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ARCHITECTS
ANIMALS

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CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

* Video riff

* Rockscool version

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Welcome...



The guitar solo has been pronounced dead or dying many a time. From the 70s punks who deliberately tried to kill it off, to Billie Joe Armstrong last year proclaiming the era of the anti-solo – it's an argument that just won't go away. Thing is, this contention has never been true.

For every proponent of the anti-solo there have always been just as many shredders, blues players, and so on, flying the flag for the lead guitar break. Since the early days of rock 'n' roll, guitar solos have *always* been around, even if their popularity has ebbed and flowed.

With solos in mind, this month we're looking at 50 of the greatest, as voted for by the readers of GuitarWorld.com. It's an interesting list, if somewhat classic rock oriented, but perhaps this is no surprise. Greats like Angus Young, David Gilmour, Jimmy Page, Brian May (I could go on!) have decades of popularity on their side – and they were all most active in a golden era of what we now refer to as 'classic' rock.

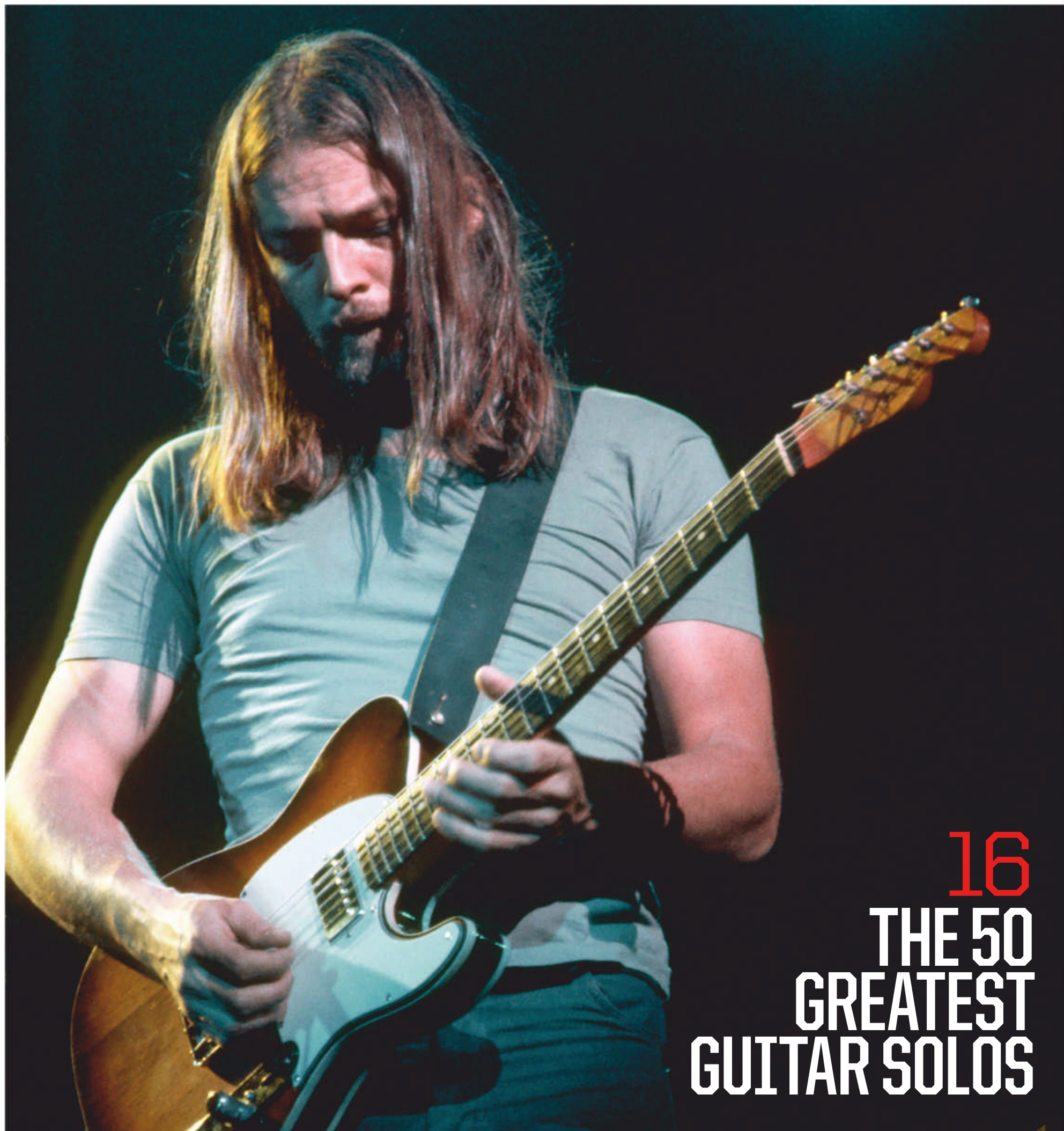
Continuing on the solos theme, our tabs this month should test your melodic chops! First up is Iron Maiden's era-defining heavy metal classic, *The Number Of The Beast*, complete with two solos courtesy of Dave Murray and Adrian Smith. And if you fancy something a little less frenetic, then check out this month's Rockschoool arrangement of Jeff Beck's *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* – surely one of the most beautiful lead guitar pieces of all time.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see you next month!

Chris

Chris Bird Editor

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GREATEST
GUITAR SOLOS



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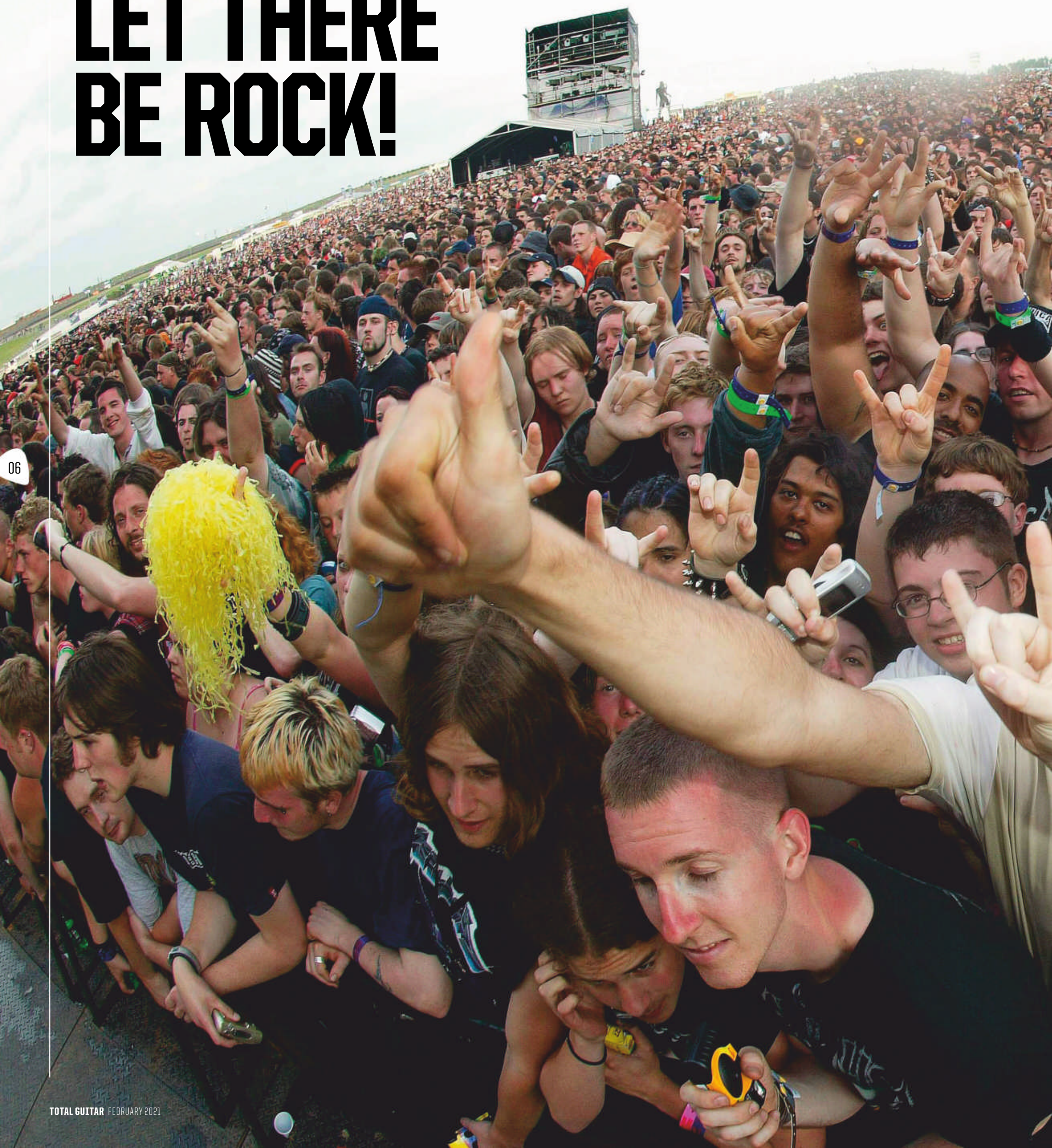


98 ARI O'NEAL

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Words: Paul Elliott Photo: Mick Hutson/Getty

LET THERE BE ROCK!



06



M

illions of people all over the world have been craving the return of live music, and nobody more so than Andy Copping, the organizer-in-chief of the Download festival. The 2021 event is scheduled for June 4th–6th, with Biffy Clyro, KISS and System Of A Down as the headline acts.

And as Copping tells TG: “We’re very optimistic that it goes ahead.” This is a man who has lived and breathed rock music since he was a kid. He attended the very first Monsters Of Rock festival in 1980, and having co-founded Download at the same venue, Donnington Park, in 2003, he says without exaggeration: “Live music is my life.” Copping was not alone in facing huge challenges in 2020. “The live industry, arts and entertainment, we’ve all had a big kicking,” he says.

But with a new year comes new hope. “There’s a light at the end of a dark tunnel,” he says. “The vaccine’s here, so hopefully we can get back to some kind of normality. The fans are chomping at the bit to get out there. The bands are of the same mind. So we’re going ahead with business as usual. And having been through all that we’ve been through, it’s great that things are moving in a positive direction.” As Copping proudly says: “There’s a special atmosphere about Download, just as there was with Monsters Of Rock.”

This photo, from Download 2004, speaks volumes.

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS



LET'S DANCE!

IS THE NEW FOO FIGHTERS ALBUM SET TO BE THE FEEL-GOOD HIT OF 2021?
PAT SMEAR AND CHRIS SHIFLETT SPILL THE BEANS...

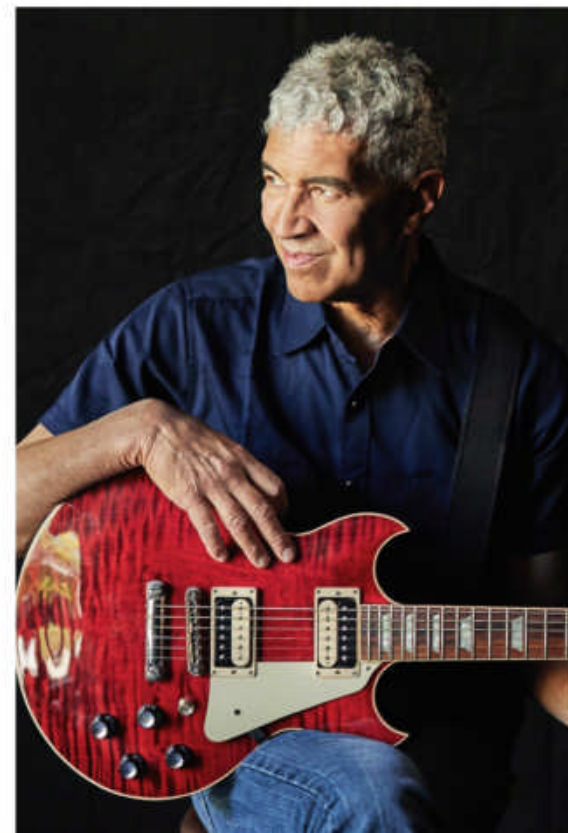
To fully embrace the spirit of *Medicine At Midnight*, the Foo Fighters' first album since 2017's *Concrete And Gold*, you are going to have to dig out your dancing shoes. No, Dave Grohl didn't install a glitter-ball in the control room as they tracked the album; they have not gone disco. Yet, nonetheless, this is a record that will make you move, with an insistent groove that's going to be hard to resist, and one that makes its presence felt when you least expect it. If you have already heard lead single, *Shame, Shame* – a playful jam that's borderline Timberlake – you'll have an idea of what's going on.

Released on 5 February, the album started out with hard rock ideas and over-sized melodies – Grohl, Pat Smear and Chris Shiflett's guitars laying the foundations. But it really found its sound with Grohl

channelling Bowie circa '83. *Let's Dance* was a lodestar for the vibe. "What happened was that we went in and we started making a regular Foo Fighters record when things started getting weird..." says Smear. "It went in another direction..."

Written and recorded before 2020 as we know it came into focus, *Medicine At Midnight* is free of all that angst. If you were looking for a 2021 release valve, maybe this is it. Chris Shiflett thinks so. "It's definitely what you would think of as an up record," he says. "I think of it as a Saturday night record. Yeah, it has a vibe for sure."

Produced by Greg Kurstin, *Medicine At Midnight* was written and recorded in an undisclosed location, a rental property that was reportedly haunted and in a state of modest disrepair. Ghosts or not, Smear said it was the ideal location: "I am telling you, even if it is a creepy haunted house, recording in houses is so cool."





ALBUM

PUMP UP THE VOLUME!

THIS MONTH SEES THE REISSUE OF THE CONNOISSEURS' SABBATH ALBUM, *VOL. 4*. TG ANALYSES HOW IOMMI CREATED THE ALBUM'S HEAVY SOUND

MONSTER DOWN-TUNING

After losing his fingertips to an industrial accident, Tony Iommi had a battle to keep playing guitar. On the *Paranoid* tour, Sabbath began playing in E₁ to reduce string tension. *Vol. 4* became the first Sabbath album recorded entirely in C# standard. A lucky by-product was the monstrous down-tuned effect. They didn't wear it out by simply chugging on the low C#, though. Most of the riffs are played higher on the neck, with really low notes dropped in occasionally for flavour.

THE CLASSIC IOMMI SG

Other than the new tuning, Iommi didn't mess with his tonal formula: his 1965 'Monkey' SG Special with P90 pickups made most of the noise. Yup, while diehard metallers insist only humbuckers will do, classic Sabbath relied on single coils.

THE 0-10-10 SETTING

Tony's Laney LA100 amp was a simple affair with not much gain; you had to dime the knobs to get it to roar. That gave quite a flubby low

end, so Tony often set the bass to zero with everything else maxed. That still wasn't enough, but a Rangemaster treble booster pushed it into meltdown. At those levels, the Laney produced a sub-frequency that almost sounded like an octave-down pedal, adding even more low end menace.

HARMONISED RIFFING

Before Thin Lizzy and Iron Maiden, harmony guitars were not yet essential to the metal sound, but Iommi's awesome intro to *Supernaut* showed the potential of twin guitar riffing. It's harmonised a 3rd up on the repeat, a sound Avenged Sevenfold now cannot live without.

THE CALM AMID THE STORM

People told Iommi he couldn't put an acoustic instrumental on such a heavy album, but the *Laguna Sunrise* interlude makes the surrounding chaos sound even bigger. The orchestra here also appears at the end of *Snowblind*, as Sabbath diversified their sound.



The Super Deluxe Edition of *Vol. 4*, including 20 previously unreleased tracks, is released on 21 February.

Main picture: A custom
Ry Cooder 'Coodercaster'
Insert: Clapton's 1954
Fender Strat



GEAR

GOING ONCE...

THE GUITAR WORLD PAYS ATTENTION AS MORE HIGHLY-
COVETABLE MODELS FIND THEIR WAY TO THE AUCTION BLOCK

Right: A 1966 Fender
Jazzmaster owned by
Chris Cornell and used
on tour from 1993-1994

2 020 has been something of an attention-demanding year for vintage guitar collectors and enthusiasts in general, as numerous iconic models have gone up for auction. As we detailed in last

month's issue, models that previously belonged to some of rock's biggest names had sold for eye-watering sums.

Notable models include Elvis Presley's Martin D-18 acoustic, George Harrison's Bartell fretless electric, Chuck Berry's Gibson ES-345, Eric Clapton's 1954 Fender Stratocaster and Prince's 'Blue Angel' Cloud 2 and Custom Shop 'Goldfinger' Strat. Continuing on this theme, several other memorable guitars have appeared for sale since our list was compiled.

The 'Coodercaster', owned and played by slide guitar master Ry Cooder, has recently appeared for sale on Reverb.com. According to Reverb, this model is the original Coodercaster, which is the adopted name for an entire range of guitars built or modified to emulate the eccentricities of Cooder's personal instruments. The

Coodercaster in question is said to be one that Ry owned, modified and played himself for decades. At the time of writing, the listing is at a price of £118,156.25.

Elsewhere, a cream-colored and signed Strat, played and smashed by Kurt Cobain in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on October 30th 1992, recently sold for \$153,600. In addition, Cobain's stage-played and smashed black Fender Strat, used on Nirvana's *In Utero* tour and gifted by Cobain to an audience member at the Palais Omnisport de Rennes in France, sold for \$128,000.

Furthermore, an EVH Charvel Art Series guitar is being offered with a minimum bid of \$30,000 via Nate D. Saunders Auctions, whilst, as reported on GuitarWorld.com, Chris Cornell's *Superunknown* Jazzmaster recently sold for \$125,000 at auction house Gotta Have Rock And Roll, where Eric Clapton's \$1m 1954 Strat failed to attract bids, possibly due to its extremely high price tag.

With an entire generation of legendary guitarists nearing retirement, expect to see far more unique and rare models for sale in the coming years.



JOE BONAMASSA

Guitar Man

FILM

THE
MAKING OF
A GUITAR
HEROFIVE THINGS WE
LEARNED ABOUT
JOE BONAMASSA
FROM THE NEW
DOCUMENTARY
*GUITAR MAN***1 HE COMES FROM
A LONG LINE OF
MUSICIANS**

As he's told us in the past, Joe was involved with guitars from a very young age thanks to his guitar shop owner father, Len Bonamassa, who gave Joe his first guitar at four years old. "We got him a Chiquita guitar – which is a shortened, scaled-down solid-body electric actually designed for airplane use," Len explains in the documentary. "By the time he was five, he was playing chords and he never looked back." But before that, his great grandfather Buddha was a respected trumpet player as was his grandfather Leonard Sr. – so it would be fair to say music was always in the blood.

**2 IN EARLY GROUP
BLOODLINE, HE FELT
LIKE "AN OLD MAN
IN A KID'S BODY"**

After opening for many a blues legend, it was time for Joe to make a career out of music – which is how he banded together with the sons of Miles Davis, Robby Krieger of The Doors and Berry Oakley from The Allman Brothers in Bloodline. It was, however, not meant to be. Joe's strict work ethic wasn't shared by the rest of the group, which is what led to their break-up after releasing only one album. "During that process there were a lot of fundamental differences between Joe, who was the guitar prodigy, and the 'sons of'," explains co-manager Roy Weisman. "All Joe wanted to do was play guitar and make music. The kids were a few years older, they wanted to have fun and didn't want to work that hard."

**3 PRODUCER KEVIN
SHIRLEY ENCOURAGED
HIM TO INCORPORATE
WORLD INFLUENCES**

Where do you go once you've headlined the Royal Albert Hall and cemented your stature as the king of modern blues? For Joe, it was now time to take the genre to new places. It was in fact Kevin Shirley who suggested recording 2010's *Black Rock* on the Greek island of Santorini – where local musicians playing more exotic-sounding, lesser-known instruments were hired. The recordings led to his invitation to headline the renowned Montreux Jazz Festival.

4 IMPROVISATION IS KEY

The only way to stay razor-sharp as a player is to continually throw yourself into the unexpected. As Kevin Shirley explains, a player as schooled as Joe sometimes needs to forget the homework and play straight from the heart. This is something they achieved by throwing solos at the guitar ace with no clue as to what mode or key to play in. "I'll say, 'Here we go Joe, it's coming in two bars', and he's in!" laughs the producer. "I get him not thinking too much, he has to be reactive."

**5 EVEN SMOKIN' JOE
HAS HIS OFF-DAYS**

By his own admission, the bluesman left a nine-week tour with supergroup Black Country Communion "with a high dose of burnout". He didn't even want to look at a guitar, – but sessions had been booked to complete *Dust Bowl* at The Village in Santa Monica. "I was blowing solos I could normally play in my sleep. That was the universe telling me I had taken on too much," he admits.

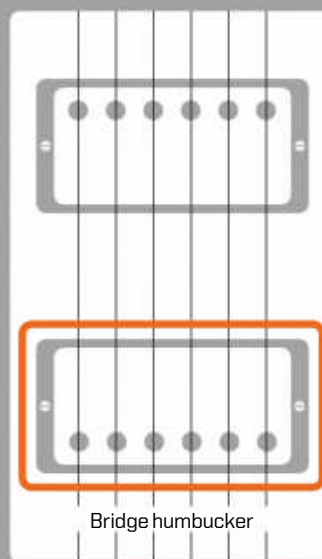
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Alternate tuning
- ✓ Palm muting
- ✓ Powerchords



GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Adam Christianson uses an LsL Instruments baritone scale guitar fitted with Bareknuckle Ragnarok pickups, while Josh prefers Fishman Fluence pickups with ESP and LTD guitars. Amp-wise, the Architects tone typically comes from Mesa amps like a Mark V or Dual Rectifier. The key to this riff is to keep the low end tight, so a Tube Screamer in front of the amp is the key to this. Add a noise gate to keep the pauses in the riff as clean as possible. Use a heavier set of strings (such as 0.011s or 0.012s) to counter the slacker strings from down-tuning.

ARCHITECTS

Animals

A

Animals is played in C# standard tuning, which means tuning each string down the equivalent of three frets. Guitarists Josh Middleton and Adam

Christianson adopt a heavy palm-muted approach here using mainly downpicking for a consistent attack. Tight alternate picking can work if you ensure your down- and upstrokes sound similar.

The riff alternates between palm-muted chugs on the open C#5aug chord and the various powerchords. It's a good idea to learn the chug rhythms first before adding the other shapes. The first three times are the same, but listen out for a rhythm change on the fourth group of chugs.

The first of the powerchord responses starts with F#5, C#5 and A5. The second time goes C#5, F#5, followed by a low F#5. Following

a repeat of the first line, the fourth and final response uses an open C# minor chord shape and a melodic single-note ending.

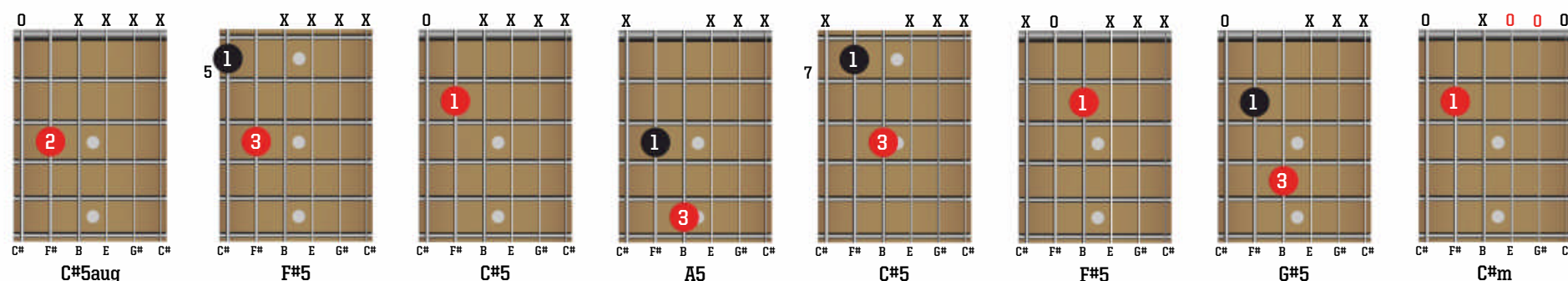
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:10-0:30

Tempo: 95 bpm

Key/scale: C# minor

Techniques: Palm muting, downstrokes, powerchords



The main palm-muted chugs use the unusual C#5aug chord, which is almost a regular powerchord, but the 5th is moved up a semitone. This makes for a heavy and tense sounding effect. The other chords are regular root/5th powerchords which all belong to the key signature. The riff finishes with an open C#m chord and a brief single-note melody. Remember, for C# standard tuning, you'll need to tune all six strings down by three semitones.

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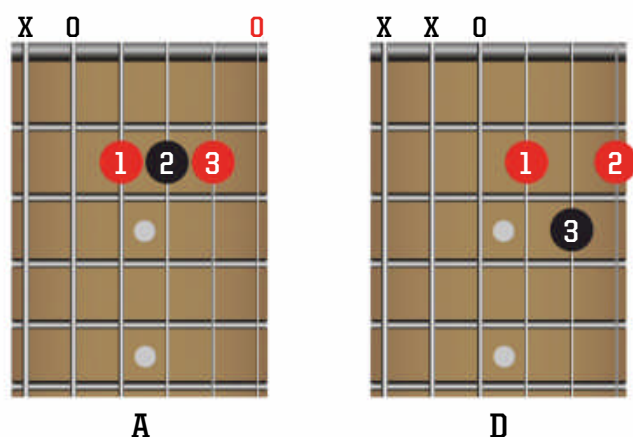
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GETTING STARTED WITH... CHORD CHANGES AND ARPEGGIOS

Play better chords and improve your accuracy by turning some easy shapes into arpeggios

GETTING STARTED

Before you get stuck in with our lesson, make sure you know these two chords: A and D.



10 OF THE BEST!

Once you're comfortable with this technique, you could learn:

REM – *Everybody Hurts*

Guns N' Roses – *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*

The Animals – *House Of The Rising Sun*

Jeff Buckley – *Hallelujah*

Lynyrd Skynyrd – *Sweet Home Alabama*

Alanis Morissette – *Hand In My Pocket*

Elvis Presley – *Can't Help Falling In Love*

Green Day – *Good Riddance (Time Of Your Life)*

Radiohead – *Street Spirit (Fade Out)*

KT Tunstall – *False Alarm*



Changing between open chords smoothly is a hurdle every guitarist faces early on. It takes perseverance, but once you can do it, you can play a huge number of songs. This month we'll be helping you to test your changes by playing some arpeggios – which just means picking the strings one at a time. This checks you are fretting accurately, trains your picking-hand precision, and it's a great musical alternative to strumming. As you pick each string, you'll

hear whether it's fretted properly. If it isn't, the note will buzz or choke. If that happens, check the following:

- Is your finger in the right place? It should be as close to the fret as possible without touching the fretwire.
- Is another finger accidentally fouling the note? It's easy for the underside of a finger to catch on another string.
- If both of the above are okay, are you pressing hard enough? You shouldn't have to strain, but you should press firmly.

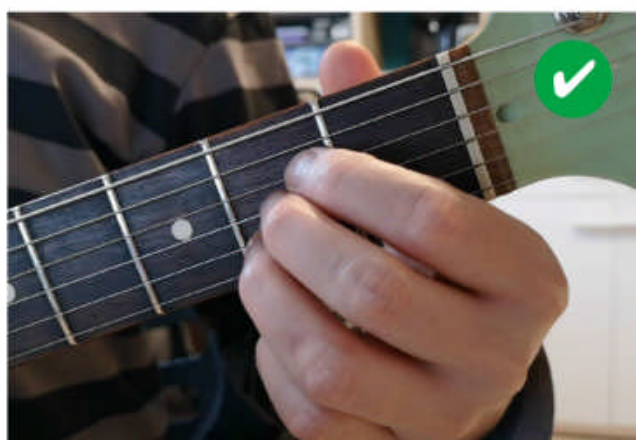
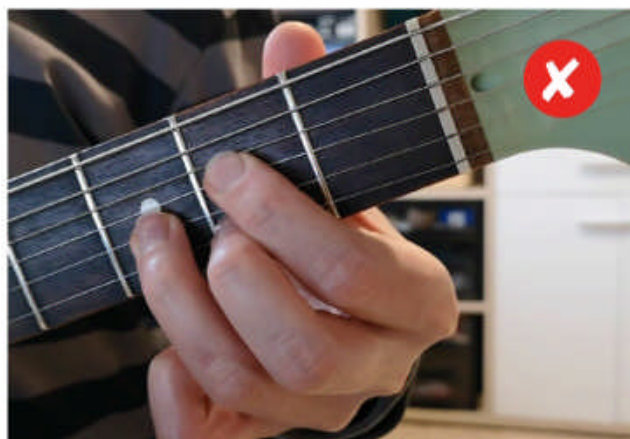
TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and your chords will sing



1. A AND D CHORDS: PULLED OUT OF TUNE

Be careful to avoid pushing or pulling on strings while fretting chords. Playing like this will always sound out of tune.



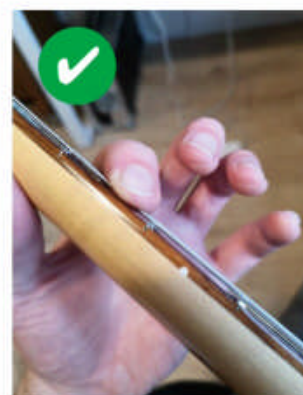
2. A AND D CHORDS: CORRECT FRETTING

Here are two correctly fretted chords: the strings run straight, and the fingers are as close to the frets as practically possible.



