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Guitarist

Issue 537

JUNE 2026

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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO TRADING UP TO YOUR DREAM GUITAR

40

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For many guitarists, buying and selling gear is a pastime in itself – closely interconnected with playing but engaging in its own right. But, as someone once said, nothing great is made without enthusiasm and that's why, even for purist guitar collectors, it's really important to buy gear that you love and feel some sort of instinctive connection with. While we were putting together this month's feature, I tried out a 'player's grade' mid-60s SG Custom that had been refinished and had many non-original mods. It sounded magical, however, and I instantly felt the dangerous undertow of wanting to buy it on the spot. Due to its quirks it certainly wasn't a collector's piece but, in that moment, it really didn't matter to me.

Would it have been a 'shrewd investment'? Well, only as a thing that made me happy every time I played it. But that's actually the point, of course. Would I have been wise to ignore the fact its quirks might make it harder to re-sell if I ever needed to part with it? No, it wouldn't have been wise. But if you really love something, the role of wisdom can often just be an inner voice saying, 'You sure about this?'

If the answer is still a resounding 'yes' and you can afford the price tag then the idealist in me says 'go for it'. In actual fact, I didn't walk out with that guitar as I didn't have the asking price just sitting round waiting to be turned into a guitar, I'm sad to report. Which is where this month's cover feature (see page 56) comes in with its advice on making savvy trades on gear you don't use and shaving a little off the the cost of gear you really want – and, in so doing, climbing an enjoyable ladder that leads, ultimately, towards the guitar of your dreams.

Lastly, all at *Guitarist* were greatly saddened to learn, as we were going to press with this issue, of Lyndon Laney's passing. Lyndon founded Laney Amplification in 1967 and created, alongside era-defining guitarists such as Tony Iommi, some of the most iconic sounds in rock and metal. Our thoughts and warmest sympathies are with his family, friends and all at Laney Amplification. Enjoy the issue and see you next month.

Jamie Dickson **Editor-in-chief**

Editor's Highlights



Pacifica SC electrics

Their Tele inspiration is clear but there are many refinements to enjoy on this brace of high-spec Yamahas as Nev Marten found on **p102**



Glenn Tilbrook

Squeeze's hits have a unique sound and songsmith Glenn Tilbrook shows us some of the guitars he finds inspiring over on **p82**



Eastman Fullertone Offset

Eastman has leaned into original design but the Fullertone Offset is both nostalgic and truly modern in character **p10**

Guitarist

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Subscription delays: Disruption remains within UK and International delivery networks.

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Magazinesdirect.com is owned and operated by Future Publishing Limited

USPS INFORMATION

Guitarist (ISSN 0953-7023 PE23920) is published monthly with an extra issue in May by Future PLC, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA11UA, United Kingdom.

Air freight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Guitarist, World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

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PHOTO BY ADAM GASSON

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REVIEW

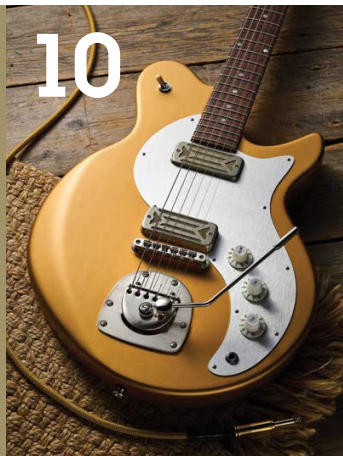


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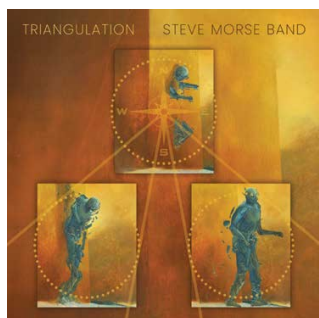
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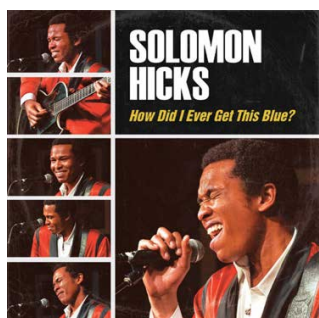
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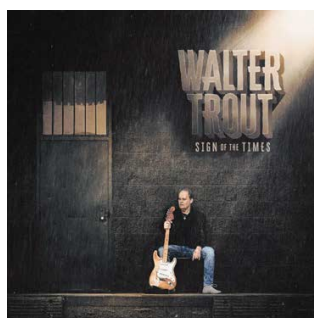
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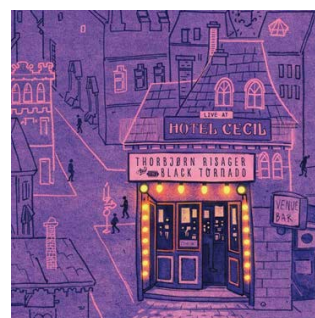
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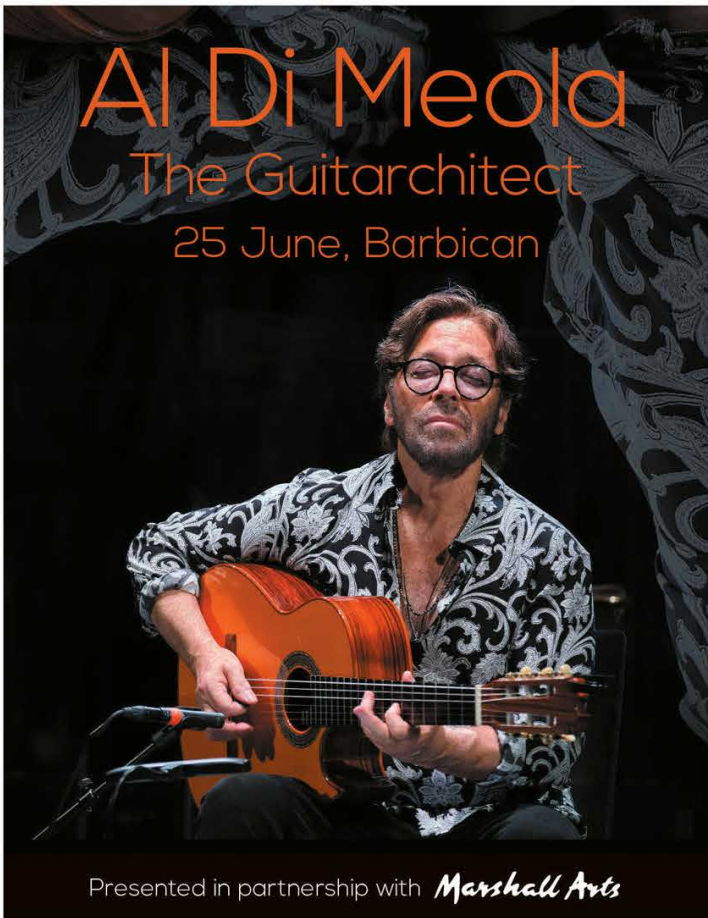
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FIRST PLAY



**EASTMAN
FULLERTONE OFFSET**
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WHAT IS IT? An offset spin on the classy and innovative FullerTone platform with Tonerider soapbars and Göldo vibrato

Good Vibrations

Having launched two very impressive FullerTone models last year, Eastman delivers another – the first with an offset vibrato and oh-so hipster style

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Matt Lincoln

Eastman's move away from well-received and very respected 'inspired-by' designs began back in 2019 with the thinline archtop-inspired Romeo, which – as good as that guitar is, not least its LA and NYC variants – seemed a little like a toe-in-water indication of what might come. But clearly a fire had been lit and next we saw the solidbody Juliet models with their Firebird-like raised centre yet otherwise very classic-inspired original style. But the gauntlet was thrown down with Eastman's head designer Otto D'Ambrosio's eponymous mini-range of USA-built boutique-style models: really classy original designs and high-build level but with a price to match and limited availability.

A wrong turn? Not at all, as the essence of those guitars was distilled into the two-guitar FullerTone range introduced last year. Made in China at Eastman's own long-running Beijing facility, and named after the unique neck joint first seen on those D'Ambrosio models, these dropped into a far more affordable everyman category and stood out in a market dominated by copies with the wrong headstock. Seriously good guitars.







1. Like the SC and DC models, the Offset uses UK-designed and Chinese-made Tonerider pickups. These soapbar humbuckers, with Gold Foil-style covers, were designed specifically for the FullerTone guitars

Catching up with the story, at this year's NAMM Show, Eastman launched the Kauffmann series based on the D'Ambrosio designs but artfully aged and relic'd by Albert Kauffmann: "Made in Holland, Born for Tone." It was these guitars that grabbed the show headlines and so many missed the intro of the *third* FullerTone model, the Offset we have here, which references the design that already features in the much higher-end D'Ambrosio and the newly launched Kauffman ranges.

So, the third FullerTone model introduces the very Juliet-like body shape, a single-cutaway like the SC'52 but with an offset lower bass-side bout. That aside, there's plenty of commonality, not least the Fender-scale 24-fret roasted maple

neck with its unique two-bolt fixing. This complex design means that the neck remains curved as it goes into a similarly shaped body pocket; there's no extending body heel. And, although the neck joins the body at the 16th fret on the bass side of the body, access is easy to the 22nd fret, and a little stretch to the 23rd and 24th.

The Offset is offered in two new colours, Dakota Red and our satin metallic Gold (the SC'52 and DC'62 models come in three choices each), which we have to say is pretty classy. Under the finish is a roasted black limba body with a standard 45mm Fender-like thickness, a light ribcage cutaway and stylish forearm chamber.

While the Offset's treble side is pretty much identical to both the SC and DC models', albeit with seemingly a

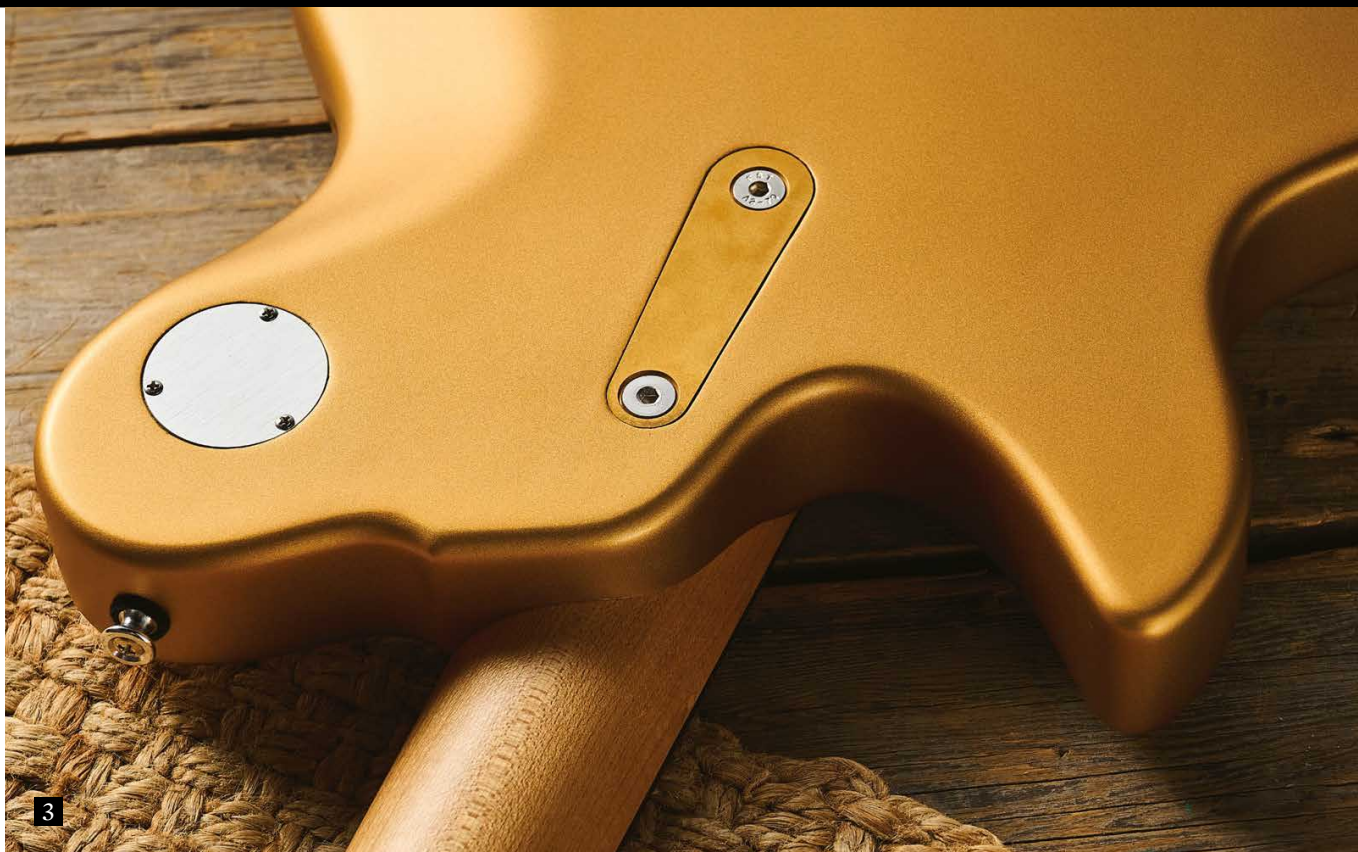
2. It might be called Offset, but there are no dual circuits or 'strangle' switches here; just a fast drive with master volume, two tones and a three-way toggle pickup selector on the bass-side shoulder. Nice

3. This unique FullerTone neck join was "brought to life by master luthier and head of design, Otto D'Ambrosio", says the brand. It uses two threaded bolts, not the typical four screws, and the curve of the neck slots into a matching curve in the body



The Offset is offered in two new colours, Dakota Red and our satin metallic Gold, which we have to say is pretty classy

slightly more pointed treble horn, the large scratchplates of all three appear identical. Here, the anodised aluminium scratchplate contrasts the gold colour, while the Dakota Red model goes for an equally contrasting gold. We get the same three controls, too – master volume and a tone for each pickup – with their amp-style white plastic knobs, and at the lower tip is the output jack.



Last year, we enjoyed the Tonerider soapbar-sized humbucker with its Gold Foil-style cover used in the neck position of the FullerTone SC and bridge position of the DC that we tested. We get the same here but in the bridge *and* neck positions, both directly mounted to the body and not attached to the scratchplate. Unlike either of the earlier models, which use a three-way lever pickup selector switch mounted on the scratchplate, the selector switch here is toggle-style and is rear-mounted on the bass-side shoulder.

As the name implies, the two-piece vibrato system, unlike the Strat-style wiggle-stick of the DC, is offset in style with a tune-o-matic bridge and lower mounted vibrato. Both parts come from the extensive Göldo catalogue and are designed by Duesenberg founder, Dieter Gölsdorf. These are typically well-designed pieces, but the 'DG Tremolo' plays with the offset style considerably. While it's a direct retrofit for that Fender classic, instead of the pivot point being at the base of the unit it's much closer to the separate bridge, meaning that the string length behind the bridge is considerably reduced, as well as giving a slightly steeper back angle. The strings top-load into keyhole cut-outs directly behind the two pivot points, and behind those is a tension screw – for the large single spring – and the mounting for the fully adjustable arm.

The '3-Point-Vario Tunamatic' bridge is well used by Eastman and Duesenberg, and aims to reduce any rattle from the



UNDER THE HOOD

Look inside and you're in for a vintage-y ride

If you want to have a gander or carry out any modding to the Offset's circuit, you need to remove the large scratchplate that's held in place with 10 thin-diameter and over-long (15mm) screws. That said, we're met with some very tidy wiring using vintage-style cloth-covered wire. Pots are by CTS: the two tone controls, with a single small orange coloured .022µF capacitor, measure slightly under 250kohms; the volume is a little over its nominal 500k. Nice attention to detail, which really reflects the overall build.

Both Tonerider soapbar humbuckers, with measured DCRs of 7.86k (bridge) and 6.99k (neck), are direct-mounted to the body, rather than the scratchplate, and

have firm foam cushions that make fine adjustment really easy.

Tonerider founder Andrew Cunningham explained more about the pickups in issue 526. He told us they're based on Tonerider's Alnico II Classic Patent Applied For-style humbucker, "as both Otto and Pepijn at Eastman really like that particular bridge pickup sound." He continued, "It doesn't use adjustable polepieces: we used two rows of slug polepieces rather than one with screws, and this allows for perfect hum-cancellation as the inductances of both coils are matched to within one per cent of each other. They are underwound versions of our Alnico II Classics but with a modern strength magnet." [DB]

BEST IN CLASS

Is the Offset the best of the Eastman Fullertones so far? We catch up with Eastman's Pepijn 't Hart who's had plenty to do with these new models

What started as a modern archtop has now expanded into a very coherent catalogue of highly original designs. Eastman is on a roll, not least with the FullerTone guitars, which prove that modern guitar design can be original.

You've called the guitar the Offset, but unlike the D'Ambrosio and Kauffmann versions, the FullerTone doesn't use a proper offset vibrato or bridge. Why is that?

"We base the name of the models on the body shape: SC and DC are symmetrical, the Offset is asymmetrical. But having said this, the Göldo DG Tremolo is 100 per cent a real 'J-master' vibrato – it's one of the best drop-ins on the market. We use the Göldo 3-Point Vario bridge as that moves along with any tremolo and we use it on many other models."

The Offset shape is pretty much the same as Juliet in terms of outline. Correct?

"All FullerTones, D'Ambrosios and Kauffmanns are based on Juliet. The main difference we pursued with the FullerTone Offset, as well as the Kauffmann Offsets, is that we implemented some changes opposed to the Original D'Ambrosio design, based on invaluable feedback we received from [YouTuber] Paul Davids. The curves, the three knobs and the placement, as well as the toggle switch moving to the upper bout, all come from Paul's ideas."

One thing we love about these FullerTone guitars is the neck shape. What was your inspiration here? It feels quite 'old Tele', especially in the upper positions.

"The funny thing is that this all comes from the fact that we are, at heart, an archtop builder, as [head designer] Otto is an archtop designer and builder. So it all comes from that heritage."

It's early days for the Offset, but which FullerTone – SC'52 or DC'62 – has proved most popular so far in terms of sales?

"Very easy to answer: we sold equal numbers of the SC and DC. We're only just starting with the Offset, so it's too early to tell."

The other news for 2026 so far is the Kauffman Series. How do these models work?

"The CNC work is done in our Beijing workshop, rough-cutting the bodies and necks. Then they are shipped to Albert [Kauffmann]'s workshop in our Eastman HQ [in Holland] and that's where he and his team turn these rough-cuts into the gorgeous guitars they become. Just check out the options on our website." [DB] www.eastmanguitars.com



4

saddles, which are spec'd as stainless steel. In use, the bridge lightly rocks with the vibrato and the saddles appear to have been carefully filed. Certainly, for typically light use, the system retains its tuning very well, obviously once the strings are stretched (and out of habit) we added a touch of lubrication to the saddle

4. Who says Fender was the only one to come up with a great six-a-side headstock shape? The Eastman design is back-angled and dual level. It's also used on the Juliet, Kauffman and D'Ambrosio guitars

We're back in Laurel Canyon in the late 60s. There's some Gretsch in here, too, not least with the slightly snappy response

slots. The actual plating of the vibrato has been abraded slightly perhaps to match in with the dull, old-looking pickup covers, although the actual bridge looks brand-new. Hey, we can live with that.

Feel & Sounds

As with the FullerTone SC and DC, the feel of the Offset is really good. It's light in weight with a lovely balance, and every facet seems player-informed, not least the neck. It certainly has a roomy feel, a relatively big classic 'C', and while we're told that its inspiration comes from the archtop world, we can't help thinking 'old Telecaster', especially in upper positions. It's 43.2mm wide at the

5. This Göldo DG Tremolo plays hard and fast with the classic offset vibrato, but it works very well. There's less 'dead' string behind the bridge, and the strings anchor in keyhole cut-outs that make restringing fast. Oh, and it looks cool, right?



Pepijn 't Hart: "We are, at heart, an archtop builder... it all comes from that heritage"



EASTMAN FULLERTONE OFFSET

PRICE: £899 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Offset single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Roasted black limba
NECK: Roasted maple, 'medium round' profile, '2-bolt long tenon' body join
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.2mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, pearl dot inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 24, medium-jumbo (Jescar 47104)

HARDWARE: Göldo DG Tremolo and '3-Point-Vario Tunamatic' bridge, unlogo'd Kluson-style tuners – chrome/nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51.5mm
ELECTRICS: Tonerider Soapbar Humbucker w/ custom Goldfoil cover (bridge & neck), 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume, individual tone controls for neck and bridge pickups only
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.1/6.75

OPTIONS: No
RANGE OPTIONS: Also in the FullerTone range are the SC'52 (£799) and the DC'62 (£899)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Gold (as reviewed), Dakota Red – Truetone satin

Eastman
 +31 36 5404478
 www.eastmanguitars.com



PROS Original style; great build; innovative neck join; well-shaped neck profile; excellent-sounding (and looking!) pickups; overall voicing; neat vibrato system

CONS Big necks might not be to everyone's taste

nut (with 36mm string spacing), 22.2mm deep at the 1st fret, increasing to a hand-filling 25.7mm by the 12th. Along with a good setup, the medium tall frets really suit the guitar, which feels lively in the hand from the off.

Whether or not it's the physical size of the pickup – think mini-humbucker like a good Les Paul Deluxe and you're in the ballpark – the bridge isn't overblown in output or midrange focus; one reason we found it worked so well in bridge position on the FullerTone DC. It veers on the single coil side of the tracks, with a little smoothness to the high-end, plenty of clarity but little spike. It's very responsive to pick strength and position, too.

At the neck the clarity stops the mud, but, of course, it is a thicker voice, and it's actually worth spending some time balancing the outputs of the two (via the easy height adjustment). On receipt of the guitar, the neck overpowered the bridge a little, giving the impression that the latter was a little thin and weedy, but very small adjustments bought a near-perfect balance. As a consequence, the mix is very good, nicely Fender-y with a welcome sparkle and good depth.

Adding some hair and grit to our amp works superbly, too; the low-output 'bucker voice at the bridge means plenty of definition, rooty and country tinged.

We're back in Laurel Canyon in the late 60s. There's certainly some Gretsch in here, too, not least the slightly snappy response, and we can't help thinking the vibrato is helping that. There's less of those typical offset artefacts, especially with its shorter behind-the-bridge string length; it's a little more direct-sounding but less 'firm' than a stronger anchor. That said, these are still humbuckers, and particularly at the bridge you can pile on some pretty heavy and fuzzy gain and that smooth clarity keeps things nicely defined.

Verdict

The Offset expands the FullerTone line-up to a trio that references the flavour of those Fender classics but in such a classy and original style. As with the SC and DC models, there's an almost played-in vintage feel to this new Offset that's appealing: it doesn't feel like a glossy new guitar.

There's also a lot of experience evident in the design. From the innovative neck join and the great-sounding Tonerider pickups, the quirkily efficient Göldo vibrato to the really good neck shape, feel and playability, it's a *proper* guitar, no question.

For those of us who are bored with the increasing number of lookalikes and clones of the classics, the FullerTones really stand out. We can't wait to see what's next. **G**

FIRST PLAY



TAYLOR GOLD LABEL 710E
£3,275

WHAT IS IT? Taylor's take on a spruce/rosewood square-shouldered dreadnought with fanned V-Class bracing

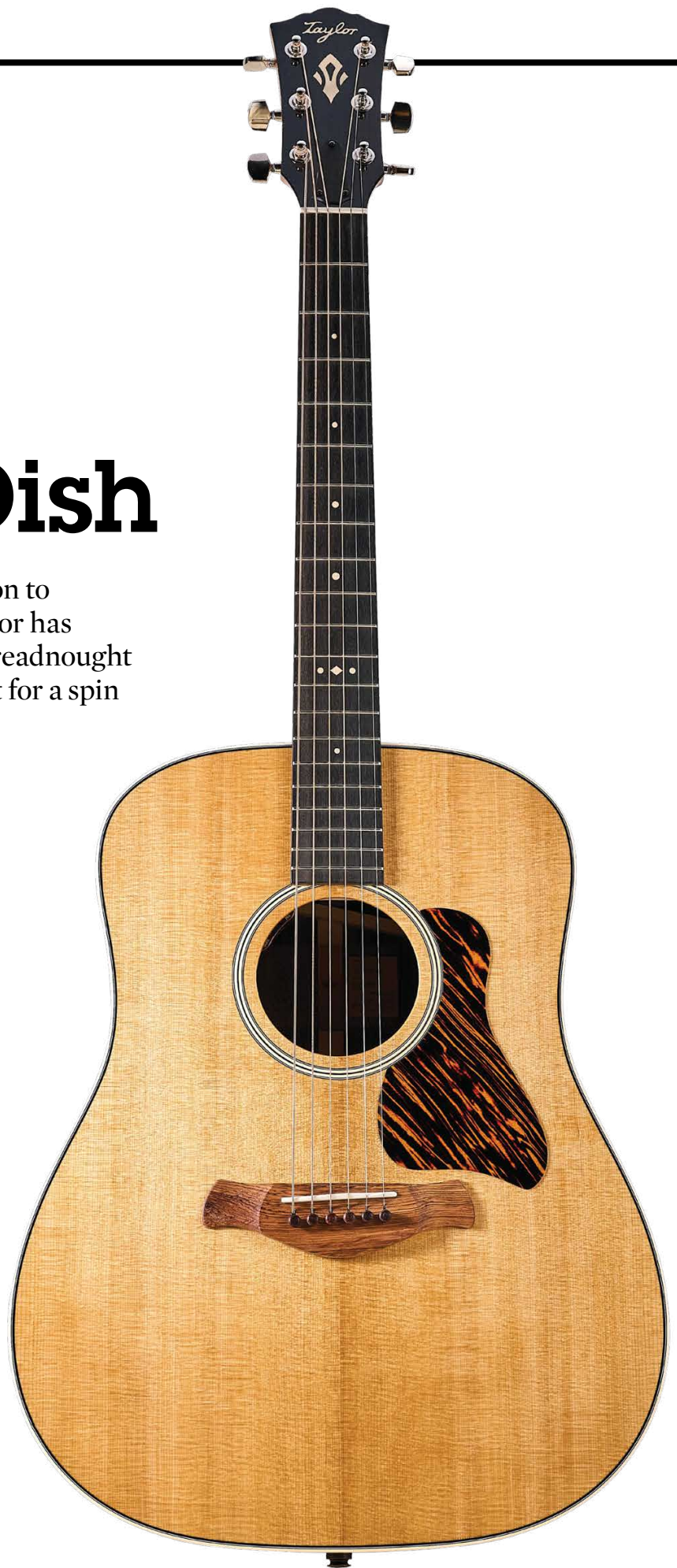
Deep Dish

As part of an ongoing revision to its esteemed catalogue, Taylor has introduced a deep-bodied dreadnought into the fold. Let's take it out for a spin

Words David Mead **Photography** Matt Lincoln

Last issue we looked at Taylor's revised and updated 324ce Grand Auditorium acoustic and heard how the company is continually reviewing and tweaking its instruments in the search for sonic nirvana. We saw that designer-in-chief Andy Powers had taken his innovative V-Class concept a step further, instigating scalloped bracing to reduce mass, but maintain strength. Then there was a new neck-adjustment system that sees simple tweaks to the angle of the neck in order to maintain a comfortable playing action. And we were also introduced to a new pickup system, the Claria, aimed at producing the best possible plugged-in tone for live use. We were impressed, concluding that the changes to the 324ce's manifest has "paid dividends" and nodded in agreement in the direction of Taylor's claim that the instrument is "its most plug-in-and-play version" of that particular model.

Naturally, when you're a fast-moving, upwards-spiralling manufacturer such as Taylor, a practically continuous programme of re-evaluation of the catalogue is going to be whirring away in the background. And so it is no surprise that the 324ce doesn't stand alone when it comes to the production of new and exciting twists from the Californian maker. Enter the 710e, a deep-bodied square-shouldered dreadnought, which Taylor







1

1. The 710e's mahogany neck is scalloped just below the headstock. Note also the Taylor-branded tuners

claims “offers a playing experience that combines traditional acoustic sound with modern innovation”. It's part of Taylor's Gold Label Series, introduced around a year ago, which draws inspiration from past eras of traditional, non-cutaway guitars; hence a ‘new’ body shape in the company's range. And you can't really get any more traditional than a dreadnought, can you?

But what's all this ‘deep-bodied’ designation about? Obviously it's there to add punch and heft to the guitar's sound,

The 710e's top wood is very attractive with plenty of shimmering chatoyance that dances when the light hits it

but is it all that new? If you take Martin's D-28 as an industry standard then we'd be looking at a body depth of 123mm, whereas the 710e comes in at a smidge under, at 122mm. On the other hand, a D-28 has a lower bout of 397mm and the Taylor comes in at 403mm. So deep and wide seems to be the order of the day with the 710e, promising a robust volume level with good bass and singing mids. But let's not skip ahead too far; if the 710e is a nod of the head towards celebrated acoustic



2

designs of yore, we'd better have a quick look in the builder's yard to see exactly how traditional things are.

To begin with, we have a torrefied Sitka spruce top, backed with East Indian rosewood and so we are spot on, as far as tradition is concerned as this mimics, again, the D-28's winning formula. While we're here, it's worth noting that the 710e's top wood is very attractive with plenty of shimmering chatoyance that dances when the light hits it. Currently, of course, the colour is a very pale amber, but is sure to darken to that more familiar hue as the years pass. The Indian rosewood is no slouch in the looks department, either, with a nice straight grain pattern and that distinctive chocolatey bloom.

The body is bound, front and back, in black and white, the pattern reflected in the rosette. The pickguard is a ‘firestripe’ pattern and the bridge and string pins are Honduran rosewood.

Moving on to the neck, we have tropical mahogany, with an incredibly subtle scarf joint below the headstock. Turning the guitar over, we find a West African Crelicam ebony fingerboard with what Taylor refers to as “cream dot” inlays in all the accustomed places.

The headstock has Taylor's own tuners and the new-old Taylor logo – we're used to seeing the distinctive ‘block’ logo from

2. A finely-figured Sitka spruce top graces the 710e, with controls for the onboard LR Baggs VTC pickup and preamp system barely visible inside the soundhole

3. The bridge and string pegs are made from Honduran rosewood, while the compensated saddle is Micarta

4. East Indian rosewood forms the 710e's back and sides and a second strap peg on the guitar's heel means that it's ready for live action, too!



3



4

Taylor, but more recently we're seeing this new cursive variation, which looks 'old' in the manner of Gibson's earlier acoustics.

Other highlights include the aforementioned Action Control Neck mentioned earlier, whereby your action is kept stable via a simple adjustment through the guitar's soundhole. A simple bolt on the neck block will tilt the neck to compensate for climate irregularities – think Fender's neck-tilt idea. Add to this another variation on Andy Powers' V-Class bracing – here it's fanned to “increase volume and sustain”.

The final piece of the puzzle is the LR Baggs VTC pickup and preamp system, with controls secreted within the upper arc of the guitar's soundhole. So the guitar is all set and ready for the stage, but first we'd better explore its unplugged voice and find out how it handles.

Feel & Sounds

We'll never tire of saying how user-friendly Taylor acoustic necks are. It really is like shaking hands with an old friend every time. And it's good to note that Taylor has decided not to go 'full vintage' and change the profile to one of the more vintage-inspired chunky variations. In any case, the neck here is that familiar C-shape, the satin finish adding that essential finishing touch for neck excursions.

Taylor's logo atop the headstock has an 'olde worlde' vintage vibe to it



We should mention the 45mm nut width, too, as just a couple of millimetres here makes an enormous difference to fingerstyle players. Needless to say, sitting down with a dreadnought is not to everyone's taste as they do tend to be a bit of an armful, but we're happy to report that the 710e is very well balanced and comfy either sitting or standing.

With everything shipshape in the feel department, it's time for those first exploratory chords. Now, it's very hard to sum up the sound of a dreadnought. We'd even question whether there is a definitive dreadnought sound. Is there that much of a similarity between Gibson's J-45 and Martin's D-28, for instance? The characteristics they share would be a robust midrange with plenty of volume and a good amount of bass – and that's virtually what we find here, give or take. If you take the aforementioned models as a reference, we'd say that the 710e lacks some of the 'woodiness' of the J-45 and leans more towards the sing-song musicality of the Martin.

There's certainly a lot of volume to hand... plenty of sparkle at the top end as well

There's certainly a lot of volume to hand and without that dreadnought muddiness that you sometimes find in the lower midrange. Plenty of sparkle at the top end as well. We tried a range of campfire chords, a bit of fingerstyle, a smidge of blues and the only bluegrass licks we could remember and everything passed muster with panache.

Plugged into our Boss Katana-50 EX on the Acoustic setting, the 710e came to life. This writer's acid test for plugged-in acoustics is the intro and verse to Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. If that particular combo of plectrum-fuelled blues and lusty chords sounds stadium rock-worthy, then you're on to a winner. And let's just say the Taylor shone like a crazy diamond...

Verdict

Naturally, this level of build quality and sound performance doesn't come cheap and £3.2k might be a determining factor in one's prospective purchase stakes. But we've looked around a few online dealers and the 710e is also available for around £2.7k if you're smart about where you click your mouse.

