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MUSE

"IT'S A NEW DIMENSION FOR THIS BAND"
How two metal titans inspired their
heaviest songs yet!



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Welcome...



I'm really excited this month to bring you our exclusive interview with Muse's Matt Bellamy. Of the band's ninth studio album *Will Of The People* Matt tells TG: "I definitely think a bit more metal has crept in this time." For my money this is good news. As our interviewer Amit Sharma explains, "It's the sound of a group finding new ways to catch lightning in

the bottle and hardwire galactic riffs into stadium-conquering anthems". For me, it's also exciting to hear what is arguably the most overtly shred guitar run ever heard on a Muse album (check out *You Make Me Feel Like It's Halloween*). Also in our interview Matt talks about how he sets up his fuzz distortion tones and the EQ tricks he employs to get his sound just right. And, as the current owner of the Fender Telecaster used by Jeff Buckley on 1994's *Grace* album, Matt discusses the idiosyncrasies of this iconic instrument and tells us about recording with it on *Will Of The People*.

Elsewhere in the mag, Megadeth's Dave Mustaine explains how he's in no mood to slow down after surviving cancer. A man many describe as the greatest guitarist on Earth, Guthrie Govan looks back on his career so far. And as the Tedeschi Trucks Band deliver a quadruple album bonanza, slide guitar maestro Derek Trucks reveals the source of his gargantuan tones and emotive power...

And as ever, we have loads of lessons to help you improve your playing. Our Chord Clinic lesson takes you through the rich, complex sounds of slash chords, and we have four great songs for you to try out.

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

Chris Bird Editor

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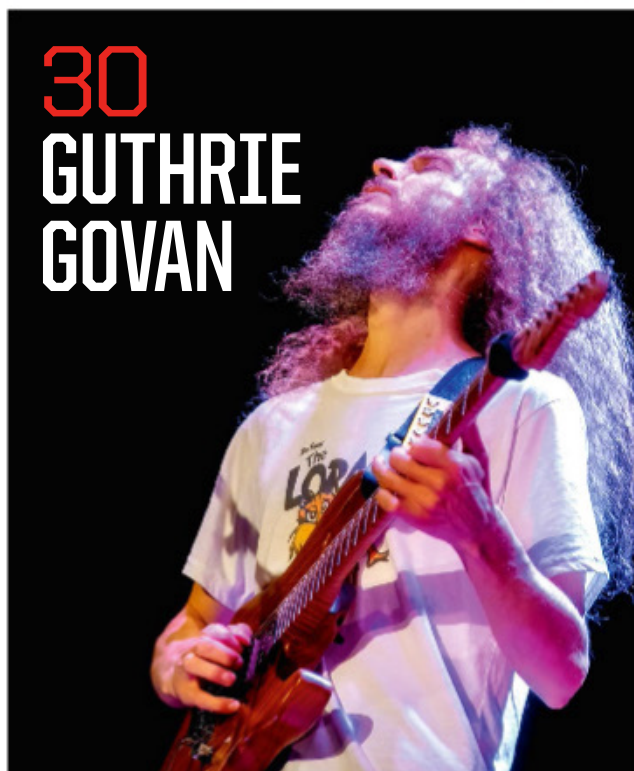


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SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS



Photos Mitch Conrad

ALBUM

“I WANT MY GUITAR TO SOUND LIKE A JAZZ SINGER”

MARCUS KING ON RAIDING DAN AUERBACH'S PEDAL COLLECTION AND WANTING HIS NEW RECORD TO SOUND LIKE “A TATTOO GUN”

I

f you're looking for the most sizzling fuzz tones in modern blues, you'll definitely want

to be keeping an eye on Marcus King. This year's sophomore *Young Blood* album sees the 26 year-old American partner up once again with producer Dan Auerbach of The Black Keys for some truly stunning and wonderfully crackly results...

We heard you tracked most of *Young Blood* with your '59 Les Paul.

Yeah, that's what you're mainly hearing, though there was '69 Black Beauty in the mix too, going into this old Gibson amp me and my Dad have had for years. It's all been reconstructed into a plywood box, so it's a small amp that looks big. We'd run it in stereo with either a Supro or an AC30. I don't know what year but I don't think anything in Dan's studio was newer than at least 30 years! Everything was period-correct for what we were trying to achieve. Basically, I wanted this record to sound like a tattoo gun!

So did you get to raid Dan's fuzz pedal museum?

[Laughs] Yeah, I had a look around! He does have this wonderful collection of vintage gear. A lot of the fuzz sounds came from this vintage Tone Bender that he gifted to me after the record was done. The Tone Bender was his recommendation and it worked out great. I used my Tru-Fi Colordriver a lot too. I love Dan's playing. It's not about what he says, it's about what he doesn't say. You pay as much attention to the space in between the notes as you do the notes themselves. He always takes time to breathe. That's how I approach live improvisations. It's meditation. Just let yourself get there.

Who were your main influences when it came to your leads on this album?

I want my guitar to sound like a jazz singer – people like Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald or Billie Holiday. I love the break-up from the ribbon microphones used on those early recordings. So I can almost recreate those sounds using fuzz pedals. If I can phrase anywhere near as good

as Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner or Bob Seger, I'm doing it right. I also take inspiration from lyricists like Method Man and Tyler, The Creator. People who have a really good flow and mean what they say. If you ever find yourself writing a blues solo with a pen and manuscript, you might as well take a lighter and set it on fire. Just play something from the heart and in the moment.

You often jam with Mastodon's Brent Hinds, who – like you – is occasionally prone to using Banker Custom Guitars.

Actually, we did use my Banker Explorer a little on this album for some doubling here and there. And yeah, me and Brent have guitar showdowns, but they're more like hoedowns! We have a lot of fun together. I got together with him and Matt Pike [Sleep/High On Fire] recently for some chicken pickin' stuff, which we're all into. My dad played Top 40 country for a while in the early 90s, so there was a good bit of chicken pickin' in my house growing up, but with Boss distortion and chorus on it. Seriously man, country guitar has some wild tones!
Amit Sharma



GUITAR

FENDER GEORGE HARRISON ROCKY STRATOCASTER

FENDER PAYS TRIBUTE TO GEORGE HARRISON'S ICONIC STRATOCASTER WITH A PRODUCTION MODEL REPLICA

The Beatles covered a huge amount of ground in just a few short years, constantly evolving both stylistically and aesthetically. The same can be said for their instruments, which at times followed suit going from smart and uniform to personalised and psychedelic, and one of the best examples of this is George Harrison's 'Rocky' Strat, which

Fender has now meticulously recreated, trippy paintwork included!

Now, this isn't the first time Fender has turned its attention to Harrison's Strat – the Custom Shop previously delivered an accurate replica, complete with a price tag that will dilate your pupils faster than the substance that inspired Rocky's finish – but it is the first time that the guitar has been primed for a full-scale production model release.

First though, a little bit about the original. In 1965 during the making of *Rubber Soul*, George Harrison and John Lennon tasked their guitar tech with acquiring them a Strat each. The result was a pair of Fender Strats in Sonic Blue, and Harrison would go on to use his prized doublecut (a 1961 model) on a number of Beatles albums. In 1967, Harrison got the paint out. "During '67, everybody started painting everything, and I decided to paint it," he told the *Curves, Contours And Body Horns* documentary in 1994. "I got some day-glo paint – which was quite a new invention in them days – and just sat up late one night and did it."

Back to 2022, and Fender's new Rocky model goes a long way to matching the original in detail. It starts with a period-correct Strat design as its base. That means we're getting the classic alder body, 60s headstock, maple neck shaped to a 60s 'C-shape' profile, and era-fitting 21-fret/7.25-inch radius, rosewood fingerboard. The tuners are vintage-style, and the bridge features six vintage-style saddles, alongside the tremolo. Electronically, there's a trio of Vintage-style 60s single-coil Strat pickups, five-way switch, master volume and tone controls for the neck and middle pickups.

Then there's the finish, which just like George's is hand-applied to every single guitar. Evidence of the original Sonic Blue colour layer is still intact around the upper side and back of the body, with George's concentric pink/green/yellow/orange/pink rings moving into the centre of the body. The scratchplate is also heavily decorated, and the guitar is adorned with George's customisations, including the 'Bebopalula' and 'Go Cat Go' – references to his rock 'n' roll idols. The guitar's nickname is also present on the headstock, and on the back face, Fender has given yet another nod to George's original by including a sticker for Grimwoods 'The Music People' – the shop where Harrison's guitar was originally purchased.

Launched alongside the Rocky Strat is Fender's new George Harrison Rocky Capsule Collection line of accessories including a pick tin, straps and a cable, all of which borrow the aesthetics of Harrison's Rocky designs.

The Fender George Harrison Rocky Stratocaster comes with a hardshell case and Rocky picks and is priced at £1849. Visit www.fender.com for more information.

Stuart Williams



PLUGIN

NEURAL DSP ARCHETYPE: RABEA

We'd wager that you're well aware of Rabea Massaad, and now the guitar virtuoso has teamed up with Neural DSP to release Archetype: Rabea. The amp modelling plugin

delivers a range of effects (overdrive, octaver, dual compressor and fuzz) as well as three flavours of valve-swappable amps (Clean Rhythm and Lead) as well as cab simulator and virtual micing options. But this isn't just

another amp modeller, it includes a dual-oscillator subtractive synth that you can play from the comfort of your guitar – no weird pickups needed. It's priced at €139, but you can download and use it for 14 days for free.

PEDAL

WALRUS AUDIO MIRA OPTICAL COMPRESSOR

Compression is the often-misunderstood workhorse of your pedalboard. Used correctly, it can boost your levels, add sustain and help your guitar cut through. Walrus Audio's new Mira Optical seeks to do just that by offering a studio-grade compressor for your 'board. The main controls comprise threshold (to set the level at which compression kicks in), ratio (how much the signal is compressed by), make-up (to bring your overall level back up), mini-pot attack (how fast the compressor is introduced) and release (how long it compresses your note) output and blend controls. On the side it features a high-pass filter, which when engaged will leave your low-end signal untouched, maintaining your bass frequencies. It's available now for £249.



GUITAR

GUILD STARFIRE I-12

We love the chorusing jangle of a 12-string electric, but it's unlikely to be your one-and-only for a full set. However, while you can simulate a 12-string with effects, nothing comes close to the real thing. Hats off to Guild, then, for announcing its Starfire I-12, which brings the authentic 12-string electric sound in on a budget. This semi-acoustic beaut is made of laminated mahogany, with a mahogany centre block to help tame feedback. The neck is a modern, thin U profile with a rosewood fingerboard (24.75" scale) and we get a pair of Guild HB-2 humbuckers, three-way switch and dual vol/tone controls. The Starfire I-12 is available now, with shops stocking from £549.



Words Stuart Williams Photography Olly Curtis

RAW POWER!

Epiphone unleashes two of its iconic electrics, but this time they're aimed at the little people



T

hey say you're never too old to start rocking, but we think there's a strong argument for never being too small either. The proof is in Epiphone's latest release, the Power Player

series which sees Gibson's Les Paul and SG shapes shrunk-down for budding rockers.

Coming in at what Epiphone calls "3/4+" size, they're the same Les Paul and SG shapes we know and love, just smaller. While there are a few spec changes – bolt-on necks and Lightning Bar wraparound bridges – Epiphone has dolled these up to look the part as well as sound right too. Both guitars feature a pair of humbuckers (650R in the neck, 700T in the bridge), full four-control vol/tone layout. Both feature mahogany bodies with mahogany, SlimTaper-profile necks, and we love the fact that the inlays are proper trapezoids rather than dots, plus the LP comes with binding to the front to complete the look. Both Power Player models come in a choice of Lava Red or Ice Blue, and at £249 – complete with a gig bag, strap, picks and a cable – we think these are going to top the wishlists this Autumn. The only difficult decision is which one to buy!

UP CLOSE



Finishes

The Epiphone Power Player is offered as either a Les Paul or SG in Lava Red or Ice Blue.



Small-scale

The necks are bolt-on rather than set, with an Indian Laurel fingerboard built to a 577.34mm/22.73-inch scale length.



Authentic features

There's body binding on the Les Paul, dual-humbuckers, four-control layout and trapezoid inlays to boot.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ 7/4 time signature
- ✓ Straight eighth notes
- ✓ Alternate picking



RIFF OF THE MONTH

FOO FIGHTERS

Times Like These

Times Like These appeared on Foo Fighters' 2003 album *One By One* – the first to feature Taylor Hawkins on an entire album (he had previously shared drumming duties with Dave Grohl) as well as being the first Foo's appearance for guitarist Chris Shiflett, who plays this month's riff.

The part is a repeating 14-note motif played on the 10th, 11th and 12th frets, along with

some open strings. First, play the open D, then frets 12 and 10, before playing the open G followed by frets 12 and 11. This six-note phrase is played twice.

Finally, play a two-note tag on the end on frets 12 and 10 on the fourth string. This brings us to 14 notes played, which, when repeated, adds up to the song's 7/4 time signature. Or in other words there are seven downbeats before the cycle repeats again.

Underneath the riff are three powerchords (D5, C5 and B5), each played for one bar. Check out our video where we play slowly through the riff for you.

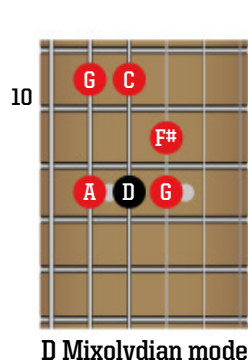
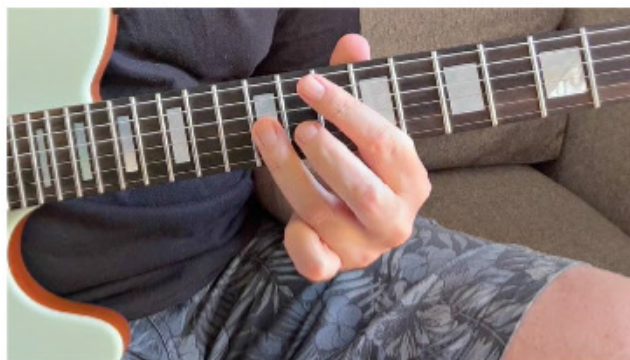
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:13–0:40

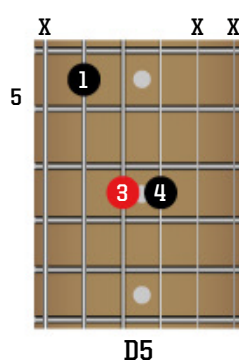
Tempo: 145bpm

Key/scale: D Mixolydian

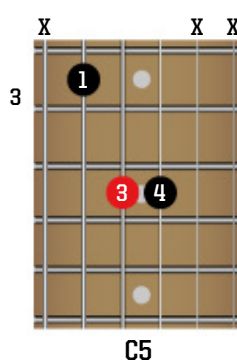
Main techniques: Alternate picking



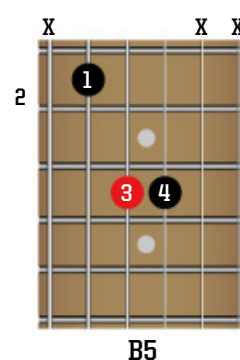
D Mixolydian mode



D5



C5



B5

The tonal centre of this riff is D and the surrounding five notes (G, A, C, F# and another G) create the intervals: root, major 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th. The major 3rd gives you a big clue to the

mode being used – we know it is one of the major modes. The presence of the 7th is also important, indicating that we're in the Mixolydian mode (D E F# G A B C / 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭ 7).



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BY FENDER

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FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

FUNK RIFFS

Paul tightens up his rhythm playing and nails his swing feel with this funk primer lesson

Once you've played guitar for a while, you'll realise that holding down notes is not your fretting hand's only job. It also needs to cut off the notes at the right time and stop the other strings ringing out. The good news is that those skills develop

mostly unconsciously, as you find ways to stop the annoying sounds coming from your amp. Funk playing, however, will put those skills under the microscope. The notes in this month's riffs are easy to play, but the subtle scratches and staccato notes make a massive difference to how they sound.



TEACHER

JENNA SCARAMANGA
Jenna has taught guitar for 15 years at music colleges, schools, and IGF summer camps. She studied with Guthrie Govan at BIMM, and was classic rock columnist for TG's sister magazine *Guitar Techniques*.



STUDENT

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul has written about music since 1985 for various titles including *Sounds*, *Kerrang!*, *Q*, *MOJO* and *Classic Rock*. Among the many guitarists he has interviewed are Slash, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page.

JENNA SAYS...

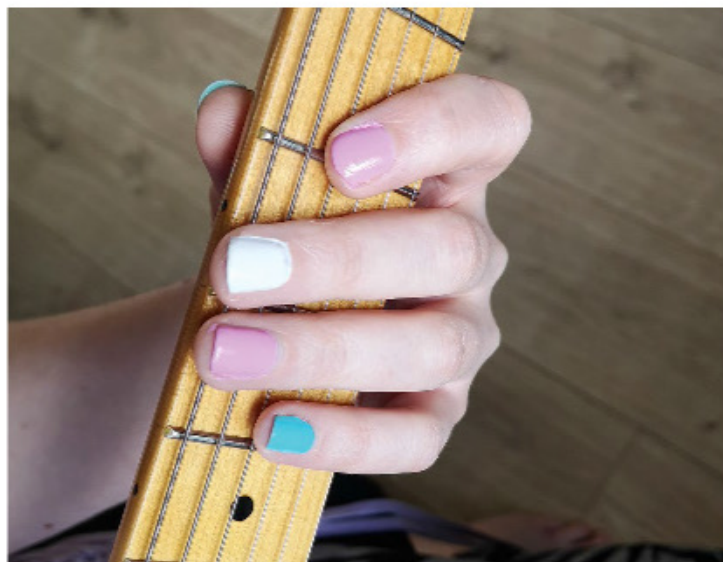
The timing and feel are challenging this month, but I know Paul has a good ear for those. There are a lot of staccato notes in Example 1, which need to be cut off early and separated from the next note. With a fretted note, you can do this by relaxing your pressure on the fingerboard.

With an open string, put a fretting hand finger on the string to silence it. If you're going from a staccato open string to a fretted note, you can rest a finger on the fret you're about to play. That will choke the open string and set you up for the next note.

The other challenge is the 16th note swing feel. It's easiest to understand when you hear it. There are great 16th note shuffles in Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke*, Led Zeppelin's *Fool In The Rain*, and Toto's *Rosanna*. Every drummer does it slightly differently, so listen carefully to sync up.

TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and your powerchords will rock!



1 CHOKING ALL STRINGS

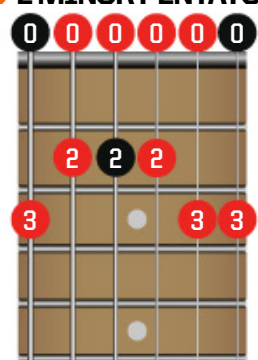
Play the 2nd-fret notes with your first finger. You can use the remaining fingers to silence the other strings.



2 MUTING INDIVIDUAL STRINGS

STRINGS
To mute one string, put your finger where you would normally fret, but don't press down.

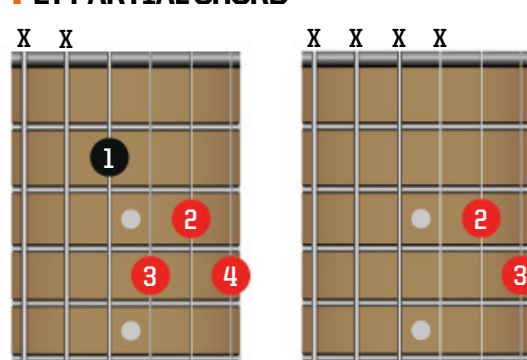
3 E MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE



E minor pentatonic scale

Play this scale one note at a time before you tackle our first riff.

4 E7 PARTIAL CHORD

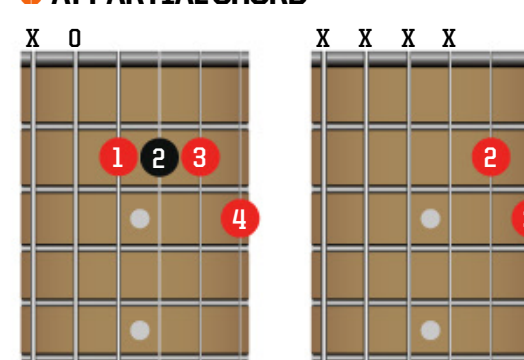


E7

E7 (partial shape)

This full E7 shape is tricky to play; the funky partial shape, less so!

5 A7 PARTIAL CHORD



A7

A7 (partial shape)

Again, the full shape presents a challenge, whereas the partial shape is easy.

SINGLE-NOTE RIFF WITH CHOKED NOTES

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

The muted Xs in the tab tell you to choke the strings as you pick them. You don't have to pick on the exact strings shown, though. Any muted string will give a good percussive sound. Sometimes it's easier to practise a riff like this without playing any of the Xs. Just add them later as you develop your feel.

PARTIAL CHORDS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. The score is written for guitar and bass. The guitar part is in the key of E major (indicated by four sharps) and 4/4 time. The bass part is in the key of E major (indicated by four sharps) and 4/4 time. The guitar part includes a "Play 4 times" instruction for the final measure.

