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XMAS GIFT GUIDE
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MEETS COHEED!
10 STEPS TO ELECTRIC
GUITAR MASTERY



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Printed in the UK by: William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future
Distributed by: Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf London, E14 5HU
Overseas distribution by: Seymour International
Head of Newstrade: Tim Mathers

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

New orders: www.magazinesdirect.com, phone orders: 0330 333 1113,
 email: help@magazinesdirect.com
Renewals: www.mymagazine.co.uk, customer service: 0330 333 4333,
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 (symbol: FUTR)
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Welcome...



Throughout the history of rock there have always been guitarists at the cutting edge – players finding fresh ways to reinterpret musical traditions and to deliver new sounds with our instrument. Today is no different. I think it's fair to say that players are exposed to more music than ever before – and we're hearing those diverse influences in the music.

So this month we're looking at the current crop of boundary-pushing players, with a focus on three of my favourite bands of the moment. Polyphia's Tim Henson discusses the band's new album, borrowing from pop and hip-hop, creating music for non-guitar listeners, and the secrets behind his hybrid- and sweep-picking techniques. Brit duo Amy Love and Georgia South of the Nova Twins explain how the bass guitar is a core element of their rap-, punk-, R&B- and metal-tinged tone, and how guitar can be a supporting texture. And we speak to Stu Mackenzie of King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard – surely the most eclectic and prolific act on Earth right now – about advanced harmony and releasing three albums at once!

Finally, I have to relate the sad news that **Total Guitar's** former reviews editor Ed Mitchell has died aged 52. He had been suffering from cancer. I worked alongside Ed for my first year or so on TG, and later on when he was writing freelance for the mag. He was a larger than life character, funny, quick-witted and with a heart of gold. My thoughts and sympathies are with Ed's loved ones at this time.

Chris

Chris Bird Editor

Total Guitar (ISSN 1355504) December Issue 365, is published monthly with an extra issue in July by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK

The US annual subscription price is \$181.87 Air freight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, c/o BBT 150-15183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Brooklyn NY 11256.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Total Guitar, World Container Inc, c/o BBT 150-15183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA

Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perryman Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH, UK

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SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS



BRING THE NOISE
Stijn Vanhoegaerden on stage and in the studio



Photo: Thomas Felsch



ALBUM

"I USED TO MAKE MY SOUND THICK - NOW, IT'S THE OPPOSITE"

HOW POWER TRIO BRUTUS FOUND A NEW FOCUS

Belgian trio Brutus are an ultra-dynamic, post-hardcore force to be reckoned with.

Comprised of vocalist/drummer Stefanie Mannaerts, bassist Peter Mulders and guitarist Stijn Vanhoegaerden, the band are striding into new sonic territories on third LP *Unison Life*, as Stijn explains...

How has your playing evolved since the last album?

I'm starting to learn more now about the way I play. I'm not a schooled guitar player and I never studied or had lessons, but there's things on the last record that I always used to do that I've tried to put behind me. I always tried the same things and came up with the same licks, so I've tried to switch things up by using different tunings and different types of guitars.

What guitars did you take into the studio for *Unison Life*?

The things I used most were a 90s '54 reissue Les Paul Custom with a

Staple P-90 in the neck and a Gretsch White Penguin. It sits really nicely in the mix – somewhere between a Gibson and Fender sound. I also used a Jaguar, a Les Paul Gold Top with mini humbuckers and an aluminium-necked Kramer. There was also a Danelectro 12-string, which I put into a double Nashville tuning. Because it uses just the thinner strings, Peter had to try harder to fill up some space!

What advice would you give to guitarists in trios to help them make the most of their spot in the mix?

I used to make my sound thick to fill all the space, but now, it's the opposite. The less space I take up, the more room there is for Stefanie's voice and for the bass. In a three-piece, it's not the best thing to just have the biggest sound all the time; it has to fit with the rest of what's going on.

What's your favourite amp for recording?

I've been playing Marshalls for the last 15 years and I like 50 and 100

Watt Plexis. I'm lucky enough to have an old one from '69 – a Super Bass – and I used that a lot on this record with the matching 4 X 12 cab with Greenbacks. Most people think Marshalls turned up are the best overdriven sound ever, which is true, but it's always easier for me to keep it clean or just at the edge of breakup and push it with pedals.

What pedal combinations do you enjoy using most?

I love reverb and delays. My favourite sound for reverb is a simple Holy Grail from Electro-Harmonix, but I always mix it with something else – two or three reverbs – to make it a little bit different and more special. It could be a Big Sky or something from Boss or Walrus Audio. For delays, I use a Tonal Recall and the Boss DD-200. I have an overdrive that I'll never get rid of. It's a homemade pedal that a friend made for me, and it's two overdrives in one. They're both on all the time and if I remember correctly, one of the sides is based on an Xotic BB Preamp.
Ellie Rogers



GUITAR

FENDER ACOUSTASONIC PLAYER JAZZMASTER

Fender's Acoustasonic is one of the more revolutionary guitar designs we've seen in recent years, and following the introduction of the Player series Acoustasonic Tele, Fender has now unveiled a cut-price Acoustasonic Player Jazzmaster, shaving over £500 off the price tag of its American-

made equivalent. Produced in Fender's Mexican factory, we get a mahogany body and Sitka Spruce top, combined with a Deep-C profile mahogany neck, fitted with a 22-fret, rosewood fingerboard. And while the Player Jazzmaster loses Fender's internal body sensor, it keeps the Shawbucker magnetic

pickup, which is blended with the undersaddle piezo and the whole lot is controlled by a three-way selector switch, blend control and master volume. The Player Acoustasonic Jazzmaster comes in four colour options: 2-Color Sunburst, Shell Pink, Antique Olive and Ice Blue, priced £1049.



PEDAL

WARM AUDIO CENTAVO AND WARMDRIVE

You might be familiar with Warm Audio thanks to its meticulous recreations of classic analogue studio gear and now it's turned its attention to two of the most revered overdrive pedals of all time with the Centavo and WarmDrive stompers. Thanks to the incredibly faithful visuals, you get no prizes for guessing that these are based on the Klon Centaur and Hermida Audio Zendrive, respectively, and both pedals promise accurate recreations of the originals. Best of all, both pedals clock-in at a fairly non-boutique £165 (WarmDrive) and £199 (Centavo).



PLUGIN

POSITIVE GRID OMNYSS

Positive Grid has debuted OMNYSS, a new guitar plugin suite that promises "massive tonal exploration" thanks to three all-new guitar amps and six pedals powered by its Bias 2 platform. Operating as a plugin within your DAW, or in standalone mode, OMNYSS' trio of amp models range from the pristine cleans of Etheria, the modern high-gain Aggralith and the "visceral"

aggression of Viscerus. Each amp also houses its own 'BlackBox', delivering sonic experimentation from synth-inspired pad, lead and octaver sounds respectively. The virtual stompbox FX section serves-up the Z Gate, Cypher Drive, Cerberus (pitch effects) Dark Matter (compressor), Nebula (synth/modulation/reverb) and Space Piercer (soundscape delay). It costs £89 and includes Bias 2 LE.

The 5150 Iconic Series



CRASH TESTED

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Words Stuart Williams Photography Phil Barker

MIGHTY BOSS TONE

A classic distortion pedal becomes the next-level Boss



Boss' DS-1 is one of – possibly even *the* – most popular distortion pedals ever made, having featured on the 'boards of players ranging from Kurt Cobain to Steve Vai since its

introduction in 1978. But in these times of boutique-at-our-feet, it's a prime candidate for undergoing the brand's Waza Craft treatment.

Here, the DS-1W keeps its original form factor, and distinctive orange paint job, but the circuit has been tweaked to deliver maximum tonal range from this classic stomper. Control-wise, there's the regular Tone, Level and Dist controls, but Boss has fitted it with a toggle switch to take us between Standard and Custom modes. Standard is the classic DS-1 distortion sound, while Custom promises "rich, fat and dynamic" tones, with a more focussed midrange and a boosted output. Boss says that these two modes enhance the DS-1W's purpose as both a main source of gain, or when being used to stack drive pedals together.

The circuit remains all-analogue, and features a buffered bypass mode to maintain clarity when the pedal is switched off. It's available now, priced at £125.

UP CLOSE



Waza Craft

Waza is the Japanese term for art and technique, and Boss developed the Waza Craft range to deliver the best versions of its pedals possible.



Enhanced output

The DS-1W features two modes: Standard and Custom, with the latter offering an additional 6dB of output. Boss says we can expect greater dynamic response and rich harmonics.



Standard mode

In Standard mode, it's your classic DS-1 distortion, equipped with the familiar Tone, Dist and Level controls.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

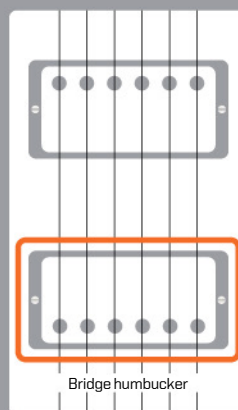
- ✓ Rhythmic syncopation
- ✓ Palm muting
- ✓ Single-note riffing



RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Dan Donegan uses signature Schecter guitars and Randall amps. The tone is very high gain with a tight low end which is usually achieved with a boost pedal in front of the amp. Tune down to drop C# [C# G# C# F# A# D# from low to high]. You can see this as drop D, with all six strings tuned down a further semitone.

Find your audio and video content online at: bit.ly/tg365audio

DISTURBED

Unstoppable

Unstoppable is the second single from the eighth Disturbed studio album *Divisive*. Dan Donegan plays this syncopated groove riff in drop C# tuning, using notes from the C# Locrian mode (C# D E F# G A B).

The opening pattern starts with a C#5 powerchord played with four alternate strums, followed by two palm-mutes. This repeating six-note phrase played against the 4/4 backbeat

creates an interesting syncopated groove. Next play a G5 powerchord at the 6th fret with eight alternate strums. Go back to the open C#5 for four more strums, then play single notes on the 6th and 5th frets, followed by a dissonant sounding minor 7th chord using the open sixth string and 3rd fret fifth string together. The riff repeats twice with two different endings using the D5, B5 and A5 powerchords on the fifth string.

Make sure to watch our slowed down video to see how all the elements fit together in the riff.

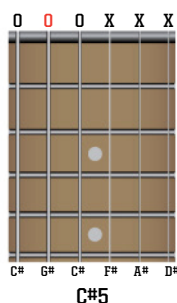
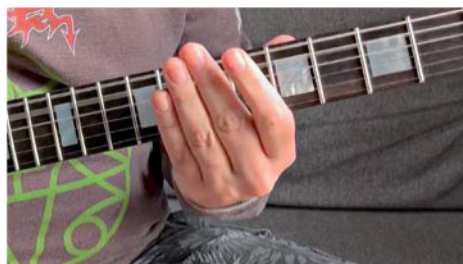
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00-0:16

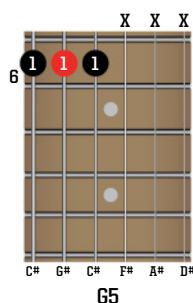
Tempo: 120bpm

Key/scale: C# Locrian

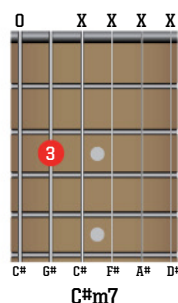
Main techniques: Alternate strumming, palm-muting, powerchords



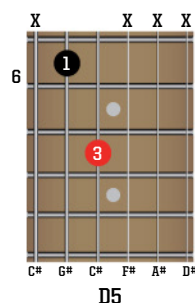
C#5



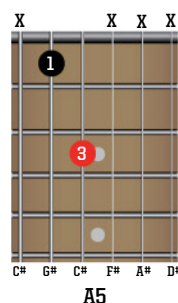
G5



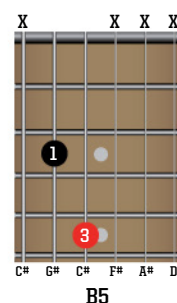
C#m7



D5



A5



B5

The bulk of this riff pivots around a C#5 powerchord across the fourth, fifth and sixth strings. The rest of the chords are G5, D5, B5 and A5 powerchords, plus a

two-note shape which we'll call C#m7 as an approximation. The shapes are simple, so it's mostly a matter of committing them to memory.

ANGEL VIVALDI

ARTIST SIGNATURE



**SAVAGE
ELEGANCE**
PRO-MOD
DK24-6 NOVA



charvel.com

Photo: Andrew Minarik

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FIRST STEPS IN GUITAR...

ROCK 'N' ROLL BENDING

Continuing his lessons in lead guitar, Paul is guided through some essential string bending techniques

In the intro to *Roll Over Beethoven*, Chuck Berry played a lick so iconic that guitarists have been ripping it off ever since. Eddie Van Halen and Angus Young used variations of it as one of their top solo entrances, and any rock guitarist who says they've never used it is either lying or rubbish!

As an introduction to string bending, then, it's about as important a lick as you'll ever learn.

String bending might be the electric guitarist's coolest form of expression. It's pretty much unique to the guitar, and it's an unrivalled way to add emotion to any note.



TEACHER

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



STUDENT

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

JENNA SAYS...

It's essential to power your bends from your wrist and arm, not your fingers. Moving your finger joints will probably seem easier at first, but those muscles are weaker and vanishingly few pro players bend that way. Steps to remember:

- 1) Press the first knuckle of your first

- finger against the bottom of the neck to act as a fulcrum. 2) Put your thumb on top of the neck for leverage. 3) Press at least two fretting fingers together to create one 'giant finger' supporting the bend. 4) Lock your fretting fingers relative to your hand, so that as your wrist moves,

- all the movement goes into the string. 5) Cut the bend off at the top. For this lick, we're not bending back down. Once the note reaches the right pitch, choke the string with some spare flesh on your picking hand, or with your fretting hand (see photo 3).

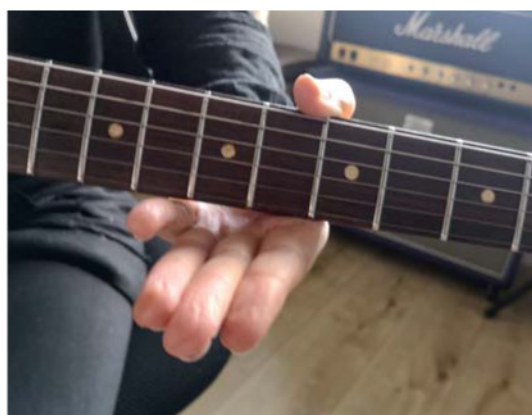
TECHNIQUE CHECK...

Get your fingers in the right place and your bends will sing!



1 THUMB AND FINGER START POSITION

To get a feel for the movement, start in this position: thumb on top, first finger pressed against the bottom of the neck...



2 BENDING MOVE

...then move to this position while keeping your thumb and first finger in place. Watch your wrist to see an exaggerated version of the correct bending motion.



3 CORRECT BEND POSITION

Correct bent position: fingers pressed together, third knuckles not collapsed, thumb on top, wrist powering the bend.

ROCK 'N' ROLL BENDING

[BIT.LY/T6365AUDIO](http://bit.ly/t6365audio)

Fig. 1 ♩=60 Fig. 2 ♩=60 Fig. 3 ♩=60/120 Fig. 4 ♩=60/120

1

For bars 1 and 2, focus on keeping the bend in tune. Bend slowly first, then try going instantly up to pitch. Bars 3 and 4 are based on the E minor pentatonic scale and work over any blues or rock riff in E.

PAUL SAYS...

String bending was one of the first little tricks I learned – by luck more than design. This was in one of my first lessons, when I was attempting to play the riff that pretty much every budding guitar player of a certain vintage turns to – Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water*.

It was, however, a far greater challenge to develop the technique from my wrist and arm instead of my fingers. At first it felt somewhat counter-intuitive to use the fretting hand as a fulcrum, but once I had that rocking motion working smoothly, I was able to deploy my

three-digit 'giant finger' with relative ease. And even at this early stage, I can get a sense of what Jenna says about the emotive quality created with bends, and how much personality this brings to the playing of a true master like, for example, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour.

Words: Jonathan Horsley

THE TOTAL GUITAR CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE 2022

What do you get the player who has everything? Well, more stuff, duh! With a price ceiling of £150, we found 10 presents for the guitarist in your life

FENDER AMPERSTAND GUITAR CRADLE £12.99

Playing the guitar involves a lot of stuff. You've got your picks, maybe a capo or a slide. There are leads, Allen wrenches, too. You also need a place to put to rest your guitar, and that's another thing you need, right? A stand. The Amperstand is Fender's catch-all device that affixes to your amplifier – or a table – via micro-suction material allowing you to rest the guitar securely while not playing. There are grooves on the side to hold your cable in place, and even if this does make us really nervous at the thought of it, you could also use it as a place to rest your beverage. Just maybe not when using that hand-wired Princeton you borrowed off of Uncle Jim for the gig.



GRUV GEAR FRETWRAPS STRING MUTER

£12.99

String dampening can be a contentious issue for players, because some just want the nut to be as bright as possible and want nothing to step on their tone. But it can be a Jedi shred move for those serious about their fretboard pyro sounding as clean as a whistle. What is playing rock guitar if not an exercise in muting? That's more than half the battle. You will have seen the likes of Jennifer Batten deploy dampeners at the nut, all to cut down on unwanted string noise and these from Gruv Gear are a cheap and effective way to clean up your shred game.



