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ANNUAL 2023

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W E L C O M E

TOTAL **ANNUAL 2023** Guitar

Welcome to the Total Guitar Annual 2023, packed with the very best features, interviews, advice and more from the past year.

Get started with our Ultimate Guitar Workout feature, essential reading for guitar enthusiasts of all levels and styles, bringing you the very best ways to improve your playing and get more from your gear, covering everything from fretting and picking to reading rhythms and creating practice plans. There's also a whole host of other brilliant features on offer – discover the Beatles' greatest guitar songs, explore our essential guide to pedals and effects, learn how to create a rock anthem with Def Leppard, and uncover the story of the mythical Metallica deepfake and learn how to recreate it. We've also got exclusive interviews with the legendary Slash, John Frusciante, Jack White, Samantha Fish, Kirk Hammett and more!

Whatever your skill level, we're also here to help – our tips, tricks and tutorials will give you the confidence to master your guitar and play like the legends. You'll find a wealth of easy-to-follow tab throughout this annual, complete with free audio, video and backing tracks. To get started, head over to bit.ly/tga2023audio to download or stream your audio or video. Enjoy!

「 FUTURE 」

TOTAL ANNUAL 2023 Guitar

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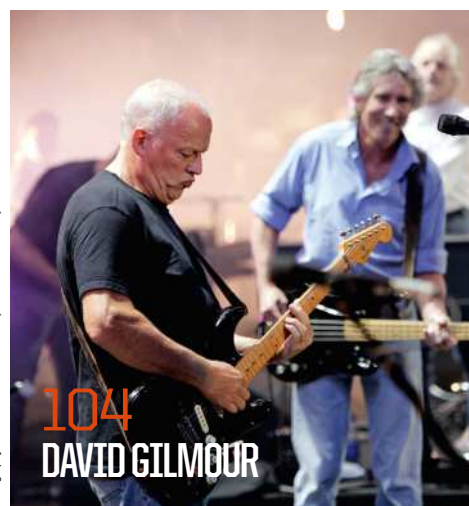
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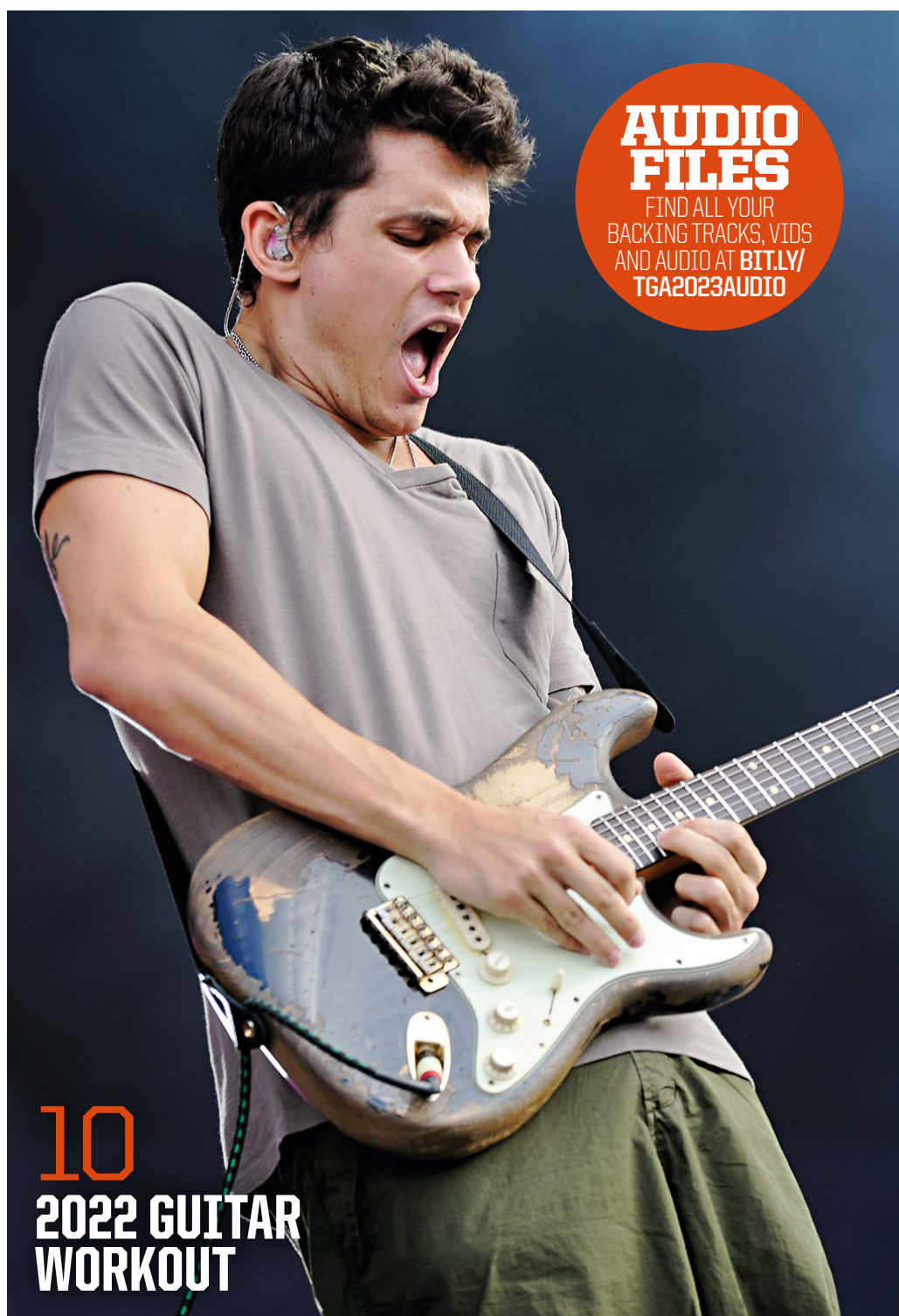
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Photography: Graham Lowe/Redferns/Getty / James Sharack / OlyCurtis



AUDIO FILES

FIND ALL YOUR
BACKING TRACKS, VIDS
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TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)



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TAB GUIDE

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

What is tab?

This is where the key signature and time signatures are shown

♩ = 72 — This is the beats per minute (BPM)

0:51

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

1 2 3 4 5 6

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

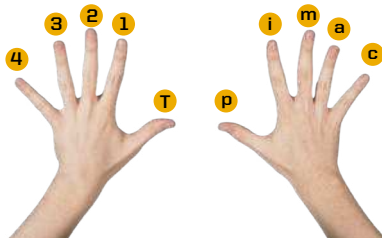
Tab is short for tablature, a notational system used to give detailed information as to where notes should be played on the fretboard. Tab appears underneath conventional music notation as six horizontal lines that represent the strings of the

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

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

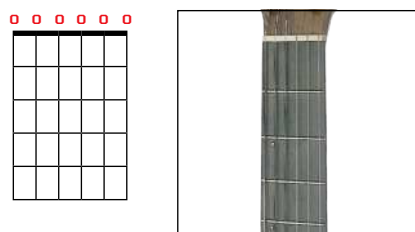
FRET BOXES: CHORDS, SCALES AND CAPO NOTATION

HAND LABELLING



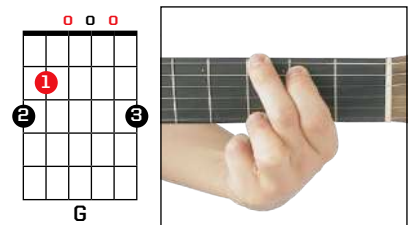
Here are the abbreviations used for each finger. Fretting hand: **1, 2, 3, 4, [T]**
Picking hand: **p (thumb), i (index), m (middle), a (annular), c (little finger)**

NUT AND FRETBOARD



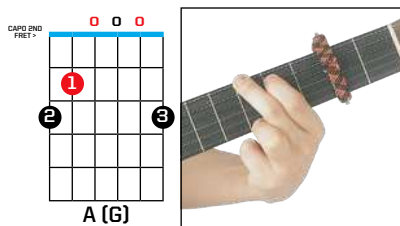
This fretbox diagram represents the guitar's fretboard exactly, as seen in the photo. This design is used for ease of visualising a fretboard scale or chord quickly.

CHORD EXAMPLE



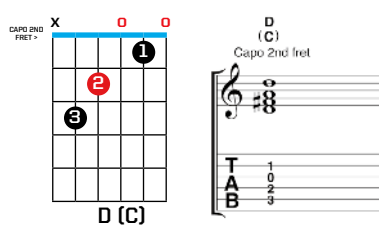
This diagram represents a G chord. The 'o's are open strings, and a circled number is a fretting hand finger. A black 'o' or circled number is the root note (here, G).

CAPO EXAMPLE



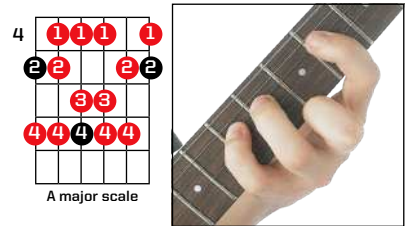
The blue line in the diagram represents a capo - for this A chord, place it at the 2nd fret. Capos change the fret number ordering. Here, the original 5th fret now becomes the 3rd fret, 7th fret now 5th fret, etc.

CAPO NOTATION



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

SCALE EXAMPLE



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

GUITAR TECHNIQUES: PICKING

DOWN AND UP-PICKING



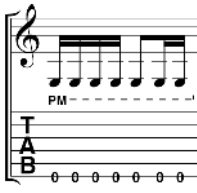
The symbols under the tab tell you the first note is to be down-picked and the second note is to be up-picked.

TREMOLO PICKING



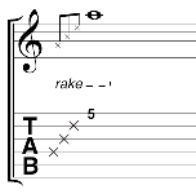
Each of the four notes are to be alternate-picked (down and up-picked) very rapidly and continuously.

PALM MUTING



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

PICK RAKE



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

APPREGGIATED CHORD



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

2022 Guitar Workout

Welcome to *Total Guitar*'s 2022 Guitar Workout, where we've made it our mission to help you become a better guitarist. We kick off with a huge 11-page technique workout, covering everything from funk rhythms and fretboard knowledge to picking accuracy and playing the changes.

Hopefully there's something for everyone.

And if it's inspiration you seek, then let the words of our star interviewees be your guide. On page 154, Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil talks tone and tells all about making his Strats sound heavy, writing in odd time signatures, and prepping for live shows. Plus, on page 140, Eric Gales offers up some musical wisdom and practical tips.

Turn on, tune up, plug in and let's rock the hell out of 2022!



FRETTING & PICKING ACCURACY

The core of any technique workout is making your fingers move more efficiently. Our exercises will help

When most people think of a guitar workout, they inevitably think of 'getting faster', but this can be a fool's errand. Winding up the speed on your metronome might not do you any good in the long run if you aren't playing accurately – you'll just end up playing sloppily quickly. It's important to keep in mind that speed is a by-product of accuracy. These exercises will improve your dexterity and accuracy, which will in turn allow you to play faster. Work through the examples slowly and only increase the speed when you can play an exercise ten times without error.

AUDIO

bit.ly/tga2023audio

1 SPIDER EXERCISES

This classic four-finger workout spider exercise is probably already in your practice routine – the idea is to play notes at consecutive frets using all four fretting fingers. You'll be honing your alternate picking technique too. The most common approach is: first finger, then second, third, and fourth, but try these variations too.

1. 4-3-2-1 1-2-3-4
2. 4-2-3-1 1-3-2-4
3. 3-2-4-1 1-4-2-3
4. 2-1-4-3 3-4-1-2

2 LEGATO WORKOUT

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 85

A fret-hand technique, legato refers to the use of hammer-ons and pull-offs instead of picking every note. It can seem easy, but it's important to be able to make every note roughly the same volume, whether picked or not. Try our exercise taking careful note of which notes are picked.

3 FINGER ROLLS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 85

Playing the same fret on adjacent strings is a tricky move – especially if you don't want the notes to bleed into each other. Play the first note here with the pad of your finger then 'roll' onto the tip to play the second note. Do the opposite for the second half of the exercise.

4 MAJOR SCALE IN 3RDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=85

5 4 7 5 4 7 5 5 7 5 8 7 5 8 7 8 5 7 7 5 5 7 4 5 7 4 5

□ V □ V *cont. sim.*

Running up and down scales has its place, but playing them using intervals (3rd, 4ths and 5ths) will improve your dexterity, keep you on your toes and provide new ideas for licks. Don't get what we mean? Listen to the audio track and you'll hear how we've made this pattern out of the major scale.

5 MAJOR SCALE IN 3RDS ON ONE STRING

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=75

8va

3 7 5 8 7 10 8 12 10 14 12 15 14 17 15 19

Scales don't just have to be played across multiple strings; this exercise shows you how to use legato to play the major scale on a single string. As always, aim for a smooth, even sound and remember to try it with other intervals.

6 LICK WITH 3RDS AND A SINGLE-STRING RUN

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=115

8va

C⁵ E^{b5} F⁵ G⁵ C⁵

8 10 11 8 10 11 8 9 11 8 8 11 11 10 10 13 13 11 11 15 15 18 18(20)

BU

We've switched to the natural minor scale here to show you how to use the interval exercises in the previous example on a different scale *and* to create a cool lick. Notice how the single-string phrase helps the lick build to an exciting climax.

7 STRING SKIPPING ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=130

C D Am

12 8 12 9 10 9 12 14 10 14 10 14 11 12 11 14 10 10 14 10 14 12

Arpeggios fall naturally onto adjacent strings and often played this way - sometimes with sweep picking. Arranging arpeggios into this string skipping sequence gives you more phrasing options and greater control over dynamics.

FRETBOARD KNOWLEDGE

Map out the notes on the guitar and you'll be flying round the fretboard before you know it!

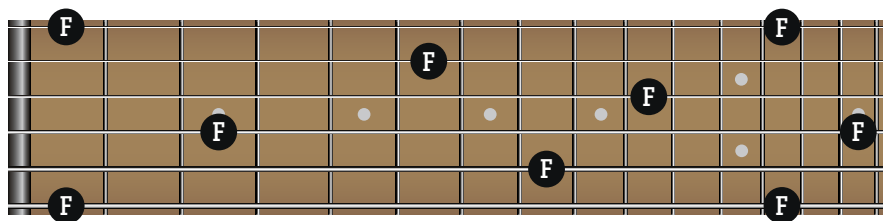
Moving freely around the fretboard is a goal many guitarists share. Knowing which note you're playing at any time, where you can move to next or which notes will sound

good against a song's chords will help you take your playing to a new level. We'll start here with some essential info to help you improve your fretboard knowledge before moving on to some practical applications of this new knowledge.

While we have demonstrated some concepts here, it is not enough to just play through them. The idea is for you to create your own licks and solos to build these skills so they integrate seamlessly into your playing.

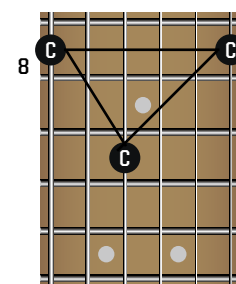
8 LEARN THE NOTES ON THE FRETBOARD

Lots of people learn notes by moving up a single string. This doesn't really work as you only learn the notes as a sequence rather than identifying them in isolation. Instead, select a note (we've gone for F) and find it in every location in the neck. Make sure to explore above the 15th fret too and repeat the exercise with different notes. For instance, try finding all the G notes.

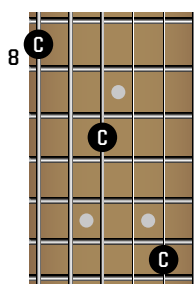


9 IDENTIFY OCTAVE SHAPES

Once you've covered individual notes, it's time to move to octaves. This will help you move licks and phrases into different registers. Lots of people like the triangle method shown here. This is good for helping find root notes, but not so great for transposing licks, so we've shown an alternative – it doesn't have a fancy name, but is worth memorising.



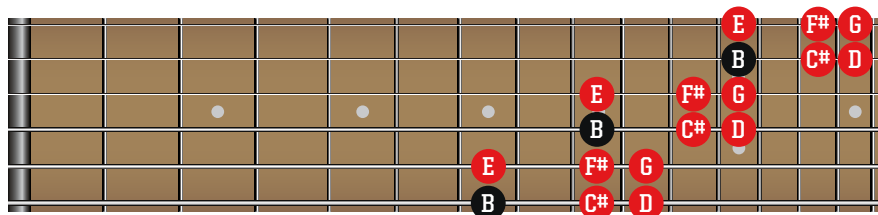
Octaves: triangle method



Octaves: alternative method

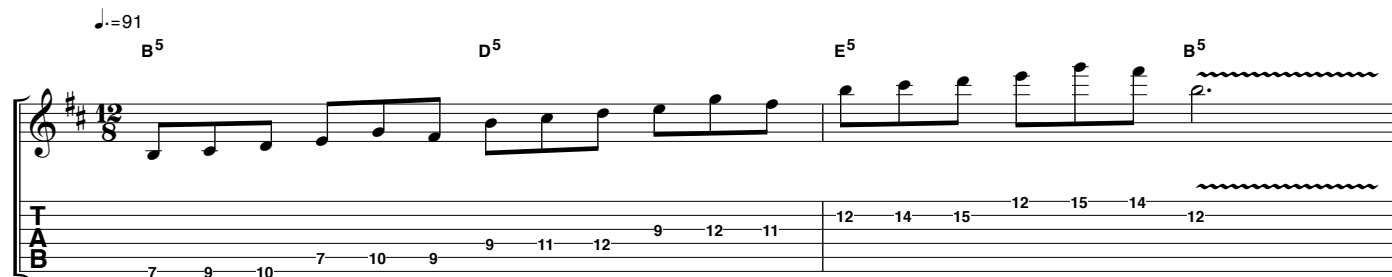
10 MOVING OCTAVE LICK: SCALE PATTERN

The lick below shows how easy shifting a sequence into different octaves is. It is the perfect device for building a solo from low notes to a high melody. This scale box gives you a visual representation of how we pieced our lick together.



10 MOVING OCTAVE LICK

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO



Playing the same fret on adjacent strings is a tricky move – especially if you don't want the notes to bleed into each other. Play the first note here with the pad of your finger then 'roll' onto the tip to play the second note. Do the opposite for the second half of the exercise.

JAM TRACKS

Test out your lead guitar skills over our rock and indie backing tracks



11. KILL THIS!

AUDIO
bit.ly/tga2023audio

VERSE

||: G /// | D /// |
| G /// | A5 B5 D5 / :|| x4

BRIDGE

||: C5 /// | G/B / D5 / :|| x3
| C5 /// | G/B / D5 B/D# ||

CHORUS

||: Em /// | C /// |
| G /// | D // B/D# :|| x3
| Em /// | C /// | G /// | D /// ||

The verse and bridge are both based in G, but approach each section differently to add variety. For example, you could try playing rhythmically in the verse, before exploring some melodic licks or short hooks as you reach the next section. As ever, make sure to experiment and just enjoy playing.

12. LIZZY'S TWIN SISTER

INTRO/INTERLUDE

||: A /// | /// G5 / :|| x4

VERSE

||: A5 A6 A5 A6 | D5 D6 D5 D6 |
| A5 A6 A5 A6 | D5 D6 D5 D6 :||
x4

CHORUS

||: Am /// | A m7/G /// |
| F#m7_b5 /// | Fmaj7 /// :|| x4

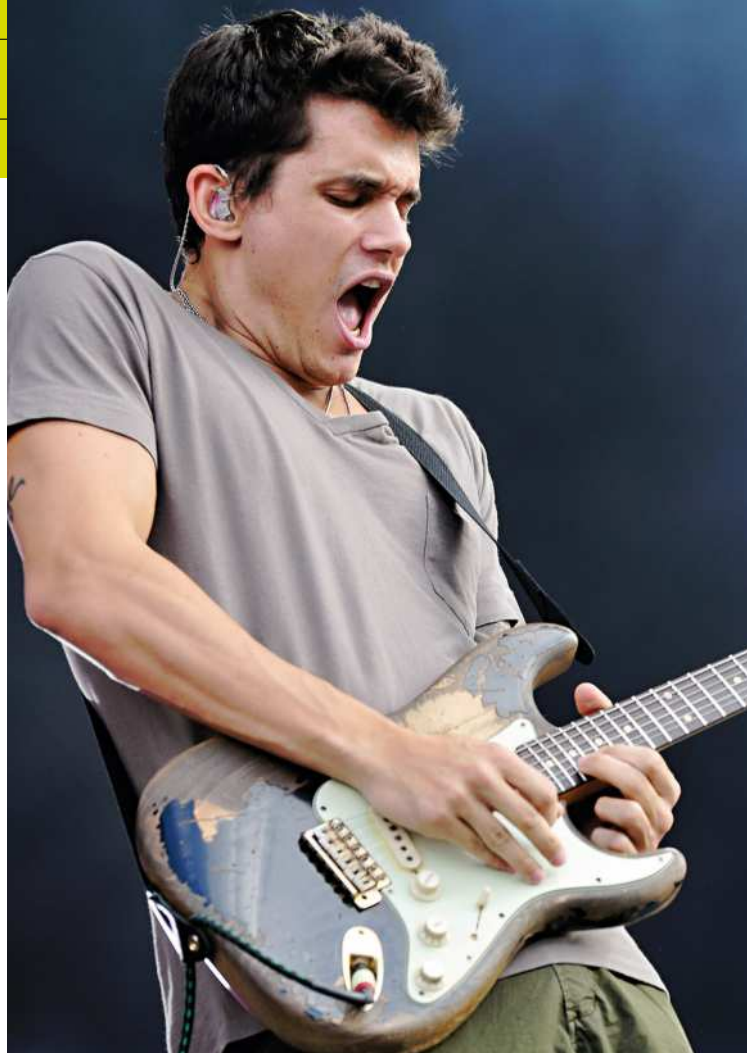
Once you've listened to the track, try mapping out how to play over it from start to finish. The intro and verse rely on the A minor pentatonic scale. Switch to the A Dorian mode in the chorus, but be ready for a brief move to the A natural minor scale as you reach the Fmaj7 chord.

PLAYING THROUGH CHANGES

Follow these shortcuts and find the right notes for your solos every time you play

Most people know the scale's root note is a good place to finish a phrase, but wouldn't it be great if you could play something that effortlessly fits against whatever chord is playing? This is called playing through the [chord] changes. Getting started can be an intimidating task,

especially if you've ever witnessed a jazz virtuoso ripping it seamlessly over fast, complex chords. Like every skill it can be built over time from simple concepts that anyone can understand and use. We're going to take you step-by-step through the basics so you can think on your feet and create intelligent, considered solos.



13 PLAY THE ROOT NOTE AS THE CHORD CHANGES

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

♩ = 70

Am Dm F G Am

TAB 7 7 6 8 7

This first step is really quite simple. Simply change note as the chords change. This gives you an idea of when to change (you're following the chords, remember!) and which note to use (the chord's root note). Don't worry if this seems simple. This is a framework that you can build upon.

14 CONNECT THE DOTS

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

♩ = 70

Am Dm F G Am

TAB 7 7 4 5 4 7 7 5 7 5 6 8 6 5 7 5 7

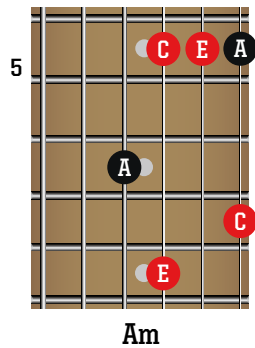
Next, you're going to make your playing more musical by playing phrases that connect the root notes. It's important that you try this for yourself once you've played through our example. We're in the key of A minor, so we're using the A natural minor scale.



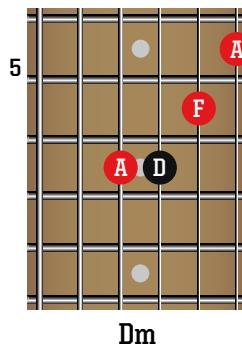
15 USE CHORD TONES

These chord boxes show every note for each chord on the first four strings – even when they can't be played at the same time. So what? Well, it might sound obvious but any note that's in a

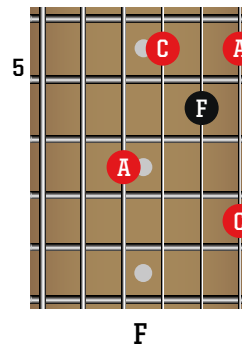
chord you're playing over will also work as part of a solo. Learn the chords of the music you're playing and you're instantly armed with loads of usable notes for your solos.



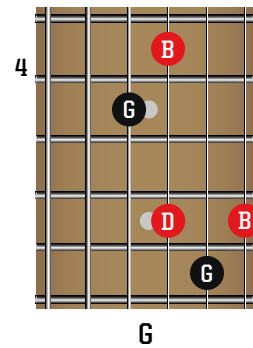
Am



Dm



F



G

16 SEAMLESS SOLOING

BIT.LV/TGA2023AUDIO



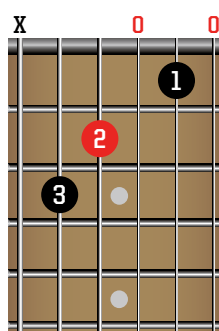
This example uses the other chord tones to stop the phrase sounding mechanical by avoiding big jumps. The first note of each bar is one of the chord tones shown in the diagram above. As before, play this example then try writing your own lick.

17 CHORDS & SCALES

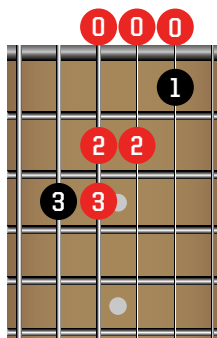
Some chords and scales are almost identical. You can use this to your advantage...

The C major scale shape shown here adds a few notes to the C chord. In fact, they're so similar that you'll nearly always be able to use the scale over the chord and know that they'll

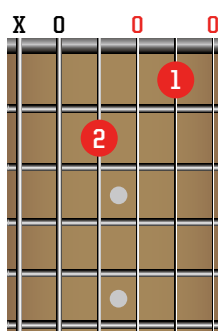
match up. It's the same with the A minor pentatonic scale and this Am7 chord. They share so many notes that you can nearly always make them work together.



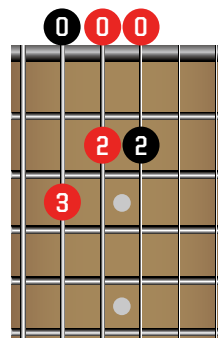
C



C major scale



Am7



A minor pentatonic



LEARN TO READ RHYTHMS

Crack the code of music notation and your rhythm playing will improve. We show you how...

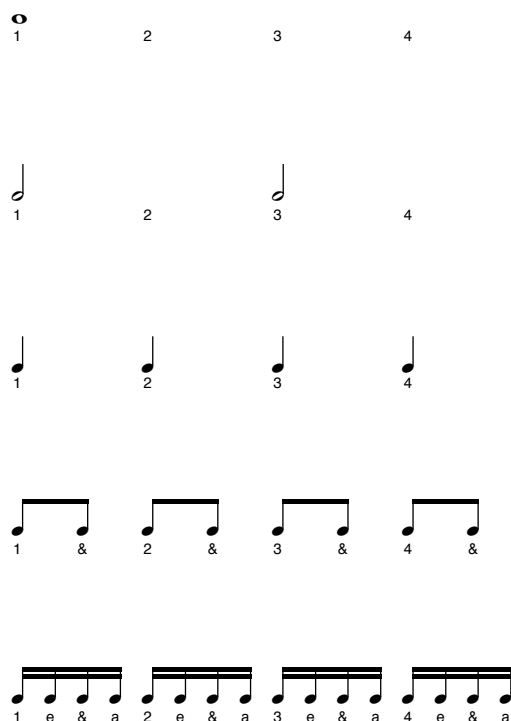
Guitarists are generally not so good at reading music. It's not entirely our fault, though.

As you'll remember from the fretboard knowledge section every note can be played in lots of locations, so it's not as straightforward as it is on, say, a piano – where every note appears

only once. What we definitely *can* be better at is understanding and reading rhythms. This will enable you to read chord charts like the one below and communicate better with other musicians – especially drummers. This section introduces you to basic rhythm notation and gives you a chance to test your knowledge.

18 RHYTHM TREE

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)



This is the rhythm tree. It shows the most commonly used notes found in music notation and how each of the rhythms relate to one another. We've also included how each of the rhythms is counted in a bar of 4/4 time music.



19 COUNTING RHYTHMS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=100

This example combines several rhythms but stays on one note, so you can focus your attention on following the rhythm as it's written. We recommend having a go at following the notation without any audio first, to see if you've understood the rhythm tree. Counting aloud as you play will help you stay in time.



20 RHYTHM TESTS

Check your rhythm knowledge

We've prepared three audio rhythm tests. The first is one bar long and uses half and quarter notes. The second is also one bar long and adds eighth notes. The

third test is two bars long. Work out which rhythms are being used, and try playing them back on your guitar. Find the answers at: bit.ly/tga2023audio.

21 RHYTHM METHOD

APPLY MUSIC READING SKILLS TO YOUR PLAYING

AUDIO
bit.ly/tga2023audio

Reading music isn't the easiest aspect of guitar playing. In fact, for some people, the symbols used in music might as well be some alien code. Still, the beams/stems of the notes do at least give you a good idea of *how many* times you need to strike a note or chord. And that gives you a clue as to which picking/strumming approach to use.

1. EIGHTH NOTES

Play these with constant downstrokes for a driving, urgent sound, or use alternating down- and upstrokes for a looser strummy sound.

2. 16TH NOTES

With four notes for every beat, you'll nearly always have to pick/strum 16th notes with alternating down-and upstrokes. They're just too quick to downpick.

22 CHORD CHART WITH RHYTHMS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

This chord chart is an excellent way to try out your newly-acquired knowledge. Play through it a few times and count the rhythms, then try it with our backing track. It's ok to have several attempts - sight reading will come later.

FUNK WORKOUT

Get your rhythm skills up to speed as we take a look at the cool, funky sounds of 16th notes

No guitar workout would be complete without at least some attention paid to your strumming technique, and we're looking at a staple rhythm in funk and disco, the 16th-note. Let us oblige you with an explanation... 16th notes are so called because that's how many of 'em are in a bar of music in 4/4 time – 16! Listen to the intro riff

in Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water*. The guitar part uses quarter notes but the hi-hat is playing 16ths. You can probably tell from this classic rocker then that 16th notes are usually fairly quick, and if you're going to recreate the rhythm with your strumming arm you need a steady, well-timed strumming technique. Our examples will help you develop your skills.



23 ON-BEAT CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=80

Em⁷

Play 4 times

cont. sim.

This line will help you establish a basic down-up strumming pattern. Emphasise the on-beat chords (the first of each group of four strums) then release pressure so that the strings are muted in between.

24 OFFBEAT CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

Em⁷

Play 4 times

cont. sim.

Here the same pattern is 'moved' so the offbeats are accented. You may find this one trickier to play even though it is essentially the same thing. Have a good listen to our version so you can hear how it sounds.

25 SIMPLE FUNK RHYTHM

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

Em⁷

Play 4 times

cont. sim.

Here we mix up the rhythms and a much funkier-sounding part is the result. Remember, the down-up strumming pattern stays the same – it's just the fretting hand pushing down on the strings that creates the rhythm.

26 CREATING SPACE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

Em⁷

Play 4 times

cont. sim.

Finally, we look at how leaving space can break up the monotony of constant muted strokes. Keep moving your picking hand up and down to ensure good timing – just don't make contact with the strings in the gaps.

WORK OUT YOUR EARS

Identify intervals by ear to become a better improviser and songwriter

The ears are one of a guitarist's biggest assets. They allow you to easily identify exactly what's going on in your favourite tracks, the ideas in your head, and what your bandmates are playing when they improvise and write songs. Identifying music's raw materials of intervals (the distance between two notes) and chords in isolation is a good place to start. As you become more familiar with each interval and chord's unique sound you'll start to notice them each time you hear music.

27 INTERVALS AND A TABLE OF SONGS

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

Interval	Minor 2nd	Major 2nd	Minor 3rd	Major 3rd	Perfect 4th	Augmented 4th	Perfect 5th	Minor 6th	Major 6th	Minor 7th	Major 7th	Octave
T	[Musical notation for each interval on a treble clef staff]											
A	3	4	3	5	3	6	3	7	3	8	3	9
B	3	4	3	5	3	6	3	7	3	8	3	9

Here you can see how to play each interval (shown in the tab in the key of C) and we've given you a list of familiar tunes to help you recognise them. Listen to the sound qualities of each interval as you play them and if this all looks a bit scary, just work on the major and perfect intervals first.

Minor 2nd - *Jaws* Theme
Major 2nd - *Happy Birthday*
Minor 3rd - *Smoke On The Water*
Major 3rd - *Oh, When The Saints...*
Perfect 4th - *Here Comes The Bride*

Diminished 5th - *The Simpsons* Theme (root, 3rd, 5th)
Perfect 5th - *Star Wars* Theme
Minor 6th - *The Entertainer*
Major 6th - *My Way*

Minor 7th - *Somewhere* (*Westside Story*)
Major 7th - *Take On Me*
Octave - *Sweet Child O' Mine*

28 CHORDS A TABLE OF SOUND QUALITIES

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

Chord	C	Cm	Caug	Cdim	Cmaj ⁷	Cm ⁷	C ⁷
T	[Musical notation for each chord on a treble clef staff]						
A	8	8	9	7	7	8	8
B	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

We've also put together a handy table for chords. Be sure to play through the shapes shown here in the tab and see if you agree with our descriptions of their sounds. If not, create your own - what matters is that you can identify them and use them to create the sound you want!

Major - Happy
Minor - Sad
Augmented - Mysterious

Diminished - Dark
Major 7th - Reflective
Minor 7th - Dark, melancholy

Dominant 7th - Strong, but uneasy

29 EAR TESTS

Track your ear training progress with TG's interval tests

We've prepared three audio tests. The first test uses just major intervals. The second uses minor intervals. The third test uses all the intervals.

See if you can tell which interval is being played in each case. Each pair of notes is played twice. Find the answers at: bit.ly/tga2023audio.

AUDIO
bit.ly/tga2023audio

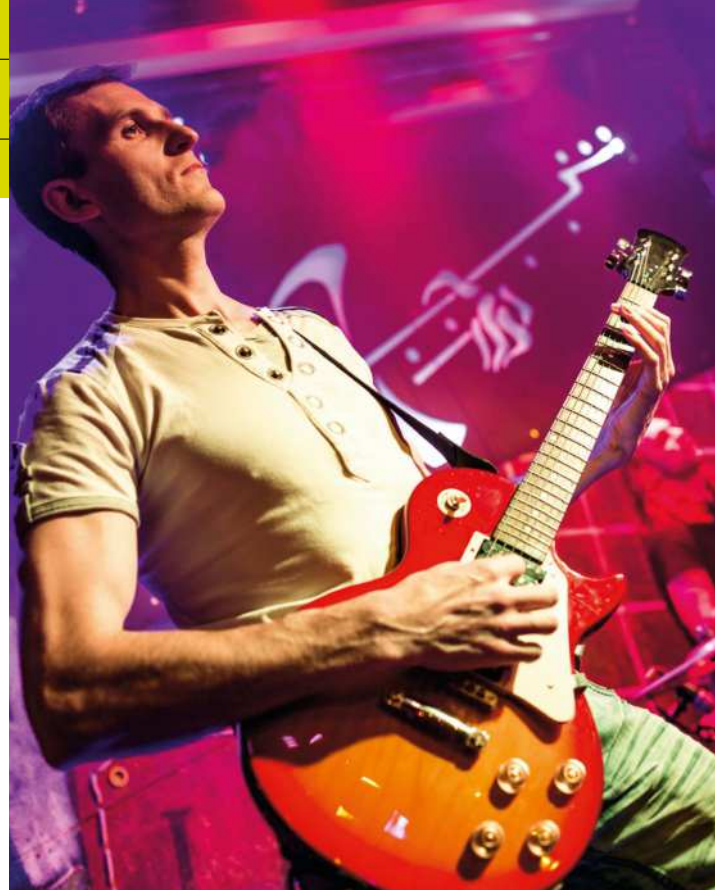


PRACTICE PLANS

You've tried our exercises, now it's down to you to get practising!

The key to improving at all these different guitar playing skills is regular practice. Each area will improve with a small amount of regular practice. How much emphasis you put in each section

depends on your goals as a player and your existing strengths and weaknesses. We've prepared three example scenarios based on different players' goals. Feel free to follow the one that suits you or – better yet – create your own plan.



PLAYER 1 THE ALL-ROUND IMPROVER

For the guitarist who plays a bit of everything, including various styles of music and the odd solo or two...

5 minutes: Notes on the fingerboard

– Find all the F notes, then all the G notes, and so on.

5 minutes: Warm-up

– Play two of the easiest tab examples in the feature slowly.

10 minutes: Dexterity and agility

– Choose two exercises, and aim to play them cleanly.

5 minutes: Write an octave lick

– Try a different root note every time you attempt this.

5 minutes: Playing through changes

– Follow the lesson daily until the 'landing notes' become second nature.

5 minutes: Ear training with intervals and chords

– Try one of our tests.

5 minutes: Rhythm reading

– Play any chord, making sure to follow the rhythm tree for your timing cues.

10 minutes: Funk

– Get into a groove and loop one exercise per day.

10 minutes: Jam tracks

– Alternate daily either playing lead or chords over our jam tracks.

PLAYER 2 THE TECHNICIAN

For players who are generally more interested in soloing and improving their dexterity, timing and technique...

5 minutes: Notes on the fingerboard

– Find all the F notes, then all the G notes, and so on.

5 minutes: Warm-up

– Play two of the easiest tab examples in the feature slowly.

5 minutes: Switch between four octave shapes

– Choose four octave shapes and make quick, accurate changes between them.

15 minutes: Dexterity and accuracy

– Try 10 minutes on legato and spider exercises; 5 minutes on anything else.

5 minutes: Playing through changes

– Land on a root note or chord tone on every change.

5 minutes: Ear training with intervals and chords

– Try one of our tests.

5 minutes: Rhythm reading

– Play through the rhythm tree using only the quarter-, eighth- and 16th notes.

10 minutes: Funk

– Choose an exercise and play the rhythm with a) chords, then b) single notes.

10 minutes: Jam tracks

– Apply the 'Playing through changes' concepts, using root notes and chord tones.

PLAYER 3 THE THEORY BUFF

For players who are looking to *understand* the music they play just as much as improve their technical skills

5 minutes: Notes on the fingerboard

– Find all the sharp and flat notes on the fretboard, e.g., G#, B $\flat$, and so on.

5 minutes: Warm-up

– Follow the major scale in 3rds and the string skipping exercises.

10 minutes: Ear training with intervals and chords

– Try one of our tests. Identify the first interval in the melody of any song you like.

10 minutes: Playing through changes

– Create your own progressions and licks, making sure to target root notes and chord tones.

10 minutes: Rhythm reading

– Revisit this lesson daily to digest the information, then move onto the funk workout.

10 minutes: Funk

– Try accenting different notes in each four-note grouping. It's a tough rhythm workout!

10 minutes: Jam track

– Jam over one of our tracks first with chords, then arpeggios, repeating riffs and finally scalar licks.

HOW TO

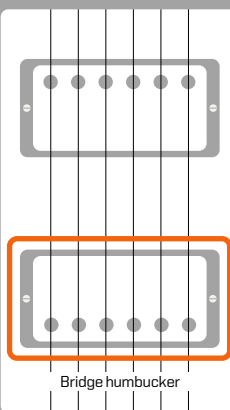
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Funk-style strumming
- ✓ G natural minor scale
- ✓ Powerchord shapes

RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE:

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



Dan Auerbach has a large collection of vintage gear, and he's known to gig with different amps and guitars compared to what he records with in the studio. He's also known for using a multi-amp setup. All this makes recreating his sound almost impossible - so, really, you're aiming for a broadly authentic tone. Humbuckers or single-coil pickups could work. We'd opt for a warm Fender style valve amp set with a little drive just on the verge of breakup. For the heavier riff, a fuzz pedal like an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff will give you some vintage-style distortion.

THE BLACK KEYS

Wild Child

Wild Child is the first single from The Black Keys' 11th studio album *Dropout Boogie*, which comes a year after the release of the Mississippi blues-inspired covers album *Delta Kream*.

Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach begins the song with a Nile Rodgers-esque funky riff using Gm, B_b and C triads around the 3rd to 5th frets. The funkiness comes from the strumming

motion, so keep your pick moving down and up with 16th-note timing.

The next part features distorted powerchords on the lower strings: G5, B_b5, C5 and A5 have their root notes on the sixth string, and there's a D5 built on the fifth string. The odd chord out (coming in after the B_b5) is a D minor diad played at the 10th fret, sixth string and 8th fret, fifth string. Watch our slowed-down video to see how all these elements fit together.

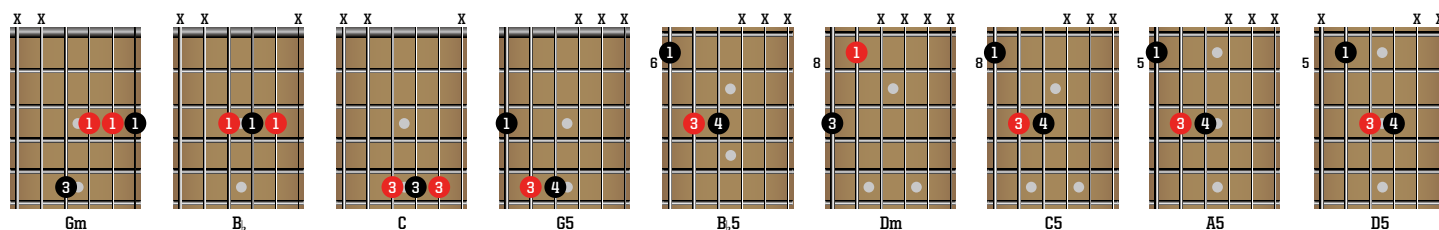
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00-0:19

Tempo: 108bpm

Key/scale: G minor

Main techniques: Rhythmic strumming, powerchords, string bending



The opening funky chords (Gm, B_b, and C) are found within the G minor pentatonic box shape, with the string bend lick played on the second and third strings.

The powerchord section uses the notes on the lowest strings in 'root-5th-octave' shapes. There is one instance of a D minor diad, too.

"I WAS THINKING ABOUT ARTISTS I LOOK UP TO - AND PRINCE IS DEFINITELY ONE WHO WAS JUST UNAPOLOGETICALLY HIMSELF"

Her roots are in blues, but **Samantha Fish** is pushing the boundaries on a new album - with influences ranging from Prince to Fleetwood Mac, and a simpler approach to her songwriting and her gear. As she explains: "It doesn't always work to have a 10-minute solo in the studio!"

Samantha Fish's seventh album, *Faster*, does just as its title suggests and takes things up a notch or two. The hooks are catchier than ever, the guitar work has yet more fire and, as the slightly provocative album artwork suggests, the record leaves the listener in little doubt that the Kansas City-born singer-songwriter is here to deliver straight-up swagger, with zero apologies. One of the overwhelming characteristics of *Faster* is that it in no way sounds or feels as if it were written in a time of global crisis, anxiety and restrictions. Says Samantha, "This is such a fun, exciting record and I really thought that it might go the other way when I first started the writing process."

As an artist who normally tours hard and writes on the road, the housebound writing process offered a little escapism. "I think we all kind of hit this wall last year," she says, "and I just started writing from this place of where I wanted to be, rather than where I was actually at. I feel like the best thing that came out of that was this empowering, upbeat, confident 'take charge and control' kind of a record."

As the follow-up to 2019's *Kill Or Be Kind*, the new album marks Samatha's first collaboration with producer Martin Kierszenbaum, who has previously worked with Lady Gaga, Madonna and Sting. It's perhaps unsurprising then, that *Faster* has a pop sheen that sits atop the raw, bluesy undercurrents of the material. "I kind of want to push the boundaries of what people consider blues to be," Samantha explains. "But also, I really like to involve different sounds. I listen to an eclectic bunch of music -

I'm into pop and I'm into industrial - so it's just kind of finding these different modern tones to incorporate with the blues and rock 'n' roll."

For this album, she headed to the West Coast for the first time, and cut the record at The Village - the world famous Los Angeles recording complex, housed in a 1920s Masonic Temple. Over the years, Samatha has made much of the way a recording location influences the outcome and character of the end product, explaining, "It shapes your mood when you're in there." Of The Village, she notes, "That place has just got so much history and you're like, 'Okay, this is the mood I'm in while I'm here making this album', and it definitely colours it. It's the backdrop for everything."

Sporting a Fleetwood Mac T-shirt for this interview, she admits, "Knowing

that a Fleetwood Mac record was done there at The Village, I listened to that a bunch" - that record being 1979's *Tusk*. As for other sonic inspiration, she cites always having The Rolling Stones "on rotation", and says that gearing up to go into the studio she "brushed up on the famous and legendary records" including those of Lady Gaga, Prince, Elton John, David Bowie, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and North Mississippi Blues players - particularly the Fat Possum roster. Altogether these artists might make for an incohesive mixtape, but elements of each can be heard on *Faster*, and their influences are expertly balanced with a contemporary feel.

For example, on the track *Hypnotic*, she explains how she considered "What would Prince do?" The result is a bouncy and spacious R&B track, reminiscent of Prince's mid-80s hits *Raspberry Beret* and *Kiss*. She laughs, "Can I cuss?", before adding, "I wanted it to feel stylish and to feel like I don't give a f*ck. It's supposed to have this swagger to it. So when I was thinking about the artists and the people who I look up to - Prince is definitely one who was just unapologetically himself - and I feel like that song channels that spirit."

Elsewhere, tracks such as *Twisted Ambition* boast a frenetic energy and an ethos of female independence with ripping solos, bright lead tones and empowered vocals. With strong hooks and melodies at the core of the record's sound, she cites *Loud* as having a melodic motif that she's "super excited about stretching-out live", and explains: "It doesn't always work to have a 10-minute solo in the studio - I'm sure some people would argue with me on that - but I have some ideas for how to stretch it out, so I'm really excited about playing that one later."



on the road and explains that if you want something to sound “Led Zeppelin huge” on a recording, a small amp is the way to go. On previous records, she’s opted for vintage Supros, and explains, “You can get a lot out of a tiny amp – it just has so much character and headroom and it just sounds so good. So I wanted, when I went out there, to have a smaller amp – the Fender Deluxe really worked.”

When touring, Samantha opts for the Texas-based boutique amp brand, Category 5, explaining: “I’m not kind to them by any means, they’re workhorses. They just work for me. It’s all tube, point to point wiring – very simple. And they wail!”

Still, she keeps it adjustable, expanding or reducing her wattage night by night and venue by venue: “I’ve actually got a 4 x 12” out on the road and I run different heads through it, depending on the venue. If we play a really big outdoor amphitheatre, I’ll throw the 90-watt Camille on there and if we’re playing a club, 50 watts is great.” As a pro tip for those just getting into gigging, she adds: “You have to be flexible. If you’re in a different room with a different PA every night – different amounts of people to soak up the sound – it changes things.”

Although much of *Faster* was written in standard tuning, Samantha is renowned – particularly because of her fiery slide work – for playing in altered tunings and frequently opts for open G, drop D, open C and open D. A fan-favourite, her Stogie Box Blues cigar box guitar will always be found in open G but, as it’s missing the top and bottom strings, is tuned to GDGB.

It is by experimenting with altered tunings, she explains, that she finds fresh inspiration. “There’s times when I feel completely uninspired to write and I’ll throw a guitar into a completely different tuning that I’ve never worked with before, and it’ll help [me] write a song. It’ll help you come up with a riff that you wouldn’t have otherwise come up with. I feel like it’s a great tool for learning even more about the instrument.”

ABOVE

“I used my SG straight into a Fender Deluxe and just cranked it”

Expanding on her approach to soloing, she notes: “Anything that has a unique melodic motif that you can repeat and make a part all of its own – not just licks to get through a solo, but something that’s memorable – I’m always proud of that.”

As for the tools of her trade, Samantha is known for having an eclectic mix of guitars, but on this record, she pared it back to just three: her favourite white Gibson SG that she ordered online and has kept stock ever since, a Fender Jazzmaster and a Gibson ES-335 for some of the rhythm parts.

Of this uncharacteristically restrained selection, she says: “Usually I’m in there, flipping through an arsenal of pedals and amplifiers, but we honestly used my SG straight into a Fender Deluxe and just cranked it. And once we got that sound, Martin was like, ‘Dude this is the sound of the record!’”

Clearly having high levels of respect for Kierszenbaum’s guidance, she continues: “I personally could go in

there and twist knobs and play with pedals all day long but sometimes there’s something to be said for being like: You’ve found a sound, this is a sound that’s powerful, let’s make it happen and focus on what you’re putting into it rather than, you know, all the effects.”

This being said, outside of the studio, Samantha’s pedalboard continues to expand rather than shrink with some of its regular fixtures including a road worn AnalogMan King of Tone, a JHS Mini Foot Fuzz, a Boss Super Shifter which she says is “kind of fun for dive bombs or shifting pitches really fast”, as well as a delay.