Guitar Part:

- Measure 1: E7 chord, notes: E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note).
- Measure 2: A7 chord, notes: A4, C#5, E5, G#5 (quarter note), A4, C#5, E5, G#5 (quarter note), A4, C#5, E5, G#5 (quarter note), A4, C#5, E5, G#5 (quarter note).
- Measure 3: E7 chord, notes: E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note).
- Measure 4: E7 chord, notes: E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note), E4, G#4, B4, D#5 (quarter note).

Bass Part:

- Measure 1: Fret numbers: 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4.
- Measure 2: Fret numbers: 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3.
- Measure 3: Fret numbers: 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4.
- Measure 4: Fret numbers: 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10.

Funk makes use of 'partial' chords, usually on the top strings. It's a simple idea meaning that you play 'part' of a bigger chord shape instead of striking every string. The two-note shapes here in our riff are taken from E7 and A7. They're easy to play and sound great over a funk groove. You can hear the shape played higher up the neck in Mark Ronson's *Uptown Funk*.

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Words Jon Wiederhorn Portraits Cameron Nunez / Travis Shinn

“It’s the way the riffs are picked that makes them exciting”

MEGADETH LEADER **DAVE MUSTAINE** SHAPED THE SOUND OF THRASH METAL WITH HIS FAST RIGHT HAND. AND NOW, HAVING SURVIVED CANCER, HE’S IN NO MOOD TO SLOW DOWN...

16

He is one of the most influential guitar players in the entire history of heavy metal, and he’s still pushing himself hard. It was all of 39 years ago that Dave Mustaine created Megadeth as the self-proclaimed ‘state of the art speed metal band’, but on their new album – *The Sick, The Dying... And The Dead!* – there’s a song called *Night Stalkers* that represents a personal best for Mustaine in terms of pure velocity. “I think that’s the fastest song we’ve ever done,” he says. “190 bpm. It needed that frantic pace because the song is about a secret helicopter division of the military. But it took a while to get working up to that speed.”

Playing hard and fast is how Mustaine made his name in the early 80s as one of the pioneers of thrash metal – first as lead guitarist in Metallica, then as undisputed leader of Megadeth on seminal albums such as *Killing*

Is My Business... And Business Is Good! and *Peace Sells... But Who’s Buying?* In the following decade, with shred king Marty Friedman in the band, a more technical approach was adopted on multi-platinum classics *Rust In Peace* and *Countdown To Extinction*. And after Mustaine recovered from an arm injury that threatened to end his guitar-playing career, he bounced back with a string of records that showcased his exceptional syncopated riffing and rapid-fire lead guitar work. He thinks about this for a moment. “Sometimes,” he smiles, “the best things for me come after I’m told I can’t do something. I’m like, ‘Oh, yeah? Watch me!’”

Mustaine is the sole constant in Megadeth’s long history, overseeing numerous line-up changes over the years. In May 2021, bassist David Ellefson, a founding member of the band, was fired. Mustaine subsequently hired Steve Di Giorgio, on loan from fellow thrash metal veterans Testament, to play bass on the new album alongside lead guitarist Kiko Loureiro and drummer Dirk Verbeuren. And what’s evident now is the strong relationship developing between the two guitarists. The Brazilian-born Loureiro, who made his debut

on 2016’s Grammy-winning *Dystopia*, is a classically trained player who resembles a hybrid of Marty Friedman and Randy Rhoads, and graces *The Sick, The Dying... And The Dead!* with an abundance of neo-classical and vintage metal chops that blend well with Mustaine’s earworm hooks and frantic thrash leads.

This, Megadeth’s 16th album, is a twisting roller coaster ride in which speed and aggression are combined with strong melodies and sonic exploration – complex rhythmic shifts, abrupt tempo changes, acoustic passages and atmospheric sound effects. “I don’t think I’ve ever wanted a record to be totally brutal,” Mustaine says.

It is also a remarkable achievement for Mustaine on a personal level. During the making of this album, he underwent treatment for throat cancer, enduring nine sessions of chemotherapy and 51 sessions of radiation. When he first received the cancer diagnosis, he had feared the worst: “I went back to my car and sat there with tears running down my face for what seemed like ten minutes,” he recalls. But having conquered drug and alcohol addiction in the past, Mustaine dug deep once

“WE TALK ABOUT WHAT THE LYRICS MEAN AND WHAT THE SOLOS SHOULD FEEL LIKE IF THE SOLO HAD WORDS”



➔ again. “I picked myself up, got a great team of doctors together and we came up with a plan to beat this,” he says. “And now I’m in full remission.”

Let’s talk first about your emotional state as you made this album.

Of course I was praying my butt off and doing everything the doctors said. But there was a serious reality check that took place as well. I might’ve been a little bit worried that I wouldn’t get the record done if I got a whole lot worse. So there was urgency and a lot of emotion there to finish it.

You didn’t take much time off during your treatment. Did working obsessively on the album help distract you from the medical procedures?

I think it did, to a degree. The toughest part wasn’t the process of going through all the radiation and the chemotherapy. A lot of the cancer medication they gave me f*cked with my memory really bad. They call it chemo brain, so I’ve been having a hard time staying in the moment, but it’s getting better.

When you were taking meds for your condition, did the doctors tell you that you might have numbness in your hands or that there could be other side effects that would affect your dexterity and challenge your ability to play?

Doctors told me that back in 2001, after I had fallen asleep on my left arm, which was draped over a chair. *[Editor’s note: The amount of time he spent in that position caused a nerve in his left bicep to become severely compressed, making the arm completely numb].* A doctor said, ‘You’re going to get 80 percent use of your arm back.’ I said, ‘80 percent of my playing back?’ And he said, ‘No, you are never gonna play again.’ I grabbed my stuff and said, ‘You don’t know who I am!’, and walked out. Another doctor put me on this radical shock treatment therapy. I had to wear these crazy contraptions. And there’s still a little bit of damage to the arm. But having 80 percent use of my arm and never playing again versus shredding my ass off and having a little clicking sound? It’s a good thing I started with a piece-of-sh*t car. I’m used to all kinds of clicks and cracks when I drive. So, having made it through that, I was pretty sure I wasn’t going to let cancer affect the way I played.



When you started writing for this album, did you have a plan in mind?

I’m always writing and coming up with stuff, so I never go into an album saying, ‘I want it to sound like this.’ These songs all had different lengths of germination for them to actually get finished. I wrote some of the riffs years before we started working on the album. Some were finished in the middle of the session before we took a break. We’d jam on stuff when we were on the road. Then we had the pandemic, and the cancer thing. The guys all went home for a little bit. And we worked together when we could, but when we weren’t touring, the process was slower because we don’t all live near each other. Kiko’s in Finland, Dirk in L.A. and I was in San Diego at the time.

What kind of support did you receive from Kiko and Dirk?

DAVE AND FRIENDS

The current Megadeth line-up (from left): James LoMenzo (touring bassist), Dirk Verbeuren, Dave Mustaine, Kiko Loureiro

It was great to work with them for three months in Nashville in the summer of 2019 to make these demos into songs. I would get to the studio and they would all greet me with hugs, high fives and pats on the back. All I got was encouragement. I’d play something and it was: ‘Great solo, Dave!’ Just encouragement, encouragement, encouragement. And I think besides making a great record, we’ve made a great band. The addition of Dirk and Kiko has increased our level of creativity and they were really great and productive. There were several different times we were out on the road that we put a little piece together here or pieced something together there. And then we came back home and I really got inspired. We would go to my home and work on song ideas for hours. We finally got enough stuff together when it was time to start assembling the full songs.

“A LOT OF THE TECHNIQUE IS IN THE RIGHT HAND. IT’S NOT WHAT THE LEFT HAND IS DOING AT ALL”



Did you have more confidence in Kiko as a songwriter this time?

Yeah, because I've played with him a lot and he knows the process. When we have an idea for something, we talk about it and then we work on it together in pieces. When we did *Night Stalkers*, for instance, it's a song about a bunch of helicopter pilots that fly at night under darkness. So, there's this spy-versus-spy excitement going on that you need to capture. The wrong music with the wrong lyrics would be a catastrophe. So we talk about what the lyrics mean and what the solos should feel like if the solo had words.

Kiko is trained in music theory and comes from a technical playing background. You're more like a self-taught street brawler who developed a classic style but who doesn't follow the 'rules' of music. Did Kiko have to learn to play 'the Megadeth way'?

Well, yeah. I've said to everyone over the years that we sing solos when we make the records. And it's funny how quickly they forget that. The solos say words, just like the lyrics do and that's

something I don't think a lot of guitar players take into consideration when they go to do their solos. When you read the lyrics and then try to complement them with what you're playing, I think solos can be way more effective.

Before Kiko, you've had many other guitarists alongside you in Megadeth. In the earliest days, Chris Poland. In the late 80s Jeff Young. In the 90s, Marty Friedman. And from 2000 on, Al Pitrelli, Glenn Drover and then Chris Broderick. Did any of those guitarists, despite their skill, lack the right feeling and attitude when they did a lead?

I've always believed we should give the guitar player an opportunity to do a solo that he feels is right for the song. If someone plays something that doesn't work for the part, then I may make some suggestions. If it's still not happening, I might say, 'Okay, this is what I want you to play here.' So it's: His Way. Our Way. And if it doesn't work it's My Way. If a lead totally doesn't work then I'm going to do the part myself. That's what happened in *Breadline* (from the 1999 album *Risk*). And Marty Friedman quit over the solo in *Breadline*.

What happened?

When we were in the studio, Marty was really excited to do a solo on that song. Then, when we went to mix the album, management didn't like Marty's part. They wanted *Breadline* to be a single and they didn't think the solo Marty recorded was right for that. I said, 'Well, you have three choices. Either you mute the solo completely, have Marty come back and redo it, or I do it.' And then I said, 'If I do it, you'd better tell him. Well, I redid it and nobody told Marty. So we're in there listening to the finished album and the solo comes on. It's my solo, not Marty's. I looked at him as tears ran down his face and I knew right away that nobody had told him. And I knew that was probably going to be the end of Marty Friedman.'

Couldn't you have explained that it wasn't your call?

Having been a partner with Marty for so many years, as much of an enigma as he was, I could tell he was really upset and he'd had enough. What happened to Marty was definitely not okay. Our management was supposed to tell him and, for whatever reason, they didn't do it. That was a terrible thing to do to him.

Some multi-guitar bands have one player record all of the rhythms. Did you and Kiko work that way for the new album?

No. In the very beginning, when Chris Poland was in the band, I did the majority of the guitar work. I would do a track on the left and the right and then he would do one in the middle. It was kind of the same way with Jeff Young and with Marty. With Al Pitrelli, we may have doubled one in the middle, and with Chris Broderick there may have been two tracks and that may have led to what we're doing now with Kiko. For this album, we each recorded our own main rhythm and harmony parts.

The Megadeth rhythm sound is largely dependent on the style of picking and palm muting you do. So no matter what riff you play, whether it's delicate and melodic or fast and heavy, it sounds like you.

A lot of the technique is in the right hand. It's not what the left hand is doing at all. Sure, there are notes threaded in there, but I think it's the way the riffs are picked that makes them exciting. Doing that and having the right sound is the name of the game with Megadeth. You don't have to understand exactly what's happening – you just have to let the music take you where it goes.

What's the trickiest element of your rhythm playing?

I like to do this thing called hand economy, where I keep my hand on one part of the guitar because I'm singing at the same time and I want to be in that area. I don't want to have to be all over the neck and looking at my guitar and not singing right because I'm looking sideways and singing out of the side of my mouth. That's why I've sung funny like that before.

And after nearly 40 years of Megadeth, and all that you've been through recently, have you thought about when the time will come to hang up that guitar for good?

When I got sick I had been talking a lot about playing out a little less. Now, if anything, I want to tour more and just carry on until the end when I actually can't do it anymore. I'm not talking about the time when I don't want to do it anymore. I mean when it's not possible for me to do. When I can't do it, that's when I'm not gonna want to do it.

“DAVE IS VERY PARTICULAR!”

The secret to Megadeth’s two-guitar attack, by **Kiko Loureiro**.

This is the second Megadeth album you’ve worked on. Did you find it easier this time?

Yes. When I joined the band in 2015, I went straight to the studio to record *Dystopia*. I had ideas for songs, but it’s really hard to work with a band until you really get to know them as people. After a lot of touring, we created this bond so I had more confidence to show them my ideas. I contributed writing to five songs on the album, including the acoustic parts for *Dogs Of Chernobyl* and the beginning part of *Night Stalkers*.

What was the biggest challenge for you when you joined Megadeth?

For me, it wasn’t so much about the solos. It was more about the riffs. Dave is very particular! He has his way of playing riffs as one of the founding fathers of this kind of music, and, for me, it’s very important to respect the style that creates those sounds, even though it’s not the way I learned to play. I played a lot of classical guitar and learned theory and all that. So every time I played, I used as minimal hand effort as possible and I tried to be as clean and accurate as possible. Dave is the opposite. He plays aggressive and dirty. I had to learn to play his way, and that includes the way you pick the strings and the chords with the right touch, the way you mute the strings – all those fine details of the rhythm guitar that Dave brought to Megadeth to get that powerful guitar sound. So when I joined the band, that’s when he went, ‘Let me show you the way we do things here!’

Are there differences between the way you and Dave set your guitar tones? For instance, do either of you scoop the mids?

I like the mids. I think guitar has to have a lot of mids because the bass has a low end and a top-end as well. That’s very characteristic for Megadeth from the bassist playing with a pick. So you need the mids so the guitars can fit right in that unfilled region of the sound. So, neither of us scoop the mids. But my guitar sounds cleaner than Dave’s. He has more gain and I like a signature DiMarzio pickup that’s based on the P-90, so it’s classic sounding. It’s not as hot as a lot of players.

How do you bring your songwriting ideas to the band?

I made a computer folder and filled it with a lot of riffs, and I kept them short. Each file was just the good part of the riff – the main idea. Dave doesn’t want to read the story. It’s more like, ‘Just read me the headline and let me see if it’s catchy or cool enough.’ Then we put some of the riffs together to make them into songs.

Did you have to adapt to a certain style when you tracked leads?

Not really. Everyone is okay with my way of playing as long as it fits in with the band. I have some solo albums where I explore more styles and more different scales. I have to find the right spots to add those elements with Megadeth. And I have opportunities to do that because of the styles of past players like Chris Poland and Marty Friedman, whose solos are different from that basic pentatonic rock ‘n’ roll solo. So that leaves some open doors for me to experiment.



ANGEL VIVALDI

ARTIST SIGNATURE



**SAVAGE
ELEGANCE**
PRO-MOD
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Words Ellie Rogers Portraits Pooneh Ghana / El Hardwick

"I ALWAYS WANTED TO PLAY WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND BE IN BANDS"

How motherhood and lockdown inspired **The Big Moon** to write their most confident album yet

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ince bursting onto London's live music scene in 2014, The Big Moon have passed through several phases. First came *Love In The 4th Dimension* – the band's irreverently Libertines-esque indie-rock debut that earned them a Mercury Prize nomination. Then, in 2020, the four-piece showed a softer side with the more spacious pop sensibilities of their "coming of age" record, *Walking Like We Do*. Now, they return with *Here Is Everything* – a collection of 11 songs that were conceived amid the pandemic years, and during the pregnancy of frontwoman Juliette Jackson.

With its themes of birth, motherhood, excitement and fear, the life changing circumstances that inspired the album make it a decidedly more grown-up offering than anything The Big Moon has yet released. Still, it features all the astute lyricism and millennial wit that listeners have come to expect from Jackson's writing, while doubling

down on harmony, texture and a sense of collaboration from the other members.

Lead guitarist Soph Nathan was responsible for cooking up the complementary riffs and intricate lead lines that adorn Jackson's songs. Having first picked up a guitar at seven years old, Nathan began fantasising about playing in bands in her early teens and then, at 16, made it a reality. She's been keeping the dream alive ever since and is now eight years deep into what she describes as a "marriage of four people" in The Big Moon – alongside Jackson, bassist Celia Archer and drummer Fern Ford.

Like many, her earliest musical memories were shaped by parental tastes and listening to mixed CDs on repeat on every car journey. She reminisces: "My mum loves guitar music. We listened to a lot of Motown, but also the Eagles, Joni Mitchell, and Jefferson Airplane. We'd sing

a lot in the car. On 'Hotel California' we'd always sing along with the solo – the one that's like 10 minutes long. That definitely influenced me."

A native Londoner, Nathan's burgeoning style was also influenced by coming of age amidst one of the most vibrant indie scenes on the planet. "I was probably spoiled for gigs because every band comes here," she explains. "I don't know if I necessarily thought about it, but now I recognise that being able to go and see bands was big. I grew up near Camden, so there was a lot of music around, which I'm so grateful for."

In fact, her very first band even rehearsed at The Roundhouse – the legendary Camden venue which had its walls shaken by the likes of

The Doors, Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix back in the 1960s. By the time Nathan and her friends were busily

honing their craft in the adjacent rehearsal rooms, acts like Oasis, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Bob Dylan were headlining the main room.

Possessing a naturally collaborative spirit, the idea of spending hours practising in solitude never appealed to Nathan quite like making music with friends. "It was a strong pull. I always wanted to play with other people and be in bands," she says. "I actually don't play guitar by myself that much anymore, unless I'm making something up. Fortunately, I get to play guitar a lot with other people. That's felt



GREEN FINGERS

The Big Moon, with guitarists Soph Nathan (centre right) and Julia Jackson (right).

➔ like the best way for me to get better and learn new things.”

While she might have spent her youth air guitaring to Joe Walsh’s incendiary solos in the back of her mum’s car, her contribution to the band is measured, tasteful and full of thought for her sonic surroundings. “Jules also plays guitar in the band and we play so differently,” she explains. “I’ve learnt a lot from playing with her. It’s really cool to understand where someone else is coming from and to bounce off of each other.”

As such, Nathan’s guitar work on *Here Is Everything* feels like part of the very fabric of the songs, with plenty of echoes of Jackson’s vocal melodies that blend in seamlessly. But restraint is something she’s had to learn over time, after first suppressing an instinct shared by guitarists the world over. “When I first started playing, I thought I should be noodling over everything,” she laughs. “But space is really important, and it means that there’s more impact in the parts that are there. The way the songs are, and the way that the others give me the room to be creative, I don’t ever feel like I have something to prove.”

Now approaching a decade of playing together, it’s safe to say the four band members know each other very well, musically and otherwise. “It’s been a really long time and we’ve all grown and changed as people,” explains Nathan. “This album has been the most collaborative we’ve done, and it had quite a long journey because we

recorded it two weeks in lockdown in Suffolk, and then a load of life stuff happened. We came back nearly a year later and added four new songs.” The “life stuff” that Nathan is referring to was predominantly the birth of Jackson’s son, which inspired the addition of this latter batch of songs, including the lead single, *Wide Eyes*.

“I think it made us stronger,” reflects Nathan. “I feel more confident in what I’m doing now because we all understand how the others operate.”

Thinking back to the early days and how the band’s sound has matured, she ponders: “We started out a bit more rocky, and our first record – because we’d played live so much – was just trying to capture that. Now it’s more of a case of working to make a song sound like the perfect studio version. Then we take it and make it live.”

Although these songs were largely fully-formed prior to the recording session, Nathan still found room to add some spontaneous flair. “Often, Jules and I will make something up together while I’m playing,” she explains. “That’s what happened with the chorus of *Wide Eyes*. The first part, I had done, and she started singing the end bit. I love making stuff up together like that.” Similarly, the pair developed the guitar solo at the end of *Trouble*, by singing and playing licks back and forth until they had the completed article. “That was a really nice moment,” recalls Nathan.

When it comes to guitars and gear, she confesses to “always taking

everything” whenever she heads into a studio. Normally, however, she finds she could have gotten away with travelling much lighter as she’s really a one guitar woman. Referring to her trusty G&L ASAT Classic T-style, she laughs, “I’ve really tried to branch out, but I always end up going back to this. Obviously, some guitar parts need a different sound, so we’ll try and shake it up sometimes, but I just really love it.”

Tonally, she describes it as “much warmer than most other guitars” and cites its particularly “hot pickups” as the reason why, for her, it trumps most Fender Teles. “It resonates a bit more, and it’s got a warmth that I struggle to find when I use other guitars.”

As for effects, Nathan keeps it simple. “I mainly have distortion and delay pedals,” she says matter-of-factly. This has always been the case, but their usage and density in The Big Moon’s sound has morphed over time. She laughs: “Jules really didn’t like delay when we started the band, and I only ever played with loads of it back then. Now, I feel like we’re in the middle together with the amounts.”

The most abundantly used pedal on *Here Is Everything* was a Strymon BigSky Multi Reverb, which Nathan used to provide “all that sprinkly, reverby goodness” that abounds. “It’s got such amazing sounds in it,” she enthuses. “I would like to explore more with pedals, but I’m quite comfortable with the ones I have. Creating it all live is all quite straight-forward.”

Since joining the band, Nathan’s used a Vox AC15, but she acquired a 1970s WEM Dominator combo during lockdown, and it’s fast becoming her new go-to. “We used the WEM for recording,” she explains. “I think Jules’ guitars also went through it for most of it. It’s just a really clean amp whereas my AC15 has less headroom and breaks up more.”

