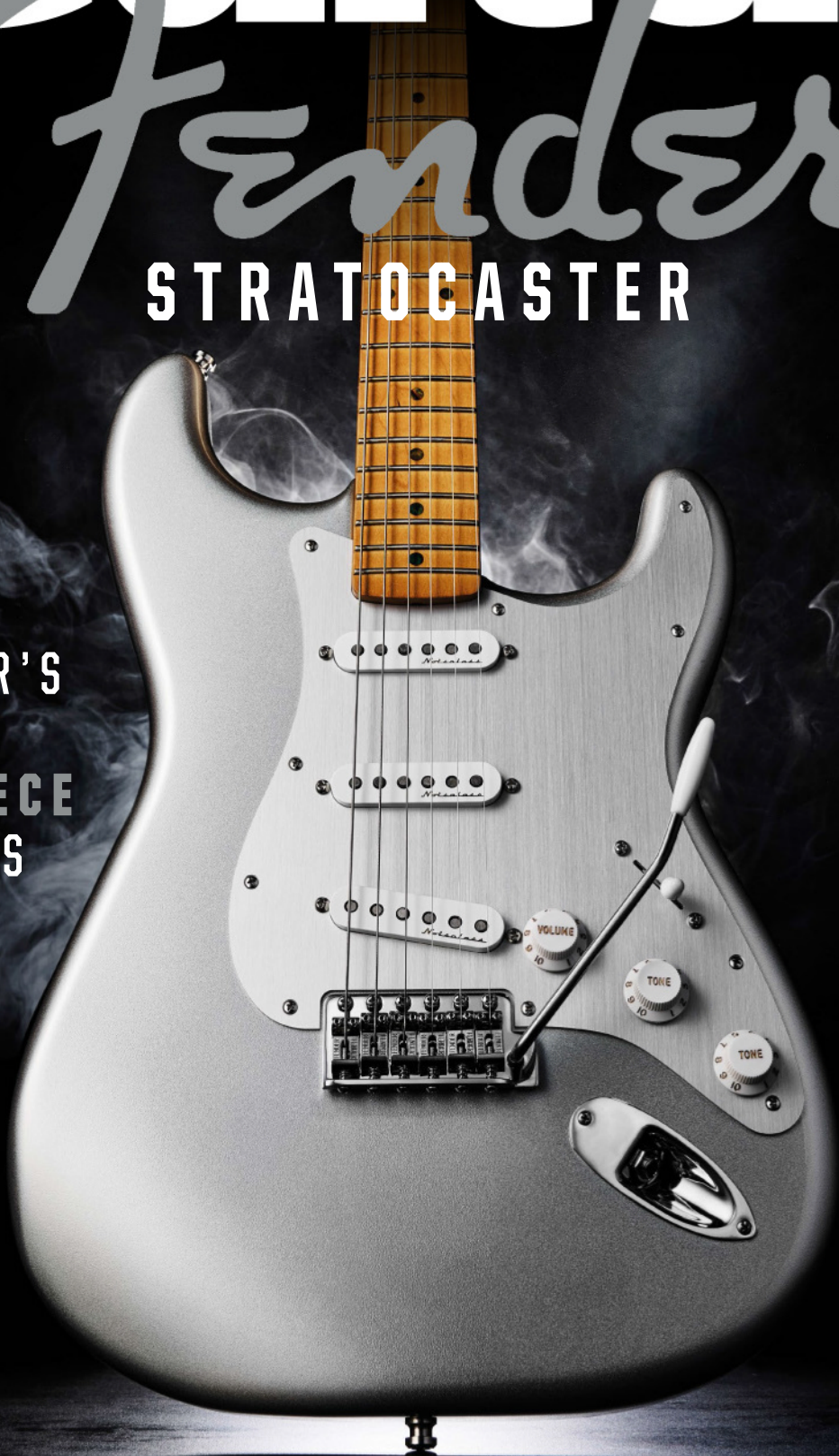


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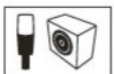
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Welcome...



Many guitarists insist that Fender got the Strat's design right at the first attempt – an interesting view to me because I feel like the Strat is a *template* as much as a design in itself. It's a minor point, admittedly, and sure, a Strat is nearly always recognisably a Strat. But no matter what the archetypal Strat is to you, there have been hundreds and hundreds of specs released over

the years. And, as Fender's esteemed doublecut enters its eighth decade, there's no shortage of contemporary players putting their names to it. Bruno Mars, Cory Wong, Tash Sultana, H.E.R., Steve Lacy, and loads more.

I think the point I'm making is that the Strat is no historical relic. It's a versatile workhorse guitar that's as relevant in 2024 as it's ever been. It's the ultimate customisable platform – with almost every component being swappable with relative ease. There's sure to be a Strat to suit almost every electric guitarist.

With all that in mind, this month we look at the legacy of the guitar that has shaped popular music like no other. Tash Sultana and Tyler Bryant tell us why Fender's doublecut remains their axe of choice. We get the lowdown on the tones of two legendary Strat users David Gilmour and Rory Gallagher by guitarists who live and breathe their music in tribute bands. We'll help you choose a Strat with our breakdown of Fender's specs. And, as if that wasn't enough Strat-y goodness, we've got a big tab lesson to help you play like the stars of this iconic guitar.

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

Chris Bird Editor

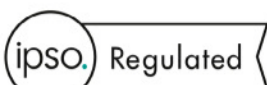
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#383

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Words: Stuart Williams
Photography: Phil Barker

AND SIGNATURE MODELS FOR ALL

LTD is helping you to you ride
the lightning with a brace of
Metallica models

06

I

f you're a Metallica fan, you'll know that there's no shortage of signature models available, especially when it comes to Mr

Hammett. But the brand that Kirk and James are most closely associated with for many fans is ESP.

Here, we have the latest LTD versions of the Kirk Hammett KH-V and James Hetfield Vulture. While they're both Vs, they're quite different. Hammett's is a korina-bodied, maple-thru-neck asymmetrical shape, while Het has gone with mahogany throughout and

a symmetrical V. For an added bonus, the vertices on Het's Vulture have been profiled to mirror the Metallica logo.

Electronically, things get a little closer, with both men opting for their signature EMG pickup sets as standard – the steel-poled (rather than traditional EMG bar magnets) for the Het Set, and Hammett's ceramic (bridge) and alnico 5 (neck) Bone Breaker models. Both feature LTD locking tuners and Tone Pros bridges (thru-body stringing for Kirk and a TonePros stoptail for Hetfield), and they're available now in stores at £1,599 (Viper) and £1,649 (KH-V).



UP CLOSE



Active pickups

Hetfield and Hammett have long been associated with EMG pickups, and these guitars feature their respective Het Set and Bone Breaker signature pickup sets.



Electronics

The EMGs are wired to two controls and a three-way switch on both. Hetfield's controls are 2x volume while Hammett's are 1x volume and 1x tone.



Hea-vee metal

V-shaped guitars are a heavy metal staple, and, between the two signatures, Metallica gives you both asymmetrical and symmetrical bodies.

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

ENTER THE DRAGON
DragonForce guitarists
Sam Totman and
Herman Li live in
San Diego, California

ALBUM

“I’VE BEEN A GEAR NERD MY WHOLE LIFE!”

TALKING TONES AND TECHNOLOGY WITH **DRAGONFORCE** GUITARIST
HERMAN LI - THE MAN WHO CAN SHRED UNDERWATER

It takes a certain kind of band to get away with naming an album *Warp Speed Warriors*. In the case of DragonForce, the title of their ninth full-length is most apt indeed, encapsulating their steely dedication to lightning-fast musical ideas that seem almost humanly impossible. But they also know how to keep it light-hearted, as guitarist Herman Li explains...

Your music is known for being very technical, and yet there are clips of you playing your most famous solos underwater!

It's quite a procedure! Especially figuring out how to keep the wireless working, making sure it was floating okay, and then swimming and snorkelling while playing the solo from *Valley Of The Damned*. You don't get many opportunities in life to do something that crazy. Another time I went down a waterslide playing *Through The Fire And Flames*. It was alright, I hit most of the notes, but I got stuck at one

point! People do these things in videos but never live, so I figured: why not?

You're such a dyed-in-the-wool Ibanez enthusiast. We have to ask, what prompted the move over to PRS?

Back in 2006, before my Ibanez model, Paul Reed Smith came to a show and loved the band. He wanted to do something but I had to explain it was my dream as a kid to have an Ibanez signature. I've learned a lot about guitars since then, playing all kinds of brands and models. I wanted something that could go beyond what I play in DragonForce, covering rock and bluesy stuff. Paul said he'd do anything to make it happen, which obviously costs a lot of money! My main guitar is the fourth prototype and has everything I've ever needed.

Like what, exactly?

There's a one-piece neck instead of laminated, because, though it's not as strong, the tone is much better. Paul gave me access to the best tops and everything. It was hard to refuse! Everything about this guitar is there for

a reason. There's a stabiliser so I can bend and everything stays in tune. I broke a string the other night and it was fine, even with a floating system. The Fishman Fluence pickups were voiced just for me. I tested it out against all the guitars I have at home and it won! PRS are now my main thing.

Did you use your Kemper on the new album or have you switched over to plug-ins?

I've been a gear nerd my whole life, so for my Twitch streaming channel I run a hybrid system where I can mix plug-ins with my Kemper and pedals in front. It's fun to have access to different technology at the press of a button. Pretty much no boundaries! But for the album, I don't want to be a chameleon, so I stuck with my own Kemper sounds. The main one is a Rocktron Prophecy preamp that I profiled myself through various Mesa, Peavey and Marshall cabinets. I'd profiled my old Marshall JMP-1 that was used on the first three albums. Those tones always sound and feel right for me.

Amit Sharma





GUITARS

VINTAGE REVO SERIES

When it comes to big bang for a not-too-big-a-buck, it has to be said that Vintage guitars knows its shallots. With its latest line-up, named REVO (Retro Vintage Originals), Vintage and celebrated

UK guitar designer Alan Entwistle have rustled up nine retro-inspired electric guitars. There are offsets, doublecuts, T-style models, semi-acoustics and more – including a 12-string and baritone – in the range. Each model comes equipped

with Wilkinson hardware, as well as carefully selected pickup configurations for each style, and in a number of different finish options. Prices start at £449. For the full range spec, head over to the Vintage website.

GUITAR

GIBSON COLLECTOR'S EDITION JIMMY PAGE EDS-1275

You know what's wrong with your guitar? It's only got one neck, and it isn't signed by Jimmy Page. Gibson has spotted this gap in the market, and filled it with a £47,399 solution in collaboration with the Led Zeppelin legend. The Jimmy Page EDS-1275 doubleneck pairs a 12-string with a six-string to replicate Page's iconic, excessive, conjoined SG. It's a limited run (of course!) Collector's Edition, with each one personally signed by Jimmy himself, and is available exclusively via Gibson's newly-opened Gibson Garage London and from its website. Here's hoping for a reissue of the Epiphone G-1275!



PEDAL

LINE 6 POD EXPRESS

We're only a short way into 2024, and already we're feeling like guitar brands are on a mission to diminish any excuse we might have for not practising. Line 6's latest offering is the £199 POD Express, which packs an unbelievable amount of features into a battery-powered (3x AA, optional PSU) stompbox. On board, there are seven different amp models, seven speaker cab options and 17 effects (including a looper). But this little POD is also



NO EXCUSES

The sub-£200 POD has everything you could need for your home guitar practice sessions

equipped with two footswitches – one for bypass, and another for tap tempo – plus, you can hook up an expression pedal, and it can also serve as your audio interface for recording to a computer or mobile device.

THE DREAM



"My dream was to have a Stratocaster".
I loved it from the beginning. Buddy
Holly played one. Hank Marvin played
one. That was enough for me."

DAVID GILMOUR

Fender

STRATOCASTER

Forever Ahead Of Its Time

DR. MOLLY MILLER

Dr. Molly Miller is a Professor of Studio Guitar at USC and one of the most sought-after session guitarists in L.A. – working with household names like Jason Mraz and the Black Eyed Peas. Her band, The Molly Miller Trio has earned praise from NPR and has been featured in major music publications.



TRIADS

Pickup Music's Dr Molly Miller explains how triads are unsung heroes of guitar, and how you can use the CAGED system to master them



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There is power in simplicity. Triads are the foundation of every beautiful song you've ever heard.

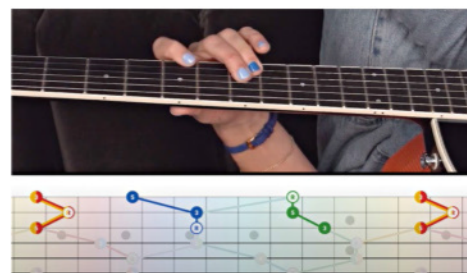
If you can build and connect them, you'll be able to learn songs more intuitively and open up a treasure trove of new creative ideas of your own. Pickup Music's lesson examines triads through the lens

of the CAGED system – an essential tool for every guitarist, especially if you struggle with music theory or are more of a visual learner.

Triads are made of three intervals: the root, 3rd, and 5th. This three-note formula creates the backbone of musical harmony across all genres of Western music. Even the most complex jazz chords usually have a triad at their core.

In this lesson, we focus on major triads and their inversions (when the notes of a chord are rearranged). Instead of the usual 'root, 3rd, 5th' arrangement, the sequence can change to '3rd, 5th, root' (the first inversion) or '5th, root, 3rd' (the second inversion).

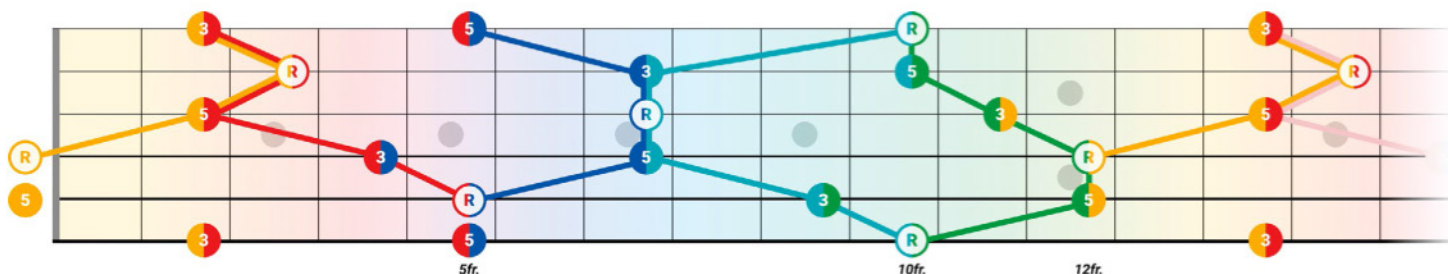
If you want your playing to be more versatile, and musical, there's no better place to start.





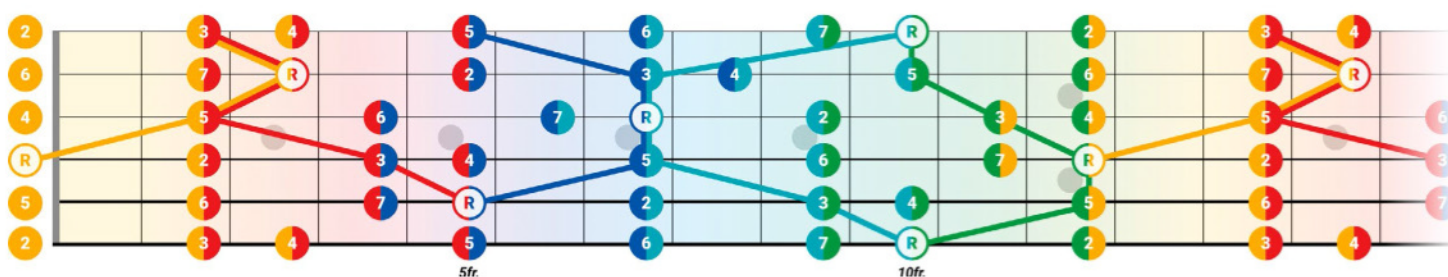
D MAJOR CHORDS

Before we get more deeply into the triads concept, take a look here at the full chord shapes they're based on – all in D major.



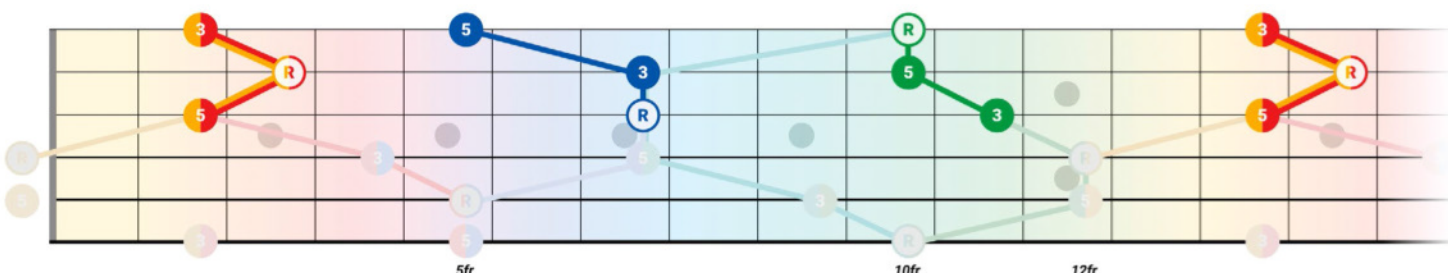
D MAJOR SCALE

And along the same lines, these are the notes of the D major scale across the neck.



1 UP AND DOWN

We're going to play through three triads in the key of D. The first shape should feel familiar – it's a good old open D chord! Try out the other shapes and notice how each one is a fragment of a bigger barre chord (shown greyed-out here).



TRIADS UP AND DOWN THE NECK

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩ = 80

D

1:30

TAB

5fr	10fr	12fr
2	5	10
3	7	15
2	7	14

Starting at 1:30 in the video, Molly plays this example, cycling up and down through the triad shapes.

2 ARPEGGIATING

ARPEGGIATING YOUR TRIAD SHAPES

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩ = 80
D

3:37

We can turn triad shapes into an instant lead line simply by breaking them into individual notes (called an arpeggio). This is a great way to connect melodic ideas to chords and helps you internalise the sequence of notes in each inversion. We'll keep it nice and simple. Start on the second inversion (D shape) and pluck the third string, then the second, then the first. Once you can play it in time with each note ringing clearly, move up to the next position. Repeat this for each triad shape.

3 MAJOR SCALE CONNECTIONS

The terms 'root, 3rd, and 5th' refer to intervals within the seven notes of the major scale – and shown here are the notes of the D major scale played along the first string. Try playing the notes from low to high.

Here, we tie everything together by adding the major scale notes between our triad shapes. Make sure to visualise the triads and be mindful of each interval as you ascend the neck.

CONNECTING TRIADS THROUGH THE MAJOR SCALE

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♩ = 80
D

5:35

Bringing everything together, Molly finishes off by running through this exercise. Follow the link above to find both Molly's video lesson and the backing track she plays over.

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Diego Cavallotti - Lacuna Coil

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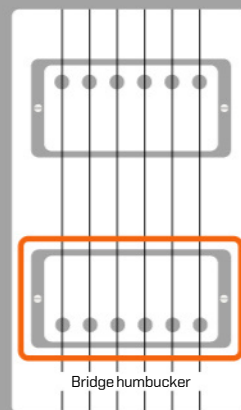
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Pedal notes
- ✓ Blues scale
- ✓ Down-picking



GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



This riff is played using a high-gain active pickup sound through an Engl amp for the saturated modern metal tone, as delivered by producer and guitarist Andy Sneap. If you have passive pickups, an overdrive boost pedal in front of the amp will give you the required extra gain.

Note that the guitars on the original recording are downtuned a semitone to E $\flat$ standard tuning, but for we've stayed in E to allow you to learn the riff without having to detune.

RIFF OF THE MONTH

JUDAS PRIEST

The Serpent And The King

Not too many bands can say they've recorded 19 studio albums, but the mighty Judas Priest is one such act, with new release *Invincible Shield* marking a full 50 years since their debut. Here, we walk you through the riff from fourth single *The Serpent And The King*, which features classic Judas Priest-style downstrokes and accented doublestops.

Start the riff with your first and third fingers on the 5th and 7th frets and play these notes on the fourth string along with an open fifth string, letting the notes ring together. Next, ascend the middle strings by playing 4th interval shapes at the 5th, 7th and 8th frets before finishing with a slide from the 8th fret to the 7th, then pulling off from the 7th to 5th. Throughout the riff, alternate between a palm-muted picking-hand position and

an open position which allows the strings to ring out. We've played the riff slowly in our video for you to hear how it should sound.

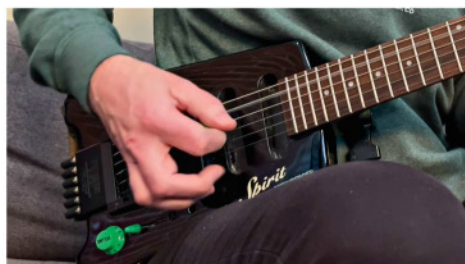
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00-0:17

Tempo: 110bpm

Key/scale: A blues scale

Main techniques: Downstrokes, palm-muting, doublestops

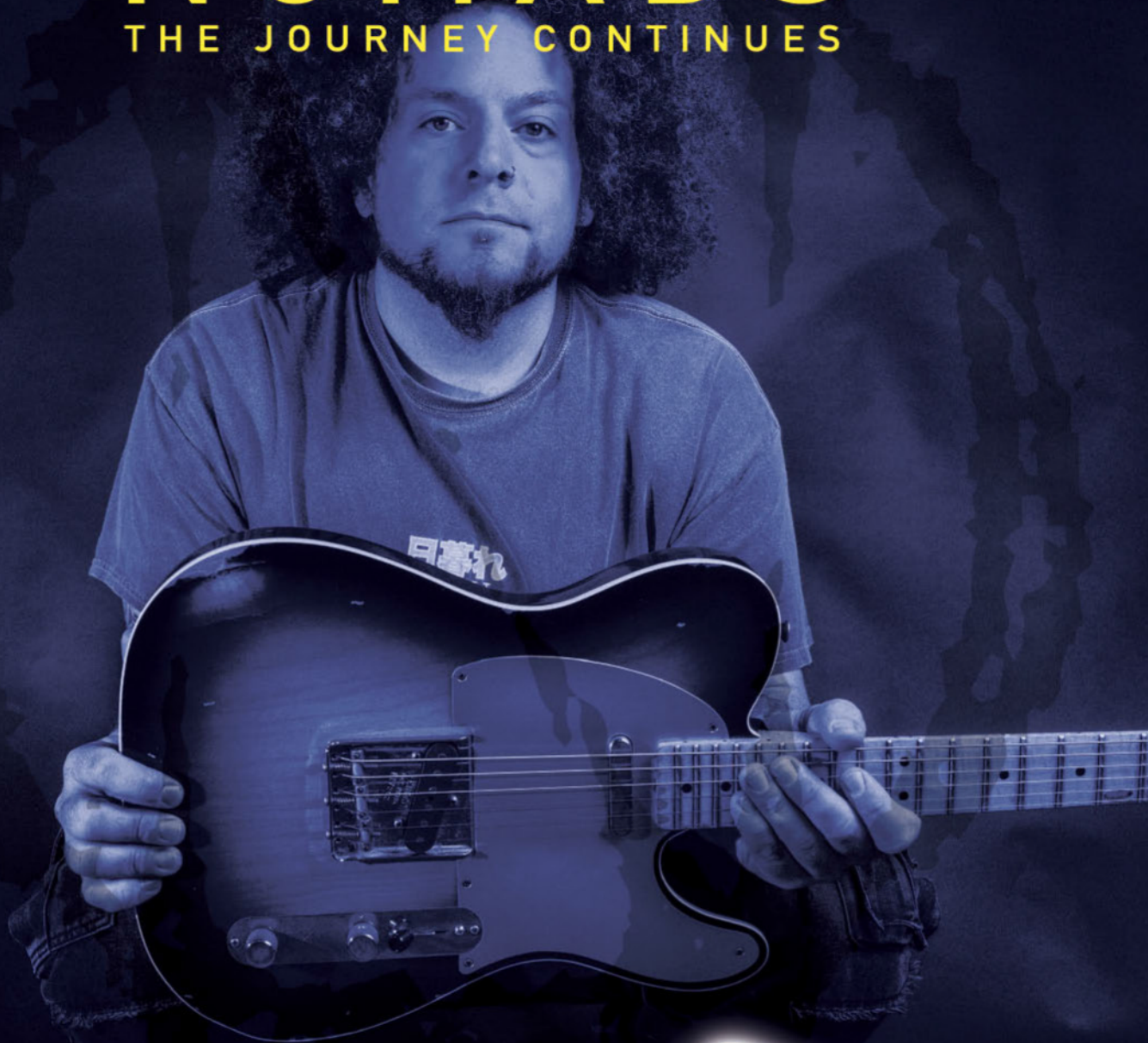


This riff uses an open A string pedal tone as a repeating root note, while other fretted notes outline notes from the A blues scale (A C D E $\flat$ EG).