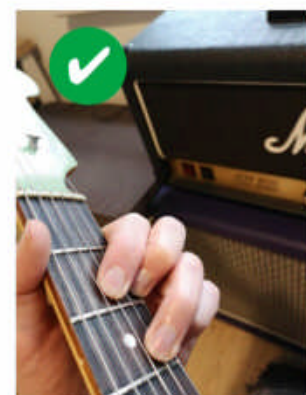
3. PRESSING TOO HARD

Don't press too hard. Here the string is mashed into the fingerboard, which will sound out of tune and fatigue your hands.



4. GETTING IT RIGHT

Only use the minimum amount of pressure needed for a clear sound. Pressing near the fret makes this easier.



5. TOP DOWN VIEW

Here's how a correct D chord will look to you. You can't see if the underside is fouling another string, so you'll have to feel it.

1 4/4 TIME

♩ = 75

A

D

TAB

0 2 2 2 0 2 2 2 | 0 2 2 2 0 2 2 2 | 0 2 3 2 3 2 0 0 | 0 2 3 2 3 2 0 0

^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V

Watch your picking hand at first to check you're hitting the right strings. When that's consistent, try to do it without looking. The picking directions tell you always to move your pick in the direction of the next string you'll play.

2 6/8 TIME

♩ = 50

G

Em

TAB

0 0 3 0 0 0 | 0 0 3 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0

3 3 3 3 3 3 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 0 2 2 0 2 2 | 0 2 2 0 2 2

^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V | ^ ^ ^ ^ V V V V

For this example you have to skip over certain strings (aka string skipping), so go slow at first. Hold down the full chord and then it won't sound bad if you hit a wrong string. It's more important to keep a steady rhythm than to pick exactly the right strings.

THE 50 GREATEST

Words
Chris Bird, Charlie Griffiths,
Rob Laing, Stuart Williams

Photography
Getty Images



TG PROUDLY PRESENTS OUR RUNDOWN OF THE HOTTEST SOLOS EVER RECORDED, AS VOTED FOR BY READERS OF GUITARWORLD.COM

The thorny subject of the greatest guitar solo of all time has long been a fiercely contested debate. Probably because every solo is different. How do you compare, say, *Comfortably Numb* with *Crazy Train*, or *Stairway To Heaven* with *Sultans Of Swing*? It's impossible. Still, public opinion ebbs and flows, and we wanted to find out which solos currently rank among our readers as the greatest of them all.

**TURN THE
PAGE AND
LET'S GET
STARTED!**



OF ALL TIME

So, a few short weeks ago, we ran a poll on GuitarWorld.com to find out, and here, over the course of the next thirty-something pages, we'll take you through the results. We'll take a look at the stories behind the songs and find out just what made those lead guitar breaks so great. We've spoken with Genesis legend Steve Hackett, glam rocker Justin Hawkins, Metallica's Kirk Hammett and more.

Finally, in the name of science, we've commissioned a real musicologist to explain the science behind the solos. If there's such a thing as a magic soloing formula, we'll soon find out!





50 PARABOLA TOOL

GUITARIST: **ADAM JONES**
(2001)

Alt-metal goes epic

As fans of the world-conquering four-piece have noted, there's really two different Tools on record. The former concerns the band's early days, specifically the *Opiate* EP and their debut album *Undertow*, with songs built around grinding riffs courtesy of bassist Paul D'Amour. With the addition of Justin Chancellor in 1995, the band's second and current phase moved towards complex prog, and by 2001's *Lateralus* they were

a group changed irreversibly. The inclusion of *Parabola*'s (albeit short) solo takes guitarist Adam Jones away from the solo-shy, riff-centric styles of his contemporaries, brushing off the hallmarks of typical 90s and 00s alternative music. Though not Jones' first solo on a Tool song, his use of melody in *Parabola*'s lead break indicates his growth as a composer, and the addition of polyrhythmic harmonics are a demonstration of his creativity.



49 JESSICA THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

GUITARIST: **DICKEY BETTS**
(1973)

Not just for Top Gear

Word is Dickey Betts wrote this as a tribute to Django Reinhardt, which is why it's possible to play with just two fingers, Reinhardt having lost the use of his other fingers. Sonically though, this is pure southern rock. An Allman Brothers secret is adding the perfect 4th to the major pentatonic (in A major this is A-B-C#-D-E-F#), and that sound is here in abundance.

Despite the regular appearance of the note G natural in the rhythm guitar part, giving a Mixolydian sound, that note never appears in the main theme and is used sparingly in the solo. The solo itself is a masterclass in using repeated motifs to build an interesting solo. Where other guitarists fear repeating themselves, Betts creates hooks and themes by returning to two or three core ideas.

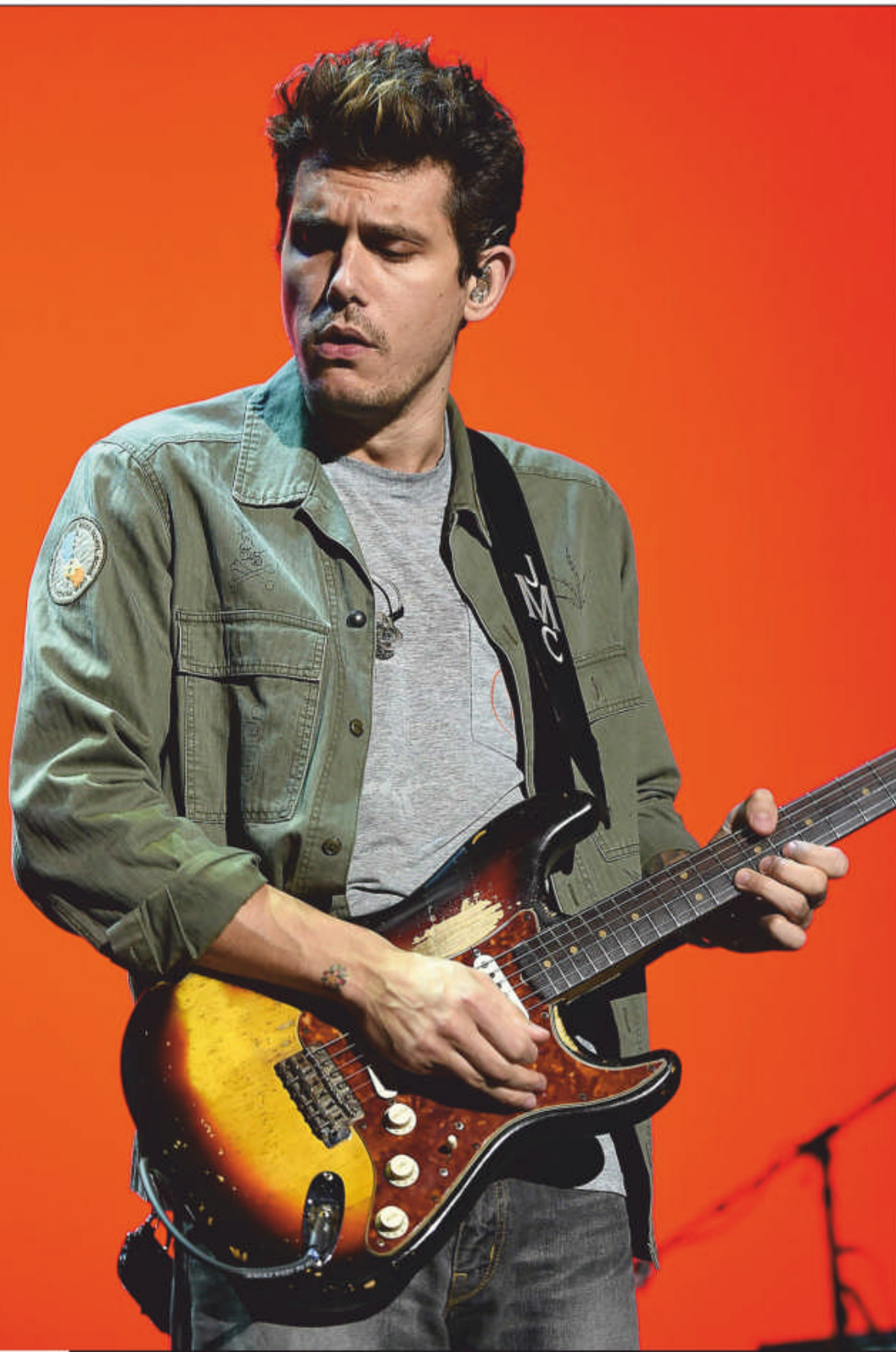
48 NUTSHELL ALICE IN CHAINS

GUITARIST: **JERRY CANTRELL**
(1994)

Sad songs say so much

This song doesn't have a chorus as such. Instead, Jerry Cantrell's memorable pentatonic licks serve as a hook alongside the backing vocals. *Nutshell* has been voted one of the saddest songs of all time, and Cantrell's guitar takes over as Layne Staley's lyrics reach a peak of despair, as though the guitar speaks when mere words are insufficient. The use of delay is particularly effective at 3:34,

when Cantrell slides spectacularly upwards off a note, which is then repeated a beat later. His Van Halen influence is obvious in the ensuing legato licks, which are surprisingly shreddy for a grunge-era hit. And then, brilliantly, Cantrell simply stops playing as the groove continues, allowing the listener to sit in the well of emotion the band has just conjured.



46 PARANOID ANDROID RADIOHEAD

GUITARIST: **JONNY GREENWOOD**
(1997)

When does a guitar become a robot?

One of the most successful examples of the anti-guitar-god movement, Radiohead have built a career rallying against the clichés of rock. Ever reluctant to conform, the brilliantly imaginative Johnny Greenwood has proven that he relishes the opportunity to turn a traditional solo on its head. *Paranoid Android*'s first, shorter solo comes after three minutes of ominous riffing that builds slowly to a noisy guitar freak-out.

Greenwood begins with intense tremolo picking – a flurry of notes that distress the listener. For the outro solo, Jonny then employs both regular and reversed guitar parts and string bends a-plenty through the envelope filter of his Mutronics Mutator rack unit. It's no exaggeration to suggest that Greenwood's solo genuinely sounds more like droid from *Star Wars* having a meltdown than a traditional guitar – which is, of course, entirely the idea.



47 GRAVITY JOHN MAYER

GUITARIST: **JOHN MAYER**
(2005)

A modern blues master

Mayer is without doubt the 21st century's most popular blues guitarist, and this remarkably compact offering shows why. A four-minute pop song with succinct and melodic guitar breaks, *Gravity* has exactly as much guitar as it needs. Mayer's exceptional bending and vibrato bring to mind Peter Green and BB King, and few players have made

a Strat sound so clean and so warm at the same time. Mayer knows how to develop ideas rather than merely repeat them. At 2:17 he plays a lick and then repeats it twice as fast; from 2:25 he plays a clever double bend lick and then transposes it further down the scale. But it's his mastery of sliding that really stands out, with a spectacular glissando to finish as the vocal comes back in.

45 MAGGOT BRAIN FUNKADELIC

GUITARIST: **EDDIE HAZEL**
(1971)

The closest anyone got to Hendrix?

In the year following Hendrix's death, the rock press searched for a worthy heir – and most concluded it was Funkadelic's Eddie Hazel who most deserved the title. *Maggot Brain*, his definitive guitar statement, is a ten-minute improvisation laid down in one take. Like Hendrix, Hazel finds joy in fuzz, wah, whammy and feedback, and gives himself the space to explore every sound his

Strat can make. At five minutes, it's nearly clean. By eight minutes, Hazel has produced the most extreme Velcro fuzz tone. Hazel initially recorded with a full band, but Funkadelic leader George Clinton faded most of them out and created the spacey backing on the final track, adding multiple layers of Echoplex to Hazel's guitar explorations. For great musicians, even guitar solos can be collaborative events.

44 I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE THE DARKNESS

GUITARIST: JUSTIN HAWKINS
(2003)

Justin Hawkins on the big hit with the “saucy bends”

“In this song I had the first solo, which was fairly easy to play, with a few of those licks I try to stick in pretty much everything. It’s more of a first chorus tag kind of thing. Then I was tasked with having the run home near the end. I always start off with a big saucy bend, that’s always been my thing I guess. There’s a harmony guitar or two in there as well – in fact there’s all sorts of things going on under the hood, including five seconds of dramatic monologue for the discerning listener with a good stereo. From that opening bend, it’s all blues stuff around the 12th fret really. I like to call it the humble blues scale! I climb down the scale and then end that run with another saucy bend... What can I say, people love saucy bends!

“For the opening section I was clearly trying to be Brian May, but then comes this almost funky bit on the D and G strings where I’m going for more of a Slash vibe. And there’s more of that humble blues scale – honestly, you really can’t knock it! It’s not quite pentatonic because you have that extra note in there... I actually find the more extra notes you include, the more it makes everything sound posh.

“The next bit is where I was trying to be Billy Duffy from The Cult. On the *Electric* album, there’s that song called *Bad Fun* where he uses hammer-ons and pull-offs against an open string. I decided to do that on the top string to get myself up to where I wanted to be. I love soloing in E and especially on Les Pauls, because there’s always an ‘out’ by bending on the highest fret you can have. It looks

spectacular live because you can reach over the top of the neck and pull it with first finger on the fretting hand. It’s perfectly feasible and justified, in some instances.

I suppose this solo does deserve to be in this list, because I ended up copying everyone that matters to me... Justin’s Jive Bunny Megamix!

“For the recording, I think we were in 2KHZ Studios on Scrubs Lane in Willesden, London. I was playing a black Les Paul Standard. It was my first-ever Les Paul, actually – made in 2000. I’ve still got it in the studio but it’s f*cked, I think all the insides have rotted away with sweat because we did thousands and thousands of pub gigs with that thing. It’s still a great guitar, made before they started chambering the bodies, so it’s a proper heavy Standard with a thin and playable neck. I used it for pretty much everything on the first record. Amps-wise, I would just go through whatever Dan [Hawkins, guitarist] and Pedro [Ferreira, producer] put me through. I think it was an old Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier with no effects, because effects are for the weak-minded. I have to say the guitars were recorded properly on this album. That’s the one thing that we nailed. Any other shortcomings were compensated by the fact that the guitars were super loud, well played and beautifully recorded!”





43 SHOCK ME KISS

GUITARIST: **ACE FREHLEY**
(1977)

Space Ace's rock lick Bible

Not so much a solo as a greatest hits compilation for the pentatonic scale, *Shock Me* sees Ace Frehley wheeling out his entire lick arsenal. He neatly distils the first 25 years of American rock guitar into 50 seconds, ready to be plagiarised for the next 25 years. Just when you think it's winding down at 2:29, it instead changes key and keeps on rolling. Ace's signature strictly rhythmic vibrato is ever present, and he combines major and minor pentatonic lines seamlessly. His licks are mostly

not hard to play, and that's a major reason they've been so influential. There aren't many things that unite hair metal and grunge guitarists, but this solo is one of them. The flurries of pull-offs at 2:06 are played by pulling off 8-7-5 on the E string and then repeating on the B string (Ace is tuned down a semitone). The wild blues scale lick at 2:14 is worth stealing, too; the timing of those massive three-fret bends (played at fret 12 on the E string) feels like whiplash. Check out live versions for the full Kiss experience.



42 SLOE GIN JOE BONAMASSA

GUITARIST: **JOE BONAMASSA**
(2007)

A 21st century blues epic

Bonamassa's reputation as a high-octane performer makes his work on this classic cover all the more impressive. Although he easily has the rock chops to match his blues, he never plays fast here. Instead, he relies on his superb note choice, sense of rhythm, and vibrato to convey passion, along with some bruising three-fret bends. As always, he lands on notes from the underlying chords at the most opportune moments, while the wah-wah and killswitch effects in verse two mirror the chaotic state of mind shown in the lyrics. Joe's Les Paul tone is enormous, and when he reaches for the

neck pickup for the raked arpeggios at 2:57, every note is gorgeously articulated. The Aeolian chord progression, tempo, and epic feel make it reminiscent of a blues *Comfortably Numb*, and Bonamassa rivals Gilmour both for string bending control and intensity without resorting the shred. Guitar solos account for nearly half of *Sloe Gin*'s eight minutes, yet Joe never hints at running out of inspiration. He leaves plenty of space near the beginning, so that when he starts playing continuously and high on the neck by the end, it sounds relentless. Joe is proof that blues is a bottomless well.



41 KILLING IN THE NAME RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

GUITARIST: **TOM MORELLO**
(1991)

Guitar solo or car alarm?

Though Rage guitarist Tom Morello may be best known for reimagining the art of soloing as collages of abstract noise (often sounding closer to a car alarm than a guitar), the self-proclaimed 'DJ of the group' doesn't rely on a huge range pedals to create his unorthodox sounds. In the solo of one-time UK Christmas no.1 *Killing In The Name*, Morello employs his humble Digitech Whammy (using a two-octave

pitch-shift) to complement his precise tremolo picking and D minor pentatonic licks. Despite the fascinating sonic assault, the set-up is relatively simple. As Morello told TG: "I enjoy embracing limitations. I've had the same amp and pedals for the entirety of my career. I decided I wouldn't go crazy with buying new pieces, but rather plumb the depths of my imagination to take this limited setup and get the maximum I can out of it."

40 FLYING IN A BLUE DREAM JOE SATRIANI

GUITARIST: **JOE SATRIANI**
(1989)

A perfectly-titled rock instrumental

This is every guitar teacher's go-to exemplar for the Lydian mode. Satch's effortless legato enhances the mode's dreamlike quality for a sound that lives up to the title. Everyone can learn from the way Joe uses slides, vibrato, and hammer-ons to turn a simple melody into such a powerful statement. Duplicating his shred licks is a bit more specialised.

When the song kicks up a gear at 2:38, Satch moves from Lydian to Mixolydian for more typically rock phrasing. At 3:08, he's back to Lydian and the track regains the sensation of floating it has at the beginning. The chord progression creates such atmosphere that the last minute and a half of the track don't even need a melody, and Satch's feedback effects just heighten the ambience.



39 SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL THE ROLLING STONES

GUITARIST: **KEITH RICHARDS**
(1968)

Satanism at its most exciting

The sheer stuttering unexpectedness of this solo makes it captivating. The first lick starts halfway through beat 2 (where else?), and the following phrases are spaced out unpredictably after that. Keef uses repetition effectively, and there's a lovely sequence from 2:55-2:58 of the same idea repeated with different end notes. A lick at 3:13 consists of just one well-placed note, later repeated

with a syncopated rhythm. Slash loved this solo so much he resented being asked to recreate it for Guns N' Roses' cover, believing the original to be untouchable. History doesn't record what guitar Keef used, but a contemporary documentary shows him getting a similar tone from a three-pickup Les Paul Custom in rehearsal. The amp was probably an AC30 with bass set to zero, which explains the spiky tone.

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38 ROCK BOTTOM UFO

GUITARIST: **MICHAEL SCHENKER**
[1979]

Michael Schenker on his ever-evolving epic

"It was always meant to be. I had to play one long solo in my life that I could use to express myself – an extended improvised lead break, rather than the short ones I usually do. When I was with UFO making (1974 album) *Phenomenon*, there was a moment where I realised this was going to be that big solo for me, with a background rhythm section to build it all on.

"Then over the years from touring, I started to develop and change parts. By the time we got to [1979 live album] *Strangers In The Night*, it would always be different! Of course there were parts from the original, recognisable melodic pieces that were important for the song, but then I would always go somewhere else. I've carried on doing that through the years – using that solo as an adventure and just take off, heading into unknown territories!

"I constructed the solo by just being me, by not thinking too much and going with the flow.

In the studio, I did it one way and then it started to change every night. The main parts – like the slow ascending notes at the beginning or the violining that comes after and the quick legato trills on the G-string I use live to set up for what I do next. That's what gives me room for adventure and the freedom to explore what I'm feeling in the moment. And that's why the solo has gotten longer and longer over the years! When you are on an adventure, you don't plan anything. To improvise you have to feel and focus on what are thinking right there and then.

"And nobody knows what will happen. Sometimes it will turn out great. Sometimes maybe not so good. Sometimes exceptional! That's the best thing about it. From the stage, you can hear the reaction of the audience when the magic happens. I'm hoping for that magic every time I play it live. We all want to know what is Michael going to do today... Even me! There's an excitement to not knowing what is going to happen.

"There were actually three or four notes I didn't agree with on the live album. They sounded like mistakes to me! But mistakes can become part of the song and become important if people get used to them. After a while, they expect those notes! I was a bit disappointed, there were two different nights recorded for *Strangers In The Night* and [producer] Ron Nevison picked the Chicago version and I preferred the one from Louisville.

"Is there a Santana kind of feel at points? Absolutely! In my late teens I stopped listening to music, but before that it was great guitarists like Carlos, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck and Johnny Winter who helped me understand the guitar. I was always so excited to find players like that. In the early days, you could probably hear my influences a bit more. But the infinite spring of creation in my world has always mutated and evolved. Now you can't really hear the influences as much – it's more Michael Schenker than ever!"



37 THE THRILL IS GONE BB KING

GUITARIST: **BB KING**
(1969)

The definitive minor blues solo

Every note of this is stunning, from the barely-audible fills in verse two to King's magnificent solos. If you've ever wondered how he's so lyrical, it's because he creates entire phrases with string bends. Those bends offer an infinite range of pitch, BB finds sweet spots that aren't available on the frets. Just 15 seconds into *The Thrill is Gone*, King spits out a lick with more

subtlety and feeling than most guitarists manage in a career, topped by his peerless vibrato. BB's playing here is a little busier than on many of his classics, but a huge amount of it can be played using only the first two strings from B minor pentatonic position 2. With his string bending genius, BB could say everything with those four notes.



36 CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS JEFF BECK

GUITARIST: **JEFF BECK**
(1994)

Stevie Wonder-penned instrumental genius

Possibly the greatest display of dynamic control ever on electric guitar. Using the guitar's volume and varying his attack, Beck moves from clean to filthy, and from barely audible to raging. This was before Beck became the Strat master and was recorded using his Tele-Gib, a Telecaster with humbuckers. Even without the Strat trem, Beck's control of bends gives the main melody a lyrical

quality to rival any vocalist. The song reaches peak intensity at around three minutes, and incredibly Beck sustains this level of passion for over minute before gradually bringing things back to Earth. The volume swells on the intro are inspired by Roy Buchanan, to whom Beck dedicated the track. Play them by plucking the note with the guitar volume on zero and quickly bringing the volume up.

35 LENNY STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

GUITARIST: **STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN**
(1983)

The delicate side of SRV

When the young SRV couldn't afford \$350 for the '65 Strat he found in a pawn shop, his future wife Lenora got all his friends to chip in on it as a birthday present. The touched Stevie stayed up all night writing Lenny in tribute. The guitar was mellower than his Number One Strat, perfect for Lenny's extended chords and softer approach. Stevie plays with huge dynamic range in this track,

using pick and fingers at different times. The tone is essentially clean, but when Stevie picks hard you can hear it break into overdrive. It's predominantly played with neck/middle pickup combination, but there are moments on bridge and neck pickup action too. It's Stevie's use of double stops and masterful combination of major and minor scales that make it so special.

34 WALK THIS WAY AEROSMITH

GUITARIST: **JOE PERRY**
(1975)

Funk-rock with more swagger than Jagger

One of the funkier rock tunes ever, *Walk This Way*'s groove is powered by Joe Perry's incomparable swing. There are three solos, all with exciting and idiosyncratic phrasing. Perry has a reputation as a standard blues-rock player, but he tries to avoid obvious clichés. These solos are each full of slippery lines created by mixing major pentatonic and blues scales.

The first solo was played on a Les Paul Junior that also provided the rhythm tone; the others were recorded on his '57 Strat. One of the coolest ideas comes at 2:38 where Joe plays a typical repeating lick in C minor pentatonic shape 5, starting on the G string. He then repeats the same pattern one string higher, producing a wild combination of major and minor notes.



33 CROSSROADS CREAM

GUITARIST: **ERIC CLAPTON**
(1966)

A rock cover of a blues song at its finest

What started as a blues song known as *Cross Road Blues* by Robert Johnson would become one of the finest examples of natural ability, soulfulness and showmanship from the guitarist at least once referred to as 'God'. The man in question is, of course, Eric 'Slowhand' Clapton, and his reimagining of 'Crossroads' as a rock song further cemented the legacy of the virtuosic 22-year-old. Famously recorded at

The Fillmore, San Francisco, for supergroup Cream's *Wheels Of Fire* album, Clapton's arrangement retains the soul and spirit of Johnson's original, but updates it for a contemporary audience raring to cut loose and be entertained by dazzlingly quick, passionate musicianship. Little did they expect, one assumes, that the four-minute track would be studied in great detail by guitar scholars and fans alike for 50 years to come.



32 FLOODS PANTERA

GUITARIST: **DIMEBAG DARRELL**
(1996)

Raw aggression as blues meets metal

The solo in *Floods* begins with a harmonic-drenched take on the main riff, featuring sus2 voicings (one powerchord stacked on top of another) making a kind of metal *Message In A Bottle*. Dime's C# standard tuning helps to facilitate his jack-the-ripper vibrato, but you could play it in standard tuning (it's in B_♭ minor). Compared to other extreme metal players of

the time, Dime's note choices are more blues based. His phrasing here is closer to Slash than Marty Friedman. Dime's Van Halen influence is apparent in the tapping lick at 4:39. He bends up the second string and taps three frets higher, pulling off as he releases the bend. Rather than ending with a shred fest, Dime builds a devastating climax with an ascending series of unison bends.



31 UNDER A GLASS MOON DREAM THEATER

GUITARIST **JOHN PETRUCCI**
(1992)

The Hitchhiker's Guide To Shred

If you've ever asked what shred guitar is, show your interlocutor this solo. In 59 seconds, Petrucci covers alternate picking, sweep picking, tapping, whammy techniques, legato, harmonics, and aggressive blues scale phrasing – a near comprehensive tour of modern guitar technique in under a minute. It jumps between C# Dorian and E Lydian, and despite some offbeat rhythms

it's all in 4/4. The hard-grooving pentatonic section should silence anyone who suggests Petrucci lacks feel. A useful lick you can steal no matter your ability comes at 5:04–5:06. Petrucci plays in 5ths on the first two strings (use the classic powerchord shape), and slides it between the 14th and 17th frets, playing the notes one at a time. It isn't rocket science, but it is a great cliché buster.



30 LA GRANGE ZZ TOP

GUITARIST **BILLY GIBBONS**
(1973)

Pinched harmonic trailblazer

Billy Gibbons is credited as the first guitarist to record a pinched harmonic. There are tons of them here, ready to inspire the infant Zakk Wylde. Like Brian May's sixpence, Gibbons's Mexican peso guitar pick really makes the notes squeal. The song changes key for the first solo, moving from A to C and feeling like things have kicked up a gear even before Gibbons brings the fire. Check out the doublestops just as the track fades out, too. There are two essential licks to get down from the first solo.

The first is from C minor pentatonic shape two: Gibbons slides into the G string fret 12, and alternates between this and B string fret 11 with hybrid pick and finger technique. Hear this lick for the first time at 1:41, and repeatedly thereafter. The second lick is the turnaround stops when the song moves back to A at 1:58. Again using hybrid picking, Billy starts at fret 5 on the D string and high E string. The D string note moves down one fret at a time, but the E string stays on the 5th fret. It'll also work over a 12-bar blues in A.



29 ALIVE PEARL JAM

GUITARIST: **MIKE MCCREADY**
[1991]

The grunge classic that pays tribute to classic rock

Despite being one of grunge's biggest acts, Pearl Jam have always been more of a classic rock band with a distinctly 90s aesthetic. Underneath the plaid shirts and warbled vocals of Eddie Vedder, PJ were a stadium rock band hidden in plain sight. Case in point: Mike McCready's solo in *Ten*

highlight *Alive* is in fact a homage to Ace Frehley's solo in Kiss' 1975 track *She* – itself, in turn, copied from Robby Krieger's solo in The Door's *Five To One*. The self-identified plagiarism (at best a compliment, at worst a lawsuit) doesn't take away from its impact, though, as *Alive*'s laidback riffing and

incendiary choruses are the perfect backdrop for McCready to display of all his favourite guitar hero techniques, such as vibrato, whammy bar bends and a heavy wah presence. The combination works tremendously, reaching euphoric heights in the song's long outro.

