



ST. VINCENT
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SLASH



DAVE GROHL
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INTERVIEW

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 TELES N' 335s**

LESSON

**INSIDE HIS NEW
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Welcome...



I think I'm on one of those "plateau" periods in my guitar playing. I feel like I'm not developing much, creatively speaking - and that's despite the constant inspiration I get from doing this job and being surrounded by active, busy musicians. So, as a former guitar teacher, what advice would I give myself? Well, I think I'd probably say that I need a new project...

Enter this month's cover star, Slash, of Guns N' Roses and Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators fame. He's an icon of guitar, without doubt. I'm not sure he suffers from creative plateaus, and, in fact, thinking about it now, I wish we'd quizzed him on that very subject in this month's interview. However, he is talking about his latest project, an album of blues covers titled *Orgy Of The Damned*.

By his own admission, he's making no attempts to preserve some "old" form of blues. I'd describe it, by and large, as "heavy blues". But The Cat In The Hat's playing is sounding fresh. There's a laid back, more toned down sense to his style. And we know he's experimenting tonally, making use of Strats, Telecasters and ES-335s alongside his omnipresent arsenal of Les Pauls. It is definitely *not* business as usual!

We also speak with Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram and Samantha Fish, who tell us what to expect when they join Slash at his upcoming all-star S.E.R.P.E.N.T. blues festival. And finally, if you feel like you need to freshen up your own playing, check out our lesson taking you inside this new side of Slash's style.

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

Chris Bird Editor

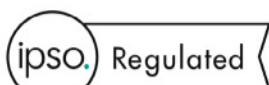
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Words: Stuart Williams
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THE POWER OF THREE

An all-analogue multi-effect pedal with the Jack White seal of approval



For many of us, pedals supply the constant fix to our perennial case of G.A.S. leakage. Each one offers its own shade for our tonal palette, they don't take up lots of space, and, unlike buying a new amp or guitar, they don't have to cost a fortune.

But even with this in mind we think that Donner and Jack White's Third Man Hardware are delivering a potential Bargain Of The Year with the Triple Threat. Based on Donner's existing Alpha series pedals, the TT bundles three pedals – Distortion, Echo and Phaser – into a single unit. The circuits have been modified from the stock designs to tailor them more to Jack White's tastes, and what's more, they're all-analogue.

"It has been my hope for a while to make an affordable pedal for beginning musicians," White says. "When I approached Donner they knew what I was aiming for, and we were able to make something very cool that was also not going to break the bank for a beginning musician."

The simple pedal has three controls (with protective bumpers) and a footswitch per-effect, with a bypass/engaged LED. Now for the best bit: the black Standard Edition Triple Threat is just £95, but if you fancy a little more customisation, you can bag the Limited Edition version in yellow for £118 via Third Man's Reverb store. We'll be checking it out for a review soon.

UP CLOSE



The magic number

The Triple Threat houses three pedals – a high-gain distortion, a phaser and echo derived from Donner's Alpha Series pedals.



Controls

These effects are analogue circuits, so it makes sense that the controls are hands-on, too. We get three controls per-effect.



Road ready

It might be affordable, but the Triple Threat is built for the stage with a metal enclosure, protective control bumpers, metal stomp switches and clearly visible LEDs.



ALBUM

“THERE’S SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT THREE-PART HARMONIES”

BATTLESNAKE ARE PUTTING THREE CLASSIC GUITAR RIGS INTO ONE CRAZY HEAVY METAL MELTING POT

Described by guitarist Ben Frank as “the genetically engineered cyborg super child of Queen, King Gizzard and Judas Priest,” Australia’s Battlesnake are

a colourful bunch. On the band’s second LP *The Rise And Demise of The Motorsteeples*, Ben and fellow guitarists Paul Mason and Daniel Willington are chasing vomit-like fuzz sounds and cranking Marshall amps.

The new album was recorded in just 10 days. How was that process?

Ben: We actually wrote a fair chunk of it in the studio. We work best as a band when we set a super unrealistic deadline and we have to make it happen. The lead-up to the recording was manic, but we’re all really respectful of each other’s creative process.

Paul: We didn’t have any solos before we got to the studio, which was quite daunting, but it ended up being a really freeing and creative process. There are some cracking solos on there...

How did you find the right tones with such a limited timeframe?

Ben: You plug into a good amp with a good guitar, turn it up really loud and it sounds good. It’s not rocket science. But at the same time, we’ll spend hours trying to get the grossest, most evil sounds we can. We DI’ed a Danelectro 3699 fuzz and it sounded like vomiting.

What other gear stood out in the studio?

Ben: We put my 100-watt Marshall Vintage Modern head through the matching cab which has 20-watt Celestions in it. To me, that’s the sound of the electric guitar. It’s angry and loud. We also used a Marshall JTM 45 100 through the same cab with a Tube Screamer in front. It’s got the most ripping lead sound.

How do you balance having three guitarists in the band?

Paul: We all come from different camps of iconic guitar and amp combos and we spend a lot of time on the arrangements to make sure we all have space to exist. I play a Korean copy Brian May Red Special through a Vox to occupy

the chimy mid-range frequency and I usually play the D and G strings. Ben puts a 2000 ’67 Reissue Gibson Flying V through a Marshall amp and holds down the low-mid chug range, and Dan’s using a Squier Telecaster through a vintage Fender Bassman head, so he has a much creamier sound.

And tell us about how the three of you combine those sounds.

Ben: There’s something magical about three-part harmonies. It’s a lost art. They can be very cheesy, but we try to walk that line very finely. If you’re going to have a guitar solo, why not harmonise it and make it more spectacular? I find it really liberating having three guitars because you have scope to do some really cool sh*t.

Paul: We want more people to be aware of the guitar statement we’re trying to make. We all have very distinctive voices on our instruments, so when we align that I think we have something that’s very special.

Phil Weller





GUITAR

GIBSON SLASH 'JESSICA' LES PAUL STANDARD

This month's cover star Slash is no stranger to a Les Paul, no less a signature model, but now Gibson has issued a replica of 'Jessica', his go-to stage guitar since the late '80s. The original started life as a Cherry Sunburst factory second (one of two Gibsons sent to

Slash in 1988). The G N' R legend had his favourite one refinished in a lighter Honeyburst, and it's been a constant ever since. "This guitar has been with me since 1988. I named it when I was drunk, but I don't remember what the catalyst for that was!" The Jessica replica features

a non-weight-relieved mahogany body with three-piece maple top, a mahogany neck with a '50s vintage profile and rosewood fingerboard. It's loaded with custom Burstbuckers and ships with a hardshell case, Slash pick pack and USA leather strap. It'll set you back £2,999.

GUITAR

FENDER TOM DELONGE STARCASTER

Guitars are nothing like buses, but we're just saying – you wait years for a Tom DeLonge signature model and then two come along in fairly quick succession. Hot on the heels of the reissuing of the Blink-182 man's revered Strat comes the Fender Tom DeLonge Starcaster. Tom's semi-hollow offset is a single-pickup version, with the unwieldy headstock reduced to that of a Strat, and it comes in four finishes. That lone pickup is a Seymour Duncan SH-5, wired to a single volume control and mounted in the laminated maple body, while the neck is made of roasted maple and fitted with a rosewood fingerboard.



AMP

LINE 6 CATALYST CX

There's no shortage of ways of getting your guitar heard in 2024, but Line 6 thinks it might have just given you its best solution yet, with a three-amp expansion to its Catalyst CX range. The new additions are all dual-channel, with 60 (£342) and 100-watt 1x12 (£465), and a 200-watt,

2x12 combo (£603) on offer. As well as this, Line 6 has doubled the number of amp models from 6 to 12, joining the 24 effect models, all of which are derived from Line 6's flagship Helix modeller. Feature-wise, they're equipped with 3-band EQ and a tap tempo control, an XLR line out, power amp input, USB audio and MIDI.

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

KARL KERFOOT

Karl Kerfoot is Head Of Education at Pickup Music and a renowned touring guitarist who's played with legendary bands like Lord Huron and Albert Hammond Jr. of The Strokes. Years of playing and teaching have given him a unique insight into guitar learning. After watching some of his lessons, it's evident that Karl is one of the best in the business.



1-2-3-4 WORKOUT

This lesson from Pickup Music will work wonders on your accuracy, speed, and finger independence - and it's as easy as 1 2 3 4!



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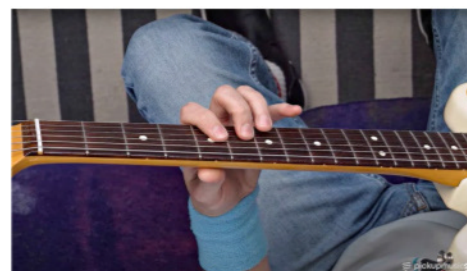
The thought of repetitive exercise doesn't fill us with joy, but that's about to change here. It's obvious that finger strength and dexterity is vital for guitarists. Everything you play depends on those dancing digits doing exactly as they're told. Unfortunately, often, our fingers aren't always as nimble as we need - and this is where the

1-2-3-4 workout (aka the spider exercise) comes in. This simple idea spreads your fretting fingers over four adjacent frets, and you play one note after the other. You have four fingers - '1-2-3-4'.

Even if you're a seasoned guitarist, it's worth trying the exercise out. You can also use it as an awesome warm-up exercise, and just a few minutes each day is enough to see serious improvement.

The workout is all about precision and focus, and these are our top tips: stay close to the fret-wire when you play a note; don't let your fingers drift away from the fretboard; keep your wrist straight and fingers parallel to the frets; and always practise at a fixed tempo.

Full disclosure: you won't be serenading your family and friends with this one - but no pain, no guitar gains!



1 1-2-3-4 DOWNSTROKES

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1 115

5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8

1 2 3 4

cont. sim.

7

Let's start as simply as possible, going in sequence (fingers 1, 2, 3 and 4) using downstrokes. Once you get to 4 on the first string, move across to the second string and start back at 1. Repeat this all the way to the sixth string, then back again, continuing playing the 1-2-3-4 sequence. All the subsequent examples are played down and up across all six strings, but we've only tabbed the first bar of each to save space.

2 1-2-3-4 ALTERNATE PICKING

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

This is the same sequence now played with alternate picking (down, up, down, up). Practise slowly and focus on accurate timing and even dynamics.

3 4-3-2-1 DOWNSTROKES

4 3 2 1

8 7 6 5

Here, we reverse the pattern, starting with the fourth finger at the 8th fret. Your pinkie may take on a mind of its own, so keep it close to the fretboard!

4 4-3-2-1 ALTERNATE PICKING

4 3 2 1

8 7 6 5

You should be getting into the swing of things by now, as, once again, we switch to alternate picking with the 4-3-2-1 pattern.

5 MIX IT UP

bit.ly/tg384audio

3 2 1 4

7 6 5 8

A great way to keep this exercise fresh is by selecting a random order of notes - this gives us tons of possible variations. Using a 3-2-1-4 pattern, begin with your third finger on the 7th fret.

6 PICK UP THE PACE

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1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8

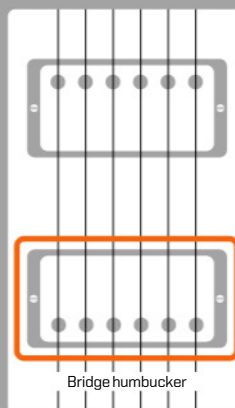
Increasing speed is the final step! Either push the tempo of your metronome up slightly, or, if you're feeling really brave, double up from quarter notes to eighth notes as we've done here.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- ✓ Whammy bar vibrato
- ✓ Phrygian mode
- ✓ Alternate picking

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL: **DISTORTION**



Satch typically uses signature gear, including DiMarzio-loaded JS Ibanez guitars with Peavey JSX and Marshall JS valve amps. Vai mostly plays Ibanez JEM and PIA guitars (with DiMarzio pickups again) through Synergy preamps and Frys stereo power amps. The pair's respective pedalboards have evolved over the years, but a Boss DS-1 is an essential part of Joe's tonal setup. The discontinued Ibanez Jemini pedal still appears on Steve's board, with its two stages voiced around, again, the Boss DS-1, and also the Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer.

RIFF OF THE MONTH

SATCH/VAI

The Sea Of Emotion, Pt. 1

When Steve Vai was a 12-year-old student of Joe Satriani, neither of the two budding greats could have predicted the incredible heights their careers would reach. 50 years on, now shred royalty, the pair finally unite for their first official collaboration... beginning with this very track – and we're looking at the cool whammy barred Phrygian riff that kicks in at 0:27.

Start the riff by barring across the highest four strings at the 12th fret. Strum a downstroke and dip your guitar's trem for a moment, before adding a dash of whammy bar vibrato. Next, play the E and F phrase (shown in our slowed down video play-through) at the 7th and 8th frets; this is repeated three times. Finally, hit open sixth string twice, then use all four fingers to finish with the alternate picked chromatic phrase

starting at 12th fret. That's three sections in all for you to learn: the whammy-dipped chord, an E-F phrase, and the chromatic line.

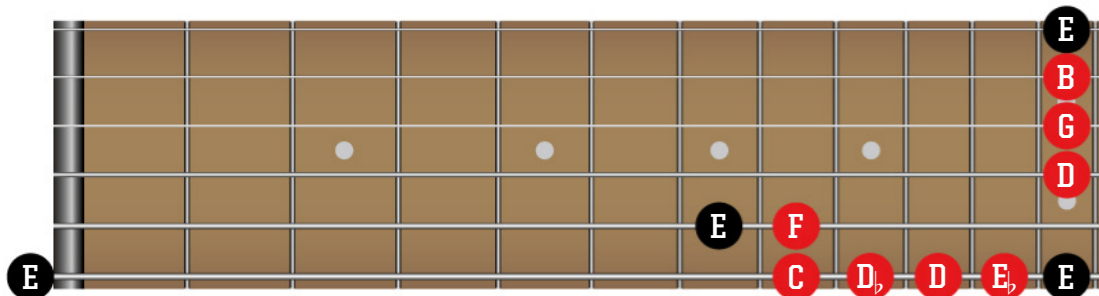
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:27–0:48

Tempo: 90bpm

Key/scale: E Phrygian/chromatic

Main techniques: Whammy bar vibrato, single-note riffing, alternate picking



The opening 12th-fret chord is an Em7 with its root on the top string, so the chord intervals from low to high are: ♭3 5 1 (D G B E). The E and F on the fifth string are the root

and ♭2 of the key, which suggests a Phrygian mode sound (1 ♭2 3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7). The end of the riff takes place on the sixth string with an open low E note followed by a

descending chromatic scale phrase. Note that guitars on the original recording are down tuned a semitone to E_♭ standard, but for this lesson we've stayed in E standard.

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"IS THIS
PERSON
VIRTUOSIC,
OR DO
THEY
TOTALLY
SUCK?
THAT'S
KIND OF
WHERE
I LIVE!"



St. Vincent's new album sees her teaming up with two Foo Fighters, stealing Josh Homme's secret weapon, using Prince's favourite pedal and embarking on a prog odyssey. It also sees her return to real amps played real loud...

Words Jenna Scaramanga



GEAR HEAD

"I'm happy to nerd out any day!"
Annie says

Annie Clark – aka St. Vincent – is finished, for now at least, with digital guitar tones. "I've done enough direct guitar sounds," she declares. "I wanted to move some air again." The result helps St. Vincent's latest album, *All Born Screaming*, sound extremely human. "It sounds real because it is real," Annie says of the record's emotional content, but she could also be talking about the Marshall she used to express some of those emotions. When she wrote this record, Clark explains: "I personally was metabolising inward and outward violence. How do you make sense of the human condition? It's wild and fraught. I'm lucky in the way I get to try to make sense of everything, by making work that takes chaos and puts it into some kind of order, whether that's literally, with electricity through circuitry, or in more esoteric ways."

"Every record I make is just a direct reflection of what's happening in life," she continues. "I'm not really deconstructing persona or identity this time. That's not really where my head is at. It was more, 'Okay, life is very short. It's in some ways very binary. You are alive or you are dead, and there's not an in between. So if you're alive, let's go. Let's live...'"

Living things need to breathe, and the guitars on the record mirror that, with roomy, ambient sounds. The vibey

guitar licks on *Big Time Nothing*, for example: "That is my Music Man Goldie signature guitar through a reissue Marshall cranked in a room, with two Coles stereo ribbon mics for room sound."

All Born Screaming sees Clark self-producing for the first time. Although guitar is central to what she does, it's just one of many instruments she plays. Wearing all those hats means she must decide not just what to play, but whether to play at all: "I don't mean

to sound like a total space cadet," she smiles, "but I think the song tells me if guitar needs to happen." Her position as songwriter and producer informs her thinking about every part of the process. When we ask about the guitar gear on the album, she includes what mics she used on guitar cabinets (C12s and SM57s) and even mentions her Neve Decca mixing console. Where most guitarists imagine their signal path starting at the strings and ending at the amp, for Clark it seems to begin in her brain and end in the listener's, encompassing everything between.

Clark's gear obsession is evident. "I'm happy to nerd out any day!" she cries, volunteering her favourite pick, but she values gear for its creative uses. She describes pedals with creative adjectives like "gnarly" and "kaleidoscopic" rather than technical descriptions of what they do, but wearing her producer's hat, she also knows the technical stuff. "Say, with a 500 millisecond delay. You gotta know what that equals in quarter notes and eighth notes," she insists.

"There's always going to be that guitar player ego going, 'Put me in, coach! Hey! What about guitar? What about guitar?' Sometimes guitar is exactly what needs to happen, and sometimes guitar is just not on the cards," she shrugs. "One must be strong in their resolve, not to put guitar on things that don't need guitar! But that also means that you try and be as innovative as possible when there is guitar."

Sometimes that innovation means layering guitars with synths or unusual bass tones to create sounds that are both familiar and new: "The real nastiness on the song *Flea* comes from the bass," she says. "Justin Meldal-Johnson played that bass clean, but I distorted it. I'm not one to go, 'Oh, to make a big chorus I'll put eighth-note distorted guitars over it.' In the midrange, by the time you have Dave Grohl on drums and Justin's bass, all the guitars need to do is be this riffy, seasick, out-of-tune EBow choir, and that's the thing that will give you the additional harmonic information."



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BLONDE AMBITION

St. Vincent on stage in Madrid in 2023

It's fuzzy, because the EBow has a built-in buzz to it."

Wait a second... who on drums? "We've been buddies since I helped induct Nirvana into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," Annie tells us. "I just hit him up and was like, 'There's a song called *Flea* and you're the only person I could hear on it!' He's a great drummer because he's a great songwriter. He has all the power and all the chops, but everything he does serves the song. He's just gonna take the song from a nine to a 21! He just brings that kind of power, but it's never ego-blowing. He just came over, knew the song inside and out, every turn. He probably only heard it three or four times but he just had it." New Foo Fighter Josh Freese also supplies drums on a further two tracks, *Hell Is Near* and *So Many Planets*.

Despite the presence of those rock giants, *All Born Screaming* makes us think mainly of Prince, to whom St. Vincent paid tribute at the 2020

Grammy Salute. It's not that it sounds like a Prince record, although there's a deep funk influence worthy of the Purple One. It's that they are both such polymaths – producers, songwriters, and multi-instrumentalists – who nevertheless keep guitar at the forefront of their sound. Both are far better guitarists than they ought to be, given their breadth of other talents, and both

have threaded the needle of maintaining artistry and musicianship alongside commercial success. And they share a favourite pedal: "On the songs *All Born Screaming* and *Inverse To*

This, I recorded my Roland JC-40 with a Boss VB-2, the original one," she says. "You know, Prince's vibrato pedal. He only played Boss pedals."

Also like Prince, Clark displays an engagingly non-linear thought process. "If I had to name my favourite bass tone ever, I would say Chris Squire from Yes on *Close To The Edge*. That is a perfect bass tone," she asserts at one point,

**"AN AMP
CRANKED UP
IN A ROOM
- THAT'S A
REAL SOUND"**

Photos Getty





"A STRAT IT SHALL BE!"

How a gift from a grunge legend turned Annie Clark's head

"Mike McCready from Pearl Jam gave me one of his amazing signature Strats," Annie reveals, "and I played that on the record a bit. I've typically been afraid of Strats just because they carry so much baggage, but there were certain songs on this record that was like, 'A Strat is exactly what needs to happen here, so a Strat it shall be!' The end of the big riff on *Broken Man* was that Strat. I was just playing it as aggressively as possible. I play with my fingers most of the time, but I think I played that with a pick. My pick of choice is the Ernie Ball nylon light (0.53mm)."

"GUITAR IS INTERESTING BECAUSE ITS VERSATILITY IS UNPARALLELED"





apropos of nothing. “I know you did not ask me that question!” This is not the only time Yes come up for conversation. She also refers to the instrumental section of *Flea* as “my Yes prog odyssey”.

That prog odyssey is powered by two pedals that use sampling in innovative ways. The first is the Hologram Microcosm, also beloved of Covet’s Yvette Young, which combines pitch-shifting, delay, and looping. “It was for that kaleidoscopic delay trail,” Annie explains. The other is the Cooper FX Outward, which she likes “for gnarliness,” admitting: “I don’t even know what it does! It just makes everything sound melted and gnarly, just disturbing.”

All Born Screaming also sees St. Vincent delivering supremely tight funk guitar parts. “The guitars in *Big Time Nothing* are very much in the pocket, which is nice. You gotta have that pocket!” she grins.

Funk tones are powered by the Roland JC-40, while the Marshall takes care of dirty tones for things like *Broken Man*. “It sort of is and isn’t enormous,” she reflects. “I think the attack feels punchy and aggressive, but it’s not like I

put a big fuzz pedal on it. It’s almost a little bit more spanky of a tone, which is why it feels more aggressive. Using pedals on a Strat, you just have to be conscientious of avoiding unpleasant brightness, so that’s all from the amp. That’s it. An amp cranked up in a room. Not to be corny, but that’s a real sound.”

She adds: “There may be a couple EBow parts that are direct to the console, or run through a pedal chain and then direct. Other than that, it’s all air coming through speakers.”

