Paul Bielatowicz

Preludes & Etudes

Mr Bee Records

7/10



Turbo-driven classical gas!

When Carl Palmer chose to form a trio to re-explore some of ELP's material, he decided not to employ a keyboard player but hire the singular fretboard talents of Paul Bielatowicz, who promptly worked out a lot of Keith Emerson's parts on guitar to perform them with the band. No mean feat, indeed! Paul has been a long-term contributor to *Guitar Techniques* and based his regular columns on electric-guitar renditions of famous classical pieces which have been collected here in this portfolio of stunning fretwork. So it's the genius of composers like Chopin, Paganini and Bach that fuels the tracks on this remarkable album – with some impeccable playing and thoughtful arrangements throughout. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Clair De Lune*

For fans of: ELP, Stanley Jordan

City And Colour

If I Should Go Before You

Dine Alone/Caroline International

8/10



Atmospheric rock from one of Canada's finest

City And Colour is the brainchild of singer-songwriter Dallas Green and this is his fifth album, following 2013's successful *The Hurry And The Harm*. The CD was recorded in Nashville's Blackbird Studios and, for the first time, Dallas is supported here by the members of his touring band – Jack Lawrence on bass, Dante Schwebel on guitar, Matt Kelly on keyboards and pedal steel and Doug MacGregor on drums. The album opens with the hauntingly ethereal *Woman*, an epic at over nine minutes in length that builds from a guitar motif into a widescreen blockbuster of a song. The album continues through a further 10 tracks that stylistically carousel their way into the imagination. Indefinable and blissful. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Woman*

For fans of: Moby, Alexisonfire

Martin Harley & Daniel Kimbro

Live At Southern Ground

Del Mundo Records

8/10



Slide mastery meets soulful blues

This record doesn't document a live performance at a sleazy blues club; it happened when slide maestro Martin Harley met up with upright bass player Daniel Kimbro for an afternoon's recording at Nashville's Southern Ground studios. Live, with no overdubs, the duo sound like they've been playing together for a lifetime. Harley's dexterity on his Weissenborn is renowned and offers the listener a masterclass in taste, style and roots blues. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Can't Help Moving*

For fans of: Jerry Douglas, Chris Whitley

Phillip Henry & Hannah Martin

Watershed

Dragonfly Roots

8/10



Folk fusion from award-winning duo

Phillip Henry and Hannah Martin won BBC Radio 2's 'Best Duo' crown in its 2014 awards and this is the couple's first release since. To describe their music as 'folk' would be doing them a disservice, as the songs definitely have a slightly progressive air to them. The songs on this CD may follow the familiar thread of the folk idiom – unrequited love, a miller's tale of boy meets girl and so on – but each is a narrative viewed with a contemporary mindset. Instrumentation comprises Henry's slide guitar and Martin's violin, plus a band of worthies and the arrangements are sublime in the extreme. Gorgeous album! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Yarrow Hill*

For fans of: Kate Rusby, Eliza Carthy

Hotei

Strangers (EP)

Spinefarm Records

8/10



A Japanese superstar guitarist with an amazing pedigree

Tomoyasu Hotei is a guitar sensation who has sold millions of records in a career spanning over 30 years. Despite this, he has an underground following among the cognoscenti to the extent that none other than Iggy Pop takes over the microphone on this EP's second track, *How The Cookie Crumbles*. Furthermore, Hotei's masterful fretwork has also featured in Quentin Tarantino's epic *Kill Bill* and the immediately recognisable track *Blue Kind Of Grey* is featured here. The music is imaginative, fresh and varied with no stylistic boundary unexplored – and it's mercilessly entertaining. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Blue Kind Of Grey*

For fans of: Nine Inch Nails

Maura Kennedy

Villanelle

Varèse/Sarabande

7/10



A standout concept from this folk-rock songstress

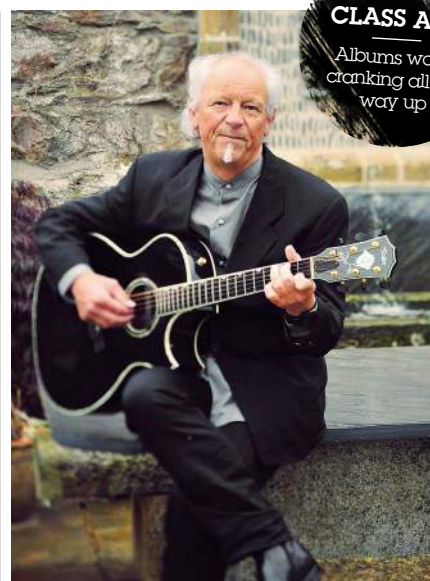
Now here's an interesting idea; take a renowned singer-songwriter and present her with a set of poems written by a celebrated author and see what transpires. In effect, this means that Maura Kennedy – one half of the East Coast USA band The Kennedys – had a chance meeting with BD Love and agreed to a collaboration. The guidelines were that Maura would leave the poems in their original form and that BD Love wouldn't necessarily write in any accepted song form, but let the music fuse with the poems as naturally as possible. The end result is a joyous collection, with Maura's angelic vocals toying melodically with the intricacies of modern poetic form. Truly fascinating! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Soldier's Wife*

For fans of: The Kennedys, Richard Thompson

CLASS ACT

Albums worth cranking all the way up



Martin Barre

Back To Steel

Digital Download

7/10



Ex-Tull man celebrates 50-year career

With his tenure in Jethro Tull now well in the past, these days, Martin Barre leads his own band, taking care of mandolin, bouzouki, banjo, flute and keyboards as well as both electric and acoustic guitars. He is ably supported by Dan Crisp on vocals, George Lindsay on drums and Alan Thompson on bass all of whom show their hand on this, Barre's sixth solo album to date. The music ranges from the blues of Howlin' Wolf – *Smokestack* – to instrumentals like *Calafel* and *Chasing Shadows*, taking time to stop off at a couple of Tull originals – *Skating Away* and *Slow Marching Band* – along the way. It's passionate, stirring stuff that will delight fans old and new. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Chasing Shadows*

For fans of: Jethro Tull, Steve Hackett

McAlmont & Butler

The Sound Of

McAlmont & Butler

Edsel Records

7/10



Classic 90s album reanimated

Just as the glad rags of Brit Pop were beginning to fade down to the drab and predictable, Bernard Butler and David McAlmont produced this rare gem of pop hope in a darkening age. It yielded the hit singles *Yes* and *You Do* before the dynamic duo went their separate ways and pursued solo careers. Interest was reawakened in 2014 with some sell-out reunion gigs that paved the way for this brush and dust-off remastering of the whole shebang. The reissue comes with a disc of rarities plus a DVD containing TV performances, demos and radio performances aplenty. It's lost nothing of its vitality over the years and is worthy of its second coming. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Yes*

For fans of: Suede, Thieves



Jennifer Batten

She's toured the world with Michael Jackson and Jeff Beck, and here she shares her tips on how to survive life on the road – and hijack a theme park

Words

David Mead



What was your first gig?

"My very first gig was a jazz-guitar duet with another guitar player named Brian Pardo. We played at a restaurant and we each made \$12. It was the first time I was out reading the Real Book and having an audience and I realised just how awful that was and that it was such a distraction, not having that clear path to making eye contact with the audience. After that, I started to focus on memorising things."

Describe your current stage rig...

"It's interesting, because I've made a whole lot changes in the last year. I have a new amp, which is a guitar-player's dream. It's made by Thomas Bug and it's 3lbs, 100 watts and four channels; it's essentially like a 100-watt Marshall that you can throw in your gigbag. He's been engineering for Hughes & Kettner for 20 years – one of these genius Einstein types, the kind of person who has the patience to sit there and listen to tubes, which is definitely not me. I'm using the amp's loops and a DigiTech RP1000, so I get every effect at my feet that you can possibly think of. Plus an expression pedal... and I use the snot out of the Whammy.

"Thomas has just sent me his new cabinets – he calls them The Nano and it's the biggest sound in the smallest package ever. So after

having hernia surgery and decades of lifting heavy amps, the lighter the better.

"Guitars are in transition; I took a little hiatus from Washburn for a couple of years because I was so excited about the Line 6 Variax, but I'm back with Washburn and I've conned them into putting the electronics of the Variax into a new Washburn Parallaxe electric and I was hoping to take it out on this tour, but I've stumped them with the electronics. They're going to have a big release in October, right when the tour is over. So what I'm taking out is my old Washburn that I've been using for 15 or 16 years; it's not available any more, it's called the JB100."

Which piece of gear is essential to your live sound?

"My hands! [laughs] I'd say the Whammy Pedal, because I use the shit out of it. I do a lot of bending with it, whether it's chords or single lines. A lifelong love."

Name a non-musical item you couldn't do without...

"Eye shades... I've been in hotels that have such complicated lighting systems that I can't turn off all the lights! So after you've flown for 12 hours, the last thing you want to do is fire up your left brain before you pass out."

What's the closest you've come to having a Spinal Tap moment on tour?

"God, there've been so many. The first thing that comes to mind is that I was on stage with Michael Jackson and for one of my solos, I would go down a couple of steps to a grate that had a fan under it and at the time, I was wearing contacts and all this shit would come up from the fan and get in my eyes and I would just be crying going back to my spot."

What's on your rider?

"It's really changed over the years, to the point where it's got a little sassy. I don't have brown M&Ms or anything, usually I just ask for water and a towel. Although if I'm doing a clinic in a store where they don't want to pay for a real engineer, I say, 'Please arrange for the best sound engineer the universe has ever known.' I mean, I've had people who are reading the manual about the mixer just before I go on..."

What's the best venue you've played and what made it so special?

"It was a Michael Jackson gig in the LA area, at a place called the Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre. At a stadium, the sound just goes out and it doesn't come back, but the way this place was set up – it was like a bowl

© ALI HASBACH



ABOVE Jennifer playing her trusty Washburn JB100

•

“When I was first with Michael Jackson and we went to Japan, he shut down Tokyo Disneyland so we could hang out without the riff-raff!”

•

shape – the sound was just gorgeous. It was so full and beautiful, I’ll never forget it.”

What’s the weirdest thing that’s ever happened to you on tour?

“When I was first with Michael Jackson and we went to Japan, he shut down Tokyo Disneyland so we could hang out without the riff-raff! [laughs] Only Elvis could have pulled that off. I think we went on all the rides, ‘cos there was no line...”

Which is the best airline you’ve used from a musician’s point of view?

“In America, it’s South West. The only airline that doesn’t charge for checking a second bag, which would be your guitar.”

What’s your best tip for getting the audience on your side?

“Comedy. I’ll always start with a tune and then I’ll try and work in some comedy – it’s the quickest way to break the ice. It’s obviously a lot more difficult if it’s in a foreign country.”

What do you do to warm up?

“Typically, scale patterns. Stuff to keep my fingers moving. Mindless muscle memory.”

What’s your favourite live album?

“The first that comes to mind is *Frampton Comes Alive!* I was working in a record shop when that came out and we could not keep it in stock – I have really good memories from that, and so does he! Jeff Beck’s live album with Jan Hammer; Jeff and Jan, for my ears, are the best improv duo out there.” 



For more information on Jennifer's latest tuition DVD, *Rock Sauce For Lead Guitar*, visit her website

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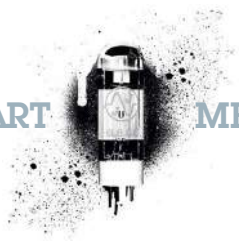
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FABIAN HOLLAND

New and notable guitarists you need to hear

Who Is He?

Born in a small village in Surrey, singer-songwriter Fabian Holland has two albums of self-penned songs under his belt and a busy touring schedule to boot. Currently, he lives aboard a canal boat, which might sound like a romantic lifestyle, but, he tells us, that notion is brought to an abrupt halt the minute that winter visits the waterways.

Who Has He Listened To?

Fabian started playing at the age of seven. His younger years were set to the soundtrack of his father playing harmonica and listening to blues and so, to begin with, he was drawn towards playing electric guitar, but his father insisted that he begin his musical journey on acoustic. Classical guitar lessons followed, but the urge to dabble on electric proved a strong one and he soon made the switch.

"I had my first gig when I was 10 and I was playing electric guitar with a drummer at Rowledge Village Fête and we managed to get a 20-minute slot... it was quite cool."

What's So Great About His Playing?

Whereas many acoustic-based singer-songwriters are content merely to strum an accompaniment, Fabian's playing exhibits more profound depths. His style developed in an unusual way, having been drawn initially towards the stylings of Chuck Berry, Skip James and R L Burnside. Later on, acoustic DADGAD maestros Pierre Bensusan and Eric Roche captured his imagination.

"Eric Roche was actually my tutor back in 2000, because I went to the Academy of Contemporary Music and he taught me for two years there. I got a lot of influence from him and I recorded all the lessons I had with him on MiniDisc. It wasn't until years later that I actually listened back to them and really took in what he was saying. He was really inspirational... amazing."

Why Do You Need To Hear Him?

With Fabian, it's all about the songs. Both his albums – 2013's *Fabian Holland* and the more recent *A Day Like Tomorrow* – exhibit a distinct maturity of style, backed up with a confident ability on acoustic guitar. In fact, when it came to turning professional, there was never any doubt in his mind that this was the course to follow.



"Eric Roche was my tutor back in 2000... I recorded all the lessons I had with him on MiniDisc"

"I just started earning a bit more money out of it, really. I always wanted to do it; there wasn't a point where I decided that I was going to really go for it professionally. I've always tried to play full-time, even though it's not been possible until now. I've been professional since the first album on Rooksmere Records, which was 2013."

What Gear Does He Use?

Fabian uses Lowden guitars. There's a 1994 O10 – similar to the one his tutor and mentor Eric Roche used – and a smaller-bodied F23 with rosewood back and sides and a cedar top. As far as electronics are concerned, he favours Sunrise pickups that feature an under-saddle piezo with an internal microphone, and a fairly complex combination of preamps and pedals before the output signal arrives safely at the PA.

"I use a K&K Trinity System and I've actually got three pickup sources and two outputs – one stereo, one mono – and one goes to the K&K and the other to a few Boss pedals, including a Boss EQ. The K&K blends the two pickups and then that goes through another Boss EQ and after that, I blend those two again to mono and that goes through a Boss RV-5 reverb, straight to DI."

Where Should I Start?

If you've not been lucky enough to witness Fabian playing live, the best place to begin would be with the two albums listed above. Failing that, here's a brief recommended listening that will introduce you to the subtlety of his songwriting style. **[DM]**

Four Inch Screen: The latest video from the new album, awaiting your viewing pleasure over at You Tube

Spring: Listen to the acoustic guitar intro; all those lessons with Eric Roche paying off!

Hard Time Killing Floor Blues: Fabian displays his rootsy blues side here on this track from his 2013 debut album



A Day Like Tomorrow is out now on Rooksmere Records. For upcoming UK gigs and tours visit the website www.fabianholland.com



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MARK TREMONTI

On the back of second solo album, *Cauterize*, the metal master talks amp hoarding, his fear of guitar clinics and why he blew out Joe Bonamassa...

Words Henry Yates

Ask Mark Tremonti for his solution to writer's block and the 41-year-old metallur can only shrug: "I don't run into that too often." True enough. From his 90s breakout with Florida post-grungers Creed, through the anvil-heavy anthemics of Alter Bridge, onto the solo career that began with 2012's *All I Was*, the guitarist has driven nine studio albums with his hard, hooky, virtuoso fretwork. Even now, in 2015, the creative wellspring remains a torrent, with Tremonti releasing his second solo set, *Cauterize*, and readying a third, *Dust*. "Every album has pushed me," says the guitarist, as he prepares to share his wisdom. "If you're not getting better, you're getting worse..."

Singing helps my slinging

"It's funny, but when you're singing in a band, it's almost like all the worries about playing the guitar go away. I used to obsess about every little part of an Alter Bridge show, and sometimes when you obsess too much, when that part comes up, it throws you off, because you've prepared too much, instead of just letting it happen. When you're singing, you just kinda let it flow. It's actually made it easier. I'm much more relaxed playing guitar for this band. But, y'know, you have to make sure you can play and sing certain parts at the same time. That's why we do one-take live demos and make sure we're not doing anything that can't be reproduced live."

Don't stick on standard

"Early on, I started messing with alternate tunings when I'd hear a chord in my head, or I'd fingerpick something but one open string sounded bad. A lot of people are afraid of alternate tunings, because they've worked so hard on memorising scales in standard. Once you change that canvas, everybody thinks it's too much work. But for me, it's a godsend."

"If I didn't have all these tunings, my songwriting would have dried up years ago. On the new album, *Radical Change* is C# standard. *Cauterize* is half-step-down drop D. *Arm Yourself* is A# standard. Open D5 is my favourite. It's next to impossible to make anything sound bad in that tuning. I purposely play something that would sound godawful in standard tuning, and all of a sudden, I'll come up with something cool and unique."

Solos are stories

"The most difficult thing on this album was to not be repetitive when doing 18 guitar solos. That was a monumental task. Y'know, a solo has gotta tell a story. It's gotta have emotion. It's gotta really target those chord changes underneath. If you took away the song and just listened to the solo, it should be a little song unto itself. I think *Dark Trip* and *Providence* are probably my two favourites on the first record, and both are storytelling, string-bending, emotional solos."

Drill deep

"I used to learn as much as I possibly could. I'd learn this solo, that solo, something from this or that instructional DVD. But you find that over the years, you forget 98 per cent of what you learned. Then I kinda had this enlightening moment where instead of learning 10 techniques, I focused on one individual thing and got everything I could out of it. For example, when I really dug into my legato, I spent maybe eight months just focusing on that. Now it's something in my style that is always at my disposal and will never fail me."

Look after yourself

"The thing that worries me is when I play too much and the back of my wrist starts to hurt. As soon as I feel any kind of uncomfortable sensation, I'll stop. But if I'm off tour, sometimes I'll be like, 'Ah, I'm gonna keep going for a bit.' Then I'll screw myself for three days and I can't play. My wife wants to go on a skiing trip and I keep telling her, 'Ah, I dunno.' I see everybody breaking their arms skiing..."

Learn from the best

"I was deeply influenced by all the speed-metal from the 80s, bands like Forbidden and Testament. Riff-wise, Slayer is one of the main bands I get influence from. Even Metallica: my fingerpicking style sorta sounds like *The Call Of Ktulu*. So it was

“When I’m playing live, I try and just flow with it, have a bit more energy and maybe sting notes harder or change the feel a little bit —”



Mark gives the perfectionist in him a break on stage and goes with the flow

them, and all the folks from instructional videos, like Vinnie Moore, Paul Gilbert... The core of my style is probably a mixture between the down-picking stuff I grew up with – the speed-metal rhythm stuff and the palm-muting – and then the fingerstyle I developed early on. I’d say it’s also the alternate tunings – hopefully, that’s something unique to my style.”

The web is your friend

“The internet blows my mind. Every time I get an itch to learn something new, I’ll find around on YouTube and find everything you’d ever want to know. I used to buy instructional videos. I had hundreds. It didn’t matter if it was country, blues, metal, jazz. Do kids in 2015 have the patience to practise as hard as I did? Some of them. It’s been a long time since we saw a new guy come out and really blow the world away, but there’s a ton of great players who are just too good for their own good.”

Choose your cameos wisely

“Joe Bonamassa came through town and texted me, saying, ‘Hey man, why don’t you sit in with me?’ But that’s absolutely what I don’t want to do: to play a slow-blues, with a blues master, in front of his crowd. It goes back to ’99. Creed went to Buddy Guy’s bar in Chicago, and he gets up unannounced and sings *Happy Birthday* to his assistant. Then he goes, ‘Okay, everybody, I want to invite my friend Mark Tremonti up here.’ Back then, I was a metal player and didn’t do the blues soloing thing too well, so I was terrified. I got up there, and we were doing a slow blues in the key of F, and I was playing as simple as I possibly could, just to survive. From that moment, it was like, ‘I never want

to be in that position again. I always want to be over-prepared.”

Live isn’t about perfection

“When I’m in the studio laying down solos, I’m always seated, to make it as precise as possible. But when I’m playing live, I try and just flow with it, have a bit more energy and maybe sting notes harder or change the feel a little bit. If I miss a note onstage because I’m having a good time, and running around, then so be it. In the studio, it’s gotta be perfect. Live, I try to have fun.”

Pass it on

“It was my brother who really pushed me to release my instructional DVDs. I said ‘no’ for a few years, because I didn’t want to ever record one and then a few years later go, ‘Man, you should have waited until you were better.’ Finally, I agreed, and now we’ve done two. Another thing he always said was that we should do clinics. I was always terrified of that, because I’ve seen a few, and I never wanted to be in front of 50 people, talking and playing guitar without a band backing me up. So I did it on my terms, where we had 10 people in a room, another amp sat next to me for volunteers, and they get tabs and a DVD of what we cover. I want to be able to play guitar with everybody, not just say, ‘Here, look at me shred.’”

It’s about practice, not theory

“I’d be at a loss without knowing the five pentatonic shapes. A lot of people just know one position, with a couple of notes in the second box, but I find it very important to know the pentatonics all the way across the neck, and three-note-per-string diatonic

shapes. But I don’t use a whole lot of theory. A lot of times, I’ll sit down with players who are big theory guys. Michael Angelo Batio is a friend and he’s like, ‘Man, if you tabbed out your stuff, the theory is crazy – it’s all these alternate tunings, crazy chord voicings, strange scales.’ I like that. But I never think of theory when I’m writing.”

You can’t have too many amps

“I don’t have a huge guitar collection. At home, I probably only have – jeez – 15. I’m more of an amp hoarder. My pride and joy depends on what day, but I have a Dumble Overdrive Special and a Trainwreck Express: those are the two biggest collector pieces. Another of my favourites is a ’56 Deluxe and a ’60 Bassman that were modded by Dumble. I also have a Van Weelden Twinkleland – an amazing-sounding amp that did all the cleans on the new album. I could go on for days...”

The sky’s the limit

“I’m always practising, and trying out new techniques, and over the years I’ve definitely improved. I’ve learnt more, worked harder, and never lost the drive or gumption to be the best player I can be. I’m not gonna be satisfied till someone that I really look up to is like, ‘Here, come and sit in with me.’ I don’t know if I’ll ever feel like I can tackle anything, but that’s my definite goal. Every one of my albums has pushed me. If you’re not getting better, you’re getting worse...”

Cauterize is available now on Fret 12 Records. See Mark’s website for tuition videos and more info.

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The Wizardry Of Oz

With enough accolades to stun a moderate-sized ox, Oz Noy is taking the blues and jazz guitar world by storm. We talk to him about touch, tone, technique and the rig he needs to pound out his fusion message to the world

Words Jamie Dickson

Every now and then, you come across a guitarist who has the full deck of virtues: a player who has great feel, but articulates assertively and precisely; who has great creativity, but also the theoretical grasp to give structure and clarity to improvisations. They're rare, but Oz Noy is such a one.

Born in Israel, Oz moved to New York in 1996 and immediately started turning heads. Pretty soon, he'd notched up a rack of critically acclaimed albums, including his debut *Oz Live!*, which was recorded at New York's legendary Bitter End. Subsequent releases included the *Twisted Blues* series, which featured Oz's unique cocktail of bebop and blues. Since then, he's toured the world, become recognised as one of the guitar's rising stars, and been hailed as a virtuoso by all who hear him play.

Guitarist caught up with him just as another live album hit the shelves – with a jazz-fusion power trio comprising Dave Weckl on drums and Etienne Mbappe on bass, recorded during a recent tour of Japan. But let's start at the beginning: we asked Oz about his early influences – who first inspired him to pick up the instrument?

"When I started, it was The Beatles, but then my brother started to bring jazz home, so I began to listen. There was some John McLaughlin, some Joe Pass – stuff like that, from what I remember. As I got a little older, I was into Pat Metheny, who was a big influence in terms of everything he did, and then all the modern jazz guys like Scofield, Stern and Bill Frisell.

"I was listening to rock also: people like Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck and Eric Johnson. Some of the rock guys, the shredders, had a really big influence on me at the same time, and so it wasn't only jazz – it was both things together."

If you had to name three breakthrough moments in your development as a guitarist, what would they be?

"The one major moment in my life that made the biggest impact on me was seeing the Pat Metheny Group in Israel in the 80s when the *Still Life (Talking)* record came out. I saw him playing with a group and then I saw him in a small club playing with a trio. He really opened up the sound of the guitar in jazz. He's just incredible. Believe it or not, the thing that I like the most about him is his solo playing. When he plays solo guitar, to me that's untouchable.

"At the same time, Chick Corea's *Elektric Band* record came out, which had Scott Henderson on it, and I kind of got turned on to Allan Holdsworth as well. That era was a big influence on me and, just a little after that, I met a teacher in Israel who used to be the piano player Barry Harris's bassist. He got me heavily into bebop: Charlie Parker, Wes Montgomery and all that kind of stuff."

Could you walk us through the rig that you might take to an average date in your touring and gigging schedule?

"I have a Two-Rock amp and a Marshall, either of those two. I bring one of my pedalboards; I have a few different

pedalboards depending on what kind of music I'm playing. I've got one for blues and vintage stuff, and then I have one that's a little more modern that I usually use for session work or my music from older records. But it's all basically the same stuff. I usually bring a Strat and a Tele, one of my pedalboards, and one of those amps.

"When I'm on tour, I just bring one guitar because the travelling thing is problematic, so I'll bring a Strat. I have one pedalboard that I usually travel with that covers everything I need, and then I'll just get rental – usually two amps, either two Fenders or two Vox AC30s will do the trick."

What particular models are the Two-Rock and Marshall?

"The Two-Rock is a Gain Master 100. Actually, I have two of those: one of them is slightly modified, but they're pretty much stock with the 2x12 cabinets. The Marshall is a 50-watt '73 Marshall and a 4x12 cabinet with Greenbacks in it."

Players such as Jim Campilongo swear by playing through smalls amps to access a different tone at club date volume. You've got slightly more headroom with your amps...

"They've much more headroom! I don't play with a lot of gain but I get all my solo lead tones out of pedals. I actually need my amps to be loud and clean, but not *too* clean. The way I get my sound is I turn the amp up so it's kind of compressed and on the verge of starting to saturate a little bit. Then I put



the pedal into it and it makes it sound really nice and alive and compressed. I can't play through a small amp because it's going to break up really quick. I need the headroom, I need the volume. The way I get my sound is by playing loud."

What drive pedals do you rate?

"If everything works as planned and the amps react the way I want them to, then all I need is any type of booster, like either the Xotic RC Booster or the TS808 Tube Screamer. Often when I tour, I don't use my own amps, so the amps don't react exactly the way I want them to. Sometimes they sound a little too cold or don't break up as much as I need them to. I pretty much use the Xotic RC Booster the whole time to make the amp sound better and feel a little more compressed or reactive. That's all it is. I use a [Fulltone] Octafuzz sometimes, but that's a different kind of sound."

So what you're trying to achieve is this nice playground of slight gain but enough definition to get your point across there?

"Correct. I don't play with a lot of gain. To me, sounds that are saturated sound really small. The only guys that do it really well are Jeff Beck, Eric Johnson and Scott Henderson, but a lot of those really heavy saturated guitar sounds sound kind of small and you can't hear the guitar and the attack well."

What do you find most challenging about the guitar?

"That's a hard question to answer. It's endless – music is endless. There are so many different styles, from fingerpicking to classical to jazz to rock. I wish there was more time in the day to practise and get that all in, but it's impossible. You just have to focus on a few things and do them as well as you can."

Moving on to your writing and the *Twisted Blues* albums – how did that concept emerge?

"I had the idea for years before I recorded those records. I was always into blues and I had this idea of taking blues forms and opening them up in my own style. I did three studio albums: *Ha!*, *Fuzzy* and *Schizophrenic*, and also I did my first live album. They're all groove oriented and more funk and R&B based, I would say. It was basically taking different forms of the blues and opening them up harmonically and rhythmically."

You're playing outside a fair amount of the time on the those records...

"Here's the thing with my playing: it's been like that on all my records. My playing is basically a mix of bebop and blues. If you want to extend your harmonic and melodic vocabulary, you have to study jazz, you have to study music, and there are a bunch of

different scales in jazz that are more exotic sounding. Then when you start playing with those, you learn the language of jazz – which is bebop – and then you learn the language of blues. Then all of that together becomes something; I don't know, in my case it became what I do.

"I have an instructional DVD on JazzHeaven.com that is teaching exactly that. It's two and a half hours where I break down everything I do – all the scales and the options – but I do it over a blues. You have to study a little bit; there are no shortcuts, that's the bottom line."

If you had a couple of pieces of advice for a beginner on how to play a good solo, what would they be?

"Know your scales and be aware of rhythm. If you know the scale that you're going to play over a blues – a pentatonic scale, for instance – know it all over the guitar, everywhere. That would be the first thing. The second part would be the rhythmic aspect of music: the more rhythmical you are with your playing, the more musical it's going to sound. I think those are the two basic things that I would try to get somebody to focus on."

What would you say to people who are trying to find their voice on electric guitar?

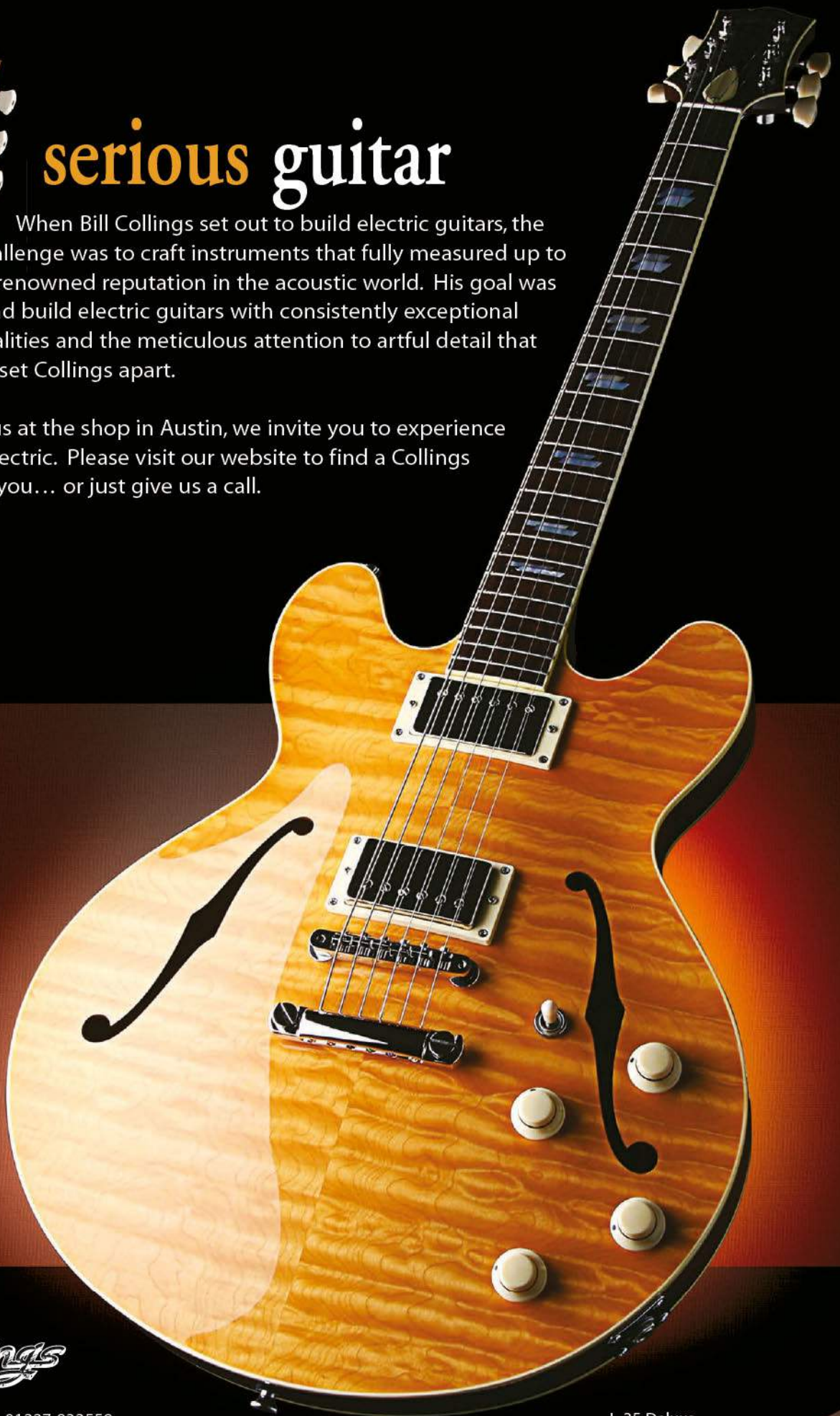
"My main advice is that you have to go through the process of copying and



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studying the language. I don't know if you can do it without it. If you want to have your own voice as a jazz musician, you have to study bebop and in order to study bebop, you have to study Charlie Parker and Wes Montgomery and those guys. All the modern jazz players like Pat Metheny or Scofield will all tell you the same thing: that they were pretty heavily into bebop and they still are.

"It's the same thing if you want to play rock or blues. You have to go to the roots of the music and learn the language: you have to study BB King, Freddie King, Albert King – all those guys. You shouldn't be afraid to do that because by studying you'll be able to find your own voice."

You've taken some inspiration from Allan Holdsworth. When we were speaking to Guthrie Govan, he felt that Holdsworth was almost in a category of one. What did you take from his playing? What did you find interesting that you could apply in your own creativity?

"I don't know, he's just his own thing. I don't know how he did it, he was just born with some other stuff because his thing doesn't come from bebop or from blues, it just comes from his brain. Of course, the technical aspect of it is extraordinary, but, to me, the thing that makes it the most appealing is that it's harmonically and melodically extraordinary."

"You have to go to the roots of the music and learn the language... by studying you'll be able to develop your own voice"

You spend a lot of time in New York; who do you admire among the people who are doing interesting work in jazz and blues?

"One guy that I wasn't aware of until I moved there was Wayne Krantz and he's a very important guy to me. There are a bunch of younger guys who play jazz that are extraordinary, like Nir Felder and Mike Moreno and, of course, Adam Rogers and Kurt Rosenwinkel. I love all those guys, they're very inspiring to me.

