

Guitarist

Issue 515

SEPTEMBER 2024

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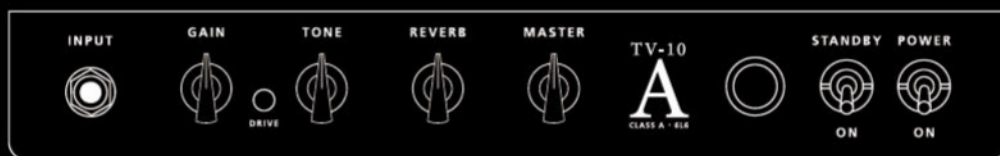
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Passing The Torch



This issue's cover feature about the upcoming sale of Rory Gallagher's guitars got me thinking about what it means to own – and eventually let go of – treasured instruments. Unlike objects such as a lamp or a dining chair, a guitar has a special connection to the person who played it. Maybe because we pour our emotions into our guitars – or maybe because we play them at memorable moments, such as a wedding or a big gig.

Or maybe it's just that they can seem, if we play them all the time, like a physical extension of ourselves. It can, therefore, be an emotional moment when guitars pass on to new owners after someone's death.

Look through the catalogues of any auction house specialising in musical instrument sales and you'll find guitars sold as part of someone's estate. Seeing them set down in black and white with a value attached can seem like a stark reminder that all that person was, all they loved, has just blown away like leaves in the wind. But I think there's a better, less gloomy way of looking at it. As a wise person once said, we're all really just temporary stewards of our guitars...

Hopefully, we put them to good use for a while and then they pass on to someone else. Looked at that way, what's important is the purpose to which we put guitars in our lifetime – the music we make, the good times we share. A guitar is an instrument; a thing made with care and precision so we can undertake our purpose with it. As such, guitars usually outlive mere fragile humans and whatever purpose they had in them, being made of more enduring stuff.

After someone's death, we can of course choose to store instruments as keepsakes – and sometimes posterity may demand that, if the musician was sufficiently influential. But I'd argue that we should also accept them going on to new owners, in time, who will only be stewards for a while themselves. Enjoy the issue and see you next month.

Jamie Dickson **Editor-in-chief**

Editor's Highlights



Single Minded

Is the single-pickup ES-330 quietly one of Gibson's best guitars – and why does it sound so uniquely good? Bob Wootton finds out **p82**



Ani DiFranco

We join one of the most original and brilliantly introspective songwriters in America to talk acoustic guitars and more **p48**



Phil Collen

Def Leppard's king of the melodic rock solo playing a thick-necked Tele? Phil tells us more about his evolving love of the guitar on **p52**

Guitarist

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FEATURE



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REVIEW



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FIRST PLAY



FENDER PLAYER II STRATOCASTER £739

WHAT IS IT? Refresh of the previous Mexican-made Player Series with new colours, body woods and the return of rosewood fingerboards



FENDER PLAYER II TELECASTER £739

WHAT IS IT? One of two Teles in the refreshed range, a fine balance of vintage-meets-modern and again new body woods to audition

Then Play On

The second iteration of this affordable, ever-faithful Mexican-made line-up has landed, with improved hardware, custom colours, and maple or proper rosewood fingerboards

Words Neville Marten **Photography** Neil Godwin

The fact that several of our own magazine and website staff have owned and gigged the original Player Series guitars is testament to how much Fender got right in 2018, when they replaced the previous Standard range. So, following in the footsteps of the US-built American Vintage II Strat and Tele, these models from Ensenada, Baja California were eagerly awaited.

Most obvious of version two changes is a choice of new colours. Among the various models are four original Fender custom finishes that had lain undiscovered in the vaults, so it's great to see something other than the same old suspects (we love them, too, of course). Our Tele's finish is called Birch Green, while the Strat is Hialeah





Yellow and with its tinted maple neck, white/black/white pickguard, yellowed pickup covers, knobs, switch and vibrato arm tip, it really does look fabulous. The green Tele's chrome-ware, similar-style 'guard and dark fingerboard offer a different but equally attractive picture.

Further changes or upgrades come with the Strat's two-point floating vibrato bridge with its bent steel saddles and what Fender calls ClassicGear tuners, both said to improve tuning stability.

Not so obvious but equally welcome is that proper rosewood has replaced the pau ferro of the first Player Series fingerboards. Now, we've always sung the praises of these alternative timbers and for all the obvious reasons. But there is something satisfying about having good old rosewood back. Of course, maple is the other option, and both models feature drag-free satin urethane finishes on their necks, with high gloss for the bodies.

Hardware-wise, it's what we've come to expect from modernised versions of these two veterans, the Tele receiving a few more tweaks than its younger sibling. So on both guitars we see hex-key truss rod adjustment through a recess at the headstock, and tuners that marry the vintage Kluson look with Grover-style nut and washer fitting. The Tele's

bridge and rear pickup housing features no raised edges but gains the improved intonation of six block steel saddles. Through-body stringing has been retained for that rock-solid feel and tone. On the Tele's pickguard you'll notice two cross-head screws for neck-pickup height adjustment. Fender has been doing this for years on non-vintage style instruments and it's certainly better than having to remove the 'plate to access them.

Both instruments also receive 22 medium jumbo frets on 241mm (9.5-inch) radius fingerboards – Player Plus models have 305mm (12-inch) radius 'boards. Fender has gone for its popular modern C neck profile here, a more slender affair than you'd find on 50s and 60s guitars but not insubstantial, either. Both feature rear skunk stripes as well as boasting rolled fingerboard edges for smooth playability.

Regarding pickups and wiring, it's standard Strat and Tele fare, with three single coils, master volume and two tones for the Strat (the second to tame bridge pickup shrillness) plus five-way blade switch. It's single master tone and volume with three-way selector on the Tele, as usual. Pickups have not changed from the Player Series' original Alnico V single coils, although Fender reminds us that they are marginally hotter and with more

1. A nicely grained 'slab' rosewood fingerboard makes a welcome appearance on our Player II Telecaster. Note too the screws for easy neck pickup adjustment

2. The modern Tele bridge plate and pickup housing is more user-friendly than the old 'ashtray' type, since six saddles improve intonation and string muting is easier

3. While rosewood is also available on the Player II Strat, here we see the maple version, with 9.5" radius and 22 medium jumbo frets. Pickups are the same as on the original Player Series





2

bite. If you step up to Player Plus level, Noiseless pickups come as standard.

Fender's website also says you can choose between alder, chambered ash or chambered mahogany body woods for your Player IIs. In reality, certain colours come with specific timbers so you can't say, "I want this wood in this finish," if that combination is not available. In general, it seems opaque colours are alder, as are both of ours, while translucent and see-through finishes get to show off the ash or mahogany wood grain.

Feel & Sounds

As previously mentioned, our guitars come with Fender's 'modern C' profile necks. While not skinny, you certainly couldn't call them chunky. There's a distinct feel that the Player Series is aimed at the younger player making their first serious step up the ladder, hence the friendly neck size and nine-gauge strings that come as standard.

And thereby hangs a slight problem, since both of these guitars suffer from quite serious fret rattle. Around the nut area in particular it's noticeable, so a slight slackening of the truss rod to add a little relief might help. Or fit a set of 10s which could be enough to pull the necks forward,



3



4

4. The two-point floating vibrato system has been upgraded with vintage style bent steel saddles. A tone control on the bridge pickup tames those Stratty highs

5. Nothing untoward about the Player II Tele's control layout, as it remains master volume and tone plus three-way pickup selector switch



5

add a bit of string tension and alleviate the problem. Nut slots are all over the place, too; some too high and the low E on both too low. These issues are easy to resolve, but if you are that young player graduating from the Squier Affinity that's seen you through to the next level, it's not a great introduction to the proper Fender brand.

Get past the initial let-down, though, and we soon warmed to these guitars. Rolled fingerboard edges, the 241mm fingerboard radius and 22 medium jumbo frets make for a superb playability combo. The speedy licks, big bends and heavy vibrato that typify modern blues-rock playing are well catered for here, and luckily there's no choking off when bending strings further up the neck.

This issue we're using the excellent Boss Katana Artist Gen 3 combo to test our Player IIs. As you'd expect, on clean settings we're treated to all the Fender-y snap, warmth and edge for which these instruments are renowned. The Tele is the more strident of the two, its neck pickup a milky liquid tone that suits anything from pop and funk strumming to jazzy runs (with the tone turned down). At the bridge, it's spanky, clanky and delightfully in-yer-face, thinning up beautifully when you combine the two in the middle position. The Strat, too, offers all you expect, with a set of recognisable voices that the Katana reproduces superbly. Think of a name

– Hank, Jimi, Buddy (take your choice), Stevie, David, Mark. They all live here and you know exactly what we mean.

Flip across to the Boss's Lead mode and things liven up considerably. The Tele gets darker and dirtier but retains its inherent musicality. Bridge pickup on its own is incisive, articulate and exactly what's required when a Les Paul is a bit too meaty (just ask Jimmy!). The middle setting is brighter but also a little flabby in the middle – exactly how we like it!

Back to the yellow Strat and most of those famous names are still there when cranked. Indeed, to this reviewer's ears it's a very Gilmour-ish set of Strat tones, with searing top-end (great with some Katana chorus), fat and flutey neck pickup, plus all those vowelly, vocal tones from positions 2 and 4 on the switch. And, as we've said before, don't write off centre position: when neither neck nor bridge is really cutting it, that good old middle pickup can often be your salvation.

Verdict

While it's a shame about the fretbuzz that blighted these guitars' initial playing test, go beyond that and we are greeted with a couple of excellent instruments that do everything a great Strat or Tele can do – and for a whole lot less. While the less than adequate setups are irritating, an hour on the bench will get them playing



as well as their excellent necks deserve. And with each guitar providing a set of voices so clear and articulate, each in its own instantly recognisable language, it makes them a very compelling choice.

While the changes seem pretty minimal save for the introduction of rosewood, and, to be honest, barely noticeable to the average user, the Player II Series remains a benchmark for how to make a great guitar for not a great deal of money. Mind you,

6. The Player II Telecaster's neck plate (no dressed-away heels here) with its fabled F stamped logo tells the younger guitarist they've arrived. This Birch Green gloss urethane finish is a great new colour find from the Fender vaults

Each guitar provides a set of clear and articulate voices, in its own instantly recognisable language, making them a very compelling choice

even though the first Player range didn't come with gigbags and they are a paid-for optional extra here, we feel guitars at this level deserve protection from day one, especially as Fender wants them to be your first real gigging guitar. Thankfully, some stores are including them for free, and they'll likely set your guitar up, too.

So, some really positive points, sadly some less so. But if you've got this far, have read the pros and cons and are still wondering 'should I get one', all we can say is, just look at the darned things! 



FENDER PLAYER II STRATOCASTER

PRICE: £739
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Double-cut, solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Simulated bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, black dot inlays, 241 (9.5") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: 2-point floating vibrato bridge with bent steel saddles, Fender ClassicGear tuners, 4-bolt neck plate, 3-ply w/b/w pickguard, recessed jack receptacle, steel strap buttons – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm (2.066")
ELECTRICS: 3x Fender Player Series Strat pickups with Alnico V magnets, 5-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume, 2x tones (neck/middle, bridge)
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.74kg (8.23lb)
OPTIONS: 3x body timbers: alder, chambered ash and chambered mahogany – dependent on finish
RANGE OPTIONS: Player Plus Strat (£949): 305mm (12") radius pau ferro/maple 'board, Fender Noiseless pickups. Player II HSS Strat (£759): with Alnico II humbucker at bridge
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, £739
FINISH: Hialeah Yellow (as reviewed), plus 10 other options (see website) – gloss polyester body finish; satin urethane neck back, gloss urethane to front

8/10

PROS Fine set of classic/modern Strat tones; superb modern-feeling neck; rosewood option is back!

CONS Annoying fretbuzz (that could be easily cured); the fact that Fender doesn't include a gigbag



FENDER PLAYER II TELECASTER

PRICE: £739
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: Single-cut solidbody electric
BODY: Alder
NECK: Maple
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Simulated bone/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Slab rosewood, white dot inlays, 241mm (9.5") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
HARDWARE: Modern Telecaster bridge and pickup housing with 6 block steel saddles, through-stringing. Fender ClassicGear tuners – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm (2.125")
ELECTRICS: 2x Fender Player Series Tele pickups with Alnico V magnets, 3-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume, master tone
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.175/7
OPTIONS: See Stratocaster
RANGE OPTIONS: Player Plus Tele (£949): Noiseless pickups, maple/pau ferro 305mm (12") radius 'board. Player II HH Telecaster (£769): 2x Alnico II humbuckers
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, £739
FINISH: Birch Green (as reviewed), plus 9 other options (see website) – gloss polyester body finish; satin urethane neck back, gloss urethane to front

8/10

PROS Nice to have rosewood back; punchy Telecaster tones; great neck with rolled fingerboard edges

CONS As with the Stratocaster, annoying (yet easily fixable) fretbuzz, and lack of gigbag

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FIRST PLAY



BOSS KATANA ARTIST GEN 3

£689

.....
WHAT IS IT? 100-watt 1x12
solid-state combo with integrated
effects, amp modes, presets
and connectivity options

Make The Cut

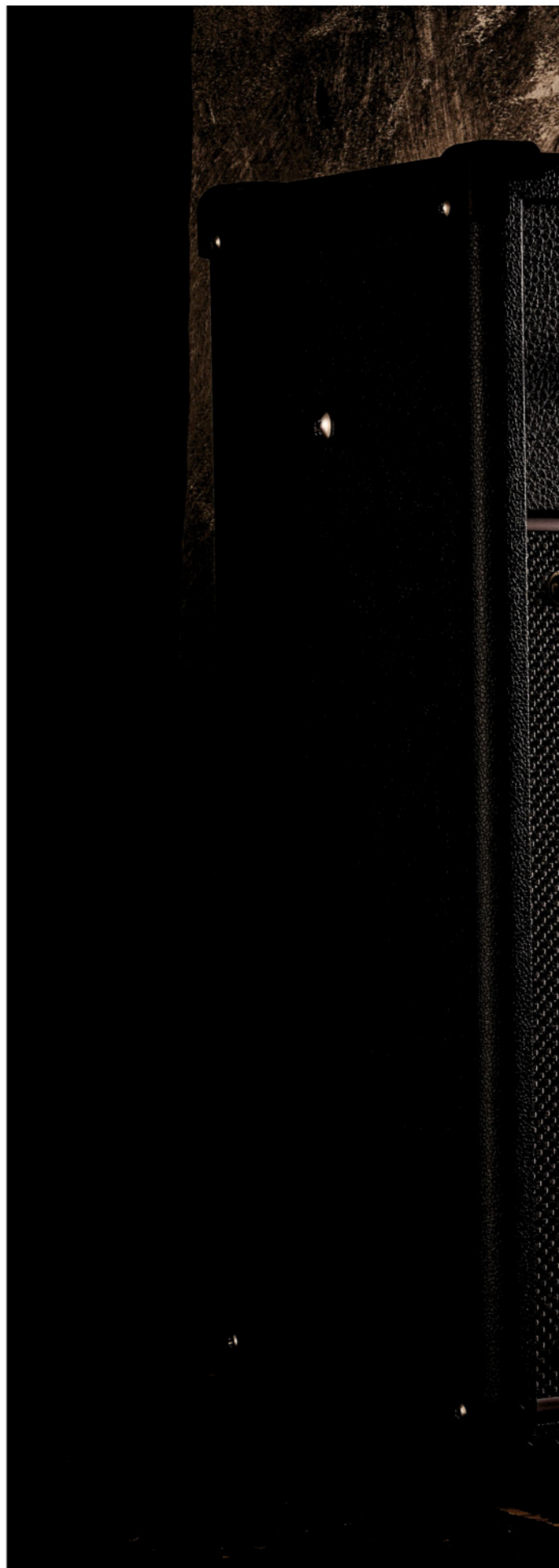
The flagship amp from Boss's latest iteration of the Katana series boasts some impressive-sounding features, for use from sofa to stage

Words Richard Barrett **Photography** Phil Barker

As a sibling to the famed Roland Corporation, Boss began its own ascent in the mid-1970s with the CE-1 Chorus Ensemble pedal, an effect that, until then, had only been available in Roland's Jazz Chorus amps. Very quickly, the Boss CE-1 found its way onto the pedalboards of Andy Summers and Alex Lifeson, among many others. By 1980, the much-loved (and still current) compact effects series was following in its footsteps.

However, over the years Boss has also expanded into different areas – with multi-effects/modellers and, of course, amplifiers – with great success. The Katana series has been around since 2016 and represents an all-in-one solution for players who need a roadworthy, affordable rig with all the effects and connectivity you could ask for. Launched earlier in this year, this Gen 3 version of the Artist combo boasts improved overall sound, afforded by the latest technological developments, plus new features in the shape of a Pushed amp type and Bloom mode.

On the front panel we have sections for Amp Type, Equalizer, Effects, Tone Setting/





Master section, Solo, Line Out, Power Control, Global EQ and Cab Resonance. Each section has its own control knobs like a conventional amp, plus a number of small backlit buttons above, offering various extra options. Boss has taken care to give us the 'hands-on' feel and instant control of analogue amp knobs, but it's important to realise that beyond this is a whole lot more potential for deep editing/sound customisation, normally inaccessible outside a DAW. However, the Katana does come factory loaded with some very useful example presets to get you started.

The Amplifier knob offers six modes: Acoustic, Clean, Pushed, Crunch, Lead and Brown (think Van Halen). A Variation button directly above the dial offers exactly what it suggests; when pressed, it lights up red, giving you a slightly brighter/tighter version of the same sound, a bit like the Bright input on an amp. There are also Gain and Volume knobs, plus a button for the new Bloom mode – more on this later.

Feel & Sounds

The amp gives an impressive range of sounds, from those optimised for acoustic guitar/piezo pickups right through crystal clean to crunch, drive and then on to the highest gain lead tones. We were pleasantly surprised at the chewy, touch-sensitive break-up of the new Pushed mode – solid-state amps didn't sound anything like this when we were starting out! Tones such as this show the Tube Logic technology is doing an impressive job – and is no mere marketing slogan. Humbuckers can go from light break-up to early Zeppelin-style gain (think *Heartbreaker*), with single coils inviting a more SRV/John Mayer approach. Selecting the new Bloom mode revoices the Class A/B power amp to give a more vintage/spongy low-end that complements single coils particularly well.



The back panel offers various extension speaker options, plus footswitch and expression pedals, effect loop, headphone socket, USB, MIDI and Bluetooth connections

Moving right, we find the Equalizer section, featuring Bass, Middle and Treble knobs, with a small three-mode Contour switch above. Press this to cycle through three additional global midrange voicings for which the button lights up in green, red or orange modes. Vintage, scooped and aggressive and more Vox-like flavours are all available here – not forgetting the off/neutral position, which offers an extremely usable option, too.

The effects section makes clever use of concentric knobs and more backlit buttons, offering various flavours from the Boss back catalogue (for example, Blues Driver, Chorus, Delay, EQ and so on). Like the Contour button, these light up in green, red or orange to indicate what you have selected. Plus, there's a tap tempo button for quick and easy delay time setting.

As we said earlier, the Katana comes pre-loaded with some useful options, but for ultimate control – including the virtual pedal order and settings – you'll need to connect to your computer via USB to the Boss Tone Studio app (much as you would with a Line 6 Helix or Kemper and their software) or use the optional Bluetooth dongle with the Boss app on a mobile device. The Reverb features three modes via another similar switch, with a range of quality spring/hall/plate types to choose from. Again, you can deep-edit all of these, but the factory settings are extremely usable.

Next, we find global controls for Resonance, Presence and Master Volume, plus a range of switches to navigate the four presents in Bank A or B – eight presets in total. Obviously, reaching round to switch



The new Pushed amp mode does a surprisingly good job of capturing the tone and feel of a clean non-master volume amp cranked to the point of break-up. The Variation and Bloom switches provide further versatility on all amp modes



The custom 12-inch Waza speaker sits in a slightly wider-than-usual cab, giving a surprising amount of depth over more conventional 1x12s without adding too much weight



BOSS KATANA ARTIST GEN 3

PRICE: £689

ORIGIN: Malaysia

TYPE: 1x12 solid-state combo

OUTPUT: 100W

DIMENSIONS: 630 (w) x 248 (d) x 515mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 19/41.8

LOUDSPEAKER: Custom 12"

Waza speaker

CHANNELS: 8 presets

(2x banks of 4)

CONTROLS: Amp Type, Gain, Volume, Bass, Middle, Treble, Effects (Mod/Boost, FX/Delay, Reverb) Resonance, Presence, Master, Solo (with Delay/Level controls), Line Out, Power Control, Global EQ and Cab Resonance
FOOTSWITCH: GA-FC EX (£120, not supplied)

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Speaker emulated Line Out with customisable modes

OPTIONS: BT Dual Bluetooth module for wireless deep editing (£44.99)

RANGE OPTIONS: Other Gen 3 options: 50 112 combo (£275), 50 EX 112 combo (£359), 100 112 combo (£419), 100/212 combo (£529), Head (£429) and Artist Head (£599)

Roland Europe Group Limited
www.boss.info



9/10

PROS Portable size; ability to produce virtually any sound; fully featured, including a Stereo Expand mode to use two together – if you can afford it!

CONS Some technical know-how is needed to get the best results; you'll need to budget for a footswitch on top for gigging

these on a gig wouldn't be practical, so you'd want something such as the optional GA-FC EX foot controller, which allows for channel/preset/effect switching on the fly. There's also a MIDI input.

The Solo section has a single concentric knob, offering Master Volume and Delay Level, plus a Tap Tempo button for the delay time – yes, another dedicated delay. You can set up a master volume boost for

The Waza speaker in the slightly oversized cab packs a real punch with plenty of headroom and low-end thump

solos and add in some delay on any preset this way – useful if you don't play a show strictly with presets and want to take a spontaneous solo.

To the far right of the control panel, you'll find a rotary control offering various speaker emulated Line Out options: virtual close/distant mic, or a combination of both. The Power Control offers Standby/Mute, 0.5 watts, Half and Full Power modes and, finally, there's a selector for Cab Resonance offering Vintage, Modern or Deep modes, and a Global EQ switch for three extra overall voicings. Virtually all of these functions can be customised via the app, but we'd suggest getting acquainted with the factory presets first.

On the back panel we find various extension speaker options and an effects loop, plus power amp in, balanced and standard jack line outs, aux in for external sounds/backing tracks and connections for MIDI, footswitches and an expression pedal. There's also the socket for the optional BT Dual Bluetooth module and USB connection. We can't imagine what else anyone might need!

Verdict

Lots of thought has gone into this: you could plug the Katana in and record via USB in your bedroom or take it on any stage and you'll have the appropriate connections for the job. Like any piece of premium gear, there's a learning curve involved, but getting through that and turning this up in a room is a rewarding experience.

The custom-designed 12-inch Waza speaker in the slightly oversized cab packs a real punch with plenty of headroom and low-end thump. The semi-open-back cab design gives a wide, even spread of sound, which should give a good account of itself at smaller gigs, but it's also no fuss to connect it to a PA via standard jack or balanced line out for further sound reinforcement.

The control panel has been cleverly designed to allow access to any function you'd need, once you've dealt with all the deep-editing stuff – even that can be accessed via Bluetooth if needed. You'll need to shell out for the optional footswitch or a MIDI controller to get the very best results, but you'd still be coming in at appreciably less than a grand. Food for serious thought. **G**

FIRST PLAY



**AUDEN 632 SERIES
CHESTER 000**
£1,699

WHAT IS IT? Chinese/UK-built, satin-finished acoustic with top-notch woods and an otherworldly electronic voice



**AUDEN 632 SERIES
BOWMAN OM**
£1,699

WHAT IS IT? Much the same as above, save for a slightly smaller build, and a 'turbocharged OM' performance

Numbers Game

A new series of short-scale acoustics joins the ranks at Auden and we couldn't wait to dive in and take a closer look

Words David Mead Photography Neil Godwin

Auden acoustics have featured many times in these pages, even claiming top spot on the winners' podium for the Austin 12-string in issue 441's Gear Of The Year. And so we always keep a keen eye open whenever the company lets us know that a new model is in the offing. Such is the case with the pair of acoustics before us now, the 632 Series Bowman and Chester models. These two models have been in the Auden catalogue for some time, the name descriptive of specific body shapes of which there are already a number of variations in terms of timber and turnout. Here, the two instruments are very close cousins to Auden's Artist Rosewood Series in general terms, save for the fact that both share a shorter scale length – 632mm





(24.9 inches), rather than 655mm (25.8 inches). Whereas you might think that just a few millimetres aren't going to make a huge difference, remember that this is, essentially speaking, the difference between playing a Gibson versus a Fender in terms of feel and playability.

Auden's instruments are partly made by a small team of luthiers based in China with the final fettling taking place at the company's UK facility in Northamptonshire. To clarify further, when we spoke to Auden's director Doug Sparkes back in issue 448, he told us: "[The Chinese workshop] has a phenomenal warehouse of timber that's years and years and years old, which they're constantly replenishing, and we'll go and pick the timbers that we want for the backs, sides and the tops of these guitars. They then build the wooden shell of the guitar, and the guitar comes over to the UK.

"The frets are in on the neck," he continued, "but they're not dressed and they're not crowned, so we'll do the fretwork, the final neck set, we make the nut, we make the saddle, we'll fit all the electronics, we put all the hardware on and we'll give it its final buff and polish before it goes out to market."

We have to say that both of these acoustics look as though they have benefitted from that stockpile of fine timber as the tonewoods look to be nothing short of top-class. But what do they play and sound like? Time to take a closer look...

The spec on these guitars is very similar, the only major difference being body shape, the Chester measuring in as a triple-0 and the Bowman an OM. In both instances the tops are from high-grade cedar with the type of tight grain and cross patterning – that shimmering, slightly wavy 'watermark' effect within the wood – that is generally more prevalent on spruce tops. The Indian rosewood used for the backs and sides is well up to premium grade, too – hats off to Auden's Chinese wood store. Under the bonnet, we're told that the mahogany necks are dovetailed to the bodies using old-style hide glue, another tip of the hat to traditional guitar building that goes back decades.

Fingerboards are African ebony with discreet position markers in all the usual places. Tuning is under the auspices of Schertler 18:1 ratio open-back tuners and we would add here that we only had



1. The Indian rosewood and maple binding present on both instruments are evidence of top-class workmanship from the Auden team
2. Both the Bowman and Chester (pictured here) have finely grained cedar tops
3. Just visible through the Chester's soundhole are the preamp sliders for the Brad Clark SuperNatural pickup
4. Schertler 18:1 ratio open-back machineheads are on standby for fine-tuning duties





to tune both of these instruments once during the entire time they spent with us and so we can attest to the fact that tuning is rock solid.

The intricate detailing, that is the rosewood and maple combo that makes up the binding around the tops and backs, has been very nicely applied and, overall, both guitars have the aura of pro-level instruments.

One thing that sets Auden acoustics apart in the marketplace is the electronics. The Brad Clark SuperNatural DS system has been fitted to both our review samples and comprises both an undersaddle pickup with six individual polepieces and a sensor that sits under the guitar's top. The thing that really sets the SuperNatural apart is its soundhole-mounted preamp, which features a three-band EQ and presets – designated as being Thick Strum, Finger Pick, Solo and Thin Strum – and so, in theory at least, it's possible to change your EQ setting quickly during a performance with the same sort of ease that you'd switch between pickups on a Strat. Each of these presets is customisable and so you can tweak to your individual needs.

Feel & Sounds

Picking the Chester up first, it proves to be quite the powerhouse, in terms of output. It feels good in the hands, too,





5. The Bowman model's Indian rosewood back and sides share the same high quality as its stablemate

6. An ebony bridge and string pins with a Tusq saddle complete the soundboard furniture here on the Bowman



with a generous but not overwrought C profile and that satin finish offering a very wholesome playing experience. Chords fill the room to the extent that you'd have to look twice to make sure you weren't holding a dreadnought, such is the sumptuous bass-rich response on offer here. Those high-grade tonewoods really are earning their keep.

Switching to the slightly more trim Bowman OM we find a good match and definite family resemblance in terms of feel, and the sound seems, to us at least, more focused while maintaining all the richness and superb projection of its brother in arms. It's everything you'd expect from a finely crafted OM – and perhaps a little more.

Plugging the guitars into our trusty AER Compact 60, the SuperNatural slider controls are very easy to navigate through with bass, mids, treble and volume, left to right. The presets are selected via a push button and a green light flashes once for the first, twice for the second and so on, so you always know where you are. The resulting sound is pure and transparent, transporting the sound of the instrument faithfully towards your live audience. The presets are subtle with no sudden leaps in volume or intensity to alarm you on stage. We found that getting a very



workable sound through the AER was really easy and any tweaks were very straightforward to administer. If we were going to be really picky, we'd say that reaching for the preset button might be a little hit or miss in a live situation, but it's very likely that it would become second nature after using it for a while. All things considered, however, the SuperNatural is easily on a par with the best acoustic pickups we've tried.

The thing that sets the models' Brad Clark SuperNatural DS pickup system apart is its soundhole-mounted preamp

Verdict

It seems that Auden has done it again in that the company has produced a pair of extremely well-made guitars with bags of character and great sound, topped off with a very capable pickup and preamp combo. If we're allowed to pick a favourite it would have to be the Bowman OM purely for its all-rounder status, but both deserve plaudits aplenty on build quality and sound at this highly competitive price point. Check one out – you will probably be as bowled over as we were. **G**

7. Both guitars share a lot of details with Auden's Artist Rosewood Series save for the shorter scale length of 632mm (24.9 inches)



AUDEN 632 SERIES CHESTER 000

PRICE: £1,699 (inc case)
ORIGIN: China/UK
TYPE: 000 acoustic
TOP: Cedar
BACK/SIDES: Indian rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 115mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 395mm
NECK: African mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 632mm (24.9")
TUNERS: Schertler 18:1 open back
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony with bone saddle/54mm
ELECTRICS: Brad Clark SuperNatural DS
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.13/4.7/
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Auden's Chester range includes a selection of body wood and finish choices, including Auden Tobacco Series Chester (£1,499), Maple Series Chester (£1,799), Black Series (£1,599) and Rosewood Series Cutaway (£1,749). See website for further details
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes
FINISH: Satin

Auden Guitars
www.audenguitars.com



9/10

PROS Superb build and finish; packed with good tones and lively playability

CONS Not so much a con, as such, but preamp controls may take a little getting used to



AUDEN 632 SERIES BOWMAN OM

PRICE: £1,699 (inc case)
ORIGIN: China/UK
TYPE: OM acoustic
TOP: Cedar
BACK/SIDES: Indian rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 101mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 377mm
NECK: African mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 632mm (24.9")
TUNERS: Schertler 18:1 open back
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony with bone/composite saddle/54mm
ELECTRICS: Brad Clark SuperNatural DS
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.93/4.26
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Auden's Bowman Rosewood Series currently features 2 other models: Neo Series Full Body (£999) and Artist Rosewood Series Spruce Cutaway (£1,749). More versions of this body shape are available – see website
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes
FINISH: Satin



9/10

PROS Lovely all-rounder with great sounds available across the spectrum

CONS As with the Chester, just that those preamp controls present a slight learning curve

FIRST PLAY



**J ROCKETT
AIRCHILD 660**
£239

WHAT IS IT? Compressor pedal
inspired by vintage Fairchild
compressors



Fair Play

J Rockett's latest offering for your 'board takes its inspiration from a legendary compressor from the 50s

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

1. The Threshold control effectively turns up the compression. It's interactive with the Output knob, which means as you dial up the threshold your volume will increase – so you will need to balance things by adjusting the Output setting
2. The Blend knob enables parallel compression by blending dry signal with compressed. It runs from full dry signal to fully compressed
3. This Tone control is a 'tilt' EQ: turning the knob anti-clockwise will introduce more bottom and less top; turning it clockwise brings in more top and reduces bottom-end

The Fairchild compressor was designed in the 1950s and is still in use in top-flight professional studios these days (Abbey Road has several). In fact, it may just be the most highly regarded compressor ever made. The 660 (single-channel) and 670 (twin-channel) Fairchild units are large, intricately engineered boxes that are full of many valves and transformers, although that hasn't daunted J Rockett, who describes its Airchild 660 – a stompbox barely big enough to contain a single valve or transformer! – as a sonic interpretation of the famous compressor.

The Airchild's four-knob interface offers plenty of flexibility, but it's really easy to dial in. Compression is increased by turning the Threshold knob, which is interactive with an Output knob that has plenty of capacity for building in a boost (with no or minimal compression dialled in, the pedal can also be a great clean boost) and can bring in a touch of nicely organic grind at higher settings. There's plenty of compression range available, evening out the signal without overtly squashing the whole thing.

The pedal offers a very pleasant playing feel, with a natural 'snap' to the start of a note on full compression settings, although the Blend knob's ability to mix in a proportion of dry sound can let your natural attack come through while the note benefits from the compression's thickness and sustain.

Juxtaposition of these knobs yields an array of playable tones, but the star turn is the Tone knob, with a 'tilt' EQ delivering an increase in treble and decrease in bass as you turn it to the right of its central detente position, with the opposite effect to the left. This can not only compensate for any tonal change brought on by heavy compression, but it can also brighten up or tone things down in a very musical way; to the right, it's perfect with cranked compression for some Byrds or Tom Petty 12-string jangle. Any clean tone would benefit from some Airchild tonal enrichment.

Verdict

We didn't have a Fairchild 660 lying around to compare it to, of course, so we can't comment on how close to one the Airchild sounds. But we can say that signal enhancement opportunities abound via a combination of compression, boost and EQ, making this is a quite excellent pedal for guitar sound and more than likely one that you won't want to turn off. **G**



J ROCKETT AIRCHILD 660

PRICE: £239

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Compressor pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Output, Tone, Blend,

Threshold, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 20mA

DIMENSIONS: 70 (w) x 108 (d) x 50mm (h)

FACE bvba

+32 3 844 67 97

<https://rockettpedals.com>



10/10

PROS Solid build quality; compact size; quality compression; dry blend control; effective EQ

CONS Nothing to see here!



THE RIVALS

If you're after a compressor pedal that's based around vintage studio gear, then Origin Effects may have been the first with its Cali76 model (from £299) in its various forms and the SlideRIG Compact Deluxe MkII (£335), which use solid-state circuitry to reproduce the sound of Universal Audio/Urei 1176 compressors. You can also find the audio limiting sounds of the 1176 in Universal Audio's UAFX digitally modelled range, alongside its Teletronix Model LA-2A pedal (both £165). For another take on the LA-2A sound, check out the Effectrode PC-2A (£299) with its photocell and valve circuitry.



Universal Audio's UAFX 1176 compact digital pedal

FIRST PLAY



BLACKSTAR POLAR 2 £179

WHAT IS IT? USB audio interface
for guitar recording designed
by Blackstar



Play It Cool

Blackstar presents a USB audio interface that it proudly proclaims has been “designed by guitarists for guitarists”

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

1. The Polar 2 takes its power from the USB bus on your computer, but it also has a power input that can connect to a standard USB phone charger via the included cable for instances when you don't have bus power – when you're using it with an iPhone or iPad, for example

2. These two combi sockets will take a standard jack cable from your guitar or an XLR cable from a microphone. If you need phantom power, the switch is right next door

3. The Polar Control app runs on your computer, providing control over monitoring levels, mixing and routing. Through this you can monitor your direct sound as it enters the interface, if desired

Blackstar certainly knows a bit about guitar amplification and then some, so when the brand releases an audio interface that it says is “designed by guitarists for guitarists”, it's time to take notice. The new Polar 2 is a solidly compact, bus-powered USB audio interface with two identical inputs, each one equipped with a combo socket for a standard guitar cable or XLR mic cable. For monitoring, you have a standard pair of outputs to connect to your speaker system, plus a front-panel headphone jack with its own volume knob.

Blackstar tells us that it identified three specific areas in audio interface design that needed to be addressed, with ease of use being one of them. The other two are more guitar-specific: the feel and response when playing a guitar directly through an interface, and the setting of input gain levels to best suit a guitar's wide dynamic range so signal peaks don't lead to digital clipping.

While these aspects are tackled by starting with a high-headroom FET input stage, the special sauce is a switchable Enhance facility that brings in a circuit that's designed to mimic the input stage of valve amplifiers. It's a subtle effect, but we preferred the playing dynamics with this feature on and the 'lift' it gave to the sound. What's more, having the Enhance switch engaged also prevents digital overloads, letting you easily set an optimum level on the input gain knob to get a strong signal going into your DAW without any worry of ruined takes.

If you're plugging in microphones, rather than guitar – perhaps taking advantage of the switchable phantom power and using a condenser mic to record acoustic guitar or vocals – then the mic preamps deliver a clean and detailed sound to which you can add some airy top-end by engaging the Enhance switch, which, in this instance, brings in a high-shelf EQ.

The simplicity of the unit's layout makes it dead easy to use and that ease extends to the included Polar Control software, a virtual mixer that lets you set up your preferred monitor mixes. On top of that, you get loads of bundled software for computer recording, including Blackstar's full St James Plugin Suite for amp/cab sim and effect needs.