ERNIE BALL PAPA HET'S HARDWIRED MASTER CORE SIGNATURE ELECTRIC GUITAR STRINGS

£48.99 FOR THREE SETS

Okay, here's another option for strings, and one of the coolest – certainly for the Metallica fan in your life. These 11–50 gauge strings ship in a collectible tin as a pack of three, and are effectively Ernie Ball's superlative Paradigm series tweaked as per James Hetfield's specs. In other words: "Wound strings are wrapped with Paradigm plasma-enhanced nickel plated steel around ultra-high strength tin plated steel hex core." Which, when read out loud in a Papa Het voice, sounds a little like Metallica lyrics.

D'ADDARIO XS ELECTRIC GUITAR STRINGS

£16.99

Choose from five string gauges, from 09–42 Super Light through to 11–49 Medium, and give your guitar the gift of longer lasting strings, whose newly engineered nickel-plated wrapping promises more sustain, faster attack, brighter performance and, according to Testament guitarist and early adoptee Alex Skolnick, a smoother feel.

"XS electric strings feel extra smooth without being slippery and deliver a 'new string feel' at a higher level," he says. "They also feel new for longer and seem to enhance the natural timbres of your instrument. Guitarists of all styles and sounds, including those who don't pay much attention to string types, will notice a big difference."



SHURE SE215 PRO IN-EAR MONITORS

£99

In-ears are the discerning choice for the gigging player, allowing you access to a hi-definition audio feed of your live sound to let your hear just how good or bad you are playing. They can take some getting used to, as many artists – e.g. Slash – will attest to, but all would argue that, ultimately, they enhance your performance, blocking out ambient noise and the possibility that the Hare & Partridge's wedge monitor mix is not the most helpful. These are exceptional value at £99 street, and have a detachable cable and superb ambient noise reduction.



WAMPLER TUMNUS V2

£149

The much-loved Klon clone in a smaller format retains its world-class performance and is the sort of drive pedal that not only never leaves your pedalboard but might well find itself always on, adding tone-gussying mojo that flatters your amp and guitar, your tone, and the other dirt pedals on your 'board. It is a simple setup – three dials for Gain, Treble and Volume – but supremely versatile. Use it as a boost, drive, or even a buffer to prevent tone suck in longer signal chains.



HARLEY BENTON PA-250 POWER ATTENUATOR

£129

For the tube amp enthusiast who wants to exercise the power stage without the threat of eviction, a power attenuator is an invaluable piece of kit. And it can also fall under the category of stocking filler when you tip-toe onto the Thomann website and grab a Harley Benton model. For a little over a 100 bucks you can get finally get screaming hot drive at conversational volume.



SEYMOUR DUNCAN '78 MODEL BRIDGE ZEBRA COVER HUMBUCKER

£148

Make 2023 the year of the mod with an aftermarket humbucker that could turn your serviceable rock electric guitar into one that supports your every effort to approximate the genius of players such as Eddie Van Halen. The '78 Model is a vintage Alnico 2 humbucker is a replica of the PAF that Seymour Duncan rewound for EVH to put a little extra juice on tap for warmth, harmonics, and all the things that hard rock lives on.



AUDIENT ID4 MKII AUDIO INTERFACE

£122

The options for the home recording enthusiast are getting better all the time; there has never been a better time to start building a setup that lets you track your ideas at home. You'll need an audio interface, though, and this from Audient is superbly functional and very affordable. The features are quite basic but quality, with a JFET-driven instrument input that's quiet with abundant headroom, and even sounds nice when its clipping.

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN CUSTOM DELRIN PICK

£11.99 FOR A PACK OF SIX



Yngwie Malmsteen is the latest high-profile guitarist to partner with Dunlop on a signature pick, and his are designed for excellent memory – meaning they won't bend out of shape – and half a super-slick polished surface so the pick glides across the strings. The collection is colour-coded, with the 1.14mm pick finished in yellow, the 1.5mm in white and 2mm in red. "For clean, precise picking that sounds great, these picks are the only choice!" Malmsteen said.



Marshall

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Words Jenna Scaramanga

“The band is shifting tonalities all the time”

Three guitarists among 25 musicians playing instrumental jazz-funk: the unlikely success story of **Snarky Puppy**

Snarky Puppy could only be a 21st century band. It's not that the music couldn't have been done before then; it's just tough to think of

them getting anywhere in the age before social media. Imagine trying to sell them to a record company: “They play jazz- and funk-influenced music with lots of improvisation. There's no singer, and none of their songs are short enough to play on the radio. Oh, and there are 25 of them, but don't worry – they don't all play at every gig.” Yet somehow this band has just completed a UK tour crowned by a headlining date at London's Wembley Arena.

Pretty much everything about Snarky Puppy is unconventional. The band's fluid line-up currently includes three gifted guitarists, with Chris McQueen and Mark Lettieri alongside founding member Bob Lanzetti – all of whom appear on the new album *Empire Central*. But for live performances, only one guitarist is utilised on any given night, and on that recent UK run it was Lettieri.

All three guitarists speak to TG about how they operate together within this

most unorthodox of groups. Each has his own take on the creation of *Empire Central*. And Chris McQueen speaks for all of them when he describes what it is that makes Snarky Puppy a band you just have to experience live. As he says: “My wife would tell me, ‘I don't totally get it, but then when I come to see the band live I really do get it, because then you see the interactions.’ You can tell how genuine it is. Someone will play something that surprises someone else in the band, they make a face and everyone is in on a joke. Even as a non-musician you can understand it.”

Snarky Puppy mainly got where they are through relentless gigging, at the behest of bassist and bandleader Michael League. As Chris puts it: “Mike had the intuition that this band needed to tour nonstop. What was magical about the band happened while we were playing, whether we were playing in front of 50 people or two people, which was generally the range for the first several years!” With so many members, the Puppies were able to run a flexible line-up. Musicians regularly dropped in and out for better paying gigs – they all have enviable session CVs – allowing Snarky Puppy to remain a passion project. They also happened to hit YouTube at exactly the right time.

“We had an early viral success with

Thing Of Gold,” Chris says. Bob Lanzetti concurs: “That was a game-changer.”

One reason Snarky Puppy have been so improbably successful is that they are, in many ways, a pop band. “You hear it once and you've got it memorised,” Mark says. “The hooks have a pop appeal to them even if they are over an advanced set of changes. We want to be fulfilled as musicians but we also want to reach people.”

That desire is most evident on *Empire Central*, which contains some of the most direct and funky music they've released. It was recorded, like several of their albums, in front of a live audience. Snarky hooks are often unison melodies that many instruments, or even the whole band, play together. For those sections the guitarists often all play the same thing, sometimes in octaves. *Trinity*, the first single from *Empire Central*, sees all three grinding out the dirty funk main riff. The rest of the time, however, things get more complex.

Given that many bands struggle to write two complementary guitar parts, writing three to fit alongside horns and multiple keyboard players is a feat. Lanzetti, who's been doing it the longest, explains: “If one guy is playing syncopated funky stuff, someone else might play long chords. If someone's playing down low, someone else might play higher funky chords. It's about making sure each part's not being covered up, trying to create a balance.”

Each guitarist has their own specialty. With his long hair, high-gain lead sound and Ferrari red signature PRS, Lettieri is the most typically ‘guitar hero’ of the three. He cites Hendrix and Satriani as early influences. Lanzetti specialises in more ambient tones: “I do a lot of textural things with delay and volume pedal and reverb,” he says. “I have a lot of influences that are not guitar based, like a lot of 20th century classical music, so I think some of that comes out.”

Chris McQueen earned his stripes with indie rock bands and brings that energy to Snarky Puppy. “If it's a little more raw or hard hitting, then maybe that would be something I would do,” he summarises. But like Snarky Puppy itself, all three are diverse musicians that refuse to be pigeonholed: McQueen has an acoustic duo and musical theatre experience, Lanzetti is a prolific jazzier, and Lettieri's session credits include 50 Cent, Erykah Badu, and Snoop Dogg.

Such diverse music calls for a diverse palate of sounds, and all three guitarists



run their amps clean as pedal platforms. For *Empire Central*, every amp was a Kemper and every musician wore headphones to allow the cleanest mix. Lanzetti used a Fender Bandmaster profile, while Lettieri used a profile of his own Naylor Dual 60. McQueen profiled an amp built by Doug Sewell, now senior amp designer for Paul Reed Smith. Pedalboards are essential for all three, but perhaps surprisingly there's no MIDI switching involved. For Lettieri, improvising with pedal combinations is all part of improvising the music: "I need to be able to combine stuff and not worry about being stuck in a preset," he says. "The band is shifting tonalities all the time when we're improvising and I don't like feeling stuck. There are certain things that I use the same sound for every night but other times it's like 'Last night I used an envelope filter here, maybe tonight I'm gonna use an octave fuzz.' The band really responds to that. If people start falling into patterns and ruts in this group, they'll let you know!"

Playing in such busy arrangements, the musicians have to be wary of taking up too much space. "If you have a lot of reverb and delay or ambient sounds, there better be a place in the song for it," Mark observes.

"That's a great point," says Bob, who specialises in those tones. "I like to use them as really intentional effects rather than just keep them on all the time. I'll use reverb if I'm doing one chord hit with a long reverb tail. I try and think 'What am I actually trying to achieve?'

Live it really depends on the room. Some rooms are really boomy and I just don't use reverb at all."

For drive, J. Rockett pedals feature strongly. Mark has a signature Melody overdrive pedal, which has a 6-band graphic EQ rather than a tone knob, while Chris and Bob both use the Archer as their main drive. Their approaches are very similar, both using Wingman knobs to adjust settings with their feet while they are playing. "I leave the Archer on all the time because I like the way it colours the tone, and then I'll just put the drive up or down depending on what I want for a particular section," Bob explains. "I have a Tube Screamer that I'll use with that sometimes to push it over the edge."

Axe-wise, none of theirs is strictly conventional. McQueen's main axe is a Moollon thinline T-style guitar with twin humbuckers and a tremolo; he also uses a singlecut Moollon he describes as "kind of like a Les Paul but not as thickly saturated." Bob Lanzetti describes his signature Fodera as modelled after his favourite Tokai Strat copy, but that is somewhat underselling it. Although

FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Founding member
Bob Lanzetti

it has S-style construction, the body shape is unique. The bridge pickup is not angled but mounted on a metal plate, Tele-style, with screw polepieces that give a tone closer to a P90. The middle pickup is angled for a sharper sound on the treble strings. Two mini toggles function as a killswitch and a switch to turn on all three pickups at once, for a truly versatile instrument.

Lettieri's signature PRS, the Fiore, dropped in 2021. With bolt-on construction, 25.5" scale and HSS pickup configuration, it continues PRS's march into Strat territory that began with the Silver Sky. "Designing a guitar during the pandemic was pretty hard," admits Lettieri. "A lot of fedexing boxes back and forth after we changed pickups or neck shapes or bridge style, or spacing of this that. I learned a lot about how to make a guitar." At Lettieri's insistence, it features PRS' first two-point tremolo. "At its very core it's like 'This is what an electric guitar sounds like.' It's that sound – the single-coil pickups and a humbucker in the bridge just because that's the sound of rock and roll to me."

The level of improvisation is such that no two Snarky shows are alike, and that goes double when the guitarist changes from show to show. McQueen, for example, gets sounds that are not necessarily guitar-like: "I mess with my tone knobs and pedals to get swollen synthesizer sounds. I listen to other instruments just as often as I listen to guitars. I feel like I've got all of that into my playing. After that I got obsessed with synthesizer and I incorporated that into my pedal thinking."

The success of Snarky Puppy is simply explained by Lettieri. "The songs are good," he says. "There's a lot going on, but it's not so dense that it gets lost in an arena. My dream was to be in a band like Guns N' Roses, so this is a dream come true. I'm just playing slightly more complicated chord voicings than them!"

"I HAVE A LOT OF INFLUENCES
THAT ARE NOT GUITAR BASED"
BOB LANZETTI

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Words Ellie Rogers

"IT'S COOL TO PLAY WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE"

How the guitarists from **My Chemical Romance** and **Coheed And Cambria** find new inspiration in joint project **L.S. Dunes**

Post-hardcore “superband” L.S. Dunes represents a meeting of minds between guitarist Frank Iero of My Chemical Romance, guitarist Travis Stever of Coheed and Cambria, vocalist Anthony Green of Circa Survive and bassist Tim Payne and drummer Tucker Rule of Thursday. As the title of their debut album *Past Lives* suggests, this is not a complete departure from their main bands, but, as Travis says: “What’s cool about L.S. Dunes is that you can hear everybody’s style peek out. Not once is it dictated by a sound that’s My Chem or Thursday or Coheed, but you hear the styles.”

L.S. Dunes made their live debut at Riot Fest 2022 on the same day that Iero headlined the

festival with My Chemical Romance, and he’s since embarked on a lengthy reunion tour with the emo-punk trailblazers. Likewise, Stever remains an active member of Coheed And Cambria, and at the time of this interview we find him on tour in Europe.

Naturally, when a band comes along whose line-up reads like a pick ‘n’ mix from the top tier of a festival poster plucked from the post-punk and hardcore boom of the mid-2000s, it’s instinctive to reach for the word ‘superband’. Travis contends, is that this is more of an “easy way” to describe L.S. Dunes than a reflection of how the band sees themselves. “It just seems to reduce it,” he asserts. “We came together because we wanted to make music. There was no expectation of what the music would be, and, as a matter of fact, there was an agreement that if the music wasn’t up to our standards, we’d let it go.”

According to Frank, the project “started very organically,” with a sensation akin to “playing in your first band in high school” – aside from the fact that preliminary writing took place against the backdrop of a global shutdown, so jams were out of the question. Instead, the five friends-turned-bandmates worked remotely, sending ideas by text and email, before getting together months later for their first in-the-flesh rehearsal in Iero’s basement – ‘The Lab’. “The fun thing about it was that we were all stuck at home, so we were trying new things and getting out of our comfort zones,” he recalls. “Nobody really thought it would go further than that. We finally got in a room together right before we recorded, and that’s when the wheels really started to turn.”

The project has proved a creative revelation for both guitarists. As Travis says, “Working with Frank has been an incredibly different but



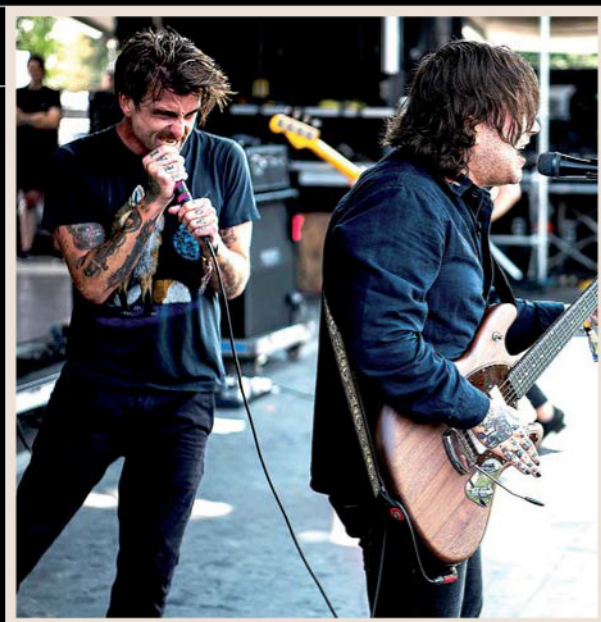
nourishing thing. I'm almost addicted! I've found a guitar player and we work well together without really having to talk about it. That's very rare." Frank repays the compliment: "It's cool to play with people who are different from your upbringing and different from your playing style," he says. "That's how you grow, evolve and change."

Ruminating on exactly how his approach has shifted since the early days, Frank suggests that the biggest factor of all has been ageing. "Your playing style and your approach changes from project to project, but it also changes with your maturity level. Even some of the earlier stuff before My Chem, the kitchen sink was a big thing, as it is for a lot of young players. You need to develop that self-editing process where everything you write doesn't need to be in the song."

It's also worth noting that while Travis is used to holding down the lead guitar role in Coheed And Cambria, and Frank a more traditional rhythm role in MCR, things are more equitably divided up in L.S. Dunes. "There's definitely things I did on this record that aren't in my wheelhouse and aren't things I would have done in My Chem, and that I'm really proud of," Frank says, citing the "whammy moment" on *It Takes Time* and the sensitive composition of a track named 2022 as personal highlights. He also escaped his comfort zone with a tapping element in *Like Forever*. "I've never done that on a record and it's something I've always wanted to try," he explains. "I'm not that kind of guitarist where I'm always doing tapping solos..."

But with new bands come new opportunities, and as Travis says of Frank's sometimes underrated chops: "He's got this primal finesse. Is he appreciated as a guitar player because of the things he's done in My Chem? Yes; but I think he deserves to be more appreciated. That's what I like about L.S. Dunes. It's a bunch of players that I'm proud to be with."

In the creation of *Past Lives*, the circumstances of working in separate confines offered some surprising perks. "Doing the writing remotely meant that you heard the tracks in isolation," Frank says, "and really being able to hear what the other person was doing was a big benefit. Sometimes you're in a room and everybody's making noise and it sounds kinda good, but you don't



ABOVE
Frank Iero onstage
with vocalist
Anthony Green.

find out until the recording process that it actually doesn't work. I'm glad that we had more of a pristine work environment than a random practice studio, especially with how much riffing is happening."

Likewise, Travis suggests that the record "turned into what it is because of that style of writing," and a track that both players single out as being representative of this is *Blender*, which features stunning harmonised guitars that took time, space and reflection to devise. "It's probably my favourite song and it was initially just a group of riffs that Frank sent," says Travis. "On the demos, I had completely different guitar parts. I lived with them for months, and wound up scratching most of them and harmonising what he was playing."

