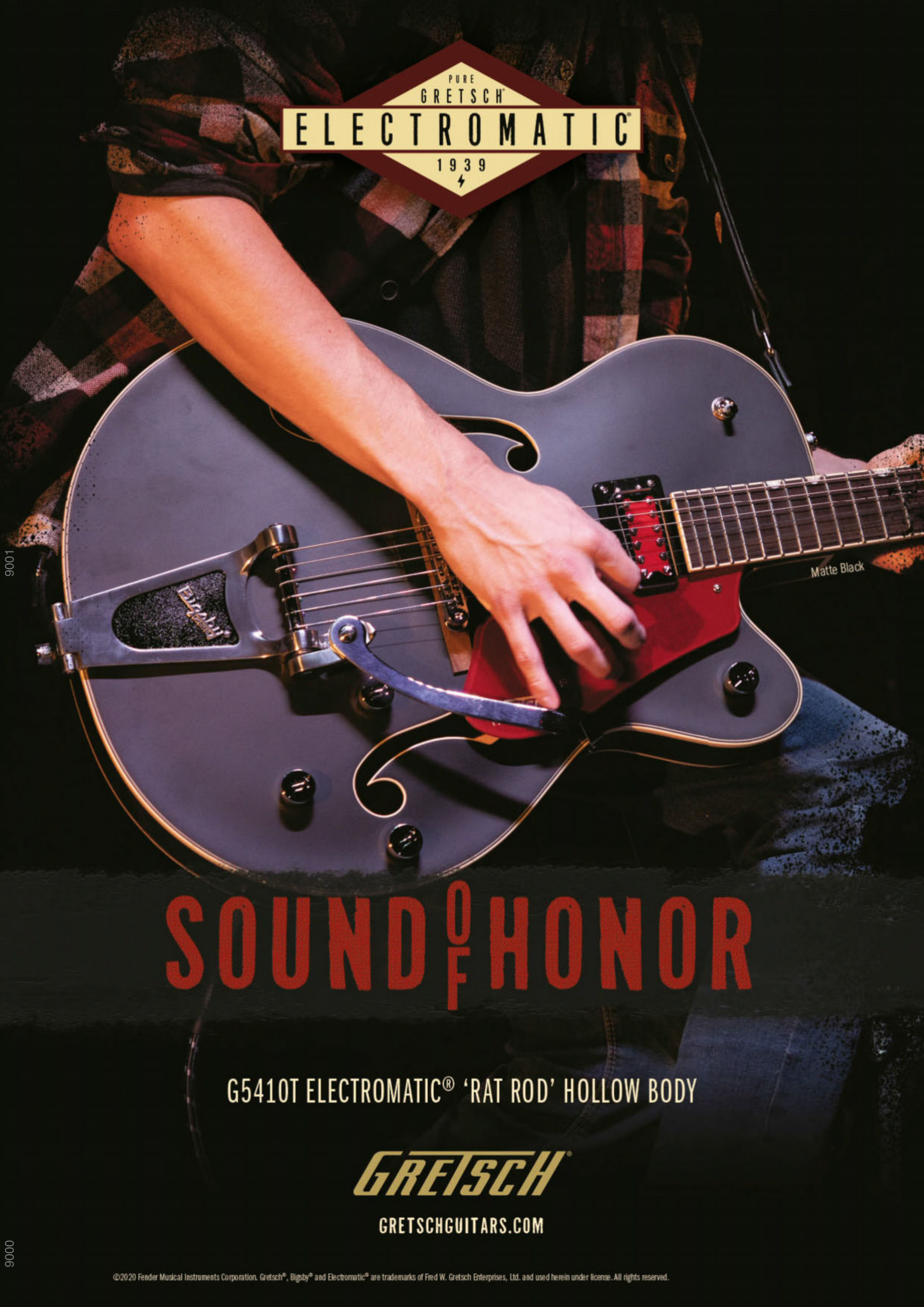




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Home, Sweet Home...



My own reminiscences about Paul Reed Smith's guitars begin around 1992. Up until that point, all I had seen from the company was its 24-fret neck models and, call me strange, but I have never got on with 24-fretters. But then, one day the brand-new Custom 22 came into the *Guitarist* office and my heart skipped a beat. Okay, that might be a little bit of an exaggeration, but I was assigned to review the guitar, which meant I had an extra dose of 'hands on' with the instrument.

We've all had that experience where you're desperately trying to justify yet another guitar joining the family to both yourself and your partner, and, in the end, I had to bid the 22 a fond farewell and it disappeared from my life. Since that time, I've accumulated a number of twin-humbucker guitars, but I remain PRS-free. Admirable restraint on my part, methinks. But I wholeheartedly applaud Paul and his team for continually surprising us with innovation and superlative design. We've even got a soft spot for the Silver Sky... So please join us in celebrating PRS's 35th anniversary in this very special issue.

Elsewhere, you'll find an extraordinary video lesson from Cory Wong. I was introduced to his playing via a Fearless Flyers video during one of those YouTube safaris that we all find ourselves on from time to time. I sat there smiling for the video's duration. This was not only funk, it was *precision* funk. But it was still chock-full of passion alongside the admirable chops from all concerned. When I saw that Cory was performing nearby, we managed to join the dots and invite him to our studio for our resulting masterclass.

Meanwhile, this is another 'lockdown' edition of the mag, put together via phone, email, text message, video conference and sundry other methods of communication available in these strange times. I hope you enjoy it – stay safe!

David Mead **Acting Editor**

Editor's Highlights



Rhythm King

Cory Wong talks about his gear and passes on the secrets of his phenomenal funk rhythm style in our very special video tutorial **p48**



Wooden Heart

If you thought that lutherie was exclusively a man's province, think again. We celebrate the superlative craft of women builders **p54**



Dawn Of The F-Hole

The brainchild of Lloyd Loar, Gibson's L-5 archtop set the standard for jazz boxes nearly 100 years ago. Read the history of this landmark instrument **p66**



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Printed in the UK by William Gibbons. Distributed by Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU



Future plc is a public company
quoted on the London Stock
Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

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Neil Godwin

COVER FEATURE
PRS GUITARS

75 This year marks 35 years of guitar making for the company helmed by Paul Reed Smith, whose drive and passion for the guitar is as strong today as it was in 1985. Join us as we take a detailed look at the models that define the brand, plus new offerings for 2020, and we chat to Paul, his team and the artists whose instruments bear the PRS name

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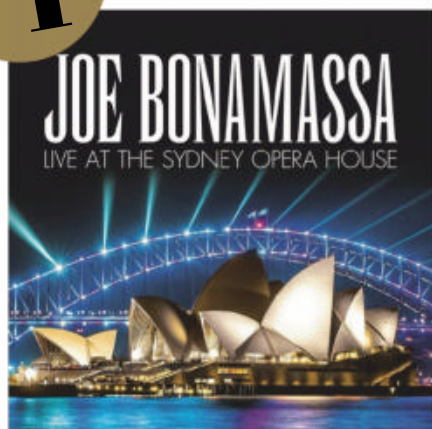
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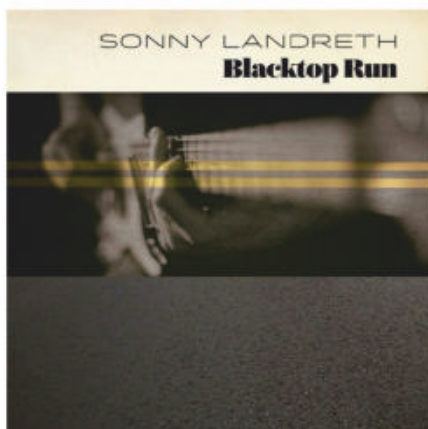
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KRIS BARRAS
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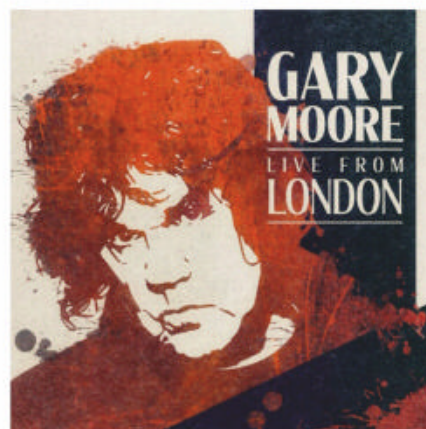
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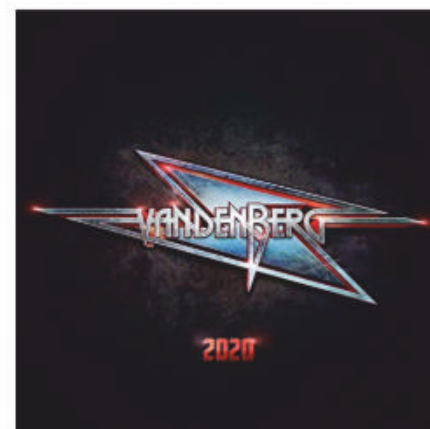
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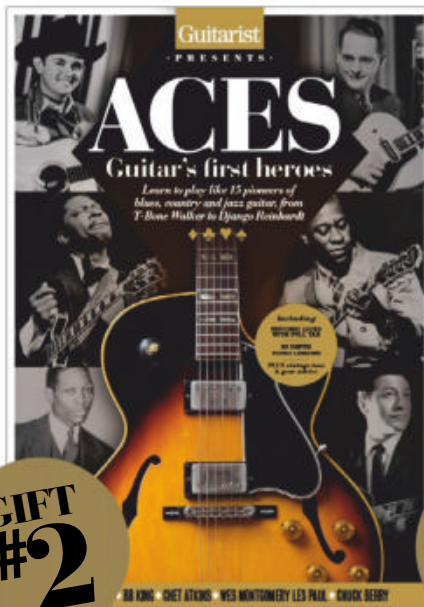
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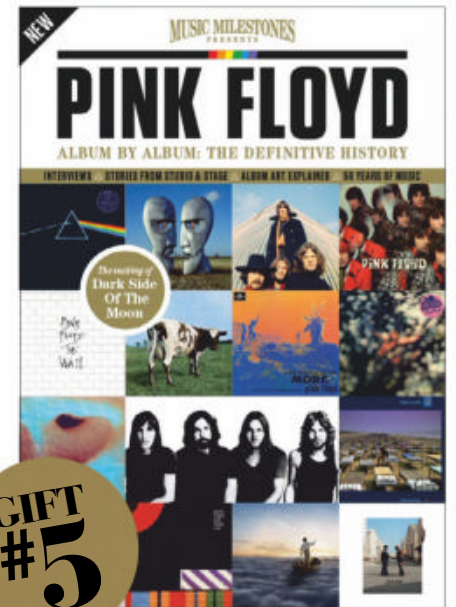
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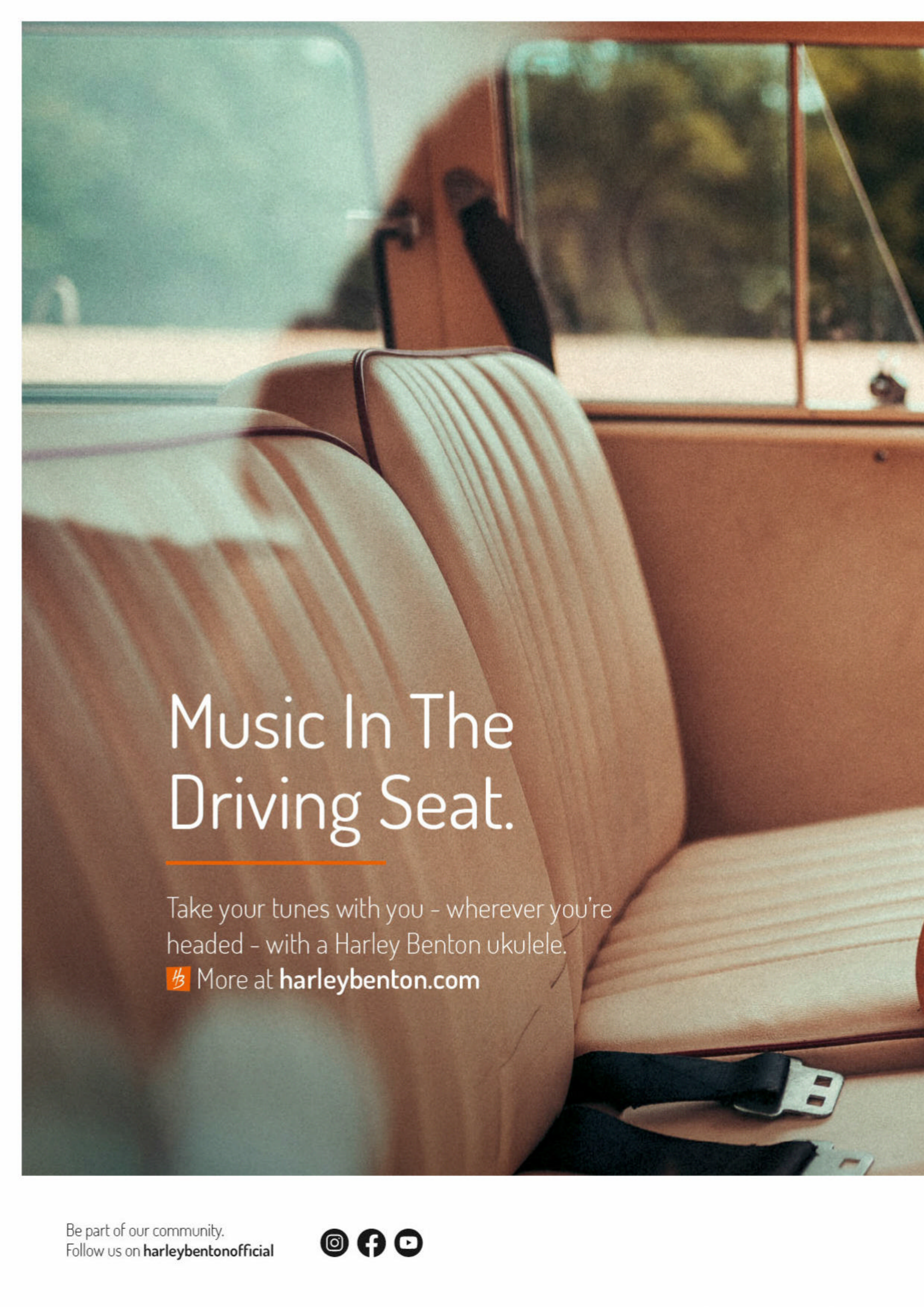
1954 Fender
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Gary Moore's 1959
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FIRST PLAY



EASTMAN ROMEO
£1,950

WHAT IS IT? Original-design semi-hollowbody, with custom Lollar Imperials, drawing on Eastman's archtop heritage

New Romantic

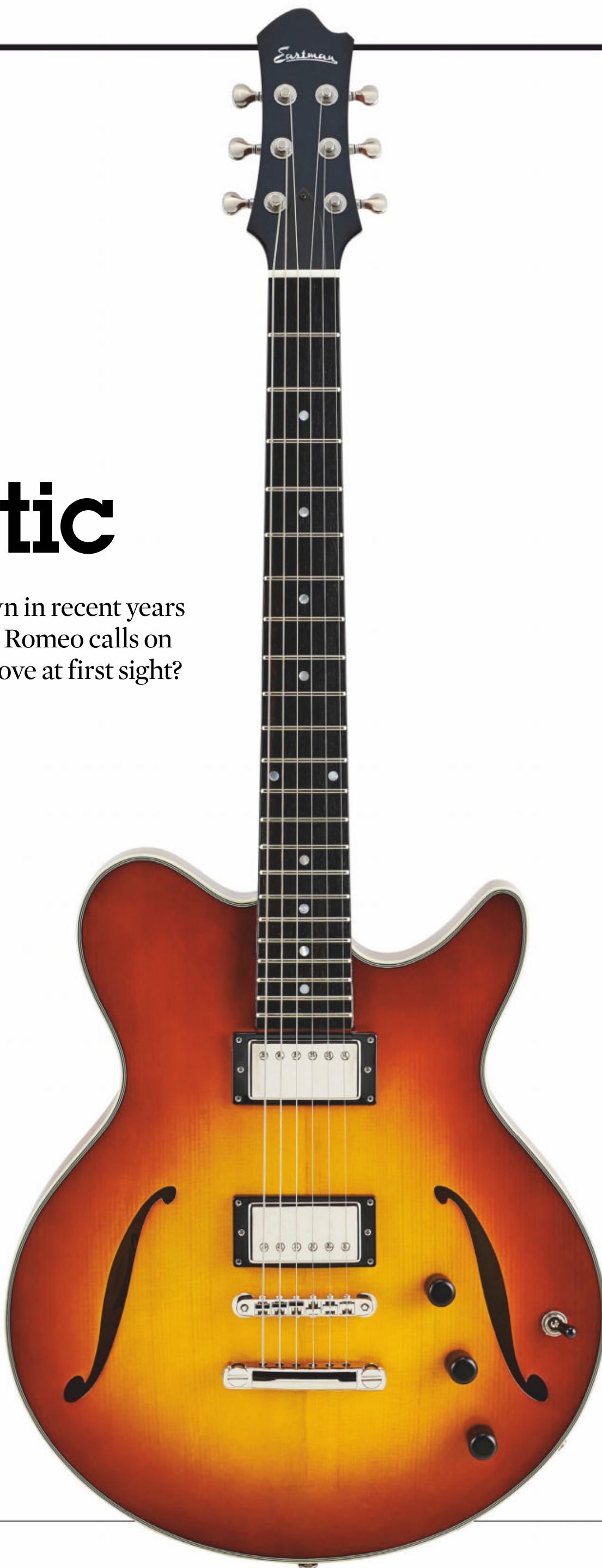
Eastman might be better known in recent years for its solidbody range, but this Romeo calls on the brand's archtop heritage. Love at first sight?

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Olly Curtis

Increasingly, Eastman guitars are becoming the alternative choice to many longer-standing USA companies. The brand builds its guitars in Beijing, China, but uses a considerable number of consultants in Europe and America to design and constantly evolve its ranges. A recent tie-up with Dana Bourgeois, for example, promises a great deal for its acoustic programme. Eclectic maker Claudio Pagelli has his own Eastman-made design, while archtop maker Otto D'Ambrosio not only has his own El Rey signature models but heads up Eastman's USA design and custom shop in California. Us rock 'n' rollers might not have heard of Otto, but his involvement with Eastman dates back nearly two decades, just as he was starting out building archtops in New York.

This particular model, Romeo, started from a question, as Otto explains from his workshop: "What would the Telecaster of the archtop guitar world look and sound like? And how do we create a unique electric guitar that honours Eastman's carved body archtop roots?"

He then goes on to list numerous criteria to answer these questions, not least a light weight, resonance, a perfect balance and a relatively small body that's between 14 and 15 inches across its lower bout. "For a smaller







1



2

1. These wooden-knobbed controls are for master volume and a tone control for each pickup. Under the hood you'll find CTS 500K audio pots, a Switchcraft toggle and a Sky MC473 .047 microfarads tone capacitor. Quality stuff

2. "Jason Lollar developed the pickups for us," says Otto. "They're just like true old PAFs, which, as you know, sometimes weren't potted at all. We do a 'half-pot'. It's gives a little feedback resistance but still gives a bit of colouring of the electric tone of the instrument"

You can probably imagine the plugged-in voice that Romeo has, but the quality of the very velveteen-sounding 'buckers is a real pleasure

semi-hollow electric we think 14.75 inches is about perfect. Small and nimble but not too small like a 13-inch solidbody."

The resulting guitar unquestionably fulfils that initial design brief. There is a little nod to the Telecaster, perhaps in the upper bout and horn design, while the lower bouts look more Gibson ES-like, although the bridge sits lower. "We placed the position of the strap button before we sketched the upper bout," comments Otto. "In other words, we balanced the guitar before it was drawn. We also looked into making the body shorter. This pulled the neck lower in the body making the guitar more compact, and [gave] better hand and wrist playing posture."

As a consequence, the neck joins the body at the 16th fret on the bass side and at the 18th fret on the treble side, although even with the classy offset heel, high-fret access is a bit of a stretch. But the craft here is beautiful – from the lovely graduated carve of the spruce top and the slightly less pronounced dishing of the laminated mahogany back, to the very tidy binding with inner multi-strip purfling. It feels nicely compact, too, with a rim depth of 46mm, though the curves of the top and back increase the overall depth to around 68mm at the centre of the body.

There's a subtle but noticeable flame to the one-piece maple neck, which appears to be quarter-sawn. The ebony fingerboard is jet black and peppered with pearl dots; we even get quite large half-circle dots as side markers. The relatively narrow back-angled headstock is a classy touch and gives way less string splay than many three-a-side headstocks. As a result, while tuning duties are handled by those super-smooth Gotoh 510s, we barely touched them – this is one very stable guitar.

That said, although the nitro Golden 'Burst finish is very classic-looking and understated, the aged patina of those nickel-plated tuners is a little at odds with the brighter new nickel plating of the tune-o-matic and stud tailpiece, not to mention the pickup covers.

The archtop heritage is referenced again with wooden control knobs, another nice flourish of the artist's brush. And those two f-holes, relatively small and without the normal notches, remind this writer of some of James D'Aquisto's designs. We're never too far removed from that archtop world.

Peering through the f-holes you can see very tidy kerfed mahogany linings, plus there's a sizeable block under the bridge and tailpiece. "The centre portion of the carved top underneath the pickups is left



3. These nicely aged Gotoh 510 tuners actually have 'HAP' height adjustable posts. To be honest, it's such a stable guitar we barely touched them

4. Romeo features an "angled neck joint so the heel of the neck falls into the cutaway for better upper-fret access and ergonomic feel", explains Otto. "A lightweight maple neck is used for stability and transference of vibrations through neck and body," he adds

at full thickness," Otto tells us. "It's about 5/8-inch to 3/4-inch thick. Then it's carved out to where the f-holes are – it gets down to 3/16-inch – so it provides the structure you want under the pickups, and the sustain, but it also reduces the weight of the top and makes it a little more acoustic-like, where the body is moving a little bit more. We think it produces the best qualities for what is a semi-hollow instrument."

Feel & Sounds

For reference, the neck here is slightly wider than a current USA Les Paul with quite a classic rounded 'C' shape that has nicely tapered shoulders but relatively little taper depth-wise from the lower to upper positions. The 1st fret depth of 22mm is more like Gibson's current '50s profile, but it moves to more of the '60s depth of 23.3mm by the 12th. There's plenty of width to the frets, too, although they're not overly high, which, in combination with the 305mm (12-inch) 'board, reminds us of many an older Gibson that had been refretted back in the day. In fact, it's one of many subtle features that make the neck feel quite played in, along with the slightly rolled fingerboard edges. The nut and frets are finely fettled and it's certainly not the only Eastman we've played where the build



quality seems higher than its price. We have questioned the use of the old-school single-action truss rod in previous reviews, but we can report here that the setup is slinky – pretty much 1.6mm on both treble and bass sides – with probably a little more relief than we'd normally set. It plays beautifully.

There's an almost delicate feel to Romeo compared with even a downsized centre-blocked Ibanez semi. By design, it's a beautiful instrument to play seated but balances perfectly on a strap. However, while the top-fret access is good for an archtop, that rear-placed heel strap button does impede it a little. It doesn't have

huge acoustic volume, though it's pretty roomy and certainly fuller-sounding than a spruce-topped PRS Hollowbody, and less solid-sounding unplugged compared with that old Ibanez AS-50.

You can probably imagine the sort of plugged-in voice that Romeo has, but the quality of the very velveteen-sounding 'buckers is a real pleasure. Not only are they perfectly matched as a pair but also in their treble to bass response. The bridge avoids being sharp or honky, the neck is beautifully thick but retains good note definition with clean basses and, importantly, the transition between both is very smooth. The controls

"We work a lot with laminates," says Otto, "and they have great qualities for acoustics. The first Romeo sample featured maple back and sides, which made for a very poppy/bright tone. We decided on mahogany laminate and all of a sudden we heard a more throaty, twangy midrange"



work as you'd expect, although many players may prefer dual volume and a single tone, particularly if you live in the mix position, which adds a little sparkle as ever. As is, though, it's a cracking soul tone. We feel like we should be wearing a suit.

Show Romeo a bit of grit and there's a very PAF-y flutey-ness to the neck and surprising girth at the bridge that takes the instrument into fusion territory or really quite ballsy roots rock. Obviously, it's a relatively lightly built hollowbody, so keeping feedback under control might not always be as easy as a centre-blocked instrument. That said, find the sweet spot and things gets seriously good. Romeo has a few tricks up his sleeve.

Verdict

Have we ever played a bad Eastman guitar? Not that any of our team can remember, be it a steel-string, solidbody, more ES-like semi or this original semi-hollow design. A glimpse into the world of designer Otto

It's certainly not the only Eastman we've played where the build quality seems higher than its price. It plays beautifully

D'Ambrosio perhaps illustrates why. This is a carefully considered design that went through numerous iterations before Otto and his team were happy, a project that took about two years from initial drawings to the first production run. If you thought Eastman was just another 'Made In Hurry' brand, it's time to think again. Romeo is a thoroughly modern take on the electric archtop, and it's built exceptionally well with its custom Lollar Imperials being the icing on the perfectly baked cake. A guitar to fall in love with. **G**



EASTMAN ROMEO

PRICE: £1,950 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Single-cutaway thinline semi-hollowbody

BODY: Solid spruce carved top with f-holes, laminate mahogany back and sides

NECK: Lightly figured Maple, 'traditional even C' profile

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.92mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony, pearl dot inlays (with half circle pearl side markers), 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium/jumbo (Jescar FW47104)

HARDWARE: Gotoh GE-104B tune-o-matic bridge and GE101A stud tailpiece (nickel), Gotoh 510 HAP tuners (aged nickel)

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: 2x Lollar custom-wound Imperial humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector, master volume and individual pickup tone controls

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.41/5.3

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Romeo-SC (£1,950) swaps the Lollar pickups for a Seymour Duncan Tele-style Vintage Stack at the neck and a full-size '59 at the bridge

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Golden 'Burst (as reviewed): all gloss nitro-cellulose

Eastman Guitars

www.eastmanguitars.eu

Guitarist would like to thank Music Street for the loan of this guitar

01480 431222 <https://musicstreet.co.uk>



9/10

PROS Design, quality build, pickup voicing, setup, feel and price

CONS Aside from some mismatched hardware and lack of lefty, very little

**SE**

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FIRST PLAY



**PRS S2 35TH ANNIVERSARY
CUSTOM 24**
£1,799

WHAT IS IT? Affordable USA-made S2 level celebration of PRS's calling card, the Custom 24

Celebrate In Style

One of three special PRS models to commemorate the brand's 35th anniversary, this S2 offers expanded sounds for half the price of the Core Custom

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin

As the original PRS guitar, the 24-fret Custom has certainly earned its place in guitar history. For this milestone year there are three celebratory models – all Custom 24s – starting at the SE level then moving to the USA for the S2 and topped off with the ultimate Core version.

While the Custom itself has constantly evolved over three-and-a-half decades and been the start point for the majority of subsequent PRS designs, it remains very much a halfway house between a Les Paul and a Stratocaster. In simple terms, it has the wood choice and construction style of the former but with the double-cutaway style and vibrato of the latter. A perfect hybrid? Its detractors, however, see this duality as its biggest failing: it's *not* a Les Paul and it's *not* a Stratocaster. While that discussion will continue as long as there are pubs and internet forums, what better way to celebrate this landmark design than with the 35th Anniversary S2 level? The halfway house of the celebratory trio.

At £1,799 and including a perfectly good gigbag, it's a well-aimed price point – like our trio of S2 McCarty 594s we look at later on in this issue – that puts it nicely in competition between Fender's American







1. The full width of the neck sits deep into the neck pickup cavity in original PRS style. The three-piece neck is different from the Core level, but tuning stability and overall intonation are exceptional

Ultra, Original and Professional ranges and Gibson USA's pricing on the first 'proper' Les Paul in the current line-up, the Classic, especially since the standard S2 Custom 24 has a full retail of £1,699.

While the two Custom 24s may appear very similar (aside from the 35th Anniversary model's celebratory truss rod cover), importantly, it's the way that the humbuckers are split to single coils that differentiates the two models. The standard model splits the pickups simultaneously via the pull-switch on the tone control, which gives you six sounds when used in conjunction with the three-way lever pickup selector switch. These are partial splits where some, but not all, of the dumped coil is still voiced via a different value resistor for each pickup. Our 35th Anniversary Custom 24 adds two mini-toggle switches, one for each pickup, to voice the full/split switching of the 85/15 'S' humbuckers individually, giving you eight

This Custom's clear, contemporary voicing might appeal more to those of us who simply need a lot of range from a single instrument



sounds. And like the circuit on the SE Paul's Guitar, we're hearing the true single coil (the slug coil) of each humbucker. Another change is that the 35th Anniversary version has a three-way toggle pickup selector; the standard model uses a three-way lever. Aside from that, specs and colour options are the same.

Outwardly, the primary difference between the Core-level Custom 24 and the S2 is the different top carve: the Core model is classic carved PRS; the S2 uses a mainly flat-top with almost SG-like edge chamfers. Consequently, the S2 looks more functional, reflecting its faster build time, but it's just one of a raft of changes that allows PRS to bring this S2 in at approximately 50 per cent of the cost of the equivalent Core model.

So, the neck here, while made of the same genuine mahogany as the Core guitars, is a three-piece design with a spliced headstock

2. Along with the now-classic headstock shape that allows near-perfect straight string pull over the friction-reducing nut, locking tuners ensure perfect return to pitch of the vibrato



PRS remains tight-lipped about its pickups, but these 85/15 'S' open-coiled humbuckers capture a 'hot vintage' vibe and are equally at home with gain or clean tones. Measured at output, we have DCRs of (full/split) 7.89/3.93kohms at the neck and 8.42/4.29k at the bridge

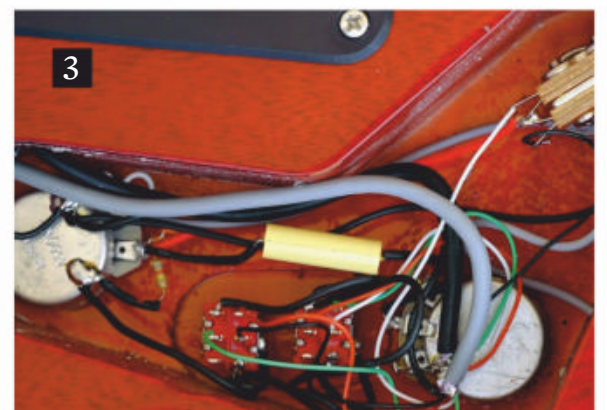
and separate heel stack. The body depth is 44mm, around 5mm thinner than the Core Custom; the one-piece mahogany back is approximately 32mm thick, with the centre-joined slip-matched maple cap being closer to 12mm. The grade of the figured maple is lower than Core and all the translucent colours are 'wrap-around' without the PRS hallmark natural edge 'binding'. Also, neither the rear control nor vibrato black plastic covers are recessed. Like the Core models, however, the S2s apparently use the same new nitro-over-cellulose finish.

Along with the manner in which they are made, it's the parts' costs that further differentiate the two levels. The S2, like the mainly Indonesian-made SEs, uses less-expensive Asian-made electronics and PRS-designed pickups. The Core pickups are made in the USA Stevensville factory

in Maryland, the pots and switches simply higher-spec parts. Country of origin plays a lesser part in the hardware: the S2 vibrato is a two-piece cast design used on both the SE and bolt-on CE models; the Core level, now in its Gen III specification, is machined from solid stock, but PRS is tight-lipped about its actual origin.

Under The Hood

Despite that unrecressed cavity cover, we have a standard PRS-shaped cavity, again unshielded like the Core models. Pots here are Alpha 500k audio taper. There's a slightly different-sized tone capacitor but of the usual PRS value of .033 microfarads and wired in 'modern' style. Each coil-split switch is a DPDT and voices (and isolates) the slug coil hence the term 'true' single coil. There's an additional 820kohms resistor wired between the input lug of the volume



3. The circuit on this anniversary model is typical PRS: 500k pots wired modern-style with a .033 microfarads tone capacitor. The two mini-toggle 'true single coil' switches are also used on the SE Paul's Guitar, while an additional resistor on the volume control 'tunes' the circuit



and ground, which means that the pickups ‘see’ an approximate 300kohms pot, more like the traditional 250k value used for single coils that subtly pulls down the high-end of the entire circuit. This little tweak is all a part of PRS’s ongoing TCI process.

Feel & Sounds

The Pattern Regular neck profile is “similar to the traditional PRS Regular neck found on guitars made in the late 80s at PRS’s former Virginia Avenue location”, states PRS. It’s the narrowest PRS profile at the nut – ours measures just over 42mm with a very contemporary depth of 21mm at the 1st fret and 23mm by the 12th – and is a very nicely shaped profile that almost hints

at a slight ‘V’ thanks to the well-tapered shoulders. Fretwire on the comfortable 254mm (10-inch) unbound rosewood fingerboard with its rounded ‘worn-in’ edges seems identical to the Core guitar in width, though slightly lower in height – perhaps a result of the differing production process here. Acoustic response is lively and resonant; setup and playability is superb, particularly the full fret access. Constructional details aside, there’s plenty of original mid-80s PRS style here.

Of our collection of 2020 PRSes, unsurprisingly, this one sounds most like, well, a PRS! We have the original scale length combined here with that in-tune vibrato and the 24-fret neck, and we’re veering back towards the Custom’s original Fender/Gibson hybrid style that is probably the reason why we’re still writing about PRS guitars today. Yet it wears its ‘modernism’ with a classic style: you won’t find graphite reinforced necks or stainless steel frets on a PRS electric guitar.

4. This S2 vibrato, also used on the SE and CE models, is a two-piece cast design based on the original PRS design. Notched pivot screws help provide excellent return to pitch; the arm push-fits into a plastic collar with swing tension adjustment

5. The true single-coil splits provide versatile duality. They differ from PRS’s partial-split style, plus the individual split switches give a total of eight sounds in conjunction with the three-way toggle switch

If you’re looking for that one hybrid guitar, this platform takes some beating, and those mini-switches are so easy and intuitive to use



PRS S2 35TH ANNIVERSARY CUSTOM 24

PRICE: £1,799 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany with chamfered edge figured maple top

NECK: Mahogany, Pattern Regular profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Friction reducing/42.16mm

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

FRETS: 24, medium

HARDWARE: PRS patented vibrato (cast), PRS designed low mass locking tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers (bridge); 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone, 2 mini-toggle coil split switches

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.37/7.4

OPTIONS: Colour only

RANGE OPTIONS: The standard S2 Custom 24 (£1,699) has the same colour options but different electronics. The Core Custom 24 starts at £3,459; the 35th Anniversary version is £3,799

LEFT-HANDERS: No. The only PRS lefty is the SE Custom 24 (£825)

FINISHES: Dark Cherry Sunburst (as reviewed), McCarty Sunburst, Elephant Grey, Faded Blue Smokeburst, Scarlet Red, Burnt Amber Burst, Whale Blue – all gloss nitro-over-cellulose



PROS Cost-effective build, versatile sounds, in-tune vibrato, playability... Does production guitar making get any better at this price?

CONS Shame there are no opaque colours that really flatter the body contours; no lefties available

As we find with the S2 594s reviewed later in this issue, there's not a huge sonic gap between this and the CE 24, for example, with its USA 85/15 pickups. In fact, the true single-coil switching in combination with the 'tuned' volume control gives a very Fender-y clarity and character that you don't always hear from a split humbucker – we seem to have depth and sparkle in equal measure. And while the 85/15 'S' loves some hefty gain, there's a strident clarity that seems a perfect vehicle to drive a cramped pedalboard or multi-effects unit. Paul Reed Smith doesn't like 'ice-pick' high-end and we don't hear it here.

That said, of the five guitars we have on review across this special issue, this Custom has the clearest, most contemporary voicing, which might appeal less to vintage obsessives and more to those of us who simply need a lot of range from a single instrument. As with any good guitar, the volume control alone is a tone shaper – pulling back a little of the hi-fi sheen yet

with a dense pedalboard patch, that full-up sparkle is very welcome. Guitars like the CE 24 and certainly the Silver Sky will give you a woodier texture, but if you're looking for that one hybrid guitar, this platform takes some beating, and those mini-switches are so easy and intuitive to use. Along with its well-trusted vibrato system, it's a very stable guitar. Intonation is very sweet and it's an effortless player that in no way feels, or frankly sounds, cut-price.

Verdict

There are two things that non-PRS players don't like about PRS guitars: the 'posh' aesthetic and the price. The former, of course, is what put the brand on the map, and at this S2 level the latter is redundant. What the doubters haven't kept up with is PRS's continuous desire to make a better instrument. Average is not good enough. If you take your craft seriously, like PRS clearly does, this is a guitar that'll support your aims and dreams... and then some. **G**

FIRST PLAY



PRS MCCARTY
£3,499

WHAT IS IT?