Verdict

A really easy-to-use interface, Blackstar's Polar 2 has a great set of attributes for recording your guitar with the best possible sound. **G**



BLACKSTAR POLAR 2

PRICE: £179

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: USB audio interface

FEATURES: 2x inputs, phantom power, headphone and standard monitor outputs, included Polar Control app, free software (Ableton Live Lite, ReLab LX480 Essentials Reverb, Melodyne Essential), USB cable and USB/jack power cable included

CONTROLS: 2x Enhance (On/Off) switch, 2x Line/Instrument switch, Gain 1, Gain 2, Monitor, Headphones Volume

CONNECTIONS: Combo inputs (1 & 2), standard (1/L, 2/R), standard stereo headphone output, USB-C

POWER: USB bus power or 5V adaptor 1000mA

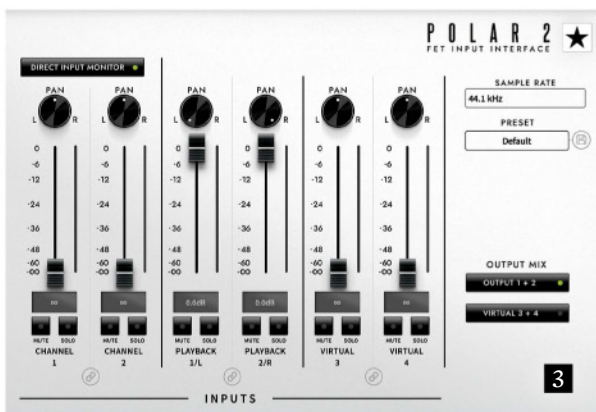
DIMENSIONS: 114 (d) x 170 (w) x 60mm (h)

Blackstar
01604 817817
www.blackstaramps.com



PROS Compact size; ease of use; bus power; Enhance facility; practical software included; works well with pedals

CONS We'd like an included power adaptor, but most people will already have one or not need one



THE RIVALS

Each of IK Multimedia's Axe I/O guitar-centric audio interfaces – the Axe I/O (£279), Axe I/O One (£102) and Axe I/O Solo (£179) – has a different feature set but all have guitar tonal shaping via 'Pure' or JFET input stages, plus the Z-Tone impedance-adapting circuit. Audient's Sono (£296) is specifically named as a 'guitar recording interface', featuring a 12AX7 valve and three-band Tone control with Two Notes Torpedo power amp modelling/cab simulation. Also check out the Focusrite Scarlett range, starting with the Scarlett Solo (£119).



IK Multimedia's Axe I/O One is built for guitarists and bassists



the Wishlist

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

Furch Green Dc-SR SPE Master's Choice £2,049

CONTACT **Furch** PHONE +420 910 902 139 WEB www.furchguitars.com WORDS **David Mead** PHOTOGRAPHY **Phil Barker**

Cast your mind back to our previous issue and you'll remember that the Furch range of acoustic guitars literally covers the spectrum in spec diversity and price level. The Green Series, to which this particular guitar belongs, sits a notch above the Violet and Blue at the lower end and the Yellow, Red and the custom-order Rainbow Series towards the higher. Its Master's Choice designation takes into account that it comes with an LR Baggs pickup installed and a branded Hiscox hard case to protect your investment.

Fundamentally, the Dc-SR is a cutaway dreadnought, the SR letting us know that the body woods front and back comprise Sitka spruce and Indian rosewood respectively. The spec sheet details that both tonewoods are AA grade, but each company seems to have its own method of categorisation and if you're thinking that AA is too much of a compromise on a model that claims Master Grade status, we're here to tell you that in both cases the woods here look to be of premium quality. Evidently, Furch's system of classification is more stringent than many that we've come across in these pages. In fact, the rosewood in particular looks to be as nicely figured and finely grained as many instruments we've seen that have carried a much weightier price tag.

As for the rest of the spec, the Dc-SR follows a well-established pattern with an African mahogany neck and an ebony fretboard, the latter being decked out with pearl position markers and side dots.

Furch also employs what it calls its CNR (Composite Neck Reinforcement) System that finds a dual-action truss rod installed that has been encased in carbon for increased rigidity, claiming that "the innovative design translates into unparalleled stability of the neck joint and the neck along its entire length...". The neck profile is what Furch refers to as a "soft V", which sits comfortably in the hand. It's by no means an extreme 50s 'boat neck' affair, having a far gentler feel to it, while topside the fingerboard radius is a flat-ish 400mm.

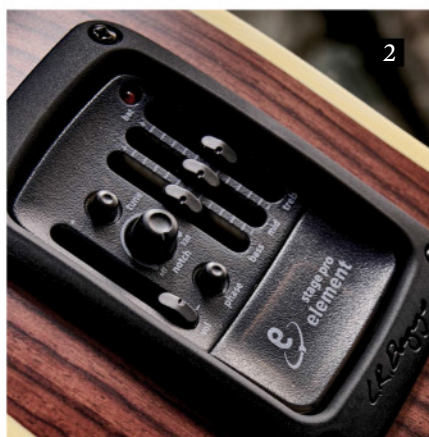
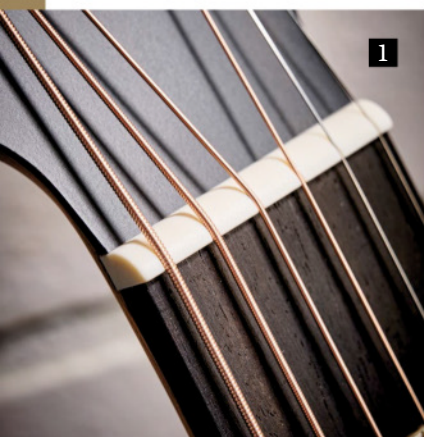
As we've said, there's an LR Baggs Stage Pro Element pickup installed beneath the compensated Tusq saddle, which offers ample control over the player's amplified sound on the live stage.

The Sitka top has been subject to Furch's "unique voicing process" where each top is individually voiced, and if our sample here is anything to go by, this results in an absolute boomer. Strummed with a pick there's bags of tone-rich power here – everything you'd ever want from a dread – and is bound to bring a smile to the face of open-mic night warriors everywhere. **G**

1. The perfectly cut nut is by Tusq and measures in at a fingerstyle-friendly 45mm, as opposed to the more standard 43mm – those extra couple of millimetres can make a huge difference!

2. A side-mounted LR Baggs Stage Pro Element preamp offers optimum control over the instrument's live sound with three-band EQ, a built-in tuner, notch filter and phase inversion

3. Back and sides on the Dc-SR are AA-grade Indian rosewood with that tonewood's characteristic stripy grain pattern well to the fore – to beautiful effect





4. Furch's soundboards are all individually voiced and aim to provide the player with "a crystalline clear, harmonically rich, balanced and highly dynamic sound"

5. The Dc-SR's fretboard is ebony with wonderfully discreet pearl position markers and side dots that match the guitar's understated good looks

6. The ebony bridge comprises a fully compensated Tusq saddle with ebony string pins and a satisfying 55mm string spacing for those ever busy right-hand fingers



Gas Supply

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

Fender Limited Edition American Performer Timber Stratocaster & Telecaster £1,429 each

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

JARGON CRUNCHING Greasebucket

Fender's Greasebucket circuit first appeared in 2005, removing high-end without losing gain or muddying your sound. It does so by effectively applying a bandpass filter: it rolls off highs but also removes low-end to avoid the perceived bass-heavy tone for mid-rich clarity.

I see Strats and Teles. Are these new finishes or something?

These models present a lot more than that. You might recall last issue's Gas Supply announcement of the Player II Series, with its chambered ash and mahogany options (see the full review on page 8 of this issue). Now, Fender is continuing to tinker with two of its most popular designs under the umbrella of the Limited Edition American Performer Timber series, with the Stratocaster and Telecaster offered in a choice of three body woods: sassafras, sugar pine and spruce.

I know pine and spruce, but what's sassafras?

As you know, pine has been an on/off part of the Fender catalogue since the 50s, and spruce is ubiquitous in acoustic guitar construction. Sassafras is native to North America and Asia, and while extracts of its roots have been used for medicinal purposes, the wood itself is utilised for everything from toothbrushes to building ships. Cort, Taylor and Fender-owned Charvel have all dabbled in sassafras as a body wood. In fact, Fender's Stories Collection Eric Johnson 1954 'Virginia' Stratocaster features a sassafras body, too.



BODY WOOD

What difference does the body wood make? Now's your chance to find out, as Fender is offering Stratocasters and Telecasters in a choice of three body woods: sugar pine, sassafras and spruce

ELECTRONICS

Both the Strat and Tele are equipped with Fender's Greasebucket circuit, and the Stratocaster models feature the American Performer push-pull switching to enable the neck pickup to be engaged in positions 1 and 2

FINISHES

Each wood type comes in its own satin urethane finish. There's Honey Burst (spruce), 2-Color Sunburst (pine) and Mocha (sassafras), although the maple fingerboard option is co-ordinated differently on the Strat and Tele finishes

AMERICAN PERFORMER SPECS

Outside of the body woods, these new additions are true to the regular American Performer models with satin-finish necks, Yosemite single-coil pickups, jumbo frets and ClassicGear tuners

You'll find Yosemite single coils across the board, and both Strat and Tele take advantage of Fender's Greasebucket circuit



What's the benefit of these different woods?

Well, this range also offers a great opportunity to try identically spec'd guitars with varying tonal 'colours'. Speaking of which, each wood is finished in its own identifying satin urethane finish: Mocha for sassafras, Honey Burst for the spruce models, and 2-Color Sunburst for the sugar pine guitars.

You mentioned the identical specs - what can we expect on these models?

Outside of the body woods, these are the same as Fender's non-limited American Performer models. That means a C-shape maple neck (with traditional four-bolt square heel), once again finished in satin urethane. The fingerboards are all 241mm (9.5-inch) radiuses and fitted with jumbo frets. Fender is offering a maple 'board on

The Limited Edition models are offered in a three body woods: sassafras, sugar pine and spruce

the pine-bodied 2-Colour Sunburst Strat and rosewood on the other two models, while the pine-bodied 2-Color Sunburst Tele uses rosewood and the other two models have maple fingerboards. Hardware-wise, there's a six-saddle vibrato on the Strat and a three-saddle vintage-style bridge on the Tele. Both shapes use Fender ClassicGear tuners.

What about the electronics?

When it comes to the pickup configuration, it's business as usual with a trio of Yosemite single coils in the Strats and classic SS arrangement in the Telecasters. But Fender has equipped both with its Greasebucket circuit, and in the case of the Stratocasters (as with the regular American Performers) there's a push-pull pot on the second tone control. This allows the neck pickup to be switched in parallel for positions 1 and 2 for some usually unavailable combinations.

When can I get one?

They're available now! All six models are priced at £1,429 and ship with a Fender Deluxe gigbag. We'll be putting them through their paces shortly. [SW]

ALSO OUT NOW...

PRS SE CE 24 SWAMP ASH 'SANDBLASTED' LIMITED EDITION £749



PRS recently released its SE Swamp Ash Special, but the brand isn't quite finished with one of the most distinctive body woods out there just yet. Now, PRS has not only added swamp ash to the SE CE 24 line-up, but it's pelting it with sand, too. The treatment marks the first time PRS has offered a sandblasted finish at this price point, globally, with the sandblasting bringing out the already eye-catching swamp ash grain, which is then filled in one of five colour options (Blue, Green, Purple, Red or White).

www.prsguitars.com

DIGITECH JAMMAN SOLO HD £239

When it comes to looping, DigiTech's JamMan Solo has been one of the front runners since it first appeared. For 2024, the revived pedal brand is back with a new version: the JamMan Solo HD. Boasting 35 minutes of onboard looping time (expandable up

to a whopping 32 hours via a MicroSD card), the Solo HD doesn't just record for longer, it's driven by a 32-bit A/D/A converter for improved audio quality, too. Also present are onboard drum loops, JamSync for synchronising multiple JamMan units together, and "glitch-free" time-stretching of your loops. Available now.

www.digitech.com



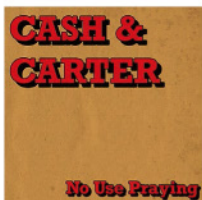


Fretbuzz

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: Cash & Carter

Album: No Use Praying EP (Frictionless Music)



No Use Praying, Cash & Carter's debut EP, channels old-time Westerns for a cinematic feel
www.rossoreilly.com

Cash & Carter is the alias of artists Ross O'Reilly (below right and opposite) and Shaun Smith, and their first foray into alt-country music

Guitarist and music producer Ross O'Reilly is based in London and divides his time between production projects and his new alternative country influenced duo, Cash & Carter, where he works with vocalist and lyricist Shaun Smith, who often operates under the moniker Stealth. This mainly acoustic-based duo is a departure for both musicians. "I've known Shaun for about 10 years now and we've worked together since," Ross begins. "If you gave us a pop quiz on the background of Americana and country music then we might be in the bottom half, but we just love the sound of it. And Shaun is a big Johnny Cash fan."

What's In A Name

Cash & Carter feels like a bold name to slap onto a "boxfresh" (as Ross describes them) country duo, but Ross seems unfazed. "It was quite handy that nobody else had [the name]," he says. "Picking a unique name now is nearly impossible and it was either that or we end up drawing names out of a hat and then all sorts of trouble can happen. But we just felt it fitted. And we didn't think too much about the names associated with it... Not in a bad way, we just thought it would be cool and those two were in the right bracket. Fingers crossed it goes well with the EP."

The Western Sound

Both Ross and Shaun come across as audiophiles, with Ross being a successful producer and Shaun an accomplished musician, so it's no surprise that this endeavour was well thought out. "I love old Western music and find it so interesting," Ross says. "I'll often ignore the film and just be thinking, 'How have they made that sound?' It's a bit of a geeky thing, but we definitely took inspiration from that. Shaun and I are both film lovers and we're often saying, 'Check out this song on that film,' because we're very much into sounds." We mention the music from Western television show *Deadwood* as an example. "Yeah, and back in the day I used to play *Red Dead Redemption* [video game] and the music was phenomenal. A lot was guitar led and there were detuned guitars with a load of reverb, and it sounded great."

A Sound Balance

As he's so finely tuned to sound and now making his own music, we wonder if Ross approached the recording of *No Use Praying* with a meticulous hand. "Well, I probably should spend more time on the guitar parts, but I find that the more I do the same part, the less life it has. And in my own sessions, I try some things out, but I want to get it down in one or two takes. I think it's better that way. Back in the 60s and 70s, obviously none of those guys had Pro Tools so couldn't jump in and pick out tiny parts of takes; it had to be that take and there's a reason those recordings are still loved today, with all of their imperfections. They make it what it is."

Trusty Steed

Although there are plenty of guitars on the EP, one modest instrument stands out. "Me and Shaun did a writing trip to LA," Ross tells us. "I needed an acoustic, but there was no way I was taking my Gibson J-45 on a flight! But when I was younger my dad bought me a Yamaha Compass CPX and I love it, it's one of my favourites to play. On the tracks *All Of The Way* and *No Use Praying* it was the main guitar and it's been at the heart of the project. It's not my favourite guitar and definitely not the most expensive, but it does the job. We did some live sessions for the EP and it was all on that Yamaha." [GK]

Standout track: *Ballad Of Talulah*

For fans of: Chris Stapleton, John Mayer, George Ezra, Colter Wall



PHOTO: CASH & CARTER

Producer and songwriter Ross O'Reilly is sitting in a different kind of chair for his latest project

GO LOW

Ross beefs up his sound with some down-tunings

Ross mentions the down-tuned sounds of soundtracks opposite, and it was a tweak he brought into the duo's sound. "For the LA trip, I decided to string the Yamaha with 13s to make it a bit sturdier and then tune it all down a minor 3rd to keep the same setup. It's basically C# [C# F# B E G# C#], so not quite baritone, somewhere in the middle. I've also got a '64 reissue Relic Strat, which is my favourite guitar of all time, and that's down a tone. I've checked out Ariel Posen recently and his guitar is tuned down and it just sounds massive."

"I want to get [the guitar parts] down in one or two takes... Back in the 60s and 70s, it had to be that take - and there's a reason those recordings are still loved today"

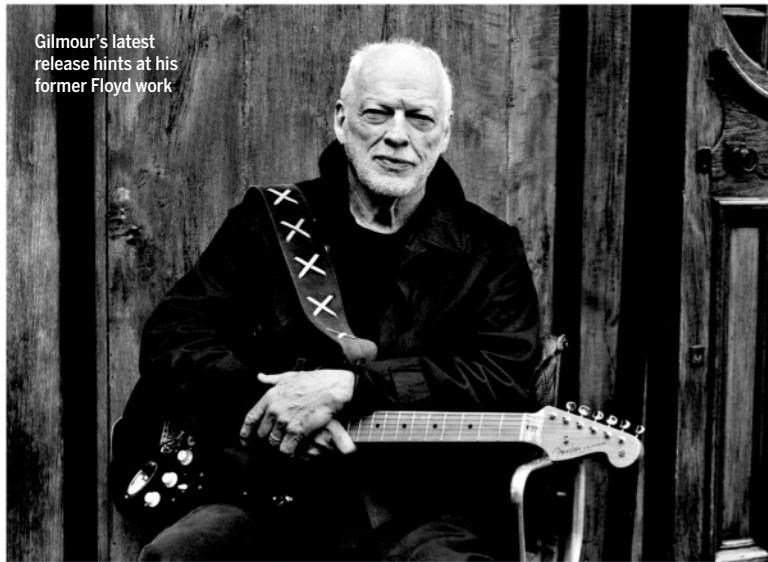


Albums

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

Gilmour's latest release hints at his former Floyd work

PHOTO BY ANTON COREIJN



David Gilmour

Luck And Strange

Sony Music (release date: 6 September)

9/10



A wistful, moody and reflective epic from the Floyd legend

Gilmour's solo albums have always lived outside the Floyd canon, while also still displaying evidence of an irrevocable link. There are references here, too – the track *Scattered* begins with the *Dark Side* heartbeat, for instance – and no one could deny the fact that Gilmour's voice and guitar style instantly suggest those grand old days of yore. But let's not race ahead...

A glance down the album credits reveals that *Luck And Strange* is something of a family affair in that Gilmour's wife Polly provides the majority of the lyrics, while their children supply backing vocals on several tracks, with daughter Romany Gilmour taking lead vocals on the searingly emotive *Between Two Points*. A nice surprise for Floyd fans is the presence of the late Rick Wright on the title track, taken from a jam session of long ago. And if you're wondering how DG is coping guitar-wise since selling the infamous black Strat in the 2019 charity auction, rest easy because he assures us (on a video posted on X) he has a new favourite black Strat, which makes its debut here on the first track, *Black Cat*.

As for the guitar playing throughout, it simply couldn't be anyone else, so instantly recognisable is Gilmour's style. Some songs are immediate, others take a couple of listens to settle, but the theme here is definitely the passage of time and the regrets that accompany it. Take the track *Sings*, for instance, definitely a case of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* if ever we heard one. Majestic. **[DM]**

Standout track: *Between Two Points*

For fans of: Pink Floyd, Roger Waters

Mr. Big

Ten

Frontiers Records (available now)

8/10



Bluesy rock volcano from established top-notch supergroup

Formed in 1988 and still touring, Mr. Big have found time to record a new album with blues/rock stylings alongside plenty of instrumental prowess. Paul Gilbert is big on melody and slide-playing these days and there's plenty of both to be found on the album.

Opener, *Good Luck Trying* is awash with 70s rock stylings; twisty unison riffing, raucous vocals, pounding drums and killer soloing. The chorus on electric/acoustic groover, *I Am You* is a great earworm while the harmonic combination of dark phrygian and playful mixolydian packs a punch on *Right Outta Here* – almost as if The Scorpions and Led Zeppelin ganged up for chart hit – killer solo, too. As for other standouts, check out the stinging string-skipping solo on *As Good As It Gets*. **[JS]**

Standout track: *Right Outta Here*

For fans of: Racer X, Extreme

Frank Zappa

Apostrophe (')

UMe/Zappa Records (release date: 13 September)

8/10



50th anniversary special edition of a true FZ classic

Since the Universal Group leapt into the driving seat of Zappa's monster-truck back-catalogue we've seen quite a few enhanced releases of classic albums. A Super Deluxe version of *Apostrophe (')*, originally released in 1974, becomes the latest to receive the whistles and bells treatment and celebrates the album's 50th anniversary with a package chock full of goodies. It comprises six discs, which include the original album plus outtakes, alternate edits, 2024 mixes and unedited bonus vault masters. But the main interest for Zappa completists will doubtlessly be the two live shows from the same period recorded in Colorado Springs and Dayton, Ohio.

Audiophiles are served, too, with Blu-Ray versions of the original quad mix and new surround sound and Dolby Atmos mixes of the core album. *Apostrophe (')* sounds as good as it ever did and the superbly presented live shows include favourites such as *Penguin In Bondage*, *Dupree's Paradise* and *Uncle Meat*. Unmissable! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Florentine Pogen* (Live in Colorado, 21 March, 1974)

For fans of: The Mothers Of Invention, Captain Beefheart



Mike Dawes: innovative and beautiful guitar playing

Mike Dawes

Galactic Acid

Qten (available now)

9/10



Virtuosic album from acoustic maestro

According to Mike Dawes, his new acoustic guitar album is, "about losing (and rediscovering) inspiration and hope in a rapidly changing world..." To the rest of us, it's a collection of innovative and often beautiful pieces by one of the instrument's best exponents in the field today.

Apart from touring the world in Justin Hayward's band, Mike can occasionally be found opening for Tommy Emmanuel or dueting with the Ozzie Grand Master bedazzling audiences with his musical sorcery. Indeed, we suspect Tommy was one of the principal influences on the album's title track. But *Galactic Acid* isn't all about fast and furious fretboard gymnastics – tracks like *Segera* and *Cloud Catcher* display Dawes' gentler and intensely melodic side. Covers, including The Foo Fighters' *Everlong* and Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower*, show his skills as an arranger, too. Fantastic! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Cloud Catcher*

For fans of: Tommy Emmanuel, Andy McKee

Marty Friedman

Drama

Frontier Music (available now)

9/10



Hard rocker blazes through solo outing

Well known as the ex-lead guitarist for Megadeth and with a long career as an instrumental artist, Marty Friedman has one of the most expressive styles in metal.

With trademark string-bending, colourful navigation of rich chord changes and elements of world-music pop, he revels in a stunning mixture of beauty and brutality.

With the new album, *Drama*, there are 12 tracks ranging from dynamically broad pieces through to songs in both English and Spanish. *Illuminatio* opens with a beautiful clean-ish guitar and piano accompaniment, full of classical rubato phrasing. The change to overdrive and gradual band build draws you in, quite an album opener.

Melody is front and centre for *Song For An Eternal Child*, enhanced by violin and uplifting major chords. *Dead Of Winter* has a steady rock tempo and major key feel that culminates with a smart solo, full of soaring bends and motifs. *Drama* is truly an album of great music and standout guitar playing. **[JS]**

Standout track: *Illumination*

For fans of: Megadeth, Vinnie Moore



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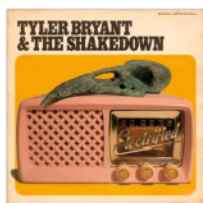


Tones Behind The Tracks

Back for another monster of a record with his band, **Tyler Bryant** is swapping Strats for Teles and tuning into a special kind of amp

Artist: Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown

Album: *Electrified* (Rattle Shake Records)



The cover star of *Electrified* is a vintage radio that was fashioned into a custom-made amp by Square Amps of Austin, Texas

Was there a particular track that kicked off your latest record, *Electrified*?

"One of the tunes that kicked it off is a deep cut, which is a song called *Moving*. With this record, I wanted to keep it true to what the band is: a couple of guitars, a bass and drums. There's always a temptation in the studio to make things bigger than they are, but with *Moving*, it's just a Telecaster plugged into a Princeton Reverb. I've been on a Blackberry Smoke and Black Crowes kick of late, so *Moving* was kind of a tip of the hat to that sort of blues and roots rock 'n' roll."

You mentioned the Telecaster, which is interesting as most people assume you have a pink Strat in hand 24/7.

"I feel like a Telecaster just makes you play a little bit differently – and, for me, it's a pretty unforgiving guitar. But this Tele is a Custom Shop '59; it was a gift from my wife [Rebecca Lovell] and, man, every time I try it, it always wins. The Telecaster is arguably one of the most rock 'n' roll instruments ever created, and when it's in open tunings, kinda like the Black Crowes, it definitely inspired me to tip my hat in that direction."

The Tele aside, did you deploy any other interesting guitars on this record?

"I've got a bunch of old National resonators, and this one resonator I used is a student model, like one of these little three-quarter scale ones. It's got this tiny scale and I've never changed the strings on it – it's just a grungy little guitar I use now and then. And I've got a bunch of pink Strats, a whole arsenal of them, all in different tunings."

Your use of open tunings seems more prevalent here than in the past.

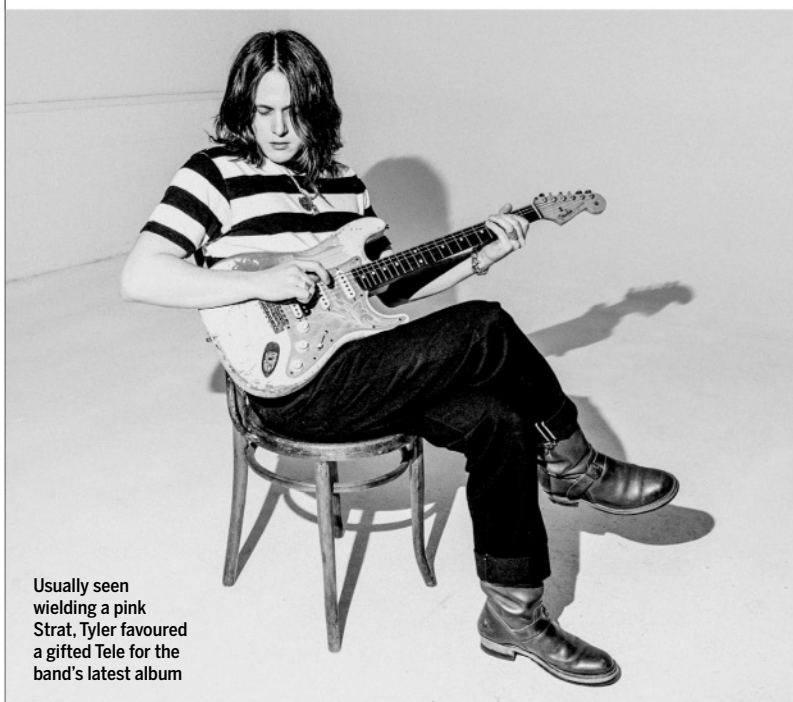
"I've always had maybe a song or two in open G or open D, but I get bored when playing in standard tuning. I'll catch myself doing the same tired lick that I always lean on, but I feel like every guitar player has like their go-to licks, where you walk into a guitar store, pick up the guitar and out comes those go-to licks. Sometimes, it's fun to put the guitar in an odd tuning, just so your licks don't come out."

What does your overarching process for riff construction look like these days?

"Well, our process is pretty much, 'Hey, let's hang out...' The guys in The Shakedown are my best friends, so there's really not much of a plan. That hangout usually consists of either eating or jamming [laughs]. I mean... what else do you do? So we'll start jamming and before you know it, maybe – if we're lucky – we'll have a song. And if everyone still has enough gas left in the tank after that, we'll record it."

The Shakedown features another outstanding guitarist, Graham Whitford. Tell us how you divide the guitar-playing labour between the two of you.

"The dynamic between us has really become natural over the years. He'll play what he feels, like a song that suits him, and vice versa, you know? And if I'm ever carrying too much weight to sing and play at the same time, I'll ask Graham to lighten the load and be like, 'Hey, can you take this part or switch with me?' A lot of it comes down to what I can sing and play at the same time, but there's certain things, like with solos, where we had lots of fun on this record. There were songs where Graham would take a solo, and then I'd fire into one, and we'd meet up somewhere. We're just inspired by moments."



Usually seen wielding a pink Strat, Tyler favoured a gifted Tele for the band's latest album



PHOTO BY ZACK WHITFORD

Do you both choose different sorts of gear to differentiate from and yet also complement each other?

"Yeah, but ultimately, it's whatever sounds best on the track. I've got a ton of amps set up in my control room and cabs mic'd up in the live room where we get going. We used all sorts of stuff. We were using this old Supro and a Tyler amp, made just outside of Nashville, and I was like, 'Man, this thing is just insane.' I became friends with the guy at Tyler – he'd come over and bring amps to my house, and one day, he said, 'Hey, I made a Dumble clone,' or 'Hey, I made this amp that's like a low-watt Tweed.' We used those sounds for almost the whole record."

It seems you're partial to valve amps as opposed to solid-state amps.

"I'd say it's almost 100 per cent tube. However, you'll notice that on the cover of the record, there's this old radio amp that was made for me by this guy [Matt Richards] who has a company called Square Amps. He made me this little radio into an amp and it's battery powered, so it's completely solid-state. It runs on a nine-volt battery, and it's hilarious because it's got no parameters: it's just either on or off. But I guess a Pignose might find its way onto a track, and I've got an old Peavey from when I was a kid. It's just about whatever sounds cool!"

Were there any always-on pedals that defined your guitar tone on *Electrified*?

"I've got a pedal called the [Rodenberg Amplification] TB Drive [Shakedown Special], which is something I've been using for years; it's a double-channel overdrive. I've normally always got one side of that on, but we did some different pedals on this record. I recently built

Tyler and his Shakedown crew, co-guitarist Graham Whitford (left) and Caleb Crosby on drums (right)

a stereo 'board for the first time, 100 per cent stereo. I reached out to Tyler amps and had them build me two different amps and point the speakers in different directions. With the stereo 'board, you get crazy swirls and echoes, and then you pan the mics left and right. We did that on *Trick Up My Sleeve* for Graham – it turned out really cool."

Is there a solo on *Electrified* that you feel best represents the player you are today?

"I'm really proud of the *Trick Up My Sleeve* solo. For me, it's about complementing the song, and I think there were times in the past when I got to be a little self-congratulatory with solos, which is fine. Like, who doesn't? Who doesn't love that, especially if you're the one doing it? But the older I get, the more I want to serve the song."

What new ground do you hope to tread as a guitarist as you move forward?

"Oh, man, I'm playing guitar all the time. Every day, I'm trying to become more well rounded and I've been playing guitar on a lot of records that aren't just bone-headed rock 'n' roll and blues. I'm trying to stretch out as a guitar player and would love to learn how to play bluegrass, but that right-hand technique is something I don't possess. That's not to say I couldn't – it's just that I didn't grow up listening to and studying it. I didn't read that Bible. But that's the thing I love about guitar: you can never master it and you can always keep learning new stuff." **[AD]**



Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown's new album, *Electrified*, is out now on Rattle Shake Records

www.tylerbryantandtheshakedown.com



Jobsworth!

Neville Marten recalls how a careers advisor tried to steer him down a very different path to the one he's walked these past few decades

John Lennon's aunt Mimi told him, "The guitar's all right as a hobby, John, but you'll never make a living at it." After The Beatles made it he put the phrase onto a plaque and sent it to his aunt at the house he'd bought her with his musicianly earnings. John knew exactly what he wanted to do, and boy did he do it. But when I left school I had no idea of my life's direction. We lived in a tiny village in the far north-east

"Clapton tells how he was about to quit music when John Mayall spotted his potential and rescued him. We can all have a bit of that"

where none of the available job options (including 'going down the pit') appealed. And the thought of university didn't even cross my mind.

So at 17 I got a menial job at a local college, before moving to the opposite end of the country in Cornwall, where my brother and I got hotel jobs. Hardly a flying start into the big time. But a season as a kitchen porter had afforded me my first electric, a Les Paul-ish Framus Hollywood. We then moved back to Essex where I'd also grown up. I worked in a couple of factories, saved up and bought some nice guitars. After being made redundant from the last one I joined a local rock 'n' roll band and 'signed on'. So, although I had no career path in mind I played guitar, had the gear, and while several mates had moved to London, lived in a squat and tried to 'make it' (some did), that wasn't for me. So I remained a medium-sized goldfish in my small north-
Essex bowl.

After a while I was summoned to the employment office where the careers advisor quizzed me as to why I hadn't accepted any of the awful jobs I'd been offered. At the end of the session he said, "So, imagine you could be anything you wanted, what would you choose?" I replied honestly, saying I'd either like to be a

professional musician or, as I was pretty good at wood and metalwork, do something creative with my hands.

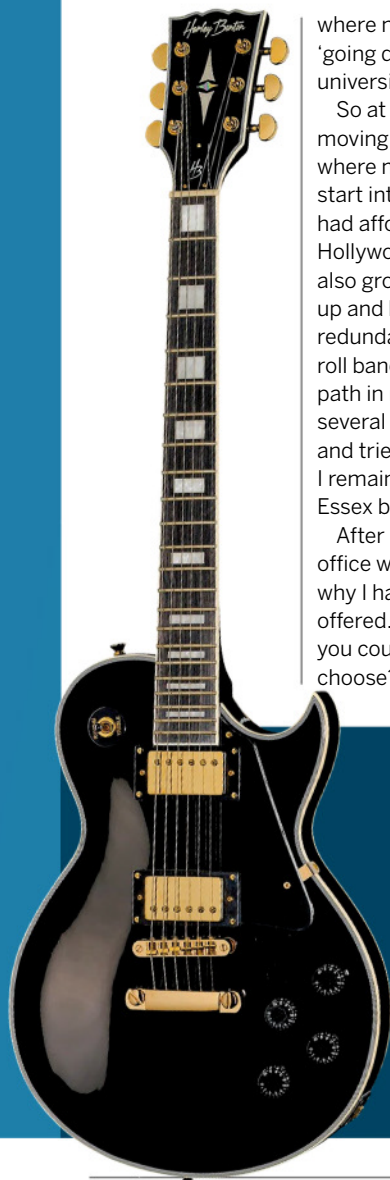
"Pah! I'm a bit of a musician myself but I'd never be so presumptuous as to think I could do it professionally," he smirked. "Looking at your 'qualifications' I think you should become a transport clerk."

Impossible Dream

Two days later I was sitting at my usual spot in the Wimpy Bar, eking out my Delta Grill and umpteenth cup of tea, when a friend tapped on the window. "Have you seen the ad in the *Brainless & Witless* (*Braintree & Witham Times*)? Selmer's are looking for a guitar repairer." I hadn't seen the advert, and anyway it seemed an impossible dream to me. But I rang the number, got an interview, which I somehow passed, and started the following Monday. A few years later I joined Marty Wilde's band, and soon after that, I began working for *Guitarist*. So that was kind of everything I'd asked for, really.

Okay, so the Bluesbreakers roster doesn't read 'Clapton, Green, Taylor, Marten', and I never got to edit the *Sunday Times*, or launch a guitar-building empire. My point is simply that it's possible to use the stuff we're naturally okay at to carve out a rewarding working life. Many of my friends have done exactly that. Some play, teach, write, build or repair guitars, deliver cars, and have family lives too. In Eric Clapton's tribute to John Mayall, he tells how he was about to quit music when Mayall spotted his potential and rescued him. The rest is, of course, history, but in our own little ways we can all have a bit of that.

I had no paper qualifications to do any of the jobs I've done, but I did put myself in the right place at the right time. And while I might have made a half-decent transport clerk, I'm glad I didn't listen to my careers advisor, and also that my mate spotted me through the Wimpy Bar window that day... See you next month. 



NEV'S GAS OF THE MONTH

First Love

What? Harley Benton SC-500 BK Vintage Series **Where seen?** thomann.de **Price?** £144

Mentioning my first Framus LP-style electric guitar, and talking to David Mead about his own (a black Shaftesbury Custom copy, which he still owns), got me to this. And blimey it really does look incredible for the money.

Harley Benton is Thomann's own brand, and with its solid basswood body, set maple neck, block inlays on a blackwood fingerboard, all-round binding, gold-plated parts, vintage-style humbuckers, an

elegant dressed-away heel, and all finished in gloss black, it really does look the part. And unlike some of those early copies from the 60s and 70s it will doubtless play and sound great. Check it out.



Restoration Station

This month **Alex Bishop** brings an Arabic oud back from the brink of musical instrument purgatory

Although people know me as a maker, repairer and educator of guitars, it's not uncommon to see some unusual instruments pass through the workshop. Anything that has strings and requires plucking tends to qualify for my attention and this month alone I've already seen a couple of banjos, a mandocello and even a Turkish saz cross the workbench for some TLC, alongside the usual slew of six-string axes of both electric and acoustic varieties.

Understandably, you are unlikely to find specialists repairing such instruments (even in a big city like Bristol, where I am), and so it was that this week I found myself scratching my chin over an Arabic oud. It arrived in a desperate state, with the distinctive right-angled headstock broken off, scarred with splintered wood and chipped lacquer. A deep split in the soundboard and some missing binding indicated some kind of disastrous impact had been the cause: some serious restoration work was required.

The Arabic oud is the ancestor of the modern guitar, having originated in the Middle East many centuries ago. Its history is incomplete, but rather like the difference between dinosaurs and humans, it dominated its place in musical culture for far, far longer than its modern six-string counterparts. The steel-string guitar took form barely 100 years ago whereas the Arabic oud was described in the 11th century, and likely goes back centuries further. It is played with an

unusually long, thin plectrum – traditionally an eagle's feather – plucked close to the bridge for a biting attack.

The first step was to reconstruct the headstock join. Similar to a guitar, the headstock is grafted onto the neck shaft at an angle and further strengthened by the addition of a fingerboard spanning the join. The steep (almost 90-degree) angle of the headstock creates a very well-defined point at the nut, which in turn produces a robust tone across the open strings. After some careful fitting with a sharp chisel, I was able to use a couple of tiny G-clamps tucked inside the pegbox to reattach it, with a carefully fitted maple insert to fill a space that had been left behind by some missing wood.

In A Bind

Fitting the new binding was a challenging task. At almost 8mm thick, the rosewood surrounding the front of the oud looked impossible to bend, until I realised that it was made up of two pieces laminated together. I rooted around in my offcuts drawer to find a piece that was a close match, and then bent two pieces around a hot bending iron to closely match the pear-shaped outline of the front. A few strips of reinforced tape was all that was required to firmly hold the wood in place until the glue dried, which was followed up with some judicious cabinet scraping to bring the binding flush to the rest of the instrument. It blended surprisingly well and only an experienced eye would be likely to spot the repair.



This Arabic oud's right-angled headstock needed to be reattached in addition to some tricky binding restoration

"I was struck by the timeless sound of the oud, the centuries of music unrecorded and the intertwining histories of musical cultures"

Hiding the soundboard split was not going to be so easy, however. The oxidation of the wood and exposure to UV light over time meant that the colour of the soundboard was much darker than the bleached, newly sanded areas. To get around this I used button shellac in my French polished finish, the amber tint at least giving an impression that these areas were of a similar age to the rest of the instrument.