There’s also an unlikely third amp: “Cian Riordan, who recorded a lot of the record and mixed it, let me borrow his Peavey Decade.” The

Decade is a previously unloved 10w solid-state affair whose second-hand prices shot from \$50 to \$500 after Josh Homme described it as his “secret weapon” in a 2020 Mark Ronson documentary. “It’s a Homme homage,” Clark confirms, though she can’t remember precisely where on the record it ended up.

The main guitar on the album is the Music Man Goldie, the latest edition of her signature model. It’s so named because of its gold foil pickups, which

BAD FOR GOOD

Annie says of her solo in the song *Flea*: “I was going for a sound where it’s like... wrong?”

“THE SONG TELLS ME IF GUITAR NEEDS TO HAPPEN”

ape the appearance and vibe of the budget single-coils on 1950s Teiscos and DeArmonds. Unlike those models, however, the Music Man pickups are hum-cancelling. “It has a little bit more of a midrange brightness that I was going for,” she explains. “That was especially nice with the amp and room sound.” Other guitars on the record include a Gretsch 12-string on opener *Hell Is Near*, and a Telecaster strung in Nashville tuning (standard tuning, but with the low E, A, and D strings one octave higher) on *Big Time Nothing*.

Annie’s favourite guitar moment on the album comes near its end: “There’s a solo in *So Many Planets* that I’m fond of. That song is my love letter to second-wave ska and 2 Tone Records. I thought I was totally aping The Specials’ *Man At C&A*, and then I went back and listened to it and realised, ‘Oh, no I wasn’t.’ Usually when you reference things, you’re only really referencing your memory of the feeling that you had when you last heard something, you’re not literally referencing it.”

Another favourite moment comes in the aforementioned *Flea*. “I take a kind of solo in the chorus that reminds me of listening to Butthole Surfers in Dallas in 1997. I was going for a sound where it’s like... wrong? Like, ‘Is this person virtuosic, or do they totally suck? That’s kind of where I live. Like, one of the great guitar solos, Neil Young’s *Down By The River* is, what, one note? So it’s just in the hands of the beholder, I think.” She laughs: “That’s not an expression!”

St Vincent’s brain is firmly planted in the here and now. We invite her to speculate where her music might be headed next, but she declines to think beyond the next day: “Tonight, I’m going to play a benefit. I’m going to play this classical guitar that I tune down to C. I’m going to put it through a couple of chorus and vibrato pedals into a JC-40, and play *Moon River* and have a really fun time. I’ll be playing very delicately and playing chords with lots of numbers behind them, you know what I mean? After that, I don’t really know...”

She muses: “Guitar is interesting, because its versatility is unparalleled. But it also is an instrument with a lot of baggage. We all know the tropes that we’re trying to avoid. There’s a fine line between, ‘Wow, that’s amazing and virtuosic, and I love it!’ and, ‘That’s an act of ego and not an act of art!’ It’s a really funny balance.”

***All Born Screaming* is out now.**

Words Amit Sharma Portraits Steve Gullick

"I'M A FUZZ

Feeder guitarist and vocalist Grant Nicholas is so obsessed with gear that he's named a new song after a favourite pedal. And for him there's still nothing better than a knackered old Tube Screamer and the guitar he calls 'Jesus'...

JUNKIE!"

W

hen Feeder released *Polythene* back in 1997, their debut album which produced five singles that remain fan-favourites to this day, the Welsh group were hailed as the UK's answer to The Smashing Pumpkins. In similar ways to Billy Corgan and co., it was Feeder's mix of heavy

metal and dream pop that made them stand out of the crowd, appealing to rock fans of almost every kind. It's why, in the decades since, they've shared stages with everyone from U2 and The Rolling Stones to Queens Of The Stone Age and Slipknot.

Feeder's new release *Black/Red* is their first-ever double album – and, much like mid-'90s Smashing Pumpkins twin-masterpiece *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness*, it takes listeners on a journey through hard riffing and kaleidoscopic reverie. As singer/guitarist Grant Nicholas explains, this is a band that still have plenty left to say...

"We're lucky to have been going for 30 years and still feel creative," he says. "I'm writing as much, if not more, as when we first started. I wanted to do a double album when we put out *Torpedo* in 2022 and then got cold feet, thinking we should just stick to a really good rock record. So I had all these ideas left over and more were coming. It felt like a body of work that belonged together, almost a trilogy in ways. It's been one big journey!"

It's been three decades since Feeder started, and comparisons to The Smashing Pumpkins still endure – which is perfectly understandable given your mutual love of fuzz...

I can see why people would compare us to them. I've always loved Black Sabbath as well as the sound of Tone Benders and Big Muffs, which were big parts of the Pumpkins sound on albums like *Siamese Dream*. We're from a similar ilk. We started around a similar time. I'm a similar age to Billy Corgan and probably grew up around similar artists. I think he's into classic rock and AOR, but also other '80s stuff. I look at my guitar more like a songwriter than a guitarist. I'm not a fancy lead player. I used to love Van Halen growing up and remember trying to work out *Eruption*. I was better back then than I am now. Like Billy, I'm more of a chord, riff and capo guy at heart.

➔ **As well as fuzz pedals, both of your bands are known for using Fender offsets to introduce elements of indie and shoegaze within harder-hitting metallic structures...**

We're a heavy metal pop band! Black Sabbath were one of the first bands I fell in love with, but I was also into The Police, Kate Bush and Duran Duran. I love '80s music, despite people saying it was bad! There was a lot of great songwriting and interesting production from that decade. And you know what? If it wasn't for Gary Numan, we wouldn't have bands like Nine Inch Nails. Sometimes people have called us the British Foo Fighters, because we have that bouncy, heavy, indie side that fits in with bands like Hüsker Dü and Sugar; or compare us to Cheap Trick. The great thing about Feeder is that we're not just one thing. I love heavy stuff as much as that '80s chorus sound. You can hear that on news songs like *Hey You*. It had that '80s flavour, so I got my classic light blue Boss CE-2 chorus out. I own two and the one at home is really old, with a broken light.

Which fuzz pedals did you rely on for the recent sessions?

It's a big part of the Feeder sound... I'm known for being a bit of a fuzz junkie! In the early days, I had quite a bizarre setup. I'd use an ADA preamp into a Vox AC30 or Fender twin, which you shouldn't really do, and keep it on all the time. I'd then use various pedals to get heavy, something like a Big Muff to bring more saturation. I always call it my 'hovercraft fuzz' sound. My general distortion would be the programmed sound from the ADA. It was unique, but incredibly noisy and a pain in the arse. I moved onto the Tone Bender quickly after that and that's my main fuzz sound, but I also use the green Russian Big Muff. I've got loads of Big Muffs but I find that one to be the best. I also use ELF fuzz pedals, hand-made by a guy in Japan...

Hang on, there's a track on the new album called *ELF*!

Yeah! I loved the smoothness of his Tone Bender-style fuzz so much, I even

named one of our tracks after it. The track's quite proggy in places and ELF – when you spell out the letters – sounds like a prog song to me. The fuzz inspired the song and the title. It's a small business, he's a fan who contacted me asking if I'd try some of his pedals, and they've all been great. He also runs RoShi pedals, which is where he gets old pedals and has a look inside to see what they're doing in order to recreate them. There are others I like, including stuff made by Raygun FX in the UK. I've got all kinds of Tone Benders, from originals to reissues to copies.

You tend to like a lot of different options for gain – you're only human, after all!

I really like the Superbolt Overdrive

SPECIAL EFFECTS

"Here's another Fuzz that RoShi made for me," Grant says. "It's a Big Muff kind of vibe."

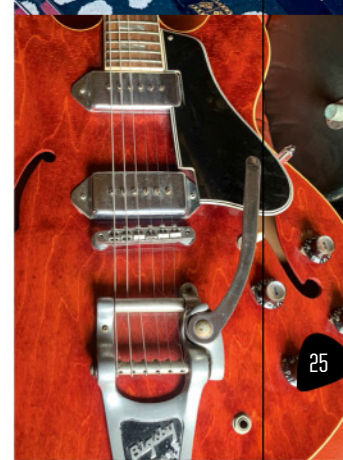
made by JHS. It's great for that edge of breakup tone. I also love the Boss Blues Driver, which is a really underrated pedal, but it has a lot of ballsy midrange. Another really underrated pedal I use all the time is my dark green Ibanez Tube Screamer TS9DX. It's on virtually all of the Feeder albums.

It's the most versatile Tube Screamer, but doesn't quite get the love it deserves because it's not as traditional as, say, the TS808 or regular TS9.

Exactly! Some purists get snobby about the TS9DX just because it's not what Stevie Ray Vaughan used. But I prefer having options – it has the classic Tube Screamer mode, where you get the mid hump, plus another three on top. I still mainly stick with the original or + mode, which are the less gainy ones for more garagey sounds. I might even have the drive turned all the way down, just because it colours your tones in a certain way. Mine is actually a little bit knackered – if you tap one of the knobs, it drops to a half-level drive, and if you



"THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT
A JAZZMASTER THAT
FEELS RIGHT TO ME"



→ tap it again it goes back to normal. But that knackered setting has a really unique sound. That's why I'll never get it fixed! Crazy sh*t like that makes me happy.

You clearly love your Jazzmasters.

What is it about those quirky offsets that feel like home for you?

When I started playing Jazzmasters, they actually weren't very popular. Everyone thought I was playing Kurt Cobain's guitar, and I'd have to correct them and say 'His was a Jaguar which has humbuckers!' The good thing back then is that you could pick them up cheap. Now they're a lot more expensive. I just love the shape of them. When you're singing, it's nice to have a guitar you feel comfortable with. I used to play SGs for a bit but found them too light. There's something about a Jazzmaster that feels right to me. I like big guitars, even though I'm a small person. I prefer a bit of weight.

What are the oldest and most desirable instruments in your collection?

There's my first one which I call 'Jesus'. It's the guitar most people know me for. That was my first Jazzmaster and I guess it's my Holy Grail. I use it live all the time, but because it's in lockup I don't really use it on recordings. I've got two 1964 Silver Sparkle [models], all original except for the finish. My favourite era of Jazzmaster is 1966, so I've got two of those with the binding, square block inlays and bigger headstock. My main guitar for recording is an original 1959 Jazzmaster which I don't take on the road. The pickups are super low output, the trem is great and always stay in tune so I use that to create a natural chorusing. Now I have a confession to make that might shock you...

Spill the beans...

I haven't changed the strings on that guitar in eight years! They're completely dead, but I just love the sound of it. If I need something with a bit more life, I'll use a different one with newer strings, but there's something about the sound of those old strings on that old guitar, it's special. With that I might use something like my Gibson Explorer with Seymour Duncan Antiquity pickups, which I've had since the early '90s. Or I'll use this ESP Custom guitar that was made for me. It sounds bizarre, but I told them I wanted it to be half



Fender Mustang and half SG! It's like an SG with a really chunky body and racing stripes, with a Jazzmaster backplate and trem, plus a bolt-on neck that feels quite solid and more like a Fender. I won't use it live but it's a beautiful guitar in a metallic bluey green. At one point I was using Telecasters for half the set, though now it's Jazzmasters for everything. I still use Teles in the studio – there's an old '72 sunburst one that sounds great. And there's an old '60s Gibson ES-330 that I've used occasionally. But really, when I think about the Feeder sound, it all comes down to Jazzmasters, Tone Benders, Big Muffs... and that broken Tube Screamer!

Black/Red is out now.

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Words Jenna Scaramanga

"PEOPLE SAID, 'WOMEN AREN'T REALLY SUPPOSED TO DO THAT. SO WE WERE VERY LOUD!'"

Flying in the face of sexism in the '70s, Heart made it big with some of the most powerful and beautiful rock songs of that era.

In turn, **Nancy Wilson** became one of the most inspirational female guitarists of all time. Now, on the eve of a UK tour, she tells TG: "You have to feel proud of your gnarly hands!"



W

hen Heart kick off their 2024 UK tour at London's O2 Arena on July 1, it will be not only their first UK appearance in nearly a decade, but their largest ever headline show on these shores. It's a sign the band's stock is as high again as it was in the late '80s and early '90s. Heart, led as always by sisters Ann and Nancy Wilson, will play a career-spanning setlist from what is now rightly recognised as a catalogue of rock classics. And, as Nancy Wilson tells TG, they have fought for that recognition from the beginning.

"We were military brats who figured we wouldn't take any prisoners. We would just go out and prove it," Nancy recalls of the band's formative years in the mid-'70s. "We travelled all our lives in the military. So to go on a rock tour, what's the big difference?" At that time, there were few visible women in rock, but the Wilsons were unconcerned by that. "There were no female influences really. When we first saw The Beatles, we wanted to be in the band. Then when we saw Zeppelin, we wanted to be Zeppelin. I was channelling Jimmy Page, and Elton's piano playing on acoustic guitar. Ann was channelling Robert Plant and Paul Rodgers."

Many women following in Heart's wake have said seeing Heart made them realise it was possible. So what gave the Wilsons the idea? "Janis Joplin had been out there already, but she was blues, really. Aretha was soul. Judy Garland was before our time, but she had a lot of power. There were powerful women that we admired in music from our parents. So we figured, 'why not? What's stopping us? It's not expected, but if we're good, we can do it.'" Nancy barely pauses before adding, "And we were good." It's not a brag, just a statement of fact, but it speaks the self-belief required to blaze that trail.



Although Ann and Nancy couldn't see a problem with women playing rock, plenty of other people could. "People were like, 'Women aren't really supposed to do that! You're supposed to be an ornament, and be seen but not heard,'" Nancy grimaces. "So we were very loud. I guess we just didn't care. We wanted to channel the androgyny of rock 'n' roll. Guys like Robert Plant looked like really hot chicks, and we felt like we could be hot chicks or hot dudes on a big rock stage like that. Androgyny and a sense of humour were our basic survival tools, because there was no place for us at the time."

Instructions to be seen and not heard were not the end of it. "A lot of people were like, 'Oh, it's just not ladylike!' A common question was, 'How do you possibly maintain your femininity?' I was like, 'Maybe just be myself?'" she laughs. "People said all the time: 'You'll ruin your fingernails!' It did of course, but I didn't care about my fingernails. Me and Keith Richards – we're not hand models. I went to a Neil Young benefit a few years ago. A famous singer came up to me and was like, 'Oh, man, I always had a thing for you. I wish I would have ever acted on it'. I was like, 'Well, I'd like to introduce you to my husband!' He was like, 'Dammit, I should have made a move, but I was just too f*cked up at the time'. But then he goes, 'Let me see your hands'. And so we compared our acoustic guitar fingers. You have to feel proud of your gnarly hands!"

That everyday sexism was only fuel to Nancy's fire. "When I wrote the guitar intro to *Crazy On You*, called *Silver Wheels*, I was just going for something like Yes, who used to have

acoustic guitar intros to epic songs. I thought, 'Okay, I'll prove myself. I'm not a guy, so if I prove myself a little bit harder, then I might be noticed and taken seriously as a player'. Stuff like that actually brings respect when you can show that you're an accomplished musician, and not just an ornament on a stage."

Silver Wheels has become a benchmark for acoustic guitarists to master. "Everybody and his brother always tries to play it on Instagram," Nancy agrees. "Everybody plays it slightly differently. I never play it the same twice. But it's a cool kind of cultural phenomenon that guitar players always try that little acoustic intro."

Her favourite Heart guitar moment, however, is from a deep cut, *Mistral Wind*, the closing track on the 1978 album *Dog & Butterfly*. "I really like the way Jimmy Page used dissonance, and his acoustic guitar playing, too," she begins. "There's that sort of element to the heaviness of Zeppelin. That made them one of the coolest bands on planet, because they were so versatile. So when I was working on the intro part of *Mistral Wind*, I was definitely channelling a Jimmy Page mentality, trying to evoke something darkly mysterious. I think musically, the guitar perfectly matches the lyrics. It starts in a quiet little mysterious place and then it runs into a huge storm at sea, and then you're almost crashed on the rocks and there's lightning bolts. It's like a music visual to the actual lyrics. By the end of it, you're a changed person, but you lived to tell. I'm really proud of it. It's one of the great epics from the '70s, when Rush and Styx would have seven-minute songs."

As the '70s gave way to the '80s, Heart briefly found themselves out of fashion before reinventing themselves as purveyors of the finest power ballads. "With the onset of MTV came all of the star-making machinery, the hairspray and the corsets," Nancy recalls with a trace of discomfort. "It was a real switchover for us from the mind-expanded '70s into the '80s that were more cocaine- and ego-driven. We were fish out of water for the first part of the '80s, and then we grabbed on to the Prince & The Revolution vibe with the stylists, and worked with other songwriters. We'd only written our own songs up until then, but *Alone* and *These Dreams* and *What About Love* are great songs that could be out of any era. So we still do those. The blues and the '80s co-exist in the set."

Although Heart made some great '80s records, Nancy's particular talents were sometimes sidelined. "I played a lot of powerchords, in the army of powerchord players of the time. There wasn't a lot of acoustic guitar in the '80s. The producer of those albums said, 'It's really out of style. Nobody wants to hear the acoustic guitar right now.' I was like, 'Really? I don't think that.' It was hard for me to get to get an acoustic guitar into those songs, but it's always been my signature. The signature sound of Heart is a hard rock band incorporating acoustic guitar, like on *Magic Man*, or a lot of songs you could name."

Still, the '80s weren't all bad: "It was a great time for music, when a lot of people first came to know Heart. We get teenage people discovering us now. I guess it speaks well for some of those songs, and it really is all about the songs."

"THE SIGNATURE SOUND OF HEART IS A HARD ROCK BAND INCORPORATING ACOUSTIC GUITAR"



The sidelining of Nancy's acoustic playing in Heart had a silver lining, however. "I did some score music that really centred around the acoustic guitar," she points out. That led to a side career in film scoring, contributing soundtrack material for films by her then-husband Cameron Crowe, including *Say Anything*, *Jerry Maguire* and *Almost Famous*.

When the 1990s saw grunge annihilate the hair metal scene, a somewhat sheepish Heart returned to their native Seattle. "We were so embarrassed to come back during the explosion of Soundgarden and Alice In Chains and Pearl Jam," Nancy admits. "All those guys were our brothers from our hometown. When Mother Love Bone's singer Andy Wood died, my best friend Kelly Curtis, who managed Pearl Jam, invited us to come to his memorial party. That's where I met Chris Cornell and all these guys that I'm still really tight with – Eddie Vedder, Mike McCready and Kim Thayil. It was such a relief to be accepted into that rock community in our hometown, after the big hair and the artifice in the '80s."

Having fought her way up alone, Nancy is now an inspiration to generations of guitar-playing women. She mentions Boygenius, Angel Olsen and Sleater-Kinney among her favourites, but her greatest praise is reserved for Grace Bowers, a 17-year-old from Nashville: "She's so good. She's not just shredding for the sake of shredding. There's a whole difference in my mind between just shredding, like w*nking-off, as opposed to melodically conversational-type shredding. That's what the great players do, like I think Grace Bowers is already at 17. She has a significant voice. I would pick her out in a crowd of shredders, like, 'Oh, I know who that is', like David Gilmour. You could shred 'til kingdom come, but it doesn't stick until there's a conversation going on."

As she prepares to tour, Nancy faces a conundrum familiar to many rock stars of her generation: whether to leave her favourite vintage guitars at home. "I've always used a 1962 SG with a Bigsby for vibrato. I just got a newer one that was built in the '70s, because road life is pretty hard on guitars. I'm saving that for my studio work now. My Lake Placid Blue '63 Telecaster – same thing. It's been my best friend onstage forever. I'm saving it for the studio, and I've got a remake. Fender Custom Shop



SISTER ACT

Nancy with Ann in the *What About Love* video, 1985; in Los Angeles, 1976; and Nancy on stage in Rockford, Illinois in 1980





HEART'S ON FIRE

"I just like a good amp, a good mic on the amp, and a pedal or two," Nancy says

made me another one, but it's not the same. I love it, but I just don't hear the dirt that's in the original. It's much harder to make it sound the way I want it to sound. But look at Bruce Springsteen. He's got the same blonde Telecaster that he's always had. Just put some extra bubble wrap around it or something. And we're playing indoors, which is easier on the guitars." She seems to decide as she's talking: "So I'll probably take the old Tele."

The rest of Nancy's rig is fairly simple: a Budda SuperDrive 30 is set crunchy, boosted by an MXR Timmy when necessary. The Ten Effects Barracuda flanger, designed by

former Heart guitarist Howard Leese, is deployed on, of course, the heaviest of all Heart songs, *Barracuda*. "I just like a good amp, a good mic on the amp, and a pedal or two," Nancy says. "For me, it's more about the expression of how you play than the effects of the playing. And I'm more a rhythm player. I mean, I play lead okay, but I'm not a shredder. I'm more like a Pete Townshend rhythm player, where I incorporate lead into the rhythms."

Although they had to fight for recognition, the Wilson sisters have long since earned their peers' respect. One of Heart's most viewed videos is their 2012 Kennedy Center Honors

performance of *Stairway To Heaven* for the surviving members of Led Zeppelin, including a visibly tearful Robert Plant. When Nancy remembers a moment from that night, she retains a sense of amazement. "Jimmy Page came up later and said, 'Wow, I love the way you play that song'. I was like, 'God, I could die now'. I was just in shock to hear that coming out of him. Then Plant said, 'I've really come to hate that song. But wow, you guys did a great job'. Jimmy Page telling me he thought I played great was so incredibly life-altering! It made me want to get better. Keep working it!"

Heart tour the UK in July.

"JIMMY PAGE TELLING ME HE THOUGHT I PLAYED GREAT WAS INCREDIBLY LIFE-ALTERING!"



CHAIN REACTION

How Nancy and Jerry Cantrell bonded over a Heart classic

In the early '90s, Nancy Wilson enjoyed a moment of validation from one great guitarist to another when she jammed with Alice In Chains' Jerry Cantrell. They ended up playing a classic Heart song from the '70s. "One of the first times I found myself sitting cross-legged on the floor with Jerry was at a party at my sister's house on Capitol Hill," she says. "We had guitars, and he said, 'Show me the beginning of *Mistral Wind*.' It was so much like Alice In Chains, all that beautiful writing they did with dissonant guitar parts and strange intervals. I was just like, 'Oh, my God, I think they like us here! They're not holding this against us'. That whole Seattle explosion was so much about pushing against the corporate rock of the '80s. We were afraid we would be shut out, but when Jerry asked me to show him the beginning of *Mistral Wind*, I knew I was okay."