Travis is no stranger to figuring out harmonies and has done so on numerous Coheed And Cambria tracks. As Frank puts it, "That's something he's phenomenal at". But what makes this example extra cool is that not all of it conforms to expected compositional norms. "If you listen to it with some kind of theory mindframe, a couple of the notes are just octaves" Travis explains. "The line goes from harmony to octave. I wound up trying everything and that's where I landed. Having the time to do that was cool."

"YOUR PLAYING STYLE
CHANGES FROM
PROJECT TO PROJECT"
FRANK IERO

Asking the pair if a novel project had necessitated novel adventures in gear elicits a split response. "It always does!" enthuses Frank, while Travis offers a slightly apologetic, "It really didn't!" He elaborates: "This past couple of years has been a time for me to abandon the ego of thinking I'm going to know what the sound should be. Instead, it's been about knowing what the melody is, and then wanting somebody to help figure out the sound."

For the most part, Travis stuck with his trusty Bigsby-fitted Gibson Les Paul Traditional Goldtop, and recorded many of his parts at home using Reason and a selection of plugins, before sending them to producer Will Yip to re-amp. "Usually, I would be embarrassed to say that, but I'm not!" he laughs. For the title track, he recalls finding a "really weird sound" through one such plugin, which he used for octaving and harmonising his verse guitar part. To this, he added British Overdrive and reverb plugins. Replicating the sound live has proven a little challenging, but he's found that an Electro-Harmonix Pitch Fork and a Highwind Amplification Direwolf Overdrive will do the trick.

Conversely, Frank used a vast array of toys – fed through his Fender Twin – to colour his various guitar sounds. These included a Keeley Synth-1, a Schaffer Replica by SoloDallas for "a bit of extra life in the signal chain", a Black Math Fuzz, and his secret weapon, a Bowman Audio Endeavors Overdrive. "Sometimes it beats my Klon," he raves. "I'll always A/B them because sometimes you need the Klon, but the Bowman – holy sh*t! I have them on every 'board!'"

Guitar-wise, Frank used everything from his custom long-scale Fender Jaguar to a selection of Ernie Ball Music Man models, as well as an old Harmony that he bought at a garage sale. Perhaps most excitingly of all, since wrapping up recording, Frank has been working on a completely new guitar design with Ernie Ball Music Man. "It's incredible," he smiles. "It's kind of built off the StingRay, but the pickup configuration is different, with a P-90 in the bridge, a single coil in the middle and a gold foil in the neck, to give a varied array of tones."

Noting one of the guitar's slightly more challenging characteristics, he laughs, "It's also made out of walnut so it's f*cking heavy! I do feel myself getting shorter as I'm playing it, but it has a tone you can't beat!"



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Words Chris Bird

“The solo is very much in the moment”

Brian May reveals the story behind Queen’s ‘lost’ classic – and the epic guitar solo he created for it

W

hen Brian May speaks to TG about *Face It Alone* – the previously unheard Queen track that was finally released last month, more than 30 years after it was recorded – his first words are in tribute to the writer and singer of that song. “The crowning glory is, of course, Freddie’s voice,” he says. “It’s just magnificent. You hear that quality in his voice. You hear the passion in his voice. And he’s fearless. The way he bends some of those notes is so beautiful.”

Face It Alone is an extraordinary song with a poignant backstory. It was recorded during the year-long sessions for Queen’s 13th studio album, *The Miracle*, between January 1988 and January 1989, at a time when Freddie Mercury had been diagnosed HIV positive. As Brian recalled of that period: “We were dealing with Freddie’s deteriorating health, and pulling together to support him.”

Face It Alone didn’t make the cut for *The Miracle*, which was released in July 1989, yielding hit singles in *I Want It All*, *Breakthru* and *The Invisible Man*. The following album, *Innuendo*, was Freddie

Mercury’s last act. The singer died on November 24, 1991.

In all these years, *Face It Alone* remained an unfinished demo track, preserved in the Queen vaults and unheard outside of the band’s inner circle. But this and five other previously unreleased tracks were rediscovered and remixed during the creation of a new box set reissue of *The Miracle*. And as Brian says, the finished version of *Face It Alone* that has now been shared with a global audience is absolutely true to how it was recorded in the 80s.

“One of the discussions we had, and one of the reasons we wanted to release it, is because it is all original,” he explains. “We did a bit of tidying up on it, and I think – well, I know – that if we’d worked on it more it would have changed. It might have become a six-minute epic. But I really like it the way it is. It’s very genuine. It speaks from the time. So we thought: yes, button it up, but don’t tart it up. Don’t embellish it. Just put it out as we hear it, but suitably cleaned up. So I didn’t go back in there and do new guitar or anything. It’s all exactly as it happened.”

This is an ensemble piece to which all four band members contributed: Freddie, Brian, drummer Roger Taylor and bassist John Deacon. “It’s rare to find any fragments which encapsulate the four of us actually working together,” Brian says. “But John’s on there, absolutely live with Freddie. And Roger’s on there with his strange percussive atmospheres.”

LEFT
Brian May in the late 80s, when Queen recorded the song *Face It Alone* in sessions for the album *The Miracle*

The Miracle was the first Queen album on which, as an expression of unity, the writing credits for all songs were attributed to the group as a whole. But as Brian now says, “There was always one of us who was leading the party.” And with *Face It Alone*, that was Freddie. “He was coming up with the lyrics and leading us with this lovely stuff. And as we working on it, we were very enthused about it.”

The guitar solo is quintessential Brian May, as perfectly judged as the solos in signature Freddie Mercury songs such as *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Killer Queen*. “You can hear that I’ve played this solo basically as a means of getting from verse one to verse two,” Brian says. “It’s like: this is what I feel at the moment, and probably we’ll work on it later, and who knows what might happen? So the solo is very much in the moment. It’s me trying to be a voice next to Freddie’s and to extend the atmosphere and the message of the song. So it’s very real.”

Brian’s lead break in *Bohemian Rhapsody* – voted the greatest solo of all time by TG readers in 2021 – ran to nine bars. At seven bars, his solo in *Face It Alone* once again eschews traditional four-/eight-bar structures. But he says: “It wasn’t conscious in that way. It’s not a question of counting. But it is a conscious way of building things, so that you leave an open-ended place for the vocal to take over again. So conscious in an unconscious way, I think. That’s the way we build songs, so there’s space for the ideas to develop and then move on.”

He was, of course, playing the Red Special. “I’m so lucky that my guitar and amp have such a wide range of possibilities,” he says. “So if I turn the guitar way down, still through the treble booster, it becomes completely clean. And I can vary the amount of compression just by turning it up. There’s no tricks. It’s just the guitar, the treble booster and the wonderful AC-30 amp. And that’s what it does. It does everything that I want it to do. And that hasn’t changed in the last 45 years.”

There are, however, a couple of details on which Brian is a little unsure. First, the weird, plucky sound to the arpeggios on this track. “The basic backing sound? Well, I don’t remember very clearly. So either that’s a keyboard or else it’s been converted to a keyboard sound through a device – and I don’t actually know. I see what you’re saying. I will have to go back and have a look!”



30



PURPLE REIGN

Queen in 1989: (from left) Brian May, Freddie Mercury, Roger Taylor, John Deacon

Second: was he playing that solo with a pick, or was it fingerstyle? It feels very personally delivered in the way that fingerstyle often does, but it also sounds like the clink of metal on string. "Hmmm," he says with a shrug. "You're asking all the right questions and I haven't got all the right answers! I would think it probably would be just with the finger. It's quite a sensitive piece. Of course with the finger you can snap it, so it does get a kind of metallic edge to it, still, but it has a lot more feel. So I think it was done with the first finger." Here, he refers back to 1975 and the game-changing video for *Bohemian Rhapsody*. "It's like you see in the *Rhapsody* video, very briefly. Sometimes it makes me smile, because I didn't realise I was doing it that so far back. I was kind of hammering with the right hand instead of plucking."

What he says, in conclusion, is that *Face It Alone* represents the very best of Queen. "It's beautiful. And it's absolutely original. It was done in the moment, in 1989 – the four of us in the studio." And as he says of this and other material in this new box set, this is Queen as you've never heard them before.

"It's a bit like watching The Beatles' documentary *Get Back*," he suggests. "The Beatles are still The Bible to me, so I loved watching that stuff, seeing how they did it. And this box set stuff is a little bit like that. There's no video, but the soundscapes that you hear are very evocative."

"There's lot of moments where you hear us in the studio talking, moving things along, laughing. You hear things in development. All sorts of goodies. It's like you're a fly on the wall in those sessions in 1989. I think people who are really into us are going to just love what they hear."

"I WAS TRYING TO BE A VOICE NEXT TO FREDDIE'S"

Photo: Paul Rider © Queen Productions Ltd

Words: Grant Moon



QUEEN UNBOXED!

The highlights from *The Miracle Sessions*

In the new box set edition of Queen's 1989 album *The Miracle*, the beautiful single *Face It Alone* is one of several previously unreleased tracks featured in *The Miracle Sessions*, which offers a fascinating, candid glimpse into the band's studio process. Microphones capture snippets of conversation as they lay down demos, unfinished pieces, plus early takes of songs that made the cut for the final album. "I won't do the fancy bits," says Brian May before the original take of *Khashoggi's Ship*, and he rattles off a blistering blues lick to show his bandmates the bits he means. "I'll do 'em later..."

Had they been fully realised, any of the five 'new' unfinished tracks here could have sat comfortably on the final album. Brian takes the lead on two of these. His brief demo for synthy, introspective ballad *Water* is the least fleshed-out of them all, but his Beatles-y *You Know You Belong To Me* is a reminder of his deft touch on acoustic. With his warm vocals doubled in wide stereo, Brian fingerpicks this relatively conventional song (in G, like another May acoustic classic, '39), and his right-hand fingernails and tips elicit that clear, edgy trademark tone that enriched the likes of *Love Of My Life* and *Is This The World We Created?*

The demo for the classic rocker *Dog With A Bone* sees Freddie Mercury and Roger Taylor sharing lead vocals, and tight harmonies. Brian's on home turf with some rich 'n' meaty blues licks in A minor pentatonic, some juicy bends complementing the vocal lines. "Do a solo!" exhorts Freddie mid-way through, and the guitarist obliges with some characteristic trad-blues licks.

At the top of piano-led anthem *I Guess We're Falling Out*, the singer hits some keys to help him calibrate his vocal phrasing ("Oh hang on, I'd better make sure this is right..."). Once launched, Brian's back on his Red Special, chiming harmoniously with Freddie's own chords with that clean, cutting *We Are The Champions* sound. It's softened and articulated by gentle movements of the tremolo arm, his latter-day chorus unit setting the guitar lushly across the stereo field.

The song soon transforms from ballad to intense instrumental. Here, Brian makes a rare foray into diminished scale tonality, evoking Yngwie Malmsteen and other neo-classical shredders from the late 80s. This instrumental section wound up as the outro to *Hang On In There*, the b-side to hit single *I Want It All*. "That's quite nice," Brian offers as the demo session peters out. "Is it worth listening to that?" It is indeed...

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This song comes with a full demo track and backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitar-aoke style!

JAZZY OCTAVES

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=92

G#m7 C#m7 F#m7 B7 G#m7 C#m7 F#m7 B7

TAB

It's often easier to move octave shapes along the length of the string, but we're confining our Wes Montgomery inspired lick to a fairly narrow area of the fretboard. It gives focus to what is a simple melody, before moving up to a satisfying high at the end. For practise, see if you can play the lick along the length of the strings as well.

EVH STYLE TAPPING

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=136

TAB

† w/fretting finger behind tap

It's a case of 'maximum bang for your buck' here in this shreddy Van Halen-style tapping lick. Yes, admittedly it is super-fast, but bar 1 comprises just one simple three-note phrase, and bar 2 is very similar with two three-note motifs. Start slowly, build speed, rinse and repeat! Job done!

SLAP GUITAR

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

N.C.

TAB

† Slap low E notes w/thumb
†† Slap X notes w/fretting fingers

Slap is far more common as a bass technique, but there's fun to be had on guitar, too. There are three components here: the 'pop', where the pick hand 'snaps' a string off the frets then lets it ping back onto them; second is the thumb slap on the bass string; finally there's the fret hand slap on the strings, indicated by an X in the tab.

COMBINING SLIDE AND FRETTING

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

A G A D/A

TAB

Slide guitar can be tricky, so it's worth remembering that you can still use your fretting fingers too - slide greats Brett Garsed and Sonny Landreth are masters of this. For our lick, place your slide on your second finger. The third finger of the fretting hand can fret the notes indicated in the tab above the slide.

NATURAL HARMONICS

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

This lick uses natural harmonics to create a classic rock sounding run. Keep your first and third fingers spread wide so they hover over the 5th and 7th frets. Picking the strings with a sweep style technique will help with the speed aspect of articulating this lick.

JEFF BECK-STYLE FAUX SLIDE

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

Here we're using the whammy bar to play slide and pedal-steel style licks. Now, even if slide isn't your bag, there's a beautiful fluid sound to this technique that's worth experimenting with. Jeff Beck and Steve Vai are masters.

'LIZARD DOWN THE THROAT' GARGLE

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

This Satriani idea can be tricky to get right, but it has a cool sound when you do. The first finger is used to fret the opening note and moves in an ascending slide up the string. At the same time the whammy bar is gradually dipped down. Match the rate of the upward slide and the downward dive and the pitch stays roughly the same and a strange gargle is created. Check out *Ice 9* on *Surfing With The Alien* to hear it in action.

ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

This is a way of applying harmonics to fretted notes, instead of the more commonplace open-string 'natural' harmonic. Start our lick by placing your first finger on the 5th fret, before simultaneously targeting a 17th fret harmonic and plucking the string with your pick hand.

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RIFFS! RIFFS! RIFFS!

We take a look at five riffs from the biggest releases of the last few months

The last few months have seen a bevy of big releases from great guitar bands including Blink-182, Architects and Smashing Pumpkins, plus long-awaited comebacks from

Paramore and Arctic Monkeys. This can only be good news for us guitarists – an injection of inspiring new riffs to try is always welcome here at TG Towers!

So on that theme, here we're looking at five great riffs – and we've produced in-depth video lessons for each one so that you can rock out with 'em! None of them are too technical,

so guitarists of almost any level should be able to have a go. Beware though, *A New Low Moral Ground* is in drop B tuning. If your guitar isn't set up for this tuning we recommend practising in drop D (DADGBE, requiring only one string to be retuned), which, though three semitones higher than the recording, saves a lot of hassle.



BLINK 182

EDGING

Blink-182's comeback single sees the band's original guitarist Tom DeLonge back in the fold – this is his first new music with the band in nearly 10 years, and it's a typically upbeat peppy pop-punk number. We're looking at the intro and verse riffs.

After the drum intro, the rhythm guitar kicks off each bar with two strums on a C5 powerchord played on the 3rd fret (of the fifth string) and the 5th fret

(third and fourth strings). It's played four times before a change to an octave shape which outlines a melody using C, E and F notes on the fifth and third strings. The strings in the octave shape are non-adjacent, so take care to mute out the idle fourth string.

Wrapping up the section is a sequence of arpeggios based around a C major chord. Again, there's a string skip to factor in, and this needs careful picking to make sure you strike the right notes.

ARCHITECTS

A NEW LOW MORAL GROUND

The fourth release from the band's latest album, *ANLMG* is a riff-laden all-out aural assault from the Brighton quintet, with guitars downtuned to drop B (B F# B E G# C#) to hit those growling open low B notes.

The riff kicks off moving between E on the sixth string and G on the fourth. Study the picking pattern shown in the video – it'll help you to cross the strings without losing your flow.

Watch out also for the alternate ending on this opening line. The first time finishes with E, B, C and A notes, whereas the closing run goes E, B and C before a D octave shape. It's easy to lose track of which ending to use!

To ensure smooth transitions as each riff repeats, make sure to focus on maintaining a steady rhythm while quickly repositioning your hand back at the 5th fret. You can see it all in action as we demonstrate the riff in our video lesson.

CHEAT SHEET

Appears at: 0:21–0:32

Tempo: 176 bpm

Key/scale: E minor

Main techniques: Alternate picking, string skipping, fret-hand muting

TG Tip: Keep idle strings silent by 'stubby' your fretting fingers up against them

CHEAT SHEET

Appears at: 0:00–0:37

Tempo: 144 bpm

Key/scale: C major

Main techniques: Powerchords, strumming, sliding octaves, arpeggios, drop B tuning

TG Tip: For sweet, sustained, arpeggios, use your first finger for each bass note and place your fourth finger over the second and third strings


CHEAT SHEET
Appears at: 0:54–1:10

Tempo: 123 bpm

Key/scale: E Dorian

Main techniques: Fret hand muting, 16th note strumming, slides, octaves, single-note lines

TG Tip: Maintain a 'down-up' 16th-note strumming motion to ensure you're always picking in the right direction

PARAMORE

THIS IS WHY

Five years since their last release, Paramore return with the lead single from their forthcoming album... and they're sounding funky! We're taking a look at the cool chorus riff that kicks in at 0:54 here, and it's worth noting that there's some multi-guitar trickery at play...

Layered guitar lines are used, with different chord voicings harmonising and creating subtle counter-melodies with each other. The overall result is a punchy, articulate hook line.

The main chords vamp on Em7 while the single-note and octave phrases outline an E Dorian tonality. There's a sweetness and brightness to the Dorian sound compared to

the darker sounding and more commonplace natural minor scale, and it's perfect for the upbeat, funky vibe here.

Maintain a down-up-down-up picking motion for the 16th-note rhythms, but be aware that the part is led by eighth notes, with only a few 16ths, and so is dominated by downstrokes.