With sights now set on resuming touring and showcasing *Here Is Everything* to live audiences, an autumn run of dates will culminate in a show at The Forum in Kentish Town, London. Geographically close to home (and just about a mile from those formative Roundhouse rehearsal rooms), it’s an almost poetically important gig for Nathan: “In terms of where I grew up, it feels like such a big deal,” she explains. “I feel more grateful than ever to be able to play live. We’re really ready to make the most of it!”

“SPACE IS IMPORTANT, IT MEANS THAT THERE’S MORE IMPACT IN THE PARTS THAT ARE THERE”

Manson

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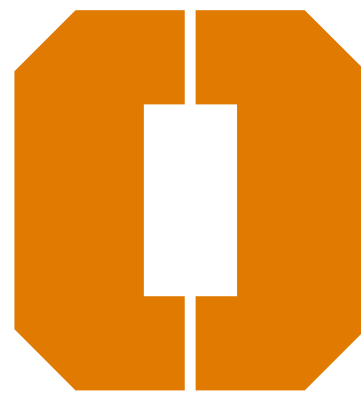
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Words Amit Sharma Portraits David McClister

"PLAYING ON ONE STRING CAN ALMOST EMULATE THE HUMAN VOICE"

As the **Tedeschi Trucks Band** deliver a quadruple album bonanza, slide guitar maestro **Derek Trucks** reveals the source of his gargantuan tones and emotive power...



In the new Tedeschi Trucks Band album *I Am The Moon: I. Crescent* – the first of four themed albums released this summer – there are moments that could very well document Derek Trucks at his world-beating best. Widely considered to be the finest slide player to emerge since the likes of Duane Allman, Sonny

Landreth and Ry Cooder, the 43 year-old Trucks is still finding new ways to make his guitar speak. These latest recordings with the Grammy-winning 12-piece band he leads alongside his guitarist/vocalist wife Susan Tedeschi are evocative in a way that can transport the listener to different times and places.

Take 12-minute instrumental *Pasaquan*, for example, which reveals a distinctly edgier and moodier player than the Southern rock poster boy most of us are familiar with and stands as the definitive guitar hero moment on this first chapter of the *I Am The Moon* series.

Talking to TG from his home on a typically balmy Floridian summer's day, Derek explains how it was The Allman Brothers Band – the very group he was recruited by at the end of his teens – who inspired this wildly intense musical direction, with angular dissonance in place of his signature seductive sweetness.

"I mean, sh*t, we were all in a different headspace, right?!" he laughs when he considers how the *I Am The Moon* concept came together during the pandemic. "Instead of our usual life on the road, we'd been locked away at home thinking 'Let us out!' *Mountain Jam* by the Allman Brothers was a big influence on *Pasaquan*. We would save it for the end of the day when everyone was warmed up. We'd take stabs and see where it took us. Some days it would be 10 minutes long, other days it would be 25. It just depended on the energy in the room. We didn't want to beat it to death. We never did more than one take at a time. We all knew we'd get there when the spirit was right."

Derek's main electric for the sessions was the number one that's almost singlehandedly soundtracked the last decade of his career – a cherry red Gibson SG modelled on the 1961 original given to Duane Allman by bandmate Dickey Betts. The Custom Shop replica (Artist Proof #4) was gifted to Trucks by Allman's daughter Galadrielle in 2011. As with a lot of his favourite SGs and guitars in general, it's "super light in weight" – Trucks reasoning that drier and more porous woods result in instruments that resonate better. The same goes for acoustics, he nods, as it's "the paper light ones" which, at least to his ears, fill rooms best...

"Sue brought a lot of different electrics," he says, "and we both used quite a few acoustics like an old Roy Smeck model plus some Dobros and Nationals, but I just stuck with that [Dickey Betts] SG, although for the instrumental I used an old ES-335 from 1965, which I tuned down to a looser open B instead of open E. Listening back I noticed my vibrato was a little swirly at times because of the different tension. Most of the record was done through an old Fender Deluxe, and I'd occasionally run an Echoplex through an old Supro as well, depending on how much dirt I needed. For a couple of tunes I took a Super Reverb into the middle of the room and dined it, which is always fun!"



And on other occasions, he obtained his gargantuan tones through running lower watt combos at quieter levels. What works best in the studio, he remarks, can be very different to what he might use live. “Some of the biggest sounds actually came from this tiny Tweed Deluxe on three,” he reveals. “There was something about the tone that totally barked. When you go back into the control room, quite often it’s those tiny amps that sound biggest. Live is a totally different beast. I have Duane Allman’s 50-Watt Marshall [as used on the Allman Brothers Band’s classic 1971 live album *At Fillmore East*], and it sounds incredible. But it’s hard to make it sound the same on the record as it does in the room. It’s almost like the bigger the sound in the room, the smaller it sounds through speakers in the control room. That’s something you are always balancing: how it sounds on the floor and how it sounds later.”

While he has a long list of slide heroes – describing “the early Bukka White recordings specifically from 1928 to 1932” as his regular go-to for musical inspiration – there’s also a discernable Eastern twist to a lot of Derek’s classic leads. At times he’ll stay on one string and cover as much distance as possible, giving a philosophical sense of motion to the music that wouldn’t be quite the same if he was making life easier for himself on different strings. These ideas, he explains, were learned from sarod player Ali Akbar Kahn and the time he spent studying at the late Indian classical virtuoso’s music college in California...

“Playing on one string can almost emulate the human voice, I think,” he smiles. “A lot of that came from hearing Ali Akbar Kahn on the sarod. He’d hit a note and travel all the way up that fretboard – or steel plate, in his case. The first time I realised you can do that on a fretted instrument was through the great Indian mandolin player, U. Srinivas. He’d just be flying around, almost leaving you wondering whether it’s intentional! Those two musicians really set the light bulb off for me. And even those old Delta guys, when they were trying to call and answer with a voice, it would usually be one string. The more you do it, the more you know what feels right.”

So what else can be learned from the man generally considered to be the greatest slide player on earth? When we ask about the secret to playing with all that emotion and power, and the advice he has to offer those of us trying to get anywhere close to his magical sense of feel, he once again points back to the early blues innovators and Hindustani raga concepts, which despite being worlds apart geographically, often share Mixolydian themes. But be warned – there aren’t any back doors when it comes to the general fundamentals of this sacred art form...

“Slide playing is all about intonation, which only comes through time,” he says. “You can’t skip over those things. When I feel like I’m not where I need to be, I’ll check in with players like Elmore James or Son House to remind myself. Through them I learned how you attack a note affects whether it sings or not,

MOON UNIT

The band in 2022, with Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi centre.

which can change whether people want to hear it. If you bring them in with a beautiful emotion from the beginning, you can dig in and take it anywhere. You just need to start and end well. You need an entrance and an exit – you’ll be forgiven for a lot of what happens in the middle! You might have this phrase and then need to find ways to get in and out of it. You find different cornerstones in this thing you’re building. You go off and explore, and then come back home occasionally. That’s an Indian classical concept, where somebody improvises and then comes back to the melody with everyone else, before it’s someone else’s turn to run with it.”

Equally as important as your note choices, he adds, is your vibrato. Few would disagree with him there – it’s one of the most defining elements of any lead guitarist, arguably even more so when slides are involved. Just search through any of the YouTube playlists compiling Trucks’ greatest live solos, of which there are many, and you’ll find moments where he attacks one note with as much fury as he can muster and ride it out for as long as possible.

“Vibrato is really where you hear someone’s personality,” he says. “I remember my dad taking me to see players like BB King and we’d just listen to him shaking out one note for ages. You could hear his life story in that vibrato. It was exactly who he was. And yeah, some of the best moments are where you pin one note and just sting it! It can be either uncomfortable or incredible. You have to play about with the tension. It’s the threat of tension and release that works as the payoff. There are moments where I’m not really sure what I’m doing. I often see videos of myself and think, ‘What the f*ck, how did you get there?!’ But it seemed right at the time. Everyone will be waiting for these moments to happen and you have to find different ways to get there. They might not always work but you have to try!”

And, of course, there are some occasions where the rules were made to be broken. Just listen to John Lee Hooker, if you’re ever in doubt.

“Some of my favourite John Lee Hooker recordings aren’t actually a 12-bar blues,” Derek concludes, “it’s more of an 11 or 13-bar blues, with the changes going wherever John said they should go, making it up as he went along. I’ve always loved that sense of freedom.”

"VIBRATO IS REALLY WHERE YOU HEAR SOMEONE'S PERSONALITY"



Words Amit Sharma Photo Nigel Neve

“It quickly became clear to me that the guitar is a typewriter”

With his instrumental power trio **The Aristocrats** sounding more 3D than ever on this year's release with the Primuz Chamber Orchestra, **Guthrie Govan** checks in with TG to look back on his career so far

Chances are, if you've ever been stood anywhere remotely near a discussion about the greatest guitar players on earth, you'll have heard the name Guthrie Govan. Though he would never describe himself in that way, the English fusion wizard is widely regarded as not only one of the most technically sophisticated players to emerge since the likes of Shawn Lane and Allan Holdsworth, but also one of the most tasteful, with a sense of melodic phrasing that's just as dynamically exquisite as Larry Carlton or even Jeff Beck himself. His 2006 solo debut *Erotic Cakes* raised the bar for instrumental guitar music, arguably becoming the most important solo album for shredders since Steve Vai's game-changing *Passion And Warfare* masterpiece of 1990. Pushing six-string boundaries is something he continues to do in The Aristocrats, who have released a handful of highly acclaimed studio and live albums since forming just over a decade ago – including

their latest collaboration with the Primuz Chamber Orchestra.

That alone would be enough to make for a remarkably impressive resume, but the Chelmsford-born 50 year-old has plenty more in his list of achievements – from briefly joining progressive rockers Asia early on to eventually backing UK grime hero Dizzee Rascal, later recording and touring with progressive rock mastermind Steven Wilson and, in more recent years, performing in composer Hans Zimmer's live band. Then there's his work as a guitar instructor, which has included stints at various music colleges, articles and transcriptions for magazines and a host of breathtaking video lessons/performances for companies like Lick Library and JTC. It would fair to say his life would have been very different without those stringed blocks of wood we all know and love...

“They tell me I was three years old when I started,” says Govan, talking to TG in between arena dates with Hans Zimmer and an ever so slightly more intimate session spot with Polish pianist Tomasz Bura at London's Jazz Cafe. “Early on I was just trying to achieve this impossible feat that I saw my Dad doing, which

was getting through an Elvis song! It quickly became clear to me that the guitar is a typewriter, it's a machine you use to make music. My instincts led me towards trying to copy anything I heard, rather than just guitar stuff. So anything from a TV theme to a Christmas carol at school was fair game. We all hear technical music in everyday life – you might turn on the TV and hear some virtuosic violin thing or a jazz piano or a bluegrass player burning on a banjo. I always felt if things like that were possible, why not try to do them?

“That came full-circle when I was 13 and I fell in with the metal crowd at school,” continues Govan, who by this point had started to become “microscopic” about the various barriers he perceived in his own playing. “Suddenly over the course of a week, I knew who Steve Vai and Tony MacAlpine were. I realised people had already been taking the guitar to its limits and I started homing in on their styles. They probably had a big impact on the player who ended up writing the *Erotic Cakes* material.

There was one track on the solo debut that had already been gaining traction within the guitar community – a piece called *Wonderful*

“The balance between predictable and surprising notes is what makes a melody compelling”





“We all hear technical music in everyday life, you might turn on the TV and hear some virtuosic violin thing...”



Slippery Thing which had won him the Guitarist Of The Year award in 1993. The song had been specifically composed for the UK competition and, in amongst its smorgasbord of sizzling fusion licks and earworm melodies, featured a Dmaj7 string-skipping/tapping run that became a big talking point in his career early on...

"I guess my 21 year-old brain was thinking about how many cool guitar things I could cram into three minutes without compromising the musicality," remembers Govan. "I remember deciding to put that fast ultra legato lick in there and thinking 'Okay, I like the sound of all this stretchy tapping stuff and the bubbly texture that it creates!' I thought about how efficiently I could get that idea across. Maybe 1.3 seconds would be enough time – something extreme and startling but also in context, so it didn't become the point of the piece."

Other tracks like *Waves* were indicative of a musician searching for new things that had never been done on guitar, snaking around the fretboard in ways few would ever dare. "That song didn't start with me saying 'Let's write some callisthenic thing that will clean my neck for me!'" smiles Govan. "It was mainly me hearing a contour in my head thinking 'This is clearly a synth melody, I wonder if it's possible to make a guitar do that!' It's nice that people found something in that song. Some of them like to learn the melody, film themselves and put it onto Instagram. I'm flattered that it's a party piece."

One defining element of Govan's playing that's pretty much encompassed all of his recordings to date is his extensive usage of chromaticism and outside scales – employing the so-called 'wrong notes' at the right time in order to create musical tension. When you speak to the guitarist about these more unexpected or challenging intervallic choices, you quickly get the impression it's one of his favourite things about being creative. "At any point in time you have a spectrum of notes to choose from, with the ultimate right note at one end and the ultimate wrong note at the other," explains Govan. "It's all about what kind of note you want right now. It would be boring if every note you played felt right, without tension or release. It's better to ask yourself at what point in this gradient is the note interesting enough, but not so ugly it will ruin what

you're trying to say. I like that idea of weaving around predictable and surprising notes, because it's the balance between the two that makes a melody compelling."

Ultimately, it's all about your ear, he shrugs. If your ear works well enough, you should be able to replicate what you're hearing in your head with no barriers in between. "I'm not consciously thinking on a note-by-note basis like 'I think I want something chromatic now and then I'll resolve on a major third for beat one!' But I guess processes are happening in the background in the same way that when we speak English we know where the verb goes. We're not choosing where to put the verb, we just know where because that's how we learned. And that's a pretty good summation of how I experience music. To me, it's just another first language."

For anyone who has sat down and tried to learn or use a scale to no avail, such as the melodic minor – which, because of its minor third, major sixth and major seventh, can present some contextual challenges and require more attention to phrasing – Govan can offer some words of wisdom. "You need to learn to enjoy the sound of a scale," he stresses, "before you have any hope of using it effectively."

"In the same way, you have to learn how to like whiskey, I don't think many people enjoy their first taste! [laughs] Melodic minor can be like that, but if you listen to enough music where that tonality is featured prominently, you get a sense for it. The notes stop sounding weird. Developing that kind of sensibility comes from bonding with a scale and internalising it."

When it comes to gear, Govan is mainly known for his Charvel signatures – the latest of which being this year's dazzling MJ San Dimas SD24 CM – and collaborating with Victory on their V30 amp series, both of which more often than not combining to form the core of his sound. From there he'll design his pedalboard around whichever project he's performing in: the Suhr Koko Boost, Providence Anadime Chorus, Dunlop Jerry Cantrell Wah and TC Electronic Flashback Delay being among the favourites that have stuck through the years. But what about the



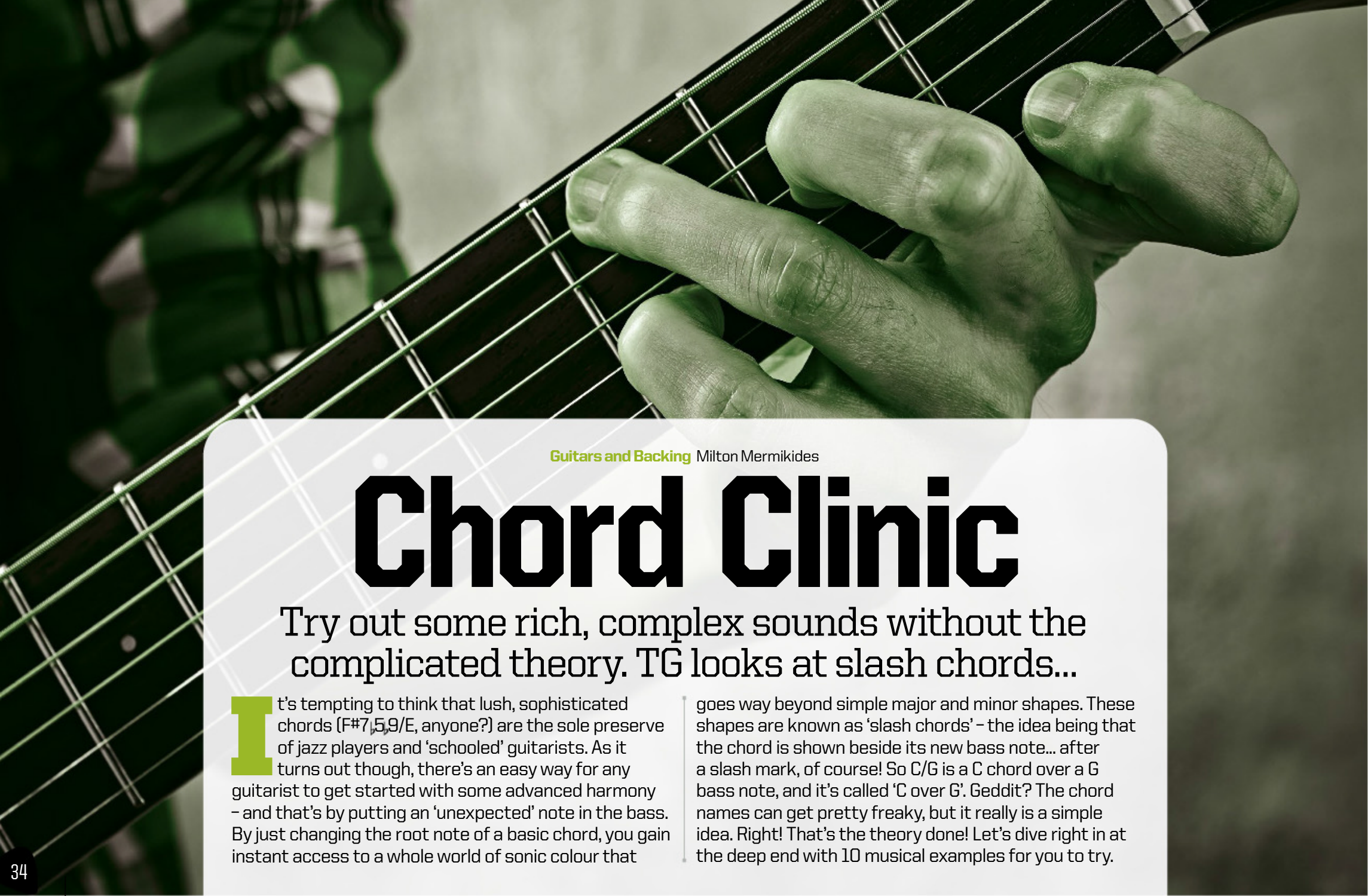
lesser-known favourites in his gear collection, such as the Gibson ES-335 and PRS Custom 24 he'd been seen with before any signature models arrived, initially through Suhr before he moved over to Charvel in 2014...

"That Cherry Red 335's almost exactly the same age as me!" grins Govan. "I traced the serial number and it's close to my birthday, so it clearly has to be a part of my life. I'm not sure if I would use it for a whole show anymore, like I did 15 years ago with [local fusion band] The Fellowship. There's something incredibly musical about the way a 335 feeds back when you're close to your amp. It's easy to coax those singing notes that go on forever out of a guitar with that design, with none of the shrieking you get from a hollow guitar without the block in the centre. What else have I got? There's my 1963 SG Special. That was my first 'good' guitar and will never be going on the road. The headstock is so fragile-looking, I wouldn't trust any airline with it. It has P-90s and does a cool version of that rootsy slide tone I search for from time to time."

"I like my Vigier fretless for certain things. It came in handy for a couple of tracks on the road with Hans, as did my Strandberg eight-string. The other exciting new guitar is a Huber Orca 59, which I stumbled on somewhere in Texas a few years back. It's my idea of how Les Pauls should sound. Again, it's not something I'd use for a whole gig. For situations like that it can only be the Charvel because it covers all bases, but this Huber has something special and does the whole Peter Green thing."

And as for the aforementioned Custom 24 seen in some of his very earliest videos, we are reassuringly told it's been "sleeping somewhere in Nevada" while its owner has been keeping busy with a slew of projects crossing all genres and venue sizes. When they'll next be reunited is anyone's guess...

"It's safe, it's fine and thinks of me often," grins Govan. "It will stay there until the next time I find myself with enough luggage allowance to bring it home with me. I'm curious to see what it will feel like to play again because it's been over a decade. I guess it's vintage now so probably worth something!"



Guitars and Backing Milton Mermikides

Chord Clinic

Try out some rich, complex sounds without the complicated theory. TG looks at slash chords...

It's tempting to think that lush, sophisticated chords (F#7, 5, 9/E, anyone?) are the sole preserve of jazz players and 'schooled' guitarists. As it turns out though, there's an easy way for any guitarist to get started with some advanced harmony – and that's by putting an 'unexpected' note in the bass. By just changing the root note of a basic chord, you gain instant access to a whole world of sonic colour that

goes way beyond simple major and minor shapes. These shapes are known as 'slash chords' – the idea being that the chord is shown beside its new bass note... after a slash mark, of course! So C/G is a C chord over a G bass note, and it's called 'C over G'. Geddit? The chord names can get pretty freaky, but it really is a simple idea. Right! That's the theory done! Let's dive right in at the deep end with 10 musical examples for you to try.

