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THE GUITARS

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THE TONES

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Joe

PERFORM



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Welcome...



With Aerosmith currently on their Peace Out farewell tour, this month we speak to guitarist Joe Perry who looks back over his 50 years with the band, and discusses how some of their greatest songs were created. *Dream On*, *Love In An Elevator* and more are featured, and, of course, *Walk This Way*, which Joe tells us “happened in a soundcheck.” Crikey!

My first experience of Aerosmith was around the band's collaboration with Run-D.M.C. on this very song. I think I was about 10 at the time; I know I was unaware of the original album track on *Toys In The Attic*. A few years later, after I'd been learning guitar for a while, this was an album I sought out – and the lighter, funkier *Walk This Way* was an inspiration. It still is. I can play it, but, truth be told, I've never really mastered the solos.

Of course, Joe Perry is an icon who has influenced countless players – and G N' R's Richard Fortus is one. In our interview, Richard tells us how *Toys In The Attic* was not only a huge influence on him, but that it was the first album he bought, aged nine. Though, of course, he learnt all the solos.

Elsewhere, we talk to Joe's tech, Darren Hurst, who gives us a deep insight into Joe's 600+ guitar collection and his walls of amps, and he gives us his top tips for sounding like Joe.

And finally, why not try our lesson on Perry's playing style, which, hopefully, is an easier way to get started than going all-in on learning entire albums!

I hope you enjoy the issue. See you next month!

Chris

Chris Bird Editor

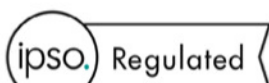
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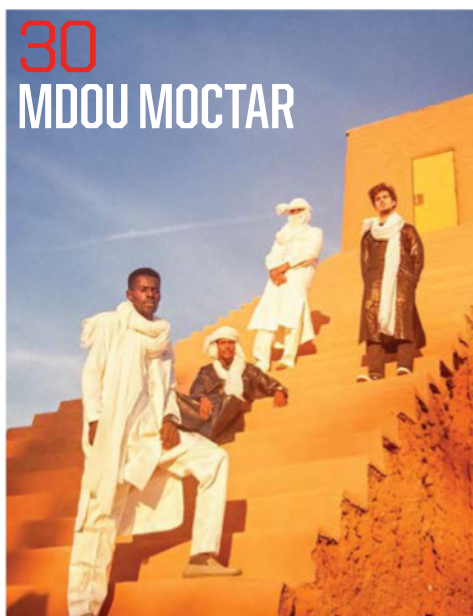
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JOE PERRY

Cover image: Ross Halfin



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MONITOR

PEOPLE ★ NEWS ★ NOISE

06

GS, I LOVE YOU

As Taylor turns 50, it hasn't forgotten the little guy.
Could this be the best looking GS-Mini of all?

Words Stuart Williams
Photography Olly Curtis

T

aylor is often thought of as a 'modern' guitar brand, and comparatively, it sort of is. But, it might surprise you to learn

that 2024 marks 50 years of Taylor guitars, and it's been celebrating with a slew of Anniversary models.

Among the blinged-up Builders Edition models, though, is a tip of the hat to one of its most popular models at the other end of the market – the GS Mini. First launched an equally surprising 14 years ago, this shrunk strummer has been one of our favourite workhorse acoustics ever since. For the 50th Anniversary model (£1,049), Taylor has paired Indian rosewood back and sides, with a torrefied Sitka spruce top. It keeps the same Grand Symphony (hence the GS) body shape, and the neo-tropical mahogany neck is once again compacted with a 23.5-inch scale-length, rosewood fingerboard. The whole lot is finished in a striking sunburst finish, and other visual touches include the diamond-shaped silhouette inlays, firestripe scratchplate and gold hardware. Electronically, it's fitted with Taylor's ES2 Expression System pickup/preamp, and it comes with a road-ready Taylor gigbag.

UP CLOSE



Anniversary

Incredibly, 14 years has passed since we first played a Taylor GS Mini, and the brand is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.



Sunburst finish

The GS Mini has come a long way since its launch, with nine models in the current line-up. Here, it's a rosewood body/spruce top combo and it looks amazing.



Electronics

It's fitted with Taylor's ES2 Expression System, so you can plug this workhorse, small-scale acoustic in straight out of the box.



ALBUM

"I'VE MOVED AWAY FROM THE 'STUN GUITAR' APPROACH"

RICHIE KOTZEN HAS MODIFIED HIS STYLE - BUT NOT HIS SIGNATURE TELE

Richie Kotzen is at it again with his latest single *Cheap Shots*, part of a grander plan, an album titled *Nomad*. He also begins a 95-date UK/European tour this month, which will see the iconic Tele-toting virtuoso slug his way through an array of new and classic cuts.

How did *Cheap Shots* come about?

This one was funny because I was playing some ideas for my wife and I said, 'I'm not sure what I'm going to sing.' As I was playing, I heard a melody, and I just started singing. I said to her, 'Don't be offended, but you've got to get out of here because I don't want to forget this!'

And you've got a full-length record on the way.

I'm using the title *Nomad*. Compared to my previous work, there's a lot of stuff on here where I'm soloing with a very clean tone, which is very specific for guitar. I don't know if it's my age, but I'm enjoying less distortion and more clear tones where you can hear the roundness of the notes.

Is that indicative of your overall progression as a guitarist?

I've kind of gone into another realm with the instrument. There's some long solos and interesting chord changes. It's not just playing over a typical riff and saying, 'Okay, here's a solo over eight bars, and a simple chord progression'. The songs are more complex harmonically. I think people will be intrigued.

What led to this direction?

Once I started taking my voice more seriously, that changed my guitar playing. I've moved away from the 'stun guitar' approach and started phrasing differently. Instead of thinking about patterns and shapes, I started thinking about melodic phrases, knowing where the notes are, and executing them.

Which of your new songs best reflects this approach?

I don't want to give too much away, but why not get people wondering? There's a song called *Nihilist*, and it's one of the most interesting compositions I've released in a long time. It's unique to me, so that would be a song that I'd think people would want to check out.

What's the latest on your touring rig?

I'm using a Marshall 59HW. It's the original four-input plexiglass panel Marshall. There's a certain percussiveness, snap, and thump that I love. I plugged that into a 4x12 cabinet and was turned onto these speakers called 'Creambacks,' which are 60w Celestions. And for pedals, I've got my Tech 21 fly rig, the RK5, which is my multi-effects pedal.

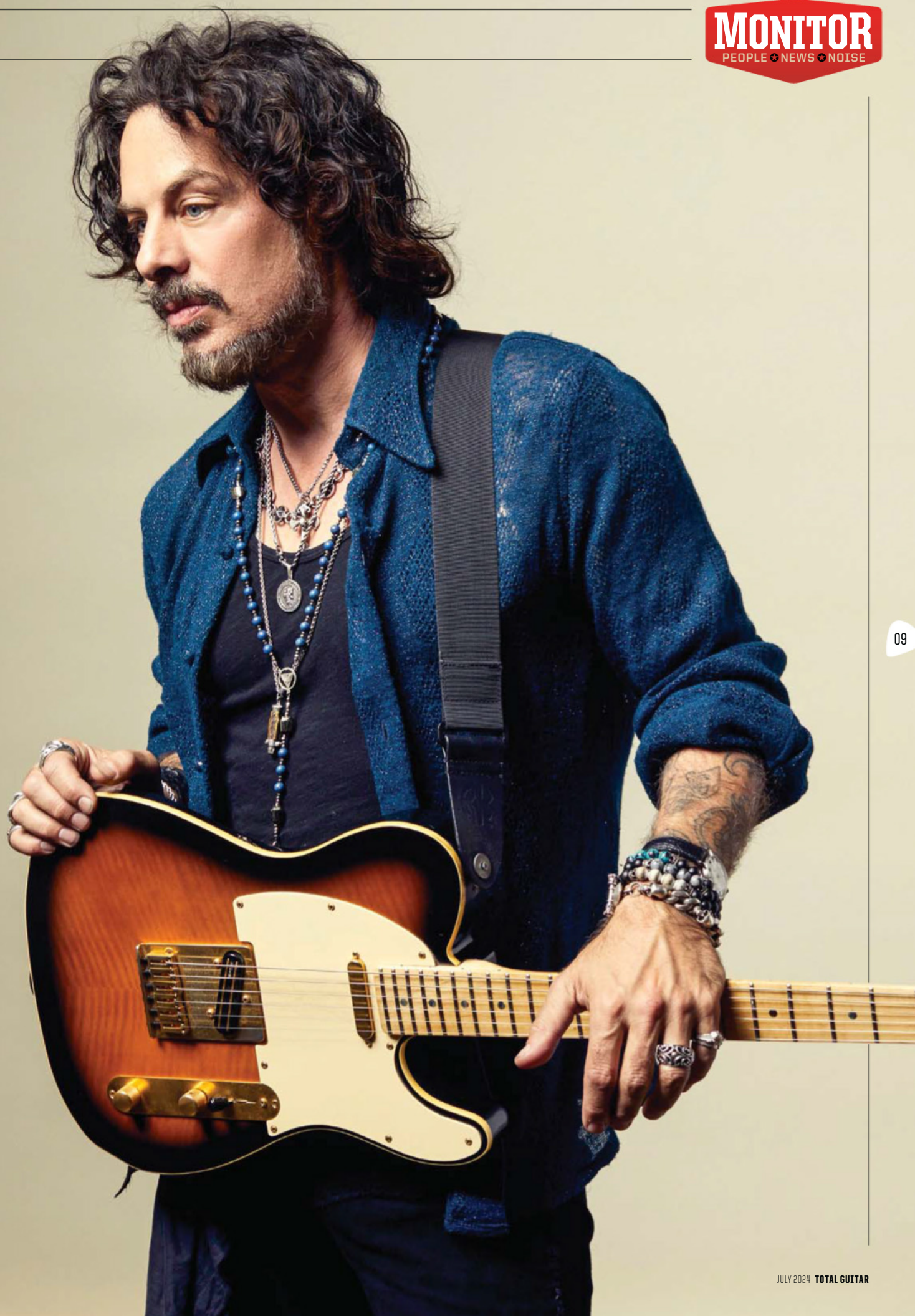
Any updates to your signature Tele?

It's funny - there's nothing to update! The first launch was in 1996, and it was Seafoam Green, and we quickly went to the Tobacco finish. There's nothing to change, man. Out of the gate, that's been my main guitar. I couldn't ever think of anything to change.

What's your best piece of gear advice?

There's nothing like plugging into a great amp without anything in front. It's like Italian food - it doesn't have to be complicated, and uses great ingredients. If you're looking for a great rhythm sound, keep it simple.

Andrew Daly





GUITAR

DANELECTRO 6-12

If you've ticked-off all the major guitar staples in your collection, you might still be missing one thing: a double neck 6/12-string guitar. Danelectro has you covered, with its reissued 6-12 model. Featuring two

25-inch-scale necks on one Shorthorn body, it offers classic rock indulgence for the very reasonable price of £1,199. Both guitars feature a pair of Danelectro Lipstick pickups, with a set of stacked volume and tone controls for each 'guitar'. There's

a three-way toggle for switching pickup positions, and you can seamlessly jump between the six-string and 12-string modes using the onboard toggle switch. It's available in the special edition White Pearl Finish, right now.

GUITAR

PJD APPRENTICE

We're not quite sure how, but UK guitar company PJD has announced the release of its newly-revised Apprentice series, which now gives us the opportunity to get our hands on a guitar made on these shores for under £900.

The single-pickup models come in the St John offset and Carey singlecut shapes, featuring a lightweight obeche body, a bolt-on neck with rosewood fingerboard, and open-pore Porsche colours. The pickup is a PJD Wadfather humbucker wired to a single volume control, and the Apprentice also boasts tuners and a bridge from Gotoh. They're even throwing-in a gig bag! These will be available direct from PJD shortly.



GUITAR

EPIPHONE MIRANDA LAMBERT BLUEBIRD STUDIO



The Bluebird is Grammy award-winning country singer-songwriter, Miranda Lambert's take on the classic Gibson Hummingbird acoustic, and now it's gone into production as an Epiphone signature model with literally thousands shaved off the price tag (£679).

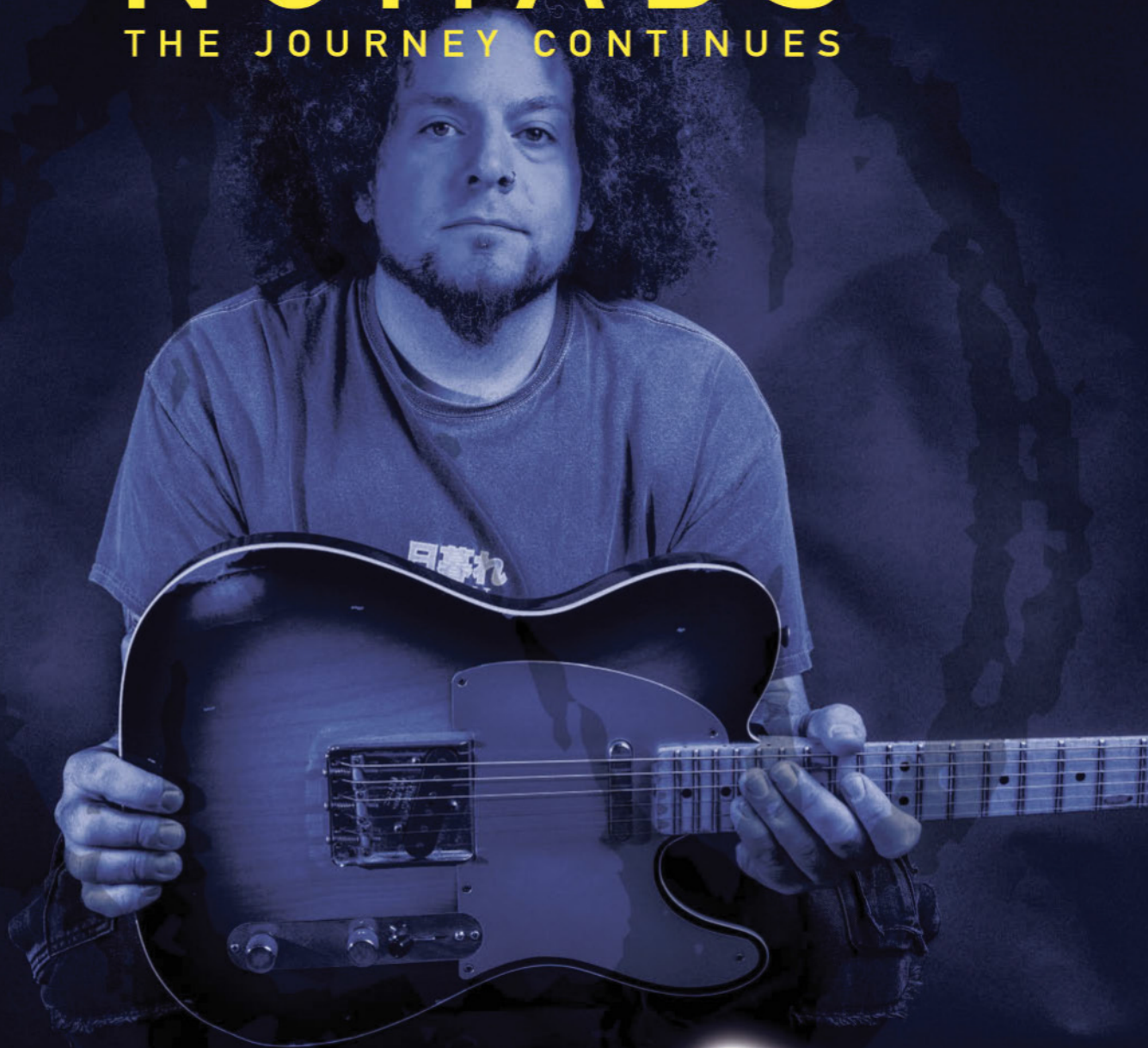
Finished in eye-catching Bluebonnet gloss, this

square-shouldered strummer is made from a laminate mahogany body with a solid spruce top. It's powered-up by a Fishman S-Core under-saddle pickup and preamp (battery not included), and comes in an Epiphone hardshell case.

"If it makes it more accessible and achievable for girls to chase their dreams, then it's a win in my book," says Miranda.

NOMADS

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



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

RABEA MASSAAD

BEA



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Bare Knuckle



ARIANNA POWELL

Arianna Powell is a touring guitarist who has spent the last decade playing with notable pop stars including Olivia Rodrigo, Dua Lipa, Halsey, Nick Jonas, JJ Lin and many more. She's recognised for her solo guitar arrangements that draw influence from jazz virtuosos such as Joe Pass and Johnny Smith while infusing her unique contemporary sound. She has devised numerous masterclasses for Pickup Music and other online forums, sharing her deep knowledge and love for the guitar.

 pickupmusic 

STRUT

Sometimes you just need to strut your stuff - and right now is one of those times!

No matter what genre you're into, this month's set of licks will definitely get you grooving. And, once again, Pickup Music is here to deliver the goods, this time with help from the outstanding Arianna Powell.

We're looking at a performance piece inspired by jazz-fusioner John Scofield. If you want to hear

more in this style, we recommend checking out 1998's *A Go Go* album.

There's nothing too difficult here in our lesson, but getting that elusive 'feel' just right is key. The balance of a laid back feel while still sounding tight can be hard to perfect. Be sure to watch the companion video to hear each lick broken down and demoed.

In terms of techniques, there's plenty to sink your teeth into, and

we'll cover hammer-ons, pull-offs, palm-muting, doublestops and more. The riffs and licks all sit nicely within the B minor pentatonic scale and the backing is a fairly simple three-chord loop (Bm, Gmaj7, F#m). So, if you want to accompany, rather than take the lead, you could either use standard barre chords or try something a little more funky, such as some sparser three- or four-note partial chords.

 pickupmusic

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Let's focus on the picking hand here. We want this phrase to bounce – and palm-muting is a great way to make each note pop. It's also important to know when to use upstrokes and downstrokes. For the most attitude, use downstrokes whenever possible, but if there are two or more notes in quick succession, use alternate picking.

bit.ly/tg385audio

This lick follows the classic 'call and response' format, with each subsequent lick 'answering' its preceding line. Ease up on the palm-muting at the end of each phrase - the last note should ring out. The trickiest part is the 'slurred' note in bar 4, going from the 10th to the 9th fret on the third string. It needs to be just a hint of that 10th fret - slide away from it the moment you strike the note. On those longer notes, add slow, wide vibrato - nothing too frantic.

bit.ly/tq385audio

Some tricky timing here – this lick starts on the '6' of beat 2. That's '1 & 2 6'. Again, make use of palm muting to give that clean 'pop' to each note. Only let up on the muting once you reach that lazy bend on the 10th fret. Why is it lazy? Because it never fully reaches that next note – it sits between the frets. If you struggle to get control over the bend, use two fingers.

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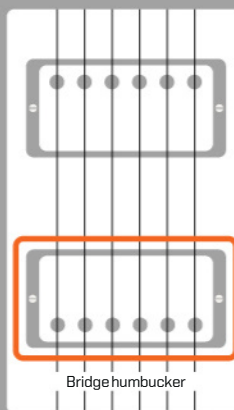
Our final lick starts with a hammer-on/pull-off combo! It's almost like a mini trill. Use your first finger on the 7th fret and then flick your third finger onto the 9th – then immediately off again. Remember to only pick the first of those three notes. It may take a little practice to execute cleanly, but most of the lick follows this idea, so it's worth getting it perfect. The final flourish is a down-up chop with a doublestop on the upstroke.

- ✓ Key of C Major
- ✓ Arpeggios
- ✓ Alternate picking



GET THE TONE

CHANNEL **CLEAN**



Ezra uses an Epiphone Sheraton II into the clean channel of a Fender Hot Rod Deluxe amp. You can also add a compressor pedal in between the guitar and amp to even out the volume of the notes across the strings, as the thinner strings can sometimes sound too quiet in the higher register. There is also an octave effect such as an Octave pedal or a Whammy pedal set to add a note an octave up. The effect level is quite loud and equal to the original guitar pitch, so aim to balance the two octaves.

RIFF OF THE MONTH

VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Classical

Appearing on the fifth Vampire Weekend studio album *Only God Was Above Us*, third single *Classical* features a catchy melodic hook played by vocalist and guitarist Ezra Koenig.

Begin by playing the initial C major triad with your fourth finger on the 15th fret and pull off to first finger at 12th fret, then play 13th fret with your second finger. The same major triad

fingering is also used for G and F major with an 8th fret and 6th fret root. Ezra also plays a B diminished shape using his third finger on the 12th fret.

Once you are comfortable playing these four triads, watch the video to learn where to add the additional melodic notes. The larger five-string arpeggio is an Fmaj7 shape which Ezra plays with alternate picking across the strings. Keep the arpeggios clean by only

fretting one note at a time to separate the notes.

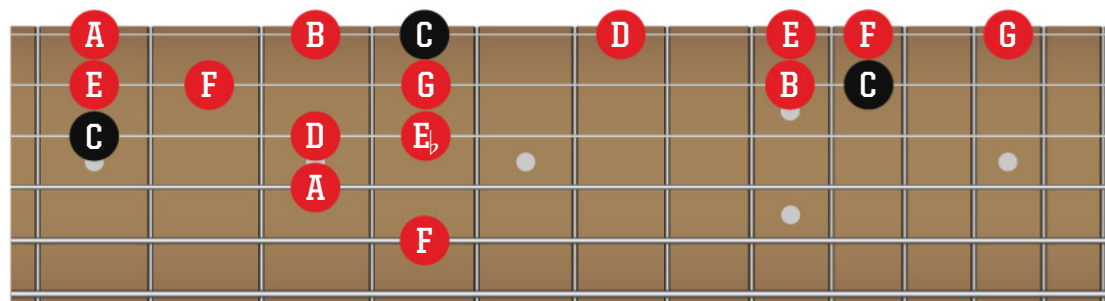
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:12–0:30

Tempo: 112bpm

Key/scale: C major

Main techniques: Alternate picking, pull-offs, slides



With the exception of the final D to E_b semitone bend, the entire melody is based in the key of C major, with no sharps or flats. Rather than playing a scale, Ezra uses mainly major arpeggios with some added melodic notes from C major. Start by finding the C, G and F major triad arpeggios on the first and second strings with the root notes on the second string on the 13th, 8th and 6th frets. Ezra also uses a B diminished triad with the root at the 12th fret. There is also an Fmaj7 arpeggio played across five strings with the root on the 8th fret 5th string.

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

WITH THIS BAND I GET TO BE A ROCK GUITARIST!

With the return of supergroup Black Country Communion, blues master **Joe Bonamassa** is pumping up the volume once again. In a wide-ranging interview, he discusses his approach to heavy rock and his ever-expanding guitar collection, and recalls “a notorious conversation about pedals...”

Words Amit Sharma Photos Rob Bonduant, Will Byington, Nathan Zucker, Getty

Joe Bonamassa is living every rock guitarist's dream by playing in Black Country Communion. Alongside him in this supergroup are musicians of the highest pedigree: bassist and lead vocalist Glenn Hughes (formerly of Deep and Purple and Black Sabbath), keyboard player Derek Sherinian (ex-Dream Theater) and drummer Jason Bonham, who performed in place of his late father John when Led Zeppelin played live for the final time in 2007.

On the day that Joe speaks to *Total Guitar* about the new Black Country Communion album – their fifth, titled simply *V* – he has just completed

a two-night stand with his solo band at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall, where many of us in attendance felt he sounded better than ever. “We were happy with the shows,” he says. “I’m lucky to call that room my home base for London. Every time you play there it gets a little easier but never gets old. It’s a special place. There’s a reason why people like going there. And the band I have playing with are all badasses... ain’t a slouch among ‘em!”

You won’t find any slouches in Black Country Communion, either. And for Joe, one of the finest blues players of modern times, this group opens up a different side to his creativity, where he embraces a harder-hitting kind of rock force. The results, as per recordings of the past, are truly thunderous.

“It’s the cast of characters that dictates how the music comes out and where it goes,” he says. “Working with this band makes me play a certain way. I get to be a rock guitar player! I’m not just thinking about how I can keep my ideas in the blues. It’s amazing to be in a band with people who were actually there when rock music was evolving. Glenn is a bona fide rock star. Jason has actually played with Led Zeppelin. Derek was a member of Dream Theater. I’m a different musician in this band than when I’m going solo. I know this because after we did two BCC shows a few weeks ago, I went straight into touring with my own band. Oddly enough, I use a bigger rig when I’m with my solo group, but my tone is more rock ‘n’ roll with the rock band...”





18



CRUISE CONTROL
Joe performing with Black Country Communion on March 18, 2024 during the Keeping The Blues Alive At Sea cruise

You've worked with so many musicians over the years. In Black Country Communion, what exactly does Glenn Hughes bring out of you?

He's a wonderful bass player and one of the greatest rock singers of all-time. He brings out things in me that are more spacious and heavier. We lock in super-tight and keep the riffs going to allow Glenn just to be Glenn.

And how does the dynamic work with Jason Bonham and Derek Sherinian?

Derek brings the colours and textures, while Jason and I are there to provide the foundation. Jason will also come up for grooves for riffs that I don't think or Glenn won't think of. We'll hear it with a certain feel and then Jason will come in and say, 'No, let's do it like this!' And it will sound much better. You've got to let the experts in the field do their thing.

With this band, you tend to rely more on your Marshall Jubilees, although they're certainly a key part of your solo rig. Has that changed at all with the new album?

