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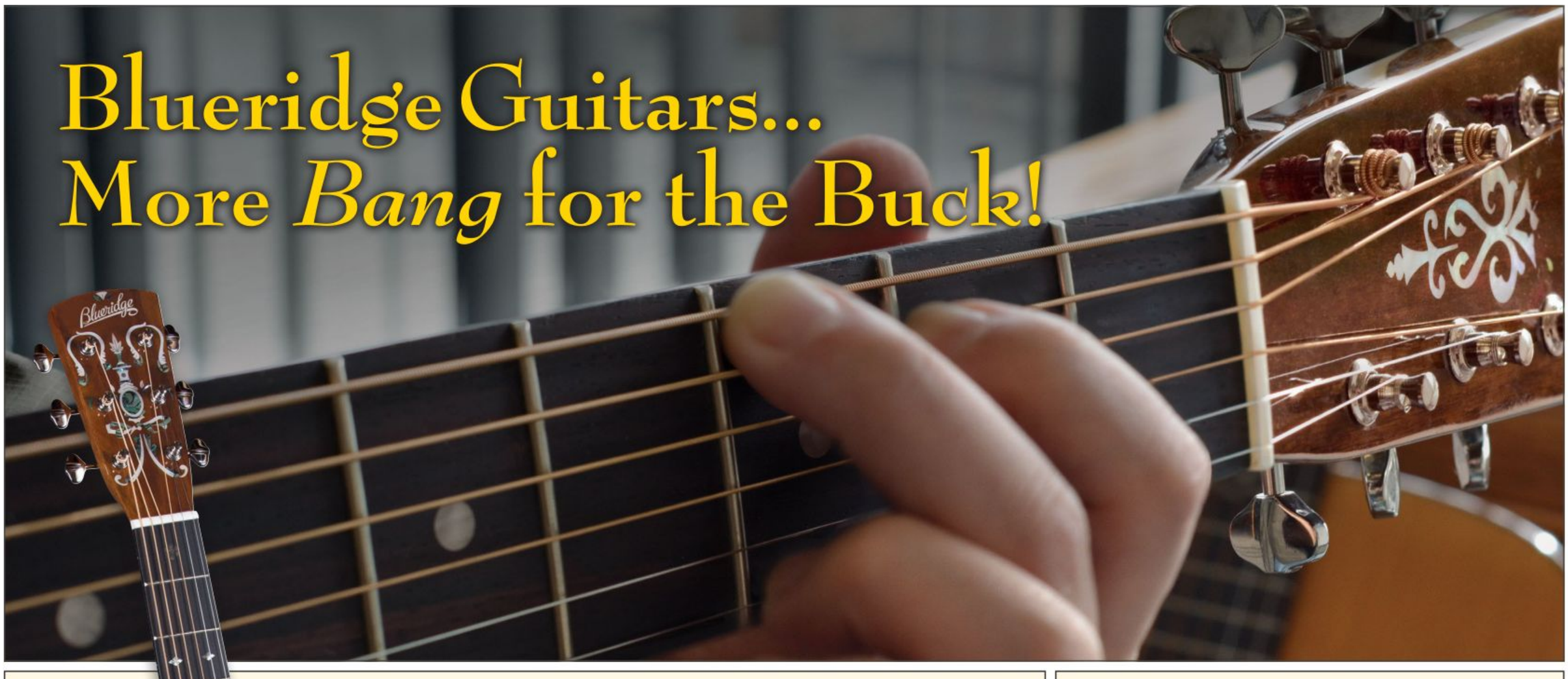

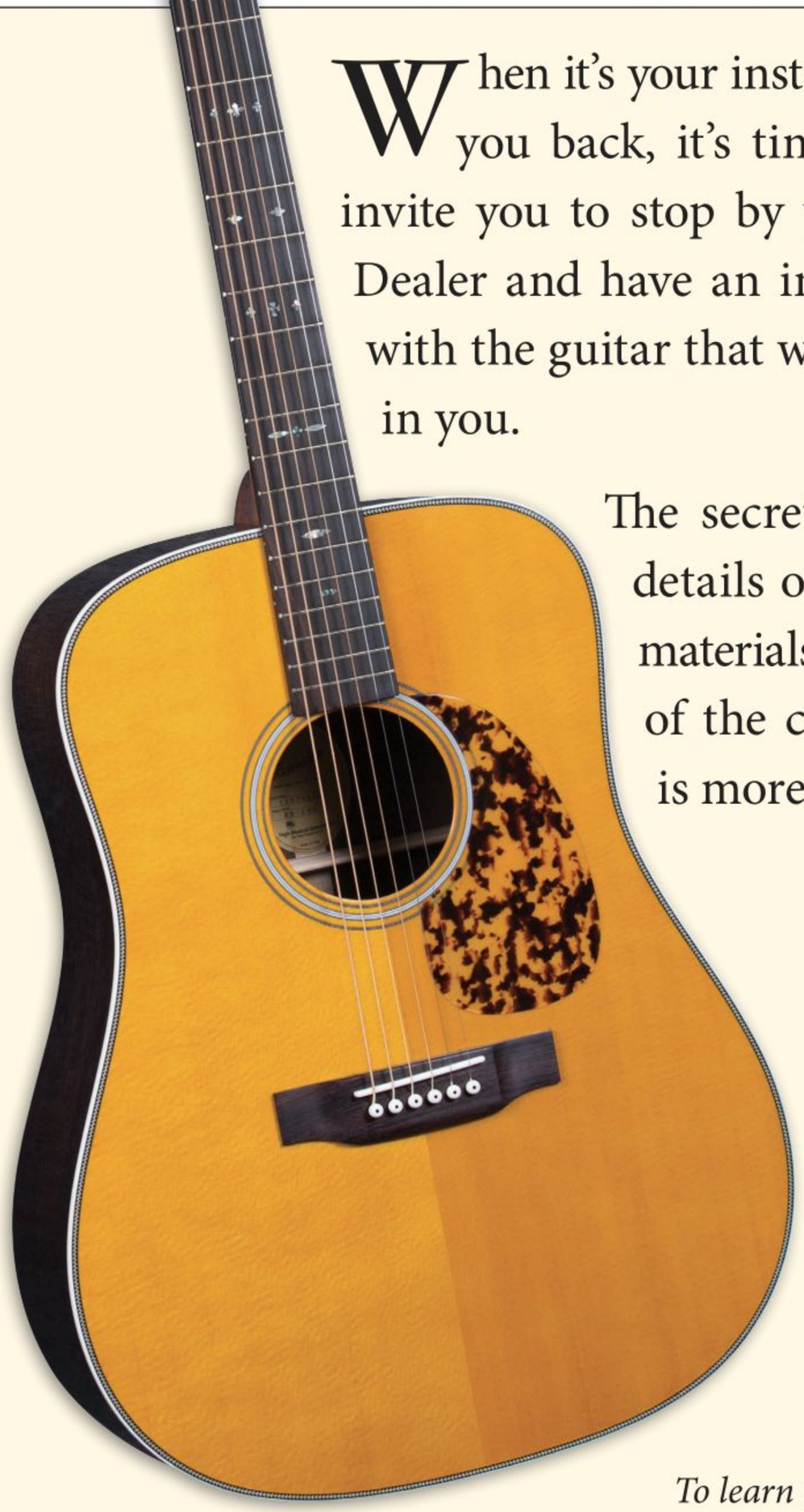

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An old soul, the 23-year-old has been a performer since age 11, furthering a tradition started by his grandfather. His new album is all about his songwriting and mature vocals, but it's also bursting with splendid guitar playing and dirty blues riffs.
| *By Oscar Jordan*

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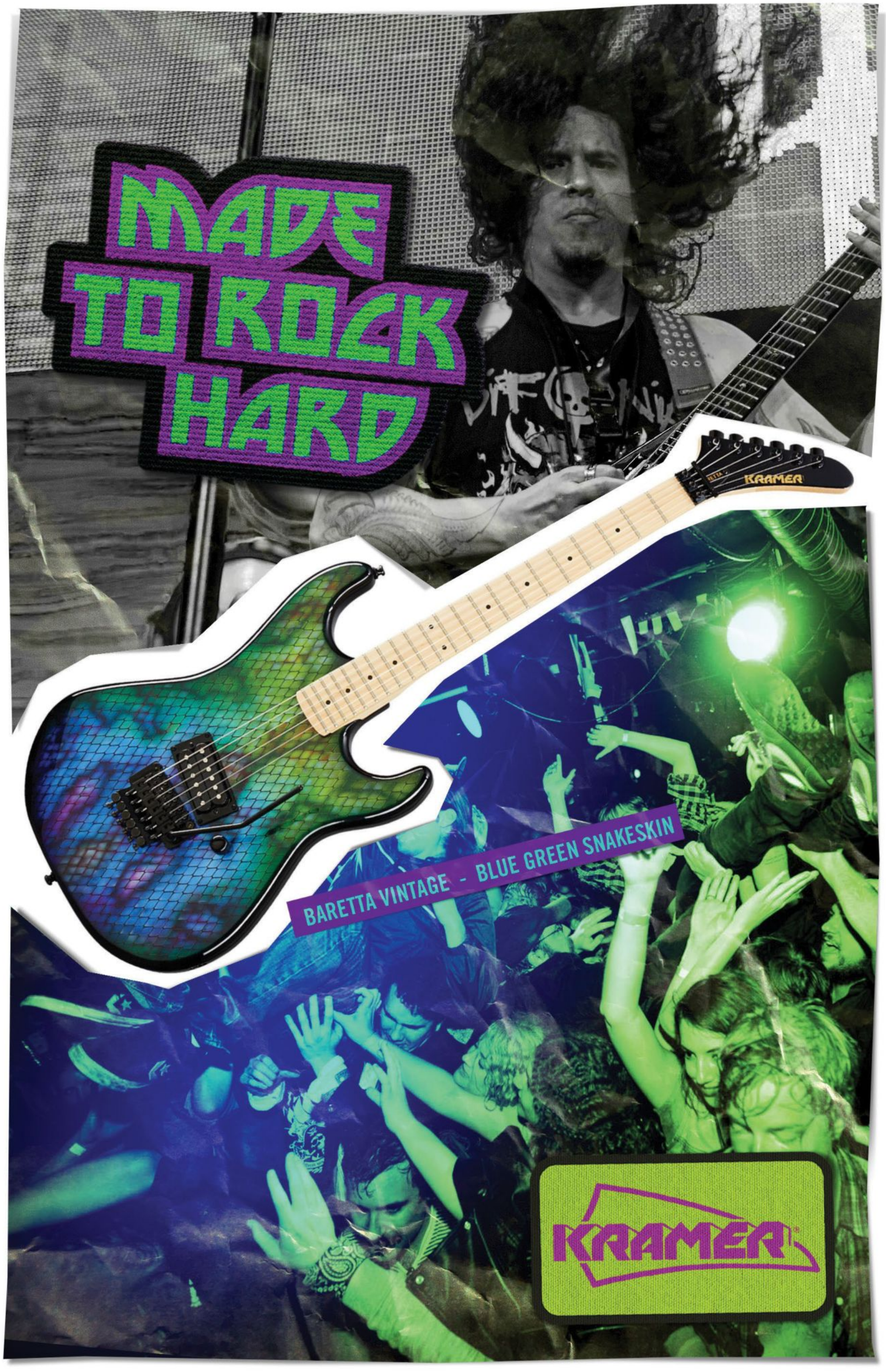
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Amptweaker's James and Phyllis Brown.

BROWN SELLS AMPTWEAKER PEDALS, MOVES TO EVH AMPS

Musical-gear distributor Alpha Distribution recently acquired Amptweaker Pedals, the boutique effects company established in 2009 by James Brown and his wife, Phyllis. Brown is moving to the EVH Amplifier division at Fender, where he will be a Principal Analog Design Engineer.

Prior to founding Amptweaker, Brown spent 18 years designing amps for Peavey, where he helped create the Classic, VTM, Triple XXX, and 5150 before moving to Kustom in 2004, where he developed the '36 Coupe, '72 Coupe, and Double Cross.

He met Alpha owner Jack Thompson at Winter NAMM 2019, where they discussed a distribution deal. That spring, Brown was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, which he says strained the limits of his health insurance. Shortly after, Fender offered a spot with EVH. He then approached Thompson about taking over Amptweaker because, he said, "...he and his team shared the same enthusiasm about working with players to create innovative musical tools."

Alpha also handles products by Noisemaker, Carl Martin, and ValveTrain. Before his departure, Brown collaborated with Alpha designers on several new Amptweaker pedals.

VG REACHES MILESTONE

You're looking at the 400th issue of *Vintage Guitar*! Founded by publisher/owner Alan Greenwood in 1986, the magazine has been in continuous circulation (and under his ownership) since its inception.

"We're proud to still be going strong, and especially grateful to our many loyal advertisers and tens of thousands of loyal readers," said Greenwood. "Obviously, we can't publish your favorite magazine without your support."

OOPS! DEPT.

A caption on page 81 of the February issue mistakenly identified Tom George's Gibson Les Paul Spotlight as serial number 94 001. The actual number is 84 001. *VG* apologizes for any confusion created by the error.

Jim Cregan with his beloved Martin D-18.

JIM CREGAN

Forever On Guitar

Side men rarely get the recognition they deserve for bringing alive the music of the stars in the spotlight. Jim Cregan warrants such praise. More than Rod Stewart's longtime guitarist, Cregan was the legendary singer's frequent co-writer (including "Passion," "Tonight I'm Yours (Don't Hurt Me)," and "Forever Young"), co-producer, and musical director.

Cregan's profile is getting a boost with the release of Stewart's 14-CD boxed set, *The Studio Albums 1975-2001*, and his new book, *And on Guitar ...: The Autobiography of Jim Cregan*.

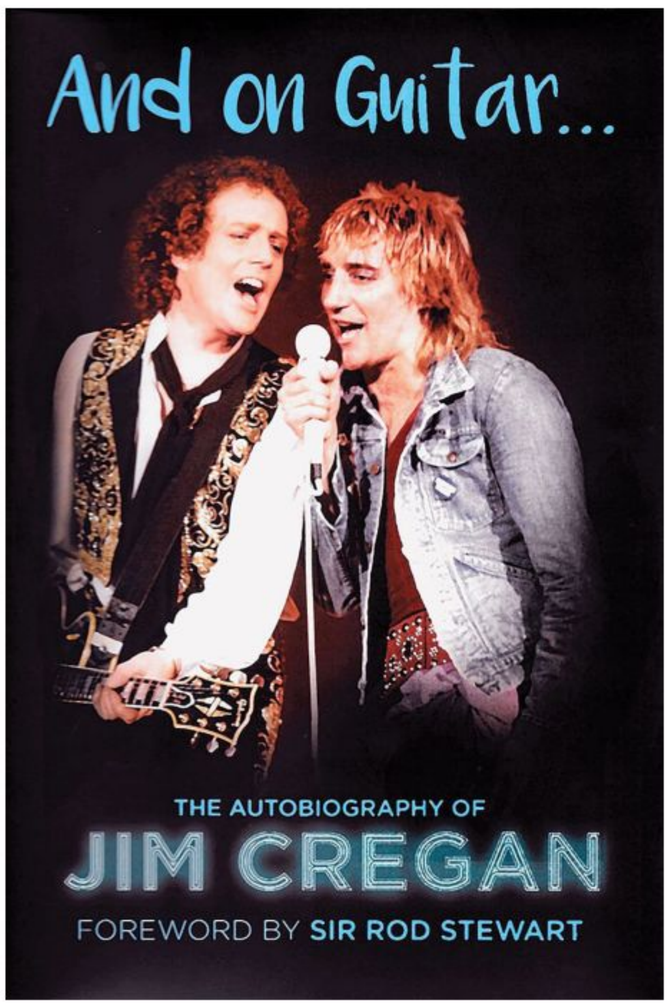
He first tasted success in the early '70s with Family, Linda Lewis, and Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel. In '76, Cregan began his carnival ride with Stewart.

"I wasn't in need of a gig, as Cockney Rebel was having #1 records in Europe, so I had to tell Steve Harley that I was quitting his band," he recalled. "That was based mainly on Rod's promise that I would be included in songwriting. Harley wrote songs by himself, and for me as a writer, that was frustrating."

Cregan's first album with Stewart was '77's *Foot Loose & Fancy Free*, which also included guitarists Gary Grainger and Billy Peek. Starting with *Blondes Have More Fun* (featuring "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?") some albums credited the core musicians as the Rod Stewart Band (or Group).

"The band in those days was a real working group," Cregan noted. "We co-wrote the songs, recorded them pretty well live in the studio, often performed in the videos, and took the whole thing on tour. Rod very

Jim Cregan: Ava Cregan.



Cregan's new book is *And on Guitar ...: The Autobiography of Jim Cregan*.

generously shared the concert income, so the original members had a vested interest in the shows and ticket sales.

"Even though we had three guitar players, Billy did not play on all the tracks; Rod used him mainly on the rock songs. I learned so much from him about playing in Chuck Berry's style. Gary or I would play the 'chips'–rhythmic accents throughout – and the other would play fills. We'd work them out with very little effort in the studio. Billy nearly always took the solos on those songs. A lot of the co-writing was by Gary or myself, and I suppose whoever wrote most of the song would get to lay down the essential part while the rest of us would try our best to complement that."

Distinct among his memories was the band's eclectic makeup. "Phil Chen, our wonderful bassist, could play *anything*, but had his roots in Jamaican music and funk. Carmine Appice on drums, having played with Jeff Beck, had a heavier approach. John Jarvis, our piano player, won a Beethoven contest when he was 13, and Kevin Savigar, who later replaced him, studied at London's Royal College of Music. Gary and I were self-taught. His influences included Joe Walsh while mine were more toward Django Reinhardt and Hank Marvin. But we both could cover various styles as needed."

Stewart's mainstream success and fame were sky high while Cregan was in the band. Did the members also enjoy those rewards?

"We were lucky to be touring during the glory days. The lack of social media, phone video, and media driven by celebrity gossip gave us the freedom to behave in the grand style of mischievous rock musicians," said Cregan, "Rod wanted to continue, to some degree, the fun he'd had with the Faces, so we stayed in the same hotels, traveled in the same plane, and some of us would go on holiday together. He and I are still the best of friends."

With Stewart, Cregan mostly played a '64 Strat through a Twin Reverb. He also used an SG with P-90 pickups, a '59 Les Paul three-pickup Black Beauty, custom Zemaitis, '60s Telecaster, and a '56 Esquire. His acoustics were an early-'70s Martin D-18 and Stewart's Zemaitis 12-string.

Today, Cregan leads a group called Cregan & Co., in which he plays a Tom Anfield custom, electrics by Vintage, and that trusty D. He also does charity work.

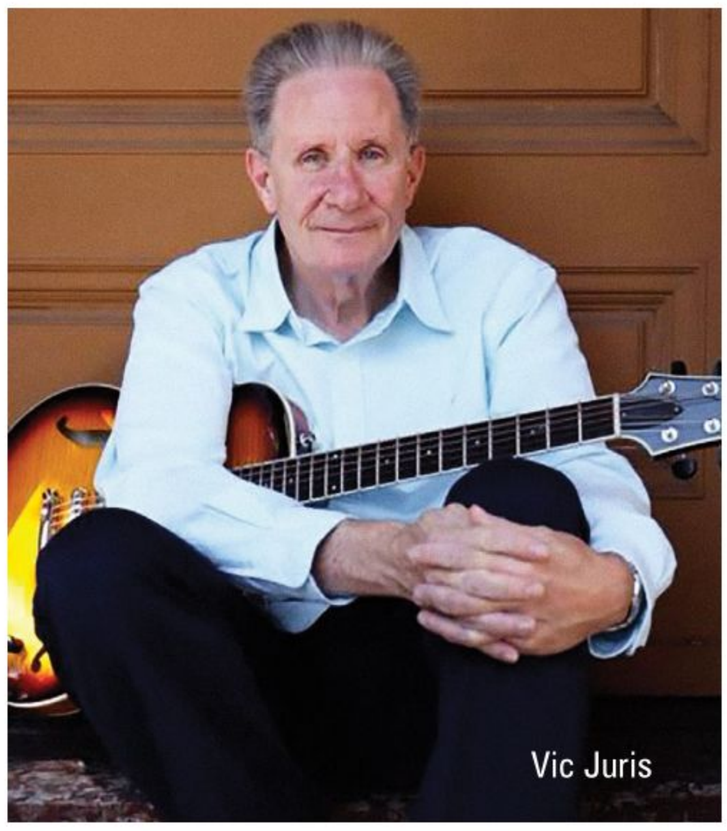
"We play theaters and festivals, mostly in the U.K., but I also started a new project called Band of Angels. A dear friend, Anne Dunsmore, founded the Angel Force USA charity. Its aim is to help veterans with post-traumatic stress who are at risk of suicide. I'm deeply involved, and Band of Angels has written songs that will become part of a benefit album. At my age, it seems sensible to be giving back something, and if I can help save a life..." ***– Bret Adams***

IN MEMORIAM

VIC JURIS

Jazz guitarist Vic Juris died December 31. He was 66 and had been diagnosed with metastatic liver cancer in mid 2019 after experiencing fatigue while performing.