PRS's original 'vintage' vision,
now updated for 2020

McCarty's Legacy

Always in the shadow of the Custom, the now 26-year-old McCarty was PRS's first 'vintage-aimed' model. We take a look at this ever-evolving guitar in its 2020 guise

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin

Ted McCarty looms large in the early history of PRS Guitars: he was the Gibson president during its halcyon days who, in the words of Paul Reed Smith, "downloaded the hard disk" on how they made guitars back then. While Ted had no direct involvement in the McCarty Model that launched in 1994, at the time it was the most 'vintage-style' PRS, with the changes Paul had already made to his Custom recipe – for example, a 22-fret version, the development of the pre-intonated Stoptail wrapover bridge, plus suggestions that early PRS-user David Grissom had requested. Over the years, the player's favourite dropped in and out of production, but it returned recently in 2016, and for 2020 it has a subtle refresh that brings it bang up to date.

Back in 1994, although still based on the now-classic PRS double-cut outline, the McCarty Model's body, specifically the mahogany back, was increased in depth by approximating 3mm (1/8-inch) to just over 52mm, a change that we see on all PRS Core guitars today, with the exception of the 49mm-thick Custom. The 22-fret neck was shorter and therefore stiffer, and these changes to the acoustic voice were enhanced by new, more vintage-aimed







1. The headstock facing is East Indian rosewood to match the fingerboard. The inlaid signature logo is vintage ivory acrylic, while the truss rod cover is actually anodised aluminium with an engraved McCarty logo. The top nut here is bone

McCarty covered humbuckers and a more classic electronics circuit that installed a three-way Gibson-style toggle instead of the polarising five-way rotary switch of the early guitars. A little while later, around 1996, a coil-split switch on the tone controls completed the package.

Today's McCarty follows that blueprint, but obviously includes all the tone-enhancing tweaks we've seen in the past couple of decades. The 2020 McCarty adds the machined aluminium Paul's Guitar Stoptail bridge with its brass inserts under the witness point of each string, which Paul believes creates more of the sound of a brass bridge but without the weight.

While the 2016 model used the latest-spec Phase III locking tuners with their unplated string posts, the 2020 reverts to the vintage Kluson-style tuners of the original model, a change back then from the rather clunky cam-lock tuners of Paul's original vision. "The weight of the tuning



2. For this year, the McCarty reverts to vintage-style non-locking tuners, with unplated brass string posts and faux bone buttons instead of the Phase III locking tuners of the 2016 version

pegs makes a difference," states Paul Reed Smith today. "The tension between the gear and the worm makes a difference. I hear a difference, a beautiful difference, and I think we're doing it for very grounded reasons. Yes, there have been discussions here about whether the weight of the tuners made a difference, so we went into Jack Higginbotham's office [PRS's chief operating officer] and we changed the tuners right in front of everybody and asked if they could hear the difference. You were in that meeting; could you hear a difference?" Paul asks PRS's director of marketing, Judy Schaefer, who was sitting in on our interview. "Absolutely!" she replies. "It was eye opening for everybody," continues Paul. "I was making a claim and they accepted it."

The final piece of this 2020 McCarty puzzle is a new nitro-over-cellulose finish, or NOC, that originally was called CAB. But what does that actually mean? "It's simple," says Paul to clarify. "CAB stands for cellulose acetate butyrate. It's nitrocellulose lacquer mixed with Plexiglas. It's crystal clear and acts a lot like nitro – it makes a wonderful base coat and we spray nitro over it. It's that simple: it's a nitro-ish base coat with a topcoat of nitrocellulose

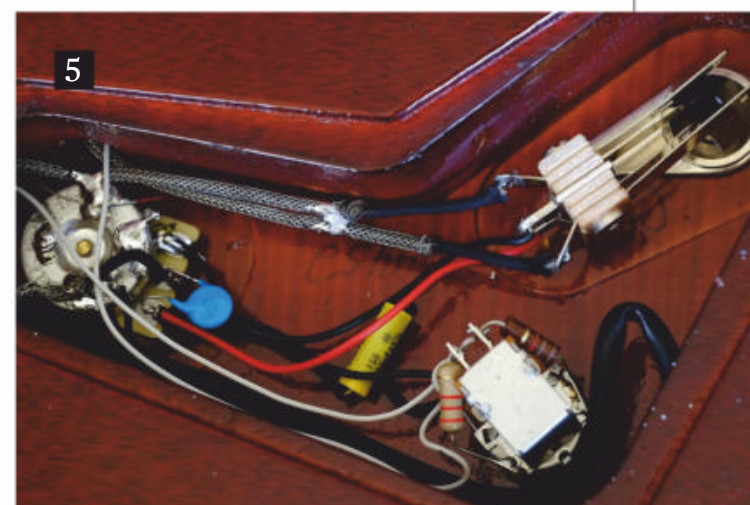
The scale length, bridge, master volume and tone setup add up to make the McCarty much broader than a vintage-chasing clone



3. The 58/15 'LT' humbuckers both have the same output; the standard set has a hotter bridge pickup. Both have PRS's partial-splits, which primarily voice the screw coils

4. These two-piece bird inlays have a green ripple abalone centre with vintage ivory acrylic edges. The rolled-top edge binding is vintage ivory acrylic

5. Back in 1994 this was a new circuit for PRS. The coil-splits on the switched tone control came later (around 1996) and the partial coil-splits with those resistors appeared later still in 2011



lacquer. It works great, looks great and sounds great. It's now used on all USA PRS guitars except Private Stock and the David Grissom's [DGTs], which are all nitro."

Under The Hood

Another abbreviation, TCI (Tuned Capacitance Inductance) refers to a relatively new way in which PRS has been able to 'see' the response of the pickup and, where necessary, 'tune' it, as well as the actual control circuit. So, although the 58/15 'buckers have been with us for the past five years, they've been constantly tweaked. Typically, the bridge pickup is slightly hotter than the neck pickup. Here, the 'LT' suffix means 'low turns' – effectively both are neck pickups and have the same output.

There's a very standard PRS circuit that's used on the majority of the company's two-control guitars. Pots are 500k audio, the volume has the standard 180 picofarads treble-bleed cap, the tone capacitor is .033 microfarads, and the controls are wired modern-style. The pull-switch on the tone control operates the simultaneous partial split (voicing primarily the humbuckers' screw coils) with a 2.2kohms resistor from the bridge pickup's split wire to ground and 1.1k on the neck pickup.

Feel & Sounds

There's an immediately engaging classic feel to the neck's Pattern profile, previously known as the Wide Fat. It's not quite as deep as the 594's Pattern Vintage profile and feels a little more V'd thanks to the tapered shoulders, especially noticeable in lower positions. The cream binding doesn't alter the feel, the top edges are nicely rounded, and the fretwork – as it should be – is superb with slightly more height than the S2 wire (see our S2 round-up review later in this issue). Setup is very consistent across all the guitars we have on review – very little relief, with string height set bang on 1.6mm on both treble and bass sides.

It's a lovely light (but not feather-light) weight, too, with generous acoustic response and ring – always a feature of any high-line PRS we've ever played.

Sonically, it's difficult to drop the McCarty into a pigeonhole. If you like the airier sounds of what we'd class as PAF-style pickups, the McCarty should be on your radar, but although the 594 might chase that aim a little more closely, the scale length and the wrapover bridge here, not to mention the master volume and tone setup, all add their own spice to make the McCarty much broader than just a vintage-chasing clone.



While the pre-intonated Stoptail bridge dates back to 1991, this contemporary version, as used on the Core and SE Paul's Guitar, features small brass inserts under each string. It's also nickel-plated

The versatility from its pickup switching alone is fairly dramatic in that the single-coil voices combine an almost Tele-like nasality at the bridge with a clear, defined but not over-sharp neck pickup and a crisp hollowed mix that alone would get you through a huge swathe of styles. The humbucking mode, of course, ups the beef, and don't think these are in any way underpowered. On this platform the bridge drips classic rock with a definite nod to the Les Paul, although there's a clarity to the bridge that cuts through an over-mushy amp voice. The neck, meanwhile, is perfectly balanced in output and does quite a trick of combining clarity with thickness.

Despite the treble-bleed cap here, the volume still pulls down the crispness a little when reduced, while the tone works just as you need to pull back those highs. We don't have the additional humbucker/single-coil blends of the four-control 594, but this is a very direct PRS-style drive and we can certainly say from gigging experience that it's fast in use, allowing you to really coax out stellar sounds. Using your volume and tone isn't essential, but it's the key to a treasure trove of voices.

Add in the inherent stability (which meant, once again, that we barely touch the tuners, not to mention the intonation) and, well, it's all a part of the quality proposition. Effortless in every regard.

Verdict

With the ever-present Custom on one side and the trending 594 on the other – not to mention Paul's Guitar, the DGT and even the 509 or the new S2 594s – the McCarty would seem to outsiders like us to have considerable competition within PRS's own catalogue, let alone in-store. But this new refreshed version keeps it very up to date, while the direct, simple drive, surprisingly versatile vintage-referenced voices, particularly the coil-splits, and a very grown-up vibe still have considerable appeal. It's just as at home with smooth 50s jazz as it is as a gurning classic blues-rock machine, sitting in general terms between that Custom and the 594. There's not a hair out of place and, although far from an impulse buy, the experience of its makers drips from every note. It's always been a *Guitarist* favourite and unquestionably still is. **G**



PRS MCCARTY

PRICE: From £3,499 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway, carved-top solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany with flame maple carved top

NECK: 1-piece mahogany, Pattern profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.13mm

FINGERBOARD: Faux-bone bound rosewood, bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS Stoptail with brass inserts, vintage-style (non-locking) tuners – nickel plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: 2x PRS 58/15 'LT' covered humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone control (with pull/push coil-split switch)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.16/6.95

OPTIONS: With 10-grade figured maple top and hybrid hardware (£4,125); Artist Pack upgrade (£POA)

RANGE OPTIONS: Other 22-fret double-cuts include the DGT (from £3,350), Custom 22 (£3,459), McCarty 594 (£3,699) and Paul's Guitar (£3,799)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Fire Red Burst (as reviewed) from choice of 19 standard colours – all gloss nitro-over-cellulose

PRS Europe

01223 874301

www.prsguitars.com



PROS Exceptionally detailed build; weight; playability; new hardware spec; versatile voices

CONS Yes, it's costly; considerable competition from other Core and even the new S2 models

Marshall

ORIGIN

WHERE EXPRESSION BEGINS

**TYLER BRYANT, GUITARIST FOR TYLER BRYANT
& THE SHAKEDOWN, DISCUSSES HIS
MUSICAL ROOTS AND THE MARSHALL ORIGIN.**

MARSHALL.COM

What do you like about the amp?

TB: Graham Whitford (**GW**) and I are jamming through the Origin 50 head, which we've played through before. These aren't the heads we use on the road, but when asked to play through them we were like, "yeah, sure" because it's a Marshall tube amp, you can't really go wrong. There's low, medium and high settings and we strongly recommend using the high setting because that's when it's the loudest, when it sounds the best. There are all kinds of EQ options and tilt, which simulates jumping between channels.

What do you think of the tone?

GW: The tone is amazing. It's really clear and articulate, tight and punchy. It's everything you would want out of a Marshall. I could easily use this at any gig and get great sounds.

How does this compare to your current set up?

TB: At the moment, over here in the UK I have a 1987X that I love. In America, I have a couple of 1959 handwireds which I also love. They're incredibly loud. We're in a small room right now, so I think having the low, middle and high options without losing the tone is something that is appealing. On the high option, it definitely stacks up to the 1987X. In my 1959 I have two of the power tubes pulled, so it's more of a 50-watt but with bigger transformers so it's really loud and awesome, but this holds up. This is why we play Marshall amps - if they're going to put their name on it, you know it's going to stand up. When you play festivals and you show up and there's back-line gear, you're like, "Is there a Marshall? What is it? Okay, cool, put it on the stage". Whether it's a JCM800, 900 or the Origin, it's going to be loud and rocking.

How does the amp respond to the pedals you're using?

TB: These amps seem to respond really well with pedals. I think Graham tends to rely more on the amp tone than I do, I like to get my gain from pedals, that way I can have a little more control. I run the amp a little lower gain than Graham does.

GW: Yeah, I try to push the volume a little bit, but this amp has such good natural breakup that I would want to push it just a little more. I've got a Klon KTR (Overdrive pedal) and it works great with this amp, they're perfect together.

TB: On this jam we just had, I was actually running the gain very low on 2 or 3, then just dimming the master volume so that the amp is staying pretty clean. I'm using a dual overdrive pedal that I use on everything, whenever we do dates and we fly into scenarios where we don't have all our gear, I know if I have this pedal, a Marshall amp and a 4x12" cab, it's going to be a good day.

How has Marshall helped your sound with Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown?

TB: I'll tell you a funny story actually. We were in this very room in 2016 at the Crauford Arms in Milton Keynes, unboxing some amps from Marshall, because we were going on tour with AC/DC. It was always a dream of ours to have full-stack 100-watt heads. Right here on this stage we unboxed our 100-watt Marshall stacks, it was like a dream come true for a couple of young rockers.

GW: Obviously AC/DC had a lot more stacks, but we brought ours and it was great. **TB:** We set them up, tried everything out and rehearsed here before that tour started. That was sort of the beginning of the end for us, we've been playing Marshall ever since. We have our rigs in America and we have our rigs here, Marshall has been incredible supportive of us. Obviously

there is a legacy that we feel grateful to be a part of, getting to align ourselves with a brand that has been alongside every great rock artist from Hendrix to Zakk Wylde to Slash, all these people who have been playing Marshalls forever. Every band worth their salt has relied on the tone of these amps. Especially in a world where so much has gone digital and small, I think it's good to be loud and bombastic.

GW: We still love tubes.

TB: Put your setting on high and make people listen to you. That's what Marshall is about to me personally. It's about being fifteen years old again and hitting an A chord. We used to joke about it and say, "how awesome would it be if everyone in the world hit an A chord through a 100-watt Marshall at the same

time? Would it set the whole world in unity?". It means a lot to us, it helps us do what we're here to do.

How did you get into guitar playing?

TB: I got a guitar after I saw a video of Elvis. The guitar had three strings and I carried it around and practiced my moves and tried to get everyone's attention. I met a man named Roosevelt Twitty in a music store when I was eleven years old and he was playing Lightnin' Hopkins-style blues, so I sat down and started listening to him. He said, "do you like the Blues?" and I said, "I don't know what the Blues is" and he said, "this is it!". He quickly became one of my best friends and would pick me up from

"EVERY BAND WORTH THEIR SALT HAS RELIED ON THE TONE OF THESE AMPS!"

school or my mum would drop me off at his apartment, we'd sit there and play guitar for hours. He showed me who Freddie King was, BB King, Bobby Blue Bland, all this great music and through the Blues I got into Rock and Roll. My love for the guitar just kind of grew and grew, I would sit in my room for hours and just play, my mum would make me go outside, all I wanted to do was sit and play my guitar. Still to this day that is all I want to do when I'm home, the obsession just kind of keeps going. ■

How long have you been playing together?

GW: I've been playing with Tyler for about ten years, almost.

TB: I met Graham in New York City at a radio station, he had his guitar on his back and he was introduced to me as the guy who was going to put me out of a job, so immediately Caleb and I are like, "oh we don't really like this guy...". Then we hung out in Anaheim, we jammed, I heard him play and was like, man he's really good. I got a call from Joe Bonamassa who was doing one of those Guitar Center King of the Blues competitions, someone had cancelled and they needed an extra judge and asked if I would come down. Graham



the Wishlist

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

Blast Cult UKDC £4,290

CONTACT **Blast Cult** PHONE **07905 370122** WEB **www.blastcult.co.uk**

Words Rod Brakes Photography Neil Godwin



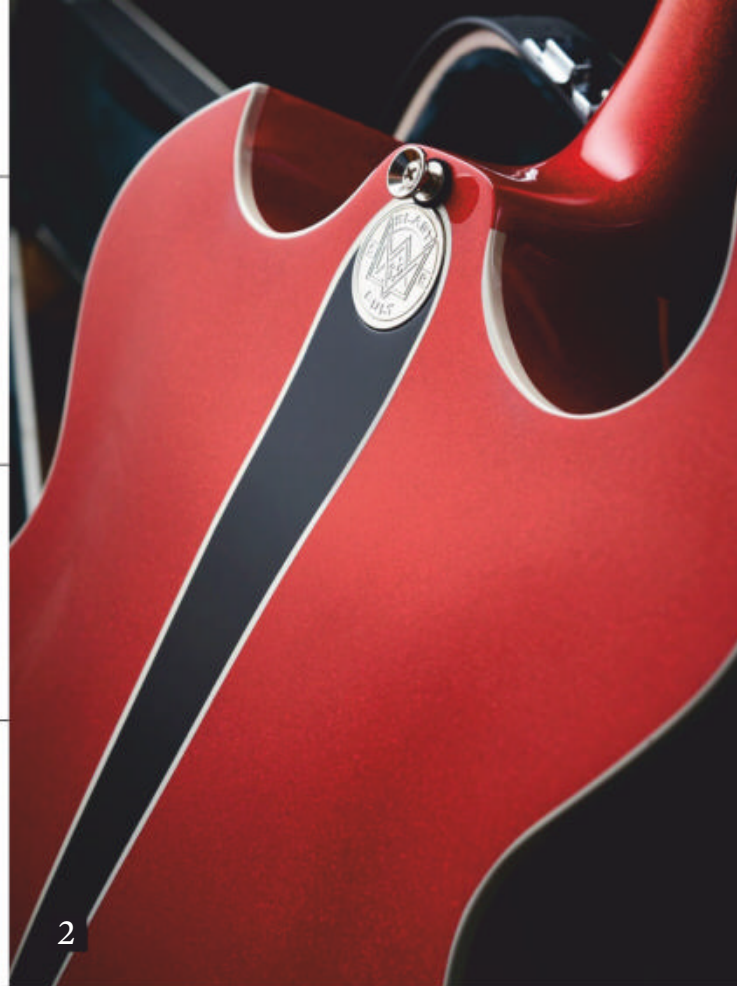
1. The B6 Bigsby is a classic fixture on electric archtops. Different tops can be custom-ordered, but the arched top and back here are made using an eight-layer maple/mahogany laminate. This not only strengthens the guitar, it relieves its overall weight while providing a warmer acoustic tone than a typical all-maple body

2. The Candy Flake Red finish pays homage to Fender's original gold undercoat Candy Apple Red. The black 'scallop' is typical of the classic style of painting that Jason perfected learning from some of the original American painters in the custom hot-rod and motorcycle business



3. The headstock profile and tuner holes are cut using CNC machinery before the quarter-sawn maple neck is hand-shaped to perfection. Hipshot locking tuners and a Graph Tech Tusq nut allow for greater tuning stability. Featuring 'bullseye' aluminium and carbon inlays, the man-made Blackwood Tek fretboard "feels exactly like ebony", says Jason. "It even ruins your tools like ebony!"

4. Hardware includes this Schaller GTM tuneomatic on a Blackwood Tek base, while the pair of Mojo Pickups P90 Soapbars were custom-ordered and hand-wound here in the UK using 42 AWG wire



With its new North London workshop in full swing, Blast Cult is now straddling both sides of the Atlantic. The innovative and super-stylish boutique builder is the brainchild of Louisianan luthier Jason Burns who founded the King Doublebass firm prior to setting up Blast Cult in Orange, California in 2011. As a touring musician, Jason's R&D was mainly carried out on the road and his well-honed designs have routinely been spotted in the hands of fellow pros such as Brian Setzer and Phil Manzanera, with Ronnie Wood snapped holding a Blast Cult Hollow Vee (and looking very happy to boot!).

Steeped in the culture of custom cars and golden-era guitars, Blast Cult is a melting pot of American vintage style and modern innovation. "I built hot-rods from the age of 12," Jason tells us, "and I learned how to paint from some of the greats, like Larry Watson, George Barris and Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth. I approach guitar building the same way I approach making music: I love the roots of where everything comes from, but I like to think, 'What if?' I've played in rockabilly, country and blues bands, and I dig old Gretsches, but I also love punk-rock and I always felt SGs were the baddest-looking guitars. So, with the UKDC, I sort of mixed the two and came up with my own thing."

The UKDC's radical design is derived from Jason's unique approach to building double basses and involves the use of CNC machinery to

produce a solid frame as the instrument's essential structure. The back, rim and top are then attached to the guitar's 'skeleton' providing a super strong yet lightweight construction. "I think of the body as a speaker box and the top as the speaker cone," highlights Jason. "The cone needs to move but the tighter and more rigid you make that speaker box, the more the sound of the top comes through. This UKDC is a mixture of maple and mahogany, which gives a warmer natural tone – it's not so bright as using maple alone."



What's Goin' On

9 Recommended Films For Guitarists To Stream Online

Jimi Hendrix – Live At Woodstock (1999)
Amazon Prime
From £2.49 to rent

The myth of Woodstock in 1969 overtook the reality a long time ago, but Jimi always holds true. Still, it was hardly an ideal scenario: The Jimi Hendrix Experience had split after three albums and the guitarist formed Gypsy Sun And Rainbows including bassist Billy Cox and Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell, second guitarist Larry Lee, and two percussionists. It was his only Hendrix band to include another six-stringer, and the line-up would play only a few shows before their dissolution. The second anomaly is that Hendrix was a headliner and yet he took to the Woodstock stage at around 8 o'clock in the morning; this was because technical and weather issues had pushed the festival to continue into Monday to a reduced crowd. But it still called for a very rare Hendrix encore with *Hey Joe*.



Relive Jimi Hendrix's legendary performance from 18 August 1969

The Beatles: Eight Days A Week (2016)
Amazon Prime
Included in subscription

This Ron Howard documentary collects some incredible archive footage to chronicle the Fab Four's era as a touring band and phenomenon. And it really does strip it all back to the live act at the root of it all to give us some of the perspective from the four men at the centre of a hurricane.

Rush: Beyond The Lighted Stage (2010)
Netflix
Included in subscription

Despite the sadness of Neil Peart's passing this year, there's celebration to be found here in the legacy he leaves behind. This documentary is funny, inspiring and surprising enough to turn a non-believer, and there's wisdom within for any musician, too. Rush as a band were never 'in', but they forged a glorious path regardless.

Eric Clapton: Life In 12 Bars (2017)
Amazon Prime
From £5.49 to rent

There's a lot to pick through for fans and the curious here with its unrivalled access to an extraordinary life. Director Lili Fini Zanuck is a friend of Slowhand but resists the urge to mythologise him, and the film instead tackles some uncomfortable chapters head on, proving all the more moving for it.

ZZ Top: That Little Ol' Band From Texas (2019)
Netflix
Included in subscription

It's high time we got the story of Billy, Dusty and Frank's blues odyssey – this feature is 50 years condensed into 90 minutes and stays focused on the humble trio's music. And while the 80s saw them become platinum names, it's the lesser-reported 70s era that will be of most interest here for blues fans.

Springsteen On Broadway (2018)
Netflix
Included in subscription

Filmed as a Netflix special during The Boss's residency at the Walter Kerr Theatre in NYC, this is a front-row seat for an evening of readings and solo performance. It feels about as intimate as a Springsteen show can get, with songs including *My Father's House* and *Thunder Road* cast in a stark new light.

Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese (2019)
Netflix
Included in subscription

Scorsese directed 2005's acclaimed *No Direction Home*, but this is a very different affair, focusing on 1975's seven-month Rolling Thunder Revue tour of smaller venues with a changing cast of artists including Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez and Allen Ginsberg. Dylan's contemporary commentary adds an amusing spin.

The Other One: The Long Strange Trip Of Bob Weir (2015)
Netflix
Included in subscription

The title here is a knowing one: the legend around The Grateful Dead is often so fixated on the Shaman-like qualities of late leader Jerry Garcia, Weir could be overlooked. This enlightening watch shines a light on a surprisingly grounded individual, a player, and his early obstacles and relationship with Garcia.

Keith Richards: Under The Influence (2015)
Netflix
Included in subscription

The most fascinating Stone for many is an unsurprisingly engaging subject. Keef has always been open about the 'American folk' heroes he worshipped in the beginning. If nothing else, it will get you hunting down some old blues records online, but it also gave us a deeper appreciation for the guitarist.

The Players

News and happenings from the world of your favourite guitarists

Photo by Analogue Art Photography / Getty Images



Lights Down

Industry figures fear for musicians' futures following COVID-19 pandemic

I don't think it can be overstated. This will end many bands' careers as they simply can't afford the losses from tour expenses that were pre-booked before the cancellations," says Vicky Langham, management co-ordinator at Northern Music Company (Opeth, Devin Townsend) who has years of experience working with artists. She's one of many industry figures who are finding themselves in an unprecedented situation; live music as we know it has simply ceased. As well as musicians, it's cutting the financial lifelines of anyone else connected to live music.

"Live touring is a huge income stream for the bands since the sale of physical music slowed down," adds Vicky. "Many bands rely on that income to survive, and a lot of smaller bands stand to lose everything with all the cancellations."

While musicians have scrambled to adapt, with 'online venue' services like Stageit seeing a huge upsurge in use as acts seek to play for their fans via their homes out of necessity, the future for road crews, live venue staff and indeed the venues is less clear.

"It's a good idea to keep hold of any concert tickets and wait for the rescheduled events rather than going for a refund," says Bristol live sound engineer Sam Drower, who's found himself out of work but is keen to encourage other music fans to help. "Try to keep a positive mental attitude. Tell your friends about your favourite small band and send them a nice email/Tweet/Facebook message... it's going to be a difficult few months for all involved."

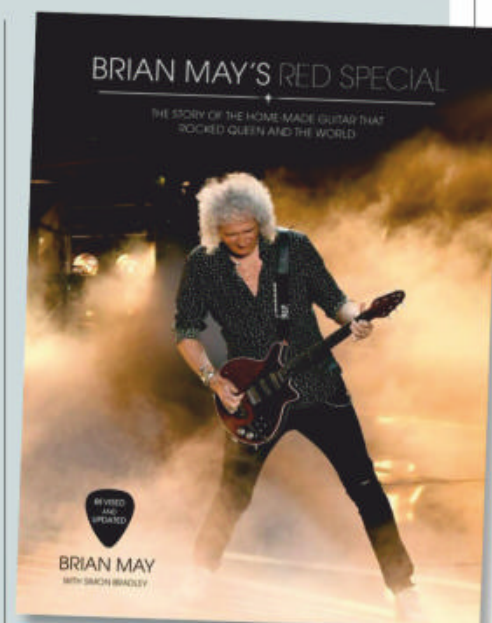
"I'm deeply thankful to have music through these strange times," says Martin Harley, who has been touring for the past 20 years. "There's help out there like the PRS [For Music] grants, but I would urge people only to take those grants if they really need them. It's there to help those in really tough circumstances, especially young musicians at the start of the journey and folks who might have just released music that it's going to be very difficult to recoup on without a touring schedule. When time comes to play to a live audience again, I believe it's going to be emotional for all of us."

Neil Young is one of the many artists streaming live performances online in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. His *Fireside Sessions* find him at home playing surprise deep cuts from his catalogue. See www.neilyoungarchives.com for more.

Tom Morello has explained why he decided to finally put his name to a signature model, based on the 'Soul Power' Fender Strat he used as his main guitar in Audioslave. "[It's something] I would never have done unless there was a crucial charity/social justice component to the whole procedure," he told us. "And to that end we're giving away hundreds of guitars to organisations." These include charity Jail Guitar Doors founded by Billy Bragg and Wayne Kramer, local youth organisations and schools.

The **2020 Glastonbury** and **Download festivals** are just two of the major festivals that have now been cancelled because of the current pandemic. Both festivals are set to return in 2021 and Glastonbury ticket holders have the option to hold on to their tickets.

UK music gear trade body **Music Industries Association** (MIA) is calling on guitarists to support **local music shops** as many move temporarily to online-only business. "The UK's musical instrument shops are filled with passionate and creative people who are determined to help every music maker they can during these difficult times," says Paul McManus, chief executive of the MIA. "Hundreds of these shops are managing to keep their websites open for business in order to deliver all your musical needs to the comfort of your home. What is great to see is the huge number of people that are taking up music making for the first time whilst at home!"



James Bay and **Brian May** have both taken to their Instagram accounts to interact with guitar playing fans during the lockdown, teaching them play their songs. May ended up filming a play-through tutorial of his *Bohemian Rhapsody* solo that you can find over on www.instagram.com/brianmayforreal.

In further May news, the revised edition of his acclaimed book with Simon Bradley, **Brian May's Red Special Guitar**, is out on 22 May via Carlton Books. This edition features two new chapters, an updated gallery section and added insight from May to the existing chapters. One of the new chapters focuses on 2018's *Bohemian Rhapsody* film and the prop versions of the Red Special made for it. The other chapter details the maintenance the guitar has had since the book was published in 2014, including a complete refinish, with all new pictures and details from Brian May.

UK charity Help Musicians has launched the Coronavirus Financial Hardship Fund, a £5 million pool to help players whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the COVID-19 crisis. Eligible professionals can apply for a one-off payment of £500 at www.helpmusicians.org.uk.

Gas Supply

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

Fender Parallel Universe Volume II Series

£1,959 to £2,279

It was back in 2018 that Fender launched its first run of Parallel Universe guitars, a series of genetically modified hybrids. Strat, Tele, Jaguar, even Gretsch DNA was spliced to create guitars that not even Leo Fender could have imagined. Now, there's Parallel

Universe Volume II, the next generation of monster mash-ups, which features eight unique interpretations of classic Fender designs built at the Corona facility in California. Hold on tight, folks. It's about to get weird... [EM]



Maverick Dorado £2,279

Originally released in 1969, the Fender Custom (aka Maverick) was built from leftover parts including Electric XII bodies and necks, the latter veneered to hide the extra tuner holes, and Mustang bridges. It was not a huge success. We're pleased to see that the Parallel Universe II reboot has had more thought put into its finished product. You get a nitro-finished alder body, the XII hockey stick headstock, an ebony fretboard and Tim Shaw-designed FilterTron-style pickups. The Bigsby vibrato is a nice touch, but we are a little surprised to see the cheaper import Licensed version on a £2k-plus guitar.

www.fender.com



Troublemaker Tele Deluxe £2,189

You can have the Troublemaker Tele Deluxe in this two-humbucker hardtail format, or a triple-'bucker edition with a Bigsby vibrato. Both are priced the same, likewise, much of the spec. Both guitars come with bound mahogany bodies with a gloss nitro lacquer, bolt-on mahogany necks with a satin lacquer finish, and 305mm (12-inch) radius ebony fingerboards. While the concept here feels like what would happen if Gibson made a Tele, the classic Fender 648mm (25.5-inch) remains for that unmissable bottom-string twang. Colour options are White only for the hardtail and Black for the Bigsby model.

www.fender.com



Jazz Strat £1,959

Yeah, you're way ahead of us. This surfy-looking customer features a Strat body wearing the neck, pickups and bridge of a Fender Jazzmaster. Arguably the prettiest guitar in the new line-up, the Jazz Strat comes spec'd with an alder body resplendent in a Mystic Surf Green lacquer, a bolt-on maple neck with a 241mm (9.5-inch) radius rosewood fingerboard and Pure Vintage '65 single-coil pickups. Detail freaks will love the old-school aluminium radio knobs, the matching headstock, and a Kustom Kulture vibe pinstriped pickguard. An American Professional Jazzmaster bridge with screw-in arm completes the eye candy.

www.fender.com



Tele Mágico £2,279

Available in Transparent Daphne Blue and Transparent Surf Green nitro finishes, the Tele Mágico is built around the much-loved Thinline model. The lightweight bookmatched ash body is semi-hollow, of course, while the soft V to C profile flame maple neck features pearloid blocks and binding. The big news here, however, is the pickup choice. Fender has spec'd a pair of Gold Foil single coils for "crystalline highs, expressive mids and creamy lows..." Gold Foil pickups were originally found on 60s 'pawnshop prize' Japanese guitars and have become highly sought after thanks to believers like Ry Cooder. In other news, this guitar comes in a Surf Green-finish hard case.

www.fender.com



Strat Jazz Deluxe £2,189

You've seen the Jazz Strat. Well, here's the Strat Jazz. This time you'll encounter a Jazzmaster with Strat pickups and bridge. The spec is high here. The offset alder body comes paired with a flame maple top and a Transparent Faded Seafoam Green nitro lacquer. The Modern C profile neck is hewn from solid rosewood, not just the fretboard. It comes coated in a satin nitrocellulose finish. The pickups are Fender's ever popular Custom Shop Texas Specials and there's a two-point bridge with vintage-style saddles for maximum tuning stability and good looks. Jazz aesthetics and Strat tone. The best of both worlds.

www.fender.com



Uptown Strat £1,959

Aside from the three-Seymour Duncan mini-humbucker-loaded Spark-O-Matic Jazzmaster (£1,959; not pictured here), the Volume II range is rounded off with this posh Strat. There's a bit of a Les Paul Special vibe here with a mahogany body and 60s C profile neck, and a Gibson-like 629mm (24.75-inch) scale length and a pair of 'PAF-style DoubleTap' humbuckers that look like classic Fender Wide Range pups. The rosewood fingerboard offers 22 frets and 241mm (9.5-inch) radius. The package is enhanced with the same two-point vibrato found in the Strat Jazz Deluxe.

www.fender.com

ALSO OUT NOW...

SUPRO BLUES KING 10

£499



American amplifier brand Supro has announced a five-watt 10-inch speaker Blues King model to round out its existing 15-watt 12-inch (£619) and

one-watt eight-inch (£349) range. Spec'd with a 6V6-fuelled power amp, the Blues King 10 also features an onboard spring reverb, switchable FET boost and Fat Drive circuits. Designed to offer the tone and response of the Chicago-built Supro classics of the 1950s, the Class A power Blues King amp "provides all the natural compression and touch-sensitive headroom that have made these vintage 'single-ended' combos a go-to solution for studio recording since the early days of rock 'n' roll".

www.suprousa.com

DANELECTRO DIVINE

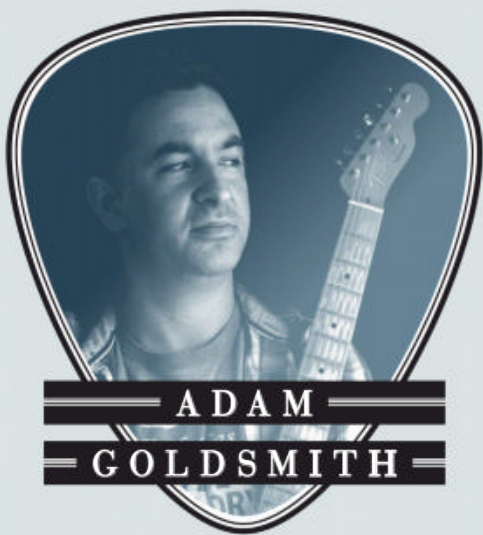
£120



Purveyor of retro-cool, Danelectro has announced the reissue of its 1959 Deluxe model. Now christened the Divine, the guitar features all the usual quirky and cool Dano goodies including the Masonite over hardwood skeleton 'Short Horn' body construction, bolt-on maple neck with 21-fret rosewood fingerboard and 'Coke Bottle' headstock shape, plus Gotoh 15:1 ratio tuners.

Meanwhile, it wouldn't be a true Dano without lipstick pups. Here you get a pair of Vintage 50s single coils with "sand-cast and then sand-blasted Alnico VI magnets housed within thin wall 80/20 brass/zinc tubes". The new '59 Divine is available in a trio of finishes: Dark Walnut top and back, Orange Flame Maple top and back, and Fresh Cream.

www.danelectro.com



SESSION DIARY

At Home With Technology

Adam joins a host of musicians to bring the *Great British Home Chorus* to life from the safety of his home studio

This month's column has been written from my home studio. It was either there or somewhere else in my house, because, at the time of writing, along with most of the planet, we're in lockdown and not allowed to go anywhere. I will take this opportunity to say thank you for reading my column, and I genuinely hope it brings you a few minutes of enjoyment away from the craziness occurring in the outside world.

I've spent a good proportion of the last few weeks in this room, in between attempting to be a home primary school teacher (struggling with Year 3 maths) and a reluctant DIY novice. One welcome reminder of my life as a studio musician has been recording some tracks for TV choirmaster Gareth Malone's *Great British Home Chorus*, which is being aired on Decca's YouTube channel – the idea being that thousands of people will all sing along to the same song at once.

The first song we recorded was Duran Duran's *Ordinary World*, which features some fantastic guitar playing from Warren Cuccurullo. I love the sounds and feel from a lot of the 80s; it was the soundtrack to my youth with guitar players such as Alan Murphy and Steve Lukather defining much

of that period. The tracks we recorded were produced by Stephen Lipson, featuring drums by Ash Soan and bass by Ben Epstein, and everything was recorded and produced remotely.

I decided to use this opportunity to experiment with some new software in the shape of Universal Audio's plug-ins, mainly because my audio interface is an Apollo from that company, the idea being the plug-ins can be powered and processed by the interface, rather than using up your computer's CPU. By the way, I have no commercial relationship with Universal Audio at all, and have bought and paid for its equipment like anyone else might do. So, the equipment chain I chose for this project was incredibly simple: a Fender Strat into the Hi-Z input of my UA Apollo interface, and directly into Logic Pro X on my iMac.

Like many guitar players, especially those who grew up with hardware rather than computers and plug-ins, I'm not instantly attracted by tech and, indeed, when well-intentioned companies make an effort to provide the user with a multitude of variables in a program (a good example being the Fractal Audio Axe-FX units), this has the effect of making me want to shove

an SM57 in front of my Princeton and use the first available sound to get the job done. I'm intimidated and bored and can't be bothered to change the year of the dust on the valves of my virtual amp. So when my friend, the incredible guitar player Paul Stacey, recommended these plug-ins to me I balked at first.