Believe it or not, this record was mainly recorded with a Marshall JTM45 running clean! I also used a Fender Vibrolux that Alexander Dumble modded into an Ultra-Phonix. That was pretty much it. I'd actually say one hundred per cent of the album were those two amps.

Does that mean you were relying more on overdrives to get some extra crunch?

I listen to how everyone sets their stuff and then I do my own. Glenn uses a lot of drive on the bass, so his tone is distorted. Derek uses a lot of drive on his organ sounds. So if I use a lot of drive, it will all sound like mush. I don't think I had the JTM45 above four and a half the whole time. It was clean. There was a little bit of hair on it but it wasn't really drivey. A lot of my guitar tracks were doubled, but I don't actually double my guitars. Kevin [Shirley, producer] just uses another take. If he likes take three, he'll use take two or four and put that on the other side; it saves

"IT'S A CHALLENGE TO KEEP THE GUITARS IN TUNE BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL SET UP FOR A CERTAIN TENSION"

a lot of work! When you double clean guitars, they sound big and crunchy.

There are some shimmering, chords in the verse sections of opening track *Enlighten*.

Those clean chords were my Andy Summers moment. It was literally a Telecaster, my boss CE-1 chorus, an Echoplex and a two-knob compressor. You hear it and go, 'Oh yeah, that's the Andy Summers sound!' We have a lot of different influences in this band. Obviously there's the Zeppelin influence. There's a Free influence, so it's a lot of British rock. Plus the influence of the British rock

players in the band, Jason and Glenn. Derek and I put on our British hats for this band. It's a very straightforward approach. Kevin is able to wrangle all of our ideas into something coherent.

You picked up a slide for the solo in *Enlighten*, with a generous helping of delays and reverbs... It definitely got wet!

We had the legendary Sunset Sound studio [famously used by Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, Prince and The Rolling Stones] at our disposal, so it made sense to take advantage! All of that was done live. I sat down with the slide, I had an SG Special and a compressor

going through the Dumble Vibrolux and Echoplex, and just tried my best to play slide. I've never really played slide in this band, but this song called for it. I think we did it in just one or two takes, and it was one whole take. There was no comping... that was that. It worked well for the song. This record didn't fight us, which is a good thing. Some records really fight you, because you sit there thinking, 'Ugh, the f*cking guitar's not staying in tune!' Making this album felt joyous, inspired, the gear worked and the guitars stayed in tune. So we got our takes done quick. You want to bottle that energy.

The song *Stay Free* has a similar vibe to Led Zeppelin's *Trampled Under Foot*, and features another heavily echoed solo, with a phaser engaged during its second half...

I think so... probably?! I'd have to go back and listen to it. I always have a bag of pedals with me. There will be a Keeley two-knob compressor, an Ibanez Phase Tone which looks like a TS-808 but it's a phaser... Yeah, I just remembered that's what I used. I'll bring a Uni-Vibe, a CE-1 chorus and things like that. I had an old Ross Graphics EQ on the Marshall at points, just to kick the mids up a little bit and tuck the highs. It's

"YOU DON'T NEED \$100K WORTH OF HENDRIX KIT TO SOUND LIKE JIMI!"

Why great tones are much cheaper than people realise

Back in March, online marketplace Reverb uploaded a video of Joe at his Los Angeles home, commonly referred to as 'Nerdville West', recalling the famous sounds of Jimi Hendrix on his seminal 1970 *Band Of Gypsies* live album. But there was a twist - as well as playing through the same period-correct vintage gear Hendrix himself would have been using, Bonamassa was also tasked with recreating the same sounds using modern products that were very much readily available and affordable, at almost 70 times less in cost. Unsurprisingly, the guitar legend was able to dispel a few myths in the process...

"If Lewis Hamilton gave me the keys to his race car and I gave him the keys to a Toyota Prius, he would still beat me around the track," Joe smiles. "It's not the car, it's the driver. You don't need \$100k worth of perfectly preserved, mint condition, ultra rare Hendrix kit to sound like Jimi. You can get it out of a Squier Strat, a Peavey Classic and a bunch of Dunlop pedals, as long as you play in the spirit of Jimi Hendrix. It's the same thing with a Les Paul. If you do it blindfolded, with a brand new Marshall and an Epiphone, and you dial it in right, it can sound like a sunburst Les Paul through a vintage Bluesbreaker. Great tones are much cheaper than people realise.



I spoke to Reverb about the whole concept, and it was to demystify the notion that you need a Dumble and a Klon or whatever. You don't need anything. You need to practise and focus in on how you really want to sound. Some of the greatest sounds were created on junk! Or at least cheaper gear."

As he goes on to explain, it's a common misconception that everyone's favourite '70s rock albums were created using Les Pauls from the late '50s. Musicians back then were more than happy to use gear that was in production at that same point in time...

"Most of your favourite rock 'n' roll sounds from the '70s were created on the Les Paul Customs that were modern for back then," he notes. "Or even late-'60s models. But not 'bursts, because not many people had one. Watch videos of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and they were playing '72 Customs through '72 Marshalls and it sounded like God! The cool thing about late-'60s Customs is that they were the first of that lot. The '50s ones were all-mahogany, but from 1968 onwards, they had maple tops which gave them a very specific sound."



noisy as f*ck, but who cares? It sounds good! All of the pedals were noisy, anyway. And I had a consistently reliable Echoplex. That's all I used for the whole thing. If I needed more gain, I'd turn the amp up slightly. There wasn't a Tube Screamer or Klon in the mix, none of that got involved on this one. I remember you and I had a notorious conversation about pedals once...

Yes, that conversation we had, when you were promoting the last BCC album in 2017, resulted in controversy after a comment you made about guitarists being over-reliant on pedals was used out of context by clickbait websites.

It wasn't your fault. It wasn't my fault! It's the f*ckin' world we live in, sir! But as for my bag of tools, I always have enough to get in trouble. You never know when you're going to need something. I'll always have a slide around. Kevin will throw a lot of ideas at me, like on *Enlighten* when he said, 'Hey man, we need an Andy Summers sound', and I answered, 'Okay, let me check my back pocket!' I'll gather up my meagre belongings, bring them into the control and see what happens. So in that situation I got my 1954 Telecaster, plugged into the Vibrolux which was set at three or four, so it was breaking up but still clean. I turned on the Echoplex, the chorus and the compressor, hit one chord and Kevin goes, 'That's it!' And I probably said, 'Alright then, let's move!' It's really that simple. I didn't think too hard about it. As long as the chorus was chorousy and the Echoplex was doing that slapback with the repeats, I was happy. The two-knob compressor is a trick I've learned over the last five years. Whether it be a MXR Dyna Comp or a Keeley, when I'm in the studio dialling in cleaner sounds, those pedals can really bring everything forward in the speakers. You just have to hit it a little, not a lot, and the whole thing will start blooming. It just hits the mic and the console in a different way. It's a good little trick!

You're well known for high-speed pentatonic burst runs. What's the secret - are you using the pick slanting technique often discussed by YouTube guitarists like Troy Grady?

My picking angle doesn't vary, whether I'm playing fast or slow. I just have a very specific place I hold it, kind of deep in there. I don't hold it right at the tip of my thumb, and my thumb is usually

straight and relaxed. I find if you hold a small pick [like a Jazz III] at the very tip, you're creating a pivot point and a break angle. I hold the pick where it's comfortable, almost as if I was sitting and having a beer with you. I could hold a pick all day. I'm not trying to angle anything. As I'm not a legato player, I have to pick every note. I'm from the Al Di Meola school rather than, say, Allan Holdsworth. That's just always been my style, you know?

One track on this album, *Restless*, is probably the closest to your solo material, bringing it all down in B_♭ minor.

Yeah, I would agree with you there. All of the BCC stuff is in E_♭ now. When we made the last album, we tuned down half a step, so it's kinda weird because most of our catalogue is in A440 and then the more recent stuff is tuned to E_♭. I'm used to being in regular tuning for my day job. It's a challenge to keep the guitars in tune because they're all set up for a certain tension. You have to use a couple of tricks to keep them in tune and feel stout. I'll back the truss rods out just a little bit to create more tension on the neck. That way they ring and the chords feel like they stay in tune.

The intro to *Skyway* is quite reminiscent of your instrumental track *Django*...

Yeah! We worked all this stuff out so fast. When we went into this record, I was slightly worried Glenn and I hadn't had enough time to hash out the tunes enough. Because we went in with, in some cases, minimal sketches. But we'd work it all out in the courtyard of Sunset Sound, go inside and after four takes we'd be done. I was like, 'Wow, this is a really good way to do it!' The band works well this way.

Can you talk us through all of the guitars we're hearing?

There were two Les Pauls, a 1958 and a 1959. There was that 1954 Tele I mentioned, plus a really good rosewood slab board 1959 Strat that had been refretted and sounded great for these tracks. It was four electrics in total and an acoustic - a Gibson J-200.

Speaking of 1954 Teles, there's one you recently picked up with a Fender installed Paul Bigsby pickup, which you described as a 'unicorn'.

I haven't even seen that guitar in person



"PEOPLE THINK I'M
DEPRIVING THE WORLD
AND OTHER PLAYERS
OF GEAR!"



“I’M A COLLECTOR: IT’S WHO I AM!”

Joe Bonamassa on his life’s obsession – and his kindred spirits Slash and Rory Gallagher.

“I share my collection because it’s part of who I am,” Joe says. “At the end of the day, I’m a collector. If you don’t understand why I need so many, then I would say you don’t understand what collecting is. Rory Gallagher is a great example. Everyone thought he just played that sunburst Strat and it was the only guitar he owned. But Rory had hundreds of guitars and a lot of amps. Donal [Rory’s brother] told me he had over 200.

“Anybody who gets into guitar and has a little extra money can always justify any purchase. It’s not a bad thing. If Slash wants to go out and corner the market on sunburst Les Pauls, it’s his right to do it because he earned the money. It’s his life’s work, you know? If I want to own 150 tweed amps, it’s my business and my life’s work. It doesn’t matter to anyone else. There are plenty of tweed Champs and Deluxes for everyone. There’s plenty of everything. I don’t think people realise how much sh*t Leo Fender and Ted McCarty and all those companies made between 1950 and 1965.

“Slash and I have threatened to get together in LA. He’s been collecting since the early ‘90s. When he started making money with his band, he started calling up [Guitars R Us dealer] Albert Molinaro saying, ‘I want a sunburst, I want an Explorer, I want this and that!’ And it was done, albeit they were much cheaper back then than they are now! And he’s still collecting. I think he bought one or two sunbursts last year, one of which came from England. I believe it was a ‘00’ 1960. He’s got some really great guitars.”



"IT'S A CHALLENGE TO KEEP THE GUITARS IN TUNE BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL SET UP FOR A CERTAIN TENSION"

at this stage. It's at my friend Charlie Daughtry's house in Houston. He just picked it up and said it's f*ckin' great! Charlie [who runs the Les Paul and Fender Forums] and I split a few guitars here and there. It eases the pain and suffering slightly, we own them jointly. He's got the green Strat now, plus Lazarus and a few other things. It's usually like, 'I'll send you this, I'll send you that, blah blah!' The 1954 Tele you hear on the record is something I bought from Norman Harris [Norman's Rare Guitars] right before he became ill in 2021. I just happened to be at the store and he said to me, 'Man, if I can make a little money on this, I'll introduce you to the family'. I literally bought it that day. It's my go-to blackguard Tele for LA. It just works, it sounds great and plays great. It's a guitar that can do anything.

As for the newest one, Fender installing a Bigsby pickup... that's

pretty unheard of!

The guy bought it in 1954 and it went back to the Fender factory for the pickup install. If you look at the route, it was clearly done by a machine. So they jammed it in there for him. Fender would do warranty like that back then if you waited. The guy wrote a letter about the whole story behind it. Somebody tipped me off saying this guitar was discussed on an Internet forum 20 years ago. It's pretty well-known in the Telecaster community, but not many people knew where it ended up. It recently came up for sale through the family. The guy died, he was 99 years old. Having the pictures and story behind it is pretty cool... and that pickup is even rarer than the guitar!

You purchased another 59 recently - serial number 9-0435, to be more specific - which came in a blue-lined case. What was the story behind that one?

It belonged to my friend Joe Martino, who I met through Norman back in 2021. Joe was very astute in the late '70s and early '80s. He paid \$1,700 to this little boutique amp maker out in Santa Cruz, California. That guy's name was Alexander Dumble! He got an Overdrive Special, that's how I met him, I bought his 50-watt Silverface ODS. Long story short, in 1982 he bought a 1959 Les Paul Standard and another ODS. He paid \$2,000 for the Les Paul and \$2,500 for the amp. He was telling me people were making fun of him because of how much he spent on the guitar but he freakin' held it! That guitar ended up at a music store outside of Boston called The Music Emporium. I kinda lost track of where it went, but figured they had it. So I contacted the store and they said, 'Yeah man, let's boogie!' So the guitar hasn't left the Boston area since 1982. It's still actually there, my tech Mike [Hickey] has it at the moment. It's a very cool guitar that I've played



before. It has factory small frets but I like the story behind the guitar because I know the CarFact. A lot of times these bursts have traded hands so many times it leaves you wondering, 'What's been done to this guitar?' This one is just a straight original.

Another one for the collection, then. How many '59s does that bring you to now, considering they made roughly 500 that year?

They shipped 536 or 539 in 1959. Les Paul Standards from 1958 were split between goldtops and bursts. So the rarest variant is the '58 burst, because they were only made for half the year. I have a 1960 SG Les Paul Standard and the serial number is lower than one of my late-'60s sunbursts one. They were shipping them tangentially as they would roll out. There are approximately 1,700 guitars shipping between 1958 and 1960. So they're not incredibly rare, just incredibly sought-after. I own 16 'bursts

in total, from 1958 to 1960, and I own eight 1959s.

It's great that you share these guitar safaris with us. We get to live vicariously through you - and there's a lot to be said for celebrating history, especially through your eye for detail.

That's the way I look at it. There's a contingent of people who somehow think I'm depriving the world and other players of gear. I always use the logic, 'Do I get advantages that other collectors don't because people want to sell sh*t to me? Absolutely!' But I also just bought a 1959 Les Paul from a f*ckin' music store in Boston. Anybody could have walked in and bought it. There are thousands and thousands of guitars out there. Anything in my collection, with the exception of maybe 20 pieces, you could source from somewhere else. You want a Blackguard? There's plenty of them. You want a sunburst Les Paul? There's plenty of them. You want a 335

in a blonde finish. There's not so many of those, but if you want them in sunburst, there's a lot out there.

And as your collection expands, there's a mid-'60s Strat you recently got your hands on in Sonic Blue...

Now, that's a hard colour to find pre-1965. Mine's actually [from] December 1963, so it's got the right neck and the black bottoms. In late 1964 and 1965 they had the transitional logos, and then later ones with bigger headstocks. That's the first two years of the custom colour charts. Sonic Blue is not as rare as Foam Green or Burgundy Mist. There are a couple that are really hard to find. Shell Pink is unobtainium, there are only one or two known examples. Fiesta [Red] is the most common. Lake Placid is common, as is Black and Candy Apple Red, so getting the chance to buy an uncirculated Sonic Blue Strat was cool!

V is released on June 14.

BACK IN BLACK
The band (from left):
Derek Sherinian,
Glenn Hughes,
Jason Bonham,
Joe Bonamassa





"THE KEY TO MY PLAYING IS LEARNING THE TECHNICAL STUFF - AND THEN FORGETTING IT!"

The Last Dinner Party are this year's hottest new rock band. Lead guitarist **Emily Roberts** reveals how their hit debut album was created, and how her unique approach to the instrument was shaped by jazz greats and one rock legend in particular...

Words Amit Sharma
Photos Cal McIntyre, Getty

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hey formed only three years ago, but in that short space of time The Last Dinner Party have become one of the most exciting new rock acts of the modern age. Their first full-length, released back in February and titled *Prelude To Ecstasy*, ended up topping the UK album charts – becoming the first British rock debut to do so since Royal Blood burst onto the scene a decade ago. “It was very unexpected,” admits lead guitarist

Emily Roberts. “I never thought that would be a reality... it’s crazy!”

It only takes one listen to the album, however, to appreciate why it was such an important release for this year. Combining elements of Kate Bush, David Bowie and Queen into a sound that feels completely new and unique, they’re the kind of band that seem to exist, as well as thrive, in a genre and class of their own – treading new ground with every song they’ve recorded to date.

They’ve supported The Rolling Stones and been signed up by American management giants Q Prime, who also represent Metallica, Muse and Greta Van Fleet. Following appearances at Glastonbury and the Reading/Leeds festivals, the quintet will be ending this year with a UK tour which culminates with three sold-out nights at London’s Eventim Apollo, performing to 16,000 people in the capital alone.

Speaking to TG, Emily discusses her guitar journey thus far, from a four-year course specialising in jazz to performing as Brian May in an all-female Queen tribute band, and gives us a closer look at the breathtaking tones on what will be remembered as one of the most striking albums of this year...

Do you remember the moment you realised the guitar would be your true calling?

I started playing really young, around the age of nine. I fell in love with it when I walked in on one of my best friends having a guitar lesson with the local teacher. They were just jamming, playing pop songs and strumming Beatles riffs on acoustics, and it made me think, 'These are the kind of guitar lessons I'd love to have!' Previously I'd had 'proper' lessons where you have to learn the notation and play upright. I guess I just wanted to have fun and play songs, so I ended up studying with the same teacher. I would say he's the reason I'm still playing. In high school I transitioned onto electric so I could play in bigger bands or jazz groups. Then I went to a specialist music school in Manchester when I was 16. That was probably the point where I realised music would be my life. I knew I had to start a band.

So who were your earliest influences starting out?

The first few songs I learned were *Tears In Heaven* by Eric Clapton and loads of Led Zeppelin stuff – all the classics! My original guitar hero has always been Brian May because I love being able to sing along to the solos. I didn't even learn them at that point, I was just listening and appreciating because Queen were one of my first musical loves. Then I started discovering more players through YouTube. I wasn't from a place where there was a big music community, I was surrounded by farms in the countryside, so I used the internet to find inspiration. I learned who Orianthi was, then I got into Jess Lewis, who I really looked up to.

How much did your jazz training affect the player you'd go on to become?

I specifically chose to study jazz guitar and it was a four-year course. So it was a big part of my life that I really enjoyed. Some of my jazz heroes were people like Emily Remler. When I discovered her, it felt like exactly how I wanted to sound

like in a jazz context. Pat Martino was another big one, as was Wes Montgomery. I went through a big Pat Metheny phase. I also liked The Impossible Gentlemen and their guitarist, Mike Walker.

Are there any things you wish you'd learned sooner?

Definitely stuff like enclosures, because there are so many different ways you can chromatically go around a note.

SPREAD YOUR WINGS

"I like to absorb as many different sounds as I can," Emily says.

If you land on the important note on an important beat, it all sounds fine. That's how you can make outside notes that aren't technically in that scale feel like they belong. I would try to invent different ones that would mix starting above or below the right note, however many semitones away. There are so many different options. I feel like you can build melodic lines almost like Lego blocks. You can learn these tiny bits and put them together to make phrases that sound jazzy. Transcribing was also a big game-changer, because I didn't do any of that earlier on. I would just find the tabs online instead of using my ear. If you sit down and listen, it can make you a better player. Sometimes it's too fast to hear everything at full speed, so you can use apps to slow it down. That's



Photo: Cal McIntyre

"MY GUITAR HERO IS BRIAN MAY BECAUSE I LOVE BEING ABLE TO SING ALONG TO THE SOLOS"

how you can appreciate every aspect of how a person is playing – whether they do a tiny slide up to the note, use octaves or legato for one line and then staccato for another. Wes Montgomery taught me a lot about those kinds of inflections. Even if you don't have a lot of jazz vocabulary, the way you attack notes can make them sound like jazz.

There are some interesting effects on songs like *Caesar On A TV Screen*...

Yeah! We used a lot of tremolo, plus a bit of phaser. We didn't use a ton of effects, there were just a few that we stuck with. I used my Fulltone OCD as the main overdrive. And I think there was some pedal called the Minotaur or Centaur that apparently cost around £5,000.

You used a real Klion Centaur?

Yeah, that's the one. Our producer James Ford just had one lying around in the studio so we ended up using it for everything!

There's one song, *The Feminine Urge*, that has an almost Spaghetti Western flavour, with more of that tremolo effect to create extra movement in your lines.

There's definitely a Western feel. I think it came from Abbie [Morris], our singer. She asked if I had the effect they used on those kinds of films, because she's really into that stuff. It ended up on quite a few tracks, like this one and *Mirror*.

We've seen a lot of footage of you with a Ernie Ball Music Man St. Vincent Goldie. Was that your main guitar?

I would say so. I also used my 1963 Gibson ES-330. That was my main guitar all the way through uni and doing jazz gigs. It's probably the most beautiful guitar I've ever played. I'm very lucky to own it. I used it on the bridge pickup for *The Feminine Urge* and the choruses of *Caesar On A TV Screen*, along with a VI bass just to double everything up an octave lower. Our producer loved the sound of the Gibson, so we ended up using it a lot.

What other pedals might we find on your 'board, then?

I love the Intensive Care Audio pedals. They have a lot of character and sound really beefy and rock 'n' roll. I don't

actually remember which tremolo we used on the record, sorry! It was something in the studio that's different to what I use live. For our shows, I use a Line 6 Helix with the Intensive Care pedals and my OCD plugged into the effects loop of my Fender Hot Rod. On the album, the amp was something similar like a Fender Deluxe Reverb.

The solo in *Nothing Matters* feels like the big guitar hero moment of the record.

There was another solo I used to play before we went into the studio. Then we were recording the album and I was trying to get it down. It sounded fine but it wasn't quite giving the song the lift it needed, it sounded too old-school. I asked myself how I could make it more modern and exciting, to fit the song better. So I went away and started jamming out ideas over Christmas. I would improvise for ages and stack up different takes on Logic. I ended up picking the bits I liked best and strung them together in a way that made sense. I took a few options to my parents and they felt one stood out, so that's what I chose. It was nice to have a fast run in there, given how it works against the slow bits. I like how it goes up with a bend and then a tap, like a climax within the phrase. It's a mishmash of styles... it even gets a bit funky towards the end!

You have many strengths as a player. *On Your Side* has a completely different approach – what you play is more impressionistic, more Jonny Greenwood than Brian May in how you embrace ambience and atmosphere over melodic contour...

I never really think about writing solos in a theoretical way, apart from maybe on *Portrait Of A Dead Girl*. It's usually like, I've got what key or scale under my fingers, and then I use my ear to improvise around it. I prefer to find the right energy or vibe myself, without thinking too much.

Interestingly, your leads in *Portrait Of A Dead Girl* have a David Gilmour kind of feel. Is he someone you've ever listened to?

Not really! I think it's a complete coincidence. Quite a few people have said that to me about the solo, which is really nice. I like his playing, but I just haven't listened to loads of it or tried

KILLER QUEEN!

Emily pays tribute to Brian May – in more ways that one

Having grown up as a fan of Queen, Emily felt it was a no-brainer to accept the role of Brian May in a Queen tribute act, with plans to perform on cruises and beyond. And while she performed with them once before the pandemic put an end to their plans, eventually leading her to The Last Dinner Party, it was an experience that she learned from greatly.

"I was around 21 or 22 years old when someone messaged me on Facebook about being Brian May in that band," she explains. "I thought, 'Yeah, why not?' I loved Queen and knew it would be fun to learn all the solos and parts. Then the pandemic happened. We only did one gig in the end, at a Queen convention near Hull. It went great. That probably ended up influencing my rock playing more than anything else, because I spent an entire summer solidly trying to get inside Brian's playing, hearing all the little details. My favourite song to play was *Hammer To Fall*. That was always fun! *Don't Stop Me Now* has a really great solo. Then there's *We Will Rock You*, *The Show Must Go On*... there are so many. *A Kind Of Magic* was great, especially for those fast, staccato licks. I loved it all, to be honest."

May's influences can be heard all over *Prelude To Ecstasy*, from the soaring modal leads on tracks like *Nothing Matters* to a lot of the single-note riff ideas in place of the usual chordal approach favoured by many a rock band. It's all about the part that fits, rather than the part that's loudest...

"The single-note thing has massively influenced the way I write parts in The Last Dinner Party," she continues. "Listen to what I play on *Portrait Of A Dead Girl* or *Sinner* – it's all single-note ideas, which comes from Brian. I found out he used a sixpence and my Dad has a collection of old coins, so I asked him for the right one with the serrated edge. I ended up using that for while, which was a bit of a challenge!"





transcribing any of it. Maybe it comes from that textural perspective. The song sets it up with this Pink Floyd-y outro with lots of vocals. It has that sound anyway, so yeah... I just wanted to do something that soared over the top in a euphoric way, keeping to the texture of it all. The jazz came in handy there, because the harmony kinda changes and it's a tricky one to follow!

Gjuha is one of the more exotic-sounding tracks, with a flamenco-ish Harmonic Minor meets Phrygian Dominant hybrid scale, using both minor and major thirds and sevenths in the same key.

It wasn't a conscious decision to try and invent our own scale! The original idea was to do something inspired by Jeff Buckley's *Corpus Christi Carol*, a vocal aria in the middle of an album. Our keyboard player Aurora's family are from Kosovo, so she wanted to write something in Albanian. I'm not sure how it ended up sounding like world music, but we added mandolin and it sounded even more like that.

The track *Sinner* has a mixture of guitar heroics, from your leads duelling with the layered vocals to some more Brian May-esque staccato leads.