All that was left to do was restring it, and with six courses of 11 strings crisscrossing the pegbox at the nut this was going to take some patience to do correctly. With each agonising tweak of the peg nudging the strings in and out of tune, I got there on the third attempt. Finally, I had a little test play to check how it sounded. I was struck by the timeless sound of the oud, the centuries of music unrecorded and the intertwining histories of musical cultures. Despite the generations of forgotten instrument makers and repairers, it was a thrill to play a small part in a musical legacy I know will continue for centuries to come. **G**



PHOTOS BY ALEX BISHOP



Cheap Thrills

Forget boutique amps - these affordable alternatives pack in nearly as much tone for much less cash, writes **Jamie Dickson**

With the prices of classic-model and boutique amps going up a fair bit in recent times, I thought I'd offer an informal round-up of relatively inexpensive combos, heads and amp-like devices that have impressed us a lot at *Guitarist* over the past few years. Please note, what follows is not exhaustive – the recommendations here are merely a personal 'greatest hits' of amps that, without being especially pricey, have sounded much more expensive – or just offered an impressive amount for the money.

The first under-appreciated amp that comes to mind is Fender's Hot Rod DeVille 60-watt combo. Tellingly, when we did an extensive shootout of boutique amps a few years ago, we used a 410 Hot Rod DeVille as the 'normal amp' control group in a blind listening test along with all the exotica – and to our surprise and slight consternation, it actually won! The best bit? Clean second-hand examples of this excellent amp can be had for around £400. As a side note, Fender does still make the Hot Rod DeVille but the current model is the Hot Rod DeVille 212

IV, an updated variant that sadly does away with the 410 speaker configuration for a more conventional 212 format but boasts, following customer feedback over the years, "modified preamp circuitry, smoother-sounding spring reverb and updated aesthetics". While the 212 IV isn't exactly a budget amp, at £1,259, it sits pretty much in the middle of the valve amp market and, if you like clarity and Dumble-esque punch, we wouldn't bet against it.

An honourable mention also goes out to the capable little 15-watt Laney Cub-Supertop head, which at just £449, offers very decent British-vibed dirty and clean tones, with boost and reverb effects on tap too, from a genuine all-valve amp with deft retro-modern styling – and all for the price of a high-end effects pedal.

Valveless Wonders

If you're okay doing without valves, the choice is even better. The superb and recently revamped Boss Katana Gen 3 range is very hard to beat. Each model in the seven-strong range has six excellent-sounding amp types built in, which have been enhanced and improved for this Gen 3 release. The choices range from Acoustic and Clean to the new 'Pushed' amp type (think clean with a bit of 'hair' on), Crunch, Lead and Brown – a nod to EVH's famous rip-snorting drive tones, we have to assume.

There's a raft of effects on board, too, which you can select via the control panel or deep-edit via Boss's easy-to-use Tone Studio app – though you'll need to pay extra for an optional BT-DUAL Bluetooth adaptor if you want to do so without recourse to USB cables. With a Class A/B analogue power section, the new Katanas have quite a natural feel and response during play and while they don't quite have that glassy cut-through, grind and clank of a real valve amp, for the money they are a very strong option.

The cheapest amp in the range, the Katana-50 Gen 3 (£289) is a perfect amp for a den or lounge at home, though it lacks some useful features such as an effects loop and a line out. So for serious gigging applications we'd honestly urge saving up for the top-of-the-range 100-watt Katana Artist Gen 3 model (£689), which also has some unique features such as a custom-designed speaker closely based on a vintage Greenback, an acoustically tuned cabinet design (which is also to be found on the enhanced Katana-50 EX Gen 3 model at £359), plus an analogue 'Bloom' circuit that, to our ears, adds sparkle at the top end while making low-end response juicier too.

While we're on inexpensive non-valve amps, honourable mention must go to the still-innovative Blackstar ID:Core Super Wide Stereo digital amp range, which uses unique signal processing and a special speaker configuration to make these combos way bigger-sounding than they have any right to be. The ID:Core 10 V4 is a steal, streeting at just over 100 quid, if you're looking for a compact but capable home-practice amp.

IK Multimedia's Tonex One is a very powerful bit of amp-emulating kit in a tiny package that should fit on almost any pedalboard. And, surprisingly, it costs around the same as your average overdrive pedal





For the very best value in terms of sound-per-pound, IK Multimedia's Tonex One pedal (£189) uses AI machine modelling to load Tone Models – digital captures of the performance characteristics of iconic valve amplifiers – into a tiny enclosure. Some users have said that, out of the box, the factory presets aren't as sonically compelling as using it to make your own amp captures and, for sure, shrewd tweaking of settings such as input gain is needed to get best the results. But it's a formidable package. Trev Curwen wrote in his review in issue 512: "The Tonex One can store 20 Tone Models that you can drag and drop to

Pictured here in the combo version, Laney's Cub-Super is a great example of an all-valve amp put together with real understanding. As an inexpensive all-rounder, it's a very fair shout if you don't need more than its pretty loud 15-watt output

"The Katana: Go puts the sonic brains of Katana amps into a credit-card sized device that plugs directly into your guitar"

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."

Also worth checking out is the Boss Katana: Go Personal Guitar Amplifier (circa £120, if you can find one). This puts the sonic brains of Katana amps into a credit-card sized device that plugs into your guitar – but it is primarily designed for home use with headphones, not on a gigging pedalboard as the Tonex One is, and it has been discontinued (indefinitely) due to scarcity of certain components. However, it's hard to imagine that Boss won't return with an updated version given how popular the Katana: Go has been. Rarely have small prices and diminutive products housed such hefty sounds. **G**

THREE TO GET READY

Bought an amp? Gonna need a cable...



PHOTO: GAK.CO.UK

Fender Original Series Instrument Cable £14.99

Fiesta Red is the quintessential Fender Custom Colour and now you can have your cable finished in it, too, with this 4.5m (15ft) instrument cable (other lengths are available too) from Fender's Original Series, with spiral shielding and quality nickel-plated connectors.

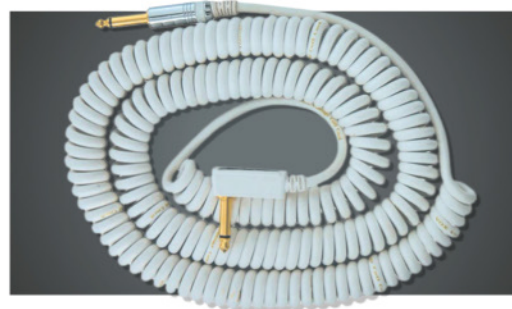


PHOTO: GEAR4MUSIC.COM

Vox VCC Vintage Coiled Cable £29

We love a curly lead here at *Guitarist* and the chunky, high-quality look and features of Vox's 9m (29.5ft) VCC model promises to bring a classic look to the stage with modern reliability, and it comes with its own mesh bag for storage. "A unique multi-gauge design uses individual conductor types that are optimised for their particular frequency ranges, resulting in a reliable coiled cable that is truly musical," says Vox of the VCC.



PHOTO: WWW.TAKAMINE.COM

Takamine TGC-1 Acoustic Guitar Cable from approx £90

It's not cheap and it's also a little hard to find but the TGC-1's no-pop connector is perfect for a professional presentation on stage, allowing you to disconnect the cable silently. Takamine says: "By employing oxygen-free copper wire of different dimensions, transmission loss is reduced to a minimum, providing the most accurate and natural imaging of your warm acoustic." Available in 3.3m and 5.5m versions.



Names For Sounds

Richard Barrett delves into 6/9 chords to uncover the meaning behind their name – and their usage

Sometimes, when music theory ties us in knots, it's good to remember that so much of what we're dealing with is just names for sounds. And sometimes those names struggle to keep up with the complexities of music as much as we do! One term that can throw people at first is the 6/9 chord, so this feature will attempt to dispel any mystery about them and their possible variants.

As you might suspect, the 6/9 chord contains both the 6th and the 9th of the 'parent' scale, the scale the chord is taken from. In practice, the name 6/9 is actually an abbreviation of 6add9 because 9th chords would technically contain the 7th. They have a very particular sound due to the stacking of 4ths. Check out the C6/9 in Example 1, which, apart from the root (C), consists entirely of 4ths, the remainder of the chord being E, A, D and G – the same as the bottom four strings of the guitar! See below for a few useful major and minor 6/9 voicings, plus an extra twist here and there.. **G**

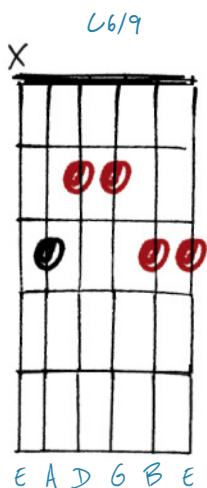
Brian Setzer's *Stray Cat Strut* finishes up with the feel of a minor 6/9 chord for a big impact



PHOTO BY TONY NELSON

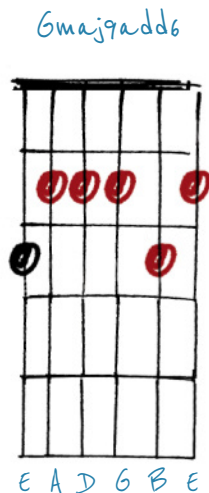
Example 1

This C6/9 is movable to any key, preserving the stacking of notes with the root on the bottom and stacked 4ths on top. This makes a great substitute for a regular major chord if you're looking to jazz things up, or move the E on the fourth string down a semitone to E_b for Cm6/9.



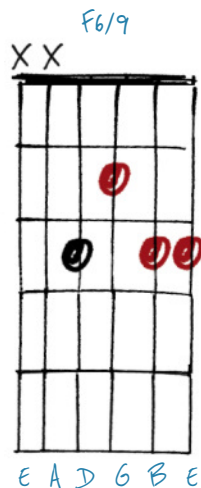
Example 2

Basically moving a similar shape across to have the root on the sixth string, this sounds very much like a G6/9 – but the presence of the maj7 (F#) on the first string changes the naming convention. Theoretically, this is first and foremost a Gmaj9 but with the 6th added. So we have Gmaj9add6, but we can view it as a 'deluxe' version of G6/9.



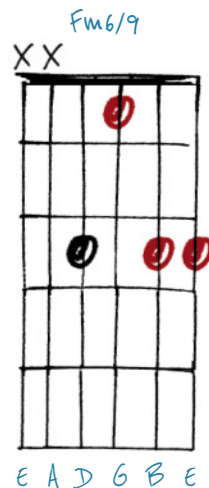
Example 3

This small but beautiful F6/9 is movable to any key, like Examples 1 and 2. From low to high it stacks up as: root (F), major 3rd (A), 6th (D) and 9th (G), omitting the 5th – as so many jazz-flavoured voicings do – and getting straight to the point.



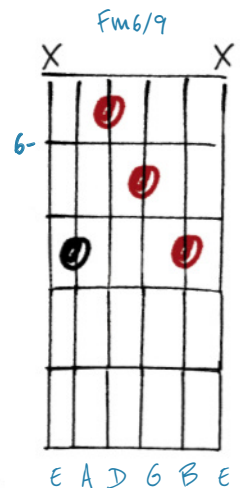
Example 4

A minor version of Example 3, this Fm6/9 calls to mind Brian Setzer's dramatic ending to *Stray Cat Strut* (though that's in C, it's easy to shift key). As we shall see in Example 5, you can achieve a darker sound by transposing this voicing over to the lower strings.



Example 5

This version of Fm6/9 is identical in its intervallic structure to Example 4, but it gains a darker sound by being played on the thicker strings. You can add a mysterious 'murder mystery' quality to this by adding in the maj7th (E) via the open first string, which would be an Fm/maj9add6.





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Drop us a line at guitarist@futurenet.com

STAR LETTER

SINGLES CHART



Why do most single-pickup guitars have the pickup at the bridge and the more jazz-oriented guitars have theirs at the neck? I wish some manufacturers offered a middle-position, single-pickup guitar model like my cool 1950s Kay-built, single-pickup electric guitars. In the middle position, you get a fatter sound than bridge-only pickup, and not too dark like neck-only pickups.

Pictured are my 1954 Silvertone 1361 [top and bottom right] and circa-1957 Kay K-136 electrics [top left], featuring through-neck neck/body construction, 25 3/4" scale length, Kay pancake pickups and cool paint finishes. Also pictured [bottom left] is a rough prototype/copy of my own, using a humbucker with coil-split/tap switch, for humbucker in-series, humbucker in-parallel, and neck-coil only options. I have all controls and jack socket mounted on the scratchplate, so I can detune, unhook the strings from the tailpiece, unscrew the whole assembly and replace with a different pickup (I have a black pearloid scratchplate mounted with a soapbar P-90 pickup in the middle position). The pickup cavity is routed so any pickup type can be fitted in the middle position.

Richard 'Snakehips' O'Donnell

Funnily enough Richard, our Historic Hardware feature (page 82) on the Gibson ES-330T and its Epiphone Casino variant makes just this point. They sound great and arguably the middle position would have been a better choice for student guitars that relied on one pickup to do all tasks than the Les Paul Junior's choice of a single pickup right by the bridge.

Okay, no-one's saying old Les Paul Juniors sound bad – the late Leslie West, among many others, might have had quite a lot to say about that! But pickup placement in the middle has a strong case in its favour on the evidence of the ES-330T. One criticism levelled at middle pickups is that they get in the way of the picking hand, so it may well be that ergonomic factor explains the dearth of single-pickup guitars with a mid-placed pickup. Nice to see modern makers such as Fidelity Guitars turn out a few guitars – such as some variants of their Lite 1 model – that buck the trend though.

FIND A FRIEND

New reader Peter Sutherland got in touch to say he got on well with a fellow guitarist he met and jammed with on a recent visit to a guitar shop – Peter says he'd love to catch up again to talk guitars but didn't catch the fella's name. Peter explains: "We met in guitarguitar Glasgow around the 23 July. He was with a friend, and both were from the Kendall area. He was having a bit of a jam with another patron, and as I was having a bash on a 12-string he suggested some accompaniment. Anyway, we chatted at length, enjoying the mutual interest, and he mentioned *Guitarist* and recommended I take out a subscription..." If you are that reader and fancy catching up with Peter again for a jam, drop us a line and we'll connect you.

STARTING YOUNG

It's always good to hear of home-builders and as a guitar tech with more than 30 years' experience and literally thousands of gigs under my belt, I have to applaud the hard work and ingenuity of some of the builds. Here is one that is slightly different...

I am giving my grandson guitar lessons and during a break he asked, "Have you ever built a guitar?" I showed him a scrapbook full of photos and, as I was doing that, I had a lightbulb moment. He has an engineer's mind (his favourite toy at the age of three was a ratchet screwdriver). After a bit of hunting on the internet I chose a kit and ordered it. Over the next couple of months his lessons have been extended to include 'build time'. The intention was



Nine-year-old Oscar with his home-build guitar



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



Readers Patrick and Nick call out for a feature on Japanese Fenders – and we couldn't agree more!

not only to provide him with a better guitar than his Squier mini Strat, but the skills and satisfaction of creating something himself.

To get to the finished product he has rubbed down the body and patiently applied 14 coats of acrylic lacquer. He has dressed, polished and rounded 23 of the 24 frets (I did the first as a demo), optimised the nut, learned to solder, learned how a passive guitar circuit works (earthing, resistance and capacitance), learned how to use a multimeter, learned how both a pickup and a speaker work (by taking a busted pickup apart), set action and intonation and adjusted the truss rod of his new guitar. The result? A way better guitar than he could have bought, plus the knowledge and understanding to not only keep it going, but to sort out any future problems with other instruments.

For me the best moment came when he played it for the very first time and the beaming smile told its own story. *Back In Black* never brought so much joy. And the kicker? Oscar is nine and committed to playing in a band like his grandad and parents.

Graham Hill (aka Very Proud Grandad)

What a lovely story, Graham – you should be proud of yourself for giving the youngster an early start in a hobby that's both satisfying and which has already taught him some very useful (and transferable) skills. Also, at the end of the day, this new pursuit has got him a fantastic new guitar by the sweat of his own brow. Bravo to you both, we wish Oscar every success in both his guitar playing and his budding luthiery skills.

BIG ON JAPAN

I was just reading issue 512 and Jamie Dickson's exploration in the Low Side Of The High Road feature. It occurred to me that whenever the subject of budget-priced guitars comes up in your and every other guitar magazine, nobody ever mentions Japanese Fenders.

Priced roughly the same as Mexican-made Fender guitars, these beauties boast craftsmanship and attention to detail that outstrip even their American-made cousins. The quality-to-cost ratio is ridiculously uneven in the most positive of ways for the consumer.

Please do a piece, or at least a sidebar, on this subject. The Japanese Strat is the best deal for the money of any of the guitars you discussed.

Patrick Galloway

...AND AGAIN

At 73 (going on 20) I love to look forward to the next issue of *Guitarist*; always interesting, always fantastic photos. Previous copies are in just about every room in the house and you can't move them on because I'm always referring to a back copy.

Like others of my era, I started on a Rosetti Lucky 7 (I think the 'lucky' bit was if you didn't draw blood off the frets!), then went to a Futurama because it looked like a Strat. But I always had to sell to move on to the next choice. Now, at my advanced age, I've managed to collect a couple of 60s and 70s guitars, but my current favourite is a £300 Japanese Strat '68 reissue with a nut width of 40mm, which really suits my hand size. It's good to know that youngsters don't have to spend a fortune to get a decent sound. Many thanks for a great publication – keep it up!

Nick Ridley

Thanks Patrick and Nick, while we did do a five-page feature on Japanese Fender offsets not so long ago in issue 509, we agree it's a massive and very interesting topic – so look out for a major feature on the history of Japanese guitars, including those beautiful Fenders, early next year.

ACOUSTIC AMP INFO

Could a feature on acoustic guitar amplifiers be a subject in a future issue? It could also include effect pedals applicable to the acoustic guitar. I'm sure there are a number of readers out there who would find such information of interest.

Colin Bentham

Both *Guitarist* editor Jamie and deputy editor David Mead are avid acoustic players and they agree a roundup would certainly be interesting. David currently plays an industry-standard AER combo while Jamie uses a trusty Trace Elliott from the 90s. However, any reckoning of acoustic amps should also factor in modelling multi-effects units, which hold out the promise of a complete EQ, compression, reverb, delay, amp and mic emulation solution (and more) in a little box that can be plugged straight into the PA.

Jamie's had good results with a Boss GT-1000CORE and similar devices should work just as well – they're not just for electric guitars and typically feature neutral, low-gain amp models suitable for acoustic guitars alongside all the Marshall and Fender-style stuff. However, that won't help you in a venue without a decent PA and monitoring – so there'll always be a need for a really sorted acoustic amp.



A dedicated amp is an essential companion for electro-acoustic stage warriors everywhere

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

JOHN MAYALL

1933 – 2024

We remember the renowned ‘Godfather of British Blues’, a gifted pianist, guitarist and harmonica player, best known for his groundbreaking Bluesbreakers band

Words Glenn Kimpton



JOHN MAYALL

29 November 1933 – 22 July 2024

On 22 July, blues legend and bandleader John Mayall died at his home in California. He was 90 years old. Mayall was born in Macclesfield in 1933, and first courted music by scouring his father's imported collection of blues 78s, before teaching himself piano, guitar and harmonica. After completing national service in Korea, Mayall returned to Britain in the 1950s, unimpressed by, according to *Classic Rock* magazine, "a monopoly of trad-jazz bands all playing the same tunes."

As Joe Bonamassa shares in his tribute, "John's importance in music is as profound as the guitarists he hired." This is a pertinent comment before we even consider the careers Mayall nurtured, and the calibre of musicians that were attached to his bands across the years.

Although Mayall had been involved with music for many years, starting groups such as R&B dance band the Powerhouse Four at art college in Manchester, and the Blues Syndicate after military service, in



Mayall with one of his customised guitars: "I cut them up and make personal designs out of them..."

"In blues history, you find bands formed around the bandleaders, trying to realise the sound they wanted. I was bandleader as well as frontman" JOHN MAYALL

the early 60s he decided to focus more seriously on music and moved to London, throwing himself into the city and forming the Bluesbreakers in 1963. The band's lineup was continually shifting, with soon-to-be guitar legend Eric Clapton replacing Roger Dean in 1965. This resulted in *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* in 1966. Often considered Mayall's greatest achievement, 'The Beano Album' (nicknamed due to an uncooperative Clapton reading the aforementioned comic on the cover) evolved the sound of the electric guitar, with the 21-year-old guitarist's switch from Fender Telecaster to a Gibson Les Paul and 50-watt Marshall amplifier.

Not to be undone by Clapton's departure in July 1966 to form Cream, Mayall hired Peter Green and claimed to producer Mike Vernon that he was 'better' than Clapton: 'You wait, in a couple of years he's going to be the best.' The Bluesbreakers' second studio album, *A Hard Road*, was a great effort, with much-deserved praise going to Mayall for his skills as bandleader through this ever-changing line up, as

well as plaudits to Green for his elegant guitar and vocal contributions. As Mayall told the *Guardian* in 2014, "In blues history, you find bands formed around the bandleaders, trying to realise the sound they wanted. I was bandleader as well as a frontman."

Mayall's drive saw the Bluesbreakers release numerous albums throughout the 60s and 70s, and the band's conveyor belt of members included Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Mick Taylor (who Mayall also recommended to Mick Jagger after Brian Jones died) and others, who joined and left the outfit. Several of the albums from this period, such as *Blues From Laurel Canyon*, *Bare Wires* and *Looking Back*, are considered high points and examples of when Mayall began to create his particularly personal sound.

Although often considered primarily a piano player and organist, Mayall was an accomplished guitarist and a great blues harp player. He loved to decorate guitars and famously played a nine-string in the early days. But he also told us in 2014 that

"the one on the cover of *A Special Life* is my favourite. It's an Eric Johnson Stratocaster in origin, but as with all my guitars I cut them up and make personal designs out of them." However, later Mayall took a simpler route, telling *Guitar World* in 2020 that his sunburst Gibson ES-125 was "the only guitar I take on tour; I just pick it up and plug it in, and I've never used any special tunings over the years."

Mayall's career barely slowed as the decades rolled by. In 1984, he reformed the Bluesbreakers going on to put out albums such as *Behind The Iron Curtain* and *Chicago Line*, playing numerous shows before retiring the Bluesbreakers name in 2008. He then formed a new band and released albums like *Tough*, with a leaner, four- or five-piece set-up. In 2013, he signed to Forty Below Records, and was finally inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 2016, an overdue nod to a prolific and generous master of his craft. And on that note we'll leave the last word to Clapton.

"When I was a young man and about to quit music he found me, took me into his home and asked me to join his band. He taught me that it was okay to play the music you wanted to play. He was my mentor and a surrogate father, too. He taught me all I really know, and gave me the courage and enthusiasm to express myself without fear or without limit. I'll miss him. Thank you, John, I love you." **G**





ANI DIFRANCO

Percussive and heavily processed, the US troubadour's new album, *Unprecedented Sh!t*, burns the playbook of acoustic folk. *Guitarist* called her to hear about driving a song, working a crowd, and "living in the hairline between a whisper and a scream"

Words Jamie Dickson & Henry Yates Portrait Danny Clinch

By her own description, Ani DiFranco set out on her career in the early 80s as "this little chick in the corner with an acoustic guitar, trying to get the attention of people who were not naturally predisposed to pay attention to her little heartfelt numbers". Four decades later, in almost every respect, the 53-year-old New Yorker is unrecognisable. Since finding major-league success with mid-90s albums such as *Dilate*, DiFranco has commanded a global fanbase who hang on every socially charged lyric. And while the acoustic is still this alt-folkie's instrument of choice – and her rippling, percussive fingerstyle remains a potent weapon – latest album, *Unprecedented Sh!t*, finds those wood-and-wire tones cloaked in studio trickery by producer BJ Burton.

Your partnership with BJ Burton seems to have led your music – and guitar sound – in a radically new direction.

"For a long time, I've been wanting to harness the power of machines, in a way that I haven't been able to on record, because I'm always just recording and mixing and producing my own shit. So I asked my management, 'Who out there is young and knowledgeable about what the gear is and how to do something more than just set up microphones in front of my band and document what we do live?'"

"My managers sorta sniffed around and made a list of 20 names, and BJ Burton – I guess because his name starts with 'B' – was top of the list. And I looked at his album credits, which include Bon Iver and Low, and these things that were exactly what I'm talking about when I put out into the ether that I wanted to employ

the world of machines, not just musicians playing instruments. So I didn't even read any further, I just called BJ and he said, 'Yes, send me some shit.'

"So that's how we did it. We were barely in the same room together. We did it all at a distance. I would record the songs and send them to him and he'd mess with them. We were really in our own little worlds, just lobbing shit at each other."

How did it feel to hand over an element of control after so many years as a self-reliant artist?

"Creatively, it was awesome to have BJ, and his incredible mastery of the world of gizmos, come in and realise exactly what I had hoped for – y'know, soundscapes that are a little more vast and varied than conventional instruments. It was hard for me in terms of waiting on him. I could put the songs down myself as fast and furious as I wanted, but then I would send them to him and just be in limbo. The process did kind of drag on for a long time because he's busy and he would disappear for weeks and months at a time. So that took patience on my part to just say, 'This is what I signed up for, this is gonna be worth it, I have to have faith.' But yeah, it was frustrating to not be able to drive at whatever speed I was feeling."

There's a real contrast between the intimacy, simplicity and expansiveness on this new album. Was that by design or something that emerged?

"Well, I love contrast. From the beginning of making songs and playing them for people, it was all about that hairline between a whisper and a scream. I love to live right there. And BJ is just the same way. We really

relate to each other in that. At one point, he was teasing me about something I was doing in one of the songs, and he was like, 'What, are you trying to scare people?' I knew what that joke meant – it's because we both like scaring people. It was the pot calling the kettle black. We both like to be surprised and put out of the conventional or comfort zone with art."

The rhythm of your right hand is so important for driving these songs. Where did that percussive style come from?

"I developed my playing style from being in bars and public spaces from the time I was a teenager, playing solo. It was all about leaning into dynamics and turning the guitar into a band with those percussive elements that I work with. And I learned very early on, if you play really loud – then stop suddenly – everybody's words are hanging in the air. They're shouting over your music and that makes them notice themselves and then they notice you – and then you have an opportunity to actually get their attention. And those were all devices that I learnt from playing live."

1. Ani has favoured a "beefy" low-end sound for solo playing, but she also picks up four-string tenor guitars that occupy more of a midrange space, in order to change her perspective and direction on a track

Silence can be a really powerful dynamic.

"Yeah, totally, and that's why I am mostly a fingerpicker, not a strummer. Because strumming sort of erases all those silences, and fingerpicking is about making patterns out of silence. And I love it."

What guitars do you find yourself gravitating towards today?

"I've grown up to be a Gibson girl. I mean, for many of my early years I played Alvarez because they were good workhorses on the road, and they were very kind to me as a company and would give me guitars. I still have some Alvarez guitars I employ, but my fella at some point was like, 'You should play better instruments.' I should maybe not say that in public. Thank you, Alvarez. I love you, Alvarez. But he told me,

"I developed my playing style from being in public spaces. It was all about leaning into dynamics and turning the guitar into a band"



1

'You should explore the world of vintage instruments.' So I went to stores and played all the guitars from the 50s and 60s, and I found my ear favoured Gibson. So my workhorses now are, like, LG-1 type Gibsons. I also play four-string tenor guitars. Like, the song *Baby Roe* is a tenor guitar."

What do you like about tenor guitars?

"My general game with an acoustic guitar is to crank the low-end. Especially when I'm playing solo. I have to move over and make room for a bass player and a drummer when I'm with the band, but generally I like a real beefy sound and I roll off the top of the acoustic kinda radically compared with how many people approach it and the place they put it in the mix. But with a tenor guitar, it's not really about that bottom. It sorta slots into the middle of the mix – it has this middy, midrange sorta sound. I don't know, I think it's cool how much room it leaves, for a change. And it makes me do different things, play differently. There's also a song on this record called *New Bible* that I play ukulele on. It's the only ukulele song I ever wrote."

What you've done on this new record with Burton really goes against the grain. So many artists are so reverential about the sound of the acoustic guitar.

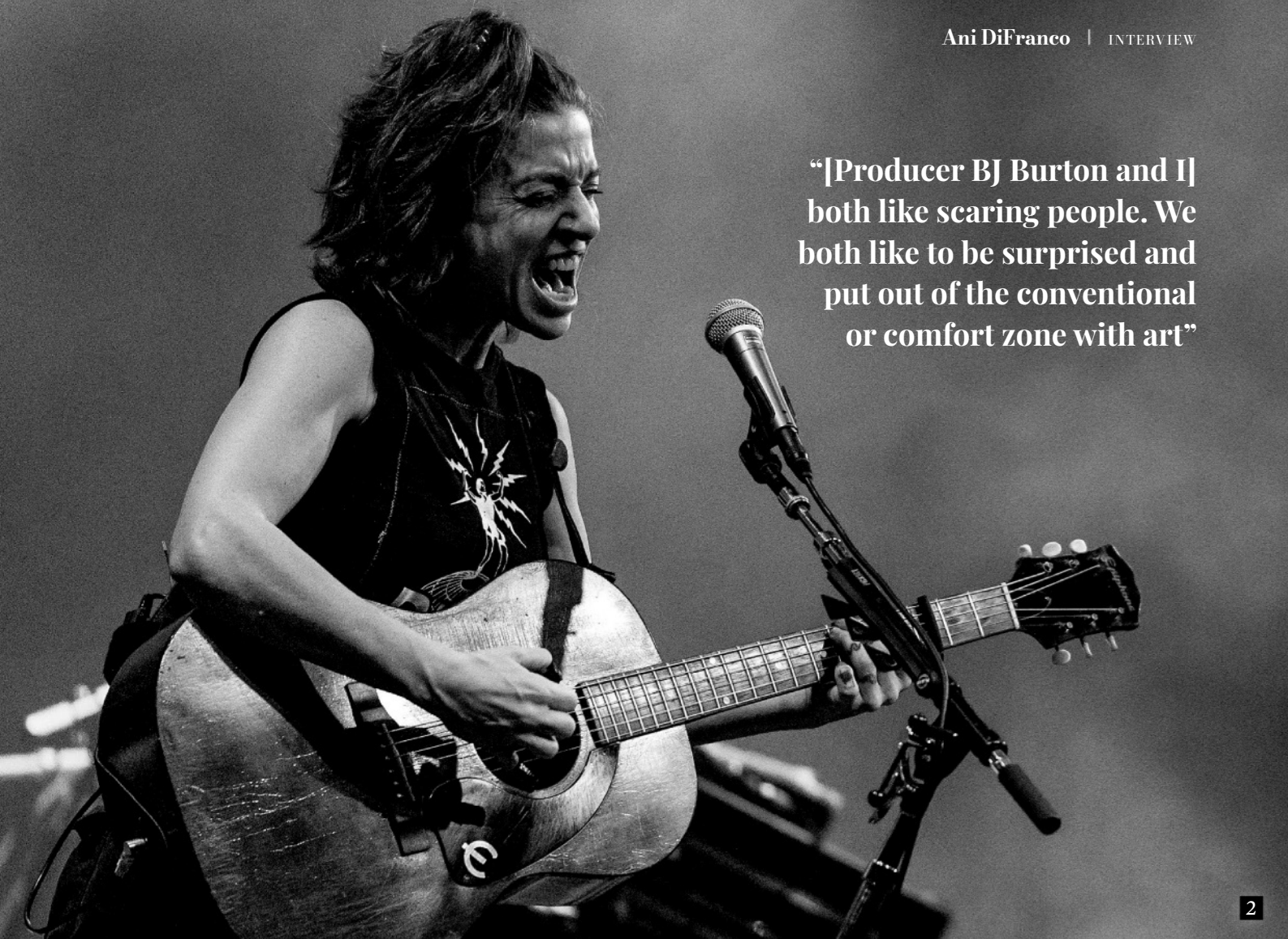
"BJ was absolutely non-reverential. On a lot of songs that have more expansive production, he turned my guitar into so many different sounds, and he built that out of just my voice and guitar. I was talking to somebody recently and they were saying how the record opens with this very meditative, murky keyboard part on *Spinning Room*, and I was thinking, 'Yeah, that's my guitar.' BJ would just do whatever the hell to it."

There's a song called *The Knowing* where the guitar sounds really pitched down.

"*The Knowing* is a regular acoustic guitar and BJ just messed with it. That song is an interesting example because I released a version of it prior to this record coming out. I made a children's book called

PHOTO BY DAVID ROSS LAWN

“[Producer BJ Burton and I] both like scaring people. We both like to be surprised and put out of the conventional or comfort zone with art”



2

The Knowing – so a version of the song that I made and mixed already came out with the book. So for anyone curious to discern the BJ effect, probably somewhere on the internet is the version of *The Knowing* that entered the world before this record. And then BJ got his hands on it and it has that really soupy, pitched-down, almost dissonant sound now.”

What are your intentions for performing *Unprecedented Sh!t* live?

“I don’t know. I’ve been in New York for six months doing a Broadway show [*Hadestown*], so I’m going to go home in the fall and revisit my life. So I won’t go out touring behind this record until the New Year. And how are we going to do it? How are we going to bring these songs to life on stage? I don’t know. I’m gonna see how that unfolds. I think this will be a little bit different in that I haven’t played with my band in a long time. We’re going to get together and rehearse these new songs from an album that has certain vibes and sounds going on – and I guess just see what happens, how we want to incorporate all that into how we’re gonna present these songs live.”

Before the internet, artists like Neil Young would put forward a viewpoint about the world and hoped it would change things. Now, we shout our opinions at each other on social media. Where do you feel that leaves the role of the songwriter?

“I’m not really a critic or a social theorist. I see my role

2. For Ani, songwriting isn’t about provoking a reaction or creating a persona. Instead, a songwriter’s aim is to “do something necessary for their own wellbeing and evolution and healing and liberation. And if people get off on that and they go with you, that’s awesome. And if not, keep doing it anyway”

as a songwriter as a type of storytelling. Songs don’t need to be direct instructions or lessons to change people or awaken something inside them. I try not to be too calculating or strategic about what effect I’m trying to have on the listener because that seems one or two steps removed from what I think my purpose should be, which is to just free myself and heal myself by getting the thing out of me.

“And then, whatever somebody makes of it, or doesn’t, or if it helps them or bores them or whatever, that’s not my problem. And that shouldn’t be my focus, I think. So I think in that sense, the role of the songwriter is the same as it’s always been, which is to do something necessary for their own wellbeing and evolution and healing and liberation. And if people get off on that and they go with you, that’s awesome. And if not, keep doing it anyway.

“What I’m so over is people doing things for an effect. I’m so over people performing something for the world. On the internet, everybody is just creating these elaborate identities and performing them all day long. The focus is so much on, ‘How am I seen? I want you to see me in a certain way.’ I want to escape from that as much as I can. I don’t care how you see me. That’s not what it’s about.”



Ani DiFranco’s new album, *Unprecedented Sh!t*, is available now on Righteous Babe Records

<https://anidifranco.com>

PHOTO BY ANTHONY MULLCAHY

» DEF « LEPPARD

Words Andrew Daly
Portrait Ross Halfin



OVER 40 YEARS ON FROM 'PYROMANIA', PHIL COLLEN'S FIRST RECORDING WITH DEF LEPPARD, THE GUITARIST'S ENTHUSIASM FOR THE BAND REMAINS AS STRONG AS EVER, POWERED BY NEW MUSIC FEATURING TOM MORELLO AND A BRAND-NEW STAGE SET FOR THEIR SUMMER MEGA-TOUR

He may have spent over four decades in the biz, but Def Leppard guitarist Phil Collen is still just as excited about playing guitar in a rock 'n' roll band as in 1983 when the band dropped its landmark album, *Pyromania*. And why shouldn't he be? Not only is Def Leppard still packing stadiums – and not only was their last record, 2022's *Diamond Star Halos*, a smash hit – but now they've got another hit on their hands in single *Just Like 73*, an outtake from the *Diamond Star Halos* sessions and featuring Tom Morello.

To this, Collen beams, telling *Guitarist*: "It's just constantly ongoing. I love the fact that we're so excited and passionate about it. It kind of takes you to another place, so when people say, 'Why do you still do it?,' well, it's because we love it."

He adds: "It's so exciting. You kind of get little boy enthusiasm, and we're both two guys over 60 and we can still get really excited. So I can't wait until we get out on tour. We're going to record some stuff on tour as well."

"WE'RE FEVERISHLY WORKING ON NEW MUSIC. [WE'VE BEEN] GOING BACK AND FORTH, GETTING EXCITED ABOUT NEW SONGS, FINDING THE RIGHT SOUND"

The tour Collen speaks of is Def Leppard's latest mega-joint across the States this summer, which will see the band dropping musical dimes in the form of classic *Pyromania* cuts, such as *Photograph*, *Foolin'* and *Rock Of Ages*. For Collen, memories of *Pyromania* are particularly sweet, as it was his first record with Def Leppard and is beloved by fans. Looking back, he recalls: "It was the first time I'd done it... my first gig with Def Leppard was at the Marquee Club and that was it. We were playing half-empty theatres around England and during that tour it blew up."

It's hard to fathom a Def Leppard show that doesn't include a typically shirtless Collen with a Jackson Dinky slung low, waving his fist in the air out front of hordes of adoring fans. But before *Pyromania* blew the lid off the thing, that's exactly how it was.

"You had MTV, which was kind of in its infancy," Collen says. "But it became a very serious medium for people to hear and see music. That was really important."

“THE BELA LUGOSI [DINKY] IS A PRETTY EXCITING ARTEFACT THAT STILL SOUNDS AMAZING – EVEN WITH ALL THAT PAINT ON IT”

Phil's iconic painted 1986 Jackson Dinky has undergone incremental changes over the years to maintain its integrity



As for why *Pyromania* resonated the way it did, Collen explains: “It was the right time. We’re a hard rock band, but you could sing along to the songs, including the solos – that was the really important part. I’ve always stressed that you can really mess a song up by playing the wrong solo; you can put people off. So it’s important that when you do a solo, it has an emotional feel and melody that’s really captivating.”

Right on through to today, Collen has continued to heed his own warning. But without the lessons learned during his inaugural *Pyromania* sessions, that might not be the case.