She adds: “I’ve actually been messing around since we stripped-back to a trio last year, during the pandemic. We’ve since expanded the band, but for that time period, I added a synth pedal to my board so I could mimic some of the keyboard parts softly underneath.”

When it comes to amps, she has very different preferences in the studio to

"I'M FINDING THESE DIFFERENT MODERN TONES TO INCORPORATE WITH THE BLUES AND ROCK 'N' ROLL"

HOW TO

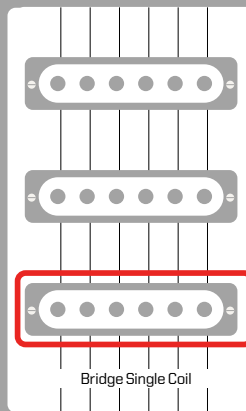
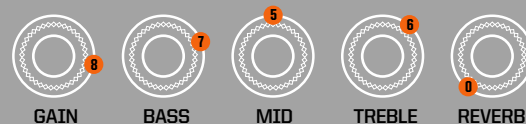
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Drop D tuning
- ✓ Octave effect
- ✓ Half-whole diminished scale



GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



Amy recorded most of the forthcoming album with her P90-equipped Fender Mustang into a Fender Hot Rod amp. She's notoriously tight-lipped about her pedalboard, but our bat-like ears detect an octave pedal set to an octave down and with the mix at roughly 30 per cent. A high gain fuzz style distortion should get you a ballpark tone. Remember, P90s are single coil pickups with typically sparkling top end. They tend to have a bit more bass than many single coils though, so bear that in mind when setting your amp's EQ.

RIFF OF THE MONTH

NOVA TWINS

Antagonist

Nova Twins' mix of grime-y urban punk and bass-heavy groove has garnered guitarist Amy Love and bassist Georgia South praise from the likes of Tom Morello, who personally invited them to open for Prophets Of Rage. The pair also recently helped Fender launch their new Player Plus range of guitars. And, with new album *Supernova* due in June, our expectations are high, fuelled by lead

single and this month's riff, *Antagonist*. Played in drop D tuning, the hefty guitar riff is delivered in unison with the bass, with help from an octave pedal (one octave down, naturally) to stand up to the weight of the song's gargantuan bottom end. With the octave effect thickening the guitar tone, there's no need for powerchords – this is a one-string riff played at the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 6th frets. Just remember to keep the idle

strings muted. Note that the section is in an 'A A A B' arrangement; so the first phrase is played three times, before finishing with a variation.

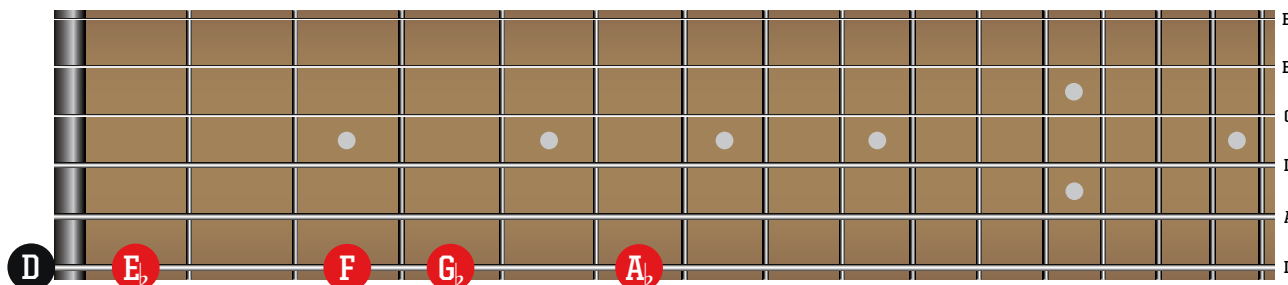
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:48-1:04

Tempo: 120bpm

Key/scale: D half-whole diminished

Main techniques: Downpicking, string muting



This riff centres around the D root note and uses a symmetrical pattern of intervals: semitone, tone, semitone, tone (or D, E_b, F, G_b, A_b if you're talking about the notes). You can theoretically continue this pattern until

you reach the root note again at the 12th fret and create the 'half-whole' diminished scale. Remember, you'll need to downtune your sixth string from E to D (aka drop D tuning) to play the track.

10 THINGS EVERY NOVICE GUITARIST NEEDS TO KNOW..

Chords and scales, rhythm and lead.
These core skills set you up for success in any style

Nobody ever finishes learning the guitar. You could be a master classical guitarist and a novice at blues; or you might be a virtuoso with a pick but uncertain with fingerstyle. Still, some essential skills let you play in a huge variety of situations. Get these down and you've completed your guitar apprenticeship.

Here we break down those essential skills to get you quickly on the road to guitar mastery. We're taking a look at the chords and scales you need to know, and we've provided some exercises for you to try out. Treat each exercise as something to build up to – and if an example is too tough to play at first, break it down into shorter 'phrases' and gradually piece it together as you improve. And why not try recording yourself playing our riffs and licks too? It's a great way to track your progress.



SETTING 1 SCOOPED MIDS

This is a stereotypical modern metal setting, fun for bedroom moshing.



SETTING 2 BOOSTED MIDS

After the scooped tone, this probably sounds harsh and honky when you play on your own. Add bass and drums and it works perfectly for rock and blues.

01 LEARN YOUR AMP

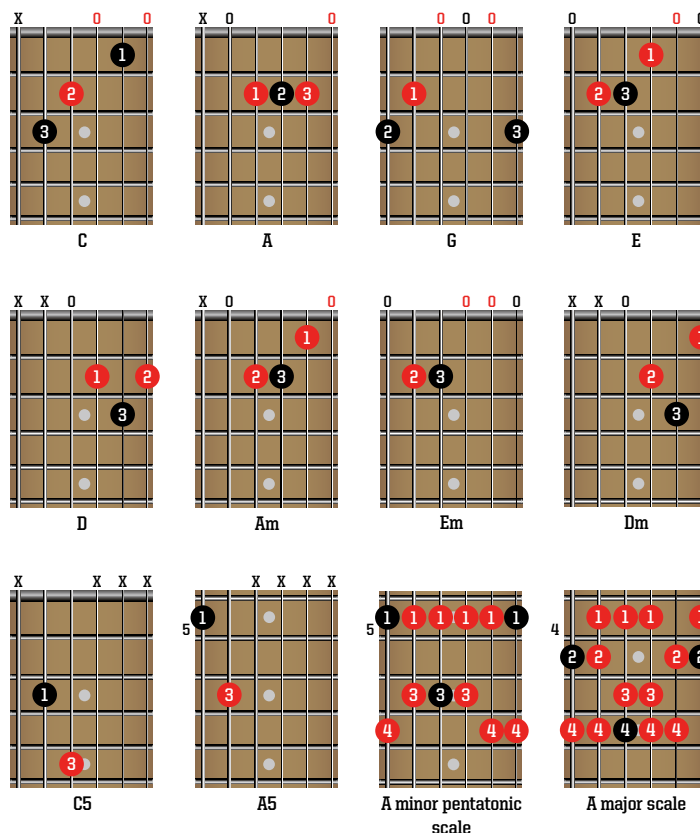
Unless you know how to set your amp? Start with treble, middle, and bass at 12 o'clock. Try turning bass to zero and then to maximum, and listen to the differences. Put it back to 12 o'clock and repeat with the middle and treble knobs. Try it with various gain settings and listen to how the amp behaves. If possible, crank the master volume. The same settings sound different and the guitar feels different at high volume. Settings shown in TG are only ever suggestions: even if we all had the same gear, every room sounds different. Try playing in your bedroom, bathroom, and garage and see how much the tone changes.

02 TUNE UP BY EAR

Everyone needs an electronic tuner, but you should still learn to tune by ear to train your sense of pitch. While tuning, you might get confused whether a note is flat or sharp. If that happens, loosen the string so it's definitely flat, and tune back up. This will 'reset' your ear so it's easier to hear the right pitch. Some machine heads also work more efficiently when tuning up rather than down, so the guitar stays in tune better.

03 ESSENTIAL CHORDS AND SCALES

The ten chord shapes shown here are the most important ones you need to know. Many more advanced chords are related to these shapes in some way. And if you only ever learn two scales, learn these. The minor pentatonic scale is probably the most commonly used shape in lead guitar, and the major scale is the basis for most music theory.



04 FINGER POSITIONING



CORRECT FRETTING

Aim to fret with your fingertips close to the frets, but not on top of the metal.



INCORRECT FRETTING

Fretting inaccurately will cause fret buzz or even sound the wrong note!



THUMB POSITION

This position allows maximum stretch for one-finger-per-fret scale shapes.



Wondering how pro guitarists change chords at lightspeed? They cheat! Throwing in one or more strums of open strings just before a change buys time to prepare the next shape. In the tab there's one strum of open strings before most changes, but if you need longer just move your fretting hand earlier while you keep strumming.

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

For lead guitar, down-up style 'alternate' picking is the most efficient way to play: follow every downstroke of the pick with an upstroke so you're plucking the string every time the pick passes it. Once you've mastered two pickstrokes per fretted note, as tabbed, you can also try three, four, or one.

07 HAMMER-ONS AND BENDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=80

TAB: 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 BU (9) 5 8 BU (10) 5

Your hammer-ons should be in time and about the same volume as the picked notes. The bends need to be exactly in tune. You'll be able to tell if you do it right, because the first picked note after each bend should be exactly the same pitch as the bent note.

08 MAJOR SCALE DESCENDING SEQUENCE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=80

TAB: 5 4 7 4 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 6 7 6 4 6 4 BU 7 6(7)

To improvise confidently, you need to know your scales inside out. This exercise increases familiarity with the shape as well as being a useable lick. Pick with all downstrokes at first, but it can also be an advanced alternate picking workout.

09 SHIFTING POWERCHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=90

TAB: 5 7 7 9 7 9 9 7 7

Moving cleanly between powerchords is about muting. The gaps between stabs should be silent, so drop your picking hand gently onto the strings to mute them. For the slide, keep pressing into the strings as you shift the chord shape up two frets.

10 CHANGING BETWEEN BARRE CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=90

TAB: 7 9 9 7 7 8 9 9 7 5 7 7 5 5 6 7 7 5

Play 4 times

Playing only on beats 2 and 4 like this is a classic soul guitar trick. To get the timing, listen for the snare drum and sync up with it. Use the rests to prepare the next chord shape. Soul greats like Steve Cropper often only strum three strings from within these shapes.

Interview Jenna Scaramanga Photos Austin Mitchell

“I WANT TO STICK
TO WHAT EXCITES
ME RATHER THAN
CONFORM TO
WHAT’S POPULAR
AT THE MOMENT.
I’D RATHER KEEP
IT ROCK ‘N’ ROLL.”

Slash made his new album with **Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators** in just five days. He’s also working on the long-awaited new Guns N’ Roses record.

But the guitar hero admits:

“I’d be lying if I said I don’t feel the pressure in this age of technical expression and fluidity...”

Slash



Slash

➔

H

e was just 21 when Guns N' Roses' debut album *Appetite For Destruction* was released – the record that made him famous as a guitar hero. And all these years later, as Slash speaks to TG via a Zoom call from his home in LA, it's evident that his love of rock 'n' roll is as strong as it's ever been.

When he talks about *4*, the new album from Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators, he's thrilled about how it turned out, with an energy created from having the whole group playing together in the studio. "Recording live is something I've always wanted to do," he says. And when he talks about how things are working out in Guns N' Roses – seven years since he and bassist Duff McKagan reconciled with singer Axl Rose and rejoined the band – he says he couldn't be happier.

4 is also the first release on Gibson Records, a fitting honour for a player who has been synonymous with the Les Paul since *Appetite For Destruction* defined Guns N' Roses as the greatest rock band of the late 80s.

In that era, when hard rock music was getting increasingly slick and safe, GN'R sounded genuinely dangerous. Slash's lead playing had a grind that over-polished shredders couldn't touch, but his melodic hooks in *Sweet Child O' Mine* and *Paradise City* were irresistible. 35 years and 30 million sales later, it's quite probably the greatest rock debut of all time.

After exiting from Guns N' Roses in 1995, Slash found success second time around in the 2000s with the supergroup Velvet Revolver, co-starring Duff McKagan, ex-GN'R drummer Matt Sorum and former Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland. And again, it was thanks in no small part to more unforgettable Slash melodies on hit songs such as *Slither* and *Fall To Pieces* that Velvet Revolver became a multi-platinum act.

In the wake of that band's break-up, Slash's self-titled 2010 solo album saw him collaborating with an array of superstar vocalists including Ozzy Osbourne, Motörhead's Lemmy and the Black Eyed Peas' Fergie. But it was his chemistry with Alter Bridge singer Myles Kennedy that really turned heads, and soon they coalesced into Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators. This is now the most stable group line-up of the guitarist's career, and his commitment to this project is such that he never considered giving it up when the Guns N' Roses reunion happened. He just has to juggle

the two as best he can – and right now, he admits, "it's pretty busy".

GN'R are currently in the middle of a world tour, which has included massive outdoor shows in London and throughout Europe. The band also released a new EP in February 2022 featuring *Hard Skool*, one of two tracks originally recorded during Slash and Duff's absence for the 2008 album *Chinese Democracy* but re-recorded with the current line-up. They have also begun working on a new album – the first since *Chinese Democracy*, and the first with Slash and Duff since the covers album, *The Spaghetti Incident?*, in 1993.

With so much riding on a new Guns N' Roses album, this is one subject on which Slash remains tight-lipped, stating simply and diplomatically: "We put two songs out already and there's more stuff coming." But for the rest of our conversation he is open, energised and passionate as he discusses his dual roles with GN'R and The Conspirators, his gear and inspirations, and this new album on which his guitar tone is possibly the cleanest and most direct he has ever recorded, revealing all the detail in his ferocious chops.

You've now played for longer and made more albums with this band than any other line-up. How do you feel about that?

That's funny! I've never thought about that. New milestones, right? I hooked up with these guys in 2010 and we've just had a great time of it. Even when I got back with Guns N' Roses, which was a pretty monumental thing, I didn't want to let that go. I just managed to thread the needle and keep it going.





Apparently you recorded the album in five days?

Yeah, it was quick. When we started looking for a producer I had a very short list of potential rock 'n' roll guys. Dave Cobb was one of those. He'd done Rival Sons, which is a band I really like, and a bunch of really cool down-to-earth country stuff. We discussed how we liked rock 'n' roll performed live and the energy with that. It was like it was a meeting of minds. We went out to Nashville, set the gear up and just started playing. We did two songs a day over the course of five days and that was basically the whole record sans overdubs and background vocals. We used wedges as monitors and it was just like playing in a club. Myles was in a booth right next to us, but I could actually see him and he just sang along. There would be two or three takes and that was it. I think Myles thought, 'I can always go back and redo this or that', but then he was the first one to test positive for Covid. The vocals were great so there was no need to go back and redo them. One of the reasons I wanted a different producer was because Elvis [Michael 'Elvis' Baskette], who produced the last two Conspirators records, also did both of Myles' solo records and all the Alter Bridge records. I didn't want another record coming out in such close succession that had the same sound. It turned out that you couldn't get a more different approach to vocals.

How was this album written?

A lot of it was written on the road in 2019, at sound checks and stuff, which

is how we normally do it. When Covid happened it stalled our routine. Normally we come off the road, do some work on the songs, then get into pre-production and go back in the studio and do the record. Covid delayed all that, so I did demos of all the material that we had plus a lot of new material. I did the computer drum machine kind of deal, playing them with my fingers, sent it out to Myles and he put down some vocals. Todd (Kerns) finally flew in and put bass on the demos, so that's how the stuff came together.

Was any of it written in the studio?

When I do demos, all my arrangements are never completely finished. You'll have an intro and a verse and a chorus. You might have even a middle. Whatever, it's always open to change. When we go into pre-production we'll jam everything out to the point where I think this is reasonably finished. Once we get in the studio and you're playing the arrangement in earnest some things will change. There was a couple different things that happened. *Fall Back To Earth* really developed. *April Fool* was only three parts that really weren't fine-tuned and Dave Cobb helped us do that.

Your guitar tone on this record sounds a bit cleaner. Was that deliberate?

There's a big difference in sound when you play with the band compared to when you mic up an amp in a booth and go into the control room and dial the sound in that way. It was just a much more direct, raw approach. The sound was cleaner just because of the way that I set up, standing right in front of it.

"I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH PLAYING FAST AS LONG AS THERE'S AN EMOTIONAL CONTENT TO IT"

Slash

You don't need as much gain because the sustain comes from the volume and closeness to the amp.

Yeah, it's just a different trajectory, the way that the sound is coming out and the way that you're perceiving it. Plus on a couple songs I used a Flying V which I love because it's got great output but it is demonstrably cleaner than my Derrig guitar [the *Appetite For Destruction* Les Paul]. *C'est La Vie* and *Actions Speak Louder Than Words* were both played with the Flying V. It's a Hendrix '69 reissue Flying V. It's f*cking great, and it works great for the talk box.

You and the talk box have a great history going back to *Appetite For Destruction*.

It was fun to break it out. It was sort of an afterthought. I wrote it like on regular guitar and in pre-production it dawned on me that that riff would be great with a talk box. The first talk box I ever got was when I was about 16. A friend of mine's mom who [was] in a band had one in her garage, and she gave it to me. The first thing that I ever heard the voice box on that really stuck out to me was Peter Frampton [on *Show Me The Way*], and then it was Aerosmith, a live version of *Walk This Way* off the *Live Bootleg* record. I came up in an era where talk box was around. A lot of people over saturate it now, and it's just more of a tonal effect as opposed to really enunciating with it. I definitely like a cleaner, buzzier old-school sound.

The reverb sounds great. How did you get that?

That was just the room! We discussed Glyn Johns and some of the records he engineered that were really live records, like *Led Zeppelin II*. That was basically it, going in and just setting up live in the room.

What was the amp?

Just a [Marshall 2555] Jubilee 100 watt into straight cab with [Celestion] Vintage 30s. I go through phases. I used the Jubilee for a long time

with Guns N' Roses and then I sort of went off it when I was working with Velvet Revolver. I went through a couple different Marshalls, and then I really came back around to Jubilees on the last tour.

On *April Fool*, the two guitars play variations on the same riff, panned left and right, similar to how you used to play with rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin in Guns N' Roses' early days. How do you develop those parts?

I'll come up with an idea and start jamming it with the guys. Unless I have a specific part, they just make up whatever. Frank [Sidoris, *Conspirators* rhythm guitarist] just goes along with it in his own fashion. We don't spend a lot of time analyzing the guitar parts as long as it works. Sometimes it inspires different ideas for syncopation, but for the most part we just start playing and people make up whatever they want until it starts to jump.

Is that a sitar on *Spirit Love*?

That was the first time I've had the electric sitar. I can't remember what the brand is but I might have had it

since the 90s. I've definitely had it since Velvet Revolver. I just never used it because the sitar has become such a cliché in rock and roll that it's very iffy whether it's gonna work. I recorded it on my Les Paul, but then I went back and overdubbed it with the sitar, through the Marshall exactly the way my guitar was set up. It sounds like the speakers are about to blow up! It was a cool sound and it doesn't sound like the Beatles or anything.

Is the riff on *Fill My World* a nod to *Sweet Child O' Mine*?

I know what you mean now that you've said it, but it didn't come from that. It's that kind of single note riff that's got a rotation thing to it, but it wasn't intended to sound like anything in particular. I was not sure if I was going to show it to the band because it was this ballady type thing, but I sent it to



"GIBSON
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IZZY RULES!

Slash on his magical partnership with GN'R's Izzy Stradlin and with his current GN'R foil Richard Fortus

On *Appetite For Destruction* was it planned that you and Izzy played variations on the same riffs?

No, it never was. I think playing with Izzy is what started the trend to have one guy playing his main part and the other one playing something off of that. That loose thing was just the way that I play with other guitar players. The other guy does his thing and I do my thing and hopefully the twain meet on the same ground somehow. Izzy was such a unique guitar player unto himself. Everything he did was so simplified that if he had a riff I would take it into another place. My approach to it, inspired by whatever he was doing, would make it a bit more complex or more driving. If I had a riff he would just find an off-the-cuff way of playing it without having to play all the notes. It just worked. There was never much discussion or sitting around working stuff out, and I just never have done since then.

Do you play differently with The Conspirators' Frank Sitaris compared with current GN'R guitarist Richard Fortus?

I mean, I play the way I play with Richard as well. He just does his thing, so it's the same dynamic. Some things are a little bit different when it comes to *Chinese Democracy* stuff. I learned parts from listening to whoever was playing, Bumblefoot or Buckethead. If there's a particular part, I want to play it to sound like that. Richard would come up and go, 'Actually, this is how he did it.' Other than that I mean we just do our thing.



ROCK SOLID

Slash and Myles Kennedy, co-conspirators since 2010

➤ Myles and he came up with this really great melody so it became a song. The riff is a mix of open strings and fretted notes and there's little bends in there, too.

The album is the first release from Gibson Records. How did you hook up with them?

I have no idea how long Gibson was thinking about starting a record company prior to us coming together for this record. I'm my own record company and I find distributors in different territories to put the record out. I was talking to my manager about who we're going to use this time around and he mentioned Gibson wanting to do a record company. I had to think about it for a second because that almost sounds too good to be true. I couldn't think of any negative side to it. I know the people at Gibson so I know how much they put into it and how much integrity the company has. I just couldn't go wrong doing it through Gibson. We partner on it an equal share, so we both have to work hard to make it happen. I'm actually very excited to see who else they sign.

Now you're playing with Guns N' Roses again as well as the Conspirators, do you use separate gear for each band?

There's definitely guitars that I use with Guns N' Roses that I don't use with the Conspirators because they're signature guitars for certain Guns songs, but there's not a conscious effort to separate the two. I use what I need to do the gig, so I take a lot of the same stuff out with both bands, especially

effects-wise because it's such minimal effects anyway. Jessica, my '87 main Les Paul, I use primarily with Guns just because that's such a Guns N' Roses thing. I experiment with a lot of different stuff with the Conspirators.

How is it different playing your old songs with Guns N' Roses again versus playing the same songs with Conspirators?

There's a certain chemistry that Duff, Axl and I have that goes back to the very beginning. That's the magic ingredient that nobody could necessarily put a finger on what it is. That happens instantly when I'm working with Guns. I have great chemistry with the Conspirators but when we do a Guns N' Roses song it doesn't have that particular spark to it. I realised that as soon as we started rehearsing. There really is a magic that happens with that combination of people that is different than doing the same material with Myles, Todd and Brent [Fitz, drums], even though those guys do play the sh*t out of the Guns N' Roses stuff. As soon as I rejoined Guns I didn't have that need to play Guns stuff in the Conspirators. We only play one Guns song in the set now. I don't know what song we're gonna play this time around. The Conspirators holds up on its own, which is great.

Have you put your own stamp on the Chinese Democracy parts?

Yeah, if there's a signature part like the hook or something, I want to be recognisable, but the way I go about playing it is probably entirely different

from how the original guys played. It's definitely my own interpretation.

You've said in the past you weren't the biggest fan of shred guitar. You can play extremely fast but you don't sound like a shredder. Do you have any thoughts on why?

I don't have an issue with playing fast. When I'm talking about Eddie Van Halen or Alvin Lee, there's a lot of great fast guitar players but they have an emotional quality. It feels like they're doing it for a reason, there's a feel to it, and it's part of the energy of the tune. It's not playing fast for the sake of playing fast, and it's not playing technical for the sake of playing technical. Like, 'how many tricks and how many techniques can I put into this?' sort of loses the plot for me. When I play fast, it really is an energy thing. I would actually like to tone it back sometimes, especially when I'm doing solos live, but I get so taken away. Things get sped up because you're just really aggressive and you're emoting, like an emotional thing that just calls for that. That's where it comes from. I don't have a problem with playing fast as long as there's an emotional content to it.

Your lead playing has always sounded so distinctive. Why is that?

I take that as a compliment. I'd be lying if I said I don't feel the pressure of all these kids standing in front of you or listening to your record and expecting you to f*cking keep up with the Joneses in this age of a lot of real technical expression and fluidity. I've seen some amazing f*cking techniques. They remind me of BMX tricks, and the time it must take to execute them. It always has been like that, especially in the 80s man. It was shred city in LA. I mean, f*cking Yngwie came to town and it was like, okay... I just don't feel like I want to go that direction. I wanna still feel like what turns me on when I listen to other people playing. I want to stick to what excites me rather than trying to conform to what might be popular at the moment. I'd rather keep it rock 'n' roll.

"ON A COUPLE OF SONGS I PLAYED A HENDRIX '69 REISSUE FLYING V. IT'S F**KING GREAT!"

GUITAR SHOPPING WITH SLASH!

Thinking of buying a Les Paul? Take Slash's advice on finding the right one...

I've learned to be really flexible with a guitar: neck, weight, to some extent hardware – I'm a little fussy over pickups but basically a good, functional Gibson, whatever model, is something I can probably be comfortable with. The biggest issue for me is how each one of them sounds. I really admire people that can pick up any guitar no matter what it sounds like and feel comfortable with it. I can have 10 of the same model, same year – I'll pick out a string of guitars and they all sound different. I can pick one up and go "no, that doesn't work". I can do that for five guitars and then find one and go "oh, this one!"

A good example of that was when Gibson did the Joe Perry '59 reissue, the Slash/Joe Perry guitar that he owned and that I gave back to him. They did a replica of that. I went down to the showroom to get one. They had 30 or 40 custom shop guitars at the showroom in Hollywood. I played probably a dozen of them to find the one that sounds right. It's a specific sound. If it's too bright it will bother me, or if it's too muddy on the bottom.

It's a myth that weight is the most important thing. You can find a light one that sounds great, or you can find a light one that sounds terrible. Same with the heavy guitars. A really heavy Les Paul, you pick it up and think, 'A really dense guitar, this is going to sound huge?', and it can sound really thin. It's really hard to predict what a guitar is really gonna sound like.

PLAY LIKE Slash

Take a look at Slash's key playing techniques to get inside his style

Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths

If you're interested in learning about Slash's playing, it's worth taking a minute to think about his early Guns N' Roses style and which elements still feature in his solo material today. Compared to their 80s contemporaries, there was a rawness to GN'R's sound, and a punky, blues-tinged swagger courtesy of Slash and rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin. Today,

Frank Sidoris takes rhythm duties alongside the hatted one in the Conspirators, but that raw swagger remains: a looseness and behind-the-beat attitude – and this is what you should aim for. Sure, metronomic timing is a good thing in principle, but really, it's all about feel when you play like Slash. Here are ten exercises on the techniques he's employed throughout his career. Let's rock!

1 EPIC MELODIC SOLOING

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 60

Chords: G⁵, D, A⁵, G⁵, D, C, G/B, A⁵, G⁵

Techniques: BU (bend), 8va (octave), 3 (triple)

Play 4 times

We're taking inspiration from *Knocking On Heaven's Door* and *November Rain* here in our short solo. The shape that opens both bars 1 and 3 is one of Slash's favourite melodic tricks, allowing him to switch between major pentatonic and pure major scale phrasing.

2 DORIAN DIADS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 140

Chord: A⁷

Techniques: Doublestops

Play 4 times

This lick uses doublestops in the Dorian mode – a technique you can hear in Slash's 2022 track *Call Off The Dogs*. You can play the entire lick with just your first and third fingers by barring across each pair of strings. For added attitude use downstrokes to strum each note throughout.

3 BLUES-ROCK RIFFING

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=110

N.C. A⁵ N.C. B⁵ D⁵ A⁵ G⁵ A⁵ E⁵ N.C. Play 4 times

Here we're looking at how Slash uses 70s-style blues-rock riffs in tracks like *Mr. Brownstone* and recent single Kennedy/Conspirators single *The River Is Rising*. Use tight, palm-muted alternate picking for the opening notes, then let the A5 chord sustain, before muting the riff again. In bar 2, use pull-offs to smoothly play the bluesy notes.

4 FOUR-NOTE SEQUENCE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=110

A⁵ D⁵ A⁵ D⁵ A⁵ Play 4 times

Slash frequently uses this kind of run, but perhaps most notably in the solo to *Sweet Child O' Mine*. Based in the E minor pentatonic scale (E G A B D), it's essentially a four-note pattern, repeating each time one note farther up the scale.

5 CONSTANT EIGHTH NOTE LICKS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=120

A C⁵ G/B A/C# D⁵ A/E Play 4 times

Slash has used constant eighth-note licks most famously in GN'R's *Sweet Child O' Mine*, on *No More Heroes* from 2012's *Apocalyptic Love* album, and, most recently, on *Fill My World* on latest release, *4*. If you can play an open D chord you'll get the idea – it's essentially the same shape moved higher up the neck.

6 COWBOY CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=100

C Fadd⁹ G⁵ C N.C. Play 4 times

let ring throughout

Clean-tone cowboy chords like these do figure in Slash's work, but mainly with Guns N' Roses. His later work with Myles Kennedy tends to feature more sophisticated harmony, for example in the opening to *Anastasia* and *Shots Fired*. The picking is a challenge here, so practise slowly, keeping your pick movements as small as possible.

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- ✓ Drop B tuning
- ✓ C Ionian, 2 mode
- ✓ Tremolo picking



RIFF OF THE MONTH

SLIPKNOT

The Chapeltown Rag

S

lipknot's latest single is an uptempo, high energy track which is dense with Mick Thompson and Jim Root's intricate, pummeling guitar riffs.

The band's style is rooted in the technical proficiency of death metal, coupled with a unique melodic and harmonic sense that makes it so uniquely Slipknot. This riff is split into three sections.

First is the melody played up at the 5th to 8th fret region of the fretboard. Use your first, second and third fingers to fret the notes, and alternate pick each note four notes per beat. It's important to keep this 16th-note feel consistent throughout.

The riff repeats twice, each with a different ending. Ending one uses C5 and D5 powerchords on the 1st and 2nd frets, whereas the second ending uses single notes on the

open sixth string before finishing with a C5dim powerchord. Check out the slowed down play-through in our video.

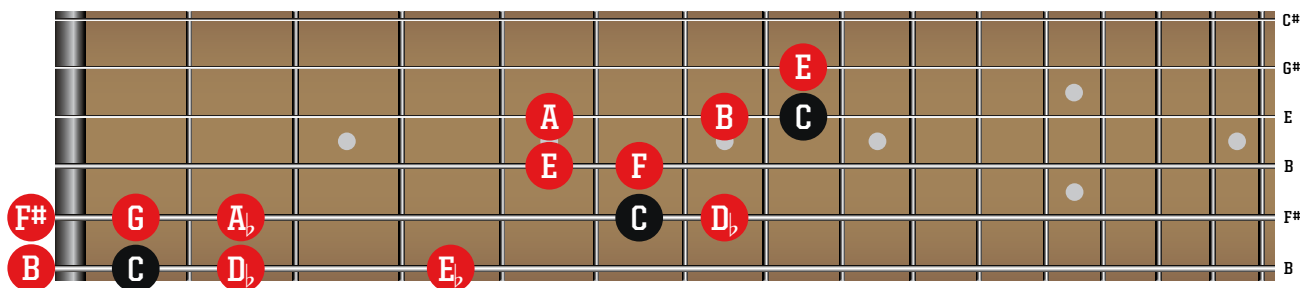
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:44-1:04

Tempo: 190bpm

Key/scale: C Ionian (,2)

Main techniques: Alternate picking, palm-muting, string skipping

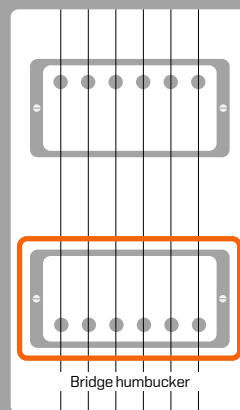
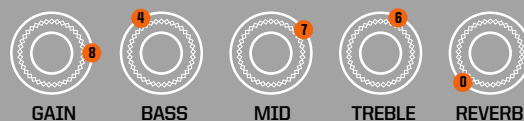


As we're in drop B tuning, the notes are three frets higher on the fretboard, so the fifth-string C is now at the 6th fret instead of the 3rd. The single-note part of the riff takes place above the 5th fret. Most of

the notes are from the C major scale (aka the Ionian mode: C D E F G A B), except for a D, instead of the usual D. This is the Ionian, 2 mode - an unusual sound, perfect for Slipknot riffing.

GET THE SOUND

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Use a bridge humbucker and a saturated distorted tone with plenty of mids and try using a boost pedal to keep the low palm-mutes tight and aggressive. The track is played in drop B tuning (B F# B E G# C# from low to high). This is the equivalent of dropping every string down by three semitones, then dropping the bass string down another tone. If you're using a guitar that's usually in standard tuning, use a set of strings at least two gauges heavier to keep the tuning stable - so, if you usually use .009s, try a set of .011s or even .012s.

Slash

APPETITE FOR INSTRUCTION

TG takes a look at the cat in the hat's greatest riffs with GN'R and more

Video Jamie Hunt

Slash will always be known best for his work with Guns N' Roses, however, he's one of a rare breed of guitarist who has found success outside of the act that first made him famous. Whether with GN'R or his various other bands, Slash is *the* riffmeister general.

We're looking at three GN'R riffs here, spanning from the LA rockers' beginnings with 1987's *Welcome To The Jungle* and 1991's *Civil War* right up to latest release *Hard Skool*. All three tracks see Slash tuning down to E, standard, but we've presented our lessons in E to save you having to retune.



1 GUNS N' ROSES WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Appears at: 0:00-0:28

Tempo: 98 bpm

Key/scale: B minor pentatonic

Here's where it all began! For many, these were the first notes we ever heard Slash play: the opening notes of the first track on GN'R's debut album, and a riff that'd soon be many guitarists' favourite delay line. And regarding that delay, you'll want yours set to a dotted eighth note – the telltale sign being the first repeated note which falls on the fourth 16th note of the bar. You'll be playing a descending run through the B minor pentatonic scale (the scale notes are: B D E F# A B) plus a repeating open second string. The first three-note phrase goes B, open second string, B; the next goes A, open second string, A; then F#, second string, F#; then E, second string, E, before the final four notes go D, second string, B, second string.



2 GUNS N' ROSES CIVIL WAR

Appears at: 2:00-2:27

Tempo: 70 bpm

Key/scale: E minor

This riff from 1991's *Use Your Illusion II* is based in the E minor pentatonic scale (E G A B D), before wrapping up with a brief moment in E natural minor (E F# G A B C D) thanks to the inclusion of an F# note. It's all played in the open position, with the exception of those slides up the strings so it's really all about milking the whole tone bends on the third string and the smaller, bluesier bends on the first and second strings. Aim for a drawn out, vocal-like drawl with your bends and, like Slash, use a wah pedal to enhance the effect – it'll make a ton of difference. On that note, Slash is rocking the wah mainly with a quarter-note pulse, but listen out for variations, e.g., between 2:04 and 2:06 where there's a more gradual swell, and at 2:16 where he follows triplet timing.



3 GUNS N' ROSES HARD SKOOL

Appears at: 0:06-0:16

Tempo: 167 bpm

Key/scale: E minor

There are two guitar parts here, with Slash playing a diad lick over a lower, riffier line. This low riff begins with C5, B5 and E5 powerchords before a single-note line follows G, F#, G, B and A notes – all from the E natural minor scale (E F# G A B C D). Slash's lick also uses this scale but at times feels a bit more like a minor pentatonic riff thanks to some bigger intervals. It's played on the second and third strings between the 7th and 12th frets – and that means you'll be changing fret position a few times: the first part is phrased around 7th- and 8th-fret F# and G diads, before a move up to 8th- and 10th-fret G and A single notes with a 9th-fret E on the third string. Another shift up to the 11th and 12th frets to play B, B, and G wraps up the first cycle of the riff. On the repeat you'll move back to 7th and 9th frets instead of going up to the 12th.



BACKSLASH / FORWARD SLASH

Three more of our favourite Slash moments

SLASH'S SNAKEPIT - BEEN THERE LATELY

Appears at: 0:08-0:20

The lead single for sophomore Snakepit album *Ain't Life Grand* kicks off with this hard rocking four-bar riff. Fretting position is key. Play the first two bars in 3rd position, but by bar 3 be ready to shift between the 7th and 1st frets.

VELVET REVOLVER - SLITHER

Appears at: 0:27-0:41

Probably Slash's best known non-GN'R song, *Slither* features a rare venture into drop D tuning. This makes for easy one-finger powerchord shapes, but practise slowly - it's easy to lose your way during those position shifts.

SLASH FEAT. MYLES KENNEDY & THE CONSPIRATORS - FILL MY WORLD

Appears at: 0:00-0:32

After the opening bend from 4th to 5th fret on the second string, Slash targets the open first and second strings. Follow up with: 4th fret second string, 6th fret third string, 5th fret second string, 7th fret first string, 5th fret second string.





Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Kevin Nixon

HOW TO CREATE A ROCK ANTHEM

BY
**DEF
LEPPARD**

Guitarists **Phil Collen** and **Vivian Campbell** on the art of the stadium rock banger. Rule number one: "Respect the melody..."

Only four British bands have had two ten-million selling albums in America. The first three – The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. And the fourth? No, not The Rolling Stones. Not The Who. Not Queen. It's Def Leppard.

Formed in Sheffield in 1977, the band rose to fame in the 80s with the two blockbuster albums that sealed their place in that exclusive club – 1983's *Pyromania* and 1987's *Hysteria*. And the key to this success is their mastery of the rock anthem – as illustrated in hit songs such as *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, *Animal*, *Photograph*, *Rocket*, *Rock Of Ages* and *Let's Get Rocked*.

This summer they head out at last for the twice-postponed Stadium Tour in the US with Mötley Crüe, Poison and Joan Jett. But while Leppard could easily tour for the rest of their lives off their back catalogue, the urge to make new music is still



strong within them. “A lot of artists stop growing and creating,” says guitarist Phil Collen. “We haven’t.”

The making of new album *Diamond Star Halos* was a first for the band – as they worked remotely from their homes, recording song ideas and individual parts on laptops, sharing material via Dropbox, which was then collated into finished tracks by the band’s long-serving producer Ronan McHugh. But the band’s signature sound remains very much intact on an album packed with new anthems in the classic Leppard tradition.

The first single, *Kick*, nods to their glam rock heroes from the early 70s. Even the album’s title is taken from the lyrics to the T.Rex glam classic *Get It On*. And throughout the album, Phil Collen’s partnership with Irish guitarist Vivian Campbell, is as strong as it’s ever been – something that’s evident from the get-go with the blazing trade-off solos in the opening track *Take What You Want*.

These guys have been playing together for 30 years now. Phil joined the band in 1982 during the making of *Pyromania*. Vivian joined ten years later following the death of the band’s original member Steve Clark.

Creating stadium rock bangers is Def Leppard’s speciality, and here, Phil and Viv present their guide to how it’s done...

THE SONG IS KING

Vivian: The real reason why Def Leppard is so different to so many other bands is we know – it’s not about us, it’s about the songs. It’s not about how well I can play guitar or how well Phil can play guitar. It’s about the f*cking song. You do your guitar parts as best as you can but at the end of the day the song is going to outlive all of us.

Phil: You’ve got to listen to what the vocal’s doing. You have to respect that main melody, and then you can alter stuff around it. It has to be within the vocal structure, because you can f*ck something up.

KNOW WHEN TO LET RIP

Phil: The reason we’ve played safe in the past is because you’re respecting the song maybe too much. With this one, because we recorded remotely and there was no one else in the room it’s like, ‘F*ck it.’ You can overthink and play too safe. You’re like, ‘I don’t want to tread



on anything.’ With this one, I was like ‘Well, I’m going to experiment. I feel this should be like this,’ and go off. I’d send it to everyone then if no one says, ‘That’s a bit over the top!’ then you’re fine.

Vivian: I do feel that my playing is better than ever and certainly more comfortable. I have a lot less anxiety about it, probably because I’m doing it so much since I started Last In Line (the group he formed in 2012 with fellow ex-members of Dio – the band in which he made his name in the early 80s). The passion was reignited and I’ve definitely built upon it. When it came time to do guitar solos I didn’t have the pressure of other people in the room. You know, ‘Lunch is coming up. When is he going to do this?’

LEAVE A GAP FOR THE SNARE

TG says: In the past, Leppard learned so much from Mutt Lange, the producer of *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*. They even called him the ‘sixth member’ of the band. Many of Lange’s hits have riffs that pause for the snare drum – check out AC/DC’s *Highway To Hell* and *Back In Black* or The Cars’ *You Might Think*. The same is true for Leppard’s new single.

Phil: With *Kick*, I think I had the chorus and then it broke down to the verse. I wanted something with gaps, like *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. When we did that my original riff was a bit like *White Lines* by Grandmaster Flash, a continuous thing. Mutt was like, ‘Oh no, man, you got to leave a gap for the snare!’ That just brought it to life. I wanted to do that for the verse of *Kick*.

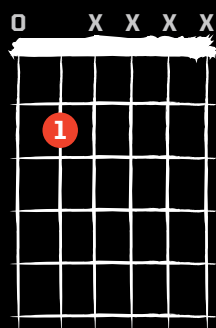
PLAYING MATTERS MORE THAN GEAR

Vivian: I moved from Los Angeles to New Hampshire, so I don’t have many guitars at home. Most of my guitars are in Def Leppard’s locker in southern California. It’s probably just as well because there’s enough choice in the drop down menu in Guitar Rig without auditioning every Les Paul again. I don’t want to get into the weeds too much. It’s about the performance more than the guitar, the preset or anything. To be honest, a lot of my choice came down to which guitar has the freshest strings!

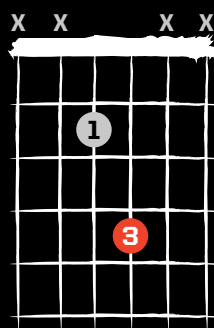


"I WANT LESS GEAR, NOT MORE. HOW YOU PLAY"

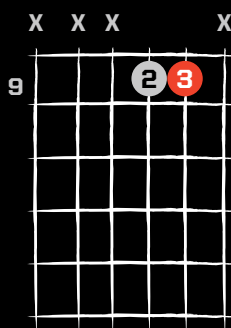
LAYER YOUR CHORDS...



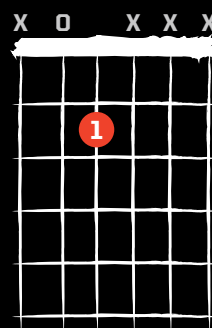
E5



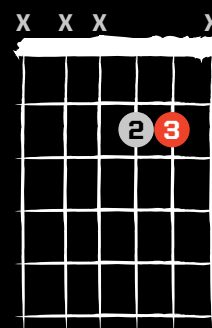
E5



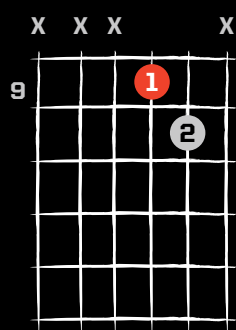
E



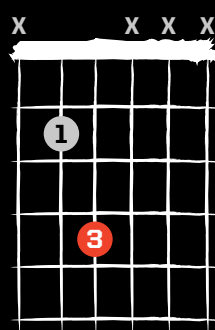
A5



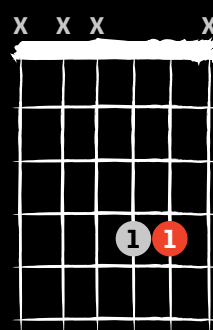
A



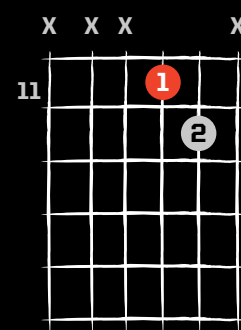
A5



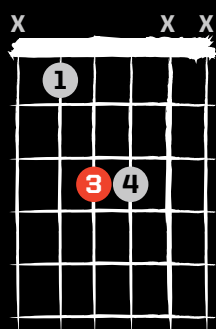
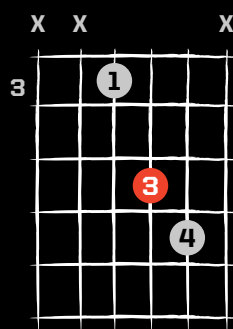
B5



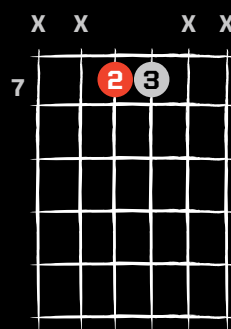
B



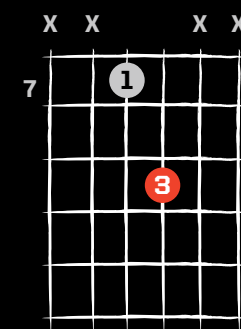
B5

B $\flat$ 5

F5



D5



A5

Vivian: In a really good Def Leppard song Phil and I are never playing the same parts. In the hard rock world there's this school of thought that you have two guitar parts playing the same thing to make it sound heavier. If I get a demo from Phil, I would never play the chords in the same register he's put them down already. I just try inversions. There's countless ways you can play a chord up the guitar neck. But the bridge section in *Hysteria* where the notes were recorded one at a time for the chord - we've never done anything like that since. I think that's too much work!

Phil: If you want to make it broader, if someone's playing a powerchord or a barre chord, and the other one's doing an open version, that sounds great. If you're playing a D you could add an A chord, you know the first and the fifth. You put the parts in different octaves and also you do a different rhythm.

TG says: In *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, the chorus has the chords E, A, and B split across multiple guitar tracks. It is possible to play all those notes on one guitar, but with distortion they can sound muddy and out of tune.

Harmonised chords sound clearer, just as a Thin Lizzy-style twin guitar solo sounds clearer than playing doublestops on one distorted guitar. You can get more ambitious by layering these E- and A-shapes over each other.

Animal begins with an F5 powerchord layered over a B $\flat$ 5 to create a big B $\flat$ sus2. The riff in *Photograph* includes a partial D5 chord layered with an A5, which makes Asus4. To hear parts in different octaves and with counter rhythms as Phil describes, listen to the chorus of *Hysteria* with headphones on.

GUITAR BEGINS AND ENDS WITH YOUR HANDS" VIVIAN CAMPBELL



PERFECTION SUCKS!

Phil: The intro to *Kick* was from my demo. You can hear this ringing that sounds like someone hit a jar or something. It's the guitar just overloading and peaking. We left it on because it sounds cool. The solo was a total guide, mistakes all over the place. I'm like, 'F*ck it, sounds great!' I love it just the way it is, so we left it on. Normally we do thirty tracks of a vocal harmony. On this one, some of the stuff is just me doing eight tracks. I would do a guide vocal in my echoey front room. Grab a [Shure] SM58 and just sing, like, 'I'll do it properly later on but this is how it goes.' Ronan would go 'That's great! Just use that,' and someone else would harmonise. You can actually hear everyone's voice. Joe [Elliott, vocalist] was f*cking spectacular. He was doing stuff in Dublin on his laptop with a little sh*tty mic that he does his radio show on, and that's some of the stuff that ended up on the album. That's Mutt Lange's thing. You'd say, 'It has to be perfect.' He's like 'F*ck no, I hate perfect!' He said it just has to sound and feel right.

WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE BETTER THAN YOU

Phil: It really helps me as a songwriter to write with someone who's better than me, or different to me. The speed that they do things is a little intimidating sometimes but it's just great to be around. I was writing with Sam Hollander, who wrote *High Hopes* for Panic! At The Disco. He's just awesome. It was really inspiring working with him because he's so quick firing. You know he's just writing away and just bouncing whole ideas. We had the whole thing done in an afternoon. You want to be around someone who's gonna do that. When I did the G3 tour with Satriani and Petrucci. We were doing *Highway Star* and from the first rehearsal I was like 'F*ck, I'm gonna have to practise a lot more because I'm just gonna get left behind by these guys.' They're just it's so far over the top. John goes, 'Well, if I do this harmony, Phil, you can do this.' It was further than I'd ever stretched on anything I'd ever done. I love someone giving you a helping hand and pushing you at the same time.

➔ **Phil:** On this album, I used a Squier Tele Thinline on the solo of *This Guitar*. It was just a standard thing I bought years ago in Dublin and it's just great. It's a Squier Starcaster at the beginning. And for the solo on *Gimme A Kiss*, I actually used a Squier Super-Sonic with a wah.

Vivian: Do I have any more signature gear planned? God no. I want less gear, not more. How you play guitar begins and ends with your hands. The rest is just sh*t to get in the way and sh*t that's gonna go wrong.

Phil: Everything is recorded with Guitar Rig. I've been using the same main preset since 2011. I made some presets for Guitar Rig 6 but I didn't want to update my computer because I was scared it wouldn't work anymore. Sometimes I'd send Ronan

[McHugh, producer] the unamped sound so he can reamp it, but with a lot of this stuff the main demo sound is what's on the record. Live we use Fractals, and whenever I do solo gigs I use a Blackstar Silverline. There's subtle differences obviously, but it all sounds like me – it sounds exactly the same!