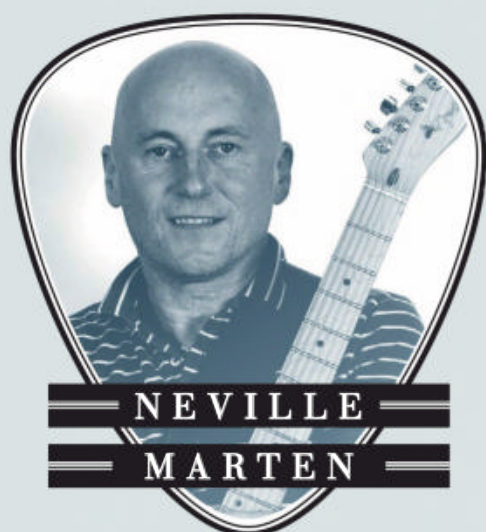
However, upon installation I was confronted by familiar-looking amps, where I could turn things up and down, and move the mics if required. A standout feature of most of the amp models here is the 'room mic' feature. These are mics placed further back from the amps, which really contribute to that 'real amp' feel. For this particular track I used the Friedman BE100 model, which comes as a package with the Friedman Buxom Betty. There are loads of presets, or you can click on the top of the amp to virtually see the back and access more detailed parameters, such as noise gate, speaker and mic models, and built-in delays. I ran this through an API 550A preamp and a Teletronix LA-2A compressor. For the uninitiated these are studio-standard bits of equipment that I'm used to seeing hardware versions of in studios, but they aren't essential here to get a great sound; the amp sim was enough on its own.

I also auditioned the Marshall Plexi Classic with my Les Paul, which is equally realistic and a much better option than turning up my real Plexi to full volume given everyone's at home. My only criticism here is that this model doesn't feature a room mic option that I can see. I recorded stereo crunchy-sounding rhythm tracks for the choruses, and one pass for the guitar solo, where delays and effects were added post recording. In addition to these, there are two acoustic guitar parts that were recorded into my AKG 414 mic and through another UA plug-in, the Neve preamp. I sent the tracks off and everyone seemed happy.

I wish you all well during the current situation, and hopefully by the time you read this we will have turned a corner and there will be some positive news. **G**



Adam in his home studio: the *Great British Home Chorus* has been an entirely remote recording experience



NEVILLE'S ADVOCATE

In these strangest of times **Nev** aims to replace the doom and gloom with a bit of vroom, and stretch his strings and skill set

The world is a scary place right now and I trust we're all keeping safe. But it's important not to let ourselves wither away during lockdown. And with the fridge ever in sight and the wine-rack beckoning, applying our minds to other things is all the more crucial.

At the time of writing, we are following guidelines at *Guitarist* and working from home. Like many of us, I'm striving to maintain a sense of norm, starting and finishing at my usual time, taking an hour for lunch that includes a distance-maintaining constitutional. Luckily, I live just metres from the canal towpath and a brisk stroll makes me feel so much more vital.

But what about the evenings and weekends, which are also spent in lockdown? On the first Saturday and Sunday I didn't do much more than slouch around, eat and drink too much, and go for a country drive in the unseasonably sunny weather (although that, too, is now banned).

Realising this lethargy couldn't be allowed to continue, the first thing I did was to go through the guitars I keep at home, restringing them, cleaning and oiling fingerboards and generally setting them up – revelling in the beauty of the instruments, their differences in style, tone and playability. My Gibson ES-335, the guitar I'd played the least over the last year or so, is now the one I pick up and plug in most regularly. That and my '56 Relic Strat (my red one is in storage). I live in a flat with underfloor heating, which is anathema to good guitars, so all their actions have wavered considerably (the Martin down and the others up).

New Gauge For A New Age?

Also, I decided to not simply restring them but to test new gauges. I'm trying nines on the Tele (Ernie Ball Hybrid Slinky, 0.009 to 0.046), as a few people I respect have been espousing that of late. My ES-335 only likes 10s, so that's just received a rosewood-darkening slug of lemon oil and a set of my usual D'Addario NYXLs. I haven't done

the Strat, Les Paul or OM-28 yet, but I'll beef up the Martin and keep the Fender strung as normal, since that, too, works best as it is, then go up a half gauge on the Les Paul (Ernie Ball Mondo Slinky, 0.0105 to 0.052), and maybe try Joe Bonamassa's 'overstringing' to see if I notice a difference.

Like many of you I'd bet, our band has been posting more on social media to keep connected to our audience. We're trying to do a live performance online, too, given that we live in Somerset, Norfolk and Essex. We've failed thus far due to latency, so we're thinking about all playing to a click then somehow editing them all together (which none of us knows how to do – yet). So far it's looking iffy. I'll let you know...

These technical things frustrate me enormously, and when I ask for help I'm met with a barrage presuming a far higher

level of understanding than I possess. This makes me just want to give up. But what better time to bite the bullet and get down to it? Crack the online gig problem, get to grips with recording on my computer (I look at it sitting there and simply despair), and learn something new on the guitar – could I crack a bit of bossa nova?

Given that I've professionally recorded 12 of my own songs, I'm contemplating putting a few up on Facebook, with me miming over the top just to see if there's any response. That's a bit scary, so I might need to wait until I've gone totally stir crazy. Again, I'll let you know and you can all throw virtual tomatoes!

I know it's the thing to say, but I mean it when I say stay safe for yourselves, your family and friends. See you next month... **G**

NEV'S GAS OF THE MONTH

Bossa Nova Nylon?

What? Yamaha GC22 Grand Concert Classical

Where seen? Yamaha Music, London

Price? £975

Description? With a view to learning a bit of Brazilian jazz, and the need to buy online since all the shops are closed, it's best to go for brands you know and trust. There are many great classical makers, but one of the nicest nylon-strings I owned was a Yamaha my mother gave me, so that's the brand I'd naturally turn to. The GC22 is available with solid spruce or cedar top, and is the company's cheapest offering with solid rosewood back and sides. Cedar has a warmer, friendlier tone whereas spruce has a more attacking sound. I'd go the cedar route as I'm a learner and I want my fumbings to sound as flattering as possible. So, *How Insensitive*, *Desafinado* and *Quiet Nights Of Quiet Stars* (appropriate!) here we come?



Substitute

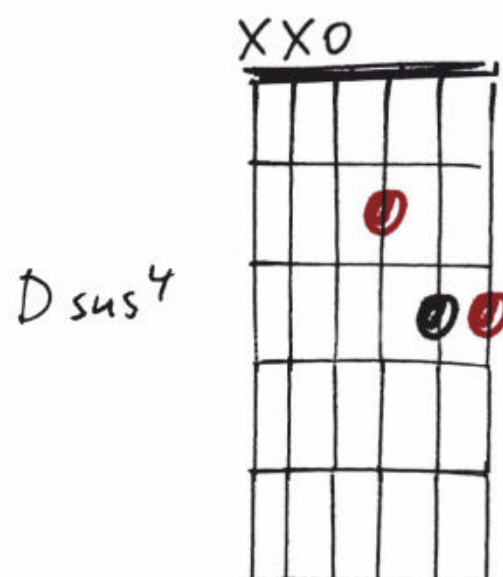
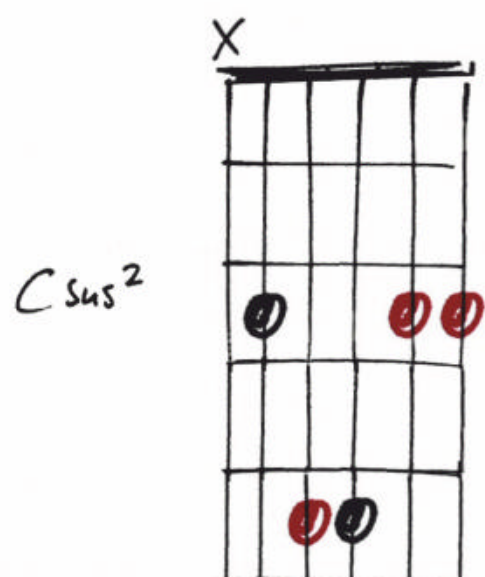
This Issue: Neither Major Nor Minor

Perhaps the most fundamental quality of any given chord is its tonality: major or minor. We learn that major keys or chords have a 'happy' sound and that minors can sound 'sad' – though different mixtures of the two can, of course, provide a variety of results. However, chords do not need to be a binary choice between major or

minor. In fact, during the 60s, players such as Pete Townshend discovered that 'straight' major or minor chords could sound jarring through a distorted amp, the complex harmonics giving the wrong kind of overload as they hit the amp's circuit...

Enter the powerchord or '5' chord – root and 5th only. Problem solved and a new

genre created! Of course, things didn't stop there. With or without an overdriven amp, players such as Townshend, Andy Summers and Alex Lifeson have all demonstrated that the root plus 5th formula can be expanded considerably without need to add a 3rd – but still evoke a variety of moods.

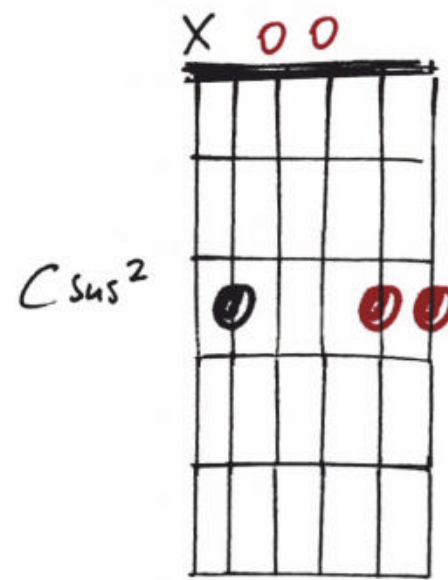
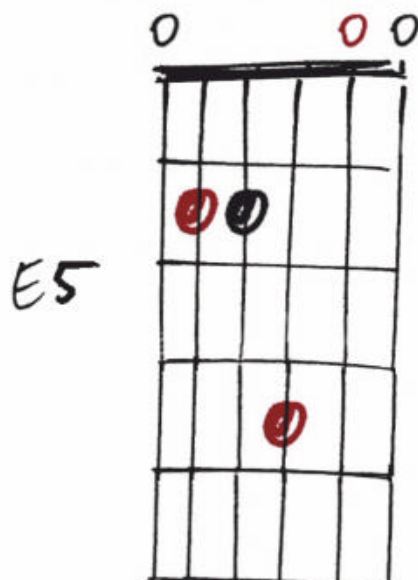
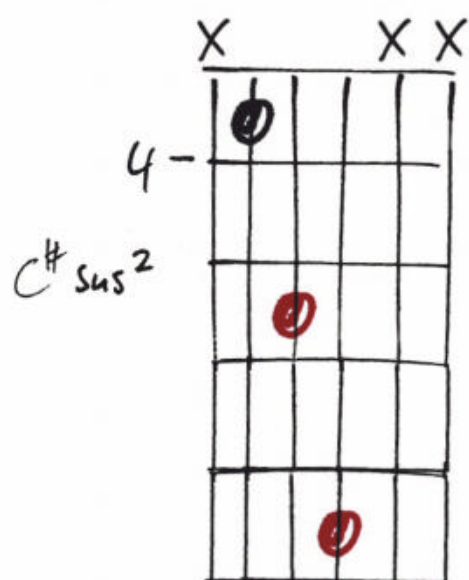


Example 1

Sometimes referred to erroneously as an add9 (it isn't, as there is no 3rd), this Csus2 is a real favourite when major or minor would be too 'grounded' and specific in a chord progression. Alex Lifeson of Rush loves this one, though it appears in a wide cross-section of popular music, from Crowded House to Van Halen.

Example 2

One of the first 'sus' chords many of us learn, this Dsus4 substitutes the 4th (G in this case) for the 3rd, be that major or minor. However, most guitarists will be most accustomed to hearing the 'suspense' of the sus4 'resolve' to a major chord, think *Pinball Wizard*.



Example 3

Many would rush to call this a C# minor 9th chord, but this is probably because of subliminally hearing *Message In A Bottle* with its minor key vocals. This example is, in fact, another flavour of sus2, with no 3rd to give a major or minor tonality. It's complex stuff for such a minimal chord!

Example 4

This E5 graces many Rush tunes, being a favourite of Alex Lifeson, who sought various ways to fill out the sound and harmony of the band with jangling distorted chords. Though he would employ major and minor 3rds occasionally, this voicing is more typical and particularly distinctive to him.

Example 5

This Csus2 is quite a complex, dissonant one, particularly when played distorted. Add the open low E string and we're veering back into Rush territory (think *Tom Sawyer*), but there are many applications for this. Nick Drake's *River Man* contains some similarly dark, mysterious voicings, so do experiment.

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Feedback

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

Star Letter



ELECTRIC CRAZYLAND?

Regarding *Guitarist* 457's Raising The Tone written by an electronics engineer – there's your first mistake – I didn't understand a word! My 'sonic territory' was totally fried and I had reached my 'optimum mid-point' by the first paragraph and then began to have a bad case of 'crossover distortion' mid-way through.

I'm a 56-year-old, reasonably intelligent, Marshall and Les Paul man. Had 'em all: Plexi, JCM800,

900, 2000, DSL, TSL, etc. I now use Marshall's flagship JVM410, four-channel masterpiece with tons of loudness and tone. I've never understood Class A, B, AB, DB, XYZ ... wasn't that a Genesis song? Your 'overlapping fractions' got me on 'half cycle' mode and my 'fixed bias' was adversely affected, which forced this 'spongy attack response' from me.

Towards the end of reading it three times, my 'output valve' was totally clogged. Even the 'push-pull' method failed. So I'm sorry for the 'negative feedback'. I am hoping that my 'dynamic equilibrium' can be restored by next month's issue of *Guitarist*.

Andy Hall, via email

So sorry, Andy, totally our fault. The valve-based sorcery of a guitar amplifier is a tough subject for anyone to get their head around and we did ask Dan Coggins to give it to us with both barrels. It's a bit like the internal combustion engine: most of us are happy to remain in blissful ignorance as to our vehicle's under-bonnet machinations, but, to some, their lives wouldn't be complete without knowing exactly what makes it tick. It's the same with amplifiers. Hopefully you'll be able to navigate through Dan's subsequent features in his short series without too much distress and, as compensation for your bewilderment, please accept a Korg tuner on us!

ART ATTACK

I have been watching *Portrait Artist Of The Year 2020*. The competition was won by Christabel Blackburn – a London-based artist whose prize was a £10k commission to paint Nile Rodgers. The winning portrait is now hanging in the Royal Albert Hall. The portrait also includes Niles' famous white Fender Strat and, for me, that is where the problem arises. I realise that the drawing of the guitar is not a photo and, to a degree, is stylised. However, the black dot markers on the Strat in the portrait are on frets 4, 6, 8, 10 and 13 [rather than 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12 in reality] and that rankles with my sensibilities. Surely a little bit of attention to detail should have been applied to such a prestigious guitar hanging in such a hallowed location?

Maybe it's me, but please do have a look and let me (and your readers) know what you think. I am a gigging semi-pro musician and have a few nice guitars, including three Strats, so I feel I have a right to be a little miffed!

Harry Currie, via email

We know what you mean about paintings of guitars. Nobody, irrespective of talent, seems to be able to get a guitar right. Strats, Les Pauls and so on take on a surreal quality – why? We don't know. I can only assume that placing Niles' Strat's dot markers in the way you describe – somewhat evenly spread along the fretboard – was a decision made in the name of uniformity and balance. I'm betting every guitarist who sees it in the Albert Hall does a double-take, too.

BURNING ISSUE

I'm a great fan of *Guitarist* and continue to seek it out in the wilds of Down Under since returning to Australia from the UK several years ago. In the early 2000s (from memory) I bought a copy of an incredibly useful issue of the magazine that outlined many of the rigs of the world's great guitarists: Hendrix, Gilmour, Clapton, Page and many others. I found it quite transformative as I was able to recreate these rigs on my Boss GT-8 multi-effects pedal with very useful results.

However, I remember telling all my guitarist buddies about this great issue of *Guitarist* at



KORG

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**It's a bird! It's a plane!
Actually, it's a rather fetching
Shell Pink Fender as found by
Guitarist reader Sean H Watson
in a charity shop in Bracknell**

the time, and of course one of them wanted to borrow it. You can guess the rest. Never got it back and, "No, it wasn't me you lent it to...". Despite searching on and off over the years I've never been able to find another copy of this issue of *Guitarist*. I was wondering therefore if this issue would be available in the *Guitarist* archives?

Ian Chambers via email

Alas, at time of writing we're locked away from our archive and cannot take a look for ourselves. So we've decided to throw your query out to the *Guitarist* readership hive mind. Anyone remember the issue Ian is talking about? Let us know and we'll pass on the info.

THE SHELL GAME

Roughly 10 years ago I was wandering around a charity shop in Bracknell when this beauty caught my eye near the counter (see pics, top right). A Salmon Pink Fender! Was it for real? And was it really £70? I asked the assistant in the shop why it was so cheap, and he said, "If it was at the real price, no-one would buy it from a charity shop." I could sort of understand his logic, but at the same time I was thinking that it's got to be worth more than £70. I pondered and then called a good



friend of mine, Adam at (the now-defunct) Guitar Works in Reading. He asked for the serial number, which I gave, and he then told me to "Buy it!", which I did. He informed me it was a good guitar as it was made in Japan, and that £70 was a bargain.

I do know that you guys 'n' gals do not do valuations, but can one of you be so kind as to tell me a tad more about this Fender, please? I did Google it and most returns came back saying it was 'Designed by Kurt Cobain', but is that true?

My 10-year-old son is currently taking guitar lessons. He plays a Fender copy and, now and again, if he wants to show off I let him play the 'Salmon Fender' (as it's known in our family), but do I need to hang onto this or should it be on the wall in my son's music room?

Sean H Watson, via email

That's an amazing find, Sean, and I'm sure that there are plenty of readers out there who are envious of your lucky discovery. We certainly are. Looking at the pics you sent in, your guitar is a Japanese 60s Strat in Shell Pink from 1996 or '97. Salmon Pink is slightly darker and wasn't a colour that was offered in this particular series at the time. Kurt Cobain didn't have a hand in the design of this particular

guitar – you might be thinking of the Jag-Stang, a fusion of Fender's Jaguar and Mustang designs and spec, which was Kurt's brainchild and, after initial prototypes from Fender's Custom Shop, entered the catalogue in 1996, two years after Kurt's death.

PRS TUNER DILEMMA

In response to the letter from Adam Dunkley in your May issue (*Guitarist* 458) about clip-on tuners. I wonder if the tuners that Adam has used have an overzealous spring. As you can see from the photo attached (left) I have two different types of tuner that work equally well.

Admittedly, they fit the headstock of my ES-335 or my Telecaster a little better as there is more space. However, they certainly have never 'pinged off'. One is a Snark and the other's a Snark Super Tight.

Martin Bridle, via email

Thanks for the intel on this, Martin. As we said in last month's issue, we have a PRS in our studio and have never had an issue with using a variety of clip-on tuners. Perhaps Adam will be encouraged to experiment further.



**Martin Bridle
gets a grip on his
favourite tuners**

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





CORY WONG

If you haven't experienced Cory Wong's amazingly funky rhythm style with the bands Vulfpeck and The Fearless Flyers, we'd invite you to check out the video *Introducing The Fearless Flyers* on YouTube before reading any further. It's okay, we'll wait...

Words David Mead Photography Olly Curtis

Cory was first exposed to music by his father who would constantly play records around the house. Although not a musician himself, his father was what his son described as “a total music freak... a music head”. So Cory's formative years were played out against a soundtrack provided by players such as Hendrix, Joe Pass, Pat Metheny and Ralph Towner. “My dad had all this ECM catalogue and CTI jazz catalogue, the Blue Note catalogue and then he had all this classic rock catalogue,” he tells us, having travelled over to *Guitarist's* HQ on a rain-soaked day following his sold-out gig in Bristol.

A great deal of the music he had heard courtesy of his dad was guitar driven and the young Cory was “interested in the sound, interested in what it did to me emotionally, how music made me feel”. He became curious about rhythm playing and, through the intense metronome-based practice routine that he outlines for us in the video that accompanies this feature and the tutorial that follows, he gained the ability

to lock in with a rhythm section with scary precision.

As well as playing with Vulfpeck and The Fearless Flyers, Cory has produced a series of solo albums, the latest of which is *Live in Amsterdam*. A much in-demand musician, with a relentless touring schedule, Cory might also have been spotted by the eagle-eyed in the house band on Stephen Colbert's late night US TV chat show.

During our pre-interview chat Cory revealed that guitar wasn't his first choice as an instrumentalist: “I actually started on bass. Bass was my first instrument...”

So, what exactly was it that persuaded you to switch from four strings to six?

“At school, two kids said they would start a band with me. One of them, his dad had a drum set at the house and the other one, his dad had a bass at the house. He was like, ‘We're not going to be able to buy a guitar, so maybe we just do two bass guitars?’ I was like, ‘I don't know if that's going to work. Fine, screw it. I'm going to buy a

guitar.’ I wanted to be in a band that bad. ‘I'll abandon the bass, I'll play guitar,’ and now I've just been stuck ever since. I'm still a closet bass player; I love playing the bass.”

Has playing bass influenced your sense of rhythm as a guitarist?

“I bought transcription books for *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* [Red Hot Chili Peppers, 1991], the bass and the guitar book, and I learnt every song front to back, on bass and guitar. What it did is it taught me how the parts weaved together, how they functioned a little bit better. When I was really getting into guitar, it was when *One Hot Minute* [Red Hot Chili Peppers, 1995] came out. Then it was learning all the guitar and bass parts for *One Hot Minute*. It was like, ‘Oh, interesting. The way that Dave Navarro approaches guitar is way different than John Frusciante, but they both work really well.’ Then understanding, even within a band, how different guitar players and different approaches can affect the sound. I bought the transcription book for



Cory's ride-or-die guitar is his Fender Highway One Strat: "The Strat has always been my sound. It's where I feel most at home"

PHOTO BY GARY MILLER/FILMAGIC

Evil Empire, the Rage Against The Machine album. I was in love with Tom Morello – the sounds he was getting. I was like, 'If I just get the book, read the tabs, read the music, I'll be able to play those songs...' Little did I know, there were a lot of guitar effects involved."

How did you find out about guitar effects?

"It was like, 'The tabs are wrong. What's going on? How is the book wrong? I know what I'm doing is exactly what this thing is telling me to play and I'm playing along with the record.' Then I realised, 'Oh, my gosh – guitar pedals. There are so many sounds that you can get.' So that was my introduction to the wah pedal. Then when I got that it was like, 'That's how Hendrix gets that sound. That's how Kirk Hammett does his thing!' Then I just fell in love with the wah pedal. Phaser, flanger, all those things – I finally got hip to what they were and what they could do for the guitar."

"I think the order in which I learnt how to play guitar maybe informed a lot of why I play the way I do now, where it is mostly coming from the hands and the voicings and the feel and the attack. For me, it always comes down to the part and the feel and the music side of it, and then I'll bring in effects if I absolutely need to."

•
"[Learning how to play bass and guitar] taught me how the parts weaved together, how they functioned a little better"
•

You don't necessarily use specific brands of effects in your setup, do you?

"I'm less picky about effects, because I don't start with the sound necessarily, like the sound of this specific pedal. It's just like, 'This pedal does a certain thing for the part that I'm playing.' It's more about the musical part, the range on the instrument, the attack, the rhythm, the size of the sound and then the effect just enhances that. So it's been a journey on that, but it's really fun."

Did you start off playing a Strat or have you evolved towards it over the years?

"Well, my first ever instrument was a Mexican-made Fender Jazz Bass that I still have to this day and it's still the bass that I

use when I record a lot of my records. I love it. Guitar wise, when I had to buy a guitar to start my band, I bought a little Traveling Wilburys Gretsch guitar. It had one pickup. I don't even remember where I got it, but it wouldn't play in tune. It's a cool guitar, but the one that I had was just not set up right. Eventually, I saved up all my shovelling money – I grew up in Minnesota, so we had to shovel the snow for our neighbours to get 20 bucks or whatever – and bought a blue Stratocaster. It was, 'Dad, I need a *real* guitar.' He said, 'All right, tell you what, let's get you a Stratocaster.' It wasn't like, 'Let's go see what they've got.' It was, 'All right, you're ready. Let's get you a Stratocaster. Take a look at the lineage: Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Nile Rodgers...' I said, 'Okay, yes, let's get me a Stratocaster.' I've been a Strat guy ever since."

You must have experimented with other types of guitar, though?

"Sure, I like playing humbucker guitars once in a while, but the Strat has just always been my sound. It's where I feel most at home. I'm comfortable on any guitar, but the thing that I feel is most important for any musician or any artist is having an instrument that draws your voice out of you. For me, when I play a Stratocaster,



“I’m comfortable on any guitar, but the thing that I feel is most important for any musician is having an instrument that draws your voice out of you”

•

“The fortunate thing for me is that I’m a cheap date. All I need is a \$400 Strat and whatever tube amp or whatever clean amp”

•

it just draws out my voice in an easy and effortless way. When I play a Telecaster, it draws out my voice, but it does it in a little bit of a different way. I still sound like me, but it’s just a different thing. When I pick up a Strat, it’s just the sound that feels most at home to me. So, it’s great, and I love the fact that it’s so versatile. Pretty much 90 per cent of what I do is in the fourth position, neck and middle pickup.”

What about amps?

“As far as amps go, I just like something that’s going to get me a really clean, fat, beefy tone and also be able to take pedals well. Any time I use drive, it’s all just from pedals; I don’t use drive from amps very much. So, in that case, I’m less picky about tube amps versus solid state, because I get the drive from the pedals. I like to use a compressor. Pretty much any compressor with a blend knob is going to be fine, because I can adjust it however I need and mix in a certain amount of the compressed sound and it’s great. Overdrives, typically the three sounds that I gravitate towards are something in the Tube Screamer vein, something in the Dumble vein and something in the Klon vein. I’ve played through a Dumble and it was insane, but it wasn’t ‘50 times the amount of money’ insane and the worry of ‘having an amp that’s worth so much money’ insane. I felt just as good about the tone running through two DV Mark Raw Dawgs and couple of cabs, or through two Twin Reverbs. Fortunately, it’s saved me a lot of money from not having to buy all that gear.”

You’re not into vintage gear, then?

“Vintage gear is great and for a while I wanted to find ‘the’ Tele and ‘the’ Strat. I went to Chicago Music Exchange and was like, ‘Let’s pretend I have an endless budget. Give me your greatest Stratocasters.’



There's a real precision to Cory's playing but never at the expense of expression!

PHOTO BY SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

They gave me 20 Strats to try, and not one of them did I like as much as my \$400 Highway One Strat. They were all wonderful, great guitars, but, for me, it was, ‘Okay, this is a vintage Strat, it’s \$8,000, but the feel of the neck is a little chunky for me. It sounds amazing, but I don’t love the feel.’ Or it’s, ‘There are some weird quirks about some of the notes, because it’s an old instrument.’ The fortunate thing for me is that I’m a cheap date. All I need is a \$400 Strat and whatever tube amp or whatever clean amp.”

How did you become involved with Vulfpeck and The Fearless Flyers?

“I just hit it off with those guys and we became friends; it just started as friendship. They were coming through Minneapolis a lot, a lot of them were living

in LA at the time and I was doing a bunch of work in LA. It just started as a friendship, a mutual admiration for each other’s music and everybody has, the whole time, had side projects and stuff on going on, so it was a friendship-based thing. Then eventually it was like, ‘Man, we love hanging out with each other. Why don’t we play music together more, too? I love what you do, you love what I do, let’s play.’ So Jack [Stratton, multi-instrumentalist/producer/manager] asked me to join the band and it’s been really fun the past several years, just being on the journey together.” **G**



Cory’s latest release, *Live In Amsterdam*, featuring Dutch orchestra The Metropole Orkest and vocalist Cody Fry, is out now www.corywongmusic.com

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Test your timing and flex your rhythm muscles as Cory shares his dynamic and precise approach

BE HONEST, YOU DON'T PRACTISE RHYTHM GUITAR ENOUGH, DO YOU?

and phrasing. There's only one way to achieve this – and that's through practice!

In this lesson, Cory shows us how he divides rhythm tasks between his hands. His picking hand always maintains a steady pulse, and in the majority of funk, soul, hip-hop, pop and fusion that's going to be 16th notes – four strums per beat (down-up-down-up). You can let a note ring by missing the strings. Your fretboard hand is then responsible for muting the notes you don't want to hear, cutting down chords to their essential notes, or even muting everything for a rhythmic 'thwack' (shown by X symbols in the tab).

When you listen to a master rhythm player like Cory Wong, you hear an immediacy and precision but also a flexibility in dynamics

CORY STARTS by showing us how his technique can be put to use. If you're new to this style, just start by looping the first two or four bars. This is a fairly generic pattern that can be applied to just about any chord. Things get more complex from bar 5, so watch carefully for how hammer-ons and longer notes affect the strumming pattern. Your hand is still moving in consistent 16th notes, but you don't have to connect with the strings.

Again, every time there are 8th notes, use consecutive downstrokes

■ Example 1 Continued

Example 2 Left-Hand Nuance

BASED AROUND a static B $\flat$ Mixolydian tonality again, this example has a wider range of hammer-ons and sustained notes, where you need to ‘miss’ the strings with your pick. Also note how Cory switches from three-note chords in bar 1 to single notes in bar 2. He mutes the strings selectively with his fretboard hand, meaning his strumming action remains consistent.

B $\flat$ 9

The "push" from the previous bar means Cory misses the first downstroke

Example 3 The Metronome Zone

DEMONSTRATING THE BENEFIT of metronome practice, Cory now plays a tight little riff using a bigger 9th chord shape. The trick here is to be able to divide your attention, listening carefully to both the metronome click and your own playing, and making tiny adjustments to the latter when necessary. This ability then translates to working with a real drummer.

1

4. 6

8

Example 4 Halving The Accountability

THIS IS A GREAT EXERCISE whatever guitar style you play. Set the metronome to half the target tempo and count the clicks as '2' and '4' in 4/4 time. This mimics the snare drum backbeat and does wonders for your time feel. To demonstrate, Cory loops this basic pattern, with a few variations.

1

Example 5 Fantastic Fours

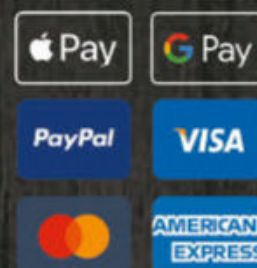
HERE'S WHERE you really test your time feel! With the metronome set to click only on the fourth beat of each 4/4 bar, Cory plays another variation on the previous example. It's not too difficult to get a pattern looping round like this, but the real test is being able to play more fluently, as in the last two bars. Can you keep time between the metronome beats?

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OUTSIDE THE BOX

Innovation, artistry and elbow grease – how women luthiers are rewriting the rulebook

Words Adam Bradbury

What connects Paul Simon, Carlos Santana and Milton Nascimento? Answer: they all own guitars made by the same pair of hands. Well into her fifth decade building guitars, Linda Manzer is one of the most esteemed luthiers of modern times.

A pioneer and inspiration to generations of other guitar makers, she creates instruments that command ardent fans, decent money and the occasional museum plinth. Convention-defying flat-tops, archtops, sopranos, baritones, sitar guitars and jaw-dropping one-offs such as the 42-string Picasso for Pat Metheny – Manzer's oeuvre and impact are all the more remarkable when you consider she's done what she's done in a business that might at times appear to have operated a 'no girls' rule.

So, what makes Manzer – and other luthiers who chose to ignore that rule – tick? Boutique builders from North America and Europe reveal their inspirations, signature models, choice of materials and thoughts on working in a world where women are still out-numbered, though not outdone. 



For Linda Manzer, it was seeing Joni Mitchell live on stage with a dulcimer that kick-started her guitar building career

MAKER #1

LINDA MANZER

Manzer Guitars

TORONTO/ALMONTE, CANADA

It all started when...

"I went to the Mariposa Folk Festival, late 60s, and saw Joni Mitchell playing a dulcimer and went to buy one at the local folklore centre in Toronto and it was too expensive. The fellow there suggested I buy a kit for half the price and make one myself, which I did. That's when the bug bit. I continued to art college in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where I kept finding myself making dulcimers. I realized that making musical instruments, specifically guitars, combined my love of art, woodworking and music. I heard about Jean-Claude Larrivée in Toronto. After spending a couple of months trying to persuade him to hire me, he eventually did.

"I learned how to make steel-string and classical guitars with Larrivée from 1974 to 1978. During my apprenticeship we made over 1,500 guitars. As his small company grew, I realised I preferred to work in a more solo environment. I felt it served the

resulting guitar better as it would have one set of hands guiding its path. I studied with James D'Aquisto in 1983 to '84 in his 'shop in Long Island, New York; I learned how to build archtop guitars from him. He had studied with John D'Angelico, so I was immersed in a workshop rich in history and tradition. It was a huge honour to work alongside him. From him I learned to trust my intuition."

What do you think other guitar makers will learn from you?

"I have been told that people like my design sensibilities and, more importantly, the sound and feel of the guitars I make. The secret sauce is the passion you put into it.

"I think those who 'get' my guitars sense a 'feel' I try to get into each guitar. Each guitar has a little bit of me in it. Technically, I match the woods as best I can so they work as a team. For me, the most important aspects are: how the instrument sounds,



"What was spectacularly unusual when I started out in 1974 is almost normal now. There's still plenty of room for improvement – generally speaking, white men still rule the world. But the men I worked with knew that inviting women into the game improved the game for everyone. A rising tide lifts all boats. It also helps if you're a little feisty..."



how it feels to play, and finally how it looks – in that order. It's also really important to listen to the person you are building for. Ultimately, it's their guitar, so I try to listen and bring their musical dream to life."

How did you work out how to make extraordinary instruments such as the Picasso you made for Pat Metheny?

"Through experimentation and boldly going where no guitar maker had gone before? [laughs] Luckily, I was a bit naïve about the complexity of what I was undertaking and therefore undaunted. I had an incredibly willing partner to work with in Pat Metheny. I am forever grateful for his inspiration and support."

What are your main considerations when choosing tonewoods?

"I listen to each piece of wood with my

eyes closed – tapping it. I'm looking for sensitivity and responsiveness. And stability. I know the woods are going to be thinned and then have braces added. You have to intuit what it can and will become. I read that Michelangelo said he was just chipping away stone to reveal the statue inside, and I sometimes feel I'm doing something similar with the wood.

"When I began building guitars there were no endangered wood species. I have enough aged wood to last a lifetime, but I am very concerned about what the future holds for next generations of builders. I am glad for CITES [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species] designations of woods. And it's great to see people using locally sourced woods, recycled materials and windfall. But I think there will have to be controlled forestation of musical-instrument wood. And the time

1. Manzer is based in Canada and commutes between her workshops in Toronto and Almonte, where she is careful to monitor the humidity to ensure the woods do not get too dry
2. The superior level of craft on Manzer guitars is found right across the builds; this intricate headstock inlay is named 'The Saboteur'
3. Linda's custom models, such as this 'Space Odyssey' cutaway acoustic, walk the line between lutherie and art

to start that would be right now, as the best woods are 100-plus years old.”

What challenges, if any, have you faced as a woman in lutherie?

“When I began building guitars there were no women in the field at all to my knowledge. Being the only one meant I was the icebreaker at the front of the ship. It was exhilarating and tiring. I cut my own path in a very welcoming field.

“I still occasionally have to prove myself when I go into an unknown hardware store and have to convince them I know what I’m talking about. But at the last hardware store I went into there were more women working there than men. That kind of blew my mind in a good way.

“The challenges can be subtle, though. When I started out there were many bumps in the road and they potentially added up to say: ‘You’re not welcome.’ Luckily, I had two older brothers. The big eye-opener was when I was about eight and I wasn’t allowed in the tree fort because my brothers had a ‘no girl’ rule. I fought my way up the ladder and once I was in the tree fort I realised they actually liked having me there. That’s when I realised ‘girls’ could do anything. Yes, there would be issues in front of me – for instance, I don’t have the strength most men have, but I work smart. I discovered a thing called ‘leverage’. Very handy for lifting heavy shit. Problems usually have solutions.

“There are definitely fewer women than men in this field, but the numbers of women grow each year. I think it’s less intimidating than when I started. For years I was the only woman working at Larrivée. But the men I worked with in the mid-70s never made an issue of my gender and, in fact, probably became slightly protective about me, because they saw some of the stuff I was experiencing. These same fellows, the original six apprentices of Jean-Claude Larrivée and Larrivée himself, are my dearest friends and inspiration.

“We are better if everyone can enter the field they excel at or have passion in. This works both ways. Society should also welcome men doing traditional female jobs. We are all stronger if these artificial walls come down.”

<https://manzer.com>



MAKER #2

KATHY WINGERT

Wingert Guitars

CALIFORNIA, USA



It all started when...

"I needed a life change and a career direction. I loved playing guitar, but I was a terrible performer. A few life events ended with me standing in the middle of the library wondering what I was going to do. Some soul-searching and a card catalogue lead to books on guitar making and repair. The book was pretty awful, but it planted a good seed.

"The journey to my first guitar meandered through the search for suppliers and tools, a class at a junior college and a job at a workshop that specialised in high-level instrument restoration and repair. The owner was an expert in violin family instruments.