Juris was born in New Jersey in 1953, then raised in Parsippany. His father, Victor, Sr., was a Port Authority police officer, and his mother, Claire, worked as an executive secretary. He began playing guitar at age 10, and got his first electric as a gift the following Christmas. While cutting his teeth on The Beatles, he studied privately with jazz guitarist/educator Ed Berg, and became especially fond of Pat Martino's playing.


Vic Juris

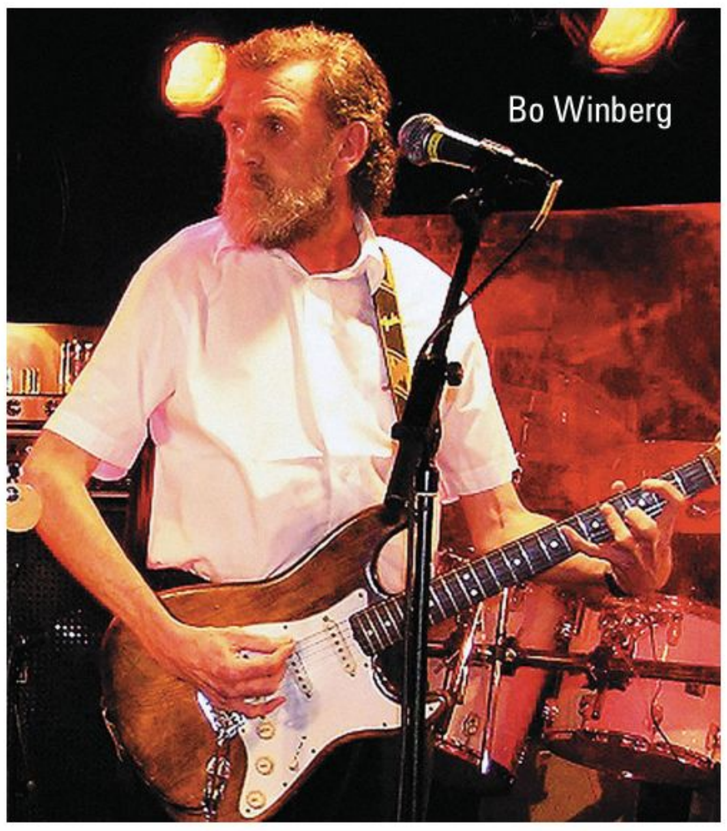
Juris came of age among a generation of guitarists versed in jazz but also informed by rock, soul, and classical music. He built a reputation among fellow musicians with a string of solo albums before raising his profile while backing saxophonist Richie Cole in the late '70s. He also recorded with organists Don Patterson and Jimmy Smith, bassists Steve LaSpina and Gary Peacock, and keyboardist Peggy Stern. He drew broader acclaim during a 23-year stint alongside saxophonist/flutist David Liebman, with whom he began recording in 1991.

Juris was also a committed educator, teaching at the New School, Rutgers, and SUNY Purchase. He published method books and instructional videos, along the way instructing several generations of guitarists.

He recorded two albums slated for release in the spring; one with Jay Anderson on bass, Gary Versace on keyboards, and John Riley on drums, the other a set of guitar/vocal duets with his wife, Kate Baker.

Fellow noted players including John Abercrombie, Pat Metheny, and Dave Stryker cited Juris as a creative and inspiring player while also recalling his humility, work ethic, uplifting spirit, and insight.

"Vic will live on through his music, as a beautiful person and through his many students," said Stryker.


Bo Winberg

BO WINBERG

Bo Winberg, co-founder/guitarist of the Swedish instro band The Spotnicks, passed away January 3. He was 80.

Born in Gothenburg in March of 1939, Winberg (*VG*, March '08) joined Bo Starander and Björn Thelin in 1957; the pair had been gigging as a duo, but, with Winberg aboard they became Rock-Teddy and The Blue Caps. With the addition of drummer Ove Johansson the following year, they changed names again, to The Frazers, and played Gothenburg clubs with Winberg on lead, Starander on rhythm guitar and vocal, and Thelin on bass. After being signed by the Swedish label Karusell in '61, they adopted the name Spotnicks (a play on Russia's Sputnik satellite) and released a live album.

Influenced by The Shadows and Ventures, the group came to be recognized for taking the stage in space suits, but moreso for Winberg's adept playing, which blended the influences of Les Paul and Chet Atkins along with Danish guitarist Jørgen Ingmann. Their first international hit came with a take on "Orange Blossom Special," which made the Top 30 U.K. singles and reached #1 in Australia in '62. Other hits included "Rocket Man," based on a Russian folk march, as well as their biggest U.K. hit, "Hava Nagila," and "Karelia," which charted in Japan in '65.

Winberg briefly played a '61 Fender Stratocaster – rare in Sweden at the time – along with a guitar he built (Thelin played a matching bass). He later acquired a '65 Strat that he used for nearly 50 years. Winberg also made his own wireless system for the guitar, and built the band's amplifiers (employing built-in tape echo) and cabs; for guitar, he used two 15" JBL D-130E speakers, and for the bass, a 30" woofer.

The Spotnicks remained active through six decades, issuing their final album in 2006 and doing a farewell tour in '14. All told, they recorded and released more than 700 songs. Winberg also recorded solo, crediting the work to The Shy Ones.

"I really regret that I was never able to meet him," said noted instro guitarist/authority and *VG* contributor Deke Dickerson. "I got close to Gothenburg seven or eight years ago, and as we drove past the city, I thought about Bo, but the meeting didn't happen. RIP to another one of the greats."

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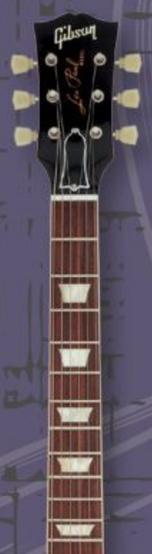
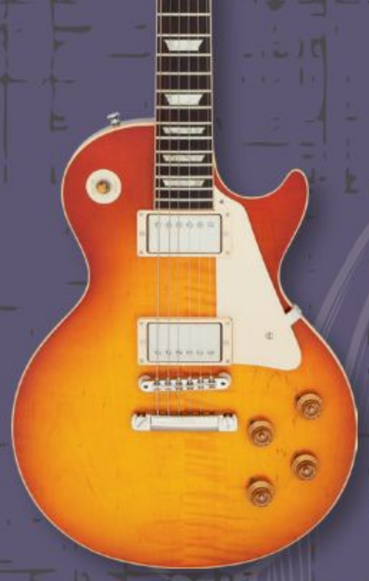
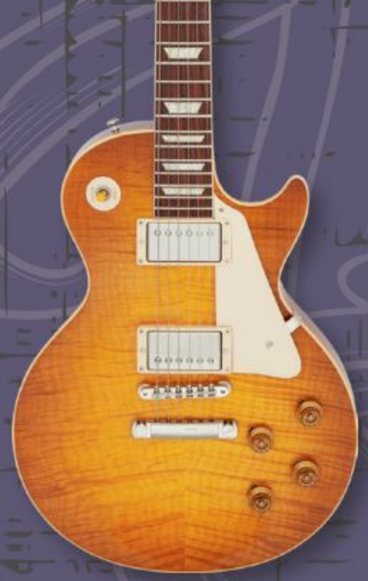

2011 Gibson Les Paul R-9 Sunburst Solid Body Electric Guitar, Serial #9 11063.

2015 Scala T-Rod "Chosen" Natural Semi-Hollow Body Electric Guitar, Serial #15148.

1965 Fender Jaguar Sunburst Solid Body Electric Guitar, Serial #L77661.



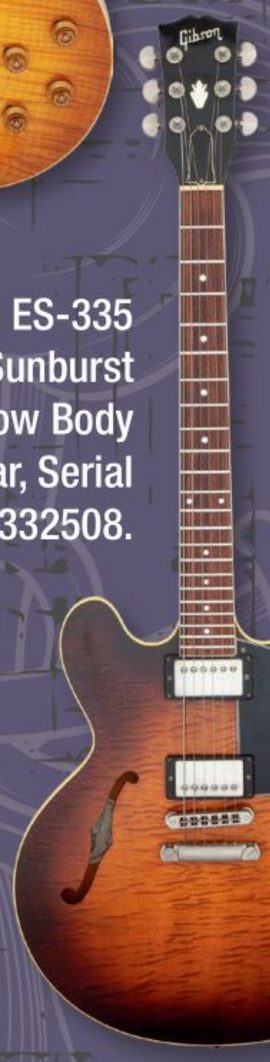
Circa 1959 Fender Precision Bass Brown Stain Electric Bass Guitar, Serial #37187.



1982 Gibson ES-335 Dot CMT Sunburst Semi-Hollow Body Electric Guitar, Serial #83332508.

Circa 1983 Gibson Les Paul Black Beauty Solid Body Electric Guitar, Serial #81153608/0108.

Circa 2005 Gibson Alvin Lee ES-335 Cherry Semi-Hollow Body Electric Guitar, Serial #AL-15.



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JONATHAN KREISBERG

The Time is Now

Jonathan Kreisberg's career has been rolling for years, but his new live album, *Capturing Spirits*, is a dramatic step up. With a great band behind him, the jazzer is now soloing at the top of his game, wildly fusing ideas and improvising at a world-class level.

The new album was recorded in Germany...

At a great club called Jazz Schmiede. We were in the middle of a European tour and went directly from the airport to the gig. That's usually not comfortable, but it can actually help to cut out the *thinking* aspect of playing music and deliver a performance based on *feeling*. After this really strong gig, I said, "Too bad we didn't record it," and to my pleasant surprise the engineer replied, "But we *did*." At that moment, I realized it was meant to be recorded live all along, and *Capturing Spirits* became the title shortly thereafter.

You're neither old-school nor fully modern as a player – you're *both*.

That's because my major influences in jazz were horn players and pianists, while on the guitar my influences were from many styles, often more-contemporary – everything from Allan Holdsworth, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Toninho Horta, the Edge, Paco de Lucía, to classical guitarists and more. I enjoy combining the jazz language with different sounds and techniques from the whole beautiful realm of the guitar.

You listened to Eddie Van Halen as a young player. How does a guitarist go from Van Halen to jazz?

I grew up hearing rock and jazz concurrently – my dad loved the Who as much as he loved Miles Davis. So though it's true I finally picked up a guitar after I heard Eddie on "Eruption," I think it was the connection to jazz that I was hearing. Not only was Eddie's dad a jazz musician, but I later realized he was trying to sound like Allan Holdsworth, who was in turn trying to sound like [hard-bop saxophonist] John Coltrane.

Some of your fast runs in "The Lift" are almost shocking.

I'm basically trying to chase sounds in my head to create some sort of unique emotional statement. In "The Lift" I was exploring a 9/8 rhythm that could be felt in many different ways. When I finish something like that, with particularly sophisticated harmonies and rhythms, I say to myself, "Oh lord, what have I done – now I have to improvise over this!" (laughs)

Which guitars and amps did you use for the *Capturing Spirits* gig?

I'm always traveling with my trusty '76 Gibson ES-175-D, which I've played for about 25 years. I got it from a friend of my dad's who had to leave the country under a bit of mysterious last-minute circumstances. Needless to say, I got it for a good price (laughs). On the road, I always try to get a Fender Deluxe '65 Reissue with the stock Jensen speaker. I play that in stereo with a solid state amp like a Polytone, Jazz Chorus, or something like that.

What about effects?

I'm often changing pedals, but I guess there's usually seven or so on my pedalboard. Right now, it's a modded EHX Micro Pog, JHS Morning Glory, Voodoo Lab Sparkle Drive, modded EHX Freeze, Pigtronix Echolution, EHX Pog 2, and my Alesis NanoVerb from the 1930s – just kidding, but it's really *old*. I also run through an Ernie Ball VP Jr. for volume and a modded VP Jr. as an expression for the echo.

Your tone on "Everything Needs Something" is unusual – sounds like overdrive or octave on the guitar. There are wicked delay runs later on.

It's a combination of a couple distortion pedals and my EHX Micro Pog. At the end, I'm using a combination of volume pedal and delays.

"Relativity" has slow-attack picking. Is that a pedal chopping off the beginning of the note?

Yes. Ever since I was in my teens and I heard Holdsworth with that SynthAxe on the album, *Sand*, I wondered if there was a way to make the guitar get that softened attack. So, now I'm basically trying to do that while retaining the organic qualities of the guitar – with the new technology. It's finally getting there.

What do you bring to the standard "Body and Soul" that makes it your own?

I try not to forget that amazing and curious melodies can also come from more-mysterious sources – sometimes from deep in our musical memory or psyche. I try not to question where it comes from, but I know it's important to stay open and capture the things I hear in my head. Actually, that's even another possible meaning of "Capturing Spirit." A constant state of discovery is what keeps me interested in jazz. ***– Pete Prown***

Jonathan Kreisberg: Claudia McDade.

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YASI HOFER

Passion and Freedom

Guitarist Yasi Hofer has been making a name for herself by barnstorming stages across Europe, mixing dazzling guitar virtuosity and low-down heaviosity. Her current album, *Freedom*, blends her passion for instrumental rock and gritty ballads.

Hofer's path forward looks bright, and with heavyweights like Steve Vai in her corner, there's no telling how far she'll go.

What led you to the guitar?

My dad was my first inspiration; his CD collection has always been a part of my life. I started by learning the flute and after that played violin for about five years. When I heard "Eye Of The Tiger" on the radio, I knew the guitar would be for me. I was never really the girly type. I played soccer and hung out with the boys, so playing guitar in a band was it for me.

You're a big Steve Vai fan.

He was the first guitarist playing instrumental music that I was introduced to. My guitar teacher showed me a video of Steve playing "Whispering A Prayer" from *Live at the Astoria, London*, and I was blown away. I didn't know one could make the guitar speak and sing. From that day on, I wanted to be able to play like him. When it comes to his composing, I love his way of writing. His melodies and arrangements are very unpredictable.

You've jammed with him.

When I was 12 years old, I wrote him a letter. Surprisingly, I received a postcard. We wrote back and forth, and I sent him videos of me playing his music. He later asked if I would like to come onstage and play "Answers" with him at his show in my hometown of Ulm, Germany.

I had four weeks to learn the song. I was extremely nervous and remember nothing from my time onstage with him that night! I'd never stood on a stage before, so joining my idol in front of 1,500 people was a lot to deal with. We've become good friends over the years. I've shared the stage with him about 10 times, and it's always very special. I feel like I learn something every time I perform with him.

How was your experience at Berklee College of Music?

It was the time of my life. It was wonderful to be surrounded by people who were just as passionate about music. Life was all about music 24/7, and everyone was eager to learn and get better. The most valuable thing was performing in front of other musicians in ensembles and classes. My songwriting became hugely influenced by my time there. When I listen to my debut album, I hear all those new things manifesting in the songs – getting introduced to different styles of music and being with musicians from all over the world made me write in a very open-minded, colorful, and playful way.

What new musical ideas did you bring to *Freedom*?

I focused on strong melodies and harmonies instead of recording too many guitar tracks. There are no keyboards and no effects sounds on the album – the intention was to keep it pure, raw, and honest; I'd play notes that were not 100 percent perfect but captured the feeling with just the right emotion and honesty. So, it sounds more mature than my past records.

What is your main guitar?

It's an Ibanez AZ Prestige. What I love most about it is that I can play any gig and cover all the sounds I need, perfectly. Before, I needed to bring at least three guitars to my shows. Now, I can play it all with one guitar... except for the seven-string songs. I love the way the maple neck feels. It feels like it's already been played for many years.

What's on your pedalboard?

It's quite minimalistic; delay, reverb, chorus, and a compressor from EarthQuaker Devices. I also use a wah and volume pedal. To me, it's important for pedals to sound organic and not artificial.

Which amps are you using?

I play a Carvin Legacy. It's been my main amp for 13 years and I use no external distortion, so my lead sound is pure Legacy. I haven't found another amp that gives me the same warm and dynamic sounds.

What's next for you?

I'm writing music for a fourth studio album and an acoustic album. My focus is on vocals, lyrics, and songwriting. Besides all the writing, I'm constantly touring with my band. In the spring, I'll be going on tour through Europe with Stu Hamm and Gergo Borlai. It's a big thing for me, and I'm really looking forward to playing the music of Vai, Satriani, and Frank Gambale with them. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Yasi Hofer: Sascha und Yasi.

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DON LATARSKI

Baritone Dreams

Northwest guitar master Don Latarski is a master of understatement. His work on *Frozen Moments* is calm and profound, mixing elements of acoustic music, fusion, and atmospheric sounds into something almost otherworldly. Throughout the deep, contemplative album, Latarski uses baritone acoustics and what he calls "water guitars," submerged in flowing streams to capture the sound of water against the strings.

Who were some of your biggest influences? Some that come to mind are evocative acoustic players like Ralph Towner, Pat Metheny, and Phil Keaggy.

You've nailed it. Michael Hedges also was a big influence. I'm a big fan of the extended song forms that Pat Metheny often works in. I like a piece of music to take me somewhere, but I'm also a huge fan of funk, which usually just hangs out, harmonically. I've always loved Wes Montgomery and George Benson, too.

You picked up an acoustic baritone guitar and had something of an epiphany...

I was immediately enchanted with the sound and realized that there were emotions only this type of guitar could tap. This is hard to put into words, but a baritone guitar has a *bigness* I've not experienced in a traditional acoustic guitar – it's like a cello/guitar hybrid. I wrote most of the music for *Frozen Moments* on a Spohn baritone.

"The Dawning Moment" has many layers going on. Is that one of your "water guitars?"

The backgrounds were created with Water Guitar #2. It has a conventional neck but the water flows through the strings near the bridge. I have two water guitars; the first is primitive and doesn't have frets, the second is more guitar-like and has frets, so I can tune it. I use both to create textural sounds similar to synth pads. During any song, I'll employ open tunings to get the sound I need. The tuning on the Spohn baritone is standard, but down a perfect fifth.

Is that a fretless on "Shadow Crossing"?

Yes, during the solo and for some doubling at other times during the song. I was given a classical guitar by Mason Williams a few years ago and decided to pull the frets and fill in the gaps with light pieces of wood to orient my hand. This guitar has proven really useful for achieving an oud-like sound.

For a recording this intimate and clear, you must have some preferred microphones, preamp, and reverb. What are your studio tools?

The main guitars in this case are two baritones recorded using three sources; a magnetic soundhole pickup – a Seymour Duncan mag mic or a Sunrise – as well as a Peluso P28 small-diaphragm tube condenser, and a Sennheiser MKH 416 shotgun mic. My main preamp is the Great River. I'm using a RME Fireface UFX interface and, for reverb, 2CAudio Aether. I like reverbs that have some motion in them.

How are your Spohn and Goodall baritones different?

The short answer is the James Goodall is tuned down to C and the Spohn down to A. I bought the Goodall guitar in Portland, Oregon, many years ago, but eventually became disenchanted with it. As you know, tuning a guitar down even just a half-step can really change the character of the instrument. I took that a bit further and tuned it down a minor third, so the bass string was at C#, and I'm now tuning it down to C. That made it sound better, but the intonation was problematic. So, I had Saul Koll make a longer neck for it.

Fast-forward to spring of 2018, when I was in Germany for the Berlin Holy Grail Guitar Show. On that trip, I had the good fortune to play a real baritone guitar, tuned down to A. I commissioned Max Spohn to build one, and I now own his first.

You clearly have ample technique, but hold it in check.

Like a lot of guitarists, I've spent many hours playing scales. This is a double-edged approach to playing, because it's easy to think "fast equals good." And I was certainly influenced by the chops of the fusion players like Al Di Meola, Jeff Beck, Bill Connors, John McLaughlin, Scott Henderson, and even Alvin Lee. But I also listened to B.B. King, Mark Knopfler, Michael Hedges, and Bill Frisell, all players who put feel, groove, and raw emotion above technique. It took awhile, but I finally realized that what I was really into was melody. Sure, it still feels great to be able to rip off a quick arpeggio, but what's most important is to play what's singable. ***– Pete Prown***

Don Latarski: Michael Stirling.

