

Guitarist

Issue 514

SUMMER 2024

MASTERCLASS

How To Be A Better Player

By 57 Top Guitarists

JOE BONAMASSA KIRK WHATCHER NILI BROOKLYN
ERIC JOHNSON ORIAN BELL BILL NELSON
STEVE LUKATHER MARTY FREEDMAN TRACIE
ANDY TIMMONS STEVE NICKETT SAMANTHA FISH
STEVE CROPPER DAMO FARRAR JOHNSON PHILIP SAYCE
JENNIFER BATTEN NITA MARSHALL AUSS DEVON ALLMAN
JESSE DAYTON SERENA JAMES HERRY VINNIE MOORE
YVETTE YOUNG DAVID GILMOUR SOPHIE LLOYD
STEVE MORSE JIMMY WYLDER ROCKY ATHAS
PAUL GILBERT JOHN McVIE MANY MORE

Historic
Hardware

IAN BAIRNSON'S

'WUTHERING
HEIGHTS'
'74 LES PAUL CUSTOM

& Much
More

1957
Fender
STRAT RESTORATION
STEP-BY-STEP

Marshall

WHAT NEW CEO THINKS
IT WILL TAKE TO WIN
BACK GUITARISTS

PLUS

WALRUS AUDIO FX
CHARVEL PRO-MOD SAN DIMAS REIC HH
MESA/BOOGIE MK VII

FUTURE

THE INTERFACE FOR GUITARISTS

POLAR 2
FET INPUT INTERFACE



REACTS & FEELS
LIKE A GUITAR AMP



VINTAGE BRITISH
MIC PREAMPS



NO-CLIP & EASY
INPUT LEVELS

INCLUDED STUDIO SOFTWARE COLLECTION



Everything you need to record guitar and vocals

ST. JAMES PLUGIN SUITE
(worth \$129/£129/€129)

ABLETON LIVE LITE
MELODYNE ESSENTIALS
RELAB LX480 ESSENTIALS REVERB
POLAR CONTROL

Find your nearest dealer at
www.blackstaramps.com

Designed & Engineered
by Blackstar Amplification UK

Blackstar[®]
AMPLIFICATION

the sound in your head



LEARN MORE

What's The Point?



For many of us, at least on a day-to-day level, playing guitar means picking it up and having a bit of a noodle. It's therapeutic, it keeps us from going rusty and it may well spark off a new idea or two. While that's certainly all good stuff, it can end up being a comfort zone we never leave. Again, nothing wrong with that if pleasant recreation is what you want from guitar. But if you're of a mind to do it, playing guitar for other people really raises your relationship with the instrument to another level – even in the most informal of settings.

I was reminded of that when I did a bit of busking on Glastonbury High Street. There's always something weird and wonderful going on there, so nobody pays any mind to a guitarist setting up their battery-powered amp and opening up the guitar case in front of them in hope of a few coins. In actual fact, I decided to do some busking as a way of rehearsing for an acoustic gig coming up in London. Something about having people watch you play, even if they're just passing by in the street, sharpens your focus. Standing there on the pavement you see all of life go by and you find yourself committing a bit more to the music – trying to find a little more expression and drama in what you're playing. And, just occasionally, someone rewards that effort with a quid flipped into the case or, just as welcome, a compliment.

The point is that performing music connects us with others and reminds us that, at root, playing guitar is about communicating emotion, excitement and beauty to people via the instrument – a sentiment echoed by many of the pros in our cover feature on page 60. In making the attempt we also do ourselves a service by reconnecting fully with our own inner life, our own inner music. It's a pleasure without vice and a sharing that leaves both giver and receiver enriched. Enjoy the issue and maybe see you on the high street?

Jamie Dickson **Editor-in-chief**

Editor's Highlights



Scaling The Heights

The Les Paul with which Ian Bairnson played the iconic solo in Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights* came up for auction recently **p76**



Lucky Seven

Mesa/Boogie's new Mark VII combo promises a veritable arsenal of top-flight tones – but is it worth the chunky price tag? **p80**



Beyond Eleven

Marshall has a new owner, a new CEO and a mission to win back players to its classic tones – we ventured to Milton Keynes to learn more **p106**

Guitarist

Future Publishing Limited, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA
Telephone 01225 442244 Email guitarist@futurenet.com Online www.guitarist.co.uk

EDITORIAL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jamie Dickson

jamie.dickson@futurenet.com

DEPUTY EDITOR

David Mead

david.mead@futurenet.com

CONTENT DIRECTOR, MUSIC

Scott Rowley

scott.rowley@futurenet.com

REVIEWS EDITOR

Dave Burrluck

dave@daveburrluck.com

SENIOR MUSIC EDITOR

Jason Sidwell

jason.sidwell@futurenet.com

ART EDITOR

Darren Phillips

darren.phillips@futurenet.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Lucy Rice

lucy.rice@futurenet.com

CONTRIBUTORS

RICHARD BARRETT, ALEX BISHOP, TREVOR CURWEN, ANDREW DALY, MARTIN HOLMES, RICHARD HOOD, GLENN KIMPTON, NEVILLE MARTEN, MATTHEW PARKER, HUW PRICE, DAVINA RUNGASAMY, GARY STUCKEY, ALVIN WEETMAN, STUART WILLIAMS

IN-HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

PHIL BARKER, OLLY CURTIS, ADAM GASSON, NEIL GODWIN

ADVERTISING

MEDIA PACKS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

CHIEF REVENUE DIRECTOR Zack Sullivan zack.sullivan@futurenet.com
UK COMMERCIAL SALES DIRECTOR Clare Dove clare.dove@futurenet.com
ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR Lara Jaggon lara.jaggon@futurenet.com

MARKETING

CONSUMER REVENUES DIRECTOR Sharon Todd sharon.todd@futurenet.com

PRINT & PRODUCTION

HEAD OF PRODUCTION UK & US Mark Constance mark.constance@futurenet.com
PRODUCTION MANAGER Frances Twentyman frances.twentymen@futurenet.com
SENIOR AD PRODUCTION MANAGER Jo Crosby jo.crosby@futurenet.com
DIGITAL EDITIONS MANAGER Jason Hudson jason.hudson@futurenet.com
DIGITAL EDITIONS PRODUCER Nick Lee nick.lee@futurenet.com

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING & SYNDICATION

GUITARIST IS AVAILABLE FOR LICENSING AND SYNDICATION. TO FIND OUR MORE CONTACT US AT [LICENSING@FUTURENET.COM](mailto:licensing@futurenet.com)
OR VIEW OUR AVAILABLE CONTENT AT WWW.FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM
HEAD OF PRINT LICENSING Rachel Shaw licensing@futurenet.com

CIRCULATION

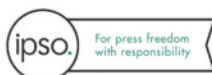
HEAD OF FUTURE INTERNATIONAL & BOOKAZINES Tim Mathers
HEAD OF NEWSTRADE Emma Bone

MANAGEMENT

SVP CONSUMER Kevin Addley kevin.addley@futurenet.com
BRAND DIRECTOR Stuart Williams stuart.williams1@futurenet.com
HEAD OF ART & DESIGN Rodney Dive rodney.dive@futurenet.com
HEAD OF DESIGN (MUSIC) Brad Merrett brad.merrett@futurenet.com
GROUP ART DIRECTOR Graham Dalzell graham.dalzell@futurenet.com

CUSTOMER SERVICES

APP SUPPORT apps@futurenet.com



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

Chief Executive **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Larkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

All contents © 2024 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008085) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

THE SACRIFICE



"The time I burned my guitar
it was like a sacrifice.
You sacrifice the things
you love. I love my guitar."

JIMI HENDRIX

Fender

STRATOCASTER

Forever Ahead Of Its Time

Contents

COVER FEATURE

MASTERCLASS



60

PHOTO BY ADAM GASSON

FEATURE



52

PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

**FREE
GIFT
WORTH
£19**

**SUBSCRIBE TO
GUITARIST FROM
ONLY £28.49 & GET
A FREE ERNIE BALL
GUITAR STRAP
WORTH OVER £19!**

See p102 for details

REVIEW



28

PHOTO BY ADAM GASSON

REGULARS

- 030** Gas Supply
- 032** Fretbuzz
- 034** New Music
- 036** Tones Behind The Tracks
- 040** Opinion
- 046** Substitute
- 048** Feedback
- 051** Competition
- 102** Subscribe
- 112** Bought & Sold
- 114** The Mod Squad
- 120** Nitty Gritty
- 124** Vintage Icons
- 130** Next Month

FEATURES

- 052** Richard Hawley
- 060** Masterclass
- 076** Historic Hardware: Ian Bairnson's 1974 Gibson Les Paul Custom
- 106** Blueprint: Marshall Group

NEW GEAR

- 008** Newman 5 String
- 014** Furch Vintage Pure & Violet Deluxe SM
- 020** Charvel Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 Relic HH FR PF
- 024** Walrus Audio Monumental
- 026** IK Multimedia Tonex One
- 028** Gibson Custom Jeff Beck 'YardBurst' 1959 Les Paul Standard
- 080** Mesa/Boogie Mark VII
- 088** Vintage REVO Series Custom Supreme & Trio
- 098** Crazy Tube Circuits White Whale V2
- 104** Yarde Guitars Tamar

TECHNIQUES

- 126** Blues Headlines with Richard Barrett

VIDEO & AUDIO

To enjoy all of the video and audio content in this issue, type the following link into your browser and follow the instructions in the post entitled 'Guitarist video and audio': <http://bit.ly/guitaristextra>

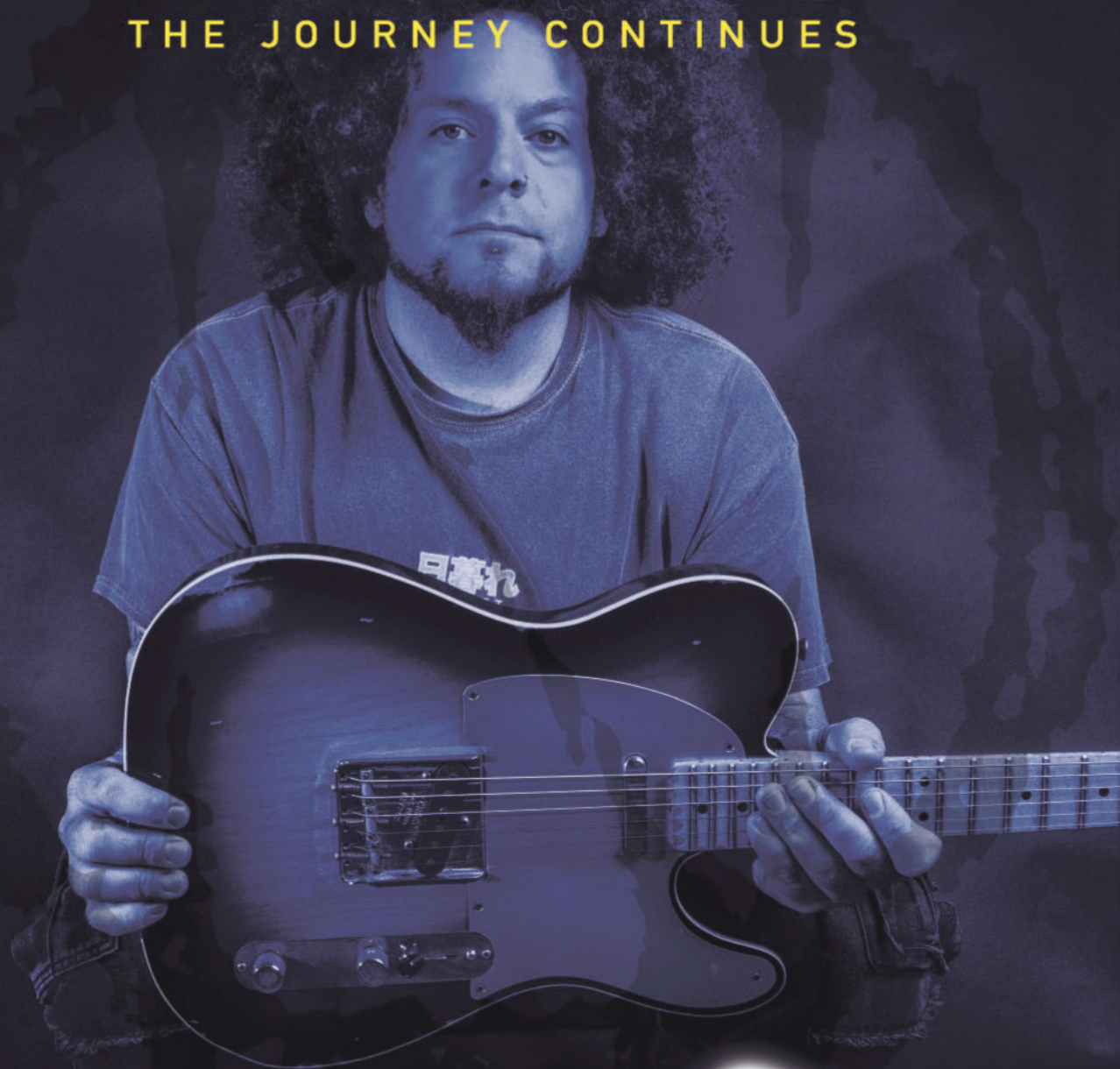


**SCAN TO GET
THE LATEST
GUITAR NEWS**



NOMADS

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



"I've always loved using Telecaster tones on my recordings. Nomads get super heavy without any unwanted spikiness but also respect the early '50s Tele tones for all the lower gain chime and spank that I love."

RABEA MASSAAD

BEA



Rabea Massaad
signature
Telecaster set

bareknucklepickups.co.uk

Bare Knuckle

FIRST PLAY



NEWMAN 5 STRING
£2,799

WHAT IS IT? UK-made five-string electric bolt-on originally designed by Ted Newman Jones III back in the late 70s

Gimme Five

A story that starts on a Rolling Stones USA tour in the early 70s, Ted Newman's distinctly shaped design is now being made here in the UK. But the first model is missing a string!

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Phil Barker

As we documented back in our Blueprint feature in issue 509, Ted Newman Jones III has a unique place in rock 'n' roll history. A fledgling guitar maker and modder, he started touring with The Rolling Stones in 1972 as 'guitar tuner' and in conjunction with Keith Richards created a five-string open G-tuned electric that featured in many Stones shows during the early to mid-70s. Ted developed the design and, with initial funding from Keith, set up shop in Austin later in the 70s where he and a small team began making guitars for local players and plenty of rock stars. Ted passed away in 2016, but prior to this current Newman owner, Jeff Smith, worked with him to digitise the design, which Ted approved.

Since then, Jeff has worked with numerous boutique makers to produce very limited versions of the modern Newman design and in 2023 started work with Cream T to co-produce a range of Newman models made here in the UK by Auden Musical Instrument Company. Cream T owner, Tim Lobley, wanted to start this new part of the Newman story with the unique electric five-string you see here.



NEWMAN 5 STRING | FIRST PLAY





1



2

1. No, you don't need an eye test: it's a five-string guitar and both the bridge and pickups are specifically designed for this initial model

2. As with Ted Newman's original blueprint from the late 70s, the Newman 5 String has 24 frets: great slide guitar potential!

As you'd expect, compared with the pair of prototypes we played earlier in the year, the finished Newman 5 String looks and feels like a proper guitar should. This first run of just 12 instruments shares the same specification and there are no options: what you see is what you get. There's an obvious Fender-like construction style, but the scale length is 628mm (24.75 inches), not the longer 648mm (25.5 inches) you might expect. As with an increasing number of UK builds, the body

heel platform isn't exactly contoured, but the treble-side edge is rounded; there's no neckplate, either, and the four screws sit in very tidily recessed washers.

The slightly diagonally grained 'rift-sawn' neck has a similar straight grain to the body running down its length. Its tinted colour is very close in hue to the body, though the neck and fingerboard finish is lightly satin. The distinctive six-in-a-line headstock is back-angled, too, its outline mirrored by the black plastic truss rod cover.

4. Only five tuners are needed on this back-angled headstock, while the Newman logo – as Bill Wyman pointed out – is an ambigram

At the nut the neck is only a millimetre thinner in width than a standard modern Fender six-string

is solid obeche, with its lightly striped, very straight grain visible through the Butterscotch finish; you can clearly see it's a two-piece spread that's superbly centre-joined. But despite a generous edge radius, it's a slab body with no comfort contouring.

The original offset ellipse outline, however, is distinctive and very practical. The single cutaway, for example, allows full access to the upper of the 24 frets, the

3. Like the Telecasters that inspired the original design, the 5 String model is through-strung



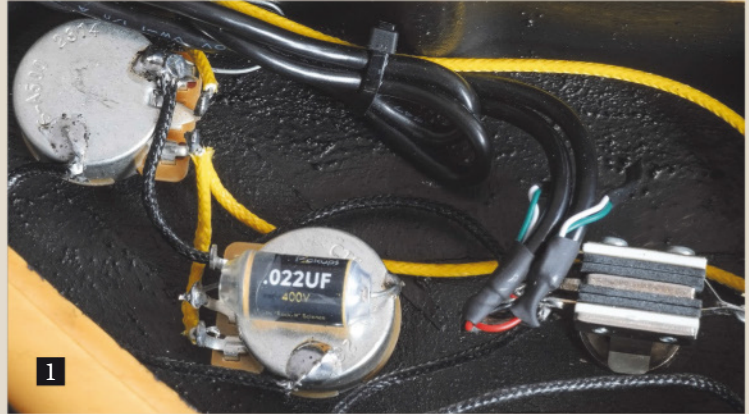
3

UNDER THE HOOD

Any tricks inside the control cavity of this 70s design?

In short, the answer is no. The circuit here is very standard with just a pair of 500k CTS pots – wired modern style – and a quality-looking pickup selector toggle switch. The tone control uses a Cream T-branded paper-in-oil capacitor with a clearly marked value of .022 μ F. It's all tidily done and the cavity is screened with conductive paint and has an aluminium foil-backed plastic cover.

But if the circuit is simple and well used, the pickups are unique. They were conceived specially for this model by Cream T's Richard Whitney and Newman owner, Jeff Smith, in the USA. "It started with a hot version of our Banger & Mash that I'd wound and had lying around," outlines Richard. "It's a well-liked pickup [originally wound for Keith Richards], but I always wanted to make a slightly hotter version. So we started with a double row of slug Alnico V magnets, but Jeff Smith had his heart set on just seeing just *one* row of five slugs. Basically, it is a sort of Banger & Mash, but one coil – the one you can't see – is actually lower underneath the fibreboard faceplate. So, in terms of the magnet field, that lower coil is only producing around 60 per cent of the one you can see. It's not like a standard 18k pickup with two equal coils, it's more like a one-and-a-half-coil pickup! I was really happy with the sound: it's kind of a raw, clean voice."



As to the wire gauge, Richard says: "[The pickups use] 44 AWG on the bridge and 43 AWG on the neck – it's really quite similar to two Telecaster neck coils side by side. I wanted to get a little more midrange, too, because Keith, for me, often has that middy sound, just something that's there but without having to push the amp too much."

As yet, there are no plans for a six-string version of these pickups, but we put in a request! The unique five-string pickups have measured DCRs of 18.11kohms (bridge) and 12.24k (neck).

1. There's plenty of room in the screened cavity for the CTS pots, cloth-covered wire and that paper-in-oil capacitor



There's no scratchplate to confuse the unfussy style, and the through-strung bridge is another unique design, conceived by Jeff Smith and crafted in the USA. The walled base is machined from aluminium with five more generic-looking block saddles that appear to be stainless steel. It's a classy design, but the edges of the aluminium base are left a little sharp and, if we're honest, still feel a little 'prototype'.

Also created exclusively for this new UK model is the pair of Newman humbuckers. These are designed and made by Cream T and are controlled by the simple no-tricks master volume, master tone and a three-way toggle pickup selector placed just above the square, chromed-metal output jack plate. All in, it's a pretty classy, pared-down build that comes with some case candy, a spare string set and a really good Newman-logo'd gigbag.

Feel & Sounds

While the guitar has a very appealing light weight of 2.91kg (6.4lb), it's obviously the narrow neck that presents the big difference here. It actually looks a little narrower than it is because there's seemingly little taper from the nut to the top 24th fret. So, at the nut it measures

TUNING TRICKS

Not only are we one string short of a full packet, but how are your open G chops?

Never tuned your guitar to an open chord? Where have you been? However, if you have ever delved into the realms of slide or bottleneck guitar, then you're probably more at home because open tunings – G, A, D and E, for example – are the building blocks.

On a six-string guitar, open G is really a dropped tuning: the low E, A and top E all drop one tone creating (low to high) D, G, D, G, B, D. That means your middle D, G and B are the same as standard tuning and handily give you a reference point and, of course, a major triad: D (5th), G (root), B (major 3rd). That 5th is repeated on the low and high strings (two octaves apart), while the low G is the lowest root. That's why Keith removes the bottom string – so a simple barre across the five strings now gives you root, 5th, root, major 3rd and 5th. From that barre, those classic Keef chords, riffs and fills are simple. Five-string open G tuning is also the most common tuning for a five-string banjo.

Of course, you can partially voice those Keef-isms in standard tuning, too – working from that middle D, G, B triad – and fudge your Stones tunes as many of us do. Another neat voicing is to just drop the high E down to D, so you're effectively in open G for your top four strings and standard tuning for your bottom five – that works well for slide soloing.



5. A subtle but welcome change to Ted's original design for this UK-made model is this lightly rounded heel to the solid obeche body

6. There are no tricks to the controls on this new offering, so you have a simple drive that really suits the raw and rootsy ride

41.82mm wide; at the 24th fret, it's 49.3mm. String spacing at the nut is 33mm and at the bridge is 41.5mm – which gives an individual string spacing of 10.4mm. What does all this mean? Well, at the nut it's only a millimetre thinner in width than a standard modern Fender six-string, and the individual string spacing is slightly wider. The bridge spacing is a little narrower than vintage Fender, too, but it really is minimal.

Depth-wise, we move from a pretty regular 21.5mm at the 1st fret to a pretty full-feeling 23.9mm by the 12th; the profile is a full-shouldered 'C meets D'. Fretwork, from a medium gauge with good height (approx. 2.6mm wide x 1.2mm high), is very tidy, and there's a little rolling to the edges, but a little more would certainly be welcome on the bass side.

The supplied strings are 0.011, 0.016, 0.018, 0.030 and 0.042 gauge, which look heavier on paper than they feel. Don't forget, the scale length is shorter than Fender and the top and bottom strings are dropped a tone.

If you're not familiar with open G tuning (see Tuning Tricks, above), that – combined with the relatively thin-width neck – will create quite an alien instrument. But if you've got your open G style down, well, you're in for a treat. You just can't help bashing out *Brown Sugar* or any of those classic Stones tunes that are powered by Keef's open G style. The voicing of the guitar is near perfect. The bridge sounds extremely Stones-y – it's raunchy and defined but not overbright, with some midrange clout, and it's dirty but with a clarity to the attack. The pickup mix is delicious and very single coil-like, perfect





Although both coils of these Cream T-designed humbuckers use Alnico V slugs, only one row is visible: the non-visible coil is actually lower and contributes to the raw, clean voice of the guitar



NEWMAN 5 STRING

PRICE: £2,799 (inc gigbag)

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Original offset-shaped solidbody electric

BODY: Obeche

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/41.82mm

FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dot inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 24, medium

HARDWARE: Newman 5-saddle bridge, enclosed Gotoh tuners – aluminium/chrome plating

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 41.5mm

ELECTRICS: 2x Custom Newman (by Cream T) open cover humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector, master volume, master tone

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.91/6.4

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: This 5 String introduces the UK-made Newman range and more custom colour runs follow. Then we'll see a honeycomb-chambered single-pickup model and a standard 6-string model later this year. Other Cream T guitars include the Aurora (£2,799 w/ pickup swapping) and the Polaris (from £2,799)

LEFT-HANDERS: Not yet

FINISHES: Butterscotch (as reviewed) – gloss polyurethane body with tinted satin-finish neck/fingerboard

Cream T Custom Shop

01695 570023

www.creamtcustomshop.com

8/10

PROS Finely crafted build; light weight and practical shape; new-design unique bridge; excellent voicing from unique pickup set – all in, a very unique guitar!

CONS Niche appeal, not least with that price tag

for more laid-back tunes like *Wild Horses*, or with a harder pick attack it's old-style snappy blues. The solo neck pickup loses a little of that sparkle, but it's far from over-thick and proves a good base for bluesier slide licks, not least with a bit of gain boost.

Of course, it's not just for Stones fans – plenty of bands and players have embraced open G, and while most of us have either done that on a retuned six-string, with or without the low E, the five-string concept here (after just a little adjustment) feels and sounds not so much like a new instrument but one that is very purpose built. Even if you don't plan to hit a stage anytime soon, it works great as an overdub guitar – a real roots rock tool.

Verdict

As we said, an open-tuned five-string guitar is unique and will clearly have niche appeal, but it seems fitting to kick off this new project because creating exactly that all those years ago was the starting point of this story. For this writer, finally playing a proper Newman – and a design that was signed off by Ted Newman himself before he passed away in 2016 – is really quite poignant, not least with its royalty level rock 'n' roll DNA.

You just can't help bashing out any of those classic Stones tunes that are powered by Keef's open G style

Nevertheless, it's far from a cheap date, amplified by the simplistic specification, especially for an instrument that may well only be used on a handful of songs in a set. Plus, unlike any half-decent SH or HH Tele-style six-string that – like Keith – you can easily convert to a five string, you're stuck here with just five strings if your open G excursions don't prove as exciting as you'd hoped.

All that said, this initial 12-guitar run – with its unique design, pickups and bridge – sold out barely after the paint was dry (there are more coming!) with customers including a couple of very big names. Forgetting that cost, then, the feel, sounds and that distinctive outline are all really rather special: a very vibe-y homage to its original designer. Bless ya, Ted! **G**

FIRST PLAY



FURCH VINTAGE PURE SM
€1,458

WHAT IS IT? An OM-size acoustic with traditional design, premium body woods and open-pore finish



**FURCH VIOLET
DELUXE SM**
€1,341

WHAT IS IT? An all-solid wood Grand Auditorium acoustic with a cutaway and front and back bevels

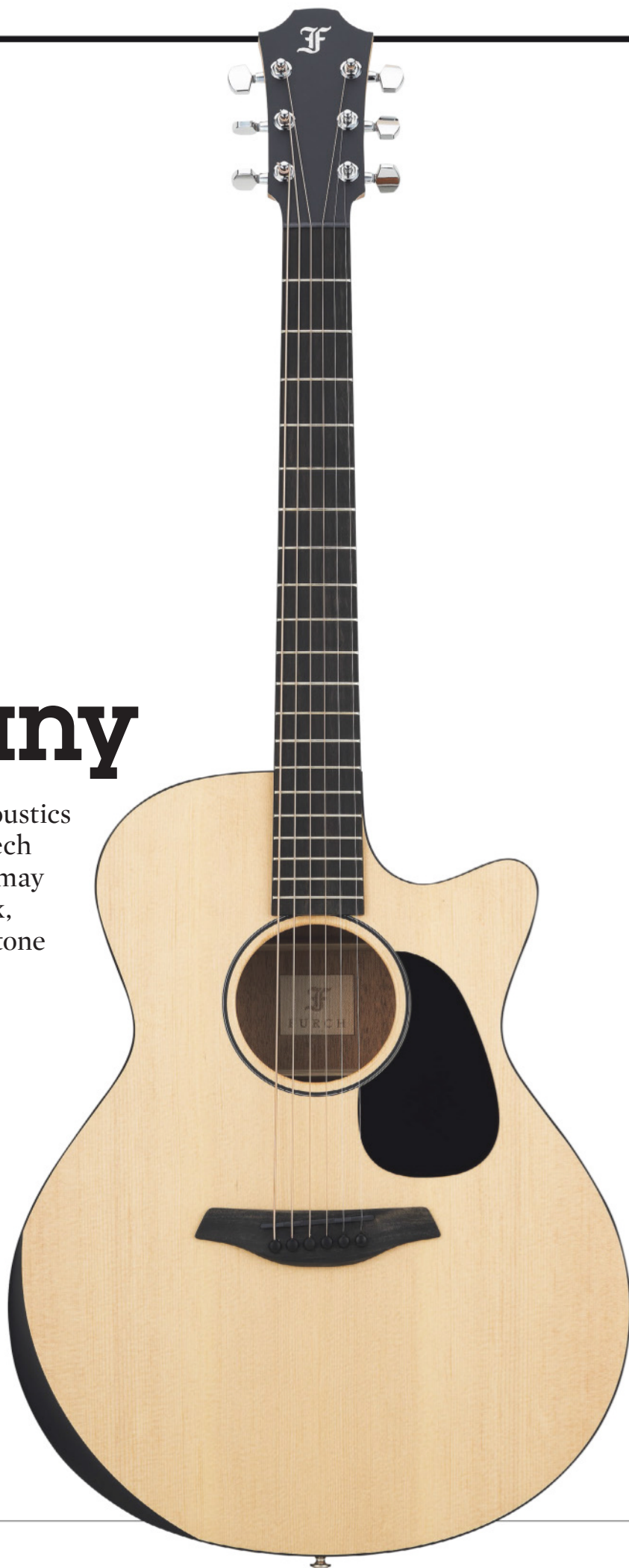
Two's Company

This pair of finely crafted acoustics from the lower end of the Czech Republic maker's price band may look simple and stripped back, but they're fully loaded with tone

Words David Mead **Photography** Phil Barker

Furch – a maker that has been on our radar for some time – has featured in these review pages before and we've been greatly impressed by the level of craft and tone on display. Both the models we have before us now are representative of the lower end of the Furch price list – an OM from the Vintage Pure category and a Grand Auditorium from the Violet catalogue.

For the uninitiated, Furch has categorised its different price bands colourfully with Violet at the low end of the spectrum, ascending through Blue, Green, Yellow and Red as the models become gradually more higher end and feature laden. It all culminates with the Rainbow Series, which, according to the company, "gives guitar players a chance to





design a customised instrument that truly fulfils their dreams and expectations". Alongside the colour range, Furch has Vintage, Travel, Grand Nylon and Limited Edition options, too. So there is no shortage of choice to be had, with virtually all points covered, as a quick look at the website will reveal.

As a thumbnail guide, the Vintage Pure instruments are essentially high on build quality but low on whistles and bells, concentrating on providing no-nonsense examples of established acoustic guitar designs. As an example, the range includes a dreadnought (with or without a cutaway), an OM with a cutaway, as well as the smallest body size in the group, labelled OOM and with 12 frets to the body, all retailing at the same price.

Turning to the Violet Series, the Grand Auditorium model that we have here sits alongside a Sitka/mahogany dreadnought and a Master's Choice GA, the latter being stage ready with the inclusion of an LR Baggs Stagepro Element pickup.

Zooming in on the OM to begin with, construction details are fairly straightforward, with a Sitka spruce top that has been listed as "AA Grade" by Furch and certainly lives up to that categorisation with a tight grain pattern

and some first-class book-matching.

Ornamentation is plain and simple, too, with a walnut rosette and a mock tortoise pickguard in contrast to the ebony bridge and compensated Tusq saddle. The simple-but-functional theme continues with the African mahogany back and sides, once again AA Grade according to Furch, with tortie binding front and back.

The mahogany theme continues with the neck, which looks to us to be a two-piece affair with a separate heel (if there's a scarf joint present towards the headstock end, we certainly can't detect it), and a set of open-back Gotoh tuners at the top end seal the deal. Fingerboard is ebony with a nut width of 45mm, although the model comes with an option of both 43mm or extra-wide 48mm on request. All in all, the OM has a considerable amount of kerb appeal that yells "play me" from the outset.

Turning our attention to the Violet Deluxe SM, the story is similar to the OM in terms of construction details. But this time we have a couple of whistles and bells to look at in the form of forearm and waist bevels. But, just to recap, we're looking at a Sitka spruce top – this time a single-A grade and so its appearance is a little bit more plain than its counterpart. The back and sides, however, are the same

1. Both our review models occupy the lower end of the Furch price range, but no expense has been spared where quality of craft and materials are concerned

2. The AA-grade Sitka spruce top on the Vintage Pure SM displays some fine grain figuring

3. A waist bevel on the Deluxe SM – similar to that which you'd find on a Strat – is included to boost player comfort





2

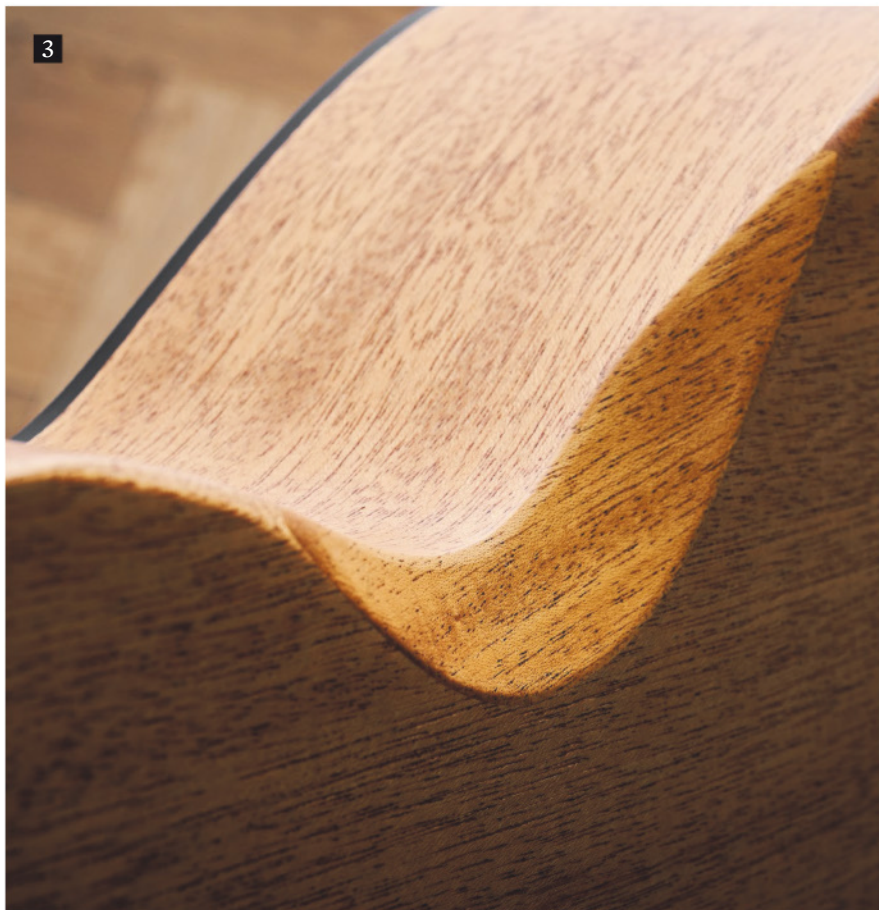
double-A grade as on the OM. Forearm bevels are becoming a familiar sight on acoustic guitars these days and Furch uses a super high-tech method of 3D-printing to produce a seamless, precise fit and a very smooth transition to and from the binding on either side.

The waist bevel is not as familiar and is present here on the player's side of the instrument's upper waist. Think Strat, only much shallower. Furch refers to this as the "Bevel Duo" and goes on to say that its presence "significantly enhances player comfort and elevates the instrument's exclusive appearance..." We'd vouch for that, of course, adding that the Violet's appearance is very elegant and that graceful swoop of the cutaway is the cherry on top of the design.

Other than that, it's mahogany for the neck, ebony for the fingerboard and a very similar complement to the OM. True to say the tuners here are closed back and Furch branded, the scratchplate is plain black, as is the binding, but both are very close in all other respects.

Feel & Sounds

We were drawn towards the OM even before we picked it up as it sits as a favourite acoustic-guitar body shape here at the ranch. Not as potentially ungainly





4. Both our review samples have African ebony fretboards that are devoid of position markers topside, enhancing their stripped-back cosmetic appeal

5. The Deluxe SM's ebony bridge has a fully compensated black Tusq saddle and plastic string pins

as a dread or a jumbo, perhaps, but not as petite and demure-sounding as a parlour at the same time. Furch describes the neck profile here as a “soft V” and visually this checks out as you can easily see the contouring with a casual glance. But once you get it in your hand the V-ness all but disappears as it's just a great, comfortable fit. Not a hint of clubbiness, just a good workmanlike handful.

We're not disappointed with the sound, either. It's amazingly balanced with the

full tonal spectrum well represented and no shelf in the bass where it drops to nothing on the final few frets on the low E string. Instead, we were greeted with a full-bodied range of tones, very good sustain and great musicality. One slight criticism is that the action was a tad too high for our tastes, but preferences in that area are incredibly subjective and what's slightly too high for some could be dead right for others.

The Violet Deluxe SM Grand Auditorium feels very similar in the hands. The open-pore finish on both of these guitars enhances the tactile aspect of the instruments. It feels like it puts the player a little closer to the action in a strange way. It's as if you're holding unfinished wood and, while that may not appeal to everyone, here it suits both guitars down to the ground and we like it a lot.

Obviously, we're dealing with a bigger body size on the Grand Auditorium and, as you might expect, it has a fuller, throatier voice with a more pronounced bass and a rise in volume level, too. Strummed chords leap out of the soundbox, making the Violet a good choice for a singer-songwriter on a budget and who is looking for a musical companion. Single notes cut through the mix, too – install a pickup and the live stage is all yours.





6

Verdict

If we were to launch any criticism at Furch, it would be that neither of these guitars come with a case or gigbag, which you might expect from instruments in this price range. While you might not want a case and already own a gigbag that would do the job, it's nice to have the choice and it strikes us as something worth rethinking. However, a Furch-branded Hiscox hard case would increase the cost of the OM, for instance, to around the £1,600 mark,

6. The Vintage Pure SM's back and sides are from AA-grade African mahogany with mock tortoise binding

Strummed chords leap out of the soundbox, making the Violet a good choice for a singer-songwriter on a budget

still making the guitar good value, but would-be punters could potentially find the add-on price a bit off-putting.