That being said, if you did decide to go down the deep-bodied Taylor dread route then you'd be getting a fine, gig-ready instrument with a very good array of sounds on tap as well as premium build quality. And you can't really say fairer than that. **G**



TAYLOR GOLD LABEL 710E

PRICE: £3,275 (inc hard case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Dreadnought

TOP: Torrefied Sitka spruce

BACK/SIDES: Indian rosewood

MAX RIM DEPTH: 122mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 403mm

NECK: Tropical mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 648mm

(25.5 inches)

TUNERS: Taylor Nickel with nickel buttons

NUT/WIDTH: White Tusq/44.5mm

FINGERBOARD: West African Crelicam ebony

FRETS: 20

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE:

Honduran rosewood with Micarta saddle/56mm

ELECTRICS: LR Baggs Element VTC

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.08/4.6

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Gold Label deep-body dreads include the Trey Hensley Gold Label 510e (£3,275), Gold Label 810e (£5,435) Gold Label 510e (£3,059). See website for more details

LEFT-HANDERS: Made to order only
FINISHES: Gloss

Taylor Guitars

+31 (0)20 667 6033

www.taylorguitars.com



9/10

PROS A great-sounding, well-built, good-looking dread from a renowned builder

CONS Not much. Dreads aren't for everyone and the price may deter all but the more serious acoustic players



Lowden
GUITARS

F-32
Indian Rosewood
Sitka Spruce

lowdenguitars.com

FIRST PLAY



**FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE
IV 30TH ANNIVERSARY**
£1,269

WHAT IS IT? All-valve 1x12
two-channel 40-watt combo with
reverb and boost

Western Twang

The ubiquitous Hot Rod Deluxe celebrates its 30th birthday with a snazzy new look and some subtle sonic enhancements

Words Martin Smith Photography Matt Lincoln

The Hot Rod Deluxe was forged in the musically chaotic post-grunge era of the mid-90s when electronica and alternative rock were vying for pole position and bands such as Radiohead – to name just one example – featured edgier, brasher guitar sounds. With 40 watts of valve power, dual channels and two footswitchable levels of boost, the Deluxe seemed a great fit for the times. And indeed, the enduring success of this amp speaks to the wisdom of Fender's design.

Through the years we've seen a number of models and variations of the Fender Hot Rod Deluxe, with a range of different speakers deployed including the Eminence Legend (1996 to 2010), Celestion G12P-80 (HRDx III, 2010) and Celestion A-Type (HRDx IV, 2018); however, this 30th Anniversary edition sticks with the Celestion G12M-65 Creamback choice with its ample 65-watt power rating.

The overdrive circuit, with its two stages of boost, has been massaged over

the years to refine its saturated character. Another important improvement over the early models is that the clean channel volume control now has a more gradual operation, rather than the rapid ascent to full volume that could be reached with the knob turned up to 2! Final tweaks were made to achieve a smoother reverb sound from the onboard spring reverb tank.

The styling is in line with the 30th Anniversary Blues Junior amp cosmetics, including the 'western'-styled tooled leather-look commemorative covering, a brown-and-gold Bassman-style grille cloth and the smart chrome top panel complete with those distinctive black 'chickenhead' knobs.

Unboxing the amp from its carton, its fancy looks are worth appreciating for a moment. If you're not familiar with this model, it's perhaps somewhat large for a 1x12 combo due to chassis-sharing with the 2x12 Hot Rod DeVille. The weight is kept down by virtue of its pine cabinet, another improvement from the particle board of previous incarnations.



The 30th Anniversary aesthetic adds a western flair to this familiar format. The black tooled-leather-style vinyl covering is set off by the brown-and-gold Bassman-style speaker grille cloth, plus a shaped brown leather handle, for a vintage look



1. Over its 30 years of production, the Hot Rod Deluxe has been host to a number of 12-inch speakers including the Eminence Legend and Celestion G12 P-80. This Celestion G12M-65 Creamback unit with its 65 watts power rating makes for a great pairing
2. The chrome-plated, wide control panel houses all controls and connections for this and the DeVille Models. The white lettering is helpfully oriented towards the player's vantage point when approaching from the front



The chromed control plate has a premium look, printed with helpful player-facing control lettering in white. Channel 1, the clean channel, employs a single volume control alongside a Bright switch before moving on to Channel 2 with its overdrive functions. Two preset levels of drive can be selected in addition to drive and master knobs.

The three-band shared EQ – ordered Treble, Bass, and *then* Middle – precedes the Master, Reverb and Presence controls. Unusually, the top panel also houses the effects loop in and out jacks and the footswitch jack, which might normally be placed on the back of the amp. But this quirky positioning has obviously not hindered its popularity in any way.

Feel & Sounds

Going in with the Telecaster on Channel 1, with the EQ controls at half mast, we can assess the range on the clean volume. We would say it comes to life a little more progressively now than on previous iterations, and the amp is pretty much at full clean headroom around 3 to 4. The cleans sparkle with the help of the Bright switch for the classic smile-EQ sound where the full body and the sparkle take precedence over midrange grunt.

It's the essence of the Fender clean sound and feel beneath the strings, and while at this price point we may not achieve highly

3. The supplied chunky two-button footswitch for channel selection and extra drive control, with its 90s stylings, connects to the amp via the top panel. This might not be the most ergonomic placement for a cable that needs to run along the ground, but the supplied right-angled jack at least induces no cable strain

sweetened boutique-style tone, this amp is aimed at players in bands, rather than YouTube cork-sniffing aficionados.

Continuing upwards volume-wise from there, we start to get a thicker response with some bloom from the 6L6s. Indeed, switching over to a Les Paul you can get thick slabs of classic rock overdrive with the volume towards the higher numbers alongside a little push from the Bright switch. It is actually possible to create a

4. This 30th Anniversary edition is the culmination of three decades of enduring popularity and features a number of subtle improvements, including smoother reverb, improved overdrive character and the smoother-voiced Celestion Creamback





FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE IV 30TH ANNIVERSARY

PRICE: £1,269
ORIGIN: Mexico
TYPE: All-valve combo
VALVES: 3x ECC83, 2x 6L6
OUTPUT: 40W
DIMENSIONS: 61.6 (w) x 27.3 (d) x 53.3mm (h)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 25.28/55.75
CABINET: Pine
LOUDSPEAKER: 12" Celestion G12M-65 Creamback
CHANNELS: 2
CONTROLS: Volume, Bright Switch, Volume, More Drive, Drive, Treble, Bass, Middle, Master, Reverb, Presence
FOOTSWITCH: 2-button switch included
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Effects loop
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Hot Rod Deluxe (non-anniversary) is £1,049. 60W 212 Hot Rod DeVille 2x12 is £1,369

Fender Musical Instruments
EMEA
01342 331700
www.fender.com



9/10

PROS The well-chosen controls and features of the Hot Rod Deluxe will suit a great many styles and environments; improved volume control; the drive-tone and reverb have a smoother sound over previous incarnations

CONS Effects-loop and footswitch jacks placement on the top panel are slightly more untidy than a rear-panel position; leather handle is a little hard on the hand for a combo of this weight

makeshift master volume for this channel by placing a pedal with a volume control in the loop if you wish to get a little more bloom at lower volumes. If this floats your boat, you will find devices on the market made for this specific purpose, comprising two jacks and a volume control in a simple moulded plastic unit.

Over to the second channel with its dual levels of diode-induced saturation. The first level of drive brings that US-style overdrive reminiscent of *Money For Nothing*-era Dire Straits. It's overdrive, for sure, but with a gritty tough edge when digging into the strings. This sound really does evoke those recognisable 90s angular overdrive sounds on guitar hits from the era. Pushing on the More Drive switch ups the gain stakes just a smidge, nothing particularly earth-shattering but it would certainly provide a little confidence boost for solos. A decent ZZ Top-style raspy drive comes naturally with a little reduction in bass level and a push in the mids.

Working further with the EQ, its powerful range helps achieve some interesting tones such as a fluid fusion sound reminiscent of the late great Allan Holdsworth, by using the More Drive function and a lower treble setting.

The reverb does indeed now have a smoother sound than the early Hot Rod models due to some specific circuit tweaks.

This updated classic is the essence of the Fender aesthetic – a solid and reliable workman-like tool

However, it's fair to say it doesn't have the magic, splashy presentation that one might expect from a valve-recovered circuit of the type that made Fender's name. Conversely, it does sit in the background well giving us a deep and rich halo.

Verdict

This updated classic is the very essence of the Fender aesthetic: that of a solid and reliable workman-like tool, commonplace everywhere from showrooms to rehearsal rooms and stages of all sizes. It reigns supreme for its no-nonsense approach to a dual-channel, giggable package. The improvements leave little to nit-pick about, with the smoother reverb and overdrive sounds and the improved clean volume taper. And it certainly looks a treat, too, in its black western vinyl.

The slightly quirky choices of the external jack-socket furniture mounted on the top control panel can easily be overlooked for the overall benefits that this amp packs. **G**

FIRST PLAY



**EARTHQUAKER
ZEQD-PRE**
£399

WHAT IS IT? Valve-based preamp/boost designed for the end of your signal chain



Tube Tweaker

EarthQuaker Devices and Dr Z join forces for a valve-based preamp and boost with flexible connectivity

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Matt Lincoln



EARTHQUAKER ZE.QD-PRE

PRICE: £399

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Valve-powered preamp pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Boost, Level, Bass (20Hz to 400Hz), Middle (400Hz to 2kHz), Treble (2kHz to 20kHz), Ground Lift, XLR Cab Bypass, Boost footswitch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, XLR direct output, standard headphone output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 500mA

DIMENSIONS: 96 (w) x 148 (d) x 66mm (h)

440 Distribution

0113 2842342

www.earthquakerdevices.com



9/10

PROS Sound quality; flexible connectivity with simultaneous outputs; boost facility

CONS Nothing in terms of its functionality, but it ain't cheap

1. The top of the EF86 valve pokes through its metal shield. It can easily be replaced for another EF86 if needed
2. Press the Boost footswitch for a wide-open boosted voice (EQ section bypassed) with level set by the Boost knob. The switch is only active when the Activate footswitch is on
3. While the standard guitar output is at the top end of the pedal, the XLR output and headphones jack are at the side. All three can be used simultaneously

The basic premise for the ZE.QD-Pre pedal is to introduce some valve mojo into a signal chain and add character. The result of this collaboration between EarthQuaker Devices and Dr Z Amplification has been designed around an EF86 pentode valve coupled with three-band EQ for fine-tuning of the sound. There are several scenarios for use, reflected in the available outputs, which can all be used simultaneously. There's a jack for a standard signal chain, maybe directly in front of an amp or a modeller, an XLR direct output (with switchable cabinet emulation) that could be used to feed a mixing desk or audio interface, and a headphone output with cabinet emulation. Complementing the standard bypass footswitch, a second footswitch bypasses the three-band EQ and delivers a full-range boost with level set by the Boost knob.

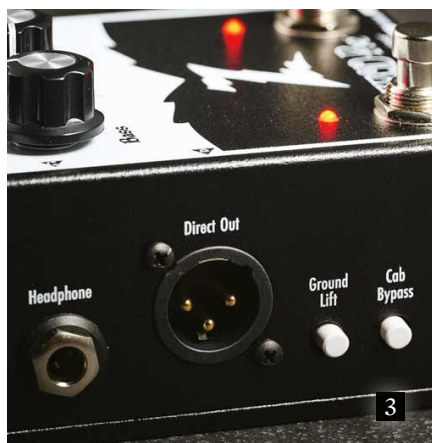
The EF86 isn't a valve that offers its own drive as such, but in its context here delivers a big open sound with clarity and great dynamic response, all tied in to the really classy EQ, which never gets out of shape. Everything above about nine o'clock on the Level knob offers a boost for additional gain stage to push an amp's front-end, with an extra kick up via the Boost footswitch as required.

Without an amp, the pedal could sit at the end of a pedalboard employing the XLR output direct to front-of-house or FRFR cab as your main amplifier, if you have the pedals to get the sound you need. Likewise, it could be a useful tone conditioner with added dimension before or after a digital modeller.

With pedals, the ZE.QD-Pre is also perfect for practice, as the headphone signal with speaker simulation gives you a comfortable sound that encourages you to play. It's also excellent as a DI box for recording clean guitar – we got great results with a Strat plugged straight in and the XLR output (speaker sim engaged) connected to an audio interface with compression added as a plug-in on the DAW recording track.

Verdict

The best part of £400 may seem a bit steep for something that could be categorised as a widget, but the ZE.QD-Pre is a very practical professional piece of kit with numerous uses for the guitarist. As a tone-sculptor and gain provider that is capable of sitting in a variety of signal chains, it is both an enabler and an enhancer. **G**



THE RIVALS

Another pedal that makes good use of an EF86 is the Hagerman EF86 Booster (\$259), designed to deliver warm, clean gain for overdriving amplifier inputs or other pedals – it features Level, Tone and Drive knobs. There are several other valve-based preamp pedals around, but these are more of an amp-in-a-box than the EarthQuaker, each having multiple channels providing differing amounts of gain. One UK-made example is the Blackbird (£495) from valve specialists Effectrode. There's also the Two Notes ReVolt (£299, right), the Tone King Imperial Preamp (£599), and some from Friedman, including the IR-X (£419) and IR-D (£419).



PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

FIRST PLAY



**ELECTRO-HARMONIX
PICO ATOMIC CLUSTER**
£129

WHAT IS IT? A compact glitch
and synth pedal for unique and
atmospheric effects



Up And Atom

EHX's new Pico pedal is designed to deconstruct your tone to an atomic level

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Matt Lincoln

1. The Blend knob mixes a proportion of the effected sound into your dry sound up to a 100 per cent wet fully effected signal
2. Set how quickly the algorithm refreshes the oscillations it produces with the Speed knob – this can also be controlled via tap tempo
3. The Mode button selects the transition style – Sharp (red LED) or Smooth (Green LED) – between different oscillations. Sharp is the more rhythmic effect

Long before the boom in boutique pedals, the one company that could be relied upon for pushing the ‘quirky and weird’ envelope was Electro-Harmonix – and the New York maker is still in motion. As part of the cute and pedalboard-friendly Pico range, the Atomic Cluster Spectral Decomposer is described by the company as “unlike any effect Electro-Harmonix has made before”.

Falling into the broad category of synth and glitch pedals, the Atomic Cluster “breaks down your signal and interpolates it into a variety of musical and whimsical sounds,” says EHX. This is done mostly via the Atoms knob, which reduces the frequency resolution of your guitar and generates resonant oscillations, the number of which reduces as the knob is turned anti-clockwise. This is best heard in Sharp mode where you get an instant transition of oscillations for a rhythmic effect. Switching to Smooth mode produces a more diffused effect, with a nice fade between oscillations. The Speed knob sets how quickly the oscillations refresh. Any sound you dial in can be mixed in proportion with your dry sound with a Blend knob up to 100 per cent wet.

With the Atoms knob at maximum, the effect is bright and metallic with a chaotic undercurrent of glitchy burbling, but as you roll it back the brightness reduces and that burbling becomes more coherent, revealing itself in Sharp mode to be more like synth-style arpeggiation with distinct notes. This is something that, when synchronised (you can use the footswitch tap tempo in place of the Speed knob), can add bubbly flavour behind fast strumming.

Switching to Smooth mode, though, results in an effect that can be exploited with guitar dynamics as those distinct notes now fade into each other for a more undulating sound. Play chords and you’ll get a sustained ambient pad sound, but with single notes the altered envelope of the generated sounds is akin to a backwards effect and it works particularly well if you dig in with a bit of dirt. Balancing Speed and Atoms yields plenty of variations on the theme for subtle blending with dry guitar or upfront prominence.

Verdict

The Atomic Cluster is niche and not the most predictable of effects. It’s unlikely to appeal to traditionalists, but if you like quirky and off-the-wall, it’s out there waiting to throw a spanner in the works of your guitar tone. **G**



ELECTRO-HARMONIX PICO ATOMIC CLUSTER

PRICE: £129

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Spectral Decomposer pedal

FEATURES: Buffered Bypass, Tap tempo

CONTROLS: Volume, Speed, Blend, Atoms, Sharp/Smooth Mode button, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (supplied) 100mA

DIMENSIONS: 50 (w) x 91 (d) x 47mm (h)

Electro-Harmonix
www.ehx.com

8/10

PROS Compact size; tap tempo; two modes; range of sounds

CONS It's not something you'd want to use for every song



THE RIVALS

None of these do what the Atomic Cluster does and all are more expensive, but we like them for their quirky effects. The Chase Bliss Mood MkII (£450) is said to be able to “twist any sound into a sprawling texture that you can freeze, loop and scatter across the stereo field”. Red Panda’s Particle 2 (£289) is a granular delay/pitch-shifting pedal that chops your signal into small grains and then rearranges, shifts and mangles it. Also check out Walrus Audio’s Fable (£249, right), a soundscape generator with five granular delay programs centered around sample-and-chop algorithms.



PHOTO BY OLLY CURTIS



the Wishlist

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

Trussart Gold Caged Steelcaster £12,999

Contact PHONE +44 (0)1695 570023 WEB www.soundaffects.com WORDS **Jamie Dickson** PHOTOGRAPHY **Phil Barker**

Also known as the 'CadillacCaster' this midas-touched example of James Trussart's unique luthiery has, like so many guitars, a close connection with automobiles. When the American car-maker Cadillac launched its electric-powered 'LYRIQ' SUV, Trussart designed a guitar that matched its luxurious styling, which appeared in ads for that vehicle. The lustrous finish that clads this (almost) one-off instrument isn't a metallic paint but 24-carat gold-plating, which extends even to the 10-46 set of 24-carat Optima strings, lending the CadillacCaster an opulent gleam. Tim Lobely, the man behind the Cream T guitar brand and Liverpool-based guitar retailer Sound Affects, where this guitar is currently for sale, spotted the guitar at the last NAMM show in Anaheim and had to have it as a centrepiece of Sound Affects' wide-ranging stock of premium guitars, he says.

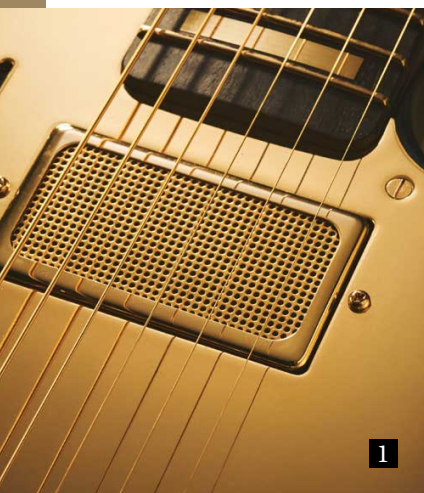
"It was the nicest guitar at NAMM, in my opinion," Tim says. "I've known James Trussart for a number of years, and talked to him about it, and he said that basically he'd made two. The first one appeared in a Cadillac advert, and he sold that privately without ever going to the market. So he made another one so he could put it to the open market and display it for NAMM. I sort of

circled it for a couple of days, but kept going back, and after a bit of haggling I got it for Sound Affects."

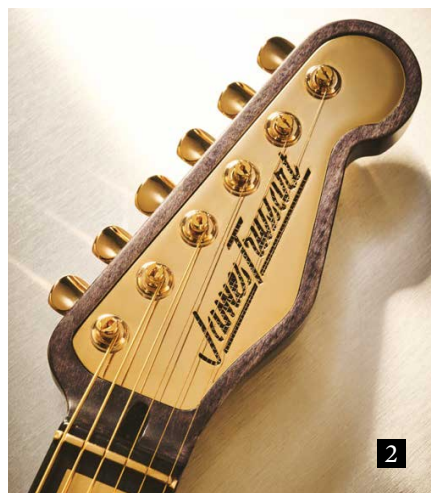
It's little wonder that Tim found the guitar difficult to walk away from as its hand-crafted features extend well beyond the finish. The fretboard inlays, for example, are polished brass blocks. "Quite a lot of the customers who come in are quite drawn to the inlays," comments Sound Affects' director Paul Bannister. "They do look unique, and they do stand out," he says.

Despite the massy connotations of gold, thanks to its lattice 'cage' construction, the guitar is surprisingly lightweight at a little over 8lbs (3.6kg) – and the contrasts continue with the grey-stained maple neck, which has a Fender-style 25.5-inch scale length but a profile that's "not really overly chunky, but it's not thin either," Paul says. "It's probably similar to a Gibson Les Paul neck," he explains. The guitar's wiring for its pair of custom-wound pickups by US maker Arcane, is visible through the lattice-style body of the guitar. The switching options aren't especially complex, Paul explains, but there is a push-pull pot that operates a coil-split for the neck humbucker. If striking gold appeals to you, there are few guitars more striking than this gleaming pinnacle of Trussart's metal mastery. **G**

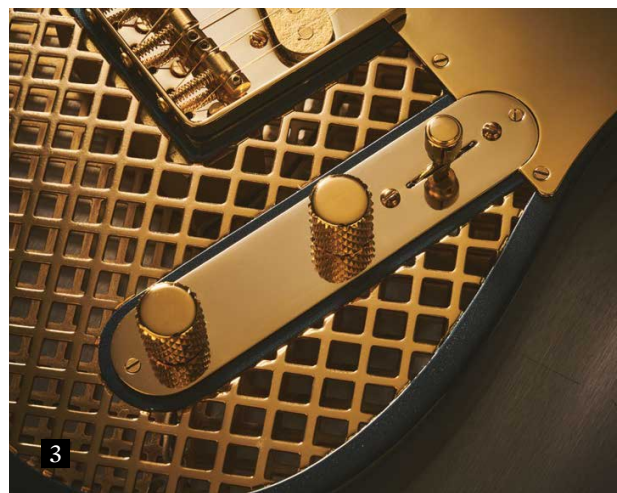
1. The guitar's foil-mesh covered humbucker is custom-wound by US maker Arcane
2. The grey-stained maple neck sets off the rich gold of the headstock plate, bearing James Trussart's signature
3. The guitar's control plate is, aside from the finish, a familiar Tele-style unit with a push-pull pot that activates a coil-split on the neck humbucker, offering an approximation of traditional Tele neck pickup tones



1



2



3

4. The gleam of the solid brass inlays, which turns heads instantly, is matched by the gold-plating of the guitar's Optima strings

5. The guitar's Tele-style bridge sits on top of a wooden block that provides a solid foundation for the pickup and bridge assembly

6. The guitar's steel-lattice body is plated with 24-carat gold, lending it a lustrous glow that's impossible to replicate with cheaper metallic finishing processes

4

5

6





Gas Supply

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

Charvel Jake E Lee Signature £1,399

CONTACT Fender PHONE 01342 331700 WEB www.charvel.com

JARGON CRUNCHING

Ever wondered why pickups are slanted? It's all about tone. By angling the pickups, it allows the fundamental tone to be tailored. In the case of Jake E Lee's signature, the pickups are slanted with the bass side towards the bridge, creating a tighter, punchier low end, while thickening the response of the higher strings

Woah, that's an old-school-looking Charvel!

Yes it is, and Ozzy fans will recognise it as one of Jake E Lee's main guitars – the Jake E Lee Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 – from his five-year tenure as Ozzy's gunslinger, which saw him play on the *Bark At The Moon* and *The Ultimate Sin* albums. The original guitar, Jake tells Charvel, began life with a sunburst finish ("In the early 80s that was... kinda old-man-ish, in Hollywood"). Jake's housemate (conveniently a Charvel employee at the time) offered to have it resprayed for Jake's birthday, and thus, the Blueburst was born.

But this isn't new, is it? I've seen these for sale before

Hold your horses, because you're thinking of the Charvel USA Blue Burst. This is a much more affordable version based on the same guitar, but is released under Charvel's Pro-Mod series. These are made in Mexico and the USA version costs around two-and-a-half times more.

It must be pretty different then!

Well, not as different as you might think. The body on the Pro-Mod is alder rather than poplar, which as any Strat fan will tell you, is hardly a concession. The neck is quartersawn maple (as is the Custom Shop version) finished in satin oil on the back, while the 22-fret fingerboard is rosewood. As you'd expect, it has a compound 12-16-inch radius, and Charvel has rolled the edges, just like the US model. The key visual difference is that the headstock face is left natural here, rather than matched.

No vibrato, though?

Nope, as per Jake's original – chosen from a number of guitars based purely on his tonal preference – the Jake E Lee Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 is a hardtail. So, if you're not a fan of traditional trem systems or Floyd Roses that are often associated with this style, then you're in luck. In this case, it's equipped with a gold Charvel HT6 string-through



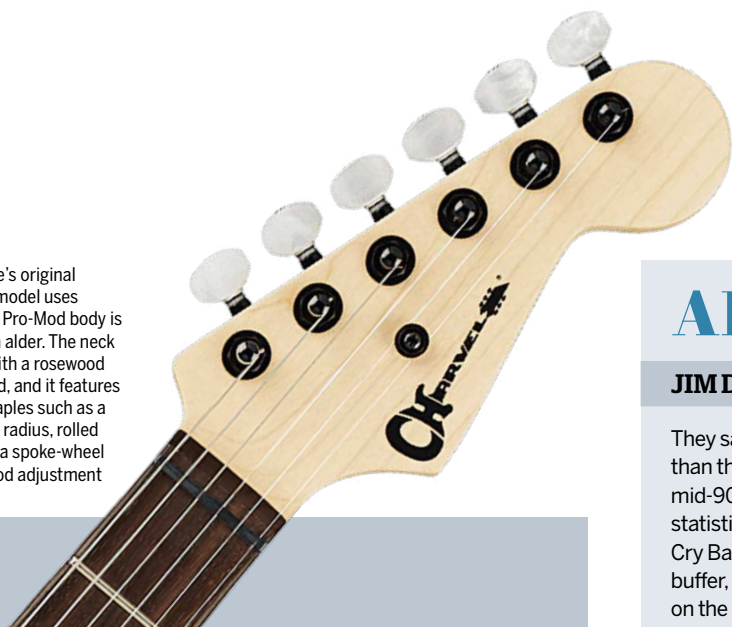
PICKUPS

The electronics are familiar third-party additions from heavyweights Seymour Duncan and DiMarzio. There's a JB TB-4 in the bridge position and SDS-1 middle and neck single-coils.

CONTROLS

There's a single master volume control, with Jake opting to go without the tone control. As well as this, the pickups are wired to a 5-way switch giving each pickup in isolation, plus two combinations of the middle pickup paired with the bridge and neck pickup respectively.

Where Jake's original signature model uses poplar, the Pro-Mod body is made from alder. The neck is maple with a rosewood fingerboard, and it features Charvel staples such as a compound radius, rolled edges and a spoke-wheel for truss-rod adjustment



body bridge, and at the other end, the black tuners are Charvel die-cast models.

They must have really scrimped on the pickups, then?

We know you're looking for the catch, but hopefully you're sitting down. It's the same pickups. Well, more or less. The bridge humbucker is a Seymour Duncan JB, and the middle and neck position single coils are high-output, ceramic magnet-equipped DiMarzio SDS-1s. The only difference being that in the Pro-Mod, it's an off-the-peg JB based around an Alnico 5 magnet, rather than the slightly tweaked JB Alnico II, found in Jake's USA model. But, we're yet to hear any complaints about the JB's pedigree as a bridge humbucker, so it's unlikely to keep you awake.

When is it available?

The Charvel Jake E Lee Signature Pro-Mod San Dimas Style 1 is available now, priced at £1,399. [SW]

PRO-MOD SERIES

This is the Pro-Mod version of Jake E Lee's Charvel Custom Shop signature Blue Burst model. However, a glance at the spec sheet (and price tag) shows that while it's more affordable, it's by no means a budget instrument.



ALSO OUT NOW...

JIM DUNLOP CRY BABY BB535 1994 £234.99

They say that people change wah pedals less frequently than they change their mortgage, but if you remember the mid-90s, Dunlop might be able to convince you to break the statistic we just made up... The BB535 is a reissue of the 1994 Cry Baby 535, which introduced a high-impedance input buffer, multi-mode voice control and a boost circuit based on the MXR Micro Amp. Now, in 1999, Dunlop added two additional voices to the pedal for a total of six modes, and it's actually this iteration that's been reissued, using the same inductors as its now (worryingly) 'vintage' predecessor. Oh, and they've added LEDs so you can tell when the wah and boost circuits are engaged.

www.jimdunlop.com



TWO NOTES TORPEDO CAPTOR X + £479.99

Few brands take speaker emulation as seriously as Two Notes, whose range of solutions has made taming and routing your valve amp easier for years. Now, Two Notes is following up on its Torpedo Captor X with the Captor X+. The new design sees the same combined load box, speaker emulation and headphone amp solution improved with all new features including Virtual Load Shaper, which allows you to apply different impedance curves, changing your amp's tonal and harmonic response. As well as this, it now offers stereo cab emulation with the True Stereo DynIR Engine, plus there are new routing modes, and the USB connection has been upgraded to USB C. It operates at 100 watts and comes in 8 and 16 ohm versions.

www.two-notes.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: Bethia Beadman

Album: *Kitten Feel* (5dB) Release date: 5 June 2026



Kitten Feel by Bethia Beadman is out in June on 5dB records www.bethiabeadman.com

She may have worked with Courtney Love playing keys in Hole, or alongside bands such as Radiohead and Depeche Mode while stationed in the studio with legendary producer Nigel Godrich, but it's Bethia Beadman's output as a solo artist that truly astonishes the senses. The 11 tracks that make up new album, *Kitten Feel*, have a hypnotising effect. Think swampy primal energy and artful enigma, beaming into the soul like an abstract blues from a long-distant planet where the language is familiar but the message is curiously esoteric... In other words, it's the perfect marriage of hippie soul and spine-tingling atmospherics, and it looks set to be one of the alternative rock highlights of the year.

Sanskrit Roots

Bethia would be the first to admit her journey into guitar was more leftfield than most players. "I got into guitar-playing through Sanskrit and mantra," she says. "You have to go deep to find your voice without much thought. It's like finding this place that's so deeply buried, there's no music. I don't want to sound like a wanker, but I'm more of a mystic than a musician. I move in energy fields. When I saw Roy Harper at Glastonbury, I cried because his music is non-performative. It's real and in the room, while also being healing."

No Bounds

As a result of this creative background, Bethia's approach is more natural and impulsive than a lot of her contemporaries, though artists such as Marianne

Faithfull and Scott Walker helped show her the way. "It's like I have a sack of songs that just goes on," she says. "I can't necessarily control what they are. It's like a cat bringing in a dead bird and leaving it on the mat. I try to live inside my music, it's almost the greater reality, and getting to work with Tchad Blake [The Black Keys, Fiona Apple, Tom Waits] on the mix gave it all ultra-vision."

Come Together

The initial sessions took place in Detroit before Bethia came back and finished recording at the Lightship 95 vessel studio moored in East London. "The Detroit sessions were done spontaneously in five days," she says. "We, producer Paul Simm and I, found this drummer called Adam Bradley Schreiber on Instagram. We didn't know him, but he was a perfect fit. I play baritones and Adam tunes his drums down a 4th, like baritone drums. We were all about limitations and simplicity. Bass wasn't needed because we had swampy guitars and deep drums covered in shammies."

Baritone Bliss

One of the main guitars heard on the album is a Reverend baritone electric kindly lent by Detroit thereminist/composer Via Mardot. "It's the perfect electric baritone," says Bethia. "It's so easy to play and sweet sounding. You can really hear it on the song *Balcony*. For the sessions in London, I used my Brook Tavy baritone acoustic, which was handmade in Exeter, and a Japanese Jazzmaster that I customised into a baritone. The electrics were plugged into my 1965 Gibson Explorer combo, which I love for its simplicity and tremolo circuit."

A Simple Reason

Bethia has many reasons to be proud of this latest body of work, though it's *Balcony* that tops the list in terms of personal achievements. "That one has so many chords," she says with a laugh. "I'm usually suspicious of songs like that. It was my least favourite initially. Generally, I prefer fewer chords, like *Wicked Game* by Chris Isaak. With fewer chords, the melody gets starved of its senses like a nursery rhyme. I like simplicity. That's why nursery rhymes and mantras have survived so many years. They touch this collective place we all have inside of us." **[AS]**

Standout track: *Lord Come In*

For fans of: PJ Harvey, Radiohead, Scott Walker

From Sanskrit to Scott Walker, Beadman's inspirations blend into her music to mesmeric effect



OFF THE PEDAL

Bethia on using less gear over the years

Although she's built up quite a sizable collection of stompboxes over the years, Bethia doesn't feel the need to use them as much these days. "I still have all the Boss ones I bought during my teens," she says. "These days, I'm more about finding a good amp sound and keeping things simple. It's mainly my Boss distortion and compression. We used a real Space Echo on this album. It sounds awesome and I ended up buying my own back in London, but maybe I should've just bought the new RE-2 pedal version because it's supposed to be amazing and is bound to be more roadworthy!"

"I have a sack of songs that just goes on. I can't necessarily control what they are"





Albums

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



Elements of prog/math rock pervade the duo's contagious and funky release

PHOTO BY CONSTANTIN MONFILLIETTE

Angine de Poitrine

Vol II

Spectacles Bonzai (available now)



Is it just weird, or is it clever prog?

Unless you've been hiking in the Himalayas or been marooned on a desert island recently, you've probably witnessed how the internet just can't seem to get enough of Canada's newest and weirdest duo, Angine de Poitrine. A recent video on social media platforms that detailed the pair's performance live at ESMA in Rennes, France, during Trans Musicales 2025, went absolutely berserk, clocking up nearly 10 million views in what seemed like only the blink of an eye. Dressed in contrasting polka dot costumes with outrageous-looking paper maché masks, it would be easy to cynically set the timer on their 15 minutes of fame. But hang on. The music they're playing is actually very interesting.

Of course, there's a fictitious backstory to complement the weirdness: "Disciples of planet Earth's rock deities, space-time voyagers Klek and Khn de Poitrine gaze in wonder at hot dogs, pyramids, and rock music in all its glorious excess," begins the official press release for the duo's solemnly-titled second album. But strip away the fantasy element and focus on the music, which we obviously have to do when listening to the album without any visual element, and we find a lot of the elements of very good prog/math rock.

