

Guitarist

Issue 481

FEBRUARY 2022

50 GUITARS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

REVIEWED

Epiphone

JOE BONAMASSA
'LAZARUS' LES PAUL
& **BB KING** LUCILLE

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FEATURING

CHUCK BERRY
1955 Gibson ES-350T

JONI MITCHELL
1956 Martin D-28

GEORGE HARRISON
1963 Rickenbacker 360/12

ANGUS YOUNG
Gibson SG

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Evolution Of The Species



This month's cover story, featuring historian Tony Bacon's pick of the 50 most influential guitars in history, really shines a light on how the player and the guitar itself interact to create musical milestones. For while, in theory, the creative imagination of a musician is unlimited, guitars each impose a certain style on what we play. So if someone hands us an old resonator with an action like a power line, we might just get a bottleneck and make some great slide music with it. We probably wouldn't opt to record a shred album with such a guitar, however.

As the guitar evolved, change was often driven by players who needed to unlock extra performance that existing designs couldn't deliver. Steve Vai and the creation of Ibanez's JEM electric is a good example – but so is the development of the earliest archtop guitars. In that sense, great players might need something new to come along before they can deliver their own full potential as musicians. The reverse of that coin is that often an important new guitar-making development will be ignored or even derided at first – and, when that happens, it often takes a groundbreaking musician to show the world the potential of a new design before it catches on properly. Buddy Holly's use of a Strat turned that upstart solidbody design into an icon of rock 'n' roll, for example.

Seen in the hands of a hero, an instrument acquires acceptance that can last forever. As composer Edgard Varèse once said, "Contrary to general belief, an artist is never ahead of his time but most people are far behind theirs." So next time you see a guitar that seems so radically new or different that it jars your sense of taste, remember it might just become an instrument of history. Enjoy the issue.

Jamie Dickson **Editor-in-chief**

Editor's Highlights



Bernard Butler

The former Suede guitarist shows us his collection of well-loved classic guitars and remembers his friend Bert Jansch on **p80**



Knowing Me

ABBA's guitar player Lasse Wellander recalls the challenges of playing for one of the most iconic acts in 20th century pop **p50**



Dave Brock

Hawkwind's psychedelic space-warrior looks back on some of the most out-there moments of an eventful career **p72**

Guitarist

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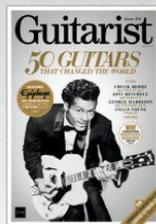


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50 GUITARS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

56 Renowned guitar historian Tony Bacon presents 50 extraordinary instruments that influenced the evolution of the guitar as we know it today – and the artists at the helm





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FIRST PLAY



**EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA
'LAZARUS' 1959 LES PAUL
STANDARD**
£799

WHAT IS IT? Affordable homage to Joe Bonamassa's restored 1959 Gibson Les Paul



EPIPHONE BB KING LUCILLE
£849

WHAT IS IT? Epiphone's take on BB King's later-years Lucille-style Gibson ES-355 with Varitone and 'stereo' outputs

Blues Brothers

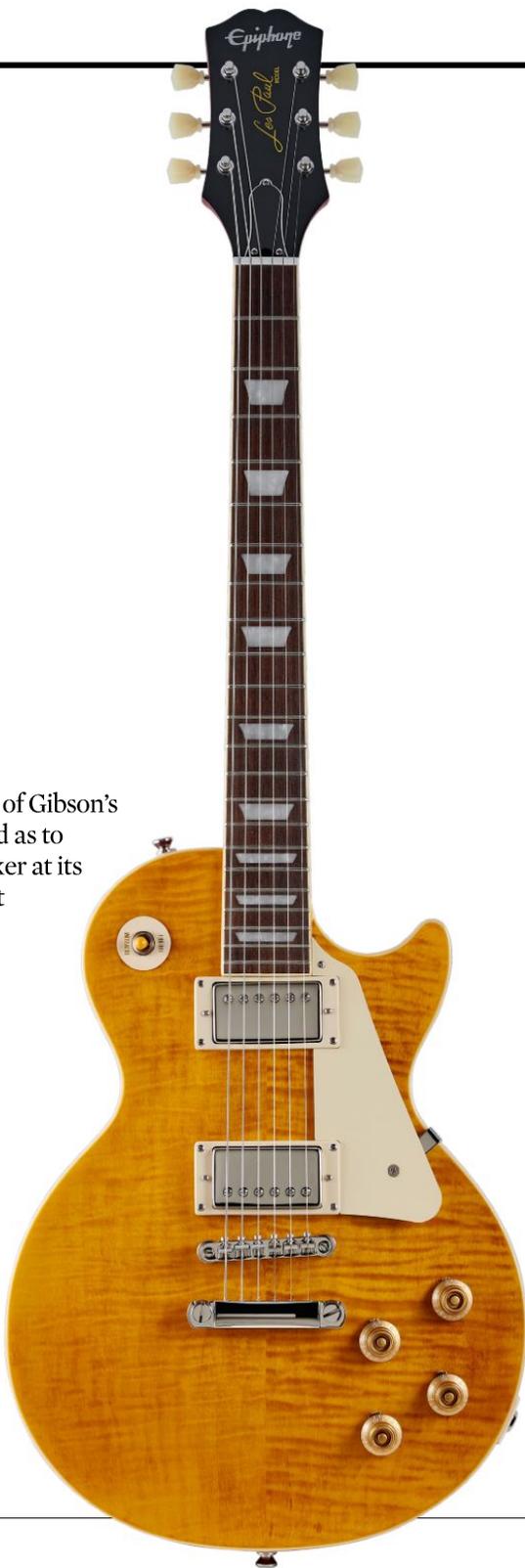
These signature Epiphones for two of Gibson's most famous endorsers look so good as to challenge the legendary guitar maker at its own game. Let's see if they can do it

Words Neville Marten **Photography** Phil Barker

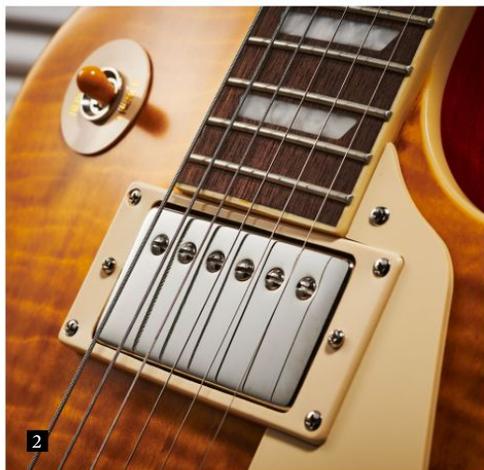
Epiphone is knocking it out of the park at the moment. We adored the Coronet, Crestwood and Wilshire trio featured back in issue 468, and this duet looks equally set to stun. On offer is a recreation of Joe Bonamassa's legendary 'Lazarus' Les Paul, an instrument he resurrected from a dilapidated wreck into a delicious original-looking '59 Les Paul. This sits alongside a jet black semi-solid ES-355-style Lucille model as played by perhaps the greatest electric blues guitarist of all.

Bonamassa 'Lazarus'

The story of how Joe Bonamassa acquired his '59 Les Paul known as 'Lazarus' has been so widely told that we won't go into it in micro detail here. The short version is that a guitar dealer friend brought Joe a tatty Les Paul that had been poorly overpainted







in red, and a box of assorted parts. By a process of elimination Joe deduced that it could only be a late 50s 'Burst. He took the instrument to his restorer, who refurbished the tired beast to its former glory. Joe wanted to share this slice of guitar folklore in an instrument that looked and sounded great but that was attainable by all. Joe had collaborated with Epiphone on previous projects, and between them they devised the instrument you see here.

Featuring the Les Paul's classic construction of mahogany back (here, two pieces) and a one-piece mahogany neck with centre-joined maple cap, it deviates slightly in that the usual rosewood fingerboard becomes Indian laurel and the standard maple cap is topped with a figured AAAA veneer. It's a great way to get the

in the bridge position. The internal wiring is 50s style with 500kohms CTS pots, Mallyory capacitors and a Switchcraft three-way toggle. All the usual Les Paul appointments remain, including cream pickguard, binding, pickup surrounds and switch tip, Kluson-style 'Keystone' tuners, and 'bell' truss rod cover. The tune-o-matic bridge and stud tailpiece are the excellent Epiphone LockTone, which fit tightly on their studs so don't fall off and potentially damage your guitar when restringing. All hardware is shiny nickel and the whole thing looks way more classy than its modest price suggests.

BB King Lucille

Again, the tale is so well known that we'll simply say that BB King christened all his guitars 'Lucille' and from 1959 a Gibson

ES-355 was King's guitar of choice. He changed them frequently, from cherry or wine red earlier on, to finally settling on ebony. Gibson has produced Lucille models in various guises, but King always stipulated his signature instruments had no f-holes and came fitted with a pair of outputs so he could run his guitar into two amplifiers when the need arose. He also liked the TP-6 fine-tuning tailpiece, so we see that here, too.

Epiphone's take on the Lucille is beautiful to behold. As smart as a black tuxedo, its gold hardware and multiple white/black binding underline the top-drawer effect. Under the poly gloss sits a laminated maple body with solid maple centre block, and a maple neck, while the fingerboard is ebony with pearloid blocks. The new

Plugging in the 'Lazarus' reveals a set of tones that would appease the most ardent Les Paul lover

look of a great 'Burst but at a fraction of the cost. The guitar comes in what Epiphone calls 'aged gloss' – essentially a version of Gibson's matt-looking VOS treatment, although on a poly, not nitro finish. The colour is basically 'lemon drop' with all but zero sunburst remaining, and the headstock shape the elegant 60s Kalamazoo style.

Joe insisted on the long neck tenon of vintage Les Pauls for its sustain-enhancing properties, plus Gibson's Burstbucker 2 at the neck and a more powerful Burstbucker 3





4

Epiphone headstock shape makes another appearance here and – with its pearl inlaid ‘Lucille’ emblem and inscribed brass truss rod cover – looks oh-so class. Add in Grover Rotomatic tuners, Alnico Classic Pro pickups, a bound tortoise style pickguard, Gibson six-way Varitone switch, 500kohms CTS pots and those twin outputs to complete the picture.

Regarding the outputs here, one is a straightforward mono jack that’s used for standard mono operation (both pickups), but when you plug another lead into the second output jack, the pickups are split, sending the neck pickup to one amp (or input) and the bridge to another.

Another curiosity found on this Lucille is the Varitone switch, a six-position rotary ‘notch filter’ that works on all pickup

1. The bridge pickup is Gibson’s excellent Burstbucker 2, while bridge and tailpiece are Epiphone’s clever LockTone units that stay put when restringing

2. At the neck sits a slightly more powerful Burstbucker 3, and also notice how the frets go over the binding, without the fret-end ‘nibs’ found on Gibson guitars

3. Under the gold top-hat knobs with dial pointers are hidden 500K CTS volume and tone pots, and Mallory capacitors. The AAAA flamed maple veneer on a solid maple cap is a neat cost-cutter



4. The cherry red finished neck and headstock are matt poly finish. Note the Les Paul’s authentic tuners and the much-improved 1960s-style headstock shape

5. The Lucille model comes sharply dressed in ebony, with gold parts and an ebony fingerboard with block inlays but no f-holes, as stipulated by BB King himself, on all his Lucille models

6. Both Lucille pickups are Epiphone Alnico Classic Pro units, which sound natural and open, and are powerful enough for any situation. All parts are gold-plated, just like the Gibson originals



6



5



selections. It's bypassed in position 1 so the guitar acts like a regular ES-335. But from then on the tones progressively shift as two chokes and a selection of capacitors filter out certain frequencies.

Feel & Sounds

Weight-wise, the 'Lazarus' just pips the 8lb (3.69kg) mark so is very comfortable on a strap. The Lucille on the other hand, is something of a monster, coming in a full pound over that at 9.1lbs (4.1kg), so it's weighty but not unbearable.

Joe's original 'Lazarus' has a slightly smaller-than-usual '59-style neck and the Epi follows suit. It's a comfortable size for almost any hand, and the action is low and slinky. The 'Lazarus' plays like a real grown-up Les Paul and nothing like an instrument costing in some instances several times less. The Lucille's neck, while a tad bigger, feels just as smooth and finger-friendly and, of course, its superior high-end access lays out the entire ebony

'board for your playing pleasure. Again, the action is perfect, offering an extremely gratifying playing experience. There are no nasty surprises on either guitar.

Plugging in the 'Lazarus' to a Matchless Lighting reveals a strident set of tones that would appease the most ardent Les Paul lover. The neck's Burstbucker 2 is warm but clear when set clean but becomes fat and juicy when cranked. Indeed, across the spectrum of pickups and settings it simply sounds like a fine Les Paul. It's easy to forget it comes in at well under a grand. Favourite tone? Both pickups on, bridge up full, neck knocked back to 7 – it sounds like the biggest bridge humbucker ever.

On the Lucille, the possible permutations from three pickup settings and six more on the Varitone means we can only hint at what's available. Memories of dreadful-sounding, unusable tones instantly fade away here. True, there are few you wouldn't naturally gravitate towards, but there's a surprising amount that you might.

As mentioned earlier, Varitone position 1 leaves the guitar in regular humbucking ES-style mode. Compared to our Les Paul, it's more polite, perhaps a little scooped, but fat and gutsy nonetheless. BB King favoured positions 2 and 3 on the Varitone because they gave him his trademark 'nasal' tone, slightly compressed sounding and not miles away from Peter Green's out-of-phase sound. Although the majority of all but position 1 settings display a degree of 'honk', many are rather nice, and even the stranger ones might come in handy in the studio.

Verdict

There's a lot to like about this pair of signature guitars from Epiphone. They look fantastic. Build quality is top notch. Sounds are as good or better than instruments way above their pay grade. They play great, too, and if they had Gibson on the headstock we would indeed be saying, "Gibson has really got its act together here." No, they're not nitro-finished and clearly compromises



8



9

Epiphone's take on the Lucille is beautiful to behold – as smart as a black tuxedo

have been made with some of the timbers selected here. But for guitars that look, play and sound this good, do we really care? To be honest, not a jot!

Joe Bonamassa knows his Les Pauls better than almost anyone, and his input on this model is clear to see. So well done, both Joe and Epiphone. Regarding the Lucille, were BB still around, our guess is he'd be equally delighted with what Epiphone has done in his name here. And while it is a weighty beast, and its Varitone and stereo output might scare some, just ignore them, use the guitar in 'normal' mode and you'll have a brilliant instrument that will not disappoint. You might need an extra-wide strap, though! **G**

7. The exceptionally tidy build is evident here, with perfect fit and finish. Note the multiple bound 'tortoise' pickguard, and the TP-6 fine-tuning tailpiece, originally made for Gibson by Schaller and beloved of Mr King

8. Check out the engraved brass truss rod cover, another feature borrowed from the Gibson version. The nut is Graph Tech's faux-bone, Tusq

9. Grover's Rotomatic tuners were a popular upgrade on many vintage Gibsons. In the 70s, the company had Grover make them with its favoured 'tulip'-shaped buttons



EPIPHONE JOE BONAMASSA 'LAZARUS' 1959 LES PAUL STANDARD

PRICE: £799 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Single-cutaway, solidbody electric

BODY: Solid mahogany body and neck, maple cap with AAAA veneer

NECK: Mahogany, 59" smaller medium C' profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Tusq/43mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound Indian laurel, pearlloid trapezoid inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Epiphone LockTone tune-o-matic bridge and stud tailpiece, Kluson-style vintage tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: Gibson Burstbucker 2 (neck) and Burstbucker 3 (bridge), 3-way toggle pickup selector, 2x volumes, 2x tones (CTS pots/Mallory capacitors)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.69/8.1

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: No

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Lazarus aged gloss only

Epiphone

www.epiphone.com



9/10

PROS Build, looks, finish, playability, value; a brilliantly thought-out, relatively budget guitar that punches well above its weight

CONS Difficult to fault at this price



EPIPHONE BB KING LUCILLE

PRICE: £849 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Double-cutaway, semi-solid electric

BODY: Laminated maple/poplar/maple without f-holes; solid maple centre block

NECK: Maple, 59" medium C' profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")

NUT/WIDTH: Tusq/43mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound ebony, pearlloid block markers, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium jumbo

HARDWARE: Epiphone LockTone tune-o-matic bridge, TP-6 fine-tuning tailpiece, Grover Rotomatic tuners – gold-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: 2x Alnico Classic Pro pickups, 3-way toggle pickup selector, 2x volumes, 2x tones, 6-way Varitone switch (CTS pots/Mallory capacitors), mono and stereo outputs

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4.1/9.1

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: No

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Ebony gloss

8/10

PROS Fabulous looks; huge range of tones; playability; great value

CONS It's a heavy guitar; some will be put off by the Varitone and dual outputs here



With 200 watts of Class D power into four 10-inch Jensens, there's a lot of volume on tap. The tilt-back legs help project that at the right listening angle, so players and audiences enjoy the best sonic experience



FIRST PLAY



**FENDER TONE MASTER
SUPER REVERB 4X10 COMBO**
£1,299

WHAT IS IT? All-digital recreation of Fender's classic 60s black-panel 4x10 combo

Master Replica

This stunning digital recreation of a legendary combo includes superb reverb and tremolo for authentic Fender tone and response without the price – or weight – of an all-valve version

Words Nick Guppy **Photography** Olly Curtis

As one of Fender's most famous valve amps, the Super Reverb also enjoyed one of the longest unbroken catalogue residencies, arriving in 1963 and staying for nearly 20 years. Having survived the CBS silver-panel transition, the Super went through various circuit evolutions for more efficient performance and higher wattage: the original GZ34 rectifier valve was replaced with a 5U4GB then silicon diodes, together with added Normal channel mid control, pull boost and master volume features.

By the mid-70s, Fender's amplification range was in a somewhat confused state, with a mixture of legacy silver-panel and new black-panel products – such as the notorious 180-watt Super Twin and 400 PS head designed by renowned engineer Ed Jahns – as Fender scatter-gunned ideas to regain its dwindling market share. The very last Super Reverb models returned to black-panel cosmetics (but not electronics) before

1



1. The Tone Master Super Reverb features a studio-quality spring reverb emulation using the latest convolution technology and a warm-sounding tremolo, which combine for a wide range of stunning and authentic USA tones

Viewed from the front, there's just a discreet badge to distinguish the Tone Master Super Reverb from its all-valve cousin

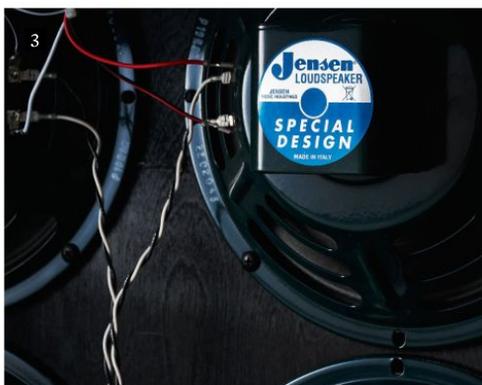
being discontinued along with Fender's entire amplification range in 1982. This was to make way for the famous Rivera amplifiers, created by a team headed up by legendary amp guru Paul Rivera Sr, which were the last hand-wired products to leave the old Fullerton production line, following CBS's sale of the company in 1985.

Happily, the story doesn't end there. In 2001, Fender added a well-received '65 Super Reverb reissue to its catalogue and now here is the highly anticipated all-digital version, the Tone Master Super Reverb.

Viewed from the front, there's nothing except for a discreet badge in the bottom-right corner of the period-correct silver sparkle grille to distinguish the Tone Master Super Reverb from its all-valve cousin. The rest of the black-panel cosmetics are similarly spot on, with heavy duty Tolex, chrome corners, tilt-back legs and a single black carry handle on top.

From the back, though, it's clear the Tone Master is a completely different animal. The steel chassis is similar, but there are no valves or heavy transformers hanging from it. Instead, the sounds come from a powerful DSP fully utilised to recreate just one amp, driving a specially designed 200-watt Class D output stage. Fender has sensibly retained Jensen's excellent P10R Alnico, the same loudspeaker found on the all-valve reissue, while the cabinet is meranti plywood, a minor disappointment as other Tone Master products use solid pine.

Inside the chassis, the electronics are mounted on high-quality modular PCBs joined by ribbon cables, with Molex connectors for easy servicing. Compared with the bird's nest hand-wired assembly of 60s valve Fenders, the internals are clean and uncluttered – with almost too much empty space.



The front panel stays true to the original early 60s design and has two non-footswitchable channels: the often-forgotten Normal channel with controls for volume, treble and bass; and the Vibrato channel with controls for Volume, Treble, Middle and Bass, along with a Reverb level control, and Speed and Intensity for the historically correct misnamed tremolo effect. Both channels have high- and low-gain inputs and Bright switches.

Around the back, there's a universal mains socket and a variable power rotary switch that knocks down the emulated valve output from 45 watts to 0.5 watts over six steps. Next to this is a balanced XLR line output and a choice of two IR cabinet emulations with a bypass, level control and a useful ground lift. The Tone Master Super Reverb looks the part and has superior build quality and classic styling that hasn't lost any of its visual appeal over the last six decades.



Feel & Sounds

The Tone Master Super Reverb retains the two mains toggle switches, which have similar functions. Powering on causes the jewel indicator to flash red and amber for a few seconds while the amp boots up, before settling down in red for live mode. Flipping the 'standby' toggle switch puts the amp into mute mode, which changes the jewel colour to amber, with the rear-panel line out staying active for recording or quiet stages.

The original Super earned its reputation in the hands of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Robben Ford, Robert Cray and many other stellar players. The Tone Master version's sounds are typical early 60s black-panel – but better because there's practically no background noise. The massive digital processing power takes it way beyond other modelling amps and plug-ins, with sweet shimmering highs that turn into an aggressive bite as the volume is turned up. Just like the originals,

bass frequencies can be overpowering so the bass tone control typically stays on 3, with treble and middle on 6 or 7 for a great tone with a natural midrange 'scoop'. The Bright switches come in useful to tame overly bright single coils.

The amp begins to bare its teeth once the volume control is turned above halfway, chewing up notes and spitting them out with a fiery vocal distortion that's very much USA-centred and ideal for blues and classic rock, especially using a beefy humbucker with the Volume control on 10. The wonderful overdrive can be enjoyed at pain-free volume levels when needed thanks to the rear-panel rotary power switch. We found some great tones with a borrowed original '72 Les Paul Custom and our Duncan Alnico Pro-loaded Strat.

You can take the Super Reverb from its maximum emulated 45 valve watts down to 0.5 watts in six steps, quickly dialling the

- Both channels on the Tone Master Super Reverb have a pair of high- and low-gain input jacks, together with a Bright switch. It's a timeless, simple way of dialling in the majority of guitars
- The combo uses four Jensen P10R Alnico speakers, the same as those on the all-valve version. As well as being light in weight, they sound superb, providing authentic USA tone by the bucketload, with the same characteristic midrange scoop of the original valve amp
- The Tone Master series' secret weapon is the variable power switch, which lets you adjust the Super's output power for any stage size, while the excellent balanced line out makes it easy to get great tone straight into a desk, with built-in IRs, a Level control and a ground lift

The onboard spring reverb and tremolo can both be switched remotely with the supplied two-button footswitch, which plugs into a socket on the back panel



amp in for any size of stage. For the average pub gig we think the five-watt setting is more than adequate for cranked sounds, but if you need clean volume there's plenty. Four speakers and 200 watts of Class D power equals a mountain of headroom, making the Super a great platform for pedals. With no effects loop, you have to plug your 'board into the front-end. We had great results with overdrive and modulation into the Normal channel's low-gain input, using a rotary speaker effect to get a satisfyingly close approximation of the old Vibratone sound.

The balanced line out IRs and effects are generally superb. The convolution reverb may be a touch too bright for some ears, though the incredible detail makes it possible to pick out individual spring oscillations as the reverb level is increased, while the tremolo goes from slow atmospheric pulses to stuttering psychobilly on maximum speed and intensity. The effects are ordered in the same way as the original, so the tremolo cuts off the reverb tail.

Verdict

Fender's Tone Master Super Reverb nails the original 1960s vibe so well, we think many players will find it difficult to tell the

The tone, effects and dynamics make it really easy to forget you're not using a valve circuit

difference. The tone, effects and dynamics make it really easy to forget you're not using a valve circuit. The big digital advantage is sonic consistency and reliability from one gig to the next, with no valves to splutter, pop, fizz, lose bias or otherwise spoil your tone. This is increasingly relevant as there are just a few valve mass-production lines left to serve global demand. There's no immediate risk of supplies drying out, but the quality of new valves is likely to fall, while prices will inevitably go in the opposite direction.

Which brings us to the other compelling argument: the Tone Master Super Reverb retails for £1,000 less than the all-valve '65 Super Reverb reissue, making it hugely more affordable as well as easier to carry. Aimed at pro and amateur players of all levels, it's a seriously good amp for the money. If you want to experience classic 60s Fender tone and your car has the boot space, we'd say go for it! **G**



FENDER TONE MASTER SUPER REVERB 4X10 COMBO

PRICE: £1,299

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Digital modelling preamp, Class D power stage

OUTPUT: 200W into 2ohms (simulating 45W valve), switchable down to 0.5W in 6 steps

DIMENSIONS: 629 (h) x 638 (w) x 267mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 16.5/36

CABINET: Meranti ply

LOUDSPEAKERS: 4x Jensen P10R Alnico 10"

CHANNELS: 2

CONTROLS: Normal channel: Bright switch, Volume, Treble, Bass, Vibrato channel: Bright switch, Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Reverb, Vibrato Speed, Intensity, Line out level, IR select, ground lift in/out

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Balanced XLR line out with ground lift and level control, 3x switchable impulse response cab sims, Firmware updates via USB port on bottom of chassis

FOOTSWITCH: 2-button footswitch (supplied) toggles vibrato and reverb

RANGE OPTIONS: Jensen N12-K-powered Tone Master Deluxe Reverb (£919); blonde Celestion Neo Creamback-loaded option (£959). Tone Master Twin Reverb with neodymium Jensens (£1,099); blonde Celestion option (£1,139). All-valve '65 Super Reverb reissue (£2,299)

Fender Musical Instruments Europe
0333 200 8765
www.fender.com



PROS Best ever Fender black-panel digital model; authentic tone; totally consistent; excellent recording/PA direct output; great pedal platform

CONS Still a big box to carry around; plywood cab not solid pine of other Tone Master amps; hyper-realistic reverb may be too bright for some

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FIRST PLAY



LARRIVÉE OMV-03
£2,428

WHAT IS IT? All-solid Sitka/mahogany OM electro-cutaway with an LR Baggs Anthem pickup system and a very pleasing array of tones

Golden Heart

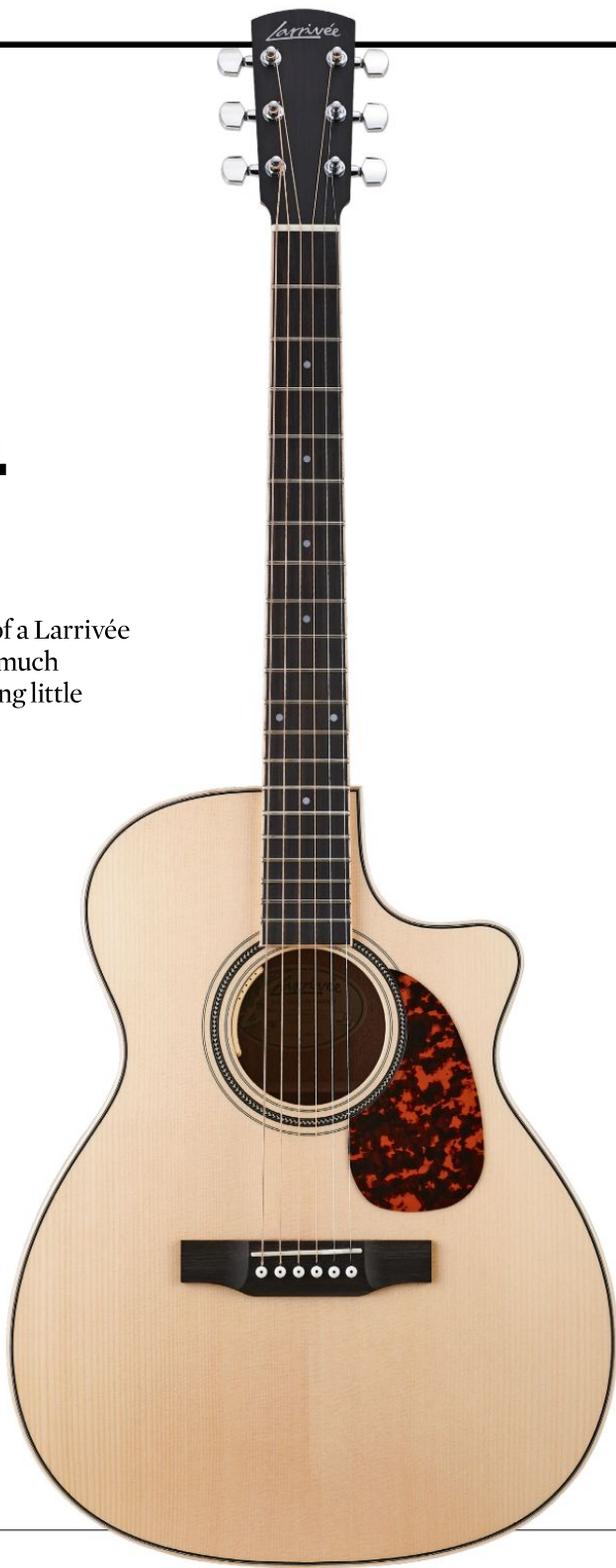
Every time we open the case of a Larrivée acoustic we're reminded how much we like them, and this charming little OM cutaway is no exception

Words David Mead **Photography** Ollly Curtis

For some reason, it's still lodged in many people's minds that Larrivée's production is based in Canada. That might have been true years ago when Jean Larrivée first set up shop in Toronto, subsequently relocating first to Victoria and then Vancouver during the 1980s and 90s. These days, however, the company is based in Oxnard, California, Larrivée having finally closed down its Canadian operation for good back in 2013.

It's also the case that perhaps Larrivée doesn't spring immediately to mind when the topic of quality production-line acoustics is raised. It's true to say that Taylor and Martin are probably higher in the average acoustic player's consciousness in this respect, but it would also be true to say that we've liked pretty much every Larrivée we've set eyes on since we can remember. And the brand hasn't escaped the attention of players such as Brad Paisley, Keith Urban, John Sebastian and many others, either.

With a manifesto that includes the use of all FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) accredited solid timbers, Larrivée tells us that, "Above all, our goal is 'affordable luxury' – we aim to put high-end guitars into







1



2

the hands of all players. We don't want to build the most guitars. We want to build the best." As such, hopes are high for this OM cutaway and so let's dive in for a closer look.

We'll begin with a set of vital statistics: the OMV is very slightly wider and deeper than the benchmark Martin OM body size, but we're talking only a few millimetres. It's still very much in that ballpark and it's a size that we're very fond of here at *Guitarist*. At home on the sofa, sitting or standing on stage, it's a comfortable fit. Sound-wise, the OM is an everyman, too, as it tends to have an even

It has a character all its own and a blank canvas upon which you can create your own sonic personality

spread of basses and trebles and a focused, sweet tonal temperament.

Larrivéé's take on the humble OM finds us with a Canadian Sitka spruce top with African mahogany for the back and sides – and if you're an OM purist and were expecting rosewood here instead, fear not as Larrivéé offers the OMV-03R that fits that particular designation to the letter. It's mahogany for the OMV's dovetail-jointed neck, too, with an African ebony fingerboard that boasts synthetic pearl position markers. We had to look twice at the size of the jumbo-ish nickel silver frets as they would seem to be more at home on an electric guitar – and one at the rock end of the music spectrum, too. Measuring in at 2.5mm wide and 1mm tall, they raised



3

an eyebrow or two, but let's not get ahead of ourselves here. We'll see how they fare when we strike up a tune later on.

The OMV has a bone nut and saddle, the former measuring 43.3mm (1.75 inches), which is a good fit for fingerstylists and chordmongers alike. Other hardware includes Larrivéé's own standard 15:1 ratio tuners, a 'tortis' pickguard and an LR Baggs Anthem pickup system with controls mounted on the bass side of the instrument's soundhole.

Feel & Sounds

Larrivéé refers to the finish of the OMV-03 as 'Satin', which gives the guitar a gloriously 'woody' feel under the fingers. It's not as open pore as we've seen on other

1. The use of Sitka spruce for the top and mahogany for the back and sides is a trusted formula for a great sounding acoustic – and an ebony bridge with a bone saddle is sonic icing on the cake!

2. Despite Larrivéé having had a long association with Canada as its manufacturing base, current guitars are now made in California

3. The OMV-03's electric voice is powered by an LR Baggs Anthem pickup and preamp combo, with the controls tucked neatly away inside the guitar's soundhole

4. A deep cutaway ensures that travelling up to the dusty end of the fretboard doesn't present much of a problem for the left hand



instruments, which is probably due to a case of many coats of lacquer being built up over time in the workshop, but there definitely is a high feelgood factor while we're holding the guitar. Onto the neck and its profile is either a fairly slim U-shape or a very generous flat-bottomed C. Frankly, we're undecided because there are elements of both here. However, it feels good in the hand, pepped along by that satin feel we've just mentioned.

What's going on under the bonnet? We're assured that what we have in this department is X-bracing plus a parabolic bracing pattern using European moon spruce – but you're probably just as curious as we were at this point to know how the OMV sounds. When you think of the

average OM acoustic, you imagine sweet trebles with a focused bass and midrange – and that is certainly the case here. Move down a body size or two and you're inviting boxiness and loss of bass response. Move up towards the dreadnought or jumbo areas and you might find some lower midrange boom or even a little mud in the mids. The OM is, to our minds at least, that Goldilocks ideal of all body shapes. It lacks nothing, but it doesn't need anything more, either.

The OMV is not the loudest guitar we've encountered, but there's no brashness or harshness here, just a sort of refined sweetness and evenness of temperament. Chordal strumming emits a crystal clear response with each note clearly defined. Switch on over to fingerstyle and here,

too, the OM magic comes to our aid with some good definition and smoothness. Plucked near the bridge things become suitably wiry and sinewy; move towards the neck and everything mellows out and becomes warmer. There is enough tonal variety available here to keep even the most discerning player happy.

The fret size we mentioned earlier doesn't seem to affect much at all when the guitar is in our hands, whereas you might expect it to add something to the mix. Perhaps a player who is more used to playing classic-era Ibanez or Jackson fretboards and has an aversion to skinny frets might feel at home here, which can only be a good thing. In any case, we really didn't bat an eye. We're almost sorry we mentioned it!



The Larrivée's African mahogany back and sides are attractively set off by pale maple binding to the guitar's top and back



LARRIVÉE OMV-03

PRICE: £2,428 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: OM cutaway

TOP: Canadian Sitka spruce

BACK/SIDES: African mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 107.9mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 387.3mm

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

TUNERS: Larrivée standard 15:1 ratio

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/44.3mm

FINGERBOARD: African ebony

FRETS: 20, medium jumbo

BRIDGE/SPACING: African ebony

with bone saddle/57.2mm

ELECTRICS: LR Baggs Anthem

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.57/3.46

OPTIONS: The OM is also available without the cutaway (OM-03

£1,899); various pickup options are

available at an extra charge. See

website for details

RANGE OPTIONS: Larrivée's 03

Series comprises a variety of body

shapes, including the L-03 (£1,899),

LV-03 (£2,299), D-03 (£1,899),

J-03 (£2,199) & BT-03 (£2,279).

See website for more info

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes (no extra charge)

FINISH: Satin natural (as reviewed)

440 Distribution

0113 2842342

www.larrivee.com

8/10

PROS A well-wrought instrument with a high-quality build and sweet temperament

CONS There might be some gripes over the wider neck profile, but that would be getting very picky

The LR Baggs Anthem is a favourite pickup system for an acoustic guitar and, as we anticipated, doesn't let the side down at all here. Put through our on-loan Da Capo 75 amp, the Larrivée literally becomes anything you want it to be. With such a generously even acoustic palette to begin with you can build onto it virtually any sound you have in your head. Add a dash of reverb and you're into an altogether new realm. All the silkiness and sweetness remains to the extent that we believe the Anthem is the perfect partner for the OMV and shows its best when amplified.

Verdict

As you can probably tell, we were quite charmed by this Larrivée OMV-03, although it maybe just fell short in the wow factor department. We might say that it doesn't have quite the girth or authority of a Martin with the same body size, either,

We believe the LR Baggs Anthem is the perfect sparring partner for the OMV and shows it at its best when amplified

but isn't that a good thing in a way? It means that this guitar has a character all its own and a blank canvas upon which you can create your own sonic personality. It's a very well-built instrument from an established name in the industry with a price that is extremely competitive in today's acoustic marketplace. Larrivée's "affordable luxury" motto certainly holds up here, and if you find yourself looking for a guitar that will do virtually anything you ask of it, we think you might find what you're looking for with the OMV-03. **G**

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D

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the Wishlist

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

Sandberg Forty Eight £1,796

CONTACT **440 Distribution** PHONE **+44 (0)113 284 2342** WEB **www.sandberg-guitars.de** WORDS **Dave Burr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Olly Curtis**

For any bass players reading, this German brand – founded in 1986 by Holger Stonjek and Gerd Gorzelke, and named after the street where their first workshop was located – will probably be on your radar. But, as you can see, Sandberg makes guitars, too. Not surprisingly, its guitars centre on the classic bolt-on designs with the California and Electra models, as well as the more original double-cut set-neck Florence. However, our Forty Eight (also available as a bass guitar) mixes up the influences with its Explorer-meets-Firebird outline, which retains the raised centre style of the Firebird, though here that flares out from the neck pickup to the lower bout.

That whiff of Kalamazoo is underpinned by an otherwise classic bolt-on build. The body is alder, and the 648mm (25.5-inch) scale bolt-on neck is maple, topped with a six-in-a-line headstock. There's a rear-placed rib-cage cutaway, too, and it's a very comfortable 'shape', either played seated or strapped on, with a weight of 3.3kg (7.26lb).

Although Sandberg has been bashing up its basses for many years, pulling the Forty Eight out of its shipping box and gigbag we weren't actually expecting a relic. It's nicely done, reflecting sensible gig-wear

that, along with the aged, dirty-looking hardware, certainly gives a comfortable impression of age; it's as if it had been made in the 70s. But it's not just a visual impression; the neck feels like an old guitar with its very light back finish, lightly rolled and worn fingerboard edges, and vintage small frets (which measure 2mm wide by 1.1mm high). And while the rosewood fingerboard's radius is 305mm (12 inches) to match the bridge, it plays really well. It's quite an illusion.

If there's a downside to any of this, we don't hear it plugged in. These Sandberg 'Blacklabel' pickups sound as good as they look. There's a little more beef and roundness that fills out the bridge, but it's far from 'hot', and that neck pickup sounds soulful and balanced with some blues wailing. While we might not suggest you turn up for your jazz dep gig with this guitar in tow, if you have the chops then the hugely classic neck pickup sound is right there.