Having said that, both these guitars tick practically all the boxes for us. Craft is top of the line and they sound very good indeed. We love that almost 'unfinished' look and feel to both instruments, and would heartily recommend a look in Furch's catalogue if you're in the market for an acoustic guitar that combines good looks with great sound. **G**



FURCH VINTAGE PURE SM

PRICE: Approx. £1,229 (€1,458)

ORIGIN: Czech Republic

TYPE: OM

TOP: AA grade Sitka spruce

BACK/SIDES: AA-grade African mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 402mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 377mm

NECK: African mahogany, soft V profile

SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6")

TUNERS: Gotoh SE700 with nickel patina

NUT/WIDTH: Tusq/45mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 400mm (15.75") radius

FRETS: 20

BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony/55mm

ELECTRICS: To order – see below

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.54/3.4

OPTIONS: Pickup options include LR Baggs EAS-VTC, LR Baggs Stagepro Element, LR Baggs Anthem, LR Baggs Stagepro Anthem at extra cost. Gigbag (£82), Hiscox hard-shell case (£296). Also available with 43mm or 48mm nut widths

RANGE OPTIONS: The Vintage Pure SM is available in several different body shapes: a dreadnought, dreadnought with cutaway, OM with cutaway and OOM body shape all at approx. £1,229

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes

FINISH: Natural open-pore

8/10

PROS Does everything you'd expect from an OM; great build, quality woods and good sound

CONS Doesn't come with a case or gigbag included in the price



FURCH VIOLET DELUXE SM

PRICE: Approx. £1,130 (€1,341)

ORIGIN: Czech Republic

TYPE: Grand Auditorium

TOP: A grade Sitka spruce

BACK/SIDES: AA-grade African mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 115mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 398mm

NECK: African mahogany, soft V profile

SCALE LENGTH: 650mm (25.6")

TUNERS: Furch logo – machine chrome-plating

NUT/WIDTH: Tusq/45mm

FINGERBOARD: Ebony 400mm (15.75") radius

FRETS: 20

BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony/55mm

ELECTRICS: To order – see left

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.08/4.6

OPTIONS: As Vintage Pure SM

RANGE OPTIONS: Violet Master's Choice (c £1,105) including an LR Baggs Stagepro Element pickup; Violet SM dreadnought (c £842)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Natural open-pore

Furch

+420 910 902 139

www.furchguitars.com

8/10

PROS Great presence to the sound and bags of toneful volume with eye-catching good looks

CONS As with the OM, it does not come with a case or gigbag

FIRST PLAY



**CHARVEL PRO-MOD
SAN DIMAS STYLE 1
RELIC HH FR PF**
£1,259

WHAT IS IT? A Fender-approved hot-rodded Strat featuring a mix of modern and retro features

Wayne's World

With a super-charged Strat vibe and a contrasting relic finish, Charvel's San Dimas Style 1 is swapping Spandex for slippers as the 80s blueprint reaches middle age

Words Stuart Williams **Photography** Olly Curtis

It's a crowded table in the Fender household. Outside of the obvious Fender and Squier-branded instruments sit its 'specialist' brands, including Gretsch, Jackson, EVH and Charvel. Excluding the former, which wears its unmistakable niche indelibly, you might think that the latter three brands present quite the overlap: three very well-respected names that all have their roots in hard rock and metal. However, each one also has to fight for its place, and we think it's pretty clearly delineated. The EVH brand is very pointedly an execution of Eddie Van Halen's ethos, which appears to be continuing faithfully under the watchful eye of Wolfgang Van Halen. Jackson has things covered at the more contemporary, heavier end. Which just leaves Charvel.

For those who are not aware, Wayne Charvel himself started his career as a luthier at Fender, before leaving to set up his own modding and repair shop, which offered refinishes and upgrades to out-of-warranty Fender instruments. Grover Jackson bought the brand in the late 70s and, thanks to its OEM parts business and later its own instruments, Charvel became a leading light in the hot-rodding trend of the 80s, offering souped-up, svelte guitars aimed at





The big news is that this San Dimas has undergone the same relic treatment as Fender's Road Worn series and the EVH Frankenstein Relic. The lacquer is nitrocellulose, while the neck is rubbed with a satin urethane gel for some obvious but not-too-heavy ageing



1



2

1. There are many parallels to be drawn between this Charvel and its EVH Frankenstein cousin, with the Charvel offering the same hot-rod Strat foundation, compound-radius 'board, and features such as the body-end thumbwheel for adjusting the truss rod

2. Our San Dimas has a Floyd Rose 1000 Series vibrato that's perfectly balanced and puts in a robust performance under abuse. Plus, you can raise the pitch as well as drop it

3. The controls are minimal with a single volume knob and a three-way pickup selector switch

players with licks so hot they'd melt your platforms as well as your face.

Coming full circle, Fender acquired Jackson and thus Charvel around 20 years ago. And just as well. Because while Charvel has dabbled in various alternative designs over the years – such as the PRS-looking Questar, slightly pointier LS shape and Jazzmaster-inspired Skatecaster – it's the SuperS shapes and configurations that we really associate with classic Charvels.

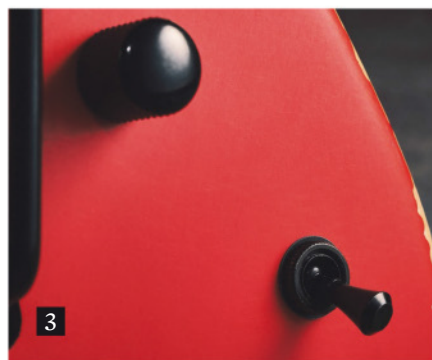
mounted pickups, and its Style 1 tag refers to the fact that this guitar features a Strat-style double-cut body (Style 2 is Tele-shaped). While Charvel's pedigree might conjure images of metallic, primary-coloured finishes covered in glossy lacquer, this version of the San Dimas shows us what becomes of Sunset Strip-dwelling rock tools after the smoke machine has long depleted.

Being made in Mexico, the relic finish has undergone treatment in the same facility as Fender's Road Worn series, and as well as our review model's Orange tint, this guitar also comes in Black and White with the same ageing.

But don't let the 40-year throwback look fool you because while there's a lot of tradition going on here – including a Strat-style square heel, 22 frets, clay-dot inlays, a Floyd Rose and a classic Seymour Duncan JB/'59 pairing – it's met by some modern features, too. These come in the form of a 305mm to 406mm (12- to 16-inch) compound radius fingerboard with rolled edges, 'speed neck' profile and a body-end truss rod adjustment wheel.

In the flesh, the Orange finish is more of a paled red, and the satin neck (rubbed urethane gel finish) matches the wear with a lot of darkened/faux-grubby spots. It's apparently built for comfort as well

There's a crossover between family traits: the playability and finish are very close to the EVH Frankenstein Relic

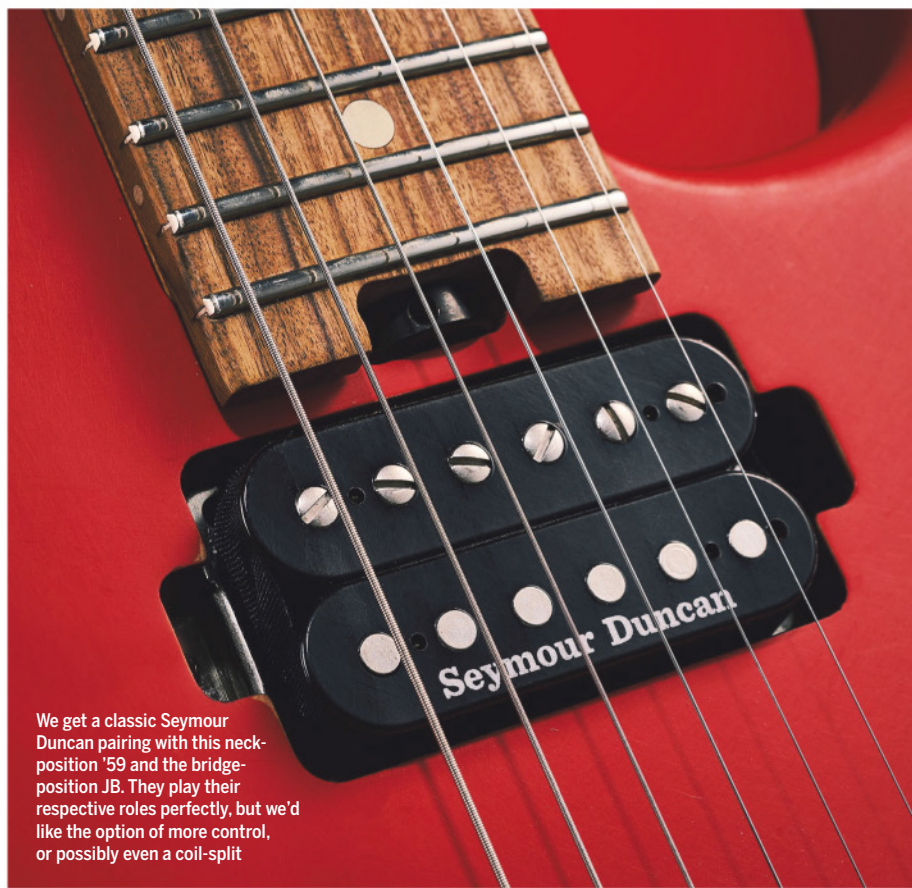


3

Feel & Sounds

With the threat of lawsuits out of the way, this meant we could now benefit from proper Fender-approved shred machines that didn't look out of place (Fender Heavy Metal Strat, anyone?). More recently, it's culminated in the Pro Mod import line, featuring Charvel's San Dimas and So-Cal designs in Dinky, Style 1 and Style 2 configurations. Which brings us to our review guitar.

This San Dimas is identifiable by the sans-scratchplate body and direct-



We get a classic Seymour Duncan pairing with this neck-position '59 and the bridge-position JB. They play their respective roles perfectly, but we'd like the option of more control, or possibly even a coil-split

as speed, though, with the thin profile feeling forgiving to our fretting hand as we anchor our thumb for barre chords, while also allowing us to put our foot down for single-note runs up the neck. It's thin but doesn't feel cramp-inducing like some shredder necks can, and big bends are aided by the increasingly wider radius, as well as the highly polished frets. It's here that we start to feel the crossover between family traits, with the playability and finish coming very close to the EVH Frankenstein Relic we tried out in *Guitarist* issue 509.

But our Charvel has the benefit of having an additional humbucker wired in from the factory. It's a pickup pairing we've seen countless times over the years – and for very good reason. The bridge-position JB and neck-position '59 work seamlessly together, with the '59 delivering a punchy example of a neck humbucker: slightly hollowed without being too scooped and, at least in this format, light enough on the bass end to maintain some clarity.

Flicking to the bridge, the JB gives us a shift in gain and a bump to the midrange. There's enough of a contrast that our clean setting turns crunchy by simply changing the pickup selection, and the sometimes-overlooked middle position combines both voices nicely in a way that we think will

see it get a lot of use. This is important, given the sparse single volume control.

It would have been nice to see some extra options, electronically, with a coil-split being the most obvious. However, the pickup is four-conductor, so in keeping with tradition, this is something that could be an aftermarket addition.

Verdict

We can't help but think that this San Dimas Relic is caught a little between two eras. On the one hand, it's a very nice-playing and sounding beefed-up Strat-style guitar. There's a lot to love – from the feel, sounds and response to the overall quality. However, if you take a look at the Charvel catalogue, there are multiple San Dimas Style 1 HH models available in their 'pristine' form, except they come with a less bare-bones electronic layout (a tone control and pull-push coil-split). Some players might also miss the additional two frets to make a two-octave fingerboard (you'll need to look at Charvel's DK range for that), and while the San Dimas's traditional leanings are heavily stylised, a more contemporary contoured heel might have been the icing on the cake.

Overall, though, it's a hard-rocking double-cut that harks back to the golden age of the genre, and it does so very well. **G**



CHARVEL PRO-MOD SAN DIMAS STYLE 1 RELIC HH FR PF

PRICE: £1,259

ORIGIN: Mexico

TYPE: Double-cut solidbody electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Graphite-reinforced maple, 'speed neck' profile

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Floyd Rose locking nut/43mm

FINGERBOARD: Pau ferro, cream clay dot inlays, 305-406mm (12-16") compound radius

FRETS: 22, jumbo

HARDWARE: Aged Floyd Rose 1000 Series vibrato, Charvel-branded tuners

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52mm

ELECTRICS: Seymour Duncan '59 (neck) and JB (bridge) humbuckers, 3-position pickup selector, master volume control

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.5/7.8

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: Pro-Mod Style 1 HH FR M (£1,049), Pro-Mod Style 1 HSS FR M (£1,049-£1,149), Pro-Mod Style 1 HSS HT M (£949), Jim Root Pro-Mod Style 1 HH FR E (£1,549)

LEFT HANDERS: No

FINISH: Orange (as reviewed), White, Black – nitrocellulose relic body with satin urethane gel neck finish

Fender Musical Instruments EMEA

01342 331700

www.charvel.com

8/10

PROS Great playability combined with classic looks, familiar tones and some modern appointments to boot

CONS This model is slightly limited in places when it comes to features

FIRST PLAY



**WALRUS AUDIO
MONUMENTAL
HARMONIC STEREO
TREMOLO**
£269

WHAT IS IT? Stereo tremolo
pedal with tap tempo capability



On The Pulse

Walrus Audio releases a stereo version of its Monument tremolo with presets and more

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

1. Press the Bypass and Tap switches simultaneously to cycle through the available presets: Red, Green, Blue, with White being 'live', the actual sound derived from the knob positions
2. Presses on this division button scroll forwards and around the five timing subdivisions available for the LFO, based on the current rate set by the Rate knob or by tap tempo
3. Fully left on the S-B-H knob you get standard tremolo where all frequencies get affected at the same time, fully right you get harmonic tremolo with high and low frequencies offset from each other, and in between those two extremes a range of blends are available
4. Opt for new the stereo role offered by this V2 pedal and you'll unlock some impressive sounds in conjunction with the pedal's Pan control

Walrus Audio's original Monument tremolo has a varied feature set for anyone wishing to explore a wide range of tremolo sounds and put them to use on stage. The major shift with this expanded version, the Monumental Harmonic Stereo Tremolo, has been adding stereo operation so that, besides standard mono, the new pedal offers stereo in/stereo out and mono in/stereo out with a Pan knob to determine stereo width.

Other changes include additional wave shapes and tap divisions, plus, instead of a switch to select Standard or Harmonic tremolo types, you now get a knob to blend from one type to the other. You can also save and recall three onboard presets, and the Tap footswitch now also offers a momentary ramp (up or down) of tremolo speed, similar to that of a rotary speaker.

For its most classic application, set the pedal for sine wave, adjust your Rate and Depth accordingly, and you'll be accessing familiar tremolo sounds that work brilliantly in a standard mono chain. Beyond that, there's plenty more to explore, including the variation offered by other waveforms, whether you plump for a square wave regimented stutter, its more lopsided sawtooth companions, or even the random trem that will have your audience thinking you've got a pedal malfunction. Furthermore, the S-B-H knob allows some subtle shadings between its two end stops, gradually separating low and high frequencies as it travels.

The pedal's crowning glory, however, is that it sounds stunning when used in a stereo role. The Pan knob moves from standard tremolo by offsetting the phase of the right LFO until you get the two LFOs 180-degrees out of phase and a huge stereo spread with a great sense of depth and movement as the tremolo sweeps back and forth across it. While we realise not everyone will have the opportunity to exploit this functionality in a live situation, it's certainly still available to all for recording.

Verdict

A pretty comprehensive feature set makes this do-it-all tremolo pedal an extremely practical compact choice for onstage needs thanks to instantly accessible presets and spontaneous changes available via the Tap/Ramp footswitch or a connected external expression pedal. From the subtle to the extreme, this could satisfy all of your tremolo needs. **G**



THE RIVALS

If you don't need stereo, the original Monument (£199) remains a potent tremolo pedal. Jam Pedals' Harmonious Monk mk2 (£239) includes tap tempo and adjustable ramp, and Old Blood Noise Endeavors' Blackcap (£209) combines a traditional analogue tremolo and a harmonic digital tremolo with various routing options. For stereo, Electro-Harmonix's triple-footswitch Super Pulsar (£199) has tap tempo, presets and lots of adjustable parameters, Mr Black's Pana-Trem (£249) is a twin-footswitch true-stereo harmonic tremolo and panner, and Source Audio's single-footswitch Vertigo (£195) has three tremolo types.



WALRUS AUDIO MONUMENTAL HARMONIC STEREO TREMOLO

PRICE: £269

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True bypass, 3 onboard presets. Tap tempo, Ramp function, available in orange/copper or black

CONTROLS: Volume, Shape (Sine, Square, Saw, Ramp, Bumps and Random), Pan, Rate, Depth, S-B-H switch (Standard/Both/Harmonic), division button (quarter, quarter triplet, 8th, 8th triplet, 16th), internal dip switches for Tap/Exp, Tap/Ramp footswitch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard inputs Mono + Stereo, standard outputs Mono + Stereo, Tap/Expression pedal input

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied) 100mA

DIMENSIONS: 122 (d) x 72 (w) x 67mm (h)

FACE bvba

+32 3 844 67 97

www.walrusaudio.com



PROS Compact size for a twin-footswitch pedal; mono or stereo operation; foot-operated performance options; variation in tremolo sound; expression pedal control over every parameter

CONS Ramping speed is not adjustable here



**IK MULTIMEDIA
TONEX ONE**
£189

WHAT IS IT? Mini-format pedal that enables access to Tonex captured sounds



Small Wonder

IK Multimedia presents captured rigs and stompboxes for all in this wallet-friendly, pocket-rocket entry into the Tonex ecosystem

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

1. The Alt button toggles between the two sets of parameters that are available for the four knobs. When accessing the alternate set, the lights pulse on and off. The button also lights up in different colours depending on the pedal's mode: green for Dual mode, amber for Stomp mode and so on
2. The three micro knobs are translucent and can be assigned custom colours for visual identification of the 20 Tone Models, especially useful for seeing whether A or B is engaged during live performances
3. This TRS socket offers plenty of options. You can take a standard mono output or a dual mono or stereo output if you use a Y-cable, and it can also feed stereo headphones

IK Multimedia's Tonex is a software application that uses AI machine modelling to capture the sound of rigs comprising various combinations of amps, cabinets and drive pedals. If you wish to use the sounds (known as Tone Models) on stage, there's the three-footswitch Tonex Pedal. Size constraints could give some players second thoughts about incorporating one of those into a pedalboard – but there will be no such qualms about the latest member of the family. The Tonex One is in the familiar mini- or micro pedal space-saving format while retaining the same audio quality of its larger sibling.

The Tonex One can store 20 Tone Models that you can drag and drop to it from the software via a USB computer connection. It comes supplied with the Tonex SE software, which offers instant access to 200 of IK's Tone Models, but it also gives you access online to ToneNET where there are unlimited Tone Models created and shared by other users.

There are two basic ways of using the pedal. In Dual mode, it is always active and you can use the footswitch to toggle between Two Tone Models designated A and B. This is likely the preferred method if both are amp and cab rig models and the pedal is feeding direct into the PA, giving you the option of two different amp rigs or the same rig with two different gain settings. Onto Stomp mode and here the footswitch works as a normal bypass, so you can use the Tonex One as a standard fuzz/distortion/drive pedal in the chain. Changing between the two modes on the pedal itself is easy and there are eight parameters that are straightforward to tweak from the front panel, including compression and reverb. You can also change your A, B and Stomp models, but you'll need to remember what colour you assigned to each.

Verdict

There's no doubting the quality of sounds available for this pedal and its all-round functionality, including as a recording asset (it works as a USB audio interface) or practice resource (with headphones). Its massive advantage, though, is its size – there has got to be space for this on your 'board, where it could be in the chain as any variety of dirt pedal or at the end of it as a full-blown amp/cab rig. It can even be a pocket-sized backup for your own rig if you've used the Tonex software to capture it. Game-changer! **G**



IK MULTIMEDIA TONEX ONE

PRICE: £189

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Amp sim pedal

FEATURES: Tuner, Tonex SE and AmpliTube 5 SE software included, onboard compressor, noise gate and reverb (five types), cabinet bypass option, USB audio interface capability

CONTROLS: Volume/Gain, Bass/Gate, Mid/Comp, Treble/Reverb, ALT button, A/B & Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard TRS output (mono, stereo or headphones), USB

POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied) 100mA

DIMENSIONS: 93 (d) x 50 (w) x 51mm (h)

IK Multimedia

www.ikmultimedia.com



10/10

PROS Very compact; massive range of tones; mono or stereo output; audio interface capability; headphone compatibility; can be powered by USB

CONS The rubber bung covering the USB socket could easily go walkies, but that's no big deal



THE RIVALS

If you want to buy into the Tonex ecosystem but the size of the pedal isn't a concern, the Tonex Pedal (£348) comes with 150 presets that can be called up by the three footswitches, and it has easier front-panel tweaking and MIDI control. Another compact pedal if you're after amp rig sounds for your 'board or gigbag is the Boss IR-2 (£179) with 11 different rigs. A third choice that can be any fuzz/drive/distortion pedal you want is the Line 6 HX One (£299); it doesn't do the amp and cab sounds, but it does cover a comprehensive range of effects types besides dirt.



the Wishlist

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

Gibson Custom Jeff Beck 'YardBurst' 1959 Les Paul Standard £8,999

CONTACT **Gibson** WEB www.gibson.com WORDS **Dave Burrluck** PHOTOGRAPHY **Adam Gasson**

Jeff Beck's career with the hugely influential Yardbirds lasted from March 1965 to November '66. And while he's probably better remembered with a Stratocaster in his magical hands, this latest release from Gibson Custom and the Murphy Lab celebrates his first Les Paul Standard, apparently purchased in London in early '66, just before the recording sessions started for The Yardbirds' eponymous album, aka 'Roger The Engineer'.

While Gibson reminds us that the 'YardBurst' is "a faithful recreation of this legendary guitar", it might be wise to add "...and one he'd mucked about with". For example, Jeff is pictured on *Ready Steady Go!* (27 May 1966) with the dark sunburst guitar, showing off its distinctive black pickguard but still with a cream toggle switch surround and covered humbuckers. In later images and YouTube footage, we see the guitar without its toggle switch surround and uncovered open-coil pickups – and then even that pickguard disappears.

"Jeff was the ultimate 'tinkerer', always changing the look, feel and sound of his guitars, and the 'YardBurst' reflects that," confirms Lee Bartram, head of commercial and marketing EMEA at Gibson. "Various references show the guitar having parts being

constantly changed during its time, a testament to Jeff's vibrant, experimental personality."

It's not precisely documented what happened to Jeff's original '59, either, or the recordings it was a part of, although Jeff had said it was used on that '66 album as well as the *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* single, which also featured Jimmy Page on guitar, of course. It is quite possibly the guitar used on Beck's *Bolero* (again, with Page) and the first Jeff Beck Group album, *Truth*. Was it the one that Jeff then stripped the finish off?

That's an investigation for another day as we'll remember this replica, number 28, as one of *those* guitars. Even before we dare pull it from its aged Lifton hardshell case, it looks scarily like the 65-year-old real thing with its relatively light relicing; it's still glossy and looks like a used working guitar, not a faux relic.

It's a beautiful weight and the neck is a good handful – 22.5mm deep at the 1st fret, 24.4mm by the 12th. Unlike an original 'Burst, there's good height to the well-fretted frets. And c'mon, play-testing this £9k 'Paul can hardly be called work: it sounds just as good as it looks and feels. It's great craft and a vivid reminder of a pivotal point in the history of rock music as Jeff moved from The Yardbirds to his own Jeff Beck Group. **G**

1. A plain alternative to this logo'd toggle switch cavity 'medallion' cover is among the case candy, which includes a replica of the Royal Blue stained-glass pattern strap with banjo-style leather ends that Jeff was pictured using with his original guitar. Even the velvet interior of the Lifton case is inspired by the suit Jeff often wore while in The Yardbirds

2. The original guitar was initially pictured with the humbucking covers still on, but one of Jeff's tweaks was to reveal the cream (or double 'Classic White', as Gibson calls them) bobbins. These Custombuckers are unpotted and have virtually identical DC readings of 7.85k, adding to the original 'Burst style



3. Later in his career Jeff used a highly striped flame-topped '59 Les Paul, but this replica has quite a plain top – “hand-picked to match the original”, says Gibson. The back is one-piece lightweight mahogany and this sample weighs just 3.8kg (8.36lb). Lovely!

4. This 'YardBurst' is from a 130-only run (in honour of Gibson's 130th anniversary) and was released on what would have been Jeff Beck's 80th birthday, 24 June 2024. It replicates the first of many Les Pauls Jeff used in his later time with The Yardbirds and then the early Jeff Beck Group. Could it be called the guitar that invented heavy rock?

5. When no-one was looking, we unscrewed the backplate to see the 'real thing' illusion. There's no screening, Gibson-logo'd CTS 500k pots, and a pair of big 'bumblebee' .022µF PIO capacitors – all wired vintage style, just like they were in 1959





Gas Supply

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

Fender Player II Series **From £619 to £769**

CONTACT **Fender Musical Instruments EMEA** PHONE **01342 331700** WEB **www.fender.com**

JARGON CRUNCHING **Rolled Fingerboards**

Arguably pioneered by Paul Reed Smith, rolled 'boards are a modern addition to our guitars, designed to remove the 'sharp' feel of the 'board by rounding off the edge on both sides. This simulates the feel of an older, played-in guitar, making your trips up and down the neck a lot smoother.

Player II? Sounds like a video game reference!

These are the all-new, second iteration of Fender's hugely popular Player Series guitars, which launched in 2018, replacing the long-standing Standard Series guitars. There are 12 electric models (including the left-handed versions) in the range, along with a trio of basses, all of which include a host of new features.

What's different?

Quite a lot! First of all, the Player II Series includes all of the core Fender body shapes: five Stratocaster configurations, four Telecaster variants, as well as

Jazzmaster, Jaguar and Mustang models. The big news is that the Stratocaster and Telecaster models come with body options. You can choose from traditional alder in both designs or, intriguingly, Fender has made both of the regular Stratocaster and Telecaster models available with a chambered ash or mahogany body.

Interesting. What else has changed?

Across the entire range, there are a number of constants, including Fender ClassicGear tuners, maple necks with a 'Goldilocks' C-shaped profile and accompanying middle-ground 241mm (9.5-inch) radius fingerboard.

FINGERBOARD

Fender has rolled the edges, but perhaps more exciting is the fact that rosewood is now back on the menu in the Player Series, alongside maple depending on your finish choice

BODY

The Strat and Tele models come in classic alder, but Fender is also offering these with weight-relieved chambered ash or mahogany bodies

ELECTRONICS

Where the original Player Series moved away from tradition with some of its pickup configurations, we now get Jazzmaster, Jaguar and Mustang models equipped with their traditional pickup offerings

LEFT-HANDED

Fender hasn't forgotten the lefties (well, not entirely), and both the SSS Stratocaster and SS Telecaster models are available as left-handed models





The Jazzmaster, and its offset siblings, return to their familiar, more traditional pickup configurations in the Player II range

Talking of which, Fender has paid particular attention to the fingerboards, abandoning the slightly divisive pau ferro for a return to rosewood. Of course, there's still the finish-dependent choice of a maple 'board, too, and this applies to every model except for the Jazzmaster and Jaguar. What's more, the Player II Series guitars feature rolled fingerboard edges.

It sounds like there are a lot of models...

Starting with the Strats, we get the classic SSS configuration (£739) with a two-point vibrato, Player Series Alnico V single coils and a choice of eight finish/

Fender has abandoned the slightly divisive pau ferro fingerboards for a return to rosewood

fingerboard combinations. Next, there's the Chambered options, which, as we've already mentioned, can feature a weight-relieved ash or mahogany body for the same price; the finish count is reduced to four. From here, we're into the HSS models, which follow the same blueprint with alder or Chambered versions – here, the bridge single coil is replaced with a Player Series Alnico II humbucker. But it doesn't stop there because Fender is also offering the alder version in a left-hand SSS configuration, with three colour choices, including a maple-fingerboard model.

What about the Telecasters?

It's a similar story with alder-bodied or Chambered SS configurations (£739), but there's also a Telecaster HH model (£769) featuring a pair of Alnico II humbuckers. There's no Chambered option for the latter, but once again Fender has opted to offer the Player II Tele as a lefty.

Talk to us about the offsets...

You might have noticed that the current Player line-up doesn't actually include a traditional Jazzmaster or Jaguar platform; both models ditch their 'classic' pickup layout to include humbuckers. That's all changed and the Player II Jazzmaster (£759) is now sporting familiar Jazzmaster pickups. The same goes for the Jaguar (£759) and Mustang (£619) models, which are offered in SS configurations only. They'll be making their way to retailers by the time you read this, and we'll take a more detailed look shortly. [SW]

ALSO OUT NOW...

BLACKSTAR POLAR 2 £179

Recording at home has never been easier, and Blackstar wants to help make it even more accessible with its new Polar 2 audio interface. Designed to be a guitar-friendly route to your computer, Polar 2 features FET-driven instrument inputs for low-noise/high-headroom response, along with the brand's Enhance circuit, which aims to respond like the input stage of a valve amp. Polar 2 is also equipped with a pair of mic preamps and can operate at 24bit/192kHz. It ships with a software bundle including Blackstar's own St James plug-in suite, Ableton Live Lite, Melodyne Essential and more.

www.blackstaramplification.com



LANEY BLACK COUNTRY CUSTOMS LOUDPEDALS £399

The pedalboard amp quest continues and the latest additions are two Loudpedals from Laney's Black Country Customs range. Made in the UK, the Laney BCC Ironheart and Lionheart Loudpedals are designed in collaboration with Laney artists Martin Miller and Tom Quayle respectively and both feature a 60-watt amplifier with two channels, plus Laney's LAIR impulse responses. Also onboard are additional foot-switchable boost and reverb circuits, plus flexible connectivity. There's a USB C socket for use as an audio interface, an XLR output, a headphone socket and MIDI input/thru for external control. Both pedals are available now, priced at £399.

www.laney.co.uk





Fretbuzz

A monthly look at must-hear artists from all corners of the guitar world, from the roots of their sound to the tracks that matter most

Artist: The Last Dinner Party

Album: Prelude To Ecstasy (Island)



The Last Dinner Party's debut album, *Prelude To Ecstasy*, became a record-breaker when it topped the UK charts www.thelastdinnerparty.co.uk

Prior to joining the band, Emily Roberts (second from left) completed a jazz degree, played on the West End in *Six The Musical* and was part of a Queen tribute band

The Last Dinner Party have seen a meteoric rise since their debut album, *Prelude To Ecstasy*, dropped into the UK No 1 album slot earlier this year as the biggest-selling debut in nearly a decade. Tours with Hozier and Florence & The Machine, along with a BBC Sound of 2024 award, have seen the band hit dreamy highs, a sharp trajectory for guitarist Emily Roberts. "I did a degree in jazz guitar before going on to work as a session player for a few artists," she tells us. "It was Covid when I graduated, so once things got more back to normal I started the job on [West End show] *Six The Musical*, which I quit to join the band."

Jazz Influence

While the band's richly textured music sits in the mainstream quarter, Emily's background has proven useful. "Having all of the jazz theory knowledge gives me a lot of ideas when it comes to writing a rock or pop song," she acknowledges. "It's definitely helped having that theory behind it when it comes to improvising ideas and understanding harmony. On the track *Sinner*, there was a lot of jazz influence in the lead lines, which was interesting. And we all come from different training backgrounds. Aurora [Nishevci, keys] is a composer and comes from a classical background, whereas Lizzie

[Mayland, guitar and vocals] did art history, and [Georgia Davies, bass, and Abigail Morris, lead vocals] did English literature, so there's a broad range."

Best Practice

To make sure they were ready for the stage, the band began rehearsing a year before they went public. "Once we had our first gig booked we knew we had to really pull it together," Emily says. "We'd been rehearsing from 2020 and then had our first show in the George Tavern in London in 2021. Having a year where we couldn't do any live gigs helped us to think about what we were doing, practise and get it really tight." The audience for their first show was modest: "There were only 10 or 20 people. But after that it grew really quickly and we got at least 100 Instagram followers after every gig. It was purely word of mouth because we had no music out then."

Elevating The Song

When debut album, *Prelude To Ecstasy*, landed at the beginning of the year, rave reviews rolled in, and its bold sound takes on Emily's formative influences. "I was in a Queen tribute band," she tells us. "Even though I only did one gig, I really got inside Brian May's playing and I would say he's my main influence for writing guitar parts and coming up with ideas. I really like how melodic and catchy his playing can be. It's not necessarily trying to show off; it's more what can be good in a moment of the song and what can lift it. It's how I approached the *Nothing Matters* guitar solo – I needed something to elevate the song and be as strong as the rest of it."

Melody Matters

This discerning approach to playing encapsulates Emily's style and she is aware of what she considers her role in a band. "I've never had the mentality where I have to show off every lick I've learned and put it in a solo," she says. "I prefer stuff that you can sing, basically. I want to show people what I can do, but it's important to balance it and serve the song. I also write things that challenge me. *Sinner* was influenced by St Vincent because she doesn't play licks as such, or things I've heard before. It's very much her own thing and she's not afraid to be creative with it, which is ultimately what I want to do." [GK]

Standout track: *Nothing Matters*

For fans of: St Vincent, Wet Leg, The Beaches



PHOTO BY CAL MCINTYRE

"Brian May is my main influence for writing guitar parts and coming up with ideas. I really like how melodic and catchy his playing can be"

PHOTO BY JAMIE MACMILLAN

GOING FOR GOLD

Why Annie Clark's design preferences resonate with Emily Roberts

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering how much Emily admires St Vincent, her current instrument of choice is the Ernie Ball Music Man St Vincent Goldie signature. "I started out gigging on a Music Man Mariposa. I thought it was unique looking and quite affordable, but I had my eye on the St Vincent one and saved up to get it. It's now my main guitar. It's iconic looking and quite treble and really sticks out. I'm only 5ft 2in as well, and some guitars give me backache, but this one fits really well. There aren't many guitars designed by women, so it was kind of a no-brainer."



Albums

The month's best guitar music – a hand-picked selection of the finest fretwork on wax

Live and loud at The Hollywood Bowl with a 40-strong orchestra



PHOTO BY LAURENCE HARVEY

Joe Bonamassa

Live At The Hollywood Bowl

J&R Adventures (available now)

8/10



Bluesman teams up with orchestra for landmark gig

Although Joe Bonamassa is one of the most prolific musicians around, with frequent album releases and more projects on the go than you could reasonably shake a stick at, he sure can spread his stylistic wings, too. That's certainly the case with this album/DVD package, which catalogues him debuting at the Los Angeles Hollywood Bowl with his band and full orchestra back in August of last year. With a mix of blues and rock songs, plus orchestrations by three renowned composers (one of which being Trevor Rabin of Yes who has also composed many Hollywood soundtracks in the past), it's a fresh sound that will appeal to JoBo fans who are looking for a brand-new take on familiar material.

For starters, there's *Curtain Call*, a rousing rocker with vibrantly rhythmic orchestra and a wonderfully dark-toned solo from Joe. The swinging blues for *No Good For The Lonely* is richly presented with swirling organ and a very smooth orchestral enhancement, before moving onto the playfully arranged and 12-string-acoustic-driven *Ball Peen Hammer*, which sounds huge, while the dynamic breadth of *The Last Matador Of Bayonne* shows that if anyone were to carry the mantle of expressive soloing à la Gary Moore, Joe is the man. Of course, a live album would be amiss without fan favourites such as *The Ballad Of John Henry* and *Sloe Gin*, and both have never sounded better. UK tour dates have just been announced for Joe (sans orchestra) for 2025, so get 'em while they're hot! **[JS]**

Standout track: *The Last Matador Of Bayonne*

For fans of: Eric Clapton, Gary Moore

Tripliciti

Tripliciti

Tripliciti (available now)

9/10



Fresh sounds from virtuosic trio

Andy McKee, Calum Graham and Trevor Gordon Hall's acoustic guitars are at the heart of these 11 tracks, unsurprisingly, but there are also baritones, high-strung and electric guitars for extra girth and colour. Strummed/arpeggiated opener, *Never Grow Old*, is full of optimism and lyrical playing, and is followed by a more contemplative offering in *The Blue Hour*, with lashings of ambient reverb, while the triplet-infused *Journey Of Love* has a wonderful bounce to it. For percussive guitar fans, *Blue Liquid* will appeal, the sophisticated virtuosity creating a great arrangement with each guitar's zone specifically placed, and the guitar variety on *That Old Familiar Pain* makes it almost orchestral. Andy pulls out his Music Man Majesty electric for a tasty rock solo on *In Lak'ech*, and his popular *For My Father* gets a mesmerising reworking from the accomplished trio. **[JS]**

Standout track: *That Old Familiar Pain*

For fans of: Michael Hedges, Eric Roche

Parlor Greens

In Green / We Dream

Colemine Records (release date: 19 July)

9/10



Impeccable 60s-style R&B grooves with feel and soul to die for

At a certain point in the 1960s, the churn of a cooking Hammond organ, rockin' guitar and sparse, in-the-pocket drumming combined to create one of the most heavenly sonic combinations known to humanity. From these elements, a genre was born that lives right on the border between gritty funk, jazz, soul and blues, and which stellar players such as Grant Green made their own. Parlor Greens revive that oh-so-cool sound here on this wonderfully vibey new record. Comprising guitarist Jimmy 'Scratch' James on guitar, Tim Carman of GA20 on drums and the absolutely superb Adam Scone from the Scone Cash Players on keys, Parlor Greens deliver 11 instrumental songs here that feel like a sainted walk through all that is soulful in 60s jazzy R&B – from the uplifting *Sugar Maple*, which feels like a ray of spring sunshine, to the gritty hustle of *The Jelly Roll*, there just isn't a poorly chosen or ill-timed note on this whole record. Glorious stuff. **[JD]**

Standout track: *In Green We Dream*

For fans of: The Meters, Brian Auger, Grant Green

Jessica Staveley-Taylor (here) and sister Camilla release their first album as a duo



The Staves

All Now

Communism (available now)

9/10



And then there were two...

Originally a trio of sisters from Watford, The Staves became two when Emily left the band to focus on raising her children, leaving Jessica and Camilla to take care of the family business. And what a business it is, too. *All Now* is their fourth album since 2012 debut, *Dead & Born & Grown*, and the sisters have taken their rightful place high on the alt-rock/folk circuit. Despite Emily's departure (she still guests on a couple of tracks here), the album is rich with the vocal harmonies for which the band became famous – think Crosby, Stills & Nash with a twist. The material is as strong as ever, with tracks such as *Make A Decision* showing considerable depth and imagination with some beautifully arranged vocal harmony. *The Important One* proves they're not afraid to dip a toe or two into raw emotionalism, and for sheer songwriting craft, check out *Fundamental Memory*. Wonderful. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Make A Decision*

For fans of: First Aid Kit, John Smith

Nick Johnston

Child Of Bliss

Remarkably Human Inc (available now)

9/10



Instrumental guitar album blazes forth

Canadian Nick Johnston has been a gold gem in the field of rock instrumental music for many years now. Mixing bluesy SRV phrasing with Malmsteen-esque single-coil shred and melodic savvy drawn from Satriani and Vai, his music has steadily become more filmic, stretching further into piano and orchestral arrangements. Noir opener, *Black Widow Silk*, drips with emotion as he mixes minor/major harmony with an ominous rock beat, rhythmic shifts and a gorgeously toned searing melody. The title track is richly atmospheric with a piano and orchestra that creates a bed on which his guitar melodies express graceful articulations, and the steady time of *Through The Golden Forest* would suit a movie's end titles with its sophistication. Nick Johnston remains a fresh voice where chops, melody, arranging and dynamics are of equal relevance, making *Child Of Bliss* an album worthy of many listens. **[JS]**

Standout track: *Black Widow Silk*

For fans of: Satriani, Vai, Malmsteen



Your Capo
Your Style
Your Choice

Nashville Guitar Capo



NEW

NOW AVAILABLE IN

RED, WHITE, GREEN AND BLUE

ALSO AVAILABLE IN SILVER AND BLACK



The Capo Company



www.G7th.com

Tones Behind The Tracks

Louise Patricia Crane's intoxicating folkloric journey took parlour guitars, Holdsworth and even abseiling to bring to life...