Microtonal guitars, looped accompaniment and odd time signatures abound and where it could easily descend into atonal anarchy, it's actually very contagious and, dare we say it, funky as heck. Opening track, *Fabienk*, is a good example, as is the other internet hit, *Sarniezz*. The album is only a brief 36 minutes long, but it leaves you wanting more! **[DM]**

Standout track: *Yor Zarad*

For fans of: Later King Crimson, Primus

Paul Gilbert

Tribute to Jimi Hendrix (35th Anniversary)
Music Theories Recordings (available June 12)



The Mr Big virtuoso's legendary Hendrix live set gets re-released

When Paul Gilbert set off for Frankfurt Jazz Festival in June 1991, he was only expecting to trade a few solos with headliner Albert Collins. Upon his arrival, however, he soon learned that Collins had fallen ill and the slot was now his. There was just one problem – he had no band or songs ready to go. Instead of admitting defeat he chose to adapt, recruiting a rhythm section to appropriate five Hendrix classics, all bolstered by extensive solo sections, to an unsuspecting jazz audience.

With only a few hours to prepare, the unrehearsed performance was nothing short of miraculous and remains a testament to the singer/guitarist's impossible brilliance. If you're looking for turbo-charged pentatonic licks, all improvised in real-time, you will find them here in abundance against the timeless backdrop of *Highway Chile*, *Hey Joe* and *Purple Haze*. **[AS]**

Standout track: *Red House*

For fans of: Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Gary Moore

Joe Bonamassa

The Spirit Of Rory Live From Cork
J&R Adventures (available June 19)



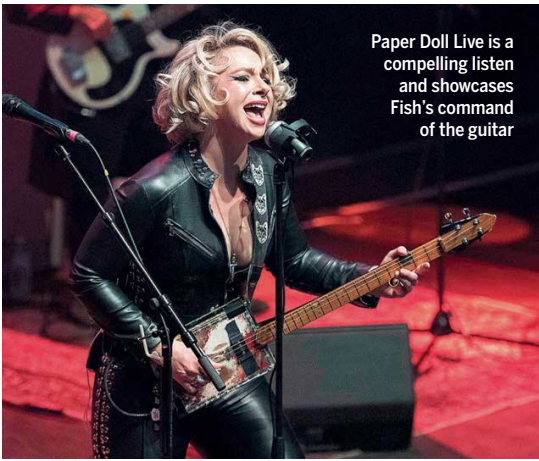
Joe's live tribute to Rory Gallagher

Recorded in the summer of 2025 in Rory Gallagher's hometown of Cork, Ireland, in front of a crowd of discerning hometown fans, Bonamassa's tribute is available on just about every platform you can name, including DVD. This wasn't a casual affair for Joe, as Gallagher's music was part of his upbringing. "I remember that voice and a singular guitar tone slicing through the walls of my bedroom at a very young age," he says. And so, with a setlist comprising some of Rory's best-known songs, some played on instruments like Rory's 1930 National Triolian resonator guitar, loaned by the Cork Public Museum, Joe does his hero proud. Intense readings of tracks like *Tattoo'd Lady*, *Messin' With The Kid* and *Bullfrog Blues*, are all sprinkled with Joe's own virtuoso finesse. It adds up to a very fitting, affectionate tribute to one of the most notable blues guitarists of the age. **[DM]**

Standout track: *I Wonder Who*

For fans of: Rory Gallagher, Thin Lizzy, JoBo

PHOTO BY SIMON GREEN



Paper Doll Live is a compelling listen and showcases Fish's command of the guitar

Samantha Fish

Paper Doll Live

Rounder Records (available June 12)



Live outing for fiery blues rocker

Two-time Grammy nominee Samantha Fish's first official live album was recorded at the Bijou Theatre in Knoxville, Tennessee in front of an audience of the party faithful. "Truly, this is for the fans," she tells us.

"We've had numerous requests over the years. *Paper Doll* felt so great on stage – it felt like the perfect time to showcase the band and our live show." Claiming the stage as her own, Samantha positively blazes through the album's 15 tracks, which not only showcase her command of the guitar, but also how her vocals have become a *force majeure* since her debut solo album, *Runaway* in 2011. It's a compelling listen, with tracks like *I'm Done Running* and *Fortune Teller* demonstrating some particularly good playing, as well as some fine songwriting. Little wonder she's one of the best around. Watch out for a UK tour later in the year. [DM]

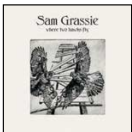
Standout track: *Dream Girl*

For fans of: Joanne Shaw Taylor, Bonnie Raitt

Sam Grassie

Where Two Hawks Fly

Self released (available now)



Bert Jansch's inheritor takes us on a captivating, moving flight

If you're into fingerstyle acoustic guitar you may have found yourself craving some of the unvarnished emotional power

and musical honesty of the 60s work of acoustic masters such as Jansch and Renbourn. In Sam Grassie, we may have found just such an artist. Hailing from Glasgow, Grassie's style might be described as having the raw presence of Jansch but a more flowing, lyrical lightness of touch, too, on plainly beautiful instrumental tracks which race and flow like a moorland stream. Grassie shows he has a fine Celtic melodic touch, too, on the excellent *Kishor's*. Jansch is a vocal touchstone but his unpretentious, warm delivery suits the style on tracks such as *Put The Blood*. Pleasingly, Grassie brings in warm electric touches that recall Tim Buckley's *Blue Melody* on some tracks – there's light and shade, drama and nuance here in abundance and an authenticity this reviewer has hungered to hear for a long time. The real deal. [JD]

Standout track: *Kishor's*

For fans of: Bert Jansch, John Martyn, John Renbourn



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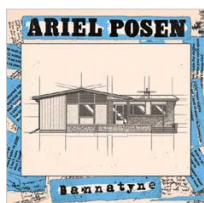


Tones Behind The Tracks

Sonic adventurer **Ariel Posen's** latest album used a treasure trove of guitar, amp and pedal exotica, resulting in his best recording yet

Artist: Ariel Posen

Album: *Bannatyne* (Dine Alone Records)



Ariel's latest album *Bannatyne* is named after a street in his home town of Winnipeg

The 12 songs on the new album were picked from around 20 to 25 that Ariel started writing in 2024

Named after a street in his home town of Winnipeg, Canada, Ariel Posen's latest album, *Bannatyne* takes his playing and songwriting to another level. It's also possible to hear his new Fender signature Strat, which features heavily throughout. Drop-tuned to tectonic-plate-bothering levels of fuzz-laden funk on tracks like *Future Present Tense* and *Vagabond*, it forms the backbone for 12 tracks of sheer sonic delight.

Your signature Fender Strat really bares its teeth on the new album. Is it a baritone or just drop-tuned?

"It's not a baritone guitar, it's a normal guitar, but you can put the heavier strings on it and [drop-tune] if you want. I have this one tuned to B standard [BEADF#B], but they come stock as standard tuning. It's very much just a normal guitar."

Were the pickups specially designed for it?

"Tim Shaw [of Fender] and I came up with the pickups together, they're called AP90s. The guitar is based on a Strat I have, as well as my Jazzmaster. I wanted the sound of the Jazzmaster's neck pickup – which is not a P90, it's a Jazzmaster pickup wired after my [own] Jazzmaster – and then the bridge pickup is a P90. They just sound really good together. It's single coil, so it's not like a humbucker kind of sound. I'm biased, of course, but it sounds really good!"

When did you first start the writing process for *Bannatyne*?

"The writing process started, basically, at the beginning of 2024. I was on tour most of the previous year, touring my album *Reasons Why*, and when I'm on tour for an album and whatnot, I'm not in writing mode at all. So at the start of January 2024, I was off for a little bit, and my goal was to write as many songs as possible and go into the studio at the end of the year. By the time November came around, I had about 20 or 25 songs and I chose the 12 that I felt were the strongest, and we went from there."

Apart from your Fender signature guitar, what was the rest of the gear you used on the album?

"For amps, I used my Two-Rock Traditional Clean, my Benson Chimera, my '63 Deluxe Reverb and my '61 Concert. I have this vintage amp that my friend built for me out of a PA head [the POS-1 by Don Voth]. I also have this SL Amps New Drive, which is kind of a Dumble-style thing, and I used my Magic Amps Vibro Prince. Those were all the main amps."

What about pedals?

"I had a pedalboard that I used, and then I had a pile of other pedals, like, whatever the song was calling for. So on the 'board, the main overdrive was between a Vemuram Jan Ray and the KingTone Duellist, and then the Hudson Broadcast-AP. And for fuzz, it was the KingTone miniFUZZ, and the KingTone Octaland and the DanDrive [Austin] Blender. For delays I was using the Eventide H9, the Chase Bliss Thermae, the Chase Bliss Mood and the Geckplex EP-5. I was using the Hologram Electronics Chroma Console a lot; that was in huge use on this record, and also the Infinite Jets and Microcosm by Hologram."



PHOTO BY LYNETTE GIESBRECHT

“If something sounds just like anything else, I’m more inclined to keep searching until I find something really inspiring and different”

With such a varied manifest of gear to choose from, how do you go about matching the song with a specific amp or set of pedals?

“It sounds so general, but I’ll try a couple things and if something just has a little magical thing to it, that’s what we’ll use. And I think it’s a constant search to fit the sound I’m hearing in my head, and something that stands out and something that sounds unique and special. So if something sounds just like anything else, I’m more inclined to keep searching until I find something really inspiring and different, if that makes sense.”

You’re using your signature Rock Slide on the album - how did you come to settle for that particular model?

“Yeah, it’s been 11 years of using that, so that’s the only slide I ever use. Well, my history is like anyone else’s; you pick up the first slide you see, and you don’t know any difference. When I met Danny from The Rock Slide, I started to realise, ‘Holy crap, you can have different sizes? You can have something that fits your finger better?’. And a couple of my favourite slide players always played brass. I always liked brass; I felt glass and ceramic were almost warmer sounding, which typically is a nice thing to have. But I like the brighter sound. We came up with something that fits my finger well and I’ve never looked back. It’s just a part of my finger, you know? I always tell people to find one that fits and feels good, and then just stick to it. Don’t change; if it works, set it and forget it.”

“The main [acoustic guitars] I used were a Martin OM-28, which is a newer one for me, it sounds beautiful, and a Martin Triple-O, an old one”

Which acoustic guitars did you choose to play on *Bannatyne*?

“There’s a bunch of acoustics on the tracks. The main ones I used were a Martin OM-28, which is a newer one for me, it sounds beautiful, and a Martin Triple-O, an old one. Also, it’s technically acoustic, a Mavis by Mule Resophonics. It’s kind of a half acoustic, half electric resonator-style guitar. That was used on *No Way Out* and *Dead To Me*. Any acoustic you hear, I like to double it with another one. So in this case, it was primarily those two Martins. There was one other one, too, made by Ryan.”

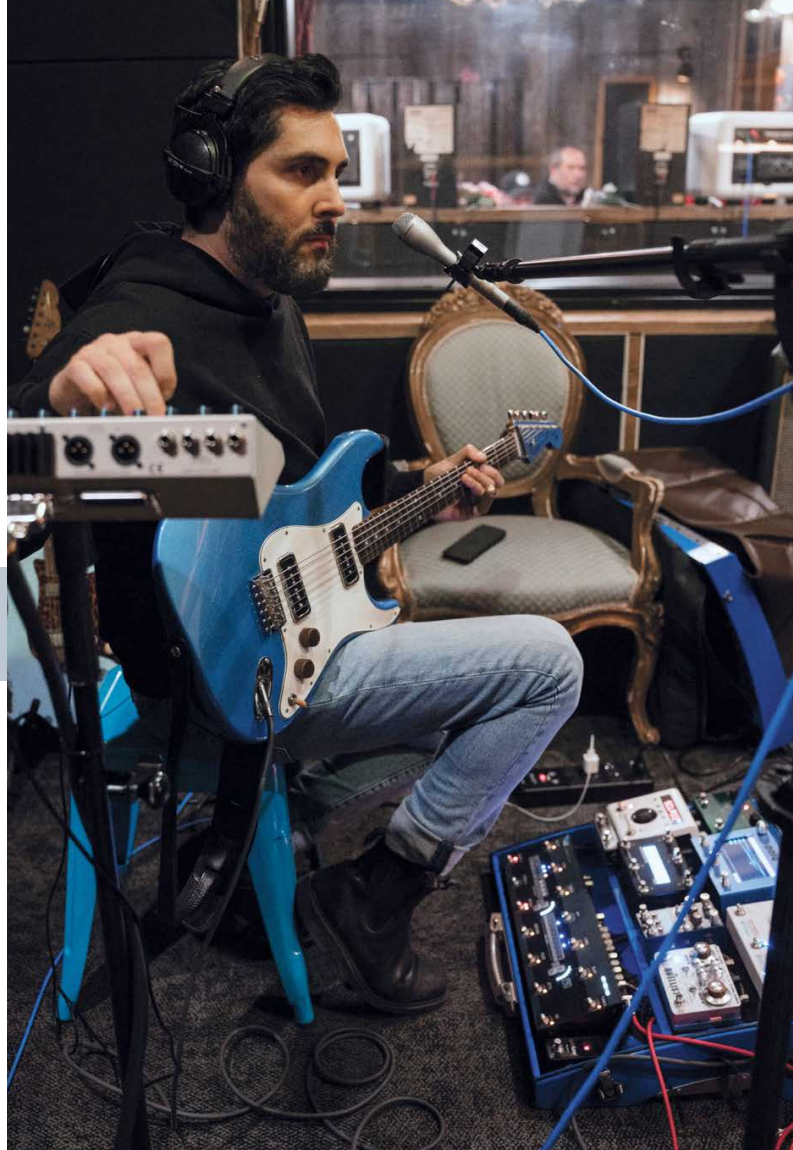


PHOTO BY LYNETTE GIESBRECHT

Ariel and Fender pickup legend Tim Shaw devised the AP90 pickups used on the signature Strat

There are a couple of collaborations on the new album, with Kathleen Edwards and City And Colour - how did they come about?

“Well, the City And Colour one, I just *heard* [Dallas Green’s] voice on it for some reason, so I just asked him if he wanted to sing on it. And fortunately for me, he was very into it, and did it right away. People know him as this soft singer-songwriter guy, but he’s also an amazing rock singer – he still sings in a band called Alexisonfire. And it was perfect, what he did. And the song with Kathleen Edwards, *More Me With You*, I really just wanted that song to be a duet, like this intimate vibe. And so, same thing. She’s someone I really admire and have been a fan of for a long time, and I texted her, and fortunately for me she was just very keen to do it, and got on it right away. So I’m very grateful to both of them for doing it.”

You’re on tour at the moment, are you playing any of the new tracks live?

“Oh, yeah, we play a lot of them, for sure. We’ve been touring in the US since last September, so we started playing a lot of these songs. It was called the *Future Present Tense* tour, which was the first single that came out. So we’ve been playing a lot of these already, just kind of getting them under our belt, so to speak.” **[DM]**



Ariel Posen’s new album *Bannatyne* is available now on Dine Alone Records

www.arielposen.com



Digital Dilemma

Neville Marten recounts his efforts in replacing the manufacturer presets on a new digital amp. He thinks he's finally cracked it!

Just because a piece of digital equipment can create outlandish noises, doesn't mean it's what you need to hear on first powering up. I had a rackmount multi-effects unit years ago and the presets consisted of implausible sounds and not what most guitarists might use on a daily basis.

For my trio gig we've decided to use a Bose L1 line array PA and small mixer, so we are self-contained and everything can go through the rig. So I bought a small

"While I have, as you know, crossed the Rubicon when it comes to digital stuff, I still have one foot firmly planted in the analogue world"

digital combo. Having demo'd several modelling amps, I was looking forward to getting to grips with it. For now, all I needed were a few classic tones: clean with a dash of reverb; the same with chorus and delay; a natural overdrive with light delay; and something that could pass for a strummed acoustic. My logic suggests that these and a few judiciously chosen others are the first you should encounter. We can always get more adventurous later on.

To give the amp its due, in the first dozen or so preset slots were some I've used as starting points. However, many of the others were sounds I imagine only a minority of players would use. Sure, have them in there, but perhaps put these at the end of the list and not in the first tranche. These should be, in my view, rock-solid, classic tones that are usable right out of the box – like those I've mentioned, plus others based on well-known amp styles and effects, and within 'usable' parameters. Maybe the final four or five could display what the thing can do with a few of the manufacturer's more outlandish concoctions. Maybe I'm being harsh. Or maybe a £299 digital amp isn't for the likes of me...

I also bought the 'optional' footswitch so I can toggle between my programmed patches on the fly. But why

is it a payable option? It's a necessity, surely? You can choose, as I've initially done, to create your own switchable sounds, or to put it in 'effects' mode where you start with a good clean sound and add drive, delay, chorus, reverb and so on in real-time. I might end up doing that, as I did with my Helix.

Luddite? Not Me!

As a die-hard valve-amp guy for longer than I'd care to say, I have embraced the whole modelling thing. It's got so much better in recent years, too. To the point where, I'm told, West End productions often stipulate a modeller brand, and on certain shows even the actual preset required. I recently saw The Illegal Eagles with my friend on sax, and all three guitarists used Kempers. They sounded phenomenal!

It didn't take me long to programme and assign my chosen tones to the footswitch, which I'm tweaking all the time to get as close as possible to the 'real thing'. In a mix you'd be hard pressed to distinguish it from a valve amp with pedals, but of course I'd prefer a hand-wound Princeton. Problem is, they can't do what this amp does – unless you fork out another £2,000 for the pedals I'd want (to add to the £2,400 for the amp itself). And this entire rig (including a Pedaltrain Metro Max board, Cioks Sol power supply, Cry Baby Junior wah-wah and Dunlop volume pedal), came in at £800-ish. Still not cheap, but it weighs next to nothing, is completely self-contained, very unlikely to go wrong, and entirely programmable.

While I have crossed the Rubicon when it comes to digital stuff (including years with my Helix and more with a Blackstar Amped 2), I still have one foot firmly planted in the analogue world. Indeed, I have a couple of theatre shows coming up, and for these I may well trade my Boogie Mark I reissue for the aforementioned Fender combo, and use my Mick and Dan pedalboard.

Have your views changed over the digital debate? I'd be interested to know! Until then, see you next month...

NEV'S GAS OF THE MONTH Acoustic Tones

What? Boss AC-3 Acoustic Simulator **Where seen?** www.guitarguitar.co.uk **Price?** £149

I got the first iteration of this pedal, the AC-2, at release in 1997. It was great when the sound was buried in a mix, but wouldn't stand up to close scrutiny on its own. The upgraded AC-3 features Roland's COSM modelling and reverb, for apparently more realistic and transparent tones. Choose from four acoustic body styles – Standard, Jumbo, Enhanced and Piezo-Equipped. Two rotaries look after the resonance of the modelled guitar body and top, so the degree of fine-tuning is excellent. It might not sound exactly like your vintage Martin, but in a mix it'll be tricky to tell.



Four acoustic simulation modes in one tidy package

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOSS



Listen Up

This issue **Alex Bishop** gets scientific – armed with only a microphone, a hammer, and a head full of ideas...

It used to be the case that when I finished a guitar, following a long and agonising process of polishing and delicate setup, it would get a brief play before taking sanctuary in its fitted hard case. But now, in this modern era of lutherie, you'll find me bent awkwardly over the workbench, guitar neck gripped in hand, clubbing the bridge of a recently built, handmade creation with a (rubber) hammer in an effort to coax out the secrets of its sound. However, I'm not taking out my frustrations on a custom order, nor am I vandalising a competitor's instrument – instead, this is science-based lutherie in action...

Laboratory Conditions

What is actually happening here is a controlled experiment, based upon the work of the brightest minds in the lutherie community, most notably Giuliano Nicoletti and his book *Mastering The Sound Of The Acoustic Guitar*. With a calibrated microphone set up on the workbench and some free software, one can trace the signature resonance response of any instrument. Striking the bridge multiple times with a rubber mallet causes the software to average out the amplitude of a wide range of frequencies and produce a graph that is a visualisation of the guitar's tonal response.

What this means in practice is the next big step. In each readout there are noticeable spikes at particular frequencies. These are resonances – parts of the guitar that naturally vibrate strongly when excited by a certain note. The strongest peak at the lowest frequency is the main air resonance, and on many guitars if you hum a note nearby somewhere close to G2 (around 100Hz) you will hear this resonance in action. The exact note is affected by two factors, stiffness and mass, and can be adjusted by the size of the soundhole and the exact air capacity of the body. Nudging this measurement away from the exact frequency of notes we might commonly play on the fretboard seems to avoid 'wolf' notes, keeping the response of the guitar more balanced.

There is definitely some tension between traditional craft intuition and modern measurement techniques. The reality is that makers who don't take these measurements are still working with them intuitively, profiling and repositioning braces to excite different modes and frequencies of vibration. For me, the hope is that by recording some hard data I'll be able to take measured adjustments more precisely and get towards the result I'm looking for more quickly.

That said, I've worked out that two excellent-sounding guitars can produce very different charts. Indeed, just because something can be measured, doesn't mean it can be fully understood – none of



this data seems to take into account other factors in the guitar's design, such as the scale length, strings or fretwork, all of which greatly affect tone. Furthermore, the graphs are fascinating, but interpreting them isn't straightforward. Knowing for certain which parts of the instrument each resonance belongs to will require creating 'Chladni' patterns, a process that involves covering the guitar with glitter and blasting a loudspeaker cone at it to see which parts move and which don't. I suppose I could raid my kids' art box... but that is probably best left for another day.

After procuring one rubber mallet and some free software, Alex records the resonance response of his guitar to create a graph in the app; a useful visualisation to support his luthier's instinct

“Knowing which part each resonance belongs to requires covering the guitar with glitter and blasting a loudspeaker cone at it”

For now at least, I'm building up a tone library of resonance traces, collecting data and hoping that in time some patterns will begin to emerge across the instruments. I've been working intuitively with top thicknesses while keeping the bracing patterns and profiling as consistent as possible. By testing a wide range of guitars, I'm hoping to be able to pin down exactly what makes those extra-special-sounding instruments better than the rest.

Despite the microphones and graphs, the goal remains the same: to build instruments that feel alive in the hands of the player. I'm beginning to realise that this data collecting is just another way of listening – dodging all the contradictory adjectives players might use to describe guitar tone, which so often can make guitar-playing feel more like wine tasting than music making. Perhaps the lesson here is the one that every guitar teaches us: to listen more carefully. **G**



German Archtops

Huw Price talks with historian Cameron Brown to discover the fascinating yet overlooked history of German guitar manufacturing across the decades

There are always niche interests in any field and among guitar collectors it doesn't get more specialised than vintage German archtops. Most guitarists will be aware of Höfner and maybe Framus, but guitar making in Germany dates back to the early 19th century, with countless manufacturers producing archtops that spanned the jazz and rock 'n' roll eras.

Renowned guitar collector and historian Cameron Brown recently co-authored a beautifully illustrated and thoroughly researched book, *German Jazz Guitars – The Archtop Guitar In Post-War Central Europe*. We spoke with Cameron to learn more about this significant but now overlooked period of guitar making.

New Bohemians

"The production of stringed musical instruments started in what was then Saxony during the late 17th century," says Cameron. "During the 1600s, a group of instrument makers was kicked out of Schönbach in the German-speaking part of Bohemia. They settled 20km away in Markneukirchen, Saxony and established a guild of violin and lute makers. Over the next three centuries, their businesses prospered, and they turned to guitar making in the mid 19th century. The area was trading so much with the US that in 1893 the Americans opened a consulate in Markneukirchen, which, at the time, was rated the richest town in all the states of Germany, and that wealth came from musical instruments.

"When I wrote this book, I believed that archtop guitars were invented in America, but I'm now less certain. At least two German-made archtops have turned up dating to the turn of the 19th century, and there's another earlier one from Mirecourt in France. These days I would be reluctant to say that Gibson invented the archtop.

"In Germany, Otto Windisch was first to spot the increasing popularity of archtop guitars in dance and jazz bands. His company made Otwin guitars and he began producing archtops during the 1930s. Other German manufacturers soon followed, providing musicians with the type of guitar they couldn't afford to import from America.

"My Viennese father-in-law was a mathematics teacher and a good jazz player. When he packed up playing, he gave me his guitar, which I discovered was made by Artur Lang, one of the three million German-speaking Czechs expelled in the 1940s from the Sudetenland. I thought it was a beautifully made instrument with a fascinating backstory. That's when my interest in German archtops really began.

"I speak fluent German, so I quickly got to know some of the collectors and manufacturers. I enjoy lively discussions with other enthusiasts because there's a great desire to attribute these guitars. There were dozens of makers but many never used any branding. However, repairers would sometimes sign them, which can confuse things, and wholesalers such as Migma, Hopf, Taco and Herrnsdorf often had their names put on them. Pre-war UK importers gave them made-up names such as 'Radiotone' or 'Martin Coletti'.

"Bracing patterns can help us to differentiate between the various manufacturers. The top braces are generally parallel or slightly splayed and positioned just inside the f-holes. Some braces peter out while others continue to the rims, and sometimes there's a little cross-brace between them. Then there are guitars that have one long brace on the bass side, while others only have a central brace."

Materials

"Before World War II there was an ample supply of tight-grained spruce from high-altitude German and Czechoslovakian forests. Germany had been flattened during the war and all that timber was needed for reconstruction. Instrument makers struggled to acquire materials and they used whatever they could get.

"Pre-war archtops were often hand carved. In the late 1940s, Wenzel Rossmesl, the maker of Roger guitars, began to use machinery to carve the thick spruce used for his top plates, to speed up the process, although the recurve of the tops and backs were finished by hand. Rossmesl was also one of the first to use plywood and the three layers were often each a centimetre thick.

"He acquired a lot of lovely old piano mahogany after the war. This was used in his factory in Markneukirchen where they would machine-carve laminated tops with contrasting light and dark layers and finish the edges with a pronounced recurve, which became known as the 'German carve'.

Guitar collector, historian and author Cameron Brown with the Lang archtop given to him by his father-in-law. "It's one of the very best archtops to have come out of Germany," says Cameron

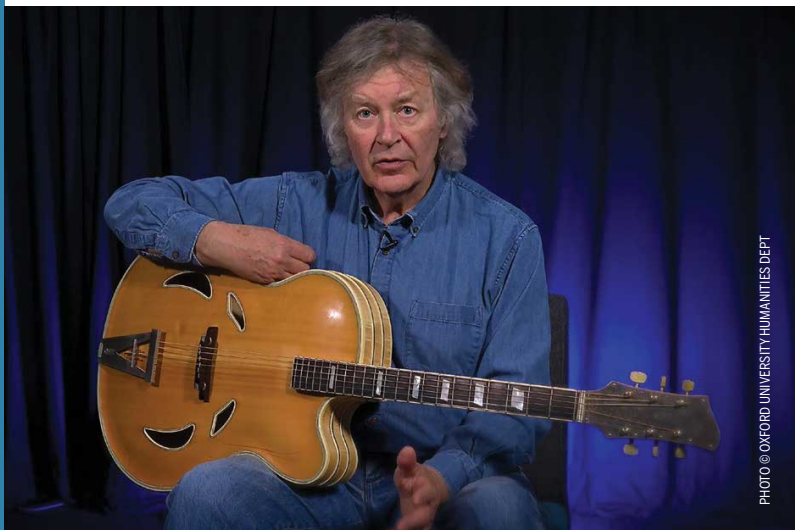


PHOTO © OXFORD UNIVERSITY HUMANITIES DEPT

THREE TO GET READY

Funky archtop alternatives



Duesenberg Starplayer TV Vintage Burst From £1,899

Keeping the German guitar-making tradition alive, Duesenberg combines quirky-yet-practical retro designs with modern pickups and hardware. The Starplayer features a semi-hollow body with an arched laminated spruce top and sustain block, and a set maple neck. There's also a Bigsby-inspired tremolo and a P90 at the neck with a humbucker by the bridge.



Eastman AR580CE From £1,799

This 16-inch archtop has a laminated flame maple body with a hand-carved spruce top and Venetian cutaway. It's very much a jazz guitar with a single Duncan Gold humbucker, ebony fingerboard with a floating ebony bridge and tailpiece, and an ebony pickguard. The set maple neck has a 25-inch scale neck with ebony button Gotoh tuners and a bone nut.



Godin 5th Avenue Jumbo From £1,035

If you want to go old-school with an electrified non-cutaway archtop, this double-P90-equipped Godin might be the one. The 16-inch-wide body is made from Canadian wild cherry and the set maple neck has a rosewood fingerboard with 21 frets and a 24.8-inch scale length. A metal trapeze tailpiece anchors the bridge and there's an adjustable Graph Tech Tusq bridge.




PHOTOS © JOE MCBURNIE

"Rossmeisl was imprisoned between 1951 and 1953 for selling guitars for foreign currency. The East German state proceeded to take over his factory, along with all the staff and tonewood stock to start the state-owned enterprise Musima. Rossmeisl's son Roger was left with just the workshop and a showroom in West Berlin. By 1953 he was heavily in debt and fled to the US. Here he would go on to use the German carve when he worked at Rickenbacker and Fender. His father re-started Roger Guitars in West Germany in 1955."

Rock 'n' roll

"In Britain, we couldn't obtain US dollars for non-essential imports until around 1961. That's when Denmark Street started bringing in Fenders, Gibsons and so forth. Until then, Höfner was the biggest brand because Selmer had been selling them since the 1930s, but in my view the reason things went downhill was simply because all the 1960s rock stars were playing American guitars so that's what young players wanted, too.

"Few of these German archtops feel modern; the necks are often very narrow and radiused so we can find them uncomfortable. You're not going to pick one up to play Bach or shred, but they can sound wonderful and make good jazz guitars. The Germans tried copying American guitars, but the Japanese did it better and cheaper. The East Germans were even worse at it, but they did build some very esoteric showy instruments to brighten up their drab day-to-day existence," says Cameron, before sharing, "Höfner was the last big name left, but they recently closed down and while it's very sad, I'm surprised it didn't happen earlier." 

German Jazz Guitars by Cameron Brown and Stefan Lob is published by Unicorn

The late 1950s Hoyer Perloid was produced in red (as shown above), cream and grey



A 1950s example of the work of Heinz Seifert (1923-2002) a highly regarded East German luthier. The single pickup is set into the neck

PHOTO COURTESY OF DUESENBERG

PHOTO COURTESY OF EASTMAN

PHOTO COURTESY OF GODIN



Open-Sounding Chords (Pt 2)

Richard Barrett explores some expansive and flexible chord voicings that can be found in standard tuning

As discussed last issue, open/alternative tunings are a great way to expand our chordal horizons without getting our fingers in a twist. However, we also mentioned that there are quite a few expansive voicings available without having to retune. There's no doubt that open/alternative tunings facilitate some unique sounds, but in a world where artists such as Davey Graham (who introduced us to the DADGAD tuning in the 1960s) plus Joni Mitchell, Nick Drake, Jimmy Page and Keith Richards have all given their unique spin on multiple angles of this idea, perhaps exploring regular tuning is equally interesting!

The five examples are selected on a fairly random basis, but they could work together to create an interesting piece or accompaniment. It's also worth mentioning that each example has the potential to yield some interesting variations, by shifting a note within each shape, or simply moving to a different position on the fretboard. The constant, if anything, is the inclusion of open strings. **G**

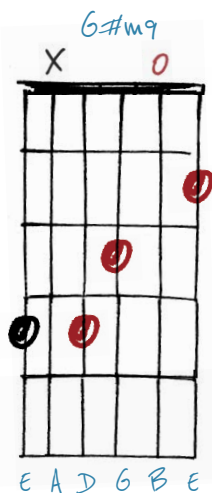


PHOTO BY CHRIS WALTER / WIREIMAGE / GETTY IMAGES

The inclusion of open strings within chords played in standard tuning can produce unique and inspiring sonic variations, as players such as Keith Richards have shown

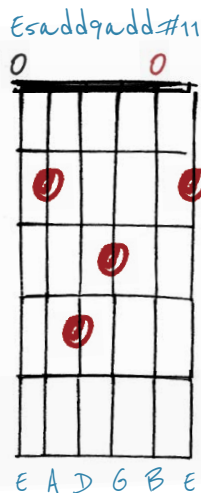
Example 1

This G#m9 is a little reminiscent of Joni Mitchell's jazzier moments (check out the 1980 *Shadows And Light* album), but no strings were retuned to create it! It's important to mute the fifth string, but this can be a movable shape if you're discerning. One useful idea is to shift it down a fret for a nice G9 chord.



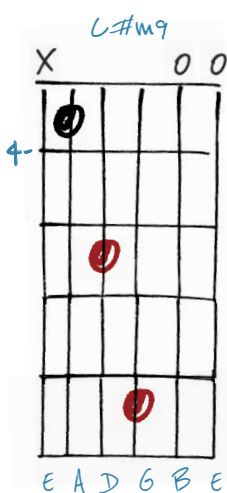
Example 2

This E5add9add#11 (yes, that really is the simplest way to describe it!) is a handful at first. It's the result of changing around the bass notes from Example 1 to give an E5 on the fifth and sixth strings. Keeping the same notes on top gives the add9 (F# on the fourth and first strings) and #11 (A# on the third string).



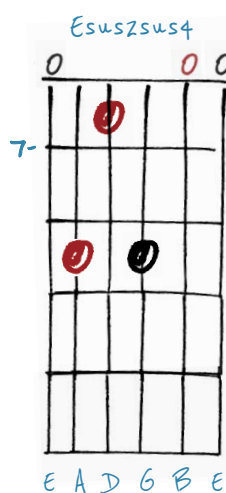
Example 3

Here's a real stretch – until you find the optimum hand position. Try shifting your fretting hand thumb down to the centre of the back of the neck. This C#m9 is surprisingly useful as a movable chord, functioning similarly to an open tuning in that the open first and second strings function as a drone.