UNCHAINED

Jerry Cantrell and country singer Gretchen Wilson perform onstage with Nancy

Words Phil Weller

"PEDALS CAN AFFECT YOUR PLAYING SO MUCH"

Shoegaze stars **DIIV** have abandoned their roots as a live band to redraw their sonic landscapes – with a vast array of effects at the heart of their songwriting



Despite being hailed as modern day shoegaze luminaries, New York-based band DIIV never felt that they became fully immersed in that scene until they wrote and recorded their 2019 album *Deceiver*. The creation of its follow up, meanwhile, saw the band embark on a four-year challenge to push their sound – and themselves – to new heights by reaffirming what it is that defines the DIIV sound.

The result, fourth album *Frog In Boiling Water*, glistens with evolution and invention; floating yet haunted guitar lines, ethereal textures and weighty introspection permeate its 10 tracks. So, as the band's tour bus pulled into a suspiciously rain-free Manchester, *Total Guitar* caught up with guitarists Zachary Cole Smith (known ubiquitously as Cole) and Andrew Bailey to discover how their sonic explorations shaped the new record, and what this means for their extensive pedal collections...

How did the writing process for *Frog In Boiling Water* differ from *Deceiver*?

Andrew: With *Deceiver*, we knew exactly what type of record we wanted to make; we were all painting with the same approved colours. With this one, we were constantly asking, 'What about this other colour?'

Cole: Adding new colours to the palette was the fun part, but a huge lesson that we learned was that removing stuff and focusing the record is really hard. There's only really so much space in the songs, so we did equal parts adding and subtracting.

What were the key additions?

Cole: At the core of it, we're a live band. But at certain points throughout making the record we decided to abandon that. We asked, 'What's a live band without an audience?' So we started working with drum machines, samples and loops. It felt very anachronistic.

Did that mean buying new gear?

Cole: Buying new toys is fun, but we're not a band that has tons of money, so only one or two new things will enter the fray with each

new album. For this one it was a Tascam Portastudio MK One four-track cassette recorder, and a Roland SP 404 sampler.

Andrew: Ben [Newman, drummer] put me onto the Tascam; it's the only one they made that has the slow playback speed option and the speed wheel, and it's my new favourite toy. You can bring down the first two tracks and bring up the third and fourth tracks so it plays the other side of the tape in reverse. Then you can slow it back down and get some weird sounding sh*t!

How has your sonic experimentation impacted your live rig?

Cole: We've started using the RJM Mastermind PBC/10 effects switcher which allows us to give our pedals MIDI parameters. The goal is to not have to touch pedals at all. We want as many pedals that can be MIDI controlled as possible. We both use the Strymon Timeline and Big Sky as our delays and reverbs, and it will send the tempos and presets of each song to the pedals. That gives us a lot of flexibility in terms of not having to tap out tempos and tweak settings by hand between every song. Half of my board is distortion and gain pedals – I have a [ProCo]



DIIV CLUB

From left: Colin Caulfield, Andrew Bailey, Ben Newman, Zachary Cole Smith

Rat distortion, a Fulltone OCD overdrive, an Earthquaker Devices Gray Channel and a Boss OD-200. [Hybrid Drive]. The Mastermind became really useful for controlling those, too.

Andrew: I miss my Gray Channel, but I've replaced it with the Rat and OD-200 as I found sounds in there that are comparable. I also have the Chase Bliss Pre-amp MKII which is all over the new record. It's all MIDI, so I can tap my foot on the chorus preset and I watch all the little faders go up and down. It's mad!

How much of your writing comes with the aid of effects, and how much is about writing the core idea and then adding the effects later on?

Cole: I think it should be, and usually is, pedal first for us,

because pedals can affect your playing so much. DIIV started as a template and we've always written within the effects chain to achieve that sound. If there's something you want to be in the final song and you have an idea for it, you want to add those effects in as soon as you can.

The record's lyrics are pretty dark and existential. Did you dial in your effects to mirror that darkness?

Cole: Definitely, yeah. There's a song, *Little Birds*, and the hook is all harmonics but it's played through a pedal set at an octave down. It gave it a really dark, underwater, kind of confusing sound. I remember being in the studio and the producer [Chris Cody] saying it sounded better in the regular octave, but I was like,

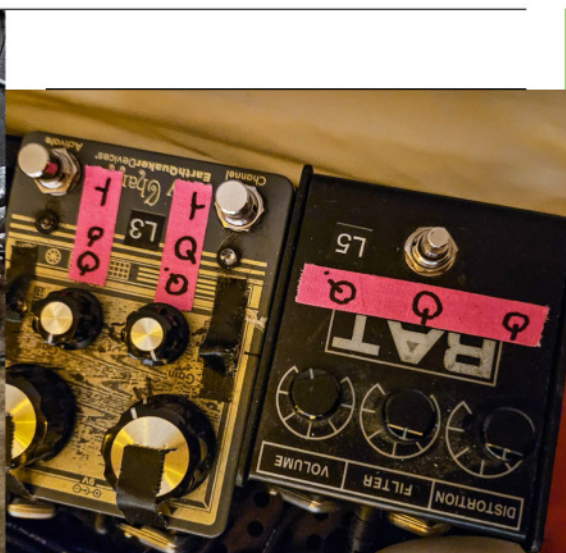
'Sorry, man, no!' With the distortions, we referenced bands like Jesu a lot for that really thick, dark and all-encompassing sound. Ultimately it was about what served the song, so ideas evolved, but we wanted to make a really dark 'headphone record' with a lot of stuff to listen to and suck you in.

What are two pedals you couldn't live without?

Cole: The secret weapon for the whole record was the Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive, so I'd say that. I got one for my 16th birthday and it sounds so good for clean boosts or a really dirty overdrive. It's the simplest pedal but in my mind it wins every shoot-out we do with it.

Andrew: For me it's the Behringer Delay/Reverb D400. I don't use it

"AT OUR SHOW IN LONDON THERE WERE THREE GENERATIONS OF SHOEGAZE BANDS BACKSTAGE"
ANDREW BAILEY



in DIIV anymore, but I did do for about 10 years. When I'm back in New York I play in a bunch of smaller bands just for fun, and I always take that with me. I had a friend who worked in a music store and whenever he got in a Behringer pedal, it was mine, and I was getting them for \$5 or \$10. It felt like a hack. They're as good as the Boss ones, but just housed in plastic. I've rocked that one pedal for over a decade and it's never crapped out.

What guitars are you putting through those pedals?

Cole: We normally do a lot of shoot-outs in the studio, but Chris Cody wanted us to use our main guitars as he felt they were special to us. I play a Blacktop HH Fender Cyclone. There's something so special about that series. It doesn't matter what model it is – if it's a Blacktop HH then it's perfect for me. They're workhorses and they're really consistent, which is a really important part for live guitars.

Andrew: I play a Jazzmaster that Cole originally bought...

Cole: ...Because I needed a guitar with a whammy bar and it was cheap. Then it entered the mix of DIIV guitars. We're a very communal band where, similar to ideas, once a piece of gear enters the fray it becomes a free-for-all.

With you using so many pedals, what do you look for in an amp?

Cole: For years we used a Roland Jazz Chorus because it's a keyboard amp so it's really clear. But when we started moving to pedal distortions we found it didn't work. It was really hard to find an amp that did both. Then I inherited a Reeves amp, which is like basically a Hiwatt clone, and it was so loud and clean and it handled pedals so well, so we've made the jump to Hiwatt. I use a Custom 50 and Andrew's on the 100 watt version. Both are closed-back for extra bass and resonance. We used a Fender Vibrolux and a Blues Junior a lot on the record, but the Hiwatt is a good all-rounder for live. We face our amps backwards so that they can be as loud as possible. Feedback is really important to us.

How does it feel to have had such an influential impact on modern shoegaze?

Cole: It's mind-blowing any time somebody tells you that your band influenced them, but we didn't invent shoegaze. It's been around for a long time, and that forces innovation. You can't recreate My Bloody Valentine or Slowdive because that sound has been perfected already.

Andrew: I wouldn't have called our first two albums shoegaze, but I think we created a pretty unique sound that a lot of people have f*cked with. But since we did a shoegaze album, I don't hear that sound in other bands as much, and when I do I think of it more that they're referencing the same bands as we do. At our show in London there were three generations of shoegaze bands backstage. Andy [Bell, guitarist/vocalist] from Ride was the legend in the room and someone who can be credited with creating that sound. So we're looking up to Andy, and bdrmm, who are supporting us on this tour and cite us as an influence, are looking up to us. It was trippy!

Frog In Boiling Water is released on May 24.

HARDWARE

A selection of DIIV's gear, photographed on tour in Manchester

Words Amit Sharma Portrait Andrew Stuart

"I'M VERY GOOD AT NOT FOLLOWING RULES!"

As one half of Slayer's fearsome guitar attack, **Kerry King** shaped the sound of extreme metal. With a new album and a new sparring partner, he hasn't mellowed...

Kerry King's no-nonsense approach to creating razor-sharp, life-affirming heavy metal has made him one of the world's most influential players. His work in Slayer with co-guitarist the late Jeff Hanneman set the benchmark for a new kind of murderous noise – sounding thicker and angrier than anything before it. As pioneers of thrash metal in the early '80s alongside Metallica, Megadeth and a host of other speed-fuelled bands, Slayer would lay the groundwork for the varying waves of metal that followed.

When Slayer announced their retirement and played their final show in 2019, Kerry was certainly vocal about not being happy with the decision. "We quit too early," he reflected. "I hate not playing." But now he's back on the horse and doing what he does best, writing riffs heavy enough to knock the earth off-axis to create *From Hell I Rise* – the debut offering from a new band under his own name.

Before we get to the music, however, we need to address the elephant in the room. Only weeks after Kerry officially announced his comeback, Slayer were confirmed to be headlining US festivals later in the year. Few could have predicted things turning out like this, including the guitarist himself...

"It caught me off-guard, too!" he admits. "Do I wish the timing was different? Absolutely, but that's completely out of my hands."

Either way, don't get your hopes up about a full-scale Slayer reunion. Kerry leaves no room for doubt in his explanation of where the band see themselves in 2024. "Everyone thinks Slayer are getting back together but that couldn't be further from the truth," he says. "We've been turning down gigs ever since we stopped. This one came and I thought, 'If we're ever going to do one, this could be cool because it's the five year anniversary of our final tour'. We're not going to record anymore. That final tour was definitely our final tour. This is just a reason to have some fun the guys, play a few shows and then jump back in the coffin..."

The other big news is your new partnership with Dean. It came as a surprise, given how loyal you've been to B.C. Rich since Slayer's earliest days...

With any of the companies I'm with, I'm super loyal, and I'd become friends with all my B.C. reps. But the company got sold to people who didn't have the same agenda. It was time for me to get out.

Do you still favour a Sustainiac in the neck and an EMG 81, with a PA2 Preamp Booster, in the bridge?

The boost is a carryover from the way I've been

playing for the last 20 years or so. It's just comfortable for me to have it there. If there's a funny-sounding stage or a situation where I need an extra kick, I'll use that preamp boost. I was using it for my leads but now I'll kick in my MXR Zakk Wylde Overdrive.

You've been a Marshall diehard over the years. Is that what we're hearing on the new album?

Yeah, I used my signature 'Beast' Marshall heads which come with a built-in thing called the Assault, based on my signature MXR 10-band Graphic EQ parameters. They just put it into a knob where you could get more or less of it, working like an overdrive. And for serious gain, it has a noise gate. I like the way they sound going through Marshall Mode Four cabinets, there's a lot of low-end girth. The heads sound different going through a regular 1960 cab. When I was doubling, I would change guitars and heads, just for variety.

Digital gear, particularly plug-ins, has really taken off since you last released an album. We can't imagine you plugging into a laptop because of the lack of air moving, but have you ever tried it?

When we did the last Slayer album, Gary Holt was using his Kemper for the solos. Phil Demmel, who is playing with me in this new band, used something digital on this album.



**KING OF SPEED**

"Concentrate on performing with articulation at whatever speed it is," Kerry says. "Full notes played clean..."

I don't know what it was. I haven't been pushed to the point of trying that stuff. Like you said, I want air moving. Is it more difficult towing real amps from country to country? Abso-f*cking-lutely. But I haven't found anything to match that. And if it ain't broke...

What do you look for in a riff? Is there anything you tend to rely on?

One thing that sticks out is my choice of chords and rhythmic patterns. I attribute a lot of that to Judas Priest, because they would write riffs that went from A to F and C, with icing here and there. And I think my go-to is more like E to F and G, or maybe G#. That idea turns up in most of my riffs. I don't try to change that, it's just where I end up. I probably base

too many songs on that kind of progression, but most people probably don't notice! There are no shocks on this album. I like bands to stay true to the sound that works. I'm happy that AC/DC have been making the same record for 50 years. That's why I like them!

Crucifixion is one of the faster tracks. How did that come about?

Yeah, it's pretty quick. The one that gave me the most trouble, which has actually been around since the last Slayer album, is the title track. If you're not warmed up, you're not getting anywhere near that opening riff.

How exactly does one master the skill, though?

It's like anything. If you want to

bench press 200lbs, you start at 80. If you don't like practising, get a song that's in the BPM range of where you need to start off, play along and then bump it in increments of 10 until you get to there. You should concentrate on performing with articulation at whatever speed it is – full notes played clean.

Crucifixion also has a harmonised riff using 5th intervals. You've done this a lot in the past to exaggerate the eerie quality to your riffs...

I always forget what the intervals are. I never talk shop, I always say 'This is four frets up, the next is five and the final one is seven!' There are so many things we've harmonised in the past. I try to present it in ways that are familiar to fans, and ways that

"EVERYONE THINKS SLAYER ARE GETTING BACK TOGETHER BUT THAT COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH"

aren't as familiar. There are tons of ways to go about it. Find the harmony you like and stick with it!

Idle Hands was the first single. Kirk Hammett referred to Phil's lead as the best solo he's heard this year – high praise, indeed!

Anytime Kirk's got something to say, you should listen. He doesn't have praise for a lot of things – that's not to say he doesn't like them, he just doesn't freak out about them. He texted me after *Idle Hands* came out and was raving about the leads. Phil is very well-rehearsed. He comes from a killer pedigree. I think he knew that would be the first single, so he attacked it in a way that would stand out.

It's an interesting balance – you've described your sound to us as archaic and atonal, while Phil has more melodic influences. Together that creates a really wide sonic picture...

I remember him sending back lead ideas saying, 'I don't know if this is too melodic?' and I'd say, 'This is your record, if this is what you are happy with – unless it makes me throw up – I don't care!' I wanted him to be proud. This band wasn't called Kerry King originally, and even though that's what we're called now, I still don't look at it like a solo project. Other people might, but whatever. Phil brought a far more melodic approach and I think we play off each other well."

Even the slower leads, like *Trophies Of The Tyrant*, seem to follow their own rules. They can be hard to predict, almost like jazz!

I'm very good at not following rules, especially as I don't know what all the rules are! That song definitely has some wide-open notes that cascade down the neck. I was picking out notes that worked with the chords behind them.

But do you ever find yourself listening to jazz?

I hit a jazz bar in the city once and

want to go more. I was bummed they didn't have a guitarist that day, as that's what I was hoping to check out. So I'll definitely be back. So yeah, I like that stuff, I like classical. Me and my wife hit the opera six or seven times a season and take it all in.

Two Fists has some almost classic rock-sounding moments.

I know the part you mean, it sounds like me trying to write a KISS riff! I wanted it to sound like a song from an '80s punk band. Musically and lyrically, I wanted to convey punk thoughts. Punk was a big influence on Slayer. We had the doom from Sabbath, the angst from punk, the polish of Priest and Maiden... take that, throw it into a cocktail shaker and it would spew out Slayer! On the song *Shrapnel* I actually wanted to have the wide-openness of Scorpions' *Animal Magnetism* crossed with the beginning of [Slayer classic] *Hell Awaits*."

Jeff Hanneman was known for being more on the punk side in Slayer while you were the card-carrying metal maniac. Together you birthed a new sound that would go on to

rule the world...

He'd been listening to metal for so long, he became tired of it. When he played punk to us, I didn't understand it. After years, it started to click. I realised it was cool in a different way. Things didn't have to be polished to sound angry and raunchy. As time wore on, I became more of a punk guy than Jeff! It helped lay the groundwork for what we'd go on to become.

You learned on your dad's Gibson ES-175. It's hard to picture you with a jazz box like that!

I'd forgotten about that! It was a fat Ted Nugent guitar. It was a big guitar for me as a teenager, but looking back now after playing guitar for so many years, it was fun. My dad also had a couple of ES-335s. There was a Tobacco Sunburst one that was nice. The ES-175 was in a Blonde finish. It had the f-holes and worked nicely as an acoustic when not plugged in. It was a quality instrument to learn on. Without my dad, who knows what kind of tree trunk I would've had.

Given the amount of gain you use, there's no chance of you



MEET THE BAND

From left: Kyle Sanders (bass), Phil Demmel (guitar), Kerry King, Mark Osegueda (vocals) and Paul Bostaph (drums)





RENAISSANCE MAN

"I like jazz, I like classical. Me and my wife hit the opera six or seven times a season..."

Photos: Rayon Richards

stepping on stage with one of those...

And that picture would break the Internet!

You also played a Strat in those formative years...

Yeah, my dad had a 1963 L-Series Strat, which apparently is a big deal. I'm not a big collector, but from what I understand that would be an expensive guitar these days. I played that enough for me realise I was definitely not a single-coil guy. I immediately knew I preferred humbuckers. Even though I love Ritchie Blackmore, single-coils are not for me. After that is when I got introduced to the B.C. Rich Mockingbird. Jeff had the B.C.

Rich Bich, though he played a black Les Paul on the debut.

What are the most valuable instruments we'd find in your house, then?

I've still got the Mockingbird in my house. I don't know if I'll ever part ways with it, but I do find myself looking at my gear wondering 'Why do I have all this stuff?' Maybe it would be good to make these things available for proper collectors. I've still got my first V from B.C. Rich and the one of a kind doubleneck V that I used on *Spill The Blood* [from 1988's *South Of Heaven*]. I keep about 10 guitars at home, another 25 in storage and then another 20 in the band storage. And there are more

in Hard Rock Cafes and Hotels around the world...

So you've never thought about becoming a serious vintage collector like Joe Bonamassa?

Knowing me, I'd have too many and spend too much doing it! If there was one special guitar I'd consider, maybe it would be something Ritchie Blackmore played or Judas Priest used. I'd love something like that.

Well, no one is expecting to see you with a Tele anytime soon.

I'll leave that to John 5. He plays them well!

From Hell I Rise is released on May 17.



"I DO FIND MYSELF LOOKING AT MY GEAR
WONDERING, WHY DO I HAVE ALL THIS STUFF?"



Words Andrew Daly

"I VIEW A GUITAR AS A WEAPON!"

As a cult hero of underground American rock, **Buzz Osborne** describes his band Melvins as "an avant-garde, weird thing". And as a guitarist, he's all about heaviness and spontaneity...

Buzz Osborne holds nothing back – not musically or anywhere else in his life. He never has, and probably never will. One listen to Melvins' latest record *Tarantula Heart* will tell you as much. This time – as per usual – Osborne and company are out for blood via music. That said, don't dare try and box them in. And even if you tried, Osborne would sidestep you, spin around, come up grinning, and bludgeon you with his aluminium guitar. That's just how it is in the land of Buzz. "I walk out there, and I feel I've got the best rig in the whole world," he says. "Nobody has this, just me. I love it."

It was way back in 1983 that Melvins formed as a trio in Montesano, a tiny city in Washington state, 100 miles from Seattle. Their debut album *Gluey Porch Treatments* arrived in 1986, a full five years before the big bang of grunge, and although Melvins eventually signed to major label Atlantic for their 1993 album *Houdini*, their music was always too crazy and gnarly for mainstream tastes.

Their friend Kurt Cobain was credited as co-producer of *Houdini*, and played guitar on one track. That album also featured a cover of an early KISS song, *Goin' Blind*. But while their contemporaries sold millions of records, Melvins remained underground cult heroes driven by Buzz Osborne's maverick sensibilities.

"I wish guitar players were more adventurous," he says now. "But they're just not. They seem like the most conservative people on the face of the planet. You can't get them to do anything left of centre." His message for TG readers is simple: "Try something new. You might just like it!"

***Tarantula Heart* is another exercise in sonic experimentation. It's remarkable that you're able to keep the pace that you do.**

I've always thought we're offering something that was not the norm. We're not part of any musical genre. We get lumped into the grunge thing, but those bands don't sound like us. I've never done that kind of stuff. I've always felt we were a different kind of animal. We're certainly not for everybody. I mean, I've always believed our records should sell millions and millions of copies, but it just doesn't work out.