Vivian: Because your tone is in your hands it doesn't really matter. Phil can pick up my Les Paul, and it sounds like Phil through my gear. I've played solos before with his Jackson, like the solo in the song *Paper Sun* [from 1999's *Euphoria*]. You can hear because I forgot to turn the sustainer off and you can hear there's one point where it goes into feedback. So tone is 100 per cent in your hands.

ANIMAL INSTINCT
"You can overthink and play too safe," Phil says.

"ONE OF MY SOLOS WAS A TOTAL GUIDE, MISTAKES ALL



CREATE HOOKS EVERYWHERE

Phil: I always go back to Killer Queen (a number 2 UK hit for Queen in 1974). There's a hook almost like every two bars or something!

Vivian: In Def Leppard world we wouldn't be very excited about just power chords.

Normally we'd be looking for a jangle to go on top. The jangle is what starts to elevate it to something other than the ordinary. That's not just a chord thing. We're looking for a part to go on top of that.

Phil: You can even do lead parts around the

vocal, but you have to have that bedrock there. On the title track from *Hysteria* we had the vocal melody beforehand and Steve (Clark) would come up with something different. Again, it's got to respect the melody. As Keith Richards so eloquently put it, weaving sonic tapestries.

DEF LEPPARD STYLE 'HOOKY' LEAD

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=108

E A C#m7 B E

Play 4 times

PM - - - - - 3 PM - - - - - 3 PM - - - - - 3 PM - - - - -

TAB

12 14 12 14 12 12 12 14 12 14 12 12 11 11 11 11 14

TG SAYS: 'The jangle' can be distorted arpeggios (*Let's Get Rocked*), clean arpeggios (*Photograph*), or jamming on a ringing open string (*Pour Some Sugar On Me*). Check out *Love Bites*, *Hysteria* and *Animal* for lead guitar hooks that fit around the vocal. Our tab example shows how Leppard write lead parts around chord progressions. One note changes on each repeat to fit the chord changes, but that note isn't necessarily a root note. Over the E chord, the lick starts on G# (the major 3rd) and moves smoothly up one fret to A when the chord changes to A major.

OVER THE PLACE - BUT IT SOUNDS GREAT!" PHIL COLLEN

STRING SKIPPING

Supercharge your picking and soloing skills and create ear-grabbing ideas with TG's string skipping exercises

This special tutorial focuses on the art of string skipping with a pick. The aim is to develop your picking hand accuracy and also to provide you with some interesting new soloing ideas.

String skipping is a simple concept: the notes you play are on non-adjacent strings, so you have to 'skip' over certain strings as you play – and this calls for accurate picking. We're focusing on lead guitar here in our lesson, but it's worth noting that

string skipping also applies to arpeggios in a chord/accompaniment setting too. For example, Radiohead's *Street Spirit (Fade Out)* uses the technique extensively.

As inspiration for our lesson we've chosen some well-known guitarists who use string skipping to great effect. The idea is to learn our tab examples and then practise them with a metronome at a tempo to suit you. You can stretch yourself by gradually increasing the tempo and charting your progress over a series of days and weeks.



MINOR PENTATONIC STRING SKIPPING 1

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 90

Am¹¹

TAB

etc.

The minor pentatonic scale places two notes on each string so it's easy to create string-skipping patterns. This example works on the easiest string skip of all – the single-string skip. Start slowly and follow the picking directions and fingering shown in the tab. Dialling in an accurate technique at slower tempos is the key here.

MINOR PENTATONIC STRING SKIPPING 2

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩ = 90

Am¹¹

TAB

3 5 3 5 2 5 2 5 10 8 10 8 9 7 10 7 10 8 3 5

etc.

Things are getting tougher here as you skip two strings with your pick. Dial in some distortion and it's an impressive sounding lick, but it may take some time to perfect. Repetition at a slow tempo is the key so your brain can learn how far to move your pick from one string to the next.

C MAJOR SCALE INTERVALLIC EXERCISE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=135
Cmaj⁹ Fsus²

TAB: 17 15 13 12 | 10 8 6 5 | 10 12 | 13 15

etc.

This pattern uses the 6th interval in a descending pattern. You can also play this type of idea with finger slides and continue it ascending or descending as long as you like. The idea in the last two bars will stretch your picking technique as it uses two string skips.

NUNO BETTENCOURT-STYLE STRING SKIPPING WITH A SCALE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=140
Am¹¹ 8va

TAB: 5 7 8 | 7 9 10 | 9 10 12 | 10 12 14 | 12 14 16 | 14 16 17 | 16 17 19

etc.

This example places three notes on the third string and three on the first string. You can ascend or descend with this idea and it is possible to build up a lot of speed with this concept. Practise slowly to begin with and consider reversing the pick strokes, starting on an up-stroke.

CARL VERHEYEN-STYLE OCTAVE DISPLACEMENT

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=140
Cmaj⁹ Fsus²

TAB: 7 8 8 | 10 10 8 9 7 | 8 8 12 | 13 13 14 12

etc.

Octave displacement is a nice way to spice up the sound of scale runs. The idea is to take various intervals of the scale you are playing up or down the octave. This can be quite challenging at first but is a great way to implement the string-skipping concept. This example simply ascends up and down the major scale but sounds way more interesting with the various intervals displaced.

JOHN PETRUCCI-STYLE ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=140
G Am

TAB: 7 8 10 | 15 10 12 12 | 10 13 10 12 | 17 10 12 13 10

etc.

This John Petrucci-style exercise is great practice for the picking hand. The fretting hand work is a bit fiddly so we have notated a suggested fingering in the tab. Once you have this exercise mastered, see if you can incorporate it in a solo.

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
 ✓ Drop C tuning
 ✓ Diminished 7th harmony
 ✓ Syncopated rhythms

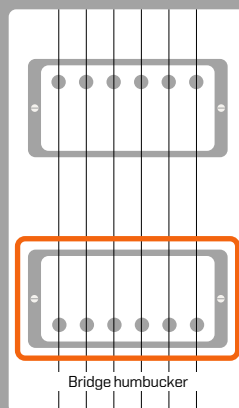


RIFF OF THE MONTH

VIDEO
ON YOUR
CD

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Typically the Mastodon duo use various Gibson Les Paul and SG guitars, usually through Marshall, Friedman or Orange amps. A lot of the drive tone comes from their amps, though Ibanez Tube Screemers are used for more boost.

MASTODON

Pushing The Tides

Mastodon's Bill Kelliher and Brent Hinds are known for their progressive and experimental riffing, and this lead single from their eighth studio album *Hushed And Grim* continues the trend.

The song opens with a heavy, syncopated guitar riff that will test your rhythmic perception. On first listen, you may assume the riff is in an odd time signature, and, though it

can be interpreted as a subset of changing meters, it actually follows two repeating bars of 4/4. The drums follow the riff's rhythm rather than playing an obvious backbeat, which heavily disguises the 4/4 signature.

The best way to learn the pattern is to keep your strumming hand moving down and up in 16th notes and learn when to hit the strings. Bar 1 should be: 'down-down-up-up', 'down-down-up-up'; bar 2 is phrased:

'down-up-up-up', 'up-down-down-down-down'. Our slowed down video demonstration shows the riff played against a 4/4 hi-hat, which should make the rhythm clearer.

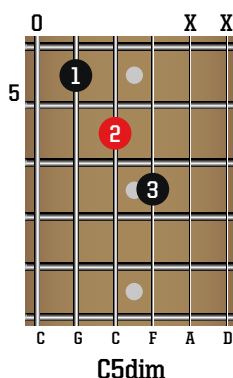
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00-0:18

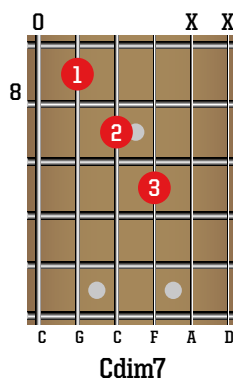
Tempo: 103 bpm

Key/scale: C diminished

Main techniques: Syncopated strumming, string muting, open pedal strings



C5dim



Cdim7

First, take note of the tuning – the guitars are in drop C (CGCFAD) here. Brent and Bill use gauge 0.010 strings for this tuning, with a 0.054 for the thickest string. The thing is, it's all relative. So, if you usually use, say, gauge 0.010s for standard tuning, it's worth using a heavier set of strings to compensate for the lower tension of the drop tuning. We recommend trying a couple of gauges heavier than your usual set.

Brent and Bill's chords shouldn't challenge you too much. There are only two of them and they're the same shape – just played in different fret positions. Together, these simple shapes give the clashing, dissonant harmony of a C diminished 7 chord (C E, G, B,). The riff alternates between the open sixth string and the fretted three-note shapes, so stub your first finger up against that low string to silence it as you strike the chords.

Photos Ethan Russell

20 THE BEATLES

Greatest Guitar Songs

No band has inspired more people to play guitar than The Beatles – the greatest, biggest and most influential band of all time. And so, in issue 352 – to coincide with the long-awaited premiere of the three-part documentary series *Get Back* – TG presented The 50 Greatest Beatles Guitar Songs, as voted by you in a poll on GuitarWorld.com.

There were so many to choose from. *I Feel Fine*, with its groundbreaking use of feedback. *A Hard Day's Night*, with that mythic opening chord. *Helter Skelter*, when the Fab Four turned it up to 11. *Blackbird*, one of the most perfect acoustic songs ever recorded. And *Something*, the classic ballad that marked George Harrison as a songwriter to rival John Lennon and Paul McCartney, and in which George delivered what was arguably the greatest solo he ever played.

In this abridged version of the original 50, we've got in-depth analysis of our top 20 from TG writers Grant Moon, Ellie Rogers and our former Editor Tim Tucker, a writer, musician and respected authority on The Beatles as host of the podcast *My Favourite Beatles Song*, which celebrates the music of the Fab Four with distinguished guests.

Turn the page, and let's get started!



Tim Tucker is a writer, musician and host of the podcast 'My Favourite Beatles Song', which celebrates the music of the Beatles with distinguished guests: www.myfavouritebeatlesong.com





20 THE BEATLES

Greatest Guitar Songs

DIG IT

The Beatles' final public performance from the rooftop of Apple Corps HQ at 3 Savile Row, London, on January 30, 1969

20 YER BLUES

A far-from-straightforward blues song

In tune with the late-60s blues boom, the Beatles delivered this slice of raunchy hard rock on the 'White Album'. Harrison and Lennon play entwined overdriven riffs and licks, with subtle shifts in time signature from 12/8 to 8/8 to 4/4 providing the twists that make this more than just a 'straight 12-bar'. For this recording, Lennon thrashed his Epiphone Casino ES-230-TD, going full grunge mode in the rhythmic guitar solo. Harrison played his famous 'Lucy', a goldtop Gibson Les Paul repainted red, which had circulated amongst various rock stars before being given to him by Eric Clapton in 1968.

19 GET BACK

Maximum R&B from a 'tight little band'

The Beatles settle into a smooth rhythm and blues shuffle for one of the highlights of the *Let It Be* period. John Lennon adopted lead guitar duties after Harrison briefly quit the band during tense filmed rehearsals. He plays some of his most subtly effective guitar parts, including the pentatonic answering phrases during the verses, and tasty partial chords at the seventh and ninth frets throughout the chorus. Lennon's guitar solo is a marvel of soulful economy, with its mournful bends and stuttering picking pattern. The song was immortalised in the famous rooftop concert that was their last public performance.

18 YESTERDAY

The song that came in a dream

Voted 'The Song of the Century' by BBC Radio 2 in 1999, *Yesterday* has been covered more often than any other song in history, with over 2,200 versions recorded. Paul McCartney is the only Beatle on the recording, playing his acoustic guitar backed by a string quartet. It's an early example of McCartney's unique picking technique, using his thumb for the bass note and 'sort of flicking the high strings' (see also: *Blackbird* on p61). The recording is in F major, but McCartney tuned down his Epiphone Texan FT-79 acoustic a whole tone, so he could play it in G.

17 A DAY IN THE LIFE

Profound lyrical expression plus visionary musical expansion

The grand finale to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* begins quietly, with Lennon strumming open G, Bm, Em, and C chords on his Gibson J-160E acoustic. But what a journey it takes us on, from the tragic death of a politician, through a devastating world war, to the banality of everyday human existence. The guitar plays a supportive role throughout, as the orchestra spirals into McCartney's piano-led mid-section, before tugging us back into a last verse and that devastating final E major chord played on three pianos at full sustain. For many, this is the band's finest moment.



16 I FEEL FINE

Another Beatles first: feedback!

John Lennon was inordinately proud that this was the world's first recording to feature guitar feedback, initiated by Paul's bass note and the resulting resonance from Lennon's guitar. The finger-contorting guitar riff drives the song, played in unison by Lennon on his Gibson J-160E (an acoustic with onboard pickup) and Harrison on his Gretsch Tennessean. Using a rhythmic pattern inspired by Bobby Parker's *Watch Your Step*, it adds 9ths and 6ths to the basic 12-bar sequence, driving this joyful rocker through a unique blend of blues changes, latin beats and pop melody. Harrison's four-bar solo is a masterclass in understatement.

15 TICKET TO RIDE

McCartney's lead guitar debut

One of The Beatles' first 'drone' songs is characterised by its chiming guitar riff on an open A chord, with an added 9th achieved by alternating the open B string. The riff is played by George Harrison on his 1963 Rickenbacker 12-string, invoking the jingle-jangle guitar sound made prominent in the mid-60s by the Byrds (who had themselves been inspired by the 12-string outro to *A Hard Day's Night*). This is also the first Beatles record where the guitar solo is played by Paul McCartney rather than George Harrison. McCartney overdubbed his distinctive bluesy licks in the bridges and outro, using his recently acquired Epiphone Casino.

14 PAPERBACK WRITER

The Beatles invent the Monkees

Recorded during early sessions for the *Revolver* album, the Beatles' 12th British single saw another turning point in their sound. The guitar riffs were now heavier and more distorted – compare the overdrive of *Paperback Writer* to the straighter sound on *Day Tripper* just a year earlier. McCartney plays bass and lead guitar, using his Epiphone Casino for the guitar riff and his Rickenbacker 4001S for the beefed-up bass, which was boosted to new levels thanks to innovative new recording techniques introduced by engineer Geoff Emerick. The sound and feel, and a mishearing of the lyrics, directly inspired the Monkees' first single, *Last Train To Clarksville*.

13 COME TOGETHER

Groovin' up slowly

Originally conceived as a political campaign song for hippy guru Timothy Leary, *Come Together* has its roots in Chuck Berry, both in its borrowed opening lyrics, as well as Lennon's classic rock 'n' roll rhythm guitar pattern. The swampy D minor blues groove goes at a deceptively slow pace, with the emphasis on 16th notes from Ringo's drum pattern giving it a more upbeat vibe. The feel is enhanced by the interweaving of Lennon's and Harrison's rhythm guitars, along with McCartney's fluid upper register bass and overdubbed electric piano. Listen out for Harrison's sweet tone on the song's harmonised lead guitar solo and outro licks.

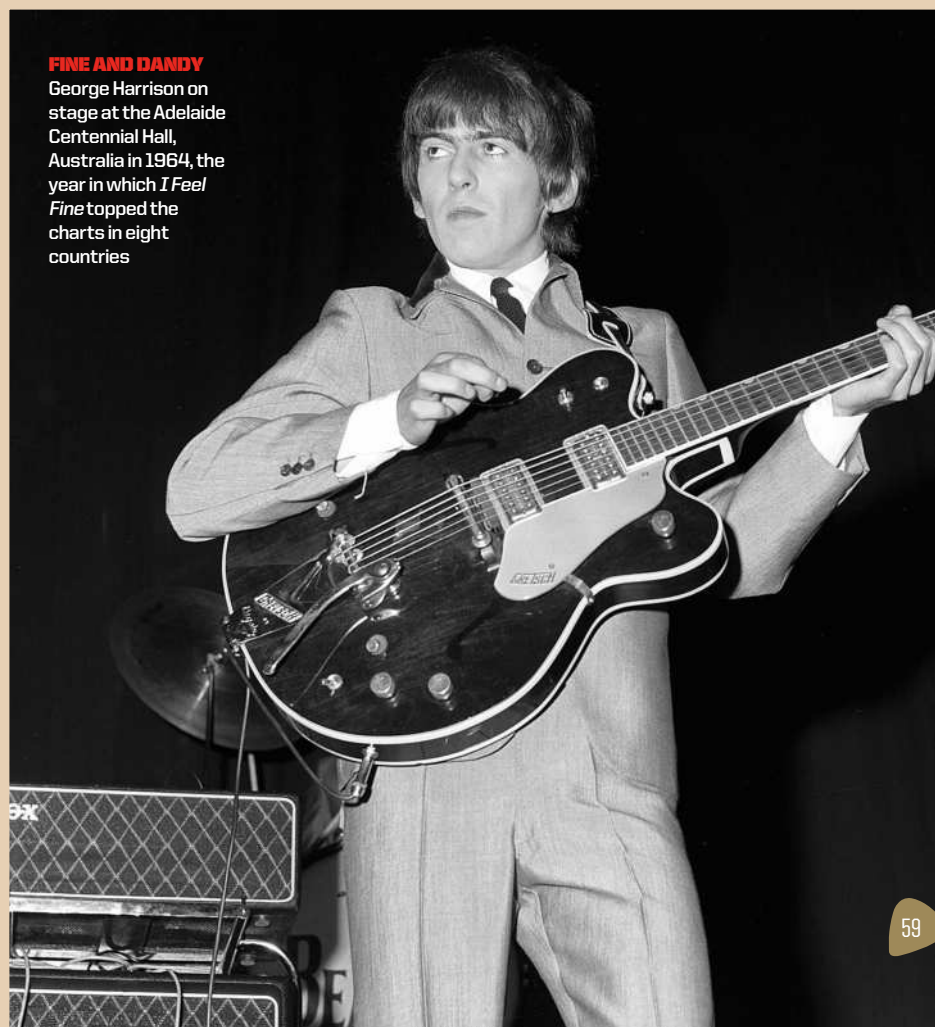
12 HEY BULLDOG

The quintessential Beatles rock 'n' roll song

A monster piano/bass/guitar riff drives this punchy rock number, recorded at the tail end of The Beatles' blissed out psychedelic period. McCartney delivers a bouncing improvised bass line, while Harrison produces one of his best

FINE AND DANDY

George Harrison on stage at the Adelaide Centennial Hall, Australia in 1964, the year in which *I Feel Fine* topped the charts in eight countries



Over a bouncing bassline, *Hey Bulldog* features one of Harrison's best rock solos for The Beatles

rock solos for the Beatles, using his 1964 Gibson SG at full blast. In his book *Here, There and Everywhere*, Chief Engineer Geoff Emerick recalled of this session, '[Harrison's] amp was turned up really loud, and he used one of his new fuzz boxes, which made his guitar absolutely scream.'

11 NORWEGIAN WOOD (THIS BIRD HAS FLOWN)

A story song with a twist

A standout on the *Rubber Soul* album, this is one of Lennon's most obviously Bob Dylan-inspired songs, written and recorded at a time when folk and rock were rubbing up against each other and creating sparks. The main theme is a descending phrase in triple time, using notes from the Mixolydian mode. Lennon plays with a capo on the 2nd fret of his Gibson J-160E, using the open D chord shape to craft its melodic contours. George Harrison harmonises with a sitar, for the first time on a pop record. The parallel minor in the bridge makes for a lovely contrast in texture.

Photos: Getty Images



10 THE END

The grand, three-guitarist finale

The last significant song on the last recorded Beatles album, it's clear that the band was fully aware of its imminent demise. Capping the majestic medley that dominates the latter half of *Abbey Road*, it's notable for two key musical landmarks: Ringo's one and only drum solo on a Beatles record, followed by the three guitar-playing Beatles trading licks. Over an A7 to D7 raw blues groove, McCartney, Harrison and Lennon take 2-bar solos in turn, cycling around three times. They agreed to record the whole performance live, lined up next to each other in the same room, and after an hour's rehearsal, nailed it in one take. According to Engineer Geoff Emerick, "John, Paul and George looked like they had gone back in time, like they were kids again, playing together for the sheer enjoyment of it." A fitting end to the recorded output of the greatest band of all time.

GOOD NIGHT

The Beatles play live together for the last time, January 30, 1969

09 I WANT YOU (SHE'S SO HEAVY)

Rock power and Lennon's best solo

The most overtly 'rock' song the Beatles recorded consists of two contrasting musical sections. The 6/8 intro features John Lennon's picked arpeggios in D minor, accompanied by some sweet lead guitar from George, culminating in an ambiguous Aaug7 chord. For the verse ('I want you...'), it switches into 4/4 for a 26-bar blues sequence in A minor, a laid-back progression that features Lennon supporting his vocal with some tasteful lead guitar phrases, à la George Benson. After a transition over an E7₉ chord ('driving me mad...'), the song returns to the intro theme for its refrain ('She's so heavy'), which gets increasingly heavier and doom-laden on each repetition, especially in the cacophonous outro, on which Harrison and Lennon piled multiple guitar overdubs. McCartney's bass and Ringo's drums get more exuberant as the song progresses, while Lennon's guitar solo over the verse chord sequence is one of his best on record.

After an hour of rehearsing *The End's* guitar solos, John, Paul and George nailed it in one take

08 TAXMAN

The 'Hendrix chord' - before Hendrix!

The opening track of the *Revolver* album is a crisp 12-bar written by George Harrison. It's notable for its crunchy D7#9 chord stabs, dubbed the 'Gretty chord' by McCartney as they learned the shape from Jim Gretty at the Liverpool shop where they bought their instruments. A year after this recording, Jimi Hendrix would use the same chord shape on *Purple Haze*, leading many to call it the 'Hendrix chord'. Paul McCartney makes a supreme contribution to this song in one of his most memorable bass riffs, played on his Rickenbacker 4001S and recorded using innovative new studio microphone techniques. Remarkably, Paul McCartney also played the guitar solo on his Epiphone Casino, after Harrison had struggled to get the right feel for it. The savage attack and Indian-influenced melodic patterns make this one of the great left-field guitar solos of the period, and a high point on one of the Beatles' greatest albums.



07 BLACKBIRD

An acoustic guitar standard

This solo performance by Paul McCartney is the ultimate showcase for his unique finger-picking style (see also: *Yesterday*, p58). With nothing but acoustic guitar, foot taps and birdsong sound effects, it represents a rare moment of peace during the tense sessions for the 'White Album'. Featuring harmonies outlined in parallel 10ths, rather than fully formed chords, the starting point was a half-remembered Bach composition, *Bourrée In E Minor*, which McCartney and George Harrison learned as a party piece in their early years. From those origins McCartney crafts a song of tranquil beauty, coloured by passing slash chords, diminished intervals and sus4s. Paul has since elaborated on the lyrics' metaphor of self-awakening, revealing its core theme of black citizens' emancipation during the civil rights movement in the southern states of America. For the recording, Paul played his new right-handed Martin D-28 acoustic, strung upside down so he could play it left-handed.

BEATLES FOR SALE

Performing on *Top Of The Pops* in London on June 16, 1966

06 HELTER SKELTER

The Beatles turn it up to 11

An explicit reaction to the emerging heavy blues rock format of Cream, Hendrix and Led Zeppelin, this aural onslaught is the Beatles' most incendiary performance. The original version of the song was a slow minor blues dirge, as heard on the edited outtake on *Anthology 3*. But a faster, heavier, thrashier arrangement was instigated by McCartney, in response to a story in the music press claiming The Who had recorded the most raucous rock 'n' roll song ever. The band go full beast mode, with McCartney on lead guitar, Harrison playing rhythm, and Lennon on a Fender VI bass. It kicks off with McCartney's vicious 16th-note riff, the rest of the band crashing in 6 bars later, with nods to Hendrix's *Foxy Lady* in the unison guitar/bass runs. McCartney's and Harrison's frantic guitar lines, Lennon's thumping bass and Ringo's thundering drums anticipate heavy metal, punk and grunge in the years to come.

Photo: Getty Images



PICK YOUR OWN

McCartney's *Blackbird* illustrates his unique finger-picking style

20 THE BEATLES

Greatest Guitar Songs

05 DAY TRIPPER

A withering attack on 'weekend hippies'

The most recognisable guitar line by the Beatles, and possibly any rock band, is also their most melodically and rhythmically interesting. John Lennon is the main songwriter, telling *Playboy* in 1980 he was responsible for 'the lick, the guitar break and the whole bit.' But it was Harrison who played the double tracked main riff that dominates the recording, possibly on his Gretsch Country Gentleman, with McCartney doubling up on his Hofner bass. In terms of the chord sequence, from the start it appears to be setting up a straightforward blues progression in E, but then takes fascinating diversions, twisting through the secondary dominant chords F#7, G#7 and C#7 during the chorus. It finally reaches the true dominant B7 for an extended guitar solo in the bridge, raising the dramatic tension to new heights before the reintroduction of the main riff back in E. The vocal melody is more sophisticated than most blues, too, with the 'Got a good reason...' starting on an A note over an E7 chord, and then harmonised with a 9th two bars later, making it a tricky song to sing (try it!). Be sure to check out Jimi Hendrix's soulful cover version on the *BBC Sessions* album.

04 SOMETHING

George Harrison's greatest guitar solo

George Harrison was the Beatles' lead guitarist from the beginning, but as the youngest in the band it took a while for him to reach full maturity as a songwriter and musician (he was just 26 when he started recording *Something*). This song is the moment it all came together, landing him his first single A side with the band, and going on to become the second most covered Beatles song after *Yesterday*. The pining lead guitar line that opens the song turns on an exquisite phrase, climbing chromatically from A to C, leading into the sighing chord sequence of the verse: C Cmaj7 C7 F and on into A minor. One of the song's most magical moments is when a variation on the intro guitar lick jumps a semitone higher to C#, to take us into the soulfully uplifting bridge in A major ('You're asking me will my love grow...'). The guitar solo over the full eight bars of the verse is a perfectly crafted melody in its own right, as memorable as any guitar line he played during his Beatles' career. Paul McCartney's bass part is a delightful improvisation of bustling lines and melodic invention, although Harrison himself was concerned it was 'too busy'.

03 HERE COMES THE SUN

An acoustic delight

One of two standout songs by George Harrison on *Abbey Road*, *Here Comes The Sun* was conceived on close friend Eric Clapton's acoustic guitar in Clapton's garden. The song took shape when Harrison 'sagged off' from depressing legal meetings with the Beatles during the lead up to the band's split. Played using a capo at the 7th fret and configured around the open D chord shape (transposed to



A by the capo), the straightforward open A, D, E chord sequence in the verse shines with sunny optimism. The song gets a further lift during the chorus, with the surprise arrival of the foreign B major chord (on the second repetition of 'Here comes the sun, and I say...'), and the triplet feel arpeggios that follow ('It's alright...'). The bridge section extends the complex rhythm pattern further, dropping in 4ths through C, G, D, A, E, with accompanying time signature shifts in 3/8, 5/8, 4/4 and 2/4, inspired by George's passion for polyrhythmic Indian music. When the Beatles catalogue was introduced to streaming services in the 2010s, this was their most streamed song, a final validation for the dark horse who had been overshadowed by his bandmates throughout his career.

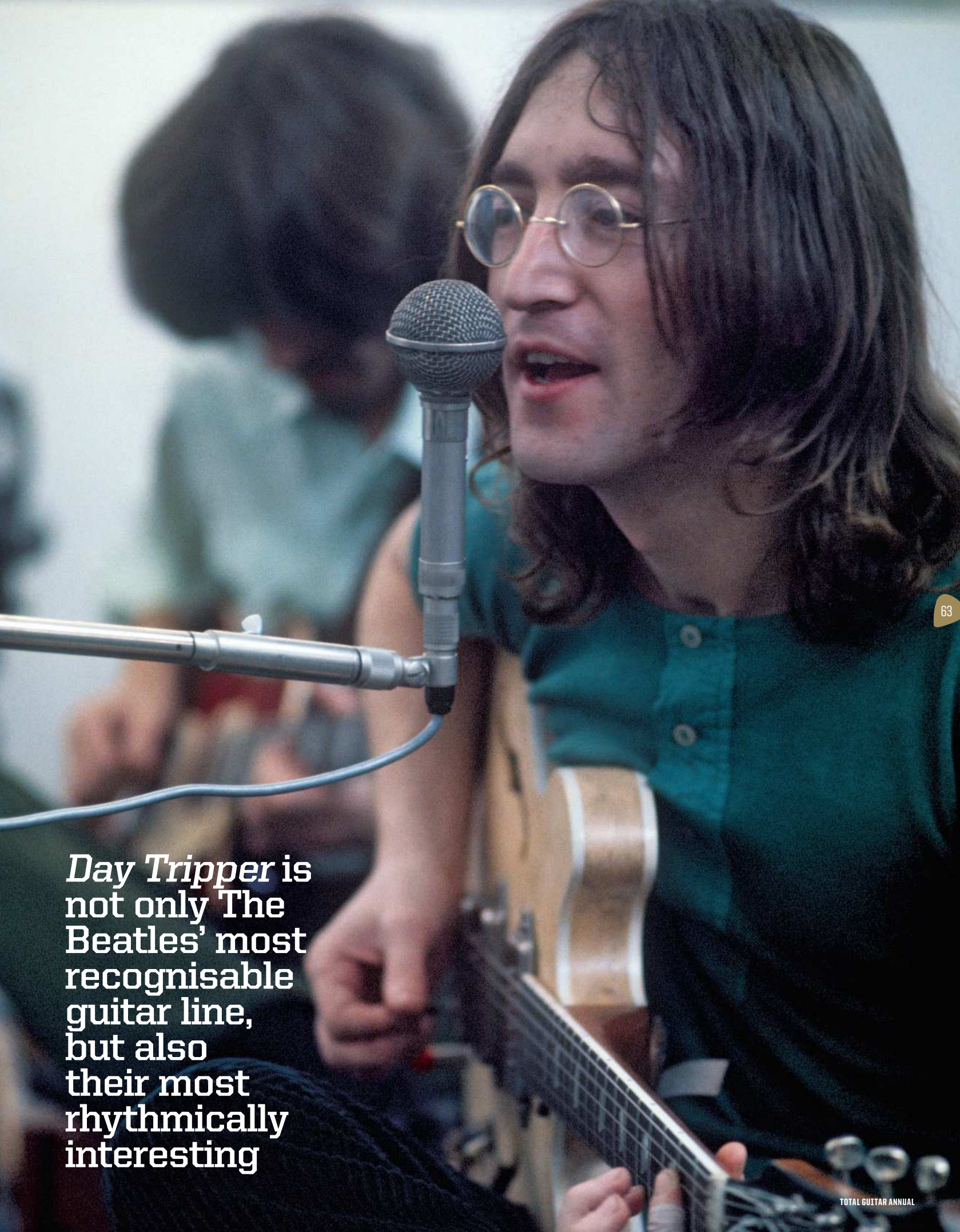
02 AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING

The birth of twin lead guitars

George Harrison and Paul McCartney deliver one of the earliest examples of twin harmonised lead guitars in rock, paving the way for the likes of The Eagles and Thin Lizzy in the 1970s. The intricately worked out scale-like passages, harmonised on their Epiphone Casinos in intervals of 3rds, 4ths, 5ths and 6ths, and backed by McCartney's semi-walking bass line, provide a kind of baroque cycle motif at the heart of the song. Hints of Celtic and Indian motifs add to the colour. The first half of this guitar melody launches the whole band into the intro in E major, while the full 8-bar passage is revealed during the bridge and repeated in the outro. The iconic ending of the song has the twin guitar line land on an unresolved A major chord, a 4th above the tonic chord, with McCartney's bass hammer-ons leaving the listener hanging (Paul Weller's band The Jam reference the same effect in the climax to their 1979 hit single *Going Underground*). For a fascinating insight into the band's creative process, check out the original Byrds-like arrangement, with Harrison's Rickenbacker 12-string backing, on *Anthology 2* (spoiled, or perhaps enhanced, by Lennon and McCartney's hysterical laughter throughout the take).

BEATLEMANIA!

Paul and John on the set of *The Ed Sullivan Show* in New York on February 9, 1964. The Beatles' performance was witnessed by 73 million people



Day Tripper is not only The Beatles' most recognisable guitar line, but also their most rhythmically interesting

TRANSCENDENTAL
George Harrison,
author of "the
quintessential
guitarist's song"

01 WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS

Eric Clapton ignites a jaded Fab Four

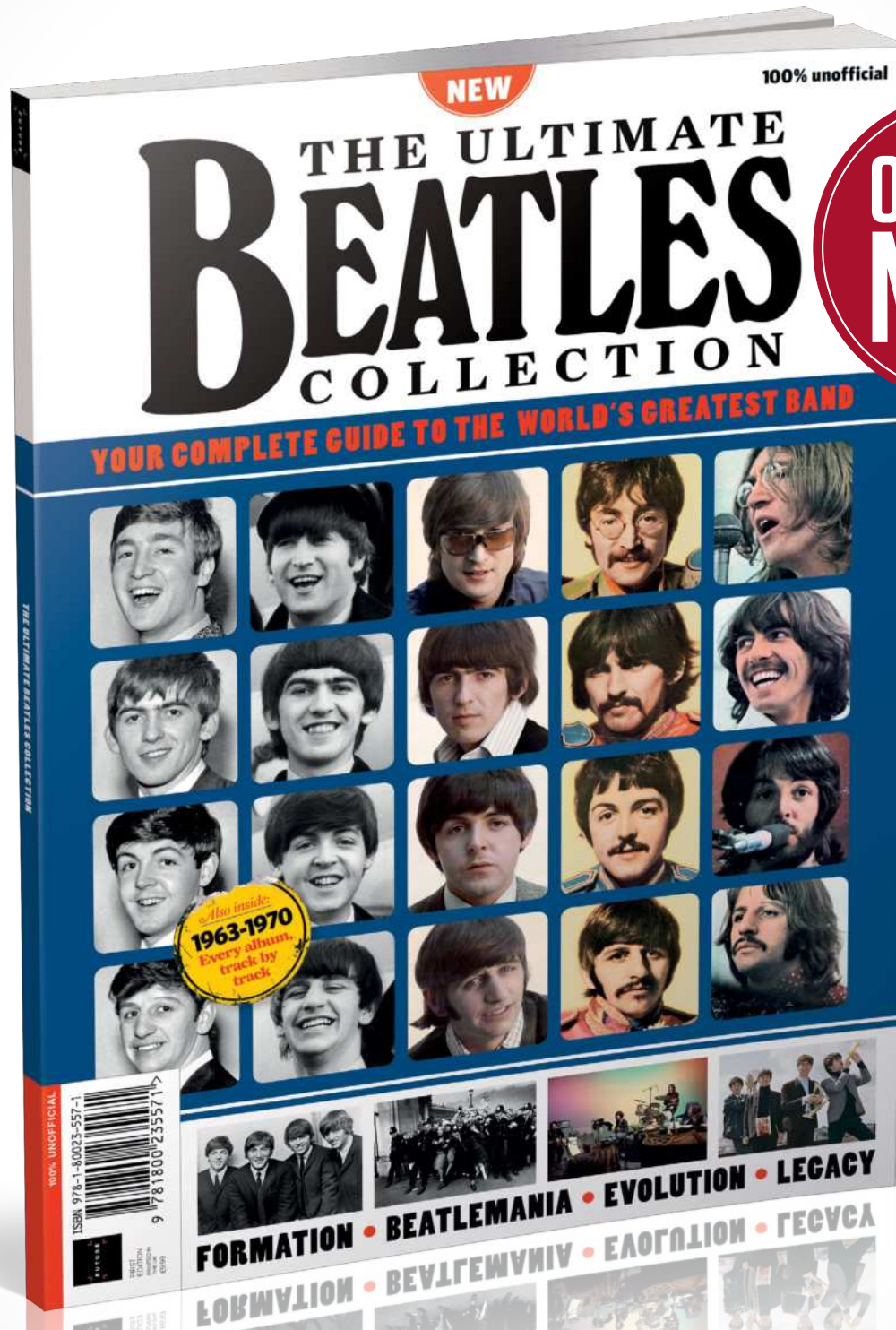
Like most of George Harrison's output for The Beatles, the song that provided one of the high points on the 'White Album' took a long time to reach its final form. During the album's gestation, Harrison was convinced that John and Paul were keener to get their own songs down than work on his contributions, and consequently his lack of confidence was at its lowest ebb. He was convinced of the song's value, though, and invited his friend, blues virtuoso Eric Clapton, to join them in the studio and work on it, correctly anticipating that the presence of such a well-respected musician would charge the atmosphere. Clapton recorded with the band live, with Harrison on acoustic guitar, McCartney on piano, John Lennon on bass and Ringo back on drums after his brief departure from the band. The resulting takes were nothing less than magical. Clapton delivers his sweetly forlorn guitar licks and rhythmic accompaniment from the intro onwards, coaxing a plaintive performance out of 'Lucy', the red Les Paul he'd given to Harrison earlier in the year. The verse features an ineluctable descending bassline of A, G, F#, F under an A minor chord; the slow tempo brought to life by the restless harmonic movement. The bridge section ('I don't know why...') lifts the song to another level through a shift to the parallel A major tonality. It's Clapton's melodic solo over the instrumental verse section that steals the show, though. With a delicious tone and perfect phrasing, Clapton captures the essence of the song's main theme, a yearning for universal love and harmony. Despite the flawless performance, Clapton was concerned it didn't sound 'Beatley' enough, and Automatic Double Tracking effects were added to give it more of the sound he was looking for. The legacy of the song has transcended its context, with some critics claiming it created the template for rock in the 1970s. The song continued to be a part of George Harrison's live sets throughout his career, including his live concerts in Japan with Eric Clapton in 1991. It's now firmly established as the quintessential guitarist's song, as evinced by the number of inspirational solos played in the many cover versions recorded. And going back to the source, Harrison's original acoustic demo, enhanced by George Martin's strings for the *Love* album, is a testament to the range of its enduring appeal.



Critics have argued that *While My Guitar... created the template for rock in the 1970s*

DISCOVER HOW JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE AND RINGO CHANGED MUSIC FOREVER

In The Ultimate Beatles Collection, we chart the Fab Four's musical evolution through the Sixties, see how Beatlemania swept the world, and explore the true extent of the band's unmatched legacy.



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Words Alex Lynham Photo Adam Gasson

The Ultimate Guide To Pedals

TONEHOUNDS AND GEARHEADS, ASSEMBLE! LEARN HOW GUITAR EFFECTS WORK, BUILD YOUR OWN PEDALBOARD AND DISCOVER THE TONE SECRETS OF THE PROS WITH TG'S GUIDE...

Whether you've just decided to put your first pedalboard together or you need some advice on integrating a pedal or two in an existing 'board, there's sure to be something for you here. Yes, we've made it our mission to help you choose the right pedals for you, guiding you through the best examples currently on sale and giving you expert advice to help you add to your pedalboard.

Our tip for getting started is to think of your pedals in groups – a handy way of

narrowing down the thousands of effects currently available to buy. There are only really a handful of categories: first, pedals that boost and clip (like overdrive, distortion and fuzz); then modulation effects (phasers, flangers, choruses and so on); next up are echoes (delay and reverb); and finally, utility pedals such as compressors, gates, volume and EQs. Besides these categories there are also all-in-one multi-effects of various types, as well as amp modellers but we'll cover these another time. Here, we're talking about pedals that fit into one effect category.

So plug in your guitar and amp, grab a handful of patch cables and let's rock our way through TG's opinionated rundown of the big hitters in the world of pedals.



01 Overdrive

Overdrives add dirt and volume to your signal, generally from 'soft clipping' diodes in the feedback path of an op-amp. Ignoring the technicalities, the idea is that soft-clipping is more 'amp-like', with less gain than distortion or fuzz pedals. In front of a decent tube amp, this quality of pushing the amp into saturation is the most prized feature of an overdrive pedal.

TG RECOMMENDS

SMALLSOUND/BIGSOUND MINI

This delightful drive is a streamlined version of the larger F*ck Overdrive. At its core, it's a gorgeous JFET overdrive with a straightforward two-band EQ, plus drive and level controls. Where it differs from a conventional drive is its bias control, which allows for messier, almost fuzz-like tones at the one extreme, and high-fidelity treble chime at the other.

BEST FOR Guitars, keyboards and bass too!

MXR TIMMY

The MXR Timmy is a mass-produced, licensed version of Paul Cochrane's legendary Timmy. Despite its popularity, the Timmy had always been tricky to get hold of. It's a simple op-amp drive with a flat EQ curve and great gain range, taking it from light dirt to roaring overdrive. It's also fantastic at kicking a tube amp into rich saturation.

BEST FOR Versatility. It has three different clipping modes.

ALSO TRY

Wampler Tumnus Mini

Wampler's Tumnus was one of the first transparent overdrive Klon 'klones', and remains one of the best.

Ibanez Tubescreamer Mini

The original overdrive, with its distinctive 'mid bump', now available in a compact form.

Nobels ODR-1 Mini

An oft-overlooked gem of the original generation of overdrives, now also in a mini format.

02 Distortion

Where overdrives use soft-clipping, distortions employ 'hard clipping', after an op-amp – delivering more dirt in the process. The idea of distortions is to mimic a cranked amp stack in a single unit, and they tend to work best when run into an amp's clean channel. Many distortions can be dialled back to a gritty drive, and some high-end units have multiple clipping modes for greater versatility.



TG RECOMMENDS

HAMSTEAD ODYSSEY

The Hamstead Odyssey is what happens when you get an amp builder to create a general-purpose gain stage. With a plethora of clipping options and amp-like EQ on tap, it's a flexible pedal tha'll go from boost, to dirt, to searing, hot-rodded gain. Though it works as an overdrive, it sings on gnarly settings, with biting distortion and enough level to kick your amp hard.

BEST FOR When you need one pedal to do it all



PROCO RAT

The ProCo RAT was arguably the first distortion pedal. It holds a secret though – part of its unique tone was the result of op-amp clipping in its LM308 chip. You can get clones with this very chip, but the square-wave chunk of the modern RAT is not to be underestimated. Like the Odyssey, it also has enough level gain to push an amp into extra saturation.

BEST FOR Classic tones from a classic pedal

ALSO TRY

Amptweaker Tight Rock

From the designer of the Peavey 5150, so you know this is good!

BOSS MT-2 Metal Zone

A misunderstood powerhouse, for those that tame it, this is a workhorse.

KMA Audio Machines Wurm

A reimagined Boss HM-2 chainsaw with added options and wicked artwork.



03 Fuzz

The oldest of the clipping types, fuzzes drive transistors beyond their tolerances and into clipping. In the 50s and early 60s, guitarists were desperately seeking distortion sounds. To get it, they slashed the speaker cones of their amp stacks – so the screaming sound of fuzz was life-changing. Fuzz sounds pretty wild, so there are few wrong answers, but generally think of it as a retro-style distortion.



TG RECOMMENDS EHX BIG MUFF OP-AMP

The Op-Amp Big Muff was a top-to-bottom redesign of the topology of the original Big Muff. As the name implies, rather than two transistor gain stages, it used an op-amp instead, radically changing the character of the pedal. Most famously, Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins used one to record *Siamese Dream*.

BEST FOR Modern retro fuzz tones



Z-VEX FUZZ FACTORY VEXTER

One of the first true boutique pedals, the Z-Vex Fuzz Factory is a modern classic. Essentially a reimagined Fuzz Face with controls placed at bias points, it offers unpredictable, sometimes unhinged sounds for the user to explore. It put Z-Vex on the map, and set the tone for their wild experimentation to come.

BEST FOR Unpredictable sounds and sonic experimentation

ALSO TRY Dunlop Fuzz Face Mini Germanium

The original, as used by Hendrix, now in a pedalboard-friendly micro size.

Way Huge Russian Pickle

The Russian Big Muff, in a deluxe package with soft-switching.

Walrus Audio Janus

A modded and hot-rodded Big Muff circuit, paired with a tremolo, with joysticks. Could it be cooler?

04 Clean Boost

Boost pedals are not dissimilar to the humble overdrive pedal. They usually contain just an amplification stage, without the clipping diodes you'd expect for an overdrive – so there's less colouration from the pedal itself. Some include tone-shaping EQs, while others are a one-knob affair. Like overdrives, they're often used to drive a valve amp into greater distortion.

TG RECOMMENDS WALRUS EMISSARY

The Walrus Emissary is two boosts in one, blended before the output to create a unique voice. The 'mid' channel is an op-amp boost centered around 800Hz or 1kHz, while the 'bright' channel is a JFET boost. The resulting combination is punchy and characterful, with more than enough gain to also push a tube amp into overdrive.

BEST FOR Clean, but characterful boost

TC ELECTRONIC SPARK MINI

Though the larger Spark has additional EQ and gain controls, the Spark Mini is elegant in its simplicity. It has a single level control, 20dB of boost, and more than enough level to make a tube amp overdrive. As a solo booster after other drives, it's clean but punchy, while stacked in front of other gain pedals it will generate more saturation without colouring the sound.

BEST FOR Set it and forget it simplicity

ALSO TRY MXR Micro Amp

Simple and effective. The solo booster of choice for players like Billy Corgan.

Z-Vex Super Hard On Vexter

Bright, crackly, loads of volume on tap. The SHOV is a stone-cold classic for a reason.

Xotic EP Booster

Based on the preamp of the EP-3 Echoplex, the EP Booster is an 'always on' marvel.





05 Pitch Shifter

Digital pitch shifters came of age with the game-changing Digitech Whammy. A pitch shifter, drop-tuner, chorus and harmoniser in one, it remains the gold standard for pitch-shifting – but demands a lot of pedalboard real-estate. Though Digitech have continued to expand its feature set, it's no longer the only game in town...

TG RECOMMENDS DIGITECH WHAMMY V

The Digitech Whammy V is the king of the castle when it comes to pitch-shifters. It has harmony modes, chorus, drop-tune and dive bomb features, as well as +/- 2 octave pitch shifting. Not only that, but it comes with a new mode for polyphonic tracking. Its only downside is its size.

BEST FOR Industry standard dynamic pitch-shifter

EHX PITCH FORK

Should you need even more octaves to play with, the EHX Pitch Fork allows for +/- 3 octaves in pitch shift mode. If you don't want to use an expression pedal, it has a smaller footprint than the Whammy. Besides momentary and latching modes, it also has harmony intervals and a blend knob for extra flexibility.

BEST FOR If you don't need a treadle

ALSO TRY DIGITECH WHAMMY RICOCLET

A compact whammy with no expression, substituting the rocker for cool ballistic modes.

BOSS PS-6 Harmoniser

Harmonising, ballistics, and expression control. The PS-6 can do it all.

Digitech Drop

If you need to drop-tune your guitar with no latency, look no further.

06 Octaver / Harmoniser

The first analogue octavers appeared in the 1960s. You'll have heard the distinctive squeal of the Octavia on Hendrix solos, but it's far from a clean, clear sound. Octave-down effects were more successful, but hampered by slow tracking. Modern digital harmonisers, meanwhile, have shaped everything from Steve Vai's legato leads, to the rumbling bass of two-piece bands like cult heroes Giraffes? Giraffes! and Royal Blood's stadium-rock riffage.

TG RECOMMENDS EHX POG NANO

The Nano POG is the smallest version available of EHX's POG line. The POG2 is the best, granted, but it's large and complex. Most players only need the excellent tracking of the POG, plus one octave above or below. That's the feature set that made the Micro POG a success. The Nano slimlines this even more, retaining its dedicated dry and effect outputs.

BEST FOR Excellent tracking speed in any octave

BOSS OC-5 OCTAVE

While the Boss OC octaver line started as analogue octave down pedals, they've moved with the times to now be POG challengers. The latest iteration, the OC-5, has two modes. The first is a faithful recreation of the original OC-2 tone, albeit with better tracking. The second is a modern polyphonic mode that also sports octave-up and sub-octave harmonies.

BEST FOR Plentiful feature set.

ALSO TRY TC Electronic Sub n' Up Mini

Straightforward sub and upper octave harmonising, at an affordable price-point.

Earthquaker Tentacle

A classic green ringer-style analogue octave up, for splatty Hendrix-like solos.

EHX POG2

Every octave and harmonising feature you could ever need, plus a few more.





PEDAL ORDER

Signal flow best practice

There are no hard and fast rules for signal order, only rough rules of thumb. However, you'll notice that many players set up their boards in roughly similar ways, breaking the standard signal order only to achieve specific results.

The clipping, or drive block should come first. Then the delay and reverb block, then the modulation block (though many players prefer modulation in front of reverb and delay). Utility pedals have varied positions depending on their function. For example, wahs, volume pedals, EQs and noise gates generally come first, before the clipping block, as do compressors. Pitch shifters are typically seen either right at the start of a chain, or just after the clipping block.

A common subversion of these rules is to place a reverb in front of the drive block, resulting in a huge, distorted bloom of compressed reverb when engaged – a gnarly sound adored by Steven Wilson of Porcupine Tree.

Another trick is to place the wah pedal after the drive so that it can be used as a parked or variable filter. The dramatic, overcooked sound of fuzz into a wah is a dream for psychedelic players looking for an attention-grabbing solo tone.

Finally, experimental guitarists place loopers pitch shifters at the end of the chain, allowing them to loop the whole signal, including effects, or pitch shift it up and down on demand.