There is also an added B $\flat$ note—a classic evil heavy metal $\flat$ 2 interval. It doesn't live in the blues scale, but it's pure metal!

NOMADS

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



"I've always loved using Telecaster tones on my recordings. Nomads get super heavy without any unwanted spikiness but also respect the early '50s Tele tones for all the lower gain chime and spank that I love."

RABEA MASSAAD

BEA



Rabea Massaad
signature
Telecaster set

bareknucklepickups.co.uk

Bare Knuckle

THE HEAVY 1008

Judas Priest (from left): Ian Hill (bass), Scott Travis (drums), Rob Halford (vocals), Richie Faulkner and Glenn Tipton (guitars)

18

Words Amit Sharma

"A GREAT RIFF SHOULD MAKE YOU BANG YOUR HEAD!"

Heavy metal legends **Judas Priest** are famous for their twin-axe attack. But now, as guitarist Richie Faulkner tells TG, necessity is the mother of invention



There are certain things to be expected from a Judas Priest album. When it comes to mid-tempo, palm-muted minor riffing, screaming harmonised leads and distorted tones that feel hotter than the sun, you know you're in safe hands. But even by their own standards, the heavy metal pioneers are truly going for gold on this year's 19th studio album *Invincible Shield* – rammed with explosive fretwork, from the rapid-fire brilliance of opening track *Panic Attack* to the biker blues of finale *Giants In The Sky*. It will undoubtedly be one of the finest metal albums you'll hear this year, and more impressively manages to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with classic Priest albums such as *Stained Class*, *British Steel* and *Screaming For Vengeance*.

The road to this point has not been easy, however. In 2018, guitarist Glenn Tipton, a member of Priest since 1974, revealed he'd be stepping down from touring after an ongoing struggle with Parkinson's, forcing the band to

repeal their producer Andy Sneap as a touring guitarist. And in 2021, Richie Faulkner, who replaced K.K. Downing a decade prior, suffered from a near-fatal aortic aneurysm while Priest were performing on stage at Kentucky's Louder Than Life festival. After a 10-hour open-heart procedure in which five parts of his chest were replaced by mechanical components, Richie lived to tell the tale and to continue playing a vital role in this legendary band...

This new album feels extra special, given everything that's happened. Like the lyrics from Priest's 1982 track *Electric Eye*, you are now actually made of metal! Literally, because there are metal parts in my chest! Part of the healing process was getting back out there and finishing this record. I got back on the horse and rode on. As you say, all of this may never have happened and that does put a different perspective on things. You never know what's around the corner. I don't know if Rob [Halford, vocalist] was referring to that when he came up with the title *Invincible Shield*. It's a reference to the metal community in general. We're proud metal fans and this

music is like an invincible shield. We all go through challenges. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Glenn's had his struggles, I've had things, Rob's been through it as well, but we live to fight another day!

Maybe that's why the latest material ended up being such a masterclass in technicality? The solo sections feel more orchestrated, with light-speed diminished sweeps and alternate picked ideas...

Priest have been through many stages, from proggy stuff like *Sinner* and *Tyrant* [from the late '70s] to straight-up metal. Because we had more time to develop our ideas after the pandemic, we came up with sections that felt like the stuff that Randy Rhoads did with Ozzy Osbourne. Moments that are a song within a song. The music goes somewhere else before coming back. You have to be careful, though – it can become a bad thing if you go too far! As for the diminished stuff, some of it's definitely from Glenn after 13 years of playing together...

It's only natural that you'd end up inheriting some of these technical nuances, right?



HELL BENT FOR LEATHER

Richie, Rob and Glenn: still delivering the goods

If you do your best to recreate what's on the record, you can't help Glenn and K.K.'s solos becoming a part of your style. As for sweeping, I've never swept. I'm good at sweeping the floor, that's about it! I'm still learning, to be honest. I find it helps if the angle of my picking hand changes when I'm coming back up, though I only just realised! I'm discovering all the time. I've been doing the *Painkiller* solo ever since Glenn couldn't play with us, which works out as a lot of *Painkiller* solos! You have to nail that starting lick as faithfully as you can. I try my best not to mess up. Doing that night after night helps build the technique. Some of these new solos called for a similar approach, maybe sweeping half the strings, a few notes in the middle and then sweeping through the remaining ones. I'm getting better at it, but I'm also blagging half of it!

How do you go about splitting the parts? Do you divide everything in half and taking turns?

We ask ourselves if the song feels like it needs to go somewhere else, in a new direction. If not, we stick to one solo and get back to the vocals. Obviously, with Glenn's situation, he wasn't playing as much lead as before. But that's okay, we didn't want that to impede the process. If Glenn was having a good day, he'd play the part. If he couldn't, I'd do it. We didn't want him to worry. He brought songs to the table like *Sons Of Thunder* which is a classic three-minute track in the style of [Priest anthem] *Hell Bent For Leather*. Glenn is the master of that stuff. He was as involved as he could be and it was important for us to involve him.

So what do you think are the characteristics of a classic

Judas Priest riff?

It's hard to say, they're so diverse. From *You've Got Another Thing Coming* and *Painkiller* to *Victim Of Changes* and *Killing Machine*, they're all vastly different, you know? That's the beauty of Priest. Because of that diversity, a lot of ideas can go on the table and most of them will be appropriate. I definitely think a great riff should make you bang your head and hit you in the face. Classic Priest riffs have to be simple enough to be accessible but complex enough to be f*cking great. If it makes you pull a mean face, it's a good one!

The large majority of these riffs live in the Aeolian minor world rather than, say, Dorian minor with the major 6th. Do you think much about the building blocks and the maths behind it?

Not at all. I wish I knew what

"IF YOU WANT TO CONNECT EMOTIONALLY, IT'S ALMOST ALWAYS BETTER TO PLAY SLOWER"
 RICHIE FAULKNER

you're talking about with all that Dorian and Aeolian stuff! But I know that there's a minor sound, a major sound, a diminished sound. If you asked me to play those scales, I wouldn't know. If you showed me, I'd say 'Oh yeah, that's the same as *The Sentinel* or whatever!' But I'm just not that way inclined. It's too mathematical for me. Sometimes what doesn't work theoretically can be powerful, too. There's been some major stuff in the past, but you're right, it's usually minor.

Panic Attack has a really '80s-sounding intro section

with synths doubling up an E, pentatonic motif descending in 5ths...

This album starts a bit different to the last few. A lot of them thunder in from the get-go, like *Painkiller*. We don't want to repeat ourselves, so a synth intro in 7/8 that doesn't smack you in the face straight away felt good. The riff was originally a guitar line and I then transposed to synth because I'm a child of the '80s! It felt appropriate because of older stuff like *Turbo Lover*.

There's that minor legato line built around the 12th to the 15th

and 19th frets, similar to some classic Eddie Van Halen and Randy Rhoads runs...

I don't normally construct solos. I'll go into the studio and play a few back-to-back. Certain motifs will jump out. If they stick, you're subconsciously telling yourself that's what needs to go there. But this time I actually had that stretched part you're talking about first, and then constructed the rest around that. Later Andy Sneap asked if I could harmonise the end bit.

Songs like *The Serpent And The King* and *Sons Of Thunder* have

some challenging picked runs. Do you play strict alternate or is there some economy in there?

I don't quite know what I'm doing half the time, but it's definitely not strict alternate. I don't pick everything, I can't do that! There's a lot of down-up-down-down moves with me. Your right hand is as valuable as your left. It's all well and good flying around with your fretting hand but the picking hand is the machine that drives the attack. It's the engine, whether we're talking about Priest or James Hetfield's right hand in Metallica. And actually it's a part of metal guitar playing that

"I KEEP PUSHING MYSELF"

Glenn Tipton reveals how he is defying illness to carry on rocking with Judas Priest

Describing the characteristics of a classic Priest riff to us as "fast and furious, interlaced with very melodic passages", Glenn Tipton is understandably proud of the group's collective achievements on their latest recordings, it now being *Faulkner's* third full-length within their ranks. As for his health, his general outlook seems to mirror that of the band's lyrics thematically. It's a case of soldiering on and powering through.

"I played what I could and am very proud of the whole album," Tipton tells TG. "Richie helped a lot. I think his strongest attribute is his ability to adapt to different styles whilst maintaining his own very strong character. Priest require a guitarist who can shift from out-and-out metal to more melodic tracks. Obviously the drawback for me now is Parkinson's, and I've had to pass a lot of work onto his shoulders. I keep pushing myself because I believe in 'no surrender'. This disease won't beat me and I will continue writing and playing for as long as I can."

Having mainly been seen with signature Hamer guitars since that partnership began in the mid-'80s, Tipton is also famous for using Gibson SGs and humbucker-equipped Fender Strats early on in his career. More recently he has played a double-horned GT-600 signature released through ESP LTD. "I don't know how many guitars I own in total, but I'm not really



a collector, because to me they are tools of my trade," he continues. "If I could get my hands on one of Rory Gallagher's old Strats, that would be a prized possession! I use the Phantom GT mostly, so I'd say that is my favourite on stage and in the studio. The advantage of Hamer was that it was my own design to my own specifications. I was able to make even the smallest changes, such as the long tailpiece on the [Explorer-shaped] Custom GT fitted the inside of my leg when I played stretched riffs. That allowed me to find the most comfortable playing positions, particularly after jumping around!"

Like Faulkner, Tipton tends to stick with an Engl backline for live performances, however in the studio it's more a case of anything goes. As for when we'll next see him on stage, he wants us all to know the will is very much there...

"Engl are quality amps which I can adjust audibly to suit the sound I require for stage," he notes. "In the studio I will use anything that gives me the sound I need. As for joining the band at any point on this next cycle of touring, you will have to wait and see. If I'm well enough, I'll be on stage with the boys... loud and proud!"



often gets neglected. Zakk Wylde is a major influence, he picks everything incredibly. I'm somewhere in the middle: I love Michael Schenker and Dave Murray from Iron Maiden; the latter of whom is a legato player. The downstroke is the law in metal, at least in a lot of people's minds, but I play some riffs starting on the up.

Devil In Disguise and Gates Of Hell typify the more bluesy side of your playing. A lot of heart and soul with some flat 5ths, for good measure...

Sometimes we don't know when to shut up when we're younger, but as you grow you realise that the slower, more melodic ideas connect more. You can stand there and do a million notes a second, but it won't work as well as stuff like [Pink Floyd's] *Comfortably Numb* or [Queen's] *Killer Queen*. I was playing covers in pubs for years, learning different styles. I don't feel like I've ever been a shredder. I'm never going to out-do Yngwie Malmsteen or Eric Johnson. I'm more from the Schenker and Ritchie Blackmore school. *Devil In Disguise* felt like a Blackmore kind of thing. There's a time for the fast stuff, but if you want to connect emotionally, it's almost always better slower. I try to find different ways of saying unique things. That's a lot harder than it sounds, taking your favourite notes and discovering new ways to use them.

You've stuck with Gibson Les Pauls, Flying Vs and Explorers over the years. Is that what we're hearing on the record?

There were three guitars: one of them was a prototype for last year's

Pelham Blue Flying V signature. I had an old black Les Paul Custom from 1976 which I painted white when I joined Priest. It's the most sonically balanced guitar I've got. I used it for all the rhythms on the *Firepower* album. The highs are all in the right place and it's well balanced tonally. That one still has the EMG 81/85 set. An Explorer I use live is on the record, too.

You rely on Engl and Wizard amps on stage. Is it the same for recording?

I ended up recording at my place. I'd run my Quad Cortex into the desk and keep the DI, because I'm not technical when it comes to mics and speakers. That's more for producers and engineers. So I'd send the DIs to Andy who would then re-amp through JCM 800s and newer EVH heads. I don't know what pedal went in front, but there definitely would've been something. For shows I've started using the Wampler Tumnus, which I think sounds better than the original Klon!

So what is the hardest track on this album to nail?

The songs have only been out a couple of minutes and some players have got it down already, probably better than I ever could! I've seen covers where everything's picked and sounds proper. The title track is a challenge with all the different parts, and *As God Is My Witness* is another, because it involves fast picking from the get-go. They're both challenging, but if you're anything like me, it's all good fun!

***Invincible Shield* is out now.**



PICK ATTACK!

The basics of alternate picking

As Richie says, he uses "a lot of down-up-down-down moves" – and he's referring to alternate picking. But what the hell is that? Well, the idea is to sync your downstrokes and upstrokes in time with the music you're playing. The symbols for downstrokes and upstrokes are ▾ and ▿ respectively. Try these exercises to hone your skills:

1. PICKING DOWNSTROKES

Count to four in time with a song you know is in 4/4 time, and pick a downstroke on each beat. It's easy, right?!

1	2	3	4
▾	▾	▾	▾

2. ADDING UPSTROKES

Twice as many pick strokes here, but you don't play faster. Just pick the string between the downstrokes.

1	2	3	4
▾	▿	▾	▿

3. ADD GAPS

Music has rhythm – and you won't always play on every beat. With alternate picking, you keep your pick moving constantly but miss the string when needed. This is a simple version of Richie's 'down-up-down-down' pattern:

1	2	3	4
▾	▿	▾	▾

4. CONSTANT PICKING

Alternate picking comes into its own at double speed with a constant stream of notes, like this:

1	2	3	4
▾	▿	▾	▿

5. DOUBLE SPEED PATTERN

Here you'll be doubling the speed to play our down-up-down-down pattern.

1	2	3	4
▾	▿	▾	▿



OUR GENERATION

IDLES' Adam Devonshire continues in the footsteps of legendary players, pushing musical boundaries with Rotosound strings



Words Tim Tucker Photos Mitch Conrad

“WE SHOULD BE TAKING THE GUITAR TO THE PUBLIC, RIGHT?”

Blues prodigy **Marcus King** has overcome his demons with the help of famed producer Rick Rubin. And his new album is a powerful statement: “It’s about letting the guitar speak for itself...”

Born into a family of musicians in Greenville, South Carolina, Marcus King started out on his journey at an astonishingly young age. He first picked up the guitar when he was just three years old, and at eight he had already performed on stage. At the tender age of 11 he made his first studio recording, setting the foundation for his future career.

Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, King continued to hone his craft. With The Marcus King Band, he established himself as a formidable live performer, with incendiary jam sets sealing his reputation as a guitarist of the highest stature. His first solo album, 2020’s *El Dorado*, was produced by Dan Auerbach

of The Black Keys and earned him a Grammy nomination for Best Americana Album.

However, behind the success and accolades, King was struggling with personal demons that threatened to consume him, and in 2022 he found himself on the brink of self-destruction. A chance encounter with Rick Rubin set him on a path to redemption and self-discovery, resulting in his latest album, *Mood Swings*. This is a set of deeply personal and emotionally charged songs that showcase his immense talent as a singer, songwriter and guitarist. The album marks a turning point in King’s life and career, as he confronts his battles with addiction, mental health, and heartache head-on.

Speaking to TG, Marcus discusses the making of *Mood Swings* and how he channelled his pain and struggles into a cathartic collection of songs...



in writing situations. In a lot of cases I used my '62 Strat too, that's where I got to a lot of cool sounds.

And were these going through your usual Orange amps?

Oh, yeah, there's definitely some Orange amps involved, my MK Ultra Positive. I didn't have access to my Gibson amp for this, because I was flying around a lot. But the Super Reverb and the Deluxe Reverb were happening in a lot of spots. Aside from that, I also played through synthesizers and directly through the console. It's the first time I've done that and it meant I could get close to it. That's not really something that I get to do often as a guitar player. Especially for parts that we stacked up a few times and added harmonies to, like on the song *Delilah*, which I approached like a synth part, and layered it. It's like a chordal solo in a way. And on the song *Hero*, I used an acoustic and electric on that solo, through the Super Reverb, that's how we got that sound.

You recorded a bit of backwards guitar on the song *F*ck My Life Up Again*. What inspired that?

That song is fairly two-dimensional, the verse and the chorus are the same progression, but there's a lot of different layers of what I'm trying to say with that song. So when we got to the solo part, it was the only direction I really thought to go in, was to have the solo play backwards. It really captured my emotions, as far as how I felt when I was writing it. I tried to construct the solo, playing the most climactic part right away, and then letting it kind of dwindle down to more held notes, in an attempt to flip it on its head, and then it has the appropriate arc that a solo should have. I had to think about it backwards before I played it.

We still hear that sweet guitar tone of yours, on songs like *Bipolar Love* and *Save Me*. How do you go about getting a sound like that?

You've just gotta be truthful, and you

➤ LIGHT TOUCH

"It's knowing when not to play," Marcus says, "to allow the spaces in between to speak louder than the notes themselves..."

For this new album, you worked with producer Rick Rubin at his Shangri La studios in Malibu. How did that bring out a different side to your music?

Rick's really big into making music and art for the right reasons, and for yourself. It took a while for us to find the real truth, I had to dig deeper and deeper, and he managed to help me access that within myself. I've always used mental health like a writing partner, as Rick would say. But on this record, for the first time I've stripped away some of the metaphors and spoken directly about it. It's definitely therapeutic, once you pull back the heavy rock 'n' roll guitar and allow the songs to stand on their own. It's a very vulnerable place and there's not much to hide behind in the way of production, and that's given me a new perspective. It's knowing when not to play, to allow the spaces in between to speak louder than the notes themselves.

This time around, did you change anything about the gear you used or the sounds you created?

Rick trusted me as far as the guitar was concerned, and we were both on a similar head trip of making the songs and the vocals the focal point. There was never any intentional conversation about letting the guitar speak for itself, but it just kind of happened. I'm pretty particular about the gear I use. I used a lot of my old faithfuls on the record, like Big Red, my Gibson ES-345. That guitar just sounds massive and has so many stories in it. It was my granddad's guitar, so I always love having that energy on a record. Another guitar I used was the ES-330, the '66 Cherry Red with P-90 pickups, a really wonderful guitar. And my red Tele, I used that a lot. It's a '62 reissue that the Custom Shop was kind enough to give me back in 2018, and it's such a versatile guitar, it's really useful

"YOU'VE JUST GOTTA BE TRUTHFUL, AND BIG RED IS THE TRUEST GUITAR I'VE GOT"

know, Big Red is the truest guitar I've got. Just that guitar straight through a Fender amplifier with a little reverb. I mean, if you can't say it like that, it may not be worth saying. For the most part, I'm just trying to go for a feeling or an emotion. And I've never been a real tone chaser, I've just been a big believer in achieving what's honest. I'll pick up just about anything, and if it feels true to me, I'll keep it on the table.

Your last album, *Young Blood*, took just three days to record in Dan Auerbach's studio in Nashville. How was this album different?

Nashville, on the whole, is a little different than LA as far as writing sessions, which will happen fairly quickly. It's not that it's any more efficient, it's just a different way of approaching, more of an assembly line. I mean that in the best way. But in LA, we just took our time with every day. We started the process during the pandemic and by the time we finished, it had been two and a half years. It took me a while to really find some peace and get back into myself. It took exactly how long it should have.

Your playing has its roots in the jam culture, with lengthy on-stage guitar solos. But lately, you've been focusing more on showcasing the songs you write. What I would say to younger

THE HOLY TRINITY

Three guitar albums that Marcus King couldn't live without



The Allman Brothers Band
At Fillmore East (1971)

Robin Trower
Bridge of Sighs (1974)

Jimmy Herring
Subject to Change Without Notice (2012)

MAN WITH A MISSION

"This record is a way for me to advocate for mental health awareness," Marcus says

artists is, if you stand outside of the zeitgeist or whatever, and try to get people to come out and be gassed up on the guitar, it doesn't really work. We should be taking the guitar to the public, right? So how do we make guitar something that everybody loves, and not just for someone who plays guitar. That's how I think about it on a track; what can I do that everybody's going to enjoy? And then maybe I can make someone a guitar fan. Because for the most part, guitar fans are going to be fans of the song as well, but not always the other way around. I want to use this instrument to open their mind a little bit.

Is there anything on *Mood Swings* that will be difficult to recreate live?

I think there are a few sounds that we'll find challenging to reproduce. But, you know, I've got a great big group, with the three horns and a tremendous rhythm section and keyboard player. Plus I've got my other guitar player Drew, who's really a guitar player's guitar player. He's a real purist, when it comes to the art form, he likes to play straight through the Orange head and cabinet. He's got a stomp box, he doesn't really do the pedalboard thing. Having him to help me get some of these double leads, or to get some of the harmonies and stuff that's on the record. My wife, who sang on the record with me

in a couple of places, she'll be out with me [on tour], and I think maybe we'll have a few other background vocalists as well. It's gonna be a real big party, man.

I hear you've got about 40 or 50 guitars. How many will you take on tour with you?

Oh, man, I've got too many! I usually bring out about seven to 10 on the road. I love classic American art, and classic American-made guitars just really make me excited. It's the same as really well-crafted men's clothing, like old Levi's jackets or something. I just really get off on that kind of thing.

The new album features drum machines and samples, as heard on the track *Mood Swings* and at the end of *Cadillac*, which really enhance the mood of the album.

Mood Swings is one of the first samples I had to get cleared in my life. That's from a documentary called *Faces of Depression* that came out in the '50s or '60s. We'd gotten all the things cleared for the record that we needed to, with the exception of this one sample. I was trying to find an interview of a mental patient, because I'm technically a mental patient; I'm just an outpatient. I came across that clip, and the son of the physician who conducted all that research is the holder of the estate now, and he said he didn't want it used for entertainment purposes because it was made for research and for educational purposes only.

So, I explained what I was doing with this record is a way for me to advocate for mental health awareness. After I wrote the letter, they granted us the usage of that. And at the end of the record, that was actually my wife's idea. I left that voicemail the night I met her. And I had been drinking a good bit, you know, I was really alone and I had just decided to, you know, not stick around much longer. And when I met her, it just changed my perspective a lot. It was really befitting because that was exactly how I felt about the song that it plays at the end of *Cadillac*.