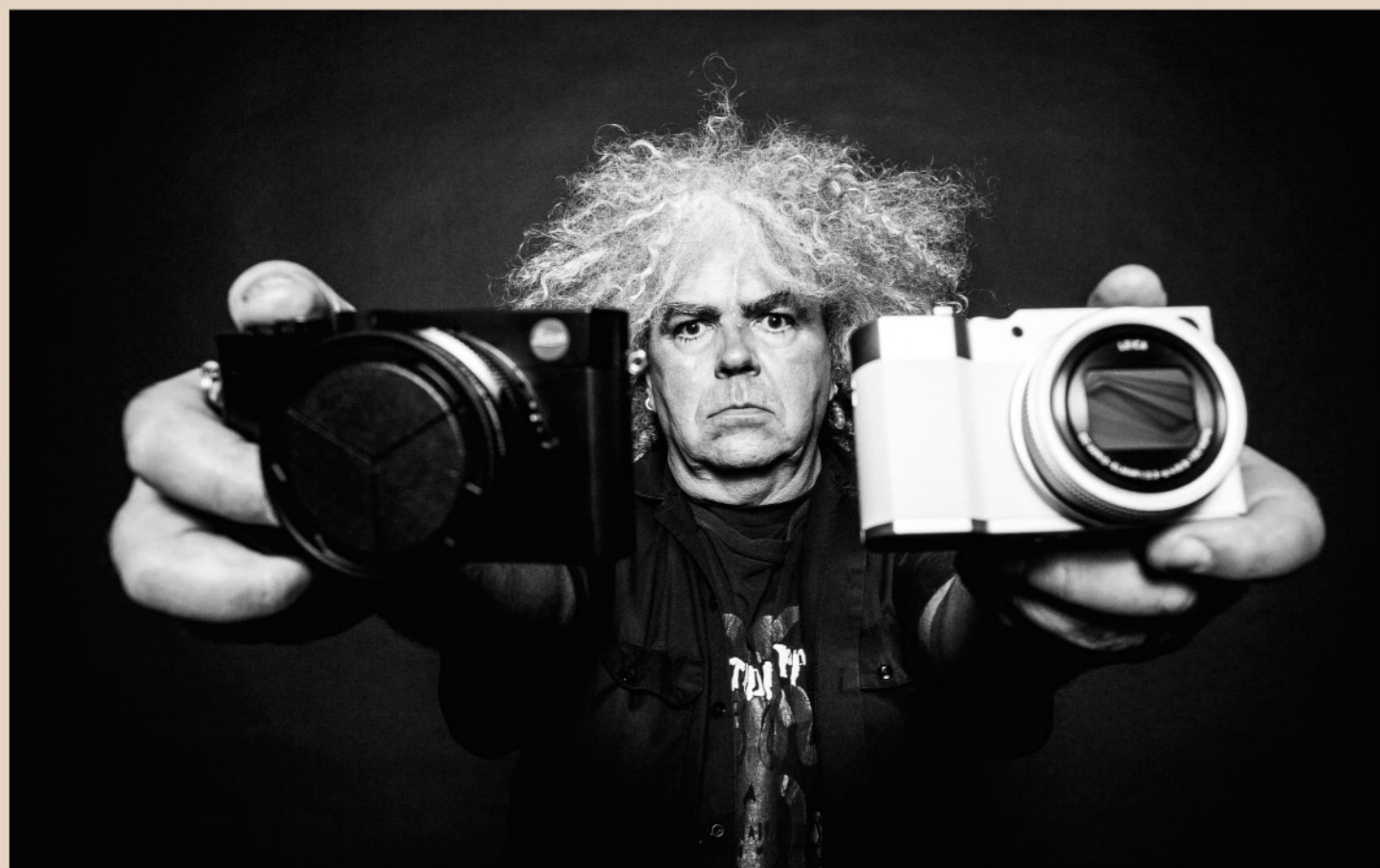
Maybe in 25 years you could be as revered as Frank Zappa?

Yeah, by the time I'm dead! Yeah, can't wait! Gosh, that fills me with so much hope. You know what, I'll take half of that in cash right now!

THE BOYZZ

Melvins (from left):
Dale Crover (drums),
Steven Shane
McDonald (bass),
Buzz Osborne





Photos: Chris Casella

Tell us about the creation of *Tarantula Heart*...

We recorded most of it two years ago. We have our own studio, so we don't do things in a normal fashion like most bands do: book two weeks, go in heavy, and prepare to do our record. I've done that a lot. I've made dozens of records like that. But since we got our own studio, now we can work at our own pace, record stuff, and then go back and listen to it. The clock isn't ticking, you know? Weirdly, it's like the way Miles Davis recorded. Although it's not exactly like it, but Miles Davis recorded *On The Corner*, or any of those records around the *Bitches Brew* era, where the musicians would jam and then take it from there. So, with that in mind, we'll lock into stuff that sounds good from these 20-minute jams on a basic riff that I would have.

How do the guitar tracks come together from there?

My intention was not to go in and digitally edit stuff together. I have no interest in that because I was looking for something more organic. I'm not interested in being perfect tempo-wise. That sounds alien to me. I think it's okay, but we never really do that. I'm not a click-track guy. We could get something cooler than that. I could never have imagined Miles Davis running a click-track. So, I jammed, and then I took all that stuff, and I spent hours poring over those things, listening for spots that I could write music to.

That checks out as the record has an off-the-wall, jammy aspect, but it's well thought out.

I think it came out great. And if I'd

DOUBLE VISION

"Don't look to me to be the normal," Buzz advises

never mentioned all that, no one would notice. You know what I mean? They would listen to it and go, 'Oh, it sounds like the drums were first...' So, what I'm expecting is for people to bitch about something they never would have noticed in the first place. 'You should have done this, you should have done that.' You know what? Let's not 'should' me to death. I don't do well with constructive criticism.

Do you feel misunderstood?

Well, I know what I'm doing. Just let me do the driving – I'll be fine. If you don't want to hear what we're doing, there's plenty of bands out there that will give you whatever you want. Don't look to us to do that. People should understand that we're an avant-garde, weird thing. Don't look to me to be the normal, or us to be the normal band.

"WE'LL LOCK INTO STUFF THAT SOUNDS GOOD FROM THESE 20-MINUTE JAMS ON A BASIC RIFF"

It's refreshing that you approach things without regard for what people think you should be doing.

I'm a firm believer in not practicing things you don't want to play. If you don't want to play *Eruption* by Van Halen, don't practice it. There's no reason to do it. You want to practice

HENDRIX'S TECHNIQUE WAS 'WRONG', SAYS BUZZ...

"In lots of circles, Hendrix is considered the greatest guitar player ever. But there's not a guitar teacher in the world that would ever teach anyone to play a guitar like that. And yet he's the best. It doesn't make any sense. Hendrix played weird! His technique is wrong. Everything is out of tune, everything is wrong, but he's the best. If he's the best, then wouldn't you want to teach people that sensibility?"

what you want to do. And there's some certain things that I like – and I like a lot of the same guitar players that most people do – but as far as approaching it in a way that would be traditional, I would say that what I'm doing is as if Captain Beefheart and Throbbing Gristle were playing heavy metal together. That's what I'm going for, with Bob Dylan mixed into it!

So shredding doesn't appeal to you?

I appreciate that kind of stuff. But ultimately, I don't care about those sorts of things. I'm more interested in how the song works. And I would say as far as live guitar, my favourite would be the '60s and '70s-era Pete Townsend, who had little regard for the guitar and the amplifiers themselves. I don't break guitars like Pete, but I view a guitar, especially live, as a weapon. I'm not here to give you a music lesson. I'm here to give you an emotional lesson.

Are your studio and live rigs the same?

I use a wide variety of guitars in the studio. But in the last 15 years, I like brand-new gear. I like brand new guitars right out of the box. I think they're better. I've sold all my vintage stuff except for my first Les Pauls. I still have my two black Les Pauls I played in the '90s, but everything else is pretty much brand new.

You seem to be using your aluminium King Buzzo Standard by the Electric Guitar Company quite often, too.

They're f*cking great guitars. I use a wide variety of their guitars and they're amazing. They're set up like Les Pauls but are completely aluminium with frets just put straight into the neck – there's no fretboard on them. The neck is the same from the headstock down to the body. It's usually tapered because it has to be or would break, but these aren't because it's aluminium. I've had people ask me, 'Where's the truss rod?' It's aluminium – it doesn't need it. As soon as I picked it up, I was like, 'Oh, my God, I have to have one of these!' There's nothing like this. These guitars are second to none in the world for weirdness. They will give you something you're not getting anywhere else. I like the idea that I'm the only person in the world using that exact setup when I walk on stage.

It's pretty apparent that you're unafraid to try new things.

Well, one of my favourite authors is Flannery O'Connor. She said about the books that she was writing, 'If they're not controversial, then they're not any good.' I've never forgotten that. Another thing I really liked was when Gene Simmons said "be as peculiar as possible". I've repeated that over and over.

Does it drive you crazy that people try to put the Melvins in a genre box?

It just tells me that they don't listen to our music. They don't really listen to what we're doing. You know, they say we're 'sludge metal,' but have you ever listened to our stuff? Sure, that certainly is something that we do. But we've done lots of weird stuff. Like last year, we did an entire album of Throbbing Gristle covers. Sludge metal, right? Whatever!

Nobody's doing what we're doing. Nobody. I play with super-talented guys. That helps because there's nothing that I could throw at them that they can't do. I'm in a really, really good position. I can reach out, and we can make records that don't sound like anything else out there. There's really crazy stuff, like *Pain Equals Funny* – that's 19 minutes long, and it's my favourite song on the new record. It's one of my favourite songs that we've ever done. It works perfectly. It doesn't have a linear journey. So, that's who we are, and I couldn't have done it without the guys I have around me.

***Tarantula Heart* is out now.**

"I'M NOT INTERESTED
IN BEING PERFECT
TEMPO-WISE"



Photos: Chris Casella

Words Jonathan Horsley Photos Gene Kirkland, Austin Nelson, Getty.

“IT’S ALL THE SAME
CHORD CHANGES.
MORE OR LESS THE
SAME NOTES.
BUT IT’S JUST THE
WAY THAT THE
INDIVIDUAL
CHOOSES HOW
TO PLAY THEM.
THAT IS WHAT’S
GREAT ABOUT
BLUES GUITAR...”

The rock icon finding new inspiration in deathless blues standards. The guitarist synonymous with the Les Paul now mixing up his Gibsons with a Strat and a Tele. This is Slash as you’ve never heard him before...



Blues guitar is a high-risk endeavour. Don't be fooled into thinking it's easy or safe just because there are fewer notes in the scale. If you want a safer pursuit, take up whitewater rafting, spelunking or snake milking. An easier way to pass your practice time would be to woodshed, build up speed and throw in some neoclassical tonalities. Stick some compression and delay on it and everyone on TikTok will think you are a genius. But blues is not that. Blues is making more out of less and that leaves a player wholly exposed.

Personality counts. Charisma matters. It is like stand-up comedy; you have to tell a story, you have to tell it well, and come the end of it you have to arrive at a punchline. Quarter-tone bends have to be on-point, and pity the fool who incautiously mixes major and minor note choices, slipping out of key and souring the jam. The audience expects. They want to hear soul in the vibrato. And if they don't, you die. Maybe that's why Slash has decided to record an album of (mostly) blues covers. It's the old BMX bandit in him. No longer willing – or foolish – enough to put limb on the line on two wheels, he's putting his reputation out there on the precipice by pulling together a blues band and welcoming a rotating cast of A-list singers to the studio for *Orgy Of The Damned*.

And what the hell, the band would track the album live in the studio while they were at it. This was the approach that worked so well on 4, Slash's most recent album with Myles Kennedy and

the Conspirators. On *Orgy Of The Damned*, veteran producer Mike Clink, who famously presided over Guns N' Roses as they cut the most dangerous hard-rock debut of all time, *Appetite For Destruction*, in 1987, would be on hand to make sure the tape was rolling.

"From my first real session, back in 1986, up until now, we have progressed into a technological kind of arena where producers don't do anything that is not safe," says Slash, joining us on from his UK tour with Kennedy and co. "Everything has to be mapped out. Everything has to be recorded a certain way. Everything has to be separated. Everything has to be Pro Tooled to death, and it's really hard to find engineers who will let a band just play in a room and mic them, and just go for it! So yeah, 4 was a fun record for me, and then doing this one with Mike Clink, he just let us do our thing."

There are a few ways of looking at *Orgy Of The Damned* and what the track choices tell us about Slash. There is a case to be made that there's an autobiographical thread to this, a through-line that takes us from Robert Johnson to T-Bone Walker, from Peter Green to Stevie Wonder, from the young Saul Hudson growing up in England before crossing the Atlantic, establishing himself on the West Coast and becoming Slash – Guns N' Roses guitarist, Gibson Brand Ambassador, rock icon. Slash isn't so sure. At least, this wasn't the intent.

"No, I didn't think about it in terms of any kind of retrospective look at my upbringing, but I guess when you think about it, that's sort of what it is," he says. "It's stuff that I have been influenced by, and stuff that I like from early on up until this point. I hadn't thought about it in those terms, but it's an interesting way to look at it..."

BLUES AND SOUL

The inspirations for *Orgy Of The Damned*, and Slash's guest stars on the album.

Top, from left: The Temptations, Gary Clark Jr. Centre: B.B. King, Stevie Wonder, Beth Hart. Bottom: Iggy Pop, Howlin' Wolf.

Alternatively, we could interpret this album as a statement on how far the blues has evolved, and how the blues has given guitar-driven rock and pop the raw materials to sustain itself, and how it can in turn accommodate those new sounds and still retain its essence. It's one of those myths that blues is somehow preserved in aspic and resistant to change when its prime movers had done nothing but innovate ever since first putting together a I-IV-V progression. Freddie King was injecting funk, soul and R&B into the blues way back in the '70s with the stylistically audacious album *Burglar*. Gary Clark Jr., who features on *Orgy Of The Damned* singing and playing guitar alongside Billy Gibbons on *Hoochie Coochie Man*, said in TG just a couple of months ago that you don't preserve an art form by keeping it stale.

"All the guys that came before me were pioneers in terms of moving it forward," Clark said. "Robert Johnson. Muddy Waters. Son House. All these guys put their own flavour into this music and evolved it. We sometimes look at it as this thing to preserve, but the guys who were making it weren't preserving it. They were trying to push the boundaries. If you're trying to do Muddy Waters, that's some big shoes to fill, and I don't really want to spend my time trying to be that guy. People used to tell me all the time, 'Just play the blues, you gotta preserve the blues!' And I'd think, 'Yeah, but look at Buddy Guy with a record like *Sweet Tea* – what the hell is that?' Why would people want me to sound like Buddy Guy's old records when even Buddy Guy doesn't sound like that anymore? What kinda sense does that make?"

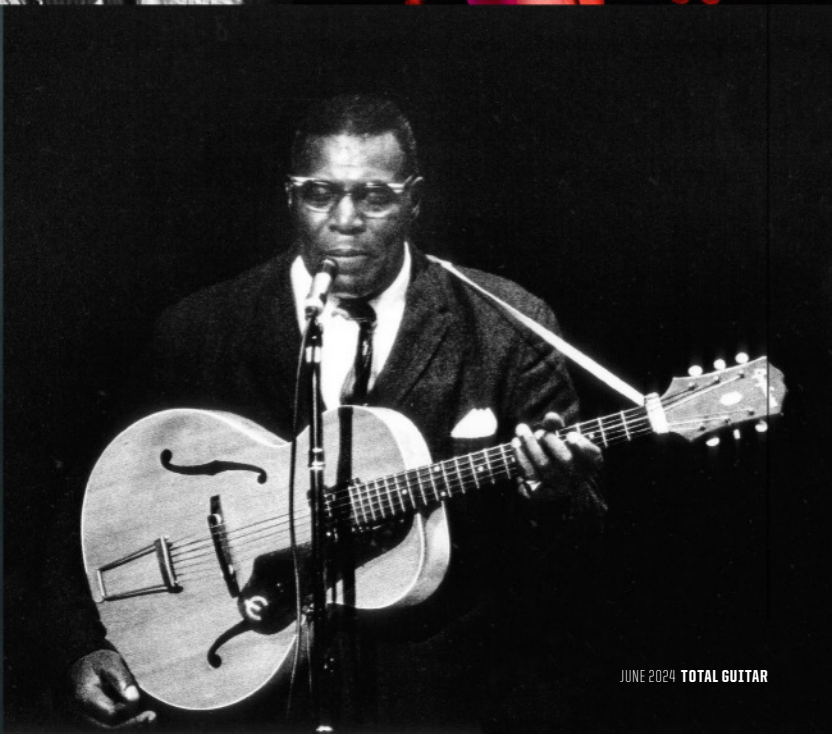
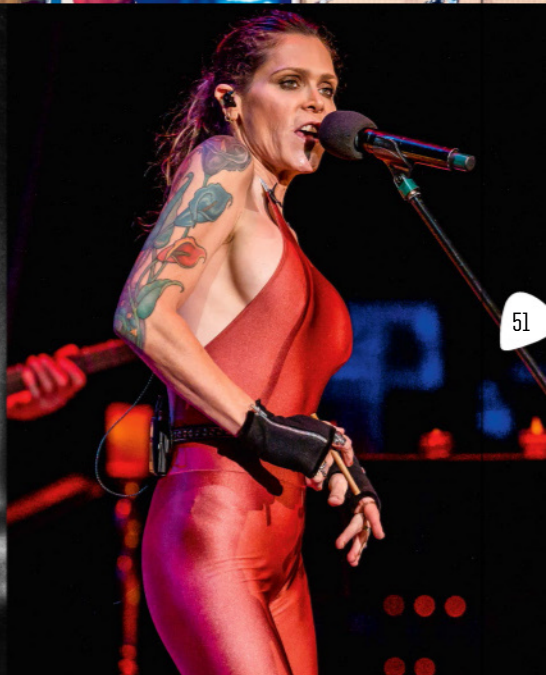
He has a point. Not to mention that blues standards are standards because they have been reinterpreted over and over again. Who even wrote *Key To The Highway*? The credits go to Charles Segar and William 'Big Bill' Broonzy, but the story goes that those lyrics had been passed around the American South in one form or another. Contested origin stories are part of the blues folk mythos. They deepen the mystery, as though songs have a mortal life force all their own. What we do know is that their version of *Key To The Highway* was recorded, cut to vinyl and became definitive, and it has since been covered by Little Walter with Muddy Waters on guitar, Eric Clapton and Duane Allman, The Tedeschi



"THIS IS ME DOING
WHAT INFLUENCED
ME TO BE WHO I AM"



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Trucks Band, B.B. King and now Slash, with Dorothy on lead vocals, and he surely won't be the last. Once you read who is involved with this project and the songs that they will be recording, *Orgy Of The Damned*, officially Slash's second solo album, is not your regular blues record.

"For me, it was just a fun thing; songs that I really dug, and I just did my own spin on it. But that said, it wasn't intended to be a traditional blues record," says Slash. "There are so many great, very traditional blues artists out there that keep that flame going, but I wanted it to be, 'This is me, doing what influenced me to be who I am.' And I bought all of these eclectic, different kind of singers into it – maybe just because subconsciously I didn't want people to think I was trying to do the same kind of record that all these really hardcore blues artists do."

The Blues Ball is back in play

We should introduce the band. The lineup is a "reincarnation" of Slash's Blues Ball, the guitarist's mid-'90s blues project that gave him something to do after his exit from Guns N' Roses. Teddy Andreadis plays keys. Johnny Griparic plays bass, with Michael Jerome on drums. It was Griparic who suggested Iggy Pop guest on the record. Tash Neal rounds out the lineup on guitar and vocals, stealing the show on the cover of Stevie Wonder's *Living For The City*.

"Tash is f*cking amazing," says Slash. "I first heard him sing at a blues event that I was involved with in Los Angeles, with a bunch of cool players all jamming one night, and I was just floored, because I had never heard him, never met him. He and I struck up a relationship, and his band opened up for the Conspirators back in 2019, doing a US run, and we were just amazed by his band."

NOT JUST THE SAME OLD HAT
"It's not a real, traditional kind of blues record," Slash says. "But there is a lot of blues on it..."

"We would go out before our set and just watch them play every single night, so when I was putting this blues thing together I thought he would be a great guy to come in and sing, and play guitar, because he is a great guitar player. He plays a lot on the record."

No one in the band knew what this record was going to be, at least not at first. They had a list of tracks and were workshopping the arrangements before being told how it was going to go down. Andreadis will be singing live with the band, and as far as he knew, he was going to be singing on this record, too.

"I never told them that I was going to pick different singers," says Slash. "Teddy was always the singer in the original lineup of the Blues Ball back in the '90s, so I sort of had this thing in my mind. As we were learning the songs I had this thing in my mind, who the singers should be."

The record opens with *The Pusher*, a song written by country/folk singer-songwriter Hoyt Axton and made famous with the version by Steppenwolf that featured in the 1969 movie *Easy Rider*. For this countercultural anthem, The Black Crowes' singer Chris Robinson was a perfect fit. "When I called him about it he loved that song," says Slash. "It was cool that he was so passionate about it, and excited about coming in and doing it." There would be Brian Johnson of AC/DC doing his best Howlin' Wolf on a raucous take on *Killing Floor*, with Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler playing the harmonica. Demi Lovato sings on *Papa Was A Rollin' Stone* by The Temptations, complementing the blues with a Motown soul classic that demanded a different treatment from the band, and, again, like Freddie King, shows how far you can push things on a blues record. "Like I said, it's not a real, traditional kind of blues record," Slash says. "Obviously, there is a lot of blues

on it! I don't know about comparing it to that great, great f*cking Freddie King record, but it is off the beaten path."

Some of Slash's choices are no-brainers. Paul Rodgers steps up for *Born Under A Bad Sign*, having already sung Albert King's *The Hunter* on Free's seminal 1969 debut album *Tons Of Sobs*. Chris Stapleton has the chops on vocals to guest on a cover of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac classic *Oh Well* that turns into a riotous eighth-note pummelling, which by its climax is more Motörhead than British blues. And Beth Hart dropped by – literally dropped by – for a totally smoking performance on T-Bone Walker's *Stormy Monday*.

"That was a funny take, because I talked to Beth on the phone; she was excited about doing it, and she called me back and had this idea about doing it in a minor key, which was a f*cking great idea," Slash says. "It made it a different version to all the other ones out there. We rehearsed it in minor, like, the last day of rehearsal, and we ended up doing it in minor, and then I think Ted had the idea of transposing it back to major at the end, which really was cool. So we had just learned how to do that, and we went into the studio the next day, and we were basically going to rehearse it – and Beth showed up. She just came in! She just jumped on the mic and sang it, and that's the only take and it was a rehearsal take. It really was almost like a live jam in a club with a guest vocalist. Nobody knew exactly what was going to happen, so the spontaneity in that was great. It was flying by the seat of our pants."

Stormy Monday is where you can really hear the benefits of recording a band live in a room. There's a dynamic range and an energy that feels like the documenting of a performance, not just a take. When Hart dials her voice back

"I DO PLAY A LOT WITH MY FINGERS,
BACK AND FORTH WITH MY PICK
AND MY FINGER TIPS"



to a whisper, Slash takes the guitar there, too. It sounds like he ditches the pick for this and is just kissing the string with his thumb, letting the amp clean up. "You know what? I do play a lot with my fingers, back and forth with my pick and my fingertips, but I can't really remember," he says, admitting that Hart's ambush caught him and the band unaware, but these moments can be the making of a record. They give it life, especially when everyone is setup together and the tape is rolling.