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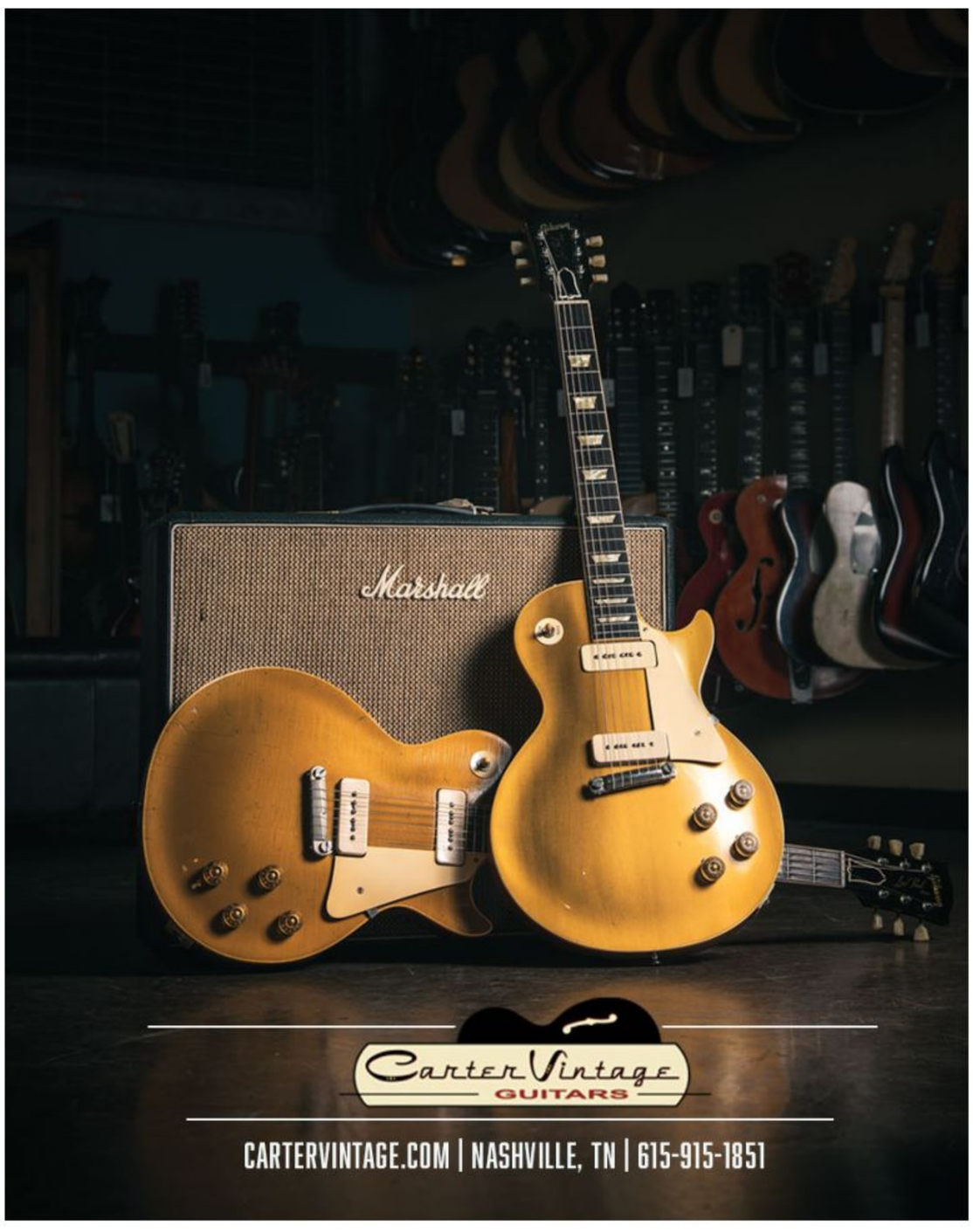

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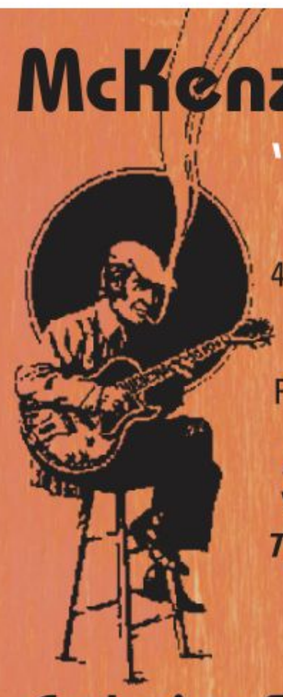

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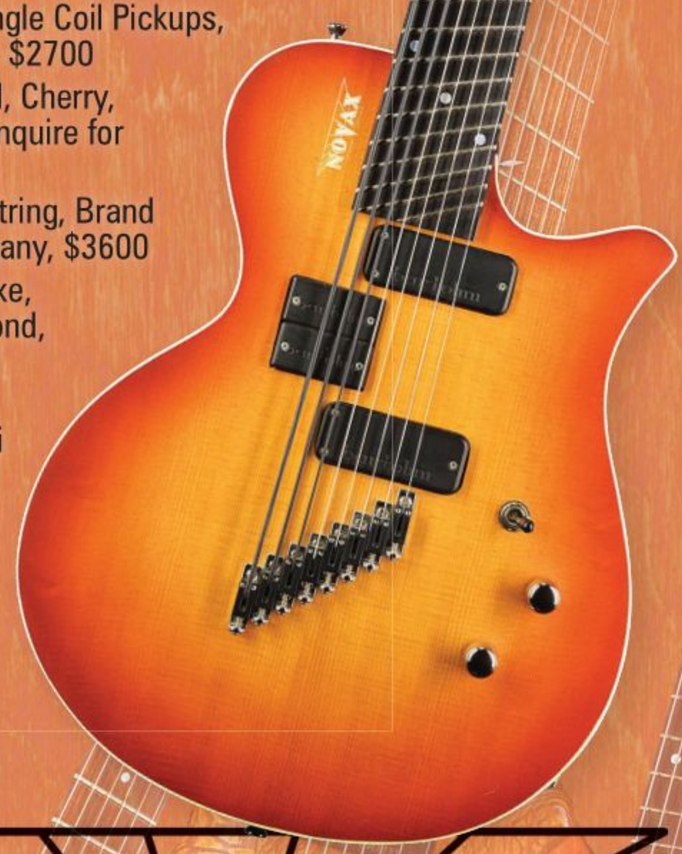

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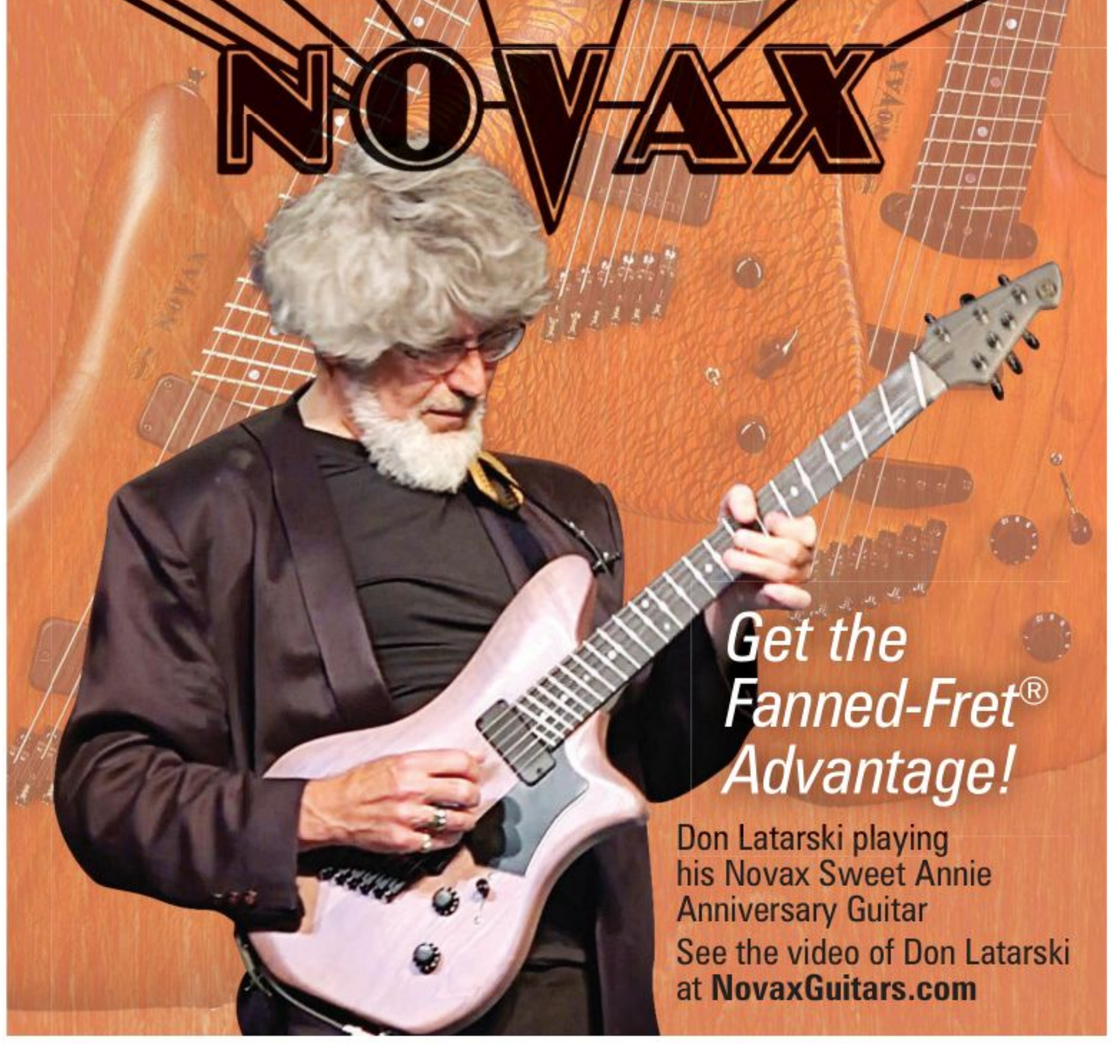

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CHRISTIE LENÉE

Acoustic Meteor

Every once in a blue moon, a guitarist breaks out of the pack with a stellar combination of melody, technique, and performance flair. That sums up Christie Lenée.

The simple fact she has toured with Tommy Emmanuel gives a sense of her six-string credentials. At the recent U.K. Guitar Show, she won "Acoustic Guitarist of The Year" in a competition judged by other world-class players like John Johnson, Andy McKee, and Molly Tuttle. Singer, songwriter, and player, Lenée matches superior fingerstyle playing with influences ranging from classical guitar to Jimi Hendrix.

We caught up with Lenée on a European tour supporting her new album, *Circles 'Round The Sun*.

Have you always been an acoustic player?

My first love was electric guitar – music from Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Bonnie Raitt, and Nirvana. At same time, the study of classical guitar naturally led to fingerstyle playing, once I became aware of it in college. By listening to rock and jam-band music, what I now enjoy most about fingerstyle is the opportunity to create many band parts with one instrument, and play them all simultaneously.

Your fingerpicking is rather elegant.

Classical guitar is an enormous part of my background. Some of my earliest memories as a child were listening to my father whistle along to Mozart while pretending to conduct the orchestra as he walked around the house. Strangely, it took me a while to listen closely to more-simple music, since I also love rock and Broadway musicals. Over time, I've truly developed a deep love for simplicity.

You tie all kinds of ideas together – Joni, Hedges, Pierre Bensusan, and more come to mind.

I love Michael Hedges and Joni Mitchell, while Dave Matthews and [Dave Matthews Band guitarist] Tim Reynolds are some of my biggest influences. More recently, I love listening to a great song and vocal melody, or beautiful classical orchestrations – melodic songs help me think less about guitar and more about the bigger picture of music. Matthews is by far my biggest influence as a songwriter. The depth of his lyrics and positive messages engrained in his songs have always resonated with me, and, of course, his band is iconic. Dave's songs are also a great challenge to play.

How do you balance your skill set – guitar, singing, writing, performing? There's a lot on your plate.

Oh, geez, I wish I had more time to lock myself in a room and discover this infinite world of music. In terms of practice, every day is different and I work hard every possible moment. It seems to be a dance between all of the elements, and that always depends on what's happening, whether it's touring, writing, or recording.

The musician in me is hungry to study and become a better guitarist/composer, but working on techniques and concepts is also a big part of my practice. Really, they all work together; I enjoy singing at any moment possible, and other days playing piano or practicing ear-training with great pop melodies. Essentially it's all music, including listening and silence.

Which tunings do you use on the album?

There are so many incredible tunings and I'm constantly discovering more. On the album, I used C-G-D-G-A-D, C-G-C-F-C-E, F-A-C-F-C-F, D-A-D-F-A-D, D-A-D-G-A-D, A-E-A-E-A-D, and drop D on "Free World Citizen."

You have a lot of effects going on, notably echo.

The tap-tempo delay is my favorite thing on earth for live performance. Different pedals are in my flight rig verses the larger rig, but the basic setup includes a Boss Giga Delay, TC Helicon Voice for vocal harmonies, Kopf Toe-Kicker Acoustic Stompbox, and an AER Amp.

Which acoustics do you use?

For the album, it was mostly Martin guitars – a D-18 Golden Era and a J-40. For the live songs, I used a Maton 808. Every guitar has a voice, and some are perfect for specific songs. The soprano 12-string on "Call My Heart Back Home" and "Sweet Little Piece" is a Gryphon, from Veillette.

It must be a challenge to get a true acoustic sound onstage.

Combating that piezo sound *is* tough. The mic in the Maton really helps, and a lot of EQ when necessary – it really helps cut the honky sound in the midrange and avoid the shrill high end at 8k. It always depends on the room, but for an acoustic/electric guitar, the pickup is key. I have yet to find anything comparable to the power of the AP5 pickup system in the Matons.

You've played a lot with Tommy Emmanuel.

Playing with Tommy has been an incredible joy and honor. We've never rehearsed, but discovered an immediate musical bond that flows effortlessly. Tommy is a guitar genius who really lights a fire in me. ***– Pete Prown***

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COCO MONTOYA

Bartender's Blues

Coco Montoya's career has turned on a couple of chance meetings. After spending five years in the mid '70s backing Albert Collins – first as drummer, then rhythm guitarist after being mentored by his boss – he stepped away from the music business, only to be brought back in after a phone call from a blues legend.

"I was bartending, and one night a guy with an English accent called," Montoya recalled. "He told me he was John Mayall... I didn't believe him, and hung up! He called right back and then I realized it was him. He said he'd heard me play at a jam and would like me to audition for his band; Mick Taylor was leaving. I auditioned and he offered me the job. I had to think about it because I'd been out of the music business for about seven years. So, he actually brought me back in, playing guitar."

After 10 years with Mayall, Montoya kicked off a solo career in 1993 and released his first album two years later. Eighteen years after that, his 10th solo effort, *Coming In Hot*, offers a blistering mix of rock, soul, R&B, and everything in-between.

"I had a good time working with (producer/drummer) Tony Braunagel on my last record, and wanted to do it again. Tony brought in some great players, and they all were good friends of mine. In fact, one of them, (bassist) Bob Glaub, and I went to high school together! It was nice because it wasn't a bunch of guys you had to try and get to know."

Montoya has a writing credit on just one song – the title cut – which he says is a simple matter of knowing his own strengths.

"I'll admit to everybody, it's not my forté. I'm not a great writer. But, thank God, I have two good writers I bounce things off of. One is Dave Steen, who lives in Lincoln, Nebraska. During the year, I try to make pilgrimages to Lincoln to write. The other is Jeff Paris, my new keyboard player. He used to be in Keb' Mo's band and is a monster writer, player, and singer."

Montoya has two workhorse guitars. His favorite is the blue Strat copy built by Los Angeles luthier Toru Nittono. Fans are also accustomed to seeing him with the white Strat he has used for many years.

"Albert Molinaro, who ran Guitars-R-Us, put that together for me back in the day. I call it the Franken-Strat because it's just pieces from all these different guitars. All of my Strat-style guitars have Bill Lawrence L250 humbuckers, which I've been using since back in the Mayall days. I've always liked Bill's pickups."

Montoya plays left-handed, and while his guitars have left-handed bodies, they also all have right-handed necks. With a laugh, Montoya says a lot of people think there's a top-secret reason for doing that, but he says it's just not so.

"The main reason is tuning. Everything was great on the guitar Albert put together for me, but I didn't realize the tuning pegs were reversed. I got onstage and it was 'Oh no!' I started *de*-tuning myself and couldn't get a handle on it. People come up to me all the time and say, 'That's your secret, right?' I usually respond with something like, 'Secret to what?' Most people ask if that's how I get my tone, but I have to tell them it doesn't do anything but tune the guitar."

A Carr Slant 6 amplifier has kept his sound consistent through the years.

"I have one of the rare ones – an 80 watt. Steve (Carr) told me there's only seven or eight of them left. I've been using it for close to 20 years. I've just been beating the hell out of it, running up and down the highway, just re-tubing it."

Speaking of the highway, Montoya's been doing it now for more than four decades and, given the state of the music industry, he says it's the best game for working musicians.

"It's pretty much what I do now," he said. "It's pretty much everyone's bread and butter. You have to look at it now as if *you* are the retail shop. I do about 120 dates each year, and I'd like to do more. It's rough, but it's the love of music I don't get tired of. What you get tired of is staying in hotels and sitting in a van for hours to get to the gig. That's the stuff that wears you down after a while. The love of playing, that doesn't go away, and it's still enough to make me do it." ***– John Heidt***

Coco Montoya: Ken Weingart.

MIKE PACHELLI

Raising Standards

Mike Pachelli has been around. An eclectic, proficient player onstage and in the studio, his fluency ranges from blues and pop to rock and jazz, and everything between. He has performed with some of the greatest names in the industry, including Albert King, Jimmy Smith, Barbara Mandrell, Phil Keaggy, Jack McDuff, and Crystal Gayle, and played with classical symphonies while touring with Ferrente & Teicher. composed music for TV and film, guest-starred on HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," played on hundreds of jingles, and garnered Grammy nominations along the way. Lately, he's trained his musical sights on jazz with a new album, *High Standards*.

VG caught up with Pachelli as he was making the move from Nashville to this new home in the South of France.

What was your motivation for doing *High Standards*? Is it a sequel to your previous album, *Impressions*?

The motivation was to make an album of swingin' jazz standards that's accessible and enjoyable. I chose upbeat songs with a positive vibe. We stayed close to the melodies to retain the beauty of the compositions.

I've released 18 albums, and six are pure jazz. *Impressions* was my tribute of some of my favorite jazz guitarists – Joe Pass, Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell, Johnny Smith, and Django Reinhardt. I worked hard to emulate their styles. For *High Standards*, I wanted to relax and interpret the songs in my own style. We did it in two sessions.

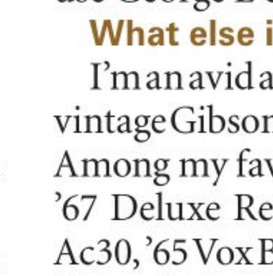
How did personnel come together for the project?

I was on the road with Tony Levin, Phil Keaggy, and Jerry Marotta. At rehearsals, Tony and I jammed on jazz standards. I asked if he'd consider playing on a song for my album. He replied, "One song? Let's do an entire album!" Danny Gottlieb and I had been in the studio together a few times, and I knew he and Tony would be a dream rhythm section. Man, was I right! Tony and Danny have such pleasant personalities and the performances reflect the positive, upbeat way they look at things.

We were careful and deliberate, because songs like "Whistle While You Work" and "Put On A Happy Face" can come off corny if not approached correctly. But Levin and Gottlieb operate at such a high level it was easy to give the tunes their deserved maturity and respect.

Did anything remarkable happen during the recording process?

What's remarkable is how intuitive Tony and Danny are; they react immediately, in the most musical way. Consider who they've worked with – Tony with John Lennon, Peter Gabriel, and King Crimson, Danny with Pat Metheny, John McLaughlin, and Al Di Meola. That they saw fit to play along with me is humbling.



I asked my good friend Keb' Mo' to do a duet on the one original, "Yardbird Blues." The song has intricate interplay and dual harmony phrases based on Charlie Parker's changes. Though busy with touring, Keb' was gracious and generous with his time and took the utmost concern to get our parts right. The complimentary nature of our individual styles seems to already be a favorite among critics.

Which guitars and amps did you use for *High Standards*?

I used a '93 Gibson L-5 Wes Montgomery plugged directly in to a '67 Fender Princeton Reverb on every song. The amp is original except for the speaker, a vintage EVM 10M. Previously, I used a variety of guitars on my recordings – '65 Gibson ES-175, '63 Gibson ES-335, a Gibson Midtown, and a 2004 Charis Acoustic #50. I use George L cables.

What else is in your collection?

I'm an avid amp collector and have numerous vintage Gibsons, Fenders, Marshalls, and Voxes. Among my favorites are the Princeton Reverb, '67 Deluxe Reverb, '67 Super Reverb, '63 Vox Ac30, '65 Vox Berkeley Super Reverb, '65 Standel Super Custom XV, '69 Marshall plexi, and two '57 Gibson GA-5s. But I also gravitate to the unusual. I played my very first gig at 12 with a borrowed Stewart amplifier, so, naturally I've since bought every Stewart I've come across! I probably have the largest collection of Stewarts on the planet. I also love amps like Jordan, Kustom, and Zim-Gar.

I've been very fortunate to have master luthiers gift unique guitars to me; John Buscarino made two, and I have a one-of-a-kind Benedetto Strat copy Also, my dear friend, Phil Keaggy, gave me two guitars that are among my prized possessions, one is a lovely Garcia classical he gave me in 1971.

Will you perform behind the new album?

Yes, I'm putting together a new band in France and I'll be gigging as much as possible. It's fun to reinterpret your albums live, with energy and feedback from the audience. I'm truly fortunate to play guitar and have folks kind enough to listen and enjoy it. ***– Wolf Marshall***

Dave Spector and Jorma Kaukonen.

DAVE SPECTER

The Blues Stay Home

It's been a half-decade since Chicago-born Dave Specter released an album, but with *Blues From the Inside Out*, he's back in the game, pedal to the metal. A full set of original music, it's 12 songs were written by Specter with help from friends, and they cover a lot of ground. Plus, he takes his first stab at singing.