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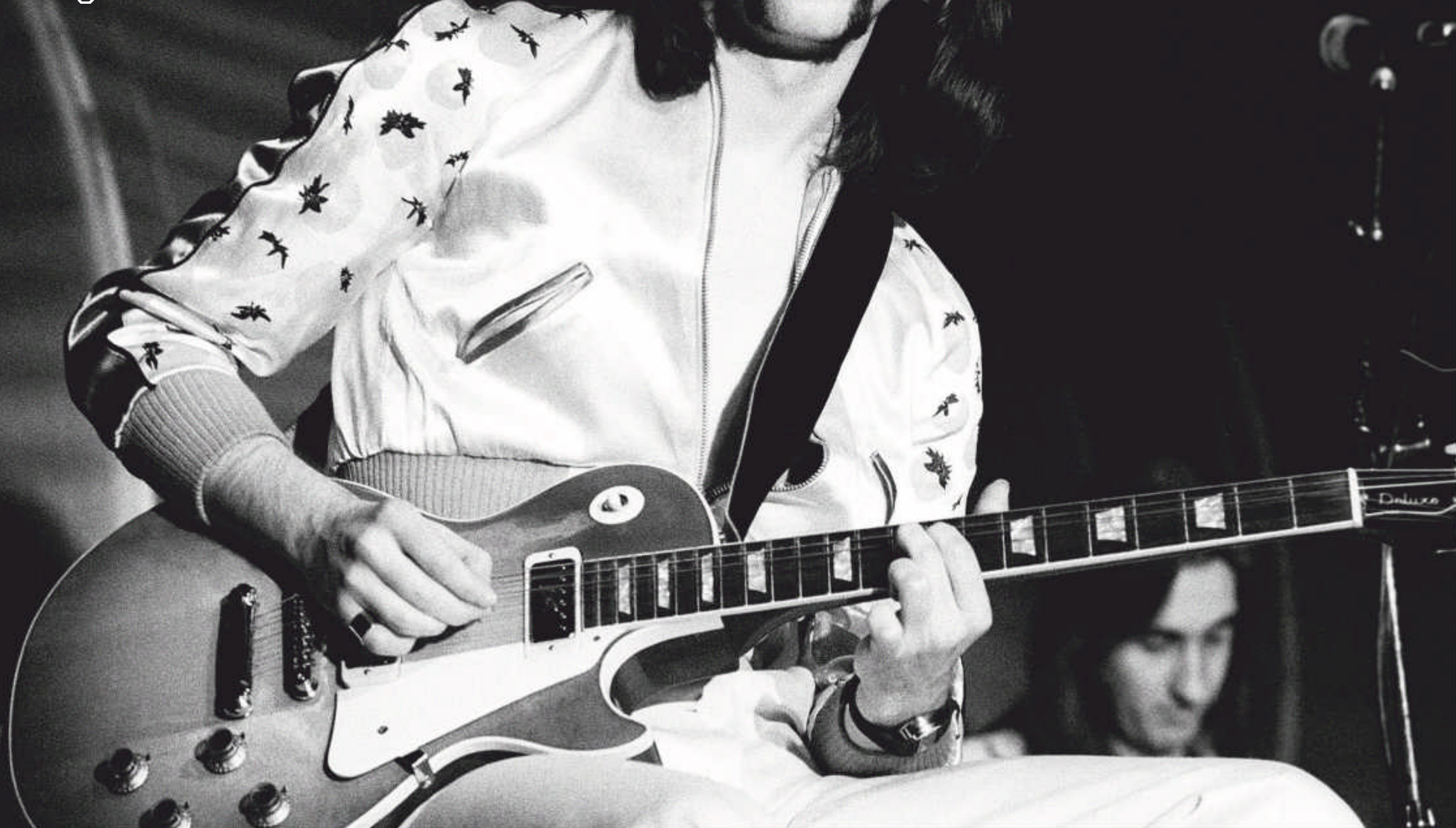


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28 FIRTH OF FIFTH GENESIS

GUITARIST: **STEVE HACKETT**
(1973)

Steve Hackett on his epic solo and the guitar of his dreams



Tony Banks wrote the song and there was a section on piano which was essentially the melody I play. I had the idea of touching on the lyrics, which talk about a river that becomes the sea. I imagined, with this held sustained feedback note, that the big keyboard swells were the sea and my part was a seagull flying high above. It all tied in with me getting new bits of equipment – I was using a Hiwatt amp, a Schaller volume pedal, a Tone Bender fuzz box and an Echoplex. The combination of all those things meant that I could produce my own sound – I could suddenly sound live, or so it seemed to me, and it felt like this big quantum leap forward.

“I worked around Tony’s melody and my amp just happened to feed back fairly reliably on a high F# note which suited the solo. I minimised some of the really pianistic bits which sounded quite Bach-like in favour of

more elegiac and soaring moments. It was the longest solo I ever did for Genesis. I never timed it but it must be about three or three and a half minutes long. So there was the writer, the player and the interpretation...

“The guitar I used was a 1957 Les Paul Standard with humbuckers. You could describe it as an original. I really love that guitar and I’ve still got it. Having had several Les Pauls stolen over time, always at gigs, I no longer take it on the road with me. I just think that would be jinxed. I’m still in love with it and it’s still the guitar of my dreams. At the time I was using the bridge pickup pretty much exclusively but this solo sounds thicker than that. It may have been at [producer] John Burns’ suggestion, being a guitarist himself, that I used both pickups. At one point I was employing an EBow to play it live and that worked well for a while, except for having to pick it up and put it down, but these days I tend to play it on a Fernandes guitar with

a Sustainer. It’s more reliable and less hit or miss, feeding back reliably nine times out of 10.

“There are some major 7th notes in there to give it that harmonic minor sound – it’s a very interesting scale. The whole middle-Eastern world opens up to you when start playing it, which is a great thing! For me, this was the closest thing to adagio rock guitar that can be done, with slow melodies. It’s not a million miles off what Erik Satie was doing as a turn of the century French impressionist and composer, as well as Ravel or Bach. Of course, guitarists weren’t the first to play harmonic minor – you get it in Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky – with Russian composers particularly, bordering those exotic regions with that vast landscape. You get it with the French, who were not immune to the pull of the East themselves! And it mixes with rock very well... Just ask any member of The Yardbirds or Led Zeppelin!”



27 EUROPA (EARTH'S CRY HEAVEN'S SMILE) SANTANA

GUITARIST: **CARLOS SANTANA**
(1976)

Latin fire burns bright in this comeback hit

Rleased in 1976, Santana's *Amigos* album marked a return to commercial success for the band across Europe. Particularly remarkable was the chart success of *Europa*, not because Santana weren't well-known, but because this is a five-minute instrumental. Take a listen and you might feel like you've heard the track before,

and this is thanks to the use of a standard jazz chord progression. Listen to Joseph Kosma's *Autumn Leaves* and you'll hear where Carlos found his inspiration. Following those trademark licks in the song's first half, *Europa* takes you on a journey outside of that standard progression with a move to a simple I-IV progression in a minor key and some fiery playing.

26 LIMELIGHT RUSH

GUITARIST: **ALEX LIFESON**
(1981)

The whammy bar takes centre stage

In 1996, Alex Lifeson related to *Guitar World*, "The approach on that solo was to try to make it as fluid as possible. There was a lot of bending with lots of long delay repeats and reverb, so notes falling off would overlap with notes coming up. I spent a fair amount of time on that to get the character, but once we locked in on the sound, it came easily." In fact,

the most prominent "bending" came in the form of whammy bar divebombs played on Alex' Floyd Rose-equipped Hentor Stratocaster through a Marshall Club And Country 50-watt combo. "We set up a couple of amps outside of the studio as well as inside," Lifeson related, "so we got a nice long repeat with the echoing in the mountains."



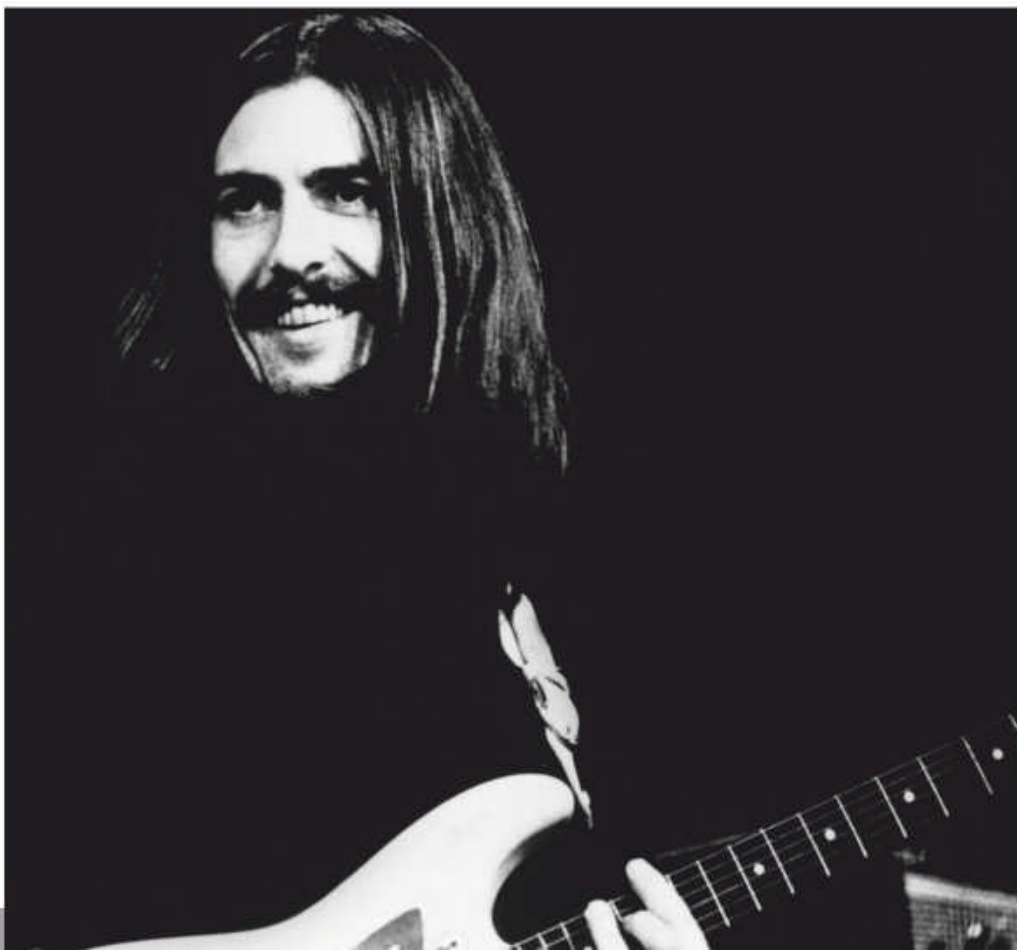
25 SOMETHING THE BEATLES

GUITARIST: **GEORGE HARRISON**
(1969)

Harrison's finest moment

Following the sprawling 'White Album', George Harrison's songwriting continued to mature into the *Abbey Road* sessions, culminating in one of the most stunning compositions of his career. The symphonic ballad saw Harrison, for a moment at least, outdo fellow songwriters John Lennon and Paul McCartney, with Lennon himself

referring to it as the best song on *Abbey Road*. The simple piece is mostly in the key of C major, before moving to A major in the bridge. Having invited Eric Clapton to record the solo for *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* the previous year, Harrison resumed lead duties here, and the yearning, melodic playing is arguably his finest ever committed to tape.



24 BLACKBIRD ALTER BRIDGE

GUITARIST: **MARK TREMONTI/
MYLES KENNEDY**
(2007)

Two distinct lead guitar styles combine for this two-man solo

That song is special in many ways,” said singer and guitarist Myles Kennedy of the

title track from Alter Bridge’s second album *Blackbird*. It was an album that saw Myles contribute guitar to the band for the first time, and also work more closely as a writer with guitarist Mark Tremonti than before. “The way we were feeding off each other was like we were capturing lightning in a bottle,” Myles said.

The positivity of this writing dynamic contrasts with the mood of the music. *Blackbird*’s mournful atmosphere is set from the beginning by the fingerpicked

verse part – two-finger technique that has Tremonti’s hallmark all over it. “I’d been throwing it around for a while and I really loved it,” Tremonti explained. “It had such a sad classical feel to it.”

Kennedy’s vocal and lyrics, and the subject matter they address, match the dark power of the music. “As we got to that point musically, I had a friend I’d known for a long time that was passing away,” Myles explains.

“The lyrics came pretty quick because it was just capturing that moment. I wanted him to find his peace and he did. He passed away within days of completing it.”

The emotive heart of *Blackbird* is lifted by its solo section – an alliance of the pair’s distinct lead approaches that finds them realising the potential of the two-man solo in a way few rock players do in the post-*Hotel California* era. Mark was the instigator of taking on the challenge...

“I remember from the moment we realised what kind of a guitar player Myles was, we tried to really push that to the forefront and show his skill on the guitar, because I felt that it was a secret weapon,” he said. “For a band not to have a player of his calibre even touch a guitar on the first record, to come out blazing on the next record would really shock people – and give it that ‘wow’ factor. We felt it was a great moment for our two styles because he took the part where he could really follow the chord changes and throw his knowledge of his feel and phrasing into that; then my more aggressive lead style back to back with that. It was a good combination, one of those hairs-standing-up-on-your-arms moments.”

Myles’ 16-bar offering is pentatonic/blues scale-based and follows a simple ‘low and slow’ to ‘high and fast’ approach as he develops his melody lines. Clearly it’s the gentler of the two solos – Mark follows up with aggressive vibrato and rapid legato lines, before that super-fast picked lick that rounds off proceedings. It’s the kind of lick that you don’t need to be too accurate with – Mark’s playing roughly six notes per beat, but he plays loosely here. Aim to get the fretting aspect tight, but just let rip with your pick hand.





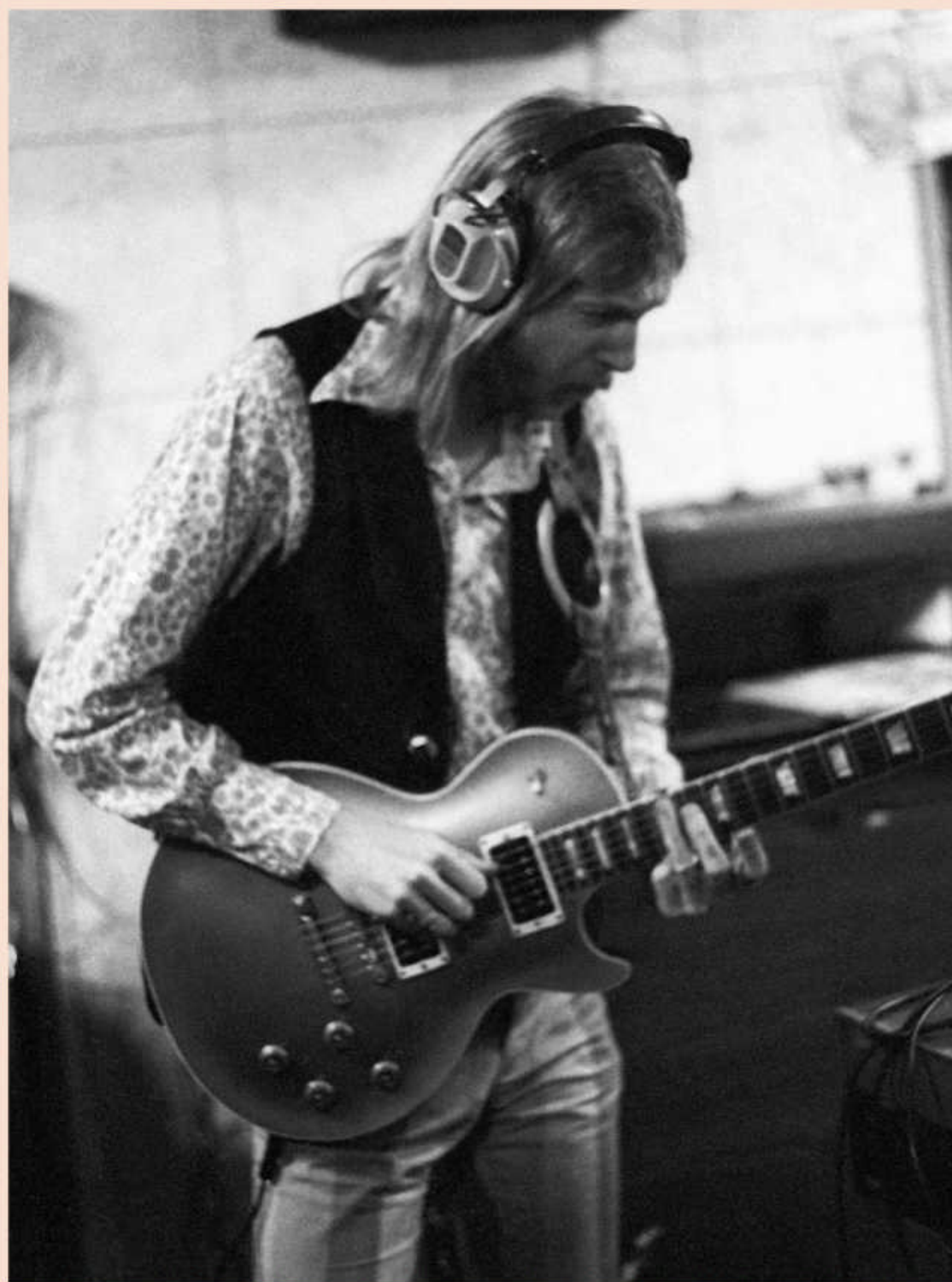
23 JOHNNY B. GOODE CHUCK BERRY

GUITARIST: **CHUCK BERRY**
(1957)

Ringin' a bell for rock 'n' roll

Is there a more influential pioneer of guitar music than Chuck Berry? Probably not. And this song about an illiterate "country boy" with a gift for guitar playing is his best known. Nerds still argue over the guitar he used. We know it to be either the humbucker-equipped Gibson ES-350T or the earlier P90 TN variant – both were used throughout his first stint on Chess Records. The 350T was introduced in 1957 – JBG's year of release, hence the guesswork. Either way, Chuck's upbeat diads and bluesy phrasing set a template for generations of rock

'n' roll acts that would follow. It's fair to say that the Beatles, the Stones, AC/DC and countless others would likely sound somewhat different had they not been exposed to Chuck's brand of rock 'n' roll riffing. If you plan to tackle Chuck's solo, it's based in the 6th position (in the key of B₇) and the diads fall broadly into two categories: shapes based at the 6th fret (easy because you can anchor your first finger in place), and shapes played at the 8th fret (a simple move of your third finger). Use downstrokes for the faster passages and a freer approach in the sparser sections.



22 LAYLA DEREK & THE DOMINOS

GUITARIST: **DUANE ALLMAN**
(1971)

This slide solo's got us on our knees

The essential nugget of trivia here in Eric Clapton's classic is that Duane Allman delivered the outro slide solo, not Eric himself. Donning his trademark 1957 Les Paul Goldtop and plugging into a Fender Champ, the slide specialist delivered his epic offering way up at the dusty end of the fretboard. Some bemoan occasional off-pitch moments in Allman's performance but take a look at the range he's playing in and things become clear. Most of the solo is played above the 20th fret and a large portion is past the end of the

fretboard – even as far as the (theoretical) 32nd fret. Aside from the lack of any actual frets up there, those theoretical frets get closer together the higher you go. Was Duane staring attentively at his guitar, taking visual cues for position or was he playing purely by ear? We'll never know. But if we have one tip for playing beyond the fretboard, it's to make visual/mental markers as to where those virtual frets are. Maybe a note will align with the edge of a neck pickup or a with a pickguard screw on your guitar. You can employ the same approach with harmonics.

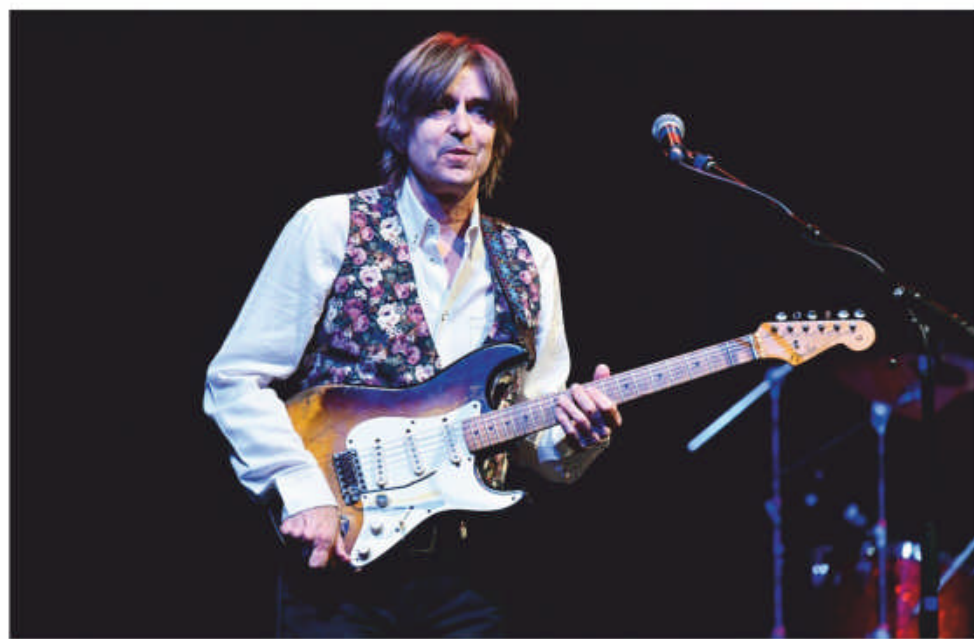
21 HANGAR 18 MEGADETH

GUITARIST: **MARTY FRIEDMAN**
(1990)

The Mustaine/Friedman partnership at its very best

Megadeth have had no shortage of great lead guitarists over the years. It's on the job description – if you want to play with Mustaine, you really have to be at the top of your game. One of the reasons for this is because you will have to execute Marty Friedman's leads for the live shows, and be good enough to do them justice. *Hangar 18* could very

well be the most impressive of them all, with no shortage of finger-twisting leads at blazing speeds. His knack for twisting the wrong notes into the right ones – often bending from a fret or two underneath the one he's aiming for – as well as employing more outside-sounding chromatic and diminished tonalities, is what gives a lot of his solos a unique and exotic quality.



20 CLIFFS OF DOVER ERIC JOHNSON

GUITARIST: **ERIC JOHNSON**
(1990)

Heavenly tones from the Texan great

This instrumental won Eric Johnson a Grammy the following year for its exquisitely tasteful guitar playing and jaw-dropping tones. For the recordings, the Texan musician mainly stuck with his early 60s ES-335, though chose to use his 1964 'Virginia' Strat for the opening lead and parts of the main solo. The guitars were fed into a 100-Watt Marshall Super Lead, with an Echoplex and BK Butler Tube Driver used to help achieve

those smooth, violin-like tones and warm sustain. "I first heard him in 1986," Joe Bonamassa told TG in 2015. "It was *Cliffs Of Dover* (*Live At Austin City Limits*), and it was just terrifyingly good guitar playing. I wasn't even sure if it was real! Then I saw him live, and his tones were the best I'd ever heard. I wondered how this guy was getting all of these sounds out of his Strat. I'd never seen anybody have such a forward-thinking rig like that."



19 REAPERS MUSE

GUITARIST: **MATT BELLAMY**
(2015)

Technical dexterity from the stadium giants

If you're planning on learning to play this single from Muse's 2015 album *Drones*, you're going to need to have your chops in order – it's particularly well-endowed with shreddy moments throughout, from a Van Halen-inspired intro line to its Morello-esque Whammy-fuelled midway solo and a Radiohead-like 'noise' outro. Based around 32nd notes (that's eight notes for every beat), the intro is quite the speed

challenge, and the placement of the tapped notes on the third of every group of four is tough to get a feel for. As for the solo itself, you'll need a DigiTech Whammy or similar treadle controlled pitch shifter to deliver those epic squeals. Matt's note choice is far from straightforward. Only very briefly intuitive and bluesy, he spends most of his time here playing chromatic licks. Honestly, you just have to be Matt Bellamy to play this.



18 FOR THE LOVE OF GOD STEVE VAI

GUITARIST: **STEVE VAI**
(1990)

The deep and spiritual side of shred guitar

The American virtuoso's second album, *Passion And Warfare*, has become one of the most important instrumental guitar records of all-time – unparalleled in its search for new and inventive sounds to throw the listener's ear and shatter expectation. Its most popular track and staple for Vai's live appearances is a deep-dive into two E minor scales – Aeolian and Phrygian – starting out with a motif which he evolves and rephrases as things unfold, transitioning from smooth slides to furious bends. And it only gets more frantic from there, using two-handed tapping, liquid

legato and whammy bar techniques to twist what starts out as a deep soulful lullaby into a cacophonous nightmare. And yet there remains a real sense of purpose behind every single note, no matter how chromatic or overbent or over-the-top, making its six minutes the biggest musical statement of Vai's career. Any doubts over his music career without Whitesnake or David Lee Roth had been silenced – this was a maestro who could control the chaos, no matter where the music went. Truth be told, the power of instrumental rock guitar has never felt so magnetically potent.



17 STILL GOT THE BLUES GARY MOORE

GUITARIST: **GARY MOORE**
(1990)

The definitive blues guitar ballad

The notion of 'making a guitar weep' is one that has been around since the earliest blues recordings – but few rock players have ever been able to do it like Gary Moore, the undisputed master of the minor ballad. This wistful track in A minor became his calling card fairly late in his career, when he reinvented himself as a blues artist at the beginning of the 90s. There's a point in the solo where you can hear the Belfast great switch from the neck humbucker to the bridge on the 1959 Les Paul Standard he nicknamed 'Stripe'

and start deviating from its main theme, mainly sticking within the A minor pentatonic scale, apart from a few occasional extra notes from the Aeolian and harmonic minor scales. For the recording, Moore was plugged into his prototype Marshall JTM45 reissue head with one of the company's newly designed The Guv'nor distortion pedals in front. It remains one of the most raw and expressive blues tracks of all-time, Moore living dangerously and almost fighting his guitar at points, and yet never failing to deliver the goods.

16 METALLICA FADE TO BLACK

GUITARIST: **KIRK HAMMETT**
(1984)

Metallica's first ballad features some of their most epic playing



Recorded at Flemming Rasmussen's Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen (which the band would return to two years later for *Master Of Puppets*) in February and March 1984, Metallica's sophomore album was more progressive and stylistically greater in scope than the all-out thrash assault of *Kill 'Em All*. *Fade To Black* features acoustic guitars, melodic solos and a non-standard structure more akin to the *Stairway To Heaven* school of songcraft.

Regarding the song's epic outro solo, Kirk Hammett recently told TG: "I have been playing that song for so long now, what I do is for the very last solo – I know how I want to start it but then I am in an area where I can improvise for, I dunno, 16, 18, 24 bars, and then Lars will hit a certain fill which means that it's up and it's time for the arpeggio part. And then I just slide right into those arpeggios, and they are arpeggios played on two strings, not three.

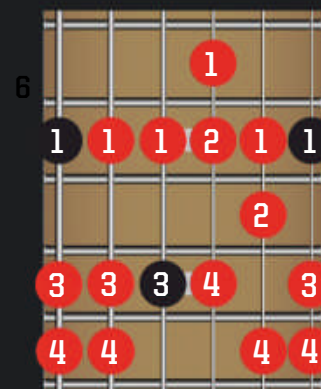
"When guitar players first started incorporating arpeggios into their playing, before the whole Yngwie sweep-picking thing, arpeggios were played on two strings – not three or four strings – and so that was what the vogue was at the time in the 80s... Before the Yngwie sweep-picking thing, it was to

play arpeggios that way and so I have been playing those for a long time and I use my middle finger just to anchor my position on the neck, at the 12th fret or 17th fret, 19th fret, whatever."

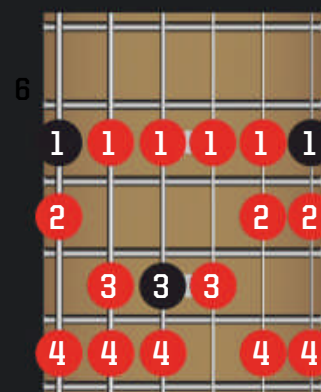
Great tips from the man who plays the solos then, but how should you tackle the solo yourself? First of all, there are two essential scales you'll need to know: the B natural minor scale and the B Phrygian mode [shown here]. These cover you for the entire opening 30 bars, which, let's face it, is a lot of music, so this is a damn good reason to learn a couple of shapes if ever we heard one!

To make it simpler, most of your time is spent in the natural minor scale. Not until around bar 20 will you find yourself briefly landing on the C note which appears in the Phrygian mode. The bottom line is: Kirk improvises this part of the solo live – and these are the shapes he uses.

Up next are those two-string arpeggio shapes – 16th notes, all of them! At 142 bpm that's pretty fast, but Kirk doesn't pick every note, opting to use pull-offs to make those rapid licks easier. It's definitely something to experiment with and if you're still struggling you could try adding in an occasional hammer-on, too.



B natural
minor scale



B Phrygian mode

16 BACK IN BLACK AC/DC

GUITARIST **ANGUS YOUNG**
(1980)

A masterclass in structure, phrasing and tone

The way Angus sets up and then winds up his own solo here is masterful, with the opening line reoccurring twice before climbing up to the fourth position of the E minor pentatonic scale on the seventh fret. From there he heads to the first position an octave up at the 12th fret, which is where he remains for the rest of the solo

until the closing line which is a higher reprise of that opening idea. Then, of course, there's that tone – his early 70s SG Standard going through a cranked Marshall, with some boost and compression coming from what's often regarded as his secret weapon – a Schaffer-Vega Diversity System wireless transmitter and receiver.