Why so few women in lutherie?

"Women with children usually do most of the care. Guitar making takes a tremendous amount of time: there aren't enough hours in the day for one of those things, certainly not both. Family roles are changing and there is a better division of childcare. I don't know if that is playing out yet in guitar world, but it will.

"I suppose you were expecting me to say girls are less likely to hang out with their dads at the workbench, but most of the great guitar makers I know were more driven by music, guitar and art than by exposure to woodworking. And guitar has tended to be more popular with men than with women. At the dawn of the guitar,

"There are so many truly fine builders doing perfect work. There are a lot of us who stand shoulder to shoulder about the things that mean the buyer will get a guitar that is worth what they pay"



He didn't teach me methods but how to see and how to listen, how to do a really good setup, and a handful of things in construction. And how to be really, really snooty about wood.

"If you count the first instrument that I built, though, it was in high school. If you count all the years I bought, fixed and flipped guitars, that was all through my 20s. As for when I hung a shingle and started selling guitars as a career choice? That was 1996."

What sets your guitars apart?

"It's hard to stand out for fit, finish, aesthetics and originality, because there are so many truly fine builders doing perfect work. There are a lot of us who stand shoulder to shoulder about the things that mean the buyer will get a guitar that is worth what they pay.

"What sets mine apart, I believe, is the time I take to voice the tops, and the voice I'm going for – as dark as possible while being fully articulate. I've been accused of getting cello-like tones. My necks and setups are very good."

after it began to supplant the lute, it was very much a woman's instrument. Over time, guitars got bigger – whether because men got interested, or if the fashion for larger instruments made it less appealing to women, I don't know."

Will more women in lutherie change the norm of 'designed by men for men'?

"I assume so. But there's a funny thing about girls with guitars. Have you ever noticed that when a woman takes the stage with a guitar, it's likely to be big and well worn? I think women often feel that if they show up with a 'girly-looking' guitar, they have just increased the barrier to credibility.

"For years I would go to concerts and search the backup band for a woman 'sideman'. Women could be stars, or they could be an all-girl band, but outside of orchestras it appeared a woman couldn't just have a job playing guitar. Then I chained myself to the workbench and didn't come up for air. When I finally did, I found the world had finally changed."

www.wingertguitars.com

3



1. While Kathy Wingert has been building guitars as a trade since 1996, based in Southern California, her history in instrument building goes back to her high-school years
2. This Grand Concert sized Model E features cocobolo and European spruce tonewoods
3. This magnificent beast is one of Kathy's Harp Guitars, the back of which is a striking striped ebony. Aficionado Stephen Bennett uses a Kathy Wingert model

KEY CHANGE

How the gender-balance tide is turning in the music world

It's no secret that women are under-represented, numerically, in all corners of the music industry. From audio production to leadership, studies repeatedly find that women can face barriers to getting in and getting on that men don't. One estimate puts the number of female luthiers as low as 50 to 100 worldwide. Scroll through trade association websites and luthier podcasts and you sense that perhaps three in every 100 luthiers are women.

This may all be changing. Certainly, there are women working as designers and builders within majors such as Gibson and Taylor, there are female directors such as Maton's Linda Kitchen in Australia, and there are teams of female staff running things at the likes of PRS. And with the example of pioneers such as Linda Manzer rolling

"For buyers, greater diversity at the workbench could mean greater design variety"

on, there's a sense that more women are picking up the pencil and power tools.

For guitar buyers, greater diversity at the workbench could mean greater design variety. The American Kathy Wingert has said she got into guitar making because she couldn't find a big-sounding guitar that suited her relatively small stature. Models and data sets behind most product design – think crash-test dummies and smartphones – take an average man as the norm. Change the designer and your data set, and you start to change more than the mood music.

MAKER #3

ROSIE HEYDENRYCH

Turnstone Guitar Company

SURREY, UK

Finding out about Linda Manzer, among other female luthiers, encouraged Rosie Heydenrych, in her mid-20s, to sign up for a guitar-making class at London Metropolitan University. She followed up with a two-year internship with a local maker, and volunteered with repairer Celine Camerlynck in London's Denmark Street, before starting the Turnstone Guitar Company in 2015.

What sets your guitars apart?

"I'd like to say tone and playability, but that is for the player to identify. It's exciting to use new woods, feel their differences in my hands and anticipate the contribution they will make to a finished instrument. I like to use different woods for bracing to emphasise tonal characteristics that a species excels at – walnut for warmth, padauk for clear treble, mahogany for crispness. I have become very interested in the use of English timbers [see more in the Winter 2019 edition of *Guitarist Presents Acoustic*]."

"I want my work to speak for itself. Maybe there are some people who think I'm not going to order a guitar from you because you're a woman – but there's nothing I can do about that except continually strive to improve my work"

Does it matter that there are so few women in lutherie?

"Lack of diversity in any industry is a shame. Things are changing, but when I was at school I was the only girl in my year to take woodworking. I think to this day it still breeds an undercurrent of insecurity. I worried about what friends and family might think when I told them I was interested in working with hand tools, machines and glues. One of the first things I did was research if there were any female guitar makers, and I found out about Kathy Wingert, Linda Manzer and Judy Threet. It gave me the courage to walk through the door of that evening class.

"I see so many small women who are swamped by a dreadnought-size guitar. I don't think women [guitar players] want anything that's aesthetically different, but they do sometimes have different physical requirements. It comes down to wanting a better playing experience, so for women I think in terms of smaller guitar bodies, less weight in the instrument and easy playability on the neck.

"Being a custom maker I can help spec a guitar that caters physically to a person's requirements. That goes for men and women."

www.turnstoneguitar.co.uk



1. Rosie Heydenrych, pictured in her workshop, found encouragement to pursue a career in guitar building by researching female luthiers who had come before her, such as Manzer and Wingert



2. The small-bodied TS is a 12-fret model as standard with a lower bout width of 355mm



3. Rosie hand-crafts all her guitars in her workshop in Surrey

MAKER #4

ANGELA WALTNER

Waltner Guitars

BERLIN, GERMANY

PHOTOGRAPHY © STEFAN MARIA ROTHER



“When I started, I was very exotic as a woman building guitars,” Angela Waltner, whose classical instruments sell worldwide, tells us from her base in Berlin. “Today, it is more common. The classical guitar world is still dominated by men, but there are signs that future generations will be female. The instrument will benefit. But when it comes to the soul of an instrument, of music, it doesn’t matter whether I am a man or woman.

“I can’t list all the great people who taught or supported me and I’m very grateful. To name one: from the late Benno Streu, a restorer of old Spanish guitars, I learned sound adjustment on the finished instrument, which is my specialism besides building guitars. Sonority, clarity and sound colours are attributes that characterise my instruments.

“Sustainability is very important to me. Classical guitarists are often conservative and expect rosewood in their guitars. Nowadays, several suppliers offer beautiful local woods that work very well.”

<http://waltnerguitars.com>



1. Angela Waltner studied traditional instrument making before opening her own studio in 2002

2. She aims to preserve the heritage of European lutherie in her work

3. Waltner’s classical guitars combine both Spanish and German making traditions. The Essence model shown here uses exclusive woods and high-end finishing techniques



MAKER #5

CLAUDIA PAGELLI

Pagelli Guitars

CHUR, SWITZERLAND

Claudia Pagelli designs guitars and husband Claudio builds them. Together, the Pagellis have been described as not so much top of their league but in a league of their own. Asymmetrical acoustics, open headstocks, even a stone soundboard – the wife-and-husband team long ago threw the rulebook out of the window.

“My apprenticeship as a decorative designer and graphic artist, my time at art school, and my various jobs in the creative field were an advantage when it came to guitar design,” says Claudia, a co-founder of the Luthiers Beyond Limits group. “I wasn’t committed to guitar history, and I didn’t know how a guitar was constructed. So I have no limits when drawing or thinking of the end product. There is really no reason why a woman can’t work as a luthier. Their work has to be good and authentic, of course. Our experience is that women are very welcome in lutherie. A new male luthier has a harder time gaining a foothold.”

<http://pagelli.com>



1. Designer Claudia Pagelli works alongside her husband, Claudio, who builds the guitars

2. This custom guitar for performer Linard Bardill came with the challenge of suiting the dualities of both his playing and voice. Unusually, the top braces are reinforced with carbon fibre for better control over the guitar’s low-end

3. The Vals Quartzite Flattop is a boundary-breaking acoustic with a 1mm-thick stone top, sourced from the Truffer Natural Stone Quarry in Switzerland, and ziricote back and sides. It was commissioned by Pius Truffer, the quarry’s owner

MAKER #6

JOSHIA DE JONGE

Joshia de Jonge Guitars

QUEBEC, CANADA

“When I first started, I think I knew less than five female builders. That’s beginning to change, but we’re still in the minority. People would assume my father was the builder, and later my husband.”

Celebrated classical guitar maker Joshia de Jonge has been steeped in lutherie since childhood. Her father, and teacher, is the luthier Sergei de Jonge, and sibling rivalry spurred her on, aged 13: “My younger brother started building a guitar and I was jealous and wanted to build one as well, so I did.”

She cites Linda Manzer and Grit Laskin among her inspirations, and credits renowned American luthier Eric Sahlin for the subtle twist she likes to plane into the neck for a comfortable playing position. “All in all, the guitar making-world has been a really positive atmosphere for me,” says de Jonge. Her handmade instruments, also notable for her mosaic rosette, top bracing pattern and French polish, attract international stars such as Otto Tolonen from Finland and Welsh composer Stephen Goss. <http://joshiadejonge.com>



Joshia grew up in a family of guitar makers, and was just a teenager when she built her first guitar

Joshia’s standard models feature spruce or cedar tops, with Indian rosewood back and sides. Options include African blackwood back and sides, like the model featured above



MAKER #7

SHELLEY D PARK

Shelley D Park Guitars

VANCOUVER, CANADA

Boutique builder Shelley Park describes her take on Gypsy jazz guitars as “a thoughtful modern interpretation of a classic design. It is my intention to provide the fit and finish expected by today’s acoustic player while respecting the work of Selmer-Maccaferri. I think my instruments offer playability and a sweet, nuanced tone while maintaining the responsiveness and projection these guitars are expected to have in a Hot Club swing context.”

Park worked at Larrivée then for fellow Canadian David Webber before setting up on her own shop in Vancouver, British Columbia, “a province where I have access to local materials, both softwoods for soundboards and hardwoods for backs and sides. I am always glad to work with local spruce, maple and walnut. I’m excited about some of the composite replacements for ebony and rosewood components and suspect they’ll start to show up in the instruments I build.” She says: “I’ve never attributed my successes and disappointments in the guitar-making world to my sex.”

www.parkguitars.com



Shelley D Park, shown above in her workshop in Vancouver, where she has been building guitars since 1991. She utilises both hard and soft woods that are local to the province of British Columbia

The Modèle Encore (left) has a long scale length of 670mm (26.378 inches) and a 14-fret neck join for greater accessibility. Note the ‘petite bouche’ soundhole, indicative of the Selmer-Maccaferri style

MAKER #8

MARTINA BARTKOVA & ZUZANA JARJABKOVA

Dowina

DEVÍNSKA NOVÁ VES, SLOVAKIA

“My grandad was a carpenter and as a kid I spent a lot of time in his workshop, so I always liked manual work, being creative and making something of great utility,” says Martina Bartkova who has worked on binding, sanding, frets, dovetails and laser-cutting for Dowina in Slovakia.

“This is dirty work. There is a lot of glue, wood dust. I like my work, but I think not a lot of women are inclined to do this. Guys didn’t believe in me; I needed to show them each day I was capable.”

Currently working on necks and backplate design, Martina’s colleague Zuzana Jarjabkova aims to move on to design complete guitars. “Guitar making is still considered a man’s work. I don’t know if that is changing. But my colleagues changed, for sure.”

Would more women in guitar making have an impact on design? Jarjabkova is sceptical: “I don’t think design depends on gender.” But Bartkova thinks so: “Women have a different aesthetic sense,” she offers.

www.dowina.com



1. Zuzana Jarjabkova, who works on necks and backplate design at Slovakia’s Dowina, believes that lutherie is still a man’s world
2. Martina Bartkova’s grandfather was a carpenter, so she was naturally drawn to the hands-on, creative nature of guitar building
3. The Dowina Bona Vida (meaning ‘good life’) is a parlour-style guitar, available in steel- or nylon-string versions, that uses granadillo, American walnut and cocobolo woods

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GIBSON L-5

We take a look back at the history and evolution of Gibson's seminal f-hole jazzbox, the L-5, with archtop historian Thomas Van Hoose and examine how this watershed design set a benchmark in guitar building

Words Rod Brakes Photography Olly Curtis

“In the beginning of rock 'n' roll, the archtops were king,” acknowledges Texan archtop historian Dr Thomas A Van Hoose. A clinical psychologist by profession, Tom is perhaps better known in more guitar-centric circles as the author of *The Gibson Super 400: Art Of The Fine Guitar* and has recently finished writing the definitive biography of celebrated archtop luthier John Monteleone. “Until the Super 400 came out in 1934, the L-5 was Gibson's top-of-the-line guitar. It's the predecessor to not just the Super 400 but to D'Angelico, D'Aquisto and Monteleone. From a historical perspective, it's quite something.”

Recognised as the world's first f-hole archtop, the Gibson L-5 story begins just over a century ago with Lloyd Loar – a talented musician and acoustic engineer whose revolutionary designs left an indelible mark on Gibson's history. “Lloyd Loar worked for Gibson from 1919 to 1924,” says Tom. “Originally, he was hired as what we might refer to these days as a design consultant. He came up with a very primitive pickup that he tried to amplify a couple of guitars with, but he didn't do much with it at Gibson. He was a visionary, and I think he saw the future in electric guitars. He was always looking to improve and innovate throughout his career, either with Gibson or afterwards. He designed a number of things and experimented quite a bit until he came up with the Gibson Master series of signature instruments. The F-5 mandolin was first, followed by the

L-5 guitar and H-5 mandola, then the K-5 mandocello. Those four instruments form what's called the ‘Loar quartet’ and they were voiced to be played together.

“The f-hole design was one of Lloyd Loar's ideas. As well as being a guitarist of some note, he was quite a gifted mandolin and viola player, and I think he took his cue from the viola. He had extensive musical and performance training before he came to Gibson and he wanted to take guitar design forward and amplify the instrument. He reasoned that the combination of f-holes, a longer body, twin parallel tone bars and tap tuning would make a really good-sounding guitar. And he was right. That systematic tap tuning of the top, back and braces during construction made a huge difference in the L-5, because it allowed the guitar to be played in a way that was much louder than the previous oval/round hole archtops and flat-tops. It had quite a voice. It was also very comfortable to play. Players really enjoyed the feel of the L-5. The 16-inch arched top with f-holes, the 24¾-inches

scale length, the body depth – all those dimensions are just right. The original version of the L-5 designed by Lloyd Loar standardised a popular layout.”

Making its debut in 1923, the L-5's milestone design stood headstock and shoulders above Gibson's existing L-series archtops and quickly began to prove its mettle as an instrument of choice.

“The early L-series guitars [including the L, L-1, L-2, L3 and L-4] were an outgrowth of Orville Gibson's original ideas and were thought of as accompaniment instruments for mandolinists,” points out Tom. “It wasn't until Gibson came out with the L-5 that people became really interested in the guitar as an instrument that could hold its own in an orchestra, and it eventually replaced the banjo as a stringed rhythm instrument. The L-5 caught on early because it was a superb rhythm instrument. It could be heard in an orchestra, people could also play solo with it and it was comfortable. The guitar really began to be accepted and so Gibson's production began to ramp up.

“As the guitar edged its way into these orchestra settings, it was seen as a rhythm instrument that provided a pulse. The guitarist would play in conjunction with the piano, bass and drums in the rhythm section. Probably the most famous proponent of that – although he wasn't a Gibson player – was Freddie Green, the Count Basie Orchestra guitarist. He played two- and three-note chords and kept a steady four-beats-to-the-bar kind of feel that carried through their music.”

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“It wasn't until the L-5 that people became interested in the guitar as an instrument that could hold its own in an orchestra”

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1. 1927 L-5 in 'Cremona brown' sunburst. In late 1929, large pearl block inlays replaced the original pearl dot fingerboard markers show here

2. 1927 L-5 headstock featuring the pre-war 'The Gibson' script logo and pearl flowerpot inlay

3. This 1937 Advanced L-5N was custom-built for Allan Reuss of Benny Goodman fame and has his name engraved on the tailpiece. Advanced L-5s are a full inch wider than the original 16-inch L-5 models



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4. The first L-5CES guitars were shipped in late 1951 with dual P-90s. Each pickup of the L-5CES features independent volume and tone controls in addition to a three-way selector switch

5. In a parallel evolution to the Super 400CES, from 1953, L-5CES guitars began to be fitted with Alnico single coils, and by 1958, the transition to PAF humbuckers was complete

6. A rare 1961 thinline L5-CEST with PAFs. In 1960, Gibson introduced a sharp Florentine cutaway that lasted until 1969 when the original round Venetian cutaway returned

“Country players liked the sound of it when they would sing and play. It looked different – and the cowboys liked their fancy guitars!”

Throughout the 20s, guitars were also increasingly being used as solo instruments and to accompany singers.

“Eddie Lang was one of the most famous early L-5 players,” highlights Tom. “He was a master jazz player on his early L-5 [Lang is sometimes referred to as the ‘father of jazz guitar’]. He played accompaniment to singers, he played solo guitar, he played in duets, and he played in orchestras. He was very versatile and that reflected the guitar’s versatility. He showed it wasn’t just strictly a rhythm instrument and that it could be used for a lot of things. Eddie Lang was the first to really popularise the L-5 both in recordings and in personal appearances.

“Gibson had a whole stable of endorsers that played solo or just sang and played or were accompanists in small combos. Maybelle Carter was one of the first folks we saw that played an early dot-neck L-5. She played well – she did fingerstyle and all sorts of things with her L-5. Country players picked up on that and they liked the sound of it when they would sing and play. Plus, it looked different to a flat-top – and the cowboys liked their fancy guitars!”

Despite the L-5 being particularly labour intensive to build and therefore expensive,

Gibson’s network of endorsers, dealers and teachers (who also sold instruments) helped keep it afloat and in production. In 1931, however, Gibson found itself facing some very stiff and totally shameless competition in the form of the f-hole-sporting Epiphone Masterbilt range of archtops. Consequently, something of a size war erupted between the two giants as each tried to top the other in a race of ‘bigger is better’.

“Gibson and Epiphone were number-one competitors, slugging it out for years until Epiphone was sold [to Gibson owners CMI in 1957],” explains Tom. “Epiphone were competing with the same customer base as Gibson, but the competition was ultimately a good thing, because both companies kept pursuing improvements in their designs and as a result, Gibsons became much more popular in terms of sales figures. They made L-5s in the 16-inch format with some changes in terms of the ornamentation and neck profiles and so on, until 1934 when the 17-inch Advanced L-5 models came out. They wanted to boost their sales and so they enlarged the L-5. The 18-inch Super 400 also came in that year.

“Advanced L-5s have X-bracing and a longer 25½-inch scale length, although



there are different versions. It may have just been psychological, but folks thought the Advanced L-5 sounded bigger, better and louder. People also liked the Advanced models, because they have more to them in terms of ornamentation and inlays. Appearance mattered, and Epiphone and Gibson both recruited well-known guitarists of that era as ambassadors of their brand to be pictured on print material and news reels. But it was being heard that was the main thing – and Gibson L-5s were being heard on recordings. Carl Kress and Dick McDonough both used 17-inch Advanced L-5s. They played instrumental duets together and were very popular. A lot of these people recorded for radio as well. They would play live on radio or the recordings would be broadcast. Their playing was really magical, even for way back then – it was very interesting.”

As the guitar became ever more entrenched in popular music as a go-to instrument, players increasingly sought to bring it centre stage, and with the introduction of the ES-150 electric archtop in 1936, Gibson suddenly took yet another evolutionary leap forward.

Both of Gibson's golden-era
flagship guitars in a custom
Cherry finish: a 1964 Super
400CES with factory-fitted
Bigsby and 1961 L-5CES
with a Varitone switch



“It was a revolution when the ES-150 – the Charlie Christian guitar – arrived,” enthuses Tom. “It changed everything. Once people heard Charlie Christian with the electric sound, it really made a difference in terms of the popularity of the instrument, because then you could just step out front and play like anybody else. He was interviewed more than once about his ES-150 guitar and EH-150 amp and his famous response was, ‘I like to hear myself!’ The archtop electric allowed these guys to play the guitar where they could be heard and not just comping in the background.”

By the late 30s, Gibson had tentatively begun experimenting with electrifying its flagship guitars, the Super 400 and L-5, and by 1939 a Venetian cutaway version, the L-5 Premier (later renamed as the L-5C) was released. Nevertheless, World War II put the kibosh on any further developments for several years and it wasn’t until the late 40s that Gibson recommenced building electric guitars.

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“Going into the post-war era, it was clear to Gibson that the electric guitar was the place they wanted to go”

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“Production stopped around ’41 or ’42,” says Tom, “and Gibson converted to producing guide rods for the M3 ‘greaser’ submachine gun. They also made wooden glider skids that were used in Normandy. We know they started making L-5s again in ’47. Those have the pre-war headstock logo and some other cool pre-war features.”

After the war, the demand for electric archtops was stronger than ever. By 1947, Gibson’s new series of laminated body ES instruments included the revamped ES-125, ES-150 and ES-300, along with its Venetian cutaway sibling, the ES-350 Premier, followed by the Florentine cutaway ES-175 and L-5-derived ES-5 in 1949.

“Going into the post-war era, it was clear to Gibson that the electric guitar was the place they wanted to go,” asserts Tom. “There was more demand for it. These were all laminate guitars – not carved tops. But there was also the ‘McCarty unit’ pickguard they used to electrify the [17-inch solid-top] L-7s. When Ted [McCarty] got there in ’48, one of the first things he whipped up was this pickguard with either one or two pickups as an accessory for your acoustic



1977 L-5CES in Ebony finish. From 1976 until 1979 both Ebony and Wine Red became regular finish options in addition to the sunburst L-5CES and blonde/Natural L-5CESN

This L-5CESN belongs to Dire Straits founding member John Illsley

L-5 or Super 400. All this then led to the electrification of the L-5 internally with the release of the L-5CES.

“The L-5CES and Super 400CES appeared in ’51 with P-90s. Gibson’s flagship models. They learned with the pre-war electrics that solid tops could feed back easily, so on the L-5CES and Super 400CES they went to parallel bracing and spread it out so the pickup holes in the top wouldn’t get in the way. They also put cross braces in where the pickup holes were like a little box. Over time they made the braces thicker to inhibit feedback.”

As the electric guitar began to boom in the 50s, leading to an explosion of popularity in the mid-60s, jazz music flourished and a new generation of guitar heroes emerged with colourful new sounds and styles.

“Wes Montgomery’s single-pickup ‘heart’ guitar – probably the most famous L-5 – is not an L-5CES, as is sometimes thought”

“Wes Montgomery was the leading ambassador of the L-5 for many years,” recalls Tom. “I got to examine Wes’s single-pickup ‘heart’ guitar – which is probably the most famous L-5 – and discovered it is not an L-5CES, as is sometimes thought. When we lifted out that PAF, you could see the top braces had been cut through and the label said ‘L-5C’. And there were two little holes at the top of the neck where a DeArmond pickup had been.

“L-5 guitars were most popular with jazz guitarists like Wes. Some of the early rock ’n’ rollers like Scotty Moore used L-5 electrics, but the feedback problems, the size of instruments and the fact guitarists were jumping around on stage more meant the ES guitars were better suited. Think about Chuck Berry: he didn’t start with an L-5CES or Super 400CES; he started with a Les Paul Custom early on then went to the ES-350T. Perfect. And from there, he went to the ES-335, 345 and 355 and stayed with those. So the L-5CES was relegated away from rock ’n’ roll and back to jazz and solo guitar, and the sales kind of reflected that. But it all had to start from somewhere!” **G**

Guitarist would like to thank ATB Guitars of Cheltenham, New Kings Road Vintage Guitar Emporium of London, and Thomas Van Hoose at www.vanhoosevintage.com



MAKING HISTORY SINCE 1958



Rotosound's Alan Marcuson
at Abbey Road studios with Pink
Floyd in 1967. © Rotosound Archive

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A DESIGN FOR LIFE

When the first Paul Reed Smith guitar found its way into the *Guitarist* office many, many years ago we knew we were looking at something really special. Suddenly, there was a new kid on the block and, boy, could he make guitars... Coming back up to date and that passion for design and sonic excellence continues apace as the brand celebrates its 35th anniversary...



THE HIT MAKER

While 2020 marks 35 years of PRS Guitars, the Maryland guitar maker has experienced massive growth since its 30th anniversary in 2015. With the help of Paul Reed Smith and his team, we look back to celebrate these unprecedented past five years

Words Dave Burrluck

Guitar makers are little different from artists writing songs, making albums and touring the world. They have their successes and they have their failures; they fall out due to musical differences while their drummers spontaneously combust. Okay, so while that last bit might be a thing of fiction, for many the definition of a successful guitarist is simply one who sells records. It's just as true of a guitar maker, large or small.

PRS Guitars has long since been considered the 'third' guitar brand after the icons that are Fender and Gibson. It's not something that stacks up from production numbers, but there is plenty to support the perception. There's the quality proposition for starters. From day one, PRS's focus on quality signalled a call to arms and helped restore the craft of the luthier. There are few contemporary electric guitar makers who haven't been influenced or inspired by PRS's obsessive drive to produce the highest quality instruments with little or no compromise – something that's easy to claim but not easy to do. Then there's the fact that the man who has his name above the door is still the driving passion behind the brand 35 years on, considerably longer than Leo was at Fender or Ted McCarty at Gibson. Indeed, in guitar making terms, Paul Reed Smith is a virtual deity to his legion of dedicated followers.

The man who has his name above the door is still the driving passion behind the brand 35 years on, considerably longer than Leo was at Fender or Ted McCarty at Gibson

Returning to our music analogy, there's little doubt that while PRS has a good few albums and big hit songs in its back catalogue, the past five years have not only been a hugely creative period for the company, the results have connected with the brand's audience, too. PRS has certainly shifted units across all its 'formats' – the USA-made Private Stock, Core, Bolt-On and S2 ranges, as well as its offshore-made SE electrics and acoustics. Let's not forget the USA and offshore amp ranges, too.

"85 per cent growth over the past five years would be a safe comment," says Jamie Mann, PRS's president who joined the company in 2008 as VP



Left to right: founder Paul Reed Smith, PRS president Jamie Mann, and chief operating officer Jack Higginbotham are all interviewed here to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Maryland guitar maker

of operations, reflecting on the combined strands and price levels. "Right now, we are back-ordered in every one of those categories to different degrees. Our Core business is not going as aggressively right now, because we have put a lot of focus and energy into relaunching the CE and the S2, but, strategically, Core is the essence of what we are and the rest of the business supports the higher-end guitars. The output of our factory with the multiple price points has been going up, up, up. The Core volume is not up so much, but the dollars out of the factory are way, way up."

A Different Song

It's no surprise when an artist into his or her fourth decade decides to put out an album of classic cover songs. The purists might sniff, but sales and bums on seats speak for themselves whether you're Rod Stewart or The Rolling Stones, or more recently James Taylor. The difference with our story here is that PRS continues to create some original bangers for the die-hard fans alongside a couple of 'covers' that have brought in new fans and considerable sales.

In the past five years, we've seen yet further evolution of that original hit, the Custom, culminating in the second version of Paul Reed Smith's eponymous guitar. Introduced in 2019, it seems to distil all of the decades of learning, craft and experience into a guitar that, as Paul says today, "there's not one thing about the PRS Paul's Guitar that I don't like. It does the job for me; I like the guitar. But I don't think those [smaller-footprint] 408 pickups are going to get accepted in the marketplace the way humbucking



PRS Paul's Guitar (2019): this is the second version of Paul Reed Smith's 'signature' model, the first of which appeared in 2013. Despite admitting it has "the worst name for a guitar in the history of the guitar business", Paul says today that "it does the job for me". It's a standout guitar from the past five years of PRS and introduced the TCI pickup methodology now used to inform the majority of the company's current pickup designs. The SE Paul's Guitar was launched simultaneously



and Strat [single-coil] pickups are in my lifetime. But there's not one [Core Paul's Guitar] in stock in Europe, not one. Ricky Hodgson who's in our sales department said that every single Paul's Guitar that comes up on his list that doesn't have a home disappears in seconds."

But either side of guitars like that, PRS has widened its range with instruments that are clearly more, well, vintage-inspired in style: the company's cover versions. In 2016 PRS unveiled a guitar that moved that original PRS style much closer to the classic Gibson melody, the 594. "The 594 is intended to be in that zone," says Paul today. "I did it because there's a wide variety of guitar players that if it's not in that zone they won't even consider it, because that's how they learned to drive. I won't call it an argument, but here we had an incredibly 'active discussion' about whether that [the 594] was a good idea or not." And speaking of good ideas...

"I did [the 594] because there's a wide variety of guitar players that if it's not in that zone they won't even consider it, because that's how they learned to drive" – Paul Reed Smith

Reach For The Sky

Continuing further into the PRS stratosphere, the Silver Sky, introduced after huge anticipation in 2018, was PRS's cover version of the Fender Stratocaster and the signature guitar of John Mayer. Yes, it might well have polarised opinion, but it has clearly connected with and expanded PRS's customer base.

Exactly how important is John Mayer and his guitar to PRS? "It's not a fair question," replies Paul. "As Jeff Beck said, John Mayer is the Eric Clapton of our time." (He actually said, "He's the new Eric Clapton, I would imagine," in an interview some years back with Spinner.com – Ed.) "Him standing behind our company, he's another new guitar hero. It'd be like Bonamassa doing it. It makes a difference."

Speaking at the PRS press conference on the first day of this year's Winter NAMM Show, Paul Reed



1. PRS McCarty 594 (2016): one of the most significant changes to the Custom recipe, the 594 brings a shorter scale length, two-piece bridge, the classic four-control layout and a shoulder-placed toggle switch pickup selector. "A more vintage take on the already vintage-style McCarty," we said. Its name comes from that scale length of 24.594 inches, or as Paul said at the time, "a '59-spec guitar with four knobs"

2. PRS McCarty SC 594 (2017): despite its controversial birth, the Singlecut has never challenged the popularity and sales of the original double-cutaway design. "We came to market with the double-cut shape and, aside from the [single-cut] Tremonti model, I'm not sure it was ever accepted. The market gives you permission to do things and I'm not sure we ever got permission for that," says Paul today



PRS Silver Sky (2018): easily the most controversial guitar in PRS's history, this was the much-anticipated John Mayer signature model



New Hits & Re-Releases

A nutshell recap of PRS's key model intros in the past five years

A significant re-release at the start of 2016 was the McCarty, which, as we explain in our review elsewhere in this issue, was originally released back in 1994, a more vintage-aimed version of the Custom 22. Another re-release was the CE 24 with its 'midway-between-Core-and-S2 construction' style: it joined the Brent Mason signature as the only bolt-on in the PRS range before the Silver Sky.

2017's price list saw the first production McCarty 594 (although it had been unveiled the previous year at PRS's annual Experience event) and the Singlecut 594. Another new model that year was the 509, with five pickups/nine sounds, which was a simplified 513. A new Gen III vibrato graced all the relevant Core guitars in that year, too.

Making its long-awaited appearance in early 2018, the Silver Sky proved to be a game-changer and rather eclipsed the much more PRS-style Custom 24-08 (another model that was first shown at the Experience

in 2016) with its original tapped pickup concept. This concept was derived from the Private Stock signature models and then the production 408, which had appeared late in 2012 with its dual-pickup switches that are featured on all the 35th Anniversary models of this year.

Next up, 2019 saw the second version of Paul's Guitar, while the long-running Hollowbody II got the shorter scale/two-piece bridge/tailpiece McCarty 594 treatment. That re-released CE 24 also got a Semi-Hollow partner, too.

Which brings us pretty much up to date with 2020's 35th Anniversary Custom 24, the refreshed McCarty and new nitro-over-cellulose finish on all USA guitars except the all-nitro DGT and Private Stock.

From its three-guitar launch back in 2014, the S2 range now boasts 15 models. The bread-and-butter Standard 24 and 22 Satin models were added in 2016 along with an S2-exclusive new model, the Vela. Things stayed

pretty much the same until a shake-up in 2019 dropped both the Mira and Starla, while 2020 began with the introduction of the McCarty 594 trio on review later in this issue. A wonderful blip was 2018's S2 Studio, one of our all-time S2 favourites, a limited-order model for that year only.

But it's the SE electric range that has seen considerable upheaval in the past five years, primarily the move in production from Korea to Indonesia during 2017 and 2018. This year's 23-strong line-up (excluding basses and acoustics) restores the excellent Mira and Starla Stoptail and sees plenty of unique-to-PRS models like the Hollowbody Standard and II, with a piezo version originally planned for release at the now-cancelled 2020 PRS Experience event in May. Equally, there's the 277 baritone, this year's Mark Holcomb SVN seven-string, and the 2019 Santana's Singlecut Trem, all unique to SE, which also offers the only left-handed model, the Custom 24 introduced in 2018.

3. PRS SE Standards (2018): the 'offshore' SE range has seen much development in the past five years, not least a change in manufacturing base from Korea to Indonesia. This pair of SE Standard models – the Santana (left) and Tremonti – signalled that change and were introduced in 2018, though only the Tremonti Standard remains today, the lowest-cost PRS guitar along with the Standard 24 and single-cut 245 Standard. In PRS speak, 'Standard' refers to all-mahogany construction without a maple top. Back in 1985, the maple-topped Custom was offered with the all-mahogany 'PRS Guitar' that became the Standard in '87. There are no 'Standards' in the USA Core line today but plenty in the S2 range



Smith was unguarded about the 'Mayer effect'. "How many orders on the maple Silver Sky have we got?" he asked his staff, referring to the new maple-fingerboard Silver Sky launched at the show. "Already a thousand, right? I like it when John lifts his little finger and we get a 1,000 orders."

Another launch, the Silver Sky Nebula, a limited run of 500 pieces with its colour-changing 'flip-flop' finish, sold out "in a minute".

"But, really, you're asking a damaging question," says Paul with hindsight. "Mark Tremonti is still one of the number one guitar endorsers in the world: he's huge in Europe right now," says Paul of the long-time PRS ambassador. "Carlos? He's a household name. You go to Africa and they know who Carlos Santana is."

The point is well made: without Carlos Santana adopting his handmade Paul Reed Smith guitars from the very early 80s, this story might not have got started. But even an artist of this stature seemed a little forgotten when PRS introduced, with zero fanfare, a cracking new SE Singlecut signature in 2019, which would have been a PR dream for many companies. After all, it was 50 years since Santana's incendiary performance at Woodstock, and it was also the 20th anniversary of his 'comeback' album, *Supernatural*, which has sold over 30 million copies worldwide and counting. More people have probably seen and heard a PRS guitar in the hands of Carlos Santana than any other guitar player. But, in truth, PRS had a bigger hit on their hands.

Did the success of the Silver Sky surprise you? "No. What surprised me was all the negativity before we did it. Although we knew it was coming," says Paul Reed Smith. "You can print this: we were getting slagged on the internet, pretty bad. I knew it was going to be okay once people held the guitar but not

until. I talked to John and he said, 'Don't worry about it.' I said, 'Why not?' He said when he joined the band, Dead & Company, 'it was really tough on the internet, but we weren't worried, because we'd been at the rehearsals and they hadn't. We knew what the band sounded like.' Same thing with the Silver Sky. Before we'd released it, we'd played it, they hadn't. When people got their hands on it they went, 'Oh, I like this.' They were assuming they'd play it and not like it, that it'd be another me-too thing. We retooled *everything* on that guitar."

John Mayer with his fabled Silver Sky: the guitar that "broke the internet". Well, for a moment...



PRS SE Santana Singlecut Trem (2019): launched in 2019 alongside the SE Paul's Guitar and the SE Schizoid (Jakko Jakszyk's signature), this Santana model is the legendary guitarist's first single-cut signature. The first one built for Carlos dates back to 2016 and is covered in gold leaf. It became the Private Stock September 2016 'Guitar Of The Month', a 24-Fret McCarty Singlecut Trem, which PRS says was "inspired by a special instrument made for Carlos Santana. Like Santana's personal axe, the September 'Guitar Of The Month' features a 'custom-wound' 58/15 treble pickup, which is wound a little hotter for a bit more power in the bridge position." The pictured SE version uses the same TCI 'S' humbuckers of the SE Paul's Guitar but without the coil-splits





4. PRS SE Hollowbody II (2019): launched as a production model in 1998, it uses a hollow construction, with a bridge block, made possible by complex CNC routing. This all-laminate SE version launched in 2019, with the SE Hollowbody Standard, and is made in the same Chinese factory as the SE acoustics. Its PRS Adjustable Stoptail bridge (below on the Standard) is the same part featured on Private Stock, Core and S2 models

Details Matter

The more cynical among us may believe this guitar-making lark is a walk in the park. Clone a classic, get a ‘name’ to play it and, bang! You’ve got a hit on your hands. The reality is quite different. In dialling in the Silver Sky, PRS – out of necessity – upped its game, which directly led to its TCI (Tuned, Capacitance, Inductance) methodology, which now informs virtually all of its pickup designs and associated circuitry. It seems that PRS is looking backwards to move forwards more than ever, but at the same time innovating with far-from-classic designs.