1 INVERSIONS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=108

C G/B F/A C/G Dm⁷/F C/E G⁷^b9/D C/E

TAB

8	8	7	5	5	3	1	1	0	1	1	0
8	8	8	6	6	5	1	1	1	0	0	1
9	9	7	5	5	5	2	2	0	1	1	0
10	10	9	7	7	5	3	3	2	0	0	2

An inversion is when you replace a bass note with another note from within the chord. This changes the flavour of the chord and also provides an opportunity to create melodies in the bass. Here in our first musical example, a simple chord progression now has a satisfying descending bass melody.

2 BEATLES-STYLE ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=90

A C#7/G# F#m A/E D/F# E/G# A E⁷/B A/C#

TAB

5	4	2	0	2	4	5	5	7	9	9	9
6	6	4	2	2	3	5	5	7	9	9	10
7	7	6	4	2	2	4	6	7	9	9	11

Much like the chords in our previous example, there's a Beatles-like quality here in these arpeggios. In fact, Paul McCartney is a master in creating melodic basslines through inversions that are integral to the song.

3 BLUES TURNAROUND

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=80

B^b13 B^b9/D E^b9 Edim⁷ B^b/F Faug⁷ Faug⁷/E^b B^b7/D B¹³/A B^b13/A^b

Another common use for inversions is in a blues turnaround. The following example shows one of many possibilities of creating a bassline melody from just three or so basic chords. You can easily discover more with a bit of experimenting.

4 POP/ROCK ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=72

Aadd⁹ Aadd⁹/G Aadd⁹/F[#] Aadd⁹/F Aadd⁹/E Asus²/E

Again, here the upper part of the chord remains static as a bassline moves, thus 'recolouring' the upper chord. Examples abound in pop and rock music, from The Beatles' *Dear Prudence* and Oasis' *Champagne Supernova* to the opening of The Police's *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic*.

5 JAZZ VIBES

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=72

Cm Cm/B Cm/B^b Cm/A Cm/A^b Cm/G Cm/A^b Cm/G G

Here's another example in a minor key. The upper C minor chord remains the same in all but the very last chord, while the bassline moves chromatically. You might hear a similar idea in jazz standards *My Funny Valentine* and *It Don't Mean A Thing*, but it is a fundamental concept and you can hear it in Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven*.

6 STATIC BASS WITH CHANGING CHORDS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=120

Am Bm/A C/A D/A

Here, the bass notes remain the same while the upper chords move, resulting in a series of slash chords. It's a great way to 'anchor' the sound around one single root note. You can hear a similar idea in Kenny Burrell's *Midnight Blue* and Bon Jovi's *Wanted Dead Or Alive*.



7 FILMIC SOUND

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=60

E F#m/E G#m/E F#m/E

Once again, the bass is static and the upper chords change, this time to imply the Lydian mode. This is a common technique in film music, and chances are you've heard it many times. You'll also hear it on Fleetwood Mac's *Sara*, Joe Satriani's *Flying In A Blue Dream* and Peter Gabriel's *Down To Earth*.

8 AEOLIAN MODE IDEA

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=72

Dm C/D Bb/D Am/D

RH mute

This example is in D minor, again with a static bass and upper chords that change (from Dm to C, Bb, and Am). You'll hear a similar idea in Phil Collins' *In The Air Tonight*. We're in D Aeolian, but any mode can be employed in this way.

9 IMPLYING A CADENCE

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=90

E D/E A/E D/E A D/A A

Another useful pedal tone approach - instead of using the root note - is to use the 5th of the key, and it's a clever way to imply a sort of elaborated V-I cadence. Don't know what that means? Well, try playing E7 to A, or D7 to G. It's that feeling like there's a natural conclusion to a chord change. Our riff is played over an E bass note before finishing on an A chord.

10 THE 'UP ONE TONE' BASS NOTE

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=108

C Bb add9/C Ab/Bb Eb/F F/G

These slash chords are essentially the same in that they are major or dominant chords with a bass note one tone higher than the root. Hear it at 0:32 in The Jacksons' *Blame It On The Boogie*, setting up a cadence, and in the opening chords to Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage*, which uses the chord liberally and without resolution.

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Muse

Photography Kevin Nixon

On the band's latest album *Will Of The People*, Muse's **Matt Bellamy is a man on a mission**. Though it is an album of typically progressive light and shade, Matt has delivered **some of the band's heaviest music to date**, inspired by some of the biggest icons of metal.

Here in our exclusive new interview Matt discusses how those acts inspired him to go heavy, outlines the finer details of **EQ-ing fuzz distortion**, revels in the delight of recording with Jeff Buckley's legendary 1983 Fender Telecaster, and gives us the **lowdown on his favourite guitars** – both Manson- and non-Manson-built – in his collection.

On the **Manson** theme, we go behind the scenes at the company, speaking to co-owner **Adrian Ashton**, who outlines **his and Matt's vision for the future**. Elsewhere, we profile the **top 10 Muse guitar tracks** as voted for in our poll on GuitarWorld.com. And if all this Muse excitement has got you revved up and ready to play your guitar, you can follow our **in-depth lesson on Bellamy's style**.

RIGHT, LET'S GET PLUGGED IN AND TURN THE PAGE!





Interview Amit Sharma Photos Kevin Nixon



"IT'S A NEW DIMENSION FOR THIS BAND"

The **Matt Bellamy** interview. How the explosive new **Muse** album was created – with a mountain of gear and inspiration from Iron Maiden and Slipknot...

M

att Bellamy loves a heavy riff. Now, more than ever.

"I definitely think a bit more metal has crept in this time," he says of the new Muse album *Will Of The People*.

He's always had it in him, as evidenced by early Muse bangers like *New Born* and *Stockholm Syndrome*, which helped make the trio one of the most successful alternative rock acts of the modern age. But with this new album, the singer/guitarist is really going for it in terms of sheer sonic weight.

Will Of The People is a head-twisting celebration of heaviness – from its opening title track to its unequivocal closing number *We Are F*cking F*cked*. It's the sound of a group finding new ways to catch lightning in the bottle and hardwire galactic riffs

into stadium-conquering anthems. Tracks such as *Kill Or Be Killed* and *Won't Stand Down* live up to the metallic defiance of their titles, while *You Make Me Feel Like It's Halloween* – despite being a synth-led throwback to the group's electro influences – features the most overtly shred guitar run ever heard on a Muse album, a throwback to the 80s heyday of shred game-changers Yngwie Malmsteen and Paul Gilbert.

This is also the first Muse album on which Matt has used the famous guitar he bought in 2020 from Parisian dealer Matthieu Lucas – the 1983 Telecaster previously owned by the late Jeff Buckley. The guitar has an unusually glassy tone thanks to a slight defect which helps it shine just as spectacularly today as it did on Buckley's classic 1994 album *Grace*, but when Matt plays it on this new album's title track, it's for colour. The heavy riffs are delivered via his Manson guitars, the brand he has sworn by since the early days of Muse, and in which he invested in 2019, becoming a majority shareholder in the company.

His long association with Manson is one of the key subjects he discusses when he talks to TG on a warm summer's day in London. He also speaks of the unique qualities in that famous Tele and his search for the perfect fuzz pedal. And he reveals how the heaviness in Muse's new album was inspired by his teenage obsession with Iron Maiden and his young son's love of Slipknot...

THE MASKED SINGER

Matt on stage in Sermamagny, France on July 3, 2022.



There are some very classic Muse ingredients on the new album's title track – from the down-tuned single-note riffs to a generous helping of octave fuzz.

It's pretty much a traditional blues riff, you know? That's one thing I learned from Rage Against The Machine. You can get away with straight blues riffs as long as you make the production unique. That's the key! I think it was the same with The White Stripes. Sometimes you'll sit down and play a pentatonic riff and think, 'Oh, that sounds very familiar, something from the 60s or 70s, like Hendrix or whatever!' I think we first learned this approach on *Supermassive Black Hole*, where we did everything we could to make a blues riff sound as futuristic and strange as possible. We took the same kind of production approach with *Will Of The People*, because it's mainly one main idea the whole way through and one of the simplest tracks we've done, at least on this album.

Do you remember what fuzz pedal you were using on that one?

We spent a lot of time working on those tones. Off the top of my head, it's hard to know what got used where as we had

around 50 fuzz pedals! DI'd fuzz is something we've gotten a lot out of over the years. It's a very underrated technique, more modern-sounding than an amp. The classic is the [Electro-Harmonix] Big Muff, so I usually start from there and veer off into others. I'm actually in the process of developing a fuzz pedal that has a few features I've always made use of, all built into the pedal. It will have an EQ curve that you can slide from left to right or invert to create more of a scoop. I usually find most fuzz pedals to be a little bit too full-range. Especially in how they sit in relation to the bass, drums and vocals.

So where's the sweet spot, exactly?

For me it tends to be around 600 to 900Hz. It's in this low, kind of girthy and middle area that sits nicely above the bass guitar but comfortably below my vocal... which is more classical and theatrical than your typical rock growl. I don't like too much crossover with where my vocals sit. Finding the right fuzz pedal to push that low-mid area was something we spent time on. And even after recording, whatever pedal we use, there will also be a lot of intense EQ work. So that's what led me towards

trying to develop something. I haven't gotten there yet. I'm working with a few people to see how that feature can be built in, and then we'll make it available for everyone.

That's exciting news. Will it be coming through Manson?

Yeah, I think that would make sense. I could probably do it on my own but we have the team there who can check all of the electronics. It makes sense to keep it all in-house. We don't have a release date planned yet, we're still researching. Hopefully it might be something we can come out with later this year. And it will be based on that sound you hear on *Will Of The People* and *Supermassive Black Hole*, which both rely on DI'd fuzz.

With its thrash metal feel and palm-muted chromatic dissonance, *Kill Or Be Killed* could easily be one of the heaviest songs you've ever written...

For sure! I'm trying to think of where exactly it came from. I mean, metal has always been around for us. When we were growing up, we were listening to bands like Iron Maiden. Dom [Howard, drums] was really into them as well.

"WE SPENT A LOT OF TIME WORKING ON TONES. WE HAD AROUND 50 FUZZ PEDALS!"



And though we connected more through Nirvana, Rage Against The Machine and The Smashing Pumpkins, we always had this love for 80s metal. It kinda hung around a little bit, which is where you might pick up on the harmonic minor scales we use. Metallica were also a big one for us, but Iron Maiden were the British band and also felt a bit more punk rock in ways.

Especially on those early albums, one might say.

It was more of a punk rock take on those harmonic minor scales. The song *Phantom Of The Opera* [from Iron Maiden's self-titled debut album, 1980] doesn't feel as bloated or overtly classical as other metal songs. There's still something quite angry and scary about it. That's why Maiden are a band we've always looked up to. That usage of the harmonic minor scale and the progressive approach to arrangements is something that we share, even if we never sounded like them and live in a different genre. We have a lot of respect for them as musicians, especially Steve Harris, who is one of the best bass players around. You always hear him doing really cool and busy things. After that I got into bands like Deftones. I wouldn't call Rage Against The Machine metal necessarily, but they're one of my favourites. Someone played me some Gojira a while back and I really got into them. I'm sure some of that crept in."

Well, there's even some double bass drum pedal on this new album.

Yes! This is the first time I've managed to persuade Dom to use one. You can hear on *Kill Or Be Killed* [makes machine gun noise]. That's not really his style of playing, but I really pushed him on this album and said we should bring it into the equation when needed, like there and the middle section of *Won't Stand Down*. He had to practise it for a while. If you're not naturally a double bass drum player, it's not an easy thing to transition into. He's always been more of a hi-hat player. But when you're combining chugging on a guitar with that double bass drum, you're automatically putting yourself in a metal world. I'm glad we've got that now. It's a new dimension for this band that we might expand on in the future.

There's a solo in *You Make Me Feel Like It's Halloween* which ends with



what sounds like an Yngwie Malmsteen lick. Is he someone you've ever listened to?

Oh, brilliant! I haven't listened to him in a while, but Yngwie was one of those people I got into in the early 90s when I first started playing. Clearly back then, I thought there was a chance! After a while I realised I simply couldn't get to where he was and sort of veered off towards more classical and flamenco guitar styles. Then I started listening to players like Hendrix and Cobain and felt, 'You know what? I can do chaos. I can't do this unbelievable technical precision but what I can do is create a mess!' So I went down the road of noise, chaos and carnage... and little elements of the other things stayed with me. And I think you're probably right, some of the fast-moving harmonic minor ideas will have come from players like that.

Having been a loyal signature artist for two decades, you're now a majority shareholder in Manson Guitars. When did you first try one and what did it bring to your playing?

I grew up with the Manson shop nearby, which is where they made guitars too. It was the same place back then. There were a few guitar shops on that high street but this one always felt more authentic. You'd go in there and people would be actually building things in front of you, making or fixing bits. The instruments themselves felt like they had a certain sense of precision and durability which led me towards wanting to play heavier music. The primary attraction was that whenever I pick up a Stratocaster I tend to play bluesy. At its best, it'll be along the lines of Clapton or Hendrix. They never really felt right for trying to create something new.

With Muse, we knew we were coming in at the tail end of rock music's innovation and longevity in the zeitgeist, if you like. We had to do something to try and stand out, to be new in some way or another.

How about Gibson guitars - what might they do to your playing?

Yeah, it's similar with them as well. I'll play a Les Paul and Led Zeppelin riffs will keep flying out, every time [hums riff to Zep's *Heartbreaker*]. I don't know what it was about the bluesiness of it all, not that I'm against blues, but it always took me to something that felt

familiar from the past, in a way that I didn't think was good. I wanted to explore unique sounds. So I got chatting to Hugh Manson in the late 90s.

I noticed that as soon as I picked up any of his guitars, I didn't go to any of those retro riffs I associated with Fender or Gibson. He also gave me an opportunity by saying he could build anything I wanted, so I started to think about adding effects pedals or Kaoss Pads. The idea was that it could be bespoke. I could actually do whatever I wanted, any shape or finish. I could create my own identity through these guitars.

The fact you've used them on pretty much every album says it all...

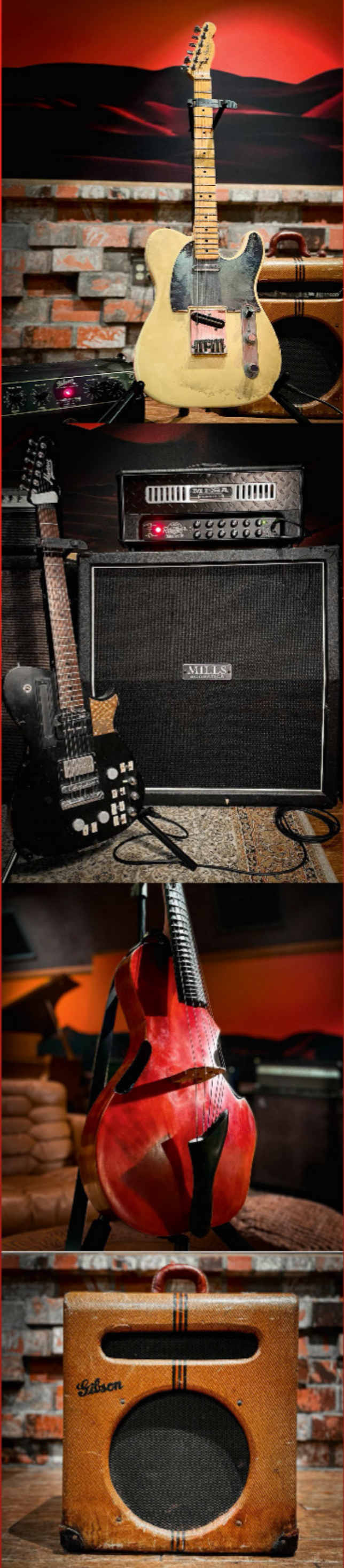
I think the only time we've used no Manson guitars was the first album, *Showbiz*, and that's because I couldn't afford one. As soon as I had enough money, I went straight in. I actually bought the guitar I used for the song *Citizen Erased* from the second album, a seven-string. Then when I had a bit more money, I went in asked for a fully aluminium one based on the Delorean from *Back To The Future*, with things built in like a phaser, a Tom Morello-style killswitch... Honestly, I don't think I'd have created *Plug In Baby* without that guitar. I'd pick it up and strange things would come out. It just felt new to me. So the ability to invent and create any kind of guitar I wanted heavily informed what direction Muse went in, at least guitar-wise. It's been a close relationship ever since. Pretty much all my guitars are from them. I've gone through quite a few, too, throwing them around on stage! Hugh got to a point where he decided to retire roughly five years ago and felt it was natural to come to me and see if I wanted to take it to the next stage.

You bought Jeff Buckley's *Grace* Tele in 2020. We're dying to know - what's it like to hold and plug in, baby?

It's amazing. What's interesting about it is that there is a slightly strange issue with the pickups that's never been corrected. It's very slightly out of phase in the middle position with both pickups blended, which is odd because it sounds great. It has this glassy kind of tone, a bit like when you play the highest notes on a piano where there's that natural sustain. It's that very plinky sound. It also has this very unusual clarity between each note, this total separation. I didn't want to touch



45



Photos Aleks von Korff



anything or change anything, but I took it to Manson so we could look at the electronics and analyse what was going on there. It'd be nice to replicate those pickups at some point so people could have their own version. I'd say it's probably the best clean-sounding guitar I've played, if you're going for a very clean sound like on *Hallelujah*. Just plug into a Fender amp and it sounds exactly like that. It's one of those things that will make your hairs stand up as you're playing those parts. It's a very unique guitar, I've never known anything else that sounds like it.

Can you tell us what other non-Manson favourites we'd find in your collection?

There's one in particular I go to and that's a Stratocaster Relic. It's not an actual vintage from the 60s but it was made in the late 90s based on one of those old ones. That's what I turn to for neck pickup sounds, which I don't use often, I'm primarily a bridge pickup player. When I go to the neck, most of my Manson guitars have a sustainer pickup in that spot, which isn't really made for amazing tones, it's more there to sustain the strings. So on occasions I'll go to the Relic. I've used some older vintage Strats over the years too, one example being the bluesy solo from the song *Uprising*, but I don't use them

often. On this album, instead of going to the Strat, I went to the Jeff Buckley Tele – in *Will Of The People*, my Manson guitars are doing the chunky riff parts but the higher guitar is that Telecaster. And for *Won't Stand Down* and *Kill Or Be Killed* I used a multi-scale fanned fret Manson.

That's also new ground for you, right?

Yeah! You can really dig into the riffs on those guitars because of the scale length, you don't get that floppy thing that happens when a six-string is tuned down. But at the same time I can play the high reggae-like chords you hear in the verses of *Won't Stand Down*. I'm just trying to think of other things I own... I've got a 1953 Gibson Goldtop. I don't use it very often but it's there to look at. I'm scared to touch it, to be honest, because of how much it's worth! I've got a couple of Strats. There's an Aloha Strat, which is the metal one that was a rare one from 1991 or 1992. There was a limited run of them. That actually helped inspire the aluminium Manson later down the line. I'm not a big collector because I'm so Manson-based! The Jeff Buckley guitar really is the first time I've forked out some serious money for a collectable guitar. I guess it could be the beginning for me! Our bassist Chris [Wolstenholme] is a pretty serious collector, he's got a museum of

CHAOS THEORY

"I can't do this unbelievable technical precision," Matt says. "but what I can do is create a mess!"

amazing instruments. That's also another reason why I don't have many. If I ever needed anything, I'd just ask him. So maybe it's time to start getting a collection going!

As for amps, are your Diezel VH4s and Vox AC30s still the main workhorses?

Yeah, those are the classics. If I'm going for really heavy single-note riffs, the Diezel will usually be an essential feature. I'm not a huge fan of double-tracked guitars, but I am a big fan of having multiple amps being recorded at once through one guitar. You get the different responses which can almost create a double-tracked sound, even though you're only playing once. I have a 1964 AC30 and a 1970 too. They're the ones which Brian May and The Edge use a lot, with the top boost. They're specific from those years and can be very hard to find. I'm lucky to have this extremely rare Marshall, it's a JTM45 and one of the first 50 amps Jim Marshall built himself. It's basically the same one Jimi Hendrix used. That's like a museum piece. Anyone that knows the history of amps will be like, 'Oh my god, what is this!' and won't believe I'm using it instead of keeping it behind glass! It was literally hand built by Jim Marshall and it sounds so Hendrixy, it's insane. Sometimes I might use a modded JCM800 for a Tom Morello tone. There were a couple of extra little things which crept in on the sides. There was an Orange, we were trying to dial in a Slipknot kind of sound...

Very interesting. What is it that you liked about Slipknot's guitar tones?

