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CULT CUSTOM

Why Fender's 1970s Tele Custom is a sleeper classic



JOEY LANDRETH

A modern slide master talks tone and technique

Issue 456

MARCH 2020

Guitarist

IRON MAN

EXCLUSIVE!

TONY IOMMI

ON SURVIVING SABBATH AND THE GUITAR THAT STARTED IT ALL

PLUS

SLASH'S NEW J-45
FYLDE GUITARS
BLACKSTAR SILVERLINE
KEMPER STAGE
& MORE



THE HISTORY
OF GIBSON'S
WILD CHILD
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PRO TIPS

TOP PLAYERS
ON HOW TO GET
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FEATURING

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STEVE LUKATHER
TOMMY EMMANUEL
JOE SATRIANI
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& MORE



PRS SE HOLLOWBODY
AFFORDABLE NEW VERSIONS
OF PRS SEMIS ON TEST INSIDE!



THEY'VE ARRIVED

Sheeran
BY Lowden



Pushing The Limits



It's still early enough in the year to think about making resolutions for the next 12 months. Like most guitarists, I never feel I have enough time to improve my playing skills. In fact, I generally need some sort of terrifying deadline to properly focus my attention on learning. In the past couple of years, gigs have been the main spur to musical growth, because once the gig's booked there's no getting out of it.

You have to sink or swim. One thing I learned from recent Hendrix and Cream tribute gigs is that if you really want to grow, you have to leave your comfort zone and tackle something tricky enough that it's not a sure thing you'll succeed with flying colours. There were definitely points while we were rehearsing Jimi tracks when I really wasn't sure if I'd nail it on the night. But the gigs happened, we played our hearts out, people clapped at the end – and we even got invited back. So I'd definitely recommend pushing your limits a little bit – you might be surprised at how well it repays you.

Of course, the motivation needed to conquer new material is nothing compared with what many players have faced after suffering life-changing injuries, as our cover feature with Tony Iommi, who lost his fingertips in a pre-Sabbath workplace accident, attests. Tony's story of surviving that, then headlong fame (and infamy) with Sabbath and finally conquering cancer – smashing out some of the greatest riffs in history along the way – is truly extraordinary and a spur to any player searching for the spark of fretboard inspiration.

On a different note, it's a temporary adieu from me as I'm going to be off for the next three issues working on a guitar book – more on which in due course – so in the meanwhile you'll be in the capable hands of our very own David Mead, who'll be serving up all your favourite *Guitarist* gear, features and lessons same as always. Enjoy the issue and see you in a few weeks' time.

Jamie Dickson **Editor**

Editor's Highlights



The Long Way

Louisiana blues-fusion guitarist Jonathon Long is the best player you never heard of in your life – a Danny Gatton for the 2020s **p46**



Hollow Victory

PRS's beautiful and versatile Hollowbody is now available in an affordable SE format. We look into its airs and graces on **p100**



Devil Horns

Iommi isn't the only great player who loves SGs. We trace the model's chequered evolution with Gibson's vintage guitar guru Mat Koehler on **p68**



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COVER FEATURE
TONY IOMMI



COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Olly Curtis

56 The Iron Man of rock joins us to introduce his Gibson Tony Iommi ‘Monkey’ 1964 SG Special Replica, an exacting recreation of the guitar that would go on to define Black Sabbath’s sound, while Gibson’s Cesar Gueikian explains how this passion project has been “the highlight” of his life

DEATH 0:01 ELVIS

Probably the most useless debate in the world: Is Elvis alive?

No question. He'll still live on long after everyone who now claims he is alive has died.

It is his music that made him immortal - along with Janis, Jimi, Wolfgang Amadeus, Freddie and all the others. Many of them lost the battle against drugs, alcohol and their inner demons far too soon. But they all had vanquished death long before.

**THE POWER
OF MUSIC!**





FIRST PLAY



**BLACKSTAR SILVERLINE
DELUXE 100-WATT HEAD**
£449

WHAT IS IT? One of a new digital range, combining boutique-influenced styling with a fourth-generation SHARC signal processor from Analog Devices

Silver Bullet

Blackstar's next-gen digital range has arrived and provides more proof that digital is the new black. We plug in...

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Neil Godwin

There seems to have been a renewed focus on digital amplification recently, as newer, more powerful signal processors arrive and amp manufacturers begin to see what they can do with them. Unlike the electron valve, which stopped being developed in the 1940s, digital signal processing is on the cutting edge of modern technology for all kinds of applications, not just music, with competition between chip builders translating into continually improving performance and lower prices.

Equally adept with valve, analogue solid-state and digital disciplines, Blackstar has become a force to be reckoned with in the affordable digital-amp market and its new Silverline range features the latest fourth-generation Analog Devices SHARC processor. Here, we're looking at Blackstar's Silverline Deluxe 100-watt head and its matching 2x12 cabinet, promising tempting tones that authentically capture the spirit of real valves.





1. The Silverline has Blackstar's familiar six-voice preamp, with two options each for clean, crunch and lead sounds

2. Effects editing is easy, with three separate buttons for modulation, delay and reverb selection. There are four effects types in each of these categories

The Silverline series has a unique look in Blackstar's catalogue: a light-grey vinyl coat teamed with a black and silver sparkle grille cloth, and a small silver badge instead of the familiar moulded plastic logo. The MDF cabinet surrounds a steel tray chassis, which contains the modular PCB electronics. The dimensions are typical for a compact valve head apart from the weight, which is less than expected because there are no valves and therefore no heavy transformers.

The front-facing control panel is similar to Blackstar's ID series, with a six-position rotary switch to choose the basic voice, followed by familiar controls for gain, volume, bass mid and treble. Not so familiar unless you're already a Blackstar user is the ISF or Infinite Shape Feature control, which adds further tonal versatility by continuously varying the EQ stack from classic British to USA response. It's a unique Blackstar innovation that's won the company a patent, and on the Silverline the ISF control sits next to another patented feature, the TVP (True





3. The USB connector allows direct recording and reamping, plus remote patch access, firmware updating and storage via Blackstar's Insider app

4. The Silverline uses Blackstar's patented TVP (True Valve Power) technology to accurately emulate the distinct responses of six valve types



Valve Power) response switch. This rotary selector provides six distinct responses based on the most popular valve output stages. Next up are the Silverline's digital effects, with three button switches and a knob to select the basic effects types, and an effects level control. Lastly, there are non-programmable master controls for presence, resonance and volume.

Around the back there's a sparsely populated rear panel with a pair of speaker jacks, footswitch and MIDI sockets, and a speaker-emulated phones/line out jack together with an mp3/line in. These last two can be reconfigured in Blackstar's Insider app to run as a series effects loop. Overall, the Silverline Deluxe looks the part, especially when sat atop its matching supersized 2x12 cabinet, with slick contemporary boutique looks and typically high build quality.

Feels & Sounds

Rather than offer an impressionist's repertoire of classic amplifiers from yesteryear, Blackstar's Silverline features

updated versions of the proprietary voices found on its ID series: Clean Warm and Clean Bright, Crunch and Super Crunch for light to medium drive sounds, and the well-known OD1 and OD2 lead voices. Combining the regular EQ controls, ISF control, resonance, presence and the TVP response switch, there's a lot of tone-shaping flexibility. However, everything is arranged in an intuitive way, so it's quick and easy to dial in the sounds you're after.

The Silverline's two clean sounds are good for all vintage and modern styles. Clean Bright has a little extra gain as well as a tighter bass and extended high range, which works really well with single coils, while Clean Warm is ideal for humbuckers. Crunch and Super Crunch add extra gain and enhanced dynamics, which sound great for blues and classic rock, while OD1 and OD2 pile on gain and sustain for high-energy solos, with OD2's mid-boosted tone working better for single coils.

The True Valve Power response switch emulates EL84, 6V6, EL34, KT66, 6L6 and KT88 power stages, with compression and

The latest DSPs really can produce genuinely thrilling and affordable guitar tone

drive progressively reducing as you travel up from the EL84 setting to the KT88, which has the biggest, most open sound.

The Silverline's tones breathe and respond like a good valve amp, cleaning up as you back off with the pick or guitar volume control and increasing in bite and aggression as you dig in. We used our regular Les Paul and Duncan Alnico Pro-loaded Strat alongside a Gibson Memphis '63 ES-335 and found our favourite sounds using the four clean and crunch voices in combination with the EL84, 6V6 and 6L6 TVP settings. This gave us a great selection of AC30-ish cleans and Tweed-inspired leads that covered everything from woody jazz tones to 70s classic rock. For modern



The emulated phones/line out and mp3/line in can be reconfigured as an effects loop send/return using the Insider app



BLACKSTAR SILVERLINE DELUXE 100-WATT HEAD

PRICE: £449

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Digital modelling preamp with 100W solid-state power amp

OUTPUT: 100W RMS into 4ohms

VALVES: None

DIMENSIONS: 240 (h) x 583 (w) x 222mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 9.6/21

CABINET: MDF

LOUDSPEAKER: Optional matching 2x12" Celestion V-Type 4-ohm mono/stereo cabinet

CHANNELS: 6 fully-programmable voices, 12 onboard memory slots

CONTROLS: Voice select, gain, volume, bass, mid, treble, ISF, output stage response select, effects select, effects level, resonance, presence, master volume. Channel, bank, manual select

FOOTSWITCH: Not supplied. A latching footswitch switches between channels 1 and 2; FS-10 foot-controller gives access to all channels/effects with 128 memory slots. Also accepts MIDI in

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Patented TVP output stage emulation, patented ISF EQ shift, built-in tuner, USB for direct recording remote control and firmware updates via Insider software app. Emulated headphones/recording out and mp3/line in (can be switched to effects loop send/return using Insider software), MIDI in

OPTIONS: FS-10 foot controller (£69)

RANGE OPTIONS: Matching Silverline 2x12" cab as tested (£399). Silverline 20W Standard 1x10" (£369), 50W Special 1x12" (£429), 100W Deluxe 1x12" (£579), 2x100W Stereo Deluxe 2x12" (£749) combos

Blackstar Amplification Ltd

01604 817817

www.blackstaramps.com



PROS Very authentic valve-like tone and dynamics; competitive price

CONS Effects choice is limited compared with the competition

rock and metal, the OD1 and OD2 voices are ready and waiting with enough gain and sustain to make even the weediest of single coils sound like the axe of a rock god.

Unlike amps that use effects to mask less than great core sounds, the Silverline's onboard effects are the cherry on top of a very tasty cake, including four choices each for modulation, delay and reverb, with all three effects types able to run simultaneously. With 100 watts powering its Celestion V-Type-loaded 2x12 cabinet, the Silverline Deluxe has plenty of volume to handle any gig, as well as looking impressive on stage. It's also a great studio companion, with a speaker-emulated line out and a USB socket for direct recording and reamping using Blackstar's Insider app, which accesses the front panel controls and a few hidden functions, as well as being a storage library for your favourite patches.

Verdict

Guitar amplification hangs on as one of the electron valve's few remaining outposts. However, as time moves on we're slowly but inexorably leaving the tube behind. The good news is we've arrived at the beginning of an exciting digital era, where the latest DSPs really can produce genuinely thrilling and affordable guitar tone, with none of the valve's shortcomings.

The Silverline's touch-sensitive overdrive and springy dynamic response is likely to convince many vacuum-tube purists

Blackstar's Silverline has enough tonal flexibility to cover every musical genre, with touch-sensitive overdrive and springy dynamic response that's likely to convince many hardened vacuum-tube purists. The onboard effects are great, although the combination of modulations plus delays and reverbs might seem a little dull compared with some of the competition. It would be great to see some optional firmware updates with alternative effects bundles in the future. This aside, the Silverline Deluxe 100-watt head with its matching 2x12 cab sounds mightily impressive – and should do as it's the top of the shop. There's also a thunderous 2x100-watt stereo combo and a compact 100-watt 1x12, together with 50- and 20-watt options at more affordable prices. Overall, we reckon the Silverline range represents excellent value for money, with something for players at all levels to enjoy. Could the Silverline be your future? We suggest you plug in as soon as you can. **G**

**SE**

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The wildly popular PRS Hollowbody model was created in 1998 and has been in continuous production ever since. These designs are now available for the first time in our SE line at a more affordable price point. These vintage-inspired guitars combine the power and stability of a solid-body electric with the captivating resonance of a hollowbody instrument, making them feel right at home with players of all styles.

FIRST PLAY



DANELECTRO 60TH ANNIVERSARY '59M NOS+
£549

WHAT IS IT? Jimmy Page's favourite budget axe gets its bus pass...



DANELECTRO '64XT
£699

WHAT IS IT? A vintage surf classic that never actually existed

Golden Years

If your dreams of owning a vintage classic are still a nose print on the music store window, meet two Danelectro models that might just scratch that itch. And one of them is celebrating its birthday...

Words Ed Mitchell **Photography** Neil Godwin

In 1959, an electric guitar was born that would change the world. A triumph of innovative design, this thing would pass through the hands of rock stars like Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. It ascended to icon status in its own right, an instrument that doesn't look, sound or feel like anything else.

At this point, you're likely picturing the '59 Gibson Les Paul Standard. The infamous £250k 'Bursts'. Joe Bonamassa's pension pot. Not so fast... You see, 1959 was also the year that saw the arrival of the Danelectro 3021 Shorthorn. If ever a guitar got ideas above its station, it's this double-cutaway, low-budget classic. Envisioned by guitar, er, visionary Nathan Daniel, the 3021 extracted the maximum rock-star-baiting tone from the humblest of materials.

The man's ideas had legs. Nat's 3021 model is still going strong, albeit better known these days as the '59 or '59DC. The 60th Anniversary '59M NOS+ version that just landed on our doorstep has been tasked with blowing out the candles on Danelectro's behalf. It even comes dressed for the occasion in a special Deep Blue Metalflake





1. Both of these new Dano models offer excellent playability thanks to a shallow D neck profile and 355mm (14-inch) fingerboard radius. The 'board timber is rosewood substitute pau ferro. The fret size is medium, and both guitars have 21 of the little blighters

2. We'd love to see a hardtail version of the '64XT, but we had a great time getting acquainted with this model's Wilkinson vibrato. This might look like a vintage guitar, but the floating Wilkinson allows you to warble and dive-bomb like a modern Superstrat...

outfit. Whether we'll be wishing it many happy returns remains to be seen.

In classic Dano style, our Anniversary '59M NOS+ has a semi-hollow body featuring a hardwood frame capped front and back with sheets of Masonite (which we know as hardboard). This "engineered wood" was a popular DIY bodge in the 60s and 70s when it was used to obliterate period features in Victorian houses. Nathan Daniel put it to much better use, and our 60th Anniversary model also features a pair of the man's iconic Lipstick tube single-coil pickups. Other Dano period features include the aluminium top nut, 21 frets, not to mention the Liquorice Allsorts-vibe concentric volume and tone controls.

There are some intentional discrepancies from the original blueprint. Back in the day, the bolt-on maple neck would've come topped with a rosewood fingerboard. Here, like many contemporary manufacturers of sub-£1,000 guitars, Danelectro has switched its allegiance to the more eco-friendly pau ferro. This 60th Anniversary guitar also has a painted neck; original Dano necks are natural.

The biggest departure from the classic 3021 spec sheet is the Badass style wrap-around bridge. This chunky customer pays tribute to the modification Jimmy Page had made to his famous black Shorthorn. For

The '64XT is utterly convincing as a vintage classic despite the fact that it never existed before 2019

this new model, Danelectro has recessed the bridge into the body, presumably to achieve a lower action. This mod is effective but not particularly pleasing to the eye. We can't help feeling shimming the neck would have been a better idea.

The 60th Anniversary '59M NOS+ is joined here by the new '64XT. Let's decipher these model designation codes, Alan Turing style. 'M' simply means modified. In other words, while you get the classic two Lipstick pickup format, M guitars feature the aforementioned Jimmy Page-style bridge mod. If you want a vintage-spec Shorthorn with the old-school wooden bridge saddle, check out the 'Stock '59' code guitars.

'X'-marked Danos are spec'd with a modern double Lipstick tube humbucker at the bridge and a big neck-position single coil that looks like the pups fitted to Mosrite guitars. 'T' stands for tremolo, the timeworn and ever-incorrect term for a vibrato unit.



Now that we're all experts on Danelectro model numbers, it should come as no surprise that our '64XT has the modern pickup arrangement and a silky smooth and floating Wilkinson vibrato clinging to its carcass. Oh, and don't let the '64XT's body shape fool you. That cool reverse offset profile might be lifted from Danelectro's Mosrite-inspired '64, '66 and Hodad models, but underneath its 3-Tone Sunburst finish lurks the same hardwood skeleton and Masonite caps that helped make the 3021 a rock legend. The '64XT is utterly convincing as a vintage classic despite the fact that it never existed before 2019. The package is completed by the bolt-on maple neck, pau ferro 'board with 21 medium frets, and a slippery graphite top nut.

Feel & Sounds

As you might expect, these Danelectros feel remarkably similar. The shallow D neck profile and flatter-than-Gibson-and-Fender 355mm (14-inch) 'board radius are more shred machine spec than vintage jalopy. That radius works great for beating out riffs and rapid surfy leads, but it might not suit those looking to dig in for upper-'board blues bends. Getting up there is a breeze, however. The skinny neck heel sees to that.

Classic-build Danelectros feel alive in your hands. Sustain is conspicuous and the



3. The 60th Anniversary '59M NOS+ comes spec'd with a Jimmy Page-style wrap-around bridge. That's the good news. We're not so keen on its body recess: it's an ugly solution to achieving a lower action. That said, the guitar plays and sounds great regardless of the aesthetic faux pas

4. Real Danos feature a body formed from a hardwood frame (usually pine) capped with an inexpensive sustainable engineered material called Masonite. Despite this low-cost construction, these guitars produce a great deal of acoustic volume and sustain. Plug into an amp and you'll discover a versatile tonal palette



5

5. When you buy an XT designation Dano you get a modern double Lipstick tube humbucker at the bridge and a big neck-position single coil. True guitar geeks will recognise that the latter unit looks like the pups fitted to 60s Mosrite guitars and the Dano '64 and '66 'tributes'

6. The '64XT's maple neck is bolted to the Masonite body, which features a hardwood skeleton just like the 3021 that came before it

635mm (25-inch) scale length ensures you get plenty of snap in the bottom strings. This guitar is spec'd with NOS+ single coils. We asked Danelectro to clarify: "The NOS+ is based on a pickup we designed in 1998 to 1999. Around 2009 or so we discovered a bunch of these pickups in a warehouse in Korea. We used them in our 59M NOS model. They were so popular, we soon ran out of these old pickups. We then engineered a new pickup close to the NOS ones, and named it the NOS+."

However the pie was made, these pickups taste like classic Danelectro to us. The Shorthorn has always been a tonal chameleon. The bridge pickup will jangle like a Rickenbacker *and* punch through a mix, Telecaster-style. Set both pickups in motion and you get the legendary fat Dano in-series tone that works so well for clean rhythm work. It'll handle jazz stuff, but the neck-position pup barks beautifully when you dial in some fuzz. If you like your blues on the trashier side, you need to try this click on the toggle switch.

Thanks to Mr Page we all know that a Dano can handle classic rock stuff. While the '59M NOS+ doesn't disappoint, some may prefer the slightly heavier delivery of the twin Lipstick bridge pickup on the '64XT. Here, you get the best of both worlds thanks to a push/pull coil-split function. The full throttle mode isn't going to turn the heads of many metal guitarists, but there's enough boost on offer to kick your dirty



6



The pickups taste like classic Danelectro to us. The Shorthorn's always been a tonal chameleon

channel up a notch. Also notable is the fat tone of the neck single coil. Sonically, you're in a sweet spot between the girth of a classic P-90 and the bright openness of a Fender Jazzmaster neck pickup.

Verdict

Some vintage reissues give you sleepless nights. Online forums are riddled with distraught punters who loved their Les Pauls until someone hinted their pride and joy might be, gasp, weight relieved. Maybe the plastic bits are made from the wrong type of plastic. Worse than that, the thing isn't held together with hide glue after all.

The 60th Anniversary '59M NOS+ and '64XT are the antidote to all that malarkey. Yes, we'd prefer it if the '59M didn't have that dirty great big recess for the bridge, and we'd love to see a hardtail version of the '64XT. That's just typical guitar geek nitpicking. All said and done, these are fantastic and incredibly affordable instruments that come with oodles of vintage mojo and tone. And while Joe Bonamassa might not be stockpiling Danos for a rainy day, the 60th Anniversary '59M NOS+ and '64XT have what it takes to hang with the big boys. **G**

7. The iconic 'Coke bottle' headstock appears on both models here, as seen on Jimmy Page's iconic black Shorthorn



DANELECTRO 60TH ANNIVERSARY '59M NOS+

PRICE: £549
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Twin-cutaway 'shorthorn' chambered electric guitar
BODY: Masonite with hardwood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")
NUT/WIDTH: Aluminium/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro, 355mm (14") radius
FRETS: 21, medium
HARDWARE: Chrome recessed 6-saddle hardtail bridge and vintage-style tuners
BRIDGE/SPACING: 52mm
ELECTRICS: 2x NOS+ Lipstick single-coil pickups, 2x concentric volume and tone controls and 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.7/6
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Standard '59 featuring the classic wood saddle bridge (£449); '59X 12-string from £579; '59M NOS (£499); '59 12-string (£529); '59 12-string with f-hole from £579; Vintage '56 Baritone (£579)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Deep Blue Metalflake (as reviewed), Silver Metalflake

John Hornby Skewes
 01132 865381
www.danelectro.com

8/10

PROS It's your classic Dano: it rocks, it jangles, and it punches way above its price tag

CONS That bridge sinkhole hurts our eyeballs



DANELECTRO '64XT

PRICE: £699
ORIGIN: Korea
TYPE: Reverse double-cutaway chambered electric guitar
BODY: Masonite with hardwood frame
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")
NUT/WIDTH: Graphite/43mm
FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro, 355mm (14") radius
FRETS: 21, medium
HARDWARE: Nickel Wilkinson WVS50 IIK vibrato and vintage-style tuners
BRIDGE/SPACING: 52mm
ELECTRICS: 1x Dual Lipstick humbucker (bridge), 1x P-90-style single coil (neck), master volume and master tone with push/pull coil-split and 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.2/7.4
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: '66 hardtail with f-hole in 3-Tone Sunburst, Gloss Black and Trans Red (£999)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: 3-Tone Sunburst (as reviewed), Gloss Black, Vintage Cream



9/10

PROS A classic in the making; killer feel and tone; butter-wouldn't-melt looks; the vibrato adds versatility

CONS When you've got a minute, sort us out a hardtail option

FIRST PLAY



**FAITH NEPTUNE
BLUE MOON**
£979

WHAT IS IT? A 'baby jumbo' electro cutaway made from figured Indonesian mango

Mood Indigo

Faith's latest Neptune model has its back and sides made from mango, a relative newcomer to the instrument wood arcana, and sports a classy deep-blue hue – cue otherworldly tones?

Words David Mead **Photography** Neil Godwin

With 18 years' experience behind it and a respectable number of awards to its credit, Faith has built a reputation as a builder of medium-priced quality acoustics that's embedded in the psyche of players worldwide. The mastermind behind the design of the instruments is Patrick James Eggle – a luthier who knows a thing or two about guitars, both electric and acoustic, after all. In the past, Faith has brought us series such as the PJE Legacy, Blood Moon, Nomad and Eclipse and sprouted body shapes that are named after celestial bodies like Venus, Saturn, Mercury and Mars. The Blue Moon Series is the company's latest theme and the model we have here is a Neptune, a planet from the outer reaches of the solar system and, coincidentally, blue in colour when viewed from Earth. We like a well thought-out plan...

In recent years guitar builders big and small have been experimenting with alternative timbers in order to be environmentally aware and circumvent restrictions on the exportation of traditional timbers such as rosewood and mahogany. So we are becoming used to seeing unusual body-wood formulae appearing in the spec







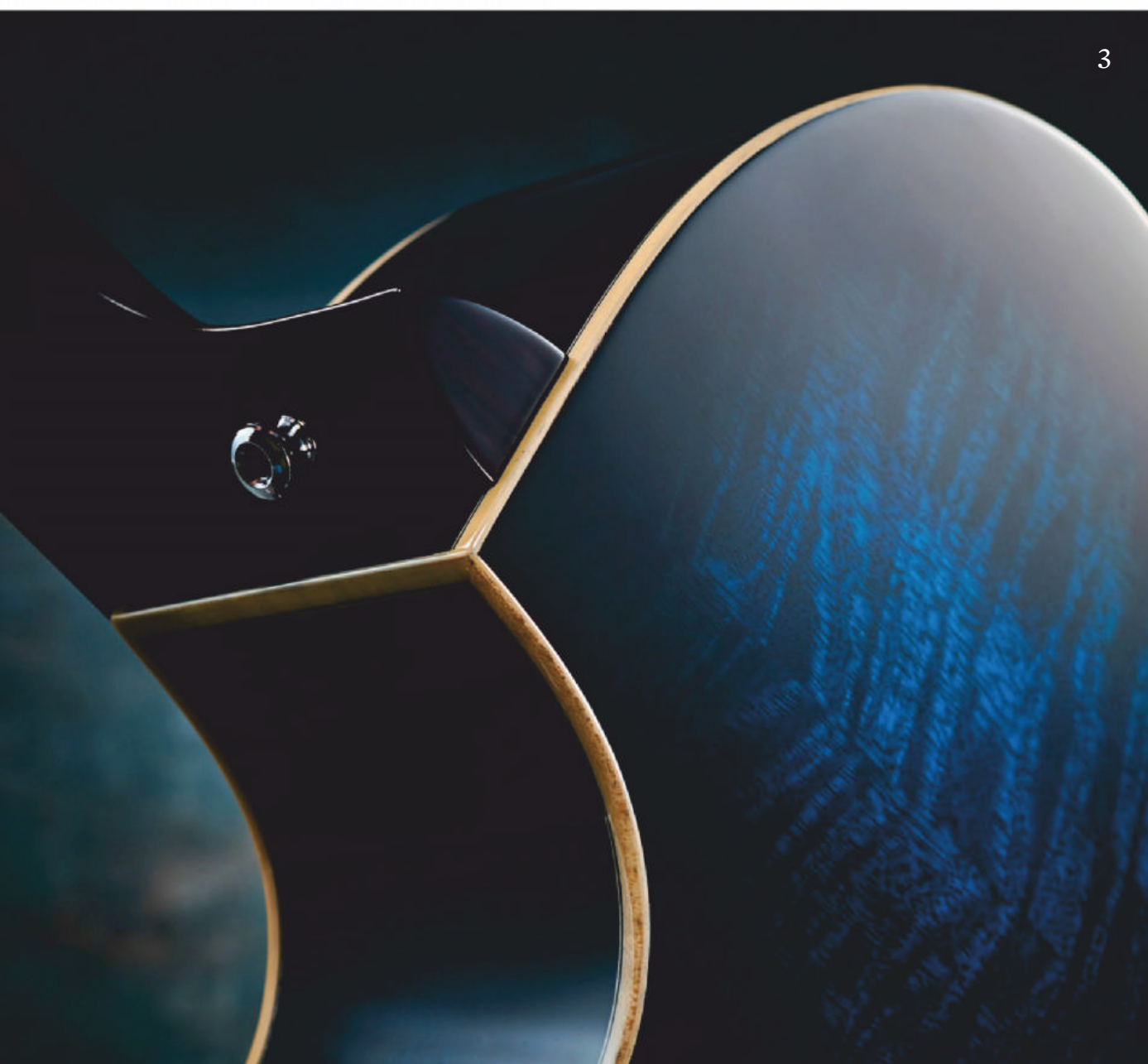
1. Used here for back, sides and top, mango is an uncommon tonewood but is highly figured and sonically reminiscent of koa

2. Faith designer Patrick James Eggle is responsible for the range's sleek, understated good looks

of current acoustic models. We have to admit, though, that mango is a new one on us. It's usual that the lesser-known timbers make their appearance as back and sides, or even necks and fingerboards, but for the company to have used mango for both back, sides and top wood, shows a considerable leap of, erm, faith.

Any new character in the *dramatis personae* of guitar woods deserves an introduction and mango is predominantly Hawaiian, although there is an Indonesian variety, which is what we find here. Mango can be highly figured, with natural colouring that includes dark brown with streaks of lighter wood and sometimes yellows and greens. Occasional spalting adds to the ornate figuring within the wood, which will have plenty of swirls and curls of its own. As far as tonal expectations are concerned, luthiers claim it to share many qualities with koa, with a bright tone and plenty of bass present. Naturally, the quality of the wood will vary enormously and so careful selection is necessary when using it for musical instruments. Faith tells us that "tonally, mango has an interesting character. It is not as loud and punchy as rosewood nor as straightforwardly mellow as mahogany, yet it bears its own distinctive





3. The Faith Neptune's dark-blue finish all but eclipses the mango wood's fine natural figuring, which, close up, looks amazing

4. Fishman's compact Ink 3 preamp features flush-mounted rotaries for volume, bass, middle and treble, plus a push-button tuner



warmth. With frequency prominence starting a little below that of mahogany and dropping off a little earlier in the midrange, the overall tone could be described as 'dark and moody'." We're not averse to 'dark and moody' and so we're looking forward to bashing out a few tunes in a little while. We may even try a little blues...

As we've established, the motif with the Neptune is heading towards the mauve end of the spectrum and so the figuring in the mango – present in abundance as far as we can see – is something you have to view at close range. You don't have to be too far away before it becomes pretty much invisible, although stage lighting could prove to be a good friend in this respect. Flamed maple binding contrasts the Neptune's dark side, as does the abalone rosette – it's a good-looking instrument, even if some of its charms are obscured from general view.

Faith's body size designation here is a 'Baby Jumbo', but at 405mm (15.9 inches) at its widest point and 116mm (4.5 inches) deep at the endpin, it's a big baby. It's all in proportion, though, with the graceful cutaway adding to its general bonniness.

Once we reach the Neptune's neck we're back in traditional territory with satin-

finished mahogany and a fingerboard of ebony, its radius clocking in at 406mm (16 inches). The only 'board ornamentation is the Faith mother-of-pearl crescent at the 12th fret, and at the other end the Tusq nut measures the standard 43mm.

Other hardware includes a set of Grover Rotomatic tuners, a Tusq saddle and a Macassan ebony bridge with matching abalone dotted string pins.

Feel & Sounds

Interested to hear what mango was going to bring to the table, we plunged into the Neptune's alleged 'dark and moody' atmosphere with a few exploratory chords. Now, we've said often in the past that sound is very difficult to describe in words. If you're not too careful you skid immediately into the more pretentious end of the fine-wine market and begin making some fairly ridiculous comparisons. What we were expecting was something really quite sombre – dark and moody, remember? – but instead we found a brightness in the treble that was accentuated when using a pick, but more mellowed down when adopting fingerstyle. There's plenty of bass, too. In fact, it's almost as if the Blue Moon wants to be drop-tuned – and so, of course, we

We were expecting something sombre but instead found a brightness in the treble, accentuated when using a pick

obliged. With the bass string dropped to D the party really started, although, if we were being overly critical, we'd say that the Neptune might be a little lacking in the midrange. It seems that treble and bass are both available in ample supply, but maybe a little more oomph in the centre audio field would liven things up even more.

We were a bit concerned that the 43mm nut might mean that fingerstyle was a bit of a cramped affair for the fingers, but everyone in the office who picked up the instrument was surprised when we offered up the stats in this respect. We came to the conclusion that the depth of the neck at the nut (which is on the slender side) and the generous C profile combine to make the nut feel wider in the hand than it actually is. Whether this is down to



Faith has employed Macassan ebony for both the bridge and the string pins

cunning luthiery on behalf of Mr Eggle or sheer happenstance is open for debate, but we didn't experience any cramping in that region when switching between campfire chords and deft pluckery.

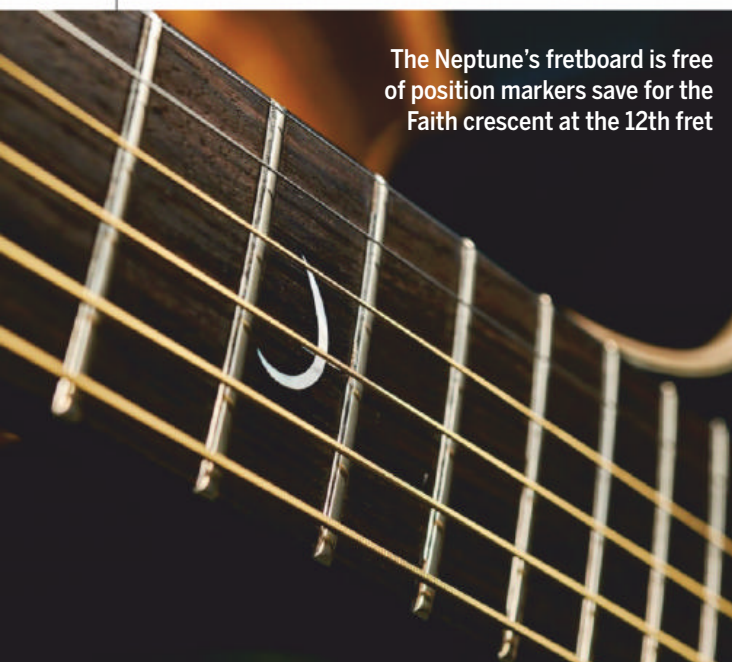
The Neptune is equipped with a Fishman Ink 3 preamp and a Sonico under-saddle pickup. The advantages here are the low-profile design – no knobs to spoil the guitar's elegant looks or get in the way of the happy strummer's right arm – and its simplicity in operation. Flush controls here include a combined push-button tuner and display, plus four rotaries for volume, treble, middle and bass. The good thing is that Fishman has chosen the range of the EQ very wisely; there is more than ample bass but not so much to allow things to become boomy, and both treble and middle

Fishman has chosen the range of the EQ very wisely; there is ample bass, and both treble and middle are similarly refined

are similarly refined. It means that any apprehension we had with the Neptune's midrange could be easily dispelled – we found that taming the treble a smidge, boosting the bass a little and bringing the mids fully into play made a big difference. You certainly wouldn't have any worries plugging in at a gig or open-mic evening.

Verdict

There's no doubt that the Blue Moon has a shelf-load of virtues all of its own. It's a shame that the figuring of the mango wood is not more prominent, especially on the front of the instrument as it could raise the guitar's game a little from a kerb appeal point of view. Mango brings its own characteristics to the picture in the sound stakes, too. We wonder if, like koa, the instrument's brightness might mellow down given the passage of time and offer the midrange the opportunity to show through. After all, it usually takes a few years before an acoustic guitar finds its true voice and we suspect this might be the case here. And it might just help the Neptune travel from just 'moody' to magnificent. **G**



The Neptune's fretboard is free of position markers save for the Faith crescent at the 12th fret



FAITH NEPTUNE BLUE MOON

PRICE: £979 (inc hard case)

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: Baby jumbo cutaway electro

TOP: Figured Java mango

BACK/SIDES: Figured Java mango

MAX RIM DEPTH: 116mm

MAX BOARD DEPTH: 405mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6")

NUT/WIDTH: Tusq/43mm

FINGERBOARD: Macassan ebony, mother-of-pearl 'F' at 12th fret, 406mm (16") radius

FRETS: 20

BRIDGE/SPACING: Macassan ebony/55mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman Ink 3 Preamp with under-saddle pickup

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.4/5.2

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Faith Neptune Range includes the FNCE natural (£809), FNCETB Trembesi Neptune (£849), HiGloss Neptune FNCEHG (£969) and HiGloss Baritone Neptune FNBCEHG (£1,099)

LEFT-HANDERS: Not this model.

A Natural Neptune left-handed model, the FNCEL, costs £829

FINISH: Gloss body with satin neck (as reviewed)

FINISHES: Blue Burst (as reviewed), Ash Green Burst (with maple fingerboard)

Barnes & Mullins

01691 652449

www.faithguitars.com

8/10

PROS An interesting voyage into the aural charms of a little known tonewood

CONS A (very) slight lack of presence in the midrange



BLUEMOON



Award-Winning, All-Solid Acoustic Guitars

find out more at:
faith.guitars

*the*Wishlist

Dream gear to beg, borrow and steal for...

Emerald X10 Artisan Woody €3,300

CONTACT **Emerald Guitars** PHONE **00353 7491 48183** WEB <https://emeraldguitars.com>

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Neil Godwin



1. The Level 3 electronics have been developed with Graph Tech around its Ghost Acousti-Phonic system. The piezo in each height adjustable saddle can be combined with the magnetic neck humbucker and offers MIDI output

2. Made by Krivo in Portland, Oregon, the pickup is based on the Nuévo single coil with an added noise-cancelling coil and a ferrous backplate to warm up the tone. "It provides a warm yet clear sound with a very sweet midrange," says Krivo

3. The rotary controls and mini-toggle switches provide extensive control for MIDI, magnetic and piezo. The unlatching mini-toggle switch next to the uppermost MIDI volume allows patch up/down change; the switch adjacent to the middle magnetic volume offers guitar (mag/piezo), MIDI/guitar mix or just MIDI; the lower switch next to the piezo volume selects magnetic, piezo/magnetic or piezo alone



4. These aged gold Gotoh 510 tuners are about the most conventional feature here! Options include plating, three electronic levels, the colour and top veneers. The X10 starts at €1,850 and ships with a custom Hiscox case, a gigbag if you prefer, or both!

5. The standard jack output allows mixed mono or with a stereo lead dual outputs of the piezo and magnetic pickups to two different destinations. The dedicated 13-pin output hooks you up to the world of MIDI!

Of the many attempts by intrepid designers to use alternative materials in the construction of both electric and acoustic guitars, carbon fibre might once have seemed the future. For Emerald Guitars, based in Donegal, Ireland, it certainly is. The company was founded in 1999 by Alistair Hay, who'd made his first carbon-fibre guitar the previous year, and in 2001 he made the Ultra Guitar for Steve Vai. Since then, there have been challenges aplenty, but today the Emerald range is huge.

Our featured X10 reflects nearly 20 years of craft with a very precise feel and appearance to the amber-toned woven carbon-fibre construction (all moulded in-house), the top faced with a custom-order koa veneer. Yet despite a full 648mm scale, and 24 frets on a uni-directional carbon-fibre fingerboard, it's not a big guitar: 350mm across the lower bouts with a generous depth of 120mm tapering to 104mm by the cutaway.

If the concept of melding the acoustic world with the playability of a high-level electric is part of the X10's aim, it certainly succeeds. The neck is around 20.3mm deep at the 1st fret with minimal taper to 20.9mm by the 12th. There's no neck heel, so access to the top frets is very easy, if a little unnerving. Likewise, the soundhole on the upper shoulder allows you to peer inside or feel that there are no braces, for example. It also throws the sound out to you – quite a delicate, balanced piano-like voice with surprising low-end and a very sustaining tail with detailed highs.

If the unplugged experience is surprising in a very good way, the amplified voice – or should we say voices – hints at immense potential.

The Krivo magnetic humbucker in the neck position is implausibly thin, but its sound is extremely flattering with a smoother attack than the slightly brasher piezo. It handles anything from fingerstyle jazz to ultra-modern zing. Then, of course, the world of MIDI is just a plug-in away. If there is such a thing as an acoustic guitar without frontiers, the Emerald X10 is it. Exceptional.

What's Goin' On

All the best guitar events you need to put in the diary...

Buck & Evans

16 February to 14 March

Various UK and Ireland venues

Last year ended with Chris Buck being voted the top blues guitarist of 2019 by MusicRadar readers, seeing him rise above the likes of Bonamassa and Gales. This achievement proves how much his emotive playing is connecting but also that listeners are open-minded to new talent and want to see it recognised. The blues is a hard nut to crack, with harder critics, and Buck is wary of being tagged as a bluesman. But his feel is so undeniably part of a lineage.

"Utterly surreal, if I'm honest," is Buck's reaction to it all. "Just to be nominated was a shock, but the prospect of winning genuinely hadn't even crossed my mind. The idea of ranking your favourite musicians will always feel a little alien to me, but seeing my name in such esteemed company isn't something I'll ever complain about!"

www.buckandevans.com



The Story Of Guitar Heroes

Throughout 2020

Various UK venues

A celebration of the finest moments of guitar history, The Story Of Guitar Heroes is a tribute including performances of songs by Brian May, Hank Marvin, Jeff Beck, Hendrix, Page, Slash, Clapton and more. The show uses over 30 guitars to deliver tonal authenticity, too.

www.storyofguitarheroes.com

Robbie McIntosh

13 February

Eel Pie Club, Twickenham

A chance to see a players' player in an intimate setting. McIntosh became an in-demand session player and sideman in his post-Pretenders career, touring alongside Paul McCartney and John Mayer as well as his own Robbie McIntosh Band. He'll be joined for this gig by former Dire Straits man Guy Fletcher.

www.robbiemcintosh.co.uk

The Guitar Show

29 February to 1 March

New Bingley Hall, Birmingham

Alongside our own UK Guitar Show, this is the other must-visit UK guitar event of the year and will see Bernard Butler, Aynsley Lister, Rabee Massaad, *That Pedal Show Live* and a host of exhibitors including ESP, Victory, Ibanez, Boss, Taylor, Yamaha, Blackstar and Laney.

www.theguitarshow.co.uk

John Williams

17 March

Ronnie Scott's, London

This special show at the legendary venue finds the classical maestro on a bill alongside John Etheridge and Gary Ryan for what is guaranteed to be an unforgettable evening. Last year's *Vivaldi, Etc!* found Williams tackling more of his favourite classical pieces including Bach, Weiss and Turlough O'Carolan.

www.johnwilliams guitarnotes.com

Miloš Karadaglić

2 April

Cadogan Hall, London

The London-based Montenegrin classical guitarist had to take things slowly a couple of years ago as he recovered from a hand injury, but latest album, *Sound Of Silence*, finds him back in full force, reinterpreting the songs of Portishead, Radiohead and Leonard Cohen to bring classical guitar to more ears.

www.milosguitar.com

Bauhaus

8 April

Alexandra Palace, London

The Hollywood Palladium reunion with all four original members together on stage for the first time in 13 years took place in November last year, but UK fans need to be more patient. The band's return is all the more surprising considering frontman Pete Murphy suffered a heart attack in 2019.

www.petermurphy.info

Joe Satriani

22 to 28 May

Various UK venues

Satriani is readying the follow-up to 2018's *What Happens Next* to coincide with this run – dubbed The Shapeshifting Tour. It kicks off in Bexhill before moving on to Glasgow, Gateshead, Manchester, London and Birmingham. He'll be joined by Bryan Beller (bass), Kenny Aronoff (drums) and Rai Thistlethwayte (keyboards).

www.satriani.com

Peter Frampton

24 to 31 May

Various UK venues

This will be Frampton's farewell tour as the guitarist looks to retirement from touring due to the diagnosis of inclusion body myositis, a disease that leads to muscle weakness and inflammation. Last year he released *All Blues*, his first blues album with the Peter Frampton Band, featuring artists including Sonny Landreth.

www.frampton.com

The Players

News and happenings from the world of your favourite guitarists



2020 will see Bonamassa make a tick against his bucket list as he brings his blues to Abbey Road

A Very British Blues

Bonomassa writes with Marsden and tracks new album at Abbey Road

Joe Bonamassa's love for British blues is no secret – he toured with a set honouring Page, Clapton and Beck in 2016 – but his 14th studio album finds him going further towards the source, writing and tracking in England's most legendary studio.

"It'll be a nice change of pace because we've done the last two records in Nashville," he says, having told us of the plan to track the record at Abbey Road. "We're looking forward to getting into the raunchy weather and, you know, putting our 'wellies' on and cranking one out properly."

British influences will be heavy on his mind: "It's very purpose-based and maybe a bit more raw and rock than people normally associate with me," Joe adds.

The seeds for the record were sown when Joe sat down with former Whitesnake man and unsung hero of the blues-rock explosion, Bernie Marsden. "I wrote most of the record in England," Joe says, "working with Pete Brown and Bernie. If you're not familiar with Pete, he was the poet that wrote a lot with [Cream's] Jack Bruce for *Disraeli Gears* – stuff like *Sunshine Of Your Love* and *SWLABR*, that really killer 60s beatnik poetry.

"So I've immersed myself in my roots and it's going to be really fun to do. And, you know, Abbey Road's a bucket-list item for me, as far as wanting to set up shop there and do a record."

The album will be released later in the year and Joe Bonamassa will tour the UK in April and May.

<https://jbonamassa.com>

Slash hasn't just launched a new signature model with Gibson but a whole collection. It includes his first acoustic in the form of a signature J-45 (£2,999; see more on p76) with two finish options, and four Les Paul Standards in four finish options. Each Slash Collection Les Paul Standard (£2,599) features a AAA maple top, solid mahogany body, as you'd expect, and Slash's personal requests: a C-shape neck profile, his signature Gibson SlashBucker pickups, hand-wired electronics with orange drop capacitors, and a vintage-style brown hardshell case. The Slash Collection J-45 nods to the past with a few modern additions. Again, there's Slash's requested rounded C-neck profile, plus a fatter, more modern 16-inch fingerboard radius. Electronics are the LR Baggs VTC pickup – one of the best around for organic character. Look for the review in *Guitarist* soon.

Paul Gilbert has released a signature distortion pedal with JHS Pedals. The PG-14 (£195) is a FET-based distortion that seeks to emulate the response and touch of a valve amp being pushed but at lower volume levels. While that doesn't sound unusual for a distortion on paper, the active mid-circuitry preamp is added to offer a wider tonal range for players that could make it a go-to distortion for all kind of guitarists –

especially with Mr Gilbert's years of experience behind it alongside JHS founder Josh Scott.

John Frusciante has returned to the Red Hot Chili Peppers, 10 years after his second departure. Josh Klinghoffer will now step away from the Californian band after recording two studio albums as guitarist. "Josh is a beautiful musician who we respect and love," said the band in a statement on Instagram. "We are deeply grateful for our time with him, and the countless gifts he shared with us. We also announce, with great excitement and full hearts, that John Frusciante is rejoining our group." Drummer Chad Smith confirmed the band's plans in an interview with *Rolling Stone* last month. "The festivals are the only shows booked," he revealed. "For now, we'll mostly be concentrating on new songs and writing a new record. We're all real excited to make new music."

Former Guns N' Roses/current Nine Inch Nails touring guitarist Robin Finck has released his first signature model with Reverend. It's based on the company's Sensei double-cut design and features Reverend's Bass Contour control along with Railhammer Chisel humbuckers. The pickups use two types of magnet for the wound and plain strings to respectively tighten the low-end and produce more open frequencies in the higher end.