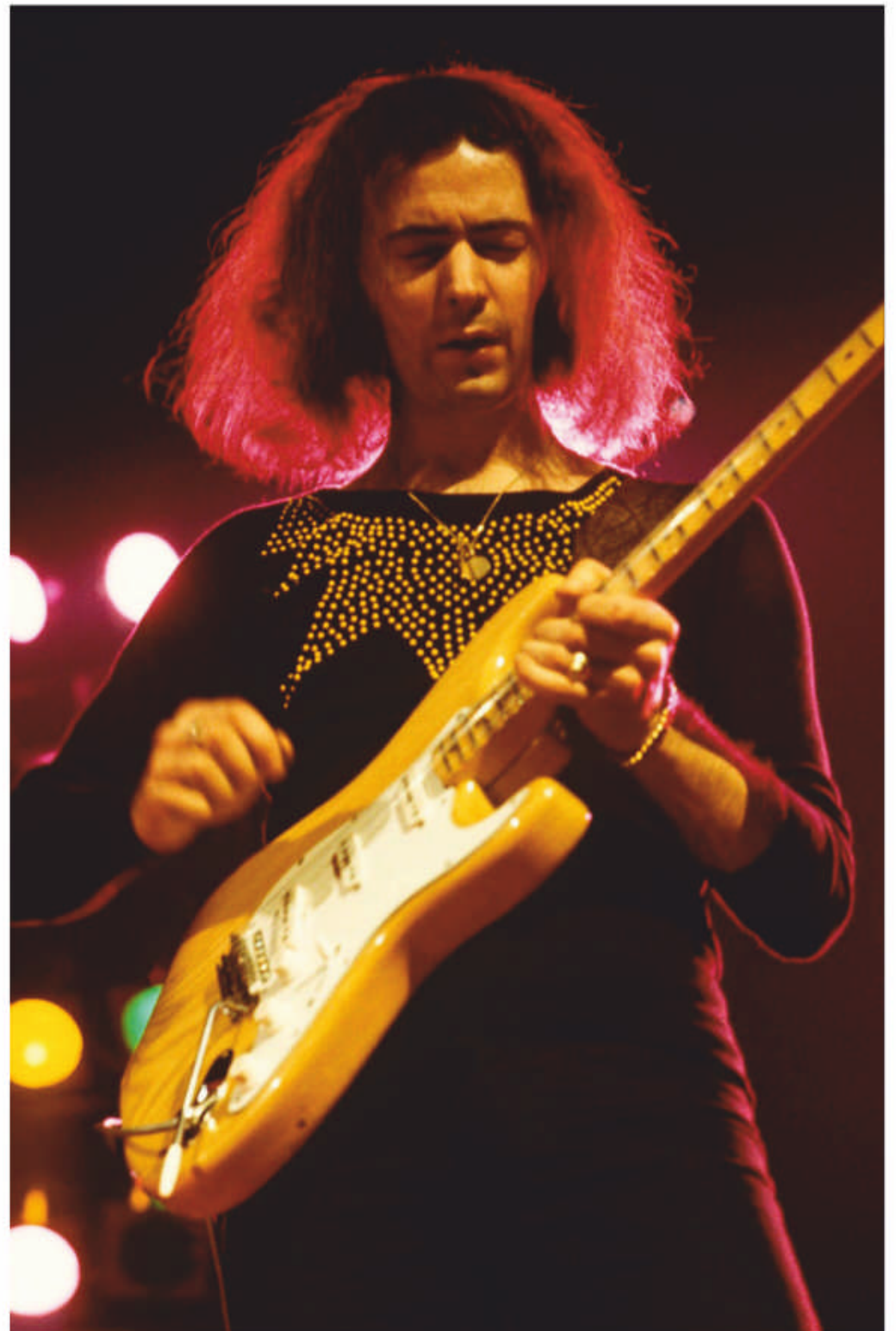
15 WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS THE BEATLES

GUITARIST: **ERIC CLAPTON**
(1968)

Harrison further displays his talents with a little help from a friend

Perhaps one of the finest examples of Harrison's songwriting during his time in The Beatles, *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* is also one of the Fab Four's most iconic guitar tracks, thanks to a little help from Harrison's friend Eric Clapton. This pensive number was written during a period of disharmony in the group following their trip to India and subsequent study of Transcendental Meditation, and

though neither solo is played by Harrison, the song was recorded in an era of the band that marked his return to the instrument following a period of sitar enthrallment. The decidedly hard rock composition was more folky in its demo form, but its weighty subject matter – musing on the world's lack of love – called for an appropriately forlorn style, which in turn acts as the perfect backing for Clapton's soulful overdubbed lead guitar.



14 HIGHWAY STAR DEEP PURPLE

GUITARIST: **RITCHIE BLACKMORE**
(1972)

Fast fretting and fierce alternate picking

Marking a breakthrough point for the British hard rock pioneers, 1972's *Machine Head* launched Deep Purple into the stratosphere. However, where side two opener *Smoke On The Water* set the band's trajectory for rock immortality, it was this track where lead guitarist Ritchie Blackmore set out his stall. A forerunner of the neoclassical genre that would

grow out of the 80s, Ritchie's relentless alternate picking is on show in a 20-bar passage in this classic solo. It's a serious challenge to nail the part as Ritchie played it, but it's possible to play it using hammer-ons and pull-offs – albeit more loosely. Just make sure to give all four of your fretting fingers a warm-up. Every finger comes into play here in Ritchie's impressive solo.



12 PURPLE RAIN PRINCE

GUITARIST: **PRINCE**
(1984)

The Purple One's defining guitar moment

It's hard not to feel like Prince's guitar work has often been overshadowed by his accomplishments as a musician in general, being a visionary multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer who left a mark on the world like no other. He was, in that regard, the full package, though that's not to say his guitar playing wasn't up there with the best of them. The epic outro to *Purple Rain* – which takes up nearly two thirds of the song itself – stands out as some of his finest work on the six-string, wailing away in G minor pentatonic and very

occasionally including some more modal notes like the minor 6th. There's also that repeating motif which dances around the 2nd and minor 3rd intervals – it's simple and effective, setting things up for the vocal melody that comes in towards the end. It's not a busy solo by any means – instead, the Purple One chose to leave a lot of space in between the lines played and focus on big hooks instead of monster licks. There are many great live renditions of this track, but his half-time performance for 2007's Super Bowl in Miami is the stuff of legend.



11 ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

GUITARIST: **JIMI HENDRIX**
(1968)

The greatest solo in a cover version?

This song tops any list of covers that are better than the original. Bands performing it live invariably refer to it as a Hendrix cover rather than Bob Dylan. Jimi's rhythm playing is astounding, both in the intro and the deft chord/melody work of the verses, and of course, there's the small matter of four solos to consider. The man many refer to as the best of all time makes the most of his Strat and Marshall rig here – but it's Jimi's offering at the 2:20 mark that we're interested in. Following an opening run of octaves, Jimi

quickly gets into his stride with a typically blues-based minor pentatonic approach in C#. At 2:32, the main solo explodes into a trademark combination of rhythm and lead, plus funky scratching on muted strings. It's worth playing along with the scratches, trying to keep a loose wrist and consistent down-up strumming. Those few beats alone will teach you a lot about Jimi's groove and feel. To get the sound, select a bridge position single coil pickup, dial in delay at around 350ms, add compression for sustain and opt for a Vox wah pedal or something similar.

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Words Jonny Scaramanga

IS THE GUITAR SOLO DEAD IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

With guitar solos absent from the charts, Green Day declaring the supremacy of the anti-solo, and Eddie Van Halen gone, is it the end for the fret-melting guitar hero?

The guitar solo has been declared dead many times. Late-70s punks actively tried to kill it, bored by 20-minute stadium rock indulgences. In the early 80s, some critics declared that the electric guitar itself was finished, replaced by the synthesizer. That prediction turned out comically wrong as the decade produced shred, Johnny Marr and a US alt-rock scene that went mainstream in the 90s.

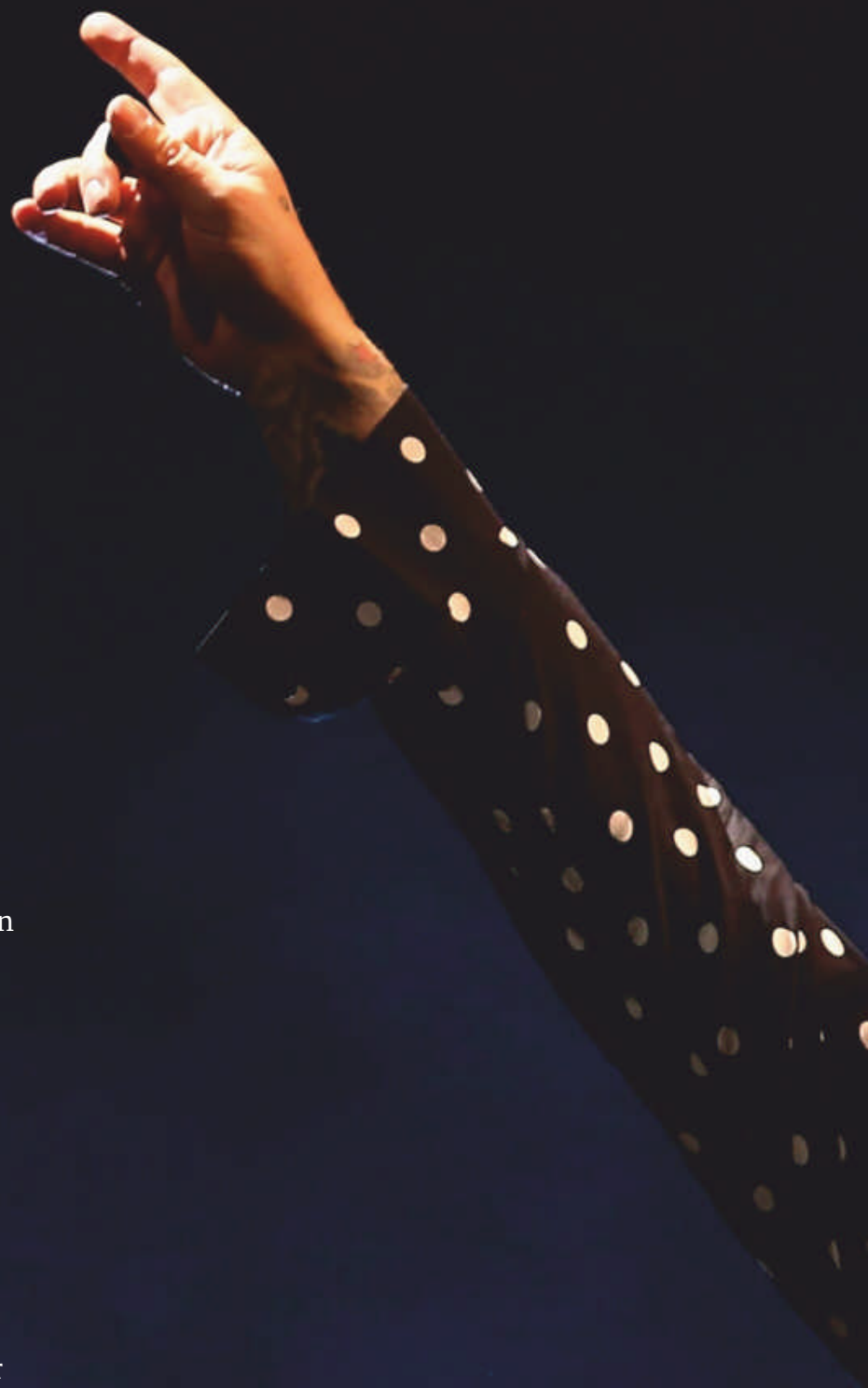
In the 90s, according to critics, solos were facing the mortuary slab once more. This did not, however, stop them from appearing in the biggest alternative rock hits of the decade, such as Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, Pearl Jam's *Alive*, or even Weezer's *Buddy Holly*. Dying, it would appear, did little to deter the guitar solo.

In the early 2000s, having recovered from nasty bouts of death in the preceding decades, solos again looked old hat. Who could forget Kirk Hammett's crestfallen face in *Some Kind of Monster* as his bandmates told him the new album would contain no solos? In the event, Metallica produced their most reviled work. Young bands like Trivium and Avenged Sevenfold promptly filled the vacuum, ripping out the kind of solos we wished had been on *St Anger*.

Now the guitar solo again looks ill-fated. Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong appeared on TG's cover in issue 329 proclaiming the era of the anti-solo. A 2019 *Rolling Stone* editorial pondered the end of the era, pointing out that guitar solos on mainstream records are now vanishingly rare. When Jack White collaborated with Beyoncé in 2016, arguably the 21st century equivalent of EVH teaming up with Michael Jackson, the resulting track didn't even have a solo. After decades of crying wolf, have the guitar solo's prophets of doom finally got it right?

Even if reports of the guitar solo's death have so far been greatly exaggerated, one day it will be gone. Maybe that day will be in 7.5 billion years, when the sun swallows Earth, or perhaps that day is upon us. The first popular electric guitar went on sale in 1936. The Stratocaster is now old enough to collect its pension, and original Les Pauls are worth more than your house because they are virtually antiques. Many of the all-time great soloists are no longer with us: Van Halen, Hendrix, BB King, Chuck Berry, Dimebag, SRV. Today, learning rock 'n' roll means learning history.

At the start of rock 'n' roll, guitar solos were the sound of revolution, but it's hard to think of them that way when





the instruments themselves are older than your grandparents. If you plugged in a guitar in 1952, virtually anything you played would have been an unprecedented new sound. Today you could play non-stop for a year without stumbling upon something that hasn't been done. But it's a mistake to think the guitar is a spent force, because you never know when a visionary will upset everything you think you know. There's a reason we think of Hendrix, Van Halen, and Tom Morello so vividly. Each arrived when we thought we had a handle on what guitars could do, and each shredded our preconceptions.

One day, maybe every variation of sound it's possible to get from an electric guitar will have been made. But the electric guitar's appeal has never been pure novelty, or it wouldn't have had such a world changing first century. The blues greats, who gave us the guitar solo as we know it, were famed for their emotional connection with the instrument. Lead guitar offers a raw form of expression, with musicians communicating their deepest feelings. That isn't going away.

#GuitarSolo has 2.7 million posts on Instagram and 207 million views on TikTok. Searching 'guitar solo' produces 50 million hits on YouTube. Clearly, guitar solos are alive. What they are not, however, is mainstream. It is hard to imagine Cardi B or Billie Eilish employing Nita Strauss for a face-melting modern equivalent of *Beat It*. But worrying about this ignores two facts: first, electric guitar music has always been in the minority on the radio. Guitarists remember the 1980s as a halcyon decade, but from 1980-1989, not a single end-of-year UK chart topper featured a lead break. Second, nothing is mainstream anymore. There's no TV channel everyone watches, no radio station everyone listens to. There are a million Spotify playlists for new music, and no one is on all of them. The electric guitar is a minority interest, but so is owning a hamster. This does not mean that hamsters are dying out.

When people proclaim the death of the solo, they mean it is over as a cultural force, that it will never again be the voice of youth. Kids in the 1960s loved rock 'n' roll in part because their parents *hated* it. When your dad is



“THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP SHRED ALIVE WAS TO KILL IT AND BRING IT BACK TO LIFE OUR OWN WAY”

SCOTT LEPAGE (POLYPHIA)

encouraging you to take guitar lessons so you can learn *Sweet Child O’ Mine*, the vibe is not the same.

One band who recognises the need to shake things up is Polyphia. “The only way to keep shred alive was to kill it and bring it back to life our own way,” says guitarist Scott LePage. It’s this attitude that makes their music so fresh. It’s a view shared by blues upstart Christone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram, who says “I can’t be the kid wonder forever. We’re all evolving, and I just want to keep playing and keep pushing forward.” Listening to the next generation of guitarists, you get no sense that there is nowhere left to go.

There’s one really good reason to think that guitar solos can still surprise

us. Until now, the famous ones have been made almost exclusively by men, mostly from the US and UK. It’s notable that some of the most exciting guitarists of today are women: Nita Strauss, Erja Lyytinen, and Yvette Young among them. The internet means that guitarists from more countries are coming to prominence as well, including Brazil’s Mateus Asato and Lari Basilio, Japan’s Ichika Nito, and Israel’s Nili Brosh. That increasing diversity means a bigger pool of ideas and more chances for new sounds to emerge. It would be arrogant to assume all the guitar’s possibilities have been explored when so far only a tiny slice of the population has even tried.

Growing diversity mean that we have to expand our ideas of what a ‘guitar solo’ sounds like. Yvette Young’s inventive breaks bear no resemblance to blues rock, but there’s no doubt they are dazzling pieces of solo guitar. It’s telling that Yvette says she never listens to guitar music. “I only listen to bands and composers. My piano upbringing – the two-handed tapping I play, I approach the guitar just how I’d approach writing polyphony on a piano.” If you want innovative guitar music, you shouldn’t be surprised when the results don’t remind you of Eric Clapton.

Other cultures could introduce brand new sounds. In October 2020, users in Nepal were among the most likely to Google ‘guitar solo’. Nepalese music commonly uses microtones (pitches in between the frets). There is still miles of potential for guitar innovation.

One avenue for originality is actual solo guitar – unaccompanied pieces. Besides *Eruption*, almost all classic guitar ‘solos’ are played with bands. Innovators like Mateus Asato and Ichika make stunning compositions for guitar alone. Without having to blend with other instruments, they are free to roam wherever they please, but they also have to find new ways to fill the space normally occupied by the rhythm section. And by becoming stars on social media, they’re also changing ideas about where we find guitar heroes.

There’s also the possibility that we’re just looking in the wrong places. When guitar solos disappear in one genre, they usually pop up in another. In the late 90s, the metal press wondered where all the guitar solos had gone, with Korn and Limp Bizkit playing as though their top three strings were missing. Yet on 1999’s biggest single, *Smooth*, Carlos Santana barely stopped soloing long enough for Rob Thomas to get the lyrics out. Meanwhile in 2020, if guitar solos are out of vogue someone should have told country musicians.

More electric guitars have been sold in the last 12 months than ever before. There’s every reason to expect that one of those guitars has gone to the next Matt Bellamy or Yvette Young. But more importantly, all of them have gone to people who will use the instrument to express themselves and make themselves happy. Ultimately, guitar solos come from rebellious subcultures, so it would be weird to care what anyone else thinks. Do you still like guitar solos? Cool. Us too.

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09 BEAT IT MICHAEL JACKSON

GUITARIST: **EDDIE VAN HALEN**
(1982)

Breathtaking results from an unlikely pairing

When Eddie Van Halen went turned up to the studio where Michael Jackson and Quincy Jones were making *Thriller* and enquired as to what exactly they were after, he was told to just play whatever he wanted. Two takes and 20 minutes later, the shred guitar pioneer was done – having reworked the solo section to suit

his unique style of playing. “I was just finishing the second solo when Michael walked in,” Eddie told CNN in 2012. “So I warned him before he listened. I said, ‘Look, I changed the middle section of your song’. He gave it a listen, turned to me and went, ‘Wow, thank you so much for having the passion to not just come in and blaze a solo, but to actually care about the song.’”



10 CRAZY TRAIN OZZY OSBOURNE

GUITARIST: **RANDY RHOADS**
(1980)

Fretboard fireworks galore on Ozzy’s comeback hit

The Double O has often cited Randy Rhoads as the man who saved his career – and when you hear solos like *Crazy Train*, it’s easy to understand why. He didn’t sound much like Tony Iommi, being more classical and modal than blues-based, but like Ozzy’s old bandmate he was a true inventor. There’s a section towards the end of this solo that actually sounds like a train

squealing off the tracks thanks to the use of a chromatically ascending trill that then descends in key. Rhoads then chose to end the solo with a fast-picked F# minor pentatonic phrase before a rapid Aeolian legato run ending with a big bend on the 19th fret. Sadly, he only recorded two studio albums with Ozzy, tragically passing away in a plane crash at the age of 25.



08 FREE BIRD LYNYRD SKYNYRD

GUITARIST: **ALLEN COLLINS**
(1974)

The Bird is the word

At 143 bars long, *Free Bird*’s solo is far and away the most epic offering here (in fact, it’s 286 bars of recorded music because the whole thing is doubled!). Appearing on the group’s eponymous debut album in 1973, guitarist Allen Collins delivered the lot on his 1964 Gibson Explorer. As Lynyrd Skynyrd’s Gary Rossington once

told *Guitar World*, “The whole long jam was Allen Collins himself. He was bad. He was super bad! He was bad-to-the-bone bad. When we put the solo together, we liked the sound of the two guitars, and I could’ve gone out and played it with him. But the way he was doin’ it, he was just so hot! He just did it once and did it again and it was done.”



07 SULTANS OF SWING DIRE STRAITS

GUITARIST: **MARK KNOPFLER**
(1977)

Knopfler's fingerpicking trick will get you up to speed

On a cold, rainy evening in 1977, guitarist Mark Knopfler stepped into a Deptford pub where a group of old boys were playing Dixieland jazz to the complete indifference of the patrons. Their set closed, and they signed themselves off as the *Sultans Of Swing*. The exotic majesty of their name clashed beautifully with the drab reality of their surroundings, and Knopfler was inspired. Originally composed on his trusty National steel guitar, it wasn't until he plugged his 1961 Strat into bassist John Illsley's Fender Vibrolux amp that Mark knew he really had something with this classic track. Famed for

its fast fingerpicked solo, *Sultans'* outro licks essentially boil down to a couple of simple repeating four-note arpeggios, and, despite a relentless pace, Knopfler's efficient picking method makes things easier. Just follow this pattern: thumb-pick the first string; play a pull-off; thumb-pick the second string; finger-pick the first string. Don't get it? Well, this approach means your thumb picks at half-speed – so you won't run out of steam! After that, it's just a matter of careful timing to fit the pull-off and finger-picked note in between your thumb notes. The old adage of 'practise slowly and gradually build speed' applies!



06 SWEET CHILD O' MINE GUNS N' ROSES

GUITARIST: **SLASH**
(1988)

A game of two halves

There are many reasons why Slash's lead work on this early Guns N' Roses breakthrough single will be forever remembered as quintessential rock guitar at its finest. The first half of the solo is laid back and modal, built around the E_b minor scale with a few major 7ths thrown in for a harmonic minor flavour. The second half, on the other hand, is much more aggressive and bluesy – mainly sticking to position one of the pentatonic scale an octave up the neck in the same key. The bends feel that much wider and the

vibrato more pronounced, and then of course there are the tonal differences too – the first section played on the neck pickup for thickness and warmth before switching over to the bridge for more bite, with his Cry Baby engaged. Perhaps more impressive than anything else is Slash's sense of feel – more off-the-cuff and improvised than overly composed – and the way he manages to string it all together, adding new dimensions and colours that weren't there before. Which, when you think about it, is the mark of any great guitar solo.



05 HOTEL CALIFORNIA EAGLES

GUITARIST: DON FELDER, JOE WALSH
(1977)

Iconic twin-guitar harmony lines

The title track from the Eagles' fifth album and without doubt the song the band will be most remembered for, *Hotel California* frequently tops greatest guitar solo polls. Beginning with 24 bars of traded licks from guitarists Don Felder and Joe Walsh, eventually those iconic harmonised licks kick in at 5:39. As it turns out, how those harmony lines work is relatively simple: both guitars play an arpeggio of every chord, and the harmony is created by one of the guitars always playing

one note lower down in the chord. For example, the notes of the Bm chord are B, D and F#, so, if the higher guitar plays an F#, the lower guitar will play a D, and so on. This simple nugget of info will take you a long way to mastering those descending arpeggios. We won't go as far as to say you could easily work it out by ear but if you know the chords it's possible to jam along with a rough harmony part – and you can't say that for many solos on this list!



04 STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN LED ZEPPELIN

GUITARIST: JIMMY PAGE
(1971)

Revel in the glory of greatness

From the moment Jimmy Page plays the opening run on his '59 Fender Telecaster (not a Les Paul in sight!) right through to the flurry of notes and the wailing bend that completes it, this is guitar solo perfection. A masterpiece of composition. Rather than wander aimlessly on the guitar, Page creates a 'song within a song'. The opening phrases set the scene with Page adding extra notes to the pentatonic scale to follow the song's final chord progression. A rapid mid-solo repeating lick raises the bar before a game of question and answer with a haunting overdubbed

guitar leads into that last flurry and bend. As we say, it's all about the composition: licks that track the chord changes, the 'contour' of the melody and the pacing of the widdly bits all take the listener on a journey. Three takes were recorded (the other two allegedly still survive, presumably locked in a Led Zeppelin vault somewhere) – all improvised, though Jimmy has reportedly said that he had worked out the opening line. Typically, there's certainly a degree of curiosity about those recordings, but they're not really going to be better than the one we know and love now, are they?

4 COMFORTABLY NUMB PINK FLOYD

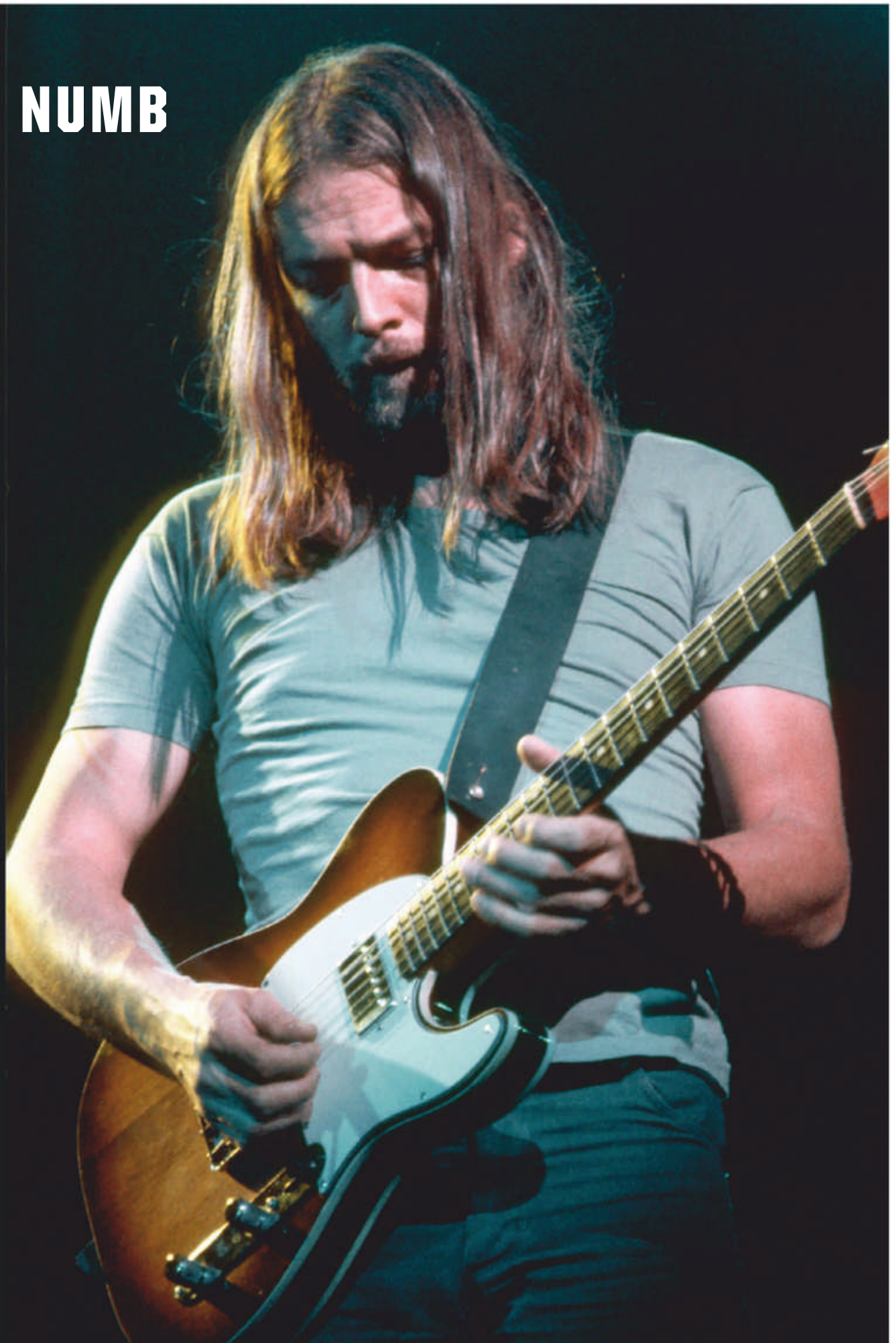
GUITARIST: **DAVID GILMOUR**
(1979)

Gilmour's greatness comes through in waves

Either of *Comfortably Numb*'s solos could qualify it for inclusion here, so the fact that Gilmour came up with both on the same track is simply inspired. The tone is legendary by itself: Gilmour's iconic black Strat, then featuring a DiMarzio FS-1 bridge pickup, into a HiWatt DR103, with the essential EHX Ram's Head Big Muff pedal. The FS-1's fatness and the Big Muff's smoothness leave no hint of the harsh treble that can plague Strats. With some extra help from an MXR Dyna Comp, Gilmour had so much sustain that he could hold notes as long as he wanted. As in his live rig, Gilmour combined a WEM 4x12 cab with a Yamaha rotating speaker lower in the mix, adding subtle modulation. The epic delay was added in the mix.

The first solo, in D major, uses the Strat's neck and bridge pickups together, permitted by a custom switching arrangement. His phrasing here is the more unconventional of the two, with arpeggios and sliding passages that still have a futuristic quality. Gilmour's use of the bar for vibrato – aided by his shortened tremolo arm – again distinguishes him from typical bluesers, inspiring many a fusion player in the process. He rakes into the beginning of many of the phrases, similar to Brian May, extracting all the excitement he can from every note.

By comparison, the outro solo has more standard licks. Many of the phrases are similar to Hendrix's, but by placing classic blues phrasing into a prog-rock context, Gilmour made it sound totally fresh. The licks at 4:57 and 5:12 could be from *All Along the Watchtower* or *Foxy Lady*, but in this epic track few listeners would make the connection. It sounds both masterful and improvised at the same time. Gilmour has explained he created this impression by recording five or six takes and compiling the finished solo from the best bits of each. The result is stunningly well written, with a combination of repetition and development that keeps the excitement building for two minutes.