They're a band I should have mentioned earlier. Obviously I've known about them for a while but I've never really given them a good listen. My son, who is 10 now, has just become a huge Slipknot fan out of the blue. I'll be driving him to school and he'll be blasting that out. I'd be doing my best to deal with that, but the more I listened the more I realised how amazing the guitar playing was. I think one of them [Jim Root] uses an Orange. So we used a little Orange on those two heavier tracks. I'd never say we

"MANSON COULD BUILD ANYTHING I WANTED. I COULD CREATE MY OWN IDENTITY THROUGH THESE GUITARS."

were trying to sound like Slipknot – there’s nothing you can do to sound like that band, because they’re just so unique and unbelievable. But I feel like we’ve rediscovered them in the last year. I remember when the first album came out way back when. I remember listening to that a fair bit and eventually lost track. I went to see them play in a stadium in LA not long ago and it was just so intense... there’s nothing like that. And it was only used a couple of times, but I also recently got this really interesting amp. I don’t even know the name of it, but it’s a Gibson from 1940. It looks like one of those Pignose things, all you’ve got is volume but it sounded amazing because the speaker distorts the more you turn it up.

How much does theory play a part in your writing – for example the main lead in *Plug In Baby* is built out of B Harmonic Minor and Dorian, while

other tracks might use classical ideas like secondary dominants...

I’m mid-level schooled and not particularly advanced when it comes to theory. If I need to analyse something I can probably break it down and describe things the way you are describing things. I’m not always thinking that way when I’m creating music. I think there are certain chordal movements that I’ve picked up over the years. I’m an ear player rather than a music reader. I did an A-level in music, it’s not that advanced, but I learned how to counterpoint and write Bach-like stuff without even needing to play anything, just in my head. I’ve always been drawn to things I didn’t fully understand.

So which musicians inspired you most outside of typical guitar music?

From the piano world it was

METAL GURU

“The more I listened to Slipknot, the more I realised how amazing the guitar playing was,” Matt says.

people like Rachmaninoff or Liszt. The degree of modulation that happens in their music is still mind-blowing to me. Their level of intelligence in that point of time is comparable to what you see in tech now – the computer programmers of the modern world. There was a time when geniuses were breaking boundaries by composing. I had to get my head around a lot of piano stuff. I would sit down and work through all the basics. I don’t have the dexterity or the technique, but learned what chords were working where and why, and how to modulate from this to that. I’m not drawn to standard major and minor scales – it’s more stuff like Harmonic Minor or Phrygian. That comes from a lot of these Russian composers that I liked. They were trying to incorporate folk styles into the classical world. Guitar-wise, the South American composer Villa-Lobos was a big influence on me around 17 when I tried to get serious on flamenco. I remember working through some of his etudes. Some of that stuff stayed with me, even though I kinda left a lot behind. There are remnants of theory, classical and flamenco in my playing. They’ve stayed with me, more as little hints than the main thing. I’m more led by the emotional reaction I have than anything theoretical.



Photo: HP/Van Velthoven



Words Amit Sharma

"HE'S PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTS"

Matt Bellamy's vision for **Manson guitars**: the inside story

The roots of Manson Guitar Works go all the way back to the 60s, when Andy Manson decided to build his first acoustic guitar at the age of 17. He and his brother Hugh founded the company, specialising in electric

instruments, and during the 70s and 80s they continued to build and repair, with famous clients including Jeff Beck, former Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones and former Cream bassist Jack Bruce. But it wasn't until the early 90s, when co-owner Adrian Ashton came on board to help open a shop in Devon, that Manson became the business we know today.

Matt Bellamy, a player synonymous with Manson, became a majority shareholder in the company in 2019 following Hugh Manson's retirement. And with Matt's hands-on role in product development, there are exciting times ahead, as Adrian Ashton reveals to TG...

How exactly does it work when Matt comes up with the concept for a new guitar?

The person who has been bringing Matt's ideas into reality for the last 10 years is our Head Luthier Tim Stark. They usually get talking about projects first

and also involve Chris Whitemyer, who is Matt's tech. It's all about turning those ideas into something that gets the creativity side established and feels a bit out there, but never detracts from being a really great, playable instrument. I find with a lot of wild guitars, it's the guitar itself that lets the show down. We always keep that as our core philosophy – whatever we do, no matter how wild it gets, it's still got to be a great guitar underneath it all. I was with Matt just this morning and we were looking through all the racks of different models. Every guitar felt extremely unique and individual, and yet you could pull any one of them out of the rack and it would play like a Manson guitar. I think that's really important to us all.

From a design point of view, how did you go about creating the on-board Kaoss Pad effect?

So it's not actually a full Kaoss Pad inside the guitar, it's just the screen glass. That came quite early on, when Hugh Manson was working with Ron Joyce – who is still with us now and is a great electronics designer and engineer. Ron played a big part in incorporating those kinds of electronics into the actual instrument. That's a great example, because the inspiration was 'I want a Kaoss Pad inside a guitar!' and the reality was a bit different. Funnily enough, some people have seen



Manson now offer affordable guitars as well as custom boutique options – catering for every corner of the market.

That's right. Matt's been very keen on making guitars that are affordable. His UK-made signature is about three and a half grand but we've since expanded to fill most market sectors. We have a licensing deal with Cort [the META series] that allows us to bring in something under £600. That range of licensed stuff is actually expanding a lot this year. And we've also decided for the first time to play on that high-end boutique aspect we're known for with the DL-OR series, inspired by and recreating Matt's original Delorean. So we do everything from £600 to £6000 and beyond, while keeping everything nice and solid in the middle!

What else does Matt bring to the table for the business?

We have fantastic input from him. He's definitely not just a guy that's come along and bought the company on a whim. Manson is now owned between Matt and myself, he's the majority owner. We all have a great relationship – obviously he's a huge global artist, he's extremely gifted when it comes to songcraft and pushing the boundaries of music and instruments. He didn't just find us and say, 'Let's just keep making standard-style guitars with a couple of pickups in Sunburst!' What he brings to this company in terms of artistry is priceless, to be honest. Me and the team are there to bring his ideas into reality and practicality. It all works really well. We're already discussing new products that we'll be bringing to the market... I can't give away too much at this stage, but what I will say is that it's not a guitar!

Matt has told us about a new pedal in the works...

It's very exciting. We did some playing and listening today, and I'm very excited about the sounds that were coming out. It's going to be a great little product, but we've still got a little bit of a wait until we release it.

➔ the Manson guitar and actually tried to do that, thinking that's how we did it. But no, it's all custom boards and circuits by Ron Joyce. You have to get the initial idea going and then the team will engineer it so it's practical and usable, and doesn't need a new battery every 10 minutes!

Other requests have included a built-in MXR Phase 90 and ZVEX Fuzz Factory. What were the main challenges there?

Yeah, the ZVEX Fuzz Factory was one of the very early ones that featured on Matt's original Delorean. He also

wanted an MXR Phase 90 on there too. The challenge was wiring all these things together and keeping noise to a minimum, finding a balance between two very different circuits. The Fuzz Factory is one of the most outrageous pieces of kit when it's in a standalone box, but when you put it into a guitar that allows the user to manipulate the sound, things go completely off the wall. It's doable, but it takes a lot of research, skill and ultimately a great team behind you, which we have!

Though you're generally viewed as a boutique brand it's interesting how

PLUG IN BABY
Matt's Manson 007
– one of his first
custom models.

"NO MATTER HOW WILD IT GETS, IT'S STILL GOT TO BE A GREAT GUITAR UNDERNEATH IT ALL."



Words Amit Sharma

PERFECT TEN

The guitar heroics of Matt Bellamy in the top 10 Muse songs – as voted by TG readers



Regular readers will know that we love a good poll here at TG Towers! Why, just two issues ago, 150,000 of you voted for the greatest guitar albums of all time, helping us to create probably our biggest cover feature to date! No surprises then, we thought we'd do

another poll this month – so here we present the top 10 Muse Songs, as voted for by you.

The turnout may have been (expectedly) a little more meagre than with our albums monster vote, but a full 10,000 of you reached for your phones, tablets and computers to register your favourite songs by the band. In good, old-fashioned Top Of The Pops style, we start with number 10...



10 BLISS ORIGIN OF SYMMETRY (2001)

How exactly do you go about following the crowd-conquering and era-defining perfection of *Plug In Baby* and *New Born*? For the third single from *Origin Of Symmetry*, it was a case of adding even more experimentation to the mix, with futuristic synth lines warring against jangly minor chords from the very start and continuing through the hard-strummed, open position shapes of the chorus – which interestingly go into double time after the initial opening cycles. Although it's

a simple enough technique for songwriters to use, this change of pace really adds to the dramatic tension of the build, making for a climactic rise that ends on a suspenseful F minor barre-chord. And, while they're not actually played on guitar, the opening and closing keyboard arpeggios – which move from C_m to B_b to F_m – actually make for an excellent sweep picking exercise, particularly for those interested in moving down one area of the neck and coming back up in a different position before each chord change.

09 TIME IS RUNNING OUT ABSOLUTION (2003)

Another high contender in the list of Muse tracks your bassist keeps asking to run through, and one of the last to be composed for *Absolution*, this top 10 single was the sound of Muse embracing a more mid-tempo and groove-oriented take on alternative rock. Oddly enough, the members have even revealed it was partly inspired by the Michael Jackson hit *Billie Jean*, a song which they felt made listeners want to click their fingers and shake their hips – and in that regard they most certainly

succeeded. During the pre-chorus where he sings “*Bury it, I won't let you bury it*”, Matt Bellamy incorporates elements of the vocal melody into his chords, often simply changing just one note at a time to allow his guitar to not only support but also mirror his voice. If tremolo-picked octave shapes after the chorus sections are reminiscent of the kind of things that Jonny Greenwood played on Radiohead's *Pablo Honey* and *The Bends*, it's probably because Greenwood was a big influence on Bellamy early on.



08 BUTTERFLIES AND HURRICANES ABSOLUTION (2003)

Their first-ever top 10 single from their first album to top the charts on home soil, *Butterflies And Hurricanes* is the sound of a band with all the creative wind in their sails. With Bellamy's octave shapes providing a counter melody to Chris Wolstenholme's bass lines, it's another track that carries a strong progressive and space rock influence, with no shortage of keyboards adding to the atmospheric collage. There have been several live

arrangements of the track over the years – some closer to the original and others with Bellamy replicating the opening synth line on guitar by playing a standard Dm chord and holding that shape while lowering the note played on the B string one fret at a time. It's this knowledge of chords – where to use majors, minors, dominants and half-diminisheds – that has allowed Bellamy to break out of conventional rock guitar riffing and into more modal, classical and filmscore-esque grandeur.

07 NEW BORN ORIGIN OF SYMMETRY (2001)

Debut album *Showbiz* certainly had its fair share of fiery moments, but it was on second album *Origin Of Symmetry* where Muse started cranking the gain and showing us just how loud they could be when they wanted to. Its second single was incredibly deceptive in that sense, starting out as more of a twinkly, keyboard-led number reminiscent of their earliest work before a detuned fuzz riff arrives out of the blue and roars its way through your eardrums. The more

extreme guitar tones heard on this and prior single *Plug In Baby* were thanks to a ZVEX Fuzz Factory acquired by Bellamy while on tour in Japan, which soon became his go-to fuzz/distortion – to the point where he was even having its circuit built into his custom Manson guitars. With its classical-inspired chord movements, clean funk strumming in the verses and alternate picked, Tom Morello-esque shred guitar solo, it's another example of Bellamy mutating different styles into his very own beast.

NEW BORN FINDS BELLAMY MUTATING
DIFFERENT STYLES INTO HIS OWN BEAST



06 MAP OF THE PROBLEMATIQUE BLACK HOLES AND REVELATIONS

(2006)

It's no secret that Muse have been responsible for some of the most dazzling tones over the last two decades – and this 2006 track could be the pick of the bunch. If its opening guitars sound more like a distorted synthesizer, that's because it was originally written and demoed on keyboards. "I really wanted to hear it on guitar, but there was no way to play the keyboard part on the guitar," recalled *Black Holes* producer Rich Costey in 2007.

The band spent the next two days reverse-engineering the idea, using a range of equipment to make Bellamy's guitar react like an arpeggiator. "It's a guitar going through three different modular synths that are opening up at different times," explained Costey. "Two of the synths are routed into different pitch shifters – one is an octave up, the other is an octave down. The guitar was split into three the ARP 2600, a Korg MS-20 and an EMS Synthi

05 STOCKHOLM SYNDROME ABSOLUTION

(2003)

When Matt Bellamy writes a song in drop D, chances are it will sit among the heavier Muse offerings. *Stockholm Syndrome* is a down-tuned affair that captures the band driving at full force, with more of a metallic style of riffing that bounces off the open low D and notes fretted an octave up around the 12th fret. Those intervals include a minor 2nd, a major 3rd, a perfect 4th and a minor 7th – built from the D

Phrygian Dominant scale (the fifth mode of G harmonic minor, theory fans!). Another key feature of the song is the tempo shift between its verse sections and choruses, going into more of a half-time groove for the most anthemic moments where more space is needed for vocals. And to bring it all to a thunderous close, the main riff is played open, loose and slower more in the style of Tool guitarist and fellow Diezel VH4 enthusiast Adam Jones.

04 PLUG IN BABY ORIGIN OF SYMMETRY

(2001)

As Bellamy himself admits in this month's interview, he might never have written *Plug In Baby* without his trusty Manson Delorean. What a shame that would have been, given how quickly it became the group's biggest anthem. Although often incorrectly tabbed in the open position, the main theme which starts the song is played around the 7th fret – sequencing passages from the B harmonic minor scale

before adding in a Dorian major 6th flavour played on the 9th fret of the B string, which then gets bent up half a step into a minor 7th and released. For the verses, Bellamy leaves most of the heavy lifting to the bass, save for a few pitch-shifted triads which ring out before the full-chord strums of the chorus. Each section involves its own unique approach, which is precisely what makes it such an effortlessly dynamic track. A masterpiece!



03 HYSTERIA ABSOLUTION (2003)

A contender for the best song called *Hysteria* ever written, this is probably the Muse song your bassist most wants to cover. *Absolution* was the album that lifted Muse to arena level, and *Hysteria* was the song that got musicians talking. Naturally, it's Chris Wolstenholme's gargantuan bass riff that gets a lot of the attention, but there's no shortage of guitar excitement. Bellamy's whammy bar nudges enhance the chorus powerchords, and the

sequence of octaves and bends he plays over the main riff is almost as iconic as the bass riff itself. The most fun part is the monstrous variation on the main riff that comes after the second and third choruses, where guitar and bass sync up to make one giant tone. The solo is comprised of two parts – the first where notes are double picked on the higher strings up around the 14th fret and the final part which consists of C, G, Dm and Am triads ringing out from the same area high up the neck.

02 KNIGHTS OF CYDONIA BLACK HOLES AND REVELATIONS (2006)

Like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Knights of Cydonia* is an epic whose defining guitar riff doesn't arrive until near the end of the track. Also like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, it's guaranteed to have all occupants of any vehicle headbanging in unison when it kicks in. The spaghetti western guitar tones at the beginning recall the surf guitar greats, with a ton of Fender-style reverb and tremolo, and the tremolo-picked descending slide at 0:47 is pure *Misirlou*. But there's

actually less pedal trickery than you might imagine. The frantic vibrato on the riff that arrives moments later, for example, is created simply by waggling the hell out of a whammy bar with the picking hand while using hammer-ons to fret notes on the A string. If you don't have any guitars fitted with a tremolo arm, you could always use a dedicated vibrato pedal like the BOSS VB-2W or TC Electronic Shaker – or even check to see if any of your vibe or chorus pedals have a vibrato

01 CITIZEN ERASED ORIGIN OF SYMMETRY (2001)

TG readers's favourite Muse song, *Citizen Erased* was also for many years the band's longest track, and is also one of the rare instances where Matt has used a seven-string – which, as he explains in this month's cover story, ended up being his very first Manson instrument. "On *Citizen Erased*, Dom came in one day with this funky James Brown beat and Chris just started playing along," Matt revealed at the time of release. "I then applied a chord

structure that I already had and it suddenly became a full-on metal track out of nowhere. Because it was so heavy for so long we decided to add another song on to the end of it." The opening riff is played using the open seventh string – tuned to A – and artificial harmonics on the higher A-string. If you don't have a seven-string, you can tune your sixth string to A, though remember there will be less tension and overall resonance than with the thicker gauges used on extended range instruments.





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REVELATIONS

It's time to plug in and take a close look at Matt Bellamy's supermassive shred techniques

A

s one of the most forward-thinking and progressive guitarists on the planet, it's safe to say there's plenty to learn from Matt Bellamy – and we're covering a fair amount

of ground here with a set of lessons breaking down his style for you. We're looking at Matt's classical-tinged chord progressions, his riffing style and blues approaches, plus we explain some of his shred techniques, too.

Probably the most important element to be aware of is his timing. Matt's a tight player, and, whereas funk and blues guitarists tend to

have a looser style, pushing notes early or laying back and behind the beat, Bellamy typically plays somewhat metronomically. Bear this in mind as you work through our tab examples. Keep your timing tight and try to lock in with the drums when you jam along to our backing tracks. This is the secret that'll get you closer to that trademark Muse feel.

1 PEDAL RIFF

[BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO](https://bit.ly/tg362audio)

♩=120
Em

Play 4 times

TAB

0 10 12 0 8 0 7 8 0 5 0 3 5 0 2 3 0 10 12 0 8 0 7 8 0 12 0 14 0 15 0 17

cont. sim.

We begin by demonstrating Matt's pedal tone riff-writing style, taking our inspiration from two of Muse's biggest hits, *Stockholm Syndrome* and *Supermassive Black Hole*. The scale tones are all placed along the sixth string with the open string serving as a repeating E 'pedal note'.

2 SHUFFLE FEEL

[BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO](https://bit.ly/tg362audio)

♩=120
Em

Play 4 times

TAB

0 0 5 6 7 0 0 5 6 7 0 0 3 4 5 0 0 0 0 5 6 7 0 0 5 0 7 0 9 11 12 12/16 0 0 5 6 7 0 0 5 0 7 0 9 10 10/14

Though perhaps not always obvious, blues is a key part of the Muse sound. Check out songs like *Uprising*, *Drones* and recent release *Will Of The People* and you'll hear a blues shuffle groove driving things along. Octave shapes and sixth-string riffing are typical Bellamy fare, paired with tight timing and a distorted, high gain tone.

HYPER MUSE-PICK

Tremolo picking is all about keeping your picking hand steady at supermassive speeds, so...



1 Hold your pick close to the tip to prevent the dreaded 'flappy pick syndrome'.



2 Rest against the bridge to help keep your picking hand steady.



3 Get points 1 and 2 nailed so your pick doesn't snag between strings!



3 TREMOLO PICKING

[BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO](https://bit.ly/tg362audio)

♩=110

Gm B^b A A^b

TAB

12 14 15 19 18 17

10 12 13 17 16 15

Gm B^b A A^b

Play 4 times

TAB

12 14 15 10 9 10

10 12 13 8 7 8

This technique features on *Time Is Running Out*, *The Gallery* and various others, and it's a great way to rev up any simple melody. Here in our example, the constant rapid-fire tremolo picking and high-gain humbucker tone turn an otherwise basic line into an incendiary lick. Keep your picking movements small and tight, with the motion coming mainly from your wrist.

4 SEQUENCED SCALES

[BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO](https://bit.ly/tg362audio)

♩=130

Em B/D[#]

Play 4 times

TAB

7 9 10 9 10 7 10 7 9 7 9 10 9 10 8 9 11 9 8 10 9 8 10 9 8 10 9 7 10 7 9

cont. sim.

The classical-inspired technique we're looking at here is reminiscent of Bach's *Tocatta And Fugue*, and you can hear it Muse's *Plug In Baby* and *Animals*. Sequencing in this context means playing through a scale a few notes at a time. Our lick begins with a sequence of ascending three-note runs through the E harmonic minor scale (E F# G A B C D#) before finishing with a sequence of descending four-note runs.



5 ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=130
Am

1

3

Play 4 times

Matt uses arpeggios to create classical-style lead guitar lines. The arpeggio notes are the same as the notes in the chords; so, for the Am chord the notes are A, C and E, and for G# chord the notes are G#, B# and D. We're just moving up and down the arpeggios to create an interesting melody.



6 ASCENDING CHORD PROGRESSIONS

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=140

C A/C# Dm B/D# Em

1

5

Play 4 times

Here we're getting to the heart of Muse-style chord progressions with an ascending sequence similar to *Space Dementia*. Our example is structured around standard major and minor chords, with 'outside the key' slash chords connecting it all together in a chromatic bassline. When played ascending, this gives momentum that's perfect for an epic bridge or an exciting outro.

7 DOUBLE PICKING

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=90
Am

1

2

Play 4 times

Taking our inspiration from Matt's solo in *Hysteria*, the idea here is to pick each note twice, first with a downstroke, then an upstroke, to create a driving, melodic riff. Rather than picking down and up parallel to the strings, try moving your pick inward and outward so your upstrokes are clear of the strings. This will make string changes cleaner and string skips much easier.

Matt Bellamy's shortcut to shred...



PLAY LIKE MUZE

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

One of Matt's shreddiest techniques is his Van Halen-inspired tapping method which you can hear in *Reapers* and the solo in *Invincible*. For our example, use your second finger to tap and pull off from the 12th fret while resting the side of your palm on the other strings to keep them muted. Use the first and fourth fingers of your fretting hand to spell out the other notes.