“It’s about enhancing every detail,” he says of what he learned. “It wasn’t just playing guitar; it’s actually way more of an important role. If you’ve got great songs, then you enhance them, make them sound better and add richness, complexity, the nuances of the song – and even all the lyrics pop out more. So that’s what I learned, and when I go back and listen to that type of stuff, it’s like, ‘Whoa, this is incredible.’ It still just blows me away.”

Def Leppard has a new track featuring Tom Morello called *Just Like 73*. How did that come about?

“When we were doing *Diamond Star Halos*, we were basing it on the music that really changed the world for us. I remember seeing David Bowie and Marc Bolan, so we basically came up with a list of songs while just writing for each other as fans. And then we realised we had an album – and this was during Covid. We always refer to that era as ‘hubcap *Diamond Star Halos*,’ a line from a T.Rex song [*Bang A Gong (Get It On)*]. It summed up the feeling and vibe. Anyway, we’d done all this stuff and all these songs as tributes to our heroes, and we had so much fun doing it, but there were some songs we didn’t finish...”

Was *Just Like 73* one of those unfinished songs?

“Yeah, it was based on sounds we would have heard in ’72 or ’73, but we never finished the song off. Brian Monaco, the president of Sony Music, played the demo to Tom Morello, who is a big Def Leppard fan, and he’s like, ‘This is awesome.’ Brian asked us, ‘Would you like to have Tom play on it?’ We said, ‘Absolutely.’

“You know, I love Rage Against the Machine and I love his vibe. So that was as easy as that. I had a few phone calls with him and I met him, I think, for the first time in 2022 when we went out with Mötley Crüe. We had a blast. The hybrid guitar/hip-hop thing, it’s just so real. It was a pleasure to have Tom onboard. He understands the whole *Diamond Star Halo* thing because he grew up listening to everything that affects us, so that was it in a nutshell.”

Elsewhere, Def Leppard are set to hit the road with Journey in North America this summer. As you’re putting your rig together, what pieces of gear are proving to be essential?

“I use the Fractal [Axe-Fx] now. I’d use the Fractal on my chorus and delay stuff on stage, and I remember when I was on the G3 tour, John Petrucci had the Fractal Axe-FX, and he said, ‘Oh, you gotta check this thing out. And now, since 2018, me and Vivian [Campbell] have used it.”

“They’re really good about upgrading the software and it really makes a difference. My tech, John Zocco, is great because it leaves me in the dust a bit, but he’s into it and technical, so he’s able to make changes, like putting the compressor in the front of all this stuff and all that real geek stuff. My tech thrives with the stuff and is an amazing player as well.”

You’ve got a nifty new Jackson T-style, too.

“I just recently got my new favourite guitar! Jackson made me a ‘Telecaster’[-style model] that’s just amazing. It’s got a [DiMarzio] Super Distortion in the neck position, no whammy bar or sustainer, and it’s got the fattest neck Jackson has ever made. Joe Williams, who is a luthier at Jackson, said, ‘I’ve kind of made it really big and tried it out...’ I said, ‘Okay, am I going to be able to play this thing?’

“It’s a beast. I love it. It’s easy to play and the tone is just ridiculous. It’s an ash body with a cut-out like a regular Telecaster, but there’s a bit more wood involved because the neck is so heavy and big. It’s a prototype, this one, and my tech had to put a couple of bars that are

“THE ONE CONSTANT ON MY GUITARS HAS BEEN THE DIMARZIO SUPER DISTORTION; I’VE USED THEM ON ALL THE MODELS I HAVE FOREVER”

actually old blocks that we took out when we put the titanium ones in, so we have a couple of them to balance this thing out because it’s so big.

“The tone on it is crazy! We recently recorded a live thing for Sirius XM in LA. It’s one of my favourite and best-sounding guitars, and it kind of freaked me out. They’re actually building me another one; I’ll be using that on tour for sure.”

Are there any guitars you’ve had forever that you can’t imagine hitting the road without?

“The Bela Lugosi one [1986 Jackson Dinky]. A lot of people go, ‘You’re crazy for taking that out; it’s from 1986!’ It was in a bunch of our videos: *Animal* and *Armageddon*. It’s got massive frets, it’s been refretted, and it’s got a skinny neck because it was from the 80s. And it’s got the old Jackson pointy headstock with the paint that still glows in the dark, you know, the Bela Lugosi thing. It’s a pretty exciting artefact that still sounds amazing. It really is true with old guitars – as the moisture leaves the body, the whole thing actually does make a difference in the sound. The thing really sounds great, even with all that paint on it.”

For the uninitiated, what’s the story behind that guitar?

“It’s gotten better with age; it’s literally one of those stories. Before I lived in California, Grover Jackson said, ‘You know, we can paint anything.’ They’d been at all these different factories and there was this one place and I went down there with a photo of Bela Lugosi from this Forbidden Planet comic store, and they said, ‘We can do a version of that with this paint.’ What’s really funny is that there was a bat that got into the workshop, so there were drawings of all the specs and everything on the table – and above it there was a bat. They said,



‘It’s a vampire bat,’ which was kind of rare in California. Anyway, that was the story of that.”

What makes it special beyond its looks?

“It went through some changes. It used to have a Kahler [vibrato] on it, but we swapped it out for a Floyd Rose. I usually change the parts, like titanium saddles, and it’s got a DiMarzio Super 3 in it – two of them, actually. It’s got a coil tap... It was all incremental. It was all of these geeky little things that we do, and as long as it makes it play, sound and respond better... that’s really what you want with all those upgrades. It’s incrementally gone a lot further without messing up the aesthetic and keeping the original spirit.”

Before your relationship with Jackson, you were very into Ibanez and Japanese shred guitars, right?

“Classically, it was the Ibanez Destroyer, which I actually used to record the *Pyromania* album. All the solos I did – specifically, *Photograph* and *Rock Of Ages* – were done on a Destroyer with three pickups. That guitar was a custom one for me. It was kind of like the Peter Frampton or Ace Frehley Les Pauls, you know, the three-pickup DiMarzio Super Distortion thing. So it had that and then it had a Kahler on it, and it sounded great. It’s the one that was in all the videos. I love the Ibanez stuff. I’ve even got a knock-off Ibanez V; the thing is a monster. It’s got a beautiful sound and tone to it. Just incredible.

“It’s a wonderful guitar. When we did the Taylor Hawkins benefit at the LA Forum it made an appearance. And Pat Smear, the guitarist in the Foo Fighters, he originally got [a Destroyer] because he’d seen me play one at the LA Forum in ’83. Mine was at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland [Ohio], so I got

PHOTO BY KEVIN NIXON

1. Phil’s tenure with Def Leppard extends from 1986 – and after nearly four decades as a member, he’s still having fun

» HEAVY HITTER «

MASTER BUILDER JOE WILLIAMS SHINES A LIGHT ON THE PROCESS BEHIND PHIL COLLEN'S PROTOTYPE THICK-AS-A-BRICK JACKSON T-STYLE



Phil isn't known for his T-style guitars, so what brought this on?

"He had an old Fender Telecaster he brought in and [master builder] Mike Shannon had made a new neck for him because he wanted it a little bigger and fatter like other necks he liked. I did that for him a while back, but he wanted to venture into something new.

"[This build] had been on the books for a while and Phil was very patient; he must have had the order together for a year. It started out as a roasted two-piece body, but I went with a one-piece ash body. Phil is about sustainability, and whenever

we do one we try to find ways to get more sustain acoustically. So the one piece of ash helped with that."

And how about the bridge?

"Originally, Phil wanted a Hipshot, a hardtail with a hard mass directly mounted to the body. We decided to go with a higher-mass bridge that looks more like a traditional Telecaster, which ended up being a Gotoh TB-0031-010 with the pickup mounted inside the bridge itself."

Phil mentioned that this is the largest neck Jackson has made.

"That was one big change, obviously, the giant neck.

"WITH THE GIANT NECK, WE SAID, 'LET'S SEE HOW BIG WE CAN GO.' IF WE HAD GONE ANY BIGGER, IT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE MESSED WITH THE BALANCE"

It was like, 'Let's see how big we can go; let's go for a record-breaker and see if we can hit that ceiling for him' [laughs]. If we had gone any bigger, it probably would have messed with the balance of the body or caused neck dive, but it didn't.

"The neck is essentially twice the thickness of many standard necks. It is nearly twice as thick and feels as such, but is a 1/4-inch shy of actually being double. 90 per cent of bolt-on style necks start at one-inch thick stock, so going beyond that took some custom trickery. I didn't want to volute the neck or make the body thicker than normal, so making the neck functional with the hardware while keeping a traditional look was a fun challenge."

Considering how big and heavy this guitar is, how does it play?

"If you sit down long enough, you get used to it [laughs]. It'll throw you off if you're used to normal, standard Jackson neck specs. But I know that Nocasters have



Phil Collen with master builder Joe Williams and his prototype custom Jackson T-style guitar

those wider necks, so if anybody is used to those, it's not such a wild change. The fingerboard plays and feels great; it's just getting used to that thickness of the neck."

Did Phil mention why he wanted it so much thicker than typical spec?

"Most of us are taught to put thumbs behind the neck, but Phil hangs his thumb over the neck. He likes not to have that gap between the curve of his hand and the neck; he wants to fill that gap because it makes it more comfortable. I think he gets a little fatigued if he has to clamp the neck to fill the gap. I've heard that from other players, too."

Seeing as this is a prototype, are there any planned refinements?

"Phil said this is the best-sounding guitar acoustically, and the tuning stability is great. The neck hasn't moved, and he hasn't had to adjust the truss rod, which is no surprise since the thing is so thick. He talked about gold hardware and a maple fingerboard, so I'm doing another one, but I'm sticking with chrome because it adds brightness because of the plating.

"We'll do a red one with chrome hardware and a maple fingerboard and see how it comes to the one with the ebony fingerboard. As for a run of them, that's out of my wheelhouse. But I wouldn't be surprised... if there's a lot of demand, it's not uncommon for sales, marketing and the product team to want to do a run."

them to send it back, and I didn't tell Pat, but he played it all night when we played together at the Taylor tribute. That was a lovely thing.

"Jackson made me a version of it. It's got a sustainer, a kill switch, and it's made of basswood, so it's kind of light. Again, the neck is so chunky on that thing. I got that in 2017 and it comes out all the time. It's my tip of the hat to that era. Everyone has their thing, but, for me personally, I like the Jackson, especially some of the stuff they do for me with the giant necks."

Pyromania turned 40 last year and features some incredible tones, as always. What were the keys to your sound back then?

"With my favourite guitar players, I'd really get excited about their vibrato – Michael Schenker and Eddie Van Halen early on. That's why I got a 50-watt head because of Schenker. It wasn't the master volume one; it was one that you'd have to crank up. I had one in my old band, Girl, and this thing was just beautiful.

"A lot of these old tube amps, for whatever reason, one would be great and one would suck, even though

"WHY DO WE STILL DO IT? BECAUSE WE LOVE IT. IT'S JUST CONSTANTLY ONGOING. I LOVE THE FACT THAT WE'RE SO EXCITED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT IT"

they'd be the same model. Mine was great. And the Def Leppard guys mic'd all these things up with 4x12s and spent ages trying all these different amplifiers. But I literally came in, put my 50-watt head on, plugged in and that's how it sounded. That was it; I never used pedals at all. Even now, it's all done through the Fractal, so if there are effects, that's where they come in, from the internal of the Fractal."

As you recorded *Pyromania*, was there a particular guitar moment that immediately stood out?

"I guess the first one I did was *Stagefright*. Mutt Lange, our producer, said, 'Take this cassette home and see if you can come up with something for this song.' This was my first recording with the band and I literally plugged the Destroyer straight into the Marshall. It was the only first take on the album. I just plugged in and that's what came out. That was really exciting. I mean, I used my Les Paul on the solo *Rock! Rock! (Till You Drop)* because there's a slightly different feel and sound. And again, the one constant was the DiMarzio Super Distortion; I've used them on all the models I have forever."

How did *Pyromania* change you as a player in a way that's still present today?

"Mutt Lange taught me that there's a rule... A lot of rock guitar players don't really listen to the rest of the band, which is a very self-absorbed approach, so what I learned from him was how to play in time with the rest of the band. You can place your focus anywhere on the beat, but Mutt's whole thing was to delay it a bit, which gives more groove and makes it more sexy. I really brought that aboard to my playing. And just the melodic strategy and how important it is to have something that enhances the storyline or the narrative. If you've got



PHOTO BY ROSS HALLIN

backing vocals supporting the lead vocals, the guitar also does that. It's all about promoting your song and making it the best it can be."

Beyond the tour and single promotion, what's next for Def Leppard?

"The most exciting thing is that we've got a brand-new stage set, so there will be a lot of running around – it's massive. It reminds me of when we played in the round. There's so much there with the production, the screens and all the content. Anyone who has seen us in the last 10 years knows this is going to be different. It's going to be way more exciting.

"Beyond all that, we've got a bunch of things coming up. There are some European things we've got to do. And there's talk of us doing a Vegas residency with an orchestra. We've done the thing with symphonies before [*Drastic Symphonies*]. That was No 1 for 11 weeks on the crossover classical charts, which was so weird. We never thought we'd be on the classical chart, but there it was. So that's what we've got to do."

***Diamond Star Halos* came out two years ago. Is there a new Def Leppard record in the works?**

"We're feverishly working on new music. Joe [Elliott] and me were going back and forth this past Sunday, kind of like we did during *Diamond Star Halos*, where I'm getting excited about this new song, and then there's another, and we want to make it better, put backing vocals in the right place and find the right sound." **G**

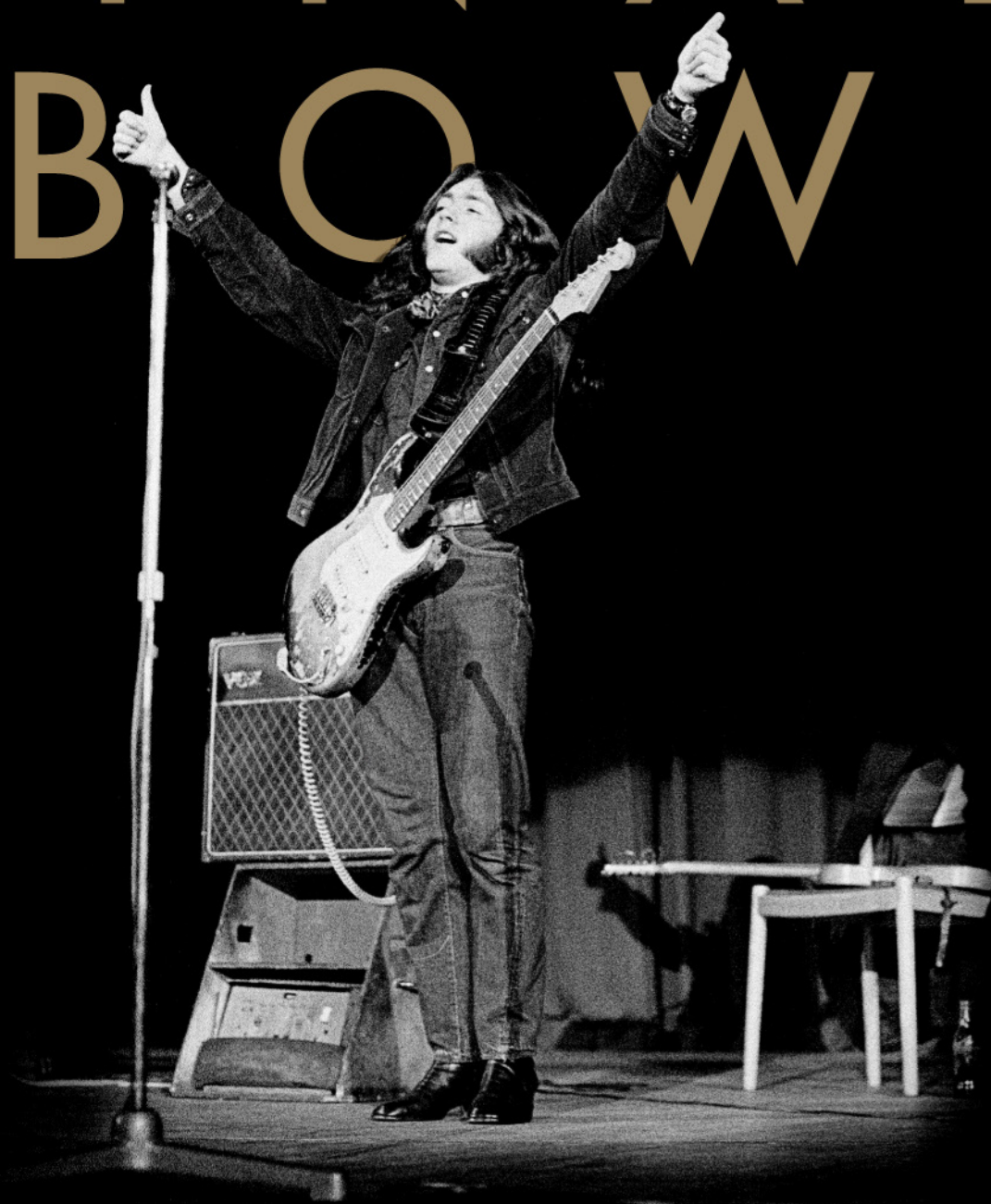


Def Leppard's new single with Tom Morello, *Just Like 73*, is available now via Mercury Records

<https://defleppard.com>

2. Def Leppard (left to right): Vivian Campbell, Phil Collen, Joe Elliott, Rick Savage and Rick Allen

FINAL BOW



Rory Gallagher's 1961 Stratocaster is one of the most recognisable guitars in the world. So closely bound with his own family history and that of Irish music itself, it seemed unlikely the guitar would ever be sold. Now, nearly 30 years after Rory's death, we join Rory's brother Donal to find out why it's time to let go

Words Jamie Dickson

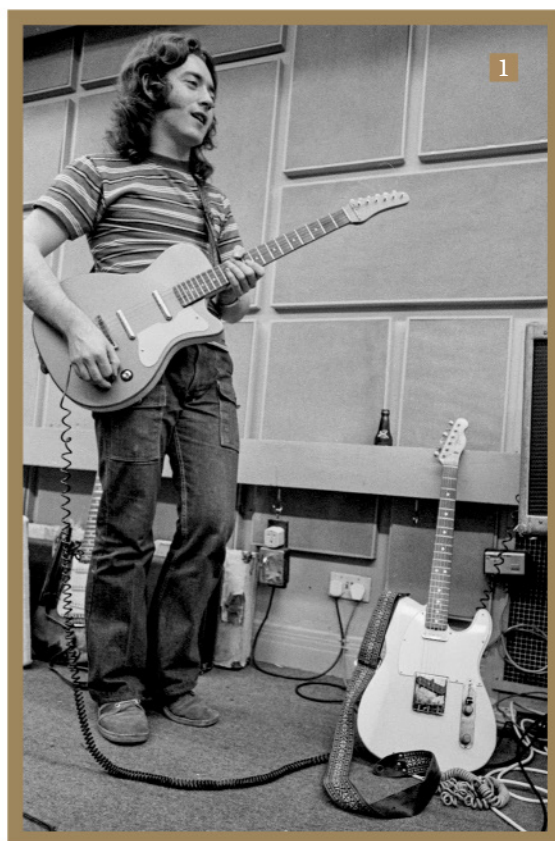
Rory Gallagher's '61 Stratocaster is one of the most iconic guitars of all time. Fender's Custom Shop replica of it is a good guitar, make no doubt, but no craftsman could truly recreate what that guitar has been through, where it's travelled and what it represents.

Bought in Crowley's music store in Cork when Rory was just 15, the guitar was purchased when his mother took a leap of faith to underwrite the hire-purchase agreement for an instrument that was, at the time, beyond the means of most pro musicians. And yet how he repaid her trust – the 14 solo albums that Rory recorded before his untimely death in 1995 remain a benchmark for all guitar players. Not only for the headlong, ecstatic energy of tracks such as *Big Guns* and *Walk On Hot Coals* but also the tender poignancy of songs such as *I'll Admit You're Gone* and *I Fall Apart*.

Not all of his songs were recorded with the Strat, of course – Rory was a collector of all kinds of guitars, most of which he put to use in the studio or on stage – yet the '61 Strat somehow contains them all, embodies all he was as a musician. In the dark years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the sound of Rory playing this guitar in Belfast's Ulster Hall, brought people together, dispelling the shadow of gunman and car-bomb for a few fleeting hours. Its voice rang out from the Isle of Wight festival in 1970 and inspired a young Brian May with a lifelong love of how single-coil pickups could sound when they howled at full tilt through a Vox AC30.

Today, the exposed grain of its alder body has become as grey as sun-bleached driftwood with use, the little that remains of its original sunburst finish mere flakes of lacquer and colour, scattered like islands in a jagged archipelago – a map, somehow, of all the places the Strat has been. A document of genius, written in battered wood and faded paint.

It means a lot, to a lot of people, that guitar. It was, therefore, all the more surprising when the news went out that the Strat (and the rest of Rory's collection of guitars) was being put up for



auction at Bonhams in London this October. Some found it hard to accept – especially in Ireland, where Rory Gallagher is rightly venerated as a pioneer of Irish rock and blues, a hero for the ages.

The possibility that the Strat, in particular, might end up in the hands of a private owner overseas led to calls for the Irish government to intercede, and fans have even begun crowd-funding appeals to buy the guitar for posterity. It's understandable that the guitar is so well loved – less palatable are cynical accusations that the sale was motivated by greed, taunts that must surely hurt the guitar's custodians, Rory's family, especially as no-one knows what that guitar means, in emotional terms, better than they.

"I'm putting blinkers on, to be honest," Rory's brother Donal Gallagher reflects. "I mean, it was the main evening news last night on television in Ireland and the radio news as well. And then the Mayor of Cork, who is a Rory fan, has come out and demanded the government makes sure it stays in Ireland, so it's going to go into that political sphere, as well as everything else."

1. Despite being best known for his 1961 Strat, Rory was never a one-guitar man – much of his collection was American in origin such as his white '66 Tele, above, and what appears to be a twin-pickup Silvertone

LETTING GO

In the 30 years since Rory's death, Donal has become a full-time steward of Rory's guitar collection as well as an ambassador for his musical legacy. However, in recent weeks, he's been besieged by calls about the sale – calls from journalists and fans, government bodies and even Vatican officials. Everyone, it seems, has an opinion on the 100-plus-item sale, which includes nearly all of Rory's guitars, amps and effects.

As custodian of all this gear, it was ultimately Donal's decision – in close consultation with the rest of the family – to sell Rory's instruments. So why do so? And why now?

"Well, several factors," Donal says. "One, I suppose, is the conveyor belt of life and you have to look at your own situation. Next year it'll be the 30th anniversary [of Rory's death], and obviously that puts a lot of things into focus – especially as we've been completing a new documentary on Rory ahead of the anniversary. When I looked at the instruments [while making the documentary] I couldn't help thinking, 'What happens after my demise?' for instance. And I suppose being hospitalised myself [Donal underwent successful treatment for cancer not long ago] brought that into sharper focus. I knew all the difficulties I faced,

"Next year it'll be the 30th anniversary [of Rory's death], and that puts a lot of things into focus" DONAL GALLAGHER

holding the collection, which I never get to see anyway. Because you can't just hang the Strat up over your fireplace, so it's not an object for the family to enjoy."

Donal adds that, over the past three decades, the idea was to tour the guitars through high-profile museums, guitar shows and national institutions. But, especially post-Brexit, staging such international events has become prohibitively difficult on a number of levels.

"It was great to do the *Guitarist* exhibition at Olympia [in 2018], where you could show the guitars

off and people could enjoy them,” Donal recalls. “But opportunities to do that kind of thing have become limited. To have a touring exhibition, visiting different countries... nowadays it’s just so difficult. For instance, we sent the Strat out to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame for their ‘Play It Loud’ exhibition and it required all sorts of special licences.

“But when it went out to the States, Covid hit and so we didn’t see the guitar for nearly three years because of the closure of the museum at that time... So then you have sleepless nights any time the guitar travels because when are you likely to see it again? It’s great that other people are seeing it and visiting it, but you start thinking, ‘What if something happens? If there’s a fire or whatever.’ Obviously it’s insured for its value, but that doesn’t begin to compensate...”

It’s completely understandable that Rory’s fans should want the best for the guitars and for them to remain accessible and in responsible hands. But beneath all the strong, sincere feelings people have about these iconic instruments, lie practical realities that cannot be ignored – including the high cost of keeping them secure. While Donal doesn’t name any exact figures, it’s clear the annual cost of insuring and storing the guitars safely could buy a respectable vintage guitar collection in itself. And Donal’s under no illusion that when his own time comes, that cost would be transferred to his surviving family.

All this has led some to suggest that the guitars should simply be donated to a museum for posterity. It’s an attractive thought – and Donal says he has looked into the possibility many times over the years. But, he argues, simply giving the guitars to a public institution isn’t as straightforward as one might think.

“There are institutions, particularly in Ireland [that could potentially host the guitars]. For example, I’ve had lots of contact with Cork City Hall, and the Music Library in Cork is named after Rory, so initially that’s where the guitar collection was going to go. They were building a brand-new library that was going to be five storeys, with two basement levels, and the whole library was going to be themed around Rory, and either part or all of the collection was [proposed] to be housed there. Now, that was first discussed back in 1998 – but the building is still on the drawing board. In

“You have sleepless nights any time the guitar travels because when are you likely to see it again?” DONAL GALLAGHER

the meantime, you’re holding this collection, waiting for government bodies to build these buildings, you know?”

Likewise, prior attempts to lodge the guitars with private museums have met their own set of problems, Donal says. “There was a museum out in Germany where we were going to put an exhibition on, and that was government-funded in Germany, [it was] their main music one. But by the time we got around to the exhibition, they’d closed it down as they’d run out of funding.

“Another place was the Fender Visitor Center in California. I got invited out to the opening of that, and, you know, it was a wonderful place near the factory, and I thought, ‘Oh, well this would be a great location,’ but sadly that closed down just a couple of years after it had opened.

“And then there was The Beatles Museum in Hamburg, which was

amazing, but that’s also closed down. So you have no certainties with giving the guitars to an institution, as to what happens to the guitars [in the years that follow donation].”

While one imagines it might be possible to draw up some kind of agreement to return the instruments to the family in the event that a host museum closes down, that would, of course, take things back to square one – with fresh arrangements having to be made for their secure storage by the family. That open-ended, long-term responsibility became all the more daunting, Donal says, after the lockup where some of the guitars are currently housed was broken into recently.

“Actually, the people who broke into the unit were targeting other units next to us,” Donal explains. “[There were] six guys dressed as emergency gas men with bolt-cutters and angle grinders. It was horrifying just how quickly they got into our unit – obviously [what was in there] wasn’t what they were after, but it had the same effect [as if they had deliberately targeted it] and you kind of go, ‘Wow, that’s scary.’”

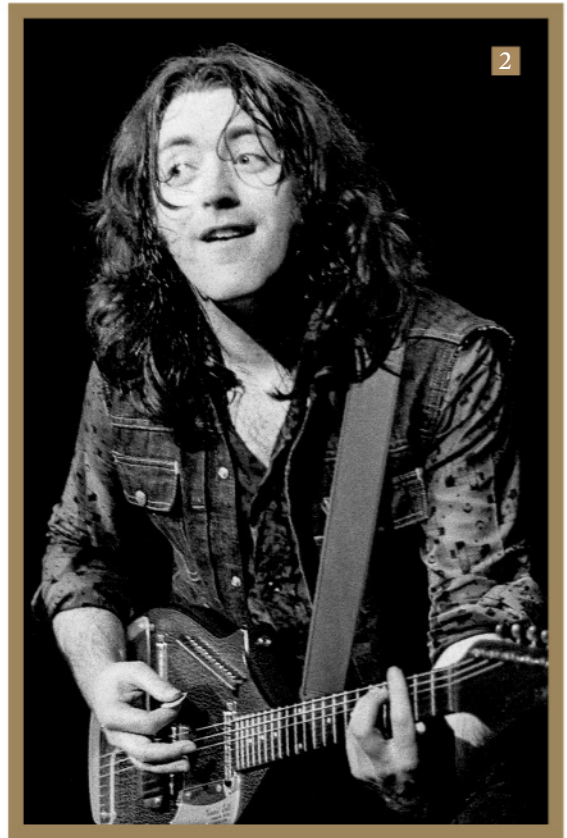


PHOTO BY DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

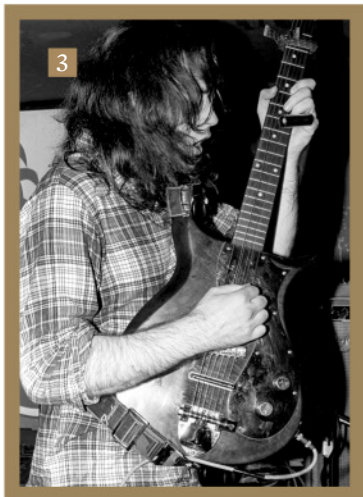
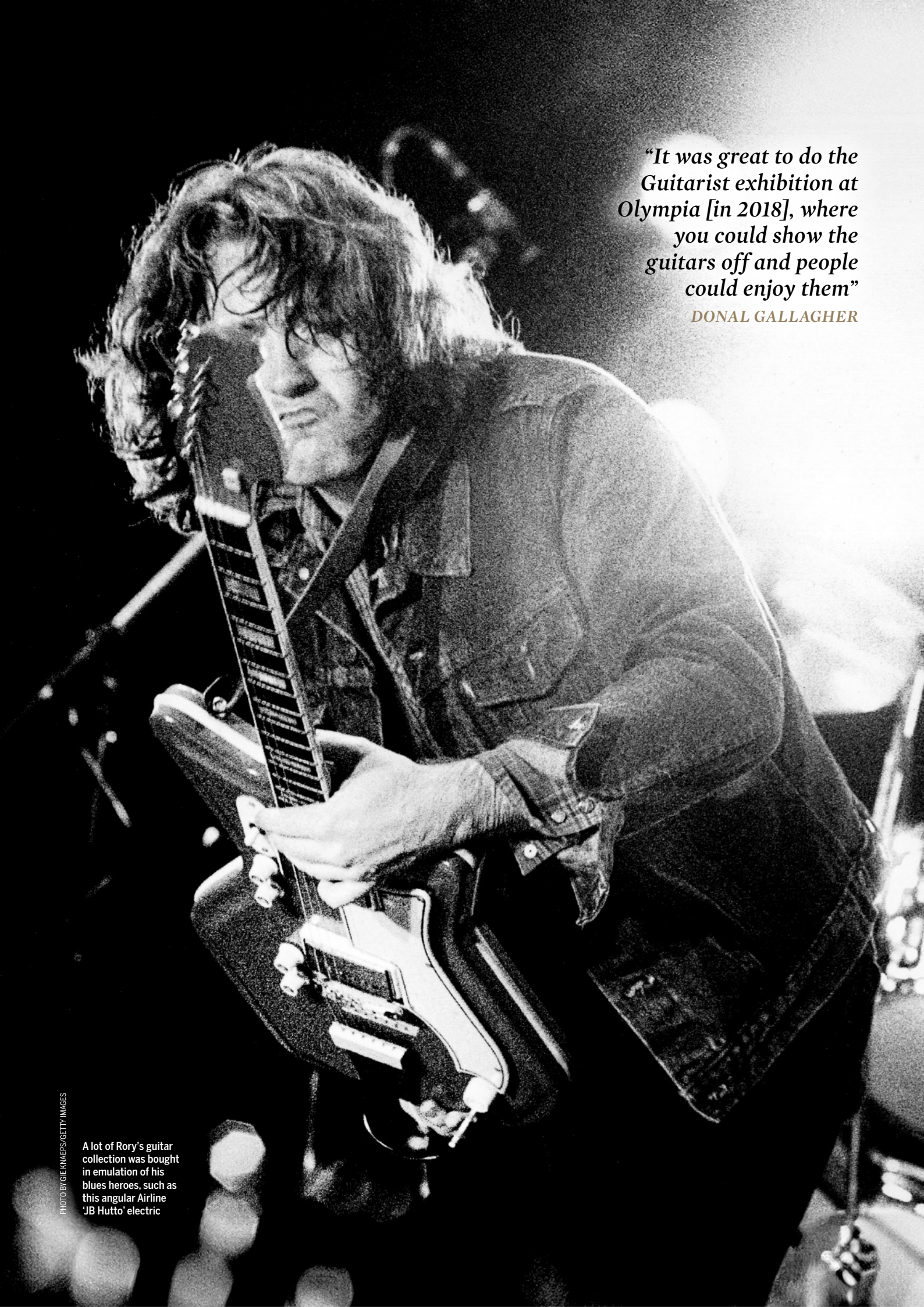


PHOTO BY PETER NOBLE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

2. Rory was a musician first and foremost and so he typically acquired guitars for their musical utility or to spark inspiration, such as his 1968 Coral electric sitar

3. Some of Rory’s guitars – often hotter output, single pickup, single-cut solidbodies – were primarily used for slide, as with his modded 1963 Gretsch Corvette



*"It was great to do the
Guitarist exhibition at
Olympia [in 2018], where
you could show the
guitars off and people
could enjoy them"*

DONAL GALLAGHER

PHOTO BY GIE KNEIPS/GETTY IMAGES

A lot of Rory's guitar collection was bought in emulation of his blues heroes, such as this angular Airline 'JB Hutto' electric

ECLECTIC COLLECTOR

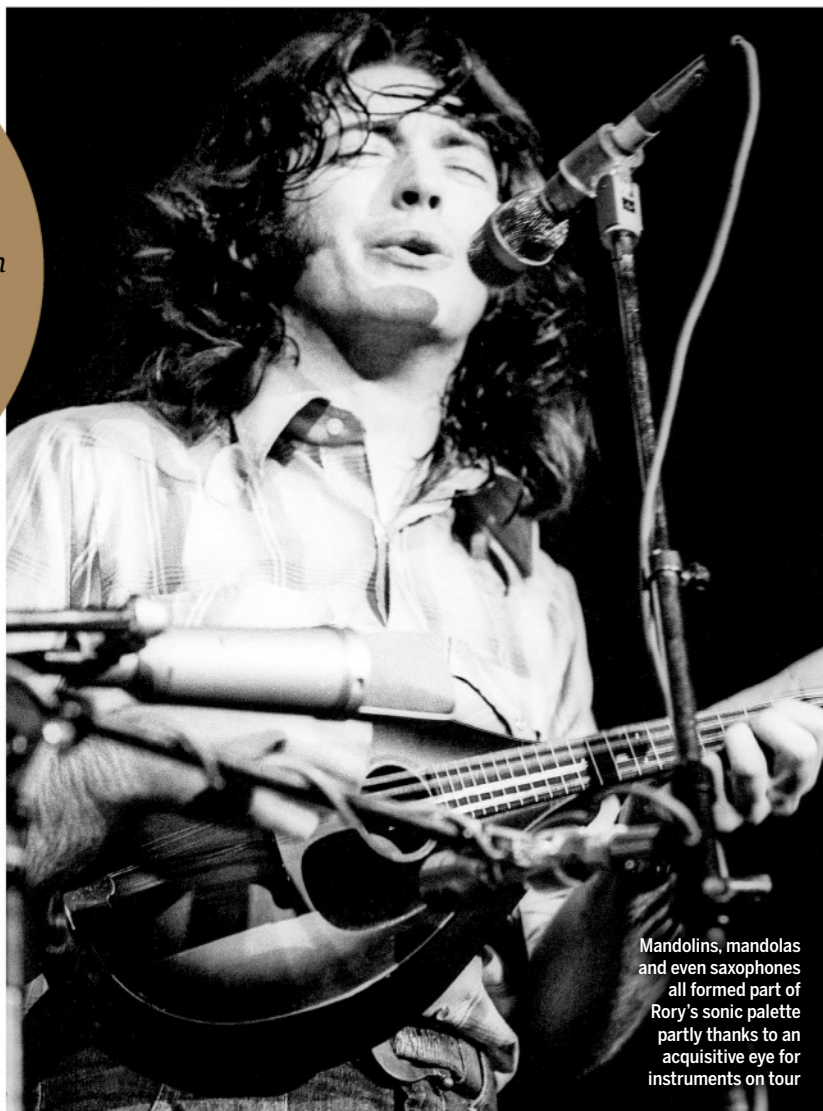
Rory's taste in guitars, amps and effects was wide ranging and often driven by the demands of stage performance – but more than a little hero worship, too, as Donal Gallagher explains

During the years when Rory's Strat saw use in hundreds of gigs, Donal was Rory's *de facto* manager – travelling the world with him and handling everything from air freight to negotiating record deals. He was the only person Rory trusted to handle business while he rocked the world's great stages. He also helped Rory track down an eclectic but hard-working collection of mostly classic American guitars but with a fair smattering of vintage Japanese oddities and rarities, folk instruments and, of course, amps and effects. The motivating force behind Rory's collection was typically either pragmatic need – say, for a workhorse stage or studio instrument – or the desire to emulate his own heroes, who were drawn from the golden age of pre-war blues and jazz.

“Buying the baritone was inspired by Rory's admiration for Glen Campbell. So, the next thing, this guitar was coming into his life”

DONAL GALLAGHER

“Primarily, he was buying a blues guitar collection,” Donal reflects. “If he'd read an article that said Alexis Korner used Japanese guitars, Rory would investigate the thread of that – maybe to try and get the sound that Alexis Korner got from that particular instrument... it would take him down that avenue.



Mandolins, mandolas and even saxophones all formed part of Rory's sonic palette partly thanks to an acquisitive eye for instruments on tour

“But I also remember one of the later purchases he made was a baritone guitar, which he used nicely on *Fresh Evidence*. It wasn't something I was familiar with, but I think [Rory was inspired to get one by] Jet Harris hits like *Diamonds*, which had that big, deep guitar sound. We always thought that was Jet Harris playing the bass but actually there were specific baritone guitars [involved]. I think buying the baritone was also inspired by Rory's admiration for Glen Campbell and his solo on *Wichita Lineman*. So the next thing, this baritone guitar was coming into his life. You know?”