We understand these Sandberg guitars are pretty rare beasts. All we can say is search them out. This is vintage-informed style with an original spin: an exceptional slice of lutherie that, at this price, would probably earn it a Gold Award in our reviews section. But it's our secret, right? **G**

1. Despite the obvious influences in its body shape, the Forty Eight is otherwise a classic bolt-on. One of the four neck screws doubles as a strap button

2. The controls are very simple with a volume for each pickup and a master tone – and cool-looking knobs! Inside, the wiring is tidy enough, using Alpha 500kohm mini-pots in a well-screened cavity. The Electrosocket-style jack plate sits right at the base of the cavity

3. A rather classy six-in-a-line headstock shows off a neat single-piece string retainer that holds down the top four strings behind the bone nut. The old-style Kluson top-lock tuners, like the rest of the hardware, are convincingly aged





4. Sandberg's pickup prototypes are developed in-house then produced by a European maker. Here, we have the 'Blacklabel' set: the bridge humbucker has a measured DCR of 8.73kohms, while the neck measures 7.69k. Like the rest of the hardware, the pickup covers are authentically aged

5. This aged Gotoh combo features a lightweight aluminium Nashville-style aluminium bridge and has those easy-to-adjust posts – not 'vintage' but extremely handy to dial in your setup

6. On a shape such as this, you might expect all-mahogany construction, but the body here is alder and the bolt-on neck is maple with a dark rosewood fingerboard



Gas Supply

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

Fender Acoustasonic Player Telecaster £1,049

CONTACT Fender EMEA PHONE 0333 200 8765 WEB www.fender.com

JARGON CRUNCHING SIRS

Fender has patented its Stringed Instrument Resonance System (SIRS), central to which is the 'waterfall' soundhole. This contoured feature is a tuned sound port, and has been specially designed for the Acoustasonic to increase volume and zhuzh-up the harmonics.

Wait, hasn't Fender already done an Acoustasonic Tele?

In the US range, yes, but this is the latest addition to the Acoustasonic family – the first time Fender has made its hybrid showstopper available as a more affordable model, and here it's part of the Player series.

Player, you say? So Mexican-made?

It is indeed. And the upshot is that it's precisely £700 cheaper than its US counterpart, which equates to a saving of 40 per cent.

Yeah, and I bet 40 per cent of the features have been removed, too...

Not at all. Actually, the Acoustasonic Player Telecaster might just be the best positioning of the guitar yet. This model's spec is dangerously close to the American version, and with that serious amount of cash saved we

think it presents itself more realistically as the guitar for do-it-all giggers who aren't yet onboard with the Acoustasonic concept.

Go on, then, convince me...

Let's start with the materials. The mahogany body, A-grade solid Sitka spruce top and mahogany neck you find here are all features of the American version. There's a rosewood fretboard (instead of ebony), Bi-Flex truss-rod and Graph Tech Tusq nut, too. Plus the finishes are applied in the same way: polyester satin matt on the body, satin-urethane finish on the back of the neck. Talking of the neck, it's the same Deep C profile as the other Acoustasonic guitars and is, of course, built to Fender's usual 648mm (25.5-inch) scale length with a 305mm (12-inch) fingerboard radius. All this means that you should feel at home here if you're jumping from a familiar electric.

PLAYER SERIES

This version of the Acoustasonic Tele marks the first time Fender has presented its hybrid design outside of the existing US models. There's a huge saving with the essence still intact

VOICES

The Acoustic Engine is navigated by a three-way switch, Blend control and a master volume control, giving you access to three pairs of acoustic and electric sounds, all of which can be individual or balanced

FINISHES

It comes in four finishes: Brushed Black, Butterscotch Blonde, Shadow Burst (pictured) and Arctic White

ELECTRONICS

The Player version of the Acoustasonic Telecaster loses the body sensor, but you still get the all-important magnetic N4 Noiseless pickup and under-saddle pickups, giving you hybrid flexibility in one guitar





Instead of a Lithium-ion battery, the Player model has a nine-volt battery

But Fender probably scrimped on the electronics, though, right?

Well, 'scrimped' would suggest a shortcoming, and we'll forgive Fender for not making parts of its own product line entirely redundant. The Player version comes with a dual-pickup system rather than the trio of the American-made model. The good news is that Fender has kept the two most important parts intact: the N4 Noiseless magnetic pickup, which covers your electric tones, and the under-saddle system (developed with Fishman), taking care of the acoustic sounds. The whole lot runs off a nine-volt battery, too.

Right, so does that do away with the different 'models', then?

Not at all. The Player Acoustasonic features a three-way switch rather than the US model's five-way. So while you don't get as many voices to play with, there are still three pairs of voicings. You select each pair with the pickup switch, and the Blend control allows you to crossfade between the two sounds on offer in that position – or you can have both running together.

What are the different sounds?

Position 1 (your 'bridge' position) is home to the magnetic sounds, in this case a Clean Tele and Fat Tele from the N4 pickup. In position 2 (middle) you get Lo-fi Clean and Crunch, which is the direct sound of the under-saddle pickup, blended in parallel with a crunchy, slightly overdriven version of the same signal. Then, in position 3, are the acoustic voicings: dreadnought and small-body acoustics.



Sounds good, what about the other trimmings?

You still get Fender's Stringed Instrument Resonance System (SIRS), making this playable and audible as an unplugged instrument, too. There's sleek contouring for your forearm and nice detailing with the pinstriped inlays. Finish-wise, it's available in Brushed Black, Butterscotch Blonde, Shadow Burst and Arctic White. Look out for the full review next issue. [SW]

ALSO OUT NOW...



MXR TOM MORELLO POWER 50 OVERDRIVE £189

"This is the Marshall JCM800 2205 50-watt head, with the name blocked out so no endorsements are given or asked for." That's what Tom Morello told our pals at *Guitar World* a number of years ago during a guest lesson. Thankfully for us, Tom has relaxed his signature stance of late, most recently with the Power 50 overdrive from MXR. This amp-in-a-box is based on his distinctive amp tone from said Marshall. There's three-band EQ with a Presence control, Gain and Volume, plus an integrated always-on effects loop for running your pedals in the same way as the guitarist himself. It's true bypass, can be powered from a battery or power supply, and is available to pre-order at the time of writing.

www.jimdunlop.com



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His music might divide opinion, but we can't think of another artist who has done more to inject renewed interest into acoustic guitars over the past decade than Ed Sheeran. For his latest album, he's turned his attention to the 'equals' sign and has added a limited-edition (3,000 units) acoustic with the same name under his Sheeran by Lowden brand. It's based on the Lowden W04 small-bodied acoustic with a figured walnut back and sides and a spruce top, while the neck is mahogany with an ebony fingerboard (609.6mm/24-inch scale length). There's an LR Baggs EAS VTC pickup/preamp system onboard, and some additional touches in the form of a maple '=' inlay at the 7th fret, butterfly carving on the neck heel and truss rod cover, plus an Equals Edition Custom Label in the soundhole. www.sheeranguitars.com

The Players

The latest news, views and happenings from the world of your favourite guitarists



PHOTO BY MANNY HANSON



PHOTO BY GILLY CURTIS



PHOTO BY LENNY WARREN



PHOTO BY KEVIN NIXON



5

1. Rock Revival YouTuber Pete Thorn and friends rock the classics

Los Angeles-based sideman and YouTube guitar star Pete Thorn is coming over to the UK to tour with *The Classic Rock Show 2022* (theclassicrockshow.com) from 7 January to 16 February. The show, which sees Thorn partner with stellar Brit guitarist James Cole, will feature a feast of exacting covers of legendary tracks from Led Zeppelin to Eric Clapton. Cole and Thorn stress this isn't your average tribute show – and with a host of top-flight session musicians in the band, that's no idle boast.

2. Smell Of Success Iommi returns with new music... and fragrance

Tony Iommi has released his first new track since 2013's *Black Sabbath 13* album – and the doomy and orchestral *Scent Of Dark* is also the name of the signature fragrance Iommi has

designed with Italian perfume house Xerjoff. Iommi has also confirmed he's written a song that's set to appear on Ozzy Osbourne's forthcoming solo album: "I wrote the whole track and played on it and played the solo on it," Iommi told *Rolling Stone*. "It's really good. And I like what Ozzy sang on it. I think he did a really good job." The album is also set to feature contributions from Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Zakk Wylde.

3. Songs In The Key Of Strife Plant weighs in on Zeppelin's high notes

If you wonder why Robert Plant seemed to have a hard task with the high notes in some Led Zeppelin tracks, the vocalist has admitted that the keys in which the band's songs were written had nothing to do with him. "In Zeppelin, quite often everything was in E because you got much more out of the bottom of the

guitar," he told the *Rolling Stone Music Now* podcast. "I should have gone to one of those castrati schools in Northern Italy to try and get it right..."

4. Slash Chords The strange case of Dylan's Wiggle Wiggle

Slash has recalled his "learning" experience playing session guitar on Bob Dylan's divisive 1990 album, *Under The Red Sky*. "Don Was hooked me up with Bob Dylan and said, 'Here's the song.' It was a real basic I-IV-V blues kind of thing," Slash told *Gibson TV* of his work on the much-maligned track *Wiggle Wiggle*. "Don had suggested me to play the solo for this particular song, which was like an acoustic kind of thing. So there was a section and I went down to the studio and did what I thought was a really great one-off." But when Slash heard the result he was bemused. "The

lyrics and chorus go by and the solo section comes in and it's just me playing acoustic, strumming. And that's like two full progressions... and then back into the song. I said, 'What happened to the solo?' [Don said], 'Bob thought it sounds too much like Guns N' Roses...'"

5. Amped for X-Gear Ace test drives new IK Multimedia pedals

Skunk Anansie guitarist and stompbox-addict Ace recently tried out IK Multimedia's X-Gear AmpliTube effects pedals and gave his first impressions of the four-unit range of drive, modulation, reverb and delay. "If I owned no pedals, and I had these and thought 'I'm going to really get into them and programme them,' I can see that they'll absolutely slaughter it in the studio and on stage... You could definitely model an entire setup with just these," he told MusicRadar.com.

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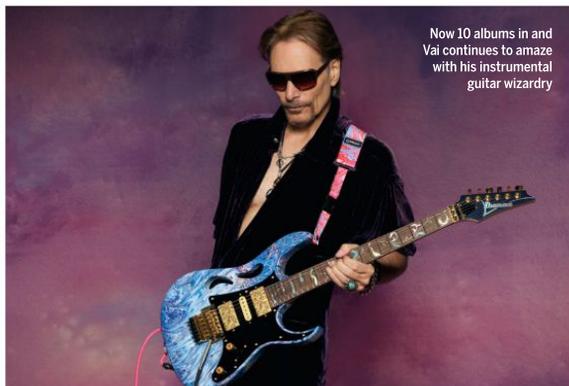


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Now 10 albums in and Vai continues to amaze with his instrumental guitar wizardry

Steve Vai

Inviolate

Favored Nations/Mascot Label Group

8/10



A new chapter of fretboard mastery from guitar's Captain Quirk

When Steve Vai released his first solo album, *Flex-Able*, in 1984 the guitar community shut up and listened in amazement. *The Attitude Song* alone was enough to convince everyone that the bar of six-string virtuosity had just been raised significantly higher than before. But who was this guy with the modded Strat and a unique take on fretboard finesse?

Fresh out of Zappa's band and still in his 20s, Steve was to go on to replace Malmsteen in Alcatraz and then join David Lee Roth's band and subsequently Whitesnake, having released what many believe to be his masterpiece, 1990's *Passion And Warfare*. The man was an unstoppable force and a seemingly endless font of original ideas, too. The intervening years have seen Steve keep to a schedule that balanced new releases with relentless touring, guest appearances and masterclasses all over the world.

In 2022, Vai, now in his early 60s, doesn't seem to be slowing down on the creative front as *Inviolate* displays once again his mastery both in terms of composition and technical prowess. Opening track, *Teeth Of The Hydra*, sets the mood with sinuous guitar lines snaking their way among bone-shaking riffs, whereas he forsakes his regular Ibanez arsenal in favour of a hollowbody Gretsch for *Little Pretty*, ditches his pick and his signature whammy bar antics for *Candlepower*, and *Knapsack* (which was recorded after surgery on his right shoulder) finds him just using legato technique with his left hand. The stunt guitar wizard is alive and well! [DM]

Standout track: *Greenish Blues*

For fans of: Frank Zappa, Joe Satriani

Neil Young and Crazy Horse

Barn

Reprise

8/10



Songs of innocence and experience

Marking a return to an unvarnished garage-rock (or maybe ranch-rock) sound, *Barn* is a rich vein of gold in rock that had seemed like it might be mined out. Opener, *Song Of The Seasons*, is like taking a stroll through chilly autumn woods with Young as he talks about life, while the homely harmonica, accordion and acoustic guitar are as comforting as a fireside at the path's end. Young's lyrics retain that strangely powerful combination of childlike simplicity and grizzled cynicism that really cuts to the heart of the matter. *Barn* isn't a consistent album: *Shape Of You* feels more like an ad-libbed pub jam than it probably should, and the album sounds more like a messy sketchbook than a masterpiece at times. But it's all forgiven when you hear the poignant portraits of American life Young draws in *They Might Be Lost* and *Welcome Back* that are as good as anything he's done. Ragged but glorious. [JD]

Standout track: *They Might Be Lost*

For fans of: Bob Dylan, Mark Knopfler, Blitzen Trapper

Bryan Adams

So Happy It Hurts

BMG

8/10



A celebration of post-lockdown freedom

Recorded before Omicron hit, it's the summer of '69 all over again for Canadian rocker, Bryan Adams. This album of jubilant rock 'n' roll celebrates the feelgood factor involved in getting back out on the road. The opening title track sets the mood - Mr Adams is certainly *So Happy It Hurts* here - and the following track, *Never Gonna Rain*, continues the mood with an extra dose of optimism thrown in for good measure. Things get a bit biblical with the intro to *Kick Ass* (apparently rock music is going to save the world) before another upbeat rocker hits your headphones. Amazingly, another facet of Adam's broad range of talent involves him having supplied the photography for this year's Pirelli calendar, but more on point is the forthcoming UK tour beginning in May. [DM]

Standout track: *Let's Do This*

For fans of: Bon Jovi, Bruce Springsteen



The Black Label energy shows no sign of abating on *Doom Crew Inc*

PHOTO BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

Black Label Society

Doom Crew Inc
Spinefarm

8/10



Zakk's back with a tribute to his road crew

Zakk Wyld returns with his band and shows that few have his capacity for roaring, burning and emoting with his vocals and guitar chops. *Doom Crew Inc* is a 12-track album that features great twin-guitar playing courtesy of Zakk and his co-pilot Dario Lorina. Opener, *Set You Free*, is a case in point; like two prize fighters, their solos tag each other with crazy runs and some of the best wide vibrato in hard-rock today. If you hanker for a BLS speciality – a 12/8 groover – you will love *Destroy & Conquer*, which is infectiously pounding with a head-turning scream-and-burn fretboard frazzle-athon section. Never being a one-trick pony, BLS have a great turn with ballads, too, and the gorgeous *Forever And A Day* shows Zakk has a fantastically smooth voice when required (killer bone-dry guitar solo, too). Dedicated to their touring crew (the *Doom Crew* of the album's title), the band is as strong as ever. [JS]

Standout track: *Forever And A Day*
For fans of: Ozzy, Pantera

Robben Ford & The Blue Line

Live At Yoshi's
Repertoire Records

9/10



Previously unreleased gem from blues superpower

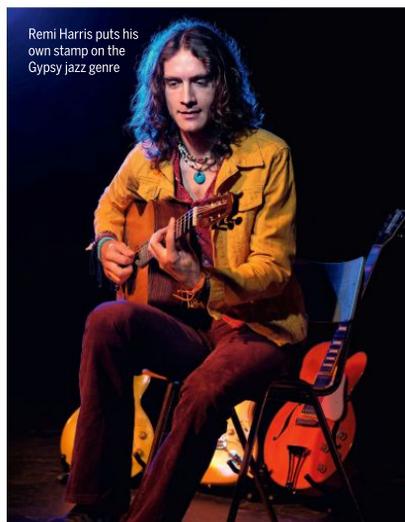
"The Blue Line was a very special band," Robben Ford says of this newly released live album. "Real chemistry is a rare thing for musicians to encounter and The Blue Line had a chemistry that is clearly present in these performances." Recorded in 1996 over a five-day residency at Yoshi's, the legendary venue in Oakland, California, this is a double-CD 14-track masterclass in jazz-hued blues. Accompanied by the considerable talents of bassist Roscoe Beck, drummer Tom Brechtlein and keyboard player Bill Boublitz, Robben romps through Blue Line staples such as *Start It Up*, *Chevrolet*, *Good Thing* and *Lovin' Cup* to the delight of all present. The 14-minute instrumental track, *Bounce That*, tells you all you need to know about how good The Blue Line were live, and we're incredibly lucky that these recordings, which lay dormant for 25 years, have finally seen the light of day. [DM]

Standout track: *Don't Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'*
For fans of: Michael Bloomfield, Mike Stern



Robben Ford joins his Blue Line comrades on this special live recording

PHOTO BY MASCHA PHOTOGRAPHY



Remi Harris puts his own stamp on the Gypsy jazz genre

START ME UP

Remi Harris On Track
Yardbird Arts

8/10



Gypsy jazz par excellence on a mix of standards and originals

On Track is Remi Harris's third album and a continuation of his quest to revitalise the Gypsy jazz genre with a few twists of his own – garnered throughout his playing career, which started at the tender age of seven. The style itself, of course, is decades old and still faithfully adhered to practically note for note by a legion of Django Reinhardt fans worldwide. But Remi has found a voice that both tips its hat towards original stylings while adding his own forward-looking, contemporary flair. So it is that a version of Django's immortal *Nuages* and *Dinette* sit side by side with Remi's (all too brief) take on Led Zeppelin's *Rain Song* – and yes, it works fine. Remi's version of Hoagy Carmichael's *Skylark* is a delight, as are other jazz standards such as *Nature Boy* and *The Way You Look Tonight*. A refreshingly new take on an established genre. [DM]

Standout track: *The Way You Look Tonight*
For fans of: Django Reinhardt, Martin Taylor's *Spirit Of Django*



Tones Behind The Tracks

British jazz guitarist **Chris Standring**'s latest album, *Wonderful World*, is a testament to the evergreen nature of jazz classics from bossa to blues

Artist: Chris Standring

Album: *Wonderful World* (Ultimate Vibe/Lateralize Records)



British-born guitarist Chris Standring has been a leading light of the jazz-guitar scene in America for many years. Described as “one of the most lyrical guitarists in jazz” by *Jazz Times*, his latest album, *Wonderful World*, is likely to win him plenty of new fans across the pond, too. An elegant collection of jazz standards, the album’s lush orchestral parts were recorded in Studio Two at Abbey Road – but the real star of the show is Chris’s sublime melodic playing on a Benedetto archtop. He joins us to talk about the difficult task of bringing fresh life to classic melodies for the album, and also offers invaluable, down-to-earth advice on how to go beyond ‘shapes and boxes’ and become truly free as a melodic guitarist.

The songs you cover on the album are already well known as legendary recordings by other artists – how did you bring something fresh and relevant to them on guitar?

“Somebody said to me before I started this album, ‘You’ve got to take those songs, you’ve got to own them.’ And I think once you do that, once you get past

Beautiful song. I wanted to record that on this album, but I couldn’t quite get it away from sounding like [the soundtrack to] a movie Peter Sellers might have starred in back in the 60s, you know what I mean? I just couldn’t quite get it to sound special enough. I’m not saying I couldn’t do it and that I won’t do it in the future, but I just sort of passed on it for this record. All the other things I *did* record, I felt were more special and they had something about them that creates a little mystery and intrigue, and I couldn’t quite do that with *The Shadow Of Your Smile*. And so that’s all it is: I think it’s self-discipline. At the end of the day, you’ve got to step back and go, ‘What is this? Is this anything? Do I use this? Do I go with this or is it not there?’”

A highlight of the album is your cover of Antônio Carlos Jobim’s classic bossa nova track *How Insensitive*, of which Joe Pass and Grant Green also played fantastic versions. What is it that attracts guitarists to bossa?

“I think there’s a sexiness to it, which translates to everybody. As you well know, jazz can be tough to get over to people, but I think the thing about the bossa nova is it has an intrinsic rhythm that just gets through to everybody, whether you like jazz or not. So it’s a good foundation to work from. The other thing, of course, is that it works great with an orchestra. It’s a good tempo to do anything with. I basically gravitate towards the rhythms and the music that hits me emotionally, and bossa has always done that.”

You have really classy phrasing – and it’s a big part of the album’s charm. How do you approach phrasing?

“Well, at a base level, it’s ‘question and answer’ – but it’s much more than that. I’ve always been interested in phrasing... I think there’s a tendency for guitar players to keep playing because they don’t have to take the horn away from their mouth to breathe, you know? But you don’t have to keep playing – I think one of the reasons I do stop at the end of the phrase is I may just have a limited vocabulary. I mean, we all do to a point, but I tend to use that as a vehicle for me to [slow down and] play musically. I know that sounds like an excuse, but I don’t think so. I’m really interested in the music breathing and the idea of making a statement. It’s like speaking a phrase – at the end of the phrase, there’s a

Although born and raised in the UK, Chris has been living in LA since 1991, where he is very much part of the jazz scene

“Jazz can be tough to get over to people, but I think the thing about the bossa nova is it has an intrinsic rhythm that just gets through to everybody”

the initial melody, you have to arrange it in such a way that it just speaks to you. Because, if you think about it, in the *Real Book*, melodies are written so straight that if anybody played them just like that, it just wouldn’t cut it. So that’s where the personal thing comes in. I think you’ve just got to personalise it and dig as deep as you can – and what will be will be. And of course, you know, if it doesn’t work out, you throw that out and try something else – until it does deliver the goods.”

The playing on the album is laid-back and elegant but never bland. When you’re playing smooth jazz, how do you avoid slipping into ‘elevator music’ territory?

“Well, there’s a terrible tendency for a melody to sound like elevator music unless you do something with it. An example is *The Shadow Of Your Smile*.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL DAMBEROSA



PHOTO BY MICHAEL D'AMBROSIA

breath: you don't keep talking. Because if you do keep talking, people get very scared [laughs]."

The album is really a homage to the enduring power of pure melody. Any tips on playing better melodic guitar?

"One thing I did discover quite a long time ago, when I play a phrase, and when I come to the end of that phrase, the beginning of the next phrase is usually a step [tone] or two away from the last note I played. And that's because it's a train of thought. You know, if I ended up on a top E and then I started a new phrase three octaves down or something, it's not necessarily going to tell the story in the same way. Now, that's not to say I wouldn't do that from time to time, but as a general rule, if anybody transcribed me, most of my solos would follow that rule.

"Also, in order to play [melody] so that you're telling a story, you have to get out of the habit of shapes and patterns. Of course, we all have them, you know? I have shapes and patterns like everyone else. But I also use a linear approach, where you can play horizontally and follow a melodic thread as easily as you can pull off a blues lick in A in position 5, for instance."

What's your advice to any players who hear the album and want to progress from blues to playing full-blooded jazz guitar?

"Well, you should probably start by studying the major scale. Because the blues scale is the blues scale, but the major scale relates to both major and minor chords. So instantly you would be discovering new harmonic ideas just with that one scale – especially if you learn to play it all over the fretboard both

horizontally and vertically. After that, you can go on to learn how it relates to inversions across the fretboard. This is all good guitar practice, but, at the end of the day, you need to adapt that knowledge to songs – because songs are what we're all trying to play. We're all trying to play music, so why not get a *Real Book* and learn some simple standards like *Autumn Leaves* or *Summertime* and just navigate through those changes using the major scale? You can throw in a blues scale on a dominant chord as well – but if you're trying to cross over to a more free harmonic vocabulary, I think the major scale is probably the best, next place to go."

The tones on the album are great - really classic. What guitars did you use?

"I've been playing Benedetto guitars since 1996. My friend Ron Escheté hooked me up with Benedetto and I met Bob Benedetto, the original luthier. He was making them himself at the time and he made me a guitar I still have – it's just an extraordinary instrument. As the company grew, Bob went into semi-retirement and hired a new guy [master luthier Damon Mailand]. I've had four of these guitars. I've just got this new one and I haven't ever played a jazz guitar as good, so there's no reason for me to stop playing Benedettos. Also, I'm not the kind of guy who's interested in playing and collecting a lot of guitars. Generally, I've wanted to find my voice. And when I find it, that's the guitar I want to play – I don't want to deviate." [JD]

Chris brings added musicality to his phrasing by ensuring there's space in his playing. "I'm really interested in the music breathing and the idea of making a statement," he says



Wonderful World by Chris Standring is out now on Ultimate Vibe/ Lateralize Records. For more information, visit www.chrisstandring.com



Get On Your Nerves

While it's natural to feel the pressure before a big booking, it's how you use those nerves that counts, says **Adam Goldsmith**

During a recent two-day booking for a Disney film at George Martin's old studio, AIR, in North London, I got to thinking about the concept of nerves when performing or recording, and how to best deal with them. This particular session was mostly fingerstyle nylon-string guitar (I hesitate to use the term 'classical' in case I give the wrong impression of my abilities), and a smattering of mandolin, with a full string orchestra and piano. Before films such as these are released, I'm generally tied into some sort of confidentiality agreement, so I won't go into specifics, but the principles could apply to many situations. For example, some of the worst nerves I've ever experienced were in a local bar in front of about 60 or 70 people. It was the first time I fronted my own band, so, in my experience, nerves are by no means unique to high-profile situations.

"Recognise you're nervous and accept it. Imagine it's [your] last gig, and [you] want to enjoy playing music with your friends as much as possible"

Like many guitar players, I have a rock background, but I did start on classical piano from a young age. And, by the powers of sheer luck and student lager, I managed to get a degree in classical music, and have played some nylon-string guitar on films over the years. That is to say, I have a bit of experience. Despite this, I still feel mild terror when confronted with a sheet of semiquavers, a bunch of Italian words, a pair of headphones, and a film orchestra packed with some of the world's finest sight-readers.

This particular job for Disney was a typical film session where an orchestra is involved. This means we

only really played each cue two or three times before it was considered 'in the can' and we moved on. As many of you will be aware, guitar can be particularly difficult to read on because you need to work out the best positions on the neck to achieve a given chord position or musical passage. This proved more challenging than usual on this session, as there was a transatlantic Zoom call in progress during the recording, which involved the head of the film studio and the composer. This meant that my trying to work out how to play the music in the background wasn't helpful to any conversation happening.

The result was my first take being the first time I'd attempted to work out the best way to play the music in question, which added to the pressure. Luckily – and I've yet to hear otherwise – everyone was happy and the music was recorded. It did, however, make me think about how best to cope with these situations, and I've also gathered advice from my esteemed colleagues.

First up is Simon Gardner. Simon is the trumpet player on my current West End show *The Drifters Girl*, and lead trumpet with the *Strictly Come Dancing* band, plus he has worked with everyone from Frank Sinatra and Buddy Rich, to The Who and Paul McCartney. It's safe to say he has experience... He advises, "Nerves are always there and the trick is to use them. They help you play as perfectly as you can, giving you an extra edge. You're less nervous when you're in complete control and doing what you know you do best."

He continues on the theme by saying 'yes' to the right projects. "Don't get booked on something that's out of your comfort zone," he says. "For me, that would be classical music. It's a different language. But swing or pop music? Bring it on!" He also emphasises the importance of preparation: "Make sure you're always match-fit. Put in the time to practise. If you turn up on a date with good chops and you know you can deliver on the music style, the nerves will leave you alone. If you turn up unprepared because you haven't been putting the time in at home and you have a delicate classically oriented piece to play, the nerves will work against you and bang goes your confidence."

Some other advice I've received comes from bass player Steve Pearce (MD for Tom Jones, plus hundreds of film and television TV credits) who urges you to assess your mindset. Steve says, "There's a difference between nerves and excitement. If it's nerves, that's usually a symptom of not being prepared enough."

Finally, guitarist/producer for Noel Gallagher and The Black Crowes Paul Stacey has a suggestion that really resonated with me: "Recognise that you're nervous and accept it. I use the tactic of imagining this is my last gig on Earth, and I want to enjoy playing music with my friends as much as possible." 🎸

Below: in the booth with Adam at London's AIR Studios. **Right:** a glimpse of the six-hour session from the other side





Celeb Sightings

Sticking with our cover's theme, **Neville Marten** recalls some famous instruments he's been privileged to play. Bring out the name-drop gong!

When I learned the theme of this issue – 50 Guitars That Changed The World – I thought this month I'd talk about some of the esteemed guitars that have passed through my hands over the years. Thinking back on these encounters, it seems unbelievable that they even happened.

The first famous guitars I played were while working as a guitar repairer at Selmer's in Woolpack Lane, Braintree. I believe we had Jimmy Page's EDS-1275 on one occasion, but I can't be totally sure. It came from Selmer's in London, and because we thought it was the *Stairway* legend, we all did a bit of the work. I fitted a new 12-string nut.

Then there was the Woodstock Strat. I've told this story so many times that I'll skip it here. I did, however, have a go on Jimi's 'painted '67 Flying V. Dave Brewis is a renowned guitar historian and he found a black '67 Flying V in a Newcastle guitar shop. He bought it and, whipping off the pickguard, discovered remnants of coloured paint. This set his imagination going. The proof that it was Jimi's came when Dave analysed the celluloid fret markers. One of the dots had a distinctive 'double stripe' going through it. Checking pictures of Jimi, sure enough, his dots matched perfectly. Mitch Mitchell also brought out Jimi's Martin D-45 for me, for a *Guitarist* 'Oldies' special. A lefty, so I couldn't really play it, but I did have a go.

Next was when I visited Bruce Welch's house. The Shadows' rhythm guitarist had Hank's original pink Strat, the one on which so many of the great hits were played. I didn't dare give Bruce a burst of *Apache*, but I did run my hands over its glorious birdseye maple neck.

Stars In My Eyes

Speaking of Strats, David Gilmour opening his kitchen door to thrust white Stratocaster serial number 0001 in my hands was another 'gulp' moment. I'd gone to interview Mick Ralphs, but Mick's house was undergoing work so he said, "My mate says we can do it at his place." I'd met David (Mick's "mate") before, while working at Fender, so he knew who I was and probably thought it would be fun to surprise me.

Visiting Queen's office the first time I interviewed Brian May was scary. I was late, due to a terrible car crash on the A12 going to London. No mobile phones in 1987! He was charming. We clomped up some noisy wooden stairs (I wore white clogs and didn't know that he did, too – embarrassing!), and we sat down on either side of a big roadcase. Brian opened it and said, "There's the beast." I played it all the way through our interview and didn't even realise it. He was the first megastar I'd ever met, so nerves probably got the better of me.

Should I mention playing *Layla* on the 'Layla' Strat, 'Brownie'? Well, I did, as did David Mead who was with

me behind the scenes at Eric's first guitar auction. I also picked up 'Blackie' on the Royal Albert Hall stage and was quickly admonished by Lee Dickson, Eric's guitar tech. He did let me play the replacement 1960 Les Paul, though, when I visited Eric's guitar compound.

Gary Moore's two great Les Pauls and his red Strat have both had my unworthy hands on them. The 'Greeny' one I met soon after I got to know Gary, and

"David Gilmour opening his kitchen door to thrust white Stratocaster serial number 0001 in my hands was another 'gulp' moment"

I've done demos of the red Strat and '59 Les Paul for *Guitarist's* YouTube channel. I picked up the *Fire Alarm Blues* ES-335, but my playing would have been a damp squib next to the explosive Mr Moore's, so left well alone.

I could mention Rory's battered Strat, a couple of Kossoff's Les Pauls (one with his name and address on a slip of paper in the control cavity), and one of JoBo's... and while I don't think I played James Taylor's Olson, he did run his fingers over my Martin 000-42.

The name-drop gong is screaming, "Put me down!" so I'd best leave it at that. If you've got any famous guitar skirmishes, we'd love to hear them. Email us at the usual address. See you next month. **G**

GAS OF THE MONTH

Comfortably Strum

What? Fender FSR Tribute Stratocaster, Black

Where seen? www.guitarguitar.co.uk

Price? £749

If the mention of a Gilmour Strat has got the juices flowing for a post-Christmas bargain then look at this. It's *Guitar*'s exclusive black 'Special Run' Fender Strat, specially spec'd to look like the one that sold at auction recently for a staggering \$3,975,000. However, the FSR Strat has a modern 22-fret, 24mm (9.5-inch) radius 'board, Custom Shop Fat 50s pickups, quality die-cast tuners and, of course, the classic Fender vibrato (here upgraded to a twin-post floating vibrato with bent steel saddles). They may all be gone by the time you read this, but check out the *Guitar* website just in case (or, as with the FSR Strat, Fender padded gigbag).

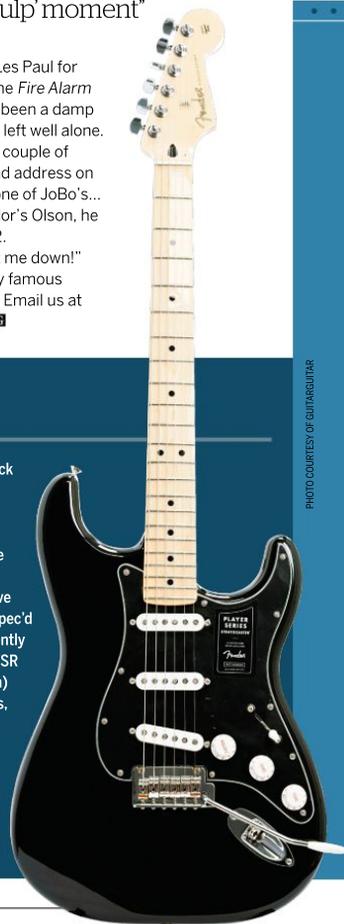


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String Theory

This issue, **Alex Bishop** dwells upon the importance of choosing the right strings for the job, and sets about finding the perfect formula

One thing I love about the craft of guitar making is that it occupies an interesting space where the boundaries of art and science cross over. A luthier must be able to cover a lot of ground in order to build instruments to the highest degree. Disregard the artistic elements of lutherie at your peril, for your craftsmanship and eye for design will be called into question. But ignore the science and your beautiful creation simply won't work.

Lately, I have been delving into some of the more technical aspects of my work. Here in Bristol there is a strong traditional folk scene so a lot of diverse folk instruments pass through my workshop, and

in 'Mersenne's laws', which state that string tension is related to the scale length, tuning and string type.

Scale length is essentially the distance from the nut to the bridge. If we assume the same tuning and strings then a longer scale length will result in more tension, whereas a shorter one will be less.

When it comes to tuning, if you've ever played around with DADGAD or drop D, the effect of tuning on string tension is an obvious one. Drop the pitch and the strings get more slack; increase the pitch and the strings get tighter. This is why many string manufacturers offer string sets made specifically for different tunings, rebalancing the tension on those dropped strings to maintain the 'feel' (and tone) one might find comfortable in standard tuning.

The string type – or, more specifically, the mass of the string – means that a dense and heavy material such as steel will introduce significantly more tension when compared with traditional gut strings. Given the plethora of options available today, it is unlikely that identical gauges of strings made from different materials will offer the same amount of tension. This is made apparent when it comes to trying to work out whether the 'g' string in your electric guitar string set ought to be a plain steel string or a wound one.

“The differences in geometry between different string types means that to feel balanced is not the same as actually being balanced”

I recently found myself challenged with some intonation problems posed by a beautiful but troublesome Scandinavian cittern. Just like the 12-string guitar, this instrument makes use of pairs of strings tuned in octaves as well as unison, but in this instance some pairs were combinations of nylon and steel strings.

Intonation problems are manifest when the notes sounded by an instrument go progressively out of tune as one plays along the neck. As I've written about previously, there can be a number of causes for this, but I've usually found the main reason is a light set of strings that offer too little tension. But how to know for sure? It turns out that string tension is related to just three factors. For the science boffins, this is expressed

When you're on the hunt for a perfectly balanced set of strings, it's important to look beyond their tensile properties

Tackling Tension

It must be said that when I'm not at the workbench with a chisel in hand, I am likely to be found at my computer staring into a good spreadsheet. So it was that I spent one chilly afternoon last week, inputting data values for every kind of string I could find for sale on the internet in an effort to work out how to create a balanced string set for a Scandinavian cittern. This particular rabbit hole led me down an interesting path. It might seem obvious that string sets ought to result in the same amount of tension in every string, but this is actually very rarely the case. A column of matching numbers might look good in a spreadsheet, but in reality the differences in geometry between different string types means that to feel balanced is not the same as actually being balanced. Add to this the fact that varied string gauges project differently, and one realises that creating a set of strings with balanced tension is unlikely to result in an equally well balanced tonal output.

So, in a sense, I guess I'm back to where I started, except now I know more than I did before, and I probably have more questions and no definitive answers. If my spreadsheet proves anything, it's that even when it comes to offering up a reasonably detailed scientific analysis, lutherie resiliently pushes back to prove it is indeed still an art as much as it is a science. Perhaps it's time to shut the laptop, pick up the chisels and make some sawdust instead. **■**





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Photo Finish

Whether it's poly or nitro, luthier Patrick James Eggle tells **Jamie Dickson** why the thickness of your guitar's finish is key

Many guitarists will swear that electric guitars with nitrocellulose finishes – the kind you'd find on many 50s and 60s Fender electrics, for example – sound the best. It's a sweeping statement and, almost immediately, one can think of exceptions to that bit of tone folklore. But is there a grain of truth in it? And if so, why would nitro finishes perform better than polyester or polyurethane finishes?

Curious, I dropped a line to one of the UK's top luthiers Patrick James Eggle. His wonderful nitro-finished Macon single-cut electric won a deserved Gear Of The Year award in our last issue, but his decades of experience include making top-quality guitars with all kinds of finishes. So if anyone is well placed to give an informed answer, it's Patrick. His answer proved fascinating – and though it's a little technical, it's worth bearing with because it touches on the real principle behind what kinds of finishes promote great tone. But first, here's Pat's *short* answer to whether nitro sounds best...

"Well, I think that it's largely true, although I think that a lot of it is in the ear of the beholder," Patrick says after a longish pause for reflection. "But I think what you're really talking about is: what finishes can mask or muffle the resonance of the instrument?"

"I've used polyester finishes – the electric guitars that we built in the early 90s, all those Berlins and what have

you, they were all polyester finishes," Patrick continues. "And the acoustics that we built, a fair amount of those were arguably polyester because they were UV-cured lacquer, which is a polyester-based hard lacquer. And then we moved over to the nitro. I've got experience with all of them. So the real answer is that I think any finish should be fine as regards tone – but the critical thing is getting it thin enough."

Patrick explains that nitro is not the only finish that can be applied thinly enough to promote great tone, but he does tend to get especially good results with it.

"With one of our nitro finishes when the guitar is finished, when it's new, I would say that the thickness of the lacquer – obviously it varies a little bit over the instrument – is generally about 150 microns. That's 0.15mm, so very thin, although we were able to achieve that with our UV finishes as well."

So, we should be clear that nitrocellulose isn't a magic tone elixir that only has to be sprayed upon a guitar like fairy dust to improve it. In fact, Patrick explains that if you apply nitro unskillfully it's just as likely to muffle the voice of a guitar as anything else.