"In terms of blues and rock guys, I don't know if that really exists in New York. The one guy that I really like is Jon Herington who came from jazz and plays with Steely Dan. New York is more of a jazz town to me.

There's not much blues or funk there, but people can mix things together like I do. In my opinion, a lot of it is getting mixed more from the angle of jazz. It's like jazz musicians do stuff that's a little different."

So where have you been playing recently?

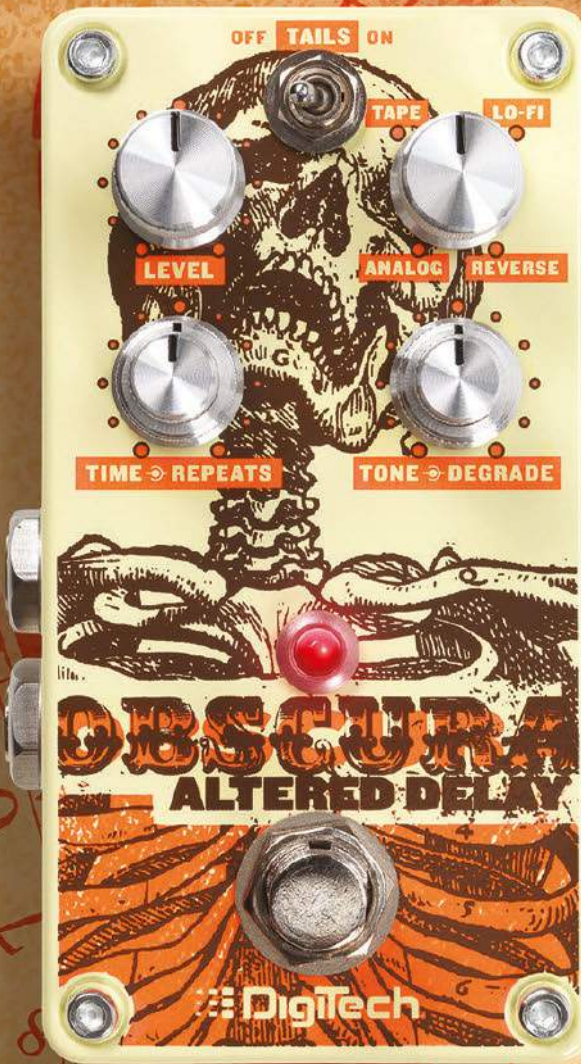
"Just recently, I released a live album called *Asian Twistz*. The story behind it is I had a tour in Asia last September with Dave Weckl and Etienne Mbatia, and Dave recorded a couple of the shows, so we ended up getting a really nice live album out of that.

"I did a European tour where I played Ronnie Scott's to support that record – that was back in April. Then I did some dates on the USA's east and west coasts right after, and for the rest of the summer I'm going to work on recording. I have another album that's almost ready to be recorded. The way I do it is I play in New York every week at a club called The Bitter End; I've been doing it for years and years and years. So I write and then I bring the music to the bandstand and we play it for a couple of weeks or months before I go in and record. That's what I'll do over the summer." 



Oz Noy's live album *Asian Twistz* is out now on Abstract Logix records. For info on tour dates see his website

www.oznoy.com



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HOPE AND GLORY

Vintage Trouble's suave six-stringer, Nalle Colt, tells us about how he and Stephen Stern built his new Gretsch prototype, and how an obscure top-boost effect he's borrowed from Angus Young has given him high-voltage tone

Words Matt Frost Photography Joe Branstion

It's been a whole two years since *Guitarist* caught up with Vintage Trouble's inimitable six-string hero, Nalle Colt, and the four-piece rhythm 'n' blues rockers have been typically busy in the interim. As well as garnering all kinds of further acclaim for their frenzied live sets at festivals and concert halls across the planet, the band have also found time to cut their sophomore album, *I Hopeful Rd*, with legendary producer Don Was.

Back in July 2013, we met Nalle on the eve of Vintage Trouble's Wembley Arena support slot on The Who's *Quadrophenia* tour, the final gig on a mammoth 51-show trek. This time around, the band is slap-bang in the middle of yet another major world jaunt, opening for none other than AC/DC across Europe and North America. Tomorrow, they'll be back in Wembley strutting their stuff in front of 70,000 rabid rock fans at the National Stadium. Nalle Colt, quite understandably, couldn't be more stoked.

"Right now, it's the largest tour in the world and it's mind-blowing to get to see [AC/DC] play every night," enthuses Colt. "These guys are putting on such a show and it's a great inspiration. It's been really moving me a lot inside – music-wise, guitar-wise, riff-wise and sound-wise. Everything about it really inspires me. I'm on a serious high right now. First of all, they offered us 14 shows of the European tour and, after five shows, they offered us the second leg

of the European tour. Now, lo and behold, they've offered us North America as well, so it's crazy! I think we've done 17 shows so far and we've played for over 1.4 million people already – incredible, man!"

Die-hard 'DC fans are a notoriously tough bunch to please when it comes to supports. What was the reception like?

"Yeah, we got really warned before the tour with AC/DC," says Nalle. "They were like, 'Our fans are not into support acts!' I even heard they had Buddy Guy supporting them once and he had trouble. But they have been so supportive. Maybe it's because we're very different but, in a way, very much the same. We're a basic rhythm 'n' blues band. It's guitar, bass, drums and vocals and there's no frills about it. We just get up and play. The support's been incredible and we've had a lot of communication with all the AC/DC fans all around Europe. They've been coming early to every show and even bringing flags with our name on it. In Spain, they wouldn't even let us off the stage, so even the AC/DC crew was asking if it was our show or AC/DC's!"

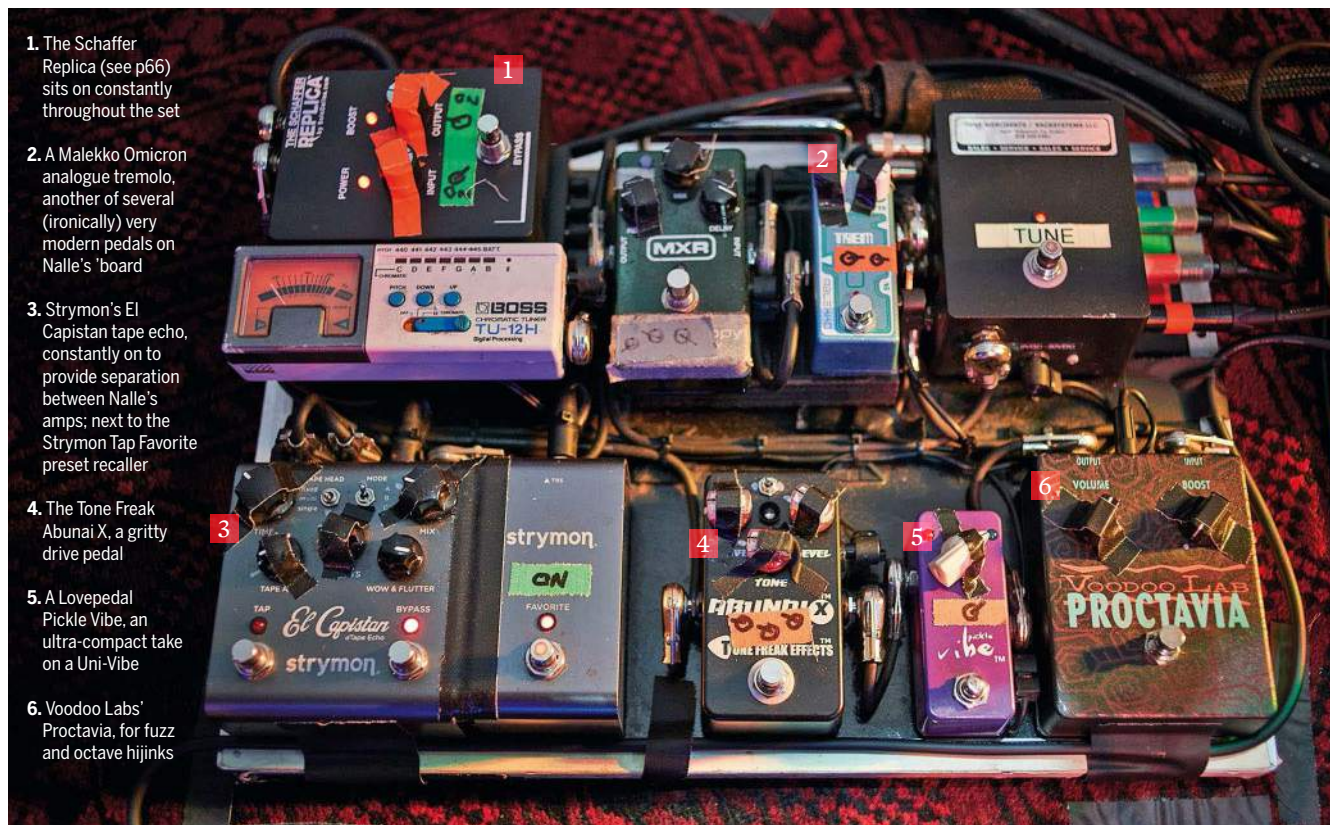
Signature Sounds

The last time we chatted to Nalle, he was gigging and recording with a mixture of Les Pauls and Gretsches. While his treasured Les Pauls still play an important part in his arsenal, Colt is now the proud owner of a Gretsch signature prototype that ticks just about every personal tone box possible.

"Right after I talked to you [in 2013] and we got off The Who tour, I went back to the States and Gretsch approached me about making a guitar and, to be honest with you, I was a little like, 'Well, I don't know, I've always been a Gibson Les Paul guy,'" explains Colt. "But they sat me down with Steve Stern at the Gretsch Custom Shop in California, and I explained what I wanted and I'm really proud of it. It came out incredible. We made a guitar based on a '54 Gretsch Duo Jet and it's kind of a hybrid of a Les Paul and a Gretsch. It's actually my main guitar on this tour... and I also used it pretty much for 99 per cent of every song that you hear on the new album. It's holding up really well. It's a super-tough guitar to play live and I love it. It's got everything I wanted, from growl to an old Chuck Berry-style kind of hollowbody vibe."

When the time came to spec out the guitar, Nalle wanted to remain faithful to the sound of his trusty Les Paul.

"I gave Stephen Stern my main Les Paul and said, 'If I'm going to make a new regular guitar, then it has to work like my Les Paul,'" says Nalle. "So they basically made a laser copy of my guitar neck from the Les Paul. Then, they put on jumbo frets, because I love the big old 6100 frets. While I love Filter'Tron guitar pickups, I always use humbuckers made by a friend of mine here in London – Monty's Guitars. They make these incredible guitar pickups. So we ended up doing a kind of a crazy thing,



1. The Schaffer Replica (see p66) sits on constantly throughout the set
2. A Malekko Omicron analogue tremolo, another of several (ironically) very modern pedals on Nalle's 'board
3. Strymon's El Capistan tape echo, constantly on to provide separation between Nalle's amps; next to the Strymon Tap Favorite preset recaller
4. The Tone Freak Abunai X, a gritty drive pedal
5. A Lovepedal Pickle Vibe, an ultra-compact take on a Uni-Vibe
6. Voodoo Labs' Proctavia, for fuzz and octave hijinks

because I wanted the Gretsch to look like an original old '54 guitar with the look of the old Filter'Tron pickups, so we ended up taking the covers off the Filter'Trons and putting Monty's humbucking pickups inside. It's also wired like a Les Paul inside as well. Gretsch guitars have that original master volume in the front and I ended up disconnecting that and using it like a regular Les Paul with two volumes and a tone control. That came out perfect, because the guitar's got a serious growl to it and it's

a hollowbody, so I can get a lot of feedback from the guitar in a very controlled way. It's also got an old Bigsby tremolo and Grover tuners, and with the bridge, I insisted on using TonePros. Also, with Gretsch guitars, usually the bridge is kind of loose, so I made sure it was fixed and we drilled it into the body. I'm kind of a heavy-handed guitar player and I need to make sure that my guitars truly can take my beating them up.

"As far as looks on it go, they ended up mounting the Vintage Trouble logo into

the guitar and then they relic'd it. Man, it looks and sounds so good and I'm really proud of it."

On the current AC/DC tour, Colt is also packing two Les Pauls: his "girlfriend who stays with me at all times", which was used on Vintage Trouble's debut *The Bomb Shelter Sessions*; and another Les Paul, which is set up in open tuning for slide.

Lazy Thinking

The majority of Nalle Colt's unique gigging amp rig has largely stayed the same over the course of the past couple of years. He still uses two Lazy J tweed amps and a Fender Vibratone, but these days, an additional Lazy J amp head powers the Vibratone.

"Jesse [Hoff] at Lazy J ended up making me a J 20 head that runs the Leslie [ie, Vibratone]," explains Colt. "He had a great old 60s blonde Fender Bandmaster that he let me use when I was touring here in England and I blew it up. Somebody plugged it in without putting the Leslie in and we smoked it! Jesse never forgave me for that, but for this tour, he ended up making me a J 20 head instead and it sounds incredible. So it's all Lazy J amps and it sounds so good. I will never change!"

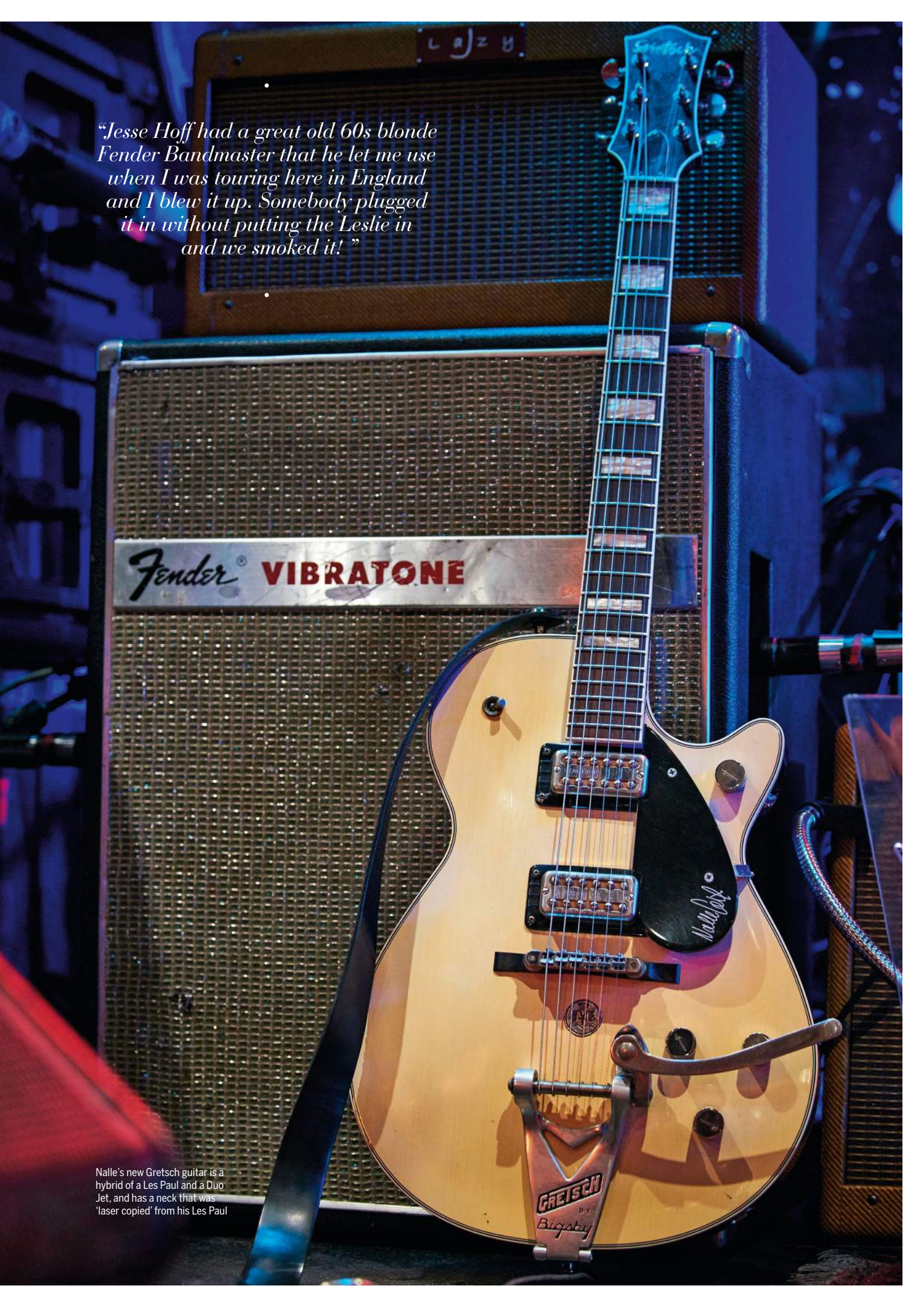
The Vibratone, which Fender originally launched in the late 60s to provide guitarists with a way of creating Leslie cabinet-style Hammond-esque tones, is still a core component in Nalle's rig and is particularly prominent on Vintage Trouble's recently released second album, *I Hopeful Rd.* A rotating Styrofoam drum in front of the



Nalle's a huge fan of Jesse Hoff's Lazy J amps, and uses two combos plus a head for his Fender Vibratone

“Jesse Hoff had a great old 60s blonde Fender Bandmaster that he let me use when I was touring here in England and I blew it up. Somebody plugged it in without putting the Leslie in and we smoked it!”

Nalle's new Gretsch guitar is a hybrid of a Les Paul and a Duo Jet, and has a neck that was 'laser copied' from his Les Paul





Schaffer's Secret

An effect that's become indispensable to Nalle's live tone is the Schaffer Replica, built by AC/DC obsessive Fil Olivieri of SoloDallas.com. Based on Ken Schaffer's original mid-70s wireless box – the Schaffer-Vega [Diversity System] – it provides players with the same main effect Angus Young championed on AC/DC's classic 70s and early-80s recordings.

"This guy had been calling me over and over again telling me I had to try this pedal he'd made and I kept putting him off... but I'd always been interested in a top boost kind of pedal. Then I tried it and I've got to say – it's fucking incredible, man! It really adds an amazing overdrive vibe to the amp. I was really blown away by it and it worked out really well when I tried it out with the band. And then, of course, we go on tour with AC/DC and obviously Angus is using the same thing. It's pretty wild and I can hear it in his tone as well. I think he mainly uses it on his guitar leads."

"[Vibratones] are really hard to find these days, but I own four of them. I keep buying them when I see them on eBay and then I restore them. They create such a beautiful old Booker T & The MG's kind of sound"

speaker is powered at either a slow or fast speed to create a variety of different guitar tones.

"We really emphasise the Leslie on the new album," enthuses Nalle. "If you put the headphones on, you can really hear it. I wanted it on all the ballads and stuff, because – since we've got such a bare-bones band with just the guitar, bass and drums – the Leslie is such a great kind of add-on with an old [Hammond] B3 organ kind of vibe. That came to me when I heard *Couldn't Stand The Weather* by Stevie Ray Vaughan when I was a little kid. I was like, 'What the fuck is that? It sounds so natural and organic,' so I ended up looking it up. [Vibratones] are really hard to find these days, but I own four of them. I keep buying

them when I see them on eBay and then I restore them. They create such a beautiful old Booker T & The MG's kind of sound."

On the new long-player, Colt also utilised a new 40-watt prototype combo amp with a 1x12 speaker built by David Friedman, who also makes Nalle's pedalboards and services his Lazy Js in LA.

Personal Effects

Although Colt does hawk a pedalboard around on tour, he actually uses effects very minimally, both on stage and in the studio. "To be honest with you, I'm trying to use less and less pedals," says Colt. "It's something that I really want to get away from. I still use the Strymon [El Capistan] echo. It sits on all the time, but just with the

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smallest amount of slapback echo, at about 250 milliseconds. I use it as something to just split up the amps to get a little bit of space. If you check out Scotty Moore from all those early Elvis Presley recordings, you'll find they always had that kind of tape echo. There's also a lot of that slapback on most of the new record.

"We've got a shorter set of about 45 minutes on this tour with AC/DC and, with the songs we're playing, all you hear is the Vibratone, that little Strymon echo and the Schaffer Replica [see box on previous page], which is basically sitting on all the time. I've also been using treble bleeds with the guitar volume and they work really well with the Schaffer Replica.

"Sometimes, when you turn down the volume of your guitar, it can sound really muddy but – with the treble bleeds – you keep the treble when you turn down. But I think my dream is to not even have a pedalboard on stage. That would be such a freedom. Just using the volume knob

on the guitar is such an expressive way of playing and you'd be amazed what you can do with the guitar on its own, and just a tone control and the splitting of the guitar pickups and stuff like that. Jeff Beck is the god of that, creating a million guitar tones from just a guitar and nothing else!"

Fifth Member

Nalle Colt is rightfully proud of his band's new album, *1 Hopeful Rd*, their first for legendary imprint Blue Note Records. It was overseen by multi-Grammy Award winning producer (and president of Blue Note) Don Was and Nalle describes Was's role as "almost a fifth member of the band" during the sessions at Hollywood's EastWest Studios.

"It was very, very cool working with Don," explains Nalle. "First of all, he's a musician because he's a bass player, and he's also an incredible musical director. He listens to everything in such a 'song' way, and I think he really brought out the songs in us. He

really cared about everything I did on the guitar, too. Sometimes, I was just sitting and noodling and he would say, 'Wait a minute! What was that? That's really cool', and I'd say, 'Oh really?' I've got to thank him for a lot of cool little guitar details that I would have never thought about doing myself.

"I also want to mention the recording engineer Howard Willing. He was so into the tone and we really spent a long time moving microphones back and forth on the speakers. He did an amazing job of finding the sweet spots... When I speak to guitar magazines and stuff, they've been a little bit surprised there's not more big guitar riffs on it, but it was all about the songs this time and being more structured. It was really fun to make and I'm really proud of it." 🎸



1 Hopeful Rd by Vintage Trouble is out now on Blue Note Records. See the website for more info

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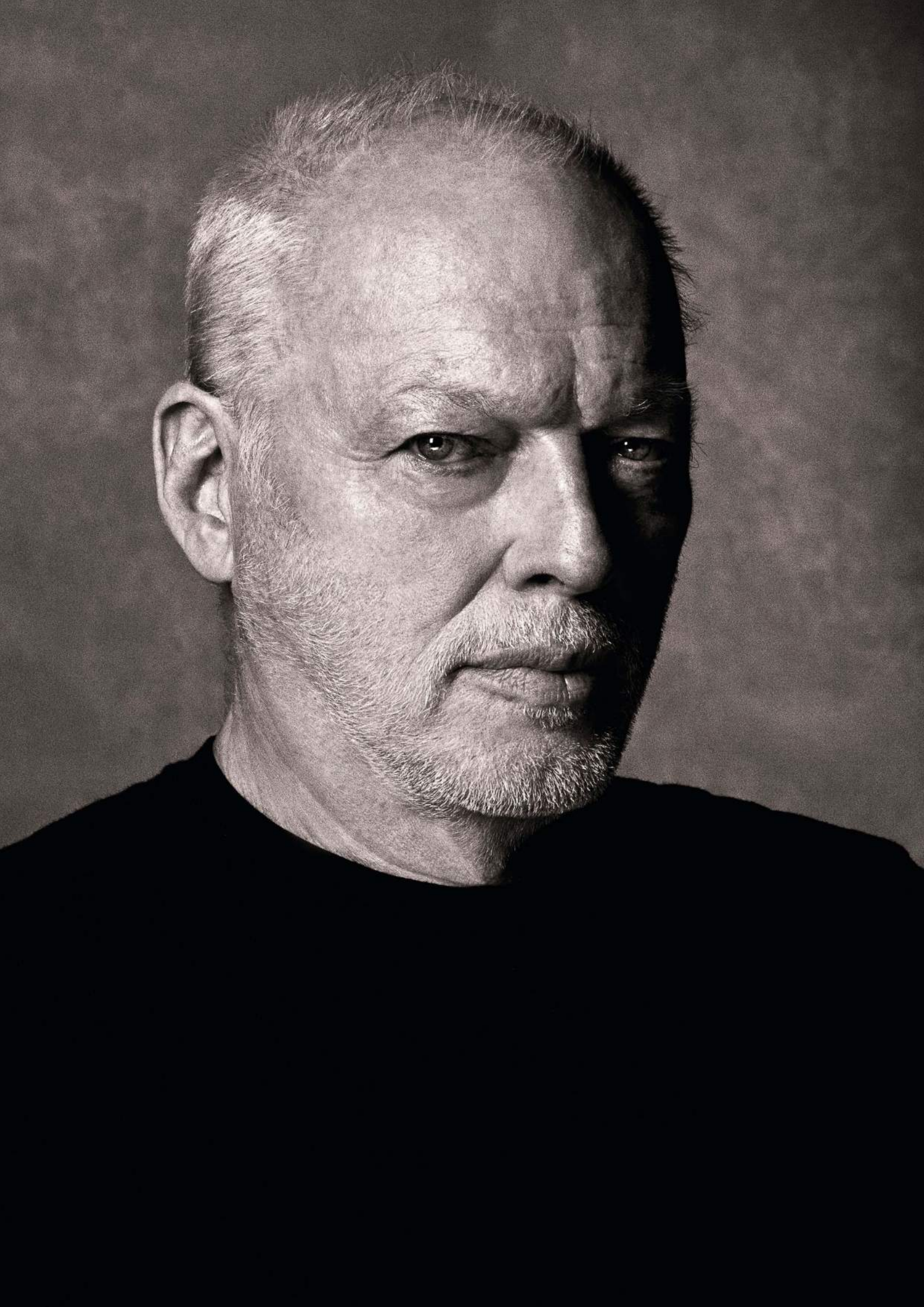
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The Big Interview

DAVID GILMOUR

David Gilmour's new solo album, *Rattle That Lock*, is the follow-up to 2006's *On An Island*. Here, he gives *Guitarist* an insight into his songwriting and recording process, discussing changes in his technique, the importance of early demos, and the gear he used to create the album

Words Jeff Slate Photography Kevin Westenber

From the opening notes of *5 AM*, the track that kicks off David Gilmour's new album, *Rattle That Lock*, you know you're in for something reflective. There's always been something intimate and yearning about Gilmour's remarkable guitar playing, but *5 AM* conveys something much deeper; amidst the familiar longing he manages to wring out of the notes he so expertly delivers. Seated in the London offices of his long-time publicist, Gilmour is fit and engaged. At the outset of our conversation, we remind him of a previous meeting at a party in the early 90s, around the time of the making of Pink Floyd's *The Division Bell*, and that he'd said a total of about eight words the entire evening. "That sounds about par for the course," Gilmour says with a wry smile.

In fact, both the keyboardist Jon Carin, who has worked with Gilmour off and on for more than 20 years, and Gilmour's wife, the novelist Polly Samson, warned us prior to our conversation that the legendary guitarist isn't exactly the most talkative guy. On this occasion, however, Samson and Carin are wrong; on the day we catch up to discuss *Rattle That Lock*, his collaborative process and, of course, his inimitable guitar technique, David Gilmour is a veritable fount of information...

It's been nine years since Gilmour's last solo album, 2006's majestic *On An Island*. It was followed by a lengthy tour, which included sold-out shows across continents and yielded a couple of live CD/DVD packages. But, as far as any further original material is concerned – nothing. It seemed like radio silence was the order of the day in the Gilmour camp, only broken by the surprise announcement that a final Pink Floyd album, *The Endless River*, was to be released as a sort of memorial for Rick Wright who sadly passed away from cancer in 2008. The album is mainly reclaimed from the vaults, and Gilmour acknowledged that it was an epitaph for Floyd, too, as he insisted that the band was finally done and that he was now focusing on his solo career. So... nine years, then?

"It's nine years, yes it is." Gilmour ponders for a minute. "I have had a long and busy career, and I don't feel it's essential for me to keep going at the rate I was going when I was younger. I work until things start gathering momentum. This just happens to be that moment."

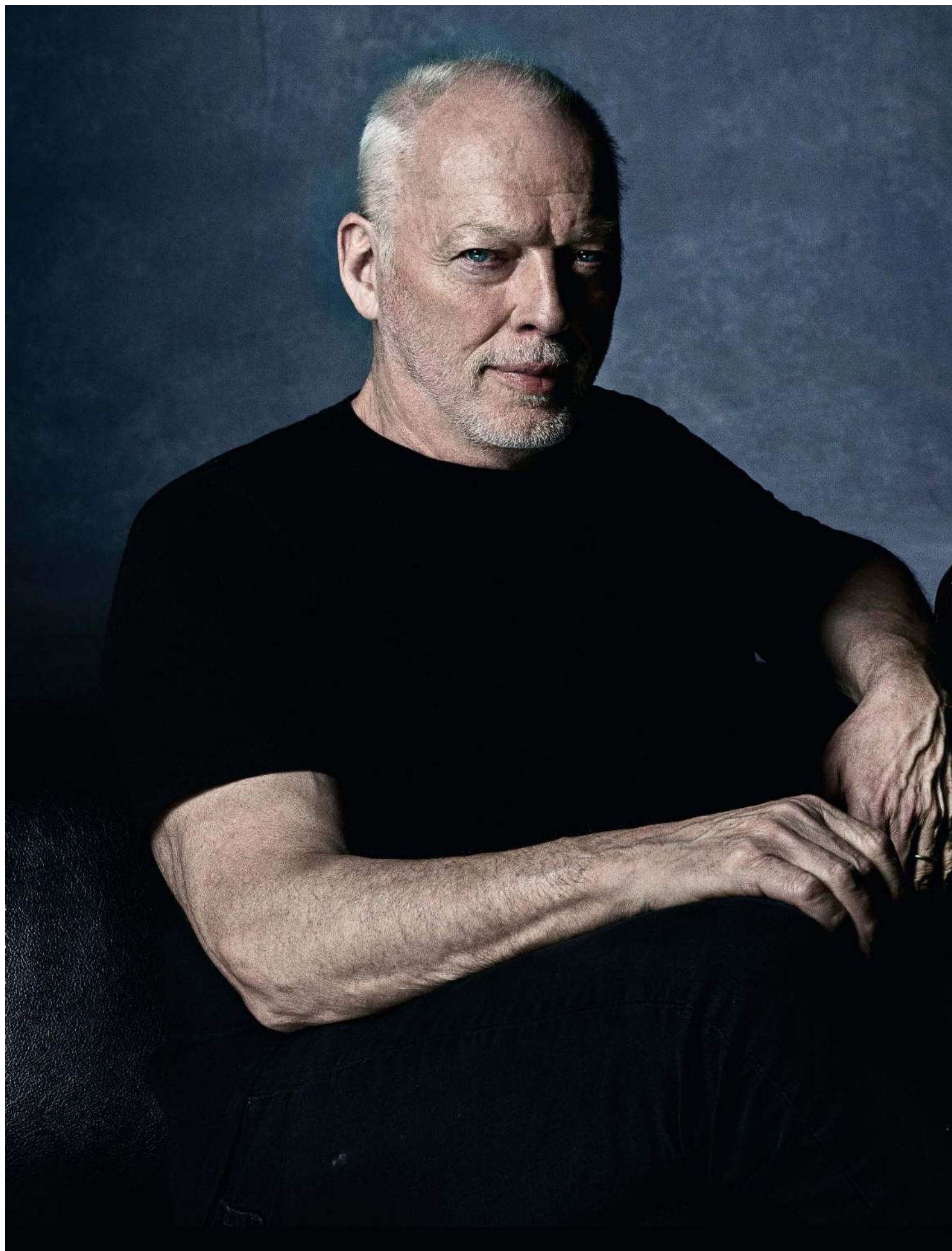
We discuss *The Endless River* for a few minutes, and ask if sessions for *Rattle That Lock* began in earnest after work on that album was complete.

"It's very hard to define the moment that you can say is the start point of it," Gilmour

says. "I've been working on bits of these songs for years, since *On An Island*, really. It gradually starts moving to a point where you start thinking, 'Yeah, actually, I'm close to having something which I could turn into an album.' Of course, just at the moment when I had started that process and was getting a head of steam up and working on it, the *Endless River* project came into view, and I had to put this one on the shelf and do a few months of hard work on that one before moving back to this one. But here we are, we've now got there."

While *Rattle That Lock* includes many of Gilmour's signature sounds, it also dabbles in jazz and more modern-sounding song structure and polish. There are hints of Pink Floyd and Gilmour's earlier solo work throughout, but it's also a remarkable step forward for Gilmour as a solo artist, defining him more than ever as having a career outside the shadow of his former band. Is this something he feels, too?

"I guess every experience you have, every project you take part in subconsciously affects you in some way or another," Gilmour reflects. "But trying to pin down what exactly has made any difference is kind of impossible, really. I have no idea. That just is the way that my mind and fingers are working at the moment. I can't find another explanation."





"There were about 200 little snippets, just odds and ends. I gave them to Phil, who whittled them down to about 30 ideas, and then we focused in"

A SONY FULL OF SECRETS

As we discuss the earliest days of demoing *Rattle That Lock* at home – some of which were recorded on an iPhone and used in the final mixes – Gilmour brightens at recalling his composition process.

"These things will tumble out of a guitar or piano, and I'll pop them down on my iPhone these days. Before the iPhone, it was something else: a MiniDisc player; before that, a cassette player; before that, well... God knows what else. It means that I never forget a new little snippet of music that comes to me, nine-tenths of which, of course, is rubbish. When you listen to them later, you go, 'Oh God, not that.' But it's easier now, and has really helped the process of making this album."

What did he do with the demos, and how did he choose which ideas to pursue?

"I turned them over to Phil Manzanera!" Gilmour says, with a hearty laugh. "There were about 200 little snippets, just odds and ends. I gave them to Phil, who whittled them down to about 30 ideas, and then we focused in on what were the best of those and what we wanted to develop – about 10. But we had plenty of ideas to draw from that were also good if we got stuck. And Phil was invaluable, in that sense. He has a mind that can keep all those ideas organised, and can make suggestions really quickly. That was enormously helpful."

Once in the studio, Gilmour tackled the songs with an energy that surprised even him, he says.