I was going for a St. Vincent kind of vibe originally. There's a song on her album *Actor* called *Marrow*, which has this guitar line where she bends a note for ages and then goes to another note. It's quite discordant or atonal-sounding. I wanted a powerful guitar line to duet with the vocals. I probably wasn't expecting it to become such a big feature within the song. I was just messing around improvising, again doing that thing on Logic where you go round and round a loop, trying to come up with ideas. I think that motif came on my third go, then we improvised around it using jazzy ideas.

***My Lady Of Mercy* has some beautiful clean tones, with some clever usage of effects.**



The inspiration behind that song was Nine Inch Nails for the choruses, but with a choir-like vocal over the top. The song is about contrast because the clean verses feel sprightly, then we went for a heavy fuzz sound for the choruses. It was tempting to use more distortion in the breakdown but our producer told us to keep it chill, otherwise it could have sounded too metal! To be honest, a lot of the tones on this album came out cleaner than I expected.

Given how multifaceted you are as a player, what do you think would be

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE

Last Dinner Party (from left): Lizzie Mayland, Emily Roberts, Abigail Morris, Georgia Davies and Aurora Nishevi

the best way of describing your approach to composing?

I think learning the technical stuff and then forgetting it is key to my playing. I like to absorb as many different sounds as I can. That's what got me here. I like the technical aspect of playing, but there's more to me than that. I've had such a variety of teachers. When I was doing more session guitar stuff, I started having lessons with Phil Short who plays for Westlife. He taught me about wider vibrato and that whole Van Halen kind of vibe. Having such different teachers is probably why I ended up sounding so eclectic. Maybe we'll have a bit more shred on the next album, who knows?

The Last Dinner Party appear at Glastonbury and Reading/Leeds festivals this summer before a full UK tour begins in September.

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Words Tim Tucker

"I'M CURIOUS. I WANT TO EXPERIMENT"

A free spirit and self-taught guitarist with dazzling technique, **Mdou Moctar** has harnessed the energy of live performance to create his most explosive album

Hailing from the desert city of Agadez in Niger, Mdou Moctar is a genuine trailblazer. With a sound that bridges the ancient traditions of the Sahara and the electrifying energy of modern rock, his journey as a musician is a tale of evolution and experimentation, a relentless pursuit of new sonic frontiers. And yet, for all his open-mindedness as an artist, he believes that the key to creating original music is to shut himself off from the world.

"I still focus on my own work rather than getting inspiration from other guitarists," he tells *Total Guitar*, speaking in French through an interpreter. "I even take long breaks from playing guitar to let something new germinate."

In 2021, his breakout release *Afrique Victime* was acclaimed by TG as the guitar album of the year. Now comes his most potent and provocative work to date: *Funeral For Justice*. Recorded in just five days in a largely unfurnished house in upstate New York, the album captures Mdou and his band at their most primal and unrestrained. The music surges with punk energy and scorched-earth guitar heroics.



Mdou's professional musical journey began with his 2008 album *Anar*, on which he paired the acoustic guitar traditions of the Tuareg people with the futuristic sheen of Auto-Tune. His music spread via Bluetooth swaps of digital files from his cassette recordings, a common practice in the region. This grassroots distribution method highlighted his initial challenges in reaching a wider audience, but also showcased the communal and

innovative spirit of his music.

Eventually Mdou's music found its way to Christopher Kirkley, founder of the Sahel Sounds label. He became such a fan he featured Mdou on his influential compilation series, *Music From Saharan Cellphones*. This amplified the young musician's reach and introduced him to a global audience hungry for fresh, boundary-pushing sounds. Kirkley went on to cast Mdou as the main actor in *Akounak Tedalat Taha Tazoughai*, a Tamasheq language interpretation of Prince's *Purple Rain*.

Emboldened by his growing fanbase, Mdou continued to evolve and refine his craft. His 2013 follow-up album *Afelan* saw him delving deeper into the well of Tuareg music, with a mix of traditional acoustic music, and blistering, psychedelic desert blues, simultaneously showcasing his growing mastery of the guitar. His music has continued to develop through live work and album releases, as he's harnessed his cutting tone and expressive range to channel the raw power and emotional intensity of his songwriting.

The sound of *Funeral For Justice* is even rawer and heavier than previous recordings, created by Mdou with rhythm guitarist Ahmoudou Madassane, drummer Souleymane Ibrahim, and American bassist/producer Mikey Coltun. The band's energy stems from their beginnings, playing all-night shows at weddings back home, where amps were cranked to the max and entire towns joined in the revelry. But although the roots of Mdou's music remain firmly in the Tuareg tradition, the branches now stretch in startling new directions. As Coltun says: "I grew up in the D.C. punk scene and this is no



different. It's a DIY punk show. People bring generators, they crank their amps. Things are broken, but they make it work." That communal spirit now infuses their stage shows around the world, with Mdou's ecstatic, high-velocity guitar playing sending crowds into a frenzy.

For many artists, retaining the raw energy and spontaneity of a live performance in the controlled environment of a recording studio can be a daunting task. The thrill of feeding off an audience's reaction, the adrenaline rush of improvisation, and the organic interplay between band members can be difficult to replicate when the red light is on and the clock is ticking. It's a challenge that has plagued musicians across genres and generations, from the early days of rock 'n' roll to the present. But for Mdou and his band, the key to bridging this gap

lies in a combination of preparation, mindset, and imagination. "We don't record albums as most people do," Mdou says. "We have a really personalised system, and the way we play in the studio is just like live. We don't use a metronome, or precisely time anything. And this was recorded after a tour, so we had the touring energy still in us. We give ourselves room to play the way we want to play."

When we ask him how they go about capturing their electrifying live sound in the studio, he responds with a mixture of pragmatism and poetry. "It's a question of work and practice. In the studio, we make sure we're feeling well, able to do it our way, and not be bothered by technicalities. We pick a time when we're determined and know what we want to record. It's like a union between the band members. We imagine an audience and express joy."

BAND OF BROTHERS

"The way we play in the studio is just like we do live"

Mdou's unique guitar style is a testament to this joy, his unwavering passion for music, and his ability to overcome obstacles. Growing up in a conservative Muslim family in the Sahara Desert, he faced disapproval and limited resources in his pursuit of mastering the guitar. However, his resilience and determination led him to forge his own path.

His journey as a self-taught musician began at the tender age of 12, when he first witnessed a mesmerising street performance by desert blues pioneer Abdallah Ag Oumbadougou. Inspired by the raw power and emotion of Oumbadougou's playing, Moutar set out to learn the guitar by any means necessary. With no access to a proper instrument, he crafted his own makeshift guitar using a wooden plank and bicycle brake cables.

As Mdou honed his skills, he began to absorb the rich musical traditions of his Tuareg heritage while immersing himself in the sounds of Western rock legends like Jimi Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen and Prince. Yet despite these diverse influences, Mdou's style remains firmly his own. "I can't say I was ever majorly influenced by other

"I WOULD NEED TO SHOW YOU EXACTLY
HOW TO TUNE YOUR GUITAR FOR
YOU TO PLAY IT THE SAME"

guitar players,” he says. “I like creating in a very personal way. I learned music a lot by ear, especially when I started very young. Before discovering certain helpful instruments and meeting other artists, I used my own personal instrument settings and tunings.”

His left-handed playing technique is certainly unique and adaptive, shifting seamlessly from soft acoustic passages to intense electric guitar. This dynamic range reflects both his traditional roots and his modern experimental urges. “My technique has definitely changed, and there are a lot of new things on this album. Like on *Oh France*, which was the hardest on the album because the rhythm is tricky, and the track *Takoba*.”

Asked about this learning process, and how he picked up the scales and chords he uses, he replies: “I do it by ear. I was alone when I started, so I did it all by ear before discovering instruments that helped me, and figuring out how to tune them, and meeting other artists. Different songs use different, very particular tunings.”

That must make it hard for Western musicians to learn his style, we ponder. “It’s my own personal tunings,” he says. “I would need to show you exactly how to tune your guitar for you to be able to play it the same. Most songs I play are traditional, so it doesn’t fit well into Western music theory. Even at home, some people have trouble if I don’t show them exactly how to tune it. Young guitarists who try to copy me tell me that regularly.”

Mdou’s guitar solos on the new album have also reached new heights of technical prowess and emotional intensity. Using a barrage of rapid hammer-ons and pull-offs on open strings, he unleashes surging melodies and countermelodies that seem to channel the intensity of the desert landscape. At once primal and otherworldly, his solos present a kind of psychedelic ‘desert shred’ that marries dazzling technical ability with an almost trance-like sense of abandon. “Yes, I feel there is a lot of evolution in my solos,” he says. “On this album, we were given the freedom to record it exactly how we wanted.”

Having broken down boundaries between African music and Western rock, does he consider incorporating styles like jazz or blues into his music? “The problem is I don’t really know those different styles well, since I never went to music school or had formal



guitar lessons,” he explains. “But if I hear something I like, I’m curious to see how my style would sound with that rhythm or instrument. I want to experiment. When I was younger I tried electro instruments to see what Tuareg music would sound like that way. I will remain curious.”

Mdou’s journey from crafting his own makeshift guitar to wielding a Fender Stratocaster is a powerful symbol of his musical evolution and the challenges he’s overcome along the way. As a left-handed player in a region where southpaw guitars were virtually nonexistent, Moctar faced significant hurdles in his musical development.

“The hardest thing for me was being left-handed in a place with no left-handed guitars,” he recalls. “To this day, I’m the only local person I know with a lefty guitar. Left-handed people have to use right-hand guitars upside down, which is very difficult. As a kid, I couldn’t join in and play with friends. I could only watch. That was a hurdle.”

The acquisition of his white left-handed Stratocaster marked a turning point in his musical journey, enabling him to fully express his creative vision. “When I learned lefty guitars existed, it

TRAILBLAZER
“I can’t say I was ever majorly influenced by other guitar players,” Mdou says.

really impacted me,” he reflects. “I used the same white guitar with the same effects on this album,” he says of his Stratocaster. “I tell Mikey what sound I’m going for, and he sets it up for me.”

This partnership between artist and instrument is evident throughout *Funeral For Justice*, with Mdou’s Stratocaster serving as an extension of his musical voice. The guitar’s cutting tone and expressive range are the perfect vehicles for his searing leads and hypnotic rhythms, allowing him to channel the raw energy and emotion of his live performances into the studio recordings.

But amid the blazing riffs and pummeling rhythms, there is also a profound sense of purpose. The new political and social themes apparent on this album have infused the music with a distinct energy. The lyrics, sung in Mdou’s native Tamasheq language, address the plight of the Tuareg people and the postcolonial struggles of Niger with bracing clarity and righteous fury. Asked how he composed these powerful anthems, and whether the lyrics inspired him towards a heavier sound, he replies: “Sometimes the music comes first, sometimes the rhythm, and then you find lyrics to fit. But in the case of *Oh France*, the lyrics came first.”

On the track *Imouhar*, Mdou urges the preservation of the endangered Tamasheq language, being one of the few in his community who can write it. “People here are just using French,” he laments. “They’re starting to forget their own language. We feel like in a hundred years no one will speak good Tamasheq, and that’s so scary for us.”

Just as *Funeral For Justice* was completed, Niger fell into political turmoil, as a coup ousted the country’s democratically elected government. With their homeland descending into uncertainty, Mdou Moctar’s music feels all the more vital and defiant. “I don’t support the coup,” he states plainly, “but I never in my life liked France in my country. We want to be free. We need to smile, you understand?”

In Mdou Moctar’s hands, the electric guitar becomes a weapon of liberation, a tool to unite people in the fight against oppression while celebrating the undeniable joy of rock and roll communion. *Funeral For Justice* is both a lament for the fallen and a raised fist for the future – the fearless sound of Mdou Moctar seizing the moment.

***Funeral For Justice* is out now.**



Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Tom Ham, Daniel Topete

"WE DON'T NEED TO BE SAT TWIDDLING KNOBS. WE CAN DO IT WITH OUR FEET!"

Idles took a new approach to writing and recording their hit album *Tangk* - created with tape loops and other production techniques. Now, as guitarists **Mark Bowen** and **Lee Kiernan** admit, the big challenge is to recreate these sounds on stage...

For their latest album, *Idles* dived into tape-looping as the basis for entire songs. As they go on tour, they've got to figure out how to make it happen live. For guitarists Mark Bowen and Lee Kiernan, that means their pedalboards have grown even more massive, but their amps have actually shrunk.

This album, titled *Tangk*, is the band's most ambitious recording to date. Where 2021's *Crawler* was led by guitar-synth sounds, this time around they used the studio as an instrument. Mark Bowen - known to all by his surname - explains that this was the plan from the get-go. "We wanted the music and the songwriting to be guided by production," he says. "There were a lot of production techniques incorporated into the songwriting. This isn't a standard Idles album, where we are able to play the songs and then record them. It was more like we had recordings, and then we're trying to reproduce that live."

That's not a straightforward task. It was producer Nigel Godrich, famed

for his work with Radiohead, who encouraged the band to build this album around tape loops. "The first thing Nigel wanted us to get into was understanding tape loops," Bowen recalls. "He just gets you to play, and he'll take bits and bobs and snapshots. Sometimes that's a means to create texture that then you can write a song based off. Sometimes, as with the track *Gratitude*, it's the basis for the whole song. Jon [Beavis, drummer] played this 6/8 pattern. Then, I played this riff that was like three fives and then a three, so it joined up with him every 18 beats. Dev [bassist Adam Devonshire] plays in 4/4. Basically every 18 beats it kind of lines up and then falls out and lines up. That was something I was interested in with the tape. It sparks creativity."

That industrious approach doesn't mesh easily with Idles' live ethos. As Bowen says: "We didn't want to lose the essence of what an Idles show is, which is me and Lee jumping around and dancing and interacting with the audience. That's why we're using a lot of expression pedals, so that we can control the ebbs and flows and the dynamics of these soundscapes, but we don't need to be sat twiddling knobs. We can do it with our feet."

In 2021, Bowen told us about the *Crawler Machine*, a hand-and-foot operated pedalboard designed to reproduce that album's synth sounds. "On *Crawler*, I'd been using a lot of pedals as a form of production, a lot of the Moogerfooger synth pedals as well as reverbs, filters and looping," he explains. "What has come out of the *Crawler Machine* is *Tangk*, because I've learnt the possibilities of what to do with the *Crawler Machine* within the songwriting."

Titling their new album, Idles coined the word *Tangk* as an onomatopoeic description of the way they attack their guitars - kind of the indie-rock equivalent of 'djent'. That *tangk* sound comes from clearer guitar tones. "We both embraced the possibility of clean instruments, rather than being this sh*tshow of gain stage that we've had in the past," Bowen reveals. "I've now got a Vox AC30 back in the running. I prefer the AC15 for recording, so on the album it's mostly that. I mean, we were working with Nigel Godrich. He's got lots of very interesting Voxes."

Lee Kiernan, meanwhile, has found a more obscure favourite. "I found the Peavey Deuce, an amp that I love so much that you can't find anywhere."



➔ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

"This isn't a standard Idles album," says Bowen, second left. "We wanted the music and the songwriting to be guided by production."

It's already become a problem. We'll just see how it goes," he shrugs.

"They have a solid-state preamp with a valve power amp. That's why you get such a good clean sound out of it. If you add gain into the preamp you get that weird solid state sound. But if you let the preamp be clean and push volume into the tubes, you get this huge, full-bodied sound."

Guitar-wise, Bowen says the album is "99%" his baritone Strat, while Lee continues to rely on his Fender Esquire and Mustang. "Live, I've started using a Tele Deluxe for a couple of songs which sounds amazing, one of the new Fender Professional IIs," Lee says. "For my baritone, me and Gavin [Maxwell, guitar tech] just mash together one of my old Tele bodies and a baritone neck, and it sounds amazing. Anyone who wants to get a baritone, just get a neck and strap it on!"

Says Bowen: "The other thing we've gotten into is stock pickups. We used to always be about finding the sickest custom pickup, but we always went too hot. On things like the baritone and Lee's Esquire and Mustang, it's all stock. Again, embracing the clean. We've also embraced the jangly, the twang. We're not in a rush to run

everything super hot and destroy stuff anymore."

Destroying stuff, he admits, has become a habit. "I keep blowing things up! So I need things that are very dependable and findable." When TG expresses incredulity that an AC30 was the most dependable amp they could find, Lee laughs. "Well, it's very findable," he says, "so that's fine!" Bowen agrees, adding, "You could put word out and I reckon someone in the audience would have one at their gaff!"

The magic of tape loops is in their analog unpredictability. As Bowen explains: "There's something about the repetition and then the wrongness. The best bit of a loop is the bad joins in the tape loops." Somehow, Idles have to translate this to a stage. "We didn't want to rely on backing tracks at all," he says. "Idles shows have always had a huge element of danger to them. We're always teetering on the edge of it just not working, and that is why it works, if that makes sense. A lot of bands when they get to this point, they either get tons of people in, or it all becomes reliant on MIDI clock and everything's running through your computer. Our shows rely on everything happening live,

which makes it chaotic.

"Whenever you come to do certain things live, it just doesn't quite translate without the essence of the tape," he continues. "One of the cool things about

using the tape loop is that you get it feeling a bit like a drum machine, even though it's live, because you've got the repetition. We've had to look at ways round that so it's not just Jon Beavis playing a drum machine, which no one wants. It's the same for guitars."

To recreate analogue loops, flawless digital sounds are no good. Bowen has turned to the Electro-Harmonix 95000, although EHX might be less than flattered by his reasoning: "It's kinda crap! It's not bad, but it definitely does something that tape would do – makes it wonky." His longtime favourite the ZVex Lo-Fi Loop Junky also makes regular appearances. "It takes something that could be a bit clean, and makes it dusty and weird and old," he enthuses. "The strings that you hear on the song *Gospel* came through super clean. We used the Lo-Fi Junky to make them sound like we sampled them."

Both guitarists admit they are still finding their way with live looping. "We have about an 80% success rate, I'd say," ventures Lee, although Bowen thinks this is generous. "There's a big learning curve with using live loops," he says. "I've got a failsafe. You find your little bits that are going to be loops, and some of them are pre-recorded, and some of them are things that you can't play live. I'll have either an outrageous, squealy thing locked and looped, or something really motorik and mechanical. You'll have something that you can go to that you can rely on so that it doesn't sound awful. There's something about these loops, it really relies upon it not being bang on. So as you gain in confidence with it, it evolves and becomes less and less reliant upon the failsafe mode. You start to play things a bit more and loop things a bit differently."

Lee says with a laugh, "I guess the most frequent thought on stage these days is, 'Oh my god, I'm nailing it!' And then immediately, 'Oh my dear Lord, what am I doing?'" His pedalboard has grown, too. "I just wanted it to be able to do more. I used to have one expression pedal. I've now got three and a piano expression, which is plugged into a tremolo to create a more of a spring tremolo. Because it's got a spring in

"WE'RE EMBRACING THE CLEAN, THE JANGLY, THE TWANG..."



"ON THIS ALBUM, WE DIDN'T REALLY
TUNE OUR GUITARS..."

**LIVE AND DANGEROUS**

"Our shows rely on everything happening live, which makes it chaotic..."

it, when you press down on it, it pulls itself back up slowly. The tremolo can fluctuate in a different way, rather than having a resistance. There's a granular delay on my board that I didn't used to have, because they scare me, but this one seemed to make sense. The expressions add more effect level or reverb or whatever. One of them's on the granular delay, and it just speeds up and slows it down."

While the synth sounds on *Crawler* were produced without the aid of a keyboard, *Tangk* saw Bowen trying a Prophet synth, which informed their guitar parts. As Lee says: "When you play guitar your whole life, it's very difficult to change voicings on one, you get so caught up in playing the same chord shapes. Your hand just falls on a chord, and you start noodling around something you've been doing for forever. It helped a lot that Bowen sat down at the piano and moved his fingers around in ways that you don't do on guitar."

"This is a taste thing," Bowen says, "but often, adding sevenths and ninths to chords on guitar doesn't fit our style of music. Lee's always done it. Lee's really good at finding a chord that has something that sticks out a little bit. When I do it, I find it just doesn't fit on guitar, but it will somehow make sense in my head if I do it with keys."

Lee shows us an example, an overdub he plays on *Dancer*, fretting the 15th fret of the G string and 13th fret of the high E, leaving the B string open. "That's a great example of Lee reacting to stuff," Bowen says. "The chorus to *Dancer* started off as big organ chords. It wasn't great. Nigel Godrich was like, 'Let's do something Television-y and bounce off each other'. So I played baritone, this Pixies-y bouncy part that was kinda wack but fits, and Lee came up with the reaction chord. Lee is just really good at finding the sound, or the shape that fits what's happening. That will either be as a reaction to stuff that I've written or

within what I've done. I'll show stuff and he'd be like, 'You need to do this bit.' Then he'll find the sound. That's where our roles have become more defined. I'll do the essence of the song first, and then Lee will either react and add or react in and fit in."

Bowen reveals another secret: "On this album, we didn't really tune our guitars. We'd tune to the track. Nigel wouldn't allow us to use tuners. We'd go, 'I'll just tune that.' And he's like, 'No, listen to what you're playing.' So it wouldn't be like a strict 440hz across the across the strings." Bowen mentions Nick Cave's *Jubilee Street* and the Chili Peppers' *Scar Tissue* as classic recordings that sound better for the fact their guitars were tuned by ear to compensate for the guitar's infamously approximate intonation.

The gear, though, is only part of the challenge. "I guess the other big difference is that the songs are really f*cking hard!" laughs Bowen. "Whereas before, an Idles gig was all easy-peasy stuff, but it's all about feeling, we've now got many moving parts. That's very enjoyable. Playing *Tangk* songs, there's a lot more focusing on each other. We all find these little grooves and pockets to lock into. It's fun!"

Idles play Glastonbury and four other shows this summer. A full UK tour begins in November.

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JOE PERRY

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Get inside the rocking and riffing style of Aerosmith's number one axe wielder



Words Andrew Daly

“Anyone who plays guitar will understand that you don’t always know where a riff comes from. You’ll just be tapping your foot, and suddenly you’re playing, and you just hope the tape is running because you’ll probably forget it!”

Joe Perry has seen and done it all in his 50 years of playing guitar in America’s Greatest Rock ‘N’ Roll Band. Now, as **Aerosmith** head out on a farewell tour, he reveals how the band’s greatest songs were created – and explains why two guitarists are better than one...

Joe Perry is a guitar hero with a simple philosophy. “Guitar,” he says, “is a means to an end. So many players get hung up on technique, sometimes losing the forest for the trees. You can learn all these scales and tricks, but it only comes together if it’s something you want to hear again. I can appreciate all kinds of music and self-expression. It could be jamming in a band where you play one song for 45 minutes, like Jerry Garcia with the Grateful Dead. But for me, playing guitar is all about what serves the songs...”

Photo: Getty





As a founding member of Aerosmith – the self-styled Bad Boys of Boston, widely revered as America’s Greatest Rock ‘N’ Roll Band – Joe Perry has played his part in some of the most iconic rock songs of all time. In the ‘70s they gave us *Dream On*, *Sweet Emotion* and *Back In The Saddle*. In the ‘80s, *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)* and *Love In An Elevator*. And in both of those decades there was *Walk This Way*, originally recorded in 1975 and reborn in 1986 as a groundbreaking collaboration with Run-DMC, which became the first hip-hop single to reach the US top five and put Aerosmith on track for one of the most successful comebacks in the entire history of rock ‘n’ roll.

It was way back in 1971 that the classic Aerosmith line-up was established, with Steven Tyler on vocals, Perry and Brad Whitford on guitars, Tom Hamilton on bass and Joey Kramer on drums. Together, they defined the sound of American hard rock with albums such as *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*, and as Joe now recalls, the inspiration for having two guitar players in Aerosmith came from two influential British groups – the early Fleetwood Mac, led by Peter Green, and The Yardbirds. “One of my favourite Yardbirds recordings is called *Stroll On*,” he says. “It was their version of *Train Kept A-Rollin’*, and it’s one of the few recordings with Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck playing together. I still get goosebumps when I hear that. The two guitars come in, and to me, that’s the ultimate – that’s rock ‘n’ roll! It’s so cool to get two lead guitars together and not get in each other’s way. And even if you can’t tell who is playing, it doesn’t matter. That was always something that stuck with me...”

In turn, Perry and Whitford’s hard-rocking prowess would influence a generation of guitarists growing up in the ‘70s, most notably Slash, who told *Rolling Stone* magazine of the moment the he first heard the *Rocks* album at the age of 14: “It hit me like a f*cking ton of bricks,” he said. “My life changed.” In the same interview, Slash added: “When I was learning to play the guitar, Aerosmith gave me the shove. I identified with Joe Perry’s image, both visually and sound-wise. He was streamlined in a way that reminded me of Keith Richards, and had a careless guitar style that was really cool.”

As far as guitar playing goes, Joe Perry is an institution. With any number of

➔ Les Pauls, Strats or various off-kilter six-strings in hand, he has rocked and rolled for more than 50 years with Aerosmith – give or take a few years at the turn of the '80s when he was out of the band after falling out with Steven Tyler. But all good things must come to an end, and this year the band will resume their farewell tour, titled *Peace Out*. The tour began in 2023, only to be postponed after Tyler blew out his voice in just the third show. In the ensuing hiatus, Joe kept busy with his other band, *The Hollywood Vampires*, fronted by Alice Cooper and featuring two other guitar players, Johnny Depp and Tommy Henriksen. But come September, with Tyler fully recovered, Aerosmith will be back in the saddle once again.