"If you used nitro lacquer and you just kept spraying and spraying and spraying it and it ended up really thick, it would be as bad as a [badly applied] polyester finish, although more flexible."

Melting In

So, why is it easier to get a thin finish – the real aim of the tone-conscious luthier – with nitro rather than polyester? The answer lies in the way that polyester has to be applied, as Patrick explains.

"The key thing is that it's quite difficult to end up with a very thin finish with polyester because of the nature of the finish... When you spray polyester or urethane, you generally do the base coats and then, once they've cured, you need to flatten them back and give them a scuffed finish. That's so that the top coats will adhere to the base properly. But when you spray another coat of lacquer onto that hardened base coat, it won't melt into the previous coats as nitro would: it has to physically adhere to the base by virtue of the fact that it has an abraded finish. After that, you have to build up enough top coats so that when you go to polish in the final stages, you're not going to rub through to the base coat again. So that [cumulative process] means you tend to end up with a finish that's a little bit thicker – because of the dangers of rubbing through and because polyester is a much harder finish and everything else."

In other words, it's not impossible to get a thin, resonant finish with polyester – indeed, skillful makers can and do achieve that every day. It's just quite difficult. Patrick then describes the rather more easygoing way nitro behaves when you spray it on.

Patrick James Eggle's Macon Single Cut features a super-smooth satin nitrocellulose finish





"With a true nitro finish, every coat that you spray on basically melts into the previous coat. The lacquer is something like 85 per cent thinners – a huge volume of what you spray is thinners. So it will basically melt into the previous coats and the thinners will then evaporate. And what you end up with is essentially one coat of very thin lacquer. Which is why I like it – and also I like it because it's beautifully low-tech."

While nitro-finishing still involves many careful steps, the end result is "a base coat of nitro that hasn't got any holes in it and provides a really, really flat, inert base," says Patrick. "And then we can spray the actual top coats over that. And we know from that point that we've got a flat base and when we spray over that we're not going to have any problems. So it basically means that we can end up with a finish that is very, very thin."

In explaining this, Patrick also hints at a possible reason why the thick polyurethane finishes associated with 1970s

This Walnut-finished 1977 Fender Telecaster Deluxe is an example of the thick poly finishes that were characteristic of many 70s instruments

"With nitro, every coat you spray on melts into the previous one... it's essentially one coat of very thin lacquer. It's beautifully low-tech"

guitars may have been applied so heavily in factories struggling with quality control in that decade.

"If you have a thicker finish, like the thicker polyester finishes, they can hide a multitude of sins. So if you've got a guitar body, for instance, that's not perfectly sanded – if it's got maybe a little ding in it or a sharp corner or something – and you spray lacquer a millimetre thick on it, you can rub it back and polish it without going through to the wood because it's thicker. So in that sense it acts as a sort of insurance policy."

Next month, we continue our exploration of how finish affects tone with a look at the acoustic guitar world. For the moment, I'll leave you with a final thought from Patrick, who adds that producing a top-quality finish of any kind also demands hour upon hour of exacting sanding and prep work even before any finish is applied, so getting a great result is not just down to the lacquer, either.

"Finishing, I think, will always be a challenge," he concludes. "And a good finish will always need a good eye and experience." ■

www.eggle.co.uk

THREE TO GET READY

Electrics finished for great looks & tone



Patrick James Eggle Macon Junior DC £2,999

This guitar's single-cut big brother, the Macon (senior?), may have taken the laurels in our Gear Of The Year Awards this year, but the more-stripped back appeal of the single-pickup Macon Junior DC mustn't be overlooked. With a single-piece mahogany body, the guitar's minimal but high-spec appointments include a milled aluminium ABM 3025 intonated wrapover bridge/tailpiece and a single Mojo P90 Dogear pickup – and, of course, that glorious nitro finish with just a hint of tasteful ageing.



Fender Jason Isbell Custom Telecaster £1,359

Fancy a Tele with a Custom Shop Relic vibe (plus star appeal) but a reasonable price tag? Look no further than the signature Telecaster of US singer-songwriter Jason Isbell. Finished in a Road Worn Chocolate Sunburst, it pairs an alder body with a 21-fret rosewood fingerboard and vintage-style 184.1mm (7.25-inch) radius. Pickup master Tim Shaw provided the Twisted Tele-style neck pickup, plus a replica of the bridge pickup from his 1965 L-series Tele. A very tempting package for any player.



PRS John Mayer Silver Sky Roxy Pink £2,499

If you fancy channelling the 80s style of John Mayer's latest long-player, *Sob Rock*, there's a Maryland-built double-cut with your name on it. Clad in a Roxy Pink finish that echoes the look of Mayer's main squeeze in the video for *Last Train Home*, the rest of the guitar follows the highly refined spec that Paul Reed Smith and Mayer hit on through intensive playtesting including a trio of 635JM single coils plus a maple neck with a slender vintage-inspired profile capped with a rosewood 'board with a 184.1mm (7.25-inch) radius.



Big Open Chords

It's time to make some noise as **Richard Barrett** uses all six strings for some big, impactful open chords in the key of E major

Sometimes you want small chords in order to fit into a funk song or add a percussive backbeat.

Today, we're not talking about these – we're looking at making the most sound possible, using all six strings and a wide range of notes (that is, from low to high). Chords such as these examples can be very effective on acoustic guitar, particularly if it is the sole accompaniment to a voice. Joni Mitchell is a master at this and would frequently use open tunings to assist with wide-ranging, complex chords.

The good news here is that these chords capture much of that sound without the need for retuning. Based in the key of E major, the example chords outline part of an ascending major scale, which you'll find quite useful as a compositional device with some experimentation, playing them in and out of scale sequence. All the chords feature the sixth, second and first string open (E, B and E), which allows us to make various triads and superimpose harmonic ideas elsewhere. **G**

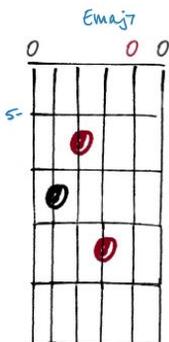
Right: Joni Mitchell's unique use of different tunings gave rise to some sumptuous chords



PHOTO BY RON POWELL/GETTY IMAGES

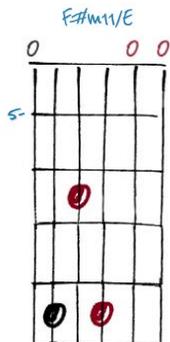
Example 1

This Emaj7 takes its name from the D# at the 8th fret of the G string. You'll find the 3rd (G#) over on the D string and another root on the 7th fret of the A – giving us three Es in total! As well as strumming up a storm, unusual voicings such as this can yield very interesting arpeggiated parts.



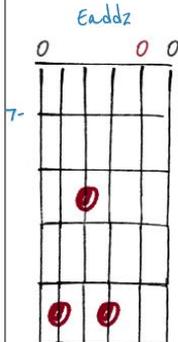
Example 2

I'm calling this F#min11/E as we have (from low to high) E on the open sixth string, F# A E (in that order) making an F#min7 triad on the fifth, fourth and third strings, the open B giving us our 11th – then, finally, another 7th in the shape of the open high E string.



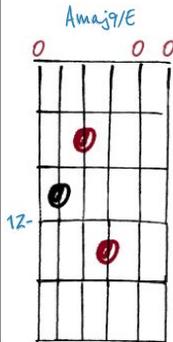
Example 3

Of the various names this chord could correctly be given, I'm opting for Eadd2. It could also be called Eadd9, or G#min7/E. While the latter gives a context after the previous F#minor11/E, I'm not convinced enough to call it that as a 'standalone' chord. Hopefully, this will give a bit of insight into how and why people name chords the way they do!



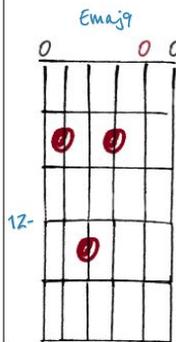
Example 4

This example suits the name Amaj9/E. I think we know where the low E comes from by this point, but the A, C# and G# on the fifth, fourth and third strings are our maj7 triad, further extended by the open B string as the 9th then the open E, which (as the 5th) doesn't require adding any further numbers to the name!



Example 5

Finally, we flip the shape round and get this nice 'doo-wop' style Emaj9. We have our open Es and B in the usual places, with the G#, D# and F# giving us the maj3, maj7 and 9th respectively. Like all of these examples, it's worth shifting these about the fretboard for some nice surprises!



Acoustic Guitars



22679- Adam Black O-3- Left Hand
22680- Adam Black S-2- Natural Left Hand
20330- Art & Luthier's Acoustic Parlor, D, Blue
19281- Alan Esserini OOO Handmade in England
19361- Bedell OH-12 G Parlor Guitar Secondhand
22673- Blueridge Dreadnought (GF52201)
21716- Blueridge 000 Acoustic Guitar (GF52202)
14197- Blueridge Discovery Concert Left Hand
12689- Blueridge Gold Acoustic Single
21922- Burnwell BP120 Left Hand Natural
19306- Cot AD810 OP AD States Acoustic Guitar
22106- The Cat AF510M Mahogany
22943- Eko Ranger V1 VR Acoustic Burst
12332- Faith FKM Mercury
19662- Faith FKNCD- Naked Neptune
18677- Fender FA125 Acoustic Guitar
21123- Fender Weightless Monogram Strap Classic
21124- Fender Weightless Monogram Strap Classic
18650- Yali YB2R Baritone Acoustic Guitar
22459- Kios Full Cation Acoustic Travel Guitar
22020- LAG Trombone 88 TB8A Acoustic
22657- Martin 00015M Mahogany Acoustic electric
6009- Martin 00018 Standard Series Acoustic
13624- Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
13034- Martin D18 Dreadnought
16760- Martin D28
22749- Martin D28L Left Hand Acoustic Guitar
6006- Martin D35 Dreadnought, Natural
22945- Martin D35 Dreadnought, Nit, Secondhand
21788- Martin D45
5835- Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
1815- Martin LX1 Little Martin
6007- Martin OM21 Orchestra, Natural
19126- Martin OM28 Reimagined
19604- Martin SC-13E Guitar
10230- Seagull S6 Original
19418- Seagull S6 Original QIT
15480- Tanglewood Oseosades TWCR O
17064- Tanglewood DBTSPCEB- Discovery Exotic
13291- Tanglewood TW OT2 Super Folk Acoustic
22924- Tanglewood TW OT2 Super Folk Acoustic
15784- Tanglewood Oseosades TWCR D Acoustic
13290- Tanglewood TWJDS Dreadnought Acoustic
19462- Tanglewood TWJPS Parlor Acoustic Guitar
4329- Taylor 310 Acoustic Guitar in Natural
22774- Traveler Guitar Pro Series
13271- Vintage VTG100 Travel Vair Travel Guitar
13128- Vintage VTR800P Vair Travel Guitar
16692- Yamaha F310 Dreadnought, Natural, Used

Electro Acoustic Guitars



18338- Godin A6 Ultra A6 Natural SG
22914- Godin Multiac Nylon String Natural SG
22761- Godi OM-140 LCE Natural Left Hand
19601- Yali BM6CE Acoustic Natural Left Hand
19070- Kios T_A Acoustic Travel
19069- Kios T_DAE Deluxe Electro Acoustic
19065- Kios T_AE Electro Acoustic Travel
19064- Kios T_AE Electro Acoustic Travel
20328- LAG TM184CE Trombone Cutaway, Blue
21021- LAG TM70 ACE Trombone 170 Auditorium
21965- LAG T270ASCE
22589- Lag V/Hye TH200CE Electro Acoustic
19691- Larmie D03 Electro Acoustic
22699- Larmie L03 Mahogany Recording Series
21495- Larmie OM40 Electro Acoustic
22637- Larmie OM40R Legacy Series
000- Maestro- 16 Models In Stock Now
21565- Martin 000-13E Guitar
22751- Martin 00012EL Koa Electro Acoustic Lefty
22747- Martin 00017E Whiskey Sunset Electro
22732- Martin 00031R10E Left Hand
21553- Martin D-13E Electro Acoustic
22743- Martin D10E Electro Acoustic, Saple
22577- Martin D12E Koa Dreadnought Electric
22745- Martin D16E Mahogany Electro Acoustic
22746- Martin D16E Oval Gled Electro Acoustic
22748- Martin D18E Koa Electro Acoustic w/ Fishman
19489- Martin D18E-10E Jnr Electro Acoustic
22742- Martin D18E Mahogany Acoustic
19050- Martin GPC11 E Electro Acoustic
7320- Martin LX1 E Electro Travel Guitar
19458- Martin LX1 FE Electro Acoustic Guitar
18517- Martin OMCI S/E Electro Acoustic Guitar
21974- Northwood M10 14 fret 000 Electro Acoustic
18167- Northwood M50 CMV Cutaway Acoustic
17418- Northwood Auditorium Electro Acoustic Guitar
19339- Ovation 1771 V1 GC Glen Campbell Legend
19341- Ovation 2771 STR-1MB Main Street
11087- Ovation 2771 Standard Elite 6778LX Black
1947- Ovation C278BAPV-NOA E Acoustic Elite
22646- Ovation CE44 Electro Acoustic Guitar
22925- Ovation CE4412 12 String M4 Depth Black
19346- Ovation CS24 Celebrity Standard, Nat
28956- Ovation CS24, Celeb, Tied Mid-Depth Nat
28955- Ovation CS28P Celebrity Tied Plus Koa
19338- Ovation 17715TG-ES
22360- Ozark Hawaiian Guitar
14814- PU Eagle Luthie Electro Acoustic
000- Paring 509 - 16 Models In Stock Now
22394- Seagull Coastline Spruce QIT, Used
19650- S & P Woodard Cedar Dreadnought, Lefty
19647- Tanglewood DW F HR Electro Acoustic
19648- Tanglewood TWT E Koa Wintefest
22723- Tanglewood TWSEKCA Dreadnought Cutaway
8293- Tanglewood TWNSNS, Nat, Secondhand
15481- Tanglewood Oseosades TWCR D E
16524- Tanglewood TWCR CE Oseosades
15979- Tanglewood Unicorn Deluxe Performance Pro
0000- Tanglewood - Plus Many More In Stock
22774- Traveler Guitar Pro Series
22785- Traveler Guitars Ultra Light Nylon
18790- Vintage LVES501N Dreadnought, Satin Nat
18790- Vintage VGE800N Geminl P Brett Baritone
21936- Yali YFL55 CE BVS
19602- Yamaha LLTA Trans Acoustic Vintage Tint
19165- Yamaha SLG300S Silent Guitar, Nylon
15619- Yamaha SLG300S Steel Silent Guitar Nat

Travel Guitars



21763- Blueridge Pursit Companion CE Travel
22115- Blueridge Pursit Companion CE Travel
15344- Faith Naked Mini Neptune
19070- Kios T_A Acoustic Travel
19069- Kios T_DAE Deluxe Electro Acoustic
19065- Kios T_AE Electro Acoustic Travel
22469- Kios Full Cation Acoustic Travel Guitar
22265- LAG Travel Kite Acoustic Travel
21949- Martin DU-10E Jnr Electro Acoustic
5835- Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
7115- Martin LX1 Little Martin
7320- Martin LX1E Electro Travel Guitar
19458- Martin LX1 FE Electro Acoustic Guitar
18338- Tanglewood TW E Mini Koa
22774- Traveler Guitar Pro Series
13271- Vintage VTG100 Travel Vair Guitar in Natural
13128- Vintage VTR800P Vair Travel Guitar
22948- Washburn Power Travel Acoustic Blue Used
19166- Yamaha SLG300W Silent Guitar, Nylon

Classical Guitars



4985- Asturias Standard Model Classical Guitar
19128- Asturias by Kodalar 3340 Classical, Used
21769- Blueridge Solo Concert Nylon CE
22771- Cordoba Protege C1M 12 Size
22770- Cordoba C1M 1/4 Size Classical Guitar
21880- Fender ESCM Classical Guitar
20441- Fishman AGX094 Passive Undersaddle
20440- Fishman AGX125 Passive Undersaddle
17847- Hiscok LA-G/LA-BBS Artist Large Classica
17846- Hiscok LA-G/LA-MBS Medium Hard Case
7365- Jose Fener 341 Size Classical
18946- Yali CE1 Electro Classical Guitar
18947- Yali Y06 NS Classical Guitar
18949- Yali YC78 Classical Guitar
21034- Yalin 000C12-10E Nylon Guitar
000- Mendota - 24 Models In Stock Now
22654- Ovation CS24C-4 G Celebrity Classic Nylon
22738- Raimund 146 Classical Guitar
22736- Raimund 690E Electro Acoustic Classical
000- Ramirez - 9 Models In Stock Now
16080- Stagg C430 1/2 Size Classical Guitar
15289- Stagg C430 3/4 Size Classical Guitar
17108- Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
17106- Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
17109- Stagg C440M Classical Guitar
19470- Stagg SC150 3/4 Neck, Natural
22785- Traveler Guitars Ultra Light Nylon
14755- Yamaha SLG300N Silent Guitar, Nylon, Nat
19165- Yamaha SLG300W Silent Guitar, Nylon

12 Strings



18730- Cort Natural Glossy MR710F, 12-String
22844- Eko Ranger LX1 VR EQ Honey Burst 12
22845- Eko Ranger LX1 VR EQ Natural 12
22846- Eko Ranger LX1 VR Honey Burst 12-String
18916- Faith FKV12 Naked Venus 12-String
16029- Patrick James Eagle Saluda 12 String
0000- Fender Guitar Strings In Stock Now
21569- RainSong BR WS3000 12-String
21560- RainSong CO WS3000 12-String
21564- RainSong VDR3000X 12-String, Natural

Acoustic Amplification



5712- AER Alpha - 40W, 1x8"
2189- AER Alpha Plus - 60W, 1x8"
18514- AER Compact 60 Mk.4
5710- AER Compact 60 Mk2 Hardwood - 60W, 1x8
15913- AER Tommy Emmanuel Sig. Compact 60
5707- AER Compact Classic Pro - 60W, 1x8"
5708- AER Compact 60 Mk2 Mobile - 60W, 1x8
22776- AER Compact Slope 60.4
4946- AER Compact XL - 200W, 2x8"
9028- AER Domino 3200W Watt Acoustic Amp
22788- Acus One For Strings 5T
22771- Acus One For Strings 8
1917- Boss Acoustic Singer Live Acoustic Amp
1918- Boss Acoustic Singer Pro Acoustic Amp
22561- Boss Acoustic Singer Live LT Acoustic Amp
21579- Fender Acoustic Junior G, Dark Brown
13956- Marshall ASS00 - 50W, 2x8"
19481- Orange Crush Acoustic 30
4976- Roland AC33 30W - 1x5"
19482- Roland AC33 30W - 1x5"
5597- Roland AC30 - 90W, 2x8"
16903- Roland Cube Street 2.5+2.5W, 6.5
13029- Roland Cube Street EX Stereo Amplifier
14371- MOBILE Acoustic Chorus, Portable Amp
5618- Roland Mobile Duo (2.5W+2.5W, 4x2)
13631- Udo Resner De Capo 75
10937- Yamaha THRFA Acoustic Amp

Ukuleles



19899- Aloha Concert Ukulele With Engraved
19901- Aloha Shiny Model Concert Ukulele in Mahog.
20332- Ashbury AU12B Baritone Uke (3/32/50/83)
20333- Ashbury AU10-10 Concert Resonator
19872- Austin Naupaka Soprano Ukulele
19877- Austin Naupaka Soprano Ukulele With Bag
19675- B & M UB32 Barjo Uke Open Back
19686- B&M Uke Bass Mahogany BMUKB1
16227- B&M Rouge UH45 Soprano Ukulele
18062- B&M Rouge UH615 Soprano Ukulele
22887- B&M Rouge VU188 Eight String Baritone
19815- Elvis Hanuama Mahogany Soprano Uke
19913- Elvis Hawaii Student Soprano Uke
19973- Factory Prototype Concert Ukulele
19881- Factory Prototype Concert Ukulele G
19894- Factory Prototype Concert Ukulele
19917- Factory Prototype Funfly Top Concert Uke
19918- Factory Prototype Mahogany Concert Uke
19916- Factory Prototype Mahogany Concert Uke
19897- Factory Prototype Rev. (Headstock Damage)
21529- Fender Fulleton Stratocaster Uke, Black
21530- Fender Fulleton Strat Uke Sunburst
20278- Fender Fulleton Tele Uke Black
20438- Fishman AG04UKE Passive Ukulele (Narrow)
19888- Flight NUS310 Soprano Ukulele With Bag
19883- Flight NUS300b Dreamcatcher Soprano Uke
19887- Flight NUS300 Concert Ukulele, Saple Top
19876- Flight Custom Concert Ukulele, Spruce Top
19669- Giannini Prototype Concert Ukulele Spruce Top
19680- Giannini Custom Concert Ukulele
20218- Gold Tone Little Gem Ukulele Barjo, Amethyst
18289- Gold Tone Little Gem Ukulele Barjo Eco
16468- Inbaro S/C Soprano Ukulele, Solid Acacia
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22801- Ashbury A Style Mandolin Cedar
20014- Ashbury A Style Mandolin Sunburst
20051- Ashbury A Style Electro Mandolin Sunburst
19937- Ashbury A Style Mandolin Sunburst
17918- Ashbury Irish Bouzouki, Flat Top 33015
22794- Ashbury Carved Irish Bouzouki GF33121
19328- Ashbury Gazeouki, Guitar Body, GF33024
17920- Ashbury Irish Bouzouki & Case GF33016
17928- Ashbury Octave Guita Mandola 32021
15442- Ashbury Rathlin Irish Bouzouki
22793- Ashbury Style E Celtic Citarrin, 10 string
15437- Ashbury Style E Celtic Mandola
13527- Blue Moon BB15E Bouzouki GF33001
18799- Blue Moon BB15E Bouzouki GF33001
18225- Blueridge Crossover FF NT Mandolin, Nat
22797- Kentucky Deluxe A Mandolin GR31051
22798- Kentucky Deluxe A Mandolin, Amber
22799- Kentucky Std F Mandolin GR31044
22834- ResoVile MS12 Reso Mandolin Copper
22337- ResoVile MS12 Reso Mandolin Nickel
22502- ResoVile WeeK Uke Dark Nickel
22340- ResoVile WeeK Reso Uke Nickel
22532- ResoVile WeeK Reso Uke Maple
22361- ResoVile WeeK Reso Uke Engaged
17928- Sakis Model Z Greek Bouzouki GX33011
18419- Seagull S8 Mandolin Sunburst EQ
19670- Seagull S8 Mandolin, Natural

Tenor & Baritone Guitars



20534- Ashbury AT-14 Tenor Guitar, Spruce Top
89- Ashbury Y4 Tenor Guitar
22792- Blueridge Acoustic Tenor Guitar
20888- D'Addario E166 Tenor Guitar Strings
15642- Faith FNCEHG HGloss Baritone Neptune
18650- Yali YB2R Baritone Acoustic Guitar
18790- Vintage VGE800N Geminl P Brett Baritone

Feedback

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

STAR LETTER

FIRE ALARM



Almost the first ever guitar that Jimi Hendrix set fire to on stage

In your article about Jimi Hendrix in the November issue of *Guitarist* [issue 478] you state that the first time Jimi Hendrix burned a guitar on stage was at the Finsbury Park Astoria in March 1967. This is an often-quoted myth – a myth because it was not the first time he did so.

The Finsbury Park gig was on Friday 31 March 1967. But on the Tuesday of that week, Tuesday 28 March, three days before, Jimi played at the Assembly Hall in Aylesbury and on that night he burned a Strat on stage. How can I be sure? Because I was at that gig and standing at the front of the stage, no more than 10ft from Hendrix as he put his guitar down on the stage, got out a can of lighter fluid, squirted it onto the guitar and set it alight.

In the days before guitarists had numerous guitars I had noticed that Jimi had, unusually, come out in the second half with a different Strat. The reason was soon clear: as well as dramatically bashing the Strat against the amp and the mic stand, he intended to set this guitar alight. Right in front of me and three days before the famous guitar burning at the Astoria.

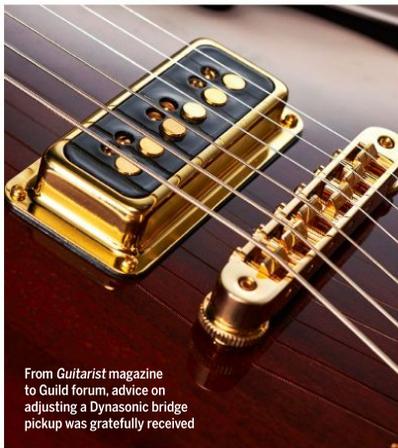
Rich Sharp, via email

Thanks for your fascinating eyewitness account, Rich – we stand corrected. To be fair to historian Tony Bacon, the main body of his story doesn't explicitly state the Astoria gig was the first time, but a caption we added to one of the images did, so we're now administering a little slap to our own wrist for that. In the meantime, your memory of that moment – which is, in its own way, a historic event – adds to the sum of what we understand about Jimi's life, music and seminal performances. This month's Star Letter prize of a Korg Pitchblack tuner will therefore be winging its way to you shortly. Have any other readers got any hidden gems of gig stories to share, where you saw lesser-known history being made?



KORG

Each issue's Star Letter wins a Korg Pitchblack Custom – a smart pedal tuner with ultra-high +/-0.1 precision for sharp visibility and pinpoint accuracy right at your feet.
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From *Guitarist* magazine to Guild forum, advice on adjusting a Dynasonic bridge pickup was gratefully received

SHIM SATISFACTION

We're all on various online forums for our favourite guitars, aren't we? So I was delighted to be able to pass on some of your sage advice to a fellow Guild enthusiast. He posted about becoming the owner of a brand-new Guild Starfire II (ST Dynasonic). The Dynasonic bridge pickup was too close to the strings and therefore a hell of a lot louder than the neck pickup. He added that there didn't seem to be any way of lowering the pickup, either.

The setup straight out of the box was good, but the strings just cleared the bridge pickup. He'd tried adjusting the small screws next to the poles, but it didn't do anything and, at that stage, he thought he might have to return the guitar. However, I passed on your advice about lifting the pickup and looking for a shim, to remove or replace. Bingo, problem solved and one very happy fellow Guild enthusiast, with thanks back to me. Credit where credit's due – I said it was all down to you!

Guy Nokes, via email

Glad to be of service, Guy, and chuffed you saw fit to give us a kindly mention for that one – you could have happily claimed it as your own! Have any other readers got any great maintenance and setup tips and tricks they'd like to share? Send them in and we'll print the best here.

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

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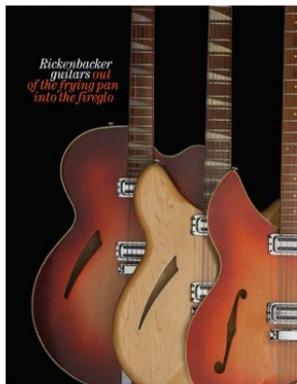
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WIN!

Martin and Paul Kelly – the experts behind *Fender: The Golden Age 1946-1970* – are back with the definitive tome on Rickenbacker instruments. For *Rickenbacker Guitars: Out Of The Frying Pan Into The Fireglo*, the authors travelled the world to capture over 350 models in stunning photography, including guitars owned by The Beatles, Tom Petty, Roger McGuinn, Johnny Marr and Paul Weller. The book tells the company's story from George Beauchamp's invention of the electric guitar in 1931, right up to today's vision under CEO John Hall, with unprecedented access to the Rickenbacker archives as well as new artist interviews.

While the new release also comes in a soft-back edition, the Super Deluxe edition we have here (worth £200) is limited to just 800 signed copies – one of which could be yours. The set includes an embossed slip case containing the 336-page hardback edition with end papers signed and numbered by the authors, and a second 160-page book, which is exclusive to the Super Deluxe set, of Rickenbacker catalogue reprints spanning 1933 to 1969. Also included

is an embossed card wallet containing three specially produced posters: one depicting all seven surviving Beatle Rickenbackers, a second featuring six of Paul Weller's famous 'Jam-era' 330 guitars, and a replica 1960s shop poster. Additionally, and unique to this prize and not currently commercially available, the winner will also receive a 20 by 16-inch Giclée print picture of Paul Weller's iconic 'Whaam!' Rickenbacker 330.

To be in with a chance of winning this exclusive prize set, answer the following question correctly:

What was the name of the US-born musician who invented Rickenbacker's famous horseshoe pickup and developed the Frying Pan lap steel guitar?

- a) Gage Brewer
- b) George Beauchamp
- c) George Harrison

UK entrants only. To enter and for full terms and conditions, go to <https://bit.ly/git481ricky>. For more details about the book, please visit www.phantombooks.com. Good luck!

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KNOWING ME

ABBA'S LASSE WELLANDER

As ABBA's first new material in 40 years tops the charts the world over, we meet the man whose guitar lines have graced both records and stages alongside Agnetha, Björn, Benny and Anni-Frid since the mid-70s.

Lasse Wellander tells his story...

Words Neville Marten

Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus recruited Lasse Wellander into the ABBA fold very early in the band's formation. They'd seen him play in both pop and blues-rock situations and knew he'd be great for the job. Not only did Lasse play on most of the singles and albums, he also trekked the world backing the band on the legendary 'Abbamania' tours of Australia and Japan, and an equally unforgettable sold-out run of shows at London's Wembley Arena.

A softly spoken, self-effacing musician, Lasse almost downplays his role in the creation of so many of those seminal tunes. But listen to almost any ABBA song and you might be surprised at just how many guitar parts there are – and it's likely Lasse Wellander played some or all of them.

We spoke to Lasse just prior to the release of the latest chart-topping ABBA release, *Voyage*, on which he was again called to help recreate the sound that has sold over 400 million records... and counting.

What were you doing before you got the call from ABBA?

"I played with a group called Nature from 1970. We were a rock-blues group, but we were asked

to accompany a guy called Ted Gärdestad, who was a young star in Sweden. In 1972 he made it really big with a song called *Jag Vill Ha En Egen Måne* [*I Want My Own Moon*]. So the band got a call: did we want to back Ted Gärdestad? We said yes, and toured with him in the summers of '73, '74 and '76.

"In Sweden we had something called the people's parks, the folkparks – very big outdoor places in almost every town. The tours went on from the end of April into August, Fridays and Saturdays, at least two gigs, sometimes three. Midsummer's Eve we did five. That suited us fine because the summers could be quiet, work-wise.

"Anyway, Björn and Benny were very involved in Ted's career, and they had heard our band play in a club in Stockholm called Alexandra's. They liked what and how we played, even if our own music was very different from Ted's. I had met Björn and Benny before that, but we were a bit surprised that they asked us. Then they came to a rehearsal sometime in '74 and asked me if I wanted to do an ABBA session. If I remember rightly it was *Intermezzo No 1* [ABBA, 1975], *Tiger* [Arrival, 1976], and two or three other numbers."

Did you know any other of the musicians who came to join ABBA, for instance that amazing bass player?

"Yes, Rutger [Gunnarsson]. He was fantastic. I had met him before. Ola Brunkert [drummer], too, and Finn Sjöberg, another guitar player on those songs and also on the 1977 tours. So, yes, I'd met them."

Was it immediately obvious there was a chemistry that would lead to something very big?

"Yes, I thought it would be big, quite early on. Strong songs all the way. Even the simple pop numbers were very high quality. One of the first tracks I recorded with them was *Knowing Me, Knowing You*. I think that's still one of the better songs throughout the years."

Were you considered a band member? Or was it like Steely Dan where they'd call in different people?

"We were a core of musicians. It wasn't a full-time job to work with ABBA – and sometimes I couldn't play, so Janne Schaffer was called in, and the reverse. And if Rutger was on tour doing something else, Mike Watson would play bass. So it wasn't a full-time job. If you were in the North of Sweden you maybe didn't

Lasse takes centre stage
with ABBA live at Wembley
Arena, November 1979

*"I thought ABBA would be big,
quite early on. Strong songs all the
way: Even the simple pop numbers
were very high quality"*



go down to Stockholm to do one just track. But I belonged to that core of musicians from '74 on."

How common was it for you to have lots of parts on some of the songs?

"Sometimes I doubled the electric guitars, especially rhythm guitars. With acoustic guitar, sometimes maybe two or three of us were playing, often Rutger, me and Björn – he is very good on acoustic guitar."

Lots of capo use, too...

"Yes, absolutely. I seldom use barre chords. I wanted it to be as open-sounding as possible, so the more open strings the better."

Did you work with Benny and Björn to come up with your parts?

"Some lines were there already because Benny had written them on the piano, so I did that on guitar. But there was a lot of jamming and spreading of ideas and finding out things. And while I can read [music], there were never charts with ABBA. We wrote the chords down. Neither of the guys can read music in that way. Of course, chords and so on, but not notation. I don't know nowadays, maybe they've trained, but not then."

"In those days, we [recorded entire rhythm tracks together], and then they overdubbed. Maybe Rutger and I would do something again, the second verse or something, but mainly it was a whole track. And I was able to bring my own sounds [to the recording]."

"Early on, it was a Les Paul '57 Goldtop and a small Marshall combo. Not very many effects – it was quite a straight sound"

What was the usual setup that you took to the studio?

"Early on, it was a Les Paul '57 Goldtop and a small Marshall combo. Not very many effects – it was quite a straight sound. They'd put on whatever delay afterwards. But I had a flanger, an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress. I loved that."

Did you bring a lot of different guitars to the sessions?

"It was mainly just one electric guitar, if there weren't any special requests. Later on, I used a Fender '62 Strat on most of the songs in the studio and on the tours. But the pickups were very weak and there was more hum than sound sometimes. So I changed all the pickups and switches and everything but, of course, kept the originals. Then I changed the bridge pickup to a stacked humbucker because the single coil was weak and there was always trouble with the distorted sound. I also played a Gibson ES-175 on some of the songs. For many years I used a Music Man amp, the small one, the 112HD.

"The Strat is now in the ABBA museum in Stockholm. I wasn't using it any more. I've actually been using a Line 6 James Tyler Variax

for some years. The first generation wasn't a success, really; the idea was very good but the build of the guitar was so-so. Also, the first ones didn't have the magnetic pickups, it was only the Variax system. This one has both. It's a great guitar, very stable."

How did you find the tours? Was it like Beatlemania?

"I played on everything from '75 onwards. And yes, it was. Especially in Australia and Japan. It was hysterical, just like when The Beatles came to New York or something!"

So did you live the life of a rockstar?

"No, we didn't. It was quite hectic on these tours. In Australia and Japan we had some time off, otherwise it was bus, airport, aeroplane, bus, check-in, soundcheck, concert, hotel."

How did you recreate your studio sounds on stage? There wasn't the technology then that we have now.

"I had two Music Man amps with 4x10-inch speakers, an A/B splitter for the distorted sound and the clean, and a pedalboard. On the first tour I had a lot of pedals with short cords in between, and there was always some problem with it. So before the Japan tour we got a proper pedalboard built by Pete Cornish. It wasn't cheap, but it was worth every penny because it was super quiet."

On stage, were you allowed to improvise or were you strictly limited to the parts on the records?

"If you listen to the *Live At Wembley Arena* album, for example, it was much looser than on the records. Of course, we played the things that belonged to the song, but there were parts where it was much looser. It sounded rockier live than on the record, and there were some solos."

A lot of the songs are in guitar-friendly keys – there's not too much B₇ and E₇, is there?

"When they wrote the song they were sitting with one acoustic guitar and a piano. It suited the girls' voices, too, which was very important. On songs like *Take A Chance*, there is so much going on, which was why you needed more than one guitarist on the live gigs.

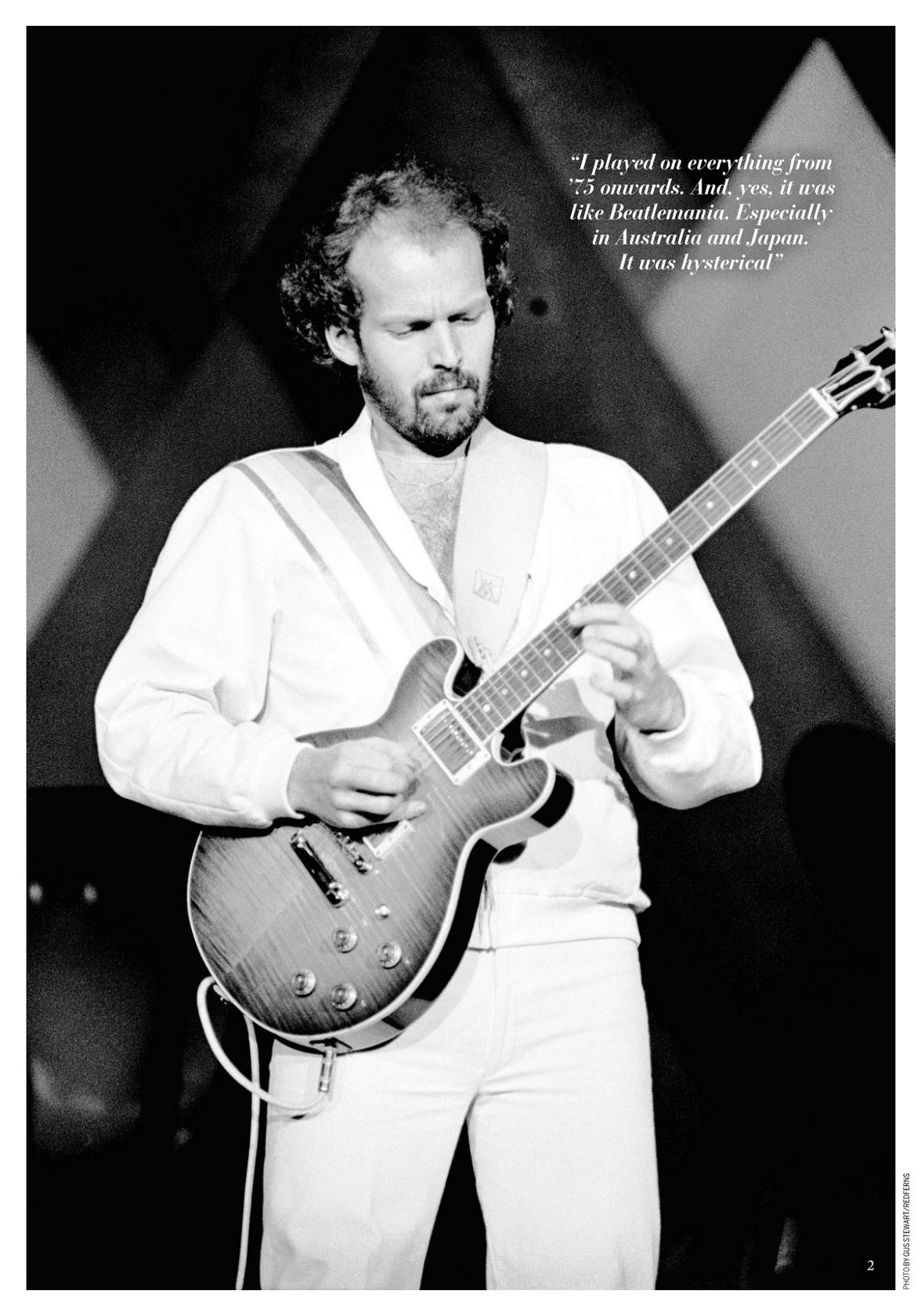
"On the intro to *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!* [where it's shifting through the arpeggiated chords] it's actually not doubled: there's only one [guitar],

1. 1978, in the studio with engineer/producer Michael B Tretow. ABBA's Björn Ulvaeus, bass player Rutger Gunnarsson, drummer Ola Brunkert, Lasse Wellander and ABBA's Benny Andersson

2. Playing live allowed Lasse to deviate from the studio recordings, introducing a rockier, much looser sound



PHOTOBY TT NEWS AGENCY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

A black and white photograph of a man with curly hair and a beard, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and white pants, playing a dark-colored electric guitar on stage. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is dark with some light patterns.