07 Wah and Auto-wah

Though it comes in and out of fashion, there's a reason the wah pedal has endured. Its ability to lend the guitar a dynamic, vocal quality is useful for solo and rhythm parts alike. Parked, it's a dramatic filter (think *Money For Nothing*); slowly swept, it's a modulation-like variable filter, controlled by the user. The fact that it's controlled by a rocker treadle results in endless creative potential, just from the number of ways it can be moved.

TG RECOMMENDS

Z-VEX WAH PROBE VEXTER

The Z-Vex Wah Probe is unlike any other wah on the market. Using a proximity-sensing radio transmitter, it allows for rapid changes in filter position that aren't possible with a normal wah. It even has a built in Z-Vex Super Hard On boost for level control. The newer versions also have range and mix options, allowing for even more control over its voicing.

BEST FOR Uniqueness. Create new sounds!

DUNLOP CRY BABY

The Dunlop Cry Baby may not be exactly the same as the original pedal that bore the name, but it's the most common wah. As a result, it's featured on countless classic records, and chances are, your favourite guitarist owns one. Unsure where to start with wah? Here's your answer!

BEST FOR Wherever you need a workhorse do-it-all wah

ALSO TRY

Morley 20-20 MT Mini

The bombproof Morley optical wah, now in a compact format.

Vox Wah Pedal

Despite its tangled history, the vintage-voiced Vox sounds unique.

BOSS AW-3 Dynamic Wah

For auto-wah action, the AW-3 is a feature rich, yet straightforward option.



08 Analogue Synth Pedals

Since the 1970s, players and builders alike have experimented with ways of creating guitar synthesis. Various analogue filters, synth voices and hybrid fuzzes have been built over the years, with varying levels of success. It can be hard to integrate an analogue guitar synth into your rig, but in the right position, and for the right part, they can be the sprinkle of magic dust a song needs.

TG RECOMMENDS

EHX MICRO SYNTH

Even for EHX, the Micro Synth was a weird addition to their line. It's a stripped-down synth voice that, like many analogue guitar synths, sounds more like a fuzz than a true synth. Its filter section is what sets it apart, offering fine-grained control over the filter sweep and LFO. If you remove the dry signal, it can sound more synth-like than most.

BEST FOR Classic vintage synth sounds

WAY HUGE ATREIDES ANALOGUE WEIRDING MODULE

The Atreides takes its inspiration from the Electro-Harmonix Mini Synthesiser, a short-lived EHX keyboard synth. The result is not unlike an EHX Micro Synth, though some of the design choices lead it towards a thicker, more aggressive sound. Another bonus is that it's more compact on the pedalboard.

BEST FOR Contemporary aggressive tones

ALSO TRY

Seymour Duncan Fooz

A feature-rich analogue synth by way of fuzz, filter and LFO.

Keeley Synth-1

A simple fuzzy monosynth at an attractive price point.

Pigtronix Space Rip

Rich analogue synth sounds in a tiny package, with plenty of options across its two blended voices.



09 Digital Synth Pedals

Digital synthesis drove several breakthroughs in guitar processing: polyphony, better tracking, and sounds sampled from other instruments. However, this came with mammoth price tags, and usually, the need for a dedicated hex pickup. Such cost and complexity drove most to instead switch to real keyboards when needed. Today, there are not only better high-end, hex-requiring options, but also a range of excellent synth pedals that require neither dedicated hardware nor megabucks budget.

TG RECOMMENDS EHX MONO SYNTH

The EHX Mono Synth is a digital recreation of a monosynth, as the name implies. Even without any dedicated hardware, it nails the sweep and rumble of those synths. It's limited in the sense that it has little control over parameters and only a handful of presets. However, if you only need monosynth sounds a few times in your set, it's convincing enough to leave the keyboard at home.

BEST FOR Keeping it simple

BOSS SY-1000 GUITAR SYNTHESIZER

The Boss SY-1000 is Roland's current flagship guitar synth. While it can be run without its GK-series hex pickup, that limits it to the feature set of the smaller SY-300. To access all the sophisticated processing unlocked by individual string inputs and full MIDI control over parameters, you'll need that hex pickup.

BEST FOR When you just have to have the daddy of all guitar synths!

ALSO TRY Meris Enzo

An intuitive dual oscillator synth, with more functions than you can shake a stick at.

BOSS SY-1 Synthesiser

A straightforward and decent-sounding unit for simple synth tones.

Empress Zoia

More of a programmable everything engine than a synth. For adventurous players, there's nothing else like it.



10 Chorus

Chorus is one of several effects that works by blending your direct signal with a delayed version modulated by an LFO (Low Frequency Oscillator). The distinctive chime of chorus dominated both mainstream 80s rock and the psychedelic underground of shoegaze and dream-pop that blossomed at the start of the 90s. It's a great way of adding character to a guitar part, though it's easy to overdo it.

TG RECOMMENDS BOSS DC-2W DIMENSION C

The DC-2W is a unique sounding dual-BBD stereo chorus. The complexity of the circuit, and the richness of the resulting tone made it closer to rack or studio quality than a pedal. That's appropriate, because this Waza reissue also contains a mode that recreates the legendary SDD-320 rack. It also eliminates the unity volume issues of the original.

BEST FOR Premium quality, studio grade sounds

TC ELECTRONIC JUNE 60 V2

Despite costing a fraction of the DC-2W, the June 60 is a stereo BBD chorus with vintage looks and killer sounds. Emulating the chorus effect from the Roland Juno 60 synth, it is most at home with synths but does work well on guitar. Version two brings new modes to the table, expanding its original two modes and speeds to four, using internal DIP switches.

BEST FOR High quality effect for those on a budget

ALSO TRY EHX Small Clone

A classic, simple BBD chorus, as used by Kurt Cobain on some recordings you might have heard.

Walrus Audio Julia

Probably the most hyped and sought-after modern chorus/vibrato pedal.

Chase Bliss Warped Vinyl Hi-Fi

The original Warped Vinyl launched Chase Bliss as a company. Their latest Hi-Fi version is another masterpiece.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Cable management, velcro, pedal position

When it comes to cable management, a pragmatic view is that pros need perfect routing and cable ties – but tying down everything makes day-to-day tinkering and changing out pedals a pain. Instead, focus on keeping things tidy enough that when you pick up and move the 'board, things won't snag or get damaged. Velcroing pedals in place, and gaffa-taping the main cable runs under the 'board also works, but you can use zip-ties if you want to commit. Bear in mind with zip-ties that if a cable dies live, you'll need to cut the ties to debug it.

Where you place your pedals is a matter of personal taste, but put the pedals you

use the most along the bottom row. Anything you need to reach for dramatic moments, especially live when there's a dark stage, should be in a foolproof place. For example, you might place a looper, drive, fuzz and pitch shifter on the bottom row to avoid live mistakes. Effects that have tails are more forgiving of errors when turning them off, so delay and reverb are fine on the second row.



11 Phaser

A phaser is a series of all-pass filters moved by an LFO. Each filter is a 'stage', and there's usually also feedback to the input. The most classic phasers, the MXR Phase 90 and EHX Small Stone are both fixed four-stage phasers. It's possible to roll back the depth of a phaser for subtle movement in your guitar sound. However, phasers work best for dramatic, psychedelic passages, head-turning riffs and bombastic, jet plane chords.

TG RECOMMENDS EHX SMALL STONE

It's hard to make the EHX Small Stone sound bad. On guitar, on drums, on keys, there's always a way of making a sound more interesting. Its coolest sound is the rich, psychedelic howl it generates when placed after a Big Muff. It may only have two modes and a single knob, but there's a great deal of inspiration to be found here.

BEST FOR Jonny Greenwood and Billy Corgan impressions

MXR PHASE 95 MINI

The Phase 95 crams a huge amount into its diminutive form. Effectively, it's four phasers in one: there's a switch to take it between the Phase 45 and Phase 90 modes, plus a second switch changes between the 'script' and 'block-letter' versions of both. When in doubt, do as EVH did and use the Phase 90 – but it's nice to have the option of the more subtle 45, too.

BEST FOR Van Halen tones and much more

ALSO TRY BOSS PH-3 Phase Shifter

Good core sounds, with the addition of a barber-pole 'endless rise' mode.

KMA Audio Machines Horizont

A phasing workstation, from the creators of the excellent Astropur phaser.

Old Blood Noise Endeavors Dweller

Not so much a phaser as a twisted mashup of delay/looper and phaser, the Dweller needs to be heard to be believed.

12 Flanger

Flangers are also the result of an LFO manipulating a delayed signal. Originally, the effect was created in the studio with two tape machines. An engineer would slow one, or place a finger on the tape, to create the warped 'whoosh'. Most flangers have a feedback control, and a max delay time of 25ms – their main distinction from chorus. You'll have heard them on Van Halen's *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love*, and The Police's *Walking On The Moon* – though many mistake the latter for a chorus.

TG RECOMMENDS STRYMON DECO

The Strymon Deco is a tape machine emulator rather than a dedicated flanger. This means the flanging sounds it makes are more subtle than most. It doesn't have a dedicated feedback or resonance control, meaning you can't get 'jet plane' flange. However, for 60s and 70s studio flanging and subtle, glassy sounds, it's fantastic. It's also a very useful unit for everything from tape saturation to slapback delay.

BEST FOR Sweet sounds that are never in your face

BOSS BF-3 FLANGER

The Boss BF-3 is an underrated unit, offering more flexibility and practical functionality than most boutique boxes. It has controls for centre frequency, feedback, depth and rate. Mode-wise, there's a normal flanger, an extreme, 'ultra' mode, a momentary function and a gate/pan mode, perhaps inspired by the Boss PN-2 Tremolo/Pan. In this final mode, modulated slices of the signal spill out in glorious stereo.

BEST FOR Flexibility and practicality

ALSO TRY Mooer E-Lady

A diminutive clone of the EHX Electric Mistress, the E-Lady can be squeezed onto even the tightest 'board.

Source Audio Mercury

A solid stereo flanger, with an ace through-zero mode.

TC Electronic Vortex Flanger

Option-rich, the Vortex is stereo, expandable via Toneprint, and also has a great tape flange mode.





13

Rotary Speaker Emulators

The most famous rotating speaker, the Leslie, generated a distinctive fluctuation in volume and in pitch. Emulations like the Shin-ei Uni-Vibe were based on a phaser to achieve a similar effect. In fact, the Uni-Vibe's creator Fumio Mieda said its inspiration was not the Leslie, but the sound of radio signals being modulated in the atmosphere. In any case, players regarded it as a workable replacement for the rotating speaker.

TG RECOMMENDS NEO MINI VENT II

The Neo Mini Vent II is spartan almost to a fault. Designed for keyboard players, it only has two controls, bypass and speed. It can be run in mono and stereo, and sounds best in the latter mode. The reason to consider it for your own 'board is simple: it's a convincing replica of a Leslie, with pitch and volume modulation and an elegant simplicity.

BEST FOR Fantastically authentic sounds

STRYMON LEX

The Strymon Lex is every bit as authentic as the Neo, but also gives you control over several parameters. However, while control of mic distance, horn level and the speed of the rotor in 'fast' mode are nice to have, they're not essential once set. The one control that you will definitely use is the preamp drive, for dialling in extra saturation.

BEST FOR Deeper control options

ALSO TRY

TC Electronic Vibraclone

For the price, a decent vintage-voiced, mono digital rotary speaker emulator.

EHX Lester K Rotary Speaker Emulator

A great stereo emulation of the rotary sound, with more controls than most players would need.

Jim Dunlop Rotovibe

Mono Uni-Vibe emulation and expression control, all in the same unit.



14

Tremolo

Tremolo is the sound of increasing and decreasing volume of your guitar's signal at a set speed – Green Day's *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams* is the clearest example we can think of. The simplest tremolos have as little as one or two knobs (for speed and timing), and the most complex can offer MIDI control, sequencing, and rhythmic subdivisions. Some tremolos use feedback or other circuit manipulation to create warped wet sounds, or different wave shapes like square and triangle, for dramatic, choppy sounds.

TG RECOMMENDS RAINER DEEP SPACE PULSAR

The Rainer Deep Space Pulsar is, strictly speaking, a sidechain compressor. However, it will end up getting used more like a dynamic tremolo by most players. It can be controlled via a microphone input, or tapped via the Igor footswitch. The signal ducking can be flipped to a sidechained gate using the 'invert' switch, while a CV input can also be used to control it. It's definitely a power-user pedal, but the possibilities are endless.

BEST FOR Changing the tremolo effect speed on the fly

CHASE BLISS AUDIO GRAVITAS

The Gravitas is exactly what you'd expect from a Chase Bliss tremolo pedal. It contains all the modes you could want, including a harmonic mode, a discrete preamp, MIDI control, and an array of additional options via the top DIP switch array. Pedals like the Z-Vex Seek Trem will make wilder sounds, yes, but no tremolo pedal is as versatile.

BEST FOR We just said it! It's a supremely versatile beast!

ALSO TRY

Mooer Trellicopter

A simple optical tremolo in a micro form-factor.

Earthquaker Devices Night Wire V2

An unusual modulated harmonic tremolo that can still nail classic trem sounds.

EHX Super Pulsar

Every tremolo option you could ever need, plus expression, tap and full stereo.

15 Vibrato

Vibrato is what happens when you take a chorus pedal and increase the dry-wet mix. By including more of the manipulated signal, you end up with a dramatic pitch-shifting effect. Whether you prefer chorus or vibrato is generally just taste. Ambient players often employ vibrato to manipulate the tails of delays or reverbs, to give movement to sounds with a long decay.

TG RECOMMENDS

Z-VEX INSTANT LO-FI JUNKY

The Instant Lo-Fi Junky was Z-Vex's response to players that loved the timbre of their Lo-Fi Loop Junky, and wanted it applied in real time to their signal, rather than just recorded loops. The result is a strange pedal that treads the line between chorus, vibrato and gritty compressor. It's intuitive, compelling and fun, if you're into modulation.

BEST FOR Scuzzy, gritty, lo-fi warbles

STRYMON OLA

A swiss-army-knife Chorus/Vibrato unit, the Strymon Ola has three modes: chorus, multi-delay studio chorus, and vibrato. It can also be set to ramp, or react with an envelope to your playing. The only downside of the Ola is that you can't run the two modes together, though that would sound pretty messy anyway.

BEST FOR A well-rounded, fully-featured option

ALSO TRY

TC Electronic Viscous Vibe

Underlining the overlap between various modulation effects, the Viscous is an excellent Uni-Vibe/vibrato crossover.

BOSS VB-2W Vibrato

The all-analogue VB-2W brings back to life the rare 80s Boss VB-2, while fixing common complaints with the original.

Earthquaker Devices The Depths V2

An optical vibrato circuit with additional controls to take the effect into novel, weirder territory.



16 Compressors

The premise of a compressor is very simple. Quieter signals are boosted, and louder signals are attenuated, giving a more uniform level that's great for funky 16ths or smoother lead tones. Of course, once you try and control these parameters, there's infinite subtlety. For most pedal compressors though, the average player can find a good sound by intuition, without having to know the technical details.

TG RECOMMENDS

EMPRESS EFFECTS COMPRESSOR MK II

Astonishingly for a pedal this size, with this feature set, the Compressor Mk II is all-analogue. Crammed inside is a studio-grade compressor with attack, release, ratio, makeup gain and sidechaining. Combine all that with input and gain reduction metering and you've got the most sophisticated pedal compressor on the market. Recommended for power users!

BEST FOR Studio compressor-style functionality

ORIGIN EFFECTS CALI76 COMPACT DELUXE

It's not cheap, but the Cali76 is a pedal-format version of the classic 1176 FET studio compressor. Alongside the attack, release, ratio and output controls you'd expect to see, there's also a dry control, as the Cali76 offers parallel compression. Without much by way of legends or explanation, the Cali76 encourages the player to experiment and find a sweet spot.

BEST FOR Another studio-like pedal for those who like to tweak

ALSO TRY

MXR Dyna Comp Mini

A simple two-knob compressor with two pre-set attack times.

TC Electronic Hypergravity Mini

A toneprint-enabled compressor with attack, sustain and level controls.

Fairfield Circuitry The Accountant

Three pre-set ratio options make the Accountant an effective, if opinionated, mini compressor.





17 EQ pedals

EQ pedals generally stick to a template – mostly, they're graphic EQs, which means they have a series of bands of audio, each with a centre frequency. These bands can be independently boosted or attenuated to change the EQ of your guitar signal. Some are parametric, which means the centre frequency and Q can be changed. For most situations however, this is an unnecessary level of complexity.

TG RECOMMENDS

BOSS GE-7

The op-amp used in the pedal has slight noise issues, meaning it's not perfect, but the GE-7 is a workhorse. In addition to its compact size and seven bands, it has a master level, for use as a line boost. Pre-2021, non-SMD models can be easily modded with a replacement op-amp, and some builders like Analogman offer this as a service.

BEST FOR Simplicity and ease of use

MXR 6B

The MXR 6B might not have an overall level control or the final 6.4k band, but they aren't essential. Where it differs from the Boss is that the 6B is a 'true bypass' pedal, and doesn't colour the guitar so much when engaged, nor when switched off. As a result, if you don't need the extra bands and aren't interested in modding it, the 6B might be the better call.

BEST FOR Tone-saving true bypass is ideal for tonehounds

ALSO TRY

BOSS EQ-200 Graphic Equaliser

A studio-grade EQ pedal with every option under the sun, plus MIDI and software control.

Source Audio EQ2

The same level of control as the larger EQ-200, but in a smaller format.

Fairfield Circuitry Long Life Parametric EQ

A gritty, single band parametric EQ with full control over every parameter. Ideal as a solo boost and filter.



18 Volume

Volume pedals are the simplest utility pedal there is. The majority are a housing for a single potentiometer, allowing you to roll off the amount of signal going to every pedal that follows. Some are active, which means they are powered, and can boost your signal too. The main thing you're paying for with a volume pedal is ruggedness, as it's likely to be used constantly.

TG RECOMMENDS

JIM DUNLOP VOLUME X

Even among a lineup of rugged pedals, the Volume X stands out as a tank. It's driven by a band, which is, in theory, more durable than the string loops used on many other pedals. It has an additional expression and tuner out, for dual use as an expression or volume pedal.

BEST FOR Robustness and a surprising number of features

ERNIE BALL 6180 VP JR

The VP JR is one of those pedals you see everywhere on pros' boards. It's simple, with just an input, output and tuner out. Ernie Ball offer a number of variations, with different pot values, and even active boosting, should you want it.

BEST FOR Keeping it simple

ALSO TRY

Mission SP-25M Pro

An expression pedal with volume capabilities for controlling modern modeling units.

BOSS FV-500

A rugged, tour-grade volume controller with a tuner out and minimum volume control. Both a high and low-impedance version are available.

Lehle Mono

The kings of utility pedals don't disappoint here. The Mono has a hall-effect sensor combined with a bombproof enclosure, second output and optional 10dB boost.

19 Noise Gate

Noise gates are not the most exciting of pedals. Most players won't consider one until they've driven themselves mad with a buzz or noise issue that won't go away. Some sit at the start of a chain, eliminating pickup hum at source, while others do more advanced processing. Many have a send/return loop that allows for complex setups like the 'four cable method'. Here, the amplifier preamp and drive pedals all go in the loop, and then the rest of the pedalboard follows, being returned into the amp's FX return.

TG RECOMMENDS ISP DECIMATOR II

Whether in front of the amp or in the effects loop, the ISP is the gate of choice for the djent crowd – the ones most in need of flawless gate operation. It can be chained with a second unit, which ISP say works better than the 4-cable method. This does add up to an eye-watering price tag, though.

BEST FOR Dual-pedal setups – if your budget will stretch!

TC ELECTRONIC SENTRY

Despite being one of the more cost-effective noise gates on the market, the Sentry is one of the more sophisticated. It can be used at the start of your chain, to isolate problem pedals in its loop, or set up using the four-cable method. Fine-grained control is available via TonePrint, while its three-band mode has each band function independently, removing only problem band frequencies.

BEST FOR Deeper editing with TC's TonePrint technology

ALSO TRY MXR Smart Gate

An effective noise gate for most common problems, with three different band modes.

BOSS NS-2 Noise Suppressor

Not the most feature-rich, but effective when set-up using the four-cable method.

EHX Silencer

Works well at the start of your chain, with a send-return loop allowing for the four-cable method.



20 Analogue Delay

Analogue delay came about from the need for compact units that were more reliable than fault-prone tape delay machines. Employing a bucket-brigade chip, or BBD, these delays used a capacitor array that resulted in dark, warm repeats. As a result, even when more pristine digital delays became available, analogue delays remained popular. Modern, digitally-controlled BBD delays have resulted in sounds and options that would have been impossible in the heyday of analogue delay.

TG RECOMMENDS BOSS DM-2W DELAY

The Boss DM-2 and DM-3 were, along with the EHX Deluxe Memory Man, the classic BBD delays. This Waza reissue expands on the original with an expression input to control the rate, and a new 'custom' mode. In 'custom', the delay times of the original are expanded to 800ms. Like the original, the Waza version can be pushed into runaway auto oscillation, for hours of noisy fun.

BEST FOR It's a premium reissue of a stone cold classic, of course!

MXR CARBON COPY

Beloved of shoegaze and dream-pop players, the darker sounds of the MXR Carbon Copy come into their own when used with its modulation function. Its rich, modulated delays are excellent for chord work or spectral leads. Though the Carbon Copy Bright and Memory Toy are similar, nothing quite captures the same magic as the Carbon Copy.

BEST FOR Dream-pop to epic Gilmour-esque delays

ALSO TRY Chase Bliss Audio Tonal Recall

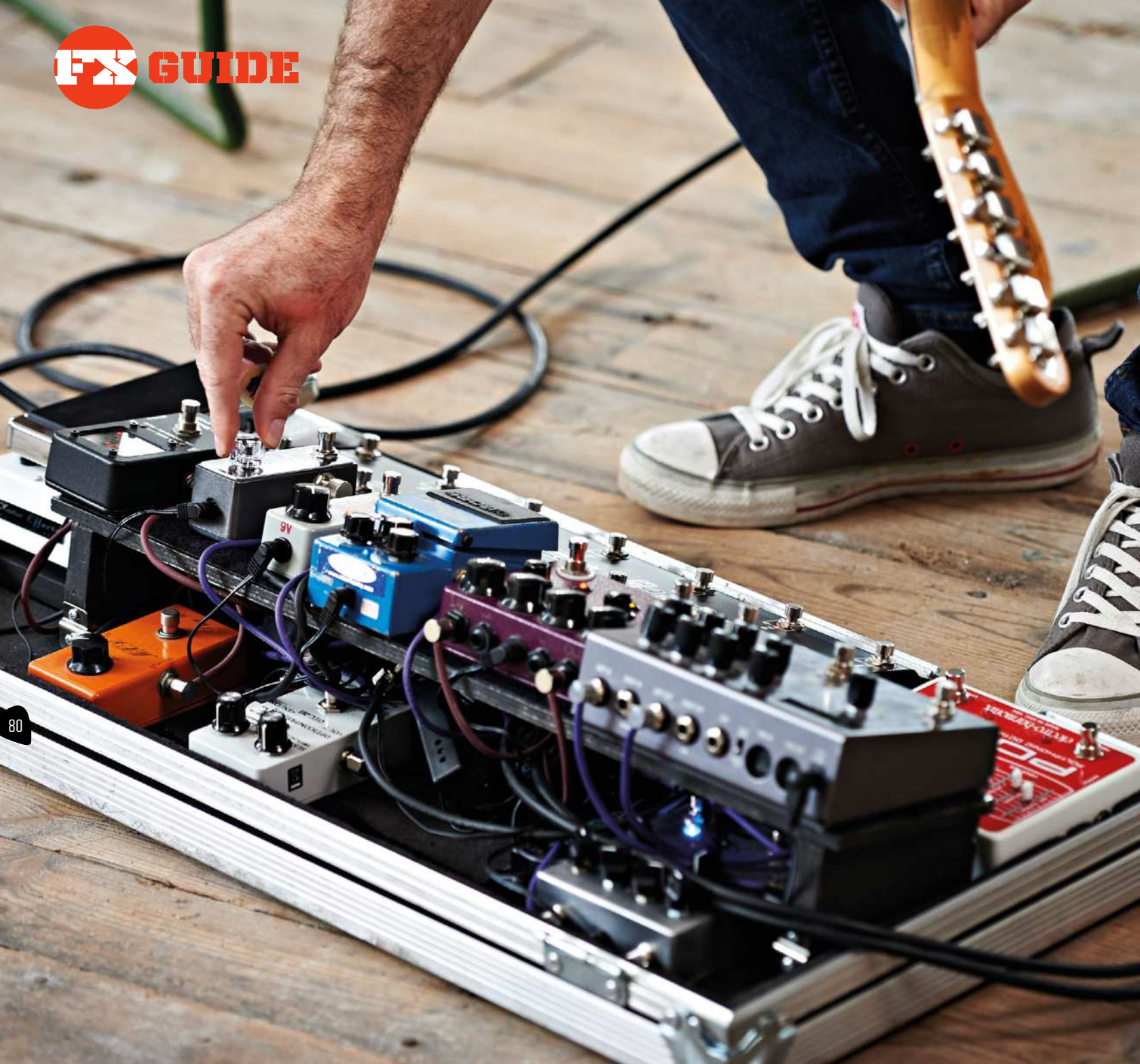
The most feature rich BBD delay ever, the TR also comes in a red knob version with even longer delay times.

T-Rex Replicator D'Luxe

Not strictly a BBD analogue delay, the Replicator uses tape cartridges to achieve a modern compact tape delay.

EHX Deluxe Memory Man

The first classic BBD delay, the modern DMM remains as potent and inspiring as the original unit.



ESSENTIAL ANCILLARIES

Pedalboards, power supplies, patch cables and more

Though there's a certain satisfaction that comes from making a pedalboard out of an old shelf, skateboard or road sign, there comes a point when it's un-ergonomic.

If you have more than a handful of pedals, the weight alone can make transporting them a pain. At this point, it's worth considering an aluminium-rail pedalboard with a case.

Some pedalboards come with hard flight cases, but unless you're a touring pro that's overkill. For most, a shoulder-slung bag with a sturdy handle and plastic inserts to prevent rips is sufficient.

Next, you can choose a power supply. This could be a feature on its own, but in short – save yourself money in the long-term and buy an isolated power supply. It's more reliable, and you won't have noise

issues. It should also come with mounting brackets that will fit your 'board.

Finally, you'll need to patch everything together. You can spend as much as you like on custom cables, expensive brands or any number of features, but we've found little correlation between price and longevity. Buy a few cheap ones, see what lasts a few gigs, then buy more of those.



21 Digital Delay

Digital delays are, in a sense, just special-purpose loopers. They record a small chunk of audio then play it back, resulting in perfectly clean repeats of the dry signal. However, this isn't all they can do. This 'buffer', once recorded, can be manipulated in endless ways. It can be played back faster or slower, pitch-shifted, even reversed. It's no wonder that as soon as boutique builders became able to build their own digital delays, the options available exploded.

TG RECOMMENDS BOSS DD-500 DIGITAL DELAY

The Boss DD-500 stock is a compelling unit. It has good emulations of classic Roland Space Echo, SDE-3000 and DM series. However, with newer firmware, it's even more powerful. You can run two delays in series or parallel, or have three different delays cued up at once in a bank. This is great for live use if you don't need the tap tempo switch.

BEST FOR Dual delays, à la Hank Marvin or The Edge

STRYMON TIMELINE

There's not much to tell apart the most expensive delay motherships, but the Strymon Timeline is an intuitive unit, for all its complexity. It's got 12 delay modes, plus a looper. Included are all the modes that make Strymon pedals like the El Capistan and DIG so compelling, as well as full MIDI control. It's no surprise that many players end their delay journey here.

BEST FOR Clear, intuitive layout

ALSO TRY Catalinbread Csidman

A delay and random skipping generator, the Csidman was inspired by the anti-jog protection on the 90s Sony Discman.

BOSS DD-8 Digital Delay

The modern incarnation of the DD series, as used by everybody from Radiohead to At The Drive-In, to Tool.

Chase Bliss Audio MOOD

A bizarre loop/reverb/delay idea-generation machine, created by a supergroup of boutique builders - Drolo, Old Blood Noise Endeavors, and Chase Bliss Audio.

22 Reverb

Reverb recreates the sound of reflections in a physical space. Early attempts at this were spring and plate delay. Plates were common in studios, while spring reverb tanks were available to your average player. While not modelling a physical space, spring reverb came to define genres like surf rock. Rack and studio gear that could model physical spaces appeared in the 70s and 80s, resulting in 'hall' reverbs. It wasn't long before this became available in pedal form.

TG RECOMMENDS TC ELECTRONIC HALL OF FAME 2

The Hall of Fame 2 is one of the most affordable reverbs on the market. It's feature-rich, with decent hall, shimmer and plate modes as well as fine-grained control over tone and pre-delay. Where the Hall of Fame shines is in its integrated MASH expression footswitch. Though it looks gimmicky and is a little difficult to get the hang of, it's a great feature for the experimental player.

BEST FOR Covering most bases on a reasonable budget

STRYMON BLUESKY

The BlueSky excels not because of out-there design choices, but due to build quality, and studio-grade sounds. Its three reverbs - plate, room and spring - can be set up in a normal, modulated, or shimmer mode. These might sound pedestrian, but the BlueSky has a trick up its sleeve. It can stretch out reverb times well beyond, say, a real-world spring, resulting in a rich and unique set of possible reverb sounds.

BEST FOR Excellent basic reverbs, plus a few unusual sounds

ALSO TRY Catalinbread Topanga

A fantastic sounding spring reverb, with cool graphics as well.

EHX Holy Grail

Though its flerb setting is hard to tame, the core sounds of the Holy Grail explain its longevity as a hall reverb.

Strymon Flint

The Flint has decent emulations of a spring tank, electronic and hall reverb, as well as three tremolo modes.





23 Exotic Reverb

Ambient players and space cadets alike are rarely satisfied with basic reverbs. If that's you, try a modulated reverb (for a wobble on your signal trails), or pitch-shifted and shimmer reverbs. There are also modelling reverbs that simulate impossible spaces, infinite reverbs, and reverse reverbs. Finally, granular effects create reverbs using some of the techniques from granular synthesis. Phew!

TG RECOMMENDS NEUNABER IMMERSE

The Neunaber is a studio-grade reverb that's as intuitive as they come. Besides an exceptional stereo image, it also brings to the table excellent detuned and shimmer modes, plus control of pre-delay mod or blend, depending on the patch. The Immerse's greatest strength is also its main drawback. Out of the box it sounds great, but it has less control over every parameter than some alternatives.

BEST FOR All-round versatility

RED PANDA PARTICLE

The Red Panda Particle is a granular delay pedal. It takes the idea of slicing up 'grains' of sound from granular synthesis, and applies this to capturing and recombining delay buffers. In the random mode, it can be set to create washes of grains that approximate a unique-sounding multi-tap delay/reverb, with a glitchy, distorted edge.

BEST FOR Tweaking sounds on the fly

ALSO TRY Gamechanger Audio Light

A gritty spring reverb powered by an actual spring, with cool extra modes and a lightshow as a bonus.

Eventide Blackhole

The Blackhole algorithm is legendary in ambient circles. Here it is as a standalone pedal, with expression control.

Old Blood Noise Endeavors Dark Star

A huge, squalling reverb, with a momentary infinite sustain mode.

24 Loopers

The first loopers were offshoots of digital delay pedals and rack units. Before long, however, manufacturers realised that some guitarists wanted dedicated loop units. The most famous pedal looper is the Line 6 DL-4. Since the era of the DL-4 and Akai Headrush, the options for dedicated loopers have expanded greatly. Whether it's for bedroom jamming or stadium-sized gigs, there's an off-the-shelf pedal up to the task.

TG RECOMMENDS TC ELECTRONIC DITTO X2

The TC Ditto X2 builds on the feature set of the smaller Ditto by adding a dedicated stop button, and stereo I/O. For live use a dedicated stop button is essential. For bedroom or studio use however, the second footswitch can also be used to switch into a reverse or half-speed mode. This unlocks even more creative potential. The only downside is it's a little large.

BEST FOR Balancing ease of use with practical features

RED PANDA TENSOR

The Red Panda Tensor isn't a looper, exactly. It's a delay, looper and sound manipulator inspired by the warp modes on the long-discontinued Digitech XP-300 Space Station. It so happens that the Tensor can do simple looping, but with sound effect loops, reversed, warped artifacts and machine-gun stutter on offer too.

BEST FOR Sonic manipulation and experimentation

ALSO TRY MXR Clone Looper

A solid core looper, expandable to cover modes from the classic Line 6 DL-4.

TC Electronic Ditto+

The plus sports a new graphic user interface, plus new quantising and stacking modes.

BOSS RC-300 Loop Station

A huge workstation, with multiple channels of independent audio, stacking, quantising and more.

HOW TO

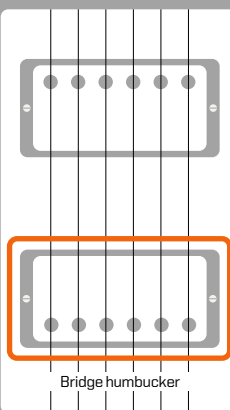
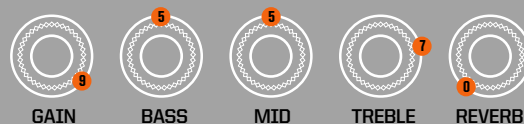
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Drop B₁ tuning
- ✓ C Phrygian mode
- ✓ Easy powerchords



GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Guitarists Joshua Moore and Lou Cotton are best known for playing Ibanez and ESP guitars into Orange and EVH amps. Theirs is a high-gain sound, so use a bridge position humbucker and a saturated 5150 style distortion, and add more drive with a distortion pedal if your rig doesn't deliver enough. The drop-B₁ tuning is very low, so consider using strings that are two or three gauges heavier than your usual standard tuning set to keep your guitar's setup stable.

WE CAME AS ROMANS

Daggers

We Came As Romans' latest single features heavily distorted, downtuned riffing from guitarists Joshua Moore and Lou Cotton. WCAR blend metalcore with electronic elements and huge production. There is some digital editing on the guitars, but at its core, the part is a brutal drop B₁-tuned riff played with a one-finger barre across the two bass strings. You can use any finger you want,

as long as the pressure across both strings is even, with your finger as close to the frets as possible.

There are four powerchords rooted on the lowest string (B₁, C₅, D₁, E₁) and an additional regular B₁ powerchord shape built on the fifth string. As you play the riff, focus on letting the powerchords sustain for their full duration making sure to change to the next chord at the last possible moment.

Check out our slow play through in the video to see it all in action.

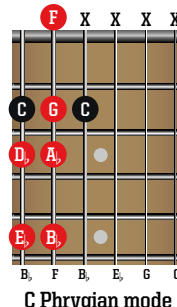
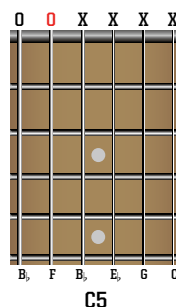
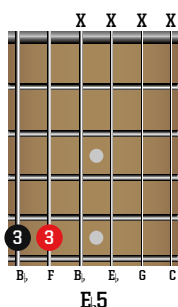
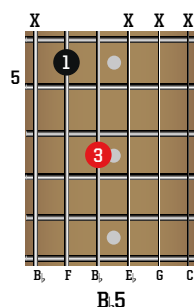
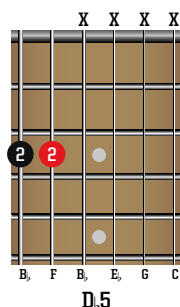
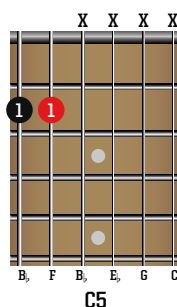
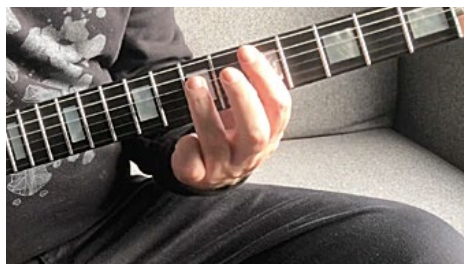
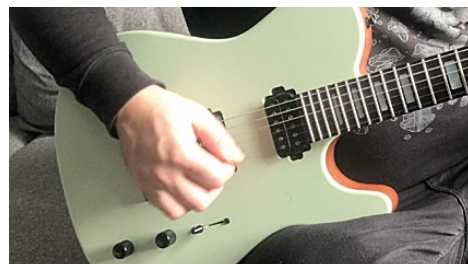
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:13-0:26

Tempo: 150bpm

Key/scale: C Phrygian

Main techniques: Powerchords, downstrokes, string muting



In drop B₁ tuning the interval between the fifth and sixth strings is a 5th (seven frets) instead of the 4th (five frets) found in standard tuning. This means that powerchords played on these strings can be played with one

finger – which you can see here in the B₁, C₅, D₁, E₁ and E₁ chords. The riff is based in the C Phrygian mode (C D₁ E₁ F G A₁ B₁) which has a dark, creepy sound due to its minor intervals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

Words Jonny Scaramanga Photos Emily Butler, Robby Klein

“WE’RE A VERY RIFF DRIVEN BAND”

For sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell, the creative nucleus of **Larkin Poe**, the best songs come from riffing, natural chemistry, and playing cover versions as a way to raise their own game

There was a time when live albums were critical releases in an artist’s career. B.B. King secured his reputation with *Live at the Regal*. *Frampton Comes Alive!* was issued to every child born in a US suburb in 1976, and while casual listeners thought they knew James Brown from his radio hits, hardcore fans found the real stuff on *Live At The Apollo*. Nowadays, live albums tend to be stop-gaps if they’re released at all, but Larkin Poe’s *Paint The Roses*, a live collaboration with the Miami-based orchestra Nu Deco Ensemble, is a major moment in their development.

“With the lack of touring due to Covid, we were able to really expand creatively and try some new stuff,” explains guitarist/vocalist Rebecca Lovell. Her sister, lap steel specialist Megan, picks up the story: “We were slated to go play with Nu Deco in Miami and it was meant to just be a one-off livestream. They collaborate with a lot of different artists, and we were going to be their roots pick for the season. We checked out their stuff and just really loved the way that they were able to interpret people’s music with the orchestra. We ended up going down to Miami and had one day of rehearsal before the show.”





Although there were no plans for an official release, on listening back to the recordings, Larkin Poe were convinced that it was too good to shelve. The combination of Nu Deco conductor Sam Hyken's orchestral arrangements with Larkin Poe's rootsy blues rock created something special. "We put a lot of faith in Sam arranging the music and writing the new parts," Megan continues. "We showed up not quite knowing what to expect, because we didn't really hear anything ahead of time. We went in blind and were just so impressed. It was a little bit of relief, like 'Oh, this is going to be a special evening.'"

Working with an orchestra gave the guitarists an opportunity to vary their usual approaches. "What was really cool for me as the slide player," Megan says, "was where Sam made the violins or the horn section follow my lines. It meant I could kind of branch out a little bit, to match what they were doing but still do something new."

"Just playing with an orchestra and playing with a conductor is so different than a four-piece rock band," Rebecca enthuses. "We're a little bit more metronomic, while the orchestra swells and speeds up and slows down in sections. It's kind of surfing the wave of the orchestra. It let us step back a bit. We're so used to filling a lot of space in our shows, having that power behind us meant we could relax."

Most excitingly, *Paint The Roses* sees the first official release of *Mad As A Hatter*, a never-before-recorded number that has long been a Larkin Poe live favourite. "From the very beginning of our talks, we knew that *Mad As A Hatter* was gonna be the special track of the evening," says Megan. "It's really made for an orchestra, and there's a long outro section that we felt was gonna build really spectacularly with an orchestra." Rebecca adds: "That song has been requested so much by so many fans over the years that we just knew releasing this track is gonna be special to people. It has opened up so many doors of communication for us through the years, speaking to people about mental illness and having people open up to us about their experiences."

With six studio albums to their name, the sisters' writing process is well honed. So how does it work? Rebecca, the main writer, explains her process. "My starting off point is a guitar riff or a chord progression that speaks to me. We're a very riff-driven band. We typically write from the riff and then the melody will kind of sprout from the riff. Then I keep a journal of lyric ideas."

I'm moving through life eavesdropping at will on the people around me. I write down anything that I think can be fleshed out. I'll go through the journal and find a puzzle piece that matches the melody."

"After that nugget of an idea has blossomed I tend to come in and the two of us together make it sound like Larkin Poe," continues Megan. So how did they develop that sound? "Over the years we've done so many cover videos. This is maybe an unusual way to go about finding one's voice, but the two of us sit down together and just figuring out how to make a song that somebody else wrote sound like us. That has been such a great practice for our own material. Sometimes you're not sure if an idea is gonna be something that fits Larkin Poe. We can really quickly now sit down and we're gonna know if it's us. It's this very organic thing that happens just from so many years of practice and the two of us being really close communicators."

It's obvious how much the sisters enjoy working together. Unlike classic rock bands who have to be kept separated until stage time to prevent violence, the Lovells are each other's biggest fans. "Not only do we love and respect each other, we love working together," smiles Rebecca. This is helpful when battling every songwriter's worst enemy: "I do very much struggle with that inner critic," admits Rebecca. "I've had a pretty great life. My parents loved me." The idea of the struggling artist – that it is necessary to sacrifice your wellbeing for your art, like Van Gogh or Kurt Cobain – can make her doubt her own validity.

Often songwriters abandon material before it's even finished because of that inner critic, but Rebecca turns to Megan for support. "I think that I'm the song supporter of the team," Megan summarises. "Rebecca brings a song to me and I have a very strong gut reaction. She is always like newest is best, she will cast songs aside so quickly. When she wrote *Holy Ghost Fire* she was like 'OK, we gotta move, we



gotta do something better.' I am like very much like, 'Let's hold on to this idea. I think that this is special.' I was a huge supporter, and it's actually been one of our most successful songs."

With such a positive relationship, we'd hoped they might offer some advice on resolving creative differences, but the Lovells say they are almost always in agreement. "Ninety-nine per cent of the time we're very much on the same page," reckons Megan. "Occasionally we'll have disagreements about where a song should go or if a song should be included or not. Since we grew up together and we love the same kinds of music, I think that we just naturally find ourselves aligning. We are siblings, so we know how to push each other's buttons. It would be very easy to be able to destroy a relationship but we've always approached kind of our relationship as we just need to be respectful to each other and value that closeness."

Once the songs are written, Megan adds the lap steel licks that are a Larkin Poe signature. "I'm very much a tried-and-true sort of person, especially musically," she says. "I like to find things that work and do that

ABOVE

Rebecca Lovell (left): "You are what you listen to, so listening to as much music as possible is gonna fuel your writing"

over and over. I started out playing Dobro which is tuned to open G in octaves [low to high] G-B-D-G-B-D. When I picked up lap steel it just made sense to transfer that tuning. I have played around with tuning down my lower strings or playing in open D, but I just love the G tuning."

Great slide playing requires meticulous pitch control, and again the sisters inspire each other. "I feel lucky to have always played the instrument that requires pitch like I started out on violin and then from violin I went to Dobro," says Megan. "It's also affected me being around Rebecca, she's a very pitch perfect singer so I've put a lot of pressure on myself to follow through with that, since I feel like my lap steel is sort of the second vocalist in the band. I love to sing harmony but I feel like my true voice is the lap steel."

Coming from Georgia in the US Deep South, the Lovells grew up in a culture that valued musicianship, starting in choirs as children before moving onto guitar. "We went from classical music where the musicianship is very high to bluegrass where again the musicianship is very high," says Rebecca. "We grew up hearing a lot of incredible folk musicians like Béla Fleck [banjoist], Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush [mandolinist], Chris Thile [Nickel Creek mandolinist]. These people are such incredible musicians that we really saw as our heroes and wanted to play as well as they could. It was really great to be surrounded by that community of musicians that exists in the bluegrass world. In the South we are surrounded by porch picking parties, mountain opries and bluegrass festivals. Later discovering blues in the [Mississippi] Delta and [Memphis'] Beale Street and then coming to Nashville and of course there are so many session players that are just incredible. Always being in these communities that really value musicianship has been incredible."

Both sisters rely on Fender Deluxe Reverbs for their amp sounds, and both run their amps clean, getting their breakup tones from pedals. Keeping it in the family, their favourite distortion pedal is the Rodenberg TB Drive, the

"MY STARTING OFF POINT IS A RIFF OR A CHORD PROGRESSION THAT SPEAKS TO ME" REBECCA LOVELL

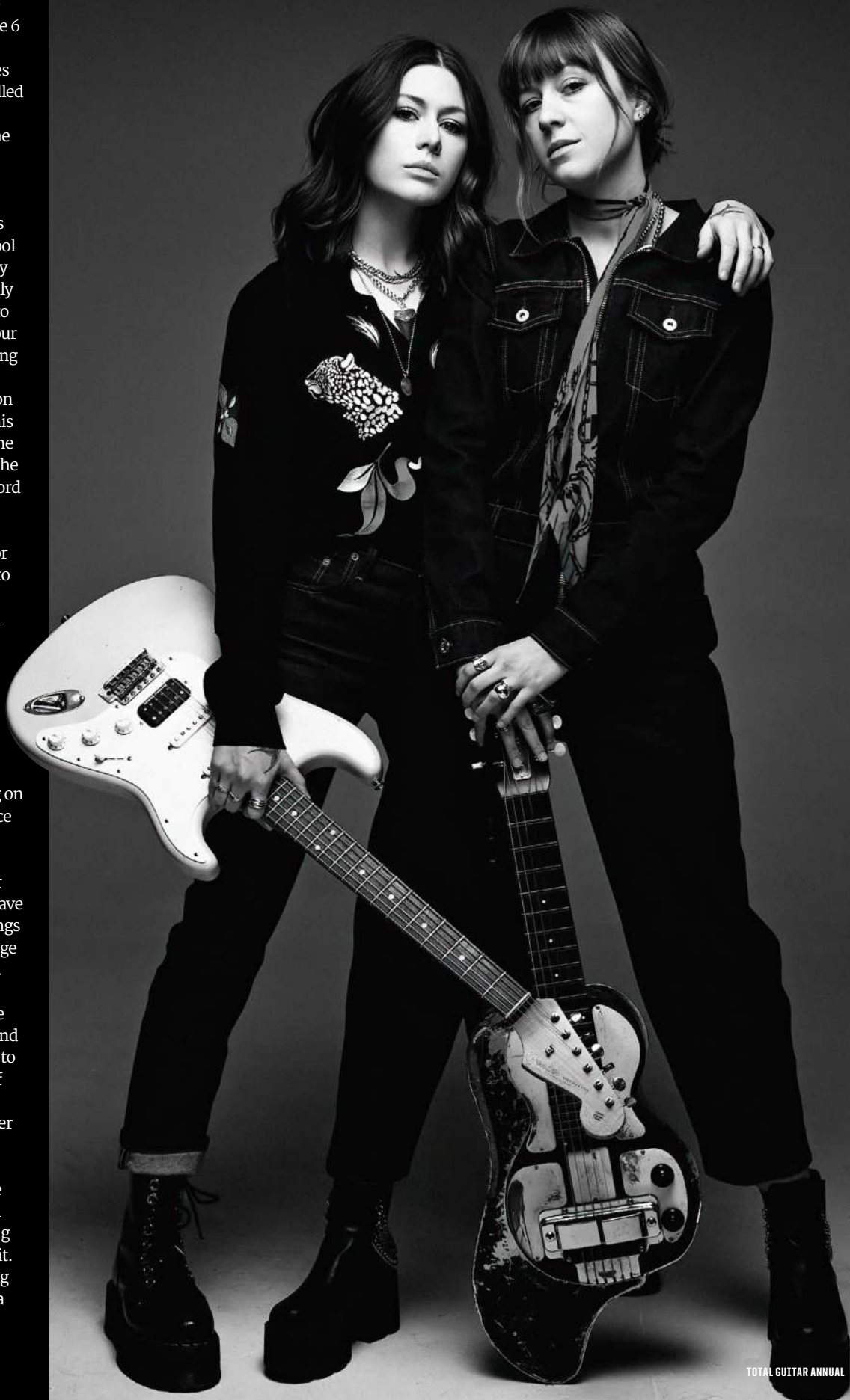
signature pedal of Rebecca's husband, Tyler Bryant. Megan runs her Rickenbacker B6 lapsteel via an Ernie Ball volume pedal, and both use a Line 6 HX Stomp for reverbs and delays. On *Paint The Roses*, Rebecca mainly relies on her custom shop Strat, but she pulled out a special axe for *Mad As A Hatter*: "My custom shop silver Tele is just the most beautiful guitar I've ever seen."

"We've been really loving the Strymon Iridium amp simulator because we play with in-ear monitors live," says Megan. "It's been really cool having the Iridiums because it's a very consistent sound in the ears, especially considering sometimes we're flying to tour dates so we're not able to bring our own gear. I think these pedals are going to be real game changers for that."