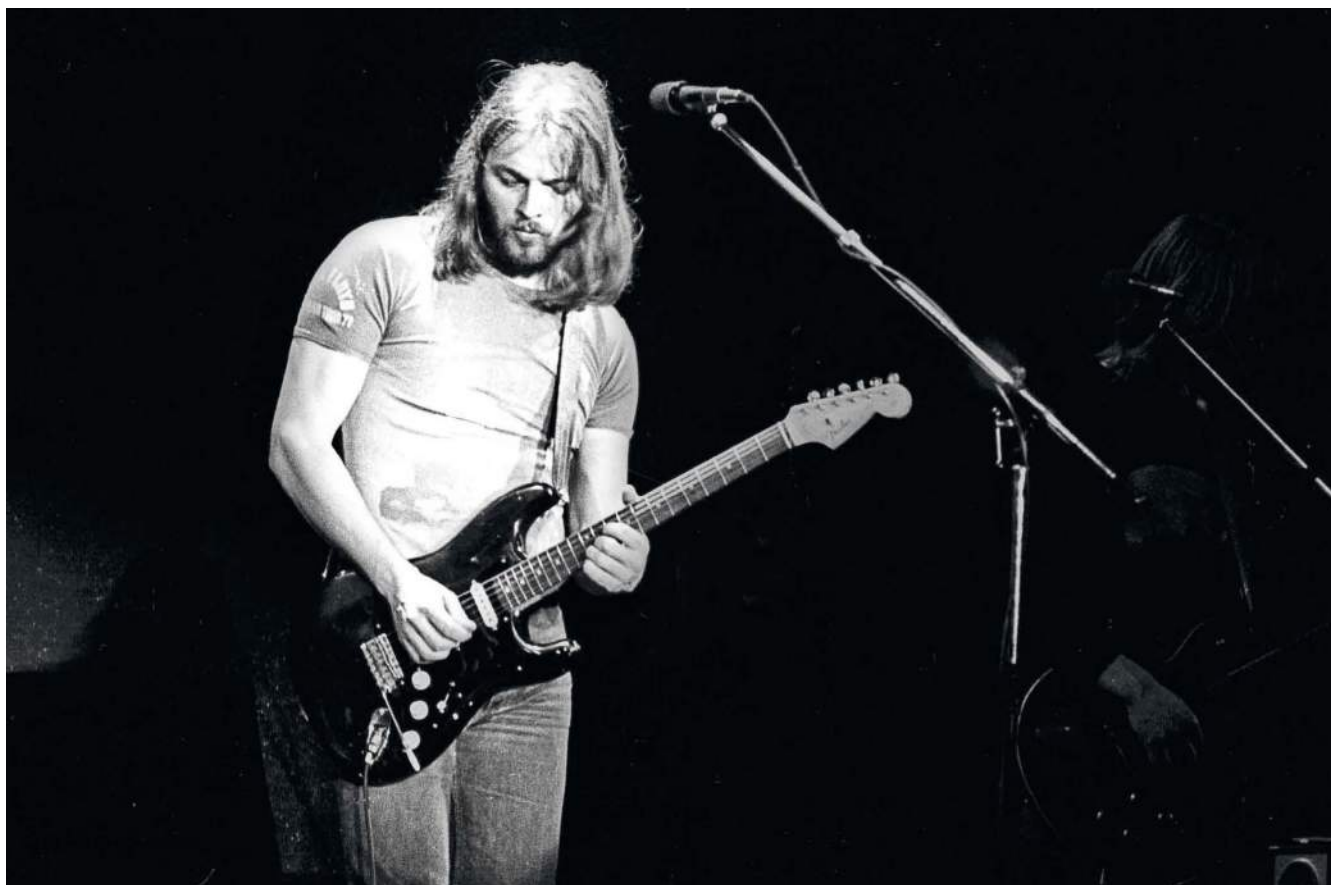
"Most of them were started off with a click track on a Pro Tools rig, and I'd do it all myself," he says of the recording process. "At some point later, I'd get a drummer in. Stevie [DiStanislaio], who came in for a couple of days, did dozens of tracks for me."

Another track, the jazzy *The Girl In The Yellow Dress*, was different.

"That was done live with a little jazz trio," he says. "Jools Holland is on that. He wasn't in the original trio that played, though. There's a trio, a bass player, Chris Laurence, a drummer called Martin France, and a guitar player called John Parricelli – they were the trio on the original one. Then I did another session to try it again, but I used the same click at that session at Abbey Road, which Jools Holland and Rado Klose and a few other people were on. In the end, I just took those guys off that session and put them onto the other session. That did start off with a live track, but most of them don't."

Does he yearn for the days of playing live in the studio, with the interaction and creative dynamic it generates?

"I keep thinking that I want to do it all with a live band and get in a big room and record the songs," he admits. "But I always



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seem to find myself at the end thinking that what I've got is so good that it would be hard to top it by doing that. But I'm always planning to do that on the next record."

Does he feel – like many musicians – that it's often hard to recapture the magic of the original demo?

"It's exactly that," he says, flatly. "On the demos for *A Boat Lies Waiting*, the piano is actually my demo, the main piano. That was recorded in my sitting room with me playing piano over 10 years ago on a MiniDisc recorder – a stereo MiniDisc recorder, a rubbish Sony thing. That's how that piano was recorded. When you put it into Pro Tools and you've tidied up the dodgy timing, taken out the bum notes, and put a double bass on it to give it some rich bottom end and stuff, it starts to sound very good and it's very hard to even think about replacing that. On *A Boat Lies Waiting* you can hear my son, who's now 20, as a newborn baby – three months old or something – squawking on that track. That tells you how old that one was!"

A WHAMMY LIES WAITING

We broach the subject of his approach to the guitar on *Rattle That Lock*. While he is well known as being reluctant to examine his guitar playing and inspirations, today, however, Gilmour seems happy to ponder

exactly those questions, and talk a little about his gear, too.

"Well, I guess I just try to find what is the right sound and feeling for the track I'm playing on," Gilmour says. "Sometimes it's tricky to get to that. I don't really think there's anything particularly different or new in what I'm playing or the way I'm playing it. I tend to play more with my fingers than a guitar pick these days, for some reason that I don't quite understand. It just seems to be the way it is. That might make a little bit of difference to the sound, but it's not really anything I've been analysing or intending to do."

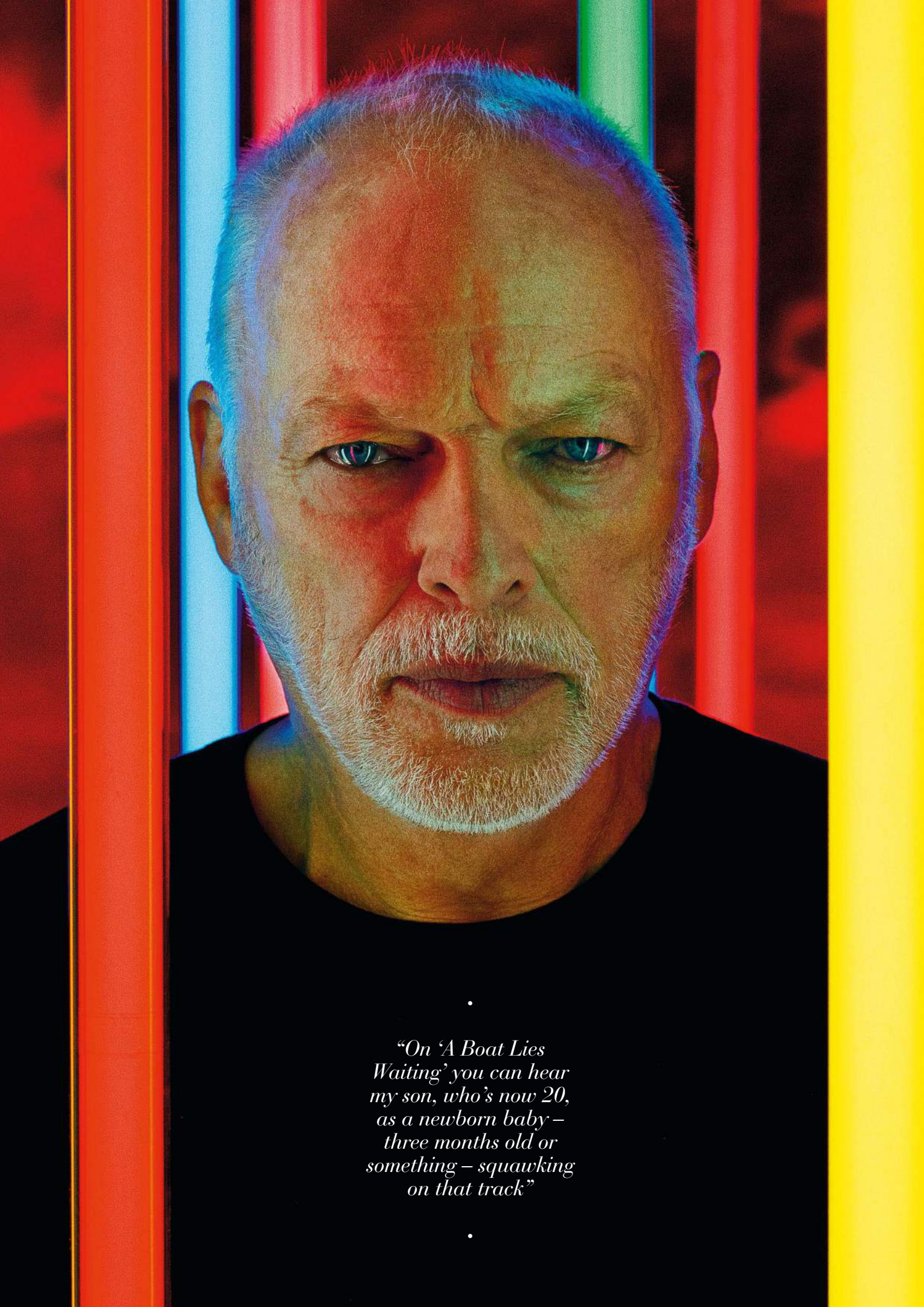
When we point out that the playing and pristine-sounding acoustic guitar on *Faces Of Stone* was possibly a highlight of the album, Gilmour is matter-of-fact about the pedigree of the guitar he used.

"The acoustic on *Faces Of Stone* is, I think, the same one that I used on *Wish You Were Here*," he says. "It goes back a fair old way."

Phil Taylor, Gilmour's long-time guitar tech, has said his boss has been using his fabled black Strat again, so we ask if Gilmour used that much on this album, and what his other go-to guitars were.

"Well, I used the Strat quite a bit," he says. "I also have a black Gretsch Duo Jet that I used quite a lot. It's a really old one. The old ones have got a very curious sort of hi-fi sound, a lovely top end. It has got a very different sound. I don't know what it is about it that makes it have that sound, but

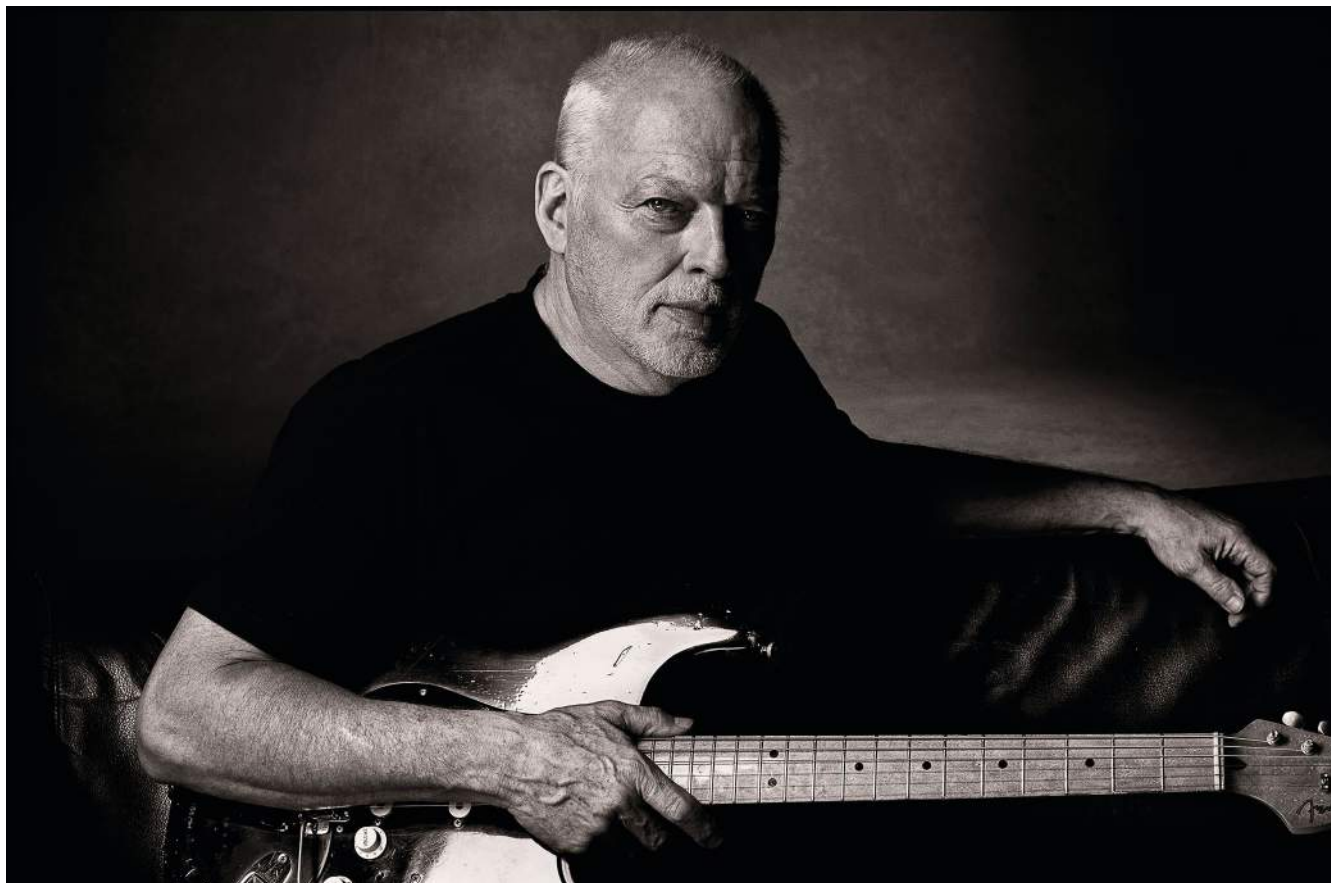
ABOVE Gilmour plays the Black Strat in Pink Floyd, Wembley 1977, on the *In The Flesh* tour promoting *Animals*



•

*“On ‘A Boat Lies
Waiting’ you can hear
my son, who’s now 20,
as a newborn baby –
three months old or
something – squawking
on that track”*

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“I didn’t use the DigiTech Whammy pedal on this album at all. I did play with it a couple of times, but it just didn’t seem like the right thing at this moment on this album”

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I’ve tried to buy a spare to take on the road and looked at other ones and newer ones, but there’s something missing. There’s something in the sound of that old one, and I haven’t got a spare for it. If I break a string or something when I’m using it on stage, I have to switch to another one that’s okay, but it’s not quite in the same league. I don’t understand why those particular pickups on that particular guitar have got a sort of hi-fi top end. It’s unusual on an electric guitar.

“I also used a Gibson Goldtop, like the one I played on *Another Brick In The Wall*, but it’s not actually the same one. Those are the electrics I used – oh, and I’m using my old Esquire as well on a couple of tracks.”

As for amps, Gilmour is equally forthcoming: “I tried all sorts of different amps,” he begins. “I’ve got an old Fender Twin that’s pretty trusty and I’ve got a Hiwatt combo that, I guess, is 50 watts. I use my Yamaha rotating speaker cabinet quite often, mixed in with the other sounds...”

Then he gets stumped. “What’s the other amp?” he asks no-one in particular. “I can’t even remember what the name of the other amp is, because it’s not written on it. It’s in a wooden case and I don’t even know the name of it [most probably his Alessandro Redbone Special – Ed]. It’s the one I used on the solo on *The Endless River*.”

Gilmour laughs, saying he’s just not that technical. But he’s willing to take a stab at the pedals he used in making the album.

“I didn’t use the DigiTech Whammy pedal on this album at all,” he says, when we mention how arresting its use was on *On An Island*. “I did play with it a couple of times to try it, but it just didn’t seem like the right thing at this moment on this album. I couldn’t find a spot for it.

“I actually haven’t used a Big Muff for quite a few years,” he continues. “Certainly not on this album. I don’t think I used it on *On An Island*, either. The overdrive I tend to use is a [BK Butler] Tube Driver these days, often with a compressor feeding into it. On this one, it’s actually pretty much untreated. On a couple of tracks, I’ve just gone through with a compressor and used the output volume to be the overdrive. But yeah, I just fiddle until something starts sounding nice.”

As for how he’ll approach his sound for upcoming live shows, Gilmour chuckles.

“I don’t memorise what I use, if that’s what you’re asking,” he says. “I just don’t work that way. I probably should try a bit harder to make notes of these things and sort all that out, but I’m afraid I don’t. I just try to get something that sounds similar when I go into rehearsal. I just press a button on the pedalboard on stage, see what comes close, and then stick with that.” **E**

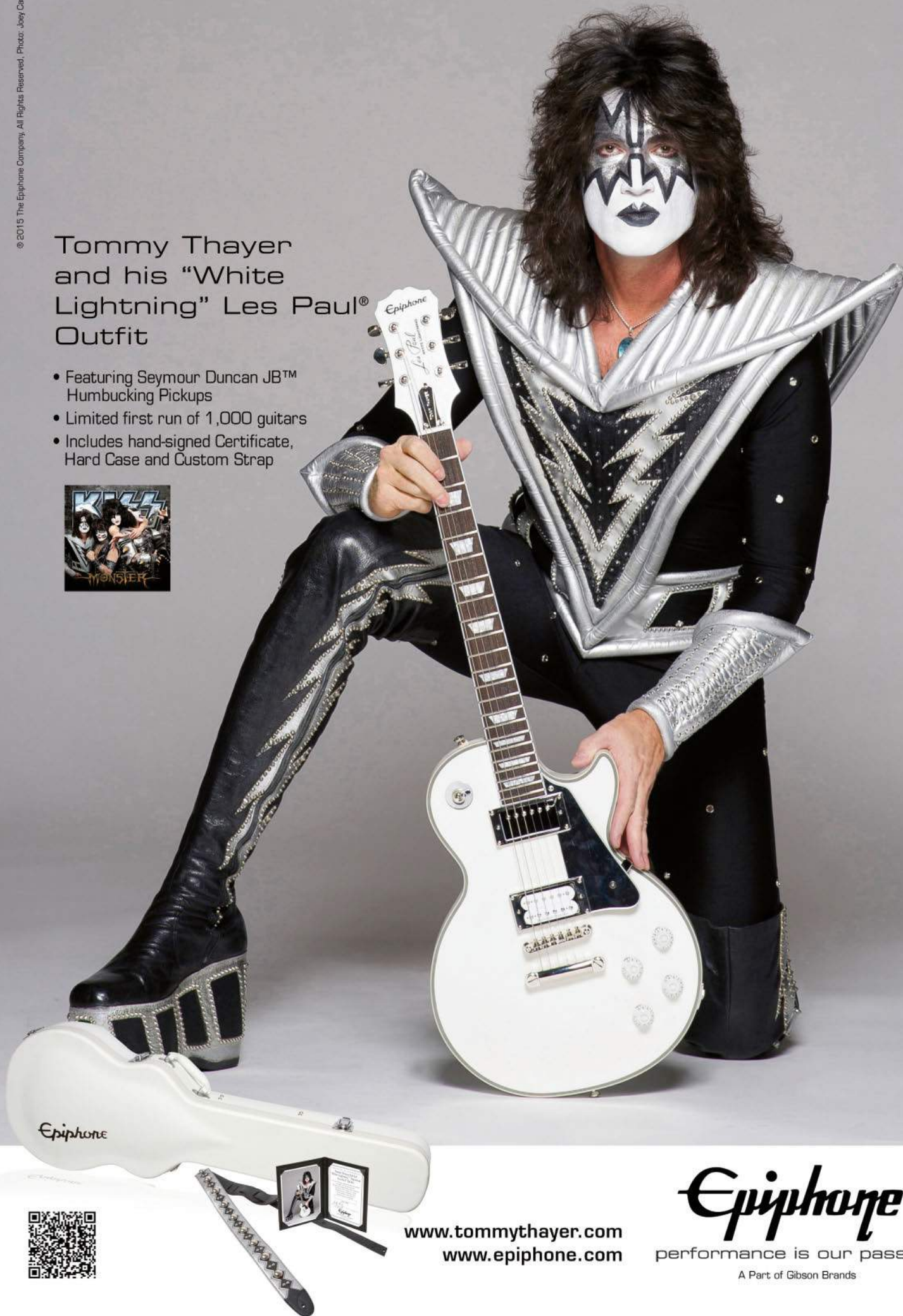


Rattle That Lock is out now. Visit the website for more information

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DAVE MURRAY

As Iron Maiden release their first ever double studio album, we meet Dave Murray to talk about Strats, spontaneity and soul

Words Rob Laing Photography John McMurtrie

By album number 16, most bands could be forgiven for going through the motions somewhat: phoning it in, mellowing out and resting on the laurels of their past hits from their immense back catalogue. But Iron Maiden proved some time ago that they're not 'most bands'. Metal's national treasures have just made a 90-minute double album and decided to shake up their creative process in doing so.

Within the maelstrom of creativity on *The Book Of Souls* are a pair of steady hands belonging to a man whose fluid legato and easy smile are synonymous with the band's heritage. Dave Murray has been a cornerstone of Iron Maiden since 1978 (he originally joined, then left, in 1976), first partnering with guitarist Dennis Stratton for the band's seminal self-titled debut in 1979, then joining up with his childhood friend Adrian Smith for twin harmonies and duelling solos in the greatest creative run of albums ever witnessed in heavy metal. Janick Gers would eventually replace Smith in 1990, but the latter's return to the band in 1999 resulted in Maiden's first ever three-guitar attack, which saw its debut on 2000's *Brave New World*.

That record was recorded at Guillaume Tell Studios in Paris, and for *The Book Of Souls*, the band once again headed off to the studio, again under the enthusiastic guidance of Joe Bonamassa producer Kevin Shirley – a man who positively encourages the spontaneous spirit Dave is still exploring with Maiden.

Did you surprise yourselves with just how much material you had for this?

"I think we did, really. On previous albums, we've usually gone into a rehearsal room for maybe a couple of weeks and maybe have four or five songs under our belts. Then we'd go into the studio and start recording, and the rest of the material would be written while we were there. But this time, we went in there with a blank page and a bunch of ideas.

"After we had several songs and it was over the hour mark anyway, we kind of said, 'Okay, it looks like it's going to be a double album...' It was fantastic, but we stopped there – otherwise we would have been in for three or four albums!"

What did such a spontaneous creative process involve?

"Everything was kind of channelled through Steve [Harris, bass]. He would listen to people's ideas and then he'd start putting pieces together and forming them into shape. We'd learn it and Kevin Shirley would just hit the record button and off we'd go. A lot of it was very spontaneous. Maybe we'd just run through it a couple of times and if it had a really good feel, then we'd keep it.

"Other things, obviously the complex sections, took a bit more time to work on, with all the time changes. But it was a really fun experience because it keeps you on your toes. You have to be really sharp. We're scribbling guitar chords down, and melodies and harmonies, changes...

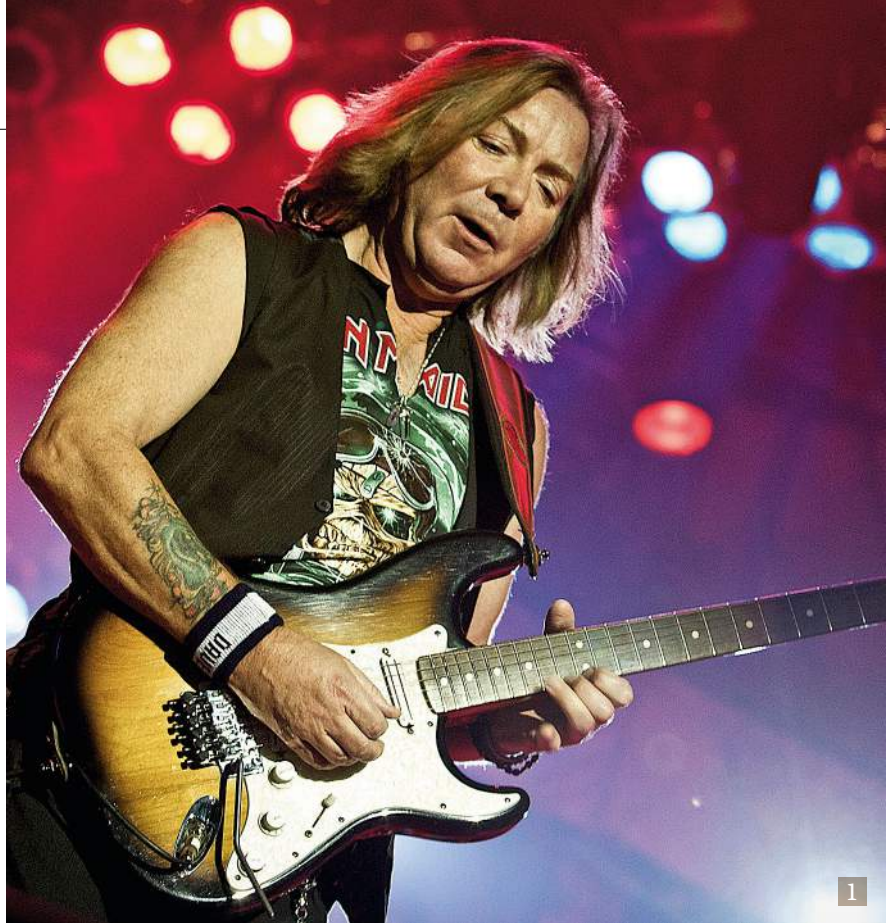
Basically, we were flying by the seat of our pants because we never knew what was coming next. Nicko [McBrain, drums] was the one that really had to get it first: the foundation. Afterwards, you go in and patch things up and overdub. But it was wonderful how things kept flowing."

You wrote the song *Man Of Sorrows* with Steve. Was that a different kind of collaboration than the way you've worked together in the past?

"Over the years, I'd go over to his house or we'd work on songs in a hotel room. But on this album, we gave Steve our ideas on a CD and then he'd take them away, listen to them and maybe rearrange parts. He might write some lyrics and add melodies, but Bruce wrote a lot of the lyrics as well. Sometimes, he might leave the whole as it was. It's a good way to collaborate, because sometimes it takes a few listens when you're showing somebody an idea.

"Sometimes, Steve will come up with a [vocal] melody immediately and be inspired that way. Other times, he'll take stuff back and work on it. Sometimes in the studio you need to go to a quiet spot and sit down and think about things, as opposed to all the distractions that are going on. On this album, we gave Steve our ideas and he might splice them up after listening to them back. Then we'd listen back to the reinterpretation, start writing down what the chords were and Nicko would be listening so we could run through it and start recording. It was a lot quicker in

“The rule of thumb is generally that the first take is the best. You could go on and play something that may be technically better, but it loses the feel”



1. Dave's main live guitar is a Tobacco Sunburst Custom Shop Strat fitted with Seymour Duncan pickups

2. This HHH Dave Murray signature Strat has a Seymour Duncan JB Jr pickup in the middle position, for an added sheen of clean jangle. Dave favours a middle position or neck-and-middle position for rhythm work

terms of putting down the tracks. It's about capturing the performance. But from the original demo idea to the true recorded performance, there are quite a lot of changes that occur.”

When you, Adrian and Janick go in to track your guitar solos on songs like *The Red And The Black*, do you listen to what each other has done before you respond with your own solo?

“If one of the other guys is doing a solo, maybe you'll hear a bit of it during the playback, but usually, you'll cut in three or four seconds before your solo starts and just jump in. But you won't really hear anything [much], so I was pleasantly surprised when I heard the album – what Adrian and Janick had played that I hadn't heard before – because we'd go in individually with Kevin and work on little parts like that. So it's exciting to hear the finished product.”

Your solos have an especially instinctive feel on this album. Do you find your first take is often your strongest?

“Yes, definitely. That always tends to be the case, because it's fresh and spontaneous. On this album, I didn't really go in with any preconceived

ideas; I didn't work anything out in the hotel or anything. I was just kind of 'go for it' on most of the album. So I'd play some stuff and Kevin would say, 'Yes, that sounds good.' And sometimes it would be the first take, then other times, I'd do two or three different things and then go out and have a cup of coffee and Kevin would put all the bits together. Then I'd come back and listen to it and he'd ask, 'What do you think of that?'

“Then you have to go back and learn it for the tour. But that's what the studio is for. The thing about editing and cutting pieces together is it can be done seamlessly now. Working with Kevin is great because his enthusiasm rubs off. You're sitting in the control room next to him and he's really excited and he's really into it. He tends to bring out the best in everyone in the whole band, individually as well.

“The rule of thumb is generally that the first take is the best. You could go on and play something that may be technically better, but it loses the feel. There's no hard and fast rules to the way we do things. If it sounds good and if we like it, we keep it. If not, it just goes on the cutting room floor to magnetic heaven! But sometimes, it's been a case of doing two or three passes and you decide which one is better.”

Do you trust your instincts more with solos now compared to the old days?

“I think I've always tried to be more spontaneous, but there were a few albums where I meticulously worked out everything before I went in: solos, melodies... I'd sit down and go over them. A few sections we've done, I've had

Middle Man

Dave explains his Strat's Duncan difference

Fender recently released a new HHH Dave Murray Strat in Two-Colour Sunburst. Dave explains the original that inspired it, and the change that made it even more essential as a live guitar for Maiden. “I had my custom Fender Strat made about 15 years ago, and it had the Seymour Duncan Hot Rails in it. Then Colin, my guitar tech, suggested putting the Seymour Duncan JB Jr in the middle position to get more of a cleaner, jangly kind of sound. And it worked fantastically. I'll have it in the five-way position set in the middle of the Hot Rails, and it gives a nice clean tone. With the Maiden material, although there's a lot of heavy chord tones, there's also a lot of cleans in between, so that Strat works perfectly. For what we're doing, you can switch from a heavy part quickly to a clean at the push of a button. Because things are happening so quickly sometimes, you don't have time to think, you have to act spontaneously.”





3. Dave has retired the Kossoff Strat from live work, but he still has this Custom Shop Strat, again with Seymour Duncan Custom Wound Hot Rails pickups in the bridge and neck, and a JB Jr pickup in the middle position

4. Dave used a Victory amp and Les Pauls for recording the majority of *Book Of Souls*, primarily this 2002 1960 Series Iced Tea Les Paul Classic with a Seymour Duncan '59 neck pickup and a JB in the bridge, and a Gibson Axxess Standard Les Paul with Floyd Rose

“It doesn’t necessarily mean it’s heavier because you’ve got three guitars, but it’s become more musical. It’s teamwork”

to consciously sit down and work out because some of the chord sections were weird to play over – maybe jazzy – and it’d force me to go to places I wouldn’t normally go, which is healthy. I’ve tried to be spontaneous as much as possible. But sometimes you do have to sit down and consciously work out something, and then you can experiment.”

There’s a bit more wah than usual for Maiden on this record...

“I think, listening back, there’s quite a lot of wah pedal on this album [a Dunlop Cry Baby]. We were breaking out the wah and the [Fulltone] DeJáVibe. It’s nice to have a bit of delay, too, [Dave used a TC Electronic Flashback] because, in the studio, it can be really dry and you want to feel you are in a live situation where you have that hall echo that you can play off. So we’re not afraid of using effects. Back in the 80s, you’d probably hear a lot more chorus in Maiden songs. Now, there’s less and it’s back to being more raw. Sometimes, it’s all about what you leave out.”

15 years in, how do you think Adrian, Janick and yourself have embraced the three-guitar sound?

“It’s nice that we can have three-guitar harmonies now, especially in a live situation. It’s been a natural evolution. When the three of us started playing together, we’d be playing the same chords but on different parts of the neck, and one of us might play clean while another plays something heavy. We don’t work at it that hard, but we sit down to make sure the intonation is there and it sounds good, that we’re not clashing. But most of the time, it works out very naturally. We’ll work out the intricate parts and nuances in the harmonies. It doesn’t necessarily mean it’s heavier because you’ve got three guitars, but it’s become more musical. It’s teamwork when we play together, and it’s orchestrated that way. I think we inspire each other.

“When Janick, Adrian and I sit down and are working things out it’s done very quietly – almost acoustically, playing in unison. It’s definitely inspirational, because they’re great players and they really go for it.”

A black and white photograph of a musician playing an electric guitar on stage. The musician is in silhouette, wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans. A microphone is positioned in front of their face. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some stage equipment.

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5. Gibson 2004 Flying V with 500T bridge pickup and 496R neck pickup
6. Gibson 2010 Traditional Series Les Paul, again with Seymour Duncan '59 in the neck and JB in the bridge position

“The band is stronger than ever, and Bruce has always been the fittest and strongest guy in the band anyway”

When Iron Maiden make a new album, you really commit to supporting it in your live set. But, also, every few years, you’ve done something retrospective in your setlists, too. Do you think you’ve found the best of both worlds?

“Well, every few years, we’ve recorded a new album and then we’ve purposefully gone out on tour with it. Over the years, we’ve had so many songs to choose from that it gets harder and harder each time. For the next tour, we’ll be taking songs from *The Book Of Souls* out there, but also reflecting back on the past 30 years – and a lot of kids want to hear the older material as well as the new stuff.

“But doing a new album keeps us current and valid – it’s not just about playing the old songs. So it’s rewarding to go out and play the new songs, but by the same token, it’s also comfortable and fantastic when we’re playing the old stuff. There are a lot of memories there. But the new songs do keep you on your toes, so you’ve got to make sure you’ve got them well locked down before you go on stage.”

Completing this double album, and with Bruce Dickinson getting back to health, does Iron Maiden feel stronger than ever?

“When we were recording, Bruce had done the whole album and he was absolutely fine. So when we heard [Bruce was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour at the back of his tongue in late 2014], obviously, we were all in shock. But we knew the prognosis was positive and he was going to heal. Once we heard, we put everything on hold and when we got the news that he was fine, up and about – and he’s in tip-top shape right now – we were able to move forward and go back out on tour. The band is stronger than ever, and Bruce has always been the fittest and strongest guy in the band anyway. We’ve got no problem touring this album next year. We’re not over the hill, but when you are over the hill, you just go faster!”