Slash's collection for Gibson includes four different Les Paul finishes

Gas Supply

Our pick of the month's most delectable, wallet-bothering new gear

NAMM Report Teaser

As we write this, the *Guitarist* team is at the NAMM Show in Anaheim, California. So while we feverishly prepare our in-depth show report for the next issue, let's take a peek at some of the gear that's tickling our collective fancy so far this year.

Winter NAMM always throws up a mountain of killer new gear. This year there's talk of a Fender Custom Shop Joe Bonamassa '51 Nocaster, Slash-endorsed Gibsons, and female-artist signature guitars. Until we nail down the details on what we saw, take a look at this little lot... **[EM]**



MANSON MATT BELLAMY META SERIES £569

Ever since Muse frontman, Matt Bellamy, did a Victor Kiam and loved it so much he bought the company, we've been intrigued to see what was coming next. Well, the answer is the affordable new META MBM-1. Those who remember the excellent Manson MBC-1 Matt Bellamy will be pleased to know this new model is also being built by Cort. You get a kill switch, natch, and it's attached to a basswood body and in turn a satin-finish maple neck. There's a custom-designed bridge humbucker and Satin Black and Starlight Silver finish options.

www.mansonguitarworks.com



MAXON APEX 808 TUBE SCREAMER £TBA

There are now more Tube Screamers and their clones on Earth than there are guitarists to stomp on them. Okay, maybe it just seems that way. But if you're suffering from Screamer fatigue, we reckon the Maxon Apex 808 is the one to pull you out of your funk. Two words: Susumu Tamura. Yes, the genius designer behind the original 70s Tube Screamers has spent the past three years developing this latest version. Tamura analysed more than 100 vintage and modern Tube Screamer units and has isolated what he believes is the best IC chip of the lot. Talk of unprecedented transparency has pushed our curiosity into overdrive.

<https://maxonfx.com>



VINTAGE RAVEN £329

The Vintage brand's fruitful association with British blues and roots guitarist Paul Brett continues with the unique-looking Raven. Less Mississippi po' boy more Edgar Allen Poe, this electro-acoustic is inspired by the gothic writer's poem of the same name. Details include a double-bound acacia body with a satin-black finish top, an old-school V-profile mahogany neck and a pau ferro fingerboard. This nest is also feathered with vintage-style open geared tuners and a Graph Tech NuBone top nut and bridge. All that and a soundhole that looks like Dracula's letterbox. You'll be powerless to resist.

<https://vintageguitarsrus.com>



CHARVEL SIGNATURES £VARIOUS

Charvel blew us away last year with its caramelised Mexico-sourced DK24 HSH and HSS models. This year, the company has announced a trio of signature models for the shy and retiring Joe Duplantier of Gojira, prog environmentalist philanthropist Angel Vivaldi, and Steel Panther's one-man Spinal Tap, Satchel. While Vivaldi and Satchel have taken delivery of classic offset-style shred monsters, the Duplantier Pro-Mod San Dimas features a Tele-esque Style 2 body. Look closer and you'll find the man's signature DiMarzio Fortitude humbucker in the bridge position and 36th Anniversary PAF pup at the neck. www.charvel.com



BOSS ACOUSTIC SINGER LIVE LT £TBA

Fresh from chiselling its much-loved Katana Series amplifiers into the exceptionally well-received MKII upgrades, Boss has taken the time to outfit acoustic players. The Acoustic Singer is designed to accommodate both guitars and microphones. You get 60 watts for your trouble, not to mention two channels with independent three-band EQs and chorus, reverb and delay effects. We're pleased to see that Boss's Acoustic Resonance technology onboard – this cool feature helps take that itchy-scratchy treble out of those pesky piezo pickups. www.boss.info/uk



REVV AMPLIFICATION G20 £1,049

If you loved Revv's compact and brilliant D20 lunchbox head but felt it needed a bit more aggression in the gain department, meet the G20. You still get 20 watts in an ultra-portable package. The reactive load box and cabinet simulation tech is still present and correct, not to mention the two-channel format and twin 6V6 power valves and triple 12AX7 preamp valve setup. This time around, however, you get the circuitry from Revv's weapons-grade G3 distortion pedal. Welding your audiences' eye balls to the back of their skulls has never been easier. <https://revvamplification.com>

ALSO OUT NOW...

NEW VINTAGE FINISHES DISTRESSED FROM £329



In what we can only describe as distressing scenes, Vintage has announced a bunch of new finishes for its guitars. The big news is the brand is bringing forth colour-over-colour style finishes previously only seen on pricey gear such as Fender and Gibson Custom Shop stuff and boutique Rock N' Roll Relic guitars. The single-cut

V120 models are now available in Distressed Black-over-Cherry Red and Distressed Gun Hill Blue-over-Sunburst (pictured). The LP-inspired V100 guitar features Distressed Black-over-Sunburst and Distressed Goldtop options.

In other news, the V6 Icon S-types now come in aged Firenze Red and Ventura Green while the HSS humbucker-loaded version now features Ultra-Gloss-Relic Laguna Blue and Sunset Sunburst options. The T-style V62 is also available with a heavily distressed black finish. <https://vintageguitarsrus.com>

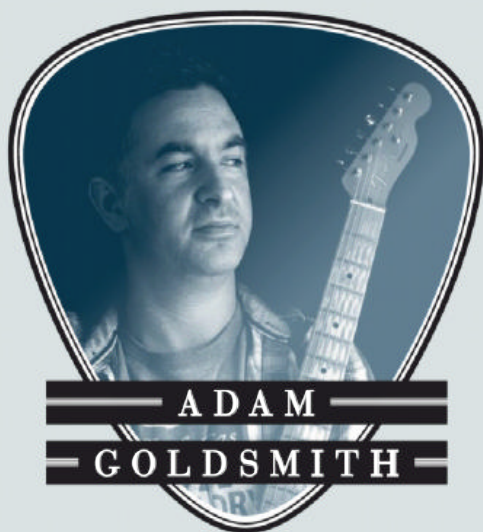
ORANGE TERROR STAMP £TBC



Orange has launched the Terror Stamp, a minuscule creature it describes as "probably the most portable class A/B, 20 Watt amp ever". They've got a point. The floor-mounted Terror Stamp

is compact enough to fit on a pedalboard. Vital statistics measure 61mm by 134mm by 99mm and a total weight of 0.38kg (0.84lb). It includes an eight-/16-ohm speaker output, buffered effects loop, and CabSim/headphone output. Despite its Lilliputian footprint, the Terror Stamp offers an ECC83 valve-based preamp to provide "all the harmonics, dynamics and feel expected from a full size Orange amp" with "crystal clean tones through to thunderingly high gain".

www.orangeamps.com



SESSION DIARY

On The Double

This issue **Adam** swaps the lull of the New Year with one of the most challenging sessions of his career

After the madness of the pre-Christmas season where a lot of people are trying to finish off musical projects before the holidays, and live shows are popular, it's usual for professional musicians to experience a quieter period in January. This was what I was expecting... until I received a fairly last-minute call for what turned out to be possibly one of the toughest studio gigs I've ever done.

I was subbing for another guitar player Leo Abrahams, recording a pop/light opera reworking of *Turandot* for Italian star Riccardo Cocciante. The project was being recorded at AIR Studios Lyndhurst in Hampstead, north London. AIR is a huge old building, originally a church, and

was George Martin's studio for a long time. Many large orchestral sessions are recorded in the main hall, with slightly smaller ensembles in Studio 1 where we were working, and private project studios upstairs. These are mostly occupied by well-known commercial composers.

I was called with about five days' notice for a week's work here with one other guitar player, John Parricelli, and an electric and double bass player, Andy Pask (who incidentally also wrote the theme tune to *The Bill*). Both are hugely experienced and talented musicians. For those of you who watch *Strictly Come Dancing*, John is one of the two regular guitar players, also having played on dozens of film and

TV soundtracks. From a personal point of view, I think he's also one of the best acoustic guitar players I've ever heard, with a magical touch that is very much suited to film soundtracks. The project was being arranged and conducted by Rick Wentworth, who has worked extensively with Roger Waters and is an all-round lovely and talented man.

Sound & Vision

Sometimes projects can feature 'lead sheets', which are basically chord guides where you get to construct your own part, and other times the parts are more prescriptive. This was definitely the latter. The parts were incredibly detailed and mostly featured two acoustic guitars, which needed to be exactly doubled – one on nylon-strung Spanish guitar (John) and one on steel-string acoustic (me, for which I used my Martin John Mayer OM model). For any of you who have attempted to sight-read classical studies, you'll realise it can be quite tricky. When you add into the mix the fact both guitars have to play identically (notes/timing/tuning, etc) and there are two hours of music to record in a week, with a deadline as the orchestra is being recorded on top the following week, then you're under a lot of pressure.

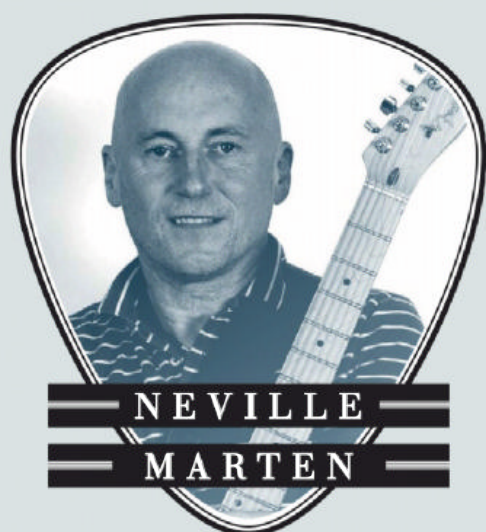
We sight-read classical-style arpeggios for pretty much nine hours a day for several days in a row, with the odd 'break' to put some electric guitar textures on top. This identified a few things: it's important in this arena of work to have all your gear in perfectly set-up working order in order to facilitate last-minute jobs such as this (the tuning had to be perfect, obviously). You also have to have the correct temperament so that you don't let the pressure of that kind of thing get to you, which it can do. I'd also recommend the Fernando Sor guitar studies for anyone interested in being able to play some classical guitar, and also for sight-reading practice. A couple of anthologies of his work have stood me in good stead since I was 21 years old. **G**



From the floor at AIR's Studio 1 (L to R): John Parricelli, Adam, Riccardo Cocciante, Andy Pask



All the guitars and basses for the project



NEVILLE'S ADVOCATE

Nev reminisces about moments over the years that now seem so fantastical he's not quite sure they happened at all...

Last month I recalled a Clapton interview that he gave after *461 Ocean Boulevard*'s release, saying he was pleased with it until he heard one of Stevie Wonder's seminal albums. After the magazine had gone to press I panicked, thinking I'd maybe imagined it – it was 40 plus years ago after all. If I did, apologies. If I didn't, it's a wonderful accolade from one supreme artist to another.

My point for mentioning it here is that it threw up a number of things that, in hindsight, seem so surreal that I wonder again, did they happen at all? Okay, they're nothing for those who already inhabit that glittery world, but for an ordinary bloke like me quite hard to believe. Like the time the wife of a famous musician I'd got to know phoned to tell me that they'd been going to bring one of the greatest music legends of all time to see me but got snowed in. "He hates the press, but we persuaded him you were all right." I don't mention names, because 30 years on I can't believe it happened. But I think it did.

And the time I was demonstrating for SynthAxe. On the morning of our first demo at NAMM it had not occurred to me that this instrument, which it was feared could kill the guitar off, might attract something of an audience. Well, we set up, slung on

the Axes and I looked up. Not six feet away stood Lee Ritenour, Stanley Jordan and Allan Holdsworth. On a sofa in front of us were Tommy Tedesco and, I think, Steve Stevens (or was that somewhere else?). I was told later that many other guitar legends were there. I couldn't do it now. But it did happen... didn't it?

When Clapton sold those first 100 guitars for his Crossroads charity, David Mead and I were invited to view the instruments at the auctioneer's. We both played *Layla* on the Layla Strat. David assures me we did. And when I was offered the 'Cream' Firebird I for 99 guineas at Sound City in London. Was I really? I think so. And how I picked up 'Blackie' on the Royal Albert Hall stage when I'd gone to do an article on EC's gear (I was quickly admonished).

Then there was the time Meady and I had a brush with a guitar legend or two. It was at Bath's Guitar Festival and we played a set swapping licks with Gary Moore and Bernie Marsden. And how about when I interviewed Gary at Trevor Horn's pile in Berkshire where he was recording? Gary persuaded me to have dinner with the band and stay over. We sat and played unplugged together all evening. Then, when I was about to retire, he said, "All the gear's set up in the live room. In the morning we'll have a

jam – you play the '59 through the Marshall and I'll use the Reissue through the Vibroverb." Honest. It happened. I think! Except I didn't do it as I had to get back to the office (that's the most unbelievable bit).

Then there was the night I was gigging with Marty Wilde at the Oxford Apollo; I looked to my left and George Harrison was sitting in the wings. He watched the entire show and afterwards said some nice things about my playing. Then, at the star-studded preview of the aforementioned EC guitar auction, George walked up and said, "I know you, don't I?" Then (poignantly, given the recent sad death of Neil Innes) insisted on showing me a Rutles guitalele that Rob Armstrong had made him. And what about when I helped deliver a guitar to Paul McCartney at *Top Of The Pops*? Paul knelt down right there and played *Blackbird* and *Things We Said Today*. Honest? Really? Did he?

There are so many more stories that people say I should write a book: working on the 'Woodstock' Strat; playing Jimi's psychedelic Flying V; my own 'ex-Hendrix' Strat; playing Hank's pink Strat and Brian's Red Special. Maybe I will one day. It's a shame *Unreliable Memoirs* has been taken (another loss – the late, great Clive James). Would have been a good title. **G**



NEV'S GAS OF THE MONTH

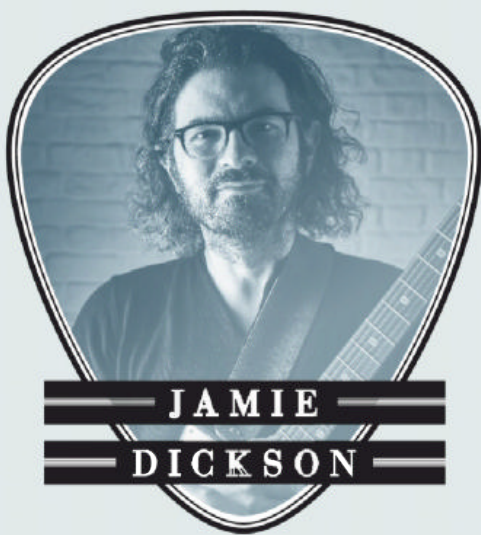
Basic but brilliant

What? Gibson SG Junior

Where seen? Anderton's, Guildford

Price? £1,149

Description? Even 60 years on the SG shape is radical and exciting. And, a bit like Fender's Tele, capable of adapting itself to virtually any amendments – different pickups, scratchplates, inlays, bridge and tailpiece styles. But it works particularly well in this stripped-down Junior format that Gibson has wisely reintroduced. The uncompromising single P-90 pickup and single volume and tone control means you have to work to get the most out of it. But the rewards are so worth it: sweet strum tones with the volume on 2 or 3; bright riffing on about 7; filthy lead flat-out; and, of course, anything from Angus to 'woman' tone on the other pot. Okay, it's a two-piece not single mahogany slab for the body, but it still looks incredible in classic Vintage Cherry, and at this price who wouldn't want one?



RAISING THE TONE

Taking The Tone Test

Editor Jamie contrasts the timbre between three very different sets of acoustic strings

One of the problems with evaluating guitar strings is that most players are loathe to change a new set of strings for another one until they've had at least a gig's use or a few weeks of home playing out of them. The reluctance to waste strings is understandable, but it means by the time you come round to fit a new set, you've probably forgotten what the last ones sounded like. That's not a problem if you've settled on a favourite set and use it time after time. But if you're trying to decide whether a completely new set of strings would suit you better than the ones you've used in the past, that time-lag can make meaningful comparison difficult.

So, in the interests of science, I got in touch with Takamine and Ernie Ball to see if they'd help me find a better way to instantly compare the difference in tone that new strings can bring. To enable an instant A/B comparison, I wanted to try fitting contrasting sets of strings to two acoustic guitars that

"I picked out three sets that looked likely to provide strong tonal contrasts when compared"

were as identical as possible. Now, obviously every guitar sounds a little different to the next one, even if they're both the same model, but it seemed worth a try. Ever obliging, the helpful folk at Takamine sent along two gorgeous EF7M-LS acoustics. This elegant OM-style model has solid Indian Rosewood back and sides and a Lutz spruce top (a hybrid of Sitka and White spruce). They're high-spec Japanese-built guitars that retail for a little north of £2,000, so I can expect to really hear and feel the subtle differences when I fit contrasting sets of strings to them.

String 'em up: the tonal differences between the sets on test are significant



Now for the actual strings themselves. Ernie Ball is one of the best-known makers in the world, with a very wide range of acoustic sets in its inventory. I told them what I was up to and they kindly sent over an assortment of acoustic strings for me to audition. From these, I picked out three sets that looked likely to provide some strong tonal contrasts when compared back to back. The details of the string sets I picked can be read in the 'Three To Get Ready' box on the opposite page – all strings tested were in 13-gauge sets for commonality.

Strings chosen, it was time to take a closer look at the two Takamine acoustics to see if their base tone was similar enough to allow me to use them for the purpose of instant A/B string comparison. However, a few minutes' playing revealed that while overall they were very similar in voice – being of the same design and factory fitted with the same D'Addario strings – they were probably still too different to act as 'identical' test-beds. The first EF7M-LS to leave its case sounds quite taut and punchy, with warm mids, while the second is sweeter, breathier and a little



Mr Makoto Terasaki, Takamine's design guru, knows a thing or two about tone

more sustaining. The difference was pretty subtle, but I didn't want it to skew the test. So I reluctantly abandoned my idea of a two-guitar test and chose the second of the two Takamines as my benchmark guitar. That decision made, it was testing time.

First up is the Aluminium Bronze set. From the first strum it's clear they are quite a different beast to the factory-fitted D'Addarios. Chords leap eagerly from the guitar, with a bright voice that's just this side of brash. There's also a hike in volume and a sense of the whole guitar thrumming with life. Chords ring out and single notes enunciate crisply and with a kind of 'bluegrass' twang. These are strings for players who want to be noticed! I'm not sure I'd want to play them all the time, any more than I'd want to drink ice-cold grapefruit juice all the time. But if you want to add refreshing zest and punch in your sound, these strings will certainly provide it. They'd be a brilliant match with a guitar that's normally a bit too dull or soft-sounding. I've certainly owned cedar-topped dreadnoughts in the past that would have benefited from a set of these.

A Right Softie

After about 30 minutes of playing it's time to switch sets. It feels sacrilegious, but it's the only way to get a quickish comparison. The Silk & Steel 80/20s have a reputation for being a very mellow, softly spoken set and, once fitted, they do indeed prove quite a bit quieter in perceived volume than the aluminiums, though not as muted and woolly as I feared they might be. They've still got some useful bite, which balances very pleasantly with the rounded bass and mids. They remind me of old-time country acoustic guitar tones – in other words, they sound

great: warm but lively and articulate.

Finally, it's time for the flagship set of Phosphor Bronze Paradigms. After the usual fiddling about with string winders and cutters, they're ready for their first strum and... hello! They're really loud and clear – with as much top-end and volume as the aluminiums but rounder bottom-end and fuller mids. There's basically just more of everything. It's like switching from normal video to HD. That said, brand-new on the guitar, they're not exactly subtle and I think they'd suit a rock guitarist strumming a dreadnought more than, say, a nuanced fingerstyle performance. You can hear where the money went in their development, though. They're definitely the 'more equals more' choice here.

So, what lessons did I learn from this test? Well, I recorded the sound of each set as I went along so I had some kind of A/B comparison to refer to as well as written notes. You might want to try that as well if you want to experiment with different strings. It's certainly better than memory alone. Secondly, if you're buying a new acoustic guitar, make an effort to try several examples of the model you've set your heart on. Every guitar is a little different and some just have a certain special, extra 'something'.

Finally, I'd urge anyone thinking of selling their acoustic because they don't like its tone to first invest a few quid trying out new strings. Guitar too dull-sounding? Try some Aluminium Bronze strings. Too bright and brash? Try some Silk & Steels. You get the idea. It might just save you the hassle and depreciation of selling – and you never know what doors of playing-inspiration a new set of strings might open... **G**

ernieball.co.uk / takamine.com

THREE TOGET READY

Strings featured in this test



Ernie Ball Aluminium Bronze £11.49

These are reckoned to be among the brightest and boldest-sounding strings in the Ernie Ball range and we'd have to agree. Slippery bluegrass licks would sound great on these bold, up-front strings, which really 'pop' when you strum or pick them.



Ernie Ball Earthwood Silk & Steel Regular 80/20 Bronze £14.49

These warm-voiced strings feature a fine layer of silk under an outer wrap of 80/20 bronze. This arrangement is supposed to offer low handling noise and a supple, mellow tone. They were actually a little brighter than expected on our test guitar and sounded sweet but balanced.



Ernie Ball Paradigm Phosphor Bronze £16.99

Paradigm is the most advanced string range that Ernie Ball offers, with next-gen 'Everlast nanotreatment' for long life and extra high-strength steel cores for breakage-resistance. For our test, I chose a set in phosphor bronze, an alloy generally reckoned to sound a little warmer than an 80/20 alloy. Sonically rich and powerful, with plenty of tonal detail.

Substitute

This Issue: Augmented 5ths & Moving Voices

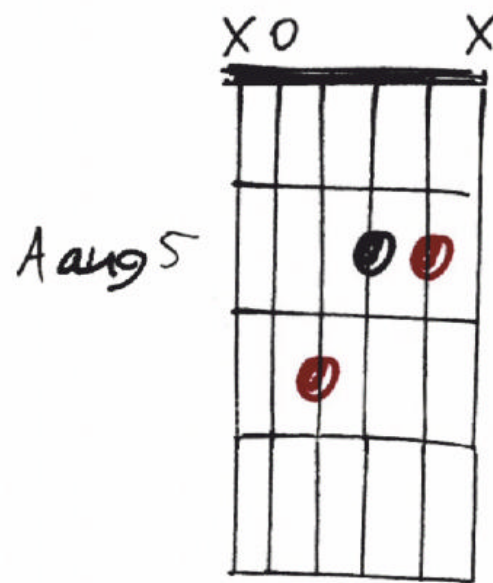
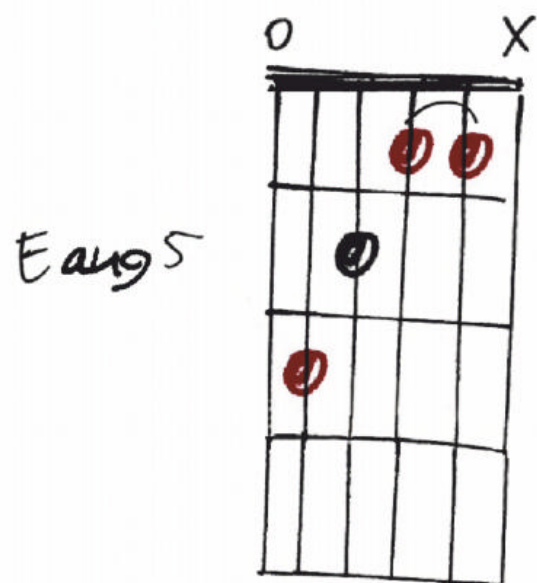
The title might sound foreboding, but this way of looking at chord voicings has given us classics such as Buddy Holly's *Raining In My Heart* and Barbra Streisand's *Evergreen*.

Having looked at the diminished 5th (aka #4) last time, it seems only right to redress the balance and look at what happens when you raise (augment) the 5th

in a chord. Understanding the harmonic implications of this will give you a wider vocabulary of ideas to call upon when improvising, too.

Though these examples stick with basic E, A and D voicings, they can be transposed all over the fretboard and applied to any type of chord. It would be a good use of time to seek these out and

become familiar with them in the contexts of both chords and scales. This is easier to do in practice rather than explain on paper! The last two examples move the 5th even further up in pitch, giving us a 6th and dominant 7th chord. This is where we get into composition rather than playing with interesting chords, so let's leave it there for now!

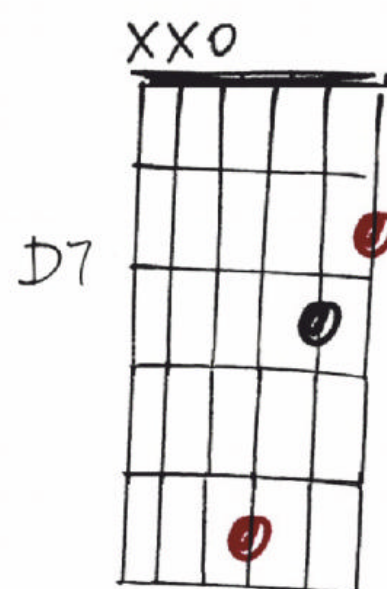
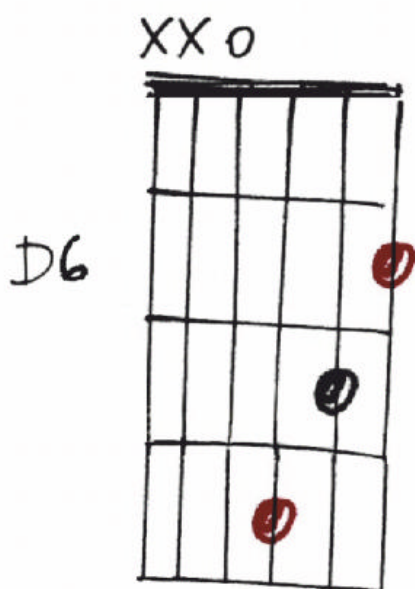
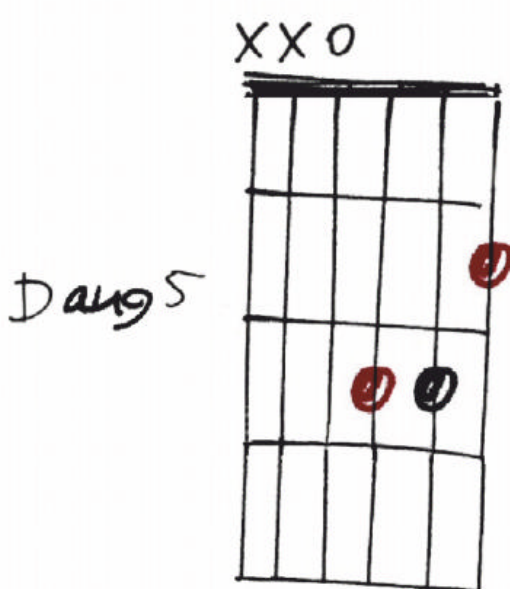


Example 1

The unassuming E major chord takes on a more menacing tone when raising the 5th. You'll notice this is done not only on the fifth string but on what would normally be the open second. Alternating between this and a regular E major gives a 'tension/release' effect, which has been used by many great composers.

Example 2

This A (aug5) chord could be further expanded by adding an F at the 1st fret of the top E string. This voicing sounds more compact with the C# on top and may lend itself to George Harrison-style arpeggiated playing, especially when combined with the regular A major chord.



Example 3

Raising the 5th within this D chord gives what will hopefully now be a familiar effect. This sounds great with an open top E string ringing on top, or adding another augmented 5th at the 6th fret on that same string. It's all about knowing where these things are, and you can vastly expand your chord playing.

Example 4

Raising the augmented 5th a further semitone gives this D6 chord. We could also call this a Bm/D, but it's all about context, especially given the next example. An alternative voicing can be found by reverting to a standard D major shape with the second string left open...

Example 5

This unusual D7 chord can be created by moving the 6th up a further semitone to the 5th fret. By alternating between the regular D major, augmented, 6th, 7th and back down, you'll recognise that this device has featured in all sorts of music, from film themes to pop songs!

P E D I G R E E D S H R E D D E R S

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

Star Letter



THINK BIGSBY

I read with interest the Longtermers article in the last edition of *Guitarist*, which mentioned the awkward procedure of restringing a guitar fitted with a Bigsby B7 tremolo arm. Quite a lot of guitarists find this somewhat fiddly. I find the easiest way to restring with a Bigsby is to first slightly bend the end of the new string just under half an inch from the ball at the bottom of the string. This makes it easier to hook under the bottom bar of the Bigsby. Then pull the string tight and place a capo around the 9th fret. This will then hold the string tightly in place while you then pull the string through the machinehead and tighten as usual.

Dennis Homes, via email

Many thanks indeed, Dennis – this is useful advice that we'll be trying next time we grapple with a B7! The capo was the missing part of the equation that could make all the difference here. All the same we wouldn't like to attempt it in on a darkened stage any time soon! We'll return the favour and give you some help next time you're stringing up a guitar by awarding you a superb Korg tuner as this month's star letter.

Hughes & Kettner Correction

We would like to correct a small detail in our recent review of the Hughes & Kettner Black Spirit 200. The review wrongly compared the Black Spirit Floor 200 with the standalone FSM432 controller, suggesting the FSM432 has a power source for external pedals when in fact it has an alternative power IN if you don't use one of the H&K amps that phantom powers it. In fact, neither product can power external pedals. Reviewer Nick Guppy corrected this in a later draft, but unfortunately the earlier piece was printed. Apologies for the confusion.



KORG

Each issue's Star Letter wins a Korg Pitchblack Custom – a smart pedal tuner with ultra-high +/-0.1 precision for sharp visibility and pinpoint accuracy right at your feet.
www.korg.co.uk

REVERSE RELIC

I wonder if any on-the-ball luthiers have spotted the business opportunity offered by the popularity of reliced guitars as shown in the excellent *Guitarist* Relic Issue (455).

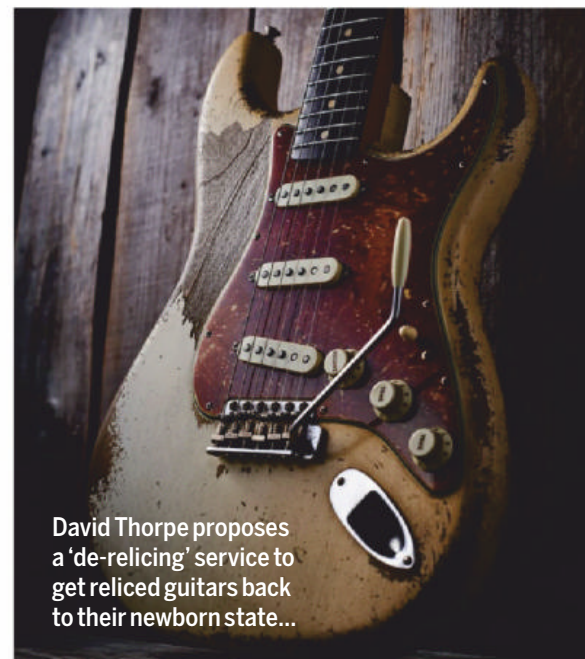
Buyers of Fender Relic (and especially Heavy Relic models) may find them difficult to sell at a later date, being so worn and battered. Yellow-aged plastic, bare wood, scratched and worn lacquer and rusted metal parts could definitely lower the resale value.

I suggest a 'de-relicing' service for owners of the Relic and Heavy Relic models. For a similar cost to the original relicing, the instrument could be taken apart, the body stripped down to the bare wood and refinished in a deep lustrous gloss. The 'worn' parts such as the pickguard could be replaced, as could rusted and yellowed parts and any marks and blemishes on the neck and headstock would be filled, buffed and polished.

Properly done, the restored reliced guitar's condition could be as shinily good as – or possibly even better than – a new stock one straight off the wall of a guitar store. And it would sell quickly, I am certain...

David Thorpe, via email

Haha, very enterprising David – I believe this was once called refinishing, but, of course 'de-relicing', as you've proposed it, is a more involved process that would bring the guitar close to showroom-correct spec, and so would naturally command a higher fee.



David Thorpe proposes a 'de-relicing' service to get reliced guitars back to their newborn state...

WISH GRANTED

First, I will do the usual smoke up the proverbial – I subscribe enthusiastically to your great magazine blah, blah... Your relatively recent features on custom builds were a particular highlight for me, having built three guitars with the genius tutor Mark Bailey of Bailey Guitars. However, now we must come to the crux of the matter! Finally, eventually, you have an article about Andy Powell of Wishbone Ash. I have been a devotee of the band since 1970 and was very surprised that your usually excellent reportage on upcoming gigs and recently released albums failed to mention the 50th anniversary tour during 2019. I couldn't

understand why such a wholly guitar-focused band with such a distinctive twin-lead sound never got a mention. You have finally rectified the wrong with your AP interview – hence the title of the letter [Hallelujah (Not the song)]!

Andy has been an incredibly hard-working musician, touring Wishbone Ash every year and getting new recordings out to the fans regularly. I had the fantastic opportunity to play on stage with the band at my retirement party and they could not have been more welcoming and generous to someone who was just a little awestruck by the situation.

It seems to me that given Gibson's newly regenerated guitar focus, an Andy Powell signature model wouldn't go amiss. I would trade my Kirk Hammett V for an AP one in a

heartbeat. Anyway, thanks for the article – it renewed my fading faith (sic) in seeing one in these pages. Hallelujah indeed.

John Pollock, via email

Thanks John, we were indeed remiss in not featuring Andy more in these pages in recent times – especially as he's a relatively rare long-time exponent of the Flying V, in one form or another, which we've always had a great affection for, from Albert King on through Jimi. It may be subtle but they have a voice of their own and, though they're a pain to play sitting, they look the business on stage. Maybe something for your next home-build project, in homage to Wishbone Ash?

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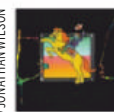


Jonathan Wilson

Dixie Blur

Bella Union

7/10



© JONATHAN WILSON

Downbeat Americana with a melancholy heart

Jonathan Wilson's 70s-infused *Fanfare* from 2013 was one of our albums of the decade. His follow-up, *Rare Birds*, moved on another decade with its glistening 80s soundscapes but perhaps fewer truly great songs. *Dixie Blur* returns to the intimate acoustic songcraft of *Fanfare* but takes the mood down a notch further, recalling Dylan's *Desire*-era recordings, with its plaintive violin accompaniments to fingerstyle guitar. In tracks such as *Oh Girl* Wilson still seems to be mourning a failed relationship, the theme that gave *Fanfare* its emotional power. But the loss is now viewed from a greater distance, the regret mellowed by time and change. Overall, the album is a scenic but strangely uneventful road trip through Wilson's inner feelings, from the melancholy nostalgia of '69 *Corvette* to the country backroads of *So Alive*. **[JD]**

Standout track: '69 *Corvette*

For fans of: Bob Dylan, Bon Iver

H.e.a.t

H. E. A. T II

earMUSIC

9/10



© H.E.A.T

Swedish rockers ignite on this blistering homage to Leppard

Hair metal, soft metal, hard melodic rock... call it what you will, but the genre that Def Leppard reigned over is back in all its pyrotechnic pomp here – and H.e.a.t have really nailed the blend of razor-sharp pop hooks and stratospheric riffage that makes it come alive. Performed with exhilarating precision and elan, standout tracks such as *Come Clean* have adrenaline-inducing momentum and every big chorus delivers on the verse's promise, as it should. Dave Dalone's guitar work is scintillating and beautifully structured in the solos, too, so there's much to admire from a guitarist's perspective. It may be a bit of a guilty pleasure, but this blizzard of Swedish fire and ice is one of the most compulsively listenable LPs we've heard recently. **[JD]**

Standout track: *Come Clean*

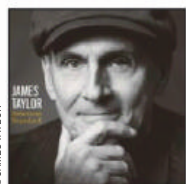
For fans of: Def Leppard, Whitesnake

James Taylor

American Standard

Fantasy

9/10



© JAMES TAYLOR

JT pays a visit to the Great American Songbook

It's uncanny the way some of the world's greatest artists from the world of rock and pop feel compelled to release an album of show tunes at some point in their career. Some of these work majestically where others fail, of course, but we have to admit that James Taylor was the last person we would have expected to follow this particular course...

However, this is no Sinatra-esque dinner-jacketed croon-along complete with Nelson Riddle string arrangements; quite the opposite, in fact. These are some of the greatest songs from the Great American Songbook reimagined for acoustic guitar and JT's regular backing band that includes Steve Gadd (drums), Jimmy Johnson (bass), Larry Goldings (keyboards) with the additional talents of Jerry Douglas (dobro)

and Stuart Duncan (fiddle). It's a clever turnabout, presenting classic material in a fresh, small acoustic band setting and, as such, songs such as *Teach Me Tonight*, *The Nearness Of You* and *Almost Like Being In Love* have new life breathed into them.

American Standard follows James's No 1 album from 2015, *Before This World*, and so this record represents what could be viewed as a brave move. But thinking about it, cover versions have always featured in JT's career – let's face it, his versions of songs such as Buddy Holly's *Everyday* and Joni Mitchell's *River* challenge the originals in many ways, and that's not an easy trick to pull off. In the end, the success of this album is down to James's abilities as an arranger and how he's managed to fuse his own style with some of the best show tunes of the 20th century to sublime effect. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Teach Me Tonight*

For fans of: Joni Mitchell, Carole King



Wishbone Ash
Coat Of Arms
Steamhammer/Sw

8/10

© WISHBONE ASH



50 years on, real guitars still have wings...

With their ongoing 50th anniversary celebrations reverberating among their fanbase, Andy Powell leads Wishbone Ash into the new decade with a powerful reassertion of their twin-guitar domination on a new album and monster UK, European and US tours. With more than two dozen albums in its wake, *Coat Of Arms* continues to deliver along the lines of the band's esteemed releases such as *Argus* and *There's The Rub* with rockers like the first single, *We Stand As One*, and ballads like *Floreana*. This is the first studio release with Andy's new guitar sidekick, Mark Abrahams, who steps very ably into the harmony guitar role to provide the perfect foil for the band's classic twin-guitar sound. **[DM]**

Standout track: *It's Only You I See*

For fans of: Barclay James Harvest, Camel

Start me up

On-the-rise guitar acts to look out for

Marcus King

El Dorado
Spinefarm

8/10



© MARCUS KING

An outstanding debut from US singer-songwriter

"He's regularly the best guitar player in the room, hands down," *El Dorado* producer Dan Auerbach says of Marcus King. Still only 23 years old, Marcus has been performing for 11 years

and has already chalked up appearances on US TV and at the Grand Ole Opry, as well as appearing at Clapton's Crossroads Festival. The buzz Stateside is considerable, but so far he's not quite so well known on this side of the Atlantic – something that this, his debut solo album, might change. *El Dorado* mixes Southern-style rock with some genre-bending twists here and there. Marcus is a powerful songwriter as well as being an excellent guitarist. Stay tuned for UK dates later this year. **[DM]**

Standout track: *The Well*

For fans of: ZZ Top, The Magpie Salute

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« BACKTRACKING »

Our pick of recently reissued classic albums, essential compilations and vintage guitar recordings you must hear



Rory Gallagher
Check Shirt Wizard – Live In '77 Chess/UMC

9/10



Archives plumbed for more blues treasure...

Hot on the heels of last year's *Blues* triple-CD set, *Check Shirt Wizard* is a double-CD (or triple-vinyl, if you prefer) live album recorded on Rory's January/February 1977 UK tour. Culled from four separate venues – London, Brighton, Sheffield and Newcastle – the tracklisting draws heavily from Rory's then-current *Calling Card* album, as well as featuring a selection of fan favourites. As such, seminal Rory tracks like *A Million Miles Away*, *Out On The Western Plain* and *Bullfrog Blues* hurtle from his fretboard with all the incendiary power and finesse he was known for. Fans will suggest that you had to see Rory live and this collection further proves the theory. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Bullfrog Blues*

For fans of: Eric Clapton, Joe Bonamassa

The Allman Brothers Band

Trouble No More: 50th Anniversary Collection

Island/Mercury/UMC

8/10



Retrospective from legendary band

Spanning 10 LPs or five CDs, this collection celebrates The Allman

Brothers Band's 50th anniversary in style. When Berry Oakley, Butch Trucks, Dickey Betts, Duane and Gregg Allman, and Jaimoe put a band together in 1969, the world became a better place and the first demo they ever produced, Muddy Waters' *Trouble No More*, is included here as one of the many rarities and previously unreleased tracks on offer. Split between material from the Capricorn, Arista, Epic and Peach labels, it's an overview of the band's career, culminating in a new live recording from The Beacon Theatre to incentivise fans who already own much of what's featured here. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Trouble No More* (demo version)

For fans of: Lynyrd Skynyrd, Gov't Mule

Jimmy Page & Friends

Live At The Club Palois Ballroom, 1984

Angel Air/Store For Music

8/10



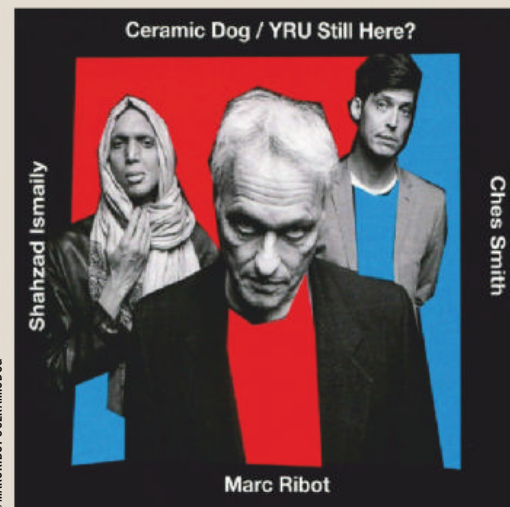
Zep legend jams rhythm and blues

This concert was held in the summer of 1984 as a tribute to UK blues pioneer

Alexis Korner who died earlier that year. The line-up (dubbed The Alexis Light Orchestra) for the event, comprised Jimmy Page, Jack Bruce, Paul Jones, Ian Stewart, Charlie Watts, Ruby Turner and a horn section that included sax giants Dick Heckstall-Smith and Don Weller. Originally broadcast on radio, the material drawn from standards such as *Stormy Monday*, *Got My Mojo Working* and *Sweet Home Chicago*. It's interesting to hear Jimmy Page in straight blues mode, instead of belting out the riffs – there's no grandstanding here, just an emotional tribute to a legendary blues hero. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Stormy Monday*

For fans of: Alexis Korner, The Blues Band



DEEP CUTS

Nigel Pulsford on lost-classic guitar albums you must hear

Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog
YRU Still Here?

Northern Spy 2018



Guitarist to the stars (and to the heavens) Marc Ribot fronts this three-piece through a refreshingly

angry and political post-punk musical journey across modern-day America – an inspired howl at the monstrosity of it all. And it's an almost perfect album. Funky as a three-legged dog's ecstatic gyrations at the sight of his missing leg on the sidewalk, dirty as the aforementioned dog, and as angry as that same mutt when the leg turns out to be a filthy old kebab, wrapped in yesterday's newspaper...

This is the third album from Ceramic Dog since they first performed together in 2008. Musically, think the Banshees, PiL, War, The Pop Group, Mingus, The Meters, the MC5, Beefheart and even Kraftwerk. It's fantastic, eclectic music made by three musical mavericks who combine to create a marvellous and energetic marriage of styles. As with all great serious music, they have an abundant sense of humour both musically and lyrically and possess extraordinary chops.

This can be seen as a companion piece to Ribot's moving *Songs Of Resistance 1942–2018* LP, which came out in autumn 2018. Politics is to the fore in his music. He is to be applauded for this.

Further listening: With Ceramic Dog: *Party Intellectuals* (2008); *Your Turn* (2013)



Rory Clewlow with Enter Shikari - Pic: Tom Pullen



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THE LONG WAY

Raised by the banks of the Mississippi, Jonathon Long's electrifying fusion of jazz, blues and country brings to mind Danny Gatton's eclectic brilliance on a Telecaster. We joined the slick but soulful guitarist from Baton Rouge to talk bayou blues – and pick up some of his best licks...

Words Jamie Dickson **Photography** Joby Sessions

Back in August we had one of those rare hallelujah moments where you get truly knocked off your feet by a player you'd never encountered before. Jonathon Long, a 31 year old from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, may not be a household name quite yet, but his effortless command of country, jazz and blues licks recalls greats such as Danny Gatton – not a comparison we use lightly.

When we caught up with Jonathon last summer, he was playing on a blues-themed cruise hosted by Joe Bonamassa. But he's about as far from the blues-rock cookie-cutter as can be, citing Johnny A, Tony Rice and Guthrie Govan as equally important influences in his rich inner musical landscape. He's also got huge chops, which he delivers with the passion of a travelling preacher. We joined the charismatic Southern Suhr-slinger to get to the roots of his eclectic and electrifying style and learn some of his hottest licks direct from source.

Louisiana is a state with a lot of music history. How did you make a name for yourself on that scene?

"I got pulled out of the music store when I was 10 or 11 years old by this lady named Dixie Rose in the town I was living in and she said, 'You're great, you need to come and be heard.' So I played with her a couple of years and then eventually she introduced me to the blues jam at Swamp Mama's in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And I would just go hear these old players like Kenny Neal and Larry Garner, and Raful Neal was still alive. Just old souls and just good players.

"So the local guys at the blues jam that were out there touring and doing it were my biggest influences early on, in the beginning. I just knew that I could feel that it had to be real. You could get up there and try to imitate it, but everybody could see right through you if you just got up there and you tried to act it. You had to really feel it and be about it.

"And I could tell those people, those guys who were my early influences, were truly about what they're singing and playing, and I wanted to feel that one day. I wanted to figure out a way to get into that sort of spirit, just that soul. Almost like, even if everything was going great and I was born a rich kid with a silver spoon in my mouth – which I wasn't, but if I was – I would still want to find the blues. Do you know what I'm saying? I would want to feel just the struggle. That way you could really live it and be it. So I think that's important.

"You know, the blues comes from African-American culture and the spirituals and the gospel. There are a lot of people that look past the history of it and they don't give enough credit to where it comes from. I say that to say there are a lot of people that try to imitate it, but you've just got to feel it and have your own voice with it."



•

“A juke-joint party is like a backyard party. It’s like being there with your friends and really getting in the groove”

•

Do the fabled ‘juke joints’ of Louisiana music lore still exist?

“There are a couple of them left, there’s not many. There’s one place called Teddy’s Juke Joint that’s been there for years and years and years in Zachary, Louisiana and it’s one of the last remaining juke joints on the blues highway. There’s not many of them left. Ground Zero Blues Club is Morgan Freeman’s spot [in Clarksdale, Mississippi], then you’ve got Teddy’s and then there are a couple of them around the Clarksdale area and stuff. But there are not many real juke joints left where it’s a shady little hole in the wall with a low ceiling and old memorabilia hanging around.

“Teddy still spins records. He don’t have a jukebox or have a CD player, none of that. He still spins original records and vinyls in a record booth and he’ll turn down the radio and talk, ‘Hey, pretty ladies, go ahead and get out there and shake that thing.’ And he’ll turn it down and kind of DJ, but he plays real records. A juke-joint party is like a backyard party. It’s like being there with your family and friends and really getting in the groove.”