Artist: Louise Patricia Crane

Album: *Netherworld* (Peculiar Doll)



Netherworld straddles folk and progressive sounds and influences, with many of the ideas originating on acoustic

The album feels like a journey into another realm - full of dreamlike stories and folkloric elements. How did you begin to weave that together?

Louise Patricia Crane: "I think I knew from the off that I wanted it to have an overarching storybook feel to it. Magical realism is a big favourite thing of mine, *Pan's Labyrinth* and the works of Angela Carter and stuff... I also knew that I wanted it to be autobiographical, go back and revisit memories, specific moments in time throughout my life from childhood to adulthood. I wanted a real sense of going somewhere – of a journey.

"I would always start out with guitar – or for pretty much 90 per cent of the tracks on the album – and then I would work piano in. I used a little PRS parlour guitar. I tend to find that starting off with acoustic guitar invites all these different ideas and it's a good foundation to begin with. I always feel like whatever you start on will dictate where the song stylistically moves to. I would say it's a game of two halves, this album, because the first half's quite folk-orientated and the latter half would be a bit more progressive, with jazz elements coming in as well. And that was largely dictated by how the songs were started, so if it was started on the acoustic it went in that more folky direction.

Jakko Jakszyk of King Crimson took to the producer's chair for Louise's latest album

"There were also some songs on the album, *Celestial Dust* being one of them, where I wrote the melody and recorded the vocals just a cappella [and then went from there]. So I had the whole big structure laid out for *Celestial Dust*, then Jakko built the song around that, so that was one where he created the music on the back of it."

There are some incredible guitar parts on the album, both from you and producer Jakko Jakszyk. What players shaped your approach to the instrument?

Louise: "Yeah, actually starting out it would have been Steve Vai. I was a huge fan of Vai when I was a teenager, and then probably my next guitar hero would have been Allan Holdsworth. I think I was about 19 or 20 when I first heard *IOU* and it just rewrote my understanding of guitar. It was like, 'Right, clearly there is so much more here to discover and this is extremely exciting.'

"And so, Holdsworth... obviously from that point that's the bar, then you discover other things from that. I'm a huge fan of King Crimson as well and I really liked a lot of the Frippertronics stuff – I would say I'm quite influenced by sound creation. Again, that's a different approach to playing the guitar and there's some [parts] on my album where I play things like that.

"So I think *Netherworld* is a guitar-lover's record masquerading as this full-bodied [stylistically diverse] thing. But my love of guitar is very much first and foremost. Typically – and Jakko will attest to this – guitars are never loud enough for me [in a mix], I want them louder than my vocals."

Jakko Jakszyk: "Whenever I've played stuff to people they've immediately gone, 'Oh, I see you've put a solo in there,' and I go, 'Hang on, it was Louise who asked for the solos!' And every solo [I did] she said, 'It's got to be longer than that and louder than that.' But everybody thinks it's me taking my opportunity to piss all over it! [laughs] But it's all driven by her."

Louise: "I'm a huge fan of Ollie Halsall's playing and of Patto as well. So the SG thing for me comes from that, from Ollie and Allan, really."

Jakko: "You know there was a period where both Allan and Ollie were in..."

Louise: "Tempest?"

Jakko: "Yeah, Tempest. And they were both playing white SGs – and, of course, Ollie was left-handed





“It’s a game of two halves: the first half’s quite folk-orientated and the latter half would be a bit more progressive, with jazz elements coming in”

Louise Patricia Crane’s love of the SG stems from two primary influences: Allan Holdsworth and Ollie Halsall

Tools of the Netherworld: Louise's main electric is a white SG though this particular early 60s SG-shape Les Paul Custom was a kind loaner from retailer Charlie Chandler, while Jakko's highly ornate PRS Custom is a unique factory-modded design

so [they looked symmetrical when playing on either side of the stage]. It was so cool..."

We understand Rory Gallagher is a big touchstone as well.

Louise: "Massive influence. I really love Rory; he's a saint in my house. And, of course, there's the saintly painting of him above [where I hang] my guitar, which is like a shrine to Rory Gallagher! But he's been a massive influence... his work with Taste and then particularly those first four or five solo records of his. Untouchable, absolutely untouchable."

The arrangements and production are gorgeous - there's a wide and rich array of instrumentation and vocals at times. Jakko, how do you organise complex, layered parts into a harmonious, orderly mix?

Jakko: "Well, it's finding a sonic space for everything and sometimes I think that affects how you record something to start with, or even what the parts are. I think what was great is that Louise's [musical] references are part of my childhood - there's a whole Genesis *Trespass* thing... It allowed me to do a load of things I don't normally do on my own records."

"But I do spend a long time with the mixing aspect of it and it's all to do with placement and creating the sonic space. At times, that means removing things and there were moments where you think, 'Actually, I'm going to get rid of that part because otherwise it clouds this.'"

"Plus, I think we both drove each other on - because Louise has got amazingly good ears, so I would do quite a subtle thing and she'd pick up on it immediately. And that encourages you to think, 'Oh, I'll do this one thing. I wonder if she'll spot that?' And she always did. I think our voices really work together, too."

Louise: "Close friends of mine whose ears I really can trust have said Jakko's stereo mix of the album - even just his stereo mix - was an absolute masterclass. I think it's incredible. It's so meticulous; like [the work of] a fine jeweller, it's got just absolutely perfect little details."

There are some seriously top-notch musicians on the album, from Tony Levin on bass to Gary Husband. Ian Anderson of Tull even makes an appearance.

Louise: "Ian's actually played on both solo records I've released, so he played on my first album [*Deep Blue*]



as well. I met him in the box at the Royal Albert Hall at a King Crimson show, which is a good story..."

Jakko: "I deliberately got the tour manager to put her in a box with Bill Bruford and Ian Anderson to freak her out [laughs]."

Louise: "There were like eight seats and I'm on my own and I'm sitting there with a glass of white wine and you can see people starting to shuffle in. And then the door behind me opens and it's Ian Anderson and I'm like, 'Oh my God,' because I'm a huge Tull fan, and he sits down and he's so charming – he has a presence. He just started chatting to me about when Jethro Tull played in the Albert Hall in the 70s and he's like, 'It's a bit too big, though, isn't it?' That kind of stuff. And then the door opens again and we both turn round and it's Bill Bruford and I'm just like, 'This is crazy, I'm dreaming.' [laughs]"

There are some lovely acoustic parts on the album. They're quite airy and light and many sound like they were capo'd fairly high. Were there alternative tunings, too?

Jakko: "Yeah, there was one tune, I can't remember, it might have been *Celestial Dust*. Anyway, my guitars keep going missing and it's usually my son who's borrowed them. They're all in his room, right? So I retrieved this acoustic from him and I picked it up and I thought, 'What the fuck's this tuning?' and I thought, 'Oh, okay.'"

Louise: "I also used to capo on the stuff that I was doing – on *Spirit Of The Forest* I used a capo on the 5th fret with regular tuning, but I just loved it."

Moving to the electric side of things, what was your guitar rig for the album, Louise?

Louise: "For the SG, typically I was using an EBow, and Jakko actually gave me an old pedalboard that he used to tour with in Crimson. It still had some of the Crimson presets for some of the songs. It took me a while to learn how to use it, because it wasn't obvious how to get under the hood of it, but I created my own effects and sounds and saved them as presets. And I also used the Devin Townsend [signature Moorer] Ocean Machine."

"Then I would run those through Logic and just record that way. That was me, good to go... The capo just lived on either the 3rd fret or 5th fret, really. I've also got a Fender 12-string acoustic – I used that loads on *The Red Room*, *Bête Noir* and *Spirit Of The Forest* as well. The thing about a nice 12-string is you sit down with it and you end up writing a song whether you like it or not because it sounds so gorgeous – it just brings ideas to the fore."

The cover is a work of art in itself. Apparently someone accused you of generating it with AI, but that couldn't be further from the truth...

"Well, yes, so I had this concept in my head that the cover art was going to be like a [picture from a] storybook. I wanted to be this character, this storyteller, but dressed in decayed finery, like a



fairytale ballgown sort of thing or a bit like Elizabeth Bathory kind of vibes as well – there's a kind of Hammer horror thing that I love as well.

"So I spent ages researching and trying to find a designer, someone who would really be able to do this thing that I had in my head and create this costume for the photos, for the cover. And I found this amazing Italian designer, Grimalde Malatesta, who makes these really elaborate gowns – usually for *Carnevale* in Venice. It took her a year to make the dress, more or less.

"It was very expensive and I saw the photos of the finished result and I thought, 'Who better to photograph this than the woman who made it?' So I asked her, 'Would you mind?' And she said, 'Yeah, I'm up for that,' so I flew to Italy and we drove for hours and hours into the Dolomite mountains. I got my

The ethereal quality of *Netherworld's* artwork could be mistaken as AI generation, but it is indeed authentic photography, with Louise descending a ravine – in full costume – to bring her cover concept to life

"My love of guitar is very much first and foremost. Guitars are never loud enough for me [in a mix], I want them louder than my vocals"

makeup and hair done, and we raced to be there for golden hour [of soft morning or evening light].

"The place [Grimalde wanted to shoot me] was down in a deep, deep ravine, a small but stunning location by a stream. So we're literally walking through a forest and we get to this sheer drop, where I could almost touch the tops of the trees [beyond the precipice]. And I look down and I looked at Grimalde and I said, 'So where are we getting the photos done?' Thinking, 'Don't say it...' And she said, 'Down there – that's where we're going.' And I'm like, 'How the fuck are we going down there?' So I'm in this dress and then there's a rope and I abseil down into a ravine..." [JD]



Louise Patricia Crane's latest album, *Netherworld*, is out now on the Peculiar Doll label
<https://louisepatriciacrane.com>



Mysteriously Magical

Neville Marten discusses documentaries on The Beatles' *Get Back* album, and how the band still generates unrivalled interest today

Recently, I saw the much heralded update of The Beatles' *Let It Be* film. I'd heard it was a tougher watch than Peter Jackson's epic *Get Back* trilogy, which I've now seen three times. Funnily enough, a good mate had always had a thing about McCartney, saying he was a show-off who couldn't take a back seat. While I can see that side to some degree, Paul acted as the driving force when the other three

"George was left trying to find a musical gap between John's guitar and Paul's bass or piano. This meant he'd try anything he could..."

Beatles seemed pretty passive. He strived to make the music the best it could be and that meant, as he admitted himself, that it could make him 'annoying' at times. But I've always adored his total musicality, which came across in spades in Jackson's huge three-parter.

Anyway, I entreated my pal to sacrifice eight hours of his life and give *Get Back* a watch. Paul had come across so well in it and, despite their differences, the love between him and Lennon was palpable. One night some days later, my phone pings. It was my mate: "You were right, McCartney's a fucking genius!"

Of course, in *Get Back* we witness the Harrison and McCartney incident where Paul is trying to get George to play more sparingly over the track they were honing. That's played out in *Let It Be*, too. George says he'll play whatever Paul wants, or nothing at all if he'd rather. The spat was a culmination of events that led to Harrison quitting the band. He was enticed back a few days later.

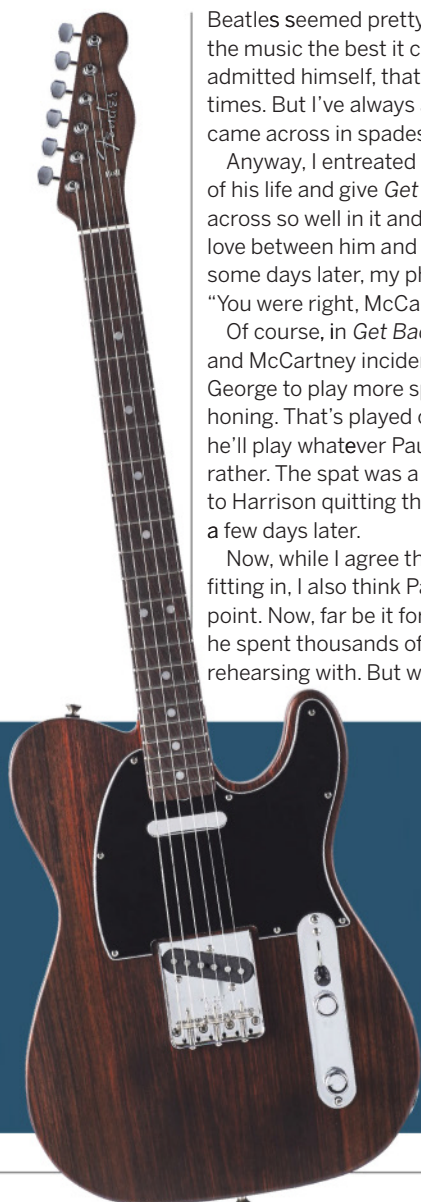
Now, while I agree that George's guitar wasn't yet fitting in, I also think Paul was slightly missing the point. Now, far be it for me to pick him up about a guy he spent thousands of hours touring, recording and rehearsing with. But watching the hours of footage

as both a member of a band myself and an interested outsider, George's working method was clear. At first he was indeed lumbering around, trying to find a harmonic or rhythmic hole into which his guitar could slot. If it was a 'John' song, Lennon already knew his part, and if it were a 'Paul' composition likewise – and usually much more so. Hence George was left trying to find a musical gap between John's guitar and Paul's bass or piano. This meant he'd try anything he could, often without success for a while. But over time he came up with some typically perfect 'George' parts: the Hendrix-y opening lick and sliding 6ths in *Don't Let Me Down*, the lovely riff that runs through *Two Of Us*, and the cool runs in *I've Got A Feeling*. It just took him time. Bear in mind he'd just heard these songs for the first time. On his own numbers his parts were sorted so he was in the driving seat and clearly more comfortable.

Starr Turn

A quick word about Ringo. Starr is hailed among drummers from Dave Grohl to Chad Smith, Abe Laboriel Jr to Stewart Copeland, as one of the most musical skinsters ever. This is so apparent in the films. He never puts a foot wrong, always playing exactly what the song required, adding his unique swing to everything. His tone and fills were beautiful, and his uniquely musical approach gave the others the perfect bed on which to place their instruments and vocals. Keyboardist Billy Preston, too. Billy came in initially to just say hello but inevitably sat in and jammed. The band immediately realised what an asset he'd be for the rooftop 'concert', so he did the gig, too. So tightly had they rehearsed the numbers, and so brilliant The Beatles were as a band, that several of the songs on the *Let It Be* album were live rooftop takes.

Isn't it strange how a group that split up 54 years ago is still arguably more interesting than even today's biggest acts? See you next time. **G**



NEV'S GAS OF THE MONTH

Gently Weeping

What? Fender Limited Edition George Harrison Rosewood Telecaster (Used)

Where seen? Various websites **Price?** £3.5k to £4.5k

Modelled after George's original rosewood Tele, built by Phil Kubicki and featuring in the above films, this is an extremely faithful repro. Its solid rosewood body with maple centre join creates a white pencil line around the body's perimeter, plus it doesn't feature the maple skunk stripe of later versions since the early ones had glued-on 'boards. Pickups are standard issue, tuners are parallelogram-shaped Klusons, and these Teles tend to weigh around 3.7kg (8.2lb). So while it might break the bank, it should leave your collarbone intact!

A photograph of two mahogany acoustic guitars standing upright on a grey carpet. To their left is a dark brown leather armchair with tufted upholstery. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall. The guitars have a rich mahogany finish and white binding around the soundholes. The headstock of the guitar on the right is visible, showing the brand name 'AUDEN'.

A

AUDEN

Artist Mahogany series

The all mahogany Chester and Emily Rose, available now

audenguitars.com +44 1933 391234





DIY-Not?

This month **Alex Bishop** is challenged to build an electric bass using materials entirely from his local DIY store

Ding! "I had an idea for your YouTube channel last night," reads the text message. I'm in my workshop working on a mandocello repair, and I glance over at my phone. Another message shortly follows, containing a single word: "Homebass".

While I would welcome surprise messages pertaining to lutherie from just about anybody, the sharing of unsolicited guitar-making fantasies are a regular feature of my relationship with Oli, my oldest school friend and witness to the twists and turns of my guitar-making career since the very beginning. His previous ideas included an electric guitar blasted with high-voltage fractal patterns (the "Guitarmageddon"), a guitar with a giant carved mahogany hand for the body (the "Epic Smack"), and an eight-necked instrument that you can actually climb inside of inspired by the Buddhist wheel of death (the "Bhavachakra").

"If you can execute a perfectly designed instrument, the results can be surprisingly good even if it's not made with the highest grade woods"

Deranged ideas continually flow forth from Oli's seemingly endless imagination, but the required 30 per cent deposit to start the build has never been quite as forthcoming. Something was different, though, this time: "You build a guitar exclusively out of material available from a popular UK DIY store. I'll run camera – I'm pretty loose at the moment, lemme know what works for you!" The whole point of this idea would be to build an instrument out of the very cheap, locally available materials found in hardware stores. It wouldn't take a lot to get the ball rolling...

For some years I've been advocating the idea that there is a hierarchy of three components that contribute to the sound of a guitar. In order of

importance these are: design, craftsmanship and materials. Some guitar players might be surprised that I don't put the importance of tonewoods at the top of this list, but experience has taught me that if you can execute a perfectly designed instrument with an unparalleled eye for detail, the results can be surprisingly good even if it's not being made with the highest grade tonewood available. Many of my more resourceful guitar-making students have proven this by building some stunning instruments from reclaimed timber or second-rate offcuts from previous projects.

We set a date and headed to Portishead to procure the first batch of materials. With a rough £100 budget, the plan would be to find everything I'd need for making the body, neck and fingerboard, plus any other random extras we might stumble across. Passing through aisles of terracotta hedgehogs and reels of garden hoses, I began to feel dispirited, but eventually we found ourselves at the back of the outdoor timber section, rifling through the stacks of railway sleepers pondering the potential for a solid body. One piece looked much better than the others, but it would be essential to find an attractive decorative cap for the front and back.

Aisle Be Back

Back inside the store we hit the jackpot, securing a couple of pricey mahogany skirting boards long enough to consider making this a through-neck electric bass; this gave the project some much needed hardwood that would provide some essential musical resonance in a timber landscape so far almost exclusively made up of knotty, fast-grown softwoods. We did, however, find some acceptable pine billets that could work well for the front and back, given that would do the job of mostly hiding the brutal railway sleeper body.

This wasn't going to be just about substituting expensive tonewood for cheap timber, though. If I was going to be stuck using materials from a hardware store I was determined that I would take inspiration from every aisle. In the BBQ section I picked up a set of bamboo skewers that would serve as inlays for fret-position markers, and even a bag of zip ties so that the bass could be converted from fretless to fretted with relative ease. Whether or not that will work, time will tell...

I want this project to demonstrate that craftsmanship can outperform materials when it comes to building high-performance musical instruments, which is why independent luthiers are such important catalysts in pushing forward innovations in lutherie. Whether or not the 'Homebass' will be a success is yet to be seen, but I'm looking forward to sharing the journey with you all, dear readers. **G**

Watch the first instalment of Alex's DIY adventure at <https://bit.ly/git514alex>

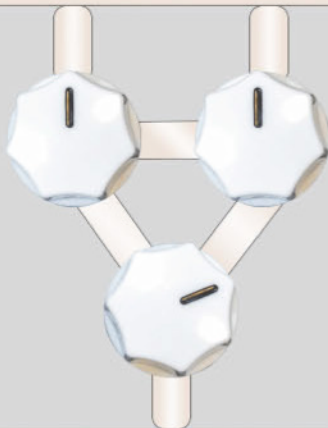
Alex opts for a railway sleeper (left) for the bass's body, while some more decorative timber is chosen for the top



ELECTRIC LIGHTNING

For CHRIS BUCK

Valve Overdrive and
High headroom Boost.
Designed for
Expressive players
who demand the best.



Thorpy
FX



WWW.THORPYFX.COM



Dumblestruck!

Neville Marten asks, when you play the best guitar amp of your life but know you can never own it, how do you move on?

Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so great amp tone surely resides in the ear of the listener. Peruse your record collection, witness a stonking gig, or play an amazing piece of equipment and you'll know it's true. One such epiphanal moment for me was hearing Robben Ford's album, *Talk To Your Daughter*. I recall the exact moment I slipped the tape the record company had sent me into the slot of my car's cassette deck and cranked it up. Bloody hell!

Mick Taylor and Daniel Steinhardt recently had Robben, and the very Dumble Overdrive Special that made those iconic tones, on *That Pedal Show*. The two were clearly in awe of the guitarist but also of his amp. So I wondered, exactly what was it that made this amp so special?

"It's impossible to play through it and not feel the weight of its iconic status," begins Dan. "I've heard it on so many amazing albums and seen Robben play it live on numerous occasions, so I definitely had expectations. What I was not expecting was what it delivered with me at the helm. It wasn't about hearing a legendary Dumble amplifier, it was about hearing *me*. The good stuff and the bad. This amp just laid me bare for all to hear. It's the most demanding and rewarding amplifier I have ever played. A truly singular experience."

Mick agrees: "Totally! I have never heard or played an amp that's so open harmonically and unbelievably responsive to touch and dynamics. Clean, distorted or on the edge, every note is full of harmonics and information. And whether it was an old Strat, Lester, 335 or anything else, it's the most moving I've heard each guitar sound."

Robben Ford's hallowed Dumble Overdrive Special graced *That Pedal Show*'s studio earlier this year

And how did it make the pair feel about their own hardly shabby Matchless and Two-Rock setups?

"My Matchless was my dream amp and I adore it," stresses Dan. "However, after playing Mick's Two-Rock TS1 I've had it in mind that a Dumble-type amplifier may be in my future. Playing Robben's just confirmed it for me. I recently tried an amp by a company called Amplified Nation and am seriously impressed. So even a flavour of it is worth pursuing."

"For me, it felt like the ultimate version of a response I've been chasing for years," states Mick. "Perhaps like driving a race-prepped 911 RS when your daily driver is a road-legal Carrera 4. Just as I'll never own a real 'Burst, so I'll never own a real Dumble. But we get as close as we can, then try to shift the focus to actually saying something worthwhile with our own equipment."

In hindsight, was there even a hint that the two might have been slightly starstruck by its provenance?

"One of the benefits of doing *That Pedal Show* is that we've got to play through some extraordinary gear," says Dan. "So we've become quite good at being pragmatic about these things. That being said, how could you not be influenced by the tones this amp has produced? That's why we employed a couple of other great players so it wasn't just Mick and myself and our little echo chamber."

"Obviously one can't remove the conscious and unconscious biases," Mick concurs, "most obviously the reverence for Mr Dumble, and Robben's status as a player. But the amp actually ended up being here for a few weeks and Robben graciously gave us the okay to play it more, which, of course, I did well beyond the honeymoon period. In that time my opinion of it grew and grew. It is without doubt the most exciting, inspiring and moving guitar amp I have ever heard or played."

So What Is Great Tone?

"Connection," Dan exclaims. "Great tone is the vehicle that enables you to connect and express something through your instrument. Great tone can be found anywhere. It doesn't need to be expensive. But does it enable you to connect with your instrument? Does it lead you to express something real to you? If so, that's tone!"

"Guitar tone is not guitar sound," Mick contests. "'Sound' is something you hear with your ears and then however your brain processes it. 'Sound' is gain and EQ and transients and all the stuff we talk about as gear nerds. 'Tone' is more complex, more contextual, and it requires all of your senses. It's all the parts of 'sound' plus two other essential elements. First is some appreciable volume, loud enough that the amp's speaker(s) and the guitar develop a physical relationship so that complexity in harmonics can develop between the two. Without volume, you only have sound. Secondly, and way above everything else, is what's being said, playing-wise."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THAT PEDAL SHOW



You have to be meaning it for there to be any tone. If not, you're back to 'sound'."

Robben said that in hindsight his Dumble is actually too powerful for recording. Dan, you use a 30-watt Matchless, and Mick you prefer high-powered Two-Rocks.

"Context is everything," stresses Dan. "Go and see a band like Idles and you'll see why they need a bunch of 100-watt amps. But if I wheel in our old Hiwatt to the local pub and crank it, I would fully expect to be given my marching orders. But I've done gigs where the Matchless's 30 watts simply wasn't enough, and others where I've needed to use it on half power."

Mick doesn't think wattage really equates to volume.

"I'm going to be similar volume if I use a Deluxe Reverb or my 100-watt Two-Rock (ish). But the tone is totally different, particularly in terms of headroom, and that's what I want the big amps for. Recording wise, I love little amps as it's much easier to get the Deluxe sounding great than the Two-Rock."

A Dumble is out of the question for all but the elite few. Two-Rock and Matchless, in reality not much less so for most. So, a decent rig for £1,500?

"Great tone is the vehicle that enables you to connect and express something through your instrument. It can be found anywhere"

Dan: "Take your guitar, so you're at least controlling one variable, and head to a music store that has a good amp selection. Spend time with each one to get a sense of what it can deliver. Once you've settled on your amp, then look at pedals. You could grab a nice overdrive, delay and modulation within that budget, maybe a boost as well. There's no substitute for getting your hands dirty. You can watch every YouTube video on amps and pedals, but you won't know what's right for you until you play through them and see if there's a connection."

"Easy!" shouts Mick. "Fender Hot Rod DeVille and a Kingsley Amplifiers Juggler V3 preamp pedal into the effects loop return, bypassing the front-end of the amp. What you save by buying a used HRD will give you extra for the Kingsley, your chosen boost *du jour* and a simple delay. You'd have to spend three times that to get close in 'boutique' amp form. If I didn't have my Two-Rocks, that's exactly what I'd be using."

So, "demanding", "rewarding", "moving", "inspiring". While playing Robben's Dumble was clearly a game-changer for Dan and Mick, a connection between player and equipment, musical context and putting in at least as much as you hope to get out of your gear is as important as the gear itself, it seems. And if you're saying something worthwhile and meaning it, the gear becomes just another part of the equation. That's the theory, anyway... **G**

The excitement in the room was palpable: "It is without doubt the most exciting, inspiring and moving guitar amp I have ever heard or played," says Mick Taylor

THREE TO GET READY

A trio of Dumble-inspired tone-makers



PHOTO: AMPLIFIEDNATION.COM

Amplified Nation Wonderland Overdrive V2 \$3,399

This company's hand-wired heads and cabs evoke the look and feel of the legendary Dumble brand. The clean channel's voicing is fashioned for a vintage Fender tone that's loud and clean with excellent headroom, while the drive side has complex harmonics, smooth sustain and fantastic pick sensitivity. Available in 22-, 50- and 100-watt formats.



PHOTO: KINGSLEYAMPLIFIERS.COM

Kingsley Juggler V3 \$700

Based on the Overdrive Special circuit, the Juggler V3 pedal amp uses two 12AX7 valves to make this the ultimate 'Dumble in a box'. The pedal amp's clean channel offers volume, three-band EQ, three-way bright switch, mid boost, EQ lift and level, while the drive side features drive, tone, volume, three-way lows switch, and three-way highs switch. The Juggler is best placed in the return socket of your main amp's effects loop.



PHOTO: FENDER.COM

Fender Hot Rod DeVille ML 212 £1,359

Michael Landau had been renting Hot Rod DeVilles while on tour with his own band or when out with James Taylor. But after Fender created his signature Strat they suggested this 'inspired by' amp. The ML's all-valve design offers a single channel with two volume controls (but no master), clean boost, Celestion V-Type speakers, plus reverb. And with a Juggler plugged into its effects return it's your perfect 'Dumble on a budget'.



Alternative Voicings (Part 2)

Following on from last issue, **Richard Barrett** continues to highlight alternative voicing options that add extra interest to your music

In this second instalment, we'll look at five more chords that could be the secret ingredient to lift a chord progression or song from ordinary to extraordinary. As we've all surely heard time and time again, being complicated for the sake of it is no substitute for a simple, memorable idea. However, an unexpected twist here and there in the shape of an alternative chord voicing stops a fair way short of turning a I-IV-V based song into a jazz fusion odyssey...

Writers such as Christopher Cross and Joni Mitchell have used alternative voicings (and tunings) as part of their music, rather than just an embellishment. James Taylor's version of Joni Mitchell's *River* is a great example of how a chord progression can be reimagined with alternative voicings and substitutions (in this case, quite a few!) without losing the song or needing to use an alternative tuning. And as with any musical device or technique, it's up to us to use it with restraint. The examples below will certainly help you get started. **G**

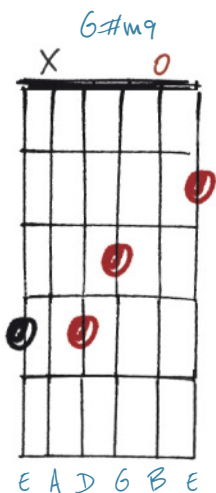
James Taylor's 2006 cover of *River* by Joni Mitchell offers a different feel by way of alternative voicings



PHOTO BY KEVIN KANE / GETTY IMAGES

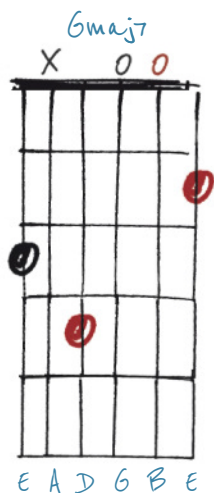
Example 1

As an alternative to G#m, this G#m9 adds a touch of complexity and is more of an open, ringing acoustic chord. There's nothing wrong with a G#m barre chord, but these can sound quite 'closed' when used alongside other open chords. Be sure not to let the fifth string ring, though.



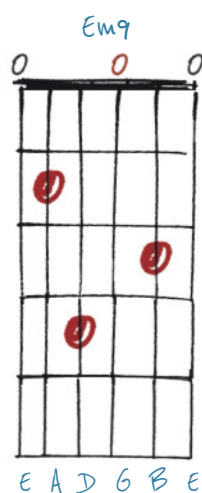
Example 2

This Gmaj7 comes from the same school of thought as Example 1. There is a hint of dissonance with the semitone between F# and G on the fourth and third strings respectively. This is a slightly less 'sweet' version of the major 7th, which has apparently been described as 'unwelcome' in Nashville!



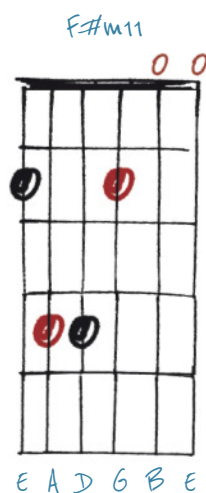
Example 3

E minor is one of the finest-sounding acoustic guitar chords of all time. However, this Em9 is also very nice indeed, so perhaps it can add a little twist and some extra harmonic interest to the occasional tune while keeping much of the sonic character of the original chord.



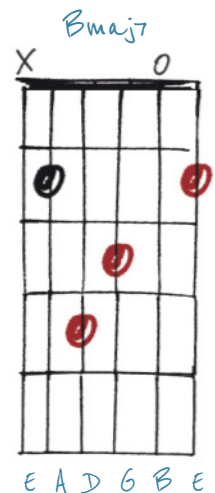
Example 4

Sometimes barre chords can feel a bit 'blocky' when used alongside ringing open chords, which are much more the acoustic guitar's forte. This voicing of F#m11 could stand in for F#m as a more harmonically detailed and open alternative. The root note (F#) on the sixth string can be fretted with your thumb if you can reach.



Example 5

This Bmaj7 (no 3rd) may bring back some of those frustrated feelings we had when first learning chords: it isn't an easy one to grab at first, but I hope you'll agree that it's worth the effort. It's a great way to keep that open-string sound, rather than grabbing the more obvious barre chord.



The star® everyone's talking about.



"When I first plugged my guitar into the Artisan 30
I was immediately smitten. When you play quiet it responds
and when you dig in it follows you. I love it."

Richard Hawley

Find your nearest dealer at
www.blackstaramps.com



Designed & Engineered
by Blackstar Amplification UK

Blackstar®
AMPLIFICATION

the sound in your head

TO FIND OUT MORE
SCAN HERE:





Feedback

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

STAR LETTER

LAND OF PLENTY



I have been reading the magazine since its very first issue and like many of your readers I have grown up with it as a musician. I was fascinated to see in your recent survey how the number of guitars that readers own has increased. Same for me. At the time of your first edition I was the very proud owner of one of the very first JV Telecasters. It was the only guitar I had and I loved it.

They were different times and the idea of a 'guitar collection' was an alien one. All those in their 50s and 60s back then, with the means to acquire guitars, were different from us today. They hadn't spent their youth watching Johnny Marr on *Top Of The Pops*

trying to work out how he was playing *Hand In Glove*. Equally, all of us generally had a lot less stuff... but, and here's the thing, were we less happy because of that?

Your survey results got me thinking on this and specifically the notion of the 'paradox of plenty', which takes me to guitars. I have loads of them now, but I've started moving them on and it's been liberating. I realised some of them never got played but were just the result of GAS symptoms from the past. I love the idea that someone might be playing them and enjoying them in a way that I wasn't any more.

Of course, my most prized guitar is the JV Tele... each dent and ding a memory of a gig. It's an unbelievable guitar and rediscovering it as a result of the clear-out gives me joy that I couldn't put into words.

Jon Harding

Thanks for those valuable perspectives, Jon. While there's absolutely nothing wrong with collecting guitars if it gives you pleasure, the consensus in the office here at *Guitarist* is that keeping things limited to good-quality guitars you actually use frequently is a very good way to get maximum satisfaction from your collection, with nothing gathering dust. Unless your name is Rodney Branigan you can't play more than one guitar at the same time anyway. We've also found that having the discipline to buy something that fills a vacant niche in one's musical toolbox is, ultimately, more satisfying than buying two or three basically similar Strats or Les Pauls, for example. Pragmatically speaking, it's hard not to conclude that a toolbox with a hammer, wrench, pliers and a screwdriver in it is better than one with four slightly different hammers inside! Still, with that said, whatever guitars make you happy and encourage you to play more are instruments worth keeping – end of.



Each issue, the Star Letter will win a pair of
Vox VGH AC30 guitar amplifier headphones!
www.voxamps.com

LIVING IN THE PAST

Having finished reading issue 512 (excellent as usual) and needing another guitar-related distraction while I wait for the next issue to hit the doormat, I decided it could be time for my once a decade, doomed to failure attempt to master *Eugene's Trick Bag*. I was extremely impressed how quickly I managed to find my 30-year-old copy of *Guitar Techniques* featuring the Guthrie Govan transcription – buried under a huge pile of *Guitarist* back issues – and quite amused to read the editorial of the aged magazine written by a certain Neville Marten. Sure, I've heard that name somewhere...

David Elliott

Nev's forgotten more about penning articles than most of us will ever know – and it's always a pleasure to be reminded of his 'vintage' editorial pieces. He's a mine of brilliant stories and we're trying to persuade him to write or record his memoirs of his time with the mag – which is still continuing to this day. Drop us a line if you'd like to see that happen and we'll send your words of encouragement to Nev!



Neville Marten has worn many editorial hats over the years, including, of course, as editor of the fine pages of *Guitar Techniques*

TAKING A BREAK

In light of Alex Bishop's 'Lucky Break' article in the July edition [issue 512], I thought I'd share this story. My son was going to buy a bass guitar (as he was building a recording studio) when I remembered that I bought this Rickenbacker copy from one of his pals some 20-odd years ago that has been lying in the attic as a future project. It's been in the wars; the headstock had snapped off at the nut leaving half of it still attached. Fortunately, in my cornucopia of odds and sods I found a piece of maple just the right size for a transplant. I got some dimensions after poring over a plethora of photographs and set to work.

Out with the jigsaw, files, drill and sandpaper and I fashioned a replacement for the missing piece. I inserted a metal pin (nail) between the headstock and the neck, carefully avoiding the truss rod, to give some additional security. Glued up with Titebond and clamped, I left it to set for a couple of days before some final fettling of the joint, then gave the whole guitar a good sand down and three coats of yacht varnish.

Gordon Stephen

Thanks, Gordon. In this age of disposable tech that just ends up in landfill, it's great to hear of readers devoting their time, care and attention to rescuing decent instruments from the scrapheap. What are your best guitar repair and resurrection stories? Send them in and we'll print the best.

INTERPOL ALERT

I would love to see a feature on Daniel Kessler and his guitars. I'm sure for many the discordant sound of Interpol might be challenging, but I've loved them from the first album and am fascinated at how they manage to build songs from the weirdest beginnings into, for me, masterpieces. Songs like *Fables* from their last album [*The Other Side of Make-Believe*] build from the weirdest combinations of notes, and Daniel's guitar is so dry and flat I wonder how he came up with a sound almost no-one else uses. Also what combination of guitar and amp creates such a sound? I find them endlessly fascinating.

It took a few listens to 'get' them, but songs such as *Narc* with its lush chords and subtle hammer-ons within the chords blow my little mind even now, 15 years or more since I first heard them. Paul Banks is slightly more 'normal', but his style is waaaaay out there, too. Maybe you could feature both guitarists and their equipment if you haven't already?

Broc Silva



We don't spend enough time celebrating the uniqueness of some guitarists' approach – Daniel Kessler being a good example. You make a good point about the uniqueness of his tone, too. Not every guitar sound that works brilliantly on record is a rich, sustaining, juicy one. Think of Jimmy Page's wiry, nasal Tele tone on his brilliant solo on *Communication Breakdown* – or Frank Zappa's janky lead sounds on *Cosmik Debris*. What's important is that they have character and work in the context of the song perfectly. Which other players do readers think have a great but not conventional sound?

A HARD CASE

Am I alone in frustration over high-end American guitar makers offering only a gigbag with expensive guitars? It seems to me that spending £2,000+ on a quality guitar should warrant a hard case. You can buy an Epiphone for £399 (granted, made in China) that comes with a hard case, so why the parsimonious attitude from the Big Boys? At the last count, I have 22 guitars and my wife insists some have to be stored, so a hard case helps to protect them from damage, plus temperature and humidity fluctuations. She is Norwegian and a dab-hand with a harpoon, so I don't argue!

We should start a worldwide protest to get equal rights for guitars – hard cases for the masses! They can't be that expensive when produced at source?

Don Park

Reader Gordon Stephen revived this attic-dwelling Rickenbacker-style bass ready for use in his son's recording studio



Fender's 70th Anniversary American Professional II Stratocaster recently joined reader Weedsy's collection alongside his 50th Anniversary model. He wasn't disappointed!

Thanks, Don, we hear your frustration, but let it be said there are gigbags and there are gigbags. The cheapest are little more than a slip-case to protect the guitar from a spot of light rain and workaday scratches. The best 'gigbags' we've seen, however, really deserve to be in a category of their own, as they offer really decent protection but also greater portability and convenience than a traditional hard case – makers such as Mono or the boutique-grade 'gig shells' of Wolfmeister in Australia come to mind, but there are many more. Obviously, if you are touring or travelling by plane a fair bit, a really sorted modern hard case from the likes of Hiscox is advisable. But for the rest of us, a premium-grade gigbag with plenty of advanced protective features could well be enough.