“Nobody put brass inserts into a bridge without plating them,” states Paul Reed Smith as an example. “There weren’t piezos in old guitars, they never made hollowbodies like we make them here, all the colours, the sanded out colours... Oh, then there’s the bird inlays, the 408 pickups...”

The forensic-like detail and investigation remains central to the PRS ethos. Even before he started his factory in 1985, Paul had learned the importance of the raw materials

“But we are doing closer reflections with the McCarty stuff, the single- and double-cuts, we are closer to that ‘one in 100’ vintage pickup – we are closer to the Holy Grail gems of those. The thing I like about the Silver Sky is that the parts where that thing came from that we loved we kept, and the parts we didn’t like we got rid of, so it’s a complete redesign.”

It’s this forensic-like detail and investigation that remains central to the PRS ethos. Even before he started his factory in 1985, from his prior decade as a fledgling, struggling maker, Paul had learned the importance of the raw materials, the parts.

“There is a thing on the internet that the only thing that makes a difference is the pickups, right? But doesn’t anyone in the world think that if you have a Telecaster and you change the bridge, it’s not going to make any difference? I’m mean, let’s put a nut made of rubber on a guitar, that’s not going to make a difference...”



5. The man who brought so much to the industry during his tenure at Gibson became a mentor to Paul Reed Smith in the late 80s. His name first appeared on the McCarty Model in 1994. “I didn’t contribute any specific design,” Ted told this writer in the 90s. “By that time my sight was so poor I couldn’t

do it. Anyway, Paul was perfectly capable of doing that: the PRS Ted McCarty is Paul’s design.” Paul added: “It’s kind of how they did it at Gibson: they designed the Les Paul and Les Paul put his name on it. The reason we called it the McCarty Model is because everything Ted had been teaching me is incorporated”

Although this initial trio of more affordable USA-made S2 models – the Starla, Mira and Custom 24 – were introduced in 2014, the current range now boasts 15 models, including our trio of 2020 594 models reviewed later in this issue



“We’re working in a very simple environment: a couple of pieces of wood, a bridge, some pickups... but it’s a very complicated little equation. With an electric guitar you’re turning an ant into a dinosaur, you’re taking this little sound, putting a pickup on it... Look, if the acoustic sound of an electric guitar didn’t make a difference, you could take a ’54 Telecaster pickup and put it on a brand-new Tele and it would sound just the same as the old Tele, but *nobody* thinks that. No matter what microphone you put on Barbra Streisand she ain’t ever going to sound like Paul Rogers: that’s never going to happen. The acoustic tone makes a difference – and the whole idea that it doesn’t, I just don’t buy.”

Quality Costs

Early in PRS’s history, the company was tagged with making guitars that only ‘doctors, dentists or lawyers’ could afford, not real guitar players. But 35 years on it would seem that Fender and Gibson have caught up to the £3.5k of the start-up Core level guitars, not least with their Custom Shop pricing. Many of the increasing number of ‘boutique’ or small-shop guitar makers often charge considerably more, irrespective of their experience.

“Manufacturing has come a long way in the past 10 or 15 years,” says Jamie Mann. “We have considerably more automation on some of the more sensitive areas: we have a robotic sprayer that we have in-house right now and another one coming. We are investing

How Much?

The price of PRS’s guitars has always been a hot topic

As we write this, PRS has had to constantly battle with the perception that its guitars – irrespective of their obvious quality – are “overpriced”. In researching this feature, we came across a PRS price list from back in January 2001. At this time, the new Singlecut guitar listed for \$3,000, a 10-grade flame maple top adding \$550 to that price. The equivalent guitar today, the McCarty Singlecut 594, costs \$3,800, the 10-top option putting an additional \$630 on the price. Over 19 years that accounts for an increase of approximately 25 per cent, around 1.3 per cent per year if you like. Of course, back in 2001 the Singlecut was not cheap, but not only has virtually everything on the current Singlecut 594 model been updated and upgraded, in our opinion it is a way, way better instrument today.

For many of us, paying this sort of money for an electric guitar is difficult if not impossible, but don’t forget that the SE range kicks off at £475 with the Standard 24 model, while the S2 range starts at £1,125 with the Satin Standard 24, for example.



PRS McCarty (2020): since the original McCarty Model of 1994, the guitar has been in and out of production and constantly tweaked. This latest 2020 version, reviewed earlier in this issue, features PRS's latest finish and pickup technology but retains the two-control layout that graced the original

significantly in manufacturing to keep our costs under control. We do have the advantage that we are in a facility and we're expanding within that facility, so we haven't had to expand [that space]. We have a very, very seasoned team on the 'shop floor."

That experience, too, is virtually unparalleled. "We did some napkin maths and the years of experience in guitar making here is in the thousands with all the folks we have on the floor right now," says Jamie. "At this point, many of the key folks have worked together for a considerable number of years."

"Ted [McCarty] blazed a trail and helped create the world we live in. Looking back, I see the same thing with Paul: he went from being the student to the teacher" – Jack Higginbotham

But it's the S2 line, sitting price-wise between Core and SE, that has come into sharp focus as it mixes all-USA build with PRS-design 'S' pickups and typically the hardware and electronics that you'll see with the SE range. Ironically, bearing in mind where the world finds itself as we're writing this, S2 was a direct response to the financial crash of 2008, "a financial upheaval of the likes we'd never seen", Jack Higginbotham, PRS's CEO, tells us, barely a week before the PRS factory was required to close. That earlier upheaval "came at a time where we'd

already invested in the expansion of our business at a level that we'd never invested before, so it was the perfect storm. S2, then, was probably a fantastic example of necessity being the mother of invention: we needed to do something, but we wanted to do something that was in keeping with our credo and sensibilities and our ethics in musical instruments. So, originally, S2 was born of that hard time. Since then, it has evolved massively and has simply become one of the flavours that people can play within our company. It's given us a platform we can really spring off: quality guitars at a price point that we never would have imagined."

With more emphasis on the McCarty-style guitars in this year's USA ranges, particularly the S2 McCarty 594s – hit records if ever we heard 'em! – we wonder if Ted McCarty, Paul Reed Smith's early mentor who passed away in 2001, is still 'in the building'. "No, what's in the building is the history of what he did," concludes Paul. "There's a reflection of the history of the guitar here and the part that he gave us."

"Ted blazed a trail and helped create the world we live in," adds Jack. "Looking back I see the same thing with Paul: he went from being the student to the teacher – I think Paul is looked at today, but by more people, in a similar way that we looked at Ted McCarty back in the early 90s. Paul has never been shy about not knowing something. He's always saying, 'Well, I didn't know that,' or 'I don't know that,' which makes him learn at an alarming rate. And he remains curious." 

Editor's note: The interviews for this feature were conducted between October 2019 and early 2020 before the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of writing, all of us, not least guitar makers, are facing a future that's impossible to predict.

6 String Acoustics



19453 - Art & Lutherie Roadhouse Parbur, T. Red
19128 - Asturias by Kodaira 3340 Classical, Used
18341 - Atkin Essential D Dreadnought Acoustic
18281 - Atkin Essential OOO Handmade in England
18340 - Atkin The Forty-Three J43, Aged Finish
19361 - Bedell OH-12-G Parlour Guitar Secondhand
19360 - Bluebridge BR-63 000 Contemporary GF52035
18269 - Breedlove [Guitar] Acoustic Strings
15233 - Faith FKN Naked Neptune Acoustic Guitar
18898 - Faith FKR Naked Mars FKR, Natural
18240 - Faith FN Natural Neptune
19765 - Fender Redondo Player, Fiesta Red
19764 - Fender Sonoran Mini, Natural, 3/4 Guitar
14615 - Gibson Dobro, circa 1961, Original Vintage
19761 - Gibson J30 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand
19120 - Gibson Vintage Ultimate J45 Ltd Ed, Used
19720 - Gretsch G9500 Jim Dandy 2-Color Sunburst
15900 - Lakewood A22 Custom Made, Secondhand
13824 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
15310 - Martin 00015M Mahogany Acoustic, Used
6009 - Martin 00018 standard Series Acoustic
13064 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Secondhand
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
16760 - Martin D28 Re-Imagined Version
6008 - Martin D35 Dreadnought, Natural
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
19459 - Martin LX1RE Acoustic Guitar
6007 - Martin OM21 Orchestra, Natural
19126 - Martin OM28 Reimagined
9185 - Seagull S6 Acoustic Guitar
16585 - Stonebridge G23CR, Outaway
15491 - Tanglewood TW40PD Sundance Delta Parbur
14947 - Tanglewood TWCR O Crossroads
19462 - Tanglewood TWJPS Parlour Acoustic Guitar
17056 - Tanglewood TWU D Union Dreadnought
12316 - Taylor Big Baby Taylor
13910 - The Cort AF510OP Acoustic Folk Guitar
18602 - Vintage LHV3000FT Acoustic Lefthand, Nat
13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural
13128 - Vintage VTR800PB Violator Travel Guitar
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
18948 - Yairi NY-65V NT Acoustic Parlour Guitar
18950 - Yairi YBR2 Baritone Acoustic Guitar
18705 - Yamaha LL6 Acoustic Guitar, Natural

6 String Electro Acoustics



19673 - Art & Lutherie Legacy HGQ-DISCR LBurst
19446 - Art & Lutherie Roadhouse Indigo Burst HG
18336 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic CE 12-String
19661 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic Concert CE AB
18885 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic Concert CE
10285 - Breedlove Pursuit Concert AB SB
15887 - Breedlove Stage Dreadnought, Natural
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
13911 - Cort AF510EOP Electro Acoustic Guitar
18875 - D'Angelico Excel Tammany OM Electro
18886 - D'Angelico Premier Gramercy Acoustic
19448 - Eastman AC508CE Electro Acoustic, Used
19542 - Faith FNBCEHG Higgs Baritone Neptune
19136 - Faith FPNECG Nexus Neptune Cognac
18889 - Faith FRESB45L Dreadnought Electro Lefty
16783 - Faith FVBMB Blood Moon Venus Outaway
18798 - Faith FVBMB Blood Moon Venus LEFTH
18897 - Faith Neptune Classic Burst FNCEB45
19573 - Fender Am. Acoustasonic Strat, Sunburst
19574 - Fender American Acoustasonic Strat Black
19572 - Fender American Acoustasonic Strat, Red
19575 - Fender American Acoustasonic Strat, Nat.
19576 - Fender Am Acoustasonic Strat, TS Blue
18564 - Fender American Acoustasonic Tele, Black
19760 - Fender CD60CE, Electro, Nat, Secondhand
16861 - Fender CP140SE, Natural
16862 - Fender CP140SE Electro-Acoustic Sunburst
19260 - Fender Malibu Player, Burgandy Satin
16889 - Fender PM1 E Ltd Adirondack Dreadnought
19765 - Fender Redondo Player, Fiesta Red
18939 - Godin A6 Ultra A6 Natural SG
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
5602 - KYairi WY1 Natural
19069 - Kios F_DAE Deluxe Electro Acoustic
19065 - Kios T_AE Electro Acoustic Travel

6 String Electro Acoustics



19064 - Kios F_AE Electro Acoustic
19070 - Kios T_AE Acoustic Travel
19691 - Lantivee D03 Dreadnought Electro Acoustic
19524 - Maestro Custom Series LE Paffles KOCBAU
19523 - Maestro Custom Series Singa KOCSBK
19528 - Maestro Double Top Series Paffles FCSBD
18258 - Maestro OO-IR Traditional Series Guitar
19525 - Maestro Original Series Singa WE CSB C
19530 - Maestro Private Coll. Victoria PH CSB AX
18265 - Maestro Singa FM-CSB-A Custom Series
19531 - Maestro Special Build Trad. Series D-CO
12225 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro Acoustic
12222 - Martin & Co DX1AE Electro Acoustic
12418 - Martin & Co DX1AEL Acoustic Guitar
19244 - Martin 000-10E Guitar
19714 - Martin 000CJR10E, Cherry Stain B&S
15592 - Martin 0015E Retro Non-Cutaway Electro
19403 - Martin 00X1AE Guitar
19716 - Martin DX1E Koa Guitar
19715 - Martin D-X2E 12 String Guitar
19390 - Martin D10E Electro Acoustic Guitar
16760 - Martin D28 Re-Imagined Version
19489 - Martin DJR 10E Jnr Electro-Acoustic
16139 - Martin Ed Sheeran 3 + Signature Edition
19717 - Martin GPC-X2E Rosewood Guitar
19050 - Martin GPC1 1E Electro Acoustic
15591 - Martin GPC1 8E Electro Acoustic Guitar
15486 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic Shaded
8039 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic, Natural
16116 - Martin GPCX1AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
7320 - Martin LX1 E, Electro Travel Guitar
19458 - Martin LX1RE Electro Acoustic Guitar
18517 - Martin OMC15ME Electro-Acoustic Guitar
19497 - Maton EBG808L in Satin Natural
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Dreadnought
18167 - Northwood M80 OMV Outaway
17418 - Northwood Auditorium With Hard Case
19283 - Ovation 1512 Secondhand
19774 - Ovation 1528 Guitar, Used
19113 - Ovation 1627 Balladeer Glen Campbell Sig.
18952 - Ovation 1761 USA Made Electro Acoustic
19339 - Ovation 1771V-1 GC Glen Campbell Legend
19341 - Ovation 2771 STR-MB Main Street
11087 - Ovation Standard Elite 6778LX Black
19347 - Ovation C2078AXR-KOA Exoticwood Elite
19343 - Ovation C2078AXP2-PB Exoticwood Elite
19344 - Ovation CE44L-5 Celebrity Elite - Left Hand
19338 - Ovation 1771 STG-ES
0000 - P.J. Eggle - 3 Models in Stock Now
19554 - RainSong APSE
10094 - RainSong BI-OM1000N2 Black Ice Graphite
10038 - RainSong BI-WS1000N2 Black Ice Graphite
17657 - RainSong CHPA1000NS Concert Hybrid
17659 - RainSong CO-DR1000N2 Concert Series
9821 - RainSong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - RainSong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - RainSong CO-WS1000N2
19557 - RainSong Co-WS1005NsM
19555 - RainSong N-JM1000N2X
19556 - RainSong V-DR1000N2X
7974 - RainSong WS1000N2 Graphite Guitar
18051 - RainSong WS1000N2 Graphite Guitar, USED
18316 - Seagull Entourage Autumn Burst CW QIT
18504 - Seagull Entourage Folk Burst Umber QIT
19672 - Seagull Performer Mini-Jumbo Flame Maple
19671 - Seagull S6 Cedar Original Slim QIT
19676 - Simon & Patrick Trek SG Dreadnought, Nat
19571 - Simon & Patrick Woodland Parlour, Used
15832 - Tanglewood TW40PD Sundance Delta Parlour
15376 - Takamine EP360GF Glen Frey Model
15481 - Tanglewood Crossroads TWCR D E
19547 - Tanglewood DBT PE HR
15494 - Tanglewood DBT SFCE PW
15869 - Tanglewood Discovery DBT SFCE OV
14952 - Tanglewood TSF CE Black
19099 - Tanglewood TSP 15 CE
15866 - Tanglewood TSR 2 Masterdesign Electro
18366 - Tanglewood TWE Mini Koa
19114 - Tanglewood TW4 EWB LH, Left-handed
15582 - Tanglewood TW4 Winterleaf Super Folk CE
18214 - Tanglewood TW4IER, Electro Acoustic, Red
8293 - Tanglewood TW55NS, Nat, Secondhand
16524 - Tanglewood TWCR OE Crossroads
12305 - Tanglewood TWJFE
19548 - Tanglewood TWR2 SFCE Electro Acoustic
15979 - Tanglewood Sundance Perf. Pro X47E
19660 - Taylor 220ce KDLX Guitar, Used
12317 - Taylor GC8 Grand Concert Acoustic Guitar
18789 - Vintage LVE0501N Dreadnought, Satin Nat.
18786 - Vintage VE300N Electro-Acoustic, Natural
14397 - Vintage VE8000PB Paul Brett 6-String
18788 - Vintage VEC501N Dreadnought, Satin Nat.
18791 - Vintage VEA900N Electro-Acoustic, Nat.
18790 - Vintage VGE800N Gemini P Brett Baritone
15575 - Yamaha FGX720SC, Black
19602 - Yamaha LLTA TransAcoustic Vintage Tint
15619 - Yamaha SLG200S Steel Silent Guitar Nat

Classical Guitars



19128 - Asturias by Kodaira 3340 Classical, Used
13864 - Breedlove Pursuit Nylon Electro Acoustic
15547 - David Pelter Handmade Classical Guitar
19210 - Hanika 50 KF-N Studio Line, Secondhand
0000 - Mendieta - 17 Models in Stock Now
9482 - Ovation 1616 Electro Acoustic Nylon, Nat
19346 - Ovation CS244 Celebrity Standard, Nat
12178 - Protection Racket Class Gtr Case Dk
5360 - Ramirez 130 Year Anniversary Classical
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
15239 - Ramirez 2NCWE 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 RB 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
14698 - Yamaha CS40 3/4 Size Classical Guitar
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
18223 - Mahab Java Soprano Ukulele, Sunburst
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 FK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana FK25G 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 SK30M Large Neck Soprano
19008 - Ohana Ukuleles SK39 Mahogany Soprano
12740 - ResoVibe Weekly Wachee Resonator Ukulele
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
19697 - B&M Electro Acoustic Concert Uke BMUK7CE
19695 - Barnes & Mullins Concert Uke, BMUK8C
19664 - B&M BMUK5CE Concert Electro Uke
15931 - Baton Rouge UR21C Concert Ukulele
19711 - Baton Rouge Vx2 Concert Uke, Fire Red
19709 - Baton Rouge Vx2/C-OR Concert Uke Orange
19707 - Baton Rouge Vx2/C-SR Concert Uke Sunrise
18975 - Breedlove Lu'au Concert Nat Shadow E Uke
18973 - Lu'au Concert Uke Ghost Burst Myrtlewood
18166 - Kai KCI 100M Concert Ukulele
18833 - Kwaya KSU1 Mahogany Soprano Uke
18524 - Kwaya KSU1L Long Neck Soprano Uke
16835 - AAMaestro UC-IR-SB-C Concert With Case
13086 - Magic Fluke M40 Mango Concert Uke, USED
18208 - Mahab MH2CE Electro-Acoustic Concert Uke
12224 - Martin & Co C1K Koa Concert Ukulele
19016 - Ohana CK14E Electro Mahogany Concert
9050 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Uke
13639 - Ohana CK22Z Concert Ukulele, Zebra wood
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
10385 - Risa UKS385MP Solid Concert Electro Uke
18277 - Tanglewood TWT10 [Ukulele]
17066 - Tanglewood TWT12-E 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
19694 - Barnes & Mullins Ukulele Tenor BMUK8T
19700 - Barnes & Mullins Uke Tenor Walnut BMUK5T
19698 - B&M Uke Bass Mahogany BMUKB1
19705 - Baton Rouge V2-B Sun Baritone Ukulele
14821 - Baton Rouge V2 Sun 8 String Tenor Uke
19713 - Kai KTI-5000 Solid Acacia Tenor Ukulele
19071 - KLOS Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_A)
19073 - KLOS Deluxe Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_DAE)
19072 - KLOS Acoustic Ukulele (UKE_AE)
19392 - Kai KCI90 Concert Ukulele
19389 - Kai KCI30 Tenor Ukulele, Mango
19391 - Kai KTI90 Tenor Ukulele
10955 - Magic Fluke M20 Nat Fluke Tenor Uke UKE
14867 - Magic Fluke Timber Elec. Bass, Fretless
18211 - Mahab MJ3 TBR Java Tenor Ukulele
15593 - Martin T1K Tenor Ukulele
8514 - Ohana BK10 Baritone Ukulele
0000 - Many More Tenor, Bari & Bass Ukes In Stock

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 Sig. 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
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 - 1x5"
9358 - Roland AC33, Rosewood
11129 - Roland AC40 Acoustic Guitar Amplifier
6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Amp - 30w, 2x6.5
9383 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Guitar Combo, FW
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 (2.5W+2.5W, 4x2)
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

12 Strings



18336 - Breedlove Pursuit Exotic CE 12-String
18730 - Cort Natural Glossy MR710F, 12-String
18792 - Vintage V5000SB12 Statesboro 12 String
18807 - Vintage VE5000SB12 Electro 12 String
14349 - Vintage VE8000PB12 Paul Brett 12 String



ANNIVERSARY PARADE

We illustrate the diverse style of PRS's 35th anniversary year line-up. Something for everyone at every budget? Almost...

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Joseph Branston, Olly Curtis, Neil Godwin & Joby Sessions



CUSTOM

The cornerstone of the PRS empire – the Custom 24 as it's known today after a 22-fret version was offered in 1993 – reigns supreme, and for the majority of the past 35 years it has been the best-selling instrument in an ever-changing range. It's also been the foundation of the majority of PRS designs over the past years; despite the variations, its body and headstock outline remain a constant.

Today's Custom 24 retains the original's thinner 49mm-thick figured maple-over-mahogany body, 635mm (25-inch) scale length, dual humbuckers (85/15) and vibrato appointments. Long gone is the original five-position rotary pickup switch (not to mention the original's sweet-switch) in favour of a Fender-style five-way lever switch offering a combination of humbucking and single-coil voices that are central to PRS style.

35 years on, Paul Reed Smith is still experimenting with this duality. The Custom 24-08 (pictured here) appeared in late 2017 offering a total of eight humbucking and single-coil sounds via two additional mini-switches, a current favourite setup of Paul Reed Smith's that's seen on his Core and SE Paul's Guitar and the trio of 35th Anniversary Customs for this year.

KEY MODELS

CORE CUSTOM 24 & 22
From £3,459

CORE CUSTOM 24-08 (PICTURED)
From £3,599

S2 CUSTOM 24
£1,699

SE CUSTOM 24
£799

NECK

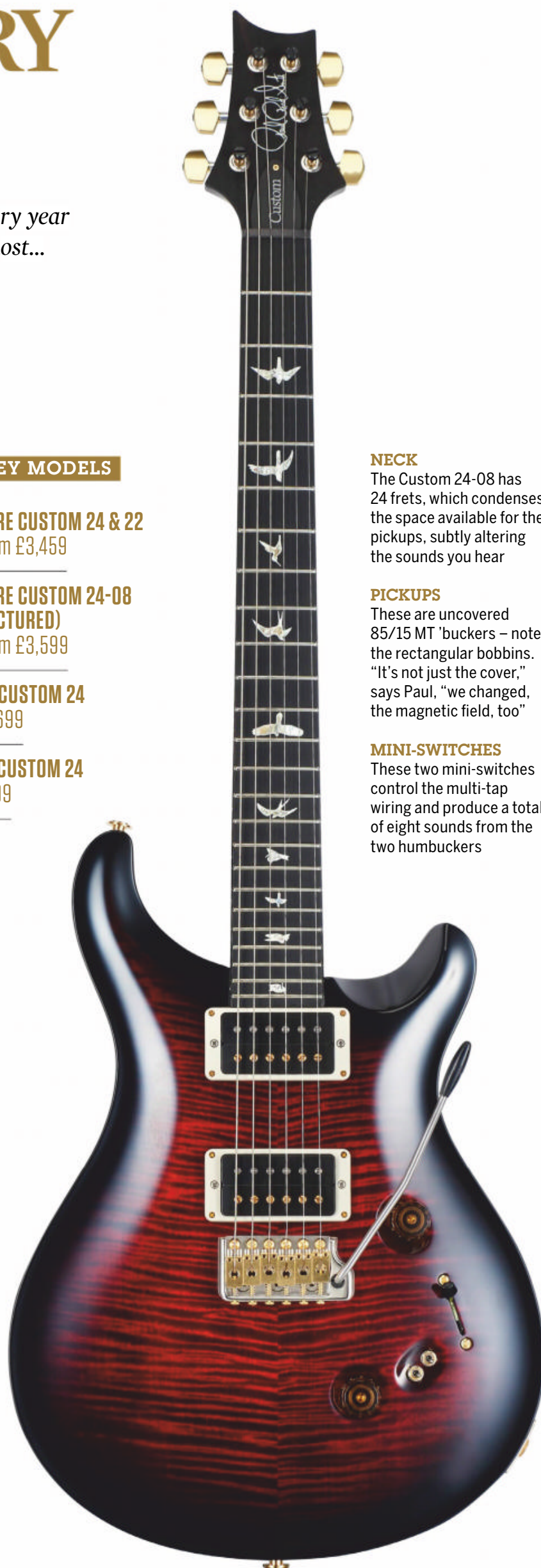
The Custom 24-08 has 24 frets, which condenses the space available for the pickups, subtly altering the sounds you hear

PICKUPS

These are uncovered 85/15 MT 'buckers – note the rectangular bobbins. "It's not just the cover," says Paul, "we changed, the magnetic field, too"

MINI-SWITCHES

These two mini-switches control the multi-tap wiring and produce a total of eight sounds from the two humbuckers





CE 24

Originally called the Classic Electric on its launch in 1988, what quickly became simply the 'CE' after Peavey objected to the name was the first PRS bolt-on guitar. It was an attempt to build a more affordable and, originally, more Fender-style guitar with an alder body and all-maple neck. Sales didn't support that aim, however, and PRS struggled to make money on the guitar, which soon became simply a bolt-on version of the Custom with a mahogany body and maple top from the mid-90s. That said, the CE became quite a player's favourite, notably of Alex Lifeson.

Today's CE 24 shown here, which returned in 2016, retains the bolt-on maple neck (now an S2-style three-piece construction) with a simplified top carve, 85/15 humbuckers and McCarty-style electronics with a master volume, master tone (with pull-switch coil-splits) and a three-way toggle pickup selector. It's also available as a Semi-Hollow. The CE remained the only bolt-on guitar offered by PRS until the famous Silver Sky came along.

KEY MODELS

CE 24 (PICTURED)
£2,179

CE 24 SEMI-HOLLOW
£2,325



NECK

One of the few PRS bolt-on guitars, here the maple neck is three-piece with separate pieces for the headstock and heel. It's also slab-sawn, not quarter-sawn wood

BODY

The CE body is slightly slimmer-depth'd than the Core Custom body and more carved than the cheaper S2

VIBRATO

Combined here with top-locking tuners, this version of the PRS vibrato is Korean-made and works perfectly



HOLLOWBODY

Using an innovative solid-wood construction made possible by PRS's increasing use of CNC routing machines to increase production efficiently, the Hollowbody and deeper Archtop appeared in 1998. The architect behind the design was master luthier Joe Knaggs who left PRS in 2009 to set up his own venture. It was the Hollowbody that survived and that provided the first platform for a piezo system co-designed with LR Baggs, which is offered today as the Hollowbody II Piezo, while the McCarty 594 Hollowbody II applies the 594's short-scale and two-piece bridge combination without the piezo. An offshoot of the PRS/LR Baggs piezo is also offered on the solid-bodied Custom 24 and 22.

Launched in late 2019, the SE Hollowbody reverts to a more classic laminated (maple or mahogany) construction and is the first PRS electric guitar to be made in China – the source of PRS's SE acoustics. Consequently, the SE Hollowbody is a lot more affordable than the USA-made Core versions. We're expecting a piezo-loaded version imminently.

KEY MODELS

**CORE HOLLOWBODY II
PIEZO**
from £4,749

**CORE MCCARTY 594
HOLLOWBODY II**
from £4,249

**SE HOLLOWBODY
STANDARD & II
(II PICTURED)**
£899 & £999

FINGERBOARD

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

PICKUPS

The covered 58/15 'S' pickups are Indonesian-made versions of PRS's USA 58/15 humbuckers and were developed specifically for these SE guitars

TONEWOODS

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





SINGLECUT

The guitar that nearly ruined the company, the Singlecut launched in 2000 and was clearly aimed at taking market share from Gibson's classic Les Paul. It landed PRS in a lengthy court battle with Gibson, although Gibson's lawsuit against PRS was eventually dismissed and the Singlecut subsequently went back into production.

Ironically, although artists such as long-time PRS endorser Mark Tremonti love their Singlecuts, the shape remains pretty niche in 2020, with just one Core 594 model alongside Tremonti's long-running signature. In the S2 range there's just the single 594 model, but the shape remains more visible in the start-up SE range, which boasts a total of seven Singlecuts, four of which are signature models.

Zach Myers' semi-solid SE Singlecut signature is now a long-running staple and, although we've seen similar-style semi Singlecuts in both the Core and S2 lines, this one is now completely unique to the PRS catalogue – a neat guitar and a favourite of the modding community.

KEY MODELS

CORE MCCARTY SC 594 (PICTURED)
from £3,699

S2 MCCARTY 594 SINGLECUT
£1,849

SE TREMONTI, SANTANA & ZACH MYERS SINGLECUTS
all £799



PICKUPS

The 58/15 LT pickups have become real favourites due to their vintage tone. The Gibson-style control layout lends familiarity, while partial coil-splits add versatility

HARDWARE

Hardware is two-tone nickel and gold in colour, and looks like it's been fashioned by a top-class jeweller

CRAFT

The McCarty's woodwork and general fit and finish are as refined as you'll find on any guitar



SILVER SKY

Some 18 years after the controversy around the Singlecut, the launch of the Silver Sky ‘broke’ the internet. Why? It was John Mayer’s signature guitar and appropriated the style and iconography of the Fender Stratocaster. It seemed the whole world had an opinion (mostly negative) on that, not least its ‘fugly’ offset three-a-side headstock. But pre-orders skyrocketed and the Silver Sky has significantly contributed to PRS’s huge growth over the past few years.

Aside from it being a John Mayer signature guitar, the meticulous ‘retooling’ of Fender’s finest speaks for itself. Originally offered with just a rosewood fingerboard to suit its early 60s-spec start-point, for this year there’s a maple option along with a limited run that has a colour-changing ‘flip-flop’ finish called the Nebula. “It’s been a dream of mine for years to design a guitar that includes some of my favourite vintage specifications but with a modern spirit and aesthetic,” said John Mayer. “After two years of study and refinement, the Silver Sky is my vision of what a reboot of the electric guitar should look and feel like.”

KEY MODELS

SILVER SKY WITH ROSEWOOD (PICTURED) OR MAPLE FINGERBOARD
£2,469

SE SILVER SKY...
Well, we’re hoping!



HEADSTOCK

“It’s just upside down – we do it on left-handed guitars,” offers Paul Reed Smith, adding that coming up with a design “that works aesthetically” was a difficult task

PICKUPS

The three 635JM single coils were based on a pickup “on one of [John’s] guitars, a ‘64”, says Paul Reed Smith. They blend that vintage voice with PRS’s own proprietary tweaks

VIBRATO

The steel vibrato has been “completely retooled”, says PRS, but retains the typical push-fit, tension-adjustable arm. It pivots on Gen III knife-edge screws



SE SANTANA SINGLECUT TREM

Carlos Santana has played a huge part in the history of PRS and his use of Paul's handmade pre-Custom design in the early 80s put the young guitar maker on the map.

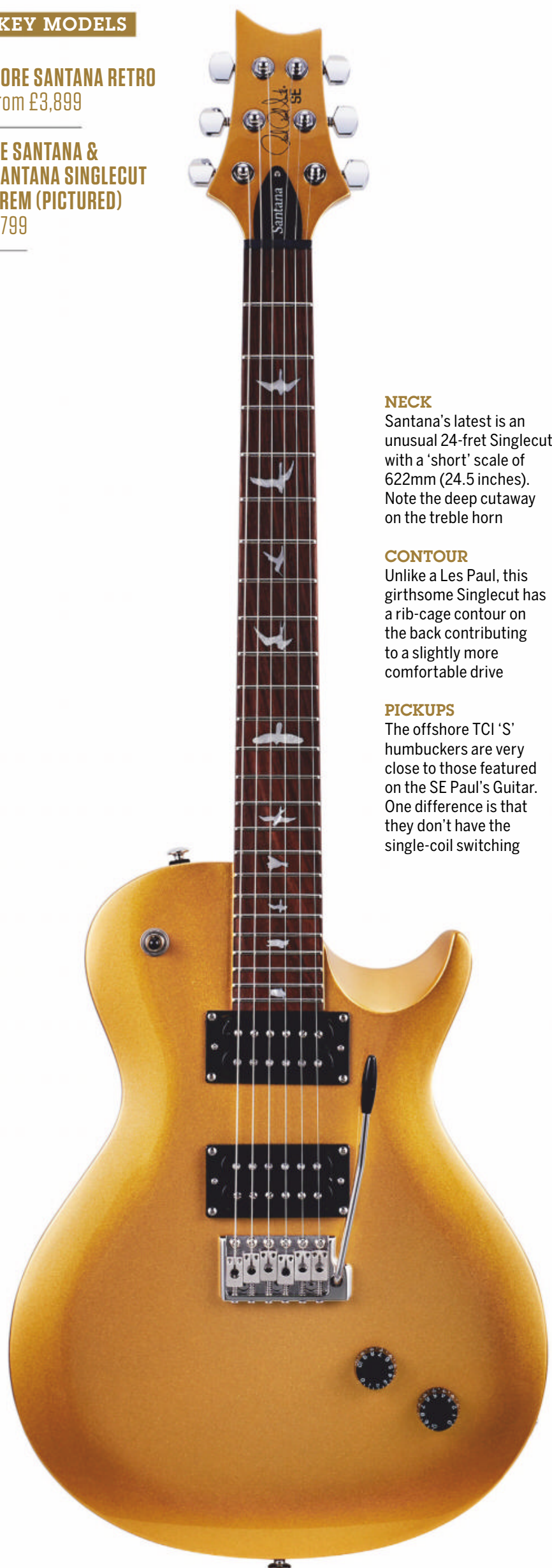
"Zebop! [1981] was the album I made when I started playing a Paul Reed Smith guitar," Carlos recounts in his autobiography, *The Universal Tone*. "Paul is still my main guitar maker to this day... I like his heart and the people he hires. His workshop is like the set of a science-fiction movie. More science than fiction. From the carving to the measuring to the fine-tuning to the varnishing, he knows the science of it and how to get the balance right so the guitar has – here's the word – consistency. No matter the weather or the place or the circumstances, a PRS guitar will not fail you, because it behaves itself. One other thing: whenever Paul ships them, the guitars always come out of the case in tune. It's a personal touch."

Aside from his Core-level Santana Retro, Santana also has two SE models, one that aims for that original early 80s shape, the other a Singlecut that Carlos prefers these days.

KEY MODELS

CORE SANTANA RETRO
from £3,899

SE SANTANA & SANTANA SINGLECUT TREM (PICTURED)
£799



NECK

Santana's latest is an unusual 24-fret Singlecut with a 'short' scale of 622mm (24.5 inches). Note the deep cutaway on the treble horn

CONTOUR

Unlike a Les Paul, this girthsome Singlecut has a rib-cage contour on the back contributing to a slightly more comfortable drive

PICKUPS

The offshore TCI 'S' humbuckers are very close to those featured on the SE Paul's Guitar. One difference is that they don't have the single-coil switching



SKY'S THE LIMIT

One of the most controversial new releases from the PRS stable in recent years is the Silver Sky, designed with John Mayer. Condemned by many as being 'just a Strat with a PRS neck', the guitar has gone on to be one of the most popular artist models in the company's range...

Words Brad Tolinski

JOHN MAYER

When John Mayer and Paul Reed Smith unveiled their new Silver Sky in 2018, the online message boards erupted with the white-hot intensity of Hawaii's Kīlauea volcano. Many guitarists were excited by the six-string creation. Others were, shall we say, less enthused.

Mayer was amused by the ruckus – but not surprised. “Traditionally, the guitar world hasn't embraced or tolerated evolution all that well,” he said. “The initial response was pretty negative; people tend to resist anything new. However, being a social-media target, I have experience that allows me to understand the mechanics of disapproval. I'm perfectly tuned to withstand that friction period of people saying they don't like something. There are going to be people who will never embrace it, that's fine. But it's interesting to watch players adapt to it. I think there is a desire for guitarists to hold something that's a bit evolved.”

The Silver Sky's influence is clear, but with its 'reverse' PRS headstock shape, vintage-style tuners with PRS's locking design, a 25.5-inch scale length bolt-on maple neck, 7.25-inch 'board radius and a trio of special PRS 635JM single-coil pickups, the instrument is undeniably its own unique rock 'n' roll animal. “We went with a Stratocaster-style body because it is just an excellent shape for an electric guitar, and it's one that I've come to know really, really well. It's part of my history. But, ultimately, I'm not interested in rehashing classics, I'm interested in pushing things forward.”

So, what were you and Paul Reed Smith aiming for? What did you need that you didn't already have?

“The answer is: nothing. If you take my five favourite guitars, I'm covered. But I wanted to do two things. First, I wanted to make a guitar that did away with the concept of 'the magic guitar'. You know, the idea that you could play 10 different guitars of the same model but only one would be magic. I want *all* Silver Sky guitars to be great. I want them *all* to be magic. I don't suspect I will ever really have a 'number one' Silver Sky, because all of them will be good. I wanted to eliminate that idea that one has magic wood and the other doesn't. The second goal is I want to have my own little plot of land to develop and build on.”

Do you see your relationship with PRS as going beyond creating a signature guitar?