You’re a very eclectic player – your guitar work spans everything from country to jazz. Who are your touchstones when it comes to taste, technique and feel?

“Oh, there’s a ton of them I really like, but I’ll name three: Michael Landau, Robben Ford and... I’m just going to name a badass – Guthrie Govan. I mean, Guthrie, he’s fast but he can be as tasteful, he can play any style of music, just as good as anybody else. And then Robben’s tone is just unmatched... just the way that he approaches licks. And then with Michael Landau, there are no words.”

Robben and Michael are players that make great use of clear but sustaining tone that has its roots in Fender and Dumble amps. Are you similar when it comes to tone?

“Oh, yes. With those guys everything is clear as a bell, even when it’s got a little overdrive on it, it’s just crystal clear.

Riding high: “Doesn’t matter if you’re playing for five people or 5,000 people, it’s better than any drug”



PHOTO BY JOBY SESSIONS

But that has a lot to do with their hand strength and their approach to attacking a note as well. Personally, I like a lot of headroom and for the note to be clear as a bell. I recently got an endorsement for Komet Amplification and I’ve been using their Concorde amp. It’s like a Trainwreck, basically, but it can get real clean and crystal clear. And then on the Fast mode it has what they call instant response or instant touch response. When you hit something it is there and it doesn’t hide mistakes. It’s not one of these amps that’s just a pillow that hides mistakes and all that, it’s a player’s amp. I like an amp to cut through and be clear and not have too much mush on top of the note, you know?

“A guitar player always is chasing tone. I recently met a guy back home named Tracy Farmer, he had a good job and retired young and has a bunch of money. And he spent countless dollars on any pedal and any amp that you can imagine but he came down to Two-Rock and Komet. He also turned me on to that stuff and then stuff like [pedal maker] Vemuram and the original Klon and that sort of thing. Just good stuff.

The Vemuram stuff is interesting. Do you use their pedals?

“I use the Shanks ODS-1, the John Shanks overdrive, and it is killer. I’m using my friend’s KTR on this tour and, man, I’ve been wanting to buy an original Klon. But the Shanks does that sort of thing so well that it’s almost not worth the \$1,700 investment in a real Klon. The Klon has a warmth around the note; it puts just a touch of a real warm halo around the note that can’t be matched, though.”

Guitar-wise, you recently switched from big Gibson-style semis to a Tele-style Suhr. How come?

“Honestly, it’s just easier to carry when you’re on the road. It’s lighter and it’s less circumference of a guitar. It’s also tougher. You know, if this boat broke down I’d use it as a paddle. I mean, they’re virtually indestructible: you can bring a Tele on the road and even if the side of the neck pocket cracks or something weird happens, you can always keep it together and jam. It’s an indestructible workhorse, and I just figure it’s light – this one’s only 6.1lbs – and there are less things could go wrong.”



*“There are a lot of people
that try to imitate the
blues, but you’ve just got
to feel it and have your
own voice with it”*

•

“I know it’s a cliché, but music speaks to the artist who wrote it as they’re playing it, just as much as it speaks to the audience”

•

Did you have to adapt your style in any way, due to the switch from humbuckers and a shorter scale length?

“Not really. I mean, I’m not really a theory player, I just play. So I tend to pick up any guitar and just do my thing on it. I’ve played acoustics with actions so high you could look under them. Just like any real player, you can pick up anything and make music.”

Are you a Danny Gatton fan at all? It’s tempting to draw parallels between your approach to playing and his...

“A little bit. I’m a fan of everybody. I like Spanky Alford a lot. So I mix the neo-soul chords and stuff with the sweeping and finger tapping and blues, kinda like Eric Gales does. But then I also every now and then will throw in some Tony Rice or Danny Gatton kind of chicken picking stuff. I kind of melt those three things together, you know? But I came up playing blues.”

You’ve got scary technical chops but also great taste – how do you keep the balance?

“Dexterity is good to work on, you try to keep yourself in shape so you don’t make yourself look like a fool doing what you’re supposed to know how to do. Like a magician trying to do sleight of hand with no fluffs and you don’t want nobody to see what’s going on.

“On the other hand, my mom tells me all the time, ‘You know, you’re sitting there playing for us, but you just noodle.’ She don’t use that term, but you know what I mean. ‘You’re just playing whatever, why don’t you sing us a song?’ So, yes, I find myself doing that all the time where I’ll be practising or trying to figure out somebody’s licks. I have to stop myself and say, ‘You know what? You need to write a tune. Or do something productive that’s going to go on something or that’s going to progress me.’”

You seem to immerse yourself deep in the music when you’re playing live...

“Oh, yes – I don’t find myself again until after the show is over with and then I

Jonathon grew up playing the blues jam scene in his native Baton Rouge, learning from the local guys who were really living the blues



PHOTO BY DEVON WILLIAMS

can get back to reality. It doesn’t matter if you’re playing for five people or 5,000 people, it’s the best high – it’s better than any drug. It’s an honour and a blessing and a privilege to be able to stand up there and do that and have people that will listen to you. You get lost and you get carried away, and I think that’s what makes most of us tend to overplay.

“As guitarists we’ll go hear somebody and we’re like, ‘Oh, they’re overplaying, whatever.’ But then we’ll get up there and do the same thing! It’s just being in the moment and it’s so intense that sometimes you just lose perspective of the current reality. You space off into your own zone. I know it’s a cliché, but music speaks to the artist who wrote it as they’re playing it, just as much as it speaks to the audience. I think as long as you’re on the ‘soul’ side of things, I think you can stay connected and really feel it.”

There are so many stunning guitar players out there now and there are so many styles to assimilate. You seem to have a real handle on bringing together dozens of influences in a distinctive way. Do you

have any tips for other guitar players who feel intimidated by how high the bar is these days?

“I think it’s important to just be yourself and do you and don’t worry about being the baddest and the best person out there. Johnny A is one of the most tasteful players in the world, you’re never going to hear him shred a solo like Steve Vai, but that doesn’t mean that he’s not as good as Steve Vai. That doesn’t mean that he’s not the same calibre of player, you know what I’m saying?

“It’s all about how you approach music and when people come to hear you they don’t want to hear Eric Johnson licks all night, they don’t want to hear Stevie Ray Vaughan’s licks, because they can hear that when they listen to them. They come to hear what you’re about and what you do, and if you can bring something new to the table.” **G**



Jonathon Long’s latest, eponymous album is out now on Wild Heart Records

www.jonathonlongmusic.com

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BAYOU BLUES

Jonathon shares his talent for transforming licks into a multitude of styles, from loping gospel sounds through Delta blues and slick country riffs

IN KEEPING WITH HIS ORIGINS in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Jonathon Long’s guitar style is a melting pot of the many strands of Americana. You can hear elements of Delta blues, gospel, Southern rock and country rock, all underpinned by the legacy of the great urban blues guitar legends – the three Kings, Collins, Buddy Guy.

In this lesson, Jonathon shows a few of his favourite licks, demonstrating how a simple idea can be extended, modified and combined with other ideas to create an almost limitless stock of licks. All of these examples are in the key of A major, so you can immediately start dropping them into your blues solos. **[AC]**

Example 1 Outlining A Chord

JONATHON STARTS WITH a tiny cell of an idea that we’ll be using in later examples. It’s a cool way to outline an A major (or A dominant) chord, mostly using chord tones, but with a smooth line of chromatic pull-offs at the start. Notice the quick slide at the end: the minor 3rd (C) resolves into the major 3rd (C#).

A7

E
B
G
D
A
E

Example 2 Working With Doublestops

HERE’S ANOTHER WAY of outlining that A major or A7 chord, again with chromatics. This time we’re using doublestops, and it’s important to note the chord tones at the beginning and end, all using chord tones. We start with G-C# (minor 7th and major 3rd) and end on C#-E (major 3rd and 5th) and E-A (5th and root).

A7

E
B
G
D
A
E

Example 3 Extending A Line

NOW JONATHON BUILDS A LONGER LICK by extending the pattern from Example 2 into the next octave. The higher line is slightly different, starting with A and C# (root, major 3rd).

A7

E B G D A E

6 7 8 9 10 9 10 12 11 13 12 14 17 17

Example 4 From Gospel To Country

JONATHAN MENTIONS HOW his broad musical tastes allow him to reinterpret phrases in several different ways. He starts off with a lazy gospel-tinged line using the A major pentatonic (A B C# E F#) and speeds it up, using consistent alternate picking. As a result it ends up with more of a country or Western swing sound.

BU BU

E B G D A E

5 6 7 5 7 (9) 7 5 6 7 5 7 5 7 0 5 6 7

Example 5 Three Octave Lines

USING THE SAME MEATY FLATPICKING, we now return to the chromatic lick from Example 1, combining it with the idea from Example 4. It's basically the same pattern played through three octaves.

E B G D A E

9 10 11 12 8 9 10 0 7 0 5 6 7 8 9 0 5 6 7 0 5 0 3 4 5 6 7 0 3 4 5

Example 6 Embellishing Diatonic Chords

JONATHON SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE of knowing all the chords in a key. The basic diatonic chords in A major are A, Bm, C#m, D, E, F#m and G# diminished, but each chord can be extended in many ways. Also, within the blues style, you have the flexibility to play around with the minor 7th (G).

A Bm7 Bm11 C#m11 Dmaj13 Dsus2 (add #11) Dmaj9 E F#m7 Gmaj9 Amaj9

E B G D A E

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

Example 7 Putting It All Together

JONATHON IMPROVISES AROUND A II-V-I-VI progression in A major (Bm-E7-A-F#m). In a bluesy interpretation of this common chord progression, the I chord is also played as a dominant (A7). The main scale here is A Mixolydian (A B C# D E F# G), but it's more important to see it as shifting groups of chord tones.

Loosely ♩ = 156

Bm7 E5 A13

F#m7 Bm9 E A13

F#m7 Bm9 E9

A F#m7 F# Bm9 E9 Bb13 Amaj7





IRON MAN



TONY IOMMI TRULY IS THE IRON MAN OF ROCK. AFTER A HAND INJURY THAT WOULD HAVE HALTED MOST GUITARISTS IN THEIR TRACKS HE BATTLED A CONSTANT “YOU CAN’T DO THAT” FROM PARENTS, RECORD COMPANIES AND GUITAR BUILDERS, SURVIVED A REVOLVING DOOR OF BANDMATES (SINCE 1968 HE’S BEEN BLACK SABBATH’S ONLY CONSTANT MEMBER), AND EVEN BEAT CANCER. TO HONOUR HIS ASTOUNDING CAREER, GIBSON HAS RECREATED HIS HEAVILY MODIFIED SG SPECIAL, THE ‘MONKEY’ GUITAR. HERE, TONY WEAVES THE TALE OF THIS INSTRUMENT INTO THE STORY OF A CAREER THAT, WITHOUT SUCH DOGGED DETERMINATION, MIGHT NEVER HAVE HAPPENED...



Words Neville Marten Photography Olly Curtis

First of all, tell us about the monkey sticker. Does it have a particular significance? “Well, I had this jacket that I bought from Take 6 in London. I just barely afforded it and I wore it all the time. I wanted to make it a bit different for on stage, so I started putting metal stars and things on it. Then I found these monkeys and I thought, ‘I’ll put a couple of them on, and I’ll put one on the guitar as well.’ So I put one on the guitar and it became known as the ‘Monkey’ guitar.”

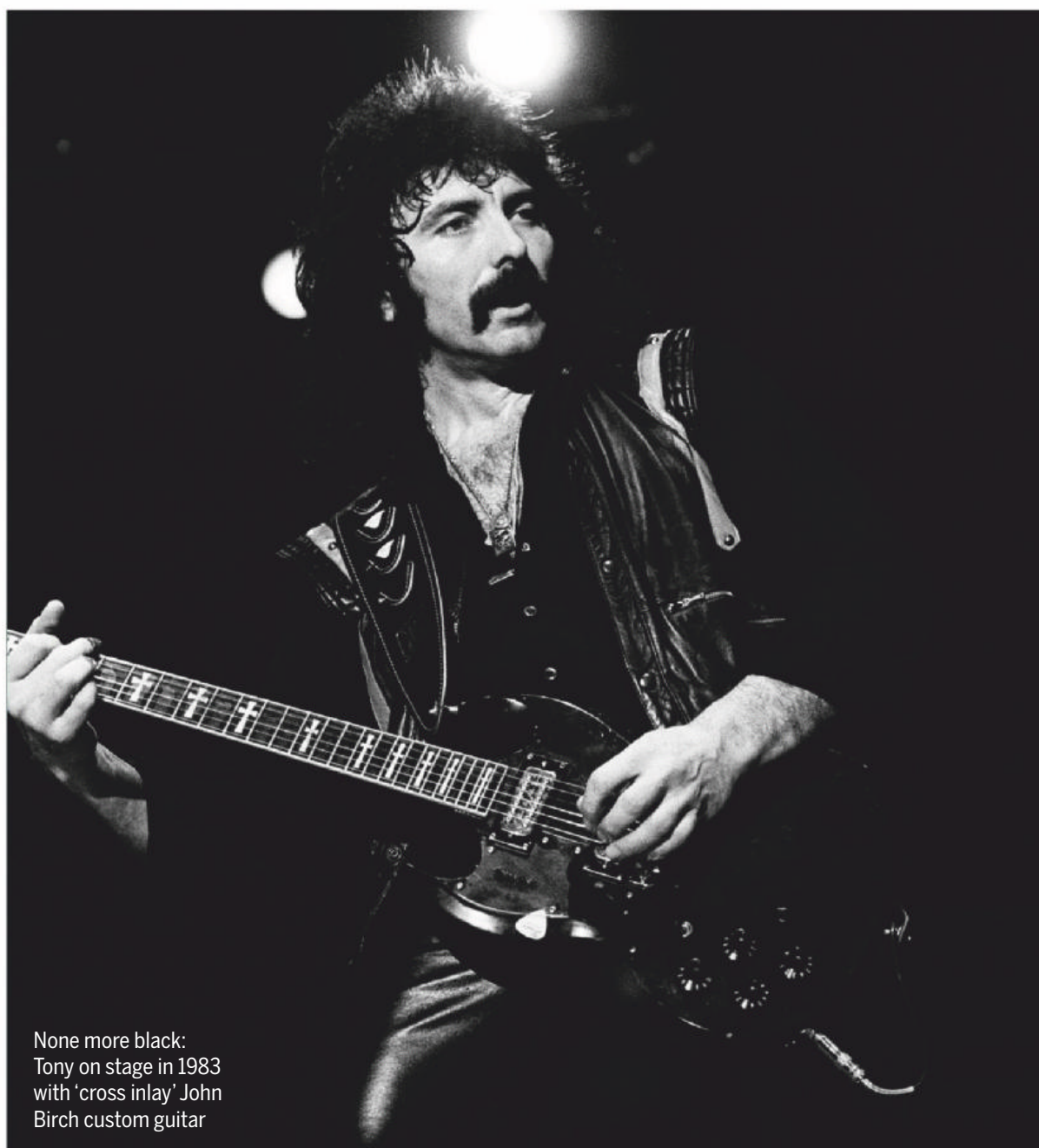
And how did the idea come about to recreate the Monkey SG with Gibson?

“It’s been talked about for quite a while. When the new owners came in they said, ‘Let’s do it’ – because that is my original guitar that was on all the early albums. I had a right-handed SG, upside-down, which I strung left-handed. But I heard of this guy who’d got a left-handed SG; he was right-handed and he played his upside-down. I didn’t know him from Adam, but we arranged to meet in a carpark. It looked a bit dodgy, but I finally got a left-handed SG.

“I had a Strat, which I played mainly, and I wanted another guitar as a spare. But when we came to record the first album [*Black Sabbath*], I played the very first song, *Wicked World*, with the Strat, and the pickup went, which is weird. In those days you couldn’t just go to the shop and get a pickup, and we only had two days in the studio. So I thought, ‘I’ve got to use this SG,’ and I ended up playing several albums on it.

“The band’s sound developed over a period. We’d be getting louder and heavier, and we decided this was the way we wanted to go – and I came up with that *Wicked World* riff. It was the first song we ever wrote and we really liked the way it was going. *Black Sabbath* was the next one. We played these in a blues club and people in the crowd came up afterwards: ‘What was that? We really liked it.’ ‘Oh, that’s one of our own songs.’ That sparked it all off, really. *Black Sabbath* was the benchmark of where we were going to go, and off we went.

“I think where we come from was also a great influence on the music, because it was



None more black:
Tony on stage in 1983
with ‘cross inlay’ John
Birch custom guitar

PHOTO BY BILL ROWNTREE/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES

a bit dismal where we lived. There were always gang fights and God knows what else. We worked in factories. I did and Ozzy did. Geezer was in the office; he was going to be an accountant. But there was a desire to escape, without a doubt. I’d always have these dreams of being on stage. But I never thought it would be musical, because I used to do contact sports. I thought it would be doing something like that. It was so weird when music took over. I remember playing one night and thinking, ‘Blimey, this is that image I used to see, of being on stage.’”

When metal happened, which you and your SG were fundamental to, was it a natural evolution from, say, Cream and Led Zeppelin, or was it the chemistry between the four of you?

“Yes, absolutely [the chemistry]. I’d played in a band with Bill Ward before. We’d joined this blues band up in Carlisle. Then when Bill and myself got together with Oz and Geez, it was a weird combination. Geez had played guitar before but never bass. Bill and I used to play in this place in Birmingham. They’d do an all-nighter with four or five bands. Geez was in this other band, and he’d be doing acid and climbing up walls. You’d go, ‘Blimey, he’s nutty that guy.’ We never

knew for a minute we’d end up playing with him. With Ozzy, I went to school with Ozzy and I never knew he was a singer.

“When we first got together we’d just learn 12-bar songs, and on the first gig we did, I didn’t even know what they were going to wear. Geezer came in in this long hippie dress. I’ve got my leather jacket on. Ozzy came with a shirt and a tap round his neck. I thought, ‘Bloody hell!’ We were a right odd bunch. But it brought us together and it just worked.”

Was there a decision to go that dark route? Was it that you wanted to be scary?

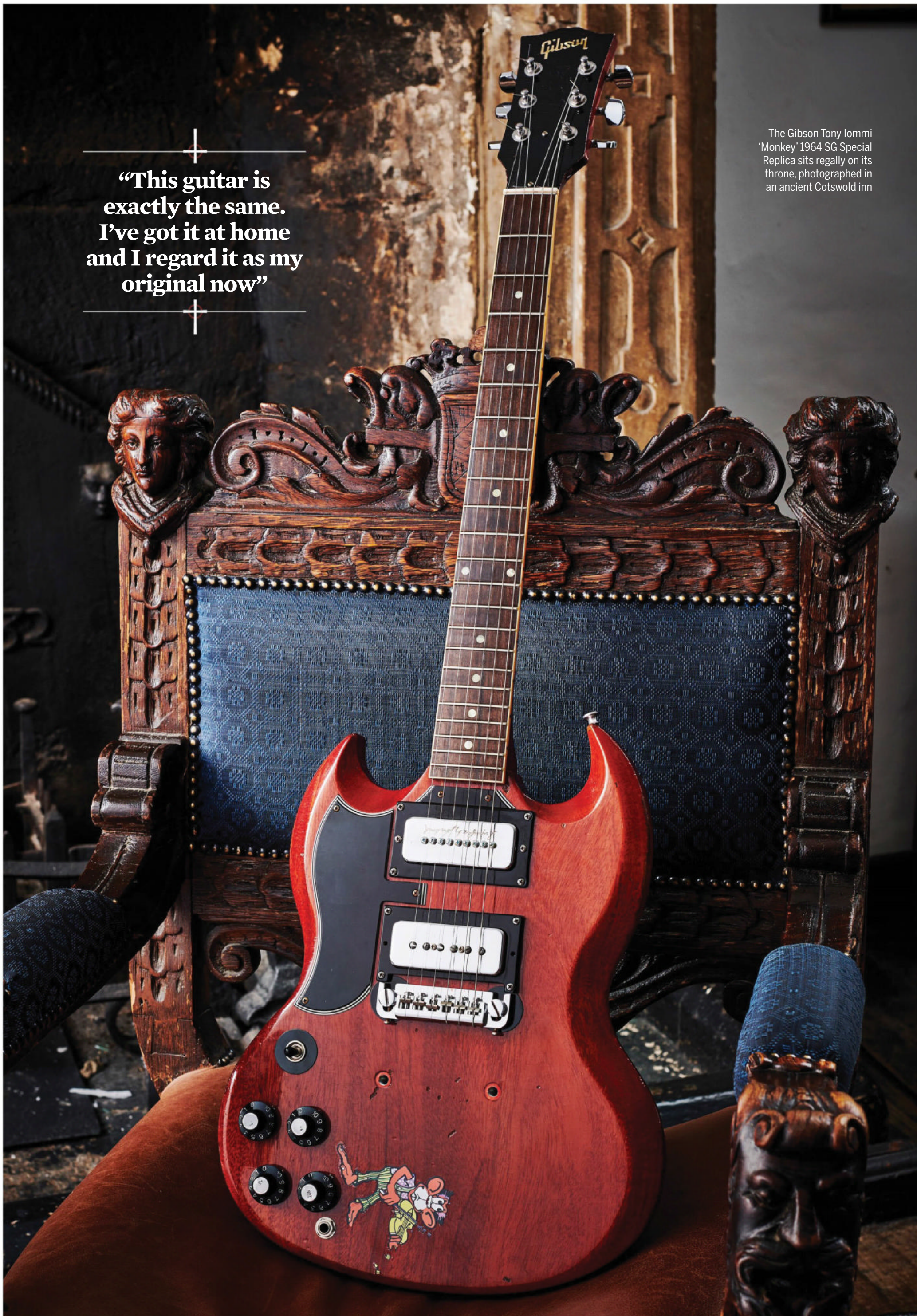
“Well, I was always interested, and so was Geezer, in horror movies and stuff like that. So we had this interest in the supernatural. We said, ‘Imagine how people get frightened, get that excitement from a horror movie, that fear. It would be nice to do that in music.’ And that’s how it took hold. Trying to make something in music that would give it the light and shade. Something a bit frightening. Which *Black Sabbath*, according to a lot of people, was. For a while we couldn’t get anybody to talk to us, because they thought we were going to turn them into a fish or something. The reputation built up and up and up.”

+

**“This guitar is
exactly the same.
I’ve got it at home
and I regard it as my
original now”**

+

The Gibson Tony Iommi
'Monkey' 1964 SG Special
Replica sits regally on its
throne, photographed in
an ancient Cotswold inn





Of course, the guitar builder John Birch was also Birmingham based, and he was important in customising your SG and getting it sounding and playing how you wanted, and needed, due to your injury... “Well, like I did with my Strat, I always used to have the SG in pieces. Do this to it, do that to it. Try and stop anything from feeding back, put tinfoil inside to shield all the bits, then dip the pickups and work on the frets, because they were too high for me. So I was constantly trying to improve it. Then the Badass bridge came out so you could adjust the intonation, which you couldn’t on the original Gibson SG Special bridge. That made a world of difference to me because I used such light gauge strings.

“Somebody recommended John Birch. I had these ideas that I wanted to try, because I’d approached some guitar companies and nobody was interested. I wanted a 24-fret guitar and I was told, ‘We can’t do it.’ So then when I said to John, ‘Can you build me a 24-fret guitar?’ he said, ‘Yes, let’s have a go.’ Then we began experimenting with pickups. I’d try them on the gigs – he had to make them by hand, so I’d go out and come back, ‘No, it’s not right.’ And he’d do another one and another one until we got one that we felt comfortable with. Then I used the John Birch neck pickup on the SG, and I got John to encase the other one in epoxy, the P-90, in one of his covers, to try and stop the feedback – it was always a constant battle because we played loud.”

So you shaved the frets down and then had the fretboard lacquered as well?

“Yes, John Birch did that as well. I tried everything I could to make it easier for me, because of my fingers. Having high frets was disastrous because I’ve got thimbles on: they’re hard, not like the skin where you just glide over. So I had the lacquer put on to build up the fretboard so I could sort of roll over the frets. All these things were experiments to make things work for me. Like the first fret. Because I was using light strings, everything had to be worked differently. It had to be right from the off, because I was already struggling.”

So the fact that you had to do all these modifications because of the injury to your fingers, created a sound that might otherwise never have happened...

“I think so. And I experimented all the time. I’d always hear, ‘You can’t do that.’ Constantly. ‘Oh no, you can’t do that. 24-fret guitar, you can’t do that. It wouldn’t be harmonically right.’ ‘I’m using light-gauge strings.’ ‘You can’t do that.’ I can, I’ve done it. I’ve made my own set up, out of banjo strings first and dropped the gauge down. I eventually got Picato to make them, and then all the other companies caught on.

“But I constantly had to struggle with people saying, ‘You can’t do that.’ So I would find people to do it. It’s like with the amp. I had this treble booster – a Rangemaster – and I wanted it modified. This guy I met when I lived up in Carlisle with Bill Ward, this guitarist from a band that became Spooky Tooth, said, ‘I can make that sound better. I’ll take it and bring it back tomorrow.’ He could have really cocked

1. “I had Schaller tuners put on; you’d turn the old plastic keys and nothing would happen, after years of use”

2. “John Birch made me the neck pickup. We tried various ones and came up with this, the P-90 he set in epoxy”

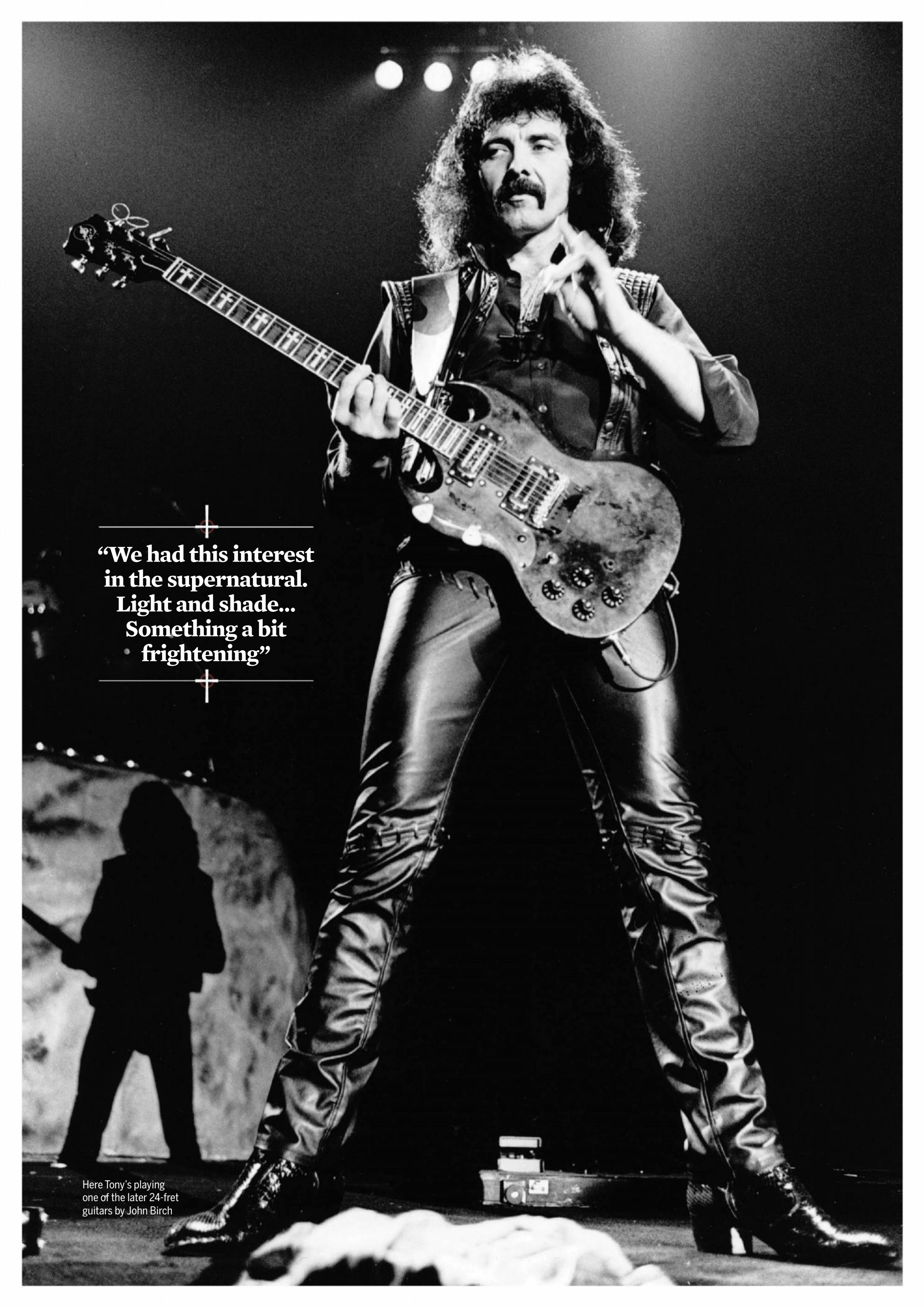
HEAVEN AND HELL

Tony on the highs – and infernal lows – of Sabbath’s ride to fame

“There’s been so many highs that we’ve had over the years. Every stage we’ve gone through. For us, when we first played Madison Square Gardens, that was like, ‘Oh,’ you know. And then we actually did it again and again and again, and then we got this plaque from Madison Square Gardens for selling the most seats at one point. So those were high times. And then different events we’ve done have become another high point. There’s so many of them. But it was definitely a high.

“The low points of it were all the other things that happened. The management thing we went through at one point, which was awful – getting law suits while we were in a bloody recording session, you know. Going to court in the morning, having to wear a suit and tie, which none of us ever had, and then coming [back] in the night to come and record the *Sabotage* album. Things like that. And of course other things would come up, within the period of the success comes the gloom as well.”

PHOTO BY CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES



“We had this interest
in the supernatural.
Light and shade...
Something a bit
frightening”

Here Tony's playing
one of the later 24-fret
guitars by John Birch

“I had to go against all these people who said, ‘You can’t do it.’ I just wouldn’t accept that”

it up, but he took it away, put different components in it, brought it back and I loved it. It had got a great sound with the amps I was using at that time, which were Marshall 50s. He’d given it sustain and everything. So I went to a company saying, ‘Could you build this booster into the amp?’ ‘We can’t do that.’

“But I’ve always had determination. I have to try and make something work and go against all these people who say, ‘You can’t do it.’ The same with my accident: they said, ‘You won’t be able to play any more.’ And I just wouldn’t accept that. I thought, ‘There’s got to be a way.’ It just made me try and figure out a way I could play. And the same with the music. ‘You can’t be playing that sort of stuff, it’s never going to sell and never going to do any good,’ but it’s a belief that you have to carry on.

“Before the accident, I could play regular chords like everybody else. But after the accident I had to think of different ways to approach the thing, because I couldn’t play a full chord the way they could. I used to work on a way to make the sound bigger and get as much out of the guitar as I could, hence all the fiddling about and making the thimbles. It was really a struggle. You had to be dedicated. I’m listening to all these people going, ‘You’re never going to be able to do that.’ So it was an upwards struggle from day one. Even my parents: ‘You’re not going to be able to play. Get a proper job.’”

You’ve told how your struggles to get the guitar right included John Birch building and modifying pickups. There’s a Birch one on the new SG, too. It’s obviously not made by him as John passed away years ago...

“Gibson got in touch with the people who worked with John. John had another guy working with him called John Diggins, who came on the road with me. JD got to know what sort of thing I’d like and what I’d use, and, of course, later on he started his company, Jaydee. But JD has sort of pulled back a bit now. His sons have worked for



Tony proudly displays the guitar that he now calls his “original”

him for quite a while, so they build guitars as well. So it was somebody, I assume, there that they contacted. But the idea with this guitar was to reproduce everything about it, and they really have reproduced it exactly – every little bump and knock. When I saw it I said, ‘Bloody hell!’ It’s scary.”

Where’s the original?

“That’s in the Hard Rock Cafe now. It’s been in New York for a while, but they pulled it out of there to do this guitar. I’d stopped touring with it, because it was too fragile. I was worried about anything happening to it or it getting stolen. It used to travel with me all the time, but as you get more successful, it goes with the crew. So then it was out of my hands and I was a bit worried about that. I thought, ‘I’m going to stop touring with it.’

“So I kept the SG at home. Then it went into storage and I thought, ‘It’s a shame, really.’ Then the Hard Rock got in touch about selling it. The deal was they could have it, they’d pay me for it, and if I ever wanted it back, pay them the money back.

The guy is dead now who I’d done the deal with, but I thought it would be better for people to be able to see it than me having it in a case with all the others.”

And you tuned the SG down to E_b with very light strings, again to help with your struggle to play, let alone to come up with some of the greatest rock riffs of all time!

“I had different gauges on stage for different songs. Because one album we did, *Master Of Reality*, we tuned down three semitones. So if we do any songs off that album, I need a guitar with a thicker string. But generally on stage, from the early days it was eights. It was .008, .011, .016, down to .032. Actually, the first album was in regular tuning, but then we tuned down on stage, both for Ozzy and for me with my fingers.

“But, yes, they relied on me to come up with the riffs. Geezer came up with some as well, but it was mainly me. Hence if I didn’t come up with anything we’d be stumped – and that did happen later when we went to do what turned out to be *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*. We’d had a great time doing *Vol 4*



Black Sabbath in 1970:
Bill Ward, Tony Iommi,
Ozzy Osbourne and
Geezer Butler

PHOTO BY CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

in the Record Plant [in Los Angeles], so we went back to America, to the same house and everything. But Stevie Wonder had built a bloody Moog in the studio so [the space] was too small. That was the first disaster. The next one was I couldn't come up with any ideas; it was just horrible. So we came back to England and we had a few weeks off. Then we hired Clearwell Castle in Wales and we set the gear up in the dungeons to give us some inspiration. The first thing I came up with was *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*. The first riff I did! I thought, 'That's it, we're off.' So that led the way and we were going again.

"Usually, the riffs would come first. Ozzy would sing anything on it, then that would go to Geezer who would do the lyrical side. So Geezer was generally the one who came up with the lyrics, and Ozzy would do the melody lines. We'd use some of the words from the original thing he'd just made up, so it was a combination of everybody, really.

"But we weren't bothered about money. We really weren't, because we didn't have anything anyway. We just wanted to play.

Our highlight when we first started was to get out of Birmingham and play in London. And, of course, when we did that they hated us. It was a bit of a disaster, really.

"We played at the Speakeasy, and we'd just started out. It was Alvin Lee, actually, who got us that gig. I used to go round to his house and I brought the lads round a couple of times. We'd sit there talking about what we were going to do. We said to him one day, 'We're going to change the name,' because we were called Earth, and we said, 'We're going to change it to Black Sabbath.' 'Oh, that will never do any good.' We plagued him for years about that."

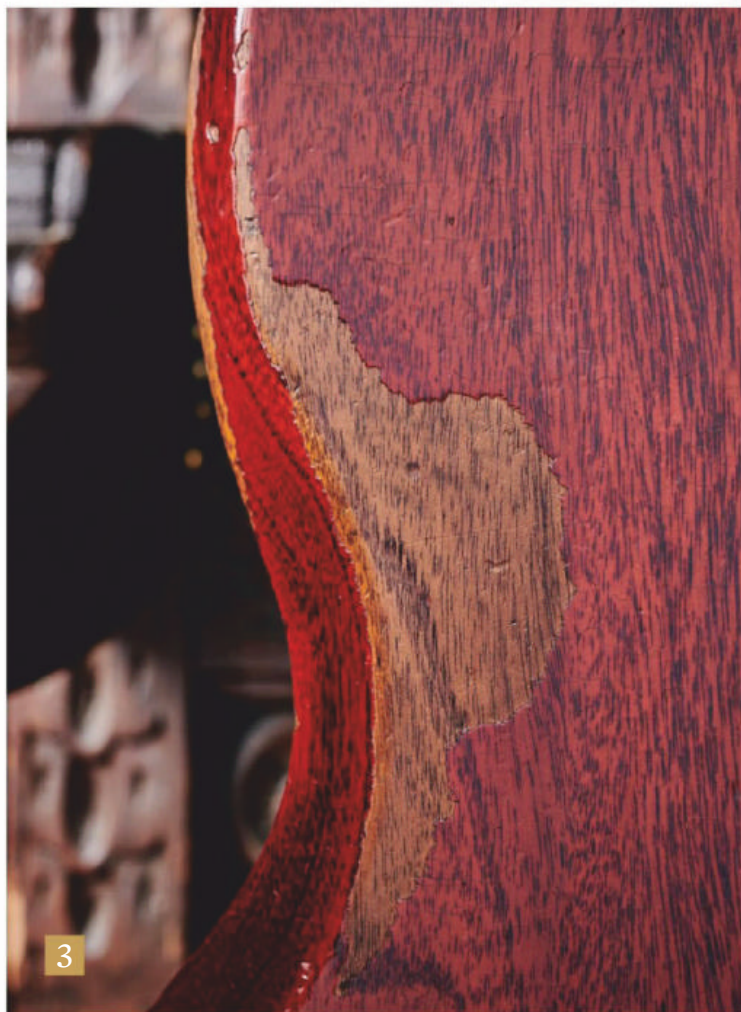
You're known as the Dark Lord Of Riffs, but you could have played in many different bands, because your playing is broad enough and you're musical enough...

"Thanks. It's hard for me to see. I tend to set myself in that vein with what we do. I've always been a bit, not scared, to jump out of my field. I do on my own, but if you shoved me in the Eagles I'd go, 'Oh Christ, what do I do here?' Much like when I was with Jethro

Tull. I did that short thing with them, after Mick Abrahams and before Martin Barre.

"We'd supported them on one of their gigs, and they asked me and I was like, 'Oh God, I don't know.' On the way back, I was driving the van and I said, 'They've asked me if I'll join them.' And they're going, 'You should go for it, it's a great opportunity.' I felt really bad. When I had a call from their office to come down and play, I went to London. I got there and there's like 50 guitar players. I went, 'Oh God, what's going on?' because I thought it was just me. I got really nervous and walked out and a guy came running after me. He said, 'Don't go, don't go.' I said, 'I can't do it, there's all these other guitar players.' He said, 'Sit in the cafe and when they're all gone I'll come and get you.' So that's what we did. And then they offered me the job.

"It was good and bad, because I felt really sad for the others. When I went down to play with them I took Geezer with me. I kept saying to him, 'I don't feel comfortable about it.' When I told them, 'It's not for me,' they said, 'We've got this movie [*The Rolling*



3

3. "It's so perfect [when compared] to the original," says Tony. "You could put them both in front of me and I couldn't tell the difference"

4. "In the end we had copper inside to shield it from all the noise, because I was using the booster and the P-90s were single coils"



5

5. "Even the monkey sticker, where the transfer's gone a bit; they've copied that"

6. "I also had a first fret put on, just to help with the tuning. With the light gauge strings that I was using, it was always difficult to tune it"

Stones Rock And Roll Circus] and we can't get anybody else quickly enough. Could you do it?" I said, 'Yes, I'd do that.' Then I started doing that and meeting John Lennon and everybody, and I thought to myself, 'Have I done the right thing, going back to playing at this blues club up the road?' But that's how it happened."

What about your influences? Given the era in which you grew up, where there was so much new music happening, presumably Hank Marvin was high on the list as you're a melodic player yourself?

"Absolutely. Me and Brian May both loved Hank. We're not widdly diddies. Brian and I have done a few things, played together on albums. We were in the studio together once and we started playing Shadows stuff. So it was mainly Hank, then Chuck Berry and a bit of Buddy Holly. I liked Clapton. I liked John Mayall. That line-up was really appealing. When he went with Cream I wasn't so enthusiastic, but then I got used to Cream. I loved his style and his sound.

"But, yes, you had bands like The Moody Blues, Fleetwood Mac, John Mayall, Cream. Then you had Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and us. We knew Planty and Bonham. Bonham was best man at my first wedding. I used to knock about with him a lot. We used to play the same gigs. We'd be playing at this club and he'd be with another band. 'They fired me.' 'What happened?' 'I'm too loud.' And then he'd go with another band and get fired from them because he was too loud. He was constantly in and out of bands."

Did anybody else turn you on later? People like Yngwie Malmsteen or Van Halen?

"Van Halen, yes. We took Van Halen on their first big tour. They were with us for eight months. Eddie was playing things I'd never seen before. We're still friends and we became friends then. Of course, he set off a whole new load of players playing like that, and now I can't believe some of them. I can't follow it. I certainly couldn't do it."

So, any plans to make new music with your new SG? More solo stuff? Collaborations?

"Well, that's the million-dollar question. I've got loads of stuff. I keep saying to Ralph [Baker], my manager, 'I want to put it down properly,' but the engineer I've used for years, Mike Exeter, has gone on to do other things... I'd like to put some stuff down, but it won't be a touring band. Actually, Brian May came over and I gave him four or five CDs of riffs, and he's going, 'You've got to do an album with these, just put them out like that.' I said, 'No, I don't want to do that. I'm going to do them properly.'"

"I played a Strat, but its pickup went so I had to use the spare SG. I ended up playing several albums on it"



4



It would be great to get people you really admired to participate. They'd jump at it! "Yes, I'd like that. I sort of did it with the *Iommi* album in 2000. I had Dave Grohl, Billy Corgan and all sorts of people on it. Another two embarrassing things that I didn't go for was one where they said, 'This chap wants to do something. Eminem.' 'Who the bloody hell is Eminem?' I didn't know, and I went, 'Oh, no.' And Kid Rock. So I turned a few people down that became quite big later, but I hadn't the faintest idea. I'd tried to do it before with Planty and a few others, but it was so hard because of management and all that. But the last one, they really wanted to do it, and I enjoyed playing with different people."

When you were struggling to play again, possibly wondering if you ever really would, could you have imagined that a company would build you a guitar, let alone Gibson?
 "No, never – when I think back, how difficult it was. Now you could say, 'Send me a couple of guitars,' whichever company it is, and they'd do it. But I believe in having guitars I like; I don't just want loads of guitars. There's always been companies saying, 'Can we give you a couple of guitars?' 'But I'm using these – I like these.' Not to be funny, I knew people years ago who would have anything they could and then sell it!
 "But getting back to this guitar, they said they'd do it and straight away they did it. And it's exactly the same. *Exactly* the same. It was my guitar and *I* can't bloody tell. I've got it at home in my bedroom. I regard that as my original now!" **G**

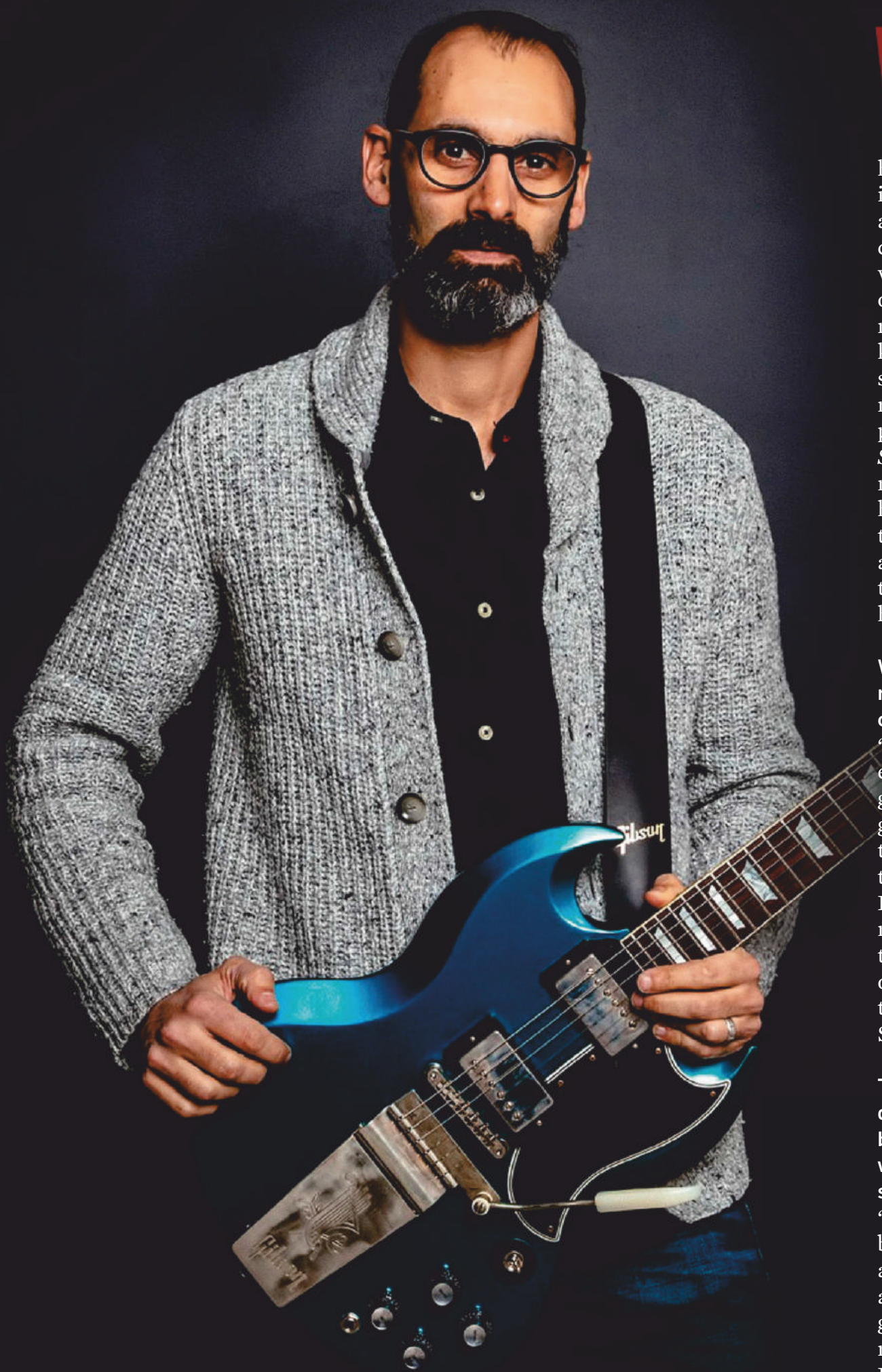


THE WIZARD

Cesar Gueikian is the man behind Gibson's hyper-exacting replica of the 'Monkey' SG. That's no accident because it's the guitar that got Cesar into playing in the first place, he explains...



Words Jamie Dickson



What does working on this guitar mean to you?
“I play guitar because of that record, *Black Sabbath*. When I was 10 years old and my dad had a vinyl record collection, that one was in it and I was going through the records and that cover really was so eerie and it caught my attention. So I wanted to see what that was about and I put that record on. I had to open it because my dad had never opened that record. I don't even know why he had it – he doesn't live today, so I can't really go back and ask him – but he never really opened it. So I opened it up and put it on and then I heard that song *Black Sabbath* and I was like ‘Oh my God, I really need to learn how to play guitar.’ And now, having the opportunity to work with Tony, that's coming full circle for me personally, and becoming such a passion project – and then in a way becoming a little closer with him and developing a friendship.”