"I'm very proud of the fact that it's not a straight blues record," he said. "It's heavily blues-based, but includes a lot of different types of music and grooves, and I think that's what my music is about."

His three turns on lead vocal reflect his increasing comfort with the role.

"I was always perfectly content to just be a guitarist. *That* was my voice," he added. "I've been able to play with some great singers, but it just felt like it was the time for me to try singing."

The record also features Jorma Kaukonen on two songs; Specter met the Jefferson Airplane/Hot Tuna guitarist eight years ago.

"We were introduced at a club that I'm part owner of here in Chicago," he said. "We started booking Jorma as a solo act and with Jack Casady as acoustic Hot Tuna. We hit it off and shared our love of blues guitar. He came to me a couple of years ago with some lyrics, and asked me to do something with them. I was flattered, and honored. About a year later, I sent an e-mail to tell him we were about to make a new record, and asking if I could finally do something with those lyrics. Then I thought, 'Why don't I just ask him to be on the album?' He drove in on a snowy February day and we recorded."

The funk, soul, and R&B that dominate the record mix perfectly, and Specter believes his writing works that way now because of his time onstage.

"I play out a lot and have a pretty good repertoire, but like any artist, I can get tired of always playing the same stuff," he said. "There are lots of grooves I like to play, so I try to write with those grooves in mind."

While there's no denying Specter's commitment to the blues, its feel, and its history, he believes things are changing.

"From a Chicago-blues perspective, I can't say it's holding up as strongly as when I was coming up," he noted. "You could hear legends every night in Chicago back then. I remember a John Lee Hooker interview years ago where he said there are too many guitar players (laughs). And now, I think it's great that there are so many, but it does dilute the quality; some of them are good, but a lot of them just aren't. And a lot of the audience doesn't know the difference. Maybe I'm a little hyper-critical, but I think the music is a bit diluted."

One way Specter is trying to spread the word is through a podcast he records in his bar studio. Called "Blues From the Inside Out," it features a different musician every show. "It's kind of artist-to-artist interview with some jamming on occasion. It's been great. I try not to talk too much and let the guest tell their story.

His guitar of choice is a Fender Jazzmaster.

"I have six of them now. My favorite is a Classic Player Jazzmaster that's totally stock, from about 2009. I love what Fender has done with them. They play and sound great."

He also used a reissue Gibson ES-345 on one song.

His main amps, recording and live, are two Victoria Golden Melody models. One is a standard 2x12 he loves for its unique tone. The other is a 1x12 version custom-made by Victoria's Mark Baier. "Those pretty much cover whatever room I'm playing," he said.

While Specter may see the blues today in a lull, he's optimistic about the form.

"There's a lot of up-and-coming artists who are exciting," he said. "*My* concern is the audience. We need to appeal to a younger audience. We've got to get younger crowds at festivals and grow new fans." **– *John Heidt* VG**

Dave Spector: Robin Subar. Spector and Kaukonen: Harvey Tillis.

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Did the Spirit draw inspiration from Washburn's Wing?

OUT WITH THE OLD...

The Epiphone U.S.A. Spirit II

BY MICHAEL WRIGHT
THE DIFFERENT STRUMMER

The Gibson guitar company faced a crisis when the ill-fated Epiphone Spirit arrived on the scene in the early 1980s. Player tastes were changing and the interest of Gibson's owner, Norlin Industries, was fading... *fast*. The Spirit was part of a last-ditch effort to preserve a dying order.

The relationship between the Gibson and Epiphone brands goes back to the 1930s (at least), when they were separate companies competing head-to-head for orchestra guitarists playing archtops; Epi held the edge. But, in 1951 the Brooklyn-based company experienced a bitter labor strike and relocated to Philadelphia, soldiering on with financial backing from one of its distributors, Continental. In '57, Gibson purchased Epiphone, vengefully turning it into their "budget" brand. While the company had been humbled, Epiphones retained their build quality, though they were now made in Kalamazoo.

When ECL/Norlin purchased Chicago Musical Instruments (CMI, Gibson's parent) in 1969, plans were already underway to move Epiphone production overseas. From circa 1970 until '82, Epiphones were made primarily in Japan. But then, Gibson brought some Epi production back to the U.S. – in a manner of speaking.

In '76, Gibson, like many other companies, opted to open a factory in a "right to work" state, where – by law – workers could not be forced to join a union in order to get a job. They chose Nashville,

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where labor was cheaper and they had proximity to more guitar players per capita than any other place. Production slowly began to migrate from Kalamazoo.

By ’82, the majority of Gibson guitars were being made in Nashville. However, the company felt it could sell *some* American-made Epiphones at a budget price. Anecdotal information suggests that making Epis in Kalamazoo was conceived as a way to bring back employees who’d been laid off in the wake of the move; reportedly, just 44 workers remained in Kalamazoo by this time, though that cannot be verified. In any case, the Epiphone U.S.A. models produced there were the Spirit I (one pickup, pickguard) and II (with two pickups), the Special I and II, and the U.S. Map. The Special was an SG, the Map was, of course, the famous map guitar.

The new Epiphones were promoted as “The American Series,” bearing an Epiphone U.S.A. logo with a subscript “KZ” for Kalamazoo (though few are seen with the subscript). Truss-rod covers were stamped “Spirit” or “Spirit/Made by Gibson.”

One of the problems under the Norlin hegemony in the ’70s was changes to the legendary PAF humbucking pickups invented by Seth Lover in the late ’50s; not necessarily deliberate, it was more a function of changes in composition of the magnets and wire insulation. Circa 1980, Gibson tasked engineer Tim Shaw with re-creating the specs and sound. He proceeded with measurements and analysis, but because there was considerable variation within old PAFs, he was only able to determine an “average” description. The result was a medium-output humbucker, quiet, with a wide-ranging frequency response offering a clean “vintage” sound. These first went on the 1980 Heritage Les Pauls, and later ended up on the U.S.A. Spirit models.

This ’82 Epiphone Spirit II (left) has serial number 83052530, making it the 30th Spirit made in Tennessee. The ’85 Gibson Spirit II XPL (right) – Spirit with an Explorer neck!

Inspired by the Les Paul Junior, the Spirits were remarkably similar to the popular Japanese-made Washburn Wing guitars introduced in ’79. Like many other Gibsons of the time, Spirits had a hardwood body pancaked or sandwiched in top and bottom slabs with a thin veneer between. The glued-in neck was three-piece mahogany (with a flamed piece down the middle) and a C profile. Scale was 24.5" with a 1.75" nut. With the Shaw pickups, the guitar offered a swell vintage vibe, and there were several variations, including some with bound tops and flamed-maple caps. The main finishes were a rather drab brown “sunburst,” a more-yellow tobacco sunburst, a more-red sunburst, and opaque black. The stop-tail version carried a strong ’70s vibe at a time when exotically shaped guitars (from headless to ultra-pointy), flip-flop finishes, custom graphics, and super-hot pickups were all the rage. Gibson

printed a flyer for the line, but it likely was not cataloged. Not surprisingly, none sold well.

In ’82, their branding was switched to Gibson, thus there *are* both Epiphone U.S.A. and Gibson Spirits, Specials, and Maps. Some have reported seeing Gibsons with an Epiphone logo visible underneath. Epiphone U.S.A. models were produced mostly in Kalamazoo, though some were made in Nashville, while all Gibson-branded Spirits appear to be Nashville-made. According to Gibson, Epiphone Spirits with serial numbers ending in 001-499 were made in Kalamazoo, while those ending above 500 were built in Nashville.

In ’83, Norlin was taken over by another company, and Gibson was put up for sale. In June of ’84, the Kalamazoo plant was closed for good, so no Kalamazoo Epiphones U.S.A. would have been made after that date. How many Spirits were produced is unknown, but since they didn’t sell well, probably not many by Gibson standards. 1985 saw the debut the Spirit XPL – a Spirit body with an Explorer neck. Instead of the Shaws, it was given much hotter Dirty Fingers humbuckers along with Kahler’s Flyer locking vibrato. It appeared in the ’86 catalog (only), then disappeared.

In ’86, Gibson was purchased by Henry Juszkiewicz and David Berryman, opening a new chapter. Except for certain limited models, Epiphone production was shifted to Korea, and the “Spirit” of the old Gibson was gone. **VG**

Gibson’s 1986 catalog showed the Spirit XPL (lower right) with the SG 62 (top), Special 400 (far left), and SG Standard in the Epiphone American Series.

MODEL	MATERIAL BODY/NECK	PITCH	FINGERBOARD & BINDING	INLAY	HARDWARE	ELECTRONICS	PICK-GUARD	BRIDGE & TAILPIECE	BODY BINDING
SG-62	Mahogany/Mahogany	17°	Cream bound Rosewood	Pearl Trapezoid	Nickel	Pat. Appl. For	Black revealed edge	ABR-1 Stopbar	None
SG Special 400	Mahogany/Mahogany	17°	Ebony/None	Dot	Black	2 single coil 1 Dirty Fingers	None	Kahler* Flyer	None
SG-Standard	Mahogany/Mahogany	17°	White Bound Rosewood	Trapezoid	Chrome	Pat. Appl. For	Black revealed edge	Tune-O-Matic	None
Spirit II XPL	American Hardwoods/ Maple	14°	Cream Bound Rosewood	Dot	Chrome	Custom Wound Pat. Appl. For	Dirty Fingers	Kahler* Flyer	Cream

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SPIN DOCTOR

The Cordovox Rotating Speaker Cab

BY DAVE HUNTER

When music started getting psychedelic in the late '60s, plenty of guitarists adopted the Leslie rotary-speaker cabinet originally designed for the Hammond organ; the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and others all added its trippy, warbling sound to the spacey atmospherics they were creating on the pop edge of the acid-rock movement.

While the most commonly used apparatus was Fender's Vibratone cabinet (licensed from Leslie), a more-portable option for attaining that evocative, whirling Doppler-inflected sound existed a few years before thanks to a device created for a different electric instrument.

In the early '60s, accordion maker Cordovox released the CL-10 Tremolo Unit, a rotating-speaker cabinet using technology licensed from Leslie, and (likely) thanks to a coincidence of product distribution, one made it into the hands of a seminal rock-and-roll guitarist who logged its evocative whirl in the annals of music history.

This particular Cordovox CL-10 now belongs to guitarist/rockabilly historian/*VG* contributor Deke Dickerson. It was given to him in 2018 by keyboardist Steve Shepherd, who has played with Ronnie McDowell and (through him) D.J. Fontana and Scotty Moore. Thus, like a musical version of the parlor game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon (or better, Three Degrees of Elvis), we trace a line from this humble cabinet to the King himself. Cordovox was owned by the Chicago Musical Instruments Company (CMI), which also owned Gibson at the time, completing the distribution connection to Moore, who famously played an ES-295, an L-5 CESN, and a Super 400 CESN.

Cordovox debuted its legendary electronic accordions in 1960-'61, along with amplifiers and "tone cabinets." As often seen in amplifiers from Ampeg, Sonola, Supro, and others, much of what worked for amplified accordion in the '60s also worked for the electric guitar.

The CL-10 (also labeled 10LR-2S) made

EARLY-'60s CORDOVOX CL-10 (10LR-2S) TREMOLO UNIT

- Speaker: one 8" CTS
- Controls: switches for Leslie Trem (high speed) and Main Chorus Reverb (low speed), push-button footswitch for on/off
- The business: rotating ported styrofoam drum

Cabinet and photos courtesy of Deke Dickerson.

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  1926, Cupperphone, 11 3/8", nice, but as found .... $995.
- Van Eps Recording Tenor Banjo
  1920s, 11 15/16", nice, but as found ..... $1095.
- Vega #9 Tenor Banjo
  1922, 11 13/16", carved heel, excellent ..... $1750.

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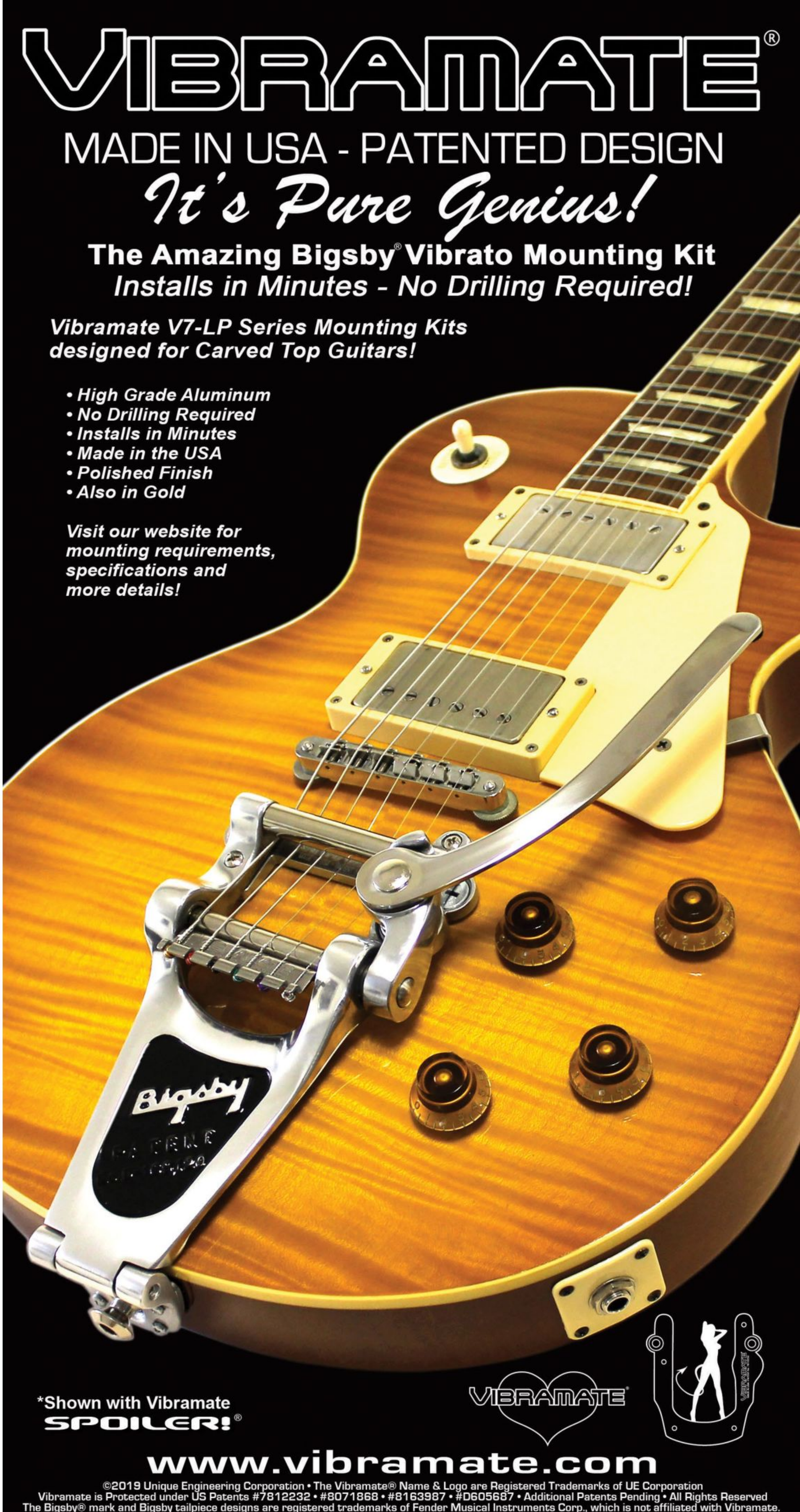

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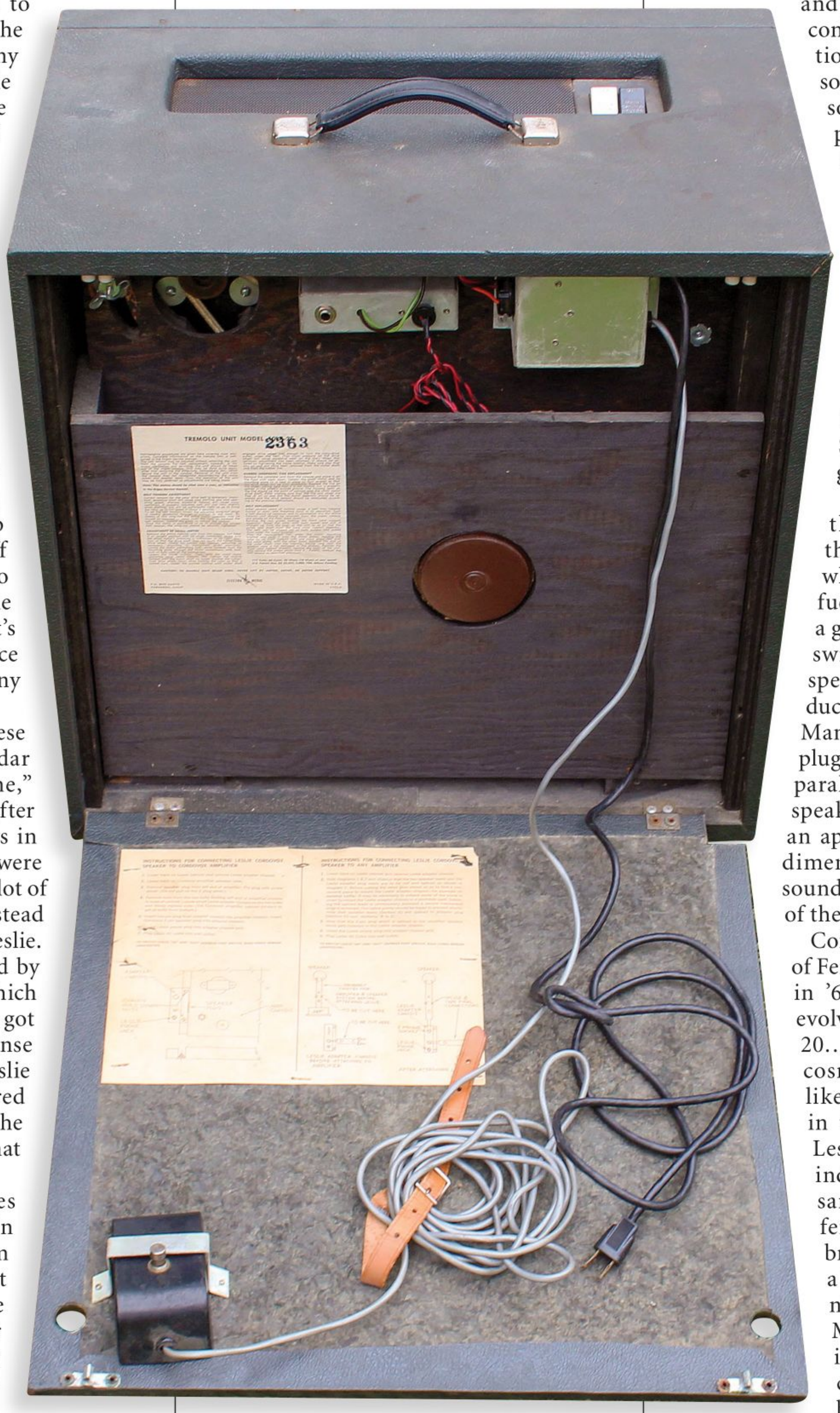
it easier for a guitarist to adapt the sound than did the larger Leslie cabs, since it was passive, intended to connect to the output of the Cordovox amplifier (or any suitable amp). Most Leslie tone cabs of the day, made to accompany Hammond organs, carried internal power amps, but the Cordovox's input goes straight to the speaker. Otherwise, it contains much the same stuff that provided the Leslie sound in many home console organs – an 8" speaker firing into a ported, revolving styrofoam rotor drum connected by a belt to an electric motor; switches for Leslie Trem (high speed) and Main Chorus Reverb (slow speed); and an on/off footswitch. The result is also significantly lighter than the powered cabs, and one that's arguably more versatile since it can be connected to any guitar amp.

"I have to confess that these things were never on my radar until Steve gave it to me," Dickerson tells us. "Then, after talking to a bunch of guys in Nashville, I realized they were really the 'budget Leslie' a lot of pickers used in the '60s instead of hauling around a giant Leslie. Plus, they were distributed by Gibson through CMI, which is undoubtedly how Scotty got his. And then it all made sense with some of the weird Leslie guitar sounds I remembered from Elvis soundtracks in the '60s. 'Ah ha, so that's what that sound was!'"

One of the best places to hear the Cordovox is in the '66 Elvis Presley film *Spinout*, where you'll detect it in several songs on the soundtrack. It's all over the title track, though it doesn't appear during the performance scene for that song. It does, however, appear for "Stop, Look and Listen," right behind Elvis in many shots, alongside the drum kit, with a blond Bassman head on top. The "band" in both cases features actors rather than musicians, so Scotty is nowhere to be seen, but it's interesting that the Cordovox made it to the set at all, and perhaps indicates a close connection between production of the film and the soundtrack recordings… or some conscious effort (or promise?) to promote the source of that unusual guitar sound. In any case, it isn't much of a leap to assume this is the very cab Moore used to record those distinctive parts. As Dickerson puts it, "I wonder if that's this thing? We'll never know, but I sure appreciate Steve's gift. He's a real good guy."