"It's great, maybe it's because I am not that comfortable in the studio when you have too much time to sit about and think about what you are going to do," he says. "So when you are doing sessions and you've got a lot of overdubbing, and you've got to come in again, you can overthink this stuff. When you are playing live, you are just in the heat of the moment, performing, just using your wits at the time. Just play! And if you've got a good guitar sound and the band is locked in, it sometimes provides much more exciting guitar."

"I just think playing live as a band is the only way to do rock 'n' roll anyway. Rock 'n' roll and blues – and jazz – has to be performed live with the band together in one room. It's not something that could be pieced together because the feel gets lost. So I try to keep everything as live as possible."

That might explain the pounding Motörhead treatment on *Oh Well*. The one-two punch of Slash and Neal's guitar turns it into a powerhouse jam. Listen to it on headphones and you will pick out all these overtones, moments of illusory musical information. It sounds like there's an acoustic guitar buried deep at the back of the mix, doubling the riff for texture, but there's not. There might have been had they had more time, but overdubs for this album were kept to a minimum. You might hear a couple here and there, such as the talkbox work on *Papa Was A Rollin' Stone*, which was rehearsed with Slash using a wah pedal and talkbox at the same time. Now, listen back to *Oh Well* again and what do you hear? Yeah, the helter-skelter take is classic Slash – getting carried away with himself, more 'Fast' Eddie Clarke than Big Bill Broonzy – but there is something off-menu as far as guitar choices go.

"Yeah, for me that song was one of my favourites," he says with a chuckle

that's as good as an admission that, yes, he did get carried away. "I remember when they used to play it on the radio back in the '70s, and I always loved it. Y'know I've jammed the riff a few times but I have never played the full song. My take on it is a little bit more hard-driving than most, right? It was a hell of a lot of f*cking fun to play. And I'm playing a Strat, too, which you never hear me use."

Wait. Record scratch. Time out. He what?

"It just sounded like a Strat to me," he says. "I used a Strat on that, and I used an old '50s Tele on *Living For The City*." You think you know someone and then this...

Old, new, borrowed and blue

As it turns out, doing *Orgy For The Damned* was as good excuse as any to play around with his rig. "Anything, everything is an excuse to buy a new guitar!" protests Slash. This in part led to his new signature guitar amp collaboration with Magnatone. In the video for *Killing Floor*, Slash is playing a 1963 Gibson ES-335. It's Neal playing the Les Paul. And your eyes did not deceive you, those were vintage Fender tube combos in the background.

"What happened was that, when I decided I was going to do this record, I pulled out a bunch of my old vintage combo amps and whatnot because I knew it was going to be a more laidback," Slash explains. "It is still sort of a rock 'n' roll tone. I just wanted it to be less Marshall-y. And have a little bit more of a clean, gritty sort of a sound to it. I had those amps that I pulled out, and then I pulled out some vintage guitars I had."

NO JACKET REQUIRED

Slash photographed at the Baked Potato jazz club in Studio City, California

"I'm funny with amps. I have obviously been a Marshall guy forever, and I love Marshalls – nothing gets the Marshall sound, right? But I also love old Fender Deluxes. I love old Fender amps for lots of different kinds of things, and they pop up here and there for clean stuff on a record or whatever. But I pulled them out, a couple of old Fender '50s Deluxes. I had a Dumble Fender Deluxe that he (Alexander 'Howard' Dumble) built for me, just before he passed away. I think it was the last one he ever built. And I had an old Marshall 50-watt, which I don't usually use but I thought might be applicable for this."

Enter, the Magnatone. There was a moment's pause, panic across the internet, when the news broke that Slash was teaming up with Magnatone for a signature amplifier, that this amp would be in his backline when touring with Kennedy and the Conspirators. The official press release never mentioned a continuation with Marshall Amps. Slash leaving Marshall seemed unthinkable – and it was. A hastily released clarification was issued. He was adding to his backline, not decommissioning the Marshalls. When his signature Magnatone SL-100 arrived, finished in green snakeskin vinyl, it was clearly inspired by vintage Marshall Super Leads, with traditional British valve amp accoutrements such as the quartet of EL34s augmented with switchable Lo and Hi gain modes, a tube-buffered effects loop, and a master volume because 100-watts of this could take some heads off. The collaboration on the amp started here.

"Funnily enough, I had this Magnatone M-80 50-watt that Billy Gibbons gave me a long time ago that

"I HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN A MARSHALL GUY FOREVER, BUT I ALSO LOVE OLD FENDER DELUXES"





I had never used before,” Slash says. “I had never even heard it! He gave it to me, I put it with a bunch of stuff and never listened to it, and so then I had a Vox that I brought out. I wanna say something else, oh yeah, a vintage Mesa/Boogie, like an early Mesa/Boogie. I was trying all these amps, and going through the songs, and it was all very laidback and relaxed, and I tried that Magnatone and it sounded amazing.

“Everyday I would say, ‘Okay, we’re going to play this song and I am going to try a couple of amps with it, a couple of different guitars.’ And I ended up back at that Magnatone. I ended up doing that whole record with the Magnatone and ended up designing an amp with them as a result.”

The moral of this story is that, when the Reverend Billy F. Gibbons gifts you an amplifier, you put it in rotation. Also, do whatever you can to get him to guest on your record. Gibbons’ turn on *Hoochie Coochie Man* is a high-water mark for the sessions and it gives one of Chicago’s greatest blues standards a little Texas flavour, with Gibbons playing rhythm guitar, singing, and taking one of the solos.

“Billy, he’s just hands down one of my favourite guitar players, ever since I first heard him back when I was a kid, and he just has this laidback kind of approach,” Slash says. “There are three of us doing solos on *Hoochie Coochie Man*, but he is the one that’s got the clean tone. I think he is the third solo in. That was something that he did just off the cuff, and it is so note perfect that I actually had to learn it! Ha! Just to learn it! Because his selection of notes on that little solo are just so great, not to mention his vocals are great. And also the same with Gary Clark Jr. He and I played back and forth, but his solo is so indicative of what makes him such a fabulous blues player.”

Riding with the King

What makes a great blues player? There are no rules per se. You don’t need expensive guitars. Robert Johnson inaugurated the art form with a Depression-era Gibson Kalamazoo flat-top. A suit is traditional but non-essential. You don’t need heavy strings and a bear trap grip for a fretting hand. Billy Gibbons is proof of that. His electric guitars are strung up with .007s after some friendly advice from B.B. King that amounted to: “Why are you working so hard?” But that was exactly

the opposite lesson Slash took from B.B. King, whom he was lucky enough to jam with at the Royal Albert Hall in 2011, when he joined the King of the Blues with Ronnie Wood, Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi on *The Thrill Is Gone*. B.B. King makes a great blues player.

“He was the guy, when I was a kid, way, way before I ever thought of picking up a guitar, he was the first traditional blues artist that I was exposed to,” says Slash. “My grandmother played me B.B. King and it stuck with me. I heard a lot of blues artists after that, all around the family and stuff, but B.B. King, the first time I ever heard it, it really stuck with me, and so he ended up being my favourite blues guitar player out of all the greats that I really dig. He is sort of my top guy. And I think one of the reasons I love Jimmy Page is because he plays very much like B.B. King.”

Slash played with B.B. King on a couple of occasions over the years, but the first time the occasion escaped him. It was one of those LA nights that got lost to the drink.

“I can barely remember it!” he says. “But he was so cordial to me, and so almost fatherly and nice and generous with his time. That had a positive affect on me. And I played with him a couple of times over the years, and the last time I played with him was at the Royal Albert Hall, and Ronnie Wood was there. It was just a lot of fun. I remember being a little bit nervous, and not really feeling comfortable trying to play, but I was there, so... whatcha gonna do? But it was a really nice moment to spend with him. He was a really sweet guy, and a genuine road dog.

“This was a guy who spent 70 per cent or even 80 per cent of his entire life working, and I have always admired that. I have probably modelled myself after that because I am a total workaholic. I go, ‘Well B.B. did it, so I can do it!’ Anyway, it was just a great moment. Just being in the same space as one of your all-time favourite and most influential artists.”

B.B. King was a stickler for details. His many Gibson ES-variant Lucilles were modified to remove the f-holes so that feedback wouldn’t be an issue. He took a pride in his intonation, took every precaution; his bridges were augmented with a TP-6 tailpiece with fine tuners. His ear was as good as



a Peterson Strobe Tuner. B.B. might have given Slash the appetite for road miles, but maybe this is where he gets his appreciation for good intonation at all times. You would be hard pushed to call Slash neurotic, but on matters of intonation he is not far off.

"I don't know, but my ear is pretty sensitive to being out of tune, and I appreciate you saying that," he says. "That's a compliment, because one of my biggest pet peeves about my playing is intonation. Sometimes a lot of it has to do with in-ears because you can go so high that you can't hear it anymore because you don't have the space of the room to really fill out the note. My pet peeve with intonation is something that I am still working on!"

Lightnin' in a bottle

Not all of the tracks on *Orgy Of The Damned* were chosen by Slash. It was at Iggy Pop's request that they covered *Awful Dream*, the old Lightnin' Hopkins tune from 1960's *Mojo Hand*. A more obscure country blues cut, Slash wasn't initially familiar with the arrangement, such as it is; Hopkins style is so spare that invites reinterpretation, as though his songs arrived fresh on record already as blues standards. It's like there's dust on it.

Listen to the original and you can hear why it works for Iggy Pop's voice. Maybe it was Hopkins's choice of words, or how his acoustic guitar had this sleepwalking slow shuffle rhythm to it, or maybe his voice, which managed to have this reedy top-end and yet be canyon-deep at the same time, but he was one of those musicians who gave the blues a supernatural feel, as though it was coming from the beyond – a haunting. Slash and Iggy are faithful to that spirit, if not the arrangement, making it sound as though the guitar itself had been exhumed from the Mojave before being brought up to pitch and recorded.

Slash says of the track: "Iggy came in and he and I just sat on stools," Slash

Snake, Rattle N' Roll

"Blues is all about bringing people together," says Slash of his upcoming S.E.R.P.E.N.T. festival

recalls. "And I hadn't ever actually learned the song because it was so loose to begin with; I just did my own thing, how I remembered it would go. Iggy had all the words down and we sat and jammed it. I think we did it a couple of times, and then just did it from top to bottom live like that. It was a really great outlet for Iggy. He really cherished the moment to do that, and I love that feeling."

Lightnin' Hopkins played Gibson and Harmony acoustics, but Slash's choice for *Awful Dream* was more inspired by Lead Belly and Blind Willie McTell – a Fraulini 12-string with a longer baritone scale. "I got turned onto these guitars by Cher's son," he says. "These 12-string guitars were built like baritone acoustic guitars in the '40s. So they are tuned really low, and they're 12-strings. Just amazing sounding." Hendrix agreed. In the 1973 documentary *Jimi Hendrix*, there is footage of him playing *Hear My Train A Comin'* on a downtuned Zemaitis 12-string acoustic. And there's something undeniably gnarly about a downtuned 12-string – those low open strings sound like a death rattle.

Spare a thought for Teddy Andreadis, who will be singing these tracks when the band takes to the stage at Slash's S.E.R.P.E.N.T. Festival, which kicks off in July and tours across the US, with Warren Haynes, Keb' Mo', Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram, Samantha Fish, Larkin Poe, Robert Randolph and Eric Gales all confirmed among the lineup. S.E.R.P.E.N.T. stands for Solidarity, Engagement, Restore, Peace, Equality, N' Tolerance. It's a celebration of the blues, a chance to play these songs live, but it's also to raise money for good causes, with a dollar from each ticket sold going to charity.

"We are trying to do something that supports people coming together and not pointing fingers at people, and ostracising different races, people of different genders, all that kind of sh*t," says Slash. "That's the driving force

behind the festival, but blues is all about bringing people together."

Looking at the bill is proof positive that there is no one way to play the blues, and that's the point. If there was, it would be easy. But it's like the great contemporary jazz guitarist Julian Lage says: everyone has their own shuffle that's unique to them. Use yours. That rhythm is just as important as phrasing a lead, note choice, tone. Listen to the pocket on *Hoochie Coochie Man*. Listen to Slash's leads on this record. None were worked out beforehand. You've got to know where to start, where to finish, and which notes to avoid. All else is up for grabs. Make it your own.

"That is what's great about blues guitar," Slash says. "It's all the same chord changes. It's all more or less the same notes, but it's just the way that the individual's personality chooses how to play them, and that's what makes all these blues guitar players so f*cking great. You can really hear their personalities in their melodies, and in their solos, and in their rhythms, and just the way that they play it. It is such a diverse canvas, because you just have these three chords, 12 notes and a couple of different octaves, and the different things that people do with them are so much more different than all the technical players out there who are spending so much time on all this technique, and all of these f*cking different kinds of picking techniques and scales. It's all brilliant. It's amazing. But it's hard to tell a lot of those players apart because they are all doing more or less the same kind of thing at blinding speed.

"If you just listen to blues players, man, there's so much personality and individuality between all these different guitar players, and it is one of these things I love about it. It's not something you can necessarily pick up from watching tutorials on YouTube. It's just something you feel."

***Orgy Of The Damned* is out May 17.**

"I LOVE JIMMY PAGE BECAUSE HE PLAYS VERY MUCH LIKE B.B. KING"

SLASH: THE PRODUCER



Words Amit Sharma

"WHEN YOU HEAR THAT TONE, YOU KNOW IT'S HIM"

Mike Clink is the producer who first worked with Slash on Guns N' Roses' debut album. Now, having reunited with the guitarist for *Orgy Of The Damned*, he reveals how this new album was created – and recalls those magical sessions with Slash in the '80s





Not many people can say they've had a front row seat to Slash's creative process in the

same way producer Mike Clink has. He was the man at the helm for Guns N' Roses' legendary 1987 debut album *Appetite For Destruction* and the band's subsequent releases *GN'R Lies*, *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* and *The Spaghetti Incident?* The partnership would continue through to the 1995 debut full-length from the guitarist's next band, Slash's Snakepit, and Clink would also gain recognition for his work with other rock giants including Whitesnake, Megadeth and Mötley Crüe.

When Slash announced his solo album *Orgy Of The Damned* in March, it was revealed that he'd once again teamed up with Clink – someone who helped create his most famous recordings and arguably knew his tone better than anyone else.

When Mike connects with TG to discuss the making of *Orgy Of The Damned* and his long association with Slash, he begins by remarking upon how far the guitarist has come since those crazy days in the '80s, when Guns N' Roses were making their reputation as the 'Most Dangerous Band In The World'.

"I haven't spoken about this stuff in a long time," Mike says, "but all of Guns N' Roses were very young back then. Yeah, they loved to party, but when they came together in the studio, they were very committed. On this new record, however, the change in Slash is clear. It's all part of maturing and growing up. Slash is more focused than ever and knows exactly what he wants to do. He's also more in the pocket, which is a blues thing. Usually I have to tell guitarists to hold back. They get excited and want to push, but I rarely had to bring that to Slash's attention. He's so fluid these days, his left hand makes it look seamless..."

Let's start with new album's the lead single *Killing Floor*, featuring Brian Johnson. The video for this track looks like it's from Studio Two at EastWest in LA?

That's it! EastWest is the iconic place where Frank Sinatra, The Beach Boys and Red Hot Chili Peppers made records. That particular room is live, but not overly live, with an old Neve console and high ceilings. I'm really big on recording everybody together. The results are different to people recording separately. You can make changes instantly.

But not all of it was cut there?

We went to Florida and recorded in Sarasota where Brian Johnson lives. There's a studio down there called Burnt Orange. He asked if he could do his vocals from the control room and I told him I didn't mind. He asked if he could use a handheld mic and again, I told him I didn't care. It ended up being one of the most fun sessions I've ever done. I'd never worked with him before and didn't know what to expect. He was perfect. I was expecting those higher-up AC/DC vocals, and that's where he started for maybe one or two takes. Slash and I looked at each other and weren't sure if that was going to work. We asked Brian to bring it down to his natural voice and it suddenly fit very well. Slash picked some really amazing artists for this record.

You managed to keep a level of bluesy rawness within the recordings, while also upholding the standards people expect from modern production. It's not an easy balance to get right.

I'm no blues expert, but the stuff from the '40s, '50s and '60s was really raw. They would go into the studio after a show and record it live with just a couple of microphones, sometimes even just one. They were rough recordings but the performances were great because the band had just gotten off stage and felt hyped. That's the roots of blues. Nowadays people expect something different. I hear so many

blues records that involve drum machines and samples, with no natural feel. All of these songs were recorded live. I got the best performances I could from the band, but it all started in rehearsal roughly three weeks ahead. We worked out the tempos and the arrangements. It wasn't all etched in stone – I like that spark of spontaneity. But we knew what we were doing when we hit the studio.

What do you remember about what gear got used on what tracks?

Back when we did *Appetite For Destruction*, it was all about the Les Paul and Marshall. On the *Use Your Illusion* albums, Slash started to stretch out a little bit. I remember I had a 1965 ES-335, and there was one song it would have been perfect for, because that one called for a different tone to a Les Paul. So I had his tech [Adam Day] bring out my guitar. Slash picked it up and wasn't that impressed. It was big and quite different, so after playing it on the song a few times he handed it back saying, 'Hmm, this isn't really working for me!' Fast forward to this record and I walk into the rehearsal studio and I saw a 335 sitting on the stand. I said to his current tech [Craig DeFalco], 'Wow, Slash actually owns a 335!' And he said, 'Oh yeah!' That was a big part of this record, along with the Les Pauls. The 335 had a phenomenally warm tone. He's definitely gotten more experimental with his sounds, and obviously knew that a 335 would be good for this record. I was happy to see that, because they're wonderful guitars.

This is notable for being the first album he's made since partnering with Magnatone.

Yeah, he was playing his Marshall the day I walked in but I also saw a Magnatone sitting there. We moved on to another song and he plugged into it. The sound was right and very appropriate for this record. He wanted to use the Marshall on a couple of songs but when we discussed things in the control room after listening back, the tone just wasn't working. No disrespect to Marshall. I love their amps and own many of them, but for this record the Magnatone really spoke for everything he played.

There's a lot of tonal versatility, from the single-coil sounds on *Living For The City* to a semi-hollow

"SLASH HAS GOTTEN MORE
EXPERIMENTAL WITH HIS SOUNDS"



openness on *Stormy Monday*...

I can't remember specifically what was used on *Living For The City*, he has so many different guitars and each one has a unique voice. He will have an idea of which one will work best for whatever song we are working on. Sometimes he might pick something up and I would go, 'Hmm, let's try something else, we can always come back to this one!' We did a lot of experimenting, sometimes working between three different guitars to find the one that spoke best for the music.

It must have been nice to be reacquainted with that Kris Derrig 1959 Les Paul Standard replica...

It's come a long way since 1987! Absolutely. It's a special guitar that clearly means a lot to him. That's his baby! When we did *Appetite*, it was that Les Paul into a Marshall. With the popularity of that record, all the aspiring guitar players wanted a Les

Paul. I feel like he did a lot to bring the Gibson Les Paul back – not that it necessarily ever went away, but there was a big rise in popularity after the debut. At the time there were all these hair bands playing other brands in competition with Gibson. When Guns N' Roses broke, guitar players started saying 'I need that tone: a Les Paul into a Marshall!' The success of that record brought those guitars back into mainstream popularity.

As you say, it was a simple recipe for *Appetite*, although there's been a bit of confusion over which modded head had been borrowed from Studio Instrument Rentals for the recordings – either a 1959T Super Lead Tremolo known as Stock #39 or a non-tremolo Super Lead known as Stock #36. Most people seem to agree it was the latter...

Yeah, that's my recollection. They were both modded. The one we used was

DESK JOCKEY Mike Clink in his natural habitat

modded by Frank Levi, who passed away in 2019. He was not doing well, but had continued doing mods for friends of mine. The amps he worked on are still around and still exist. He was only doing those mods for friends and special people.

As the story goes, Slash tried to buy the amp and his attempts proved unsuccessful, so he avoided their calls for quite some time. But, of course, the amp was discovered by an employee and retrieved during a band rehearsal...

Yeah, he had an opportunity to buy that amp after the sessions but decided not to because of what they were asking. He ended up borrowing it for as long as he could before they took it back. And you're right, the company found the amp in their rehearsal space... true story! Someone had put a piece of gaffer's tape over the logo of the rental company. An employee walked over,



ripped it off and took the amp away. They wanted a boatload of money for that amp after we did the record. But Guns hadn't blown up by that point and that particular amp that was making S.I.R. a lot of money. They wanted well over what it was worth as a retail item. In hindsight, Slash should have bought it because it's now worth over 10 times what he would have paid. But no one knew at that time! They wanted more money because they didn't want to get rid of it. Anyone who wanted the amp would have had to pay extra because that's what it was worth to them.

There was also a Roland Digital Reverb, a Jim Dunlop Cry Baby and an MXR Analog Chorus in Slash's corner for those Appetite sessions.

That was it. I don't remember an overdrive. We got the tone from the amp. Back in those days I just used Shure SM57s on the amp... tried and true! Nowadays, I have a big selection of mics to get different textures so we can blend them all. One of my favourites is a Royer R-121 ribbon mic, but they didn't exist back then. There were ribbon mics but you didn't think about using them on amps – things have changed. So it was a very simple setup for the debut. A big part of the sound was that Roland SRV-2000. I used that for guitars, vocals, everything.

Coming back to the present, Papa Was A Rollin' Stone, featuring Demi Lovato, has the most aggressive tones on the record towards the end. How did you dial that one in?

We did use a pedal on that one. I think it was the MXR Custom Audio Electronics Boost/Line Driver [MC401], just to get more gain. We'd be down there tweaking and tweaking to make sure it was the right sound for the part.

Two tracks feature guest guitar players. You're not going to have

Gary Clark Jr. in the room and not take advantage of his talents, right?

Gary walked into the studio with his signature Gibson guitar on his back, and that's what he used – plugged into one of the Magnatones we had. As he was playing, I could tell he was fiddling around. He didn't really have a particular rhythm part written, he was just noodling and experimenting as we were rehearsing the song, trying to see where he'd fit in. I'd occasionally tell him which parts sounded best. When musicians are searching, they love input because that helps them find what they're looking for. It quickly came together. After running through the song four or five times, he had his rhythm down. For the solo, he knew exactly what to do. That was it. Gary Clark Jr. all the way!