And as America's Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Band gears up for that last hurrah, Joe Perry has plenty to say for himself in this wide-ranging interview with *Total Guitar*. He talks about his evolution as a player and the music that inspired him; his creative partnerships with Brad Whitford and Steven Tyler; the key songs in Aerosmith's career; and of course, the guitars...

What he says at the outset is that great guitar playing is all about open-mindedness. "It's about when you think outside the box," he says. "When you try things and fall into something inspiring, or when you play guitar and somebody says, 'Well, this is the proper way to play it', and then you think about it and go, 'Oh, I never thought of playing it like that!' That's why guitar sounds the way it does. It took a lot of rule-breaking back in the '60s, and it still does. So there's no point getting hung up on getting the right sound – unless it's the sound you want, and it feels right and inspires you. Other than that, there are no wrong sounds, just the ones that inspire you to do something good..."

A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

Let's start with how the young Joseph Anthony Pereira learned to play guitar...

My parents wanted me to play piano. It was like everybody had some musical instrument their parents wanted them to play, and mine gave me piano lessons. But that lasted like three months! I mean, rock 'n' roll – that sound – was always in the back of my mind. I finally got an acoustic guitar in



the early '60s, and I played along with what was on the radio and then put it aside. But when The Beatles came along, I brought that guitar out and I started plinking away on it.

As I understand it, you are naturally left-handed but learned to play with your right.

I never knew that there was a left-handed guitar or that you could play left-handed. I remember when I got my first acoustic guitar, my first instinct was to put the pick in my left hand and the guitar neck in my right hand. But I had this instructional record, and it said, 'Put the guitar neck in your left hand and the pick in your right hand'. So that's what I did! At that point, I didn't know that there were left-handed guitars or that you could play them that way. I was just young and following

ALMOST FAMOUS

The classic Aerosmith line-up in the early '70s, before their first hit record. Clockwise from top: Tom Hamilton, Brad Whitford, Joe Perry, Steven Tyler and Joey Kramer

directions! And that was it. That's how I ended up learning to play right-handed.

What did the guitar mean to you?

It was something I could always do that was mine. I loved rock 'n' roll – something about it got me. But back then, rock 'n' roll was the 'Devil's music', you know? Certainly, pop music had guitar in it, but rock 'n' roll was different.

Once you came of age, what sort of local scene were you exposed to in New England?

The little town I lived in [Hopedale, Massachusetts] was the exact opposite of what was going on in London in the early '60s. One or two other guys played guitar, but that was it. Most of the other guys played pop songs at high school dances or local clubs.

Eventually you hooked up with future Aerosmith bassist Tom Hamilton and formed The Jam Band. How did that happen?

During the school year I'd be in Hopedale, which is like 45 minutes from Boston, and I had a band with group of friends there. We played in clubs, some dances. And one of the guys had an older brother who turned me onto a lot of great music. He had stacks of albums, like Elvis, blues, Chuck Berry, and the first live record I ever heard, The Kinks' *Live At Kelvin Hall*. But my family was fortunate enough to have a little cottage up on a lake in New Hampshire. We'd go there every summer, and that's where I met Tom.

And that's also where you met Steven Tyler?

Yeah. I worked at a hamburger place, which is where all the kids liked to hang out. And one summer this guy Steven Tyler came in. He had a band up there, and I'd got the band together with Tom. I'd heard about Steven Tyler, heard his name. We never met, but we ran in some of the same circles for a couple of years. He saw my band play a couple

of times. But the first time I really interacted with him was when he and his band came into that hamburger joint. They were all dressed like a New York band that was gonna make it. They were loud and

"WE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT TUNING OUR GUITARS. ALL WE CARED ABOUT WAS ENERGY AND ROCKING OUT!"



doing what they thought rock bands did, and then they started having a food fight. And I remember having to clean up after it! I had to clean their f*cking whipped cream off the wall!

COME TOGETHER

After that rather inauspicious beginning, how did that progress toward the earliest incarnation of Aerosmith?

I don't think Steven really took my band seriously. We covered some pretty heavy stuff, like The MC5, and we didn't care about tuning our guitars. All we cared about was energy and rocking out! That's not what Steven's band was about. They would play Beatles songs, and they had harmonies. But one summer, I think it was 1970, his band broke up. Steven was a singer and a drummer, and he was really good. Tom and I had plans to go up to Boston to put a new band together. So I talked

to Steven. By that point, he was thinking of quitting the business. I wanted him to play drums, but he said, 'I want to be the singer.' I said, 'Okay, that's great.' And then we found Joey Kramer in Boston.

Early on, before you found Brad Whitford, you had Raymond Tabano in the band on guitar.

Steven said, 'I know this guitar player called Raymond...' Steven always wanted to have two guitars, and I was okay with that, so I said, 'Let's give it a try.' Raymond was in the band for about eight or maybe 10 months, but that was it.

From there, Brad joined the band, and Aerosmith got rolling.

Well, we did a lot of high school dances and stuff, but we never got into working the local Boston scene. Back then you had to play five nights a week, four sets a night, and cover whatever the

EMPIRE STATE OF MIND

Joe sporting a BC Rich Mockingbird, backstage at Madison Square Garden, New York City, 1976

Top 20 was. But Boston was a good place to be, because a lot of the English bands that we really loved would come down to Boston before they went to New York. So I got to see bands like Fleetwood Mac.

What was the feeling in the band in that early period?

It was a really exciting time. Steven knew a lot about songwriting. I didn't think that was as big a deal as having a band together and a gang of guys with the same vision of making music. The performing part came later, along with being on a record label, and going into a studio...

YOU'RE ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR NEXT RECORD...

The first album, titled simply *Aerosmith*, had some great, rocking songs including *Mama Kin*, later covered by Guns N' Roses. But the



➔ **biggest song that on that record was of course *Dream On...***

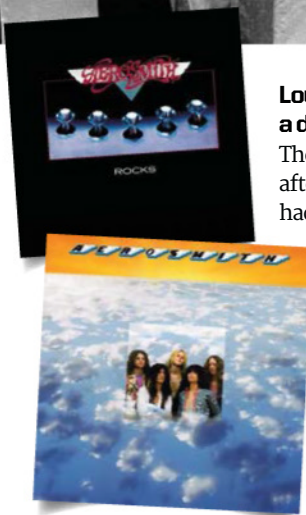
Steven had been working on this riff for a while. He had it in his pocket for years. His father was a Juilliard graduate who taught music and played piano, an exceptional player, and Steven learned a lot from him. So Steven had this tune he was constantly working on, but it got to a point where I don't think he really wanted to play piano on it, so we transposed it over and picked up the same vibe on guitar. It was real chords, so when you hear that song, the first thing you hear is guitar. Then we added Mellotron, and it's now an integral part of how we play it live. But back then, we didn't want to lug a piano around, so it worked.

That song is a great early example of the interplay between you and Brad Whitford.

When we finally arranged the song, there were certain parts where I felt I could do a better job on it and others where Brad could do a better job. That's why we split up the guitar, and some of my

favourite parts of the song are the parts that Brad plays. That's how we followed it – whatever seemed to work, that's who filled the spot. And whoever wrote the basic guts of the song, that's who'd get to play the solo. That was the unwritten rule of how things evolved.

With the second album, *Get Your Wings*, things got a little weird for you and Brad when two other guitarists, Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner, were brought in to play solos on the opening track *Same Old Song And Dance* and a cover of *Train Kept A-Rollin'*. It was a decision made jointly by the album's producer Jack Douglas and executive producer Bob Ezrin – the latter having used Hunter and Wagner when working with Alice Cooper and



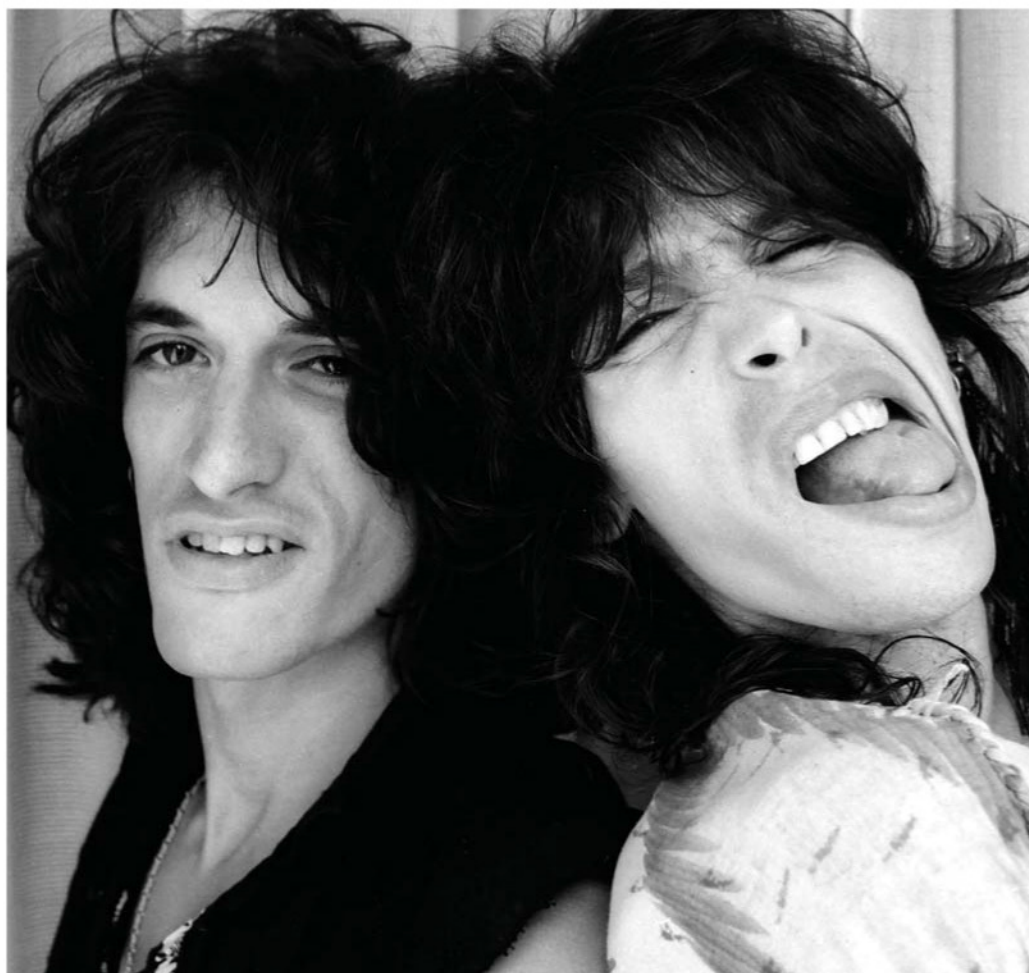
HIGH TIMES

Top: The boys in celebratory mood. Above: 1976's *Rocks* and the band's 1973 self-titled debut

Lou Reed. This must have been a difficult time for you and Brad.

The record label was ready to drop us after the first album wasn't a hit. We had already struggled to get the record deal, and they were ready to drop us. You think that once you get a record deal, you're set. But that's just the start. The second record, man, it's a bitch! So the label said, 'We'll give you another go as long as you bring in Bob Ezrin'. He was one of the top producers at the time – and I've gotten to know him well now – but we were under their thumb. Jack Douglas was brought in to do the day-to-day stuff, but and Bob would come in every couple of weeks to listen to what was going on, but he kind of handed it off to Jack. Of course we were on the fence about bringing in sidemen to play some of the stuff, but we kind of made a deal with the Devil because we wanted our shot at a second record. Brad and I weren't happy about it, but that's what it was going to take to keep us on the label and keep us going, so we did what we felt we had to do. For better

"WHEN YOU HEAR DREAM ON, THE FIRST THING YOU HEAR IS GUITAR"



or worse, we opened that door, but that was certainly the last time. After that second record came out, they re-released *Dream On*, it was a hit, and suddenly we had the power. Then it was a whole different story.

After that difficult experience with *Get Your Wings*, how did you approach the sessions for the third album *Toys In The Attic*?

I'd learned a lot about what I wanted to do and what the fans responded to. I wanted to make music that the fans would want to come and hear. I always saw myself that way – I always was a fan first. I still am. I don't take anything for granted. And you're only as good as your next record, man!

***Toys In The Attic* was Aerosmith's first masterpiece and is now acclaimed as one of the all-time great hard rock albums. It was also the band's commercial breakthrough. You had a vision, knew what you wanted, and executed it.**

"WHOEVER WROTE THE BASIC GUTS OF THE SONG, THAT'S WHO'D GET TO PLAY THE SOLO"

What gear defined that period for you?

I always felt like we should sound like one of us was playing a Fender Strat and the other was playing a Gibson Les Paul. We liked the idea of having two different guitar sounds. I think a lot of people, when they think of us in those years, are us playing Les Pauls. But I recorded a lot with Strats. I was definitely a stone-cold Gibson man, but I seemed to gravitate more toward Strats and that variety of tones. The bottom line is that it all comes from your hands. But with a Strat, I always felt like you could get a little more out of it. Plus, you had the vibrato, which you could use as a sound effect, and musically I always felt like it was like one more colour on your paint palette.



TWO OF A KIND

Top: The former Toxic Twins in the 80s. Above: Aerosmith's masterful 1975 album *Toys In The Attic*

And just ergonomically, a Strat is laid out so well – the volume knob is right there, it's a little thinner, you've got the toggle switch. It seemed like you could go more places with a Strat.

But as you say, many people always associate you with Les Pauls in the '70s, particularly your famed '59 'Burst.

That was an important guitar, but I wasn't glued to it. When it was time for a Les Paul, yes, that was it. And I didn't really have that many Les Pauls then, though I look back at pictures and it seems like I had a dozen! But that was the guitar. As far as a Les Paul, yeah, that was it. I loved the way the neck of a Les Paul felt, the thickness of it.

***Toys In The Attic* has so many great songs, so many great guitar moments – the funky riff in *Walk This Way*, the cool talkbox intro in *Sweet Emotion*, the frantic riffing in the title track. What do you remember about writing and recording that stuff?**

We were under pressure to write sh*t in the studio, but I had riffs waiting around to play for Steven. *Walk This Way* happened in a soundcheck one day. I always had things ready for Steven to

see if it was something he could wrap his head around. If it was, that's what we'd end up working on. And then everybody would throw it into the pot and we'd go from there. I remember sitting on a little combo amp and coming up with the riff

for the song *Toys In The Attic*. The producer Jack Douglas had said, 'We need another rocker'. So I sat down on a Marshall 2x12 and came up with the *Toys* riff. Anyone who plays guitar will understand that you don't always know where a riff comes from, but you'll just be tapping your foot, and suddenly you're playing, and you just hope the tape is running because you'll probably forget it.

THE SIX-STRING BASS & OTHER DELIGHTS

Many fans feel that *Rocks*, the follow-up to *Toys In The Attic*, is Aerosmith's finest hour. Again, it features a ton of classic tracks and great guitar work from you and Brad.

➔ Can you remember writing the riff for *Back In The Saddle* and why you chose to play a six-string bass on that song?

Oh yeah. When I saw the Spinal Tap movie, that scene where they had three bass players, I had to laugh. But I also remember seeing a band with two bass players – maybe it was Peter Green with Fleetwood Mac, during one of their jams, when he would put down his Les Paul and pick up a six-string bass. I remember thinking it would be cool to have that in our little corner of the woods, so I tracked one down and wrote that *Back In The Saddle* riff with it. Very often, you buy a guitar not just because it looks great or sounds great, like a '68 Les Paul, but because there's just something about it that makes you work a little harder to play it, and through that, you might have a new song.

And that's how it was with *Back In The Saddle*?

It was. I've collected a lot of cool guitars over the years, and they inspire me to do something I might not have done otherwise. And with that guitar, you can get a lot of great sounds because it's basically a bass, but it's got two extra high strings, so you can play chords on it. But it's the kind of instrument that's not going to work for everything, so when we played it live, we tried to do it without it, but it didn't work. So, Brad plays the solos live, and I use the six-string bass. It all works out.

Another killer track on *Rocks* is *Last Child*, a Brad composition.

Brad wrote some of my favourite songs in our catalogue, and he played some of my favourite solos. His style is so different to mine, but if you listen enough to our stuff, you can tell the difference between Brad's sound and mine.

That's an important point, as Brad should be considered Aerosmith's co-lead guitarist. You interchange so well and, in many ways, created a template many bands have followed. The two biggest influences on this band, at least from my point of view, are The Yardbirds and early Fleetwood Mac. They both had two guitar players, and I always thought, 'What would they do?' And, of course, it's always fun to start that way, but you end up finding out that you don't sound like them – you



sound like Aerosmith, you know? But you gotta start somewhere...

FLYING SOLO

Aerosmith had continued success in the late '70s with the albums *Draw The Line* and the in-concert double *Live! Bootleg*. There were huge tours with headlining shows in stadiums. But in 1979, during the recording of the *Night In The Ruts* album, you quit the band and formed a new outfit, The Joe Perry Project. At that point, did you overhaul your cache of guitars?

There's a lot of guitars that are associated with me, like that red 10-string B.C. Rich Bich, which I'm holding up in the air on the *Live! Bootleg* record. I didn't play it that much with Aerosmith, maybe a few times for a couple of songs, but I used it a lot on my first Project album [1980's *Let the Music Do The Talking*].



BROTHERS IN ARMS

Top: Brad Whitford (left) and Perry on stage at Winterland, San Francisco 1976
Above: 1980's *Let The Music Do The Talking* and Joe's self-titled solo debut from 2005

It's funny – for the relatively few times I played it, I got a lot of recognition for that guitar.

And you weren't much of a collector then anyway, right?

That's true. I really wasn't into collecting guitars. At that point, I had a few Les Pauls, a few Juniors or Strats, but that was it. Honestly, the guitar I miss the most from that era is the Strat I recorded *Walk This Way* with, which went the way of the wind when I left the band. But right around then, I wanted to clear the decks and clear my head. I took most of my Aerosmith guitars, put them in road boxes, and left them there.

Aside from the red Rich Bich, what other guitars were critical to your early '80s work outside of Aerosmith?

I started playing a left-handed Strat, my main guitar, while I was away from the band. But I did bring out the clear-body Dan Armstrong and the Rich Bich. I recorded the first couple of Project albums with an Ampeg V, like the 50-watt kind. I wanted something close to a Marshall, and that was pretty much it. I didn't get into collecting amps until the late '80s or early '90s. Brad turned me onto this guy on the West Coast, who lived in San Diego and had a house full of great old Marshalls and combos. That's when I started collecting old amps.

You rejoined Aerosmith in 1984 and have stayed put ever since, but you've made a number of solo albums. Do you have a favourite?

Well, some of them – I think I've got seven or eight of them now – I just needed to do. I felt like I had to get a record out. When I listen to some of them I kind of cringe. But there's one with a couple of tunes I really loved. The red one [2005's self-titled *Joe Perry*] hit the mark. So for some of the solo records, I listen to one or two songs and go, 'Man, I just wasn't in the right space for that.' But the red album has song *Mercy* that got nominated for a Grammy. So that's probably my second favourite solo album after the first one with Project.

THE RESURRECTION

When the band reunited in 1984 were you confident you could get



back to the top?

I don't know, man. When I look back at it, we were lucky to have one shot. I've seen so many bands come and, for whatever reason, they're gone. But when we got back together that summer in '84, we had to buy ourselves out of our deal with Columbia – we were in debt for \$300,000. They said they'd laid out so much money, and *blah blah blah*, so we had to buy our way out of the record deal before we could even sign with another label.

And nobody wanted to touch the band anyway, right?

Yeah, nobody wanted to sign us at that point. We'd burned too many bridges. So, we went out on the Back In The Saddle Tour, and the fans were there for us. We went out without a record company or an album. We had nothing, man, just the fans. And we had to see if we could get over the old bullsh*t and work together as a band again. The fans were there for us, and by the end of that summer we found that we could make it through a tour without killing each other! We buried a lot of hatchets in the ground instead of each other's heads! I've always said that if we had our wits about us – which was hard because we were so burned out from seven years of album, tour, album, tour, album, tour – we would have just taken a break or a



vacation. We would have taken a few years off. We didn't have to tour so much, but we did and we burned out. And in those four years that we were apart, by the time we came back to the band it was a whole different scene.

The comeback album *Done With Mirrors* was not a huge success, but then you had the collaboration with Run-DMC on *Walk This Way*, which introduced Aerosmith to a whole new generation. And then you had multi-platinum albums with 1987's *Permanent Vacation* and 1989's *Pump*. Did the band feel at home



GUITAR HEROES

Clockwise from top left: Joe with two of his prized axes; onstage playing an Ampeg Dan Armstrong; Perry and Jeff Beck backstage, 1976; the *Dude* (*Looks Like A Lady*) single cover, 1987

in the MTV era?

Well, you had to get a great video for your single and all that sh*t. The whole industry had changed. Touring was different. It had become more of an industry, so it wasn't just about a great song but also having a great video. Then you could go out and sell tickets.

Songs like *Dude* (*Looks Like A Lady*) did the trick, though.

With *Dude*, I loved AC/DC. That band still f*cking knocks me out! Their early albums – pick any album – they're all great. So, with *Dude*, I was thinking about an AC/DC song. And it's funny, it doesn't sound like an AC/DC song, but there you go! I remember around that time Steven had gotten a sampler, which had just come out. He pressed a button, and you could shorten things, and another button would make it repeat. So suddenly you've got this cool rhythm thing, and we were fooling

"THE GUITAR I MISS THE MOST IS THE STRAT I RECORDED WALK THIS WAY WITH"



around with that. That riff you hear at the start came from Steven fooling with the buttons, and we captured that stuttering riff. We built the song from that.

And how about *Love In An Elevator*, another big hit?

With that one, we were in Vancouver working on the record and we had this guy following us around with a video camera. He was trying to capture those moments when you're searching for the right riff, lyric or whatever, and you get hit by lightning. So we had the camera going, and fortunately, we'd keep the tape or audio to get that moment, because you never knew when it would hit. So that's why you see those moments when you watch *The Making Of Pump* video. With *Elevator*, I remember we had the four or five chords, but we needed a riff that worked, and we ended up getting that on video. When you need something, sometimes it's right there, but other times,

you don't know where the f*ck it comes from!

The solos in *Love In An Elevator* are classic, too.

While doing *Pump*, sometimes we'd work on Saturdays, but we'd usually take Sunday off. So Steven, me and our wives decided to head to Vancouver Island, and I got food poisoning. But by the time we came back to the studio, I was feeling better, I'd stopped throwing up, and the first thing we did was work on the solo for *Love In An Elevator*. Half of it was pretty much the first take, and then we probably put a few edits in. It's one of those songs that, to this day, when I do it live, I stay as close to the record as I can.

THE GEARHEAD

With the 1993 album *Get A Grip*,

"I'M ALWAYS LOOKING AT GUITAR MAGAZINES AND THE LATEST PEDALS"

you were becoming experimental with gear and sounds. What prompted that?

That was the beginning of the period when I really got into amps. I remember telling Brad that I was having trouble getting the sound I wanted, and he said, 'It would help if you got some really good amps!' So that's when I really got into that stuff. But with a song like *Fever*, the beginning has sound effects. I recorded that in my studio while fooling around with some rack-mounted stuff. By then, I'd really learned how to go to the next level because I wasn't happy with some of the quality of the recordings to that point. I was learning how to produce, engineer, and get really good sounds, along with what gear to use. I got into that a lot. On the first record, I didn't know any of that stuff, and I'd ask producers and engineers, 'How did you get that sound?' So I learned about it, and *Get A Grip* was when I started to learn how to use it.

Aerosmith haven't made an album since *Music From Another Dimension* in 2012, but you've recorded and toured with the Hollywood Vampires. Do you approach that band much differently from a guitar perspective?

I don't feel like there's any set rules. It's all about experimenting. If I'm gonna go in and record, or someone wants me to do an overdub or a solo, it all depends on the song. But there's no pressure to do anything other than see a smile on somebody else's face in the band. Some bands have hard and fast rules about how the guitars have to sound or who needs to be the only one playing a solo, but it's all about the song. Above all else, it's about what's right for the song. And the other guys in the band are great players. Both Johnny [Depp] and Tommy [Henriksen] are formidable. You're all part of the game.

But it's different from Aerosmith.

It's such a different set of... I don't want to say rules, there are no rules. But there's a certain freedom to just go in there and just do what you do. And Johnny, he's a musician first. He always wanted to be in a band, so watching him blossom in the studio is great. Man, he can really play!

A year or so back, you said that there are no bad tones. I love that idea.

It's freeing...

When you just think about what works for the song, there are no bad tones. *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)* was inspired by Steven using samples, and it turned into this effect that when we play live a keyboard player triggers it. But what inspired that song was chord changes, a riff and a guitar. The melody came after. And it's a song that people love to hear.

Another thing that should be talked about more is that you've become a mad scientist when it comes to pedals and amps.

Oh, man, that's one thing I'm constantly doing – looking at new pedals. Electro-Harmonix has come out with a ton of great stuff. I don't know enough about all the circuitry to tell you the difference between one distortion and another in that way. All I know is that if your preamp isn't hot enough, it's not going to drive the power amp enough to get the kind of distortion that you want.

You came up in the days when most players pushed their tube amps for distortion, but now you've got pedals to do it for you. What has that been like?