Removing the cabinet's back panel reveals cabling and the single-button on/off footswitch.

Some players using these units today find them very "all or nothing," which is to say its rotary-fueled tremolo overwhelms a guitar's sound, and when switched off, the onboard speaker isn't enough to produce adequate "dry" tone. Many players like to use them plugged into the host amp in parallel with the amp's own speaker or cab, which yields an appealing blend of three-dimensional, Doppler-effect sound backed by the solidity of the standard speaker.

Coinciding with the release of Fender's Vibratone cabinet in '67, the Cordovox CL-10 evolved into the larger CL-20… which looked (logo and cosmetics aside) every bit like the Vibratone, which in turn looked every inch Leslie's Model 16 because indeed they were all the same design, badged differently. The CL-20/Vibratone/Model 16 carried a 10" speaker and was significantly larger overall. Many claim the upgrades improved the sound of the cab, but it was certainly a bulkier carry.

As the '60s rolled into the '70s, the Cordovox brand carried on alongside Gibson's transition to Norlin ownership, though the rotary-speaker cabs

The belt drive between motor and rotating drum (upper left), footswitch connection (upper center), and the magnet of the 8" speaker (lower right).

The Leslie Trem switch activates the rotors high speed, while Main Chorus Reverb activates slow.

that continued to accompany accordion sets veered away from anything of utility to guitarists. New sonic explorers like Eric Clapton and (eventually) Stevie Ray Vaughan would take the Leslie sound into the blues realm, but the most notable use of that bubbling, burbling whirl in rock and roll likely remains Moore's cuts for *Spinout*, via this humble, portable, Cordovox cabinet. **VG**

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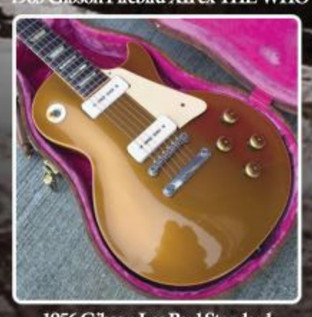
1963 Fender Vibroverb

1962 Gretsch Country Gentleman

1965 Gibson Firebird XII ex THE WHO

1958 Gibson Les Paul Custom

1964 Rickenbacker 1996 Rose Morris Model


1956 Gibson Les Paul Standard

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Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree

1971
Rickenbacker
360/12

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1963	Ampeg ET-2 Super Echo			
	Twin Amp	30 watts, 2x12	$950	$1,250
1965	Ampeg R-12 R-T Reverberocket Amp	15 watts, 1x12, reverb	$525	$700
1967	Baldwin Bison Bass		$750	$975
1978	BC Rich Bich Bass	USA	$1,800	$2,400
1950	Bronson Model B Style			
	(Rickenbacker) Steel		$800	$1,025
2012	Carr Bloke Amp	48 watts, 1x12	$1,150	$1,500
2015	Carr Impala Amp	1x12 combo	$1,400	$1,850
1954	Danelectro Model 72			
	(Series D) Centurion Amp	1x12	$475	$625
1911	Dayton Style B Mandolin		$1,400	$1,800
1920	Ditson Mandola	Bowl back	$900	$1,200
1968	EKO Kadett Bass		$625	$825
1935	Epiphone Blackstone		$725	$925
1948	Epiphone Broadway (Acoustic)	Natural	$1,675	$2,200
1939	Epiphone Century Amp	1x12 lap steel amp	$400	$525
2004	Epiphone Collegiate			
	(Les Paul Jr style)	Various college logos	$150	$200
2004	Epiphone Elitist 1963 ES-335 Dot		$1,300	$1,700
1937	Epiphone Emperor			
	(Acoustic Archtop)	Sunburst	$4,400	$5,700
1998	Epiphone ES-295	Gold finish	$525	$675
2015	Epiphone ES-339 Pro		$300	$400
1964	Epiphone Excellente	Brazilian rosewood	$5,700	$7,500
2003	Epiphone 1958 Korina Explorer		$375	$475
1949	Epiphone FT 30		$875	$1,150
1965	Epiphone Rivoli Bass	1 pickup	$2,100	$2,800
1986	Fender Blue Flower Telecaster	MIJ	$750	$975
2014	Fender American			
	Deluxe Stratocaster	SSS/HSS/HSH	$900	$1,200
1974	Fender Bassman 50 Set Amp		$450	$600
2012	Fender Blacktop Stratocaster	HH/HSH/HSHFR	$300	$400
1955	Fender Champion Lap Steel	White or yellow pearloid	$550	$700
2000	Fender Deco-Tone			
	(Custom Shop) Amp	15 watts, 1x12 tubes	$675	$875
2016	Fender Deluxe Nashville			
	Telecaster (Mexico)		$400	$525
1977	Fender Deluxe Telecaster (USA)	HH	$2,000	$2,600
1993	Fender Freddy Tavares			
	Aloha Stratocaster (Custom Shop)	153 total made	$4,200	$5,400
1995	Fender J.A.M. Amp		$60	$75
2010	Fender Mustang I Amp	20 watts, 1x8	$50	$70
1967	Fender Mustang Bass		$1,500	$2,000
1953	Fender Precision Bass	Blond, slab body	$15,000	$19,000
1964	Fender Precision Bass	Sunburst, late '64	$5,400	$7,000
2003	Fender '59 Precision Bass			
	(Custom Shop)	Closet Classic	$1,750	$2,300
2008	Fender Princeton Recording Amp	15 watts, 1x10, attenuator	$500	$650
1956	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst, alder body	$27,000	$35,000
2014	Fender '64 Stratocaster	Closet Classic, COA	$1,750	$2,300

FEATURED SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Gary "Big Hern" Hernandez (left) and Jim Singleton with Gibson J-200N models from '57 and '60.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
2010	Fender '65 Stratocaster	NOS	$1,750	$2,300
1959	Fender Telecaster	Blond, slab	$13,700	$17,800
1967	Framus Atlantic Bass Model 5/140	Thinline f-hole	$500	$650
1980	Gibson 335 S Custom	Coil-tap, TP-6	$1,000	$1,300
2011	Gibson 335-S Limited Run	Sunburst	$875	$1,150
2014	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Iron Mountain (CS)	Adirondack, curley map	$2,000	$2,600
2007	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Reissue		$1,600	$2,050
1996	Gibson All American II		$475	$625
1968	Gibson B-15	All mahogany, small hdstk	$650	$850
1978	Gibson B-45-12/B-45-12N		$925	$1,200
1970	Gibson Blue Ridge	Laminated rosewood/maple	$900	$1,150
1997	Gibson Blueshawk		$825	$1,075
1974	Gibson Byrdland	Various colors	$3,300	$4,300
2014	Gibson Byrdland Historic Collection	Sunburst or Natural	$4,500	$5,900
1952	Gibson GA-40 Les Paul Amp	Brown, 2-tone, LP grille	$1,250	$1,650
1954	Gibson GA-55 Amp	30 watts, 2x12	$2,050	$2,650
2003	Gibson Blues King	Mahogany body	$1,325	$1,725
1894	Gibson Orville Gibson	Basic and plainer models	$4,200	$40,000
1894	Gibson Orville Gibson	Fancier and rarer models	$22,000	$50,000
1894	Gibson Orville Gibson	Very rare historical	$27,000	$70,000
2000	Gilchrist Model 1 Mandolin	Round hole, pear-shape	$6,100	$8,000
1965	Givens Model A Mandolin		$2,600	$3,400
2011	Gold Tone BG-250F BG Special 5-String Banjo		$450	$575
2011	Gold Tone OB-250AT 5-String Banjo		$650	$850
1955	Gretsch Chet Atkins (6120)	Single-cut, G-brand, Western	$10,000	$13,000
1956	Gretsch Chet Atkins (6120)	Non-engraved, amber red	$8,800	$11,500
1957	Gretsch Chet Atkins (6120)	No G-brand	$7,500	$10,000
2007	Gretsch Tennessee Rose G-6119-1959		$1,500	$1,950
2007	Gretsch Tennessee Rose G-6119-1962		$1,500	$1,950
1988	Guild Liberator Elite		$775	$1,000
1967	Guild Starfire Bass	Single-coil	$1,850	$2,350
1978	Guild Starfire IV		$1,500	$2,000
1969	Harmony Baroque H35 Mandolin		$325	$425
1965	Hilgen Troubadour T-1506 Amp		$300	$375
1974	HiWatt DR 504 Custom 50 Amp	50 watts (head)	$2,100	$2,800
1895	Howe-Orme Mandola	Mahogany, plain style	$1,450	$1,875
1900	Howe-Orme Mandolin Style 4	Brazilian , fancy style	$1,800	$2,400
1985	Ibanez RB RS Roadstar Bass	Various models	$250	$500
1968	Idol Hobby 100 Amp		$165	$225
1980	Kawai Acoustic guitar model	Various models	$250	$350
1967	Kay K494/K495 Elec. Mando		$250	$375

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Brian Goff
Bizarre Guitars

Les Haynie
Blue Moon Music

Garrett Tung
Boingosaurus Music

Dave Belzer
Burst Brothers

Walter Carter
Carter Vintage

Daniel Escauriza
Chicago Music Exchange

John Majdalani
Cream City Music

Dave Rogers
Dave's Guitar Shop

Drew Berlin
Drew Berlin's Vintage Guitars

Stan Werbin & S.J. "Frog" Forgey
Elderly Instruments

Dewey Bowen
Freedom Guitar

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Garrett Park Guitars

Gary Dick
Gary's Classic Guitars

Alex Gray
Goat Peak Strings

Eric Newell
Gruhn Guitars

Richard Johnston
Gryphon Strings

Kennard Machol & Leonard Coulson
Intermountain Guitar & Banjo

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Jim's Guitars

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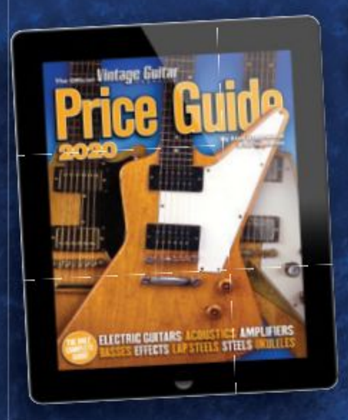

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1961	Maestro GA-1 RT			
	Reverb-Echo Amp	8 watts, 1x8	$475	$600
2005	Marshall Model 1974X Combo Amp		$1,200	$1,575
1967	Marshall Model 1987			
	50-Watt Amp Head	Black, plexi	$3,100	$4,100
1899	Martin 1-18	Brazilian with only minor repairs	$2,750	$3,550
1923	Martin 2-17	Steel bracing with		
		only minor repairs	$2,500	$3,300
1902	Martin 2-30	1 made	$5,300	$7,000
1898	Martin 5-18	1 made	$2,500	$3,300
1959	Martin 00-18	326 made	$3,800	$4,900
2008	Martin America's			
	Guitar 175th Anniversary	175 made	$4,000	$5,200
2004	Martin CF-1 American Archtop	Sunburst	$2,100	$2,700
1993	Martin D-1		$650	$825
1973	Martin D12-18		$1,325	$1,700
1990	Martin D-12-41		$3,500	$4,500
1935	Martin D-18	133 made	$45,000	$58,000
1959	Martin D-18	475 made	$4,900	$6,500
2011	Martin D-18 Authentic 1937		$3,300	$4,400
1977	Martin D-19	Walnut stain	$1,700	$2,200
2017	Martin D-28 Standard	Early Standard X	$1,650	$2,150
1991	Martin D-3-18	L.E. 3-pc mahogany back	$1,300	$1,675
1998	Matchless Chieftan 112 Amp	40 watts, 1x12	$1,800	$2,350
1909	May Flower Bowl Back Mandolin	Plain style	$600	$800
1909	May Flower Bowl Back Mandolin	Fancy Style	$725	$950
1980	Melobar Elec. Steel and Power-Slide		$500	$1,000
2007	Mesa-Boogie Express 5:25 Amp	1x10, 5-25 watts	$700	$900
1966	Mosrite Ventures Model	Moseley	$2,400	$3,100
1948	National New Yorker Lap Steel		$550	$725
2005	Old Hickory Style A Mandolin	M-1 lowest level	$45	$60
1963	PANaramic			
	Model 260/262-Style Amp		$1,400	$1,800
1930	Paramount Aristocrat			
	Special Plectrum Banjo		$1,925	$2,500
1930	Paramount Artists			
	Supreme Tenor Banjo		$3,300	$4,300
1930	Paramount Junior Tenor Banjo		$525	$525
1999	Ratliff R-5 Mandolin		$2,100	$2,700
1971	Rickenbacker Model 360/12		$3,000	$3,900
1962	Rickenbacker Model 4001 Bass	Fireglo	$7,200	$9,500
1980	Rickenbacker Model 4003 Bass		$1,350	$1,775
2014	Rickenbacker Model 4003-S Bass		$1,175	$1,550
1935	Rickenbacker Model A-22			
	Frying Pan Steel		$2,500	$3,200
1899	S.S. Stewart 20th Century Banjo		$800	$1,050
1895	S.S. Stewart American			
	Princess 5-string Banjo		$725	$925
1965	Silvertone Silvertone Tenor Banjo		$70	$125
1980	Stelling Whitestar 5-String Banjo		$1,950	$2,600
1964	Vega Pete Seeger Folk 5-String Banjo		$2,300	$3,000
1927	Vega Whyte Laydie #7 Tenor Banjo		$2,000	$2,600
1994	Vox AC-30 Reissue Model Amp		$1,050	$1,400
2007	Vox AD-15VT Amp	15 watts, 1x8	$95	$125
1980	Vox Climax V-125/V0125			
	Lead Combo Amp		$500	$650
1964	Vox Mark IV Bass	England, white finish	$2,100	$2,800
1988	Wal Custom (V) Mark II Bass		$5,100	$6,600

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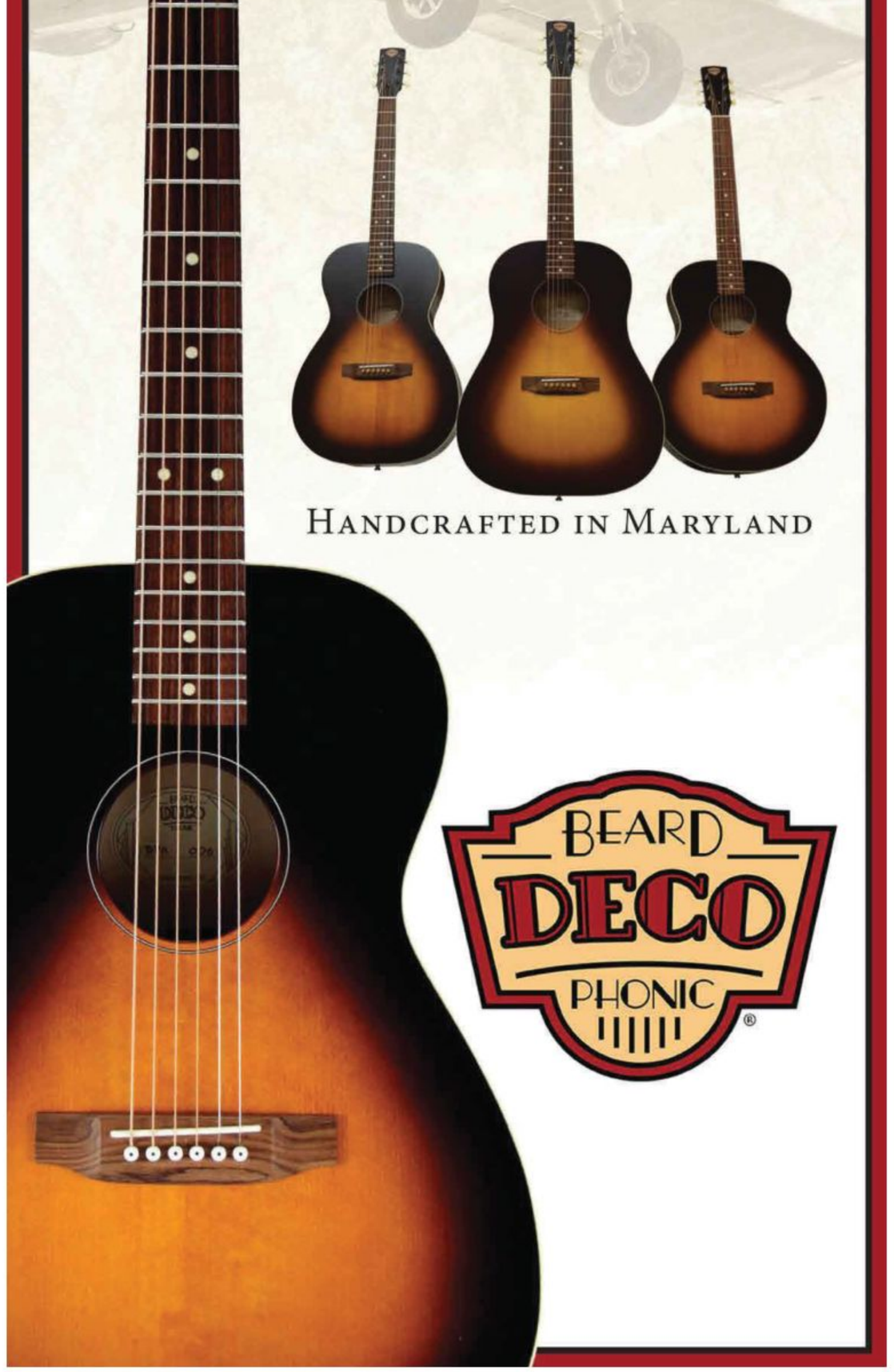

Vernon Reid and Muzz Skillings onstage in 1989.

BLACK-ROCK ETHOS

Living Colour's Vivid

By Oscar Jordan

Living Colour emerged from New York's art-rock-jazz scene with influences that fused thrash, jazz, hip-hop, world music, and funk with a narrative about humanity. They weren't the first African-American rock band to be thrust into the limelight, but they were the most successful, and their debut album, *Vivid*, resonated for its blend of genres and substantive message. Released in May of 1988, it signaled a paradigm shift on the hard-rock landscape.

The emergence of MTV in the early '80s undeniably changed the face of music and how it was marketed; initially, the network resisted including African-American performers in regular rotation, insisting that few played the type of rock and roll preferred by MTV's audience. By '88, it was serving viewers a diet of spandex, fast cars, hot women, and big hair. These bands were white... and then there was Living Colour.

The Living Colour that debuted on *Vivid* consisted of vocalist Corey Glover, drummer Will Calhoun, bassist Muzz Skillings, and Vernon Reid on guitar. With a wealth of sonic textures at Reid's disposal (including his signature buzz-saw distortion), Living Colour wrote about culture, injustice, love, and relationships.

"I was entrenched in the jazz scene back then because I was playing in a band called Defunkt, and in Ronald Shannon Jackson's group, the Decoding Society," Reid recalls. "I met Ronald because he was playing with James 'Blood' Ulmer. Seeing Blood and Sonny was as crucial to me as Led Zeppelin and Rush were in regard to how I play, along with Jimi Hendrix, Curtis Mayfield, Eddie Hazel, Freddie Stone, Ernie Isley, Robin Trower, and Frank Marino – also, Carlos Santana."

Despite having a large local following, record labels consistently rejected Living Colour.

"Rock music was made by white people," said former co-manager Roger Cramer. "It was the heyday of the hair band. Living Colour came along and could play circles around those bands, but they were black."

In 1986, Mick Jagger sought musicians for his solo album, *Primitive Cool*; Reid got the gig sharing guitar duties with Dave Stewart, G.E. Smith, and Jeff Beck. Jagger later saw a Living Colour show and was so impressed that he offered to produce the band with Bad Brains producer Ron Saint Germain.

"We did demos for 'Which Way To America' and 'Glamour Boys' with Jagger, to help us get a deal," Glover recalled. "We only did two songs because Mick thought two would be enough to get people interested. He also played harmonica on 'Broken Hearts'."

Even with Jagger's endorsement, Living Colour faced opposition from record labels.

"The record business was flat-out racist," Cramer recalled. "The pushback was intense. We shopped them to every single label."

They eventually signed to Epic Records and *Primitive Cool* producer Ed Stasium.

"It took a lot for *Vivid* to exist," Reid remembers. "*Everything* had to go right, and then Jagger had to take an interest. The fact that the most-recognizable rock star in the world had to take an interest in us for our record to be heard is crazy. It took

Living Color: Paul Natkin.

an extraordinary set of circumstances, and I'm very thankful, but the fact is we shouldn't have had to have the number one rock star in the world help us get signed. We sent the demo to Elektra, and they passed. That was a drag. All along the way, we fought like salmon swimming upstream."

The band had been performing the 11-song track list, which made *Vivid* easy to record; Reid nailed the guitar solo to "Cult of Personality" on the first take. "Desperate People," "Open Letter (To A Landlord)," and "Cult of Personality" were a departure from the hard-rock songs of the day. "'Cult of Personality' was about celebrity, but on a political level," Reid recalled. "The riff had a Zeppelin-ish vibe, but also a Mahavishnu Orchestra thing. It was based on a series of notes Corey had sung. I already had the lyrics, but with the music in place, it took on a life of its own."