The Hendrix-style blues lick returns at 5:27, longer and more intricate than before. The aggressive double stops first appear at 5:15, and by 5:35 he has turned that idea into a motif.

For the climax, Gilmour shoots up an octave just when it seems he's wrung every inch of expression from his maple neck. He descends back down the neck, incorporating one of his spectacular three-fret bends on the way, and finishes with another take on that double stop motif. It has all the excitement of an

improvised performance, and all the structure of a careful composition.

Both solos share brilliant rhythmic awareness. Gilmour uses triplets, sextuplets, 16th and 32nd notes freely, sometimes within the same phrase—check out the effect at 5:10 when he plays a lick in 16th notes and then immediately repeats and expands in sextuplets. A good solo can have great tone, rhythms, melody, or expression, but only a work of rare brilliance features them all to this degree.



02 ERUPTION VAN HALEN

GUITARIST: **EDDIE VAN HALEN**
(1978)

Eddie's iconic solo that shook the world

Way back in 1978, Van Halen's self-titled debut album featured this mind-blowing instrumental guitar solo, which went on to inspire a generation of guitar heroes. No-one had heard anything as groundbreaking since the days of Jimi Hendrix, with its mix of fast legato hammer-ons and pull-offs, pinched harmonics, whammy bar dives and, of course, two-hand tapping. The tapping gets the attention, but the tone, blistering legato, and creative note choices are all equally important. Amid all that virtuosity, Eddie still played with joyous rock 'n' roll abandon. It makes his playing appeal to people who never listen to shred instrumentals.

As it happens, *Eruption* wasn't even supposed to be on the album, Eddie himself explained to *Guitar World*: "I showed up at the recording studio one day and started to warm up. I had a gig that weekend and wanted to

practise my solo guitar spot. Our producer, Ted Templeman, happened to walk by and he asked, 'What is that? Let's put it on tape!' So I took one pass at it and they put it on the record. I didn't even play it right. There's a mistake at the top end of it. To this day, whenever I hear it, I always think, 'Man, I could've played it better.'"

Despite Eddie's admission, the track is a technical opus that should really be broken down into sections to digest the magnitude of the overall piece. The first eight bars are a bluesy affair. Not BB King-bluesy, of course, but those virtuoso legato licks perhaps call up the mojo of Jimmy Page's breakdown solo in Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*. And it's a theme that Eddie develops over the following eight bars, taking notes from both major and minor pentatonic scales to give a chromatic sound.

Eddie's tapping finale is probably one of the best known, best loved, but least understood

solo sections in rock history. If you've ever looked at a tab of this iconic outro, you'll know that it's not just a case of learning some shapes and simply tapping out a repeating sextuplet lick (although this is a good starting point for practising some bite-sized phrases!).

Eddie's taps are not always on the beat, which makes for some tricky timing changes as he switches from tapping the first and fourth sextuplet notes to the third and sixth notes. It's tough to get a feel for this – realistically, you have to slow right down to practise this part.

Eddie taps with his index finger, with his thumb resting on the top of the neck to keep him in place. You might favour using the tried and tested middle finger tap while holding your pick between index and thumb, but either way you'll need to keep the bass strings muted. A true masterpiece, one that could take a lifetime to perfect...

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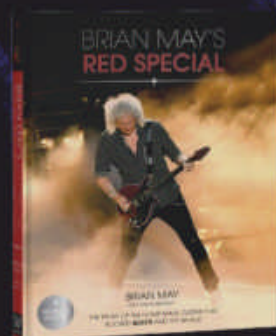
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Brian May's *Red Special* (updated for 2020) available now from www.theredspecial.com and Amazon

Interview: Chris Bird

01 BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

QUEEN

GUITARIST BRIAN MAY
(1975)

The biggest rock song of all time?

Probably. And, we'd argue, a worthy winner of the TG greatest solos poll. Following Freddie Mercury's death and after *that* cameo moment in *Wayne's World* in 1992, *Bohemian Rhapsody* became a trigger point for a worldwide outpouring of affection and respect for Queen. Their renewed popularity would continue into the new millennium as Ben Elton's *We Will Rock You* musical and the band's discovery of a different way to exist behind frontman Adam Lambert would bring their music to a new generation.

And *Bohemian Rhapsody*? Well, unsurprisingly, it's Queen's best-known song, and its brief nine-bar solo is a short and sweet musical interlude, bridging the verses to lead into what's become known as the 'opera section'. Those two words alone should warn you that this song *shouldn't* work. There's no chorus. Aside from two verses, there's no repetition. And there's an opera section! But of course it does work, and Brian May's solo is the perfect melodic break. His phrasing is loose and natural, moving across the backbeat rather than sticking to a rigidly-timed grid. The fastest licks are expressive bursts, rather than repetitive noodling. And Brian's articulate pre-bend and vibrato technique demonstrates his beautiful touch.

Somehow, within the confines of the complex structure of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, this solo just works. Here, in TG's exclusive interview, we catch up with our number one guitarist Brian May to talk about the writing process, and how he made the melody that was in his mind work in Mercury's masterpiece...

What do you remember about the recording of *Bohemian Rhapsody* and how you created the solo for it?

This track had been evolving for a while. It was very much the product of the fevered brow of Freddie. We knew it was something very special. It was recorded in pieces, as I think everybody knows. We would rehearse and record. We'd do it until we got it right. The various bits were put together. Freddie put a guide vocal on, and then we started doing all the multi-tracked vocal harmonies. There was already a rhythm guitar on there, of course. And somewhere during that process we talked about where there would be a solo, and that part of it

Freddie hadn't mapped out. He said he wanted a solo in there, and I said I would like to effectively sing a verse on the guitar. I would like to take it somewhere else. I would inject a different melody. There was already a lot of colour in there, but I would like to have a free hand. And I could hear something in my head at that point – long before I went in there and played it.

As you're remembering this, can you picture you all in the studio?

It's funny, because you see this in the *Bohemian Rhapsody* film. It's quite faithfully reproduced, the way the Brian May character says, 'Okay, how about

this?' And Freddie's going, 'Oh, lovely – but can you try a bit more of this?'

And the idea you had in your head – was that exactly how the solo came out?

Yeah. I basically sang it. I regard the guitar in that situation as a voice. I could hear this melody and I had no idea where it came from. That melody isn't anywhere else in the song, but it's on a familiar chord sequence, so it dovetails in quite nicely. And of course the job of the guitar solo is to bring that extra voice in, but then it's a link into what everybody now calls 'the operatic section'. You know you're into something very different.

Did the solo require multiple takes?

It came out very easily. I didn't do many takes. It was one of those occasions where you do a few takes and then you go back and listen to the first one and the first one is almost exactly what you want. You just need to trim it a little bit and polish it up.

And the climax of the song is very heavy on guitar.

The bit where everybody does the head-banging? That's just riffing, and that was much more Freddie's idea than mine. He had that riff in his head and I just played what he wanted there. I think he just sang it to me, what he wanted. We went for it live in the studio.

The different tones in that song, from the clean sounds in the solo to the distortion in the heavy part – how did that work?

It's all about Vox AC30s and the treble booster – which was all inspired by Rory Gallagher. There's really very little else on my guitar. There are no effects boxes as a rule. I used delays and stuff, but the fundamental tone that you hear is the guitar and the treble booster and the AC30. And the AC30 gives it that incredible throat, which is variable. The more you turn it up the more it goes into saturation. It doesn't distort that much, and you're still in the position at about nine and a half where you can still play chords and they still sound like chords. It doesn't sound like a big fart [laughs]. So it's a unique thing and we know why that is now, because the AC30 is fundamentally a class A amplifier,



“THERE ARE SO MANY BITS IN IT, I USED ALL OF THE TONE SETTINGS. I REMEMBER THINKING, ‘THIS IS FUN! I CAN USE THEM ALL!’” BRIAN MAY

and because of the way the valves are used, they’re biased half way up, they don’t distort until you drive them very, very hard, and then they go smoothly into that distortion. So that’s the whole thing. I get so used to that being the way that the guitar speaks, I take it for granted.

So when you play *Bohemian Rhapsody* live, have you got one tone dialed in, or are you flipping the switches on the guitar?

Well, there are so many bits and pieces in *Bohemian Rhapsody* that I used almost all of the tone settings. I remember thinking, ‘this is fun’! I can use them all!

So by the time you get to the end, I’ve been double tracking that and octaving it and using all the different tones, and you can hear it. There’s a lot of different changes in colour. And then there’s those little orchestral bits at the very end, very sweet bits, that’s a different sound again. The main solo is one of my favourite combinations of pickups which you don’t get on most guitars. Even if you have three pickups on a guitar – which frequently you do, on Fenders and all sorts of guitars – you generally don’t get the option of what I do. I have an option where I can have the fingerboard pickup and the middle pickup in series but out of phase. And in that setting

almost everything cancels out, and all you’re left with is all those harmonics the high stuff, and that’s what I use for the solo. It screams. Even at low volume it screams at you. And if you turn it up really high it gets this kind of milky... I don’t know if I can even describe it. It’s a kind of saturation that only happens at the very high frequencies, so it’s a pretty piercing sound, but it also has a strange kind of warmth that doesn’t distort. So that’s what I used for the solo, and I’ve used it every time. And every time I go into that setting it does that thing, it makes the harmonics leap out and it kind of makes me think of the *Bohemian Rhapsody* solo as soon as I do that.

There’s something about the tone of that solo, maybe the way you pick or the metal picks you use?

The pick has a little bit to do with it, definitely. It all adds up that incisive tone. These days I’m using the pick less



WONDERFUL! MONUMENTAL! GENIUS!

Brian May salutes the classic solos in the TG readers' Top 5



ERUPTION, VAN HALEN

"Eddie Van Halen changed the whole course of guitar history with that solo, *Eruption*. It still takes my breath away every time I see footage of him playing it. I feel incredibly sad that he's no longer around."

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN, LED ZEPPELIN

"The thing that blows me away most is the opening line, because the last note leads you to the next chord, which you wouldn't be able to find that easily if it was purely spontaneous, unless you were very brilliant or very lucky. It's a monumental line, it's genius."

and less, and I find that I can get all of that range of sound using the fingers. It's odd. I don't know what that is, even. Maybe because I play more and more at home, and there isn't always a pick to hand, you just end up using fingers. But I also find I get more expression out of the fingers these days, and I like it that way. Probably live I'll never do that, because live, people want to hear it the way it was on the record. But it's always slightly different every night. Although I'm playing that solo almost note for note, it always comes out differently, because of the different feelings going through my head or the fingers falling in different places... But that's the closest to a set piece that I have, I suppose. It's also usually the place in the show where I'm coming out of a hole in the ground with lots of smoke and being very dramatic, and having changed frocks, you know? That solo is a nice place to get theatrical. And on the

last tour, a friend of mine, the cyborg – what people started to call the Bri-bog – he did that solo under my tuition.

***Bohemian Rhapsody* was Freddie's masterpiece, so did that make it more of a challenge for you to create that solo?**

There was a lot of interaction, and I think that was part of the magic that we had. We gave each other a lot of stick, really, but in a very positive way. We were always pushing each other to try things. You know, one day Freddie had a big smile on his face when I came into the studio and he popped a cassette into the player and said, 'Listen to this, darling. This is going to surprise you.' And what he'd done was spend the whole morning putting together all the guitar solos that he could find in the work that we'd done, and he'd strung them all together. It was quite amazing. And one of my big regrets is I can't find



HOTEL CALIFORNIA, EAGLES

"Oh, that wonderful trading between the two guitars! I think Joe Walsh hadn't been in the band that long when they recorded that. Joe is a dear and wonderful friend, and an absolute guitar hero monster."

COMFORTABLY NUMB, PINK FLOYD

"It has an incredibly lyrical quality. It sounds like he's singing, and I think that's why it's so riveting. It's like he's opened up and he's playing from the heart. It's a wonderful piece."



Were these influences you were conscious of when you created these songs?

No, I think it's all in there unconsciously. But I know it's all in there, the same as there's a lot of other stuff in there. All those wonderful arrangements that The Temperance Seven did, that's all in there unconsciously and I know that I draw on that. But I grew up with Clapton and obviously Jimi Hendrix, and The Who, and it's all in there. You can hear it in me, definitely. And Django Reinhardt, strangely enough. When I was growing up there wasn't a lot of guitar music on record. James Burton was the first time I heard anyone bending strings like that. And that's all in me too. And I take great pleasure in telling James Burton what he did for me.

What is the hallmark of your best solos?

I suppose it's the ones that become orchestras. My dream was to use the guitar as an orchestra instrument, and I was lucky enough to make the dream come true. The *Killer Queen* solo was the first time I really managed to get the harmony thing across, and all those harmonies move about, they're not just following each other parallel – they all interact like a small jazz band would do. I took it further on *Good Company*. I actually got into emulating a complete jazz band on that. But with *Killer Queen*, it worked out so nice. I would probably put that forward as the one that perhaps I would want people to remember me by. And can I offer one more thing – my favourite guitar solo of all time?

Go on!

It's Clapton, *Key To Love*, from the John Mayall's *Blues Breakers* album. It's the hottest burning high-passion piece I've ever heard in my life – still to this day. I just love it. It totally rips, and I'll never get over that. That's one of my great inspirations.

The tone in that solo is incendiary...

Incendiary is a good word, yes. He burned in that solo! The whole track revolves around that solo. Every time I put it on, I'm just waiting... John Mayall's great, but you're waiting for that moment when Eric rips out and suddenly he's whacking into those top notes. It's incredible. Absolutely spine-chilling.

“I GREW UP WITH CLAPTON AND JIMI HENDRIX AND THE WHO, AND IT'S ALL IN THERE. YOU CAN HEAR IT IN ME, DEFINITELY” **BRIAN MAY**

that cassette. I never throw anything away. I'm a bit of a hoarder. So it ought to be somewhere. But Freddie was very proud of the stuff that I'd done and that we'd done together.

In all of those solos, is there one that's a personal favourite?

Killer Queen has always been a favourite of mine. And again, that was always in my head. It was something a bit more complex, an adventure in putting guitar harmonies into the solo. It was quite a step into the unknown, that solo, and it has a melody that I put in there which doesn't appear anywhere else in the song, so in a sense they're quite

comparable, that and *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

The solo in *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* is another of your best.

That one is a really a pastiche of James Burton. James was my hero and I'm happy to say he's become a friend now. And his solo on *Hello Mary Lou*, the Rick Nelson record, was massively influential on me.

And the solo in *Now I'm Here*?

That has a lot to do with The Who, Pete Townshend, and Mott The Hoople, who of course figure in the lyrics to the song and inspired the whole thing.

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Words: Milton Mermikides

THE GREAT BIG SOLO SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

TG follows the science behind the solos to find out exactly what makes these classic songs so enduring

HOW IT WORKS

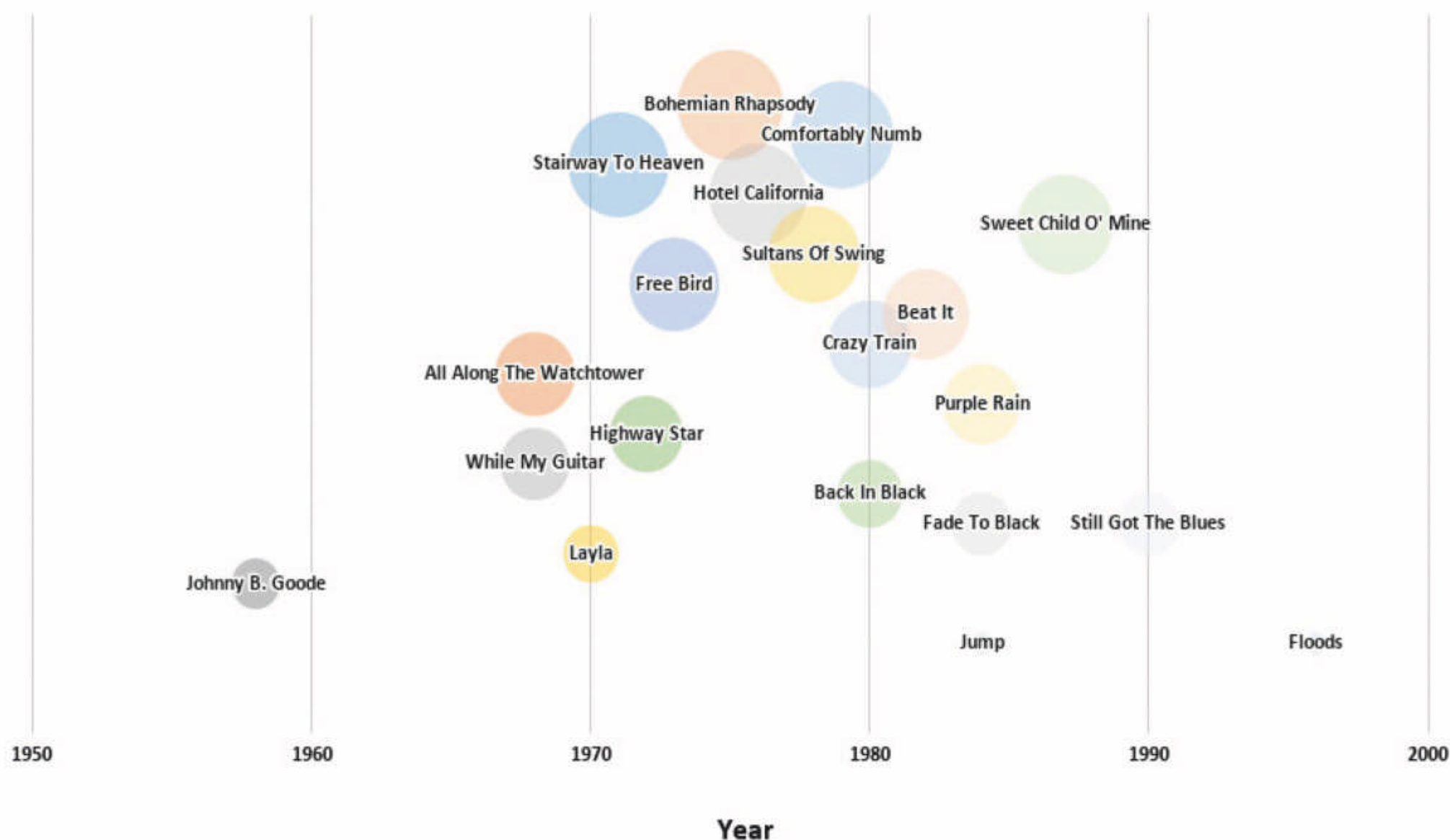
- Instrumentals are out! So no *Eruption* or *Cliffs Of Dover* in our experiments
- Our focus is on 'classic' solos, so all songs here are pre-2000
- We commissioned our research before the final results came in, so this list doesn't quite match the top songs in the poll. But it's close enough to learn from...

You've seen our poll results. You've heard from our winning guitarist. But what can we learn from these iconic solos? Well, here at TG Laboratories we've donned our white coats and set

about poking, prodding and analysing 20 of 'em under our musicological microscope in search of some common essence, a musical DNA which links them all and makes them so engaging. Is there some secret formula, a

foolproof blueprint to replicate the success of these giants of rock? And if so, can our findings tell us all how to write our own 'new classic' solo? Read on as we find out...

Timeline And Popularity



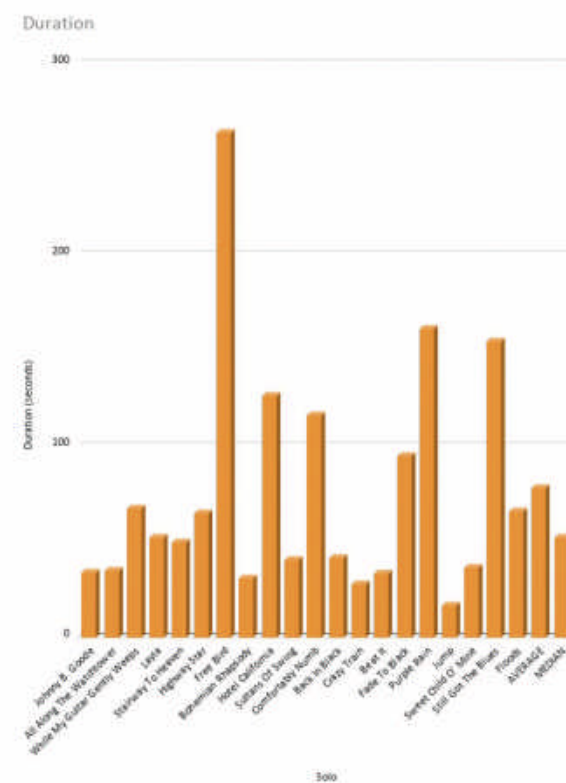
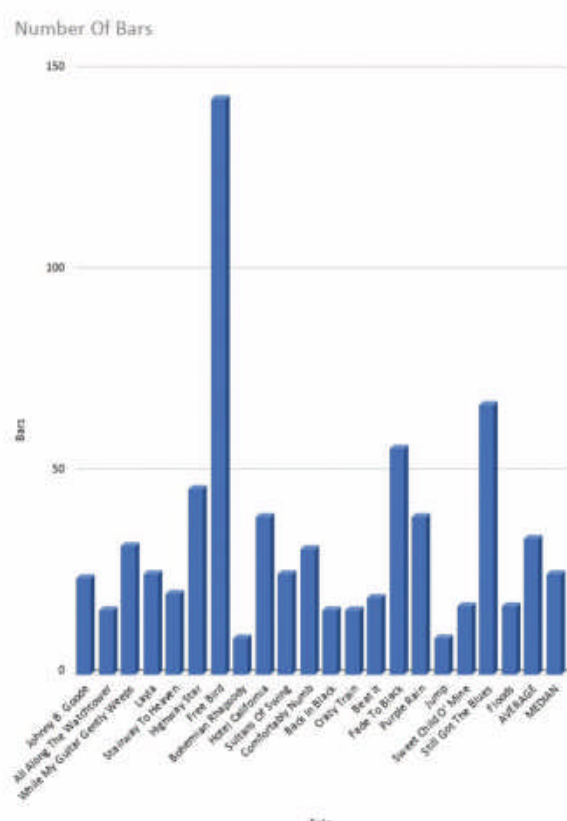
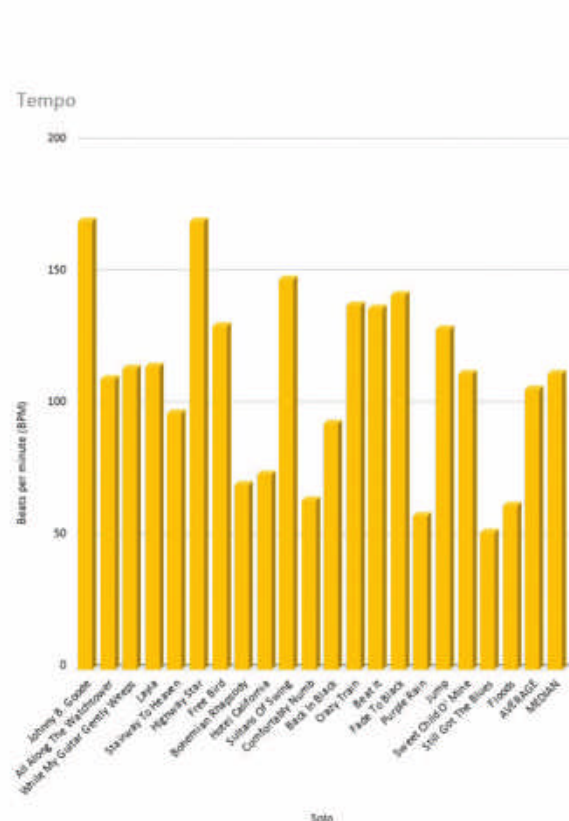
1 TIMELINE AND POPULARITY

Finding: There's something enduring about the late-70s guitar style

Our solos span 38 years (1958-1996), giving a midway point between the earliest and latest of 1979 – *Comfortably Numb's* year of release,

as it happens. What is clear (and remarkable) is that if you plot the poll popularity as height (with *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Comfortably Numb* and *Stairway To Heaven* at the peak), a bell

curve emerges and you can see that the late 70s style is not only the midpoint of the era, but the peak of popularity also.



2 TEMPO AND DURATION

Finding: Any length can work, but short and sweet can succeed

How fast are these solos and how long do they last? Well, the average tempo is about 106 bpm, but this doesn't tell us much: the songs vary considerably from the

stately 58 beats per minute of *Purple Rain* up to about three times faster in *Highway Star* and *Johnny B. Goode*. The duration is even more variable, from the short, sweet nine bars of

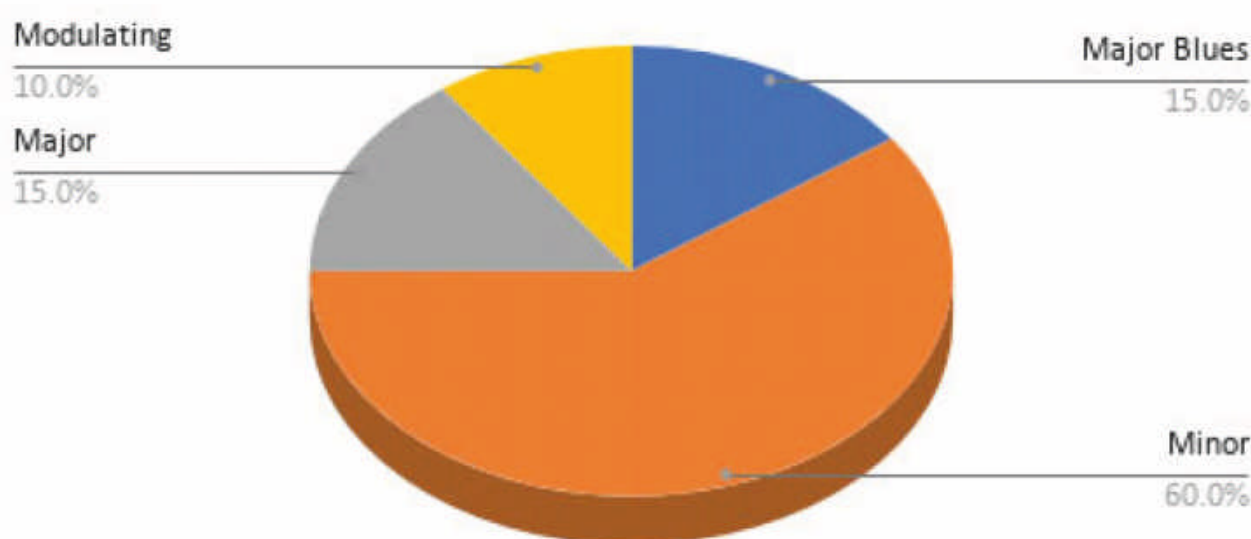
Bohemian Rhapsody to the ludicrous 143 bars of *Free Bird*. In fact, over half of these solos clock in at under a minute. Long or short, it's no barrier to writing a world-beating solo.

3 KEY SIGNATURES AND SCALES

Finding: Scales are generally minor, but sophisticated and 'guitar-friendly'

Minor tonality makes up for more than all other categories put together, and, of these, the guitar-friendly keys of A minor, B minor, D minor and E minor are the most common. Given that this is rock, one might think the minor pentatonic scale would be king, but these solos are all sophisticated, using at least seven notes. The Aeolian mode is most common but 30% of our solos are Aeolian with extra notes borrowed from other keys/scales.