NICK GUPPY

No idea how I missed notice of Nick Guppy's passing, until reading your *Guitarist* piece online today. I have reams of Nick's reviews over the years, stored away as future reference material. I never got a chance to meet the man, but like that which sometimes happens with an author whose work you read over the years, one feels a kind of kinship/connection that belies the actual lack of physical contact.

Thank you for the piece on Nick. We lost one of the unique voices in our industry. I will miss him.

Rich Lasner, VP of Development G-Rok R&D/Vox Guitars

Many thanks for the kind words about Nick, Rich – it means a lot. We all miss him, but letters from readers and fellow industry professionals who mourn his passing are a real comfort at a sad time and the best kind of tribute to the hugely positive impact Nick's always-knowledgeable and scrupulously fair writing on amplifiers had.

STRAT'S THE WAY

I was right to trust Neville Martin's review [in 511's Strat Anniversary feature]. I bought the 70th Anniversary Comet finish and love it; it's exactly what I was looking for.

I was already 56 when I bought my 50th anniversary Strat in 2004, didn't like the bling of the 60th, and time's running out for me to buy the next decade's 80th issue at 86 (!), so I'm glad I got it right. Shows how guitars (and your magazine) span the decades with ease (echoing a little Jamie's current issue editorial).

I also try to span the decades, but bearing in mind my pro days were in a little-known never better than

second-on-the-bill band, but opening for bands like The Animals, The Kinks, Yardbirds, Stones (tickets were 7/6d for that one!) etc, it was bliss, best years ever. I'm now retired in France, living a few kilometres from Mick [Taylor] – he doesn't speak these days... didn't then, actually!

Weedsy

Thanks, Weedsy – it must have been a thrill to play those shows. Be interested to hear who you thought were the most impressive headliners you supported back then and we'd wager you have some great stories to tell from that time. Glad you're enjoying the 70th Anniversary Strat – it's a real looker and a very nice, crisply voiced example of a design that really doesn't seem to have aged at all. Here's to many more decades of stellar Strats!

IRISH MAKERS?

I was very interested to read the glowing review of Ciaran McNally's S-32 as I've been an admirer of his work for a while. However, I'd like to draw your attention to another Irish maker, Domhnall Ó Ráinne, who is based in Galway. I recently acquired one of his guitars (built in 2017) – the workmanship is absolutely top-notch and the sound is wonderful. It has a European spruce top coupled with gorgeous amara ebony back and sides and it sings. Maybe a piece in the magazine about Irish guitar makers in general?

Dave Kirkpatrick

Thanks, Dave, that's a very interesting idea indeed!

Especially on the acoustic side, but then again there are some fine Irish and Northern Irish electric guitar makers, too. Leave it with us...



Reader Dave Kirkpatrick commends the craft of this spruced-topped Domhnall Ó Ráinne acoustic guitar

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



WIN! A trio of Walrus Audio pedals!

This compact, tone-shaping threesome from the boutique pedal builder's Mako Series could be yours

**WORTH
£770!**



Here's your chance to treat your pedalboard with these dual-footswitch offerings from Walrus Audio. First up the ACS1 Amp + Cab Simulator presents a trio of emulated vintage amp voices, with the AC30-like Dartford, silver-panel-flavoured Fullerton, and the Marshall-inspired London, which can be mixed and matched to deliver your ideal classic amp tones. Next up, the R1 High-Fidelity Stereo Reverb offers six studio-quality, tweakable programs – from the conventional to the esoteric – with nine onboard presets, and stereo in and out. The feature-rich D1 High-Fidelity Delay completes the trio with its custom-tuned sounds.

All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning this lovely lot is head to the link opposite and follow the online instructions. Good luck!

Which of the following is not currently a pedal in the Walrus Audio Mako Series line-up?

- A) A1
- B) M1
- C) R1

CLOSING DATE: 12 SEPTEMBER 2024

Make sure you enter before the closing date at

<http://bit.ly/git514walrus>

GOOD LUCK!

Terms and conditions: By taking part you agree to be bound by these terms and the competition rules at <https://www.futureplc.com/competition-rules/>. The opening date for entries is 00:00 (UK Time) on 13 July 2024 and will close at 23:59 (UK Time) on 12 September 2024. The competition is free to enter and entries must be submitted via <http://bit.ly/git514walrus>. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Entries are limited to one per individual. Open to all UK residents aged 18 and over, except employees of Future Publishing Limited ("Future"), FACE bvba ("Sponsor") and any party involved in the competition. There will be one winner entitled to the featured items provided by the Sponsor and selected at random. Please note: the boxes may have superficial marks due to being opened for photography. The winner will be randomly drawn from all valid entries received and shall be notified by Future by email or telephone within 14 days of the closing date. Upon notification the winners will be required to supply details of a UK delivery address. If a winner has not responded after two weeks of being notified that they are a winner, an alternative winner will be drawn. The prize is non-transferable and non-refundable. There is no cash alternative.



RICHARD HAWLEY

The Sheffield songsmith's new album, *In This City They Call You Love*, is undoubtedly one of his finest yet – and its sounds were carved out with some of the most characterful guitars, amps and effects you'll find anywhere, including Scott Walker's Tele. We join Richard in the heart of the city that inspired the record to find out more

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Phil Barker

Reverent references to Duane Eddy, Pops Staples, Scott Walker and other giants of the vinyl era are never far from Richard Hawley's lips. But with his new album, *In This City They Call You Love*, Hawley has produced a work that deserves to stand alongside that of the legends he has always admired.

You'd never hear him say that himself, of course, as there's a genuine and abiding humility in his approach to music. But the tender, yearning ballad *I'll Never Get Over You* is a song that Roy Orbison might easily have penned, while *Hear That Lonesome Whistle Blow* sounds like a lost, lovelorn Eddie Cochrane ballad. Yet Hawley somehow manages to wear his influences lightly, like a well-fitting jacket that suits him and that he makes his own. And if the past looms large in his work, its main purpose is to highlight the unbroken threads of memory, pride and love that stretch from childhood to the present day and imbue it with meaning.

A particularly enduring theme in Hawley's music is his home city of Sheffield – he's named several of his albums after its landmarks, and the place and its people are a continuing wellspring of inspiration. Ironically, however, it was a chance encounter with visitors from out of town that gave his latest album its name.

"It was something I overheard some people saying," Hawley recalls. "They weren't from Sheffield and one of them said, 'Oh, in this city everybody calls you love,' and it went in like a missile. I just heard that, literally walking past a cafe and I went, 'Whoa, I'm having that.' You know?"

Hawley acknowledges that songwriters have to have something of the magpie about them, always ready to snatch up a golden phrase and wing home with it, to be tucked away for later use. He adds that the best songs come from that part of our mind that isn't caught up in mundane, day-to-day decision-making. Words and phrases overheard by chance can open the taps to a sudden, instinctive flow of inspiration that yields better songs than conscious effort, he argues.

"You can hit the bullseye without aiming for it. But if you aim for the bullseye, you're probably not going to hit it. Technically, music is numbers and letters, mathematics and literacy. But actually it's something that you cannot define. You can't bottle it. You know what I mean? I write all the songs walking the dogs now because there's something about putting one foot in front of the other, where something flips in your mind... with rational, normal thought, that you need to survive on Earth, your yes/no synapses



**VIDEO
EXCLUSIVE!**

Watch Richard Hawley
play his go-to vintage
electrics, including Scott
Walker's Telecaster
www.bit.ly/guitaristextra



are flipping all the time in your mind. But there's something that happens when you're doing something rudimentary, like walking the dogs, washing the pots or whatever... you hit the bullseye without aiming for it. And that's the best advice I can give anybody who's going to write a song. If you try to write a song, it'll probably be shit."

We can only conclude that Richard's dogs must have had plenty of exercise recently because every song on the album hits home emotionally. The production is simple yet beautiful, a touch less orchestral than some of his previous records perhaps but all the more direct and powerful for it. A key theme is memory and how we live with it – of loves and loyalties that fade all too quickly into the past, yet from which we can never wholly free ourselves.

"I think music gives you the ability to accept the fact that maybe we are mortal, but also to hover like a kestrel in time," Richard reflects. "You've got more time than you realise, to think about things."

The songs on the album are often deceptive in their simplicity. *Deep Water*, for example, is a kind of secular

gospel song – a prayer for acceptance of the kind that people tend to write as life experience accrues and an awareness of mortality colours one's thoughts.

"The thing about records, I realise as I've got older, is that I listened to stuff when I was younger and I just thought, 'That's rubbish,' and then later in life, I got it," Richard reflects. "And it's because you're not ready for it, as a person. Events and time and ageing and stuff like that... you're not swimming in the fucking shallow end any more. You haven't got a choice. So music is an accompaniment to the passage of your life, and some songs you'll hear when you're 16 you're not ready for, but you might hear them when you're 40 or 60, or whatever, and you get it."

"A lot of folks, you know, when they hit 30, they think it's over, you know? But when you approach 60 and you see a picture of yourself at 30, you just go, 'Didn't I look young?' [laughs] Do you know what I mean? Nick Banks, actually, one of my dearest friends, the drummer out of Pulp, he sent a picture of me and him backstage at Finsbury Park in '98, and we were in our 30s then, and I look back and I just go, 'Whoa, man, we look like little kids.' And we were off our heads as well. I just thought, 'Stupid, stupid boy.' [laughs]"

GUITAR MAN

Fittingly, Hawley's guitars are as steeped in time and memory as his songs, especially his gorgeous 1950 Gibson J-200 bought from Tony Werneke at Replay Guitars, which has a sweet yet expansive voice that is what that guitar is all about, at its best.

"Martin Simpson found this for me," Hawley explains, referring to the celebrated fingerstyle folk guitarist who is a good friend of Richard's. "Because my dad had a J-200. And it was a 60s one – I think it was a '62, or something like that. And during the steel strikes he had to sell it, to feed us, you know? There was always this thing in my mind [ever afterwards] that it was an injustice. And so I looked around for one for years and years and years. It's funny – because

"I think music gives you the ability to accept the fact that maybe we are mortal, but also to hover like a kestrel in time"

it's part of mine and Martin's story – he just says 'Oh, you don't want one of those, you want one of these' – a PRS or a Fylde or one of these really mental high-end guitars. But I couldn't get on with them at all... maybe it's an ergonomic thing, but they just didn't feel right. I think it's down to sonic memory. Because when you play something when you're young there's a part of your brain that works in a certain way..."

Richard strums the first few bars of *Hear That Lonesome Whistle Blow* to demonstrate, then grins at the wonderfully evocative sound coming out of the J-200.

"And that's it," he smiles. "It's a great guitar to play and the neck's not as slim as a lot of the modern ones. But it's to do with ergonomics, isn't it? It's bit like if you go into a shop and you want to buy a new shirt or a jacket or something like that, don't look in the mirror – put it on and see how it feels first, you know? And it's

1. Hawley's 1950 J-200 has a warm, expansive sound. He was inspired to buy it by childhood memories of his father's J-200





“Bo Diddley used a Country Club, and Eddie Cochran – it’s got this liquid sound to it, like moving water. It’s amazing”

Hawley's Gretsch Country Club has a stunningly figured top – and he first used it in anger playing a 50s-style version of Zepp's *Rock And Roll* with Robert Plant



Hawley loves his 1954 J-160E acoustic, long associated with The Beatles. Despite having a pickup built in, he values it for its intimate acoustic sound

the same with any musical instrument. Close your eyes and just listen – you were given these [points to ears] by nature for a reason and you can read all the reviews you want, you can be fooled into buying something because you think it's going to be this, that and the other. But you've got to use these, your ears – they're the greatest asset you've got."

Does Richard use the J-200 a lot when he's recording, we enquire?

"I use it when I'm frying eggs," he laughs. "Or whatever... It's on the wall [ready to hand at all times]. It's just such a great guitar to play."

No Richard Hawley record would be complete, of course, without the lonesome shimmer of a Gretsch electric. Accordingly, Richard shows us a beautifully figured natural finish 1954 Gretsch Country Club that is a go-to for studio work.

"I love that – it sounds like Pop Staples to me," he says, strumming the big archtop through the beautiful tremolo circuit of his 1958 Watkins Scout combo.

"That's one of the problems with the Gretsches, but I've always found it an asset," he observes as the guitar teeters on the edge of incipient feedback. Like some other vintage guitars among Hawley's collection, the Gretsch was bought locally. "I got this from a local store in Sheffield called Rich Tone Music and it's run

"There's something that happens when you're doing something rudimentary... you hit the bullseye without aiming for it"

by people who subsequently became friends of mine – James and Dylan Ferguson – and they've always got amazing stuff. Again, actually I owe Martin Simpson again for this because he's in and out of there all the time and I'm always on tour or travelling and stuff, and he'll just [tell me] they've got this such and such guitar... He called me up and said, 'They've got this Country Club and it's insane – it's a 1954, you're going to love it.' I went down with him and I literally just played a couple of chords on it and I'm done. In my mind I was sold.

"I ended up using it on the *Jools Holland* show [only days later] and I got asked to play with Robert Plant and Imelda May. It was the last song of the show at the Hammersmith Apollo, when they did it there, and it's quite fun because it wasn't anything that we'd rehearsed. I was playing with Jools doing Fats Domino stuff and we'd had this idea to play an A- and B-side from the same single, back to back, so we did those two tunes and Robert heard me play. I've known Robert on and off for many years, he's a lovely fella, and so afterwards he just called me over to the piano and said, 'Do you want to do a song with us?' It was nothing to do with management and completely unscripted.

"So I said, 'Yeah, what is it?' and Robert said, 'We're going to do rock 'n' roll.' I said, 'Yeah, what song?' And he said, 'Rock 'n' roll...' and I go, 'Yeah, yeah, I can play rock 'n' roll, but which song?' And he says, 'No, you silly fuckwit [laughs], *Rock And Roll* by Led Zeppelin.' I said, 'No, I'm not doing it because I don't want to be in Jimmy Page's graveyard,' you know – nobody can play

A full-page photograph of Richard Hawley sitting on a dark, ornate spiral staircase. He is wearing a blue zip-up jacket over a black turtleneck, blue jeans, and dark sunglasses. He is holding a red Gretsch hollowbody electric guitar with a gold pickguard and a black anchor logo on the body. The guitar has a signature on the pickguard. To his left is a large, worn, brown suitcase. The background is a dimly lit room with various items on shelves and a wall with a poster that says "FRIDAY".

Richard Hawley with
an icon of Gretsch
design: his 1957
(or possibly 1956)
'G-Brand' 6120
model hollowbody

*"[Feedback is] one
of the problems with
the Gretsches, but
I've always found
it an asset"*

like Jimmy, he's the don of that [style of guitar]. And he said, 'No, we're going to do it like Johnny Burnette and the Rock 'N' Roll Trio. So I said, 'Okay,' and we did it like that – and that was the first time I ever used the Country Club. I'd only bought it a week or so before and I had it plugged into an old 50s Magnetone amp, which has got this really... it's not a tremolo, it's a vibrato, which is actually different and it sounds like liquid. Bo Diddley used one, and Eddie Cochran – it's got this liquid sound to it, like moving water. It's amazing."

GREAT SCOTT

One testament to the bond music can create is the fact that many of Hawley's heroes later became personal friends – notably the late, great Duane Eddy, with whom Hawley recorded the beautiful album *Road Trip* in 2011. Hawley also became friends with one of the most interesting figures in 20th century pop, Scott Walker, who after huge initial success as a mainstream 60s orchestral pop star developed into one of the most nuanced, innovative and experimental artists working in contemporary music.

2. Hawley's late-50s Watkins Scout combo may be relatively low output, but it has a room-filling, evocative tone that suits his work perfectly

3. "It's scruffy, it's beat-up... but I just love the sound of it. It's beautiful," he says



Walker and Hawley met while working on Pulp's 2001 album, *We Love Life*, which Walker produced, and their friendship blossomed after a rocky start when Hawley turned up late to a session with the fastidiously punctual Walker. Hawley's reason for being late – rescuing a stack of rare records from a closing-down sale – earned Walker's forgiveness, however, and their friendship grew from that moment forward. Though Walker passed away in 2019, his white circa mid-70s Telecaster features prominently on Richard's latest album, as Hawley explains.

"Three days into recording the new record, I got a phone call from my old friend Cathy [Negus-Fancey], who was Scott Walker's manager," Richard explains. "Scott and I were friends, we used to play

"Close your eyes and just listen... You can read all the reviews you want. But your ears – they're the greatest asset you've got"

darts and sup Guinness together and there was no discussion of music – it was just darts and Guinness and occasionally a game of pool, but he was shite at pool so I'd always hammer him. So he preferred darts because I was crap at darts – I still am [laughs]. Anyway, Lee, his daughter, said one of last requests was to [feigns a parody of Scott Walker's drawl] 'Give that tosser Hawley one of my guitars...' and this is it.

"It arrived three days into recording the new record and I must say it was in quite a parlous state. It had been unplayed and my long-suffering guitar tech, Gordon White, who is a genius, [took on the job of fixing it up] and the hardest decision was to actually do anything with it at all. Because basically, [traces of] Scott blood's was on there – his physical remnants were on the guitar. But Gordon said, 'Fuck it, it's got to be playable,' and he fixed it all and made a beautiful thing and it was very, very close to me recording the new record; I recorded all the mad shit on it."

Hawley says Walker's impeccable musicality and rigorous high standards made him such a formidable artist and producer.

"We did this track on *We Love Life* called *Bob Lind (The Only Way Is Down)* where I had to play acoustic 12-string guitar. Jesus, he [Scott] whipped me like a racehorse, I'm telling you. He made me do it again and again. He was saying, 'Bite in, bite in – play deeper, like *really* dig in...' And my fingers at the end of that session literally bled. But the end results were great. I learned a lot from Scott, especially about microphones. His ears were immense: he could hear subtle inflections in the sonic quality of microphones or guitars or whatever it was, and his sonic palette was so expansive... I mean, I'm not really a musician. I just collect sound, you know, that's what I do. And I think Scott got that... but he was still shit at pool [laughs]." 



Richard Hawley's new album, *In This City They Call You Love*, is out now on BMG

www.richardhawley.co.uk

4

4. This mid-70s Tele belonged to pop icon Scott Walker and was bestowed on Richard following Scott's death in 2019

5. Hawley's wild-sounding wah-fuzz pedal has a nameplate from the Monofinn company from the city of Lahti, Finland – and a curious reference to leather uppers that suggests shoes more than fuzz! Cyrillic text on the bottom of the pedal may indicate Soviet manufacture in the Cold War era

6. Hawley's circa 1954 to '57 Epiphone Emperor Regent (pickup was added later) is a real looker and was formerly owned by Mike Collins of synth-funk pioneers SunPalace



5



5



6



Somewhere in life, you may have experienced something like the following: you struggle to get your head around something for years – say, a particular skill that eludes you – until one day an expert in that subject explains things in a new way that suddenly makes perfect sense. That person's unique take on a problem, combined with their experience, helps you leap forward several steps. And all you had to do was listen. At other times we gain strength from consulting a trusted mentor for exactly the opposite reason – they can tell us we are already on the right track and simply need to place more faith in our own instincts and abilities.

M A S

All of the above applies to the art of playing guitar and that's why we've brought together 57 top players, from Eric Johnson to Steve Cropper, to ask them what really makes a great guitarist? From the core skills every player should cultivate to the emotional and even spiritual connection we must each develop with the instrument, the pro players we consulted gave, without exception, thoughtful, useful and sometimes surprising answers to the question of how to become a better guitarist. We hope the lessons they have to impart over the following 14 pages help you grow as a musician and feel even closer to the core of what makes guitar such a special instrument.

J O E B O N A M A S S

J E N N I F E R B A T T

S T E V E L U K A T H E

A N D Y T I M M O N S

N I T A S T R A U S S

T E R

D A M O N J O H N S O N

V I N N I E M O O R E

S E R E N A C H E R R

R O C K Y A T H A S

J A Y J A Y F R E N C H

S A ERIC JOHNSON PHILIP SAYCE

EN KIRK FLETCHER STEVE SE

R MARTY FRIEDMAN BILL NELSON

S STEVE HACKETT DUANE TTTS

SAMANTHA FISH STEVE CRIPPER

CLASSES

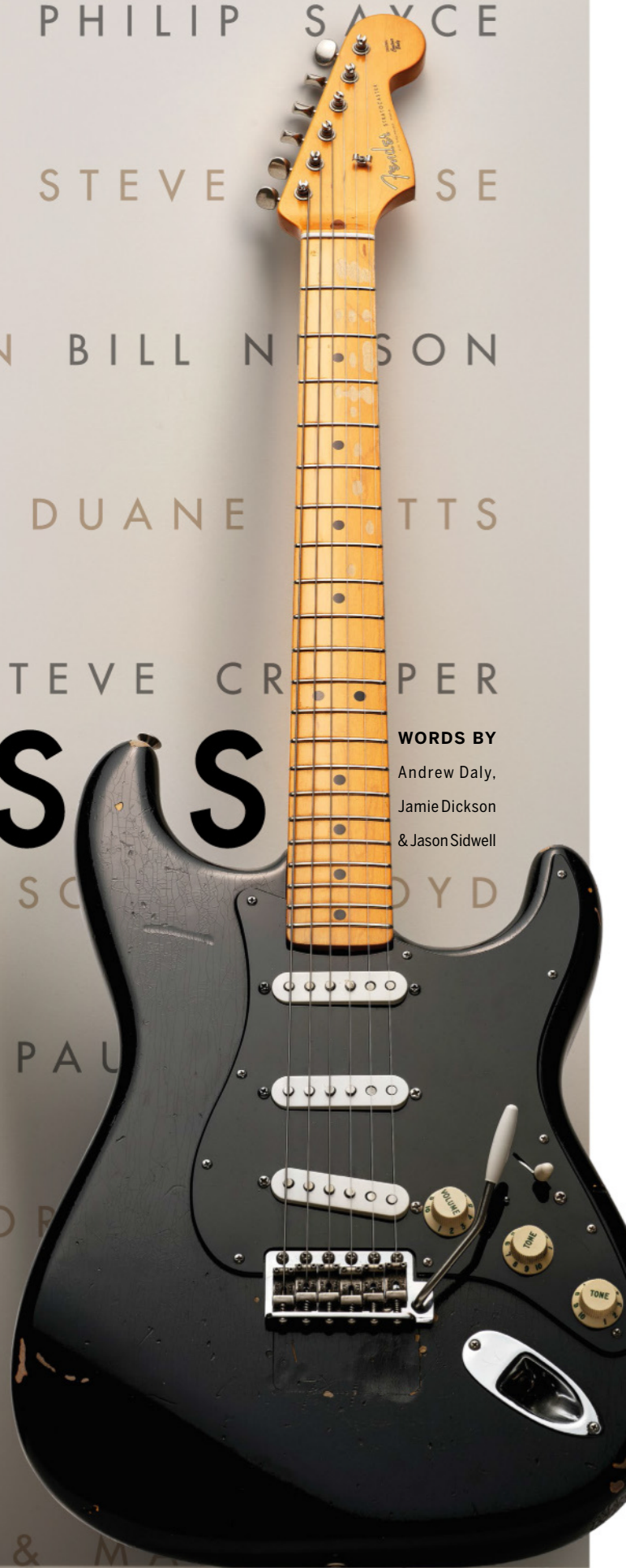
ON JESSE DAYTON SCOTT DODD

YVETTE YOUNG PAUL

Y ZAKK WYLDE OR

DEVON ALLMAN

H DAVID GILMOUR & M



WORDS BY

Andrew Daly,
Jamie Dickson
& Jason Sidwell

Guitarist would like to thank Vintage 'n' Rare Guitars in Bath for the loan of this exceptional 2012 Fender Custom Shop David Gilmour Relic Stratocaster, which is for sale. For more information: www.vintageandrareguitars.com

JOHN 5

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?



"The positive experiences have taught me the joy and love that the instrument can bring to a person. When you're down or when you're sad or even when you're happy – just any kind of experience that you're going through, no matter what, for me, my guitar will always bring me love and excitement."

DEVON ALLMAN

What's your best tone tip?



"Turn down. The volume and tone pots probably have 50 different flavours of tone within their spins."

How important is gear?

"Not very... However my '57 Les Paul Junior through my '66 Super Reverb will fuck you up! But I can also sound like me through cheap shit, too."

What's your best advice for playing well with other musicians?

"Listen and play within the cut, not on top."

MICHAEL ASTLEY-BROWN

(MAEBE)

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"Confidence in their unique voice on the instrument. Play with conviction and you will sound 100 times better than someone who isn't sure of themselves, or playing a style they don't believe in."

What negative experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"Battling long bouts of depression taught me how the guitar can be a way to process my darkest emotions and turn them into something positive. And if you're dealing with those thoughts while you're recording, channelling that into pure feeling – no matter how messy – can be more evocative than hitting the right notes."

ROCKY ATHAS

What's your best tip for banishing stage fright?



"Two things. First, nothing replaces being prepared. Nothing. After that, the only way to rid yourself of stage fright is to perform in front of others every chance you get, so that it all becomes second nature. Perform in the living room in front of the family. I did that plenty at my parent's urging during every family holiday gathering. Perform at school, perform anywhere and everywhere you can."

"The experience helps you work out your fears and helps you learn how to handle little problems like broken strings, being out of tune because of the weather, etc. Because all those things will happen at the worst possible moment on stage. You need to experience the good, the bad and the ugly to prepare for professional life. Really, all of that just boils down to being prepared. So, I guess there is just one thing. Be prepared."



1. Getting top-flight gigs with artists such as Michael Jackson and Jeff Beck were validating moments for Jennifer Batten

2. Just a single pickup plus a volume and tone control can yield a world of tone – if you are prepared to invest the time to really use these under-utilised controls to the full

JENNIFER BATTEN

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?



"Being chosen by Michael Jackson and Jeff Beck was extremely validating. It's easy to get really frustrated with your progress because you always want to be at a certain level, and when you get to that level, you're always looking further up the road at the next level. It's endless. The realisation that you never really arrive anywhere and that music is an ongoing learning and expressive experience is powerful. Getting those gigs let me know I was doing something right."

"All you can really do is spend time with the instrument and never stop working on it. I think the dedication magnetises new experiences in ways you can never anticipate."

How important is gear?

"Gear is important to the point where you shouldn't really have to struggle. If you have a guitar with extremely high action and heavy strings, that's going to be a struggle. There's no need for that and decent gear isn't that expensive. I buy quite a bit of used gear, too, so it's even cheaper. David Sanborn once had a TV show in the late 80s. The band received a letter from somebody saying they only sounded good



because they were rich and had the best gear. So the next week they all showed up with the worst gear you could possibly have including a plastic saxophone and toy piano, etc – search 'Night Music Playing Toy Electronic Instruments' on YouTube. They sounded as good as ever, which proved the ultimate point: it's the player, not the gear."

MICHAEL ANGELO BATIO

How important is theory to your playing – and what is its main value, in your view?



"I have a degree in Music Theory and Composition from Northeastern

University. The university degree doesn't make me a better musician or smarter than anyone else; it says that I finish things. The main objective was to learn as much as I can and to *finish* school. Music theory is second nature to me. However, I don't think you need music theory to be a great musician or composer, but I feel the strength of knowing about music gives you the opportunity to analyse a piece of music and understand it immediately. My saying regarding knowing theory is that if a person is truly musical and has something to say, they will find a way to say it: 'Musical people find a way to make music.'"

What's your best tone tip?

"Tone is very much in your fingers and what your mind tells them to play, but modern equipment can give an average player a very good sound. The thing it can't give you is uniqueness and your own style."

SHAUN BAXTER

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

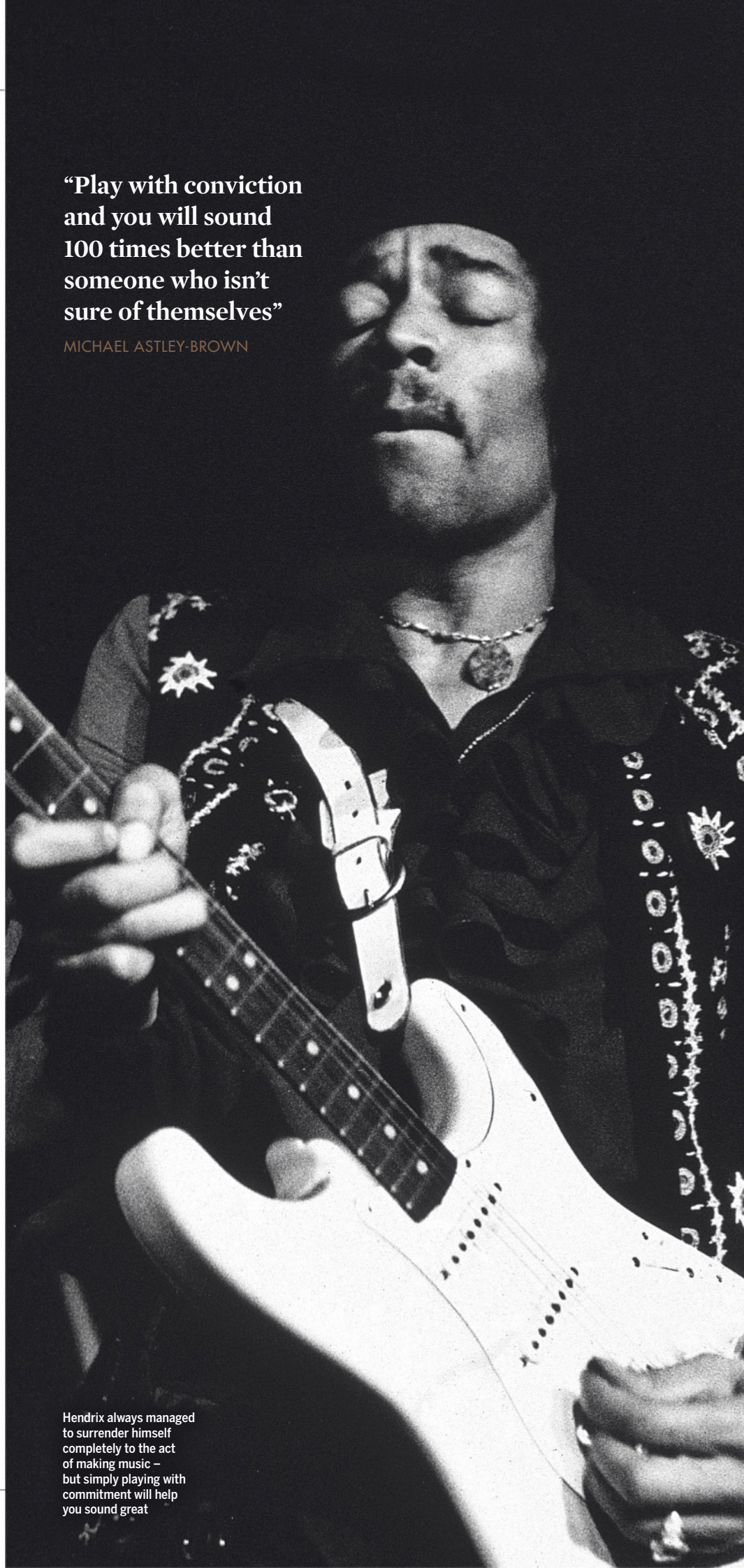


"I remember getting asked to go 'head-to-head' with a world-renowned and very

technically advanced player. Instead of getting into an arms race in front of a live audience, I simply focused on playing with beauty. This took all the pressure off me and forced me to focus on what was musically relevant. I still ended up playing lots of notes – because that's often what I hear in my head – but it was an approach that guaranteed that there was a reason behind every one of them."

**"Play with conviction
and you will sound
100 times better than
someone who isn't
sure of themselves"**

MICHAEL ASTLEY-BROWN



Hendrix always managed to surrender himself completely to the act of making music – but simply playing with commitment will help you sound great

DUANE BETTS

What's your practice routine?



"I love to play acoustic guitar in the morning after coffee. It's great not only for practising, but it centres me and doesn't let my mind drift into unnecessary thoughts and worry."

Have you ever encountered a barrier in your playing you wanted to overcome but couldn't – and what did you do about it?

"I've done acoustic jams with bluegrass musicians and I have always loved those players, but trying to keep up with them is another issue. Sometimes it's just best to admire what other players do. We all have our strengths."

JOE BONAMASSA

What's your best tip for learning new material quickly and effectively?



"I like to write it down first. Play and sing it while reading it then take the paper away. Step and repeat until you know it."

What negative experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"You learn the most when the gig goes to shit. You learn how to be a showman, an entertainer and to play, sing and smile your way out of trouble. There is always tomorrow."

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

"I realised very quickly that no matter what you do, it probably has been done before. So smile and enjoy the music. Your style will develop in time."

"No matter what you do, it probably has been done before – so smile and enjoy the music"

JOE BONAMASSA

NILI BROSH

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"That it's all a lifelong journey, that it's a marathon and not a sprint. I've always been



3. Steve Cropper pictured in 1967 during his time with Booker T & The MG's. Steve says the small but toneful Fender Vibro Champ was his secret weapon in the recording studio

an impatient person, and when I was younger I thought I had to 'accept the limitations' of what I thought my weaknesses were. It didn't dawn on me that I have my whole life to continue learning and improving, and that music is so vast it becomes a lifelong journey for everyone."

If you could be more like any one guitarist, alive or dead, who would it be and why?

"EVH! Spreading of confidence, never 'playing it safe', a plethora of spontaneity and improv moments out of nowhere, all while smiling and being effortlessly cool. Who wouldn't wanna be more like Ed?"

SERENA CHERRY (Syalbard)

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"That playing music is not a competitive sport, you don't need to compare yourself to other guitarists – just create what feels right to you."

STEVE CROPPER

What's your best tone tip?



"For the *Under A Bad Sign* session, I used my Fender Vibro Champ. I remember wanting to cry because I needed an amp that was warm but louder [laughs]. And to this day, I still have one of those 60s Vibro Champs in my garage. Everybody loves it. You just plug into it, and it's always ready to go until you turn it off."

JESSE DAYTON

What's your best advice for playing well with other musicians?



"Not being married to small things. Don't die on that musical hill if it's just not working. Be able to bob and weave and change. It doesn't matter who comes up with the best idea, it matters that you're giving the song what it needs. Stay open to new ideas."

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"Probably the most positive

experience that guitar playing taught me was watching how music brings people together. Playing for a crowd that's all in for the band and the show feels like the most positive thing ever."

SADIE DUPUIS (SPEEDY ORTIZ)
What's your best tip for learning new material quickly and effectively?



"Drill, drill, drill! Once I've got a general handle on the parts, I'll play them while I'm doing something else distracting – watching TV or a movie, for example, or even sitting outside unamplified if the weather calls for it. I find that practising through diversions helps the parts develop more innately than if I spent all my learning time solely fixating on guitar."

TOMMY EMMANUEL
What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"I had a lot of breakthroughs when I started to hear myself recorded. I heard that

4. Blues-rock maven Samantha Fish says that building licks around small chunks of memorable melody is the key to playing really effective solos

5. Tommy Emmanuel says that listening back to recordings of your own playing is a powerful way to develop technique

I needed to work on my time, my tone and not overplay all the time. Hearing my bad habits forced me to be a better listener and a better team player."

What negative experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"I think that being embarrassed by my lack of knowledge and experience in the company of better players helped push me into humility and hard work. I opened my mind, my heart and my eyes and left my judgments behind. I haven't looked back since! A musician's first job is to listen!"

SAMANTHA FISH

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"I remember being in the studio with Luther Dickinson when we were working on my *Wild Heart* record. I was recording a solo and didn't have much direction for it, so I was just swinging in the dark. He gave me this really simple piece of advice that has helped to shape my approach since. Start with a simple melody, something people

can sing, and build from there. Random riffs and flashy shit don't really speak to the soul. The memorable moments are built off of strong melodies, and sometimes it's so easy that we miss it entirely. Reinforce the hook or create one when you have the opportunity."

What negative experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"Gear failure is always a great teacher because the gear will fail from time to time. I've been on stage when the pedalboard dies, the amp dies, a pickup in the guitar fails – you don't have time to diagnose and fix it, but the show must go on. The power comes from your hands, and having confidence in your ability to carry the show without the comforts of your gear."

JASON FALKNER (BECK)

What's your best advice for playing well with other musicians?

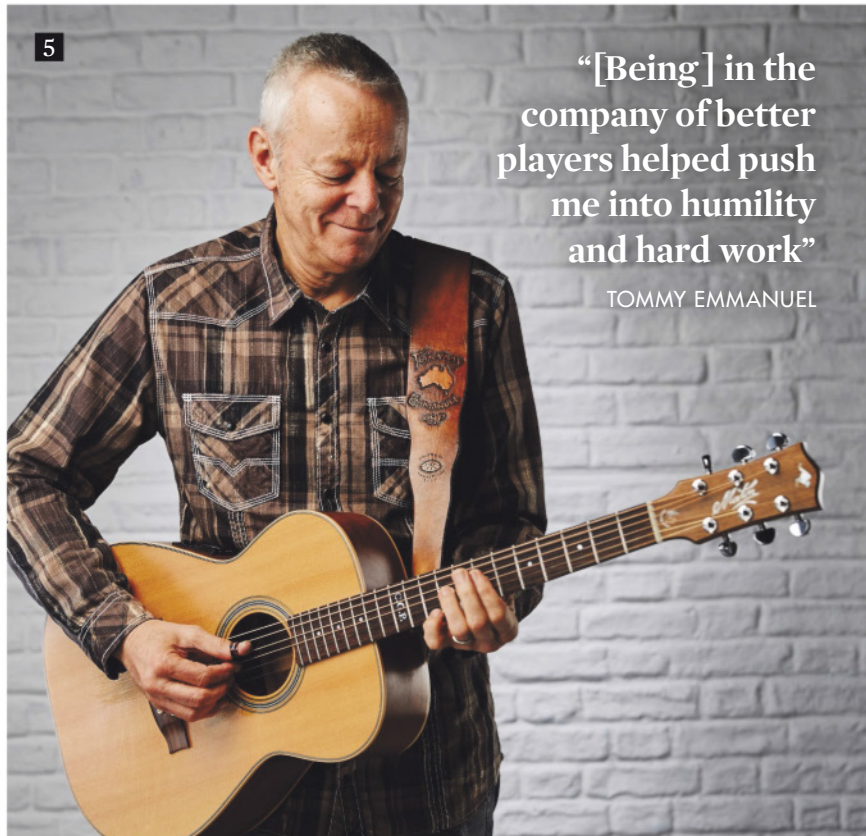


"Listening but also being confident enough in what you're doing that you're not waiting for musical instruction from what others are playing. It's like standing your ground but also being hyper-aware of what's going on around you."

4



5



"[Being] in the company of better players helped push me into humility and hard work"

TOMMY EMMANUEL

A great guitar player is ...