CHEAT SHEET
Appears at: 0:09–0:47

Tempo: 96 bpm

Key/scale: A minor

Main techniques: String bending, hammer-ons, pull-offs, thumb-picking

TG Tip: As you strike each note, use the side of your thumb to mute the thicker strings

ARCTIC MONKEYS

I AIN'T QUITE WHERE I THINK I AM

Arctic Monkeys have come a long way since their early days as young indie-rock upstarts – their latest offering, *The Car*, features orchestral, lounge pop and even jazz influences. And for us guitar fans there are a few sweet, funky guitar lines to try out, too, such as this zinger.

Played in the open position, Alex Turner's lick is based in the A minor pentatonic scale. The phrase begins with a semitone bend on the 2nd fret of the third

string, followed by a pull-off to the open string. Next, the riff moves between D and C notes played on the open fourth string and 3rd fret of the fifth string. The main riff is completed by a hammer-on to an E note on the 2nd fret of the fourth string, a D on the open fourth string, a C on the 3rd fret of the fifth string and an A on the open fifth. An auto wah is used for shape and texture, but you could achieve a similar effect by using a regular wah pedal and sweeping your foot from heel-down to toe-down as you play each note.


CHEAT SHEET
Appears at: 0:00–0:57

Tempo: 117 bpm

Key/scale: D Phrygian

Main Techniques:

Palm-muted downstrokes, string bending

TG Tip: Avoid gradually speeding up by counting the tempo at double speed – it'll keep you more tightly in time with the pulse

SMASHING PUMPKINS

BEGUILED

The Smashing Pumpkins have a bold vision for their forthcoming album, *Atum*, an epic 33-track three-installment rock opera. It's due next year, but for now we're looking at teaser track *Beguiled*.

The guitar is tuned to drop D (DADGBE) and features a heavy chugging riff on the bass strings. Start by playing palm-muted eighth notes on the open sixth string. Simply unmute the string for the 16th-note flourishes on beat 3 of the bar. It's a rhythm that

occurs throughout the track. This opening riff ends with a descending figure played on the 12th and 10th frets of the sixth string. Unmute these notes and apply that 16-note rhythmic flourish once more.

After 10 times through the riff a run of powerchords (D5, C5 and E5) lead you into the next section and a descending melody line along the third string. The transition chords are repeated as before and then reharmonised as G5, F5, and A5 chords to conclude the section.



Words Amit Sharma Portraits Kevin Scanlon

"GUITAR IS A MEANS TO AN END - THE END BEING GOOD MUSIC"

Two virtuosos, no rules: how **Polyphia** are redefining the possibilities for guitar music

**THE
HOTTEST
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ON THE PLANET**

Every now and then, usually right around the time people are starting to feel like they've heard it all, an artist will come along and reinvent a sound or style in ways radically different to what came before, daring to dream and open up the floodgates for a new era of noise. These things can certainly be said of Polyphia – the Texan quartet led by Tim Henson and Scott LePage, whose combination of virtuoso guitar heroics and unabashed genre hopping has broadened their appeal to well beyond that of your average rock group. On latest album *Remember That You Will Die*, for example, they're collaborating with the likes of Rodney Jerkins (Michael Jackson, Lady Gaga), Y2K (Doja Cat) and Johan Lenox (Kanye West) – borrowing as much from the pop and hip-hop worlds as they do from six or seven-string heroes, and in the process creating guitar music for non-guitar listeners.



"These days I view us more as composers rather than guitar players, though obviously that hasn't always been the case," says Tim Henson, who started the predominantly instrumental group with LePage in 2010 when he was 17 years old. Since then, he's launched his own signature models through Ibanez and Archetype plug-in via Neural DSP. "I guess it's been something we've been always working towards – composing rather than showing what we can do with our techniques. We just happen to be playing guitar, and have done our whole lives, so that's where our skill set is. The guitar is a means to an end, the end being good music. It's just a tool to get the final product. The average music listener and enjoyer probably won't give a sh*t about the things guitarists do. So this time we've tried to think 'Is this enjoyable to listen to?' rather than 'Is this impressive to play?' I remember showing the track *Genesis* to Tosin Abasi and he was like, 'Ah, so this is your grown-up song!' I was like, 'We're not children anymore!'"

That's not to say all the guests involved on their latest body of work are from long-distant musical worlds. Deftones frontman Chino Moreno is the star guest for *Bloodbath*, while fellow Ibanez-endorsee Steve Vai makes his presence known on album closer *Ego Death* – undoubtedly one of the most epic guitar showdowns you'll hear this year. In many ways, the grand finale almost signals a changing of the guard or passing of the baton – from the instrumental mastermind who was a major protagonist in the original shred guitar movement of the mid-80s and early 90s, to the newcomers hijacking the art form through a musically limitless lens more informed by the youth culture of today. However, as much as the collaboration was a dream come true for Henson ("the dude's my motherf*cking idol"), it was also met with its fair share of challenges – starting off with Henson and LePage accidentally blowing up Vai's speakers before they'd even gotten started. Whoops indeed...



"Two years after asking him at NAMM 2020, we had *Ego Death* ready," Tim says, describing this as the new album's most technically challenging track. "Steve invited us over to his house and we showed him the song. But the file was simply too hot, so when it got to the part where his solo was supposed to come in, the 808s were booming so loud, they broke. We broke Steve Vai's speakers, it was really f*cked up! He had to call his tech to fix it and we felt pretty bad. He was totally cool about it and said he'd love to do the feature but didn't know if he would have time or what he would do."

As the Polyphia pair sheepishly made their exit, they felt like they'd blown not only the speakers but also their chance to work with a man often described as the greatest guitarist on earth. One week later, however, Vai surprised them completely out of the blue...

"He sent an email with all of his parts, telling us to do whatever we wanted with it... so I did!" Tim shrugs,

'F*ck yeah, we dodged a bullet there!' The next time we saw him was when we filmed the video and the first thing he told me was how he felt the creative choices I made were the correct ones, he just needed time to sit with it. That gave me affirmation!"

When TG last caught up with Henson, it was for our summer Acoustic issue coinciding with the release of the new album's lead track *Playing God* – which got tongues wagging for its usage of nylon-strings in place of the usual Ibanez superstrats. Then in October came the official launch of Tim's second signature, the all-new TOD10N nylon electro-acoustic, featuring a solid Sitka spruce top with laminated sapele back and sides, a walnut fingerboard decorated by his Tree Of Death inlay, a Fishman Sonicore piezo and an Ibanez AEQ210TF preamp, plus

"YOU CANNOT PLAY IT FAST UNLESS YOU CAN PLAY IT SLOW"

TIM HENSON

almost as if he's reasoning the decision to himself. "I chopped it the f*ck up. Ivan Jackson from Brasstracks, who was featured on the song *Genesis*, helped make it the most epic thing ever. I sent it over to Steve and I think he was really taken aback. I don't know if anyone had ever done that to his guitars before... but he did tell me to do it! He emailed saying 'Wow, I've never heard myself so Polyphia-ised!' and then wrote something that was alarming to us. He was like, 'Let's go ahead and not do a feature, I don't feel like I did enough...'"

"We were really sad so we wrote this long email saying 'Please, please, please!' and even changed it back to how he had it, keeping just a couple of the chopped bits. We were like, 'Yo dude, we didn't mean to offend or anything!' And he replied saying, 'Guys, if it means this much to you, of course, this is your thing and my gift to you, I'm happy to be featured!' We were like



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→ a soundhole in its upper bout. From a technique standpoint, *Playing God* leans heavily on fast-picked harmonic minor and chromatic runs – ensuring that Henson and LePage’s right hands aren’t given many moments of rest. When and where exactly did they hone in on the mechanics of it all, we wonder, and did they turn to the same Paul Gilbert instructionals as the rest of us?

“I know exactly which Paul Gilbert DVDs you’re talking about,” Tim smiles, before admitting how he, like millions of others, struggled to keep up. “Scott got a lot further than I did, and throughout our career he’s always been stronger at that stuff. I always felt like I sucked at alternate picking. It wasn’t until I got into hybrid, finger and other types of picking that it brought me all the way back to alternate. That was when I started to feel like my right hand was up to par with my left. Everything before that was horsesh*t!”

NEW RADICALS
Tim Henson (left)
and Scott LePage.

He continues: “I had to learn all those other techniques to realise it’s just down-up-down-up. In comparison to the other ways of picking, it’s actually the most simple. All you need to do is slow it down, like dummy f*cking slow, and eventually it will start to feel natural. Some people like to say if you can play it slow, you can play it fast. I don’t really agree with that. To me it’s more like you cannot play it fast unless you can play it slow.”

If *Playing God* is a piece you’re hoping to learn, Tim says be warned. There many obstacles and challenges to consider when trying to nail it note-for-note, namely “because it’s such a BPM-f*cker”. It’s a song that even he struggles with at full speed, to the point where he has to slow it down before building back up to the tempo of the recording. Don’t be fooled by the calm front in the video – it’s purely the result of intense and extreme practice...

“That song’s at 137 [BPM], which is honestly quite tough. 128 is the classic EDM tempo that gets people moving. Using 16th notes anywhere between 128 and 140 is where things starts to get f*cked! A lot of people try to play it to speed and I don’t even do that unless we’re performing! I

usually start off by slowing it down to 110 and building it up by five just to make sure the delivery of every single note sounds and feels good.

“There are a lot of techniques happening fast. For a lot of people, myself included, trying to play it at speed straight away will make it really sloppy. You need to spend hours drilling it out. I don’t think I’ve ever practised a song more! In the video you see me doing it with my eyes closed and sh*t, almost looking like I’m sleeping, and that’s simply because I put in so many hours with that song. It kinda begs for that. You can’t play it without putting in the time. It forces you to brush up on every technique there is – hybrid picking, selective picking, hammer-ons from nowhere. All of those things make that song what it is.”

As for other picking styles, Tim has also written his fair share of economy and swepted lines – perhaps most famously on the track 400z from 2017 EP *The Most Hated*. As well as jokingly referencing how controversially received their musical cross-pollinating had been within the guitar community – a whole four years before Henson’s infamous ‘boomer bends’ comment, might we add – the song also showed us just how brilliantly creative they could be with long-established tricks of the trade.

“We’ve been sweep picking since we were children!” he laughs. “That’s like

**“WE BROKE STEVE VAI’S
SPEAKERS, IT WAS
REALLY F**KED UP!”**

TIM HENSON

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one of the first things you want to learn because everyone's like 'Can you sweep pick, bro?' When you start, the five-string C and A sweep shapes are where the money's at. I didn't get into six-string sweeps until 400z. That ended up being one of our crowd favourites live so I had to get better at playing it.

"A good tip I learned from Jason Richardson is alternate pick your sweeps before you, um, sweep your sweeps! It sounds backwards, but like I was saying earlier, you need to understand everything before coming back to the beginning, so all the pieces make sense. Trust me, when you alternate pick the ideas you plan to sweep, you will understand what they sound like with note separation and everything even. Then you try to achieve that using sweeping. You have to dissect different techniques, learn how they work and then put them back together."

So, given his extensive research into the more ambitious and acrobatic side of guitar playing, what have been the most useful lessons and eye-openers in Tim Henson's journey thus far? As it turns out, the most revelatory insight

came from legato-loving Canadian fusion guitarist Nick Johnston, whose own style blends the jazziness of Guthrie Govan with the atmospheric of Vai and Satch. When Henson was 21 years old, a private lesson from Johnston breaking down his hybrid mastery one-on-one helped develop the pick and fingers approach that's now become fundamental to the Polyphia sound.

"Honestly, my best advice for anyone reading this would be brush up on your hybrid picking," concludes Henson. "That really changed the game for me. Nick Johnston showed me back in 2014. He could pick up a guitar and just play sh*t, hybrid picking everything. We were sitting in my bedroom in my parent's house and he taught me how to do it. Honestly it felt like having Guthrie Govan in my bedroom... that's how good Nick is! Watching him made me realise I wanted to get good at it. Now I would say hybrid picking is a huge staple of our music. It can make your playing a lot more fluid and give you a lot more control. It's the one thing I would encourage everyone to work on."



POLYPHIA-STYLE MAJOR SCALE

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩ = 120

D

let ring

NH

Play 4 times

TAB

5 2 0 5 3 7 5 17 3 0 16 2 0

This is a G Major scale (G A B C D E F#) played with typical Polyphia flair. Use hybrid picking to play the first six notes and let the notes ring together. Natural harmonics on the 7th and 5th frets complete the scale – but jumping an octave higher. We're finishing on a typical rhythmic flourish.

POLYPHIA-STYLE STRING SKIPS

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩ = 100

let ring

Play 4 times

TAB

12 15 0 12 12 14 19 14 10 0 12 15

Start this lick with a hammer-on from open to 12th fret, then hop over to the first string 12th fret and slide up to 15th, then pull-off before jumping back down to the sixth string. Start bar 2 with a sweep pick at the 12th fret, 'rolling' your first finger across the strings to apply fretting pressure.

POLYPHIA LICK

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩ = 100

Bm

let ring

NH

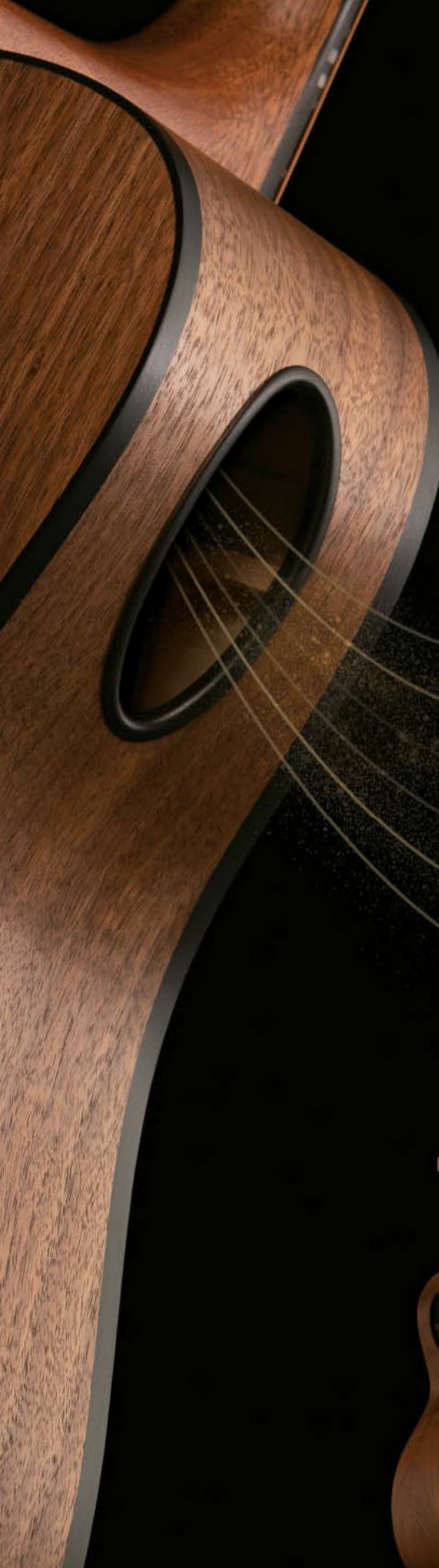
let ring

Play 4 times

TAB

7 4 0 7 4 0 7 9 17 16 15 14 22 15 0 22 15 0 10/12 10 12 10 11 9 9 7

Here we've used a mixture of Tim and Scott's techniques. We start with the scale run. Use your first and fourth fingers here, keeping free of the open third and fourth strings. The following harmonics, arpeggios and tapped lines spell out a Gmaj7 chord – a richer, jazzier sound than a straight G major chord. The 32nd note rhythm on the muted notes in bar 2 is a typical trick. Wrap up with the octave melody.



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“THE BASS IS SO LOUD. GUITAR IS THE TEXTURE”

How the **Nova Twins** created their heavy and unique sound – and why their pedalboards remain a closely-guarded secret

Nova Twins are the most exciting young band in the UK. Combining rap, punk, R&B and metal, they also have the filthiest synth sounds a stringed instrument has ever produced. They're the first band since Muse to have tones on their album that we genuinely don't know how to make. They're influenced by music many guitar bands don't even consider. And most importantly, their current album *Supernova* is stuffed with great songs.



THE POWER OF 2
Georgia South (left)
and Amy Love



The Twins, guitarist/vocalist Amy Love and bassist Georgia South, have been a band since 2014 and are finally catching a buzz thanks to the support of Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello. Georgia says Rage's support has been invaluable. "With them being a diverse band, they can kind of understand some of our experiences being women of colour. The success that they've had was really encouraging because there's so many times we'd hit a wall with people not getting it. Seeing a band like Rage Against The Machine, one of the biggest bands in the world, being fully diverse – it's inspiring."

In 2019 Nova Twins supported Prophets Of Rage, Morello's rap metal supergroup with members of Cypress Hill and Public Enemy, and were booked to open RATM's sadly cancelled 2022 UK dates.

"People wouldn't know about us if we didn't have big bands helping us," Georgia says, "because the industry at first weren't getting it."

It was two girls playing heavy music looking the way we do, and it was a bit like 'we don't know where to put you.'"

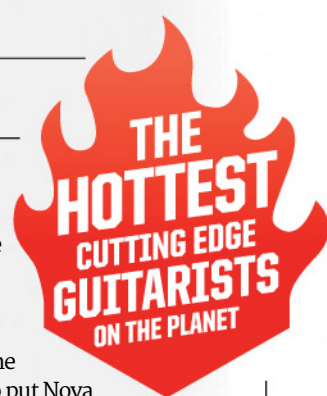
The answer, for anyone still wondering where to put Nova Twins, is on big stages. They impressed at festivals across Europe this summer. Audiences, not worried about how to categorise the band, responded to their fat riffs and relentless energy. The Rage parallels are inevitable for bands combining riffs and rap, but Nova Twins also caught favourable comparisons to The Prodigy, Missy Elliott and even No Doubt. "They're incredible artists, so we always feel happy when we hear that," Amy says.