***Mood Swings* is out on April 5.**





Words Phil Weller Photos Andy Sapp

"THOSE LITTLE AMPS CREATE A WHOLE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE"

The new album from **Blackberry Smoke** is a subtle refinement of their rootsy Southern rock sound. Guitar-playing frontman and compulsive gearhead Charlie Starr explains how it all began with downsizing their amps

It was all set up to be a great year for Blackberry Smoke, with the release of a fine new album, *Be Right Here*. But just a few days after guitarist and vocalist Charlie Starr spoke to TG about the making of the album, it was announced that the band's drummer and co-founder Brit Turner had died on March 3 at the age of 57. In this interview, Charlie explained how they had set out to make an intimate-sounding record. Producer Dave Cobb came into the project having just worked on the Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators album *4* – live-recorded with loud Marshall stacks. But with Blackberry Smoke, Cobb encouraged the band to use tiny amps so they could get in tight amongst one another in the room. Now, there is poignancy in how Charlie described the sessions: "During recording I was sitting right across from Brit's drums..."

Be Right Here is an album which delicately blends the drawl of Southern rock with soulful blues and classic rock. It now stands as a fitting epitaph for Brit Turner.

How would you describe *Be Right Here* in a few short sentences?

It feels really warm and natural to me. It feels like I am literally in the room when I hear it. I'm sitting in that spot across the across from the drums where I was during recording. Organic is a word that's used so much, but it really is a very organic sounding record. It doesn't sound rushed at all – we were very relaxed making it and it makes me very happy to listen to it.

Has your approach changed at all when it comes to writing a new Blackberry Smoke album?

I never want to repeat myself or write anything derivative and I think that Dave [Cobb] was thinking the same

thing – we're not going to go in and do exactly the same thing as last time. An important thing he said before recording was, 'Don't bring any big amps – let's use Fender Champs and Princetons'. I bought a little Gibson GA-5T with tremolo and I don't think we used anything bigger than an 8" speaker so that we would all be in the room with the gear. He'd just done the last Slash record with walls of Marshall stacks, which he said got ungodly loud, so this was a little different. We used Gobos [acoustic isolation panels] and didn't worry too much about bleed.

Did this make the recording process a lot more comfortable, being able to vibe off one another?

It actually achieved the exact opposite of what I thought would happen. I thought that everybody was going to be apprehensive and think, 'Well, I better not f*ck up, because if I do, I'm ruining the take.' But instead it all just kind of glued itself together. We felt like one cohesive unit. It made the playing more human. There were a couple of times where I went into a vocal booth with an acoustic guitar, but I wanted to be back in the room with the other guys. It felt like making a '60s record.

Was everything recorded in single takes?

We didn't play any solos on the floor. We hadn't rehearsed a ton, and a bad solo could ruin the take. We actually recorded lead guitars in Savannah and we used those same little amps. Dave said, 'Don't bring a Marshall stack!' I wound up using this little this little 1964 Fender Champ which was sitting in a hearth, and it sounded magical. I love those little tweed amps. They have so much natural compression and they're really touch-sensitive. You can hear the speaker cone, it's like I'm rubbing that paper between my fingers. You're not getting the heft and the air of something like a Marshall Super Lead which, but it creates a whole different experience.

Which guitars are your most trusted tools?

There's a Gibson ES-330 that I have,

➔ which is a hollow-body with a P-90 pickup. It's early '65 and I've used it on every record since [2012's] *The Whippoorwill*. It just records really, really well. So I always take that, and my little black '56 Les Paul Jr. That's the only two that I have to take into the studio with me. And I don't always use the little black Jr. – I might use a different guitar.

It depends on how they sound through a specific amplifier for that specific song. And that happens a lot. There's a song on the record called *Like It Was Yesterday*, and I really wanted to play this one specific Telecaster on it because I was identifying that guitar with that song. I played it and it sounded good. Then, just to see, I picked my '63 Esquire up and it sounded so much better. It had so much more body and bite and I was like, 'Well, this one wins – I was wrong!'

So how many different guitars feature on the new album?

Not as many I thought! I wound up playing a 1964 Gibson ES-335 on a lot of songs, as well as a 1957 Les Paul Jr. and the Esquire. That's about it. I work those guitars through the whole record, and I use a couple of different acoustics, a Martin and a Gibson.

Did you get to experiment with any new pedals?

Dave Cobb was using a Menatone Red Snapper from the mid-'90s and I loved it. It's an overdrive pedal that really has a unique bite and voice to it. I knew I had to have one for myself and Dave said, 'You better start looking because they have gotten expensive!' I mean, dammit – why are all these great pedals over a thousand dollars? So that pedal was used a lot, and a couple of cool fuzzes and Analog Man pedals like the King of Tone. That's a great pedal. When I record with something I then have to use it on the road because now it's attached to that song for me, mentally.

You put out *Stoned*, an EP of Rolling Stones covers in 2022. Did that experience teach you anything?

The Stones are a band that lives on feel, so completely. None of those songs are difficult, technically. It's not it's not like learning a Rush song. It's all about the feel, and that can be difficult. You don't just accidentally play the groove of



Tumbling Dice, it's got a real pocket. Charlie Watts is playing the drums and Bill Wyman is a little bit forward as a bass player and Keith Richards is very behind the beat which causes this wobble that only they have. You can't teach that.

Which I guess puts more reason to record in the room together?

Yeah. We had takes where I felt we got a little swift at the end and Dave would always say, 'Who cares? We're humans!' At one point he got his phone out and played [Stones classic] *Honky Tonk Women* and he showed us how it kept speeding up, but that's something that's never made us want to turn the song off before. So that was our lesson to stop worrying about tempo changes. He won't allow a click.

As a huge lover of gear, how do you choose which of your many guitars to take out on the road with you?

I want to take all of them! But I'll know which ones I actually do need or what type of pickup configuration I need, because the songs really will dictate

TEAM PLAYER

"There were a couple of times where I went into a vocal booth with an acoustic guitar," Charlie says. "But I wanted to be back in the room with the other guys."

that. When I think about a song or a riff, I'll know that's a humbucker riff right there, you won't play that on a single-coil, and vice versa. So I know I'll need my Les Paul Jr. for the humbucker songs, and a Telecaster or Esquire for single coil stuff. Sometimes I'll have just found a guitar and I'll think, 'I've gotta take this one because it's gonna sound great'. So then it starts to be like I'm packing for a beach trip. I just throw it all in there!

With that in mind, what was the last piece of gear you bought?

Well, I just got another '56 Les Paul Jr. back in September. I found a really good deal on that guitar and a 1960 Fender concert. Then a couple of weeks ago, a friend hit me up and said, 'You got an interest in a mid-'60s Vox?' And of course I did! It's a '65 AC15 twin, and it's glorious.

If all your guitars were in a burning building and you only had time to save one, which would it be and why?

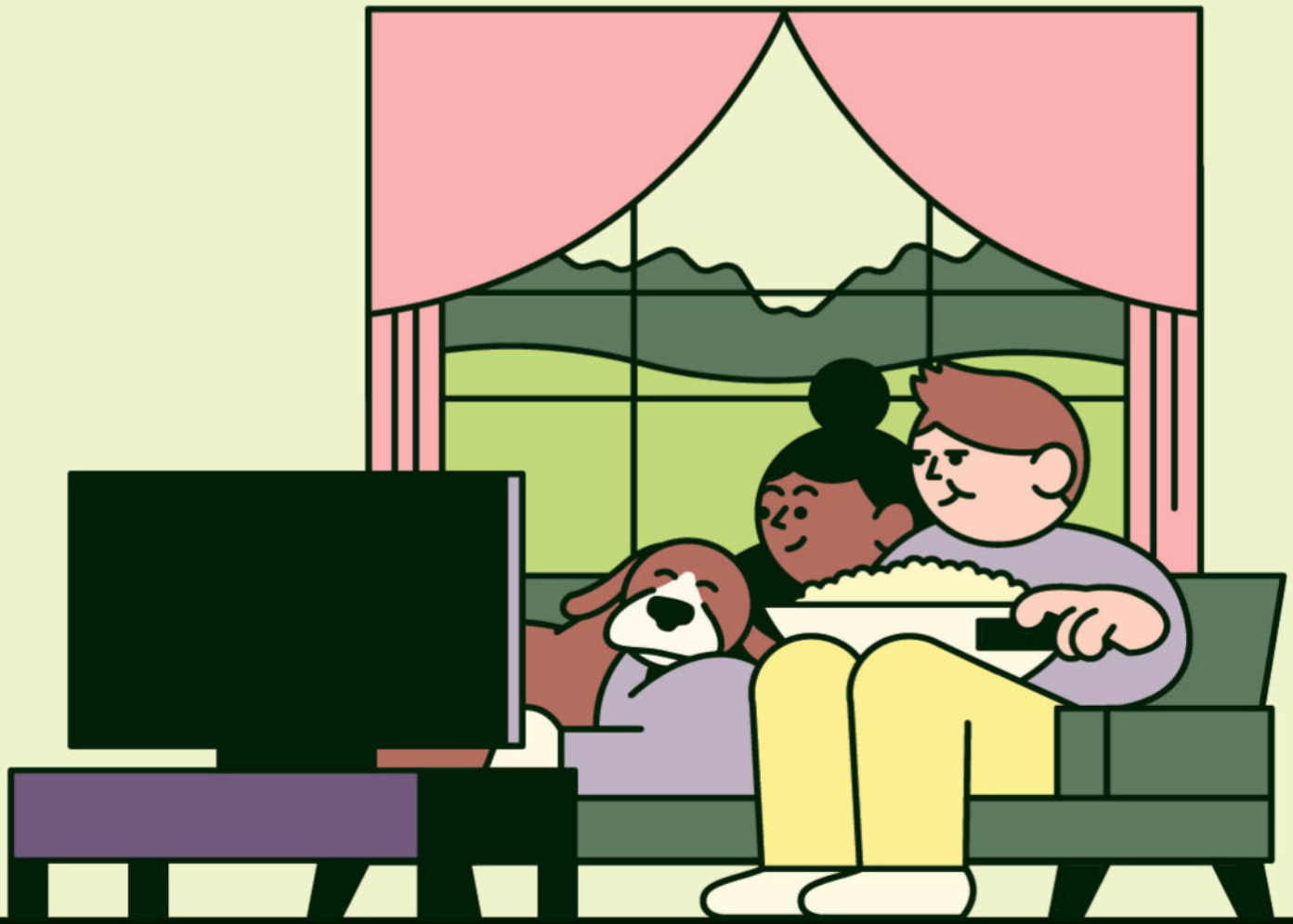
It'd be my little black Gibson Les Paul Jr. that I bought in 1993 or so, and it's my favourite. We're attached. We have a bond that I got with it immediately the first time I ever played it. There's no way to explain it, you know, just it's a tangible thing.

Be Right Here is out now.

"OUR PRODUCER SAID 'DON'T BRING A MARSHALL STACK!'"

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Words Jenna Scaramanga

"YOU CAN REALLY MESS UP
A SONG WITH THE WRONG
GUITAR SOLO!"

Def Leppard redefined rock guitar in the '80s with their 10 million-selling classic *Pyromania*. Lead guitarist Phil Collen reveals how...



When Leppard began work on *Pyromania* in 1982, the sound of the decade was still emerging. There were benchmarks – Van Halen, Boston and AC/DC – but no one had yet made the record to define rock in the '80s. Despite their relatively modest success to date, Leppard fancied their chances. In their corner they had Lange, still hot from AC/DC's *Back In Black*, plus a pile of new technology no rock band had yet exploited, and a sh*tload of confidence.

As it turned out, that confidence was warranted. Released in January 1983, *Pyromania* went platinum in the US within three months, en route to 10 million sales. In its wake, record companies scrambled to sign bands aping the *Pyromania* formula of AC/DC's crunch, Journey's melody and Queen's harmonies. Leppard and Mutt Lange had cleverly employed synths and drum machines to make *Pyromania* larger-than-life without softening its attack or masking the guitars. While bands fought to match Leppard's big riffs and bigger hooks, their producers struggled to replicate Lange's jaw-dropping sonics.

As a 40th anniversary deluxe edition of *Pyromania* is released this month – albeit a year late – Phil Collen looks back on the making of a masterpiece and his role in it...

GETTING THE TONES

To record their orchestrated guitars, Leppard needed a guitar tone that would play nicely alongside the synths and vocal harmonies. Engineer Mike Shipley, who died in 2013, described the nightmare of this process: "Because of the nature of the way that band played, and the inversions they used, it was very hard to get the right tone, what Mutt had in his head as 'commercial distortion.' We had hundreds of amps and cabinets in that studio, from AC/DC amps to little combos. Everything you could think of. After a while you get so fatigued that nothing ever sounds good enough."

The main *Pyromania* amp was a 100-watt Marshall head borrowed from session guitarist Mike Slamer, whose band City Boy had a minor hit with the Lange-produced 5-7-0-5. "Now you could get the sounds that they were trying to get with stuff like Fractals," Phil says. "Back then it was it wasn't

Every guitarist has been told that rhythm guitar is the most important skill, because no one gets a gig playing only solos. But when Phil Collen got the call to play on Def Leppard's third album *Pyromania*, it was to do exactly that. "The painting was finished," he recalls now. "I just threw an extra layer over it."

The band's first two albums had been recorded with the guitar team of Pete Willis and Steve Clark, but when Willis was dramatically fired late in the *Pyromania* sessions, Phil was drafted to provide the solos on songs that would become hit singles and deathless rock anthems: *Photograph*, *Rock Of Ages*, and *Foolin'*. It was the gig of a lifetime.

Pete Willis made a huge contribution to *Pyromania*, co-writing four of the songs and laying down rhythm parts that singer Joe Elliott called "phenomenal". Producer Mutt Lange had relied on Willis for his Malcolm Young-like ability to play on the beat. But on a personal level, there was a disconnect between Willis and the rest of the band. Phil Collen, of London glam rock band Girl, was the perfect replacement.

FIRE STARTERS

Def Leppard on the *Pyromania* tour. From left: Phil Collen, Rick Savage, Rick Allen, Joe Elliott, Steve Clark



so easy. Those Marshalls would be so different from each other. You'd have to add things to an amp or get it modded, but occasionally you'd just get a beauty that for whatever reason just sings." Phil thinks Slamer's amp was probably unmodified. "They just plugged it in and were like, 'Oh, this has a different thing.'"

Phil wanted his own tone for the solos, so he brought his amp, a non-master volume Marshall JMP he'd bought in 1979 or 1980. "They'd spent months mic'ing this cabinet up. We literally just plugged my 50-watt Marshall in and it sounded great. It was a very different sound to what they'd been using."

THE ONE-TAKE SOLO

The band gave Phil a tape with a rough mix of the song *Stagefright*. For his Def Leppard audition, Phil had to write a solo for it. He composed his solo overnight and recorded it in one take the next day. "It was all my Ibanez Destroyer on that one," he says. "It started on the bridge pickup. For the fast run, I click it over to the neck pickup. That was the Al Di Meola influence, because he would kick it into the neck pick up and just get a smoothness that would just glide."

The remaining solos were worked out in the control room, with Phil improvising a take and Mutt Lange making suggestions for changes. Collen also played various overdubs. "It was mostly 'vibe' parts," he says. "Root note things, powerchords and stuff. Little bits of solo stuff."

Phil used three guitars: a black Japanese Stratocaster with a big headstock that would become the main guitar on the band's next album *Hysteria*, the wine red Les Paul Custom he had used with his last band Girl, and the black Ibanez Destroyer that is synonymous with early Leppard thanks to its use in the *Pyromania* videos. The studio also had various Strats and Teles used for overdubbing, as well as Steve Clark's Les Pauls.

In the end, Phil played solos on half the tracks, with Clark supplying the remainder. Each guitarist had a distinct role in the recording process. "Pete had done a lot of the really very concise, strict rhythm," Phil explains. "He was a really good player for that kind of stuff. And then Steve would do all the jangles over the top of it. I'd just come in and mess it all up with leads and powerchords, scrapes and feedback!"



COLLEN THE DESTROYER
Phil used his Ibanez Destroyer for the one-take solo in *Stagefright*

Bassist Rick Savage also played clean guitar overdubs. "Sav's really good at getting a very precise, clean jangle," Phil says.

THE SOLO THAT TALKS

For the solo in *Rock Of Ages*, Phil tried to emulate one of his heroes. "I thought I'd make the notes count, like Jeff Beck," he says. "It doesn't sound anything like Jeff, but that was the intention going in. You could hang on the note a little bit longer, and it would actually talk to you."

The lick that opens the solo is a conscious quote from the "I'm burnin', burnin'" vocal melody in verse two. "The solos were worked out with the vocal in mind and the rhythm of the song," he says. "I think you can really mess up a song by doing the wrong guitar solo. You follow the narrative that comes from the vocal and the lyric."

THE JOHNNY THUNDERS VIBE

Phil's solo on *Rock! Rock! (Till You Drop)* has a noticeably cleaner tone than the other solos, all of which came from the Ibanez Destroyer. He used the same amp settings for everything, though. "For *Rock! Rock!*, I used the Les Paul. It just definitely has a cleaner sound," Phil says, even though all his guitars were fitted with the same DiMarzio Super

Distortion pickups. Although the solo begins with a Chuck Berry lick beloved by Eddie Van Halen and Angus Young, Phil didn't actually have any of those players in mind. "I was thinking more in the tradition of Johnny Thunders. There's a punkiness. I love Angus and Eddie, but we always try and get the Johnny Thunders vibe in because it's a bit more aggressive and violent. For the ride-out solo, there was a Hamer guitar just sitting around. I don't know what model it was or who it belonged to. I remember picking that up, and that's what I used."

RECORDING ONE STRING AT A TIME

In an interview with Leppard biographer David Fricke, Mutt Lange explained how the *Pyromania* guitar tones were created. Referring to the album's final track *Billy's Got A Gun*, Lange said: "That big orchestral riff is in C, which is a really ball-less key. But the riff only sounded good in C, so we couldn't move it. In order to get a good, cutting sound and still keep the bottom end nice and fat, we had to work on the sound in stages. We'd get a powerful sound with a lot of attack on one string. Then we'd set up a clean harmony on a lower one. After that, we could cut the exact same riff on those strings with a more honky



sound to get a solid mid-range. Then we'd do the same riff a third time to get a real booming sound down below. That would be one guitar, three weeks later!"

As Phil now explains: "People say, 'Oh Def Leppard record one string at a time!' Yeah, we did that, but only when you want to get clarity. On *Too Late For Love*, that middle riff section, a lot of the distortion would fuzz up some of the clarity of the notes. Mutt would say, 'Let's separate the riff.' Usually it was just two parts, two strings, and then you mix that in with the distorted riff."

This approach meant you could hear the individual notes even in complex chords, but as Phil says: "It still has that rock energy."

JANGLE AND FEEDBACK

The arpeggiated chorus in *Photograph* had been recorded with the cleanest possible guitar tone. "The jangle part is country clean," Phil says. "It's actually a Stratocaster, and it's just so clean. It need something to bolster it up so it

just didn't sound too country." Mutt suggested Phil overdub the root note of each arpeggio with a dirty tone. "It was probably a Boss pedal. It was just the root note with a with a kind of a fuzzy sound." In context, a sonic miracle occurs: the fuzzed-out root notes and the clean arpeggios merge into one clean-yet-dirty tone.

For the solo, Phil wanted to create a dramatic entrance with feedback, so he stood next to his amp in the live room. "I always want to do feedback bits on songs. I always loved the way Mick Ronson hit the root note and it turns into feedback. It's one of my favourite things."

THE LAST-MINUTE PANIC

The band and their producer had headed into the sessions knowing they wanted to make an album that had never been done before. It turned out they very nearly couldn't. For one thing, their ears were fried. "We were singing a semitone sharp," Mutt said. "Our ears

SMOKIN'!

"The first time I heard *Pyromania* I thought it was the best rock album I'd ever heard in my life," Phil says

would get tired and we couldn't hear the bass anymore. We watched Elton John on *Top Of The Pops* one night and he sounded really out of tune." Rick Savage's bass parts had been recorded first, and where his tuning had drifted, the guitars had to be retuned to match. When it came time to record backing vocals, the band were horrified to discover some of the guitars were also out of tune. There was no time to recruit them, so engineer Mike Shipley put them through a harmoniser, whose chorusing effect masked the tuning errors. The popularity of harmonised guitars for the rest of the decade was partly inspired by this happy accident.

To make things worse, technology began to fail them. In recording so many overdubs, the multitrack tapes had been rewound so many times that the oxide began falling off in two-inch chunks, leaving the tape almost see-through and robbing the guitar tracks of some of their original high end. The drums and other samples were run on the Fairlight CMI, an early digital sampler and sequencer, which somehow had to be kept in sync with the analogue recordings. By the time they reached the mix stage, Mike Shipley had fallen asleep at the desk twice, and Lange had to finish the sessions with assistance from Nigel Green (who would later fall asleep at the desk during the making of *Hysteria*).

FEEL THE BURN!

By the time *Pyromania* was completed, the band needed to sell a million copies to break even. Neither of their first two albums had shifted even half that amount. But they needn't have worried. *Photograph* was an immediate smash on radio and MTV, and the album was soon selling 100,000 copies per week.

As well as changing the sound of the '80s, *Pyromania* has had a long-lasting influence. As System Of A Down's Daron Malakian told VH-1, "Pyromania was a big part of our childhood so it has to play some kind of role in our music." In 2008, Taylor Swift performed a Crossroads concert with Def Leppard, duetting with Joe Elliott on *Photograph* and a selection of other Leppard and Swift hits.

And after all these years, Phil Collen still can't believe his luck. "It's crazy," he laughs. "The first time I heard it I thought it was the best rock album I'd ever heard in my life. I remember it like it was yesterday."

The 40th anniversary edition of *Pyromania* is released on April 26.

"I'D JUST MESS IT ALL UP WITH LEADS AND POWER CHORDS, SCRAPES AND FEEDBACK!"



COVER
FEATURE

The Strat

2024 marks the 70th anniversary of the Stratocaster, and, while Fender has its own celebrations planned, we're getting in on the action, too. Here, we look at the legacy of a guitar that has shaped popular music like no other – and why Fender's enduring doublecut remains at the top of the tree, being, as it is, in the hands of countless cutting edge players. The Strat-toting Tash Sultana and Tyler Bryant tell us why Fender's design remains their axe of choice. We get the lowdown on the tones of two legendary Strat users, David Gilmour and Rory Gallagher, by guitarists who live and breathe their music in tribute bands. We'll help you choose a Strat with our breakdown of the spec. And, as if that wasn't enough Strat-y goodness already, we've got a big tab lesson to help you play like the stars of this iconic guitar...



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A DESIGN FOR LIFE

Words Jonathan Horsley

Celebrating 70 years of the Stratocaster: a story of evolution in guitar design and revolution in guitar music

The Fender Stratocaster is the most successful electric guitar design of all time. No guitar has shaped popular culture like the Strat. Its double-cutaway design is the acme of guitar shapes, arguably the most copied, the most easily recognisable. The Stratocaster's cultural legacy, ignited in 1957 when Buddy Holly debuted it with the Crickets on The Ed Sullivan Show, transcends the instrument itself.

Its story is not just about its impact on guitarists' imagination. And yet as a musical instrument, a piece of engineered design, it has remained relevant, a fact that rests upon its player-friendly ergonomics, with contouring to accommodate the forearm and to sit better against the body, the versatility of the three-pickup format, but also a subtle but telling evolution in its specifications that has often been led by those who played it. Some of the standard specs we see in Fender's Stratocaster lineup today – the five-way switching, bridge humbuckers – came from players. Before 1977, Strat players had to manually manipulate the three-way switch to get those in-between sounds of Positions 2 and 4, the sort that Jimi Hendrix popularised.