"Someone who knows when to shine and when to serve the song and support."

STEVE FARRIS (MR MISTER)

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"Not sure it helped me grow, but certainly survive... Trying to make it in a place like LA, once you accepted the idea that at least nine out of 10 great things that are 'supposed to happen' won't, you no longer give a shit about every disappointment, audition failed or that time you bombed when sitting in. But until you do all that, you don't get to cross the finish line, ie, make it! After that, you just take all setbacks as part of 'getting there'. I've told this to many people. Great survival tool."

KIRK FLETCHER

How important is gear?



"I'm a guitar-first guy. I literally can't play a guitar that is set up weirdly, has little frets, or something. Heck, plug me into the PA; I'll make it work [laughs]!"

BRIAN FORSYTHE (KIX)

What's your best tone tip?



"Guitar – straight into the amp. No pedals. Crank it."

"Over time, the more you play to people and the larger the crowd, the more you get used to it" JAY JAY FRENCH

JAY JAY FRENCH

(TWISTED SISTER)

What's your best tone tip?



"This is so subjective. The guitar mags will try to convince you that a certain guitar, amp or pedal will get you where you wanna go. This is true to a degree, but understanding who you are and knowing that it's what is in your head and fingers – that's where the truth lies. Trust me. All the greats will sound like themselves regardless of what gear they play through."



"Unless you are regularly playing classical music with orchestras, practice at home is the lowest priority thing to do"

MARTY FRIEDMAN

6. Marty Friedman says there are 'no locks on the fretboard'. The best way to familiarise yourself? Play – a lot

What's your best tip for banishing stage fright?

"Over time, the more you play to people and the larger the crowd, the more you get used to it. By the end of our touring years – in 2016 – we played in front of an average of 40,000 people per show up to 110,000. By then it was just another gig. I could be sleeping 30 minutes prior, get up, go on stage and play for two hours then go to my hotel, check the baseball scores of my favourite teams and go to sleep."

MARTY FRIEDMAN

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"Unless you are regularly playing classical music with orchestras, practice at home is the very least effective, lowest priority thing to do as a musician. One show – and its

accompanying prep (rehearsals, soundchecks, song choosing, song arranging, promotion, staging and performance, etc) – will do more for you as a musician than hundreds of hours of practice at home. That will turbocharge your abilities. In other words, you get good at what you do. If you practise at home a lot you will get better at practising at home. If you play out a lot, you will get better at playing out."

What's your best tip for understanding/unlocking the fretboard?

"There are no locks on the fretboard. If you play long enough, you will know where everything is, I guarantee it. Stop looking for shortcuts. Just play. A lot. Learn from anybody and everybody."

What's your best tip for banishing stage fright?

"Remember the show is not about you; it is about the people who came



“[Become] fluent enough with guitar so you have enough mental space left to listen to the drummer” PAUL GILBERT

BRETT GARSE PHOTO BY TIBBY FLORA / PAUL GILBERT PHOTO BY SAM GERRKE / TRACII GUNS PHOTO BY JOE SCHAEFFER PHOTOGRAPHY

to see you. It's their night. They are already in a forgiving mood. Unless you have a train wreck, no-one will notice your mistakes. And if you think you might make mistakes, it just means you aren't even close to being prepared. Overprepare and stage fright goes away.”

How important is gear?

“Can't play without it.”

BRETT GARSE

What's your best tip for understanding/unlocking the fretboard?



“I personally work on intervals, rather than shapes or patterns. This doesn't mean I don't use shapes or patterns, of course, but the shapes and patterns have a sound to them that I can hear as well as see. If I'm playing a note on the fifth string and the next note I want to hear is a minor 3rd, I know I can either go up three frets or over to the

fourth string and down two frets. I navigate the fretboard by sound using this method, so I feel like it gives me a lot of freedom and I never get 'stuck in a box', so to speak.”

PAUL GILBERT

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



“Being fluent enough with guitar so you have enough mental space left to listen to the drummer. Listening to the drummer solves nearly every problem.”

What's your best tip for understanding/unlocking the fretboard?

“Learn vocal melodies. Practising scales up and down will sound like scales going up and down. Learn the vocal melody to *I Will* by The Beatles. With the exception of one note, the entire melody stays in the F major scale. It's beautiful.”

7. Paul Gilbert advises players to learn to play vocal melodies – the voice is unbound by scales or positional patterns so following what it does on guitar can be liberating

DAVID GILMOUR

What's your best tone tip?



“I do unrepentantly like the old [guitars]. Older instruments have a tonality of their own that often takes years to develop. But these things go in waves... Luckily, I know the periods of guitar and the types of guitar that I like. You just need to look in the right places.”

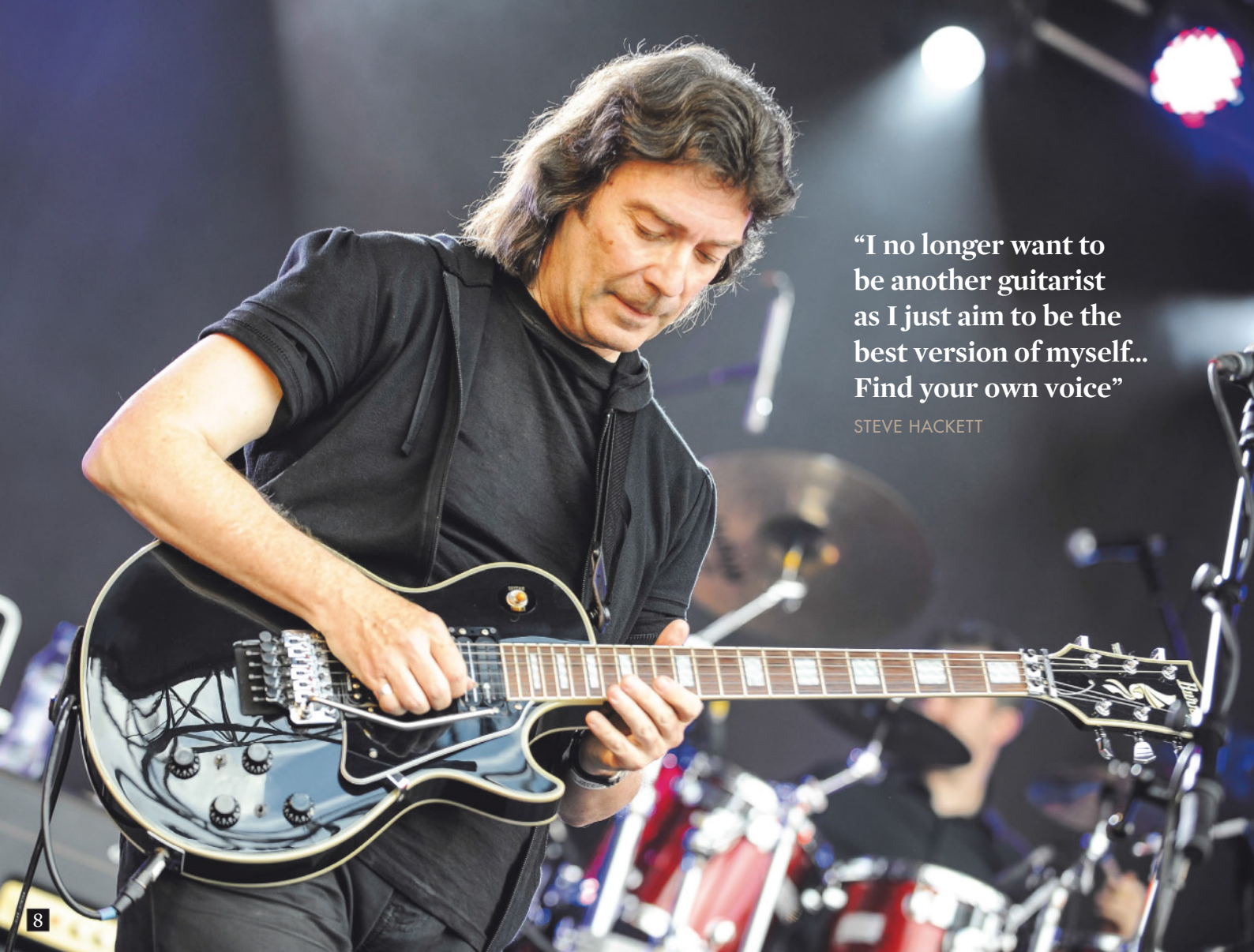
TRACII GUNS (LA GUNS)

What's your best tone tip?



“Tone is what makes the player comfortable. You're gonna play at your best when your sound is most comfortable to your hands, your body and your nervous system. For me, that'd be a Telecaster or Les Paul through a great-sounding Marshall – for example, a perfectly tuned 80s JMP Marshall has a way of reacting to a humbucker or single-coil pickups that's very expressive and dynamic. And then

DAVID GILMOUR PHOTO BY GUS STEWART/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



“I no longer want to be another guitarist as I just aim to be the best version of myself... Find your own voice”

STEVE HACKETT

8

what adds that extra layer of comfort is the Boss SD-1 distortion pedal: it gives me that forgiving kind of sustain that makes me feel confident in my playing.”

STEVE HACKETT

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



“Skills can be acquired. Every finger dance becomes a skill turned into muscle memory, but the thing that cannot be acquired is passion for the medium itself. Either you want it so bad or you don’t. Nureyev had to dance, even though his father tried to beat it out of him. A teacher hit Gary Moore on the head for even thinking about a big red guitar. But in both cases, passion met brilliance.”

What’s your best tip for banishing stage fright?

“Phil Collins once said that enjoying playing was more important than fearing it. Enjoyment is the most powerful weapon against fear.”

If you could be more like any one guitarist, alive or dead, who would it be and why?

“I no longer want to be another guitarist as I just aim to be the best version of myself. It is important to find your own voice.”

PHIL HILBORNE

What’s your best tip for learning new material quickly and effectively?



“I know it might seem obvious, but one of the best ways of learning new material is simply to listen to it a lot before even attempting to play it. I think ingraining the structure and phrasing is a lot easier if you do it this way. Too many people just grab their guitars and dive in and try to play the material too soon.”

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

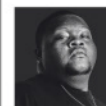
“The realisation that it’s all in the details – often the smallest of

8. Steve Hackett urges players to connect with the enjoyment of playing live, even if you feel butterflies before stepping on stage – or perhaps especially then

these make such a big difference. Particularly with regards to timing, feel, groove as well as the finer points of dynamic control, intonation and overall band interplay.”

CHRISTONE ‘KINGFISH’ INGRAM

What negative experience taught you the most about playing guitar?



“Sometimes the road can be tough. Sometimes this whole industry can be tough. But when you get yourself up and out there it can be very beautiful.”

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?

“As simple as the scale is, pentatonic ideas are always the best way to reach an audience. Those tend to be the notes they feel even if they don’t even know why... The secret to pentatonic playing is finding as many licks as you can. You have to be inventive so it doesn’t sound like a scale.”

DAMON JOHNSON*(BROTHER CANE/LYNYRD SKYNYRD)***What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?**

"For me, it comes back to that issue of tone. In 1990 a friend guided me to ordering a modified '72 100-watt Marshall Super Lead head that had been worked on by the late great Frank Levy. Spending \$1,000 back then would be like spending \$10,000 now, but it was worth every penny. That amp quite literally changed my life, as I had just put Brother Cane together and used that amp on stage and in the studio for our first album, and I still have it with me today. The compliments and encouragement I got from everyone around me about the sound of that amp was rocket fuel for my confidence."

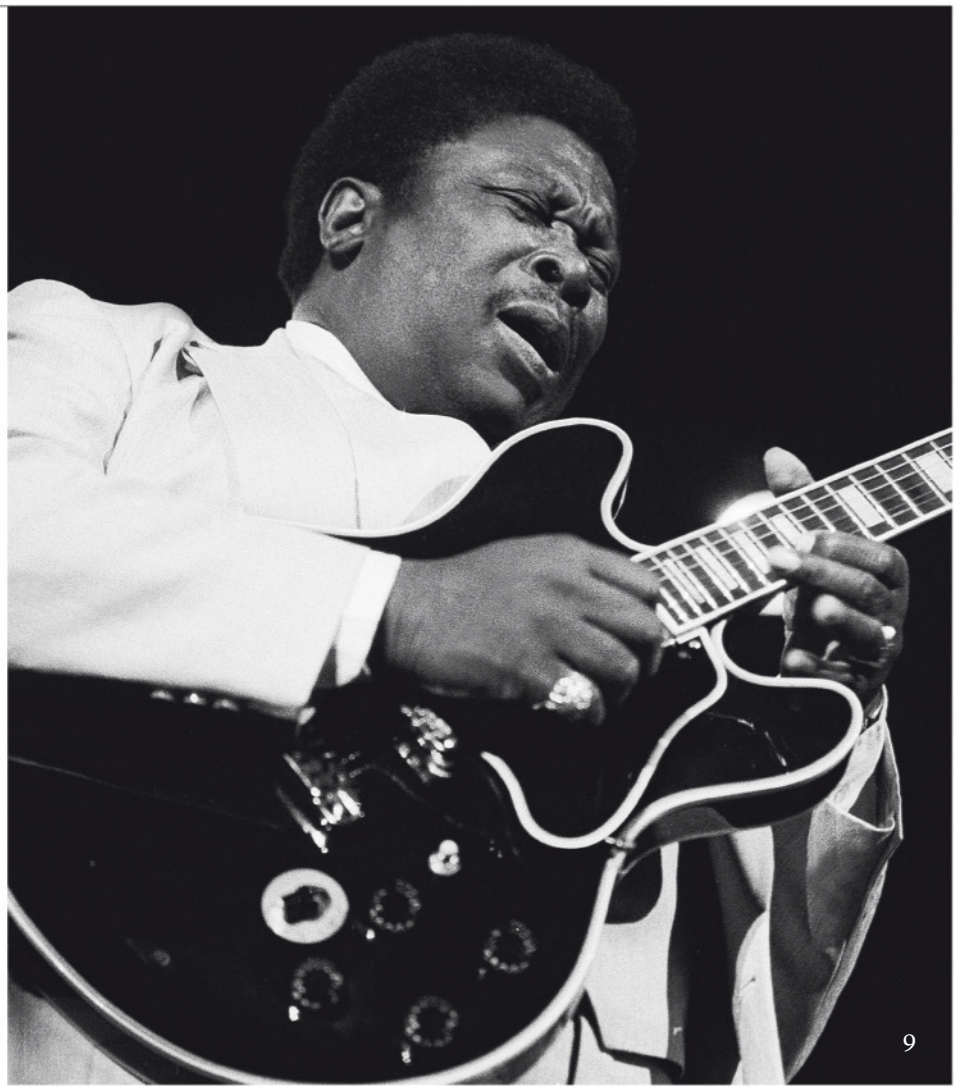
ERIC JOHNSON**What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?**

"One of the most important realisations I had as a player was to work on not living in my head too much when I play. Entertaining the potential of how you could sound in your head is sometimes romancing the reality. In other words, if you're honest about your playing and take a real look at it, you can take the responsibility to improve your playing. The more you manifest into reality the dream romance of how you want to sound in your head, the more you can let go of all of that and just play from your heart."

"This whole industry can be tough. But when you get yourself up and out there it can be very beautiful" *CHRISTONE 'KINGFISH' INGRAM*

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?

"A valuable skill for a guitarist is to be able to honestly review their playing and work on all the aspects of improving their technique, so that when it comes time for the music you can forget about technique and just play."



9. BB King, pictured here on stage in 1980, was the very epitome of 'taking your time' to express the music with full intensity and expressiveness

ANDY LAROQUE*(KING DIAMOND)***Have you ever encountered a barrier in your playing you wanted to overcome but couldn't – and what did you do about it?**

"Yes, but when you realise you can't play a certain part exactly as you want, that's when you create your own unique style. Although if I went back now to check some of my favourite players, I'd probably manage to play their stuff better than I did when I was 18!"

BILL LAVERTY *(FIREHOUSE)***What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?**

"Playing in time is more important than playing the 'right' notes. I'll always be a student working on my rhythm playing – and lead playing – to be more in the pocket. I want my playing to sound effortless without speeding up or slowing down."

TIM LERCH**What's your best tip for learning new material quickly and effectively?**

"'Quickly' is usually not effective. Take small bites, chew them well. Once you've learned a phrase very carefully without mistakes, do the repetitions necessary to make it yours. Don't try to do too much too soon!"

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

"Always remember why you wanted to play in the first place. Don't let egoic machinations steal your joy."

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"I was at a blues jam with some very seasoned older players in my early days. When I somewhat frantically launched into my big solo, a sax player leaned over and said, 'Take your time, son.' I'm still trying to follow that very helpful advice."

SOPHIE LLOYD

What's your best advice for playing well with other musicians?



"Interact with everyone around you. So many people stand there in their own bubble not looking up from their instrument for a second. You want to be making eye contact with everyone around you, smiling and rocking out with them – look for cues from others and have fun."

KIKO LOUREIRO

(MEGADETH)

What do you know about guitar now that you wish you had known when you were starting out?



"Being creative, writing songs and solos is for everyone. We all have that, we just need to access it. In the beginning, though, I needed to learn everything before trying to create my music."

What's your best tip for learning new material quickly and effectively?

"If it's a song, I prefer to listen to it a lot before even trying to play it. Then I learn the rhythm parts and structure, and move on to the solos, isolating the difficult licks and making exercises out of them."

STEVE LUKATHER

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?



"Well, competition was fierce growing up as there was nothing to do but play music or sports and I sucked at sports, so music became my best friend and I found other kids that could play good – it was the 60s and rock music was not that difficult then."

"I learned the solo for the song *Gloria* by Them as a small kid and people thought I was some child genius. Thank you, Jimmy Page. That was the first Page solo of many I learned and loved. We all hung out and played as kids in the local neighbourhoods, practised together and grew musically together and hung out and listened to the latest records... It's all I ever cared about as a kid. It's all I ever wanted to do and all I was any good at."

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

"Time and groove are everything. Vibrato, which is one's thumbprint, is also something to work on. It comes natural after a while – but be patient."

STEVE LYNCH (AUTOGRAPH)

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"I believe the most important and useful skill is being yourself. By that, I mean create something that is *you*. Having good technique and knowing your theory is important, but what's key is to have an original sound. If you reflect on the most respected guitarists throughout history you'll find that, above all else, they have a specific sound and style that defines them."

"Be yourself. The most respected guitarists throughout history have a specific sound and style that defines them" STEVE LYNCH

ALEX MASI

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"There were at least a couple – realising that in order for anything to sound musical it had to be played with a certain amount of authority. Even the simplest thing can turn into an important musical statement if played by projecting out each single note while still paying attention to dynamics."

10. For many players we spoke to, Eddie Van Halen embodied all the important virtues a guitarist should have – superb groove yet also blistering licks and an irrepressible joy in playing

VINNIE MOORE

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"I think that developing your ear is at the top of the list for any musician. When I had been playing for about a year, my guitar teacher asked me to go home and figure out the chord changes to Van Halen's *Ice Cream Man*. I thought that I had nailed it, but when I played it for him I learned that a lot of it was wrong. At that point I hadn't developed my ear. So I began frequently listening to songs and trying to figure out the chord progressions. The more I tried, the better my ear got. Soon I was listening to and figuring out solos. Writing songs or improvising all starts with your ear. It is one of the most fundamental and essential things you need to be a good musician."



10

STEVE MORSE

What's your best tone tip?



"Muting the strings you're not playing. For instance, playing slide guitar becomes easy if you use all your right-hand fingers to block the strings you don't want to hear because the slide creates extraneous noise as you move it around. Or on high-gain distorted sounds, holding every other string still gives you the opportunity to play a clean, lyrical single voice part while using an awkwardly high-gain setting otherwise."

How important is gear?

"Gear is a tool. You go in a garage with master mechanics and they will have different tools and joke with each other about the ones that came from a lower-priced tool store. But they know what each one works best for, and they make miracles with them if they're really masters. Same with gear. It's a tool – and if you know what it will work for musically, and how to master the choices it gives you, well, you've got some great tools. Still, the art is picking the right tool for the job and having the feel in your hands along with the knowledge to not over- or under-torque a part."

BILL NELSON

What's your best tip for understanding/unlocking the fretboard?



"Not sure I've ever unlocked it, though it's been fun trying to pick the lock! I never had guitar lessons, nor absorbed much music theory; I play entirely by ear and instinct. Don't be afraid to take risks, you learn by making mistakes. Eventually, you will get to the point where you and the instrument are one and the barriers will fall away to some degree."

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

"One realisation was when the input volume on my Watkins Copicat tape echo unit was accidentally turned up too high – this was back in the early 60s. The resulting feedback and sustain was like a light bulb being switched on. The sound

Bill Nelson's well-loved and much-played 1963 ES-345 – he says he's still unlocking the secrets of the fretboard every day, after years of playing

"I play entirely by ear and by instinct. Don't be afraid to take risks – you learn by making mistakes"

BILL NELSON





11

became violin-like, rather than a percussive twang! The covers band I was playing in at the time threw me out for being a noisy hooligan!"

ORIANTHI

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"Be inventive – learn from the greats then find your own fingerprint. And don't think too much! That gets in the way of not only having a good time but taking the audience on a journey with you. Go on a feeling, always."

JACKIE PARRY (DIANTHUS)

What's your best tone tip?



"Balance with any frequency is key. No matter the genre, always aim for a tone that isn't too harsh or shrill. At the same time, though, you don't want a tone that is muddy or easily lost in a live setting. I remember back in the day when I was new at playing live, I would crank up the bass dial on my amp. I wanted to sound so heavy! This only dirtied up my tone and I couldn't cut through my sister [Jessica]'s drumming. After many

years of playing live and watching footage back, I've learned it is so important to embrace the higher frequencies that a guitar should have in the mix. If you can understand this, your bass player will love you forever, too!"

CHRIS POLAND (MEGADETH)

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"There are a few, but if we are talking about soloing I would say phrasing. I feel it is the thing that keeps the listener interested. Phrasing helps bring a theme to a solo. Jeff Beck had genius phrasing, and Eric Clapton's take on soloing has always stuck with me. Always try to have a beginning, a middle and an ending to a solo."

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?

"How beautiful music really is and how it has so much power. Music is soul food. Music is healing. I could go on, but I think everyone agrees music has gotten them through the best and worst times of their lives. It's spiritual. There – I said it!"

11. Malcolm Young of AC/DC was everything a great rhythm player should be – rock-solid in the groove, tireless and the engine behind AC/DC's biggest hits

ANA POPOVIC

What's your best tone tip?



"Fender Strat single-coil pickups – Alnico V – matched with Mesa/Boogie Mark IV medium distortion channel, used simultaneously with the Fender Super Reverb '65 [black-panel], via an A/B box."

A great guitar player is ...

"Humble. They have put in enough work and years in their craft to know that you shouldn't take pleasure in bashing other people's work."

RYAN ROXIE

(ALICE COOPER / SLASH'S SNAKEPIT)

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"The skill to play solid rhythm guitar always takes the back seat to playing lead and I don't know why. Without Malcolm there wouldn't be Angus, or at least not the Angus we all know. Learning rhythm guitar will actually help you become a better lead player as it will lock you in more with the 'rhythm section' aka bass and drums. Wanna get popular on YouTube? Play mind-blowing solos and post 'em up. Wanna get employed with a touring band? Play mind-blowing rhythm parts as well as solos that ultimately lift the song that becomes popular on all musical platforms, including YouTube!"

Which guitarist has most impressed you and why?

"Brian May pound for pound is one of the most important guitarists I know. Style, tone, image and, most importantly, songs. One only has to listen to Queens's 1977 *News Of The World* to hear just how many different styles of guitar you can record on one record. Classical, punk, blues, Spanish... it's got it all! Plus the guy *still* looks like a rockstar when he hits the stage. Absolutely love and respect that guy!"

"Be inventive – learn from the greats then find your own fingerprint. And don't think too much! It gets in the way..." ORIANTHI

BLUES SARACENO

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"To really try to achieve your absolute best you had to be willing to fail miserably. No half measures. The problem with swinging for the fences is that the numbers aren't in your favour – but when it does happen, it's totally worth it."

What record by another artist taught you the most about what matters in music?

"I would listen to early Bob Dylan records and would think about how imperfectly perfect they really were – also the real early blues albums by various artists. My favourite art has never been even remotely close to perfect."

What's your best tone tip?

"Lay off the preamp gain... You're welcome."

"Music is soul food. It's healing. I think everyone agrees music has gotten them through the best and worst times" CHRIS POLAND

PHILIP SAYCE

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"Connection to emotions. To play from your heart and gut makes it personal and adds a vibrancy, depth and a multi-dimensional quality to one's music. Even just one note from deep within your soul can shake the world."

What's your best tip for banishing stage fright?

"To focus on gratitude. To understand that playing music is a privilege. To have the opportunity to connect with other people through the power and spirit of music is an incredible gift. To be grateful to all of the musicians that have come before me for their influence and their beautiful music, which has turned me on for my entire life. To be thankful to all the people in my life who support me as



"To play from your heart and gut makes it personal and adds a vibrancy, depth and a multi-dimensional quality..." PHILIP SAYCE

12

a musician during my lifetime, and to play my ass off for them in every moment at every opportunity. To understand that we are all equals and whatever each of us has to say musically is valid and important. To open my heart and mind to receive guidance and inspiration through the language of music from my higher power."

JEFF SCHROEDER

(SMASHING PUMPKINS)

What do you know about guitar now that you wished you'd known when you were starting out?



"Clichés can be difficult because we have a tendency to gloss over them. That being said, the phrase 'tone starts in the hands' is something I wish I understood better when I was younger. In an era where we are continually inundated with what I would call a false need or desire for the latest gear, it is easy to slip into a mentality that getting a new guitar, pedal or amp is necessary to improve your playing and/or sound. It can help, especially if the gear you're using provides challenges. However, I've found over the years that it isn't as important as we often think it is."

ALEX SKOLNICK

How important is theory to your playing – and what is its main value, in your view?



"Theory is very important as a tool of mental organisation. I'm also very respectful of players who just play by ear and don't have a use for it. I thought I was going to be that type of player, but when I got the bug for jazz guitar and high-level improv, I realised I needed to grasp theory. I remember seeing pages of scales and modes and just feeling baffled and having no intention to ever learn them, yet that completely turned around once I was able to make the connection between those concepts and sounds I was hearing that I liked."

What things make you cringe/do you dislike when you hear other guitarists do them?

"My biggest pet peeve with other guitarists is uncontrolled vibrato. I often compare vibrato on the guitar to vibrato on the voice. A note needs to be sustained for a moment before any vibrato is incorporated. This is how it is done with most singers, unless we're talking about Jello Biafra from the Dead Kennedys. On guitar it just sounds

ridiculous to vibrate instantly and uncontrollably. As I've told many students over the years: vibrato should not control you. You need to control it, not the other way around."

NITA STRAUSS

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"The most important realisation I had was that I wanted what I do to be fun. I didn't want playing guitar to feel like a chore! I enjoy every moment of my playing, on stage and off. It's my hope that that joy and enthusiasm translate to the audience when they see me play."

How important is theory to your playing – and what is its main value, in your view?

"I think it's important to understand the basics of theory in anything that you do. Music, math, painting ... knowing the theory is helpful. Understanding how the notes fit together does help you create more sonically beautiful and cohesive pieces of music. However, I don't think that knowing theory is the end all be all of creating! Claude Debussy said, 'Works of art make rules; rules do not make works of art.'"

What things make you cringe/do you dislike when you hear other guitarists do them?

"Honestly, nothing! I hear other guitar players do things that I wouldn't do, but they don't make me cringe. It's better that we don't all sound the same."

"Timing is the most important thing. You can play any notes with hip timing and it sounds good! You can't do the opposite" CARL VERHEYEN

Have you ever encountered a barrier in your playing you wanted to overcome but couldn't – and what did you do about it?

"Marcus Aurelius, the stoic philosopher, says in his famous *Meditations*: 'The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way, becomes the way.' So to put this simply ... Just do it! Do the thing you can't do, slow before fast, until you can do it."



14. Andy Timmons hails the inventiveness of jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery, above, as one of the most inspiring sounds in all guitar music

SHANE THERIOT

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?



"The idea of hearing what you are going to play in your head before you play it. Take a second and 'hear' a melody or idea before you even start playing. Singing while playing solos to make your phrasing more 'you' and less about playing memorised licks. All the great improvisers do this to some degree. It's helpful for coming up with parts for a song."

ANDY TIMMONS

What one skill do you think is most useful for a guitarist to possess and why?



"The ability to listen on a deep level. Listening is everything: being able to learn by ear, recognising what's happening around you musically and how to respond and

blend in real-time. That idea spills over into just general awareness as a human being and how you interact in society. Is it 'all about you' or are you sensitive to the bigger picture? In other words: 'Everything I do affects everything around me'. It's the same with music."

What's your best tip for understanding/unlocking the fretboard?

"Learning scales on one string, opening up the horizontal fretboard in addition to the vertical/position-based fretboard knowledge that's more commonly applied. Knowing the names of every note on the fretboard is certainly helpful, too."

If you could be more like any one guitarist, alive or dead, who would it be and why?

"Wes Montgomery as he played with such melodic freshness and inventiveness. You can sense the incredible creativity happening in real-time. Django Reinhardt even

more so. It's not that I desire to play in their style but with their command and freedom."

CARL VERHEYEN

What positive experience taught you the most about playing guitar?



"The great guitarist and mentor of mine Joe Diorio had a paralysing stroke. When I heard he was giving a masterclass locally and knew that he wouldn't be able to play a single note on the guitar, I was worried. But I attended what I still consider to be the heaviest masterclass I've ever seen because it was all about tapping into the creative pool at any level of technique you have... The ability to touch people is equal. It's not about chops."

What was the most important realisation about playing that you had, coming up, and how did it help you grow?

"I understood that time – or timing, if you prefer – was the most important thing. You can play any notes with hip timing and it sounds good! You can't do the opposite. If you talk about economical blues players like BB King and Muddy Waters, the time was everything – and, of course, taste. If you take extremely advanced players like Allan Holdsworth, it was his timing that was most important, how he ended the phrases and his pauses. He had a fantastic time-feel. Many players that copy him miss that fact."

ZAKK WYLDE

How important is theory to your playing – and what is its main value, in your view?



"I enjoy theory, scales and the language of music, but if something doesn't serve you, why waste hours on that when you could invest your time on something you'll use?"

YVETTE YOUNG

Which guitarist has most impressed you and why?



"I've been listening to a lot of stuff where guitar is not at the forefront and it's a tool. I had this really amazing guy Scarypoolparty [Alejandro Aranda] with me on tour. He's technically amazing and he writes really good songs." 

Nita Strauss showed her mettle in Alice Cooper's band and she says obstacles to advancement should be viewed as an essential part of becoming a great player – not something to be shielded away from

"Do the thing you can't do, slow before fast, until you can do it"

NITA STRAUSS





IAN BAIRNSON'S 1974 LES PAUL CUSTOM

When Pilot's Ian Bairnson used this guitar to play the solo on Kate Bush's *Wuthering Heights* in 1978, he was nursing a broken wrist... We catch up with fellow Pilot David Paton and producer Alan Parsons to find out more

Words David Mead Photography Phil Barker

Ian Bairnson was already a successful session musician before he joined the band Pilot back in the early 1970s. The band's single *Magic* was an instant hit on its release in 1974 and served to introduce Ian to Alan Parsons, who produced the early Pilot albums. This led to Ian becoming a member of The Alan Parsons Project, playing on all the band's album releases. Sadly, Ian was diagnosed with a progressive neurological condition in 2018 and passed away in 2023 after a long battle with dementia. His family then took the tough decision to put his instruments up for auction in June at Gardiner Houlgate in Wiltshire. Among them was this 1974 Les Paul Custom, which has the added distinction of being featured on Ian's solo at the end of Kate Bush's debut single, *Wuthering Heights*.

The guitar was bought brand-new from Take Five in London's Shaftesbury Avenue in 1974 and quickly became Ian's number-one instrument. As you can see, it has had several modifications, including a change of pickups and the addition of two mini-switches, which act as coil-taps for the humbuckers. We asked Gardiner Houlgate's head of guitar, Luke Hobbs, for the lowdown on the modifications to the guitar in its present form.

"Basically, they are Tom Holmes pickups that are currently installed; they're supposed to be PAF replicas," he tells us. "But the guitar was sold with the original pickups alongside the guitar. The tuners have been replaced with Schallers – they were just deemed to be more stable. The control knobs were replaced; it would have had the black 'witch's hat' kind of knobs and essentially it would have had all black hardware in terms of the plastics. The two pickup surrounds were replaced – they would have originally been black, as

would the poker chip. The original black pickguard was included in the case... And I think that pretty much covers it."

Looking back to the early 1970s, David Paton – the bass player in Pilot and who also went on to play with Alan Parsons (and, in the mid-1980s, Elton John) – shares his memories with us here.

How did you first meet Ian?

"We met in Edinburgh. Ian played in a club called Tiffany's – you may be familiar with the name as there was one in London, too – and I was asked to join the band with Ian on guitar. That would be about 1972. He then decided to move to London, so he left the gig at Tiffany's in Edinburgh and moved to London and took up the gig at Tiffany's there."

When did you invite Ian to join Pilot?

"We were recording in Abbey Road, the first album, just as a three-piece. The album was finished, including *Magic*, which I had played guitar on, but we didn't have a strong enough intro. So we decided to re-record the intro to *Magic* and Ian was there at the time, so he agreed to play on the intro. Then he came along to the studio one time while I was auditioning guitar players. I went up to the control room and he said, 'What are you



Pilot in 1975 (clockwise from left): Ian Bairnson, Stuart Tosh, David Paton and Billy Lyall

PHOTO BY MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Ian's 1974 Les Paul Custom underwent a good deal of modding over the years, including the coil-tap mini-toggles in between the volume and tone controls



1



2



3

1. Ian bought his Les Paul Custom in 1974 for £315 and, over the years, changed a few things "to make it look more like a Standard", including the tuners here, by Schaller

2. The Custom was a 20th Anniversary model that Ian teamed up with a 50-watt Marshall amp in the studio with no pedals between the guitar and amp – any effects were added at the mixing desk

3. A slight case of buckle rash to the rear shows that this guitar was a thoroughbred road warrior and was used by Ian on recordings by Pilot, Kate Bush and The Alan Parsons Project

doing?" I said, 'Auditioning guitar players...' and he said, 'Why didn't you ask me?' So that was it: he was in the band."

Do you remember Ian's '74 Custom?

"Oh, I do, yes. Such a gorgeous guitar. I think he bought that after he joined Pilot, and that was 1974, so it must have been new, right?"

By the time it came up for auction there had been a few modifications made to it. Was Ian a modder in that respect?

"You know, Ian could be quite boring when you asked him about a guitar [laughs]. Because his knowledge was so comprehensive that he would tell you how many [wire turns] there were on his pickups and what-not. He was really, really into it. So he certainly had a lot of knowledge and whoever the technician he worked with was, I'm sure Ian's input was quite substantial."

And you both went on to work with Kate Bush.

"We did. We did a lot of things like that together. The Kate Bush session was perfect for us. We didn't want to continue with Pilot any more and session work was the ideal thing. I think that was about '76 or '77 and there seemed to be plenty of it for us. It was Andrew Powell, who did a couple of string arrangements for the Pilot singles, he produced the first two albums for Kate Bush, and Andrew wanted Ian and I to participate in that particular session. I played 12-string guitar on *Wuthering Heights*."

Is it true that Ian played the solo with his arm in a cast?

"Yes. Ian and I shared lots of mutual interests and one of these was trail bike racing. We had a couple of bikes in Edinburgh and we used to go into the hills to the firing ranges and do our tricks up there. And Ian just happened to do something that was a bit beyond him and came off the bike badly and broke his wrist. When we got back to the house, I said, 'Tomorrow, you'll be fine. You've just sprained it,' without realising that he'd actually broken it. It began to swell up quite a bit, so we took him to the hospital and he got a cast put on. And we knew that the session was coming up..."

Which arm was it?

"I think it was his right. I've got a picture of him on a bike with this cast on somewhere." 

Guitarist would like to thank Luke Hobbs at Gardiner Houlgate for giving us access to Ian's Les Paul Custom



Height Of Success

The Les Paul Custom continued its journey with Ian Bairnson into The Alan Parsons Project. We talk to Alan about the re-release of the album *Pyramid*, which features Ian on guitar

You met Ian when you were producing Pilot...

"Yes, the original Pilot was a three-piece: David Paton, Stuart Tosh and Billy Lyall. Ian came onboard and made a huge difference to what the band was capable of. He came up with that opening solo for *Magic*. We got to know each other pretty well and Pilot essentially became the rhythm section of The Alan Parsons Project."

When did you think of inviting the guys from Pilot to join the Project?

"It was really just when we had the songs ready to record. It seemed so easy with a single phone call to Pilot's management to have them come in and just learn songs. And it turned out that they would remain with us. David, Ian and Stuart were there for the first two albums, and Stuart Tosh was then replaced by Stuart Elliott for *Pyramid*, but I don't know what we would have done without Ian. He was definitely a part of the Project's sound. I think *What Goes Up* has my favourite guitar solo of anything he ever did. And we're actually going to be promoting the album because of the new boxset. I'm having the guitar player learn that solo note for note for this because it's magical."

Ian had a very melodic style, avoiding the blues guitar clichés of the time.

"Yes, but that isn't to say that he wasn't capable of doing an incredible blues performance as well. He could play the blues like no-one else. He did have an incredibly clean technique, which was very, very rare. I've never found it in any other guitar player. No fretbuzz, no little glitches – it was always a clean, clean sound for every note he played."

What was he like to work within the studio?

"Oh, very amenable. He would sometimes take a somewhat serious look at the job in hand, but other times he'd be really humorous, really funny, you know? He was just the most amazing player and I miss him."



The special edition *Pyramid* album will be available from 23 August via Cooking Vinyl
www.the-alan-parsons-project.com

"Ian had an incredibly clean technique. I've never found it in any other guitar player"

ALAN PARSONS



Magnificent Seven

How can Mesa/Boogie possibly have improved on the Mark V so much that it skipped the Mark VI?

Join us as we plug in and find out

Words Richard Barrett Photography Phil Barker





MESA/BOOGIE MARK VII 1X12 COMBO £4,199

CONTACT **Gibson** WEB www.mesaboogie.com

What You Need To Know

1

What exactly is this?

It's a small three-channel, feature-packed valve 1x12 combo, the flagship of the current Mesa line-up, that's versatile enough to handle virtually any musical situation. Gibson acquired Mesa/Boogie back at the start of 2021, although original founder, Randall Smith, is still at the helm. In fact, this new Mark VII is seen as his "magnum opus".

2

Why was there no Mark VI?

There was – but only as a prototype. Mesa felt this amp represented such a progression that it deserved to skip a generation.

3

How loud will it go?

Enough to blister paint at 30 paces! There's plenty of clean headroom, too, but typically you have a good deal of choice via the three-way Power Select function that switches between 90-watt Simul-Class, 45-watt Class A pentode and 25-watt Class A triode.