Although they've grown to make heavy music, their first influences weren't remotely rock. Like most kids, that began with their parents' record collections: Stevie Wonder and Donny Hathaway for Georgia, Toni Braxton and Whitney Houston for Amy. "Then the mainstream hits you," Amy continues. "People like Destiny's Child who were saying to us: you're beautiful, strong black women."

The heavy part of their sound came not primarily from their record collections, but from the bands they gigged with. "Playing on the rock scene from 13, sneaking into clubs, that's how I got into heavier music, playing with bands in my local area and experiencing it firsthand," remembers Georgia. Part of the reason the band sounds so exciting is that they are utterly steeped in live music. They didn't listen to a record and then try to copy it – they learned by doing it.

"It was amazing being on that live circuit," Amy says. "We came up through the punk scene really. That's where a lot of the punk aspect comes from, because we were surrounded by it, playing pit parties and Wonk Unit [DIY] festivals." With that kind of upbringing, performing is their natural habitat, and the heavy music they inhaled mixed with their early influences. "I moved from Essex to London which was dramatically different," Amy says, "and that's when I got introduced to bands like The MC5, New York Dolls, Kiss, The Sweet and Led Zeppelin. That's when I was like, 'F*ck! I love the feeling of live musicianship.'"

Georgia, meanwhile, namechecks Skrillex, Pharrell Williams' rock side project N.E.R.D. and R&B super-producer Timbaland. "I love Timbaland's beats and how he manipulates sounds. That was a big inspiration for me, not making it sound like a bass guitar but more electronic, how hip-hop producers would use their synths."





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Thus began the journey to the unique sounds on *Supernova*, with Georgia experimenting until she found ways to recreate her favourite synth sounds. "I used to go to Denmark Street all the time with my dad and pick out pedals. I didn't know what I was looking for so I'd be that annoying person trying out the pedals in the corner and then I'd take one home with my savings. Towards the end of our first album when we wrote *Vortex*, that was a kind

LOUD AND PROUD

"When I got introduced to bands like The MC5, New York Dolls and Led Zeppelin," Amy says, "I was like: 'F**k! I love live musicianship!'"

for most of it. "When we first started the band, the core element was bass and vocals," Georgia muses. "Bass would be a lot of the track, then the guitar weaves into it. It's a dance. Before we had our own sound engineer, people used to mix us with the bass turned down so quietly. We're actually flipping it on its head. It's

"WE ARE OBSESSED WITH BEING ABLE TO PLAY EVERYTHING LIVE"

AMY LOVE

of lightbulb moment. It shifted when the bass sounded really electronic. We were like 'This is sick!' I think *Supernova* is the evolution of that."

TG only realised the centrality of South's bass to Nova Twins' sound when we caught their album launch show at Bristol's Rough Trade, where due to space restrictions Amy wasn't playing guitar. Georgia carried the entire show; we barely even missed the guitar

more like electronic music where the bass is so loud. Guitar is the texture in between."

Normally at this point, TG would reveal the gear behind the tones. On this occasion we can't, because Georgia and Amy are giving nothing away. Back in TG355, Amy told us how their secrecy began when a rival band photographed their gear without even talking to them first, so we can thank ill-mannered

London guitarists for depriving us of this knowledge.

The Twins' reluctance to divulge their gear secrets reminds us of the young Eddie Van Halen turning his back to audiences and lying about modifications to his amp. In both cases, we find the secrecy understandable but unnecessary. Van Halen's tricks are now common knowledge but no one has come close to being EVH, and we doubt anyone else could be Nova Twins regardless of gear. We put this to the band, but they are not convinced. "Tom Morello revealed his secrets a lot later in his career," Georgia points out. "Maybe when we're his age then we'll do it. If people come around and have dinner at your Nan's you don't ask for the recipe! I haven't looked up how Tom Morello gets his sound. I don't want to know the magic. You have to find your own route because there's already a Tom Morello. When somebody idolises someone too much, you end up being like them but you'll never be as good as them."

Here's what we do know about the Nova Twins' sounds. We still wouldn't know where to start with some of them, but hearing Amy and Georgia playing in isolation makes it a little clearer what's going on. The synth-like bass sounds have a generous helping of analogue



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phaser with the rate set fairly low, usually in combination with a huge fuzz sound.

Amy and Georgia wouldn't show us their

pedalboards up close, but the clicking sounds when triggering octave up Whammy effects suggest they're using momentary footswitches rather than rocker pedals. That allows them to fix the rate of the Whammy sweep for a precise, mechanical effect. They always use combinations of pedals to create bespoke sounds; there's never just one pedal on at a time. "My feet are as important as my hands," says Georgia. "It's more like driving a car than playing bass. If I broke my leg it would be a disaster."

Both visually and sonically, Georgia's most visible gadget is The Ring, a MIDI controller she wears on her index finger to control effect parameters with gestures, a little like Matt Bellamy's use of a Kaoss Pad with his guitar. On the song *Toolbox* she rhythmically controls octave-up synth stabs by moving her hands away from the strings. "I don't know what it's intended for! I use it for a dubstep drop kind of vibe," she smiles.

Amy's guitar tone is a little more conventional, with less low end than usual to make space for those gargantuan basslines. Her main amp is Fender's perennial workhorse the Hot Rod Deluxe, sometimes supplemented by a Marshall Origin, although the dirt is from pedals. Her guitar, a P-90-equipped Mustang, also emphasises mids over bass frequencies. Meanwhile Georgia's Westone Thunder 1 bass is split between a Gallien-Krueger bass head and a Marshall Valvestate guitar amp set slightly dirty. Between them,

they can cover all the *Supernova* sounds. "We are obsessed with being able to play everything live," Amy says. "We always felt we have to prove ourselves 10 times harder. Even now they'll be like 'oh there's so much on track, there's a laptop.' There isn't any guitar or bass on track at all."

Amy points to Jack White and St. Vincent as references for her approach

GO YOUR OWN WAY

"Take yourself in the woods somewhere and see what comes out," Georgia says.

to solos. "Their style of playing was really interesting because it wasn't always a blues lick. I just love being a bit in your face and untamed. If a pedal glitches or something, we don't try and take out all that noise. It's part of it. Sometimes we'll loop a glitch – that's f*cking sick!"

Supernova could only be made by a British band, so it's surprising that Nova Twins' influences are almost entirely American. When asked, Georgia says she was into the grime scene while she was at Lewisham College, but most attempts to relate them to other British acts are doomed. Reviewers have likened them to Skunk Anansie's frontwoman Skin, which Amy dismisses: "They're incredible live, and we've played with them, but as two bands we're completely different," she says. "The only association is obviously we're black women." Instead, they put the British sound down to being unapologetically themselves. "When you hear an American record, it sounds incredible sonically, but it's so perfect. We allow things to be how they are and that reflects in the mixes," Amy says. Georgia agrees: "Amy's doesn't try and twang into American. She keeps the British accent, which is cool."

"MY FEET ARE AS IMPORTANT AS MY HANDS"
GEORGIA SOUTH



Although the innovative sounds are what you notice first about *Supernova*, there is enough substance to the songs that you can easily imagine them working with stripped down production. At Rough Trade, Amy joked that no one would want to hear Nova Twins unplugged, but we could get behind Nova Twins plugged straight into their amps. Although they've got no plans to try it, Georgia agrees it could work "because the riffs are so melodic." In fact, in the comparisons to rap metal, the importance of melody to Nova Twins' sound is sometimes overlooked. "When we first started it was way more melodic," remembers Amy. "As we were on the punk scene, we wanted to be more angular and jagged. With this new album there's more melody in there."

The source of that melody may surprise you. “A lot of the *Supernova* riffs were actually written on a keyboard,” Georgia admits. “Part of it was laziness. I got a MIDI keyboard which is tiny, so you can literally have



this in bed and write riffs on it. It ends up being more melodic that way. I find it takes you out of your comfort zone as well.”

Leaving their comfort zones is a theme the Twins' keep returning to, and they're keen for other bands to do the same. "Don't listen to people you love for two weeks and your ideas will come through and that'll be totally original," suggests Georgia. "I think when bands are struggling to find their sound, they often run to play songs that they're influenced by, but you can hear it straight away. I think it's good to take yourself in the woods somewhere and see what comes out."

Amy says that it was in some ways easier for Nova Twins to find their own sound because as black women there were few obvious role models in rock and metal for them to follow. “Because we didn’t have anyone easy to latch on to, it was all a mix of everything. That’s why we went on our own journey discovering music and experimenting.”

NOVA TWINS-STYLE WHAMMY RIFF

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=100

The first system of musical notation for 'The Wind' consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time and a guitar tablature staff. The treble staff contains a melody starting with a repeat sign, followed by eighth and quarter notes, and ending with a double bar line. The guitar tablature staff shows fret numbers (14, 14, 15, 14, 15, 15, 15) and fretting instructions (0, 0, 12, 0, 0, 12, 0, 13, 0, 0, 13, 13, 13). A '†' symbol with a dashed line indicates a 'whammy' effect over the final notes. The text 'Play 4 times' is written above the final measure of the treble staff.

Play 4 times

TAB

14 14 15 14 15 15 15

0 0 12 0 0 12 0 13 0 0 13 13 13

† w/whammy

This riff uses just two notes, E and F, which creates a semitone interval. Use your first and fourth fingers to play the octave shape. If you have a Whammy pedal or a similar momentary-switched pitch shifter, set it to two octaves higher and engage it where indicated.

NOVA TWINS STYLE SYNCOPATION

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩ = 100 Play 4 times

TAB

0 0 12 0 15 0 17 18 17

This riff is all about syncopation and hand synchronisation. Play the first two notes with a down- and upstroke, then play the remaining notes with upstrokes, all while bouncing your fretting fingers to keep the notes short.

NOVA TWINS LICK

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

[illegible]

Here we put those elements together in a more complex line. Keep your picking hand moving down and up throughout the entire riff in order to maintain consistent timing and a solid groove. Play the octave shapes with first and fourth fingers and remember to use your fretting fingers to mute the unused strings so you can strum with lots of energy. An octave pedal set to an octave lower (at about 30 to 50 per cent mix) can beef up the sound if you don't have bass backing you up.



Words Grant Moon Portraits Jen Rosenstein

“I’D NEVER HEARD ANYONE DO THIS BEFORE”

Inside the strange world of **King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard**, the most eclectic and prolific rock band on Earth...



They’d made 20 albums in 10 years. Then they released three new albums – yes, three – in the last month. But there is method in this madness, as King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard’s affable vocalist, co-guitarist and head honcho Stu Mackenzie explains. “There’s always a plan when we make an album,” he says. “Sometimes it’s still being formulated throughout the process, and sometimes it’s more of a mission statement, a manifesto. Usually we’ll have a couple of songs that have one vibe and some that have another, so we join the ones that have similar themes then write more songs like that. It’s like we’re creating brothers and sisters for them.”

Since their 2012 debut *12 Bar Bruise*, this Melbourne-based collective have populated their ‘Gizzverse’ with their own trippy cocktail of garage-psych rock, proggy jams, thrash metal and world music. From the thrilling experiments of 2017’s *Flying Microtonal Banana* to the balls-out metal of 2019’s *Infest The Rats’ Nest*, their catalogue shows how compelling and eclectic they are. And in 2022, they’ve been more prolific than ever before.

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April saw release of their 20th LP, *Omnium Gatherum* – their first double album – which embraced alt-rock, hip-hop, space rock, metal, jazz, soul and more. And in October came three albums in quick succession: first, *Ice*, *Death*, *Planets*, *Lungs*, *Mushrooms And Lava*, then *Laminated Denim*, and finally *Changes*. This vast array of brand new material shows the serious musicality beneath their veneer of hip quirk; the band embracing modal jams, polyrhythmic intermission music and some woozy exercises in rapid key modulation. It's unbelievable when listening to it, but *Omnium Gatherum* seems to have been the most straightforward affair.

"We didn't intend to make a double," Stu says. "We just had heaps of songs. That one felt less focused than other releases, but on purpose. We didn't go in with an overarching concept and that felt nice. It was just about each song really being its own little thing, and that was liberating. We could take some different paths we usually wouldn't go down, approach ideas that felt daunting or unrealistic to do for a whole record, and just try some things out."

Things like hip-hop. The spacey, 60s-psych jazz of *Kepler 22-b* is powered by an irresistible breakbeat pulse, and *The Grim Reaper* and *Sadie Sorceress* saw the band channeling Beastie Boys-style

Maiden-esque *Gaia* – which gallops along in proggy sub-divisions of 9/8 – and the Judas Priest-like *Predator X*, one of the album's unabashed metal moments.

A leftover from last year's *Butterfly 3000* LP, the funky, eastern-flavoured *Magenta Mountain* has a beautiful riff whose lines shift from a major to minor pentatonic feel, the song opening in F# then gravitating towards its relative minor, E_b minor. "I have grown to love pentatonics," Stu says. "There's something about it which is just so inherently melodic, and so much music is built around that scale. The trick with it is to try to make something that still

THE MAD SCIENTIST
"It's just a weird experiment," says Stu of *Changes* – the last of five albums from King Gizzard in 2022.

spend one day jamming on each individual mode, then go back through the five or six hours of music recorded, and sift it for the most interesting moments, then arrange. "The concept there was to not prepare anything," Stu says, "to just roll tape and capture everything. We record the main tracks, a day per song, but there's a lot of content in there. We went back through all the recordings, which took an absurd amount of time, energy and patience, and grabbed all the parts that had a vibe, that didn't sound like anything we'd ever done before."

With sax and organ, the gentle, almost Caribbean *Mycelium* is their Ionian moment, an easy vamp on the E_b and F minor – the mode's first two chords in E_b. But perhaps typically for such an unorthodox group, the major scale wasn't King Gizzard's starting point. "We attacked the modes in the order we felt comfy with them," Stu explains. "We started with [the funky single] *Ice V*, which uses the Dorian mode, then went Mixolydian [the catchy 13-minuter *Hell's Itch*], Phrygian [the jazzy *Magma*], the straight minor [or Aeolian, on the wah wah-packed, flute-flecked *Iron Lung*], then Ionian for *Mycelium*."

Which leaves many guitarist's favourite mode, the Lydian, and the frequently neglected Locrian, whose ♭2, ♭3, ♭5, ♭6 and ♭7 offer little in the way of conventional, consonant tonality. "Locrian was easily the hardest," Stu says. "We were nervous about it so left it last! It's easy to play Locrian and sound dissonant, but I wanted us to sound deliberate and melodic, but maintain the loose, freewheeling feeling of the jam it came from. We'd done all these other jams beforehand, so once we got

"I'D BE LOOKING AT MY GUITAR NECK AND BE LIKE, 'F**K, WHAT SCALE AM I IN?!'"

STU MACKENZIE

rap smarts. Those tunes were also unconventionally written – the blueprints were based on chopped-up samples from Mackenzie's bargain-bin world music LPs, and those ideas were then expanded on by the band, completed by co-guitarists/vocalists Cook Craig and Joey Walker, Ambrose Kenny-Smith (vocals, keys, harmonica), Lucas Harwood (bass) and Michael Cavanagh (drums).

There are proggy/jazzy moments (*Evilest Man*) and catchy, retro tunes (*Blame It On The Weather*), along with some heavy stuff. Mackenzie reaches for his Gibson Holy Explorer on the Iron

feels unique, original, and fresh."

The album's relentless opener *The Dripping Tap* features some drop D, Mixolydian guitar madness set to an irresistible motorik beat (complete with wailing harmonica), and such modal experimentation forms the backbone of the first of their three new releases...

Ice, *Death*, *Planets*, *Lungs*, *Mushrooms And Lava* takes its title from the band's mnemonic for the order of the seven modes of the major scale: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian. Convening at Gizz HQ – their large rehearsal space on the outskirts of Melbourne – they would



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into a groove and a pattern, that one, which we called *Gliese 710*, kind of clicked.”

The Lydian piece,

Lava, comes with flute, sax,

and wah’d guitar, giving that brightest of all modes a woozy, hypnotic, psychedelic feel. “That was hard for us,” he says. “We tend to sit on the tonic – the I – and explore it, but Lydian has that sharp four, which means it’s inherently floating outside of its tonic – it doesn’t want you to sit on the I. A lot of our music is muscular and strong and powerful, and Lydian is none of those things. It’s like a cloud, like air – unsolid. Funnily enough the straight-up major scale/Ionian was quite challenging as well. It was about finding something that didn’t feel too happy, too ‘Disney’.”

With a piano, drumkit and an assortment of spanking new and knackered old synths also in the room, King Gizzard’s three guitarists would share their instruments – Mackenzie’s trademark 1967 Yamaha Flying Samurai, Walker’s Gibson SG, Craig’s Fender Jazzmaster. Mackenzie went through his sole amp, a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe, using its dirty channel, and his go-to fuzz, an old Devi Ever Torn’s Peaker.

The following album, *Laminated Denim*, was made as an intermediate step between *Omnium Gatherum* and *Ice, Death*’s modal explorations. In 2020 the band were meant to play at the iconic Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado. Two, 15-minute intermissions were built into their mammoth, three-hour performance, so they had produced two pieces of music to play during those breaks as a clock ticked down – at its natural 60BPM – on the stage’s screen. Due to the pandemic, the Red Rocks show was pushed back to this October, and, veing who they are, the band couldn’t resist making two brand new tracks for the same purpose. *The Land*



KICK OUT THE JAMS

“We jam,” Stu says. “You’re conversing, musically. And if you’re talking all day, by the end you’ve said some fairly interesting things...”