“I played on everything from '75 onwards. And, yes, it was like Beatlemania. Especially in Australia and Japan. It was hysterical”

but it had some effect added to it – maybe a small amount of Electric Mistress, or [producer] Michael B Tretow adding some Eventide Harmonizer. It's hard to remember what was done 45 to 50 years ago!

“With the *Knowing Me, Knowing You* track, there's a melody guitar and a harmony guitar, not doubled, plus two electric powerchord guitars playing the same thing, plus some acoustic guitars. It's very thought-through.”

What were your favourite tracks to play live?

“Well, I liked *Eagle* because I had a long guitar solo in that song. I enjoyed it all, actually, but I looked forward a bit more to that number. It was amazing being out on the road. We played six days at Wembley Arena, full house. One interesting thing about those days at Wembley Arena was, because it was already decided that we should do a tour in Japan, there were a lot of Japanese people there measuring how everything was positioned on stage. There was a break before the Japan tour, that was 1981, I think. When we came to rehearse the Japan shows, everything was set up to the millimetre, exactly as we had it on stage. You didn't have to move anything. Not a guitar stand or anything. Perfection!”

What did you do when ABBA stopped touring and recording? They never announced that they'd split, they just stopped doing it.

“Well, I had always been a freelancer. I was working with a lot of other bands and sessions, TV jobs, nightclubs and theatres, so I just went back to work. I played with four different groups during the 80s. Recently, I've mostly been recording some of my own songs. I've put 14 songs on the streaming platforms since 2017. There's a Spotify playlist that's available on my website [<https://verywellander.se/en/>] and one more is coming soon. I've also been doing overdubs for other people, remote guitar overdubs. At the moment in the pipeline is

“Knowing Me, Knowing You’ has melody guitar, harmony guitar, two electric powerchord guitars, plus acoustic. It’s very thought-through”

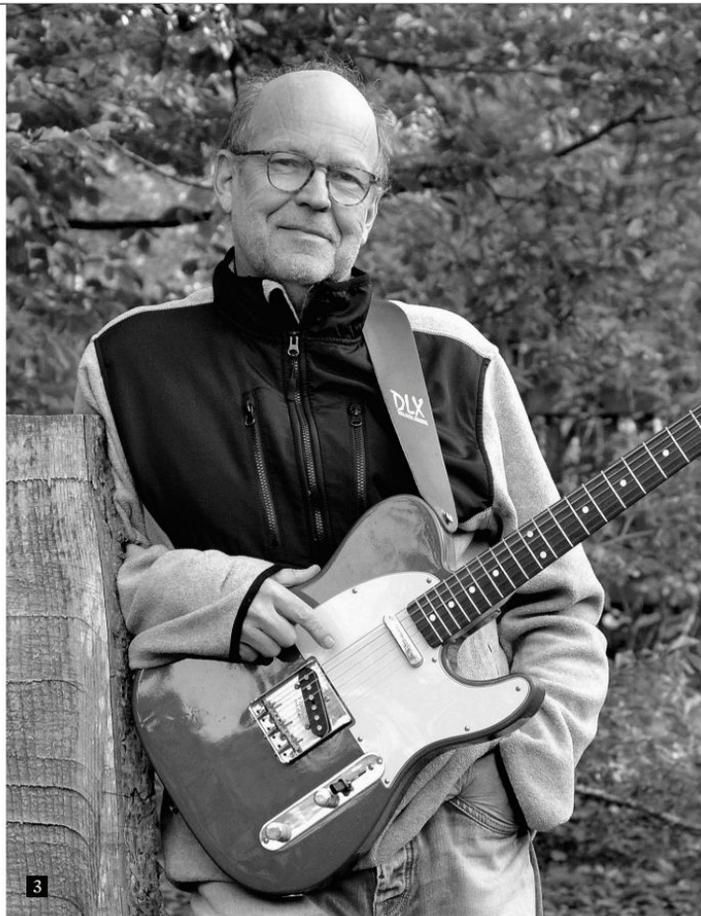


PHOTO BY LENA LARSSON

3. After years of working with other bands doing sessions, TV, playing nightclubs and theatres, Lasse now has his own songs available on Spotify

an English group called Girl Gone Bad, and there's a Danish hard-rock singer. It's very different. Sometimes there's a lot, sometimes there's less. I'm actually retired now, stage-wise.”

So, now we come to the new ABBA album, *Voyage*. Was it a surprise when they called you?

“Actually, it started in April 2017. Benny called and said we're going to do a couple of songs with the old band. We did two: *I Still Have Faith In You* and *Don't Shut Me Down*. So something was going on, but it sounded like these were going to be for the ABBA tour project that they were planning. Then spring 2019, Benny called again and we did two more songs. So I suspected something. Then at the beginning of summer last year we did four more. I'd heard that they are bringing in two older songs, too, but we recorded eight new ones.”

The sound is still clearly ABBA, but Agnetha and Anni-Frid's voices have become richer, haven't they?

“They are a bit deeper, yes. It's natural, everybody gets lower [as they get older]. They are really good singers, both of them. Before ABBA, they had been singing for many years in different environments – dance bands and all that.”

Were the recording techniques the same this time around?

“There was more pre-production this time. In the old days, there was a bit more jamming and trying out. This time it was Benny with his Synclavier. And there's nothing wrong with that because that's how you do it these days.”



Voyage is available now on Polar/Universal. For info on Lasse's releases, go to <https://verywellander.se/en/>

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50 GUITARS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

As well as being a perfect union of form and function, guitars have the power – in the right hands – to change the course of music and even history itself. Here, we present the 50 most influential guitars of our time with renowned historian **Tony Bacon**

There's a good story told about Chet Atkins. One day, someone who had stopped to listen to him play said, "Man, that guitar sure sounds good!" According to the tale, Chet put the guitar down on a chair then said to its admirer: "How good does it sound now?" His point, of course, is that guitars are just lumps of metal and wood until a player brings them to life. As enjoyable as it is to pore over the technical evolution of famous guitar models – and we do plenty of that – instruments can't be truly historic until they are used to make influential music. Pioneering musicians, in their turn, set the agenda for the next generation of instrument design – and so the wheel of history turns.

In that sense, the player and the instrument itself are forever entangled, indivisible. That's why, when we decided to explore which guitars have had the most impact on history, we realised it must include not just classic models (though sometimes it is enough to simply invent something first to make history), but also identify specific iconic instruments that represented a fleeting moment when the world stopped to listen to a new sound and, in so doing, was changed forever. For example, it's hard to imagine *Peggy Sue* without Buddy Holly's '55 Strat. By the same token, the Strat itself might never have become an icon of rock 'n' roll without Buddy Holly.

The following pages therefore represent an attempt to trace the most crucial pairings of artist and instrument, each of which tilted history on its axis just a little and set music rolling down a new path. They also contain lesser-known contributions to the evolution of the instrument that were made by guitar designs that, without setting the world alight, nonetheless changed our perception of what the guitar could and should be.

Our guide in this endeavour is celebrated guitar historian Tony Bacon who compiled the following list of 50 extraordinary instruments that mark a watershed in the history of the instrument, both musically and technically. We hope you gain fresh insight into the evolution of guitar as you join us on the journey.

PHOTO BY DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



05

Joan Baez with her 1929 Martin 0-45 acquired in 1959 for just \$200



06

Lead Belly's Stella 12-string delivered sounds befitting of its owner

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LOCKS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

1 c.1590 UNKNOWN MAKER FIVE-COURSE GUITAR

This very early guitar is a rare survivor, thanks partly to its prized workmanship. It has five courses, a format that developed around the mid-16th century from the earlier 'treble' four-course instrument. A course can be a single, double (as here), or even triple string. Inevitably, this guitar has been restored: as such, the top has been replaced and the neck rebuilt and cut down, although a beautiful central 'rose' in the soundhole is original.

2 c.1804 PAGÉS SIX-COURSE GUITAR

Around the end of the 18th century, makers began to move from five to six courses, and with the addition of the low-E course, tuning began to settle at EADGBE. A further change to six single strings, at first in Italy and France, resulted in something closer to a modern flat-top. This six-course guitar was made in Cadiz, Spain, by Josef Pagés with 12 full-size metal frets and shorter 'treble' frets on the body.

3 1888 TORRES CLASSICAL GUITAR

In the 19th century, the classical guitar began to take shape, and the maker most responsible for this evolution was a Spaniard named Antonio de Torres, active from the 1850s to the 1890s. He determined

•
Maybelle Carter played an L-5, setting templates for country, bluegrass and folk guitar
•

the guitar's top as key to its sound and developed a fan-strutting pattern for the underside. Torres domed the lower bout, shifted the bridge further into the body, and used relatively thin woods. His ideas for an integrated guitar were widely adopted in Spain and abroad.

4 MAYBELLE CARTER'S 1928 GIBSON L-5

Lloyd Loar's greatest contribution at Gibson was the Master Series L-5 guitar, introduced in 1922. It had violin-style f-holes instead of a regular soundhole and established many of the ideas for the modern archtop acoustic. Maybelle Carter regularly played an L-5, setting templates for much of country, bluegrass and folk guitar. Her style neatly blurred the lines between melody and rhythm, always supporting the singer and providing crisp leads where needed.

5 JOAN BAEZ'S 1929 MARTIN 0-45

Following Martin's innovative X-bracing, in the early decades of the 20th century, it came to define the modern flat-top guitar, and by 1928 was bracing all models for steel strings. Joan Baez acquired this '29 0-45 in 1959 for \$200 and has played it (or a replica) ever since. Martin's Size 0 was a relatively large 'parlour guitar', a little over 13 inches wide, and 45 was the fanciest Style with distinctive abalone inlay.

6 LEAD BELLY'S c.1930 STELLA 12-STRING

The skiffle, folk and blues boom of the 50s and 60s brought a new popularity to the 12-string, its sizable singer-supporting sound coming from strings arranged in six pairs tuned in octaves and unison doubling. Records by the country bluesman Lead Belly, who mostly played a Stella 12 like this one, were a big influence. The Stella brand was used at the time by the Oscar Schmidt instrument company of New Jersey.

7 1932 RICKENBACKER FRYING PAN PROTOTYPE

This maple lap-steel experiment was the first guitar to feature an electro-magnetic pickup, which makes it effectively the basis for the majority of electric guitars that have followed since. George Beauchamp was a partner in Ro-Pat-In – soon renamed the Electro String Instrument Company –

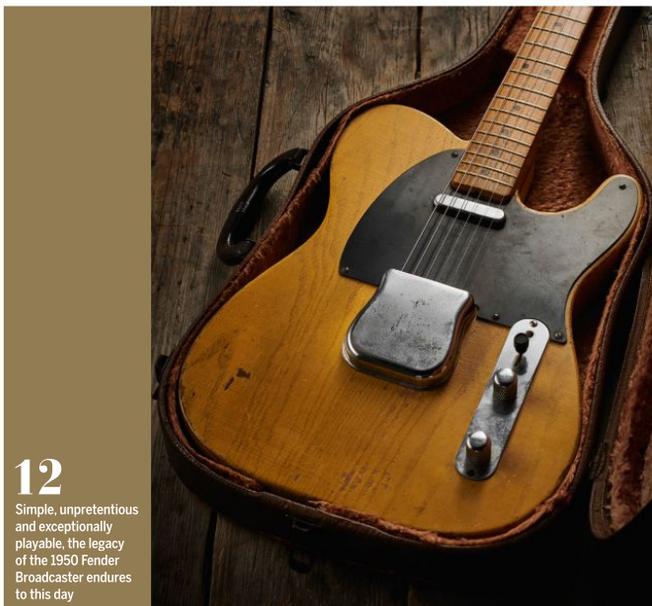
(OPPOSITE LEFT TO RIGHT) PHOTO BY DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY PHOTO BY MICHAEL LOCKS ARCHIVES/GETTY

When Mark Knopfler's National guitar started on the cover of Dire Straits' 'Brothers In Arms', it sparked a revival of interest in resonator instruments



09

Mark Knopfler's 1937 National Style 0 is an example of the system developed by National's John Dopyera and George Beauchamp whereby aluminium resonators were suspended inside a metal body for extra volume and a characterful sound



12

Simple, unpretentious and exceptionally playable, the legacy of the 1950 Fender Broadcaster endures to this day

along with Adolph Rickenbacker and Paul Barth, and he devised the instrument's 'horseshoe' pickup. Electro began selling the cast aluminium production-version A-25 lap steel later in 1932.

8 CHARLIE CHRISTIAN'S c.1937 GIBSON ES-150

This was Gibson's first Spanish electric guitar, launched in 1936. After World War II, electrics would become an important part of Gibson's revived business, but the ES-150 marked an important first step in that direction. Charlie Christian played early Gibson electrics, including a 150, with Benny Goodman, and his pioneering work proved that amplified guitars could work as soloing instruments in jazz and elsewhere. He died just 25 years old in 1942.

9 MARK KNOPFLER'S 1937 NATIONAL STYLE 0

When Mark Knopfler's National guitar, shining like the Mississippi Delta, starred on the cover of Dire Straits' 1985 album, *Brothers In Arms*, it sparked a revival of interest in resonator instruments. Visible on Knopfler's guitar are the vivid decorations National sandblasted onto the bodies of some of its models. John Dopyera and George Beauchamp at National developed a system with aluminium resonators suspended inside a guitar's metal body to produce extra volume and a distinctive sound.

10 1939 NATIONAL SONORA

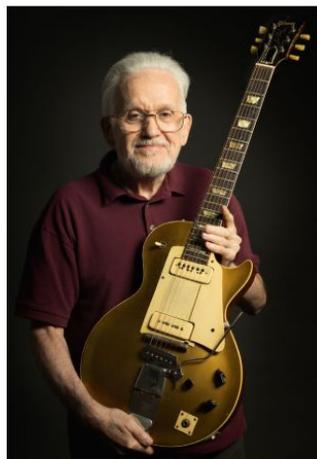
This was probably the first two-pickup electric guitar. Until National in California introduced this model, the electric lap steel and Spanish electrics that began to trickle out from some makers during the 30s all had single pickups, usually at the bridge (although Gibson, for example, put its Spanish guitar pickup at the neck). The obscure Sonora model paved the way for two, three or more pickups – but there remained an appeal to the simplicity of one.

11 1948 BIGSBY MERLE TRAVIS

This remarkably influential guitar looks closer to our idea of a modern solid electric guitar than anything that had gone before. Merle Travis was a fine country guitarist, Paul Bigsby a mechanic and woodworker who fixed motorcycles and built custom pedal-steel guitars. They devised the Bigsby-Travis guitar in California in the late 40s, pre-dating Fender's first solidbody. Bigsby – better known for his vibrato, patented four years later – produced some similar guitars but only in small numbers.

12 1950 FENDER BROADCASTER

This is the guitar that roused an entire industry to seriously consider the new idea of a modern mass-produced solidbody electric guitar. Gretsch complained about Fender's original name, Broadcaster, and during 1951 Fender changed it to Telecaster. The much-copied Tele retained



13

Les Paul's 1952 Gibson Les Paul Model aka 'Number One', held here by his son Gene Paul

its straightforward, no-nonsense style and playability through the ensuing decades and remains a near-perfect utilitarian design geared for mass production – and for players who continue to recognise the value of elegant simplicity.

13 LES PAUL'S 1952 GIBSON LES PAUL MODEL

Even a conservative Midwest company such as Gibson did not wait long to react to Fender's activities in California, and soon the firm was busy designing its own new solidbody. It was introduced in 1952, reflecting Gibson's craft heritage in contrast to Fender's unpretentious approach, and endorsed by America's most famous guitarist, Les Paul. This guitar, since much restored, was one that Gibson gave to Les Paul himself and which the guitarist used widely in the 50s.

14 GRADY MARTIN'S 1952 BIGSBY DOUBLENECK

Among the Spanish electrics made by Paul Bigsby was the first solidbody double-neck guitar, built in 1952 for the busy Nashville studio guitarist Grady Martin. He ordered his Bigsby double-neck with a regular six-string neck plus a five-string mandolin neck. For Bigsby, used to making double- and triple-neck steels, the design may have seemed a logical step, but it paved the way for other brave makers and strapping musicians to chance their arm with several necks.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN BURROCK

A 1958 Gibson ES-335 electric guitar is the central focus, mounted on a black stand. The guitar has a light-colored, semi-hollow body with two f-holes, a black pickguard, and two humbucker pickups. The neck is dark wood with a fretboard and a black headstock with the Gibson logo. The guitar is positioned in a rack of several brown leather guitar cases. A white perforated metal bar runs horizontally across the rack behind the guitar. The background shows the interior of the cases and the wooden structure of the rack.

*The now-classic 335
was revolutionary...
for the modern player
who wanted to explore
traditional tones at
elevated volume levels*

20

With a double-cutaway form and feedback-taming function, the 1958 Gibson ES-335 had twice the style and playability

Chuck Berry invented so much about electric guitar playing that it's easy to overlook his guitars

15 BUDDY HOLLY'S C.1955 FENDER STRATOCASTER

Fender's second solidbody was introduced in 1954. Three years later, in December '57, American TV provided a boost for the guitar when Buddy Holly strummed a Strat on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Holly had topped the charts with *That'll Be The Day* and now had a new 45, *Peggy Sue*, and his Strat was on the cover of his '57 album, *The "Chirping" Crickets*, too. Suddenly, thousands of aspiring guitarists knew the guitar they wanted for Christmas.

16 CHUCK BERRY'S 1955 GIBSON ES-350T

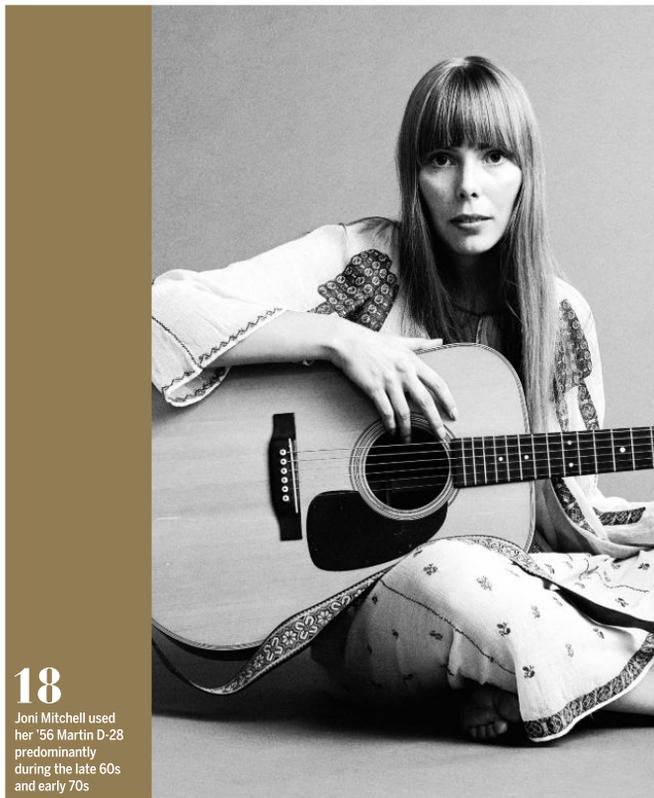
Chuck Berry invented so much about electric guitar playing – including the signature licks that influenced every budding rock 'n' roller in the 50s and early 60s – that it's easy to overlook his guitars. Chuck's axe of choice in the classic early days was a stylish 350T, which combined a comfortable thinline body with a shorter neck and scale, and the model set the style for many of the electric hollowbodies to come from Gibson as well as other makers.

17 1955 STRATOSPHERE TWIN

This rare model is the one for which the Missouri-based brothers Russ and Claude Deaver will go down in guitar history because it was the first production doubleneck electric and it incorporated the first 12-string electric. Their 12-string, also offered as a single-neck model, used an unusual tuning system that required guitarists to reconsider their playing techniques. Chet Atkins used a Twin, as did the West Coast session guitarist Jimmy Bryant, but Stratosphere's instruments soon faded from the scene.

18 JONI MITCHELL'S 1956 MARTIN D-28

Joni Mitchell learned to play guitar from a Pete Seeger instruction book. She soon developed her own picking style and a fondness for alternative tunings, which she played during the late 60s and early 70s on her main guitar of the period, a '56 D-28. Martin first made the big dreadnought guitars in 1916 for Ditsen, and in 1931 introduced its own models, the D-18 and D-28, followed by the high-end D-45 in '33.



18

Joni Mitchell used her '56 Martin D-28 predominantly during the late 60s and early 70s

19 1957 SILVERTONE 1323

The mighty mail-order firm Sears, Roebuck was an important source of affordable guitars in the 50s and 60s. Danelectro, Harmony, Kay and others supplied instruments to Sears bearing the company's own Silvertone brand, and, by the late 50s, Sears was offering a line of models such as this Silvertone 1323, derived from a Dano U2. Thousands of would-be American guitarists started out with their cheap, effective Silvertones thanks to the Danelectro factory in New Jersey.

20 1958 GIBSON ES-335

The now-classic 335 was Gibson's most revolutionary electric guitar. It had two radical body features: double cutaways, and a semi-solid structure. The cutaways made it easier to reach higher frets, while a solid maple block inside the body tamed feedback and combined solidbody-like sustain with a hollowbody's woody warmth. The result was a comfortable electric for the modern player who wanted to explore traditional tones at elevated volume levels.

21 1958 FENDER JAZZMASTER

Following the success of the Telecaster, Esquire and Stratocaster, as well as the Precision Bass and Jazz Bass, in 1958 Fender introduced a further solidbody guitar – the high-end Jazzmaster. It had an enlarged headstock, a body with Fender's new offset-waist design, the first Fender appearance of a separate rosewood fingerboard, two new-style single-coil pickups, a floating vibrato bridge, and an array of controls including a switch to select between preset rhythm and lead settings.

22 JOHN LENNON'S 1958 RICKENBACKER 325

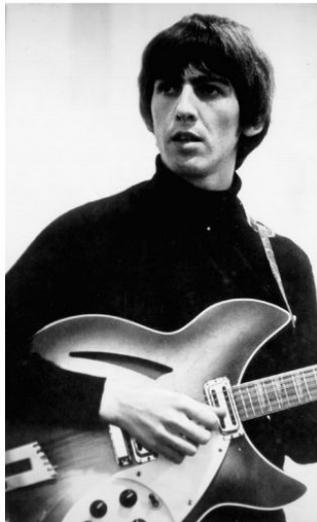
The Beatles have been important to Rickenbacker, and this is where that connection began. John Lennon bought this, his first American guitar, when his band played a residency in Hamburg, Germany, in 1960. After a long life, today it has a non-standard pickguard and knobs, and the finish restored to original natural. Lennon played this and a later 325 throughout most of the band's life on stage and in the studio.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LOCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



24

The unconventional 1958 Gretsch custom rectangular guitar as played by Bo Diddley



26

George Harrison with his 1963 Rickenbacker 360/12, an early prototype gifted to him by the guitar company

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LOCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

23 DAVE DAVIES'S 1958 GIBSON FLYING V

In 1958, Gibson introduced the Flying V and Explorer models to almost universal disapproval, and only 98 Vs were made before production ceased in '59. When Dave Davies happened on an original V during a Kinks US tour in 1965, he went on to provide the first glimpse of this rare instrument for many fellow guitarists. It became clear to players what a great guitar this was, and showed makers that a solidbody could be virtually any shape.

24 BO DIDDLEY'S 1958 GRETSCH CUSTOM RECTANGULAR GUITAR

Rock 'n' roll hero Bo Diddley teamed up with Gretsch to create a series of unusually shaped guitars, including this flat-sided

beast from 1958. *Billboard* magazine noted that Gretsch "has made a special custom-built square guitar for Bo Diddley – this is a strong artist who would probably sound great even with glockenspiel accompaniment". Here was early and very public evidence that some players no longer required instruments that matched the conventional template.

25 ERIC CLAPTON'S c.1959 GIBSON LES PAUL STANDARD 'BEANO'

This guitar, missing since stolen in 1966, is a rare example of an influential instrument that no-one has seen for a very long time indeed. Clapton bought the sunburst Les Paul in London in '65, using it for John Mayall's *Blues Breakers* album. The cover had EC reading a copy of the *Beano* comic – hence the guitar's nickname – and sunburst Standards rose dramatically in popularity and value as Clapton and others demonstrated their musical worth.

26 GEORGE HARRISON'S 1963 RICKENBACKER 360/12

Rickenbacker models became the electric 12-strings of choice during a mid-60s trend for the 12's big chiming sound, prompted by George Harrison. Rickenbacker gave him this guitar – actually an early prototype –

during the group's first American tour early in 1964, and he used this and a second gifted Rickenbacker on many Beatle live shows and recordings, including *A Hard Day's Night* and *Ticket To Ride*.

27 JOHNNY WINTER'S 1963 GIBSON FIREBIRD V

With Fenders popular, Gibson looked for a competing design, landing with the Firebird line, new for 1963 and devised by car designer Ray Dietrich. Firebirds had a neck-through-body design and a similar look to Fender's offset style, which gained these first Firebirds the 'reverse' nickname. The Texan bluesman Johnny Winter favoured a sunburst V, which he bought around 1970 for \$225, and he showed just what it could do, especially when he took a slide to it.

28 1966 VOX GUITAR ORGAN

The Guitar Organ – devised by Dick Denney, who designed many Vox amplifiers – had frets with contacts connected to the innards of a Vox organ in the body. The idea here was to create organ sounds or guitar sounds, individually or simultaneously. It was a difficult instrument to play, not least because of a neck wider at the nut than the body, and did not last long, but it provided an early suggestion that a guitar might be made to sound like a keyboard.

Vox's Guitar Organ was difficult to play, but it was an early suggestion that a guitar might be made to sound like a keyboard

27

Johnny Winter mostly used a sunburst 1963 Gibson Firebird V on stage, and was also the owner of this '65 in the rare custom colour of Inverness Green

With Fenders popular, Gibson looked for a competing design, landing with the Firebird line



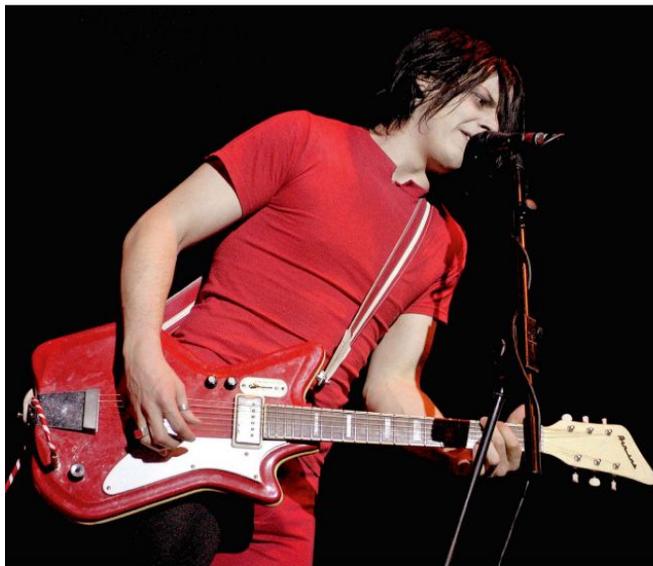


PHOTO BY BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

29

Jack White bringing retro back with an Airline 7283, originally bought in as a house brand for Sears

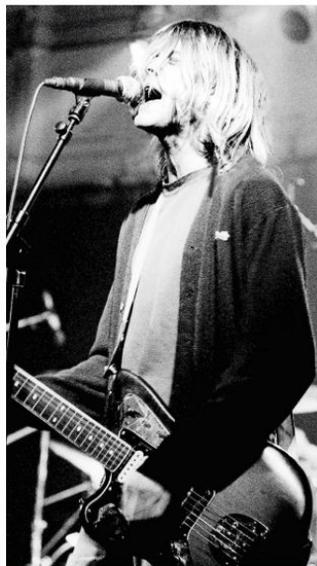


PHOTO BY PETER PAKVIS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

30

Kurt Cobain's lefty '65 Fender Jaguar had various quirks, such as an extra volume knob, and helped raise the profile of offset models from the 90s and beyond

29 JACK WHITE'S c.1965 AIRLINE 7283

Alongside Sears, Roebuck, the other big name in US mail-order was Montgomery Ward. Like Sears, it bought in instruments for its house brand, Airline, and served many a fledgling guitarist. Valco in Chicago built a series of models for Ward, some of which used moulded-fibreglass bodies, like some similar Valco-made National and Supro guitars. When Jack White later used an Airline for his work in The White Stripes, Airline became a key name in retro-land.

30 KURT COBAIN'S 1965 FENDER JAGUAR

Kurt Cobain's favoured guitar for *Nevermind*-era Nirvana was a left-handed

Jimmie Webster's White Falcon surely qualifies as a gadgeteer's guide to extreme gadget guitars

Jaguar. It had some odd features for a '65, various aftermarket mods, including DiMarzio pickups and an extra volume knob, and it soon gained a taped-off toggle area. During the 90s and beyond, Cobain's love of offset Fenders did much to repopularise these models, which had gone in and (more often) out of fashion through the years since their introduction.

31 JIMMIE WEBSTER'S 1966 GRETSCH WHITE FALCON SUPER PROJECT-0-SONIC 6137

The White Falcon was a spectacular gleaming object that appeared in 1955, designed by Gretsch's chief ideas man, Jimmie Webster. This double-cutaway guitar was owned by Webster himself and typifies Gretsch mid-60s style, with double mute switches and pads, telescopic vibrato arm, multiple stereo controls, Space Control bridge, T-Zone slanted frets, thumbnail markers, two Filter Trons, and, of course, That Great Gretsch Sound. It surely qualifies as a gadgeteer's guide to extreme gadget guitars.

32 1968 MICRO-FRETS THE ORBITER

This innovative instrument was probably the first wireless guitar, well ahead of its time.

The onboard FM transmitter's antenna sat on the upper horn of the body and a receiver plugged into an amp. The idea came to Ralph Jones at Micro-Frets in Maryland from the growing popularity of wireless-controlled garage doors. Micro-Frets guitars had an unusual side-join body construction, and some had a clever intonated nut, but the brand was gone by the mid-70s.

33 1969 AMPEG DAN ARMSTRONG SEE-THROUGH

Ampeg, better known for amps, hired Dan Armstrong to design this guitar, which had a body carved from a block of clear plastic, as much to grab attention as to exploit any sonic potential the material might have. Another novel idea was the six slide-in/slide-out pickups – Rock, Country or Jazz in Treble or Bass varieties. The See-Through guitar lasted little more than a year in production, brought down by conservative guitarists (Keef excepted) and expensive production.

34 JIMMY PAGE'S 1971 GIBSON EDS-1275

Jimmy Page ordered a doubleneck from Gibson in the early 70s so that he could play both the six-string and the 12-string parts of *Stairway To Heaven* on stage without

33

Ampeg's Dan Armstrong see-through guitar turned heads with its plastic body and slide-in/slide-out pickups

The body was carved from clear plastic, as much to grab attention as to exploit any sonic potential the material might have





35

Loyal to Gibson his entire career, Angus Young's mainstay is the SG Standard

PHOTO BY MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



39

EVH created a beast of his own – from a Charvel body and neck, and a 335 PAF humbucker – with the 1977 Frankenstrat

PHOTO BY RICHARD MCCAFFREY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

changing guitars. It prompted a surge of prog-tastic interest in such twin-pronged beasts from the likes of John McLaughlin (Mahavishnu Orchestra), Steve Howe (Yes) and Alex Lifeson (Rush). Gibson spotted the trend, too, and reissued its EDS-1275 Double 12 in 1975.

35 ANGUS YOUNG'S c.1971 GIBSON SG STANDARD

The SG was a fine piece of sculptural guitar design when Gibson introduced it in 1961, a modernistic amalgam of bevels and points much studied by other makers. Angus Young showed how one model type could sustain a guitarist through his whole career, acquiring his first SG in Australia in the early 70s. In addition to his SG Standard, also notable is Angus's iconic c.1970 SG Custom (as pictured on our cover), used throughout the *Back In Black* tour, which had its middle pickup removed and pickguard replaced.

36 1971 OVATION ELECTRIC LEGEND 1617

In 1971, Charles H Kaman's Ovation brand popularised the integrated amplified acoustic, an idea that caught on quickly among many other makers. Ovation had already raised eyebrows among the

conservative world of flat-tops with its 'Lyrachord' composite fibreglass bowl-shaped backs. The brand's electro-acoustics were a more important development, using piezo pickups mounted under the bridge saddles linked to an onboard preamp to provide an amplified acoustic sound, with controls on the body's side.

37 1976 FENDER TELECASTER DELUXE

Influenced by a popular mod that added a neck humbucker to a Tele, Fender put twin humbuckers on the existing Thinline in '71 and the Deluxe ('73), and a neck 'bucker on the Custom ('72). Fender said of the two-'bucker models: "The humbucking pickups not only help eliminate feedback, they also add a gutty midrange and bass sound." It was about as close as Fender would come officially to say: "This Fender is like a Gibson."

38 1976 BC RICH MOCKINGBIRD

On the road to the pointiest of pointy guitars, BC Rich in general and the Mockingbird in particular drew the eye of many a metallic musician. It wasn't only its dangerous curves. Bernardo Rico's guitars often had neck-through construction, and the controls provided a knob-twiddler's

paradise. The '76 Mockingbird has a volume per pickup and a master tone, a regular three-way toggle, a coil-tap per pickup, a phase switch and a five-way chickenhead varitone filter. Enough?

39 EDWARD VAN HALEN'S c.1977 FRANKENSTRAT

Ed's guitars paved the way for 80s SuperStrats as a result of his fun with DIY. His Frankenstrats began around 1977 with the black-and-white guitar seen on the cover of the first Van Halen album. He took a Strat-style body and neck from Charvel, a PAF humbucker from a 335, slanted at the bridge, glued in some jumbo Gibson frets, screwed on a Strat vibrato, and fitted a single volume control. Ready to rock.

The pointiest of pointy guitars, the BC Rich Mockingbird drew the eye of many a metallic musician



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Chet Atkins' idea used a semi-solid body and piezo bridge pickup... looking and feeling like a classical guitar but louder

40

Chet Atkins' 1981 Gibson CEC electro-acoustic classical was designed with performance in mind

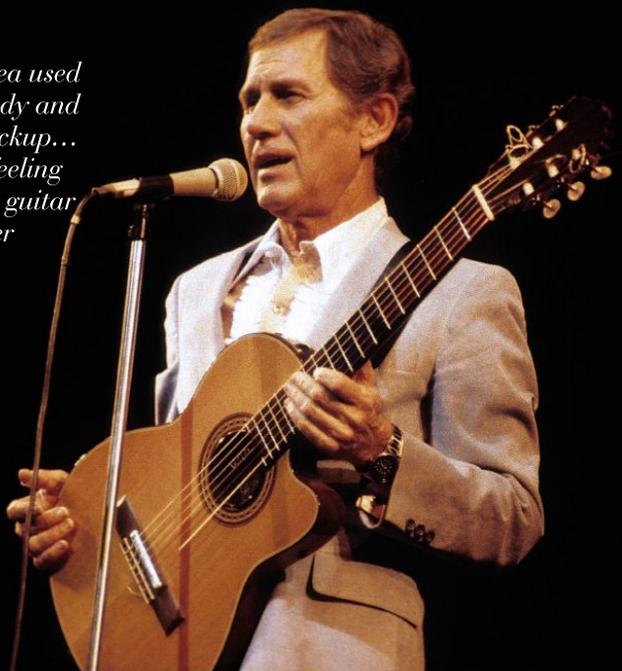


PHOTO BY DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

40 1981 GIBSON CHET ATKINS CEC

Amplifying a nylon-string guitar for stage use took a useful step when Gibson collaborated with Chet Atkins to design the CEC electro-acoustic classical. Despite his reputation as an electric player, Atkins was, by the 80s, mostly playing nylon-string classical-style flat-tops, and he wanted a practical electric model. His idea for Gibson used a semi-solid body and a piezo bridge pickup, the result mostly looking and feeling something like a classical guitar but louder.

41 1982 FENDER SQUIER SERIES TELECASTER '52

Fender introduced vintage reissues with a trio of models in 1982 that recalled 50s features, at first made at the Fujigen factory in Japan.

Roland's unusual G-707 guitar/controller was quickly nicknamed 'The Coat Hanger' for its look

The company's European agent requested budget-price versions to compete with the multitude of Fender copies, which, in its view, were damaging the market. The result was the Squier, which has since expanded greatly to a strong second-tier brand for Fender, and the spur for many other makers to develop quality overseas manufacturing.

42 1983 JACKSON RANDY RHOADS

Randy Rhoads was playing with Ozzy Osbourne in 1980 when he met Grover Jackson, and the two designed a custom guitar based on a classic Flying V. A little later they collaborated again on a radical variant with a notably offset body style, which established the 'extreme V' style. Following Rhoads's tragic death in '82, the first Jackson-brand production instrument, the Randy Rhoads model, appeared the following year.

43 1983 ROLAND G-707

Guitar synths started to appear in the mid-70s, promoting the idea that a guitar rather than a keyboard could control a synthesizer. Roland became the busiest activist, developing models from 1977 with separate guitar ("controller" in Roland-speak) and synthesizer unit. The most unusual was the G-707/GR-700, introduced

in 1983, and the 707 guitar/controller was quickly nicknamed 'The Coat Hanger' for its look. But still the guitar-synth remained a specialist item.

44 1983 KRAMER PACER

Kramer was the most successful electric brand of the 80s, leading the push to 'SuperStrat'-heaven with a line of simple, effective shred machines. The brand also helped establish the Floyd Rose locking vibrato, which quickly became the metal guitarist's vibrato system of choice. Other locking systems were developed at the time, by Rockinger, Kahler, Ibanez and others, but the Floyd, especially with the addition of fine-tuners at the bridge, was top of the divebombers' tree.

45 1985 PRS CUSTOM

Paul Reed Smith was among several makers in the 80s who wanted to combine the best of Gibson and Fender. An early result for his new-for-1985 PRS company was the Custom. Its mahogany-maple construction and fancy timber recalled 50s Les Pauls, while the through-body stringing and simple vibrato came from the Fender rulebook. PRS has ranged far and wide since, but this was the model that first put it on the map.