What were the main challenges of recreating Tony's 'Monkey' SG? The original was heavily modded...

“The folks at Hard Rock were gracious enough to give us access to the original guitar, so that was awesome, but once we'd got the guitar, we realised how intricate the lacquer checking had become over time. There were also other challenges. For example, we commissioned an artist to recreate the sticker and then we had to do the ageing. So we had to have it made, put it on, then age the sticker to look exactly like the one the way it is on the original guitar. So it was a pretty involved process.”

Tell us about the hardware – it's quite distinctive. The pickups, of course, hark back to the work of the late John Birch, so what influence do you feel they have on the sound of the 'Monkey' SG?

“Yes, the pickups were originally done by John Birch in England, and those are an integral part of the sound. We were able to work with John's apprentice – a guy who worked with John for many, many years – and he now carries the John Birch brand forward. So he was able to do authentic recreations of those original

pickups. They're a little bit higher-output than regular P-90s and they have a little bit more attack as well. That is not a scientific interpretation of the pickup, but it is my personal view. And so they bring probably a little more out of that guitar.

"I think they're a little bit overwound and then they have the magnets in a different place as you can see from the pickups. All that contributes to a little bit of a dirtier sound, and also the cool thing about them is that even when you roll the volume all the way up or you have gain on

"Working on this guitar is probably the highlight of my life"

your amp, you still get a really clean sound out of a really heavy overdriven sound. So it doesn't muddy up. Which kind of, with a P-90, you want it a little bit muddier. And with these, you kind of get that clarity, which I think is because of the magnets and because it's a little bit overwound.

"The way he modified it with that bridge, that's also part of the sound. The lacquer on the fretboard and the way that guitar resonates is also part of the sound. You also need the treble booster [see box, right]. When we were just getting started with this project, I had lunch with Tony over in England and I said 'What was the secret to your sound?' and he said 'You know what, it was just the Laney with a treble booster.'"

How do you feel about the process of making this guitar now that it's complete?

"It's probably the highlight of my life. It really is – it's the ultimate privilege to be able to work with Tony. Even if we were designing something else, I would be equally as stoked as I am right now. It's the highlight of my life." 

Black Country tone: an original LA100 BL (right) and Laney's reissue



BLACK COUNTRY BOOST

Why you'll need Laney amps and treble boost to complete Tony's tone

No study of Iommi's seminal early sound would be complete without making mention of his amp and effects setup, which is simple but pivotal to its menacing sonic presence. Simon Fraser-Clark of Laney talks us through it.

"The original Laney LA100 BL amps Tony was using in 1967 were super-simple: very, very unsophisticated. Single channel, very little gain, with a quartet of EL34s in the power section. You had to dime it all the way across and get everything up to '10'. There's a really weird thing as well: the first amps that were built used Partridge box-frame transformers. And there is this thing that happens when you saturate the output section – there's a weird undertone that is there. It's almost sounds like an octave below, but it's not an octave below. When we were working on recreating those amps, Tony sent me a load of guitar tracks, just solo'd stems from the album – and I thought they were multi-tracked. But he said, 'No, it's not multi-tracked,' so I was listening to just one guitar. But there was this sub-undertone, which as soon as you notice it's there it becomes really obvious. When you bend it doesn't track properly – it gives you this weird oscillation that then catches up to the note. It's kind of like a ghost tone.

"The fact everything had to be turned up loud with those amps was why Tony also used a Dallas Arbiter Rangemaster with them in the front-end, purely to hit that amp harder to make it break up. Before Tony formed Sabbath he was playing in a band up north with another guitar player, who also had a Dallas

Arbiter Rangemaster. It sounded better than Tony's. So Tony said, 'Why does yours sound better than mine?' And the guy said, 'Well, my brother modified it.' So Tony said, 'Well, would he modify mine?' So he did. Tony came back, the band broke up, he formed Sabbath. So, an LA100 BL, modified Dallas Rangemaster... that was his sound until in 1982, they employed a new tech who went through Tony's gear, built him a new pedalboard, everything. Old stuff? Thrown away.

"Problem was, Tony had never opened the back of the Dallas Arbiter Rangemaster in order to see what the mod was. So no-one knew. So when we built the new LA 100 amps for Tony, he said we'll need the pedal as well. So we said, 'What do you mean you'll need a pedal as well?' And we said, 'What do you want?' And he said, 'I want one like my old Rangemaster.' So, again, we bought up some old Rangemasters to try out, but because we didn't know what the mod was, we had to basically mod something, send it to him and say, 'Is it that?' and he'd be like 'No.' But we carried on listening and testing until eventually we said, 'Hang on, how about that?' and it was like, 'Yeah, that's it.' And he said, 'All right, I'll have one.' And it was sat in his rack. But that was like 18 months of R&D time in a box, so then we thought, 'We don't make pedals – let's make some pedals.' So that's where the TI Boost came from, where we were 50 years old so we decided we'd reissue 50 sets of Tommy's original amp, his original speaker and the original pedal."



The top-of-the-line Custom model featured gold-plated hardware and a white finish as standard

ROCK SOLID

We take a close look at Gibson's iconic SG range from past to present with Mat Koehler, head of Product Development at Gibson, and David Davidson, owner of Well Strung Guitars and COO and curator of the Songsbirds vintage guitar museum

Words Rod Brakes

Throughout the 1950s, Gibson continuously revisited and reworked its Les Paul range. One of the most significant changes occurred in 1958 when, in response to customer requests, Gibson modernised its single-cutaway Les Paul Junior, TV and Special models with double-cutaway body designs. Featuring rounded horns, the revised Junior and TV guitars began shipping that year, followed by the Special in early '59. Then in late '59 Gibson rebranded the Les Paul Special and Les Paul TV; renamed the SG Special and SG TV respectively, it marked the beginning of the end for Gibson's original Les Paul range of solidbody electrics that began in 1952 with the Les Paul Model (Goldtop).

By 1961, these rounded double-cutaway guitars, along with the Les Paul Standard/'Burst and Les Paul Custom's classic single-cutaway form, had been superseded by a profoundly different design sporting a thin bevelled body with pointed double cutaways. Although this unmistakable profile is commonly referred to as an 'SG', it wasn't until 1963 – following the expiration of Les Paul's endorsement contract in 1962 – that the Junior, Standard and Custom joined the TV and Special in receiving their official SG model designation.

It was a notably creative period in the electric guitar building industry. As the market gathered momentum in the wake of rock 'n' roll, Gibson president, Ted McCarty – acutely aware of the continued success enjoyed by competitors Fender and Gretsch – responded to the booming demand by testing the water with innovative designs. Still, despite being highly coveted today, many of these formative instruments were not considered successful by Gibson at the time and were therefore subject to ongoing modifications and/or discontinuation.

"If you go through Gibson's history and look at their electric guitars, they rarely got it right the first time," points out Well Strung Guitars' David Davidson. As a vintage-guitar-dealing veteran with over 40 years' experience and the current COO



From '61 the SG TV had a white finish as standard; otherwise it was virtually identical to the Cherry Red SG Junior

and curator of the Songsbirds vintage guitar museum in Chattanooga, Tennessee, David answered our call to his shop in Farmingdale, New York, to help us gather some pearls of SG wisdom.

"Gibson were constantly playing catch-up with their competitors," continues David. "Every guitar Fender had churned out was an instant hit that didn't need to be modified. When they made the Stratocaster, it was great; when they made the Esquire, it was great; when they made the Broadcaster,

it was great. They were just great right out of the box. Whereas Gibson took years. When you look at the Les Paul, they were always trying to make it better because they failed the first time. When they made the Les Paul Model [in 1952] they had the silly trapeze [tailpiece]. Then they had the stud tailpiece. It wasn't until they had the ABR-1 [Tune-o-matic bridge] and PAFs [by 1957] that they got it right. But then they come and remodel the guitar again!

"They needed to make the [SG-style] Les Paul Standard and Custom fancy to compete with Fender, so they put a sideways Vibrola on, but they kind of over-engineered the whole thing. They went on to try several different types of tailpiece, but I think the only one that ever really worked well for Gibson generally was a Bigsby. Most people took the Vibrolas off and put a stop tailpiece on. That's why there are so many guitars that've been converted over the years. It would've been a great guitar if they did it that way from the beginning. Those early years are important because the model's reputation gets solidified very

"If you go through Gibson's history and look at their electric guitars, they rarely got it right first time"



Standard model in Cherry Red: “The ebony block with the pearl inlays was mainly decorative,” says David. “With the short Maestro Vibrola, it just gussied the guitar up a little bit”



The 'Les Paul' signature disappeared from the Standard model's headstock in 1963 when it was renamed the SG Standard

quickly. If a guitar comes out and it's not a great player straight out of the box, people tend to move on to what plays well.”

“Gibson experimented with many vibrato systems, especially in the early 60s,” agrees vintage guitar expert Mat Koehler. After spending years running a vintage guitar store, Mat teamed up with the Gibson Custom Shop prior to his current role as head of Product Development. He speaks to us directly from Gibson's headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee.

“There was an almost manic sense of trying to find a vibrato system that worked,” he says. “There were at least half a dozen different trem systems Gibson used in the 60s. The reason was to compete with Fender who had the Stratocaster; the Strat had a tremolo system and Gibson thought that it needed to have one. Arguably, they never did find one that worked even remotely as well as the one on a Strat.

“Looking back, it wasn't the best solution to compete with a Stratocaster, but I will say that when set up well, a long Maestro [Vibrola] on an SG feels right at home. I like the balance better with a Vibrola, but there's a reason why a lot of players modified their SGs to have a stop bar: it offers great tuning stability and a little bit more sustain. The SG Junior and SG Special have wrap-around tailpieces, but even though those guitars are

killer, I don't think that's how [the SG] was originally intended; I think it was originally designed with the side pull trem in mind, as a way to balance the guitar.”

A DOUBLE-CUT FUTURE

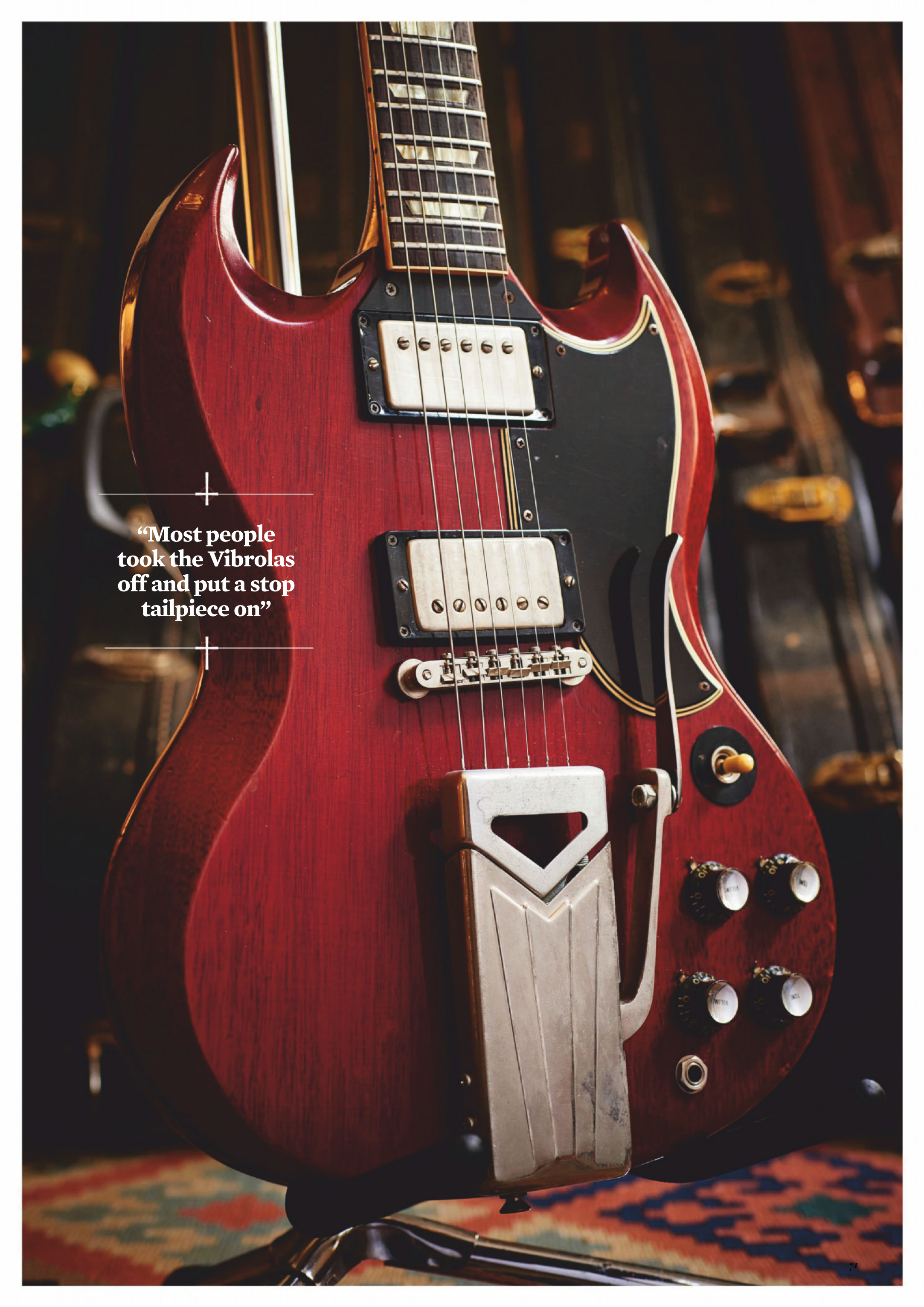
Originally, the key concepts of the SG were most likely presented by the Gibson sales team who tended to keep a close eye on the competition while receiving feedback from dealers and musicians. By 1960, they'd become convinced that double-cutaway electrics were the way forward.

“The Les Paul Special and Junior were already modified into a [rounded] double-cutaway design, and they knew they wanted to modify the Standard and Custom in a similar way,” explains Mat. “As regards the design of the SG itself, all the old-timers from the factory point to a guy called Larry Allers. Larry was a woodworker. He was a foreman of the woodworking area and was promoted to an ‘engineer’. That was Gibson's way of promoting you – to call you an engineer. He became a project manager and if any highly specialised custom orders came along, Larry would often end up with the job. I think they just compiled all their notes from the sales team, gave them to Larry, and he came up with the SG [design].”

Initially, sales of the new design were encouraging: “We know that Ted McCarty

thought Les Paul's popularity was waning, and we know that sales of the single-cut Les Pauls were not going well,” Mat tells us. “But according to the shipping numbers, the new SG was received very well. It helps that Gibson went to the '61 NAMM Show without any single-cut solidbody guitars – just their newly redesigned line of sleek, streamlined double-cutaway instruments. That clearly helped sell them to dealers. Sales were off the charts in the first couple of years, but it did decline steadily throughout the 60s. It's no coincidence they reintroduced the single-cutaway Les Paul [in 1968]. By this time, the SG was not necessarily out of favour, but it didn't have the same kind of success as in the early 60s.

“I think it all circles around what the famous players were using. Eric Clapton and Keith Richards were using single-cutaway Les Pauls, but it took years to catch on. The same goes for SGs. With the exception of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, there weren't that many famous players using an SG when they first appeared in the early 1960s, but it gets going years later with Pete Townshend and Eric Clapton/The Fool. George Harrison also played SGs, but there aren't that many artists you can point to before the mid-60s. Gibson was struggling to find its identity, especially with the rise of Fender on the West Coast. Automotive



+
“Most people
took the Vibrolas
off and put a stop
tailpiece on”
+

“**[Gibson] were over-engineering solutions. That’s evident from the ever-changing SG**”

design was a major influence across the industry – the colours and exaggerated features mimicking automotive trends – but I think Gibson still thought of themselves as an archtop building company, even throughout the 60s. I mean, look at their endorsements and advertisements: it was all jazz players and archtop guys.”

While Fender and Gretsch embraced the aesthetics of classic American car culture in an effort to win over the young, upwardly mobile guitar-buying public, Gibson remained more reserved.

“There were some custom colour orders, but they’re as rare as hen’s teeth,” says Mat. “Nowhere in the catalogue did it say, ‘If you want something that’s not listed, send us a message,’ but you would have had to do a handwritten request to the factory in Kalamazoo for a custom colour SG. When you get to the mid-60s, you start seeing more custom colour SGs, normally in Firebird colours like Pelham Blue.”

BEYOND THE CUSTOM COLOURS

“Back in the old days, I’m sure if you wrote a letter to Gibson asking for a colour from the [Firebird] chart on such-and-such a guitar they’d make it for you,” concurs David. “Also, I think custom colour guitars would sometimes be made and displayed at a trade show then sold on. The earliest [SGs] I’ve seen in colours are always Customs, not Standards – I have one in Cherry Red, one in black, and I also have a sunburst from ’63. When it comes to Standards, I have an Inverness Green, a Pelham Blue, a Sparkling Burgundy, a Cardinal Red and one in black. We also have a custom-ordered ’64 SG Standard in Cherry Sunburst at the museum. I think ’64 to ’66 was the crest of the wave. Custom colour SGs are pretty darn scarce from the late 60s and are pretty much done by the beginning of the 70s.

“Throughout the [70s] Norlin period and beyond, they tried to make the SG into the cheaper guitar – ‘the affordable Gibson’. I think they were trying to reinvent the wheel and the SG really suffered: the necks got really thin, the quality of the workmanship went way down, and they tried to make

many models that were unsuccessful – like the SG-200. They lost their way, but Gibson are doing the best thing now by going back to their roots and making them correctly.”

“The Norlin era is a different animal altogether,” says Mat. “Having access to the engineering archive, I think the pity about it is that they were a lot more proactive about things than people often think. They were always problem solving. But that was to the detriment of everything. They were basically over-steering and over-engineering solutions. That’s evident from the ever-changing SG designs to the bracing on the acoustic guitars. That’s not to say they didn’t make some great instruments; it’s just the process was a lot different in that era than it was earlier. SGs were a much easier guitar for Gibson to build in all of their forms, compared with single-cutaway Les Pauls because they don’t have maple tops and binding – they’re easier to make and easier to get through production.

“In the 60s, I think Larry [Allers] was steeped in the Gibson tradition of building set-neck instruments and with the SG he was just trying to build a solid-bodied modern-looking guitar. I don’t think he was that intent on changing the way production operated at the time, which is something I can relate to now. We have very specific ways of hand-crafting set-neck guitars. It’s a process. To do that right you have to build

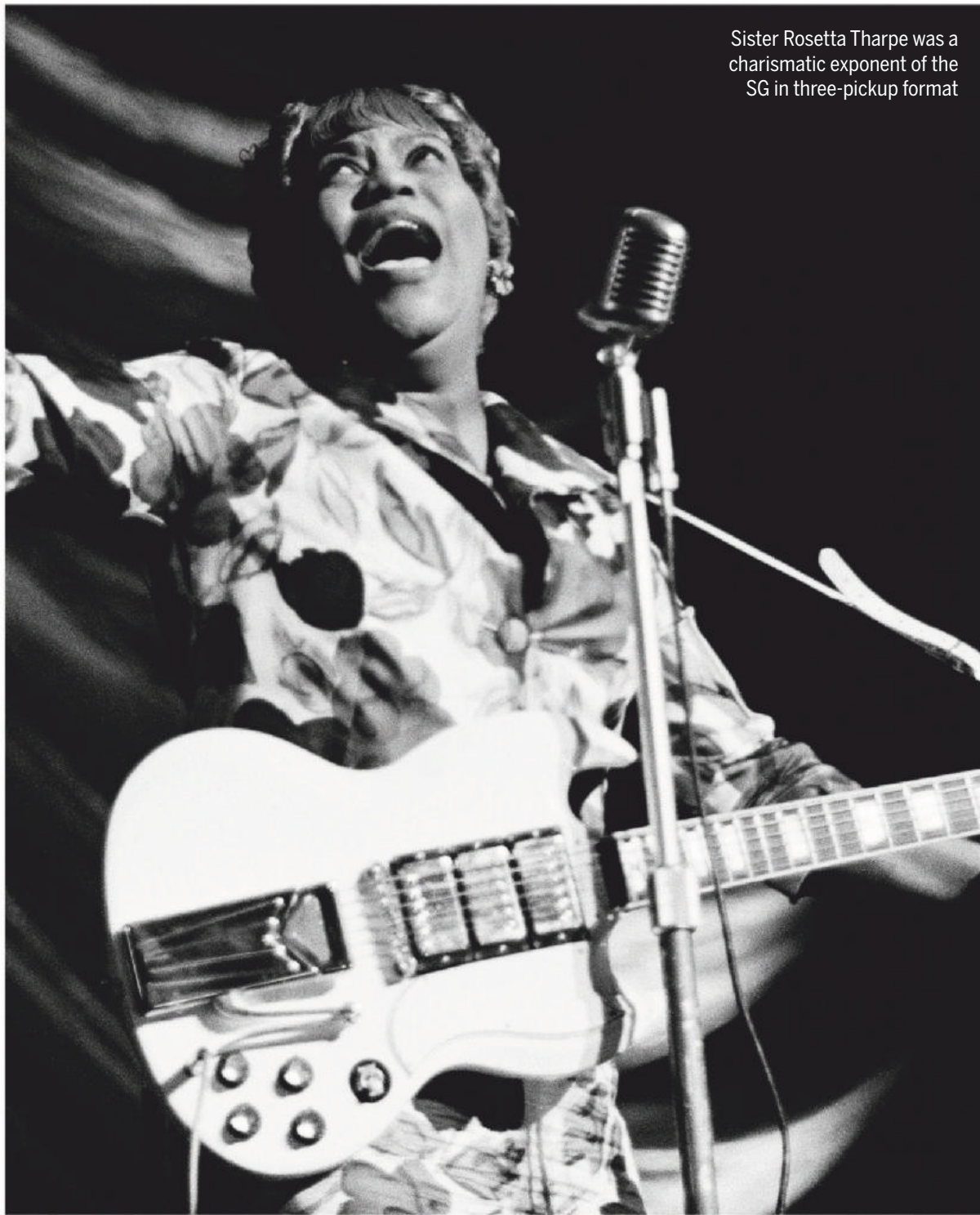
the neck tenon a little bit larger than the area that accepts it, and you kind of chisel away as you go while being mindful of the neck angle. It can take up to an hour just to set the neck of one guitar.”

Today, Gibson is returning to its roots with a fresh perspective under new leadership.

“On the one hand we’re returning to our roots in terms of design,” says Mat, “and on the other we’re being more mindful of how we are perhaps stuck in our ways on the manufacturing side. It’s not like a Norlin situation: we are just finding ways to modernise our production. That’s where the real work comes into play. We’re asking not only what makes it the best instrument, but what’s the strongest, smartest and most historically accurate instrument we can make. It’s about finding ways to modernise production and go back to what made our instruments great in the first place.

“We still have the same goal, but we have fresh, new ways of thinking about it. And we’re definitely not having machinery take the place of people, because try as we might to modernise to that extent, the answer to most of our problems is usually: find an expert. There’s usually a human being who can get us the result we’re looking for.” **G**

Guitarist would like to thank Paul Tucker, Vintage ‘n’ Rare Guitars of Bath, and the Songbirds Guitar Museum



Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a charismatic exponent of the SG in three-pickup format

PHOTO BY TONY EVANS/GETTY IMAGES



This Custom model features a super-rare Cherry Red custom colour finish

SOLID CHOICE

From Epiphone’s new Inspired by Gibson collection to the Gibson Custom Shop, here’s our pick from the incredible range of SGs available now...

Words Rod Brakes



© WWW.GEAR4MUSIC.COM

Gibson Custom Shop 1963 Les Paul SG Custom Reissue w/ Maestro Vibrola £5,299

Top of the line in '63 and today, this reissue Custom has been painstakingly recreated using Gibson's traditional building methods. Sporting a solid one-piece mahogany body and long tenon, hide-glue fit neck, Classic White vintage patina nitro finish, solid ebony fretboard, mother-of-pearl block inlays, and Custombucker Alnico III humbuckers, this guitar was built to turn heads.



© WWW.PMTONLINE.CO.UK

Gibson Custom Shop 1961 Les Paul SG Standard Reissue Stop Bar £3,399

The model is hand-crafted using old-school Kalamazoo factory methods and materials, with a hide-glue 'board/neck/body construction and a nitrocellulose Cherry Red finish. The ABR-1 Tune-o-matic bridge has brass saddles and a lightweight aluminium stop bar to maximise coupling between the strings and body, providing greater resonance, sustain and detail in conjunction with a pair of unpotted Custombucker Alnico III 'buckers.



© WWW.ANDERTONS.CO.UK

Gibson SG Special £1,149

This dual P-90 classic from Gibson's distinctly retro Original Collection comes in a choice of two 60s-style gloss nitrocellulose lacquer metallic finishes: Faded Pelham Blue and Vintage Sparkling Burgundy. With a mahogany body, a slim taper mahogany neck and a bound rosewood fingerboard, the SG Special's twin soapbar P-90s provide a broad base of tone with a virtually endless array of further possibilities available via the guitar's hand-wired volume and tone controls.



© WWW.ANDERTONS.CO.UK

Gibson SG Junior £999

Pros and students alike have long favoured the Junior for its sheer simplicity and killer tones, not to mention its comparatively low price. Recently revived for the Original Collection, the SG Junior has been reintroduced with a design that strongly mirrors its original 60s counterpart, including a Vintage Cherry gloss nitrocellulose lacquer finish, mahogany body and neck, rosewood fingerboard, compensated wraparound bridge, single dog-ear P-90 pickup, and hand-wired volume and tone controls.



© WWW.ANDERTONS.CO.UK

Gibson SG Tribute £799

The SG Tribute from Gibson's Modern Collection is a stone-cold classic rock machine boasting open-coil 490R and 490T humbucking pickups, and it comes in a choice of two satin nitrocellulose lacquer finishes: a 60s-vibe Vintage Cherry Satin or 70s-chic Natural Walnut. With a mahogany body, maple neck, rosewood fingerboard, and an aluminium Nashville Tune-o-matic bridge with aluminium stop tailpiece, this faithful workhorse strips Gibson's classic SG styling back to basics.



© WWW.ANDERTONS.CO.UK

Epiphone SG Standard '61 £399

From the new Inspired by Gibson Collection, the Epiphone SG Standard '61 harks back to the debut of the SG/ Les Paul Standard with a Vintage Cherry finish and mahogany neck and body. Bolstered by high-quality CTS electronics, the dual ProBucker humbucking pickups found on this model are constructed using sand-cast Alnico II magnets along with vintage correct '18% Nickel Silver' unit bases and covers, delivering quality vintage tone at a lower price point. [RB]



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NOVEMBER REIGN

Iommi's not the only Gibson artist to get a new signature model...

Words Jamie Dickson

He may be more synonymous with Les Pauls (more of which later), but top-hatted firearm and floristry specialist Slash is also a devotee of the Gibson's classic round-shouldered dreadnought, the J-45. It was not a total surprise, then, to learn that he's been honoured with his own signature '45, among the raft of new releases Gibson unveiled at this year's NAMM Show. As you might expect, the late-40s design of the J-45 has been adjusted a bit to suit his needs. At £2,999 it's certainly not cheap, but the illustrious moniker will doubtless tempt its share of fans and the guitar's modded features, as shown here, offer some thoughtful tweaks that make it a very playable take on an evergreen platform. **G**



1. The neck of Slash's J-45 has a fast-playing Custom Slash Round profile and a flatter-than-standard 16-inch radius

2. Plugged-in tones come courtesy of an LR Baggs VTC under-saddle pickup



3. Grover Rotomatics provide stable tuning and a more rock-oriented aesthetic. The reverse of the headstock features Slash's trademark 'Skully' doodle



4. The top and body combination of Sitka spruce and mahogany is straight out of the Gibson canon



+

**“The guitar’s
modded features
make it a very
playable take on an
evergreen platform”**

+

A classic, updated:
the Slash-optimised J-45

Don't Get Bitter, GET BETTER

As one decade passes into the next, you may be reflecting on how much you've managed to improve as a player during that time – or, just maybe, feeling a little guilty if you've fallen short of where you hoped to be. Don't despair, though: even pros don't improve as fast as they'd like. To help you turbo-charge your own playing skills, we spoke to some of the biggest names in guitar to ask how they feel they could have improved faster...



Joe Bonamassa finds strength in his weaknesses

JOE BONAMASSA

America's new king of blues-rock guitar

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"Legato: I have absolutely no capacity to play anything using the legato technique. Eric Johnson blends legato and picking perfectly in my opinion. I am an Al Di Meola school player, especially when it comes to faster playing. I pick literally every note unless I'm on stage playing pretend rock star. I've tried to incorporate legato a little, but as my tech – who is extremely good at it and a huge Allan Holdsworth fan – glares over with the look of, 'You are embarrassing yourself, Bonamassa,' I decided it was not in my best interest to pursue that avenue."

2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"One of my strengths and weaknesses is that I have a very limited knowledge of theory. Strength: it makes me more fearless as a musician. I don't care if what

I'm doing is in the book; it just sounds good to me. You use that intra-barometer in all facets of your playing and life. I don't want the numbers or the rulebook swirling in my head. Weakness: some people ask me if I want a chart for the song. I laugh and say, 'Play the demo and save a tree.'"

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier

"One of the reasons I do not collect celebrity instruments is because they will not write those iconic songs for you. Right now, I am in Abbey Road Studios making a new album. The *Hey Jude* piano is in eyesight. If I went over and played it, it's not gonna write a song of that calibre for me. It's gonna sound like a hack piano player playing in the key of G. In hindsight, I would trade some of my playing ability for songwriting ability without hesitation."

MARTIN BARRE

Jethro Tull's super-talented guitarist and now solo artist

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"Nobody mentioned alternate picking in 1960 when I bought my first guitar. Many years later, I pay the price for having a hybrid picking technique! There are some things I struggle to play picked and resort to a legato style to bridge the danger areas; I'm frustrated when I can see the obvious method but have to take a bypass. I construct musical passages that, in theory, have no barrier in executing them. It is a challenge that I can meet, but only if I had worked on alternate picking. That said, playing mandolin helps my picking technique – a great instrument to explore."

2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"Music has a habit of taking us on a journey. At no point on this fabulous trip is there something that is not a pleasure to discover and examine. So the rules are written in stone yet I would rather discover them with an ear for music than to transcribe them or download a video. Self-discovery makes music a very personal journey and gives the player a unique 'personality'."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier

"I have no regrets with my music career. I savour the good times and learn from the bad. If anything, I should have had a business 'head' earlier on. In the late 60s and early 70s it was all about the music and very little attention to finances. This enabled a lot a bad deals from a handful of dubious music execs. The mindset was to make business appear too complex for the average rock musician. Nowadays, we can run our own band, record and market our own music – we do a better job."



PAUL GILBERT

One of the modern-rock greats

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"I had all kinds of strange technical 'mistakes', but they all turned out to be beneficial. The first two years I played guitar, I only did upstrokes. But I got really good at upstrokes! I also held the pick with too many fingers and at a backwards angle. This turned out to give me a larger palette of tones and textures I still use all the time. My fingering for an open G chord is also really odd. I didn't know I was doing it 'wrong' until a few years ago. I may switch to the world-standard G chord, as it's a little easier on my wrist, but my old weird one sounds good for a lot of things!"

2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"Melodies often drop from the root, directly to the lower 5th, without playing the 6th or 7th. This can be a bit of tangle to do on the guitar, especially if you've trained your hand to play every note of the scale... which I certainly did! My recent experiments in leaving these notes out has been such a great melodic discovery. I certainly wish I had left out the 'Crazy Train' note [the 6] a bit earlier."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier

"When I set up my monitors on stage these days, I just need to hear my guitar, my voice and some snare drum. I used to want all kinds of things like ride cymbals and hi-hats and a pretty blend of everyone's voices. That made for some long and ultimately impractical soundchecks. The Beatles didn't have any monitors when they played stadiums in the 60s. Simpler is often better. And always wear earplugs!"

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

Founding father of jazz-rock fusion guitar

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"I wish I could have had either a drum kit and teacher, or the possibility to learn and be able to articulate the fundamentals of rhythm. In improvised music, 99 per cent of the time we play with drummers, and to fully understand what they are playing is essential in this world."

2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"The harmonic foundation that is used in contemporary jazz for the past 60 years is founded upon the music of Ravel, Satie, Fauré, Scriabin and others such as Bartok and Stravinsky. It would have been extremely useful to have had an opportunity to learn the harmonic techniques of these composers."

3) One thing related to music I wish I had done earlier

"I should have taken singing lessons!"

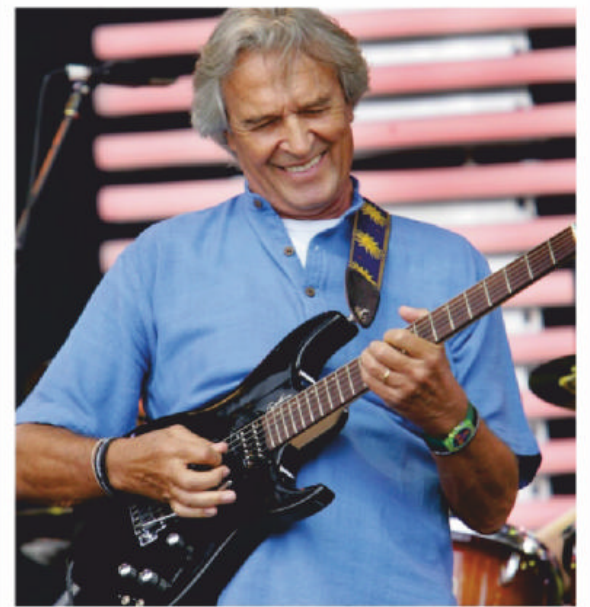


PHOTO BY BARRY BRECHISEN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

“ I AM IN ABBEY ROAD. THE ‘HEY JUDE’ PIANO IS IN EYESIGHT. IF I WENT OVER AND PLAYED IT, IT’S NOT GOING TO WRITE A SONG OF THAT CALIBRE ”

Joe Bonamassa

MIKE STERN

Ex-Miles Davis guitarist
and fusion legend

- 1) A technique-based 'I wish'
- "I always knew guitar came first, but I wish I had learned at least one other instrument. Sometimes when you learn another instrument, it can help your guitar playing. When I was a kid I took some piano lessons, but then I let that go when I started playing guitar. But no real regrets, there is so much to learn on guitar; it's endless. It's always a challenge and it's always kicking my ass!"
- 2) A theory-based 'I wish'
- "I wish I had studied a bit more classical music when I was younger. I do it now. I read and try to learn some Bach pieces, but I do it with a guitar pick. I wish I had learned more fingerstyle classical technique at the beginning."

- 3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
- "I got into drugs and alcohol when I was younger. I've been sober for over 30 years now. The guitar may have enabled my drinking and drugging, but it also had a lot to do with saving my life. Music is such a positive force."

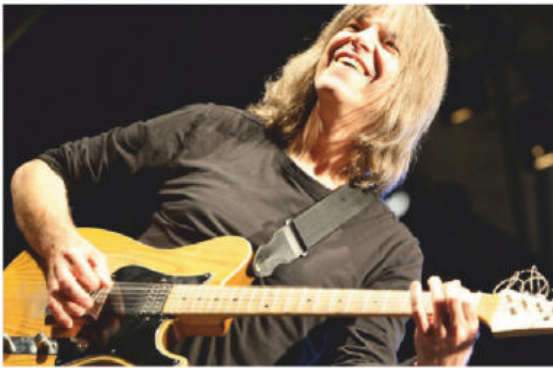
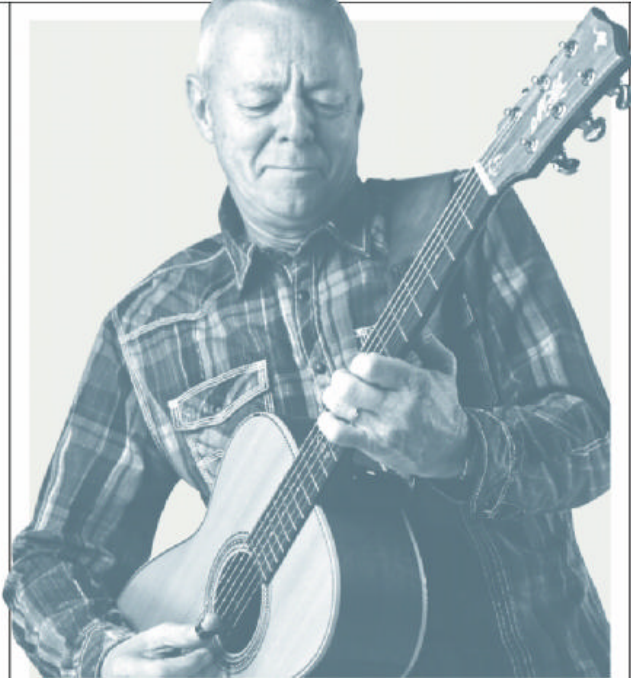


PHOTO BY LUCIANO VITI/GETTY IMAGES

“ TIME, FEEL
AND GROOVE:
THESE ARE THE
ELEMENTS THAT
PUT BUMS ON
SEATS AND
CAUSE PEOPLE
TO RUN OUT AND
BUY CONCERT
TICKETS ”
Tommy Emmanuel



TOMMY
EMMANUEL

Acoustic giant and
thumbpicker supreme

- 1) A technique-based 'I wish'
- "I wish I had learned to read music. I could have learned a lot more and perhaps had a better understanding of the fretboard. I was busy trying to earn a living and support my family by playing and teaching guitar. I tried once, but I found it impossible, so I just carried on as I do today and followed my instincts."
- 2) A theory-based 'I wish'
- "I learned later in life to be more adventurous and unafraid when going for a solo. When you are young and inexperienced you tend to play it safe and stay close to the melody. But when you've had some time to grow as a musician you feel the freedom to step outside the comfort zone and see what's possible to make a bolder statement and have fun with music."

- 3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
- "I wish I'd have been more aware of time when I was younger. I was too busy trying to impress people enough so I had plenty of work. What I now feel is that I would have been a much better musician if I'd started working with a metronome, every day! Time, feel and groove: these are the elements that put bums on seats and cause people to run out and buy concert tickets. So I suggest getting to work on training your mind to understand time and groove. When you've spent enough time with a metronome, that thing will set you free!"

JOHN ETHERIDGE

Soft Machine's incredible
fusion prodigy

- 1) A technique-based 'I wish'
- "I wish there had been a good theory of picking. Like everyone else my age, I developed my own erratic methods. Actually, this has worked okay and helped to give my generation of players individual approaches. When I see a lot of young players, particularly the Gypsy guys, their picking hands look so beautifully efficient."
- 2) A theory-based 'I wish'
- "Reading music. I'm very slow and this has cost me energy, nerves and given me a sense of inadequacy when playing with other musicians who tend to read better. I wish someone had forced me to do this at age 13 to 15. It's boring but is so helpful, time saving and opens up so much music to you. And more money could have been made from playing sessions!"

- 3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
- "I always practise with a metronome or drum programme nowadays. For years I practised all my scales just tapping my foot. I was a terrible 'racer' as I always wanted to play like John Coltrane. Cramming more notes in does, in an undisciplined player, lead to speeding up. For people playing with you, this is infuriating. I think I've got over this now, although as a result of years of bad practice, it can creep in. Good time is the best ingredient a player can have."



ANDY TIMMONS

*Technical monster
but feel-filled, too*

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"The whole idea and application of economy picking and sweeping has largely eluded me for most of my playing career, even though some of my lines do include some of these techniques – it must have happened naturally. There is now much more awareness and instruction available for working on developing these techniques that I wish would have been around in my early years of learning. But as they say, 'It's never too late!' I'm now working on these techniques daily as part of a practice regimen, so I will see if any of it works its way into my playing."

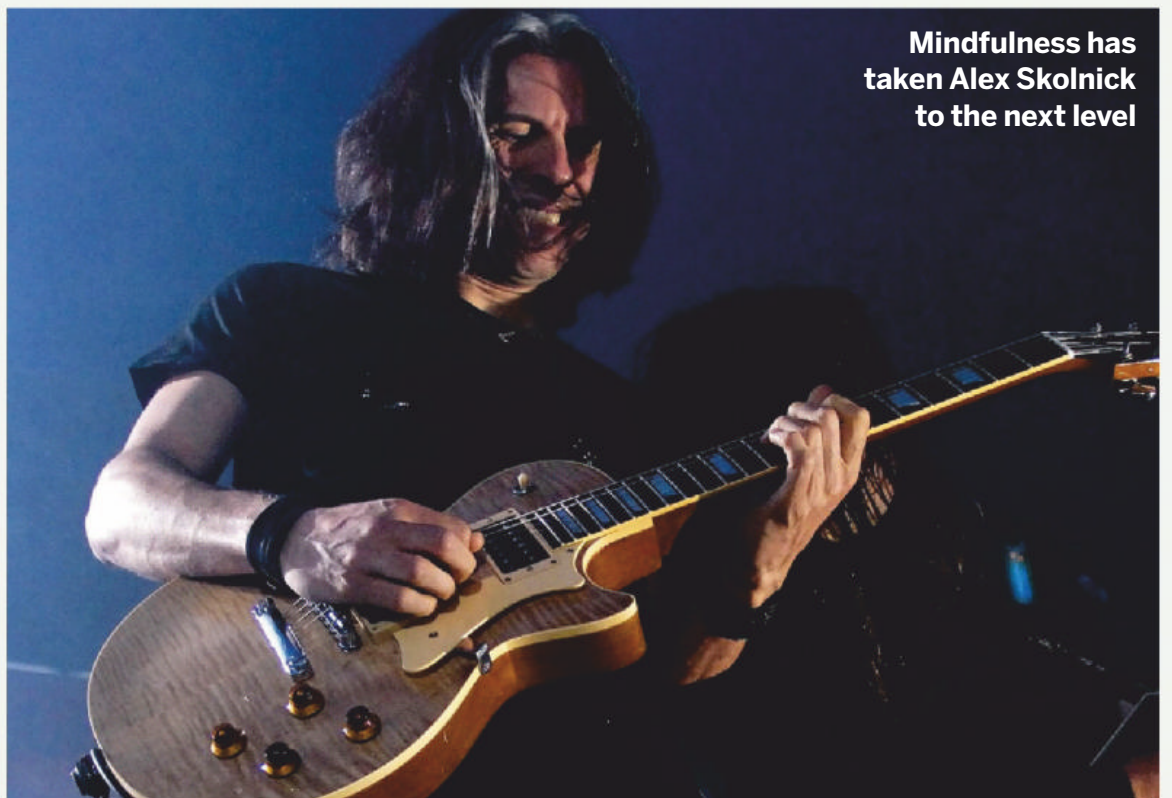
2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"Learning by ear is most assuredly the best way to obtain and retain music. I feel fortunate to a degree that there wasn't an abundance of didactic material when I was growing up. I eventually took lessons, but I was largely self-taught from the age of five to 16. Someone showed me barre chords and the A minor pentatonic scale and off I went. I had my guitar and a record player. Occasionally, you'd see someone on TV – I loved Roy Clark on *Hee Haw!* – but I had to 'earn it', meaning figure out by ear what was on the recording.

"This realisation was fortified years later – if I would learn a song first by the chart, I would be reliant on the paper as opposed to when I took the time to learn it by ear. It internalised aurally instead of visually – and isn't music largely an aural experience? Of course, some music may be more complicated than your ear is capable of 'figuring out', but always make an effort to get as much as you can, then check out the video or transcription."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier

"I wish I'd have been a more ardent and disciplined practiser. I played all the time, but I wasn't always practising. Big difference! Playing all the time is essential, of course, but also pushing yourself to learn new things consistently while also fortifying what you already know is a way to grow rapidly. I'm only now – at the age of 55! – becoming a good practiser. I'll keep you posted how it goes."



Mindfulness has
taken Alex Skolnick
to the next level

ALEX SKOLNICK

Thrash metal overlord turned tasty jazzier

1) A technique-based 'I wish'

"The main technique that I wished I'd learned earlier is mental: achieving focus and clarity, or what is often referred to today as 'mindfulness'. I was already in my late 20s when I discovered a great book by jazz pianist Kenny Werner – one of the best, in my book – *Effortless Mastery*, which deals with these concepts for musicians. That led to other enlightening materials, with care taken to avoid anything pseudo-scientific or 'culty'. Today there are great apps for your smartphone, such as Waking Up App by Sam Harris. John McLaughlin really set an example with his embrace of meditation and Eastern philosophy in the 70s, which I dove into and appreciated more as I got older. But as a young guitarist, I just wanted to rock! Ironically, the rock is the perfect metaphor for stillness, tranquillity, inner calm and strength."

2) A theory-based 'I wish'

"My hindsight theory relates to music theory itself and if written as an equation, it would be this: Music > Theory. In other words, music determines music theory, not the other way around. History is full of music theory taboos that later became acceptable to our ears, from a minor 3rd rubbing up against a chord with a major 3rd, a staple of the blues, to the tritone interval, once thought to be sacrilegious. The earliest musicians – probably cave-dwellers who discovered sound-making in a manner similar to Kubrick's apes in the opening scene of *2001: A Space*

Odyssey – were not thinking, 'Wait! The book says we can't use this note in that scale!' Yes, music theory is quite useful and recommended for some; I wouldn't play the way I do without it. But that doesn't mean it's required for everyone. Whatever your musical trajectory, it's most important to focus on sound first and theory later, if so inclined."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier

"What I wish I'd done earlier is pursuing additional instruments, particularly piano. I did get a piano about 15 years back and just love getting lost in music separate from the familiarity of the guitar, as well as figuring out piano parts from recordings – film and TV soundtracks, classic tunes I grew up with, manageable classical and jazz pieces. I also have some percussion instruments and know some very basic drum beats, but, again, I wish I'd started much earlier. It took a while to figure out, but so many of my favourite guitarists play other instruments, too, from Pat Metheny composing on the piano, to Al DiMeola getting behind the timbales in concert, to Stevie Ray Vaughan playing drums occasionally, to Eddie Van Halen's keyboard skills – drums, too – to the all-time master multi-instrumentalist, Prince.

"Though I wish I'd started sooner, having incorporated piano and percussion into my practice in more recent years has helped develop my playing, timing and composing invaluable. Better late than never!"