Iron Maiden's 16th album, *The Book Of Souls*, is out now on Parlophone. See the website for tour information

www.ironmaiden.com



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ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Some guitars, such as Fender's Strat, become so familiar over time that they attract accolades such as 'timeless' and 'iconic' like a magnet attracts paperclips. Yet look closely at an original 1954 Stratocaster and you realise how different it is to the Strats of today. So, we put a pristine original example under the microscope to uncover the intriguing spec details that set the earliest Strats apart from their latter-day descendants...

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Joby Sessions

Now here's a curious thing. From Buddy Holly to Mark Knopfler, so many celebrated guitarists have used Strats over the years that the sleek, twin-horned outline of the Strat is as familiar as the back of your hand. In fact, if you asked a child to draw an electric guitar there's a high chance they'd draw something that resembled one, right down to the trio of pickups with one mounted at angle at the bridge.

But take a really close look at a variety of Strats built over the six decades that they've been manufactured and you start to realise that the Strat's iconic body shape, as well as more obvious spec changes, has drifted quite a bit from its original form over time. Indeed, it's only when you get up close to an original '54 Strat that you realise how much those apparently changeless contours have changed between the 50s and the present

day. For example, mid-50s Strat bodies have a svelte kind of greyhound slimness, while as you edge into the CBS era they appear to become a little stockier and more purposeful-looking. Those differences are not illusory but reflect small but significant changes in the way the guitars were made – and each change tells a story about the way guitars used to be made, compared to how they are now.

So when Rod Brakes, proprietor of Vintage & Rare Guitars in Bath, showed us a very clean '54 Strat in near-complete original condition, we took it as a cue to chart some of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which this most familiar of all electric guitars has evolved since the earliest examples appeared. With a little trepidation, we took up our screwdriver to peer under the hood of this elegant first-year-of-production example.



“What we have here is a Stratocaster built in July 1954,” Rod explains as we begin our examination. “It’s perfectly original aside from a few extra screw holes that have been made in the scratchplate here at some point and a non-original cover over the vibrato cavity. There’s a little bit of superficial fretwear. But by and large, this has been kept in its case for the majority of its life. The finish has not faded at all. It still looks really rich and lush, as it was when it left the factory,” he adds. “They started making Strats in earnest from October 1954, although there were early models made from March on. This is number 522.” Until autumn of ’54, Strats were almost prototypes rather than full production models with a stable spec.

“During this early period of Stratocaster production, the dates on the body and the neck tended to match up very closely, often to within six months and sometimes within the same month. This one is actually marked ‘TG July ’54’, which indicates that Tadeo Gomez [celebrated Fender neck shaper] made it July ’54. The body is also marked as being made in July ’54,” Rod says of the hand-pencilled date on the neck, a hallmark of early Fender production, except in 1959 when the system was briefly suspended after an employee supposedly left some obscene remarks on one guitar’s neck. Neck dating marks were later stamped in ink from ’62 on.

Although the prices commanded by rare vintage guitars have stabilised somewhat in recent years, the most sought-after vintage Fenders and Gibsons are still worth a lot of money in pristine, original condition. Thanks to their bolt-on necks, old Fenders are especially susceptible to

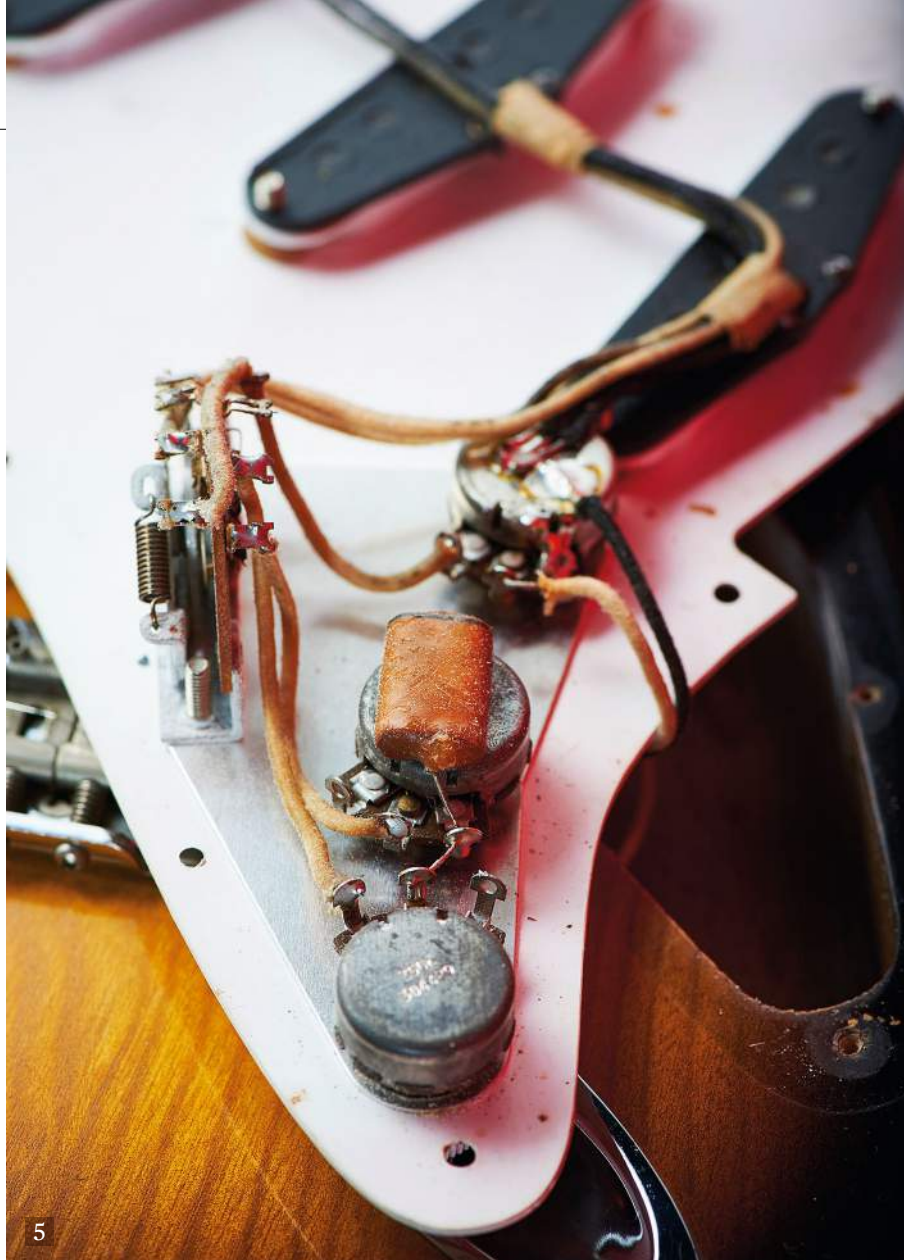
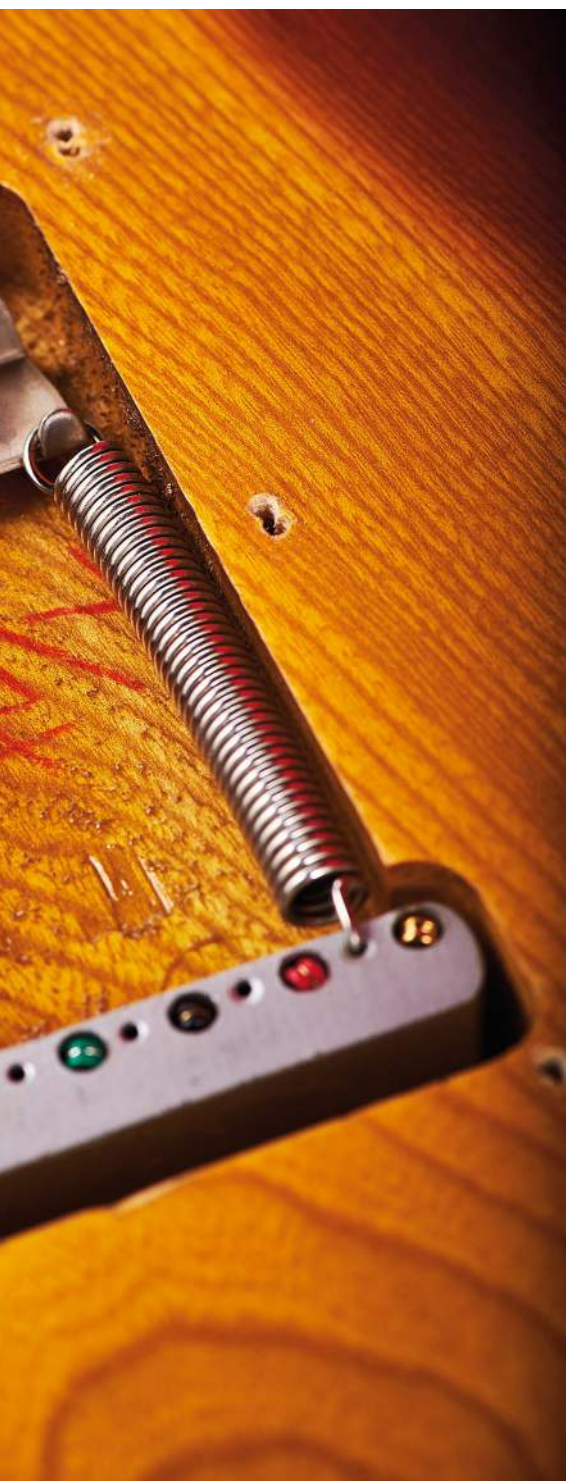
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“One striking feature of very early Strats is the gently rounded contour of the body, which indicates the amount of skilled hand-work that went into shaping”

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becoming ‘bitsa’ guitars over the years, as parts are chopped and changed by various owners, with the guitar losing some of its cachet, from a collector’s point of view, in the process. So very careful examination of construction details needs to be made before one can be sure that a guitar remains in the original state in which it left Fullerton. Some of these clues can be gleaned from the finish.

“Often the finish hadn’t really dried completely before the neck and body were assembled: sometimes, it was still a little bit tacky. So often some of that finish will get stuck to the neckplate during assembly: you should see a mirror-image almost, like a fingerprint, on the plate. You’ll also see those kind of matching imprints on the neck pocket and the neck itself,” Rod explains. Other clues come from residues



1. Fibre-backed pickups with black (very early) and later, as here, brown rubber grommets made from surgical tubing
2. The way in which drying lacquer has adhered to neck pockets and other parts can give clues as to the authenticity of original parts
3. With three of the five vibrato springs removed further details can be seen. Note the ball-ends of the strings sit higher in their recesses in the vibrato's block than on later Strats
4. Though in surprisingly complete original condition some typical minor mods have been made to this guitar over the years, including the addition of four extra screws, presumably to hold the scratchplate down more evenly
5. Very early volume and tone pots for '54 Strats were 100k ohms, changed to 250k ohms around June '54, with brass-shaft pots manufactured by Stackpole. A three-way CRL switch was fitted
6. In the early stages of Stratocaster production, the shaper's initials, in this case belonging to Tadeo Gomez, and completion dates were marked in pencil at the base of the neck. As production ramped up in later years, stamped dates were employed

•

“They started making Strats in earnest from October 1954, although there were early models made from March on. This is number 522”

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found beneath seldom removed parts, such as the bridge, he adds. “On this guitar, there was finishing fluid, this reddish-tinted stuff Fender used to finish the guitars and some of that was still visible just under the bridge, under the trim here.”

Dangerous Curves

But not all of the signifiers of a '54 build are so subtle. One of the most striking features of very early Strats are the graceful and gently rounded contours of the body, which indicate the amount of skilled hand-work that went into shaping in the era before the degree of mechanisation increased.

The belly curve, for example, is much longer than on later mid-60s Strats: less of a scallop shape and more of a graceful, sweeping curve. The subtle radius on the edges of the headstock, and where it graduates into the neck, is also noticeably softer and more gently sculpted than on later post-'55 Strats, like an ice-lolly that's melted just a bit.

“Back then their production methods were significantly different from what we have nowadays,” Rod continues. “It was like a workshop and there was more hands-on craftsmanship involved. You'll see that in things like the edges of the headstock, which are nicely rolled off. That only lasted a little while. I suppose when things ramped up, they become a little squarer. It was obviously time-consuming to do that degree of hand-finishing, so in time it disappeared. But it's really beautiful.”

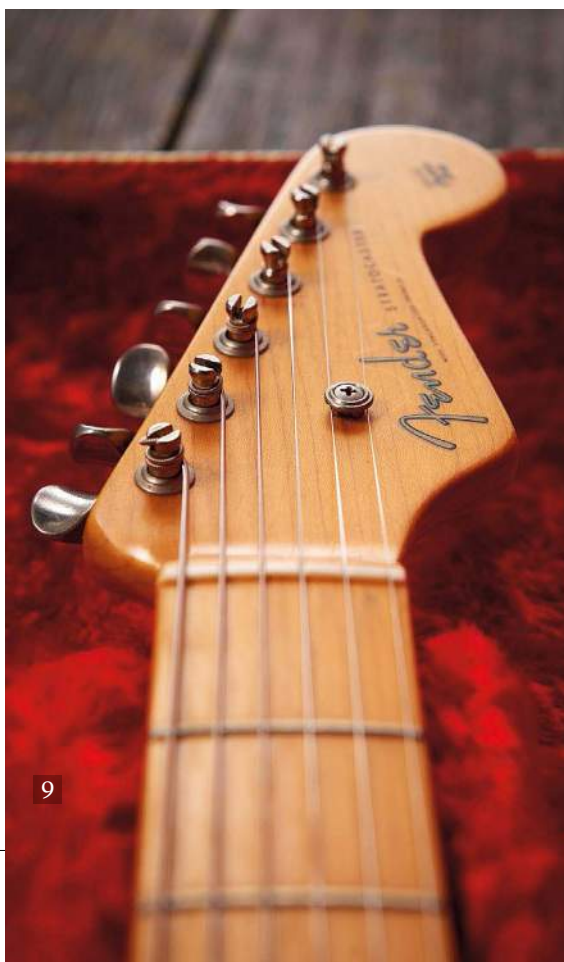
However, although some of the details of the early Strats were a bit more 'bespoke' than the more workmanlike models that followed in the 60s, many of the components were later upgraded to more durable alternatives, as it gradually became clear that the relatively primitive plastics



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8



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7. The famous Fender vibrato system, first fitted on the '54 Strat, was a steel two-piece unit with six saddles that could be adjusted for intonation and height. Note that the 'Fender Pat Pend' stamp on each saddle was quite faint until the 60s

8. The belly contour on the early Strats is longer, more gently sculpted and elegant than on later versions of the Strat. Note that the very earliest Strats also had a 'one-tone' sunburst that was left natural in the centre

9. The notably rolled-off edges of the headstock, which became sharper from 1955, are among numerous small details that set this '54 Strat apart from later production models



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10

used on pickup covers and other parts wasn't durable enough.

"They didn't get it all right to begin with," Rod argues. "Some of the original spec details were slightly flawed. To begin with, the pickup covers were made of polystyrene, sometimes [erroneously] termed Bakelite. It's pretty fragile and it looks different from the tougher ABS parts that followed: it's a lot whiter and more translucent and marble-y looking.

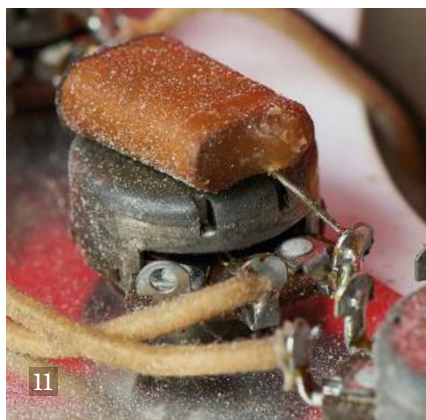
"But these early parts are very, very fragile, especially over time. If a guitar has been played even a moderate amount you would expect to see cracks in those delicate materials."

The precise dimensions of familiar parts such as the volume and tone knobs are slightly different from the modern Fender norm, too.

"They're just slightly different dimensions, but very recognisable. The selector switch is also a rounder type of switch tip, often known as a 'football switch'. It looks like an American football I guess. But perhaps surprisingly the three-way pickup selector itself was actually kept by Fender until the late 70s."

Turn the guitar over, and a closer examination of the vibrato block reveals more subtle differences when compared to later Strats.

"It's easy to see that on the trem block, the holes are drilled not so deep: the ball-end of the string is virtually at the surface of the block. Later on, they were recessed much deeper. They're often milled much more round as well on the edges there. It's a painted steel block. You can distinguish it fairly easily from later blocks."



10. A partial disassembly is the only way to examine all of the spec details that denote guitars of this vintage

11. The solid shafts of the very earliest pots fitted to Strats were changed to split brass shaft units a little later

"Ultimately, only the owner of the individual instrument can decide what fate such instruments deserve: timepiece or working tool"

A Question Of Heritage

Viewed as a whole, the guitar is remarkably clean – so much so that fear of scuffing its glowing finish hangs over you a bit while you play, although as we found when we plugged it into a 'brownface' Fender Princeton, this Strat is harmonically rich and vibrant, while the bridge pickup is almost as ballsy and trebly as a good Tele's. Is it wrong to feel a little intimidated by such 'time machine' guitars? Should we find it sad rather than attractive that it is in such obviously unplayed condition? Or, at this stage in the game, is it in fact beneficial that a few near-perfect examples are preserved carefully for posterity rather than played to bits? It's a tough call. After all, while hardly common, there are tatty but great-sounding '54 Strats around that can show us what a great early Fender sounds like. Ultimately, only the owner of the individual instrument can decide what fate such instruments deserve: pristine timepiece or working tool.

"It would be cool to preserve this guitar for future generations, I think," Rod offers after some thought. "I like guitars to be played as much as the next person, but I think sometimes you get certain [very clean] vintage guitars and... they've gone over the edge of something: it's arguably come too far to take them down the Dog & Duck and start playing in your band or whatever. These things are very, very rare. It's just really cool to see. I don't know what will happen to it in the end." 

Guitarist would like to thank Vintage & Rare guitars in Bath for their assistance in making this feature www.vintageandrareguitars.com



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JOHN ETHERIDGE

John Etheridge's musical path has taken him all over the world with the likes of Stéphane Grappelli, classical maestro John Williams and the group with whom he's most famously associated, jazz-rock pioneers Soft Machine

Words Denny Ilett Photography Olly Curtis

Equally at home on acoustic, solidbody and archtop electric, and just about everything in between, John Etheridge has been involved with some of the world's finest musicians over his 45-year career. Stylistically, he's played the lot – including solo jazz, fusion, gypsy and even touching on world music on occasion – and to have such a vast range of styles available to him, his influences have to be pretty diverse, too. We sat down with him and asked him how it all started...

Is it true The Shadows were your first musical influence?

"No, they were my first inspiration; my first influence was Django Reinhardt. In my first band, the rhythm guitarist's dad heard the rubbish we were playing and said, 'Have a listen to this bloke Django.' On every level I went, 'What?!' I was totally knocked out with the rhythm, his insane chromatic runs that still sound amazing. My dad didn't like it, he preferred Charlie Christian. I remember him saying, 'We used to hear Django in the 30s. We thought it was novelty music!' The blues boom was

just starting, too, so I heard Buddy Guy and others, but when I finally went to college, a mate talked about this bloke Eric Clapton. I knew The Yardbirds stuff and thought he was good, but my friend took me to The Manor House to see Eric. At the time he'd just joined John Mayall's Bluesbreakers."

So, this would've been 1965, then?

"November '65, before the 'Beano' album. There he was with a Les Paul/Marshall setup and I was completely blown away. I'd been playing about five years, was an okay guitarist and had heard some great players, but this was something else entirely, just totally unbelievable."

It sounds as though that gig had a massive impact on you...

"Oh, that was *it* – we were all in tears. This gets forgotten, but at the time, it was something that hadn't even been conceived of. No-one was doing anything like it. Of course, we now know where Eric's inspiration came from, but this was something new: the sound and the place he'd taken it to was unique. Check out the live version of *Stormy Monday* and

remember he was only about 20 or 21 years old. It was like it was from another planet – it was just stratospheric."

Why was it so different?

"In a way, it was like a lucky accident. You've got these brand-new Marshall amps, which very few people had back then. It's only 30 watts, so he's turned it up full and then he's got the Les Paul, which – people forget – nobody wanted back then; it was a failure and had been discontinued by the time Eric got his.

"Suddenly, he's got this sound. Whatever people say now, he was the first guy to use overdriven guitar. That whole 'Clapton Is God' thing was really true. Within a year, everybody had a Gibson Les Paul and was ripping Eric off."

Did you get to see Hendrix in the clubs around London?

"Yes, his whole thing was so balletic. The way he would play and conduct himself, it all flowed so beautifully – quite unbelievable. Of course, Jimi's arrival freaked Eric out somewhat, because Jimi kind of replaced him as the king."





Guitarist contributor Denny Llett shares a joke with fusion legend John Etheridge

That's ironic: Jimi's motivation for coming to England was to meet Eric...

"And the first thing he did was get a Marshall amp! Both Eric and Jimi were geniuses. I believe that great players keep their talent, if they have it, but genius is something that flashes through someone and then it's gone. Everyone says of Jimi, 'Oh, what he could have done if he'd lived...'; but I think they'd see him like they see Eric – a great player who survived. The genius in both of them was a short-lived thing. That's not to downplay them, I think that's true of anyone. It doesn't last and most of us get nowhere near it in the first place."

What about the jazz players coming up in the 60s? Wes, George Benson, Joe Pass?

"A major thing for me was hearing the Joe Pass album called *For Django*. I listened to it constantly for about five years. To me, it's the best straight-ahead bebop jazz-guitar album ever. I couldn't get enough of it and learnt all the solos by ear. Again, it was a flash of genius. The next big moment for me was hearing John McLaughlin's album *Extrapolation* in 1969. It's an amazing album. McLaughlin's playing on it has such a force to it – fantastic."

Isn't it incredible that guitar-based music went from Marvin to McLaughlin in the space of eight or nine years?

"I think that's partly because guitarists then didn't have much access to the past. Guitarists couldn't learn a solo by slowing it down or watching the internet or whatever. They just got on with it and made the music they could under the circumstances. There was a real explosion as a result. They were

“
Being able to
hear less of myself
really helped me
dig in and play.
I always felt that
I could play with
more intensity if
I couldn't hear
myself so well
”

bound to come up with something fresh as they would have little fragments of lots of things floating around rather than the luxury of studying one person or piece of music. I think that's why so much original and exciting music comes from that period. It's similar with technique. None of us were schooled properly and all developed weird ways of playing through a combination of watching players at gigs and interpreting little bits we'd picked up from records.

"The way that musicians are trained these days is great for them, because they learn all aspects of negotiating any chord progression and correct technique, but it's not so good for individuality."

So, here we are, into the early 1970s and, as a player, you're in the vanguard of a new rock-flavoured jazz movement, which leads us on to Soft Machine...

"It was 1975 and Allan Holdsworth had just left and passed them my number. I'd been with [ex-Curved Air] Darryl Way for a few years and Chris Welch from the *Melody Maker* was really into my playing, so I'd been getting a bit of attention and was offered the gig. They'd auditioned all the jazz guys on the scene but they weren't right. It needed someone coming to jazz from a rock perspective, not the other way round. It was pretty hard work at the beginning, though. We were promoting the album Holdsworth had recorded and it had these endless guitar solos; it took me a while to get into it."

Do you recall what your gear setup was in the Soft Machine days?

"By then, I'd got my Gibson SG Custom – a great guitar I could really fly around on. I used a Marshall 50-watt head and a 4x12 cabinet. That was simply because it was the 'band amp' – I inherited it. I plugged straight in, no pedals, although by the time of the album *Alive & Well*, I'd got an MXR overdrive pedal that I used as a boost for solos. Effects were frowned upon in Soft Machine – you were supposed to get your sound with just guitar-lead-amp. The Marshalls didn't have reverb then, either. On stage, I would screen the amp off so I could hear, and play off the drums more. Being able to hear less of myself really helped me dig in and play. I always felt that I could play with more intensity if I couldn't hear myself so well."

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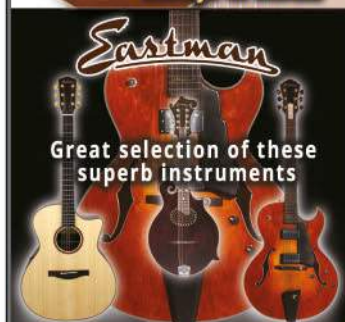
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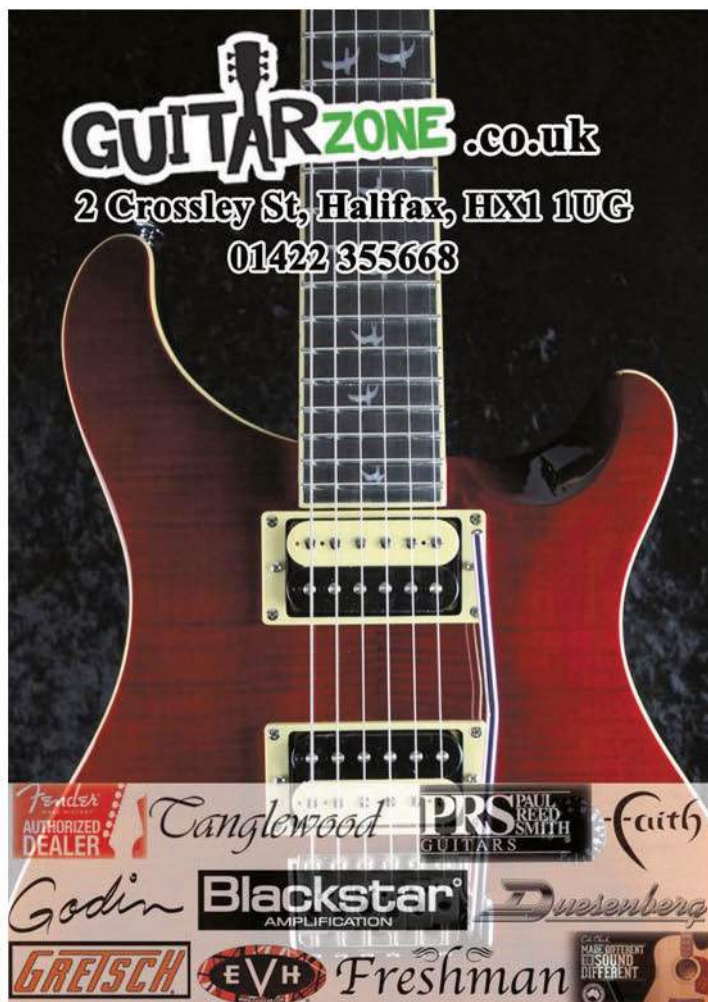
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“Diz Disley and I went to Hamburg to meet Stéphane Grappelli and, after a few tunes, he said, ‘Yes, I like that fast business – it amuses the tourists!’”

So, with you being at the forefront of the jazz-rock scene, how did you end up with Stéphane Grappelli?

“Diz Disley was with Stéphane at that time. He bumped into my mate Pete Shade [jazz vibraphonist] on the street one day. Stéphane was looking for a replacement for Ike Isaacs and Pete told Diz about me as he’d just seen me on the TV with Soft Machine. Of course, Grappelli’s music is nothing like Soft Machine, but Pete was raving about me, so Diz called. I didn’t even have an acoustic guitar then, so I borrowed one. Diz had an original Maccaferri. We went to Hamburg to meet Stéphane and, after a few tunes, he said, ‘Yes, I like that fast business – it amuses the tourists!’”

Did you feel you were having step into Django’s shoes in that band?

“No, not at all; that worked in my favour. The last thing Stéphane wanted was a Django-style player; he wanted to hear new things. For example, it was the late 70s and that whole quartal voicing thing was happening, which, although he didn’t play that way, he loved. He encouraged me to play the way I wanted to, which was lovely. Having said that, he was very proud of his association with Django. Every guitarist wanted to work with Stéphane. I remember, in New York, Les Paul came backstage and was chatting away then came and sat in, unannounced, on the gig. Stéphane turned to me and said, ‘Who is this guy?’ – he was a very funny man.”

Your career then took another eclectic turn when you began working in a duet with classical legend John Williams...

“John lived near me and was thinking of doing something with another guitarist,

so he suggested we get together and have a play. Actually, originally it was a quartet with bass and drums playing African music. I found that very hard, because there’s little to do but it has to be spot on, rhythmically. Anyway, after a while, it got whittled down to a duo; we commissioned some new pieces and had a solo spot in each show, too. Of course, John just sight-reads anything that’s put in front of him – talk about not being in your comfort zone!

“We did a live album once with no separation at a guitar festival, with people like Paco Peña in the audience. It came out great, but it was terrifying. Ultimately, it works well: we both play to our strengths. John has the most phenomenal technique; it’s absolutely perfect with the minimum of effort.”

What keeps you busy these days?

“I’m recording right now with a great singer, Vimala Rowe, and I continue to work with the Soft Machine Legacy, which is a mix of players from different periods in the band’s history. We’ve made a lot of albums with that group. John Williams is semi-retired, but we still do concerts together. I also do a lot of solo-guitar gigs, which

I love. I have a group called Sweet Chorus, a tribute to Stéphane of sorts. Actually, last year, I toured with Hawkwind.”

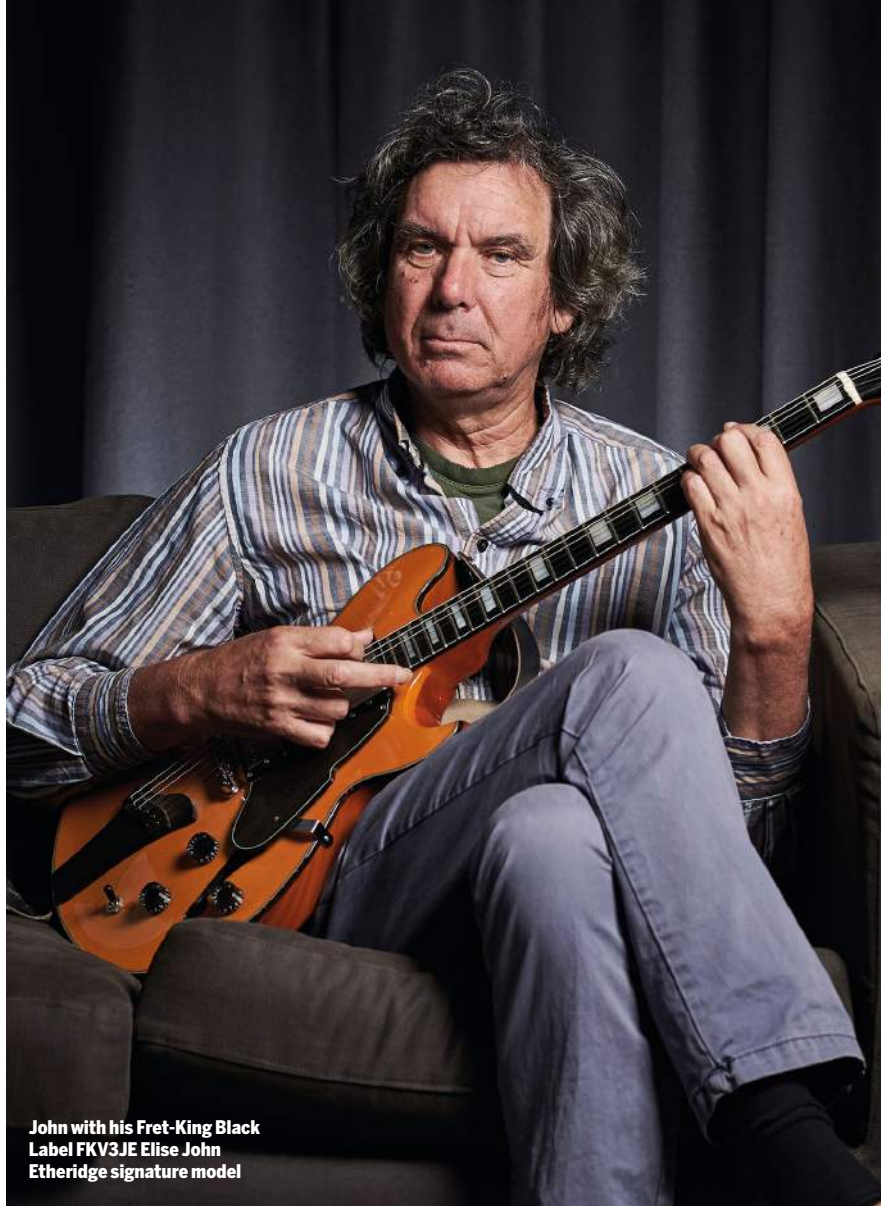
You’ve had a busy and varied 45-year career to date. Any advice?

“First, you should find an instrument that complements you and lets you play naturally. The difficulty today is that there’s so much information on so many areas of playing. If you don’t look out, you’re going to get bogged down. I think it’s about finding a musical area that really appeals to you and going with it. Every guitarist has a different physical technique, so don’t worry about that ahead of the music.

“On paper, Wes Montgomery, Django Reinhardt, Pat Metheny and tons of others have a technique that’s ‘incorrect’. Metheny’s a great example of someone whose technique looks odd, but listen to him – he’s fantastic. We didn’t worry about correct technique when we were growing up, we just played!”

For more information on John Etheridge and the Soft Machine Legacy, visit the website

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STYLE FILE

EFFORTLESS ETHERIDGE

Denny Ilett walks us through some examples of John's sophisticated soloing technique, covering chromatic passing notes between chords, and licks combining different scale choices including Dorian, the half tone/whole tone scale, the altered scale and more

Example 1

THIS study highlights the use of chromatic passing notes on a simple G7 to C chord sequence (passing notes are marked). This gives a very melodic, old-fashioned blues/jazz feel that is not scale-based.

Example 1 is a 4-measure study in 4/4 time. The first two measures are G7, and the last two are C. The melody features chromatic passing notes. Fingering is shown with numbers 1-5 on the strings. Dynamics are marked with 'p' (piano).