The other big guest was Billy Gibbons for Hoochie Coochie Man – another Magnatone signature artist.

I wasn't there for Billy's session. But he has his own tone, it's a very signature thing and more unique than anybody out there. His settings, from what Slash has told me, are pretty unusual. Having three guitar players creates a lot of movement, and this one ended up being the most funky track on the album. There was also a harmonica line from Les Stroud, with some dissonance created by all the musicians playing together in the verses. There are some tuning things that naturally happen, so it felt like the most traditional song. Back in the day, blues players would tune up in sweltering hot rooms, play, and what you got was what you got. Whereas today, it's more like, 'Check that E-string' or 'Is the G out?' This song has an old-school vibe to it.

This album sees Slash reuniting with two members from his Blues Ball project – bassist Johnny Griparic and keyboardist Teddy Andreadis – as

PRODUCTION LINE

Four of the landmark albums in Slash's career, all produced by Mike Clink

well as rhythm guitarist Tash Neal. There's definitely a different feel to his other projects...

When we started rehearsals, Tash wasn't there. A couple of days after he showed up and brought his own guitar to go through a Fender Twin Reverb. A bit later, Slash gave him a Les Paul Goldtop and Tash was so blown away, it became his main guitar. Tash found his place in the band very easily. It was very similar to the way Izzy Stradlin complemented Slash in Guns N' Roses, and vice versa. Tash was the perfect guy to fit in there. He was very articulate and knew what was needed of him. He also sang brilliantly on *Living For The City*. I'd never worked with Johnny before, but his bass parts complemented the vocals so beautifully. And Teddy is such a great keyboard player and singer – he's the blues guy. He sang the guide vocals for every track. What he did was so good it actually took a minute to get used to the final versions!

And now that the world is able to hear Orgy of The Damned, what does this album say about where Slash is at now as a player?

Slash became one of the most iconic guitar players for a reason. When you hear that tone, you know it's him. It doesn't matter what notes he's playing, it's the tone and that signature sound. It's what all guitar players strive for but few accomplish. It's not just the amp or the guitar, it's in the hands and fingers. That's what sets guitarists apart. It's how they attack the strings and settle into the track, using the instrument to its full dynamic range. Stevie Ray Vaughan was the master of that. Talk about smooth! That guy was so in the pocket. And I think Slash is right there with him. It's a different style, but he has that same sense of flow – very much standing as the glue holding it all together.

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Words Amit Sharma Photo Phil Barker

"THE WHOLE LINE-UP IS STELLAR!"

Samantha Fish is thrilled to be joining Slash's blues festival – with a new band and as many guitars as she can handle

Samantha Fish's take on contemporary blues is multi-faceted, with elements of bluegrass and country thrown into the mix. Having grown up with *Appetite For Destruction* on repeat in her car stereo, the invitation to perform on Slash's S.E.R.P.E.N.T. festival is a dream come true...

Looking ahead to the S.E.R.P.E.N.T. tour, how are you planning to make your set stand out?

I'd like to think I'm a unique performer. I'm a guitar player, I'm a songwriter, I'm a singer... I do my best to put on a show that takes people on a trip. My show will be different from everyone else's because I'm me! Nobody else is me and I'm nobody else. I try to win people over with energy. One thing I'm always told is that it's my live shows that draw people in. The records are the records. I put my heart and soul into them, but the live show is where I'm home. I'm very comfortable on the stage. That's where I've honed my skills, where I've spent most of my time. Anyone watching will get a really healthy dose of blues and rock 'n' roll with a lot of power and soul. There will be original songs mixed with covers.

What kind of tracks will you be playing?

I'm in the process of reimagining all of my material with my new band, who are really talented. I just finished the US leg of the *Death Wish Blues* tour, which is an album I did with Jesse Dayton. I might play some of that stuff but I will mainly be revisiting a lot of older fan favourites,

which is a first for me! I've never done that before, because usually I will base the show around the new record. I'm still working on new material, too...

You're typically seen playing a white Gibson SG, Fender offsets and a cigar box guitar through Category 5 amps. Is there any new gear you'll be using on this tour?

I have this new Martin D-18 they gave me just over a week ago. I've been playing that a lot and I'm excited to be partnering with them. It's a beautiful-sounding guitar. I'll have all of my gear for the full tour, so there'll be my SG, Firebird, Jazzmaster, Jaguar and cigar box. There are also the old-school Supro-esque or Danelectro-style guitars that I use for open tunings. I can only fit so many guitars into my show, but I do my best to fit in as many as possible! I've been using Category 5 Amps for years, I really like them. As for the pedalboard, I want to mix it up a bit. I've been using the same pedals for a long time: my go-to's are the Analog Man King Of Tone, the JHS Mini Foot Fuzz plus various delays and octaves.

There's a deeper meaning behind this festival – as well as championing blues music, Slash is also calling for more inclusivity and equality...

I'm all for promoting positivity and equality. It's a good message and something that we need in the world today. Music is the greatest connecting factor amongst us as human beings. It's the universal language we all speak. That's why the blues has been around and relevant for so long. It touches your heart and soul, and there are no boundaries for that. It connects people to each other through stories and experiences. I'm a big supporter of that.

It's such a diverse line-up – there are female musicians and people from minority backgrounds, the kind of artists who have often been neglected in the past. There's a big sense of coming together...

The whole line-up is stellar. It's a very good representation of the blues scene right now, which is why I feel so honoured to be part of it. All of the artists playing this festival are blues-oriented but they have different sounds and come from different walks of life. The connecting factor is the music, which brings people together.

Slash is a huge advocate for the blues. All of his solos seem to come from that background, even when it's delivered in a hard rock context...

When I learned to drive, I'd take my family's Chevy Suburban around Kansas City. I'd be driving so fast, and probably quite recklessly, to *Appetite For Destruction*. I love that stuff! It's almost hard to pinpoint one solo, because he always plays with a lot of dynamics and takes people on a journey. The best guitar players know how to tell a story and he's definitely one of them. It's not about coming out of the gate and saying everything you know, it's about having a conversation with its own varying nuances. You take the time because there's an art to storytelling. When you figure out how to do that on a guitar, that's when you start using it most effectively. It's all about the dynamics, and Slash has always done that really well. I've been a fan for a long time so I'm excited to get this opportunity, which connects me back to when I was first getting into music. It's a full-circle moment for me, especially if I get to spend some quality time with Slash!

And, of course, it all ties in with his new blues album.

Yeah, the first single with Brian Johnson and Steven Tyler sounds great! *Killing Floor* is a track I used to play when I was starting out in blues. It's a classic Howlin' Wolf standard and a beautiful song that's stood the test of time. I love how these stories keep getting retold, kicking back to the originals and the great songs they wrote. Hubert Sumlin and Howlin' Wolf played such a big part in the movement. There are other tracks I'm excited to hear like *Crossroads* with Gary Clark Jr., who is such an amazing modern blues artist. I love how he puts his own stamp on everything and is



keeping the guitar alive at a time when a lot of modern artists aren't even using real instruments!

You've previously jammed with Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram on tracks like *I Put A Spell On You* and *Going Down*. It seems as if there's a lot of love and respect between you guys? He's amazing! We first met in Portland back in 2016. He was really young then – he's still really young now! We played together and I knew straight away that the guy was really special. He's carrying the blues torch and rightfully so. I'm a big fan and think he's wonderful.

So who else would you cite as the ultimate storytellers in blues?

I've always loved B.B. King. He used his voice and guitar as counterparts to each other. There was something so sweet about the way he played, and you'd know it was him the second you heard him. He's definitely up there for me, as is Freddie King. I'm a big fan of the Delta blues musicians, too – all that North Mississippi stuff like R. L. Burnside and Junior Kimbrough. It's a different take on blues, with the guitars rockin' around the drums in this groove-oriented thing. It has its own feel. As for contemporaries, I think Derek Trucks is amazing at that. He really knows how to build his ideas.

Samantha Fish tours the UK in October.

"THE BEST GUITAR PLAYERS KNOW HOW TO TELL A STORY – AND SLASH IS DEFINITELY ONE OF THEM"

Words Amit Sharma Photo Phil Barker

"THERE WILL BE A LOT OF GREAT GUITAR PLAYING AT THESE SHOWS!"

Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram is a huge fan of Slash – and the feeling is mutual

Any conversations concerning the future of blues will usually include a mention of

25-year-old Mississippi sensation Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram. So it should come as little surprise that he's met and jammed with nearly all of the acts appearing on Slash's S.E.R.P.E.N.T. festival, including his hero, Eric Gales...

What will the audience get from your set at S.E.R.P.E.N.T.?

In recent years, I've been adding a lot of funk and R'n'B grooves into my show. So the crowd will get a mixture of things – it won't just be blues or hard rock.

As well as songs I haven't played much before, there are at least two new songs from my upcoming record that we'll be performing. I also have some new guitars that I'm bringing out...

That's interesting. Tell us more!

I can't go too deep because I don't want to upset my family at Fender. But there's a custom ES-339-style guitar that I've started using and another Les Paul-style guitar that I've added to the arsenal, both made by another brand. I'll be using those along with my Fender signatures.

Is there anything else you're looking at changing, rig-wise?

Well, since I last spoke to TG I ended up going back to the Marshall Shred Master. That one's back on the 'board. I want to do something different in terms of amps. The plan is to run two Fender DeVilles through with my pedalboard. I'm hoping I'll have that as my main rig by the time we hit the road for this tour.

What kind of message do you think this festival sends in terms of culture?

There are people out there who say the guitar is dead and guitar solos no longer exist. And I know for a fact there will be a lot of great guitar playing at these shows. Our job is to prove that it's still a thing and that the blues can be directed to a younger crowd, too. There are many forms of contemporary blues and mine is just one of them.

The festival name itself is an acronym for Solidarity, Engagement, Restore, Peace, Equality N' Tolerance. Many would say these are all things the world needs more of right now...

We need to stick up for each other! Definitely! The world is in a bit of a tangle at the moment. All it takes is music to give us the hope to heal. It's

"EVERYONE CAN HEAR THE BLUES ROOT IN SLASH'S MUSIC"

this magical thing we can all connect to. You can break boundaries through sound. I love what this festival represents and stands for.

Eric Gales is on the bill. Given what you've said about him in the past, we're guessing that's one set you'll be watching every night...

Oh yeah! I think I've seen him a lot of times by now, and every time I've learned something new. I will have my eyes glued, for sure! I actually know a lot of the artists on this line-up. I've jammed with Eric, Larkin Poe, Robert Randolph and Samantha Fish in the past. Jackie Venson is a great guitar player as well, and I've jammed with her, too. I met Warren Haynes one time and it was a great interaction. There are a lot of killers on this tour... It's a star-studded line-up, for sure!

On Eric's last album there was a song called *The Storm* where he asks 'How can you love what I do, but hate who I am?' That's very poignant, given the message behind this festival.

Yeah! Stuff like that ties into what the blues is and where it came from. It was originally a form of protest music. It was used to tell people to resist and talk about the tough situations they were being put through. That said, music can help you forget about all the bad things and ugliness in the world. It's all about beauty and positivity, even if it originates from people struggling.

Is it safe to assume you're a fan of Slash? What are your favourite things about his playing?

I think everyone knows about Slash and the band Guns N' Roses. How could you not? My introduction to him was actually through the video game *Guitar Hero*! He did that live show a long time ago called Slash's Blues Ball, which there are recordings of. I've always loved the version of *The Thrill Is Gone* on that album. I've been a big fan of his guitar playing, especially the bluesy side of it, for a long time.

Why do you think he ended up becoming one of the most iconic guitar players of all-time?

People have always been drawn to Slash because he's technical but also has a lot of feel. He's definitely not just an average pentatonic player, he has a lot of swagger in how he plays. If you listen to *Sweet Child O' Mine*, there are so many

different elements – from pentatonic bends to harmonic minor ideas. He's got a whole lot of range. On tracks like *November Rain*, he could slow down and play from the heart. I learned that myself from an early age. The general public aren't as interested in your guitar solo as other guitar players. It's more about the hooks and the catchiness of it all. You can say more with three notes than three thousand. Now, let me just say, it's fun to play three thousand notes! I've been there, and I still do it too sometimes. But if you want the audience to feel something powerful, you should simplify your ideas. Slow and steady wins the race, as they say, and someone like Slash always takes you on a journey. He's a global icon who represents what rock 'n' roll is, and definitely helped sell a lot of Les Pauls and Marshall heads!

Have you met him yet?

I haven't met or jammed with him ever. We've spoken on Instagram a couple of times. I found out from a couple of friends that he was a fan of mine. We talked very briefly online, and then again when he was putting this festival together and wanted to give me the opportunity to play. Hopefully I'll get a chance to meet him and talk to him properly, just so I can say how much I appreciate him and thank him for inviting me! I was digging the *Killing Floor* cover he did with Brian Johnson from the new album. It was very hard rock, but it also had a funky vibe, too. He's jammed with B.B. King – not many rockers out there could hang with the blues OGs like that. It's obvious he had a lot of respect for B.B. and it's clear the respect was mutual. Everyone can hear the blues root in Slash's music. There can be no doubt he's a blues player at heart. He almost makes love to the guitar!





Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

CROSSROAD BLUES

We take a look at his phrasing and technique as Slash explores a new direction in his playing

New album *Orgy Of The Damned* is very much *not* business as usual for the Guns N' Roses icon! Take one look at the

Killing Floor music video and you'll immediately notice The Cat In The Hat eschewing his usual Les Pauls and donning a Bigsby-loaded 1963 Tobacco Sunburst Gibson ES-335 in front of a rack gear that includes (gasp!) a pair of Strats and a Telecaster. And if the experiments in tone hadn't given the game away, well, presumably the song title has – it's a blues

cover, from an album of more of the same.

You know this already, of course, but the new direction sees Slash taking influence from blues pioneers he holds in high regard – and his playing sounds revitalised as a result. Here in our tab lesson, we're taking a look at some of the techniques and phrasing he employs on his latest outing. As ever, you can find accompanying audio files at the link at the top of the page.

Right, plug in and let's get started – and it probably doesn't matter what guitar you use...

1 COUNTRY-STYLE CHROMATIC RUNS

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩ = 120

A⁵ D⁵

TAB

1

A⁵ E⁷#9

let ring - - - - -

BU RP BD

15 (17) 15 (17) (15) 13 14

3

Play 4 times

Our first example is inspired by Slash's lead work on *Killing Floor* – played on that 1963 Gibson ES-335. Using country-style chromatics in a rock/blues-rock backing is a Slash trademark, and you can hear them in action in Slash's solo (at 2:25) and here in our tab example.

2 DOUBLESTOP BENDS

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩ = 120

A⁵ D⁵

let ring — — — — —

BU 12 12 (14) (12) 10 RP BD 11 (13) 12 12 (13) (11) 9 BU 5 5 BU BD 4 (6) 4 (6) (4) 2 4 2

Play 4 times

TAB

More of the country-rock here, as we start with a couple of doublestop shapes played on the first and third strings. These can be augmented by finger sliding in or hammering on from a semitone below. It's a staple Slash motif.

3 SHUFFLE PHRASING

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩ = 80

E⁷ 8th 1/4

let ring — — — — —

BU 15 (17) 15 17 (19) 15 BU 17-18 19 19 (21) 19-17 17-15 18 16 14-12 14 12-14 14 (15) 14 12 12-13 14-12 13

let ring — — — — —

BU BD 12

Play 4 times

TAB

This example is inspired by Slash's collaboration with Billie Gibbons on *Hoochie Coochie Man*. The track has a shuffle feel, and our example mirrors some of the ways Slash phrases within the shuffle feel. High-register string-bending is a Slash trademark, as is the use of chromatic notes to add extra colour.

4 WHAMMY BAR VIBRATO

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩ = 200

E⁵ w/bar

let ring — — — — — w/bar

let ring — — — — — w/bar

let ring — — — — — w/bar

Play 4 times

TAB

Yep, you read that right! Slash has opted for a tremolo-loaded Fender Strat instead of the fixed stop bars of his usual arsenal of Les Pauls on his rendition of Fleetwood Mac's *Oh Well* - and, here, we're looking at the whammy shimmer he applies on doublestops. Make sure you're holding down both the first and third strings as you wobble the tremolo arm in bars 3 and 4.

5 MAJOR KEY PHRASING

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩=105

D A D⁵ D⁵/C D⁵/B D⁵/B^b A

Play 4 times

Slash has always been great at major and Mixolydian phrasing, and in *Key To The Highway* he really goes to town, with D major and A major pentatonic scales. Our example showcases a way to navigate the classic blues turnaround in the key of D. The finger slides are a classic way to improve the overall feel and presentation.

6 REPEATING PATTERNS

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩=105

A^m

Play 4 times

Born Under A Bad Sign sees Slash channeling his inner Albert King, with his trademark pentatonic rock licks driving the solos. Here, we're looking at a trademark Slash-ism that he's employed to some extent with every act he's been in: repeatable short phrases. Most of the action takes place in bars 1 and 2, but watch out for the early change on the last note of that first bar.

7 FUNKY WAH WAH LEAD

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩=120

A^m7

1/4

Play 4 times

Slash's *Papa Was A Rolling Stone* cover sees wah and talkbox riffing, but it's in the solo at 3:54 where the hatted one really opens up with his wah pedal – and our example features a typical descending phrase. The basic pattern is two picked notes followed by a pull-off and finger-slide. This creates a four-note pattern that can be moved around on the second string as required.

8 LOW-REGISTER SOLOING

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩=107

E⁷

RP

1/4 1/4

RP

Play 4 times

TAB

BU BD

4 (5) (5) (4) 2 4 2 2 0 2 4 (5) (5) (4) 2 4

Slash's solo in his cover of Stevie Wonder's *Living For The City* starts in the low register, gradually ascending to a big finish up at the dusty end. Your main aim here in our example is to concentrate on the string bending and digging in with your pick to get all of the juice out of the notes.

9 USING THE HARMONIC MINOR SCALE

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩ = 66

Am7

3

3

3

1/4

3

1/4

Play 4 times

TAB

9 13 12 13 12 10 9 12 10 7 5 7 6 7 5 4 5 4 7 6 7 5 5 7 7

BU

9 7 5 7 5 0 7

Over the years, Slash has flirted with the harmonic minor scale to spice up his soloing, and his take on T-Bone Walker's *Stormy Monday* features an exploration of the exotic sounding scale in its unaccompanied intro. The tension of the harmonic minor scale is released by reverting back to the A minor pentatonic scale.

10 DOUBLESTOP ACCOMPANIMENT

bit.ly/tg384audio

[illegible]

Our final example is inspired by the opening doublestops in the new instrumental track *Metal Chestnut*. The 6th interval sounds great and can be used to create movement and colour. We have used a simple chord progression of A7 to D7, and then spiced it up by moving the doublestop 6ths around. We've used a slightly cleaner tone by rolling off the volume control.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

SNOW (HEY OH)

Crack John Frusciante's
chordal craftsmanship
with this Chilis classic
from 2006

Appearing on the 2006 album *Stadium Arcadium*, *Snow (Hey Oh)* features John Frusciante's driving rhythm guitar, chordal riffing and arpeggiated riffs, as well as some multi-layered harmony parts.

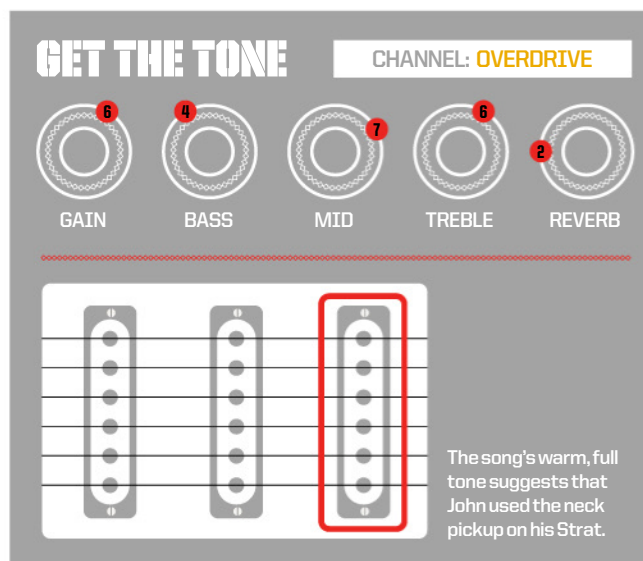
The song begins with the main guitar hook – a satisfying arpeggiated riff which John plays with alternate picking and a little melodic legato to connect the chords together. The choruses are played with 16th-note strumming courtesy of John's relaxed loose wrist style.

There are two lead guitar sections. First, Pre-chorus 2, which features a three-guitar harmony, and we've transcribed this in full, so you can try out each part. Note that it's possible to play all three parts at once – worth a go for the sake of filling out the sound. Lastly, there's the outro solo which is played with wailing, high-gain unison bends.

The guitar playing throughout the song is very dynamic, with both lightly-picked chord parts such as the verse riff, and harder picked, louder sections such as the chorus.