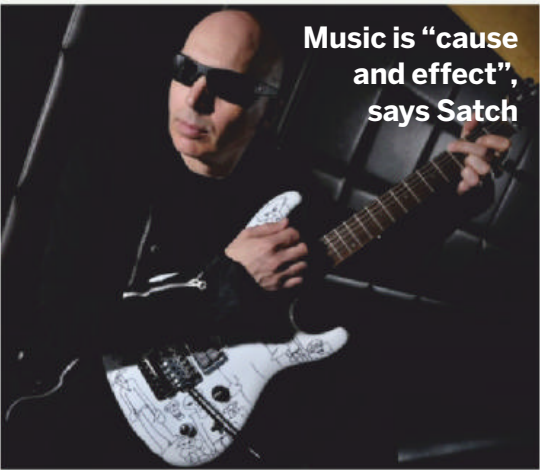
STEVE LUKATHER

*Top sessioneer and
Toto's mighty axeman*

1) A technique-based 'I wish'
"I wish I had practised more!"

2) A theory-based 'I wish'
"I wish I had started learning to read music when I started as a kid of seven or eight years old. I started to learn and study at 14. Wish it was day one, but... rock 'n' roll hit! I can't tell you how much it has helped me, but sight-reading takes time. No way around it."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
"Watch my money and I wish I'd never let 'the party' get in the way. It was okay as a kid, but when I got older, not good. So I quit all that 10 years ago. I wish it was 20. Sorry. It creped up, ended bad, but I am okay now, thank God. I was 18, thrown into a room with 20-, 30- 40-year-old people and it was 1976 to '77 to the early 80s, the most insane times in rock 'n' roll. Fun as some of it may have been, a waste of time and money and life."



JOE SATRIANI

*New York's titan
of instrumental rock*

1) A technique-based 'I wish'
"I wish I had found my most comfortable 'right-hand position' at the start. I've gone through three radical shifts in how I anchor or float my picking hand. At first it was resting my palm right above the bridge, at the muting spot. Then I tried no anchoring, but dropped that after many trials and tribulations. Next was resting my fingers on the pickguard area – good for some stuff but not everything. So now I use all three whenever they seem appropriate. I'm still searching!"

2) A theory-based 'I wish'
"All theories are equally golden and dangerous. It's good to remember that in music there are no rules, only cause and effect. The key to embracing this approach is to learn all the cause and effect situations, remember them and apply accordingly. If you want people to sing along with your melody, don't make it complicated. If you want people to get up and dance to your song, don't make it dreadfully slow or painfully fast. Theories get dangerous when they stifle creativity and lead you down the path of mediocrity. Free your mind, your guitar will follow."

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
"I wish I'd pursued learning recording studio techniques. Perhaps a job at a local studio would've been the right move when I was in my teens. I can't help thinking it would have opened my eyes and ears to the wonders of the recording studio. However, my path led me to the stage, which helped me build my live performance chops. After answering these three questions I'm reminded of an old Scottish proverb: 'If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.' So true!"

RUSTY COOLEY

*US shredder with
technique to die for*

1) A technique-based 'I wish'
"I wish I had developed my eight-finger tapping and hybrid picking all the way through, the way I did many other techniques. I see a lot of value in it now and the added creativity that it can bring to your playing."

2) A theory-based 'I wish'
"I wish I had kept up my sight-reading. There was a time when I could read really well, but as the old saying goes, 'Use it or lose it!'"

3) One music-related thing I wish I had done earlier
"I would have done anything to have gone to GIT [Guitar Institute Of Technology] right after high school. It just wasn't in the budget. Being in LA at that time would have been amazing. All things aside, it's never too late for anything and I still have lots of things I want to accomplish as a musician and plan on continuing to work on it each and every day."



“ I SHOULD
HAVE HAD A
BUSINESS 'HEAD'
EARLIER ON.
THIS ENABLED
A LOT OF BAD
DEALS FROM A
HANDFUL OF
DUBIOUS MUSIC
EXECS ”

Martin Barre

CONTINUOUSLY
MANUFACTURED
IN THE UK SINCE

1958

FOUNDER JAMES HOW WITH
JOHN ENTWISTLE - 1965



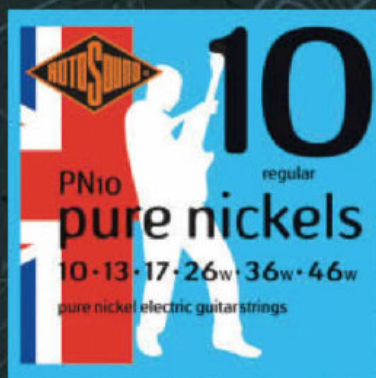
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“ I WISH I'D HAVE BEEN A MUCH MORE ARDENT PRACTISER. I PLAYED ALL THE TIME BUT I WASN'T ALWAYS PRACTISING. BIG DIFFERENCE! ”

Andy Timmons



PHOTO BY DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG / GETTY IMAGES

In Summary

SOME CONCLUSIONS THAT COULD SHAPE HOW AND WHAT YOU PRACTISE FROM NOW ON...

The ability to read music notation is the single biggest regret raised by our celebrity panel of guitarists. So many either wish they could read, had started earlier or could do it better. It's a skill set that, once acquired, has countless benefits. If you can't read at all then it's a wise musician that puts it high on the 'to-do' agenda.

A versatile picking technique is an admirable quality that many wish they had developed more at an earlier stage. It's a guitarist's most important source of dynamics and time keeping so make sure your practice covers this as extensively as possible. That said, it's often championed as a more 'hardcore' technique than legato ("I couldn't pick that well or fast, so I used legato instead"). While it can require more practice than legato, it should not be considered as 'better' – Joe Bonamassa's reply is proof of that.

Theory is not a dirty word but rather a means to improving creativity and options for a given musical scenario. Being naive of the notes in a chord, fundamental modes such as Mixolydian and Dorian, knowing relevant notes to use over a chord progression and how to harmonise the major scale is not elitist knowledge. It means you're well positioned to play better and are ready more promptly for any music scenario.

Styles can dictate direction. Classical and jazz music requires a strong base level of technique and theory ability (classical more about interpretation, jazz more about improvisation). Other contemporary styles such as blues and rock have, at times, been culturally dismissive about academic-based skills. In this day and age, all styles feature countless musicians that do know and want to know about what they are doing.

Slow practice allows you time to critique what you're doing, adjust accordingly and

play in time; playing fast can be euphoric, but you don't have time to clock what you're really doing and you haven't built up a strong enough technique foundation.

Never lose the ability and the will to just 'go for it' – because the results can sometimes be wonderful!

Good timing is imperative, so work with a metronome, a drum machine or, even better still, a drummer. Focus on your picking hand's technique. Many of our artists told us this.

Be wary of being a 'back of the book' learner. At the back of guitar tuition books there tends to reside the harder material such as eight-finger tapping licks – the flashy, showy stuff. If you have holes in the fundamentals (can you play five voicings of a C chord, imply the three chords in a blues when single-note soloing, know the note names in F major, maintain a 4/4 rhythmic groove for five minutes, and so on?), you're better served improving those to become a rounded musician than spending time on flash music-shop licks that get you zero gigs or work.

Learning about classical music or classical guitar technique can be a good source of improvement, as Mike Stern was quick to point out.

Learn another instrument. The sound and the physical interaction can create new scenarios. Some musicians talk about the guitar being a warm instrument that we physically embrace to make music on; the piano is more aloof, our hands pushing the music outwards onto the keys. Mike Stern regrets not learning piano, while John McLaughlin said drums.

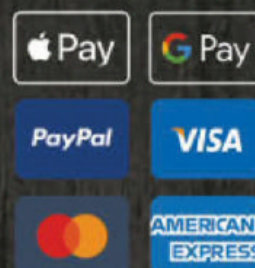
If you've got the material and a drive to get established, don't hesitate and make your move, because several guitarists here regret not getting out and being an artist at an earlier age.

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JOEY LANDRETH

He's lauded worldwide as a songwriter, vocalist and guitar stylist par excellence – and he's no slouch as a slide player, either. We caught up with the Canadian guitarist to find out what makes him tick

Words David Mead Photography Olly Curtis

In the three short years since we last caught up with Canada's Joey Landreth, the guitarist has released a debut solo record, *Whiskey*, in 2017, and a recent follow-up, last year's *Hindsight*, which he has been relentlessly touring alongside his commitments to The Bros Landreth, the band he started with his brother, bassist Dave, in their hometown of Winnipeg. In fact, he's on the road right now on home shores in support of The Bros' second and latest long-player, '87.

It was during the gap between the band's two albums that Joey found time to spread his own songwriting wings. On the recent *Hindsight* he joined forces with producer and multi-instrumentalist Roman Clarke, with his brother contributing to some of the writing duties, too. Listening to *Hindsight* again, our ears settle upon the deep growl of Joey's drop-tuned guitar. "My main guitar, the goldtop, is tuned down to open C," he tells us, "so not quite the full B that a baritone is, but I live in that tuning, CGCEGC. I use 19 to 65 gauge strings. Originally the set that

I started with was 14 to 68, but the 14 was way too light. I just started working my way up. I've always liked heavy strings, so in standard tuning, for example, I use 13s. So the 19s are around that kind of weight."

And so, with the essential 'What strings do you use?' question out of the way, it was time to dig a little deeper...

What exactly drew you to the instrument in the first place?

"I've always been in love with music, but the guitar started when I was eight... My dad built me a Telecaster[-style guitar]. I'd banged around on the piano for a few years before that, taking lessons. I was listening to everything from Celine Dion to NOFX punk rock. It was before I knew that you were supposed to pick a side musically, so I just would listen to whatever captivated me. There were guitar players in there, definitely. Stevie Ray Vaughan and Robben Ford were my biggest influences and musical mentors from afar. But then, like I say, there was a lot of pop music there. There was my parents' record collection, which I've always found fascinating, too: Little Feat, Ry Cooder, Bonnie Raitt, things that also had a lot of guitar playing in it. My dad loved jazz, so we listened to a lot of straight-ahead jazz as well."

With you listening to Ry Cooder, Little Feat and Bonnie Raitt, was there a slide influence there right from the beginning?

"No, not really. I wasn't entirely aware of slide playing in and around that music. It wasn't until I was in my 20s that I really started to take a fascination in slide guitar. I mean, my dad was a massive slide fan, so I kind of shied away from it for whatever reason. It's like, 'My dad is really into that. I'm going to do something different...'"

So, what was it that finally pulled the trigger for you where slide is concerned?

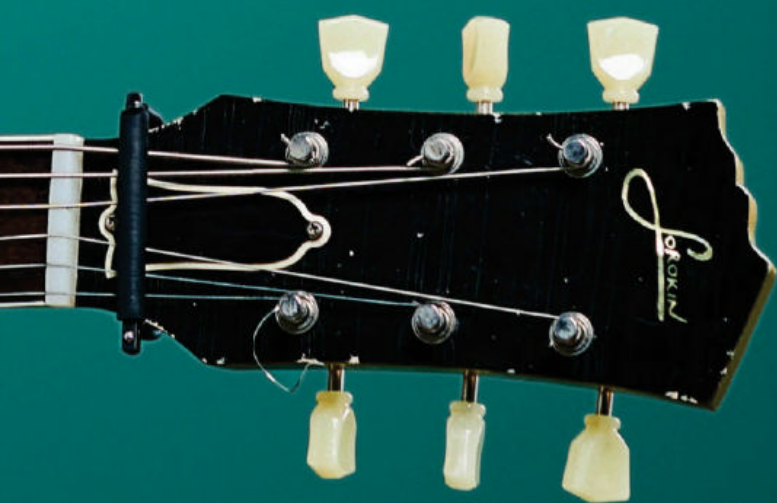
"Like I said, there were a lot of slide players in my life growing up. Sonny Landreth coincidentally was another big slide player in the house, and I really, really loved his playing, but I always thought, 'While he exists and we share the same last name, I really have no right to pick up the slide when somebody as monstrous as him is around.' But it was being a big fan of his. Then the first time I heard Derek Trucks was like, 'Oh, shit. That is really inspiring.' So I started trying to impersonate Derek Trucks and Sonny Landreth. Then throw some Bonnie Raitt and Ry Cooder in there – and what you got is what you get."

Did you play in bands at school?

"Yes, I played in my first formal ensemble in the eighth grade. I actually played trumpet in concert band, too, but I was pretty shitty at it. But my first gig with the guitar in hand was in the eighth grade. I always was quite certain that I was going to be a musician. It wasn't a decision made then; it was a decision made almost at birth, I think. From the moment that I was a cognizant human, I knew I wanted to be a musician and in a professional capacity, because my dad was, right? You idolise your parents, so other kids want to be cops or firefighters or whatever, and I wanted to be a keyboard player in a band."

Did having a musical brother help somewhere along the line, too?

"Yes, although we didn't really connect musically until we were in our teens. He played, and my brother actually lived kind of in the classical world early on. He's a classically trained flautist. We were both very musical, but our paths didn't cross



until in our teens when he picked up a bass – and then the rest is history there. We formed the band when I was 24, and Dave would have been 26.”

Does your approach to songwriting change when you’re preparing your solo material, as opposed to writing for the band?

“It’s not all that much different. My brother is obviously not there, so that’s the biggest difference. But musically, it’s kind of an extension of that in terms of the projects. It’s not altogether different. There’s a little more guitar playing, a little more self-indulgent guitar stuff, but not all that much more. It’s not a massive departure. The emphasis is still heavily on the songs, on trying to be as musical as we can. There are a lot of harmonies, much like The Bros – it’s more of an extension than a departure.

“I actually did wind up doing a lot of writing with my brother for the last record, [*Hindsight*], alongside Roman Clarke, who’s the producer. Part of the project was I wanted that record to be in collaboration with Roman, so we wrote everything together except for the first song, which is *Forgiveness*. That’s just my tune. But everything else, he and I wrote together. In the last three or four tracks, Roman and I wrote alongside my brother.

“The process was very similar, you know? I brought a song idea to the table, Roman and I would finish it together, or he would bring an idea to the table and we would finish it together. In the case of *Forgiveness*, I brought that song to the table and said, ‘What do you think it needs?’ Roman went, ‘I think that’s done. Anything that I’d want to add to it would be on the production side, so let’s call that finished.’ That was the writing process.”

Where does the songwriting process begin for you?

“I always start with chordal ideas first. I’m a harmony nerd, so I like to build the chord progressions and a simple idea of what the melody may be. Then I start adding lyrics once I get a feel for where the song wants to go harmonically and musically.”

•

“Dave and I were both very musical, but our [musical] paths didn’t cross until our teens”

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Since their debut, The Bros Landreth have played hundreds of dates around the world – and they released their second album, '87, last September



PHOTO BY ROBIN LITTLE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

What sort of gear have you been taking out on the road with you?

“I’ve got my Sorokin Goldtop, which is my number one these days. I also have a Mulecaster, which is made by Mule Resophonic Guitars. It’s Tele-shaped, and it has got palm benders on it, which I use for *Forgiveness*. I’m currently using a Two-Rock Bloomfield Drive as well as my tried and true 1965 Deluxe – no reverb on the Deluxe. I also cart around a Victoria Reverberammo, which is a smaller version of their Reverberato unit, which is a harmonic tremolo and reverb, all-analogue, all-tube. Then a pedalboard full of goodies.”

Tell us more about those goodies...

“It starts with a late 60s Vox wah, which is phenomenal. Then I’m using my fuzz pedal that I collaborated on with Zach [Broyles] from Mythos Pedals, which is called the High Road Fuzz. That’s first in line. Then it goes into Zach’s Argo [Octave Fuzz], which is a kind of COB clone with a few tweaks to it: an Octavia with a clean octave blend or with a clean boost blend. Then that goes into the Mythos Mjolnir, a Klon-style thing, which then goes into the Jackson Audio Broken Arrow, which is their fantastic new drive that I’m absolutely in love with. Three Chase Bliss Audio pedals: Tonal Recall [delay], Thermae [delay/pitch shifter] and the Dark World, their reverb. Actually, before that is a pedal called a Count To Five, which is made by Montreal Assembly, a Canadian company. It’s kind of a mini looper – it does all kinds of weird, crazy ambient stuff, which I use for creating textures in solo pieces and stuff like that.

“Then I actually use a Two Notes Torpedo CAB M to simulate a room sound. They’ve got really nice room reverbs in the Torpedoes, so I use that to simulate a room sound that I’ve got on the record. Then I have a TC Electronic Flashback Mini, which I use to generate a pre-delay, so I have it set 100 per cent wet to a specific millisecond pre-delay to also simulate some sounds from the last record. Then I use TheGigRig Wetter Box to blend all that madness back in with the regular sound. I’m also running those two amps in wet/dry.”

How are the amps configured?

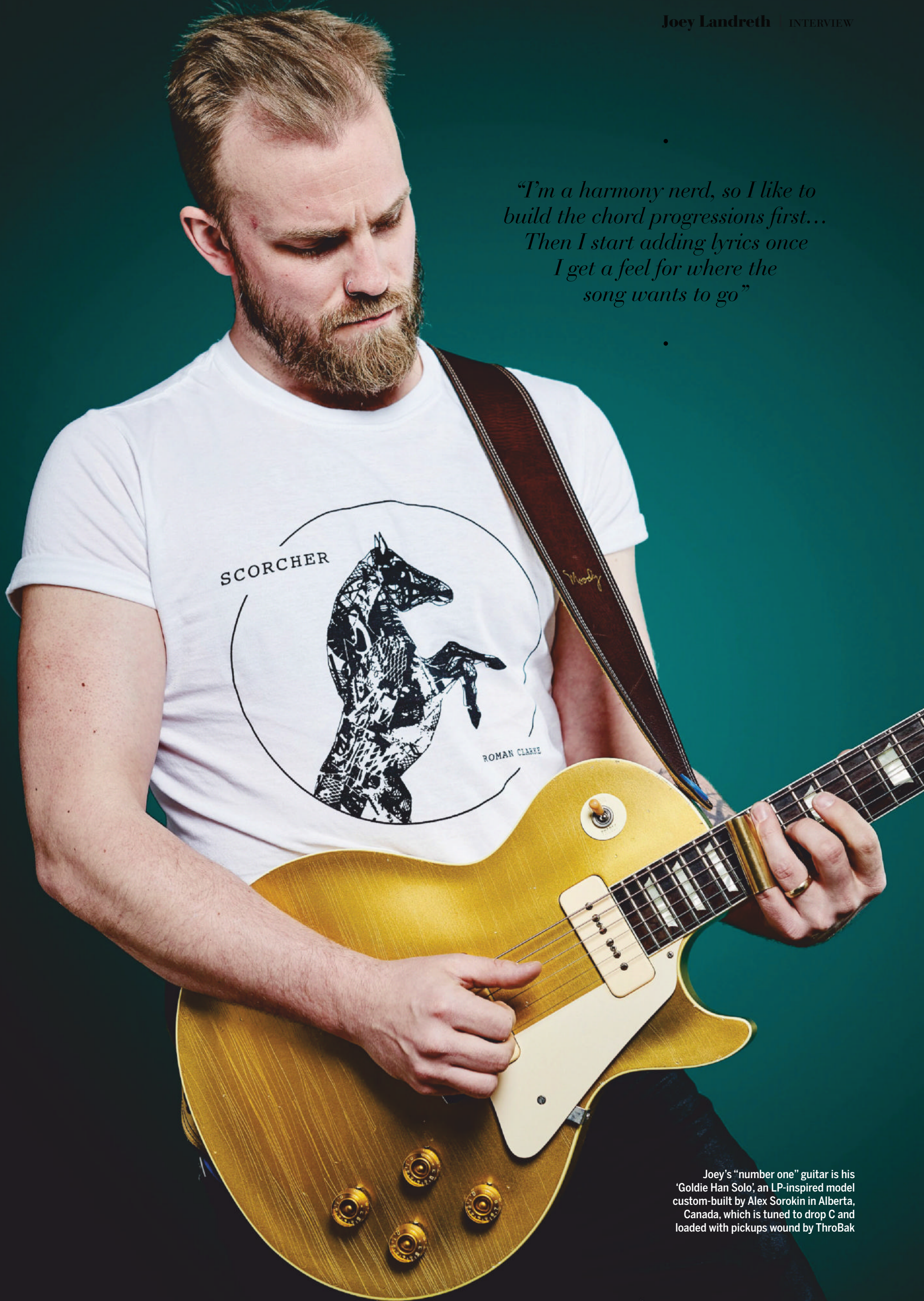
“The Two-Rock Bloomfield is effectively dry; although I do run the reverb on the amp, it sees none of the effects. Then the Deluxe sees the same thing the Two-Rock sees but with the effects added in, so it just creates some stereo gorgeousness. Then the Reverberammo only goes into the Deluxe, so I use the reverb from the Reverberammo into the Deluxe, because the Deluxe doesn’t have reverb, then the tremolo, because it’s based around phase shifting – the early 60s [Fender] ‘Brownface’ was based on the phase shifting of the treble and bass... something, something, something. I’m not actually an engineer, so I don’t have anything for you on that! When it’s only on one amp, it creates a perceived Doppler effect, not unlike a Leslie kind of thing. But I’m kind of addicted to stereo effects these days.” **G**



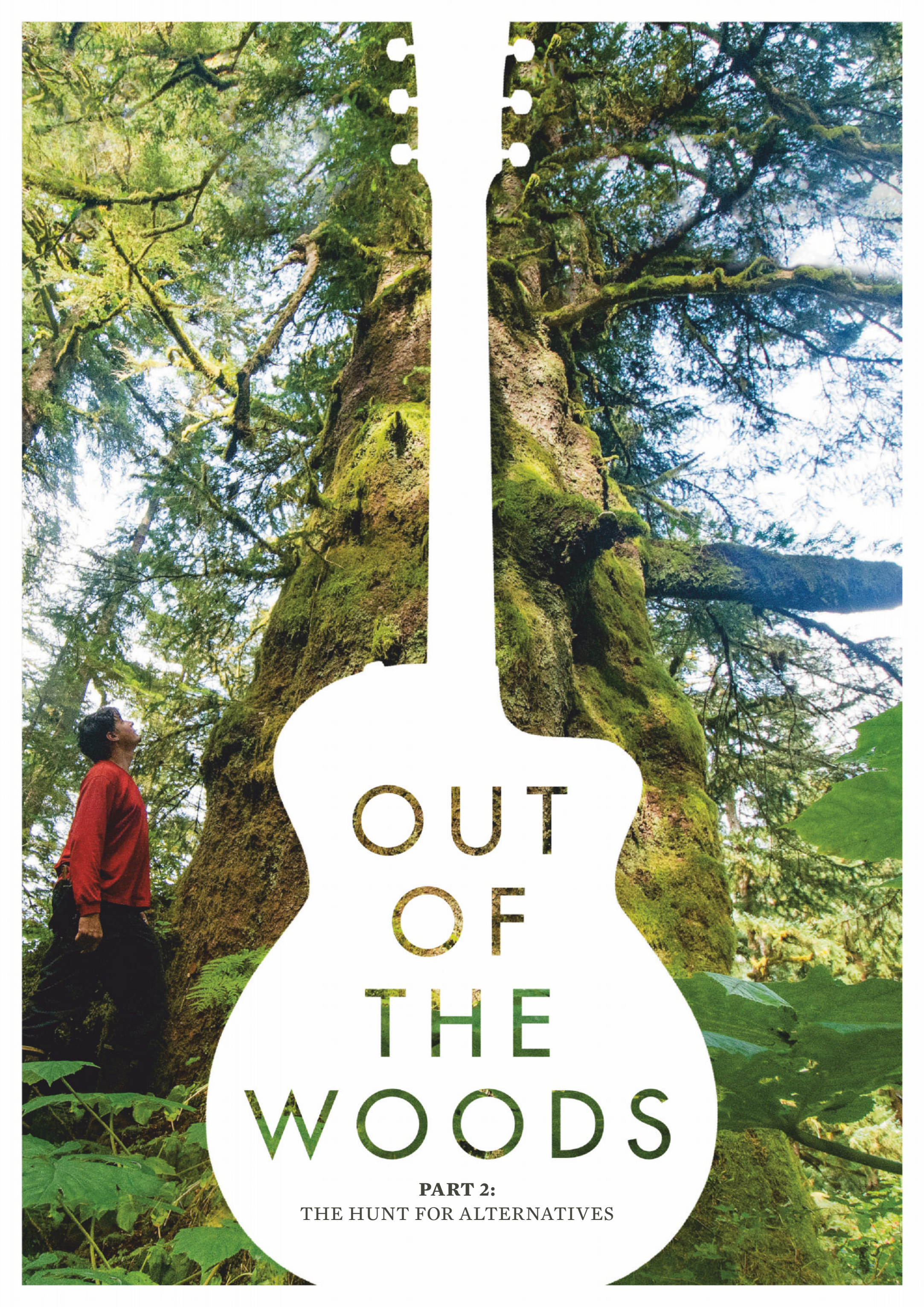
Joey’s most recent solo album, *Hindsight*, is available now via Birthday Cake Records

www.joeylandreth.com

“I’m a harmony nerd, so I like to build the chord progressions first... Then I start adding lyrics once I get a feel for where the song wants to go”



Joey’s “number one” guitar is his ‘Goldie Han Solo’, an LP-inspired model custom-built by Alex Sorokin in Alberta, Canada, which is tuned to drop C and loaded with pickups wound by ThroBak



OUT OF THE WOODS

PART 2:
THE HUNT FOR ALTERNATIVES



WITH TRADITIONAL ACOUSTIC TONEWOODS SUCH AS ROSEWOOD AND SPRUCE UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE, MANY GUITAR MAKERS ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE. IN THE SECOND OF THIS TWO-PART REPORT (SEE PART 1 IN ISSUE 455), WE ASK HOW TOP LUTHIERS ARE TRYING TO DO THEIR BIT FOR FORESTS WHILE CREATING A NEW GENERATION OF PLANET-FRIENDLY GUITARS THAT PLAYERS WILL LOVE

Words Adam Bradbury



“If people like the forest then they should be careful about demonizing wood... Grow it. Use it”

BOB TAYLOR



paperwork required by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) made shipping rosewood guitars too much of a headache. But major brands made significant moves, too: Fender announced as early as May 2017 that it was turning from rosewood to ebony and pau ferro fingerboards on its Elite and Mexican ranges respectively; and summer 2019 saw Martin’s 00- and 000-16E models feature granadillo back and sides.

The challenge of sourcing sustainable materials for guitars has been occupying Bob Taylor for years. The founder of US major Taylor Guitars is chipping away at it on a number of fronts – from scientific research to community replanting, to waste reduction and even tapping urban waste wood.

How do you know how sustainable your music wood is? If the question is how to be sure where it comes from, that it’s legal and harvested in a way that leaves forests and people who rely on them in reasonable shape, the answer is to be able to trust your supply chain and supplier. So third-party sourcing specialists, auditing, verification and certification – for example, through Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – are all common approaches.

Alternatively, you can become your own supplier. As a co-owner in the Crelicam ebony sawmill in Cameroon (alongside Spanish tonewood supplier Vidal de Teresa of Madinter), Taylor has eyes on the entire supply chain of ebony from forest to factory. It’s also enabled him to tackle waste. Most felled ebony used to be left to rot because it didn’t match consumers’ preference for jet black ebony. In fact, he says, a law passed in Cameroon in around 1910 made it illegal to bring to the port for export any ebony that wasn’t jet black.

Taylor has spent the best part of a decade challenging this mindset. Coloured ebony fingerboards and bridges now feature on Taylor’s own lines, and in Fender’s American Elite electric guitars and basses. Not everything works out first time. Taylor changed the Ebony Presentation

Where’s your next acoustic guitar tonewood coming from? In the face of ecological crisis and concerns over supply, acoustic guitar makers are shaking up their methods and materials. In this, the second part of our report on the future of acoustic guitar woods, we ask what the next generation of acoustics will be made from. Do makers keep going after the same revered species of wood? Protect and replant the ones we like the sound of? Search out lookalikes and use them up, too? Stand back and let forests recover while cooking up synthetic materials? Or how about picking over our old waste – furniture, whisky barrels, railway sleepers? **Spoiler: it turns out to be all of the above.**

The 2017 trade clampdown on the rosewood (*Dalbergia*) species – and anything made from it – was a watershed moment in acoustic guitar land. Although some makers did continue to parcel out existing stocks of prized woods, often on premium acoustic guitars, others walked away from rosewood and probably won’t be going back to it any time soon, even though instruments have now been exempted from the trade restrictions. For some smaller outfits the additional

PHOTO BY CHRIS SORENSON/TAYLOR GUITARS



Bob Taylor co-owns the Crélcam ebony sawmill in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which is just part of the company's efforts to ensure that ebony can be legally, sustainably and ethically harvested

series mid-stream to feature Tasmanian blackwood back and sides after it found the coloured ebony would sometimes crack in a factory environment. But, Taylor says, “many luthiers making bench-made guitars are having good success” and he’s confident that Lowden in Ireland and Furch in the Czech Republic will be using coloured ebony in their guitars. Erika Marinova of Dowina Guitars in Slovakia says, “We will use Taylor’s coloured ebony for sure. Not only is it from a sustainable source, it is extremely beautiful.”

Taylor has also started discussions with the piano industry about “what happens when jet black wood disappears off the menu. When it was abundant, of course you’d want to use black, but now it’s wrong to choose that and reject the other stuff. It’s just wasteful.” Taylor has even set up a company producing kitchenware from ebony that would otherwise “go on the burn pile”.

Alongside the Crélcam sawmill, Bob Taylor is personally funding The Ebony Project, which is researching the ecology of the species, the way it propagates and grows, developing high-quality strains, and working

with a handful of communities in Cameroon to plant ebony saplings alongside fruit and medicinal trees. “Ebony really needs a donor to pay some people to plant these trees,” says Taylor. “Then we all go away for 100 years and they own those trees. Hopefully their descendants will sell to mine.”

He’s anticipating a quicker return in Hawaii, where over the next eight years Taylor plans to plant about 180,000 koa trees on one property alone. The species is reportedly in tight supply right now after decades of heavy harvesting. But Bob Taylor says that “35 to 45 years from now, we’ll have a pretty sustainable supply of koa to go into guitars”.

Those may be distant horizons for the average maker or player. But Taylor’s view is that you need to keep growing high-value species in the forests longterm. “To save ebony, we have to use ebony,” he says. “Because if I quit using it I’ll probably quit planting and then I’ll just leave it up to the world and what the world does – and the ebony will go away.”

“I hope we’re always sourcing tropical woods, I hope we’re always sourcing temperate woods,” says Scott Paul, Taylor’s sustainability lead. “Because if we are that means those forests are functioning and healthy and there.”

Think Global, Axe Local

Even though temperate and boreal forests are under pressure – from climate change, fire, disease and exploitation – they may offer advantages over tropical woods for US or European makers and players. For one thing, they can be nearer to hand – a plus if you’re looking to simplify your supply chain or reduce your timber’s travel miles.

TOO DANG PICKY?

The traditional tonewood brand is a powerful one. Are we being too loyal – or too fussy?

“The traction we’ve gotten from the Forest Stewardship Council-certified models is less than I would have expected. We use cherry. Well, cherry works, but it’s not the wood that most people think of. I think it’s just tradition. We’ve done too good a job of convincing the vast majority of guitar players that high-end acoustic guitars must be made from rosewood, mahogany, ebony and spruce. And, yeah, they work – but other woods work also.”

CHRIS MARTIN IV, MARTIN GUITARS

“People automatically think the guitar maker needs to get it together and stop wasting trees. And yet we use so few of them. And we make something that is not a wasteful product. We could stop being so dang picky about the materials, but that’s symbiotic with the players.”

BOB TAYLOR, TAYLOR GUITARS

“The Leonardo Guitar Research Project involved mainly students of lutherie building pairs of guitars to the same design in traditional tropical and non-tropical European woods. These were compared in blind tests and both players and audiences were asked to state a preference. Among several hundred individual tests, the results came out almost exactly 50/50.”

ADRIAN LUCAS, AJ LUCAS GUITARS

“In terms of wood’s capacity to vibrate and flap air around and make sound, some woods are better than others, but [...] you can make a bad guitar with any wood. And if you know what you’re doing you can make a pretty damn good guitar with most woods. Balsa wood, I’m not so sure.”

ERVIN SOMOGYI, LUTHIER, FROM THE PODCAST ‘LUTHIER ON LUTHIER’

“To save ebony, we have to use it. If I quit using it, I’ll probably quit planting... the ebony will go away”

BOB TAYLOR



PHOTOS BY CHRIS SORENSON/TAYLOR GUITARS



An ebony supplier with ebony billets at the Crelicam sawmill in Yaoundé, Cameroon



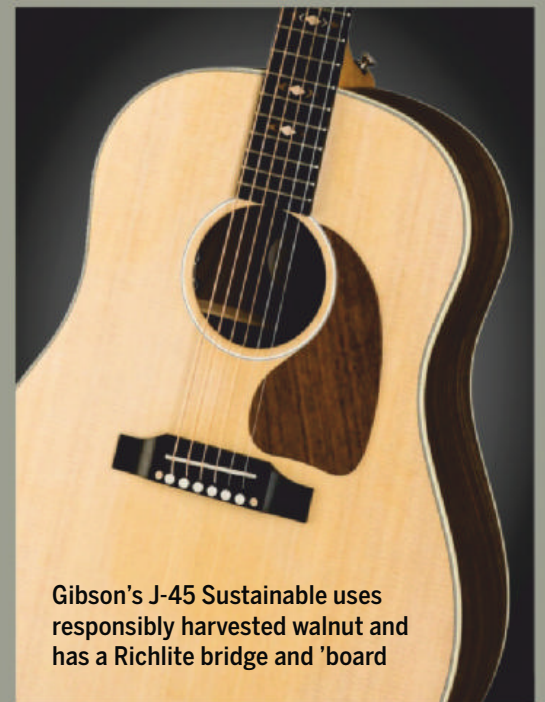
A Cameroonian man tends to ebony leaf cuttings planted in non-mist propagators at his community-based nursery. This vegetative propagation technique can produce large numbers of trees



Research technician Alvine Tchouga in the tissue culture lab at the Congo Basin Institute, where methods of ebony propagation are being studied



Children from a local community with ebony saplings that were planted in April 2019



Gibson's J-45 Sustainable uses responsibly harvested walnut and has a Richlite bridge and 'board

TESTING TIMES

Gibson's environmentally minded efforts

Gibson's 2019 offering includes the Sustainable series, which the company described as "built with the environment in mind". Based on the J-45, L-00 and Hummingbird body shapes, the series incorporates Alaskan Sitka spruce tops, North American walnut, Central American mahogany necks and Richlite fingerboards and bridges. Robi Johns, sales and marketing director for Gibson Acoustic, says the spruce and walnut are from "sustainable sources, and we expect them to be around for many years to follow".

On top of Richlite's eco-credentials, he says it also provides the right black background for maple inlay. "The Sustainable series was created for us to march forward as a responsible wood user," says Johns, and to appeal to "consumers looking for a more natural instrument, an earthy kind of instrument".

Johns says the Sustainable series has sold in its hundreds, but that it's a little early to tell if it's going to continue. The group recently launched what chief merchant officer, Cesar Gueikian, referred to as the "Gibson Lab", where they would be "testing how we evaluate our standards for our partners who are sourcing wood, and what are the different woods and alternatives that we could be using."



Ancient woods are increasingly being seen in acoustic builds, such as this Martin 000-14 Fret, which features sinker mahogany top, back and sides

THE REGENERATION GAME

How Martin Guitars is utilising alternatives to the traditional tonewoods

“Mother Earth will be cheering you on,” says Martin, if you pick up one of its Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-endorsed acoustics. There are currently two of Martin’s 150 or so models that carry the FSC stamp, meaning all materials in an instrument have been judged to meet the organisation’s forest management standards.

At one end of the FSC range, the OME Cherry features a Sitka spruce top, cherry back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony fingerboard and bridge, plus African blackwood headplate. The most expensive in the range, the 00-DB Jeff Tweedy is Martin’s first Custom Artist model certified by the FSC and carrying the Rainforest Alliance seal. Mahogany top, back, sides, neck and headplate, and Richlite fingerboard are all FSC certified. Richlite also appears as fretboards and bridges on the X, Road and the Junior series. Martin’s sourcing specialist Albert Germick says engineered materials are “always something we’re looking at”.

“When the CITES thing occurred,” says Germick, “we started looking at more alternatives to rosewood and we did decide to use granadillo (*Platymiscium yucatanum*) and katalox (*Swartzia cubensis*),” which he describes as “sustainably harvested”. The Martin 00- and 000-16E, launched in 2019, feature granadillo back and sides.

At its Mexican plant, the company has been switching necks from mahogany to laminate birch from the US, and uses HPL (high-pressure laminate) on its X and LX lines, “greatly reducing our consumption of mahogany and rosewood”. Martin says it is planting koa in Hawaii, mahogany in Nicaragua, cocobolo and mahogany in Costa Rica, and is in a partnership to replant maple in Pennsylvania.

In 2016, more than 30 luthiers took up the The European Guitar Builders’ Local Wood Challenge to make guitars entirely from local woods “to show that there need be no compromise in using non-traditional woods”, says EGB board member Adrian Lucas. “This can be seen as a return to tradition: until the Renaissance, all instruments were made from local woods and other materials.”

The idea is gaining ground. In a few years, the Local Wood Challenge has spread from its debut at the Holy Grail exhibition in Berlin to other shows in Europe and Canada.



“If you know what you’re doing, you can make a pretty damn good guitar with most woods”

ERVIN SOMOGYI



Local isn’t the preserve of boutique luthiers. Godin is big: the brands within the group make some 200,000 guitars a year, and they will use 95 per cent Canadian woods such as spruce, maple and wild cherry. Riversong Guitars, also operating out of Canada, uses all Canadian woods. And US builders don’t have to go far to get hold of Sitka or Adirondack spruces, walnut or maple – although there are worries about a beetle-borne disease affecting American maple at present. Breedlove in the US uses the pale and interesting Oregon myrtlewood, while European makers such as Dowina and Lowden offer Dolomite and Alpine spruces among their tops.

“A temperate forest has way better governance and way better habits,” says Bob Taylor. “So we’re making a switch right now from mahogany to East Coast American maple. We have basically a sustainable supply. There’s maple forest that’s thick and dense and they plant those trees to make syrup. We’re starting to use that on our acoustic guitars and it could take half the pressure off our tropical American mahogany.”

These Taylor 600 series models (618e, left, and 614ce) include bigleaf maple back and sides, offering up a new way to consider maple as a serious alternative to rosewood and mahogany



Martin's GPX1AE celebrates 20 years of the company's X Series, offering the classic Martin feel and sound with alternative materials. Like its series stablemates, it features HPL back and sides

Thoughts On Salvage

If you want to avoid cutting down trees at all, how about waiting for them to fall down? In Hawaii Josh Johansen of KoaGuitarSets.com favours this kind of salvage over taking immature koa from intact forest. "I don't think we should be taking down young trees even if they are spectacular," he told Tom Sands on *The Interval* podcast. "They are habitat for wildlife. They can grow and make seeds and when their time is done they fall and then me or someone like me comes in and carefully gets it out."

Some of the Godin brands state that they only use wood from trees that have already fallen, with no clear-cutting involved. So if you play a Seagull, Art & Lutherie, LaPatrie cedar-topped guitar, or many with Simon & Patrick or Norman on the headstock, then there's a good chance its top, back and sides have been produced in this way.

Alaska Specialty Woods, based in the Tongass National Forest, claims to be the largest producer in the world using locally procured "100 per cent salvage-sourced old-growth Sitka spruce". This includes

LITE YEARS AHEAD

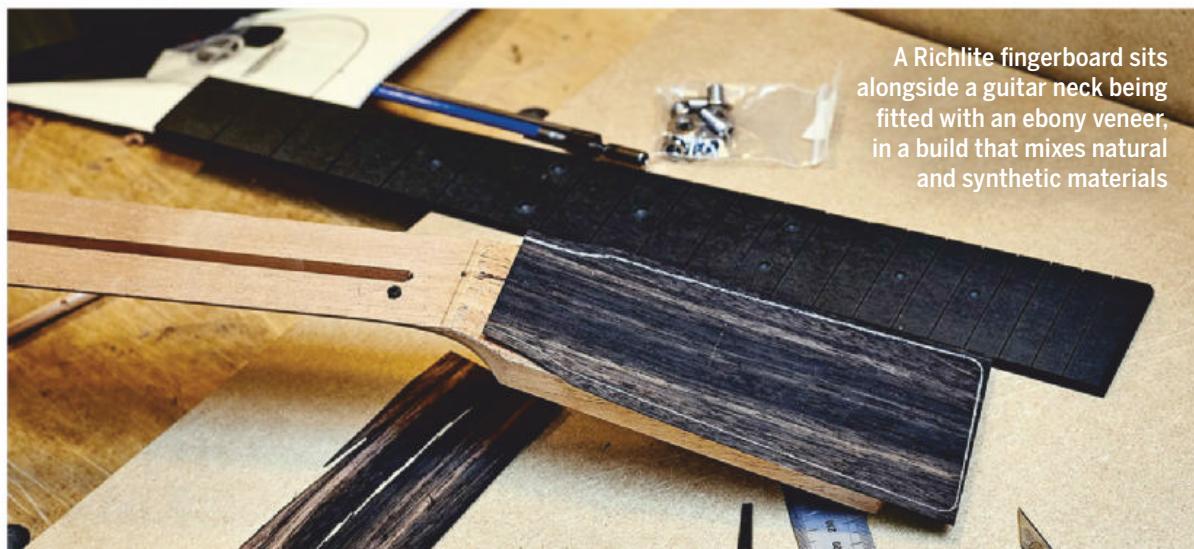
Are man-made alternatives the key to sustainability?

Dumping traditional tonewoods for engineered materials may be a step too far for some. But it's an obvious area to explore. California's Blackbird Guitars produces completely wood-free instruments made from a "flax linen fiber and bio-based resin material" called Ekoa, which it says is lighter than carbon fibre, stiffer than fibreglass, stable under temperature and humidity changes, and offers "a better soundboard than spruce because of its superior stiffness-to-weight values".

For individual components, the wood fibre-based composite Richlite, approved by the Forest Stewardship Council, Rainforest Alliance and Greenguard, is already familiar as fingerboards and bridges on, for example, Martin's Mexican-made guitars.

Rocklite, meanwhile, is a blend of American tulip and European eucalyptus, says its UK developer Steve Keys. Luthiers in Sweden have been early adopters, in the US Michael Bashkin uses it, and it's finding fans among young British luthiers, too, including Tom Sands who says it looks like wood, has a tap tone like wood, and works like wood. "You plane a fingerboard, you get shavings and curls coming off just like ebony." Listen to Sands and Keys in conversation on *The Interval* podcast.

Bob Taylor is a fan of wood. "I do lend hope to some woods that are being modified, and if the growth in that business sector continues, I can imagine some modified woods being blended into guitars." But he adds, "If people like the forest then they should be careful about demonising wood. If we simply decide to abandon certain wood species it's not like forests will be left alone. They'll surely, absolutely be converted into other uses. Let's just grow wood. It grows on trees. Grow it. Use it. Grow it some more."



A Richlite fingerboard sits alongside a guitar neck being fitted with an ebony veneer, in a build that mixes natural and synthetic materials



A Sitka spruce guitar top being prepared for final construction. Even once-abundant supplies of instrument-grade Sitka are getting scarce

some music-quality trees that were used decades ago to build bridges, for example. ASW says it supplies as many as 50,000 guitar tops a year to the industry, including Sitka, Western red cedar and Alaskan yellow cedar. Customers include George Lowden, who says, "We could use wood from freshly felled trees, but this needs to be greatly restricted today in order to preserve these ancient trees."

Talking of ancient, custom builders love to use 5,000-year-old bog oak that's been salvaged from UK farmland, or redwood sinker logs that have been lying in Californian rivers for decades.



"Sustainability is about trying to innovate in such a way that we're not relying on these tropical timbers"

TOM SANDS



One of the hottest topics among environmentalists in recent years is rewilding – it's even a storyline on *The Archers*. This is the idea that nature will thrive if we just leave it alone. Even a fallen tree in a woodland is part of an eco-system and removing it upsets the system.

So perhaps the purest hands-off-the-forest approach is reuse – a mahogany piano lid (AJ Lucas Guitars) or a single-malt whisky barrel (Fylde), or a railway sleeper made of Alaskan Sitka recovered from a line in Vancouver, British Columbia (Tom Sands). Most reuse tonewoods in this vein won't be on the bargain rack. But in case you thought local upcycling was only for boutique luthiers, it turns out Bob Taylor is having a crack at this, too.

City Branch

"When city trees come down, they are typically disposed of at taxpayers' expense, burned or used as mulch if you're lucky. Some of this wood is music-quality tonewood. And every board foot taken from the urban wood dump is a tree not taken from a forest," says Taylor.

"There's a tremendous amount of wood in that waste stream," says his colleague



Tom Sands, pictured left in his workshop, is a custom acoustic guitar builder based in North Yorkshire who studied under Ervin Somogyi in California. His Model 00 shown below includes a Sitka spruce soundboard salvaged from a railway sleeper in Canada

Scott Paul. And tremendous variety. “People just planted everything in cities – it’s amazing. We went to one location and pulled five or six different species and were just kicking the tyres, and virtually all of them are quite promising.”

An urban wood – possibly a tropical ash or eucalyptus – might appear on a Taylor guitar as early as a couple of years hence “because the trees aren’t coming from Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Africa, India – they’re coming from Los Angeles. It’s crazy,” says Taylor.

The longterm approach could be about growing more trees in cities. Paul says cities globally are losing trees at a “staggering rate”. “If we are able to stabilise the urban canopy, it could help on a number of levels, from energy bills to mental health, fighting climate change and adding biodiversity.”

But is there already urban waste wood in Europe and America that could make a neck, for example? “I’m going to say yes,” says Scott Paul. “Is there enough to tap into a dedicated line? That is a great unknown because it’s a conversation that by and large is only taking place in North America right now – people looking

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THE RECLAIMERS

And I would walk back in time 5,000 years...

"Using reclaimed wood is rather more green and sustainable – for a small-production luthier – than even using local sustainable woods," says UK guitar maker Adrian Lucas. "You might have a wardrobe that comes to the end of its life, but the material it was made from is as good as the day it was built and it's such a waste to discard the whole thing."

"Reclaimed wood can be of a very high quality," he continues, since moisture and chemical content may have stabilised. Finding big enough pieces intact can be a challenge but "a four-piece back is every bit as good as a two-piece, and can often allow one to maintain quarter-sawn grain over the whole width".

Among the most alluring of salvaged woods, bog oak or Fenland black oak has been submerged in boggy ground for perhaps 5,000 years. "Because

there is no oxygen in the mud there is no decay," says Lucas. "Bog oak is usually black and sometimes fades to brown, but the oak figure is still visible and can be very beautiful. It often turns up in fields where it is a nuisance to farmers. It makes great fingerboards and its colour means it has quite a traditional appearance, but it also works very nicely for acoustic back and sides."