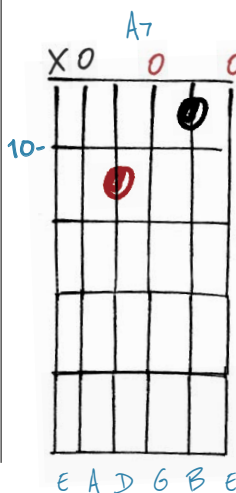
Example 4

There are shades of Jimmy Page in Led Zeppelin's *Ramble On* in this Esus2sus4, one of the only examples of a 'double' sus voicing we've ever come across. Remember, these complex-sounding names are just music theory struggling to explain what is actually a very simple chord to play. Once again, treat this as a movable shape for some nice results.



Example 5

This A7 is one of many similar shapes that can be moved up and down the fourth and second strings. The wonderful Gordon Giltrap used shapes like this (albeit in open A tuning) in his signature composition *Heartsong*. Be sure to mute the sixth string; it isn't a horrible clash exactly, but it does mess with the resonance overall.



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STAR LETTER

ECHOES OF THE PAST



The Black Strat is a document of David Gilmour's changing needs, sounds and trends

David Gilmour's Black Strat is in the news, coming under the hammer once again due to the sad death of Jim Irsay. As the owner takes it home and Jim Irsay's estate (and charities) take home their share of \$14.5m, can I raise a pertinent question? How much of the Black Strat is there left?

Your article in issue 535 mentions that it currently sports a different bridge pickup from the original and is on its fourth neck. According to *Wikipedia*: "Due to the constant modifications, the only original part on the guitar, apart from the body, is believed to (possibly) be the bridge plate."

Granted, it's probably 100 per cent of the guitar David Gilmour played throughout the 2000s, up to when he very generously auctioned it off the first time. But if you

want the bits of wood and wire that helped create the timeless songs that made it so famous, face facts, folks; the current Black Strat is about half of it.

When the successful auction-winning billionaire gets it home, plugs it in and strums a chord, they might be saying to themselves, 'My hand is where David Gilmour's hand was when he played the solos on *Time*, *Money* and *Comfortably Numb*. This is the very instrument used to create those classic tunes'. But it's not really, is it?

And if Mr Gilmour still has that worn 70s Fender neck that he played the amazing *Dogs* solo on, I've got a build on the go and I'm happy to take it off his hands if he doesn't need it...

Jon Heal

Given all the mods it's had, the Black Strat does put one in mind of Trigger's Broom (AKA the Ship of Theseus) to be sure. With that being said, the guitar is still a remarkable document of changing needs, sounds and trends in Gilmour's work, its body pitted with filled-in routing for Kahler tremos, XLR sockets and more. If anything, it resembles the musical equivalent of an Iron Age fort that later eras built their own castles on. Or maybe we're thinking of the band Saxon? Anyway, thanks for sending in your philosophical musings on this undeniably historic guitar, they secure you this month's Star Letter prize...

KORG

Each issue, the Star Letter will win a Korg PitchStrap strap-mounted tuner!

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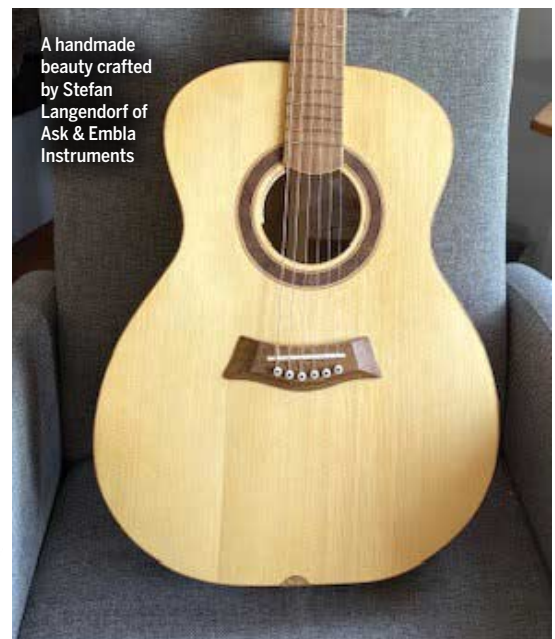
CRAFTED WITH PRIDE

First of all, a huge thanks for your monthly contribution to my guitar-obsession! I've been an avid reader for the better part of 10 years now and I have no intention of stopping. If I may, I want to do a quick shout-out to all the small shop luthiers out there, who build guitars in small numbers, often while keeping regular jobs.

Pictured is the product of such a luthier, Stefan Langendorf of Ask & Embla Instruments in Stockholm, Sweden. This handmade beauty is built out of oak (with a spruce top) from a tree grown on the island of Ekerö just where I live. (Ekerö actually means Oak Island.) It's an amazing instrument with tone and sustain for days. So keep up the work, all you local builders out there; you deserve recognition.

Niklas Lehammer

Thanks Niklas, as you rightly say, in every country there are absolutely brilliant luthiers quietly making excellent instruments that are as beautifully individual as they are toneful. These artisans, often operating small shops, understand the specific needs and sonic palette of their local scene in a way that mass manufacturers simply cannot. This intimate relationship between builder and player results in instruments that embody the spirit of the community they serve. Has anyone else got an independent luthier they'd like to praise? Send us your candidates for your personal 'local luthier of the year' award and we'll print the best.



A handmade beauty crafted by Stefan Langendorf of Ask & Embla Instruments

LOVESTORY

I've been an avid reader for over 30 years and taken great interest in the reviews – maybe too much interest as I've often found myself travelling all over the country picking up my latest review acquisition!

My long-running issue has been finding a single-cut that delivers all the sounds I am looking for. I thought the artist brands would deliver this, but having bought and sold Knaggs, Paul Reed Smith, PJE Macon, Eastman SB59, a Gibson R8 and an older Classic model, I still had not found my dream single-cut.

A PRS 594 McCarty double-cut came close and is a keeper, but then I saw a local advert on Marketplace for a recent Tokai Love Rock in beautiful Lemon Drop finish, just 10 miles away. These guitars are so well built and put Gibson's finishing to shame. The neck must have been plek-ed, it is so straight and the action effortless, the sound is perfect, all for a fraction of the cost of the better-known brands.

Guitar choices are, of course, very individual and finding the right one needs careful consideration and a must is playing it through your own rig. It's been one hell of a fun ride but I'm now settled with a great selection of guitars that deliver all the sounds in my head... until the next issue!

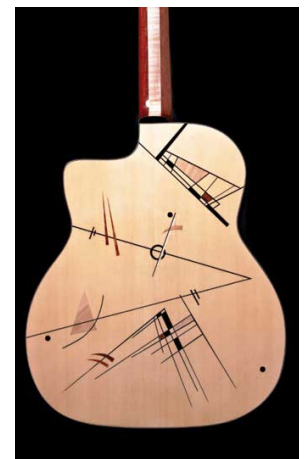
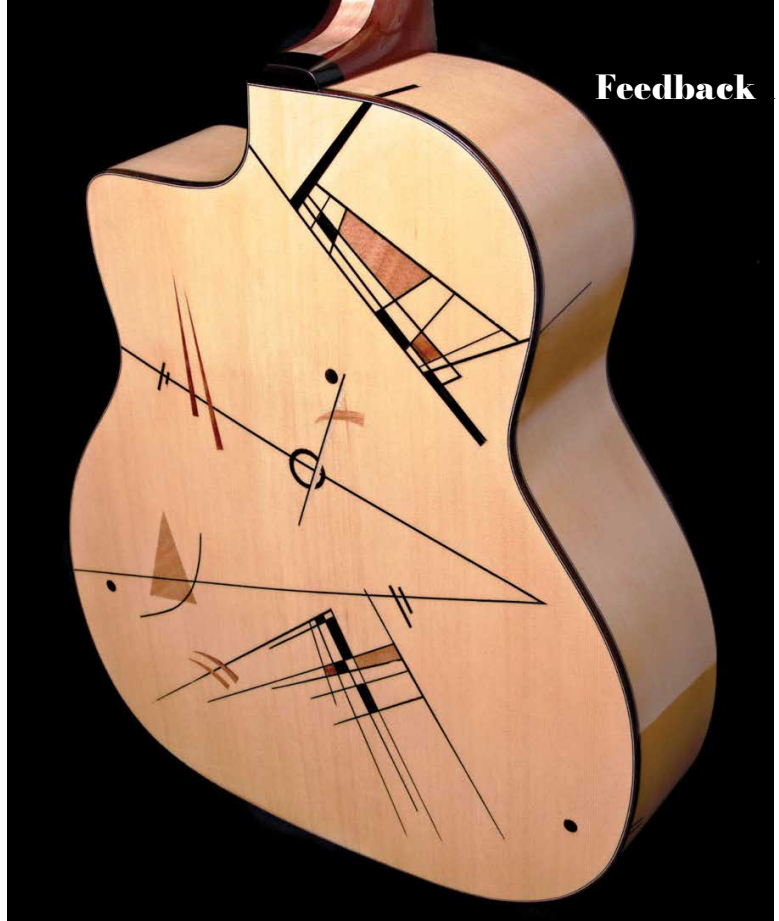
Kevin Larcombe

Thanks for sharing your thoughts on finding a keeper (or a collection of them), Kevin – your timing is perfect given the theme of this month's issue. Nev Marten of this shire often says that, if you can afford to, you should ideally have one of each of the major 'food groups', if you will, of guitar – something Les Paul-like, something Stratty, a Tele of some kind and a good Dreadnought or OM.

Now, obviously, there are wonderful permutations on those themes to enjoy and, as you rightly point out, the guitar that clicks with you may not be from one of the big US heritage brands – it just has to feel and play right and inspire you to pick it up every time you walk past it. Glad you've found The One (and some other ones)!

STATE OF THE ART

Can we see more pictures of Alex Bishop's Kandinsky inlay guitar? Kandinsky was the father of abstract painting and also a follower of 'Chromesthesia', a theory linking colour and sound. The concept is based on the principle of the resonance of string instruments producing colours in the listener's mind, which



could then be painted. The guitar inlay is based on *Composition VIII* by Kandinsky. Did Alex know about Chromesthesia, or was this serendipity in action?

Justin Lees

Alex Bishop replies:

At least three Kandinsky-inspired pieces have flown the workshop (see pics above). I first saw his paintings at the Guggenheim in New York, on holiday with my parents when I was studying Art at A-level. The vibrancy of the images really struck me. I was aware that some of his paintings were visual responses to music, and that he lived through the early jazz age, though I knew little else. I messed up one of my early builds by cutting out the back of the guitar back-to-front, revealing a nasty knot of grain in an otherwise pristine piece of yellow cedar, so I spontaneously inlaid the back of the guitar with lots of wood, paying homage to *Composition VIII* (a copy of which was floating around my workshop at the time). It was fun to explore the links between improvisation, art and music all at once. The guitar sounded fantastic too!

The vibrancy of Vasily Kandinsky's work has been an inspiration for luthier Alex Bishop since he first saw the work of the Russian artist as a student. Above are some Kandinsky-inspired pieces

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



PHIL CAMPBELL

1961 - 2026

Motörhead's longest-serving guitarist was the perfect fit for a band whose bludgeoning sound and appetite for excess eclipsed all others

Words Henry Yates

PHIL CAMPBELL

7 May 1961 – 13 March 2026

The most acclaimed Motörhead lineup might have been the *Ace Of Spades* [1980] and *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* [1981] power-trio comprising berserker/bassist Lemmy, guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke and drummer Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor. But in February 1984 (by which point Thin Lizzy's Brian Robertson had also come and gone), the then-unknown Phil Campbell announced himself as the perfect fit for this most dissolute of hard-rock bands by arriving at auditions bearing three different types of amphetamine ("Orange, white and pink!").

The Welshman – who was hired that day alongside fellow guitarist Michael 'Würzel' Burston – debuted on 1986's *Orgasmatron* album and went on to play and write for a further 15 studio releases by the band. Campbell was still holding the position in December 2015, upon Lemmy's unthinkable demise from prostate cancer ("We knew he wasn't well, but never thought it'd escalate how it did"). Now, the guitarist has himself died aged 64 after complications from surgery, and rock 'n' roll has lost one of its driest characters and most powerful players.



Phil Campbell (left) with Lemmy at the Glastonbury Festival, 2015

PHOTO BY SHIRLAINE FORREST/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

"Lemmy said: 'Just play what you want – I trust your musicianship and your playing'" – Phil Campbell

Born in Pontypridd on 7 May 1961, Campbell once gave a damning assessment of his prospects beyond music. "Without the guitar," he told this writer, "I'd probably be a professional dog-walker or in jail. It all started with playing in a school folk group. You could either play violin, trumpet or guitar. I was just strumming away on some early Simon & Garfunkel stuff, but when I heard Hendrix *In The West* [1972] – that turned me on. A load of feedback through Marshall stacks, you know? When I got an electric guitar in my hands, I could make any sound with it that I chose. Most of them bad, in them days."

Campbell himself started on a £12 Woolworths Strat copy and amp, but progressed fast, graduating from a chord book to riffs of the day such as David Bowie's *The Jean Genie* and buying his first Les Paul in 1978. He'd already met Lemmy once before – in the foyer after a Cardiff show by Hawkwind, aged just 12 – when the frontman welcomed him

into the Motörhead fold with the loosest of briefs. "Lemmy said: 'Just play what you want – I trust your musicianship and your playing. Just don't wear shorts onstage'. I think Brian Robertson had scared him away with that, wearing leg-warmers one night."

Standing before the obligatory wall of Marshalls with his signature LAG Explorer, Campbell drove the late-period band hard, not only putting his own spin on standards like *Overkill*, *Bomber* and *Killed By Death*, but submitting his own standout riffs like *God Was Never On Your Side* and *The Game*. Just don't call him a heavy-metal guitarist, he once reminded an interviewer. "People think I might be, but they're wrong. Motörhead was a rock 'n' roll band that played loud. Lemmy thought the same."

Just as important as his pummeling guitar work was the sense that Campbell, Lemmy and Swedish drummer Mikkey Dee were a ramshackle brotherhood, not

a slick, session-populated enterprise built around the star frontman. "I remember going to the Hyatt House – that's the Riot House – in LA one night with a petrol scooter. I took it up the lift to our rooms on the seventh floor or whatever, and ended up riding it up and down the corridors naked, in drag make-up, with just a tie on, with all these fumes creating this smog."

When Lemmy died, Campbell immediately recognised that Motörhead was over too. "But I didn't know what to do for a while," he reflected. "I didn't know whether to just stop and retire. For three or four months, I was feeling very weird. And then I just got together with the boys, started playing, and I started to enjoy it again then."

His final project – helming Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons, a family affair – had built a sizable following and released three warmly reviewed studio albums by the time of his death in March. But Campbell will be best remembered as the man who kept the train on the tracks for the loudest, wildest, most chaotic rock 'n' roll band of them all. "Phil was a wonderful guitarist, writer, performer and musician," posted the band's official site. "He had Motörhead in his veins..." **G**

DEVO

In the early 70s, when Devo touched down, they immediately weirded out their arena-rock contemporaries, bringing a new sound and message to the scene. Guitarist Bob Mothersbaugh joins us to explain why this “very misunderstood band” is still making waves today

Words Andrew Daly



When Devo arrived out of Akron, Ohio, the world didn't know what to do with them. After all, Ohio was part of the so-called American 'Rust Belt', an area known for adoring acts such as KISS, Ted Nugent and Grand Funk Railroad. But Devo, with their weird guitars and even weirder music and looks, weren't like those acts. In fact, they were deliberately something else entirely. The band comprised guitarists Bob Mothersbaugh and Bob Casale, bassist Gerald Casale, vocalist/keyboardist Mark Mothersbaugh, and drummer Alan Myer. "We didn't like the arena rock kind of sound," Bob Mothersbaugh tells *Guitarist*. "We wanted to make fun of it. We wanted to do anything but arena rock. We just wanted to do *anything* weird."

And the band did just that – but not without consequence. "We were very misunderstood," says Bob. "We didn't try to produce hits... we wanted to be artistic. We'd play around Akron and people hated us!"

He recalls: "In the *Devo*/documentary [streaming on Netflix], there's footage of what it was like. People hated us, bullied us, threw stuff at us and even threatened to beat us up. But they didn't leave... we knew we might have been upsetting them, but we had something."

Although Mothersbaugh and company wanted to create unconventional music with an off-kilter aesthetic, his influences were decidedly run-of-the-mill. "I had favourite guitar players. Players like Chuck Berry, George Harrison, Jeff Beck and Muddy Waters."

Those influences were not unique, but Mothersbaugh soon found that no matter the influence, his mind and

body wouldn't let him be anything other than himself. "I never took lessons," he says. "I'd play what I felt. And when I tried to play those players' parts, I always sounded like me. And now, I've been doing that for long enough that people try to emulate me! [laughs]"

It's not just about longevity, though, as Mothersbaugh has played a huge role in the success of new wave music in general, as well as its adjacent guitar stylings. One listen to Devo's first four records – 1978's *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*, 1979's *Duty Now For The Future*, 1980's *Freedom Of Choice*, and 1981's *New Traditionalists* – will tell you that. The records contain far-from-arena-rock-but-still-halcyon hits, a cover of The Rolling Stones' (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction*, *Girl U Want*, and *Whip It*, among others.

And then there are the records that came after – 1984's *Shout*, 1988's *Total Devo*, 1990's *Smooth Noodle Maps*, and the latter-day – and probably final Devo – record, 2010's *Something For Everybody*. These records all proved critical to establishing Mothersbaugh's legacy. The same can be said about his partner in guitar-related crime, Bob Casale.

Sadly, Casale passed away in 2014 and so Josh Hager joined the ranks, holding down the fort with style and grace. To Hager's credit, Mothersbaugh calls him "a good player," while joking... or lamenting the fact that many of Casale's off-the-rails rhythm parts have fallen to him to execute, such as the idiosyncratic licks with Devo's rendition of *Satisfaction*.

In August this year, Bob Mothersbaugh will be 74, but he's not slowing down as Devo hits the road in the States, with UK dates coming in June. While he reveals



L-R: Bob Casale (rhythm guitar), Mark Mothersbaugh (vocalist), Alan Myers, (drums), Gerry Casale (bass), and Bob Mothersbaugh (lead guitar), pictured here with a 2x4 La Baye

PHOTO BY ROBERT MATHEU

that getting ready for gigs is tougher these days, he will “play just enough so he’s not in excruciating pain” on tour. “I’ll rock till I drop,” Mothersbaugh says.

Elsewhere, the band – whose current line-up is now Bob and Mark Mothersbaugh, Greg Casale, Josh Hager and another relative newcomer (who’s been with Devo since ’96) drummer Josh Freese – are surging after the recent Netflix documentary, *Devo*, shone a light on the band. With a new generation of fans loving the band, Mothersbaugh is thankful: “As soon as we walk out, people are cheering,” he says. “I’m lucky to go out and do that every night. We’re having a resurgence.”

This has not caused Mothersbaugh to rethink his playing but to double down on what he’s always done, aka the thing that makes Devo so damn lovable in the first place. “I think of my guitar like a shovel,” he says. “I’m just digging ditches with the rest of the band. I just play whatever there is and see what I can do to make it sound good.”

Devo came of age in the 70s and presented an alternative to classic rock, which you almost seemed to be making fun of.

“It’s funny... yeah. I always think back on that and it was just like a groundswell. You know, there were all these bands that weren’t doing arena rock, like the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, Blondie and the Talking Heads. Everything was cool for a short while.”

If Devo were to land today and not in the 70s how do you think it would go?

“I think we would be well received with a larger audience because of the internet. I’d like to try it.”

Early in Devo’s career, you and Bob Casale were a formidable guitar duo. But you were songwriters first. How did you bounce off each other?

“Bob Casale was a great guitar player, but he didn’t like to play leads, so I got the job. Often, I would play both guitar parts on the album, and then we would work out who played what live. Bob was an easy person to get along with and one of the funniest people I’ve ever met. He was just a great bandmate. [Our dynamic] came



1. Bob Mothersbaugh (left) and older brother Mark, California, 1980

2. Mark on stage at Lollapalooza, 1996. Note the ‘built-in’ effects unit duct taped to his Strat!

really naturally. He didn’t play leads. But you know, there’s a difference between playing good rhythm parts and then playing a lead where you don’t know where it’s going, you know? So he didn’t play many leads, but the big thing was we wrote songs.”

What gear did you use for songs such as *Satisfaction*, *Whip It* and *Girl U Want*?

“For *Satisfaction*, I used a Gibson L6-S guitar and an Acoustic model 470 solid-state amp. For *Whip It* and *Girl U Want*, I played the Ibanez ‘Cloud Guitar’ through a tube amp that Roland was developing; they loaned me a prototype. And Bob Casale is the one who came up with the riff for *Satisfaction*.

“BOB [CASALE] WAS EASY TO GET ALONG WITH AND ONE OF THE FUNNIEST PEOPLE. HE WAS JUST A GREAT BANDMATE”

“We were doing a tour where we did all the really early stuff. Bob had passed, so I played his part on *Satisfaction* and it was really hard every night, because I hadn’t played it every night for years [laughs].”

Devo is known for oddball guitars. Was there a reason for that as far as sound goes, or was it more for aesthetic purposes?

“No reason as to the sound... I just wanted to look different! Back in Akron, I saw a La Baye 2X4 guitar in a pawn shop and decided I had to play it live. It didn’t sound great or play great, but it was cool to play it on stage at club gigs in Akron and Cleveland.”

After *Whip It* became a big hit, along with its kooky music video, how did your life change?

“We got to do whatever we wanted for a couple of years [laughs]. But with the video, we actually made that *because* the song was taking off. We just thought *Whip It* was going to be another song on the album and actually expected *Girl U Want* to be the hit.”



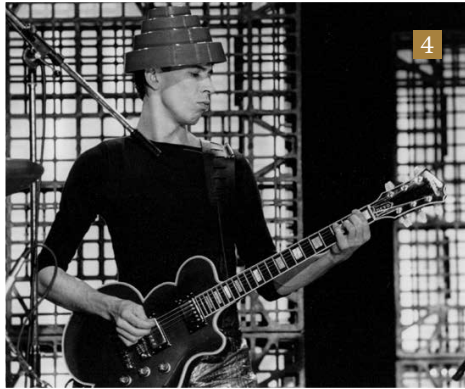
PHOTO BY TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

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PHOTO BY PETER NOBLEZ/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

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3. Bob Mothersbaugh (left): "I saw a La Baye 2X4 [pictured] in a pawn shop. It didn't sound great or play great, but it was cool to play it on stage"

4. Bob Mothersbaugh, on stage with his Ibanez 'Cloud Guitar'

5. Mark displays his preference for Fender Telecasters – heavily modified, of course

Did you have a tried-and-true process for tracking guitars that you can look back on as essential to Devo's albums?

"I knew very little about the tracking process. In the basement in Akron, we just stuck a Shure SM57 in front of the amp. Our first four albums were recorded with producers and engineers who knew how to mic an amp."

You often used solid-state amps in the studio and live. Why did you favour those as opposed to big clunky valve amps?

"I didn't know much about guitar amps, and the Acoustic 470 had a five-band graphic EQ, which I would configure in patterns for each song. And the cabinet had 2x 12-inch speakers and a high-frequency horn. I later disconnected the horn – too much high-end for me."

What gear do you rely on these days while touring?

"At some point, I wanted a guitar that felt *good*. So what I'm playing now is a Les Paul that's a Gibson Custom Shop recreation of Mike Bloomfield's '59 Les Paul. I've one of those, and I've a Line 6 modelling amp, so that we don't have to have amps with speakers. But apparently, a lot of places have stuff under the stage, and that was affecting and making noise, so our sound guy said, 'Bob, you gotta get a guitar with humbucking pickups...' I went to the guitar store, and I was just like pulling down all these Les Pauls, and going, 'Boring. Boring. Don't like this...'

6. Gerald Casale, Mark Mothersbaugh and Bob Mothersbaugh, Michigan, 2025. "I think people needed reminding about how fun Devo is live," says Bob about their recent Netflix documentary

And then I grabbed the Mike Bloomfield one and I was like, 'Oh my God, this feels perfect!' So I bought it and then took it home, plugged it in and said, 'Oh, and it sounds perfect, too!' I just wanted something that feels good in my hands.

"With the amps, I like a really clean sound, where I can plug the Les Paul in, and go, 'Oh, yeah, that's the Les Paul sound.' And then I can grab my Tele, plug it in, and go, 'Oh, yes, there's the Tele sound.' I appreciate all of that. But like I said, I don't really use amps that much when we're on stage any more. I mostly just use amps now when I'm back in LA and I'm working on TV shows, you know, mostly cartoons. But it really just takes too long to mic up an amp, so even then oftentimes I just plug right into the computer."

Talking now about the recent Netflix documentary, Devo, has its success altered your view on the band's legacy or your influence as a guitar player? It offers a pretty full-frontal look at the band's journey.

"The documentary has allowed people some insight into what Devo was doing all these years. It has not altered my viewpoint on legacy or influence as a guitar player. I'm still doing what I've always done."

"DEVO IS LIKE THE MUSICIANS ON THE TITANIC WHO KEPT ON PLAYING. WE ARE TRYING TO DO OUR PART"

"[Director] Chris Smith did a good job with it. He found a lot of really old footage that I've never seen or just didn't remember. It was a lot of fun to watch. And, really, it's a feel-good kind of documentary, you know? I felt good at the end of it. And that's what everybody else has told me, too."

As someone who was put through the wringer early on and came out the other side a huge success, what's your best piece of advice for would-be guitarists or bands looking to succeed?

"I didn't know I was in the wringer at the time; I just thought record companies were insane. I've always enjoyed writing music and playing guitar, so being successful is an added bonus. If you don't enjoy the process, you're in the wrong business."

The general vibe seems to be that Devo has no intent to stop. What's next and why, in your eyes, does the world need groups like Devo?

"You're right! Devo has no intent to stop. And starting in April, we will be touring the world. Devo is like the musicians on the Titanic who kept on playing as the ship was sinking. We are just trying to do our part."


"The documentary has brought a new audience to our shows. I think people needed reminding about how fun Devo is live. I take nothing for granted and am truly grateful for Devo's continued success." 



PHOTO BY SCOTT LEGATO/GETTY IMAGES



Devo will play in London and Manchester in June. The *Devo* documentary is available to stream on Netflix now

<https://clubdevo.com>

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- Mark Tremonti



Photo by Chuck Brueckmann



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Ever consigned a random assortment of unused gear to a traditional auction – the kind where the auctioneer slams down the gavel to close the deal? If you have, you’ll know that an assortment of effects pedals, a couple of mediocre guitars and some cables and other oddments can bring in a surprisingly handy sum when the auction results come in. Most of us have no aspiration to trade guitars professionally – a whole different game that is beyond the scope of this article. But shrewd guitarists who know a little about getting the best price for what they sell and the best deal on the guitar they *really* want can build surprisingly impressive collections – guitars that, in turn, inspire new avenues of music. In the following pages, we consulted seasoned pros to get their insider view on how you can trade guitars more effectively and get on the path to owning and enjoying the guitar you’ve always promised yourself...

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Matt Lincoln



GOING FOR A SONG

Times are a-changin' on the guitar market – so who better to put both buyer and seller in the (big) picture about good deals and when to walk away than Cyril Nigg of online marketplace Reverb.com

The market for both used and new guitars has had a few rollercoaster moments in the past few years – most notably during lockdown – and while things have steadied quite a bit, professional traders, private buyers and sellers alike are all still trying to figure out what the new normal looks like. But amid the settling dust, some clear patterns have emerged – while there are always timeless skills that can help you buy your dream guitar or sell gear fairly and quickly. One man who's well placed to advise is Cyril Nigg, Data Science Leader with Reverb.com – the huge online marketplace for music equipment. We sat down with him to examine the anatomy of a good guitar deal in 2026.

What models currently seem to offer the best deals on the new guitar market, in your opinion?

“That’s a good question. I try to break it down into a few different price points. So when we look at the sub-£500 mark, there’s the PRS SE series – I think those are fantastic

guitars, especially for the price. Working at Reverb, I tend to focus more on the used market and really I’ve only bought a few new guitars in the last 10 years. One of them was the PRS SE CE 24 with the twin humbuckers. I helped my father-in-law buy it. He’s a big Santana fan, and he wanted to get something new. When you just compare [it with] the quality of instruments at that price point, it’s pretty hard to beat. Staying with that line, the SE

“Signature models have done really well [and] held their value the best... the Johnny Marr Jaguar was a good example”

Silver Sky is also a great guitar if you want that S-Style configuration – they’ve been one of the best sellers on Reverb as well for the past four or five years since it was released.

“If you go a bit higher in price and think about new, more innovative shapes that don’t look like they were

1. A report by Reverb.com on the state of the used market concluded that prices have recently remained steady

designed in the 50s or 60s, Reverend makes guitars like the Charger or the Double Agent – which is kind of like a variation of the Charger – that are really cool guitars for just under that £1,000 price point and offer a kind of Tele-meets-Gibson design in an offset body.”

What used guitars do you think sometimes get overlooked but offer really incredible features or quality for the money?

“There are a few models that stick out. One is the early 2000s Gibsons, particularly the Juniors and the Specials. You can get those for under 800 pounds – still a pretty good deal and they have a nitro finish that ages nicely [even in just 15-20 years], and they feel good. In a similar way, the Fender Highway One series from the early 2000s – the Telecasters in particular – look and sound great.

“One of the things I like about them is their really thin satin nitro finish. I’ve had one for 20 years and it just ages like a [Custom Shop] Relic in a cool way rather than like someone just took a screwdriver to the guitar to chip some of the finish off! And those ones are typically good deals, too. You can definitely get those for under 800 bucks in the States. Moving a little bit later on, the 2012 American Standard Strats were using the Custom Shop Fat 50s pickups and they are great guitars and usually well-priced.”

What mainstream guitars from the past 20 years tend to hold their value well?

“Signature models have done really well, kind of across the board. We have a Reverb price index where we track and aggregate individual model prices over the past six or seven years, and when we were going through it the signature models have held their value the best. The Johnny Marr Jaguar was a good example, even the EVH Wolfgang. Maybe you consider

1 STATE OF THE MARKET

Prices steady over the last 16 months



REVERB: STATE OF THE USED MARKET REPORT Q1 2026

Cyril Nigg of Reverb.com says the PRS SE Silver Sky is a "great guitar" for those wanting the S-Style configuration and says they have been one of the best sellers for the past four or five years



PHOTO BY OLLY CURTIS

that a signature model. I'm also thinking of the Epiphones, such as the Tom DeLonge ES-333 and Joe Bonamassa Firebird – those have held their value really well, as has Fender's John 5 Telecaster.

“Some of these guitars have basically doubled in value between 2019 and, you know, where we are now. Of course, during the pandemic a lot of the prices went up, but then they tended to come back down. But the signature models have just stayed a bit more elevated compared to some of the other more standard models. The other ones [that seem to hold value] are Rickenbackers in general. They've been pretty consistent, especially the 330, 660, 620 and, on the bass side, the 4003 – that's kind of like a perennial bestseller on Reverb.”

What mainstream guitars of the past 40 years are going up in price?

“That's probably similar to the models that tend to hold their value. So the signature models and some of the Rickenbackers, especially with guitars from the 90s, those are getting almost into 'vintage' territory, especially from the viewpoint of younger buyers. For them, it's kind of like the equivalent of what 60s and 70s guitars were when we were in high school. And then there's also some guitars made in Japan – not Fenders necessarily but the Grecos, Tokais and Edwards brands – I think the word has kind of gotten out that they're high-quality instruments.”



PHOTO BY MATT LINCOLN; WITH THANKS TO ATE GUITARS, MELKSHAM

2. The new and used guitar markets have experienced a few rollercoaster moments in recent years although some models have held their value well

3. Reverb.com's State Of The Used Market report reveals the market price trends for certain sought-after instruments

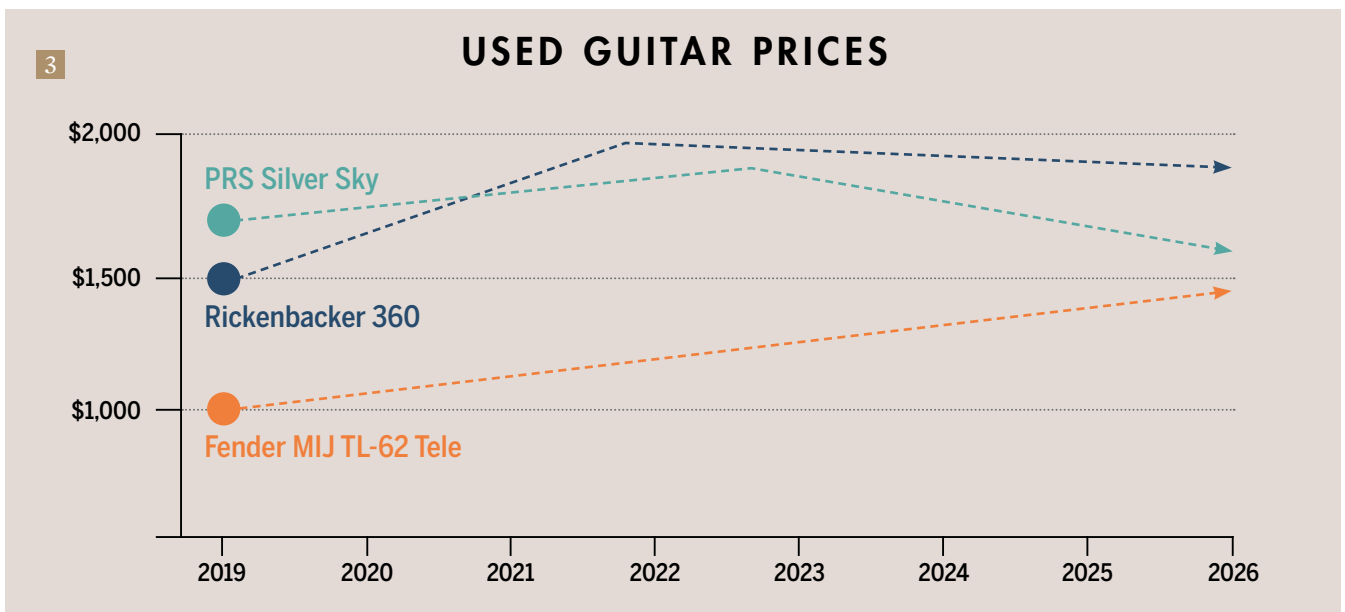
We've all bought the occasional guitar online that hasn't quite lived up to expectations when it arrived.