Well, that classic sound and those early effects back then were interesting. You had your clean sound, and then you had that dirt, like the distortion. All of that happened by accident, and according to the legend, depending on who you believe about amps falling off trucks or whatever, distortion came from that, and they said, 'Well, okay, let's use it anyway!' We're talking about old songs like *Rocket 88* [widely considered to be the first rock 'n' roll record, sung by Jackie Brenston with Ike Turner on guitar] and *Rumble* [Link Wray's 1958 instrumental featuring innovative use of distortion]. And then somebody came along with valve amps with certain transistors, capacitors, and transformers that get distorted when you take it to 10. It's magic! So, from the '50s to the '60s, it became like its own voice, and of course, Marshall and the other English amp companies jumped on that because you had these guys who wanted more volume. People still chase that sound that Clapton had with the Bluesbreakers. Ted Nugent once said to Eddie Van Halen, 'If I had your gear, I'd sound like you'. But he plugged in and sounded like Ted. So if it's amps or

pedals, I don't think there's any place where you can say, 'I've found the perfect tone', because there are no bad tones.

It's also important to remember that many tones people are chasing through vintage gear came about when that gear was new years ago.

Right, so you can go back and find the exact same amp and same guitar, and now they're all 50, 60, 70 years old. That's not the same. My point is that those instruments, back then, were pretty new. Big legacy companies like Gibson and Fender are now starting to make guitars that are as good as the ones they made back when they were first invented. I've played some new Gibson and Fenders that really nail it. And the boutique companies, money aside, have hit the nail on the head and are making great instruments, too. So I'm always looking at guitar magazines and the latest pedals. There are some pedals that, for example, if you're dealing with a Klon, it would be tough to decide between them during a blindfold test. So think again if you need to spend a whole bunch of money on an original Klon to get that sound. There's some affordable stuff out there that can do the same thing.

50 YEARS. 600 GUITARS. AND ONE BILLION STREAMS...**You've dedicated 50 years to Aerosmith, and in all that time you've amassed a huge collection of guitars – in excess of 600 at the last count. But is there one guitar that means the most to you these days?**

There's a Strat that has changed a bunch since around 2001 that I call the 'Burned Strat'. It changes every six months, kind of for the fun of it. But there are some legitimate sonic reasons that I've got set up with a left-handed neck, like the length of the strings from the nut to the tuning pegs, all these little things. And I've got this great set of Seymour Duncan pickups that can switch back and forth between single-coil and P-90 sound. They're great, and I'm surprised you don't see them talked about more in guitar magazines.

And when you look back on all that you have achieved, how do you measure the importance of what

SMOKIN' JOE!
Onstage with
Aerosmith at UBS
Arena in Elmont,
New York, 2023

you've accomplished from a guitar perspective?

I recently saw that *Dream On* went over one billion streams. One billion. That's insane! I never imagined that would happen. And the first thing you hear when that song comes on is my guitar. That means a lot to me. The space between when I got my first Silvertone guitar and when I recorded *Dream On* seemed like a minute. So for that song to be over a billion and reach as many people as it has, that's pretty special. When you start, you can't imagine these types of things, so to have it reach so many people, and for us to be ready to get back out there again for this tour, I don't take any of that for granted. That's the biggest thing – at my age, you learn not to take anything for granted and enjoy it.

Words Andrew Daly Photos Ross Halfin

“IT’S REAL, IT’S RAW, IT’S ALIVE!”

Joe Perry tours with a wall of amps, five vaults of guitars, and enough pedals to supply a shoegaze festival.

Darren Hurst, the man charged with making all that work, reveals Joe's setup and tone secrets...

Darren Hurst had just finished five years' work with Peter Frampton when he got the call to tech for Aerosmith's Las Vegas residency in 2019. Since then he's become Joe Perry's most trusted ally.

Joe enlisted Darren to catalogue his 600-strong guitar collection, rebuild his rig, and join him for tours with Aerosmith, the Hollywood Vampires, and The Joe Perry Project. These are Darren's top tips for sounding like Joe Perry...

SPONTANEITY IS KING

It's just like having a paint palette, but Joe never paints the song the same way twice. That is the thing I love most about working for him, but it's also the most difficult. It's cool, because it's real, and it's raw, and it's alive. It centres around that edge of calamity. Sometimes it's this beautiful, chaotic dance, where any minute it can fall off the rails, but it doesn't. 95 times out of 100 it's amazing. But you'll get a night where something explodes and now

you're running around with your hair on fire, ten minutes into a two and a half-hour show!

The setlist doesn't come out till 20 minutes before the show, right when I'm tuning everything. I've got 54 guitars in five vaults – 24 I consider main show guitars, and two vaults of other things he can call for, and every guitar's got a backup. Some days, he'll just decide that he wants to lean on hollow bodies, or he wants to play Les Pauls. He's been on a Strat kick recently. You never know which way he's going to go. He'll lean in at the end of the song before and say, 'Hey, I want to play that on the burnt Strat, or the Lucille or Billie.' It can get a little hair-raising. *Walk This Way* is usually the silver Gretsch, although the last two shows, he wanted the burnt Strat. I'm also managing wireless for all these guitars. He could call for something that doesn't have a pack on it, and then it's a scramble.

When I get to 4pm, I start to get nervous because I'm waiting for that text from Joe going, 'Hey, let's change out this pedal or that amp head!' My soundcheck is already done, so anything we change at that point is







"HE'S BEEN ON A STRAT KICK RECENTLY. YOU NEVER KNOW WHICH WAY HE'S GOING TO GO"



wild and going into the show with no idea whether it works or not!

TURN THE GAIN DOWN AND CRANK THE VOLUME

Joe is always going to have a multi-amp rig. That's part of the way his tone is created, because he's not a high-gain player. His sound comes from clean boosts and it comes from volume. He likes low wattage heads with low wattage speakers. It still gets pretty loud on stage. Joe doesn't play on in-ear monitors – he's old-school. Right in front of Joe's amp, it's about 108 decibels. On the other side of the stage where Brad Whitford [guitar] and Tom Hamilton [bass] are, it's silent because they're on Kempers or something direct to the PA. We actually had to bring in a couple of Ampeg SVT stacks just to put some

bass on stage, because Joe had nothing to play with. We were struggling because there just wasn't any stage volume. It's weird because you watch the crowd – and this happens with a lot of bands – the first ten rows just stand there with their arms folded, because there's no electricity in the air. But on Joe's side of the stage, you just get this natural movement, because there's electrons and air movement. It just changes things.

I know sound engineers love a silent stage, but screw those guys – rock 'n' roll is supposed to move people! Even if you turn the backline around or you face a cab down, there's got to be some kind of movement. I want the guitar to couple to the amp. I've got a Kemper in my rack. It does some amazing things, but it can't sound like Joe Perry.

RIGHT HAND MAN
Darren Hurst with
boss Joe Perry

HIT THE GUITAR HARDER. NO, HARDER!

Joe is a very, very heavy hitter. I've been a Joe Perry fan for a long time – I mean, who hasn't? But I didn't know how great of a guitar player Joe was until I stood behind his amps and listened to him play at close quarters. For how hard he hits, the amount of control that he has is outstanding. He doesn't hold back at all. When I first started working for him, he said, 'I want you in the trenches with me, and we don't phone it in.' He goes 100 per cent every single night. If he's tired, you still get 100 per cent. If he's pissed off, you still get 100 per cent. And then there's other nights where he just give you 105 per cent. There's a video on YouTube of one of the Hollywood Vampires shows and he's giving it everything he's got. A JCM800



falls and whacks him on the shoulder. So many people were like, 'That's not a real head!' That head was plugged in and working. There's no faking it. I love that. It inspires you to work harder.

The other thing that's really interesting is when I play Joe's rig at soundcheck, I don't sound like Joe Perry. It's Joe smacking the sh*t out of a guitar. It's control, and it's sheer velocity. Joe plays a lot with his thumb, so naturally, he kinda pops on the upbeat. He's almost got a stronger upbeat than he does downbeat. If you listen to a lot of his riffs, they kind of pop in the spaces in between the downbeats. That's what makes his riffs so funky. It's unencumbered by anything else because everybody else in Aerosmith is playing on the downbeat, so he gets to have this

space. Joe just weaves in and out of those pockets.

USE LIGHT STRINGS AND A BEEFY ACTION

Joe likes thin strings. We went to 8s for the Hollywood Vampires shows. As we all get a little older, you want less tension. We also went to the Vega tremolo, which is a fully floating, medium spring.

Aerosmith have a lot of cryo jets on stage. Those temperature changes can affect the guitar quite dramatically. If you're anywhere near a cryo jet and you've got 9s or 10s, those

LIVIN' ON THE EDGE

Joe and Steven Tyler in 2023 during the Peace Out tour—shortly before Tyler lost his voice and the plug was pulled

strings start to feel like steel bars until the guitar warms back up again. You've got to think about those kinds of things.

For setups, he likes a little bit of fight. When you've got super light strings, you've got to have something to grab hold of, so the necks have a little bit of relief. I'd say the action is about 3/32" (2.4mm) at the 10th fret, but I'm so used to just looking at it. I call it the Gary Moore setup. I want it to play super easy at the nut, to be able to get hold of stuff at the high end, and to be able to dig in in the middle. But you can't put too much relief in with

"RIGHT IN FRONT OF JOE'S AMP, IT'S ABOUT 108 DECIBELS"

➔ Joe because he plays so hard, he will go sharp.

I don't intonate Joe's guitars at the 12th fret. I do compensated intonation, and that allows that extra bit of relief. Compensated intonation is to get all your open chords massively in tune. I intonate the high E and the B at the third fret, the G string at the eighth fret, the D string at the tenth fret, and then the A and the E at the 12th fret as usual. Your guitar is really in tune up to about the seventh or the eighth fret. Then it'll start to drift a little bit, but with a little bit of finger pressure, you can put it in.

When Joe's playing a solo, or he's putting vibrato on a note, so when you get up to the 12th fret, if the notes are a little bit flat, the vibrato is going either side of the pitch anyway. That allows him to be super solid in tune at the bottom and still have a little bit of air to grab hold on with such light strings. I learned that in Nashville. It's great for recording, and it's great if you use a capo because you put your guitar in tune with the capo.

He hits the Vega tremos pretty hard, and they do move because they're not locking. We put locking tuners on them, and I grease the nuts every day. But we're changing guitars nearly every other song, so the guitars don't have to stay in tune very long. It helps that Joe doesn't like new strings.

MORE AMPS, PLEASE!

We just talked about what amps we'll use this year. He wants to do couple of couple of full stacks, maybe a half-stack with a slightly higher gain, and then the rest will be all combos. It'll be a combination of probably Fender and Supro combos, although I've got a great new Ashdown combo to check out. The one great thing about working for Joe is it never stays the same.

My favourite Joe Perry sound is a JCM800 with the Tube Screamer, and then something like either an Ampeg V4, or a Hiwatt Custom 50, and then a Fender combo. You combine those three things like a cake. You can front end that with a little bit of gain stacking, a little boost, or a compressor if you want it super clean. You could use a Klon, another TS9, or a fuzz panel, and it'll kind of hit everything, and then it all responds differently. It blends together beautifully. The Marshall is a little bit more ferocious. The Hiwatt is pure clean gain, and then



WHAT IT TAKES

"We're changing guitars nearly every song," Darren says

the Fender's kind of on the edge of breakup. If you stand 10 feet back from that, it's Joe Perry.

On this tour we'll also have an EVH 5150 combo and a 25 watt Hiwatt Custom they built for Joe, and that will be where we start. Whether that's well we'll stay I don't know. He's got so many friends that build amps and so many amps in this collection. I've got basically an entire semi truck devoted to Joe Perry's gear. If he wants to change it up, I want to be able to give him what he wants.

We go back and forth on Fender combos – Vibroverbs, Vibrolux. I like the way that they break up. I'll take the Deluxe non-reverb out every single time, but the Fulltone tape echo seems

In the rack, I've got an Origin Effects Revival Drive, another TS9, Joe's main Klon, a Blues Driver, he MXR Micro Boost. I can gain stage those five things in different combinations. Certain combinations work better than others. I don't like a TS9 going into a Klon. It gets clumpy, but if you swap them around, the Klon can push the TS9, and it gets really singing. It's kind of like a high gain amp, it's got that little flutter, but you can get it at a much lower volume. Then you can punch in the Strymon Compadre compressor with the threshold on zero. I just use the Compadre's boost to cascade into the Klon, which then cascades into the TS9. It's controllable. You roll the volume down and it's not

interface that you can assign to anything. Joe has four of them on deck. Wherever he is on the stage, he can get to a wah pedal controller and a Whammy. It's kind of cool because he's got all this vintage stuff that he loves, but it's all under modern control.

REMEMBER THAT GUITARS ARE JUST TOOLS

What I love about Joe is if we break it, he's like, 'F*ck it, we'll get another one!' With Joe, we use it till it blows up. Joe will say you change strings when they break. I've worked for players where you bias the tubes every day. That kind of appeals to one side of my brain because I love signal flow, but there's another creative side of me that just loves the chaos. When we finish

the show, the rigging guys descend on that thing like rats on a cadaver. The amps go into a road case still hot. This stuff gets abused. I can put an amp up and 10

minutes into the show it'll be on fire. It's just how Joe rolls: if it sounds good, it is good. He's looking for an accident. He's looking for a moment. He's not looking for the same. He's looking for an incident in time that creates something unique. I'm inspired by that.

"I'VE GOT BASICALLY AN ENTIRE SEMI TRUCK DEVOTED TO JOE PERRY'S GEAR"

to go into the Vibroverbs and Vibroluxes a little better. The Supros he's got sound great. We use those out front. All those all those big Aerosmith hits were recorded on combos. The challenge for the tech is to make Joe Perry sound like Joe Perry when you're traveling around 40 different arenas. I have to pinch myself some days when I wake up and there's a whole bunch of gear that says Joe Perry all over it!

GAIN STAGING: THE TONE SECRET OF THE PROS

With a Marshall, an Ibanez TS9 Tube Screamer is the secret for me. There's a bunch of things out there that will do it – Boss OD-1 or SD-1, Origin Effects Halcyon, or any Klon clone. But my favourite is a TS9 into a JCM800. I get the JCM just on the verge of breakup. You find that little sweet spot where you hit a hit a chord and if you hit it too hard it goes like a pencil on a bottle: there's a little ring that you get. You know then just to dial a little hair back. Then I put a TS9 in front and it just stays on. It gain stages really, really well. You can put an OD-1 or a heavy metal pedal in front of it. If you've got a Marshall amp and you're having trouble with it, just get a TS9 and just leave it on. Don't even put it on your pedalboard. Just tape it to the back of the Marshall!

hissing. You can leave the guitar wide open, take your hands off the guitar and doesn't run away with itself. You've got everything in between if you're the kind of player that rides your volume control, which Joe does. He's typically set on eight and a half, and then he'll open it up for a solo, and I might push in the boost on the compressor. Gain staging is about how things interplay with everything else.

GET SET UP FOR SLIDE

On the Dan Armstrongs, you could put a pencil under the strings and it would probably fall out. They're setup for slide. You ain't playing chords on those guitars. They are .011 to .052, except there's a unison on the bottom string [so Open A is A-A-E-A-C#-E]. The lowest string is a .060 from a bass set. The two As create this really interesting sitar-like drone. The slide will be on a slight angle, so the two notes beat against each other tuning-wise. I love that sound, it's really unique to Joe. Joe is such a good slide player. I've seen him play on the bus, really close up. He's just monumental.

DON'T FEAR HIGH TECH SOLUTIONS

Joe does embrace technology. We're using an RJM Music Mastermind, a programmable multi-button MIDI

PUMP UP THE VOLUME

"It still gets pretty loud on stage..."



6 of the BEST

The cream of Joe Perry's **600+** guitar collection

1 BURNT STRAT

Built by Joe Perry and Jim Servis in 2001 from left-handed Fender and Warmoth parts, the P-rails pickups are a recent addition. Darren moved the volume control below the strings and fitted a Vega trem.

2 BC RICH BICH

The 10-string BC Rich Bich was immortalised on the sleeve of Aerosmith's *Live! Bootleg* album. It's the only guitar Darren restrings every day. Tuned like a 12-string, but the low E and A strings are not doubled.

3 MUSICMAN SILHOUETTE BASS

Used only for *Back In The Saddle*, the Silhouette bass has a Floyd Rose trem. "Trying to get a .105 string under the Floyd Rose locking nut is kind of a challenge!" Darren Hurts admits.

4 BILLIE

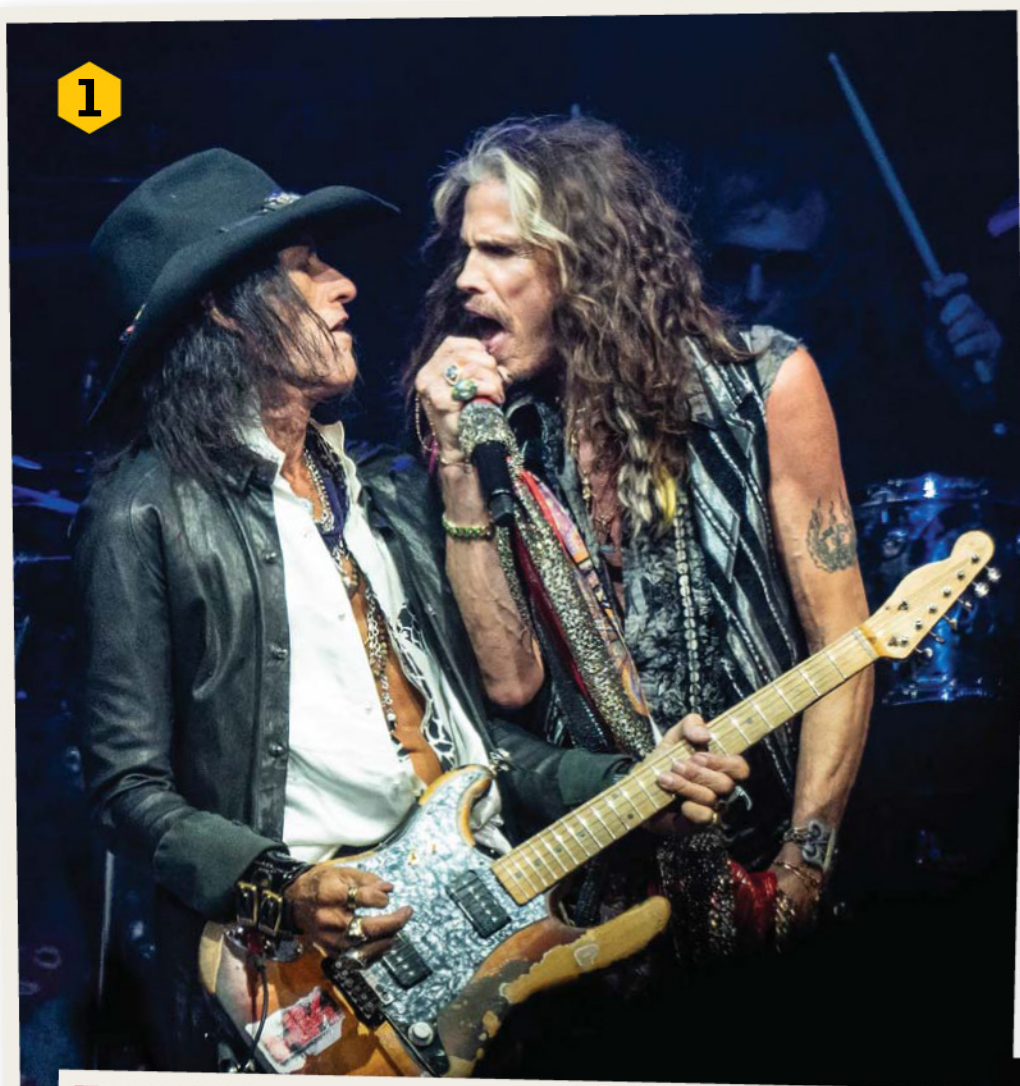
Billie was a stock B.B. King Lucille model that Joe had airbrushed with a picture of his wife, Billie Perry. At the same time he simplified the circuitry to one volume and one tone control.

5 DAN ARMSTRONG

A Perry perennial since Aerosmith's '70s heyday, the plexiglass Ampex Dan Armstrong guitars are used only for slide. The single pickup slides in and out. You'll see this guitar for *Draw The Line* and *Let The Music Do The Talking*.

6 BLACK GOLD RUSH

Joe's last signature Les Paul, the Gold Rush, featured a single humbucker, Wilkinson tremolo, roller nut, and a gold top, but Joe is often seen live with this one-off black version.

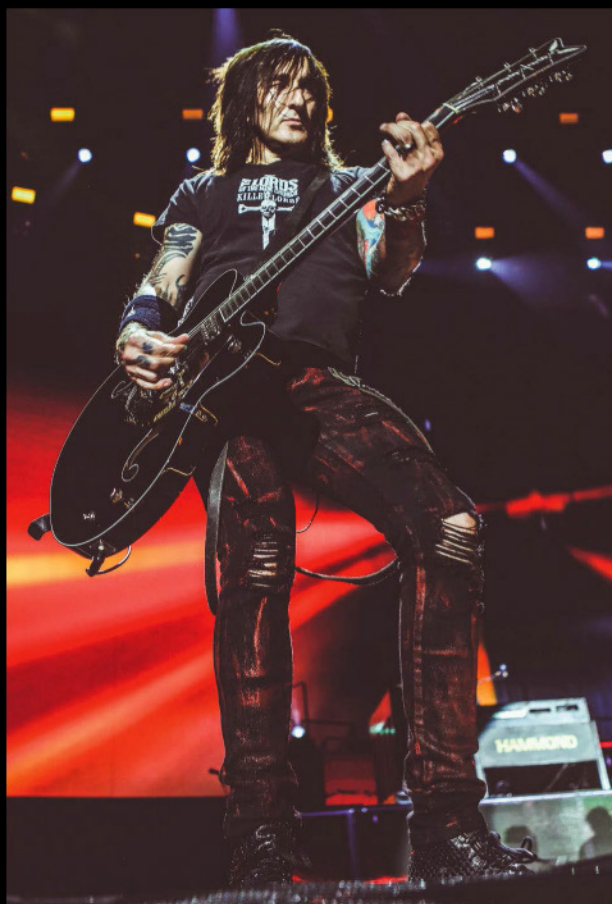






“NOBODY PLAYS LIKE JOE!”

Guns N' Roses guitarist **Richard Fortus** recalls how Aerosmith's early albums changed his life, and tells us what he's learned from being friends with Joe Perry



My first album, and I remember this very well, I bought in 1975 when I was nine years old. There was a thing called the Columbia Records and Tapes program where you could order eight albums for a penny! I convinced my mother to let me do that. I got the 8-track cassette of *Toys In The Attic*, Aerosmith's latest record, and wore it out until it was so thin that you could hear through to the other side playing backwards. That was my introduction, and that record really changed everything for me.

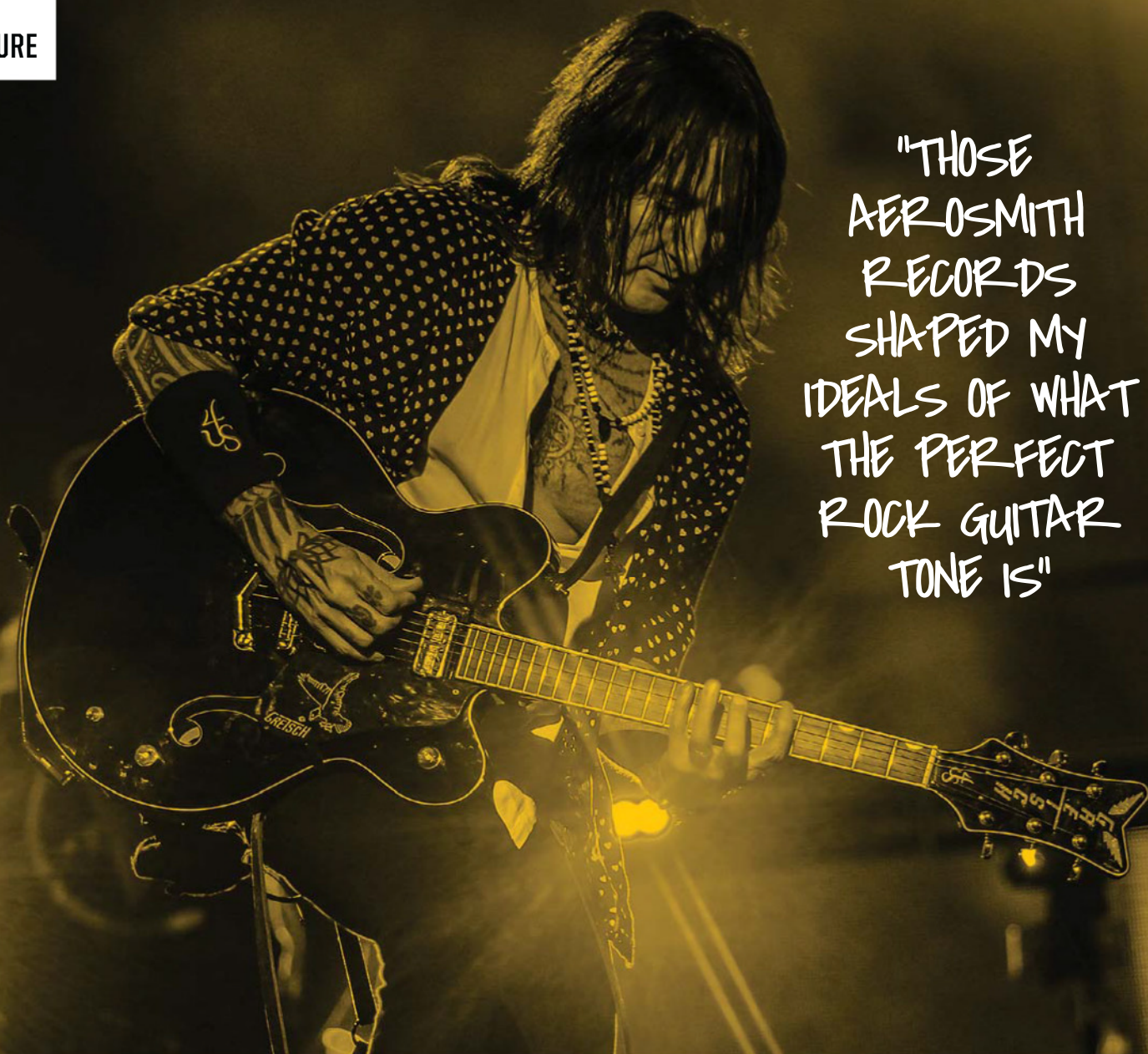
After that I got *Draw The Line*, I got *Live! Bootleg*, I got *Rocks*...