The 12-inch Black Shadow speaker is custom-made for Mesa by Celestion and it does an impressive job of throwing the sound out there in a way that belies the enclosure's diminutive size

Randall Smith's first foray into amp building began as something of a prank. When repairing amps at the back of his San Francisco music store in the late 1960s, Randall was commissioned to hot-rod an unassuming Fender Princeton combo, turning it into a 100-watt wolf in sheep's clothing, guaranteed to give its owner a fright to remember.

But before the amp reached its new owner, a passing Carlos Santana was persuaded to try it out, reluctantly at

first, but on the assurance that this was no ordinary Princeton. His oft-quoted reaction was: "Man, that amp really boogies!" Many 'Princeton Boogies' would follow, leading to Randall creating his own Boogie Mark I in 1972. By now, Santana and The Stones were enthusiastic users and this, along with the undeniable quality of the amps, helped establish a reputation that still goes from strength to strength today.

Since 1980, all Mesa products have been made in Petaluma, California. This





includes the famous Dual/Triple Rectifiers and the Mark Series, of which the Mark VII incorporates many notable features. In fact, you could say this is a 'greatest hits' of the Mark Series, all rolled into one amp.

To say an amp can achieve any sound may seem a rash claim, but we'd wager you won't get closer to that possibility than with the Mark VII. There are three channels, each with three modes,

three-way switchable output power and Mesa's own discrete spring reverb control. Each also has its own four-band EQ (Bass, Mid, Treble, Presence) and can be routed through the onboard Graphic EQ – or not, as you prefer. There's even a choice of several excellent cab IRs (Mesa's own 'CabClone' interface is built-in) for recording, DI or silent headphone practice. We can attest that these sound as good as any we've heard, and you can assign a different IR to each channel if you wish.

Sounds

As you might expect, there's the facility for crystal cleans up to ultra-high gain, with thousands of possibilities in between, all delivered with impeccable focus and clarity. The detailed instruction manual is very helpful, too, and gives some excellent

1. The rear panel is almost as packed with features as the front, with an effects loop, various external speaker connections, the versatile CabClone IR DI system, USB, MIDI, Headphone and footswitch connections

2. Each channel has its own controls for EQ, Gain and Volume, plus three sound modes and three power modes, with an EQ in/out switch. The separate reverb controls for each channel live at the other end of the control panel



There's the facility for crystal cleans up to ultra-high gain, all delivered with impeccable focus and clarity

3. Each channel has a three-way Power Select switch for a choice of 90-watt Simul-Class, 45-watt Class A pentode or 25-watt Class A triode
4. There is further tweakability available on the rear panel in the form of a Store switch for presets and a trimpot for MIDI channels

THE RIVALS

What else out there compares to this?

That's a tough one to answer, but you could check out the 633 Engineering Drive King 50 (£3,175), a hand-built boutique head with switchable channels and digital reverb. More Dumble than Boogie-inspired but certainly a wonderful amp, and you can specify custom features direct with its maker.

Boogie's own Triple Crown features three channels running into a dual EL34 power section and 1x12 cab. Not quite so feature laden as the Mark VII, but we still have completely independent channels and a choice power/headroom modes. At £3,222, it could be well worth a look.

Finally, how about the Bogner Uberschall Mk2 100-watt head? This offers two channels, each with its own EQ and switchable gain modes. The power amp also offers global Presence, Depth and Density controls – available in EL34- or 6L6-powered versions. You'll need to buy the cab separately, but at £3,399, you'll come in at a similar budget to the Mark VII – albeit slightly less portable.

advice on how to get the best from the Mark VII, which can also be applied to dialling in many other amps. Next, then, let's examine those three channels...

Channel 1, with its Clean, Fat and Crunch Modes, is where the clean to medium-gain tones live. The most sparkly/tight tones are achieved with the gain set below 11 o'clock, warming up a little at two o'clock. Moving beyond this warms and loosens things up further, and adds low-end. On gainier tones, keeping the bass set low and adding in extra lows with the Graphic EQ at the end of the signal chain is a great way to keep the bottom-end tight.

Switching to Fat mode gives us fuller bass and mids, a bit like turning off a bright switch. There's more potential to gently drive for 'pushed' sounds that retain every note of a chord. Humbuckers prefer less bass in this mode, which is to be expected; Crunch takes us a step further. With the gain between 12 and two o'clock, there is what Mesa calls "classic British territory where chords break up more smoothly and evenly, yet with urgency". We'd concur!

Below the Mode switch we have another, offering the option to auto select/disable





5



6

the Graphic EQ when using the (included) footswitch. Squeezed below this is the three-way Power Select switch, offering a choice between the full 90-watt Simul-Class, 45-watt Class A pentode or 25-watt Class A triode, which uses only two of the four 6L6 power amp valves. Each has its own sound, with the tightest/boldest being the 90-watt.

Moving to Channel 2, the controls here are identical to Channel 1, except for the three modes: Fat, Crunch and the brand-new Mark VII mode. The Fat and Crunch modes function identically to Channel 1, with this duplication meaning you don't have to choose either/or. However, the Mark VII mode is where we first hear Mesa's latest version of its signature focused high-gain loveliness. From a "Brit-style colour" with the Gain set between 10 o'clock and 11:30, to a hybrid between the previous Mark Series and more British-sounding circuits such as the Triple Crown, this mode has more pronounced mids and sounds great without the Graphic EQ, perhaps leaving it free for the other channels.

Once again, Channel 3 has a full complement of EQ, Reverb and power

5. The CabClone IR system is much more than a novelty bonus feature. It allows for silent headphone practice and DI for recording or performance

6. As part of the CabClone IR system, these three rotary knobs allow a choice of eight different cabs per channel

7. The well-chosen frequencies on the Graphic EQ really help with 'surgical' tone shaping, while also adding a much bigger sound than you'd expect from a 1x12 enclosure. Note also the mini-switches – these allow front-panel control for reverb, EQ and other effects



MESA/BOOGIE MARK VII 1X12 COMBO

PRICE: £4,199

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: 1x12 multi-function
combo amp

VALVES: 5x 12AX7, 4x 6L6 (or
4x EL34 using bias switch)

OUTPUT: 90W (45W or 25W
via power switches)

DIMENSIONS: 476 (w) x 292 (d) x
463mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 26.4/58

CABINET: Marine-grade
Baltic birch

CHANNELS: 3, with 3x preamp/
power amp modes on each

CONTROLS: Bass, Mid, Treble,
Presence, Gain, Volume, 3x
Reverb, plus extra modes and
switchable Graphic EQ

FOOTSWITCH: Included, controls
channels plus reverb, loop and EQ

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

The Mark VII has an effects loop
and is compatible with MIDI
footswitching devices for
further versatility on the fly

OPTIONS: Custom cabinet
finishes, EL34 or 6L6 power option

RANGE OPTIONS: Head and
Rackmount Head also available,
both £3,849

modes, but this channel brings the Mark IIB, Mark IIC and Mark IV modes. The Mark IIB mode is the least saturated, giving what Mesa calls 'Turbo-Traditional' sounds, preserving the character of your guitar, rather than all-out heavy drive. The Mark IIC mode is more saturated, as the Treble Shift function of the Mark II+ is duplicated, giving us *that* sound, which has characterised so much great rock music. The Mark IV mode notches this up a step further, with thicker gain and more low-end. Though this does excel at the heavier tones, there are quite a few tasty lower gain tones in there as well.

Verdict

If you're paying £4,199, you would rightly expect an incredible amp, and we'd certainly say that is true of this latest Mark VII. It can genuinely hold its own in any genre, with an amazing amount of projection, spread and thump from such an unassuming looking 1x12 cab. Obviously, there are options to hook up to extension cabs, but we really didn't feel the need.

Yes, there are a lot of controls/options, but the basic tones are fantastic and there is plenty of helpful, practical advice in

There's an amazing amount of projection, spread and thump from such an unassuming looking 1x12 cab

the manual. In this era of quiet stages and portable multi-effects, some might say the era of the valve amp is waning. But with tones of this calibre available without having to scroll through a single menu, on top of the ability to connect via USB and use top-quality IRs, we'd say that's not going to be happening just yet: the direct tones stand up to market-leading amp modellers with their heads held high.

You couldn't really put the Mark VII in the hold of a plane, but it does comfortably fit in any car. At 26.4kg (58lb), however, you won't want to carry it long distances, but it's not much heavier than a Blues DeVille and does come with heavy-duty castors. For international travel, then, we might go for the rackmount version, but as a stage/studio amp in any other scenario, it's hard to imagine why you wouldn't want one. **G**



PROS Typical high-class build; virtually any sound you can imagine; relatively portable; well thought out and flexible options

CONS It's certainly not for the single channel purist and is a very serious investment

We Like To Boogie

Mesa/Boogie is back on these shores with a full complement of models for every style – here are a few of our favourites

Words Stuart Williams



FILLMORE 50 MEDIUM HEAD
£2,199

Vintage-voiced and taking its name from the legendary US venues, Mesa/Boogie's Fillmore is designed to provide responsive, rich, classic rock tone with retro authenticity. At the heart of its two channels is the 'cloneable' voicing, featuring Clean, Drive and Hi modes on both. The preamp circuit includes five 12AX7 valves, while the power stage takes a US flavour thanks to a pair of 6L6s. There's a spring reverb built in and an effects loop around the back. Turn on, tune up and wail out.



MARK FIVE: 25 HEAD £2,199

The Mark Series is Mesa's 'everyone' amp, mainly because it covers so much ground. While the Mark VII is the new kid on the block, the Mark V amps are still available and definitely not to be sniffed at. Here, we see the preamp and voicing options pushed through EL84 power amp valves. The two channels each have three voicing options (Clean, Fat and Crunch; and Mark IIC+, Mark IV and Extreme, respectively). Throw in a spring reverb, CabClone DI and effects loop, and it's a tonal banquet in a lunchbox.



RECTO-VERB 25 1X12 COMBO
£2,449

Take the essence of a 90s classic, add reverb and scale it down into a more portable, volume-friendly format, and you've got the Recto-Verb 25 combo. This EL84-powered, 12-inch Celestion V30-loaded combo is equipped with two channels, both with two voices offering Clean or Pushed on Channel 1, and Vintage and Modern gain flavours from Channel 2. There are 12AX7s in the preamp stage plus a long-spring reverb, and the output can be dropped from 25 to 10 watts.



CALIFORNIA TWEED 6V6 4:40
1X12 COMBO £2,799

The California Tweed range is Randall Smith's take on classic US Tweed tone of the 50s, and the 6V6 4:40 serves up a flexible blend of voicings from a single channel. The full-power 40-watt mode (Class A/B pentode) can be switched to 30, 20, 10 and two watts, each with a variation on the amp's operation. The front panel gives us Normal/Low gain inputs for more flexibility, while the straightforward control set is complemented by Boogie's valve-driven spring reverb circuit.



TRIPLE CROWN 50
1X12 COMBO £3,299

It's not all modelling and mini-heads these days, and so if you want to flap your trousers, look to the Triple Crown Series. The 50-watt 1x12 combo is plenty loud enough to overpower your drummer, while maintaining practicality. Each of the three channels features two modes, independent three-band EQ and gain/level controls, plus the stock EL34 power amp valves can be swapped for 6L6 or 6V6 models without fussy rebiasing. For those continuing to rock, Boogie salutes you.



MARK VII HEAD £3,849

Like the look of the Mark VII but don't want a combo? No problem. The Mark VII Head delivers the same detailed tonal options as its speaker-equipped sibling, but without the cabinet part. There's the three-channel, nine-mode preamp, Simul-Class power stage, the CabClone IR DI (including eight classic Boogie cabinet IRs) and, of course, the Mark Series Graphic EQ. It's the perfect alternative if you already own a treasured cab, or are looking for a more portable solution without compromising on features.

1974 **50** 2024



Cromer Green



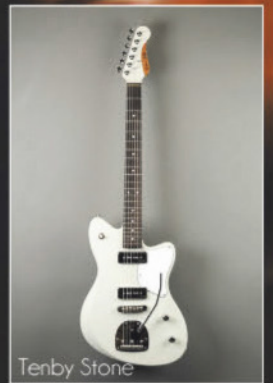
Bude Cream



Hove Pink



Skye Blue



Tenby Stone

THE GATSBY

Handcrafted in the UK

Available from the GS Workshop, Regent Sounds,
Richards Guitars, Sound Affects, Merchant City Music,
Forsyth Brothers, Leo & Ted's, The Guitar Store.

For more details visit our website or call 01933 391234.

Gordon Smith

gordonsmithguitars.com







Original Vintage

Vintage already offers a huge number of affordable and tidily made electrics, but for 2024 we get a whole new retro-inspired range – and 15 new models. Where to start?

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Adam Gasson



VINTAGE REVO SERIES CUSTOM SUPREME & TRIO £749 & £449

CONTACT **John Hornby Skewes** PHONE **01132 86538** WEB www.vintageguitarsrus.com

What You Need To Know

1 More cheapo copies, then?

Okay, Vintage doesn't shy away from affordable lookalikes, but the new REVO range (which stands for REtro Vintage Originals) certainly mixes up the styles and adds some unique spins. By design, there's a strong retro vibe throughout, a calling card of designer Alan Entwistle.

2 Alan Entwistle?

A veteran guitar designer, Alan has probably designed more guitars than you and we have had hot dinners. We last caught up with him when we looked at his new Rapier models – inspired by the likes of the Brit-made Watkins guitars of the early 60s.

3 How big is the series itself?

There's no shortage of choice from 15 new models, with trendy offsets well represented, some neat takes on 'student' Mustang style, a bit of a nod to the Höfner Verithin, and even an original shape, the Vision, which features a "unique transonic spring cavity in the rear for added sustain". Intrigued? So are we...

If something a little different is what you're after then this Vintage REVO range will be more than welcome. These aren't artfully crafted boutique instruments – although a lot of the recipes here are what you might find in that costly, rarified world. But neither are they past 'pawn shop' relics that look cool but fall far short of the sort of playability you'd expect from a modern instrument.

While our Trio is clearly based around the original solidbody production electric,

The new REVO range is definitely generous with its pickup complements

with its three Jazzmaster-style pickups and vibrato, it's far from a direct clone. Meanwhile, the Custom Supreme is inspired by an actual UK-made guitar from yesteryear. Vintage tells us: "We designed this one based upon a Grimshaw guitar that Pete Townshend played in the 60s with a modern twist." That probably late-50s 'SS' model was modded by Pete with a Rickenbacker truss rod cover on

the headstock and three Rickenbacker pickups. According to TheWho.net, Pete is quoted as saying, "I bought the guitar at Ivor Mairants; I'd always wanted one (was it because Joe Brown played one?). At the time, I was used to Rick pickups so when I ran out of Rickenbackers one day I rigged the Grimshaw with the pickups and added the headstock blazer as deception. However, when people asked me what model of Rick it was, I told them it was a Grimshaw. It played beautifully."

Custom Supreme

Here's a guitar that will get you noticed on a stage – you'll feel its presence, too: at 4.44kg (9.77lb), it's no lightweight. That's perhaps no surprise as the all-maple laminate body is 405mm (16 inches) wide, 46mm at the rim and around 74mm deep overall, with a substantial-looking maple centre block. Its outline, though considerably bigger, is rather Les Paul like, with that quite classy upper horn that reminds this writer of one of Josh Homme's Echopark builds. And while we don't get the Rickenbacker 'blazer' from the modded model it's inspired by, the trio of 'toaster' humbuckers certainly reference Rickenbacker, with those two tear-drop soundholes adding a sprinkling of Gretsch. But then there's the Gibson



1. You find this roller bridge and Jazzmaster-style vibrato on many lower end offsets, but it works really well and imparts an almost semi-acoustic-like response with typical offset overtones

2. Unlike the Pete Townshend-modded Grimshaw model, the Custom Supreme uses a regular Vintage headstock with Graph Tech nut and enclosed Grover-style tuners



Maestro-style vibrato adding some show, and, with respect, the control plate looks more like something Vintage has knocked up in its ProShop. The headstock actually looks a bit like Vintage's standard three-a-side outline, though the block REVO logo, which is repeated on the truss rod cover, lacks the flair of the overall design.

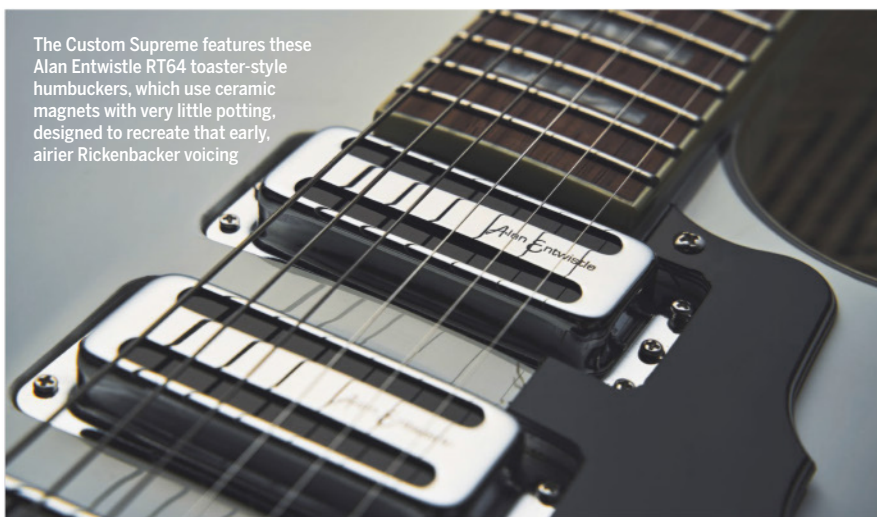
Those 'toaster' humbucking pickups are tidily recessed into the body, and the chunkier roller-saddle bridge (a well-used design that has lock-down adjustable saddle blocks) sits quite low on the body.

That large control plate houses three on/off slide volume, a master volume and two tones (labelled 'tone' and 'midrange' on the control instructions pdf) with knobs borrowed from Gibson. Hmm.

Trio

You'd think a T-shape with two Jazzmaster pickups and vibrato would be a decent mash-up, but as you can see we have *three* pickups here, hence the name. The new REVO range is definitely generous with its pickup complements. Along with our three-some review models (and the Custom Supreme baritone), the Vision, the Superthin and the more S-style Deluxe also have a trio of pickups. Even more generous is the four-pickup Surfmaster Quad!

The Custom Supreme features these Alan Entwistle RT64 toaster-style humbuckers, which use ceramic magnets with very little potting, designed to recreate that early, airier Rickenbacker voicing



But designer Alan Entwistle is also known for some pretty tricky passive circuitry, as we see not only on the Custom Supreme but also this Trio. First off, we have two three-way lever switches. Switch A (closest to the bridge) voices bridge, bridge and neck, and neck in its three positions. Switch B selects middle (overriding switch A) in its lowest position, in centre position it adds the middle pickup to any of the switch A selections, while in its third upper position it's out of circuit, leaving just the selections of switch A.

Like the Custom Supreme, we also get three rotary controls – master volume and two tones. The control closest to the output jack is advertised as 'tone', while the tone closest to the vibrato is named 'mid-tone'. That might need a bit more explanation.

We'll get to those controls a little later, but the rest of the Trio is pretty tidy. As you'd expect, we have a Fender scale length, and the standard bolt-on maple neck (with skunk stripe) has a nice vintage tint under its glossed back. The reddy-brown jatoba fingerboard (the same that's used on the



3

3. These on/off pickup switches work perfectly well, although they're not ideal if you need quick changes in a song. Plus, embarrassingly, you can turn yourself off completely!

Custom) is cleanly bound, but here we have dot inlays instead of the Custom Supreme's blocks. Fretwork on both guitars is good, the fret ends sitting over the edge binding, and the Trio uses a similar wide 'n' low gauge to the Custom Supreme.

The Honeyburst finish of the Trio's body is well named and we're told the wood is okoume. However, it does appear that the top and back have a veneer facing as the grain doesn't match the body core, which is at least two-piece, probably three. Like the Custom Supreme, it's cleanly double edge-bound with a cream binding and it's all rather nicely done. Above all, this guitar has a good weight of 3.32kg (7.3lb).

Both the J-style vibrato and its roller bridge tune-o-matic are rather generic but function very well, and the EZ-Lok Wilkinson tuners have dual string-post heights, the lower three for the G, B and E strings, which means you don't get any string trees.

Feel & Sounds

Okay, we might have two three-pickup-with-vibrato guitars here, but other than that they barely share any similarity. We've mentioned the weight differences: the Custom Supreme is a big ol' bird compared with the much more manageable Trio. The all-gloss finishes mean there's less

difference between neck shapes than you might expect, though the Custom's is very slightly wider and deeper with a nut width of 43.9mm (and 35mm string spacing), 21.7mm deep at the 1st fret and 24mm by the 12th. The Trio's nut measures 43.6mm (with a string spacing of 35.5mm), 21.4mm deep at the 1st fret and 21.4mm by the 12th. Speaking of string spacing, the Custom's bridge spread is 50.5mm, the Trio's is

Designer Alan Entwistle is known for some pretty tricky passive circuitry, as seen on this Custom Supreme and Trio

51.5mm. Both share a similar neck profile, a little more D than C, we'd wager, with a slightly flat back.

The Custom's acoustic response is quite big, ringing and bold, and the Trio, as you'd expect, is a little lighter in tone and volume with a little 'offset' to the response due to the undamped string length behind both the nut and saddles. We'd be tempted to fit a string tree to at least the top two strings here as the response is a little light in sound, but adding a few more wraps around the string posts might improve that anyway.

UNDER THE HOOD

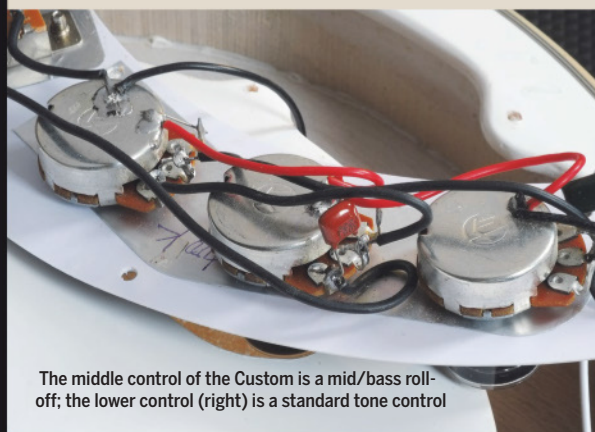
You guessed it, the circuits here are a little different...

The Custom Supreme's circuit is simple with three on/off slide switches and a trio of pots with a nominal value of 500kohms (measuring between 462k and 554k). The pickups' output hits the centre mid/bass cut pot first, which uses a .0022 μ F (222J) capacitor in series across the first two lugs (input and output) of the pot. The output from that goes to the volume then from its centre output lug to the lower tone, which uses a .015 μ F (153J) cap in parallel, like a regular tone control.

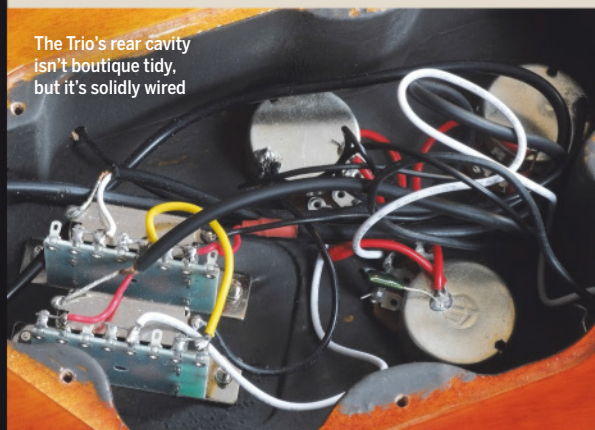
The Trio's controls are rear mounted in a large cavity with recessed backplate. Here, the pots have a nominal value of 250k (measuring between 239k and 264k). Reflecting what we heard in our sound test, both tones are regular, but the cap values are a lot lighter than most would use: .0068 μ F (682J) on the tone closest to the vibrato and .015 μ F (153J) on the tone closer to the body edge. We get a pair of the block-style three-way lever switches, but both feel pretty solid in use.

Neither guitar uses a treble bleed on the master volume controls, so pulled back you'll get a little treble roll-off, which might be welcome if you find the voicing quite bright. Both guitars really suit a player who uses their volume and tone controls!

The Custom Supreme's RT64 toaster-style humbuckers use ceramic magnets with only partially potted coils. Our samples all measured around 7.5k. The Trio's J90A single coils use a coil that's deeper than a Jazzmaster pickup, more like a P-90, but retain the Fender-style rod Alnico magnets. These have higher DCRs: ours measured 8.89k (bridge), 9.07k (middle) and 7.6k (neck).



The middle control of the Custom is a mid/bass roll-off; the lower control (right) is a standard tone control



The Trio's rear cavity isn't boutique tidy, but it's solidly wired



4

If you're after a fire-breathing metal monster you've come to the wrong place. Set up a clean amp tone with or without some reverb and/or short delay, and you're right back in the 60s. If you want dirt, you'll need some help from a pedal. The Custom's voice is very single-coil like; there are good sounds with a balanced midrange and pretty crisp highs. The Trio's single coils are more mid-scooped with plenty of high-end detail, too.

Not everyone gets on with a three-pickup guitar, the middle pickup can get in the way, and while that's a personal decision it's worth pointing out that the Custom's humbuckers don't sound like they're fully potted – there's a bit of 'clonk' when your pick hits the cover.

The three on/off switches on the Custom provide a simple drive, but you need to remember that down is 'on' and up is 'off', otherwise you'll get in a mess and quite probably mute yourself. Once you get your head around the dual switches of the Trio, it's pretty logical and at least you can't mute the guitar.

The Custom's two tone controls? Well, irrespective of what Vintage says, the first tone (the centre of the three knobs) thins the sound as it's rolled back, like a pretty wide mid/bass cut. Fully off with neck pickup engaged, it sounds more like the

4. Obviously based on a Jazzmaster's single coils, these Alan Entwistle J90A units of the Trio model retain the Alnico rod magnets, but the deeper coil wind is more like a P-90

This adapted Fender-style headstock is common to Vintage's bolt-on models. Here, the Trio uses dual-height string-post tuners with no string trees and a nicely cut Graph Tech nut



THE RIVALS

Squier's Paranormal range takes a mash-up approach to classic Fender designs, from the three-pickup Custom Nashville Stratocaster (£389) with Tele-style bridge plate, single-pickup Esquire Deluxe (£385), to the okoume body/bolt-on neck Offset Telecaster SH (£419).

Shergold's Telstar (£379) is a very affordable take on a T-style with a Firebird-like raised centre and dual Page FilterSonic pickups, while G&L's Tribute Comanche (£499) has three hum-cancelling MFD Z-Coil pickups and PTB (passive treble/bass) tone controls.

For fun and funky blasts from the past, check out Eastwood's three-pickup thinline Airline H77 (£786) or the H78 (£1,026) with Bigsby.

Duesenberg is a stalwart of original retro style, and though its models cost considerably more, a favourite is the semi-hollow single-cut Starplayer TV with vibrato (approx. £2,300) – it looks like it's landed straight from the 60s!

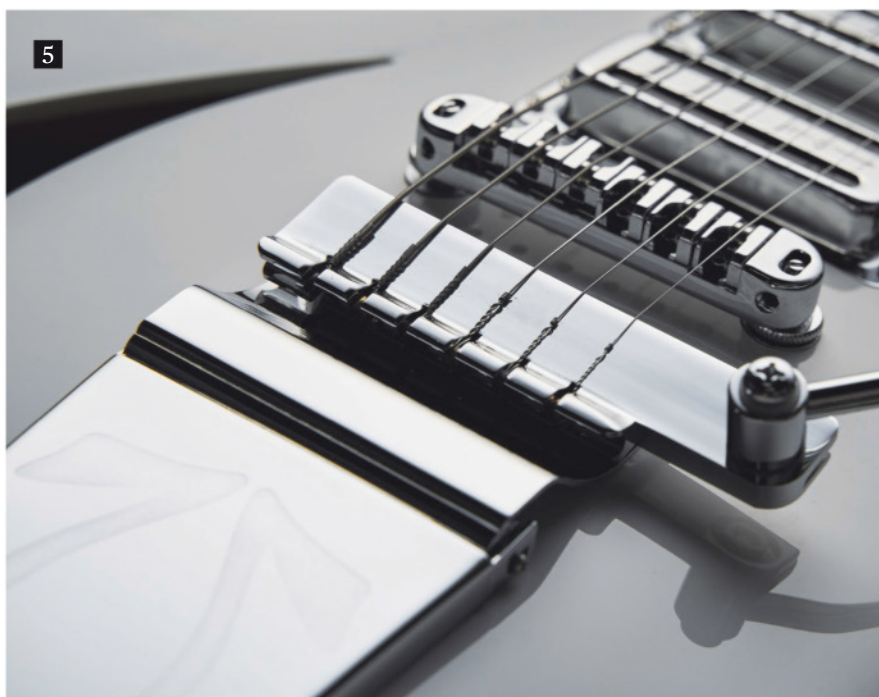
Set up a clean amp tone with or without some reverb and/or short delay, and you're right back in the 60s

5. A nice bit of real estate, the Custom Supreme's vibrato unit emulates Gibson's Maestro Vibrola. However, instead of the typical lyre engraving we get a V motif here

bridge pickup. The lower tone control is a more standard treble roll-off.

As to the Trio's controls, both tones work in all switch positions and sound like two standard tone controls with, we'd guess, slightly different value capacitors (see Under The Hood, previous page). The tone nearest the vibrato seems to only pull back the upper high-end, and even the second tone barely sounds muddy pulled back. These are subtle, but they do help to tame the potential brightness, particularly with some raunchier pedals in play. The overall T-style feels a bit more like home than the much larger Custom Supreme, too.

Aside from a few 'new guitar' niggles (the Custom's nut needed a little work so the strings came back in tune, and the pickup heights needed a little evening out), the performance out of the box of both guitars is pretty impressive. There's perfectly good waggle from the Custom's Maestro-style vibrato, and not for the first time the Trio's J-style vibrato (albeit without a stop function) is wonderfully





smooth with quite a large range – always good for those Spaghetti Western or spy movie themes, or frankly some pretty out-there mangling with plenty of fuzz and gain beloved of the offset brigade.

Verdict

It feels like we've been in an episode of the *Twilight Zone* and, to be honest, we wouldn't mind being in a few more. The Custom Supreme is a no-frills jangle machine that's very nicely voiced. The mid/bass cut tone control means you can really push the percussive attack, or lighten the body of sound: perhaps not essential, but it adds to the slightly off-kilter retro 60s style. Our sample is heavy and yet it feels very businesslike on a strap.

There's little doubt that the Trio feels more familiar and the design is quite inspired. As a Jazzmaster in Tele dress, it's light in weight, has very evocative sounds and a super-smooth vibrato, and although the dual tone control setup is pretty subtle, those two pickup selection switches work very well: you can drive this as a twin or trio very easily.

But we've only dipped a toe in the REVO waters – there are another 13 models to consider! If you're bored by the usual suspects, you'll have some serious fun here. What's your poison? 

6. The dual three-way lever switches select the pickups as we describe. Meanwhile, we get two tone controls with different value capacitors – a rare but quite inspired design that helps to subtly round the response of those single coils



VINTAGE REVO SERIES CUSTOM SUPREME

PRICE: £749
ORIGIN: China/Vietnam
TYPE: Double-cutaway semi-acoustic electric
BODY: Laminated maple
NECK: Maple, glued-in
SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Nubone XL/43.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Bound jatoba, pearloid block inlays, measured 254mm (10") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Maestro-style vibrato, roller saddle tune-o-matic-style bridge, unlogo'd enclosed tuners – nickel/chrome
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50.5mm
ELECTRICS: 3x Alan Entwistle RT64 toaster-style humbuckers, individual slide switch pickup on/off, master volume, tone 1 (mid/bass roll-off), tone 2 (standard treble roll-off)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4.44/9.77
OPTIONS: No
RANGE OPTIONS: Custom Supreme Baritone VI (£599) with 3x toaster-style pickups and offset vibrato. See REVO gallery over the page
LEFT-HANDERS: Not this model
FINISHES: Arctic White gloss (as reviewed)

8/10

PROS Individual 60s style; good build; very single-coil-sounding humbuckers; flexible switching and tone control setup

CONS It's pretty heavy; needed a little nut work



VINTAGE REVO SERIES TRIO

PRICE: £449
ORIGIN: China/Vietnam
TYPE: Single-cutaway electric
BODY: Okume
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech/43.6mm
FINGERBOARD: Bound jatoba, pearloid dot inlays, measured 241mm (9.5") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Vintage offset vibrato, roller saddle tune-o-matic-style bridge, Wilkinson E-Z Lok tuners – nickel/chrome
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51.5mm
ELECTRICS: 3x Alan Entwistle J90A single coils, dual 3-way lever pickup selection switches: switch A (neck, neck and bridge, bridge), switch B (no function, adds middle pickup, middle pickup only), master volume, 2x tones with different capacitors
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.32/7.3
OPTIONS: No
RANGE OPTIONS: Mid-Line (£499) is a Cabronita T-style semi-hollow. See REVO gallery over the page
LEFT-HANDERS: Not this model
FINISHES: HoneyBurst (as reviewed), Arctic White, Green/Yellow Burst



9/10

PROS Familiar chassis; good-sounding single coils; excellent offset vibrato; inspired pickup switching; good weight/build

CONS Very little, although the twin-tone setup is quite subtle in use

Variety Show

Why introduce one new model when you can create 15? Here's more REVO style

Words Dave Burrluck



COLT HS £419

With a strong nod to the Mustang design, the Colt HS comes with hum/single Alan Entwistle-designed pickups and a Mustang-style vibrato, and uses okoume for the body. Other Colts – all bolt-ons featuring a 629mm (24.75-inch) scale length – include the SS (£399) with dual Entwistle Astrosonic single coils, while the HH (£449) features a cut-off T-style hardtail bridge with three compensated brass saddles and a pair of Wide Range-style HV72 Entwistle humbuckers. Available in Blueburst (pictured) and Fiesta Red.



VISION £449

This model – shown here in Trans Orange and also available in Black and Two Tone Sunburst – is based on a previous Alan Entwistle design that he conceived for Revelation Guitars. This maple bolt-on one uses a full 648mm (25.5-inch) scale length with 22 frets and a single-bound and block-inlaid jatoba fingerboard. It also features those Burns-inspired Astrosonic single coils. Under the cut-down T-style bridge is the Transonic spring cavity, another Burns-inspired feature, to add resonance.



SURFMASTER THINLINE TWIN £499

This thinline (in Arctic White as here, Greenburst and Trans Orange) uses a Fender scale length. It has a chambered, double-bound okoume body, Filter'Tron-style Nashville Classic 'buckers and the same vibrato and roller bridge as our reviewed Trio. The other thinlines in the range are the Surfmaster Quad (£549, four Astrosonic single coils), Surfmaster Thinline 12 (£529, hardtail 12-string with three Astrosonics), and Surfmaster 90 (£479, solidbody with dual P-90-style single coils).



DELUXE £579

The only S-style instrument in the REVO range (although it has a quoted scale length of 628mm), this Deluxe model recalls a Burns creation from yesteryear, with its block inlay bound fingerboard, not to mention Greenburst (pictured) and Cappuchino (sic) finishes. Its vintage-style vibrato is the Wilkinson WVS, and fitting the style are three Astrosonic single coils. The dual tone controls are similar to those found on the reviewed Custom Supreme. So not quite your normal S-style at all, then!



INTEGRA £599

This is a string-through hardtail offset, but it has two open-coil Entwistle X3 dual-rail humbuckers, recalling 70s style more than 60s. In fact, the whole build is rather 70s, with multi-laminate maple/mahogany neck-through construction and ash 'wings'. However, we get two coil-split slide switches on the scratchplate and Entwistle's chickenhead knobbed ATN5 'Variator' control for added tonal flavour. Choose from Natural Satin (pictured), Amber Burst or Green/Yellow Burst with colour-matched reversed headstocks.



SUPERTHIN £699

If the Custom Supreme nods to that old UK-made Grimshaw, the Superthin pays homage to the popular German-made Höfner Verithin, a bit of a classic back in the day. Of course, it's gone through the Alan Entwistle mangle so we get another trio of pickups, this time the mini-humbucking HFS 63s, plus the same vibrato/bridge that's used on the Custom Supreme. Like that guitar, there are three on/off pickup switches but two tones and a bass-cut switch. Available in Cherry Red (pictured), Amberburst and Natural.

Spring Fling

Want to Fender-ise your amp? Here's a pedal that will add real spring reverb and all the flavours of vintage tremolo to your tone

Words Trevor Curwen
Photography Phil Barker





CRAZY TUBE CIRCUITS WHITE WHALE V2 £299

CONTACT **FACE** bvba PHONE +32 3 844 67 97 WEB www.crazytubecircuits.com

What You Need To Know

- 1 That's a bit of a chunky pedal...**
Yes, but it needs to be as it has to have the internal space to house a real spring reverb tank!
- 2 It's not digital, then?**
No, this is an all-analogue pedal that features a metal tank with suspended springs that vibrate to create the reverb, just like you might find in a Fender amp, albeit with shorter springs.
- 3 Has it got tremolo like a Fender amp, too?**
It has. You get a choice of Bias, Opto and Harmonic tremolo sounds, all of which have been found in Fender amps at various stages.

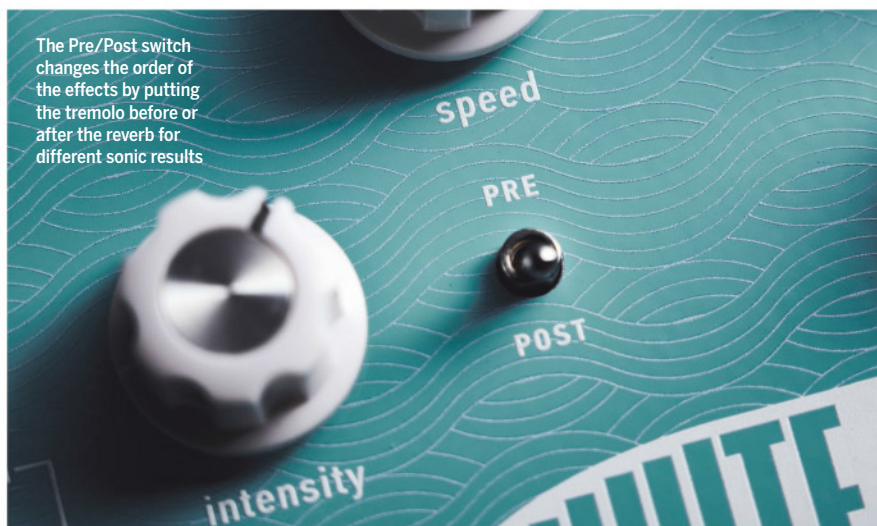
In the historical timeline of guitar effects, long before pedals of any kind were commonplace, the effects that guitarists utilised were mainly built into their amplifiers, namely tremolo and reverb. Fender is the company most of us associate with those onboard effects. Tremolo – a cyclical change in amplitude manifesting as a rhythmic pulsing – debuted in a Fender amp, the Tremolux, in 1955, albeit wrongly labelled as ‘vibrato’, which is actually pitch modulation. Fender introduced spring reverb later on with the standalone 6G15 unit in 1961, and had it built into amps from 1963’s Vibroverb onwards.