The modular build allows players to modify components or swap them out entirely. Not getting along with the tremolo? Block it off. If it's got screws you can unscrew it; if it has got solder, it can be rewired. You would not be the first to execute the Dan Armstrong/HSB wiring mod that connects all three single-coils to the neck tone control, allowing you to use the middle tone control to select between regular single-coil operation or to combine the neck and bridge pickups with the middle in series for humbucking

tones – a new trick for an already versatile guitar.

Do you want more from your bridge pickup? You could fit a steel inductance plate under it, then remove it if you don't like it. Don't like the neck shape? Someone will sell you a spare. That's how Eric Clapton's Blackie came to be. It was a buyer's market for Strats in 1970 and Clapton was buying. Taking full advantage of the bolt-on build he had the neck from his alder-bodied '56 Strat swapped out for a '57 neck, its V-shape more to his liking. He changed the

pickups, too, kitting Blackie out with a greatest hits of Strat pickups so far. In a coupe de grace, he blocked out the vibrato, too. Blackie was his "mongrel". In Pasadena, California, a young Eddie Van Halen was paying attention...

Some of the most radical specs found on today's Stratocasters were borne of artist collaborations, such as the onboard fuzz circuit on the Steve Lacy 'People Pleaser' Strat, or the 12dB mid-boost circuit of the Juanes Strat. Ed O'Brien's Strat has a Fernandes Sustainer at the neck position. Does all this mean that Leo Fender *didn't* get it right the first time around? Well, maybe. But consider this: for all the changes over the years to the pickups, neck shape, vibrato design, hardware, tonewoods, fret-size, fingerboard radius and so on, the concept of the Stratocaster has changed little since its 1954 launch. Leo Fender created an archetype. He created a platform. It was designed to evolve.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Leo Fender did not act alone. It was his name on the headstock, his company, his call – but he had help. Not being a musician, he needed assistance when designing a follow-up to the Telecaster. Feedback from pro players was







invaluable – not to mention their ideas. Freddie Tavares, a Hawaiian steel guitarist who worked with Dean Martin and Elvis Presley, who played the famous intro music to Warner Bros' *Looney Tunes* features, can take much of the credit for the shape, which took cues from the Precision Bass. Bill Carson had the right stuff as the Strat's test pilot (and catalogue model). Speaking to guitar historian Tony Bacon for a 2019 *Reverb* piece, Carson recalled the early knock-ups to be "very ugly, but very playable" and with plenty finessing to be done – the prototypes Fender and his lieutenant George Fullerton presented him lacked balance.

"A big part with me was that the guitar should fit like a good shirt and stay balanced at all times," said Carson. "I said that so many times that Freddie and Leo both got pretty tired of hearing it. But finally they glued a horn on the upper bout, and it was pretty close to balancing. They extended it one more time, and it did balance, but it was really ugly by the standards of the day. Then Freddie Tavares said it wouldn't be quite so ugly if we put a small horn on the lower side and gave it a little symmetry there, so we did that."

Carson attributed the front-mounted jack design to Fullerton. Fender sales executive Don Randall named it the Stratocaster. Its contours owed much to country-western guitarist Rex Gillion's input. Gillion's reward was a custom build bearing the serial number #0001, finished in white, that would later be owned by Seymour Duncan, and ultimately David Gilmour, who used it on Pink Floyd's *Another Brick On The Wall*. That a Strat could exit the factory in 1954/'54 and be played on a landmark rock release from 1979, with Gilmour describing the guitar as "perfect", speaks to the success of Fender's early work.

Not everything was perfect, though. Production ground to a halt in 1953 when the vibrato design proved not fit for purpose. It made the guitar sound like a "tin can", said Fullerton, who sounded the alarm. That ultimately delayed the guitar's release, costing Fender a lot of money. But the redesigned unit, which incorporated a steel block and would be named the synchronized tremolo, sounded just right.

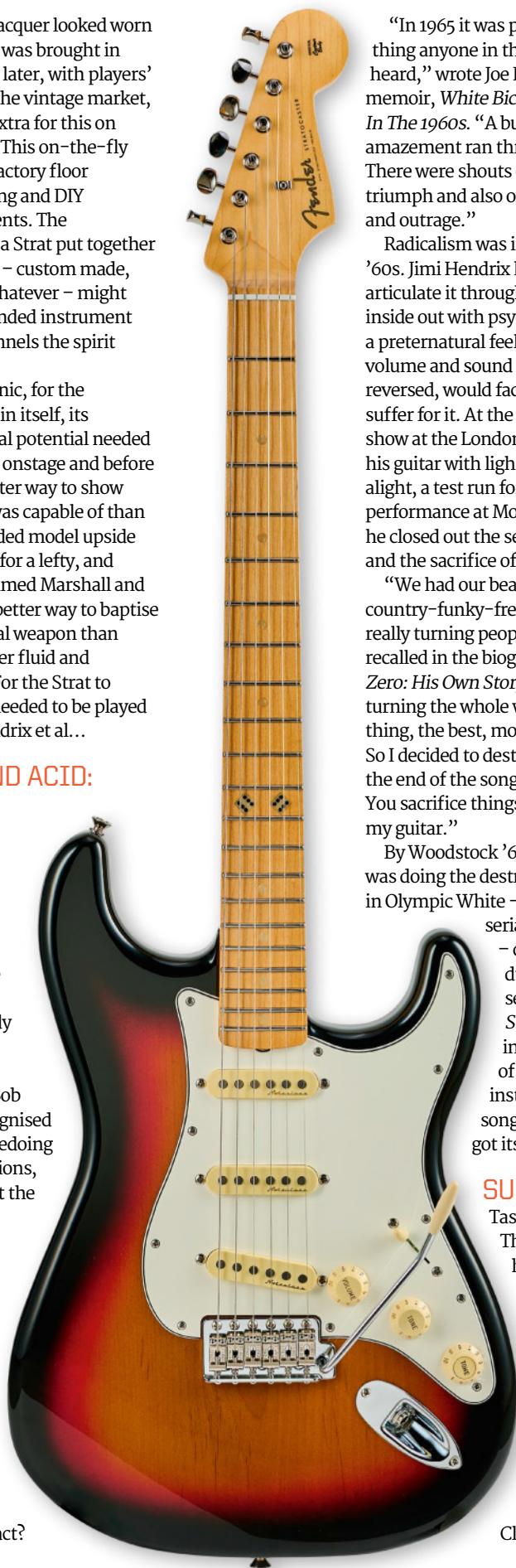
Back in the 1950s, the Strat's specifications would change from month to month. Maple fingerboards

with nitrocellulose lacquer looked worn quickly so rosewood was brought in – ironically, decades later, with players' appetites honed by the vintage market, players gladly paid extra for this on Custom Shop relics. This on-the-fly tweaking from the factory floor presaged the modding and DIY partscaster movements. The partscaster, literally a Strat put together from different parts – custom made, vintage, salvaged, whatever – might not be a Fender-branded instrument but the practice channels the spirit of Leo Fender.

But to become iconic, for the Stratocaster to sustain itself, its revolutionary musical potential needed to be demonstrated, onstage and before witnesses. What better way to show just what the Strat was capable of than turning a right-handed model upside down, restringing it for a lefty, and playing it through dimed Marshall and Sunn stacks? What better way to baptise it as a countercultural weapon than dousing it with lighter fluid and baptising it in fire? For the Strat to become a legend it needed to be played by them. Enter, Hendrix et al...

FOLK, FIRE AND ACID: NEWPORT, MONTEREY, WOODSTOCK

One it rolled off the production line in California, the Stratocaster needed moments to capture the public's imagination. If Buddy Holly effectively introduced it to the world in '57, it was Bob Dylan who first recognised its potential for torpedoing staid genre expectations, taking to the stage at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival with a '64 Strat for an electric performance that lasted just 17 minutes but will be remembered for eternity. As many hated it as were thrilled. What they had seen, however, was a first. How were they supposed to react?



"In 1965 it was probably the loudest thing anyone in the audience had ever heard," wrote Joe Boyd in his 2006 memoir, *White Bicycles: Making Music In The 1960s*. "A buzz of shock and amazement ran through the crowd... There were shouts of delight and triumph and also of derision and outrage."

Radicalism was in the air in the late '60s. Jimi Hendrix had the chops to articulate it through a blues style turned inside out with psychedelics, and a preternatural feel for the force of volume and sound in rock. His Strats, reversed, would facilitate his art and suffer for it. At the climax of his 1967 show at the London Astoria, he anointed his guitar with lighter fluid and set it alight, a test run for his forthcoming performance at Monterey Pop, where he closed out the set with *Wild Thing* and the sacrifice of his '65 Strat.

"We had our beautiful rock-blues-country-funky-freaky sound, and it was really turning people on," Hendrix recalled in the biography *Starting At Zero: His Own Story*. "I felt like we were turning the whole world on to this new thing, the best, most lovely new thing. So I decided to destroy my guitar at the end of the song as a sacrifice. You sacrifice things you love. I love my guitar."

By Woodstock '69, Hendrix's guitar was doing the destroying. This '68 Strat in Olympic White – aka "Izabella", serial number #240981 – did the damage during a triumphant set that turned *The Star-Spangled Banner* into a pulsating work of psych-noise, an instrumental protest song. The Strat officially got its stripes.

SUSTAINING IT

Tastes change in music. The '70s tastes for humbuckers challenged the Strat's appeal, but did it ever go out of fashion? The Strat could still count on standard bearers such as the aforementioned Gilmour and Clapton, Genesis' Mike

Rutherford, George Harrison, Ritchie Blackmore, Jeff Beck and Nile Rodgers, whose Hitmaker Strat has sold more records than any other.

Fender's CBS era, from the mid-'60s to early '80s, was a difficult time for the brand. There were a lot of spec updates. Not all landed.

Some players, like Eddie Van Halen, took matters into their own hands. The need for a high-performance Strat variant with a humbucker at the bridge was the impetus for his Frankenstrat, which seated a Gibson PAF in a Strat body, and over time developed into the ur-Superstrat, complete with double-locking Floyd Rose vibrato. Ex-Fender employer Wayne Charvel, who had been making a living servicing guitars and selling parts, entered the hot-rod business, working with Grover Jackson on bespoke high-performance S-styles. The Charvel and Jackson brands eventually came home to roost under Fender's ownership in 2002.

In the '80s, players wanted to play faster, louder. Not all coveted humbuckers. The precision of single-coils (and perhaps the influence of Blackmore, too) made the Strat Yngwie Malmsteen's weapon of choice. "I refused to hack my Strat up and put

CLEAN FREAK
Stat purist Yngwie Malmsteen



a humbucker in it because everyone else on the planet did," Malmsteen told *MusicRadar*. "And that was a big deal for my sound. People would say, 'He sounds different... Clean!'" Speaking of '80s cultural moments for Stratocasters, in a shred context, Malmsteen's 1984 album *Rising Force* is hard to beat. In blues, we had another generational talent, Stevie Ray Vaughan, redefining what was possible on a Strat.

Fender responded to Superstrat provocations with the HM Strat but did not officially have a full production run HSS Strat until 1996's Lone Star. The advances in pickup design – noiseless single-coils, stacked humbuckers

– presented players, and Fender, with more opportunities for adapting the Strat for popular music's next generational shift. Nirvana's Kurt Cobain and Pearl Jam's Mike McCready played 'em and smashed 'em.

It helps that the human form is unchanged; the Strat is still sympathetic to our physiology. Its growing vocabulary of sounds and features, Fender's Janus-faced expansion of the Strat catalogue, both looking forwards to new looks and features and backwards to reanimate classic designs in its Vintera, American Vintage and Custom Shop lines are all factors in keeping it relevant – not to mention Fender recognising the Strat as an ideal beginner guitar, and producing them under its affordable Squier sub-brand.

Moreover, it is still being played; by Idles' Mark Bowen on *The Tonight Show*, by H.E.R. at the Super Bowl... and remember John Mayer's legendary 2009 Grammys performance of *Gravity*? Each generation finding its own sound, impressing their identity onto the Stratocaster, as only a good instrument allows. And occasionally setting it on fire or smashing it into pieces because, as Hendrix says, you have to make sacrifices for art...

BELOW LEFT
Bob Dylan plays a Stratocaster for the first time on stage at the Newport Folk Festival, 1965

BELOW RIGHT
Jimi Hendrix with his black Strat onstage at the Monterey Pop Festival, 1967

"I REFUSED TO HACK MY STRAT UP AND PUT A HUMBUCKER IN IT BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE ON THE PLANET DID!"

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Photos Getty



SUPER STAR

H.E.R. rocks the Super Bowl
as guest of Usher on
February 11, 2024

Words Phil Weller

A NEW GENERA

The hottest Strat players in the world right now – from H.E.R. to Idles and beyond...

As Fender celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Stratocaster, a wide-ranging generation of modern players are putting its tonal versatility through its paces like never before. Regardless of who picks one up and what they do with it, the Strat continues to excel in every environment. Super Bowl LVIII proved high-class entertainment on and off the pitch, and H.E.R.'s classy halftime show solo was right at the heart of it. The first black female artist to be bestowed with a signature Stratocaster in 2020, her satin-smooth R&B playing has been turning heads for nearly a decade.

The Californian musician has cited watching Prince and Lenny Kravitz music videos growing up as life-affirming moments, and speaking to *Total Guitar* in 2020, she explained how her soloing style is as inspired by vocalists as much as blues greats. "I like to play my guitar like I'm singing, so I go for melodies that might feel a bit closer to what a singer would do, as opposed to a guitar player," she said. "Sometimes, I like to sing and play my solos at the same time, even harmonising my voice with my guitar."

With that comes a love for minimalism where, though she can shred her fretboard alight, feel vastly outweighs acrobatics. "Everything I do is based on the pentatonic scales," she explained. "I grew up listening to B.B. King, Albert King and John Lee Hooker. I do like to get melodic and do a little bit of fancy stuff, but all the feeling I find is in the blues. I like making people feel something with just one note."

Since 2020, she has enjoyed three variants of her signature, Vintage Noiseless pickups-stocked Stratocaster, and she hopes it can be a tool to inspire. "This is my expression," she said at the time of its launch. "I think it will inspire a lot of young black girls – and actually a lot of young girls in general – to pick up the guitar, which is something we don't see enough of."

Fellow Californian Steve Lacy is another Strat-lover rooted in the R&B aesthetic. The magic of single-coils really shines through his clean, chimy tones to the point where you can hear his pick hit the strings. It gives his chord-focused playing a personable charm across songs where his Strat brings colourful texture so his storytelling vocals can thrive. Lacy is a terrific example of how guitarists don't always need to be flashy to impress.

Angel Olson takes a similar approach in using raw guitars as storytelling vehicles. The singer-songwriter's music is filled with energy and angst, her tones typically sandpaper-smooth for that 'amp that's fallen off a back of a truck' vibe where it's not so much about riffs as it is the atmosphere they create. Her playing can feel vulnerable on songs such as *Unfucktheworld*, or furious and frenzied, like the chorus pedal-laced alt-rock crescendo of *Shut Up Kiss Me*, but it always feels resolutely her.

Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil, however, is arguably the most famous modern day Strat super-fan. Across nine studio albums, the Scottish trio's sound has been hugely transformative. Journeying

from stripped back garage alt-rock to the world-conquering riffs of *Only Revolutions*, with their modern sound a blend of the two, a Squier Strat has always been by his side. Even at their most polished, the kind of grittiness only budget gear can deliver reigns supreme, proving money isn't everything. Whether churning out barely overdriven single note riffs – see *Bubbles* and *Weird Leisure* – or battering ears with drop-tuned powerchords – *The Captain*, *Wolves Of Winter* – Neil's playing remains a scintillating hybrid of clever catchiness and feral mania that would sound second rate on any other guitar.

That same wildness wriggles beneath the fingers of Nigerian guitarist Mdou Moctar, who transforms his instrument into a symbol of protest. With his new album, *Funeral For Justice*, he says "nothing is toned down" and that his psychedelic rock has never sounded "louder, faster and wilder". Its title track is conclusive evidence of that, where his biting single coils bare their teeth like starving wolves.

The Stratocaster has often been at the epicentre of invention and intriguing stylistic cocktails. Shubh Saran is one such player continuing that trend. Born in India, Saran grew up in four continents and six countries as his parents moved around for work. While this blurred his cultural lines, he grounded his musical foundation in the singular chord-shape songwriting of punk, whilst an Indian approach to melodies coloured his licks.

TION





Gamakas – the way Indian musicians dance between notes in a scale – are a key part of his musical palette, which has gotten more progressive over time.

Today, Allan Holdsworth and Derek Trucks are major influences for the John Mayer-Strat playing Saran as he manoeuvres, amongst other projects, through his prog jazz solo work and the electronic jazz/EDM of *Sungazer*. That's led to him jamming on stage with Plini and subsequently blowing the Aussie's mind. "I love that guy," Plini told *Guitar World* last year. "He'd come on stage and play the weirdest sh*t from other realms of playing that I would never think of. We'd look at him like, 'What the f*ck is happening?'"

Floya's Marv Wilder, meanwhile, has put modern rock and EDM one hell of a collision course. Equal parts Eurovision pomp, fizzing electronica and hip-swinging rock, Wilder's lead lines are the icing on the band's genre-blending cake, with the glorious solo *The Hymn* a clear highlight.

To those ends, Andrew Savage and Austin Brown of New York indie outfit Parquet Courts bring their own spin on alternative rock. Sharp, Talking Heads-esque clean tones and a Kinks-go-punk swagger are their calling cards. Their no-nonsense songwriting oozes a sense of care-free nostalgia, which is a world away from London-based multi-instrumentalist Flo Blue's music. Amalgamating velvety jazz and folk turns with pop sensibilities, her songs are full of colour and interesting rhythmic choices without ever losing sight of an addictive hook.

Perhaps it's the textural versatility of Stratocasters which makes them so valuable. Taking things down an indie folk route, Buck Meek's writing in *Big Thief* and his sparsely furnished solo work always ushers a warming tonality from his Strat. Be it on the country-twangled *Cannonball!* or *Big Thief's Vampire Empire*, his playing always feels like an embrace from a long-lost friend.

Despite nestling in a post-punk pool, Carlos O'Connell and Conor Curley of Ireland's Fontaines D.C. ooze a similarly warm moodiness from their

Stratocasters, employing 1961 American Vintage II and Rory Gallagher tribute models among a slew of Jaguars, Teles, and Jazzmasters. Yet, despite that warmth, there's a chill icing their tones at times, as the haunting refrain of *Roman Holiday* attests.

That's a chill that Bristol's Idles crank to the max and lacquer with bare-knuckle-boxer ruggedness. Speaking to *Guitarist* earlier this year, Mark Bowen explained how is time-worn '72 Strat originally belonged to his father, and it's one he calls "unique and weird". He's gotten rid of its tone knobs as he simply doesn't use them, its finish is beyond knackered after being covered in tape over the years, its varnish strummed clean off. But what it lacks in pageant-ready perfection it more than makes up for in charisma. He's also installed a high-output Creamery pickup in the bridge to accentuate the twang from his D and G strings, which makes for a wonderful contrast to his blue baritone Strat.

"The best thing about baritones is that they're twangy and meaty at the same time," he enthuses. Its guttural character, which he pairs with a Vox AC30 amp, is all over new album, *TANGK*.

Cory Wong is one of the modern-day poster boys for the Strat thanks to his relentless right-hand technique. Cory Hanson is another leading exponent. Whether he's unfurling gritty psych textures in *Wand*, toning things down with Ty Segall or stomping through garage rock hits with former outfit *Together Pangea*, he's usually bringing his Olympic White 1972 Fender

AMERICAN MADE
Parquet Courts'
Andrew Savage

Stratocaster along for the ride. His ever-growing CV shows him as something of a musical chameleon, but whichever way he points his guitar playing, his Strat has always proved a reliable weapon.

For Larkin Poe's Rebecca Lovell and her husband Tyler Bryant, Strats are a part of the family. Bryant, professes a love for '50s builds, with an American Original and a '59 in his arsenal, and oozes for suave, rolling blues rock licks from his fingertips. Lovell's go-to, meanwhile, is a '60s-style Custom Shop model. A Seymour Duncan humbucker in the bridge fattens her stylish bluesy playing, which works as a striking counterpoint to sister Megan's lap steel.

Speaking of counterpoints, Leprous' Robin Ognedal's Strat collection has helped create a potent dichotomy with co-guitarist Tor Oddmund Suhrke's six- and eight-string Aristides. While Suhrke's tone is all about balls, Ognedal's thinner, more cutting lines typify the modern metal and prog rock blend the Norwegians have learnt to master over their 23-year career. His love of maple fretboards and glassy tones creates a playing style more in line with John Mayer than John Petrucci, as the band sits in a pocket that is both vintage and modern.

It's a feat that defines the work of Boston's Snakedersch, too. When he's not playing an Abasi Concepts guitar, channelling its creator's innovative jazz-prog playing style, he's utilising the brightness of Strats to great effect. His latest EP *Edges* is rich with ethereal textures and shining leads in a manner not too dissimilar to the fusion-coloured licks of Owane. He's also finding that Strats are right at home in the modern instrumental prog world whilst leaning heavily into the world's sunnier landscapes.

Another bright spark in that talent-littered world is Joshua De La Victoria, whose namesake project Victoria sees him joining forces with Animals As Leaders drummer Matt Garstka. Their music ranges from laid-back lucidity to thumping, off-kilter passages. Light and accessible but deceptively complex jazz, churned out through a relic'd white Stratocaster, sits at its core.

Eras may come and go, but whatever's in vogue in the musical world, you can trust that the iconic purrs and growls of a Fender Stratocaster will be heard within it.

"THE BEST THING ABOUT BARITONES IS THAT THEY'RE TWANGY AND MEATY AT THE SAME TIME" MARK BOWEN



**WHEREVER I
PLAY MY STRAT...**
Clockwise from top
left: Mark Bowen,
Rebecca Lovell, Cory
Wong, Mdou Moctar

W

With 1.3 million YouTube subscribers and 1.2 million Instagram followers, Tash Sultana is one of the few social media age guitarists best known for making original music. Fender released Tash's signature Strat in 2020, and the Strat's become the dominant force in Tash's sonic arsenal, even for 2022's questionably-titled *Unplugged*.

How was it working on Fender's 70th Anniversary campaign?

I'd made the decision not to go on tour for the foreseeable future. I'd just gotten back home and I get this email: 'Hey, not sure if you're interested in this. You'll have to fly back to LA. It's Grammy week, could be fun. Nile Rodgers is doing it on the day that they want you there.' I was just like, 'All right!' I've got a love/hate relationship with my guitar playing, so to be asked and considered among some of the best guitarists in the world to do this campaign, I think I needed that. You know, Mateus Asato, Tom Morello, Nile Rodgers on the bill, and they're asking little old me to come along as well! I partied so hard, stayed up till the sun came up every morning. I finally understood what hair of the dog means, and had this amazing week where I just kept bumping into Nile Rodgers everywhere I went. Like, 'We got to stop doing this, man!' We really connected and he gave me his number. We've been talking so we'll see what happens from there. I think it was possibly the best week of my life.

What is the Strat you're playing in the videos?