I didn't start playing guitar until a few years later. I think I was 12 or 13. I was playing drums at that point. I used to play along with it, and then when I started playing guitar, I was going back and figuring out all this stuff on guitar, lifting the needle back and forth. We put quarters on the arm to slow the records down. I remember learning *Walk This Way* and all the stuff off of *Toys*. I knew that record from front to back. I learned all the solos.

I absolutely learned about how to play with another guitarist from those albums. How Joe Perry and Brad Whitford worked together was a big deal. The way they wove their guitar parts, I thought was genius. Especially on *Toys*, it seemed like they were at the peak of their powers, and really working together as a unit. I think later on with *Draw The Line*, it didn't seem like they were putting in the same amount of time and effort into creating parts that lock together in the same way. *Rocks* is the best for that, I think, as far as the interplay between how the parts lined up and how they divided things to fill the space. It took what the Stones were doing to a whole new level for me, as far as how two guitars can intertwine to create a bigger picture.

Joe and Brad would write parts based on what Steven Tyler's left and right hands were doing at the piano. With Guns N' Roses I don't really think about it in that way. It's more about creating a part to fit around what Slash is doing. It seems like Joe and Brad did a lot of that, just trying to complement each other

"THOSE
AEROSMITH
RECORDS
SHAPED MY
IDEALS OF WHAT
THE PERFECT
ROCK GUITAR
TONE IS"



and not play the same thing. Not playing different inversions, but just creating different parts to interlock so well on those records.

I hear a lot of similarities in Guns N' Roses parts. I think it comes more from Slash's side, the way he weaves in and out of what Izzy [Stradlin] was doing. That's similar to how I think Joe Perry would approach things, with playing around the basic riffs, weaving around that.

I have a mix of *Rocks* from just before they put the vocals on, before the guitar overdubs, just the basic tracking. God, it's amazing! I remember playing it for Slash and he freaked out over it. You really hear the genesis of the ideas and how they were approaching the songs. Tonally, you hear how they each approach things from a different point, how their amps were set, the kinds of guitars they were using, and I love that Joe paints with a broad palette. You hear

the different guitars that he's using in the different tones. It sounds like they recorded it live. You can hear mic bleed and stuff like that.

I'll tell you an interesting story that I discovered through my conversations with Joe. We talk about guitars a lot, and I sent him a photo of a Travis Bean that I just purchased, an early one. He said, 'Oh man, I've got a couple of those. I had them widen the horns and make the body thinner, because they were so heavy.' He asked to widen the horn so that when he was playing slide, he can get his hand all the way up. I said, 'Well, you realise that in '77 they changed the body style to be thinner, and the horns wider.' He had no idea, but they made him a custom one, and then they I guess they took his suggestions. That's everything they did after that point.

Nobody plays like Joe. He has such a unique voice as far as soloing, where it's so slinky and so distinctly Joe.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

"I spent so many of my formative years when I was learning how to play listening to Joe..."

That's what really blows me away about this stuff. And Brad's playing as well, they had unique voices.

Lick And A Promise is such a great song, and it's such an unusual song format-wise. The interplay on that track just blows me away. We play that song before we go on stage sometimes. *Nobody's Fault* is genius. The guitar tones are so great on those. They're so pure, just amp and guitar. I think Joe said he was just using a Plexi on that. *Adam's Apple* is such a great example of his slinkiness, and on *Walk This Way* the solos are incredible, his use of open strings and rhythm – I had never heard anything like that. When you look at the other things going on at the time, with the Stones or Queen and KISS, Aerosmith was such a different thing. His solo band The Joe Perry Project was spotty, but I loved [1980 album] *Let The Music Do The Talking*. *Shooting Star* – that riff! I love that song. That's one

of the greatest Joe Perry riffs. Just raw rock 'n' roll. I think you hear elements of the New York Dolls in that as well.

It was all the early Aerosmith stuff that I really loved, but even some of their later big hits, the guitar parts are just incredible. *Love In An Elevator* and songs that like were so popular you sort of take them for granted, but when you dissect the guitar parts... His slide playing is just incredible. He turned me on to the Rickenbacker lap steel, which is my favourite. For recording, I use it all the time. He's got a couple of them, and I think that's his main in the studio. I think they were made in the '40s.

I think the things in my own playing that I can pinpoint and think 'Oh, yeah, that's Joe Perry' is more soloing – and rhythmically, I think it really sort of influenced me subconsciously. I spent so many of my formative years when I was learning how to play listening to him. It's the slinkiness of his playing that I hear elements of in myself, and in Slash as well. I hear that in Slash big time, in his bending. It's the way Joe bends down at the start of a phrase, like a pre-bend and a release, that I hear in Slash. That's the first time I remember hearing somebody do that, starting high and bending down.

so you'd stare at the photos; that photo collage with all the different guitars he used. All those photos formed my views of what was cool when it came to guitar.

The guitars I bought because of Joe? Well, the Travis Bean, the reverse-headstock Strat – which I associate not only with Hendrix but also with Joe – and the Les Paul. I always wanted a BC Rich, but I could never afford one. I eventually got one and never used it, though it was a great-playing, sexy guitar. I would try and use it on recordings and sessions and never could never make it work, though it's a great guitar. I'm sure that's why Slash has Mockingbirds as well.

I think it probably came from his love of Hendrix, but having a left-handed headstock, you've got more string length on low strings where you want it, which is probably why Hendrix had such a piano-like low-end. I think Joe figured out that if you have a left-handed headstock, it increases the tension on the low strings and the top strings are going to be easier to bend. A lot of the photos that you see of Joe, he's using either a left-handed Strat or a left-handed neck. Also reversing that angle of the bridge pickup makes a big difference. I think Leo Fender sort of got

subconscious, so ingrained in our DNA, those early Aerosmith records, that it's hard to stand back and pinpoint what was a direct influence. I tend to review shows that we've played. God bless YouTube, I'm able to go back and listen to what we did the night before. That's when I really hear it, like, 'Oh jeez, that's ripping a little too close there!'

Subconsciously, the way Brad and Joe created complementary guitar tones informs so much of how I approach things. To me, that's the idyllic guitar tone, where you've got the sustain and the compression of an overdriven tube amp without being too gritty. It's funny, I sent Joe an amp. I gave one to Slash as well, the B&H Filmosound. I think it started in the '40s. They were home movie projectors with a built-in amplifier. You can pull those out and use them as guitar amps, just some of them. I sent one to Joe. He had a cabinet built to mount the head because he wanted to take it on the road. They're very low wattage. He's big into small amps. He's got all these cabinets that his tech built for them where you can change the baffles and have different size speakers, and different types of speakers. He's a mad scientist, constantly experimenting with tones.

"THE SOLOS ON WALK THIS WAY ARE INCREDIBLE – HIS USE OF OPEN STRINGS AND RHYTHM"

Rhythmically, I think it's very unique. The rhythm of his lead playing. He places notes behind the beat. He's always bending and weaving around the beat. You can definitely hear The Meters and funk influence on Joe, especially on *Live! Bootleg* and [the James Brown cover] *Mother Popcorn*. That's what makes it slinky, along with all the microtonal notes that surround the line because he's always bending. Rhythmically, he's playing around the beat. I guess that is the Meters influence, because that's how all that stuff is – it is not dead on the beat, it's playing around it. The Meters were a big influence on my playing as well.

I lusted after a BC Rich Mockingbird because of the promo ads for the Joe Perry Project. I remember thinking that was the most beautiful guitar I'd ever seen. Also the Rich Bich, where he's holding it up on the back of *Live! Bootleg*. We didn't have videos then,

it wrong, and Jimi Hendrix corrected it. It makes more sense.

You wanna talk about Joe's rhythm playing? It's all about those riffs, and again his tone. You hear the single-coils he's using, just going straight into the amp. He told me he was probably using just a 50-watt Marshall on *Rocks*. It was just what they had, you know? He had one amp and that was it. His palate broadened later and as he acquired more gear. But I like how a lot of those aren't heavy guitar tones. Those records shaped my ideals of what the perfect rock guitar tone is, where it's not too distorted. There's sustain and there's tube compression, but there's not a ton of preamp distortion. Those parts are really clean, so you hear the single coils, and you hear when he goes to a humbucker.

You can hear the influence of those riffs on Guns N' Roses, but I'm sure it's not a conscious thing. It's in our

He uses Fender Champs a lot, and he says this Filmosound is his number one recording amp now. We're always sending each other photos of little amps. You don't overload the microphone. It's much easier for a microphone to capture a small amp. I love the way big 200 watt heads sound in the room. I had a 200-watt Hiwatt, and I've got a Park 150. There's nothing bigger when you're standing in the room with it. It's not the volume, it just sounds so massive. But capturing that with a microphone is very, very difficult. It's much easier to get a huge sound out of a lower-wattage amp that is not pushing as much air. Joe really likes little speakers for that reason.

And Joe is also one of the best dressed rock and roll stars ever! I think I think that's often overlooked. Come on – Joe Perry, Keith Richards and Jimmy Page. They wrote the book. That's what we all aspire to look like!

2 DROP A TUNING

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=140

A⁵ C⁵ D⁵ C⁵ A⁵ A G

w/slide

Play 4 times

TAB

0 0 3 5 3 0 0 12 12 10 10

0 0 3 5 3 0 0 12 12 10 10

0 0 3 5 3 0 0 12 12 10 10

0 0 3 5 3 0 0 12 12 10 10

The next example is inspired by Joe's gritty slide work on 1977's *Draw The Line*, where he uses a Dan Armstrong Plexi guitar tuned to open A with the sixth string way down on a low A (A A E A C# E). It gives a real growling bottom end that contrasts with the smoother slide sound. For our example, we recommend wearing your slide on your third finger and playing the low powerchords with your first finger.

3 EBEEBE TUNING

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=130

E⁵ A⁵ E⁵ G⁵ E⁵ A⁵ E⁵ G⁵ E⁵ A⁵

Play 4 times

TAB

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

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

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

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

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

Joe employs a bespoke E5 tuning (EBEEBE) on one of Aerosmith's biggest tracks, *No More No More*, and, typically, he has a Telecaster set up specially for it. We're looking at some simple strumming here, so it's easy to get started with.

4 BASS VI RIFFS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=120

A^b5

let ring - - - -

A^bm

let ring - - - -

Play 4 times

This next example is inspired by *Back In The Saddle*, a song originally written on a Fender Bass VI. Joe is riffing in the midrange of the bass, and that means some similar ideas can be created on the guitar. Though we've used a bridge pickup here, you could experiment with a neck pickup and by playing bar 1 in 5th position to get a warmer, bassier tone.

5 OPEN E SLIDE LICKS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=100

E⁵

E

G⁵

F⁵ E⁵ A

w/slide - - - -

Play 4 times

Here, we're taking our inspiration from *Rag Doll*, once again playing slide, but in open E tuning (E B E G[#] B E) this time. Joe plays this song on a P-90-loaded lap steel over crunchy Les Paul tones provided by Brad Whitford. As always, make sure to position your slide directly over the fret in question, not behind it.

6 FUNKY RIFFING

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=80

A⁹

Play 4 times

This next example is inspired by *Last Child*. Aerosmith have always blended classic rock with funk, right from their early days. It's the kind of riff that Joe'll play on almost any electric guitar, Strats, Les Pauls, hollowbodies, and so on.

7 SIMPLE OPEN CHORDS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=120

A⁵ G⁵ D⁵/F[♯] F⁵ G⁵ Play 4 times

TAB

Sometimes simple is best and this example uses classic, open position powerchords. Joe is famed for plugging his 'Boneyard' Gibson Les Paul Standard into lightly overdriven Marshall amps with the help of clean booster pedals such as the Klon Centaur.

8 BLUES-ROCK PHRASING

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=120

A⁵ G⁵ D⁵/F[♯] F⁵ G⁵ Play 4 times

TAB

Much of Joe's signature lead work fits into the blues-rock framework established by Joe's key guitar influences such as Jeff Beck, Peter Green and Jimmy Page. This example is inspired by Joe's soloing on tracks like Train Kept A Rollin'. The A minor pentatonic scale is the scale of choice here.

9 PENTATONIC RIFFS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=180

E⁵ Play 4 times

TAB

This example uses the E minor pentatonic scale to create an exciting, fast paced riff. This type of riff work can be heard throughout Aerosmith's back catalogue – our example was inspired by songs like Toys In The Attic. This riff will sound best if played exclusively with downpicking, but you may need to build up to our fairly fierce 180bpm tempo.

10 RIFF IN AN ELEVATOR

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=90

N.C. Play 4 times

TAB

Any open string can be used as a pedal tone to provide a harmonic grounding for other notes to be played against. This riff is inspired by Love In An Elevator and features a descending line that combines pull-offs and rhythmic picking. Such is Joe's penchant for swapping guitars out, this is one of those riffs that you could play on almost any guitar.

11 QUESTION AND ANSWER LICKS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=90
E⁵ G⁵ A⁵ C^{sus2} 1/4 Play 4 times

TAB: . BU 14 (16) 12 14 \ . BU 16 (19) BU 14 (16) 14 12 14 12 14 \ .

Leaving space in musical phrases is a key ingredient of authentic blues guitar, and Joe uses this concept to the max in his solos. Our example uses the E minor pentatonic scale in its shape 1. The opening line is 'answered' by an ear-grabbing one and a half tone bend on the third string.

12 POWER BALLAD ARPEGGIOS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=64 D⁵ D⁵/E D⁵/F# G⁵ Play 4 times

let ring throughout

TAB: . 0 2 3 0 0 0 2 0 2 0 3 0 0 0 0 0 .

This next example is inspired by classic Aerosmith power ballads like *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing*. A simple D5 arpeggio is repeated and each time the bass note changes to provide movement. This type of idea has a hypnotic quality and is very effective when played at a power ballad tempo.

13 FINGERSTYLE DOUBLESTOPS

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=125 A⁵ G⁵ A⁵ G⁵ A⁵ C⁵ G⁵ C⁵ D⁵ Play 4 times

TAB: . 2 2 0 2 2 0 2 / 5 5 5 0 5 7 7 7 \ .

The doublestop is great for creating riffs and this next example is inspired by tracks like *Dude Looks Like A Lady*. Joe used a Gretsch Duo Jet to record this song, and the Filter Tron pickups add that extra spice. The fingerstyle technique allows both notes to be plucked simultaneously and this adds a unique sound to the attack. The notes are also cut slightly short as the fingers pluck the next doublestop.

14 BOOGIE RIFFING

bit.ly/tg385audio

♩=160 C⁵ C⁷ C⁶ C⁵ C⁷ C⁵ C⁶ C⁵ F⁵ B^{b5} Play 4 times

TAB: . 10 10 13 10 12 10 10 10 13 10 12 10 10 8 \ 3 3 3 3 8 8 8 8 \ .

Joe is a master of the boogie riff, both with Brad Whitford in Aerosmith and in his solo Joe Perry Project line-up. Our example is inspired by his rhythm work on tracks like *Walk This Way* and many others. The rhythm on this one has a shuffle feel and requires a solid picking hand.

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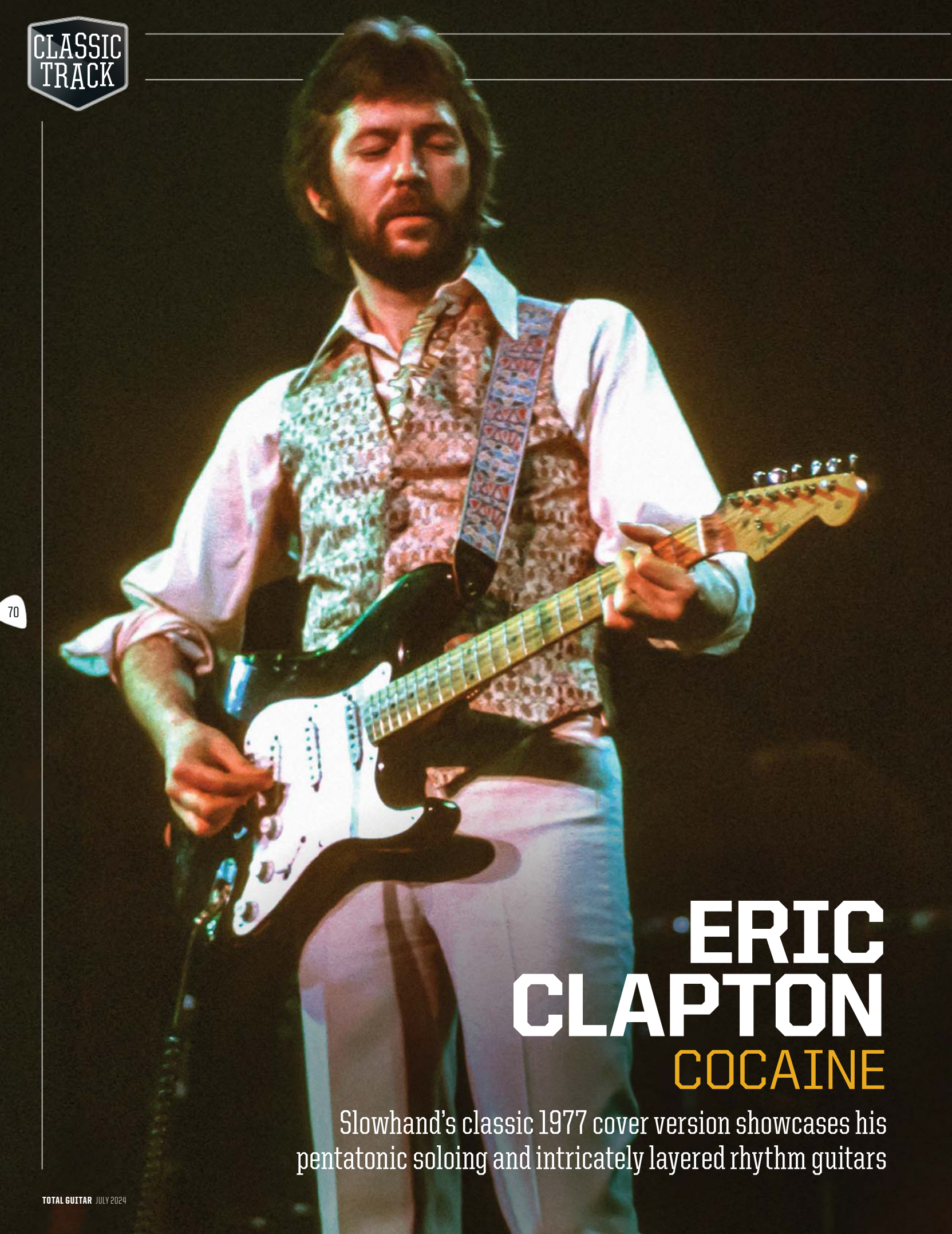


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A full-page photograph of Eric Clapton performing on stage. He is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, a patterned vest, and light-colored trousers. He is playing a Fender Telecaster guitar with a sunburst finish. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on him.

ERIC CLAPTON

COCAINE

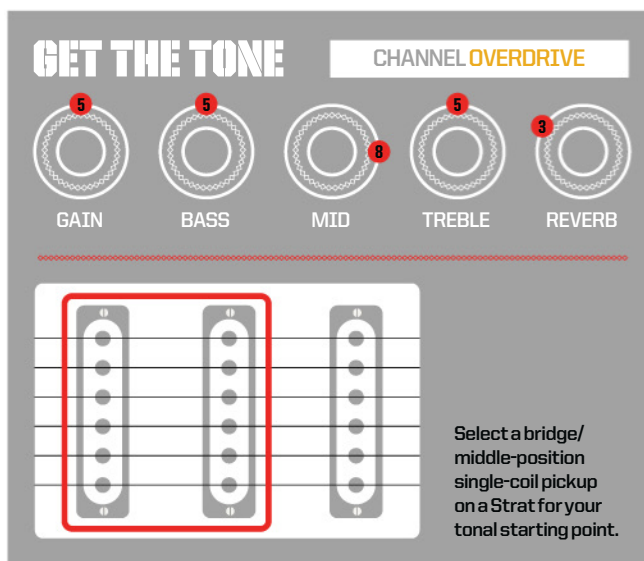
Slowhand's classic 1977 cover version showcases his pentatonic soloing and intricately layered rhythm guitars

SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing *Cocaine*

Eric Clapton is one of the few guitarists who can craft solo after solo using nothing more than the minor pentatonic scale. Like the blues legends who influenced him (B.B. King, Buddy Guy), improvisers such as Clapton often don't 'write' their solos, they just grab the moment and go for it. This method takes years of practice, but you can cheat by analysing some of your favourite players' licks. Think about their choice of notes, their rhythm, and their phrasing.

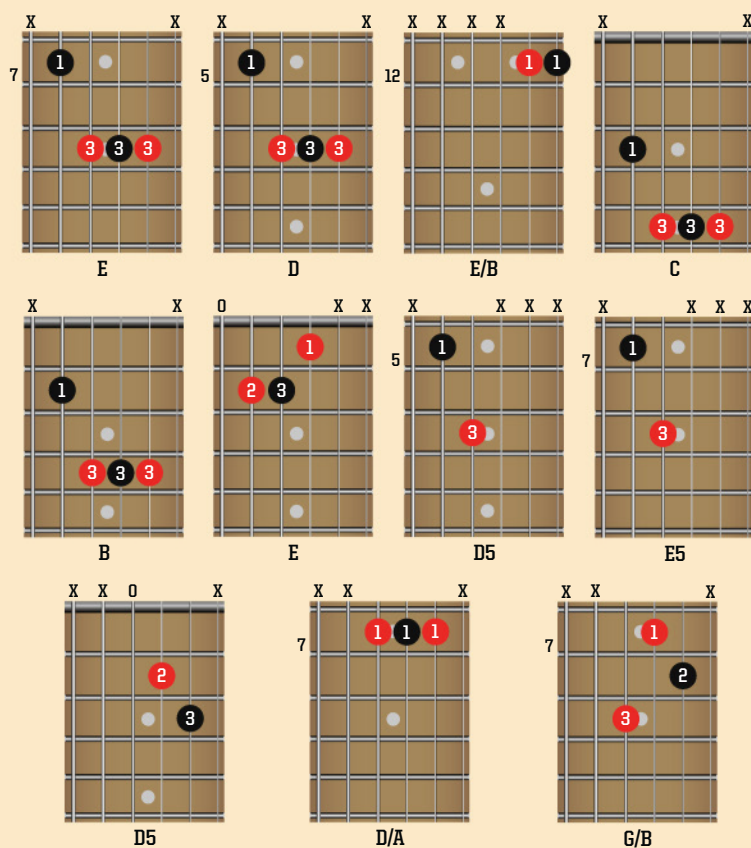
Listen to the solo in *Cocaine* and you'll hear that it's made up of two- or three-bar phrases, which work together to help the song unfold. The overdubbed guitar in the solo should get right in the way of the main guitar line, but instead the phrases work cleverly in and out of each other. Clever stuff!



Eric had switched to playing primarily Fender Stratocasters by the early '70s, and *Cocaine* is a prime example of his sound from this era. He was also playing Fender amps at this time such as Champs and Twin Reverbs. It's a fairly simple tone, and you should aim for a bit of light crunch from your amp with bridge/middle-position single-coil pickups of a Fender Stratocaster.

CHORDS

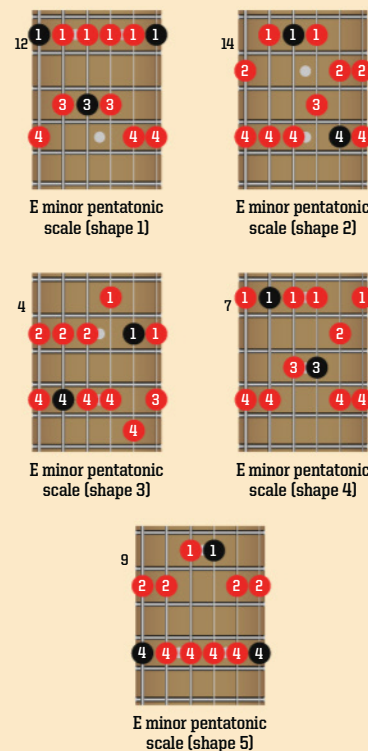
The rhythm part to *Cocaine* is based mainly around E, D, C and B barre chords. Learn these shapes and you'll have most of the track covered. The other shapes here are played occasionally in the track by the various layered guitars, but as they're incidental, you won't see them all named above the notation.



SCALES

The main solo is based almost exclusively in shape 1 of the E minor pentatonic scale.

This is bread and butter stuff for every player so make sure you know this shape inside out. Eric's outro moves around the neck a bit, still based mainly in the E minor pentatonic scale, but using other shapes. Practise the shapes and Eric's solo should be easier to grasp.