45

The Custom outline, born in 1985, is quintessential PRS and remains its flagship model, shown here in a stunning 30th Anniversary guise

Its mahogany-maple construction recalled 50s Les Pauls, while the through-body stringing came from the Fender rulebook





46

Steve Vai's attention-commanding 1987 Ibanez JEM777LG includes HSH DiMarzios, scalloped top frets and a locking vibrato



50

In 1995, Vince Cunetto started ageing guitars for Fender. Today, as part of the Custom Shop, the relic trend lives on. This Master Design '53 Tele was aged by CS's Paul Waller

46 STEVE VAI'S 1987 IBANEZ JEM777LG

Ibanez made a breakthrough among extreme rock players in 1987 with the distinctive Steve Vai JEM model. It had colourful HSH DiMarzios, a Monkey Grip body handle, Disappearing Pyramid inlays, a thin 24-fret neck (the top four frets scalloped), and Lion's Claw cutouts behind the Edge locking vibrato for pull-ups. It formed the basis for Ibanez's highly successful RG series of 'SuperStrats', while many JEM variations followed alongside Vai's Universe seven-strings.

The Martin Backpacker's take-anywhere vibe was demonstrated when Pierre J Thuot took one on a space-shuttle mission

47 1991 CHARVEL SURFCASTER

An early sign of the 90s retro fashion came with Charvel's Surfcaster. Makers looked back for features that made past instruments distinctive, borrowing them to give new models a modishly vintage vibe. The Surfcaster mixed old influences – lipstick pickups (Danelectro), slash soundhole and triangle markers (Rickenbacker) and a pearly pickguard (Fender). Many other electric brands took note of this early indication that retro could not only look good but also sound good and attract players.

48 1993 PARKER FLY

Ken Parker and Larry Fishman cut a unique swathe through 90s electrics with the hybrid Parker Fly models. Their radical construction had ultra-thin wooden bodies strengthened by a composite carbon and epoxy material forming an 'external skeleton' around the wood. Necks were similarly made, and the guitars combined sounds from piezos and magnetic pickups. It was an intriguing but short-lived look at what an electric guitar could be.

49 1994 MARTIN BACKPACKER

Upon its 90s launch, Martin's Backpacker was an inexpensive compact guitar with a narrow body about nine inches at its widest and a 24-inch scale length, the whole thing around 3ft long and weighing a touch over 5lb. Its take-anywhere vibe was demonstrated in spectacular fashion when astronaut Pierre J Thuot took one on a space-shuttle mission in March '94, and since then it seems as if every acoustic maker has offered a travel model.

50 1995 FENDER RELIC TELECASTER

Fender popularised the idea of the relic'd guitar, starting in 1995 when Vince Cunetto began ageing the bodies, necks and parts Fender sent to his Missouri workshop. Four years later, the work moved to Fender's Custom Shop. It wasn't a new idea – repairers have always restored old guitars. Now, though, a new-oldie could take away the fear of damaging a collectable, and modern relics were soon to be seen in many other makers' freshly aged inventories. **G**



ERNE
BALL

- REGULAR SLINKY
- POWER SLINKY
- NOT EVER SLINKY
- BEER'S SLINKY
- PRIMO SLINKY
- EXTRA SLINKY
- SUPER SLINKY
- SKINNY TOP HEAVY BOTTOM
- MAMMOTH SLINKY
- MEGA SLINKY
- BURNING SLINKY
- ULTRA SLINKY

DAVE BROCK

From busking and the blues, to high times and some lows, the Hawkwind founder tells us tales of yore from his epic journey in space-rock

Words Rod Brakes

Some of you may be surprised to learn that Dave Brock – captain of the good ship Hawkwind – celebrated his 80th birthday earlier this year. But while many octogenarians are busy putting their feet up and enjoying retirement, Dave can't think of anything worse. "I don't want to retire," he states emphatically. "It's boring."

Indeed, this year has seen the band put out their 34th studio album, *Somnia* – the follow-up to last year's *Carnivorous* and *50th Anniversary Live* albums – while the *Dust Of Time: 1969-2021* anthologies were released in December. Amidst it all, *Guitarist* caught up with the space-rock overlord to traverse time and space (and various other dimensions along the way).

My First Guitar

"I was about 13 or 14 when I got my first guitar, but I had a banjo before that, that my uncle Morris gave me. I didn't know how to play it, though. My mum and dad bought my first guitar, an acoustic, but I can't remember what make it was. My first electric guitar was a Harmony Stratotone – a bit like Jimmy Reed's [Kay K161 Thin Twin]. My art teacher, Mr

Dyson, heard I was listening to blues and jazz and was really enthusiastic about telling me about different jazz musicians and what to listen to, so that helped a lot. He used to write down chords for me. Also, Bert Weedon had a book called *Play In A Day*, which taught me a lot early on."

Passport To Eelpiland

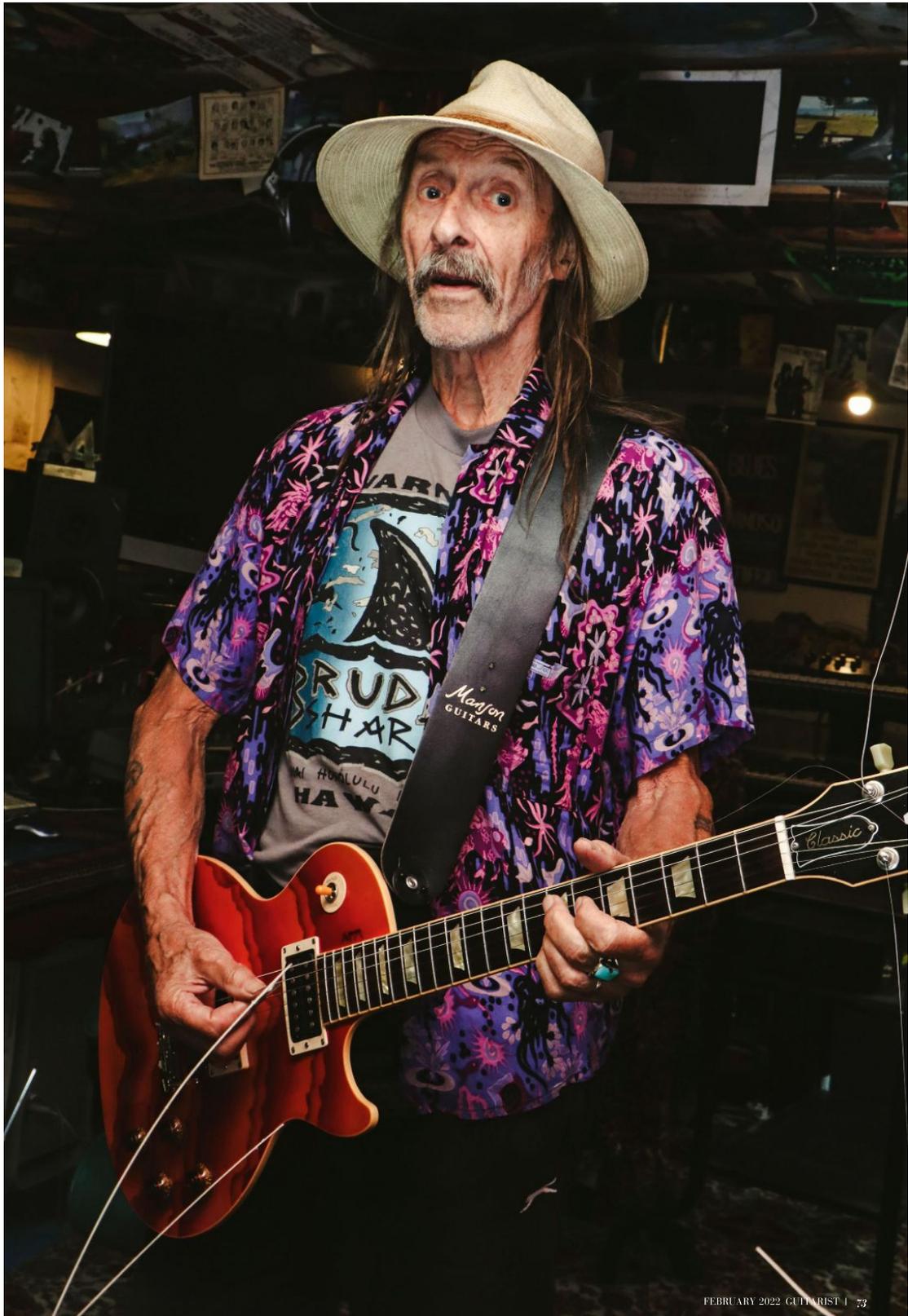
"There was a bit of a scene in the late 50s and early 60s in Richmond. That's where I met Eric [Clapton] and a load of other people who used to hang out in the L'Auberge coffee bar. We always used to hang out there before going over to Eel Pie Island. That was where it all happened in our era. You used to get

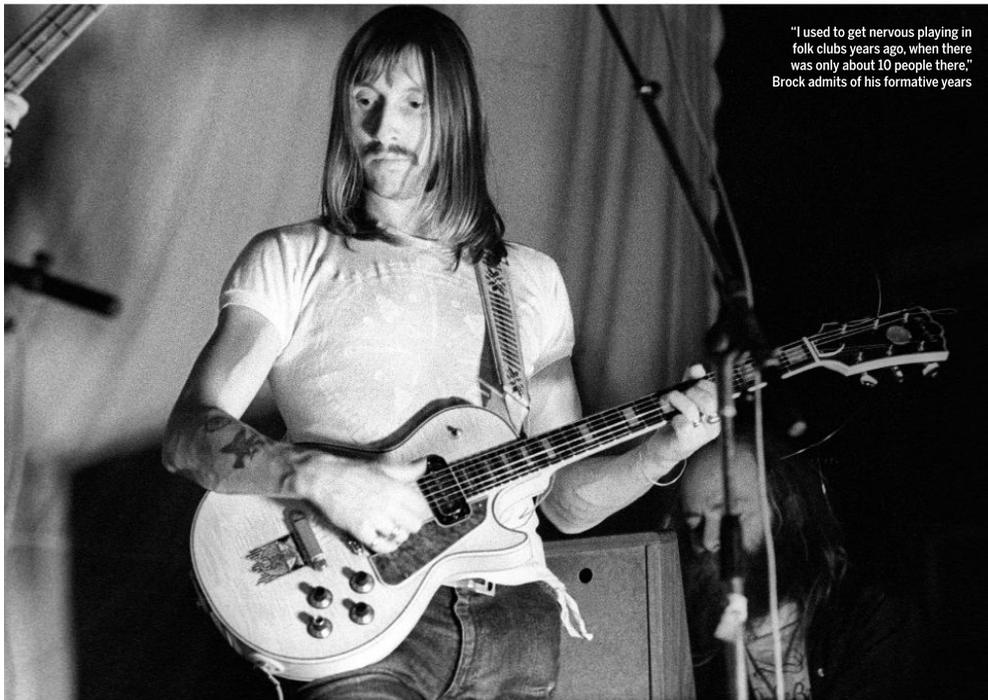
these little membership cards labelled 'Passport' for the [Eelpiland] club. I loved going over there and listening to jazz. Later on, they had blues artists playing there. Eventually, me and a friend ended up playing in the interval. That's how I met Memphis Slim and Champion Jack Dupree. The guy who used to run Eelpiland, Arthur Chisnall, was an innovator because he'd book all these different blues artists in. Arthur Chisnall got so many people into blues and jazz – Eric Clapton, The Yardbirds and Jeff Beck, they all went to Eelpiland."

The Busking Life

"From about 1964, I had a blues band with [pianist] Mike King and [harmonic player] Luke Francis. We were called the Dharma Blues Band and we did some recording for Immediate Records. Around '66, I travelled around Europe playing music for a while, and when I came back I ended up busking in cinema queues and subways in London for a few years. It was a good way of earning money and was quite well organised. I think it taught me a lot and gave me plenty of practice performing."

"I busked in cinema queues and subways. It taught me a lot and gave me plenty of practice performing."





"I used to get nervous playing in folk clubs years ago, when there was only about 10 people there," Brock admits of his formative years

PHOTO BY IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Launching Hawkwind

"Don Paul – who produced *The Buskers* album [1969] that I recorded a couple of tracks for – helped us out and we recorded an acetate of *Hurry On Sundown*, *Cymbaline* and *Mirror Of Illusion*. Then we played the All Saints Hall [in Notting Hill]. There was this Saturday night freak-out night down there where everybody used to take acid and jump around. We went and played down there for about 20 minutes and that's how we got signed up. That's how we managed to get our first record deal.

"To make our first album [*Hawkwind*, 1970] was a dream for all of us. It was fantastic to actually do that. We signed a deal with United Artists for five years and worked hard to get a following."

Happy Daze

"The Middle Earth Club [in Covent Garden] was jolly fun, too. They had their Saturday all-nighters around '67/'68. And when I got Hawkwind together in 1969 people were still taking loads of acid. It was a real party scene. The far end of Portobello Road [in Notting Hill] was where *Friends* magazine had its office, and next door was a record shop with big speakers outside playing loud reggae

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"I loved going over to Eelpiland. I met Memphis Slim and Champion Jack Dupree there"

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music all the time. The joy of it was you could sit around smoking marijuana and it was a nice thing happening all in one place. It was really nice.

"On Saturday afternoons we used to play underneath the flyover because there was a power point down there. So, there was us and the Pink Fairies, and we used to combine into one band with two drummers and two basses. It was good fun. There are loads of photos from there on the old *In Search Of Space* vinyl artwork. Really happy times! Although back then it could also be a real pain in the arse because we used to get stopped and searched all the time. The police would stop the van and search everybody. It happened so often the police knew us all by our first names!"

Free Festivals

"*Friends* and *International Times* – the underground newspapers – used to have happenings quite often. There were always things going on, so there was always plenty of like-minded people around. The free festivals used to give lots of young bands an opportunity to play because it was a local stage. That's what it was like – young bands would come along and ask to play and, yeah, of course they could. They might be awful, but it gave them a chance to do something. There were lots of great bands with great musicians in them who unfortunately took too many drugs. Which was a real shame because some of the writing was amazing. Later, we met some amazing bands like 2000DS who were brilliant, and lots of bands that are still going now like RDF and Ozric Tentacles."

Dodgy Ground

"When we did the White Horse Free Festival in Westbury [Wiltshire, 1985] it pissed down with rain. We thought we were going to get electrocuted because the rain was coming through the tarpaulin and onto our equipment. This was around the time of the Battle of the Beanfield. Roy Harper was playing

Dave Brock | IN MY LIFE

By the time Hawkwind released their debut album in 1970, they'd happily experienced the "party scene" of late-60s London

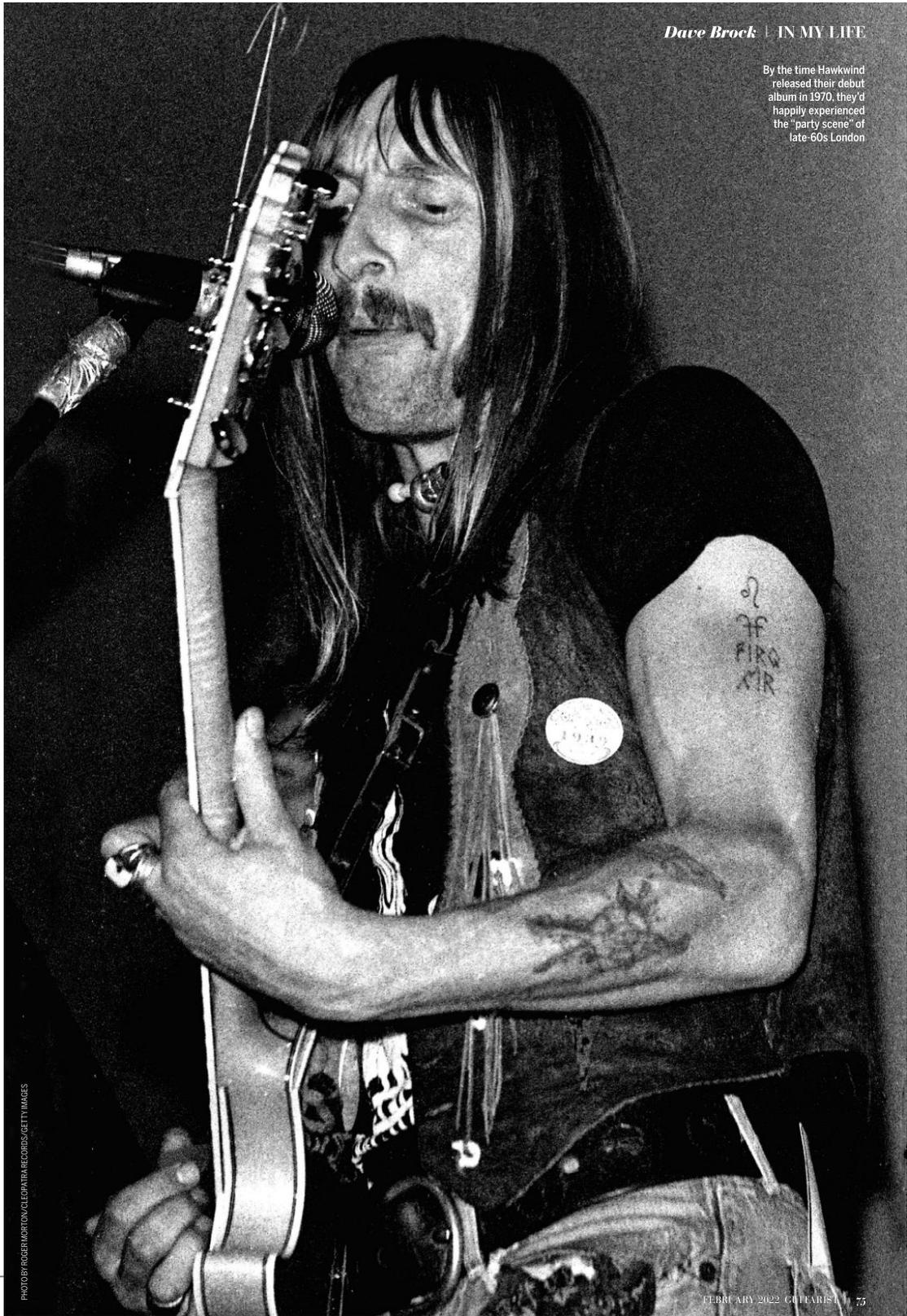
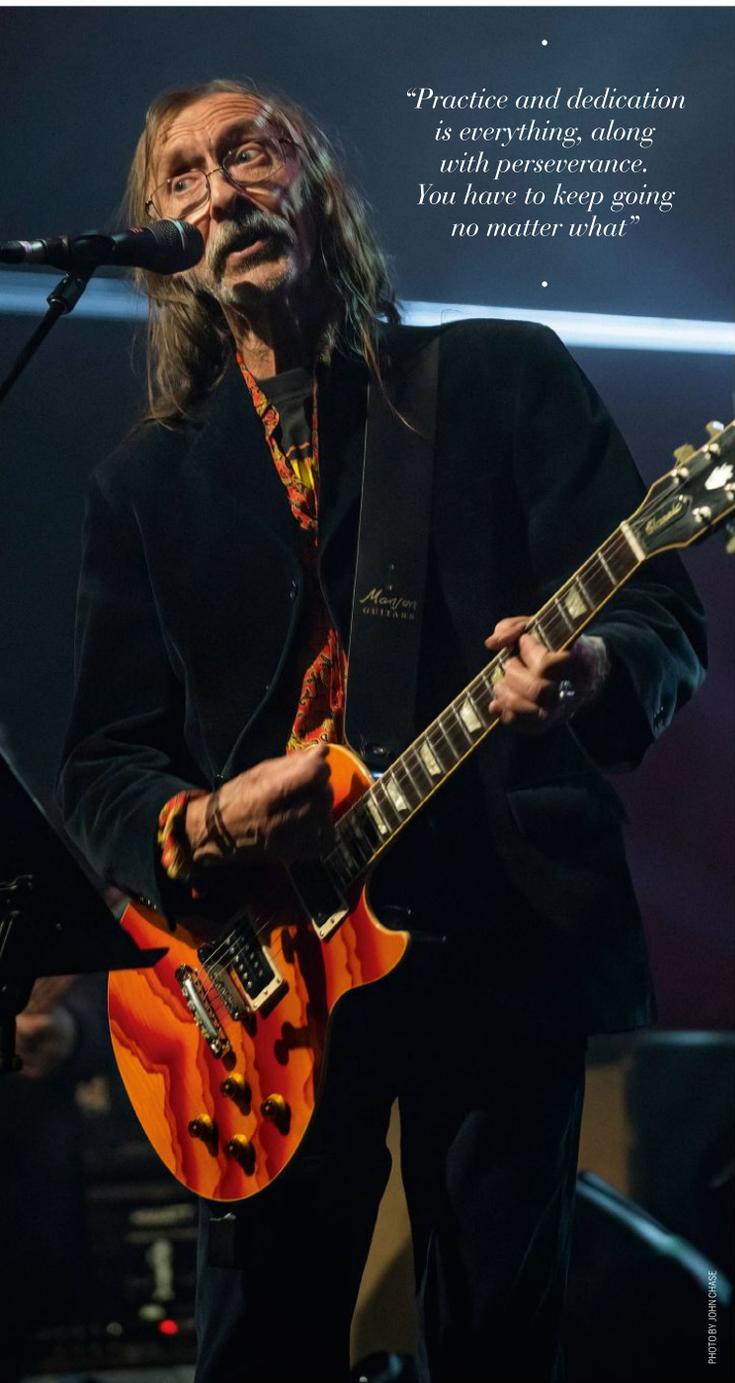


PHOTO BY ROGER MORTON/CLEOPATRA RECORDS/GETTY IMAGES



“Practice and dedication is everything, along with perseverance. You have to keep going no matter what”

there and we were sitting in his tent. He had some After Eights because it was his birthday. But they got knocked over and fell on the floor. Unfortunately, someone had trod in dogshit, and he ate one that had it on by mistake. He was really ill and had to go home! There used to be lots of awful things happen at free festivals, like drunk people would come reeling into you on stage knocking things over and being aggressive, and you'd have to kick them up the arse.”

Fear & Loathing In Glasgow

“We played in the Apollo in Glasgow – it used to be called Green’s Playhouse – and there’s a big drop from the stage. I mean, a big drop, maybe 10ft or so. The stupid thing was, I got hopelessly stoned before we went on and every time I got near the microphone to sing, I thought I was going to trip over and fall off the stage. I had proper vertigo. It was awful. Every time I came up to do the vocals, I couldn’t do it! Everyone was looking at me like, ‘What the fuck’s wrong with him?!’ The strange thing is, when we played there again a year later, I had the same paranoia.”

Stage Nerves

“I don’t get nervous, generally. Maybe sometimes, but it all depends on the stress factors involved. Sometimes, with gear, you’ve just got to make the most of it and get on with it. I used to get nervous playing in folk clubs years ago when there was only about 10 people there. There were a couple of great little folk clubs in Soho – Le Macabre and Les Cousins. They were really small and everyone could hear everything.

“Years ago, we used to sit in the dressing room and actually play numbers to warm up. We don’t really do that any more. Nowadays, I just sit down and plonk around. We probably should, though...”

The Show Must Go On

“If I was going to give any advice to my younger self I’d say, ‘Practice!’ You have to be dedicated. Practice and dedication is everything, along with perseverance. You have to keep going no matter what. Several years ago, I cut the tip of my finger off and about three weeks afterwards I had to play the Sweden Rock Festival on the Lemmy Stage with my middle finger bandaged up. But I couldn’t play all the chords properly because of this big white bandage. It still hurts occasionally, even now. But you’ve got to keep going. It was quite funny, really – I was sitting there being interviewed about Lemmy on Swedish television with my middle finger sticking straight up.”

PHOTO BY JON CHASE

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Founder member Dave heads up the band to play the London Palladium in October 2021

PHOTO BY JOHN CHASE

Learning From Lemmy

“When I first started, I used to copy Big Bill Broonzy. When people first start playing, they often copy someone they really like and that gets them going. But from there on you can go off on your own trip. Lemmy had a different way of playing bass, but you’ve got to remember he was a guitarist. If you’re a guitarist and you play a bass, sometimes you don’t play it the same as someone who’s been brought up playing the bass. Lemmy used to play a lot of chords. Different technique. Different style. And between the pair of us we had a great understanding. Playing together and travelling around together all the time you get to know exactly what people are like.”

Equal Measures

“When I first met Kris [Hawkwind manager and Dave’s wife] she was screenprinting t-shirts. And then she went to Exeter University to study drama before working with us on stage doing miming. But she’s ended up being our manager. And she’s really good! She really cares what goes on and you can trust her. That’s what really matters. We’ve been together for over 40 years now. We’re living in a day and age where women can do exactly the same as what blokes can. It’s nonsense to say they can’t. We’ve got

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“I never listen back; I only listen to what we’re doing now. I like to move on to something else”
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a couple of women on our live crew doing PA and monitors. We see women working more and more on the light show as well.”

Healthy Living

“You go through life and your perspectives change on things. The essence to life is to try and get at least eight hours’ sleep for the body to recuperate. I always try. I used to go all night and the next day feel all washed out, but now I’m quite cautious and always try to manage eight hours. It’s the same thing as eating: if you eat regularly – breakfast, lunch and dinner – you can pretty much retain some sort of sense of normality. I still eat vegan, which I think is another one of the reasons I’m pretty healthy. I live on a farm and there’s always plenty to do, so that keeps me physically active.”

Onwards & Upwards

“I still use the same rig I’ve had for years, which includes a Roland [JC-120] amp and a Line 6 POD [Version 2.0]. My main guitar is a [2007] Tom Morgan-painted Gibson Les Paul Classic. I recently bought a 1976 Greco Les Paul off eBay for about £400. It’s a really lovely little guitar and the pickups are really good. In fact, I’ve got two Greco’s now. We’ve got a load of music gear we want to raffle and give all the money to different animal charities, so look out for some of that gear on the Hawkwind website.

“I tend to use the same gear. And I never really listen back [to recordings]; I only listen to what we’re doing now. I always like to move on to something else. I really like to finish whatever it is I’m working on and get on with something different. I always have stuff in the pipeline, but it’s having the time to get on with it. You can never stop learning guitar. There are so many different ways of playing guitar, you could never stop learning. It’s endless.”

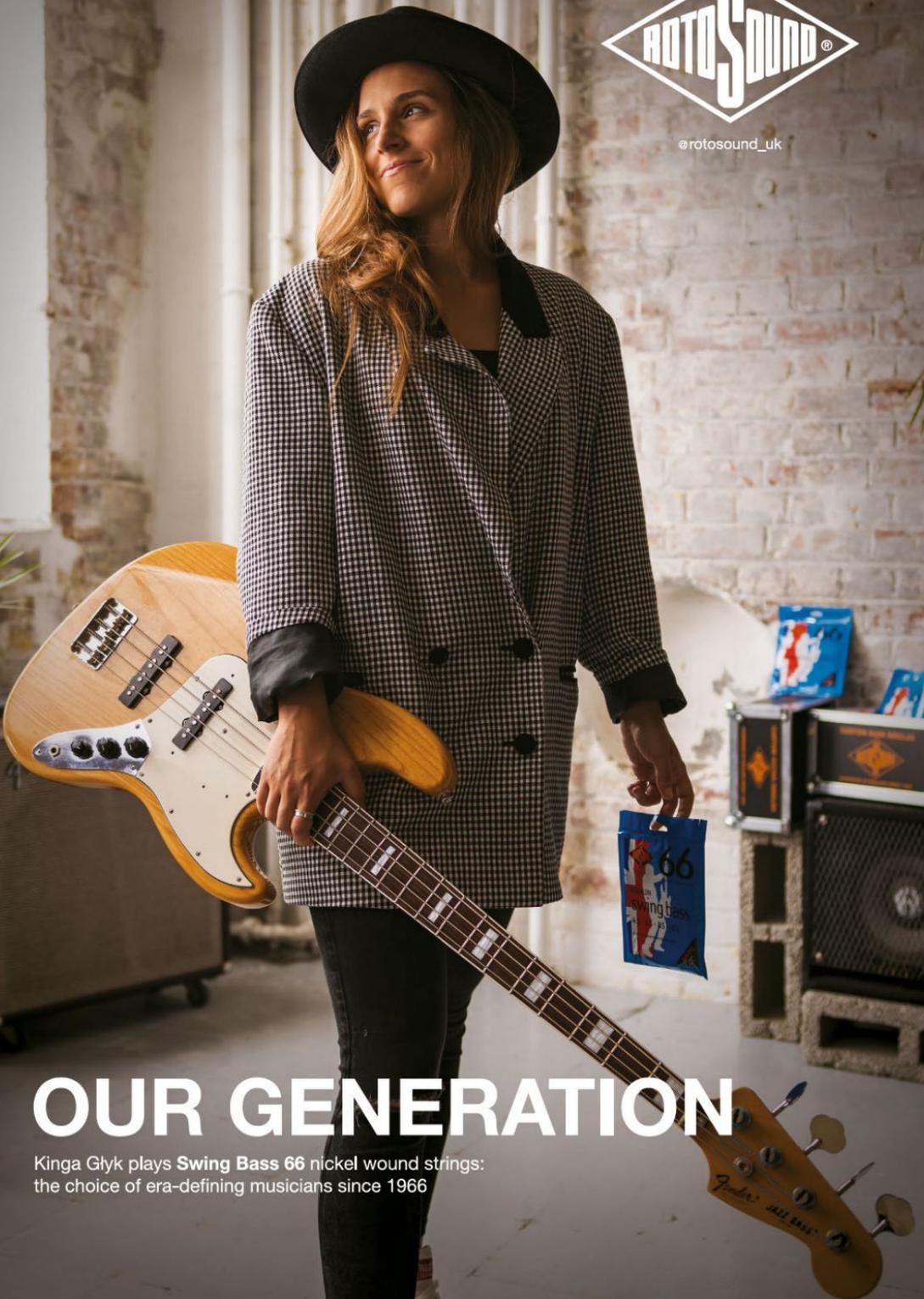


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BERNARD BUTLER

As the celebrated Brit-rock guitarist releases a newly reimagined take on his “flawed” 1998 solo debut, *People Move On*, he meets *Guitarist* to revisit the no-expenses-spared sessions, the vintage guitars and the ambition in the air

Words Henry Yates & Jamie Dickson Photography Will Ireland

The late 90s were a tumultuous time for Bernard Butler. By 1998, the guitarist was four years out of Suede, the band that made his name, while a partnership with the mellifluous vocalist David McAlmont had broken down in similarly acrimonious style. Yet Butler was finding his voice, in every sense, not only starting to sing but discovering artists such as Bert Jansch and broadening his scope beyond the glam-inspired crunch of old. And when Creation Records offered him one of the music industry’s last blank cheques to chase down his first solo album, *People Move On*, Butler turned in what he now calls “a flawed, majestic trainwreck, overwrought and overdone”.

Butler’s solo career didn’t last, and while the guitarist has gone on to become a fascinating, diverse and highly successful figure – involved with everything from playing guitar with Robert Plant to producing The Libertines – you sense the missed opportunities of the era have always rankled. As such, and despite his hatred of nostalgia, this year, almost a quarter-century later, Butler has re-examined *People Move On* to see what he could add to the youthful document by applying the perspective of a seasoned 51-year-old musician.

Set for release at the end of January, this *People Move On: 2021 Special Edition* is a long way from the lightly buffed reissues that merely repackaged dog-eared material for die-hard fans. To his credit, Butler has swung a wrecking ball through his own work, resinging the vocals from scratch and adding new guitar parts on impulse. No wonder, then, when we meet him at his home after the process, the guitarist seems like a weight has lifted – he has finally able to present this album as it might have been.

What made you want to look again at *People Move On*?

“The Demon label had asked me to do the reissue for a while. And I had said no. I mean, reissues take a long time. You do have to devote a lot of time to it. Some artists don’t make any effort at all, and that’s a bit rubbish. But, for me, I tend to work on my own, so I knew it’d be quite time-consuming. The other reason was, I just had a bit of a glimmer of not loving it, not wanting to go back. There were too many flaws for me to commit to it.

“What changed that situation was that, over the last couple of years, I’ve gradually got back to performing on my own and writing on my own, which I just didn’t do for a good 15 years. I’d been producing, writing with other people, spreading myself all over the place. And I just didn’t go back to it. But it was something I wanted to address because I felt at the back of my mind it was a lingering disappointment, something I dropped the ball with and just went off and tried to forget about it.”

How did the process start taking shape?

“I started going to a rehearsal room, just on my own, with one guitar, and playing the songs. I didn’t want to go back and listen to the records, write down chords and lyrics. That was just too much like hard work. I thought it would be more interesting to just try and remember the songs. You might forget a chord shape or change, or you’d get the key wrong, but it didn’t matter because you were trying to find that pure element that represented the song. If I couldn’t remember the lyrics, I’d make them up. If I couldn’t remember chord changes then I didn’t really care.

“So I did this on my own, completely. I didn’t tell anybody I was doing it for about six months. And

Bernard revisited his 1998 album *People Move On*, and started from scratch to create a new version for 2021. "If I couldn't remember the lyrics, I'd make them up. If I couldn't remember chord changes, I didn't really care," he says



1. Bernard's much-loved 1971 Martin D-28S is quite different from the more conventional D-28 variants, with its slotted headstock and neck that joins at the 12th fret
2. A newer acquisition is this 2020 Yamaha FG5 Red Label, a subtle nod to Bert Jansch
3. Bernard's 1950s Gibson LG-1 has become a favourite, thanks to ladder-braced spruce top that lends it a distinctive voice

I really enjoyed the process, performing songs that I haven't performed for years, thinking, "That line was a bit shit when I did it. Let's fix that." A great part of this was rediscovering my voice, as a 51-year-old man, rather than a man in his 20s. And just giving myself that time, to stand in a rehearsal room, make some noise, sing my heart out and play the songs from memory, for nobody except myself. Then Demon came back, and I said, "You know what? I've got an idea."

At the end of the process, what was your impression of what you'd done then versus what you've done now?

"As human beings, you expect a certain amount of humility, I think. But when it comes to music, fans are shocked when you say about your own work, 'I don't think that's very good,' because they've invested in it. But, for me, I can happily say that now. Just being self-critical in healthy way. These days, we're living in an 'awesome' world, aren't we? Everyone's got to be absolutely extraordinary and having a brilliant time and looking fantastic, all the time. That's a worrying thing. I'm happy to say I think a song I did is just 'all right!'"

Let's talk about the original recording and your approach on guitar. What was the mood when you went into the studio for *People Move On*?

"Well, I was given an opportunity to do anything. Carte blanche. This was the 90s, so it will never

"A '61 355 has been my guitar since 1993. It's become part of me and the way I play"

happen again. Creation Records, who were running everything at that time, with Oasis et cetera, became interested. They threw themselves behind me and said, "We just want you to make a record." I went into RAK Studios in London and I'd stay there for about a month having a brilliant time. We ended up going off to AIR Studios to mix it, and we did the strings there, too. And no-one worried about the money at all, and I could do what I wanted.

"There was an outpouring ready and I think that's reflected on *People Move On*. I think there are some good songs on this record, but, essentially, the biggest problem is I didn't think about how to deliver them vocally. And so I delivered the vocals in a slightly affected way. Which now I don't like. The vocals are okay. It doesn't kill me. But that was why, going back to the album, it was the first thing I wanted to do, and to recover from."



4. Bernard's 1961 ES-355 was bought in 1993 while on tour in the USA with Suede and has been his mainstay electric ever since

5. Seven-ply binding is one of the upmarket appointments that set the 355 above other 300-Series Gibsons

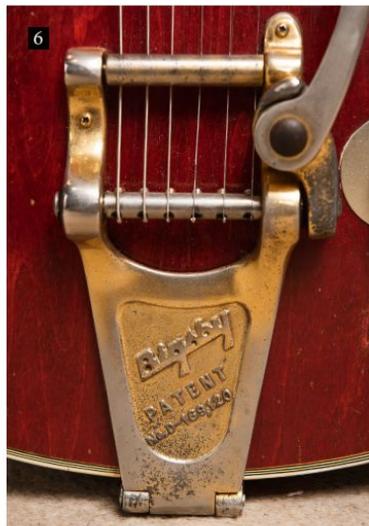
6. The gold-finish Bigsby B7 vibrato has aged gracefully but has clearly seen plenty of use, just as it should

7. The love-it-or-hate-it Varitone notch filter is part of the 355's vintage character

4



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7



- 8. This 1965 ES 335-12 provides another very useful colour in Bernard's tonal palette
- 9. Bernard's 1980 Les Paul Standard Heritage 80 was one of the company's first serious efforts to replicate an original 'Burst faithfully
- 10. Bernard says of his Gretsch 6120: "I think it's a '62 because it has painted-on f-holes and a double cutaway but still has Filter 'Tron pickups. I think '62 was the first year they switched to the fake f-holes and string mute – which is useless!"

You Light The Fire was a wonderful moment of acoustic fingerstyle. What was the inspiration?

"Well, it was clearly Bert Jansch. I had discovered him a little bit before, the classic first couple of albums. And, of course, there was Nick Drake and that era of fingerpickers. I didn't really understand a lot about it. I didn't get into learning Bert's songs or tunings, but I remember just hearing what he was doing and loving certain inflections. And I'd say that *You Light The Fire* – which I played on a 1971 Martin D-28 – was a starting point. I guess it's a first attempt at getting into that territory. It was definitely from discovering Bert."

And you went on to become friends and collaborators, of course...

"I met him in about 1999. We just started hanging out. He had a flat in Kilburn, we became friends, and I played on a couple of records from that period and we did a lot of gigs together. A massive inspiration in my life. Not just as a player but as a human being. The way he presented himself. His humility and dignity. His absolute devotion to the pure essence of creativity and music.

"Bert never spoke about influences, really. I very rarely saw him put on a record. And even though you could have grilled him – about Dylan or Paul Simon, or all the greats who were around him and clearly watching him – you just didn't do it. He wasn't that guy. He wasn't the old rocker down the pub who wanted to

•

"A great part of this [process] was rediscovering my voice, as a 51-year-old man"

•

go on about the old days. You'd just go round and he'd say, 'D'you want a cup of tea?' Then you'd sit down and he'd just start playing.

"I never really got him to show me how to play stuff. I didn't really feel like I wanted to get into doing 'guitar lessons with Bert'. It just wouldn't be the most creative thing, getting him to show me *Angie* or something. I just thought, 'What can I add to this?' And so I'd see these things that he did – or at least I thought he was doing – and try to adapt them."