What tips do you have for buyers to resolve issues successfully?

“It depends on the issue, but typically I'd recommend contacting the seller before taking any other action but do it in a timely manner. If you're buying the guitar on Reverb or another [online marketplace] platform, it helps to keep the messages on the platform so you keep documentation of what the interaction looks like. And, of course, you want to be respectful when you're reaching

out. Our sellers are typically either musicians themselves or independent music stores, so a lot of times they'll help you fix it, if it's something like an issue with the action – maybe you just need to adjust the string height on the bridge or something. Ultimately, when you buy a guitar you just want it to work. But there's a lot of ways to come to common agreement and, if you're on Reverb, we also have our Buyer Protection [scheme]. So if there is an issue, especially within seven days of delivery, our Customer Experience team will work with the buyer and the seller to reach a fair resolution – which could be a return, could be a refund. The key thing is to provide photos and a clear description of what's wrong and maybe reference how the listing potentially differed from what you received.”

“Rickenbackers... [are] pretty consistent, especially the 330, 660, 620 and, on the bass side, the 4003... a perennial bestseller”



REVERB: STATE OF THE USED MARKET REPORT Q1 2026

Rickenbackers have remained consistent bestsellers on the Reverb.com platform and appear to be holding their value



PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

How would you go about assessing whether a price asked for a used guitar is fair for the condition, age, make and model?

“Again, this will depend a bit on the instrument. You kind of have this [really broad] range, so you might be talking about an original ’52 Blackguard Tele versus a 70s Mustang bass versus, I don’t know, a 2023 Fender American Professional Strat. But in general, you’re going to see more variation with older, more unique instruments. There are a few things that are always helpful – first, look at a price guide. Reverb, for example, has a very robust price guide. We have thousands of items and all the transaction history [associated with them] going back historically, so you can look at sold listings on Reverb or other platforms as well. That helps you get a sense of what things are actually selling for. With some models, there’s a lot of variation, just in terms of the colour or the pickup configuration.

“Also, especially as you get more into vintage guitars, you need to find out if it has all the original parts and the original case. That’s obviously going to impact the value. You can also look at



4. Consulting a reputable price guide and the sold listings on platforms such as Reverb will help you get a sense of what certain used guitars are actually selling for

“On the photo side... get all the angles... [put] yourself in the buyer’s place – what would you want to see on the guitar?”

a vintage guitar price guide, especially if you’re looking for [something really classic] like a ’52 Blackguard, or a pre-war Martin for example. It’ll at least give you a general sense of what prices are. If you’re looking at something made more recently, or just looking at the used version, understanding the brand-new price will also help you price it. Typically, used instruments [in good condition] will sell for 30 per cent lower than what that guitar goes for new.”

How much do buyers care about case candy, hang tags and things like that?

“It really depends on how distinct the guitar is. If you’re talking about a Fender Custom Shop Tele and it’s got the ashtray [bridge] cover and maybe a cool strap that came with it or, to give a newer example, one of the Gibson Back To The Future ES-345s

that had a bunch of [movie-themed] stuff in the case, like the digital wristwatch... that’s going to be very desirable. But if you’re just talking about a Fender Standard Strat that’s made in Mexico, but you don’t have the Allen wrench and the little bag with the polishing cloth, I don’t think people are going to care that much.”

How about advice for sellers – what are the key things to do in order to get a guitar sold on an online marketplace? Particularly in terms of how you photograph and describe it...

“On the photo side, taking a wide range of pictures is helpful. You want to get all the angles – a full length, a close-up... making sure you capture any details, especially dings or imperfections. Photographing it in natural light will also help a lot. Nowadays, you don’t need fancy equipment, you can just use your phone – most smartphones take beautiful pictures. It’s about putting yourself in the buyer’s place – what would you want to see on the guitar? Try to take those pictures.

“With the descriptions, try to be thorough. Disclose anything that might be a blemish, quirk or defect. But it can also be good to have fun with the description and tell a little bit of the backstory. I think there are times when that can be part of the attraction of buying a used instrument. For example, I bought a ’64 00-18 Martin six months ago and the story behind the guitar was

really nice. It was from a seller in Pennsylvania and she got it as a gift from her mom when she was in high school, after seeing Joan Baez. She put it under her bed and didn’t play it for 60 years. And when I got it, it still had the original strings on it, which, when you know the story, there’s something a little sweeter about that versus just buying it and you don’t know anything about the guitar.”

How about tips for being a good seller who gets great feedback?

“There’s a saying that ‘disappointment is the distance between expectation and reality’ right? And so along those lines, having good photos and descriptions is really the first step. So when a buyer actually gets the instrument, it is what they expected, it’s based on what you’ve described as a seller. And then you have two other things. One is on the communications, so you’re making sure you’re responding promptly – and if you’re shipping it out, just giving the buyer some updates on where it is, giving them the tracking information is always a good idea. And then the last thing is just packing and shipping it properly and promptly. Once people have purchased something, then they get excited. They want to get it as quickly as possible. So I always encourage people to ship guitars as soon as they can.” **G**

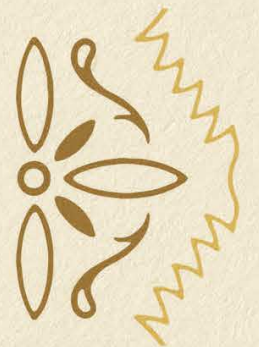
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PHOTO BY MATT LINCOLN; WITH THANKS TO ATB GUITARS, MELKSHAM

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TRADING TIPS

Want to trade up to your dream guitar? Or simply buy a keeper for a great price? From traditional guitar shops to online auctions, having some key principles in mind can save (or even make) you money and, most importantly, get you a guitar that lights a fire under your playing. We join the experts to find out how...

1 YOU REALLY SHOULD TRY IT

Guitarist writer and veteran guitar restorer Huw Price says, "If possible, try a guitar in person and test it out. Compare it with other guitars, because as tempting as the online prices often are, and even if the specs are the same, two guitars that come off production lines next to each other can sound very, very different. So if possible, try the

guitar out in person. And if you can't, if you're buying online, make sure you've got a right of return."

2 LOSE IT IF YOU DON'T USE IT

Chris Turpin, guitarist and frontman with *Ida Mae* and *Mirador* is also a producer with an enviable working collection of guitars, which he has painstakingly traded for over years. He says it pays

4. Refretted vintage guitars are becoming increasingly more accepted and if the refret is done well it is unlikely to knock a huge percentage off the guitar's value

to be brutally honest and get rid of gear that doesn't see regular use. "If you haven't used it in a year-and-a-half to two years, trade it with something else, because you'll make someone else much happier [if they can have that] piece of gear they've been looking for," he says, "and it's going to better serve you as something else. I know it's a lot of faff to sell little bits and pieces, but just do it – turn it into something."

3 BEWARE FRETWEAR

"There's no getting away from fret wear," says Julian White, veteran guitar trader and owner of high-end guitar store *World Guitars*. "And these days it's very expensive having something refretted – to find someone to do it properly, that is." This is especially true of maple-fretboard guitars, which also need a clear topcoat sprayed on again once the fretwork is done to make good any cracks caused by removing worn frets. "A refret like that can add 500 quid to the price of your secondhand purchase," Julian says.

4 ...BUT DON'T BE TOO CONCERNED ABOUT REFRETS AND RESETS

"When I first got involved in vintage-guitar dealing about 15 years ago," says long-time *Guitarist* contributor Rod Brakes, "it seemed that popular opinion was changing regarding vintage acoustics with reset necks. Whereas some people would turn their noses up at the very notion that a guitar had been made more playable by a skilled luthier, others wouldn't pull the trigger if it *hadn't* been worked on.

"It was quite polarised, though I would say opinion has now swung more towards the latter. After all, most people want to enjoy the guitars they buy. Refretted vintage guitars, too, are increasingly becoming more accepted, and as long as the job's been done well, a refret isn't likely to knock a big percentage off an instrument's value. It makes all the difference to playability."



PHOTO BY NEIL GODWIN

Using a reputable guitar auctioneer is a safe way to buy and can make the whole process of selling a guitar much easier

5 TRADITIONAL AUCTIONS CAN OFFER SECURITY

"Obviously we are a specialist in the area," says Luke Hobbs of bricks-and-mortar guitar auctioneers Gardiner Houlgate. "The advantage of coming to us to buy guitars is that we're acting as a middleman, which makes the mechanics of selling guitars easier, but we are also vetting [authenticating] things, so it's quite a safe way to buy. If you're buying from a private seller, you might not always have 100 per cent confidence in the person you're buying from and even many online marketplaces can suffer from fraudulent listings."



PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

6 DON'T BE TOO SENTIMENTAL

Mirador's Chris Turpin says that while some guitars are genuine lifelong keepers, it's healthy to let stuff go. "You can't put a value on early guitars that have really done a lot with you, that you used on shows that were milestones in your own career, or creative explorations, or family life... those are a big deal.

"Don't get rid of those ones. But don't be overly attached to every single thing that you've bought just because it was a necessary stepping stone – be mercenary in getting rid of three guitars, five guitars, to get one incredible piece. Do it, and I promise you, by the time you sell each of those guitars, if it sat in a dusty corner not being used, you'll probably be quite happy that it's gone."

7 HAGGLING IS RARE THESE DAYS

Julian White of high-end guitar retailer World Guitars, says, "I get offered a lot of part-exchange. Some people are sensible and realistic and realise I've got to resell [the part-exchanged guitar] and pay card charges and make a couple of quid on it. But some people don't realise that at all, and they'll say 'Well I paid two-and-a-

half grand for it, so I want to get close to that back', which you have to say 'no' to. Likewise, with haggling it's fine to ask but I wouldn't automatically expect it. After all, you don't go to the supermarket, put all your shopping through the till and then say to the cashier, 'Oh £200, that's quite a lot. How would you feel about £150?'"

8 CONSIDER BAD REFINIS CAREFULLY...

"I think bad refinis can be hard to deal with," says guitarist and producer Chris Turpin of Mirador. "I know a lot of

6. Chris Turpin advises against becoming too attached to every single guitar you have acquired. You may need to sell some, he says, to get one incredible piece that you really desire

7. Hagglng over the price may well get you nowhere but don't be afraid to ask. Just remember that guitar retailers have to build in a profit margin for each sale

people will buy bad refinis [on otherwise decent guitars] to get them refinished, but it's a lot of investment in time and effort to decide how much you're gonna like the guitar at the end. So one thing I always look out for is how a refin *feels*, because there's something in the finish of those old guitars, with them being so thin that can be quite dramatic in how it affects the tone."

9...BUT DON'T DISMISS GOOD ONES

"It used to be that refinished vintage guitars were worth half as much as their original-finish counterparts," says former vintage guitar trader Rod Brakes, "though that's changed in recent years. What's more, they've tended to increase in value over time. Players also love refinis for anxiety-free playing, as regular wear doesn't significantly affect value. If you buy such a guitar, you then have the option to refinish it again in the exact colour of your choosing – complete with ageing, if that's your preference. The same can't be said of an original vintage guitar, and professionals would likely raise their concerns about devaluing it. You might even love the refinish and decide to keep it that way."



PHOTO BY JOBY SESSIONS

Artist-associated instruments such as signature models can make good investments

10 DON'T OVERLOOK SIGNATURE MODELS

"One thing that's good for investment – and always has been – is artist-associated instruments," says Luke Hobbs of Gardiner Houlgate. "Not necessarily owned or autographed by artists, but things like signature models, because quite often they get discontinued or they get released in very limited runs. I was asked to do a valuation on one of the Mark Knopfler Les Pauls [the 2016 '58 replicas]. The first 50 were aged and signed, another 75 were aged but not signed and then the last 75 they made were VOS – something like that. Anyway, someone contacted us with one of the first aged-and-signed run and that was a guitar that originally sold for around £10k. But they're changing hands for between £30,000 and £40,000 now."

11 QUALITY NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

As many seasoned traders have observed in the past, the secret to selling is buying. Which is to say a secondhand high-spec instrument by a major maker, when in good condition, is one of life's more solid bets – both as an instrument to enjoy and as something that will hold value and be straightforward to resell.

"A secondhand Core-line PRS, for £2,500, is a lot of guitar for the money," says Julian White of high-end retailer World Guitars. "You could buy one of those £2,500 things [quasi-boutique new guitars by less-established makers] that's only ever going to be worth £1,500 secondhand. But I think your money's much better off buying a secondhand, better-quality guitar in the first place."

12 WHAT A GOOD GUITAR SHOP SHOULD DO FOR YOU

Julian White of World Guitars, says: "Almost every new guitar needs a setup because they are set up [to compromise settings] to ship to a range of different countries in different climates and need to be playable out of the box – if it goes to a cold country, the action will drop, if it goes to a hot country, the action will get higher. A good shop looks at every guitar they have in stock, sets them up, restrings them and makes sure they work as they should. A good shop should restring the guitars they put on sale, whether new or used, setting them up for you to perfection."

13 TRY SELLING ON CONSIGNMENT

Rod Brakes, former owner of Vintage 'n' Rare Guitars in Bath, says selling guitars on consignment – where a guitar shop presents your guitar for sale and takes a reasonable cut of the proceeds – can be a 'goldilocks' solution for sellers. "The



11

PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

benefits of buying and selling vintage guitars on consignment via reputable dealers are often underappreciated," says Rod. "Buyers invest in instruments from trustworthy experts because they've been accurately assessed, which means confidence and peace of mind. You needn't worry about conducting an appraisal, researching specs, establishing value, taking photographs, writing descriptions, creating listings, handling inquiries, wrestling with

11. If you are planning to buy a secondhand guitar then it makes sense to aim for one of the better-quality models such as a Core-line PRS that will hold its value

packaging, paying shipping and insurance, dealing with after-sales, or any other time-consuming responsibilities. Dealers typically charge around 10–20% for consignment, but then they regularly achieve prices 10–20% higher than private sales. All you need to do is deliver the instrument, sign the agreement, and wait for a phone call."

14 TRY THE JERRY DONAHUE TAP TEST

Many different methods have been proposed to test how resonant a guitar you intend to buy is, but this one from Jerry Donahue – as told by *Guitarist* restoration expert Huw Price – brings a little musicality to proceedings, especially if you have an ear for intervals. "Jerry used to suggest tapping the body – specifically on Telecasters and Stratocasters – and try to establish what the note is [even a knock on wood has a pitch]. And then tap the neck and try to establish what the note of that is, then see if they're in unison or in harmony. If they're a third apart or a fifth apart, you're probably going to have a guitar that will resonate nicely in music in a way that's pleasing," says Huw.

12. A good retailer looks carefully at every guitar they have in stock and will set them up, restrings them and ensure they perform as well as they possibly can



12

PHOTO BY JEDDY SESSIONS

HALCYON

Thinking outside the box

Mike Stringer
signature humbucker set

"From crushingly heavy tones
to glassy cleans, Halcyons
deliver consistently and
without compromise"


Spiritbox

bareknucklepickups.co.uk

Bare Knuckle

1957 LES PAUL SPECIAL

This gorgeous and striking late-50s Special turned out to have freakishly good pickups in it, says Stu Robson

Stu Robson, a lifelong devotee of trading up to ever-better guitars and the founder of Sunbear Pickups, recently acquired – with the financial blessing of his nearest and dearest and some judicious trades – a genuine Golden Era Gibson. So what does it feel like to reach such a milestone as a player/owner and how did he get there?

“I’ve spent my whole life buying and selling guitars and selling stuff for a little bit extra and being able to, therefore use that to get something else,” Stu reflects. “And I did that loads as a teenager and into my very early 20s, before Jeff Pumfrett [the late owner of World Guitars] left Machinehead in Hitchin. I used to go between Hitchin and Coda Music, and I would buy things from one place, do things up, then trade them in elsewhere. And they all knew about it [laughs].”

The first things I used to buy and sell were Parker Flies and Ibanez JEMs. At the time, they were fantastic guitars but the real drive towards them had passed and was in a lull. So I could get a

1. Years of judicious trading with guitars whose glory had faded a little – and were in need of a little love and attention – allowed Stu to strike vintage gold with this '57 Special

2. It may bear a few battle scars, but the guitar is in remarkable condition for its age

3. A set of otherworldly P90s, which Stu puts down to just the luck of the draw, puts this guitar on a whole different level

beaten-up late-80s, early-90s JEM the previous owner had set up badly because they didn’t know what they were doing with a Floyd Rose.

Or there’d be a Parker Fly with a fret that’d fallen off of it. I was buying guitars like that for £400 to £600 and I would tart them up a bit and sell them online, and they would go to different countries. Japan in particular, loved buying JEMs at the time.

“The P-90s in it are ridiculously good. Yeah, I’m still trying to work out quite why they’re as good as they are, if I’m honest”

“So I used to trade myself up [in terms of quality of guitars] bit by bit over time. But with this particular one, obviously going up to a guitar of this sort of value, has involved years of trading up. I have a Masterbuilt Fender Duo Sonic, which is going towards paying for this plus a Masterbuilt Strat as well as some other smaller bits and that kind of

stuff. So I think it’s worth getting some nice guitars and then using those nice guitars to buy a more rarefied vintage guitar.

“This guitar is a 1957 Gibson Les Paul Special. It’s all original. It’s previously had a Bigsby and a set of Grovers on it. They’re the only value-detractors on the guitar. Otherwise, it’s all stock – the only thing on it that’s an upgrade is a St Helens-compensated, replica wraparound bridge, so that’s a modern quality-of-life improvement.

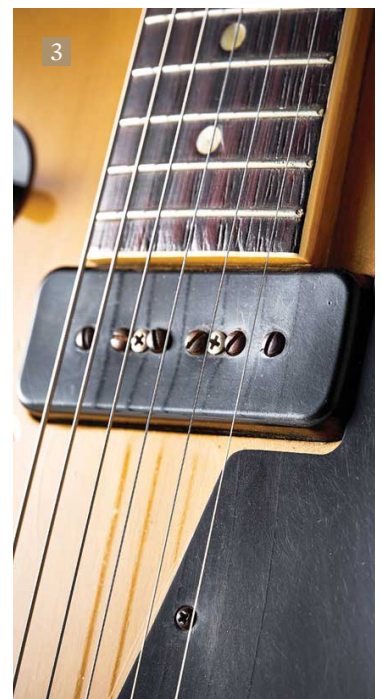
Apart from that, as I say, it kind of is what it is. I’d have bought it even if it had had an averagely good set of pickups in it. But, as it happens, its particular set of P-90s in it are ridiculously good. Yeah, I’m still trying to work out quite why they’re as good as they are, if I’m honest with you. They’re just ridiculous, which is just luck. You know, I’ve got a set of 1956 P-90s from an old Goldtop in another guitar here, which are also a great set. But you go backwards and forwards between the two and this ’57 just slays it instantly.” **G**



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This '57 Les Paul Special is very nearly all original, apart from a retro-fitted compensated wraparound bridge. It had also been fitted with a Bigsby at one point in its life, and once bore a set of Grover tuners





15

PHOTO BY PHIL BARKER

15. It's worth remembering that the scarcer your chosen guitar is then the less likely your chances will be of getting your hands on one

15 SCARCITY CHANGES YOUR OPTIONS

"If you're shopping for a brand-new PRS Custom 24 that's available in 10 different shops, you might go and find the shop where it's the cheapest," says Julian White of high-end retailer World Guitars. "But it's no good coming and looking at a Luxtone, for example, where there's only two in the country, and be like, 'Oh, well, this is the one I want', but then walk away because you can't get anything knocked off the asking price. Are you really going to pass it up for the sake of a £150 haggle? Because you're not going to find one anywhere else, you know?"

16 BOUTIQUE QUALITY VERSUS BIG BRANDS

"Big brand names can be safer [in terms of holding their value] for obvious reasons," says Luke Hobbs of Gardiner Houlgate. "Gibson, Fender and Martin would be the main three. But then, on the other hand, if you want a fantastic guitar with the potential of buying it at a very good price point, you could go down the boutique builder route.

"We get lots of boutique builder guitars in the auction that may ask four or five thousand pounds on a commission basis, if you're getting one made by them. But then in the auction, you could be looking at somewhere between £2,000 and £3,000 for [that type of] instrument, so you're getting a lot of guitar for the money."

'BURST CASE SCENARIO

Gibson Les Paul Standard sunburst reissues are perennial favourites for players and collectors alike. But how do you find a good one for a great price? We ask Julian White of high-end guitar shop World Guitars for his insider tips

17 If you're looking to buy a used 'Burst reissue, is there a 'sweet spot' year in terms of features, price and tone, based on what you've had in over the years?

"Look for ones built from 2013 onwards," says Julian. "That was the big changing point for R8s and R9s. Gibson changed a lot of things and they became much, much better guitars, with new pickups – it was the start of the Custombuckers.

"They completely rejigged everything, really, and started doing rolled edges on the fingerboards. It was a big change from the previous years. And that's when all the excitement started – we sold a lot of those guitars in those first couple of years, 2013 and 2014."

18 Did that hot streak continue past 2014?

"Come 2015 they stopped doing normal R8s and R9s because that was the year that True Historic came out. So they downgraded the normal ones with a short-tenon [neck joint] but these only lasted a year because they were essentially downgraded. But after 2015, when they finished doing the True Histories, they went back to normal R9s, so that's just something to be aware of if you want a long-tenon neck joint example."

19 And what about 'Burst reissues from just before the sweet-spot year of 2013?

"So people were a bit funny about the 2012 model, because they used two-ply finger boards – it didn't make

any [functional] difference at all but sometimes you do see a two-ply fingerboards on the 'Burst reissues from that year. The rosewood is two pieces laminated together."

20 What about the True Historic models that were the flagship reissues in 2015?

"The True Historic models are the most accurate and the best [that Gibson have made], in my opinion. We sold a lot of them, and we saw a lot of them, and they were all brilliant. And, still to this day they haven't topped that. Double-carved necks, double-carved tops, thinner, hand-sanded finish, thinner headstock veneer... they had slightly different fret wire, which was vintage-correct. To my mind, they've never been bettered."

21 Are there any other year-specific features to look out for on 'Burst reissues?

"In 2017 they started using all the True Historic [vintage-correct] plastics on everything, which was nice, but they didn't do all of the other True Historic things. The rolled fingerboard edges on the 2017 guitars were nice – we sold a lot of those instruments.

"Going back to 2016 specs, 'R' serial numbers were still being produced then. So it would say R9 [if it was a '59 reissue] but the second number after the 9 would denote the year of manufacture. So R9 (or 8 if it was an R8) and then the second number, which followed that, was the year in that decade the guitar was built in."



Julian believes that the True Historic 'Burst reissues from 2015 have never been bettered

PHOTO BY JOBY SESSIONS

22 DON'T FORGET THE BUYER'S PREMIUM

At live auctions nearly all auction houses charge a 'buyer's premium' – a percentage of the hammer price added to the final price paid by the buyer. "Experienced auction buyers come with a spreadsheet of what a hammer price will add up to with the buyer's premium added on top," says Luke Hobbs of auction house Gardiner Houlgate. "So they'll know that a £100 winning bid with the premium added will total £126.40, including VAT. And that [sliding scale of buyer's premium additions] carries on through the entire range of increments, right up to tens of thousands of pounds. Having a spreadsheet with it all set out means they don't get carried away. The buyer's premium can catch people out – for example, if you buy a guitar for £5,000 you're looking at at least another grand on top."

Anyone buying from live auctions should remember to take into account the buyer's premium and VAT

1961 GIBSON LES PAUL / SG

Chris Turpin of Mirador says friendly rivalry with Jake Kiszka secured him this stunning double-cut...

"So we call this 'The One That Got Away'. And when me and Jake [Kiszka of Greta Van Fleet] were working on the Mirador album, we spent a day hitting up a few guitar shops, including Vintage 'n' Rare in the morning and ATB later, where they had a killer little 1x12 Park combo. It was like a 50-watt, with reverb, and it was sitting in some dusty corner and I was like, 'We should plug that in'. And so we did and it sounded incredible.

"So I was talking to [the ATB staff] and said, 'Okay, I think I'm gonna do this. I just need to have a think about what will have to be sold to justify it'. But Jake just said, 'Ah, no, it's okay. I'll bring it into the family fold - I'll buy it right on the spot'. After that, we went to Vintage 'n' Rare, and it was right at the end of the day and

1. This model was initially branded as 'Les Paul' on the truss rod cover before the name was dropped in late 1963

2. Chris's deal was sweetened by the fact that this player grade SG/Les Paul has original Patent Applied For pickups

3. A side by side comparison with bandmate Jake Kiszka's own SG revealed it to be an absolute stunner

we're hanging out upstairs, and they had this '61 Les Paul / SG. Jake's played countless numbers of them, and owns quite a few. So every time he sees one, he'll play it. And he plugged this one [in] and we both kind of just shut up and went, 'This is an amazing guitar.' Just sounded extraordinary, right off the bat. Jake was lost in it for 10 minutes.

"So I picked it up and realised this thing's really alive. You can tell it had been owned by a player - it'd been worn down and it had a stock tailpiece at some point... someone had been playing this thing. No idea

who it was or where it came from, if anyone out there knows... So we left buzzing about it and Jack was like, 'I'm gonna put an offer in. I could give it a month [to consider it] then come in and make an offer. So the next day, it was in the back of my mind. It's player grade, so I thought, 'If I trade this, this, and this, I could probably get close.'

So I spoke to Steve Hove [then manager of Vintage 'n' Rare], who's now at ATB, he said he would be willing to do it. So I went in and got it from underneath Jake and he was genuinely quite pissed off [laughs].

"So yes, we now joke that it's 'The One That Got Away'. It's got real Patent Applied For pickups and it's a little earlier than Jake's. We have put them side by side. Jake thinks it sounds like his before he trashed it..."

"He plugged this one in and we both kind of just shut up and went, 'This is an amazing guitar.' [It] just sounded extraordinary"



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The 1961 Gibson Les Paul / SG marked a radical design shift, with a sleek, double-cutaway mahogany body, bevelled edges, and a thin and fast-playing neck profile

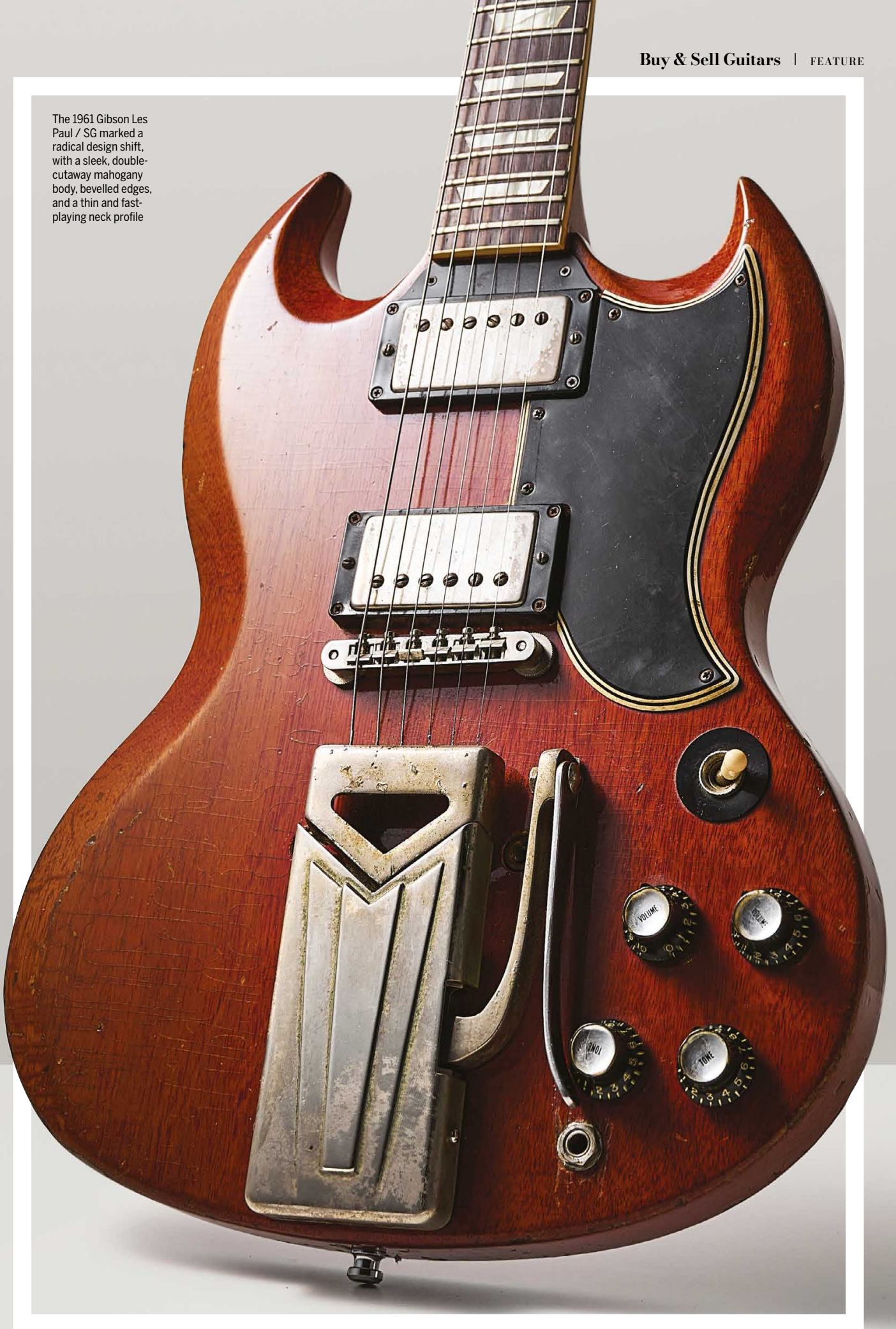




PHOTO BY JOBY SESSIONS

25. Condition is absolutely key for both vintage and modern instruments when it comes to fetching a premium and selling them on

23 LOSING YOUR HEAD WILL COST YOU

“You really need to do your research, know exactly what you’re buying and set your limit accordingly,” says Luke Hobbs of Gardiner Houlgate. “Do market research [on what a guitar is likely to be worth] before you go for it. When we had our first few auctions during lockdown, people were getting really carried away – probably because they were bored – and in some cases were paying more in the auction for guitars than they could buy them at retail and then paying postage on top. And it was just crazy. So it’s about preparation really.”

24 WIDER EVENTS CAN AFFECT VALUE

“The Black Strat is a prime example,” says guitar auctioneer Luke Hobbs. “You’ve got the [Custom Shop] Relic and the NOS version. And when Gilmour’s original Black Strat sold the first time for \$3.9m in 2019 it coincided with when Fender stopped making the replica model and prices rocketed. We actually have a David Gilmour Signature Stratocaster Relic coming up in the next auction, so I was price-checking it and again, the market has shifted upwards, because suddenly the original is the most valuable guitar that has ever sold at auction [following

the recent Jim Irsay sale, where the Black Strat sold again for a record \$14.5m]. And that does have an effect on the market.”

25 CONDITION COUNTS FOR A LOT

“From a good investment point of view,” says guitar auctioneer Luke Hobbs, “condition is everything. The best condition pieces – whether it’s a vintage or a rare modern piece by one of the big names – the better the condition, the easier it is to sell on. And then what you class as collector’s grade or museum-grade pieces will always fetch a premium. The best always does.”

Introduced in 1962, the Gibson B-25 12-String was an affordable instrument. Glen Campbell used one and it appeared on the cover of his 1964 Capitol Records album *The Astounding 12-String Guitar Of Glen Campbell*



1960s GIBSON B-25 12-STRING

Mirador guitarist Chris Turpin on the ‘sleeper’ of his vintage collection

Guitarist and producer Chris Turpin of Ida Mae and Mirador has an enviable selection of vintage guitars to work with but one of his most frequently-used instruments proves that buying vintage can be quite affordable. “I really like Fanny’s House of Music In Nashville,” Chris says. “They have great stuff to play and they’re very friendly – good, honest folks. I went in and they had this particular 12-string, which had clearly lived a life. It’s had the back panel smashed in, and

I felt it just had the energy, like it had been to a bunch of political protests or something in the 60s and someone had played Simon & Garfunkel covers on it. I got it for not very much at all, 800 bucks or something, and it became quite an important guitar. I took it over to Jake [Kiszka’s] house, and he whipped out a case and he had the same one. I was like, ‘Oh my god, aren’t these the coolest 12-strings, or the best recording 12-strings?’ and it’s been on records ever since.” **G**



PHOTO BY NEIL GODWIN

26 DOER-UPPERS HAVE THEIR LIMITS

"Be realistic about what you can upgrade and how much better you can actually make a guitar," says guitar restorer Huw Price. "I think that's key, because a lot of people waste money on upgrades that aren't really ever going to transform a guitar. If it's not good enough to start with, then it's not good enough."

"Take pickups, for example. They're like microphones. You can have the most fabulous vintage valve Neumann or AKG mic but if you stick it in front of a [terrible] acoustic, all you'll end up with is a really great, pristine recording of a really bad-sounding guitar! Pickups are the same – they work with the information they're able to pick up. If it's not inherent to the guitar, even the greatest set of pickups isn't going to magic it out of nothing."