I bought a 1960 Graffiti Yellow Stratocaster from the Chicago Music Exchange. It's the most expensive guitar I've ever bought. It makes me sick to even think that I spent that much money on a guitar. It's a f*cking crazy guitar. Straightaway Nile Rodgers was like, 'That! What is that?' I did change the pickups, just for three stock single coils. The old ones were super tarnished, very noisy, so they came out. For me, it wasn't about the internals of the guitar. I just saw this mother*cker on the wall

Words Amit Sharma Photos Allysse Gafkjen

"I USE THE WHAMMY BAR HEAPS!"

Tash Sultana loves Strats, just like their new bestie - the legendary Nile Rodgers



YELLOW PEARL
"The yellow one, 'Daphne', has taken first place now"

and I was like, 'What the hell is that?' It had the ugliest scratch plate on it too, but I could see what it could become.

You're normally a stickler for noiseless pickups. How are you coping with traditional single coils?

I kind of dilute my noise with the way that my guitar is routed and the type of processing that I have on it. I think I can pretty much achieve everything now by removing that noise digitally, with noise gates and other processing. I also reduce the noise floor on my Strats by shielding the cavities with aluminium foil.

Tell us about your signature Strat.

I wanted it to be versatile for all different

kinds of player preference. So I wanted to have the Dual-Tap humbucker with a coil-split on the tone knob and humbuckers and single-coil just so that you could set the guitar however you wanted. My whole concept was I wanted a guitar that looked like it was worth a lot of money, but still be affordable. I think the next one I do will probably be a little bit more specific to my personal spec. I still want to price it the same, but I would just I would make sure that the neck and radius was a little bit different, starting off as a U and finishing off as a half-moon. I would make sure that the neck was shaved down and unfinished. And I would have three single-coils for more of that jazz/blues sound.

"WITH THE STRAT CUTAWAYS I CAN GET ALL THE WAY DOWN THE NECK, AND THAT'S HOW I FEEL I PLAY THE BEST"

What's your number one Strat?

The yellow one, 'Daphne' – that's the name – has taken first place now. I knew as soon as I picked it up, it's the build, it's the weight, it's the wood. It's just things that you can't replicate, because of age, that just kind of does a certain thing to the guitar itself. That has a really big impact on the sound. So that would have to be number one. I still feel sick about how much I paid for it, but I love it. Vinnie was my other one, my vintage blue relic 1962 Stratocaster with the single coils and the hot rod DiMarzio Choppers pickup on the bridge. That's definitely up there.

How did you get into playing Strats?

My first Strat was a black Fender Squier that I got for my eighth birthday. When I was a little bit older, I actually saved up all of my money and bought myself a Epiphone SG. After the Epiphone I went and bought a Jazzmaster with my busking money. I could not believe that I'd made enough money busking to afford this Sea Foam Green Jazzmaster! From there, I bought my Richie Kotzen Tele which I still use every single show. I don't even remember when I started playing Strats again, I don't remember how and I don't remember why! I'm a slinky type of guitarist, so that is what I really like. Predominantly I play Strats because it's great for all those reggae, soul and jazz progressions. I like the thin neck to be able to wrap my thumb all the way around. With the Strat cutaways I can get all the way down the neck, and that's how I feel I play the best. And and I think they're just a really good looking, classic guitar. And I use the whammy bar heaps!

Last time we spoke you teased that you were developing something Strat-related with DiMarzio. Is that still coming?

Yeah, that kind of fell away a little bit just because of schedule conflict, but it's definitely in the pipeline.

How are you coping with not gigging?

Right now, it's a really strange place to be. Who am I now that the music's off? Quite a few days of nothing, just laying around in bed, which is not me. Maybe slightly depressed. I haven't had that spark for a very long time, because I was just completely burnt out. But also, it's kind of a nice place to be because I am starting to feel really, really creative now...



Tyler Bryant's blues-rock credentials are impeccable. He was mentored by real-deal Texas

bluesman Roosevelt Twitty, grew up playing sweaty Texas clubs, and collaborated with Robben Ford and Junior Wells. Along the way, his band has supported B.B. King, Jeff Beck, and Joe Bonamassa. His Strats have been in his hands for all of it.

What was it like being involved in the videos celebrating the Strat's 70th Anniversary?

It was so cool to be part of that with so many players that I respect. I was thrilled to get to be involved with anything Jimmie Vaughan is doing. There's just such a deep respect for Jimmie where I come from. As a fellow Texan, just to stand on the same stage is pretty cool.

How did you get into playing Strats?

The first time I picked up a Stratocaster, I kept hitting the five way switch. I was like, 'I'll never play one of these guitars!' Then I realised that I could actually use that to my advantage. I got my first Strat when I was 10 or 11 years old, a Texas Special American Stratocaster. The guitar case was locked because my parents wanted to be there when I opened it, and it was under the Christmas tree. I woke up in the middle of the night and pried the locks open with a fork and knife because I couldn't wait. It had to be a Strat because I'd been watching SRV's *Live At El Mocambo* and Jimi Hendrix at the Isle of White and Woodstock, and I'd become like a broken record about wanting a Stratocaster. I still use it. Those Texas Special pickups are crazy.

Your signature Strat has a humbucker. Why do you prefer that?

I started messing with humbuckers in about 2016. The Shakedown went on tour with AC/DC, and I was using a couple of 100-watt full stacks. It was amazing. The other guitarist in my band, Graham Whitford, was eating up a certain sonic space with his Les Paul. I wanted to be able to compete with anyone. Even with a humbucker, the Strat doesn't sound like a Les Paul.



"MY DREAM GUITAR WAS A 1960 STRATOCASTER"

Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Allyse Gafkjen

"IT HAD TO BE A STRAT. I'D BEEN WATCHING SRV AND HENDRIX"

Tyler Bryant is one of the hottest young exponents of Texas blues. So of course he plays Strats...

There's this midrange thing that Graham doesn't have that I can get. With the Shawbucker that I ended up with in the bridge, I can get just about any sound that I want, a really aggressive rock tone or a nice clean tone. But my original pink Strat still has the single-coil in it. I couldn't bring myself to change it. I love a single-coil and it just depends on the song.

Your main Strats are two shell pink Custom Shop relics. What's the story with them?

Pinky One was stolen from me in Spokane, Washington, and missing for five and a half years. It was found in the trunk of a car. They had sanded a bunch of stuff off it. When we inducted Steve Cropper into the Songwriting Hall of Fame, I'd written some of the lyrics for *In The Midnight Hour* [Wilson Pickett's 1965 hit, co-written by Cropper] on the back because I didn't want to mess up the lyrics in front of him. [Aerosmith singer] Steven Tyler had written 'Pink, it's like red, but not quite' on the back. They sanded that off, too. They went to all this trouble to make it look like it wasn't mine, but they never changed the serial number plate. This is the one I'm most sentimental about. I took this on tour with Jeff Beck, got to play it on stage with him, and Jeff played it. When it was stolen, it was devastating. When Pinky One was stolen, my family and my close friends pitched in and got me a Strat of the same specs. That's the one – Pinky Two – that I play most of the time, and that's what my signature model is based on. It was with me the last night I saw Roosevelt Twitty, and he played it right before he passed. Then we got those AC/DC tours and got to go

out with Guns N' Roses. It just became like my right arm. Those two are closely tied in my heart.

Are there any mods to your Strats?

It's so funny, because when I was working with Fender on the signature Strat, they were like, 'So what modifications have you done?' I said, 'Man, it sounded great when I got it!' I just put the humbucker in it. All my Strats since have had humbuckers. I did one that had a coil split, so I could try and get the best of both worlds, but the truth is, if I want a Strat with a single coil, I'm just going to grab Pinky One, or my original 1960 Strat. I don't do too many mods. I always just put a longer screw in the strap pin because I tend to shake them out of the guitar. I have stainless steel frets. I always prefer the vintage saddles and vintage tuners. I know there's like technology with locking tuners and all that, but it's not for me. I'm used to the screws digging into my palm!

Tell us about the 1960 Strat.

I used to play in this band called The Blues Buddies. We were opening for Dwight Yoakam at Gilley's in Dallas, playing Freddie King songs. People were just like, 'What is this band doing here?' They wanted to line dance! The coach of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team, Don Nelson, came up to me after the show and said, 'What's your dream guitar?' I said a 1960 Fender Stratocaster. He asked, 'Why don't you have one?' I was like, 'Oh, man, they're like \$20,000.' I was 13 at the time. A few days later, one showed up at my house. The reason my dream guitar was a 1960 Stratocaster was because of Alan

Haynes. He was just mind-boggling to me, playing in clubs in Austin and Houston with a 1960 Strat straight into a Fender Vibro-King, no effects. It was the most pristine, beautiful sound I'd ever heard. Even my signature models stick to that spec. I wish Fender would recreate Alan Haynes's Strat, because it's got a pretty cool history. Stevie Ray owned it at one point, Johnny Weiner, and Eric Johnson owned it. The first time I saw Alan play, I was young, and they wouldn't let me into the club on Sixth Street in Austin. He walked out onto the street because he saw they wouldn't let me in. I said, 'Can I play your guitar?' I wanted to feel it and see, what was different. How was he able to get that sound? He took his guitar off and let me play it. I realised in that moment, it's him. The guitar has the potential but you have to fulfil it.

TONES AND I
"I can get just about any sound that I want, a really aggressive rock tone or a nice clean tone"





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Photo Getty

Words Amit Sharma

"THE NUMBER OF TONES YOU CAN GET OUT OF A STRAT IS JUST INCREDIBLE!"

How to get **David Gilmour's** sound: expert advice from the guitarist who makes his living going exactly that – Steve McElroy from The Australian Pink Floyd Show

With over five million tickets sold for performances all across the globe, The Australian Pink Floyd Show are undisputed champions when it comes to recreating the music of the world's most celebrated prog rock band. And they even come with an official stamp of approval – David Gilmour was so impressed by them, he invited the group to perform at his 50th birthday party.

Here, Steve McElroy, the guitarist who helped start the project all the way back in 1988, talks us through the tools needed to emulate those genre-defining sounds and explains why the Pink Floyd guitarist is in a class of his own when it comes to channelling emotion...

David Gilmour and Fender Strats are, quite simply, a match made in heaven. Why do you think the formula works?

It's rare to see photographs of David playing anything else, though he has very occasionally used Telecasters and even Les Pauls. He was such a big Hank Marvin fan, so the revered Strat was what he gravitated towards. Syd Barrett [original Floyd guitarist and vocalist] played Danelectros and Telecasters, so when David joined, he was expected to use the same instruments, but obviously he had his heart set on the Stratocaster.

A big factor was the tremolo arm – the way he uses it is so unique and precise. That guitar clearly gave him the power to unlock the voice he had inside and that sound he wanted to get out. The instrument became an extension of his body.

It's funny, David's wife Polly Samson has said he's a man of few words at home and tends to speak through his guitar instead. He gets his emotions out through his Strat. Luckily for us, he got a lot of it down on tape and we get to enjoy it!



➔ **It makes perfect sense that such a versatile player would require a versatile instrument...**

That's it! The number of tones you can get out of a Strat is just incredible. I just saw an old Jeff Beck interview where he's sitting in a TV studio talking to the host, explaining the extreme versatility of a Stratocaster – from jazzy blues with the tone rolled back on the neck pickup to full-out rock on the bridge, while also backing off the volume to show how it can clean up. In two minutes he went through a whole catalogue of sounds and I thought, 'My god, it's a phenomenal guitar, isn't it?!' Leo Fender and his team knew what they were doing when they built it. And it hasn't really been improved upon that much since, has it? We're talking about a 70 year-old design that's timeless! Think about every song that's been recorded with one... it's unbelievable.

Starting with the instruments in your hands, how do you go about authentically reproducing those legendary Gilmour tones?

It does, of course, all start with the guitars. That's the most fundamentally important part of it, along with your hands, the plectrum you use and the strings. I try to get the pots to be the right vintage, with the right type of capacitors in there for the tone circuit. Then there's the pickups – Fender had put out a David Gilmour signature Strat with the Seymour Duncan SSL-5 bridge pickup that's, by all accounts, identical to the Seymour Duncan SSL-1 David had famously used. Apparently Seymour dropped off a shoebox full of pickups to [Gilmour's long-serving tech] Phil Taylor. Him and David went through all of them until they found 'the one'. It was just a lucky dip – and that pickup ended up being the sound of his black Strat. So I've used those replicas in the bridge. I also have other guitars with stacked versions so I can switch to a humbucker if I need to...

That's interesting. What kind of scenarios would call for that?

It's not for gain purposes. I try to retain the single-coil sound as much as possible, but some stages have a lot of electrical interference from the lights. You might have a transformer the size of a fridge underneath where you are stood. There's nothing you can do about that, other than switch to humbucker and hope for the best! Other guitars

have the EMG DG20 system, which is the active stuff David used from the *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* tour onwards. He's since gone back to the passive setup over the last 15 years. Another guitar has a 70s DiMarzio FS-1 pickup. David had that in a Strat for his first solo album in 1978, some of *The Final Cut* and some tracks on *The Wall*. Some have said that's what he played the *Comfortably Numb* solo with.

He's since resorted back to the Seymour Duncan in the black Strat, which, of course, has now been auctioned off for a lovely cause. But the DiMarzio has quite an aggressive, more midgy and poking sound. They're as rare as hen's teeth but I was given one a few years ago by a collector friend. As soon as I put it in a guitar, it sounded exactly like the tone on *Animals*. It was almost conducive – it made you want to play in a certain way that matched that album. On this journey I've had, when you find a piece of equipment that puts you in a zone, you think, 'Wow, David had this and it clearly influenced what came out of him!' I know it's the chicken or the egg, but I always feel like whatever he uses, he can always squeeze the most out of it.

"THE PITCHING OF GILMOUR'S BENDS IS JUST RAZOR SHARP"

CAREFUL WITH THAT AXE...

Steve McElroy (left): "I try to retain the single-coil sound as much as possible"

Is there any special insight you've had into how David Gilmour works and his approach to finding the right melody?

I've had some contact with Phil Taylor. I was up fixing my roof one day and my mobile phone rang. It was Phil saying, 'Steve, we're trying to find an old Colorsound Power Boost, the old 18V one from the '60s/'70s, have you got one we can use?' And I had loads in, but not the specific model they were looking for. So I helped them track one down in London through another collector friend. While I was on the phone, there was this loud noise in the background going off that sounded like an alarm. I had to ask Phil about it, just to find out what is going on back there and he told me it was David, who had been relentlessly working on one note all day long for two weeks! It made me laugh, but I realised that's why every note is perfect. That's how dedicated he is.

You must have a sizeable pedalboard, particularly when it comes to fuzz, modulation and delays?

I use two of the Pete Cornish fuzz pedals, there's the P-1 and the P-2. I also use a 70s Electro-Harmonix Ram's Head Big Muff, but it's got to have a specific transistor to get the right sound. I also use Thorpy fuzz pedals. There's the Veteran which comes in both germanium and silicon. I needed both because the germanium sounds beautiful but falls down and dies when it's hot. Then I'll dig the silicon out, which doesn't sound quite as good but



it's 80% there. After doing this for 36 years, I have boxes and boxes of fuzz pedals. I'm on the hunt for the Holy Grail! You can buy 10 of the same and they'll all sound different, maybe they've been repaired or tweaked or were made on a Friday instead of a Monday. You can't just grab a vintage pedal and expect it to be exactly the same as another.

What other pedals are an absolute necessity?

I use proper Leslies mic'd up for certain modulation sounds, then there's also the Electric Mistress Flanger and CE-2 Chorus. Anything David has used, I've bought at some point. The ones I couldn't live without are the Colorsound Power Boost and the Pete Cornish SS-2 Soft Sustain Overdrive. Compression-wise, there's a '70s MXR Dyna Comp with the script logo, which gives you that beautiful attack for clean tones, and there's a Boss CS-2. For this gig, you need a lot of boosts, compression and fuzz.

What are the defining characteristics of David's lead work? A lot of people might say it's the slower bends and vibrato, and general sense of minimalism...

Definitely the pitching of his bends, which is just razor sharp. It's the feel of it and the timing – he dances around the beat a lot of the time. He might come in late or have notes hang over instead of resolving on the beat.

To picture David Gilmour's solos, they're tumbling and falling but always remain graceful and beautiful, like athletes in the Olympics. His ideas always fit perfectly. I've read interviews where he's said he'll absorb the music first before even thinking of a note. He'll just listen to the music around the house for a week or so, walking around, coming up with melodies in his head, whistling or humming them out. That's why he always plays for the song rather than saying, 'Look what I can do!' and trying to fit in as many notes in as possible. It's always complementary. I think he visualises the solos in the context of the song.

There's definitely a visual element, isn't there?

I remember talking to Dick Parry who played saxophone on the Floyd albums. He told me that when he went to record the song *Money*, Roger [Waters, Floyd bassist/vocalist] and David were sitting there explaining what the music was all about. David had figured out his guitar solo and was telling Dick he chose those notes while imagining a big fat businessman who was greedy, looking down on people while laughing at them. He conveyed that through his guitar and you can really feel it in the solo. That's his approach to it, always very relatable. He makes us feel things. His solos have a sense of humanity that can cross all barriers of race and culture. It's a very humble approach. His role is to serve the song, not to self-promote.

So what exactly are your favourite leads to play with the band?

I love all of *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. The opening solo is just so pure. It's also using a different tremolo technique – he's palming the bar instead of grabbing it and warbling it up and down. Instead of the sine wave going up and below, it's only going below and rising up to pitch. It has its own sound but it sounds so beautiful. It's a very intimate part, especially when you think about what the song is about: the sadness of Syd Barrett and his demise. The emotion was just coming through. David went for a bluesy sound on the neck pickup. That opening riff four note idea is so iconic and magnificent on its own. The sound he dialled in is just perfection...

Guitar tones don't come much more legendary! But is it a Uni-Vibe or a phaser along with the Leslie?

A lot of people argue over that! I think it's a Uni-Vibe myself. I've tried both, and I actually use all three to get the right motion, blended in parallel. I also love the song *Echoes*, which is 20 minutes long with all these masterful guitar parts. Then there's *Dogs* from the *Animals* album, which has some wonderful guitar work. But it's all amazing! Catch me on a different day and other ones will jump out.

The Australian Pink Floyd Show begin a UK tour in October.

STRATS ARE VARIOUS

Scenes from Steve's workshop and home set-up





G

uitarist Jim Kirkpatrick is arguably best known for his work in British melodic rock band FM, whose new

album *Old Habits Die Hard* is released in May. Jim also plays in Band Of Friends, performing the music of Rory Gallagher with members of the late Northern Irish trailblazer's own band. When he connects with TG, he's just returned from this year's International Rory Gallagher Tribute convention, where he played through the actual amps heard on Rory's famous recordings, nailing all the tones and techniques to keep that legacy alive...

Though he did occasionally use other models, it was usually a Strat in Rory's hands. Why do you think that is?

It's an interesting story. I'm not sure if he purposefully chose it to start off with. I believe there was a Strat in a shop window when he lived in Cork. He had his first guitar already, something like a Futurama, and apparently somebody had ordered a Strat in the wrong colour. It was most likely the first Strat in Ireland! It got taken back to the shop and Rory recognised it from players like Buddy Holly and Hank Marvin. An American instrument in Ireland back in the early '60s would have been rare.

He was fairly loyal to Fender over the years. There are only a handful of photos of him with a Les Paul, for example.

He had a big guitar collection. There was a white Telecaster he used to play slide on. He never really replaced that one. There were a lot of one-off guitars, especially things he might use on a certain track, but few lasted the distance. A lot of those instruments were given to him, but you can tell he was the kind of person who had two or three guitars that did the job and didn't feel like he needed anything else.

Can you talk us through the rig you use to get the Rory tone?

He was really associated with a Vox AC30 and a treble booster. That was his sound for the mid-'70s, but he did move away from that to Marshall later on,

Words Amit Sharma

"RORY KEPT IT SIMPLE.."

The tone and technique of **Rory Gallagher**
by tribute guitarist Jim Kirkpatrick

which a lot of people tend to overlook. I've got the Rory signature treble booster and I was using it with one of his actual AC30s not long ago at the Rory convention. There's a guy I know in Ireland who has Rory's Marshalls, and when I play over there, he brings Rory's JMP 2x12 combo. Obviously I don't get to use that gear all the time, so I tend to stick with a Vox or a JMP-style Marshall.

Like most players back then, he didn't use too many pedals...

It was few and far between. There was the treble boost, plus a flanger that got used on a couple of songs like *Shadow Play*. An octave pedal on a couple of later tracks. There was a Boss overdrive at one point, but he kept it simple.

So what are your main instruments for the tribute shows?

There are two that I'm using at the moment. There's a Nash Strat that's been worn down to look like Rory's. And there's another guy who runs DY Guitars down in Worcester. He does affordable copies of signature models and made me a Rory guitar. I don't think he builds the bodies and necks, he assembles them and then winds the pickups himself. It's a £600 guitar that sounds fantastic and plays well. Then I have a Telecaster for the slide things. That's all I need!

What do you think were Rory's strongest suits as a player and what are the hardest songs to replicate?

I think Rory was a really underrated acoustic player. He's primarily known as an electric guitarist and most people's vision of him is *Irish Tour '74* or *Live In Europe* – mainly those albums from that period. But he always did an acoustic segment. His fingerstyle playing and slide was fantastic and never given enough credit. Those are usually the hardest things to learn, songs like *Barley & Grape Rag* and *Out On The Western Plain*.

And how about his electric material?

He was advanced for his time. Take a song like *They Don't Make Them Like You Anymore*, it's like a swing tune.

Nobody else was doing anything like that. His playing was great on *Moonchild*. Then there's stuff like *Edged In Blue* where he went in more of a Jeff Beck direction. He liked using different tunings and capos. I learned how to play in open G and open A through songs like *Souped-Up Ford* and *Bullfrog Blues*. He also had his mandolin!

There were a lot of different sides to him as a player, like the jazziness of *When My Baby She Left Me*, which is a Sonny Boy Williamson tune. That one's tricky to learn! A lot of slide players like Duane Allman to Derek Trucks tend to work in open E, while Rory was often using open G like Ry Cooder, with a lot of drive from his amp. He'd turn the tone down on his Telecaster to get rid of the scratchiness – that's how he controlled the noise.

As you say, he was a lot more than just a blues guitarist.

There was a big Irish influence, particularly that kind of rhythmic jig. He grew up around it, those Celtic flavours would have been inherent. His playing was very green in that sense, just listen to the intro to *A Million Miles Away*! He was a lover of the blues, but it was the Irish side that helped him stand out against Eric Clapton or Peter Green. He came from a different country with its own influences.

A lot of his music lived in that Mixolydian world, where he would twist major and minor pentatonics together.

Definitely! He also played in natural minor as well, you can hear it on *A Million Miles Away*, *Shadow Play* and

Bad Penny. Those are the songs where he'd drop a few extra notes in. Even though his health wasn't great towards the end and his performances were

subdued, his guitar playing got better and better. If you watch *Live At The Cork Opera House* from 1987, he's blinding!

It is alleged that Jimi Hendrix was once asked how it felt to be the greatest guitar player in the world and his answer was "I don't know, you'll have to ask Rory Gallagher..."

I don't know if it's true. I've tried finding the source online

and there's nothing concrete. From what I know, someone might have insinuated Jimi saying something like that and Rory's brother Dónal, who was also his manager, grabbed hold of that and ran with it. Jimi might have said it, but there's no proof. It's just one of those folklore things!