ERIC CLAPTON

COCAINE



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ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Intro (guitars 1 & 2)

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When playing the consecutive open strings in bars 4 and 8, you'll achieve a cleaner sound if you mute the open fourth string immediately before you play the fifth by lightly touching it with your fretting-hand fingers. Note that one of Eric's layered guitar parts repeats the chords from bar 1 in bars 3, 5 and 7.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Intro (guitar 3)

bit.ly/tg385audio

Fret the slides in bar 3 with your first finger. Slide quickly and keep your finger firmly pressed onto the fretboard so that the note doesn't die out as you move from fret to fret.



ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Intro (guitar 4)

bit.ly/tg385audio

0:09

Play these light, funky doublestops by barring both strings with your third finger. Create the gaps between the notes by releasing the pressure off the strings so that the notes stop ringing out. Make sure to maintain contact with the strings so they stay muted out during these gaps.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Verse 1 (guitar 1)

bit.ly/tg385audio

0:18

You should recognise the chords in bar 1 from the main intro line. Play softly here, or even back off the gain slightly to make room for the vocals and the funky diads; bring the level back up when you reach the E chord at the end of bar 3 for a louder end to the verse.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Verse 1 (guitar 3)

bit.ly/tg385audio

0:18

All of the slides should be played with your first finger. Don't re-pick the note you're sliding to – the new pitch is created simply by sliding quickly to the new position, without lifting your finger off the string. There's a lot of space in this part, so follow the chord names to not lose your place.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Verse 1 (guitar 4)

bit.ly/tg385audio

As in the intro (guitar 4), use your third finger to play these funky doublestops. Touch the third string with your fingertip to prevent it from ringing out if you accidentally pick it.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Verse 1 (guitar 2)

bit.ly/tg385audio

Hold down an open D chord shape in bar 2 while picking the notes indicated and allowing them to ring out over each other.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Solo 1

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ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Solo 1 (cont'd)

bit.ly/tg385audio

9

Chords: E, D, E, D

Techniques: BU, BD, RP

Fret numbers: 12, 14, 15, 16

13

Chords: E, D, E, D

Techniques: BU, BD, RP

Fret numbers: 12, 14, 15

Instruction: let ring - -

17

Chords: E, D, E, D

Techniques: BU, BD, RP

Fret numbers: 12, 14, 15, 16

21

Chords: E, D, E, D

Techniques: BU, BD, RP

Fret numbers: 12, 14, 15

Play the quarter-tone bends (indicated by the '1/4') with your first finger by pulling the note slightly sharp. Bending the string towards the floor is easiest, unless it's on the first string, of course. Eric's overdubbed line comes in at bar 17 and it can be hard to pick out every line, so why not pick and choose your favourite phrases?

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Verse 3 (guitar 3, cont'd)

bit.ly/tg385audio

Whereas verse 2 was roughly the same as verse 1, here you'll encounter some variations. Watch out for the quick, consecutive hammer-ons at the end of bars 7 and 13. Use your first finger to hammer-on to the 1st fret, and your second finger to hammer-on to the 2nd fret.

ERIC CLAPTON COCAINE Solo 2

bit.ly/tg385audio

The musical notation for the guitar solo is presented in two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It features a series of notes and rests, with some notes beamed together. Above the staff, there are chord symbols: 'E' at the beginning, 'D' above a group of notes, 'E' above another group, and 'D' above the final group. There are also wavy lines indicating bends or vibrato. The bottom staff is a tablature staff, labeled 'TAB' on the left. It contains fret numbers (e.g., 5, 7, 9, 10, 12) and rhythmic markings (e.g., 1/4, 1/4, 3/4, 4/4). Some fret numbers are in parentheses, indicating natural harmonics. The tablature includes the words 'BU' (bump) and 'let ring -' (let ring) to indicate specific playing techniques. The solo is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines.

[illegible]

With drawn-out string-bends and simple pentatonic licks, there's a more relaxed vibe here compared to the main solo. The opening doublestops should be fretted with your first and third fingers. In this instance, play the quarter-tone bend 'upwards', in the direction of the ceiling, to avoid touching the third string.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

SAM FENDER

SPIT OF YOU

Master the sweet indie jangle riffs in Sam Fender's gritty and reflective ode to his father

Sam Fender's lyrics are a million miles away from many of his contemporaries – he's never afraid to tackle human issues head on. *Spit Of You* is no exception – a poignant observation of how father and son relationships are frequently complex. The song is built around a repeated four-bar riff underpinned by a solid bass and drum groove. Additional guitar parts (and even mandolin) dip in and out to create a rich tapestry of tone that builds

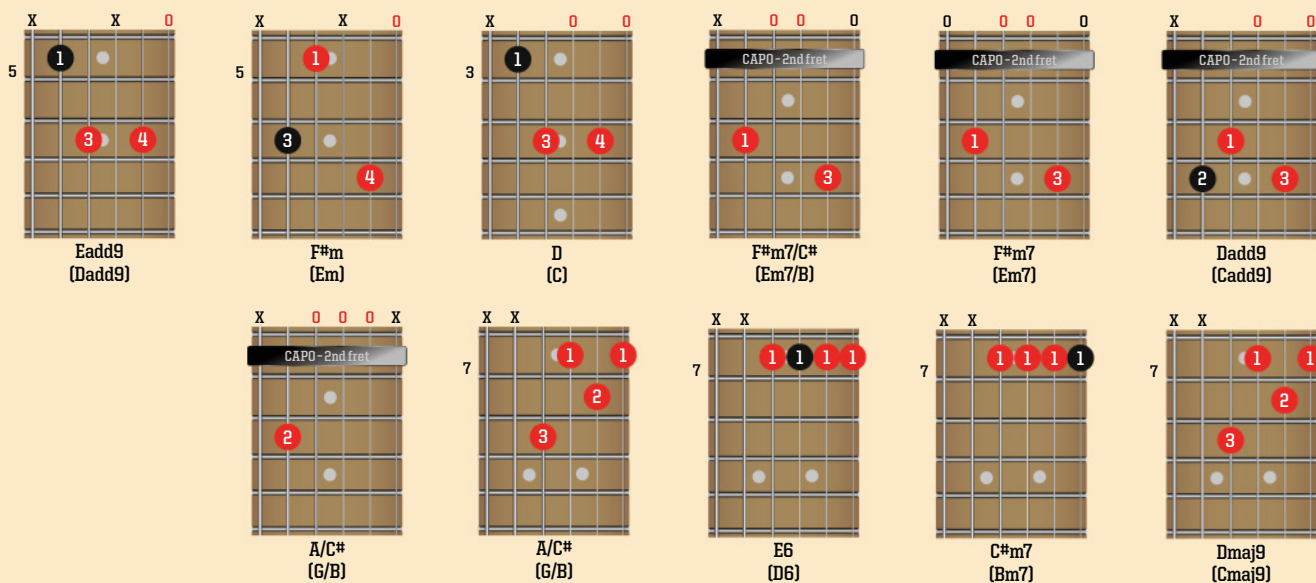
to an exciting crescendo featuring a tasteful sax solo in the outro.

This song was recorded with a capo on the 2nd fret, so you'll need to get capo'd up to play along to our backing track. The main riff is tricky but it's well worth investing your time on. Live, the second guitar part is played with a capo on the 5th fret as the rhythm guitarist is playing in C# standard tuning. Just remember that's the equivalent of a capo on the 2nd fret in standard tuning.



CHORDS

For the main riff, open strings are added to familiar moveable shapes to create Sam's trademark jangle. Try to avoid damping these open strings and keep your fretting fingers at right angles to the fretboard for best results. Fret numbers refer to how many semitones above the capo your finger should be. So, the '5' on the first chord tells you to play 5 frets higher than the capo – the actual 7th fret.



SPIT OF YOU
Words and Music by Sam Fender
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Spit Of You

Intro

Eadd9 / / F#m D / / /
F#m7/C# / F#m7 / Dadd9 / / A/C# x3

Verse 1

They say I'm the spit of you
A/C# Eadd9 F#m D F#m7/C#

And they're not wrong
F#m7 Dadd9

Bury my head too
A/C# Eadd9

Stomach hurts all the time
F#m D F#m7/C#

Can't shift it
F#m7 Dadd9

Been like that since eight
A/C# Eadd9

Knotted up with the baggage
F#m7 D F#m7/C#

Neck like a stone
F#m7 Dadd9

All sounds just like you
A/C# Eadd9

Smashing cups off the floor
F#m D F#m7/C#

And kicking walls through

F#m7
That's me and you

Chorus

A/C# Eadd9
I can talk to anyone

F#m D F#m7/C#
I can talk to anyone

F#m7 Dadd9
I can't talk to you

A/C# Eadd9
I can talk to anyone

F#m D F#m7/C#
I can talk to anyone

F#m7 Dadd9
I can't talk to you

Verse 2

A/C# Eadd9
You kissed her forehead
F#m D F#m7/C#
And it ran like a tap
F#m7 Dadd9
No more than four stone soaked wet through
A/C# Eadd9
And I'd never seen you like that
F#m D F#m7/C#
Spun me out

F#m7 Dadd9
Hurt me right through

A/C# Eadd9
'Cause it was love
F#m D
In all its agony
F#m7/C#
Every bit of me
F#m7 Dadd9 A/C#
Hurting for you
E F#m
'Cause one day that'll be your forehead
D
I'm kissing
F#m7/C# F#m7 Dadd9
And I'll still look exactly like you

Repeat Chorus

Guitar Solo

Eadd9 / / F#m D / / /
F#m7/C# / F#m7 / Dadd9 / / A/C# x2

Repeat Chorus

Sax solo

Eadd9 / / F#m D / / /
F#m7/C# / F#m7 / Dadd9 / / A/C# x4

SAM FENDER SPIT OF YOU **Intro/main riff (guitar 1)**

bit.ly/tg385audio

$\text{♩} = 85$

Capo 2nd fret

Eadd⁹ (Dadd⁹) F#m (Em) D (C)

F#m7/C# (Em7/B) F#m7 (Em7) Dadd⁹ (Cadd⁹) A/C# (G/B)

let ring throughout

TAB

0 0 | . 0 7 0 7 7 0 8 0 | 0 5 0 5 5 5 | 3 0 3 0 3 0 3 | 3 0 3 3 3 0 2 0 |

5 7 5 7 5 7 7 5 | 3 5 3 5 3 3 | 2 0 2 0 0 0 | 3 0 3 0 3 0 2 0 |

V V V V V V V V V V V V V V cont. sim. V V V V V V V V V V V V V V

Concentrate on learning the chord shapes first. Once you feel confident with the changes, turn your attention to picking. Alternate picking is probably the best approach – it'll help you 'feel' the 16th note groove, although you can vary this, as indicated below bars 2 and 3. Note that the numbers in the tab tell you how many frets higher than the capo you'll be playing. So a '3' indicates the actual 5th fret.

SAM FENDER SPIT OF YOU Intro/chorus (guitar 2)

bit.ly/tg385audio

Capo 2nd fret

A/C# (G/B) E⁶ (D⁶) F#m⁷ (Em⁷) N.C. C#m⁷ (Bm⁷) Dmaj⁹ (Cmaj⁹) A/C# (G/B)

tacet 2nd time -

0:12 let ring throughout

TAB

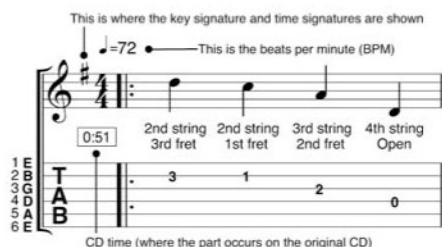
V V V V V V V V cont. sim.

After four bars of the intro, guitar 2 joins in. It's a similar part to guitar 1, but with notes that extend the harmony beyond the basic chords. As before, familiarise yourself with the chord shapes before you work on the picking pattern and practise slowly to begin with.

TAB GUIDE

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

What is tab?



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

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

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

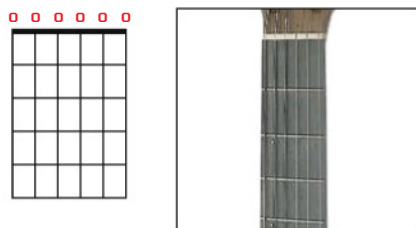
FRET BOXES: CHORDS, SCALES AND CAPO NOTATION

HAND LABELLING



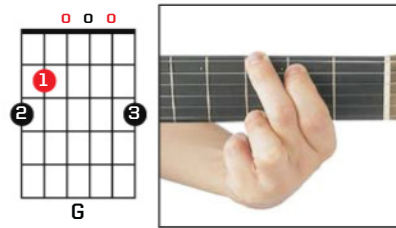
Here are the abbreviations used for each finger. Fretting hand: **1, 2, 3, 4, (T)**
Picking hand: **p (thumb), i (index), m (middle), a (annular), c (little finger)**

NUT AND FRETBOARD



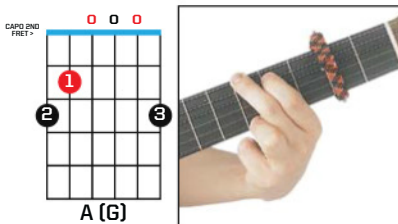
This fretbox diagram represents the guitar's fretboard exactly, as seen in the photo. This design is used for ease of visualising a fretboard scale or chord quickly.

CHORD EXAMPLE



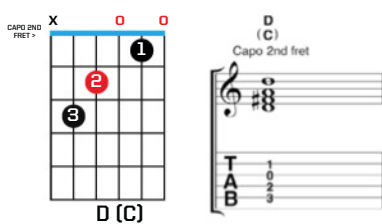
This diagram represents a G chord. The 'o's are open strings, and a circled number is a fretting hand finger. A black 'o' or circled number is the root note (here, G).

CAPO EXAMPLE



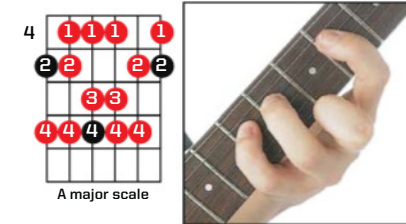
The blue line in the diagram represents a capo - for this A chord, place it at the 2nd fret. Capos change the fret number ordering. Here, the original 5th fret now becomes the 3rd fret, 7th fret now 5th fret, etc.

CAPO NOTATION



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

SCALE EXAMPLE



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

GUITAR TECHNIQUES: PICKING

DOWN AND UP-PICKING



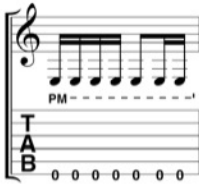
The symbols under the tab tell you the first note is to be down-picked and the second note is to be up-picked.

TREMOLO PICKING



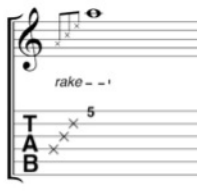
Each of the four notes are to be alternate-picked (down and up-picked) very rapidly and continuously.

PALM MUTING



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

PICK RAKE



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

APPREGGIATED CHORD



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

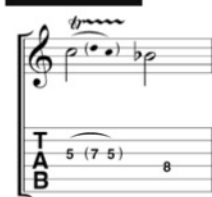
FRETTING HAND

HAMMER-ON & PULL-OFF



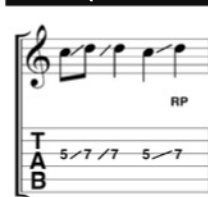
Pick the first note then hammer down on the string for the second note. Pick the third note and pull-off for the fourth note.

NOTE TRILLS



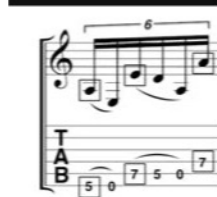
After picking the first note, rapidly alternate between the two notes shown in brackets using hammer-ons and pull-offs.

SLIDES (GLISSANDO)



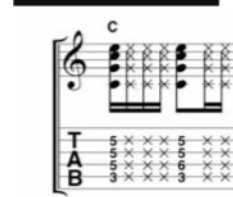
Pick the first note and then slide to the next. For the last two notes pick the first, slide to the next and then re-pick it (RP).

FRET-HAND TAPPING



Sound the notes marked with a square by hammering-on/tapping with your fret hand fingers, instead of picking.

FRET-HAND MUTING



X markings represent notes and strings that are muted by your fret hand when struck by your picking hand.

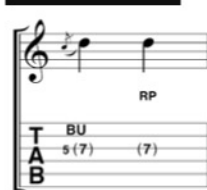
BENDING AND VIBRATO

BEND AND RELEASE



Fret the first note (here, the 5th fret) and bend up to the pitch of the bracketed note, before releasing again.

RE-PICKED BEND



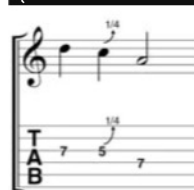
Bend up to the pitch shown in the brackets, then re-pick the note while holding the bent note at the pitch shown.

PRE-BEND



Silently bend the string up from the 5th fret (PB5) to the pitch of the 7th fret note, pick it and release to the 5th fret note.

QUARTER-TONE BEND



Pick the note then bend up a quarter-tone (a very small amount). This is sometimes referred to as a 'blues curl'.

VIBRATO



Your fretting hand vibrates the string by small bend-ups and releases. Exaggerate this effect to create a 'wide' vibrato.

HARMONICS

NATURAL HARMONICS



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

ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS



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

PINCHED HARMONICS



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

TAPPED HARMONICS



Place your finger on the note as shown, but sound it with a quick pick hand tap at the fret shown (TH17) for a harmonic.

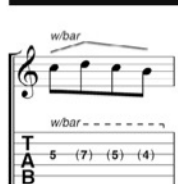
TOUCHED HARMONICS



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

VIBRATO BAR / WHAMMY BAR

WHAMMY BAR BENDS



The note is picked as shown, then the vibrato bar is raised and lowered to the pitches shown in brackets.

SCOOP AND DOOP



Scoop: depress the bar just before striking the note and release. Doop: lower the bar slightly after picking note.

SUSTAINED NOTE AND DIVEBOMB



A Note is sustained then the vibrato bar is depressed to slack. The square bracket indicates a further articulation.

GARGLE



Sound the note and 'flick' the vibrato bar with your picking hand so it 'quivers'. This results in a 'gargling' sound!

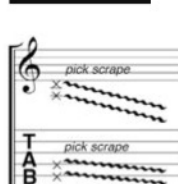
WHAMMY BAR VIBRATO



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

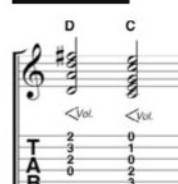
OTHERS

PICK SCRAPE



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

VIOLINING



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

FINGER NUMBERING



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

PIMA DIRECTIONS



Any kind of fingerpicking requirements are shown at the bottom of the tab notation.

PICK HAND TAPPING



Tap (hammer-on) with a finger of your picking hand onto the fret marked with a circle. Usually with 'i' or 'm'.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE
BEST NEW GEAR

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

HOW WE TEST

CURATION

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

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS

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

*WHAT IS GAS?

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

NO SNAKE OIL

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

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT

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

REAL WORLD REVIEWS

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

BEST BUY AWARD

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



PLATINUM AWARD

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



84

83 START ME UP

Five new products you need to check out

84 FENDER TOM DELONGE STARCASTER

DeLonge's second signature model in a year takes the form of Fender's offset, semi-acoustic classic

88 THIRD MAN HARDWARE X DONNER TRIPLE THREAT

A three-in-one, all-analogue pedal for around £100

90 STRANDBERG BODEN ESSENTIAL

The imaginative Swedish ergonomic specialists unveil their very first affordable line

92 BOSS IR-2

Amp and cab emulation in the familiar guise of a Boss compact pedal

94 WALRUS AUDIO FUNDAMENTAL AMBIENT

A compact and affordable soundscaping reverb pedal



SUPERB, A BEST BUY



EXCELLENT



ABOVE AVERAGE KIT



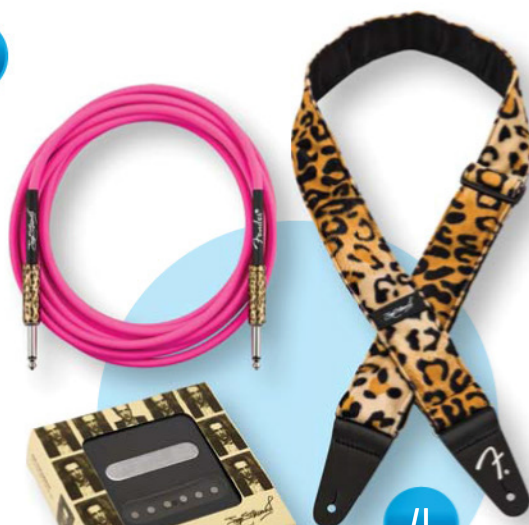
SOME ISSUES



POOR



5



4



2



1



3

START ME UP!

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

WALRUS MONUMENTAL HARMONIC STEREO TREMOLO

1 Walrus Audio has taken its Monument tremolo and expanded it for the Monumental. As well as making the pedal stereo, Walrus has added the ability to save presets, plus the Monumental can blend between the Fender-inspired harmonic tremolo (found on Brownface amps of the late '50s/early '60s) mode and standard trem mode, and it has six waveshapes to tailor your tremolo's curve. **£269** www.walrusaudio.com

BEATLES ACOUSTIC GUITAR OUTFITS

2 Distributor John Hornby Skewes has unveiled three officially licensed Beatles guitars aimed at younger players. The nylon-strung instruments are adorned with paint jobs celebrating different eras of the Fab Four's career, with Abbey Road, A Hard Day's Night and Love (inspired by the Love Drum from 1967's *Magical Mystery Tour*). They're short-scale, the headstock has been designed to replicate the 'T' from The Beatles logo, and they each come with a gigbag. **£69** www.jhs.co.uk

EHX LPB-3

3 Before the Big Muff, Electro-Harmonix made its name with the LPB-1 Linear Power Booster. This simple one-knob pedal opened the doors for pushing the front end of amps into overdrive, and now EHX has issued the LPB-3. It's a modern revision with three-band EQ (including a sweepable, parametric mid control), and as well as offering the same boost knob as before, the LPB-3 is switchable for a maximum level shunt of up to 33dB of clean boost. **£129** www.ehx.com

FENDER JOE STRUMMER ACCESSORIES

4 If you can't afford Fender's new Masterbuilt Joe Strummer Telecaster (priced at £20k), there's still plenty of scope for paying homage to the late, great Clash frontman with Fender's new Joe Strummer accessory collection. Starting with a pink jack cable (with leopard print designed barrels) at £29.99, the collection also includes a Joe Strummer strap (with faux-leopard print), a pink Strat/Tele hard case (£209) and Fender signature Joe Strummer Telecaster pickup set (£149). www.fender.com

ORIGIN EFFECTS CALI76 FET

5 Origin's first ever pedal was the Cali76 Compressor, based on the classic Urei 1176 studio rackmount compressor that's graced pretty much every album in your collection. Now, Origin has revamped it with its latest iteration, the Cali76 FET. New additions include the 10-segment LED meter to display your gain reduction accurately, increased internal headroom and a set of comprehensive controls for ratio, attack and decay. **£309** www.origineffects.com



FENDER TOM DELONGE STARCASTER

£1,149

DeLonge's second signature model in a year takes the form of Fender's offset, semi-acoustic classic

It's been 25 years since Blink-182 rocketed to global success with third album, *Enema Of The State*.

Somewhere between the poo jokes, zany bants and persistent nudity, Tom DeLonge also managed to forge a path as a hugely influential guitar hero to a generation. As is often the case, the key to his success is simplicity – hooky riffs, full of melody and harmony, and he's consistently played them on guitars with a similar ethos. Last year, Fender reissued DeLonge's sought-after Stratocaster: a single-pickup take on the Strat finished in retro colours. But to fully understand his latest model, we need to rewind a couple of decades to his

in rock has most often been attributed to The Killers' Dave Keuning. Fender released the Modern Player Starcaster in 2013, with Squier-branded Classic Vibe and Contemporary versions following in the years since.

Which brings us to now. DeLonge's iteration of the Starcaster hails from Indonesia, clocking in at just under the price of his Mexican-made Strat. It maintains the familiarity of the offset, semi-hollow body, but nearly everything else is up for grabs. Starting with that headstock. Gone is the wavy, scrolling, bevelled shape; in its place is a much more understated Strat 'stock, which makes us a lot less nervous about bumping into

1 SINGLE PICKUP

In the Tom DeLonge school of guitar playing, a neck pickup is surplus. Here, we get a single Seymour Duncan SH-5 to cover all potential bases, and it sounds great.

2 CONTROL

Similarly, there's a single volume pot and no tone controls. A coil-split might have been a nice addition, but Fender has included a treble-bleed circuit.

3 HEADSTOCK

It's a '70s Strat, rather than the Starcaster's usual headstock. Around the back there's Tom's signature graphic, and a set of locking Fender tuners.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Laminated maple

NECK: Roasted maple, lacquered

SCALE: 25.5"

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood

FRETS: 22

PICKUPS: Seymour Duncan SH-5 (ceramic)

CONTROLS: Volume (with treble-bleed circuit)

HARDWARE: Fender locking tuners, adjusto-matic bridge, chrome

FINISH: Surf Green (pictured), Shoreline Gold, Olympic White, Shell Pink

CONTACT: Fender, www.fender.com

“A ROCK GUITAR DESIGNED FOR ENERGETIC PLAYING”

'grown-up' transition to a Gibson ES-335. Subsequently issued as an Epiphone version in 2008, before being discontinued five years ago, the stage is now set for DeLonge's latest signature guitar – the Fender Tom DeLonge Starcaster.