Despite being relentless in pursuit of certain instruments, Rory was very particular about what he wanted – and sometimes passed up even highly collectible guitars if they didn't feel like a good fit for him, including a guitar that was almost a twin to Rory's '61 Strat.

“Another time, somewhere in Texas, this guy turned up at this venue and he had a sunburst Stratocaster to show Rory. He came backstage and I met him, and he said, ‘I wonder if your brother would be interested in this? It would be the same age as his.’ And then we compared serial numbers and found it was only one digit off Rory's Strat and I'm going, ‘Oh my God.’ Rory was always saying, ‘What if anything ever happened to the Strat?’ so I thought it was a certainty he'd want to buy this guitar. I asked the guy to wait while Rory finished his soundcheck, but, to me, it wasn't even a question of how much. But, actually, it was quite peculiar – when Rory saw the guitar, I remember just feeling in myself, ‘He's not even going to entertain this.’ And, in fact, he didn't buy it. Although, for the life of me, I couldn't understand why he wouldn't.”

PHOTO BY IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

NEXT LIFE

Clearly, the decision to sell the collection was not taken lightly – and that both personal factors and long-term practical obligations weighed in the balance. When the decision was made, Donal did so in close consultation with his wider family. One concern raised by fans is that Rory's Strat could end up in some collector's bank vault. But Donal says the irony is that the Strat, due to its high

4. Rory's Martin D-35 gave him the classic Dreadnought voice that every working guitarist's collection needs. It was bought in London in 1969

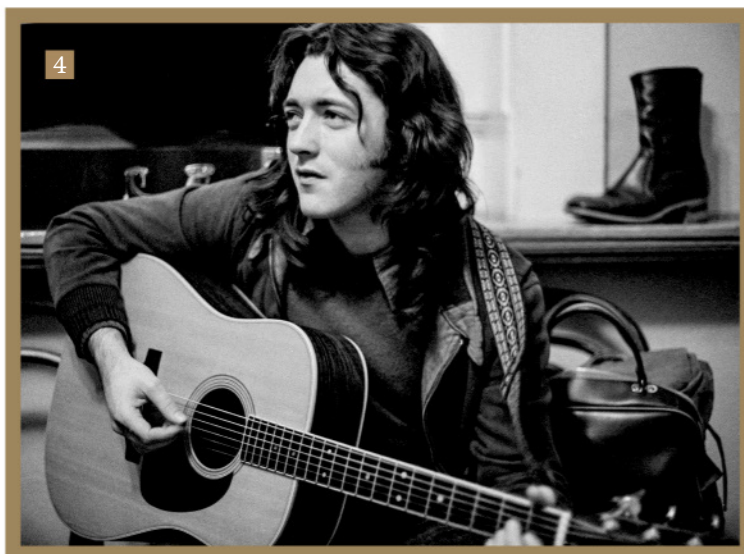


PHOTO BY MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

"The guitar has got to move on. The life it's got at present isn't necessarily the kindest one it could have" DONAL GALLAGHER

value and historic status, already is kept in a bank vault, out of view most of the time.

"Put it this way, if I was a man who could play guitar and enjoyed playing it, that'd be one thing," he reflects. "If the family had wanted to keep it, that would be another thing. If I didn't have to worry about the safety aspect of it and that all goes with insuring an instrument like that and it was in my house all day... it still wouldn't get any use. I always saw it as having a life of its own. I mean, you can still watch the footage of the guy who originally had the guitar [before Rory bought it] on YouTube – he was called Jim Conlon

5. Rory with the 1932 National Triolian that became, in resonator terms, what the '61 Strat was to his electric playing – a pillar of his live performances

and he was in a band called the Royal Showband.

"It's so difficult. The guitar has got a life of its own and it's got to move on. And put it this way: I think that the life it's got at present isn't necessarily the kindest one it could have. To be sitting in a bank vault is not the way. And whatever few years I might have left... I mean, it's about trying to pass it on before the inevitable happens, you know? You hope that if somebody wants to bid on it and buy it, that they'll cherish it, and they're doing it for all the right reasons. But either way, hopefully the instrument gets played and used or featured somewhere."

While it's unlikely that everyone will be reconciled to the idea of the guitars being sold, it's certainly a lot more comprehensible in the light of what Donal has to say on the matter. It would be nice to think that another leading guitarist will buy the Strat – but there are no guarantees. And in the instrument's life to date there have been few of those anyway. If Rory's Strat hadn't been returned after being stolen early on in his career, none of this would be taking place. If Rory hadn't died, all too soon, perhaps he'd be playing it yet. Perhaps, maybe, what if? It's only human to ask those questions. But in reality, to paraphrase George Harrison, all things must pass.

In the meantime, while the guitars are still in the family's possession a little longer, we decided to document them on camera one last time at the scene of some of Rory's most memorable moments on stage – including the breakthrough moment when Taste supported Cream for the latter's farewell show – the Royal Albert Hall in London.

With Donal as our guide, in the following pages we share his personal favourite stories about seven guitars from Rory's collection that will be under the hammer in October... **G**

The Rory Gallagher Collection will be auctioned at Bonhams in New Bond Street, London, on 17 October 2024 www.bonhams.com

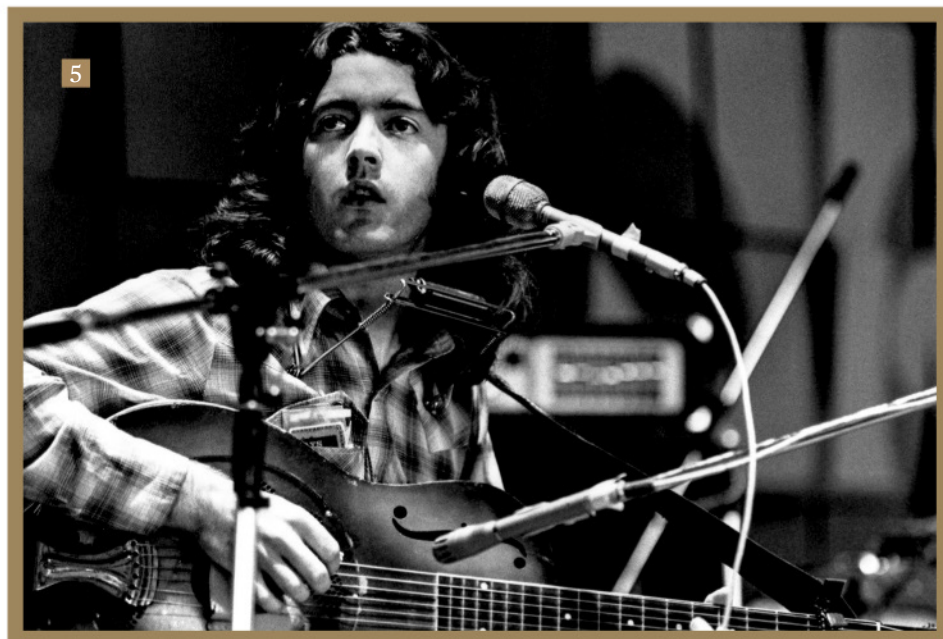


PHOTO BY ANDREW PUTLER/RED FERNS/GETTY IMAGES

A 1961 Fender Stratocaster guitar is the central focus, standing on a black tripod stand. The guitar has a heavily worn, dark brown body with significant peeling of the finish, revealing a lighter wood underneath. It features a white pickguard, three single-coil pickups, and a tremolo bridge. The neck is dark wood with a fretboard. The background is a grand, ornate theater interior with red seats, gold-colored architectural details, and a ceiling with large, blue, disc-shaped light fixtures. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the guitar's texture and the theater's grandeur.

1961
FENDER
STRATOCASTER

Rory's iconic Strat is one of the most storied guitars in the world. But the day Rory, with untold thousands of gigs under his belt, became stage struck in the presence of his hero is one of Donal Gallagher's favourite tales

For this issue we photographed Rory's guitars, for perhaps the final time, in the Royal Albert Hall – the scene of some of Rory's most glorious moments. So perhaps it's only fitting we share a story about the one occasion where Rory, the consummate live performer, was lost for words and paralysed by stage fright at the Royal Albert Hall in the presence of his childhood musical.

"To Rory, Lonnie Donegan was the first guy [to inspire him to play roots American music] – even though he wasn't an electric guitarist," explains Donal Gallagher, "But it was that introduction to blues music and Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly, you know – Lonnie really was bringing it through... he was the guy who was passing the torch down the line.

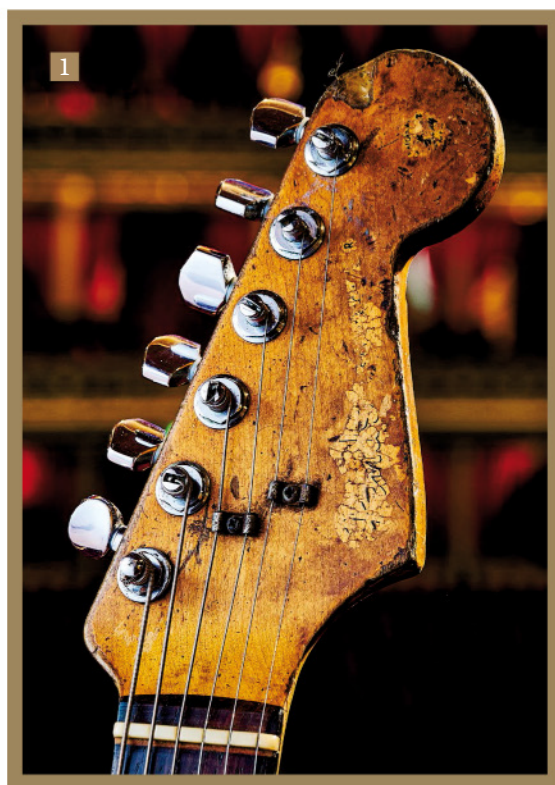
"In December '75, we'd been on tour as usual with Rory non-stop and I hadn't managed to find him a present for Christmas. And this was the first concert at the Royal Albert Hall since The Nice set fire to the American flag on stage in July 1968 – which curtailed all rock at the Albert Hall. So it was a very important concert, not just for Rory but for rock, generally. Everyone behaved. Prior to that, Rory had played there with Taste for the Cream farewell gig and a few other shows.

"So we had set up in the afternoon and Rod de'Ath, the

"The band had come on, but no Rory: most unusual. He was in a state of shock and couldn't bring himself to step on stage!"

drummer, had got himself a new drum kit made by an offshoot of Arbiter who dealt with Fender here in the UK. The guy who brought the kit was a drummer himself and I got chatting with him. I said, 'Who do you play with?' And he said, 'Oh, Lonnie Donegan, when he's in town,' and I went, 'Oh my God, where is Lonnie now?' Because he'd kind of gone off the radar quite a bit.

"And he said, 'Well, he's in town as it happens.' So I said, 'Would you ask him along tonight?' And



1. The Fender decal is all but obliterated on the headstock – testament to the thousands of gigs performed with this iconic guitar over Rory's career. At one stage it was set aside so it could dry out from all the perspiration it had absorbed during tours

so he took me down to a pay phone at the back and he dialled the number, put the sixpence or shilling in, and just literally handed me the phone. So it was a cold call to Lonnie Donegan.

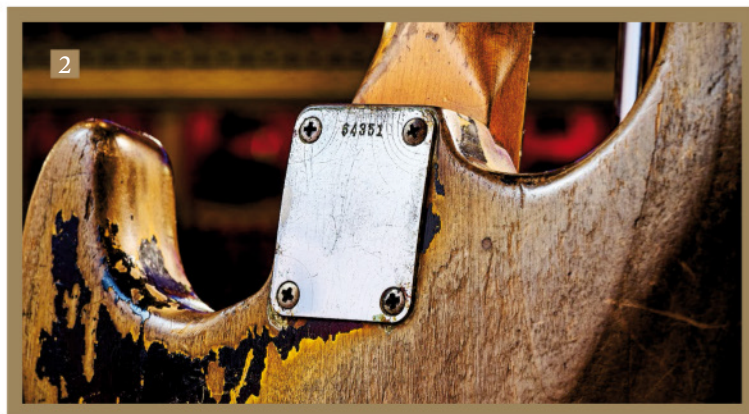
"Lonnie came on the line and I explained how much Rory and I admired him and told him that Rory was playing the Albert Hall that evening and, despite the short notice, would he consider coming to the gig. And he kind of went, 'Oh, well...' and hemmed and hawed. Then he said, 'Well, look, if you meet me at the stage door I'll come – but I don't want any messing around getting in and all that,' and I said, 'I'll be there.'

"So I was waiting there when he arrived and he came in a dress suit and we were all in our casual Western shirts and jeans and what have you. And he was flabbergasted because in his day playing the Royal Albert Hall was like going on the BBC to read the news – you had to wear a dress suit. It was quite formal. So I engaged with him anyway and just said, 'Look, I didn't want to disappoint Rory by telling him, but then you weren't able to make it or something like that.' And I said, 'But would you do us the honour of announcing Rory on stage?'

"He said he would, provided I announced *him* on stage because he didn't want to go on cold – he said, 'No-one in this audience will know me.' But I said, 'Don't worry, they will,' you know? And I said that this was to be a surprise for Rory, his Christmas present. Anyway, I went on and introduced Lonnie Donegan and explained how Rory was one of his biggest fans and he was such an inspiration to Rory and the crowd took to their feet and gave him a very warm reception, and Lonnie came on and said a couple of words and introduced Rory.

"I was looking around to see where Rory was but there was no Rory. Normally, he came on like a bullet, straight across the stage, in his usual form. The band had come on, but no Rory: most unusual. But, in fact, Rory was in a state of shock and couldn't bring himself to step on stage!

Afterwards he said, 'It was lovely, but *never* do this to me again.' He'd actually got stage fright because he was performing in front of one of his heroes." **G**



2. Donal Gallagher says a visitor to a show in Texas brought along another Strat with a serial number only one digit away from Rory's '61 sunburst – although the guitar was for sale, Rory chose not to buy it

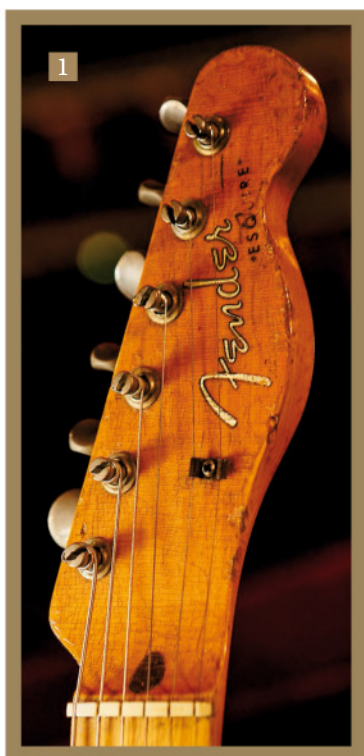
1959
FENDER
ESQUIRE

Heavily modded over the years, this hot-sounding Esquire was, outside of the Strat, Rory's go-to Fender for slide work – but it nearly came to an untimely demise on an airport runway...



**VIDEO
EXCLUSIVE!**

Watch Joe Bonamassa play
through Rory's '59 Esquire
<http://bit.ly/guitaristextra>



Rory's 1959 Fender Esquire, the earliest photos of which date from live gigs in Milwaukee, 1971, saw many changes over the years. A crude engraving on the guitar's neckplate, still visible today, gives a clue to the guitar's origins, reading: "Property Of Buzz Harding, Greensburg Kansas". But once in Rory's possession it would never leave his side. In fact, the

1. The headstock says 'Esquire' but the pickup configuration is that of a Telecaster – a mod that had already been made when the guitar came to Rory

2. The neck plate still bears the name and home city of a former owner, Buzz Harding, though the inscription has been partly scored out, possibly by Rory

"The guy did a full circle to go back – and drove straight over the guitar! And I thought, 'That's it – dead...'"

only time its place in his collection was in serious jeopardy was when it was crushed on a runway and then inadvertently refinished in a colour Rory hated. Donal Gallagher takes up the story.

"Back in the early 70s, we were touring America. We had arrived at some airport on a regional flight – it was a small jet, maybe a DC-9 – and we'd got off the plane. It was in the Midwest, I think it was the afternoon flight to Columbus, Ohio, or some town like that. Through the [arrival hall] window, you could see

there was a conveyor belt with the instruments coming down in their cases out of the plane's hold. They weren't even flightcases, when I think about it. Crazy, it was. We always managed to get the Strat on board the plane with us though.

"So we were watching the Esquire and the bass being unloaded from the plane [from inside the arrivals terminal] and put on a luggage trailer, when I saw the Esquire case fall to the ground, and the guitar just fell out of it, and I thought, 'Oh Jesus.' We were looking through the plate-glass window, and kind of shouting and banging. As we were waving at the guy driving

the tractor, he did a full circle, to go back – and drove straight over the guitar! And I thought, 'That's it – dead.'

"The gig that night was important for Rory and so I remember getting to the venue and thinking, 'Oh Jesus,' and plugging the Esquire in. They're as tough as nails, Esquires, but the body was completely scraped and scored and it was actually outshining the Strat as being the most worn guitar on stage that night!"

The Esquire needed extensive repairs to the body and crushed bridge hardware when it returned to London, which were completed by Chris Eccleshall. During the repair, Chris fitted 60s-style threaded steel saddles to the bridge and a new scratchplate, swapping out the seven-screw single-ply scratchplate present on the guitar at time of repair for a white five-screw single-ply one.

"As Rory was due to go out on tour again, Chris decided the original nitro finish couldn't be replicated in time and used a faster-drying poly finish during the repairs, which left the guitar with an unfortunate greenish hue in certain lights. Donal says Chris Eccleshall joked that this was perhaps appropriate for an Irish artist when he presented the guitar to Rory. Rory was, however, unamused.

"It just was the most awkward moment. You know? Rory was a peaceful man, but I thought he'd thump poor Chris on the spot," Donal jokes, adding that the guitar was soon refinished by Chris a second time and today sports a solid black paint finish. **G**



3. The Esquire's original bridge and saddles had to be replaced after its calamitous accident at the airport. The extensive repairs were made by the luthier Chris Eccleshall, who died in 2020

A close-up photograph of a 1932 National Triolian Resonator guitar resting inside its open, worn, reddish-brown velvet-lined case. The guitar has a brass body with a large 'f' logo on the front plate, which is perforated with a grid of small holes. The body shows signs of age and wear, with some paint missing. The neck is made of wood with a fretboard and a metal bridge. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some warm, glowing lights.

1932
NATIONAL
TRIOLIAN
RESONATOR

*Rory's battered National Triolian
could be seen as the acoustic sibling
of his infamously weathered 1961
Strat – though this metal
workhorse could howl, too*



1

Fans of Rory's famous *Irish Tour '74* album – one of the great live rock and blues recordings of our time – will know the National as the guitar used on the track *As The Crow Flies*, with its metallic yet soulful voice evoking so many of the old blues and roots recordings that inspired Rory growing up.

"I remember Rory picked it up in Denver, and he was particularly after a resonator like the one Scrapper Blackwell played," Donal Gallagher recalls.

1. Rory's Triolian was normally set up for slide, though he did use it for fretted playing as needed

2. The earliest National Triolians featured wooden bodies but this was soon changed to metal, as on Rory's guitar, finished in a 'walnut' sunburst



2

to pick it up and play it, it almost plays you. I can tell you, it brings power to your hands, you move from that neck to the Strat and it's like running your hand across a jelly."

Despite its powerfully projecting sound, the guitar – serial number 513W – often struggled to be heard above the cheering of Rory's fans on tour. Donal says this ongoing issue led to the guitar being superseded by a newer National late in Rory's career.

"Rory didn't have a pickup on the guitar, he just played it

into the mic and let it carry," Donal says. "I think we attempted various bugs and things, but also the paint was inclined to flake, so putting anything like glue or epoxy on it never ever worked. In fact, at the end of a tour Rory did in 1991, he discovered that National had brought out a solid version [of the resonator concept], called the Resoelectric, which had built-in pickups [see page 78]. And Rory managed to get one of those, even though there was something like a year's waiting list. In other words, they let Rory jump the queue and get his hands on one.

"I remember we were on our way from San Francisco back down to LA and an arrangement was made with National, who were based in San Luis Obispo, where they agreed to drive out to the highway with the guitar.

We were on the highway and we had to time it so we could pick the guitar up at a roadside truck stop.

"The thing we had to deal with was that when Rory was playing live, his audience loved the acoustic songs, so they'd really start cheering and clapping along. So you were forever trying to get the volume on that guitar up above the audience as much as you possibly could; it would then start to squeak and squeal quite a bit. That Resoelectric guitar eventually solved the problem of feedback." **G**

"Despite its powerfully projecting sound, the guitar often struggled to be heard above the cheering of Rory's fans on tour"

Rory himself added more detail about the purchase in a 1977 interview with *International Musician*, stating that: "I got it from a guy in the States. You get these travelling guitar salesmen going round. I got it for a very reasonable price – about £100.

"I feel it sounds better than the steel-fronted model... It's got more of a banjo sound and it's got the old classical machineheads... The resonator caved in, believe it or not, so I had that beaten out again... The National is really good, though, even for a beginner

3. Rory's Triolian shows evidence of the heavy use it got on tour – the flaking paint proved an impediment to fixing contact mics to it over the years. Rory's example is a 12-frets-to-the-body design though later Triolians changed to a 14-fret neck instead



3

A high-angle, close-up photograph of a 1963 Gretsch Corvette electric guitar resting inside its open hardshell case. The guitar has a vibrant red finish on the body and a black pickguard. It features a single P-90 pickup, a chrome bridge, and a chrome tailpiece. The neck is made of dark wood with white frets and dot inlays. The guitar is positioned diagonally across the frame. The case's interior is lined with a plush, olive-green material. A light-colored leather strap is draped over the left side of the guitar, and a portion of a rainbow-striped strap is visible at the bottom. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the guitar's finish and the case's lining.

1963
GRETSCH
CORVETTE

*A search for empty guitar cases
ironically turned up this punchy
single-pickup Gretsch – a potent
electric that, hot-rodded with
a P-90, became a mainstay*

Rory had a lifelong affection for single-pickup student guitars that he often modded with more powerful pickups then played on the major stages of the world. Arguably, this guitar – serial number 60937 – is the most famous guitar of that style in Rory’s collection. Ironically, however, it was found by chance by Donal Gallagher while Rory browsed a nearby guitar store.

“This guitar was found on one of the many trips to LA we made over the years. We were there for just a few hours in the afternoon, and Rory said he wanted to visit a guitar store, I think it was called Valley Sound, and he knew the guy there. So I said, ‘Okay, Rory, let’s go down. But it’s a nightmare parking because there’s only a couple of meters.’ So I dropped him at the place, and he said, ‘Oh, I think they have something I might want, I won’t be very long,’ and, of course, he walks in

1. Gretsch’s answer to the Les Paul Junior was introduced in 1961 and was available in a mahogany finish (as in this case) or Platinum Grey though the latter proved a short-lived option, discontinued in 1963

2. Rory’s Gretsch Corvette, which his brother Donal found by chance in Los Angeles, features a single P-90 pickup at the bridge but this variant of the Corvette would have originally had a single Hi-Lo ‘Tron pickup when new from the factory. The option to have a flat-arm vibrato on single-pickup Corvette models was offered from 1963, which chimes with the appointments of this ‘63 example



“Going into guitar stores was always funny because you’d get guys immediately start a Rory guitar riff at full volume...”

the door and I said, ‘Okay, I’ll stay with the car.’

“Going into guitar stores in places like LA, where they knew who Rory was, was always funny because you’d get other guys trying a guitar out and, of course, they’d see him and immediately start a Rory guitar riff at full volume, to show that they knew

who he was. A lot of the time, my head wouldn’t be in the right space for that, but Rory took it gallantly. Anyway, he was in there and I was outside with the car. You’re not supposed to do it, but I kept feeding quarters into the parking meter, hoping the attendant wouldn’t spot me doing it, but I was getting so bored.

“But then I realised we were parked outside a pawn shop, and I kind of looked and I thought, ‘Oh, I wonder if they have any spare guitar cases.’ We had this ongoing thing where Rory was picking up loads of guitars, but none of them had decent cases – or sometimes the original cases had been lost or they weren’t up to touring. And I thought, ‘Well, I’ll kill five minutes.’ So I went into the store and I said, ‘Would you have any guitar cases?’ and the guy said, ‘Oh, do you not want to buy a guitar?’ and I said, ‘No, no, I haven’t got the money for that.’ I was like, you know, pleading poverty.

“I’d seen one case that looked good, but he said, ‘Oh, well, you’d have to buy this guitar to get the case.’ So I looked at it and it was a Gretsch Corvette. So I said, ‘How much do you want for that, then?’ and he said, ‘Oh, it’s \$500.’ But I was seriously focusing on the very good case that it had. So in the end, I got him down to \$150.

“I took it out and put it in the boot of the car, fed the meter some more and waited for Rory. Rory eventually came over, all disappointed that he hadn’t found anything, and I said, ‘Well, Rory, look, you’ll probably kill me for this, but I spotted they had a guitar... Actually, the case is probably much better than the guitar is.’

“So he said, ‘What is it?’ and I said, ‘It’s a Gretsch,’ and he said, ‘A Gretsch?’ and I opened the trunk of the car, he looked at it and he just closed it down again and said, ‘Let’s get out of here before they realise what they’ve sold you [laughs].’” **G**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSEPH BRANSTON

1968
CORAL 3S19
ELECTRIC SITAR

The sound of the electric sitar is synonymous with Rory tracks such as Philby – but despite its niche utility as an instrument, it ended up being one of the most costly guitars he ever used



It's well known that Rory used an electric Coral Sitar for tracks such as *Philby*, but less well known is how much his devotion to its atmospheric sound ended up costing. The 19-string instrument, made by the Danelectro sub-brand Coral in collaboration with session guitarist Vinnie Bell, was surprisingly rare and reputedly only around 50 were ever made, many of which were already owned by well-known players such as Pete Townshend. So Rory simply hired one for touring. But, being a scarce item, doing so cost him an arm and a leg.

"I'd got to the point of frustration with touring costs and budgets," Donal Gallagher recalls, adding that he tried to find Rory a Coral Sitar he could buy and so do away with hire costs. To Donal's further chagrin, a seemingly perfect example that he found for sale on tour in Australia was rejected by Rory, leaving him back at square one, paying the sitar bills. However, Donal eventually spotted another one for sale for \$1,500 in New York.

Taking matters into his own hands, he decided to buy it on a business trip and bring it back for Rory. Little did he know that the Coral Sitar would once again end up costing dear. Donal takes up the story: "I had to make a short trip out to the States as we were negotiating a new record

"I walked through the 'Nothing To Declare' lane, though the sitar was in an embarrassment of a guitar case at that point..."

deal with Mercury Records at the time," he says. "I had an accountant and a lawyer with me so that the deal could be done within a week – it was quite a pressure. But I took the time then to look up one of the guitar traders out in New Jersey who had a Coral Sitar listed on its sales pamphlet, and picked it up.

"On the last night before we were flying back, the accountant and the lawyer said, 'Oh, as it happens, Cliff Richard's in town tonight doing a gig. Would you



1. The Coral brand was a subsidiary of Danelectro. While not many electric sitars were made back in the late 60s, they've been on their fair share of hits such as Denny Dias' solo on Steely Dan's *Do It Again*

like to go along with us?" And I said, 'Oh, that's great.' I hadn't seen Cliff, and it was unusual to see him in New York, because he wasn't so big in America.

"So it was a lovely theatre and a great gig and I had a quick chat with Cliff after the show. He told me he was going back to London the next day and asked me when I was heading back, so I said, 'Well, we're booked to fly back in the morning at 10 o'clock.' And he said, 'Oh, I'm on the 10 o'clock as well. See you on board.'

"Well, it turned out he was on the 10 o'clock Concorde. However, we had been given seats in first class by the record company. So I got to the airport

and said to the guy at check-in, 'The 10 o'clock is Concorde, isn't it?' 'No, no, no,' he replied. 'It's a different flight – but they go out at the same time.' And I said, 'Well, what's the cost to change and go on Concorde?' Because it was due to be taken out of service, even then, and I wanted to fly on it at least once. So he said, 'Would that be cash or charge?' and I said, 'Cash, if it's the right price' [laughs]. So in a New York fashion, I gave the guy cash and so the next thing we're on.

"So the sitar came back on Concorde, and then everyone sort of got their baggage at Heathrow. Cliff had an impressive entourage with him and the two guys I was with both had a suit and tie on. So I decided that I'd walk through the 'Nothing To Declare' lane with them, though the sitar was in an embarrassment of a guitar case at that point.

"Anyway, I got the nod and was pulled over by the customs inspector. I said something like, 'Well, I'm just bringing it back from my brother. I'm not a player. It's something that was picked up in New York for him as a gift.' And the guy says, 'Oh, well these things can be worth a lot.' So I was going, 'Are you serious?' And he said, 'Well, you have to pay something for it [in import tax]. Hang on there a minute.' And he went off and came back with a manual. Not only that, within the manual, he had the pamphlet from the guitar trader that I bought the Coral Sitar from in America with the price on!

"So it became an even more expensive guitar – but worth every penny and I paid the charge to Customs." **G**



2. Sympathetic 'drone' strings, 13 in number, provide some of the shimmer of a real sitar. They are tuneable and have their own dedicated pickup

1960
GIBSON
MELODY MAKER

Gibson's under-appreciated student electric proved potent enough for Slash, especially after Rory had modded it with a poky humbucker



This 1960 Melody Maker was nudged in a more Les Paul-like direction, with the addition of a humbucker at the bridge, when Rory acquired it in 1985 originally for slide work. However, when a certain member of Guns N' Roses turned up at a Los Angeles gig to pay homage to Rory, it came in handy for another purpose, as Donal Gallagher explains.

"In March of 1991, we'd arrived back in LA after a long flight from Sydney. Oddly enough, we'd left Australia on 2 March, which was Rory's birthday. I'd kind of planned the flights so that Rory would get two birthdays [after crossing the International Date Line]. The first gig in LA was at the Roxy down on the

1. Presumably as a cost and labour-saving measure, the 1960 Melody Maker had a straight-sided headstock without the 'wings' of the classic Gibson 'open book' headstock design

2. Launched in 1959, the Melody Maker had a slab body 1 3/8" deep, sporting a single cutaway. The model then switched to a twin-cutaway design in 1961

"I went backstage and said to Rory, 'There's a guy called Slash, who's come to see you.' I didn't know too much about him..."

Strip. Anyway, thanks to this sort of *Lost In Translation* flight experience, everyone was not in the best of humour. So I was just trying to get everyone's spirits up for the show and kick off the whole tour at the Roxy.

"And somebody said that Slash from Guns N' Roses was there and the bass player, Duff McKagan, and that they'd come to see Rory. So I went backstage and said to Rory, 'There's a guy out there called Slash, who's come to see you.' I didn't personally know too much about him. I kind of knew of

3. Rory beefed up his '60 Melody Maker with a humbucker, but it would have originally had a covered single-coil pickup without visible poles 5/8" wide, plus a simple wrapover bridge without the intonation adjustment of the non-original bridge on Rory's Melody Maker



the band but not much about him as an individual – but Rory's eyes lit up and he went, 'Oh my God.' I said that they were asking if Slash could come up and have a jam. And Rory said, 'All right.'

"Rory gave me chapter and verse about how Slash was great and a brilliant player and then he said, 'Oh, go and find the Gibson Melody Maker' for him. A lot of the gear still hadn't arrived by airfreight from Australia at that point, but luckily the Melody Maker had and it was just out in the truck, so I brought it in.

"Rory said, 'Oh, he'll like playing that.' If Rory ever invited another guitarist up for a jam session, he'd make sure that they got a guitar that Rory considered they'd be very comfortable with. So, anyway, at the end of the show we signalled that it was time for the jam session and Slash comes up and I said, 'Oh, Rory wants you to have this guitar for the jam.' He strapped it on [with approval] and went, 'Oh my God, a Melody Maker, how did he figure that out?' But that was Rory. And it was an excellent jam." **G**



1961
KAY K1962
VALUE LEADER

This vibey early 60s electric looked too pricey to buy, even with the help of blues musician John Hammond Jr – but Rory's charm secured it in a New York minute, as Donal explains



“John Hammond Jr is the son of John Hammond, the great A&R man at CBS who signed Bob Dylan. Oddly enough, he never signed his son, but Rory loved John Hammond Jr’s albums and his playing, and one of his ambitions, once he got out to the States, was to meet up with him. This was on the ’69 tour,

1. This particular Kay was kept at home a lot by Rory. His nephew Daniel Gallagher remembers it from childhood visits to his uncle – possibly giving it the status of Rory’s ‘sofa guitar’

So John took him down to 11th Street down in Bleecker Street [near] the Bowery, which was not a fashionable area back then, but there was a store there that John knew about, a kind of pawn shop, and on the second floor Rory found exactly what he was looking for.

“Rory brought it down and [as one familiar with New York

haggling] John took control of the situation to get Rory a good deal. But the lady wanted \$500 for the guitar and wasn’t budging. But then Rory interjected himself and spoke to her, chatted to her, and as John later said, that beautiful thick Irish accent that could melt anyone’s heart. And the lady ended up selling the guitar to Rory for \$50!” **G**

“[Rory’s] beautiful thick Irish accent could melt anyone’s heart. And the lady ended up selling the guitar to him for \$50”

and Rory was trying to track him down in New York.

“In the end I think Eric Clapton provided a number for John, but Rory didn’t connect with him on that tour – it was when we went back in ’71. Rory called him up and had a chat and obviously, like all good guitar players, he knew where the best guitars were, and Rory was particularly after something to play blues on.

2. Volume and tone controls are handily marked with large ‘V’ and ‘T’ characters for ease of use

3. Kay’s Value Leader model was made in single-, double- and triple-pickup variants, and despite its solid looks it’s a lightweight semi-hollow design with a very simple wooden bridge



THE
BEST OF
THE REST

The 100-plus item sale of Rory's gear will include nearly all his guitars amps, and (though not yet catalogued) his effects, so there's something for everyone. Here's our pick of the gear that's been announced so far...



1965 AIRLINE 'JB
HUTTO' STYLE
ESTIMATE £12,000–15,000

A stage-used cult-classic with a Res-O-Glas body



1963 SUPRO
DUAL TONE
ESTIMATE £5,000–7,000

Another plastic-bodied blueser with juke-joint mojo



1966 FENDER
STRATOCASTER
ESTIMATE £120,00–150,000

A Brazilian-'board Tele that was pivotal in Rory's career



1967 VOX MARK
XII SPECIAL
ESTIMATE £10,000–15,000

Bought by Rory in honour of Brian Jones of the Stones



1971 ECCLESHALL
ELECTRIC MANDOLA
ESTIMATE £1,500–2,000

Mahogany solidbody made for Rory by Chris Eccleshall



1990 NATIONAL
R-1 RESOLECTRIC
ESTIMATE £2,000–3,000

A feedback-proof modern successor to Rory's Triolian



1959 GUYATONE
LG-60B
ESTIMATE £2,000–3,000

An early model that inspired Rory's custom Guyatone



1940s OAHU LAP
STEEL
ESTIMATE £1,500–2,000

Charming WWII-era slide machine with floral decals

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BONHAMS



1960 DANELECTRO
3021 SHORTHORN
ESTIMATE £12,000–15,000

Rory's love of Dan-Os found expression in this classic



1963 EPIPHONE
CORONET
ESTIMATE £8,000–10,000

Vibey single-pickup P-90 double-cut electric



1958 FENDER
BASSMAN COMBO
ESTIMATE £8,000–10,000

This was a hugely important amp for Rory's mid-to-late 70s sound, often used with the Twin below or a Fender Concert



STRAMP 2100A
PLEXI-STYLE HEAD
ESTIMATE £800–1,000

The schematic on the cover of Rory's 'Blueprint' album was of an amp circuit by this Marshall-influenced German maker



1950s FENDER TWIN-AMP
ESTIMATE £8,000–12,000

As Rory transitioned away from using his trademark Vox AC30 on its own in the early 70s, this classic tweed Twin, No.0070, was used alongside the AC30



1950s FENDER
PRO JUNIOR COMBO
ESTIMATE £1,500–2,000

As Rory's customary practice amp, this neat tweed combo probably saw more play-time than many of his other amps



1968 MARTIN D-35
DREADNOUGHT
ESTIMATE £30,000–40,000

Rory's go-to acoustic for so many historic gigs and tracks



1980s LEVINSON
BLADE DURANGO
ESTIMATE £800–£1,200

Workhorse modern electric with a tempting estimate



1978 MARSHALL
JMP 2104 COMBO
ESTIMATE £1,800–2,500

As Rory's sound became more gain-heavy in the 80s, this 50-watter – typically used with another of the same type – was key



1950s FENDER
DELUXE COMBO
ESTIMATE £6,000–8,000

This sought-after tweed-clad, early variant of the Deluxe was used for Rory's legendary jam sessions with the Stones



**WORTH
£139.99!**

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- c) Race The Wind

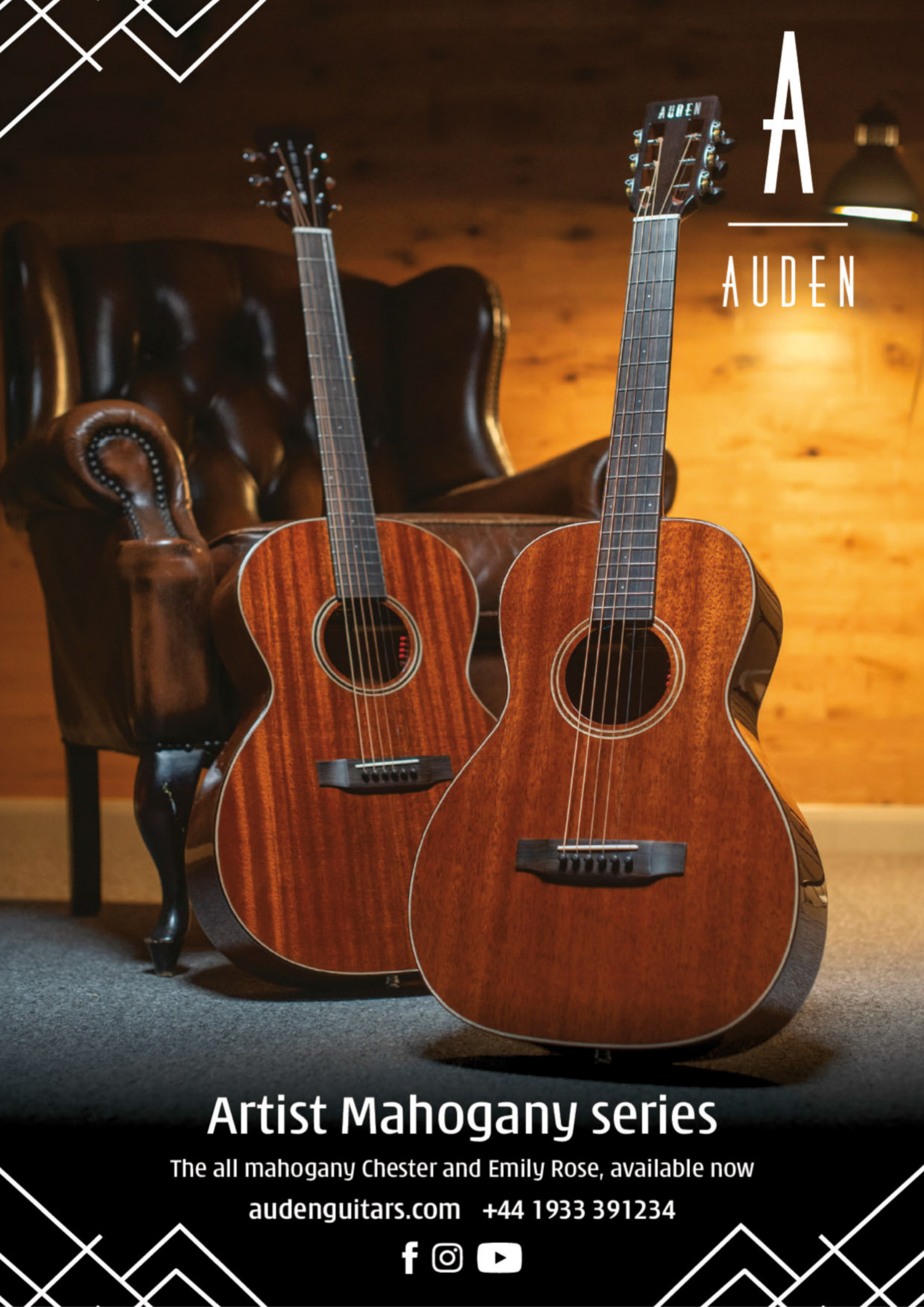
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A photograph of two mahogany acoustic guitars standing upright in front of a dark leather Chester-style chair. The guitars have a warm, reddish-brown wood finish and dark fretboards. The headstock of the guitar on the right is visible, showing the brand name 'AUDEN'. The background is a warm, textured wall, and a lamp is visible in the upper right corner. The overall lighting is warm and intimate.