Basic Tonality



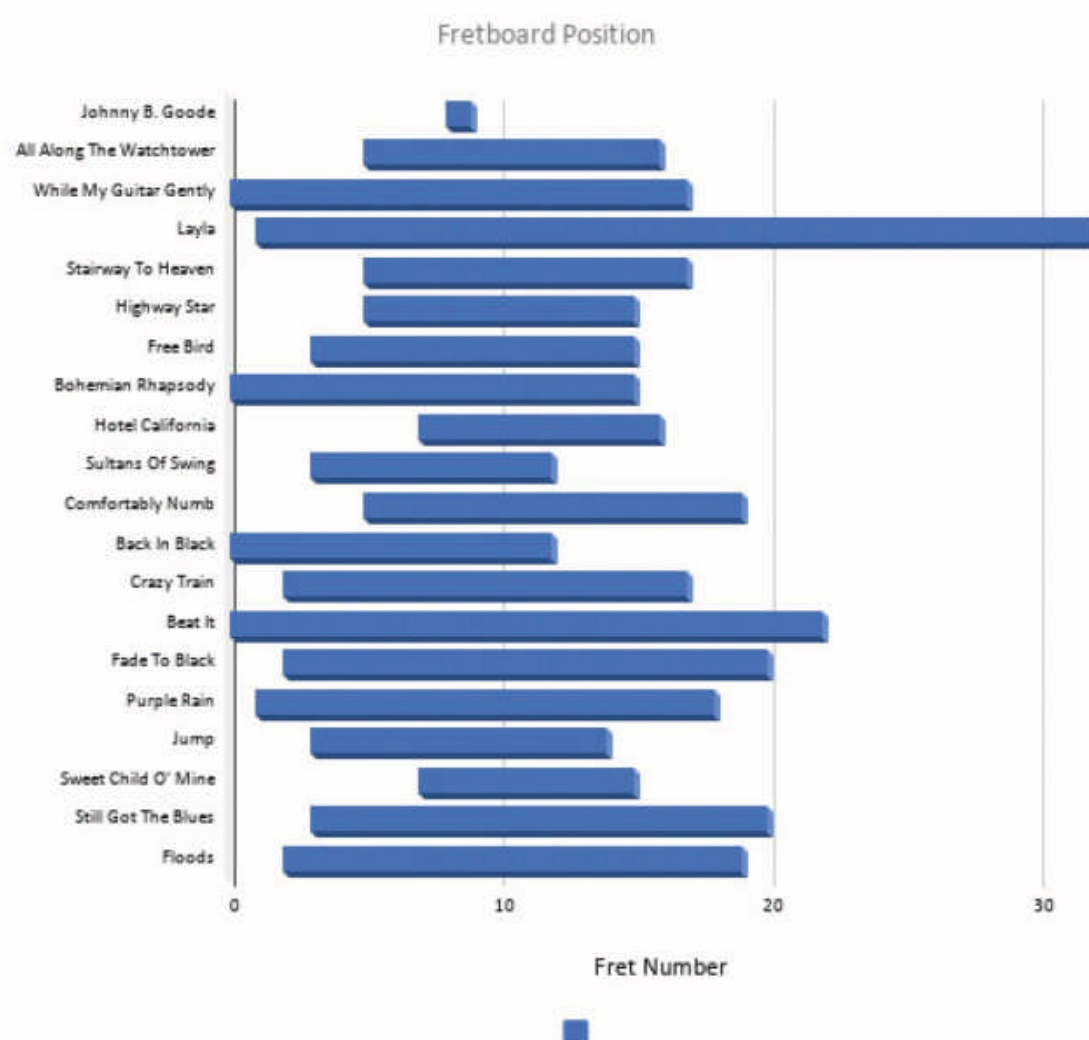
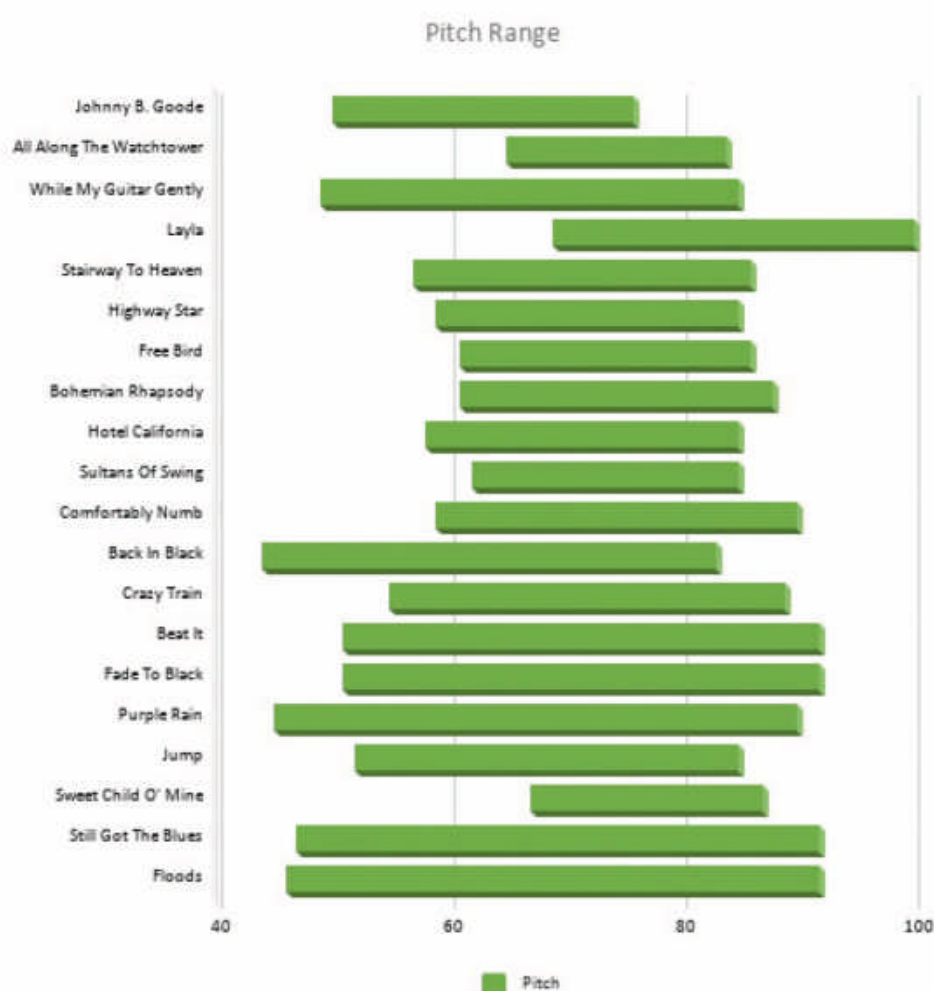
4 PITCH AND FRETBOARD POSITION

Finding: Most solos have a wide pitch range

Our solos average about two and a half octaves of range, covering a fair bit of fretboard real estate too, although

Johnny B. Goode is an outlier, staying in one position. *Layla's* slide solo is also unusual, reaching a high range beyond the fretboard.

Note: the pitch range shown here is in MIDI numbers. The guitar's bottom E is MIDI note 40, and the top E is MIDI note 64.



5 HIGH AND LOW NOTES

Finding: The lowest note tends to happen before the halfway point, and the highest afterwards

Also crucial is *when* the highest and lowest notes occur – the position and pacing of these peaks and valleys creates the solos' satisfying narrative arcs after all. There's a general pattern, but it's not strict...

KEY FACTS:

- In 60% of our solos, the highest note occurs later than the lowest note.
- In 70% of the solos, the highest note happens in the second half, with the average peak at about 61% of the way through.
- 70% of the solos have their lowest notes in the first half (averaging about 37% of the way through).
- Our champion *Bohemian Rhapsody* violates the first two of these three tendencies – so there are no hard, fast rules!

6 GLUE VS NOODLES

Finding: Melodies and hooks and are balanced with noodly runs

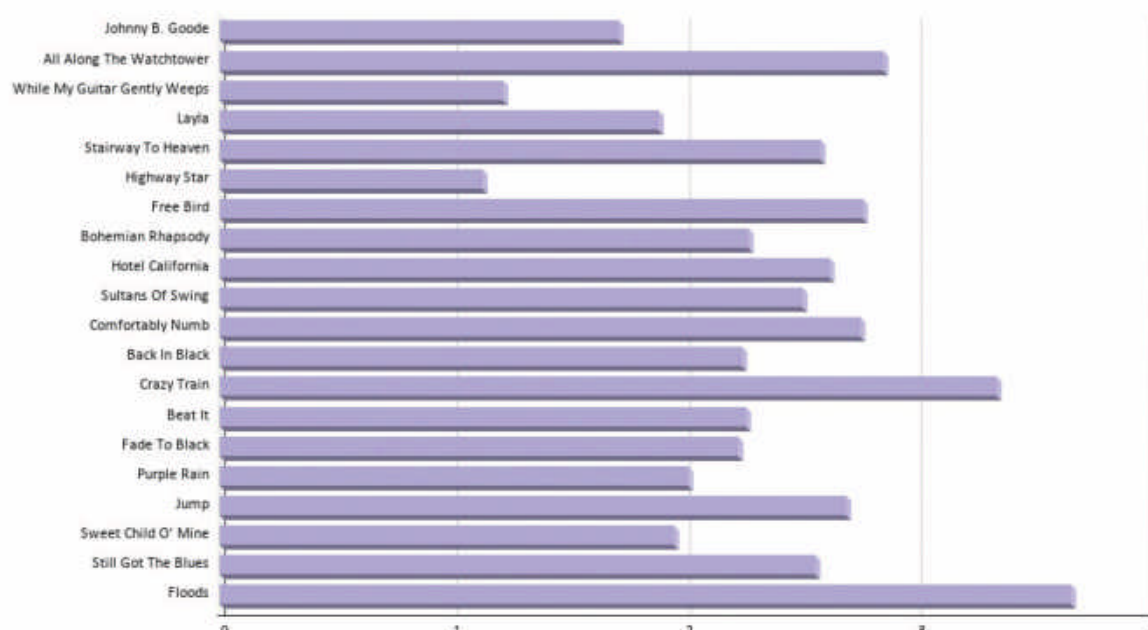
Most of our solos strike a balance of what we'll call 'glue' (memorable melodies, hooks or repeated patterns) and 'noodles' (less connected phrases). The 'glue' can happen up front (*Sweet Child O' Mine*, *Back In Black*), but it's more common for a solo to start noodly, then coalesce into a melody or a repeated lick (*Purple Rain*, *Sultans Of Swing*, *Hotel California*). Other models include a 'pivot', a strong motif interspersed with more fluid material (*Johnny B. Goode*) or an ornamented melody embellished with noodles (*Still Got The Blues*).

7 NOTINESS, SHREDDINESS AND BURSTS

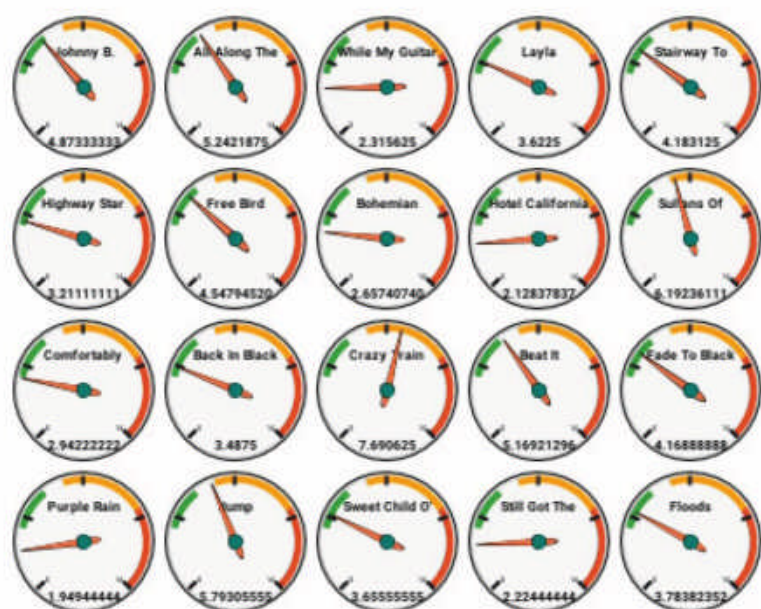
Finding: Notiness can be characterised by occasional bursts or by more constant shred!

Now for the matter of number of notes. Yep, we counted the lot! And we're most interested in the average number of notes per beat (NPB), which ranges from about one NPB in *Highway Star* to almost four in *Floods*. A better measure of shreddiness is the average notes per second (NPS). Here *Crazy Train* leads the pack (7.7 NPS) and the most chilled is *Purple Rain* (just below two). However, ditch averages and measure the fastest bar and both EVH solos catch up to Rhoads, showing that Eddie's style balances bursts with longer notes.

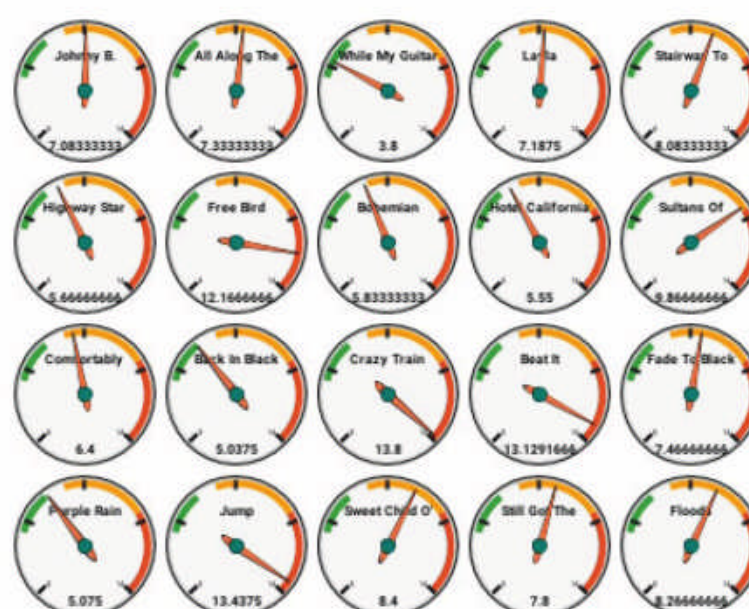
Average Notes Per Beat (NPB)



Average Notes Per Second (NPS)



Fastest Bar (NPS)



8 NOTES PER BAR

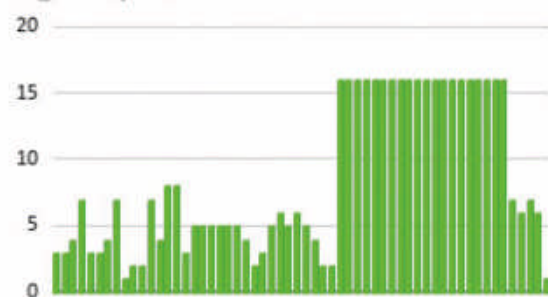
Finding: Most solos build to a climax, with more notes in the latter stages

Just how note-y are our solos as they progress from beginning to end? Well, having counted all the notes, we plotted

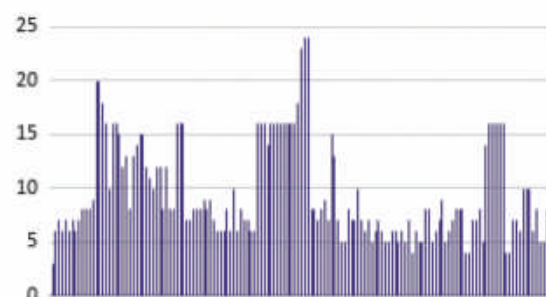
the numbers bar-by-bar for every song (sadly there isn't room to print them all). The results are fascinating. If there's a general rule, the

most consistently note-y bars occur in the last third of each solo. These graphs show the number of notes in each bar.

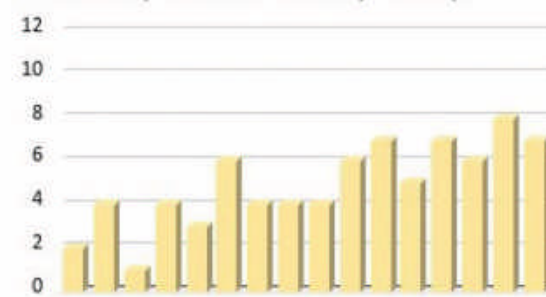
Highway Star



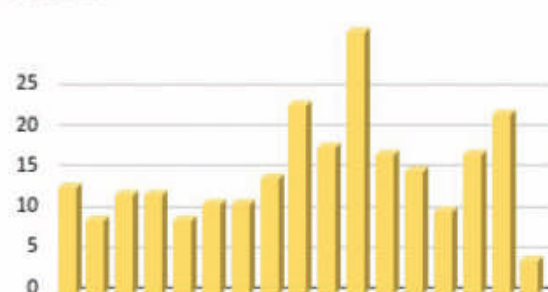
Free Bird



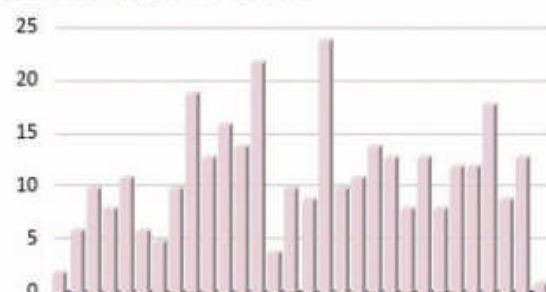
While My Guitar Gently Weeps



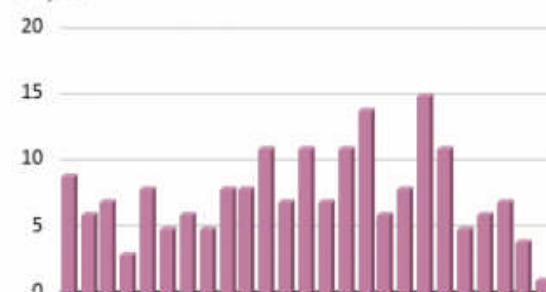
Floods



Sweet Child O' Mine



Layla

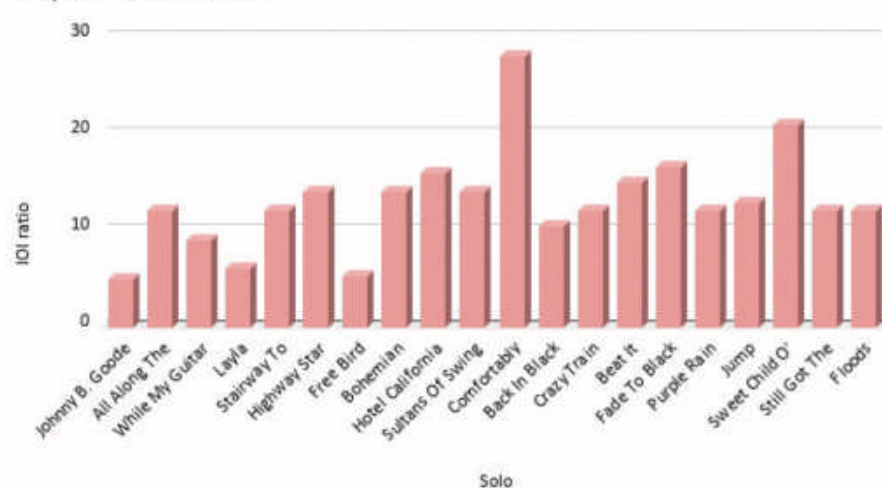


9 RHYTHMIC VARIATION

Finding: A wide range of note lengths can create epicness

Rhythm's not just for, er, rhythm guitar, so we've analysed our solos to see how much variation there is between the longest and shortest notes (rests count too!). If we take a solo's longest note or rest (we're calling this the 'inter-onset interval' or IOI) and compare it to the shortest one, we get a ratio telling us how varied they are. *Johnny B. Goode* is the least varied, but the widest by far is *Comfortably Numb*.

Rhythmic Variation

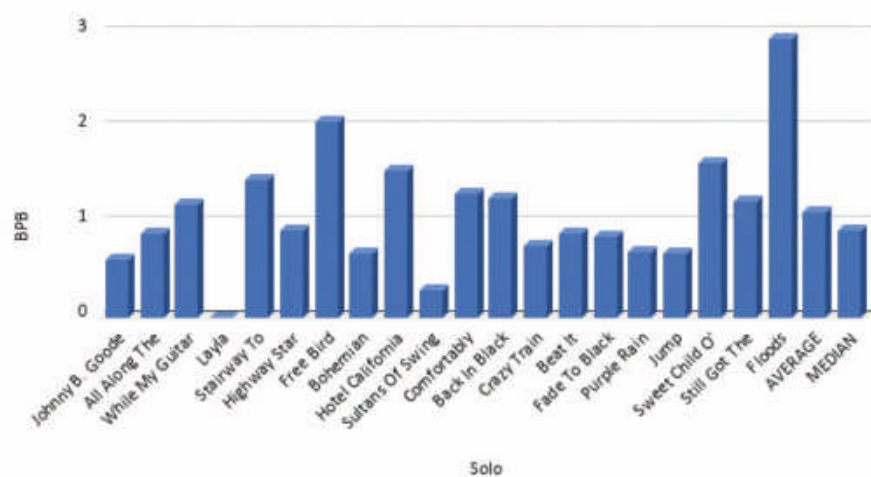


10 STRING BENDS

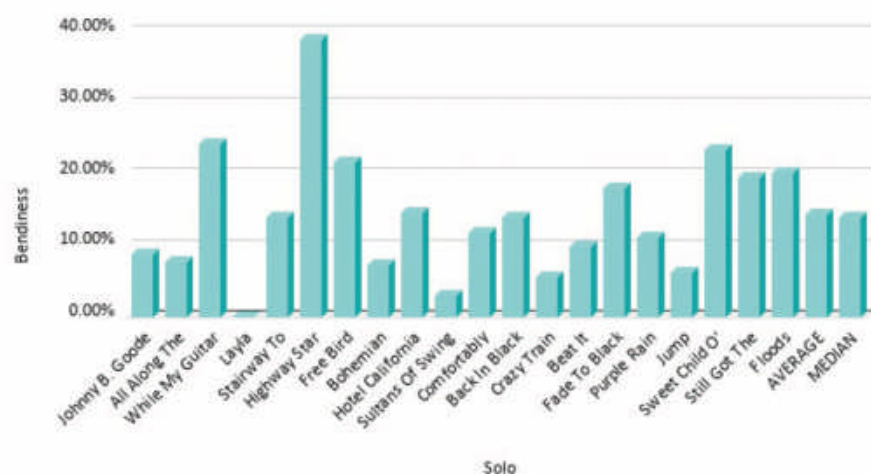
Finding: Bendiness is a matter of both number and proportion

We can measure how 'bendy' a solo is by counting the average number of string bends per bar. *Floods* sits at the top and *Sultans Of Swing* at the bottom (*Layla*'s solo is slide guitar and doesn't count). However, measure what proportion of all notes involve a bend and *Highway Star* is way out above them all.

Bends Per Bar



Bend Ratio

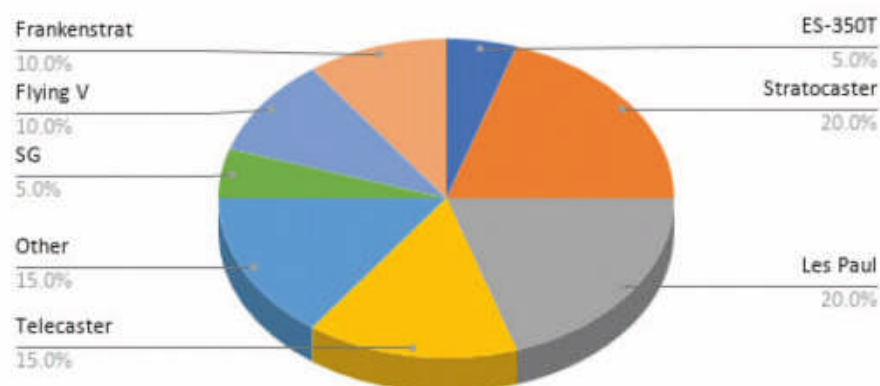


11 GEAR AND TONE

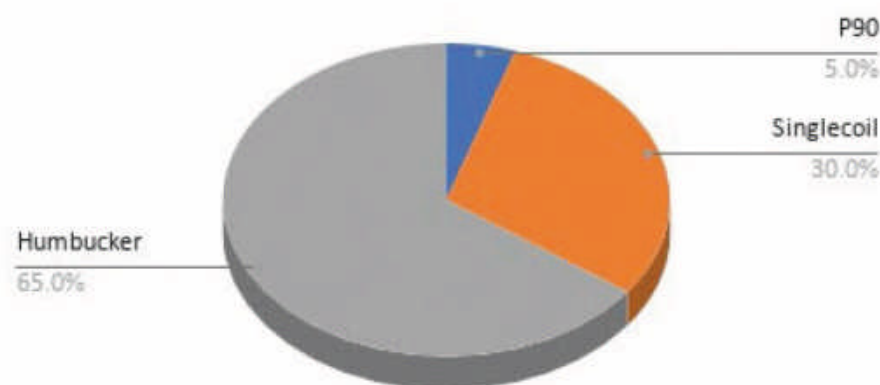
Finding: Melody and ideas are more important than effects

No surprises here, Les Pauls, Strats and Teles appear most frequently, with humbuckers a little more commonplace than single coils and a one-off P90. Although gain level varies wildly (on the *Floods-Sultans* scale), effects are relatively sparse. Beyond reverb, a little chorus, delay or wah are the most commonplace effects.

Guitars



Pickups



FRANKEN-SOLO

TG creates the 'scientifically proven' greatest solo of all time, and you can learn it here...

So the results are in, and we're using them as a guide to create a brand new Frankenstein's monster of a solo for you to learn. Here's the essential info...

First, the tempo – with a range between 64 and 170 bpm we've opted for a close to average 120 bpm. A minor key is essential, so we're in E minor here, but with a few moments spent hinting at E harmonic minor and E Dorian. A minimum of 2.5 octaves of pitch range is vital, and we've covered about three octaves here.

The lowest notes appear in the first half of the solo, before building to the highest point later on. The 'notiest' bars of music begin about two thirds of the way through and we've made sure to include a mix of fast, shreddy content and melodic hooks – all essential stuff.

There's loads for you to learn in our tab, including licks in the styles of several iconic guitarists. Just remember, if anyone asks what you're playing, tell them it's the scientifically proven greatest solo of all time!

FRANKEN-SOLO

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This is essentially the same as the intro, except it's varied with a move two frets down the fingerboard to imply a C chord in bars 7 to 9. Try playing the D5 and C5 powerchords with your second and fourth fingers. This keeps your first finger free to fret the lower notes that open each bar of 2/4 time.

FRANKEN-SOLO

21

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Following our melodic opening lick, we move into a *Comfortably Numb*-style arpeggio, *Bohemian Rhapsody*-style staccato notes and *Crazy Train*-inspired tapped string bend – all before bar 6! Bars 11 and 12 feature *Highway Star*-style picking, taking in brief *Free Bird* and *Sweet Child O' Mine*-inspired licks to lead into a *Fade To Black* idea in bars 15 and 16. The arpeggios from bar 20 reference *Hotel California* over a *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*-influenced chord progression, and we round things off with a *Sweet Child...* motif and *Beat It*-style harmonics. Phew!

EVERGREENS DO NOT SUFFER FROM ALZHEIMER'S.

Carol is no longer who she used to be.

She no longer recognises Nancy, her sister, or Jim, her husband. Most of the time it's as though she isn't aware of the things going on around her.

But when Nancy carefully puts headphones over Carol's ears and plays her most beloved song, her sister's eyes light up. She gently sways to the beat of the song, she even remembers the dance routine. She may nudge Jim's arm. Or tell him what

a fun guy he is. For the duration of that song, she's back again. For 4:35, she's Carol.

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th.mann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

Try out the gut-punching
riffs and rapid-fire solos in
Maiden's classic slice of
80s British heavy metal

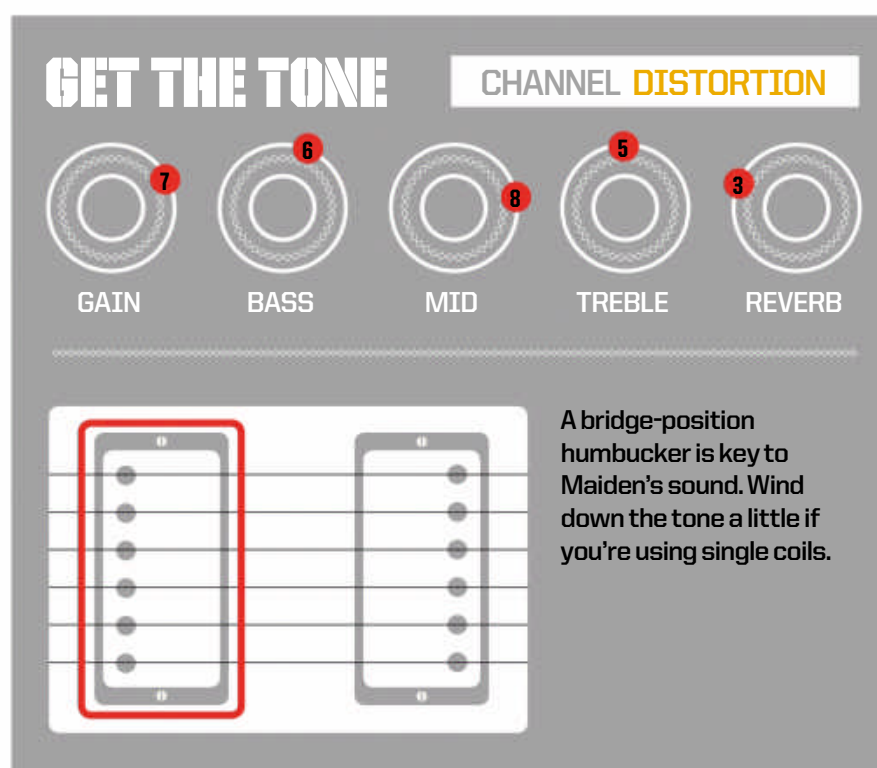
Widely regarded as one of the greatest metal albums of all time, *The Number Of The Beast* saw Iron Maiden rewriting the heavy metal rulebook for the 1980s. Sure, *TNOTB* topped the charts, but, whereas Judas Priest had taken a more commercial turn with 1982's *Screaming For Vengeance*, Maiden's offering was pure metal.

At the core of band is the twin axe attack of Dave Murray and Adrian Smith, who trade rapid-fire solos. Both lead breaks are a challenge for most guitarists, but listen out for Smith's slightly bluesier phrasing in solo 2. It's a subtle distinction, and, if you're tackling both solos yourself, a few rocks of a wah pedal will get you closer to Murray's tone in solo 1 and help contrast between the two.

It's not all about the solos, however. At 195 bpm, the song's downpicked eighth-note riffs will likely have your strumming arm burning. This is definitely one to practise slowly!