Larkin Poe are currently in the US on their biggest tour to date, and once this wraps up they'll be heading back to the studio. "We'll probably try record at the end of the year and maybe have a record out in the first or second quarter the next year," says Megan. As Rebecca explains: "We tend to write kind of for a good chunk of time before we go into the studio but then things always happen in the studio as well." Megan agrees. "For *Kindred Spirits*, the last cover album, two of the songs we recorded just off the cuff, like 'let's just try this' and then an hour later we've recorded it. But we'd like to do a bulk of our writing beforehand if possible."

"We're both very inspired by being on the road and feeling what the audience react to," says Megan, and many of their best songs began as improvised jams on stage. "We love to write after we've been on the road. We tend to have a lot of riffs stockpiled from tour, things that felt awesome and exciting on stage that we can take right into the studio. That's how we recorded [2020's] *Self Made Man*. Then before we go into the studio we'll sit down for afternoons and just write riff after riff after riff. I like to send ideas along to Rebecca and see if they spark any lyrical ideas."

As we're finishing, Megan offers her advice for new songwriters. "I'd say songwriting is a muscle just like any other, and the more that you do it the better you'll get. Not all of us are Tom Petty, coming out of the womb writing hit songs. Most of us have to work at it. You are what you listen to, so listening to as much music as possible is gonna fuel your writing."



METALLICA

THE BLACK ALBUM



88

Photo: Getty Images

Words Amit Sharma

“I WAS JUST SITTING THERE WITH MY GUITAR AT THREE O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING, AND THEN THIS RIFF CAME OUT. AND I THOUGHT, ‘WHOAH, THAT WORKS!’”

A flash of inspiration from guitarist **Kirk Hammett** was the key to the reinvention of Metallica on *The Black Album*. Now, on the 30th anniversary of its release, he tells the story of the album’s creation

It was one simple riff that set the tone for the biggest album of Metallica's career, and it came not from James Hetfield, the band's rhythm guitarist and riff-maker-in-chief, but from lead guitarist Kirk Hammett. The riff came to him during a tour in 1989, as he sat alone in a hotel room. And as he recalls that moment to TG, all of 32 years later, he acknowledges a debt to one of the bands that defined a new form of heavy rock at the exact same time that Metallica rose to superstar status.

"Back in '89 I'd just discovered this new musical movement coming out of the Seattle area," Kirk says. "I was listening to a lot of Soundgarden. I was pretty impressed with the rawness of their sound and how heavy it felt. And one thing we spoke about as a band was how much we all like bouncy riffs. So I was just sitting there with my guitar at three o'clock in the morning, thinking: 'Soundgarden, bounce, flattened fifths...' Almost simulating my mind to those sounds. And then this riff came out, and I thought, 'Whoah, that works!'"

From this riff, a classic was created. *Enter Sandman* was, in every sense, the pivotal song on Metallica's fifth album, officially titled *Metallica* but more commonly known as *The Black Album*. It was the opening song on the album, the first single, and most important of all, it defined a new direction for the band when they most needed it.

By the end of the 80s, the kings of thrash metal had outgrown the genre they had done so much to create, and it was *Enter Sandman* that unlocked their future.

As drummer Lars Ulrich explained: "With the first four Metallica albums, it was a journey that sort of got more and more progressive, more and more crazy and kooky and long-winded. With the fourth album [1988's *...And Justice For All*] it's like we hit a wall. So when we got together to write the next batch of songs, the mission statement was: simplify. And the first song we wrote, on day one, was *Enter Sandman*."

Metallica's choice of producer for *The Black Album* was a shock to the band's diehard fans, for Bob Rock had made his name working for hair metal stars Mötley Crüe and Bon Jovi. But he proved a perfect fit for Metallica, and after an eight-month stint

at One By One studios in Los Angeles, a masterpiece was completed – the measured power in *Enter Sandman* and *Sad But True* contrasting with thrash throwbacks such as *Holier Than Thou* and the classic rock feel in *The Unforgiven* and *Nothing Else Matters*.

Released in August 1991, *The Black Album* would become one of the highest-selling albums of all-time, transcending heavy metal and earning its place in mainstream popularity alongside the likes of Michael Jackson and The Beatles.

On its 30th anniversary, the man whose riff started it all has plenty to say about the making of this legendary album. But first, Kirk Hammett reveals how, in the last two years, a certain magazine has helped him develop those flattened fifths that served him so well for *Enter Sandman*...

"I've always enjoyed *Total Guitar*," he says, "but my appreciation for your magazine has really grown since the lockdowns. I've had a lot of time to go through all my issues and there's so much great stuff in there. I've been learning how to use the flattened fifth as a substitution for seventh chords, and I love sh*t like that!"

"PLAYING MUSIC IS ABOUT MOVING PEOPLE PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY..."

Let's start in 1990 and where your heads were at going into *The Black Album* after *...And Justice For All*. We'd come off that album and our mantra afterwards was very much: 'Let's not make another album like *Justice*!' We wanted to start writing shorter songs, and that was a reaction to playing the songs from *Justice*, which were long and had all those changes. You have to understand that when that album came out and we went on tour, we were playing to an audience who hadn't really digested the album, and we were seeing yawns, people looking up at the rafters or at their watches... It was a good thing we had pyro at the end of the songs to wake everyone up and bring them back around! So after seeing the reaction to that – the general progressive nature of the album – we wanted to put out something on the other side of the coin.

And so, as you said, the focus was on shorter, simpler songs...

Yeah. A song like *Battery* [from 1986's *Master Of Puppets*] has a gallop to it, and *Blackened* [from *...And Justice For All*] has the open chords in the bridge. They're good examples of bouncy riffs. So we were all trying to write bouncy stuff. The one riff that was around, that we were jamming on because it was fully realised, was the riff to *Sad But True*. There's a heavy bounce to it.

And, of course, there was your riff for *Enter Sandman*...

I really wanted to find my ultimate bouncy, heavy riff. That was kind of the impetus for *Sandman*. And even though I kinda accomplished it to a certain extent, I'm still trying to find the ultimate catchy heavy riff, like [Deep Purple's] *Smoke On The Water*. That riff is so powerful. There's something about the silence you hear before it comes in...

Have you ever noticed that? You put the track on there's two or three seconds of silence before it comes in. That silence makes the riff so ominous to me, in the weirdest way. And yet when that riff comes in, you're there instantly. Within a tenth of a second, you're already in – moving your head, your body feels it and gets into the motion. It's so instantaneous. It's like crack! It's audio smack! I don't know how else to put it. When you write a riff like that, it's the ultimate. You know you'll get people dancing, moving, energised and inspired... So many things. For me, playing music is about what I hear but also moving people physically, mentally, emotionally. I like the idea of writing riffs that connect with people on a different level. And it means more to me now than ever before, going into my fortieth year of being a musician. I look at my instrument and think, 'F*ck, man, there's still so much I need to

RIGHT
Kirk with
James Hetfield





learn and do!' There's so much I have yet to accomplish. But, you know, writing *Enter Sandman* allowed me to pursue other things in the light of it. And thank god!

When did you realise that this song was something really special?

Well, it was written pretty much exactly as everyone knows it. I put it down on a demo tape and five or six weeks later we all got together and started trading riff tapes. I went over to Lars' place and he said, 'There's a riff on this tape that's f*cking great!' He played it to me and I was like, 'Oh yeah, I remember that one!' And then he told me to start playing it, so I picked up my guitar. He really liked the opening part so asked me to repeat it before getting to the next bit, which is how that all came about.

Talk us through the main gear used on the album. From what we've seen on the documentary *A Year And A Half In The Life Of Metallica*, you were mainly using your black ESP guitars, plus a blonde Gibson ES-295 and a black Les Paul Custom through various Marshalls and Mesa/Boogies...

For *Enter Sandman*, it was mostly my black Skully ESP. Actually I used it for the entire song. I had that Gibson ES-295 that I did a few overdubs with here and there. I also used my Jackson occasionally. There was a blonde 1961 Strat for some of the clean parts in *The Unforgiven*. I think I used that Skully ESP for most of the guitar solos, if not all of them. I might have broken out my Gibson Flying V here and there. At one point my spider ESP showed up so I used it for one of the last things I recorded during the sessions, which was the solo for *So What!* [a cover of the Anti-Nowhere League's punk classic, which became the b-side to the *Sad But True* single]. That took like 45 minutes. I was really happy about that!

What about amps?

This was at a time when we were all focusing on the EMG and active pickup sound. I remember we had a bunch of amps in mind. We had the Jose-modded Marshall, plus Mesa/Boogies. We stopped using the ADA preamps that I'd been using up to that point. We also had a Matchless in there, plus a Wizard, and this was for all the lead stuff. I believe there was a Fender Vibroverb in the mix as well. And they were all combined. I don't think it was as many amps as James had for this rhythm sound! We had a pretty big combination of stuff, and it was mostly Bob Rock's amps except for the Boogie ones and the Vibroverb, which was mine. I remember getting a Matchless amp right after the recordings because I liked the sound so much.

And you generally stuck with a Tube Screamer for extra drive.

Yeah, there was always a Tube Screamer somewhere in there. I know at one point we were using a lot of different gain and distortion pedals. We were messing with the Tone Bender but it didn't sound good at all. I had my standard Cry Baby wah. I think for the solo on *The Unforgiven* we used a real Echoplex, which added the slapback on that part. At one point we talked about using a sitar for one of the solos in *Wherever I May Roam*, but we got rid of that right away because we couldn't get a good distorted lead sound out of that sitar. Once I got my lead sound, I just went with it. We didn't change it too much. On previous albums I might have switched different wah pedals or guitars. I didn't do it that much on *The Black Album*. I really stuck to that ESP for my solos, and maybe I did *Sad But True* with a Jackson...

Sad But True has quite a deceptive riff that's a lot harder to replicate in feel because of its behind-the-



PENTATONIC POWER

As Kirk explains, he tends to use a pentatonic framework as his base for a lot of the classic Metallica solos and then incorporates other notes from the modes, or the flat 5th from the blues scale, to capture more moods. If you're in E minor pentatonic on the 12th fret, for example, the flat 5ths can be found on the 13th fret of the A string, the 15th fret of the G string and the 11th fret of the B string. He might also include major 2nds and major 9ths – found on the 14th fret of the E strings and the 16th fret of the D string – and these intervals will work in most major and minor contexts. More consideration, however, needs to be applied to 3rd, 6th and 7th intervals – which can sound wrong when used incorrectly. As the man himself tells us, looking closely at the riff you're playing over will help you find out what works best where...

DOMINATE WITH PHRYGIAN DOMINANT

There's a reason why Phrygian Dominant tends to be one of the most popular modes of the harmonic minor scale with metal players. Much like its cousin from the major scale family, the Phrygian mode, it features a minor 2nd – and is therefore well-suited to riffs that use powerchords one fret up from the root. In the case of *Wherever I May Roam*, it's the dissonance between the E note on the 7th fret of the A string and the F on the 8th fret right next to it. What makes the harmonic minor mode sound more dramatic or exotic is its major 3rd in place of the minor 3rd found in standard Phrygian, and this usage of major 3rds against minor 7ths is typical of dominant chords – hence why it's known as Phrygian Dominant. Phew!

Photo: Jeffery Mages

“I HAVE A STRONG KNOWLEDGE OF SCALES AND MODES. KNOWING YOUR THEORY DEFINITELY HELPS!”

beat drag...

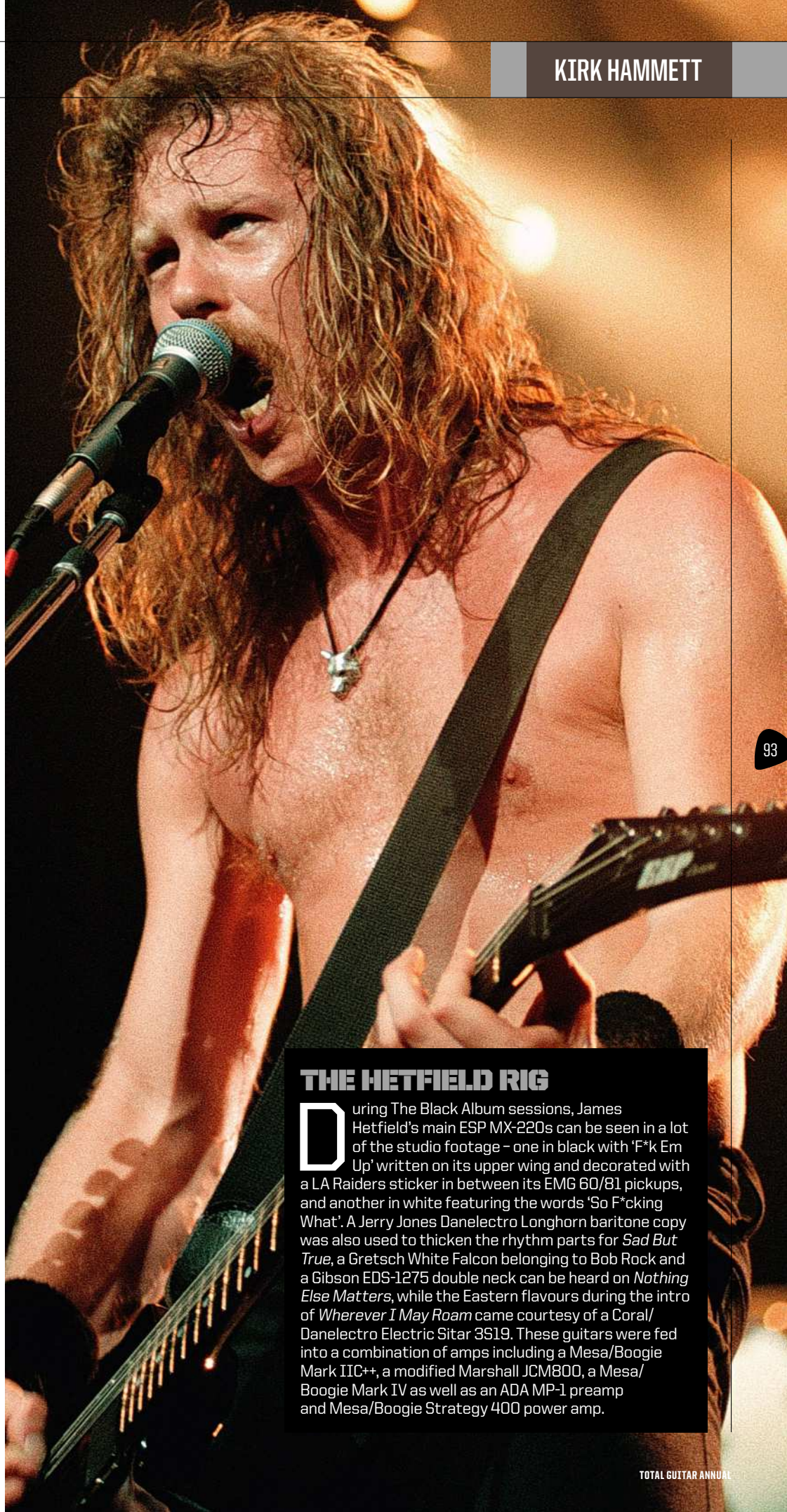
You have to be so behind the beat. Because if you're in front, you'll lose the whole groove and power of it. And yes, it's a riff that sounds easier than it is. There are little things you have to get right and the drag is one of the most important. The same goes for the bit where we hang on one note and bend just before the verses. And, to be honest, we haven't used that technique much since – we generally play fast...

Holier Than Thou has some frenetic triplet rhythms. What's the secret to getting those thrashy rhythms so tight?

The trick to getting those triplets right is really just sitting down and repeating those up-down-ups, starting slow and then getting quicker. Or you could look at them more like a fast gallop. Or, if you want, you could just play along to *Whiplash* (from Metallica's debut album *Kill 'Em All*). One of the exercises Joe Satriani showed me when I started taking lessons was double and triple picking on open strings, as well as tremolo picking... And that's *Whiplash*, right there! I would do that across all six strings and back. It was a really good exercise. Later on, I started looking into other exercises I could do to improve my wrist picking and found out that one is pretty much the best one you can use. It improves the velocity of your picking on one string. Then you can break it up into triplets, quarter notes, all sorts of stuff. I'll usually pick the most difficult single-string chug and use that to warm up before we go on stage... And, you know, it works! There are some rhythms or riffs that you might feel you can't play, but after a couple of weeks or months you can play them in your sleep. You absorb them and they become a part of you, if you practise enough.

Don't Tread On Me has a very grand opening symphony, almost reminiscent of bands like Queen.

That all goes back to our love of harmonised guitars. Brian May did it in such a cool fashion. Thin Lizzy harmonised the hell out of everything. Then there's Judas Priest. We always loved the sound of that. It can add a different sort of mood or colour, and felt appropriate for this intro.

The God That Failed is very Thin Lizzy at points.**THE HETFIELD RIG**

During The Black Album sessions, James Hetfield's main ESP MX-220s can be seen in a lot of the studio footage – one in black with 'F*k Em Up' written on its upper wing and decorated with a LA Raiders sticker in between its EMG 60/81 pickups, and another in white featuring the words 'So F*cking What'. A Jerry Jones Danelectro Longhorn baritone copy was also used to thicken the rhythm parts for *Sad But True*, a Gretsch White Falcon belonging to Bob Rock and a Gibson EDS-1275 double neck can be heard on *Nothing Else Matters*, while the Eastern flavours during the intro of *Wherever I May Roam* came courtesy of a Coral/Danelectro Electric Sitar 3S19. These guitars were fed into a combination of amps including a Mesa/Boogie Mark IIC++, a modified Marshall JCM800, a Mesa/Boogie Mark IV as well as an ADA MP-1 preamp and Mesa/Boogie Strategy 400 power amp.

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The way the chords modulate in the chorus is really cool. There's a lot of movement in there, but it never loses momentum. Instead, the power carries through. The guitar solo I played was basically the first riff and then variations of it. I'm basically repeating the riff over and over again but changing it each time. I knew what I wanted to play, I heard it in my head and sang it. Then I sat down with my guitar and worked it out.

Through The Never has some of the album's finest riffs, particularly the one three minutes in as James sings "On through the never!"

That middle part had been around for a while, before the song came about. It was one I would play here and there, warming up for shows. And when I showed it to those guys they were like, 'Great, this is f*cking heavy!' But when James put on those gang vocals it brought it up to the next level. And I one hundred per cent agree with you – the riff is heavy, but when the vocals come in it all gets even heavier. The intro riff is another thing that had been around for a while on one of my riff tapes. It was me trying to be fast and heavy... Like Slayer! Hey, I love Slayer, what can I say? They're the greatest. Kerry King has such a smooth technique when he plays. He can move from super heavy to super fast to totally jagged, and he does it effortlessly and fluidly. Kerry doesn't get enough credit as a rhythm guitar player. He's a great rhythm player and a great lead guitarist, too. He's always aggressive and I love consistency.

My Friend Of Misery is the longest track on the record, similar to the *Master Of Puppets* era in ways.

Well, it was originally going to be an instrumental and then management told us it was too good to be just instrumental. The vocals were added as an afterthought. So I guess that's why it might feel reminiscent of *Puppets*.

As far as opening gambits go, the stabs that initiate *Of Wolf And Man* are quite a musical statement.

The main riff after the stabs is one that I came up with on the *Justice* tour. The interesting thing was I played it backwards... Or we're playing it backwards now! It started with the higher bit on the fifth fret of the E and A strings and then went down to the



"I LOVE THE PENTATONIC SOUND BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I GREW UP ON. JIMMY PAGE, JIMI HENDRIX... THAT'S THE SOUND, MAN!"

first fret and open chords. Lars heard it the other way round. In hindsight, it was a good idea because we could use the open E chord stabs to ramp up into that main riff.

Nothing Else Matters has some beautifully layered acoustic parts. What exactly are we hearing?

I think James played all the acoustic stuff on that track. We rented some acoustics, and there might have been a Martin in there. We didn't have as much gear back then, but nowadays we have enough for twenty bands! Bob Rock had so much, and then there was this whole multitude of stuff we ended up renting – from compressors and preamps to acoustics and amps, like Marshall JCM. I know the JCM played a large part in the recording of *Nothing Else Matters* and it was our first time using one in the studio.

ABOVE
Kirk and James on stage in 1991, as Metallica toured *The Black Album*

You ended up using some real choice notes for your solo in *The Unforgiven* – which, as evidenced by the documentary, was perhaps challenging at points.

It wasn't happening and then Bob Rock accused me of not doing my homework. I don't know what he was talking about, because I arrived into the studio with all these ideas, but they just didn't work! I had to throw them all out. I was bare naked with no idea what to do. Bob told me he would try to tweak the sound for me and when he did that it really helped. They said, 'Just play!' and I was like, 'Arrrrgh!' I had maybe a minute to put myself into a real mood. I just needed to block everything out and go deep emotionally. We hit record and I didn't know what the f*ck to play but something was going to come out... Something always does. And that's what came out. The cameras caught



ABOVE
Kirk Hammett,
a man who knows
his scales

a large portion of what ended up on the record, which is a pretty cool thing looking back at it. But that solo was raw emotion. I had no idea what to do, it all came to me as I played – real improvisation. I was so happy after that, really excited and inspired. I knew I needed to do more of it and ever since that moment, I've worked on being better at improvisation and completing music thoughts that are very much listenable. Forming complete solos naturally, if you know what I mean. For *The Black Album*, I came in with eighty per cent of the stuff worked out and twenty per cent was improvised, including *The Unforgiven* solo. Nowadays I prefer to have it the opposite way, with twenty per cent worked out and eighty per cent improvised, because it's more exciting, more spontaneous and honest. I don't know what's going to be on the album as much as anyone else! It feels right doing it like that, it feels better – rather than composing something and making it fit, sometimes forcing

things where they might not feel right. Pure improvisation is more real and human.

The big harmonised bends at the end of *The Unforgiven* also add greatly to its overall symphonic weight.

Now I think about it, I remember wanting to double those parts in the studio. It's been so long, it's hard to remember.

You used the Phrygian Dominant mode of the harmonic minor scale for parts of the *Wherever I May Roam* solo, really capitalising on its exotic feel.

Yeah, I used some Phrygian Dominant in that. What I always do when I get to where the solo is look at the rhythm chords. You need to look at the notes in the riff and apply the necessary scale. Find the one with the most amount of notes that the chords do and co-ordinate them. In this case,

it was a lot of Phrygian and Phrygian Dominant. I'm more inclined to use harmonic minor these days than the straight major scale modes because I feel you can get away with more! I recently played with Kamasi Washington, he covered *My Friend Of Misery*. The tonality of the chords during my solo worked well for harmonic minor because it had some similar chromatic notes. When I played pentatonics over that bit, it sounded in but it didn't really jive in the same way as it did modally. I tried harmonic minor and I was in. I tried harmonic minor with even more chromatics and I was even more in. Which is how I came up with the solo for *Wherever I May Roam*, looking at the chords in the riff and what kind of scales they're suggesting. The whole song is in Phrygian when you look at it. So Phrygian Dominant would definitely work! I have a strong knowledge of scales and modes, if I didn't I wouldn't be able to reach the same melodic conclusions. Knowing your theory definitely helps!

And it's interesting how you have continued to use the trusty pentatonic scale as your launchpad for other tonalities, mixing in seconds, sixths and beyond...

The trick is to add notes when you want to. I might play in E minor pentatonic and then add in a C sharp, and suddenly I'm in Dorian. Then I might go back to the pentatonic and go down to the seventh fret and use the E minor shapes there. Then I might go up two frets and find a relative minor there [Editor's note: the C# Locrian mode here would mirror E Dorian]. I just add notes when I feel like it. Sometimes people might not notice this – I think you're the very first person to actually point it out – but I might go from pentatonic to modal for just three or four seconds before going back. I love the pentatonic sound because that's what I grew up on. Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix... That's the sound, man. For me it's not about the completely modal thing, like Eric Johnson or those kinds of players. I still love modal stuff and the European sound of it, so I tend to write melodies and compose using modes but when I'm improvising it's about pentatonics and chromaticism. Those are the notes I like to play.

METALLICA

THE BLACK ALBUM



FOR MORE INFO, GO TO...

Andriy Vasylenko [youtube.com/AndriyVasylenko](https://www.youtube.com/AndriyVasylenko) / andriyvasylenko.com

Steve Allsworth [instagram.com/steveallsworthguitar](https://www.instagram.com/steveallsworthguitar) / steveallsworth.com

Interview Chris Bird Photo Ross Halfin

APOCALYPSE DAWN... THE TOTAL GUITAR METALLICA DEEPPFAKE TRACK

How a TG 'Play like' track accidentally achieved mythical status amongst Metallica fans the world over...

We know what you're thinking: 'What's a deepfake'? Well, bear with us as we tell you a story that'll explain all, and why it's relevant to *Total Guitar* this month...

Back in March 2002, TG printed an edition of the magazine featuring James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett on the cover – though between album cycles, Metallica were a big deal back then, just as they are today. Emblazoned across the cover appeared the words: 'Play Like

Hammett & Hetfield' – a coverline referring to a lesson written by fresh-faced TG tutor, Steve Allsworth, who had created a four-minute instrumental track in the style of the band entitled *Apocalypse Dawn* and tabbed it out for readers to learn.

So far, so normal, then. 'Play like' lessons are standard guitar lesson fare, and TG has always been jam-packed full of 'em. However, what happened next was not so normal. Fast forward nearly two decades to 2021 and Ukrainian blogger Andriy Vasylenko, a Metallica geek and

fansite owner, would contact Steve (who still writes for the mag!), informing him that his track had acquired notoriety online in the mid-2000s. Many had believed it to be a genuine unreleased Metallica studio demo. Others labelled it (perhaps more accurately) a deepfake – an intentional aping of the Metallica sonic likeness.

Though the myth was busted, Andriy posted a video to his YouTube channel this year recounting the story. Read on as Andriy relates the facts about TG's unintentional online hit...

Please tell us a little about yourself, your YouTube channel and your love of Metallica.

I'm Andriy Vasylenko, 29, musician and blogger, born and living in Poltava, Ukraine. My main instrument is bass, but I've always been a big fan of guitar riffs. In 2014, during my final year in university, I started posting Metallica bass covers on YouTube. And over the years it grew from just a cover channel to a sort of Metallica fan encyclopedia. Now the bass/guitar stuff is taking over again, not least thanks to the guys I've collaborated with, including Steve Allsworth.

How did *Apocalypse Dawn* first come to your attention?

It was late 2009, I guess. The Internet was still pretty much [a] Wild West, so you often could come across faked stuff that nobody could verify. Most would believe [these tracks were] real, because why not? Like so-called 'Unreleased Metallica Demos', *Apocalypse Dawn* was among the

most convincing ones. The programmed drums could evoke some doubts, but most still didn't hear the difference back then. Plus the near-radio sound quality concealed the fakeness even more.

And can you tell us a bit about how the track initially rose to prominence on the internet?

It began not long after *Apocalypse Dawn* had appeared in *Total Guitar* in 2002. The track spread across the Internet within the following couple of years, and everyone was wondering if it was really Metallica. [Certain] conditions overlapped that made it so believable. Firstly, it's an instrumental track – no James Hetfield singing. Secondly, it was the *St. Anger* era, when Metallica was in a sort of information cocoon. Thirdly, it actually sounded quite close to Lars and company.

How did it compare to the other "fake" Metallica tracks you'd heard?

Other 'fakes' were mostly actual songs by actual bands that people just retitled as 'Metallica' and uploaded online. And then the Internet machine did the job. Most were way off, but wishful thinking reinforced by the lack of info is a powerful thing. *Apocalypse Dawn*, on the other hand, was intended to be as close to Metallica as possible. All the band's trademark features were there. You would think that the creators of such a masterful imitation would have done it for exposure, to promote their band or something. But almost nobody could trace its origin. So there you have it, a perfect 'fake' Metallica track.

As the huge Metallica fan you are, which songs do you think Steve's track evokes the most?

Firstly, the ballady stuff. As an admirer of James Hetfield's arpeggios, I find the licks Steve wrote were spot on, without sounding forced. *Fade To Black*, *Sanitarium*, *One*, *To Live Is To Die*, *Nothing Else Matters* – you can feel

them all in only the first minute of the track. And then the *Sandman*-ish and *Battery*-ish sections completed the essence of Metallica.

From your perspective, how did the YouTube community react to *Apocalypse Dawn*?

It was a recurring topic online in the 2000s. People asked on forums 'Did you hear of *Apocalypse Dawn*?' or 'Is it really Metallica?'. And a lot did agree that [it really was] Metallica rather than not! Now the generations [have] changed, and most of my YouTube audience [have] never heard of the track and the mystery around it. The millennial viewers, however, do remember it, which gives them that bittersweet nostalgic feeling. It was funny hearing Steve say that he had no idea *Apocalypse Dawn* had become such a myth among Metallica fans. He did a fantastic job and served the community big time, in both teaching the guitar and (unintentionally) giving food for fun speculation.

TG's very own **Steve Allsworth** guides you through a full tab of his unintentional online hit

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

STEVE SAYS This riff is effectively an amalgam of all the great Metallica ballads. I based it mainly on *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)* from *Master Of Puppets* and *Fade To Black* from *Ride The Lightning*, which both feature emotive minor arpeggios like this.

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

STEVE SAYS This riff was loosely based on the electric arpeggio ideas in two songs: *The Call Of Ktulu* from *Ride The Lightning* and the middle section from *Master Of Puppets*. Both of these tracks hint at harmonic minor with the addition of the diminished 7th chord. I also borrowed the vibe and 12th fret harmonics from *Nothing Else Matters* (from the Black Album) and the diatonic chord movement from the intro to *Fight Fire With Fire*.

3 CHUGGING POWERCHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

[illegible]

STEVE SAYS This section is typical of some of Metallica's classic mid-tempo riffs such as *Enter Sandman*, *Seek And Destroy* and *Ride The Lightning*, which all feature plenty of chugging powerchords against the open bottom E string. It also features the extra beat in the final bar, which is a nod to the changes of time signature in *Blackened* (from ...*And Justice For All*) and *Master Of Puppets*.

4 EARLY-PERIOD GALLOP RIFFS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=165

N.C. C⁵ B⁵ N.C. F⁵ N.C. E⁵ N.C. B^{♭5} A⁵ N.C. G⁵

1:43

PM - - - - -
w/distortion

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

TAB

1 0 0 0 5 3 4 2 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 8 6 8 6 7 5 0 0 0 0 0 0 5 3

♩=100

N.C. C⁵ B⁵ N.C. F⁵ N.C. E⁵ N.C. E⁵ N.C. G⁵ N.C. G⁵ Play 4 times

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

PM - - - - -

TAB

2 0 0 0 5 3 4 2 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 5 3 0 0 0 5 3 2

STEVE SAYS I based this riff on some of Metallica's early, faster thrash metal songs such as *Battery* and *Fight Fire With Fire* that rely heavily on the forward gallop rhythm (eighth, 16th, 16th) and reverse gallop rhythm (16th, 16th, eighth). It also targets the classic tritone (B, 5 in the key of Em) from songs like *Enter Sandman* and *Of Wolf And Man*.



5 MELANCHOLIC SOLOING

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=100
Em7

2:19

1

TAB

7 9 10 9 9 7 8 (11) (9) 7 9 12 12 12 14

BD PB 9 Dsus4 D/F#

Em9 Dsus4 Asus4 Em9

3

TAB

14 (16) 12 (14) 12 12 14 7 8 7 9 7 9 11 10 12 10 12 (14) (12) 10 12

BU BD PB 12

STEVE SAYS This is really a simple pastiche on Kirk's clean solo ideas in the tracks *One* and *The Unforgiven*. He was a lot more bluesy than his 90s rock and metal peers, and the minor pentatonic scale and Hendrix-style diads here show this influence. Straight natural minor is never far away however, and this scale will instantly deliver a more melancholic sound.

6 WAH WAH SOLO

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

E⁵ C⁵ G⁵ F^{#5} F⁵

2:38 w/distortion + wah

1

TAB

15 15 12 15 12 15 12 15 12 15 12 15 12 15 12 15 12

BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU BU

E⁵ G⁵/E B^{b5}

3

TAB

17 15 14 17 15 14 17 15 14 17 15 14 15 14 12 14 12 15 12 15 12 15 12 14

6 WAH WAH SOLO (CONT'D)

BIT.LV/TGA2023AUDIO

8va

F⁵

BU

TAB

12 15 12 14 12 15 12 14 12 15 12 14 12 15 12 14 15(17)

STEVE SAYS Epic, wah-laden solos don't come much better than in *Enter Sandman*, from which my opening idea is borrowed here. It also makes a nod towards Kirk's Michael Schenker-inspired legato ideas and pentatonic scale sequences used on the outro to *Fade To Black*.

7 SINGABLE MELODIES

BIT.LV/TGA2023AUDIO

Em⁷

2:57

Dsus⁴

D/F#

Em⁹

TAB

7 9 7 9 7 9 11 11 12 11 12 14 14 12 14 16 12

8va

Asus⁴

Em⁹

BU

17(19)

STEVE SAYS This offering was a nod to Kirk's tasteful melodic neck pickup soloing from such tracks as *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)*, *Master Of Puppets* and, to a certain extent, *The Four Horsemen* from *Kill 'Em All*. These solos tend to be crafted around singable melodies and slower rhythms (usually the calm before the storm!).

8 HARMONISED LEAD

BIT.LV/TGA2023AUDIO

Em

3:16

w/distortion

B

C⁵

B

D#dim

Em

TAB

9 9 7 8 7 8 7 9 8 13 12 10 12 11 10 9 8 7 8 9



8 HARMONISED LEAD (CONT'D)

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

STEVE SAYS This is another melodic solo, but this time based on the classic harmony ideas heard in *Master Of Puppets*, *Fade To Black* and *To Live Is To Die*. The twin guitar solo idea is classic Thin Lizzy, although here the use of E harmonic minor gives it a neoclassical twist.

9 PHRYGIAN LICK

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

STEVE SAYS I based this fast solo around some of the fast open-string pull-off licks featured in parts of solos in *Whiplash* and *One*. This also uses the Spanish-sounding E Phrygian mode (E minor with a ♭2), which Kirk helped to popularise in tracks such as *Wherever I May Roam*.

10 MALMSTEEN INFLUENCE

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

10 MALMSTEEN INFLUENCE (CONT'D)

BIT.LV/TGA2023AUDIO

STEVE SAYS An Yngwie Malmsteen influence often reared its head in Kirk's early guitar solos. Tracks such as *Creeping Death* and *Leper Messiah* were the inspiration behind this idea, featuring C, D and Em sweep arpeggios in full flight as well some fast triplets and descending scale sequences. Kirk frequently used the full range of his guitar with frequent bends up from the 22nd fret (and often beyond) that allowed him to break up the flow of relentless fast picking.

"SOMEONE WOULD COUNT IN OR START PLAYING... AND THEN YOU'D JUST FLY!"

MY LIFE IN PINK FLOYD - AND BEYOND. DAVID GILMOUR: IN HIS OWN WORDS...

Interviews Mark Ellen and Daryl Easlea

In extracts from two major interviews, David Gilmour looks back on his long career – with Pink Floyd and as a solo artist. He speaks about the formative influences that shaped him as a guitarist, and all that followed...

Joining Floyd in 1968 as their former leader Syd Barrett was losing control of the band and his sanity. The landmark albums and songs that defined Pink Floyd. The bizarre 'lost' album *Household Objects* (recorded with – you guessed it – household objects!). *The Final Cut* – the last album the band made with founding member Roger Waters. The reunion with Waters for the Live 8 concert in 2005. The solo records and session work that sustained the guitarist outside of Floyd. The thrill of playing guitar with a Beatle. And the satisfaction that comes from Floyd's mighty legacy...

GUITAR HEROES

I'm a real jack of all trades. I'm completely the anti-purist. I was never going to dedicate my life to being B.B. King. My influences were Pete Seeger, Lead Belly, Bob Dylan, Hank Marvin, all the blues guys and everything. It was all a complete hotchpotch, a mass of different styles and influences. I saw no reason why all these influences could not co-habit – and I still don't! Bill Haley's *Rock Around The Clock* was a pivotal moment for me. And that was superseded in what seemed like

months by *Jailhouse Rock* by Elvis Presley, also pivotal. The Beatles were pivotal. Jimi Hendrix was a pivotal moment. Pete Seeger was a pivotal moment when I was young. I learnt guitar from him. Too many to name.

THE EARLY FLOYD WITH SYD BARRETT

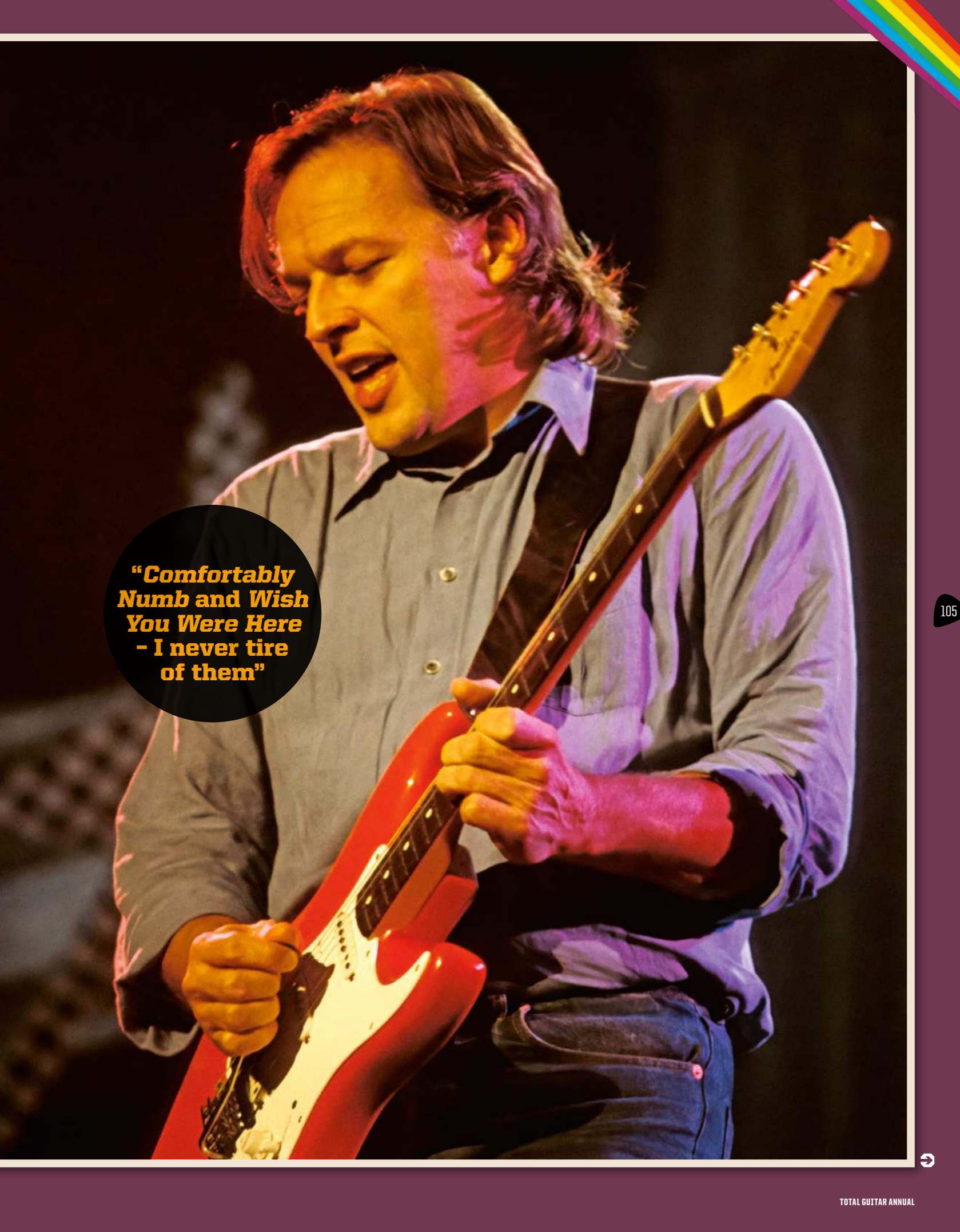
Syd would gradually phase out of live performance, and stick around and write songs for us. He obviously wasn't up to playing live very much, so they asked me to join, and for him to be the

THE SHOW MUST GO ON
Gilmour (right) leading Floyd in the 80s

Brian Wilson backroom boy figure. It could have felt very uncomfortable, but it didn't really. After five gigs, it obviously wasn't working. We went off to do the gig in Southampton and didn't bother picking him up. It's a well trotted-out story. We certainly didn't know those would be the last gigs we played together. I don't think we were ever in the studio at the same time. I worked on one or two of the tracks that were already recorded. All five of us are certainly on [1968 song] *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*. We didn't record whole new tracks until after he'd left.

ADVENTURES IN SOUND

The music was exploratory, and it was exciting to explore. But that, to me now, looks like a process – a process to find out what you do and don't like. And when you get older – necessarily, it seems to me – you find what you do like, and that maybe narrows your vision down a little bit. And in those early days, while it was exciting, there



***"Comfortably
Numb and Wish
You Were Here
- I never tire
of them"***

was an awful lot of it that was embarrassing and you go: 'Oh, God, what are we going to do now?'

JAMMING

We would have a template of what we were playing live. Someone would count in or start playing, and you'd know what the title was, and you'd have a rough template and then you'd just fly off on any tack you liked, and the music would build up and fly away and wander off in another direction. And some of those directions were dead-ends and some were exciting.

THE ASCENT OF PINK FLOYD

If I watch [1972 concert movie] *Live At Pompeii*, I cringe. But mostly I can see how great it all is, and it's all sitting there in its memory box mostly happily. I'm very good at forgetting all the bad sh*t anyway. The great moments are legion. I have thousands of snapshot memories that are great. *Meddle* was a great moment for us. It showed the way forth and it was successful. *Dark Side Of The Moon* obviously was the breakthrough moment and was terrific, and we suddenly moved up from the medium-time to the mega-time.

ROAD-TESTING THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

That's slightly a myth. *Dark Side* was fashioned out on the road, because we started playing and honing it, but it wasn't that common. Things like *Echoes* we had done live, and later, with the *Animals* stuff, we had done the two tracks on the '74 tour. They were part of the oeuvre before being unleashed officially, but *Dark Side Of The Moon* was the one where that belief comes from – and it did help make it better, as we were pretty well conversant with the music. We would jam with something, use it or throw it away. By the time we got into a studio, we knew what we were going to do and we worked on it until it was right.

HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS

We spent an awful lot of hours of wasted studio time faffing around [with that aborted project]. I remember spending an inordinately long time stretching rubber bands across matchboxes to get a bass sound – which just ended up

sounding like a bass guitar! But we salvaged a little bit. The main drone at the beginning of *Wish You Were Here* [on the album's opening track *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*] was made with wine glasses which we recorded on 16-track, with a glass on each track at a semitone interval, so we could do chords and play it like a keyboard. It was a hugely difficult sampling system.

THE JOY OF COMFORTABLY NUMB

For the very palpable joy that things like *Comfortably Numb* and *Wish You Were Here* give to an audience, I never tire of them. I suppose playing that same old thing again can be seen as being tedious, but really I'm always happy to do the ones people love.

THE FINAL CUT

I was just trying to get through [that album]. It wasn't pleasant at all. If it was that unpleasant but the results had been worth it, then I might think about it in a different way. I wouldn't, actually. There are a couple of reasonable tracks, at best. *The Fletcher Memorial Home*, *The Gunner's Dream* and the title track are the three reasonable tracks on that. The rest of *The Final Cut* is dross.

THE SOLO ALBUMS

The first one was just a quick blast [titled simply *David Gilmour*, and released in 1978, it was recorded with bassist Rick Wills and drummer Willie Wilson, both ex-members of Gilmour's pre-Floyd band *Jokers Wild*]. We congregated down in the south of France, knocked out a few jams. It was really off the top of our heads, it was fun – comparatively, compared to Pink Floyd. *About Face* in 1984 was at a time when we knew Roger wasn't going to be part of anything we did, but before he'd officially left. He had us trapped in limbo. I was putting my toe in the water. Then he left and I was unencumbered and carried on doing Pink Floyd. There didn't seem to be any reason to do a solo project.

THE SESSION PLAYER

I did a lot of things. I was bored – and flattered to be asked. Some of the things I don't have a lot of affection for, and some I've never even heard. With Grace



"You're sitting there with Paul McCartney and your guitar is plugged in – it's magical!"

Jones, I'm on one version of *Slave To The Rhythm*, but I can't really hear myself on it. I can become a perfectionist when I'm with Pink Floyd, but going in, doing a guitar solo and then leaving is great.

PERFORMING WITH A BEATLE

I'm a kid, really. You get into Studio Two at Abbey Road, you're sitting there with Paul McCartney and your guitar is plugged in. You think that's an ordinary day's work, but of course it isn't – it's magical! Managing to persuade him to sing *I Saw Her Standing There* at the Cavern, with me doing the John Lennon parts, was absolutely fantastic.

PINK FLOYD'S REUNION AT LIVE 8

I thoroughly enjoyed it, though we had a few days of very tense rehearsals. We hadn't spoken to each other for years. Roger wanted to do *Money* – which we all did, actually – and *Another Brick In The Wall* and *In The Flesh*. In the end



I thought, actually, we're Pink Floyd and he's our guest, and he can just do what we tell him to do or f*ck off. [But the show] was magical. We were relaxed and we enjoyed it. We did a run-through of the set the night before to no audience in the park and that was terrific, and helped us feel relaxed and confident. It went very well.

STADIUM ROCK

I don't see the need for that sort of adulation on that scale. Also the strange thing about stadiums is you have no way of telling if it's going well. It's a crowd – in the singular. You can't really retain them as individuals. The power and energy of their 'love', so to speak, is a wonderful drug to boost your ego to the point where it's overinflated. If anyone else in any other pop group wants to go and do that, that's great. But I've forged a career that suits me pretty well. I've had reasonable commercial success and reasonable artistic satisfaction.

MODERN MUSIC

I don't listen to much new music.

When I have the radio on it all sounds dreadfully formularised to me, but I'm not its audience. Obviously there are whole layers of music away from what we get on the radio and telly. It's like that thing they say about rats: 'You're never more than six feet away from a rat in London'; you're probably never more than a hundred yards from someone doing a great gig somewhere, but I'm just not aware of it. If a new Pink Floyd came along now I wouldn't know it had happened.

LEGACY

Obviously I accept there are people who want to go and see and hear this legend that was Pink Floyd, but I'm afraid that's not my responsibility. Been there, done that. To me it's just two words that tie together the work that four people did together. It's just a pop group. I don't need it. I don't need to go there. I'm not being coy or difficult, I just think that at my age I should do whatever I really want to do in life. But I'm thrilled that each new generation that comes along seems to latch on to us, and we

PIGS MIGHT FLY
Gilmour reunited
with Waters at Live 8

get a fresh bunch of followers and listeners as the years tick by. Though I don't quite know what's made it work for us that way when it doesn't for quite a lot of other people.

WHY PINK FLOYD'S MUSIC STILL MATTERS

Quality. Universal themes. I can understand it. It's good stuff. People listen to Neil Young and Joni Mitchell the same way. We're in a fine, select group – it's great for every new generation to investigate. I'm happy to be considered part of it. Our music has depth, and attempts philosophical thought and meaning with discussions of infinity, eternity and mortality. There is a line which people cross that turns it into some magical, mystical realm, for which I don't claim responsibility – and don't hold any great truck with.

LIFE AFTER PINK FLOYD

I've had a life in Pink Floyd for a lot of years, and those years in what is now considered to be our heyday were ninety-five per cent musically fulfilling and joyous and full of fun and laughter. And I certainly don't want to let the other five per cent colour my view of what was a long and fantastic time together. I'm all for Roger doing whatever he wants to do and enjoying himself and getting the joy he must have had out of those Wall shows. I'm at peace with all of these things. But I absolutely don't want to go back. I don't want to go and play stadiums... under the [group] banner. I'm free to do exactly what I want to do and how I want to do it. I don't know if it's as good as Pink Floyd or worse than Pink Floyd or better than Pink Floyd. I don't give a sh*t. It's what I want to do and it's what I will do.

THE LAST WORD...

I've had a great career. I can do it when I want to and then lay off and do all the other things that make up a life. I've done the relentless... everything-ing – which is what you have to do to fight your way through and create a career of the sort we had. I don't need or want it any more. It's fine. No regrets. Nothing – almost nothing – but great memories. I've done it. And I'm happy with it.

Interview Amit Sharma

“You get this huge spread that’s not possible on a six-string...”

THE EIGHT-STRING GUITAR OPENS UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES. TWO OF ITS LEADING EXPONENTS – **MÅRTEN HAGSTRÖM** OF MESHUGGAH AND **TOSIN ABASI** FROM ANIMALS AS LEADERS – REVEAL ALL

In 2020 the art of eight-string guitar is in rude health. This was once an incredibly obscure instrument, with roots going as far back as 19th century classical music. But since 2007, when Ibanez launched the RG2228, the first mass-produced eight-string, its popularity has grown and grown. You can easily find an eight-string in most first-hand guitar shops.