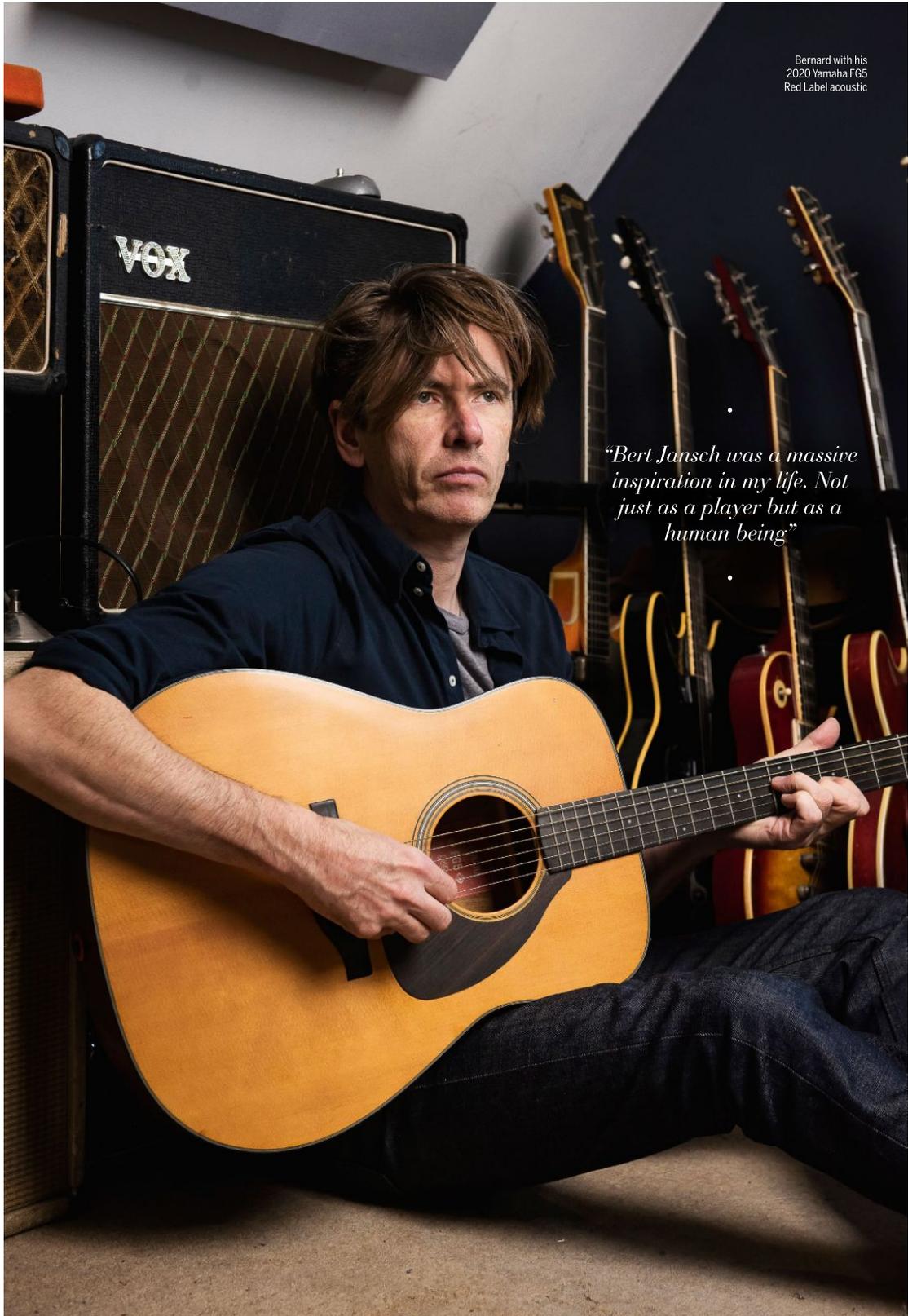
What electric guitars were you using on the original *People Move On*?

"The 355 would have been the main thing. It's a '61 355 and that's been my guitar since 1993. It's still the guitar I use 90 per cent of the time. It's a bit of a luxury to have as your everyday guitar, but it's become part of me and the way I play. It's that old pair of boots that you get to



Bernard with his
2020 Yamaha FG5
Red Label acoustic

*“Bert Jansch was a massive
inspiration in my life. Not
just as a player but as a
human being”*



11. A modern amp with a vintage soul: Bernard's Lazy J 20 combo

12. Bernard's 1971 Fender Telecaster with Bigsby provided the 'wiry' tones of his debut solo album, *People Move On*

know. When I was still in Suede, I had a 345, and our van was cleared out overnight in Toronto. So we were moving down the West Coast, and by the time we got to LA, I went to the Guitar Center on Sunset, just went in and bought this 355. It was \$4,500. Which at the time, I thought was an extraordinary amount of money, but I was also young and on tour in America. You know, 'Whatever! Let's get a tattoo!' It's probably worth insane amounts now. In that era, you could still buy guitars for relatively sane prices. I couldn't now. So this is the main guitar, and it was on the second Suede record and everything after that."

Which other models were in the mix on *People Move On*?

"There's Johnny Marr's 335 12. That's on this record quite a lot. The acoustics would have been this early 70s Martin D-35 12, which is the sound of the song *Stay*, with the D-28 for all the fingerpicking. Then there's

"When you bash a Tele, they look even better. And you don't say that about the 355"

this 1960 330 with P-90s. I got it around the time I was making *People Move On*. There was a tiny guitar shop underneath the Chelsea Hotel. I remember walking in, and it was one of those classic 'I've got something for you, mate' moments. The guy went out the back and brought this guitar out. This is a custom black. I use it an awful lot. It's as light as a feather. I tend to use it for the mellow tones, on the neck pickup. So this would have been on the song *People Move On* where there's an electric solo. I later found out that there were only five of these made in 1960. And apparently Keith Richards has two of them."

What can you tell us about the Tele we shot today?

"It's heavy and it's a beast, and if you drop it, it makes it even better. That's the best thing about a Tele – when you bash them, they look even better. And you don't say that about the 355. So I used this Tele quite a lot. There's a song called *Autograph*, which has an intro riff and that would have been this guitar. This was bought around the same time as I bought the 355, and I really love this guitar. Again, I think it's an early 70s model with a Fender Bigsby. A beautiful-sounding guitar. So it was easy to split the album between the fat humbucker stuff and then the wiry Telecaster. In my head, I would've chosen things in that way. Y'know, if I want a wiry riff sound, I go for the Tele. And then as soon as I want the creamier, fatter fuzz, I'd be going for the 355."



13. Very few ES-330s in black were made – Bernard was lucky to find and buy this 1960 example in a guitar shop underneath the Chelsea Hotel in New York around the time that *People Move On* was made

14. Unlike its big brother the ES-335, the 330 has a fully hollow body, adding some extra 'air' to its voice

15. Once again, a Bigsby B7 provides the shimmer here – this variant was Gibson's go-to vibrato for its archtops

16. White 'button' Kluson tuners adorn the nicely weathered headstock

13



14



15



16



17. With *People Move On* now reworked to his liking, Bernard is eyeing an album recorded entirely in DADGAD tuning – but he’s staying mum about his collaborator for the project

18. A mixture of classics and modern boutique pedals provide the tones on Bernard’s compact but purposeful ‘board

19. A Lehle switching unit provides plenty of options when it comes to utilising multiple amps

“I don’t like writing songs just because I need to do it. I want there to be a reason to do it”

Were you working with different amplifiers on that record, as well?

“There’s this Fender Tremolux behind me – I use this quite a lot – and the AC30 at the time. Those would have been the main things. I’ve got a Hiwatt 100, which I used quite a lot on that album, actually, with the AC30 and Fender. Again, it would probably be split between – you want that thinner sort of feel, you go for the Fender, and as soon as you want to turn stuff up, you go for the Vox, make it scream. The Lazy J is the thing I use all the time at the moment. I’ve got a Vox AC4, and a little Gibson Skylark, which I think was probably on this record. Y’know, getting past that idea that volume means bigger – because often, in the studio, it doesn’t.”

You’ve laid the ghost of *People Move On*. So what’s next for you?

“Funny enough, I’ve got a record with another artist, which I’m not really allowed to talk about just at the moment, but I’m really proud of it. It’s my DADGAD album. I sunk into DADGAD over lockdown. Something I’d never done before, and I just thought, ‘Fuck it, I’m gonna do this.’ One song in, it worked and

then I just carried on writing. And I was writing with this artist and it just started working for every song, and almost every song is DADGAD.

“So that record is really interesting and that was mostly written on a 50s [Gibson] LG-1, which my wife bought me for my birthday years ago. At the time I was like, ‘This is lovely, but it’s hard work.’ And, gradually, it’s become my number-one writing guitar. I’ve slowly fallen in love with it. Really small body. Quite hard work. No bottom-end. And quite a raw sound. And I started putting it into DADGAD and really picking it, and I just adore this guitar.”

Do you have any more plans as a solo artist?

“I’ve written a new album and I’m two-thirds of the way through recording it. It’s got a title and running order, all of that stuff is there, and I just have to get my head down to finishing off the parts. So I’m really excited about that. It’s taken me a long time to make myself feel comfortable about doing it, and also to give myself a real reason to write. I don’t like writing songs just because I need to do it. I want there to be a reason to do it. I want there to be something I’m inspired by that makes me go and do it. And so I’m in that place at the moment. So next year is quite exciting for me, I must admit.”



People Move On: 2021 Special Edition is released on 28 January through Demon Music Group. It is available as a four-CD boxset, in a media book and as a two-LP set, with revocaled versions of all recordings, B-sides and demos, and new artwork <https://bernardbutler.com>



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KIEFFER SUTHERLAND

With third album, *Bloor Street*, Kiefer Sutherland has pulled off the gearshift from Hollywood royalty to acclaimed singer-songwriter. He tells us about broken hearts, modded Teles, pawning Christmas presents for guitar money – and why Jack Bauer wouldn't have been a player

Words Henry Yates

We don't quite have 24 hours with him (more like a strict 30 minutes). But it's remarkable how closely an interview with Kiefer Sutherland resembles a chat with a normal human being. Answering the phone from Los Angeles in that unmistakable honey-and-grit drawl, he's the most gracious megastar you're ever likely to encounter, more like a guitar shop regular than the man who stared from your childhood *Lost Boys* poster as a peroxide vampire.

At the grand old age of 55, Sutherland is paying his dues all over again. Unlike his movie and TV career – a context in which he's been a stone-cold icon since *Stand By Me*, 35 years ago – the Canadian's two country albums since 2016 have seen him shinning up the greasy pole and playing venues that can barely contain his star power. But aside from the scale, he considers, maybe his day job has more in common with third album, *Bloor Street*, than it appears. “The thing I love about acting is that I get together with a group of people to tell a story. Americana music is kinda like that, too.”

What subjects came up as you wrote *Bloor Street*?

“I couldn't help but be aware of the struggles people were having to endure during the pandemic, economically, emotionally and from a mental health perspective. The songs I naturally started writing – *Two Stepping In Time*, *Bloor Street*,

So Full Of Love – were incredibly hopeful. Even a song like *Set Me Free*, which is really playful. Y'know, I'm at an age now where I feel like a used car and I thought it would be funny to write a song from that perspective: a used car wanting one last great owner. I can be cynical and pessimistic, but these songs were really positive.”

Did you find yourself writing about harder themes, too?

“*Going Down* is about that first real break-up that leaves a mark on you for life. I think, in many ways, that's what takes you from a teenager to an adult and realising that it's not all gonna be perfect and there are going to be things you want in life that you are not going to get. Outside of the two per cent of the population that fell in love with their high school sweetheart and have been married for 55 years – the other 98 per cent of us will understand this song.”

Your three albums so far have leaned towards Americana and country. Why does that music speak to you?

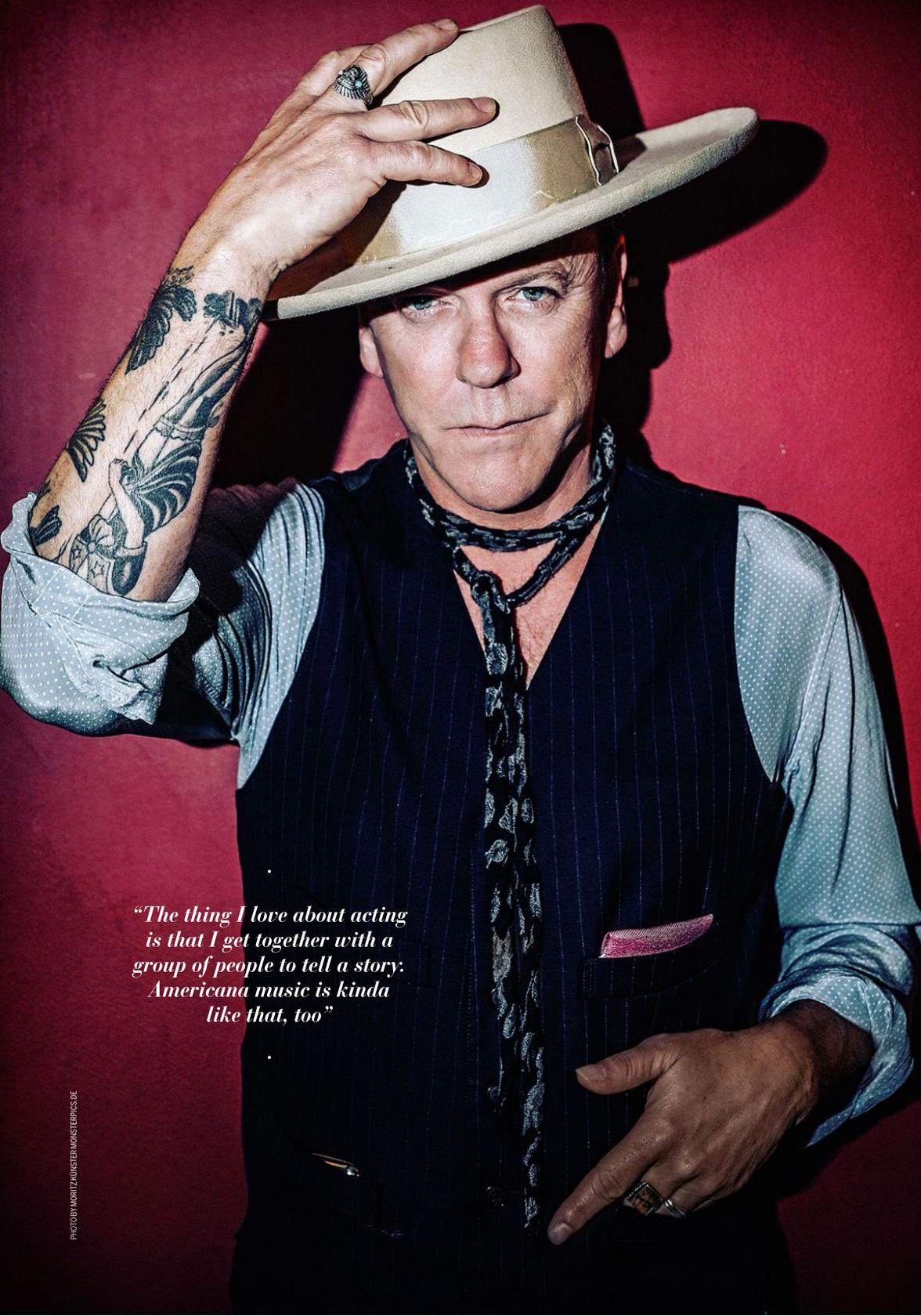
“I was a huge AC/DC and Led Zeppelin fan as a young person, but I began listening to country when I started professionally rodeoing. I was a team roper on the TRC [Team Roping Championships] circuit and I'd drive around the US with a couple of cowboys, just going from rodeo to rodeo. That was my first real exposure to country, and when I was introduced to storytelling in the context of music. I mean, when I listen to old songs by Hank Williams or

Kris Kristofferson – or a beautiful imagery writer like that – it's a very simple story with a beginning, middle and end. Bob Seger, Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash... and I know he didn't write a lot of his songs, but the way he would perform them. *A Boy Named Sue*, there was no mistaking what that song was about. Whereas I could describe five amazing Led Zeppelin songs and I have no fucking idea what they're about.”

How do the songs tend to come for you?

“Certainly, on the first two records [2016's *Down In A Hole* and 2019's *Reckless & Me*], I had a lot of help from Jude Cole and I was really learning how to write songs properly. And then I would hit prolific moments where I would write a lot of songs. I wish I was a guy like Jackson Browne who got up at nine o'clock, put the kettle on, sat down at the piano and basically wouldn't get up until six o'clock and he'd write two or three songs. Ed Sheeran sounds like that kind of guy, too, which I am so envious of. You treat it like a job and you're a nine-to-fiveer.

“For me, I started realising that something had to fall from the sky, trigger a memory and that's how I would start to write. It could really find me at any moment. There's a song on this record called *Nothing Left To Say*. I was sitting in a bar watching a couple. They didn't say a word to each other. They were looking at each other's phones, eating their meals. They were sitting together, but that was about it. I just said, ‘Oh shit, I have to go home’ – and I wrote the song in 20 minutes in my kitchen.”



*"The thing I love about acting
is that I get together with a
group of people to tell a story:
Americana music is kinda
like that, too"*

Who handles the guitar work on the record?

“Well, I’m a rhythm man, really nuts-and-bolts. On the record, I had Austin Vallejo, who has been my right-hand guy for seven years. And then Doug Pettibone who joined us on the last two tours, and he had played with Lucinda Williams [and John Mayer]. Both are extraordinary guitar players. When we were recording the record, we would lay down the rhythm tracks and a scratch vocal, all in one pass. Then Doug would play a solo, Austin would play a solo, and we’d pick whichever one we liked – and that would be the last thing to go on the song. It got kind of competitive between those guys, which was really fun. So both of them are equally sprinkled around the record. And then Waddy Wachtel, who’s just such a great slide player, is on a couple of tracks as well.”

How did the guitar come into your life?

“Well, my first Yamaha acoustic was awful. The first few guitars were awful. I remember Christmas being a funny time when I was 12 or 13 because I would get presents and say, ‘Oh my gosh, I really like this, thank you so much.’ But then, by January 2, I would be in a pawn shop, pawning those Christmas presents so I could trade in whatever guitar I had and slowly move up the ladder.

“I remember I had an S-type guitar, but it only had one pickup – the back pickup – so there was no real warmth to it at all. It just wasn’t a nice guitar. And then my first Gibson – which has actually made kind of a comeback, but it shouldn’t have – was a Gibson Sonex. You know, that’s what you got when you couldn’t afford a Les Paul or maybe an SG.”

“I began listening to country when I started professionally rodeoing... That was when I was first introduced to storytelling in the context of music”

What was the significance of Toronto’s Bloor Street to you as a young player?

“Well, Bloor Street and Yonge Street were the two main streets in Toronto, and where they intersect was the city centre, both economically and with regards to what was cool, with bars and clubs and stuff. Certainly, back in 1977, it was where it was at. When I look back on being a child, we left our houses at nine in the morning and we were allowed to go do whatever we did as long as we were home by six. So me and my friend Stephen Barker, we’d hop on the train, get down to Yonge and Bloor and walk down to Steve’s Music Store on Queen Street. We shot *Designated Survivor* in Toronto and I just got really nostalgic about being home for the first time for over a decade.

“So that title song wrote itself pretty quickly. It’s a song about getting to a later part in life and just realising that this place, this is where you’re from and I’ll love it until the very end, and it’s not perfect, but it’s mine.”

Coming up, were you more attracted to guitar heroes or songwriters – to Jimmy Page or Jackson Browne?

“Well, Jimmy Page can really play the guitar, and so can Jackson Browne but in an incredibly different way. Jimmy Page certainly was a guitar hero. Keith Richards was a guitar hero. Eddie Van Halen. Angus Young. Those were bands that when I was younger – 12, 13, 14 years old – I was listening to. But then, in my 20s, Jackson Browne’s *Running On Empty* was a big record for me. The songwriting stood out and he was such a great storyteller. You know, *Running On Empty* was a song he wrote after his wife killed herself. It’s one of the most heartbreaking records. Tracy Chapman’s first record, too. Again, her storytelling in her songwriting was incredibly moving.”

What are the most cherished guitars in your collection now?

“I have a 1939 or 1940 Martin single-O, which is a pretty rare guitar. It’s nice and small. The bus that I tour in is also the bus I use when I’m making a movie. So that guitar just fits really well on the bus and I use it to write a lot of songs. And then, traditionally, I’ve used a Hummingbird and a Dove, both beautiful guitars that I’ve toured with.

“But then, recently, I came across a British maker, Atkin Guitars. They make a D37 pre-war and it’s the best-sounding live acoustic I’ve ever played in my life. They never gave me one. They don’t pay me. I don’t work for them. But it’s just blown me away. I played an Americana festival in Nashville, with Rocco DeLuca on pedal steel and Marc Copely on guitar, and the rhythm parts I was playing on this Atkin just sounded the most even I’d ever heard. The blend between the low E and high E was just magical. Chords actually sound like a singular note as opposed to one thing being brighter and contrasting another. I just couldn’t get over this guitar. So that’s my new favourite. Almost everything I have is really old, so to say that about a new guitar, for me, means a lot.”

How about your electric collection?

“I have a ’67 Tele. I’ve got a ’70 Tele that I use a great deal on the road. I’ve also got a Tele with a Fender humbucker in the front, which was standard, and then in the back I have a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails. In a bar, or wherever we’re playing, I can get a really gritty tone out of that at a pretty low volume. That’s the guitar that I’ll play live on. Then there’s another guitar from Fano, and I have a white and a black SP6. Even when we opened up for Muse, I would use that guitar. We’d never played an arena show before, and when that guitar was stretched as high

PHOTO BY BETH ELIOTT PHOTOGRAPHY



Kiefer on stage with guitarists Austin Vallejo (right) and Michael Curley, whose spot is now filled by Doug Pettibone

Kiefer's Fano SP6 has a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails at the bridge, which held strong for his arena shows supporting Muse

"In the three years before the pandemic, we played 500 shows. I know a few bands that played as much, but none of them were making a TV series at the time"

and far as it would go, that pickup really held together because I had a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails in the back of that as well. And for most of the songs, I'm sitting on that back pickup."

Do you have favourite amps, too?

"For the longest time, a Canadian amp maker Wizard Amps were my favourites. I would tape up the logo because not a lot of people knew about them, and I could just get out such a great tone at low volume. And then, on the smaller amp side, there's a great amp maker in Los Angeles called Black Volt. I've got a 10-inch Custom Crazy Horse and a 12-inch – both single-cabinet – and they're just extraordinary amps, mimicking a great old Tweed, y'know, from the early 60s. I can get the tone I'm looking for out of that amp pretty early on in the volume and distortion stages as opposed to having to crank it up."

Have you found your tastes have changed as you've become a huge star?

"Well, I'm certainly not a huge star, but playing live as much as we have has changed it, yeah. In the three years before the pandemic, we played 500 shows and I was saying to someone else, 'Y'know, I do

know a few bands that played as much as we did, but none of them were making a television series at the time, and none of them had made three films as well."

"So any days off we had, we were playing live, and yeah, that can't help but change what you're looking for out of a guitar. The Hummingbird and Dove might end up actually being a better recording guitar because they are more dynamic. But the Atkin guitar and the even quality and the even distribution of tone is such that when you go to play live, it's not going to be overly bright. It's not gonna pierce through everything. It's gonna have a unique blending quality. So those are attributes of an acoustic guitar that I would never have thought of 10 years ago."

Do you find the guitar helps you turn off from the scrutiny of fame?

"Well, the scrutiny of fame, I couldn't give a shit about. But what it does help you with is releasing pressure. A lot of people I know ride motorcycles. You can't think about anything else – or you'll die. You can't think about all the other minutiae that might be bothering you or upsetting you or panicking you. So it's a form of meditation.

"In many ways, the guitar has been like a best friend. I've had it by my side for years and years. And it's the one thing that I go to when I want to get away."

"The same thing with a guitar. Even if you're just playing scales or picking patterns. Even if you're trying to get to a place where you can play unconsciously, it still requires an incredible amount of focus. And so, in that sense, when I was doing a show like 24, which was the most I'd ever worked – it lasted a decade and it was five days a week, 10 months a year, 14 hours a day – there were hours between setups sometimes, and the guitar was a great way of just tuning out, just focusing on one thing."

"Then there are the moments when you'd have a breakthrough and all of a sudden something worked and you'd say, 'Holy shit, I did that picking pattern.' So in many ways, the guitar for me has been like a best friend. I've had it with me for years and years by my side. And it's the one thing that I go to when I want to get away."

Do you think 24's Jack Bauer would have been a guitar player?

"Not at all. I think the closest Jack Bauer ever would have been to a guitar was smashing it over someone's head. He was not that guy."

You've played so many fantastic characters. But how important is it to show your true self as a musician?

"Well, I think that's the real difference, isn't it? I'm not Jack Bauer. I'm not David from *The Lost Boys*. I'm not President Kirkman. Those are characters. The real difference with songwriting for me is that there is no character. These are songs that are written by me, from me, about either my life or a perspective that I have on life. What's so exciting for me are the moments on tour when I've been able to say, 'This is why I wrote this song, and maybe you have a similar experience.' And those people in the audience that have, we get to realise that we have a little more in common than we thought when we walked in the door." 



PHOTO BY BETHELLOTT PHOTOGRAPHY



Bloor Street is released 21 January on Cooking Vinyl. Kiefer's UK & European tour runs from 28 January to 25 February www.kiefersutherland.net

Kiefer is set to be hitting stages across the UK and Europe this month and through February

“Jack Bauer would not have played. The closest he ever would have been to a guitar was smashing it over someone’s head. He was not that guy”



Art Class

Another new British guitar brand with an interesting backstory – Robson's guitars feature detailed art and craft. But are they different enough to stand out from the crowd? Let's take a look...

Words Dave Burriuck Photography Olly Curtis





ROBSON RENEGADE & PARADISE 73 £3,200 & £3,600

CONTACT **Robson Guitars** PHONE 07368 827321 WEB <https://robsonguitars.com>

What You Need To Know

1 Robson? Is that anything to do with posh machineheads?
Yes, Keith Robson has been making super tuners for many high-end (mainly acoustic) makers for many years. They are often engraved by Greg Goodwillie, who trained at James Purdey & Sons and is Keith's partner at Robson Guitars.

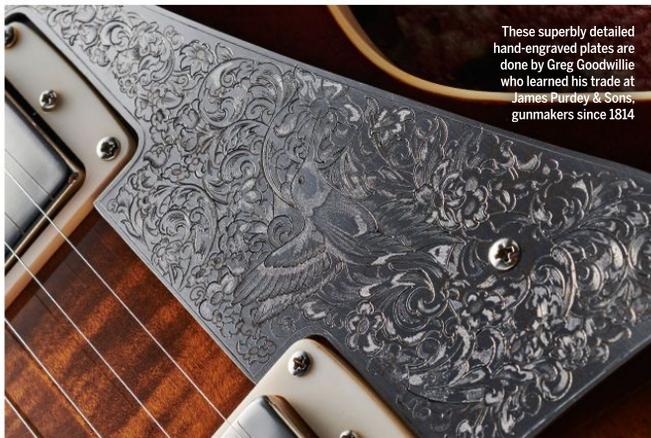
2 So, who's doing the woodwork?
As Keith explains in our review, that side of the project is undertaken by Marc Lamaq (and his team), whose workshop is close to Robson HQ in Sunderland.

3 They're not cheap...
No, but the initial range does start with the Trailblazer, a slab-front single-cut that kicks off at £1,800. Interestingly, the Trailblazer will be offered with a full metal front, engraved by Greg, that will really chase the Zemaitis vibe – though that will obviously cost a lot more. The range is certainly diverse, topped by a classic archtop, the £8k Dream 17, and with a more affordable electric, the Reiver, which starts at £2,800.

We can't quite remember there being such a vibrant time for our homegrown guitar-making industry. While the actual output in terms of numbers is miniscule compared with the big guns, the increasing choice is providing a serious option to those well-established custom shops, especially with many of them being severely back-ordered. Of course, many of the UK's more established makers are in the same boat; it seems that demand even at the high-end

of guitar craft is insatiable. And here's another option: Robson Guitars.

While the inspirations are obvious, Robson's take on a couple of classics combines a high level of craft, some very nice details and scope for options, too. Both review samples are effectively production prototypes, but the first thing you notice about our Renegade is its light weight thanks to the chambering on the striped sapele back, which appears to be one piece. It's immediately inviting.



These superbly detailed hand-engraved plates are done by Greg Goodwillie who learned his trade at James Purdey & Sons, gunmakers since 1814



These Robson Alnico V humbuckers capture a pretty classic PAF-alike style. They're wound in-house by Marc Lamaq

The top carve is very violin-like with superb dishing around the edges, and showy but not overdone figuring to the maple top. We measured overall depth at 54mm, 45mm at the rim, a little thinner than its inspiration, which no doubt helps with the weight. At 8.5mm around the edge, the top's single-ply edge binding is slightly deeper than a typical modern Les Paul, but ties in nicely with the proprietary pickup rings and those neat grained ivoroid control knobs – typical of the craft at Robson.

Of course, we also have Robson tuners here, with almost round grained ivoroid buttons and open backs showing off the classy metalwork (mainly stainless steel). And then there's the superbly detailed hand-engraving by Greg on the pickguard, the truss-rod cover and the rear electronics cavity cover. These plates are also stainless steel and not aluminium or mild steel.

Greg's work recalls the style of Tony Zemaitis, whose metalwork was often engraved by Danny O'Brien – and the artistry here is really well done, quite beautiful. It adds a touch of opulence to the Renegade that's continued with those classy Art Deco-style mother-of-pearl fingerboard inlays on the dense black ebony fingerboard, which has ebony binding and a white coach-line stripe by the bound edges.

Pickups and controls follow the recipe closely, but the two-piece bridge you might expect is replaced here with a Schaller

Greg's metalwork is quite beautiful. It adds opulence that's continued with classy Art Deco-style mother-of-pearl fingerboard inlays

Signum wrapover that's fully adjustable for intonation and is locked in place by two nuts that sit under the bridge on each threaded post. That aspect is a little tricky to adjust, but it's nicely engineered and really seems to enhance the lively, vibrant acoustic response.

The Paradise 73 might retain the outline of an ES-335, but all the woods are solid – the maple top has a subtle, delicate flame and a very light-coloured, lightly 'burst' top colour. The sapele back, again very striped, is heavily chambered, leaving a hollowed centre block that extends just past the bridge. It results in a guitar that's a little heavier than the Renegade but not really overweight – we've played and tested ES-335-style thinlines that are a similar weight and heavier.

There's only one f-hole on the bass side, and the combination of the bridge and (rather generic-looking) trapeze tailpiece, not to mention just two controls rather than four, creates a different look to its inspiration. Again, the truss rod cover and the almost teardrop-shaped pickguard are engraved by Greg, although here the rear cavity cover is sapele, not engraved metal.

THE RIVALS

There's huge competition for high-end single-cuts both above and below the Renegade in price. The UK has plenty to offer with more production-style models from the likes of Gordon Smith with its Graduate, which has a long list of order options and, in similar style, would cost just under £2k.

At the other end of the market, there's Patrick James Eggle's carved-top Macon Single Cut (from £4,400), and Cream T has just entered the market with a range of chambered guitars co-designed by Billy Gibbons. The maple-topped Aurora Custom MP2PS (£2,999) includes pickup swapping.

Solid-wood thinlines are less common over the more classic laminate style. Gibson's Custom Shop reissues kick off around £4.5k, for example, while USA Production versions street from around £2.5k. Knaggs Guitars in the US offers the single-cut solid-wood hollowbody Chena, from \$5,925, and PRS's McCarty 594 Hollowbody II starts around £4.5k. Zemaitis-style guitars are still made, but currently have no outlets in the UK.



1



2



3

1. More superb craft from Greg Goodwillie on the Paradise 73's scratchplate, but can you spot the Union Jack? It's a motif he often details in his designs

2. This bridge is well used, not least by Taylor on its original T3 models. It features roller saddles and once intonation is set it locks in place

3. Slightly different to the tuners on the Renegade, these are more modern in style with screw bushings. They're machined mainly from stainless steel

4. Like the pickup rings, these control knobs are fabricated in-house by Robson, turned down from 15mm faux ivory rods. They're typical of the detail we see throughout the guitars

The bridge is the same that Taylor uses on its T3 guitars, with lockdown roller saddles and grub screws in front and behind the posts that lock everything in place. Rather like that Schaller, it's a little involved to set up, but once done there are no rattles or vibration loss. The slightly different Robson tuners are a work of art here with keystone buttons and modern screw bushings, and a single screw attachment on the back. Conversely, both guitars use rather generic chromed-metal 'football' jack plates, but these will be replaced on the production models with engraved plates.

Feel & Sounds

The body size obviously has a major impact on the different feels of these two instruments, yet the one-piece necks, which both have small volutes under the truss rod access cavities, feel pretty similar – and this is reflected in their dimensions.

The Renegade's slightly flat-backed and full-shouldered version of a relaxed C measures 21.1mm at the 1st fret, 22.3mm by the 12th; the Paradise 73 is virtually identical in feel and size. However, while both have generous nut widths of 43.8mm (Renegade) and 44.8mm (Paradise), the string spacing on the Renegade is a little more cramped at 34.5mm, as opposed to the 37mm spread

of the Paradise, while the bridge spacing is the opposite: very slightly narrower on the Paradise. Devilishly small details, but – like the setup – they do affect the playability.

Both fingerboard radiuses are slightly more cambered at 254mm (10 inches) than the saddle radius (305mm/12 inches), but the setups feel good, though we did just tweak the relief on both and the string height on the bass side of the Paradise to give it a little more air. There's a little rounding to the heels on both, which adds comfort, a hint of modernism that continues with the dual-action truss rod and decent-sized frets – measuring approximately 2.38mm wide by 1.25mm high.

From its acoustic response, which is very 'new guitar' and lively, the Renegade comes across as slightly mid-scooped plugged in, and we sense that is as much about its chambering as it is the pickup voicing. Compared with our Burstbucker-equipped Les Paul Classic, it sounds a little more polite with less LP grind to the voice,

The tuners are a work of art with keystone buttons and modern screw bushings



4

PARADISE CITY

We catch up with Keith Robson to discuss the finer details of these new guitars and, of course, Sunderland FC!

When we refer to Robson guitars being a new venture, that's not entirely correct, as back in issue 431, nearly four years ago, we featured two sumptuous builds that were among the most expensive, non-vintage instruments we've ever featured in *Guitarist* magazine. These were the Robson Edna-May (right) and Nellie-May, which cost £25,000 and £30,000 respectively.

"The brief was to build some of the finest engraved guitars ever seen," said Keith Robson at the time, "each constructed to the highest possible quality throughout, with a precision



"The engraved plates are stainless steel and it's blooming hard! Greg kicked up a fuss about that. . ."

engineer's attention to detail and aesthetics." The guitars were hand-engraved primarily by Keith's partner-in-craft, Greg Goodwillie, who spent 13 years as a master engraver at gun and rifle maker James Purdey & Sons.

His idea to produce his own hand-engraved guitars first came from previously working at the same workshop as Danny O'Brien, engraver of the original Tony Zemaitis guitars. "Edna-May was built in the Purdey factory by two of Greg's work colleagues, Phil Butcher and James Bryan," explained Keith. "The engraving was done by Greg and two fellow master engravers Paul Chung and John Dowell in their break times." The Nellie-May, meanwhile, was made by Brit luthier legend, Dave King.

"We always had plans to do more of those guitars," says Keith today. "We did sell them, but it's been a busy time. We were making a lot of tuners, a lot of work with George Lowden, for example. But three years ago we hooked up with Marc Lamaq who we're collaborating with on these new guitars. He's a very clever fella with a lot of experience in guitars, especially large production.

"I was making some tuners for him and he was just setting up his workshop here in the North East. That's how we started talking about collaborating and doing our own line of guitars, using our experience of the metal parts and

hardware, along with Marc's knowledge of the woodworking. Obviously, the pandemic put us back, but we've got a real firm relationship now where we are moving forward in terms of the production of our own line of guitars. Really, for the past three years, that's what we've been concentrating on – the guitars. We're still making tuners for certain clients, but our energy has been on the guitars."

Marc Lamaq's workshop is based close to Peterlee in County Durham, as Keith explains: "It's literally about 10 minutes from our workshop here in Sunderland. Currently, while we have plans for expansion next year, we have the capacity to make around 15 guitars a month. This is a new thing for us and, as I said, it's taken a little longer to get there than we'd have liked. But up to now we've probably made around 25 instruments."

But what of those sumptuous tuners that found their way onto many high-end acoustic and electric guitars? "Actually, making the tuners has kept the food on the table while we've been working on the guitars," admits Keith. "But to be honest, I think I've served my time on that one."

That said, the tuners on both our review guitars are quite something. "They're stainless steel," says Keith, "but I've tried to get that whole 'old silver' kind of look. They even use stainless-steel gears – I don't know if anyone's done that before. The worm gear is mild steel because it's got to be a different metal. Everything else is stainless steel and that includes the cog screw, the bushes, the string posts – and, of course, the metal isn't going to tarnish."

The gear ratio is 18:1 on both sets, although Keith doesn't dwell on those sorts of details.

"You know what? They get your guitar smoothly to pitch, ready to play. That's the important bit."

A considerable part of the appeal of the new Robson range remains the hand-engraving. Although here, instead of using softer metals such as aluminium, brass or mild steel, the engraved plates are stainless steel. "Yes, those engraved plates are stainless steel and it's blooming hard! Greg kicked up a bit of a fuss about that to be fair," comments Keith. "We did trial mild steel and aluminium, but it didn't have the same effect. For pickguards and scratchplates, the mild steel is always going to have corrosion issues. So, basically, Greg just had to get sharper, harder tools and these plates do take slightly more time to engrave than aluminium or mild steel." And to reflect the home-spun production, says Keith, "Greg always tries to fit in a little Union Jack somewhere on most of the larger plates – you can probably spot those if you look closely."

Adding to the bespoke nature of the instruments, things such as the pickup mounting rings and those lovely control knobs, not to mention the Art Deco fingerboard inlays, are also made in-house. "Yes, the fingerboard inlays are genuine mother-of-pearl and they're CNC'd," clarifies Keith, "and we do the control knobs, too – it's a 15mm diameter ivory rod that we've turned them down from. It's a polymer, it's not real ivory, but it's a very nicely figured faux-ivory material."

Before we finish our conversation, we can't help but ask about the origin of the Paradise 73 name, although remembering Keith's other passion, Sunderland FC, we should have twigged: "Sunderland won the FA Cup in 1973 and in that year the city of Sunderland was in paradise – it's my homage to that." [DB]

UNDER THE HOOD

What's inside these artfully crafted guitars?

Both control cavities are shielded with copper foil and use modern wiring, albeit with old-school cloth-covered hook-up wire for the most part. The pots inside the Renegade are Alpha 500kohms types, but there's no ID on Paradise 73's pots. Both use boutique-style NOS Russian paper-in-oil tone caps: the Renegade uses a grey K40Y-9 .015 microfarads type on each tone control; the single cap in the Paradise is larger in size and dark salmon in colour – a K40N-2a valued at .033 microfarads.

The pickups on both models are made in-house by Marc Lamaq. There are no IDs to be seen on the nickel-silver bases, and the Renegade's Alnico V humbuckers have a measured DCR of 12.02kohms at the bridge and 11.82k at the neck, suggesting smaller gauge wire is used as both sound pretty classic, not hot, in terms of output. Meanwhile, the Paradise model's humbucking-sized P-90-style single coils measure a more regular 9.1k at the bridge and 8k at the neck.



Inside the Renegade we find Alpha pots and Russian PIO tone caps

a little brighter and nodding towards a Deluxe's mini-humbuckers. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, and there's a good quality to the sound that can easily be bundled into the PAF ballpark. That said, a little more clarity to the neck wouldn't go amiss and a touch more grind on the bridge, either. On its own, however, it has plenty of merit, not least as an engaging player. It's a pretty cool piece.