“I want to be clear, I wasn't looking to create a signature model. I want to go a step deeper into the genetic code of things. I'm looking to create a series of instruments that represents my point of view and have a little desk next to Paul where I can bring some of my ideas to life that, over the years, will tell a story. The best analogy I can give you without is being too self-aggrandising is the relationship Air Jordan has with Nike. Air Jordan is still Nike, but it's its own brand. I don't want the Silver Sky to be a signature guitar; I want it to become other people's signature guitar. My hope is to eventually take my name entirely out of the equation.”

We've heard a lot of people try to characterise the sound of the Silver Sky. How would you describe it?

“My tastes have changed and one thing that started fatiguing my ear was the 'out-of-phase' quack of Fender guitars. And look, I'm responsible for a lot of people using that fourth-position pickup sound. *Slow Dancing In A Burning Room* is the official song for checking out that 'out-of-phase' thing, but at this point it's almost unusable for me. I just got tired of it. I started getting into the clarity of tone, like the stark beauty of a middle pickup or the sparkle of a nicely tuned bridge pickup. So, the point is, on this guitar I've tried to add that clarity even to the 'out-of-phase' pickup positions. You still can get that sound on my PRS but without all those harmonic overtones that are so sonically heavy handed.”

Let's talk about design. Although you've made some substantial revisions on the Silver Sky, this is still essentially a Strat-style guitar...

“If you ask someone to draw a guitar, nine out of 10 people are going to draw a Stratocaster. When it came time to work with Paul, I just thought it would be an easier path to get people to understand that this is a Strat-based body, more than, 'Hey, you're gonna love this new shape... um, someday.' There are design guidelines. I don't set them. You don't set them. The world just sets them. And, sorry, I don't deal in anything other than what is in keeping with the unchangeable truths of the shape of the electric guitar. We need to find a thoughtful balance between honouring the history of the electric guitar but not to the point of cutting off the future of the electric guitar. I do feel like the industry has taken a bit of a hit for focusing too much on the past.” 



PHOTO BY KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES



“I wasn’t looking to create a signature model. I want to go a step deeper into the genetic code of things... I want it to become other people’s signature guitar”



SEAL OF APPROVAL

Over the years PRS has attracted an impressive roster of endorsees. We talk to two contrasting artists who have their own signature models with the company and ask them about their experiences working with Paul Reed Smith to construct their ideal performance tools...

Words David Mead

MARTIN SIMPSON

Martin Simpson's relationship with PRS began with a phone call from Paul Reed Smith telling him that the company was developing a line of acoustic guitars. "They sent out the first prototype and I thought it was brilliant," says Martin. "But it felt like an electric guitar player's guitar – the neck was too narrow and the string spacing wasn't big – so they made another one that was superb, but again it just needed a bit more heft to it. The third one arrived: I got it out of the case and the phone rang and a voice said, 'You're happy now, right?' It was Paul, of course, and I was happy. It was great!"

We wonder what Martin's overall experience of working with Paul has been like over the years. "It's been fantastic," he enthuses. "I mean, you're talking about an unstoppably enthusiastic human being. The thing about Paul is that he has never rested for a moment – I don't think he's ever found any laurels.

He's the most driven human being and I think mostly he's driven in the right direction. I think he's an astonishing example of someone who's set out to do something, never ever allowing himself for a moment to think that he would not succeed."

Martin's current signature acoustic is not only a formidable instrument, it's also incredibly pretty to look at. "The last one that I got would be the Brazilian rosewood back and sides with the cherry blossoms on the neck, and that's just an extraordinary guitar. I think probably, in actual terms, it's the best of the guitars that I've had. It's incredibly well balanced and really loud. For someone who is essentially an electric builder, one of [Paul Reed Smith's] approaches to building acoustic guitars is that you want something really loud. It's kinda funny, because they're obviously very quiet little things compared with electrics."

The spec on Martin's latest model, which he's been using since 2016, includes a heavily bear-clawed Adirondack top with a mahogany neck and an ebony fingerboard and bridge. "One of the things that they've absolutely proved, in terms of the production values, is



"The size of the neck is an influencer on the feel and tone and general quality of guitars, full stop, y'know? I really think it contributes a great deal" – Martin Simpson

that the necks are totally consistent. Once they've got them, that's it, that's how they are. They're brilliant at producing consistent instruments."

As to the future, Martins tells us that he has been talking with Paul about producing an SE acoustic based around his signature model's spec. And for him, everything starts with the size of the neck. "The size of the neck is an influencer on the feel and tone and general quality of guitars, full stop, y'know? I really think it contributes a great deal. One of the things that PRS have been talking about recently is the SE series, their Far Eastern line, which are extraordinarily good, but all of them are made with what I would term as being electric-style necks. Over the last three years or so at least we've been talking about making a model that has – perish the thought that I should say this – a 'proper' acoustic-style neck, a big neck with mass,



MARTIN SIMPSON

On Martin's Private Stock acoustic, the neck and string spacing in particular were honed to his exact specification

MARK TREMONTI

This angular PRS is a prototype designed with Paul Reed Smith. It's received a lot of attention from Mark's fanbase, so maybe we'll see a production model soon...



because I think it would make it really attractive to a lot of people. Generally speaking, people don't have upwards of £3,000 to spend on an acoustic guitar. If they could get a really well-made acoustic guitar for £800 to £900 with a proper neck it would really, really suit all the open-tuning stuff and things like that. And they actually have great pickups in them as well. I think that would be very good for the company and very good for guitar players. So that's definitely on the cards."

MARK TREMONTI

Alter Bridge's Mark Tremonti will soon be celebrating 20 years as a PRS endorsee. In that time, he's worked on several instruments with the company, as well as his own signature amplifier, the MT 15. "Back around, I think, 2000 I got approached by Paul Reed Smith to see if I wanted to play their guitars," says Mark. "I loved their guitars, but they just weren't suitable for me on stage at that point – the switching on the guitar was in the wrong spot and the tone of the pickups was a little too loud for my taste. So, just by [me] being picky, Paul said, 'Why don't we just design a guitar exactly to your specifications and make it your signature model?'"

What was it about the standard models that Mark didn't like? "The body shape, the weight of the guitar, the neck carve, the tone of the pickups... just about everything. They had sent me a McCarty model, which is still one of my favourite models ever, it's just not something that I usually play on tour, y'know? It's something that I write with at home. For me, doing my thing on stage, I need more of a guitar that has less of a round tone and more something that I can get percussive with on the rhythm side of things."

On tour with Alter Bridge Mark takes quite a few instruments with him. "Yeah, on any given tour about nine or 10 guitars, because I use so many different guitar tunings. Every song that has a different tuning needs a guitar and a backup to go along with it, so it's a little more difficult on the Alter Bridge side of touring, because Myles [Kennedy] and I have to carry a bunch of guitars. But I also have a guitar that I designed with Paul that's not my signature model, it's just a kind of prototype I really love."



PHOTO BY FRANK HOENSCH/REDFERNS

Is there a chance that this new, very un-PRS-looking guitar will go into full production at some point? "I'm not sure, y'know," he says. "There have been a lot of people that have asked about that guitar and wanted to get it, but I don't know. I think Paul Reed Smith has done a good job of keeping it really classy. All their models are really classically inspired and there are no 80s kinda shred-looking guitars in their line-up, and so I think that guitar kinda pushes the limit a little bit, but hopefully I can talk them into it someday."

Along the line, there have been limited-edition models, such as the baritone that Mark uses on stage.

"I loved their guitars, but they just weren't suitable for me on stage... So Paul said, 'Why don't we just design a guitar exactly to your specification?' – Mark Tremonti"

"Yes, we did a limited edition of the baritone – I don't know if you can still get your hands on one, I think they sold through those pretty quickly. They're beautiful guitars, I absolutely love them."

Then there was an SE version of Mark's signature single-cut – was that his idea, or did it come from PRS? "I think it was a collaborative effort. I think we all decided it was the right thing to do. We've done so many versions of the guitar at every price point, any player at any level has an option."

How would he sum up his experiences with PRS after 20 years as an endorsee? "It's just been such an honour to be recognised in the first place as a player who'd be deserving of a signature model from such a classy company. It's been quite a ride since then. We've developed a lot of great instruments and amplifiers that I'm very proud of, and I couldn't be happier." **G**



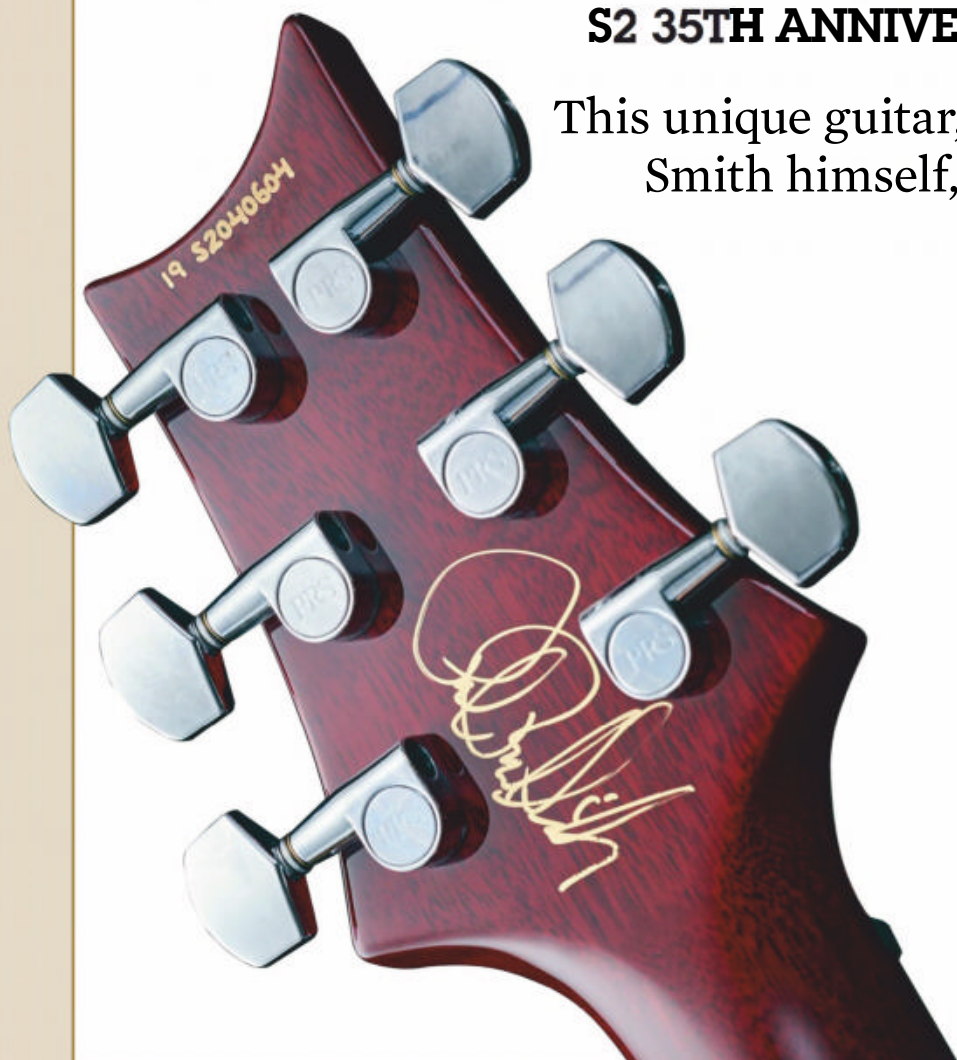
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S2 35TH ANNIVERSARY CUSTOM 24

This unique guitar, signed by Paul Reed Smith himself, could be yours...



To be in with a chance of winning this stunning Anniversary model, worth £1,799 and signed by Paul Reed Smith, all you have to do is make your way over to the website address below (where you'll find full terms and conditions), answer the following question correctly – and keep your fingers crossed. The competition closes on the 26 June and the winner will be notified by email, so please be sure to give us an address that you monitor frequently. Good luck!

Paul Reed Smith's first workshop was in which historic street of Annapolis?

- a) North St
- b) South St
- c) East St
- d) West St

**Closing date:
26 June 2020**

**Make sure you enter at
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before the closing date.
Good luck!**

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BEST IN SHOW

PRS's trio of S2 594 models were a big hit at this year's NAMM Show. How do they fare in the flesh? Very well...

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Neil Godwin

PRS S2 MCCARTY 594, S2 MCCARTY 594 SINGLECUT & S2 MCCARTY 594 THINLINE £1,849, £1,849 & £1,649

CONTACT PRS Europe PHONE 01223 874301 WEB www.prsguitars.com

The 594 is the closest PRS veers towards the classic 'vintage-aimed' Gibson recipe. Introduced back in 2016 in PRS's Core range, the £3.5k-plus guitars remain out of reach for many of us. But at the start of this year, this trio of S2 models slashed the prices by pretty much 50 per cent. But let's backtrack a little...

The guitars are named after their scale lengths of 24.594 inches (625mm), the slightly-shorter-than-24.75-inch (629mm) scale actually used by Gibson in its golden days. PRS's standard scale length, as used on the Custom or the McCarty, is 25 inches (635mm), very nearly halfway between that Gibson scale and the longer Fender scale length of 25.5 inches (648mm). PRS fans will also know of its shortest scale of 24.5 inches (622mm), currently used on the Santana Core and SE models and the SE 245s. Apologies for all the maths, but clearly this scale length stuff is important.



PRS S2 MCCARTY 594 £1,849

1. Although locking tuners are synonymous with PRS guitars (both vibrato and hardtail), all these S2 594 models go for vintage-style non-locking tuners

A more obvious change to the PRS design concerns the bridge and tailpiece. Usually we'd see a PRS Stoptail or vibrato, but here we have a separate bridge, with wide-topped brass saddles and open-slotted tailpiece: PRS's update on Gibson's tune-o-matic bridge and stud tailpiece combination. "The bridge is zinc, not an alloy," PRS tells us. "It is cast and minimally machined and nickel-plated. The saddles, saddle screws, studs, and thumbwheels are all raw [unplated] brass. The tailpiece is cast aluminium, but the studs and stud wells are machined – raw brass/raw steel respectively." Private Stock or limited runs aside, you'll only see this combo on the Core 594 models or these S2s.

The third element of difference to the 594 concerns the controls and their layout, which follow Gibson's classic positioning – not the four-control layout of the original and subsequent PRS Singlecut models. Plus, for the first time on a PRS double-cut outline guitar, the three-position toggle pickup selector switch is placed on the bass-side horn.

In keeping with the vintage vibe – and without a vibrato in sight – the tuners are non-locking vintage Kluson style in the appearance of their rear covers with cream-coloured 'faux-bone' tulip buttons, but the string posts are unplated and we'd wager there are no plastic washers inside. They're slightly different from the tuners on the Core 2020 McCarty, which have shorter string posts.

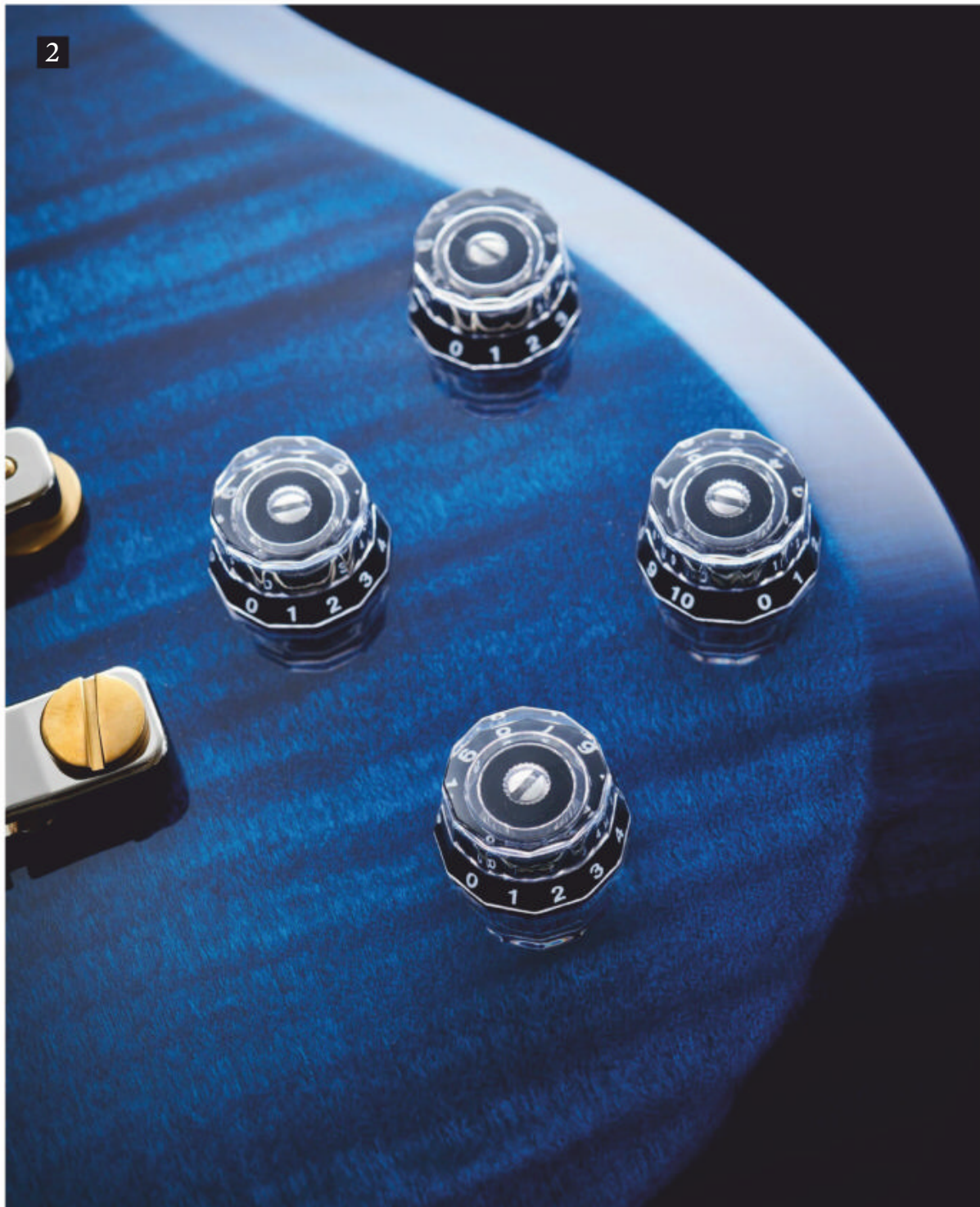
The S2 Proposition

As we discuss with Paul Reed Smith and Jack Higginbotham earlier in our anniversary feature, the S2-level guitars – still made in the same USA factory in Stevensville, Maryland, as the Core level – are all about production efficiency, which equals lower cost, primarily in materials, parts and all-important labour time.

The S2 necks, then, are three-piece (not one-piece like the Core models) with a heel stack and spliced-on headstock.

The S2 guitars are all about production efficiency... quality is to the fore, just here it's tempered by a bang-on price point





2. PRS's first four-control layout was a different diamond shape. Here, it reverts to classic Gibson-style protocol albeit with proprietary 'lampshade' knobs

3. The one-piece wrapover bridge, with its preset intonation ridge, dates back to the first Dragon guitar PRS produced in 1991. This later two-piece setup references a Gibson tune-o-matic/stud tailpiece but with different ingredients

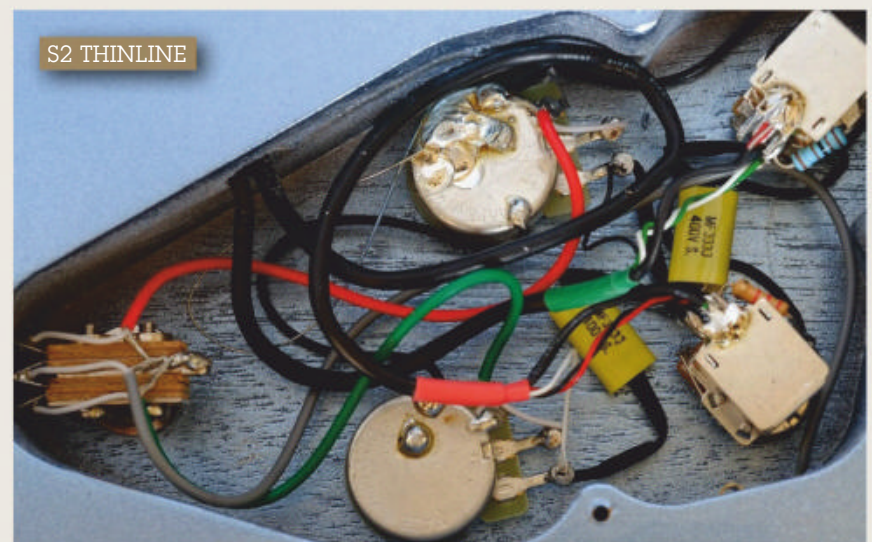


UNDER THE HOOD

How the circuits and parts measure up to existing models

All three guitars here use the same circuitry, although the parts are of a slightly lower grade than you'll find on the Core guitars with either Alpha or Jin Sung 500kohms audio taper pots. All are wired modern-style, too, with no treble-bleed caps on the volume controls, and the tone caps are still the same .033 microfarad value,

though different from the Core caps. You can have fun listening to the difference! Each of the tone controls have a pull-switch to independently split the pickups. Each is a PRS-style partial split via a resistor, but here it's the slug coils that are primarily voiced unlike the screw coils, for example, of numerous other PRS two-control guitars.





PRS S2 MCCARTY 594 SINGLECUT £1,849

4. As with all the S2 (and SE) guitars, the 'S' pickups are PRS-designed and made offshore. Don't let that put you off – originally designed for the SE Hollowbodies, these 58/15 'S' humbuckers sound great

Parts are made offshore – exactly where PRS doesn't tell us – while the 'S' suffix pickups are designed by PRS and made in Indonesia and are the same ones that you'll find on the now mainly Indonesian-made SE models.

So, while the double-cut 594 is a real hybrid of PRS and Gibson style, the Singlecut is noticeably thicker in depth at 51mm (two inches) compared with the 48mm (1.89 inches) of the double-cut, and is clearly aimed at the classic Les Paul. That additional depth increases the ratio of mahogany to maple, too – the maple top is the same thickness on both models at just over 13mm.

Our third design here, the Thinline, is clearly aimed at SG territory. It has the thinnest depth body (43mm) and it's all mahogany with no maple cap like its inspiration, while the toggle-switch position moves to north of the four-control layout, making for a less convoluted wiring layout because the wires from the pickups' volume controls don't have as far to travel. And it's the same for the wire from the switch to the output jack.

Fit and finish is typically sharp, but the S2 models have a distinctly different chamfered edge top-carve with no inset control 'dishes' – or recessed rear control covers. This more simplistic build is all a part of the S2 ethos: maximum quality, minimal labour cost in terms of things such as hand-sanding compared with the Core guitars. That said, as of 2020, all USA PRS guitars (with the exception of Private Stock and the DGT) use the new nitro-over-cellulose finish as Paul Reed Smith discusses in our 2020 McCarty review elsewhere in this issue.

Feel & Sounds

The neck shape on our maple-topped models is the same Pattern Vintage profile; the Thinline differs with its Pattern Thin neck, slightly wider at the nut but slimmer in depth (see the Dimensions chart). On all three, the fingerboards are edge-bound and although the fretwire gauge is pretty much identical to that used on the Core McCarty in terms of width, it is marginally lower in height, again subtly altering the playing feel. Meanwhile, the fingerboard radius remains slightly tighter at 254mm (10 inches) compared with Gibson's 305mm (12 inches).

As you'd expect, there's a fair amount of similarity here, certainly in terms of the neck shape of the maple-topped models, but the three 594s have distinctly different





S2: EXPLAINED

The meaning behind the series name

The S stands for Stevensville, the location of PRS's USA factory; the '2' simply refers to the creation of a second production line conceived to create these more affordable guitars. The range originally launched in mid-2013 with just three guitars: the S2 Mira, S2 Starla and S2 Custom 24.

While the Mira and Starla have dropped down into the fully 'offshore' SE range for this year, the current S2 range is expansive and kicks off with the all-mahogany vibrato-equipped S2 Standard 24 and 22 at £1,125 in satin and £1,395 in gloss. The unique-to-S2 hardtail Vela solidbody is £1,195 in gloss and £1,495 in satin; the Semi-Hollow version in satin/gloss is £1,295/£1,615.

Of course, the maple-topped Custom is represented, too, all full-gloss with vibratos; the 24 and 22 are £1,699, while the 22 Semi-Hollow is £1,899. All S2 models come with PRS gigbags.

5. The neck might be three-piece in construction but it still joins the body in classic PRS style; the full width of the neck slots under the neck pickup

6. It's all about the details. PRS's proprietary tweaks, such as these pickup rings, include recesses for the height-adjustment screws

There's a sweetness to the voicing of all three; they reference an older played-in-quality electric

characters. The heaviest of our trio with the chunkiest body, the Singlecut makes no bones about chasing a Les Paul. The Thinline is considerably lighter and almost acoustic-like in its unplugged response, which is hugely vibrant. The double-cut 594 sits between the two in terms of weight and, to a certain extent, style. Whatever you think about Paul Reed Smith's theories – the importance of the acoustic sound of the solidbody guitar, differences between tuners, nut material and bridge/tailpiece components and so on – these three are extremely 'alive' guitars.

In general terms, there's quite a sweetness to the voicing of all three; they reference an older played-in-quality electric. The





PRS S2 MCCARTY 594 THINLINE £1,649

7. While the controls and circuits are the same for all three S2 594s, the toggle switch on the Thinline moves from the bass-side shoulder to the control area
8. Part of the cost-saving effort on the S2 guitars is the unrecessed control covers for the guitars' back coverplates

slightly lower fretwire gauge perhaps adds to that more classic illusion. Having reviewed the SE Hollowbodies for which these 58/15 'S' pickups were originally conceived, they are fast becoming one of this writer's favourites. There is far from a chasm between these and the USA-made pickups, and listening here – to the whole package, of course, not just the pickups – we don't feel short-changed.

Obviously the double-cut comes closest to our Core McCarty, for example, and purely on a sonic level it offers really wide stylistic versatility with the single-coil voices impressing from the off; they're slightly less strident than the Core

McCarty, a little snappier. Bridge pickup to bridge pickup, well, it's very close, both sounding less honky or spiky than the Seth Lovers or Burstbuckers of our Knaggs and Gibson references, a little more refined. It's pretty similar on the neck pickup in both modes: the split sounds a little mellower on the 594 and quite beautiful; the Core McCarty has a little more treble push. In full humbucking mode, the 594 sounds a little softer, there's a *soupeçon* more clarity to the Core McCarty, but we wouldn't kick either out of bed.

The Singlecut might aim at the Les Paul, but the single-coil voicings open up way more subtle shades hinting at

PRS S2 & CORE DIMENSIONS

(all dimensions in mm unless stated)

NB: The S2 Custom 24 35th and the Core McCarty 2020 use PRS's standard scale length of 635mm (25"); the trio of S2 McCarty 594s have a short scale length of 625mm (24.594")



S2 594

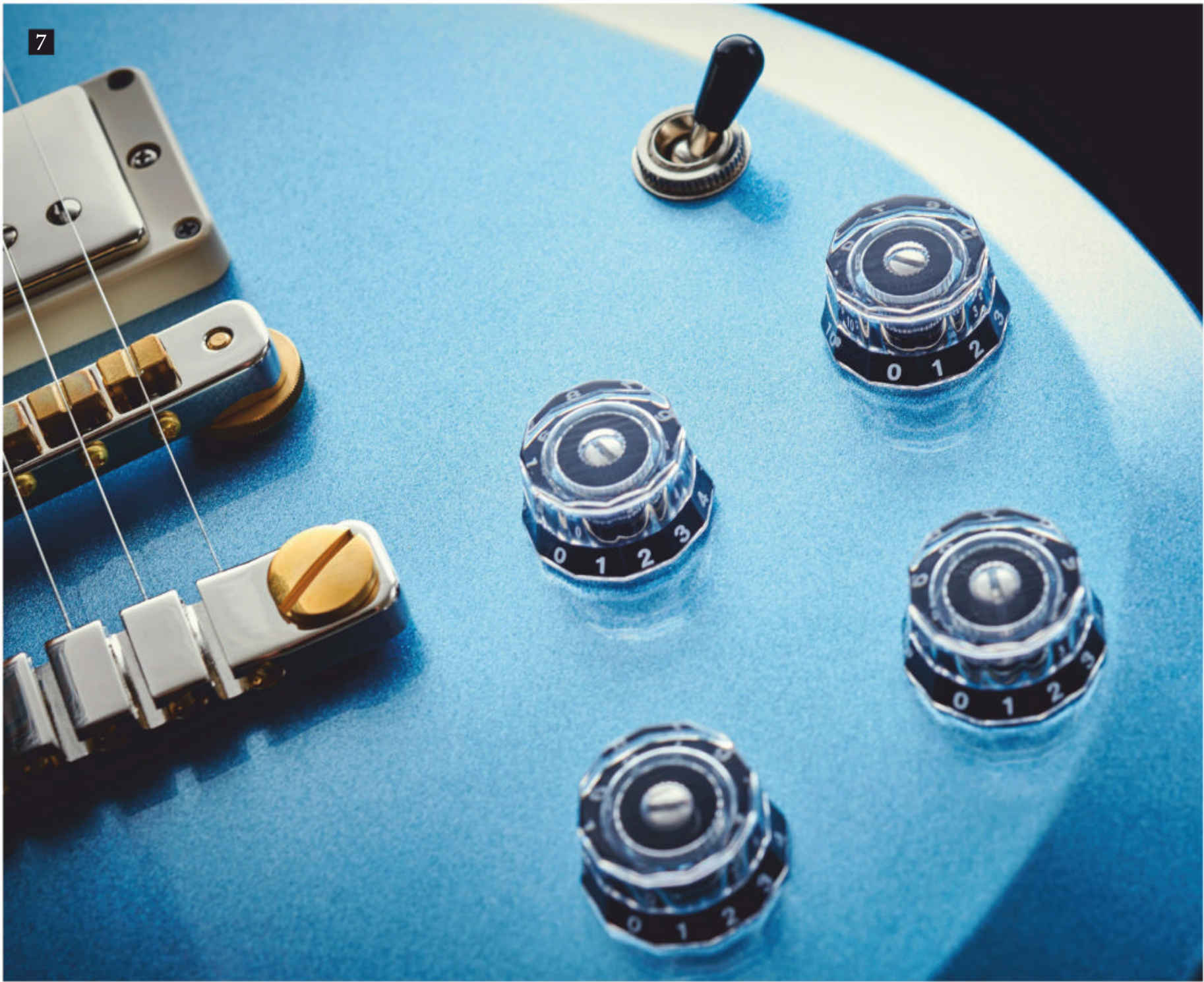


S2 594 SINGLECUT

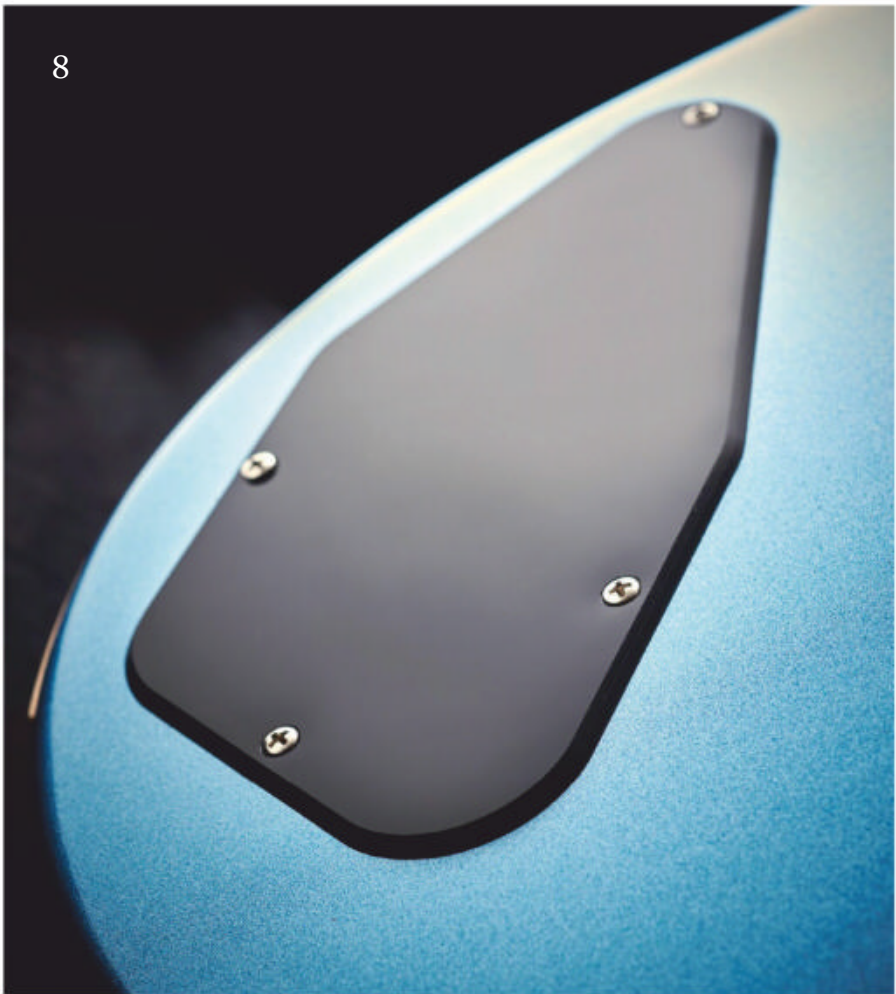


S2 594 THINLINE

	Pattern Vintage	Pattern Vintage	Pattern Thin
Neck profile	Pattern Vintage	Pattern Vintage	Pattern Thin
Width at nut	42.7	42.7	42.8
Width at 12th	52.69	52.6	52.73
Depth at 1st fret	22.6	22.5	21
Depth at 12th fret	25	25	23
Weight (kg/lb)	3.07/6.76	3.8/8.36	2.9/6.38
Bridge pickup (full/split) DCR (kohm)	7.95/5.38	7.98/5.4	7.91/5.38
Neck pickup (full/split) DCR (kohm)	7.81/4.78	7.82/4.79	7.8/4.78



S2 CUSTOM 24 35TH	MCCARTY 2020
Pattern Regular	Pattern
42.16	43.13
51.82	52.86
21.6	21.1
23.8	24
3.37/7.4	3.16/6.95
8.42/4.29	8.08/5.46
7.89/3.93	8.1/4.95





9

PRS NECK SHAPES

Do you know your Wide Fat from your Pattern Thin?

PRS's original neck profiles – Wide Fat, Wide Thin and Regular – were refocused and renamed in 2011 to “reflect modern tooling and programming that allows us to even more precisely shape and consistently reproduce our necks”, says PRS. So, the Wide Fat became the Pattern profile, the Wide Thin became the Pattern Thin and the Regular became (yup, you’ve got it!) the Pattern Regular. A fourth shape was added with the introduction of the 594, the Pattern Vintage.

Nut widths for the Pattern necks are all identical in PRS’s specifications at 1 ¹¹/₁₆ inches (42.86mm), except the Pattern Regular, which is 1 ²¹/₃₂ inches (42.06mm). The width at the body end of the neck is the same at 2 ¹/₄ inches (57.15mm).

It’s the depth and obviously the actual profile that create more noticeable difference. We measure the depth of each neck on our review models (see the Dimensions chart) just in front of the 1st and 12th frets, so you can compare the Pattern Regular (Custom 24 35th), the Pattern (McCarty 2020), the Pattern Vintage (S2 594 Singlecut and double-cut) and the Pattern Thin (S2 594 Thinline).

According to PRS, the Pattern Vintage “features an asymmetrical curve with a little less meat on the bass side of the neck toward the nut end and a little less meat on the treble”. Paul Reed Smith told us: “I bought a ’53 Les Paul and it has an asymmetric neck carve – it’s subtle, yes, but you can feel it, it’s very cool. The 594 is not as pronounced as that but still noticeable.” On our relevant S2 models it’s fair to say the asymmetry is subtle, but it’s the biggest neck in terms of depth and really quite rounded in lower positions compared with the ‘hint of a V’ of the Pattern.



9. 35 years on, the PRS headstock remains instantly recognisable and offers near-straight string-pull over the friction-reducing nut: one of many subtle reasons for the guitars’ renowned tuning stability

10. PRS’s bird inlays grace the majority of guitars the company has built. They were in use before Paul Reed Smith started his first factory in 1985 and first appeared on a guitar he built in 1976 for Peter Frampton

pre-humbucker P-90-like voices that are underpinned by a very solid tonal foundation: for older, snappier classic electric blues, it’s a combination that’s really appealing. You also have the ability to mix neck humbucker with bridge single coil, and vice versa. Yes, it can do grunt and seems marginally thicker in the lower mids with a subtly different vocal character to the mids than the double-cut, but there’s something in the whole package that has more complexity and subtlety.

Next, however, we plug in the Thinline and its more focused voice trims the bass a little and slightly rounds the highs; it’s that midrange character that shifts again. It’s classic mahogany SG-ish grind and one of those planet-aligning combinations. The double-cut and Singlecut are very good, but this Thinline really kicks – vibrant, alive and an effortless player.