The Starcaster was Fender's answer to bigger-bodied semi-acoustics, first introduced in the mid-'70s and finding favour with a host of players from Leo Nocentelli of New Orleans funkateers The Meters through to Martin Gore of synth-goths Depeche Mode. Radiohead's Johnny Greenwood kept the Starcaster alive in the '90s, and more recently, the guitar with one of the most unwieldy headstocks

things while we review it. Which is just as well, because the C-shaped neck is a thing of beauty: dark, roasted maple under a coat of glossy lacquer that wouldn't look out of place on the dashboard of your grandad's Jag. But here, its deep, walnut-ish vibe is met with a rosewood fingerboard, together contrasting with the matte Surf Green finish of our review model beautifully. To the back, there's a set of Fender locking tuners for speedy string changes and (hopefully) rock-solid tuning tension, while at the other end sits a Fender Adjusto-Matic bridge and tailpiece.

Given DeLonge's previous form, it should come as no surprise that



Where's it made, again?

We've already made parallels to Epiphone's DG-335 here, and that's because both are semi-acoustic signature models coming in at higher price points than we're used to from the Far East. This is due to many factors – a global pandemic, multiple wars, shipping piracy and global inflation being a few – but it's not going away. With a change in origin has also come a change in spec, with more premium features and third-party additions to our guitars coming as standard. The question is, if it plays and sounds as you'd expect, how important is a guitar's place-of-build to your buying decision?



this guitar is fitted with a single humbucker in the bridge position – a Seymour Duncan SH-5, known for its medium-output, all-rounder performance for everything from blues to hard rock and metal. In turn, it's wired to a solitary volume control which is also equipped with a treble-bleed circuit in order to preserve your high-end when the volume knob is rolled down. Electronically, that's it; there's no tone control, no switching (because there's no alternative position to select), and the humbucker remains in its full dual-coil state.

On paper, it's quite the departure from the quirky guitar of the '70s, but as a signature model, we view that as a good thing. Finish-wise, it looks great, spare a couple of slightly untidy bits of paintwork around the neck and unbound f-holes. The setup is low, but surprisingly, buzz-free, and those frets come highly polished for a silky glide when bending strings. This is furthered by the fact that the neck features a 12" radius, stopping our notes from choking out. It's all very much 'Strat'-feeling, rather than aping a classic semi-acoustic neck feel.



Tonally, it's something to behold. With only one pickup, we were expecting it to be a one-trick pony, and while we can't say that it's going to do *everything*, it does have a surprising amount of mileage. That's largely thanks to the treble-bleed circuit. Played clean, we get a solid pluck out of our notes, and while reducing the volume softens this slightly, the clarity is still there due to the fact that the treble frequencies aren't filtered out. Under gain, this guitar has bite. Powerchords come out with aggression followed by a meaty chunk, and Tom's signature arpeggiated riffs chime through clearly with a little crunch.

There's always a conundrum with signature models, in that they need to reflect the artist whose



name they bare, and in that sense can't be criticised for being 'niche'. This model nails the brief, and does so with excellent sound quality and playability. It's not a jack-of-many-trades model in the way that Epiphone's DG-335 is, and nor does it claim to be. It's a bare-bones rock guitar designed for energetic playing, and if you're from the school of 'plug in, turn up', without getting fussy with your controls, you're going to love it.

Stuart Williams

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

ALSO TRY...

TOM DELONGE STRATOCASTER

If you want a similar single-pickup experience, but in a solid-body guitar, look no further than DeLonge's Seymour Duncan Invader-equipped signature Strat. It's available in four retro Fender finishes for around a similar price to the Starcaster.

£1,179



DAVE GROHL DG-335

OK, it's a signature model for another rocker, but DG's Epiphone comes in at £100 more than the DeLonge, with the added benefit of a neck position Gibson USA Burstbucker.

£1,249



SQUIER CONTEMPORARY ACTIVE STARCASTER

On a budget? Squier's Starcaster offers a roasted maple neck and simple control circuit, with a pair of Squier SQR Active Ceramic humbuckers. It's semi-hollow, but comes without the f-holes.

£395

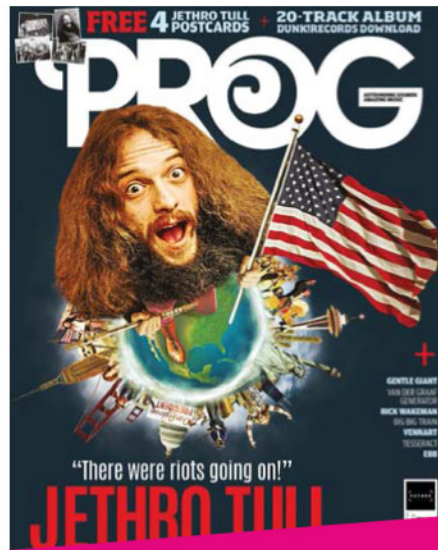


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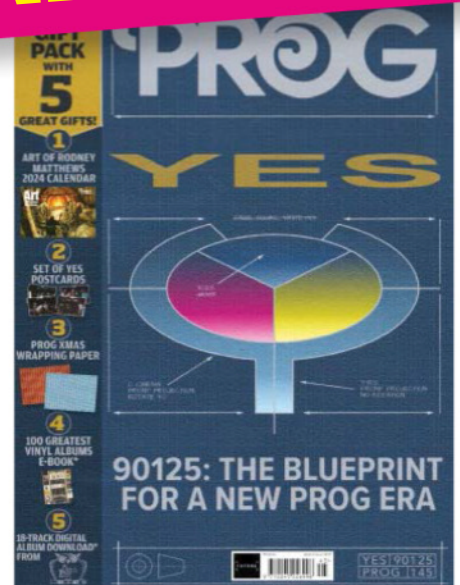
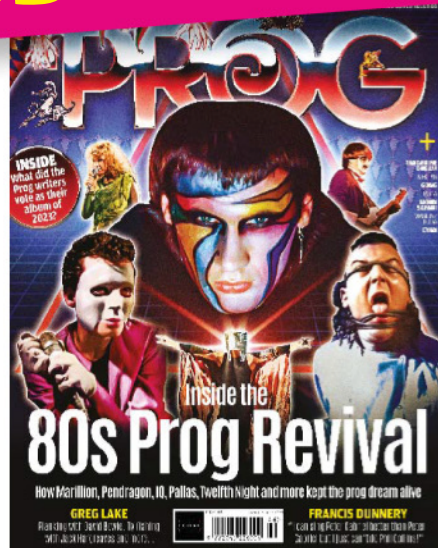
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THIRD MAN HARDWARE X DONNER TRIPLE THREAT

£118



A three-in-one, all-analogue pedal for around £100

Given Jack White's slightly elusive and incredibly hip reputation, when it comes time for a partnership between his Third Man Hardware brand and another pedal company, you'd be forgiven for expecting him to team up with an underground builder for something equally exclusive. Not so. Because for the Triple Threat, Mr W has thrown his hat into the ring with Donner, a Chinese brand specialising in affordable gear.

The Triple Threat houses three analogue pedals in a single aluminium chassis. These circuits are based on Donner's own effects pedals, including the Pearl Tremor phaser and Yellow Fall delay, with the form factor borrowed from its Alpha Cruncher multi-effects, and White and Third Man beefing up the components to ensure better sound and sturdier build quality. Our review model comes in the limited edition Yellow finish, but the standard Black edition costs £95, with the finish being the only difference.

It's a simple affair. The three 'pedals' are arranged in a fixed order from input to output, starting with the distortion,

then the phaser and finally the echo. Each circuit comes equipped with a metal footswitch, complete with an LED to indicate when the pedal is engaged, and around the parameter control mini-pots are protective bumpers to keep them safe. Aside from that, there's an input, output and connection for the included PSU.

You'll quickly notice that the Triple Threat is pretty small at 25mm x 195mm x 60mm, making this a great grab 'n' go pedal if you're in need of a simple set of effects. Each effect has three controls – gain, tone and volume for the distortion, rate, depth and level for the phaser and level, feedback and time for the delay. The distortion starts off at a crunchy overdrive, and with the gain control bumped up you're into heavy overdrive that's thick and harmonically rich, while also being surprisingly dynamic. The phaser can do swirling, Van Halen-style modulation at the slower speeds, and, with the rate control increased, we get watery, almost chorus sounds. With the distortion engaged before it, the sweep of the phase becomes incredibly accented, to the point where you may need to dial back

the depth settings, but this is a good thing, rather than not being able to have the effect as intense as you might like.

Finally there's the echo, and if you don't have an analogue delay in your setup, this one is a delight. Slower delay times with fewer repeats may not quite reveal the degrading grit that analogue delays are known for, but crank up the feedback control and you'll hear how it begins to thin out with each pass. Push it all the way and it'll go into self-oscillation, allowing you to bend the time control for some cool noises to boot.

There's no way of rearranging the effect order, and the preset/mixed pedal nature of the Triple Threat means that using it in an effects loop might not be ideal. But, it's a fun, affordable way of adding extra sounds, or possibly even getting to grips with three of the major pedal food groups.

Stuart Williams

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

1 ALL-ANALOGUE There's distortion, phaser and echo circuits, and each one is 100% analogue. This is the limited edition Yellow version, with a standard Black model priced at £95.

2 ROAD-READY The enclosure is made of aluminium, it's got metal footswitches and the tiny control knobs are kept safe with surrounding bumpers.

3 CONNECTORS Connecting the Triple Threat up is as simple as it gets. It's equipped with two 1/4-inch jacks, one input and one output.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Analogue multi-effects unit
EFFECTS: Distortion, phaser, echo
SOCKETS: Input, output, power supply (included)
BYPASS: Buffered
POWER: 9v psu (included)
CONTACT: Third Man Records, thirdmanstore.co.uk



STRANDBERG BODEN ESSENTIAL

The imaginative Swedish ergonomic specialists unveil their very first affordable line

£999

Any discussions around forward-thinking brands fixated on evolving the design of the electric guitar will almost always include a mention of Strandberg – and with good reason. Though founded in 1982, the Swedish company have risen to prominence over the last decade with an impressive list of endorsees, from Australian instrumental mastermind Plini and Scar Symmetry's Per Nilsson to American YouTuber Sarah Longfield and Haken's Charlie Griffiths.

Up to this point, however, their instruments had been aimed at the higher end of the market, typically catering to more advanced players with the budget to accommodate for more of a custom shop feel. And though they partnered with PT Cort in Indonesia back in 2017 – a factory who have also been entrusted to oversee the PRS SE line with unprecedented levels of success – it's only now that they've delivered a Strandberg at under a grand.

Given the names associated with the brand and the aesthetic of their lines, it would be all too easy to write off the Boden Essential as a tool for modern metallic types on a search for futuristic shred machines. Far from it, in fact, when you start experimenting with the different humbucker and single-coil variations on offer, which can take you all the way from a Strat-y spank to a much thicker mid-focused roar. And that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the innovation at the core of this design. The

headless construction and ergonomic cuts at every corner of the body dramatically reduce the weight, with this review model sitting at little over four pounds.

Those dramatic curves also ensure it's a comfortable fit whether you're stood up or sat down. Make no mistake, this is as user-friendly as a guitar can get. Then there's the patented EndurNeck, which Strandberg claim provides a more restful thumb grip that guarantees players keep a straighter wrist, and such promises seem to ring true. It may take a short while to get used to, of course, but it's a neck that can make the most ambitious of stretches and convoluted of chords feel like a breeze – making the player feel like they're capable of almost anything. The EGS Arc bridge and string locks are also geared towards creative excellence, providing a tuning stability that doesn't seem to falter, with micro adjustments done at the base as per famous headless models of the past.

You might look at a guitar like this and think it's too far evolved from the Strats and Les Pauls that made history in the 1950s. But that could prove to be regrettable – the Boden Essential may be a modern classic, but it's a classic nonetheless.

Amit Sharma

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

1 HEADSTOCK
Clearly a striking, revolutionary design, the Boden Essential is weighted correctly and doesn't feel lopsided in the way headless models from other companies have in the past.

2 NECK
Invented by Ola Strandberg, the EndurNeck creates less stress on joints and tendons, encouraging relaxation while reducing fatigue, resulting in less risk of injury and better playing.

3 PICKUPS
From running each humbucker alone to mixing the bridge with either coil of the neck, or even the neck inner coil in isolation, there are tones aplenty here.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Meranti
NECK: Roasted Maple
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 24
PICKUPS: Strandberg custom OEM neck and bridge humbuckers
CONTROLS: 5-Way Pickup Selector, Volume, Tone
HARDWARE: Strandberg EGS Arc Cast Zinc Fixed Bridge and String Locks
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Elemental Blue [as reviewed], Black Granite, Astro Dust
CASE: Strandberg Essential gig bag
CONTACT: Strandberg, strandbergguitars.com







BOSS IR-2

£179

Amp and cab emulation in the familiar guise of a Boss compact pedal

The practical advantages of self-contained amp and speaker emulation in a small pedalboard-friendly pedal are there for all to see in the likes of the Strymon Iridium and Walrus Audio ACS1, but now those have got competition from Boss in the shape of the IR-2. Boss has previous experience in this genre of pedal with their twin-footswitch IR-200, but this time, in what looks to be

The guitar input is mono, but you get a choice of mono or stereo output to a line level device like a PA system's mixer, or to an amp. If you fancy a bit of silent practice you also get a mini-jack stereo headphone socket, and as the IR-2 can be battery powered, you can do that anywhere. The pedal can also function as an audio interface via its USB socket, allowing it to be used for recording to a DAW. Further socketry provides a mono

a range of tones to cover many musical styles.

You'll find some player favourites – Fender Twin and Bassman, Vox AC-30, Marshall 'plexi', plus models for Soldano, Mesa/Boogie and more – alongside generic Boss creations like the aptly named 'Clean', 'Crunch' and 'Hi-Gain'. A press and hold on the footswitch is needed to bypass the pedal but, when active, the footswitch provides instant switching between two channels. These can each feature a different amp or the same amp with altered settings so you can, say, have two gain levels of the same amp – a practical choice for onstage use.

A truly portable rig for practice, recording and live use, the IR-2 is quite possibly the most versatile Boss compact there is – it's an outright problem-solver that all guitarists should consider carrying in their gigbag.

Trevor Curwen

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

1 FOOTSWITCH

The Green and Red amp channels can be toggled between using the footswitch when the pedal is engaged. A long press is needed to bypass the pedal.

2 KNOBS

Dual-concentric knobs have the Ambience, Level and Gain on the taller, inner knob while Bass, Middle and Treble are adjusted by the outer rings.

3 USB AND PHONES SOCKETS

The headphone socket allows silent practice with just guitar and pedal, but it can also be used for monitoring if you connect via USB to a DAW for recording.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Amp & Cabinet simulation pedal

FEATURES: Buffered bypass

MODES: Clean, Twin, Tweed, Diamond, Crunch, Brit, Hi-Gain, Soldano, Brown, Modded, Rectifier

CONTROLS: Ambience, Level, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Mode selector, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard outputs (A/Mono, B), standard CH Select input, standard Send, standard, Return, Phones, USB

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC adaptor 160 mA

DIMENSIONS: 73 (w) x 129 (d) x 59 mm (h)

CONTACT: Boss, boss.info/uk

THE MOST VERSATILE BOSS COMPACT THERE IS

an inspired piece of engineering, they have crammed an impressive range of functionality into a compact pedal chassis.

The IR-2 is designed to deliver the sound of 11 different amps, each of which comes with a matched Celestion Digital cabinet IR. A free IR-2 IR Loader app for macOS and Windows also lets you load IRs of your choice into the pedal. While combined use is the default, you can use amp and cab individually as there is provision to turn either off.

or stereo send and return loop which can bring other pedals into the signal path after the amp emulation.

The IR-2 provides Level, Gain, Middle, Treble and Bass adjustments for the amps. You also get an ambience knob to add in a sense of space to the sound with a choice of great-sounding Room, Hall or Plate Reverb. All of the 11 amps are very playable, reacting well to guitar dynamics and between them will deliver



WALRUS AUDIO FUNDAMENTAL AMBIENT

A compact and affordable soundscaping reverb pedal

£125



AT A GLANCE

- TYPE:** Ambient reverb pedal
- FEATURES:** Buffered bypass, switchable trails mode, choice of three algorithms
- CONTROLS:** Decay, Tone, Mix, Deep/Lush/Haze switch, Bypass footswitch
- CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output
- POWER:** 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 100mA
- DIMENSIONS:** 60 (w) x 116 (d) x 56 mm (h)

Walrus Audio have been responsible for some pretty tasty pedals in the ambience field with the likes of the Slöer Stereo Ambient reverb, Slö Multi-Texture Reverb and the Fable and Lore Soundscape Generators, but they are not pedals that every player would be able to afford. Now, though, there's the opportunity for more of us to discover what the Walrus ambience is all about with the release of the Fundamental Ambient, a pedal in their budget-friendly Fundamental series.

The Fundamental Ambient is a compact pedal with an easy-to-operate interface consisting of three centre-detented sliders governing the reverb mix, decay and tone, plus a switch that selects one of

three different ambient reverb algorithms – Deep, Lush and Haze. While these are all in that same spacious and textured reverb ballpark that can provide a shifting pad of sound supporting your guitar, each has its own attributes that may lend themselves to different applications.

Deep is delivered with a low octave that'll give you real dense girth in its low end – if you want to get doomy it's your first call. Lush, by contrast, has a lighter vibe with a more open sounding midrange and is ideal where you need a really long, lingering reverb tail – it's like an infinite reverb if you move the decay slider to maximum. That Decay slider actually gives plenty of variation for all three algorithms, running

from a relatively short but intense fadeout through to a tail that'll just hang in the air.

For both Deep and Lush, the Tone slider controls the cutoff of a low-pass filter, offering plenty of range, brightening things up from right to left. For Haze, it operates as a band-pass filter which suits the reverb's grainy lo-fi texture delivered by the distortion and sample rate reduction inherent in the algorithm.

OK, it's not stereo like some of its more expensive siblings, but the Fundamental Ambient gives you a nicely affordable option of adding some atmospheric soundscapes to a standard guitar signal chain, and is a practical complement to a more conventional reverb pedal.

Trevor Curwen

A PRACTICAL COMPLEMENT TO A MORE CONVENTIONAL REVERB PEDAL

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

SPACE ODDITY
Words and Music by David Bowie



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Words Amit Sharma Photo Allyssa Cornier

LOWLIVES

In his last band The Defiled, Lee Downer spliced elements of nu-metal and industrial into a fiery package that turned them into one of the most exciting acts in Britain.

Following that band's dissolution in 2016, Lee moved to California, working as a buyer for the vintage department of Hollywood's Guitar Center, and started new group Lowlives. The alt-rock quartet's debut album *Freaking Out* was released in May through Universal imprint Spinefarm and they have been booked for Download in the UK as well as US festivals Aftershock and Louder Than Life. You could say it's all off to a good start...

"There was one Foo Fighters gig I was obsessed with as a kid," Lee tells TG. "I think it was on their first UK tour and they were so good. I remember watching the footage and thinking, 'I need to be in a band like that!' For this project, I wanted no click tracks or extras, just real amps, real drums, real everything. We're heavily influenced by Alice In Chains and Nirvana, stuff that's probably now considered classic rock, plus later groups like Superheaven and Dinosaur Pile-Up. It's not super techy or heavy, but it's fun to be playing guitar live again!"

The group flew to the UK for sessions at London's Chapel Studios, but by their own admission some bad decision-making led to them needing to re-record the lion's share of the guitars at a later date. You live and learn, as Lee explains...

"All I needed was a Les Paul and I stupidly brought something else," he admits. "I redid all the rhythms with my white 1976 Les Paul Custom, which is now banana yellow. I've owned a lot of white Les Pauls over the years and this one sounds the best. Plus it looks so cool – Dave Grohl was playing one on those early Foo Fighters tours. The Manic Street Preachers had one, so did Randy Rhoads, though I'd probably say Steve Jones from Sex Pistols is why I got my first one."

The Les Paul was plugged into a modded Marshall JCM800 with a Maxon OD808 providing some extra dirt en route, and the only other pedals used were an old Shin-Ei fuzz, a Rat and a Small Clone. Ultimately, the sound of this band is a Gibson into a Marshall, says Lee, though he does have 169 guitars at home to choose from. "I own a lot of gear but I still prefer the sound of the most basic rig," he laughs. "No tricks, no messing about, just meat and potatoes rock!"



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BLUES/ROCK FOUNDATIONS WITH David Mead

level
1/5



This course will address all the skills you need to make sure-footed progress with your playing. Typical topics will involve mapping out the fretboard using the CAGED System, the major and minor scales you need to make your solos ignite, picking hand technique – specifically alternate picking and muting – fretting-hand skills like slurs, bends, double stops and vibrato, etc, and much more. We'll also look at the fundamentals of blues playing, both rhythm and lead, the 12-bar blues format and some of the common variations like the 'quick change' and 'riff blues'. But most of all, we're going to have fun!

ACOUSTIC SONGS WITH Chris Quinn

level
2/5



This acoustic course promises to reveal how techniques from Robert Johnson through to Ed Sheeran will make you a better fingerstylist. Looking at guitar masters like Merle Travis, Jason Isbell, John Mayer, James Taylor and Paul Simon, you'll study important exercises and techniques that can give you that solid, timeless sound. You'll learn how to use these skills in modern guitar arrangements and for your own live performances. This inclusive week of workshops and group playing is aimed at lovers of quality songwriting, fingerpicking and guitarists wishing to take their acoustic playing to the next level.

BLUES SONGS WITH Neville Marten

level
2-3/5



This is an inclusive get-together of guitarists on a quest to play and perform great blues songs. During a week of intensive but fun learning the collective talents of the group will put together four, possibly five great bluesy tracks both classic and modern. A solid degree of competence is required, such as ability with the major and minor pentatonic scales, blues scales and standard 7th chords, but everyone's abilities will be put to good use whatever their level. The student concert set list will be made from everyone's suggestions and they will be worked on from day one alongside technique and guitar tone considerations.

ROCK 'N' ROLL WITH Jon Bishop

level
2-3/5



If you are looking for a good time course then look no further than rock 'n' roll. The rock 'n' roll style is an exiting blend of country, blues and rock with artists as diverse as Elvis (Scotty Moore), Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Brian Setzer and Albert Lee will be studied. Your tutor Jon Bishop is perfectly placed to help you in your quest as he has recorded and toured for the past 16 years with UK rock 'n' roll legend Shakin' Stevens. Throughout the week, many iconic riffs and songs will be covered.

JUMP BLUES WITH Chris Corcoran

level
2-3/5



Referencing the big sound of '40s & '50s R&B and Jump Blues guitar, this course will give a fresh perspective on how to add drive, style and invention. Licks, riffs and phrases will be covered as well as the styles of guitarists like Freddie King, Matt Guitar Murphy, Bill Jennings, Earl Hooker, T-Bone Walker, Tiny Grimes and Barney Kessel. Chris will also include examples and pointers of his signature chromatic blues style.

GROOVE! WITH Jason Sidwell

level
2-3/5



Playing in time with energy and sophistication is what this involving course is about. Typical funk/soul artists include James Brown, Prince, Chic, Michael Jackson, Rick James and Earth Wind and Fire. The core topics will be rhythmic syncopation, chord vocabulary, octaves, double-stops, Dorian and Mixolydian mode usage and how best to interact with drums and bass. There will be additional modules that cover soloing over unique chord progressions (Stevie Wonder to Steely Dan) and deep dives into expanding alternate and hybrid picking techniques.

BLUES WITH Andy Saphir

level
3/5



This course looks at the techniques, musical approaches and lick vocabulary used in electric blues lead guitar. By delving into the styles of blues guitar greats of the past and present like T Bone Walker, BB King, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Joe Bonamassa and Kirk Fletcher, you will learn staple blues guitar approaches such as mixing minor and major pentatonics, string bending and double stops. In addition, the course looks at the theory behind some of those cool jazz sounding approaches used by players like Robben Ford, Larry Carlton and Josh Smith.

ROCK WITH Jamie Hunt

level
3/5



For the rock course, key techniques like picking and legato plus phrasing approaches will be explored, ranging from classic acts such as AC/DC and Black Sabbath through to modern players like Joe Satriani and Alter Bridge's Mark Tremonti. You will study typical scales and modes plus soloing approaches that enhance your familiarity with the fretboard and expand your vocabulary as a lead player. Alongside this, you'll explore equipment and tone settings that achieve chugging rhythm guitar tones and screaming leads. To bring it all together, numerous famous riffs will be enjoyed as well as three songs learnt for the closing student concert.

JAZZ WITH John Wheatcroft

level
3/5



This course focuses on the exciting sounds of jazz, looking at players ranging from Wes Montgomery to John Scofield, George Benson to Mike Stern. We'll be covering a wide range of topics, ranging from accessible simple and direct ideas to more sophisticated and complex concepts, all framed into repertoire coming directly from the American Songbook. You'll learn immediately applicable ideas to expand your comping, melodic delivery, ensemble interplay, technique, improvisation and creativity.

SINGING WITH Sara Davey

All levels



A course for all levels of singing. While teaching and reinforcing basic healthy singing habits Sara will help each singer to find their own style and unique voice. We will work on personal technique and skill, anatomy of the voice, one to one coaching, stage craft, improvisation harmony singing. There will be opportunities for soloing, duets and small ensemble acapella singing in addition to singing on stage with a band. Vocal students will have the opportunity to sit in on other guitar classes while one-to-one voice lesson slots are offered in the afternoon.

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