Lucas has made an Arbour model with entirely reclaimed woods apart from the bridge pins, purflings and rosette veneer: a soundboard of reclaimed 80-year-old Douglas fir; back and sides of Honduras mahogany from a chest of drawers; a mahogany neck made of a door frame from Bradford University; and an Indian rosewood fingerboard and bridge from an old dressing table.

seriously at the urban waste stream and trying to figure out how to tap into that, build local economies and take pressure off natural forests."

It seems to be a conversation that Taylor is willing to kick off. Perhaps one day some of that red Chinese furniture blamed for the rosewood CITES listing in 2017 will find salvation as a guitar. Hongmu Series, anyone?

Hey, Buyer

Amid the brouhaha of the CITES rosewood clampdown, US luthier Michael Bashkin (check out his deep-dive podcast *Luthier On Luthier*) wondered whether guitar buyers are at last realising it's time to move on from traditional tonewoods. We're breaking down guitar-shop doors and demanding forest-friendly guitars, right? It seems not.

Yes, many guitar makers are beaver away on alternative raw materials, and retailers can often talk knowledgeably about whether this or that is responsibly harvested, and what that might mean –



"I hope we're always sourcing tropical and temperate woods... That means those forests are functioning and healthy"

SCOTT PAUL, TAYLOR GUITARS



if you dig around their websites, or if you ask. But not many of us are asking. Or not yet enough to make forest-first, species-friendly acoustic guitars anywhere near the loudest show in town.

Which is a bit surprising when you consider how much of an inroad ethical shopping has made into things such as food and fashion, even nerdy stuff like investments and household energy tariffs. It's also surprising when you consider how long we've known about the plight of the world's forests. (It was before Sting.)

"Progress is being made," says Bob Taylor. "But let's not think that next year buyers will be overwhelmingly putting pressure on guitar makers to deliver some level of sustainable guitars. But I do think that next year more buyers will prefer to buy a brand that is actually doing something significant and is able to communicate that." **G**

6 String Acoustics



19453 - Art & Lutherie Roadhouse Parlour, T. Red
18713 - Art & Lutherie Roadhouse
18341 - Atkin Essential D Dreadnought Acoustic
18281 - Atkin Essential OOO Handmade in England
18340 - Atkin The Forty-Three J43, Aged Finish
19310 - Bluebridge Historic OOO Guitar, GF52228
14197 - Breedlove Discovery Concert Left-handed
18269 - Breedlove Guitar Acoustic Strings
19493 - Breedlove Guitar Acoustic Strings
19449 - Eastman E10M Sika/Sapele Acoustic, Used
15233 - Faith FKN Naked Neptune Acoustic Guitar
18898 - Faith FKN Naked Mars FKN, Natural
18240 - Faith FN Natural Neptune
19542 - Faith FNBCEHG HiGloss Baritone Neptune
19267 - Fender CD-60 Dread V3 DS 0970110532
16877 - Fender FA125 Acoustic Guitar
19120 - Gibson Vintage Ultimate J45 Ltd Ed, Used
15900 - Lakewood A22 Custom Made, Secondhand
18169 - Lantivee 03 Parlour Sized Mahogany, Used
18258 - Maestro OOHR Traditional Series Guitar
13824 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
15310 - Martin 00015M Mahogany Acoustic, Used
6009 - Martin 00018 Grand Auditorium Acoustic
13064 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Secondhand
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
16760 - Martin D28 Re-imagined Version
6008 - Martin D35 Dreadnought, Natural
19050 - Martin GPC11E Electro Acoustic
16322 - Martin GPCRS GT Electro Acoustic, Used
19459 - Martin LX1RE Acoustic Guitar
6007 - Martin OM21 Orchestra, Natural
18167 - Northwood M80 OMV Outaway
9185 - Seagull S6 Acoustic Guitar
16585 - Stonebridge G23CR, Outaway
15784 - Tanglewood Crossroads TWCR D Acoustic
18518 - Tanglewood TW2 TXE Travel Size Guitar
15491 - Tanglewood TW40PD Sundance Delta Parlour
14943 - Tanglewood TW40 SD VS
19462 - Tanglewood TWJPS Parlour Acoustic Guitar
17056 - Tanglewood TWU D Union Dreadnought
15980 - Tanglewood Sundance Perf. Pro X15NS
12317 - Taylor GC8 Grand Concert Acoustic Guitar
13910 - The Cort AF510OP Acoustic Folk Guitar
18104 - Vintage V2000MGG Giltap Mahog Acoustic
18602 - Vintage LV3000FT Acoustic Left Hand, Nat
14397 - Vintage VE8000PB Paul Brett 6-String
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
18950 - Yairi YBR2 Baritone Acoustic Guitar
15577 - Yamaha LL26 Handcrafted Jumbo Acoustic
18705 - Yamaha LL6 Acoustic Guitar, Natural
15576 - Yamaha LS26 A.R.E. II Handcrafted Guitar

6 String Electro Acoustics



18242 - Fender PMTE Travel Guitar, Natural
18939 - Godin A6 Ultra A6 Natural SG
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
5602 - K Yairi WY1 Natural
19069 - Kbs F_DAE Deluxe Electro Acoustic
19065 - Kbs T_AE Electro Acoustic Travel
19064 - Kbs F_AE Electro Acoustic
19070 - Kbs T_AE Acoustic Travel
19524 - Maestro Custom Series LE Pafles KOCBAU
19523 - Maestro Custom Series Singa KO CSB K
19528 - Maestro Double Top Series Pafles FCSBD
19525 - Maestro Original Series Singa WE CSB C
19530 - Maestro Private Coll. Victoria PH CSB AX
16830 - Maestro Guitar Electro-Acoustic All Solid
18265 - Maestro Singa FM-CSB-A Custom Series
19531 - Maestro Special Build Trad. Series D-CO
12225 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro Acoustic
19553 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro Acoustic Used
12222 - Martin & Co DX1AE Electro Acoustic
12418 - Martin & Co DX1AEL Acoustic Guitar
19244 - Martin 000-10E Guitar
18516 - Martin 000RS1L Electro-Acoustic Guitar
15592 - Martin 0015E Retro Non-Cutaway Electro
19403 - Martin 00X1AE Guitar
19390 - Martin D10E Electro Acoustic Guitar
16760 - Martin D28 Re-imagined Version
19489 - Martin DLR-10E Jnr Electro-Acoustic
16139 - Martin Ed Sheeran 3 + Signature Edition
19050 - Martin GPC11E Electro Acoustic
15591 - Martin GPC18E Electro Acoustic Guitar
15486 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic Shaded
8039 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic, Natural
16116 - Martin GPCX1AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
19458 - Martin LX1RE Electro Acoustic Guitar
18517 - Martin OMC15ME Electro-Acoustic Guitar
19497 - Martin EBG808L in Satin Natural
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Dreadnought
17418 - Northwood Auditorium With Hard Case
19283 - Ovalion 1512, Secondhand
19113 - Ovalion 1627 Balladeer Glen Campbell Sig.
18952 - Ovalion 1761 USA Made Electro Acoustic
19339 - Ovalion 1771 V-1 GC Glen Campbell Legend
19341 - Ovalion 2771 STR-MB Main Street
11087 - Ovalion Stanard Elite 6778LX Black
16006 - Ovalion Adamas W597 USA Electro Acoustic
19347 - Ovalion C2078AXP-KOA Exoticwood Elite
19343 - Ovalion C2078AXP2-PB Exoticwood Elite
19344 - Ovalion CE44L-5 Celebrity Elite - Left Hand
19346 - Ovalion CS24-4 Celebrity Standard, Nat
19338 - Ovalion 1771 STG-ES
14913 - PJ Eggle Linville Outaway Elec/Acoustic
14914 - PJ Eggle Linville Electro Acoustic
14927 - PJ Eggle Saulda Elec/Acoustic
0000 - RainSong - 11 Models in Stock Now
18316 - Seagull Entourage Autumn Burst CW QIT
18504 - Seagull Entourage Folk Burst Umber QIT
15832 - Tanglewood TW40PD Sundance Delta Parlour
16427 - Takamine EF261S-AN, Gloss Antique Stain
15376 - Takamine EF360GF Glen Frey Model
15481 - Tanglewood Crossroads TWCR D E
19547 - Tanglewood DBT PE HR
15494 - Tanglewood DBT SFCE PW
15492 - Tanglewood Discovery DBT SFCE BW
15869 - Tanglewood Discovery DBT SFCE OV
14952 - Tanglewood TSFCE Black
19099 - Tanglewood TSP 15 CE
15866 - Tanglewood TSR2 Masterdesign Electro
14070 - Tanglewood TW145 SS CE
18365 - Tanglewood TW4 E KOA Electro Acoustic
19461 - Tanglewood TW4 E VC KOA Electro Acoustic
19114 - Tanglewood TW4 E WB LH, Left-handed
15582 - Tanglewood TW4 Winterleaf Super Folk CE
18214 - Tanglewood TW4ER, Electro Acoustic, Red
8293 - Tanglewood TW55NS, Nat, Secondhand
14947 - Tanglewood TWCR O Crossroads
16524 - Tanglewood TWCR OE Crossroads
12305 - Tanglewood TWJF E
13288 - Tanglewood TWJPE Parlour Electro
19548 - Tanglewood TWR2 SFCE Electro Acoustic
15979 - Tanglewood Sundance Performance Pro X47E
18789 - Vintage LVEC501N Dreadnought, Satin Nat.
15850 - Vintage Gordon Giltap Signature
18786 - Vintage VE300N Electro-Acoustic, Natural
18788 - Vintage VEC501N Dreadnought, Satin Nat.
18791 - Vintage VGA900N Electro-Acoustic, Nat.
18790 - Vintage VGE800N Gemini P. Brett Baritone
14439 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini Electro Acoustic, Blk
14436 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini Electro Acoustic, Nat.
15575 - Yamaha FGX720SC, Black
15817 - Yamaha FSX720SC II Black
19012 - Yamaha LLTA TransAcoustic Sunburst
15619 - Yamaha SLG200S Steel Silent Guitar Nat

Classical Guitars



19128 - Asturias by Kodaira 3340 Classical, Used
15547 - David Pelter Handmade Classical Guitar
19210 - Hanika 50 KF-N Studio Line, Secondhand
19527 - Maestro Crossover Series Vera IR CSB GY
19376 - Mendieta - 16 Models in Stock Now
12178 - Protection Racket Class Gtr Case Dk
5360 - Ramirez 130 Year Anniversary Classical
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
18906 - Ramirez 2NE Classical Guitar
15236 - Ramirez 4NE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model Classical
15237 - Ramirez RA Classical Guitar
15238 - Ramirez FB Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
16060 - Stagg C410 1/2 Size Classical Guitar
15290 - Stagg C430 3/4 Classical Guitar, Black
15291 - Stagg C430 3/4 Classical Guitar Blue
15289 - Stagg C430 3/4 Size Classical Guitar
15292 - Stagg C430 3/4 Size Classical Guitar Red
17107 - Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
17106 - Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
17109 - Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
19470 - Stagg SCL50 3/4N Pack, Natural
19471 - Stagg SCL50 4/4N Pack, Natural
8352 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Natural
18946 - Yairi CE1 Electro Classical Guitar
18947 - Yairi YC6NS Classical Guitar
18949 - Yairi YCT8 Classical Guitar
14720 - Yamaha C40II Full Size Classical Guitar
18689 - Yamaha CGTA TransAcoustic Classical
14698 - Yamaha CS40 3/4 Size Classical Guitar
18680 - Yamaha CSFTA TransAcoustic Parlour
14721 - Yamaha CX40 Mark II Electro-Classical Guitar

Ukuleles



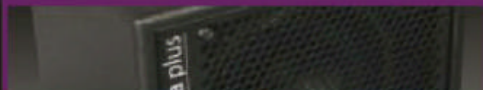
16390 - Baton Rouge UR11S Soprano Ukulele
18054 - Baton Rouge UR3S Soprano Ukulele
16227 - Baton Rouge UR4S Soprano Ukulele
18052 - Baton Rouge UR51S Soprano Ukulele
16458 - Iberica SC Classic Sop Uke, Solid Acacia
19306 - Kai KS110 10 Series Soprano, Mahogany
16794 - Kala KA-15S-S Satin Spruce Soprano
15833 - Korala UKS32 Soprano Ukulele
19464 - Mahab Halloween Soprano Ukulele Pumpkin
18195 - Mahab MK1 Kahiko Soprano Ukulele, Blue
18196 - Mahab MK1 Kahiko Soprano Ukulele, Brown
18197 - Mahab MK1 Kahiko Sop Uke, Butterscotch
18198 - Mahab MK1 Kahiko Soprano Ukulele, Red
15691 - Mahab MR1 Soprano Ukulele, Black
19480 - Mahab Snowflake Soprano Ukulele
18199 - Mahab Union Jack Soprano Uke
10909 - Martin OXK Soprano Ukulele
8128 - Martin S1 Soprano Ukulele with Gig Bag
13679 - Nukulele "Abbots Digil" Bottle Ukulele
13684 - Nukulele Autumn Gold Bottle Ukulele
13680 - Nukulele "Brown Ale" Bottle Ukulele
13683 - Nukulele Lemonade Bottle Ukulele
13682 - Nukulele Sainte Bottle Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana PK25G Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
19007 - Ohana Pequeno All-Solid Soprano Uke
4711 - Ohana SK20 Soprano Ukulele Uke
14210 - Ohana SK21 Premium Mahogany Soprano
4710 - Ohana SK25 Soprano Ukulele
15957 - Ohana SK28 Soprano Uke
9052 - Ohana SK38 Soprano Uke, Mahogany
9051 - Ohana SK50 Soprano Uke
7108 - Ohana SK70MG Soprano Ukulele
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
16017 - Ohana Ukuleles SK-30M Large Neck Soprano
19008 - Ohana Ukuleles SK39 Mahogany Soprano
16199 - Risa Electric Soprano Ukulele, Black
17059 - Tanglewood TWT1 Tiare Soprano Uke in Satin
17063 - Tanglewood TWT11 Concert Uke
17068 - Tanglewood TWT14E Tenor Uke
17062 - Tanglewood TWT4 Soprano Ukulele
17090 - Tanglewood Tiare TWT SP Soprano Ukulele
16454 - Uluru Koa I All Solid Koa Soprano Uke
15931 - Baton Rouge UR21C Concert Ukulele
15557 - Baton Rouge V4C Concert Ukulele
18975 - Breedlove Lulau Concert Nat Shadow E Uke
18973 - Lulau Concert Uke Ghost Burst Myrtlewood
18166 - Kai KCI 100M Concert Ukulele
18524 - Kwaya KSU1LL Long Neck Soprano Uke
16835 - AAMaestro UC-IR-SB-C Concert With Case
13086 - Magic Fluke M40 Mango Concert Uke, USED
18221 - Mahab Java Concert Ukulele, 2515C
18203 - Mahab MH2CE Electro Acoustic Concert Uke
12224 - Martin & Co C1K Koa Concert Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK10 Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
19016 - Ohana CK14E Electro Mahogany Concert Uke
9050 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Uke
13639 - Ohana CK22Z Concert Ukulele, Zebra wood
8518 - Ohana CK25 All Solid Concert Ukulele
15958 - Ohana CK28 Concert Ukulele
12604 - Ohana CK35 Concert Ukulele
12603 - Ohana CK38 Concert Ukulele
19020 - Ohana CK70 A6
19021 - Ohana CK70M Solid Spruce Concert Ukulele
19022 - Ohana CK70R Spruce/Rosewood Concert
19023 - Ohana CK70M Solid Spruce Concert Ukulele
16022 - Ohana CK75CG Concert Uke
13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
10385 - Risa KS385MP Solid Concert Electro Uke
18277 - Tanglewood TWT10I Ukulele
17066 - Tanglewood TWT12E Electro Acoustic Uke
17954 - Tanglewood TWT3 Concert Ukulele
19029 - Tanglewood TWT3 Sunburst Concert Ukulele
19030 - Tanglewood TWT3 Red Stain Concert Uke
18217 - Tanglewood TWT9 Concert Ukulele
14821 - Baton Rouge V2 Sun 8 String Tenor Uke
15553 - Baton Rouge V2T Sun Tenor Ukulele
19071 - KLOS Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_A)
19073 - KLOS Deluxe Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_DAE)
19072 - KLOS Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_AE)
19392 - Kai KC190 Concert Ukulele
19389 - Kai KC130 Tenor Ukulele, Mango
19391 - Kai KT190 Tenor Ukulele
10955 - Magic Fluke M20 Nat Fluke Tenor Uke UKE
14867 - Magic Fluke Timber Elec. Bass, Fretless
15593 - Martin T1K Tenor Ukulele
8514 - Ohana BK10 Baritone Ukulele
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
19013 - Ohana BK35CGE Baritone Ukulele Uke
7101 - Ohana BK35G Baritone Ukulele Uke
19375 - Risa ST Electric Tenor Uke, Cream
19373 - Risa TE Electric Tenor Ukulele, Black
19374 - Risa TE Electric Tenor Uke, Butter Blonde
15476 - Risa Tenor Ukulele Electric Tenor-Uke
16965 - Stagg UB30 Mahogany Baritone Ukulele
17069 - Tanglewood TWT15 E Tenor Uke
17071 - Tanglewood TWT17E Tenor Uke
17072 - Tanglewood TWT19 Tenor Uke
17073 - Tanglewood TWT20 Baritone Uke

6 String Electro Acoustics



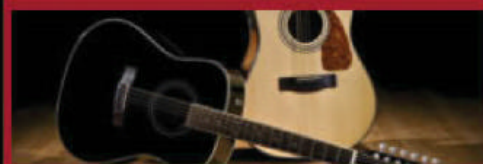
18505 - Art & Lutherie Americana CW, Faded Black
19446 - Art & Lutherie Roadhouse Indigo Burst HG
18894 - Breedlove Discovery Concert Bourbon Burst
15224 - Breedlove Pursuit Concert Acoustic
16244 - Breedlove Pursuit Dreadnought Ebony
18336 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic CE 12-String
18895 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic Concert CE
15887 - Breedlove Stage Dreadnought, Natural
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
13911 - Cort AF510EOP Electro Acoustic Guitar
18875 - D'Angelico Excel Tammany OM Electro
19134 - D'Angelico Premier Gramercy, Grey-Black
18886 - D'Angelico Premier Gramercy Acoustic
19448 - Eastman AC508CE Electro Acoustic, Used
10987 - Faith FECN Neptune Baby Jumbo Electro Bk
12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Outaway/Electro
18186 - Faith FMESB45 BNC Classic Burst Mercury
19136 - Faith FNEOG Nexus Neptune Cognac
18889 - Faith FRESB45L Dreadnought Electro Lefty
16783 - Faith FVBMB Blood Moon Venus Outaway
18796 - Faith FVBMB Blood Moon Venus LEFT-HAND
14717 - Faith FVHG Venus Cut/Electro Acoustic
18897 - Faith Neptune Classic Burst FNCESB45
18564 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele, Black
18565 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele, Nat
18566 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele, Green
18567 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele, SGray
18568 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele Stourst
16861 - Fender CP140SE, Natural
16862 - Fender CP140SE Electro-Acoustic Sunburst
16889 - Fender PM1 E Ltd Adirondack Dreadnought

Acoustic Amplification



5712 - AER Alpha - 40W, 1x8"
5193 - AER Alpha Plus - 50W, 1x8"
18514 - AER Compact 60 Mk 4
5710 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Hardwood - 60W, 1x8
14504 - AER Compact 60 SLOPE
15913 - AER Tommy Emmanuel Signature Compact 60
5707 - AER Compact Classic Pro - 60W, 1x8"
5708 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Mobile - 60W, 1x8
4945 - AER Compact XL - 200W, 2x8"
9028 - AER Domino 3 200w Watt Acoustic Amp
15917 - Boss Acoustic Singer Live Acoustic Amp
15918 - Boss Acoustic Singer Pro Acoustic Amp
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
18243 - Fender Acoustasonic 40
15775 - Fishman SA220 - 220w, 6x4", Ex-Demo
6770 - Marshall AS100D - 50W+50W, 2x8"
13956 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8"
19483 - Orange Crush Acoustic 30, Black
4976 - Roland AC33 30W - 1x8"
9358 - Roland AC33, Rosewood
11129 - Roland AC40 Acoustic Guitar Amplifier
6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Amp - 30w, 2x6.5
9383 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Guitar Combo, RW
5597 - Roland AC90 - 90W, 2x8"
16903 - Roland Cube Street 2.5+2.5W, 6.5
13029 - Roland Cube Street EX Stereo Amplifier
14371 - MOBILE AC Acoustic Chorus, Portable Amp
5618 - Roland Mobile Cube (25W+2.5W, 4x2)
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
16469 - Vox VX50AG Acoustic Amp, SECONDHAND
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

12 Strings



19351 - Bluebridge BR4012 GR52031T
19496 - Breedlove 12-String, Myrtlewood, Used
18730 - Cort Natural Glossy MR710F, 12-String
18916 - Faith FKV12 Naked Venus 12-String
19340 - Ovation 2758AX-NEB 12 String Elite
18434 - Sigma DM12-15E Electro Acoustic, Used
18792 - Vintage V5000SB12 Statesboro 12 String
18807 - Vintage VE5000SB12 Electro 12 String
14349 - Vintage VE8000PB-12 Paul Brett 12-String



Thin Air

A PRS guitar designed in the 90s finally gets the ‘offshore’ SE treatment, knocking a cool £3.5k off the price. It’s also the first Chinese-made PRS electric guitar

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin



PRS SE HOLLOWBODY STANDARD & HOLLOWBODY II **£899 & £999**

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What You Need To Know

- 1 A PRS Hollowbody we can afford!**
It's been a long wait (22 years), but PRS is really attacking the mass-market price point with its SE guitars. We suspect these will be very popular.
- 2 Wasn't there an Archtop model?**
A deeper-bodied Archtop design pre-dated the thinner Hollowbody, appearing as a Guitar Of The Month offered between 1995 and '96: the first PRS guitar with f-holes. It's been out of mainstream production for some years now, leaving the Hollowbody as the lasting version. PRS has toyed with numerous semi-hollow guitars; only the Custom 22, CE 24, S2 Vela and SE Custom 22 Semi-Hollows survive into 2020.
- 3 Where are they made?**
In the same Chinese factory that produces PRS's SE acoustics. As you'll see, though, this pair are made in a very different manner to the USA Hollowbodies.

We're barely out of 2019 and PRS has announced its first wave of models for the New Year, its 35th as a production company. Among the new models are this pair: the SE Hollowbody Standard and the Hollowbody II. It's little surprise that PRS's f-holed hollow guitars were originally conceived by Joe Knaggs, who at the time described himself as an "ex-jazz guitarist". These SE Hollowbodies certainly reference that original 20-something-year-old design (still available in PRS's USA Core range), but they actually amount to a virtually complete redesign. Where to start?

Officially launched in 1998, the PRS McCarty Archtop and the ongoing Hollowbody guitars (the McCarty name is now used only on the 594 Hollowbody II) were, and remain, solid-wood constructs, the build made possible by CAD design and CNC routing. These new SE versions, however, revert back to the style of a more classic hollow or semi-acoustic guitar. The bodies – top, back and sides – are laminated, like the classic Gibson ES-335, for example. The Standard is spec'd with five-ply mahogany; the II has the same mahogany sides but adds both a five-ply maple top and

back with a flamed figure. On both, the top laminate measures just under 4mm thick.

Along with that fundamental change, the SE Hollowbodies are slightly increased in size, too, including a bigger-looking upper horn. One reason could be the difficulty in replicating the relatively small horn of the original PRS design in this old-school construction method. Side by side with a USA Hollowbody, the SE's body looks noticeably bigger at 356mm by 464mm (14 by 18.25 inches), the original measuring 330mm by 451mm (13 by 17.75 inches). The overall depth of both is similar to the original at around 72mm; likewise, the rim depth of 42mm. Interestingly, too, the headstock outline is enlarged: the SE's head measures approximately 165mm long by 95mm at its widest point; the original is 153mm by 87mm.

The upscaling of the design might seem slight on paper, but it's surprisingly noticeable



True to its name, the Hollowbody is free from a centre block, unlike an ES-335. Instead there's a small block that sits under the bridge only and connects the top to the back and allows PRS to use its Stoptail bridge. On both SE versions here it's the adjustable style – although the block, which you can see through the f-holes, is obviously a separate piece of what looks like maple.

Internally, the guitars are very tidy. As ever, the full-width neck forms the heel and slots under the neck pickup cavity. Unlike many laminated hollowbodies, there is no top bracing but there is an additional block support, approximately 22mm thick, under the top between that bridge block and the end of the neck. In keeping with the more acoustic-like construction style, we have kerfed linings to provide enough gluing area for the top and back to be attached to the relatively thin sides.

If the body here is very different, the mahogany neck is more familiar: PRS's Wide Fat profile, set into a large neck block. Like the sides on both our finishes, the neck is painted opaque black so you can't see if it's one-piece or not. On the back of the headstocks, as usual, PRS states exactly where the instrument is made: by Cor-Tek

1. This is the same adjustable wrapover Stoptail bridge that is used by PRS on various models throughout its ranges. It's ideal here if you want to string either SE Hollowbody with heavier gauge or even flat-wound strings

2. It looks like the standard PRS headstock outline, but it's actually enlarged to suit the upscaled body. This makes it the same dimensions that PRS uses on its SE acoustic guitars



3. The primary difference between the two SE Hollowbody guitars is the wood used for the top and back. The Standard uses a five-ply mahogany that you can see at the edges of the unbound f-holes

4. Both guitars use a very simple control setup of master volume and tone with a three-way toggle pickup selector. There are no coil-splits as we see on many PRS guitars



in China. The headstock is bound – like the fingerboard and the body’s top and back edges – and has what looks like a striped ebony or possibly rosewood facing. It is, in fact, a stained basswood veneer.

There’s more unfamiliarity with their ebony fingerboards, rarely used by PRS. Fret gauge is smaller (spec’d at 2.64mm wide by 1.17mm high) than the current SE Santana Trem (2.79mm wide by 1.40mm), for example. The ends sit over the binding on the usual 245mm (10-inch) cambered fingerboard, which is noticeably striped on the Standard, less so on the II. There’s a slight shimmer to the solid pearloid bird inlays, too, which certainly aren’t as showy as many used by PRS.

While it might be surprising that these models are made in China, there is no doubt about the quality of the build. Both guitars are near flawless.

While we’re seeing more proprietary parts used across PRS’s three ranges – such as the Private Stock bridge used on both the SE and Core versions of Paul’s Guitar and here the same adjustable Stoptail bridge you’d find on an S2 or Core model – that sharing doesn’t extend to PRS’s pickups. As usual, we get Asian-made ‘S’ versions

of existing PRS designs; in this case the covered 58/15. There’s no mention of the new TCI ‘tuned’ system we’ve seen on the SE Paul’s Guitar or the SE Santana Singlecut Tremolo, and the humbuckers here are simply controlled by a three-way toggle selector, master volume and tone.

Feel & Sounds

The upscaling of the design might seem slight on paper, but it’s surprisingly noticeable. An original Hollowbody Spruce, slightly lighter than either SE, now feels a little small, especially when played seated – although the new SE outline is still a long way off the ES-335’s 406mm (16-inch) wide body. Diehard Hollowbody fans might not admit it, but, to us, the SE version feels better. The slightly expanded size feels more like a proper semi whereas the original is – and feels like – a hollowbody crammed into a solidbody size.

The Wide Fat neck is the biggest offered by PRS (now called the Pattern profile on the USA Core models) and adopts a quite classic Gibson-esque girth in upper positions with less depth and a hint of a V in lower positions. Here, the Standard’s neck measures slightly deeper (22.5mm at the



The Hollowbody II uses a five-ply figured maple top and back; the sides on both guitars are laminated mahogany

1st fret, 25mm at the 12th) and has a slightly rounder, bigger feel in lower positions and a bit more bulk in higher positions. The II, while obviously similar, just feels a bit more classic PRS, measuring 22mm at the 1st fret and 24.3mm at the 12th.

Both guitars have been smartly set up and aside from a little more polishing being needed on top of some of the frets, each of these models plays exceptionally well out of its case. We did need to check pickup heights on the Standard as the bridge pickup was placed quite low, but, really, that's nothing to moan about.

If our USA Hollowbody along with an all-mahogany Singlecut Hollowbody sound a little more acoustic-like, the SEs certainly seem a bit more ES-like initially. Both feel a little more damped than the USA comparisons, again more akin to a

They're not designed to nail a specific vintage tone, but both veer towards a hollow ES-330

less-hollow build. There's quite a different response from the two SEs, though: the Standard sounds a little roomier with a slightly louder, more fundamental voice, while the II is not quite as loud with a little more snap to the response. Both are noticeably more hollow-sounding than a centre-blocked semi, though.

When amplified, the II has somewhat more clarity, snap and bite than the darker, moodier Standard. The quality of sound is very impressive, though, with clean lower mids (the neck pickup really sounds good on the II) and a smooth, not sharp treble response. Swapping between the two, the Standard's darker voice may make it the less versatile for some: rolling the tone back things do get a little woolly, whereas the II's tone can be knocked back a little to simulate the darker voice of the Standard then pulled back up if you need a little more clarity.

Like the USA Hollowbodies, yes, you'll get feedback if you're using higher gains and volume, not to mention if you're close to your amp on a crowded small stage. Always difficult to determine or predict, both SEs seemed a little more comfortable with higher volume, certainly more so than the USA Hollowbody Spruce.

THE RIVALS

The majority of hollowbodies or semis follow well-trodden paths. Ibanez's Artstar AS153 (£899) is a stylish take on a centre-blocked semi and reflects a long-standing association with the jazz and fusion worlds. Along with dual Super 58 humbuckers, the neck pickup's Tri Sound switch offers parallel and single-coil switching.

Godin makes a number of classy hollow and semi-hollow guitars in Canada. The single-cut Montreal Premiere, for example, is 378mm (14.89 inches) wide with a cedar 'breathe through' centre block. The twin-humbucking Sunburst HG kicks off the mini range at around £1,500. A more cost-effective Indonesian-made guitar of similar style is the D'Angelico Premier SS Stoptail, which retails at £709.

Gretsch has the G2655 Streamliner Center Block Jr Double Cutaway (approx. £340), also available with Bigsby, which reduces its classic double-cut shape to 340mm (13.375 inches) wide and has a mainly hollow spruce centre block and Broad'Tron BT-2S humbuckers.



5. The slightly more upmarket vibe of the SE Hollowbody II includes bound f-holes

6. Both SE Hollowbody guitars employ an ebony fingerboard – quite a rarity in PRS’s history, although commonplace in the archtop world

It all means both guitars are almost blank canvases in terms of the sounds you can create. They are not designed to nail a specific vintage tone, but both veer more towards a hollow ES-330 than the more solidbody-sounding ES-335. For players wanting to add jazzier, bluesier flavours you’d be very much at home here, but with some crunch, the voicing on the 58/15 pickups offers a clarity, whereas both our USA Hollowbodies, and a couple of centre-blocked ES-335-style guitars, sounded a little congested.

To be critical, it’s a shame PRS didn’t give these the four-control shoulder-placed toggle treatment of the 594: in that guise they’d really give the near-generic thinline-semi market a run. Conversely, the simple drive with no coil-splits really does focus you on the playing.

Verdict

While the majority of the SE line-up apes the style of the Core models, it’s far from a range that just replicates the USA line. There are models such as the well-loved Zach Myers Semi-Hollow, the new SE Mira and Starla, the Mark Holcomb models, even the Santana Singlecut Trem that are unique to the SE line, and these SE Hollowbodies illustrate just how things are changing – the SEs are becoming very much their own thing.





The laminate construction of these Hollowbodies is unique to the PRS canon and they certainly sound and – thanks to the upscaled size – feel different from the USA Hollowbodies. They actually augment your choice, rather than being just a down-spec'd lower-cost version.

There's a validity to the design, too, that might make you prefer the lower-ticket version. Not only does the design offer more air, there's a very balanced musical voice that sort of sits between more classic

7. The covered 58/15 'S' pickups are Indonesian-made versions of PRS's USA 58/15 humbuckers developed specifically for these guitars. They utilise PRS's 'TCI' technology "to prove what your ears are hearing and using the data to manipulate the nuances of sound to ensure your ears are working correctly", adds Jack Higginbotham

There's a balanced musical voice that sits between more classic semis and the USA Hollowbody

semis and the USA Hollowbody. You can only imagine where PRS could take this design with P-90s or a Bigsby, for example... not to mention a centre-blocked or single-cut version and, of course a piezo system like the USA models.

But that's not to say anything is lacking here. For the money (which includes a good hard case), both are excellent instruments that would suit a very wide style palette, certainly as broad and, we might wager, broader than the USA design. We predict these will be a huge hit with players of any style. **G**



PRS SE HOLLOWBODY STANDARD

PRICE: £899 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Double-cutaway hollowbody electric

BODY: Double-bound mahogany laminate

NECK: Mahogany, Wide Fat profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.2mm

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

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS Adjustable Stoptail, PRS designed tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING/BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.79/6.15

OPTIONS: None. See Hollowbody II

RANGE OPTIONS: The USA Core-level Hollowbody range includes the II Piezo (from £4,749). Both the Hollowbody I 12-string (from £4,830) and the McCarty 594 Hollowbody II (from £4,429) have updated specs for 2020

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Fire Red Burst (as reviewed) and McCarty Tobacco Sunburst



9/10

PROS Upscaled design; laminate construction; excellent pickup choice. A classy hollowbody

CONS Darker sounding than the II; only two colours; no lefties; dot inlays might suit those with a bird allergy



PRS SE HOLLOWBODY II

PRICE: £999 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Double-cutaway hollowbody electric

BODY: Double-bound flame maple laminate (top and back), 5-ply w/ mahogany laminate sides

NECK: Mahogany, Wide Fat profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43mm

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

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS Adjustable Stoptail, PRS designed tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.75/6.05

OPTIONS: None. See Hollowbody Standard

RANGE OPTIONS: PRS currently offers four Semi-Hollow models: CE 24 (£2,325), S2 Vela (£1,615, and in Satin finish £1,295), and the SE Custom 22 Semi-Hollow (£799)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

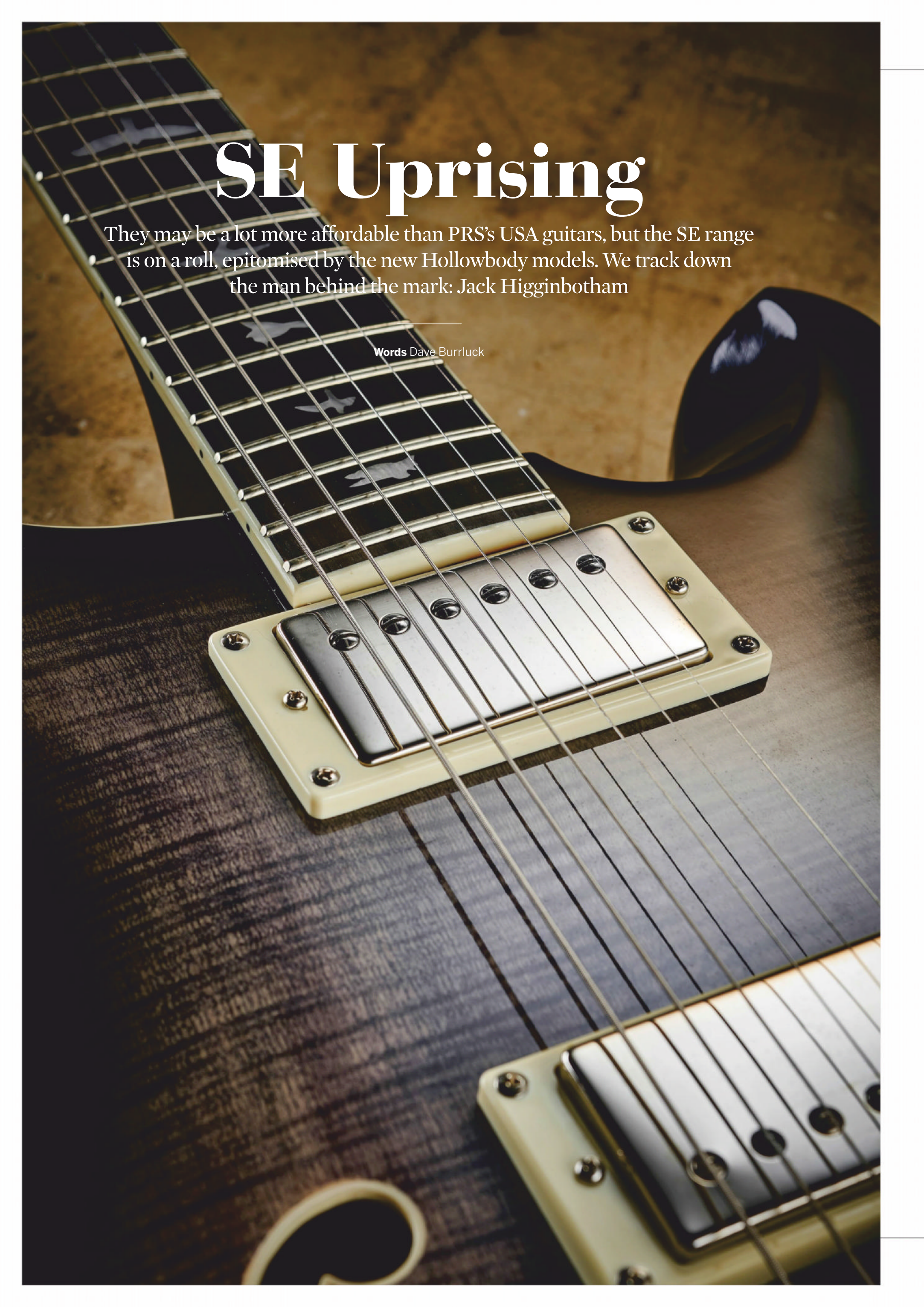
FINISHES: Charcoal Burst (as reviewed) and Tri-Color Sunburst



9/10

PROS Ditto the Standard; there's more snap and clarity to this version, making it the more versatile of the two reviewed here

CONS Again, only two colours are offered and no left-handers



SE Uprising

They may be a lot more affordable than PRS's USA guitars, but the SE range is on a roll, epitomised by the new Hollowbody models. We track down the man behind the mark: Jack Higginbotham

Words Dave Burrluck

We'd been at PRS HQ for a matter of minutes when we were ushered into an office expecting to be shown the latest high-ticket guitars for 2020. Instead, we spent the following hour and a bit discussing the new SE offerings, primarily the Hollowbody guitars made not in Korea or Indonesia but in China – a first for a PRS electric. How? Why?

"It's pretty simple," Jack Higginbotham, PRS's chief operating officer, tells us. "We are very happy with our SE acoustic guitars made in Dalian, China, through Cor-Tek. We have an incredible relationship with the man that runs that factory. Instead of him saying, 'No, we do things our way,' he has embraced our mission and our philosophy on what makes a good acoustic guitar. I feel very connected to him and very much a part of what he's doing. His ability to make a guitar to our design is well proven."

"The way I look at the new Hollowbody," he continues, "well, it's a coin toss as to whether it's an acoustic guitar or an electric guitar. So it's not a radical thought to me to have them make the guitar. As you know, you've played them, there are some intense acoustic properties about that guitar: it's like we're making an acoustic guitar with twin humbuckers."

"The Cor-Tek factory in Surabaya, Indonesia, is made up of several different factory buildings," he adds. "The one in China is probably about the same [total] size, but it comes across as being larger because it's all under the one roof. I've been in the factory many, many times, but I think I'd still get lost if I was left on my own. So it's really large but extraordinarily well equipped and organised."

Strong Links

As our review explains, the SE Hollowbody guitars are the first – and only – PRSes at any level to be made of laminates, a stark difference to the solid-wood construction of the USA Hollowbody models.

"You're right, they're not carved out of a huge hunk of maple or mahogany," says Jack, "but it has a spiritual relationship to the original USA model, if you like. It's not

completely different and even though it's made in a very different way, the philosophy feels very similar."

Fundamental to the new design is the upscaling, as Jack explains: "I have one of the first USA Hollowbody models – it was the only guitar I played for many years – but I always wished it was a little bit larger. So, initially, we put the design onto graph paper and played around with it. Myself and [PRS engineer] Jon Wasserman printed out a zillion of those until we thought the slightly upscaled version looked pretty good. We did that and thought, 'Well, now the headstock looks small,' so we used the larger acoustic headstock shape. Then we took it to Paul [Reed Smith] who made a few changes and we landed on what you see today. To me, it's just more proportional: it's not big and clunky like a full-size hollowbody guitar

"It has a spiritual relationship to the original USA model, if you like: it's not completely different"

but just that bit bigger than our [USA] Hollowbody design."

In our review we wonder whether a secondary reason for the upscaling of the guitar is so that the relatively thin upper horn could actually be made in this laminate construction method...

"As far as that horn goes, part of the shape – and particularly that part – has to do with how you can effectively, in a mass-production way, pull that off and not have it split and crack. So there is some of that in a practical sense, but the overall size increase was really down to wanting the guitar to feel a bit bigger. I had an idea of what that would do from a sound standpoint with a bigger sound chamber."

"Early on in the design process I honestly didn't particularly like the way the guitar



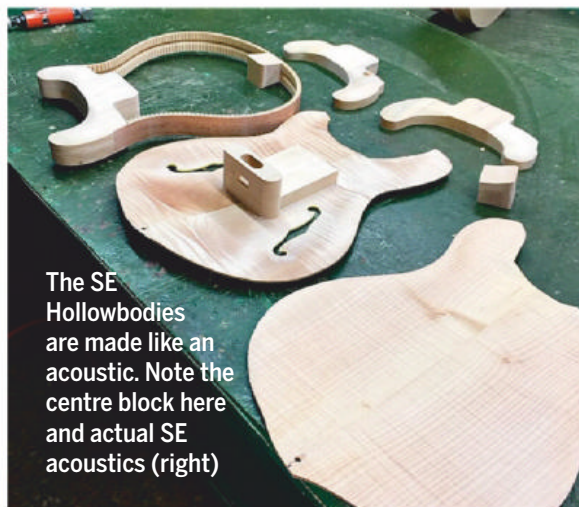
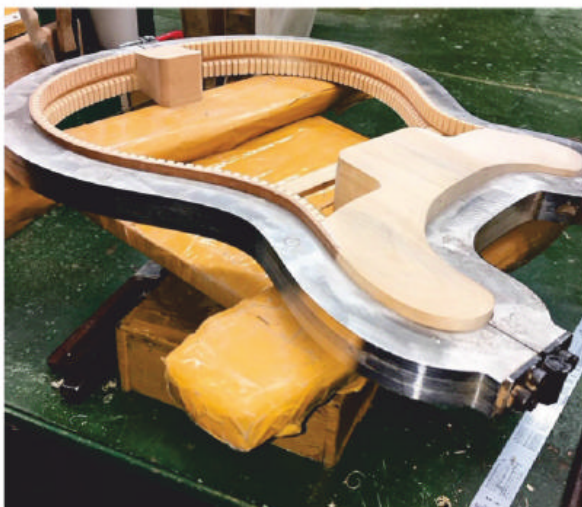
The much-travelled Jack Higginbotham heads up the SE team

sounded acoustically, so I started to talk with Rob Carhart in engineering here at PRS. He told me we'd changed something in the design of our hollowbodies: when we carve the inside of the top there is what is effectively another block that runs under the pickups from the neck-join to the bridge, and that seems to get rid of that slightly boxy sound of the original Hollowbody. Doug Shive performed an operation on a prototype and added the block, and it sounded great. So that's why inside the SE Hollowbody there is no bracing but there is a block, just like the 594 Hollowbody and Hollowbody II, and I'm telling you if you were able to take that block out it would sound like a different guitar."

High Five

While both guitars now use a five-ply laminate for the body construction, the mahogany Standard was originally conceived with a three-ply laminate.

"When I went to the factory I saw it was five-ply and asked why," says Jack. "They said it sounded better – and they were correct as well. It sounded better and I believe that's because the five-ply is just a little bit stiffer."



The SE Hollowbodies are made like an acoustic. Note the centre block here and actual SE acoustics (right)



Both our SE Hollowbody review samples have pretty big necks, a little fuller-feeling than the Wide Fat profile suggests.

“The guitars you have are very early in the production. Quite honestly, I like the necks on those early ones, too. But knowing what the market desires I shaved the neck down slightly so the current production guitars have less shoulder and slightly less back-to-front depth, so it feels more like a proper Wide Fat. As far as consistency goes, that factory is amazing at being able to make a lot of product very consistently.”

Another unusual feature for a PRS electric guitar is the use of ebony for the fingerboard, which was influenced in part by the CITES rulings in 2017.

“When we started with the SE acoustics, because of the CITES restrictions on rosewood, and because of our ability to take a clean-slate approach, we choose ebony for the fingerboards. When the Hollowbody project came along we were very comfortable knowing that we could

“Everything I’ve learned is being applied to this project. All of the effort over the years is being put to very good use”

use ebony to make a guitar that sounded great: we just understood ebony out of that factory very well and obviously we had no idea the CITES restrictions would end [as of late 2019]. To be honest, my experience with ebony, much like Paul’s – certainly back in the 80s – is that it could create a very bright-sounding guitar. It didn’t seem to be the right recipe for us. But I think we’ve evolved, certainly in our pickups and in other areas, in such a way that [ebony] fits in nicely now. It’s all a part of an intentional design. So long as you build a guitar in a way that all the pieces work harmoniously with each other then it’s perfectly acceptable.”

Pickup Refresh

Continuing with ‘the first’ accolades, the covered PRS 58/15 ‘S’ pickups were specifically developed from the USA-made pickups for these guitars (although you’ll find that they are now fitted to the S2 Standard 22 and 24 as well).

“It’s a lower-output pickup to suit the Hollowbody project: Paul was the brains and I was the hands kinda thing. We were working to tailor a sound that would be appropriate, that lower-output vintage-vibe



Here is a trio of PRS’s USA Core Hollowbodies. Top and bottom are examples of the Hollowbody II Piezo; centre is the McCarty 594 Hollowbody II

hollowbody thing we were looking for. We needed to use standard sourced parts that Asian manufacturing is used to, but by taking some of the philosophies of TCI – the way that Paul is measuring things and the way he is reinventing the way he looks at pickups – we were able to take those standard parts and formulate them in such a way that they come off as very far from what most of us would consider a standard Asian-made pickup sound. We were able to pull it off with standard parts: it’s not just the ingredients, it’s the recipe.”

The company seems to be hitting the SE range hard with a slew of excellent designs. But does this mean they are trying to compete with the USA-made guitars?