The combination of tremolo and spring reverb is a sweet one, but not all amplifiers are vintage Fenders, so plenty of manufacturers have strived to give us pedals that aim to recreate that sound. While there are some convincing digital

emulations of spring reverb available out there, some players will always want the real thing. One company that has tried to satiate that need is Athens-based Crazy Tube Circuits, who released its original White Whale pedal, featuring real spring reverb and tremolo, several years ago. Now we welcome this new V2 iteration of the pedal into the fold, which expands the original feature set and has an upgraded power amp to drive the spring tank for more headroom and a wider frequency response.

In Use

The tremolo and reverb in the pedal are independently footswitched so can be used individually or in combination. A Pre/Post switch determines whether the tremolo comes before or after the reverb – and the two outcomes can be quite different. Some may favour having reverb last to



The Pre/Post switch changes the order of the effects by putting the tremolo before or after the reverb for different sonic results

This V2 pedal expands the original feature set and has an upgraded power amp

smooth out the sound, while others would prefer the order that was found in vintage Fender amps where the tremolo came last, yielding a more intense tremolo, exerting undulation in the reverb trail.

The reverb is based around a spring tank assembly with three springs that is attached to the pedal’s bottom plate. Although the same assembly is used at all times, a toggle switch can select Short,



1

1. Although the actual springs are always the same length, the Long/Short/Medium switch will let you choose the sounds of a short two-spring tank, a medium two-spring tank or a long three-spring tank. Elsewhere, Dwell may seem like an unusual name for a control, but it dates back to Fender's first outboard reverb unit. It controls the amount of signal going to the spring tank – the more the springs are stimulated, the longer the reverb tail

Medium and Long reverbs, the difference in reverb size and decay coming from carefully tuned all-analogue tone-shaping before the reverb driver – the power amp that drives the spring tank. A Mix knob governs how much reverb is added to the dry signal, and there's a Tone knob to adjust the brightness of the reverb.

Besides these, you'll find crucial adjustment via the Dwell knob, which controls the strength of the signal going into the reverb driver. This not only sets the length of the reverb decay but has an effect on its tonal quality because it's tuned to emulate the valve and output transformer saturation that was produced on higher dwell settings of original 60s gear.

Turning up the Dwell control emphasises the 'drip' that's sought after by surf guitarists – the reverb tail on a short percussive note that's almost like an echo effect. If you enjoy playing Dick Dale's *Misirlou*, then this will enhance your experience, especially on the Long setting with its denser sound of a long three-spring tank. Short and Medium settings are based on the sound of a two-spring tank for some amp-style reverb action and, overall, there's plenty of variety here, whether you're looking for low-key ambience or brash and splashy. It's real spring reverb and it sounds excellent.

The overall output of the reverb effect is governed by a Volume knob that has a unity gain setting at around 11 o'clock. Beyond that point you get a boost and there's 20dB on tap. The tremolo section also has a Volume knob that has similar boosting powers, so there's plenty of opportunity to bring drive into the equation should you wish.

The standard Speed and Intensity (tremolo depth) knobs adjust the sound of the tremolo, but the first port of call has to be selecting which type of tremolo you wish to employ. The choice is of three tremolo types that were used at various times in Fender amps: there's Bias tremolo

2. A common problem with all spring reverbs is that physical movement can make the springs themselves move, creating a crashing sound. Adding a remote footswitch means you don't have to physically stomp on the pedal itself and risk a spring crash



2

THE RIVALS

Gamechanger Audio's LIGHT pedal (£339) combines a real spring reverb with tremolo plus some unique optical effects. Several other pedals feature real spring reverb only, such as the Surfy Industries SurfyBear Metal (£229), the Carl Martin HeadRoom (£251), the Echo Fix EF-P2 (£263) and, for a more budget option, the Danelectro DSR-1 Spring King (£111). Several pedals pair a digital emulation of spring reverb with tremolo, the Strymon Flint (£329) pretty much being the industry standard for the type. If your budget is less generous, there's the Fender Tre-Verb (£209), a flexible example from the company that pretty much started it all.



as used in early Fender amps where the circuitry varied the bias of valves; Opto is based on the photocell circuitry seen in black-panel amps from around 1963 onwards; and the third choice is Harmonic, a rarer type of Fender tremolo as briefly seen in some of the company's brown Tolex amps from the early 60s and created using dual-band filtering.

Two options are available for the Harmonic type's more sonically complex of tremolos. Hard offers a wider range of pulsating frequencies and a more pronounced sweep from low to high for a harder edge, but we gravitated more towards the smoother, more diffuse sound that Soft delivers.

All of the tremolo types sound great and have a practical speed/depth range, neatly covering all the options if classic, vintage and traditional are your watchwords.

Both Tremolo and Reverb sections can have their own expression pedal control. An expression pedal plugged into the Trem XP input will control the speed of the tremolo. Alternatively, you could plug in a footswitch to set the speed by tap tempo (internal switches in the pedal let you select which method). The reverb's Mix is the parameter that can be put under expression pedal control. There's also provision to plug in a remote switcher via

There's crucial adjustment via the Dwell knob, which controls the strength of the signal going into the reverb driver

a TRS cable to activate or bypass reverb and tremolo sections independently (Crazy Tube Circuits has its own dual footswitch, also in the White Whale V2 colours, for £45).

As with any spring reverb, there is the possibility of an audible crash if the pedal is subjected to a knock, so using remote switching enables users to not only avoid stepping directly on the pedal but also to be able to place it in an isolated position away from any stage vibrations that could cause the springs to move.

Verdict

Okay, you could buy separate tremolo and spring reverb pedals, but to get both effects in one chassis – especially one this small, with easily switchable ordering – makes absolute sense. If you want those vintage sounds but have an amp that doesn't have onboard reverb and tremolo, this is the perfect remedy. **G**



CRAZY TUBE CIRCUITS WHITE WHALE V2

PRICE: £299

ORIGIN: Greece

TYPE: Spring reverb & tremolo

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Tremolo Volume, Tremolo Speed, Tremolo Intensity, Tremolo mode switch (Tube/Opto/Harmonic), Harmonic Hard/Soft switch, Pre/Post switch, Reverb Volume, Reverb Dwell, Reverb Mix, Reverb Tone, Reverb size switch (Long/Short/Medium), internal XP mode switch, Tremolo footswitch, Reverb footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, standard TRS Trem XP, standard TRS Reverb XP, standard TRS Remote

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

DIMENSIONS: 172 (w) x 125 (d) x 70mm (h)



10/10

PROS Spring reverb and tremolo in one pedal; compact size (for a spring reverb); three tremolo types; flexible effect order; plenty of potential expression control

CONS Proximity to strong magnetic fields (from power transformers, for example) can affect the pedal

SUBSCRIBE TO Guitarist

TO GET A **FREE** Ernie Ball Guitar Strap[†]
(Pattern may vary)



THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE POLYPRO GUITAR STRAP IS
NOW AVAILABLE IN AN ARRAY OF STYLISH PATTERNS

Adjustable length
from 41 to 72 inches

Machine-stitched
leather ends

Polypropylene webbing provides
comfort and durability



SUBSCRIBE AND ENJOY THESE BENEFITS

- **FREE DELIVERY** STRAIGHT TO YOUR DOOR
- **SAVE MONEY** ON THE COVER PRICE
- **NEVER** MISS AN ISSUE
- **YOU'RE IN CONTROL** MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION ONLINE VIA OUR DEDICATED SELF-SERVICE SITE
- SUBSCRIBE TO PRINT AND ALSO GET **FULL DIGITAL ACCESS!****

NEW!
FULL DIGITAL ACCESS TO ALL PRIOR AND FUTURE ISSUES WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO PRINT!

PRINT MAGAZINE + FREE GIFT & DIGITAL ACCESS

• **ONLY £28.49** EVERY 6 MONTHS BY DIRECT DEBIT*

SAVE 35%*



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

• **ONLY £22.49** EVERY 6 MONTHS BY DIRECT DEBIT
• PLUS INSTANT ACCESS ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

SAVE 35%*



SUBSCRIBE ONLINE AT
www.magazinesdirect.com/GUI/C97Y
or call 0330 333 1113 and quote C97Y

(Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time)

OFFER ENDS: 11 OCTOBER 2024

Terms & conditions: Offer closes 11 October 2024. Direct Debit offer open to new UK subscribers only. The subscription rate of £28.49 (print magazine) and £22.49 (digital magazine) is payable by 6-monthly payments via UK Direct Debit. This price is guaranteed for the first 6 months and we will notify you in advance of any price changes. The full subscription rate is for 12 months (13 issues) and includes postage and packaging. *Savings are based on the cover price. †Your gift will be delivered separately within 60 days after your first payment has cleared. Gifts only available to subscribers on the UK mainland. Gifts not available with a digital subscription and pattern will vary. In the unlikely event that we run out of this gift, we promise to offer you an alternative gift of the same value. **Access to the digital library ends with your subscription. Payment is non-refundable after the 14-day cancellation period, unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries, please call +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time (excluding Bank Holidays), or email help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

Introducing

New and unsung
artisans making their
mark on the scene



Yarde Guitars Tamar £2,500

EMAIL james@yardeguitars.co.uk WEB www.yardeguitars.co.uk WORDS Dave Burrluck PHOTOGRAPHY Adam Gasson

While he was studying as a furniture maker, James Yarde (the 'e' is silent), found it was necessary to learn 3D CAD (Computer Aided Design). "With a great technical team around me, I learnt how to harmonise modern CAM [Computer Aided Manufacturing] processes and traditional techniques to produce accurate products with character," he tells us. It's not the traditional lutherie route, granted, but one that informs James's thoroughly modern guitar craft.

"I was initially inspired by the pillars of the industry, but I wanted to do something a bit different. This is when I focused on the headless/multi-scale electric guitar." And after some years of prototyping, the Tamar is the result.

Yes, it's a bolt-on and uses proper bolts (not screws), but the Tamar is a multi-scale instrument, moving from classic Fender at the top E and extending to 673mm (26.5 inches) at the low E, creating the fanned-fret spread of the perfectly installed stainless-steel frets. The neck is African wenge with a perfectly inlaid zebrano fingerboard – another illustration of James's mastery of modern machining – and the quite full-depth neck has a pretty classic deep C profile and feels a lot more conventional than the style might suggest.

The detail of the body's machining is almost sculptural and is quite complex, from the deep cutout

under the base-placed tuners, to the gently curved top face (from treble to bass side), the light chamfering in the cutaways, a lightly chamfered heel platform and some quite deep ribcage contouring. The work is extremely detailed, and the teal blue finish shows off the ash's striped grain perfectly.

Overall, the design means that the guitar itself is almost travel-style compact, measuring 850mm (33.5 inches) from top to bottom. At just 2.48kg (5.46lb), it's super light, too, and very comfortable played seated; it virtually disappears on a strap.

With a lively unplugged acoustic-y response, there's plenty of heat here in terms of output but also excellent note separation and clarity sitting on the more 'hot Tele' side of the tracks. There's good character to the midrange bite, which is steelier at the bridge and has excellent depth at the neck. You'll find considerable versatility, too, from beautiful, almost ethereal single-coil splits paired with delay and reverb, to a gainier raunch from the full humbuckers, which retain good clarity even under some pretty juicy amp sounds.

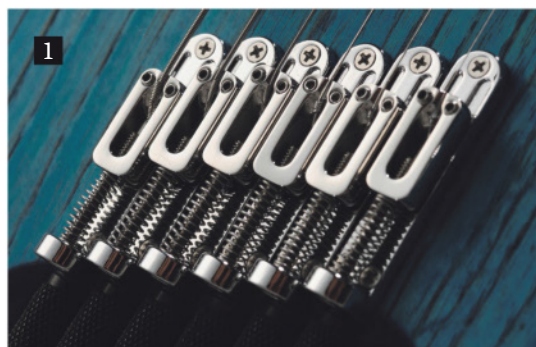
Multi-scale fan-fret guitars certainly aren't for everyone, but be prepared to be surprised – you'll barely notice the difference after a few minutes of playing. Everything just feels right under your fingers. It's an expansive and beautiful-sounding guitar that's been flawlessly executed. One to watch! **G**



BUILDER PROFILE

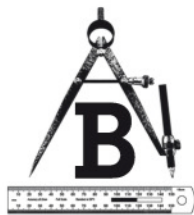
NAME: Yarde Guitars
FOUNDER: James Yarde
LOCATION: Saltash, Cornwall
STATUS: Founded 2024; prototyping from 2020
EMPLOYEES: 1
FIRST GUITAR SHIPPED: First batch from 2024, previous custom builds from 2015
CURRENT OUTPUT: Aiming for 3 per month
STYLE: Headless, multi-scale, bolt-on electrics
CAD/CNC: Yes
PICKUPS/HARDWARE: In-house designed/ Grainger Guitar Parts and Anomaly
FINISHING: In-house, stain and oil
REPAIRS: No
CUSTOM ORDERS: Yes, so long as it's headless!
DEPOSIT/BUILD TIME: Once spec determined, 50% deposit, balance on completion/2-3 months depending on complexity
WAITING LIST: N/A
DEALERS: Sound Unlimited 01752 261 993
PRICE RANGE: From approx. £2,000 upwards depending on spec

This string anchor at the top of the neck was initially designed by James and made in the UK by Grainger Guitar Parts. Just one example of the detailed craft on show here



1. The Headless Solo body-end tuners are by Hipshot; the distinctive control knobs (see far left) are by Anomaly, another UK enterprise. Along with a master volume and three-way lever switch, there's a pull switch on the tone control to voice the inner single coils of the humbuckers
2. Modern details include the spoke-wheel truss rod adjuster and slanted-coil direct-mount Tamar humbuckers – which sit in perfectly cut open holes and were designed by James and made by a friend





« BLUEPRINT »

LOUD & PROUD

Marshall Amplification is the ship that launched a thousand faces, but in the last decade, it's been adrift. Now new CEO, Jeremy de Maillard, says he is out to win back guitarists

Words Matthew Parker Photography Adam Gasson

You may not be aware, but the centre of the known universe is located on an industrial estate in the town of Bletchley, just opposite Aldi. Or at least, to the right player, that's how it feels. There, inside the long, low building with a grey and white panelled exterior, lies the Marshall factory. And with it the heart of the British amp-making industry – not to mention one of the world's most important guitar brands.

The list of players that have used Marshalls reads like a who's who of rock's cornerstone players: Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Pete Townshend, Eddie Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, Slash, Ritchie Blackmore, Billy Gibbons. You can say the same of the list of products: from the JTM45, through to the Bluesbreaker, the 'Plexis', the JMP, the JCM800 and Silver Jubilee and, of course, those walls of black and white 1960 cabinets – the infamous stacks.

There is no denying its history, but Marshall's star has faded a little in recent years as players new and old have moved away from heavy valve heads and full-stacks to mini amps and digital alternatives. Many guitarists still want a Marshall, of course, but the sound guy mic'ing your pub band does not...

So what can the Marshall Amplification of 2024 do about it? The brand is still, rightly, a source of pride and desirability – and represents surprisingly good value,

given the quality of its UK-made output – but many of the products the company needs are not there.

Meanwhile, the Marshall name has proven its value well beyond the guitar industry, with the Swedish firm Zound Industries enjoying enormous success with a range of licensed Marshall home audio and headphone gear. Indeed, Zound's offerings proved so popular that in 2023 the headphone producer was able to buy out the amp maker.

Now, the long-term partners are working in the same stable as the newly rebranded Marshall Group. The news has split Marshall fans, with some excited by the opportunity and others concerned about its future – particularly as amp sales now account for only five per cent of the combined group's annual revenue.

This is why we're now stood in the foyer of Marshall's Bletchley facility in Milton Keynes. Later, we will ask new CEO, Jeremy de Maillard, about all of these things – and what he plans to do about them. But before then we've been given the chance to take a look around.

"We've been behind... We've got to show guitarists that Marshall truly cares about them"

Factory Fresh

Steve Hill is the man tasked with giving us the tour. He heads up its custom cab builds in the Design Store and is a Marshall employee of some 31 years, so it's fair to say he knows his way around.

"If it's got 'Made in England' on it and was built after '66, then it came from this actual estate," Steve explains.

The firm makes roughly 450 units a week across two production lines and its hand-wired section. Steve says that everyone on the line is trained in all 50 builds from the current catalogue and they move between lines, too. No-one is sitting around simply pressing switches, and we don't see a single worker referring to a manual or following an instruction process; they do it all from memory and we see a huge element of hand-assembly, even on the builds that use machine soldering.

Steve says that many of the methods haven't changed since he started there – and it's pretty traditional in that sense, bar the odd automated soldering machine or part picker...

"When I started, I was making the old 12-watt amps, tiny combos," he recalls. "We'd do 25 on a bench between two people. [I remember on my first day] someone came over and asked me if I was new. He showed me what to do and went off. Later, my boss came along and said, 'You've done them all?!' I said, 'Yeah. The bloke over there showed me what to do.' He said, 'That's Jim Marshall!'"



"We will forever cherish the valve, handmade, analogue product – and will continue to over-invest in this. It is beyond protected"



1. The firm's latest release celebrates Celestion's centenary; it's limited to 100 hand-built amps

2. Production-line builds still have a considerable handmade element

3. Every hand-wired amp board is stickered with the builder's name; Marshall die-hards collect them

4. It was the day of the summer party on our visit. "We don't normally employ cowboys," quips the Design Store's Steve Hill



The best place to see a traditional amp build up close is the hand-wired section. The area consists of a series of small desks, rather than a line. Each one might be working on a different model and they're all wired, start to finish, by hand. We see a 1987 (one of the much-favoured 'Plexis'), alongside a more complicated JCM900 4100 getting soldered. Each one is then stickered with the name of its builder.

"People collect the stickers now," says Steve. "We get tours in and the first thing people show me is a photo of the corner of their amp with the little 'Made by' sticker. Then we try to introduce them to the person that made their amp." The valves and dials are added to the chassis before it's moved through to finishing.

Steve takes us through to the wood mill. Here, beech ply arrives in large sheets and is cut, joined and sanded to form Marshall's cabinets and amp-housing. It is the loudest room by far.

"Every one is hand-sanded [before being covered]," he explains. "And we do three different grades of paper, too."

Back in the finishing room we watch as the glue-sprayed cabs are finally covered – in astonishingly quick time, again, by hand – and the iconic white piping is added before they're all rolled along to meet the chassis and/or speakers for final assembly and testing.

We could spend hours here gawping at the variety of builds, but we're conscious of our appointment with the firm's new CEO, Jeremy de Maillard. We ask Steve – who seems genuinely enthusiastic about the new management – if the boss has got his hands dirty with a build and we're told he has indeed. How did Jeremy handle it? "He did all right!" says Steve.

The New Guy

As *Guitarist* sits down with Marshall's new chief, we report our findings. "Well, big words!" Jeremy laughs. "I've done different parts on different days. They make it look so easy because they're so good. It's like, 'Okay, sit here and do that.' And then... everything's wrong!"

Jeremy de Maillard, by his own admission, might not be a production line

super-sub quite yet and, indeed, he's not a guitarist, either (though neither was Jim Marshall, of course), but he does not lack a sense of Marshall's heritage – and the talent of the people in his employment.

"I've done that tour like 10 times now," he tells us of the steps we've just taken around the factory. "I can't get enough of it. To me, this is the highest level of craftsmanship you can have. I draw the parallel with Swiss watches or high-end leather goods. These are the people that are just the best at what they do. And they're so proud of what they do."

And it was with this expertise in mind that the new Marshall Group sought to discover what its employees really required – in the most direct of ways.

"We basically came in and asked the factory, 'What do you need?'" says Jeremy. "Like, 'Here's a blank piece of paper. What do you need?' The studio has been really well taken care of before our time, but [we wanted to know], 'What do you need to make these the best facilities for either making products for guitarists or for the recording studio?'"

Marshall has a state-of-the-art studio on site – complete with a Neve 8048 desk from Pathé Marconi studios in Paris



And the new group reportedly said yes to everything – alongside upgrading the staff facilities. Jeremy believes the firm has invested more in the past eight months than was spent in the 10 years prior to the takeover.

For all of Marshall's aura – its talent and tradition – that investment is, to be frank, badly needed. The amp market of 2024 is unrecognisable compared with that of 20 or 30 years ago. The recent mini heads and cabs of the Studio series are a notable exception, but it feels like Marshall has fallen noticeably behind the competition.

We lay this picture out and are assured to hear that it is not news to Marshall's new CEO. Nor is the fact that guitarists have been speculating over the implications of the merger – but Jeremy is keen to set the record straight.

"There are two things we're very clear on," he responds. "Number one is that we will forever cherish the valve, handmade, analogue product that we have – and will continue to over-invest in this. Even if it's not the biggest part of the business. We will never let go of this."

We know guitarists will be pleased to hear this, we note. "It is beyond protected," he reiterates.

"All of the investment we've made here is to make that better. But at the same time, we also realise that we don't have all of the products that the guitarist today expects of us – when it comes to more digital amplifiers, or digital products, in general."

"To me, this is the highest level of craftsmanship. [Our people] are the best at what they do"

The hint is a tantalising one. Marshall might still hold its own as a valve amp builder, but in 2024 most players need and expect more than valves alone. If Marshall is truly to appeal to the mass market again, then it needs to address this quickly.

"We've been behind and now we want to catch up," he acknowledges. "Our

goal is to provide guitarists the best possible Marshall experience, no matter what their needs are. If you're into valve analogue amps, we've got you. But if you want a practice amp or digital or desktop [solution], we're gonna be there for you as well. Just give us a little bit of time."

Jeremy de Maillard says that the results of the group's present R&D efforts should really start to show in the next year or two.

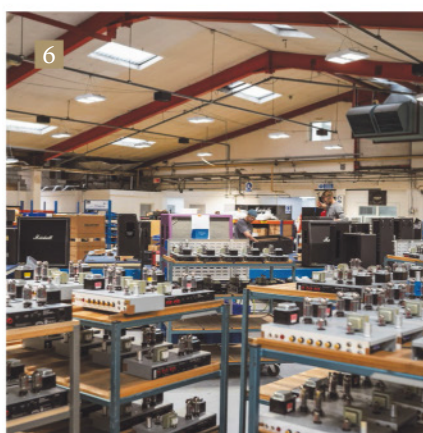
"I'm super excited about this," he enthuses. "Because everything we hear when we talk to the guitarist community is that they love the brand – they just wish they could use the brand in all of the occasions that they have to play guitar."

Guitarist spent an evening reading Marshall forums before our visit and we tell Jeremy that players have felt frustrated in the recent past – and that they're concerned about the amp maker being overshadowed by its home audio wing.

"If we lose this [Bletchley and the amp brand], we lose everything," he says. "So that's what we're going to cherish first and foremost. That cannot go away. But we've got some catching up to do. We've got to



5



6

5. As the new CEO of the Marshall Group, Jeremy de Maillard wants to ensure guitarists have the option of Marshall gear in all playing scenarios – not just Wembley headline slots

6. The finishing room is where it all comes together, as the cabinets are covered and the wired-up chassis are installed

7. A look inside a 1987X – fresh from a desk in the hand-wired department at Marshall's Bletchley HQ



7

go back and show the guitarist community that Marshall truly cares about them. To listen to them.

“We are on those forums as well. They keep us honest. It’s like, ‘Hey, tell us! No filter!’ We love this. We take it in and then we’re very self-aware of the things we can do better, and we’re working hard on it.”

Future Of Marshall

In that spirit, then, we list some of the things on players’ wishlists from a modern Marshall: among them a viable digital amp, something that crosses the line between the Bluetooth speaker and home amp, modelling solutions, software plug-ins, IR integration...

“Well, I don’t want to give away too much. But I would say all of the above is in the plans,” he grins. “Literally, everything you just talked about. But the order in which they’re going to come is going to depend on our ability to get them to the level that we are proud of.”

The Marshall exec says that we’re likely to see more Studio Series takes on the firm’s classic valve amps first, which

makes sense as a signal to those concerned about the heritage. And while we’re back on the topic of valve builds, what is the likelihood of trying to win back some market from the Marshall modders?

Again, we’re met with a knowing grin – and a vague but enticing nod that “we are working on this”. The CEO won’t be

“The goal is to grow the whole pie... You feel the love and the passion when you spend time in this office”

drawn on the details at this point, but he acknowledges the idea of in-house mods came “very early into conversations” with the Bletchley team.

Ultimately, it’s an exciting and slightly frustrating discussion, but mostly the former. It’s clear the firm has some very big things bubbling, along with the intent

and financial firepower to actually make them happen. But we’re going to have to wait a bit longer to see exactly what is brewing behind those panelled walls.

What is clear right now, though, is Jeremy de Maillard’s message to players: everyone at Marshall is listening, they get it and they have a plan to win hearts, minds and ears once more. In the meantime, the CEO asks Marshall fans to keep letting the company know what they want to see – and points out that there are not many amp firms out there in the position to make this kind of investment. As we conclude our conversation, *Guitarist* is left feeling much more positive about the prospects for Marshall amps and players, too...

“The goal is to grow the whole pie,” Jeremy concludes of the newly merged business. “For me, [whether listening or playing,] it’s just an opportunity to get more people to love what we love. I think you feel the love and the passion when you spend time in this office. We want more people to be into this. That’s really what we’re about.” **G**

www.marshall.com



Marshall's Studio JTM offers a downsized, 20-watt take on the firm's first amp – the iconic JTM45



GEM ARCHER

The former Oasis turned Noel Gallagher guitarist talks about his love for vintage Rickenbackers, gorgeous Gibson Firebirds, and why it's getting tougher to find cheap gear in the wild

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

"The first was basically half of my own money. I saved up half and the other half came from my uncle, who used to live with us. I really wanted a Rickenbacker because I was a massive fan of The Jam and The Beatles. I'd been around all the shops in the north east of England, and my uncle ran in one day, saying, 'There's a shop that's got a Rickenbacker,' and the first thing I said was, 'What colour is it?' I'd saved about 100 quid and I think he put in about 200 quid; I think I was about 15. I loved it so much that I used to sleep with it under my bed!"

What was the last guitar that you bought?

"A Les Paul Custom. I bought it off my mate, who was in one of my old bands, Heavy Stereo. I've done this before where you buy a guitar off your mate, but they always have the option of getting it back. I had this Gretsch Country Gentleman and it was fantastic but not really my thing. So he got that off of me and I got the Les Paul off him."

This 60s mini-humbucker-loaded Epiphone Sheraton belongs to Noel Gallagher who played it with Oasis back in the day, and Gem has been using it live with the High Flying Birds since he joined the band

It's the main Les Paul Custom I'm playing live and I love it. I hope he never wants it back! I think it's an '89 and it looks like it's been played. I stuck a Bigsby on it to complete the look. It's the bollocks, man. I sanded down the back of the neck, and there ya go."

What's the most incredible bargain you've had while buying gear?

"It's a guitar I've still got, a 1965 Epiphone Casino. I bought it back in '91 when I got my first record deal. There used to be a paper called *Loot*, basically a [classified advert publication] selling anything – and I mean anything. So I saw an ad for this Casino and I was like, 'Right, I've got to have it,' and got it for 400 quid. It's just amazing; I've two other Casinos, but that one is the one."

What's the strongest case of buyer's remorse you've experienced?

"Well, I'm in my studio now and I've got an Echoplex that I paid a lot for and never used [laughs]. I turn it on now and



"I had about seven Firebirds at one point, which was ridiculous... it got a bit out of hand"

again to see if it works – and it's the big, clunky plastic one, the one that you want. And, of course, we've all bought too many pedals. You know how it is where you're up late at night, you're on YouTube, you order something and it's just a load of bollocks when it comes [laughs].

"But I'll tell you what I bought [that I didn't regret], a Klon clone, which we've all got so many of. It was one of those JHS [Pedals] Notaklön pedals and it's great. The best part about this one is that it was 80 quid and I just like the Ikea[-style] packaging. Even the manual looks like an Ikea thing, and after I put it together, I ended up with this wonderful pedal I ordered five months ago."

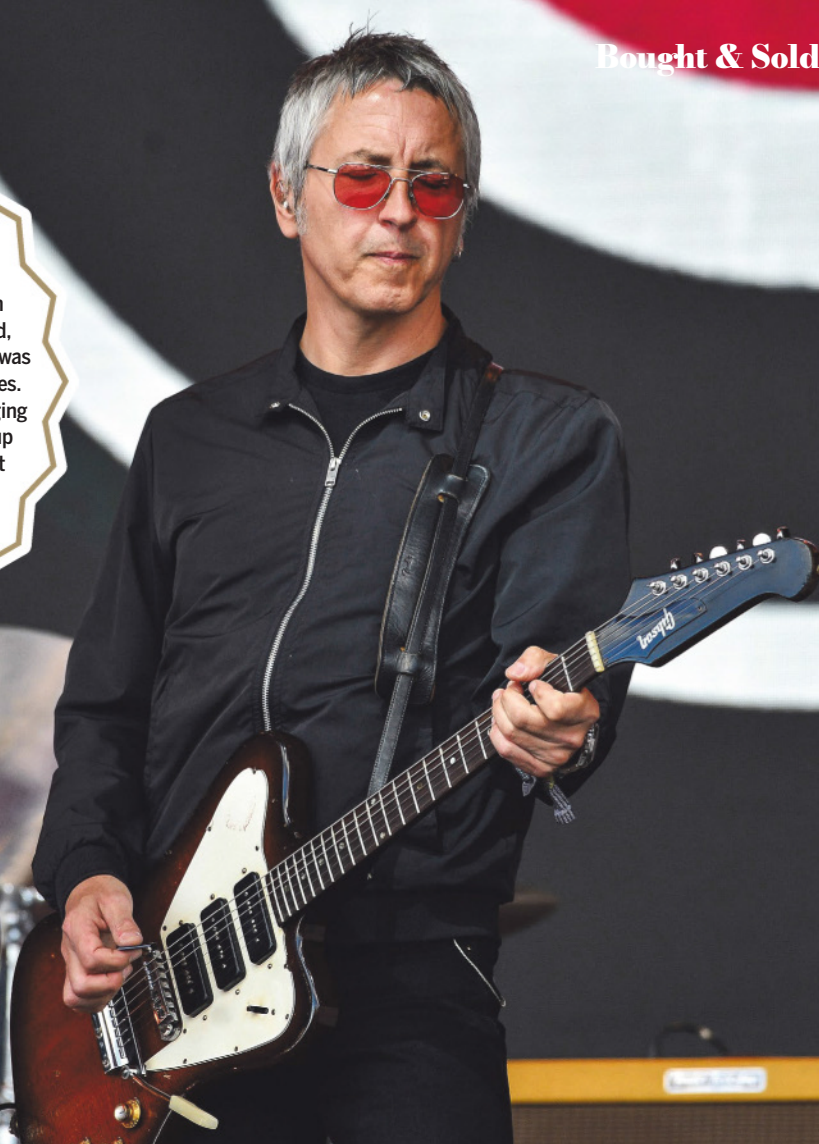
Have you ever sold a guitar that you really regret letting go?

"There's a 12-string Rickenbacker that was my old guitar for a long time. I was in a three-piece band in London and needed to pay rent, so I lined up all my guitars and chose one to sell. It was one from the 80s and it played so well. That was such a good period for those guitars, and just around a year before I got asked to join Oasis, I sold it. I always hoped I would be able to buy it back because it was one of those guitars that we all, as guitar players, romanticise or mythologise."

"And there's another, a non-reverse Firebird that I played a lot when I was in Oasis. I had about seven Firebirds at one point, which was ridiculous, and the red one – which

GEM'S GO-TO RIG

"Right now, there's this Epiphone Sheraton that's actually Noel's. I don't know what it is, but it's got it. Noel used to play it in Oasis and love it, and then we split up and when he asked me if I wanted to play with him again in 2017, and if I wanted to borrow any gear, I said, 'Have you still got that red Epi?' He said, 'Oh, yeah,' and that was it. It's got mini-humbuckers, like the Neil Young-looking ones. "My pedal setup is constantly changing. It's mostly changing levels of gain, some reverb and tremolo. I've got to come up with a lot, though, because there's a lot of sounds I've got to cover playing with Noel. But it's just fucking rock 'n' roll, so I like the Fulltone stuff and I like Wampler and Strymon stuff, too. With all that, my main amp is a Fender '57 Twin reissue because it can take all that sound, meaning all the levels we play at."



I got for 400 quid, too – and the black one were the main ones I played. It got to a point where if I closed my eyes, I couldn't tell which was which, so I ended up selling the black one to my old mate James [Walbourne], who plays in The Pretenders. I still say to him, 'If you're ever getting rid of that guitar, I'd love to have it back,' but he always says, 'No way!'"

What's your best guitar-buying tip?

"If it's an acoustic – or any guitar, really – ask them for a tuner and get it in concert pitch. I've found over the years that a lot of acoustics tend to be tuned down a bit, which makes them sound a bit better, so get it in tune. And if it's an electric, don't plug it in first; play it to feel how it is and really take your time to see how it sounds unplugged."

Do you have a favourite spot to shop for gear?

"That's a really good question because they're all kind of going away, you know? It hurts to walk down Denmark Street in London – it used to be Tin Pan Alley and when we'd tour, we'd all go there. But I don't know... Chicago Music Exchange is still great. But too many of them have the same things, like, there used to be a place called Black Market Music in LA and they'd have odd stuff that you'd never seen before, let alone for sale. It's tough now, and a lot of it is online."

When was the last time you stopped and looked in a guitar shop window or browsed online and what were you looking at?

"Recently, I was buying some slides on Denmark Street.

I've got too many slides, though none of them are the one. And even though I've got too many, I'm always looking at Rickenbackers and Firebirds, just because I think they look great. I've gotten a bit out of hand with Firebirds, but I always go back to what Keith Richards said: 'Give me five minutes with any of them and I'll make them all sound the same.' [laughs]"

Given the choice, would you rather have a great guitar and a cheap amp or a cheap guitar and a top-notch amp?

"A really good guitar. Always. Even with a cheap amp, you can get something out of it. But a bad guitar... it doesn't work. It's got to be that way round for me."

If you had to choose humbuckers or single coils for the rest of your career, which would it be?

"You're assuming I know the difference! [laughs] I've got a close friend, who I won't mention by name but is a fantastic guitar player, who doesn't know the difference and said to me, 'Right explain it to us.' But, for me, it would be humbuckers because you can probably cover more ground with them. You can turn them down and get that sound, or you can turn them up and push. I would say they're more adaptable, but it's a tough question to answer for the rest of your life!" **[AD]**

Gem is a self-confessed Firebird obsessive, but he once let a '65 non-reverse model in black go to his friend James Walbourne – who has kept it firmly in his clutches ever since!



Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds' latest album, *Council Skies*, is available now. Check out the website for tour dates www.noelgallagher.com

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE?

The transformer-based passive Focus switch on Yamaha's Revstar Mk II was a first for us – and now there's another passive boost you can retrofit. Dave Burrluck investigates

I was always taught that when it comes to boosting anything onboard a guitar you need an active circuit, and that needs power: a battery. And what is the thing that us electric guitarists really don't like? A battery! It's a little odd in that any of us who use our acoustics live invariably have a battery onboard to power our preamps; it's the same thing with plenty of bass guitars, too. But switch back to the electric guitar and for many players it's a total no-go.

This 'acoustic good/electric bad' situation is reflected by the instruments we're offered: very few production guitar makers employ active circuits, Music Man being a notable exception. Active pickups, which again need a battery, are another polarising choice. Some swear by their EMG or Fishman Fluence setups... Others run a mile.

John Mayer recently gave the topic a valid shout-out with his 'Dead Spec' PRS Silver Sky, which features an active Alembic Blaster preamp and a proper flip-top battery compartment [pic 1] as you might find on an electro-acoustic. To be fair, many players don't like batteries simply because to change them you have to virtually disassemble your guitar, not least if it's a Stratocaster style. With the 'Dead Spec', you don't have to do that. Simple. But even John Mayer – as popular as he is – isn't going to change the taste of the world's anti-battery brigade.



The PRS 'Dead Spec' Silver Sky uses a flip-top battery compartment on the back to house the power for the active circuit

Passive Power

Last year's Revstar Mk II refresh, however, saw Yamaha – in its typically highly considered fashion – introduce a *passive* boost, which it called the Focus switch. This doesn't use a battery, but it does use a small step-up transformer in the control cavity [pic 2]. In use, it supplies a subtle but noticeable boost, although it's not full frequency: it's centred on the midrange and low-end. It's not a variable boost, either, and having spent quite a bit of time with one, I initially concluded it's of

limited use; indeed, you can easily create a similar boost with an outboard EQ pedal. But the concept – as another thicker voice and without using a battery or taking up more pedalboard space – isn't daft and is actually quite useful in order to broaden your sound options.

But then, rather like London buses, another passive boost came along. This was courtesy of Mike Christian, who I'd had some contact with some years back when he was making 'acoustic' pickups for electric guitars, now known as Graph



Inside certain Revstar Mk II models you'll find this transformer. It was a first for us!

"The 'acoustic good/electric bad' situation is reflected by the instruments we're offered"

Tech's Ghost pickups. "I now have something new to offer folk who enjoy coaxing new sounds out of their favourite electric guitar or bass," said Mike in his welcome email. "I'd say the big news is our new Black Ice Boost module [pic 3] – it offers fingertip access to 7dB of true boost, without the need for a battery or any other power source." Intriguing, I thought, although a few bells were ringing...

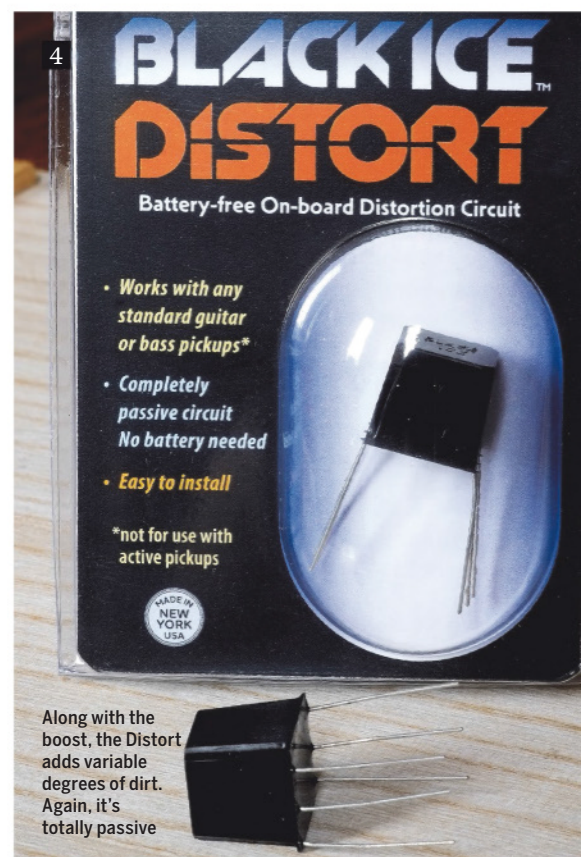
"Yes, you may have seen a device called Black Ice Overdrive before, perhaps in an old StewMac catalogue or online,"

Transformer twins:
this SE Silver Sky
and Yamaha Revstar
RSS20 both feature
passive boosts





Supplied in a small tin, the mini black cube Black Ice Boost is smaller than a nine-volt block battery



Along with the boost, the Distort adds variable degrees of dirt. Again, it's totally passive

confirmed Mike. “Now that I’ve closed my repair shop, I decided to develop a new companion product – the Black Ice Boost – which I believe is a more useful and appealing device. The ‘Distort’ name seemed more appropriate, so we renamed the Black Ice Overdrive the ‘Black Ice Distort’ [pic 4] when we introduced the Black Ice Boost. The two versions are otherwise identical.”