Example 2

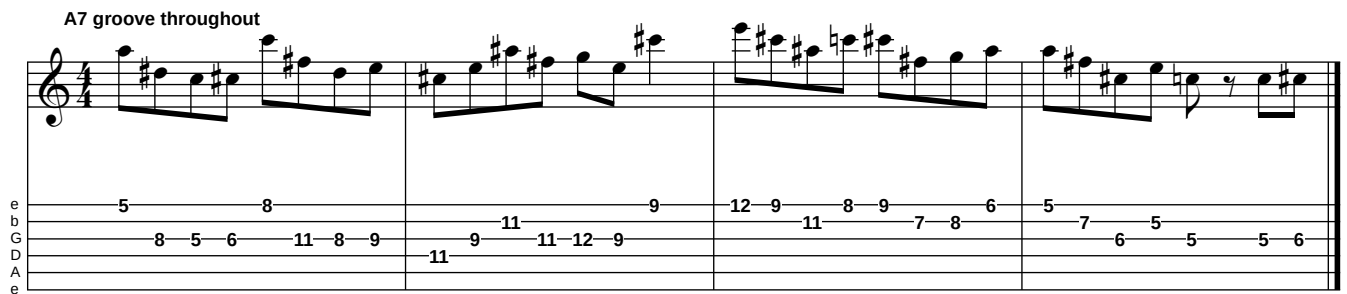
THIS is the sort of thing you would hear in a typical jazz-guitar solo (eg. Joe Pass). The first bars have the eighth notes grouped in threes, with marked accents. This three against four is very much a feature of swing. The first bar and a half are Dm (Dorian), then half a bar of G altered scale. The C major in bar 3 is followed by a bar of the A altered scale.

Example 2 is a 4-measure study in 4/4 time. The first two measures are Dm, and the last two are C. The melody features eighth notes grouped in threes. Fingering is shown with numbers 1-5 on the strings. Dynamics are marked with 'V' (accents).

Example 3

DIMINISHED lick based on half tone/whole tone scale. This is a great scale for playing over dominant chord grooves that basically stick in the same place. It's an eight-note scale, and phrases can repeat up and down the fretboard at minor 3rd intervals with exactly the same fingering – no need to think! The first two bars have string skips. Use as much legato as you can to give a fusion feel.

A7 groove throughout



5 8 8 5 6 11 8 9 11 9 11 12 9 12 9 11 8 9 7 8 6 5 7 6 5 5 6

Example 4

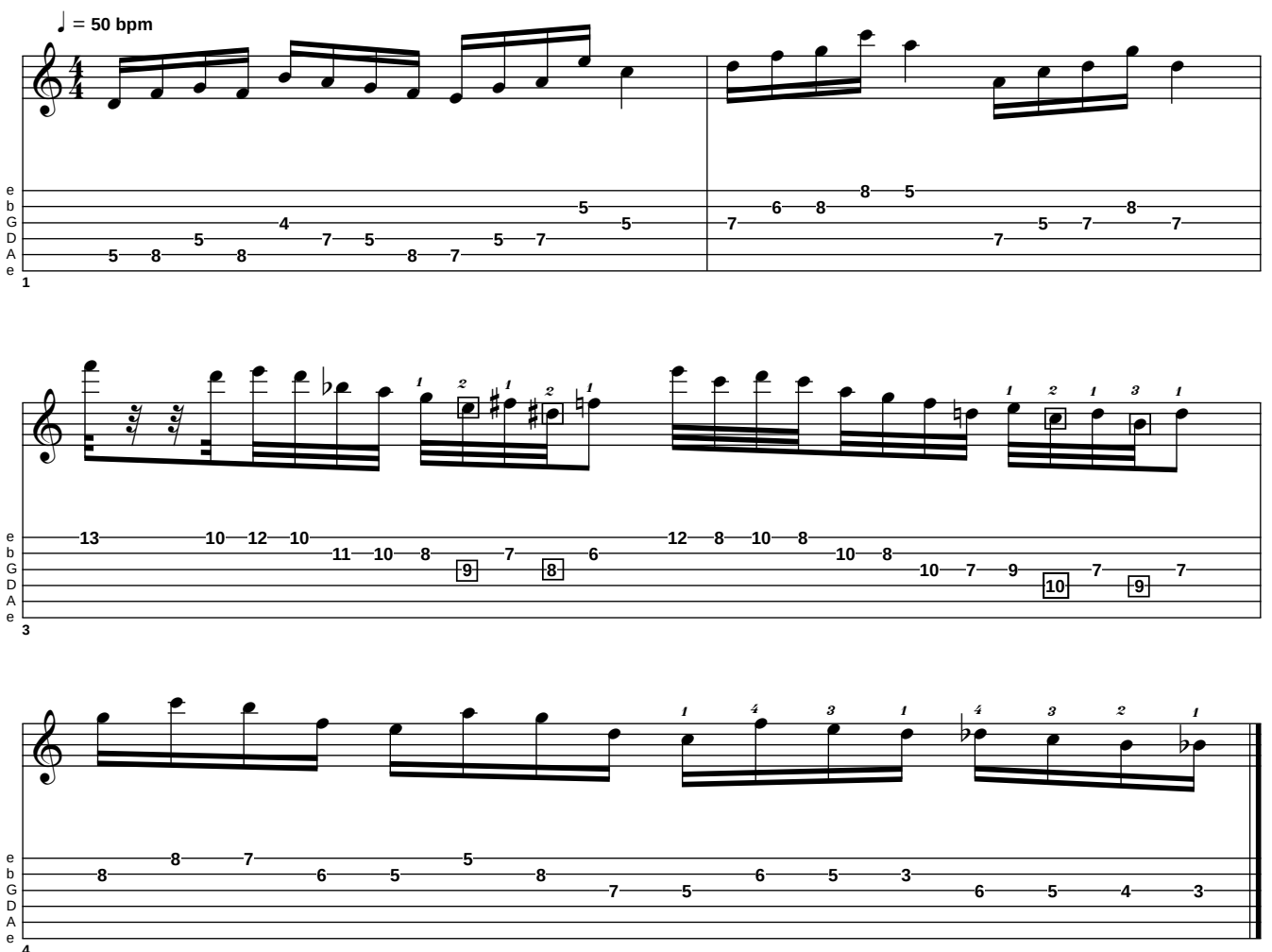
THIS is based just on a G Dorian groove. It's very slow, so much easier than it looks!

BAR 1 AND 2: This moves from a standard lower-interval lick to use of upper intervals (ie, landing on the A, C and E notes in the scale).

BAR 3: A fast lick with passing notes (which should be ghosted by just hammering, not picking – something Pat Metheny does a lot).

BAR 4: These are 4th intervals on the Dorian scale, ending up with a chromatic line.

♩ = 50 bpm



5 8 5 8 4 7 5 8 7 5 7 5 7 7 6 8 8 5 7 5 7 8 7 13 10 12 10 11 10 8 9 7 8 12 8 10 8 10 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 8 8 7 6 5 5 8 7 5 6 5 3 6 5 4 3



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Words Darran Charles Photography Olly Curtis

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3

By the way, who's Keith Merrow?

He's a highly-respected online demonstrator of guitar products with a vast army of followers (his opinion is much sought after). As well as being a recording solo artist, he currently works as a tech consultant for Seymour Duncan pickups.

Although we've covered and reviewed some examples of its high-end USA custom shop models in the last few months, Schecter is still best known as a manufacturer of rock and metal guitars. The instruments reviewed here reflect once again the company's predilection for these musical styles and further contribute to its quite bewildering catalogue of top spec rock guitars, catering for every conceivable genre and sub-genre within that compass.

The KM-7 is the signature model of prog-metal player Keith Merrow who, although a solo artist in his own right, is perhaps best known as a guitar product demonstrator. It may seem strange that a relatively unknown recording artist should warrant his own signature guitar, but YouTube sensations and prolific gear demonstrators are these days arguably as influential as established artists when it comes to persuading us what our next purchase should be.

The Hybrid Tempest's origins are less straightforward. The Hellraiser Hybrid range was introduced in 2014 and, as the name suggests, is a hybrid of the most sought after features of Hellraiser and SLS series of guitars. Taken from the Hellraiser range, for example, is the highly figured quilted top, whereas the neck style has been lifted directly from the SLS series. The Tempest refers to the body shape, and was once offered by Schecter as a model in its own right. It was discontinued a number of years ago but has been resurrected here and incorporated into the Hybrid series.

Let's take a closer look at the Hybrid Tempest, then. With an unusual and unique body shape, there is a definite Tele influence here and also a passing resemblance to a Knaggs Steve Stevens model. The body depth is comparable to a Les Paul and similarly has a figured and carved maple cap, which Schecter has slightly redesigned for the Hybrid series to possess a more sculptured arch.

Its transparent black burst finish, with carbon fibre binding, is the only colour option on this Hybrid series. To our eyes, there's more than a hint of dark green in the hue and, set against it, the carbon fibre binding actually looks like snakeskin – a positive or negative, depending on personal taste! All important, the neck is a slim but comfortable affair, sporting a compound radius and ebony 'board. Easy playability is a trademark of Schecter and this model is no exception: beautifully set up with top-notch craftsmanship from its South Korean factory.

On to the Keith Merrow KM-7, and out of the box, it feels very lightweight with a slim body depth. Our review model is labelled 'Lambo Orange', which isn't actually as polarising as you might think, with the black hardware and dark ebony fingerboard providing a nice contrast. It also features a carved body that, although not as pronounced the Hybrid, still makes its presence felt when resting your right arm on top to facilitate those two-handed tapping gymnastics – not by any means uncomfortable but maybe highlighting



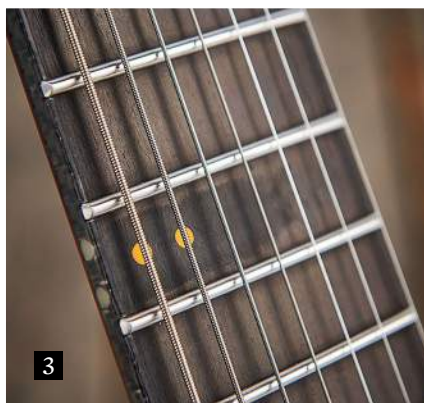
the fact this hasn't been designed purely as a 'shredder's' guitar, despite its appearance.

Deference is given to the extended range provided by the low B in the form of a longer scale length (26.5 inches – one inch longer than the standard Fender scale). A longer scale length scale may deter players with smaller hands, but those who play extended range guitars can vouch that the intonation is more accurate on the lower strings due to a higher tension. Either way, there was no discernible drawback felt by this writer: neither visually nor in terms of playability.

Sounds

The prominent carved arch of the Hybrid Tempest certainly makes its presence felt strapped on. Those used to playing a carved top instrument probably won't experience any discomfort from the picking hand position forced upon you by the body contouring, but we found this guitar more comfortable played slung low so the inside of your forearm isn't being pressed so hard against the outside 'lip' of the body. Possibly due to the unusual body shape, the vaunted

The KM-7's chosen
combo of pickups
and tonewood
provides an almost
faultless definition to
lower-register riffing



“increased upper access cutaway” of this range is not keenly apparent. Instead, you're afforded the same kind of upper fret access that, say, a traditional single-cut shape grants. Not necessarily cumbersome, but certainly not as accommodating as the KM-7.

On a dirty amp setting, the Tempest's active EMG bridge pickup pushes the amp as much as you'd expect it to, but the 57 has been designed to give a more PAF-like tone by using a combination of Alnico V magnets and steel pole pieces. It succeeds, too, albeit with a tad more warmth and gain, and proves a great platform for any heavy rock or metal style you choose to throw at it. The neck pickup produces generic high-gain metal tones: blistering, creamy sustain à la Zack Wylde, but little in the way of subtlety or dynamic variety in tone. That said, on a clean setting the neck position produced some interesting and infinitely usable clean sounds, perfect for single-note jazz lines.

Over to the KM-7 and its appearance overwhelmingly suggests a very metal-inspired tone trip is in store and we



1. A 673mm (26.5-inch) scale length and carbon reinforced maple neck is beautifully glued-in to produce a smooth chamfered neck joint that provides effortless and unencumbered access to upper frets

2. These classy-looking brushed-chrome pair of EMGs (57 and 66) pack a mean punch but are actually more PAF-like than the more often-used, high-octane EMG 81/85 pairing

3. A smooth and elegant-looking ebony 'board, with extra-large jumbo frets, provides the perfect platform for the variety of modern techniques

4. The perfect balance between power and clarity from the onboard Seymour Duncans: powerful enough to pack a progressive punch, but with enough restraint to give definition to bigger open chords

were ready to turn down the gain on the Cornford MK50H II head providing our sounds. Once plugged in, though, our trepidation vanished. Both pickups possess enough power and punch to accentuate that low B while retaining enough subtlety to offer balance and clarity on more expansive chord work. You get the impression that a lot of thought has been put into achieving this, as the natural brightness of the swamp ash body and ebony 'board work well without the muddiness produced by some lower range instruments. The bridge pickup performs particularly well for progressive metal styles and the punchy roundedness on low single-note riffs is very well defined, with the neck pickup performing in much the same way, albeit with a warmer sound.

The split coil sounds on offer work particularly well, too, and offer a very Nuno Bettencourt-like aggressive funk sound, which adds further colour to its sonic palette. But for clean work we have an almost perfunctory sound. The lower strings actually have a frequency response

THE RIVALS



ESP LTD AJ-7 £889

From ESP's second tier LTD range, the signature model of renowned guitar teacher Andy James sports a neck-through design, mahogany body and a pair of high-octane active EMGs. This is a serious metal workhorse with great hardware at a competitive price.

www.espguitars.com



IBANEZ UV70P £949

The original and, for some, the best seven-string guitar – it still gives modern extended-range guitars a run for their money. This more affordable Premium version was introduced last year. The benchmark in seven-string guitar design since its introduction in 1990.

www.ibanez.com



IBANEZ ROADCORE RC1320 £969

With a retro and unusual body shape, the Roadcore was introduced in 2014. It features a slim mahogany body, maple neck and 22-fret rosewood 'board. Add to that the ultra-versatile pickup combo of a Seymour Duncan JB and '59 and you get retro looks with modern playability.

www.ibanez.com



PRS SE TORERO £1,099

New designs such as the Torero can get overlooked in the bright light of PRS's classic Custom. But with Floyd Rose vibrato, EMG 81/85 pickup combination, 648mm (25.5-inch) scale and 24-fret maple through neck, this SE model is very specifically aimed at the metal market.

www.prsguitars.com



5. Both models feature glow-in-the-dark fretboard markers, which, while not as ostentatious as LED-lit fretboards, still provide exactly the same service by illuminating the path for your fingers on those dark stages

similar to a flat wound bass, which actually works very well for jazzy chord/melody playing – the genesis of the modern seven-string guitar, of course.

Verdict

There's an innate playability to Schecter's guitars that makes you feel like you've been playing them for years. Even though these are very capable rock guitars, the very mention of the name Schecter will automatically confine the subject guitar to the 'metal' category. We suspect that Schecter will be happy with such pigeon-holing because the headstocks and overall metal aesthetics of the review models – and indeed many of its other ranges – are hardly going to endear them to any other type of player.

The KM-7 proves that it could possibly be an extended-range rhythm player's dream as the chosen combination of pickups and tonewood provides an almost faultless definition to lower-register riffing. The split coil sounds add some versatility, but make no mistake, prog-metal rhythm is the order of the day. The Hybrid Tempest has more of a generic sound, despite its body shape being anything but. Worn low, it's a consummate heavy rock and metal guitar, but not particularly adept in performing in other styles. But then, if you're playing in a funk band, are you really going to be pulling this off the hanger at your local music store?

Both are high-quality guitars at a seriously competitive price that will satisfy the professional and hobbyist alike. They're also two books that will happily be judged their respective covers! **G**



SCHecter HELLRAISER HYBRID TEMPEST

PRICE: £869

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: Solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany, quilted maple top

NECK: Maple 3-piece, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Black Tusq/42mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony w/compound 305mm to 406mm (12-16") radius

FRETS: 22, extra jumbo

HARDWARE: Black chrome-plated Tone Pros T3BT TOM (w/ through-body stringing), Schecter locking tuners

ELECTRICS: EMG 66 with brushed black chrome cover (neck), EMG 57 with brushed black chrome cover (bridge), 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone controls

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Also in the hybrid range are the Hellraiser Hybrid Avenger, Hellraiser Hybrid C-1, Hellraiser Hybrid C-7, Hellraiser Hybrid C-8 and Hellraiser Hybrid Solo-II (£869-£969)

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISHES: Trans Black Burst (as reviewed)

Westside Distribution

0141 248 4812

www.schecterguitars.com

7/10

PROS A body-shape to make you stand out from the crowd; a metal sound to help you fit right back in

CONS Not particularly versatile and needs to be worn low down for maximum comfort



SCHecter KEITH MERROW KM-7

PRICE: £1,029

ORIGIN: Korea

TYPE: Solidbody electric

BODY: Swamp ash with carbon fibre single-ply binding

NECK: Maple 3-piece w/ carbon fibre reinforcement rods, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 673mm (26.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech XL Black Tusq/48mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony, compound 305-406mm (12-16") radius

FRETS: 24 extra jumbo stainless steel

HARDWARE: Black-plated Hipshot hardtail bridge (w/ through-body stringing), Schecter locking tuners

ELECTRICS: Seymour Duncan Sentient (neck), Seymour Duncan Nazgul (bridge), volume (with pull/push coil-splits), 3-way toggle pickup selector switch

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The 6-string Keith Merrow KM-6 costs £969

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISHES: Lambo Orange (as reviewed), Trans Black Burst satin, Trans White satin

8/10

PROS Almost the dream seven-string prog/metal rhythm guitar: power, punch and clarity

CONS Missing the comfort contours of contemporary shred machines; positioning of the three-way selector

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Yolanda Charles



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Baz Warne



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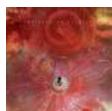
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Rip It Up

Five modern progressive, shred and metal players you should listen to... And listen to loudly!



Tosin Abasi

(*Animals As Leaders*)

The Animals As Leaders founder and guitarist has

recently completed a week-long stint as part of the prestigious G4 line-up in Los Angeles, along with Joe Satriani, Guthrie Govan's Aristocrats, and Mike Keneally. His prog-metal credentials are all present and correct: great picking technique, ingenious sweep ideas, and the ability to play in any other time signature than 4/4. However, to just label Tosin as a shredder would be doing him an injustice as the sense of jazz harmony displayed within his chord-melody chops showcases a versatility not often seen in this genre.

Animals As Leaders tour quite heavily and have released three albums since their formation in 2007. Their music is certainly not for the rhythmically faint-hearted, but check out their latest release, *The Joy of Motion*, for an understanding of Tosin's unique style, produced on his signature eight-string Ibanez.



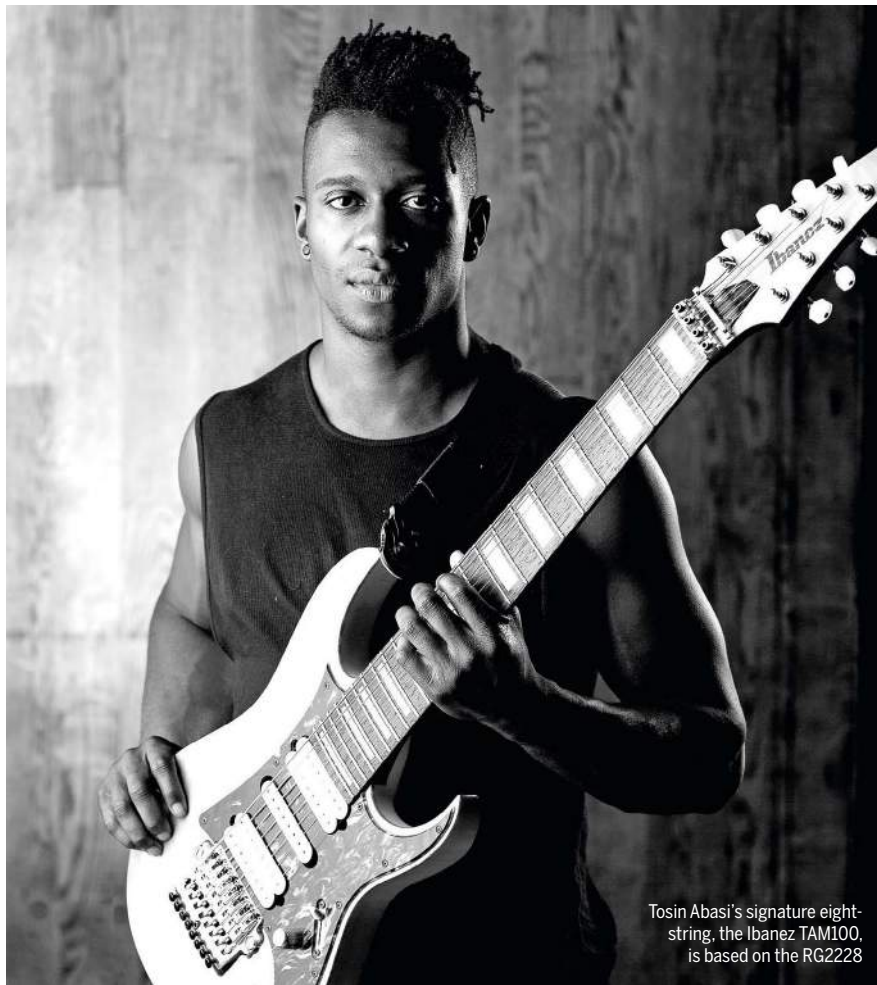
Misha Mansoor

(*Periphery*)

Mansoor is considered by many as one of the founding fathers

of the modern progressive djent movement – the musical onomatopoeia referring to the music's heavily featured palm-muted, down-tuned powerchords. Misha founded and is one of – count them – three guitarists in Periphery, an increasingly successful prog-metal outfit who recently completed a tour with this genre's reigning king, Devin Townsend. Misha's (and Periphery's) Dream Theater influence is worn quite proudly on the band's sleeves, but delve a little deeper into Misha's musical influences and you will find the harmonic sensibilities of Allan Holdsworth, who he cites as a huge inspiration to his playing.

Always an advocate of new technology and a self-confessed gear nut, for his guitar sounds, Misha currently uses Fractal Audio's Axe-FX both in the studio and for live work. Check out the band's latest double-album release, *Juggernaut*, for some intense rhythm and lead playing.



Tosin Abasi's signature eight-string, the Ibanez TAM100, is based on the RG2228

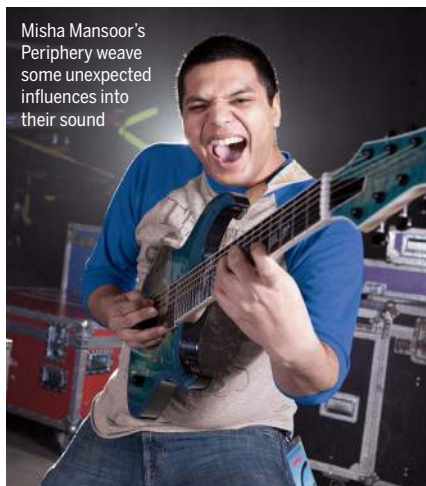


Fredrik Thordendal & Mårten Hagström

(*Meshuggah*)

Certainly not to everyone's musical tastes, these two eight-string Ibanez-wielding guitarists have been pushing the boundaries of metal guitar for over 10 years, and are half of one the most incredibly tight rhythm sections in metal. Even tapping your foot to Meshuggah is nigh-on impossible, but make no mistake, the guttural sub-bass groove that these guitarists create through their Axe-FX units is unique and genre-defining. It's probably some of the most intense and

heaviest music you will ever listen to... so maybe the 'friendliest' introduction would be 2012's *Koloss*.



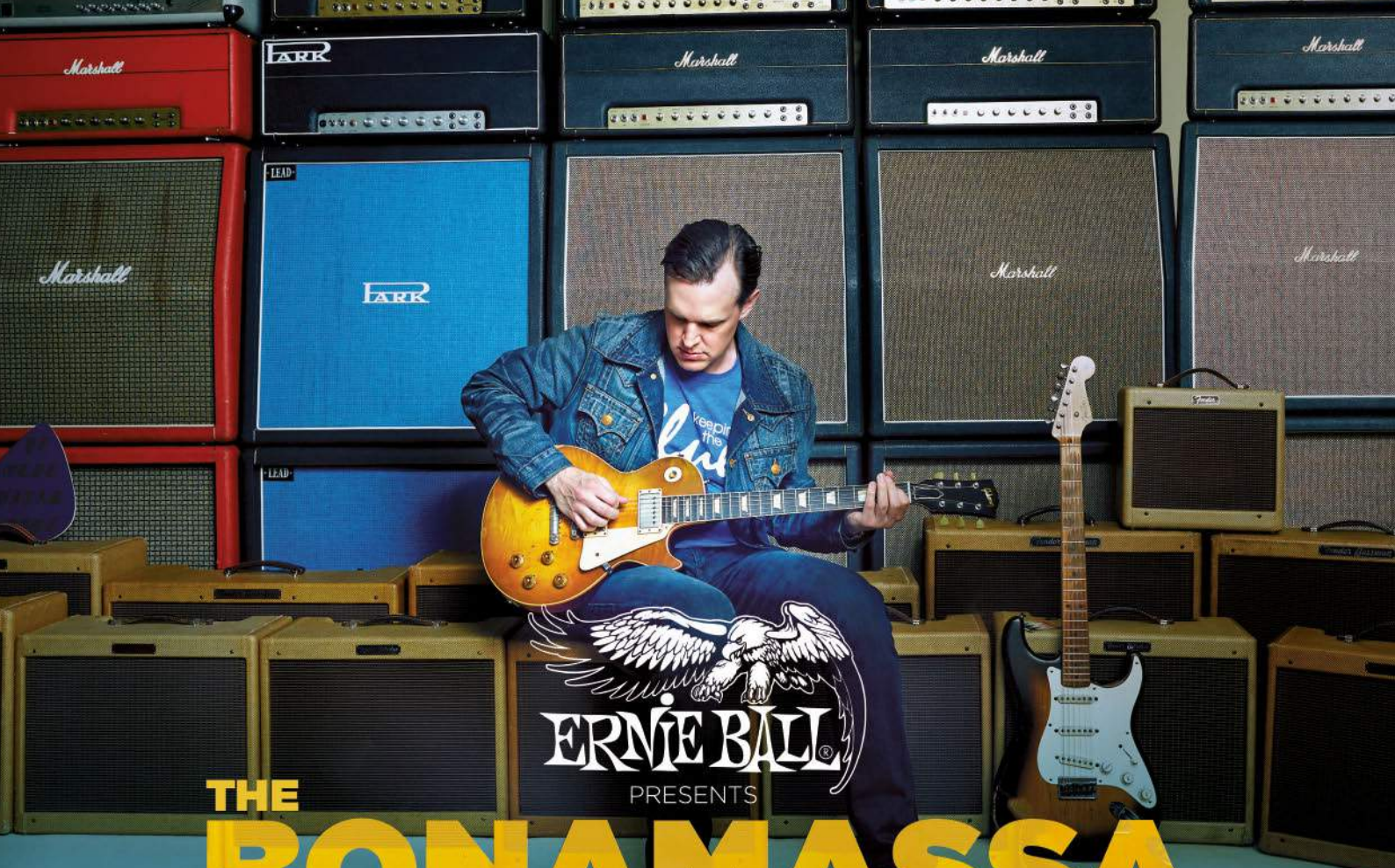
Marty Friedman

Okay, Mr Friedman is hardly new to the prog-metal scene, but some may be forgiven for forgetting that since leaving Megadeth and in addition to making Japanese pop albums, he still makes records showcasing the heavier side of guitar playing. His latest release, *Inferno*, is another benchmark for tasty metal soloing and, of course, anyone who is a student of this genre will need to check out his seminal lead playing on Megadeth's *Rust In Peace* and *Countdown To Extinction*.



Andy Wood

Another well-known product demonstrator, though namely for Suhr for whom he is an artist endorsee. His impeccable tone, taste and technique lead to comparisons with Guthrie Govan, although there is a significant bluegrass element to Andy's style that sets him apart somewhat. Currently the guitarist for country band Rascal Flatts, he also plays with his own band, and *Caught Between The Truth And A Lie* showcases his broad range of musical styles, including rock, fusion, and country.



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A Head Of Its Time





Are valves are no longer important for great tone?
Yamaha brings us to a possible watershed in amp history

Words Nick Guppy Photography Adam Gasson



YAMAHA THR100HD HEAD £755

CONTACT **Yamaha Music Europe** PHONE **01908 366700** WEB **www.yamaha.com**

What You Need To Know

- 1 It looks great. What is it?**
Yamaha's new THR head is designed not as your 'third' amp to use at home, like the original THR amps, but one to take out and gig. It's actually two digital amps in one and uses VCM technology.
- 2 Er, VCM technology?**
It stands for Virtual Circuit Modelling. Yamaha's proprietary method of dissecting, analysing and emulating analogue circuit behaviour in the digital domain. Using powerful DSP chips, VCM faithfully models analogue components – resistors, capacitors and valves, to recreate the musicality of classic guitar amps.
- 3 And what do you mean by two amps in one?**
Dual-amp rigs are usually controlled by complex switching systems, often custom-made and tailored to a player's precise requirement. Not here, though: it's all onboard.

Yamaha caused quite a stir when it released the THR series of home practice combos three years ago. The 'third amp' concept resonated successfully with a lot of players who wanted something small and unobtrusive to use at home, but with no compromise on tone. Of course, more than a few players discovered that the THR's portability made it an excellent stage amp, too, and on the back of that comes Yamaha's latest creation, the all-new THR100HD head.

The THR100HD is so new that production hadn't quite officially started when we received our review sample, clearly marked 'PROTO'. It takes its design ethos from the very successful THR combos, but this time aimed at live use, with a switchable dual output stage delivering up to 100 watts RMS. Like the combos, the chassis is steel, formed into an attractive and well-proportioned design, with a friendly analogue-style control panel – no LCD displays or hidden pre-set buttons – what you see is what you use.

Inside, however, the electronics look more like a computer than a regular guitar amp, with nine PCBs connected by ribbon cables. Three main boards sit in the base of the chassis and handle power supply, output stage and preamplifier duties – the latter holding two large and very powerful-looking Yamaha DSP chips.

It's a solid design that will take any kind of abuse and live to fight another day, as well as being pleasing to look at, compact and very portable.

Two In One

The THR100HD's design is based on the dual-amp rig concept, mirroring the kind of stage setup used by many pro players, with separate amps, speakers and pedals for clean and lead sounds. There are two completely separate amp channels, each with a separate preamp, power amp, effects loop and a booster function, best thought of as a built-in overdrive pedal in front of the main amp circuit. This concept extends to the THR100's specially designed closed-back cabinet, which holds two different loudspeakers – an Eminence Legend 1218 and an Eminence Tonker. There are rotary controls for boost level, preamp gain, master volume, bass, mid and treble, reverb, presence and channel volume. Two voice selector switches access five different amp sounds, from clean to heavy distortion. There's a toggle switch to change channels and combine them, with separate boost switches on each channel. Two input sockets lead directly to their respective channels – however, if you want to switch and combine channels, it's input 1 you need.

The rear panel features include a choice of five valve types for the two output stages, together with class A/AB emulation, switchable impedance and power levels. To make the point that the THR100HD is a 'proper' stage amp, there's also a pair of XLR line outs, with a ground lift switch. A pair of mono/stereo effects loop sockets, headphones output, DIN socket for the footswitch, and a USB socket complete the feature list.

The THR100HD takes its design ethos from the very successful THR combos, but this time aimed at live use



This being a THR, the fun doesn't stop with hardware – there's also a simple but very useful editor app that lets you pre-set three different booster types, which approximate boutique and classic overdrive effects, and change the reverb type to spring, plate, room or hall. There are series and parallel options for the effects loops and a switchable noise-gate, with three levels.

A choice of cabinet types for the loudspeaker-emulated line outs use something Yamaha calls Impulse Response data, modelling the way loudspeaker cabinets behave in real time under load. On the THR100HD, this can all be pre-set per channel. The USB socket connects the THR to your computer or DAW and records in stereo, as well as access to the editor and firmware updating functions.

Overall, we really like the way Yamaha has put usability first and done away with endless feature parameter settings, something mirrored in the THR100HD's analogue visuals, which are clean, functional and aesthetically pleasing, with a hint of Art-Deco from the ventilation slots and a warm glow from the sunset orange LEDs behind them.