27 KEEP ORIGINAL PARTS

Modding guitars is popular but be sure to keep any original parts, says Cyril Nigg of online marketplace Reverb.com. "If you're modifying or your guitar is getting into more of that 'player grade' territory – if you swap out pickups or a bridge or

tuners – throw the originals in the case, if you think you might want to sell the guitar in the future. I think when potential buyers are making that purchase decision, having the original parts is always helpful."

28 BEWARE THE 'SUNK COST' TRAP

Guitarist and producer Chris Turpin says occasionally it makes sense to cut your losses. "People hold on to things, because perhaps they overpaid for it or

27. If you swap out pickups or do any kind of modifications always ensure that you keep the original parts. It will boost your chances of selling a guitar on

28. Chris Turpin suggests getting rid of any instrument you're not playing that is taking up "psychological or playing space"

they bought it because they got a good deal, but it wasn't the thing they really wanted. So then it kind of hangs around because it's a sunk cost, so it has to stay. That can be crippling! Get rid of those [instruments], I would say, even if you make a loss on certain things – if you're not using it and it's taking up psychological or playing space, get rid of it. If selling it is a means to getting that dream guitar or closer to that piece of equipment but you have to take a slight hit on a trade, take a hit on a trade."



PHOTO BY SIMON LEES

Rod says he is very cautious about buying guitars before playing them but says he took a punt on the '65 Duo-Sonic II because the seller's photographs were so detailed



1965 FENDER DUO-SONIC II & 1967 FENDER MUSTANG BASS

Rod Brakes reveals how he became fixated on finding this matching vintage duo

“This pair was separated at birth,” says long-time *Guitarist* contributor Rod Brakes. “I first discovered the joys of the Fender Mustang Bass – strung with flatwounds, of course – several years ago while recording a Blue Violet album. I’d been using a Japanese Precision Bass, but Middle Farm Studios’ Pete Miles handed me a 1970s maple-neck, Walnut-finish Mustang Bass loaded with flats. I was instantly hooked.

“I kept an eye out for Mustang Basses and spotted one at Vintage ‘n’ Rare Guitars in Bath: a ’67 model in White. That finish is actually the same acrylic paint Fender marketed as Olympic White. An early example, I snapped it up for £3,000

about five years ago. Today, similar models fetch around £4,000, proving you don’t need top-tier instruments to get on the vintage guitar investment ladder.

“The Duo-Sonic II was offered in the same White, Red, and Blue (Daphne Blue) finishes as Mustangs and Mustang Basses, and I became fixated on finding one to match my bass (why not?). I’m very cautious about buying guitars before playing them, but about 18 months ago, I stumbled across a ’65 Duo-Sonic II on Reverb and took a punt because the seller’s photography was so detailed. Priced reasonably at £2,400, I pulled the trigger, and it joined the family a few days later.” **G**

29. The admin and effort of packing up and shipping a guitar can seem a daunting task for some but a willingness to ship can bolster your chances of selling gear for the optimum price

30. While navigating all the do's and don'ts of buying and selling guitars, don't forget that the most important thing is to buy something that you love and cherish

29 BE WILLING TO SHIP

"I always tell sellers not to be afraid to pack and ship a guitar," says Reverb.com's Cyril Nigg. "It's often easier than people think. And it really opens up the potential buyers that you have to make a sale. You can usually sell things faster and sell for a better price than if you're just listing something locally on, say, Gumtree or Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist to name just three.

"While highly fragile, rare or valuable guitars can be a prudent exception to this rule, on the whole, readiness to ship helps you sell gear for the best price."

30 BUY SOMETHING YOU LOVE

Amid all the advice for getting bargains or investing well, never forget the most important reason for buying a particular guitar – you ought to love it, says long-time *Guitarist* contributor Rod Brakes.

"I've met collectors who admit they rarely touch certain instruments, lest they put a mark on them. And I know players whose main concern is



PHOTO BY SIMON LEES

using a vintage guitar as Leo Fender, Christian Frederick Martin, or whoever else originally intended. However, I've yet to come across a collector with a complete aversion to playing. Nor have I met a player with zero appreciation of collectibility. And therein lies the

point – you can have the best of both worlds. Regardless of budget or skill, if you want to get the most out of a vintage guitar, buy something you love. On the hypothetical desert island, there are no collectors or players – just guitarists."



PHOTO BY MATT LINCOLN

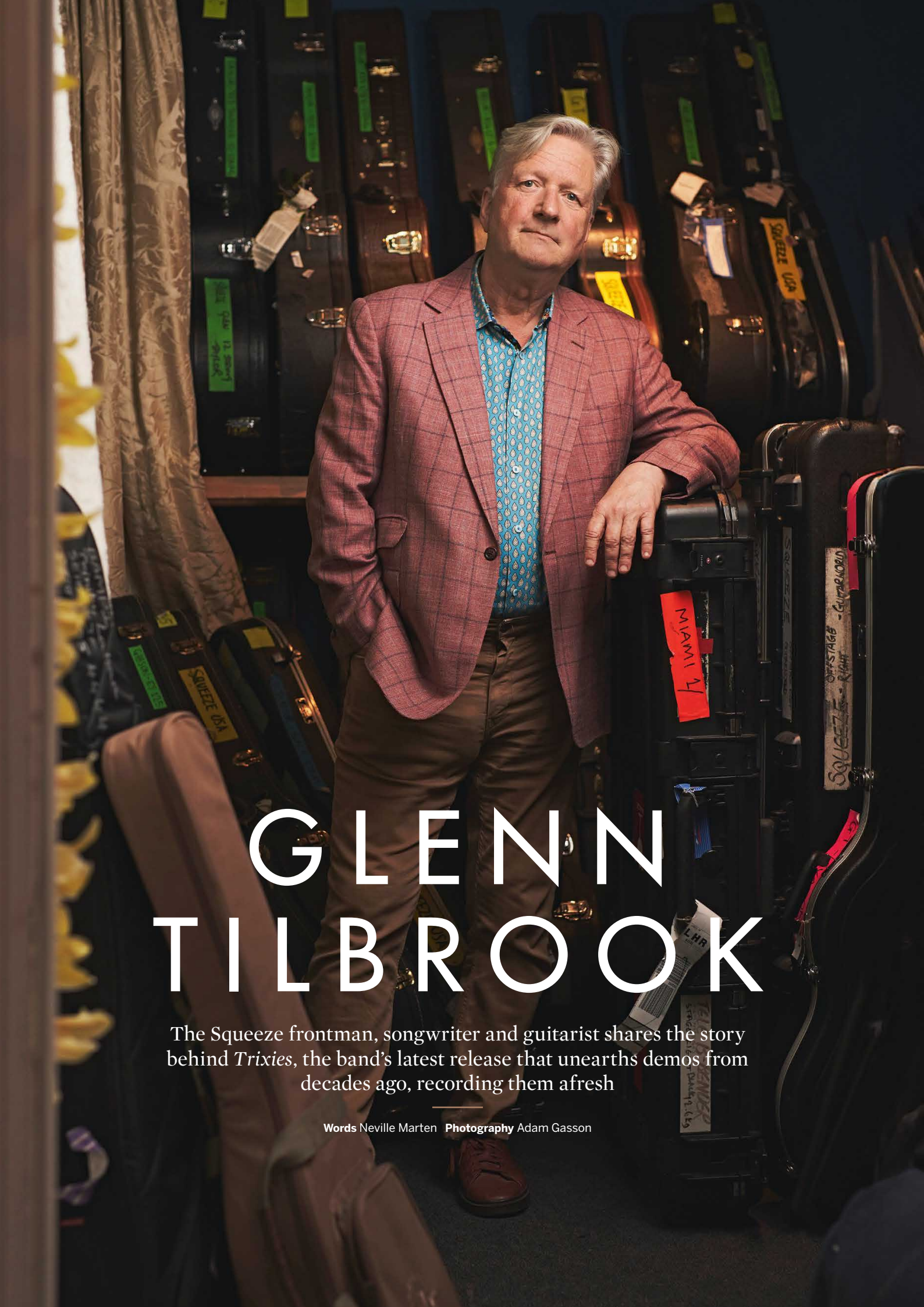
Eastman

INTRODUCING

FULLERTONE OFFSET

The Offset For Everyone



A photograph of Glenn Tilbrook, the frontman of the band Squeeze, standing in a room filled with black luggage. He is wearing a red checkered blazer over a blue patterned shirt and brown trousers. He is leaning on a black suitcase with a red tag that says "MIAMI 11". Other luggage has tags that say "SQUEEZE USA" and "OFFSTAGE - GUITARBOARD".

GLENN TILBROOK

The Squeeze frontman, songwriter and guitarist shares the story behind *Trixies*, the band's latest release that unearths demos from decades ago, recording them afresh

Words Neville Marten Photography Adam Gasson


 THE
Guitarist
INTERVIEW

PHOTO BY PETER NOBLE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Anyone who witnessed the emergence of Squeeze in 1978, with their galloping, octave-laden single *Take Me I'm Yours*, will recall a band whose intricate music and witty lyrics set them apart. Similarly great tracks followed, including *Cool For Cats*, *Up The Junction*, *Pulling Mustels*, *Tempted*, *Another Nail In My Heart* and *Labelled With Love*. Guitarists will have noticed Glenn Tilbrook's canny solos that wove through his chords with melodies sounding like no-one else.

Tilbrook and Squeeze lyricist Chris Difford recently discovered an entire album that they wrote prior to the hits but about which they confess "we weren't good enough to play yet".

"Obviously, we brought all the knowledge we have now to the

1. An early incarnation of Squeeze with Jools Holland (keyboards), Chris Difford (vocals/guitar), Gilson Lavis (drums) and Glenn Tilbrook (vocals/guitar) on the right

table," Glenn tells us, "but these are very much the songs that we wrote then. The only difference is I can teach them to the rest of the band. Back then, I didn't even know the names of the chords."

Chris adds: "Before I met Glenn I was reading Damon Runyon books, which had these funny, poignant short stories set in the 30s and 40s in New York. There

"I was just absorbing everything that was around me, and almost every song on *Trixies* I can trace back to something"

was one about a nightclub and the characters that inhabited it. That inspired me to write a load of lyrics about what I imagined a nightclub to be – but in Soho in the 1960s."

The band convened at Glenn's South East London studio, along with original Squeeze pianist Jools Holland playing an identical piano to the one on which Tilbrook composed the tracks. *Guitarist* met there with Glenn to discuss the new album, take a look at his guitars, and delve a little into Squeeze's fascinating five-decade history.

***Trixies* feels like the next in the Squeeze lineage, rather than a 50-year-old throwback.**

"I'm astounded at how mature it was. And I think that when Squeeze were first successful, we essentially had to dumb down to fit in with what was going on. I was just absorbing everything that was around me, and almost every song on *Trixies* I can trace back to something."

1979/80 Black Strat
Tilbrook: "I would have
got it in Manny's in New
York, I'm gonna say '79
or something like that.
I think I was using it on
East Side Story"



“Chord-wise, I got such a lot from Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder. Stevie Wonder had a massive impact on my writing”

The ingenuity of the songs compared with what else was around reminds us of what groups like 10cc or XTC were doing.

“I remember [at school] there was a programme with 10cc talking about how to make a record. It was when they were cutting *The Dean And I*. I knew about studios, but not quite how it worked. They were doing guitar overdubs and then he did a harmony [Eric Stewart and Lol Creme harmonised the guitar fills]. It’s like, ‘Oh, that’s amazing!’ So yeah, all that stuff was sinking in. But chord-wise, I got such a lot from Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder. Stevie Wonder had a massive impact on my writing. You can hear that in *What More Can I Say*. It doesn’t sound like Stevie, but that’s what it is.”

When your single *Take Me I’m Yours* came out, it sounded like nothing else at the time.

“Well, what came a bit later was listening to Kraftwerk. I had a fascination with that, and that’s how *Take Me* was written. That was the last in a series of songs that I wrote, the first of which was *Why Don’t You*, which is on *Trixies*. I had a few songs that went like that. I was such a sponge.”

Listening to *Trixies* next to the hits, the connection is obvious. It’s like you’ve recorded these old songs just as you would have done.

“That was such an important thing. That first time we heard Jools [Holland] play, when he was in the band, was when we got the RMI piano [Rocky Mountain Instruments Electra-Piano]. So I found one in America and brought it back. And I thought on *Trixies* we’d use it again. Back then we couldn’t afford more keyboards, but the noise the RMI made was charming.”

Gibson ES-125

Tilbrook: “I used the ES-125 on *Good Riddance*. That’s also in the photo on the back of the *Tempted* single. It was made in the late 1940s and was first featured in *Messed Around* on the *East Side Story* album. It’s also on the cover of a single release of *Labelled With Love*”



1966 Gibson ES-345
"I use it on *The Place We Call Mars* and *Why Don't You*. A good friend got it for me as a present about three years ago. The tone on it and the sustain, it's just brought me into another world; I don't normally play with that sort of sound"



2



PHOTO BY MIKE PRIOR/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Does one dare describe *Trixies* as a rock opera of sorts? After *Tommy*, *The Village Green Preservation Society* and so on, many would have stayed shy of doing that.

“Chris was into The Kinks and I absolutely got that it was stuff I hadn’t heard. I think there’s also an element of *Cabaret*, the film about the German nightclubs of the 1920s, and that all fed into the idea of what *Trixies* was. Plus you have authors like Damon Runyon and Raymond Chandler influencing what it might be. Musically, of course, it had nothing to do with that. It was about processing 1974 music into what we could do.”

Have people suggested the next move is to turn it into a musical?

“That’s definitely a thing we could do. It would play very well there. The songs will stand up with or without us. One of the good things about *Trixies* is that there are enough characters. It’s not a definite story. It doesn’t have a beginning or an end. So all of that is open for interpretation.”

2. Glenn Tilbrook, circa 1979, live with Squeeze at the Hammersmith Odeon

Your guitar solos are intricate and clever, weaving around the chords.

“At heart, I’m a blues guitarist, but I’m also not interesting enough to do that very much. Early on, I was really influenced by the solo in The Carpenters’ *Goodbye To Love* [played by Tony Peluso]. And also Maria Muldaur’s guitarist Amos Garrett. When I worked with John Wood [producer: Cat Stevens, Nick Drake, Fairport Convention], I mentioned how I wanted to construct solos, specifically talking about Amos Garrett. He said, ‘Well, I worked with Amos and he’d drop in every three seconds if he knew what he wanted to get.’ And I was like, ‘Oh, I can do that?’ So one afternoon I did the solo in *Another Nail In My Heart*. I knew it had a journey in a certain direction, so I was just finding each bit and then

learning it. And now that’s part of the song and I will always play that same part.”

But in solos like that you turn that bluesiness into a pop style.

“Well, my dad took me to see Joe Pass play at Ronnie Scott’s. It was great – and also really embarrassing because he insisted on dragging me up to meet him. But Joe was very gracious. I was, like, 15 or something, but I learned a Joe Pass solo by slowing the record down and literally figuring out how it went. That taught me so much about positioning. It seemed to me there was only one way you could do it, and that was the way he’d done it. If I tried it another way I’d just get stuck. I came to Wes Montgomery through Jimi Hendrix, and I play quite a lot of octave stuff because it’s a beautiful and expressive way of playing.

“So it was just what I listened to growing up. Before I met Chris, and even after that, Jools and I would get pub gigs, like the Morden Arms in Greenwich. So that gave me some fluency

“I came to Wes Montgomery through Hendrix – I play octave stuff because it’s a beautiful and expressive way of playing”

**1966 Fender
B-Bender Telecaster**
Tilbrook: "I got this
from a guitarist called
Ross McGeeney in
1986. I don't tend to
use the bender that
much though"



"The blonde Tele was
very generously given
to me by Elvis Costello
in 1981, in return for
my singing on *From A
Whisper To A Scream*
on his album *Trust*. It's
an early 50s one. The
first time I recorded
with it was on *Sweets
From A Stranger* on
the song *His House
Her Home*"





because we were playing a lot of rock 'n' roll and blues songs. So I learned that I could work my way around a song and create tunes for it."

When Squeeze emerged, artists such as Elvis Costello, The Police and The Stranglers all hung to some degree on the coat-tails of punk. Squeeze had a bit of that, too – a little of the attitude but also a ton of musicality.

"Our first album [self-titled, 1978], which John Cale [The Velvet Underground] produced,

"I prefer Chris giving me lyrics – it's the way we've worked since I was 15. I'd written songs before but suddenly had lyric after lyric"

doesn't sound much like us to me. The *Cool For Cats* album [1979] is our first one that really was how we were as a band. It was exciting and it was adventurous as well. I remember we played at the Nashville Rooms, us and XTC, one night. They were so

3. Squeeze on stage during the *Trixies* 2026 album launch at Koko in Camden – the venue was transformed into 'Trixies Nightclub' for one night only

good and the first other band that I thought were really doing something different. We also played with Joe Strummer, but The Clash came more from a rock 'n' roll side than we did. We came from a melodic rock 'n' roll thing."

Compositionally, does Chris give you the lyrics and you write the music?

"Very much so. I think I've written maybe two songs that started out as tunes. But I prefer it with Chris giving me the lyrics because it's the way we've worked since I was 15. I think I'd written about eight songs before I met Chris, then suddenly I had lyric after lyric. I'd grown up getting record songbooks, and I'd learn songs from those. The ones I didn't know, I'd just make up tunes for. So I was unwittingly practising for what I would later do."

There is a lot of guitar playing on *Trixies*. Is it all you?

"It's all me, except that Melvin [Duffy, Squeeze's second

guitarist] played nylon-string on *You Get The Feeling*, slide guitar on *The Jaguars*, and various others throughout the album."

Do you come up with your guitar parts first, or get the basic track down and then find something to fit?

"Well, last January I had a few weeks in the studio by myself, trying to figure out if anything else needed to be done. I remember working on the solo for *The Place We Call Mars*. I knew it was something like it ended up being, but I didn't know what that was until I hit on it. And then, for the actual solo, I'm inverting the wartime song *We'll Meet Again*. It's not that tune, but I thought it was appropriate for the song's scenario of destruction and science fiction. It's parody, and I think it's serious, but it also makes me laugh that I could get that in. Actually, I did the same joke twice, once vocally and once on the solo in *Good Riddance*: that was the Jackson Five's *I Want You Back*."

Martin 000C Classical
Tilbrook: "The first
guitar I learned on was
a nylon-string. But as
soon as I could afford
guitars I switched to
steel strings and never
really went back, until
this one. And what a
wonderful guitar this is.
It features on *You Get
The Feeling* from the
Trixies album"



What gear did you use in the old days? A wooden Mesa/Boogie combo atop a Marshall 4x12 springs to mind.

“Yeah, I used that for years. It was a great amp and I’ve still got it. I eventually went back to Voxes at some point. I also had a 1959 Strat that I bought off the guitarist in Steeleye Span. It was my first proper guitar and it was a beauty. I used just that on at least the first two records. But it got nicked out of the back of the car in Liverpool. I’ve never had a Strat like that since; it was just one of the things that plays perfectly. I played Strats all the way through the first iteration of Squeeze and into Difford & Tilbrook. When I got the B-Bender Tele in 1986 that’s when I swapped – it’s been a big part of my playing ever since.”

What can you tell us about the guitars on *Trixies*?

“That 1966 B-Bender Tele is the go-to for tracking and overdubbing. Do you know of a guitarist called Ross McGeeney [guitarist in a Byrds-influenced band called Starry Eyed And Laughing – see ‘Neville’s Advocate’, issue 535] Well, when I met Ross he had the black B-Bender Tele. Ross and I did a few casual gigs together, like at the Albany in Deptford. It was great hearing him play. But also



“I’m all over nylon-string guitars at the moment. There’s nothing old about it, but I love the way it sounds”

I’d seen a guy in Las Vegas, just playing in the casino in a corner, and he had a two-way bender – one going that way and one the other way. He also had two palm benders, and he could play it like a pedal steel. I’ve never seen anything like it, so I was really intrigued by that. I don’t use the bender a lot, but it’s a great tool to be able to bend the string up and down like that.”

And the black Strat?

“That’s early 80s or late 70s. I bought a few guitars when we were first out in America. I tried

4. Tilbrook reflects on Squeeze from his East London studio: “We’re in a good place. It’s definitely the best it’s ever been. It took me a while, but I’m there now”

to get guitars as soon as I could afford them, so whenever I was in America I’d have a look and see what was around.”

The cutaway Martin nylon-string looks interesting.

“What a wonderful guitar. I’m really all over nylon-string guitars at the moment and now I just want to use that all the time. It’s completely new. There’s nothing old about it, but I love the way it sounds.”

Is it like a cutaway version of Willie Nelson’s?

“Yeah. I saw Willie Nelson when we were touring with Elvis Costello in America in 1981. I went with Elvis and our bass player and we saw Willie Nelson at Caesar’s Palace. And because it was Elvis, we had a table right by

the stage. And oh, what a player. I mean, Willie Nelson is another massive influence. You can’t replace that.”

So how do you feel about Squeeze today, from creating *Trixies* all those years ago up until the band it is now?

“We’re in such a good place now. It’s definitely the best it’s ever been. I know in my heart and soul we are at a different level now. We’ve got eight members, we can do proper backing vocals and do it live. And there’s so much I didn’t know about arrangements and stuff. It took me a while, but I’m there now.”



Squeeze’s new album, *Trixies*, is available now via Love Records/BMG www.squeezeofficial.com



Something In The Air

After testing the water with a limited-edition version, PRS now officially adds David Grissom's semi-hollow signature to the Core line-up. But are we worthy?

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Lucy Robinson



PRS DGT SEMI-HOLLOW £4,420

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

What You Need To Know

1

Haven't we seen this one before?

The DGT will be 20 years old in 2027, but not in the semi-hollow guise we have here – no, this is a brand-new Core production model that follows on from a limited edition announced in 2024.

2

But didn't you write about the DGT a few issues back?

Yes, but keep up! Aside from David's solidbody USA Core-level DGT – and now the Semi-Hollow we have on review here – there is also the maple-topped SE version (from £849) and the most recent all-mahogany SE DGT Standard (£799), the guitar we looked at in issue 532. If we liked a wager, we'd bet there's possibly a SE DGT Semi-Hollow in the works.

3

PRS guitars usually have two or four controls. Why does the DGT have three?

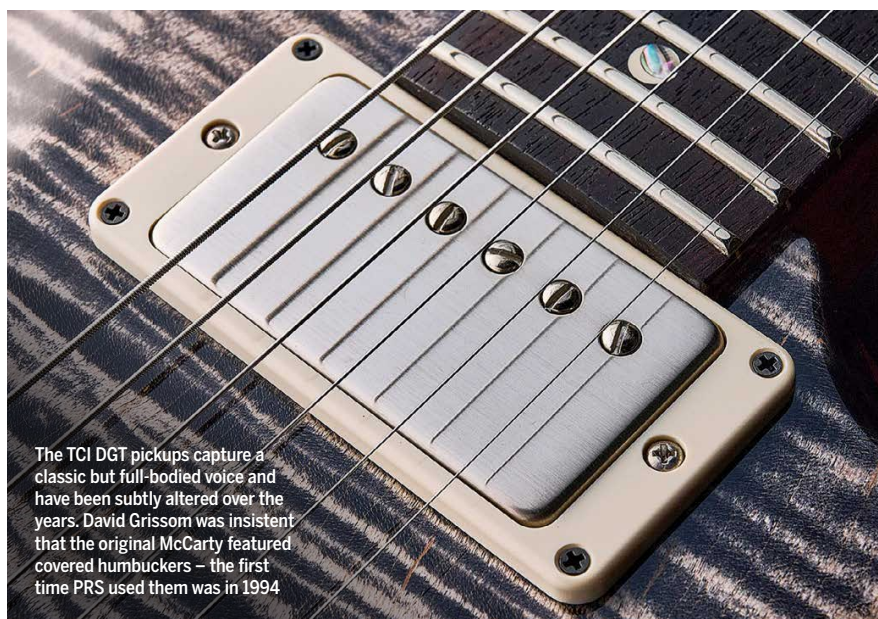
It's one of the many changes David Grissom wanted on his original signature model: a volume control for *each* pickup but with a master tone control. It's not a unique setup, Gibson's Flying V used the same. But instead of the neck pickup's volume being closest to the bridge, it's the other way around on the DGT: bridge volume, neck volume then master tone.

PRS Guitars might have just celebrated its 40th anniversary, but you still can't help but smile when you open one of the company's now-moulded guitar cases. One of the true classic designs of the modern era, the PRS is defined by its elegant double-cutaway outline, its carved and vividly curly maple top and, typically, those bird inlays that pepper the fingerboard. This writer remembers falling for its charms in the late 80s at a far-from-glorious period for the electric guitar. It seemed like a reminder of a bygone time, a beautifully made musical instrument, not just a garish plank to support a Floyd Rose and a hot humbucker.

Just over four decades on, little has changed outwardly, although – of course – every detail has evolved to

improve function, playability and, most importantly, sound. Plug in an early mid-80s PRS Custom and compare it with one that's rolled off the production line in 2026 and you'll see, hear and feel a colossal difference. Battling fad, fashion and economic upheavals over these past decades, PRS has stuck to its guns: 'good' is not good enough, and there's always a better way to eke out another micro-percentage of improvement to better serve the musician.

David Grissom is one such musician who knows that better than most. A PRS player since the late 80s, David was instrumental in the development of the crucial, more vintage-aimed McCarty Model, launched in 1994, which subtly changed the original PRS flavour and recipe. His own



The TCI DGT pickups capture a classic but full-bodied voice and have been subtly altered over the years. David Grissom was insistent that the original McCarty featured covered humbuckers – the first time PRS used them was in 1994



1

1. The classic PRS style is reflected in the DGT, which doesn't feature a headstock facing as with other Core models. That said, the raised gold logo is a lot bigger than you'd see on a 2007 DGT. The nut reverts back to the Core standard brass-infused friction-reducing type from traditional bone

2. While the majority of PRS guitars use the proprietary lampshade knobs, the DGT sticks with the Gibson-style speed knobs, a case of old dog and new tricks!

signature model (with its working title of 'McCarty II') launched in 2007, and the DGT (as in 'David Grissom Tremolo') has been in production ever since – a real player's PRS that has spawned an all-mahogany Standard version and (after a 200-piece limited edition announced in late 2024) this new full-production DGT Semi-Hollow.

In its Charcoal gloss nitro finish – one of seven offered including a Gold-Top – our new single f-hole model is priced the same as the solidbody DGT. Either DGT is the lowest-ticket maple-topped Core model in the 2026 line-up if you go for the less opulent-looking moon inlays, while a bird-inlaid version adds £320 to the full retail price.

Note that the DGT is the only Core PRS model still offered with moon inlays, which date back to the very first mid-80s guitars. The third option comes with bird inlays, a 10-Top maple cap and hybrid (gold and nickel) hardware and will cost you a cool £5,540.

In Build

The DGT builds on the McCarty recipe that was noticeably different from the Custom on its launch in 1994. Always a 635mm (25-inch) 22-fret (not 24) guitar, its primary difference was a slightly thicker mahogany back, covered humbuckers



2

(a first for PRS), and a toggle-switch pickup selector with master volume and tone (that later added a pull-switch coil-split for both pickups). Originally, the McCarty featured the then-new PRS Stoptail bridge, although a vibrato option followed.

David Grissom custom-ordered his first PRS in the style of what was to become the McCarty in around 1991, and his signature model was the result of playing his McCartys for some 15 years. It came with his own neck shape, “somewhere in between a Wide-Fat and an old Regular shape,” said David at the time. “We compared my ’93 McCarty and my ’87 Standard and shot for something in between those, as they were both my favourite ‘feeling’ guitars.”

Obviously, the DGT came with the PRS vibrato, while another difference remains the control setup: a volume for each pickup (the control closest is for the bridge) and a master tone with a pull-switch to engage coil-splits for both pickups simultaneously. Grissom’s model also introduced the partial coil-splits that have subsequently been used on many PRS guitars. What else? Oh yes, bigger ‘jumbo’ frets based on the Dunlop 6100 gauge that Grissom preferred, and 0.011-gauge strings (with a plain third string, of course). Then, the

David custom-ordered his first PRS in the style of what was to become the McCarty in around 1991

stuff of legend, a signature DGT pickup-set originally voiced from listening to 40-plus prototypes – with the help of tech Ed Reynolds’ pickup-swapping test guitar.

That initial recipe is the basis of the current DGT, both solid and semi. Of course, plenty of tweaks have occurred since 2007, not least the full nitro-gloss finish – the original DGT introduced nitro to the PRS guitar but only the top coat over a thin acrylic basecoat. Another change is that both 2026-spec models stick with the original-style Gen II vibrato (not the latest III version) that was briefly offered on the DGT, according to PRS specs, certainly from 2022. Also, instead of the previous bone nut, here we have the Core-standard brass-infused low-friction type.

As ever, the DGT doesn’t feature fingerboard binding like the current McCarty, or a headstock facing like most Core models. The DGT pickups and the control circuit have evolved, too (see Under The Hood, right).

UNDER THE HOOD

The careful craft continues on the inside

While there are no magic tricks to the DGT’s circuit, it certainly goes beyond a simple volume, tone and pickup selector switch. For example, it’s the only PRS with dual-pickup volumes and a master tone (Bernie Marsden’s SE used a similar setup). Each of the 450 series CTS pots measures slightly under 500kohms, and each volume pot has a small 10mega-ohm resistor wired in parallel across its input. This tuning tweak means the pickup ‘sees’ approximately 476k, subtly pulling back the high-end. Both volumes also have a PRS-standard 180pF treble bleed cap.

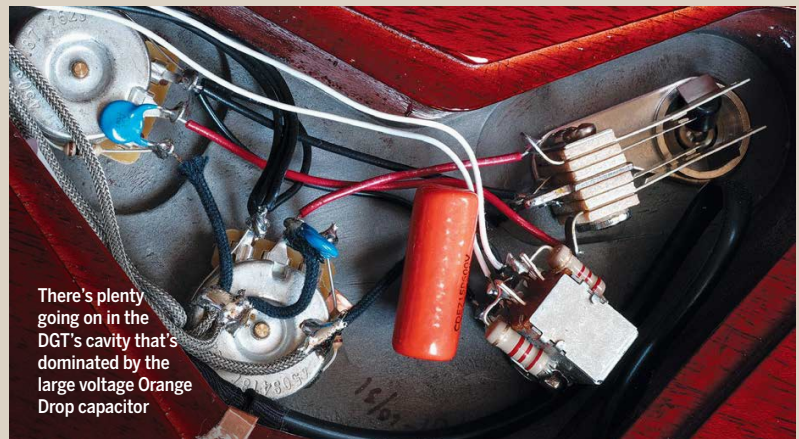
The partial coil-splits are achieved with a resistor placed between the coil junction of each pickup and ground, so that while it’s the slug coil that’s primarily voiced, some of the usually fully dumped screw coil is left in circuit for a fuller sound with a little hum-cancelling. Typically, PRS has used a 2.2k value for the bridge split, 1.1k for the neck. Here, we have the same 2.2k value for both, which should allow a little more of the neck pickup’s screw coil – with measured DCRs of 5.97k (bridge) and 5.15k (neck) in

single-coil mode – something we noticed on last year’s S2 Mira 594, so possibly this is yet another example of an unadvertised and subtle change.

Similarly, we first spied the large 630-volt .033µF Orange Drop tone capacitor on the new-for-2025 Standard, which we understand now features across the USA ranges. Why? Because Paul Reed Smith believes it sounds better.

The new screening is another thing we first saw on that Standard. But in typical PRS fashion, it’s a little unusual. Firstly, the conductive paint is nickel-based and is applied to the base (not the sides) of the cavity and the pickup routs, which are earthed. The back of the coverplate is copper-foil lined and connected via a single strip of copper tape to that conductive paint.

There’s next to zero official info on the DGT pickups, although DCRs are both in the Patent Applied For-range, the 7.52k neck at the lower end and the bridge at the higher ‘hot’ end at 8.96k. Both use brass baseplates that are clearly engraved with the TCI logo, illustrating yet another tweak to the design.



There’s plenty going on in the DGT’s cavity that’s dominated by the large voltage Orange Drop capacitor



The latest generation Grissom TCI pickups have engraved backs



3

3. Typical of PRS tweakerly are these open-back Phase III tuners with their unique 'worm collars' and small lightweight 'faux bone' buttons. The other Core models feature larger 'wing' buttons

As to the hollow bits of our subject here, it's primarily the bass side that's hollowed and behind the bridge, too; both the mahogany back and some of the underside of the maple top (around the f-hole area) are machined away. Like the solidbody, the thickness is 52mm in the centre of the body (the Custom is 49mm), just over 30mm at the rim, and you can expect a slightly lighter weight – ours was a nicely trim 3.12kg (6.86lb).

There's plenty of fight if you're used to a lighter gauge, although David won't hunt you down if you drop to PRS's standard 10s

Feel & Sounds

It's rare to find a USA solidbody PRS that's very much above 3.6kg (8lb), Singlecuts excepted; closer to 3.4kg (7.5lb) is a rough average in our experience. The lighter weight here is very engaging from the off. PRS's specs tell us that the DGT neck is slightly narrower at the nut than the Pattern profile, but the same as the Pattern Regular (42.06mm); ours is fractionally wider. It's fractionally narrower than the others at the top fret, too (56.4mm), which is bang on what we measure.

Depth-wise, it feels pretty fulsome with the same 1st-fret depth as the Pattern and Pattern Regular (21.4mm), and by the 12th it's the same as the Pattern (24.2mm); again, ours is fractionally deeper.