This popularity is mainly thanks to metal bands who called for lower and thicker tunings to take their imaginations to the extreme – foremost among them Meshuggah, math-metal pioneers from Sweden, and Animals As Leaders, masters of instrumental tech-metal from Washington D.C. In both bands’ new albums, the extended range of the eight-string is explored by two guitarists: Mårten Hagström and Fredrik Thordendal on Meshuggah’s *Immutable*; Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes on Animals As Leaders’ *Parrhesia*.

In conversation with TG, Mårten and Tosin reveal the secrets to mastering this instrument – and what it gives them in terms of creativity...

What have you both learned about getting more mileage out of an eight-string?

Tosin: That’s an important question, because a lot of people might be looking at their guitars from a six-string perspective. Ultimately, the six-string can be the core of how you understand an eight-string, especially if you retain standard tuning. We often tune our eight-strings to drop E, so you can still perceive it as a six-string in standard

tuning. All scales and shapes repeat per octave, so it’s good to acknowledge the repetition within the fingerboard. Imagine if you’re playing an A power chord on the fifth fret on your sixth string – with our tuning, if you barre all the way down, you have another fifth interval and a low octave. It’s like drop D, because those three strings give you a functional chord. That helps retain orientation. You can use lower notes in the same positions, while also finding

higher notes to create more width and distance.

Mårten: We didn’t have an engineering masterplan or any idea how to go about using eight-strings. With Meshuggah, it’s always been about finding unique sounds. So we learned how to play eight-strings as we were learning how to compose with them. Our technique is something we manufactured as we went along. The best advice I can give is find how the extended range can benefit your style. That’s what worked for us. It affected how we attack the strings and how we write riffs. It was all about new atmospheres and avenues that weren’t available on a six-string. Start thinking about what the extended range can actually enhance. To be honest, we would have loved to continue using baritones and seven-strings. We didn’t



➔ necessarily want to add extra strings, but we knew we liked the tone.

A lot of players find the jump from six to seven easy enough, but eight is an entirely different ball game...

Mårten: I think the beauty of eight-strings is that it takes away the normal aspects of guitar playing – they can feel huge, like playing a piano. There are a lot of adjustments in terms of angles, like with your wrist and picking technique... all these small things you have to get used to. As you said, if you play a six-string, everything will transpose pretty nicely onto a seven. Eights are a different matter. For me, it's all about being comfortable with the tone. Sometimes I hear eight-string stuff and it sounds like someone's just detuned something. And other times I will hear someone actually utilising what the instrument can do.

Tosin: It's all about taking the chord voicings you know and adapting them to the eight-string, and using octave displacement. You can also have a lot of fun using the low E as a pedal tone in your riffs, using other chords to superimpose against it, like a G major. There are a lot of options out there. I like to make use of the full range of



EIGHT BALLER
Mårten Hagström (right) on stage with Meshuggah

eight-string prototypes, though we were actually already working with Ibanez on custom seven-strings at the time. It was far from finished, but me and Fredrik found that his eight-string lent itself well to playing differently.

In what sense?

Mårten: We quickly figured out that powerchord chugging and riffing didn't really work, it wasn't as simple as transposing ideas down to the eighth string. The tone of the instrument lent itself better to the single-string stuff we're known for. For us it was like, 'Wow, this is a new tool that makes us sound different!' We sounded deeper and started to write unusual things that

an eight-string design that feels more approachable and guitar-like than the others out there. That was the starting point: a guitar that didn't feel like playing leads on a surfboard. It had to encourage people to play complex things, sounding incredible both clean and heavy. It also had to look modern – it's hard to introduce a new body shape that doesn't turn players off, so we designed something that felt bold and noticeable but not too alien. We're trying to distill what makes a guitar desirable. What is mojo? Why would you choose an Abasi over something else? It boils down to wood selection, like more stable and lightweight roasted woods which translate as a guitar that feels more alive, and pickups like the [Fishman] Fluence stuff, where you get a noiseless single coil with multiple voicings. It's been fun. Gary Clark Jr. bought one of our guitars [a six-string Space T] and we didn't even know. I had to reach out to him afterwards!

Both of your bands are known for unusual time signatures – or at least odd-time riffs against steady 4/4 beats...

"THE BEAUTY OF EIGHT-STRINGS IS THAT IT TAKES AWAY THE NORMAL ASPECTS OF GUITAR PLAYING" MÅRTEEN HAGSTRÖM

the eight-string, almost like a piano or harp. You get this huge spread that's not possible on a six-string. Think of it as an opportunity to use three-octave chords. Other times, it's fun to just turn it up and play your favourite Meshuggah riffs!

Mårten, you were experimenting with eight-strings as far as back 2002 – they were the stuff of legend back then.

Mårten: We started discussing different ways to come up with new things after touring the [1998] *Chaosphere* album. We wondered what would happen if we recorded three bass guitars, for example. Just to see how different the band would sound. Randomly we ended up talking to a guy from Nevborn Guitars, who wanted us to try out their

seemed to capture the imagination, with this whole other kind of sound. We then started to write things for the eight-string before we even owned one. We would tune down our seven-strings, the entire [2002] *Nothing* record is an eight-string album recorded on seven-string guitars... which was a bitch! We would play four bars and then need to retune, again and again.

Tosin, you launched your own guitar company, Abasi Concepts, in 2019 and with great success – most of your models are currently sold out. What have you learned about making extended range instruments along the way?

Tosin: Manufacturing high-end instruments is a challenge. The standard that guitarists expect is very high, and it should be! We've created

Mårten: A song like *Bleed* [from 2008 album *obZen*] sounds tricky but it's actually pretty simple. It's triplets in odd groupings over a 4/4 beat, with added strokes to make the rhythm move. That's something we do a lot in our riffs, it's that the awkward, funky groove that comes out when we write. The problem with playing triplets for seven and a half minutes is consistency. Being technically able to play them in a relaxed manner for that long, as if you were playing an AC/DC song, is the challenge. So the hardest thing isn't the timings themselves, it's the parts that are like 92 notes in a row that never repeat, like we did on [2005 album] *Catch Thirtythree*. It's the faster songs that have 16 full bars before coming back to the one. It can be tricky for the mind, especially when they only change ever so slightly. It might sound like the same riff over and over, but there are

Photo: Jesse Wild/Getty



➔ subtle differences. You can easily get lost. It's like, 'Man, is this the one here or do we have another bar to go?' Keeping track is the hardest part, but it's often over straight 4/4... just like AC/DC!

Tosin: There's a thing I do quite a lot which is play in 4/4 but I'll make the end a little longer, maybe for another quarter note, so now you're in a measure of five. But the general sense of the phrase feels like it's in 4/4 and repeats evenly. It's all about arbitrarily extending or shortening the length of certain phrases. I like to do it because it rubs expectation. The evenness of rhythm is something so deeply intuitive that we all expect to be able to tap along or nod our heads. But I love rhythmic and melodic surprises. I'll come up with something that feels graspable, then I might add the complexity in, maybe every other repeat there's one less quarter note than before or I might extend the phrase a few more notes into the next octave. It can technically be 4/4 but exploring these ideas means you can sound like it's something way outside. The trick is to count in longer chunks.

Both of you have new albums out. What gear are we hearing on the recordings?

Mårten: In the studio, most of our albums have fallen back on Dual Rectifiers. Those are the go-to amps for us. This time I found the EVH 5150 III 100-Watt heads to be exactly what we were looking for. They had the gain, control and Mesa/Boogie-ness we needed, but with a more raw and unbridled kind of tone. They sounded less predictable, more organic. Instead of the usual Fortin 33 pedal as a booster, I actually ended up using Misha Mansoor's Precision Drive. That was suggested by our singer [Jens Kidman], as he had one. The gate on it isn't really all that good, it's cool for live use but in the studio it needs some work. But the sound of the Precision Drive going into the EVH was super. I would use the preamp of the EVH's second channel and run it through the power amp of

SHOCK TACTICS
"I love rhythmic and melodic surprises," says Animals As Leaders' Tosin Abasi



a Mesa/Boogie Roadster, then out through EVH cabs. For the clean parts, I used my Roland JC-120 head.

Tosin: We began production for this album with my Neural DSP plug-in, but when it came time to mix we decided to take the DIs and see what kind of results we'd get by experimenting with real amps, cabs and mics. We started with my Morgan SW50R, which is a single channel tube head that I use as a pedal platform, with my Friedman BE-OD overdrive and the Bogner Harlow and Ecstasy Blue pedals. Those were the main drives we were running into the clean head. The Friedman pedal into the Morgan was perfect for all the slap tones and articulate stuff, even some of the heavier stuff. For the lead tones, it was my Abasi Pathos pedal going into the Morgan. We also ran a modded Soldano SLO from the 90s, which added this great character in the midrange when blended in.

And how about the actual eight-strings themselves?

Mårten: I'd say ninety-five percent of the guitars were recorded with my M8M Ibanez Custom. It's basically our signature M8M but with a bolt-on neck and it's a little shorter in scale with

a piezo mounted on it. It's my favourite instrument. I use it as much as I can, but not live because I'm scared of destroying it. For the clean parts, I used my Roland JC-120 head. I don't know what Fredrik used because he recorded in his studio. He wasn't around for any of this album and hasn't been writing for years, he's been busy doing his own thing. For the four leads he recorded at his place, I'm pretty sure it was his [signature] Ibanez Stoneman.

Tosin: We used Abasi Concepts guitars for nearly everything – the solo on *Thoughts And Prayers* was performed on an ESP. For some reason we weren't happy with the tone on the *Monomyth* solo so the engineer suggested using one of his guitars. We went digging through and there was this Les Paul. I couldn't even tell you what year it was from but it had this nice prominent midrange without being too bright, it sounded really smooth so I tracked with that. I'm pretty pragmatic in the studio – if my favourite gear is not doing what I want then I'm quick to find an objective solution. It's kinda funny though, because you wouldn't think a Les Paul would be anywhere near an Animals As Leaders record... but it happened!

"YOU CAN HAVE A LOT OF FUN USING THE LOW E AS A PEDAL TONE IN YOUR RIFFS" TOSIN ABASI

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

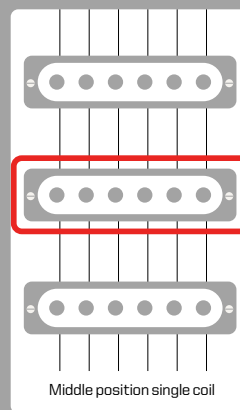
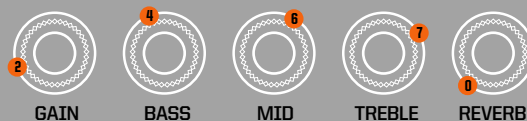
- ✓ Funky 16th-note strumming
- ✓ Easy partial chord shapes
- ✓ Fret-hand muting



RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL **CLEAN**



The official video sees Yannis Philippakis and Jimmy Smith doubling up on the riff, playing a humbucker-equipped Travis Bean TB1000A and a Fender Mustang (with single coils) respectively. So, although almost any pickup configuration will do the job, we recommend using a single coil equipped guitar, ideally with a compressor pedal to even out the strumming dynamics. If your guitar has humbuckers select the middle pickup position for an even spread of frequencies. For a single coil guitar we recommend using a neck- or middle-position pickup.

FOALS

Wake Me Up

Okay, we admit it, this riff isn't really 'of the month' – it came out in November last year. But, with the new Foals album *Life Is Yours* recently landing, we're fired up and ready to rock out with Yannis Philippakis' and Jimmy Smith's cool, funky rhythm part.

At its core is a strummed rhythm played with a mixture of partial chords and muted

strings. The initial part alternates between 10th- and 12th-fret F and G chords played with the first and third fingers. Next up are three more chords at the 12th fret: a Gsus4, a G5 and a G7. Technically, all five shapes are inversions, i.e., the root note isn't the lowest one – but this is usually the way in funk so don't worry about the chord names.

To really nail the part, keep your strumming hand moving constantly in a 16th-note rhythm

– that's four strums (down up down up) for every beat. Watch our slowed down play-through to get the finer details.

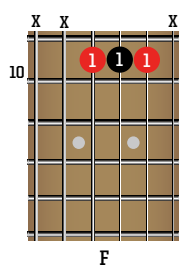
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:18

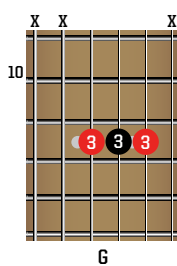
Tempo: 120bpm

Key/scale: D Dorian

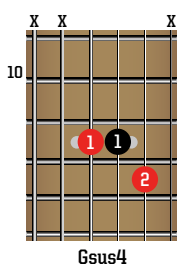
Main techniques: 16th-note strumming, partial chords, string muting



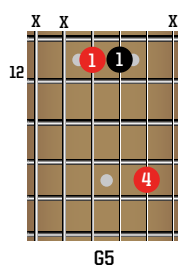
F



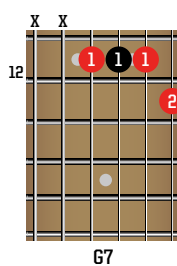
G



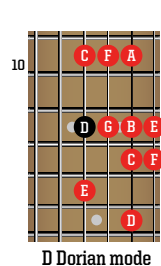
Gsus4



G5



G7



D Dorian mode

All of the notes in this riff are found in the D Dorian mode (D E F G A B C). And, although the riff is played with chord shapes, it's useful to identify the chords in the context of the scale. Try playing the notes of D Dorian individually and see if you can memorise the

note names. Next, barre across the 10th fret to play an F triad and once again try to memorise the notes of the chord. Do this for each chord shape to gain a deeper understanding of both the riff and the fretboard.

Words Milton Mermikides

BENDODOLOGY...

The evolution of string bending from classic 70s blues-rock to contemporary progressive math-rock

HOW TO READ OUR STRING BEND DIAGRAMS

We've used Celemony Melodyne pitch editor to map out each string bend. Notes are indicated by 'blobs' and note names are shown at the side of each diagram. Thin wavy lines portray pitch variations with greater accuracy

POLYMATH
Polyphia's Tim Henson rocking his Ibanez TH8B10

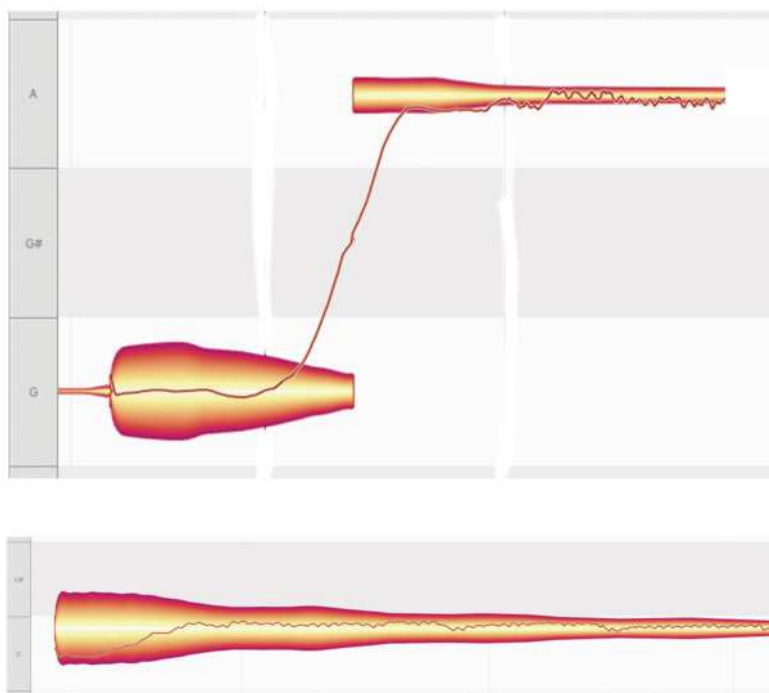


Some aspects of electric guitar playing are so totally established as orthodoxy that they seem almost immune to change: standard tuning is a de facto, er, standard; open chords, powerchords and 'blues box' scale shapes too. Like a goldfish and the water it lives in, we don't really question their existence.

So it came as a bit of a shock to some in August 2021 when Polyphia's Tim Henson innocently related to music YouTuber Rick Beato that he rejects conventional string bending techniques of the 'Boomer' generation "because it's gonna sound like that era". Henson intended no disrespect (he actually paid homage to his heroes Jimi Hendrix and Black Sabbath) but in a conversation ostensibly about 'modern' guitar, Tim made it clear that he's most interested in new approaches and techniques.

Here at TG we saw in this the opportunity to learn something new about guitar playing. So read on as we provide a taxonomy of key species of guitar bends from classic to contemporary. Learn them all, experiment with them in your own playing and you'll surely become a better guitarist whatever music you're into.

Find your audio at: bit.ly/tga2023audio

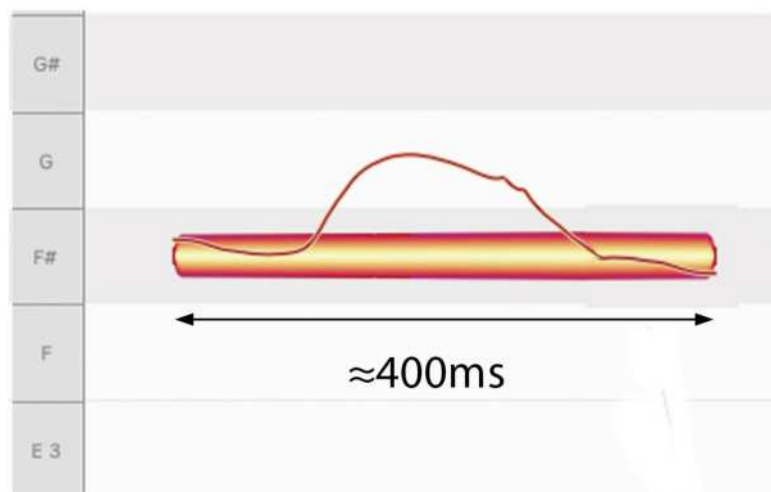


These waveforms shows a blues bend from G to A and a 'blues curl' between C and C#.



1 CLASSIC BEND #1: BLUES BENDS

A huge core of electric guitar soloing is blues-based, and, though there are many blues bends, most connect adjacent notes in the minor pentatonic and blues scales. For example, in the A blues scale (A C D E_b E G) you'd typically bend from C to D, D to E, G to A, D to E_b, or E, and occasionally the wider bends of A to C and E to G. Equally important are the microtonal 'blues curls' that fall between the frets' tunings - most commonly the 'neutral 3rd' between C and C# in the key of A. These are all fundamental to 60s and 70s icons like Tony Iommi and Jimi Hendrix, and are still widely used by countless artists such as Mdou Moctar, Jake Kiszka, Joe Bonamassa and more.



2 CONTEMPORARY BEND #1: THE TWEAK BEND

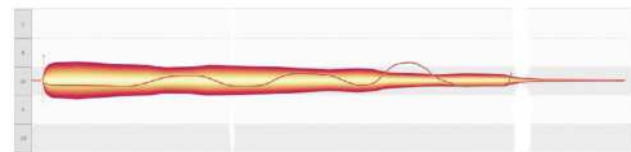
Tim Henson's own intro in Polyphia's *G.O.A.T.* features several of these. We're calling it a 'tweak bend' – it's a rapid up- or up-down bend, usually played quickly and without vibrato between the semitones of a diatonic scale (e.g., F# and G in the key E minor). There's none of the bluesy flavour associated with classic minor blues bends, just a restrained but committed attitude when you get it right. Play it with a light overdriven single coil tone for a Polyphia vibe.

Note the rapid 'hump' profile of a quick tweak bend from F# to G and back.

3 CLASSIC BEND #2: BEND AND SHAKE

We're in Angus Young and Paul Kossoff-style blues-rock territory here. Both players turn the electric guitar into a highly emotive instrument, emulating the human voice with their expressive leads. A common technique they both use in doing so is adding vibrato to string bends – reminiscent of a heartfelt blues/soul vocal 'cry' or 'wail'. Whole-tone bends (two semitones) rule the roost here.

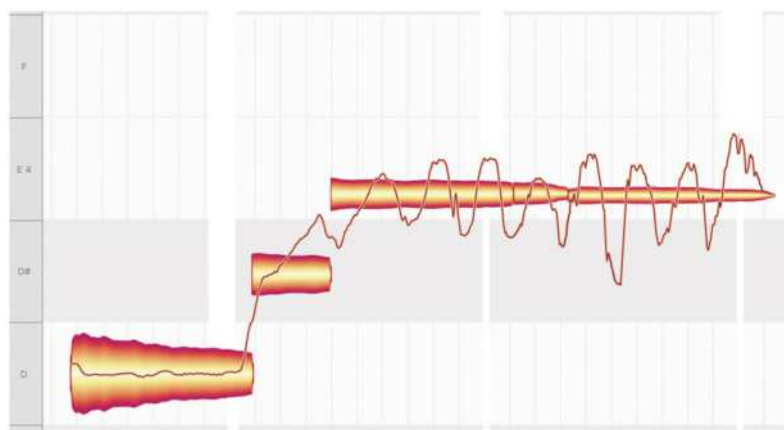
The G pitch is held steady then the vibrato starts as the bend reaches A.



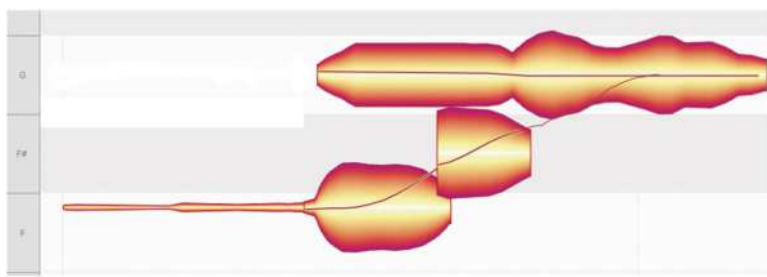
The slow, wide wobble bend teasing towards but never reaching the adjacent chromatic notes.

4 CONTEMPORARY BEND #2: THE WOBBLE BEND

With a fragile, 'wobbly' quality reminiscent of whammy bar vibrato, this technique can be heard in the opening bars to *Lost* by Ichika Nito. Its microtonal expressivity is reminiscent of the Japanese koto instrument, and, with typically less than a semitone of pitch variation, it exists on the boundary of vibrato and conventional guitar bend. The timing should be synced to the musical metre – almost like the pulsing effect of a chorus pedal.



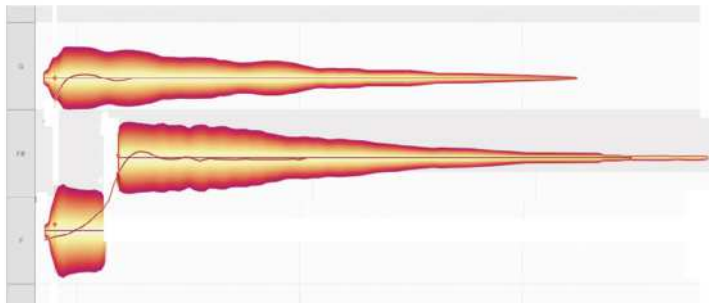
BLUES BENDS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO 60S AND 70S ICONS LIKE CLAPTON AND HENDRIX, AND ARE STILL WIDELY USED TODAY



F and G are played together, before the lower note is bent to match the upper note's pitch.

5 CLASSIC BEND #3: THE UNISON BEND

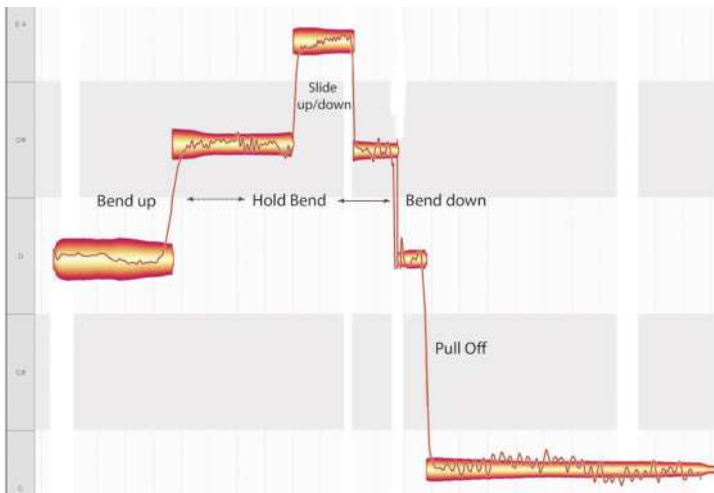
Surely you know this one! The outro solo from Jimi Hendrix's *All Along The Watchtower* is a great reference for a technique which involves a string being bent up to a simultaneously held note of the same pitch. To do it, fret a G on the first string at the 15th fret and an F on the second string (18th fret). Pick the two strings together then bend the F to match the G. The resulting scream and dissonance between the two notes is heightened as you bend, then resolved when you hit the target.



The lower note bends and stops at a dissonant minor 2nd interval with the upper note.

6 CONTEMPORARY BEND #3: THE CLUSTER BEND

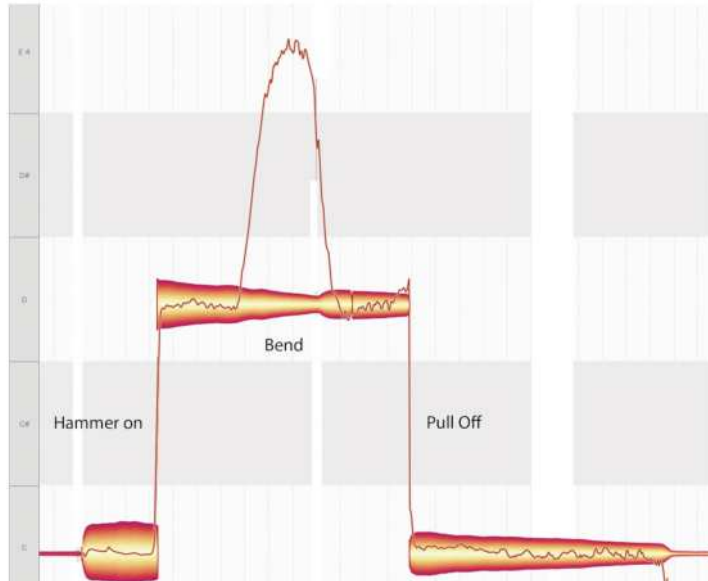
While the unison bend has survived numerous generations of guitar solos, it has also diversified. A notable contemporary example is the 'cluster bend', where the bent note – rather than reaching its unison target – stops a semitone short, goes a semitone above, or targets another deliciously dissonant interval. Hear it in action at 2:04 in *Ulysses* by Alluvial, where guitarist Wes Hauch plays a semitone bend into $\flat$ 5th and $\flat$ 2nd intervals.



We said they were brief! See how quick the D# and D notes are in the downward part of the phrase.

8 CONTEMPORARY BEND #4: THE SLIDY BEND

We're homing in on Mateus Asato's solo on Polyphia's *Drown* between 2:14 and 2:16 for this one. He's using a bend in a more complex way, adding intricate slurs and slides to proceedings. It's basically: bend, hold bend, slide up a semitone, slide down again, then release the initial bend and finish with a pull-off. Sound easy? Think again. These are surprisingly challenging to execute in tune, and the virtuosity may well go unnoticed because they're often fleetingly brief.

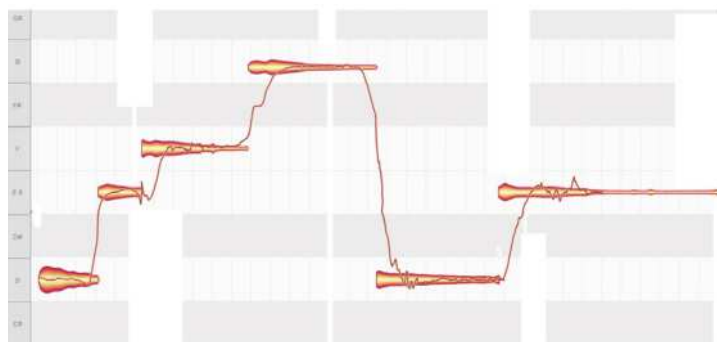


Hammer on from C to D, bend up to E, then down to D before pulling off back to C.

7 CLASSIC BEND #4: THE LEGATO BEND

String bends have long been played alongside other lead guitar articulations. One common approach is to use legato (slides, hammer-ons, pull-offs) on either side of the bend to create a collective phrase. A great example comes between 5:53 and 5:58 during Allen Collins' solo in Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Free Bird*. This sort of slippery articulation is part of the established electric guitar vocabulary and there are countless variations on the theme.

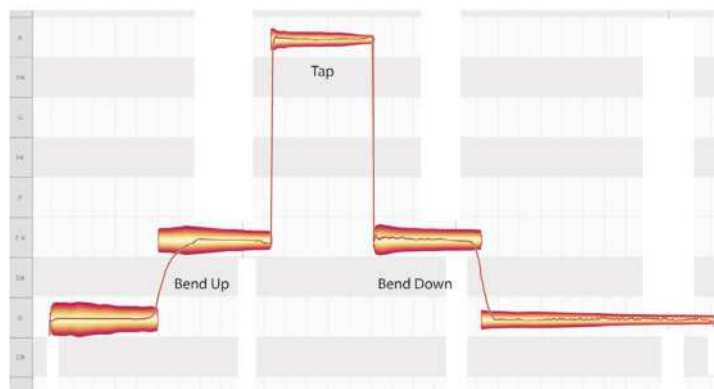
OF TG'S 20 GREATEST SOLOS OF ALL TIME, 14% OF ALL THE NOTES INVOLVED BENDS



One picked D note is bent four times to produce a five-note melody. Consider downtuning to save your strings!

9 CLASSIC BEND #5: THE MELODY BEND

Some solos use bends to create complete melodic phrases rather than just as momentary inflections. We're looking at you, David Gilmour – the outro solo in Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall, Pt. 2* features a couple of examples like this. These potentially string-snapping licks are tricky to execute, and demonstrate that the 'classic' era of rock was in no short supply of sage string benders. Save your strings by downtuning by a semitone and playing one fret higher!

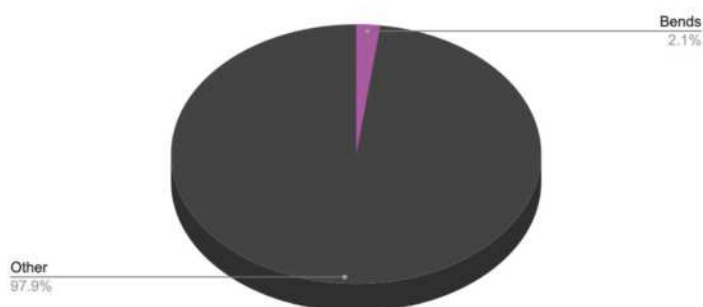


Bend D (third string, 7th fret) to E, then tap the 12th fret to produce A, which is released to the bent E and bent back down to D.

10 CONTEMPORARY BEND #5: THE TAP BEND

Fans of contemporary math-rock acts like Chon, Polyphia and Covet will be no strangers to tapping – the technique is at the heart of these acts' styles. Tapping bent strings expands the available range for bends and allows phrases to continue almost indefinitely – the tap providing additional energy to the string. Though considered a 'modern' rock technique, it was already commonplace by the mid 80s thanks to the influence of players like Eddie Van Halen and Steve Vai.

Liftoff



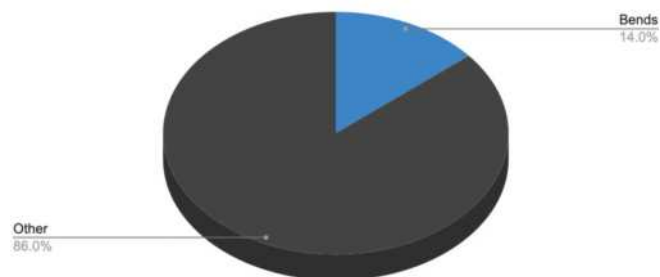
Tim Henson's solo on Skyhaven's *Liftoff* shows a 2.1% bend density. About 7x fewer than a selection of 20 classic solos.

12 BEND DENSITY: SKYHAVEN - LIFTOFF

Let's compare this 14% bend density to the virtuosic solo on Skyhaven's *Liftoff*, which features a heady post-prog blend of rhythmic sophistication, diatonic and borrowed chords, tasteful neo-soul inflections and hyper-shred. Tim Henson's exquisite and intricate 240-note 16-bar solo only has a handful of bends, and even these are generally blues-adjacent and non-unison devices. It has a bend density of just over 2% – a stark contrast to the classic style. Indeed acts such as Chon and Covet have complete tunes with few – if any – bent notes.



Top 20 Classic Guitar Solos



Of the 20 Greatest Solos of All Time (which had an average release date of 1979), a full 14% of all the notes involved bends.

11 BEND DENSITY: TOP 20 SOLOS

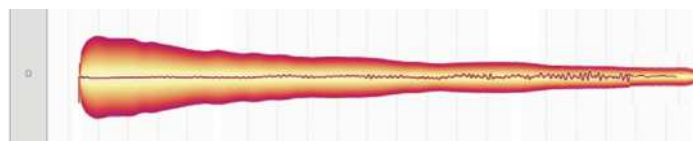
The most significant change to string bends in soloing might just be the simplest – the striking reduction in their number. Back in issue 341, we analysed the Top 20 Greatest Solos Of All Time – which were mostly from the 1970s. We found that close to 14 per cent of all notes in these solos were string bends.



On average there's more than one bend per bar in a classic solo. Tim Henson's virtuosic solo in *Liftoff* has only about 0.3

13 AVERAGE BENDS PER BAR: TOP 20 SOLOS AND LIFTOFF

Another – and perhaps more accessible – way of considering bendiness is in terms of 'average number of bends per bar', as opposed to which proportion of the notes are bent. Here again there is a marked difference: While our classic solos sample had on average over one bend per bar, Henson's solo averages just 0.3 (less than one bend every three bars). This is further compounded by the fact that at 77bpm, *Liftoff* is significantly slower than the 106bpm average of classic solos, and Tim's solo is particularly virtuosic and notey.



Behold, the zero bend!

14 THE ZERO BEND

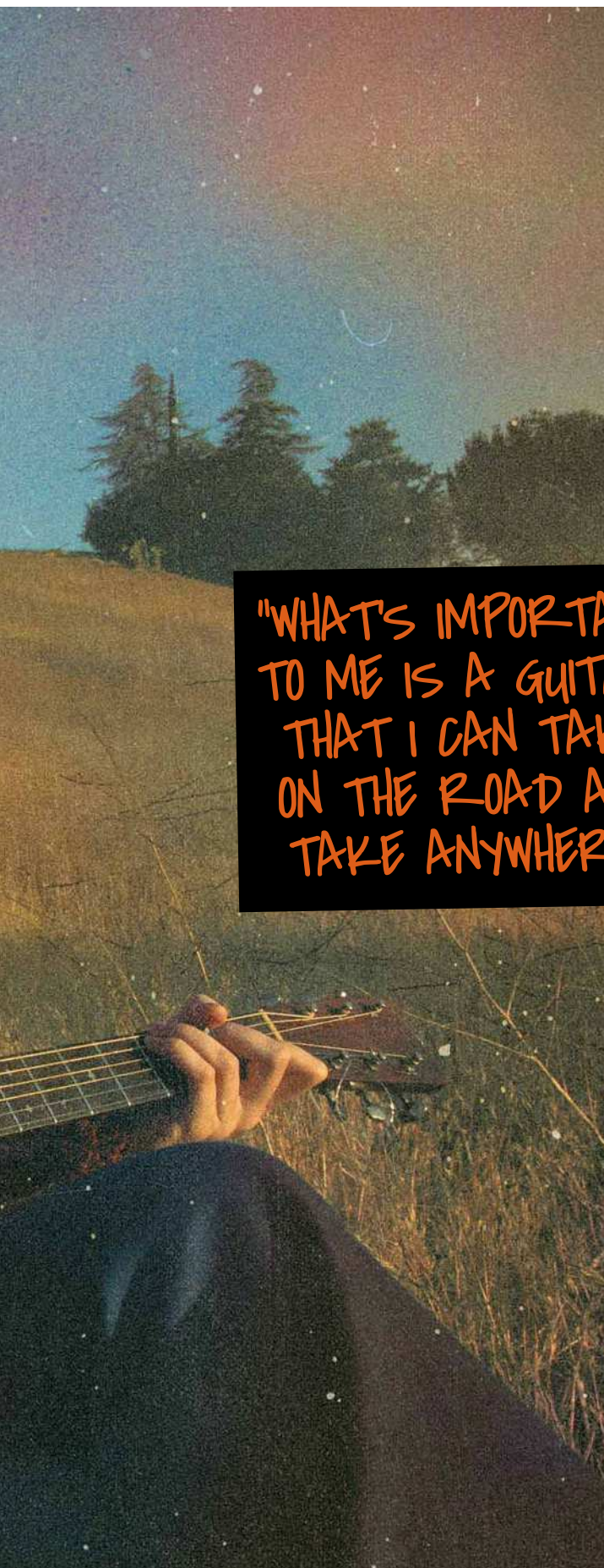
So perhaps the final and most radical bend we should include is... one that doesn't exist: the 'Zero Bend'. A frivolous inclusion, you say? Well okay, guilty as charged! However, it's not without precedent in the math-rock genre. Yvette Young's work with Covet features barely a single string bend. Who knows if future generations will one day look back at the quaint and dated bending techniques of Boomers and Zoomers alike as they explore AI, robotic and mind-controlled hyper-bends among perhaps a renaissance in CDs, denim and NFTs.

"IF YOU KNOW THREE CHORDS YOU CAN STRUM ALONG!"

Molly Tuttle reckons that pretty much anyone can play bluegrass music. But as a renowned virtuoso, she likes to bend the rules. "It's fun," she says, "to stretch the limits..."

Words Jonathan Horsley Photos Samantha Muljat





B

luegrass belongs to a long tradition but having the weight of history on its shoulders does not preclude it from existing as a radical art form.

This musical style – light on its feet, effervescent, joyous, on occasion elegiac and melancholy – has been woven together from myriad influences, a uniquely American story of many cultures and different voices all bringing something to the party in a sound that welcomes it all.

That, too, is true of the players and their abilities. There's a virtuosic element to the bluegrass rank-and-file, among whom we'll find latter-day phenoms in the likes of Billy Strings

and Molly Tuttle – players whose technical ecstasy brings lightning into a largely acoustic space. But if you know three chords and count to four, the chances are you can play along, too. And Tuttle says you would be made to feel right at home.

Her most recent album, *Crooked Tree*, is a thoroughly modern bluegrass record, which is to say it mines the history of the art form for its sonic

vocabulary and then contextualises it in the 21st century. It is explicitly bluegrass by design but only after the song ideas started piling up and Molly reached the point where it just felt right to do an all-bluegrass record now.

Speaking via Zoom before a show at Brownfield, Maine's Stone Mountain Arts Center, she explains how the genre's stylistic horizons yield plenty of free space for its contemporary practitioners to run into.

"I like bluegrass for the reasons that you mentioned," she says. "It is such a combination of different cultures, and different influences. I think it is kind of radical in that it is a music that anyone can have access to. These are songs of the people, told by people who are just telling their own life stories a lot of the time. People try to put rules around it, and I don't think that's necessary. Once you learn the basic technique of playing bluegrass banjo or bluegrass guitar, it is going to sound bluegrass, and it's fun to stretch the limits of that."

Tuttle's approach involves applying her preternaturally gifted flatpicking technique to bluegrass patterns, orthodox or otherwise, and then telling a story. *Crooked Tree* stands proud on the wide open instrumental plains of bluegrass instrumentalism by virtue of its storytelling verve. There's the autobiographical Grass Valley that speaks of attending bluegrass festivals with her father, Jack, and she brings him onboard for a vocal. She also espouses big tent themes of American unity in *Big Backyard* that play out like Tuttle's take on *This Land Is Your Land*. "It's just trying to give people a sense of this country is very divided but it belongs to all of us," she explains. "It belongs to everyone. I don't believe in trying to keep people out of America or building big walls over half the country."

Then there is *Dooley's Farm*, which brings the aforementioned Billy Strings onboard for a 21st-century reworking of the The Dillards' famous standard; in which Tuttle's Dooley is less known for his 40-gallon still and more for the potent marijuana he grows on his land.

"I feel like a lot of people who play bluegrass are instrumentalists – most people who play bluegrass don't write songs, a lot of them don't even sing, and a lot of them don't even listen to the words!" she laughs. "I have always gravitated to musicians who really loved songwriting, even if they didn't write songs themselves, and I think you can always tell when someone is listening to what the song is about. You can hear it in their playing."

This is one of the main reasons why Molly chose the legendary Jerry Douglas to co-produce *Crooked Tree*. She knew Douglas would be mindful of the broader mission, the golden rule for any songwriter that says everything has to work around the vocals and the lyrics because what you are singing about matters.

"I know he backs up songs so beautifully, and cares what they are about, and doesn't just play notes and notes over them if it is not calling for them," she says. "There is a balance to the music. When I think about it, at the time we were recording this album, we were just trying to strike a balance between being true to the tradition, and still keeping those tempos up and featuring virtuosic playing, but also making it a songwriter record as well."

"WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME IS A GUITAR THAT I CAN TAKE ON THE ROAD AND TAKE ANYWHERE"



Tuttle's songwriting sensibility was shaped by the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Gillian Welch, and of course bluegrass trailblazers such as Hazel Dickens and The Stanley Brothers. But there are all kinds of influences that are brought to bear on her sound. Rage Against The Machine, Jimi Hendrix and Blink-182 might not be foregrounded in the bronzed acoustic textures of *Crooked Tree*, but rock was an early obsession, and early obsessions have a way of getting under the skin. Tuttle even recorded punk band Rancid's *Olympia, WA* for her 2020 covers album *But I'd Rather Be With You*. But then that's a record that finds Tuttle reinterpreting the Rolling Stones, The National, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Harry Styles.

"I have always listened to all styles of music, and I think that is just a product of growing up around the time of iTunes and then later Spotify," she says. "When I started being able to get old enough to explore other styles of music, I remember in sixth or seventh grade having a teacher who had a big CD collection and was like, 'You can take whatever CDs you want and burn them onto your computer.' That tells you that it was the early 2000s! I was listening to everything on my iPod Shuffle."

Tuttle grew up in San Francisco's Bay Area, moving to Boston when she was 19 to study at Berklee, before settling in Nashville in 2015. She says moving has given her an outsider's perspective, the aesthetic distance to see things from a different angle. Some of *Crooked Tree* sounds like it draws upon the American literary canon as much as its songbook. No more so than on *Flatland Girl*, which is like something that could have been adapted from John Steinbeck's notebook.

"I do really admire the art of storytelling, and I have always loved to read," she says. "When I am reading, the song ideas flow faster. Thank you for that compliment. I love John Steinbeck. I read a lot of his books in high school, and especially growing up in the Bay Area, reading his books and going to Cannery Row; I feel like he really influenced that area. When I wrote *Flatland Girl* it was very slow and mournful, and we made it peppy, and did the classic bluegrass thing where it sounds really happy and you are saying something that is really sad."

That's the other great tension and contradiction within bluegrass's



aesthetic. It's a style most often performed in a communal jam – replete with stunt banjo, see-sawing fiddle and knuckle-twisting acoustic guitar gymnastics – all of which are tossed headlong into a helter-skelter rhythm. The mood in the room might be one of collective euphoria from people coming together, and yet the song itself might have been inspired by great tragedy. Such phenomena are not sleight of hand; they are forced into being by sheer weight of numbers. When Tuttle and Douglas were gaming out the songs on *Crooked Tree* it was soon decided that it was to be recorded as live as possible, with as many bodies in the room. Molly jokes about the 'fiddle cloud'. If there was a fiddle player passing by Music City's Oceanway Studios, they'd be hauled in to complement Jason

KIND OF BLUE

"The classic bluegrass thing is where it sounds really happy and you are saying something that is really sad," Molly says.

Carter's kinetic elbow. These strings – mandolin, banjo, fiddle, guitar and upright – suspend Tuttle's compositions in richly textured, organic sound. It's a three-dimensional and immersive record, just as a bluegrass show is. These songs might also evolve in the moment, Molly says, liable to be augmented by improv when presented before an audience. What you hear recorded on *Crooked Tree* is just "a screenshot".

"I have played the songs a bunch live and things have changed," she says. "For this music, because it is such an organic style, and so much of the album was inspired by jam sessions and bluegrass festivals, we really wanted to record it as live as possible. You can hopefully hear that on the record."

When she made *But I'd Rather Be With You*, there was no one around. It was



a pandemic record of unlimited vocal takes and a click-track for company, and ultimately a learning process that she enjoyed. She used the time to adapt her flatpicking to the material, to “kinda reframe bluegrass” and experiment. *Crooked Tree* was a change of pace, originally scheduled to come together in just four days. “I was like, ‘Woah! That’s crazy,’” she laughs. “We ended up doing a little bit more than that, doing some overdubs, but mostly the vocals are live and everything was done right there in the studio.”

Tracking was done on a pair of custom acoustics from Pre-War Guitars, a North Carolina company specialising in boutique builds inspired by vintage Martin and Gibson. Molly’s are based on old Martin D-18 and D-28 dreadnoughts, preferring a skinnier neck than some of the clubbier profiles found on 1930s models.

“They don’t sound like a brand-new guitar that just came out of the guitar factory and sounds really shiny, and kind of closed,” she says. “So that instantly made me gravitate towards

FREE SPIRIT

“You can take this music and add whatever you want.”

them. And they are just great to take on the road. They are really stable. I have toured with an old guitar and it was just having so many issues. I was doing harm to the guitar! I put it in the shop so many times it was like it was losing the original things that made it cool.

“That is what is important to me, a guitar that I can take on the road and take anywhere. I took the Pre-Wars to the beach and then the next week I took them to a ski resort and played a set outside in 15 degrees and they were fine.”

She also prefers a narrow-ish 1 11/16” (43mm) nut width, which is easier for a flatpicker to navigate. Molly’s style also leans on the clawhammer techniques Michael Stadler taught her. Clawhammer guitar migrated to guitar from Appalachian banjo players, and involves parking the guitar in an a banjo-esque open tuning like Gsus4. But listening to her talk bluegrass is an invitation to introduce any style you can imagine to the sound. Once you have the rudiments of bluegrass orthodoxy down, everything else is fair game. Players like Tuttle have proved that. Billy Strings, too. Art, and not least music, never moves forward when we handle it with silk gloves and respect. It is a living thing.

“If you know three chords you can strum along,” Molly says. “These are songs of the people, told by people who are just telling their own life stories a lot of the time, so that’s why I like it. It’s like folk music but with really specific stylistic elements that I wanted to include on my album. And then you see people like Billy Strings who are playing with bluegrass instrumentation. You hear his guitar playing and that sounds like Doc Watson – but then he is also playing rock licks and playing tons of pedals and has this crazy light show and is sampling stuff on his albums. That’s another thing that makes it cool. You can take this music and add whatever you want. You can take it and make it your own. That’s what Bill Munroe did with it when he was first putting his band together. It is just part of the tradition.”

"BLUEGRASS MUSIC IS AN ORGANIC STYLE, AND SO MUCH OF THE ALBUM WAS INSPIRED BY JAM SESSIONS"

“I THOUGHT: IF I’M GETTING BACK INTO MAKING ROCK MUSIC, LET’S GO TO THE ROOTS OF IT”

When he left the Red Hot Chili Peppers, **John Frusciante** kept in shape by playing jazz solos and learning prog rock chord progressions.

Now, having rejoined the band, he has gone even deeper with a musical and artistic workout – inspired by plugging into electric blues and 50s rock ‘n’ roll. What’s more, he’s feeling great about the old gang being back together. “It is,” he says, “a magic feeling!”

In the end, it was a simple reason that led John Frusciante to return to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. “I really wanted that challenge of trying to work in a democratic band,” he says, “with people that I respect and people that I have a chemistry with. I felt that to move forward as a soul and as a human being, I had to accept that challenge. I felt that it would be good for me to try to work harmoniously with them, and not have my ego be the thing that was driving me forward, but to have love and respect for them. That was the thing: to try to be a part of a whole.”

Frusciante is talking to *Total Guitar* from his home in Los Angeles, the city where the Red

Hot Chili Peppers formed back in 1983. With his long hair unkempt under a woolly hat, his face unshaven, wearing black-rimmed glasses and his lean frame clad in a loose fitting yellow t-shirt, the guitarist looks pretty much the same as he did 16 years ago, when the double album *Stadium Arcadium* gave the band its first ever US number one. But it was in the wake of that album’s success that John quit the band – the second time he had done so, having previously bailed in 1992, both exits prompted by his discomfort with the pressures of fame.