GET THE SOUND

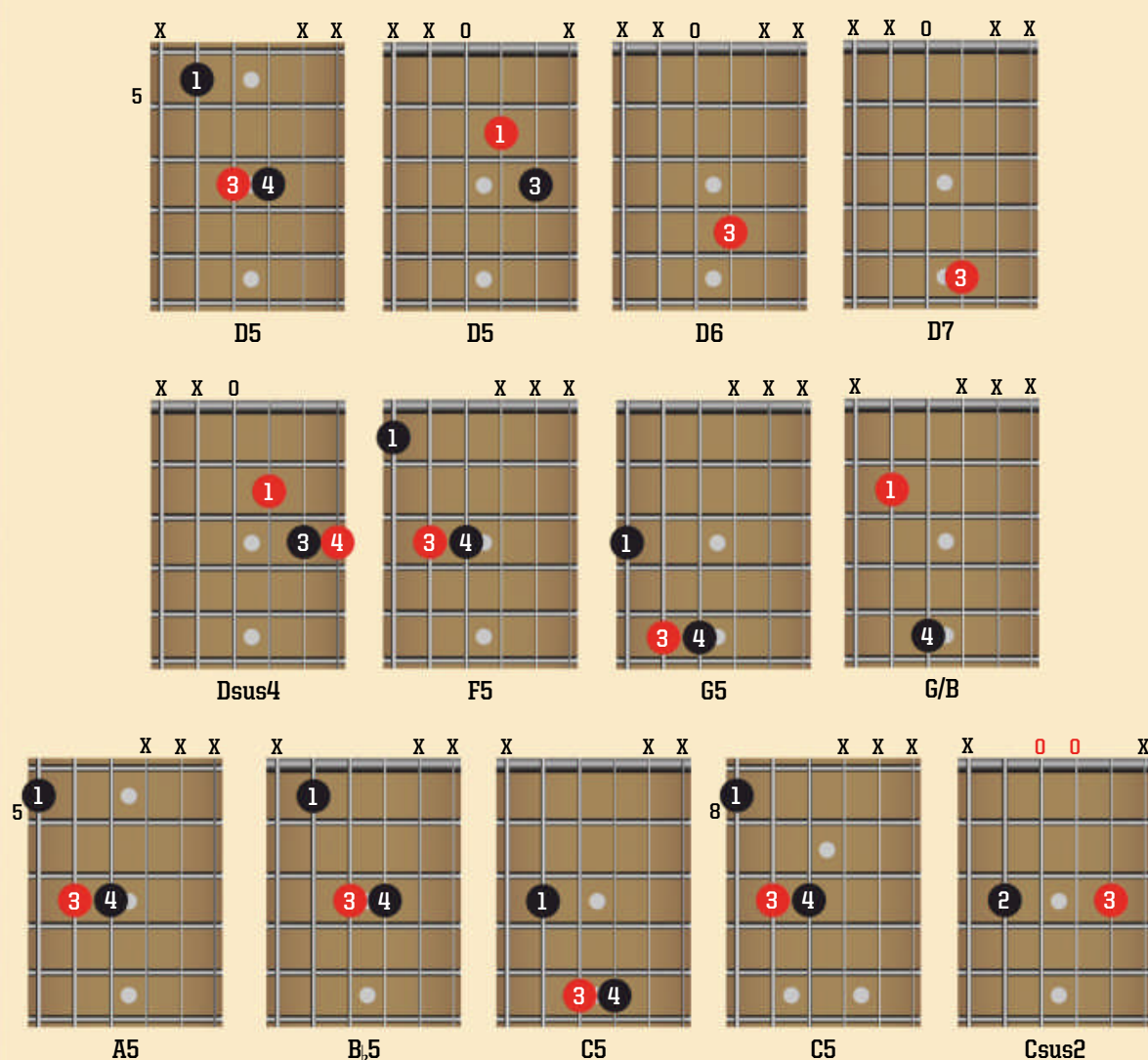
Everything you need to know before playing 'The Number Of The Beast'



Lashings of Marshall-style distortion, together with a humbucker equipped guitar will give you the ballpark Maiden sound. Raise the gain a touch and lower the treble if your guitar has single coils. Although there's plenty of distortion on the track, you will still need a decent amount of midrange to cut through the rest of the band (a modern high-gain distortion tone with scooped midrange won't work here). Consider using either an EQ or a volume booster pedal to help your guitar cut through the mix during the solos.

CHORDS

As you'd expect of 80s British heavy metal, the majority of this track is made up of simple powerchords. The exceptions are the G/B slash chord in the chorus, the two-note D6 and D7 chords that form the rock 'n' roll style riff of the middle section and two open chords: Dsus4 and Csus2. These are all simple shapes that shouldn't pose much difficulty.

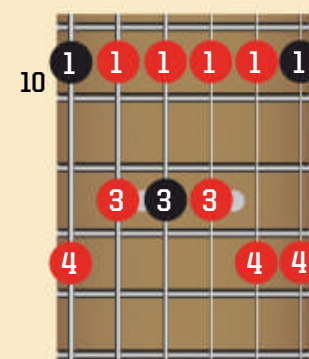


SCALES

Solo 1 cycles around B₅ and F₅ chords and marks a modulation from a D major (D E F# G A B C#) and D Mixolydian (D E F# G A B C) tonality to F major (F G A B, C D E). The second solo is in D minor (D E F G A B, C) and uses standard D minor pentatonic scale patterns, with occasional major 6th and 9th intervals thrown in to give a Dorian flavour.



F major scale



D minor pentatonic scale

IRON MAIDEN

Words and Music by Steve Harris

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IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST **Intro**

[illegible]

Ideally, use downstrokes throughout this section. It does require a fair bit of stamina, so practise slowly and gradually build up speed. The 'PM' marking tells you to palm mute throughout. Keep picking movements small and efficient, and aim to articulate the notes as clearly as you can.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Verses 1 & 5

0:29 PM

D5 N.C. D5

TAB

1 cont. sim.

N.C. C5 N.C.

5

D5 N.C.

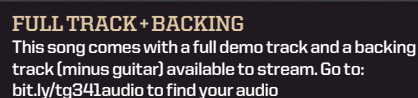
1.2.3. 4.

PM

9

This is essentially the same as the intro, except it's varied with a move two frets down the fingerboard to imply a C chord in bars 7 to 9. Try playing the D5 and C5 powerchords with your second and fourth fingers. This keeps your first finger free to fret the lower notes that open each bar of 2/4 time.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Chord Stabs



IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Chord Stabs (cont'd)

These chords are simple to play. The timing, however, is quite tricky. Look through the tab and work out which beats of the bar the chords fall on. You're playing eighth notes in 4/4 time, so count '1 8 2 8 3 8 4 8' so that all the chords either fall on a number or an '8'.

The trick in bars 1 to 6 is to palm-mute the bass note on the fifth string, but let the higher two notes of each powerchord ring out. This takes careful placement of your pick hand on the string. Palm muting is a common punk and heavy metal rhythm guitar technique, though, so consider it essential practice.

This is one of the easier parts of the track. Accurate timing is still vital, though. The chord changes in bars 1 to 6 should all fall on the '4 8', i.e., the last eighth note of the bar. The last two bars re-establish the verse chords as you return to that section again.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Middle 8

2:29

D⁵ D⁶ D⁵ D⁶ D⁷ D⁶ D⁷ D D⁷ D

Play 4 times

TAB

2 2 2 4 2 4 4 4 5 4 5 5 5 7 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

This is a traditional rock 'n' roll-style riff. Notice the separated note stems (one set pointing up and one set pointing down). This is to indicate that the open fourth-string D note should ring on a little longer when the third-string notes stop sounding on beat 3.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Solo 1

2:47

B^{b5} F⁵

10 13 10 11 10 11 (13) 10 11 10 8 10 8 10 8 10 8 6 8 6 8 6 8 6 5

1

8^{va} B^{b5}

5 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 13 10 13 10 13 10 13 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 13 BU

4

F⁵ (8^{va}) B^{b5}

grad. BU (14) BU (16) 13 (16) BU 13 (16) 10 13 10 13 10 9 10 8 10 8 10 8 10

7

F⁵

11 13 11 13 11 13 10 11 10 11 10 8 10 8 6 8 6 5 6 5 5 3 5 BU BD (7)

10

B^{b5}

(5) 13 15 13 15 17 18 17 15 17 18 17 15 18 20

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IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Solo 1 (cont'd)

8va F⁵ D⁵ C⁵

BU 20 (22) RP [22] RP [22] 18 BU 20 (22) RP (22) (22) [22]

14

As with any fast solo, break this down bar by bar, looking out for familiar scale patterns that you can practise. Bars 9 to 11 involve legato-style hammer-ons and pull-offs, but notice also the slides that make the position changes a little easier.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Break

N.C. C⁵ B^{b5} N.C. G⁵ F⁵

3:06

1

5

This section sees the guitars and bass playing in unison, so make sure you keep your timing tight. Bars 1 to 4 are essentially based on common A and F blues scale patterns. If you know these scales, then the riffs should be reasonably easy to play.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Solo 2

D⁵ F⁵ G⁵

3:16

BU 11 (13) 8 8 8 BU 11 (13) 8 8 BU 11 (13) 8 BU 11 (13) 8 BU BD (11) × 10 10

1

1/4 B^{b5} C⁵ D⁵ F⁵

1/4

[10] [10] 12 10 12 12 10 13 (15) 10 10 10 13 10 13 10 13 10

3

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Bridge (cont'd)

Use alternate downstrokes and upstrokes throughout this section. This hopefully takes the guesswork out of where to play the offbeat chords. Live, Maiden sometimes simplify this section, strumming fewer chords, so improvise around the theme if you like.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Chorus 3

This slight variation on the earlier chorus comes before a repeat of the guitar part from verse 1. You can improvise around the chords in bars 1 to 6, but make sure you play accurately in bars 7 and 8 so you come back in on time in the following verse.

IRON MAIDEN THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Outro

Here, we've provided an arrangement of the three or so overdubbed guitar parts for one guitar. The Csus2 is a blend of both D5 and C5 chords that each of the guitar parts plays. This is especially useful if you've only got one guitarist in your band.

JEFF BECK

'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

TG and Rockschoo! check out this powerful instrumental from Jeff's 1975 album, *Blow By Blow*

This track exemplifies Beck's mastery of the instrument, seamlessly blending elements of rock, jazz and blues into his unique melodic style. 'Cause We've Ended As Lovers was written by Stevie Wonder, and features musical tension/release points which Beck takes on with full force. His inventive arsenal of rhythmic and melodic approaches can be a little daunting to learn, so try first to break the piece down into its main sections, then into manageable bars and phrases.

As the track has a slow pulse, counting the 16th note subdivisions within the bar ('1 e & a 2 e & a' and so on) will make the more complex passages easier to translate. The various string bends are essential to Beck's melodic phrasing so focus on hitting the 'target' pitches accurately, practising them steadily until you gain confidence. A strong picking hand attack will help with your tone and projection – but don't forget to hold back some 'headroom' in your dynamics for the peak moments!



Whether you're taking your first steps on guitar or moving into further/higher education, a Rockschool Grade will improve your playing ability whilst you learn iconic tracks from the world of popular music. For more info visit: www.rslawards.com

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Words: Jono Harrison
Photography: Getty

'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS
Words & Music by Stevie Wonder
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JEFF BECK 'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

♩=54

Chorus: Cm⁹ A^bma^j7^{#11} Fm⁷ C^{sus}4 C

Verse: Cm⁷ A^bma^j7^{#11}

Tablature:

1. BU 8 (10) BD [10] (8) BU 8 (10) BD [10] (8) BU 8 (10) BU BD [10] (11) (8) 6 5 5 3

5. 10 8 8 BU BD 7 (8) (7) 5 5 3/6 6 4 4 4 5/7 5 5 3

JEFF BECK 'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

Cm⁹ **A^bmaj^{7#11}**

BU 10 (11) PB 11 BD 13 (11) BU BD 7 (8) (7) 10 4/6 4 4 4 BU BD BU BD BU BD BU BD 5 (7) (5 7) (5 7) (5 7) (5) 5

Fm⁹ **Csus⁴** **C**

8 6 BU BD 5 (6) (5) 3 5 6 BU BD 6 (8) (6) 5

Cm⁷ **A^bmaj^{7#11}**

10 8 8 [8] (11) BU BU BD 7 (8) (7) 5 7 5 6 4 4 4 BU BD 5 (7) (5) 5 3/6

Fm⁹ **Csus⁴** **C**

8 6 BU BD 5 (6) (5) 3 5 6 4/6 6 5 5 7 5 7 5

Cm⁷ **A^bmaj⁷**

5 3 3 5 4 5 6 (8) 5 BU BU 6 (8) [8] (9) (6) BU BD

JEFF BECK 'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

Fm¹³ **Gmaj⁷**

PB 8

BU BD (8) 7 8 7

3/5 3 (4) 5 3 1 (2) 3 15 0 1 2 3

29

Cm⁷ **A^bmaj⁷**

1 3 1 3 1 3 3/5 3

31

Fm⁷ **Gmaj⁷**

3 5 3 4 6 4 6 8 6 6 7 6 8 (10) 6 2/4 3 5/7 5 3 2/4 5 10

33

Cm⁷ **A^bmaj⁷**

PB 10 BU (14) 12 17 16 18 13 (15) BU BD BU BD 18 (20) (19) (20) (19)

35

Fm⁷ **Gmaj⁷**

BU BU BU BU BD BU BU BU BU BD 19 17 1 3 6 3 6

37

JEFF BECK 'CAUSE WE'VE ENDED AS LOVERS

Cm⁷ **A^bmaj⁷**

39

Fm⁷ **Gmaj⁷**

41

Cm⁷

43

A^bmaj⁷ **Fm⁷**

44

Gmaj⁷ **Cm⁹** **A^bmaj⁹** **Fm⁹** **Csus⁴** **C**

46

The opening volume swells can be achieved by manipulating the volume pot using the picking hand whilst striking the notes on the first string (you may need to adjust your hand position). There are some challenging position shifts and bends (e.g. bars 8 to 9 and 18 to 19), so take time to prepare your fingering and positioning to support these phrases.



Ashdown Guitar Magnifiers

ALL VALVE TONE

MADE IN ENGLAND

Designed, engineered and lovingly hand built in the UK custom shop the AGM-5C is designed for genuine tonal purists wanting luscious British valve driven guitar tones but at home/studio friendly volume levels combined with a host of modern player friendly features.

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WWW.ASHDOWNMUSIC.COM



OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

BETTER OBLIVION COMMUNITY CENTER DYLAN THOMAS

Always wanted to experiment with open tunings but never knew how to start?

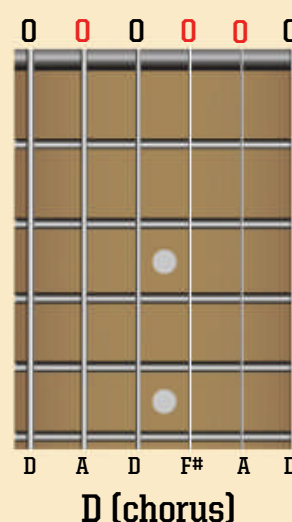
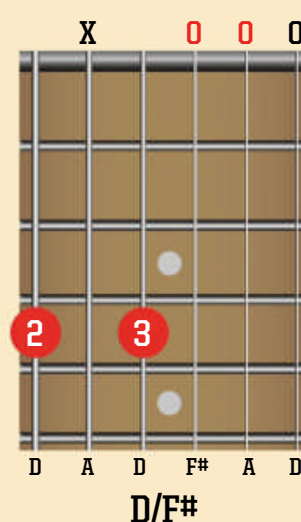
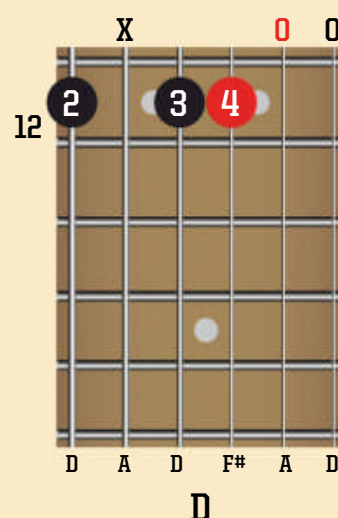
Better Oblivion Community Center feature the Los Angeles based singer-songwriting partnership of Phoebe Bridgers and Conor Oberst. *Dylan Thomas* is a single taken from their eponymously titled debut album released in 2019. The song is an intoxicating mix of hook laden melodies and politically charged lyrics. The band are categorised as indie rock, but this song has a protest vibe reminiscent of the 60s bohemian folk scene in Greenwich

Village, New York City. On the original track, Phoebe Bridgers' acoustic is tuned to open D (D A D F# A D), while Conor Oberst's Danelectro baritone guitar is tuned a 4th below standard tuning (B E A D F# B). We've rearranged the baritone intro riff so that it can be played in open D tuning, this way you can strum through the song *and* play that cool riff. In open D, your guitar is tuned to a D chord – so just hit the open strings or barre across any fret and you've got a major chord!



CHORDS

The great thing about open tunings is that you can play some very cool sounding chords that would be impossible to fret in standard tuning. Just moving a single shape around the neck, as illustrated here, could be all you need as the inspiration for your next riff, song, or jamming groove. Play the last shape shown for all the D chords in the chorus sections.



DYLAN THOMAS

Words and Music by Phoebe Bridgers and Conor Oberst
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FULL TRACK + BACKING
This song comes with a full demo track and a backing track (minus guitar) available to stream. Go to: bit.ly/tg341 audio to find your audio

SONGSHEET

Dylan Thomas

Verse 1

D
It was quite early one morning
Gadd9
Hit me without warning
D **Gadd9**
I went to hear the general speak
Aadd11
I was standing for the anthem
Gadd9
Banners all around him
D/F# **Gadd9**
Confetti made it hard to see
D
Put my footsteps on the pavement
Gadd9
Starved for entertainment
D **Gadd9**
Four seasons of revolving door
Aadd11
So sick of being honest
Gadd9
I'll die like Dylan Thomas
D/F# **Gadd9**
A seizure on the bar room floor

Chorus

D
I'm getting greedy with this
Aadd11 Gadd9
pri-vate hell
D **Aadd11 Gadd9**
I'll go it alone, but that's just as well

Verse 2

D
These cats are scared and feral
Gadd9
The flag pins on their lapels
D **Gadd9**
The truth is anybody's guess
Aadd11
These talking heads are saying
Gadd9
The king is only playing
D/F# **Gadd9**
A game of four dimensional chess

Solo

Verse 3

D
There's flowers in the rubble
Gadd9
The weeds are gonna tumble
D **Gadd9**
I'm lucid but I still can't think
Aadd11
I'm strapped into a corset
Gadd9
Climbed into your Corvette
D/F# **Gadd9**
I'm thirsty for another drink
D
If it's advertised, we'll try it

Gadd9

And buy some peace and quiet
D **Gadd9**
And shut up at the silent retreat
Aadd11
They say you've gotta fake it
Gadd9
At least until you make it
D/F# **Gadd9**
That ghost is just a kid in a sheet

Chorus

D
I'm getting used to these
Aadd11 Gadd9
di-zzy spells
D
I'm taking a shower at the
Aadd11 Gadd9
Bates Motel
D
I'm getting greedy with this
Aadd11 Gadd9
pri-vate hell
D **Aadd11 Gadd9**
I'll go it alone, but that's just as well

Instrumental Outro

BETTER OBLIVION COMMUNITY CENTER DYLAN THOMAS

♩=116

D **Gadd9** **D** **Gadd9**

0:15 w/phaser let ring throughout

T **D** **A** **F#** **D** **A** **D**

5 0 0 0 5 7 0 0 5 0 0 0 5 7 0 0 5

Aadd11 **Gadd9** **D/F#** **Gadd9**

let ring

T **A** **B**

0 0 0 0 5 7 0 0 4 0 0 0 5 7 0 0 5

This riff was originally played on baritone guitar; we've made a few changes to make it work in open D. Don't let the E note (7th fret, fifth string) ring into following notes when you play the Gadd9 chord; achieve this by releasing the pressure of your fretting finger *before* you pick the fourth string.

TAB GUIDE

Get more from TG by understanding our easy-to-follow musical terms and signs

What is tab?

This is where the key signature and time signatures are shown

This is the beats per minute (BPM)

0:51

2nd string 3rd fret 2nd string 1st fret 3rd string 2nd fret 4th string Open

1 E
2 B
3 G
4 D
5 A
6 E

TAB

CD time (where the part occurs on the original CD)

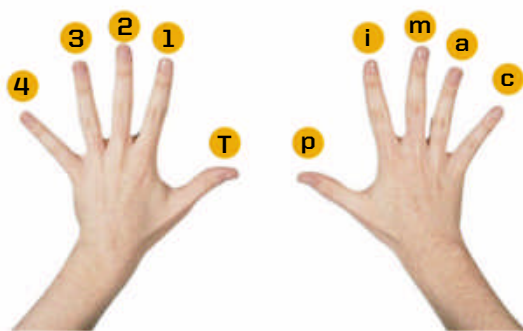
Tab is short for tablature, a notational system used to give detailed information as to where notes should be played on the fretboard. Tab appears underneath conventional music notation as six horizontal lines that represent the strings of the

guitar, from the sixth (thick) string at the bottom to the first (thin) string at the top. On these lines, numbers represent which frets you place your fingers. For example, an A note on the 2nd fret, third string, will be shown as a number '2' on the third line

down on the tab. Unfretted strings are shown with a '0'. The key and time signatures are shown in the notation. TG also includes a timestamp to tell you where in the original track you'll find each example and tempo expressed in beats per minute.

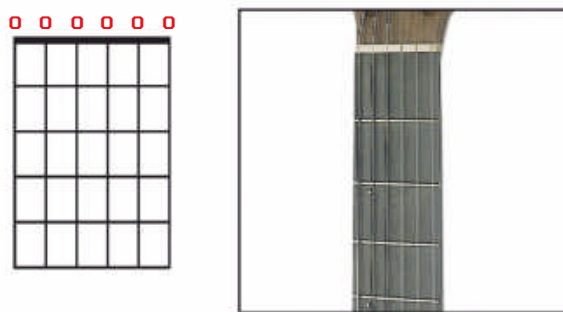
FRET BOXES: CHORDS, SCALES AND CAPO NOTATION

HAND LABELLING



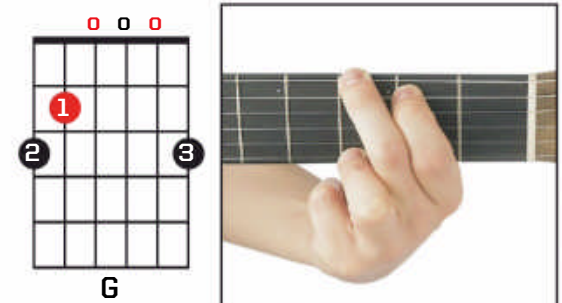
Here are the abbreviations used for each finger. Fretting hand: **1, 2, 3, 4, (T)**
Picking hand: **p (thumb), i (index), m (middle), a (annular), c (little finger)**

NUT AND FRETBOARD



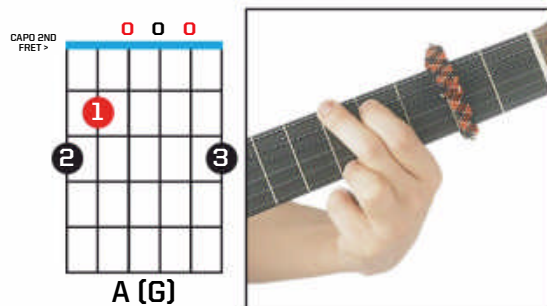
This fretbox diagram represents the guitar's fretboard exactly, as seen in the photo. This design is used for ease of visualising a fretboard scale or chord quickly.

CHORD EXAMPLE



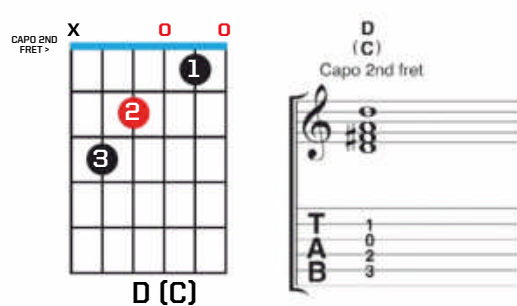
This diagram represents a G chord. The 'o's are open strings, and a circled number is a fretting hand finger. A black 'o' or circled number is the root note (here, G).

CAPO EXAMPLE



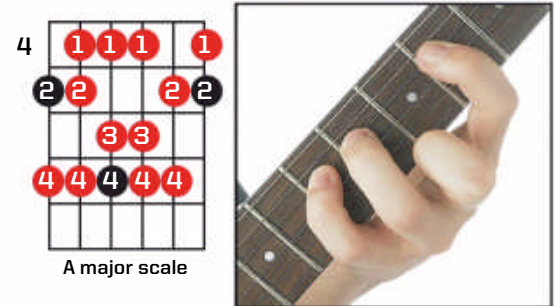
The blue line in the diagram represents a capo for this A chord, place it at the 2nd fret. Capos change the fret number ordering. Here, the original 5th fret now becomes the 3rd fret, 7th fret now 5th fret, etc.

CAPO NOTATION



Here the chord looks like a C in the tab, but the capo on the 2nd fret raises the pitch to make it a D. The 2nd fret capo'd notes are shown with a '0' in the tab as if they were open strings.

SCALE EXAMPLE



The fret box diagram illustrates the fret hand fingering for the A major scale using black dots for root notes and red dots for other scale tones. The photo shows part of the scale being played on the fourth string with the first, third and fourth fingers.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES: PICKING

DOWN AND UP-PICKING



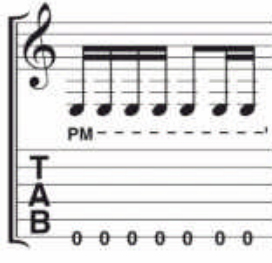
The symbols under the tab tell you the first note is to be down-picked and the second note is to be up-picked.

TREMOLO PICKING



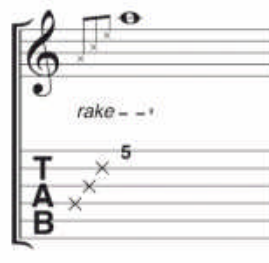
Each of the four notes are to be alternate-picked (down and up-picked) very rapidly and continuously.

PALM MUTING



Palm-mute by resting the edge of your picking hand palm on the strings near the bridge saddles.

PICK RAKE



Drag the pick across the strings shown with a single sweep. This is often used to augment a rake's last note.

APPREGGIATED CHORD



Play the notes of the chord by strumming across the relevant strings in the direction of the arrow head.

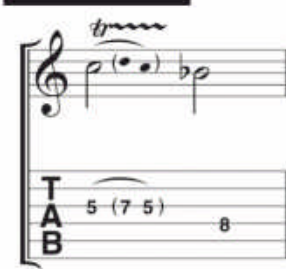
FRETTING HAND

HAMMER-ON & PULL-OFF



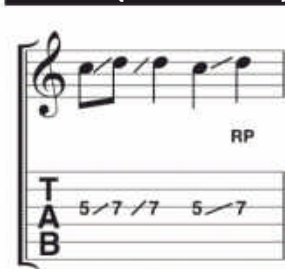
Pick the first note then hammer down on the string for the second note. Pick the third note and pull-off for the fourth note.

NOTE TRILLS



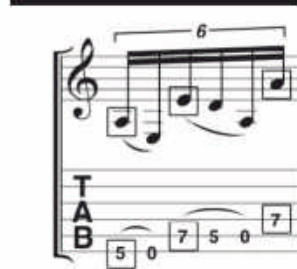
After picking the first note, rapidly alternate between the two notes shown in brackets using hammer-ons and pull-offs.

SLIDES (GLISSANDO)



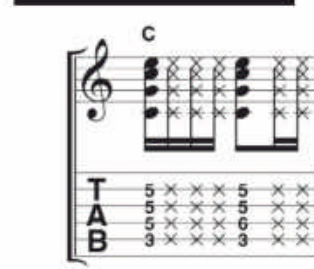
Pick the first note and then slide to the next. For the last two notes pick the first, slide to the next and then re-pick it (RP).

FRET-HAND TAPPING



Sound the notes marked with a square by hammering-on/tapping with your fret hand fingers, instead of picking.

FRET-HAND MUTING



X markings represent notes and strings that are muted by your fret hand when struck by your picking hand.

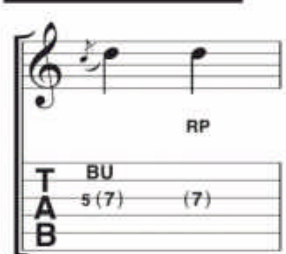
BENDING AND VIBRATO

BEND AND RELEASE



Fret the first note (here, the 5th fret) and bend up to the pitch of the bracketed note, before releasing again.

RE-PICKED BEND



Bend up to the pitch shown in the brackets, then re-pick the note while holding the bent note at the pitch shown.

PRE-BEND



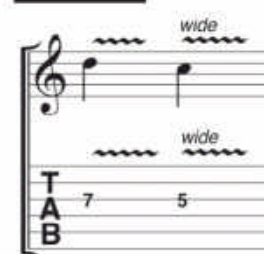
Silently bend the string up from the 5th fret (PB5) to the pitch of the 7th fret note, pick it and release to the 5th fret note.

QUARTER-TONE BEND



Pick the note then bend up a quarter-tone (a very small amount). This is sometimes referred to as a 'blues curl'.

VIBRATO



Your fretting hand vibrates the string by small bend-ups and releases. Exaggerate this effect to create a 'wide' vibrato.