"THERE WERE
A LOT OF
DIFFERENT
SIDES TO HIM
AS A PLAYER"

EDGED IN BLUE

Jim with Nash Strat





Words Chris Bird

CHOOSE YOUR STRAT!

With well over 100 Strats to choose from on Fender.com how do you choose which is the right one for you? Here's what you need to know

It's often said that Leo Fender got it right the first time with the Stratocaster design. Whether or not you agree with that sentiment, one thing us TG staffers will argue until our faces turn a delicate shade of Daphne Blue is that the Strat's modular nature makes it tremendously appealing to vast numbers of guitarists – and with so many models there's almost certain to be a Strat to suit your requirements. But which one is right for you? With so many options it's not an easy choice.

Here, we break down key Strat specs. We'll consider choices of bodies, necks, tone controls, hardware and more to help you choose your next Strat, though, for the sake of brevity, rarity, and all of our wallets, we'll rule out the Custom Shop here. For now, we'll kick off with one of the biggest deciding factors with any electric guitar: the pickups...

Pickups

Things get complicated quickly with Strat pickups as many are custom voiced for each range of guitars. Happily, that means you'll have a good idea of each pickup's character. On the downside, it means the best advice we can give you is to make sure you try out any guitar or pickup you're interested in. On that bombshell, here are the main categories of pickup you'll need to consider.

1 ERA-SPECIFIC

Many Fender pickups are era-related. The mid-priced Vintera '50s Strat features pickups voiced to be "more '50s-accurate", and it'll set you back £909. American Vintage Strats start at £1999, but their Pure Vintage single coils (in '57, '61 or '73 spec) can be bought as standalone sets starting at £149 if you fancy modifying your own Strat.

2 NOISELESS PICKUPS

If you love the tone but hate the hum of single-coil pickups then you have to go Noiseless – and Fender offer them in Vintage and Hot versions, both in either standard or Ultra Noiseless spec. An SSS Player Plus Strat will set you back £939, or the H.E.R. signature Strat you see on the cover of this very mag comes in at £1,249.

3 HSS CONFIGURATION

You'll find HSS-configured Strats at every price range, from the affordable Squier Sonic and Contemporary models up to this year's flagship 70th Anniversary American Ultra. Check out the Player Series, too, which strikes a balance of price and performance.



4 ARTIST SPECS

Browse the Artist Series of Strats for some eclectic takes on pickup configuration. Tom Morello's Soul Power model pairs two Noiseless single coils with a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails humbucker. There's a Fernandes Sustainer and a Duncan JB JR humbucker in Ed O'Brien's Strat. For contemporary metal tones, Jim Root's signature axe features a duo of active EMG 81 and 60 pups.

5 PRE-WIRED PICKGUARDS

If you'd rather choose your own pickups, Fender offer various pre-wired pickguards to fit your Strat. However, it's also worth looking farther afield. Bare Knuckle offer an extensive range of pickups which they can provide in pre-wired guards.



Tone controls

Three pickups. Three knobs. You'd think the Strat's tone controls would be simple, right? Not so. The standard feature set on an SSS Strat is a master volume, a tone knob each for neck and middle pickups, but no tone control at the bridge – plus a five-way selector switch. However, there are variations on this core spec to look out for, and these are the most important to consider...

1 THE S-1 SWITCH

A gem in Fender's Strat lineup, S-1 switching offers five additional pickup wirings over and above those from a standard five-way selector switch. In position one on an SSS Strat, typically only the bridge pickup is engaged. Press the S-1 switch (a push button mounted in a volume/tone knob) and it could be wired so that all three pickups are heard in series. There's not space here to explain all the possible permutations (and it's not the same on every S-1-equipped Strat) – just think of it as a tonal expansion for the guitar.

2 BRIDGE TONE CONTROL

If having no tone control on your bridge pickup is a deal-breaker check out the Player series which offers this facility. It's also a simple wiring mod for you or your local guitar tech to perform on your Strat.

3 PUSH ME PULL ME

If you like your Strats in HSS configuration, keep an eye out for a push/pull switch on those bridge 'buckers, giving you single-coil-esque tones. The American Performer HSS (£1,379) features this coil-split function.

4 PRE-WIRED PICKGUARDS (AGAIN!)

High-end electronics come mainly with Fender's high-priced Strats, but a fully wired pickguard can deliver awesome tone at relatively affordable prices, assuming you're modding a guitar you already own. We'd urge you to budget for premium potentiometers, wiring and capacitors. Check out Bourns and CTS pots and Sprague caps.

Necks

Arguably the most important part of any guitar is its neck, and while most chatter tends to focus on materials and the eternal maple vs. rosewood/rosewood substitute debate, we'd suggest that the shape is a more important consideration. It'll certainly have a bigger effect on your playing than the wood it's built with, and that's what we're focussing on here.

1 NECK PROFILE

The profile is the shape of the rear of the neck – and it plays a big part in how comfy your fretting hand will feel when you play. You can search guitars on Fender.com based on four profiles: C, D, U and V, and this isn't some random code; the shape of each letter is roughly akin to the curve of the neck. C is a fairly neutral round curve, V has a slight "hump" in the middle with flatter sides. You get the idea. However, it's only a guide. For example, some Vs are quite pronounced, whereas others are softer, and so on. You'll learn your preference once you've tried a few guitars out.

2 FRETBOARD RADIUS

Radius refers to the roundness/flatness of the fretboard. A low figure (say, 7.25" as found on the Vintera II 50s) is rounder, generally considered more "vintage", and, some say, is more comfy for cowboy chords. A higher figure (over 12" – see the Squier Contemporary Strat) is flatter and supposedly better suited to shreddier styles. 9.5" is a happy medium. Like neck profile, it's not a price-dependent feature – so think about your playing style when choosing any guitar.

3 FRETS

Expect 21 or 22 frets on a Strat. Why not 24? Because those two extra frets would interfere with the position of the neck pickup, which is strategically located to, er, pick up a strong harmonic, enhancing the tone thusly. Like radius and profile, fret size isn't related to price, so, for example, a £375 Squier Classic Vibe '50s model has "narrow tall" frets and the similarly priced Contemporary Special features the jumbo kind. Supposedly jumbos can enhance speedy playing, but it really is down to personal preference.





Hardware

The Strat is the supreme modding platform, and there's a whole industry of aftermarket hardware mods and upgrades to draw on. Of course, there are also 100+ Fenders and Squiers to look at first, and you may well find your dream axe there.

1 TREMOLOS

Fender's vintage-style six-screw trem can be considered a de facto "standard" choice, but there are alternatives. The mid-price Player and Player Pro Strats come with a two-point trem that's better suited to more vigorous use than the vintage style. In fact, there are dozens of two-point tremos and price is no determining factor – the Affinity Strat (just £225) also includes this feature. The Squier Contemporary FR and Dave Murray signature both feature Floyd Rose locking tremos for when you've just got to divebomb! And, though it ain't cheap, the Michael Landau signature features a vintage-style six-point trem, but with a rout behind it to allow for upward whammy bar moves.

2 FIXED BRIDGES

Tremolos not your thing? No worries – there are several fixed bridge Strats. Squier's Paranormal Strat-O-Sonic features a compensated wraparound style bridge. Dare we say it's a little bit Gibson-esque. The Robert Cray, Tom DeLonge and Jim Root Strats all feature a hardtail bridge with through-body stringing, the latter two also having block saddles. If you're on the tightest budget, check out the Squier Sonic at just £155.

3 NUTS AND TUNERS

It's best to consider nuts and tuners as upgradeable parts – there are far too many choices on Fender's menu to make them a deciding factor. We love Graph Tech TUSQ products, which are a great upgrade to many stock nuts. Check out brands like Schaller and Gotoh for replacement tuners and opt for locking units for ultimate tuning stability. We'd recommend getting tuners and nuts installed by a qualified guitar tech to get the best out your pride and joy.

Bodies

Once again, we're veering away from the discussion of materials, and that thorny subject of premium tone woods, instead focussing on more practical concerns. Admittedly there isn't too much too much to consider. The exact dimensions of the Strat body do vary slightly, with deeper body contours on some models plus a few quite different alternatives. Let's get stuck in with the most important deciding factors.

1 NECK POCKETS

A sculpted neck heel with bevelled neck plate appears on the American Pro II, the Squier Contemporary Strat and the Jeff Beck signature model. Allowing easier access to the top frets, it's a cool feature if you're after a SuperStrat vibe.

2 PICKUP ROUTING

You're probably unlikely to be too worried about the pickup routing on a shiny brand new guitar. However, if you're scouring the secondhand market for a project Strat to modify, it's worth being aware that many SSS Strat bodies are routed to accommodate HSS or HSH pickup configurations. And, though it's not complete, you can find a list of close to 200 Strat models and their *actual* pickup routing in the knowledge base at Fender.com.

3 PICKGUARD HOLES

Another moot point when buying new, but hugely important from a modding perspective. A replacement pickguard is not guaranteed to fit your own Strat. Fender has most notably equipped Strats with eight- and 11-hole pickguards, and with one or two subtly different screw positions. Make sure you know the model and serial number of the Strat you're modding and only buy replacement guards from reputable stores.

4 ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS

Seeking a quirky, less Strat-y design? Fender has a few options. Squier's Paranormal Custom Nashville is a Strat-shaped doublecut with no contours and Telecaster-style binding and hardware additions. The MIJ Elemental Strat is configured with HH pickups and a pickguard design that won't let on that you're actually playing a Strat! Alternatively, go guardless with the Aerodyne Special. Finally, check out the Suona Thinline for a semi-hollow Strat complete with an F-hole in its ash body.



Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

STRAT ICONS

TG examines the styles of some of the finest players to ever pick up a Fender Stratocaster

Fender's septuagenarian doublecut has been in the hands of a zillion guitar icons over the decades, and appeared on far more legendary recordings than we could possibly count.

When it comes down to it, the sound of this guitar is familiar to us all. It's part of the background to our lives. And for us guitarists, that means there's a lot to learn from.

In this lesson, we're looking at the signature styles of 15 Strat-wielding

icons – a mix of rock pioneers, virtuosos and modern-day greats.

As usual with our tab lessons there's plenty for you to get stuck in with and you'll find accompanying audio to play along to (just follow the link at the top of the page).

Of course, you don't *have* to own a Strat to follow our lesson –there's something for everyone here– and we have given you a steer as to which pickup/position to use.

Right, let's plug in and get those single-coils buzzing!

1 JIMI HENDRIX (PICKUP-SELECTOR TOGGLE)

bit.ly/tq383audio

♩ = 160

E7#9

3

1/4

†

Play 4 times

TAB

3 3 3 3 5/8 0 (15)(17) BD 12 14 12 3 3 3 3 2 (4) BU

0 ×

0 ×

† Toggle p/u/p selector w/eighth-note rhythm

Our first example is inspired by the great Jimi Hendrix who was a master of manipulating the Strat's controls - and here we're using the pickup selector to create a pseudo wah effect. This is most effective when the neck pickup tone is turned right down. Then, simply move the selector switch back and forth and a wah-like sound is created.

2 RITCHIE BLACKMORE (BRIDGE)

bit.ly/tg383audio

Ritchie Blackmore was famed for playing CBS-era large headstock Strats with various Fender innovations and Blackmore's own mods. He's best known for preferring a scalloped fretboard, which supposedly enhances clarity, from a fingering/fretting perspective. Scallop your pride and joy at your peril, we say!

3 DAVID GILMOUR (NECK)

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩ = 80

Em⁹ w/bar

E^b w/bar

G

3

RP BD

BU w/bar

BU BD

15 (17) (17) (15) 13 15 (16) 15 13 12 (13) (12) 12 12 10 9 10

Play 4 times

Though several Strats would pass through Gilmour's hands, he'll always be most associated with The Black Strat, as used on Pink Floyd's *Comfortably Numb* and *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Our example is inspired by David in clean soloing mode. Select the neck pickup and use the tremolo arm to add that signature vibrato to the string bends.

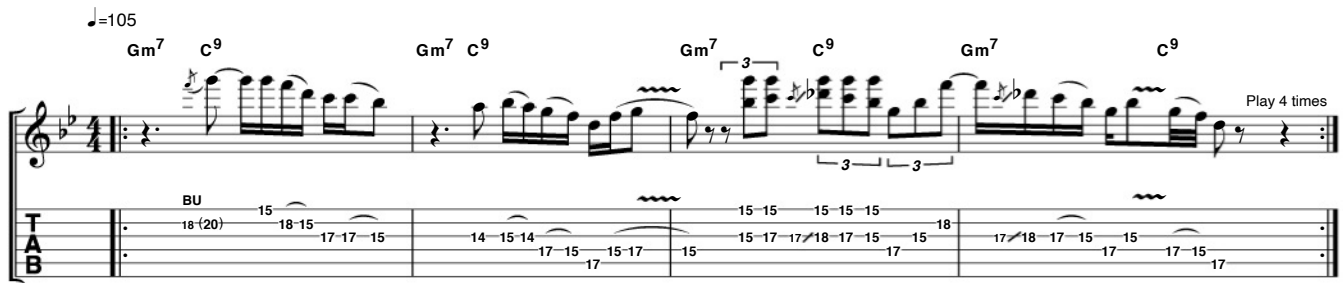
4 RORY GALLAGHER (BRIDGE)

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩=105

Gm⁷ C⁹ Gm⁷ C⁹ Gm⁷ C⁹ Gm⁷ C⁹ Gm⁷ C⁹

Play 4 times



The Irish blues-rockers was best known for playing a 1961 Sunburst Strat - though most of the 'burst had worn off! Our example uses a high-output bridge single-coil pickup and a light overdrive tone, combined with a heavy pick attack, to conjure up that signature Gallagher vibe.

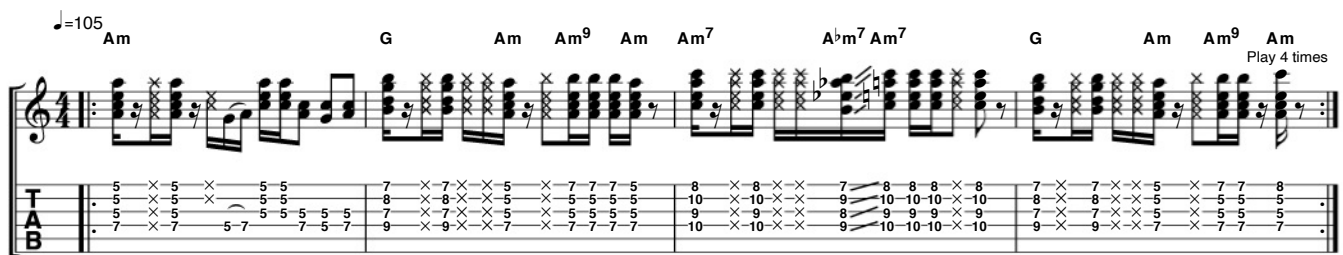
5 NILE RODGERS (NECK)

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩=105

Am G Am Am⁹ Am Am⁷ A^bm⁷ Am⁷ G Am Am⁹ Am

Play 4 times



Best known for playing his 'Hit Maker' Strat, Nile Rodgers' sound has pretty much stayed the same throughout his career. For our example, we selected the neck pickup, dialing in a trebly clean tone with a little compression to even out those funky 16th-note rhythms. To get a more even attack, experiment with a thin pick just like Nile does.

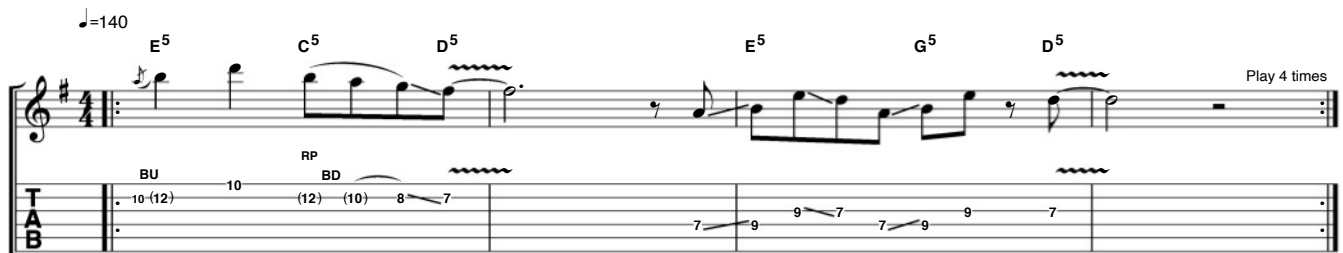
6 MARK KNOPFLER (NECK/MIDDLE)

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩=140

E⁵ C⁵ D⁵ E⁵ G⁵ D⁵

Play 4 times



Knopfler's early Dire Straits tones were primarily the product of his Strat's bridge/middle or neck/middle pickups, the latter being more for incidental licks and the former for the 'big solos'. Plugging into clean Fender or Music Man amps, Mark augmented his tone with a Dan Armstrong Orange Squeezer compression pedal - a key trick for increasing sustain in this typical Dire Straits-style lick.

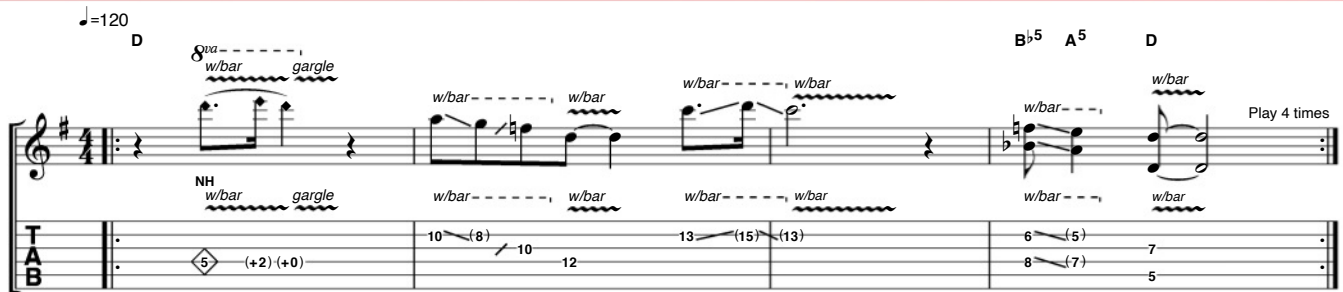
7 JEFF BECK (BRIDGE)

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩=120

D B^b5 A⁵ D

Play 4 times



A true innovator, Jeff Beck pushed the possibilities of the Strat to the limit. It's mostly to do with his playing than the guitar's spec - although his signature axe's high-output noiseless pickups, two-point trem and roller nut help! Our example is a good workout for the tremolo arm, and also features Jeff's trademark use of natural harmonics.

bit.ly/tg383audio

The opening tracks on U2's *The Joshua Tree* album represent some of the finest Strat clean tones ever recorded – and that's our inspiration here. Our example combines 16th-note strumming with that all-important dotted eighth-note delay. At 120 bpm, you'll need your delay set to 375ms.

bit.ly/tq383audio

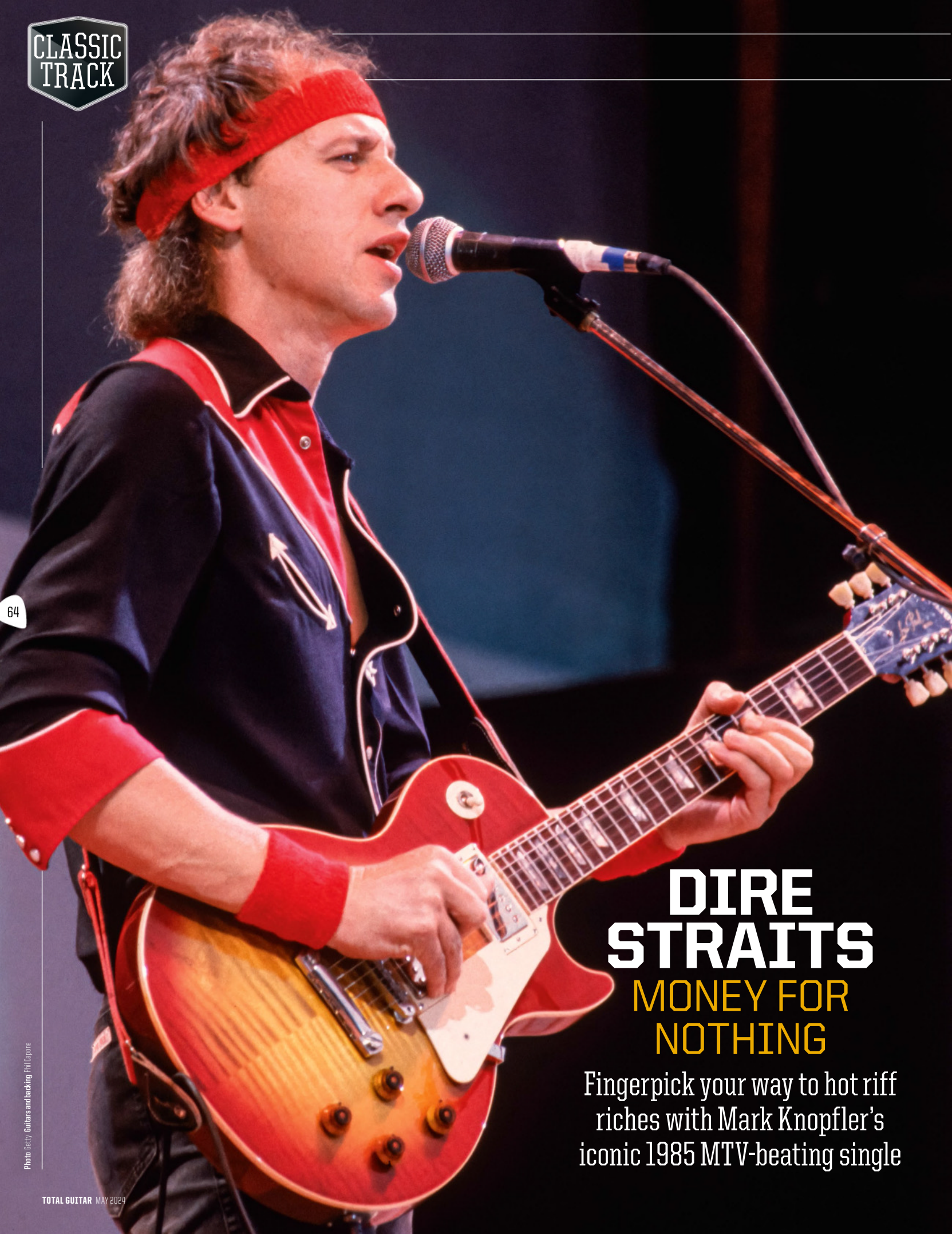
Here, we're looking at some open-voiced triads to create a colourful chord part. This is one of many signature components of Eric Johnson's style. Our clean chords are a simple introduction to the concept, but you can transfer the shapes into some complex EJ-style soloing by playing them as arpeggios. Give it a go!

bit.ly/tq383audio

This example is inspired by Pearl Jam's heavy blues-rock riffing. We've dialed in a grungy fuzz tone with the bridge and middle pickup position. Bear in mind, Mike needs his Strat tones to sit in a mix with a second guitar – usually one of Stone Gossard's Les Pauls.

bit.ly/tg383audio

Since the *Californication* era, Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist John Frusciante has most favoured a beaten up 1962 sunburst Strat – and it's appeared on many of the band's biggest hits since. Our example is inspired by the Chili's' classic loud, grungy chorus riffs. Select your bridge single coil and a medium overdrive Marshall tone.