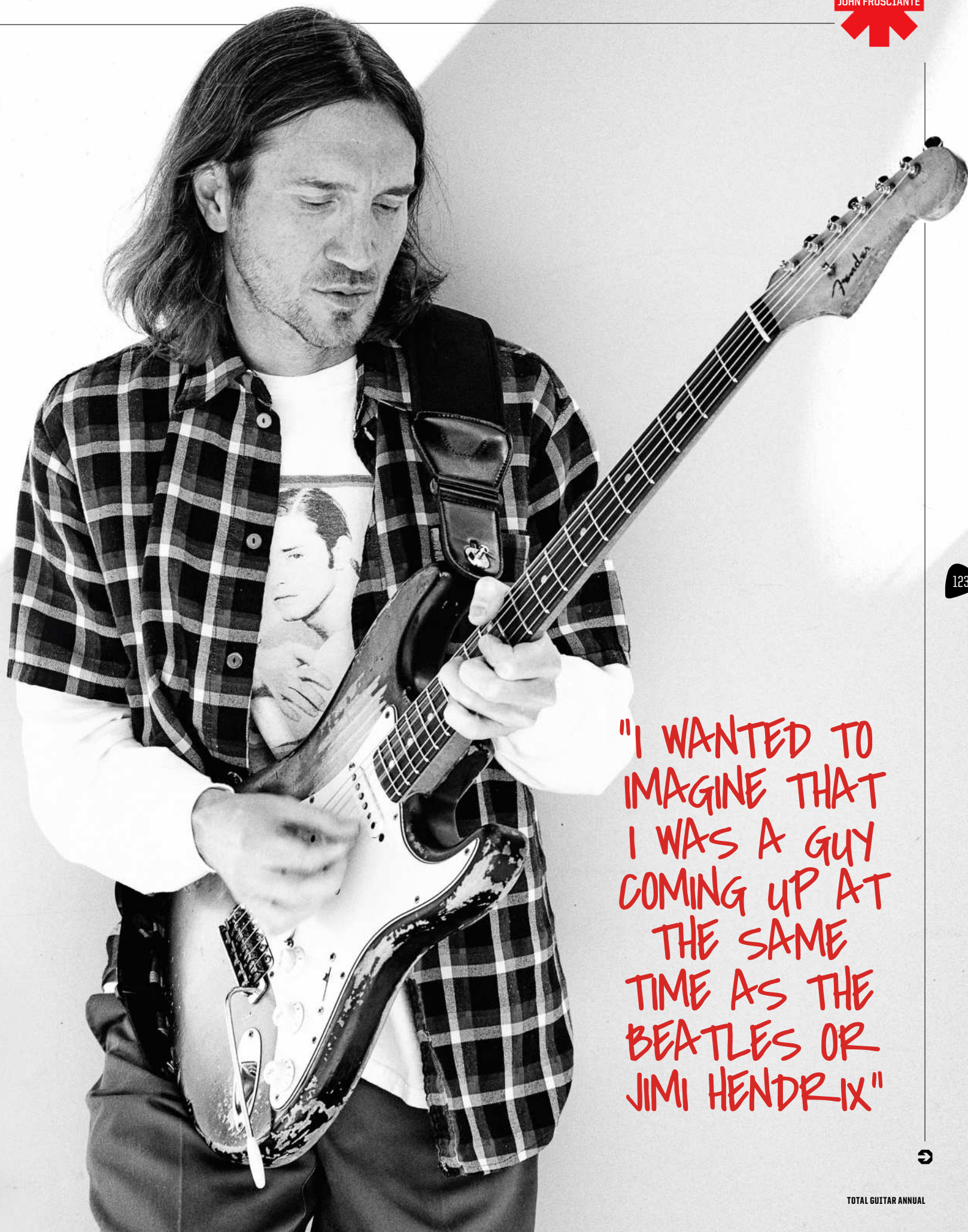
Following his departure in 2009, the Chili Peppers went on to release two albums with another accomplished guitarist, Josh Klinghoffer. Frusciante, meanwhile, pursued his love of electronic music and modular synths, in an effort to make music that stood apart from the band with which he made his

name, and with entirely personal – and non-commercial – aspirations.

So it came as a surprise when the Chili Peppers issued a social media communique in late 2019 announcing Frusciante’s return, and with it, the potential for a new album – their first with John in the fold since *Stadium Arcadium*. The fruits of their labour, *Unlimited Love*, finds the band reunited with super-producer Rick Rubin, showcasing 17 tracks that run the gamut of their collective influences, from breezy funk to progressive rock and hardcore punk. In short, the chemistry between John, bassist Flea, drummer Chad Smith and frontman Anthony Kiedis has resurfaced intact, a musical formulation unimpacted by the decade-plus break and even a global pandemic.

Naturally, there’s a lot to talk about, and John is certainly in the mood to talk – so much so





"I WANTED TO
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➡ that his conversation with TG extends beyond its allotted 45 minutes to more than two hours. He loves to discuss the subjects closest to his heart – the art of making music, the gear he uses, the sense of anticipation ahead of the band’s return to the live stage. He is also candid about his reasons for leaving the band over a decade ago, and what ultimately brought him back to his musical brothers.

“I’ve done a lot of reflection on the causes of my quitting the band the last time that I don’t think I had the mental space to be aware of at the time,” he says. “It was like, ‘I just really don’t want to do all this living in this world of fame and publicity; I just want to concentrate on making electronic music and making music just to make music, and not to make people happy, not to be successful.’ And that was just what I needed at the time.”

“But I looked back and realised that with some of the personal stresses between me and other members of the band, I saw my own part of it more than I think I saw it back in 2009. And while I think no one person is at fault in a situation where somebody quits a band, I’d grown enough as a person to see my side in it, as opposed to just playing the victim.”

A NEW BEGINNING

It’s hard to overstate the impact that John Frusciante has had on generations of guitarists. With his sparse, feel-driven lines on the Chili Peppers’ 1991 breakthrough *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, he introduced 90s players to a wiry, exhilarating blend of funk and post-punk. And in his second phase with the band, a run of three expansive, diverse, multi-million selling albums – *Californication*, *By The Way* and *Stadium Arcadium* – kept adventurous textures and guitar solos at the forefront of mainstream rock, at a time when pop-punk and nu-metal ruled the airwaves.

For this third phase, the reunited band took their tentative first steps in the rehearsal room. Rather than begin writing straight off the bat, they played material from the earliest Chili Peppers albums – released when John was a fan rather than a member of the band – in a bid to reconnect with the roots of the group. Meanwhile, band members suggested covers of classic tracks – *Some Other Guy* by Richie Barrett, *Trash* by the New York Dolls,



Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson’s *Hot Little Mama* and the Kinks’ *Waterloo Sunset* all received a workout – which injected fresh energy into rehearsals.

“I didn’t want to feel any pressure about writing stuff, because that would have been overwhelming,” John recalls. “So for a month or two, we were just playing songs by other people, and playing really early Chili Peppers stuff. We just had a lot of fun. And luckily that spirit of fun ended up staying with us throughout the whole writing process, even after those songs had been phased out and replaced by going there every day being excited about the new stuff we were bringing in, or the jams that we were turning into songs.”

And boy, did they have a lot of songs. By the time the band hit Rubin’s Shangri-La studio in 2021, they had 45 tracks ready to go, with a further three written during the sessions. All were ultimately recorded, leaving more than enough material for a follow-up record. “I definitely feel like we saved some of the best stuff for the potential next album,” John teases. But, he adds, he never had the intention to write quite so many songs.

FREE SPIRIT

“I developed a real fan relationship with different forms of rock music, without it having anything to do with my identity,” John says.

“You know, I was ready to stop when we had, like, twenty – I felt like that was good enough,” he laughs. “But one thing led to another and somebody or other kept encouraging me to keep bringing in more songs. So, before we knew it, we had way more songs than we’d ever written for a record before.”

For his part, John had to readjust his guitar playing to write rock music again. During his electronic music wilderness, any time with a guitar in his lap was more often spent appreciating music than composing it. He learned every solo recorded by jazz great Charlie Christian, and took inspiration from the chord progressions in landmark 70s albums by progressive rock legends Genesis. It helped him reconnect with his love of the instrument.

“I developed a real fan relationship with the different forms of rock music, without it having anything to do with my identity,” he explains. “So when I went back to playing in the band, I knew it would affect what I wrote.”

Accordingly, the guitarist had a vision for where he wanted to take his compositions, and it harked back to the origins of the genre he was returning to.

As he explains: “I really wanted to focus on where I see the beginning of rock music in history – the rock ‘n’ roll of the late-50s, and the electric blues that took place throughout the 40s and 50s. I wanted to imagine that I was a guy coming up at the same time as The Beatles or Cream or Jimi Hendrix, to see: ‘What would I have done to embellish upon that foundation?’ I felt like as long as I’m getting back into making rock music, let’s go to the roots of it.”

“I’d spent so much time on other records specifically focusing on Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix and Cream. Rather than do that again, I thought, ‘Let’s focus on Elvis and Clarence ‘Gatemouth’ Brown and Freddie King and Albert King, and Buddy Holly and Gene Vincent and Ricky Nelson – and then, okay, so how would I try to do something beyond this?’”

Those plans would change shape once John began collaborating with the band. To warm up for recording each day, he would play through Jeff Beck’s classic albums *Truth*, *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*. But equally, he was re-immersing himself in the textural approach of Siouxsie And The Banshees’ John McGeoch, as well as Greg Ginn’s abrasive riffs in Black Flag. His approach became an amalgamation of all those

"I LIKE IMPROVISING ON STAGE, MAKING UP NEW SOLOS EVERY NIGHT"

➤ influences, with a smattering of 80s guitar heroes for good measure.

"I really love guitar players like Randy Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen for the way that they could make the instrument explode through hand and whammy bar techniques," he says. "But I also really like the way people like Greg Ginn or Kurt Cobain play without it being so much about technique – although there are all kinds of unconventional techniques in there – but the focus is definitely a more visceral thing. Eventually, by the time we were recording, my concept was to find a bridge between those two conceptions of the instrument: that idea of making it explode with the electricity of the human energy that comes through the strings. And, also, using the full range of the instrument in terms of the types of techniques that, while Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads did a lot to develop them, I see them all as being rooted in what Jeff Beck did on *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*."

STRETCHING OUT

Ultimately, *Unlimited Love* became a distillation of the guitar heroics Frusciante employed on the bombastic *Stadium Arcadium*, sitting alongside the ambient sonics found in the more experimental moments on *By The Way*, all while incorporating a more overt punk influence. His wide-ranging approach spans the anthemic alt-rock of *Black Summer* through to the sultry funk of *Poster Child* and the ferocious hardcore of *These Are The Ways*, which dishes out the album's heaviest riffs – although the track's inception was very different to the rock monster that ended up on the record.

"Before I wrote the music for *These Are The Ways*, I was playing along with Sparks' album *Propaganda*," John recalls. "I was just blown away by how seemingly simple but imaginative their chord progressions are. But once

I brought it to the band, we turned it into this heavy-duty thing where the drums go from being like Keith Moon to Black Sabbath to Metallica. The end seems like a speed-metal thing to me. With the power of the band, it definitely turned into something else."

Another stylistic left turn crops up on *White Braids & Pillow Chair*, a mid-tempo chord workout that ends up as a full-blown rockabilly wig-out. It was one of the first songs John brought to the table, and one of his favourites in the way it

ERUPTION

"I really love guitar players like Randy Rhoads and Eddie Van Halen for the way that they could make the instrument explode through hand and whammy bar techniques."

"mixes up a few things that are important to me", blending a voice-leading progression inspired by Genesis keyboardist Tony Banks with an early-60s surf outro.

John's more textural approach, meanwhile, crops up on slow-burn groovers *Not The One* and *It's Only Natural*, which combine the minimal six-string ethos of 80s goth with techniques inspired by all-time guitar greats. The former draws on Adrian Belew and Eddie Van Halen's mastery



of the guitar's volume control, teamed with expansive digital delays. The latter features smatterings of backwards delay – an 80s hallmark – on its psychedelic solo, but its deceptively simple verse atmospherics found John once again turning to Jeff Beck for inspiration.

"It sounds like there's an echo on *It's Only Natural*," he says, "but I'm doing that with my hands. That's not an echo. That's me with my right hand just being loud, loud, loud, softer, softer, softer, softer. I had actually been doing it a lot because on Jeff Beck's *Blow By Blow* there's a song called *Constipated Duck*, and I think he probably actually has an echo on his guitar, but to play along with it, you have to do that: play loud, softer, softer, softer, softer, to sound like you're matching the recording. Flea had come up with the idea of *It's Only Natural* on piano. And then when he switched to bass, I thought that would be cool if I tried to do that kind of thing, like I'm doing on *Constipated Duck*, but make it a part of the song."

OLD FRIENDS

While John sought to explore new ground on *Unlimited Love* with his songwriting and technical philosophy, his gear ethos saw him reunite with the familiar tools he used to carve his name into the hearts of millions of young players.

"The main guitar that I played was my '62 Strat, which is the same guitar that I got when I rejoined the band back in 1998," he says of his go-to, which still features the original hand-wound pickups, but now comes loaded with an ILITCH hum-cancelling system. "Back in '98 I didn't have money for a Strat, but I told them all I had was a Fender Jaguar, and I felt that I should have a Strat for it to sound like the band. Anthony and I went to Guitar Center and he lent me the money to get a Strat, and it was the one that spoke to me off the wall. And ever since then, I've had many other Strats – from that period of time, generally – and that one that happened to be there that day, I've never found one better than that."

Other old favourites also made an appearance: his maple-necked '55 Strat – whose Seymour Duncans were recently replaced with a louder, better-matched set of pickups courtesy of Fender Senior Master Builder Paul Waller – as well as his '61 Fiesta Red Strat and a Jaguar or two. Acoustics – as heard on electro-folk groover

I LIKE DIRT

John presents a guided tour of the key elements on his current rehearsal pedalboard, stacked with pedals that wound up on the new Chili's album *Unlimited Love*.

IBANEZ WH10 AND BOSS CE-1 CHORUS ENSEMBLE

"I used a lot of the same things – the same Ibanez wah-wah pedal, the old one. And the same old Boss chorus pedal, the Chorus Ensemble."

BOSS DS-2 TURBO DISTORTION AND SD-1 SUPER OVERDRIVE

"Normally, I would use the DS-2. But I also used the SD-1 – it's less distorted. It's not a super-extreme kind of distortion, but it can give you a powerful tone."

MXR SUPER BADASS VARIAC FUZZ AND CUSTOM BADASS '78 DISTORTION

"There was definitely a lot of MXR stuff on the album. They gave me a bunch of pedals early on. I used their fuzz tone quite a bit, not just for solos, but sometimes even for guitar parts for choruses or whatever. And a distortion pedal of theirs, too."

MXR REVERBS

"That was on almost all the time [at rehearsals – the album features real room reverb]. It's one of those things that comes from me being an engineer – I don't think I used to be very conscious of room sounds, but now they're very important to me to give some sort of sense of space to what you're recording. And so it's very subtle. It's a very short room sound, but I just like to hear the guitar that way. The other is set for a more long kind of reverb."

MXR DYNA COMP

"Sometimes the Dyna Comp was just exactly what I needed in terms of getting the right amount of sustain on clean things, and having a more Taffy-like kind of sound. I've loved the Dyna Comp ever since I was a little kid. I was a big fan of Adrian Belew when I was a youngster, and he had one of those on, like, all the time back in those days in the early 80s."





Bastards Of Light and delicate album closer *Tangelo* – were all Martin: two 1940s 0-15 mahogany models, a D-28 Dreadnought and a 12-string. But there were some new-to-the-Chili Peppers additions, too, via a cabal of Yamaha SGs from the late-70s and early-80s. These dual-humbucker heavyweights became John's main squeeze during his time away from the band, but proved to be the perfect guitars for overdubs during the album's heavier moments.

He explains: "When there's a heavy section with distorted powerchords and that kind of thing, a lot of the time the Strat was what I played in the basic track, but [doubled with a] Yamaha SG straight into the Marshall with no distortion pedal or anything, just getting the distortion from the amp. Quite a bit of the time it's the Yamaha on the left, for example, and the Fender Strat through a distortion pedal on the other speaker. And there are even some mellow, soft things where it's the SG."

Amp-wise, the Marshall Silver Jubilee and Major stacks that flanked the guitarist at the Chili Peppers' biggest shows were dusted off and taken out of retirement for the bulk of the tones, while a Roland Jazz Chorus wound up on a few dubs. But John's lockdown reading also inspired him to seek out an old classic – which, as it transpired, had an unexpected connection to the band.

"I also had an Ampeg B-15," he reveals. "I really loved both the guitar playing and the engineering of Greg Sage from the Wipers. He's gotten some of the best guitar tones I think anybody's ever recorded. He mentioned that he thought [the B-15] was the best amplifier ever made. So I bought one of those while we were recording the record to have a small amp to have a difference in tone for certain things. Then when I brought it in, Flea looked at it and he said, 'That's the same amp my stepdad used to have!' His stepdad was a bass player and upright bass player, and that was the amp he would plug his upright bass into. That was a funny coincidence."

But it was the Marshalls that would light the tonal fuse for some of the album's guitar highlights, in particular the visceral, screaming feedback that tears across the solo sections of *The Great Apes* and *The Heavy Wing*.

"Feedback is one of the funnest parts of making music for me," John enthuses. "The approach to the feedback is just volume: having all



four cabinets of two stacks on at once and finding the different places to stand where the really good feedback's gonna happen, and walking around while I'm playing the solos to get different feedback on different notes. And just being extremely loud – like, so loud that if I didn't have my headphones on, I couldn't have stood there. The headphones were the only thing preventing my ears from getting blown out!"

The sheer volume meant that while many of the rhythm tracks were recorded live in the room, John was forced to track most of his solos as overdubs to avoid the amps bleeding too heavily into the drum mics. But those band recordings found the guitarist fine-tuning his core sound, too, making one major adjustment to his Strat and amps compared with previous Chili Peppers outings.

"The bass [neck] pickup is on pretty much everything," he reveals. "For a period of time, like *By The Way* or *Californication*, I was using the bridge pickup quite a bit. So, I noticed that when we were recording this, my treble

ROAD TRIPPIN'

"I haven't really played in front of an audience in 12 years!"

was up on three on both of the Marshalls – in the old days, my treble was always on zero."

As a result, the guitarist is still figuring out his pedalboard for the Chili Peppers' upcoming live dates, and contemplating an EQ pedal to even out the treble response on those neck and bridge pickups. Naturally, the studio was ripe for effects experimentation elsewhere, too: modular and rack units received regular use, alongside more conventional pedals.

"I definitely used more delays on this than I had in any time in the past," he says. "Mainly because I was inspired by that 50s stuff – things like Gene Vincent or Elvis, where a lot of the time, there's a slapback delay, not just on the guitar, but on the drums and on the vocal and bass and everything. So, I had a few: I had an MXR analog one, I had a [DeltaLab] Effectron II digital delay. Somebody suggested that I get one of these tape delays that they make now, the Fulltone Tube Tape Echo. That's the last thing you hear on the album at the end of *Tangelo*, when all of a sudden there's a delay that starts and then it builds into a kind of feedback for a second and then it's noise."

One new discovery was the Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive for a chunkier rather than more aggressive tone, as well as the MXR Super Badass Variac Fuzz for hairier solos and meatier overdubs. But it remains to be seen how many of those will make it out onto the road, and whether John's 'board will approach Slane Castle levels of enormity.

"I never used very many!" he laughs at the mention of the cornucopia of stompboxes at his feet during that landmark 2003 show. "A lot of the time, one pedal was just for one particular song, and so I had to have it there just in case we played that song. And it was also because sometimes after being on tour for a long time, I get bored with the same sound from night to night. I like to have pedals that are just there for me to do something weird and different if the mood strikes me."

AROUND THE WORLD

Of course, there will be plenty of opportunity for Frusciante to push his tones and his playing on the Chili Peppers' upcoming world tour. Unsurprisingly, the setlist is likely to be heavily populated by greatest hits from his tenures with the band, as well as plenty of new material – at the time



of TG's interview, the band have been almost exclusively rehearsing all 48 of the songs they wrote for this album and its potential follow-up. So, while the prospect of hearing *Unlimited Love* and even yet-to-be-released material is a tantalising one for fans, John emphasises how much he's enjoying revisiting the old classics and adding some fresh, improvisatory twists.

"It really does feel good to play the old songs again," he says. "There's been a magic feeling for all of us going back to that material. And, you know, I like improvising on stage. So I look forward to the jamming parts of it, and making up new solos every night. [There's] that reciprocal thing that happens with an audience, where their energy and the pressure of playing in front of them and not being able to rewind the tape and go backwards, it brings something out of you as a musician that there's no way to recreate as a guitar player sitting in a studio recording your music by yourself, as I have in the past.

"I look forward to playing under that pressure, and letting go, and letting whatever spirits are with us that night come through me, and trying to match that feeling that gets generated between the band and an audience." He pauses. "You know, I haven't really played in front of an audience in about 12 years. So it's as new to me as writing rock music was when I rejoined."

Yet Frusciante has more than settled into his old role; it's as if he never left. And while he's brought some new tricks from an engineering perspective – citing his explorations of backwards delay and reverb and modular guitar treatments as highlights – it's rediscovering that raw musical connection, and the simple joys of playing with like-minded musicians, that's kept things exciting and fresh. All in all, it paints a rosy picture of John's third act with the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

"There's an appreciation of the chemistry that I can't say I really had towards the end of being in the band last time," he admits. "An appreciation of what we're capable of – when you get so used to something, you sometimes tend to take things for granted.

"I'd had lots of time making music where I do whatever I want. And that was great. And I continue to do that. But it seemed like a really good step for me as a human being to try to play in a band again. Most of all, I just have a lot of fun playing with those guys."

“IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH TECHNIQUE YOU HAVE”

John Frusciante shares his lessons learned over a career of era-defining guitar playing – and reveals his tips on how to become the guitar player you always wanted to be...

Never stop pushing yourself

The first couple of years I was in the Chili Peppers, I wasn't really on the right path. I thought I could be like Flea where, in those days, he used to practise a half-hour a day, or some days not play at all. And every time he picked up his bass, an awesome thing came out of it. And so when I joined the band, I thought, 'I could be like that!' And it turns out, I can't be like that – if I did that, nothing original would come out of me, I wouldn't feel good about what I've done, I wouldn't have fun on stage, I wouldn't be able to write songs and be able to match his level of creativity. For me to be equal to Flea, I have to work twenty times harder: I have to be playing along with other people's music all the time, I have to be writing way more ideas than I actually show to anybody. I have to be striving to understand things that I don't understand, and that I may never understand.

Stay true to who you are

When I was 18 and the early part of being 19, I was trying to be impressive, because I could play fancy things, or because I could be intense. That never left, but I figured out pretty quickly that I couldn't rely on that ability to be intense and I couldn't rely on my technique – music doesn't really mean anything to people unless you're really giving something of yourself in it and putting yourself out there in a vulnerable way. Not trying to show people, 'Hey, watch me, I'm good,' but to give people a piece of your heart. It was a switch that took place right after we got off tour for [1989 album] *Mother's Milk*. I just decided, if I keep going the way that I'm going, I'm never going to be happy with anything that I do, so I have to give up my ideas of what good is and I just have to try to be myself and figure out what that is – and stop

trying to be what I think people want me to be, or what I think the Chilis are supposed to be. I have to try to just figure out: 'Who am I?'"

Don't set out to impress

Generally, when I put away all those ideas of trying to be 'good', or trying to impress people, a thing that I can't explain from my soul started to come out of my playing – and people started liking my playing a lot more at that point; I started to mean something to people. It was one of those weird conundrums, because I had given up caring at that point: I figured I'm just gonna be myself, come what may; I'm going to stop trying to be impressive. And that was

actually what caused people to start to really be into what I was doing.

Keep it simple and your bandmates will shine

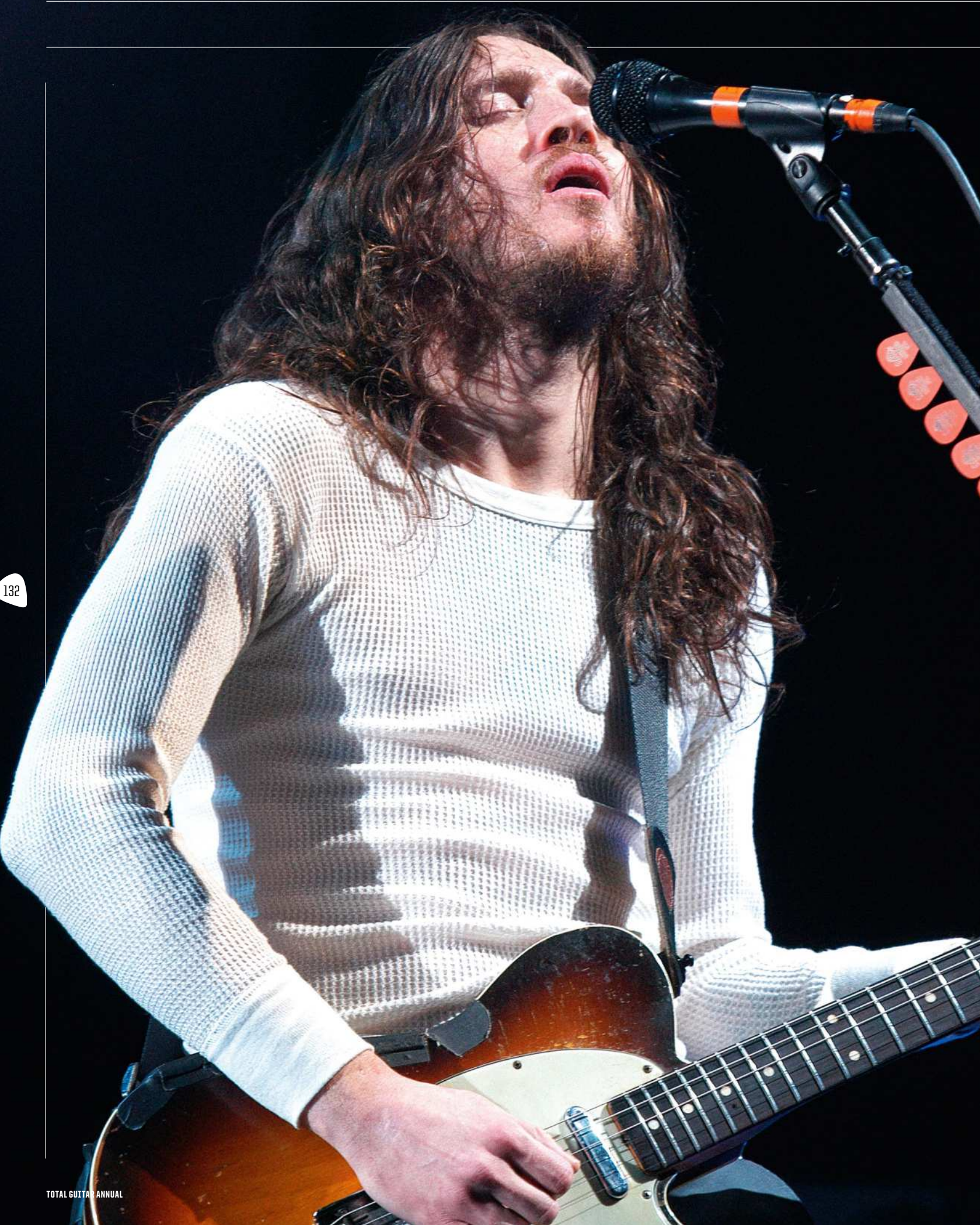
When I started to put all those teenage ideas out of my head, and I started really simplifying and trying to play more from my heart rather than trying to dazzle people with my fingers, Flea started sounding a lot better. I realised that by going into rehearsal, and instead of playing, just do feedback, or hold one note for a long time. I noticed that this made Flea sound awesome! I saw how it affected the chemistry in the band, as well; it made everybody else sound better, 

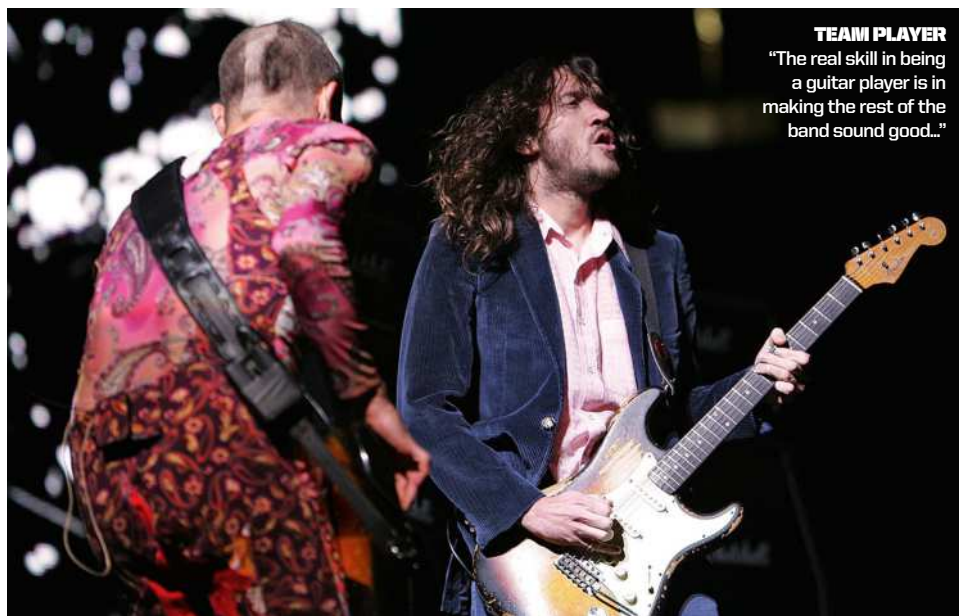
FLEA IN YOUR EAR

"For me to be equal to Flea, I have to work twenty times harder..."









TEAM PLAYER
 "The real skill in being a guitar player is in making the rest of the band sound good..."

because I was giving them this canvas that they could paint on, as opposed to trying to step in front of other people to do my painting. I was like, 'I'm gonna let them do the painting and I'm just gonna give them an atmosphere to do that in,' and I saw that it had a really good effect on everybody.

A guitar player's true ability lies in how they interact with the band

Too often people assume that a guitar player's worth comes from their ability to draw attention to themselves. And there are a lot of great guitar players who are great at drawing attention to themselves. But to me the essential thing that those people have – that other people who don't draw attention to themselves like Bernard Sumner in Joy Division, or Syd Barrett, or Johnny Thunders or Matthew Ashman from Bow Wow Wow or John McGeoch in Siouxsie And The Banshees – to me, what they have in common with Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads and Jimi Hendrix is that they knew how to be a member of a band and make everybody else sound better. They knew how to be team players.

"Yeah, Eddie Van Halen happened to have a flashy style, but he was a great rhythm guitar player, and he made those drums sound great. He made that bass sound great. He made the singer sound great. To me, it really doesn't matter how much technique you have; the real skill in being a guitar player is in making the rest of the band sound good. And so for some people, it's just who you are as a soul. For some people, that means doing a lot of flashy stuff as well as doing the guitar parts for the song. For some people, that means not soloing at all. For some people, it means doing a very simple kind of soloing.

"I feel like, for me, that's where I measure a guitar player's skill: in how they assist the rest of the band in creating one sound together. A rock band is not four separate people in their own bubble; a rock band is three or four or five people who all create one sound together. And each person's skill can be judged by what that sound is – not by what they're doing individually or what it looks like, or whether or not it's physically hard to do for up-and-coming musicians. I realised that when I was about nineteen, twenty, and I've always felt that way.

Master your dynamics

Accents and non-accents are, I think, the most important thing in terms of sounding expressive as a guitar player. That's the thing

"ACCENTS AND NON-ACCENTS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN TERMS OF SOUNDING EXPRESSIVE AS A GUITAR PLAYER"

you have no control of when you start playing, and you wonder, 'What is it that makes these people on these records sound so much better than me, and I'm playing the same thing?' It's your accents and your non-accents, and then everything in between. My practice routine has a lot to do with playing scales in different ways that switch between accents and non-accents. I'm always extremely conscious of it – I'm really focused on that whole idea of the volume that comes from hitting notes harder and faster, or softer and slower.

Switch off your mind and feel the chemistry

When you shut your brain off [while jamming], that's when you notice funny things happening – like, Flea and I will play the same exact riff at the same time without either of us having played it before. It's definitely best to turn your brain off, and just listen and feel whatever feelings everybody else is putting through you. It's definitely important to listen to everybody else, but you should also be having fun listening to what comes out of your instrument. And it's another thing I like about feedback: that you don't know what's gonna happen next. So, you listen to what's coming out of the speaker, and then you play to that.

"Sometimes with guitar players, especially when they're very concerned with whether or not what's going to come out of them is good or not, they tend to place themselves *before* the notes that come out. And I know that's a natural thing to do, the way our minds are locked into the present moment. But if you can let go and listen to what's happened as it's just happened and respond to that, no matter how much you have to slow yourself down to do that, I feel like that's the more productive angle to listen from, and it's definitely the more fun angle to listen from. Because if you're worried about what's gonna happen before it happens, you might miss the boat altogether, but if you listen to what's just happened, and you pay attention to how that relates to the other things that are happening, it becomes a regenerative process.

"In the same way that feedback is something that, while it's coming through you, it comes back at you, I feel like it can be that way with any kind of playing: play a couple of notes and

wait for five seconds before you play any more notes. Listen to the feeling of how that affected the other instruments, and then just play whatever the f*ck comes out of you without thinking about it when the right time comes. That's one of the main ways that my whole mental state switched at that point when I felt like I found my own style: before that, I was stuck in that moment right before you play everything you're gonna play. And after that, I found myself more located in that moment after you've played something.

RED HOT RIFFS

Nail these classic Chilis riffs in true Frusciante style!

There's a strong argument to be made that John Frusciante is the secret spice in the Red Hot Chili Peppers' fiery funk-rock recipe. His second outing with the LA quartet (their fifth album), *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, broke the band into the big time. After the commercial disappointment of 1995's *One Hot Minute* (recorded with Jane's Addiction recruit, Dave Navarro), John's return to the fold in 1998 saw the band on a path to global

recognition, with three increasingly successful albums culminating in 2006's *Stadium Arcadium* which topped charts worldwide.

Here we're looking at some of our favourite Frusciante-penned Chili Peppers riffs. *Can't Stop* will test your ability to groove. *Scar Tissue* offers Beatles-y chords with a fiercely tricky string muting technique. And, bringing proceedings right up to date, we're looking at the Hendrix-tinged shapes of 2022's *Black Summer*. Plug in and let's get funky!



1 CAN'T STOP

Appears at: 0:00-0:34

Tempo: 90 bpm

Key/scale: E minor

Main techniques: Fret-hand muting, accenting, 16th-note strumming.

Since it dropped in 2002, *Can't Stop* has become one of the Chili Peppers' biggest tracks, racking up hundreds of millions of streams on every platform and becoming one of their most gigged songs. It kicks off with a repeating motif played at the 5th and 7th frets on the fifth string. Now, remember, this is the easy bit! Just remember to play the line eight times and you're good. The real action begins at 0:21, with a deceptively tricky riff from Frusciante. We say 'deceptive' because the repeating treble notes (on the 7th and 9th frets of the third string) make it sound like it's going to be simple; however, there is another element to master: a moving bassline on the fifth and sixth strings. And while Frusciante's aggressive pick attack and wide strumming motion propel the track with urgency, you're left having to keep five idle strings quiet as you navigate from string to string. Practising slowly at first, and keep in mind that your first finger will be doing most of the string muting.

TG Tip: Try using your thumb to fret the notes on the sixth string. This allows you to play the entire riff without changing hand position.



2 SCAR TISSUE

Appears at: 0:00-0:11

Tempo: 90 bpm

Key/scale: F major

Main techniques: Fret-hand muting, string skipping, sliding, melodic lines over implied chords, pull-offs.

We're looking at another Chilis mega-hit here, specifically the Beatles-y *Blackbird*-esque two-note shapes that open *Scar Tissue*. John uses the root and 3rd intervals of F, C and D minor chords, but, instead of playing pure 3rds, he adds an extra octave in between each pair of notes, covering a wider register to outline the chord progression while still making room for melodic variations. If that sounds like a lot to take on board don't worry! There are only three shapes to learn. The real challenge comes from the rhythm and picking. On the recording John singles out each individual note (downpick the root note; up-pick the high note), but note that in live shows he tends to strum, keeping the fretted notes ringing out over each other with the idle strings dead quiet. It's ninja-level fret-hand muting, and it's well worth practising the song this way to hone your own technique.

TG Tip: Use your second finger to fret the sixth string to allow your first finger to get a better position to mute the idle strings.



3 BLACK SUMMER

Appears at: 0:00-0:09

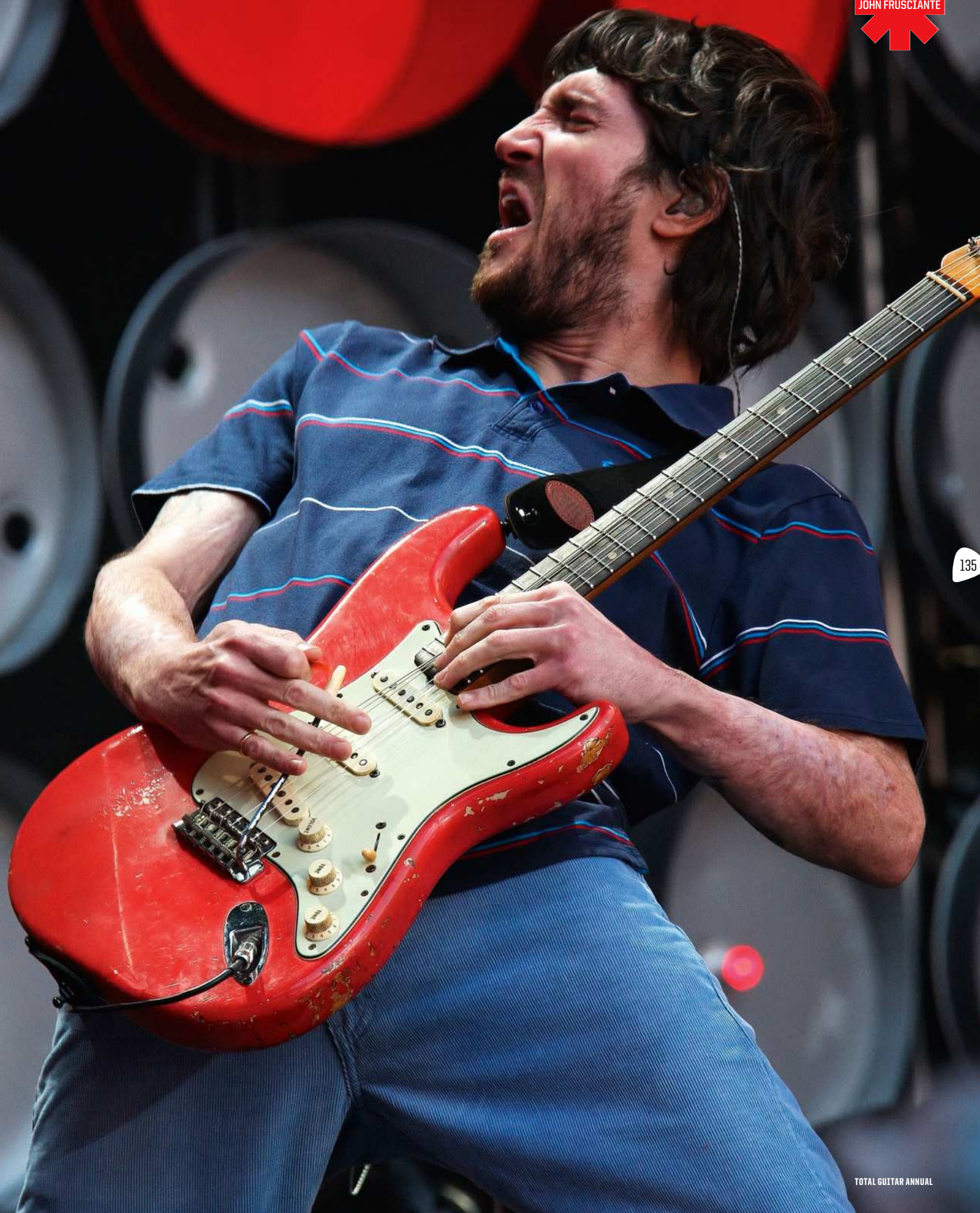
Tempo: 105 bpm

Key/scale: E minor

Main techniques: Hammer-ons and pull-offs within a barre chord, slides, and regular string changes.

John's 2022 Chili Peppers comeback track, *Black Summer* is drenched with Hendrix-esque decorative runs right from the top – and we're looking at the intro riff here. It's based around a 7th position E minor barre chord with hammer-ons and pull-offs included on the second, third and fourth strings. You'll need a steady barre so that every string in the chord shape continues to ring out as you hammer and pull. Fluff your barre and it'll all sound a bit thin! After the hammer-ons and pull-offs comes a sliding phrase on the second and third strings. You'll be starting at the 8th and 9th frets and sliding up to the 10th and 11th. Just like the barre, this is another case where you need to keep your finger pressure consistent. Get it right and these two-note shapes will sing. Finally, note that John tuned to E, standard here, but we've stayed in E to save you having to retune.

TG Tip: Use a chorus pedal with the rate set to pulse at an eighth-note triplet rhythm, and with mix and depth set to medium levels.



LESSONS IN FUNK

Flex your funk muscles with this groove masterclass as we examine Chilis-style funk-rock, contemporary neo-soul, jazz-fusion and more...

Guitars and backing Steve Allsworth

Although funk can be traced back to the early days of James Brown, like all styles, it has evolved a lot over the last 60 years. With an increasing body of great rhythm guitar players on the live circuit as well as online, there's never been a greater abundance of talent and innovation, that's constantly pushing stylistic boundaries.

Within this evolution, funk has crossed over into other styles such as RnB, neo-soul, fusion, gospel, and many more guitarists are becoming switched on to the

beauty of using a clean sound and really working on rhythm and harmony. At its heart, classic funk is all about syncopation, space and generally static/simple chords. The crossover into neo-soul and gospel largely retains this element of syncopation and rhythm but tends to use more extended and colourful harmony.

You'll also find many of the guitarists featured here frequently use fingerstyle technique to bring in slaps/pops borrowed from classic funk bass technique, together with wider intervals and greater control over chord shapes.

1 JOHN FRUSCIANTE FUNK #1

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUD10

♩ = 93 ♩ = ♩

When many people think of funk, they often turn to this 90s-inspired Frusciante style rhythm. This small partial chord is inherently funky because of the space, fret-hand mutes and swing feel. It's all about how it interacts with the bassline, so notice how we're not filling the bar with endless fret-hand muting. In this case, less is more.

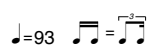
2 JOHN FRUSCIANTE FUNK #2

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUD10

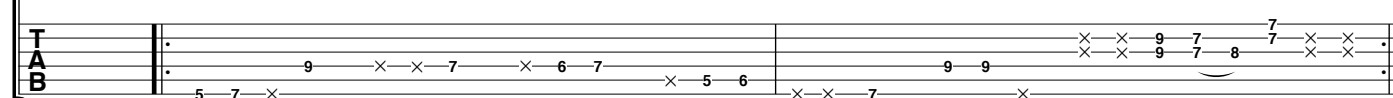
Just like the classic James Brown blueprint of having two interlocking guitar parts, this D minor pentatonic idea is designed to 'fill in the cracks' of our previous guitar part. John is a master of string muting, especially when fretting single notes while strumming through all the strings. Once you've mastered this technique, you'll have the freedom in the picking hand to improvise any rhythm you like.

3 ERIC KRASNO FUNK

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

♩ = 93  B7

Play 4 times



As part of jazz-funk outfit Lettuce, Krasno's style often mirrors the sparse single-note lines of James Brown's most famous guitarist Jimmy Nolen. Try to view our example riff through the lens of the B7 chord shape at the 7th fret and you should be able to see the connection between classic blues lines that target pentatonic ideas within the shape. Aim to keep your pick hand moving at all times, but try to avoid constant fret-hand mutes.

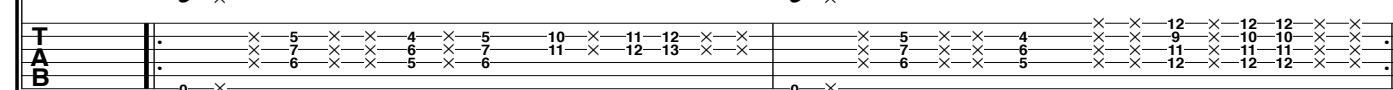
4 CORY WONG FUNK

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

♩ = 82

E7 D#7 E7 D#7 E9 E11sus2

Play 4 times



Cory's signature sound is position 4 on a Strat together with a dash of compression to make those funky lines pop. He has a particularly rubbery pick hand wrist, so the key to this riff is constant pick hand motion coming from the wrist rather than the arm. This riff is also a great lesson in how to get the most from a humble E7 chord, with Cory's trademark melodic variations up and down the neck.

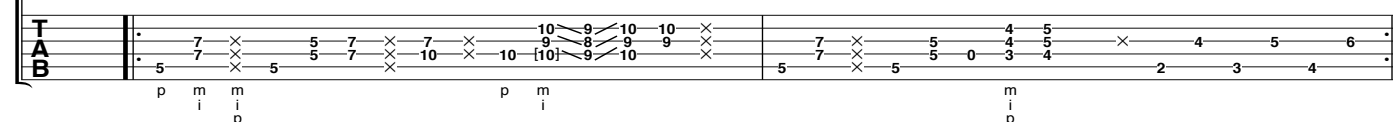
5 SNARKY PUPPY FINGERSTYLE

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

♩ = 95

D5 D7 D9 C#9 D9 D5 C#9 D9

Play 4 times



p m i p p m i m i p

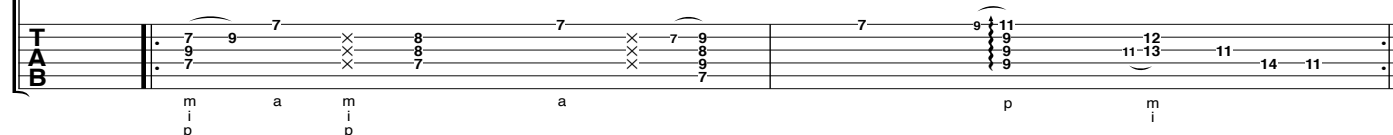
Snarky Puppy's Mark Lettieri is a great fingerstyle specialist. Here the thumb, index and middle fingers can be used for percussive effects as well as playing chords/notes. Beat 2 is a great example of the 'keeping time' percussive technique. This offbeat 'mini slap' comes from pivoting the pick hand at the wrist, away from the strings and back to rest on the strings.

6 MARK LETTIERI NEO-SOUL

[BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO](https://bit.ly/TGA2023AUDIO)

Amaj7 B7#5 Emaj7 C#m9

Play 4 times



m i p a m i p a p m i

Here, as we delve into gospel-tinged neo-soul, we start to hear complex chord extensions such as the 9th and #5th for added tension. Much of the gospel/neo-soul stylistic vibe of this riff comes from the quick hammer-ons on chords. As with our previous Lettieri-inspired riff, fingers work best, as you can get some great separation between notes in the chords. You can also try raking through chords with the thumb (as with the C#m9 chord).

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

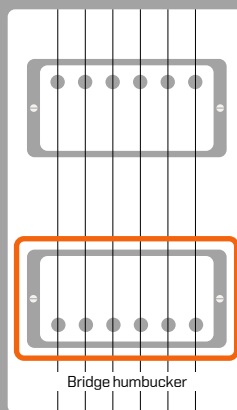
- ✓ String bending
- ✓ B minor pentatonic
- ✓ Atonal arpeggios



RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE



White can be seen playing *TMB* on a variant of his Three Wheel Motion Low Rider Telecaster, with a Gretsch-style FilterTron bridge pickup taking the place of the original's Lace Sensor. We don't yet know whether this is a custom refinish or a new Fender build, but, in general, FilterTron pickups have an 'in-between' humbucker/single coil sound – so aim for a treble-rich, but full-bodied guitar tone. The fuzz and octave effects are likely to come from Jack's Third Man Bumble Buzz and Mantic Flex pedals, both of which have been spied on his 'board.

JACK WHITE

Taking Me Back

Jack White's first solo release since 2018, *Taking Me Back* features huge fuzz-fuelled guitar riffs blended with bass, synth and octave effects. The song is based around B minor pentatonic scale (B D E F# A) with the main riffs staying relatively close to those notes. The guitar solo at the end of the song (which we're looking at here) starts with three of those notes in a repeating lick: F#

E D E. This four-note pattern repeats eight times, followed by a phrase played between B and D. Listen carefully for some slight variations on the final repeat.

The following section uses descending arpeggios played as one-note-per-string shapes; first it's A D B, then E A F. Next, things get a little atonal and step outside the pentatonic sound with D D# B, and D G D#. To add to the strangeness here, there are

two guitars playing slightly different notes and perhaps a ring modulator effect to add to the dissonance.