A

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GIBSON ES-330T

This single-P-90 variant walked in the shadows of the humbucker-toting 335 and its late-50s ES siblings, and yet its straightforward charm continues to endure some 65 years on

Words Bob Wootton Photography Phil Barker

Gibson had used the 'Electric Spanish' or 'ES' designation since the launch of its first electric guitar, the ES-150, in 1936, but it would later become synonymous with the thinline double-cutaway 'semi-acoustic' ES-335T, which first appeared on the back cover of Gibson's spring catalogue in 1958 (along with the initially short-lived Flying V).

A quick word on ES nomenclature before we continue: T stands for thinline, so applies to all models; D is for double-pickup, redundant for all but the 330; N is for Natural, C for Cherry and W for Walnut; S for stereo; and V for Vari-tone. Some now call the later, longer variant a 330L, but that was never official.

Back to the ES-335, then, and this model had a pair of Gibson's new and improved noise-cancelling 'humbucking' pickups, four controls and a switch, dot fretboard markers and a stop tailpiece, while also launching with new, bigger frets, which would soon feature across all models. Sunburst was the standard finish at \$267.50, with Natural blonde an optional

\$15 upcharge. A radical design, it proved successful and has been in production ever since, almost matching Gibson's long-running ES-175 jazzbox, which was produced for 70 years, from 1949 to 2019.

Like the early Les Pauls from 1952, the neck angle of the first 335 models was too shallow. This required the bridge and stoptail to be ground thinner and thereby made more fragile to get a good playing action. This issue was fixed by 1959 when neck binding was also added. That same year, Gibson jumped to extend the range with the fancier ES-345, featuring stereo output (sending each pickup to a separate amp) and Vari-tone circuitry, and the even posher ES-355 (introduced in a very small number in 1958 before its official introduction in '59) added multi-ply binding, gold hardware and Les Paul Custom neck appointments.

Single Minded

The runt of the litter was the ES-330T – the single-pickup sibling to the 330TD and the main focus of this feature – which joined the ranks in 1959, replacing the

ES-225, along with its fellow new double-cutaway thinlines, the 335, 345 and 355. Not much cheaper at \$230 (in Sunburst), it was a more showy proposition than entry-level 'student' models such as the Les Paul Junior. The 330's construction was surprisingly different. The neck joined the body three frets earlier (at the 16th fret, rather than the 19th of the 335), reducing higher register access. And whereas the rest have a solid maple block under the top to anchor the pickups, bridge and tailpiece, the 330 is fully hollow. It therefore has a trapeze tailpiece to anchor the strings, which wasn't fitted to other ES models until several years later – and in turn was removed by many players.

330s are a great transition guitar for acoustic players who often play cleaner and are used to dealing with feedback, while the hollow construction confers a certain familiar snap to the action. Unlike their fancier siblings, 330s had Gibson's earlier single-coil P-90 pickups under dog-ear covers – black plastic until '62, then nickel-plated until turning to chrome in '65. Bigsby and Gibson vibratos were

*The runt of the litter
was the ES-330T, the
single-pickup sibling
to the 330TD*



Natural 'blonde', as seen on this 1960 ES-330TN, was an upgrade option from launch in '59. During 1960, the Cherry red of this 1961 ES-330TC took its place.

offered across the ES range and all models' features evolved along the typical Gibson path over time.

Knobs started as 'bonnets' and became metal cap 'reflectors' in 1960, before changing again to 'witch hats' by '67. Switch tips lightened over the years as plastics improved, but they often darken to a nice amber with age.

The 330 necks had a chunky C profile in '58, flattening slightly to a D in '59, and got much skinnier in 1960, fattening again by '63. Many feel the fatter necks have a bigger tone – just witness Clapton's famous '64 Cherry ES-335. By '65, however, necks were narrower at the nut, compromising playability and desirability. Meanwhile, rectangular pearl blocks replaced the original dot fret markers in '62.

As ever, there are transitional examples, such as the mid-'62 330s with plastic pickup covers and block fret markers (*Guitarist* contributor Huw Price has a great example). To many, the plastic covers sound better and their combination with the great-playing dot necks explains why these earlier examples are the most sought after. Another quirk is that some 330s seem to have left the factory with two knurled thumb wheels on each bridge post. One adjusts bridge height and action, while the other rests on the body, arguably helping tone transfer and certainly stabilising the posts, which can lean and skew intonation.

Taking Shape

Body shapes also evolved, the earliest having very rounded corners and nicknamed 'Mickey Mouse ears'; these became more pointed by '63. Body thickness was quite variable, too, and the earliest ES models had thinner tops



1. Colour differences belie the mahogany neck and maple body, while the flat D shape of the heel indicates the typical flat '61 neck profile



2. Vintage P-90 pickups were underrated for years. On these single-pickup variants they're located in the 'Goldilocks' spot

(4.4mm versus the later 5.6mm), making them even more responsive – and indeed desirable. This writer discovered this via a fellow UK collector who sourced many of his beautiful ES guitars from world-leading expert Charlie Gelber of OK Guitars in Kent, Connecticut. Charlie has handled hundreds of golden-age ESes, including unique custom orders. Most of his personal favourites have these thin tops and come from a specific serial number and date range in 1959.

The finish colours of 330 models followed that of the 335: three-tone Sunburst was standard, with Natural blonde an option in '59 and '60, succeeded by Cherry in '60 (though Gelber has so far

unearthed 19 Cherry-finished 335es from '59). A two-tone yellow to sepia sunburst, Argentine Gray, also surfaces occasionally.

The first Sunburst Les Pauls show Gibson's red pigment was famously unstable until early to mid-1960. The earliest Cherry ESes also faded to a much sought-after 'watermelon' shade, and a Sunburst that often ages to an attractive 'teaburst' was offered by '65. This writer had one with chrome pickup covers – a very pretty but uninspiring player.

By '68, the 330's neck length was brought into line with the 335s and Walnut and Sparkling Burgundy finishes had appeared. A very few Gibsons of the time were custom-ordered in black. Super rare



3. This close-up of the Natural finish shows some longitudinal finish checking in the clear coat that has yellowed uniformly with age



4. Almost a player's eye view, you can clearly see the model's layout in this shot, along with a hint at the very playable wide/flat-feeling neck

*330s are a great
transition guitar for
acoustic players who
often play cleaner*



Featuring regular vintage Sunburst with a cheeky bit of flame, this 1961 Epiphone E230T is a rare example with the earlier enamelled 'bikini' headstock logo



5

5. Here's another glimpse of flame in '61 Epi's Sunburst, plus some wear on the pickguard's silvered E logo. Note the 'reflector' knobs (introduced mid-'60)

6. This enamelled metal headstock logo plate was actually phased out before the Epiphone ES230T Casino's official launch in the spring of 1962



6

and highly desired by collectors, solid black is easier to fake than transparent finish, so buyers need rock-solid provenance – and/or a steady nerve!

Next mention must go to Epiphone, which Gibson acquired for \$20k in 1957 and had integrated into production ready to be shipped from the Kalamazoo factory in 1959. Made alongside Gibsons, models share craftsmanship but retain distinctive features: New York and then mini-humbucking pickups, headstocks, tailpieces, pickguards and fret markers. The ES-330-equivalent E230 Casino debuted in 1961, in both double and rarer single-pickup variants; standard finish was Royal Tan, a paler orangey sunburst. By 1962, Casinos had acquired a mother-of-pearl headstock legend, but a few earlier examples (see image 6, above) exist with Epiphone's previous enamelled metal plate 'bikini' logo and dot fret markers.

Unsung Hero

Surprisingly few big-name players are associated with 330s. The great jazzier Grant Green and bluesman Slim Harpo are the most notable, and it was Emily Remler's main squeeze, too. BB King and Chuck Berry played them in the early days, JJ Cale and Terry Smith (60s award-winning British jazz player who later founded early fusion band If) also picked up the model, and – perhaps unlikely of all – wall-of-fuzzers The Jesus And Mary Chain used them, too. Likely because of affordability and suitability for

The ES-330-equivalent E230 Casino debuted in 1961, in both double and rarer single-pickup variants

rhythm, the ES-330 is quite common in pictures from the early 60s British scene; influential Animals' guitarist Hilton Valentine sported one, as did The Stones' Brian Jones. Latterly, John Mayer has used one to great effect.

The sibling Epiphone Casino had better fortunes as it was taken up by The Beatles, an association that ensured its success and a unique position among Epiphones as the only model that consistently commands higher vintage prices than its Gibson equivalent. Paul Weller, Noel Gallagher and Gary Clark Jr keep the flame alive.

Even at today's soaring prices, then, 330s are relatively affordable because their fully hollow body means they're prone to feedback, so they don't suit higher gain styles. This writer was in Dallas in September 2019, teching for the late Alan Darby when he rejoined Eric Clapton's band for the Crossroads Festival fundraiser's finale. Gary Clark Jr was playing the show and he shared a little of how he managed his signature Casinos at volume. He'd started with the

old bluesmen's trick of stuffing socks/rags/t-shirts into the f-holes but had recently found a clever new way: inserting the long thin balloons that kids' party entertainers twist into animal shapes and, once inside, inflating them to break up body resonances.

Pictured in this feature are this writer's 1960 Gibson ES-330TN, 1961 Gibson ES-330TC and 1961 Epiphone E230T. All three are in excellent condition, though there is some checking on the blonde model, and a previous owner was careless with a tuning peg winder on the sides of the Cherry model's headstock. The Epi is very clean and has never had a neck-heel strap button, so it's a sitting-down guitar – not a problem, though, as these are the ultimate couch guitars.

But why are the single-pickup models of particular interest? Well, they really can sound better. Consider how Les Paul Juniors tend to fetch more than Specials, despite being less fancy, for example. Some say the second pickup's magnetic pull and 'phantom' circuit loading both influence tone; the neck pickups on many 330TDs can be quite boomy, while the bridge unit can be contrastingly thin. But the ES-330T's single pickup is mounted in the middle – the 'Goldilocks' spot – meaning the early dot-neck 330T is definitely up there as a must-have guitar. **G**

Guitarist would like to thank Bob Wootton for allowing us to photograph his collection of single-pickup thinlines



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Single Vision

Introduced in 1954 and always overshadowed by 'proper' Les Pauls, the 70-year-old Junior is now rather senior. With two new single-pickup solidbodies just released, it's time to celebrate the Junior style

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Neil Godwin



GIBSON CHARLIE STARR LES PAUL JUNIOR & EPIPHONE CORONET (USA COLLECTION)

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What You Need To Know

1 Isn't Gibson celebrating the Junior with an anniversary model?

Not as far as we know, although it is the company's 130th anniversary, so maybe they have their hands full! There are quite a few Juniors in the current catalogue, which are priced between £469 (if we include Epiphone ranges) up to £7,799!

2 What's new about the Coronet?

This is the new made-in-the-USA model and for Junior fans it's another flavour. It's not a slavish repro but is based on late 50s/early 60s Coronet style. Back in the day, it was the first Gibson-designed solidbody Epiphone, appearing right in the middle of Gibson's post-'58 double-cut Junior and the impending Les Paul/SG.

3 Who's Charlie Starr?

He's the founding member of Atlanta, Georgia-based band Blackberry Smoke and a long-time Junior devotee. His signature is based on his favourite heavily modded and refinished 1956 Junior that was once owned by the Georgia Satellites' lynchpin Rick Richards.

For a guitar that was specifically created and aimed at beginners, the Gibson Les Paul Junior has been embraced by many professionals since it first saw the light of day in 1954. Gibson had no idea it had created a rock 'n' roll benchmark that would still provide inspiration for players – and guitar makers – everywhere some 70 years on.

Later in that decade, Gibson changed the Junior's 'dress' with a new double-cutaway version, which certainly has its fans and, as on the ES-335, that extra cutaway gave full access to the fingerboard, as well as increasing the

unsupported length of the neck, of course. It was exactly at this period that the Coronet was born, the first solidbody Epiphone (along with the two-pickup Crestwood) and the first one designed by Gibson since it had purchased the brand in 1957. It was initially called the 'Moderne Black', but that name was appropriated for Gibson's near-mythical modernist design that appeared in 1958 alongside the V and Explorer; the Coronet name goes at least back to a pre-war Epiphone archtop.

Clearly, this was a pretty fertile time for Gibson's design department. Not only had the Les Paul Standard grown into its





1. Both review guitars use pretty small 'vintage' fretwire and follow Junior style with dot inlays and unbound Indian rosewood fingerboards – back in the day they would have been Brazilian rosewood

2. Another common mod was replacing the one-piece wrapover bridge with this Leo Quan-style 'Badass' bridge with its six in-tonatable saddles, like a tune-o-matic. Another addition is the locking studs. The dog-ear P-90 is overwound

3. Reflecting its modded style, this Junior has Grover Rotomatic tuners, a very common addition back in the day

classic style, there was the revolutionary ES-335, those modernist models, that double-cut Junior and Special, and now someone had to create new designs under the Epiphone brand. Perhaps the diligent designers ran out of steam because the Coronet could be seen, outline-wise, as a symmetrical double-cut version of the Fender Telecaster or, more accurately, the single-pickup Esquire.

Gibson Charlie Starr Les Paul Junior

At the starting point of Gibson USA's models, the standard Tobacco Burst Junior will cost you £1,499. This signature (limited to 250 in each of its two colours) is a tweaked version of that, reflecting the mods Charlie's 1956 Junior has gone through: there's the Grover tuners, the six-saddle Leo Quan-style wrapover bridge with locking posts, a chromed metal output jack plate, and an overwound dog-ear P-90. More esoteric alterations are those amber speed knobs without any numbers. There's a signature squiggle on the truss rod cover, too, and the guitar comes in what Gibson calls a "historic Les Paul Junior 'Gator Skin' hardshell case", which includes a some case candy in the form of the Charlie's rather good signature ceramic slide and a 'Hey Ya'll' sticker that replicates the DIY artwork on the back of his original.



UNDER THE HOOD

What's inside these simple single-pickup guitars?

In short, not a lot! Despite the smaller rear cavity of the Junior compared with the spacious hole in the back of the Coronet, the components and circuits are identical. Gibson logo'd pots are used in both: the Coronet's volume and tone measure 501kohms and 482k respectively;

the Junior's measure 472k and 479k. Both guitars use a .022µF Orange Drop capacitor and both are wired (perhaps surprisingly) modern style, not like the 50s style. What is in keeping with vintage theme, though, is the complete lack of screening, but the P-90s both have shielded

hook-up wire, the same as the wire that's running to the output jack. And although they're mounted differently, internally the pickups should be pretty similar: the Coronet's measures 7.94k, the overwound Junior pickup is 9.04k, which is reflected in what we hear for once.



The Junior's control cavity has just enough room for the two pots and capacitor



Inside the Coronet we see exactly the same circuit

Charlie's model comes across as a real giggers' delight, far from precious and with a very strong, full-fat P-90 roar

The standard 45mm thick slab body with its small edge radius is two-piece centre-joined mahogany, the mismatched grain clearly visible under the translucent satin nitro Dark Walnut finish. As ever, the neck is also mahogany, glued into the body with the typical Junior lip in the treble cutaway. To style, there's no fingerboard binding and just simple dot inlays.

The mounting of the pickup – which has a 'P90 Dogear OW' logo on the back – is standard for the dog-ear style. Two lips extend from the ends of the baseplate and rest on the body top (here with a single spacer to raise the height) and it's all held in place by the screws that also hold the plastic cover in place.

While there are some nice touches, those locking studs for one and the metal output jack plate, the classic black-plastic single-ply pickguard's edges are left sharp and look – and feel – pretty cheap. While we're shouting out the cons, the heel finishing looks a little scrappy, plus there's an area on the body by the base side of the fingerboard that hasn't been properly grain-filled.

4. These unusual speed knobs don't have any numbers but add to the pared-down style. There are no tricks to the circuit: it's just volume, tone... and the truth!



4



Epiphone Coronet (USA Collection)

Pulling this new USA-made Coronet from its attractive blue-plush-lined rectangular hard case, it comes across as the more expensive piece. The body is thinner and more SG-like at 34mm, and under the fetching translucent cherry colour it seems more attention has gone into the diagonally grain-matched two-piece centre-joined body. The gloss finish just seems more expensive than Charlie's oh so utilitarian Junior, too. Removing the white scratchplate we notice those sharp edges again as well as sharp points on the bass side, and the screws aren't fully countersunk, which lets the craft down. Nevertheless, you see the neck extends into the body some 58mm, although it's not full width like the post-'58 double-cut Les Paul Junior, for example.

Like our Junior, here there's no fingerboard edge binding and you get those same dot inlays, while that 'bikini' badge that displays the headstock logo is a rather budget-looking plastic affair. The tuners are single-unit Kluson style with white plastic buttons but with modern securing nuts on the front, not vintage-style bushings. More vintage is the same Advanced Plating lightweight wrapover bridge that you'll see on Gibson's standard Junior – ours looks aged, although that's not mentioned on the spec sheet.

The soapbar P-90 – a 'Lead P90 soapbar', according to its rear label – is chosen over the rectangular New York single coil that would have graced the early Coronets. It direct-mounts to the body and is height adjustable. That said, it seems quite loose and could probably do with firmer supports, and on closer inspection the two fixing 'screws' are actually bolts (as used to hold a humbucker into its mounting ring) that thread into a metal baseplate that's screwed to the body under the pickup. The pickup is suspended with humbucking-like springs... so, direct-mounted to the body? No, not really.

5. This plastic bikini badge might ape the original Epiphone style, but it does look a little 'economy' to us. That said, the vintage-style tuners with their modern mounting are very positive and smooth in action

6. In line with the Gibson double-cut LP Junior and Special, the full complement of frets sit clear of the body. That cherry gloss finish is really well done, too





7

Those funky 'carousel' control knobs look pretty cool, but again the pointer extension on each is very sharp. Along with that pickguard, we'd be tempted to smooth and round some of the edges and sharp points here.

Feel & Sounds

At 3.72kg (8.18lb), the Junior isn't overweight but feels pretty substantial, which can't be said for the Coronet; at 3.06kg (6.73lb), it feels featherweight in comparison and also a little more delicate. Strapped on, they do hang slightly differently: the Junior feels very centred; the Coronet feels a little wider and sits a little lower using the same strap thanks to that bass-side horn strap-button position.

There's little difference in the width of the necks and both have the same 20.8mm depth at the 1st fret. The Junior fills out a bit more by the 12th to 24.2mm; the Coronet is marginally slimmer at 23.5mm. There's less difference than you might initially think, with both having quite full-shouldered 'C' profiles.

The similarity continues with the relatively small fretwire (approximately 2.3mm wide by 1mm high) and you can't help thinking a bigger wire on Charlie's Junior would suit its modded vibe – his own original has apparently been refretted three times since the early 90s when he bought it. As is, the chosen wire

gives both guitars quite a vintage vibe, but the fret height is pretty low. We expect nicely fettled frets these days and here the work is okay, although the Coronet's frets do feel a little smoother on both the crowns and the ends. The fingerboard edges are very square on both, too, with no incurve; there's some light edge rolling on the Junior, less, if any, on the Coronet. Setup wise, both are pretty good – there's a slightly sticky D string nut slot on the Junior and the Coronet's nut grooves are a little high but not excessively so.

Neither guitar disgraces the single-pickup style and the Charlie Starr comes close to our real '57 Junior with that almost coked-wah throaty midrange push. No, it doesn't quite match the wallop of the real thing – the top string response is a little thinner and brighter – but that archetypal Gibson grind is here in spades.

The Coronet's different construction and slightly lower-output pickup lightens up that lower midrange grind a tad, but its slightly clearer voice has plenty of appeal. It's not a million miles away in the heat department, either, with plenty of juicy punch and slightly more clarity, or twang, on the lower strings.

The missing ingredient on both, however, is a more flexible control setup. If you play with everything full up, that's not a problem. But whereas the original Junior has considerable contrast and

7. Along with an aged-looking lightweight wrapover bridge, the soapbar P-90 is mounted with bolts and spring spacers to allow easy height adjustment

THE RIVALS

Eastman's SB55/v single-cut in Antique Sunburst and the SB55DC/v double-cut in Antique Classic (both £1,659) are close interpretations of the Junior style, employing lightweight okoume instead of mahogany and with ebony fingerboards, plus Lollar 50s-spec dog-ear P-90s. Great examples of well-detailed Chinese craft.

Here in the UK we have Gordon Smith's all-mahogany GS1 (from £999), which has been a long-running Junior-alike and can be custom ordered from a drop-down menu of options. Gordon Smith is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and never have its guitars been so good!

PJD doesn't have that long history, but it certainly has the quality and its UK-made, direct-only new Apprentice models (£899) take on the Junior style and kick it into the modern age with the offset St John and single-cut Carey, albeit with a longer Fender scale, bolt-on maple neck, solid obeche body and single hand-wound humbucker.



8

Pulling this new USA-made Coronet from its attractive hard case, it comes across as the more expensive piece

shade from its controls – going from an almost acoustic-like clean response with the volume and tone pulled back to that full roar – both review models are a little more ordinary. That's a pretty quick DIY fix, though.

Verdict

From a sound and, to a certain extent, playability perspective, both of these 'Juniors' hit the spot. But it's at the expense of the finer details that many makers simply wouldn't allow. That said, for those who need the Gibson logo and embrace the Junior style, Charlie's model has got something going on: it comes across as a real giggers' delight, far from precious and with a very strong, full-fat P-90 roar. To be fair, the Coronet isn't far behind and any good boost or overdrive would even up the slightly lower output here. And there's something very appealing about the slightly less-thick voice, not to mention the resonant lightweight platform and superb finish.

Two different shades of Junior-style, then. What's your poison? **G**

8. These ivory coloured 'carousel' knobs feature in Epiphone's history, although they're new to us. Kinda cool, if rather sharp-edged



GIBSON CHARLIE STARR LES PAUL JUNIOR

PRICE: £1,769 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Single-cutaway, single-pickup solidbody

BODY: 2-piece mahogany

NECK: 1-piece mahogany,

'Artist Spec 50s' profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 624mm (24.57")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech/43.7mm

FINGERBOARD: Indian rosewood, acrylic dot inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Adjustable wrapover with locking studs, Grover Rotomatic tuners with kidney buttons – nickel-plating

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51.5mm

ELECTRICS: Overwound Dogear P-90, volume and tone controls with numberless speed knobs

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.72/8.18

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: See the gallery over the page

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Dark Walnut (as reviewed), ebony – satin nitrocellulose

8/10

PROS A cleaned-up version of Charlie's well-beaten and modded 1956 LP Junior; juicy P-90 grind and roar; very stage aimed

CONS Finish issues; 'unfinished' pickguard; rather square 'board edges; vintage frets don't suit the modded style; we'd be tempted to rewire the circuit to vintage style



EPIPHONE CORONET (USA COLLECTION)

PRICE: £1,599 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway, single-pickup solidbody

BODY: 2-piece mahogany

NECK: 1-piece mahogany,

'SlimTaper' profile, glued-in

SCALE LENGTH: 624mm (24.57")

NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech/43.3mm

FINGERBOARD: Indian rosewood, acrylic dot inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 22, medium

HARDWARE: Wrapover bridge, with locking studs, vintage-style 'Gibson Deluxe' tuners with white plastic buttons – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 50mm

ELECTRICS: Soapbar P-90, volume and tone controls with 'carousel' knobs

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.06/6.73

OPTIONS: No

RANGE OPTIONS: See the gallery over the page

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: Vintage Cherry (as reviewed), Ebony, TV Yellow (Epiphone.com exclusive only) – gloss nitrocellulose

8/10

PROS Very tidy build with excellent finish; lightweight and very resonant; highly valid lighter voicing – a very vibey guitar

CONS The headstock badge looks a little budget; unfinished sharp pointed pickguard and sharp pointed control knobs; again, we'd prefer vintage-style wiring

Single File

Covering a vast price range, Gibson and Epiphone have a Junior for every occasion and budget

Words Dave Burrluck



EPIPHONE LES PAUL JUNIOR £469

To kick off the Junior style, this Epiphone-branded single-cut in its dark Tobacco Burst-only gloss looks suitably moody. It uses a 'Lightning Bar' compensated wrapover bridge with an Epiphone P-90 Pro dog-ear and mahogany with laurel fingerboard construction. Elsewhere, the dual-pickup Les Paul Special in TV Yellow costs £489, while Junior champion Billy Joe Armstrong has his own Classic White signature Junior at £529, with the same Lightning Bar bridge and P-90 Pro. www.epiphone.com



EPIPHONE CORONET £439

A cost-effective way to experience the single-pickup Coronet style, this model uses the perhaps more classic and larger 'butterfly' pickguard, here a three-ply, plus the output jack socket is face-mounted, not side-mounted. It comes in Cherry or Ebony finishes and again uses all-mahogany construction with a laurel fingerboard, and the single pickup is that P-90 Pro dog-ear with a compensated wrapover. The twin-pickup Wilshire (£529) comes with dual soapbar P-90s and in the same finishes. www.epiphone.com



GIBSON LES PAUL JUNIOR £1,499

Moving into Gibson USA's range, this Les Paul Junior model kicks off the line-up, just as it did historically. The gloss nitro finish is available in two colours, Vintage Tobacco Burst and Ebony, and again it's all-mahogany but with an unbound, dot-inlaid Indian rosewood fingerboard. It's the guitar that the Charlie Starr signature model is based on but without the modded parts, and it comes with a standard output P-90 dog-ear pickup and non-Historic hardcase. www.gibson.com



GIBSON CUSTOM SHOP 1957 LES PAUL JUNIOR REISSUE £3,799

Want to get dangerously close to the original flame, just as it would have been new back in the day? Then the Custom Shop's models kick off with this Historic reissue. The hide glue construction is old-school, as is the vintage-style circuit, with a vintage-correct nylon nut and '50s rounded medium C' neck profile. We get an original-style lightweight wraparound bridge, three-on-a-strip Kluson-style tuners with white buttons, and a VOS nitro finish in Vintage Tobacco Burst or TV Yellow. www.gibson.com



GIBSON CUSTOM SHOP 1957 LES PAUL JUNIOR ULTRA-LIGHT AGED £4,199

Going up to the next Gibson Custom level is this single-cut Junior in its classic TV Yellow, here with light ageing by the Murphy Lab. It gets very, very close to a real 67-year-old piece that's been played in. In fact, trying out one of these might be expensive! "From the solid mahogany and hide glue construction to the vintage-style wiring, the classic Les Paul Junior is back... and ready to 'ruin' you," says Gibson. We couldn't agree more. www.gibson.com



GIBSON CUSTOM SHOP 1958 LES PAUL JUNIOR DOUBLE CUT HEAVY AGED £7,799

Approaching the price you'd expect to pay for an original vintage piece, this one-off double-cut Junior, in TV Yellow with dark tortoiseshell celluloid pickguard, looks like you've taken it on hundreds of gigs (and you can with the Historic 'Gator Skin hardshell case). There's also the single-cut 1957 Les Paul Junior in Vintage Sunburst with Murphy Lab heavy ageing at the same price, for those of us who don't want to take the real thing on the road. www.gibson.com



Raising The Bar

Becoming well known for its streamlined, cost-effective production models, York-based maker PJD is now catering for the bespoke sector of the market. We try them on for size

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Neil Godwin





PJD CUSTOM CAREY ELITE & CAREY CUSTOM

£3,199 & £2,699

CONTACT **PJD Guitars** PHONE **07891 201729** WEB www.pjdguitars.com

What You Need To Know

1 These look more expensive than the previous PJDs you've reviewed.

Yes, both guitars here are from PJD's new Custom Shop and give the company's founder Leigh Dovey and Josh Parkin the opportunity to raise their game. Along with making top-of-the-line models, such as the Carey Elite with chambered bodies and fancier flame or quilted maple tops, the Custom Shop will consider any custom build you have in mind.

2 Who's Josh Parkin?

Another York-based maker, Josh was building under his own banner, JPG, until he started working for PJD, originally on prototyping and pickup making. Now he looks after the Custom Shop builds along with Leigh.

3 The Custom here looks like a mash-up of PJD's Carey and York Standard.

It sort of is! It's based on the Standard specification but adds custom twists including its solid alder (as opposed to obeche) body, and there's an active variable boost, too. It's inspired by Andy Summers' famous Telecaster.

There's currently plenty of action occurring in the UK's guitar-making community. From solo and small-team builds to almost industrial scale, there's considerable choice for us guitarists now. But crafting anything in the UK isn't easy, it seems, and PJD's progress hasn't been straightforward.

Having created a small but well-received range of Standard and Elite models, the company co-created UKGB, an intended manufacturing hub for smaller brands such as Seth Baccus, Cream T, Chapman, and, of course, PJD itself. Despite building some great guitars, the venture failed commercially and all those brands lost a potentially viable manufacturing home.

But post-UKGB, in early 2023, PJD dusted down (the two companies had always been separate), set up new premises and, well, carried on with the highly streamlined production of the new-spec Standard range that launched later in the year with a starting price of £1,299. As of 2024, PJD has announced its Custom

The Custom Shop aims to make 50 instruments a year – higher spec, Elite models and one-offs

Shop, which aims to make around 50 instruments a year, centring on the higher specification and 'posher' Elite models, plus one-off custom orders. To test the waters, we ordered up one of each.

Carey Elite

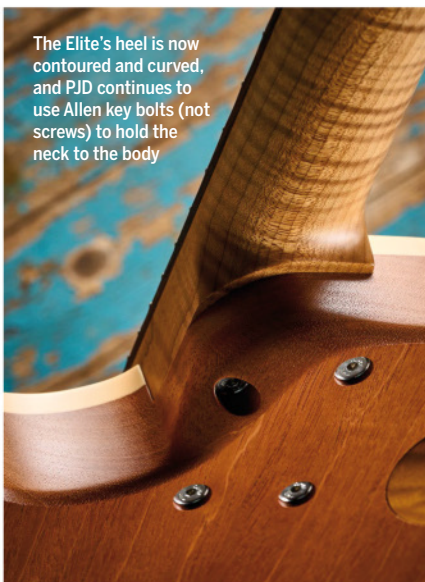
The Carey Elite was one of the first PJD models we had the opportunity to play. This was around five years ago, back in issue 451, and at first glance you might ask, what's changed? Quite a lot. The foundation of the PJD line, the Carey is a nicely modern creation: a mixture of the familiar with the slightly wider LP-style outline, its Fender scale length and six-in-a-line headstock, and typically powered by either dual humbuckers, as here, or bridge humbucker and neck soapbar single coil.

From today's perspective, however, the Elite does return to the style of PJD's earlier models in that, unlike the current solid obeche-bodied Standards, the two-piece bookmatched body is quite heavily chambered, and here it's a 50-year-old Brazilian mahogany sourced in the UK. It's capped with a thin maple flat-top with a subtle but rather beautiful flamed figuring (the same maple is also used for the rear cavity covers), a single f-hole, and cream edge binding that's nicely rounded. The back also now gets a ribcage contour and the heel is more contoured compared with the earlier models.



The neck here is strongly figured roasted maple with rather posh Gotoh 510 tuners and their ebony buttons

This new Elite also returns to the deep-caramel-hued, quarter-sawn roasted maple neck of those earlier models and it's quite eye-catching with a deep flame to the satin nitro-finished back and topped by an unbound dark rosewood fingerboard with a 254mm (10-inch) radius. We get PJD's standard Jescar fretwire, perfectly installed and with those rounded 'hot-dog' ends, and mother-of-pearl rectangular inlays on the face with smaller dot inlays to the edge.



The Elite's heel is now contoured and curved, and PJD continues to use Allen key bolts (not screws) to hold the neck to the body

What hasn't changed is the Gotoh hardware, although here we go up a level to the 510 Series with the 510FX-6, which uses a brass-walled bridge base that surrounds the steel-block saddles. The SG510 tuners look equally classy with a high 18:1 ratio and ebony buttons paired, as usual, with a perfectly cut unbleached bone nut and single string-tree.

We also get the same control layout with the pickup selector LP-style on the bass-side shoulder and the widely spaced volume and tone controls, here with gold reflector-top knobs that certainly suit the honey colouration. The final change comes with the hand-wound PJD pickups; these use gold-foil fronts and a dual row of screw-adjustable poles with partial covers. It's a very classy, well-considered piece. However, the same can't be said for this Carey-based custom-build...

Carey Custom

'Half an idea' might be a good description for this instrument – and we have to take the flak for that. But hats off to PJD's Josh Parkin who turned our partial concept into a very viable musical tool.

Now, classic guitar boffs might be thinking that, outline aside, this Custom build emulates the specs of a rather famous guitar: Andy Summer's modded Fender Telecaster Custom. Full marks if you spotted that as, indeed, it was the half idea

THE RIVALS

The UK has a rich history of custom guitar makers from the late, great Tony Zemaitis and Chris Eccleshall, to the Manson brothers and a whole lot more. Today's landscape is a little different and the choice is vast. Of course, there are established makers, such as Patrick James Eggle who builds mostly custom-order models – either from dealer or individual requests – but also offers a full custom-shop level (£POA), while of the more production-led makers, Gordon Smith offers a full custom-order service for the majority of its models, which start with the Classic T and GS from £999.

Alister Atkin's electrics – not least the brand's own-design models such as the Boosh and Mindhorn (from approx. £3.5k) – can be custom-ordered, while smaller makers such as Ivson Guitars are attracting some big names, here with the Dakota (approx. £4k).

We've had some great experiences with pretty affordable UK builds, too, including Maybury's Upscaler models (from approx. £850), which use recycled parts, and Vintage's ProShop (approx. £900 upwards) who can adapt the Vintage brand's wide range of production models to create some rather good and affordable custom builds.

While the big names' custom shop guitars seem to be getting pricier by the day, Fender's Mod Shop is relatively affordable, and there's considerable choice from our domestic craftspeople for those of us who dare to be different!

that kicked off the build. This writer had been chatting to PJD main man, Leigh Dovey, about Summers' unique guitar and that, despite the huge success of the band it fuelled, you can't buy anything like it today. 'Let's make one,' said Leigh – and that's how this party started.

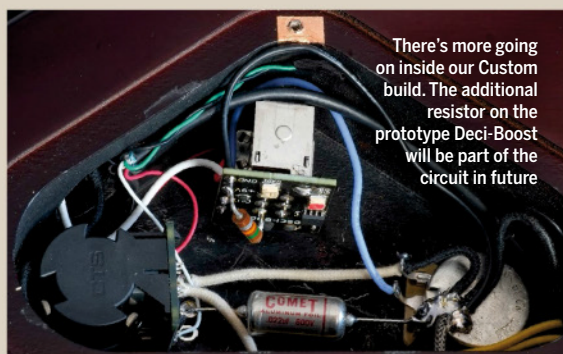
While the Elite shows off very tasty timbers, the Custom's build is based on the production-spec Carey Standard, which typically features a slab-sawn plain maple neck with an obeche body. The first change here is the alder body given a bit of a Junior vibe with its two-tone low-gloss nitro finish (which is actually more old-Fender-style) and the standard Carey's Junior-style black phenolic pickguard. Its slab-body 'Junior' style is enhanced with just a rear ribcage cut-out and, as usual for PJD, the maple neck is attached with proper bolts, not screws. This hybrid style

UNDER THE HOOD

What's inside these tidily crafted guitars?