HARMONICS

NATURAL HARMONICS



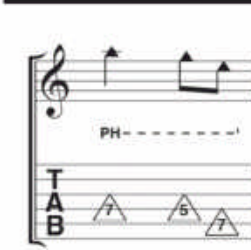
Pick the note while lightly touching the string directly over the fret indicated. A chiming harmonic results.

ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS



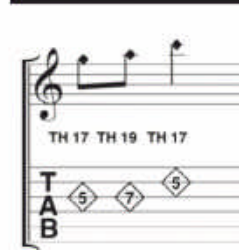
Fret the note as shown, then lightly place your index finger directly over 'x' fret (AH'x') and pick (with a pick, p or a).

PINCHED HARMONICS



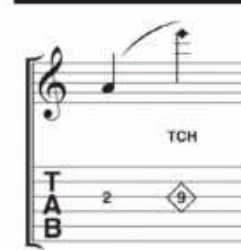
After fretting the note in the triangle, dig into the string with the side of your thumb as you sound it with the pick.

TAPPED HARMONICS



Place your finger on the note as shown, but sound it with a quick pick hand tap at the fret shown (TH17) for a harmonic.

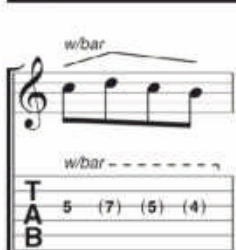
TOUCHED HARMONICS



A previously sounded note is touched above the fret marked TCH (eg, TCH 9) for it to sound a harmonic.

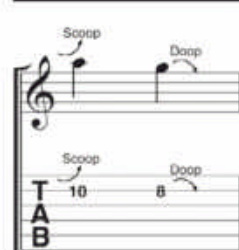
VIBRATO BAR / WHAMMY BAR

WHAMMY BAR BENDS



The note is picked as shown, then the vibrato bar is raised and lowered to the pitches shown in brackets.

SCOOP AND DOOP



Scoop: depress the bar just before striking the note and release. Doop: lower the bar slightly after picking note.

SUSTAINED NOTE AND DIVEBOMB



A Note is sustained then the vibrato bar is depressed to slack. The square bracket indicates a further articulation.

GARGLE



Sound the note and 'flick' the vibrato bar with your picking hand so it 'quivers'. This results in a 'gargling' sound!

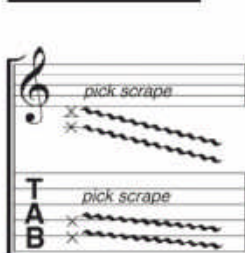
WHAMMY BAR VIBRATO



Gently rock the whammy bar to repeatedly bend the pitch up and down. This sounds similar to fret hand vibrato.

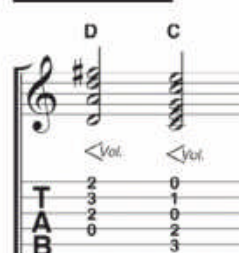
OTHERS

PICK SCRAPE



The edge of the pick is dragged either down or up along the lower strings to produce a scraped sound.

VIOLINING



Turn the volume control down, sound the note(s) and then turn the volume up for a smooth fade in.

FINGER NUMBERING



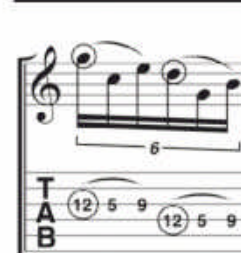
The numbers in the traditional notation refer to the fingers required to play each note.

PIMA DIRECTIONS



Any kind of fingerpicking requirements are shown at the bottom of the tab notation.

PICK HAND TAPPING



Tap (hammer-on) with a finger of your picking hand onto the fret marked with a circle. Usually with 'i' or 'm'.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE
BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION

Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS

We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

*WHAT IS GAS?

Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL

You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullshit-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT

TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS

We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD

TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a five-star rating. This is the best, most exciting new gear that you need to check out



BEST FOR...

Different guitarists have different needs. This badge highlights a particular strength that a product has in a TG Test or Group Test, so you can choose what's best for you



86



92



085 START ME UP

Five new products you need to check out

086 FENDER AMERICAN PRO II STRATOCASTER HSS

A Strat that can do it all?

090 TC ELECTRONIC DITTO+

The best mini looper money can buy?

092 DANELECTRO '57

One of the original American electric guitars, reissued

094 MXR M267 OCTAVIO FUZZ

Huge tones in a tiny box!



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



SOME ISSUES



POOR



03



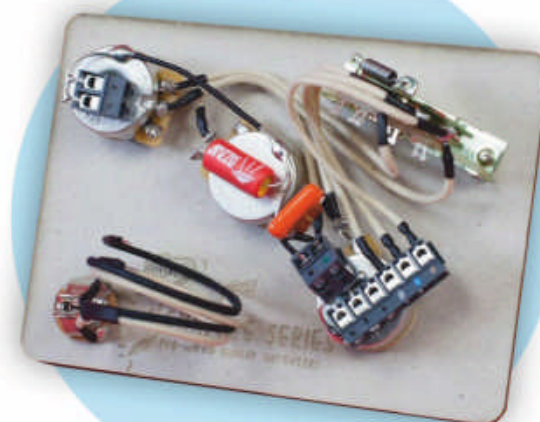
05



04



02



01

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

JAMES'S HOME OF TONE SIGNATURE SERIES SOLDERLESS PRE-WIRED HARNESES

1 Is the thought of soldering putting you off upgrading your pots? Or maybe you want a faster way to try out different pickups on your guitar. James Gascoigne's superb online store offers the solution – you simply screw your pickup and ground wires into the terminals provided. There's Strat, Tele, Les Paul, SG and more – all with 50s wiring to give you a great upgrade for your tone. **From £44.99,** www.homeoftone.co.uk

DUNLOP PRIMETONE PICKS

2 For many of us, our pick choice is the last thing we experiment with, let alone pay more than usual for. But finding the right pick for you matters a lot, and we really rate these. Primetone picks are made from Ultex for durability and a bright sound and have hand-burnished sculpted edges to improve articulation and quick string release. We certainly found that, and the grip was great too. Not cheap but certainly impressive. **£7.99 for three (0.73 to 2.0mm options),** www.jimdunlop.com

BOSS WAZA CRAFT TB-2W TONE BENDER

3 A compact Tone Bender fuzz? Yes please! The Japanese-made Waza Craft series has the tonehounds salivating again with its collaboration with Sola Sounds to bring back an "authentic sonic recreation of the Tone Bender MKII". It's packing germanium transistors under the hood and controls are a simple Level and Attack, plus a three-way voltage selector for added headroom. And in other news: there's a Waza Craft HM-2 pedal coming too. **£TBC available Spring 2021,** www.boss.info

BLACKSTAR CARRY-ON

4 We certainly didn't expect Blackstar to be releasing an electric guitar in 2020 but here it is in all its 20.7" glory. The Carry-on was designed with fellow UK company Gordon Smith Guitars and is made from one piece Okoume wood with a set neck to maximise resonance. Its mini humbucker is splittable and the two finishes (Jet Black and Vintage White) are available with a premium travel bag plus optional extras including a FLY 3 Bluetooth mini amp. **From £349,** www.blackstaramps.com

CORT CORE-OC

5 Cort has impressed us with its electrics, and recently with the Little CJ Travel guitar but now it's raising the full-size electro acoustic spec standards for under £500 here. All solid tonewoods, Fishman electronics and bone nut. There's a choice of three cutaway models with mahogany (pictured), blackwood or spruce/mahogany, each offering Fishman's low key sonitone preamp system. There's even a swish looking gig bag included. **£459,** www.cortguitars.com



FENDER AMERICAN PRO II STRATOCASTER HSS

The do-it-all Strat?

£1649

How does a company evolve a design that they got so right at the start? With the Strat, Fender treads carefully but with its recent Ultra series, it proved that its carefully considered tweaks can amount to quite a lot. But it has to be a sensitive balance, retaining the very things that make the Strat experience so attractive. So where does that leave us with Fender's new standard; the second iteration of the Professional II.

There's no doubt some of the Ultra's features have influenced the changes here, but the Pro II also brings its own distinct changes; namely a new tonewood option with roasted pine (the roasting improves its resonance). While the Sienna Sunburst finish also uses this new sustainable

with push-arm and Narrow Tall fretwire. The Pro II adds in contoured neck heel and plate for easier access (though it's not as dramatic as the Ultra's), but the added electric options across the line are the boldest upgrade.

For the HSS Strat, it's a Double Tap (see boxout) humbucker that promises to make an already versatile take on the Strat blueprint even further. The neck's deeper C-shape is certainly subtle, and this is a really comfortable Strat-playing experience enhanced by the rear satin finish. The neck contour does make a notable difference to accessing those highest frets more easily.

The two-point tremolo is wonderfully responsive acoustically, and because tuning remains stable it becomes

addictive. But before we plug in, there are a couple of issues to address. The G string is buzzing on all frets – thankfully it's not a nut issue and a string change addresses it. We also choose to raise the pickups as they seem a little low to us. It's a personal preference but we really like that Fender provide two adjustment screws for the single-coil and humbucker parts of the Double Tap – for good reasons.

Some people just can't accept the idea of a humbucker on a Strat but Fender have integrated it here as only experts do – from the zebra bobbin to blend it into the control plate aesthetically to the Double Tap's role in the broader spectrum, it all makes sense. This isn't

1 FINISH
The roasting process darkens the pine, but other than that there's just a clear coat after the sanding is sealed on this natural finish.

2 BRIDGE
The two-post bridge now boasts a chamfered cold-rolled steel vibrato block that, says Fender, "increases sustain, clarity and high-end sparkle".

3 DOUBLE TAP HUMBUCKER
Fender's patented Double Tap was introduced on its Performer series and aims to minimise the volume loss between humbucker and single-coil sounds.

AT A GLANCE

BODY Roasted pine

NECK Maple, modern 'deep C' profile, bolt-on

SCALE 25.5" (648mm)

FINGERBOARD Maple / 9.5" radius

FRETS 22, narrow tall

PICKUPS Fender V-Mod II Double Tap humbucker (bridge), V-Mod II single coil Strat (middle & neck)

CONTROLS Five-position lever pickup selector switch, master volume (w/ treble bleed), tone 1 (neck & middle), tone 2 (bridge) w/push-push switch coil-split

HARDWARE Nickel/chromed-plated 2-point synchronised vibrato with bent steel saddles and pop-in arm and coldrolled steel block, Fender Standard cast/sealed staggered tuners

FINISH Roasted Pine, Sienna Sunburst, 3-Color Sunburst, Olympic White, Mystic Surf Mercury, Miami Blue, Dark Night

CONTACT Fender, www.fender.com

A REAL PRIZE WORKHORSE FOR IT'S ASKING PRICE

replacement for ash, here in clear-coated natural glory.

The pine looks more 70s retro than some of the bold new finishes in the Professional II line, and it will probably be one of the most divisive. But in the first reveal of the new line that TG attended, it was suggested these pine models would be on the lighter side of Strat weights, and at 7.5lbs ours is certainly on the lower side.

When it replaced the American Standard series in 2017, the American Professional sought to continue its appeal to a wide range of players but ring in some changes; a slightly deeper take on the Modern C-shape neck, two-point synchronised tremolo





Hum's the word

Why the Pro II's pickups offer a distinct proposition

The pickups here are the result of some carefully considered R&D. Fender's Double Tap humbucker is not a traditional coil-split affair and features some unique wiring plus mismatched coils to reduce the difference in output when switching between single-coil and humbucker modes with the push-push tone control. The other two V-Mod II pickups are an enhanced version of Tim Shaw's original Pro design using mixed magnets to create hum-cancelling single-coils; the neck uses Alnico II on the bass-side magnets and III for the treble while the middle again uses Alnico II for the bass with V for the treble.

some hot rod 'bucker – it's an extra voice to transition to. So it's not ideal for death metal, but is articulate and doesn't jar when transitioning too and from the positions. In offering two extra voices (bridge and position 2), it brings the total to seven.

That makes for a serious array of tones when combined with the two volumes' incredibly effective treble bleed circuits that encourage you to explore the extremes of their taper in combination with the tone pot. You can effectively set the controls here to activate tone presets without touching a pedal.



The Strat spank and sparkle is all here, and the more we play, the more we discover. We can't resist some heavier riffs and rhythm through a Victory Countess with an EHX Soul Food pedal and this guitar just keeps revealing more versatility with every test. The neck pickup handles higher gain very well – articulate and percussive.

So yes, this is as close to a stock do-it-all Strat we've played, and yes, you do get a real prize workhorse for your asking price. The pine finish will turn some people off, but other options are

available and, along with the standard version, it's the most user-friendly and seamless switching we've played in a Strat. It's another great example of a timeless design that's found another way to successfully evolve here.

Rob Laing

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

ALSO TRY...

FENDER ULTRA STRATOCASTER HSS

£1919

Rosewood fingerboard only for this higher-priced sibling, but five exclusive finishes with a Double Tap, noiseless single-coils, locking tuners and 10"-14" compound-radius fingerboard.



AMERICAN PERFORMER STRAT HSS

£999

If you can't stump for the Pro II or Ultra, this is a great way to enjoy the original Double Tap equipped Strat. Its Yosemite single coils are some of the best examples we've heard.

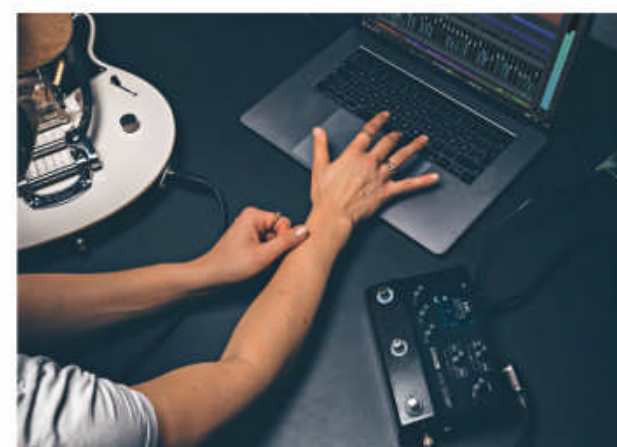


CORT G290 FAT

£549

An affordable but versatile s-type from 2019, with coil-splits as part of its five positions, recessed trem and a roasted maple neck.





USING THE **LINE 6 HX STOMP** FOR PRACTICE, SONGWRITING AND RECORDING

The success of the Helix family of amp and effects modellers isn't just because they're all-in-one solutions for the live stage with their industry-leading tones; Helix is just as effective in your home too. With its compact desk-friendly dimensions and huge range of versatile features for players, the HX Stomp model is the perfect candidate for your go-to guitar recording interface, headphone practice rig and source of limitless tonal possibilities for creative your ideas.

The new Helix 3.0 update has now expanded the HX Stomp's potential even further, with the number of user blocks to create your amps and effects signal chains increasing from six to eight. This added flexibility combines with other key Helix features to make the HX Stomp an intuitive and powerful processor for your guitar tones at home.

Editing and switching between your favourite tones for practice and recording is easy with the Helix's unique Snapshots feature. These are like presets within your presets – you can choose and edit up to three onboard Snapshots for each of your presets and switch between them seamlessly, allowing you to add or subtract multiple effects and edit parameters for your favourite signal chain.

As a recording interface, the HX Stomp allows you to effectively monitor your tones for tracking. Players also have the option to easily edit and save Helix amp and effect model presets without touching the HX Stomp via computer with the included HX Edit software.

The Line 6 HX Stomp offers access to the unlimited potential of Helix to help any guitarist to stay inspired.

Discover more at line6.com





TC ELECTRONIC DITTO+

The new best mini looper to buy?



£109

When the original Ditto looper pedal emerged in 2013, it was such a simple and effective proposition – a plug-in-and-play no-brainer for anyone wanting an easy to use, dedicated looper that didn't take up much space on their pedalboard. Moreover, it was a superb introduction to the benefits of a looper for practice and creativity.

Like the previous mini Ditto, you press once to record, again to play and once more to overdub – and you can overdub as many times as you like. Then you can hold the same footswitch down for two seconds to erase your last loop or hold down for another two to bring it back, double click and hold to delete the whole session. So far, so intuitive and your loop time

whether you turn the pedal off or not. You can also import and explore up to 99 loops via the USB – yes, that can mean backing tracks. Plug in via the USB and the pedal shows up as an external drive on your computer with 99 track folders – simply drop your file in whichever one you want, as long as it's in 44.1hz WAV format. MP3s are not welcome here, sorry.

We think the new Extended Loop Mode is equally as significant as the onboard storage here; it allows you to record a longer overdub over your initial shorter loop. The mode extends the loop to match your new overdub. Simple and effective!

This is a worthy follow-up to the hugely popular original true bypass Ditto, retaining everything that was good about it with useful additions to justify the extra cost.

Rob Laing

A WORTHY FOLLOW-UP TO THE HUGELY POPULAR ORIGINAL

But what if you want more than simple with the same mini footprint? TC has managed to cram it in the same mini dimensions here, but is it trying to do too much to stay intuitive with just three controls and a small screen? A looper needs to be easy to use on the fly, and a quick start guide that's a two-sided sheet not much bigger than the pedal itself suggests that TC Electronic is confident about delivering that – though it certainly

leaves some important information off of it. The new colour LCD screen offers a visual guide to the progress of your playback, but it's also crucial to managing the new features here. With the original, you could only keep one loop session at a time, now there's 99 sessions you can save. On top of this, it is incredibly simple to keep them, too. Once they're recorded, they remain until you delete them, regardless of

- 1 BACKING TRACK CONTROL**
The control pot sets the level of your loop track/session overdubs, but if you want to turn the backing track level down and not your overdubs, you need to hold the left and right buttons down to enter backing track volume mode.
- 2 EXTENDED LOOP MODE**
Keep those left and right buttons down for longer and you'll be asked if you want to enter the new Extended Loop Mode.
- 3 PONG?**
Hold down the right control button as you power the Ditto+ on to play a Pong-esque video game on the screen – yes, really. You use the level control knob to move.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Mini-size looper pedal
CONTROLS: Level, left and right menu buttons
FEATURES: 60 minutes of 24-bit looping time, 99-slot memory bank for sessions, Extended Loop Mode, import/export WAV loops, 2.6cm x 2.6cm colour LCD screen, true bypass, analog-dry-through
SOCKETS Input, output, Mini USB, DC in
POWER 9V DC 100mA
CONTACT TC Electronic, www.tcelectronic.com

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★



DANELECTRO '57 £799

A ridiculously cool reissue of one of the original American electric guitars

The Danelectro U2 was just the second branded model designed and produced by company founder Nathan Daniel after making his name supplying the American department stores of the fifties with musical instruments. This new '57 is a faithful reproduction of that landmark instrument, a model that was only produced between 1956 and 1958 and, like the majority of all Danos, it features a semi-acoustic body composed of a solid spruce framework with a front and back of a type of hardboard called masonite. Also within is a spruce centre block that supports a pair of singlecoil lipstick pickups, designs

bridge pickup feeds into the neck unit thus boosting the signal. Compared to the sound the isolated pickups provide, this gives a gloriously fat tone that's part P-90, part Tele neck pickup; take it from us, it's a real treat to play with. The '57 reacts well to drive settings, making it eminently useable for blues styles, and adding a gnarly fuzz really allows you to go to town. Danos make for excellent slide guitars and, with some minor adjustments, that goes for the '57, too. Out of the box the action is probably a little too low, but if you were to string it with a set of 12s, simply raise the action via the saddles and carefully straighten the resulting neck bow with the truss rod.

THE '57 REACTS WELL TO DRIVE SETTINGS; IDEAL FOR BLUES

that can also be attributed to Daniel. Back in the day he sourced actual lipstick tubes from cosmetics manufacturer Max Factor and simply inserted a magnet encased in copper wire into the each one; he didn't even use a bobbin. Proceedings are more sophisticated these days but the concept is still the same, and each uses an uncommon Alnico 6 magnet set within a chromed brass/zinc tube. The maple neck sports a period-correct coke bottle headstock and is a delight to play, and both the pau ferro 'board and the 21 medium frets have been nicely finished too. Arguably the best feature is that the pickups are wired in series rather than in parallel, meaning that, with the toggle in the middle position, the

1 HEADSTOCK The '57 features a coke bottle headstock, so named because of its shape. Other headstocks across the range include the dolphin nose and the thermometer.

2 CONTROLS The stacked controls work really nicely. The lower, larger round regulates the volume, leaving the smaller upper pot for the tone-shaping.

3 TOP The perfectly-named Limo black finish is flawless. How much more black could it be? The answer is none. None more black...

AT A GLANCE

- BODY:** Masonite front and back with spruce framework
- NECK:** Maple
- SCALE:** 635mm (25")
- FINGERBOARD:** Pau ferro, 14" radius
- FRETS:** 21
- PICKUPS:** 2x Alnico 6 Vintage 50s singlecoil lipstick pickups
- CONTROLS:** 2x Dual-concentric volume/tone pots
- HARDWARE:** Chrome hardtail adjustable U3 bridge, vintage-style Gotoh tuners
- LEFT-HANDED:** No
- FINISH:** Limo black (reviewed), Jade
- CASE:** Not included
- CONTACT:** JHS, www.jhs.co.uk/danelectro

The elephant in the room is trumpeting far too loudly to be ignored any further, so let's quickly address that price. We'd concede that £799 is a hefty sum for any new Dano, but our advice would be to shop around as we've spotted some pretty generous online deals from a couple of established retailers that would make actually shelling out for a new '57 a far more palatable proposition. At the very least you should try one; it sounds as good as it looks.

Simon Bradley

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	PLAYABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★





MXR M267 OCTAVIO FUZZ

£139

Get fuzzed!

While fuzz may well be the most divisive of the gain family, it's seen something of a resurgence since the early-00s garage rock revival movement. From the wooly retro sounds of vintage fuzz to the all-out ripping Velcro of more modern examples, it's a mixed bag that you either love or hate. MXR's Octavio pedal sits somewhere between the two, combining silicon fuzz with an octave-up effect. It's looking to deliver a similar vibe to Hendrix's favourite fuzz/pitch combo, as originated by effects wizard, Roger Mayer with his Octavia – that's 'a' not 'o', as we have here.

MXR recreated Jimi's original pedals a while ago in association with the Hendrix estate. Here, the same circuitry is housed in a simple white box as part of MXR's standard line. Tonally, the Octavio is a bit deceptive. On paper you might expect this to lean towards the gentle end of fuzz tones, with its silicon diode-powered clipping circuit. While that's the case at lower gain ranges, start cranking and you'll really notice this little box start to clip and compress into that modern, aggressive territory. The octave-up isn't quite as overt as you might expect – there's no control for it for a kick-off, but this subtlety actually makes it more

usable, with the effect becoming more intense on harder-picked single notes. Think Queens Of The Stone Age at the medium setting and you're not far off. Wind it up, and you're in synthy, squared-off territory: kiss goodbye to pristine note definition if you're playing chords, it does get ugly! The Octavio is a versatile fuzz that has you covered for retro jagged edges and more contemporary sounds. Fuzz fans will love it, but if you're on the fence then we'd suggest trying one out first.

Stuart Williams

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Octave fuzz pedal

CONTROLS: Output, fuzz, bypass

SOCKETS: Input, output, power

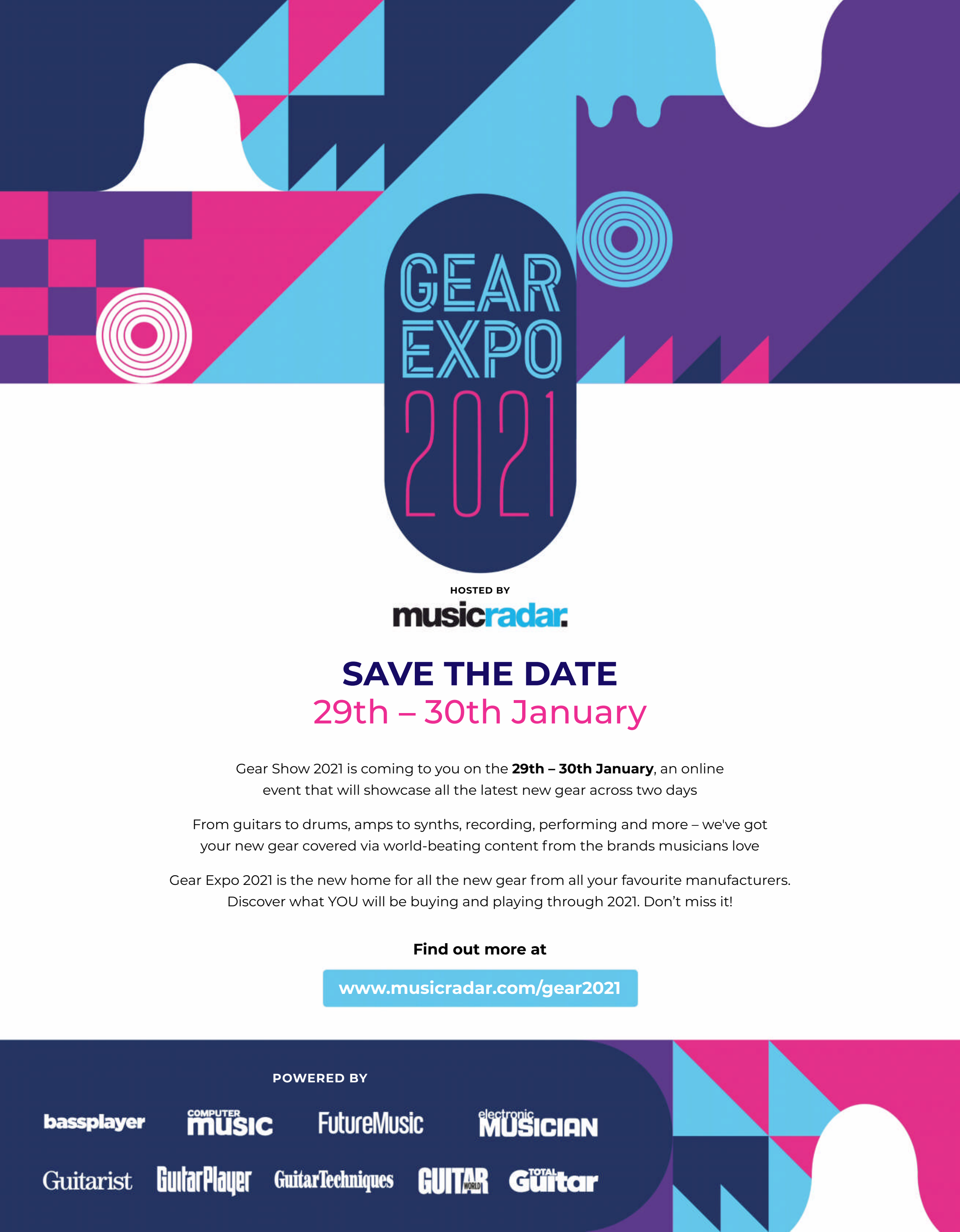
TRUE BYPASS: Yes

POWER: 9v battery or PSU

CONTACT: www.jimdunlop.com

A SIMILAR VIBE TO JIMI'S FUZZ/PITCH COMBO

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★



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Words: Amit Sharma Photo: Devyn Glista

ARI O'NEAL

The secret behind getting so many gigs as a session player?" ponders American guitarist Ari O'Neal, who – in her years of playing for Beyoncé, Jay Z, Lizzo, Alicia Keys and more – would know a thing or two about finding work as a musician. "Post, post and post," she continues, stressing the importance of making it as easy as possible for people to find you. "I'm always active on my social media pages, it's really important... As is being different! I want to play like I'm an old black man, and still look like a Barbie [laughs]."

As for her main influences, the young session ace lists George Benson ("the first

guitarist I ever studied"), Joe Pass ("because his music always tells a story) and Isaiah Sharkey from John Mayer's band, alongside soul/RnB talents like Agape Jerry, Jairus 'JMO' Mozee and Jubu Smith ("because he's my favourite guitarist's favourite guitarist").

She also describes herself as a "Fender girl all the way", having been chosen by the guitar giants to demo their

Acoustasonic Telecaster hybrid and was also asked to perform alongside Mark Lettieri [Snarky Puppy] and Ayla Tesler-Mabe at the Fender Ultra

JammJam for 2020's Winter NAMM, promoting the American Ultra series. She points out her obsession with all things Fender began long, long ago...

"I loved them well before I got endorsed," O'Neal tells TG. "Not mentioning any names, but I nearly endorsed by another big guitar company and they tried to make me jump through so many hoops. And the sound I was getting wasn't even that versatile anyway. Which is why I switched to Fender, whose instruments can give me the sound I need for any situation. I like them with a maple neck – always a maple neck – and Mexican-made!"

From there, O'Neal trusts in a Boss multi-effects unit to handle her tones, praising the Japanese innovators for their dependably rugged build quality and tonal expertise. Right now she cites the GT-100 as her favourite, with no shortage of amps and effects by her feet at any given time...

"I can really dig in on that thing and make any sound I want," she grins. "It's an all-in-one kind of pedal, which is what I typically use. And the Boss stuff always works great for what I need! You can definitely say I won't be building any boards anytime soon!"





RABEA MASSAAD

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'I need a pickup with the ability to create glassy, ambient leads and warm, clear chord tones. Equally I need it to sound crushingly heavy and aggressive. The Silo humbuckers give me everything I need and more. I couldn't be happier.'

Rabea

launch your tone into the ambient-sphere

Photo: Max Taylor-Grant

Bare Knuckle

bareknucklepickups.co.uk