Verdict

The 594 recipe certainly sweetens the pill for those of us who either grew up with or are long-time owners of Gibsons and the like. The S2 594 double-cut here has obvious appeal, not least to existing PRS owners who enjoy that now-classic outline but not necessarily the ‘don’t-even-look-

There’s a fair amount of similarity here, but the three 594s have distinctly different characters



at-it' vibe of the higher level Core version. The Singlecut has never excited the market as much as the PRS's double-cut, but if you're in the market for a sub-£2k single-cut you'd be silly not to audition this one. Which leaves the Thinline as the runaway success: a more rock 'n' roll vision that (bird inlays aside) ditches the 'posh maple' aesthetic and offers a slightly lighter and more vibrant sound, particularly to those of us who find the SG hugely appealing but can't get on with its 'long neck' geometry. It's a guitar with a lineage from the PRS Mira, but this Thinline has the proverbial rocket up its backside.

Some might find those flat chamfered-edge maple tops a little, erm, cut-price-looking and we can't help thinking that some solid colours (with a plainer maple underneath) would broaden the appeal. As the Thinline illustrates with its metallic blue finish, it's quite the looker and stylistically further distances the S2 from the Core models. But, as ever, PRS's quality proposition is to the fore, just here it's tempered by a bang-on price point. We really don't think any of this trio play or sound 'cheap', and in these challenging times a saving of around £1.5k might prove to be very important. 



PRS S2 MCCARTY 594

PRICE: £1,849 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany with chamfered edge figured maple top

NECK: Mahogany, Pattern Vintage profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 625mm (24.594")

NUT: Friction reducing

FINGERBOARD: Faux-bone bound rosewood, bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS 2-piece bridge and tailpiece, vintage-style (non-locking) tuners, nickel plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers (bridge); 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone (with pull-switch partial coil-split)
OPTIONS: Colour only
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Whale Blue (as reviewed), Faded Blue Smokeburst, McCarty Sunburst, Dark Cherry Sunburst, Elephant Grey, Scarlet Red and Burnt Amber Burst



9/10

PROS Cost-effective design and build; excellent neck shape and playability; increased versatility from four controls and coil-independent splits

CONS Some opaque colours and even moon/dot inlays would add a more classic style



PRS S2 MCCARTY 594 SINGLECUT

PRICE: £1,849 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany with chamfered edge figured maple top

NECK: Mahogany, Pattern Vintage profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 625mm (24.594")

NUT: Friction reducing

FINGERBOARD: Faux-bone bound rosewood, bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS 2-piece bridge and tailpiece, vintage-style (non-locking) tuners, nickel plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers (bridge); 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone (with pull-switch partial coil-split)
OPTIONS: Colour only
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Faded Blue Smokeburst (as reviewed), Whale Blue, McCarty Sunburst, Dark Cherry Sunburst, Elephant Grey, Scarlet Red and Burnt Amber Burst



9/10

PROS Ditto double-cut model; more Les Paul-like heft here in weight and sound

CONS Ditto double-cut; this is the heaviest of our trio



PRS S2 MCCARTY 594 THINLINE

PRICE: £1,649 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway solidbody electric

BODY: Mahogany

NECK: Mahogany, Pattern Thin profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 625mm (24.594")

NUT: Friction reducing

FINGERBOARD: Faux-bone bound rosewood, bird inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: PRS 2-piece bridge and tailpiece, vintage-style (non-locking) tuners, nickel plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS 58/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers (bridge); 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone (with pull-switch partial coil-split)
OPTIONS: Colour only
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Frost Blue Metallic (as reviewed), Frost Green Metallic, Tobacco Sunburst, Walnut, Vintage Cherry, Antique White and Black



10/10

PROS All the attributes of the other two models in a vibrant rock 'n' roll proposition; any guitar player could enjoy this

CONS At this price, none

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WALRUS AUDIO

Mako D1 High-Fidelity Stereo Delay

A new range from Walrus kicks off with a compact but potent delay

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Neil Godwin

In a somewhat radical departure from its usual graphic-bedecked pedals, Walrus Audio has launched its rather more staid-looking Mako series, and the first in the new range is the D1 High Fidelity Stereo Delay, or 'Echo Machine' as the label reads on the pedal itself.

The D1 is a multi-function delay with five different programs or delay types, each of which has three instantly accessible adjustable parameters, and features a dedicated tap tempo footswitch that's linked to three timing divisions for instant delay time setting. Various mono and stereo in/out options are possible, and while the pedal has nine onboard preset slots available you can actually access a full 128 slots if you use MIDI, which can also offer full control over all parameters.

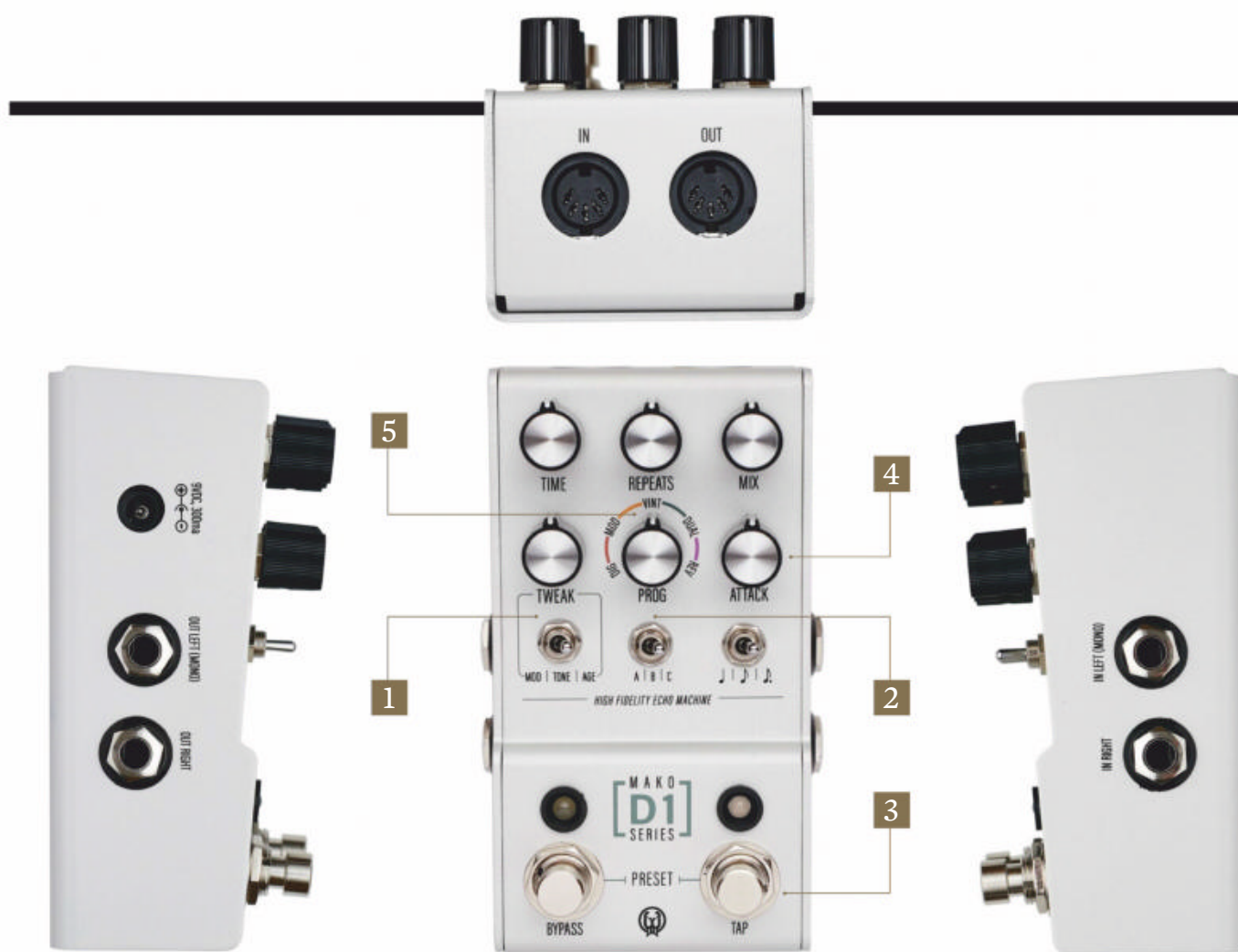
SOUND

About the size of a Boss compact pedal but sporting two footswitches, the D1 offers a practical pedalboard-friendly alternative to larger multi-delay pedals and is also straightforward to operate with nothing hidden away in menus.

The delay types (Digital, Mod, Vintage, Dual and Reverse) are selected via a rotary Program knob and you get the standard Time, Repeats and Mix knobs to set up the basics, although the tap tempo is there as an alternative to the Time knob. Further to this there are three tailored parameters for each delay type via the Tweak knob. The Mod parameter adds pitch modulation to the repeats, while Tone adjustments are generally in the form of a low-pass filter applied to the repeats to tone down the top-end, although with the Vintage delay

you get a low-pass filter below 12 o'clock on the knob and a high-pass filter above. The third Tweak parameter, Age, offers overdrive and high-frequency roll-off for all of the programs except Digital where it applies bitcrushing to the repeats. The final front-panel knob, Attack, is a brilliant feature: it basically softens the attack of the repeats by applying a volume envelope to the audio that's fed into the delay line. It's great for keeping the repeats separate from the dry signal and delivering more diffuse echoes as you turn the knob.

If you like your repeats clear and clean, the Digital program is as straight as it comes, but that also makes it a good starting point for creating something a little less pristine. You can take the sharp edge off with the Attack knob, lose some brightness with the Tone tweak, and maybe add a touch of



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Delay pedal

FEATURES: 3 selectable bypass types (True bypass, DSP+True Bypass (trails), and DSP Bypass), 9 onboard presets, tap tempo, MIDI, 60ms to 2s delay time

CONTROLS: Program selector, Time, Repeats, Mix, Tweak, Attack, Tweak switch (Mod/Tone/Age), Bank switch (A/B/C), Division switch (quarter/eighth/dotted eighth), Tap footswitch, Bypass footswitch

EFFECTS PROGRAMS: Digital, Mod, Vintage, Dual, Reverse

CONNECTIONS: Standard inputs (Left/Mono, Right), standard outputs (Left/Mono, Right), MIDI IN, MIDI OUT

POWER: Supplied 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 300mA

DIMENSIONS: 73 (w) x 125 (d) x 60mm (h)

01. TWEAK KNOB & SWITCH

Here you'll find the three adjustable parameters for each program. Select Modulation, Tone or Age with the switch and adjust with the knob

02. BANK SWITCH

There are three banks of three presets onboard: you select the bank (A, B or C) with this switch and press down both footswitches together to access the three presets (LED colour indicates which)

03. TAP TEMPO SWITCH

This footswitch is allied to the Division selector switch above it, which can select quarter (1/4), eighth (1/8), or dotted eighth (.1/8) notes. The Division switch also selects the combination of repeats in Dual delay mode (1/4 note with 1/4 triplets, 1/8 note with 1/4 triplet repeats, 1/4 note and .1/8 note)

04. ATTACK KNOB

Turn this knob clockwise to adjust the volume envelope of the signal being fed into the delay. Higher settings means longer fade-ins, which result in softer-sounding repeats

05. PROG KNOB

Turn this control so the pointer points at the legending to select which of the five programs you want to use

Guitarist
CHOICE
9/10

modulation. For more off-the-wall repeats, its bitcrusher can get brutal and angular.

The Mod delay's premise is repeats with random and unpredictable pitch modulation. The result can be interestingly swimmy but can go fully seasick if you want to get more radical. Vintage incorporates complex filtering of the repeats to deliver analogue-style delay sounds in many flavours, the Tone parameter offering darker-sounding repeats or something much thinner, shorn of low-end. Asymmetric modulation offers a flavour of tape wobble, while the pedal's universal function of momentarily holding down the bypass footswitch to ramp up the repeats can deliver vintage dub stylings.

Stereo rigs can take advantage of the Dual program's two delays in parallel with different time divisions sent to separate

outputs, but in a standard mono chain the summed repeats offer cool rhythmic multi-taps. Reverse can offer a nice otherworldly touch, especially when combined with a high Attack knob setting.

While it's straightforward enough to set up the sounds, changing a delay type manually along with its three Tweak parameters is not something you'd really want to be doing on stage, which is where the nine onboard memories – plenty to get you through a gig – come in useful. Stored in three banks of three, you select the bank with the toggle switch and can then scroll through and load them by pressing both footswitches simultaneously, easily done as they are fairly close together. The tap tempo LED will light red, green or blue to indicate which preset is loaded. Usefully, you can choose whether to store delay

time within a preset or not. In the pedal's Global mode the tempo stays the same as you change presets, but in Preset mode the tempo changes to that set when the preset was stored.

VERDICT

A practical pedalboard delay with recallable presets, tap tempo and all the parameters on the surface, this pedal will slot easily into live gigs. However, it's the massive scope for tailoring the nature of the repeats, in particular the inspired Attack control, that makes this a really flexible tone machine. **G**

PROS Onboard presets; practical set of delay types; MIDI capability; Attack knob

CONS External control is MIDI only – there's no provision for extra footswitches or expression pedal

DOPHIX

Michelangelo Overdrive Plus

The Italian maker presents a trio of voices for valve-style drive

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Olly Curtis

Dophix, an Italian company based in Florence, has been hand-building pedals to order since 2015. And the aim of its Michelangelo Overdrive Plus is to deliver valve-amp-style drive.

The circuitry is mainly based around JFET transistors but offers three different diode voicings with germanium and silicon sound represented as well as FET. Level and Gain controls set up the drive sound that can be further tweaked by two EQ knobs; the ‘B’ knob works on low frequencies while the knob marked ‘M’ offers control over the top-end.

The three voicings, each sufficiently distinct from the next, offer real versatility when it comes to choosing your drive flavour, be it the straight-up FET sound or the more fuzzy-edged silicon and germanium. Further variation is available via a Blend knob to mix clean sound with drive, although it’s not the pristine clean sound as heard when the pedal is bypassed but one with extra low-end and midrange. It’s not what we were expecting from the

description, but it’s nevertheless another useful parameter for shaping the tone, particularly for adding body to the drive’s naturally scooped character and tweaking the transients.

The pedal also has boosts either side of the drive circuitry. The preamp boost offers up to 15dB of gain before the signal hits the drive section, pushing it harder into distortion. It can be turned on via a toggle switch to be part of the overall signal or switched in with the Boost footswitch. That footswitch also always brings in the output boost that offers up to a further 15dB at the output. The combination of footswitch and toggle switch means that you can switch in either the preamp boost or the output boost or both together, offering a useful degree of flexibility, especially for onstage use where a switched transition to more gain, increased level or both together could be invaluable.

Overall, whether you want clean boost or anything from light break-up through to heavier distortions, there are plenty of variations to be discovered here.



VERDICT

This pedal’s sonic versatility and flexible boost options make it a practical solution for that empty pedalboard drive slot. *Molto buono!* 

- PROS** Three distinct drive voices; flexible options available for introducing boost; clean blend knob
- CONS** Layout and legending isn’t naturally intuitive; expensive

ALSO TRY...



D&M Drive £229

A dual-format design featuring overdrive and boost sections that can be used individually or stacked, with the option of putting the boost before or after the drive. The circuits can also be split – each in separate loops of a switching system.



Palisades £249

Two channels of drive, one with higher gain than the other, and a separately footswitchable boost offer instant access to four different gain levels. For the drive sound there’s a choice of six clipping voices and five different bandwidth settings.



Santa Ana £169

A dual-footswitch FET-based drive and boost pedal, the Santa Ana offers two different voices (American and British) with a four-knob amp-style EQ. The footswitchable boost can boost either the drive stage or the output volume.

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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Tech Spec

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass,

CONTROLS: Boost, Gain

2, Pre, Level, B, Blend,

M, Pre on/off switch,

Diode selector switch

(Ger/FET/Sil),

Boost footswitch,

Drive footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input,

standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor

(not supplied) 60mA

DIMENSIONS: 120 (w) x

90 (d) x 40mm (h)

8/10





PEDALBOARD

MANUFACTURER
EMPRESSEFFECTS

MODEL
ZOIA

PRICE
£479

CONTACT
[HTTPS://EMPRESSEFFECTS.COM](https://empresseffects.com)



EMPRESS EFFECTS

Zoia

This box of tricks could change the way you think about effects...

Words Rod Brakes Photography Olly Curtis

The *Guitarist* team are suckers for good old-fashioned vintage gear, but we are also huge fans of technology. Be it the simplest analogue application or cutting-edge digital modelling, if it sounds right and feels right, the chances are it is. And with Empress Effects' "infinite trick pony" – the Zoia – creating such a buzz in the stompbox world recently, we couldn't wait to dive in and find out why people have been raving about this quirky little box with what seems like far too many buttons.

Although it may appear unfamiliar or slightly confusing at first, that grid of 40 buttons is precisely what makes working with the Zoia such a breeze. Think of them as spaces. Press an unoccupied one to choose a module from the screen menu using the rotary knob (not forgetting to

pick a suitable colour, of course!) and a number of buttons light up in a row depending on how many parameters and inputs/outputs the module has. To link different modules together simply press two buttons simultaneously, like the output of reverb to the input of tremolo, and to tweak their parameters just hit a relevant button and use the rotary knob to adjust. Easy!

"But what is this 'module' nonsense?" we hear you cry. The Zoia is a modular synthesizer in pedal form, but that doesn't mean it's off the radar as far as us guitarists are concerned. Indeed, quite the opposite: the very same principles have long been used to design guitar pedals. What makes the Zoia unique, however, is that with a little imagination you can easily customise your own effects. And without needing a

studio full of synth modules, or a soldering iron for that matter, in order to do so. Furthermore, with 64 patches available to save your work and instantly recall it on the fly using the Scroll and Select footswitches, or via MIDI, you can create a virtual pedalboard full of possibilities.

If you have zero experience hooking up synth modules and would like to start using the Zoia straight out of the box then fear not. Empress has included a bunch of ready-made guitarist-friendly effects modules to choose from. The Canadian company has been hard at work updating the firmware with new and exciting modules since the Zoia's release, often based on recommendations from an ever-growing online community of users. At the time of writing, it boasts 20 effects modules including an EQ, overdrive/

01. ROTATE & CLICK TO SELECT

Clickable rotary knob used to navigate various options and dial in parameters

02. MODULE GRID

Modules are laid out on this 'page'/grid of 40 buttons (64 pages max per patch)

03. ASSIGNABLE FUNCTIONALITY

Stomp switches are used to navigate patches and also have assignable functionality

04. INPUT/OUTPUT

Left/right ins and outs (can also be used to set up an effects loop and patch other units in)

05. CONTROL PORT SOCKET

The Control Port can accept an expression pedal, external switch, MIDI and control voltage



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: Canada

TYPE: Multi-effects/synthesizer

FEATURES: 20 ready-made effects; 23 audio modules; 22 control modules; 16 interface modules; 3 analysis modules; 64 writable patches; MIDI in/out; CV in/out; exp. pedal; ext. switch; 3x assignable footswitches

CONTROLS: 1x rotary knob; buttons: 4x utility buttons (Page Left/Right, Back and Shift); 40x module grid/page buttons (alternative/Shift functions include Move, Copy, Edit, Delete, Star, View, Save, Random, Undo, Help and Configure Menu); Select, Scroll & Bypass footswitches

CONNECTIONS: Left/right input & left/right output standard jacks; Control Port jack for ext. switch/exp. pedal/MIDI in & out/0-5V control voltage in & out; 2x MIDI mini jacks: in & out (2x 3.5mm/5-pin dongles supplied); micro SD card slot (card and adaptor supplied)

POWER: 2.1mm centre negative 9V DC adaptor (not supplied); 300mA current draw

DIMENSIONS: 145 (w) x 95 (d) x 67mm (h)

Guitarist CHOICE

9/10

distortion, fuzz, compressor, noise gate, phaser, flanger, chorus, vibrato, tremolo, envelope filter, ring modulator and cab simulator, along with two delays and five reverbs partly derived from Empress's popular Reverb pedal.

SOUNDS

Although the above effects merely scratch the surface of the Zoia's capabilities, they alone would be enough to elicit a rave review. Take the OD & Distortion module, for example: it may not replace your favourite dirt pedal(s) – and it's worth bearing in mind here that you can easily set up an effects loop to patch external devices in – but the overdrive is clear, open and surprisingly natural-sounding enough to give the best of them a run for their money. Sporting a range of options

including Plexi, Germ, Classic, Pushed and Edgy, along with adjustable input and output gain, the OD & Distortion module covers an impressive range of sonic ground. Further tone-shaping is available courtesy of the Tone Control EQ module, while the Cabinet Sim module rounds things off nicely with 4x12 Full, 2x12 Dark, 2x12 Modern, 1x12, 1x8 LoFi, 1x12 Vint and 4x12 HiFi options.

Although the Zoia can do tons of classic guitar tones, it excels at large, complex sounds and unique custom-detailed effects of an experimental nature, where creating the same kind of thing would be difficult, if not impossible, using regular pedals. For example, you might envisage a tremolo that speeds up and slows down depending on your picking strength. No problem: just pop down the Envelope Follower module

to analyse your incoming guitar signal then attach it to the LFO controlling the volume of a VCA audio module – and job done!

VERDICT

Getting the best out of Empress's Zoia will require a little knowledge of how effects work and what various synthesizer terms mean, such as envelope, LFO, VCA and so on, but with just a modicum of learning and imagination the Zoia can open up possibilities that take your musical vision to another creative level. **G**

PROS Build your own custom effects; logical and intuitive operation; outstanding sound quality; also functions as an instrument/synth
CONS Requires learning; stereo headphone socket would have significantly expanded the functionality



Howard Gee

The ex-Catalinbread masterbrain talks vintage echo and reveals his new brand of guitar effects pedals...

1 What was the first pedal you built and how did the design come about?

“Originally, all I wanted to do was play the guitar, so I used to buy a lot of different effects. I guess you could say I was quite knowledgeable about them, but I’d never built a pedal before I went to work for Catalinbread in Portland in 2007. I thought it was going to be a temporary thing, but I ended up tinkering around with a Fuzz Face circuit. Like a lot of guys, that’s what I cut my teeth on. The first pedal I designed was a [Mosrite] Fuzzrite-inspired fuzz pedal called the [Catalinbread] Merkin and that really started it all off for me. That was the moment I thought, ‘I guess I can design pedals now!’”

2 What do you think makes your pedal designs unique?

“It’s a tone thing, but it’s also a feel thing. A pedal might sound right but it might not feel right, so the way I approach it is: if it feels right, it’s going to sound right. It’s more in the fingers than the ears. I have a purist approach to building guitar pedals and my philosophy is to honour the feel and response of old-school gear.”

3 Which notable players have used your pedal designs?

“The [Catalinbread] Belle Epoch got the attention of some notables like Eric Johnson – he jumped onboard in a big way! Ed O’Brien is a big fan of the Belle Epoch Deluxe, as is Richard Fortus from Guns N’ Roses, and Andy Summers uses one for his band Call The Police.”

4 Do you have anything new on the horizon?

“I’ve started a new company called kittycasterFX. I’m the circuit designer and we also have Scott Miller, Steve Hamari, Boris Lutskovsky and Jean Mastaler onboard, along with the graphic artist David Medel, who’s known online as weirdbeard72. Stay tuned to my Instagram account – @kittycastermusic – for news!”

5 Can you reveal your best tone tip for guitarists?

“If you want your pedals to sound their best, make sure the rest of your rig sounds good. I always make sure my guitar and amp sound good with nothing else plugged in. Basic things like the instrument cable, pickup height, strings and picks can really influence your sound.”

6 What problems have effects designers yet to crack?

“A lot of pedals don’t respond to your playing very well, whereas my goal has always been to try and get the best dynamic response and touch-sensitivity possible. Using more than the standard nine volts is a means to achieve that with greater headroom and dynamic range.”

7 What’s your favourite vintage pedal and why?

“I’m a big fan of the [Maestro] Echoplex EP-3, because that, to me, is the sound of 70s rock guitar. Almost everyone ran through that at some point. When people are talking about EP-3 preamps, that’s a



This EP-4 Echoplex is owned by Adrian Utley and is the Portishead guitarist’s favourite echo unit

real phenomenon I used to see in the 70s – people just left them on without using the echo, because they sound so good.”

8 What’s your favourite effects pedal moment on record and why?

“Any live Hendrix. Also, I grew up as a big fan of live records and the late 70s was sort of the peak of that. You had *The Song Remains The Same*, *Cheap Trick At Budokan*, *Frampton Comes Alive!* – just a ton of great live recordings. I think that spark of raw energy you feel with live music affected my sensibilities in terms of design. I’m always trying to keep that alive with as much response as possible.”

9 If you had a three-pedal desert island pedalboard, what would be on it and why?

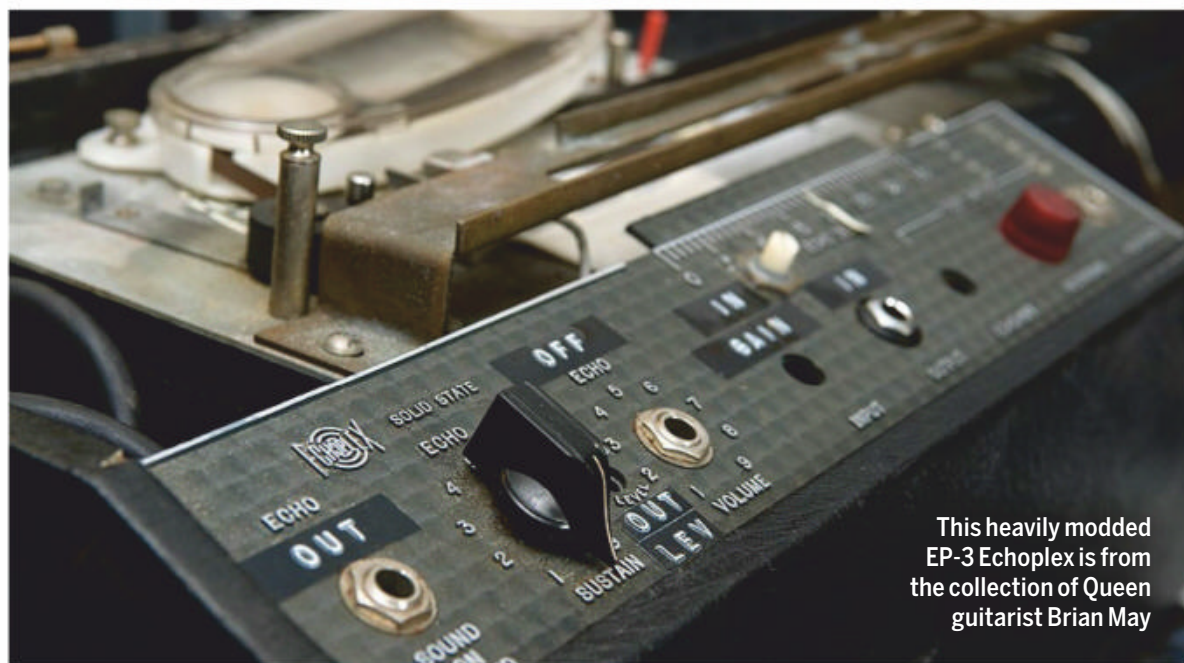
“A wah, a fuzz and an Echoplex. I’m really into 60s and 70s stuff.”

10 Are there any long-lost gems you think would be worth reissuing?

“There’s a bunch of old delay units from back in the day I’m not sure have been reinterpreted, so I might do a take on something along the lines of a Watkins Copicat, Multivox or Klemt Echolette. The gold Klemt Echolette is freaking amazing! It’s got this dirt to the preamp that is just astounding. Those old units are very quirky and the danger is sanitising out the quirks when you reinterpret them. I think it’s better to celebrate the quirks, because that’s what makes them unique.”

“There have been a lot of intrepid folks exploring these things, but I’m not into the whole DSP thing. For me, the audio path is king. I’m not trying to reinvent the wheel, but I am trying to build a better one.”

www.kittycasterfx.com



This heavily modded EP-3 Echoplex is from the collection of Queen guitarist Brian May



Level Up

Adrian Thorpe takes you beyond the volume knob on your guitar as he extols the virtues of the humble volume pedal

THE BACKGROUND

ANDY PAULLSON, **Via email**

I've long been a fan of volume pedals, but I've a feeling, with some creative pedalboard routing, I could get even more interesting functionality and sonic results out of them. Could you tell me the optimal place or places you could put a volume pedal for ordinary level control on stage? And then suggest some more creative uses for volume pedals in either a big pedalboard or a pedalboard and two-amp rig?

THE ANSWERS

Andy, great question. A volume pedal is often a misunderstood beast. Lots of players swear they don't need one as they can just ride the volume on their guitar. This is understandable to a degree, but, ultimately, it ignores the versatility a volume pedal can bring to your rig.

01 A volume pedal is a mechanical pedal that allows you to control the volume of the input source (the guitar, usually) with your foot. This can be anything from 0 to 100 per cent if it's a passive pedal, or from 0 to 100+ per cent if it's active – namely, it contains an electronic circuit that can boost the signal to the output.

Even if you only need some very fleeting volume swells, a dedicated volume pedal can introduce a useful degree of control over your volume that hitherto was unavailable. Using a long travel on a foot pedal is easier to control while you're playing than the volume control on your guitar, and allows you to control your guitar's volume for clean. If used before a gain pedal it can be used to 'clean up' the amount of drive on tap, meaning you can set a driven sound for rhythm and then swell in the gain for solos. This works particularly well with vintage-style germanium Fuzz Face pedals (passive volume only).

Ernie Ball's VPJR Tuner is a volume pedal with added versatility – it has a tuner built into the top plate



02 The traditional placing of a volume pedal is at the front of your pedalboard, but they are versatile in that they can be used in other locations, too. Placed at the end of a 'board they can control the output from your whole pedalboard and therefore how much of your effected signal reaches the amp. This is great if you run a stereo rig, as you can have one signal unmolested going to one amp and then you can feed in the other amp as and when required.

Another trick is to use the volume pedal in your amp's effect loop. This comes after your amp's preamp and can therefore act as a level control for the amp's distortion without changing the character of the distortion.

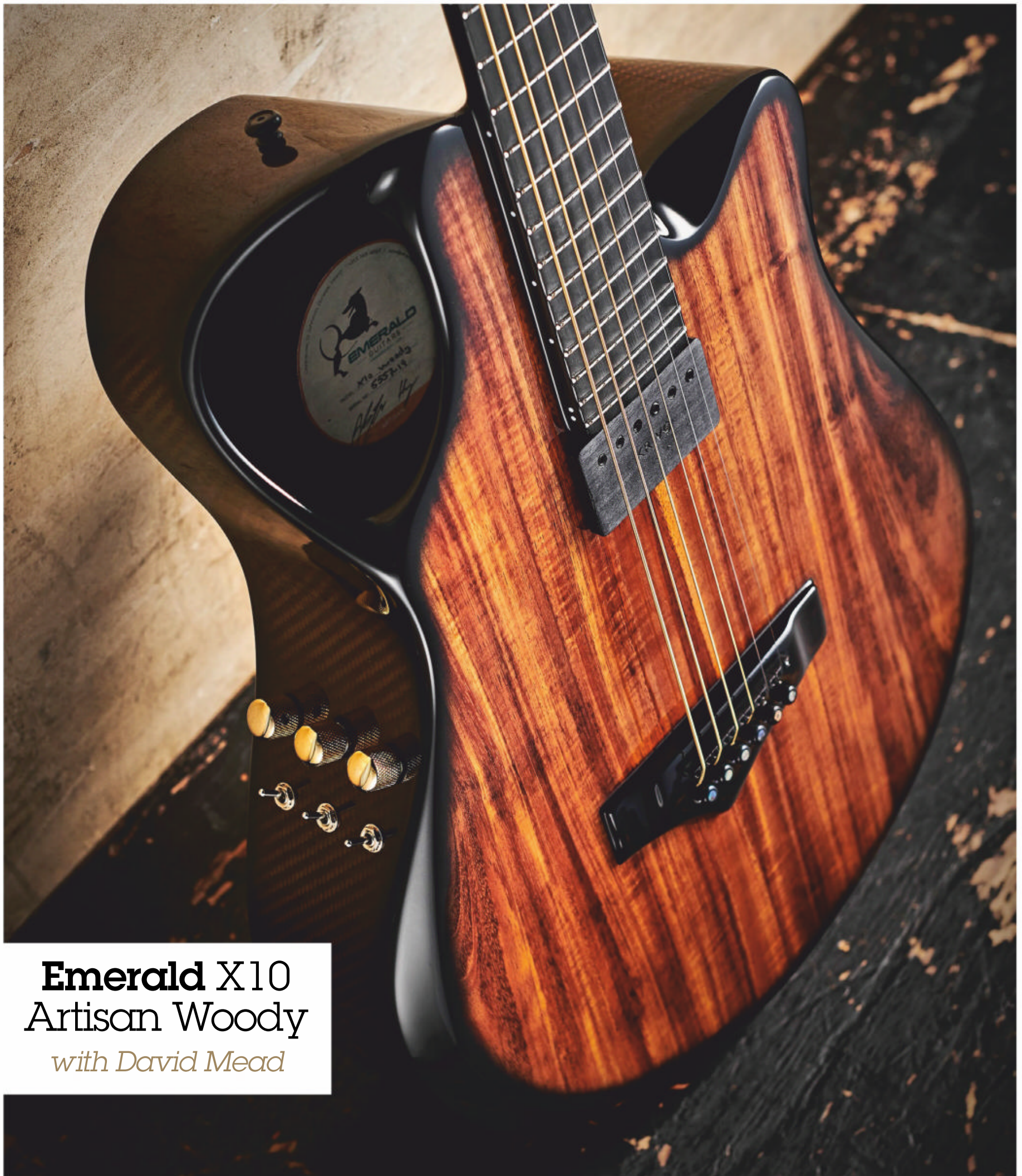
03 Volume pedals are very much focused tools, but there are versions out there that multi-task, such as the new Ernie Ball VPJR Tuner pedal that has a tuner built into the top plate to save 'board space. Others combine volume, wah and expression into the one slice of real estate. One last thing: it's great to combine a volume pedal in front of a delay pedal or reverb that has spillover engaged. This means that when you roll back the volume on the pedal it creates space for the spillover to occur and do its things.

Volume pedals can be extremely expressive and creative tools, so their placement is vital to getting the most of their abilities. Experiment and enjoy!

EMAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS: GUITARIST@FUTURENET.COM

Longtermers

A few months' gigging, recording and everything that goes with it – welcome to *Guitarist's* longterm test report



Emerald X10
Artison Woody
with David Mead

Writer

DAVID MEAD,
Guitarist, Acting Editor



David first met the X10 during a brief video demo shoot for issue 456 and realised immediately that it promised a whole range of possibilities that demanded further exploration...

Up until the point that our eyes first met across a busy video demo studio, my only acquaintance with the Emerald range of instruments was via the company's Facebook ad campaign and Dave Burrluck's Wishlist article. I was fascinated not only by the idea that the X10 was conceived as a hybrid electric and acoustic, with spec that would make it equally desirable in both camps, but also by the pickup options.

The Graph Tech Ghost Acousti-Phonic piezo cluster at the bridge – six individual pickups with adjustable height for each – takes care of the acoustic sound, but then there's the wafer-thin (6mm) Krivo magnetic pickup in the neck position. If that wasn't enough, an additional MIDI facility means that hook-up possibilities are endless. Using a split stereo

"The build process is fascinating and one that's poles apart from the more usual sawdust and wood shavings experience"

cable it's possible to feed the humbucker to a regular guitar amp of your choosing and the piezo to an acoustic amp or DI box.

All things considered, the Emerald X10 is beginning to sound like the ultimate performance tool, especially for players with a repertoire that takes in a bit of blues, a smidge of fingerstyle and maybe some ambient synth noodlings on the side. A little Mellotron with your acoustic whimsy, sir? Well, why not.

We haven't even discussed the elephant in the room yet, either: this is a fully carbon fibre guitar that is technically immune to any variations in temperature or humidity the world can throw at it. But the bottom line is always going to be 'how does it sound?' and that box is ticked, too, because when I took the X10 for a spin at the video shoot I was impressed by how 'woody' it sounded and how easy it was to play. Placing it back into its Hiscox case that day, I was already plotting how I could spend more time with it – and it was the last thing I grabbed from our studio before we were all subjected to lockdown.



Graph Tech's Ghost Acousti-Phonic system comprises six height-adjustable pickups, with additional MIDI functionality



has a mindset that is tailored to wooden instruments – maybe he or she wants a spruce and rosewood acoustic response – how does Alistair translate that into the language of carbon fibre?

"Well, that's one of the most difficult things to do," he responds. "You're trying to work with language that is describing something that's not constant. People are using descriptive terms to get across what they're looking for tonally in a guitar, so that can be hard. Also, the benchmarks, I think, are not really great, because people talk about combinations of different tonewoods and those combinations on a different guitar can sound entirely different."

I suggest that there's still work to be done in unlearning some of the preconceptions about acoustic guitars, and Alistair agrees: "Yes, I think that a lot of it is maybe the eye hearing, if you know what I mean," he laughs.