“Yes, I agree that it does seem that way, and I’ve heard others talk about that, but I think it’s dangerous. There is *no* competition internally: it’s simply a desire to do the best we can in every category, not one better than the other. Competitive? No, if anything, it’s more collaborative than ever. I think Paul is embracing it more, as we all are.

“It comes back to the focus we’ve put on it. More attention, more resources, more

concentration, more love – it’s reflected in what you said about your left hand telling you things about a neck shape before you even know them. That’s music to my ears because it says that all the efforts we’re putting in are worth it.

“I’ve been learning stuff [about guitars] for 35 years and I’ve been learning in a lot of different disciplines, whether it’s marketing, sales, design or manufacturing. Practically everything I’ve learned is being applied to this project: the culmination of everything is all funneling into this moment. All of the effort over the years is being put to very good use.

“The question we ask is: what is the best guitar we can make at this price-point? How can we make these necks feel better? How can we make this a better instrument for more people?”

As we allude to in our review, these initial SE Hollowbodies are just the start.

“The Hollowbody platform is a new door inside the PRS SE series. It is a solid platform to build upon. As such, it presents opportunities to expand and grow within itself... and we already have plans to expand this model.” Watch this space! **G**



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Profile Synthesis

Kemper combines its Profiler head preamp and Remote foot controller to present a pro-standard floorboard that’s a serious and roadworthy addition to your rig

Words Nick Guppy Photography Olly Curtis



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What You Need To Know

1 Has *Guitarist* gone completely digital, then?

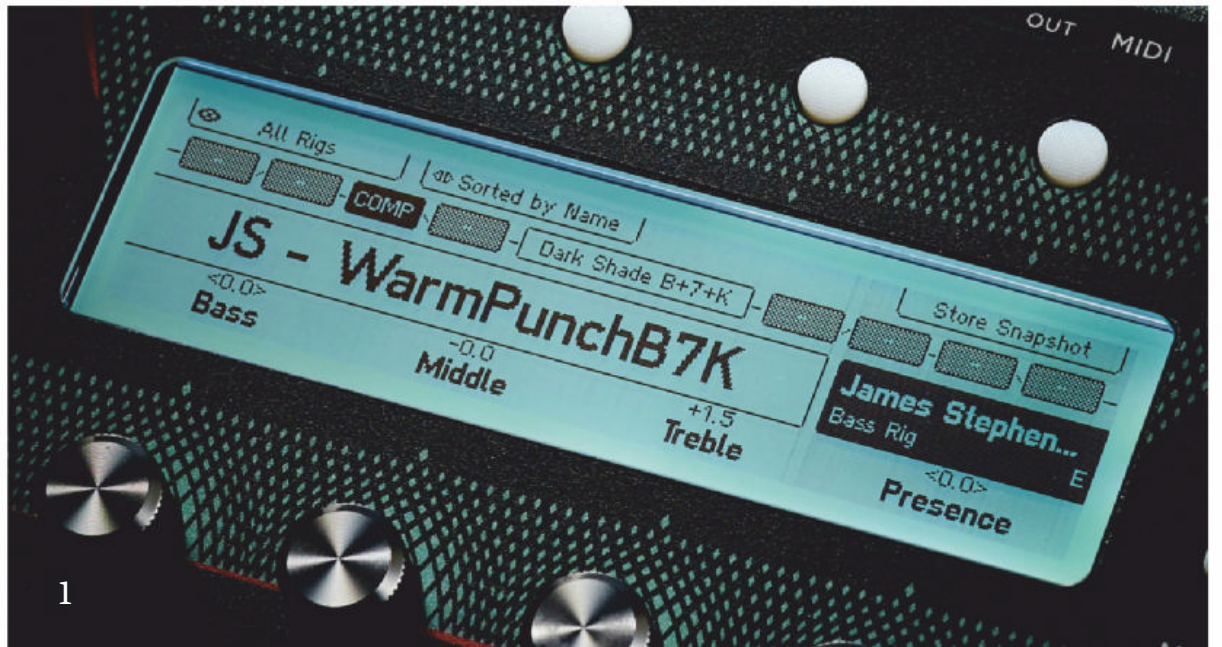
No, but we're definitely in a time of immense development in digital amplification. The problem might well be which brand or product to go for.

2 So, what is the Profiler Stage?

A new floor-standing version of Kemper's Profiler head preamp, combined with the Kemper Remote foot controller. Like the original Profiler head, it doesn't have a power stage, so you'll need a powered cab of some sort if you want to use it live without a proper PA. However, it does come with full profiling capability.

3 Will it suit me?

If you're an occasional amateur guitarist, it's probably overkill, but if you're tech-savvy and can use the whole amp profiling concept to build a collection of vintage and modern amps in the digital realm, the Profiler Stage is a very serious piece of kit.



The arrival of Kemper's Profiler digital head in 2011 was a game-changer for many guitarists, allowing them to digitally recreate the sounds of their own amps, as well as download amp profiles from other users via Kemper's online portal. The Profiler Remote foot controller was added to the range a few years later as the Profiler's popularity grew. Kemper has now taken the next logical step, integrating its Profiler Head and Remote foot controller into a compact, stage-ready preamp appropriately called the Profiler Stage.

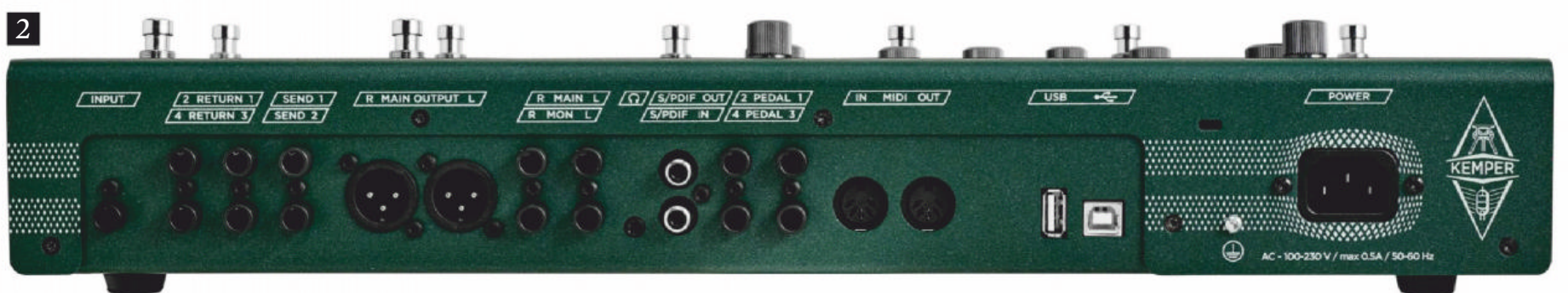
The Profiler Stage is housed in a tough steel case that's heavy enough to stay put but still very portable. Newcomers to Kemper's styling and operating system may find the controls somewhat daunting, with dozens of switches, knobs and multi-coloured LEDs threatening to push even mild technophobes into sensory overload. However, everything has a purpose and the layout is quite logical when you get used to it. The all-important display screen is relatively small compared with other similar products and the information isn't so easy to read from a distance, although the contrast is good. The display backlighting changes colour in some modes as a visual assist and all the footswitch labels are backlit, which is handy in low-light situations as well as looking very cool.

Kemper's main claim to fame is profiling: creating a faithful replica of any amp's tone from a sample

The Profiler Stage organises amps, effects and speaker cabinet simulations into Rigs, which are stored in 125 banks of five, with a Browse mode and a separate Performance mode, which is useful for storing and shuffling setlists. Two footswitch buttons step up and down through the banks, while five more directly access each Rig. Four more footswitch buttons can be assigned to toggle effects or groups of effects in each Rig, with two more buttons to the right of the display controlling the Profiler Stage's looper and tuner functions and another for tap tempo. Most of these buttons have at least one secondary function: for example, the Rig select buttons also operate the looper. In loop mode, the button number backlights dim and the looper control symbols become brighter – just one example of the thought that's gone into making a relatively complex interface as easy as possible to navigate.

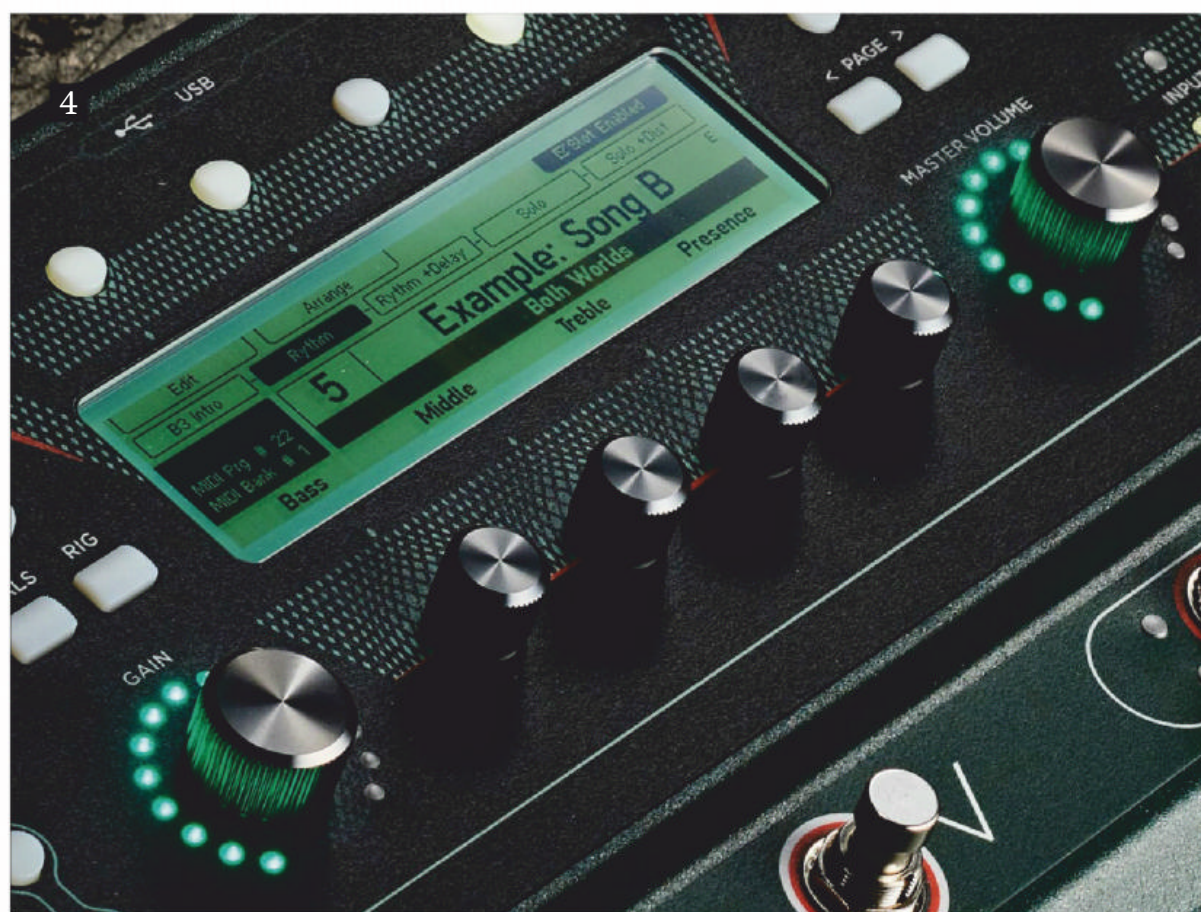
1. The mono LCD display is somewhat small and difficult to read from a distance, but it has all the info you need to know what the Profiler Stage is doing

2. Kemper's new unit has two fully programmable mono-out/stereo-in effects loops



3. There is a fully featured built-in looper as well as an automatic tuner with a highly accurate strobe-display option

4. You get dedicated knobs for gain and master volume, while the smaller knobs in between can function as bass, mid, treble and presence but have other functions as well



The unit's signal chain is represented by a series of 12 illuminated push-buttons to the right of the display, featuring an input section followed by four effects choices in front of the virtual amp and four more effects after the virtual speaker cabinets, ending with an output section. Button switches over the display handle various parameter select and editing functions, while under the display you'll see that there are some more familiar-looking knobs for gain and master volume, with smaller assignable ones in between handling bass, mid, treble and presence as well as other parameters. Other controls include useful browse and type select knobs for quickly locating and auditioning rigs and effects.

The Profiler Stage's rear panel has a single guitar input jack, two mono send/stereo return effects loops, main outputs on XLR and jack, and a secondary pair of monitor outputs. Other connections include S/PDIF digital in and out, no less than four expression pedal jacks, MIDI in and out, USB and headphones. Overall, the Profiler Stage is ready for life on the road, with robust construction, classy looks and impeccable styling.

Sounds

The Profiler Stage's software takes around 20 seconds to load, after which the lights and display screen come to life. Straight out of the box, this isn't really a 'plug in and go' preamp. A read of the quick-start manual is recommended, as the main manual covers every feature and runs to 300 pages! Even then, a supplementary manual covers MIDI programming; the Profiler easily exceeds the 128-parameter limit of normal MIDI, with more than 400 addressable functions available through NRPN (Non-Registered Parameter Numbers).

Kemper's latest OS7 software has really come of age, offering an impressive array of onboard effects including wahs, distortions, delays, choruses and modulations, with

Your imagination is the only limit to what you can create, and the vast editing scope makes the Kemper a tweaker's paradise

THE RIVALS

Line 6's Helix Floor (£1,199) is very popular. For good reason: at the last count it featured 45 amps, 30 cabs, 16 mics and 70 effects models, accessed from a high-definition colour display, making editing a pleasure. It has assignable colour-coded footswitches, programmable scribble strips and an integral expression pedal.

For those on a tighter budget, the HeadRush Pedalboard (£774), like the Helix, features a big seven-inch full-colour touchscreen display, making for fast, intuitive drag-and-drop editing through what must be one of the best user interfaces in this class. The latest software adds extra amps, cabs, impulse responses and effects to rival the competition, with quad processor-powered realism and a mad looper that can record samples up to 20 minutes long.

Boss pedals are so abundant it's worth remembering the floor multi-effects concept really belongs to them, too, going all the way back to the ME-5 in 1988. The current flagship GT-1000 (£869) leaves good old COSM behind, replacing it with Boss's next-generation AIRD (Augmented Impulse Response Dynamics), providing highly responsive amp and cab models, wireless Bluetooth editing and a host of effects few manufacturers can match.

all kinds of tempting extras lurking in the menus. It's complemented by Kemper's Rig Manager app that syncs online Rig Exchange and local patches, as well as managing firmware updates, which are reassuringly easy to apply. Currently Rig Manager is only available for Windows and Mac desktops, with connection to the Profiler solely via USB. There's no mobile or wireless option.

Kemper's main claim to fame is, of course, profiling: the ability to create a faithful replica of any guitar amp's tone from a recorded sample. On the Stage, the Profiling Assistant opens when you press down the Browser and Perform buttons simultaneously, after which you're taken through the process. As you might expect, the quality of the resulting profile is very dependent on how well your sample is recorded. Browsing through the 16,000 or so online rigs available through Rig Manager and the 280-odd that come pre-loaded, it's quite easy to pick out those that have been recorded professionally from those that haven't. With the best profiles, it's possible to strip away the effects and hear an impressive recreation of an original amp, while others are quite heavily dependent on



The Profiler Stage has main outputs on professional balanced XLR connectors, with ground lifting tucked away in the software

effects, with distortions and reverbs making many rigs sound too similar. Ironically, quite a few of the online rigs are profiles of valve amp facsimiles made on other digital modelling products and software plug-ins, making one wonder how deep the rabbit hole can go.

One of the Stage's strongest creative features is its ability to simultaneously change more than one parameter, something Kemper calls "morphing": for example, sweeping from a high-gain lead sound with a longish hall reverb, delay and pitch shift to a clean rhythm sound with rotary speaker and a tight room reverb. Your imagination is the only limit to what you can create, and the vast editing scope makes the Kemper a tweaker's paradise.

The quality from the balanced outputs is very good. There are ground lift switches for all the outputs in software, but we think Kemper should have used mini toggles on the XLR's at least for speedy access. Some may quibble about the lack of a built-in expression pedal. However, pedals are often the first part of a floorboard to wear out and we think keeping them separate is sensible, especially as the Profiler Stage can run up to four simultaneously.

Verdict

Kemper's Profiler Stage is the company's most practical and accessible product yet, combining all the Profiler and Remote's capabilities into a robust gig-ready package. Aimed at professionals and well-heeled amateurs, it's an expensively big decision. However, it costs less than buying a Profiler Head and Remote, and can potentially replace any number of vintage amplifiers in a player's collection, replicating those tones reliably and consistently night after night, with practically unlimited possibilities for players who are prepared to put in the time to learn how it works.

Compared with the competition, we think it's generally good value for money, although perhaps somewhat lacking in the display department when you look at the high-definition colour and touchscreens found on other products, which use fewer switches as well. Nevertheless, Kemper's Profiler Stage is a serious professional-standard floorboard that has enough features, resources, technical support and creative potential to last a lifetime. If you're ready to go digital, then this unit is very hard to beat. 



KEMPER PROFILER STAGE

PRICE: £1,449

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Digital modelling guitar preamp with built-in digital effects

DIMENSIONS: 80 (h) x 470 (w) x 260mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4.5/10

CABINET: Pressed steel

CHANNELS: Infinite clean/drive voice capability using Profiler software, 125 banks of 5 patches

CONTROLS: Gain, master volume, soft rotary x4, soft button x4, browse and type select, stack select x12, browser/perform/profiler mode, page forward/back/return, morph, lock, edit, power on/off

CONNECTIONS: Guitar in, mono send/stereo return effects loops x2, S/PDIF in/out, expression pedal x4, main outputs on XLR and jack, monitor outputs on jack, headphones 3.5mm jack, MIDI in/out, USB A/B

FOOTSWITCH: Integrated Kemper Remote controller

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Integral digital effects, full Kemper Profiling capability, S/PDIF in/out, MIDI in/out, headphones, USB

POWER: 100-230V mains IEC

OPTIONS: The Mission Engineering EP1-KP expression pedal is £137

RANGE OPTIONS: Original Profiler head and rack preamp is £1,461, with powered versions (including a 600W class D power amp) costing £1,810. The Remote foot controller is £387

Kemper

+49 2361 486 46 79

www.kemper-amps.com



PROS Replicates any amp; solid and robust build; improved onboard effects; cheaper than buying separate Profiler Head and Remote

CONS Small mono display; no mobile app; ground lift switching only in software; no dedicated carry bag available at the moment

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Collider Delay+Reverb

Two ambient worlds collide in a single easy-to-operate pedal

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Olly Curtis

VIDEO DEMO ► <http://bit.ly/guitaristextra>

Anyone who has Source Audio's Nemesis Delay and Ventris Dual Reverb on their pedalboard has a pretty comprehensive arsenal of ambience effects underfoot. Now you can access that experience while bypassing the combined price tag and footprint: the new Collider puts seven reverbs from the Ventris and five Nemesis delays into a single dual-engine pedal for a more streamlined pedalboard.

There are separate footswitches for delay and reverb that you can use individually or simultaneously, and the pedal has dual inputs and outputs allowing for a range of mono and stereo routing options. Its standard mode is to run delay into reverb, but you can reverse this order, and there's also the option of running the effects in parallel with a combined mono or stereo

output or sending the effects to separate outputs. The pedal can also be configured as two delays or two reverbs if you wish.

A choice of four or eight presets (storing all user-editable parameters for delay and reverb) can be immediately called up from the front panel, but you can access a full 128 presets via MIDI. While just about all of the functionality you'd need in everyday use can be accessed from the front panel, you can go deeper by taking advantage of the free computer-based Neuro Desktop Editor or the Neuro Mobile App, which lay out all the adjustable options clearly and offer preset editing, storage and sharing.

SOUNDS

Setting up your sounds starts with the Knobs toggle switch, which selects

whether the knobs will be adjusting delay or reverb. A rotary knob chooses the desired delay and reverb algorithms, while a further six knobs provide the tweaks. There's adjustable wet/dry mix available for both effects as well as tonal shading. A Delay knob sets delay time or reverb pre-delay, and a Feedback control sets the number of delay repeats or the length of reverb decay. In addition, the Control 1 and Control 2 knobs each adjust one crucial parameter specific to the selected reverb algorithm or the pitch modulation depth and rate for the delays.

There are some excellent reverbs here. In our view, the most practical ones are from the Ventris. In the more traditional vein you get Room, Hall and Plate reverbs alongside the company's True Spring –

01. EFFECT SELECTOR

This rotary switch (in tandem with the Knobs switch) lets you choose your delay and reverb type – the red LED lights up for the selected effect

02. KNOBS SWITCH

Switch to the left to edit delay parameters and to the right for reverb. The central position locks the settings so that accidentally moving a knob will have no effect

03. CONTROL 1 & CONTROL 2 KNOBS

These each control a crucial parameter for the selected effect type

04. PRESETS BUTTON

You can press and hold this to store presets. Short presses scroll through and recall the presets indicated by the LEDs. You can set this up for either four or eight presets

05. FOOTSWITCHES

These provide bypass switching for reverb and delay, but when the effect is bypassed a press-and-hold on the footswitch will scroll through presets forwards (Delay footswitch) or backwards (Reverb footswitch). The Delay switch also offers tap tempo; the Reverb switch offers a freeze function to hold the reverb trail



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Delay and reverb pedal

FEATURES: Selectable true bypass, buffered bypass, or soft bypass with reverb trails, 128 presets, tap tempo, reverb freeze function, software editing (Neuro) via computer or mobile device, works with Neuro Hub for a multi-effects system

CONTROLS: Delay, Feedback, Mix, Tone, Control 1, Control 2, tap division switch, Knobs switch, preset select button, control input switch, exp switch, Delay/Tap footswitch, Reverb footswitch

REVERBS: Room, Hall, True Spring, Plate, Shimmer, E-Dome, Swell

DELAYS: Digital Analog, Tape, Reverse, Oil Can

CONNECTIONS: Standard inputs (1&2), standard outputs (1&2), EXP, MIDI in, MIDI thru, USB

POWER: Supplied 9V DC adaptor, 300mA

DIMENSIONS: 112 (w) x 116 (d) x 56mm (h)

Guitarist CHOICE
9/10

one of the best emulations of Fender-style spring reverb you'll hear. Like the more ethereal altered reverbs? Look to the sparkly Shimmer, the huge floaty ambience of E-Dome, and the slow build of Swell.

Of the five delays, you get a pristine Digital and some older flavours, too: authentic-sounding Tape and Analog (BBD) emulations, and the delightfully lo-fi emulation of a Tel-Ray Oil Can delay. Finally, there's a 'dig-in-and-play' Reverse delay with extra taps added by the Tone knob to intensify the psychedelia.

Those 12 effects types endow the Collider with great sonic potential – with all its delay/reverb combinations, there's a huge range of bespoke ambiences to be explored and saved as presets. Or you can simply use a preset to save two separate

effects for a particular song – maybe spring reverb and tape delay for a vintage vibe. You can call up presets hands-free: pressing and holding either footswitch when in bypass mode will scroll through them; an external footswitch also does the trick. Direct access to individual presets is available via a MIDI controller. Various performance assets include expression-pedal (or Source Audio Hot Hand) control of any combination of up to three knobs, and a tap tempo facilitated by light taps on the Delay/Tap footswitch – but it may be prudent to connect an external footswitch if tap tempo is a facility you rely on a lot.

VERDICT

As a 'greatest hits' combination of the Nemesis and Ventriss, the Collider might

have lost a few of the effects programs from the two pedals but it arguably provides the most essential ones for guitarists. It delivers them in a mix-and-match scenario that's extremely easy to use, delivering the ability to construct, store and recall complex effects without any need for deep menu navigation. Anyone wanting high-quality delay and reverb effects, while keeping a compact and concise 'board, should seek this out. **G**

PROS Separately switchable reverb and delay in compact housing; variety of routing options; presets; easy hands-on front panel operation without recourse to menus

CONS Tap tempo operation with the Delay/Tap footswitch is a bit fiddly and may need a little getting used to



THORPYFX

Heavy Water

It's time to go nuclear with a double dose of boost...

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis

VIDEO DEMO ► <http://bit.ly/guitaristextra>

ThorpyFX's The Dane, a twin-footswitch pedal featuring overdrive and boost, has many admirers but not all of them need a new overdrive. Consequently, after many requests to put just the boost side into a pedal in its own right, Thorpy has done just that. The result is the Heavy Water, which not only provides that exact same high-headroom clean boost but also pairs it with a second boost that features germanium diodes in its circuitry for a different character. Separate footswitches enable the two boosts to be used individually or together: the 'Dane' boost (RHS) running into the germanium boost (LHS). Both feature a knob to control the amount of boost plus another to adjust the low-end.

Set at minimum, the clean boost brings in a small but definite boost that enhances the sound, immediately making our amp sound better without undue alteration of its tonal character. If you do want a bit of tonal shift, the Lows knob can add a warmth and thickness that's ideal if you're looking for a bit more body from your

single coils. By the same token, rolling it back can make humbuckers a bit leaner, or could help focus the sound when hitting a drive pedal or boosting an already driven amp. There's loads of gain available and higher levels will drive the cleanest of high-headroom amps into break-up. The germanium side of the pedal is more of the same but has extra grit for a raunchier boost. Both boosts on together is capable of delivering a ridiculous amount of gain that will truly pummel your amp should you decide you need it, but there are plenty of options for them to be used together more subtly – perhaps a small amount of clean boost always on as a tone conditioner with the germanium side kicked in for solos.

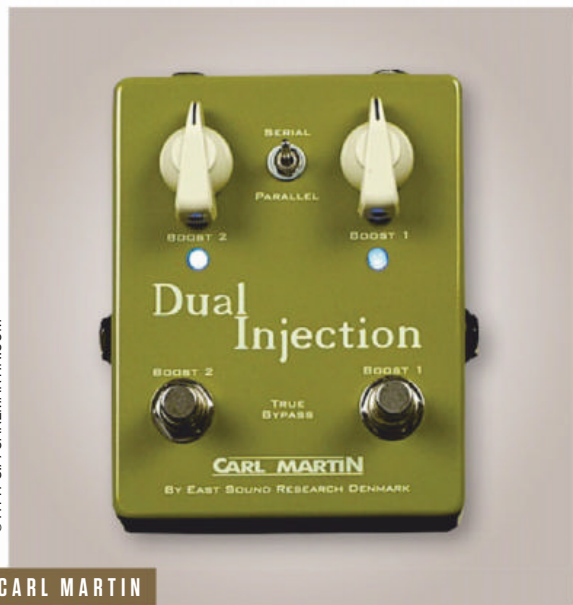
VERDICT

This is one of the most versatile boost pedals we've seen, capable of everything from always-on tone enhancement to kicking in a full-on screamfest. It's a great candidate if you want a single pedal in front of your amp, but for ultimate flexibility pair it with your favourite drive pedal. **G**



PROS Two boosts of different character; practical EQ; huge amount of boost available; exemplary build quality
CONS None

ALSO TRY...



CARL MARTIN

Dual Injection £99

Here, two separately footswitchable boosts are taken from the company's Hot Drive'n Boost and put into one pedal that can be used in serial or parallel (one boost in the signal chain before your amp, one boost in your amp's effect loop).



MAXON

DB10 Dual Booster £145

The DB10 features two completely independent boost circuits in a single compact housing, each with its own input and output jacks: the Clean channel is a transparent boost, and the Vintage channel is based on a classic treble booster.



SUHR

Dual Boost £199

Suhr's offering includes two independent boosts, each with its own Boost and Hi-Cut controls. There is only a single footswitch here, but you can switch from Boost 1 to Boost 2 by pressing and holding it for about a second.



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Dual boost pedal

FEATURES:

Buffered bypass

CONTROLS: LHS Boost, LHS Lows, RHS Boost, RHS Lows, LHS bypass footswitch, RHS bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 125 (d) x 53mm (h)

**Guitarist
CHOICE**

9/10



ELECTRO-HARMONIX

Ram's Head Big Muff Pi

Heads up! Arguably the most anticipated of the Big Muff reissues has landed

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis

So, which is the most desired Big Muff of them all? There have been many variations over the years, but a lot of Muff aficionados have a soft spot for the V2 Muff produced for a few years from 1973 and known as the 'Ram's Head' because of that bizarre little face on the front. The popularity may also have something to do with the fact that it's the model most associated with David Gilmour.

Now in its nano range of Big Muff reissues (that also includes the V1 Triangle Muff, Op-Amp Big Muff and Green Russian), Electro-Harmonix has launched the Ram's Head Big Muff Pi, said to be a reproduction of the 'violet' version, the most common revision of Ram's Head-period circuitry as first seen in '73 models with violet silk-screened graphics, although it is also found in pedals with other colours.

EHX has refined the new model's circuitry with close reference to some vintage models, and A/B'ing it against our own '73 vintage Ram's Head confirms they've nailed it. The usual Big Muff range is all here: the Sustain knob starts out at medium-gain overdrive, but soon

transitions into saturated fuzzy sustain that just goes on and on, blooming into harmonic feedback as you hold a note. Tonally, there's less bottom-end than in a lot of other Big Muffs; here it's tighter and more controlled. The midrange scoop is there, but the pedal's overall balance of frequencies seems just right, yielding a lovely degree of string articulation. All can be tailored with the wide-ranging tone knob – rolled back for smooth liquid sustain or rolled forward for crispier, more cutting top-end.

Ultimately, a Big Muff is a Big Muff and any particular version is going to be in the ballpark, but to aficionados it's all about the subtle differences and this one has pedigree. If *Comfortably Numb* floats your boat, you're a Dinosaur Jr fan or you want to cop Ernie Isley's *That Lady* tone, then a Ram's Head is likely to be your preferred variation.

VERDICT

It's excellent news that this particular flavour of Big Muff is freely available once more – and it sounds every bit as good as it did back in 1973. **G**



PROS Nails the classic Ram's Head tone; compact size; very reasonably priced

CONS None really – but why no violet-coloured graphics?

ALSO TRY...



Tup Fuzz £189

Hand-built in the UK, this inspired-by version of the Ram's Head Big Muff from Expresso FX increases the versatility that's available by adding two extra toggle switches to the pedal for boosting the mid and bass frequencies.



Comfortably Plum £200

One for fans of Mr Gilmour, this pedal puts two classic circuits into one unit: there's a 'Ram's Head Muff' channel, followed by one that's based on a Colorsound Power Boost, favoured by the Floyd man as a post-Muff tone sweetener.



Large Beaver from \$69.99

For those of you who like to build your own pedals, BYOC has the Ram's Head-style Large Beaver, which has the added flexibility of a tone bypass and a scooped/flat/hump mids selector switch. There's also a more diminutive L'il Beaver.

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Fuzz pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS:

Volume, Sustain, Tone,

Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V battery

or 9V DC adaptor

(not supplied) 30mA

DIMENSIONS: 68 (w) x

111 (d) x 50mm (h)

Guitarist
CHOICE

9/10





David Rainger

The founder of London-based pedal mavericks Rainger FX talks tone and explains why stompboxes are here to stay...

1 What was the first pedal you built and how did the design come about?

"The first pedal I built was an Electra distortion [from geofex.com]. This was around 2002. I printed out the circuit, bought some parts and just soldered them together using a bit of cardboard to hold them in place. And it worked! I couldn't believe it. I was amazed. The first Rainger FX pedal was the Freakenstein Fuzz. When I first started doing my own pedals, I was etching the board with chemicals and hand-drilling them. I took a few down to a shop in Denmark Street and they phoned me later that day asking for more! And it went on from there. It's been full blast from 2009 onwards."

2 What do you think it is that makes Rainger FX unique?

"It's all about the sound. It has to be exciting and something that I'm totally into. We're trying to make really unique sounds that are incredibly useful to every guitar player. Our vision is to help you write a hit record, whatever style of music you play, whether it's inspiring you with a sound to write a new song, or a riff, or to just play a bit longer than intended. The sound is really important when it comes to giving you the momentum to write something new."

3 What's your best-selling pedal and why do you think that is?

"At the moment, it's the Drone Rainger. It's a relatively recent pedal, which is a digital delay with two controllable analogue tone generators, or drones, built in. It looks complicated, but it's a simple idea; it's really just a digital delay, and you can mix in how much guitar and drones you want. I think it's caught people's imaginations. It sounds very cinematic and atmospheric, but you can use it in loads of different situations."

4 Which notable players have used Rainger FX pedals?

"Carlos Alomar, Billy Gibbons, Noel Gallagher, Joe Bonamassa... In fact, Joe Bonamassa bought one of my first pedals on Denmark Street, which was very nice. John Frusciante got a few pedals early on. A friend of mine who's also into techno, EDMX [Edward Upton], was

hanging out with Frusciante and he said, 'You should check out Rainger FX pedals,' so he bought some."

5 What's your best tone tip?

"I think a lot of people are concerned if there's a right or a wrong way to do things, and I think there really isn't. Just be creative. Do things the 'wrong' way if you like. Find your own way to do it, because then you'll come up with the best stuff."

6 What new pedal triggers your GAS the most?

"I've just bought a Mattoverse [Electronics] AirTrash pedal – it's a whole load of fun. If you play one note, it makes it seem as if that note is alive somehow. And the interesting thing about it is that it makes me play slower. When I'm listening to the notes, I'm thinking, 'This is a good thing, surely?' Also, I think Death By Audio are a hugely inspiring company. They're so brave with their sounds. The boldness of it all is just fantastic."

7 What's your favourite vintage pedal and why?

"It has to be the Sustainiac by Maniac Music. When you play a note, you get this feedback loop where your guitar starts vibrating, and it's exactly like touching the amplifier with the headstock. You

get immediate feedback, except you can control its intensity and range."

8 If you had a three-pedal 'desert island' pedalboard, what would be on it and why?

"I'd have a Freakenbender [fuzz], which is a collaboration we did with Colorsound. I'd also have a Boss DM-2 [Delay] because it always sounds good. And I'd have a Boss CS-2 [Compression Sustainer]. I haven't turned that thing off for 25 years!"

9 What are your favourite effects pedal moments to be heard on record and why?

"I immediately think of the Rage Against the Machine records. [Tom Morello] is so imaginative. You'd think his pedalboard was a vast field of machinery, but it's pretty basic. He did amazing stuff with it."

10 What problems have effects designers yet to crack?

"I think the main problem is that a human being has to interface with it, so you have a huge list of requirements with regards to how the pedal is laid out. We're trying to make things smaller and smaller, but in the end, you have to be able to use it with your foot. I don't think we'll ever be able to get around that!"

www.raingerfx.com



Rainger FX expanded its Freakenstein range with the Chop Fuzz, which uses the same circuit but adds more features

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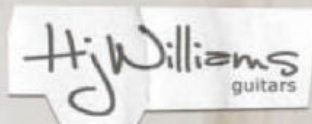
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The Sound of Summers

This issue's query comes from a Police fan who's trying to decipher Andy Summers' signature tone

THE BACKGROUND

ARTHUR WHILE *via email*

For some reason, over Christmas I found myself listening to The Police. While doing so I fell down the rabbit hole of trying to nail Andy Summers' guitar tone. What I don't understand, however, is why perceived wisdom states he used a flanger to achieve a lot of his signature sounds and yet to me it sounds like a chorus. Am I missing something or is internet wisdom wrong – and why? Also, what modern pedals would you choose to emulate Andy Summers' sound?

THE QUESTIONS

- 1 WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHORUS PEDAL AND A FLANGER?
- 2 DID ANDY SUMMERS USE A CHORUS OR FLANGER DURING HIS TIME IN THE POLICE?
- 3 WHAT MODERN RIG WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO ACHIEVE ANDY SUMMERS' TONE?

THE ANSWERS

Arthur, I can sympathise – I, too, have been obsessing about Andy Summers' guitar sounds for the best part of two years now... You're not alone in thinking Andy Summers used a chorus (on *Walking On The Moon*, for example), so take solace in that!

01 The best place to start when explaining how a chorus pedal and flanger are different is to describe how they are similar. Both are time-based modulation effects. What that means is that they both split the guitar signal into two then manipulate the 'wet' signal in both pitch and character. The modulated signal is then delayed and blended back in with the 'dry' signal. Chorus pedals typically have their wet signal delayed to a larger extent, but there is overlap in that the shorter chorus delay can overlap with flangers that have a longer delay. Where they differ is in the way the wet signal is manipulated.

Chorus pedals are designed to thicken your sound to give the impression that more than one guitar is playing. Flanger pedals give a sweeping sound as the delayed signal constructively and destructively interferes with itself creating a comb filter. This interference can be enhanced as more of the output signal is fed back to the input of the delay line.



Andy Summers' sound hides some subtle tone secrets

Essentially, if the comb filtering of a flanger is set to subtle settings, it can sound very much like a chorus.

02 The person best suited to answering this question is Andy Summers himself... In lieu of his expertise, however, I shall try to answer myself. Andy Summers is known for using an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress during his time in The Police. His settings were very subtle when you consider what the Electric Mistress is capable of. As a result of these settings, his guitar sounded extremely like a chorus pedal, but there is more of phase shift in the sound that isn't achieved with a chorus. So if you use a chorus while emulating him, there is always a little something missing: ie, chorus is the 90 per cent solution; a flanger takes you to 100 per cent.

03 As for building a modern rig to emulate Andy Summers' tone, there are four pedals that can get you in the right space: a compressor, a flanger, an overdrive and a tape delay pedal. My budget choices to investigate for this scenario would be an MXR Dyna Comp, an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress (reissue), a Nobels ODR-1 and a TC Electronic Flashback Delay. For a no-holds-barred rig, I'd go for an Origin Cali76 compressor, ThorpyFX Camoflange, Effectrode Blackbird and Strymon Volante delay.

One last thing that's worth mentioning here is that it will pay not to forget the sponge that Andy Summers apparently favoured underneath his strings to give a different tonality of muting versus palm mutes. Give it a try, it's really good. Let us know how you get on!

EMAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS: GUITARIST@FUTURENET.COM

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This amp has turned that on its head,
it's crystal clear." *James Bagshaw*

TEMPLES



FYLDE GUITARS

If Roger Bucknall were a chef he'd have two Michelin stars, possibly three. After all, in nearly 60 years of guitar making he's served up bespoke tonewood recipes to some of the world's principal gourmets of acoustic guitar tone...

Words David Mead Photography Olly Curtis

Roger Bucknall began building guitars professionally in 1973 on the Fylde coast of Lancashire, although he actually built his first instrument in his father's garage at the age of nine. With a degree in engineering – he insists guitar building is simply engineering with wood – and an interest in the works of William Shakespeare (all Fylde models bear the name of one of the Bard's characters) combined with a love of guitar and music in general, he set up shop.

Relocating to Fylde's current location in Penrith in the mid-90s, Roger has made guitars for folk legends, including Martin Simpson, Martin Carthy, Davey Graham and Nic Jones, and jazz players Al Di Meola, Pat Metheny and Biréli Lagrène, as well as artists like Sting, Pete Townshend and Paul McCartney.

In 2016 he was awarded an MBE for services to 'guitar making, music and heritage crafts'. "I did wonder if I would be granted an annual stipend, but apparently not, and I don't even get my own castle," he said at the time.

We visited Roger and his small team of builders on a rainy December morning last year and found a hive of activity. After a quick tour, we asked him about the instruments currently making their way through his workshop.

"A lot of the time I've got artists' guitars going through, and it's really what keeps

me going. At the moment, we're just finishing off another guitar for Chris Difford, quite an unusual one, it's quite highly inlaid and exotic woods. We're also sending out a guitar for Adam Holmes who is one of Martin Simpson's Magpie Arc band. It's a five-string, high-strung, a bit like Nashville tuning, but only five strings on it. It's specially built for this tuning, it's not a modified six-string. The bracing inside is built for the tension and neck width, and string spacing is built for the tension. I'm hoping that he likes it. It sounds a bit like a musical box.

"We're also just starting another batch of guitars that includes another guitar for Gordon Giltrap, another for Adam Palma – it will be the third identical guitar, a shallow-bodied Falstaff. He lives half in Poland and half in England, so he needs guitars everywhere. Then there's a Falstaff for John Doyle, which he ordered shortly after he made the Fylde album. We tend to alternate: get a small batch of artist guitars through and then relax and make some more straightforward instruments."

"A lot of the time I've got artist's guitars going through, and it's really what keeps me going..."

What's the process behind the development of artist guitars?

"The first thing is to discuss the concept of the guitar – how big it should be, string [scale] length, neck join and timbers – to try to supply a certain tone. It's nothing exotic, normally; I don't get involved very often in special inlays and things like that. The ones I've made for Martin Simpson recently have taken a lot of discussion. The first guitar was very successful, and then we thought, 'Okay, what's it going to sound like made with Brazilian rosewood?' And we needed to find out, because the first guitar was so successful made with mahogany, we needed to know if it was going to work with a different timber, and it has. It's even better; slightly different but better.

"The first one was a 12-fret body join in order to put the bridge in a really efficient place on the body. It was a short scale because Martin didn't want a huge tension on the strings. But this meant there wasn't a lot of access to higher frets, particularly with a capo on. So we thought, 'Okay, this time it's got to have a cutaway.' So we made that cutaway, Brazilian rosewood, very successful, lovely guitar and beautiful to look at.

"The next was, 'Okay, this is lovely, but I can't take it abroad.' And then, because I knew that the change in CITES was coming up, I said, 'Okay, we'll try Indian rosewood,' and, again, it's come out very



Roger Bucknall MBE
at his workshop in
Penrith. The protective
gloves are a permanent
feature owing to his
allergy to rosewood



1. Where it all begins: a small section of Fylde's extensive wood store
2. Fylde currently comprises a team of three builders. Here, Paul Ferrie shapes a soundboard's bracing
3. Various works in progress wait their turn on the workbench
4. A vast percentage of the work on every Fylde instrument is completed by hand. Here, Alex Reay rough shapes the heel on a guitar neck



well indeed and he just loves playing it. It's a lovely piece of Indian rosewood. The tone is a little bit different and, in theory, Martin could travel to the States using it. He still plays his Stefan Sobell guitar, primarily, as well as his PRS, which is fine by me."

How does that differ from a customer who has seen an artist in concert, for example, and thinks, 'That sounds nice, I want one of those'?

"It's much more difficult. Particularly if it's by email, because they don't always have the same understanding of the words we use and they'll say to me, 'I want a guitar that is this, that and the other,' and because we don't use exactly the same words, I need to be very, very sure what they are looking for. It's important, and I won't just say, 'Yes, we can do that' and take the money. I have a lot of experience, and I have to get that across. That's how I get my professional customers, and it's those customers who have helped me build my knowledge base. I'm very proud of my client list. I do

have a bit of a reputation, but only because I won't allow an untruth to pass. It's so important that the customer gets what they want, and it doesn't help to let them believe something that isn't true. I point out that if they read something on the internet, it almost certainly isn't completely true. People come to me because they need my experience and my input. I tend to be a bit direct, but I like to think that I make a new friend every time I make a guitar."

What would you say are the popular misconceptions that people have when ordering a custom-built guitar?

"The popular conception with American players is that mahogany is bright and rosewood is mellow. That's the opposite

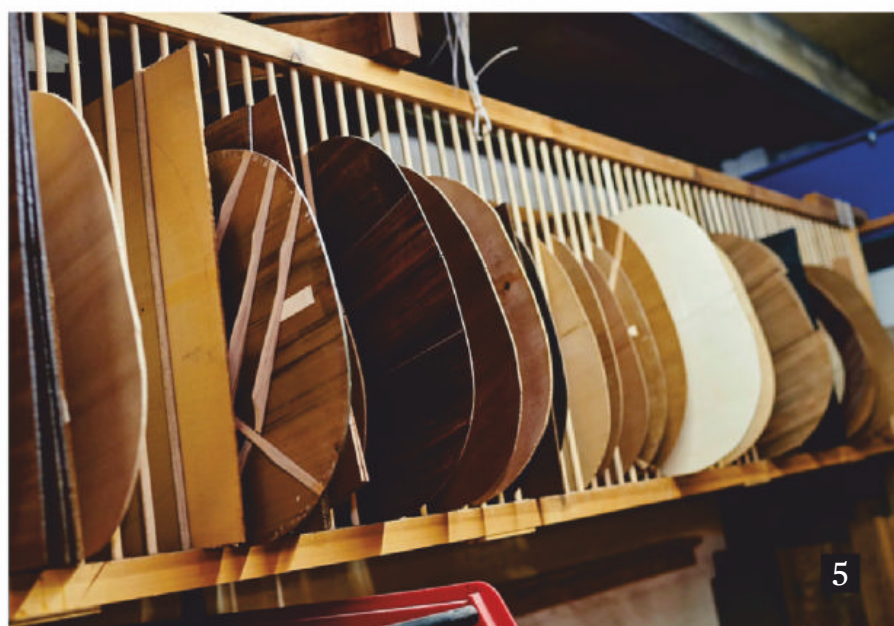
"I tend to be a bit direct, but I like to think that I make a new friend every time I make a guitar"

to my experience. And most people in the guitar-making business would agree – not everybody, because people get used to a certain sound and they associate it with certain words. It's like if I show you a piece of paper and I say, 'That's blue,' you'll get to know it as blue, but somebody else might have been told it's green. It's sound blindness, really. Words don't work.

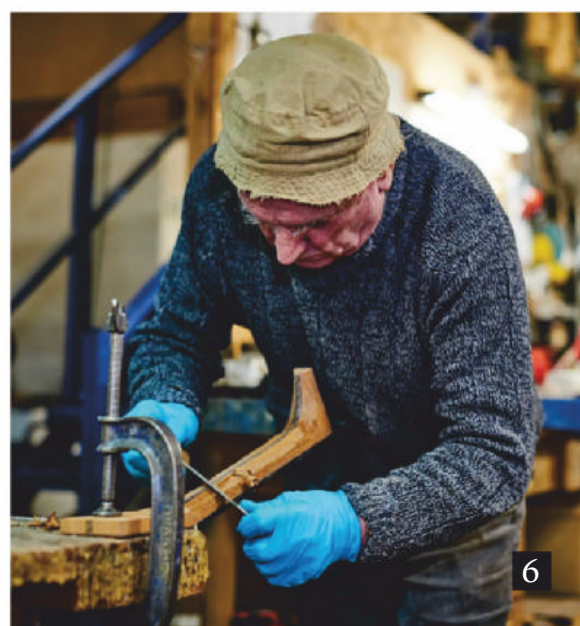
"Bright" is a really interesting one. To me, it means a preponderance of higher overtones, but for some people it means a personality, a bit like Bonnie Langford – a massive output from a small source. That's not brightness to me, that's personality, loudness or cheerfulness. And you get that from a light timber like cedar, but cedar is a soft timber and it encourages bass overtones, lower overtones. Heavier timbers are stiffer and they encourage higher overtones. And that's just physics, really. It isn't quite as simple as that, particularly when you get into discussions about the differences between various similar timbers, and a lot of people use lots of different words thinking they know what they mean, but they don't really."