The group's punk-rock ethos, viewed through an eclectic lens, created "Broken Hearts" – an experiment using hip-hop beats, country-western soundscapes, and

the departure of Reid's girlfriend. He channeled his broken heart by creating ghostly pedal steel sounds. "Funny Vibe" blended the intensity of prog metal, the funky guitar style of Nile Rodgers, and white America's paranoia.

As a whole, *Vivid* is equal parts compelling music and social commentary. "Open Letter (To a Landlord)," with its elegant arpeggiation and volume swells, morphs into tidal waves of distortion and tales of gentrification.

Glover's gospel arena-rock vocal style, Calhoun's exceptional drumming, and Skillings' nimble bass lines created an explosive presentation. Coupled with Reid's affinity for free jazz and fusion, Living Colour reclaimed the African-American musical traditions white artists had plundered for decades. They altered the conventions of rock while remaining stridently unique.

"The fact that Living Colour exists at all is about a lot of really weird, unlikely stuff happening," Reid remembers. "Every step along the way has taught me about how all of it works and doesn't work."

Their collective vision led to *Vivid* becoming one of the most popular albums of the '80s, reaching #6 on the *Billboard* charts as "Cult of Personality" won a Grammy for Best Hard Rock Performance in '89. In a genre that often sounds dated, *Vivid* remains relevant. **VG**

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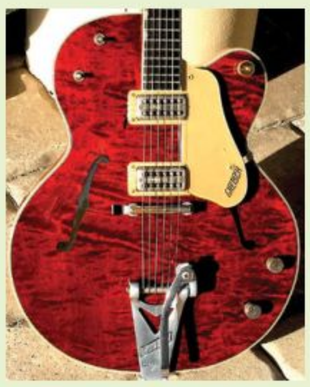
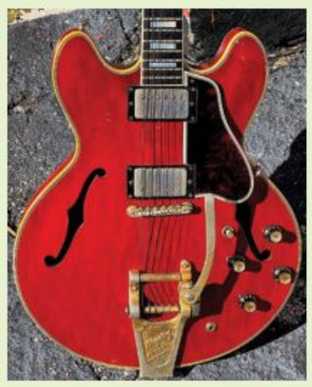
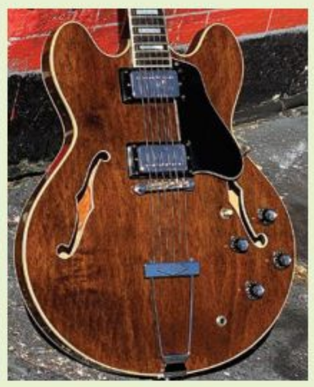
1959 Gretsch 6122 Country Gent 1st type & Flamey!

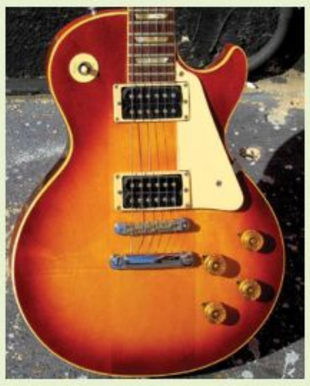

1960 Gretsch 6122 Country Gent 1st type & Quilty!

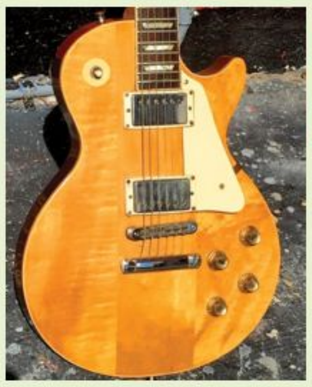
1961 Gretsch 6113 Pre-Tennessean fat body clean!


1966 Gibson ES-355TDC "Mono" ultra rare example


1970 Gibson ES-335TDW 355 neck w/bound F-holes

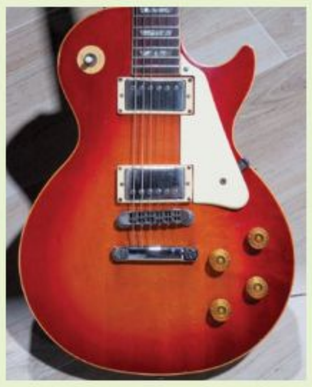
1969 Gibson Les Paul Custom Lefty 1 pc.body & neck


1974 Gibson Les Paul Std. 1st full year really rare axe

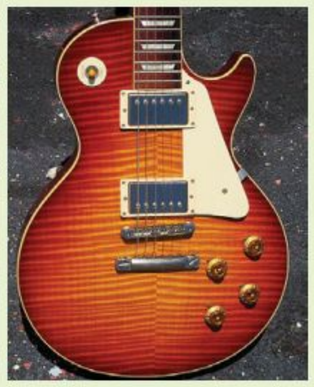

1977 Gibson Les Paul Std. nice Natural 3-piece Top

1978 Gibson Les Paul Custom rare Maple fingerboard

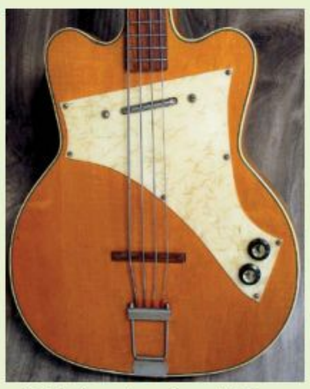
1982 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe cool Gold Top beautiful


1983 Gibson Les Paul Std. cool w/Tim Shaw pickups

1985 Gibson Les Paul Custom w/rare factory Kahler


2009 Gibson Les Paul '59 Std. rare 50th Anniversary

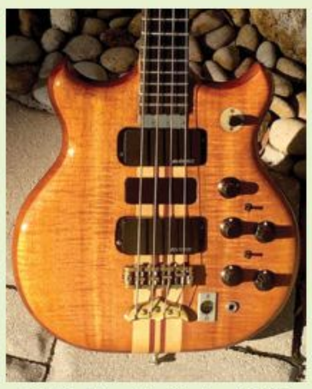
1959 Danelectro Longhorn 6-string Bass oh-so rare!


1962 Kay Jazz Special Bass Blonde full Kelvinator

1962 Hofner 500/1 Beatle Bass exactly like "Maca"!

1977 Music Man Stingray Bass Inca Silver real rare!

1979 Music Man Stingray Bass cool string-thru body


1979 Alembic Series I SSB crazy Koa like "Stanley"

1980 Alembic Series II SSB Zebrawood like "Stanley"

1965 Vox AC-30T Twin MINT w/cover w/fresh service

Ricky Skaggs and Sharon White.

RICKY SKAGGS

Newgrass Virtuoso

By Wolf Marshall

With one foot in Americana's historic past, the other in its future, Ricky Skaggs is often cited as a pioneer of neo-traditional country – a charge he usually plays down. Part of the mythos lies in the narrative of his rise from child prodigy in small-town Kentucky to Grammy-winning country superstar and his uncompromising stance as a bluegrass artist.

Skaggs' music is timeless, classic and important, and speaks for itself. Want further proof? Chet Atkins credited him with "single-handedly saving country music." Enough said.

Born July 18, 1954, Rickie Lee Skaggs was a toddler when his music-loving parents recognized his ability to carry a tune. Blessed with a phenomenal ear, he began playing mandolin at age five and could improvise after learning just a few chords. Within a year, locals attending a Bill Monroe concert emphatically requested "little Ricky Skaggs" be brought onstage to jam with the bluegrass legend. Monroe brought Skaggs to the stage, strapped his treasured 1923 Gibson F-5 to the six-year-old, and was dazzled by the tyke's take on "Ruby, Are You Mad at Your Man?" Skaggs' love of bluegrass was bolstered that night, and Monroe – his idol/mentor – became a role model.

Ricky's musical journey is marked by milestones taken at a brisk pace. At seven, he appeared on "The Flatt and Scruggs Grand Ole Opry Show," playing with Flatt and Scruggs. Proficient on mandolin, he became a pro by 16 and petitioned the Grand Ole Opry, but was declined. He soon after met guitarist Keith Whitley and began playing radio shows as a trio with Whitley's banjoist brother, Dwight. By 1970, they were opening for Ralph Stanley; in short order, he and Keith were invited to join Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys. Skaggs subsequently worked with The Country Gentlemen, and J.D. Crowe's New South. In '76, he formed a progressive bluegrass (or "newgrass") group, Boone Creek, which included Jerry Douglas and Vince Gill. His reputation as a multi-instrumentalist spread quickly. In '79, he was called to play fiddle, banjo and 12-string guitar on Johnny Cash's *Silver*. He joined Emmylou Harris' Hot Band, which had boasted Albert Lee and James Burton, playing fiddle, mando, banjo, and acoustic guitar, singing harmony and writing arrangements for the bluegrass-inspired *Roses in the Snow*.

Skaggs' solo career began in 1980, coinciding with the *Urban Cowboy* fad and a renewed interest in country music. He has since outlasted trends and produced 12 #1 hits, earned 15 Grammys, and received numerous awards from CMA, ACM, IBMA, TNN/Music City, and others. He debuted on Epic with *Waitin' for the Sun to Shine*, which climbed country *and* pop charts and yielded two #1 hits. In '82, he became the youngest member to join the Opry, being just 27. That year, he released *Highways &*

Ricky Skaggs: Steve Proctor.

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1977 Travis Bean TB-1000S
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1987 Gibson SG Les Paul Custom
Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Tony Iommi. Jimi Hendrix. Sir Keith Park, All notable figures, to be sure, but the first three actually played white SG Customs, one of the coolest-looking Gibson solidbodies ever. This one is very light, very clean, all-original including 3 "patent stamp" humbuckers, small Tune-o-matic bridge, and case, uniformly-faded to cream, sounds and plays like a million bucks. $5,100

1953 Gibson LG-2 3/4
Nice! Clean - and cute, cute, cute. This smaller 22 & 3/4" scale guitar has all the right stuff vintage Gibson acoustic lovers want - only less (size, that is.) Small guard, small bridge, Brazilian board, wide-grain Adirondack top, V-shaped neck, great tone. For a better fit, or Nashville tuning, or unique tone, these are hard to find this clean and crack-free. Comes in its original soft brown case. $2,995

1983 Gibson Explorer Korina
Extra clean with case and tags. Korina, limba, afara wood is from Africa and quite coveted and rare, known to be easy to work, glue, and finish well, beautiful and durable. Korina has that "thunk" like old, dry mahogany does, but finding korina without any blemishes or mineral streaks is a treat for any woodworker. As this guitar will witness, korina is also very light weight, and this guitar is a feather. $7,500

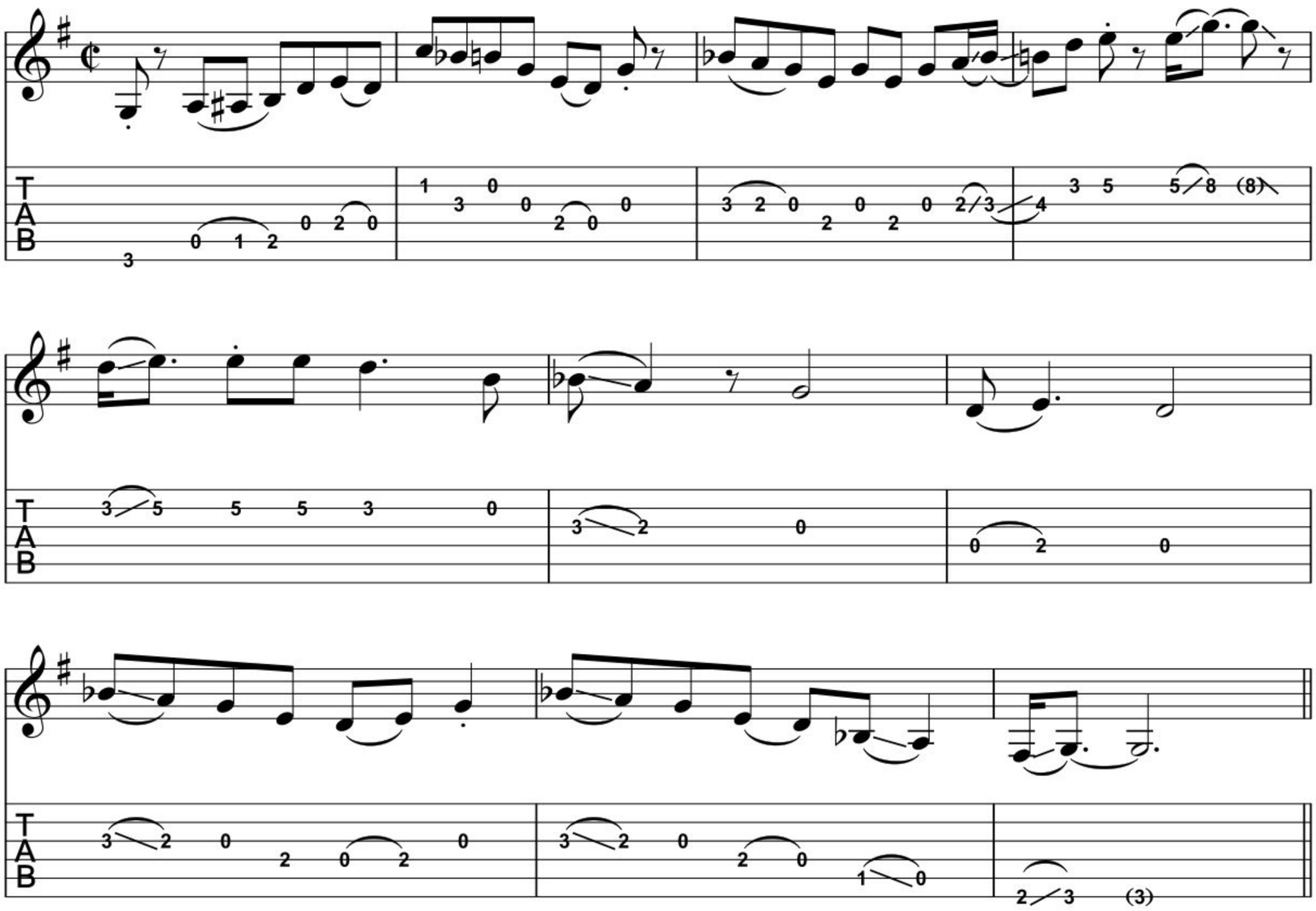
The Science of Vintage

Heartaches, which earned platinum status and featured "Highway 40 Blues" flaunting a stellar solo from guitarist Ray Flacke, then a member of his posse.

In 1984, Skaggs made his first outing on electric guitar. Though a formidable acoustic picker, he had never played electric on recordings or in concert. When Flacke left the band, Ricky – encouraged by his wife, singer Sharon White – proceeded to learn the licks and tricks of country lead. He took the stage on electric that weekend, and immediately joined the ranks of hot Tele pickers. That year was also distinguished by Skaggs' duet with Ray Charles on *Friendship*, where he guested on the title song.

Skaggs' prominence rose further in '85 with the success of *Country Boy* and its title track, which became his ninth #1 single; his work in '84/'85 earned numerous awards including the coveted CMA Entertainer of the Year and Instrumental Group of the Year, as well as ACM's Touring Band of the Year. By '86, he'd scored 11 #1 hits in five years, three consecutive #1 albums, and was revered as a vocalist and instrumentalist.

Fast Country

G

This phrase is based on Ricky's interpretation of the main theme in "Country Boy." Played essentially over a single G major chord on acoustic, it presents many of his virtuosic country-picking ingredients. He skillfully paraphrases Albert Lee's original melodies but adds some of his own flourishes. Note the chromatic passing tones (A-A#-B) in measure 1 that expand the basic G major pentatonic scale. The first beats of measure 2 depict a typical country targeting pattern: C-B♭-B. The B♭ in 3 adds a blues inflection to the phrase. Note its use as both a flatted third blue note and a leading tone to B in measure 4. The blues effect is also found in measures 6 and 8-9.

At insistence of his label, Epic, he next ventured into country/pop with two glossier efforts, *Love's Gonna Get Ya!* (#3 in '86) and *Comin' Home to Stay* (#2 in '88). He was subsequently approached by Dolly Parton to produce a real country record; the result was *White Limozeen*.

In the early '90s, as country started to blend pop, rock and traditional sounds (as characterized by Garth Brooks), Skaggs signed with Atlantic and moved back to bluegrass, re-establishing his mandolin chops. However, he kept an ear open to modern sounds, prompting the "newgrass" appellation with his band, Kentucky Thunder. In '97, the group released *Bluegrass Rules!*, which sold more than 200,000 units at a time when bluegrass albums were deemed successful if they moved 25,000. It earned the first of what would be several consecutive Grammys for Best Bluegrass Album. The follow-up, *Ancient Tones* ('99), appeared on his new Skaggs Family Records label, envisioned as a haven for roots music and young bands like Blue Highway, Cadillac Sky, and Cherryholmes as well as the Whites and Del McCoury. He purchased the Oak Ridge Boys' studio and built Skaggs Place Recording Studio, equipped with vintage mics and an Amek (Neve) mixer, which boasted a stellar live ensemble room and finely-tuned "guitar parlor" acoustic room. It has been home to hits by Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, John Fogerty, Dixie Chicks, and Barry Gibb as well as numerous bluegrass acts.

Ricky has been an eclectic traveler since the '90s. He began winning Grammys in sacred music with *Soldier of the Cross* ('99), which paid homage to Bill Monroe's gospel work. He also performed with Phish in 2000, collaborated with Bruce Hornsby in '07, played on Charlie Haden's *Rambling Boy* in '08, released *Honoring the Fathers of Bluegrass: Tribute to 1946 and 1947*, and contributed to *Moody Bluegrass Two*, a bluegrass take on the Brit band's prog rock. His mission as a "musicianary" was crystallized in *Mosaic*, an album that straddles the lines between bluegrass, country, and worship music. He was awarded honorary doctorates from Eastern Kentucky University and Berklee, and was inducted to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2018.

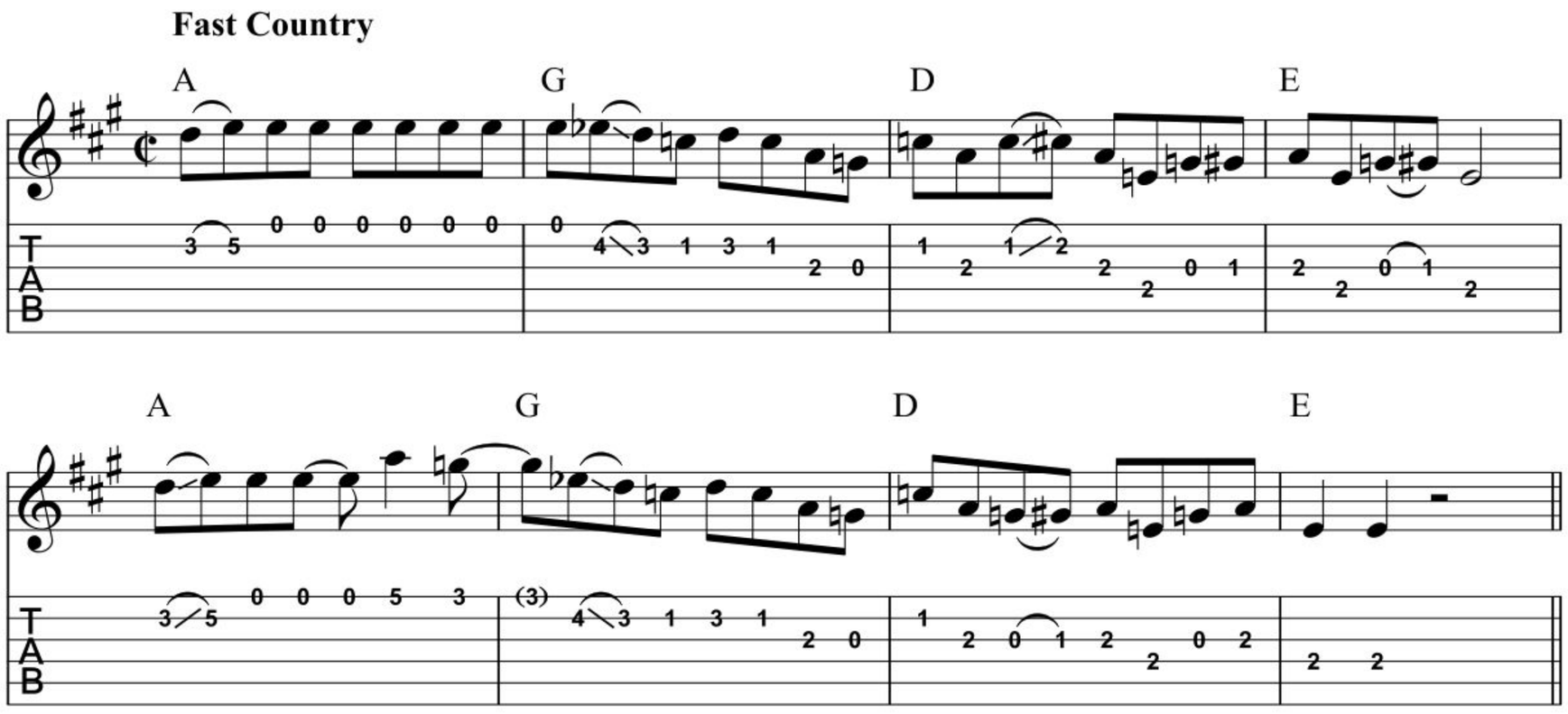
INFLUENCES

Ricky's heroes include Ray Charles, Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Roscoe Holcomb (also revered by Dylan and Clapton), fiddle players Chubby Wise and Stéphane Grappelli, and the Stanley Brothers.