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Another Bellamy chord progression trick here that'll give you an epic Muse vibe. In a minor key the V chord should technically be minor. For example, in E minor (E F# G A B C D) the V chord is Bm (B-D-F#). Change one note and make it a B major (B-D#-F#) and you get classical-tinged chord changes of *New Born*. Our example takes you through the 'in key' chords of Em, Am and G before hitting the all-important B major V chord.

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Another of Matt's shreddier techniques, this legato line can be played with no picking at all once the first note has been sounded – just use pull-offs to the open D string for a smooth, uninterrupted stream of notes. The open D string here acts as a root note and the ascending notes are from the D harmonic minor scale (D E F G A B, C#).

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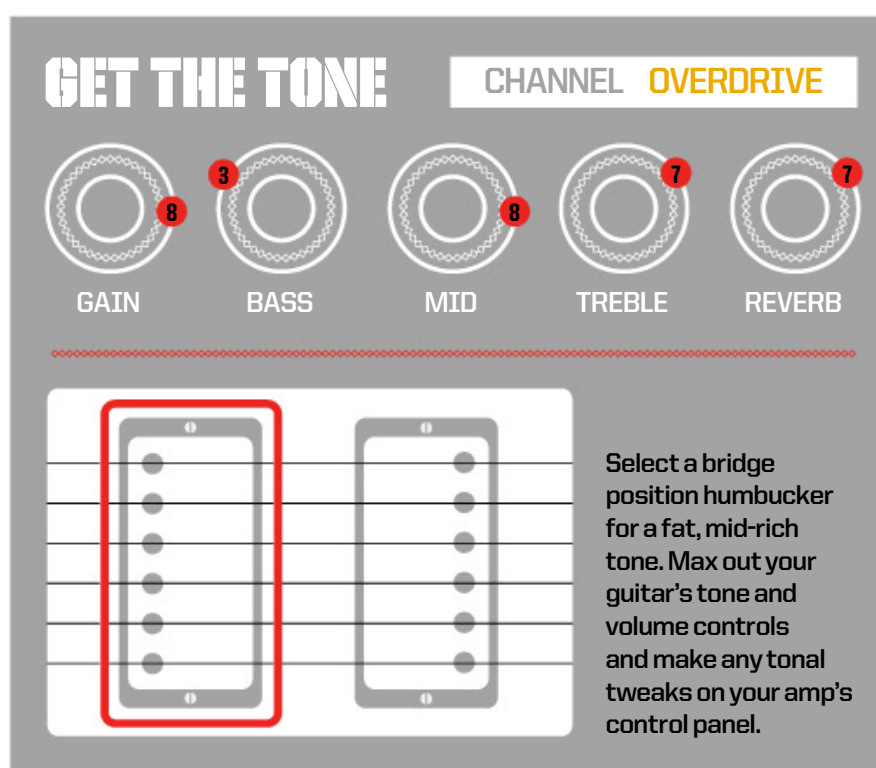
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line from BÖC's third studio
album, *Agents Of Fortune*

Back in 1975, while writing and recording their third studio album, *Agents Of Fortune*, Blue Öyster Cult couldn't possibly imagine they would be penning one of rock's all-time greatest riffs, but that's exactly what happened with *(Don't Fear) The Reaper*. The track spent 20 weeks on the US Hot 100 breaking the UK Top 20 two years later.

The track's iconic guitar line was played, unexpectedly, on a Gibson ES-175 (generally considered to be a jazz guitar) through guitarist Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser's Music Man 410 combo. It's a tone the band never really attempt to recreate though, so there's a different vibe to live performances – Dharma has favoured Gibson SG and Steinberger M series guitars over the years.

SOUND ADVICE

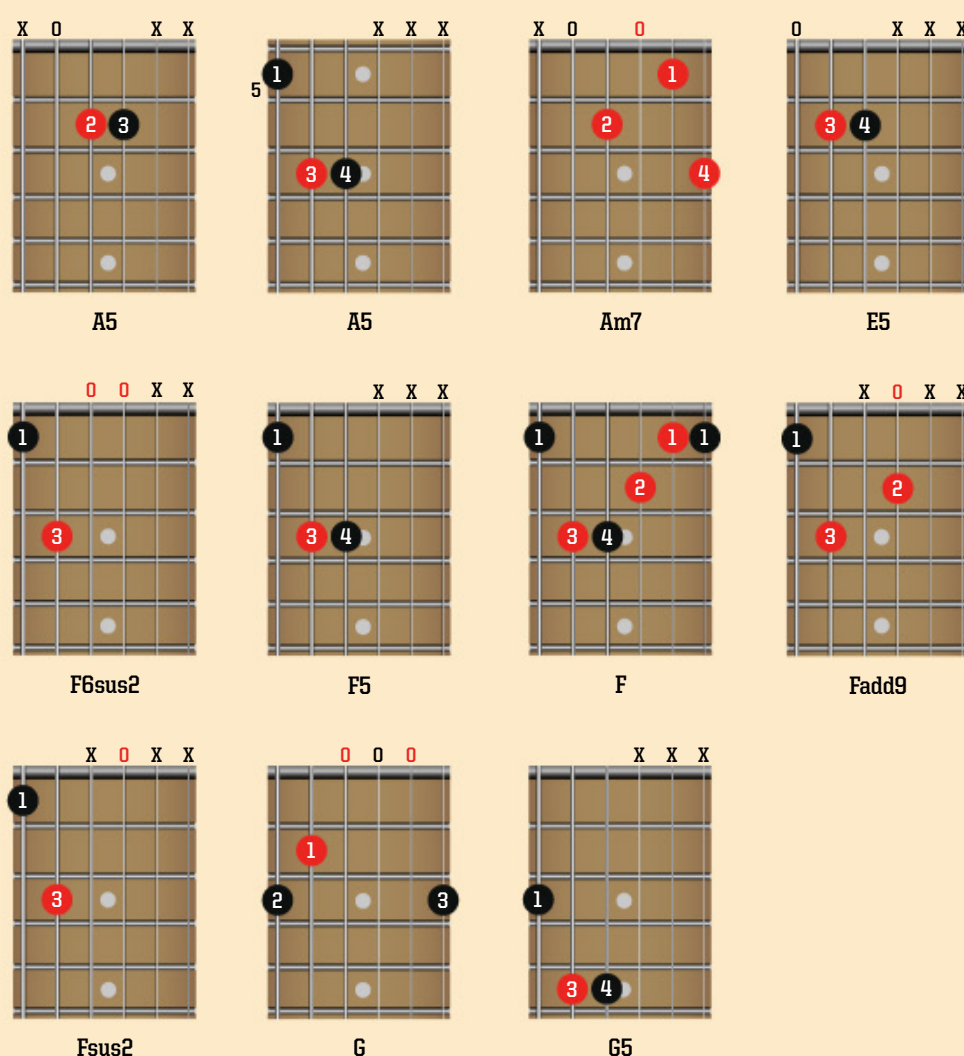
Everything you need to know before playing '(Don't Fear) The Reaper'



All the guitar parts feature a bridge position humbucker pickup with varying degrees of overdrive. For the main riff, aim for a very mild overdrive tone, almost clean, in fact. You can use a compressor pedal to help the notes ring out (although this is optional). For the lead work, turn up the gain, perhaps adding some distortion from a pedal if your amp doesn't have enough drive. Aim for a tone with plenty of midrange and not too much bass. The feedback at the end of the solo is helped along with a delay effect set to repeat on the beat with a high feedback (the number of repeats). All the guitar parts have plenty of reverb.

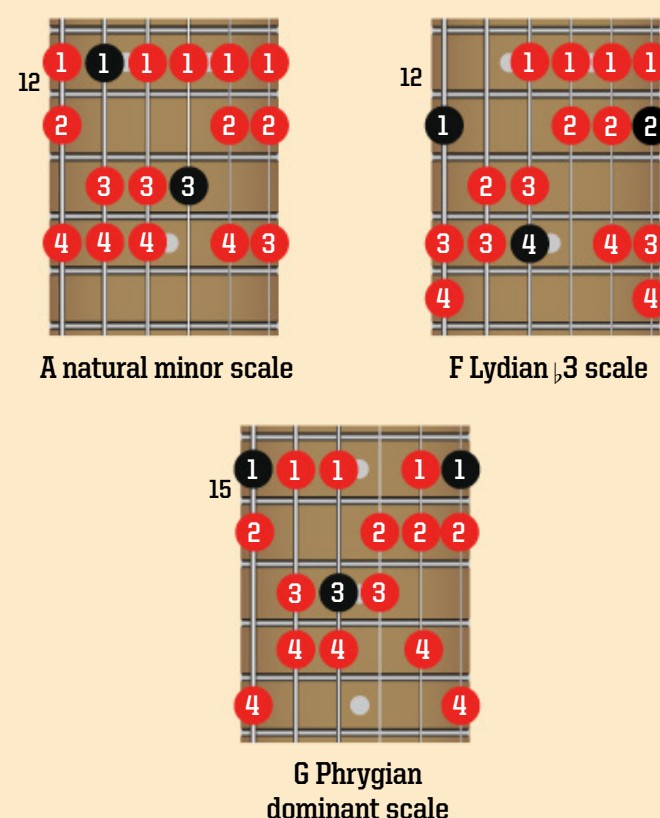
CHORDS

With the exception of the sustained Am7 chord at the end of solos 1 and 2, a rhythm guitarist could cover most of the song using simple three-note powerchords rooted on the sixth string, namely: A5, G5, F5 and E5. The main riff is based on the Am7, G and F6sus2 chords. There are a couple of variations (Fadd9 and Fsus2), but they are close relations of the F6sus2 and the fingerings are almost identical. The Dm and G7 chords in the breakdown and solo 3 are implied by a repeating riff, so they are never actually played.



SCALES

Solos 1 and 2 feature the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G). The track is in the key of A minor, so no surprises there. Solo 3 is more interesting, harmonically speaking. Guitarist Buck Dharma plays the F Lydian $\flat$ 3 scale (F G A $\flat$ B C D E) over the F minor chords and the G Phrygian dominant scale (G A $\flat$ B C D E $\flat$ F) over the G7 chords. F Lydian $\flat$ 3 is the fourth mode of the C harmonic major scale. G Phrygian dominant is the fifth mode of the C harmonic minor scale. The theory is deep but you can still get a lot from practising the scale patterns shown here and improvising over solo 3.



BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

(DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER

FULL
TAB

[DON'T FEAR] THE REAPER

Music & Lyrics by Donald Roeser
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BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Intro / main riff

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

♩=142

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Play 4 times

let ring throughout

TAB

0 2 2 0 3 2 0 0 1 3 0 0 3 2 0 0

□ □ □ V □ □ □ V □ □ □ V □ □ □ V

The open third-string G note, in particular, should ring out clearly here, so fret right on your fingertips so that you don't accidentally mute out any vital ringing notes. We've added picking directions below the tab but you can use alternate picking if you prefer. This riff is repeated throughout the verses, so be ready to come back to it!

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Pre-chorus

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

F⁵ G⁵ A⁵ F⁵ E⁵

0:27 PM throughout

TAB

3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2

3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2

1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 0

□ □

cont. sim.

Pre-Chorus 2+3 only

A⁵ G⁵ F⁵ G⁵ A⁵ G⁵ Play 3 times

TAB

7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5

5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3

4

You can fret these powerchords with just your first and third fingers. Alternatively, use your first, third and fourth fingers. Either fingering is fine. Use downstrokes throughout the section with a touch of light palm muting. Keep your fingers close to the fretboard for faster chord changes.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Chorus

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Fadd⁹ G Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Play 3 times

0:34 1 let ring throughout

TAB

2 0 0 0 2 2 0 0 3 0 0 0 3 2 0 0

1 3 3 2 0 0 0 0 1 3 0 0 3 2 0 0

This is essentially a repeat of the intro/main riff but starting as if in the second bar and with a slight variation to the F arpeggio. Bars 2 and 3 are exactly the same as the main riff and the same picking guidelines apply.



FULL TRACK + BACKING (BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO)
This song comes with a full demo track and backing track.
Enter the above link into your web browser of choice;
press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT / (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 1

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G

0:46

15 13 12 13 12 BU 15(17) 15 13 12 12 14 14

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G

12 14 12 13 12 14 15 BU BD 15(17) (15) 13 12 12 14 14

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Am⁷ G⁵ F⁶sus² G Am⁷

BU RP BD w/feedback + 8va 3 1 0 2 0

14 12 (13) 12 (13)(12) 14 12 14 14

This solo breaks up neatly into three four-bar lines, so master each one slowly before moving onto the next. All three lines are based in 12th position so use your first finger for all the 12th fret notes. The frets are close enough together that you may find it easier to place your third finger (instead of your fourth) at the 15th fret.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Verse 2 lead lick

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G F⁵ G⁵

1:33

14 12 [12] 14 5 5 7 5 7 7 8

This short lick uses syncopated rhythms (accenting the offbeats), so take your time to establish where the offbeat and onbeat notes are. Use your third finger for the initial doublestop then switch to your first finger at the 5th fret at the end of bar 1.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 2

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Am⁷ G F⁶sus² G Am⁷ G

2:06

12 BU BD 12 12 [12] (13) (12) 14 12 12 [12] (13) (12) 14

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 2 (cont'd)

BIT.LV/TG362AUDIO

Break this solo down into three licks: bar 1, bars 5 to 6, and bars 9 to 10. Aim for a smooth, fluid sound with accurate string bends and steady, even vibrato. All the bends are equal to a semitone (one fret) so be careful not to over-bend. Practise by fretting the note you are bending up to first.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Breakdown

BIT.LV/TG362AUDIO

There are two arpeggios here. Each is a three-note line that is repeated. The first arpeggio (Fm) is played five times and the second (G7) is played six times. Count the pulse carefully because these groups of three eighth notes don't fit evenly in each bar. This means that each repeat of the arpeggios is displaced, rhythmically.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 3 (rhythm)

BIT.LV/TG362AUDIO

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 3 (rhythm, cont'd)

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

4.

F⁵

G⁵

TAB

6 5

3 3 1

5 5 3

You can pick this riff in two ways: you can use firm downstrokes throughout for a driving feel; or you can play downstrokes on onbeat notes and upstrokes on the offbeats. The latter approach is a good way to sync your picking with the pulse of this tricky rhythm.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 3 (lead)

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

8^{va}

Fm

2:43

3

15 15 13 15 15

15

1/4

BU

BD

(15) 13 15 13 12 13 15 15

TAB

1

G⁷

(8^{va})

15

15 16 15 13 16

TAB

3

Fm

(8^{va})

15

BU (16) BD (15) [15] 19 19

RP

19 19 BU (20) RP (20) (20) (20)

TAB

5

G⁷

(8^{va})

15 15 15 15 16 15

15 15 16 15 13 15 13 15 12

TAB

7

Fm
(8va)

TAB 9

G7
(8va)

TAB 11

Fm

TAB 13

G7

TAB 15

F5

TAB 17

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Solo 3 (lead, cont'd)

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Sheet music for Solo 3 (lead, cont'd) for guitar. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a tablature staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 19. The notation includes a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 19.

The timing in this solo is loose and often played against the beat. If you want to reproduce it faithfully, break it up into manageable two-bar or four-bar chunks and master each phrase in turn. Given the loose style you may prefer to improvise your own ideas with the scale patterns shown on page 65.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Last chorus / outro

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Sheet music for the Last chorus / outro for guitar. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a tablature staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 4:07. The notation includes a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 4:07.

This is a simplified version of the intro/main riff, but the main points are the same. Keep your fingers out of the way of the third string so that it rings out against the fretted notes. Picking-wise, play either 'down, down, up', 'down, down, down' or 'down, up, down'.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER Outro (lead)

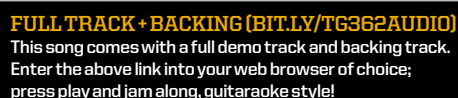
BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

Sheet music for the Outro (lead) for guitar. The notation includes a treble clef staff and a tablature staff. The treble staff shows a melodic line with a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 4:24. The notation includes a wavy line indicating a bend or vibrato. The tablature staff shows fret numbers and string numbers (T, A, B). The key signature is one flat (Bb). The tempo is 4:24.

This is a simple lick played on the first, second and third strings. It's essentially the same as the opening lick from solo 2. Again, focus on accurate string bending from B to C on the second string. The original track fades out after a few repeats of this lick.

A full-page photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and shiny silver pants, singing passionately into a microphone while playing a black and white acoustic guitar. She is on a stage with green lighting.

TOTAL GUITAR SEPTEMBER 2022



71

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

5

8

1

† 4-string voicings of Bm are acceptable throughout

13

15

17

G G/F# Em⁷ A

19

Bm Bm⁷/A G A To Coda ⊕

21

D Dsus² Dsus⁴ Dsus²

23

D Bm⁷ G

26

Em A D. al Coda ⊕

⊕ Coda

D

Rockschool's arrangement includes basic open-string chord shapes with substituted notes (e.g., Dsus2 and Dsus4 in bars 2 and 3) as well as slash chords (e.g., Bm⁷/A in bar 19). It can be easy to confuse them, so take extra care here and ensure all parts ring clearly. Technically, the main challenge is to play the rhythms accurately and keep your strumming attack consistent and controlled. Follow the picking directions under the tab for guidance.



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PHARRELL WILLIAMS HAPPY

This guitar-less global smash hit makes for a great strum-along and even includes the dark art of 'borrowed chords'...

Neo-soul pop hit *Happy* was released from the soundtrack to the film *Despicable Me 2* in 2013, and went on to become the most commercially successful single worldwide the following year with nearly 14 million sales/streams. The upbeat soul/Motown groove lends itself really well to acoustic guitar, even though the original track has quite sparse production and, in fact, no guitar whatsoever.

We've tabbed out a riff for you based on the first bass guitar line

in the verse, using diads within an F minor pentatonic/Dorian framework.

Harmonically, the real magic happens in the chorus, where 'borrowed chords' are used. This means using chords from two parallel keys – in this case F major and F minor. The D_b and C_m chords are 'borrowed' from F minor, before returning to an F major root for the final chord (although we've made it an F7 – just because it sounds great!). There's a bluesy vibe, so we'd encourage you to experiment with your own minor pentatonic ideas too.



CHORDS

Happy is a relatively simple strum-along, but be aware of the rhythmic 'pushes' during the chorus – the C_m7 and F7 chords land on the last eighth note of the bar, played as

upstrokes (so should sound like they are 'pushing' into the next bar). Also shown here are the F minor pentatonic and Dorian scales, which you can use as a basis for the riffs in the verse.

Diagram 1: F7 (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 2; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 2: D_bmaj7 (Fret 4, strings 1-4: 1, 2, 3, 4; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 3: C_m7 (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 2; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 4: C_m11 (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 5: A_b (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 6: B_b (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 7: C (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 8: F minor pentatonic scale (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

Diagram 9: F Dorian mode (Fret 1, strings 1-4: 1, 1, 1, 1; strings 5-6: X, X)

HAPPY

Words and Music by Pharrell Williams
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BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

Happy

Intro

F7 / / / / N.C. / /

Verse 1

N.C.

It might seem crazy

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

What I'm about to say

F7

Sunshine she's here

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

You can take a break

F7

I'm a hot air balloon

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

That could go to space

F7

With the air like I don't care

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

Baby by the way

Chorus

D $\flat$ maj7

Because I'm happy

Cm7

Clap along if you feel

Cm11

F7

Like a room without a roof

D $\flat$ maj7

Because I'm happy

Cm7

Clap along if you feel

Cm11

F7

Like happiness is the truth

D $\flat$ maj7

Because I'm happy

Cm7

Clap along if you know

Cm11

F7

What happiness is to you

D $\flat$ maj7

Because I'm happy

Cm7

Clap along if you feel

Cm11

F7

Like that's what you wanna do

Verse 2

F7

Here come bad news

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

Talking this and that

F7

Give me all you got

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

Don't hold it back

F7

Well I should probably warn you

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

I'll be just fine

F7

No offense to you

Don't waste your time

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$

Here's why!

Repeat chorus

Bridge

N.C.

(Happy), bring me down, can't nothin'

(Happy), bring me down, love is too high

(Happy), bring me down, can't nothin'

(Happy), bring me down I said

Repeat bridge

Repeat chorus x2

Repeat bridge

Repeat chorus x2

PHARRELL WILLIAMS HAPPY Intro / verse riff

BIT.LY/TG362AUDIO

$\text{♩} = 160$

F7

F A $\flat$ B $\flat$ C B $\flat$ A $\flat$

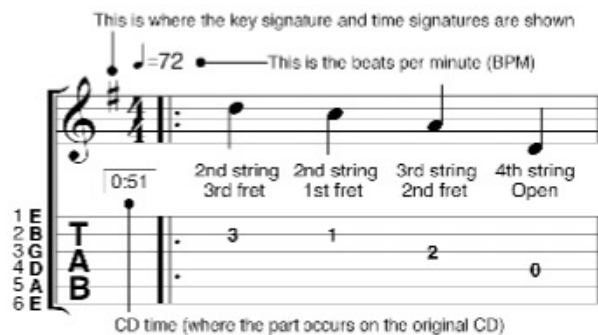
Play 4 times

This riff would sound equally as good if you took away the top note from the doublestop chords and simply played this as a single-note line. If you wanted to take this further, some light, muted strums during the two bars of rests would sound great too.