The Elite's control cavity is total simplicity



There's more going on inside our Custom build. The additional resistor on the prototype Deci-Boost will be part of the circuit in future

Removing the Elite's 6mm-thick foil-backed maple cover reveals a paint-screened cavity with a simplistic array of widely spaced CTS 500k pots with a USA-made, military-spec Jupiter Comet .022µF paper-in-oil tone capacitor. Typically, the simple setup is wired modern-style with cloth-covered pushback wire.

The Custom's cavity is obviously larger to take the active variable boost, but at least the battery has its own separate flip-top compartment. Here, the volume pot is the same as the Elite's, but the tone pot is the modern CTS pull-switch type to engage the out-of-phase feature, while the Mars-Tronic Deci-Boost variable boost is pretty similar in size. It can actually apply a fair range of boost (0 to 22dB), adjustable on a small 'gain' trim pot, and the circuit uses a TL0721 op-amp. On designer Ben Marshall's instruction we made a small mod, adding a 15k resistor to eliminate any 'popping' as the true bypass boost was engaged.

The Elite's single-conductor humbuckers are based on PJD's '57' spec: the bridge DCR measures 7.92k ohms and 7.03k at the neck, both are unpotted with an Alnico II magnet in each. Although it has a traditional raw-nickel cover, the Custom's neck humbucker (albeit four-conductor for that out-of-phase feature) is pretty much the same spec with a virtually identical DCR. "The pickups we put in our York Standard guitars are based on a '55 Tele set, what you'd consider a typical Tele pickup in overall voicing," explained Josh Parkin when we discussed our options. "If you're wanting something with a little more grunt at the bridge that will have less of a drastic difference to the neck pickup, then we could go with a '51-style wind, which is much hotter at around 11k of 43 AWG plain enamel wire with Alnico V slugs." Which is exactly what we did.



1

1. The '57-spec humbuckers are given a bit of Gold Foil style with their mesh fronts, and use partial raw nickel covers. They're unpotted, too

continues with another of PJD's usual appointments in that Fender scale length, along with a Gotoh T-style bridge plate, as used on the PJD York Standard, with its suspended single coil and through-body stringing. Then it's back to Gibson with the 50s-style humbucker in the neck position.

Along with the standard Carey control layout, there's a third control, which is a variable active boost that's engaged by a push-push switched pot. Low on the body back is a flip-top battery compartment

It's not just the perfect detailing of the build, but the Carey recipe is very player-led and a great platform for customisation

– an idea borrowed from John Mayer's 'Dead Spec' PRS Silver Sky, which uses the Alembic Blaster clean boost. Another trick from Summers' guitar is a pickup phase switch engaged by pulling up the tone control.

One aspect of the build that needed some consideration is that near-mythical active boost. Andy Summers had described it as a boost and/or overdrive, and by the time Fender got around to replicating the guitar in 2007, the original circuit was apparently



2. The upgrade here is the walled Gotoh 510 bridge with its steel block saddles and through-body stringing. All the plastic parts, including the pickguard and pickup rings, are made in-house at PJD

3. Based on the Standard specification, the neck here is a plainer slab-sawn maple with Gotoh's split-post tuners and an unbleached bone nut. The PJD logo is now a gold transfer – the original models had laser-cut logos



no longer functioning. PJD tasked Ben Marshall (who makes the Mars-Tronic Treblemaker variable treble-bleed circuits used on PJD's original Apprentice guitars) to create the boost circuit, aka the Deci-Boost, and that's what we have here.

Feel & Sounds

If you're lucky enough to have played or owned a guitar from any of the well-established custom shops or smaller 'boutique' makers – Nik Huber and Patrick Eggle spring to mind – neither guitar here will disappoint. It's not just the perfect detailing of the build, but the Carey recipe is very player-led and it's a great platform for customisation as these different versions illustrate: the Elite is PJD's state-of-its-craft showpiece; the rather utilitarian Custom looks, by design, decidedly Junior-like.

Then there's that lovely light weight of the Elite (earlier chambered ash versions can be even lighter), and while the alder-bodied Custom is heavier it feels about right for the T-style it loosely emulates. The neck shapes disappear in your hand – no, they're not vintage baseball bats, they're more contemporary with a finely shaped, pretty classic C profile averaging 21.5mm at the 1st fret and 22.5mm by the 12th, with nut widths a shade over

42mm. The detailed fretwork just seems enhanced by the Plek process that each PJD guitar now goes through, and both guitars are extremely stable and very in tune straight out of their cases.

Unplugged, the Elite sounds very vibrant, a little darker and with a fuller midrange compared with our reference old-spec ash-bodied Carey Standard, perhaps as you'd expect. The Custom obviously sounds very Fender-like with less 'acoustic-ness' but a more steely, sustaining and vibrant response.

We start the plugged-in test with the untricky Elite. Some while later we're still at it. Not that anything's wrong, it's just that it nails so many classic styles, like its design suggests. At the neck, played clean with a little volume and tone roll-off, there's juicy and plummy jazz/blues that you could play all night in the right context.

Pulling up the volume, there's more push and thickness, but the word 'classic' springs to mind again, with the construction and scale length just bringing a little snap and definition. For rockier intent, the bridge pickup is well voiced; it has a nice old PAF-y honk with that slight seat-of-your-pants ride from the lively unpotted pickups as you wind it up. The voicing is definitely a little darker than our reference ash-bodied

Carey Standard, but both recipes are very flavoursome – the Elite a little more 'Gibson', the Standard a little more 'Fender'.

Where to start with the Carey Custom? Again, the unpotted neck humbucker nails those low-volume plummy cleans perfectly, and the volume and tone controls are very well-voiced here. The mix adds considerable jangle with depth, and the tone control shades that very usefully again. The phase switch was included simply because that's what Andy Summers' Tele had, but the different style of pickups means it's not over-the-top, and as we experiment with sounds it works so well with Summers-style modulation or a much gainier amp voicing where we're getting into more grungier, gnarly territory – not least with some of that onboard boost.

As you'd expect, the bridge pickup is considerably brighter than the neck humbucker and, yes, if Tele-style is your aim then it's well voiced: not oversharper and with good steely bite. But roll back the tone and the bridge becomes more humbucker-like and, of course, you can again add in that boost, which easily edges our valve combo amp into juicy overdrive. If you're happy to play with the three controls, the range of voices is



CUSTOM QUESTIONS

We grab PJD's Leigh Dovey for a background chat about the new Custom Shop... and beyond!

Not standing still would be quite a fitting motto for PJD Guitars. Not only has the brand established a five-strong range of very high-quality UK-made Standard models that start at £1,299, but it's about to introduce a bass range, too. Oh, and then there's the new Custom Shop...

Why did you decide to open a Custom Shop when your Standard range could easily be called custom-shop quality at production-line prices?

"The plan with the Standard models was to standardise everything to the point where we can offer that range at a price that's in line with a lot of the competition. They're not 'cheap' in terms of the parts that go into

"The Custom Shop is where me and Josh (Parkin) get to have a bit of fun, really"

them, but they are a lot more efficient to produce than the old Standard models we offered. We also found a wood, obeche, that's really great to work with and is consistent: compared with the ash we worked with on those earlier Standards, our rejection rate is non-existent.

"But it's not the only thing we want to do; we can do the high-end stuff as well. As we move forward we'll be adding set-neck models and really pushing that top end. We're not

just building bolt-on neck guitars. They're cool, but not everyone can make a set-neck single-cut with a carved top, it's a completely different ball-game. And what we're doing with the Elite models – yes, they're still chambered and bound, with a figured maple top – but to do that well is not easy. The Custom Shop is where me and Josh get to have a bit of fun, really."

How did you meet up with Josh Parkin?

"I'd moved up to York about six years ago. I remember my mum saw this exhibition advert for a furniture maker; his brother had just come back from Japan and set up a guitar-making workshop in York. His name was JPG – which is a bit close to PJD, I thought! I ended up chatting with the maker, Josh, and we became friends. I'd go over to his workshop and he'd help me with stuff. He's done the formal training and he's old-school. When I first met him he was building everything from scratch by hand. I said, 'You need to get yourself a CNC,' and he was like, 'No, I don't know.'

"A year or so passed and I was upgrading my CNC so I suggested he bought this older CNC from me – 'It'll change your life'. Anyway, we got it set up and pointed him in the right direction. Josh is the kind of person who, when they learn something, they go into every fine detail. He took the CNC and he was off! 'Why was I ever doing this by hand?' he said.

"A few years down the line we had a discussion about pickups and for him to come in and do those for us, working on prototypes, and that's kinda how he started working for PJD. He just loves working with guitars and has a huge knowledge base. He's not a fan of the business side – and I don't mind that, the

promotion side and keeping on top of all of that. So the Custom Shop is just like a small boutique workshop, [but] I'm not going to say the sky's the limit as there are some things we'd probably say no to if we didn't want to build it."

So the Custom Shop is a return to more lutherie, less production-style builds?

"Absolutely. I think you need to be able to tell that they're from the same brand – and I think you can – but I also hope you can tell that the Custom Shop is just doing something a bit different to those earlier Standards. The Elites have the higher grade woods, the hand-wound pickups, premium hardware – I love those Gotoh 510 tuners, and the 510 bridge is another little elevation. The standard bridge we use does the job very well, but the 510 looks like it's had a bit more thought gone into it."

You've hinted at a set-neck PJD. Will that have a shorter scale length?

"Yes, and we're calling that the Carey Senior. I don't want it to look like a copy of a Les Paul, although that's the sonic area we're going for. Why not? Nik Huber does the Orca and Patrick Eggle does the Macon, which are unbelievably good guitars – I think their work is exceptional – and plenty of people might prefer those to a contemporary Gibson. So we'll probably go with a natural edge, a proper violin-like top carve, and we're discussing using the PJD six-in-a-line headstock but back-angled with a veneer facing. I don't want to make a Les Paul copy – I like our headstock. Some people won't like it on a set-neck guitar, but, hey, I think it'll look pretty cool!" [DB]

4. This very efficient Gotoh bridge with its relaxed walls is the same as on the PJD York Standard and features brass 'In Tune' compensated saddles. The bridge single coil was custom-wound by Josh Parkin

5. An idea borrowed from the PRS 'Dead Spec' Silver Sky is this rear compartment for the nine-volt battery that powers the onboard active boost

6. The upper control is master volume and the lower is master tone with a pull-switch phase option. The third control at the centre has a push-push switch that introduces the Mars-Tronic onboard variable level boost, created especially for this custom build

considerable, not to mention the clean-to-grunge versatility even before we touch our amp or kick in any outboard dirt. It might look like a lowly 'Junior', but the quality of sound, not to mention that range, is quite something.

Verdict

It's ironic that while we're in a golden age of British guitar-making, the shrinking market and increased dominance of the big brands means it's harder for lesser-known makers to get a foot in the retailer's door. Even then, without expensive and constant marketing, many smaller makers are overlooked. But the instrument has to be world class if it stands a chance and that's been the focus at PJD in recent years: sharply produced instruments with superb playability that might not have the kudos of the much more established brands, but that do have the quality of some other frankly much more loftily priced builds.

The understated Carey Elite would satisfy any seasoned player needing to nail those classic sounds, and its pared-down drive is perfect for the performing musician. Our Carey Custom is a unique build, nodding to one of the greats, perfectly executed with an extraordinary range of voices, particularly with that active boost. Clearly, if you can imagine it, PJD can probably build it for you. 



PJD CAREY ELITE

PRICE: £3,199 (inc case)

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Single-cut chambered body electric

BODY: 'Old Growth' Brazilian mahogany, chambered, w/ figured maple top

NECK: Roasted and highly figured 4A grade quarter-sawn maple, original PJD profile, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Unbleached bone/42.2mm

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, rectangular mother-of-pearl inlays, 254mm (10") radius

FRETS: 22, medium (Jescar 55090)

HARDWARE: Gotoh 510FX-6 string-through 6-block saddle bridge, Gotoh SG510 18:1 ratio tuners w/ ebony buttons – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PJD hand-wound '57-spec humbuckers, raw nickel partial covers with gold foil inserts, 3-way toggle pickup selector, master volume and tone

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.20/7.04

OPTIONS: Anything is possible, but there are options in wood, colour, chambering, 'board radius, pickup type/voicing (£POA)

RANGE: New Valhalla Custom, plus original cracked nitro, single soapbar Carey and St. John Apprentice. St John and Woodford Elite to come (£TBA)

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, no extra

FINISHES: Original Burst (reviewed) – satin nitro body and neck back



PROS Excellent crisp and detailed craft throughout, along with upper-level Gotoh hardware; PJD's hand-wound pickups very classic voicing

CONS Nothing that can't be custom ordered...



PJD CAREY CUSTOM

PRICE: £2,699 (inc case)

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: Single-cut solidbody electric

BODY: Alder

NECK: Maple, PJD standard profile, bolt-on

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.6mm

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

FRETS: 22, medium (Jescar 55090)

HARDWARE: Gotoh BS-TC1S bridge with brass 'In-Tune' saddles and relaxed side w/ through body stringing, Gotoh vintage-style SD91 split-post tuners – nickel-plated

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm

ELECTRICS: PJD hand-wound '57-spec covered humbucker (neck), PJD hand-wound '51-spec single coil (bridge), 3-way toggle pickup selector, master volume and tone (w/ pull switch out-of-phase), Mars-Tronic Deci-Boost

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.68/8.1

OPTIONS: Just ask!

RANGE: The non-Custom Shop Carey and York Standards both cost £1,299

LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, no extra

FINISHES: Two-Tone Burst (reviewed) – satin nitro body and neck back



PROS Similar detailed but pared-down build; superb playability and tuning stability; excellent and diverse pickup voicing; extensive sounds, not least with that active boost

CONS By the nature of the unique custom design, it might not quite be for everyone



Plastic Fantastic

The latest iteration of the Line 6's long-running Pod series is practical, portable, feature packed – and plastic

Words Trevor Curwen
Photography Phil Barker





LINE 6 POD EXPRESS £185

CONTACT **Yamaha Music Europe** PHONE **+49 (0) 4101 3030** WEB **www.line6.com**

What You Need To Know

- 1 That's a bit colourful!**
Yes, guitarists get the red chassis as opposed to a black version for bass players, but the coloured legending and LEDs do give it a certain toy-like vibe.
- 2 What's onboard?**
There's some serious amp and effects modelling going on here, but that colourful appearance ties in with the impression that this is a unit that's easy for anyone to use.
- 3 So does this sit on my desktop or pedalboard?**
Either. It can deliver a full amp/cab plus effects sound or you can turn the amp/cab simulation off and use it as a multi-effects pedal.

The original Pod was the unit that started the whole shebang of hardware digital amps and effects processors, and Line 6 has kept the range going in parallel with its Helix (HX) models. The brand's latest, the Pod Express, bridges the gap between the Pod Go floor processor and the tabletop bean-shaped Pocket Pod with attributes of both – most notably the stage readiness of the former and the practical portability of the latter.

What you're getting here is a unit with a plastic, rather than metal, chassis that's about the size you'd expect from a twin-footswitch stompbox. It features a choice of seven amp models with matching cabs derived from the HX series, coupled with the four most common effects types – Dirt, Modulation, Delay and Reverb – in a setup where everything is hands-on and easily tweakable. No menus here!

There are also 21 user-programmable preset slots onboard, a tuner, a looper, tap

tempo and mono or stereo output, as well as a headphone out and a USB connection that allows you to stream music to the unit or to link it up as an audio interface for recording. There's also provision to connect add-ons such as an expression pedal to control volume and extra assignable footswitching.

In Use

The amps are selected via a central rotary switch that's surrounded by seven LED segments, which are your main indicators of everything that's going on with the

Any sound that you dial up can be saved as a preset into the 21 onboard memory slots



This thumbwheel on the side of the unit controls the output volume for the headphone output and the main output jacks

pedal, lighting up in different colours for different functions: red shows the selected amp. Each amp has five parameters (Gain, Volume, Bass, Mid, Treble) instantly available via the knobs if the Alt button is held down, but you also get access to Power Amp Master volume and Presence/Hi-Mid if you press and hold Alt and a footswitch together. Together, these can dial in quite a range of tones for your selected amp, and you can also mix and match cabs or turn the cab sim off altogether. The amps are arranged in ascending order of gain capability starting with Clean, based on a Fender Princeton, and running through to Lead, which is inspired by a Peavey



1. The LED ring features seven multi-coloured segments that indicate what amp or preset is selected, as well as lighting to indicate colour-coded parameter settings. Turn the Amp encoder to select an amp model or turn to the detente at the 6 o'clock position for no amp. The lit LED ring segment in red indicates which amp you have selected or is dark for no amp

5150. Between those extremes, all bases are covered with decent-sounding amp/cab combinations, including Vox and Marshall-style tones, with Chime based on a Matchless DC30, and Crunch on a modded Friedman.

Besides a noise gate at the start of the signal chain, there are up to four simultaneous effects available: Distortion before the amp, then Modulation, Delay and Reverb after the cab. These can also be used in front of a conventional amp by turning the amp/cab simulation off with the Amp encoder at its six o'clock



THE RIVALS

For amp and speaker simulation in a compact pedal, there's the Boss IR-2 (£179) with 11 different amp types, each of which has an associated cab IR from Celestion Digital or your own loaded IRs. It has an ambience knob to add in a choice of either Room, Hall or Plate Reverb, as well as a headphone output and USB audio interface capability. Also from Boss, an even more compact and transportable practice tool comes in the form of the Boss Katana Go (£119), a personal headphone amp that plugs into your guitar and features 10 amp types and over 60 effects.

The Pod Express is a very potent machine. It could absolutely be a first guitar pedal... and there's plenty for experienced players

position. To add an effect from any of the four knobs, you simply turn it from its anti-clockwise (effect off) position to the segment of the knob where your desired effect resides. The knob's travel in the selected segment's arc adjusts the effect's intensity; consecutive segments light up in the central ring as you turn the knob to indicate how much you've dialled in. The parameter for Distortion is, of course, gain/saturation, while depth and rate are increased together for the Modulation. For Delay, you get an increase in wet mix and number of repeats (delay time being set with the tap tempo footswitch), while Reverb gets adjustment of wet mix and decay time. While it's broad strokes, it's quick adjustment that works well.

The four effects controlled by the distortion knob are labelled as Boost, Overdrive, Distortion and Fuzz comprising modelled Klon, Tube Screamer, Boss DS-1 and Big Muff, respectively. While they might struggle to

2. Like the knobs for the other three effects types, Delay selects and sets the parameter for the four different effects available, but turned fully clockwise it engages the looping facility

3. Press the Alt button to access alternate features for the knobs or switches – mainly the parameters for the selected amp (legended in white below each knob)

4. The On footswitch is your main bypass, while the Tap switch offers tap tempo but brings up a tuner if you press and hold it. Hit both together to enter Preset mode and use both to scroll through the presets



knock their real hardware counterparts off your 'board, they do their job well, interacting nicely with the amps here.

The Modulation quartet of Chorus, Flanger, Phaser and Optical Tremolo all sound lush, especially if you're running a stereo output, while Delay is amply covered with standard and ping-pong digital delays, plus models of a Boss DM-2 analogue delay and an Echoplex tape echo. Your options are completed by Spring, Hall, Plate and Space reverbs, the latter offering huge lingering ambiances.

Any sound that you dial up can be saved as a preset into the 21 onboard memory slots, arranged in three banks of seven. A press on both footswitches together puts the pedal into Preset mode and you can then scroll up and down through your saved presets with the footswitches, or use the amp selector. Segments on the LED ring light up to indicate the selected preset, with white, yellow and purple colours being used for bank identification.

The final trick up the pedal's sleeve is a 30-second stereo looper that's easy to use and operated purely by the bypass footswitch, with subsequent presses delivering record, loop playback and overdub, a hold to undo and a double-press to stop playback.

Verdict

Despite looking like something of a 'My First Guitar Pedal', the Pod Express is actually a very potent machine. Of course, it could absolutely be a first guitar pedal. Anyone buying an electric guitar for the first time would find it the perfect companion that's easy to use and fulfils many roles, not least the fact that it provides an immediate overview of the range of sounds that an electric guitar combined with amp and pedals is capable of.

Beginners aside, there's plenty here for the more experienced player to get stuck into. Battery power and a headphone socket make it a great practice tool that's perfect for those who like to sit on the sofa and have a noodle, as well as a go-anywhere recording companion to a laptop or tablet. For gigging, it can give you a fully processed sound straight into the PA if required, or could just sit on your 'board (amp/speaker sim turned off) as a utility pedal for single or combined effects – those presets are ready and waiting to store the sound you need for each scenario. The Swiss Army knife analogy may be overused, but this truly does fit the criteria in a package that's fun, portable and won't break the bank. **G**



LINE 6 POD EXPRESS

PRICE: £189

ORIGIN: Vietnam

TYPE: Amp and effects processor

FEATURES: Buffered bypass, 7x amps (Clean, Special, Chime, Dynamic, Crunch, Heavy, Lead), 4x effects types (Distortion, Modulation, Delay, Reverb), Tuner, Looper, Tap Tempo

CONTROLS: Amp/Ch. Vol, Dist/Gain, Mod/Mid, Delay/Bass, Reverb/Treble, Output Volume, Alt button, On (Bypass) footswitch, Tap footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard outputs (L/Mono, R), standard FS 3/4, USB, Headphones

POWER: 3 x AA batteries (supplied), 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 500 mA

DIMENSIONS: 91 (w) x 129 (d) x 50mm (h)



PROS Light and portable; battery power; ease of use; solid range of amps and effects; presets; headphone facility; USB audio facility; tap tempo; clear LED status indication

CONS It's plastic (though it feels pretty robust) and so some may think it looks somewhat toy-like

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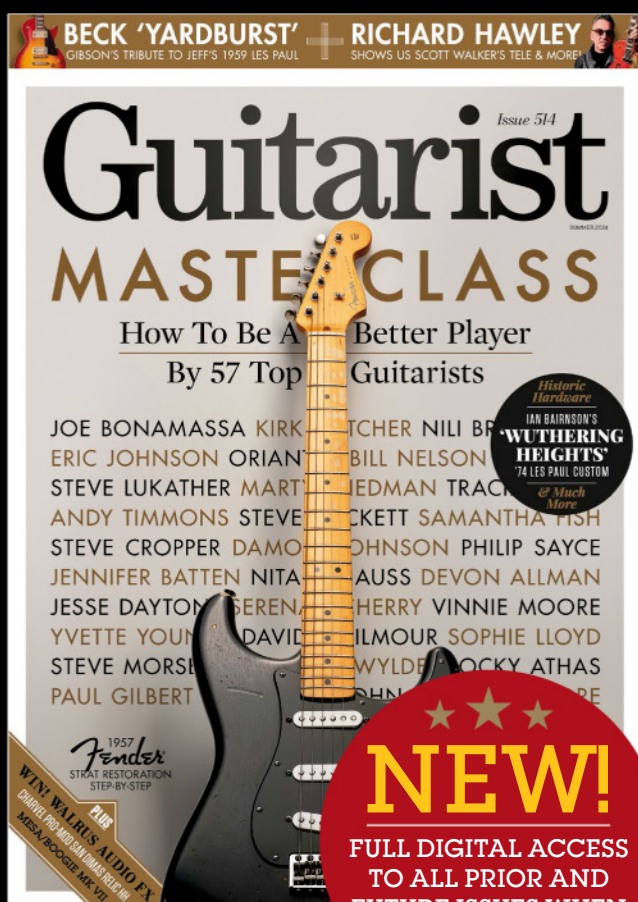


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Longtermers

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



Jamie's busking setup, poised for performance duties outside of Glastonbury Abbey

Boss Cube Street II

With Jamie Dickson

Writer

JAMIE DICKSON
Guitarist Editor-in-chief



Ahead of a London performance of songs from his debut album, Jamie takes to the streets of Glastonbury for some valuable preparation

As regular readers may know, I've pretty much devoted myself completely to fingerstyle acoustic guitar recently, at least as far as gigging and recording goes. Solo fingerstyle performance can be a bit nerve-racking as the stream of notes produced is very much a chain that must either flow without mishap from the guitar or hit a mistake and grind to a sudden halt. Unlike playing a riff on electric with a nice loud band behind you, you can't fudge things and drop back in at the next bar if you slip up. Every note is nakedly on display – and every mistake, too.

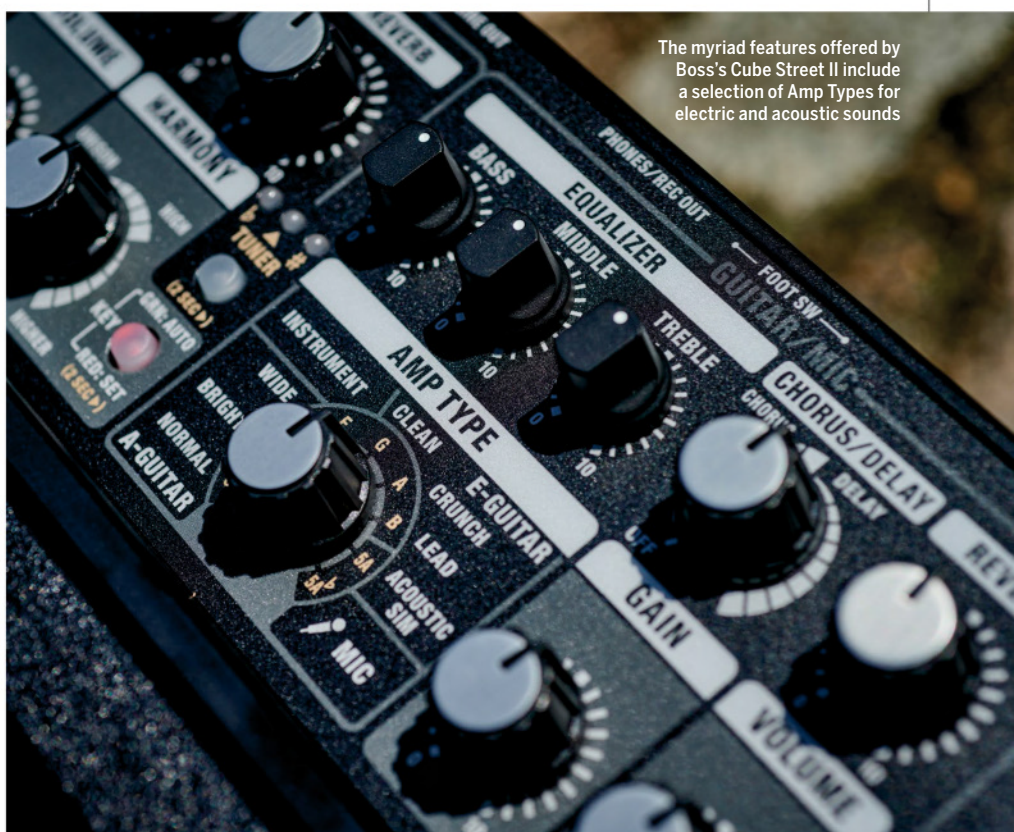
That can pose a bit of a psychological challenge when it comes to gigging fingerstyle acoustic pieces. Ironically, the more tense you are, the clumsier your fingers will become and the more likely you are to

"It was an odd feeling playing pieces I'd only ever performed in the studio to passers by"

screw up. It's a vicious circle that needs to be dealt with if you want to devote your time to gigging and even recording this stuff. The pros we consulted for last month's Masterclass cover feature said, nearly unanimously, that the best way to cope with potential stage fright and its unwelcome effects on your music is to prepare, prepare, prepare.

But Marty Friedman made a very valuable observation in that same feature, which we don't hear often enough: "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," he argued. "Instead of practising at home, use that time to create opportunities to play in front of people. That will turbocharge your abilities."

Great advice – but if gigging itself is the hurdle you fear to jump, how do you get prepared? With a booking in the diary to perform songs from my debut fingerstyle album, *Withershins*, at the Betsey Trotwood venue in London, I decided to immunise



The myriad features offered by Boss's Cube Street II include a selection of Amp Types for electric and acoustic sounds

myself to stage nerves by performing (and thus practising) the material on Glastonbury High Street as a busker. My theory was that it would get me used to the sound of my acoustic playing through an amp. Inevitably, there's a feeling of disconnection from – yet also magnification of – one's every move on the fretboard that you need to become acclimated to when playing an amplified acoustic as compared with playing quietly at home. And even passers by would provide enough of an audience to test my readiness properly.

Busker's Best Friend

With a plan in place I only had one problem. My existing Trace Elliot acoustic amp needed mains power, which obviously isn't available on Glastonbury High Street! Figuring that there must be battery powered amps ideal for buskers (there are), I quickly surmised that Boss might be the best brand to turn to, as its Cube Street II amp had plenty of useful features, including nine Amp Types offering electric and acoustic sounds, acoustic emulation and more, plus full EQ and decent reverb, delay and chorus effects, a looper and a tuner. In short, everything and more that I'd need to perform on the High Street.

Once the amp arrived, I loaded in the eight little AA batteries that enable it to work without the optional mains supply (could they really power a 10-watt amp I wondered?)

and headed into town. Dialling up a generous dollop of reverb and delay, I picked a spot on the pavement outside the Abbey and began to play. It was an odd feeling at first, playing pieces I'd only ever performed in the studio to passers by. The notes echoed strangely amid the stone buildings and the roar and wheeze of passing buses drowned me out periodically. But immediately the value of 'rehearsing by performing' became clear – even playing to random pedestrians put a bit of healthy pressure on, revealing which areas of the material were already well rehearsed and which were weak. The nice thing being that if I stumbled over a note, it didn't really matter. The amp sounded very decent, perfectly loud enough to turn heads at the cafe across the street, and I was glad of the built-in tuner when I changed from DADGAD to standard tuning halfway through.

About 20 minutes in I realised, with a slight shock, that I was in danger of enjoying myself. A lady walked by and said the music was nice. A man in a check shirt came over and dropped a pound coin in the case. The life of the town ebbed and flowed around me, and by the end of the half-hour session I had three quid in the case – a pittance in the grand scheme of things but better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, as they say. There might be something in this busking lark, I thought. But would it prepare me for the London gig? Tune in next time to find out... **G**



DAVE MUSTAINE

The Megadeth man recounts his long-standing love for Seymour Duncan humbuckers and why he's finally – at the age of 62 – just getting the gear-collecting bug

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

"My Jackson... no, my BC Rich Bich 10-string."

What was the last guitar you bought and why?

"I just bought a Gibson Les Paul Silverburst; it's the second guitar in my collection. I just started collecting guitars once I went to Gibson because... honestly, all of the guitar companies I've been with [have enabled me to play] really wonderfully made guitars. The collection I've got now includes a Les Paul Junior and the Silverburst – it's kind of changing colours because it's so old."

What's the most incredible bargain you've ever come across?

"I don't know... I really haven't bought many guitars up until the last guitar I bought, which was the Les Paul. Gosh, I can't even think about another guitar that I've bought lately because I've been so blessed to have endorsements for so long!"

Is there a guitar that you intensely regret getting rid of?

"There are a lot of double-neck guitars that I've had to part ways with. And those were especially heartbreaking because the double-neck thing is kind of a work of art."

What's the worst case of buyer's remorse you've ever experienced?

"I've had guitars that I really didn't like, though I didn't buy them, I possessed them. One that I really didn't like was the aluminum Jackson [Roswell] Rhoads guitar. It didn't sound good, didn't play good, but it was a really neat moment. Even though Randy Rhoads had passed on, I don't think he was the guy who would have played an aluminum spaceship-shaped guitar. He was more along the lines of the shark fin and his Les Pauls."

What's your best gear-buying tip?

"Learn how to play. Learn how to play because if you can't play, you'll find a pedal and you'll cheat. You'll find a pedal that makes you sound really good and you won't be really good; you'll be living a lie. Once you learn how to play really good, you'll see those pedals as exactly what they are: a simple non-moving, analogue device that is a signal processor."

Do you have a favourite place to shop for gear?

"I like the Gibson Garage. And there are a couple of other places, but like I said, I'm not a real big guitar collector yet. But I am realising that in the next couple of years, I will be because I've actually started enjoying walking around. I guess I'm at an age now where going out and seeing and

Dave's signature Seymour Duncan Thrash Factor high-output humbuckers are modelled on the bridge JB that he used to record 1990's *Rust In Peace*



**"Learn how to play.
Because if you can't
play, you'll find a pedal
and you'll cheat"**

getting to know the community where we're playing is great. I can feel like, 'Man, I really do have an emotional connection with this city or county,' before I can go out and play the show."

When was the last time you stopped and looked in a guitar shop window or browsed online and what were you looking at?

"I love what's going on with my Gibson relationship. I look at a lot of that stuff. We're doing some models, like the Flying V with 24 frets, and we've talked about a couple of others and are making them perfect. One of those is the Dave Mustaine Les Paul. It will play like a beast, be a 24-fret guitar, and have the heel shaved down."

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

"I think I would rather have a great guitar. If you have a really bad guitar, all you're going to be doing is amplifying a really bad guitar that's really difficult to play. And if it's

Bought & Sold

Giving the Vs: Dave has a host of signature Flying V models across Gibson, Epiphone and Kramer



difficult to play, it's gonna be like anything; you won't hear it right any more."

If you could only use humbuckers or single coils for the rest of your career, which would it be and why?

"I don't know what the single-coil thing is with me, but I've never really dug them. I know that I fell in love with Judas Priest in the beginning, and part of the sound that I liked was Glenn [Tipton]'s Strat on *Victim Of Changes* – that solo changed my world. Though it could have been KK Downing because I usually get who solos mixed up... [laughs] It was wonderful to hear, but it wasn't my sound.

"My sound is humbuckers, which are brighter and crunchy. I have my Seymour Duncans – Seymour Duncan wrote the book on pickups. There's a winder there who knows exactly what I like, and my [signature] Thrash Factors, to me, are the best pickups I've ever heard. They were modelled after Jeff Beck's JB pickups [specifically the one on the guitar used to record fourth Megadeth album, *Rust In Peace*], and when I made my pickups, I said, 'I want to have my own pickup,' and so I made them mine. We noodled around with them and they're great." [AD]

www.megadeth.com

DAVE'S GO-TO RIG

"I'm using a Neural [DSP Quad Cortex] effects processor now; it's like having the key to the city. I don't know that there are a lot of beginners who are going to be able to make that kind of financial commitment to a piece of gear, but I absolutely love the processor. It does everything you can imagine. And I'm just getting started because there's so much in there that you can go down a rabbit hole and never come up [laughs].

"For real amplifiers, I have my [Marshall] JCM800 and a white Randy Rhoads head that I use when soloing in the studio, but I don't let anyone play or touch it. I like the JCM800 for that natural, surging, loud English crunch.

"For guitars, it's any one of my Gibson Flying Vs, although I love my Explorer and my Les Pauls. They all sound great. The only difference is the wood, the finishing process and if the guitar has binding because that changes the sound and how it vibrates from the centre to the edges. These are the things that are really neat and interesting and have to do with physics and logic and all that shit. Most guitar players don't worry about that stuff, but I'm very picky."

THE UNKNOWN MODDER

Plenty of modded or self-built guitars have gone on to power the careers of big players. But the origins of one heavily used guitar remain a mystery... Dave Burrluck investigates

A little over 45 years ago, a then pretty unknown English band released a self-financed album called *Outlandos d'Amour*. It had been recorded out of hours at a small studio in Leatherhead, Surrey, between January and September of 1978, on secondhand tape found in the band's manager's garage. The first two lead-off singles were banned by the BBC, although on its reissue in 1979, one track in particular changed the struggling band's fortunes: *Roxanne* became an international hit and the calling card of this plucky 'fake punk' trio called The Police.

For his early career with the soon-to-be-huge trio, guitarist Andy Summers relied – virtually exclusively – on a mongrel Telecaster, which he'd famously bought from a student while teaching guitar in California in 1972 before he returned to London in late 1973 to seek fame and fortune. It was already well worn when Andy got the instrument, and quite extensively modded, too, with a humbucker in the neck position, a

pickup phase switch and an active boost controlled by an additional third knob. All Andy subsequently remembers doing is adding replacement Schaller tuners. Summers says the guitar is from '61, although plenty of other sources suggest it's a '63: a sunburst Telecaster Custom. Presumably, even if the maple neck is original, it would have been a special order, but more likely it's from a pre-rosewood 50s Tele. And that's just one of its many mysteries...

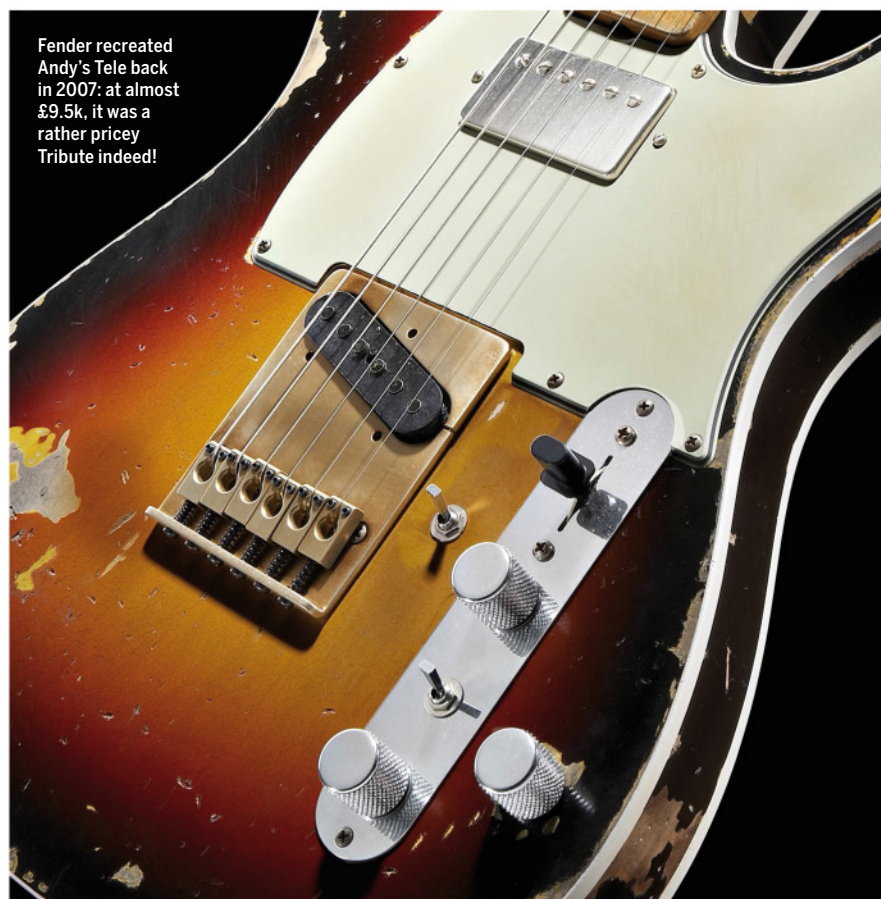
While we've all heard the guitar – and might well have seen it in action back in the day – by the end of The Police in '86 it was one of many Andy used. Perhaps surprisingly, bearing in mind just how famous that Tele was, no-one, not least Fender, thought it might make sense to offer something similar. 20 years after The Police's last hurrah, however, when attending the 2006 Winter NAMM Show in LA, Andy had a mission: "I had this idea about building a Strat with a Steinberger TransTrem on it, so I went to Fender to

talk to them about it. Then they came after me and wanted to build the Telecaster as a part of their Tribute series. They told me they were getting calls every single day about it. So it started in January 2006 and finally they got it together."