STYLE

Though a world-class mandolinist, Ricky

Ricky's guitar solo in "Country Boy" is a career highpoint. This example is based on his opening phrase. Note the pickup line that again includes those operative chromatic passing tones. Even more notable are the dizzying interval jumps in measure 2-3. Bear in mind that, like the previous example, this solo is played at a quick tempo on an acoustic guitar. It epitomizes the fluidity and accuracy of his technique and the precise synchronization of left-hand picking and right-hand attacks.



Ricky's flight on "Life's Too Long (to Live Like This)" was a standout solo on *My Father's Son*. Played on acoustic, it reveals his approach to improvising over chord changes characteristic of country-pop-rock music: A-G-D-E. Note his approach to each chord – and when he chooses to play modally in the key center or addresses the actual harmony specifically. For example, he applies A blues licks to the A-G progression in measures 1-2 and 5-6. Over D in measure 3, he alludes to a blues sound by using C in the melody before resuming the A major arpeggio of the key center. Over E he plays melodies related to the dominant chord. Check out his use of unisons and open strings in the measures 1-2 – a holdover from mandolin style. Like many of his solos, this phrase is played at a blistering tempo and comprised of long, complex lines set up as strings of continuous eighth notes, which necessitates precise execution and leaves no room for error.

is a propulsive rhythm-guitar player and an accomplished lead guitarist. His bluegrass background helped build a powerful flatpicking style and he exploits banjo-inspired hybrid picking with plectrum and fingers to articulate intricate lead lines. His solos are distinguished by the seamless combining of these right-hand techniques. He transferred many of his fiddle, banjo, and mandolin techniques and ideas to his guitar playing. These are vital parts of his sound and approach; the guitar solos in "Country Boy" and "Life's Too Long" exemplify his abilities, and his virtuosity extends to the blistering ensemble melodies, often played in unison with fiddle and second guitar heard in "Highway 40 Blues" and "Country Boy."

Like many country and bluegrass players, Skaggs sticks to diatonic and pentatonic scales in his solos, but frequently incorporates blues-based melodies into the improvisations. These transcend genre and personify the intrinsic links between American roots music, rural blues, and the Appalachian sub-genre that gave rise to bluegrass and the modern country style. Many of his rootsy licks are expanded with chromaticism, which, like jazz and swing melodies, tend to target chord tones, supply passing tones, or emphasize the blues effect via "blue notes." Ricky also plays idiomatic arpeggio figures and intervallic jumps that further stress the chord-based impression in country guitar.

His lines also include the characteristic "cross picking" of bluegrass and country. This often results in compelling, juggled melodies with lower notes on higher strings (and visa versa) made more interesting with his hybrid picking. He combines all of these approaches in solos, where they are often played as long and fast-fingered string-of-eight-note lines that illustrate his precision, comparable to the high level heard in bebop jazz, fusion, and banjo music. He occasionally employs

a capo, as on the live performance of "Uncle Pen." When playing electric guitar, he incorporates the telltale string bends, chicken pickin,' pedal-steel emulations and twangy percussive melodies reminiscent of Tele masters like James Burton, Albert Lee, Ray Flacke, and Vince Gill into his florid improvisations.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Country Gentleman is a serviceable compilation offering an overview of hit songs and career highlights. *Country Boy*, *Bluegrass Rules!*, and *Live in London* are highly recommended for a deeper look at Skaggs diverse musicianship.

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

There are numerous notable Skaggs performances online. Among the best are a 1985 version of "Highway 40 Blues" that finds him on mandolin and electric lead, a brilliant take on "Wheel Hoss" with the Super Pickers, his concert with Kentucky Thunder at ROMP 2018, an '86 English appearance on TV's "Wogan" playing "Country Boy" and "Uncle Pen" with Bill Monroe.

ESSENTIAL READING

Ricky's autobiography, *Kentucky Traveler*, is required reading for fans and music lovers alike.

SOUND

Ricky's acoustic collection includes Chunky Boy, a '31 Gibson L-5 designated as a rhythm guitar and played on every album for more than 20 years. Another is Red, a '59 Martin D-28, and others include a '35 National Dobro, an ornate Bourgeois Brazilian D150 with L.R. Baggs pickup (his primary stage guitar), and a Bourgeois Ricky Skaggs Limited Edition. He also praises a PRS Tonare Grand, and has recently become attracted to pre-Civil-War Martin small-body guitars (he currently favors one from 1855).

His primary mandolins are Pee Wee, a 1922 Gibson F-5 named after Pee Wee Lambert and bought from David Grisman in 2010. He also has a '23 F-5 like Bill Monroe's, appropriately named Mon, a '42 fretless banjo used in minstrel shows, a clawhammer banjo, and the '42 Martin 000-21 given to him by father.

On his early electric outings, Ricky played a custom-made Joe Glaser Tele copy. Check out the *Live in London* version of "Highway 40 Blues" online. He also uses a G&L ASAT, custom Fender Tele, and his recent favorite, a '57 Tele. Several of his have a B-bender. His electric collection also contains a Gretsch Country Gentleman and Danelectro six-string bass. He prefers GHS extra-light on acoustic guitars and GHS Boomers on electric, and chooses Dunlop picks – light for electric and heavier for acoustic.

He has employed various amps including a Fender Dual Professional, Twin, a Princeton, and a LAB Series L9. In the studio, he occasionally plugs into a tweed Bassman 4x10, as on "My Father's Son."

Skaggs' use of effects is sparse; he generally adds delay and compression on recordings while his stage pedals include an MXR Flanger, and Echoplex and Roland Space Echo tape echo units.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original editor-in-chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His books include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*, and a list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

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BRIDGE-BELLY FIX

And, Finding Danny Gatton's Strings

By Zac Childs

My parents gave me an old Alvarez 5055 that looks like a J-200 – it even has the open-book headstock. When they bought the guitar, it had brass bridge pins with holes through which the strings traveled, instead of into the body like traditional pins. On closer inspection, we discovered they were held in place with a mechanism that had a block and a rod inside the body. We removed it, but we're wondering what it is.

Also, unlike most of the other 5055s I've seen, the bridge is heavily routed in front of the saddle. The guitar plays and sounds great with standard light-gauge strings. – *Ross Skinner*

Judging by your photos, it's clear that several repairs were performed on your guitar. Most likely, it had heavy strings at one point, which caused the bridge to "belly." When this happens, the bridge sits higher, making the instrument difficult to play. A repairman tried to lower the saddle on yours, but could not get it low enough. So, instead of removing the bridge, shaving the bottom, and gluing it back in place, he removed it and seated a new saddle, then routed in front of the saddle. This made the guitar easier to play, but is *not* the proper way to deal with the issue.

The bridge on Ross Skinner's Alvarez 5055, with replaced saddle... and routing.

It looks as if the bellying was finally fixed with a JLD Bridge Doctor, which is that mechanism you removed. The Bridge Doctor is designed to deal with bellied soundboards, and in your case, it worked, since the instrument no longer needs the mechanism thanks to those light strings.

I have an incredibly clean '59 Fender Deluxe I use for gigs, but I can't get enough headroom out of it. I have heard about swapping the 6V6 output tubes for 6L6s, but don't really want to go that route. I've also tried miking the amp and having the sound man put it in the monitors, with very mixed results. I also had the original speaker re-coned, which helped but still wasn't enough to keep using the amp with my band. – *Jim Rowe*

The original Jensen in that amp was not very efficient. When looking at speaker specs, efficiency translates to sensitivity; for your old Jensen, it's probably in the mid to low 90 dBs, even with the re-cone. A speaker like a Celestion Alnico Blue, which has a 100dB rating, or an Eminence Swamp Thang (102dB), will give noticeable extra headroom. However, every speaker imparts its own sonic stamp, so you may end up happy with the change – or you may long for that old Jensen.

Another great way to get more out of your amp is to move the amp closer to your ears. Put it on a chair or lean it back in front of you, like a monitor wedge.

I'm a huge fan of the late Danny Gatton, and from reading an old interview I know he used Fender Dynamax .010-.046 strings, but swapped out the .017 G for a .015. In the interview, Danny acts like they're the best ever, but Fender no longer makes them. Which current strings would be closest to those Dynamax sets?

Also, Fender no longer makes Danny's pick of choice – the heavy 358 in white. Do you know of anyone who can make them in white celluloid? – *Dave Jordan*

Looking through Fender dealer info and price lists from the mid/late '80s, it's clear that Dynamax strings were simply Fender's nickel-plated set. All other electric-guitar strings they offered at the time were either pure nickel or flatwound.

Nickel-plated strings emerged in the late '60s and quickly began to displace pure nickel in popularity, due to the wound strings being brighter and having a bit more output. To be clear, plain strings in both pure nickel and nickel-plated sets are made from steel – only the wound strings are different. Any nickel-plated string should do the job, including Fender's current 250R set.

As far as replicating Gatton's pick, D'Andrea made most of Fender's branded picks until a decade ago. In fact, they came up with the number designations like 351, which used the "traditional" shapes, and others including the small/teardrop 358. Though they still make the 358, it's shell-style celluloid only, *not* white, but they *can* make it in white if you're willing to order 1,000 of them. They also offer personalization, e.g. with a name or graphic.

Zac Childs is a guitar tech in Nashville. If you have a question about guitars – anything from nuts and bolts to historical or celebrity-related inquiries – drop a line to him at zac@askzac.com or visit facebook.com/askzac.

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'65 Fiesta Red 100% original, near mint!!
'66 Sunburst, 4 in stock
'67 Charcoal Frost Metallic 100% original
'67 Sonic Blue 100% original
'67 Blond 100% original, well played but cool!
'67 Candy Apple Red, only refret and changed nut, clean!!
'69 Olympic White & Black/Rose neck
'69 & '70 Candy Apple Red/Rose neck

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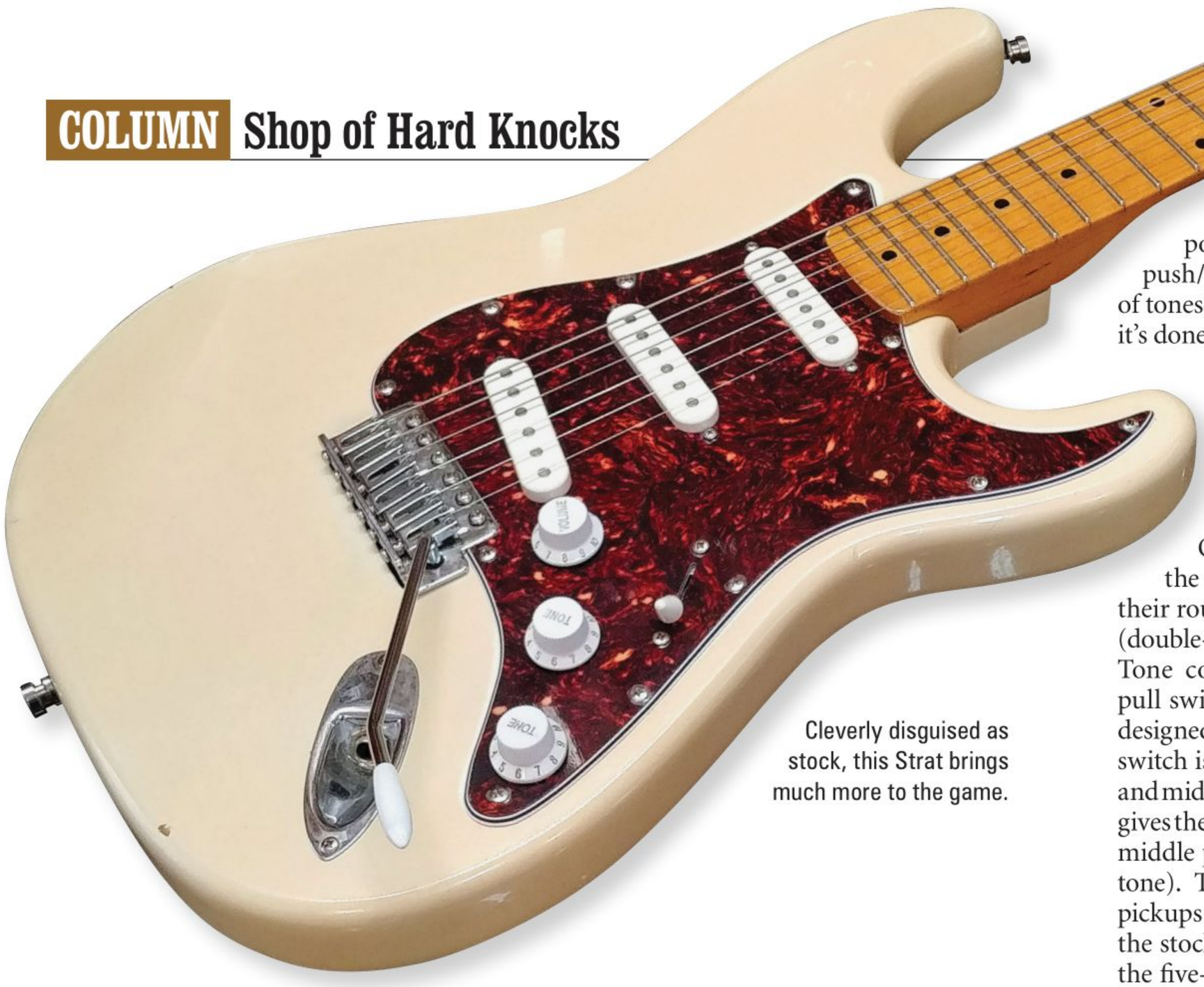


Cleverly disguised as stock, this Strat brings much more to the game.

GREATER THAN FIVE

Enhancing Strat Tones with a Blender Control

By Will Kelly

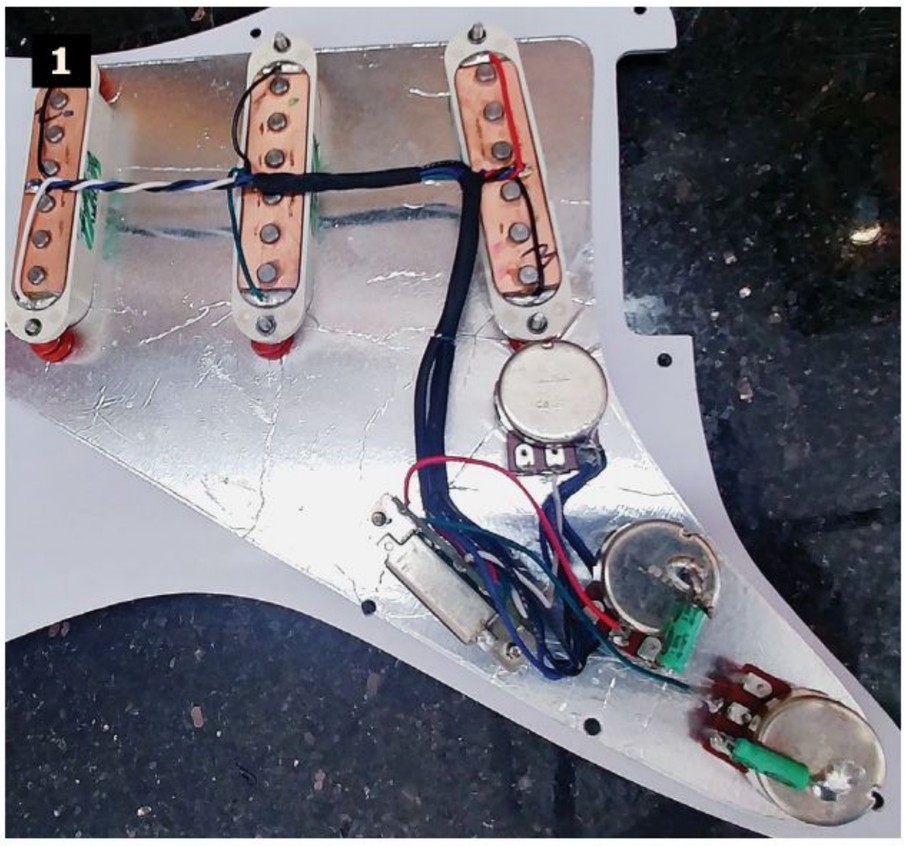
Fender introduced the Stratocaster in 1954, and not long after, players discovered that when they nudged its pickup-selector switch to spots just between its three intended positions, the guitar made different sounds. It was truly a "Voila!" moment, and there's irony in the fact that blending the bridge and middle pickups this way became a hallmark Strat tone.

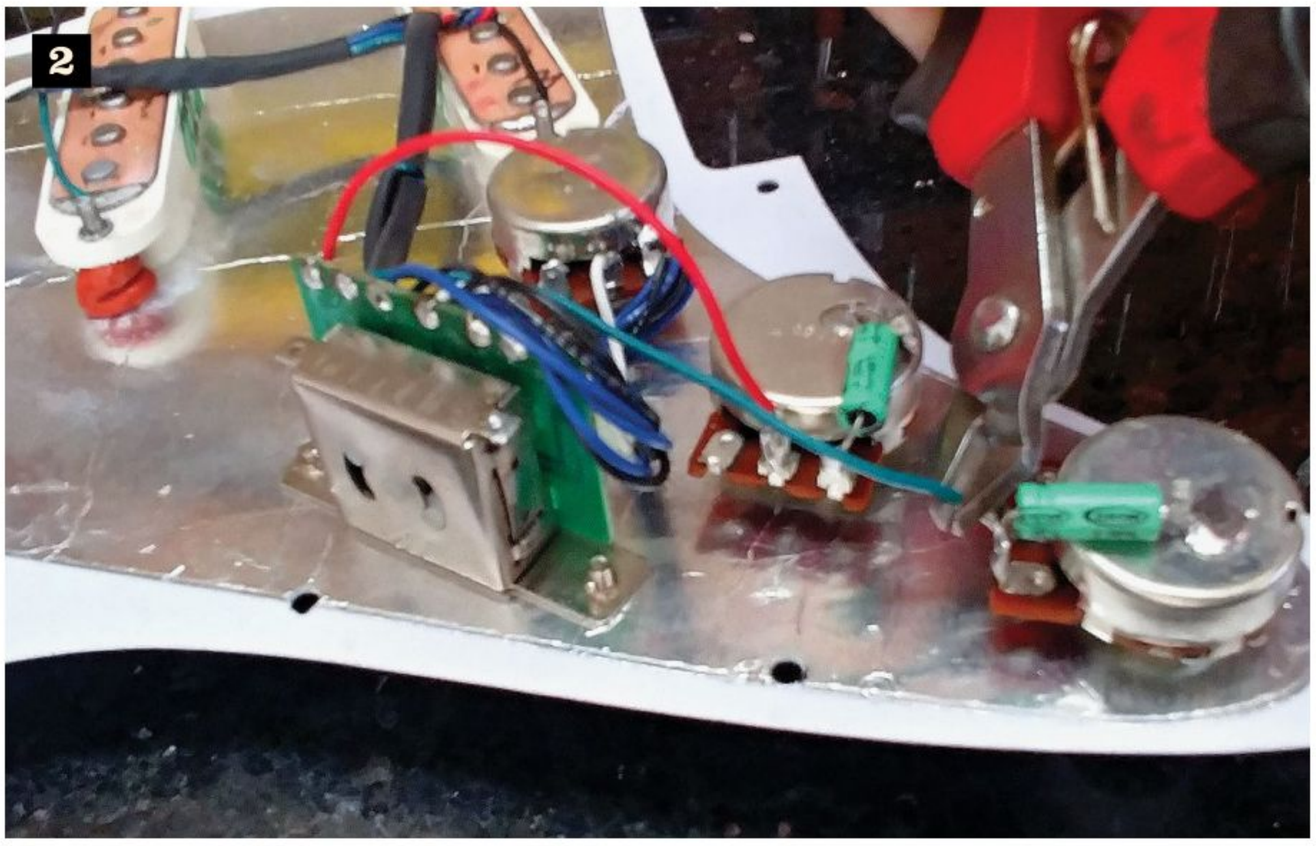
There are many ways to get additional sounds from the five-position selector of a modern Strat, and the coolest involves adding two potentiometers – a "blend" and a DPDT push/pull, which together provide an array of tones far beyond just those five. Here's how it's done.