The Paradise 73 actually sounds a little bigger, too, and somewhat magnified. That slightly crisper single-coil edge, and what we hear as a wider voice with a little more depth, suits cleaner amp tones on the one hand – especially jazzier styles where the depth and clarity on the neck pickup alone sounds very good, though not overdone. There's some honky bite at the bridge, too, as we introduce a little bluesier amp crunch and some pretty big rooty rhythm voices. Stylistically, it might have the edge on the Renegade, and, in our tests, seemed to suit cleaner voicings from jazz to jangle and quite a bit more. It's extremely pedalboard-friendly, too.

Verdict

As we've described, both guitars here are effectively production prototypes: they're perfectly fine pieces with a few details (such as those output jack sockets and the headstock outline) that will have changed by the time you read this. But there's more than enough to illustrate the intent as the Robson team chases down those final tweaks, and it's abundantly clear that these guys mean business.





The Renegade's artful dress doesn't overshadow its exceptional feel

The Renegade feels exceptional. Its artful dress doesn't overshadow the sort of single-cut that's hard to pigeonhole: it's about as far from a lumpen boat-anchor as you can get and actually reminds us just how good this dish can taste. Put another way, we've played single-cuts twice this price that simply don't offer the depth, resonance and the dynamics that we hear here. Its more Deluxe-like voicing gives it a valid place in any collection. The Paradise 73 isn't far behind, if at all – a connoisseur's thinline that almost reaches back into jazz-age archtop heritage, but, like any good example of the style, can move effortlessly from smooth to searing.

If you're into the craft of the luthier, you can add Robson to your list. We look forward to hearing more. **E**

5. Keith Robson's world-class tuners are made in Sunderland to exacting standards. These look like old silver but are mainly stainless steel. As of mid-November 2021, the headstock shape changed to a more Art Deco and original style

6. Instead of a more usual bridge and tailpiece, the Renegade uses Schaller's Signum adjustable wrapover bridge. A superb piece of engineering

7. The Renegade's rear cavity cover features more awe-inspiring metalwork, while the Paradise 73 simply has a sapele cover



ROBSON RENEGADE

PRICE: £3,200 (inc case)
ORIGIN: UK
TYPE: Single-cutaway, chambered body hardtail electric
BODY: Chambered striped sapele with figured maple top
NECK: Quarter-sawn mahogany, glued-in
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, custom inlays, 254mm (10") radius
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: Schaller Signum adjustable wrapover bridge, Robson open-gear stainless-steel tuners with antique faux-ivory buttons, Schaller strap locks
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm
ELECTRICS: 2x Robson covered Alnico V humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.74/8.14
OPTIONS: Call for details and prices
RANGE OPTIONS: The other single-cut in the range is the Trailblazer (from £1,800) and will be available with fully engraved metal front circa £6,000
LEFT-HANDERS: Not currently
FINISHES: Burnt Toffee (as reviewed), more colours on request – gloss nitrocellulose to both body and neck

8/10

PROS Smart build; chambered lightweight design; superb hardware and engraving; a good-playing and sounding single-cut

CONS Minor details still need to be addressed; the base design is hugely derivative



ROBSON PARADISE 73

PRICE: £3,600 (inc case)
ORIGIN: UK
TYPE: Double-cutaway, heavily chambered solid wood thinline
BODY: Chambered striped sapele with European figured maple top
NECK: Quarter-sawn mahogany, glued-in
SCALE LENGTH: 628mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/44.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, custom inlays, 254mm (10") radius
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: Roller saddle bridge, trapeze tailpiece, Robson open-gear stainless-steel tuners with antique faux-ivory keystone buttons, Schaller strap locks
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50.5mm
ELECTRICS: 2x Robson covered humbucking-sized P-90s, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual pickup volume and tone controls
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4.04/8.9
OPTIONS: Call for details and prices
RANGE OPTIONS: The Dream 17 (£8,000) is the only archtop in the current range. Another double-cut, the solidbody Reiver, starts at £2,800
LEFT-HANDERS: Not currently
FINISHES: Amber Fade (as reviewed), more colours on request – gloss nitrocellulose to both body and neck

8/10

PROS Like the Renegade model, the build is good and it has the playability and sounds to match; a very versatile piece, too

CONS Also like the Renegade, minor details still need to be addressed; again, the outline design is derivative

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TriceraChorus

Eventide presents a triple threat of lush Tri-Stereo style sounds

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

Now roaming the Earth is the latest in Eventide's dot9 series pedal range: the TriceraChorus. Maybe there's a hint of irony in the name and dinosaur logo as some may consider chorus an extinct effect that had its time back in the 80s... but if anyone can drag it into modern times, Eventide is the company to do so.

The TriceraChorus pedal takes its inspiration from chorus effects of the 1970s and early 80s but particularly the rackmounted Dytronic CS-5 Tri-Stereo Chorus, which was the workhorse of LA studio musicians such as Steve Lukather and Michael Landau. This vintage unit featured three simultaneous bucket brigade delay lines (Left, Center and Right) to create rich and lush chorusing, and the TriceraChorus takes this approach as well

with its three independent chorus voices. Besides these, though, the pedal also features Eventide's MicroPitch detuning and a Swirl footswitch, which brings phasing into the mix.

The TriceraChorus can take a mono or stereo input and has a stereo output for the full spatial effect, although it can still function perfectly effectively with a mono output. There are five instantly available presets you can call up with its footswitches (denoted by the five-LED preset ladder), but you have access to 127 presets if you use MIDI or connect the pedal up to a computer running the Eventide Device Manager (EDM) software, an easy-to-use graphic editor and librarian for preset storage. An array of six front-panel knobs adjusts a dozen parameters: six primary and six secondary.

SOUNDS

Three knobs in a row in the centre of the pedal adjust the modulation depth of the Left, Center and Right voices, but before going there a Mix knob lets you choose the type of chorusing you're going to get. To its left is the Chorus effect, and from fully anti-clockwise you can add in the effect from a fully dry position. This is based on the sort of sound you'd get from vintage chorus pedals; we found a classic Boss CE sound between 10 and 11 o'clock. You reach 100 per cent wet at the central position of the knob and, hence, the pedal's Vibrato sound. Clockwise from there you get all of the wet/dry variations of the Chorus effect, which is the pedal's emulation of the more complex chorusing of the rackmount units. A separate knob controls the overall modulation rate, although that

01. BUTTON/LED

This button toggles between the primary and secondary functions for the six knobs – if it's lit, you're accessing the secondary functions

02. PRESET LED LADDER

Each LED represents one of the five onboard presets – the lower two light up together if you're using a preset beyond number 5 in the list

03. ACTIVE BUTTON LED

Not only does this light up when the pedal is active, but you can push it to toggle the footswitch action between latching and momentary

04. SWIRL FOOTSWITCH & LED

You can toggle between Preset Select and Swirl modes by pressing and holding. The red LED indicating Swirl mode turns green when the effect is active



05. LEFT/CENTER/RIGHT KNOBS

These set the modulation depth for each of the three (Left, Center and Right) chorus voices

06. DETUNE KNOB

This sets the amount of stereo Detune. Its secondary parameter sets the Detune pitch with up to -40/+40 cents available

07. EVENTIDE DEVICE MANAGER

Save and edit presets with the EDM software, which offers access to all parameters of the pedal for editing on your computer



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Chorus pedal

FEATURES: Multiple Bypass options (Buffered, Relay, DSP+FX or Kill dry), latching or momentary footswitch action, 5 onboard presets, 127 total presets, software editing

CONTROLS: Mix/Mix Env, Rate/Rate Env, Detune/Pitch, Left/Delay, Center/Filter, Right/Output Level, Shift button, footswitch latching/momentary button, preset save button, Mono/Stereo switch, Guitar/Line level switch, Active footswitch, Swirl footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard outputs 1 & 2, EXP, USB

POWER: Supplied 9V DC adaptor 200mA

DIMENSIONS: 100 (w) x 115 (d) x 58mm (h)

Guitarist CHOICE

9/10

can also be controlled by an external tap switch or MIDI Clock.

The last of the main parameters on the front panel is Detune, which adds increasing amounts of the stereo MicroPitch detuning (detuning pitch is the secondary parameter of the same knob). MicroPitch is actually independent of the Chorus/Chorale Mix so can be used as an effect in its own right if your Mix is set to dry sound. It's a valuable asset, whether just used for subtle thickening or sweetening, or as a component in dialling in realistic rotary speaker effects.

There's further tweaking in the secondary set of parameters, with delay of up to 200ms to add ambience, very effective low- and high-cut tone control via the Filter parameter, plus envelope adjustment of Mix and/or Rate via playing

dynamics to create some interesting effects such as the rate rising as a chord dies out.

There are so many sonic variations here that it's easy to lose track, but exploring the 65 factory presets in the EDM provides a masterclass in how the parameters work together. This is a truly classy-sounding pedal with all fully adjustable shades of chorus plus vibrato, flanger and rotary stylings. With a real sense of dimension and movement, it offers a lovely wash of enriched sound with as much warble and pulse as you need. That's even before bringing in the Swirl effect, which adds its phasey layer over proceedings – a soft haziness that can transform the sound so it's like a second effect.

For performance, you can set the main footswitch to be latching or momentary, and an expression pedal can be assigned to

adjust multiple parameters. Alternatively, you can use the EXP input for footswitches for tap tempo or preset changes.

VERDICT

No simple two-knob chorus pedal (although one of those is still a prime contender if basic chorus is all you need), Eventide's TriceraChorus is a pedal that can serve up those basics but go way, way beyond them. It delivers quite possibly the most comprehensive array of deep and dreamy modulation effects we've seen in a single relatively compact pedal. **A**

PROS Variety of modulation effects; mono or stereo; computer-based editor; expression pedal input; switchable Swirl effect

CONS Moving between primary and secondary parameters takes getting used to

ROUND-UP

Neo Micro Vent pedals

Rotary speaker simulation in two distinct flavours

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

Neo has established itself as a go-to brand when it comes to rotary speaker emulation pedals, with the likes of its Ventilator II and Mini Vent II models. And now the company has come up with something a little more pedalboard-friendly with this pair of micro-sized Vent pedals, both of which

are said to feature equally as powerful DSPs as the larger models. One pedal is based on the sound of the Leslie 122, while the other emulates a Fender Vibratone – and both have identical facilities, including a single footswitch that is capable of the traditional speed-switching as well as bypass functions.



NEO INSTRUMENTS

Micro Vent 122 £269

This pedal's algorithm is designed to emulate the sound of the classic large-cabinet Leslie 122 with separate rotary horn and drum, as captured by a pair of microphones. A Distance knob sets the distance of those virtual mics, with the actual rotation being more apparent as they move outwards, deepening the tremolo aspect of the sound and adding top-end stridency.

Overall, the sound here is an authentic (albeit mono) representation of a full rotary speaker with all of that rich complexity, and realistic speed change is flexibly implemented. The Speed knob, with a range from slow to fast, sets the primary speed, while a three-way toggle switch sets the second speed (a fixed Slow, Fast or Stop). Consequently, you can have a whole range of options (slow to fast, slow to stop, and so on), the transition time being set by a Ramp knob that offers a practical range of acceleration/deceleration. What's more, the footswitch has various user-set modes so the switching can be momentary or latching. For subtle shading rather than the full-on effect, a Blend knob lets you mix dry and rotary sound in proportion. **G**

VERDICT Full-range Leslie sound for a mono signal chain with its essential facilities in a small footprint



NEO INSTRUMENTS

Micro Vent 16 £269

While Leslie speakers (with their built-in amps) were originally designed to partner organs, guitarists could more easily access the effect once the Leslie company obliged with cabinets that could be driven from a guitar amp. The Leslie 16 and its derivative the Fender Vibratone, produced from the late 60s until the early 70s, eschewed the rotating high-frequency horn for a single rotating drum that spatially distributed the sound from a 10-inch speaker. The Micro Vent 16 is designed to reproduce that sound as captured by a single microphone.

The 16 model has a less complex sound than the 122, not as rich and a little mellower, but it has a quality that sits particularly well with guitar sound to our ears. Now, certain guitarists, such as David Gilmour, like a composite sound that features a rotary speaker alongside conventional cabs, and the Blend control on both these pedals will give you that. Arguably, however, it's this one that emulates the sort of onstage setup that a gigging guitarist would be more likely to use – a conventional combo or cab alongside an easily portable Vibratone. **G**

VERDICT If you prefer that Vibratone sound to a full-range rotary, this is a great way to add it to your pedalboard

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Rotary speaker pedal

FEATURES: Selectable true or buffered bypass, two selectable speeds, momentary and latched switching, output level attenuation (0 to -3dB), Leslie 122 emulation

CONTROLS: Speed, Distance, Ramp, Blend, Speed switch (Fast/Slow/Stop), Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 180mA

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 113 (d) x 47mm (h)

8/10

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: Germany

TYPE: Rotary speaker pedal

FEATURES: Selectable true or buffered bypass, two selectable speeds, momentary and latched switching, output level attenuation (0 to -3dB), Fender Vibratone emulation

CONTROLS: Speed, Distance, Ramp, Blend, Speed switch (Fast/Slow/Stop), Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 180mA

DIMENSIONS: 65 (w) x 113 (d) x 47mm (h)

8/10



ROUND-UP

Walrus Audio pedals

A duo of high-gain distortions with a twist

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis

Recently introduced by Walrus Audio, these two new US-made distortion pedals are no one-trick ponies, as each provides varying flavours of distortion via clipping from silicon diodes, LEDs or both together. However, each takes a different route to dialling it in. The Eras features a five-way

rotary switch to select LED and silicon-based modes, while the Iron Horse has a rotary knob that morphs from silicon to LED, for a continuous range of blends between the two extremes.

These handmade pedals are nicely put together and run from a standard nine-volt power supply.



WALRUS AUDIO

Eras Five-State Distortion £179

The Eras features the same form-factor as the Ages overdrive pedal we reviewed in issue 462. You choose one of the five hard-clipping options and then, besides the expected Gain and Volume knobs, there are very effective tone controls, the Treble knob being especially adept in dialling in some especially cutting presence.

There's a great variety of dirt on offer from crunchy drive to high-gain metal tones. All the clipping modes have something different to offer, the main delineation being between the three Tight modes and the two Rhythm modes, where the scooped mids offer a notably different sonic landscape to the Tight modes' slight mid-cut.

Overall, there's plenty here that's ideal for chuggy rhythms and sustain-y leads. The silicon options sound a little smoother with more compression than the LED, but there's also the cool complexity of the best-of-both-worlds Tight dual mode where both silicon and LED are in play. The cherry on the top is the Blend knob, which allows you to mix your dry sound with the distortion for hybrid layered sounds or, more subtly, extra clarity and definition as you roll it back from fully wet. **G**

VERDICT Versatility! If you want a distortion pedal with plenty of different flavours, this is the way to go



WALRUS AUDIO

Iron Horse LM308 Distortion £179

This third iteration of the Iron Horse has had quite a revamp over its predecessors. There's now more pedalboard-friendly positioning of the socketry and a soft-relay true bypass on/off. The main difference, though, is that where there was a three-way toggle switch you now get continuous morphing from silicon diode to LED clipping.

The pedal offers distortion based around a LM308 chip as found in a Pro Co RAT, and the sonic similarities are immediately apparent; the Tone knob even has that same huge range rolling back from fully bright to dark and woofy.

The gain range is very versatile, taking you from a tonally targeted clean boost right through to full-on distortion. Coordinated adjustment of the Level knob is needed when setting the Si/LED blend – the LED end of things is louder and looser compared with the silicon, which is quieter with more compression and capable of thick saturation that can take off nicely into harmonics. So you have quite different playing experiences at the two extremes, but it's in the space between – with a blend of both elements – that you may just find the sweet spot that contributes perfectly to your desired tone. **G**

VERDICT Classic distortion with optimal dialled-in variation – there's plenty to like here

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, Blend, Gain, Bass, Treble, Mode switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 125 (d) x 57mm (h)



9/10

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Distortion pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Level, Tone, Distortion, Si/LED, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 67 (w) x 125 (d) x 57mm (h)



9/10





Perfect Preamp Placements

Stefan Fast of YouTube channel ThePedalZone explains how preamp pedals can add finesse to your tone



The term preamp is being slammed on a lot of pedals these days – and it can be a bit confusing because what actually defines a preamp pedal? To understand this, let's look at how an actual amplifier works. Your amp consists of a preamp stage and a power amp stage. The preamp stage takes the super-low output that comes from your guitar cable and introduces it to voltage gain and EQ. This voltage gain pumps up the signal to line level, so the power amp can work with it and actually move the coil of your amp's speaker, which enables you to make loud beautiful music.

So, a preamp delivers a bunch of the good stuff that shapes the tone and dynamics of your sound. To add to the complexity, a lot of 'preamp'-labelled pedals aren't true preamps; they don't pump up your output to line level. Most of these pedals are often boosters, drives and distortions with

the dynamic headroom, EQ options and/or gain characteristics of an actual amplifier, designed to work in front of an amp. I know it's confusing, but it's that latter pedal category we'll be working with today as that's something most guitarists have.

Now, let's look at some useful ways to implement your favourite preamp pedals in what is my final Tonal Teamwork column for now.

END-OF-CHAIN COLOUR

It's common to just place a preamp pedal early on in your chain, like you would a normal overdrive pedal. But a lot of preamp pedals actually work exceptionally well at the end of a signal chain, especially if you play through a pretty neutral-sounding clean amp. If you set the preamp pedal's gain fairly low, you can impart a different type of amp-like compression and break-up crunch to your entire signal chain. You can leave it 'always on' and let it

become a part of your new signature core tone, or turn it on when you need a second sonic colour to paint with.

Due to the high headroom and natural compression of preamp pedals, they will not kill the dynamics of the rest of your pedal chain. Instead, they will often glue your sound together in a nice organic way.

Preamp pedals actually tend to come alive when you feed other drives into them, while the EQ section on a preamp pedal can be great for carving out clarity when using a lot of washy delay and reverb before it.

"A lot of preamp pedals work well at the end of a signal chain, especially if you play through a neutral-sounding amp"

1. Some tone-shapers to seek out: Jackson Audio Prism, Keeley Filaments, Old Blood Noise Endeavors Fault and Rev G2

2. Put a preamp pedal at the end of your signal chain and combine it with a clean amp for an organic 'glueing together' of your sound

3. Experiment by combining a number of preamp pedals with a cabinet simulator. This setup works well with time-based effects

4. By using your amp's effects loop, you can bypass its in-built preamp and use your pedal preamp instead – with surprising results



CAB-SIM ENHANCER

It's more popular than ever to play an amp-less rig these days due to the extreme convenience, flexibility and consistency that comes with it. Hence the gear world has seen a massive surge in cabinet simulator pedals that simulate the sound and response of a mic'd guitar cabinet and power amp. This is a pretty neutral starting point, and simply playing your guitar directly into a cabinet simulator will often sound pretty anaemic and lacklustre since you're lacking the colour and organic sag from the preamp section.

By having several preamp pedals, you can create a multi-channel setup with a clean and dirty channel. This type of setup also gives you a lot of room to experiment with time-based and modulation effects. If you place them before your preamp pedals, you will get the effect of running your pedals directly into an amp. If you place them in-between the preamp and cab sim,

you will get the effect of using an amp's effects loop. And if you place them after the cab sim, you will get the sound of applying effects in post, like you would when using effects plug-ins in a DAW.

EFFECTS LOOP HACK

The effects loop on an amplifier was originally designed to let you place other effects in between the preamp and power amp section in your amplifier – allowing you to get clear and defined modulation, delay and reverb trails, while using your amp's in-built distortion. But, of course, you already know this, so that's not what I'm here to teach you! Instead, what I'm here to share is if your amplifier has an effects loop then you have the freedom to bypass the in-built preamp and replace it with a pedal preamp for a totally new core tone from your amp.

The effects loop Send is connected to the output of the amplifier's preamp,

while the Return is connected to the power amp's input. So take your preamp pedal of choice then connect your guitar to the pedal's input, and the pedal's output to the effects loop Return. Now you're playing through the pedal directly into the power amp. The effect of this is often surprising to a lot of players and can breathe new life into preamp pedals that only sounded okay in front of your pedal.

You'll often notice that your pedal will suddenly sound bolder and with more midrange focus because it's no longer being affected by the tone sculpting of the amp's preamp section. This trick can be very handy when recording, so give it a try. Stacking similar takes with different core tones can really make a rhythm part or solo come to life.

I truly hope you learned a couple of new ideas on how to use preamp pedals. They can really add the final sonic touch in today's modern rigs. **■**



« BLUEPRINT »

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Three years ago there was bankruptcy and a complete changing of the guard at the top at Gibson. Since then, under new leadership, the giant Nashville guitar maker has – with a few missteps here and there – reconnected with its mojo. We met up with brand president, Cesar Gueikian, to find out where guitar design is going next at Gibson

Words Jamie Dickson

This feature normally focuses on the design process behind a noteworthy new product, but this month we've cast the net wider, to discover what one of the world's largest guitar brands – with a 128-year history – is planning next.

While under previous management, Gibson tried to introduce novel features such as robo-tuners and brass nuts to its 2015 guitar range, something that gave the company a bloody nose in the court of public opinion. Chapter 11 bankruptcy followed, toppling CEO Henry Juszkiewicz from his throne at the head of the company after 32 years. Since then, under the leadership of JC Curleigh, the company has focused on the fundamentals of what turned people on to Gibsons in the first place. And a heavily revised and simplified product line-up saw classic mojo given pride of place. The Les Paul Standard '50s, for example, delivered the vibey, heritage-rooted experience that a lot of people wanted from the company.

Innovation wasn't abandoned, but it became more low-key and cool in the form of the company's Gibson USA Modern series guitars. While an ill-thought-through decision to drive a JCB over rejected surplus examples of the reviled Firebird X had bad optics, the public got the point. Gibson and

its guitars were in a new era. But with the ship of Gibson seemingly steadied on a promising course, questions remain about the future of guitar design at the company. What does innovation mean for Gibson now? Will we see entirely new models or just cautious reworkings of classics? What will the recently established Murphy Lab be developing next in terms of authentically aged guitars? And, following the launch of Gibson's affordably priced Generation acoustic guitars, will we see more instruments inspired by lost blueprints from the 50s and 60s come to light in the near future?

To answer these questions and more, we caught up with brand president, Cesar Gueikian, to get the skinny on what's new in Nashville.

The Generation acoustics with the additional soundhole, or 'Player Port', have just hit the market. What kind of player are you trying to appeal to with them?

"Those were really built over a two-year period, working in the Gibson Lab. [The aim was] to give a more accessible entry into a Gibson acoustic, with features that would appeal primarily to young generations of players, hence the collection title. Also, at the same time, we

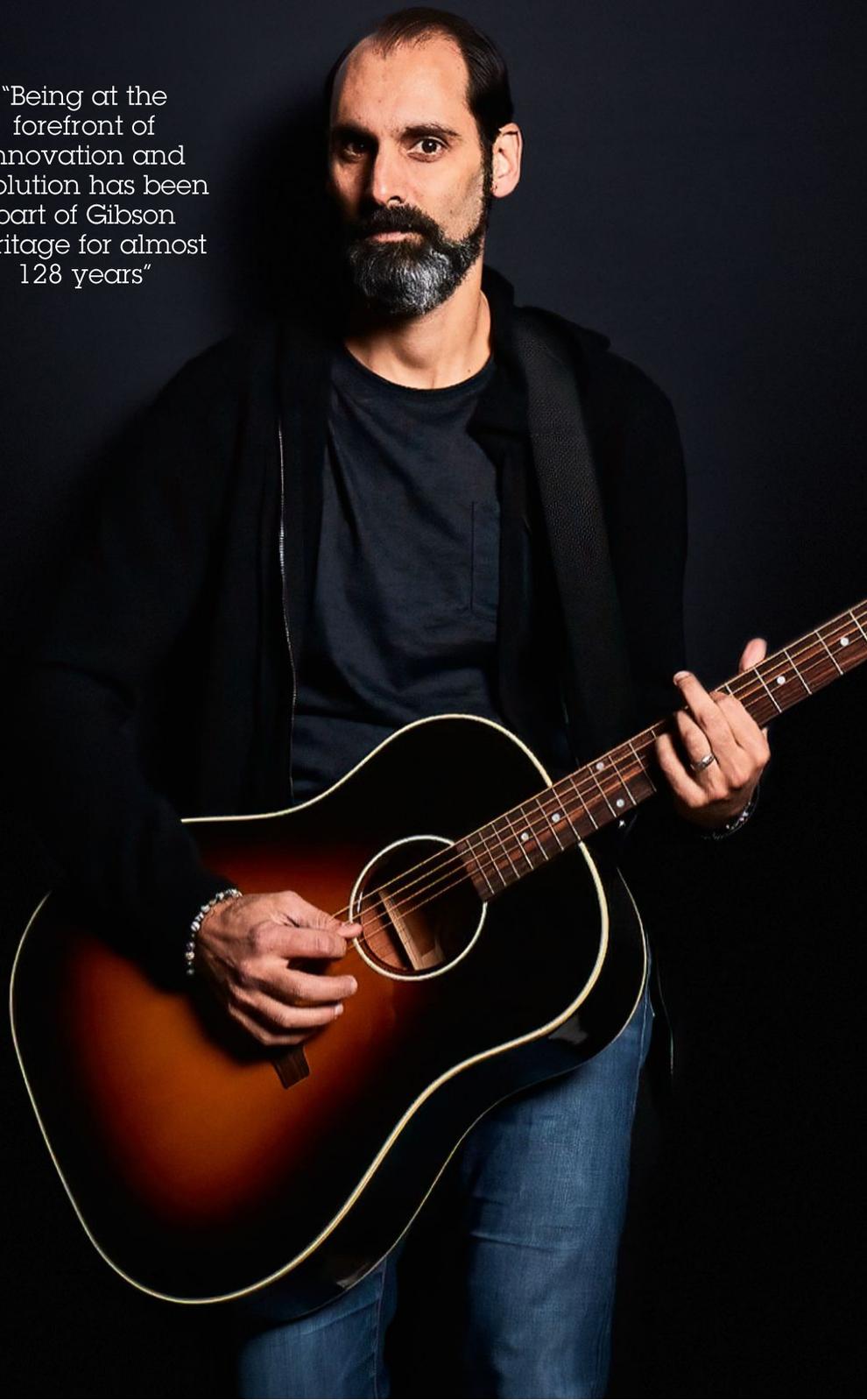
wanted to provide something different for [established] players who might already have a couple of guitars.

"Bringing the Player Port onto the guitar, having slim necks that are easy to play, great tonewoods, plus have the guitar made in the USA by the same hands that make all our Gibson acoustics, gave us that ability to appeal to young generations of players, at an accessible price point. And also make it an interesting alternative, a new sonic experience, for more experienced players."

The idea for the Generation acoustics was inspired by an unused design from the 1960s. Tell us more about that.

"We borrowed [the Player Port concept] from a 1964 blueprint that we had in our archives. That blueprint was of a J-45 that was originally titled the 'J-45 Modern'. It had a sound port on the edge of the guitar but on the bottom bout. We built that guitar, exactly as it was on the blueprint, first – just to put ourselves in the mindset of the Gibson team, back in the golden era, when they thought of the concept. It had a floating bridge and it had that soundhole on the upper edge of the guitar, but it was where your arm normally rests, or where your body is clapping the guitar..."

"Being at the
forefront of
innovation and
evolution has been
part of Gibson
heritage for almost
128 years"





The Generation acoustic range, complete with its 'Player Ports', has been developed to attract younger players

So you moved the Player Port to the upper bout then used existing body shapes as the basis for the current Generation range. What was the goal in doing that?

"The intention was you could 'hear more of you'. And you really can. If you A/B the Generation collection guitar against your other acoustics, it's almost like having your own in-ear monitors. That's how a lot of our artists describe it as well."

Are there any other unused blueprints for Gibson guitars from the 50s and 60s that hold promise?

"We do have other designs that were never put into production: really interesting designs. They were doing so much at a time where the modern techniques and production capabilities weren't there. And I think they were further ahead in innovation and design than what could really be put into production. So that's the good news because we still have all those archives."

"We are working on a few now and have set up a Gibson Lab [to research the possibilities]. We have 120 years of innovation – maybe there were a couple of decades where there wasn't much done, through the 80s and 90s. Even so, there were things like the RD design and some of the concepts that came in the 70s and the 80s. Even in the 1930s, with guitars like the ES-150 of Charlie Christian, there was innovation. In electronics as well, Gibson created the P-90 and the humbucker."

"To continue that tradition, we set up the Gibson Lab. It's all about innovation, testing, research, development. That's where we are now – testing, prototyping, building, putting things in the hands of artists. Testing with some concepts that were designed in the golden era and were never put into production."

How happy are you with the overhaul of Gibson's product line in the past couple of years? What were the biggest challenges?

"One of the first things JC and I talked about was the need to 'simplify to amplify'. It was a bit complicated to understand the offering of guitars [as it stood before]. We designed the concept of the Original collection, and the concept of the Modern collection [in both] electric and acoustic. Then with Gibson Custom [it was] Historic and Modern, in electric and acoustic. So it is easy to understand."

Launching entirely new products is always a risk, especially for brands with a lot of heritage. How much of a priority is developing new guitar models at Gibson?

"I think it is incredibly important. Being at the forefront of innovation and evolution has been part of Gibson heritage for almost 128 years, whether it was using violin-making techniques for carving tops when Orville started making mandolins and then guitars, for example. If you look at the instruments he made in the late 1800s,

"In the 50s and 60s, Gibson were further ahead in innovation and design than what could really be put into production"

certainly 1900s, they were also ahead of their time. Inventing the truss rod, so that you can slim down the necks...

"In 1957 we designed the Explorer, the Futura, the Moderne, the Flying V. At the time, people said they were too ahead of their time. But that never stopped Gibson and won't stop us from continuing to think about evolution, innovation... Gibsons are not just a guitar, they are a *Gibson* guitar, and we need to always keep that in mind. That comes with a huge responsibility and an opportunity to continue to evolve through the Gibson Labs."

Have you considered launching an entirely new body shape or family of guitars?

"We are working on a few things. You will see in the next couple of months, particularly with one. We are getting inspired by our original archive, something that was never made – but, at the same time, also creating a couple of new things, one of which we are working on with a very famous artist."

PHOTO COURTESY OF GIBSON



"The Gibson
Lab is all about
testing, research,
development.
There's where we
are now"

Gibson still owns some heritage guitar brands, such as Dobro, that we haven't seen much of for a while. Any interesting stuff in the pipeline for resonator guitars?

"We have been getting organised and are now setting up – starting with the Custom Shop – to create a new collection of mandolins, archtops, banjos and resonators. We are working on prototypes to provide a wider offering at different price points of what ultimately will be a larger Bluegrass collection. I think it is very important to us because that takes us back to our original start, our original DNA, that Orville started, so it is also a bit of a passion project.

"Some of the concepts we might be bringing to market today, we might have been working on in the background for two years. We take our time because we know anything we bring to market has to be at the expectation and quality of a Gibson."

Turning to the Custom Shop, how do you see the aged 'Murphy Lab' guitars evolving from here?

"The Murphy Lab was two years in the making before we ended up coming to market in March 2021. We started with a limited offering and grabbed a fraction of the 'greatest hits' to apply different treatments from ultra-light ageing to ultra-heavy. So that has been a very exciting start.

"The offering will evolve and change – and we'll continue to put in the artist runs that are aged recreations of the originals. Those will go through the Murphy Lab because that is the only place where we age instruments. We are prototyping, in the Gibson Lab, a future series of acoustic guitars for the Murphy Lab."

Quality control at Gibson drew flak under the previous management. How are you approaching that side of things now?

"Quality is still not just about the way the guitars are built, it is also *what* we are making – making the guitars in the right collections, with the right set of features that make it a Les Paul Standard, for example. So it starts there and then it goes into *how* we make them, creating this modern-day concept of a 'craftery' [Gibson's term for its manufacturing centres], which is a celebration of craftsmanship, so we keep that balance.

"We brought in Jeremy Freckleton, a manufacturing production expert [to lead] the production team in our crafteries. Then we put in a quality team... If you watch the process on *Gibson TV*, you get a sense of how involved the process is to make a Gibson guitar. By organising a centralised quality team that is not just [responsible for localised quality control] in Bozeman, for example, or at Gibson USA or in the



Gibson's Murphy Lab focuses on aged recreations of original models. There's an acoustic offering on the horizon, too

"We have a responsibility to make the best guitars ever made in Gibson's history"

Custom Shop... we have a team that is a centre of excellence, sharing ideas, working across different crafteries, including in China for Epiphone. That quality team is now in service to every brand, to every category, to every collection, and has the quality-check at every step of the process of making a guitar.

"Separately, we also created our own training centre. We have incredible luthiers – from Jim DeCola and Keith Medley to Tom Murphy – who are part of the training process. When it comes to quality, it is our obsession, so it is one of the areas where we are investing heavily."

What is your favourite guitar that Gibson is making right now?

"That's like asking me who is my favourite child [laughs]. It's a hard one, so I don't think I can. I have 153 guitars in my collection, 90 per cent of which are Gibsons. I have a lot of Spanish guitars. I have been playing the Les Paul Modern a lot at home and I really enjoy the features, like the ability to split the pickup from a humbucker into a single coil. I like the access, the shaved profile of the

back of the neck. At the same time, I also like the originals and I have a big collection of golden-era Gibsons, and a lot of the new things or prototypes we are doing. But I have been playing the Les Paul Modern quite significantly."

In your opinion, what is the most underrated model in Gibson's history?

"The one that immediately comes to mind is the RD. I think it was a kickass guitar. I have a few originals because I like the shape, the sound, the weight. Then the Les Paul Modern, to go back to that one, is also one that has been slowly catching on. For example, I saw Kiko [Loureiro] from Megadeth use a Les Paul Modern on tour. He initially thought, 'Maybe I will use it on this one song.' Then he started using it on 30 per cent of the set. It's a guitar that you realise why it's so cool once you play it. It gives you a lot of flexibility."

If you had to write a report card for what Gibson has achieved in the past couple of years and more, what would it say?

"I almost want to leave that to the artists and fans, but maybe the excitement [that's been generated] is an early indicator. I think we are off to a good start. I would just frame it that way. We are off to a good start, and we now, as a team, have a huge responsibility to be good stewards of the future of Gibson and make the best guitars we have ever made in its history." 📌

www.gibson.com

10/10

Guitarist
GOLD

*"Acoustic master Tommy Emmanuel says the
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- that's some recommendation!"*

GUITARIST MAGAZINE



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DAN PATLANSKY

The South African rocker reveals a lifetime's quest to find the perfect fuzz pedal and an incredible deal on a '62 Strat

This sunburst Fender Strat comprises a '64 body with '62 neck and retrofitted Slider pickups. It's been with Dan for many years: "Unfortunately, there's very little fretboard left and the neck is completely twisted," he tells us

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

"I had a bar mitzvah when I was 13 years old and you obviously get a bit of bar mitzvah money that's supposed to be for a deposit on a car when you come of age or maybe some university money, but I managed to convince my father to release the money and I bought myself a Clapton signature Strat. It was my first proper guitar and it cost a chunk of money. It was in the 90s and it was Pewter with the Lace Sensor pickups in, and that was the first guitar I bought with my own money. It was one of the most special moments of my life!"

What was the last guitar you bought?

"It was a [Fender] Jason Smith Masterbuilt. It was a guitar that I commissioned to replace the vintage guitars that I have because they were getting just a little bit troublesome on the road. The necks were moving around from venue to venue: if I was in the UK and I travelled from London to Brighton I would have to do a complete neck relief adjustment because the strings would either be against the frets or I would have a slide guitar action. The necks were twisting and there was not enough rosewood left on the 'boards to refret – and I didn't have papers for the Brazilian rosewood on the necks and I almost got a guitar confiscated when I was going into Hamburg one time. So I contacted Fender and commissioned that guitar."

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

"My '62 Strat was an incredible bargain. It was in the year 2000 from a vintage dealer here in South Africa and I'd pestered this guy since I was a teenager and said, 'Please, when you find [a vintage Strat], sell it to me at a reasonable price...'. And, eventually, I think because of my persistence, he called me one day and he said, 'I've got

"I've got a graveyard of fuzzes in my studio... I probably could have retired on the money I've spent on them"

a '62 Strat here, it's a refinish, and he gave it to me for the equivalent of £1,000 in today's money. Even for a refinish that's almost for free."

What's the strongest case of buyer's remorse you've ever had when buying gear?

"Luckily enough, it wasn't big ticket items like guitars themselves, but I think I've done a lot of that in the pedal world, especially when people are demoing things on YouTube – you don't know what they're doing in post [production]. They could retrack it all and add a bunch of magic in the mix and the pedal sounds glorious. You pay these exorbitant prices for pedals and you get them and often they're quite disappointing, so I've got a graveyard of fuzzes in my studio. I've haemorrhaged money on fuzzes. There's been so much buyer's remorse: I probably could have retired on the money I've spent on them."

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

"In 2005 I was living in New Orleans and I was involved in Hurricane Katrina and that '62 Strat that I bought for



PHOTO BY TOBIAS JOHANNESSEN

DAN'S GO-TO GEAR

"My current rig is the [Fender] Jason Smith Masterbuilt, built after my three of my Strats: the '62 neck, the '64 body and the colour of my '97 reissue, which is Vintage White, being a big David Gilmour fan. My pedalboard is an RMC 10 wah-wah pedal, a King Tone Duellist, a King Tone silicon fuzz, a Honey Bee Amps Clean Drive – which I never switch off, it's like a very subtle drive pedal – and a Tech 21 Reverb. That goes into a Honey Bee Amps 40-watt amp, which is based on a Fender 6L6 clean sound, but it's built to be more like SRV's amp, and I'm running into a pair of vintage EVM speakers from the 80s – a smooth-sounding, slightly dark speaker. That's the rig I'll be bringing to the UK [for my tour]."

£1,000 was with me on the tour. To cut a long story short, I had to leave the guitar behind when we evacuated. You had military guys with machine guns making sure you got out, and we had to pack food and supplies in the car and so we had to leave the guitar.

"When I got to where we were going, which was Alabama, I saw on the news what New Orleans looked like and I just assumed that my guitar was floating down the Mississippi somewhere and would never be seen again. So I went into a vintage guitar shop in Los Angeles and bought a [Fender] Custom Shop '61 sunburst relic. It was a great guitar and I played it for close to a decade. Eventually, I sold it because I found a 1964 body – the real deal – and I didn't have the money to buy it and so I sold the guitar. As great as the '64 body is, I instantly regretted it because I've never had a relationship with a guitar that I had with that Custom Shop guitar."

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

"The last time I did an actual live window shop was years ago when I was playing The Borderline in London and there was a vintage guitar shop on Denmark Street that had a fantastic '59 Strat in the window. I forced myself not to go into the shop and play it because I had my credit card in my pocket and my wife might have filed for divorce when I got back home!"

What's your best guitar-buying tip?

"You know, I think we tend to be brand loyal and if we see Gibson or Fender or whatever on the headstock then we think it's going to be great. But I think, even with the

big guitar companies and even if it's a particular model, you've got to play a bunch of them because they all have a life of their own, even if they've got the same exact spec on paper. I just can't imagine buying a guitar online because it's such a gamble. So if you can go into a music store that's got a bunch of stuff to try, that's always the best way to do it."