Sounds

Each channel has five voice settings, split into three overdrives simply called Crunch, Lead and Modern, and two cleans called Solid and er, Clean. The good part of it is that all five are highly usable, making it easy to do more than passable impressions of many classic Brit and USA amp sounds, if you want. Around the back, things can

1. They're simple to use and to understand, and yet these analogue controls are also the front end for a very powerful digital system

2. The footswitchable effects loop is actually two loops in one, which can be split or shared between the two amp channels, with series or parallel modes in the editor app

3. Two five-position voice switches provide access to a huge range of clean and distorted tones



The Rivals

Reviewed by us a few months back, the **BluGuitar AMP1** (£589) is probably the THR's closest competitor, but in a more unconventional package and without the luxury of separate output stages. Nevertheless, a brilliant product that we rated highly enough for a Gold Award. Hughes & Kettner's **Switchblade TSC Head** (£1,299) isn't strictly a digital modelling amp, but combines analogue solid-state and digital effects with a very slick digital control interface, and typically great H&K tone. If you want to experience similar digital tonal finesse to the THR100HD, you need to look at high-end modelling preamps such as Fractal Audio's **Axe-II**, which sells for around \$2,500 direct, or Kemper's **Profiling amp**, around £1,199



The sounds respond very dynamically, and are rich in expressive nuance

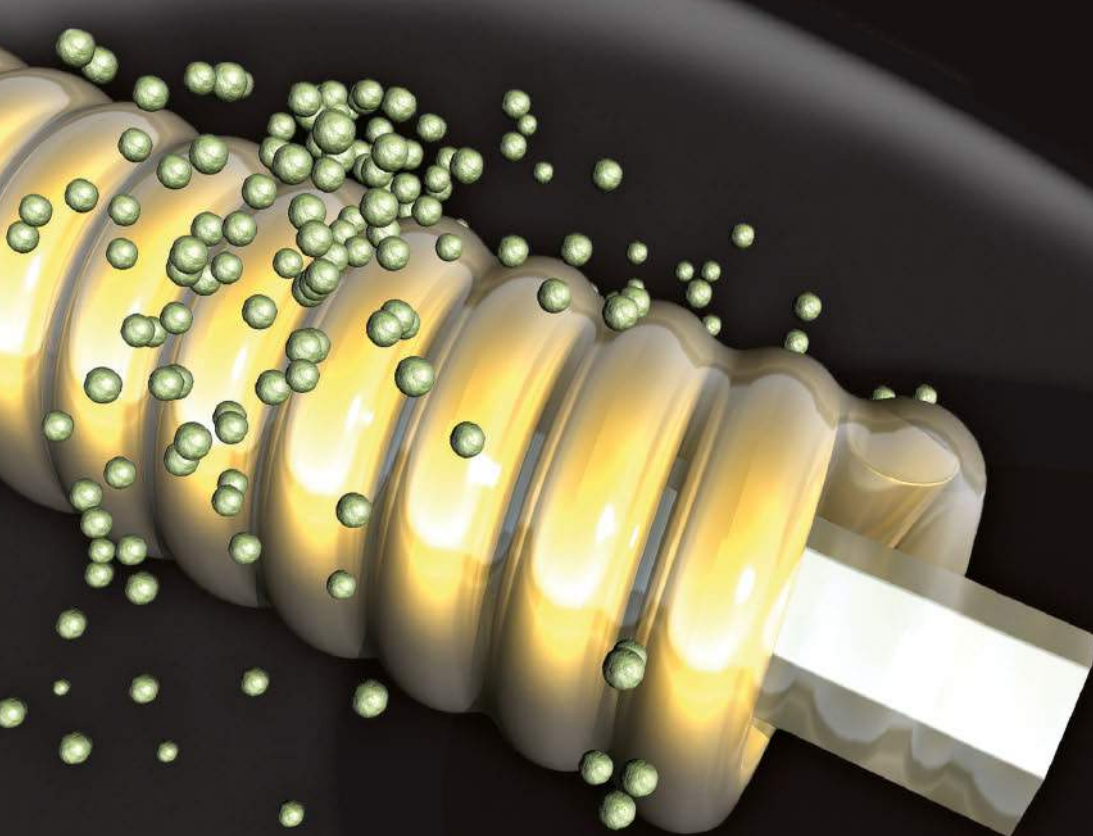
be further tweaked by altering the virtual output valves and selecting Class A or Class AB operating mode, as well as setting the output wattage. The master volume controls on the front panel form part of the VCM (Virtual Circuit Modelling) environment, and add more output stage drive when cranked, hence the need for separate volume controls that make the whole sound louder or quieter without affecting other parameters. The important thing about all these sounds is the way they respond – they're very dynamic and rich in expressive nuance. Add the THR100HD's virtual stompbox circuits into the mix, and you can hopefully see how it's possible to do a lot with just a few building blocks.

The Solid voice is a flat response, probably intended to work with outboard pedals, while the Clean voice captures classic

cleans, inspired mostly by 'blackface'-era Fender, we'd guess, with sweet, sparkling treble, rich midrange warmth and tight bass. Use this one with the booster, and you're already covering most two-channel amps capabilities.

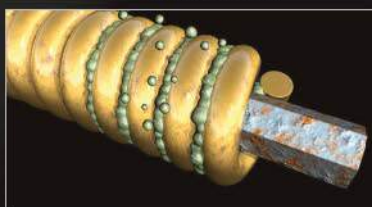
The Lead and Modern overdrives are superb. These two handle classic 80s rock through to contemporary metal; with a deft twist of the mid, they're all that's needed for a vicious scoop sound. Our preference is for the Crunch channel as the starting point, creating a brilliant touch-sensitive tone that growls when we dig in and cleans up as we back off on the pick attack, using the OCD Booster model to kick things up a gear for soloing.

The effects loop is clever, acting as a shared loop for both amp channels with mono plugs, or split into two separate loops



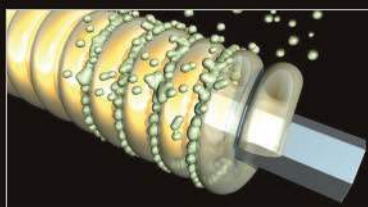
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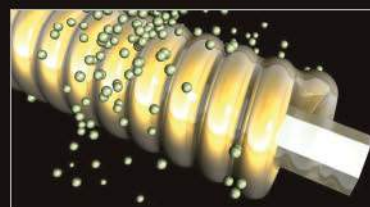
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1. Illustration shows potential for particles to accumulate between the windings and cause product corrosion/tarnish over time. 2. Illustration shows potential for particles to accumulate between the windings. 3. Illustration shows ability for coating to protect against the incidence of particle accumulation between the windings. All illustrations above are simulations only - Not to scale

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4. The dual balanced line outs use Impulse Response data for accurate speaker emulation, and there's a ground lift

5. The Booster control works on any voice, with three booster types in the editor app, and footswitchable convenience

6. The virtual valve switches allow selection of EL34, 6L6, EL84, KT88 and 6V6 valve emulations, together with Class A or Class AB topologies



if you use TRS jack plugs, making it possible to incorporate separate pedals for both amp chains, or if you're keen, two entirely different pedalboards. The reverbs – lifted from Yamaha's SPX library – are superb, with bags of natural ambience and warmth.

The all-important response is no different to many great valve amps: Yamaha's clever digital power amp captures the interaction between valve, transformer and speaker with extraordinary accuracy, and with the special speaker cabinet, you're really hearing two amps that can be as different or similar as you like.

Verdict

There are other modelling amps, but none that provide the same degree of realism with such ease of control at this price. Add

Impulse Response speaker simulation, fabulous reverbs, offline editing flexibility and the THR100HD's brilliant analogue interface, and it's an impressive package, with volume to spare for practically any gig. True, there are no valves, but unlike a valve amp, the THR100HD will be totally consistent, night after night, as well as being virtually noise-free, far more robust and portable to boot. But perhaps the most compelling reason for plugging into a THR100HD is a much simpler one – it's really great fun! Not once did we stop to think about what was happening inside the cream steel box, we just plugged in and had a great time playing. Isn't that what it's all about, at any level? We think the THR100HD is sensational: a must-try for any guitar player. **G**



YAMAHA THR100HD HEAD

PRICE: £755

ORIGIN: Designed in Japan, made in China

TYPE: Analogue controlled digital preamp and power amp

OUTPUT: Max 100 watts RMS (50+50)

VALVES: None

DIMENSIONS: 415 (w) x 125 (h) x 210mm (d)

WEIGHT (KG/LB): 4.1/7

CABINET: Steel

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Voice select, gain, volume, bass mid, treble and presence, reverb and output level x2. Boost select, channel select/mix toggle switches. Power stage valve select, Class A/AB select x2. Output power and impedance select

FOOTSWITCH: 5-button foot controller toggles channels, combines channels, toggles boost, reverb and loop functions

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Dual series/parallel effects loops, 3-stage noise gate, stereo XLR line outs with programmable Impulse Response speaker emulation and ground lift. USB socket, headphone output, offline editing software

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The THR100H is a single-channel version and costs £564. The THRC122 1x12 cabinet costs £286, while the THRC212 dual mono cabinet costs £477

Yamaha Music Europe

01908 366700

www.yamaha.com



10/10

PROS Lightweight, tough, editing flexibility, high-end speaker sim, dual-amp rig sounds – and it's fun!

CONS Dual mono speaker cabinet is hefty; the end-mounted carry handle spoils the visual symmetry



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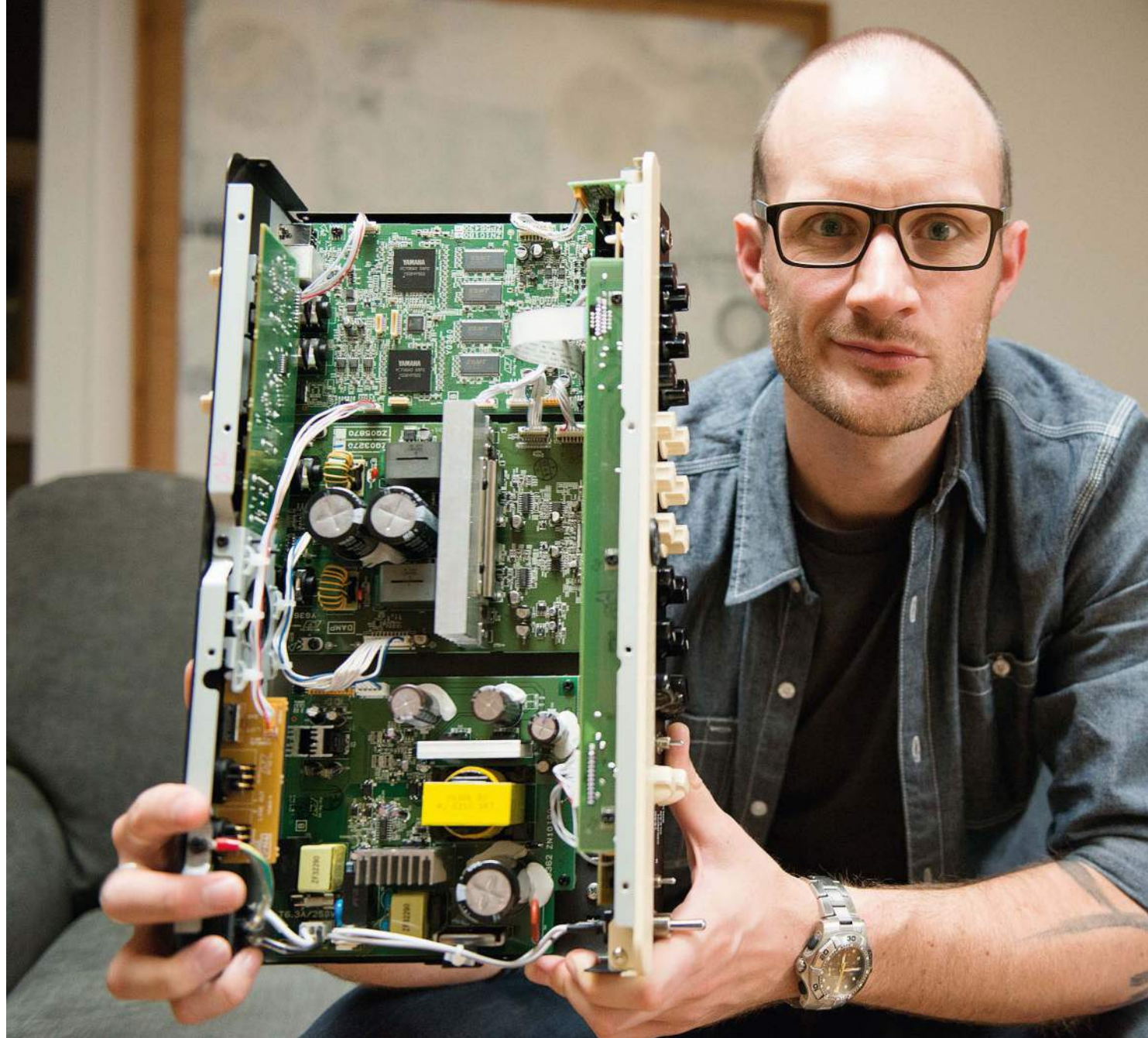
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Designing The Future

Yamaha's THR head could well be a watershed in amplifier design. And it all started in a coffee shop. Of course, where else?

There's always a moment when a great idea hits and a product is potentially born. For Yamaha's THRH, that was back in early 2013, at a Costa coffee outlet in Epsom. The original THR amps were "driven by the idea that more and more people were playing at home, in front of a computer, and there wasn't a great amp for that", says Yamaha's Julian Ward. "The THR answered that need, but very quickly, we were getting requests for a giggable THR – mostly because people were really into the sound. We weren't convinced that simply a bigger THR was the answer, and we'd started brainstorming in early 2012."

From those initial ideas, a plan was formed and given the green light by Yamaha management. That left a small team of two or three marketing/planning guys and four or five engineers to make it happen.

"Forming a plan for THRH took longer than we expected," says Julian, "because when we starting seriously researching, we quickly found that there was no desire for us to make 'just another amp head', but it wasn't very clear as to what would be both interesting and feasible. It took a while to take that initial caffeine-fuelled idea – which was basically along the lines of, 'So, what is cool? Er, dual amps

are cool...' – flesh it out into something we could actually make, and back it up with a strong enough logic and justification to get through the approval process.

"THRH was a big challenge, actually," he continues. "There's a lot of new technology in there, especially related to the feel and response of the power amp, and we were working right up to the last minute to get it sounding and performing right. The final 'okay' was only really given at the end of June [2015] after we spent two weeks locked in a studio in LA with two of the lead THR engineers and a series of artists. Even at that point, there were quite a few



Julian Ward, product planning manager for Yamaha guitars and amps, exposing the innards of a THR100HD amp

occasions when we wondered if we could really get it sounding right in time for the planned launch this September.”

Even with a conventional amp, the whole design process can be convoluted, but the THRH’s heart is digital – a big hurdle for players and not easy to get ‘right’. Yamaha’s approach wasn’t to mimic specific amps, but to create good core models to cover the sounds we love.

“Even though digital technology can be used to replicate analogue circuits very accurately,” says Julian, “there are so many factors involved in the holistic experience of playing, say, a Marshall JCM800 or an old AC30 that even if the sound was indistinguishable, it still wouldn’t feel the same. Instead of trying to make it sound exactly like another amp – which we can’t really do unless it’s DI’d because there are so many variables, like speaker cabinets, which we can’t control – and then trying to persuade people it does sound exactly like it – which in all honesty, it probably doesn’t – we just tried to make amps that

•

“We set out to make a great amp, not a great digital amp, so we designed it to work how we thought would be best for the player with a very analogue feel”

•

sound great in their own right. Our hope is that people will want to play a THRH because of the way it sounds, in the same way they choose to play a Boogie, Marshall or any other amp that has its own sound.”

One of the THRH’s major draws is its ‘analogue’-style user interface, unlike the LCD screens of many digital products.

“It’s mainly because of the fact that it’s a digital amp is a means to an end, not the end in itself,” he says. “We set out to make a great amp, not a great digital amp, so we designed it to work how we thought would be best for the player and that meant a very analogue feel. That idea of blurring the line between ‘amps’ and ‘digital amps’ was a drive in a lot of areas. We’re pretty sure digital is the future for amps and there are times when that means a big screen, deep editing and presets, and there are times when that just means the heart is silicon chips instead of vacuum tubes. Designing a digital amp makes lots of things possible, but we believe it’s not necessarily a great idea to do something just because you can. That was the thought process behind a lot of THRH’s features – what’s right for the player, not what’s possible.”

Another challenge for the musician is the fact that THRH uses Virtual Circuit Modelling (VCM). Is this the future?

“In short, yes,” says Julian. “VCM has already replaced valves for us; I don’t expect we’ll ever make a valve amp. The THRH is a watershed for us in terms of power-amp development – we developed a new non-linear damping factor for our digital power amp, which is a huge part of why the THRH feels and sounds the way it does. Preamp modelling has been very good for a long time, but the big difference between a valve amp and a digital amp is all in the power section. We’re pretty sure the power amp in the THRH is a good step towards changing the conversation from digital being, at best, a passable emulation of valves. Our goal is to be better than valves, on every level.”



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BOSS SY-300 £549

A guitar synth that you can play from any guitar without using MIDI? Boss's no-compromises unit seamlessly integrates into your setup...

Words Trevor Curwen Photograph Olly Curtis

What You Need To Know

1 Guitar synths? Why don't I just buy a keyboard-based synth?

Ah, but can you play keys as well as you play guitar? A keyboard will give you synth sounds but it won't give you the magical blends of guitar, synth and effects that the SY-300 offers.

2 Do I need a special pickup?

To trigger sounds via MIDI, you need a guitar equipped with a hexaphonic pickup that tracks each string separately. The SY-300 doesn't use pitch-to-MIDI conversion and is designed to take a signal direct from your guitar or bass: it's more of a sophisticated effects processor that can output synthesiser sounds.

3 So, sort of a pedal-based synth?

Yes, and between parent company Roland's long history of both keyboard and guitar synths and Boss's pedal legacy, there's the perfect expertise necessary to pull it off.

There are a variety of reasons why the vast majority of us guitarists don't own a guitar synth, but we reckon many players are simply put off by the hassle of the thing: the need for a hexaphonic pickup and the idea that you may have to alter your playing technique to get the best out of one without false note triggering. Well, those reasons don't hold water with the new Boss SY-300 Guitar Synthesiser because it lets you plug a guitar or bass straight in and play exactly as you normally do.

The SY-300 is a Boss product, somewhat distancing it from parent company Roland's GR-series guitar synths and suggesting that it may have more in common with the company's effects processors. It is, in fact, a different kind of guitar synth: it doesn't work via the pitch detection and conversion method of the GR-series and it doesn't have MIDI output to access an infinite range of sounds, beyond those onboard the floor unit. Instead, it works on your guitar's audio signal and provides all of its own sounds using three onboard oscillators combined with a range of onboard effects. The signal passes through up to three oscillators in parallel, each of which has a choice of eight

waveforms (including the input sound) and a shedload of adjustable parameters to shape the sound, including a 16-note sequencer for creating arpeggios from one note. On top of that, there are four COSM effects blocks that can be placed at various points in the signal chain. The sounds created are collected in 70 onboard preset patches while another 99 memory slots let you store your own.

The SY-300 has a footprint that, while a little larger than most four-footswitch pedals, could fit fairly naturally onto a pretty standard pedalboard. There's a bypass footswitch, a control footswitch that can bring in different functions within a patch, and two footswitches that scroll up and down through the presets or can alternatively be configured as control switches. If you want more capability, you can add an expression pedal or up to two extra control footswitches. There's audio signal routing flexibility with Main mono or stereo outputs, plus Sub outputs that can pass the same signal or audio tapped off from a different point, while Thru and Return sockets can be used to bring external effects into the SY-300's signal chain. Alternatively, the Thru output could be



used to pass the dry guitar signal to an amp. MIDI connectivity is provided for program and control change messages, while a USB connection allows audio-interface duties for computer recording but also lets you connect to Tone Central editor and librarian software, which offers the possibility of downloading new patches from the web.

Sounds

The SY-300 plays superbly, both on single notes and chords – there are no doubts about tracking, like you'd get with a pitch-to-MIDI guitar synth, as it is simply synthesising the guitar's audio signal. Consequently, there's no need to alter your technique. All the nuances of your playing – string bending, vibrato, muting, and so on – are translated perfectly into synthesised sound... even playing slide is possible!

Sound-wise, there's an awful lot of creative sonic possibilities and not all of them are adequately represented by the factory presets, which mainly showcase 1980s synth sounds and arpeggiated dance music rhythms. Some of the presets are

All the nuances
of your playing
– string bending,
vibrato, muting –
are translated
perfectly into
synthesised sound...
even playing slide
is possible!

cool: there are organs, funky basses and the sort of synth sounds that will have you trying to play the intros to *Jump* or *Born In The USA*, or a bit of Pat Metheny soloing.

But what isn't instantly apparent is how much of a creative tone machine the SY-300 can be, in adding more textures to your guitar sound rather than totally transforming it. It can also work as a pure effects processor with its wide range of effects and parallel guitar paths. It's tantalising to image the possibility of synth sounds and ambient textures lurking behind the natural guitar tone – plenty to fill the sound out on stage, particularly if you're working as a duo or a small combo. Of course, to unlock those possibilities, you have to get into editing, which might seem daunting to anyone unfamiliar with oscillators, LFOs and the like.

Thankfully, though, it's really not that difficult, especially with the help of the computer-based editor, which lays out the complete signal routing clearly and lets you swiftly turn effects blocks and oscillators on and off to let you hear their sonic



1. The SY-300's menus and controls are both intuitive and clear

2. The Blender control enables you to mix up synth patches to create new sounds

3. Sub outputs send the same signal at a lower frequency, and Thru and Return enable you to add external effects

4. The SY-300 comes complete with 70 onboard presets – mainly covering 80s synth sounds and arpeggiated sequences – plus there's space for 99 more user-defined patches. The SY-300's potential can be unlocked through Tone Central editor and Librarian software

contribution. For live work, patch switching is instant and the Control footswitches can be set up for a variety of tasks from performance-enhancing momentary effects like a quick filter sweep to switching effects in a patch.

Verdict

This is not the guitar synth for those who need access to realistic instrument sounds; we recommend a hexaphonic pickup and all the associated gubbins if that's the route you want to explore. While that sort of setup is like a different instrument that exists in parallel to a guitar, the SY-300 feels like a totally natural extension of the guitar that can take it off into new directions with no compromises in expressiveness or playing technique. This is a bit of a game-changer, if that's not an over-used term, and if you feel that the out-and-out synth sounds and new blended guitar textures that the SY-300 delivers can play a part in the music you make, you'll be buying into a creative and extremely versatile sonic toolbox that just begs to be explored. **G**



BOSS SY-300

PRICE: £549

ORIGIN: Taiwan

TYPE: Guitar synthesiser pedal

EFFECTS TYPES: Touch Wah, Compressor, Limiter, OD/DS, EQ, Slow Gear, Delay, Chorus, Reverb, Phaser, Flanger, Tremolo, Rotary, Uni-V, Pan, Slicer, Isolator, Lo-Fi, Delay+Reverb, Chorus+Delay, Chorus+Reverb

PRESETS: 99 user, 70 preset

OTHER FEATURES: Tuner, 3x oscillators each with 8 waveforms: Sine, Sawtooth, Triangle, Square, PWM, Detune Sawtooth, Noise, Input

CONTROLS: Output Level, Patch select, 4x soft knobs, 7x buttons, On/Off footswitch, 3x CTL footswitches, Ground Lift

CONNECTIONS: Standard guitar input, standard Thru, standard Return, standard Main output L (phones) and R (mono), standard Sub output R (mono) and L, standard TRS CTL/EXP jack, USB, MIDI In, MIDI Out/Thru

POWER: AC adaptor (supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 255 (w) x 191 (d) x 70mm (h)

OPTIONS: Footswitch (FS-5U, FS-5L, FS-6, FS-7), Expression Pedal (Boss FV-500L/500H, Roland EV-5)

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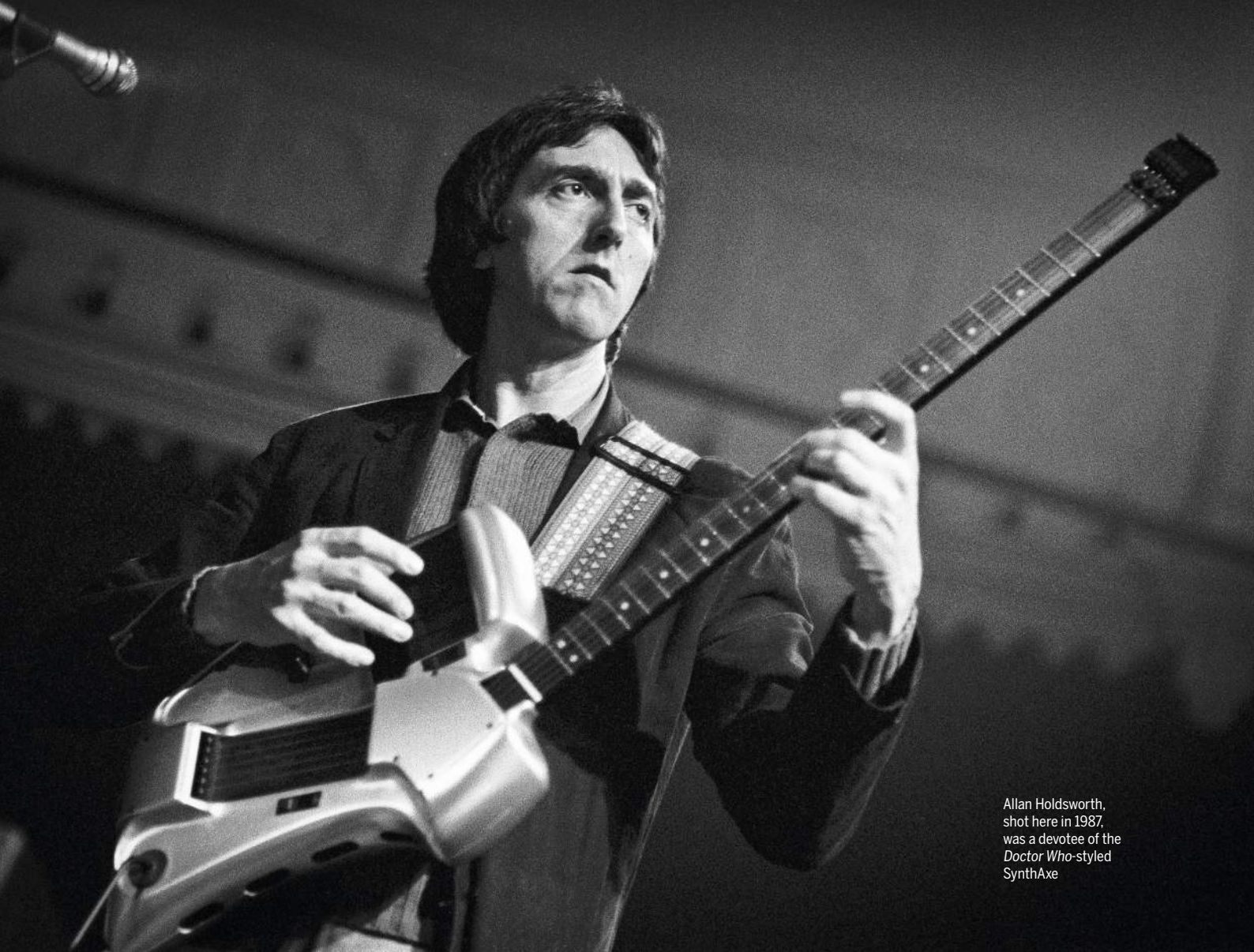
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9/10

PROS Opens up a whole new world of sounds using all the expressiveness of your technique

CONS If you're looking for MIDI control and triggering sampled sounds, you need to look elsewhere



Allan Holdsworth, shot here in 1987, was a devotee of the *Doctor Who*-styled SynthAxe

Synth Stories

Many have tried to make the guitar synth cool. Most have failed. Let's take a quick journey through the evolution of the instrument...

The fact that the SY-300 can be played from any guitar actually harks back – long before the hexaphonic pickup made its debut – to the very first processor that was marketed as a 'guitar synth': the EMS Synthi Hi-Fi, a large tablet-like structure on a stand as used by David Gilmour. This, though, may just be thought of as an analogue multi-effects processor that simply processed the sound of the guitar's output as it combined ring modulation and other effects. Other companies, such as Maestro with the USS-1 Universal Synthesizer, produced similar products.

The big step in guitar-synth evolution was pitch-to-voltage conversion technology, manifesting itself in 1977 in Roland's first foray into guitar synths, the GR-500, as heard on David Bowie's *Ashes To Ashes*. This consisted of a guitar (GS-500) equipped with a hexaphonic (or divided) pickup that senses the sound of each string separately, connected by a multicore cable to a desktop synth unit. Around the same time there was also the ARP Avatar, reportedly used by Jimmy Page and Pete Townshend, and driven by a

proprietary pickup. Both GR-500 and Avatar were capable of monophonic synth sounds but could do polyphonic fuzz. The only polyphonic guitar synth at this point was an expensive beast made by 360 Systems.

Roland made the next step into something that more resembles a modern guitar synth when someone had the idea to put the synth part of the equation on the floor. Released in 1979 and used by Andy Summers, among others, the combination still featured a dedicated guitar, chosen from four available models, but it now connected via multicore to the smart blue GR-300 floor unit (not unlike the SY-300). There was also a simpler yellow GR-100. A few pedals played directly from guitar and marketed as guitar synths, such as the Korg X911 and the EHX Micro Synth, were also available in the late-70s/early 80s.

While guitar synths were getting used and heard – Robert Fripp's and Adrian Belew's GR-300s are all over King Crimson's *Discipline* album – they were still limited in their range of sounds, but in the 1980s, the invention of MIDI really opened things up. MIDI (an



1



3



2



3



3



4

acronym for Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a system that allows communication between a variety of musical instruments, computers and related devices. MIDI carries event messages that specify such things as the pitch and velocity of notes allowing one MIDI-equipped instrument to send a message that plays the same note on another connected instrument. Modern guitar synthesis relies on pitch-to-MIDI conversion.

In 1985, Roland introduced the GR-700. Okay, it was still a guitar (GR-707) and synth combination connected via a cable, but had rudimentary MIDI, so you weren't just limited to the sounds in the GR-700, but could link to and play other MIDI-equipped synths. The next step was for guitarists to be able to use their own guitars for synth control when Roland brought out the GK-1 pickup, which could attach to any guitar. This could connect to the GR synths, but also to the GM-70 guitar-to-MIDI converter. Other manufacturers had alternative pitch-to-MIDI products – one option was the Shadow SH-075 synth controller, which looked like

a pocket calculator strapped to your guitar, but let you connect to and play MIDI instruments.

MIDI, and the development of sampling technology, spawned a whole generation of synths, samplers and sound modules that could recreate the sounds of real instruments: now you could play piano, strings, brass, and so on, from your guitar. In 1992, Roland's GR-1 synth and associated GK-2 pickup (connected with what's become a standard 13-pin cable) put a load of these sounds in one box with onboard effects. It's since been followed up with other Roland GR synths, such as the GR-20 and the current GR-55. These days, you can buy synth-ready guitars with built-in hexaphonic pickups; you can even do away with the cable if you opt for Fishman's TriplePlay wireless system, which sends its signal to a receiver 'dongle' connected to a USB port.

There's been another strand to the story other than using a conventional six-string guitar. There have also been some wacky and wonderful things (probably better labelled as guitar-shaped MIDI controllers) that, while bearing a resemblance to a guitar in that they were designed to be used by guitar players, eschew a normal string setup for electrical switching as found in keyboard synths to circumvent the tracking problems of a pitch-conversion system. The SynthAxe, a favourite of Allan Holdsworth, comes to mind, as does the Stepp DGI Guitar, as well as the Yamaha G10 and some Casio models. The latest of these, a development of the You Rock Guitar, is Inspired Instruments' forthcoming Lineage MIDI guitar. **G**

1 The GR-55, released in 2011, incorporates COSM modelling, but needs a hex pickup-equipped guitar

2 The forthcoming Lineage MIDI guitar controller promises "an infinite creative palette"

3 There's SynthAxe in the air tonight, as *Guitarist's* very own Neville Marten demos Roland's avant-garde design in 1985; complete with foot controller and pitch bar

4 The YouRock Guitar, forerunner to the intriguing Lineage MIDI guitar

The big step forward in guitar-synth evolution was pitch-to-voltage conversion technology, in Roland's GR-500 in 1977



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ECC83-MG	10 Pcs	£9.60 Each	5881	16 Pcs	£12.60 Each
ECC83-MG	20 Pcs	£9.00 Each	6550	12 Pcs	£21.60 Each
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PEDALBOARD

From Fractal's foray into multi-effects to ultra-creative delays and atmospheric tremolos, we test the effects that matter in our dedicated pedal review section



You've probably heard of the impressive amp-modelling technology that Fractal Audio Systems has won so many guitarists over to in recent years, but the company's equally powerful effects have had less attention. Now Fractal has put them in a stand-alone unit for the first time, throwing down the gauntlet as far as high-end, ultra-editable multi-effects goes. Check out what reviewer Trevor Curwen has to say about the new FX8 on p131. Meanwhile, the classic tremolo effect is about as atmospheric an addition to your clean tone as you can have – but these days, you can have your

wobble served up a lot of different ways. So we rounded up a few of the top contenders this issue – read the full report on p136 to see which suits you best. Permission for lower-mids to quiver, sir...

If slight (and not-so-slight) returns are more your thing, here's some good news: the delay pedal has never had so many interesting, creative offshoots. Two of these new examples of tweakable digital delays from Strymon and Free The Tone are rated on p140, while the affordable thrills of a Thomas Blug-designed distortion and valve-aping overdrive from Xvive await you on p142. **G**



FRACTAL AUDIO FX8 €1,599

Fractal Audio Systems puts the effects from its Axe-FX II into an all-new floor pedal. Could this be the ultimate in multi-effects flexibility?

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis

Regular readers will be aware of Fractal Audio's Axe-FX range: high-end gear endorsed by numerous well-known names and offering modelled amps and effects in a rackmount unit that can be coupled to a floor controller. The company became aware that many players have their own favourite amps, so while they don't need the amp sims, they may be interested in the effects – and this was the concept behind the new FX8: taking just the effects from the Axe-FX II and putting them into a floor unit that has a basic working format of a pedalboard with eight simultaneous, instantly available effects blocks, each home to an effect of your choice. 128 different preset pedalboards are stored onboard in banks of eight, and each preset has features that can go beyond just switching the individual effects on and off.

Featuring rock-solid construction, the FX8's rugged steel chassis, with its aircraft aluminium end-panels, is practically sized with a sloped top featuring footswitches in two tiers so that you can easily hit the

right one without a problem. Round the back, you'll find a comprehensive set of connections that allow the FX8 to be used in several different configurations. You can just plug the FX8 directly into your amp, of course, but there's also provision to have some of the FX8 effects in front of your amp and some in its FX loop, using the four-cable method with the unit's 'Pre' and 'Post' inputs and outputs; effects can be designated as Pre or Post within a preset. There are sockets to add footswitches or expression pedals, which can be assigned to effects and, furthermore, you get a pair of Relay sockets to take care of amp-channel switching duties from the FX8.

The eight footswitches that operate the effects blocks each have three LEDs, because they can have three different functions within any preset. A green LED lets you know which effects block is active or bypassed, but there is extra flexibility – each block can have X and Y settings (encompassing two different effects models or one model with different parameter values), changed

ABOVE The FX8 floor units incorporates the effects of the world-conquering Axe-FX II



by pressing and holding the footswitch, the Y setting signified by an amber LED.