SOUND ADVICE

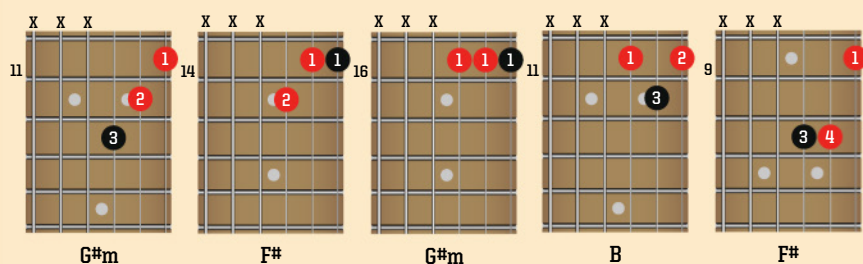
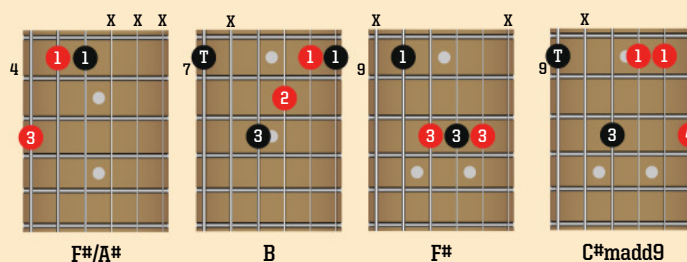
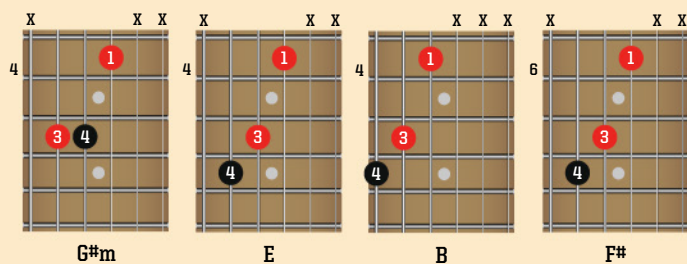
Everything you need to know before playing *Snow (Hey Oh)*



John most likely used one of his 1955 or 1962 Fender Stratocasters through a Marshall amp set to the clean channel. Set the gain so the tone is clean with softer picking, but breaks up into a lightly overdriven clean with heavier strumming. The lead guitar parts are played with a fuzz pedal and he's known to have used an MXR Super Badass Variac Fuzz paired with a Boss SD-1 in recent years.

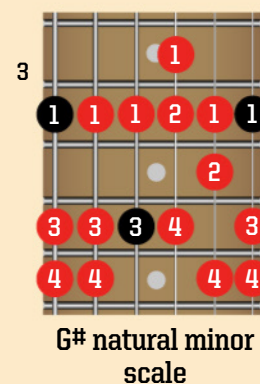
CHORDS

The song is based in the key of G#m, which contains these seven chords: G#m, A#dim, B, C#m, D#m, E F#. John uses all of these except the A#dim and D#m, so that's just five chords, but his use of different fretboard positions for the same chord gives the impression that more is going on.



SCALES

The G# natural minor scale (G# A# B C# D# E F#) acts as the framework from which all the chords in the key are taken. You can find these notes all over the fretboard, but this particular scale position is where most of the single-note hammer-ons and pull-offs in the verse riff comes from.





RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Pre-chorus 1 (cont'd)

bit.ly/tg384audio

5

This section is played with 10th intervals, which is the same as playing the root and 3rd of each chord, but with the 3rd an octave higher. Rest your fretting fingers on the adjacent strings to keep them muted. This will allow you to strum across the strings without the open strings ringing out.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Chorus 1

bit.ly/tg384audio

1:46

B

F#

C#madd⁹

Play 4 times

3

The chorus is comprised of three chords (B, F# and C#madd⁹). Play the sixth-string root notes with your thumb over the top of the neck, leaving your first, second and third fingers free to play the highest four strings. The F# chord can be played in the usual barre chord fashion with your first and third fingers.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Pre-chorus 2 (10th intervals)

bit.ly/tg384audio

3:08

E

F#

G#m

let ring

1

3

5

This is the first of four guitar tracks in the pre-chorus, and probably the one to focus on if you're playing alone. John strums this part, keeping the idle strings silent by stubbing his fingers up against them. If you've not done this before, it's just a matter of angling your fingers carefully.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Pre-chorus 2 (harmony parts)

bit.ly/tg384audio

This section is comprised of three guitar parts played in harmony with each other. Each layer of the harmony part is played on a different string, so you can pick which one you'd like to play, but they can also be combined into a single guitar part and played as chords.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Chorus 2

bit.ly/tg384audio

3:22

B F#

C#madd⁹ Play 6 times

This chorus is played with constant, driving 16th notes. Frusciante's style always feels relaxed, even in these moments, so aim to keep your wrist and forearm as loose as you can and let the weight of your hand do the work. The part is doubled from 3:58 by an overdriven guitar.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Outro chorus

bit.ly/tg384audio

4:16

B F# 1.-7. G#m 8. C#m

let ring throughout

rall.

This lead chordal part is played with a light fuzz tone. Form the three triad chord shapes with your fretting hand and use your pick to play the rhythm. Notice that the chord changes happen on the eighth note before the bar line, giving the part a pushed feel.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS SNOW (HEY OH) Outro solo

bit.ly/tg384audio

5:09

B F# G#m/C# C#m

BU BU BU

rall.

Use your first finger to play the higher note of each diad, and your second and third fingers together to grip the string on the lower note. While keeping both notes fretted, turn your wrist to bend the lower note up a tone until both strings produce the same pitch.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

OLIVIA RODRIGO

GOOD 4 U

This fun-to-play pop-punk rocker features a driving chord progression and some clean and catchy lead guitar arpeggios

We love a good pop tune here at TG, and Olivia Rodrigo's *Good 4 U*, from her 2021 debut, *Sour*, definitely counts! The album was conceived as a multi-styled tapestry of songs, taking in mainstream pop, rock, punk, folk and more – and, though Olivia doesn't usually take guitar duties on this track, she does play, for example, on her 2021 NPR Tiny Desk acoustic performance of *Good 4 U*.

For our purposes, you'll be playing a handful of easy open chord shapes and a couple of barre chords, too, all shown below – and that's all you'll need to follow the song sheet on the right.

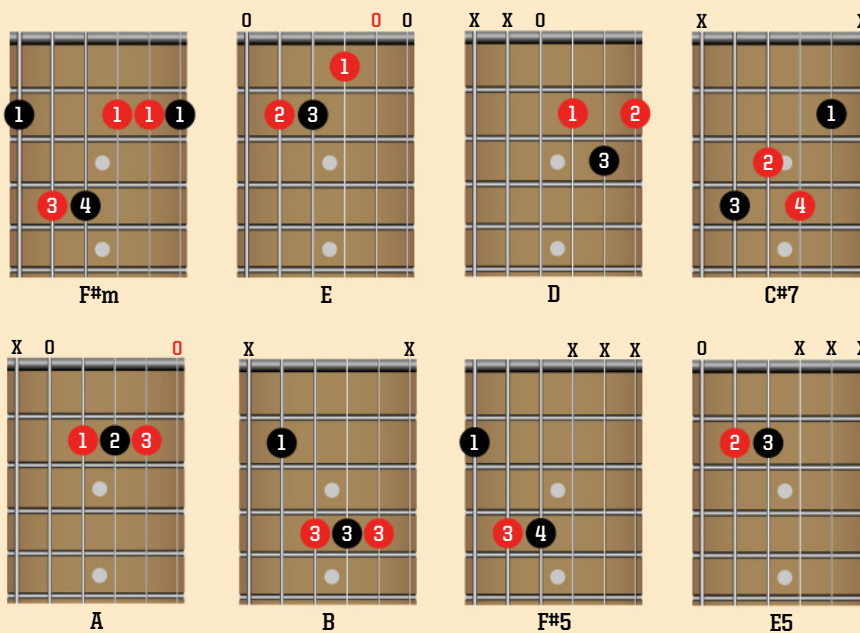
In addition, we've tabbed out the catchy guitar riff from the instrumental section so you can play it along with our backing track. This clean arpeggio part also appears in the second half of the first two choruses.



CHORDS

Here, we've written out the eight chord boxes you'll need.

All the chords come from the song's key of E Mixolydian, with the exception of the C#7. If you were only using notes of E Mixolydian (E F# G# A B C# D) then the sixth chord would be C#m7 (C#-E-G#-B), but, here in *Good 4 U*, it has been changed to a C#7 (C#-E#-G#-B) to give a stronger sounding change.



GOOD 4 U

Words and Music by Olivia Rodrigo, Daniel Nigro, Hayley Williams and Josh Farr
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-interpolates portions of Misery Business, written by Hayley Williams and Josh Farr

SONG SHEET



FIND YOUR AUDIO:
bit.ly/tg384audio

Good 4 U

Intro

F#m / / / E / / / x2

Verse 1

F#m E
Well good for you, I guess you moved on really easily

F#m E
You found a new girl and it only took a couple weeks

F#m
Remember when you said that

E D C#7
You wanted to give me the wo--orld?

F#m
And good for you

E
I guess that you've been working on yourself

F#m E
I guess that therapist I found for you

She really helped

F#m E
Now you can be a better man

D C#7
For your brand-new gi--irl

Chorus

D A E
Well, good for you, you look happy and healthy

F#m E D
Not me, if you ever cared to ask

A
Good for you

E
You're doing great out there without me, baby

F#m E D
God, I wish that I could do that

A E
I've lost my mind, I've spent the night

F#m E D
Crying on the floor of my bathroom

A E
But you're so unaffected, I really don't get it

F#m E
But I guess good for you-ou-ou-ou

Link

F#5 / / / E5 / B / x2

Verse 2

N.C. E
Well, good for you, I guess you're getting

Everything you want

F#m
You bought a new car

E
And your career's really taking off

F#m E
It's like we never even happened

D C#7
Baby, what the fuck is up with that?

F#m E
And good for you, it's like you never even met me

F#m E
Remember when you swore to God

F#m
I was the only person who ever got you?

E
Well, screw that and screw you

D
You will never have to hurt

C#7
The way you know that I do

Repeat chorus & link

Instrumental

D / / / A / / / E / / / / F#m E x2

Bridge x2

F#m E B
Maybe I'm too emotional

F#m E B
But your apathy is like a wound in salt

F#m E B
Maybe I'm too emotional

F#m E B
Or maybe you never cared at all

Dropout chorus

D A E
Well, good for you, you look happy and healthy

F#m E D
Not me, if you ever cared to ask

A
Good for you, you're doing great out there

E N.C. D
Without me, baby, like a damn sociopath!

A E
I've lost my mind, I've spent the night

F#m E D
Crying on the floor of my bathroom

A E
But you're so unaffected, I really don't get it

F#m E
But I guess good for you

Repeat link

Outro

F#5
Well, good for you

E5 B F#5
I guess you moved on really easily

OLIVIA RODRIGO GOOD 4 U Chorus / instrumental

bit.ly/tg384audio

♩=166
N.C. D A E F# E

1:49 let ring throughout

TAB

1

5

This line leads the instrumental section and spices up the choruses. The key to getting it sounding like the recording is to dial in a dynamic clean tone and to let the notes ring out. A touch of chorus effect is a nice addition. Fret the part by keeping your first finger in 5th position in bars 1 to 2, then 7th position in bars 3 and 4.

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.



82 EPIPHONE DAVE GROHL DG-335

The best of Foo, or a mere Pretender? Grohl's affordable new signature model is here

86 PRS SE CE 24 STANDARD SATIN

This satin-finished CE bolt-on is now PRS's most affordable guitar!

88 ESP LTD KH-V KIRK HAMMETT

The latest signature for the Metallica guitarist is a lot more pointy than the last one... This monster is casually dressed

90 BLACKSTAR ID:CORE V4 STEREO 10 COMBO

Blackstar raise the bar yet again for digital practice amplification

92 GRETSCH G2604T STREAMLINER RALLY II CENTER BLOCK

Rally the troops: Gretsch's latest model may be the ultimate affordable semi-hollow

94 DANELECTRO NICHOLS 1966

Distortion and fuzz not heard since the '60s



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



SOME ISSUES



POOR



START ME UP!

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

BEETRONICS WANABEE BEELATERAL BUZZ

1 If you're constantly hunting for Holy Grail drive sounds, Beetronics thinks it might have the solution with the Wanabee Beelateral Buzz. This dual-pedal combines three voices of Klon-style boost with another three Bluesbreaker-inspired overdrive options. You can run the two independently or simultaneously, with the ability to blend the sounds in parallel.

£315

www.beetronicsfx.com

IK MULTIMEDIA TONEX ONE

2 IK has taken its ToneX modelling technology, and shrunk it down into a mini-pedal. The ToneX One can be any one of IK's TONEX amp, boost, overdrive, distortion or fuzz pedals at once, with three saveable presets on board, two operation modes (Dual for A/B preset switching or Stomp for traditional toggling). There's a micro-tuner, USB interface, colour-codeable controls and more!

£179

www.ikmultimedia.com

MOOER PRIME S1

3 Moorer are well-versed in delivering a lot of bang for your buck, and with the S1 Prime it looks set to continue. This compact multi-FX houses 126 effects models, as well as an 80-second looper, and 80 drum machine patterns to jam along with. Need a metronome? It's got 10 of 'em, as well as a clean, four-button layout for switching sounds.

£169

www.moeraudio.com

HARLEY BENTON TRAVELMATE

4 Thomann-owned Harley Benton claims its new TravelMate travel acoustics are set to "redefine" the concept. The TravelMate and TravelMate-E are both made of carbon fibre with half-size bodies and a 580mm scale-length. The TravelMate-E includes HB's SP1 effects and bluetooth-equipped pickup system, which can interface with the Enya app for further creativity.

£154/£239

www.harleybenton.com

SEYMOUR DUNCAN CORY BEAULIEU DAMOCLES

5 Trivium's Cory Beaulieu has been a Seymour Duncan Blackout user for a long time, and now he's developed a signature set with the pickup brand. The Cory Beaulieu Damocles have been tailored to deliver a high-output tone with added presence and greater clarity for down-tuned playing. They come in six and seven-string sets and are available now.

\$145

www.seymourduncan.com



EPIPHONE DAVE GROHL DG-335

£1,249

The best of Foo, or a mere Pretender? Grohl's long-awaited new signature model is here

Dave Grohl needs very little introduction. From having a hand (or both hands) in changing the course of rock as the drummer in Nirvana to steadily growing Foo Fighters from a collection of self-recorded songs into a stadium-filling band, he's become the poster boy for all things rock in mainstream culture. Rewind to 1995, and it's most likely you'll see him bouncing between Gibson Les Paul Standards and Customs, Explorers and SGs. Throw in the odd Firebird and RD, and it's clear that – spare a brief dalliance with an Ampeg Dan Armstrong, the clear-bodied Lucite guitar you can see in the *All My Life* video –

go-to since 2007. Originally released as a mega-expensive, Memphis-made guitar, the DG-335 has been issued and reissued a few times since it was first released, with used examples pushing towards £20,000 at times.

Well, now it's been issued as a production model under Gibson's Epiphone brand, giving real-world Foos fans the opportunity to bag the iconic colour and shape without having to sacrifice basic necessities like food and heating.

Spec-wise, it would've been easy to start putting lines through the spreadsheet to save money, but Epiphone has kept it pretty faithful. There's the double-bound, laminated body (maple and

1 TRINI LOPEZ-INSPIRED

Many of the guitar's visual features come from Grohl's love of the Gibson Trini Lopez signature model – there's the six-in-line headstock, diamond-shaped F-holes and split-diamond inlays.

2 GIBSON PICKUPS

These aren't soundalikes. They're the same US-made Gibson Burstbucker 2 and 3 found in the elusive Gibson version of this guitar.

3 THE COLOUR AND THE SHAPE

It's not nitrocellulose, but then we weren't expecting it to be. Regardless, Epiphone has aped the Pelham Blue hue of Grohl's distinctive on-stage guitar brilliantly.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminated maple/poplar, with maple centre-block

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE: 24.75-inches

FINGERBOARD: Indian laurel

FRETS: 22

PICKUPS: Gibson USA Burstbucker 2 (neck) and 3 (bridge)

CONTROLS: Volume x2, tone x2, three-way selector switch

HARDWARE: Epiphone lockTone T-o-M bridge and tailpiece, Grover Mini-Rotomatic tuners, nickel

FINISH: Pelham Blue

CONTACT: Epiphone, www.epiphone.com



THE GUITAR THAT FOO FIGHTERS FANS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

Grohl has almost exclusively favoured Gibson models.

His leanings towards slightly leftfield variations go back to before the conception of Foo Fighters though, thanks to a chance purchase of a 1967 Gibson Trini Lopez model while he was still drumming in Nirvana. This cherry red guitar would go on to play a massive part in the band's sound and history, with Grohl using it to track the bulk of his guitar parts on every one of the band's studio releases.

But as well as that, Grohl used it to inform much of the design of the Pelham Blue Gibson DG-335 signature model that's been his

popular rather than the Gibson's pure maple), one-piece mahogany neck, and a laurel – rather than rosewood – fingerboard. The elusive Trini Lopez features adopted by Grohl are all present, too: diamond-shaped F-holes, split-diamond inlays and the Firebird-style six-in-line headstock all combine with the Pelham Blue paint job to complete the picture.

But one of the biggest features is bubbling at the surface: the DG is packing Gibson USA pickups. In the neck position we get a Burstbucker 2, and the bridge humbucker is a Burstbucker 3 – the same pairing found in the USA version.





In Your Honor

The Epiphone DG-335 pays tribute to one of Grohl's most prized guitars

Gibson released two signature models for Trini Lopez: the Standard and the Deluxe. The latter was a fully-hollow electric based on the Barney Kessel shape with pronounced horns and wide cutaways. It's the Trini Lopez Standard, however, which found favour with Grohl, who first picked one up in 1992. Since then, Dave attributes much of the Foo Fighters' guitar sound to his Trini, which can be seen in the *Best Of You* video. In 2011, he told NME of his vintage guitar, "I didn't really know anything about Trini Lopez, the artist, when I bought it, but this f*cking thing... this is the sound of the Foo Fighters, this guitar. On every record I might use other guitars every now and then, but for the most part it's just this."

To the back of the headstock sits Grohl's signature, and the guitar comes in a sturdy hardcase, which, while devoid of any candy, does include a larger version of the same John Hancock on the outside.

Straight out of the box, the DG-335 cuts a familiar figure – the hue of the finish is spot on, and delivered flawlessly to boot. Acoustically, it's fairly vibrant and lively, which we think bodes well before plugging in.

The neck shape is also a little different to the norm, another 'win' in our book, rather than opting for an off-the-peg profile. Epiphone calls it an Elliptical C-shape, and it's quite different to the common SlimTaper profile – it's rounded, wider, chunkier and more of a palm-filler that strikes



a great balance for chord and rhythm playing at the lower frets, while giving us a great anchor for string bends and lead playing.

The tone is where the heart is, though, and those USA pickups earn their spot. Many of Grohl's tones come from a combination of Vox AC30 or Fender-style cleans, combined with Marshall and Mesa/Boogie for the dirt. Yes, we're talking relatively meat and potatoes for a lot of Foo Fighters sounds, but as we all know, getting the simple things right can present as much of a challenge as more complex sounds. Not here though, because with our modeller dialled in, we were able to quickly replicate some typical Grohl sounds using very little processing beyond amps, overdrive and delay.

But, it goes beyond Foo Fighters. This is essentially a rock-friendly ES-335, and it's got the firepower to cover everything from blues to indie to classic rock tones with ease.

As with every successful signature guitar, you're wearing your influences around your neck with the DG-335. For fans and tribute bands, it's the guitar we've been waiting for. For everyone else, it's Dave Grohl's guitar, and a fine one it is, too.

Stuart Williams

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

ALSO TRY...

EPIPHONE EMILY WOLFE SHERATON

£969

Emily Wolfe's signature semi-hollow delivers some of the DG's visual cues, namely the diamond-shaped soundholes, with a SlimTaper neck and Epiphone Alnico Classic PRO pickups.



GRETSCH STREAMLINER G2622

£549

This G2622 in Gunmetal gets you some way towards the DG vibe, at a lower price point. It's loaded with Broad'Tron BT-35 'buckers, with coil-splitting from the controls.



VINTAGE VSA500

£429

More traditional than the DG, this is a great budget semi that will see you right with Grover tuners and Wilkinson pickups. Plus, it's the same colour as Grohl's inspiration.



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PRS SE CE 24 STANDARD SATIN

£499

This satin-finished CE bolt-on is now PRS's most affordable guitar!

You don't need us to tell you that everything seems more expensive than it did a couple of years back. Guitars are no different. A USA-made Core level PRS guitar, for example, will now cost north of £4k. Even PRS's second tier USA S2 models now start dangerously close to £2k. Since 1981, the PRS guitars that most of us play come from the SE range: designed by the PRS boffs in the USA and now made in Indonesia (and China). All good, except even the lowest-priced model, the SE CE 24, released last year, now costs £695, while the classic SE Custom is barely a beer under £1k.

The CE model (originally the Classic Electric) dates back to 1987, their first bolt-on guitar designed to cut the cost of their more expensive, all-mahogany Standard and maple-topped Custom. But the current USA CE 24 costs a dizzying £2,775, which is why that SE version is such a welcome addition. But now PRS has shaved nearly £200 off the price with this new start-up Standard Satin version: exactly the same guitar with a couple of frankly minor changes.

First off, the flame maple veneered top is ditched, leaving an all-mahogany body – hence its 'Standard' name – but with the same 'shallow violin' top carve. Secondly, it's a no-gloss zone: this new addition comes in just three satin 'open pore' finishes. For those of us that like the more workingman-style here over the all glossy flame maple PRS proposition, this is quite the deal.

There's nothing 'cheap' here. The guitar has a good, light weight

of 7.4lb, it uses PRS' original 25-inch scale length, the satin-finished maple neck has a scarfed headstock – just like the USA Silver Sky, CE 24 and S2 models – and finely fettled, proper rosewood fingerboard with 'old school' bird inlays and medium jumbo gauge frets on a 10-inch camber. It's the essence of PRS which, as ever, is ready to gig from the moment you pull it out of its standard SE gigbag.

Our previous experience of the 85/15 'S' pickups in both full humbucking and partial single-coil modes has always been positive, but there's just something else going on here. Is it just our imagination, or is that ultra-thin finish giving us just a little more resonance? That's our impression: it's a very classic-to-modern, rock-ready voice with those very good single-coil sounds – exactly the sort of guitar for any player having to cover lots of bases without swapping guitars, and a sort of halfway house between the Gibson and Fender classics. As ever, with basic string stretching, it's stable and typically very in-tune.

Hey, it's a lowly offering, but it's still a perfectly made PRS. A no-brainer for any player, well-heeled or skint – not to mention a potential modding platform. Just where could you take one of these?

Dave Burruck

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

1 VIBRATO

This CE might only cost £499, but it uses exactly the same all-steel vibrato that's used through the SE range and also on the USA CE 24 and S2 models. It's designed to sit parallel to the top of the body and has a push-in arm with swing tension adjustment.