Since then, I've had the X10 home with me and the first job, before I begin to plumb the possibilities where pickup combos are concerned, is to change the strings for a heavier gauge. I have a tendency to drop-tune a lot of the time and the strings that were native to the X10 felt like they could have been 11s, a good in-between gauge in line with its hybrid appeal (not too heavy for an electric player nor too light for an acoustic stylist) but too light for DADGAD. So, it was on with a set of Elixir 13s, stretch the strings in a little – and I haven't had to tune it since. Carbon fibre super-stability? I don't know, but I'm looking forward to the next stage where I'll be exploring the sounds on offer. I've even got some MIDI facilities that I'm going to dust off for the occasion. Like the X10, stay tuned! **G**

Between times I have visited the Emerald workshops in Donegal, met with company founder and designer Alistair Hay, and witnessed the production of the guitars for myself. It's a fascinating process and one that's poles apart from the more usual sawdust and wood shavings experience I'm used to when visiting an acoustic maker. I wondered how players out in the world are viewing carbon fibre as an alternative to their treasured wooden instruments...

"Some people have a mindset that carbon is going to sound a very specific way, but it's actually a material that does allow you to still tailor the sound," Alistair begins. "So, by different combinations of carbon, different types of resins, other different materials that we put into the mix, we can actually tailor the tonal properties of the guitar. Just like you can with different combinations of wood, you can alter the tonal properties with synthetic materials as well."

So, let's say a customer approaches Emerald to commission an instrument but



ROBBY KRIEGER

From pawn shops and stolen guitars to 'Bursts and signature Gibsons,
The Doors legend reveals his trials and tribulations in the trade...



What was the last guitar you bought and why?

"I didn't really buy it, I traded it. I was doing some recording with Alice Cooper and the guitar player had a '61 Les Paul Junior. I always liked those. I'd just had a [Gibson] signature model made of my SG, so I traded him for that. It had the wide, flat neck of a Les Paul Junior from '61. Gibson did a run of 100 of those. It came out good. They also did my '54 Les Paul Black Beauty."

What was the first serious guitar you bought with your own money?

"It wasn't my own money, it was my dad's money. He was going over to Spain on business and I told him, 'Listen, you've got to go to this guitar shop called Ramirez in downtown Madrid and pick up a Flamenco guitar for me and I'll pay you back.' And for \$200 he got this beautiful '63

"I don't have a lot
of guitars just sitting
around in a warehouse;
I use them"

Flamenco guitar, which I still have. I wrote *Spanish Caravan* on it. Flamenco was the first lesson I took that I was serious about, especially since I had this cool guitar. Actually, I had a pretty cool Flamenco guitar before that one that was made in Mexico by Ramirez's nephew. Mexico make some pretty high-end guitars if you look for them."

What's your best guitar-buying tip?

"I wouldn't buy a guitar sight unseen on the internet. I like to make sure they sound good and I like light guitars – I don't like them too heavy. If you're a collector or something like that it might be okay, but I don't have a lot of guitars just sitting around in a warehouse; I use them. I've got about 35 guitars. I went over to Richie Sambora's house one day and he's got quite a few. Although no one compares to Joe Bonamassa."

What's the most incredible find or bargain you've ever had when buying guitars?

"Well, the one that's worth the most is my '60 Les Paul Sunburst that I picked up about 15 years ago. This friend of mine who is a real Les Paul freak saw it down at the Guitar Center and told me about it, so I went there and got it."

What's the strongest case of 'buyer's remorse' that you've ever had?

"Years ago, I had a chance to buy the best Les Paul I'd ever seen. It was the most flame-y 'Burst ever. It almost looked painted. It was like the guitar was on fire or something. The guy said he wanted \$3,500 for it and I said, 'Are you kidding? No guitar is worth \$3,500 dollars!' It'd be worth at least half a million today. Should've bought that one [laughs]!"

Have you ever sold a guitar that you now intensely regret letting go of?

“My first guitar that I used in The Doors – a Gibson Melody Maker – got stolen. But I didn’t even care. I just went and got another one. In those days there were no collectable guitars. Today, that guitar would be worth a lot... About 20 years ago, I sold a ’59 dot-neck 335 for some reason. I wish I still had that one. I bought it a few years before that and I don’t know why I sold it. I think I had my eyes on a 355 that I bought and thought, ‘I don’t need that any more.’”

Are there any common design features on electric guitars that are an instant turn-off when you’re auditioning potential new guitars?

“All I know is how it sounds and how it plays. And I can tell right away if a guitar plays good or not, and if it sounds good. It sometimes takes me a while to get used to a guitar. Sometimes, after a month of playing, it’s not as good as I thought it was... I just don’t see why people like Telecasters so much. It’s not my style. To me, a Strat is a lot better and more playable than a Tele.”

When was the last time you stopped to stare in a guitar shop window and what were you looking at?

“I go into the Guitar Center every once in a while, but, to tell you truth, I haven’t really seen anything that I would want to buy that would be better than what I’ve already got. My number one is the one I always use on stage – a ’67 SG Standard, similar to the one I had back in The Doors days. For some reason, it just plays really, really nice. It has a skinny neck, but I’m more into wide necks.

“Years ago, I had a chance to buy the most flame-y ‘Burst ever. It was like the guitar was on fire or something...”

I think it’s more about the sound. I got that about 25 years ago. Before that, I used a 335 mostly, like Larry Carlton.”

If forced to make a choice, would you rather buy a really good guitar and a cheap amp – or a cheap guitar and a top-notch amp?

“A cheap amp, I think. You can always get another amp, but it’s not so easy to find a good guitar. I like the [Fender] Blues DeVille with the 4x10s. I really like those. I seem to get what I need out of them. I really like the old ’59 Twin, but they’re hard to find. I’ve been looking for one and Joe Bonamassa said he’s got a bunch of them. He said he’d sell me one, but every time I call him, he’s on tour [laughs].”



If you could only use humbuckers or single coils for the rest of your life which one would you choose and why?

“Humbuckers. Even though my guitar on the first two albums was a single-coil Melody Maker. It sounded pretty good! But they buzz so much, you know. I didn’t really think about it that much when that Melody Maker got stolen and the next guitar had humbuckers on it. I just kind of got used to it... I bet someone has my [guitar] but just doesn’t know it.”

What’s your favourite guitar shop and why?

“My favourite one was a pawn shop called Ace Loans in Santa Monica. It’s not there any more. It eventually became just a guitar shop, because they became so famous for selling guitars. There was a guy called Hank there and he was a wheeler-dealer kind of guy. I used to make a deal with him. That’s where I got my first Melody Maker for \$180 – and that was brand-new. They had old ones, too.” **[RB]**

Robby recorded The Door’s first two albums using Gibson single coils before moving on to humbuckers after his guitar was stolen



Robby’s new album, *The Ritual Begins At Sundown*, featuring Frank Zappa alumni Arthur Barrow, Tommy Mars, Sal Marquez and Jock Ellis, is now due for release on 14 August 2020 via The Players Club/Mascot Label Group

<https://robbykrieger.com>

TURN ON THE TAPS!

If we don't already have enough choice in the pickup market, Dave Burrluck auditions a new-to-him British brand. But will the stars align?



1. Gemini Pickups' founder Mike Rose started the company in 2006; here he is plying his wares at a guitar show

2. Andy Powell's famous Royale Warrior V is powered by Gemini pickups – a Vampire Lord at the bridge and Vampyra at the neck

I'm sure somewhere some diligent person has listed all the companies, large and small, all over the world that make retrofit pickups for us to swap. If that list ran to 300 or more, I wouldn't be surprised... although it's probably higher. And when we consider that most pickup makers offer various types of pickups – full-size humbuckers, single coils for Fender-styles, P-90s, not to mention more leftfield designs such as mini-humbuckers or Gold Foils and the like – the actual number of pickups made each year could be rather staggering. That doesn't even include all the pickups that are made for the actual guitars we buy.

Like every other area of guitar-related gear, we have the choice of price and origin, but that doesn't tell us much. The thing is, a pickup doesn't make a sound without a guitar. You can visit the pickup makers' websites and watch endless videos about the units, but until you buy the pickup and load it into your guitar you're really not going to know how it suits, are you? I'd wager many players and tinkerers have a lot more unused pickups sitting around than they do guitars. I know I do...

But what is it about our obsession with magnets and coils of wire? It's certainly born out of our desire to sound better, right? With so much choice, though, it's just as easy to buy a pickup set that'll make your guitar sound (potentially) worse. What if, we think, just around the corner there's a pickup that could change our world? If only we could find the bugger...

Different By Design

You might not have heard of the UK's Gemini pickups. I certainly hadn't and I'd like to think, thanks to the day job, I have a keen eye thanks to keeping an eye and an ear out for new bits of gear. Founder Mike Rose isn't a new pickup maker; he's been at it since 2006 – and his wife, Liz, has been helping out the business for the past couple of years, too – in what would once have been called a semi-professional guise. "I have a day job as technical manager of a small software company in Eastern Germany specialising in pipeline safety," Mike tells me. As a long-time guitarist, Mike had "wanted to do something with guitars for a long time, but I knew I didn't have the patience needed to make them",

"I'd wager many players and tinkerers have a lot more unused pickups sitting around than they do guitars. I know I do..."

so pickups seemed the obvious choice. "I don't want anything to do with high voltages and I don't generally use much in the way of effects."

Mike has made pickups for various UK makers, in particular Kevin Chilcott at Royale Guitars. "This included the pickups for Andy Powell's Warrior and Camille Royale Vs," says Mike. "They are actually a Vampire Lord bridge and Vampyra neck. I probably won't ever tell Andy that his neck pickup is perfect for Satriani-style high-gain work..."

"While I don't think I've missed out on many vintage sounds," continues Mike, "I've tried to create as much as I can that's new or different. The great majority of



Our well-modded PRS S2 Singlecut Semi-Hollow is a great platform for a pair of Gemini Ghostrider tappable humbuckers mounted in their Anomaly pickup rings

“A fresh set of strings and a little time spent balancing the pickup heights to your taste means you’re maximising what you’re hearing”

pickups are made with three magnet materials and three gauges of coil wire: Alnico II, V and Ceramic 8 with AWG 42, 43 and 44. All of the other common Alnico grades are used and there are a few pickups with neodymium magnets. Some rail pickups have AWG 45 coil wire, but other gauges are not used very much except for SWG 46 [equivalent to AWG 42.5], which is used quite a bit in Europe. I use Alnico II, III, IV, V and VIII as well as Ceramic 8 with AWG 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46 and SWG 46.”

Checking out Mike’s perfectly functional but far from showy website reveals a huge selection of humbuckers and single coils. Dig a little deeper and it’s clear that Mike

is into offering some different flavours, not least in using tapped pickup designs. As we’ve previously discussed, a ‘coil-tap’ is where a secondary output is taken part way through winding a coil (or both coils of a humbucker) giving a different, lower and switchable output option. It should never be confused with a ‘coil-split’ where one coil of a humbucker is shunted to ground leaving the other one active.

“Half a vintage humbucker usually sounds thin, weak and horrible,” says Mike of the latter method. “But two thirds of a vintage humbucker typically sounds really good. Neither of them sound much like a Strat or Tele pickup. I also have a couple of P-90s with two gauges of wire separated by a coil-tap – finer wire over heavier wire. That lets me offer a really clean tone and a much heavier, thicker tone as well.”

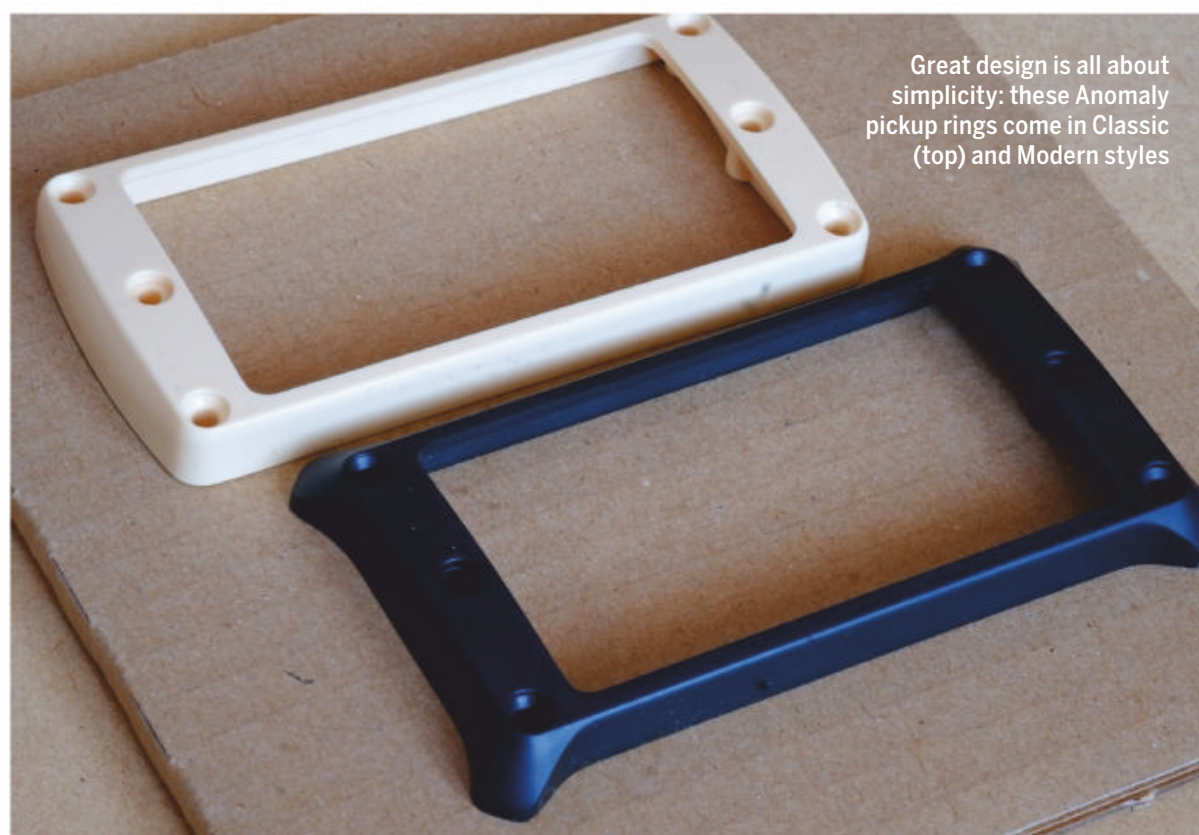
Tapped Options

Exactly how the pickup is tapped depends on the model. The Phoenix, for example, sits in the ‘vintage-PAF-style humbucker’ category and Mike describes this as “a rich, creamy vintage humbucker reminiscent of the early 60s PAFs. Sweet and warm, the Phoenix provides beautiful, soulful sounds all the time. The bridge is wound about 10 per cent hotter to provide perfect balance. The tapped sound provides more clarity but combined with a unique warmth and smoothness.”

But the thought of having two different humbucking *flavours* from one pickup set piqued my interest and I was drawn to the Ghost rider: “It’s tapped on both sides [coils],” says Mike. “The winding matches that of a typical FilterTron, just placed on a full-sized humbucker frame and bobbins. It also has the double thickness (half-inch) Alnico V magnet needed to get the proper amount of sizzle and pop. When used full [untapped], it sounds very much like the Vampire Lord [pickup] but with some extra aggression.”

Mike describes the Vampire Lord as being “particularly suited to the needs of shredders, fusion players and prog rockers, although they’re in no way restricted to these genres”. Well, that’s reassuring as I’m not entirely sure I fall into those camps. But that’s not the point. Two humbucking sounds instead of one? Game on.

I’d clearly called Mike at a good time as the pickup set arrived a few days later. Impressive service. As both pickups are tapped you need two DPDT switches, one to switch each pickup. I selected a PRS S2 Singlecut Semi-Hollow – which has had more pickup changes than I can



Great design is all about simplicity: these Anomaly pickup rings come in Classic (top) and Modern styles

Anomaly Pickup Rings

Thoughtfully designed pickup hardware

In keeping with our British-made thread, designer Luke White sent me some sample sets of his Anomaly pickup rings after they had featured on the Seth Baccus Nautilus Classic we’d reviewed in issue 449. “All product design, manufacturing and packaging takes place in the UK,” he states on his classy website. “Ethical manufacture is something that we take very seriously and, as such, our packaging is fully recyclable and contains no plastics; printing is limited to a single colour to further reduce our impact.”

And these are rather good: a different, stylish and fresh take on the time-honoured humbucker mounting ring, with lightly convex tops, which are made from “high-quality, impact-modified ABS for extreme durability” and that feature internal ribs for

added strength, while the height-adjustment screws are recessed adding to the smooth, thought-through design.

Two styles are available: the Classic, not dissimilar to the proprietary-shaped pickup rings used on certain PRS models; and the more extreme Modern rings. The Classics are available in Classic Cream, Midnight Black or Cool White; the Modern in Classic Cream and Midnight Black only. The 6082 rings are billet machined aluminium, brushed and anodised in Black, Silver or Gold.

Tapered height or flat sets cost £25 for the Classic and Modern pair; the 6082s are not surprisingly more expensive at £69 in Classic style and £79 in Modern style. The 6082s are also available for seven-string guitars.

www.anomalyguitar.com

This nicely made and good-sounding Ghost rider humbuckers set is just one of many designs offered by Gemini Pickups here in the UK

MOD SPEC

PRODUCT: Gemini Ghost rider humbucker set

COST: £190 w/ nickel covers (exc. delivery)

TYPE: Standard humbucking size with oversized Alnico V magnet and tappable outputs

QUOTED DCR:

Neck: 9.7/4.1kohms (when tapped); Bridge: 12.4/4.7kohms

SKILL LEVEL: If you can solder, it's pretty easy. You will need one DPDT switch for each pickup to maximize the dual tapped concept

www.geminipickups.co.uk

PROS & CONS

PROS Smartly made; dual-pickup concept via coil-taps; good service; sensible price

CONS As ever when there is considerable choice, finding your fit is never easy

8/10

remember – with two 500kohms volume controls and two 500k tones with DPDT switches. Perfect. If you're not handy with a soldering iron then you'll need to find someone who is, because wiring up DPDT switches can be a little tricky.

Ready To Roll

A fresh set of strings and a little time spent balancing the pickup heights to your taste means you're maximising what you're hearing, and with absolutely no idea how the pickup should sound, especially the Vampire Lord, that's a good place to start. Listening clean at the neck there's a pretty big but smooth response. On this resonant semi, which has 50s wiring, we're actually hearing a pretty good jazz voice with some volume reduction and thinning from the tone. The bridge is honkier, but pulling back the controls a little there's quite a strident voice with a slightly compressed-sounding attack that does 60s Stones to a T. In more gained settings, despite the relatively smooth attack, we're hearing there's plenty of power and thickness and the S2 sounds surprisingly muscular.

Of course, mention classic references like 'PAF' or 'FilterTron' in a pickup

description and a sound pops into our head, usually from a record of one of the greats, on a great guitar, in a great studio with a great engineer. It can be very unhelpful in gauging your first impressions of just a new pickup. I pulled out our modded and stripped Tokai Love Rock that currently has a pair of TV Jones Classics – a renowned modern take on the FilterTron. The tapped Ghostriders aren't a million miles away, a little more demure-sounding, slightly less crisp in terms of attack and, as you'd expect, lower in output than not only the untapped voice but also compared with those TV Classics. But set up a different sound from your pedalboard and/or amp and you can easily maximise the twang. In the middle position along with the dual volumes and tones, for example, having the untapped neck pickup and the tapped bridge gets us into almost Tele Custom-like style, with a little treble lift.

Above all, though, while far from a new concept the dual-humbucker voicing is something that still has legs, and for many it might well be a better route than the usual humbucker/split single-coil voicings that dominate the majority of production instruments. Time for a rethink? **G**

"The dual-humbucker voicing might be a better route than the usual humbucker/split single-coil voicings that dominate production instruments"

*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.*

PICKUP LINES

Ohm Truths

Amp designer and pickup winder Hayden Minett of Bulldog Pickups brings the rocket science of pickup electronics back down to Earth...

DC resistance is a common reference with respect to the imagined sound and response of a pickup. In truth, however, with a complex set of interactive variables at play, the sound of your guitar depends on far more than just ohm readings alone.

“DC resistance is a very useful gauge of output power – with a few caveats,” says audio engineer Hayden Minett. “You have to make sure you’re comparing apples with apples. You can use DCR as a pretty good indicator of output power if the pickups you’re comparing have the same wire gauge and magnet type. If they have, it will always be that the higher DCR pickup is louder than the lower DCR pickup. Changing the magnet affects it, but it’s the wire gauge that makes the most significant difference.

“If you think about a piece of wire, it has a resistance. And if you make that wire thinner, the DC resistance goes up. For

“Guitars are generally high impedance and high impedance is prone to interference and signal loss”

example, say a humbucker wound with 42 [AWG] wire yields a nominal 8kohms. If you wind the same pickup with the same number of turns using thinner 43 [AWG] wire, it’ll come out about 10kohms. The two will be roughly the same in terms of volume level, but there will be a noticeable tonal difference. The 43 AWG wire will probably sound a bit brighter, thinner and not overly pleasant. But if you increase the number of turns what you’ll find is, eventually, you’ll get the body of the tone back and it’ll start sounding usable. And that’s the approach people adopted back in the early days of DiMarzio and [Seymour] Duncan. It was all about thinner wire gauge but more of it, because it gives you more power and a full tone if you get enough turns on.



“Coil size, wire gauge, coil shape and so on all determine the frequency response of the pickup. The problem with DCR as a comparative tool, however, is that the published figures aren’t necessarily comparative between brands, so I tend to avoid it. On the other hand, when resistance becomes impedance in an AC circuit then the maths suddenly gets quite complicated and the concept starts becoming a little harder to understand. But, ultimately, you’ve got to try and match the impedance of the pickup to the impedance of the amplifier in AC terms.

“In the case of a valve amp, the input impedance is governed by the first valve and the load resistor – that presents a load on the pickup. If you change the load on the pickup, it drastically changes the characteristic of the tone you get. A typical input impedance mismatch – with your high-impedance pickup going into a low-impedance input – equates to poor tone response. Guitars are generally high-impedance devices (obviously it’s different with the Gibson low-impedance pickups or anything active) and high impedance is notoriously prone to interference and signal

loss. You can hear the result of different impedances by plugging your passive pickup/guitar into the high and low inputs of an amp; the difference in tone and volume is all down to this relationship. The other thing is when you turn the guitar volume control down – that also changes the load on the pickups, so you’ll start to hear subtle changes in tone as well as volume.

“The pickup also has capacitance and inductance from the coil, which work against treble. The ‘resonant peak’ is the point at which the capacitive and inductive effects converge, giving a peak in output response. This can also be affected by things like the input impedance (or load) of the amplifier input and the resistance and capacitance in the cable. In practice, a higher resonant peak means the pickup is more efficient at the brighter end of the tonal spectrum, which is typical of lower-power vintage-style pickups. Scatter-wind techniques can help reduce the capacitive effects and increase the resonant peak.

“There’s a hell of a lot more to pickups than DC resistance. But beyond that, what really matters is if you like the sound!” **[RB]**
<http://bulldogpickups.6.ekm.shop>



This 1974 Gibson Les Paul Signature belonging to Robert Plant guitarist Skin features low-impedance pickups

classicGear

The electric archtop that shone through the golden era of 50s rock 'n' roll

Gibson ES-295

When Ted McCarty joined Gibson as CEO in 1948, he immediately set about turning the post-war operation around financially, before pursuing the development of new and exciting electric guitar designs as company president. Released in 1949, the single-pickup ES-175 is the predecessor of the dual P-90 ES-295 and one of the earliest McCarty 'golden era' models. Essentially an electrified laminate-body version of the carved spruce top L-4C acoustic model, the mid-priced \$175 ES-175 set the template for the \$295 ES-295 electric archtop released a few years later in 1952.

Aside from rare exceptions such as the red 1955 example featured here, the ES-295 is easily distinguished by its all-gold finish ('all-gold' aside from headstock face and fingerboard) and clear/cream back-painted pickguard embossed with a gold Gibson Century lap steel-style floral design. The ES-295 does, however, have much in common with the ES-175. Sporting unbound f-holes along with a triple-bound top and single-bound back, both the ES-175 and ES-295 measure 16¼ inches wide by 3 ⅜ inches deep and feature a laminated maple body construction with a sharp Florentine cutaway. With an unbound headstock featuring mother-of-pearl Gibson logo and crown motif inlays, both models' single-piece mahogany necks have a 24¾-inch scale length and join the body

at the 14th fret. In 1955, the ES-295 changed in tandem with the ES-175 from a 19-fret to a 20-fret design; otherwise, the instruments' Brazilian rosewood fingerboards retained the same single-bound, double-parallelogram mother-of-pearl inlay design throughout their production.

The inspiration for the ES-295 was born from an all-gold finish ES-175, which was custom-ordered by Les Paul and completed in late 1951 before being presented to a disabled guitarist. In turn, the ES-295 set the mould for the perennially popular dual-pickup version of the ES-175, the ES-175D, released in 1953 (although it wasn't unheard

The ES-295 is easily distinguished by its all-gold finish and pickguard embossed with a floral design

of for people to custom-order dual-pickup ES-175s prior to this). Les Paul, it seems, expressed a strong preference for gold finishes over Gibson's traditional sunburst, and with the ES-295 joining Gibson's line-up in 1952 alongside the Les Paul 'Goldtop' Model, the golden era appeared to be truly underway.

With its gold finish, cream-coloured P-90s, independent pickup controls, Kluson Deluxe tuners with white plastic keystone buttons, and combination trapeze tailpiece/bridge, the ES-295 is something of an electric hollowbody equivalent of the '52 Les Paul Model solidbody electric. Indeed, Gibson ambitiously sought to market the ES-295 as such: "This golden beauty is truly a 'royal' instrument," reads a Gibson catalogue. "Tone and action wise, the Gibson ES-295 measures up to its outstanding appearance; this instrument meets the demand for the slick action and sustaining power of a solid body electric in a regular-size acoustic guitar."

The ES-295 changed very little during its run in Kalamazoo during the 50s. Despite sales more than doubling in its second year of production, shipping numbers indicate a steady decline in popularity until it was finally discontinued in 1958. Even Scotty Moore and a set of PAFs introduced in late '57 couldn't save it! **[RB]**

The Evolution of the Gibson ES-295

1949

ES-175 released
(same dimensions as ES-295)

1951

First all-gold ES-175 custom-built
at Les Paul's request

1952

ES-295 released with
all-gold finish; 19 frets

1953

Peak production
(c.650 models shipped)

1954

Production declines
(c.350 models shipped)

1955

20 frets

Late 1957

PAF humbuckers replace P-90s

Summer 1958

Discontinued

1959

4x ES-295s built for trade show
(2x Cherry Red and
2x Argentine Grey)



1955 Gibson ES-295

1. SERIAL NUMBER

A-prefixed five-digit number inked onto orange oval label on back (visible through bass f-hole)

2. HEADSTOCK

Unbound; mother-of-pearl Gibson logo and crown inlays; black finish

3. PLASTICS

Two-layer (w/b) bell truss-rod cover; two cream-coloured dog-ear P-90 pickup covers; white pickup selector switch tip; four clear, gold-tinted speed knobs; clear pickguard with cream painted back and gold embossed floral design; white keystone tuner buttons

4. HARDWARE

Gold-plated Les Paul trapeze combination tailpiece/bridge; individual gold-plated Kluson Deluxe tuners

5. PICKUPS & ELECTRONICS

Two single-coil dog-ear P-90s with independent volume and tone controls; gold-coloured wooden bridge pickup spacer; gold-plated three-way pickup selector switch; side-mounted jack socket

6. BODY

16¼-inch wide; 3⅜-inch deep; laminated maple with pressed, arched top; single Florentine cutaway; three-ply (w/b/w) top binding; single-bound back; unbound f-holes; rare red finish

7. NECK

Glued-in one-piece mahogany neck; 24¾-inch scale length; 14th fret body join; single-bound 20-fret Brazilian rosewood 'board with double-parallelogram mother-of-pearl inlays

Guitarist would like to thank
ATB Guitars in Cheltenham
www.atbguitars.com

ReverbRarities

Dan Orkin of Reverb.com introduces a dual-pickup hollowbody wildcard

Fender Coronado II 1967



Welcome to the latest instalment of Reverb Rarities, where we look at a stellar bit of vintage kit currently listed on Reverb.com. This month we've turned our sights to a red Fender Coronado from 1967. As most vintage aficionados know, the Coronado was Fender's first foray into the world of hollowbody electrics and came about in a period where these sorts of guitars were all the rage among the folk-rock set. Guild, Gibson, Rickenbacker, Harmony and other manufacturers all found success marketing hollow and semi-hollow double-cutaways in the 60s – and with the Coronado, Fender saw its opportunity to enter this segment of the booming guitar industry.

To do so, it enlisted the now-legendary luthier Roger Rossmeisl who had

previously worked at Rickenbacker and other legendary brands. Also known as the mind behind the Telecaster Thinline, Rossmeisl designed the Coronado along with a series of new Fender acoustics. Apart from its markedly un-Fender-like body style, the Coronado also sported pickups from DeArmond as opposed to the thinner single coils found on most Fenders of the time.

This particular Coronado comes from Motomusic Limited in Cardiff and is one of dozens of fine vintage and used guitars it currently has listed on its Reverb shop. Per the listing, the guitar is in very good condition with all the original components and stunning Cherry Red finish.

To find the full listing, head to: <http://bit.ly/ReverbCoronado>



Dan Orkin is director of content and international marketing at Reverb, a leading website and app for buying and selling new, used and vintage music gear and go-to resource 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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PJD
Guitars
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Blues Headlines

Richard Barrett is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks

Difficulty ★★★★★

30 mins per example

Tutor: Richard Barrett | **Gear used:** SSC, Hamstead Subspace Drive, Vox AC15 C1

Playing live, Gary Moore would zero the volume between phrases to minimise feedback

The 80s Rock Ballad



WE'VE PREVIOUSLY looked at some of the various (and sometimes unlikely) places where blues influence finds

its way, and this month we continue that tradition. During the 80s, guitar solos moved in an increasingly technical, even academic, direction. The blues element was less prevalent in the output of players such as Steve Vai, Joe Satriani and Yngwie Malmsteen. On the flip side, Gary Moore, John Sykes and Zakk Wylde combined modern, flashy playing with a recognisably 'blues' feel. The then ubiquitous hot-rodded locking whammy-equipped SuperStrats were/are great fun and can work well here – Gary Moore certainly had a flirtation with them – but the players we're talking about here generally stuck with a more 'classic' Les Paul/Marshall type rig, as Slash also did in the latter part of the decade...

The four examples here are taken from a single solo and can be joined together to make a complete transcription, so feel free to treat this as a whole solo or just take the ideas that appeal. There are some tricky fast sections that can be open to interpretation. These are very much from the Gary Moore school of thought: Gary once said his speed came from "pure energy" rather than slick technique. In no way did he lack finesse but rather he phrased in a very different way from players such as Guthrie Govan or Tosin Abasi. As you work on this, you'll hear some imperfections in my original solo, but I didn't want to do a dozen takes – or sneakily 'repair' with punch-ins...

Tonally, this is 'high-gain'. If you watch footage of Gary playing live, you'll see how he would reflexively zero the guitar volume between phrases to avoid unwanted noise and feedback, particularly important when using vintage guitars with unpotted pickups!

Example 1

THOUGH THERE ARE SOME WORKOUTS for the picking hand coming up shortly, this first part of the solo is more about correct pitching and control over bends and vibrato. The second bar features some slow 'John Sykes' type wobble, which leads to a series of semitone bends. In turn, this progresses to the first of our 'flash' sections. Working through slowly, you'll see it is alternate-picked in a couple of descending groups of four, changing on the final note to ascending groups of six.

Example 1 musical notation, showing three systems of guitar tablature and standard notation. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 60$. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

System 1: Features a G#m chord, an E chord, and an F# chord. The tablature shows fret numbers 14, 16, 14, 12, 14, 8, 9, 8, 11, 8. The picking pattern is BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU.

System 2: Continues the G#m and E chords. The tablature shows fret numbers 11, 12, 11, 12, 11, 12, 11, 12, 11, 12, 11, 12. The picking pattern is BU, BD, PB 11, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU.

System 3: Features an F# chord. The tablature shows fret numbers 11, 12, 11, 9, 11, 9, 8, 11, 9, 8, 11, 9, 8, 11, 9, 11, 11, 8, 9, 11, 8, 9, 11, 9, 11, 12, 9, 11, 12. The picking pattern is BD, BU, BD, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU.

Example 2

BEGINNING WITH THE CLIMACTIC NOTE at the end of the first ascending run, this section takes a melodic turn via a fragment of E major scale and B major arpeggio (superimposed over the E chord), before building towards a classic Gary Moore/John Sykes style phrase. We'll be staying with this for a while, exploring various possibilities as we build towards another flurry at the end of the next example.

Example 2 musical notation, showing one system of guitar tablature and standard notation. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 60$. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

System 1: Features a G#m chord, an E chord, and an F# chord. The tablature shows fret numbers 12, 14, 12, 11, 12, 11, 12, 14, 11, 12, 14, 16, 16, 18, 16, 19, 16. The picking pattern is BU, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU, BD, BU.

Example 2 Continued

Example 2 Continued

Chords: G#m, F#

Staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a melodic line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Staff 2: Bass clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a bass line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Techniques: BU (Bend Up), BD (Bend Down), 1/4 (Quarter note), 3 (Triplet), Bridge pickup, 16-18, 18-19, 18-20, 16-19, 16-18, 16-19-16, 19-16, 18-20, 18-16.

Example 3

THE FIRST HALF OF THIS EXAMPLE builds on the momentum established towards the end of the last phrase and accelerates further. A lot of the picking here is not alternate but what you call 'economy picking'. I'm brushing across adjacent strings, mixed with hammer-ons and pull-offs, with a couple of the notes sounded only by the hammer-on. It would be worth taking a close look at the video of this section, which may explain better than words what is happening.

Example 3

Chords: G#m, E

Staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a melodic line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Staff 2: Bass clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a bass line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Techniques: BU (Bend Up), 1/4 (Quarter note), 6 (Sixteenth note), 16-19, 18-20, 16-19, 16-18, 16-19-16, 19-16, 18-20, 18-16.

Example 3

Chords: G#m, E, F#

Staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a melodic line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Staff 2: Bass clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a bass line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Techniques: 1/4 (Quarter note), 3 (Triplet), 6 (Sixteenth note), 16-19-16, 16-19, 19-16, 16-19, 19-16, 18-16, 19-16, 19-16, 16-19-15, 18-16, 18-16, 18-16-18, 18-16-14-16, 13.

Example 3

Chords: G#m, E, F#

Staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a melodic line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Staff 2: Bass clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The staff contains a bass line with various techniques indicated by arrows and notes.

Techniques: PM (Pitch Bend), BU (Bend Up), BD (Bend Down), 13-14, 13-15, (16)-(15)-13, 16-14, 16-18, 16-16, 18.

Example 4

THIS TAKES A LITTLE AFTER ZAKK WYLDE, with some held bends contrasting with rapid-fire palm-muted lower notes. Though it's the final phrase, this may make a good starting point if you're hesitant about tackling some of the more flashy stuff. Some light palm-muting helps to control the articulation of a high-gain sound like this, even if you don't make an obvious feature of it like Zakk. The slide down the E string at the end makes as though joining in with the rhythm guitar after the solo!

1

4

Hear It Here

GARY MOORE
We Want Moore!

 Recorded live in 1984, this album captures Gary between the first phase of his solo career, culminating in *Victims Of The Future* album (1983), and about to embark on the much glossier radio-friendly production of *Run For Cover* (1985), before returning more to his blues roots later in the decade. Check out the extended solos in this version of *Empty Rooms*, the super-charged blues of *Cold Hearted*, and the melodic but fierce soloing on *Shapes Of Things*.

BLUE MURDER
Blue Murder

 After exiting Whitesnake rather mysteriously as the recording of their 1987 self-titled album drew to a close, ex-Thin Lizzy guitarist John Sykes was highly motivated to show he had actually been a significant part in its success. This is the first of just two albums with this band – he is on ripping form on *Riot*, *Valley Of The Kings* and the title track. Honourable mention should also go to the solo on *Out of Love*, which influenced the example solo here.

OZZY OSBOURNE
No More Tears

 Though this album has more than its fair share of bombastic guitars, there are particularly noteworthy solos on the title track, plus *Mama, I'm Coming Home* and *Time After Time*. Zakk Wylde certainly seems to have taken that Gary Moore style commitment to each and every note, with a bit of John Sykes panache for fast pentatonic runs, although he definitely has his own unique thing going on. Well worth stealing from, as the saying goes!

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Fender Hot Rod Deluxe 40-watt valve amplifier. Immaculate, home use only. With cover, foot switch and paperwork. £195. Buyer collects. Phone Graham on 07389 025852. Gloucester

Fender 59 Bassman reissue. USA-built Jan 1990, the month they were announced NOT the Mexican LTD. £900. Call Dave on 07961 074449

Bass Guitars

Gibson EB-3 short-scale bass, 1962, Cherry Red, vgc in ossc having had two owners. £5,250. Contact 07773 276815. Cumbria

Gibson Thunderbird '76', reverse body, Sunburst, ohsc, two owners since new. £3,750. Contact 07773 276815. Cumbria

Gibson Thunderbird '76', Red, electrics modified for studio work by original owner, vgc, ohsc. £3,750. Contact 07773 276815. Cumbria

Misc

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