DIRE STRAITS

MONEY FOR NOTHING

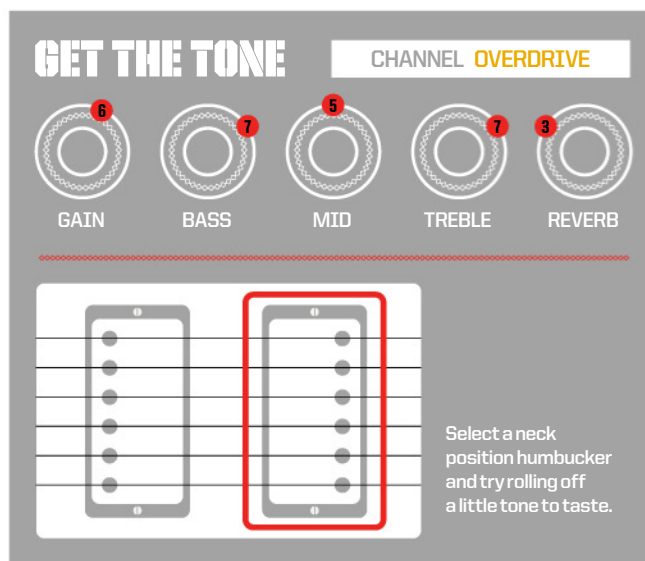
Fingerpick your way to hot riff
riches with Mark Knopfler's
iconic 1985 MTV-beating single

Dire Straits' 1985 single *Money For Nothing* would see guitarist Mark Knopfler recording with a Les Paul instead of the Stratocaster that had been so integral to his earlier work. With the aim of creating a ZZ Top-like sound, it was a stroke of good fortune (an SM57 accidentally left pointing at the floor instead of the speaker) that led to the song's signature tone, and Knopfler never fully recreated this sound again.

Famed as a fingerstylist, Knopfler's technique in *MFN* relies heavily on the first and second picking fingers, with occasional use of the thumb. In fact, he often rests his third and fourth fingers against the guitar body for stability. It's not 'perfect' technique, but copying Mark's method might just get you closer to the feel of his playing.

SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing *Money For Nothing*

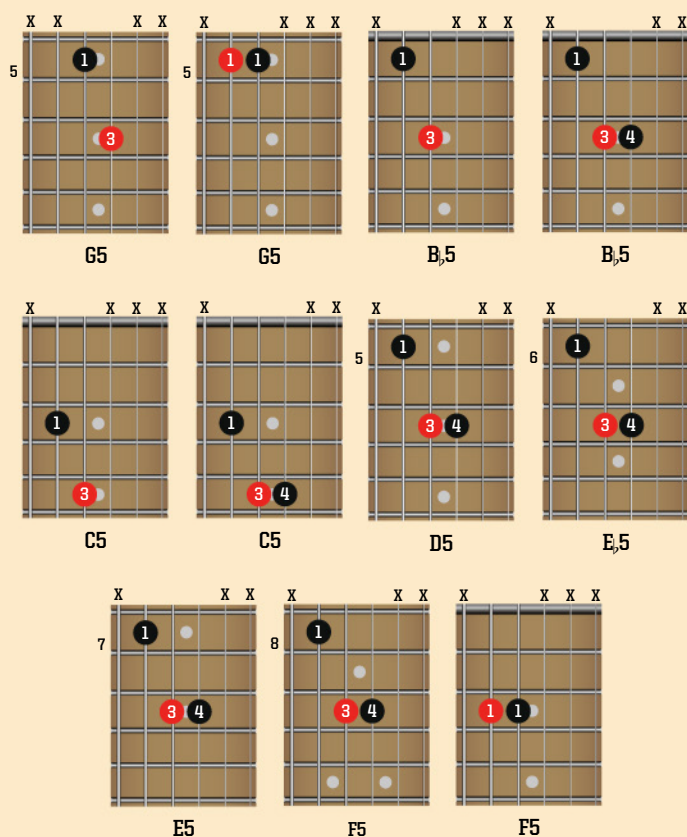


Knopfler plugged into a half-cocked Dunlop Cry Baby wah pedal and a Marshall JTM 45 head through a Laney 4x12 cabinet for the recording, but multi-mic'ing and that out of position mic make it near impossible to recreate the tone accurately. In early Dire Straits performances, Mark can be seen with his Les Paul set to the bridge-position humbucker, using his amps and little else for tone shaping.

In more recent years, he's tended more towards using the neck pickup (though you'll also see him using the middle position at times), adding a rackmount EQ/filter effect to alter the tone, which is best achieved with a wah pedal as per the studio recording. It may be one of those cases of tone coming from the hands!

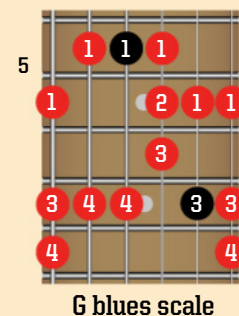
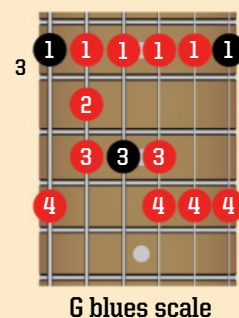
CHORDS

These are extremely easy chords to fret, but Mark's fingerpicked riffs are harder than you may think. Practise the shapes by picking the lowest note with your thumb, and the remaining notes simultaneously with your first and, where required, second fingers.



SCALES

The bulk of the main riff and the licks in the outro are played using the G blues scale, so make sure you're familiar with these shapes before you play through the tab. Mark rarely plays in a single-note manner on this track, however, so try practising these shapes on two strings at the same time.



DIRE STRAITS

MONEY FOR NOTHING

FULL
TAB

MONEY FOR NOTHING

Words and Music by Mark Knopfler and Sting
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DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Main riff

bit.ly/tg383audio

♩=134

8va-1 G⁵ B^b5 C⁵

NH NH

1:36

let ring - - - - -

8va-1 G⁵ F⁵ G⁵

NH NH

5

These natural harmonics (shown as diamonds in the tab) are played by laying your first finger across the third and fourth strings over the 5th fret. As soon as you've played the harmonics, mute the strings with a spare fretting finger. Keep the barre in place until you move down the neck at the end of bar 2.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Verse 1

bit.ly/tg383audio

8va-1 G⁵ B^b5 C⁵

NH NH

2:05

8va-1 G⁵ F⁵ G⁵

NH

5



DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Verse 1 (cont'd)

bit.ly/tg383audio

8va - 1 NH 8va - 1 B^b5 C⁵

9

8va - 1 NH G⁵ F⁵ G⁵

13

let ring - - - - - let ring - - - - -

The open strings need to be played staccato at the beginning of bar 2, so simply rest your picking hand thumb and finger back on the strings as soon as you've played them. This is a quick and easy way to mute out the strings.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Chorus

bit.ly/tg383audio

E^b5 B^b5 E^b5 F⁵

2:33

1

8va - 1 NH G⁵ C⁵

5

D⁵ E^b5

8

Hold down the three-note powerchord shapes for the whole bar, then pick out the notes as required with your thumb and first and second fingers. Use a thumb and two-finger 'pinch' to pick the three-note chords. Alternate between thumb and two fingers for the rest of the riffing.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Verse 2

bit.ly/tg383audio

8va-1 G⁵ B^{b5} C⁵

2:51 NH

TAB 1

5 0 0 3 0 5 0 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 0 5 3 5 0 3 5 5

5

At the start of bar 2, the D note is played on the 5th fret of the fifth string and then repeated on the open fourth string. Use your thumb to play both notes, keeping your first finger ready to pick the third string as required. After this section, repeat the chorus, the intro/main riff and the chorus again.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Verse 3

bit.ly/tg383audio

8va-1 G⁵ B^{b5} C⁵

3:55 NH

TAB 1

5 3 0 3 0 0 3 0 3 0 0 3 0 5 0 3 0 5 0 3 0 3 5 5 5 0

5

Play the three-note powerchords in bar 4 by pinching the strings with your thumb and first and second fingers of your picking hand. Your thumb and first finger alone are used to play the doublestops on beat 4. Repeat the intro/main riff, followed by the chorus again at the end of this verse.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Main riff (variation)

bit.ly/tg383audio

G⁵ 8va-1 B^{b5} C⁵

4:42 NH

TAB 1

7 6/7 7 0 7 6 5 5 5 3 0 0 5 0 0 3 2 2 3 5 5 3 0 3 5 5 3 0

5 5 5 5 3 0 0 5 0 0 3 2 2 3 5 5 3 0

1

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Main riff (variation, cont'd)

bit.ly/tg383audio

5

In bar 5, form a half-barre across the strings at the 5th fret using your first finger. This leaves your other fingers in place to play notes at the 6th, 7th and 8th frets. Repeat verse 3, followed by the intro/main riff after this section.

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Outro section 1

bit.ly/tg383audio

1

5

9

13

To play the bend in bar 13, fret the third string with your third finger (you can add your first and second fingers for extra strength) and the second string with your fourth finger. The strings are then picked with your thumb and first fingers respectively. Once again, head back to the main riff before moving on to outro section 2.

8^{va} -

G⁵

B^{b5} C⁵

6:51 NH

TAB

5 7 0 7 7 7 0 7 7 0 3 5 5 3 0

1

G⁵

F⁵ 1/4 G⁵

let ring - - - -

TAB

7 5 5 7 7 7 8 7 5 3 0 0 5 3 0 0 3 5 5 4 5 4

5

B^{b5} C⁵

BU 3 3 6 3 5 3 6

TAB

5 (7) 3 3 0 3 0 3 3 5

9

G⁵

F⁵ G⁵

BU 3

TAB

5 (7) 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 2 2 2

13

17

let ring - - - - -

TAB 5/7 3/5 7 8 6 7 5 5 3 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 3 5 5 3 0

21

let ring - - - - -

TAB 5 7 5 5 5 7 5 7 8 5 5 5 3 0 0 0 5 0 0 3 0 0 3 5 5 5

25

let ring - - - - -

TAB 3 5 (7) BU 3 5 (7) BU 0 3 0 0 3 5 (7) (5) 3 5 3 5 5

29

let ring - - - - -

TAB 8 7 5 8 5 7 8 5 7 5 3 0 0 0 5 0 3 0 0 0 3 5 5

There are many instances throughout this track where two notes are sounded, but the higher note is created by a hammer-on or a pull-off (bars 6, 18, 21 and 22 of this section). You may find this awkward at first, but it's attention to details like this that'll enable you to achieve a Knopfler-esque vibe.

8va-1 G⁵ B^{b5} C⁵

6:51 NH

TAB 5 7 0 7 7 7 0 7 7 0 3 5 5 3 0

G⁵

let ring - - -

TAB 0 7 7 7 0 7 7 5 3 5 5 3 2 3 2 0 0 3 5 5 0

B^{b5} C⁵

let ring - - -

TAB 5/7 3/5 7 5 7 6 5 7 5 5 3 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 0 3 5 5 3 0

G⁵ F⁵ G⁵

let ring - - -

TAB 0 7 5 8 5 7 7 5 7 5 3 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 3 5 5

DIRE STRAITS MONEY FOR NOTHING Outro section 2 (guitar 2, cont'd)

bit.ly/tg383audio

17

This image shows a musical score for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. The score is written for guitar and bass. The guitar part is in the key of G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The bass part is in the key of E minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. The score includes a guitar staff with a treble clef and a bass staff with a bass clef. The guitar staff has a G5 chord at the beginning and an F5 chord later. The bass staff has a TAB section with fret numbers and a BU (bump) instruction. The score is divided into four measures. The first measure has a G5 chord and a BU instruction. The second measure has a G5 chord and a BU instruction. The third measure has a G5 chord and a BU instruction. The fourth measure has a G5 chord and a BU instruction. The score is labeled "The Sound of Silence" and "Simon & Garfunkel".

Andante

let ring

NH

B $\flat$ 5 C5

25

29

You might find it tempting to pick the single-note lick in bars 22 and 23 with your thumb alone, but you can achieve better results using your thumb and first fingers alternately. Think of this as the fingerstyle equivalent of alternate picking – ie, use a thumb-finger-thumb-finger picking pattern.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

JAMES BAY
GIVE ME THE REASON

Acoustic set short of a good tearjerker? Learn Bay's heartfelt hit along with the soloing potential of the pentatonic scale

It's hard to believe that it's 10 years since James Bay released his debut single *Let It Go*, a song that sold by the bucketload and made him a superstar. More recently, 2022's *Give Me The Reason*, Bay's 14th single and the opening track for third album *Leap*, features a hypnotic drum groove, driving bassline, and guitar overdubs aplenty, including a short but sweet solo.

There are two versions: the original single/album version and an acoustic remix. We've tabbed the rhythm

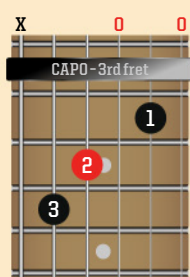
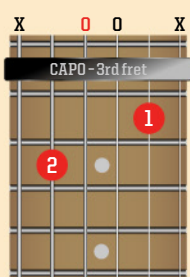
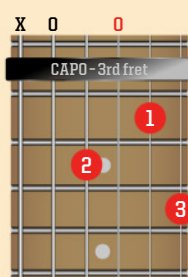
guitar part from the acoustic version (where it's audible) and based our backing track on the original version since it's more fun to jam with. The solo remains the same in both arrangements.

Note that the song was recorded in E_b, standard tuning (low to high: E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b, B_b, E_b) with a capo on the 4th fret. To save you the faff of retuning, we've shifted the capo down to the 3rd fret, that way you can play along with the original recording as well as TG's backing track.



CHORDS

This song is based on four basic shapes: E_b, Cm7, A_b, and B_b. The remaining chords are passing chords or suspensions, ie, basically window dressing! You can omit these altogether and go for a 'bare bones' performance if you prefer. Notice that the A_b chord (F shape) shown is how Bay plays it, with his thumb on the sixth string – which makes for a smoother chord change. This is often preferable when fingerpicking.

E_b
(C)B_b add11/D
(G/B)Cm7
(Am7)Cm7/B_b
(Am7/G)A_b
(F)B_b sus4
(Gsus4)B_b
(G)

GIVE ME THE REASON

Words and Music by James Bay, Foy Vance and Gabriel Simon
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SONG SHEET

Give Me The Reason

Chorus

Give me the reason
Am I staying or leaving?
Give me the reason to give it one more try
Don't wanna say goodbye

Verse 1

Feels like yesterday
You and I we were walking around New York City
Hand in hand
Man, it was so pretty that day
Standing on the corner in your favourite dress
I was trying to take our picture
My hair was such a mess
Oh, but we laughed so hard
Then you broke my heart

Pre-Chorus

I can't stand to see those tears in your eyes
We should be dancing like we did that night
Give me the reason to give it one more shot
And I'll give it all that I got

Oh, I'd hate to lay that weight on your heart
After all that we did to everything that we are
Give me the reason to give it one more try
Don't wanna say goodbye

Repeat Chorus

Verse 2

'Cause I've got nothing left
Without your foot on the drum
That beats inside my chest
I feel like mirrors and smoke

All of my words are broke

I wanna just throw me in the ocean

It's not that I couldn't see you were in pain
I wish we could talk, maybe no one's to blame
I still want you now, I still need you now

I'm not fooling around

Repeat Pre-Chorus & Chorus

Solo

Bridge

I can't stand to see those tears in your eyes
We should be dancing like we did that night
I want you to know that
We don't have to say goodbye

Repeat Chorus

JAMES BAY GIVE ME THE REASON Pre-chorus/Chorus

bit.ly/tg383audio

Capo 3rd fret

♩ = 122

E^b (C) B^badd11/D (Gadd11/B) Cm⁷ (Am⁷) Cm⁷/B^b (Am⁷/G)

0:48

We've tabbed the first four bars of this eight-bar progression. You can then repeat the strumming pattern across the full sequence. The fret numbers in the tab show how many frets higher than the capo you have to play - so, for example, a '1' is your guitar's 4th fret, one fret higher than the capo.

JAMES BAY GIVE ME THE REASON Solo

bit.ly/tg383audio

1° Cm⁷
2° A^b
3° E^b

Play 3 times E^b/G

2:54

Fret numbers are indicated here without the capo - this would've been a capo-less overdub in the studio, after all. Repeating a melody over a changing chord sequence as shown here is a great way to create solos without over playing. For non-diatonic chord sequences you can often get away with simply changing one note. You don't need

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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The latest version of Eddie's monster is casually dressed

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The best (and most fun) Klon clone to date?



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



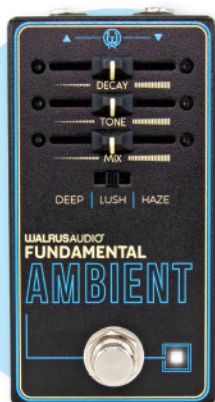
ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



SOME ISSUES



POOR



4



2



5



1



3

START ME UP!

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

WAMPLER EGO 76

1 Compression is one of the most misunderstood, yet most useful effects at our disposal. Wampler's new Ego 76 puts the power of a studio classic – Bill Putnam's 1176 Peak Limiter – at our feet. It's equipped with a detailed set of controls for accurate, studio-style compression: Tone, Attack, Release, Compression and Level controls, and thanks to a Blend knob, you can achieve parallel compression sounds by blending in some of your dry signal.

£219

www.wamplerpedals.com

KEELEY 4-IN-1

2 Keeley has added three new pedals to its multi-mode four-in-one series. Joining the existing Noble Screamer are the Blues Order (Blues Breaker/Fulltone OCD), Angry Orange (EHX Civil War Muff/Boss DS-1 Distortion) and Super Rodent (Boss SD-1/ProCo Rat). What's more, both modes of each pedal can make use of the other's clipping and tone circuit, giving a total of four voices from each stomper.

£215

robertkeeley.com

ZOOM MS-70CDR+

3 With pedal prices continuing to head upwards, how many effects can we expect to get for £150? How about 149? That's what the Zoom MS-70CDR+ is packing, as the Japanese brand has updated its much-loved MS-70CDR. From modulation to pitch-shifting, delay and reverb, there's something for everyone. You can use six FX at once, it's got 100 user memories available for instant recall, and it's got MIDI, too. It'll be coming this way in time for summer.

£149

zoomcorp.com

WALRUS FUNDAMENTAL AMBIENT

4 We love Walrus pedals, and we particularly love its Fundamental line-up, which offers Walrus tonal DNA for less. The Ambient is a brand new addition, equipped with three ambient reverb modes: Dark, Lush and Haze. Walrus says these three make the Ambient capable of everything from ultra-long sustain to textured, lo-fi sounds. Priced at just over £100, we think it looks like a bargain.

£125

www.walrusaudio.com

THALIA GIBSON AND GUILD PICK PUCKS

5 Accessory brand Thalia has teamed up with Gibson and Guild to produce licensed, branded pick pucks: pick holders which stick to your guitar without any adhesive. Instead, they use vacuum pads which create thousands of microscopic air pockets to grip to your guitar's surface, leaving no residue or trace once you remove them. Each puck is inlaid with a mother-of-pearl logo and comes in either black ebony, rosewood or Hawaiian Koa.

£25

www.jhs.co.uk



78



1 SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN

Like the original Profilers, the Player's gain control has a ring of bright green LEDs surrounding it, for an instant visual status indication.

2 HOOKED UP

The Profiler Player has Bluetooth for audio streaming and Wi-Fi for connection to Kemper's Rig Manager. The Kone feature integrates with Kemper's powered Kabinet speakers.

3 STEP ON IT

The Profiler Player's footswitches can be assigned to various functions, by default the right and left-hand switches step through banks, the centre one toggles effects.

KEMPER PROFILER PLAYER £619

Kemper introduce a pedalboard-size version of their unique amp modelling alternative

Christoph Kemper's amp profiling concept certainly caused a few ripples in the digital modelling continuum following its NAMM 2011 debut, and, ever since, the ability to effectively create your own amp models has been the Profiler's biggest selling point.

13 years is a long time in the digital modelling world, and while the original Profiler hasn't changed, the software has been regularly updated with features like Liquid Profiles, and we've had new hardware in the shape of the Kemper Floorboard, the powered Kabinets and Kone loudspeakers. Now there's another new hardware addition, which is going to be of particular interest to pedalboard users, the Kemper Profiler Player.

As its name suggests, the Player doesn't have on-board profiling

capabilities, but it can load and use any existing profile, including Kemper's newer Liquid Profiles and any Kemper Rig, within the limits of its four effects blocks.

The Profiler Player looks the part, while beneath the cool styling it's as hard as nails, with a compact and tough steel case that's ready for pedalboard use. Rotary controls include a pair of knobs to govern the Player's onboard effects, along with gain, EQ, rig volume and a non-programmable master volume.

Illuminated button switches take care of effects select and save, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and Kone, with more buttons for bank and patch selection, tap tempo and tuner functions. Three assignable footswitches take care of performance functions.

There's no text display panel, however. As well as the illuminated button switches

there are over two dozen LEDs, most of which can produce up to five colours to tell you what the Profiler Player is doing. This is a little bewildering at first glance, but the logic is sound and a thorough read of the manual makes things easy to understand, especially when using the Rig Manager app.

The Profiler Player's rear panel connections include a single guitar input jack socket, stereo unbalanced outputs, a headphones socket, an expression pedal jack and a single balanced XLR output. There are two USB sockets, one for firmware updates and the other for connection to a desktop or DAW for direct recording.

Power comes from an external adaptor and pedalboard users should be aware that the Profiler Player needs a hefty 2.5 amps at startup, putting it beyond the reach of most third party multi-

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling preamp

DIMENSIONS: 145mm (w) x 166mm (d) x 68mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.1/2.4

CASE: Steel

CHANNELS: 50 Kemper Rigs, organised in 10 banks of five, 136 on-board effects organised in two slots of two

FOOTSWITCH: Three integral custom-assignable footswitches

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Bluetooth audio streaming, Wi-Fi or USB connection to Kemper Rig Manager, USB audio recording, integral tuner, Kensington security lock slot

POWER: 9-12VDC from external adaptor (supplied). NB Initial start-up current draw needs a minimum 2500mA supply

CONTACT: Kemper, kemper-amps.com



Different profile

What makes profiling different to modelling?

Christoph Kemper was already well-known as the designer behind one of the most powerful keyboard synths on the market, the Access Virus, when the original Kemper Profiling amp made its debut at the 2011 winter NAMM show. Profiling is different to conventional amp modelling, using Kemper's patented software to take a recorded snapshot of any amplifier and then transform it into a unique model called a Profile, which can be played and treated with effects like any other amp. It's a concept that makes a lot of sense to pro players, who might use dozens of fragile valve amps to record an album but would find it impractical to take them on tour. The Kemper offers night after night consistency and reliability, so for many players the decision to use it is a no-brainer. Today, thanks to regular updates, including last year's important Liquid Profiles, the Kemper is still relevant.

outlet power supplies. Kemper recommend you only use the supplied adaptor. With the power switched on, the software takes a few seconds to load, accompanied by a Christmas tree of LEDs indicating progress.



Once the Profiler Player is booted, you can select from any of the 50 pre-loaded rigs, or add your own from the many thousands available through Kemper's Rig Manager app. The pre-loaded Profile quality and range is excellent, using a range of USA and British amp models and covering most musical genres with ease, from metal and blues to country and jazz. The Player's built-in effects are superb, especially the reverbs and delays, which are on a par with the best studio units. Other highlights include a highly realistic rotary speaker and Air Chorus, a spatial chorus effect based on Roland's legendary Jazz Chorus amplifiers.