Comparing the neck with an older Pattern profile, well, they're very close, although there does seem to be a little less shoulder in upper positions as it's subtly more V'd. But the most noticeable differences are the bigger and taller frets (measured at 2.74mm wide by 1.4mm high) and the bigger 0.011 gauge strings. There's plenty of fight if you're used to a lighter gauge, although David won't hunt you down if you drop to PRS's standard 10s.

Exactly what the semi-hollow construction brings to the table, sound-wise, is not easy to define. David believes it "has a bit warmer top-end, a little less bottom than the solidbody, and I can get more controlled feedback" – and he should know. The guitar does have a very vibrant ring unplugged, though with quite defined highs, a lively ringing response and a little more volume than any of our solidbody references. It feels and sounds *very* alive.

Plugging into a clean amp, we were in coil-split mode and the voice we hear is rather like that unplugged character. Kick in a delay and it's classic-era The Edge, but these splits are very good; musical

4. The long-running Gen II two-piece vibrato replaced the early one-piece design. "The bridge is made of brass, a metal that rings beautifully," says PRS. "The block, intonation screws, height-adjustment screws and the string slots on the saddles are all left unplated for increased sustain and fidelity of tone"

5. The dark brown East Indian rosewood features the standard 254mm (10-inch) radius with lightly rolled edges. The DGT also features bigger PRS jumbo fretwire, beautifully installed and polished. The moon inlays use a vintage ivory acrylic crescent 'moon' with green abalone 'sky'; side dots are white Delrin



with character and depth. Having been a little sidetracked, we headed back to humbucker mode and with some crunchy, rootsy light gain we're right into that Grissom-style voicing and there's plenty to enjoy. Even without touching the controls, bridge to neck is really balanced with a nice bite to the former and a big plummy depth to the latter. It doesn't sound over-hot, though, but there is a fullness to the voice that frankly makes our reference Patent Applied For-style solidbodies sound a little bright and thin.

Pulling back the volumes a little and the subtlety and versatility begins to come through, slightly smoothing the high-end but not losing any clarity, and sitting nicely for classic rockier rhythm duties. In the mixed-pickup position, those controls seem almost interactive and take on a faster taper; a slight adjustment of either volume yields another nuance. It's the way these controls work, not least with the coil-splits, that is the key to this guitar.

With little more than a couple of different, light drive pedals, the guitar just *delivers*, nodding to a good Les Paul but with seemingly more definition. In this sort of environment, the single-coil voices give a really valid texture: lighter with more present high-end that cleans for more strummy and arpeggiated



One change that came in the early 90s with the 22-fret guitars was an increase in the size of the neck heel. It's all about the structure, the neck stiffness and its effect on the sound



PRS DGT SEMI-HOLLOW

PRICE: From £4,420 (inc case)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Double-cutaway, carved-top solidbody electric

BODY: 1-piece mahogany with figured maple top

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

SCALE LENGTH: 635mm (25")

NUT/WIDTH: Brass-infused, friction-reducing material/42.4mm

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

FRETS: 22, jumbo

HARDWARE: PRS Gen II vibrato, PRS Phase III locking tuners (w/brass posts and faux bone buttons)

STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 52.5mm

ELECTRICS: PRS DGT Treble and Bass covered humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, individual volume controls and master tone (with coil-split pull-switch)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.12/6.86

OPTIONS: The DGT starts at £4,420 w/ moon inlays. With bird inlays it's £4,740; with bird inlays plus 10 Top/hybrid hardware it's £5,540

RANGE OPTIONS: The other semi-hollow 2026 Core model is the Special Semi-Hollow (£5,060)

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISHES: Charcoal (as reviewed), Dark Cherry Sunburst, Tiger Eye, Faded Blue Jean, McCarty Sunburst and McCarty Tobacco Sunburst

rhythms, particularly with a slight volume reduction. Jangle? Oh yes.

In terms of the sounds we conjure and the playability, it's really so responsive. Needless to say, this guitar is extremely stable and in tune, too, with or without the vibrato in play. It's stellar craft but with a tremendous lived-in and vintage-y feel, and it's very, very hard to put down. We don't want to stop playing.

Verdict

We all know if you put in the hours you'll become a better player. David Grissom has certainly done that, but those countless hours have *really* informed this guitar. He'd already been a PRS player for more than 15 years before his signature model launched in 2007, and since that time he and PRS have continued to tweak and improve a guitar that – nearly 20 years ago – was already exceptional.

The DGT was always pitched as the workingman's PRS, a more vintage-y, rootsy vision, and this semi-hollow

It's ridiculously alive, does full-throttle with ease or, conversely, works effortlessly in cleaner environments

version amplifies that reputation. It's lighter in weight, ridiculously alive in our hands, does full-throttle with ease or, conversely, works effortlessly in cleaner environments where those coil-splits provide really usable single-coil textures to our ears.

It certainly nods to the classics, the benchmark designs of our industry. And yet, especially in this semi-hollow guise, it manages to add another level that seems to enhance lower-volume cleaner styles or, by contrast, screaming musical feedback at stage volumes as you lean into your amp. No guitar does everything, but this comes dangerously close. **G**



10/10

PROS The perfect craft informed from more than 40 years of guitar making; superb proprietary hardware and vibrato; tuned control circuit with immensely versatile voicing, not least the single-coil sounds

CONS While the controls are the key to the voicing, they're not for everyone – but PRS has plenty of equally stellar two- and four-control options available!

TRIPTYCH

THE POWER OF THREE

Pushing the boundaries of vintage Strat tones into uncharted territories of super heavy fuzz-drenched riffing



"For me, the perfect Strat tone has been an ongoing journey for the last few years, and I'm happy to say that the journey has ended with the Triptych single coils"

RABEA MASSAAD

BEA



bareknucklepickups.co.uk

Bare Knuckle

Hollow Victories

The semi-hollow looms large in the current PRS line-up. We pick our favourites

Words Dave Burrluck



PRS SE SPECIAL SEMI-HOLLOW
£1,089

PRS's semi-hollow style starts, price-wise, with the long-running single-cut Zach Myers (£899), a cracking guitar. But it's this 22-fret three-pickup Special that's the most favoured format across PRS's SE and USA ranges. Here, we have the 58/15 'S' 'buckers in bridge and neck (with individual mini-toggle coil-split switches), with the Narrowfield DD 'S' in middle position. It's offered in three translucent colours with gigbag.



PRS SE CUSTOM 24
SEMI-HOLLOW PIEZO £1,299

If the three-pickup Special doesn't offer enough sounds, then this particularly classy Custom 24 will do the job nicely. It adds a piezo system, designed to simulate an electro-acoustic and developed with acoustic-pickup titan LR Baggs. The magnetic humbuckers are the 85/15 'S' humbuckers, and there is a volume control for each signal path, plus dual 'mix/piezo' and 'magnetics' outputs.



PRS S2 VELA SEMI-HOLLOW
SATIN £1,789

The Vela is the third of PRS's star-named 'alternative' electrics after the Mira and Starla and as a fairly dramatically offset design – not least in this Semi-Hollow version – it remains quite unique. It features the top-loading plate-style bridge, with its two brass saddles, and pairs a coil-splittable DS-01 humbucker with a PRS Narrowfield at the neck. There's a good six-strong colour choice in either satin, or high-gloss nitro at £2,149.



PRS S2 SPECIAL SEMI-HOLLOW
£2,149

Moving to the USA S2 line, this Special Semi Hollow here sits nicely between the SE and Core versions. S2s are all about more efficient production – hence the ‘asymmetric bevel’ top carve and scarfed neck – without compromising quality or sound. To that end, the S2 models now feature USA-made pickups and we get a pair of 58/15 LTs paired with a Narrowfield in the middle. Nice working-guitar vibe – don’t overlook these.



PRS CE 24 SEMI-HOLLOW
£2,799

The bolt-on CE, which dates back to the late 80s, has long been a PRS fan-favourite, and the semi-hollow version is a welcome option. Like its solidbody counterpart, the CE 24 Semi-Hollow employs a maple neck with rosewood ‘board and uses 85/15 humbuckers with master volume and tone, the latter with a simultaneous coil-split for both pickups. Again, there’s a good colour choice available here.



PRS SPECIAL SEMI-HOLLOW
FROM £5,060

It’s a mighty jump in price from the S2/Bolt-On level to PRS’s flagship Core range, but, like the DGT, you’re in for a ride. This Special features a pair of the new-for-2025 McCarty III covered humbuckers (with mini-toggle coil-splits for each) with a Narrowfield in the middle position. It has a whopping choice of 15 colours, plus all the latest level hardware such as the Gen III vibrato and Phase III wing button tuners. Another masterpiece.



Single-Cut Sensations

Yamaha's Pacifica range has been a stalwart of the company's electric guitar line-up since 1990. These new SC models could well represent the pinnacle of that journey

Words Neville Marten Photography Matt Lincoln



YAMAHA PACIFICA SC PROFESSIONAL & STANDARD PLUS £2,150 & £992

CONTACT **Yamaha** PHONE **01908 366700** WEB **uk.yamaha.com**

What You Need To Know

1 What's Yamaha's Initial Response Acceleration system?

Yamaha says this treatment is applied after construction to enhance resonance and sustain. Acoustical tests show that optimum response and volume are achieved more quickly after plucking a string. So there you go.

2 Rupert Neve Design pickups? Who's Rupert Neve?

Neve is a designer of legendary mixing consoles used by bands such as The Beatles and Nirvana. His consoles can be found in Abbey Road and other top studios. Rupert Neve Design continues the legacy today.

3 And what is a compound fingerboard radius?

This is usually when the fingerboard radius is smaller (more convex) in the lower positions but flattens out (a larger radius), above the 12th fret. The Pacifica SC Professional has a 241mm to 304mm (9.5" to 12") compound radius.

When asked by friends or family to recommend an electric guitar for a budding musician, for many of us a Yamaha Pacifica is the shout. Even the cheapest models' fine build, setup, and potential resale price make for a sensible choice, especially when it's time to trade up. But despite making some truly fabulous high-end electrics too, Yamaha has never quite made it alongside the likes of Gibson and Fender.

But with more recent instruments such as the 2022-refreshed Revstar range championed by no less than fingerpicking shred virtuoso Matteo Mancuso, and

our own modern blues maestro Chris Buck, the brand is in the ascendant for the serious muso. So it seems like the perfect moment to revisit an old friend to these pages, the highly regarded Pacifica, this time in SC (single-cut) guise, and namely the Pacifica SC Professional, and SC Standard Plus.

We'll confess now that these two models had us scratching our heads somewhat. Apart from a whopping £1,200 more for the Professional, there seemed to be nothing separating them in nuts and bolts terms. The only obvious differences are the Professional's compound





1. The co-creation of Reflectone pickups with Rupert Neve Designs has given us some great sounds, including from this neck humbucker. Note the easy-access truss-rod adjustment nut at the end of the fretboard, too

radius (241mm to 304mm) fingerboard compared to the Standard Plus's single 304mm curve, and the Pro's deliciously oiled and tinted neck.

Look closely though and you'll perceive that, while the Professional is constructed in Yamaha's revered facility in Hamamatsu, Japan, the Standard Plus is built by the company's long-standing partner plant near Jakarta, Indonesia. What this should mean in practice is better-quality timbers and more refined finishing processes for the Japanese instrument, although the latter is certainly

2. Rather than the Telecaster's recessed jack socket, which can be problematic for some angled plugs, Yamaha prefers this surface-mounted solution

not assured since the Indonesian factory's output has rarely failed to impress.

Design-wise, clearly, the SC takes its cue from Fender's veteran workhorse, but the single-coil bridge pickup with its mounting plate and three-brass-saddle assembly is the only direct lift, although

Small routs, a honeycomb of holes and two X-shapes have been scientifically positioned in order to maximise response



even this has been tweaked. In every other respect it seems the designers went all out to refine it in as many ways as possible.

Yamaha does love its buzzwords and acronyms, and for the body we get 'Acoustic Design Technology'. Described as "using 3D modelling, the two-piece alder body is precisely routed to maximise resonance and vibration through the neck, enhancing sustain". Various small routs, a honeycomb of holes on the lower horn and two X-shapes above and between the pickups, have been scientifically positioned in order to maximise response, sustain, and all the juicy elements we search for in a great electric.



3



4

Next is the 'Initial Response Acceleration' (with its acronym 'I.R.A.')

treatment, which is applied to the Japanese-made model only. We can't say exactly what this is, but it supposedly enhances picking response, resonance and sustain, with tests showing optimum volume being achieved more quickly after a string's initial pluck.

Staying at the body end we notice big forearm and belly cuts, as well as an elegantly sculpted heel for upper-fret access, with four recessed neck bolts holding everything chunkily in place.

The neck on our SC Professional is tastefully shaded with a beautiful oil-rubbed finish, while the Standard Plus features a thin satin coat on untinted maple. Although various 'City Pop'-inspired colours are available on both models across two different fingerboard timbers, our Peppermint Green Standard Pro's maple 'board is plain, satin-finished maple, while the Metallic Black Professional has an impeccably buffed and finely finished rosewood slab. Fret finishing is exemplary, and pretty much any other mainstream guitar maker could take a lesson or two from Yamaha here.

Hardware is all Gotoh, and identical on both models, featuring locking tuners,

3. One of the few differences between our two SC models is the Professional's beautiful oiled and tinted neck, although both guitars boast Graph Tech Tusq nuts and superb-quality Gotoh locking tuners

'In-Tune' Tele-style bridge plate with cutaway sides (so it doesn't dig into the heel of your hand), and intonation-compensated brass saddles.

Last but not least, it's Graph Tech nuts for both guitars, medium jumbo stainless-steel frets, classy 'baton' fingerboard inlays (pearl on rosewood and black on maple), body-end easy-access truss adjustment, rim-mounted jack socket, a modified Tele-meets-Revstar pickguard and control layout – two knobs and a three-way pickup selector switch – with no chrome plate.

4. What Yamaha terms its Focus switch is a really great addition to the SC range's fine array of tones. Pull it up and the bridge pickup's edgy but musical single-coil bite gives way to a thick and raunchy, almost humbucking bark

THE RIVALS

The PRS SE NF 53 (£879), not least in White Doghair, is a great rival to our Yamahas. Superb build and styling, it features a beautiful swamp ash body, PRS Narrowfield DD 'S' humbuckers, a bolt-on maple neck and gigbag.

Schechter's PT in Special Purple Burst Pearl (£719) is a very cool-looking guitar, with swamp ash body, maple neck with 304mm (12") radius rosewood 'board, standard Fender scale, Schechter Tele-type

bridge pickup and P90 style at the neck, Graph Tech man-made-ivory Tusq nut, and compensated brass bridge saddles on an ashtray bridge.

Atkin's 52 T Butterscotch Aged (£2,899) is the British maker's take on the Fender original. An obeche body, maple neck, hand-wound in-house Tele pickups, top-flight electronics, a beautifully aged nitro finish and tweed case make it the connoisseur's choice.



5

5. Our Pacifica SC Standard Plus came in this fabulous Peppermint Green, although check out the Yamaha website as not all models and fingerboard styles are available in all colours

As with the earlier 2024 Pacifica reboot, Yamaha once again got together with Rupert Neve Designs to create the Reflectone pickups – here a humbucker at the neck and the usual T-style single coil mounted within the bridge housing. A master volume covers both pickups, while the tone pot is a push-pull affair for the bridge pickup only. Yamaha calls this the Focus switch – which originally featured on the refreshed Revstar models – and it adds a serious ‘push’ to the middle frequencies for a much darker, thicker sound. A high-pass filter or treble bleed means that those lovely highs should not get lost when backing off the guitar’s volume pot.

Neither guitar can be faulted on build, although perhaps the Professional has the edge when it comes down to fret and fingerboard finesse.

Feel & Sounds

Both Pacifica models have a 21.5mm depth at the first fret and 23.9mm at the 12th, and both guitars feel right the moment you pick them up. The Standard Pro’s neck does feel ever so marginally slimmer, perhaps a little less on the shoulders, but otherwise any guitarist would feel at home here. The Professional’s polished

rosewood ‘board and fabulously dressed and finished frets means it’s as smooth as silk under the fingers, and that compound radius with medium jumbo frets would leave even the lairiest shredder smiling. It really is a peach to play, especially if you like things on the slightly meatier side.

Although very little would better the SC Professional in the fret and fingerboard finishing department, the Standard Plus sits extremely close behind. Which one you prefer could even be down to a preference for maple over rosewood, but both models are available with either, should that be the case.

Although very little would better the SC Professional in the fret and fingerboard finishing department, the Standard Plus sits close behind

Plugging into our Fender Mustang LTX50 digital amp with some really good clean and dirty tones dialed in, the guitars are a revelation. Remember that, other than the Pro’s Initial Response Acceleration (I.R.A.) treatment, which, at a basic level, is hard to detect, the guitars should prove identical, sound-wise.

6. A compound radius on the SC Professional’s smartly dressed and finished rosewood fingerboard lends the guitar almost infinite playability, even for the highest-octave players

7. We’ve always loved the Pacifica’s elegant take on the six-a-side headstock. Here it is from the rear, featuring those fab locking Gotoh tuners (found on both SC models)



The Rupert Neve Design pickups are beautifully tailored to the SC. The neck humbucker has both warmth and clarity, and sounds particularly great with a pushed clean tone, where backing off the volume retains the clarity but with a sweeter, yet still very lyrical voice. Beef it up with some overdrive and the fundamental tone remains, albeit in a much more raunchy setting. But back off the volume a tad and we get a gorgeous blues-jazz tone.

Flip to the bridge and the real fun begins. Terms such as 'Focus switch' can be somewhat yawn-inducing, but boy this one's an exception. With the tone knob resting in its pushed-in position and the Focus switch bypassed, the overall impression is of a slightly more raunchy Tele (no bad thing!). But with the Focus switch engaged in the 'up' position we get a fat, clean but ballsy tone that feels like there's no need for pedals. It just wants to be played. Of course, we all love a bit of drive and the pickup responds exceptionally well to it, the Focus switch's middle push taking it almost into humbucker territory.

And don't forget the oft-forgotten middle 'both pickups on' setting, where we enter a Stonesy fat, clean, bright, powerful, funky



8

8. A dressed-away heel carve on both Pacifica models, with these chunky inset bolts, means solid connection between neck and body, but also improved upper-fret access

world (think *Start Me Up*), especially with the Focus switch in play. There's a world of fabulous tone here, whether or not you get the 'Initial Response Acceleration' thing. And with your reviewer's own Fender Custom Shop 1960 reissue Tele only feet away, the Yamaha remained the go-to picking pal during its stay.

Verdict

Yamaha has really nailed it with these two SC guitars. Their build, playability and tones deliver on every level. They look fantastic, and their setup – even on the Indonesian-built instrument – is without fault, and those tones... You really have to play one yourself, through a good amp or decent set of pedals, to really appreciate what a Pacifica SC can do for you.

The dilemma, of course, is do you pay two grand or so for a Japanese-made model, or possibly opt for the considerably more affordable Indonesian guitar? That's up to you, but for us it's a clean sweep across the board for two sensational electric guitars. Keep it up, Yamaha. You could go far! **G**



YAMAHA PACIFICA SC PROFESSIONAL

PRICE: £2,150 (inc case)
ORIGIN: Japan
TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Chambered, two-piece alder
NECK: One-piece maple, 'Medium C' profile, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Black Graph Tech/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 241-304mm (9.5-12") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo stainless-steel
HARDWARE: Gotoh BC-TS1S bridge with compensated brass saddles, Gotoh locking tuners – chrome/nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm
ELECTRICS: Yamaha Reflectone EH7n humbucker (neck) and Reflectone EH7b single coil (bridge), three-way pickup selector lever switch, master volume (w/ high-pass circuit), master tone w/ Focus switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.25/7.05
OPTIONS: Maple fingerboard
RANGE OPTIONS: Not yet available
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Black Metallic (as reviewed), Shell Pink, Peppermint Green (all with maple and rosewood 'boards); Breeze Metallic Blue, Sunny Orange, Shell White, Desert Burst (rosewood only) – gloss polyurethane body w/ custom-tinted satin polyurethane neck



PROS: Stunning-looking and built as well as most custom shops. Fantastic fret and fingerboard finishing, fabulous tones, excellent Focus switch

CONS: There's nothing to fault here, except some might say why pay so much more than the price of its Indonesian sibling?



YAMAHA PACIFICA SC STANDARD PLUS

PRICE: £992 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: Indonesia
TYPE: Single-cutaway solidbody electric
BODY: Chambered, two-piece alder
NECK: One-piece maple, 'Medium C' profile
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Black Graph Tech/42mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple, 241mm (12") radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo stainless-steel
HARDWARE: Gotoh BC-TS1S bridge with compensated brass saddles, Gotoh locking tuners – chrome/nickel-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm
ELECTRICS: Yamaha Reflectone EH7n humbucker (neck) and Reflectone EH7b single coil (bridge), three-way pickup selector lever switch, master volume (w/ high-pass circuit), master tone w/ Focus switch
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 3.25/7.05
OPTIONS: Rosewood fingerboard
RANGE OPTIONS: Not yet available
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Black Metallic, Shell Pink, Peppermint Green (as reviewed) all with maple and rosewood 'boards); Breeze Metallic Blue, Sunny Orange, Shell White, Desert Burst (rosewood only).



PROS: Everything that's been said about the SC Professional applies here, but to that we must add extraordinary value for what must be one of the best electrics out there, at any price

CONS: Nothing to criticise... except we would like one in Shell White with tortoiseshell pickguard, but that's only available on the SC Professional!

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- Adam 'Nolly' Getgood



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Time For T

In this 75th anniversary year of the Fender Telecaster, choice for T-style guitars has never been broader. Here are six that span tradition and contemporary innovation

Words Stuart Williams



CHARVEL STANDARD SERIES SAN DIMAS STYLE 2 SD2 £509

With its Jim Root models, Fender has proved before that the versatility of the Tele doesn't only apply to the sonics, but visuals too, and Charvel's latest model continues to back this theory. Swapping the singles for humbuckers, adding a compound-radius fingerboard and stripping-back the controls, presents a contemporary T-style that's primed for heavier styles. It's pretty accessible price-wise, too!

www.charvel.com



PRS SE NF53 £879

Taking the T-style blueprint and reimagining it, the PRS SE NF53 is one of the most characterful PRS models we've seen in a while, and it sits at the more affordable end of the brand's output. Utilising a swamp ash body, available in Black or White Dog Hair finishes (as well as Pearl White), it is joined by a pair of Narrowfield DD 'S' humbuckers, which, tonally, live somewhere between single coils and a traditional 'bucker. If you're after a T-style with a difference, put it on your list to try.

<https://uk.prsguitars.com>



CREAM-T ASTRA STANDARD £1,799

We're big fans of Cream-T's pickup-swapping concept here at *Guitarist*, and the Astra Standard presents the opportunity to snag that technology in a UK-made T-style guitar. Once again, it's an obeche body, with a maple neck and you get a choice of maple or rosewood fingerboards. Crucially, though, it has the hot-swappable pickup system (which allows for a pickup change in literal seconds), with a Hot Sauce set as standard, and options for nine pickups from Cream-T or Seymour Duncan available.

www.creamtcustomshop.com



SCHECTER PT SPECIAL PURPLE BURST £719

Schechter made its name in hot-rodding/modding during the '70s custom boom, and the PT has long been one of its highlight models. Here, the model that began life as a signature for The Who's Pete Townsend gets a reconfiguration. With a V-90 on the PT Special, it ramps up the neck tone, plus there's series/parallel switching via the tone control. The Purple Burst Pearl finish looks stunning over the swamp ash body, and who doesn't love a bound top?

www.schecterguitars.com



CHAPMAN LAW MAKER LEGACY £1,099

Just look at that finish! Chapman's T-Style take sees the pickup configuration changed to a highly-versatile HS setup, comprising Seymour Duncans (Little '59 in the neck position, Alt 8 Trembucker in the bridge cavity). The alder body is topped with flamed maple, the neck is rosewood with a rosewood fingerboard, and tuning stability comes courtesy of Hipshot Grip-Lock tuners. If you're after T-time from a modern instrument, don't swerve Chapman.

www.chapmanguitars.com



ATKIN FIFTY TWO BUTTERSCOTCH AGED £2,899

As a high-end choice from a UK builder, the Atkin Fifty Two doesn't stray too far from tradition, particularly in the beautiful aged Butterscotch nitro finish. But that body is obeche, and it comes stocked with Atkin's hand-wound, in-house pickups and top-notch third-party electronics from the likes of CTS, Sprague and Switchcraft. Chuck in the tweed Hiscox case, and you've got a premium alternative T-style guitar that's sure to catch eyes (and ears).

www.atkinguitars.com



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Value Matters

Fractal's AM4 aims to make the company's prestigious amp and effects modelling accessible to a larger audience



FRACTAL AUDIO AM4 AMP MODELER £789

CONTACT G66 PHONE 07392 395520 WEB www.fractalaudio.com

What You Need To Know

- 1 Didn't we see a new Fractal like that just recently?**
 Yes, you're thinking of the VP4, which has the same form factor but only effects onboard. This new one has amp modelling and effects.
- 2 What's the thinking behind that?**
 It's basically to deliver Fractal's amp modelling at a more affordable price point in a unit that's more transportable and easier to slip into pedalboard setups compared with the brand's previous offerings.
- 3 It only has four footswitches...**
 This is true, but the way Fractal has implemented the operability means four is enough to cover a host of scenarios.

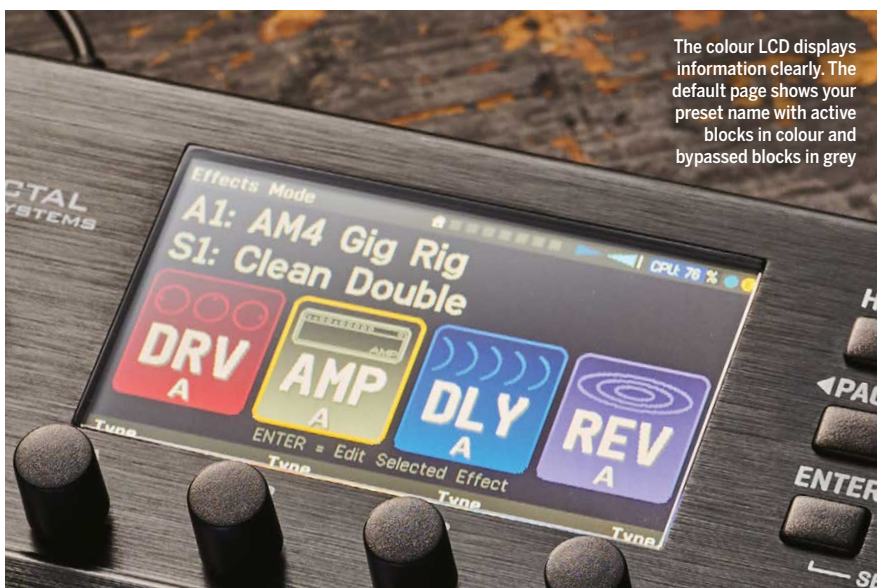
Fractal's flagship Axe-Fx III amp and effects processor may be a bit overkill for most of us, not just in its £2.5k asking price (and that's without a foot controller) but also in the facilities it provides. However, Fractal is, of course, aware of this and does provide more affordable stripped-down iterations of its modelling technology with the likes of the FM3, FM9 and the (effects only) VP4 Virtual Pedalboard.

The current FM3 MKII Turbo (retailing at £1,149) has been the entry point into the full Fractal amp and effects world up until now, but that's all changed with the release of the new AM4, which makes the sounds more accessible to a larger audience. It still has the same four-footswitch form factor and the same price point as the VP4, but where the VP4 has no amp modelling, the AM4 has a full quota of Fractal's finest amp models alongside a choice range of effects.

In Use

The AM4 falls neatly into the 'compact modeller' category with a size and shape that's both eminently portable and suitable for slotting into a pedalboard alongside your other pedals. While its main use in a live scenario is direct connection to a PA or an FRFR speaker, there's no reason you couldn't use it as an effects processor with a conventional amp. What you're getting is a unit with 104 presets onboard in 26 banks of four, each preset comprising a signal chain of four blocks – one amp and three effects is the norm, but you can have four effects blocks.

Now, while four blocks may seem paltry to anyone who is used to longer signal chains, it really can be enough to cover many contingencies because those blocks have an inherent flexibility. Every block has four channels, each with a different model or parameters. This means you can have four different amps in your amp block



The colour LCD displays information clearly. The default page shows your preset name with active blocks in colour and bypassed blocks in grey

The AM4 is in the 'compact modeller' category with a size and shape that's eminently portable

and four types of delay, for example, or simply one delay with four different delay times in your delay block. The amp block is of particular note as it has facilities that might otherwise have used up several blocks – it doesn't just have the amp but also contains the full associated cabinet modelling with built-in stereo room ambience, plus a footswitchable boost.

For each preset you also get four Scenes, each Scene basically a snapshot of which blocks are active and which channel is



1



2



3



1. Turn the A, B, C and D soft knobs to adjust their associated on-screen settings. The Select knob highlights different areas of the current page for adjustment; the Page buttons step left and right through menu pages

selected for the block – this means you can call up a wide variety of sounds by switching Scenes. Everything in a preset can be quickly set up or tweaked from the unit itself – there’s no touchscreen, but using the buttons and soft knobs is intuitive. Alternatively, you can use the excellent AM4-Edit software on a connected computer.

Changing between the three primary modes of operation (Preset, Scene, Effects) is implemented by pressing footswitches 1 and 2 together and then making your

selection via one of the other footswitches, each corresponding to a different mode shown above in the display. In Preset mode you can gaplessly select the four presets in a bank with the footswitches, and bank changes are implemented by a press-and-hold of footswitches 1 or 4.

Scene mode lets each footswitch call up the different scenes within a preset, while Effect mode is for turning effects blocks on and off and, in the case of the amp block, turning its boost on and off.

There’s also an Amp mode of operation that assigns each of the four channels from the amp block its own footswitch, so you have access to four independent amp-and-cab setups.

While the signal chain may not be as complex as that of the Axe-Fx III, the AM4 still has its component-level physical amp modelling and DynaCab cabinet emulation, which makes for a classy range of sounds with excellent playing response. You get more than 240 different amp models – albeit some being different channels of the same amp – with all of the big hitters covered, as well as a wide selection of more obscure and boutique examples. As for the cabs, there are more

2. Connect to your computer via USB to access the AM4-Edit software and install firmware upgrades. You can also use the AM4 as a 4x4 audio interface for recording. It will simultaneously output unprocessed as well as processed sound

3. Pedal 1 and 2 jacks connect expression pedals that can be set up to control sound settings such as the sweep of a wah or the speed of a rotary speaker. Alternatively, a single momentary or latching switch can be connected

4. The AM4-Edit software for Mac/PC lets you set up the unit to your requirements. The large display is a handy aid when building presets and adjusting the sound of amps, cabs and effects. You can also check for firmware updates here

THE RIVALS

The AM4’s sibling is the VP4, a four-footswitch ‘Virtual Pedalboard’ that offers four simultaneous effects chosen from 400 onboard effects derived from the Axe-Fx III (some of which are not available in the AM4). Elsewhere, the Quad Cortex Mini (£1,129) is Neural’s smaller form factor version of its Quad Cortex. It has all the power of the larger machine but reduces the number of footswitches to four. From the Line 6 Helix family, the HX Stomp (£549) only has three footswitches but delivers a comprehensive selection of amps and effects. For less outlay, there’s the three-footswitch IK Multimedia Tonex Pedal (£329).



Each footswitch has colour-coded LEDs as a handy visual aid. Depending on the selected mode, footswitches change Presets (green), select Scenes (red), toggle Effects on and off (blue), access Tuner/Tap Tempo (yellow), or select amp channels (multi-colour). Each mode also has its own press-and-hold functions



FRACTAL AUDIO AM4 AMP MODELER

PRICE: £789

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Amp and effects modelling floorpedal

FEATURES: Buffered bypass, 104 presets, tuner, tap tempo, noise gate and EQ on each preset

CONTROLS: Level, Select, Soft knobs (A, B, C, D), 6x buttons, Footswitches (1, 2, 3, 4)

CONNECTIONS: Standard instrument input, standard outputs L (mono) & R, Standard Send, Standard Return, Pedal 1 & 2, 1/8" headphone output, SPDIF In & Out, MIDI In & Out, USB

POWER: Supplied 9V DC adaptor 1500 mA

DIMENSIONS: 252 (w) x 162 (d) x 62mm (h)

than 45 DynaCab models, all with real-time visual mic positioning, and there's also the option of using your own IRs.

Effects are well represented by a selection of 80-plus drive models, loads of reverbs and delays, many modulation types, and compressors and wahs. While there's no dedicated pitch shifting, there is some for shimmer in the reverb block.

The AM4 comes well stocked (22 banks) with usable pre-programmed presets for use straight out of the box or as advanced starting points for your own tweaks. A lot of these are in the format Drive>Amp>Delay>Reverb, which may be all you need. You can also choose from 16 different effects blocks (a maximum of two of any type) to easily set up your own chain, and if you need to free up blocks it's useful to know that you can have reverb and delay in a single block by choosing one of the Echo models for your reverb block.

If you want to use other effects pedals with the unit, there's nothing to stop you placing them before or after the unit, but there is also a send and return loop with a fixed position just before the output. This would allow you to use external pedals in the chain while taking advantage of the

AM4's balanced outputs or the headphone output for a bit of silent practice. That headphone output also comes in handy for recording, taking advantage of the AM4's ability to function as a 4-in/4-out audio

If you want to get into the Fractal universe, the AM4 is your entry point – but it's in no way 'entry level'

interface. Comprehensive MIDI capability is available for those who wish to take advantage of it, and there's also provision to connect up to two expression pedals for real-time control of effects – essential if you want to use the onboard wah options.