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?

"I'd probably go for the good guitar. I'm all about trying to get a tone because I find that if I can get a playable tone on stage then I play better. The playability of a guitar is important and so I'd have to go with the guitar itself, even though I think that the amp and speaker are a big part of it. But the guitar is the bond and if you've got that bond then you can really get away with murder on stage."

If you could only use humbuckers or single coils for the rest of your career, which would it be and why?

"Single coils, definitely. I only own single-coil guitars and it's not because I don't like humbuckers, I think they're great, but they suggest different things to play. You've got to play differently and approach it differently and I've always been lusting after a certain tone – and a single coil is definitely a main ingredient of that." **[DM]**

Dan's Fender Jason Smith Masterbuilt Strat in Vintage White combines the features of three of his past Stratocasters, with MF Guitars' "Number One" pickups onboard. "Best Strat I've owed by far," he says



Shelter Of Bones is released by Virgin on 25 February. Dan's UK tour with special guest Arielle runs from 1 to 12 April.

Tickets from www.thegigcartel.com

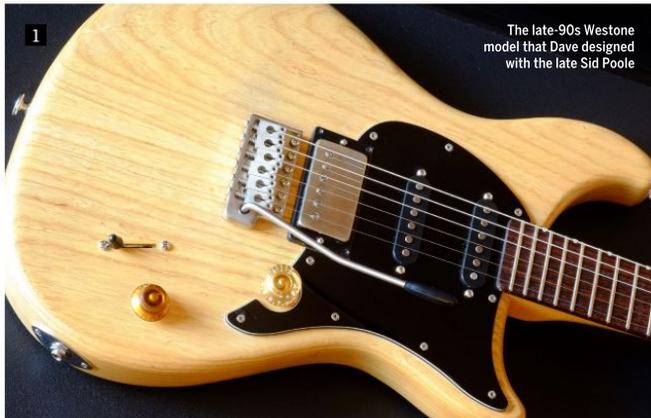
PERFECT MISMATCH

Mixing humbuckers and single coils on the same guitar is never easy. What kind of HSS are you, wonders Dave Burrluck?

One day I'll get the time to research who the first manufacturer was to offer a Strat-style guitar with a bridge humbucker and two single coils. A typical player mod in the 70s, like the same full-sized humbucker in the neck position of a Telecaster, the humbucker-single-single HSS concept was simple: to provide some oomph to the Strat's notoriously weedy bridge pickup, while still keeping that classic neck single coil, a perhaps less-used middle single coil, and two funkier in-between sounds.

The beauty – and the potential difficulty – of the HSS guitar is combining the opposite cornerstones of pickup design on one guitar: the 'Fender' single coil and the 'Gibson' humbucker. It's a mismatch, one that can be desirable... or despicable. We don't all want things to match. Far from it. For many, the success lies in having those classic single coils completely blown out of the water by a hot or high-output 'bucker. Conversely, using a low-output PAF-style humbucker with those single coils can be more useful. It's the first thing you need to consider if you want to voice your HSS.

Many HSS guitars go for a pretty standard wiring that functions like a Strat by providing, in positions 5, 4 and 3 of the lever selector switch, neck, neck and middle, and middle single coils as usual. Position 2 automatically splits the bridge humbucker and combines it with the middle single coil, leaving position 1 to voice the full humbucker. Done properly with a reverse-



The late-90s Westone model that Dave designed with the late Sid Poole

wound, reverse-polarity middle pickup, your combination positions – 2 and 4 – should be hum-cancelling.

Aside from size and sound, the single coil/humbucker mix presents another consideration. Conventional wisdom tells us that those single coils like to 'see' 250k pots to tame a little of their potential over-brightness; it's the opposite with a humbucker, not least one with a cover, which prefers 500k pots. On a Strat with two tone controls, that's less of a problem as the middle tone can be assigned to the single coils with a bigger tone cap and just slightly rolled back – the lower tone control

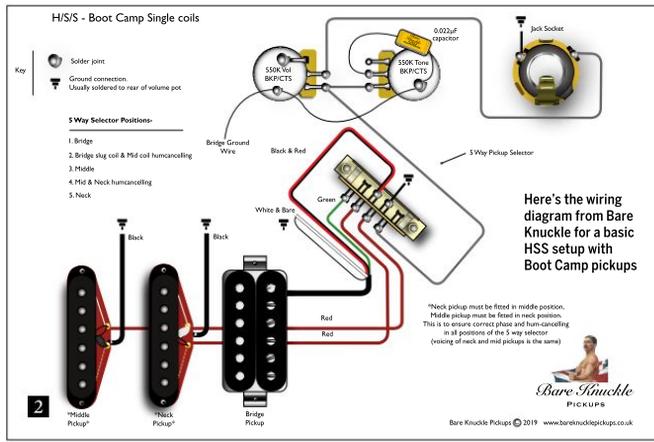
can be used specifically for the bridge, typically with a smaller value capacitor. Of course, the three-control real estate could be changed to a two-volume/master tone setup with a volume for each pickup style. On guitars with just a master volume and master tone, you're more limited.

Narrowing The Field

Regular readers will know I've been restoring a guitar from the late 90s that I had the pleasure to design with the late luthier Sid Poole [pic 1]. When we got to voicing the guitars we'd designed back then, we were hampered by cost, availability and, frankly, time, and as ever with a magazine deadline looming little seems to have changed there!

Having loaded in a Bare Knuckle Old Guard humbucker at the bridge and with two Old Guard single coils to add, I was certainly hoping the guitar was going to sound rather good – 24 years on. Thanks to its diligent service, Bare Knuckle Pickups provided me with a wiring diagram [pic 2] that swaps the neck and middle pickups around and voices the slug coil of the humbucker in position 2. It means that in the combination positions – 2 and 4 – everything is hum-cancelling.

Because of the discussed pickup/pot mismatch, I loaded in Bare Knuckle's CTS 550k pots (see The Right Taper on page 126) and the company provided me with a couple of 470k resistors, which – by installing where the neck and middle pickups solder to the five-way switch and



The Westone prototype model is finally dialed in and restored





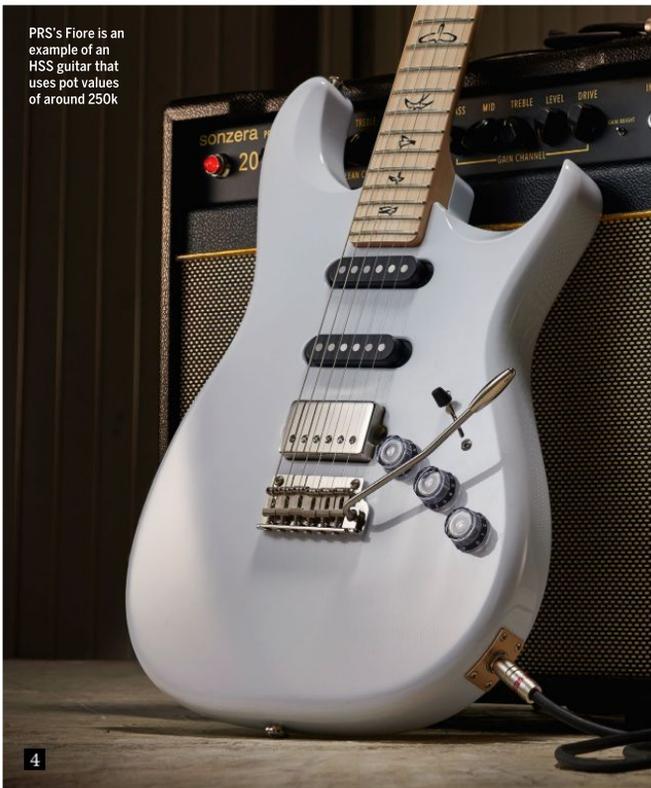
This tone control also splits the bridge humbucker. It's an experiment but it works!

3

COMBINING RESISTANCE

When you combine two resistors in series, to calculate the total resistance you simply add the two values together. Adding one resistor to another in *parallel* is different: it results in a lower combined resistance. Thankfully, you'll find series and parallel resistance calculators online. Try Digi-Key at <https://bit.ly/git481mod>, for example. If you want to test your maths the formula is: $R_{parallel} = (R1 \times R2) \div (R1 + R2)$.

Adding that 470k resistor to a 550k pot in parallel results in 253.5k when rounded up. Two pickup coils of 4k each when wired in series, like a standard humbucker, result in a pickup with a resistance of 8k. If you wire those pickup coils in parallel, the resistance becomes 2kohms.



4

PRS's Fiore is an example of an HSS guitar that uses pot values of around 250k

"The beauty of the HSS guitar is combining the opposite cornerstones of pickup design"

ground (in other words in parallel) – fool the pickups into thinking they're 'seeing' a 253kohms pot or thereabouts.

Another difference is that tone control circuit [pic 3] where the tap wires of the bridge humbucker go to the input lug: you wire the middle lug to ground and the output lug takes the capacitor to ground. It splits the pickup (voicing the slug coil) between 10 and 8 then switches to the full humbucker with the usual tone roll-off for all the pickups. In my earlier experiments with just the humbucker, I'd added a 2.2k resistor from the middle lug to ground so I'm not quite dumping all of the screw coil, giving the (mainly) voiced slug coil a little more body.

Now, theory is one thing, but it's only when you're plugged in that you hear the results, and after the usual play tests and comparative testing I'm not entirely happy. I like to ride both the volume and tone, and while I'm now getting used to the unusual tone control circuit, the volume is pulling back the highs too much as I roll it back a little. The obvious thing is to try a treble-bleed capacitor on the volume, yet neither reference single-coil guitar I'm using – one

with Fralin Blues Specials, the other with a Bare Knuckle '63 Veneer Board set – have treble bleeds and only very marginally pull back the highs in a more musical fashion. Checking back to my review of PRS's HSS-format Mark Lettieri signature Fiore [pic 4 & pic 5], the main difference is that the Fiore – as well as my two references – are using 250k pots or thereabouts. The PRS actually uses a 300kohm pot with a 2.4meg-ohm resistor on the input lug going to ground, which means the pickups 'see' a pot value of 268kohms. The Fiore also uses PRS's usual 180 picofarads treble-bleed cap. Checking through my stock of 250k pots, I find a CTS 250k pot with a 'V' taper that actually measures 270kohms. If it's good enough for Mark Lettieri, I reckon it's worth a try and I remove those two 470k resistors from the single coils. Finally, I'm happy.

What started out as a supposedly simple restoration job has turned into a much more complex task, not least in trying to make that bridge humbucker and those single coils play together. As ever, you're the only one who can decide what's right for you. Good luck with your HSS guitars! 🎸

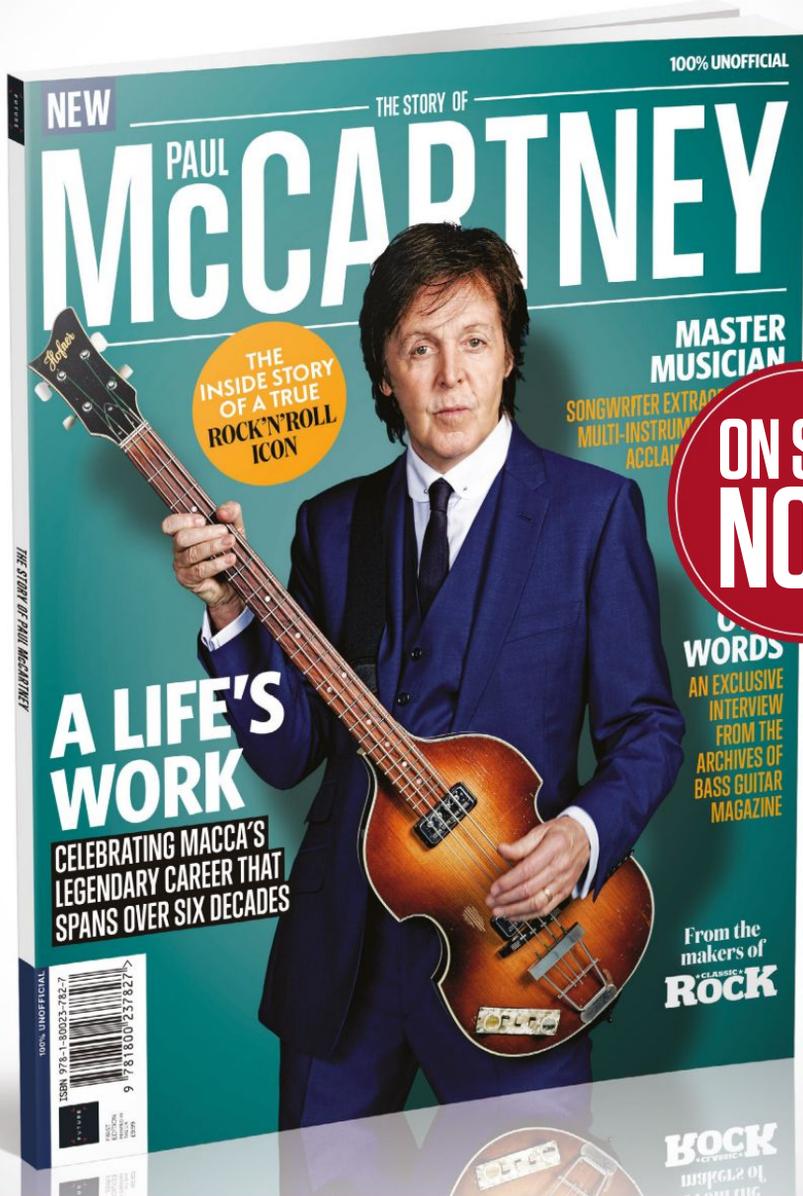


Close up, you can see the resistor on the volume control of the PRS Fiore

5

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THE RIGHT TAPER

One of the least costly parts of any guitar is its potentiometers, better known as your volume and tone controls. Dave Burrluck wonders if we take our pots for granted

Potentiometers are variable resistors (apparently invented by Thomas Edison in 1872) and pretty much every electric guitar ever built uses them for its volume and tone controls. The basic rule of thumb is that we use 500kohm pots for humbuckers and 250k pots for single coils. Lesser-used values are 1Meg-ohm (1,000k) where you want to maximise the brightness, and 300k where you want to sit between those two standards. These are *nominal* values in that pots, such as capacitors or resistors, have a production tolerance expressed as a percentage. So a 500k pot with a 10 per cent tolerance could actually measure anywhere between 550k and 450k to be in specification. And because, in theory, the higher the value, the brighter the sound, you can use the *actual* measured value to subtly 'tune' the pickup.

Even if you know next to nothing about pots, anyone who has owned different guitars over the years will have noticed that they can all differ subtly in their feel and the way they raise and lower your volume. Some pots have a pretty fast rise with most of the perceived volume increase

“Some pots have a fast rise, and others have a slower rise, sounding more even”

happening between 10 and 7 on the control – which is great for fast volume swells or where you need to go from 'lead' to 'rhythm' volumes with the minimum of travel. Other pots, however, have a slower rise and sound more even from off to full-on. This is referred to as the taper and numerous companies advertise their pots with a 'custom' taper, or even a 'vintage' taper.

Bare Knuckle has taken the topic a little further by offering a range of pots that feature different taper choices: “These pots feature a smooth torque and +/- 10 per cent tolerance, and are specially made for Bare Knuckle by CTS” – one of the big names in pots. They have slightly higher-than-standard nominal values of 280k and 550k and are offered with three audio tapers: 10% Fast taper 'A', 20% Medium taper 'BD', and 30% Slow taper 'J'. In fact, these CTS



The pots before they're wired into your guitar

450G series pots (which cost £8 each from Bare Knuckle) can be ordered with other tapers, too, and if you really want to sweat the details you'll find a data sheet at www.ctscorp.com.

So, what do those percentages mean? Okay, those figures tell us the percentage of resistance at 50 per cent rotation of the pot: the lower the figure, the faster the rise. Shouldn't that percentage be 50 per cent? Well, if my memory of schoolboy physics is correct, the human ear hears in a logarithmic fashion, like the decibel scale, and we perceive a logarithmic taper (also known as an audio taper) to be more even than a linear taper. Most volume pots for guitars, then, have log or audio tapers. But let's not dwell on the theory. Let's warm up the soldering iron and take a listen.

The 10% 'A' tapered pot, a pretty common type used on many guitars, has a pretty fast volume rise or sharp fall – whichever way you want to describe it. Fast violin volume swells are really easy, and moving from full up 'lead' to backed-off 'rhythm' is quickly achieved with little travel of the pot: 10 down to 8 or 7. As you move lower on the control, less seems to happen before it drops off smoothly to no output. It feels very smooth, very intuitive.

Next, the 20% 'BD' taper has a slightly slower rise and fall, and produces a smoother graduation from rhythm to lead

as you have more of the pot's travel to use. Those fast violin swells are that much harder – you have to pull the pot back further for the low volume start to the swell then, obviously, move it further and indeed faster to get that quick rise. So it's more subtle, especially if the slight rounding of the note attack as the volume is reduced is important to your style. Despite the seemingly slight 10 per cent difference, it's surprisingly distinct in use.

Finally, the 30% J taper has the slowest rise of the three, more linear, and really allows you to set precise levels, even when you're doing quite fast movements from picking to adjusting your volume. Even more so than the 20% 'BD' taper, this is about subtlety – if you're into using your volume constantly like BB King or Carlos Santana, you'll be at home here, particularly with a really responsive amp where you seem to have immensely subtle control over your sound.

Which is best is completely up to you, and obviously these differing tapers can be applied to your tone controls, too. Using our Westone restoration as an experiment, I ended up with the 20% 'BD' taper as my volume and the 30% 'J' taper for the tone with its unusual circuit. You might hear and feel things differently, but instead of having the taper that someone else tells you is 'right', you choose. **👍**

That should give you something to think about till our next issue.

In the meantime, if you have any modding questions, or suggestions, drop us a line – The Mod Squad.



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Mixing Speakers

This issue, we welcome Paul Gough of Zilla Cabs to *Guitarist* for his new column where he'll share expert knowledge on speaker and cab design

Mixing speakers is the area of cabinet design that really grabbed my attention from the start. There is something to discover every day, and a surprise around every corner. It's also a great subject to give an overview on several more techy areas, around which I plan to go into more detail in future articles.

Let's start with a few popular mixes. I'm going to be lazy and say, tonally, if there are two speakers you like and they're going to be used for a similar job then you'll probably like how they mix. Now, there are plenty of things to come that you should bear in mind, but this is a good place to start. I personally like a Celestion Vintage 30 (V30) in a 2x12, which I would often use with a G12H Anniversary as, unlike today, it was the only 'H' (a family of Celestion speakers all sharing the same-sized magnet) available in the Celestion range, and the late-70s G12H Blackback was my favourite.

The problem I had with these speakers individually was that a V30 sometimes lacked a certain grit, and the H Anniversary I found to be lacking a little bit of the body of a V30, so I thought mixing the two may solve this – and largely it did.

I also found mixing the speakers very useful in the studio as each speaker could be mic'd individually and, assuming everything was in phase, could be blended, too, often at different levels. Live was great because I liked the resulting sound both speakers gave, and I could close-mic whichever speaker I felt most closely satisfied that gig's needs.

On to power. With this mix you have a 60-watt speaker in the V30, and a 30-watt speaker with the H Anniversary. It's absolutely fine to mix speakers with different power ratings – but remember, the overall power rating of the cab should be based on the 'weakest' of the two speakers, giving this cab a 60-watt power rating (that is 2x30 watts). That's why, these days, a popular mix would be the V30 with a Celestion H Creamback (G12H-75), as it has a 75-watt power rating, providing a total power rating of 120 watts when mixed with the 60-watt V30 in a 2x12 cab.

Power rating tends to be what most people try to match most closely, and this does make a certain amount of sense, but the most important technical specification to watch out for is the sensitivity rating.

This is the perceived volume (output), or how loud a speaker is, given a unit of power (input) measured at a set distance (in this case, usually one watt at one metre) and expressed in decibels. That's about as technical as I want to get here, but – in short – near the top of a speaker's spec sheet there's the sensitivity rating, usually somewhere between 97dB and 100dB. In the case of our three aforementioned speakers, they're all rated at 100dB, so they'll be well balanced in terms of how loud they sound.

Some people will cringe at what I'm about to say next... but it's perfectly possible to mix speakers with different sensitivity ratings – you just have to be aware that one speaker will sound louder than the other. The larger the difference in the two ratings

"Mixing speakers is very useful in the studio as each speaker can be mic'd individually"

and the louder you play (namely, the greater the input power) then the greater that loudness difference will become.

Matchless has done this for years, first mixing the Celestion M Greenback and H 30th Anniversary (98dB and 100dB respectively), and these days seeming to favour the M and H Creambacks (97dB and 100dB respectively) in many of its amps and cabs. I have had many a Divided By 13 amp on my bench with a Blue and M Greenback in (one of my favourite mixes), and barely a day goes by where I don't do it myself.

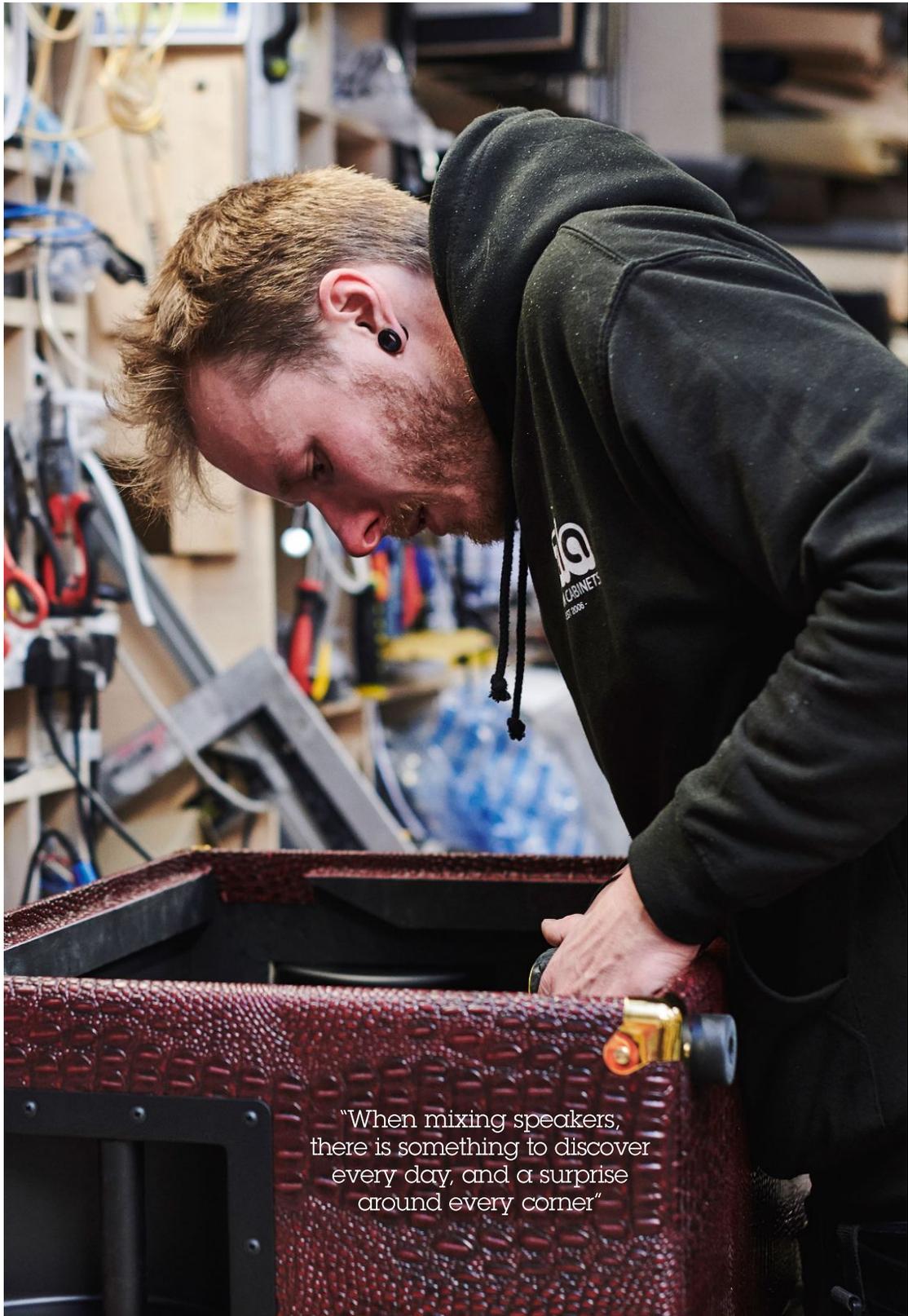
There are many reasons on paper to not mix speakers – phase issues, power rating mismatches, differences in sensitivity ratings – but, for me, science is what helps create art. There are many opportunities for cool new sounds, and the speaker and its housing can often be the missing link in what makes a sound truly yours. **📧**

www.zillacabs.com



Paul mixes the 60-watt Celestion Vintage 30 with a 30-watt Celestion G12H Anniversary speaker to get the sound he needs





"When mixing speakers,
there is something to discover
every day, and a surprise
around every corner"



ClassicGear

Inspired by the Fender Twin, this classic British amp has a voice all its own

Vox AC30 Twin

Tom Jennings' firm Jennings Musical Industries (JMI) had previously marketed the Univox, Vox Amplifier and 'G-Series' amplifiers before the company's first electric guitar amplifier – the AC2/30 – was developed. Appearing in late 1957, this 30-watt 1x12 combo was powered by two EL34s but never went into mass production. At the time, JMI was concentrating its efforts on the 15-watt 1x12 AC1/15 aka AC15, which was successfully released in January 1958.

In spring 1959, the 1x12 30-watt AC30 appeared. This version featured the same 1x12 speaker and square TV-front design as the AC15, but it used a pair of EL34 power valves rather than EL84s. Discontinued in 1960, it was superseded by the Fender Twin-inspired AC30 Twin model earlier that year. This advanced design utilised a quad of EL84s and was fitted with dual 12-inch speakers. Much like Fender had done years before, the AC30 Twin updated its image away from the old TV-front look in 1960, and its new split-front design established the more familiar Vox appearance that remains popular to this day.

Though the two-channel/four-input AC30/4 Twin made it to market before the three-channel/six-input AC30/6, both circuits

were designed at the same time – the original schematic is dated 29 April 1960 for both. As far as the player is concerned, the most obvious difference between the two is the addition of a Brilliant channel, which, alongside the Normal and Vibrato channels, produces a brighter sound. The AC30/4 and AC30/6 were manufactured concurrently for around a year until the former was dropped from production in September 1961.

AC30 Twins were originally fitted with a pair of 12-inch Rola B024 speakers, but it soon became evident that the amp needed something a bit sturdier. Vox and Celestion eventually settled on a new design in August 1960. Known as the T.530, this now legendary bespoke speaker first appeared in a silver/pink colour referred to as "Oyster Hammer" but changed to the iconic azure "Vox blue" version within months.

In 1961, Vox developed the Top Boost tone circuit aka the "optional brilliance circuit" in an effort to reinvigorate the amp's appeal by helping it to cut through more during performances. It was originally available as an add-on 'mod', but Vox soon began fitting the Top Boost circuit at the factory. In early 1964, the AC30 Expanded Frequency Fifteen/AC30X

Demand for Vox amps grew exponentially during the mid-60s with Beatlemania and the British Invasion

2x15 model was released, fitted with a Top Boost as standard, while later that year two further versions of the AC30/6 were added to the catalogue, namely the Treble and Bass (the existing model was dubbed Normal). From 1961, the AC30 was also available in a head/cab format known as the AC30 Super Twin, incorporating a slant-sided design from 1964 onwards.

Demand for JMI's Vox amps was growing exponentially during the mid-60s in the midst of Beatlemania and the British Invasion. Desperate for a cash injection to help his company respond, Tom Jennings sought investment from the Royston Group. Sadly, however, after selling his controlling share, in 1967 he was ousted from the very same firm he had grown and nurtured since the early 50s. It was the end of an era. **[RB]**

The Evolution of the Vox AC30 Twin

Spring 1959

AC30; square cabinet; TV-front; 1x12; 2x EL34; discontinued 1960

Spring 1960

AC30 Twin; 2 channels/4 inputs (AC30/4); 2x12; 4x EL84; TV-front; cream/diamond covering; brown diamond grille cloth

Summer 1960

Oyster Hammer Celestion T.530 speakers (previously Rola B024)

Autumn 1960

Also available with 3 channels/6 inputs (AC30/6); split-front; fawn covering

Early 1961

Azure blue Celestion T.530 speakers

September 1961

AC30/4 discontinued

Late 1961

Top Boost circuit available; copper panel (previously black)

1963

Black covering

1964

Grey panel; charcoal covering; black diamond grille cloth; Normal, Treble and Bass versions

1967

Tom Jennings leaves JMI



The plate on the rear of this 1962 Vox AC30 displays the model name, serial number and some good advice!

1962 Vox AC30 Twin

1. SERIAL NUMBER

Black/silver metal plate on rear stamped 'AC30' and '4996B'

2. CABINET

Baltic birch plywood; 27 1/2 inches wide by 20 3/4 tall by 10 1/4 deep; split-front; two-piece open wooden back

3. ORNAMENTATION

Fawn Rexine covering; three brass vent louvres; three leather handles (originally!); white vinyl front piping; gold fascia front strip; brown diamond grille cloth; horizontal one-piece plastic Vox motif

4. CIRCUIT

Steel/aluminium Contempo chassis; 30 watts; dual Vox-branded 12-inch Celestion T.530 Azure blue speakers; valves: one GZ34 rectifier; one ECC82 (vibrato modulator); four ECC83 valves; four EL84s

5. MAINS & CONNECTIONS

Mains power switch; indicator lamp; three-amp fuse; voltage selector (115, 160, 205, 225 & 245 volts); six inputs/three channels labelled Vib-Trem, Normal & Brilliant

6. CONTROLS

Copper panel with six black plastic chickenhead knobs in three sections (left to right): Vib-Trem Speed and Depth; Vib-Trem, Normal and Brilliant Volumes; Tone





David Davidson's *Vintage Icons*

Deviating from its standard finish, this special-order 355 is one of few custom colours

1967 Gibson ES-355TD-SV



This Polaris White beauty had just one previous owner and is in virtually mint condition

The 355 first appeared in 1958 [as the mono ES-355TD] and is just a more ornate version of the 335. Gibson basically put on the whole Les Paul Custom trim: the ebony 'board with the real mother-of-pearl blocks, as opposed to the 'mother-of-toilet-seat' inlays; multiple layers of binding on both the front and the back of the body; and the gold hardware.

"Most 355s are stereo [the ES-355TD-SV released in 1959], and the [ES-355TD] mono versions are very desirable. Most of the early guitars were Bigsby-equipped, and by 1960 they were available with a sideways Vibrola. At one point you could also get them with an ebony-block Vibrola, like a Les Paul SG.

"The stoptail models – which are few and far between – are quite coveted. Players like the stop tailpiece guitars because it gives you a better break angle, which helps with the sustain of the guitar, plus you can bend strings more cleanly. If the string is pulled down sharply, like on a stud tailpiece, it'll bite. And it won't slide across the saddle – you don't get that weird pinging sound.

"Gibson tried to rectify that in '62 by changing from metal to nylon saddles. They stayed with that right through the 70s. I actually think they work very well, especially with an ebony 'board, which is a harder wood that tends to brighten the sound of the guitar. The nylon helps to take away some of that shrill high-end. So it serves its purpose. A lot of people think it's a bad idea, but the engineers over at Gibson knew what they were doing.

"The tops and backs of these laminated guitars were steam-pressed with a veneer of maple. The necks are mahogany. The earliest models come with Grover

Rotomatic tuners and, in the early 60s, these were superseded by Kluson [Super] 'waffleback' tuners. The Klusons work really well – they're very well made. Although I have seen some people taking them off and putting Grovers on. There was this whole obsession with Grover tuners in the 70s. People were even putting them on Stratocasters. It was terrible.

"This particular guitar was owned by just one person before me. It was specially ordered in Polaris White and it has all of its tags from when it was new. It's a pretty neat piece and it has virtually no wear. All

"It was such a high-end instrument that players had more of a hand in [its personalisation]"

the gold plating is intact and there's no verdigris. This one has a laminated input jack ring, which was something you could order, but you don't see it on that many guitars. I've seen it on several 355s, but I like that they took the time to use a white one for this guitar. It's a '67, so it has the narrower nut width: 1 1/16-inch rather than the 1 11/16-inch. It's a little bit narrower, but it plays very well. And by this stage the fret size was fairly large, so they work really well for rock 'n' roll and blues.

"This guitar sounds great. By '67 Gibson were using T-top humbuckers, but I'll be honest with you, I never really had a problem with T-top pickups – I think they sound great. To me, this is a very good instrument. It hasn't found a home yet, but

it did have a sibling – a '61 355 in Polaris White – that was virtually the same except it had the side-pull Vibrola. I sold it to Joe Bonamassa about six months ago. That, too, was a wonderful guitar. Keith Richards has a white [ES-345], but I haven't seen a whole lot of them. They didn't make a lot of custom colour 355s. It's also very hard to get a sunburst 355, but I have a '62 with the Maestro 'leaf and lyre' Vibrola.

"355s are interesting. Because it was such a high-end instrument, I think a lot of players had more of a hand in how they wanted their guitar to be personalised. It was like instead of driving a Pontiac you got to drive a Cadillac. You know, when you ordered it, it could be customised to some extent. And I have had several artist-owned 355s that were personalised. One of them had a Super 400 headstock with a family crest inlaid into the top. It belonged to a blues guy from Alabama. I also had a 1960 cherry 355 that was made for a guy called Bernie Smith – look him up on YouTube! – with a stoptail. It has white dual pickguards, and each knob had a giant white washer. It also has a plaque that reads 'Custom Made for Bernie Smith 1960'. That's a really interesting guitar.

"People seem to forget that even back then Gibson had a custom shop, and you could basically draw up what you wanted within reason. And that's where some of these really wacky special-order Gibsons came from." [RB]

Vintage guitar veteran David Davidson owns Well Strung Guitars in Farmingdale, New York www.wellstrungguitars.com / info@wellstrungguitars.com / 001 (516) 221-0563



PHOTOS BY FACE DAVIDSON

Blues Headlines

Richard Barrett is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks



Mixolydian Psychedelic Blues

Tutor Richard Barrett | **Gear used** Knaggs Choptank, Vox AC15 C1

Difficulty ★★★☆☆ | 10 mins per example



Robby Krieger put a unique twist on the blues with The Doors

IF YOU'VE ALREADY VENTURED into what many regard as the mysterious world of modes, the name Mixolydian may be familiar to you. If not, no problem. My own approach to modes has always been intuitive, rather than methodical, but whichever way you choose to proceed, there should be something in this article for you.

I think we can agree that when soloing over a 12-bar blues in the key of A major, the A major scale would not be conducive to cool-sounding blues solos. Try this yourself over the backing if you're not convinced. Yes, it's possible to come up with a phrase here and there, but the overall impression is that the A major scale (A B C# D E F# G# A) is not a great fit.

One of the reasons for this is the way the grouping of notes leads us in an unhelpful direction – more *Sailor's Hornpipe* than *Stormy Monday*... Another is that the I-IV-V progression of the standard 12-bar sequence (and I think it's fair to say blues chord sequences generally) leans heavily on the dominant or ♭7th; think A7 rather than Amaj7. If we take a look at the A major pentatonic (A B C# E F# A) and then A Mixolydian (A B C# D E F# G A), you'll see they have most of their notes in common. Thinking of the Mixolydian as a couple of extra notes we can add to give a 'deluxe' version of the A major pentatonic is probably the easiest way for the non-theoretically-inclined to relate to this and expand their options, especially if you apply this approach to all five shapes of the major pentatonic!

In the example solo, I've tried not to be too 'studied' about this and only play strict Mixolydian lines as I think this would miss the point. However, you'll notice lots of G: the flat/dominant 7th and key ingredient of Mixolydian in A. Hope you enjoy and see you next time! 🎸



Richard Barrett's new album, *Colours*, (complete with backing tracks), is available now from www.richardbarrettguitar.com

Example 1

THIS OPENING PHRASE GETS STRAIGHT TO THE POINT, sliding from C# to E then adding a ringing G (dominant/7th) to clearly state our Mixolydian intentions! Sliding briefly up two frets adds a little variety – some might call this a partial D chord, though the F#, A and open E are all part of the A Mixolydian mode. In any case, we head straight back to the original position, before switching to a more single-note approach but remaining within the Mixolydian mode.

J = 134 N.C.

Example 2

A COUPLE OF QUICK SLIDES BETWEEN POSITIONS lands us at shape 3 of the A major pentatonic, between the 9th and 12th frets. Adding in the G from the Mixolydian opens up the possibility of an arpeggio style run that comprises the main part of this phrase. As with any grouping of notes, there are many ways it could be phrased – I've gone with a triplet feel, but this is not the last word!

J = 134 N.C.

Example 3

STARTING FROM WHERE I FINISHED at the end of Example 2, there is then a shift in position – and tonality – down to the A minor pentatonic. This fits because the backing track is very ‘modal’-sounding and riff-based, rather than a selection of straight up major or minor chords. This minor pentatonic remains a feature until the end of the solo, though at this point the feel has been established as not a ‘straight’ blues solo.

$\text{♩} = 134$ N.C.

Let ring -----

Let ring -----

Example 4

MOVING TO A LOW REGISTER for some riff-style phrases, both the minor 3rd (C) and major 3rd (C#) feature here. We could discuss whether the G (minor/dominant 7th) appears as part of the Mixolydian mode or the A minor pentatonic, but I’m not sure how productive that would be... Perhaps the ultimate goal would be to recognise that there is an overlap here and get on with making some cool music!

$\text{♩} = 134$

w/bar

w/bar

Hear It Here

THE DOORS

MORRISON HOTEL



This album features a bold mix of blues and psychedelia, with Robby Krieger’s unique twist on the blues all over tracks such as *Waiting For The Sun*, *Blue Sunday* (featuring a major 7th, rather than dominant 7th/Mixolydian feel) and *Indian Summer*, which really epitomises the mix of styles happening everywhere at the time (1970). Note the lack of distorted solos and how the lines are woven in and out of the chords themselves.

CREAM

ROYAL ALBERT HALL 2-3-5-6 2005 (LIVE)



Taken from Cream’s reunion/farewell concerts, these recordings show that the spirit was still strong in this trio, with that trademark exploratory approach from the turn of the 60s and 70s. Check out *I’m So Glad* (a Mixolydian chord progression by virtue of including a D major chord), *Rollin’ And Tumblin’* and, of course, *Crossroads* – a very Mixolydian-style riff, with the bonus of alternative solos to the classic original.

THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED



Dating back to 1967, it’s probably fair to call this a benchmark of the collision between blues and psychedelia that was happening at that time. Check out the very Mixolydian *Love Or Confusion*, *Fire* (which isn’t the most obvious example at first, but try a D Mixolydian over this for a perfect fit), and the title track for another very psychedelic approach to the Mixolydian (backwards solo optional).

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