Kemper's Profiler Player puts all of the Kemper's unique capabilities on your pedalboard, taking up the space of just a couple of standard stompboxes, with Bluetooth audio streaming and MIDI via USB making it highly

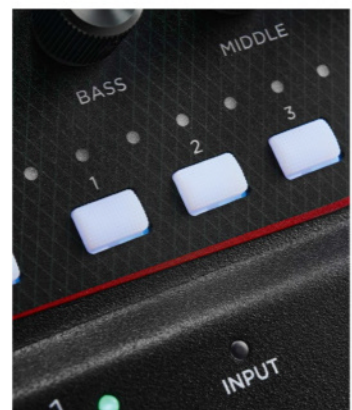
versatile for performance and practice; it's a compact yet powerful solution that could turn out to be a game-changer for many players.

With no graphical or text display, you really do need to read the manual to understand what all those multi-coloured LEDs are telling you, but with the Rig Manager app installed, the whole operation becomes much easier.

With many thousands of Kemper Profiles and Rigs available to download, the Profiler Player is an ideal solution for players who don't want to spend the time and money on creating their own, as well as for existing Kemper owners looking for a more portable solution to carry to gigs. Aimed at professionals and more serious amateurs, it's definitely worth checking out.

Nick Guppy

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



ALSO TRY...

BOSS GT1000 CORE

£619

The GT1000 Core takes all the processing power of the flagship GT1000 and repackages it into a smaller format. Coincidentally, it's the same price as the Profiler Player.



LINE 6 HX STOMP

£499

Line 6 took most of their legendary Helix floorboard amps and effects and packed them into this stompbox-sized pedal, including a nice bright colour screen.



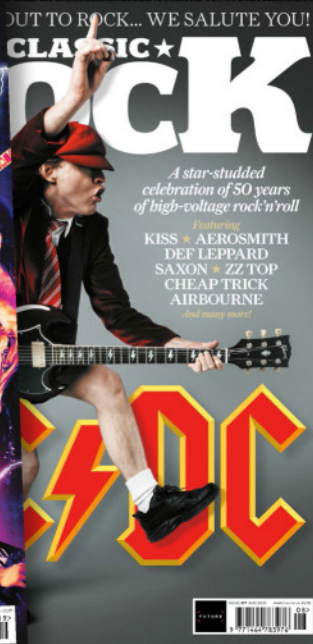
BLACKSTAR AMPED 2

£499

If you're finding the modelling thing a bit too much, Blackstar's Amped 2 provides a credible alternative, with plenty of tone, effects and 100 watts.

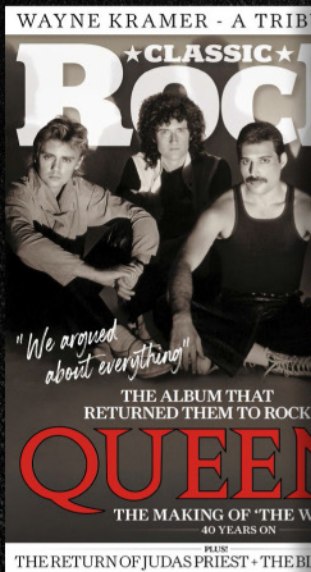


IT COULD BE A GAME-CHANGER FOR MANY PLAYERS



★CLASSIC★ Rock

HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK'N'ROLL



classicrockmagazine.com

Words Dave Burrluck Photography Phil Barker

MANSON MA JUNIOR AND VERONA JUNIOR

A pair of stripped-down, UK-made, single-pickup Juniors from Matt Bellamy's luthier of choice

Few British guitar makers have quite the backstory of Manson Guitar Works. It begins with Andy Manson, who built his first acoustic guitar aged 17. In the late '60s, Andy attended the London College of Furniture, which thanks to its instrument-making classes, became a hotbed for fledgling guitar-makers. While Andy focused more on the acoustic side of the tracks, his younger brother Hugh was drawn to the electric guitar and bass, and together they built Manson Guitars into a visible force during the following years, not only making, but also repairing instruments for anyone who asked – not least John Paul Jones, Jack Bruce and Jeff Beck.





During the '80s, the pair decided to concentrate on their own passions and moved to separate workshops in Devon. Hooking up with bass-playing Adrian Ashton and Jay Henson, Hugh opened Manson's Guitar Shop in 1992, which became not only a well-needed retail outlet but a hub for customisation, repairing and custom-building guitars and basses. Along with work for a long string of pros, it was local lad Matt Bellamy that began challenging the team to push the electric guitar forwards, not least with

the fabled and otherworldly Manson 'DeLorean' with its complex electronics and aluminium finish. As Matt's band Muse became international rock royalty, and a huge advert for Manson's capabilities, it was little surprise that in June 2019 he purchased the majority share of the company from Hugh Manson (who retired), leaving Adrian Ashton and Matt to continue the journey.

Today, Manson's Guitar Works has a team of nine people working out of their Ashburton workshop, making between 200–300 guitars annually along with their Czech Republic/UK joint venture M-Series models, not to mention their entry-level Indonesia-made Meta series.

As the recent £14k GEO Mask Edition guitar illustrates, they haven't given up on the outlandish designs favoured by Matt Bellamy, either. But at the start of 2024, they reminded us they haven't forgotten the everyman working guitar with the introduction of two Junior models, all UK-made, that cost a very attractive £1,399 including a superb fit-for-purpose Mono gigbag. Let's take a look...





£1,399

MANSON MA JUNIOR

Stripped-down style

These new Juniors were conceived as attempt to streamline every process involved in the guitar's construction to allow Manson to hit a very attractive price-point for a quality-led UK-made instrument. Based around the two outlines we have here, Manson converts will be very at home with this MA, a sort of stylised Telecaster – a less extreme version of Matt's favoured MB shape.

What they might not expect is the light weight – this one was *super* light at just 5.68lb – and for the first time on a Manson production run, the body wood of choice is obeche, currently used by numerous UK makers. Each Junior comes in a choice of five satin open-pore colours although, again, Manson fans will be well at home with the slightly textural standard satin black we have here.

The Fender-scale bolt-on neck is un-tinted maple with an unmarked rosewood fingerboard (you do get side dots!) that features superb fretting from a medium gauge, mirror-polished wire. Hardware isn't compromised with Gotoh's all-steel, six-block saddle thru-string bridge and their top-line 510 tuners with height adjustable posts, so there's no need for any string trees.

Mounted on a rugged, black-coated aluminium scratchplate, the single open-coil Dirty Rascal humbucker was designed for these Juniors and made in-house at Manson HQ. We might just get a single volume control, but it has a push-push 'Mojo' switch to move between standard series, and parallel, wiring of the two coils. It proves effortless in use with a gainy but not over-done series voice – that's surprisingly close in output and tone to a Gibson Les Paul Junior – and a lighter, more single-coil-like parallel option. Both voices are simply stunning.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Obeche
NECK: Maple, soft V profile, bolt-on
SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood/12" radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
PICKUPS: Manson Dirty Rascal humbucker
CONTROLS: Kill-switch, master volume (with push-push 'Mojo' series/parallel switch)
HARDWARE: Gotoh six-saddle thru-string bridge, Gotoh 510 H.A.P. tuners – chrome-plated
FINISH: Dry Satin Black (as reviewed), Neon Green, Miami Blue, Neon Pink, and Vivid Mustard Yellow – open pore satin finish
CONTACT: Manson Guitar Works, www.mansonguitarworks.com



£1,399

MANSON VERONA JUNIOR

Similar strokes

Yes, the Verona's outline is pretty Strat-ish. Originally, it was a request from Matt Bellamy for a three-single-coil guitar, which – once the Manson team had made a gloss Sunburst model of – featured on Muse's *Will Of The People* tour in 2023.

While we'll probably see that guitar later this year, the Verona outline suits this Junior style perfectly. Our sample was weightier than the MA at 7.28lb, but shape and weight aside it's otherwise the same guitar.

Does the shape, not to mention the weight, impact on what we hear? There is perhaps a gnat's more body to the voice, but there's little in it – although some players might enjoy slightly airier access to the top fret thanks to the bass-side cutaway.

Both necks feel pretty mainstream: not overly big in depth, with a soft V profile that's so well-shaped it virtually disappears in your hand. Another regular Manson feature is the spoke-wheel truss rod adjuster at the end of the neck which makes any necessary tweaks fast and simple.

Just like the MA, the duality of the sounds from that volume control and Mojo switch, not to mention the kill-switch that features on both, give the Verona the same expansive sounds.

Manson tells us that the Dirty Rascal design came from working with Blur's Graham Coxon, sitting between the hotter, more saturated PF-1 Matt Bellamy signature humbucker and the hot-PAF style Benchmark: plenty of strength... but not too much!

Just like the MA, the impressive things about the Verona are the *quality* of the sounds we hear – that neck profile, the superb playability, the in-tuneness and tuning stability. Faultless.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Obeche
NECK: Maple, soft V profile, bolt-on
SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood/12" radius
FRETS: 22, medium jumbo
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FINISH: Neon Green (as reviewed), Dry Satin Black, Miami Blue, Neon Pink and Vivid Mustard Yellow – open pore satin finish
CONTACT: Manson Guitar Works, www.mansonguitarworks.com

Two very similar guitars, but which one would we choose?

Choosing between the two different-shaped models, however, might be a harder job. Unlike choosing between a Tele and a Strat, the similarly inspired MA and Verona-shaped Juniors are the same guitar, with the same neck, pickup and control circuit. If push came to shove, that deliciously weighted MA might get our cash, but your tastes might be different. Either way, both guitars not only show off Manson's careful craft but sound spectacular as well.



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

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

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A BETTER
PLAYER!**



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EVH FRANKENSTEIN RELIC

The latest version of Eddie's monster is casually dressed

£1,479

Eddie Van Halen changed the guitar game with his mesmerising chops, but it wasn't just his playing that shook the world – it was the instrument he did it with. When he couldn't find the combination of a comparatively svelte Strat and the heavy-humbucker sound of a Les Paul, he decided to make it himself, fitting a P.A.F. removed from an ES-335. The result was the infamous Frankenstein, which in turn helped kickstart a modding revolution after Eddie left jaws on the floor in 1978.

But there's one big detail we left out, and that's the distinctive visuals. Eddie masked-off his guitar with tape in order to spray it, creating the instantly-recognisable (and trademarked) striped pattern. That brings us to our review guitar, which is, of course, a Frankenstein, but it looks like it's arrived for dress-down Friday at EVH HQ. Instead, the body is finished in a retro satin lacquer, then expertly bashed about by Fender (who makes EVH instruments) in its Mexican factory.

Elsewhere, it's business as usual: a graphite-reinforced, quartersawn maple neck, compound radius fingerboard, Floyd Rose vibrato, D-TUNA and a Wolfgang humbucker. But you've no doubt spotted the gubbins in the spare pickup routes. These are a '60s-style single-coil, and a Fender five-way selector switch. Both are mounted in the body, and can be connected into the circuit thanks to the routs and ample control cavity space. Admittedly, it's a slightly strange concept, but then this is a replica of sorts, so the idea here is that you can configure it either faithfully, or more practically.

Playability-wise, it matches up to previous Frankensteins we've played, with a comfortable action set just below a 'medium' height. The neck feels familiar, too, with the ageing giving it a worn-in feel that's unobtrusive, like your favourite pair of trainers. The 12"–16" compound radius is great for our slightly stubby fingers, giving us ease for chords at the headstock end and room to stretch out towards the top.

That Wolfgang humbucker performs just as you'd expect, too, with a lively output that delivers a versatile set of sounds. Obviously, it's a bridge humbucker, but it works equally well for clean sounds as it does crunch, but feed it to a higher-gain pedal or amp and you'll start feeling the harmonics spitting in your direction.

One thing we love about the Frankenstein is the Swiss Army Knife approach that it takes across the whole design. From the truss rod which can be adjusted at the body end, to the low-friction volume control (labelled 'tone'), or the instant drop-D from pulling the D-TUNA's lever, there's attention to detail at every turn.

EVH calls this the 'civilian' version of the Frankenstein, and while removing the most distinctive visual feature of the guitar could be viewed as a mistake, we think it also opens the door to fans of the man, the band and the brand, who don't want to be quite so overtly playing a 'signature model'.

Stuart Williams

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

1 NO STRIPES

It's a Frankenstein in every way, except it is missing that unmistakable striped pattern.

2 BONUS ELECTRONICS

The 'dummy' single-coil and selector switch can be wired into the circuit if you'd like to get a bit more versatility out of the Frankenstein.

3 FLOYD ROSE WITH D-TUNA

Ever the problem-solver, Eddie's guitar gives the stability of a Floyd, but the flexibility of being able to flick a lever to put the guitar into drop D tuning.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood
NECK: Maple
FINGERBOARD: Maple
FRETS: 22
PICKUPS: EVH Wolfgang Humbucker, Fender '60s-style single-coil (not fitted)
CONTROLS: Volume
HARDWARE: Floyd Rose 1000 series w/D-TUNA
FINISH: Red (pictured), Black, White
CONTACT: Fender, www.fender.com







BOSS KATANA:GO HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER

 **PLATINUM AWARD**

Boss continue to expand their popular digital amp range

Boss' award-winning Katana digital amp range continues to expand, with a product to cover almost every niche.

Beside the mainstream heads and combos, now in their second generation, we've already seen Boss successfully bring the Katana's tone and functionality into the miniature practice and wireless desktop format with the Katana Mini, Air and Air EX.

Now, there's another new

to a desktop or charger. The hinged integral jack plug can be positioned to suit most jack sockets, as well as folding back against the Katana:Go's body for storage.

Boss's Tone Studio app connects via Bluetooth to select and edit amp voices, EQ and effects, as well as save them and store them. You can also stream audio and arrange songs into Sessions and Livesets for further practice fun. The amp models are the same as all Katana

you include bass mode) is plenty of space for anyone, with more if needed in the Tone Studios Librarian feature.

If you really want to go to town, the Katana:Go can also hook up to Boss's footswitch and expression pedals using MIDI over Bluetooth. The ability to download your favourite tracks from YouTube or your own music libraries, and play along with them using the Stage Feel environment to make you feel as though you're in the band, is what really gets the inspiration going, though. It's a long, long way from repetitively lifting up the needle on a vinyl record and putting it down again to learn licks or tunes.

Boss' Katana:Go packs so much musical inspiration and tonal variety into such a small space, for such an affordable price, it's staggering to think how far technology has come along and what might be in store in the next decade or two. Go buy!

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

PACKS SO MUCH TONAL
VARIETY INTO A SMALL SPACE

Katana, which may be the smallest in size, but in terms of flexibility and fun it's likely to be another runaway success story; the Katana:Go headphone amplifier.

It may be small, but the Katana:Go is exquisitely designed and fabricated, with soft touch buttons on either side and a smart volume control on the top face, together with a small monochrome status display. On the rear face, there are two sockets for headphones and a USB 'C' lead for connection

amps, with a choice of Acoustic, Clean, Crunch, Lead and Brown, each with a second variation. There's also a bass mode, with Vintage, Modern and Flat voices, again with a second variation.

There are dozens of effects to choose from, including the regular boosts, distortions, modulations, delays and reverbs, alongside more unusual and often highly inspiring models like the Slicer, which can set off all kinds of creative rhythm ideas. 30 onboard patches in 10 banks of three (60 if

1 HINGED JACK PLUG

The hinged jack plug folds back against the case for storage, and easily accommodates angled and straight-in jack sockets, while optimised for a regular Strat.

2 VOLUME KNOB AND DISPLAY

The Katana:Go's smart volume knob and display are typical of the attention to detail with all Boss products, looking smart and functional.

3 REAR PANEL SOCKETS

The headphones and USB sockets are on the rear face; there's enough power to drive most decent studio-type headphones as well as mobile phone earbuds.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling headphones amplifier.

DIMENSIONS: 45mm
(w) x 83mm (d) x
25mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb):
67grams/2.4oz

CONNECTIONS: Single instrument plug, stereo headphones jack, USB 'C' socket for desktop/charger connection

CHANNELS: Thirty slots organised in ten banks of three

CONTROLS: Volume control, bank up/down/tuner switch, A/B/C patch select buttons, Bluetooth button, on/off button, stage mode select button

FOOTSWITCH:
Optional Blue tooth
footswitch/
expression pedal

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Bluetooth audio streaming, USB audio recording, integral tuner

POWER: Integral re-chargeable battery pack

CONTACT: boss/uk.info





SHEERAN LOOPER + £299

Is Ed's signature pedal a dream for the one-man jam band?

There's no bigger champion of looping right now than Ed Sheeran, with much of his live show built around an acoustic guitar and Ed's voice – all sent, of course, through his custom built Chewie II looper 'board. Ed's well established in the signature guitar game, with his Sheeran By Lowden brand delivering high-quality instruments for over five years now. It's a surprise, then, that

pedals. The rotary Function/Menu encoder inspires less confidence – but its position behind the left foot pedal keeps it safe from harm.

The biggest challenge with live looping is delivering well-timed takes, and you need confidence in the pedal response as you switch between dubs. We prefer the Looper +'s chunky foot pedals to push-button stomp switches, which are easily mis-hit in the heat of battle. The Looper + really performs well in this respect, and

clear, and doesn't overwhelm the user with information.

You can run two independent tracks on the Looper + (eg, a verse and a chorus) in four different modes, layering up overdubs as you go. If you want to drop earlier takes out, well, you'll need the Looper +'s big brother, the Looper X, for that, but that's not really the point here because the feature set is relatively stripped back – and it's all rather intuitive in use as a result. Just a single-tap or tap-and-hold of each pedal will access most of the play, record, undo and clear-all functions you'll need – and a double-tap switches between the two tracks.

Its simplicity makes the Looper + a compelling, easy-to-use pedal. One that can inspire you to create new music in an organic way – by jamming over your own ideas. And even if you never write or perform a song, it's just great fun. Definitely worth the wait!

Chris Bird

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

1 ROTARY ENCODER

Press down and turn to access the unit's controls, including: reverse and half-speed functions; single, multi, sync and song modes; mono, stereo or split output configuration and more.

2 VOLUME KNOBS

These give you control over the instrument and mic input levels, and the main output volume, with LEDs giving you a visual cue.

3 FOOT PEDALS

Once you're happy with the menu settings, all your live use comes from interacting with the chunky pedals. You'll either single-tap, double-tap or tap and hold, depending on the function.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Looper

CONTROLS: Function/menu rotary encoder, instrument level, mic level, main output level, multi-function foot pedals

SOCKETS: Mic input, instrument input x2, output x2, external footswitch, MIDI in, USB, DC power in

POWER: 9v psu, included

CONTACT: Sheeran By Lowden, sheeranguitars.com

ITS SIMPLICITY MAKES THE LOOPER + A COMPELLING, EASY-TO-USE PEDAL

we've had to wait as long as we have for a looper bearing his name. The question is, was it worth the wait?

Upon first look, we're in no doubt the Looper + (co-designed with multi-fx experts, HeadRush) is intended for pros. It's built like a tank! Unless your live show includes a speeding steam roller, no on-stage mishap is ever likely to inflict major damage on the die-cast aluminium chassis and

it ticks other useful boxes, too.

First, it runs from a 9 volt DC adapter, but it's also battery powered – ideal for busking. The three inputs include two 1/4" instrument jacks and a combo XLR/1/4" input for a microphone. USB connectivity allows software updates and file transfer with your PC or Mac and doubles as an audio interface, too. You can save up to 128 loops to internal storage and the 1.8" full-colour display is very



JHS PEDALS NOTAKLÖN £79

The best (and most fun) Klon clone to date?



It's not an over-exaggeration to say that no other effects pedal in recent memory has managed to stir up quite as much hype as JHS Pedals' Notaklön overdrive did when it was first unveiled last year. Overnight, the internet was flooded with news of the Notaklön – a brand new, £79 Klon clone that you assemble yourself. Every influencer under the sun marched on YouTube, documenting the foolproof building process and demonstrating the JHS-certified Klon tones, which – as expected – looked to be top-notch.

Now, the market is in no great need for more Klon Centaur clones – the mythically elusive original unit championed by the likes of John Mayer has been the

inspiration behind many off-brand attempts in recent years – but the Notaklön is a different beast altogether.

To start: you build it yourself. The solder-less DIY process is immensely fun, and adds an extra layer of entertainment to a piece of gear that sonically excels. Sure, it's simple – all you have to do is fit the two circuit boards to the chassis, connect them via a ribbon cable and secure the Output, Treble, and Gain control knobs – but that's what makes it so great: its accessibility.

The foolproof process caters to all players, and while the Notaklön could easily have been released as part of a standard JHS line, it certainly would have lost some of its charm.

Then there are the tones. JHS has been kind enough to fit this pedal with a Shamrock Mod Switch, which means you get not only the classic Klon tone, but an additional voice that supplies +4dB gain boost and an additional stage of hard-edge clipping. This is the mode that TG have found ourselves sitting in; with the gain dialed up, there's a gritty gnarliness about it. Rolled back, it's the most serene edge-of-breakup boost you could hope for.

At £79, not only is it one of the most affordable Klon clones out there, but easily the most entertaining. We'd say go buy one right away, but you can't. Owing to its immense popularity, the Notaklön is backordered – no surprises there.

Matthew Owen

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Overdrive

CONTROLS: Volume, Treble, Gain, Bypass switch, +/- Shamrock Mod Switch

TRUE BYPASS: Yes

POWER: 9V DC negative center

CONTACT: JHS Pedals

“THE SOLDER-LESS DIY PROCESS IS IMMENSELY FUN AND FOOLPROOF; CATERING TO ALL”

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	PERFORMANCE	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL	★	★	★	★	★

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Words Amit Sharma

MORGANWAY

There are many bands out there who refer to themselves as family, but in the case of British country rockers Morganway, there's an even deeper sense of meaning behind it all. The group was started by twin brothers Keiran and Callum Morgan – the former splitting guitar duties with his wife, Morganway's lead singer SJ.

Their unique twist on modern Americana has seen them build a loyal following since the release of their debut self-titled album in 2019, followed by last year's second full-length *Back To Zero* and festival performances at Glastonbury and The Long Road. Last year the sextet embarked on their first American tour and the next 18 months will be spent promoting their newly finished third record.

"We have such a mix of influences, from Fleetwood Mac and Tom Petty to Haim and The 1975," says SJ, when asked about the sonic variety at play. "This line-up has been together for six years, so we're a family literally and metaphorically!"

If there's one guitar she loves more than any other, it's her PRS SE Silver Sky in Dragon Fruit finish, describing it as a reliable workhorse for the road that's also very easy to play. "Kieran is the pedal aficionado in the band, but the one I couldn't live without is my Way Huge Blue Hippo chorus," she continues. "It's what you hear on everything I played on our newest album. Through my Blackstar Artist 15, it brings such a retro vibe to my single-coil tones, working nicely against the other guitars. Sometimes it all sounds so good, I forget to start singing!"

Typically found on stage right, Keiran tends to stick with humbucker models like his PRS S2 Vela Satin – lovingly nicknamed 'The Badger' – which then get fed into an array of pedals including his Magnetic Effects White Atom fuzz and Eventide H9 before ending up in his Fender '68 Custom Princeton Reverb. As many guitar partnerships have proved in the past, two contrasting sounds can add a great amount of depth if they compliment each other in the right way. It's something Morganway are using to their advantage.

"I'm excited to see where our journey goes," adds SJ. "That's what can be maddening but awesome about this industry – anything can be around the corner. You just have to keep the faith and enjoy the ride."



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