Verdict

If you want to get into the Fractal amp-modelling universe, the AM4 is your entry point – but we're in no way describing it as 'entry level'. Make no mistake, it could grace any professional stage with its superb range of sounds, rugged build and great flexibility in how you use it. **G**



PROS Rugged build; sound quality; massive selection of amps, cabs and effects available; straightforward operation; clear display; audio interface capability; software editor

CONS Four footswitches means extra tap-dancing; balanced jacks, rather than XLR outputs

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MARC FORD

The former Black Crowes and current Lucinda Williams blues-rocker talks shred-guitar mistakes, the importance of connection and his love for custom Asher axes

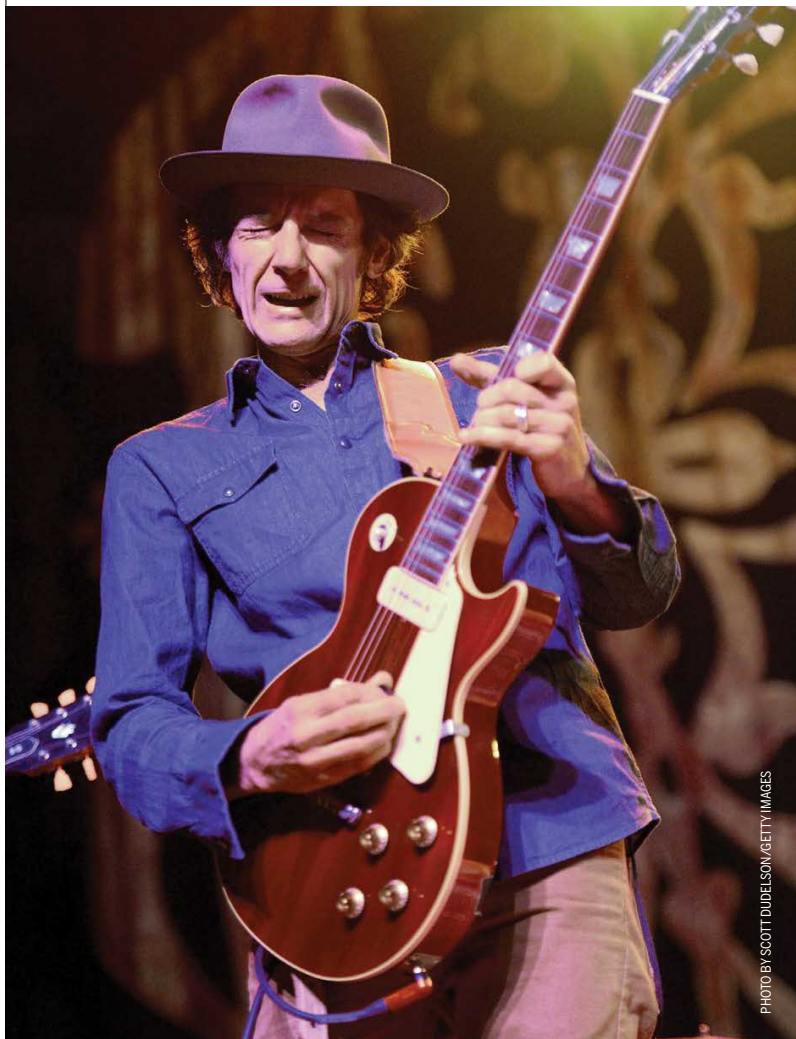


PHOTO BY SCOTT DUBELSON/GETTY IMAGES

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

“Well, I took all of the savings I had accrued as a kid from all the birthdays and Christmases – which was obviously meant for something way more responsible, I think – and I cashed it and went in and had a guitar put together out of Warmoth parts. It was right when that whole Schechter thing was happening and the parts-guitar thing was just starting. I essentially had a hot-rodged [S-type] made.

“But prior to that, all of my guitars were gifts from my family. I ended up trading that for something else pretty quickly. It was sort of a flash of the times, you know? It had a humbucker in it and it was [an S-type], so it had the whammy bar... it was very Eddie Van Halen-esque in a way. That was what was going on at the time and I didn’t know enough about guitars, so it just seemed cool. But as soon as I got into guitar, I realised that it wasn’t something I wanted to use.”

What was the last guitar that you bought, and why?

“The last one that I bought was a Nash [T-style]. I was missing the Telecaster style with the gear that I had with me with Lucinda [Williams], so I went to Mike’s Music – where I bought my ’61 Tele, like, 30 years ago – and now I’ve bought another [laughs]. It’s a great guitar and it made sense because it’s a tool that I’ve been missing in my equipment.”

“There’s a lot of gear that I had to get rid of because rent was due... there were a lot of lean times”

Above: Marc Ford on stage with The Magpie Salute in Los Angeles, 2017

Right: Marc receiving the prototype for his Signature Model Asher S-90 in TV Yellow. This was a hybrid design of his ’54 Strat and Les Paul Special. The S-90 reportedly felt so comfortable and sounded so good live that he quickly asked Bill Asher to make another in Cherry Red. Since then, Asher has offered the model as a custom order for players



PHOTO © ASHER GUITARS

What’s the most incredible find or bargain that you’ve ever heard when buying guitars?

“Shoot... probably a short-scale Gibson hollowbody like the one Chuck Berry played in the 50s before he went to the ES-335 [the ES-350, a close cousin to the Byrdland]. I found one of those in Lake Havasu for incredibly cheap. It needed some work, but it was a great deal. It was the same one that Chuck played, and the same one that [Eric] Clapton played at the Bangladesh concerts [EC played a Gibson Byrdland].”

What’s the strongest case of buyer’s remorse you’ve ever had while buying gear?

“Well, that first guitar that I had made is one. It was a quality guitar, but it was just a dumb choice. It really wasn’t at all helpful to what I was doing, so I was pretty bummed that I did that, you know? But other than that, I don’t think I’ve made too many stupid mistakes... at least, not ones that stick out. But there’s always gonna be some stuff that



MARC'S GO-TO RIG

"Right now with Lucinda, I've got a Satellite amp. It's probably about 25 watts with two 10-inch speakers. I don't know what [owner] Adam [Grimm] does to them, but they're just cool and they work. I'm playing a Wide Sky guitar that's kind of like a Les Paul Special, and I've got the Nash T, and an old 50th anniversary '54 [Fender] Strat that I really love. I just got the Nash, but I think I'll bring it out on the road with me.

"Aside from all that, I've got my signature Asher guitars. Bill [Asher] is an incredible luthier. His attention to detail is almost more than I can handle! I developed a relationship with him over time, and we started talking about ideas and gear. At the time, my two favorite guitars were a Les Paul Special and a Fender Strat. I thought, 'Can we marry these two guitars together somehow?' Then I noticed his Electro Sonic design, so we were essentially using his parts that he'd already designed and just assembling them to my taste.

"With pedals, on the road I'm really only using a couple of boost pedals, an overdrive and maybe a slap delay. There's not a lot of tricks, which is cool because I was never much into tricks anyway."

PHOTO © ASHER GUITARS

didn't turn out the way that you thought or didn't fit once you got it home. But I don't do a lot of on-a-whim, off-the-cuff buying, you know? I've gotta hear it and know that it's working pretty cool before I buy it."

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

"I mean... yeah [laughs]. There's a lot of gear that I had to get rid of because rent was due. I was always paid as a side man, so there were only a few moments where I was really paid money that was decent. There were a lot of lean times, where I had to get rid of stuff just to keep afloat. So that list is longer than I can remember what's even on there. But gear is a great place to keep your money, you know what I mean? If you have real pieces, you're really not gonna lose anything on them.

"This is when you start to realise that guitars are just tools. Like, you can have your favourites and you can have things that you prefer, but sometimes that can be limiting. There are times when being on an instrument that's a little uncomfortable, set up wrong, or not what you're used to, forces you to be present, think about what you're doing and not get so hung up about the instrument itself."

What's your best buying tip for someone looking to buy their ultimate guitar?

"The ultimate guitar tip for guitars – and really, any guitar, though it's more obvious on acoustic and maybe less so with electric – is that it's got to sound good when it's not plugged in. There has to be a tone that catches your ear. And it probably needs to be unique compared with other

guitars. Obviously, feel is important. It's gotta feel good to you. But if it doesn't sound good when it's not plugged in, there's no way that you're ever gonna get it to sound good through the electronics."

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

"I'd buy the guitar. Shit, these days, half the time I'm playing through a rented amp [laughs]. But the guitar is so much more personal. You're physically touching the thing and, in a perfect world, it becomes a part of you to where you don't even think about it any more.

"It becomes just a way to get your insides out, since your fingerprints are literally on it. There's direct contact and that's gonna exchange your subtleties way more than an amplifier will, I think."

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

"Single coils. They're more expressive. There's more subtleties and they're way more direct for when you need that. I just find them to be more versatile and more fun. I've always been drawn to single coils. Not that I'm knocking a great humbucker; I just prefer single coils." [AD]



Marc Ford's album *Live In Germany* is available at www.marcford.bandcamp.com and his soulful, expressive playing can be heard on Lucinda Williams' 2026 album *World's Gone Wrong*.

Marc Ford with his Asher Electro Sonic California Gold Top, which he has been touring and recording with since 2017

PHOTO BY STEVE JENNINGS/GETTY IMAGES



Lucinda Williams and Marc Ford perform at the Stern Grove Festival, San Francisco, 2024



Huw Price's *Nitty Gritty*

There are three types of Blackguard bridge pickup – we discover which sounds best

1950s Telecaster Pickups

I wouldn't usually follow up one pickup feature with another, but the article I wrote detailing changes to the pickups in our Telecaster 75th Anniversary edition got me thinking. I've been privileged to play a few 50s Telecasters, and even a Broadcaster, but it occurred to me that I've never had the opportunity to directly compare each type of Blackguard-era pickup.

Just to recap, T-style bridge pickups were wound with 43 AWG magnet wire before Fender changed to thicker 42 AWG wire in 1951. The next big change occurred in 1955, when Alnico V magnetic slugs replaced the weaker Alnico III. By my reckoning, that equates to three distinct versions in the early 1950s alone.

I'm just a newcomer to the pickup-making hobby, but I thought it might be educational to make one of each. My idea was to order flatwork, slugs and baseplates from the same supplier, along with two gauges of magnet wire from a single manufacturer. So long as I could wind all the coils consistently, with the same number of turns, and wax-pot them for an identical period of time, it should be possible to form some clear conclusions on how each change influences the overall tone.

Picking Up Parts

Pickup parts are widely available, but for this project I ordered kits from UK retailer Axesrus because it's a one-stop place for

everything you need. However, the plain enamel magnet wire actually came from Allparts UK because it's slightly cheaper there. When ordering, keep your wits about you because it's easy to end up with slugs and flatwork holes that don't match.

Complicating things further, some suppliers provide measurements in millimetres while others use inches, while both decimal and fractions feature. The narrower diameter post 1955 slugs were

"When ordering parts, keep your wits about you because it's easy to end up with slugs and flatwork holes that don't match"

0.1875-inch, which equates to 3/16-inch and 4.75mm. Axesrus doesn't sell the early style 0.195-inch (4.953mm) slugs, but it sells 5mm slugs and that's close enough.

Most guitar-parts suppliers stock cloth-covered hook-up wires, and you can choose which colours you prefer. Yellow and black would be traditional for vintage style T-type pickups, but if you can't find yellow then it's possible to stain white cloth. You'll also need some old-fashioned white parcel-string, which can generally be found in hardware stores or post offices.

Slug Fest

I started by pressing the non-bevelled ends into the flats using my arbour press. This makes the job easy, but you could tap them in using a rubber mallet. Axesrus's kits come with tiny eyelets for soldering and they are inserted from the underside of the bottom flat. As long as you've ordered the correct flatwork for your chosen slug diameter, there should be a tight friction fit. Even so, I like to wick some water-thin superglue around the holes from the inside and then wipe off any excess if I need to.

With all the bobbins assembled, Fender would mask off the eyelets, dip the bobbins in lacquer and let them drip dry. They probably did this to lower the chances of corroded magnet wire shorting out against the slugs, and you can wrap tape around the slugs before winding if you don't want to bother with lacquer. I did both to play it safe and also because the lacquer gives the flatwork a distinctive vintage sheen.

Winding Up

I'm not going to go into great detail about setting up machines and winding coils because there are many online video tutorials that can show you exactly how it's done. You can even find one with Fender's legendary Abigail Ybarra – watch her wire-guiding hand closely.

With 42 AWG wire I find that 10,000 turns equates to a coil resistance reading of around 7.5k. That's pretty strong for

PHOTOS BY HUW PRICE



The main components for T-type pickups include top and bottom flats, baseplates, eyelets, magnetic slugs and magnet wire

1



An arbour press makes it easy to assemble the bobbins, but a soft mallet can also be used

2

Hugh ordered flatwork, slugs, baseplates and two gauges of wire for his homemade pickups



"I've played 50s Teles, but never had the opportunity to compare each type of Blackguard-era pickup"



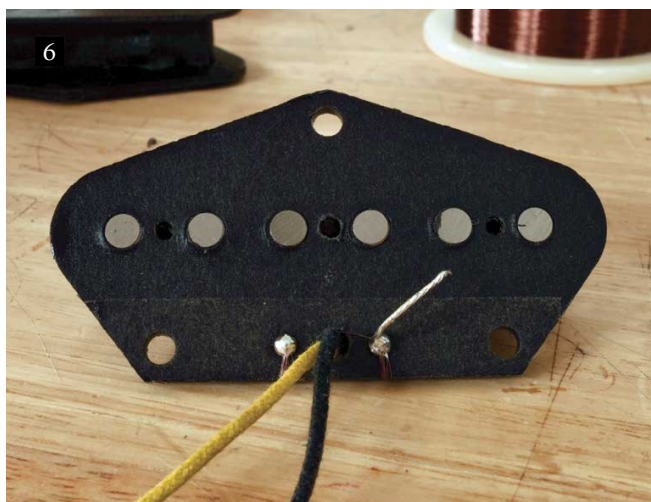
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4



5



6

3. After a few hundred turns, winding is paused to check the alignment before restarting the machine once more

4. Wrapping the string around the coil provides the protection needed before soldering the leadout wires and fixing the baseplate

5. The string has been secured and the leadout wires have been soldered to the eyelets

6. The negative leadout wire protrudes beyond the eyelet, so that it can be soldered onto the baseplate

a mid-50s T-type bridge pickup, and the same number of turns resulted in a 9.5k coil with 43 AWG wire. Be sure to re-check your resistance reading after soldering the leadout wires and try to avoid getting hot solder resin on the coil.

Strings Attached

Fender wrapped string around T-type bridge pickup coils, which protected them and allowed molten potting wax to soak through to the wire. The company's winders used black-tinted wax, which turned the white string black and held it in place.

To apply the string, I unravelled about 10mm at the end to flatten it out and then positioned it up the side of the coil at one end, running from top to bottom. Pinching the flattened end against the coil, I began wrapping the string around the coil in layers going from the bottom flat to the top. Once I had applied as many turns as possible, I cut the string and tucked the end between the final turn and the underside of the top flat.

“The time pickups should spend in the wax is open to debate. Some advocate for 10 to 15 minutes, or until air bubbles stop coming up”

Pot Luck

I use a beauty salon-style wax heater to melt potting wax at about 60 degrees Celsius. You could also get by with a glass bowl and a bain-marie type of arrangement instead, (but don't use your partner's favourite kitchenware or it might result in a 'domestic'. You'll have to trust me on this...)

More learned pickup makers than me may have special wax formulations, but I use paraffin wax mixed with lamp-black powder and some boot polish to turn it black. The amount of time pickups should spend in the wax is open to debate. Some advocate leaving them for 10 to 15 minutes, or until air bubbles stop coming up to the surface. This pretty much guarantees that a pickup won't squeal microphonically, but lighter potting retains some microphony for airy high harmonics and vintage chime.

Having examined numerous vintage Fender pickup coils, I've noticed that the potting wax only penetrated the outer layers and there's often no wax on the inside of the coil. They were semi-potted at most, and for vintage tonal characteristics I find that three to five minutes works well. If a pickup is too microphonic, you can always re-pot it, but you can never *un*-pot it.

7. After candle wax is dripped over the bottom flat and the baseplate is heated by a hot air gun, they're pressed together to cool

8. With the negative soldered to the plate, the slugs are charged between neodymium magnets with a bag used as a safety 'handle'

9. Black wax is heated to 60°C and the pickup is lowered in for potting

10. The wax turned the string and leadout wires black, and the finished pickups are treated to some light ageing



Tone Tests

With four coils wound, bound and waxed, it was finally time for testing. Rather than evaluate my own work, I invited my mate Ed Oleszko over to lend an ear and he kindly brought his 1955 tweed Super. Using my Dearnaley Taff Delta loaded with a genuine 1954 lap steel pickup for reference, Ed tested the pickups in a US-made Fender Anniversary Esquire, and both guitars were fitted with brass saddles.

Ed says of the Alnico III with 43 AWG: “This pickup doesn’t sound overwound in a dull and midrange heavy sort of way. I’d describe the output as gutsy, rather than hot. It has mellow treble, hi-fi clarity and excellent balance that is very forgiving and easy to play, but it’s not a quintessentially Tele-like tone. It sounds older and mellower, with loads of bass heft, although the lows do sound a bit soft and it’s more woody than twangy.

“It has a beautiful midrange, lots of harmonics and, with no hint of shrillness, it’s the one that works best in the Esquire’s back setting. Once your ears adjust, it makes some regular Tele pickups seem a bit shrill and uncultured in comparison. It has a lovely oboe-esque voicing, and as a Gibson player I feel very comfortable with the plummy midrange and the effortless way it sustains and blooms.”

Over to the Alnico III with 42 AWG, and Ed says: “This one has a huge sound, with a lot of low-end thump and a wide soundstage. It really sustains, but not quite as well as the 43 AWG version, and it doesn’t generate as much of that Patent Applied For-like upper-harmonic bloom. This is very much a Blackguard Telecaster sound with an aggressively confident midrange that never gets brash, and it’s the one that sounds closest to the ’54 lap steel pickup.

“It’s twangier than the 43 AWG version and the low strings have a springy bounce. The resonance peak seems higher, so it has a clucky quack, rather than the plummy voicing that makes the 43 AWG softer and woodier. It’s not as clear sounding as the 43 AWG, maybe because the midrange is congested with harmonics, but there’s a clickier front-end attack to notes, and when overdriven, the overall vibe recalls Springsteen’s *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*.”

Finally, to the Alnico V and Ed says: “42 AWG with Alnico V slugs appears to generate an upper midrange peak and a bass lift with a slight dip in between. This pickup is clearer and more balanced overall, and it’s like a ‘loudness button’ has been applied across the whole frequency range. Nothing jumps

out, and it sounds more modern because it doesn’t have as much of the 42 AWG’s quacky and honky vocal midrange. That said, it’s not as characterful as the others.

“It does provide the best note separation and it has the tightest bass. With the volume right up it sounds punky, and when you turn it down it does that jangly faux-acoustic thing. There’s a lot of sustain, which makes playing easier because it doesn’t require as much physicality as some vintage pickups. It’s perhaps the most versatile of the three and I think it would work well in a lot of musical genres. The problem is that now I’ve heard how different they all sound, I want three Telecasters, rather than just one, because they’re sufficiently different to justify it!”

Wrapping Up

As I mentioned at the beginning, I’m just getting into pickup making and repairing, and these were only the second, third and fourth T-type pickups I’ve made so far. If you fancy trying it for yourself, you can set up with a winding machine, a magnetising rig and any other bits and pieces for less than £200, and the wire and parts for a T-type bridge pickup should total less than £20. Have a go! <https://huwpriceguitar.com>



David Davidson's *Vintage Icons*

It may look like a 70s survivor but this Les Paul Custom is one of six from a limited 1960 run

1960 Gibson Les Paul Custom



This Custom features a solid mahogany body, ebony fretboard, mother-of-pearl inlays and split diamond headstock inlay

This three-pickup Les Paul Custom belonged to Neal Schon of Journey. Its distinguishing feature is the cherry finish and Gibson only made six of them for the Swedish company Hagstrom in 1960. Very few people know that these exist and this one may be the only surviving version that is fully intact. The others I'm aware of have suffered broken headstocks and other repairs. We don't know of Gibson making Les Paul Customs in any other colour at that time.

"Neil sold it in the Heritage Auction in the pandemic [to clear space in his home]. It turned out to be the worst time to do an auction because his guitars really undersold. I remember having a conversation with Bonamassa afterwards and he felt Neil should have waited.

"I was amazed he didn't just get a storage place and put it off for a year or two, but nobody knew where the market was going to go at the time. It was a brutal auction to watch because we were worrying that it would hurt the vintage guitar market, but it had no effect either way. Things just started popping like crazy a couple of months after the auction happened. Neil just missed the boat, which is a shame.

"The special run of cherry Les Paul Customs all have late-1960 serial numbers and this one is '0 5700'. Despite that, it doesn't have a blade-thin neck, but the neck has a little less depth than 'bursts from earlier in the year. It has never been touched or tampered with and still has its original case and tiny little factory frets. It's very much a 'fretless wonder' and with

"Very few people know these exist... this one may be the only surviving version that is fully intact"

only minimal wear over the first three frets, it was probably used by a cowboy chord player.

"The gold hardware, Grover tuners and three Patent Applied For pickups are exactly as you would expect. The plating has worn and the pickup covers look more like nickel than gold, but it's otherwise very clean. There's the ebony fretboard, mother-of-pearl inlays, split diamond headstock inlay. One point of interest is the 'Made in USA' stamp, which is something Gibson only did to guitars specifically made for export. After 1970, all the guitars were stamped that way.

"Gibson also started making necks with volutes around that time but not all models had them. For instance, they wouldn't put one on an L5, or any of the high-end jazz models. Maybe Gibson just figured that the owners were less likely to drop them or send them flying off guitar stands than Les Paul, SG or ES-335 players.

"I think Gibson preferred making necks without volutes but they were aware that the necks had gained a reputation for being weak, and rival companies like Fender were alluding to it in their advertising. I often wonder why they didn't try putting

some kind of reinforcement in there. Maybe they tried it and didn't like the way the guitar sounded because it disturbed the way that energy travelled from the tip of the headstock to the body.

"The switching options are neck pickup, then the neck pickup with the centre pickup out of phase and then the bridge pickup in the back position. A lot of people modify the circuit if they're going to play the guitar out live and some don't like centre pickups because they get in the way when they're strumming. People complain about scratching sounds, hitting the pickup cover and making noises. Although, when I discussed this with Peter Frampton, he insisted it's easy to play between the pickups. I just laughed and said, 'Yeah, but not everybody's you'.

"The body is solid mahogany and there's no maple cap. The translucent finish has a very pretty and rich colour. Some call it 'wine red', but I think Gibson's official ledger refers to 'Cherry'. It's completely unfaded, so Gibson had obviously transitioned to a light-fast red pigment by the time this guitar was made.

"It doesn't resemble 'aniline red' and it looks like a stain with clear gloss coats on top. You have to be right in front of the guitar to notice any lacquer-checking and besides a few nicks and things on the back of the neck, it's in very fine condition." [HP]

Vintage guitar veteran David Davidson owns Well Strung Guitars in Farmingdale, New York www.wellstrungguitars.com / info@wellstrungguitars.com / 001 (516) 221-0563

"Gibson only made six of them for the Swedish company Högstrom in 1960"

This very rare 1960 Les Paul Custom was originally owned by Neal Schon of Journey

Blues Headlines

Richard Barrett is on a mission to make you a better blues player – with full audio examples and backing tracks



Rhythmic Phrasing

Tutor Richard Barrett | **Gear used** Knaggs SSC & Vox AC15 Hand-Wired
Difficulty ★★☆☆ | 10 mins per example

MOST OF US GUITARISTS are perpetually chasing ways to raise our game. That is part of the fun, after all. But sometimes what we seek is already freely available, without studying music theory, learning scale/arpeggio shapes or drilling picking exercises. I'm talking about the rhythm of what we play, which is arguably 50 per cent (if not more) of what makes phrases appealing and memorable.


If we feel we *should* be working harder, this is when we're most at risk of overplaying, filling all the gaps and overcomplicating things (take it from someone who's done it). Sometimes what feels good to play doesn't translate to what sounds good to the listener,

who may not play guitar or be wowed by rippling arpeggios.

If we listen closely to the greats, especially in this genre, you can hear that not only do they leave spaces, but when they do play, there's a rhythmic signature to their phrasing. For example, Clapton in *Crossroads*, Gilmour in *Comfortably Numb* and Peter Green in *Black Magic Woman* all have their own take on how they approach rhythms in the phrasing, giving a uniqueness while using the very same pentatonic shapes.

One thing that isn't demonstrated explicitly here is the spaces in between. That would certainly be easy to transcribe (and read!), but ultimately not particularly

helpful, so do bear in mind that even these examples are a concentrated version of what you might want to play in a real-life musical scenario.

The four phrases were played separately, but could be joined up to make a solo if you prefer. That being said, the fourth example is really an alternative take on Example 1, or perhaps a suggestion of how you might continue onwards in a similar style. I hope these examples are useful and enjoyable. See you next time! 



Richard Barrett's album, *Colours*, (complete with backing tracks), is available now to stream or buy from Amazon Music

Example 1

A QUICK RAKE LEADS INTO a contrasting held bend, giving a sense of space to start. Bar 2 then features some repeated triplets – feel free to pull back and play these late, you'll know when you've gone too far. Note the quarter-tone bends in bars 2 and 3. These are very subtle but add so much in terms of attitude. The final phrase crosses bars 3 and 4 – it's a smooth bend/release leading to a quick flurry, similar in essence to the introductory phrase.

♩ = 97

Bm

BU

BU

BU BD

1

4

Example 2

KEEPING WITH THE TRIPLET THEME to start, this example then takes a leaf out of Peter Green's book, especially in bar 3 where the rhythmic groupings feel as though they're floating independently of the beat. They aren't really in this case, though the last four semiquavers do pull back in tempo noticeably. This shouldn't be set in stone, keep experimenting – you can always dial it back if you think you've lost the feel. The pre-bend with fast vibrato in bar 3 is another detail worth spending some time on.

Example 3

THIS RHYTHMIC IDEA is similar to some of Eric Clapton's phrasing during his solos in *Crossroads*. The rhythmic groupings are quite funky and you will want to use down- and upstrokes to aid with this. Use this idea as a basis for further experimentation, rather than conforming precisely to any rhythm. There are no rules, but you can pick up some hints from watching the video. Also, watch for details such as quarter-tone bends, staccato/short notes and vibrato.

Example 4

AN ALTERNATIVE OPENING PHRASE, or a suggestion for how things might continue, this example draws on David Gilmour's phrasing from the solos in *Comfortably Numb*, *Another Brick In The Wall (Pt 2)* and *Have A Cigar*. As with Example 3, it's questionable how useful it would be to duplicate this exactly. This is more of a 'feel' thing, based around choppy/staccato or muted up- and downstrokes. We finish with a classic pentatonic lick, the last note of which (D) holds, adding a slow quarter-tone bend after crossing into bar 4.

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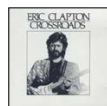
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Hear It Here

ERIC CLAPTON

CROSSROADS



One of the details which makes Eric's playing so appealing is his use of rhythm. Check out the solos in *Crossroads* and

you can hear him experimenting – and really pulling against the beat at times. He can also be heard (in a more restrained manner) on the *Bluesbreakers* ('Beano') album a few years earlier. More recently, he revisited this approach in *Bad Love*. Like anything, the rhythm is just a part of the picture, so often isn't as blatant as some of the examples.

ALBERT COLLINS

TRUCKIN' WITH ALBERT COLLINS



The Iceman himself, Albert used an unusual F minor tuning (low to high: F C F A, C F) often with a capo at the 5th to 7th fret,

which contributed to his sound, but that need not concern us too much here. All the same, check out *Frosty* from the 1969 album *Truckin' With Albert Collins*. On that same album, see if you can sit comfortably with the lilt between the guitar and brass on *Tremble!* Finally, have a listen to his playing alongside Gary Moore on his cover of *Too Tired*.

PETER GREEN

THE PIOUS BIRD OF GOOD OMEN



Peter's manipulation of rhythms is perhaps the most subtle of the players cited here, but his rhythmic groupings on *Black*

Magic Woman, *Supernatural* and *Need Your Love So Bad* demonstrate a free flowing 'push and pull' against the beat, with some unexpected pentatonic flurries that sound easier to play than they actually are. All are great demonstrations of the use of space, plus you can hear the intention behind each and every note.



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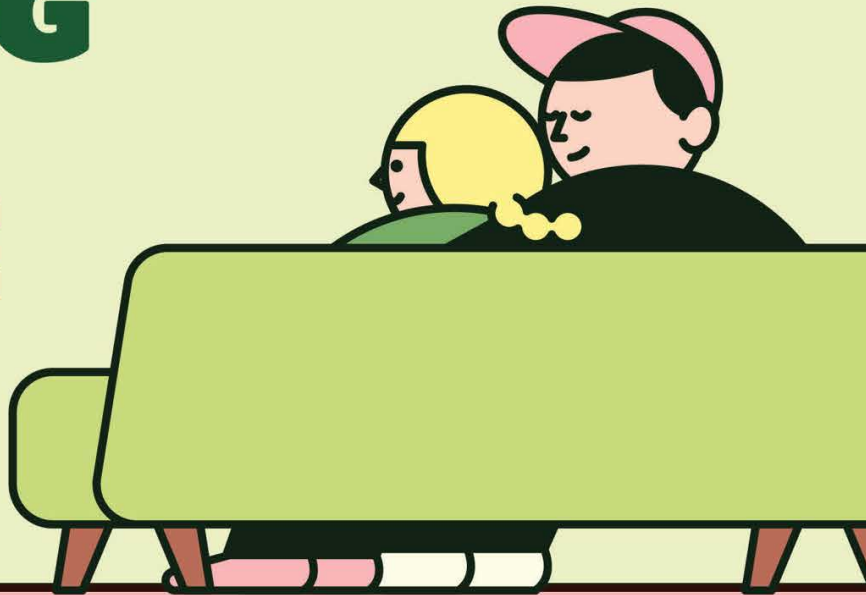


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10/10
GUITARIST MAGAZINE

SPECIAL GUEST
tom moriarty
A PERFORMER OF RARE TALENT
UK PRESS ASSOCIATION

ADDITIONAL SPECIAL GUEST
CHANTEL MCGREGOR
HOLMFIRTH ONLY

PLANET ROCK
WHERE ROCK LIVES

TUE 19 MAY | BRISTOL FLEECE
WED 20 MAY | NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS *
FRI 22 MAY | HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME **
SAT 23 MAY | GLASGOW ST LUKES *
SUN 24 MAY | NEWCASTLE ANARCHY BREW

WED 27 MAY | BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET
THU 28 MAY | BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
SAT 30 MAY | CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS *
SUN 31 MAY | CARDIFF THE GLOBE
WED 3 JUN | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL *

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MEET & GREET * / VIP TICKETS AVAILABLE AT PHILIPSAyce.COM
ADDITIONAL SPECIAL GUEST 18A %

PHOTO CREDIT: MARTY MOFFATT

THE GIG CARTEL BY ARRANGEMENT WITH HEXAGON BOOKING AGENCY PRESENTS

ERIC JOHNSON

Texaphonic

2026 TOUR EUROPE



WED 22 JULY | WOLVERHAMPTON KK'S STEEL MILL
FRI 24 JULY | FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
SAT 25 JULY | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
SUN 26 JULY | BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET
MON 27 JULY | SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK
WED 29 JULY | NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER

THU 30 JULY | NORWICH EPIC STUDIOS
FRI 31 JULY | HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
SAT 01 AUG | EDINBURGH THE QUEEN'S HALL
MON 03 AUG | SUNDERLAND THE FIRE STATION
TUE 04 AUG | LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION

THE GIG CARTEL.COM / ERICJOHNSON.COM

PHOTO CREDIT: MAX GRACE

THE GIG CARTEL PRESENTS

TOMMY EMMANUEL, CGP

LIVING IN THE LIGHT TOUR

WEDNESDAY 29TH | WARRINGTON PARR HALL
THURSDAY 30TH | STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE

TICKETS AND INFO AT TOMMYEMMANUEL.COM
THEGIGCARTEL.COM

PHOTO CREDIT: [unreadable]

THE GIG CARTEL & PLANET ROCK PRESENTS

ROBIN TROWER 2026

MON 31 AUG | SUNDERLAND THE FIRE STATION
TUE 01 SEP | EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL
THU 03 SEP | MANCHESTER ACADEMY
FRI 04 SEP | CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION
SAT 05 SEP | 02 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE LONDON

PLANET ROCK
WHERE ROCK LIVES

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THE GIG CARTEL PRESENTS

OCTOBER 2026
BLUESROCK'S RESILIENT ICON

WALTER TROUT

FRI 02 OCT | BUXTON OPERA HOUSE +
SAT 03 OCT | EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL +
SUN 04 OCT | ABERDEEN THE LEMON TREE +
TUE 06 OCT | SOUTHPORT ATKINSON *
WED 07 OCT | CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION +
THU 08 OCT | GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE +
FRI 09 OCT | CLITHEROE THE GRAND //

SAT 10 OCT | HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME //
SUN 11 OCT | NORWICH THE ADRIN FLUX WATERFRONT //
TUE 13 OCT | WOLVERHAMPTON KK'S STEEL MILL //
WED 14 OCT | GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL //
THU 15 OCT | FROME CHEESE & GRAIN //
FRI 16 OCT | SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK //
SUN 18 OCT | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL +

SPECIAL GUESTS
BOB MANN KENNEDY
9TH - 16TH
LAURA EVANS
(FULL BAND IN LONDON)
2ND - 8TH + (18TH)

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