Grateful that my memory isn’t completely shot (although I can’t remember actually trying that Black Ice Overdrive back in the day), could Mike’s endeavours mean that us battery-phobic guitarists can access a truly passive boost? Even though Mike shipped us a couple of samples to try out, he is less keen on spilling the beans.

“I think you may find that I’m annoyingly reluctant to get too specific about what’s under the hood,” he says. “Folk will point out that with passive devices you can’t gain something without sacrificing something else. And they’re absolutely correct. But if you manipulate these trade-offs very carefully, they can be used to your advantage when trying to reshape the frequency response and output of a pickup.

“In our case, we managed to sacrifice a small amount of high-frequency energy in exchange for significantly more output in the mids and more output overall,” he

continues. “With single-coil pickups, the end result can sound strikingly similar to the mid-forward, slightly darker sound produced by humbuckers.

“I will also say that while the design and functionality of our Black Ice Boost is significantly different, it does share some common electrical traits with the traditional-style transformer found in Yamaha’s Revstar models. But, again, our boost is voiced primarily for single-coil pickups and it has significantly more boost on tap: enough for highlighting a solo or driving an amp into clipping, for example.

“Finally, I should mention that the Yamaha transformer is definitely *not* typical,” says Mike. “Up until now, it was the only currently available device that is compatible with high-impedance passive guitar-pickups (and it’s not available separately). That’s why we’re building the Black Ice Boost from the ground up here in New York. I *wish* we could buy something off the shelf!”

Get To Work

Due to the usual space and time constraints, I’m going to concentrate on the Black Ice Boost here. And to fully hear what’s on offer, I need to fit two mini-toggle switches (or pull-push pots) to a single-coil-equipped guitar.

The Black Ice Boost measures 30mm by 30mm by 21mm, a smaller but wider

footprint than a nine-volt block battery (which, of course, we don’t need). There’s nothing to see as it’s encapsulated in what looks like epoxy resin with just four visible small loop connection points.

Not wanting to drill holes for a couple of mini-toggle switches, I’m going for two pull-switch pots and conclude a Telecaster would be a good host. However, while Mike confirms it’s doable, it is a very tight

“Folk will point out that with passive devices you can’t gain something without sacrificing something else”

fit, especially with those pull switches. So I switch to a loaner PRS SE Silver Sky and get to work.

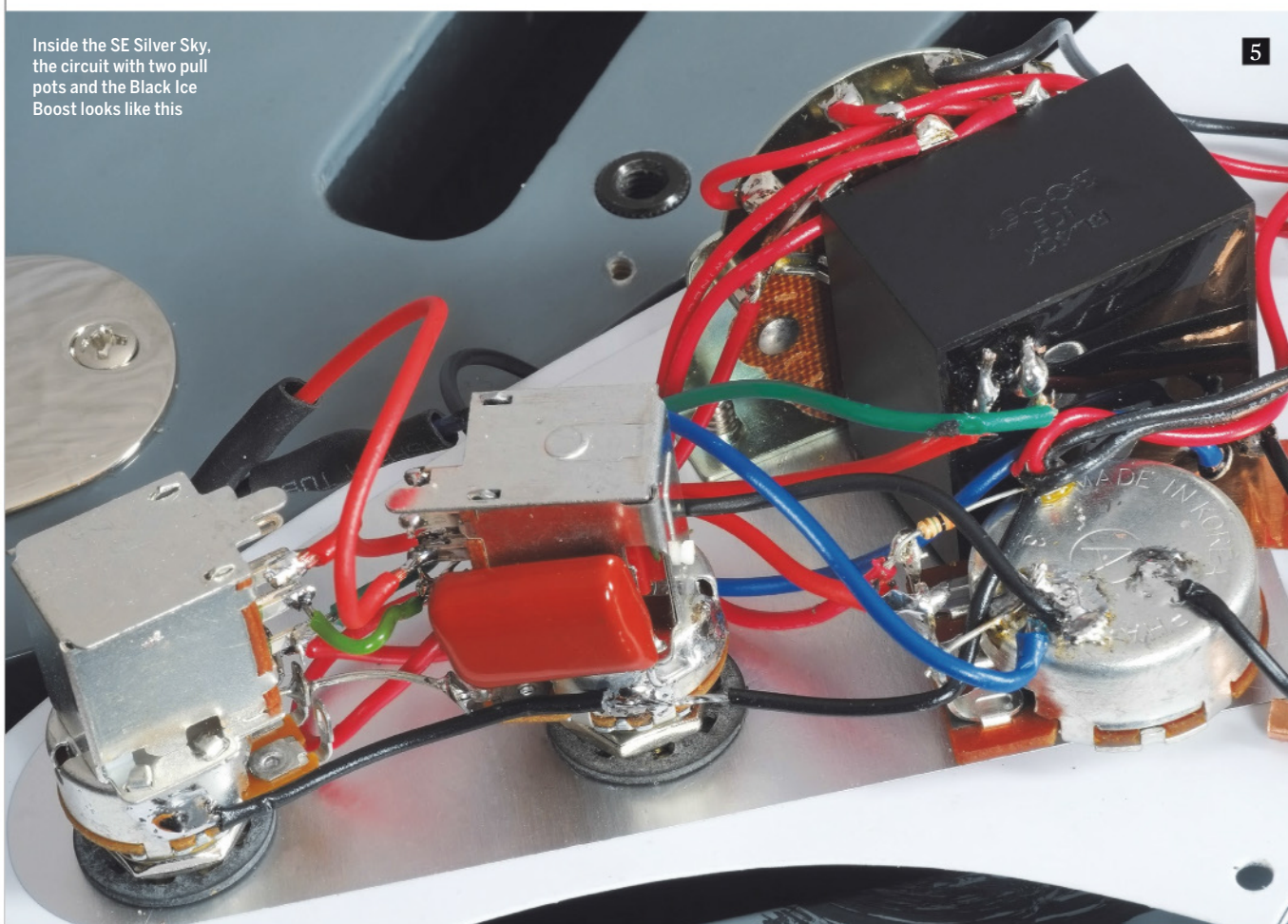
The Black Ice Boost fits perfectly between the volume and five-way switch and is held in place with a supplied sticky foam pad. Obviously, I need to mod the Sky’s wiring, replacing the two tone controls with pull-switches: the centre-placed middle and neck-pickup tone for the Boost’s on/off switch, and the bridge tone to set full gain (7dB) in

Unlike the active 'Dead
Spec' Silver Sky, our SE is
now loaded with the Black
Ice Boost passive boost



Inside the SE Silver Sky, the circuit with two pull pots and the Black Ice Boost looks like this

5



the up position, and partial boost (4dB) when the knob is pushed down – you can easily swap those around if you prefer. The instruction sheet is clear and if you have basic soldering skills it's a pretty simple job [pic 5]. That said, there's a small logo on the cube that needs to be facing down when you wire it from the diagram. Initially, I wire the Boost upside down so only the partial boost works. Mike puts me right!

But Does It Work?

If you think 'passive' and 'boost' don't belong in the same sentence, think again. With the partial boost engaged, it's like a thickener – it's not full frequency and rounds the highs in a similar style, sound-wise, to knocking back your tone control. It's more humbucker-like, and with a bit of added dirt the Silver Sky has quite a different character. It reminds me of that saturated Clapton mid-boost or very tubular Santana tone. The full boost has noticeably more level and is even fruitier-sounding, but pulling back the volume control seems to lessen the boost in both modes, and compensating the output with an outboard clean boost is worthwhile.

Comparing it to the Revstar's Focus switch boost, the Black Ice Boost adds

"It reminds me of a saturated Clapton mid-boost or tubular Santana tone. The full boost has more level and is fruitier"

a little more level, even in partial mode, and the full boost adds considerably more. Typically, the Yamaha sounds a little more conservative – the Black Ice Boost is much more 'Noo Yawk'!

Of course, there are plenty of ways to wire up the boost. For example, you could just have it engaged on the bridge single coil where typically you'd roll-back the tone control, creating a sort of HSS without changing pickups.

Aside from the fact you don't need a battery, the Black Ice Boost is different from a full-frequency active boost – such as EMG's PA2 – centring on the mid and low-end, a sort of 'tone rolled off' kinda boost. It's a very handy thickener for single coils, especially if you like your fuzzes and distortions. A neat mod! 

MOD SPEC

PRODUCT: Black Ice Boost
COST: £89 via www.creamtcustomshop.com
TYPE: Transformer-based passive boost
SKILL LEVEL: If you can solder, it's pretty easy, but wiring mini-switches or pull switch pots can be fiddly. You will need two switches to achieve the on/off and partial/full boost functions
www.blackiceoverdrive.com

PROS & CONS

PROS No battery; dual boost levels; easy to fit with soldering skills; works very well with fuzzes and gain

CONS Unlike an active boost, it's not full frequency, but it doesn't need a battery!

**Guitarist
CHOICE**

9/10

THE INSIDE STORY OF MARBLES - THE MAKING OF MODERN-DAY MARILLION

Plus Yes, Steven Wilson, Riverside, Pendragon, Marjana Semkina, Nordic Giants, OU, Jane Weaver, Louise Patricia Crane, Bill Fisher, and loads more!

MEGA GIFT PACK
WITH
4
GREAT GIFTS!

- 1**
FOUR **PROG** COASTERS
- 2**
SET OF MARILLION POSTCARDS
- 3**
A SONICBOND PUBLISHING **PROG** E-BOOK*
- 4**
21-TRACK DIGITAL ALBUM DOWNLOAD* FROM **ESOTERIC RECORDINGS**

PROG
ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC

Marbles at 20: The making of modern-day
MARILLION

“There’s not an ounce of fat”

PLUS YES, STEVEN WILSON, RICHARD THOMPSON, NORDIC GIANTS, AIRBAG, MARJANA SEMKINA, OU, JANE WEAVER, RICHARD TANDY, MIKE PINDER, BILL FISHER AND LOADS MORE...

ON SALE NOW



Huw Price's *Nitty Gritty*

This time, Huw dismantles the guitar, pulls the frets and strips the body and neck

1957 Stratocaster Restoration (Part 2)

With the guitar reduced to a kit of parts, a detailed restoration plan can be made



PHOTOS BY HUW PRICE

Whether it's a humble Epiphone SG or a vintage Fender, every refinishing project begins with dismantling the guitar. For a Stratocaster, all that's needed are large and small crosshead screwdrivers and a soldering iron. It had been a while since I looked under the pickguard of this guitar, but it was nice to be reminded that there are two Stackpole potentiometers with fourth week of 1957 date stamps. The volume control had been replaced with a 1964 CTS pot, which isn't a bad alternative. I'll need a period-correct reproduction capacitor, but I installed a vintage switch not long after I acquired the guitar.

It's actually a CRL 18672, rather than a period-correct 1452, but it looks exactly the same and only cost me £25. Even 10 years ago when I bought the switch, a CRL 1452 would probably have cost 10 times as much. With all the parts carefully bagged up and labelled, I was ready to start stripping some lacquer.

Stripping Off

One of the most fascinating aspects of stripping a vintage guitar can be the story it reveals. In some hard-to-access areas, like the control cavity and the vibrato rout, you can often find multiple layers of paint and sometimes several colours or even traces of the original factory finish. Stripping a vintage guitar body can also confirm its authenticity if you know what clues to look out for.

But firstly, a decision must be made on the best way to remove the finish, and much depends on the lacquer itself. Nitrocellulose can usually be wiped off using paper towels soaked in acetone – but wear a breathing mask and work outdoors if you try this yourself. This wasn't an option here because I had already determined that the gold lacquer was impervious to acetone. In the past, I enjoyed some success with Nitromors stripper, but it's a messy process that usually culminates in a lot of sanding and neutralising before the body can be resprayed. Besides which, the manufacturer appears to have altered the formula and it's no longer that effective for this purpose.

Some advocate sanding off the finish, and that would certainly have been a

possibility here, but great care has to be taken not to lose original contours by oversanding and I didn't want to take any unnecessary risks with a Strat body that had already seen more than its fair share of silicon carbide.

A paint-stripping heat gun is another option, but this process is not without risks, either. Applying too much heat can char the wood and you may not be able to sand out the blackened areas. Veneered bodies are also problematic because heat can cause the glue to let go and the veneer to bubble up. Although it hasn't happened to me, I have also seen body joints open up and even fall apart. Nevertheless, I decided a heat gun was probably the best option for this guitar.

Gold Gone

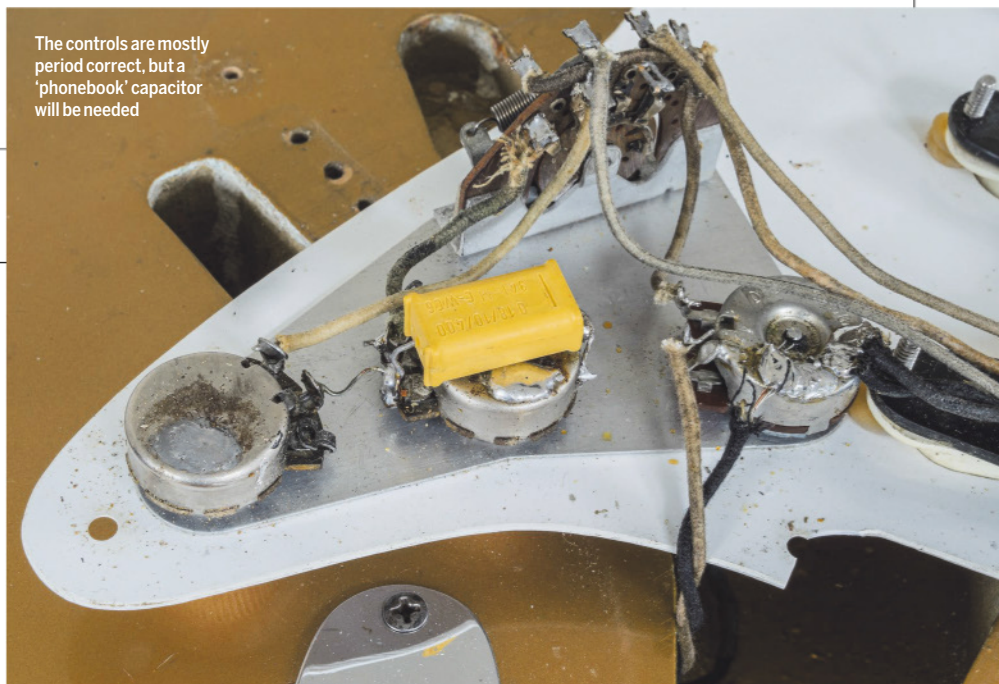
Every time I strip a guitar body it's a bit different and the first stage involves experimenting to see how the lacquer responds. I soon discovered that this gold lacquer quickly softened up and peeled right off. Best of all, the white base coat hadn't really bonded with the wood and it came away without tearing the grain.

The wood had clearly been sanded smooth before the previous refinish. Once the lacquer was removed, I could tell that relatively little preparation would

"One of the most fascinating aspects of stripping a vintage guitar can be the story it reveals"

be required to ready the body for fresh lacquer. Although I was 95 per cent certain that this body was genuine, stripping the thing would give me a definitive answer. Lingering at the back of my mind was the possibility that I had been wrong all along and was about to suffer the biggest embarrassment of my career as a guitar journalist and vintage guitar restorer.

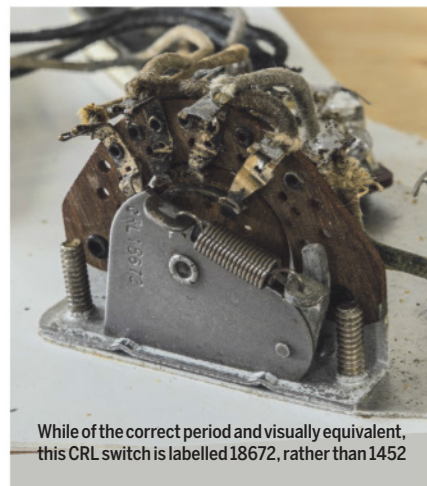
I started on the rear of the body and was greatly relieved when both the router template dowel holes appeared exactly where they should be. Besides three additional screw holes that had been made



The controls are mostly period correct, but a 'phonebook' capacitor will be needed



'304704' stamps on both tone pot casings tell us Stackpole made them during the fourth week of '57



While of the correct period and visually equivalent, this CRL switch is labelled 18672, rather than 1452

to accommodate an aftermarket spring coverplate, it was in pretty good condition.

On the front of the body, I started removing the gold in the area where I suspected additional switches had been added. I soon uncovered a decently done mahogany plug and an inlaid strip of mahogany filling a wire channel.

The finish came off to reveal two more template dowels and three spacer nail holes in the correct locations next to the neck pocket, bridge and jack socket rout. In 1957 there would most likely have been a fourth hole in the area where the extra switches had been installed. There were also six additional holes in the area under the pickguard, and all but one were plugged with dowels. This final hole was just in front of the bridge and had broken through to the pickup rout, revealing a taper and screw threads.

People often modded guitars in the days before they became collectible and

maybe the extra screws were added for 'cosmetic' reasons or in an attempt to flatten a warped pickguard. I also found a second strap button hole on the lower horn, indicating that at some point this Strat was owned by someone who played left-handed.

Lacquer is sometimes left in the control cavities and vibrato rout when they're being resprayed in a solid colour. But with lighter semi-opaque and sunburst finishes, this isn't an option and I resigned myself to stripping the tougher areas. Since the previous luthier hadn't stripped these areas, I was soon discovering more about the guitar's history. Under the dark gold outer coat, there was a layer of lighter gold, and below that there was some sort of white basecoat. Lastly, I uncovered a layer of reddish brown that was more brittle and I could see evidence of lacquer checking.

My assumption was that it was nitrocellulose, so maybe the guitar had



With bench dogs bracing the body, the gold finished peeled off easily with some gently applied heat

been treated to a 'hippy refin' during the 1970s when brown guitars were all the rage. Best of all, the factory-applied yellow stain was still clear to see under the brown and in the neck pocket traces of the original sunburst's tobacco brown edge remained.

After a full day of stripping, scraping and sanding I was left with a decent looking 1.7kg (3.7lb) Strat body. There were very few dents, so I would guess that the original sunburst finish was probably in pretty good shape before it was sprayed brown. To make the body completely ready for its fourth and hopefully final finish, I'll need to decide what to do about the switch patches. It's a pity that

mahogany was deemed acceptable, rather than alder, simply because it was being oversprayed in gold.

Without wishing to conceal the guitar's history, I would like to minimise the visual impact. A carefully positioned alder patch might improve the look and most of it will end up hidden beneath the darker edge of the sunburst. Rather than rush things, I parked the body restoration and turned my attention to the neck.

Pains In The Proverbial

Before getting started on the neck I gave it a thorough examination under black light. There was no finish to speak of on the back of the neck, but the areas where

the wood transitions into the lacquer at the heel and neck did glow faintly. This indicated that the lighter coloured lacquer had some age, but black light cannot confirm that it was factory applied. Even so, the possibility that the factory lacquer may have been oversprayed led me to decide on some gentle hand-sanding around the heel, rather than the heat gun. Of course, I was also keen to preserve the neck date.

As for the curiously located decal, having closely compared it with Andrew Raymond's '56, it became clear that it wasn't original. There were several telltale signs, including slightly differently shaped letters on the 'Fender' section, and 'Stratocaster' lettering that was noticeably smaller. I could also tell that there was no original lacquer under the amber coats, so I decided to go ahead and strip the headstock.

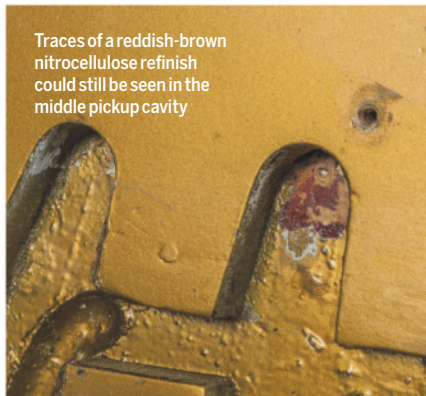
Before doing so, the tuner bushings had to be removed. It is possible to tap them out from the back using a flathead screwdriver, but I prefer not to. Instead, I used a machine screw with a 7mm head diameter that is small enough to enter the post hole from the back of the headstock and butt up against the bushing.

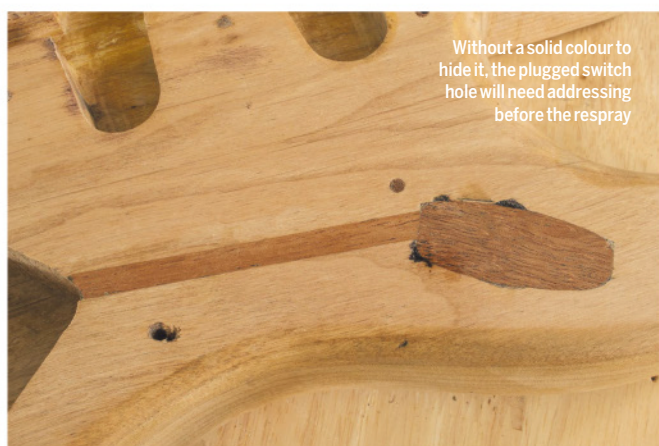
On the front of the headstock I used a small block of wood with a blind drilled

Great care was taken to preserve the original body date in the spring cavity

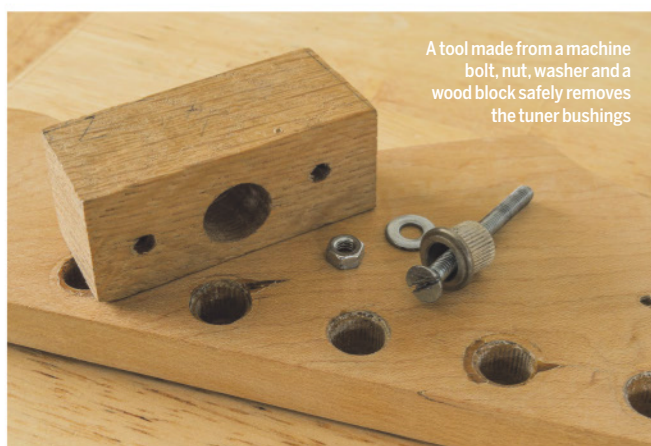


Traces of a reddish-brown nitrocellulose refinsh could still be seen in the middle pickup cavity





Without a solid colour to hide it, the plugged switch hole will need addressing before the respray



A tool made from a machine bolt, nut, washer and a wood block safely removes the tuner bushings



For fret extraction you'll need a fret puller and a soldering iron to release any glue



Traces of the original sunburst finish and yellow stain remain in the neck and pickup cavities

hole that's wide enough to fit over the bushing. The threaded end of the machine screw then went through a smaller hole drilled through the centre of the larger hole. Placing a washer and a nut on the thread, I used a screwdriver to tighten the machine screw to ease the bushing out. There's probably an expensive tool designed specifically for this task, but making your own from scraps and spares is more satisfying.

Fretboard Prep

In the previous instalment I mentioned how the fretboard had been oversanded and poorly resprayed. There was no possibility of the factory finish having survived in that area, so the final stage before removing the lacquer was to pull out the non-original jumbo frets.

To remove frets you do need to use proper fret-pulling pliers. The ones I prefer are quite sharp at the ends and slip under the crown to lift the wire out. I was also pretty certain that glue would have been used to install the frets.

Simply pulling out glued-in frets is never a good idea because it invariably results in damage to the fret slots, as well as the surrounding area of the fretboard. In fact, it's very common to see refretted guitars with chipped fretboards.

Titebond, protein glues, superglue and epoxy are adhesives that are commonly used for fret installation and they will release when heated.

A soldering iron is ideal for the job and applying solder to the wire helps transfer the heat. When I'm refretting a maple fretboard, I usually set the soldering iron temperature to around 320 degrees to avoid melting the lacquer. That wasn't much of an issue here, but another reason to keep the iron temperature low is to prevent the maple from discolouring. I recently refretted a Stratocaster that had been heated so aggressively that the wood around the slots had burned and turned dark grey. Fortunately, the owner's preferred jumbo frets concealed most of the damage.

These frets came out easily and, judging by the colour of the glue and the absence of nasty fumes, I'd guess that the previous fret job had been done with fish or hide glue. With the nut gently tapped out, I was ready to finish stripping the lacquer off the fretboard.

Round The Block

I used the heat gun to strip the headstock and opted to remove the overspray on the heel by hand-sanding. Whenever possible, I avoid applying heat to guitar

"Simply pulling out glued-in frets invariably results in damage to the fret slots"

necks, unless I'm attempting to correct a bow, so I clamped the headstock to my workbench in readiness for more sanding.

Having verified that the fretboard radius was as close to 7.25 inches (184mm) as pre-CBS Fenders ever get, I used double-sided tape to fix some 220-grit abrasive paper to my 7.25-inch radius block, adjusted the neck to be as straight as possible and started sanding. Before long, the maple's natural colour started showing through the thinned-out amber lacquer and I swapped over to a smaller block loaded with 320-grit to remove the last of the lacquer while minimising the amount of maple that would sand off.

And that's about it for this instalment. Now that the body and neck are stripped, I know exactly what I'm dealing with and both have to be made ready for spraying. There's a lot more to be done, but the worst of it is over. 

www.huwpriceguitar.com



David Davidson's *Vintage Icons*

Sometimes vintage guitars come with a backstory and this one is very personal

1944 D'Angelico New Yorker



David first encountered this 1944 D'Angelico New Yorker as a child and 57 years later became its second owner

I've known this D'Angelico New Yorker since my early childhood. When I was a kid I played ice hockey for a team called The Green Machine in Syosset, New York, and we were coached by a gentleman called Frank Palma. His son Michael was one of my better friends and every time I went to his house, his father, who knew I played guitar, would show me his D'Angelico. I was always made aware that it was a special and expensive instrument.

"The years passed by and we all went our own ways, and one day I got a call from Michael's brother Anthony, who told me Michael and his father had passed on and this guitar had been left to him. Apparently, there was a note in the case saying that he should call me if he needed anything. He didn't play guitar and couldn't put it to use, so he asked me if I'd be interested in purchasing it.

"The D'Angelico remained close to the neighbourhood where we grew up and I had first encountered it. I went down to see the guitar and it was still the beautiful blonde with stunning flame that I remembered. There had been a little bit of restoration work done by Giuliano Balestra on the frets, and some sections of binding had needed to be redone.

"It still had the original case and inside there was some great paperwork, including a flyer for a gig that Frank's trio was playing in New York. I think he was a jazz cat in Manhattan and played around the clubs. The guitar dates to 1944 and it's in the D'Angelico ledger with Frank Palma's name next to it, so he was the

"Unfortunately, there aren't many jazz cats around now who grew up with these guitars"

original owner. It's funny how these things come around and I became the second owner 57 years later.

"It was very interesting to hold it again, and as much as I love and appreciate this guitar, one of my other childhood friends had a father who owned a '59 Les Paul and I really wish I'd got the call about that one. But this D'Angelico has a wonderful spruce top and the maple on the back and sides is stunning. It once had a hang-on DeArmond pickup added, but that's not on there now. The pickguard is a later one, which often happens when the celluloid originals deteriorate, but the guitar is structurally very sound and plays wonderfully.

"Deke Dickerson was in here recently playing on it and just loving it. It's a very standard New Yorker of its era with a 17-inch body and has a really good balance. These came with enormously heavy strings, probably 14-gauge with a wound B, and you really had to hit them hard to make them project.

"Set up correctly D'Angelicos were giant sounding, like pianos. Jazz guys loved them because they were immensely loud guitars. Through choosing really great woods and his methods of construction, D'Angelico created the most amazing archtop guitars of their time.

"I would describe the neck as having a very large V profile that goes up to about the 5th fret and then rounds out to a C. The feel is wonderful because it fills the palm but doesn't give you any hand or finger fatigue. It's just brilliant design and very few makers, except possibly Gibson, were thinking at that level. A few years later when electric guitars were coming out, companies took inspiration from guitars like D'Angelicos for their neck profiles. Leo Fender was obsessed with the neck feel of early Epiphone archtops, as you can tell on early 50s Fenders.

"In the late 80s and early 90s, D'Angelicos were selling for a lot of money. Blonde cutaways in particular were fetching upwards of \$100,000, but, unfortunately, there aren't many jazz cats around now who grew up with these guitars. Players still like the looks, but not many players understand how to get the best out of them. You can't approach them delicately like you're strumming a flat-top because they're meant to be hit hard. That's where the sound is.

"Now it's hanging on the wall like it's for sale. I have it priced at a point where I'm not trying to sell it, but if it happens then it happens. It reminds me of a very good time in my life and the fun that we had with a very good hockey team, so I'm not pushing it out the door." **[HP]**

Vintage guitar veteran David Davidson owns Well Strung Guitars in Farmingdale, New York
www.wellstrungguitars.com/
info@wellstrungguitars.com / 001 (516) 221-0563

The original celluloid pickguard rotted away and the gap in the edging of this replacement shows that a floating pickup was once fitted



Blues Headlines

Richard Barrett is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks



Two Sides of Gary Moore

Tutor Richard Barrett | **Gear used** Knaggs Choptank, Knaggs SSC, Marshall JTM45 reissue & Keeley Boss SD-1
Difficulty ★★★★★ | 20 mins per example

IT'S OFTEN SAID that the sound comes from the player rather than the guitar. For example, there's a well-travelled anecdote about Ted Nugent picking up Eddie Van Halen's guitar at a soundcheck and sounding like Ted Nugent, even through Eddie's rig. While there's a lot of truth in such stories, it's also correct to say that different guitars can influence how we play. Gary Moore's differing approaches to playing a Strat or Les Paul are great example of this.

While still unmistakably Gary Moore, there are ways he explores the different tone and features of each instrument, some of which I've aimed to highlight in the two example solos over these pages.

Gary often favoured a Strat in the mid-to-late 70s. On Colosseum II's *Electric Savage* from 1977 you can hear the characteristic wide vibrato he would get from the vibrato arm – similar to Ritchie Blackmore on Deep Purple's *Black Night* at times, though with a touch of Jeff Beck in there, too. Of course, the Les Paul (the fabled '59 once belonging to Peter Green) also had some time in the spotlight. Gary's own *Back On The Streets* album from 1978 features a mix of Strat and Les Paul, with the Strat often being employed for the cleaner, more sensitive moments.

By the early 80s, Gary had moved primarily to Strats, especially his red '61, though Ibanez, Charvel and Hamer also came in

to play later in that same decade. Most of these had humbuckers and a locking vibrato, which seemed to encourage Gary's more 'Les Paul' approach. By 1990, Gary had switched primarily to blues, but this had always been a key ingredient of his style, even in his 70s 'fusion' period. The second solo refers more to this period with some faster licks, but it's a bit more relaxed than the rocker of the previous decade. Hope you enjoy these and see you next time! **G**



Richard Barrett's album, *Colours*, (complete with backing tracks), is available now from iTunes and Amazon

Example 1

IN THIS FIRST HALF there's far less gain, which encourages more bluesy, rhythmic phrasing, as opposed to searing bends and sustain. The introductory phrase starts out with A minor pentatonic shape 1, but quickly slides to shape 2 for beat 1 of the first full bar. This gives the A that many players would bend to from within shape 1, but sliding to the 10th fret and using the bar gives a different character. The second half could also be described as shape 2, but strictly speaking the change to E minor underneath makes it a shape 4 E minor pentatonic.

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel. It includes a guitar part (top) and a bass part (bottom), both in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as 88 BPM. The guitar part features a melody with a wavy line indicating a vibrato effect, and the bass part provides a steady accompaniment with a wavy line indicating a vibrato effect. The score is written in standard musical notation with a treble clef for the guitar and a bass clef for the bass. The guitar part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4. The bass part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system starting at measure 1 and the second system starting at measure 4. The guitar part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4. The bass part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4. The score is written in standard musical notation with a treble clef for the guitar and a bass clef for the bass. The guitar part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4. The bass part includes a key signature change to one flat (Bb) and a time signature change to 3/4.

Example 2

I'M USING THE BAR to add vibrato on the first phrase, rather than the bend that would be necessary to do this on a Les Paul. The rest of this example is taken from the shape 1 A minor pentatonic (with the exception of that one slide). This section showcases how Gary would use the pentatonic to create fast phrases with many – but not all – of the notes picked. He had a particular way of doing this, so make sure you check out the directions in the transcription.

Example 2 musical notation (Measures 1-4). The notation is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 88 bpm. It shows a guitar solo using the A minor pentatonic scale (shape 1). Measure 1 starts with a Dm7 chord with a bar, followed by a fast run of notes. Measure 2 continues the run with an Fmaj7 chord and a 1/4 note. Measure 3 features a G chord and a 'rake' technique. Measure 4 includes an Am7 chord and a fast run of notes. The bass line is indicated by a wavy line and 'BU' (bend up) and 'BD' (bend down) markings. The fretboard diagram shows the notes on the strings: E, B, G, D, A, E.

Example 3

TURNING UP THE GAIN and using a Les Paul-style guitar gives us a different sound and phrasing options. Gary had a way of nailing the pitch of a bend without 'covering his tracks' with vibrato, which is a tricky thing to master. We're starting here in shape 4 of the A minor pentatonic, then morphing into the E minor pentatonic (shape 1). High gain such as this leads to handling noise and/or feedback, so Gary would tend to make a feature of the handling noise or zero the guitar's volume control if he wanted silence.

Example 3 musical notation (Measures 1-4). The notation is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 88 bpm. It shows a guitar solo using the A minor pentatonic scale (shape 4) and the E minor pentatonic scale (shape 1). Measure 1 starts with an Am7 chord and a fast run of notes. Measure 2 continues the run with an Am7 chord and a fast run of notes. Measure 3 features a fast run of notes. Measure 4 includes an Em7 chord and a fast run of notes. The bass line is indicated by a wavy line and 'BU' (bend up) and 'BD' (bend down) markings. The fretboard diagram shows the notes on the strings: E, B, G, D, A, E.

Example 4

THIS FINAL PHRASE uses the shape 1 A minor pentatonic, an octave above where we began back in Example 1. Pay close attention to the way this travels across the strings: the picking patterns may seem counterintuitive at first, but they are the key to how Gary would create fast but relaxed two-note-per-string pentatonic runs in many of his solos. At volume, you may need to be ready to zero the guitar's volume control to avoid unwanted feedback!

Example 4 shows three systems of guitar notation. The first system is marked '8va' and 'Dm7'. The second system is marked '(8va)'. The third system is marked '(8va)' and '1/4'. The notation includes fret numbers, picking patterns (BU, BD), and a 'rake' instruction.

Hear It Here

COLOSSEUM II ELECTRIC SAVAGE



Recorded in late 1976, this album is reportedly live off the studio floor without overdubs – and it certainly gives a good representation of what the band must have sounded like live. Check out Gary's aggressive Strat-playing and distinctive vibrato use on *Put It This Way* and *All Skin & Bone*. Elsewhere on the record, he brings out a more sensitive side to his playing, notably on *Am I*, with shades of David Gilmour at times, though that gives way to some stunning picking later.

GARY MOORE BACK ON THE STREETS



Recorded in 1978, there are a few styles on display, some harking back to Colosseum II as well as duets with Phil Lynott in advance of Gary's appearance on Thin Lizzy's *Black Rose* album. There are clear attempts at a hit single, but a clear winner was *Parisienne Walkways*. It's interesting to come back to the original; this kind of restraint and control is an often neglected facet of Gary's style. Also, check out *Don't Believe A Word* and *Song For Donna* to hear his contrasting Strat/Les Paul approaches.

GARY MOORE POWER OF THE BLUES



Released in 2004, more than a decade after Gary's initial shift to the blues, his playing here remains as intense as ever but with a considered effort to include fewer of the trademark fast runs. It's clear this is still available when required, though: listen to the play-out on *There's A Hole* as well as the solo in *Getaway Blues*. Elsewhere, Gary combines traditional-sounding blues phrasing with contemporary production flourishes, such as his distinctive use of the wah on *Evil*.

DEEPEN YOUR GUITAR KNOWLEDGE

With our reference-grade bookazines that assemble the best of our classic features and interviews in beautiful standalone editions



ON
SALE
NOW



AVAILABLE TO ORDER ONLINE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL EDITIONS AT
www.magazinesdirect.com/guides-and-specials/categories/music/
OR FIND THEM TODAY AT WHSMITHS (UK) AND BARNES & NOBLE (US)

Guitarist

Next month



◀ **BOSS KATANA ARTIST GEN 3**

Boss reveals the next generation of its best-selling modelling amp, revoiced and enhanced with new features

DEF LEPPARD

Phil Collen lays bare just what it is that keeps The Lepp's mighty rock machine rolling

ANI DI FRANCO

On new album, *Unprecedented Sh!t*, and her percussive, thought-provoking songcraft

Next issue on sale
16 August 2024



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR DIGITAL EDITION AND SAVE!

Want instant access to *Guitarist*?
Go digital from just £3.46 an issue!
www.magazinesdirect.com/GUI



**SWEEP, PLUCK,
SHRED, STRUM,
EVERLAST.**

EVERLAST GUITAR PICKS



ERNIE BALL®
THE COLORS OF ROCK'N'ROLL™

AMP UP YOUR TONE

BUY AN AMP, GET A PEDAL

JULY 1, 2024 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



At PRS Guitars Europe, customer satisfaction is our top priority. The free pedal offer is available between 01/07/24 and 30/09/24 with purchase of qualifying amps at participating retailers; submit request with receipt online by 31/10/24. While supplies last; no rainchecks. Includes shipping and handling. Sponsor reserves the right to verify eligibility. Limit one (1) free pedal (ARV €279 - €459) per purchaser. The dealer receipt for your amplifier must be attached to your submission. The dealer must be on our participating dealer list shown below, for your submission to be eligible to receive your free pedal. To learn more about eligibility and how to complete your submission, visit https://prsguitars.com/amp_up_your_tone

PRS PAUL REED SMITH
GUITARS