All very well, but that 250-only Tribute version was hardly for the masses when it launched in 2007; it cost a cool £9,399 as featured in our Summer 2007 issue. I recently saw one come up for sale at nearly double that.

We also can't help thinking that Fender might have had some mystic assistance as Andy's superb book *One Train Later*, which documented his story, hadn't yet been published and there were no plans for the The Police to reunite, which they did later in 2007 for a tour that lasted for over a year. Whatever. But that Fender Custom Shop Masterbuilt Tribute did shine a little more light on the guitar. First off, there's that date...

"I couldn't find any dates written in the thing," said Fender master builder



Fender recreated Andy's Tele back in 2007: at almost £9.5k, it was a rather pricey Tribute indeed!

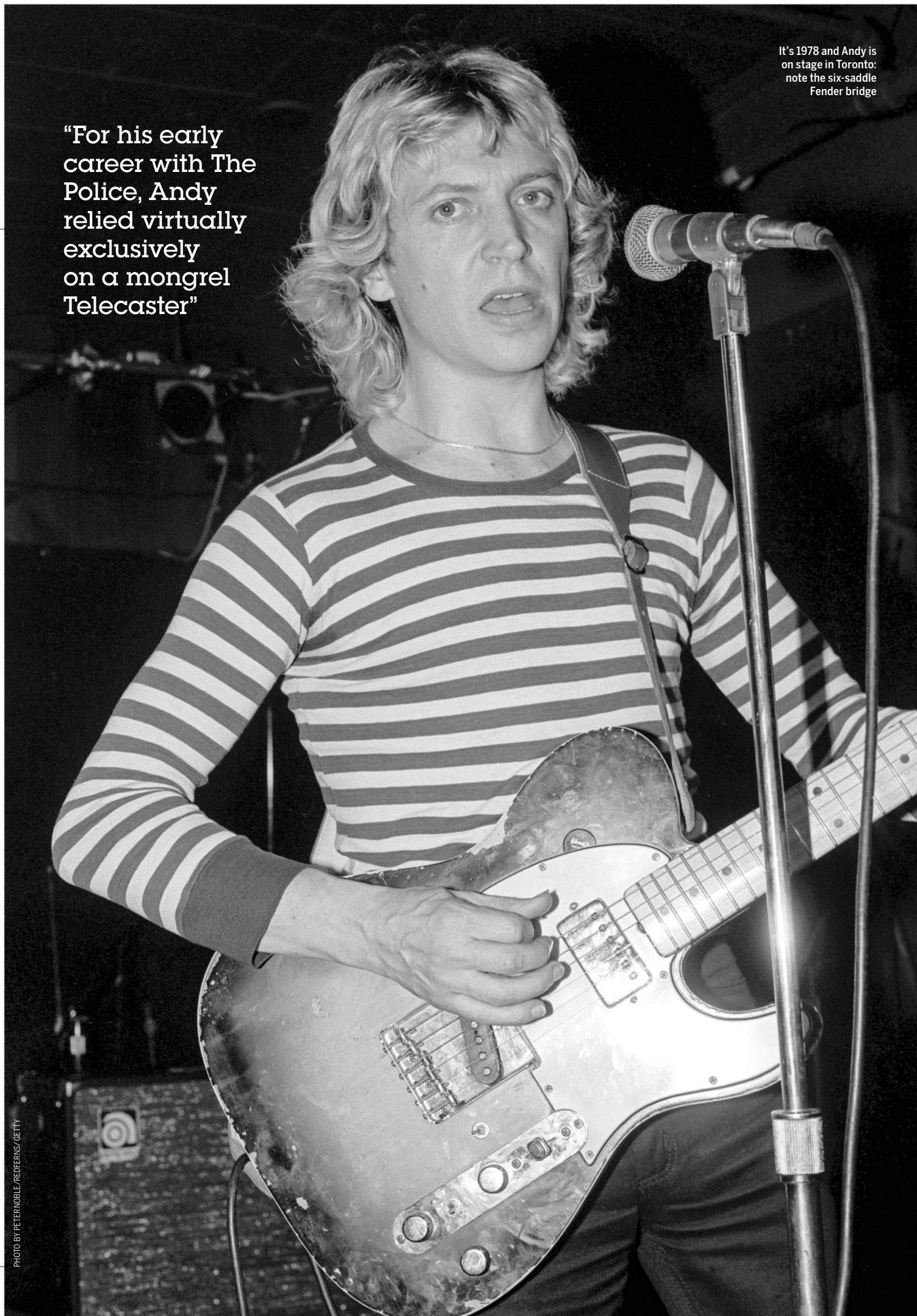
"The instrument is quite extensively modded, with a pickup phase switch and active boost"

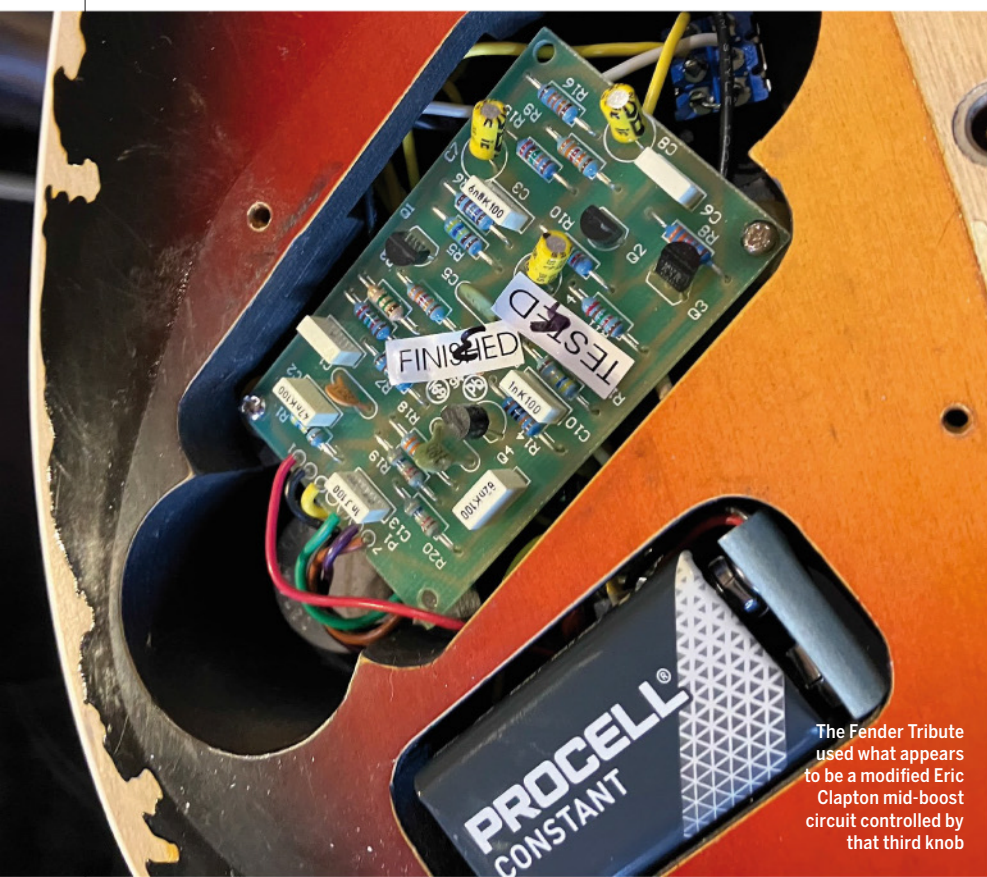
Dennis Galuszka (in an interview by Alan di Perna on GuitarWorld.com) who had taken the original instrument apart and studied it in close detail in preparation for the Tribute. "If I had to guess, it looks like the neck came off a 50s Tele because it actually had a little white blonde paint – like they used on 50s Teles – left on the butt. But the neck pocket had no date written or stamped on it, which was weird. And the body has been routed out so much under the pickguard that all traces of a date are long gone."

Adding a Gibson humbucker in the neck position wasn't unique for the time, nor was a pickup phase switch, but if the guitar was worked on – probably during 1971 or before – it's very early for its retrofitted brass bridge plate and saddles, not to mention its 'secret weapon', an active boost/overdrive. This was engaged by a second mini-toggle placed by the bridge, with the amount

"For his early career with The Police, Andy relied virtually exclusively on a mongrel Telecaster"

It's 1978 and Andy is on stage in Toronto: note the six-saddle Fender bridge





The Fender Tribute used what appears to be a modified Eric Clapton mid-boost circuit controlled by that third knob

Then there's the issue of what actual pickups were in the original mongrel. From di Perna's interview with Dennis Galuszka, it seems this was where the replica started: "Galuszka decided to tackle the guitar's electronics first. A Seymour Duncan '59 proved a very close substitute for the '59 PAF pickup in the neck position. The bridge pickup was more problematical. Galuszka says it was probably a custom pickup, perhaps a Seymour Duncan: 'We ended up having to have Abigail Ybarra here at the custom shop hand-wind all the [bridge] pickups for us,' he says, 'because the pickup on Andy's original has staggered poles, but they're not bevelled. They were wrapped with black twine instead of the standard white. Just a bunch of unusual things.'

"One problem, as the unknown modder found, is that the Telecaster's control cavity is relatively small"

of boost/overdrive being determined by the third rotary control to the side of the control plate.

But the biggest mystery of all is who originally modded Andy's guitar? Did they design and make its active circuit? As far as I know, Andy has never published the name of the student he bought the guitar from, let alone the person who did the modding. And bearing in mind the colossal success of The Police, particularly in the USA, isn't it a little odd that no-one has ever surfaced to say, "By the way, I modded that guitar"?

Finding Facts

So while the original modder remains uncredited, Andy Summers (or someone on his behalf) continued to tinker with the instrument after he bought it. It's that brass bridge that gives the game away and, indeed, some 26 minutes and 30 seconds into Andy's own DVD *Can't Stand Losing You*, based on his book, he is clearly pictured with his Tele with its *original* three-saddle bridge, taken at London's Hope and Anchor, presumably on either 9 or 23 February 1978, after they'd started recording *Outlandos d'Amour*.

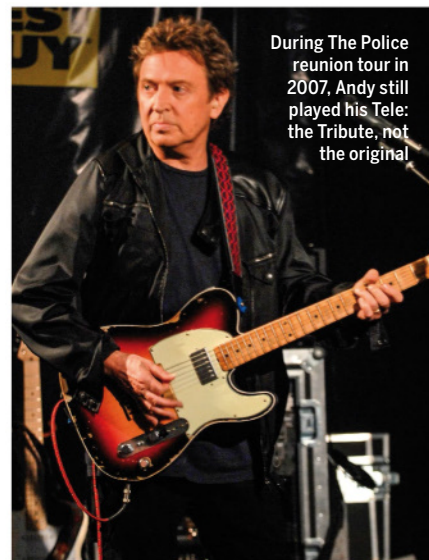
Andy, or again a third party, made another change, perhaps during the ongoing recording of that album. Although the sound of the band on the first album is

more punky than its follow-up, the even more massive *Reggatta de Blanc*, you can't help wondering if Andy wasn't getting the precise intonation for some of the extended chord voicings he began using that became a hallmark of The Police's sound. Either way, the next change for the Summers Tele was a six-saddle Fender Tele bridge, which became available from the mid-70s. A few dates into the USA tour on 2 November 1978 at Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto, Summers is clearly pictured with the six-saddle Fender bridge in place.

Exactly when the six-saddle *brass* bridge found its way onto Andy's Tele certainly isn't documented, but by early 1979 it was visible. That certainly fits time-wise for what this writer remembers as the start of the brass parts craze. But there's another change that's ushered in with the brass plate: instead of the bridge pickup being suspended within the plate, it's now direct-mounted to the body. Another oddity is an apparent crack in the thick brass bridge plate between the treble side of the pickup and the edge of the control plate. That couldn't have happened once the plate was on the guitar. Why Summers overlooks this apparent bodgery is unclear. To be fair, it was an extremely fast-paced life he led at that period. Maybe he simply forgot.

"By trial and error," the write-up added, "Galuszka discovered the bridge pickup was mounted to the body for grounding purposes, to keep the guitar quiet when the pickup was flipped out of phase."

Now, that doesn't sound quite right to me, and I can't help thinking the pickup was direct-mounted because – possibly due to the wrong size holes in the bridge plate – it couldn't be suspended. So was a DIY fix to screw it into the body with a trio of small wood screws?



During The Police reunion tour in 2007, Andy still played his Tele: the Tribute, not the original

Onboard Boost

Something that also isn't clearly documented, either, is the onboard boost/overdrive, which required an enlarged control cavity and larger backplate. Our unknown modder was pretty adventurous! As we explain, this was fitted before Andy got the guitar in 1972, so it's either a homemade circuit (a boost is a pretty simple circuit) or it came from a pedal, although these were pretty rare at that time. Something like Electro-Harmonix's LPB-1 boost with a single-knob boost amount control, which became available via mail order in 1968, might have been a contender, creating 'overdrive' when the increased output hit the front-end of Andy's typically Marshall or Fender amps.

I certainly can't find any info on the original circuit, and it seems for the 250-only Fender Tribute run a 'modified' Eric Clapton mid-boost was employed (see the image of Andy Summers Preamp, far left) as some sources suggest that by this time (2006) the original circuit wasn't working. Don't forget, this was many years and many, many gigs after Andy had purchased the guitar. How many times over those years did he (or later, his tech) have to unscrew the homemade backplate to replace the necessary nine-volt battery?

Clone Theory

Isn't it strange that, for such a famous, well-heard and seen guitar, nobody (with the exception of that cost-a-fortune Fender Custom Shop Tribute and some repros by diligent custom makers) has offered a similar model? Of the many, many guitars that come through our hands here at *Guitarist*, we've had Teles with neck humbuckers, even phase switches, but I can't remember one with those features *and* that variable active boost. One problem, as the unknown modder found, is that the Telecaster's control cavity is relatively small, hence the extensive rear routing on Andy's guitar. You can find Tele control plates with holes for three controls, but making one of those an added boost with its necessary circuit board and battery... Well, good luck.

This absence is the genesis of the PJD Carey Custom we have on page 98 of this issue. Basically, to actually experiment with the Andy Summers recipe, I had to ask a guitar maker to create one.

But whichever route you take, who knows, a guitar you might mod on your kitchen table may – in the right hands – go on to help sell many millions of records. Hopefully, unlike our unknown modder, you'll get due credit! **G**

“Isn't it strange that, for such a famous guitar, nobody has offered a similar model?”





Huw Price's *Nitty*Gritty

Whether this timeless effect comes from an amp or a pedal, we're shaking all over

Tremolo

Electronic tremolo employs circuitry to mimic musical effects that have traditionally been produced by playing techniques on certain instruments. If you were ever required to memorise Italian terms for music theory exams, you may be familiar with the word *tremolando*, and there's even notation for tremolo on musical scores. *Tremolando* from Italian translates as 'trembling' and can refer to fluctuations in volume, the fast repetition of a single note or rapid alternation between two notes.

A string player might achieve these effects by quickly moving a bow back and forth, and a balalaika, mandolin or guitar player may employ fast alternate picking using a plectrum. And we're all familiar with the hammering on and pulling off that so many blues and rock players use to get that two-note trill.

Church organs with tremolo started appearing as early as the 16th century. It was mechanical, rather than electronic, and was produced by opening and closing diaphragms in the pipes to modulate air pressure. In addition

to modulating volume, this also caused fluctuations in pitch.

Tremolo arms notwithstanding, we tend to refer to pitch fluctuations as vibrato, rather than tremolo. But there is a long tradition of using both terms interchangeably and maybe Leo Fender was attempting to distinguish his whammy bar system from Paul Bigsby's. Later, when Fender developed volume-modulating tremolo circuits, the company was almost obliged to describe the effect as vibrato.

Electro-Mechanics

DeArmond first designed an electronic tremolo for the electric Storytone piano during the 1940s. Shortly after, the company's 'Tremolo Control' was offered as a standalone unit and it may be the first dedicated guitar effect. A motorised spindle agitated a canister containing electrolytic fluid, which varied the amount of audio signal going to ground and therefore caused volume to fluctuate. Famous users included Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters, Billy Gibbons and Duane Eddy, who used his on *Rebel Rouser*.

Oscillation

Tremolo circuits began appearing in guitar amps around the late 40s and companies such as Gibson, Multivox and Danelectro were early adopters. Fender and Magnatone amps became renowned for their tremolo effects – but didn't get started until 1955. Purely electronic onboard tremolo offered greater convenience and long-term reliability than mechanically driven tremolo units that required a separate power source.

Most amp tremolos are based on a circuit called a phase shift oscillator. The circuit uses a single valve stage to generate a sine wave at a frequency somewhere between 1Hz and 10Hz with a loop connected between the anode and grid employing a three-stage capacitor/resistor (CR) network. The gain stage creates a 180-degree phase shift and each capacitor in the CR network charges off the anode voltage and then discharges to ground through resistors. The resulting delay at each stage provides a 60-degree phase to bring the total phase shift through another 180 degrees. The combined phase shift is

Electronic onboard tremolo offered greater reliability than mechanically driven tremolo units

360 degrees, which makes the feedback positive, rather than negative.

The loop gain must be set at unity or higher, so a large anode resistor to maximise gain along with a cathode that is fully bypassed below the oscillation frequency are usually combined with a high-gain 12AX7/ECC83 valve. Just like guitar and amp feedback, the tremolo needs something to get the loop started.

With a guitar, it's a case of playing in close proximity to an amp at a sufficiently high volume. The tremolo circuit's input signal comes from its output signal and the oscillator actually gets going from the noise that's inherent to the circuit. This is why it can take a moment for the tremolo to reach full strength after footswitch activation disconnects the loop from ground.



Check out Duane Eddy's classic *Rebel Rouser* to hear DeArmond's 'Tremolo Control' unit in action



Famous users of DeArmond's 'Tremolo Control' included Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters, Billy Gibbons and Duane Eddy

While the names may vary, most amp tremos have speed and depth controls. Oscillation speed is adjusted by combining a potentiometer with a fixed resistor in the first shunt position of the feedback loop. The resistor sets the minimum speed and the potentiometer increases the overall resistance to increase the oscillation frequency.

Wiggling Roaches

We've established how a single valve stage can operate as an oscillator, but how can the alternating current be used to create a tremolo effect? One way is to combine the oscillator output with the bias voltage of fixed bias power valves. This causes the bias voltage to vary at a rate set by the oscillator, and as bias goes up and down, so does the output of the power valves.

This is sometimes called 'bias wiggle' tremolo and in this instance an intensity control determines how much of the oscillator output reaches the valve bias circuit. With some variations in component values, this is the circuit Fender used in the Tweed Vibrolux, brown Princeton and the Princeton Reverb. The difference between the Tweed, brown- and black-panel bias wiggle tremolos is more about feel than sound quality, with the earlier amps seeming deeper and swampier, and having

a slightly different speed range. But it's easy enough to swap a few components to make a black-panel Princeton sound more brown-panel like, or vice versa.

For cathode-biased amps, the oscillator output isn't applied in the same way. Instead, it's usually routed to a stage earlier in the signal path and a common point is the cathode of the phase inverter

valve. This was Fender's solution with the Tweed Tremolux and the Vibro Champ. Amps such as Marshall's 18-watt and various Vox and WEM amps applied the tremolo modulation even earlier in the signal chain. The effect isn't as deep and throbby as bias wiggle tremolo, and in some amps it can sound lacklustre.

Some amp builders prefer to modulate preamp valve bias, rather than power valve bias. Sometimes the power valves have to be biased on the cool side to get the tremolo working properly, which may compromise tone, and some argue that it puts additional stress on the power valves.

From the mid-60s onwards, Fender equipped amps including the Deluxe Reverb, Twin Reverb, Vibroverb, Tremolux, Pro, and others, with a new tremolo circuit. It used both sides of a dual triode valve and an optocoupler. The optocoupler is often called the 'roach' because it has a black body with four 'legs' sticking out, and many refer to this as optical tremolo.

The first triode is configured as an oscillator in the usual way, but the anode is connected to the grid of the second triode, which amplifies the oscillator output. This second triode drives the optocoupler, which is actually a sealed unit containing a neon bulb and a light-dependent resistor

The Princeton Reverb (and earlier Princeton) featured speed and intensity knobs to control the onboard tremolo



Top-of-the-range models such as Fender's Super produced a more complex tremolo effect

Effectrode's valve-powered Delta-Trem provides warm amp-style tremolo direct from your board



(LDR). The amplified oscillator output varies the amount of light produced by the bulb and the LDR's resistance is highest when the bulb is dim and lowest when the bulb is bright.

One side of the LDR gets the audio signal from a point in the circuit just before a mixer resistor merges the vibrato channel with the normal channel. The other side of the LDR is connected to ground so as the bulb modulates the LDR's resistance, the amount of audio signal going to ground varies accordingly and volume level fluctuates at a rate determined by the speed control. The intensity of the tremolo is set by a potentiometer that restricts the amount of audio signal reaching the LDR.

Another name for this is 'signal shunting tremolo' and it's characterised by an asymmetrical response, where the volume rise and fall occur at different rates. It often has a tad more shimmer and flutter than bias wiggle tremolo, and much depends on the characteristics of the bulb and the response and recovery times of the LDR.

Pitched Harmonics

Many consider the brown-panel era 'harmonic vibrato' to be Fender's ultimate tremolo design. The complex circuit requires multiple triode stages, with

If harmonic tremolo is your thing, then choosing the pedal route is a cheaper and easier solution

some designs utilising four and later versions five. This added to the build cost, so it mostly featured on Fender's top of the range amps such as the Vibrosonic, Bandmaster, Super, Pro, Concert, Twin and Showman.

In the simpler circuit, the output of a regular oscillator stage modulates the gain stage of a 7025 triode via an intensity control. This modulation signal is split after the intensity control to feed another gain stage that flips the oscillator polarity and modulates the other half of the 7025.

The clever bit is that the audio inputs to the 7025 are sent through high- and low-pass filters, and when the low frequencies are in a positive tremolo cycle, the high frequencies are in a negative cycle. The effect has been described as a pseudo-vibrato because it appears to pitch shift, but it is actually tremolo with phasing and it results in a complex, hypnotic and beautiful effect.

The later circuit does the same job, but the oscillator feeds a cathode follower that drives a 12AX7 stage configured as a phase inverter. The anode and cathode outputs modulate the 7025 gain stages and, as before, the 7025 audio outputs are combined to drive the phase inverter for the power valves.

Pedal Tones

We've focused on the various varieties of amp tremolo because most tremolo pedals are designed to emulate classic circuits. Some do so using valves, but most run on JFETs, transistors or op-amps. For modern optical tremolo, an LDR is usually combined with an LED, rather than a neon bulb, or instead builders use sealed units called vactrols.

If harmonic tremolo is your thing, then choosing the pedal route is a cheaper and easier solution, and some pedals even allow you to switch between harmonic and regular tremolo modes. Other modern features onboard include tap tempo and expression pedal control. Some pedals also allow you to modify the oscillator waveform from sine to sawtooth or triangle, or even switch between symmetrical and asymmetrical to achieve your preferred feel. 

www.huwpicguitar.com



David Davidson's *Vintage Icons*

This Blue Metallic Strat is about as rare as they come



Often called Moreno Blue, this metallic precursor to Lake Placid Blue most closely matches Pontiac's 1957 Sapphire Poly finish

The neck date reads December 1957. This Strat has been loved and played, but it's very straight and correct, with the yellowed plastic knobs and pickup covers, and the alder body, which were all standard by then. The body has slim body contours like a '56 or '57, and it's quite unlike the chunkier contours that started appearing in mid-to-late 1958.

"The neck starts off with a beautiful V that is on the harder side and that's fairly typical for late 1957. By about the 5th fret the V shape softens out into a larger and wider profile, and by the 9th fret it has a very substantial heft. The frets are original and they show some wear, mostly in the cowboy chord position, but the playability is fantastic.

"I don't know much about this guitar's history, but I got it about 20 years ago. I received a call from We Buy Guitars and after seeing some photos and asking a lot of questions I flew down to Texas to buy it. I remember opening the case and saying, 'Wow' because it looked so much like the 1958 Moreno Blue Esquire that I also still have. It's obvious they were sprayed from the same can of paint and, in fact, I'd imagine that one quart of lacquer did all the guitars Fender ever made in this colour.

"Moreno Blue is the colour that pre-dates Lake Placid Blue because Fender didn't begin using that until late 1959. Moreno Blue was sprayed over a Desert Sand basecoat and this body was always intended to be this colour. In the 1950s most Strats were purpose built to be sunburst and they were stained yellow. Most times a body would simply be

taken off the rack if a custom colour order came in, but in this case, the yellow was never applied.

"Fender used Desert Sand as a basecoat for custom colours pretty much exclusively in the earlier days, but by 1961 or 1962 you can see other colours being used as a primer. I see a lot of Fiesta Red examples painted over Shell Pink or Coral, probably because they weren't used that much. Rather than waste the lacquer, they probably decided to use it up as a primer instead. It was the same with Sonic Blue because they probably had way more than they needed.

"This guitar is among the top 10 Strats from the 1950s that I've ever touched"

"The earliest Lake Placid Blue Fender that I've ever seen had a January 1960 neck date and sixth-week potentiometers. Of course, Fender's colour chart didn't appear until November 1961, so although those colours were used beforehand, they weren't standardised.

"Fender did name a couple of colours, but from an automotive standpoint they weren't correct. Also, over time people have made up names, such as Luar Green, but Fender never called it that and neither did any of the automotive paint manufacturers. It's actually Arlington Green.

"San Marino was a colour that was being used in the automotive industry and it was probably manufactured by DuPont.

Fender got their paint from a little auto body supply shop and if they had an order for a blue guitar, they just bought what was in stock. I have paint swatch books going back to 1940, and using those and a paint camera it's usually possible to figure out what Fender was using for custom colours.

"Custom colour Fenders from the 1950s are extremely rare and I'd estimate that during that decade they probably made less than 200. A lot of those guitars would have been stripped during the hippie era when everybody wanted natural or sunburst. I've had a few of those where you could still see traces of the colour in the routs.

"All three pickups sound really good. Sometimes these guitars just have a great bridge pickup, like a cat scratching on glass, and it's the ultimate sound. Sometimes you get a really warm and liquid-sounding neck pickup or a very woody middle pickup, but when you have all three on one instrument you have a special Stratocaster.

"I try to avoid the word 'best' because once you've used it, you can't use it again. But I will say this guitar is among the top 10 Stratocasters from the 1950s that I've ever touched. It just has the most wonderfully big bell-like tone and if the Lord Almighty ever wanted to carve a guitar neck, this is the template he should use. It has been with me for a long while and I guess I have a soft spot for it." **[HP]**

Vintage guitar veteran David Davidson owns Well Strung Guitars in Farmingdale, New York
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By late 1957 Fender had started using a different plastic, which resulted in pickup covers and knobs turning a creamy yellow



Blues Headlines

Richard Barrett is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks



Beck At The Bar

Tutor Richard Barrett | **Gear used** Knaggs Choptank, Keeley Boss SD-1 & Vox AC15 C1
Difficulty ★★★★★ | 30 mins per example

THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT for this Headlines was going to be 'Some Useful Vocabulary For Slide Using Standard Tuning' – or words to that effect. Then I happened to have a play over the backing track using the whammy bar, instead of a slide, and realised I was channelling (or trying to channel) something like Jeff Beck's solo in Jon Bon Jovi's *Blaze Of Glory*. Jeff was extremely adept with a bottleneck, but he could also manipulate the whammy to get a slide effect when the mood took him.

The four examples shown here were played separately but with the intention of forming a complete solo when listened to together. There are a few fundamentals

to take care of before you dive into these examples, so take note. I'm taking for granted that your vibrato bridge, whatever style it is, is set up floating (as opposed to flat against the body), with at least a semitone rise in pitch on the second string when you pull up on the bar. You'll also want a newish, properly stretched set of strings and a well-cut, lubricated nut, otherwise the constant retuning will hinder any progress. Unless you're using a locking vibrato, you'll probably find you need to keep retuning anyway!

A fairly well-driven tone with plenty of mids and not too much bass is also essential. Using a classic overdrive pedal

(such as a Tube Screamer or Boss SD-1, or a Klon, if you're feeling flush) really helps with the sustain you need while using the bar. I also dialled back the tone on the bridge pickup a little for a mellower attack on the first two examples. Using the picking-hand thumb and fingers helps control noise from the other strings and makes it easier to adjust the guitar's controls as you play – something Jeff did frequently. Hope you enjoy and see you next time! 



Richard Barrett's album, *Colours*, (complete with backing tracks), is available now from iTunes and Amazon

Example 1

THIS FIRST EXAMPLE repeats the same rhythm and a similar technique with the bar for the first three phrases. After the initial sustained note, the first two notes of each group of semiquavers are generated by pressing the bar down until the note drops a tone. Be as accurate as you can, but remember that perfection might not have any character. The scoops into notes also help give the slide effect. In the final bar, things change up a bit with the brief semitone pull-up on the bar, followed by a nice easy divebomb.

The musical notation for Example 1 is presented in two systems, each with a guitar staff (treble clef) and a bass staff (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 7/4.

System 1:

- Guitar Staff:** Starts with a whole note D (labeled 'D' above the staff). This is followed by a phrase of semiquavers with a 'w/bar' (whammy bar) annotation. The next phrase consists of a sustained note followed by two semiquavers, with a 'scoop' annotation. This is followed by another 'w/bar' phrase. The final phrase consists of a sustained note followed by two semiquavers, with a 'scoop' annotation.
- Bass Staff:** Corresponds to the guitar staff. Fret numbers are indicated below the staff: 13/15, 13, (12), 14, 13, 10, (8), 10, 10.

System 2:

- Guitar Staff:** Starts with a whole note Cadd9 (labeled 'Cadd9' above the staff). This is followed by a 'w/bar' phrase. The next phrase consists of a sustained note followed by two semiquavers, with a 'BD' (bottleneck dive) annotation. This is followed by a 'w/bar' phrase. The final phrase consists of a sustained note followed by two semiquavers, with a 'scoop' annotation.
- Bass Staff:** Corresponds to the guitar staff. Fret numbers are indicated below the staff: 12, (10), 12, 12, 12, (13), (12), 10, 12, 12, 12.

Additional annotations include 'scoop', 'BU' (bottleneck pull-up), 'BD' (bottleneck dive), and 'doop' (divebomb) in the final phrase of the second system.

Example 2

THE FIRST PHRASE HERE features selected notes from a D major chord/arpeggio being dropped down a tone, with the bar in this case, but it's something you'll often hear done with a slide. We continue to bar 2 with some slightly more conventional playing. A scoop, another quick semitone pull-up and a short pentatonic flurry lead us to a divebomb at the end, simulating how many slide players end a phrase – but not before a wobble with the bar. You'll notice the note is also slid down with the fretting hand to maximise the effect.

Example 3

THE DYNAMIC PICKS UP HERE and this is reflected by the shrill unison bends that start the phrase. This is followed by a flirt with G Mixolydian (noting the hammer-on at the end of bar 1) and a D major arpeggio, with another semitone pull-up on the bar, then a couple of whole-tone dips at the bottom of the D major arpeggio that leads into bar 2. A more conventional (but hopefully still useful) pentatonic lick takes us through bar 3 before returning to a lower D major arpeggio embellished with a tone dip on the bar and a quick sus4 reference at the end.

Example 4

HOLDING A DOUBLESTOP BEND with a floating bridge can be tricky, but it isn't impossible if you compensate by pushing the whole thing slightly sharp with your fretting hand. The idea behind this is to simulate the rapid-fire licks available to slide players using open tuning but then changing to a more country style for bar 2. Bar 3 is basically the setup for the harmonic in bar 4, but there is some aggressive vibrato and a hammer-on from nowhere to spice things up. The final G harmonic is pulled up to A via the bar, before the final dive. String noise here is encouraged!

The musical notation for Example 4 is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 1 and 2, and the second system covers measures 3 and 4. The notation includes fret numbers, bends, and various guitar techniques like 'BU' (bend up), 'RP' (release pick), 'BD' (bend down), 'scoop', and 'doop'.

System 1 (Measures 1-2):

- Measure 1:** Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time. Notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter). Fretboard: 10-12, 10-12, 10-12, 10-12, 9-10, 10-12, 10-12, 10-12, 10-8.
- Measure 2:** Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time. Notes: C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter). Fretboard: 10-8, 9-10, 9-10, 7-10, 9-7, 7-10, 8-9, 10-7, 5-7, 5-10.

System 2 (Measures 3-4):

- Measure 3:** Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time. Notes: G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter), D6 (quarter), E6 (quarter), F6 (quarter), G6 (quarter). Fretboard: 6-8, 6-7, 7-5, 7-5, 5-7, 5-0.
- Measure 4:** Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time. Notes: G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter), D6 (quarter), E6 (quarter), F6 (quarter), G6 (quarter). Fretboard: 5-7, 7-5, 7-5, 7-5, 7-5, 7-5, 7-5, 7-5.

Hear It Here

JEFF BECK

LIVE AT RONNIE SCOTT'S



Of all the available formats, our recommendation is to lean towards the DVD/video.

The classic *Where Were You*

is, of course, a benchmark for whammy bar technique, but check out Jeff combining bar and bottleneck flair on *Angel (Footsteps)* and *Nadia*, plus what can justifiably be described as a mindblowing cover of The Beatles' *A Day In The Life*. Guest appearances from Imogen Heap, Joss Stone and Eric Clapton enhance an already attractive package.

JEFF BECK

GUITAR SHOP



Released in 1989 after a four-year hiatus, this was the first album on which Jeff dispensed almost entirely with the pick and

showcased his extreme dexterity with the whammy bar. *Behind The Veil*, *Where Were You* and *Two Rivers* are all great examples of this. They also demonstrate how he would interpret an often simple-sounding but deceptively tricky melody in his own style – not necessarily 'flash' (pun intended) but undeniably slick and unique.

JEFF BECK

THERE & BACK



Jeff was always ahead of the curve, as this album from 1980 shows. Many guitarists were unsure about where to go at this

point, with many forsaking their hard-won skills to try to assimilate themselves into this new era. However, Jeff came into the 80s with a collection of contemporary sounding tunes and an approach that the ensuing decades have shown to be ahead of its time. Check out *Star Cycle*, *The Pump* and *The Final Peace* to hear what we mean.

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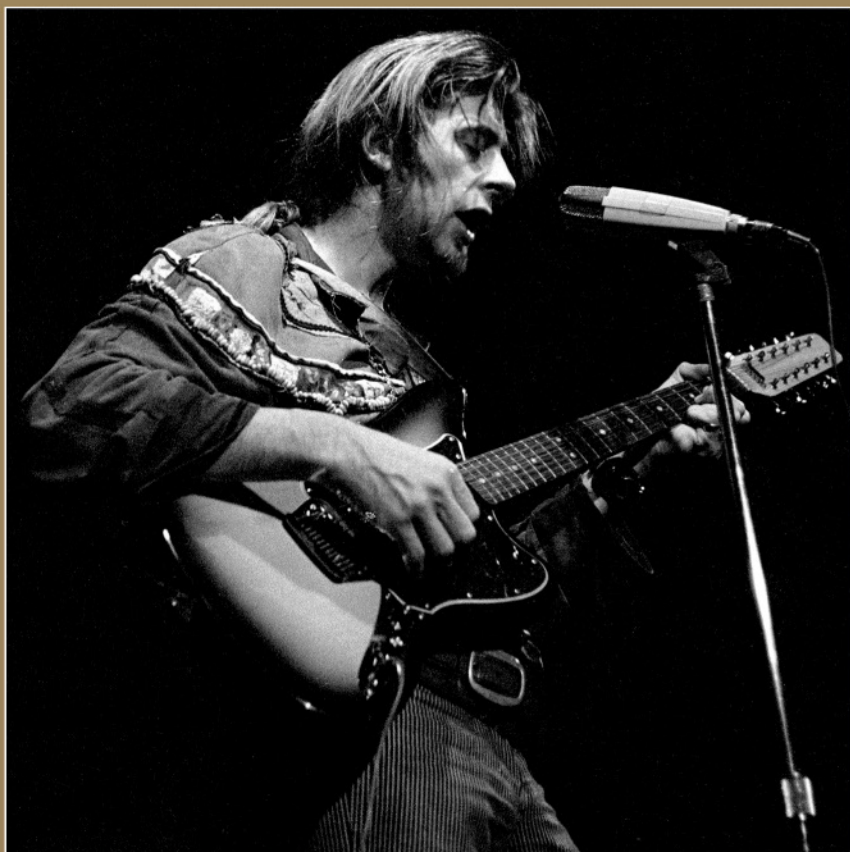
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How John Mayall ignited the UK blues scene in the 1960s and changed the course of music history forever

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