Before *Timeland* and *Hypertension* are motorik, guitar-heavy frenzies, and masterclasses in how powerful repetition in musical can be.

“We actually started *Laminated Denim* before *Ice, Death*,” Stu says, “but they were recorded in a similar fashion. It was entirely improvised. We had a click track in our ears because there’ll be a clock ticking down on the screen, and both songs are a polyrhythm to that – I think one might be 150 and 180 – they work with the 60BPM, so the clock becomes a polyrhythm to the tempo of the tracks. Guitar-wise, we stripped things back a lot – I’m playing the Yamaha with my Cry Baby Wah and a fuzz. Cook’s on his Jazzmaster, Joe’s on his SG.”

standard or drop-D tuning, his custom Gibson Holy Explorer, tuned to C# standard [C#, F#, B, E, G#, C# – great for metal], and his Flying Banana guitar for the microtonal songs. Attached to his guitar by his Divine Noise Curly Cable, his live pedalboard’s pretty sparse – the Torn’s Peaker fuzz, Cry Baby, JHS Superbolt overdrive, Boss DD3 Distortion and a Boss TU3 tuner. Craig has two Jazzmasters, one in standard, one in C# standard, while Craig’s SG shares a stand with a Flying V, and his own microtonal guitar.

But the guitar is only one strand in King Gizzard’s musical fabric. Their final 2022 album, *Changes*, came about from Mackenzie’s noodlings on the piano, which leads him to very useful tip for budding composers: “I’m a big believer in writing on an instrument you don’t feel very comfortable on. I love guitar – it’s far and away the instrument I feel the most comfy on and I’ll always play it. But unless you try very hard not to, you can get stuck in certain ruts, of playing the same thing, of using the same patterns. There’s nothing wrong with that, as long as you’re aware of it, but that’s why I love composing on

The Red Rocks show is part of the second US leg of the band’s extensive world tour this year. Live, Mackenzie keeps just three guitars on stage – his Flying Samurai, which he keeps in

“A LOT OF OUR MUSIC IS MUSCULAR AND STRONG AND POWERFUL”
STU MACKENZIE

a piano. The separation of lines between your left and right hands means you can sketch out parts for three people – one playing chords, one playing bass, then one playing a melody. Then you can give this a rough idea to three players who can flesh the parts out.”

All seven tracks on *Changes* are predicated on an idea Mackenzie came up with, on piano, of modulating quickly between the keys of D major and F# major, and exploring the fresh, surprising tonal possibilities this unusual marriage of keys brings. From the cycling A/B chords of the playful title track to the spacey *Astroturf*, from the bluesy *No Body* (some great, spare lead playing here) to the motorik *Gondii*, the band make this pleasingly muso exercise a highly listenable one.

“Those two scales are so different,” he says. “They contain very few of the same notes. I wanted to make it sound pretty, beautiful, and not too melodically weird. I’d just never heard anyone do this before. I’m sure there are jazz records like this, but this doesn’t feel like jazz. The challenge was to make it *not* sound like jazz to the listener. It’s just a weird experiment, a study. When



we first had the idea back in 2017 we tried to make a record out of it, but couldn’t. Everything we did was unlistenable! I’d be looking at my guitar neck and be like, ‘F*ck, what scale am I in?!’ But there was something catchy about it, and every time I’d sit in front of any keyboard I would oscillate between those two scales, and every now and then land on something pretty. It took five years of tinkering in the background, but slowly it came together. My favourite records that we’ve made as a band have always been ones I felt we couldn’t have made a few years ago. They feel like progressions or signposts along the road.”

And even over these past five years, King Gizzard have come far. It’s how they’ve been able to come up with four compelling, extraordinary albums on the bounce this year. Stu reckons they’ve developed as players together, and – crucially – they’re listening to what each other are doing better than ever before. “We jam for a little bit,” he says, “so you’re conversing in a certain way, musically. And if you’re talking all day, by the end you’ve said some fairly interesting things...”

KING GIZZARD-STYLE ODD TIME

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=120

Em Fmaj7#11/E Play 4 times

This riff is in the E minor pentatonic scale with an added, 9 interval (E F G A B D). 7/8 time is one eighth-note shorter than regular 4/4 time which gives the riff a proggy flavour. Listen to the drums and bass on the backing track and follow the accents to match the guitar riff.

9/8 TIME HARMONICS RIFF

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=100

A sus4 D sus4 Play 4 times

This part is in 9/8 time, which is just one eighth-note longer than regular 4/4. Use your first and fourth fingers to reach from the 7th to 12th frets and lightly touch each string above the fret-wire and release and pluck simultaneously to play each note as a natural harmonic.

MICROTONAL IDEA

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=100

E5 Am N.C. Play 4 times

King Gizz sometimes play microtonal guitars, which have notes in-between the ones found on regular guitars. We can mimic the microtonal sound by bending quarter tones; these are in-between a fretting note and a semitone bend. To create the microtonal notes use your first finger to very slightly pull down on the third string.

Words Jonathan Horsley, Stan Bull, Sam Roche

OUTLIERS

From major stars to cult heroes, cutting edge players are experimenting across multiple genres, from jazz to metal and beyond...

ST. VINCENT

Annie Clark, aka St. Vincent, is one of the most well-known and commercially successful artists at the forefront of cutting edge guitar today. The Oklahoman singer-songwriter already has three Grammy awards to her name and has performed at the ceremony onstage with pop sensation Dua Lipa. But despite having one foot in the mainstream, Clark's unorthodox approach to guitar fully embraces the avant-garde.

St. Vincent's 2017 LP *Masseduction* cracked the top ten in both the UK and the US, and its electro-pop sound saw Clark rethinking the tonal palette of her guitar rather than abandoning it in favour of synths – something more typical of the genre's core sound. *Masseduction*'s title track features heavy, fuzz-centric riffing that sounds far closer to a saw wave synth than an electric guitar, or anything obviously played by a human for that matter. Clark uses a slide to allow a continuous glide between notes that gives the riffs a pitch-bending quality, and the extremely obscure AAAAAE tuning allows her to hit multiple octaves at once for a thick, robotic sound.

Clark's most recent album *Daddy's Home* channels 70s downtown New York through soul-inspired vocals and a heavy use of a wah. Album highlight *Down* features Clark on both guitar and electric sitar-guitar, layering variant riffs atop one another before coming together for a harmonised dual-guitar solo that pays homage to psychedelia whilst sounding inventive and unique.

Not just content to stretch the boundaries of her music, Clark's penchant for a bold, original idea is on full display with her signature Ernie Ball six-string, too. The model's light weight and ergonomic shape was designed with female players in mind, whilst still being tonally beefy enough for fellow fuzz abuser Jack White to use it onstage.

As St. Vincent continues to re-write her own guitar rulebook she broadens the minds of many a mainstream pop fan in the process, proving to us all that there is life in our beloved instrument yet.

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PLAY LIKE ST. VINCENT

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=110

1/4 Play 4 times

TAB

0 3 0 3 3

Play the open string and 3rd fret with downstrokes and add a slight bend to the 3rd fret note where indicated. In between the fretted notes we have a dissonant ringing sound which St. Vincent creates by strumming the 'wrong' side of a tune-o-matic style bridge. You can create a similar sound by strumming the strings at the fretboard end of the guitar, behind the nut.



SARAH LIPSTATE

This Los Angeles-based guitarist and filmmaker trades under the name Noveller, a solo project casting Lipstate as world-builder, leaning into the creative potential of a well-stocked pedalboard to create atmospheres that are so vivid and real you expect to encounter alien flora and fauna as your mind orients through them.

It was no surprise but still a great delight to see her performing tracks from Angelo Badalamenti's *Twin Peaks* score for solo guitar – her sound is complementary to Lynchian dream worlds. That this dreamweaver of six-string atmospheres has collaborated with all-action artists such as Iggy Pop and defunct Brooklyn noise-rock act Parts & Labor makes her all the more of an enigma. Lipstate's guitar choices include Fender offsets, an Ed O'Brien Stratocaster, a late-'70s Gibson Marauder, Les Pauls, and of course her signature Bill with onboard fuzz that she used when playing with Pop.

Photos: Getty/ShervinLainez

JULIAN LAGE

Lage once attached a stethoscope to a Fender Telecaster so that he could explore its tone more thoroughly. The experiment was too harsh on the ear, he admits, but it was indicative of where his mind is at, how restless his curiosity is. Lage started young, but even a child prodigy – later, a Berklee grad – who could be seen playing jazz standards on a Tele wielded behind his head aged eight, could not be expected to evolve into a player like Lage in 2022. His compositions speak to something fundamental about the art form. Technically, he plays on the edge, a book-smart player challenged by his own improvisational derring do. And tonally, whether on his Tele or signature Collings 470 JL, leaning into the treble-forward tones of jazz guitar trailblazers George Barnes and Charlie Christian, offering himself nowhere to hide, exploiting his guitar's iridescent overtones to electrify the performance.



TOM MISCH

London-born Tom Misch is something of a modern day renaissance man, whose talents include DJ-ing, playing the piano and violin and having impressive vocal chops. But what separates the 27-year-old singer-songwriter-producer from his peers is his dexterity with the electric guitar, from which he effortlessly blends contemporary jazz, neo-soul, funk and R&B – his chameleonic style supplying an organic feel to his otherwise beat-focussed sound.

Misch studied jazz guitar at London's Trinity Laban Conservatoire, and his fingerstyle approach of using alternating chords spliced with short licks has formed the basis of some of his most well-loved compositions. A superfan of iconic crate-digging producer J Dilla, Misch uses modern tech to create lush worlds of texture, often multi-tracking his guitar atop washed out synth pads and string drones. Misch frequently pulls from his love of hip-hop by creating beds of loops and samples for his improvisational noodling, and his love of R&B gives his lead phrasing a strong melodic quality. His understanding of funk often finds him purposefully playing behind the beat – a quality of his music that's easy to identify but harder to emulate.

A good example of Misch's sonic world-building through layered guitar parts comes from his appearance in a *Fact* magazine video, where Misch has ten minutes on the clock to create a beat from scratch on a DAW (digital audio workstation). Armed with a vintage semi-hollow Gibson six-string, he first records a funky bassline across the lower frets, which he then pitches an octave down using a plugin. He then adds clean, jazzy chord inversions on top, which he pitches up to emulate the sound of an electric piano. Though not recorded, he finishes off the track with an improvised solo, using his signature envelope filter lead sound. Though created with a logic plugin in this example, Misch has been seen with an Aguilar Filter Twin on his pedalboard. A young creative whose modern approach to recording speaks for itself. For someone so enthralled with technology, it's astounding how expressive Misch's playing can be.

PLAY LIKE TOM MISCH

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

Play each chord quickly and keep them short by relaxing your fretting fingers to mute the strings. In between each chord use hammer-ons and pull-offs to play the licks, which you can think of as belonging to first position of the F# minor pentatonic scale.

A man with dark, wavy hair and a nose ring is playing a black Ibanez electric guitar. He is wearing a purple leather jacket over a black turtleneck. He is looking down at the guitar. The background is a backstage area with various items like a brown paper bag with text, a white bag, and a black bag. The lighting is dim and moody. In the top left corner, there is a red flame-shaped graphic with the text "THE HOTTEST CUTTING EDGE GUITARISTS ON THE PLANET". In the bottom left corner, there is a small black circle with the number "62".

MANUEL GARDNER FERNANDES

Setting the record straight, the guitarist confirmed that he does occasionally edit and pre-record his videos – as is the entitlement of any online content creator in 2022 – to ensure the music is the “best quality

"I started playing metal when I was a kid and already started

playing downstrokes back then,” he said of his signature style in 2020. “After that, I kind of started combining Latin styles, and at some point I wanted to integrate dead sounds and notes. I found a way to play it the fastest and tightest way possible to make it sound sick.”

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

TOTAL GUITAR DECEMBER 2022

LARI BASILIO

Look online and you'll find no shortage of adept electric guitar players, but few possess the emotional feel with the instrument quite like Lari Basilio. While her music is mostly instrumental – which often presents an arrangement challenge to many guitarists – Basilio uses an absence of vocals to allow her Ibanez LB1-VL to really sing. Highlights of the guitarist's recent catalogue include a breathtaking rendition of Derek And The Dominos' *Layla* with fellow guitarist Martin Miller – in which she painstakingly recreates the blues classic's iconic pentatonic lead lines with killer precision, showcasing her soulful lead playing. Recently, Basilio forayed into the world of seven-string guitars, too; a move perhaps unexpected for her playing style. On *Alive And Living*, the second track from her latest full-length, *Your Love*, she leans on the lower registers offered by an Ibanez Prestige AZ24047, illustrating how her versatility with the instrumental is virtually boundless.



JAKUB ZYTECKI

A Polish frontiersman of guitar technique and texture, Jakub Zytecki approaches electronic music with the virtuosic iconoclasm of a shredder who knows there's always something interesting over the horizon. Oftentimes, that won't be guitar. He confesses to not listening to guitar music that much. Hey, we love guitar, but there's a lot of sound out there to investigate. Listen to something like *Nothing Lasts*, *Nothing's Lost* or *HEART*, and you are confronted with a player who makes the guitar sound familiar yet alien. With clean tones gently manipulated by effects, he'll deliver something melodically and technically audacious over relaxed, spaced-out and blissed-out dream pop beats. His sound is at once ambient and immediate, and all the more thrilling for not needing a guitar to make it function; just needing guitar to make it perfect, his strings freestyling in a hyper-composed world of electronica.

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JASON RICHARDSON

Face-melting shred guitar has been done in the world of metal for years, but Jason Richardson – easily one of the genre’s most proficient players – continues to thrust the long-established discipline in new directions, sometimes even at the cost of his own health. *Tendinitis*, the lead track from Richardson’s latest album with metalcore drummer Luke

Holland, *II*, is so named as the guitarist has suffered the condition twice in both arms; partly due to “working out six days a week, playing video games, constantly using my phone”, he told *Guitar World* in a recent interview, but mostly in pursuit of advancing his already-out-of-this-world guitar chops. Other highlights from *II* include *poombachu*, an epic, near-eight-minute cut loaded with sizzling thrash arrangements, djenty dynamics, and gravity defying Uzi-esque lead lines, and *Polyrhythmic Pug*, a proggy homage to Richardson’s late pet pug, who, strangely would drink his water in odd time signatures.

PLINI

Everyone surely knows by now what Plini Roessler-Holgate is all about, especially after Steve Vai declared him the future of guitar. But if you’re just catching up, like Rip Van Winkle shambling down the Catskills, behold a player who might just change how you think of guitar in terms of rhythm, phrasing and style – and the design of the instrument, too, for Plini’s headless Strandberg Boden Prog NX 6 is the ur-21st-century electric guitar.

Over two albums, *Handmade Cities* (2016) and *Impulse Voices* (2022), and a scattering of EPs, Plini has positioned himself as the quintessential modern progressive guitar player. Plini’s sound is guitar music as fantasia, an unreal player referencing the melodic audacity and musical grammar of videogame soundtracks as though to warn the audience that all reality is virtual, and you just have to surrender to that fact.



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MATEUS ASATO

When so much of social media's guitar virtuosity concentrated on shred flame-outs, Mateus Asato is like a cool drink of water on a hot summer's day. Oh, yeah, what he does with the instrument is technically virtuosic, how he can take a track – say by The Beatles – and then reinterpret it for solo guitar in a way that somehow, magically, amplifies the original work's melody like never before. It is his gift for secreting technicality within an approachable neo-soul sound that has seen the likes of Bruno Mars securing his services.

Asato is both booksmart and street-smart. He studied at Musicians Institute in Los Angeles in 2013, giving him a firm grip of the fundamentals. But he understood the power of social

media, and how to use it to document his progress as a player and artist. In a sense, this makes him the quintessential 21st-century guitar hero, evolving in real-time, in full view of the audience.

What they'll see and hear is a dynamic player whose all-round game makes him just as comfortable with fingerstyle and hybrid picking as he is switching between alternate and economy picking, and a sensibility that teeters between the restrained and the spectacular. Boutique tones, hot, musical tube drive, sauced with the three-dimensional depth of reverb and delay, and tamped down by his guitar's volume control, are all hallmarks of Asato's sound. Check out our tech box-out to crib some of his fingerstyle approach, making full use of open strings to underpin his melodic ideas. Once upon a time, his lodestar was shred – the big dogs,

ASATO VIRTUOSO

Mateus is a player just as comfortable with fingerstyle as economy picking.

Petrucchi *et al* – but Asato is that rare thing these days, a player whose sound evades easy categorisation, stylistically omnivorous, but with a taste for the finer things.

PLAY LIKE MATEUS ASATO

[BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO](http://bit.ly/tg365audio)

$\text{♩} = 100$ Play 4 times

let ring ——— let ring ———

TAB: 5 6 9 0 2
p i m a c c m p i p i m c a p i m c a

Use your 2nd finger to fret the sixth string, fingers 3 and 4 on the two middle strings and use 1st finger for the first string. This fingering shape is good for each fretted chord, and for the F#m11, simply remove your 1st finger. As you move up and down the fretboard, keep your fingers clear of the open strings to allow them to ring as you use finger-style to gently pluck the strings.

**THE
HOTTEST
CUTTING EDGE
GUITARISTS
ON THE PLANET**



➤ ICHIKA NITO

Ichika Nito is the modern-day guitarist success story. After making a name for himself on YouTube – posting quirky quick clips of himself playing guitar solos on one-string, and meme-like clips, including one titled ‘When you need to impress a girl but you only have a guitar and 20 seconds’ – Ichika has begun using his platform to promote his stellar original music, most recently with a dizzying seven-string-infused single, *Away*.