TAB GUIDE

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

What is tab?



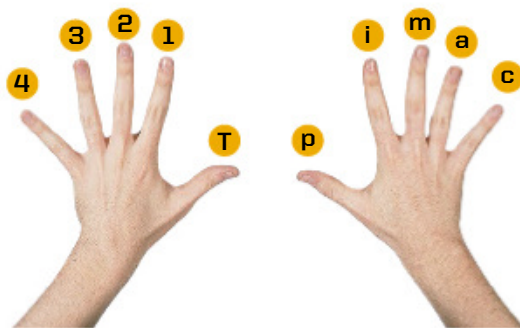
Tab is short for tablature, a notational system used to give detailed information as to where notes should be played on the fretboard. Tab appears underneath conventional music notation as six horizontal lines that represent the strings of the

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.

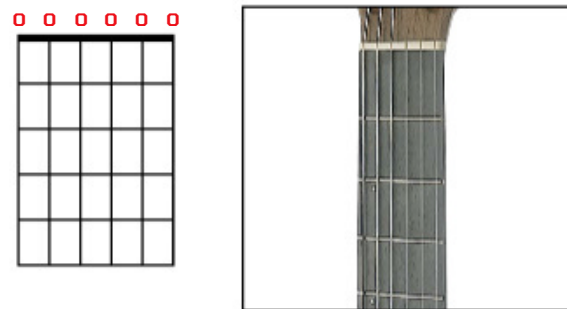
FRET BOXES: CHORDS, SCALES AND CAPO NOTATION

HAND LABELLING



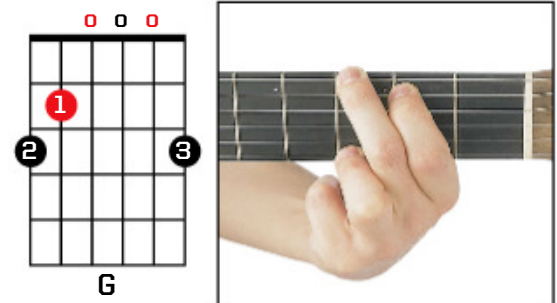
Here are the abbreviations used for each finger. Fretting hand: **1, 2, 3, 4, (T)**
Picking hand: **p (thumb), i (index), m (middle), a (annular), c (little finger)**

NUT AND FRETBOARD



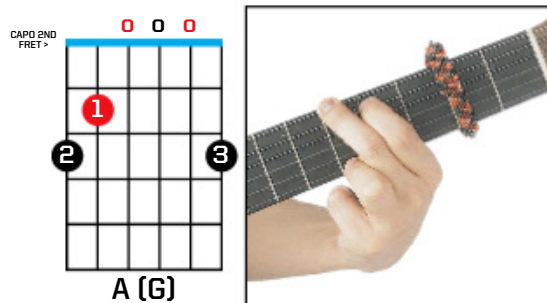
This fretbox diagram represents the guitar's fretboard exactly, as seen in the photo. This design is used for ease of visualising a fretboard scale or chord quickly.

CHORD EXAMPLE



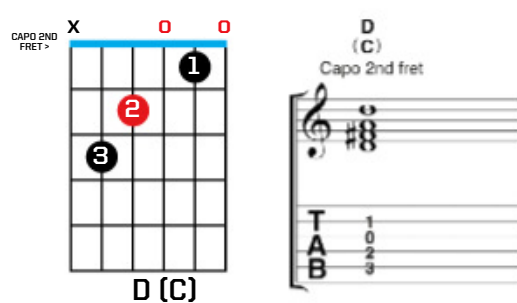
This diagram represents a G chord. The 'o's are open strings, and a circled number is a fretting hand finger. A black 'o' or circled number is the root note (here, G).

CAPO EXAMPLE



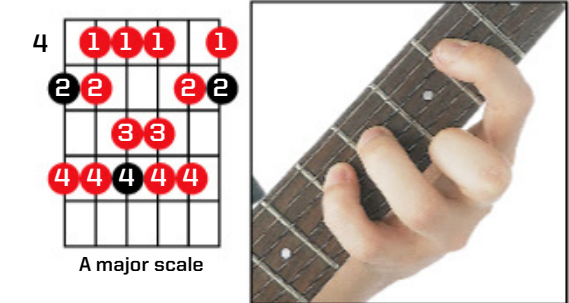
The blue line in the diagram represents a capo - for this A chord, place it at the 2nd fret. Capos change the fret number ordering. Here, the original 5th fret now becomes the 3rd fret, 7th fret now 5th fret, etc.

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



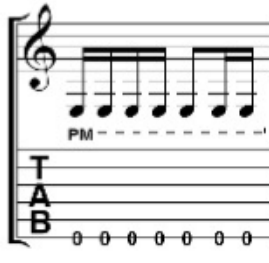
The symbols under the tab tell you the first note is to be down-picked and the second note is to be up-picked.

TREMOLO PICKING



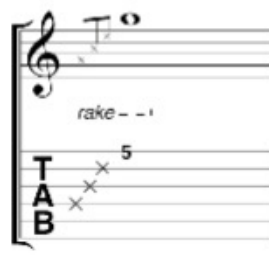
Each of the four notes are to be alternate-picked (down and up-picked) very rapidly and continuously.

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



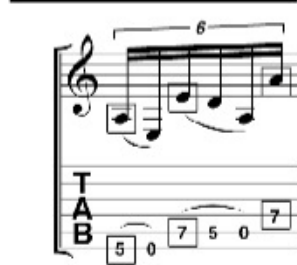
After picking the first note, rapidly alternate between the two notes shown in brackets using hammer-ons and pull-offs.

SLIDES (GLISSANDO)



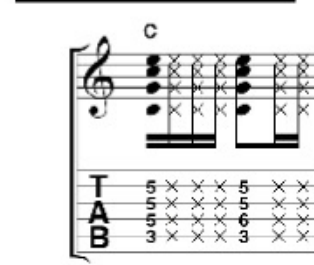
Pick the first note and then slide to the next. For the last two notes pick the first, slide to the next and then re-pick it (RP).

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.

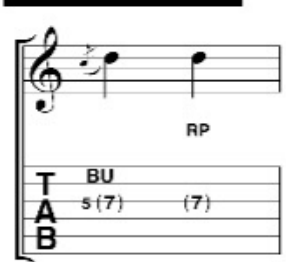
BENDING AND VIBRATO

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



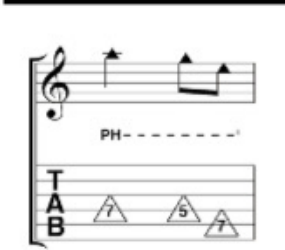
Pick the note while lightly touching the string directly over the fret indicated. A chiming harmonic results.

ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS



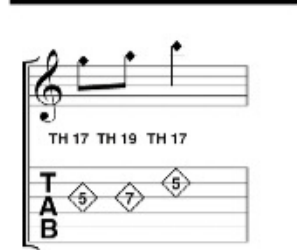
Fret the note as shown, then lightly place your index finger directly over 'x' fret (AH'x') and pick (with a pick, p or a).

PINCHED HARMONICS



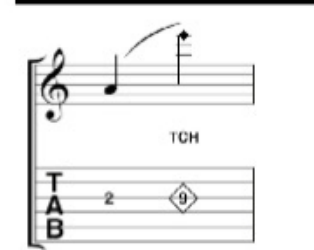
After fretting the note in the triangle, dig into the string with the side of your thumb as you sound it with the pick.

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.

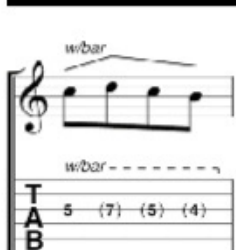
TOUCHED HARMONICS



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

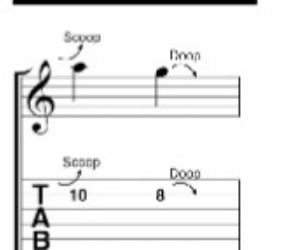
VIBRATO BAR / WHAMMY BAR

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!

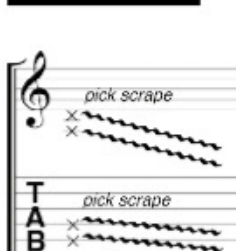
WHAMMY BAR VIBRATO



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

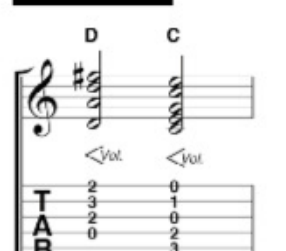
OTHERS

PICK SCRAPE



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

VIOLINING



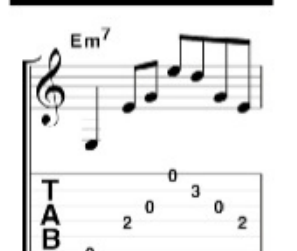
Turn the volume control down, sound the note(s) and then turn the volume up for a smooth fade in.

FINGER NUMBERING



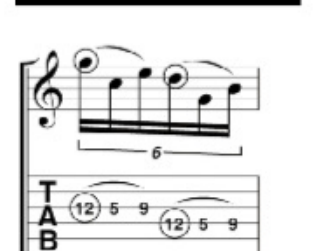
The numbers in the traditional notation refer to the fingers required to play each note.

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 bullsh*t-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 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out



PLATINUM AWARD

Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



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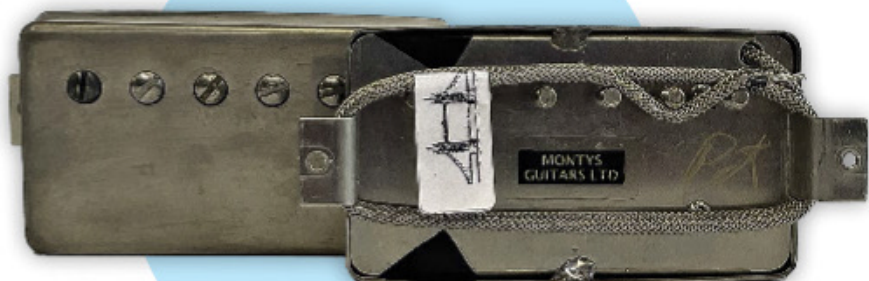
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START ME UP!

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

FENDER SQUIER 40TH ANNIVERSARY VINTAGE SERIES

1 We've already had one half of the anniversary celebration with the Gold Editions, this time its satin finishes and aged chrome hardware. A subtle but played-in look that may hit the sweet spot for many on look and price. Sound-wise these are standard Fender-designed pickups across the Tele, Strat and Jazzmaster with poplar body for the latter and nyatoh for the former. All have 9.5" radius maple fretboards, narrow-tall frets and C-shaped necks. **£499** www.fender.com

OLD BLOOD NOISE ENDEAVOURS FLOAT

2 You thought filter pedals were boring? You haven't heard this in action then! A Dual Moving Filter, its pair of independent filters are capable of stereo effect sounds, with the Cutoff Frequency able to be set can be set to move via six different LFO shapes or through dynamic Envelope triggering. Things can get very sci-fi as a result, or subtle too, with everything from quack, squelch, bubble, to phaser, tremolo and synthy sweep. **£299** www.oldbloodnoise.com

MONTY'S GUITARS UNDERSpun PAF HUMBUCKER

3 Monty's PAF humbuckers are already high on the list of the world's best options when it comes to recreations of the finest Gibson originals, and this new flavour acknowledges not all of them were created equally when it came to winds. Lower than average examples can have 'increase clarity, sparkle and depth, with a less aggressive, sweeter midrange', according to Monty's. Think fat single-coil from these 6.8k (bridge) and 6.1k (neck, approx) humbuckers. **From £142.99** www.montysguitars.com

SOUNDLAD LIVERPOOL HUNGRY BEAVER

4 We've taken a look at Marc Dunn's Scran pedal in reviews this issue and this is his other design. The cheeky name nods to EHX inspiration but the Hungry Beaver actually combines over 30db of boost with its wild fuzzy thrills. You need to spend time experimenting with the controls to understand the dynamic relationships and frequency range before you can unlock its feast of versatility, but once you do there's plenty to get your teeth into here. **£99** www.soundladliverpool.co.uk

DUNLOP HEAVY CORE KORN GUITAR STRINGS

5 A seven-string salute to extended range pioneers James 'Munky' Shaffer and Brian 'Head' Welch, the Korn duo used their experience of playing over two decades of down-tuned metal to help create a set to utilise Heavy Core's 'dynamic range, optimal tension when drop-tuned, and incredible tuning stability'. The set consists of .010, .013, .017, .028, .038, .048 and .065 strings and joins a new Jim Root signature set in the Dunlop line. **\$24** www.jimdunlop.com



GUILD SURFLINER

£395

Old, new, borrowed and, er, orange. Let's introduce the Surfliner!

The past couple of years has seen quite a few changes for Guild's Newark Street Collection of electrics. The main one is price with guitars like the Starfire I thinlines and the chambered Aristocrat HH and P90 dropping into the mid £450–700 area and resulting in an upturn in sales. While those guitars still plunder Guild's past, a surprise new entry earlier in 2022 is this Indonesian-made Surfliner, a bolt-on offset that can't quite decide if it's retro or modern. One thing is for sure, at under £400 it's the most affordable Guild electric.

The Surfliner is also completely unique to the Guild range in that it's an original design and, for the most part, a pretty good one at that. Based around a Fender-style 25.5 inch scale length the Surfliner

strings anchor through the body – a set-up more usually seen on more progressive, modern guitars; likewise the HSS pickup configuration that's more 80s than 60s. That said the LB-1 mini-humbucker at bridge *does* date back to the 60s, while the more generic-style Aerosonic single coils have no historic reference aside from the DeArmond brand name.

While you'd expect an HSS guitar like this to use a regular five-way lever pickup selector switch, Guild again takes a sideways turn by fitting three on/off 'rocker' switches – the sort of thing you'll see on numerous electrical devices rather than the slide switches you'll see on a Jaguar or Jagstang. Thankfully, there's just a regular master volume and tone, the output

A DIZZYING MIX OF STYLES THAT COMES TOGETHER WELL

sports a lightweight poplar body; our sample is a four-piece spread and you can see some light grain through the transparent Sunset Orange gloss finish, one of three currently offered.

We've seen the distinctive, back-angled headstock on guitars like the Jetstar and Starfire I Jet 90 but not the logo which Guild tell us is based on a font used back in the 80s. The bright white truss rod cover looks rather generic and, yes, if you've counted the maple fingerboard, it has 23 frets instead of the much more normal 22 or 24.

This off-kilter design style continues with the hardware and pickup array. For example, bearing in mind Guild's heritage, we get a tune-o-matic bridge but the

jack being on the guitar's face which means a right-angled jack lead is recommended.

However, this dizzying mixture of styles actually all comes together in terms of feel and sound rather well. That poplar body ensures a light weight of approximately 6.7lbs and hangs very well on a strap. Guild spec the neck profile as a 'C' but the quite full shoulders give it a bit more meat, the fingerboard radius is 10" – like a PRS – and the frets, although quoted as 'narrow jumbo', aren't particularly tall: we'd call 'em medium jumbo – the sort of size you'll find on a PRS SE. Comparing the Surfliner with a new PRS SE Silver Sky, which shares the same body wood, but a price that's nearly double, ➡

1 BRIDGE

Stick 'surf' into a guitar's name and you immediately think of vibrato and twang, don't you? Well, you don't get that here, just a generic tune-o-matic-style bridge and through-body stringing. In fact the name comes from the Pacific Surfliner train service on the California coast.

2 PICKUPS

The three pickups here are made by Booheung Precision Co Ltd in Korea. The LB-1 humbucker uses an Alnico V magnet with a relatively low output. The Aerosonics' flush rod magnets are also Alnico V plus they have partial covers which provide some shielding. While the LB-1 is hum-cancelling, so are the neck and middle pickups and all three together when combined.

3 SWITCHING

There are some advantages to the three on/off rocker switches. Firstly, you can switch on and combine the neck and bridge pickups for a wider-sounding, more Telecaster-like mix. Then you can voice all three together for seven sounds.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Poplar

NECK: Maple, 'C' profile, bolt-on

SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)

FINGERBOARD: Maple/10" radius

FRETS: 23, narrow jumbo

PICKUPS: Guild LB-1 humbucker (bridge), 2x DeArmond Aerosonic single coils (middle/neck)

CONTROLS: Master volume, tone, three on/off pickup selector 'rocker' switches

HARDWARE: Tune-o-matic-style bridge, thru-body stringing, vintage-style tuners – chrome/nickel-plated

FINISH: Sunset Orange (as reviewed), Catalina Blue, White Sage

CONTACT: Selectron (UK) Ltd
www.guildguitars.com





Badge Of Honour

A classic USA heritage brand that never quite scaled the heights of Gibson

Guild didn't enter the solidbody market until the early 60s, and despite a heritage in jazz-style hollowbodies that had been produced during the previous decade, the Thunderbird S-200 was an odd looker with a built in stand! A slightly more conventional Polara S-100 laid the foundations for Guild's best-known model that appeared from the early-70s and later found fame with Soundgarden's Kim Thayil.

Today, the Guild and DeArmond brands are owned by the Córdoba Music Group. The Newark Street Collection sits alongside an extensive range of acoustics and also includes many repros of past Guild glories like the Starfire range of Gibson ES-335-style thinlines.



the only thing letting our sample down was a little set-up work and a final fret polish. If you can't do that yourselves we'd recommend you get it done because this is a really vibey sounding guitar.

The LB-1 at bridge sits nicely between a Fender single coil and wider-sounding PAF-style humbucker, there's bright attack but a little more oomph than a standard single coil. It sits really

well in terms of output and balance with those Aerosonic single coils which are crisp with a slightly trimmed low-end but work really well for garage rock, trashier tones not least with a dollop of fuzz. This is about as far from a modern HSS 'rock' guitar as you can get. It's like a 60s Fender with a bit of attitude and, had it been conceived in time, might well have become a grunge-rock staple.

The problem lies with those on/off switches which are nowhere near as fast in use as an industry standard five-way selector switch. That said, not everyone wants to swiftly change from neck and middle to bridge. But be warned: you can also mute the entire guitar, never something you want in the heat of battle.

Dave Burrhuck

THE SURFLINER IS ABOUT AS FAR FROM A MODERN HSS 'ROCK' GUITAR AS YOU CAN GET

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

ALSO TRY...

HARLEY BENTON MR-MODERN

£295

This reverse-body offset apes the classic style of Mosrite guitars and boasts a pucker Wilkinson VS-50 II vibrato and a pair of hum-cancelling Artec AHC-90 soapbars which can be split to single coil.



SQUIER CONTEMPORARY JAGUAR HH ST

£419

Squier doesn't make a HSS hard-tail offset but this Jag swaps out its single coils for a pair of Squier SQR Atomic humbuckers with coil-split a option.



RAPIER 33

£479

Designed by Alan Entwistle and based on the sixties Brit classic, the Watkins Rapier, this new guitar has a very retro vibe and is powered by three Entwistle low-noise EWR64 mini-humbuckers.





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Words David Hands Photography Phil Barker

UNIVERSAL AUDIO UAFX AMP PEDALS

The plugin giant turns its attention to squeezing classic amps into pedal form



In 2021, Universal Audio entered the pedal market, and they did it in style. The UAFX Golden Reverberator, Starlight Echo Station delay and Astra Modulation Machine were premium stompboxes with premium modelling tones. For the next three pedals in the UAFX range, the company is getting even more ambitious with its vintage recreations via three pedals that aim to capture a trio of iconic guitar amps; the Woodrow '55 with the Fender Tweed, Ruby '63 with the Vox AC30 Top Boost and Dream '65 with the Fender Deluxe Reverb. Instead of trying to offer quantity, UA seem to be making a statement on quality and detail while offering a compact, digital take on valve amps that can be used onstage and on your home studio desk.

We're used to modelling processors offering a range of amp choices, and even the closest modelling competition to these pedals (the Strymon Iridium and Walrus Audio ACS1 offer the choice of a three amps in each). UA are leaning into authenticity with pedals that don't just reflect the controls their respective vintage originals, but also a few popular mods too. It's certainly a distinct approach but it of course hinges on how close they get.

The amp pedal market has stepped up in recent times; offering players the flexibility of going direct from the pedalboard to a PA or active cab, and their USB interface. For many players, the allure hinges on how closely they can capture the elusive response of playing through a valve amp and variable picking dynamics, in addition to the detail of tone. Modelling has come a long way in the last two

years with companies including Neural DSP honing in closer on the dynamics of touch response. We're now listening to what Universal Audio has to offer.

All three of these pedals offer six onboard cab models (via online registration you can add a trio to the stock three on each pedal) that have been curated for the specific amp in question. And we know UA already has expertise in dynamic speaker modelling field from using its Ox.