Each preset can also have eight scenes, and the active scene is signified by a red LED. A scene can bring several of the effects, complete with their X and Y status, in at once with a single footswitch and can also store Relay status for amp switching (Relays can also be assigned as effects blocks to footswitches). A scene is called up by a quick press on the Scene footswitch at the top right followed by pressing one of the eight switches. Once a scene has been called up, the unit reverts to standard pedalboard mode. Presets are selected by pressing and holding the Scene footswitch and then selecting one from the current bank with the eight footswitches, or using the Bank Up and Bank Down footswitches to first select a new bank. There's also a looper (with a maximum loop time of eight minutes mono, four stereo) with every preset. Hitting the Looper footswitch assigns dedicated looper functions to seven footswitches.

Sounds

Each block you choose to assign to the eight switches on your pedalboard offers a particular genre of effect such as chorus, reverb or drive – there are 21 to choose from, plus blocks that operate MIDI switching and the two Relay switchers. You can then choose a specific effect for that block; the Drive block, for example, offers 33 options including modelled Tube Screamer, Fuzz Face, RAT and more. There are over 130 different effects in total to choose from and all have many

editable parameters. Effects order is flexible and effects can be run in parallel as well as in series, so you can, for example, choose not to send your delay through the reverb. Editing can be neatly accomplished from the FX8 front panel, but there's also a computer-based editor/librarian that makes setting up a doddle.

As with the Axe-FX II, sound quality is excellent, and with just about every effect you could possibly want, coupled with a plethora of routing options, there's huge sonic potential. While all that tap-dancing footswitching might seem complicated on paper, in practice, it's an easily managed, extremely flexible system for changing sounds on stage.

Verdict

The current Euro rate puts the price a little north of £1,100, which may seem quite a lot. Yet you could spend the same money putting together a collection of quality pedals, power distributor and switcher and still not come close to the practicality of this self-contained professional-quality unit that will continue to be upgraded. There are no compromises here: this is the most comprehensive and best-sounding all-in-one effects processor you can currently buy today. **A**

PROS All the effects you might need in one very rugged and practical unit for stage and studio

CONS It's costly for a single unit and you're stuck with the Fractal sounds rather than choosing a set of individual pedals

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Multi-effects

FEATURES: 128

onboard presets, buffered and true bypass, tuner, looper, tap tempo, amp switching capability, software editor/librarian, Humbuster outputs, dual global 10-band Graphic EQ, upgradeable firmware

See manufacturer's website for full spec

G66 GmbH

0049 461 1828 066

www.g66.eu

www.fractalaudio.com



9/10



TREMOLO PEDAL ROUND-UP

The effect that just won't go away: the guttural wobble of tremolo is just as valid today as it was in the 1960s. We consider six modern choices...

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Adam Gasson

We've all heard tremolo guitar – it's all over surf music, 1960s soul, Spaghetti western and spy movie soundtracks and plenty of classic songs: The Rolling Stones' *Gimme Shelter*, Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Born On The Bayou*, The Smiths' *How Soon Is Now*, right up to its use by Radiohead and The Black Keys. So what's the history and the latest on this first electronically-created modulation effect for guitar, and what do you need to look for in a tremolo pedal?

Tremolo is a cyclical change in amplitude (volume) that manifests itself as a rhythmic pulsing. It first appeared in standalone form for guitar in the shape of the DeArmond Tremolo Control in the 40s, but the recorded tremolo sounds we're most familiar with came built into amps, and Fender popularised the effect most with the Tremolux in 1955 – although it's usually wrongly labelled as 'vibrato', which is actually pitch modulation.

Two basic methods for producing tremolo were seen in Fender amps: the

early amps varied the bias of valves while 'blackface' amps from around 1963 onwards used a photocell. Besides these two, usually referred to as bias and opto tremolo, there's a rarer-type of Fender tremolo as briefly seen in some of the company's brown Tolex amps from the early 60s. This is known as 'harmonic vibrato' created using dual-band filtering, and offering a sweet, phase-y trem.

Synchronised Tremolo

The staple controls of tremolo are knobs to set the speed and the depth of the effect, and all tremolo pedals will have these, but while many modern pedals have the sole aim of recreating the vintage-amp tremolo sounds, many more have added new features to provide a wider range of sounds and functionality.

One of the most common facilities now provided is tap tempo for instant foot control over the speed, offering tremolo that's rhythmically synchronised to the music you're playing. Because of the nature of the tremolo effect, it can seem to make

your sound less prominent in a band mix when switched on. Consequently, many companies are now providing output volume knobs on their trem pedals so you can have unity gain, or a boost, when the effect kicks in.

At the root of tremolo is a particular geometric waveform used to modulate the amplitude and, while that's fixed in a tremolo-equipped amp, some pedals will offer a choice of waveforms (sine, triangle, square, and so on), crucial to shaping the sound: a square wave, for example, can give you an on/off sequenced effect. Some pedals also offer the ability to adjust the symmetry of the waveform, perhaps to make it slightly lopsided. One recent innovation – as seen in pedals by Pigtronix and Keeley – is dynamic control, whereby the speed or depth of the effect can be affected by how hard you play. Other pedals can offer instantly footswitchable tremolos at two different speeds.

Turn the page for our review round-up of six modern tremolo pedals.



Gibson

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Echopark

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Two-Rock

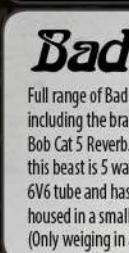
Two-Rock are incredible sounding, hand built boutique guitar amps, made in Rohnert Park, California. Two Rock Bi Onyx Head, Two Rock Studio Pro Plus Heads & Combos, Two Rock Sensor Heads & Combos. **New Two Rock Akoya head and combo's due soon, prices start at £2629**



Collings

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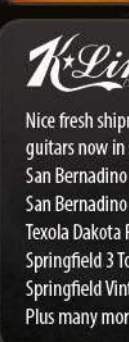
BadCat

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fano guitars

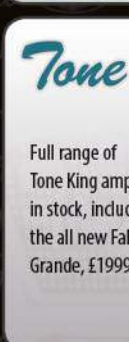
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Bedell

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



1



2



3



4



1 STRYMON FLINT £249

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo/reverb

FEATURES: True bypass, 3 reverb, 3 tremolo types

CONTROLS: Intensity, Mix, Speed, Decay, Colour, Tremolo type, Reverb type, Tremolo and Reverb Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard outputs, expression pedal

POWER: Supplied 9V PSU

DIMENSIONS: 102 (w) x 114 (d) x 62mm (h)

MusicPsych

0207 607 6005

www.strymon.net



The **Flint** seems designed for habitual Fender amp users who are faced with the problem of having to use a hired/borrowed amp, and features both reverb and tremolo, individually footswitchable. While the reverb simulations cover spring, plate and hall sounds, it's the tremolos that we're interested in here, and all three Fender varieties are available: there's a '61 harmonic vibrato, '63 power tube bias tremolo and a '65 photocell tremolo. Intensity (depth) and speed adjustment knobs grace the front panel but there are also secondary functions like setting the pedal for a slight boost when it's kicked in and setting the order of the two effects.

Three trem flavours cover plenty of bases from the choppy '65 to the more rounded '63 and the delightful harmonic tremolo with its hint of rotary speaker or Uni-Vibe. **[TC]**

VERDICT Tremolo and reverb in one pedal is a great idea that is perfectly implemented here

9/10

2 SUHR JACK RABBIT £179

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True or buffered bypass, selectable waveforms, tap tempo, strum tempo

CONTROLS: Depth, Rate, Level, Waveform switch, Tempo

Subdivision, FX Link, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output, FX Link jack

POWER: 9V battery

or 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 114 (d) x 50mm (h)

Peach Guitars

01376 553016

www.suhr.com

Despite its compact size, the Jack Rabbit packs plenty onboard. In addition to the standard rate and depth knobs, the output level knob can go from unity gain to supply 14dB of boost, which can really drive an amp into overdrive – turn down the trem depth to use it as a pure boost. The modulation waveform is also variable with Sine, Square, Triangle, Reverse Ramp and Ramp shapes for a range of sounds from rounded Fender-style throb through to harder-edged on/off stutters.

If you want to change speeds on the fly, two tempo modes with three subdivisions (quartet note, eighth note and quarter note triplet) are possible by holding down the footswitch for two seconds. There's normal Tap tempo and a Strum tempo mode where you set the tempo with three strums, and the option of control with a remote footswitch, too. **[TC]**

VERDICT With its compact size, many trem variations and a usable boost, this is a must-try pedal

8/10

3 KEELEY DYNATREM £135

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, dynamic tremolo, selectable waveforms, reverb and tremolo combination

CONTROLS: Depth, Rate, Shape, Level, Mode switch

Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 66 (W) x 112 (D) x 50mm (H)

Guitar Guitar

0800 456 1959

www.rkfx.com

The **DynaTrem** offers tremolo and reverb, although the reverb is only available in one of three modes, either with tremolo or by itself. The pedal's agenda is dynamic tremolo that responds to your playing: play harder and you can either get faster or deeper tremolo in the first two modes, the depth variation seeming the more natural of the two when playing. The third mode offers 'Harmonic Tremolo + Reverb' for that phase-y tremolo with a hint of pitch shift combined with a spacey ambience.

There's usefully adjustable output level and, while the depth and rate knobs do their normal job for mode three, they also feature an element of setting how the parameters react to playing dynamics in modes one and two. A Shape knob offers four different waveforms for the first two modes and adds the reverb for the third. **[TC]**

VERDICT An interesting sonic signature makes this a great choice if you want something different

8/10

4 SEYMOUR DUNCAN SHAPESHIFTER £249

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: Electrical true bypass, variable waveforms, tap tempo

CONTROLS: Wave, Depth, Shape, Speed, Ch Phase, Mode switch, Bypass footswitch, Tap Tempo footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard inputs L (Mono) & R, standard outputs L & R

POWER: 9V battery or 9V-18V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 90 (W) x 125 (D) x 55mm (H)

Rosetti

01376 550033

seymourduncan.com

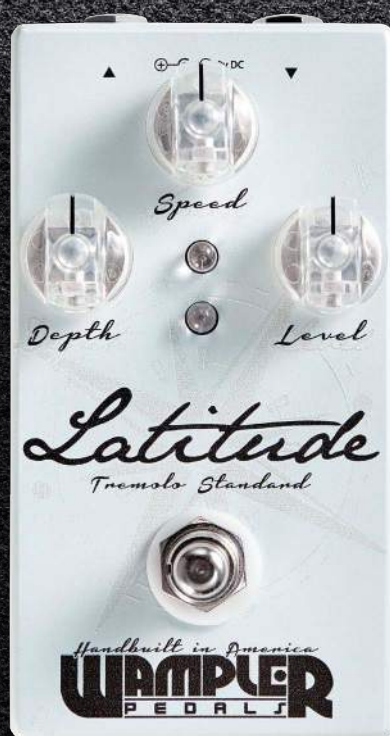
This is a recently launched revamped version of the original that adds stereo operation and a channel phase knob that can adjust the phase between left and right output channels from 0 to 180 degrees, which results in some interesting sonic variations.

The shape of the tremolo waveform here is continuously variable from sine wave through triangle to square wave, and you can also tweak the shape, so there's load of variations – from familiar vintage tones to extreme helicopter chops. While the depth knob works as you'd expect, you can adjust the speed in three ways – either conventionally with the knob or via the tap tempo footswitch, either as tapped or by engaging the ratio switch to dial in speeds up to four times faster than your quickest tap. The sound sits well when engaged, but there's no apparent boost and no volume adjustment. **[TC]**

VERDICT With a massive feature set, you can conjure up a wide range of tremolo sounds with this pedal

7/10

5



5 WAMPLER LATITUDE STANDARD £159

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES:

True bypass

CONTROLS: Speed, Depth, Level, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 63 (W) x 114 (D) x 57mm (H)

First Line Distribution
01626 853876
wamplerpedals.com

Wampler's Latitude Deluxe (£217), released last year, is a fully featured tremolo that includes tap tempo with four subdivisions, a choice of three waveforms, and adjustable Attack and Space for fine tuning of the wave shape. That's a pretty comprehensive feature set, but if you are looking for something less complex, the newly minted Latitude Standard takes the Fender-inspired portion of the sound from the Deluxe and puts it in a more compact pedalboard-friendly form. There's a no-brainer user interface that gives you access to standard depth and speed controls and a variable output that offers a slight boost to ensure your sound's prominence in the mix. A pulsing red LED always show the tremolo speed, even in bypass, while a bright blue LED lets you know the effect is active.

Sound-wise, it's Fender-style tremolo all the way with a rounded sine wave instead of a choppy character, so it's a pedal for traditionalists rather than experimentalists who would be better to check out the Deluxe. **[TC]**

VERDICT Easy-to-use amp-style tremolo with adjustable output – a practical pedalboard option

7/10

6



6 CARL MARTIN SURF TREM £89

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES:

Semi-true bypass

CONTROLS: Depth, Speed, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V battery or 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 120 (W) x 95 (D) x 56mm (H)

First Line Distribution
01626 853876
www.carlmartin.com

Certainly the coolest looking of the pedals collected in this round-up with its surf green chassis and cream chickenhead knobs, the Surf Trem is also the most basic of the pedals on test with just amp-style depth and speed control.

Now, while the Surf Trem – which is part of Denmark-based Carl Martin's Vintage Series – has been around for a few years in a couple of different-shaped enclosures, this particular unit is a newly released revision of the pedal that, alongside the standard red LED on/off indicator, adds a second bright blue LED that pulses in time with the speed of the tremolo, whether bypassed or not, leaving you in no doubt as to the trem speed.

The circuitry of the pedal is taken from the company's TremO'vibe tremolo and vibrato pedal, and offers a rich, warm and rounded tremolo. The sound is reminiscent of Fender-style bias tremolo, and while there's no volume knob, when the effect is kicked in there's no loss of level, instead a distinct boost to give the sound presence. **[TC]**

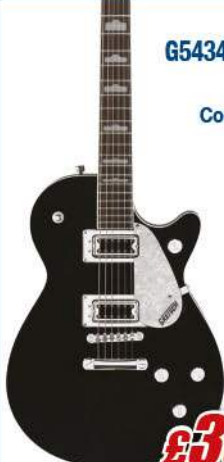
VERDICT If you're looking for vintage-amp tremolo, simply delivered, this could be your pedal

7/10



**Gretsch G5420T
Electromatic
Orange**
Code: 205037

~~£700~~
£575



**Gretsch
G5434 Pro Jet
Black**
Code: 89609

~~£400~~
£380



**Fame Forum III
Outburst
Limited Edition**
Code: 220058

£665



**Epiphone
ES-339 P90 Pro
Limited Edition
Vintage Sunburst**
Code: 213928

£299



**Epiphone
Union Jack
Sheraton Outfit**
Code: 207842

£679



**Fame Forum III
Progressive
Limited Edition**
Code: 220060

£665



**Gibson Les Paul
Classic 2015
Heritage Cherry
Sunburst**
Code: 212019

~~£1599~~
£1139



**Gibson Les Paul Jr
SC 2015 Vintage
Sunburst**
Code: 212006

~~£699~~
£482



**Gibson Les Paul
Studio 2015
Desert Burst**
Code: 212014

~~£899~~
£679



**Gibson Les Paul
Less Plus 2015
Heritage Cherry
Sunburst**
Code: 212016

~~£1499~~
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dv 247

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RM7 7PJ



1



2



1 STRYMON DIG DUAL DIGITAL DELAY £249

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Dual digital delay pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, Selectable Trails Mode Analog Buffered Bypass, dual delays, delay times from 20ms to 1.6s (40ms-3.2s with Half Note Delay 1 Subdivision), tap tempo

CONTROLS: Time 1, Time 2, Mix 1, Mix 2, Repeats, Mod mode, Delay type, Tap Tempo and Bypass footswitches

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard outputs (L&R), expression pedal input

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 102 (w) x 114 (d) x 62mm (h)

MusicPsych

0207 607 6005

www.strymon.net



While the sound of BBD analogue delays and tape echoes is oft-revisited, digital delays have been around for 35 years or so now, and early rackmount units had a unique sound of their own. Strymon has incorporated the choice of two early digital sounds as well as pristine 24/96 delays into the DIG, while also adding a whole slew of features that enable two simultaneous and synchronised delays to be used side by side.

Each delay has its own mix knob so you blend the two, and while the actual delay time for Delay 1 is set by a knob (or the tap-tempo footswitch with three possible subdivisions), the time for Delay 2 is governed by one of five rhythmic subdivisions: triplet, eighth, golden ratio, dotted eighth, or dotted quarter note. A single knob sets the number of repeats for both delays while a

three-way switch lets you add light or deep modulation.

Besides the 24/96 delay, you get a choice of ADM (adaptive delta modulation) 1-bit delay, which offers repeats that have a percussive front end to them. That little bit of extra snap is particularly useful if you're into creating prominent and driving rhythmic delay patterns. The other delay option is the 1980s-flavoured 12-bit with repeats that are slightly darker. Should you wish to tweak repeats to sit in with your tone and playing style, one of the DIG's secondary functions adds either a high cut or a low cut filter. Other secondary functions include the ability to disable synchronisation so that Delay 2 is free-running (20ms

to 1.6ms), and configuration of the sound at the stereo outputs to be series (normal operation) Ping Pong or Parallel where Delay 1 and 2 come out of separate outputs. You can also set the Delay 2 repeats independently rather than tracking Delay 1.

As well as standard digital delay (turn Delay 2 off), the unit is great for rhythmic delays with the juxtaposition of both delays creating some brilliant patterns. What's more, you can keep delays repeating continuously by holding down the Tap footswitch. Add in some modulation and you get some cavernous sounds, and setting Delay 2 free running with a short delay time conjures up chorus and flanging. **[TC]**

VERDICT *This revival of the early years of digital delay is an ingenious pedal with a set of features that will let you get really creative*

9/10

2 FREE THE TONE FT-1 Y FLIGHT TIME £385

ORIGIN: Japan

TYPE: Digital delay pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, 99 presets, delay times from 1ms to 9999ms, record and repeat function (20 seconds), trails mode

CONTROLS: 12x buttons, Dry on/off switch, 2x footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, footswitch input, MIDI In, MIDI Thru

POWER: 12V DC adaptor (supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 146 (w) x 120.5 (d) x 57mm (h)

Guitar XS

01227 832558

www.freethetone.com

At first glance, the Flight Time's lack of knobs – plus a user interface that consists of several tiny buttons linked to numerical displays – may be disconcerting. However, it will seem familiar to anyone who's used a rackmount digital delay and it puts those capabilities into a pedal.

The FT's high-quality digital delay is provided by 32-bit high-precision DSP, and it sounds great. It is capable of delay times from just 1ms up to 9,999ms, and the possibilities – from chorusing onwards – are vast. Delays can be set in milliseconds or beats per minute. Besides the delay time, there are a few other editable parameters including feedback, which can actually go up to 110 per cent, something you'd need to keep a careful eye on if you value your speakers! The repeats can be pristine copies

of the input signal, but you can apply Hi-Pass and Low-Pass filters to them to respectively shave off some top end for a warmer vintage sound, or attenuate the low end. You can also apply modulation with separate Rate and Depth parameters and turn on the Trail function, which leaves the repeats to die away after the effect is bypassed if you don't want them to just stop dead.

Switching presets isn't something you'd want to be doing during a song – it involves holding down the Tap/Play footswitch for two seconds, using either footswitch to scroll to the wanted preset number, and then holding the footswitch down again for two seconds. If two preset delays are all you

need for a set, you can hold the footswitch down for four seconds to switch between presets 1 and 2.

Two features are claimed to be unique to the FT. One is a very useful delay offset that puts your delay slightly before or behind the bpm-set beat for either more urgency or a laid-back feel. The other feature is the Realtime BPM Analyzer, which automatically resets your delay time if you've entered the delay with tap tempo but are slightly out with the music being played. A small mic on the pedal's top surface 'listens' to the performance and can adjust within +/-20 per cent of the tempo, which could be a face-saver if your drummer's having a bad night... **[TC]**

VERDICT *The Flight Time is an expensive professional's tool, but its onboard facilities include unique settings that some will find invaluable*

8/10

1



2



1 XVIVE GOLDEN BROWNIE £52

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES:

Hardwire bypass

CONTROLS: Drive, Volume, Tone, Presence, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 43 (w) x 93 (d) x 45mm (h)

JHS

01132 865381

www.xviveaudio.com

Xvive has a range of US-designed/Chinese-built pedals that includes the Analog series Micro pedals, two of which have been designed in conjunction with German guitarist Thomas Blug, he of the BluGuitar AMP1. Designed to deliver 1980s style high-gain hard rock tones, the Golden Brownie is described by Xvive as a “Marshall JCM800 in a box”, and there’s definitely a Brit valve flavour there, from mild breakup through to a full-on distortion and all points in between.

Key to the tone are the two EQ knobs, Tone and Presence, which complement each other. They seem to be cutting or boosting the upper frequencies in slightly different ranges to dial in a sweet spot with the correct amount of brightness.

This pedal will save valuable real estate on your ‘board, while also providing plenty of rich distortion with loads of sustain for pinched harmonics, legato playing and EVH-style tapping, if that’s your thing. **[TC]**

2 XVIVE TUBE SQUASHER £49

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES:

Hardwire bypass

CONTROLS: Drive, Level, Tone, Lo Cut switch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 43 (w) x 93 (d) x 45mm (h)

Where the Golden Brownie does the high-gain-amp-in-a-box thing, the Tube Squasher falls squarely into the low- to medium-gain overdrive category. What you are getting here is a smooth valve-like overdrive that responds organically to your playing dynamics, as well as plenty of extra gain to drive your amp while you are at it.

The sound is delivered via a familiar array of drive, level and tone knobs, but there’s also a toggle switch for two quite different modes. One setting offers the sound with ‘nowt taken out’ – full and fat in the bottom end – while the other filters out some bass for a tauter low end that lends itself nicely to chordal rhythm playing. The Tone control’s range has been wisely chosen to focus on the upper mid presence so you can dial in a tone to best suit your amp’s voicing. There are no extremes of bright or dull here, just an emphasis on mellowing or sweetening your tone to enhance the music. **[TC]**

VERDICT You’ll have no trouble finding a screaming lead tone for rock and metal here

7/10

VERDICT A reasonably-priced low-gain drive pedal with a fat sound and the option of something leaner

8/10

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|||||

Audition

We test the best of the rest
of the month's new gear

Photography Olly Curtis & Joe Branston

|||||

PRS SE CUSTOM 22 SEMI-HOLLOW £759

CONTACT PRS Europe PHONE 01223 874301 WEB www.prsguitars.com

PRS's 30th Anniversary year is turning into a bonanza of new guitars. Aside from the 30th Anniversary models, we've seen the new P245 solid and Semi-Hollow, and there's a new McCarty. In the S2 line there are the all-mahogany Standards, and the fabulous Vela. The SE range has already had its trio of Standards, along with the Santana Standard, plus the A10E and Alex Lifeson acoustics, and now we see the return of the SE Custom 22, the maple-topped version of the all-mahogany Standard 22, and the Custom 22 Semi-Hollow, the only current semi-hollow SE double-cut.

However, semi-hollow double-cuts aren't new to the SE line. The Custom Semi-Hollow, with dual humbuckers and a scratchplate, appeared in 2007, which also became available with 'soapbar' P-90s but no scratchplate from 2008. That latter model was retired in 2010; the humbucking version in 2013.

A major difference between this new Custom semi and the previous models is the contoured top, which is solid maple with a flamed maple veneer facing (the previous models had a flat front), and there's the standard bass-side 'f' hole as opposed to the Rickenbacker-like 'slash' soundhole of the forerunners. The new model, then, is more corporate, a dead ringer for the S2's Custom 22 Semi-Hollow, in fact, although this Korean-made version is half that guitar's price... and still includes a sturdy gigbag.

The Custom 22 Semi-Hollow is hollowed on the bass side and behind the bridge, not on the treble side. The most obvious benefit is a slight reduction in weight. The solid Custom 22 weighs in at 3.57kg (7.85lbs), a near perfect weight, and our semi version is lighter at 3.17kg.

To put that into perspective, a 2008 soapbar Semi-Hollow is feather-light at 2.51kg (5.52lbs). And unlike the S2 and core PRS models, the SEs are using more maple (three pieces, quartersawn) rather than mahogany for their necks.

"We use maple when employing the Wide Thin carve because its stiffer," explains the SE's main man, Doug Shive. "We found the Indonesian mahogany to be a bit whippy when it's carved to our Wide Thin spec."

Sounds

Semi-hollow body aside, both the new Custom 22s share the same specs with PRS-designed humbuckers, wrapover bridge and the now classic volume, tone and three-way toggle pickup selector. With typically slick playability, the Semi-Hollow's 'original' SE spec humbuckers produce a very balanced output between bridge and neck and with a less direct 'rock' voice than the solidbody version (which uses the Tone Furnace humbuckers designed for the Marty Friedman SE). These humbuckers are "medium-output, 'traditional' humbuckers", says Doug. "Both have Alnico V magnets and 42 gauge wire, [while] the Treble pickup has a few more turns."

There's a slightly thicker texture to the Semi-Hollow, without the crisp highs of the solidbody. Certainly, if you're playing beyond modern rock, it would make a good choice. The slight volume reduction softens the response, but pulled back further, we almost get a treble lift and the mixed pickups produce balanced jangle, while the neck drops into jazzier zones.

Verdict

Not for the first time, we've found ourselves scratching our heads at the quality of the SE models. They might not approach the full and detailed tonality of today's high-line 'core' models, but if you go back into PRS's history and pull out a mid-90s Custom 22, for example, sound-wise, you really won't be disappointed with the modern SE. In the PRS world, its shorter neck, slightly different tonal character, not to mention strapped on feel, all adds up – especially with the Stoptail bridge – to a different ride. Here, the lower-output bridge pickup and the semi-hollow nature of the Semi-Hollow produces a different voice to the more rock solidbody version. Either way, both are worth the money, and there's something about this Semi-Hollow that we prefer over the S2 version – not least the price! **[DB]**



9/10



FAITH PJE SIGNATURE NEPTUNE CUTAWAY BRONZED BRITISH SYCAMORE £1,499

CONTACT **Barnes & Mullins** PHONE **01691 652449** WEB www.faithguitars.com

We last caught up with Faith's Patrick James Eggle signature series in issue 393, and this mini-jumbo Neptune cutaway is the latest addition. Designed by Patrick and made in Faith's Indonesian factory, these signature models are all about more unusual back and sides woods such as London plane, ancient bog oak, or British sycamore, as here, in a beautiful 'bronzed' stain that's not over-coloured. Essentially a botanical twin of maple, the solid back and sides do look quite maple-like, and spectacular with it. On one hand, £1.5k seems expensive for an Asian-made guitar, but this quality level could be seen on a USA-made guitar that would cost you considerably more, especially with its tight-grained cedar top and clearly thin high-gloss finish.

The Neptune's body is very similar to Taylor's 406mm (16-inch) wide GA, so it's on the bigger side of the tracks, and with its 650mm (25.6-inch) scale length, 45mm nut width, with 37mm string spread, and bridge spacing of just a shade under 56mm, it feels very spacious. The slick playability is helped by more electric-like wide/flat

frets neatly installed on the black bound Macassan figured ebony fingerboard with its 406mm camber. The same wood is used for the bridge, which features Indian ebony bridge pins with abalone dots, while the soundhole rosette is a 5mm wide ring of green abalone with a fibre border.

Bolted to the body, the mahogany neck, with spliced headstock and heel, has an almost classical feel to it, a subtly flat-backed D. It's all impressively tidy from the clean interior with side supports to the solid rosewood edge binding, back stripe, heel cap and headstock facing. Then there's the Bali bone nut and compensated saddle, not to mention the classy nickel-plated Grover tuners with their ebony buttons.

Sounds

While it might be on the larger size for ultra-comfortable seated playing or recording, it's far from unmanageable. Its quality sounds will no doubt mature as playing and age take effect. Maple – or indeed sycamore – isn't exactly flavour of the month, but combined with the spruce X-braced cedar top here, there's a sizeable

low end and balanced mids. There's also noticeable compression strummed hard, the cedar top seemingly less explosive than spruce; for recording, that could well be a bonus. Fingerpicked, there's a delicate, chiming timbre.

Verdict

The tropical woods used throughout the history of steel-string acoustics are either diminishing or becoming prohibitively expensive. It's welcome, then, that Faith (among others) is presenting alternative woods. Pairing British sycamore with cedar is not only a beautiful aesthetic choice but one that imparts an equally beautiful, quite modern tonality that could see plenty of use either solo or in an ensemble recording or performance. It has the brightness and balance of a maple guitar, but that cedar top seems to tame it a little and create something special: a bit of boutique style at a much more real-world price. **[DB]**

8/10

ONE CONTROL CROCODILE TAIL LOOP OC10 & CHAMAELEO TAIL LOOP V2 £449 & £249

CONTACT **Zoom UK** PHONE **08432 080 999** WEB **www.one-control.com**

Pedal-switching systems can make a lot of sense in many ways for multiple pedal setups: all of your footswitches can be lined up conveniently close to each other in a row at the same height; you can set up a loop to turn two or more pedals on at once with one footswitch; and you can keep certain pedals out of the chain so they don't contribute to signal degradation when bypassed.

One Control is a Japanese company specialising in pedal-switching hardware and the Crocodile Tail Loop OC10 is its flagship switcher. The OC10 offers 10 footswitchable loops, which you can connect to single or multiple pedals and can be used in 'Direct' mode. Here, each footswitch accesses the pedals in its related loop or can be programmed so that footswitches bring in a preset combination of loops. There are 70 onboard presets in 10 banks of seven – two upper footswitches scroll through the banks, while the lower seven footswitches call up the programs in the selected bank. Setting up the presets is

an easy process using 10 low-profile buttons – one for each loop – that can be toggled on and off to make a loop active in that preset.

While all of the loops are true bypass, there is buffering in the system that can be patched in at the start of the chain or further along. Loop connectivity is also flexible, with seven loops that connect serially internally, and three that need to be patched in, so that they can be used serially with the seven, connected to an amp's effects loop or even set up as amp-channel switchers. For users willing to embrace higher tech methods, the OC10 is equipped with MIDI and can send program change messages to pedals that support it. It can also be connected via a LAN cable to another OC10 to allow access to multiple pedals offstage.

Should you be looking for something a bit simpler, the Chamaeleo Tail Loop Mark II offers five separate loops and can handle 15 presets in three banks of five. As a bonus, it also features six nine-volt DC outputs

to power a tuner (accessed via its own footswitch) and five pedals.

Verdict

Both switchers have a workable footprint – the Chamaeleo, particularly, at 55 x 440mm could easily slot into a small pedalboard while taking care of power distribution. The OC10 obviously offers a lot, but at the asking price we'd be inclined to wait careful comparison with the Boss ES-8 would be wise: while it only has eight loops, it has the ability to change the order of the loops in a preset and to set up parallel loops. Of course, some players may see the idea of employing a pedal switcher as a complication too far, but if you like the idea, we have to say that the operational simplicity of the One Control units is a massive plus point in their favour. **[TC]**

8/10



Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test reports



Yamaha SLG200S
Silent Guitar
Jamie Dickson

"It sounds very much like an acoustic: I went straight through the PA and the tone was impressive"

Writer

JAMIE DICKSON
Editor, *Guitarist*



This month, our editor takes to the stage with the Yamaha SLG200S – a skeletal solidbody guitar that emulates studio-recorded acoustic tones – to see if the latest version of the Silent Guitar concept is more than just a 'practice' tool



It's one of those invitations you can't refuse. A friend, Claire, is getting married and she's asked if I and her other guitar-playing friend Paddy could play her up the aisle with a rendition of *Mardy Bum* by the Arctic Monkeys. Paddy's playing a Gretsch through a little Skylark combo, so there's going to be no shortage of tremulous twang – therefore, in the interests of providing some genteel tonal contrast, I decide that I'll use the Yamaha Silent Guitar, with its airy acoustic tones. I confess I bottled out of using the Silent Guitar for a rural festival gig a few weeks back as part of a trio playing fingerstyle versions of old country songs. The act we were following was, of course, a hairy-arsed biker blues band that played at apocalyptic volume for the best part of an hour. In that rootsy setting, the Yamaha's sleek, modernist looks seemed a bit out of place – like taking a bottle of Evian to a Real Ale convention – so I used a cutaway Takamine from *Guitarist's* office instead, which did admirable service.