His efforts have landed him noteworthy guest spots, too; back in June, he lent his silky six-string chops to *More Than Life*, a track by rapper-turned-pop-punk-superstar Machine Gun Kelly. Ichika said it was “a pretty crazy story” that a “guy from Japan that barely speaks English” wrote a guitar

loop which now features in a Machine Gun Kelly track.

But this is not a guitarist that needs to lean on big musical names to prop himself up. Currently his following includes nearly 2.2 million YouTube subscribers, over three quarters of a million Instagram followers, and over a quarter of a million TikTok followers. As of last year, he’s had a headless Ibanez signature model, the ICHI10, under his belt, too, so his influence is clearly working its magic on a wave of new guitarists.

Standing alongside the likes of Polyphia and Manuel Gardner Fernandes, Ichika Nito is a trailblazer of the modern guitar movement, fusing crystalline clean fingerstyle passages and tapped slides with hip-hop and trap beats, showcasing the limitless future

POP STAR

Ichika is surprised by his own “crazy story” that’s seen him work with the likes of Machine Gun Kelly.

potential of the instrument in a time when many have touted its death. Quite the opposite: the guitar is very much alive and well, and in the hands of immensely talented bucks like Ichika.

PLAY LIKE ICHIKA NITO

[BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO](https://bit.ly/tg365audio)

♩ = 110

Bm7

8va

Play 4 times

let ring throughout

T
A
B

17 14 15 22 20 15 21 19 14 21 16 22 14 17

c i m a
p

Form the Bm7 shape at the 14th fret using all four fretting hand fingers and leave it there for the entire lick. Start with finger-style technique to play the opening arpeggio, then use any finger of your picking hand to tap and slide while allowing all the notes to ring together.

GOOD TO GO

WHENEVER • WHEREVER



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IRON MAIDEN

RUN TO THE HILLS

Gallop your way to guitar stardom with the mighty Maiden's classic slice of 80s British heavy metal

This legendary track appeared on Maiden's 1982 metal classic *The Number Of The Beast*, and features Dave Murray on lead duties with Adrian

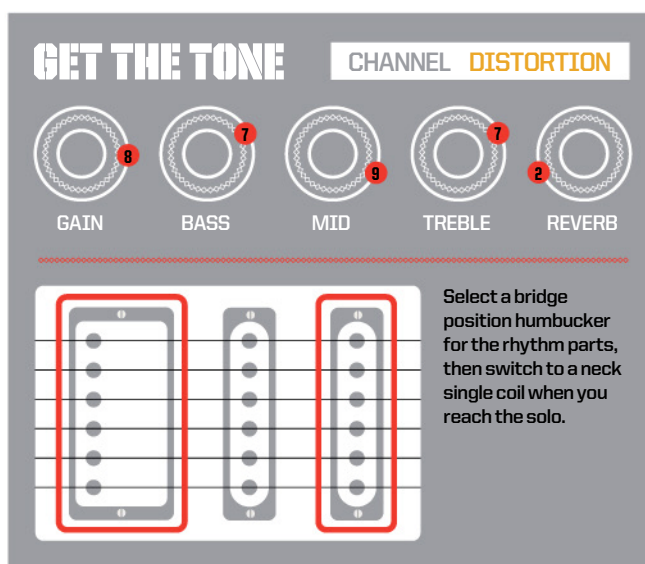
Smith holding down the rhythm guitar on 'root-5th' powerchords. The song kicks off with a run of tricky string bends which need to be pitched as accurately as possible. Aim to hit the target notes quickly, without drawing out the bends.

The verse features Maiden's trademark 'gallop' riffing – a repeating rhythm played mostly on two-string powerchords. Play a constant down-down-up picking pattern, keeping your motion as minimal as you can.

Murray's solo features fast legato licks, but it's nearly all based in the good old minor pentatonic scale, so hopefully the phrasing will feel familiar.

SOUND ADVICE

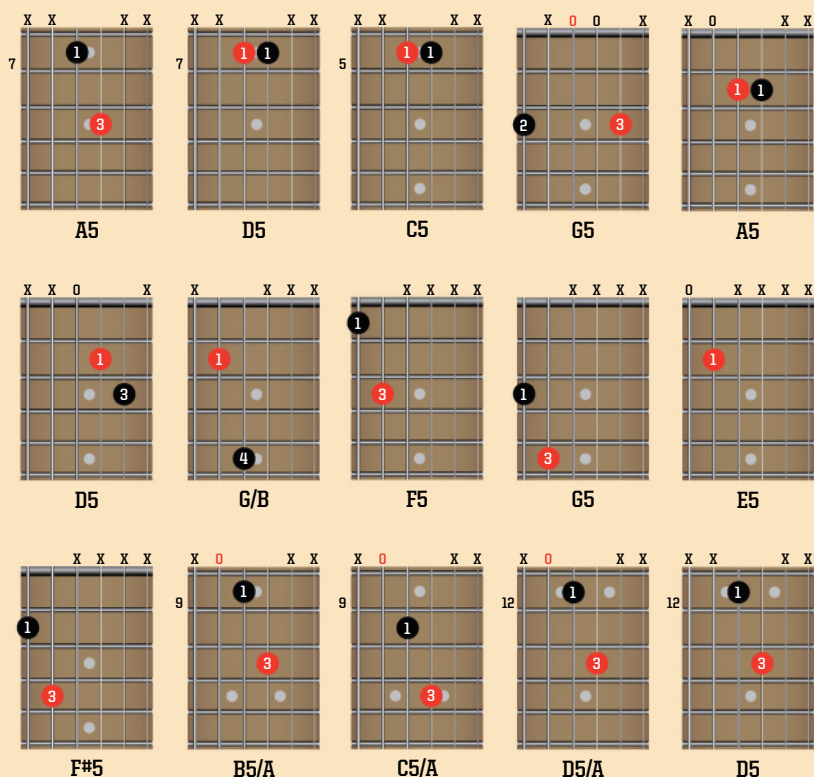
Everything you need to know before playing 'Run To The Hills'



A British Marshall-type distorted amp tone works best for *RTTH*. Be generous with the midrange on your amp to help cut through during the solo. Though single coil pickups were used on the recording, Dave Murray uses a humbucker-loaded Strat these days – and if you're trying to get close to the sound of Maiden's triple-axe attack, the two-coil approach is probably the better option for those galloping rhythm parts. An HSS configuration is ideal so that you can switch over to the creamier neck single coil pickup for the solo.

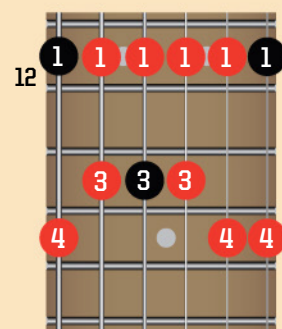
CHORDS

The majority of the track uses simple powerchords, so it's just a question of authority and delivery when tackling these two-string shapes. You're probably familiar with the similar three-string powerchords. However, you'll get a tighter, more focussed sound during the gallop riffs using the smaller shapes.

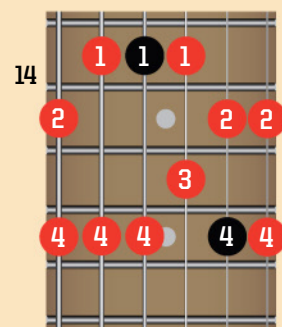


SCALES

The E minor pentatonic scale in 12th position should be familiar to everyone, so make sure you know this scale. The majority of the solo sticks to legato phrases based in this single pattern. It briefly wanders into shape two, where you'll see the large three-semitone bend at the 17th fret.



E minor pentatonic scale (shape 1)



E minor pentatonic scale (shape 2)

IRON MAIDEN

RUN TO THE HILLS

FULL
TAB

RUN TO THE HILLS
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IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Intro (lead guitar)

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=120

0:08

BU BU BU

15 (17) 15 (17) 13 (15)

13 (15) 13 (15) 15 (17) [17]

1

4

A⁵ D⁵ A⁵

1.2.3.4.

G⁵ A⁵

BU BU BU

11 (13) 11 (13) 13 (15) [15]

BU BU BU

10 (12) 10 (12) 12 (14) [14]

4

5.

G⁵ D⁵ Scoop Scoop

♩=180

Scoop

grad.

0:49

BU Scoop Scoop

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

[15] 14 [14] grad.

6

Accurate bending is the main challenge here, so spend lots of time perfecting your tuning on each tone bend. Remember, the physical distances you bend will vary depending on which string you're on, so try not to overcook these phrases, particularly when you reach the third string.

IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Intro (rhythm guitar)

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩=120

3

0:08

A⁵ D⁵

9 9 7

7 7 7

0

1

**IRON MAIDEN** RUN TO THE HILLS Intro (rhythm guitar, cont'd)[illegible]

Pay attention to the brief rests between each chord in bars 3 to 7. The momentary pause gives you time to comfortably change shape/position. Notice that the second chord in bar 3 falls on the fourth 16th note of the beat, and not on the beat. This takes careful timing, so practise slowly to begin with.

IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Verse

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

71

IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Verse (cont'd)

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

7

9

pick scrape

This is the classic Maiden 'gallop' rhythm. The addition of palm muting makes things a tad more difficult, so spend time with a metronome building up your speed. Stamina can be difficult at this tempo, too. If you find yourself getting sloppy or you feel any cramp, take a short rest, stretch, then begin again.

IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Chorus

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

1:10

PM

PM

1.

2.

5

The long, ringing powerchords are easy to play. However, you'll need to make sure you catch the iconic gallop rhythm in bar 4, so take care with your timing. We recommend that you play bar 8 using all downstrokes, but it also works with alternate picking, if you prefer.

IRON MAIDEN RUN TO THE HILLS Solo

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

2:12

w/wah

BU

grad. BD

BU

12

15 (17)

(15) 15 (17)

12

14

12

15 (17)

12

15

12

15

12

14

14

1

STING SHAPE OF MY HEART

TG takes a look at Rockschoo's Grade Six arrangement of Sting's masterpiece from 1993's *Ten Summoner's Tales*

Sting co-wrote *Shape of My Heart* with his long-serving live and studio guitarist Dominic Miller. A versatile musician, Miller's classical and Latin American influences are clear in the elegant and distinctive arpeggios that underpin the song. These arpeggios are based on open-chord voicings which may be unfamiliar, some with big finger stretches, so take time to learn the fingerings and changes slowly before introducing the picking hand.

In bar 1, the C# note at the end of beat 1 should be fretted with the first finger, linking the F#m and E6 arpeggios together. Try to balance the volume of notes, aiming for clarity and a consistent balance between the bass, middle and upper pitches. The part also features full chords, played either by picking the notes simultaneously (e.g., the G#m11 chord in bar 7), or with a variety of articulations (such as the ghost note hammer-on in bar 6 on beat 1.



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SHAPE OF MY HEART

Music by Sting and Dominic Miller

Lyrics by Sting

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STING SHAPE OF MY HEART

BIT.LY/TG365AUDIO

♩ = 85

F#m E6 D6 C#7sus4 C#7

D/F# E6 D6 C#7sus4 C#7

1 3

STING SHAPE OF MY HEART

BIT.LY/T6365AUDIO

5

D⁶ Aadd⁹ A C^{#7}

TAB 5 4 7 4 5 7 4 0 2 2 0 2 2 0 4 6 6

7

D G^{#m11} F^{#m} Play 3 times

TAB 7 7 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

9

F^{#m} E⁶ D⁶ C^{#7sus4} C^{#7}

TAB 10 6 10 9 6 9 7 4 7 7 4 6 4 9 9 7 7 5 5 5 4 4 4

11

D/F[#] E⁶ D⁶ C^{#7sus4} C^{#7}

TAB 10 7 10 9 6 9 7 4 7 7 4 6 4 9 9 7 7 5 5 5 4 4 4

13

D⁶ Aadd⁹ A C^{#7}

TAB 5 4 7 4 5 7 4 0 2 2 0 2 2 0 4 6 6

D G#m¹¹ F#m F#m/E To Coda ⊕ Dmaj⁷

15

G#m¹¹

18

C#m B⁶ A⁶ G#7sus⁴ G#7 A/C# B⁶

Solo in C#minor

20

A⁶ G#7sus⁴ G#7 A⁶ Eadd⁹ E G#7

23

A D#m⁷ C#m C#m⁷ A D#m⁷ A D. al Coda ⊕

26

[illegible]

79

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

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

HOW WE TEST

CURATION

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

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS

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

*WHAT IS GAS?

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

NO SNAKE OIL

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

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT

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

REAL WORLD REVIEWS

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

BEST BUY AWARD

TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you need to check out



PLATINUM AWARD

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



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Cobain's "dream guitar" gets a reissue

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Double value?



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



SOME ISSUES



POOR



START ME UP!

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

JHS ARTIFICIAL BLONDE

1 A signature vibrato pedal for indie folk-rock artist Maddison Cunningham, the Artificial Blonde is inspired by the true pitch vibrato of Magnatone valve amps. The pedal's two channels allow players to switch between two different vibrato sounds of different intensities, just as Cunningham does. There are Speed and Depth controls for both sides with a global Volume knob and an EQ that operates as an active tilt control for highs and lows.

£269

www.jhspedals.info

IBANEZ TODION

2 First seen in Polyphia's *Playing God* video, Tim Henson's latest sleek signature could open up nylon-string guitars to a whole new audience. It's a very different approach to classical traditions with a Talman-esque shape and a small soundhole on the upper bout edge for unplugged performance. The Tree Of Death inlay nods to Steve Vai's signature models and the onboard electronics pair a Fishman Sonicore piezo with a Ibanez's AEQ210TF preamp.

£659

www.ibanez.com

JACKSON HIGH-PERFORMANCE CABLE

3 How metal can a cable get? How about 6.66-metres in length and blood splattered. It's part of Jackson's new range of apparel and accessories that includes blood splatter straps (we're detecting a theme!) and Soloist guitar strings. The cables are also available in all-black and less evil 3.33-metre length but all feature 24K gold-plated jacks, heavy duty shielding and 8mm OD wire, with one straight plug and one right-angled.

From £17.99

www.jacksonguitars.com

WALRUS AUDIO EONS

4 This year's most versatile fuzz pedal? Five clipping modes and voltage selection says yes. Following in the stomping steps of Walrus's Eras distortion and Ages overdrive, a five-state mode control takes you from soft-clipping silicon to germanium pick-friendly dynamics all the way to positively angry compression. The voltage control allows maximum openness at the extreme of 18V to dying battery-esque splutter at 3V. There's lots to explore here on a Swiss Army knife of fuzz.

£235

www.walrusaudio.com

HARLEY BENTON JA-60CC

5 The new custom colours for HB's offset add extra desirability to a bargain electric. While block inlays and Seafoam Green, Inca Silver, Shell Pink, Dakota Red and Lake Placid Blue finishes nod to classic Californian influence, the Tune-O-Matic-style bridge and lack of rhythm circuit streamline proceedings. The caramelised maple necks are a nice touch and 'boards here are laurel. Basswood bodies should hopefully keep weights on the lighter side, too.

£156

www.thomann.com



MAGNETO ERIC GALES RD3 SIGNATURE

£849

A fine slice of blues... and bling!

While Eric Gales is enjoying quite a renaissance, not least with his latest Joe Bonamassa- and Josh Scott-produced album *Crown*, the Magneto guitar pictured on its cover is lesser known. In fact, Magneto was founded by Christian Hatsatt back in 2008 and have built quite an underground reputation with their small production Japanese-made T-Wave and Sonnet models, which combine neat re-designs of Fender's finest with exemplary hand-craft but, inevitably, high-end prices. Eric was introduced to the brand just over a decade ago and has been playing them ever since, and, of course, already has his own Raw Dawg II Custom signature model based on the Sonnet.

from the age-old outline. There's some dishing around the neck heel which reduces the bulk a little too and you'll notice an extra strap button at the tip of the heel: as Eric Gales' fans will know, he plays upside-down, left-handed style.

The neck and fingerboard increase the distance from the vintage recipe with a more Gibson-style 12" radius to the dark rosewood fingerboard while the neck profile feels more like a slighter narrower version of Gibson's SlimTaper rather than any vintage Fender we've played. The fret work is excellent, the gauge allows enough height for big bends without feeling over-high and the fingerboard edges are lightly rounded: excellent craft.

In contrast the vibrato sticks with vintage style. The all-steel unit is a really quality piece,

1 NECK

The initial run of RD3s used a three-piece hard rock maple neck; Magneto have now switched to slab-sawn roasted maple, primarily for stability, but Magneto's Christian Hatsatt believes it also adds "a certain amount of higher midrange" to the sound.

2 PICKUPS

The pickups for Magneto's U-One series are made close to the factory that builds the guitars in China. These Metro-Poles EG-1 single coils were designed for the guitar and feature scatter-wound 42AWG Elektrisola coil wire and Alnico V flush pole magnets.

3 VIBRATO

Gotoh's hardware is renowned for its quality and is more often featured on higher-priced instruments. The vibrato here is very vintage in style with pressed steel saddles, a steel top-plate and a steel block along with a screw-in arm.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Two-piece basswood

NECK: Roasted maple, 'medium C' profile, bolt-on

SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood/12" radius

FRETS: 22, narrow jumbo

PICKUPS: Magneto Metro-Poles Custom EG1 single coil set

CONTROLS: Master volume and tone, 5-way lever pickup selector switch

HARDWARE: Gotoh Custom vintage-style vibrato w/ steel plate saddles and steel block, Gotoh enclosed tuners - gold-plated

FINISH: Sunset Gold (as reviewed)

CONTACT: Rosetti Ltd, www.rosetti.co.uk

“AN ENGAGING, LIVELY AND VIBRANT SIGNATURE GUITAR”

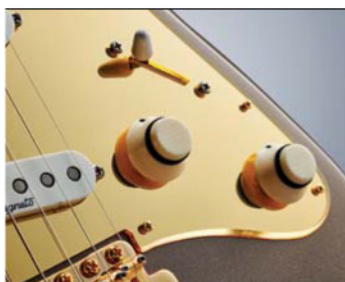
But starting in 2017 Christian set about producing a much more affordable Chinese-made U-One range - which became available in Europe in 2019 - and in 2020 discussions with Eric led to the new signature guitar you see here, which is anything but high-end in price.