Alex cleans off the
glue on a custom
12-string model





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5. The workshop's 'plate rack' holds part-made backs and soundboards ready for final assembly

6 & 7. Roger hand-shapes a guitar neck at the workbench using a home-made draw knife

8. English walnut is one of Roger's favourite tonewoods, as it "bends like butter and finishes really easily"



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Do you have any favourite timbers to work with?

"I'm allergic to some of my favourites, which can be very hard. I cannot touch rosewoods, literally can't touch them [hence the protective gloves you see Roger wearing in the pictures here]. But I still like them: it looks lovely, it's very pleasant to work with, it's a structurally sound timber, and comes in fairly big pieces, so you don't get much wild grain.

"I love walnut, particularly the claro walnut. I kept away from it for a long time because it had been used by a few other makers as a characteristic of their guitars and I didn't want that characteristic. I wanted to do things the Fylde way, the way I always have done. But I love the look of it, and once I started using it, I thought it was adorable. It bends like butter, finishes really easily and you can contrast it with other timbers. I've got quite a lot of walnut that was cut in Oregon – virtually a whole log – and I've got some claro walnut that was grown in this country, and I've got some of the same timber that was grown in Kew Gardens and allegedly planted by Queen Victoria. It's all the same species, the same botanic name, slight differences, and all glorious stuff."

You've recently started using bog oak, haven't you?

"I just got one set and absolutely adored it, so I've bought quite a bit more since then. It's a different timber altogether to what you think of as oak. It just grew for a long, long time, then it fell over and got buried. Nothing else has happened to it until somebody came along and chopped it up and dried it. It looks glorious, it's very black, which is a bit of a shame, but it's black in a nice way. Glorious if it's quarter-sawn, glorious filigree across the grain, bends like a dream, easy to finish as well, unlike most oaks that you get, which are far too deep grained and coarse. So, so far I love it and I will use it again."

What about top woods?

"It's been a journey for me. When I started there wasn't anything available, and even

"I'm allergic to some of my favourites, which can be very hard. I literally cannot touch rosewoods"

that disappeared. There was one dealer in Birmingham who could supply decent quality spruce and then everybody got interested in guitars and the supplies of all this stuff dried up, the quality went downhill. The good stuff went to Japan. So I started looking sideways and I used a lot of hemlock for a while, which is a very fine-quality joinery timber, but wasn't used in guitar making. Even now it isn't, but it's a fine timber, equivalent to the best Sitka spruces. And I used a lot of German spruce until the quality started to disappear. So I started using cedar, and that was a big success.

"Then, because most of my customers are fingerpickers rather than flatpickers, Sitka spruce was too hard, mostly; you need something softer to be able to get the range of tone and power out from just your fingers. So I started using Engelmann spruce and it's readily available, but it has some technical issues. It's very easy to get this twisting effect called 'run out', where you get a colouration in the centre and the shade changes, so I don't use that so much now. For the higher-quality guitars, I've gone back to European spruce, Italian spruce quite a lot, and for the higher-level guitars I use a lot of Swiss pine."

One of the seven bending forms that Roger has made for use in the Fylde workshop



What would be a thumbnail sketch of the difference in tone between spruce, cedar and other top woods?

“Well, that’s fairly easy. The most important thing about a guitar is its basic structure, its design, how big it is, what scale length it is, how deep, how heavily it’s built. If you change any of those, the sound changes quite a bit. But if you stick to those things, the tone of that particular design will be fairly constant and you can adjust it by a couple of ways: one, by drastically changing the structure inside, but you’ve still got the same basic principles of tone. Changing the soundboard makes a big difference, whereas changing the back and sides makes a smaller difference. If you go through the range of spruces, the Sitka and the Adirondack and the Lutz spruce, those are the stiffest of the lot. But cedar is the softest of the timbers. You can get yellow cedar, which is a bit stiffer; redwood is stiffer than cedar but it’s a bit more brittle. So overall if you want the softest, warmest, most responsive guitar, you’d almost certainly use cedar. It’s lightweight, it isn’t very stiff, so it moves a lot of air very quickly. If the wood is soft it will move a lot of air and that is bass. If the wood is very stiff, it won’t move a lot of air so that implies treble; a

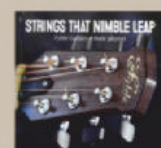
stiffer wood has a higher natural frequency. But stiffer wood can be worked thinner and still get the overall weight or the overall stiffness. Of course, if you go too far and make it really thin, you get a guitar that’s very responsive. If you go a bit further, you actually get a drum or a banjo...”

After nearly 60 years making guitars, you’re obviously still enjoying it...

“Now I’m making smaller numbers, it’s more fun. Making, for me, is all about the fun I have doing it, and the fun we can have in the workshop, making something gorgeous looking. And great players come and play them. When we get Martin Simpson or John Smith come here, I say, ‘Play the guitar,’ and we all come through and listen, you know? It’s part of the enjoyment to be able to pick out particular pieces of wood, either for an individual person or, even more fun, for me. If I like a piece of wood and I pair it with another piece and then another piece, to make one guitar I call it my ‘Personal Selection’. I know I’ve done the best I can, chosen each piece of wood to match, it can’t be any better – and when I offer them for sale they get snapped up instantly.” 

www.fyldeguitars.com

‘STRINGS THAT NIMBLE LEAP’



Roger has recently released a double-CD – *Strings That Nimble Leap* – featuring music from players of his instruments including Martin Simpson, Gordon Giltrap, John Smith and Martin Carthy and many others. It was a project that took eight months to complete and all the profits will be split between three charities.

“The charities are Mind, Help Musicians UK and The Woodland Trust,” he tells us. “I asked all the artists to give me a track. They’ve all done it free of charge – and nearly all of it is stuff that isn’t published elsewhere. An awful lot of it is specially written, nearly all of it is specially recorded. And some you’ll never hear elsewhere, ever again...”

So if you want to hear over two hours of excellent acoustic music from 52 artists played on some of the most beautiful guitars available, complete with a 128-page booklet – and, in doing so, make a donation to three very worthy causes – log onto the Fylde website and follow the links to the album page.

Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test report



**Knaggs Choptank &
Fret-King Country
Squire Semitone Special**
with Dave Burrluck

Writer

DAVE BURRLUCK
Guitarist, Gear Reviews Editor



In a Longtermers special, our reviews editor decides to test out not one but two guitars that share some commonality on paper but are priced about £3.5k apart. Nurse! Get the meds...

We often say that the 'best' guitar is simply the one that suits you and your budget. If you're just starting out, or indeed returning to this guitar-playing lark, we'd never advise spending a lot of money; likewise, if you only have the occasional noodle. But if you take your craft seriously, gig out a lot and hopefully earn some money in the process, you might want an instrument that'll support your aims.

Two instruments I reviewed in issue 455 – a lowly Fret-King Country Squire Semitone Special and a lofty Knaggs Choptank – really got me thinking. Both are hybrid mash-ups of our dearly beloved Telecaster. I can't speak for anyone else, but personally the Tele has played a big part in my playing life. It's also a great platform for sonic experimentation: Bigsbys, twin humbuckers, Cabronitas... not to mention a P-90, a Staple or even Charlie Christian neck pickup. But these two guitars

take a slightly different spin by loading on *three* pickups. Tremendous... more sounds!

Now comes the tricky bit. Our Fret-King is £599 and our Knaggs is over four grand! One is clearly a bargain, while the other is bonkersly overpriced, right? Let's look a bit deeper...

You'll probably know that Fret-King guitars, and the Country Squire Semitone Special, were originally designed by hardware king Trevor Wilkinson. Trev is no longer involved with the brand, but the guitars, certainly the Black Label range, remain quite available. A little while back production moved from a Korean factory to a new Indian facility (just outside of Chennai, we understand) that is already building for some big brands and, coincidentally, is making a new line of Wilkinson kit guitars set to be launched early this year. If Mr Wilkinson, who has vast experience of offshore manufacturing, thinks a factory is good then it usually is.

"We often say that the 'best' guitar is simply the one that suits you and your budget"

The Fret-King crams in the value with a WVC 3+3 humbucker at the neck, an over-wound WHS single coil in the middle position, and a tapped WVOBT single coil at the bridge – all by Wilkinson





Our Knaggs Choptank goes for simple high quality with a trio of Lindy Fralin Blues Specials. The in-between sounds are hum-cancelling, plus there's a steel plate under the bridge pickup for a little more Tele-like flavour

"Our Fret-King is £599 and our Knaggs is over £4k... But, hey, you know what? They're both perfectly serviceable guitars"

At the opposite end of guitar making, Joe Knaggs and his small team build guitars in Maryland, USA, of the quality many of us can only dream about. Currently, the team builds around 40 instruments a month. We have no idea of the output of the Indian factory, but if it's as serious as we understand then you could probably add a couple of noughts to that figure – and then some. A different continent, a very different price point, a completely different business model. But, hey, you know what? They're both perfectly serviceable guitars.

Side-stepping the final price for a moment, there are plenty of us who may or may not want to buy from an Indian factory (or one in China, Indonesia and so on): we believe USA or the UK is best; or we don't care. That's not a debate that I want to enter here. A geographic location alone has nothing to do with quality, although it can have a profound effect on an instrument's price.

Side by side, then, both guitars are a credit to their different makers. During our review process the Fret-King got more at-home practice and noodle time, often unplugged; the Knaggs got the gig time. Why? Well, the

Fret-King is a lighter guitar with slightly more acoustic projection thanks to its chambering. A great guitar to just grab when you need a break or you hear a lick or idea you want to pursue. In comparison, the solidbody Knaggs is heavier; its .010-gauge strings as opposed to the Fret-King's nines (on the same scale length) give it more fight. Of course, marrying up the string gauges is easy, but so much of the impression of a new guitar might be, at best, in-store where we can form very lasting impressions from a little time with an instrument. But the light relicing of the Choptank means we can happily play it out, and any marks or dings that it might attract will go unnoticed when the time comes to give it back. The pristine Fret-King needs to stay that way.

To many of us, the feel of a guitar is often as – or even more – important than the way it sounds. If your references lie with old vintage guitars and the like then Knaggs' Choptank will speak to you in volumes. But I have a sneaking suspicion that if we could just give the Fret-King's neck a boutique/hand-crafted makeover then we'd narrow the gap between the two. Considerably. **G**

Fret-King Black Label Country Squire Semitone Special Reviewed 455 Price £599 (inc gigbag) On Test Since November 2019 Studio Sessions No Giggled No Mods No
Knaggs Chesapeake Choptank Joe's Guitar Reviewed 455 Price £4,100 (inc case) On Test Since November 2019 Studio Sessions No Giggled Yes Mods No





PAUL GILBERT

The first artist to appear in this new column on trading guitars, Paul reveals how he was outwitted by an 80s Ibanez...

What was the last guitar you bought and why?

"The last guitar I bought was an Ibanez Pat Metheny guitar. He's had a few different signatures over the years; this one was a bit thinner than the one that came out in the late 90s. I think it was from about 2009 – I don't remember the exact date – but it's a thinner body, so you've got a fighting chance of it not being a total feedback monster if you do what you're not supposed to do, which is play through distortion. I bought it on Reverb.com and it's really cool."

What was the first serious guitar that you bought with your own money?

"I'd saved up \$150 and my uncle, who is a guitar player, came to visit and he looked at the local paper and found a Les Paul Custom, used, for \$300. I didn't have \$300 so my parents said they'd pay the other half for Christmas, but they also said, 'You won't have any extra money for toys...' I was 11 and so, 'No toys?' but I thought, 'Okay this is a rite of

passage into adulthood,' so I put in my 150, they put in their 150 and so it was my first Christmas with no toys. Although a Les Paul is a great toy... it's different than Lego."

What's the most incredible find or bargain you've ever had when buying guitars?

"That first Les Paul was a pretty good one..."

Have you ever experienced buyer's remorse after picking up a piece of gear?

"Sometimes it's really fun to have a pointy guitar and Ibanez made some really pointy ones back in the 80s. There was one, probably inspired by the Randy Rhoads pseudo Flying V, and I got one of those from eBay. It was during the early days of the locking tremolo and it was a bridge that was impossible to find parts for – and it needed parts. It had potential if I could have fixed it, but it was like buying an old car from the 50s."

"Sometimes it's fun to have a pointy guitar and Ibanez made some really pointy ones in the 80s"

Have you ever sold a guitar that you really regretted letting go of?

"There's one that I wish I had kept and that is a [Hopf] Telstar. It was a blue to black sunburst, had four pickups that DiMarzio rewound for me, and the headstock was like a moose antler. I don't know that it had even 20 frets – it didn't have that many frets – but it had a huge baseball bat neck and a really cool tone. Of course, it was a cheap guitar, but it had some mojo to it. I miss that one."

Has anything caught your eye in the guitar shops lately?

"Not always in a guitar shop, but on the internet there's always stuff. One guitar I got recently was a Godin. I was with Mr Big and we were doing our acoustic hit and I was having trouble with feedback. Mr Big is a loud band – really loud stage volume – and so when we play acoustic, Billy [Sheehan] doesn't. He's still going full blast on the bass and those low frequencies really hit the top of an acoustic guitar. You can go out on a soundcheck and it will be fine, but that bass guitar note hits you and 'Wooooaaah!' I did all the things that you're supposed to do, I put the rubber thing [soundhole cover] in there and I just couldn't solve it. So I was interested in the Godin because it's a thinner body, so less likely to feed back, and what I could tell from YouTube-ing, the tone was good. So I got one of those and, man, it was great. After that it was like problem solved: feedback problems gone and a great acoustic sound, so that was cool."

PHOTO BY JOBY SESSIONS

Having found a Gibson Les Paul Custom in the local paper for \$300 in his youth, Paul has become an avid buyer and seller of gear throughout his career



STAR BUYING TIP

"I used to buy a lot of things on eBay before Reverb was there and once in a while you'd get something that was messed up, but generally people who sell on eBay or Reverb want to have a good reputation because they've got their rating and so if they sell you a bad product, or it's not as advertised, it's going to affect that reputation. The other thing is that I play with such a high action so almost any guitar works for me. I dunno, I guess my best tip is buy lots of them!"

PHOTO BY JAMES CHIANG



If you had the choice, would you go for an expensive guitar and a cheap amp or a cheap guitar and an expensive amp?

"There are a lot of good cheap guitars and, again, I don't really need a super-low action because I'm a higher action guy. For amps, it's hard for me to be super-objective because my ears are pretty messed up, I've got a lot of hearing loss. In the last 10 years distortion pedals and amps really sound different to me; I'll never know whether it's the amps that are different or if it's my ears that are different – I've no way of being objective about it. But it *feels* like the amps and distortion pedals are different. I get vintage reissue Marshalls that are totally clean unless you turn them all the way up, and I don't turn them all the way up. I mean, a Marshall on '2' is really clean and really loud and then I just find pedals that I like to get varying degrees of gain. When I was a kid I loved that really fuzzy, tons and tons of saturation kind of a sound, but I think that's because my ears have been so battered it's hard for me to hear pitch then. I want to hear the notes, I'm sort of fighting for clarity and at the same time trying to get sustain and a certain feel out of the guitar."

Which one could you not live without: humbuckers or single coils?

"It would be humbuckers. There are some beautiful things about some single coils, especially for funky chordal stuff. But lately I've been the lead singer on guitar, doing a lot of single notes with a slide, so I'm trying to get the small strings to sound as big and resonant as possible, and single coils tend to be a thinner, bitier sound. So if you're playing some fast, funky stuff on the lower strings it's great, but if you're trying to get the high E string to be really resonant and full, I like a humbucker."

"I want to hear the notes, I'm fighting for clarity and trying to get sustain and a certain feel out of the guitar"

What is your favourite guitar store and why?

"I've been visiting Japan on and off for a while and I would walk by these little guitar stores and I just assumed because they were so small that they must be not good. But I was completely wrong. I'd walk into this little place in the neighbourhood where my apartment was and it was all acoustics – they probably had 15 acoustics – and I thought, 'Oh, I'll just go in...' and, my God, they had such a cool selection. And that's the thing with Japan in general, it's a place where there's not much in the way of physical space; it's a small place with a lot of people. So a closet will be like a treasure chest because there's no room for junk, there's only room for the good stuff."

"I bought a guitar there, it was like a one-off from a luthier in Kalamazoo – maybe he used to work at Gibson, I don't know – I'd never heard of the guy then or since. I Googled him and he's the repair guy in some shop, but it's the coolest acoustic. It's got a V neck on it, like an old Fender, and it feels like an electric, which is good for me because when I play acoustic I'm basically just playing electric without an amp, but it's one of my favourite instruments." [DM]

Paul has found gear in some of the most unlikely places across the globe – a memorable visit to a tiny shop in Japan proving fruitful on one occasion



Paul's new album, *Werewolves Of Portland*, will be available summer 2020. To find out more visit

www.paulgilbert.com

SWITCHTASTIC

If you're after more sounds, look no further than the Brit-designed and manufactured Free-Way, reckons Dave Burrluck

As long as we've had the electric guitar there have been two main types of pickup selector switch most commonly in use: the 'Gibson-style' toggle switch, and the 'Fender-style' lever or blade switch. You can count the other types of pickup selector switches used in the past 60-something years on the fingers of your left hand. These are very basic switches that have barely changed at all. Today, we have more varieties of these 'standard' switches than we did back in the 1950s, and that includes a price scale from touring pro to starter quality.

The three-position (or three-way) toggle switch is typically used on a twin-pickup guitar selecting either or both combined in parallel. The lever switch in its basic form again offers three positions but is more flexible, and used on the single-pickup Esquire, two-pickup Telecaster or three-pickup Stratocaster, for example.

"Bryce came up with the Free-Way switch, which gave the three-position toggle two parallel banks that doubled the number of selections"

Its two-pole design also means various more tricky wiring hook-ups are possible. Of course, back in the day, Strat players found they could jam the three-position lever switch in the famous in-between positions and the five-position lever was born. More recently the four-position lever became a neat Tele mod – adding the two pickups in series in the extra position – while a six-position lever can be used to add neck and bridge in parallel, like a Tele, to a Stratocaster's classic five sounds.

The even more versatile four-pole Super switch gives ultimate versatility to the five-position lever switch, especially when it's combined with a secondary switch such as Fender's S-1 push-switch. Elsewhere, Schaller's various Megaswitches simplify that concept with three- or five-positions. But by far the most common switches remain the five-position lever and three-position toggle.

The new Free-Way 5B5 lever offers five more sounds for your Stratocaster. What's not to like?



We Want More!

Alasdair Bryce is not a household name in the world of the electric guitar, but he came up with the patented Free-Way switch concept (handmade in the UK by NSF Controls), which initially gave the three-position toggle two parallel banks – down and up – that effectively doubled the number of selections. More recently, this same Free-Way concept has been applied to the lever switch, so where a three-position switch, like on a Telecaster, can offer six positions, a five-position lever doubles that figure to 10.

It was guitar maker Chris George who first put me onto this 'gear-shift' Free-Way concept, but instead of immediately seeing the light I felt it made a three-position toggle feel a little odd. But now that I'm used to the concept – and for the right guitar and right guitar player – I'm a *big* convert and have to admit I got rather

excited about the new 'Fender-style' Free-Way switches, the 3B3 and 5B5.

When fitted to a Stratocaster or any other three-single-coil guitar, the Free-Way 5B5 offers the usual Strat-like selections in the down position: 1) bridge; 2) bridge and middle in parallel; 3) middle; 4) middle and neck in parallel; and 5) neck. The additional five positions are: 6) bridge and middle (or all three) in series; 7) all three in parallel; 8) bridge and neck in series; 9) bridge and neck in parallel; and 10) middle and neck in series.

So the 5B5 gives us our favourite 'seven-sound mod' additions, positions 7 and 9, plus the four-way Tele switch extra of bridge and neck in *series*. Then we get two extra sounds of the bridge and middle and the neck and middle in *series*, not the normal parallel. The Free-Way website has a page dedicated to wiring schematics and install sizes. If you can use a soldering



Many makers are using the Free-Way switch on their custom builds. Lincolnshire luthier Chris George fitted one to this three-pickup beauty we reviewed in issue 450

“In its lower position it’s the sounds you know and love; in the upper position you get the extra selections. It’s as simple as that”

iron, all you have to do is unsolder your old five-way and remove it, mount the new switch and wire it up.

The Free-Way 5B5 switch is slightly larger and more rectangular compared with a more classic-style CRL switch (approximately 50mm by 15.6mm with a depth of 33.9mm, as opposed to 47.8mm by 11.2mm and a depth of 31.6mm). The important retaining screw positions, however, are pretty much identical at 40mm apart, although the Free-Way uses thinner screws

In Use

Installation on our Fender Road Worn Strat with a set of Custom Shop Texas Specials (with RWRP middle pickup) is dead easy. It’s not quite a drop-in replacement, though, because some of the leads, like the ground wire of the neck pickup, needed extending to reach the switch instead of being grounded on the back of the volume pot. The contacts on the switch are more like soldering onto



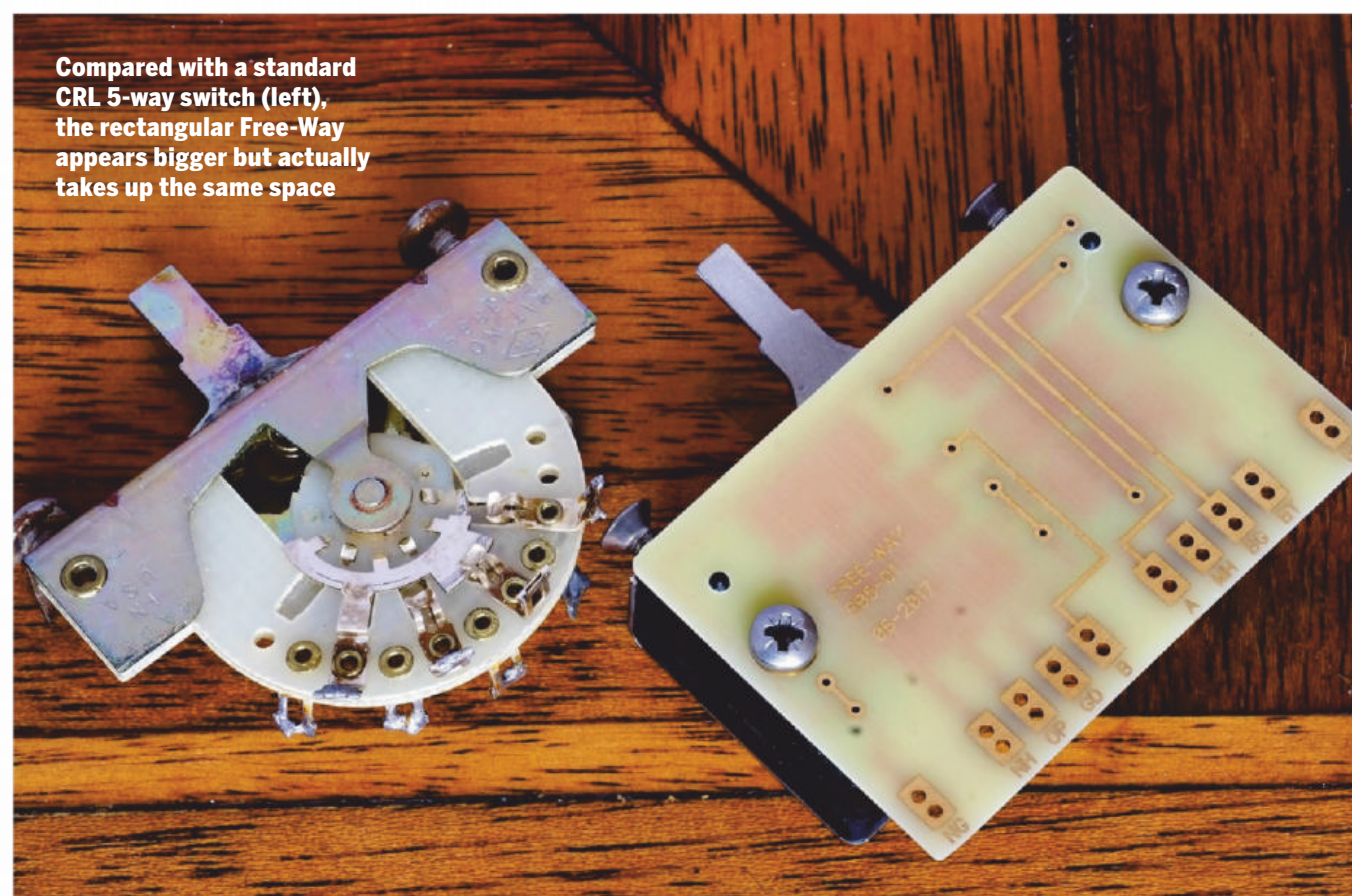
Installing the Free-Way switch in a Fender Road Worn Strat was very easy. You’ll need a fine-tipped soldering iron

a PCB, too, rather than the larger lugs of a standard lever switch. You’ll need a fine-tipped soldering iron.

The dual action of the Free-Way switch feels very firm and positive. Remember, in its lower position it’s the sounds you know and love; in the upper position you get the extra selections. It’s as simple as that. The series combinations really do expand the guitar’s voice with humbucking-like power and a much rounder high-end with a little of the classic Strat’s note attack, while both the neck/bridge and all-three-on give viable options to the classic, if rather clichéd, in-between sounds.

The switching potential with the other Free-Way switches (toggle or lever) is equally good, although when combining pickups – single coils or split coils of a humbucker – in series they might not be hum-cancelling. But that’s a whole different topic than we have space to cover here.

Bare Knuckle stocks the full line of Free-Way switches, and at £39.95 the 5B5 costs twice as much as a CRL 5-way (which retails at £18). Still, as we’ve explained, we have twice as many sounds. For those who want it, the expanded Free-Way concept is quite unique. Our standard switches now seem oh-so last decade... or six. **G**



Compared with a standard CRL 5-way switch (left), the rectangular Free-Way appears bigger but actually takes up the same space

MOD SPEC

PRODUCT: Free-Way 5B5

10-position lever switch

COST: £39.95

SKILL LEVEL:

If you can solder, it’s easy

www.freewayswitch.com

PROS & CONS

PROS A simple high-quality retrofit switch for a USA-spec five-way lever switch, which doubles your sounds to 10; a totally reversible mod

CONS Nope, we can’t think of any

Guitarist GOLD **10/10**

*That should give you something to think about till our next issue.
In the meantime, if you have any modding questions, or suggestions, drop us a line – The Mod Squad.*



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Headroom & Effects

Stompbox design master Dan Coggins of Lovetone, Dinosaural and ThorpyFX shares some wisdom on the fine balance between pickup level and effects pedal headroom

If you're shooting for a certain sound via an effects pedal, it's important to consider pickup signal strength and the differences between pickup types, because this will often have a tremendous impact on the pedal's circuit and resulting tone.

"As a rule of thumb, the difference in level between regular Strat or Tele single coils and P-90s is about 3dB," effects guru Dan Coggins tells us. "Humbuckers tend to be the strongest, with about another 3dB difference. The more output the pickup has, the less likelihood there is the pedal will be able to cope with the dynamics. But, at the other extreme, although a lower-output pickup is going to achieve more dynamic range from an effects pedal, [the signal] will be further down towards the noise floor and, therefore, the more the noise created in the pedal is going to dominate. So, it's all a bit of a compromise.

"The dynamic range is measured between the noise-floor limit at the bottom of the

"Typically, a Fuzz Face-style pedal is going to react differently depending on the pickup. They tend to be sensitive"

scale and the peak clipping limit at the top of the scale," continues Dan. "Headroom is the amount of amplitude you can put through a linear audio circuit before it clips and is defined by the voltage limits in the pedal. And as most effects pedals only work on nine volts, they don't tend to have a tremendous amount. With lower headroom you're more likely to get clipping distortion, which may, or may not, be nice. It's not such a big deal with something like a compressor or fuzz – effects that limit dynamics by their very nature – because you're deliberately limiting the headroom as part of the effect.

"The action of the compressor will smooth out the level variations of different



From sparkling clean to filthy dirty, the strength of your pickup signal can be everything when it comes to a Fuzz Face

pickups, but you'll be pumping and driving the compressor more with a higher-output pickup like a P-90 or humbucker, and with a weaker pickup you'll have to hit the strings harder for it to compress as much. The [Dinosaural OTC-201] Opticompressor I used to make, which is what ThorpyFX's Fat General compressor is based on, had the Axematch three-way switch that gave unity gain in the middle, and either 3dB of boost or 3dB [of cut] to help match pickup types and account for the differences."

Certain types of effects, particularly vintage-style fuzzes, are much more sensitive than others with respect to variations in pickup signal strength.

"Typically, a Fuzz Face-style pedal is going to react quite differently depending on the type of pickup being used," says Dan. "They tend to be very sensitive to pickup level. When you back off your guitar's volume, you get a rapid attenuation – it becomes a very strong gain control to the Fuzz Face, because the pedal can cope better with the dynamics of the pickup. Conversely, the more you turn the volume on the guitar up towards 10, the more your

pickup is obliterating the input of the Fuzz Face – the input capability, or headroom, of which is limited to less than a volt.

"When it comes to overdrive, you're going to drive the amp harder with a louder pickup. A Strat pickup isn't going to hit the amp as hard as a Gibson humbucker, for example. Rory Gallagher used to take his Strat and put it through a Rangemaster [booster] and drive his AC30 with it. Although it's often referred to as a treble booster, the Rangemaster is more of a midrange booster, because the top-end and the bass drop away, and you're left with this hump in the midrange. That's a vintage form of overdrive that really is boosting the pickup and slamming the amp, but at the expense of the dynamics.

"If you were to use something like ThorpyFX's Team Medic, which has got an 18-volt supply and lots of headroom, you get a really powerful clean boost and it will slam anything it's connected to with very low noise and lots of headroom. So you could beef up a Strat or Tele pickup into humbucker territory but with the bite of a single coil." **[RB]**



Boosting the pickup signal from Rory Gallagher's Strat while adding its own sonic twist and pummelling the front end of a Vox AC30, the Dallas Rangemaster was an integral part of his unique sound

classicGear

The reimagined Custom is a far cry from Fender's golden era namesake

1970s Fender Telecaster Custom

There are two unique versions of the Fender Telecaster Custom. The first appeared in catalogues from 1959 and was intended as an upmarket alternative to the regular Telecaster. With its “custom treatment of the body” – including a three-tone sunburst finish over alder along with top and back binding – it stood apart from the standard ash-bodied Telecaster's more austere blonde finish. However, with the same pickups, electronics and hardware, both models function identically as instruments.

During the late 60s and early 70s, Fender experienced a creative boom and began to experiment further using the Telecaster as a hotbed for new ideas. Subsequently, in 1968, the semi-acoustic Telecaster Thinline was released, along with the short-lived flower power-inspired Paisley Red and Blue Flower Telecasters. The following year saw the introduction of the George Harrison-endorsed Rosewood Telecaster. This spirit of innovation continued into the next decade and in 1971, following Fender's recruitment of Seth Lover – the inventor of Gibson's fabled PAF humbucker – the Telecaster Thinline was endowed with a pair of Seth's new ‘wide-range’ humbuckers in place of conventional single-coil Tele pickups for a completely new sound.

As inspired as Fender was to implement these new designs, the early 70s also marked the end of the road for some models due to underwhelming sales. Thus, in 1970 the single-pickup Esquire and Esquire Custom models were dropped from the line (having been in production since 1950 and 1959 respectively), followed by the

Rosewood Telecaster in 1972. That same year, the original Telecaster Custom model also ceased production and a markedly different design took its place with the same moniker. Featuring a regular Tele bridge pickup and a wide-range humbucker in the neck position, and Gibson-style controls, the revamped Telecaster Custom appeared distinct not only from its predecessor but also from the rest of the Tele range, both in terms of form and function.

Replacing the single-coil neck pickup of a Telecaster with a humbucker was a popular modification at the time as many players felt they lacked usability, particularly in

Replacing the single-coil neck pickup with a humbucker was a popular modification at the time

the ever more popular world of hard rock. Fender's ‘official’ acknowledgment of such preferences in the form of the Telecaster Custom and the top-of-the-range dual wide-range humbucker Telecaster Deluxe (released in 1973) were obvious steps into Gibson territory in a bid to cover ground on both sides of the Fender/Gibson divide. Due to its association with Keith Richards, the Custom is perhaps the most prominently successful of the wide-range humbucker Teles, though none were ultimately considered a great success; it was discontinued in 1981 along with the Deluxe, following the Thinline's demise in 1979.

Throughout its production, the 70s Telecaster Custom changed relatively little in terms of design. Much like its previous namesake model it was originally available in a sunburst finish as standard along with custom colour options. These were initially limited to a choice of four – Blond, Black, Natural and Walnut – although by late 1977, following the phasing out of custom colours in the middle of that decade, a larger choice of standard finishes were offered – including Sunburst, Blond, White, Black, Natural, Walnut, Antigua and Wine. By 1980, this had been significantly reduced to a choice of either Black, Natural, Wine or Tobacco Sunburst. **[RB]**

Guitarist thanks Adrian Hornbrook

The Evolution of the 1970s Fender Telecaster Custom

1959

Telecaster Custom released; front/back body binding; sunburst finish standard

1972

Original Telecaster Custom (model number 11-1400) discontinued

Mid-1972

New version (model number 11-0700) appears; 1x wide-range humbucker (front)

January 1973

Debut list price \$315; sunburst finish standard; rosewood fretboard or fretted maple neck

1975

6x individually adjustable bridge saddles replace 3x twin saddles

1976

Serial number relocates from neckplate to front of headstock

1977

Black Strat-style knobs replace black metal cap Gibson-style knobs

September 1980

Final list price \$675; choice of standard finishes in Black, Natural, Wine or Tobacco Sunburst

1981

Dropped from Fender price list



1974 Fender Telecaster Custom

1. SERIAL NUMBER

Six digits stamped into neckplate (typically between 540000 and 590000 during 1974)

2. HEADSTOCK

Traditional Telecaster-style headstock with bullet truss rod nut; two metal 'butterfly' string trees; black with gold outline CBS 'Fender' logo and black 'Telecaster Custom' decals

3. PLASTICS

Three-ply (b/w/b) elongated scratchplate; four black Gibson-style metal cap knobs (independent 'Vol' and 'Tone' pickup controls); white pickup selector switch tip

4. HARDWARE

Standard Tele string-through-body bridge with three adjustable twin saddles and six rear ferrules; Fender 'F' logo tuners; 'three bolt' Tilt Neck system; adjustable truss rod; recessed side jack; two strap buttons

5. PICKUPS

One 'wide-range' humbucker with adjustable polepieces and Fender logo chrome cover; one standard Tele bridge pickup; three-way selector switch; individual pickup tone and volume 1meg-ohm pots; two 0.022uF tone capacitors

6. BODY

Single cutaway; solid ash; Walnut polyester finish

7. NECK

25½-inch scale length; maple neck; rosewood fretboard; pearloid dot markers; 21 frets; polyester clearcoat finish



ReverbRarities

Dan Orkin of Reverb.com finds an exceptional early signature model

1963 Guild Duane Eddy Jr



In the early 1960s, pioneering guitarist Duane Eddy worked with Guild guitars to produce one of the very first signature guitar models. In time, Guild would produce two different models for Eddy, the DE-400 and DE-500. But before these model names were finalised, Guild built a small number of what would become the DE-400 under the name 'Duane Eddy Jr'. The guitar featured today, listed by Andy De Looze at Really Great Guitars, is one of these rare early instruments and ranks as one of the most desirable vintage Guild guitars on the market.

Before striking a deal with Guild, Eddy mainly played Gretsch guitars and has continued to do so today. In an interview with Reverb and *Guitarist* writer Tony Bacon, Eddy recalled that he "...really

thought that Gretsch might have wanted to do a Duane Eddy guitar, but they were all Chet Atkins Gretsches, so I guess maybe Chet didn't want it or maybe they didn't want it."

Whatever the reason for signing with Guild over other makers, the result was the classic thinline archtop electric you see here. De Looze cites the vibrant Sunburst finish, DeArmond pickups, thin 60s neck taper, and Brazilian rosewood fingerboard with white abalone inlays as just some of the elements that make this guitar so spectacular. Its pedigree as a world-traveller with plenty of stories left to tell only adds to the mystique of this stunning instrument.

To find the full listing, head to:
<http://bit.ly/ReverbGuild>



Dan Orkin is director of content at Reverb, a leading website and app for buying and selling new, used and vintage music gear. A go-to for gear history, sales trends and pricing data, Dan edits the *Reverb Price Guide* and leads the Reverb team that produces daily videos and articles

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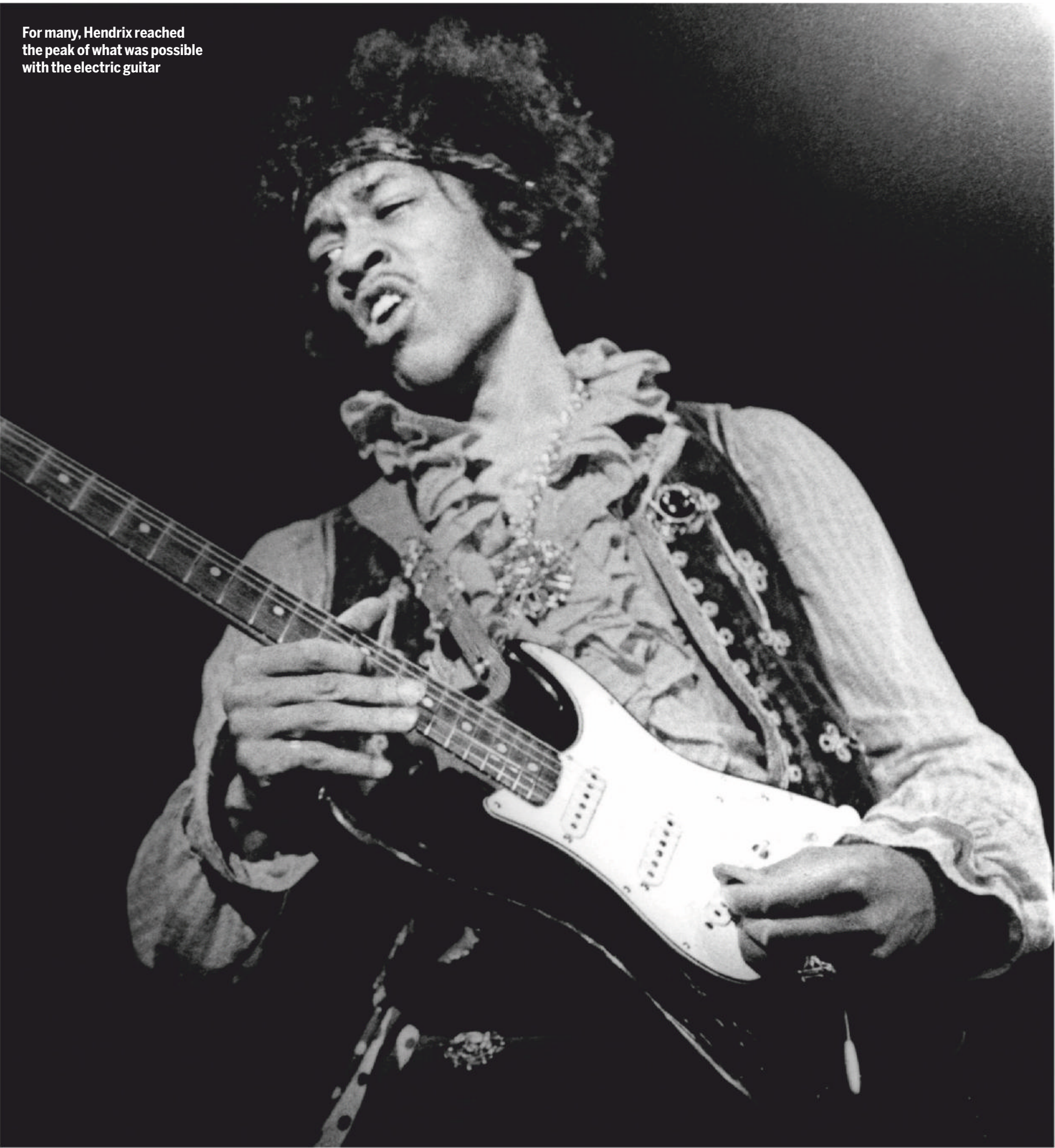


PHOTO BY ED CARAEFF/GETTY IMAGES

Modern Funky Blues



SOMETIMES IT'S INTERESTING to think about when the electric blues was an 'up and coming' genre, before Eric Clapton and his Gibson Les Paul, before the invention of the overdrive pedal and the era of guitar shops full of people noodling on the pentatonic scale. The idea of electric guitar was new – and resisted by many (especially Gibson!) – but players were looking for new sounds, or perhaps simply to be heard in the first instance, later realising the possibilities amplification brought to the table. For many,

this reached its zenith with artists such as Jimi Hendrix, who combined his instrumental skills with an array of pioneering gadgetry, as well as his legendary showmanship. In the present day, we have an astonishing amount of well-documented and recorded influences to refer to, so it's hardly surprising if we sometimes feel we're looking backwards more than we look forwards. In this example solo, I've tried to reappraise my own approach from every angle. Rather than going for the relatively easy option of a forgiving overdriven tone and a 12-bar backing track, the tone is

clean (albeit heavily compressed) and the backing style owes more to funk than blues. There's plenty of pentatonic phrasing, but there is also a chordal element coming in towards the end of the solo. Starting out with fingerstyle technique allows me to 'ping' the strings against the fretboard with a twangy attack, enhanced by the compression. The repeated phrase in the first example is definitely a blues device, but it's used here in a different context. Why not try dialling up the sort of tone you would never normally use to play solo and see where it takes you?

Example 1

THE REPEATED PHRASE and subtle development of the idea is a traditional blues technique but used in a slightly different context here. Note the strings are attacked quite emphatically with the fingers, twanging them back against the fretboard. Some heavy compression gives a bit more sustain to play with, plus evening out the volume between heavily picked and quieter notes. It's surprisingly expressive! To finish off the phrase, I've 'dive-bombed' the final note of the phrase using the whammy.

Example 1 musical notation, showing two systems of guitar tablature and standard notation. The first system is labeled **F#m** and **A**. The second system is labeled **B** and **F#m**. The notation includes standard notation with treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and 4/4 time signature. The guitar tablature is written on six-line staves with fret numbers (2, 4, 6) and techniques like **Swung semiquavers**, **BU**, **BD**, **w/bar**, and **1/4**. The first system includes the text **Swung semiquavers** and **BU BU BD**. The second system includes the text **BU BU BD** and **w/bar**.

Example 2

MOVING TO THE PICK, this phrase begins in a similar way, though in a different position on the fretboard. This allows the higher register to be reached more easily, followed by a descending pattern that uses the pentatonic scale but isn't particularly blues-based. Nevertheless, little touches like quarter-tone bends and slides do borrow heavily from the blues. The D#, or 6th, in the final bar is a nod to 50s rock 'n' roll, which occurs again shortly...

The image displays two systems of musical notation for guitar, each consisting of a standard musical staff and a corresponding fretboard diagram below it.

System 1 (Top):

- Staff:** Key signature of F#m (F# major, minor mode), 4/4 time. The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. A 1/4 note bend is indicated over a G4 note.
- Fretboard Diagram:** Shows fingerings (7, 9, 7, 9, 9, 11, 9, 11, 11, 9, 10, 12, 12, 14, 12, 12, 14, 12, 14, 12, 10) and techniques: BU (bend up), BD (bend down), and PB (triplet bend).

System 2 (Bottom):

- Staff:** Key signature of B (B major), 4/4 time. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by eighth and quarter notes. A 1/4 note bend is indicated over a B4 note. The system concludes with a F#m chord.
- Fretboard Diagram:** Shows fingerings (12, 11, 10, 12, 11, 10, 9, 11, 11, 9, 9, 9, 10, 9, 12, 9, 12, 9, 11, 9, 9) and techniques: BU (bend up), BD (bend down), and PB (triplet bend).

Example 3

THIS ASCENDING RUN uses economy picking. The first two notes are played with a single downstroke across the adjacent strings, followed by a hammer-on to complete the triplet. The second triplet is played with a single upstroke back across the third and fourth strings, ending with a pull-off. This interesting technique allows the strings to be crossed rapidly. Once we reach the high strings, there is another touch of rock 'n' roll with the doublestop/6th lick, preparing the ground for the final phrase.

The image displays a guitar score for two systems. The first system is in F#m and 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff, starting with a whole rest followed by a triplet of eighth notes, then a series of sixteenth notes. The bass line is written on a five-line staff, with fret numbers indicating the fretting hand. The second system continues the melody and bass line, with a key signature change to F#m. The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 4

WE END IN A SIMILAR MANNER to the beginning phrase but staying with the pick rather than reverting to fingers. The chord fragments are inspired by Nile Rodgers' playing with Chic and Sister Sledge, using a maximum of three strings to facilitate moving shapes around quickly and rhythmically. A short pentatonic run leads to a divebomb on the final F#. In the absence of a whammy bar, perhaps a slide upwards would be equally quirky/effective?

The musical notation for Example 4 is presented in two systems. The first system (labeled '1') shows a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass staff shows fret numbers for the E, B, G, D, and A strings. Chord labels 'F#m' and 'A' are placed above the staff. The second system (labeled '3') continues the notation, including a 'B' chord label and a 'w/bar' (whammy bar) instruction. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

Hear It Here

PAUL RODGERS
Muddy Water Blues:
A Tribute to Muddy Waters



Bringing in guest guitarists such as Brian Setzer, Trevor Rabin, Jeff Beck, Buddy Guy and Neal Schon, Paul Rodgers reimagines a selection of classic Muddy Waters tracks, giving each of them a free rein. The results are very interesting, to say the least! It would be a shame to pick out individual tracks to recommend, but *Rollin' Stone* featuring Jeff Beck might be the track to check out if you're not going to listen to the whole thing.

ERIC GALES TRIO
Ghost Notes



As an instrumental album, *Ghost Notes* presents a great opportunity to study Eric's unusual phrasing at length. You should bear in mind that Eric plays his guitars left-handed/upside-down, too, so there will certainly be some surprises in those phrases. From the slow blues of *A Few More Miles* to the country style of *Pickin' 'N Grinnin'*, you'll find plenty of diversity going on here – look to *Way Down* for a heavier rock feel with some blistering soloing.

JEFF BECK
Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop



It would be churlish not to acknowledge Jeff Beck again here, as his pioneering approach has continued from the early days of electric guitar, consistently ahead of the curve. The title track has a little good-natured fun with the jargon spoken in many a guitar shop. *Big Block* takes some traditional ideas and puts them in a completely new context, and *Behind The Veil* surely demonstrates the kind of invention I'm trying to get at with this month's solo!



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