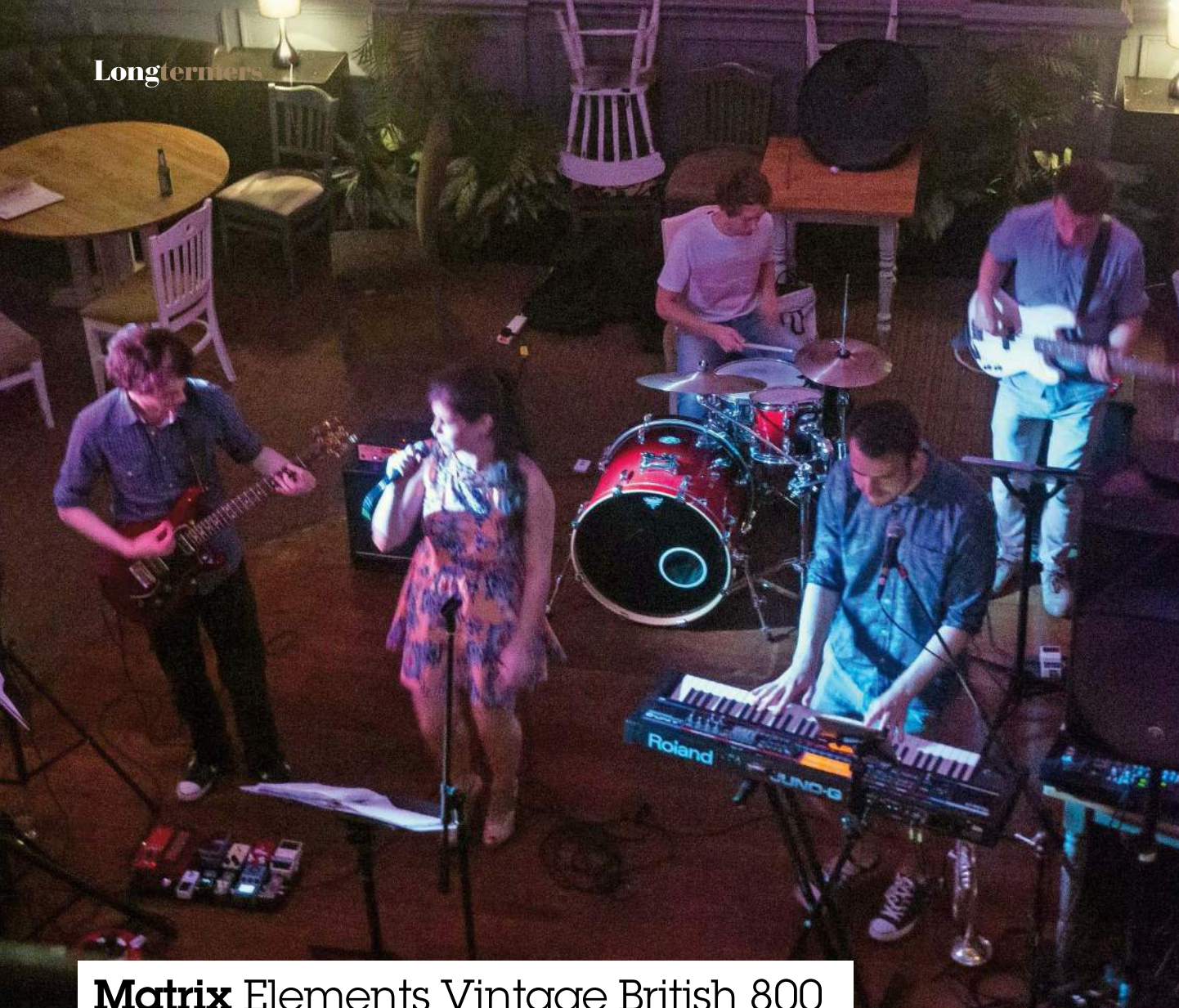
However, another opportunity to give the Yamaha a gig test came up shortly afterwards when I performed with singer-songwriter

Jonny Velon (pictured) at The Louisiana (see last month's Longterm Test). Jonny's main instrument is the piano, but he also gets up and does a couple of songs on acoustic during the set. He has a vicious old electro-acoustic that he's had for years, which is not, in all honesty, much fun to play. He's been looking around for a low-hassle replacement, so I suggested he try the Yamaha tonight. It's got a lot to recommend it: it's lightweight, doesn't suffer from feedback, is as easy as an electric to play and it has onboard reverb and EQ that can be adjusted easily mid-performance. It's unplugged tone on a stick, if you like.

As we launch into the set, I note how crisp, balanced and 'produced' the Yamaha sounds through the PA. It's a marked improvement, tonally, from Jonny's workaday electro and it's also quite visually striking – prompting a gear-gawker to come up after the show and ask what it is. So, did it come up to scratch as a live tool? Here's what Jonny had to report afterwards: "The first thing to say is it looks cool – I felt like Prince wearing it!" he joked. "The action is more like an electric and so it's very easy to play; I had no problems

sliding up to chords around the 12th fret. It also sounds very much like an acoustic: I went straight through the PA and the tone was impressive. My main gripe is that it is so lightweight that it felt strange to wield and I think it would take some getting used to, not having the reassuring weight and body of an acoustic guitar."

So there it is again: full marks for the Yamaha's tone and playability, although it seems like both Jonny and I felt a bit weird about using this minimal, featherweight instrument on stage after playing conventional electros for years. It is very slightly neck-heavy on a strap, but the main issue seems to be psychological. What creatures of habit we guitarists are – or maybe we just want something substantial to hang on to up there! To be fair, though, I think you'd get over that pretty quickly, and the Yamaha's plug-and-play ease of use is undeniable. So, with the wedding beckoning, I reckon I've made the right choice in opting for the Yamaha for that all-important moment in the ceremony. We'll find out when the bride comes up the aisle... **G**



Matrix Elements Vintage British 800 with Michael Brown

Writer

MICHAEL BROWN
Content Manager, Guitars, MusicRadar



With the lightweight, ultra-portable VB800 and NL12 pairing already put to the test on pedalboard-aided clean tones, MusicRadar's guitar guru unleashes the high-gain fury at his local pub residency. But can he handle the heat?

For those just tuning in, my motives for testing this Matrix head 'n' cab were solely weight-based: it was a rig I could carry down the road to the local pub for my weekly covers band residency, without breaking my back or putting my bandmates out. Little did I realise its more rock-orientated tones – owing to the VB800's JCM-derived design and NL12's closed-back enclosure – would reignite a fire within me, one that was once driven by 100-watt heads with gain knobs positioned firmly at 11.

Sadly, after 20 or so weeks, the residency came to an end, as the venue announced it would be replacing us with a more cost- and space-effective DJ – a sign of the times, eh?

Owing to the last-minute announcement, I never quite got around to reconfiguring my pedalboard to accommodate the Matrix's effects loop, so at that week's gig, I ended up connecting my pedalboard straight into the VB800's high-gain input and left my gain pedals untouched – the first time in a long time I'd done so. It was a liberating experience. My guitar's volume knob was my

"I was clipping the Matrix's wings when it should be soaring on harmonically charged distortion"

steer, my picking hand leading the charge. Not only did the VB deliver the JCM tones I know and love, but it was more dynamic than I remember its inspiration ever being, so working through a bluesy rendition of *Ain't No Sunshine* before winding up the wick for a more raunchy Kings Of Leon crunch was no problem. I'll admit that when the band leader shouted out for *September* by Earth, Wind & Fire I was a little flummoxed, but I like to think my edge-of-break-up rendition had a certain magic of its own.

After the first hour's set, I started getting itchy feet, so I wound the amp's gain back, using drive pedals again for comparison. I appreciated the tonal versatility, but it just wasn't the same experience; the palm-muted grunt, the glorious transition to feedback, the sheer oomph... despite the Matrix's admirable clean tones, I wasn't quite getting the same satisfaction from pedals, whereas I was from the amp on full blast. It made me realise that I was letting the Matrix down – clipping its wings when it should be soaring on

Reviewed 390 Price £549 On Test Since April 2015 Studio Sessions No Gigged Yes Mods None

www.matrixamplification.com

the winds of harmonically charged distortion. So, as I stepped out of the residency for the last time, I retired the VB800 and NL12 from active duty.

With normal service resumed and car-sharing once more on the agenda, my Laney valve combo is back in the saddle. My arms don't thank me for it, but its clean channel paired with drive pedals is a better fit for the sonic adventurousness a 60s-to-today covers band dictates. However, make no mistake: if I ever have need for a distortion-orientated 150-plus-watt head, I'll turn to the VB800, no question. Its sheer practicality is unrivalled. In fact, the whole experience has left me open-minded and optimistic about the future of lightweight amplification in general – certainly, for smaller gigs and travelling on public transport, I'm completely sold on the Neolight cab. Now, can we have a clean head next, please, Matrix? 



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~ **Jon Garber**
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~ **Kerry King**
Guitarist - Slayer.



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~ **Danny Miranda**
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~ **Bradley Johnson**
FOH - Aerosmith, Whitesnake.



"The JDX gives character without the worries of bleed and feedback. I was so surprised how close it sounded to a SM57, I had to double-check."

~ **Jim Warren**
FOH - Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Nine Inch Nails.



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~ **Russ Giroux**
FOH - Chickenfoot.



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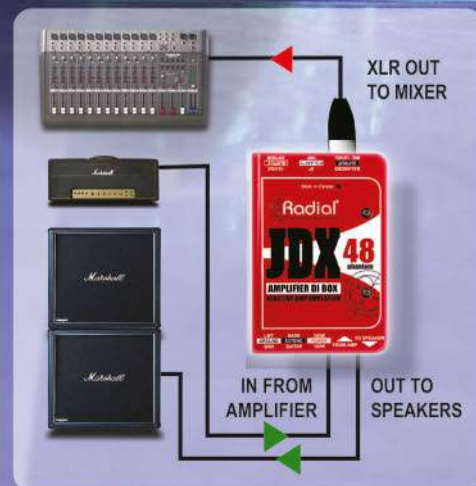
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Q&A

This issue: Thoughts on placement, replacement and defacement

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
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BITCHKUP

This is a small, but I think significant bitch about your pickup article [issue 393, The A-Z Of Pickups]. You missed out 'D for Dummy Pickup'. Lots of us singlecoilists need more info. My own experiments on my cheapo Squier Strat with an equally cheapo bar-magnet-snapped-off Tele dummy pickup have taught me that I need all three pickups to be of the same polarity (I think).

The Squier sounds great and buzz-free, but doesn't like positions two and four. I'm not ready to take the next step with my beloved G+L. Please advise.

Lloyd Richardson, via email

It's a fair cop, and for anyone scratching their heads at this point, a dummy coil or pickup is an extra coil often secreted under the pickguard of a single-coil pickup guitar that's there purely to act as a humbucking device. With its magnets removed, it's not there to change the tone or output of whatever it's paired with.

You're on the right lines with the 'same polarity' question though, Lloyd, because in a regular humbucking pickup, the two coils are reverse-wound, reverse-polarity relative to one another. However, your dummy coil should have no magnet, so polarity isn't the issue. What you're hearing with your positions two and four is that your middle pickup may already be RWRP in relation to the bridge and neck. What that means is that your dummy coil (that works perfectly with the bridge and neck pickups) is probably adding noise to positions two, four (and three!) because it has the same winding direction. It's why users of dummy coils with

Experimenting with new speakers can be hugely rewarding



RWRP middle pickups also use a switch to be able to turn the dummy coil off, just like Thomas Blug, for example.

The other option is to have all your main pickups of the same winding and polarity, as you rightly pointed out. We hope that helps.

BUZZ DRIVER

I recently purchased a Vox AC15 that came with a Celestion 25-watt Greenback speaker. After years of annoying my wonderful amp tech with, 'What's wrong with my Marshall?' I've realised that what I perceive as the annoying, almost fret-buzz sound is in fact the Greenback speaker!

Apologies to all those who covet this sound, but it doesn't work for me. He pointed to a pair of Lorantz Alnico speakers that were lying around and bingo: no more papery rasp with the Marshall or my little Fender Champ!

However, the Vox amp just got dull. It deserves an Alnico Blue I suppose, but the darn things are so expensive. Can you recommend a speaker that might put some 'chime' into my wee combo please?

Name supplied, via email

Easy answer: buy a Celestion Blue and be happy and poor. Or maybe an Eminence Alnico Red Fang. We like that a lot, too.

Harder answer... Speakers are such a fundamentally important link in your whole tone chain, and you've begun a journey into a potentially time consuming process, albeit one that can result in a fundamental improvement in your sound. Most people never even think to try a different speaker.

Start with some reading on power handling, magnet type/size and resonant frequency – and cross-reference that against music you like, where you know (or can have a very good guess at) the speakers being used. The main manufacturers' websites are a good source of info.

If possible, you could then visit some guitar stores and try out various amps with different speakers or cabinets depending on what they have in stock, as well as listening to demos online, of course. After all that, pick a couple of likely candidates and try them in your own amp. Sell the ones you don't like and buy more as you learn. If that all sounds like too much hassle, go back to the first line. Happy listening.

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com

What Should I Buy?

Sting without the bling

Q I love the look of vintage instruments, but as my playing moves towards jazz-fusion, I find myself wanting a humbucker at the bridge, serious build quality and modern playability (flat-ish or compound radius neck and medium to large frets). I don't like the HSS Strat-style concept or bling-y 'trophy' guitars. Basically, I want a lightweight, beautifully built solidbody with retro looks and a bridge humbucker/neck P-90 or single coil, ideally, but another humbucker could work. Classic-ish looks are a must, and it must come in under a grand!

Tim Godden, via email

A We recognise this, Tim, because we've all been through it. The 'classic' guitar idiosyncrasies have become unappealing to you for whatever reason and it's in your head that there's something better out there that addresses them.

If you eliminate Strat-derived double-cuts and the blingy, 'trophy' guitars from your enquiries, we're not left with a massive choice, especially staying with a solidbody chassis. Gibson's Nighthawk might have been an option, but they're very hard to find. It's a real toughie, this. To whit...



2. Gibson USA 2015 SG Standard

£mega knock down!

This one is the wild card. Gibson's 2015 spec changes have not been popular, which in turn means insane price drops. Gibson USA build quality has received flak in the past, but SGs *can* sound and feel truly spectacular. Often light in weight, but fat in tone when needed. Try one and test your preconceptions.



3. Fender American Standard Telecaster HH

c£1,100

Surprised? Don't be – the dual-humbucker setup here gives you the grunt you want while medium jumbo frets and a 9.5-inch radius 'board feel more modern than vintage specs. There's a rosewood 'board option, which might suit jazz-fusion slightly better than maple.



1. PRS S2 Mira

£999

This is virtually blingless, lightweight and comes with PRS's great build quality and feel. Both humbuckers are coil-splittable for lighter tones, and there's even a semi-hollow model option that opens out the tone slightly and may appeal to that jazz fusioner in you. Try one alongside an S2 Standard 24.



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Did we all grow out of wanting custom finishes?

CUSTOM FINISH

I remember the good old days of the 1980s and 90s when custom and graphic finishes were common. I'd stand in my local guitar shop – a heartless sod thankfully long out of business – and marvel at the Charvel, Jackson, Ibanez et al guitars with varying degrees of garish patterns. What happened, did we all grow up? Presumably there are custom finishers still around? I'd always wanted the Fyffes bananas logo on a banana-yellow Strat, for reasons I can't really explain.

Jon Talbot, via email

That's among the strangest guitar finishes ever that you've mentioned, Jon, but it takes all kinds of kinds, right? Fyffes might have something to say about you using its logo, but yes, there are various custom finishers who do fantastic work. Our fave is Martin Sims of Sims Custom Shop who has all the clever stuff to turn amazing artwork into eye-popping guitar finishes, not to mention all kinds of 'standard' finishes – you can find him and his work online.

MORE METAL, LESS BASS?

While watching an amp demo video on YouTube recently, I heard something that shocked me and left me slightly confused. The guitarist (I won't name him so it doesn't look like a shameless plug!) was talking about 'metal' and 'djent' music

and what he needed from his amp was less bass, or at least 'tighter' bass, so that the sound remained clearer. He also said that his down-tuned guitar had plenty enough bass of its own, so he didn't need the amp to add lots more. As somebody with a passing interest in heavier tones – my son plays down-tuned a lot – I was surprised, because I thought all those sounds were about lots of bass. Can you shed any light?

Dave Boon, via email

This becomes more of an issue the louder you play. More bass doesn't make it bigger or fatter! Indeed, when you're playing very heavy gained tones, the bass end can become indistinct. So, if you play heavy music that's fast and syncopated, getting the bottom-end EQ tightened up can really help the music sound impactful. It's one reason certain amps aimed at those genres have a 'resonance' or 'tight' function that works in a different way to how the 'bass' control on the front panel works. It is dealing with bass frequencies, but often in the power section specifically, sometimes in the way the negative feedback loop works. Bass frequencies require a lot of amplifying to make them heard; they take a lot of power. One way to get the amp to overdrive and compress less in the power sections at higher volumes – ergo, to sound clearer – is to dial the bass back a bit.

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Board Games

Pedalboard problems solved

The background

Martin Fennimore, Guitarist reader: When I plug my Boss digital delay pedal into the front of my Mesa/Boogie Express 5:25 and dial in some overdrive on the amp, the sound becomes harsh. However, if I connect the delay pedal via the amp's effects loop, it sounds fine.

Moving on, if I use an Ibanez Tube Screamer overdrive followed by the delay into the front of the amp set to a clean sound, it also sounds fine. I'm a little confused by all of this – I'm trying to reduce the amount of cables and clutter on stage because I want to keep things simple as it distracts me from playing the guitar! Please help...

The answers

You've stumbled on a very common issue, Martin, and as ever with these things, there's no one 'right' way to do it. So...

1. There are probably various technical and physical reasons that involve clipping waveforms, digital-to-analogue conversion and a lot more besides. It's all academic until you get to the relevant, practical bit: where that delay pedal sits in your signal chain has a massive impact on the resultant sound, exactly as you've discovered.

In short: overdrive before delay, happy days; overdrive after delay, not so much. By putting the delay in the loop of the amp, you're putting it after the amp's overdrive, not entirely unlike putting it after an overdrive pedal into a clean amp.

Plenty of people do run delay pedals into overdriven amps with results they like, but not all delay pedals are created equal, and nor are all overdrive channels in amps.

Our old friend General Rule is worth introducing at this point. What you'll notice is that players who use a lot of amp-derived distortion – many rock and metal players especially – tend to run their delays in the amp loop; there are exceptions to General Rule, of course. Conversely, players who use cleaner amps with their OD and distortion predominantly from pedals often run the delay straight in the front of the amplifier. Which, unfortunately, leaves us with the significant grey area between the two schools, of course, and that's where your own ears are the best judge.

The questions

1. What are the technical reasons behind why the delay sound is more or less harsh with either pedal or amp overdrive?

2. Is there a way of running the delay in front of the amp and just using the natural overdrive from the amp instead of a pedal?



2. We're going to say 'no' in your case.

You say it sounds 'harsh', and that's because the amp's overdrive is mushing up with the delay. You don't like it, so there are two ways forward. The simplest is to just use the delay in the loop – this just means two extra cables and the same amount of switching on and off. Not too distracting.

The second is to try some different delay pedals into the front of the amp to see if that makes a difference. Try a digital type with a really good dry-analogue-through

signal (where your unaffected sound isn't passed through the A/D and D/A converters). Strymon's TimeLine is a good (and expensive) example. Alternatively, audition a really good analogue delay if you like the idea of warm, more vintage-y sounds: the AnalogMan ARDX20 is our pick of the bunch. However, no matter what delay pedal you use into the front of an overdriven amp, you will always get some of the 'harshness' you dislike, so the loop is the easiest and least expensive way forward. **G**

Email us your questions: guitarist@futurenet.com

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Old Gold

Mid-90s Malmberg Explorer

Photograph by *Joby Sessions*

This month, the guitar we're looking at is something of an oddball that required a fair amount of sleuthing on our part to gather all the details. It was made by a builder called Göran Malmberg, about whom very little is known and whose website seems more concerned with custom-built sports cars than it does the instruments that have passed through his workshop! However, a guitar of his can be seen in the hands of no less than Eric Clapton in an early Cream video and there are speaker cabinets bearing the Malmberg marque behind Jimmy Page in a Led Zeppelin performance filmed during the late 1960s. Possibly his most celebrated instrument was used by Björn Ulvaeus during ABBA's 1974 Eurovision success in Brighton – remember the guitar shaped like a star? That was made by Göran.

But what about the angular Explorer-type guitar in our picture? It was made for a player called Flavia Canel who played in the Swedish heavy metal band called Drain STH. The band flourished for a while, picking up an award or two here and there, including the magazine *Metal Edge's* 'Female Performers Of The Year' in 1999. Sadly, they disbanded shortly afterwards and Flavia switched to playing bass, which led to this instrument's arrival at Guitars: The Museum in Umeå, Sweden.

From what we can ascertain, the guitar was never meant to be modelled on Gibson's famed Explorer, but instead after a Japanese guitar brand, the exact identity of which seems to have been forgotten by all concerned. Certainly, Ibanez has had some angular body shapes in its catalogue over the years, but the same could be said for a few other Asian makers, too. In any case, it has a carved top and allegedly weighs about the same as two Les Pauls. A brass bridge aids some singing sustain, but many of the guitar's intimate details remain shrouded in mystery. Rare, because there are so few Malmbergs about – all of which adds to the puzzle. **G**



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Bending Rules Part 2

Major Scale Bends

For this second instalment of Guthrie Govan's five-part series on string bending, our intrepid guitar hero shows you how to add more expressive and vocal bending techniques to your vocabulary

LAST month's column introduced a bending approach in the familiar context of the minor pentatonic scale. This time, we'll be applying a similarly systematic approach to seven-note diatonic scales and also introducing a few new inflections to your bending vocabulary...

The following examples are (almost) all based on the E major scale, which contains the notes E, F#, G#, A, B, C# and D#. Some of the following ideas work best when applied 'positionally', with the fretting hand rooted in one small area of the fretboard and using multiple strings, whereas other ideas show more of their true potential when you stay on a single string and utilise the whole length of the neck to achieve melodic range. Let's go through the examples in sequence...

EX.1 illustrates a whole fretboard's worth of the relevant seven notes, and it should prove to be an equally handy reference for both approaches. The aim of this column is to develop a vocabulary of bending building blocks to apply to any seven-note scale.

EX.2 picks things up from where we left off last month, illustrating the systematic quest for every possible melodic bend within a given scale shape. Each group of three notes comprises the starting pitch, followed by a reference target pitch (provided by the scale shape) and then finally the bend itself. When you become more confident with your pitching, you can happily ignore the first two of every group of three notes and focus exclusively on the bends: as a starting point, however, it can be very helpful to be able to hear the target pitch of the bend before attempting it. Naturally, you can apply the same approach to all six strings in any major scale shape, but this example illustrates the basic idea.

EX.3 will also look familiar to those readers who worked through last issue's column: it's the pre-bending version of Ex. 2 and it requires a little extra confidence, as you essentially have to guess the correct amount of bending before striking the string. Practice makes perfect...

EX.4 is an example of a less positional approach: staying on one string like this feels somehow more vocal, which can often encourage a more melodic way of thinking. The basic concept of this example can also be used as a good test for your ear: try playing through the seven notes of the scale, in the position of your choice, and then try to find all the appropriate notes and accompanying bends on any given string, without referring to any tab or neck diagrams.

EX.5 brings some sliding into the mix. Sliding and bending can complement each other very effectively within a lick, as each of these approaches tends to add a certain fluidity between one note and the next, adding more of a human quality to the phrasing. It's important to focus on ensuring that the target note at the end of each slide (the F# at beat 2, for instance) rings out with as much volume and clarity as possible: try to slide with confidence and focus on the idea that the note at the end of each sliding motion needs to sound like a distinct melodic event. Being fluent with this mixture of bending and sliding will hopefully bring out some of your inner Mike Landau, and it's a great way to connect different scale shapes mid-phrase.

EX.6 is slightly trickier than it looks, as it requires you to execute two movements at once. Once you've bent the original note up to F#, the idea is to release the bend while sliding up two frets towards the unbent F#

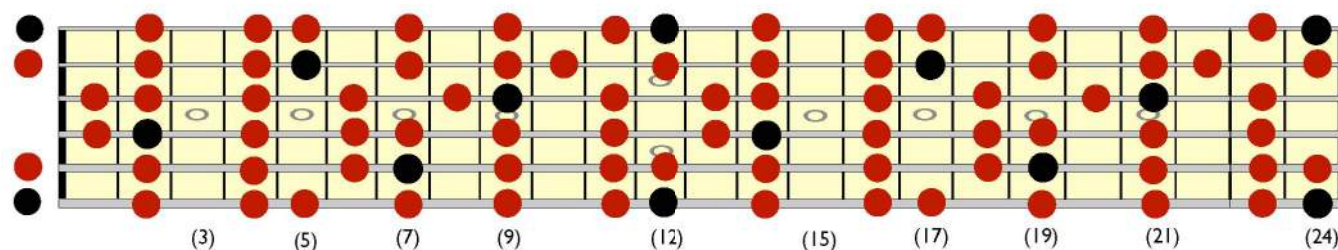
at the seventh fret. Try to make this double movement as fast and efficient as possible, and the result should be a quirky-sounding effect where you hear two different versions of the same note in rapid succession. Needless to say, it's worth trying this all over the neck as it works with any two adjacent scale notes. If you're feeling adventurous, you might also enjoy applying this idea within a pentatonic scale.

EX.7 illustrates what happens when you slide in the opposite direction. The basic movement is similar, but now we're releasing the bend while sliding down in pitch, so there's a little more melodic information in each three-note cell here. If you experiment with the speed of the slide and the bend release, you should be able to make this sound something akin to that Vai-esque 'bouncing whammy bar' trick...

EX.8, our final quirky bending idea, takes inspiration from the pitch-wheel style of note bending popularised by synth players such as Jan Hammer. As with the last two examples, Ex. 8 requires you to do two things at once, and the fun part occurs between the second and third notes of each three note group. At that point, you need to release the fifth-fret bend while hammering on at the seventh, and your goal is to disguise the descending pitch of the bent note being released. This works best if you focus more on the hammer-on motion while trusting the release of the bent note will happen naturally. At first, I would recommend starting at a slower tempo, trying to execute the release/hammer motion as fast as possible, but taking every other aspect of the lick at a very relaxed pace. Enjoy exploring these ideas and exercises and stay tuned for some more bending licks next issue.

Example 1

E major scale – whole fretboard



Example 2

EACH group of notes comprises the starting pitch, the target pitch, and the bent note, all within the seven-note major-scale shape.

1:32

bU	bU	bU	bU	bU	bU
7	9	7	(9)	9	6
9	7	(9)	9	6	9
(11)	6	7	6	(7)	7
9	7	(9)	7	9	7
(9)	9	(11)	6	8	6
(8)	8	9	8	(9)	

Example 3

HERE, you'll work on your accuracy by pre-bending strings to the target note before sounding it and releasing the bend.

3:08

Pb	Pb	Pb	Pb	Pb	Pb
7	9	6	7	9	6
bD	bD	bD	bD	bD	bD
(9)	(7)	(11)	(9)	(7)	(6)
(7)	(6)	(9)	(7)	(11)	(9)
(8)	(6)	(9)	(8)	(11)	(9)
(9)	(8)	(11)	(9)		

Example 4

STAYING on one string and bending to the target notes of your scale opens up the possibilities for more 'vocal' techniques.

3:56

bU	bD	bU	bD	bU	bD	bU	bD	bU	bD	bU	bD
5	(7)	(5)	7	(9)	(7)	9	(10)	(9)	10	(12)	(10)
12	(14)	(12)	14	(16)	(14)	16	(17)	(16)	17	(19)	(17)



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Example 5

INCORPORATING slides and bends can create sophisticated effects. Make sure you let your target notes ring out loud and clear.

4:14

bU bD bU bD bU bD bU bD bU bD etc

5 (7) (5) / 7 (9) (7) / 9 (10) (9) 9 (10) (9) / 10 (12) (10) 10 (12) (10) 12 (14) (12)

Example 6

THIS quirky effect involves an initial bend to a target note followed by a quick slide to it, in rapid succession – instant Jeff Beck!

4:58

bU bD

5 (7) (5) / 7

Example 7

QUICKLY following an upward bend with a downward slide creates an effect that's akin to the whammy-bar trickery of Steve Vai.

5:18

bU bU bU bU bU

17 (19) \ 16 16 (17) \ 14 14 (16) \ 12 12 (14) \ 10 10 (12) \ 9

Example 8

FOR this Jan Hammer-esque, pitch-wheel-bend-style lick, focus on the hammer-on and trust the release will happen naturally.

6:43

bU bD bU bD bU bD bU

5 (7) (5) (7) (5) (7) (5) (7)



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Grab yourself a piece of Rory's rockier, bluesier side with this issue's lesson

Rory Remembered

Difficulty ★★★★★

20 mins per example

Tutor: Neville Marten | Gear used: Fender 1966 Telecaster, Vox AC15CC (rhythm), Marshall JTM45 (lead)



IT'S an almost unbelievable 20 years since we lost Rory Gallagher. *Guitarist* marked the anniversary last month with an in-depth look at Rory's guitars, so I thought it might be appropriate to revisit a previous blues column so you can ingest a little more of Rory's magic. It's not on video, but I did like this track and the licks, so I hope you do, too.

I was lucky enough to know Rory for the last few years of his life. To reiterate what every other person I know who ever met him will say: he was a beautiful person, supremely modest, always ready with a kind word even for those who gained commercial success

way above what he did, but often with a good deal less talent than this man.

He was an extraordinary player. Whether it's apocryphal or not, the story goes that, when asked, "What's it like being the best guitarist in the world?" Jimi Hendrix responded: "Ask Rory Gallagher..." Rory had it all – technique hugely advanced for his time, the stage presence to hold a crowd in his hand, and an ability to play everything from hot rock to delicate ballads and acoustic folk. His Irishness informed everything he did, and if you can hear spots of Gary Moore there, it's hardly surprising – Rory was already a legend well before Gary hit the scene.

But you may not know how influenced Brian May was by Rory. Brian loved his records and went to see him play live, adored his tone and his playing and when they met at a show he was greeted with the legendary respect and warmth for which Rory became famous. It influenced not only Brian's playing but his choice of Vox amps and Dallas Rangemaster treble boost, too. So if you can also hear a little Brian in today's licks it's hardly surprising.

This is inspired by his tune *Bad Penny* – we've changed the key, the chords, the tempo and the bridge, but hopefully the vibe remains. Enjoy these and we'll be back to normal next month...

Example 1

IT'S great to start a solo or a song with a 'refrain', rather than just a lick. I tweaked Rory's opening to *Bad Penny* here, and coming up with motifs like this gives you a great point to return to. The chords are Em, C, D and Em, shifting to G and A in the bridge.

♩ = 90

Em C D Em

hold . . .

BU BD

14 12 14 12 14 (16) (16) (14) 12 14 12 11 12 11 14

Example 2

I'M not going to dwell on scales this month, as Rory would have thought in terms of melody and the 'shape' of his licks and solos, rather than thinking theoretically. A simple repeated bend like this is so memorable, and when you complete it with a neat Celtic-flavoured run and a powerful vibrato, you can't go wrong.

Em C D Em

BU BD BU BD BU BD BU BD

15 (17) (15) 12 15 (17) (15) 12 15 (17) (15) 12 15 (17) (15) 12 15 14 12 14 12 15 12 BU 15 (17)

Example 3

THIS lick is very 'shape'-driven, too, both in fretboard position – it's a similar idea shifting down from second to third to fourth string – and also sonically, as its melody draws the listener in. Rory came up with thousands of such ideas without even thinking.

D Em C

3 3 3

15 12 13 12 14 11 12 11 14 12 14 12 14 12 14

Example 4

MOVING to the bridge and the chord of G, things become a tad countryish as E minor pentatonic becomes G major pentatonic. Can you hear a little Brian May in there, too? Rory had a wonderful, strong vibrato and Brian's is one of the best in all of rock.

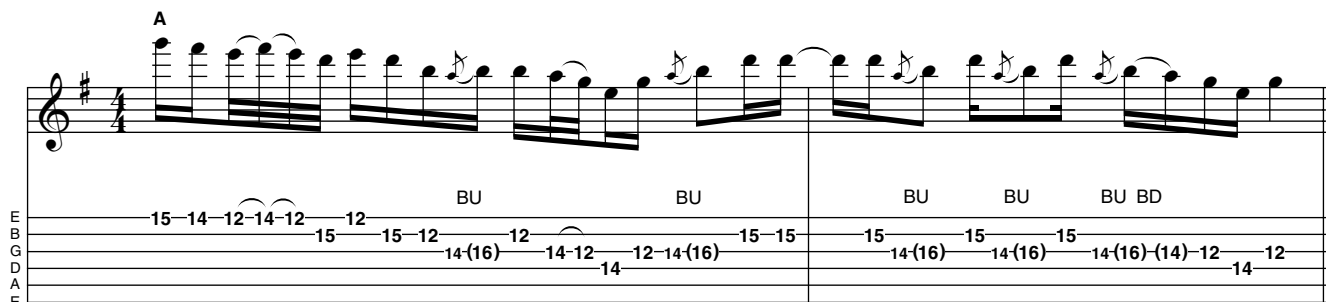
G

BU BU BU BU

15 14 (16) (16) (14) 12 14 12 14 (16) 15 13 12 13 12 12 14 14 12 14 12 14 12 14 (16)

Example 5

THE A chord in the background gets a Queen or Stones-like treatment with the double suspension moving over it – D over the C# note and F# over the E note, picked then pulled-off a couple of times. Did 'tripping' major-scale licks like this influence Brian, too?



Hear It Here

Rory Gallagher

Top Priority



Bad Penny comes from this great '79 album – named after his record company's promise to make the record 'top priority' after his early success in America. Check out Rory's completeness as a musician throughout, and how wonderful his tone and touch were, even then.

Queen

Sheer Heart Attack



One of the band's best, it features the fabulous *Killer Queen* with its gorgeous solo full of compositional melody and a complete lack of 'lick playing'. All the guitar playing on the album is wonderful, of course, and there are definite hints of Rory's influence here and there.

Gary Moore

Out In The Fields (Best Of)



In Gary's rockier moments, his Irish background would often surface, both lyrically and in the writing and solos. Here, his playing would often become more scalar, rather than pentatonic- or blues scale-based. Check out the title track for a scalar run to end them all!

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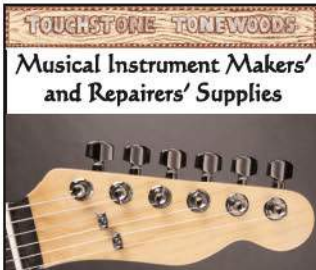
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000-28K AUTHENTIC 1921 KOA



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LINE 6

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The Line 6 Helix is an incredibly powerful new guitar effects processor, its four-grade construction and studio-quality sounds make this a professional standard product that will withstand the rigours of writing, recording and gigging. The new HX modelling engine lets you adjust amps, cabs, mics, and effects for a huge range of tones, from vintage to modern. If you rely on unique pedals the Helix lets you integrate them thanks to its comprehensive I/O and routing capabilities. When you have your setup connected you can create custom setups and footswitch labels for smooth operation.

Line 6 have included a next-gen dual-DSP engine which provides massive power for accurate tube tone, not an approximation of it. Every stage of a huge range of amps' circuitry has been analysed, which means the controls respond like the real thing. If you want to go down into minute detail, the Helix extends into areas like power supply ripple, individual tube sag, and control over B+ voltages- one for proper tone needs!

Helix Rack can be controlled by almost any MIDI-capable device, but adding Helix Control gives you the same functionality as the floor-based Helix, opening up a new world of creativity. With Helix Control connected over a single cable, Rack users can select a block for editing by touching a footswitch, create custom labels for the scribble strips, connect up to three expression pedals, and edit parameters hands-free for the first time using Pedal Edit Mode.



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