Each pedal has two footswitches that can be assigned to different functionality via bluetooth connection with the UAFX Control mobile app. The app also accesses a range of UA and artist presets to showcase the range of sounds these pedals offer. So without further ado, let's take a trip through a virtual hall of fame of classic guitar amps...



UAFX WOODROW '55

Ragged glory

The Fender 5E3 narrow panel Tweed Deluxe amps made between 1955 and 1960 are beloved by players including Billy Gibbons and Neil Young, and yet, the more vintage vibe of the Woodrow means it is probably going to remain the dark horse of this trio next to the other two pedals.

UA has already had success with a plugin based on Fender's original and here the original amp's separate instrument and mic volumes are represented on the control panel. And understanding the sweep and relationship of these is vital to unlocking the Woodrow's potential. To simplify, the Instrument Volume dials in some dirty gain while the Mic Volume offers low end warmth.

UA help to negate the one amp pedal/£350 price critics by offering a good amount of versatility around the Woodrow blueprint; the six cab models all bring distinct character, but the boost section brings an even more enhanced Tweed experience. A stock boost, EP-III based on the Echoplex tape echo's preamp section and KP-3K based on a Korg SDD-3000 delay are carefully curated mods that offer warmth, higher end and mid boost, respectively.

The gamut of gain is great for rootsy Americana cleans to scrappy Neil Young all the way to self-imploding fuzz when cranked with the boost. The room reverb offers authentic studio ambience that feels great for vintage blues, and the sensitivity to playing of this pedal goes beyond pick dynamics and responds well to your guitar's controls. Just like an amp! It also stacks well with our Klon-style Wampler Tumnus overdrive. Don't overlook this pedal.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Instrument Volume, Mic Channel Volume, Output, Room (reverb), Tone, Boost; 3 x toggle switches for Speaker cab type, preset store and boost type; preset and bypass footswitches

FEATURES: USB-C for app control and updates, Mono/stereo inputs and outputs, Bluetooth for app control; switchable true or buffered bypass (via app)

POWER SUPPLY: 9-volt mains supply only (minimum 400mA, not included)

DIMENSIONS: 148 x 92 x 65mm



UAFX RUBY '63

Sly Vox

The Ruby is actually two AC30s in one pedal; though main draw here is the later '63 Top Boost, the Normal channel here is based on the 1961 Vox model. The former added an additional tube for more gain and treble, and is what many of us associate with the classic AC30 character. These modes are selectable with the right hand mini toggle switch, alongside a Vibrato mode that uses the Top-Boost as its foundation.

You can assign this to be a switchable channel via the UAFX Control app with the bottom three control settings Speed, Intensity and Room reverb when set to alt mode. It's great for slower Uni Vibe-esque sounds as well as choppy fare.

If you're new to AC30s you need to understand some basics; they need time to shine. First, know that the Bass and Treble controls of the Top-Boost channel (like the real 1961 amp they aren't usable in Normal mode) are cuts that work in the opposite way to most amps; you're taking away those frequencies as you turn the controls clockwise. Then, confusingly, the AC30 offers a separate Cut control that adjusts a different high end frequency to the Treble Cut's tone stack. Explore the relationship between them alongside the Volume control's gain and the onboard boost and you've got the key to the Edge and Brian May with all the chime, crunch and Voxy boxy goodness of a real AC30 Top-Boost.

UA's designer James Santiago and the team have done their homework big time, and the six-cab selection allows you to hone in on brightness or warmth for your specific pickups through a FRFR cab, PA and recording.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Output, Cut, Bass / Room (reverb), Treble / (vibrato) Intensity, Boost / (vibrato) Speed, Speaker cab select switch, Control mode switch: ALT / Amp / Preset store mode; Channel select switch; bypass and preset footswitches

FEATURES: USB-C for app control and updates, Mono/stereo inputs and outputs, Bluetooth for app control; switchable true or buffered bypass (via app)

POWER: 9-volt mains supply only (minimum 400mA, not included)



UAFX DREAM '65

A dream pedal platform?

Fender once claimed that the '65 Deluxe Reverb was the most recorded amp of all time. It's associated with crystal cleans, drippy surf spring reverb and watery vibrato. That's all here in this little box, and it really does sound closer to the real thing than anything we've tried before.

But while there's a stock boost to add clean gain, the other two choices are based on popular mods in Deluxe Reverb history; Lead adds warmth in low settings but past 10 o'clock there's a midrange 'lead boost' lift. The D-TEX is based on the SRV mod and adds the most gain; yes, it's great for Texas blues.

Like the real thing, the Dream has the cut and snap to really hold its own in a band mix; we know because we tried it at a band rehearsal. And like the other two pedals, it's valve-like dynamics really hold up to scrutiny at gig volumes. While it breaks up earlier than you might expect, setting the footswitches up as Preset/Live on the right (voiced as a clean/dirty combo) then with the left switch activating boosts for both, you then have an incredibly usable range.

While we gravitated to the classic Oxford 12K5-6 12" speaker cab model for cleaner tones that helped the Deluxe earn its reputation, there's a 1966 4x10 Fender Super Reverb cab with CTS speakers to experiment with amongst the six choices.

Of the trio, the Dream felt the most seamless inclusion on the end of our 'board. But what surprised us was its drive capabilities thanks to the boosts that widen the scope of the original amp not just for stacking with your own drive pedals but the Dream's tones in isolation.

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS: Volume, Reverb (spring), Output, Bass, Treble / (tremolo) Speed, Boost (tremolo) Intensity, 3 x mini switches: speaker cab sim type, ALT / Amp / Preset store, Boost type.

FEATURES: USB-C for app control and updates, Mono/stereo inputs and outputs, Bluetooth for app control; switchable true or buffered bypass (via app)

POWER SUPPLY: 9-volt mains supply only (minimum 400mA) (not included)

DIMENSIONS: 141 x 92 x 65mm



UAFX WOODROW '55

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



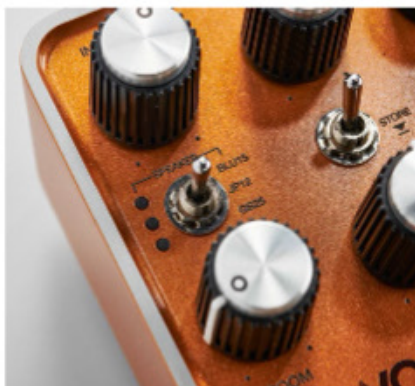
UAFX RUBY '63

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



UAFX DREAM '65

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



FINAL VERDICT

Let's start with where we feel these three fall short; the lack of a dedicated headphone output is our biggest gripe. Walrus, Strymon and Blackstar offer it with their amp pedals and with the market of home players so sizeable, we are mystified by the exclusion and the Features scores here reflect that.

True to their vintage amp roots, there's also no onboard effects loop on these pedals that could be an issue for some players wanting the flexibility of where to place their own reverb and delays in the pedalboard signal chain. MIDI functionality is something UA declined to include on the previous trio of pedals, too.

But the strengths here are significant for us. These are some of the best amp modelling tones we've ever heard. They're inspiring and versatile and they react like the real thing. We found UA's decision to hone in on each amp for a deeper experience to be a strength for their usability as physical pedals. A mix of old-school functionality, canny additions with cutting edge modelling, they are relatively accessible ways to

access authentic tones on amps that sell for north of £1,500 – and that's just the contemporary reissues.

Each pedal offers clear strengths for us that could dictate the buying decision. The Woodrow is a much more affordable way to get authentic-sounding Tweed tone on your 'board; either immerse yourself in that world or bring it in and out as a vintage voice. It's less of a Swiss Army Knife pedal platform and more for those who know they want that Tweed sound.

The Ruby has the most authentic modelled AC30 tones we've heard to date and that will be enough for many; a great portable alternative to the real thing but could certainly be the basis of your 'board. But it's the potential widest appeal of the Dream '65's strengths as a clean machine, coupled with its reverb, vibrato and surprising versatility in the gain stakes make it the number one choice for us if you're making the switch to a pedalboard amp, and the best value of the three.

Now, we can't wait to hear what other amps UA have in their sights for future pedals.

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Words Stuart Williams Photography Phil Barker

MANSON META MBM-2

We take a look at two new Matt Bellamy guitars built on an identical platform, but with very different offerings

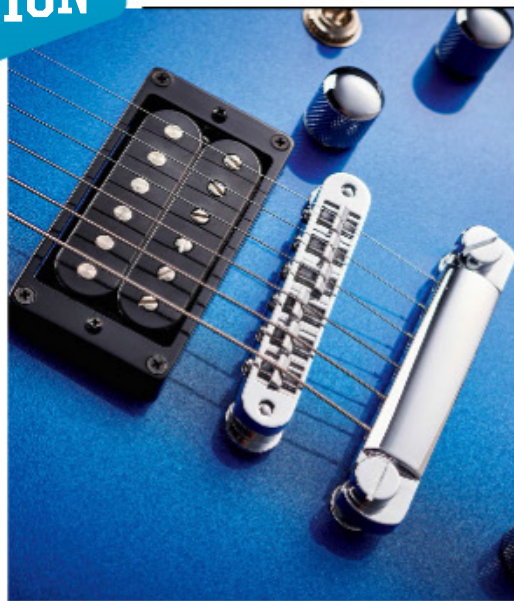
The Meta series don't always have all the electronics built-in, but I'm hoping that if our collaboration with Cort goes deeper, we might be able to get some guitars with some of the more special effects stuff built-in." That's what Matt

Bellamy told us when we spoke to him back in 2020. Two years on, and the Muse frontman-turned-guitar-brand-director has clearly settled into his role off-stage.

Manson Guitar Works enlisted the help of Cort guitars to carry out the build of its first affordable design, the MBC-1 in 2015.

Next came the Meta MBM-1, and now we arrive at the latest updates in the Matt Bellamy signature model range, the Meta MBM-2. There are four models on offer: the neck P-90 loaded MBM-2, humbucker/Sustainiac-equipped MBM-2S, the Z.Vex Fuzz Factory-loaded MBM-2F, and the top-level MBM-2SF with a Sustainiac and a Fuzz Factory built in! Lefties are catered for too, with the MBM-2LH taking on the MBM-2 revisions, but with the same dual-humbucker configuration as the MBC-1, and at no additional cost to the 'standard', MBM-2. It's a range of options that we haven't seen at this price, in an easily accessible format from Manson Guitar Works before.

Our review models are the P90-equipped MBM-2, plus the fully loaded MBM-2SF with a Sustainiac and Z.Vex Fuzz Factory circuit built in. Now, the design is pretty much common to both models. It starts with that unique MB body shape, which has undergone some subtle body contouring changes in order to bring it closer to Bellamy's stage guitars,



The Meta MBM-2 comes in Meta Blue and Dry Satin Black (as pictured), as well as Starlight Silver

and that last point is something we'll be seeing throughout the MBM-2's spec sheet. It's cut out of basswood, and finished in either Dry Satin Black or Starlight Silver for the P-90-equipped version, or Dry Satin Black/Meta Blue for the tech-heavy model.

The necks on each guitar follow the same format with Canadian maple, carved to a 'soft V' profile and fitted with an Indian laurel fingerboard. Guitars don't come much more contemporary than this, and sticking to that theme there's a 25.5" scale length (enough to dip your toe into drop-tuned waters), with 22 frets, and the fingerboard features a compound 12"-16" radius. That means that it's narrower at the headstock end to make chords more comfortable, while up at the top you should be able to bend without choking-out your notes.

The hardware is uniform, too, with a Cort T-o-M-style bridge and stoptail, plus Manson-branded locking tuners not only keeping things stable, but making string changes quick too. Electronically, both guitars feature a kill button as standard, and the controls are simple master tone/master volume knobs. So, is the difference purely electronic?

In a word – yes. But what difference? We'll get to that shortly, but first, we should add that the playing experience on both of our review guitars is not only comfortable, but a lot of fun. The V-shape of the neck is indeed 'soft', and while there's a very slight hump towards its centre, this certainly isn't the pronounced ridge you'll find on more vintage examples. It's a great alternative in a sea of 'C's, made even better by the fact that it's a satin finish, which to us adds a premium feel to what is (in the case of the P-90 model) a relatively affordable guitar.

The fingerboards on both are very neat, with nothing to slow us down and the highly-polished frets make fretting and bending silky smooth. Talking of which, if you've ever dismissed a compound radius as marketing fluff, these guitars could well change your mind. A combination of that neck profile and the radius means that we're able to reach for the sky and hold it there with no sign of our note faltering. Under gain it's a case of 'go and have a bite' – there's a lot of sustain on offer.

But the big news here is of course the electronics. We'll start with that neck P-90. Sometimes the humble soapbar gets overlooked as your grandad's favourite magnet, when it really should be viewed as the guitarist's secret weapon. This isn't an off-the-peg recreation of a dusty blues pickup, though. Manson's Adrian Ashton tells us that in order to get the balance correct between the P-90 and the existing Manson-designed humbucker, they went back to the drawing board. It shows, because it's got power and punch in abundance. Forget what you might think about woolly, vintage warmth, and imagine a neck single coil that's been on the Red Bull. It's angry, fired up, and ready to throw tonal punches that you might not see coming. It's the sort of deep neck tone we associate with players such as Tom Morello – one of Matt's influences – and it also comes through in his own playing, particularly when he's in drop-D. There's bass without flab, a mid-scoop without losing the growl, and a high end that helps it slice through. It's complemented rather than entirely contrasted by that bridge humbucker, which takes us back to a thicker, almost wider-sounding midrange when we want a smoother humbucker sound.

In our review of the MBM-1, we mentioned how we'd like to have seen coil-splitting as a factory option, but in hindsight, we'll take this pickup configuration – which could easily see you through everything from a set of blues to heavy rock – with pleasure.

On to the sci-fi version, then. There's the standard controls, but the neck pickup is a Sustainiac Stealth Pro. If you're not sure what that is, you're in for a treat. When switched off, the Sustainiac acts like a regular neck humbucker. But, engage the 'on' switch, and it will create a magnetic field to excite the strings. This means you can get an infinite sustain from one note, then violin it, slide it, bend it, douse it in effects – whatever takes your fancy. But there's more! Because the second toggle switch offers three modes: Fundamental (your original note frequency), Harmonic (which can be used for producing feedback-like sounds), and Mix (a blend of the two). There are internal trim pots inside the guitar for adjusting the humbucker volume, as well as Sustainiac gain and Harmonic mode gain, too.

Adding to the fun is the Z. Vex Fuzz Factory circuit. We should point out that Manson hasn't gone with an inferior or cut-down version of the additional electronics. These are the exact same effects and circuitry that Bellamy uses in his custom stage guitars. The Fuzz Factory is a modern classic, known for its excessive, ripping-Velcro fuzz sound and utilised by Bellamy most famously on the *Plug In Baby* riff (among many others).

Top-mounted to the guitar are the FF's Stab and Comp controls, and the effect is engaged via another mini-toggle, which works in the opposite direction to that of the Sustainiac's on/off switch. Meanwhile there are additional controls inside the guitar's cavity, which are again 'set and forget'. Engaged, it's nothing short of insanity, in the best possible way! Winding up the gate gets you that tight, ripping, Jack White-style fuzz, all stuttering and synth-like. Play with the comp control, and you'll hear a huge self-oscillation that sits somewhere between noise and feedback, and can be bent in pitch as you move through the knob's travel. Bellamy fans will have seen and heard this particular effect many times in live performances.

FINAL VERDICT

Which of our Meta MBM-2s is best for you?

We weren't sure how different these guitars would be from their – let's face it – already extremely good predecessors. In a nutshell, we'd say that to the regular player, the P-90 MBM-2 represents a jump forward in versatility, with that neck pickup really adding an additional dimension that's preferable to a coil split, while still

maintaining a thicker sound so you don't miss the humbucker. The Sustainiac/Fuzz Factory MBM-2SF is a different beast. While the additional electronics make this guitar unique to an extent, it's based on Bellamy's own combo of experimentation, and therefore we think it'll be one for Muse fans to really sink their teeth into. The Meta Blue finish looks fantastic, and both models

prove once again what can be achieved and offered in an electric guitar in 2022 for surprisingly low prices. We started with a quote, so we'll end on one, "We keep trying to find ways to make [guitars with effects] more cost-effective..." Says Bellamy. "We're trying to find ways to make that more widely-accessible so that we can make guitars like that for everybody." We think they've managed it in spades.

MANSON META MBM-2 AND MBM-2SF





£1349

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



£569



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

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood

NECK: Canadian hard maple

SCALE: 25.5"

FINGERBOARD: Indian laurel

FRETS: 22

CONTROLS: Volume, tone, 3-way switch, kill button (all

HARDWARE: Cort T-o-M-style bridge and tailpiece, Cort locking tuners

LEFT-HANDED: Yes (dual humbuckers only)

FINISH: MBM-2 P-90 – Dry Satin Black, Starlight Silver; MBM-2SF – Dry Satin Black, Meta Blue

CONTACT: Manson Guitar Works www.manson-guitarworks.com



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SOUNDLAD LIVERPOOL SCRAN £99

Brit-rock in a box?

SoundLad Liverpool’s Marc Dunn has form for having a hand in capturing amp-like drive. If you recall the Funny Little Boxes’ 1991 overdrive we gave a glowing review to back in issue 355, he played a key role in its development. The Scran – a British term for basic but tasty food, in case you weren’t aware – sets its sights on a UK tonality, compared to the 1991’s grunge. However, it’s not your usual clone or Marshall-in-a-pedal story...

The controls follow the food theme and part with familiarity as a result: Thick, Soft, Toast, HP, Cheese and Beans mean you need to do some research. Dunn is

happy to oblige with a detailed explanation on the SoundLad site – or check out ours right here! Thick in itself is a powerful tool; go left for biting treble boost and crank right for Fuzzface territory. Interestingly, HP and Toast are gain controls too with HP adding bass and gain, but Toast being more of the traditional gain control you’ll be used to.

Exploring the relationships between all this reveals amp-like gain and response to pick dynamics that nods to British amp icons. This blurs the line between overdrive pedal and the feel of an extra amp channel that you tailor. Plugging into a clean Fender Deluxe Reverb – but keeping that

Thick dial at 9 o’clock while setting Toast the same (with everything else at midday) reveals a Voxy chime with our bridge humbucker. The Thick can then dial in more Orange woolly warmth as both head to midday.

The Thick and HP controls offer a lot of scope to move into the supernova of prime-era Oasis, and can brighten up your neck ’bucker or thicken a single-coil. Wind back that thickness for snappier Coxon drive and you can tonally reenact the battles of old with Blur. A versatile, vintage-flavoured overdrive at a fair price.

Rob Laing

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

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Overdrive

CONTROLS: Thick (amount of gain and bass going into circuit), Soft (Neve-esque inductive EQ for treble response for ‘mix placement’ that we’d advise setting after your gain is dialled in), Toast (gain), HP (thickening gain control for bottom end), Cheese (subtle and seemed to be similar to Soft to our ears and proved useful finding a sweet spot for presence if you set it after the other controls), Beans (volume)

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

BYPASS: True bypass

POWER: 9V DC (6mA draw)

CONTACT: SoundLad Liverpool
www.soundladliverpool.co.uk

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Words Grant Moon Photo Dani KM

SOPHIE MAY

During the 2020 lockdown, singer/songwriter Sophie May was really churning out the content for her newly minted TikTok channel (200k followers, 3.8m likes, both rising fast). At one point, she tells TG: “I was almost tricking my brain into writing a hook or a verse, and then I would be finished. TikTok can shorten attention spans in that sense, but I see it almost as a writing exercise. I try not to take it too seriously, and that helps me just write and feel free, not trapped by the format.”

That short-form platform – and Instagram too – has served

the 23 year-old Londoner well. With stars including Billie Eilish and Celeste dropping likes her way, May’s compact, pithy songwriting style is informed by her teenage love for slam poetry. She got the music bug late-ish, at 19, when she bought her main axe, a Squier Classic Vibe Mustang, although she barely knew one chord.

She progressed quickly though, turning to YouTube, absorbing the music and guitar techniques of Laura Marling, Paul McCartney, Jeff Buckley, and Leonard Cohen: She says of the latter: “His most famous songs have those rolling, tumbling [arpeggio] patterns, which work

well when you want to let the lyrics shine through.”

May’s own striking, beautifully sung stories light up her debut EP, *You Do Not Have To Be Good*, out August 7 through Psychic Music. The songs are despatches from the front of the age-old battle of the sexes, as seen through Gen-Z eyes, and are populated by female characters who, in spite of themselves, are in the thrall of flawed men – ego-fuelled wannabe rock stars (*With The Band*), car boys (*Cadillac*), plain wrong ’uns (*Bad Man, High Life*) and flat-out narcissists (*Drop In The Ocean*, about a creepy ex-teacher). “A lot of it is dramatised,”

she says, “with plenty of metaphors. It’s looking at a lot of my female friends and their relationships, and packing in a lot of those experiences into one song.”

For her forthcoming live shows she’s been eyeing up a new guitar, a Gretsch. She’s only done two gigs to date – including one at London’s Groucho Club – but more are planned, in Hackney in September and, in 2023, Australia (she has dual nationality). “Here in the UK I’m just starting out playing lots of little gigs,” she says. “We’ll announce a few days before and see who can go, and I’ll get some practice in...”

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