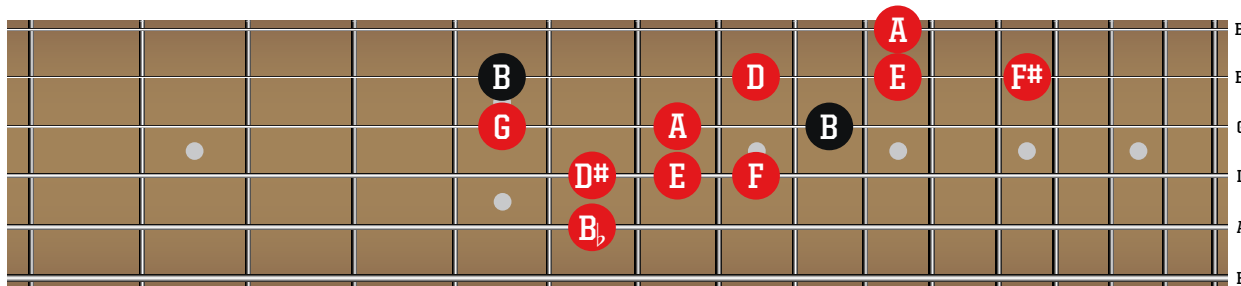
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 3:26–3:58

Tempo: 117bpm

Key/scale: B minor pentatonic

Main techniques: string bends, hammer-ons, one-note-per-string arpeggios



The first half of the solo uses B, D and E notes on the second and third strings, with a tone-wide string bend on the 17th fret to access the F# note. The second half of the solo descends through the notes shown in

the diagram, as unusual arpeggios. These don't really fit into a specific scale or mode and it's possible that Jack hit those notes while improvising and simply liked the atonal sound it creates.

Words Jonathan Horsley Portraits Katrena Wize

“95 PER CENT OF TONE IS IN THE PLAYER”

How **Eric Gales** is taking one of electric guitar's oldest art forms and reimagining it for a new generation

The blues has been appropriated by every style of popular music but maybe it's time for pop culture to repay the favour. Maybe it's time for the blues to consume

those styles and put them in a different context. If so, Eric Gales is the man to do it. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, he is a player of catholic tastes and an uncanny ear for incorporating alien styles back into the realm of electric blues. With each passing release, it's like he is redesigning the future of the art form, augmenting it with licks and phrases gleaned from funk, jazz, rock, Eric Johnson, Andrés Segovia – from whomever catches his attention.

Gales' new studio LP, *Crown* – produced by blues-rock's premier production duo Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith – is an eclectic piece of work that torpedoes the received wisdom that blues exists only inside a I-IV-V progression. It's iconoclastic. There's a hip-hop sensibility to how Gales deploys his styles, like he has a channel switcher. This is the record you play to those who say the blues is an archeological musical endeavour, that the best music has already been made. But what goes into a style like this?

RAW INGREDIENTS

If mastering Eric Gales' flamboyant playing style is a task akin to scaling

Everest in a pair of Dunlop Green Flash, it is some consolation knowing that amassing a rig to give you a Raw Dawg tone is eminently more achievable. Gales' sound on record is all spanky Strat-style cleans, meticulous, detailed, with a raunchy, juicy overdrive when he engages blues-rock mode and takes aim for the centre of the sun. Crown was recorded with his signature Magneto RD-3 S-style electric going into a tried and trusted setup.

“I used my signature amps, the DV Mark Eric Gales Raw Dawg model, 250-watts,” he says. “[A Dunlop] Cry Baby, distortion, Xotic boost/drive, MXR Raw Dawg boost, Tech21 [Boost D.L.A. Analog Delay Emulator] delay, and that's it. It's been pretty much the same for the past few years.”

All of this is readily available. Okay, the Magneto is niche, but any Strat-style guitar will do. The DV Raw Dawg head retails for £399, the stack for £859, but pick any US-voiced amp with sweet cleans, plenty headroom and a nice reverb and you're good to go. Like B.B. King before him, Gales has gravitated to solid-state amps in recent times. Certainly, cheaper than the Tone Kings he used to run, and also better for any of us looking to get a good tone at home without having to crank a tube amp and send the cat into hiding.

Once you've found a bouncy elastic clean, add some boost or drive to taste. Again, nothing on Gales' pedalboard is too niche, and his signature MXR

FAST AND LOOSE
“Everything is spontaneous,” Gales says. “Nothing is rehearsed...”

overdrive is medium-hot on the gain scale with a pronounced midrange.

“I use my overdrive as a boost, and just to give me a little bit more edge,” says Gales. “That's it. Tone is important. It goes with all of it. But I believe that ninety-five per cent of tone is in the player, so there are things that are out there that can help enhance, and there are some things out there that can take away. It's about finding that happy medium.”

THE UPSIDE DOWN

All that talk of gear is one thing, but we can't let it pass without mention of something more fundamental to how Gales approaches the guitar; that is, he is a left-handed player who plays a right-handed guitar flipped over. Wait, what's the big deal, you ask, but bear in mind, Gales doesn't restring it for its alternate dexterity. His high E is where we'd normally find our low E. That won't necessarily affect his note choice but it is sure to factor in how he is connecting with those notes.

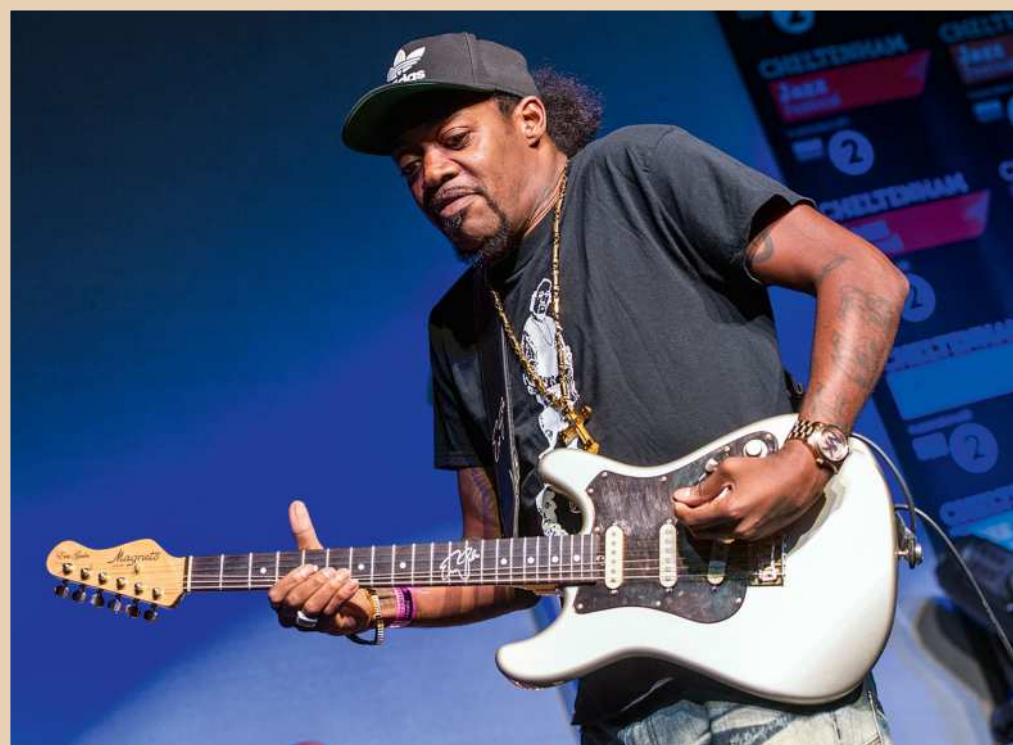
YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

There's no great secret to Gales' polyglot guitar style, but there is a little mystery. When asked, he tries to put his finger on it. In the past he has described himself as a guitar player who just happens to be good at the blues, and that seems an accurate description. But what is key is how his understanding of









THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

There's no style of guitar that is more dependent on a player's stylistic fingerprint than the blues. Often it's not what you play, it is how you play it. As with his note groupings, Gales will take familiar elements of the blues – minor pentatonics, blues scales – but make them his own with a trick back full of bends, vibrato and ingenious slides that not only shift the pitch but also the rhythm of the lick.

"You just have to find yourself, man, and that's a search that's individual to your own DNA," says Gales. "There is an element of the blues that I think is going to be incorporated with everything that I do, and that's just who I am. What I think makes me who I am is all the different influences that I throw in there on top of it. That's it, man. It's each individual finding their own particular DNA. No one can copy anyone else's DNA. Once you submit yourself, you are on the way."

PLAY ON THE EDGE

If you have watched Gales' recent solo when jamming *When My Train Comes In* with Gary Clark Jr. onstage, you'll know what we mean by playing on the edge. And you'll know what Gales means when he says those different styles and the way he expresses him is simply what comes to him in the moment. That solo is the Rosetta Stone to understanding Gales' style. It's like he is challenging the guitar to find a wrong note, to throw him off the track. But there's a casual virtuosity to his playing; as though he recognises the danger but deep down trusts his chops.

When you position yourself like that, not knowing what's coming next, then neither does the audience, and that can make a performance transcendent.

"I like that," says Gales. "Everything is spontaneous, spur of the moment; soloing, songwriting, performing, showmanship... Nothing is rehearsed. I have found a comfortability with not knowing what's going to happen until it happens. That's the type of model that has become very comfortable for me, and this is not something that works for everybody but it works for me."

"You've got to be confident. It is not the time to be afraid or hesitant, so once you have acquired all the influences that you feel have formed who you are, then you can do whatever it is that your heart is telling you to do."

different musical styles is brought to bear on his songwriting. Gales will listen to anything, and when inspiration hits him, he'll go home and learn that style until it is part of his vocabulary.

"It doesn't matter what style of music it is," he says. "If I am inspired, I'll go home and start working on whatever it was, and then, later on, it'll manifest itself in a show or something like that. It's a combination of everything that I like, and that is definitely going to come out in everything that I do. The more you learn, the more you can expand."

As a result, you'll put on a track like *I Want My Crown* and he'll be working a funk guitar part, while *Death Of Me* has a classical interlude that sounds like it could have come from a Danny Elfman film score. "Due to my knowledge that I have gained through the years of many different styles, I am able to tap into any given style at any given time," says Gales. "It all just depends on what kind of feel that I have got going on in that day."

FREE SPIRIT

"The more you learn, the more you can expand"

TAKING BLUES BEYOND THE BOX

Gales might be a maverick but there is no blues-rock player on the planet who doesn't put the minor pentatonic scale to work. The question is how you do it without it sounding stale and predictable. Gales' approach might be instinctive but there is a method to it. He will break up predictable note patterns, and play fast groups of five and alternate them with groups of four. This keeps it unpredictable, but it also gives his flashier lead guitar breaks a vocal quality, with those note groupings assuming a similar rhythm and meter to a soul vocal line.

Besides splitting up his phrasing into different patterns, Gales will alternately run up and down the same scale shape, building tension and occasionally throwing in a passing note before resolving it in a gigantic bend. Those bends can be hard to execute but he tunes down half-a-step and that can make your guitar a little slinkier. "There's a little bit more wiggle," says Gales. "And it's easier on my voice."

"I AM ABLE TO TAP INTO ANY GIVEN STYLE AT ANY GIVEN TIME"

Words Joe Bosso Portraits Eleanor Jane

"I'M THE PROUDEST I'VE BEEN IN MY LIFE OF MY GUITAR PLAYING"

As two new solo albums illustrate the breadth of his art, **Jack White** believes that he's reaching a new peak as a guitarist. "There are places I've never gone before," he says, "and techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing.."

It is a big statement that Jack White is making this year – with the release of not one but two new solo albums. And yet, as the man himself says, this is not the result of some intensely calculated master plan. In fact, he had no plan at all... "I know people won't believe me when I say this, but I don't really ever have a plan to make an album once I get involved in it," he explains. "I always sort of start falling into it and find myself in the middle of it, and then I say, 'Oh, wow. I guess I should start maybe thinking about this, how it's going to relate to things I've done in the past, or what I want to do next live on stage.' But just as quickly, you can find yourself in a bunch of traps because you start overthinking the public version of what you're doing, and that's not a good place to create, really."

Jack is speaking from his home in Nashville, where these new albums were written and then recorded at his Third Man Studios. He has made

a couple of public appearances over the past few years, performing on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, and playing two concerts in London last year to mark the opening of a new Third Man Records Store in the city's Soho district. But for the most part he has been laying low in Nashville as a result of the pandemic. And while he admits that the period of forced isolation affected him deeply, it was also a key factor in the sheer volume of new songs he wrote.

Once he had recorded all this material, Jack briefly considered packaging everything on one grand double-album set – an idea he quickly rejected. Instead, he divided the material into two thematic albums. With his previous solo record, 2018's *Boarding House Reach*, he struck a balance between blitzing riff monsters and mellower songs that blended rustic country, folk and blues, but with the new albums he draws distinct lines of demarcation.

Fear Of The Dawn, released in April, features plenty of boisterous guitar action. It begins with three hellacious rock load-blowers – *Taking Me Back*, the title track and *The White Raven*, all of them brimming with bonkers solos. Elsewhere

on this album, *What's The Trick* is a punishing hybrid of hip-hop and metal; *That Was Then (This Is Now)* fuses way-out acid funk with good-time 70s pop crunch; a version of Cab Calloway's *Hi-De-Ho* – featuring guest vocalist Q-Tip and Black Belles guitarist Olivia Jean – has the jazz classic reimagined as unnerving psychedelia; and on the epic *Eosophobia (Reprise)*, Jack answers the musical question: what would Steve Howe on steroids sound like?

The second of these albums, *Entering Heaven Alive*, followed on July 22, and it's a different animal altogether. A more subdued, acoustic-laced work, it showcases a softer, quieter side to Jack White. But even while he's luxuriating in the acoustic pastoral elegance of *A Tip From You To Me*, evoking lush mid-60s chamber pop on *Help Me Along* or laying his soul bare on a pair of aching ballads, *Love Is Selfish* and *If I Die Tomorrow*, there's a restlessness and an overarching feeling of anxiety that runs through the album.

Recording with other musicians during on-again, off-again lockdowns proved tricky, and on much of his new music Jack handled





the lion's share of instrumentation himself – electric and acoustic guitars, bass, keyboards, percussion, vibraphone, theremin; you name it. But he nixed the idea of performing everything on his own. “I just didn’t want to get into that concept,” he says. And so he waited until restrictions eased to call in an assortment of players for various tracks – chief among them drummers Daru Jones and Patrick Keeler, as well as bassists Dominic Davis and Jack Lawrence, all of whom he’s worked with in the past. “I like to play with other people to get someplace new,” he says. “It brings out different personalities in the songs.”

In a wide-ranging conversation, Jack talks about the whole creative process that went into these albums, from writing to production. He talks about the fun he’s had with guitars designed by Eddie Van Halen and St. Vincent. And he suggests that his playing on *Fear Of The Dawn* might just be the best he has ever laid down...

Let's talk first about songwriting – and how you wrote enough for two albums...

Songs were just coming out every day, and I was getting lucky. You start to hit a streak where several tracks keep pouring out. It's funny because you don't really know where they're coming from, or why they're coming, so when it's happening it's just best to get out of the way and let it happen.

How much of this was the result of isolation during the pandemic?

It's been tragic for the entire world. The sadness of people dying and how this has disrupted everything – it's left me with a whole new respect for the fragility of human life. At the same time, as an artist, to be put in that position where I was basically told, ‘You can't leave your house,’ I found that inspiring. Constriction has always been something that turns me on and gets me motivated. That part wasn't hard for me at all. It was actually a blessing, and it made me have a whole rebirth.

How much time do you spend on a song before you decide if it's good enough or not?

If it doesn't sound interesting very quickly, I quickly abandon it. Every artist is different, but for me, I know pretty fast whether there's anything I can find some life in. Like riffs – every guy on the street can write a riff, but is it interesting to other people? It just comes down to taste, but along with that there's how you execute it live or in the studio. That comes down to taste, as well. Once you do all that, and you mix it and present it to people, are they going to get anything out of it? Who knows? The ability to quickly decipher whether something is interesting or not can't be taught in school. You just have to have it in you, and I don't really think I'm that good at it.

You don't?

I don't think I'm really that good at saying, “Oh, that's a great song!” But I am good at knowing if it's something I won't enjoy playing live. If it's something I don't get much out of when I listen to a mix, I get away from it and move on to something else.

Do you ever bounce things off other people? Like, ‘Hey, I've got this song that I don't know about. What do you think?’

I bounce it off people once I think it's interesting. The hardest part is playing things for somebody, like, ‘God, this sounds like a song somebody else already wrote. Does anybody know this song?’ I do that quite often. What sucks is when you play it for fifteen other musicians and no one recognises it, and then you release it and all these people start saying, ‘Oh, that sounds like *blah blah blah*.’ I'm like, ‘Oh, my God. Why didn't somebody mention that?’ Because we're living in an era where there's been so much recorded music in the last, whatever, seventy years – it's not like 1966, when only five guys had tried it.

You've self-produced your records for quite some time. Do you ever think about using an outside producer to get another perspective?

Yeah, I might do that in the future. Producers are good for people who don't want to bother themselves with orchestration, arrangement, production, all that other stuff, and they just want to be a singer or a bass player or whatever. That's when a producer comes in handy. I'm actually more interested in the production and the direction of the stuff than I am of the actual performance part of it. For me, it's like, ‘OK, I can do that. That's not a big problem, but can I bring this to life?’ That's what I'm more interested in. Over the years, I've lost interest in producing other artists as much as I used to. I used to do it a lot in the early days of Third Man Records, but it's a lot more difficult because you have to understand that everybody wants something different from a producer. Some people want absolutely no input from a producer; they just want some comfort. And other people want you to do everything for them, and it's really hard to know what that is. You can't come in the room with the exact same attitude every time.

"EVERY TIME I WALK INTO A ROOM WHERE THERE'S A GUITAR, I END UP PICKING IT UP. YOU NEVER STOP"



➔ **With these two new albums, how did you figure out which songs belonged on each?**

This is the first time where it was like, 'Wow, this song is so heavy and this song is so soft and melancholy. They cannot go next to each other on a record.' On my computer, I had softer songs on one playlist, and the harder songs were on another. So it was kind of simple – the songs divided themselves up.

The first three songs on *Fear Of The Dawn* – *Taking Me Back*, *The White Raven* and the title track – have got really brutal guitar riffs. What is the balance between guitars and synths on those songs? It's hard to tell because the sound is so dense and overwhelming.

I would say it's probably 75 per cent guitar on the record. I recently told somebody that, on this record, I'm probably the proudest I've been in my life of my guitar playing and performing. If someone asked me, 'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else. There are places I've never gone before, and there's new techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing. I think I was finally able to tap into thirty years of experimenting and failing, trying to get a certain tone and not really getting there. Now I actually have what you hoped you would have as you get older, which is a little bit of wisdom about how to put a mic in the right place or how to manipulate an amplifier to get what you want out of it. These are things that I wish I could back and teach my 21-year-old self how to do. I hoped that this would happen as I got older, and it's finally starting to show up now.

You played a theremin on the title track. How much practice goes into mastering one?

It's not an easy instrument to play. That was wild, because I just wanted to do one little sound effect. I turned it on and tried to get that sound to open up



a section that had an empty hole, and I continued to play as more and more sounds came out that made sense. It was all about electricity, and it reminded me of the Captain Beefheart song *Electricity* that has a theremin. I thought, 'Oh, this makes sense.' I just started digging a little bit deeper. It's pretty difficult. I couldn't do exactly what I wanted to with the theremin, but I got close on a couple of moments.

There is one new song, *That Was Then (This Is Now)*, that sounds like the 70s glam rock band The Sweet. Do you hear that at all?

I do. Sometimes the best ones are when someone says, 'That sounds like The Sweet,' but somebody else says, 'Oh, no, that sounds like Slade.' Then someone else says, 'No, that sounds like early Marc Bolan.' The best ones are when people say different things. When everyone says the same thing, it almost feels like a failure. I never try to reference something literally when I write; there's no point in trying to do a pastiche. For example, if I sat down and said, 'I want to write a song like The Sweet,' I probably would fail and end up sounding like Devo or something.

HAPPY JACK

"If someone asked me, 'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else," Jack says.

Speaking of references, the song *A Tip From You to Me* from *Entering Heaven Alive* is like acoustic Neil Young meets the country side of the Stones' *Exile On Main St.*

I really love that track, and at first I thought it should just be me and an acoustic guitar. Then when we got a band and I was finally able to get a couple musicians in the studio, we played it and it felt really good. Once we got to mixing, I thought, 'Wow, this has to open the album up.'

There is also a Stones vibe in *Help Me Along*, reminiscent of that pop-Elizabethan period on *Aftermath*.

Ah, okay. It's nice when you feel like a song isn't fully there yet, and you keep digging into it. That was one of those songs where I kept digging and digging, and it got better and better. Whereas sometimes, you dig and you realize you're making it worse, like you're trying to polish a mud pie. But that song was the opposite; as I layered, it got better and better. It's got four different keyboard players on it, which is crazy.

You don't mind hearing these references, do you?

No, no. I love to hear them!

Good – because *Queen Of The Bees* is a beautiful pop song that's like a classic Donovan number from the 60s.

Yeah, I can see that. It has a whimsical nature to it. It's a love song, but it could be seen as a novelty song. It's got some strangeness that I could really dig into. A lot of it was done on the new digital Mellotron. I have a real Mellotron on the album, too, but on this song it's the digital one. It was really interesting to mess around with it.

Let's talk more about gear. When you performed a tribute to Eddie Van Halen on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, you played a guitar he had designed.

Did you get to know him?

We had a bit of a relationship. What happened was, when I was doing my last album, *Boarding House Reach*, I found that the songs took weeks of rehearsal, which was something new to me. I thought, 'I want to get the easiest guitar there is to play', which is the opposite of what I normally do. I saw an interview with Eddie Van Halen and [EVH Master Builder] Chip Ellis in which they talked about building the Wolfgang

"EVERY GUY ON THE STREET CAN WRITE A RIFF, BUT IS IT INTERESTING TO OTHER PEOPLE?"



EVH guitar. Eddie talked about how he didn't want to fight the guitar, and I thought, 'OK, that might be the one for me.' I bought one, and sure enough, it was so easy to play. It practically played itself. That's when I got into customizing it to my liking. I took his design, and I customized it to some specs that I like – pickups, switches, material and stuff, the paint job. But yes, he and I had a little bit of a relationship, talking back and forth, and he taught me a couple things. There were some texts. It was nice, although we never met in person, which is a shame.

You've been playing some other artists' signature models in recent years – a St. Vincent guitar and one by Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter, famous for his work in the 70s with The Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan. What brought that about?

On that tour, I wanted to use three guitars designed by other players. One was Eddie, one was Baxter, and one was St. Vincent. It was so interesting to see

STAR TURN

Jack performs the US National Anthem prior to the Opening Day game at Comerica Park in Detroit, Michigan.

what other people think is the ultimate tone and versatility for their stage instruments. I think it all applied to me as I was building these custom Fender things that I used on The Raconteurs tour, along with what I'm going to be using this year. I put a lot of different ideas into the Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster, and I road-tested it. It's a heavy guitar, and after I put a lot of gadgetry in it, the weight got even heavier – which I don't mind that much. We changed the B-bender situation in the Tele, so now there's a B-bender and a G-bender, but no Bigsby for all six strings.

There was a time when you became the poster boy for inexpensive guitars. A lot of people followed your lead.

Yeah, that kind of shocked me – I was surprised that people liked anything I was doing back then. Also, it was surprising that they would find the guitars I was playing interesting because it was something I always loved and had been doing for years. The garage rock

scene in Detroit and across the country were into finding lesser-known guitars. I was very deep into that stuff, and I think we just caught a moment where people got turned onto what the possibilities are with those other models. It's great to see that it's still around today. I still see a bit of that infatuation, which the internet helped progress a bit. What's great now is how you can find these things so easily. I always tell people that I looked for a 100-watt Silvertone amp for probably eight years before I found one. That's how hard it was back then. You had to go to conventions; you had to go to every guitar shop in every town you went to. I never saw one. Now, of course, you can buy one on Reverb or in two seconds. When I was in The White Stripes, Jack Oblivian [Memphis-born guitarist and garage rock cult hero] sold me that red Airline guitar for 250 bucks. I don't think I saw another one for five years. That's what it was like back then. When you found a good thing, you held on to it like gold because you know that you're never going to see it again.

Have any new guitars made their first appearances on these albums?

Just a new Fender that I'm working on – a custom one. Chip Ellis has been helping me a lot at Fender. It's been really great to be able to dream up an idea and have these talented people make it come to life. That's a real blessing. I'm glad I finally decided to do that, because I love to design and construct things like that. I wish I had done it earlier, but I'm glad I'm doing it now. I'm really getting a lot of life out of it, and it's inspiring me to pick up the guitar. I can't wait to go on stage with this guitar.

You've said how proud you are of your guitar playing these days. But do you ever sit and 'practise'?

It never needs to be scheduled – it just happens. I think that's what goes on with people like me. I couldn't do anything else, so my life was always dedicated to music. Every time I walk into a room where there's a guitar, I end up picking it up, or I sit down at a piano. You never stop. I think the only thing I really need to do right now is go back and learn all the chord structures from these new songs for the tour rehearsals. That's what I've got to go refresh my brain about, because there's so many new songs.

CHANGE YOUR STRIPES

Here we look at some techniques and tonal tricks to help you play like Jack

Play like Jack White... That's easy, right? Well, in some respects perhaps, yes. The open chords and basic strumming in The White Stripes' *Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground*, for example, are achievable for all but absolute beginners.

Jack spread his guitar-playing wings with Brendan Benson in The Raconteurs, and his epic Jimmy Page-inspired solos in live shows are something to behold. But it's since 2012's solo debut, *Blunderbuss*, that

his musical eccentricity and broad range of influences have truly shone through.

Still, there are consistent threads in his playing throughout his entire career – and his tone is at the heart of it. Get a ballpark White-esque tone and you'll find it easier to get a feel for his playing. Fuzz-driven, octave- and powerchord-based riffs figure highly, alongside ear-catching pentatonic and Whammy pedal-infused solos. Check out our 'Play Like Jack' tab examples complete with playing tips and tonal advice below.



SOUND ADVICE...

Essential gear tips for the Jack White tone

Jack has experimented with various pedals over the years, but these three pedals should form the core of any tribute rig.

1 ELECTRO-HARMONIX BIG MUFF PI

Wind up the distortion on this classic fuzz pedal. You're aiming for maximum compression.

2 ELECTRO-HARMONIX POG

Used for both octave-up and octave-down sounds, it's an essential effect to have in your arsenal.

3 DIGITECH WHAMMY

Don't own one? Any expression pedal-equipped digital multi-effects floorboard will have a similar option.

MEDIUM FUZZ AND OCTAVER

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=110
Em

Play 4 times

This riff is based in the E minor pentatonic scale in open position – though it's the kind of riff you can transpose to any octave and fret position. Inspired by The White Stripes' *Icky Thump* we're using a medium fuzz distortion and an octaver to round out the bottom end.

POWERCHORD ARPEGGIOS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=110

G⁵ B⁵ D⁵ A⁵ F⁵

let ring - - - - ' let ring - - - - ' let ring - - - - ' let ring - - - - ' let ring - - - - '

Play 4 times

Taking our inspiration from *The Hardest Button To Button*, here we're looking at a simple idea: turning powerchords into arpeggios. If you have a looper and Whammy-style pitch shifter you could experiment by laying down a bassline underneath these shapes.

RIFF LESSONS

Get inside Jack White's playing style from past to present

Jack White has most certainly carved out his own niche in terms of both guitar sound and style. Be it with The White Stripes, The Raconteurs or in his own solo work, his idiosyncratic fuzz driven mixture of groove and note choice is easily recognisable. Most people would be happy with the commercial success of The White Stripes and the bona fide classic riff of *Seven Nation Army* which came with it, but Jack shows no

sign of slowing down, with his latest *Fear Of The Dawn* being his fourth solo album.

Here we're looking at a handful of our favourite White-penned riffs, starting with a classic White Stripes tune *Icky Thump*, whose ear-worm infectiousness will help you recognise the Dorian mode, the groovy *Lazaretto* to help you sit in the pocket. We finish up to date with the driving *What's The Trick*, which is a fantastic hand synchronisation challenge.



1 THE WHITE STRIPES ICKY THUMP

Appears at: 0:40-1:04

Tempo: 95bpm

Key/scale: E Dorian

Main techniques: Single note picking, grace-note slides, powerchords

Title track of the sixth and final White Stripes record, *Icky Thump* features one of Jack White's most recognisable guitar riffs. The riff is based in E Dorian (E F# G A B C# D) and its sound comes from Jack's use of slides and open strings. After the initial open E root note, the next four notes are all played on the fourth string. Start by sliding up to 7th fret on the fourth string, then play 5th fret with your first finger, slide it down to 4th fret, then pull-off to the open string. Next, play three notes on the fifth string; slide into the 3rd fret and hang on that note before playing 2nd fret and the open string.

Next up is a G5 powerchord, which is played on the 3rd fret sixth string and open fourth and third strings. Now repeat the riff, but at 0:43 slide up to 7th fret on the third string, instead of playing the fourth string. Repeat everything twice and finish the riff with C5 and D5 powerchords with the root notes on the fifth string.

TG Tip: Use the underside of your fingers to mute the treble strings as you play the lower strings.



2 JACK WHITE LAZARETTO

Appears at: 0:21-0:48

Tempo: 90bpm

Key/scale: F# minor

Main techniques: String skipping, funky 16-note picking, hammer-ons and pull-offs

From Jack's second solo album, the title track *Lazaretto* features simple funky single note riff similar in style to the classic *Cissy Strut* by The Meters. The main part of the riff is played using just your first and third fingers on the 2nd and 4th frets, and all of the notes can be found within the F# minor pentatonic scale (F# A B C# E). Start with the F# root, then it's octave, followed by the 7 E note at the 2nd fret. Leave a rest in between each note and if you keep your pick moving in 16th notes, each rest would be equal to two 'ghosted' pick strokes.

Next, play the open E string and repeat the three initial notes again, this time without any rests and add 4th fret 5th string before returning to the open E string. Finally replay the initial three notes including the rests. So far this is one cycle of the riff, which repeats three times. After the 3rd repeat finish with an A5, then a G# powerchord, then play a slow trill between frets 4 and 5 on the fifth string.

TG Tip: Keep your picking hand moving throughout the extended rest sections to help keep track of time and tempo.



3 JACK WHITE WHAT'S THE TRICK?

Appears at: 0:04-0:29

Tempo: 95bpm

Key/scale: G minor / G Blues

Main techniques: Staccato picking, string bending

Jack is now on solo album number four, entitled *Fear Of The Dawn*. The track *What's The Trick?* can be played entirely with first and third fingers, starting with three notes on the 1st and 3rd frets on the sixth string, and 1st fret, fifth string.

As you ascend and descend these three notes, keep the notes short and staccato by bouncing the strings off of the frets with your fretting fingers, in order to stop the notes; it's possible Jack has used a fast noise gate to make the notes stop more abruptly. Repeat this initial riff pattern eight times and try to make each repeat consistent.

Next, move up to the fifth string and play between the 3rd and 5th frets with a semitone bend from 5th to 6th fret. Then move down two frets and repeat the same finger, this time bending 3rd to 4th fret to hit the bluesy ♭5 interval and finally land on the G root note.

TG Tip: Get used to feeling riff repeats in sets of 'four', so you don't have to always count through every single repeat.

HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

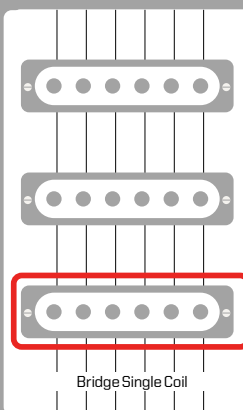
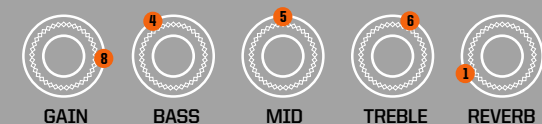
- ✓ D standard tuning
- ✓ Offbeat rhythms
- ✓ 6/8 time signature



RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Simon is well known for using Fender Stratocasters and a combination of Fender and Marshall amps to create a rich, heavy, biting tone – a single coil pickup in the bridge position is a key part of recreating that bite. Experiment with enough gain to create a heavy sound, but back it off slightly to allow the notes to sound clear. *AHIYH* is played in D standard tuning (D G C F A D from low to high), which means all six strings are tuned down by two semitones (i.e., two frets). A heavier set of strings would be a good choice for tuning stability.

BIFFY CLYRO

A Hunger In Your Haunt

Barely a year since Biffy Clyro's eighth record *A Celebration Of Endings* dropped, *The Myth Of The Happily Ever After*, a sister album to last year's release, has arrived featuring this month's riff. Consider us excited!

A Hunger In Your Haunt is in 6/8 time. Counting '1 & a 2 & a' will help you feel the timing, as guitarist Simon Neil's single-note riff follows this 'triplet feel' tightly. Take care as you reach

the third powerchord stab though. While the first two stabs land predictably on beats 1 and 2, the third falls on the first '&' of the bar. And though the fourth stab is conveniently on the 2 again, if the third stab upset your rhythm, it's easy to fluff the timing here too. Practising slowly really is your best option – particularly as there's a fiddly scale shape to factor in too. Watch our slowed down video demo so you can nail the rhythm of the riff.

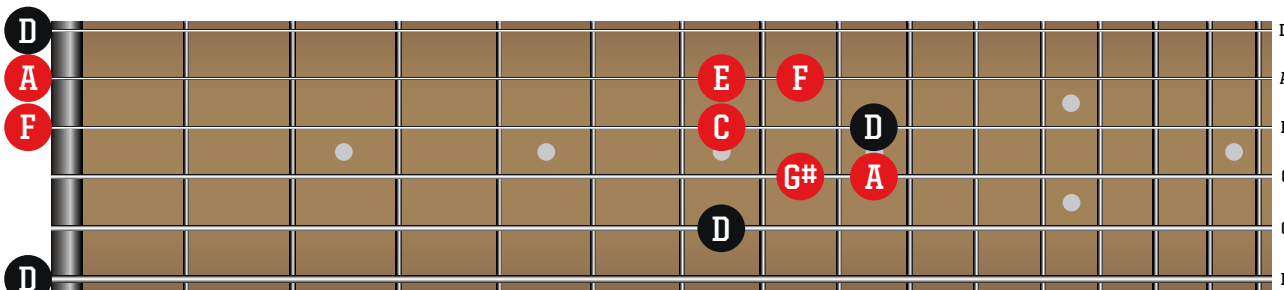
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at 0:00–0:16

Tempo 120bpm

Key/scale D minor

Main techniques Picking, pull-offs, open strings



The fretted notes are all found between the 7th and 9th frets – so there are no fretboard-wide position shifts to manage here. That being said, it's a fiddly riff, with all four fingers coming into play as

you navigate Simon Neil's offbeat timing. Before you get started we recommend familiarising yourself with this scale shape and the powerchord contained within it (using the D, A and D notes).

Words Jonny Scaramanga Photos Glen Ballard / Euan Robertson

"THE THOUGHT
OF PLAYING ON
STAGE CAN
INTIMIDATE
ME, BUT AS
SOON AS I PUT
THE GUITAR
OVER MY
CHEST I'M
LIKE, 'RIGHT,
THIS IS ME!'"

When **Biffy Clyro** made a triumphant return to the stage, frontman **Simon Neil** felt that he had rediscovered the meaning of life. Now, as part of TG's 2022 Guitar Workout, he presents his guide to the art of rock guitar. How to make a Strat sound heavy. How to write in odd time signatures. How to prepare for playing live. And why there is still one pedal he can't live without...



Dropping a surprise album is the kind of thing you expect more from Taylor Swift than hard-working Scottish rock trios, but that's what happened when Biffy Clyro's *The Myth Of The Happily Ever After* arrived at the end of October 2021. As guitarist/vocalist Simon Neil says, "There's part of you feels like it's total baller – 'Hey man here's our new album!' Like Beyoncé or something. But it's also extremely terrifying."

He needn't have worried, as Biffy fans made it the band's sixth consecutive Top 5 album. *The Myth...* has big hooks and huge sonics that belie its rapid creation. And in contrast to the band's embrace of pop that peaked with 2016's *Ellipsis*, this album also features complex riffs in odd time signatures. "Moving back to stranger, more esoteric ideas", as Simon describes it.



Making music in times of crisis made the band consider their relevance. “When you’re seeing people going through proper heartbreak every day, you start to wonder ‘Am I contributing to the world? Is this something that needs to exist?’” Simon reflects. But, he concluded, “It’s about trying to bring a sense of joy and togetherness to me and my friends. Just to find that focus and joy was remarkable at this stage of being in a band.”

As well as finding joy in creating music, Biffy Clyro made a life-affirming return to the stage last summer with enormous shows including headline slots at the Reading and Leeds festivals. They also completed the aptly named ‘Fingers Crossed’ tour at the end of the year.

After this hectic period, Simon is in upbeat mood as he talks about the album, the tour and his new signature pedal, and explains his singular approach to playing, performing, songwriting and gear...

Let’s start with *The Myth Of The Happily Ever After*. What was different about the process of making this album?

Normally when I’m writing there’s 18 months of working on the songs. This one felt so spontaneous. I didn’t anticipate writing a bunch of songs but it ended up being the way I was processing. Every week all our realities were changing so I was able to focus my energy and my anxieties into the songs. It was going in to make an album without necessarily knowing how the songs should sound, and that was strange. We did no pre-production. We would normally record ourselves in the practice room. This was like, ‘Here’s a song, let’s record it.’ The growth period to the record was probably about six to eight weeks and then recording it was about eight weeks, and then suddenly it was done. Normally it takes us that long to rehearse. Because of the pandemic, the purpose of the music felt more pure, knowing that we weren’t going to go out on a promotional tour.

Was all of the material brand new?

That’s how I like to work. I like to feel like I’m about to make either the best



BOOOOOOM AND BLAST!

Get Biffy in a Box with Simon's new pedal, built in limited runs by his tech!

"Me and my guitar tech Chard [Richard Pratt] took about two years of prototyping to get it where we wanted. We wanted two channels, an overdrive and a fuzz, and the most options without being overblown. My main aim for Biffy is just the best distortion sound I can possibly have. [For the 'Blast' fuzz] the main aim was volume and just being able to get

that square wave. I love that Jack White fuzz tone, real 60s, everything totally blown out. The Biffy tone is the Boooooom. All my guitar sounds have been based on my very first Peavey Bandit and Boss Metal Zone. Ever since then I've just been trying to sophisticate that sound, add detail and depth to it. That's what this pedal does.

You can put it straight into any amp and it really gives you a level of power. You can have clarity if you want, or you can have the real fuzz and real overblown sound. It was important that if you plugged your guitar in, you were getting a taste of my guitar sound. It's hard to do that in one box, but Chard did a fantastic job.

record we've ever made or the worst. When you've had an idea that's floating around your relationship with that idea can colour any new themes or songs, so I've always tried to clear the decks before we start a new album. If an idea isn't good enough the first time round, why is it good enough six years later? I like to have no starting blocks so that I feel the fear. I want to feel like I have to make music. If it's just a case of 'time for another album, we've got half a dozen ideas let's work on them until they're good enough', why bother?

At this moment in time I have not one song idea for the next Biffy record!

What gear did you use?

I used my Michael Landau signature Stratocaster. I've got a couple of them and they are honestly the best-sounding Stratocasters I've ever found, so that was the guitar I used for pretty much every song. In terms of amplifiers I used a Friedman for the very first time and a Matchless. We didn't really have access to all our normal gear so we were trying a few

different things. The Friedman BE-100 was an absolute beast. I'm definitely thinking of investing in one. I used an Audio Kitchen Flying Squirrel which is just a stunning distortion. You can use it as a head or a pedal. I actually use it as a head. I used some Earthquaker pedals, and the Boooooom/Blast pedal! It was about trying to keep things as simple as possible. Normally when we make a record I feel fortunate to have access to anything. If I want a 1960s Fender amp, I could do it. The restrictions of the gear we had this time really helped push the

"WHENEVER I WRITE SOMETHING WEIRD I STAND UP AND PLAY. EVEN WITH WEIRD TIME SIGNATURES YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE IN WAYS THAT MAKE SENSE"



A CELEBRATION OF TUNINGS

Simon explains how tunings open creative doors

"I'm a man that lives and dies by the drop D! If it's good enough for Helmet it's good enough for Biffy Clyro! DADGAD is a beautiful tuning. That's one of the first ones where I started to come up with some more folk-type songs. With some open tunings you just start to voice your chords in a different way. One of my favourite tunings is CFGDCF. You never find a chord that sounds like anything you've ever played before. Every place you put your fingers is new. If you have gone through lessons and you learned a certain way of playing, as soon as you detune the guitar you're in a brand new, naive landscape and that's where you discover new things. For me it's very important. Sometimes I'll place my fingers on a chord and just detune certain strings and see what happens. There's a song called *Get F*cked Stud* [from *Puzzle*, 2007]. That sounds like weird tuning but all I changed was the G string down to an F#. It makes everything ring differently. On *Infinity Land*, there's a song called *Pause It And Turn It Up*. I was just going for it. I played this riff, recorded it and didn't write down the tuning. If anyone out there can find the tuning, that would be wonderful! That was the beauty of it, not having an idea of what the guitar was going to tell me."

creativity because we weren't relying on the gear too much. But yeah, there were pedals upon pedals upon pedals. I use the [Jackson Audio] Prism overdrive pedal for absolutely everything. That just gives the guitar this slight bite and overdrive that that normal clean sound doesn't have.

What about speaker cabs?

I was using the [Universal Audio] Ox Box as a speaker simulator. We were [recording] on a working farm so I couldn't turn the amplifier up as loud as I wanted. I would have loved to have half a dozen amplifiers just cranked to f*ck, but we would have curdled the milk! With this box I'm able to get the head absolutely cranked that golden zone without needing a speaker. The reason I wanted to use the Matchless and the Friedman is they're so crisp, they're so factual their sounds. Especially with the Stratocaster, you can really get shimmer. Sometimes a clean guitar sound can be the most aggressive tone, so it was trying to get that aggressive sound and then not making the pedals do too much work, just letting the pedals tip it over the edge. That's just always been the way I've worked. I feel like an amplifier is its own thing but you need to put it through a pedal to really get it to the next level.

Were you running the Friedman and the Matchless at the same time?

Just using one head at a time. I learned that from working with Rich Costey [producer of *Ellipsis* and 2020's *A Celebration of Endings*]. When I worked with Garth Richardson, we would use a Soldano head, a Mesa head, and a Marshall all running through different speakers to create the one guitar sound. On *A Celebration of Endings*, we managed to get most of my guitar tones just with an amp. If you can make that one tone sound monumental, there's a clarity and power you cannot achieve having lots of amps running at once. So, if I did a main track with the Friedman, I would then shift to another head and do

a different part, so never really doubling with different amps.

How do you make a stock Stratocaster sound so heavy?

I guess I'm not scared of the percussive nature of a Strat or the fact it lacks a bit of bottom end. In our band, James [Johnston] takes care of that bottom end with his bass. If I hadn't discovered a Strat going into a Metal Zone when I was young I probably wouldn't have believed you could get that heft to a Stratocaster. That's why it's taken me this long to find that sound with a Strat and one amp. The way I made it work through the years was a combination of a Peavey, old-school Marshall, and a Fender DeVille. One was driven by the Metal Zone, one just being overdriven itself, and the DeVille sat right on top of all. It took years of experimentation. Sometimes when I hear someone else's Stratocaster I'm like, 'F*cking hell, try to get a bit of bottom end out of that!', forgetting that actually it's a tricky thing to do. It's also the way I play. I have a very heavy right hand. I play with heavier strings as well, Ernie Ball Skinny Top Heavy Bottoms [10-52]. That was a big step in trying to get the muscles on the Stratocaster to show. Every time I rejig my live setup I try and get rid of the Boss Metal Zone. I swear to God I cannot get rid of it. It's the one thing that brings the Stratocaster into that real heavy world. Every time I do a blind test, if the Metal Zone isn't there I hate it. The Metal Zone can give you a real warm and fuzzy bottom end and then everything else just sings and sizzles over the top of it.

You write in odd time signatures like 5/4 and 7/8. How do you approach that?

The key to writing weird or progressive or mathy music is that you shouldn't feel like you're making it weird. It's important that it feels physically right. Whenever I write something weird I stand up and play. Even with weird time signatures you should be able to

"I ALWAYS TRY TO GET MY PINKY ON THE FRETBOARD. SOMETIMES IT WORKS, SOMETIMES IT DOESN'T!"



move and lurch in ways that make sense. Sometimes if I get back to the open string on a strange part of the riff I would then loop that part of the riff. Say you're coming back to the open string on the fifth or sixth note of that riff and start repeating, it's going to be weird but it's still in a regular tempo. That's a simple way: just remove one note from your riff and see how it feels. Add an extra note to your riff and see how it feels. These are the ways you discover things that make sense to you musically but also are satisfying to listen to.

What is your warm-up routine?

A lot of my warming up involves playing Biffy songs. On a gig day, I'll normally play guitar for about an hour before the show. I actually feel my most confident when I have my guitar strapped on. The thought of playing guitar on a stage can intimidate me, but as soon as I put the guitar over my chest I'm like, 'Right, this is me!' I learned the hard way about going on cold. Hand cramping is the worst f*cking thing.

You feel like a lobster trying to play guitar! The fear can sometimes make your body tense, and it can really play on your mind. Constantly picking up your guitar takes away that stress. The shows really feel perfect for me when I feel my guitar is just an extension of who I am and I'm not even thinking about what I'm doing.

How did you prepare for Biffy's massive comeback shows last summer?

It was tough! An aspect of it was just hoping that muscle memory would kick in, hoping that things would make sense once we stepped on the stage. The big step for us was just even getting in a room and playing live together. That was the first time where things made sense. It was probably only two weeks before we did the shows that we thought, 'We can do this!' There's a level of fear that builds just having not engaged with more than three people for the last 18 months. We were very rusty, my voice really was just out of practice and it was tough to sing to

TONE ZONE

"Every time I do a blind test, if the Metal Zone isn't there I hate it!"

our shows. It was a real worry but I think that led to something truly transcendental happening at the shows. We all felt changed when we came off after those gigs, like we discovered the meaning of life again.

And finally, what is the best advice you have for guitarists?

If you're starting out or if you're creating something, don't worry about not being able to play what other people can play. Don't worry about having a style or a technique that means you can't play like Eddie Van Halen or Bert Jansch or whatever. I wanted to make a racket! I came from playing violin which gave me a slightly different angle. I was always trying to make four finger chords. I always try to get my pinky on the fretboard. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. By putting it on there you're giving the opportunity for an idea to grow. Find a way to express yourself through your music. And don't worry about limitations of gear. You will take your identity to whatever instrument you have.



Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths

GOLDEN RULES

The Guitar Techniques Of Simon Neil

You've heard from Simon Neil himself, now it's time to look at some of his trademark techniques in TG's tab lesson. We've recorded three Biffy-style riffs, each demonstrating a few ways that Simon plays guitar.

Our first example provides an insight into the syncopated offbeat timing the band are so well known for. The octave shapes are crucial, too – a key part of the Biffy style and a great way to create a big sound in a three-piece band. Our next two riffs feature a selection of the kind of

chords that define the band's sound. Simon is adept at disguising those well known open and barre chords, often preferring to add open strings to closed position voicings, or using partial chords in lieu of predictable sounding fuller shapes.

1 RIFFY CLYRO

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=80 Play 4 times

Several Simon Neil trademarks are on show here in our riff inspired by *Wolves Of Winter* and *That Golden Rule*. Drop C tuning (one of Simon's favourites) takes our riff down low. Octave shapes and sixth-string root notes ensure we're covering a wide pitch range (a great way for a lone guitarist to fill out the sound). And the syncopated offbeat timing is typical Biffy Clyro fare.

2 PUZZLING CHORDS

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

♩=160 Play 4 times

Back to E standard tuning now as we take inspiration from *Who's Got A Match?* and *Bubbles* here. The first half of our riff uses the E minor pentatonic scale (E G A B D) starting at the 7th fret. The open strings fit within the scale too – we've added them to create some trademark Biffy-like unusual chords. The second half of the riff is powerchord-based, but still with those open strings.

3 EPIC

BIT.LY/TGA2023AUDIO

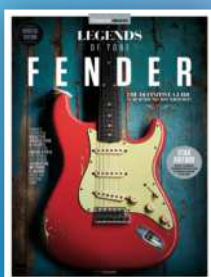
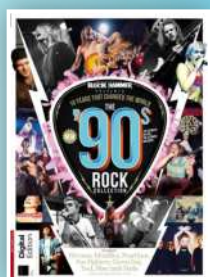
♩=120 Play 4 times

Our final riff demonstrates how Simon Neil plays in the epic choruses of songs such as *A Hunger In Your Haunt* and *Many Of Horror*. The weight of drop D tuning is key as you reach the low note in bar 2, and the 'let ring' approach gives the chords and arpeggios a sweetness.



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We sit down with legendary guitarists John Frusciante, Slash, Kirk Hammett, Jack White and more