In the flesh, the RD3 hardly reinvents the Stratocaster, but along with its smart metallic finish - that gold mirror scratchplate with its smart grained ivoroid control knobs and gold-plated Gotoh hardware, not to mention the inlaid signature that surrounds the 12th fret - it's certainly distinctive in style. The body outline is altered too: the upper horn is reduced in length and the treble horn slightly altered

although we might be tempted to add a neck shim just to reduce the height of those slightly protruding saddle screws. As supplied, it's set flat on the body too with no up-bend but, like any Strat vibrato, that's easily sorted. We don't get locking tuners either but, not least thanks to a very well-cut oiled bone nut, tuning stability, with sensible use, is surprisingly good. Overall, with a good weight of 7.7lb it's an engaging, lively and vibrant guitar even before we plug in.

Obviously, with three single coils and a five-way pickup selector we get the usual Stratocaster voices (and here the mixes are hum-cancelling), but these slightly overwound Metro-Poles pickups have





Bolt-on tones

The best circuits are simple and effective!

The majority of Strat-inspired electrics stick, pretty much, to the protocols designed back in the early 50s. Those early Strats featured a three-way pickup selector switch (the five-way switch didn't become factory fitted until 1977), a master volume and a tone for the neck pickup and the middle pickup: there was no tone control for the bridge pickup. More modern Strats, of course, use the middle tone control for both neck and middle, and the lower tone for the bridge. The neat thing with the RD3 is the master volume and tone set-up which makes for a fast drive and that tone control really works offering a useable 'woman' tone when fully rolled 'off', and an almost humbucker-like character as you beginning to roll it up and when you're fully up all the sparkle of the slightly overwound single coils become present. Not unique, but nicely done.

a very even string response – thanks to their flush-pole magnets – and a good kick in terms of output. With the volume control full up there's a really modern-sounding sizzle to the high end and while some of that is due to the 500k ohm pots on our sample it's easily tamed just by slightly pulling back the volume a smidge. The



tone control is another surprise that provides a very useable 'woman' tone rolled fully off then a slightly humbucker-like, smoother voice as you begin to wind it up. Kick in some overdrive and light boost and use those controls and here's a guitar that's a lot more than its inspiration. It moves effortlessly from pristine, sparkling funk to full-throttle contemporary blues and just about everything in between. But you really need to use those controls to access the sonic potential.

There's little doubt that Magneto's underground style plays a part in the appeal here. This RD3

is around the same price as PRS's oh-so-mainstream SE Silver Sky, but really holds its own in terms of construction, playability and sound, and although both are based on the good ol' Stratocaster, it's the RD3 that comes across as the more inspired reinvention in terms of style. Unfortunately, not everyone will get the look – and currently there are no colour options – but don't blame us if when you track one down and plug it in, you get hooked. We certainly were.

Dave Burluck



ALSO TRY...

PRS SE SILVER SKY

£979

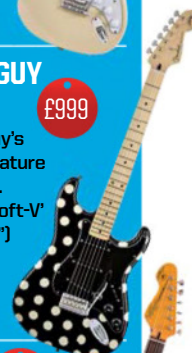
The Indonesian-made SE version of John Mayer's signature PRS model appeared at the start of 2022, costing a third of the price. It's a great sounding Stratocaster-inspired electric built to PRS's no-compromise exacting standards.



FENDER BUDDY GUY STRATOCASTER

£999

Blues legend Buddy Guy's polka dot finished signature Strat is another looker. Highlight include the 'soft-V' neck profile, a 241 (9.5") fingerboard radius and Mexican Standard single coils.



VINTAGE V6 THOMAS BLUG

£649

With artwork by German artist Daniel Hahn, this Vintage model is well spec'd for the price, including Wilkinson hardware, WVS vintage-voiced Alnico V single coils and a 7.5" radius.



AN INSPIRED RE-INVENTION OF THE GOOL OL' STRAT

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



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Words Daryl Robertson Photography Phil Barker

EPIPHONE POWER PLAYERS SG AND LES PAUL

Epiphone are here to help kids fulfil their rockstar potential with two pint-sized guitar legends

If there's one thing we can be sure of it's that your first guitar has a monumental impact on you as a player. Put the right guitar into the hands of a child and their playing career will be accelerated, sending them speeding down the road to rock stardom, whereas an ill-fitting axe will put the brakes on their progress entirely. Clearly, Epiphone agrees, as they've created an entire collection of guitars specially designed as a gateway for budding guitarists – the Epiphone Power Players. Like something out of a Rick Moranis-led 80s flick, Epiphone has pointed their shrink-ray at their most famous instruments, turning them into short-scale shred machines that are sure to fit even the smallest of hands.

This isn't Epiphone's first venture into the world of miniature guitars – far from it. Some of you may remember the admittedly slightly unloved Les Paul Express, which sat in the depths of the brand's range for quite some time. Now, the Express wasn't a bad guitar. It's just that the nuts-and-bolts approach to a kid-friendly guitar was a little uninspiring – we can't imagine that it lit a fire in the belly of many young players. Contrast that with an eye-catching design, bright colours and focus on playability, and it's clear that the new Power Players Les Paul and SG breathe new life into the concept of a beginner's guitar.

Sporting a 3/4+ length scale – or 22.73", to be exact – as well as a Slim Taper D neck profile, a sculpted heel for improved upper fret access, and a set of 650R/700T humbuckers, these little guitars have an impressive spec list. As you'd expect, with these dinky guitars being aimed squarely at newbies, they come with a plethora of accoutrements, such as an Epiphone branded gig bag, strap and plectrums, plus a basic guitar cable – all you need to do is supply the amplification. Read on and we'll take a close look at both guitars.





EPIPHONE POWER PLAYERS SG

£249

For young ones about to rock

Okay, before we take a deep dive into this guitar, we need to get the obvious stuff out of the way first. This guitar is built with a very specific player in mind, and frankly, we aren't it. This guitar was designed for the youngest of players, putting us a comfortable two feet taller than the intended audience. So with that in mind, we won't judge this devil-horned six-string on whether or not it will replace our beloved SG Standard, but instead, we aim to find out whether it fulfils the brief it has set out for itself – is it a good first guitar?

Now, the Power Players SG is up against some pretty stiff competition in this rather crowded end of the market. Fender, Jackson and Ibanez all offer well-received mini shredders, and unfortunately for Epiphone, they are all more affordable – though granted, they don't all come with extra accessories. That said, Epiphone

might just win when it comes to playability, and the retro charm of this classic design most definitely stole our hearts.

Despite its size, this guitar doesn't feel cramped at all – even for a grown-up's hands. Sitting with this SG was surprisingly natural and the fret spacing didn't mess with our muscle memory too much. The D profile neck is nicely rounded, with a smooth finish, and we can see it being a hit with rookie players. It's easy to play for hours and hours without placing too much strain on young fingers.

At the heart of this colourful SG is a set of Epiphone branded humbuckers – more specifically, the 650R and 700T. These no-frills pickups deliver the exact sound you expect to hear from this devilishly pointy axe, with the tone being equal parts warm and present, and you'll be glad to

know there's just the right amount of output to get things cooking.

We need to give a quick shout out to the overall aesthetic of the Power Players range and, in particular the SG. It's our belief that Epiphone is trying to make the – sometimes – stuffy world of legacy guitars fun and exciting for new players, and we fully endorse this bold look. All three

colour options – Lava Red, Dark Matter Ebony and Ice Blue – hit the mark for us. Our review example was finished in the snowy Ice Blue, and while it may look more at home on a guitar of Californian persuasion, we think the handsome curves of the SG wear it well.

In fact, Gibson, if you are reading this: hurry up and make the SG Standard available in this finish for us older kids!

AT A GLANCE

BODY & NECK: Mahogany

NECK PROFILE: SlimTaper D

SCALE LENGTH: 577.34 mm / 22.73"

FINGERBOARD: Indian Laurel

FRETS: 22, Medium Jumbo Bridge, Lightning Bar Compensated Wrap Around

PICKUPS: Epiphone 650R/700T Humbuckers

CONTROLS: 2 Volume, 2 Tone

FINISH: Ice Blue (reviewed), Dark Matter Ebony, Lava Red

“EPIPHONE IS MAKING LEGACY GUITARS EXCITING FOR NEW PLAYERS”



EPIPHONE POWER PLAYERS LES PAUL £249

The tiny LP that's perfect for your sweet child

Now we turn our attention to the SG's vainglorious big brother, the Les Paul. The Power Players Les Paul shares the same specs and aesthetic and is even available in the same choice of colours – our review example just so happened to be in the sizzling Lava Red finish.

Keeping the scale the same at 22.73", the Les Paul is just as comfortable as its pointier counterpart and just as easy to play. In fact, it might even be more comfortable. The single-cut option seems to be better balanced overall, especially when seated. Now, that's not all that surprising, as this is a fairly common observation when comparing the Les Paul to the SG – we just didn't

expect it to be quite so noticeable on the mini version.

Of course, the neck sports the same D profile as before, but where it gets more interesting is in the sculpted heel. While both guitars feature this design, it's way more useful on the Les Paul iteration. By the very nature of the single-cut design, the fret access just isn't as good as the SG, and while it doesn't solve the issue completely, the recessed heel joint does go a long way to making playing up at the dusty end more comfortable.

Tonally, there isn't much in it, between these guitars. And, yes, you guessed it, the Les

Paul features the same 650R and 700T pickup set, as well as the two volume, two tone layout you'd expect from the LP. The overall sound of the Power

Players Les Paul is rich, warm and much bigger than the body would have you believe. We actually found ourselves favouring the tone of the neck pickup on a clean Twin-style setting with plenty of reverb.

For us, this little LP really came into its own in this scenario, delivering a dynamic sound that some larger – and more expensive – guitars would be jealous of.

AT A GLANCE

BODY & NECK: Material: Mahogany

NECK PROFILE: SlimTaper D

SCALE LENGTH: 577.34 mm / 22.73"

FINGERBOARD: Indian Laurel

FRETS: 22, Medium Jumbo Bridge, Lightning Bar Compensated Wrap Around

PICKUPS: Epiphone 650R/700T Humbuckers

CONTROLS: 2 Volume, 2 Tone

FINISH: Lava Red (reviewed), Ice Blue, Dark Matter Ebony

"THIS LITTLE LES PAUL DELIVERS A DYNAMIC SOUND THAT SOME LARGER – AND MORE EXPENSIVE – GUITARS WOULD BE JEALOUS OF"

FINAL VERDICT

Are Epiphone's Power Players the best mini guitars on the market right now?

This question really has two answers. The short answer is 'yes', with an 'if', the long answer is 'no', with a 'but'.

In truth, we really enjoyed Epiphone's new venture into short-scale, kid-friendly guitars. These are a mammoth step up when compared to Epiphone's previous mini offering and they will most definitely inspire legions of wannabe rockstars, for sure. Both of these instruments offer a new look for Epiphone, while the stellar playability

and superb sound prove they aren't just style over substance, but the price can't be overlooked.

Coming in at just shy of £250, these guitars are over £100 more expensive than the Squier Mini Jazzmaster, which is also a dual humbucker loaded, miniature six-string in a pastel finish. You don't get the added extras such as a gigbag, picks, or cable, but with the cost of everything going up, it's hard not to see the Squier as a pretty sweet deal.

That said, we can't deny that some players are just more drawn to the classic appearance – and sound – of the Les Paul or SG, and in that case, these are by far and away the best options out there for young players looking to kick start their playing career with a classic axe hanging off their shoulder. If your little one is seeking that iconic tone, look and feel only a Les Paul or SG can deliver, then the new Epiphone Power Players are definitely worth it. We certainly had a lot of fun playing them.

EPIPHONE POWER PLAYERS SG

£249



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

EPIPHONE POWER PLAYERS LES PAUL

£249



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



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HARLEY BENTON EVIL TWIN

£69

Double value?

While the shell pink finish is unusual to see on an effects pedal, the two influences here are not. The influence of the Ibanez Tube Screamer and Fulltone OCD is apparent across the price spectrum, and it wouldn't be difficult to pick up two budget mini pedals in this ballpark for around £70. But where Harley Benton's dual pedal series offers a tempting proposition is they save space and power outlets on your pedalboard, and players will know that's a constant juggling act. There's the added incentive of being able to change the gain stacking order the pedals are in at the flick of a switch (or leaving them independent). Practicality box ticked. So how does it sound?

The 'Tube Drive' TS-inspired side has the added versatility of the Hot/Warm modes seemingly inspired by Mooer's Green Mile mini pedal. It's not the same circuit though – we A/B'd them. While the Warm mode is the familiar mid-push TS-808 feel we are used to, the Hot mode boosts the low end. So while one is great for cutting through in the mix, the other can give added girth to single-coil pickups if required. But it's notable that the mids were still pretty spiky in this mode, too.

The harder clipping of the 'Overdrive' OCD-influenced side offers significantly more gain, with the lo- and hi-pass filter switch allowing players to further explore EQ shaping independently and in combination. While the

Tube Drive side can be an always-on option when dialled low, the obvious advantage of the left-hand circuit in our preferred Tube Drive > Overdrive stacking order is to kick it in for solos or big powerchord choruses. Stacked up you can also get into heavy rock and vintage metal territory if you desire.

The tones and range of gain with EQ scope here are impressive and show their worth in a band mix, with the Overdrive side notably brighter than the OCD-influenced Joyo Ultimate Drive we have, and proving how varied interpretations can be. An excellent value pedal.

Rob Laing

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Dual circuit analogue overdrive pedal

CONTROLS: Tube Drive side A: Hot/Warm modes mini toggle, Level, Tone, Drive, activation footswitch; middle toggle switch offering A>B, independent A or B and B>B switching order modes. Overdrive side B: Lo-pass and Hi-Pass filters, Volume, Tone, Drive

SOCKETS: Input, output, power

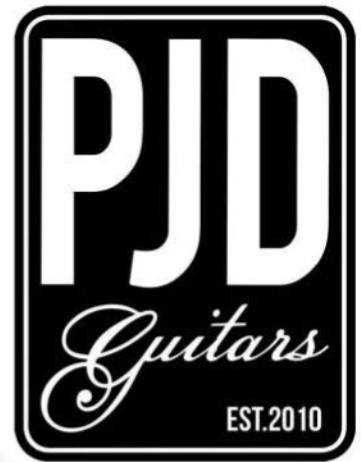
TRUE BYPASS: Yes

POWER: 9v PSU, 100mA

CONTACT: Harley Benton, www.harleybenton.com

THE TONES AND RANGE OF GAIN HERE ARE IMPRESSIVE

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



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Words Stan Bull

ALEX BISHOP

LONGHEADS

Moving to the Big Smoke is often a tricky manoeuvre for young bands, and for Norfolk-native garage-psych group Longheads, their accommodation set-up was too good to last. As lead guitarist Alex Bishop tells TG: “It was just over the road from the Oval cricket ground, and it was a guardianship scheme that the rest of the band all lived in where we built our studio and practised. But it got bought by the Oval and they knocked it down!”

Collateral damage aside, it’s an exciting time for the newly London-based five-piece, who released their latest EP *Mars Doesn’t Feel Like Home Any More* this month. Though its five songs touch upon the sound

of the late 2010s psychedelic garage rock revival – the likes of King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard, Oh Sees and Ty Segall are mentioned as influences – Alex takes inspiration from more than just his contemporaries.

“I started playing guitar when I was 11”, he says. “I learnt at school and it was purely because of *Back In Black* – that riff. I’m a guitar teacher as well, and I still have to teach AC/DC licks to young kids! My influences usually cover the spectrum of rock. I do try to listen to everything, but it’s hard to draw influences from outside that world when you pick up a guitar and plug it into a Marshall...”

There’s undeniably an enticing aura to early-70s hard rock for guitarists, and that era’s

penchant for heavy riffs and longform solos are front and centre on Longheads’ new release. But channeling the spirit of that sound requires an instrument that’s more than a little rough around the edges, surely? “I have a Gibson SG Firebrand from 1980,” Alex says, “which I picked up from a guy in 2020 that had sat under his bed for 20 years. On the Reverb.com listing it said it comes with all original parts, including strings! It was the most filthy guitar I’ve ever seen, but I’ve done it up, and it’s pretty much all I use.”

Alex’s pedals of choice for said sonic dirge check out, too. “I was using a vintage Sola Sound wah into the Earthquaker Devices Sunn O))) Life V2, which is my main drive and fuzz pedal, and then a Seymour Duncan Vapor

Trail delay, which is the only delay I’ve used since I bought it when I was 15. And then the MXR Phase 90 Script, the Earthquaker Afterneath reverb and a Line 6 DL4 for the effect delay.”

The future looks bright for Longheads, whose equal love of King Gizz and Sleep will certainly tick boxes for plenty of Sabbath-worshipping riff merchants. But as a guitar teacher himself, what advice does Alex have for newer players? “I teach a lot of children, and my advice to them is always to just keep going. Most people don’t keep on playing guitar, so my job is just to keep people turning up and being engaged. A lot of people can get bored. I mainly just try to get people to enjoy playing.”

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