2 PICKUPS

The PRS-designed, Indonesian-made 'S' pickups are now exclusive to the SE models. For the past decade they've been used on the USA S2 guitars, too, but these have now switched to USA-made pickups. The 85/15 'S' pickups are more modern sounding compared to the 58/15 'S'.

3 CONTROLS

PRS invariably offer humbucking and single-coil voices on the majority of guitars they've built since 1985. The system here uses 500k ohm volume and tone pots, the latter with a pull-switch that partially splits each humbucker.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Maple, wide-thin profile, bolt-in
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 24, medium
PICKUPS: PRS 85/15 'S' Treble and Bass humbuckers
CONTROLS: 3-way toggle pickup selector switch, master volume and tone (w/ pull-switch coil split)
HARDWARE: PRS vibrato (cast), PRS designed non-locking tuners
FINISH: Turquoise (as reviewed), Charcoal, Vintage Cherry
CONTACT: PRS, www.prsguitars.com





LTD KH-V KIRK HAMMETT

£1,399

The latest signature for the Metallica guitarist is a lot more pointy than the last one... This monster is casually dressed!

A quick glance at recent signature releases might lead you to believe it's Kirk Hammett's world and we're just living in it. There was the purple sparkle edition of his KH95X Cry Baby back in 2022, and then a lot of excitement over replicas of his prized 'Greeny' 1959 Les Paul Standard – previously owned by Peter Green and Gary Moore – through the Gibson and Epiphone brands. But those who prefer an all-out metal machine may find such tools a little too vintage-leaning in both appearance and design, with one of the PAF-style humbuckers wired upside down and a Greeny Burst finish to replicate the original's fade from Cherry Sunburst to Lemon after all those decades of heavy usage.

Which is precisely where ESP come in. Following a recommendation from Anthrax's Scott Ian in 1987, the Metallica axeman has been using their instruments for nearly 40 years, famously relying on horror-themed models like 'The Mummy' and 'White Zombie'. The new line of KH-Vs, through their affordable Korean-made LTD brand, are certainly striking, arriving in three loud finishes for a modern twist on Gibson's classic Flying V shape, doubling up on inspiration by the choice of korina for the body. Most importantly of all, they come fitted with the guitarist's signature EMG Bone Breaker set, utilising Alnico 5 and ceramic magnets in the neck and bridge, respectively. As you'd expect from active humbuckers of this nature, they're very much voiced for high-gain

players, catering to the muscular aggression Metallica pioneered and helped popularise.

Of course, every instrument comes with its own unique compromises and, as is often the case with high-output EMGs, the clean tones aren't particularly versatile or inspiring. On the other hand, they're not as compressed as Hammett's 81/81 sets of the past – if you're in a band like Metallica, the less driven sounds are still perfectly usable, as the four horsemen themselves have proven time and time again on live renditions of *Nothing Else Matters*, *Fade To Black* and *One*.

Other notable appointments include the TonePros Locking Tune-O-Matic bridge with strings coming through the body – increasing both stability and sustain – with more reassurance provided by the locking tuners. Extra tonal reinforcement is provided by the neck-through design, allowing resonance to travel from the very top of the guitar to its base to produce chords that never seem to stop ringing, while the 24 extra jumbo frets make the Hammett style of soloing as seamless as possible.

All in all, it comes as little surprise that this latest signature is less versatile than the Greeny tributes, though there can be no doubt it's the perfect weapon to seek and destroy.

Amit Sharma

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

1 NECK-THROUGH

This kind of construction means the nut, strings, fretboard, pickups and bridge are all mounted on the same block of wood; in this case a three-piece maple laminate.

2 PICKUPS

As well as recommending ESP, Scott Ian also influenced Hammett's longstanding relationship with EMG, leading to the KH20/KH21 sets, and, more recently, the Bone Breakers, released in 2018.

3 INLAYS

These unique pearloid wave inlays on the Macassar ebony fingerboard are another noteworthy customisation you'll only find on the new Hammett models.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Korina
NECK: Three-piece maple neck-thru
FINGERBOARD: Macassar Ebony
FRETS: 24 XJ
PICKUPS: 2x EMG Bone Breaker humbuckers
CONTROLS: Three-way toggle, volume and tone
HARDWARE: TonePros Locking TOM bridge with String Thru, LTD locking tuners
FINISH: Red Sparkle (as reviewed), Black Sparkle, Metallic Gold
CASE: ESP Deluxe Hardshell
CONTACT: ESP, esp guitars.com





BLACKSTAR ID:Core V4 STEREO 10 COMBO



£139

Blackstar raise the bar yet again for digital practice amplification

Blackstar's relentless R&D program means there's a practically endless flow of new products coming off the production line; most recently it was the turn of their affordable ID:Core programmable amps to get an upgrade, so let's take a fresh look at the ID:Core Stereo 10 in its new V4 guise. The smallest amp in the ID:Core range, the Stereo 10 doesn't skimp on features; the control panel has a new smart

streaming input. The V4 also gets the modern standard USB 'C' plug for direct recording and connection to Blackstar's Architect software app, which lets you deep edit amp and effects settings, and dial in your virtual live environments with CabRig Lite, Blackstar's real time speaker emulation.

Architect's clean graphics and logical workflows make editing and storing patches a breeze, and for those writer's block moments there's a clever 'randomise'

Even more impressive, though, is the quality of its recording and streaming outputs and their ease of use. The ID:Core's improved effects are ideal for recording and will often replace other plugins, saving your computer's processing power for other things.

The practice amp market is one of the most competitive, with a wide choice of products offering an often bewildering range of features. However, the revised ID:Core range gives players everything they need (and more) in a compact, desktop-sized package that's so easy to use it quickly becomes intuitive and great fun. The ID:Core Stereo 10's features would cost many hundreds, if not thousands of pounds in the analogue world; the digital revolution packs it all into a compact box that's insane value for money and ideal for players at all levels, from beginners to serious professionals.

Nick Guppy

INSANE VALUE FOR MONEY

brushed aluminium overlay, with knobs for voice select, gain, volume and a single EQ control based on Blackstar's patented ISF (Infinite Shape Feature), which morphs the EQ from British to USA voicing. There are knobs for effects selection and level, together with a tap tempo button, and a new power reduction switch that drops the output level to just one watt – ideal for quiet practice.

Other handy features include separate 3.5mm jacks for headphones and Blackstar's CabRig Lite speaker emulation, plus a 3.5mm TRRS line in/

function which can come up with unexpected tones to help kickstart your creativity. You can save six patches into the amp, with practically unlimited offline storage using Architect as a librarian. In use, the ID:Core Stereo 10's special design 3" loudspeakers sound impressive, especially with the Super Wide Stereo function engaged. The Stereo 10's six amp voices cover pristine cleans, touch-sensitive crunch tones for classic rock and blues, all the way up to soaring leads and fat chugging metal rhythm.

1 USB/POWER

The V4 versions of the ID:Core range have been upgraded to USB 'C'. There's also a new power reduction switch, dropping output to one watt.

2 VOICES

The ID:Core's six amp voices cover everything from sparkling cleans to aggressive crunch tones.

3 EFFECTS

The ID:Core V4's effects section delivers high-quality simultaneous modulation, delay and reverb effects, which can be deep-edited via Blackstar's free Architect app.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Programmable digital guitar amp

OUTPUT: 2 x 5 watts RMS stereo

LOUDSPEAKERS: 2 x 3" Blackstar special design

DIMENSIONS: 340mm(w) x 185mm (d) x 265mm (h)

WEIGHT: 3.7kg / 8lb

CABINET: Particle board

CHANNELS: Six programmable voices

CONTACT: Blackstar Amplification, blackstaramps.com

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



GRETSCH G2604T STREAMLINER RALLY II CENTER BLOCK

£569

Rally the troops: Gretsch's latest model may be the ultimate affordable semi-hollow

Over the last few years, Gretsch's Streamliner range has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity thanks to their wallet-friendly pricing, superb build quality, and the ability to replicate the classic twang of their flashier siblings.

Speeding into the catalogue is the G2604T Rally II, which promises an abundance of horsepower from the duo of Super HiLo'Tron pickups, perfect handling with its lightning-fast neck and classic styling with the vintage-inspired go-faster-stripes. But can it deliver?

Our first impression of this retro-inspired semi-hollow is that it's absolutely stunning. The lemony hue of the Bamboo Yellow top with the dark and subtle Copper Metallic back is a pairing that screams elegance and sophistication. Throw in the radio-style G-branded control knobs, the iconic Neo-Classic Thumbnail fret markers, as well as a glistening chrome Bigsby, and you have a guitar that's most definitely worthy of the Gretsch name on the headstock.

Now, putting that gorgeous aesthetic aside for the moment, let's move on to playability, where this guitar really comes into its own. Gretsch describes the neck as a "Thin U" – and boy, is it thin. Okay, it may not be in Ibanez Wizard territory, but it's undoubtedly slimmer than some players may be expecting.

That said, it's very comfortable and despicably quick to navigate. Pair the slight profile with the 12" radius of the fingerboard and medium jumbo frets, and you get a playing surface that feels

distinctly modern and a joy to hold.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Gretsch without a Bigsby, and the B70 model used here perfectly illustrates why so many players find it difficult to separate these two legendary brands. This vibrato unit feels smooth and responsive, and even when we got a little more aggressive, it held its tuning remarkably well.

Progressing to the pickups and we are greeted with the Super HiLo'Tron set. Delivering a higher output than your typical Filter'Tron, these humbuckers are radiant in their top end, with plenty of mid-range and just enough lows. As you'd imagine, this vintage-style Gretsch is ideal for clean, sparkly country and slightly pushed blues, but it can even handle the rockier side of things, too.

Thanks in part to a chambered mahogany centre block that runs the body's length and the slightly louder pickup set, we found that the G2604T could more than walk on the wilder side of rock and heavier alternative.

Gretsch has knocked it out of the park with the latest entry to the Streamliner pantheon. Yes, the Rally II may be affordable, but Gretsch certainly hasn't held anything back. To us, this guitar is hyper-playable, exquisitely finished and fiercely versatile – what more do you need?

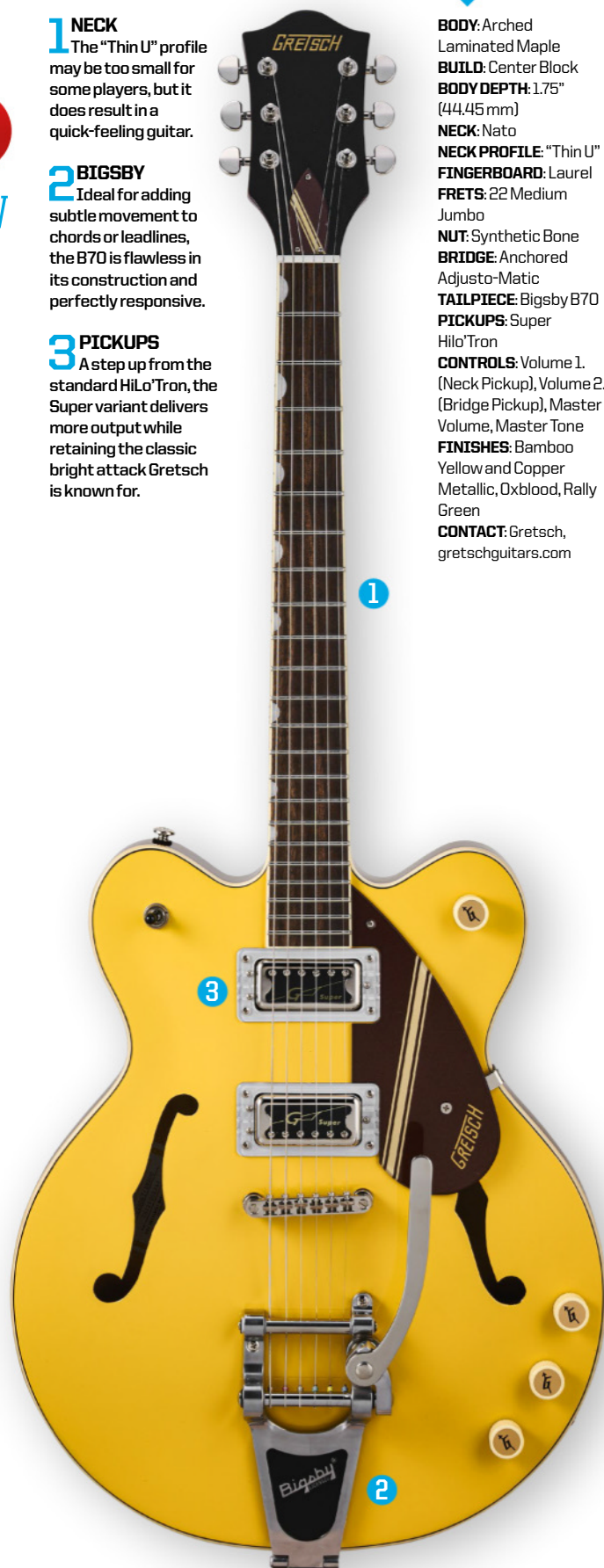
Daryl Robertson

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

1 NECK
The "Thin U" profile may be too small for some players, but it does result in a quick-feeling guitar.

2 BIGSBY
Ideal for adding subtle movement to chords or leadlines, the B70 is flawless in its construction and perfectly responsive.

3 PICKUPS
A step up from the standard HiLo'Tron, the Super variant delivers more output while retaining the classic bright attack Gretsch is known for.



AT A GLANCE

BODY: Arched
Laminated Maple
BUILD: Center Block
BODY DEPTH: 1.75"
(44.45 mm)
NECK: Nato
NECK PROFILE: "Thin U"
FINGERBOARD: Laurel
FRETS: 22 Medium
Jumbo
NUT: Synthetic Bone
BRIDGE: Anchored
Adjusto-Matic
TAILPIECE: Bigsby B70
PICKUPS: Super
HiLo'Tron
CONTROLS: Volume 1.
(Neck Pickup), Volume 2.
(Bridge Pickup), Master
Volume, Master Tone
FINISHES: Bamboo
Yellow and Copper
Metallic, Oxblood, Rally
Green
CONTACT: Gretsch,
gretschguitars.com



DANELECTRO NICHOLS 1966

£189

Distortion and fuzz not heard since the '60s

Many of the fuzz, distortion and overdrive pedals released these days are variations on circuitry that has been around for yonks, and the Danelectro Nichols 1966 follows that trend. The big difference, though, is that the particular circuitry here has not been heard for the best part of 50 years. This is no Tone Bender or Fuzz Face knockoff, but rather an original design created in 1966 by a teenaged Steve Ridinger, founder of Foxx pedals, then living in Nichols canyon, LA.

The reason the pedal, originally called the Liverpool Fuzz, has now seen the light of day is that Ridinger is in charge at Danelectro and felt a revival was overdue, so

the pedal joins Dano's 'Vintage' range which also includes the 3699 Fuzz, a recreation of the Foxx Tone Machine.

The key to dialling in a sound on the pedal is in the interaction of the Fuzz and Drive knobs, which work together to deliver a wide range of dirt tones. The Drive knob by itself produces a gradual increase in low-level overdrive – from putting a bit of hair on a clean sound through to gritty breakup, all of which are eminently usable. However, with the Fuzz knob also in action, the Drive knob's fundamental role is to add a textural crispy edge to the thicker sound that the Fuzz knob brings in, with plenty of sweet spots available as you balance the two.

There's plenty of EQ adjustment available, too; a Mid Cut toggle switch brings in a scoop that thins out the midrange for a more focussed top and bottom, while the Tone knob can dial you in a leaner sound with more emphasis on the top. Overall, the juxtaposition of all the controls gives plenty to be explored in the field of raunchy distortion, but if it's fuzz you are after, there's a real treat once the Fuzz knob gets past 3 o'clock for full-on fat fuzz with loads of sustain.

Rescued from oblivion, the Nichols 1966 is a flexible source of distorted tones, all of which are delivered with a decent response to touch and volume knob cleanup. Worth the wait.

Trevor Curwen

AT A GLANCE

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Fuzz/DC adaptor

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, Tone, Fuzz, Drive, Stock/Mid Cut switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 59 (w) x 112 (d) x 55 mm (h)

“ THIS IS NO FUZZ FACE COPY, RATHER AN ORIGINAL DESIGN RESCUED FROM OBLIVION ”

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

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Words Phil Weller Photo Amia Watling

HAAL

Formed by two schoolmates from a picturesque but lifeless town in Devon, HAAL came to life in Bristol while the pair studied at university, and they blame the city for accentuating their weirdness. Guitarist/vocalist Alfie Hay's dad has since called their music "menacing" and his friend says she always "feels weird" after their shows. But it didn't use to be like that.

"We found Bristol to be open to experimental music," Alfie says. "It's a comfortable environment to get weird. The heavier we got, the less we cared about how it might be perceived. We'll play eight minute songs and people won't walk out to go for a cig."

Their debut EP, *Back To Shilmarine* ices gloomy, post-hardcore soundscapes with

frenetic, industrial hardcore and noisy-as-hell finales. They operate on a shoestring budget and it works wonders for them. It was only recently that Alfie bought his first proper guitar, having previously abused his drummer's Fender Jaguar. He's opted for a Chapman ML3 Modern – "I wanted a guitar that looked like a Tele but didn't sound like one" – which he puts through pedals built for him by bassist and childhood friend, Joe Collins. It's saved him a fortune.

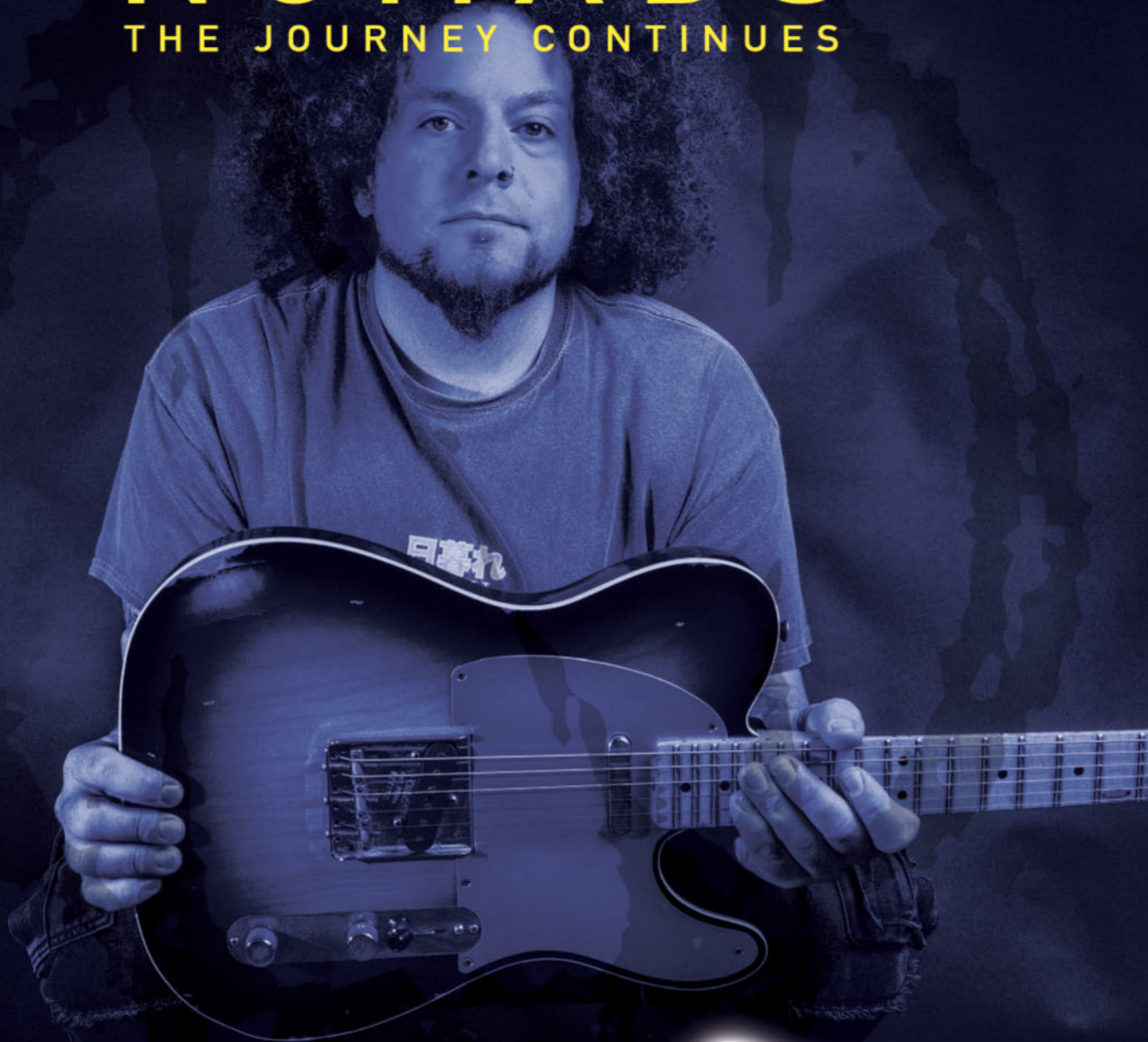
He explains: "I'd be looking at buying a pedal and Joe would go, 'I can build you one instead'. He built a harmonic EQ which we call the Joey Special. It makes any amp sound expensive. We don't take amps to gigs – we just borrow whatever's there, so that pedal is genuinely brilliant. Joe also made a fuzz which has about 20 switches on it, it's mad!

It's all the different types of fuzz tones I like in one pedal. He even put a +100db switch on it. It blew out the speakers in the practice room and we've never used it again."

Alfie's pedalboard is completed by a Boss tuner – "those are the hardest to mark" – a DD-8 Digital Delay for "warpy, shimmer-verbs", Earthquaker's Arpanoid polyphonic pitch appregiator, and two more Collins copies, of an MXR Micro Amp and a Fulltone Hot Cakes respectively. For the rest of their weird effects, the band relies on the "pedalboard within himself" synth player, Ethan Jones. Alfie, meanwhile, also embraces the "beautiful, twinkling" sound of harmonics. "They feel like the antithesis of our breakdowns," he says, "and when I'm playing in different tunings the harmonics will move too, revealing secret notes."

NOMADS

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



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