1) Stock wiring has each pickup going to the five-way, then to Volume. The two Tone controls are tapped from the neck and middle pickups, for a total of three potentiometers. Our mod takes the input leads from the bridge and middle pickups and has their routing controlled by a push/pull DPDT (double-pole/double-throw)-equipped master Tone control. One output from the push/pull switch goes to the five-way, as originally designed. When the knob is pulled up, the switch is engaged and output from the bridge and middle pickups goes to the blender pot. This gives the option to variably blend the bridge and middle pickups (for that classic "in-between" tone). This wiring also allows for all three pickups to run at once, instead of only two, per the stock scheme. You can select the neck via the five-way, and pull up on the master Tone to engage the DPDT switch. This fine-tunes the blend of bridge and middle pickups while combining them with the neck. This creates a lot of new sounds.

2) I started by removing the two Tone controls from the pickguard. I clipped the two wires from the five-way then removed the retaining nuts and washers. These pots will be replaced by a master Tone with DPDT push/pull switch and a 500k blender pot. I removed the bridge-(red) and middle (green)-pickup leads from the five-way. These will instead go to the center terminals on the DPDT switch.

3) For the master Tone, I'm using a 500k

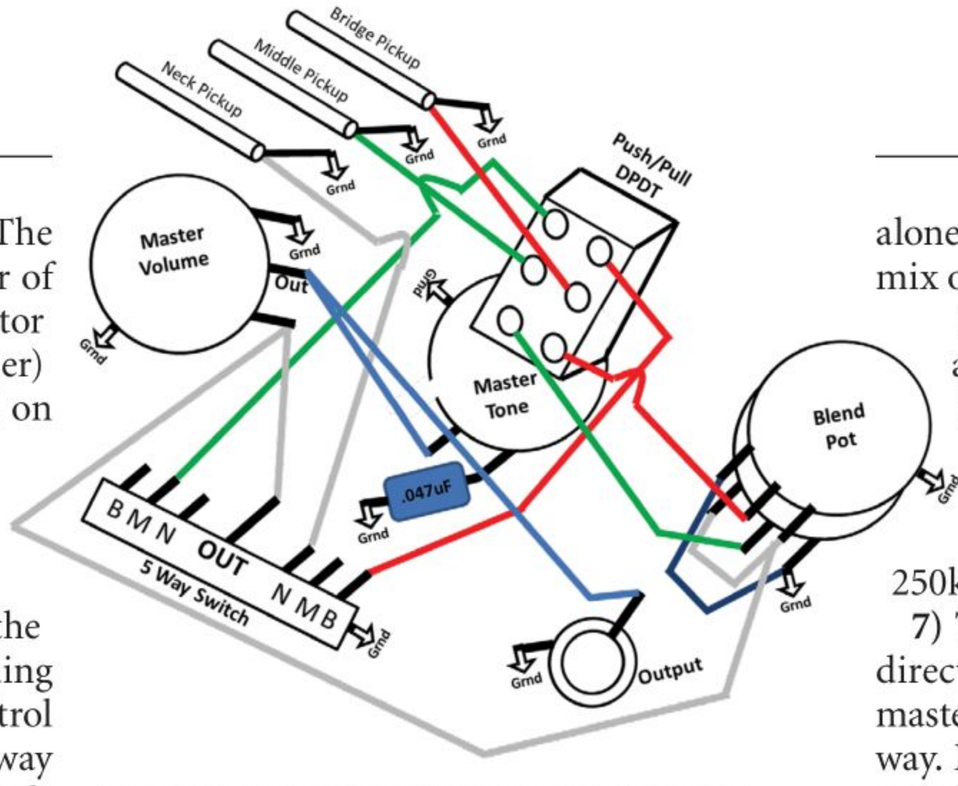




audio-taper pot with a DPDT switch. The right-hand terminal (viewed from the rear of the pot) is connected to a .047-uF capacitor then to ground. The center terminal (wiper) will be connected to the output terminal on the master Volume.

4) When the push/pull pot is in the down position, the center terminals connect to the upper terminals. I've connected the red (bridge) and green (middle) leads on the two upper terminals back to the corresponding terminals on the five-way, so when the control knob is in the down position, the five-way functions as normal. The two lower terminals on the DPDT are engaged when the knob is in the up position.

5) The blender pot is wired so the lower pot's connections are controlling the *middle* pickup when it's turned clockwise, and the upper pot controls the *bridge* pickup when turned counterclockwise. When turned fully clockwise, the middle pickup runs by itself, and when fully counterclockwise, the bridge pickup is heard alone. As the blender is rotated, it produces a mix of the two.

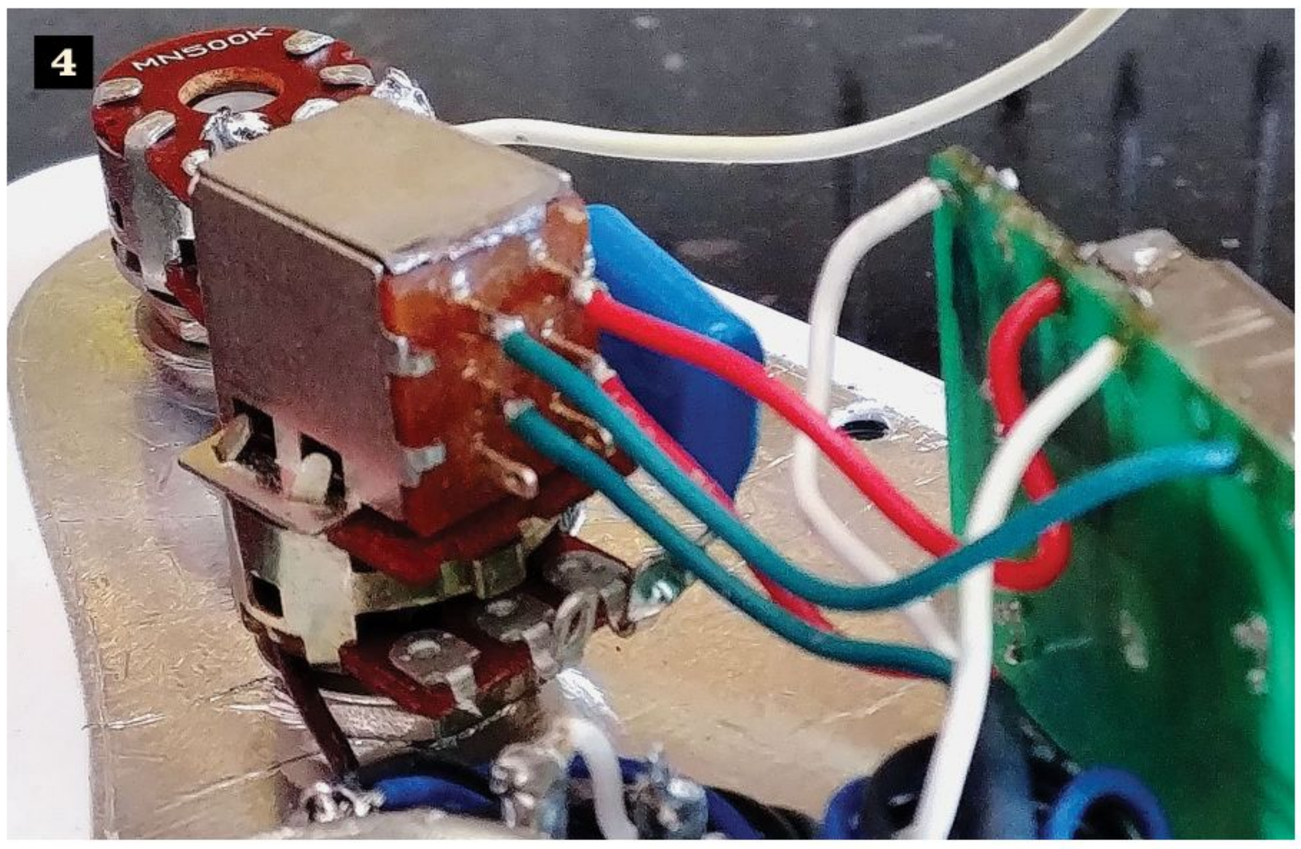


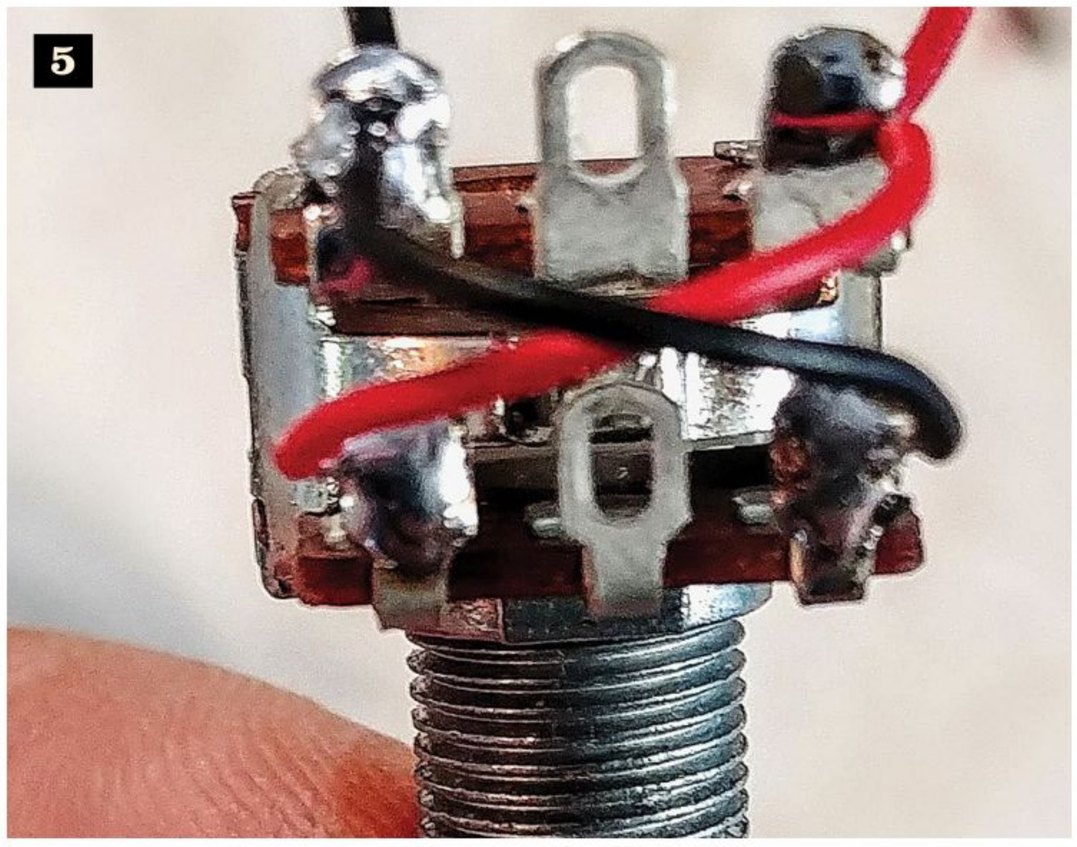
Schematic diagram for the mod, which can be reversed, taking the instrument back to factory specifications with no permanent changes.

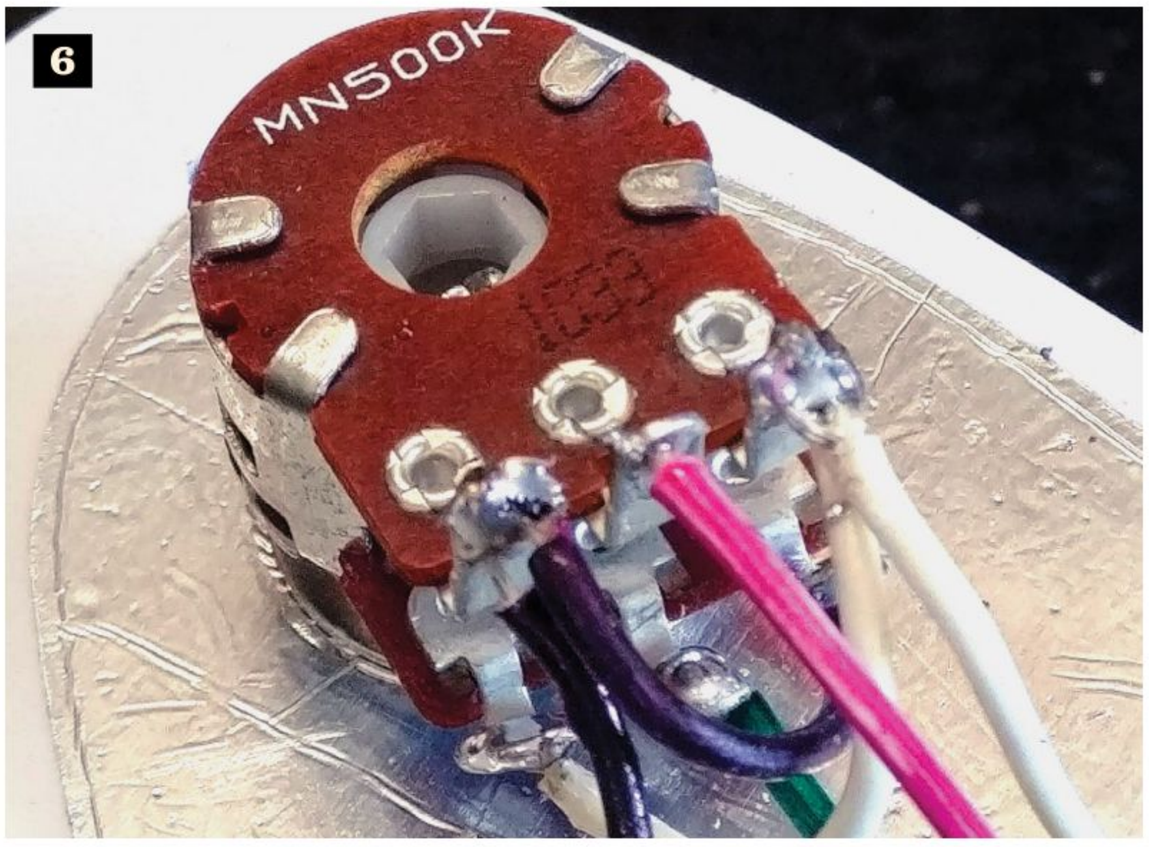
6) I chose a 500k audio-taper blend pot and kept the 250k master Volume pot. The guitar can sound a little dark with an additional Volume (blender) pot in the circuit, but a 500k here can restore brightness. The Tone control is also a 250k audio-taper pot.

7) The output from the blender pot is sent directly to the center (wiper) terminal on the master Volume, along with output from the five-way. Depending on the position of the DPDT switch, either tone path is active (but *not* both).

8) With the blender pot and master Tone/DPDT switch in place, I reinstalled the control knobs. There are no additional holes or other modifications to the body or pickguard; from the front, the assembly looks stock and even functions as such when the Tone knob is in the







down position. The only difference is it now has a master Tone instead of knobs for only the middle and neck pickups. Before reinstalling the pickguard, I was careful to make sure the delicate wires are stowed safely and didn't get pinched. I use small wire ties to neaten the compartment and provide stress relief for wires. And of course I always use proper star grounding whenever I can, to reduce hum and noise in the circuit.

This is a clever mod that opens a plethora of new sounds. You'll be surprised at how useful the blend function is when dialing in that classic Strat "quack." The blend and DPDT pots cost less than $25, and the procedure takes less than an hour. Plus, it involves no permanent changes to the instrument!

Will Kelly is a guitarist, repairman, and the author of *How to Build Electric Guitars*. He operates Hard Knocks Guitars in Apex, North Carolina, where he has played host to countless artists, instruments and amplifiers. You can contact him at WillKelly@nc.rr.com.

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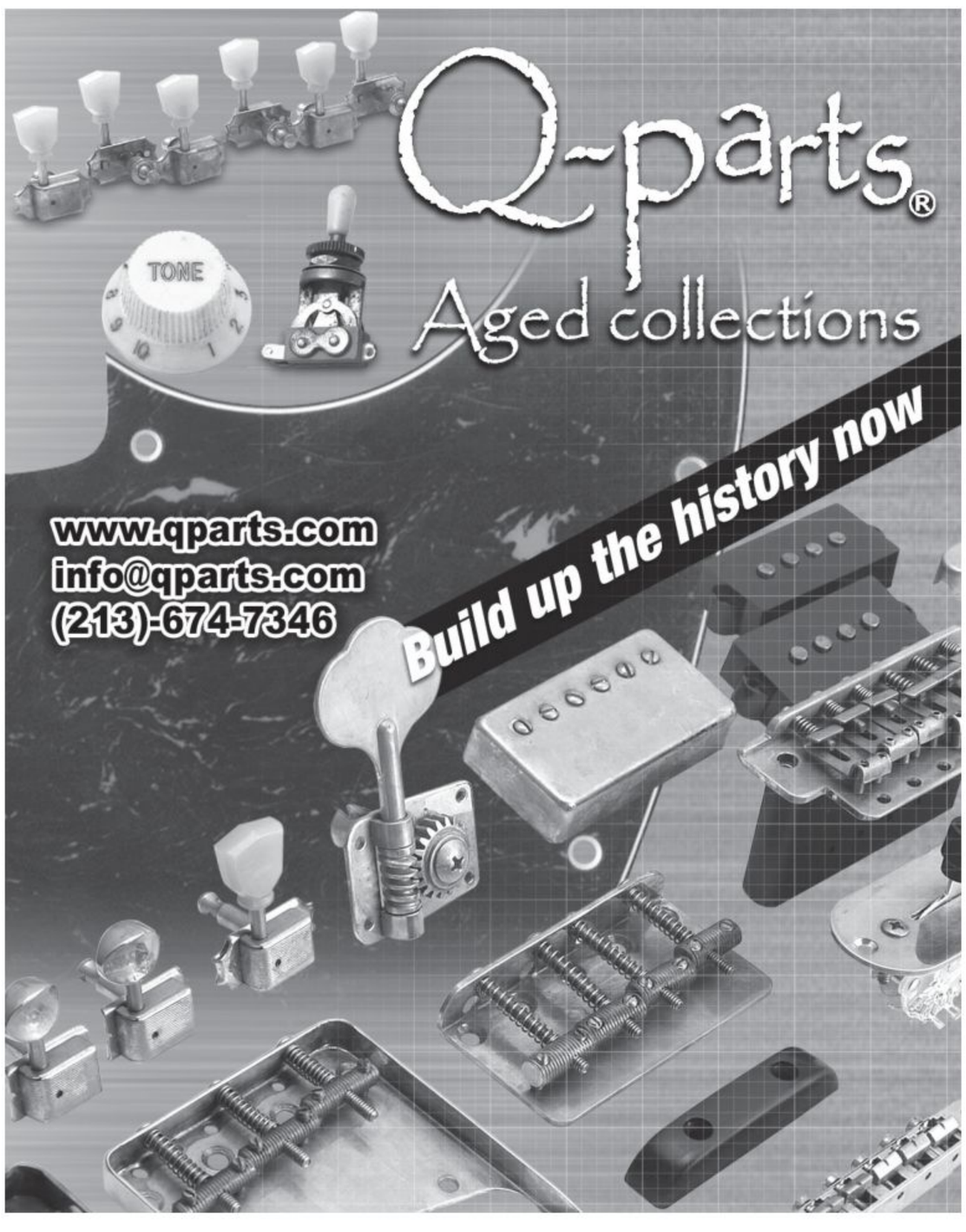

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MARTIN CILIA

From the Shadows...

BY PETE PROWN

Cilia onstage at the Meredith Music Festival, 2018.

A worldwide phenomenon, surf and instro music can be found in every corner of the planet. In Australia, few do it better than Martin Cilia, whose family moved from England when he was 10; four years later, he was gigging professionally. In the '90s, he joined the Atlantics, one of the original Aussie guitar bands.

Today, Cilia's impressive collection of vintage instruments helps him pursue his passion for recording instro-rock records, billed as "Australia's Premier Surf Rock Guitarist." His latest platter is *Shadowman*, a tribute to the legendary band that inspired him as a youth – Hank Marvin and the Shadows, and other guitar-driven hits of the era.

In America, Marvin was never as popular as the Ventures, Link Wray, or Dick Dale, but it's a different story in other parts of the world; throughout the U.K. and its commonwealth, Marvin is rock royalty. "The Shadows were huge in the U.K. and Europe, and also did well in

1, 2) Cilia has all-original Les Paul goldtops from '54 and '58. "Both are exceptional, sound-wise, and in excellent condition," he said. 3) Any time Cilia doesn't need a Strat for a gig, he grabs this '59 Les Paul Custom with its "exceptional-sounding PAFs." 4) '62 Gibson Les Paul/SG.

South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand," Cilia noted. "I'd imagine in the '60s, in the U.K., Hank was as well-known as the Queen of England; there were *many* Shadows copy bands and Hank lookalikes about the scene. 'Apache' was the song that started it for many guitar players. Because of him, Fiesta Red Strats and Vox amps became extremely popular, as did echo devices like the Binson, WEM Copicat, and Klemt Echolette. We didn't hear much of the Ventures, Dick Dale, or Link Wray until later; I discovered them in the late '70s."

Cilia was born in the U.K. in 1958—ground zero for British surf via the Shadows, John Barry Seven (with "James Bond" guitarist Vic Flick), and the Tornados, who had a #1 hit in '62 with "Telstar."

"My father was a technician for Ekco/Pye electronics in the late '50s and '60s, so of course we had TV and radios in the house," he recalls. "One day, he brought home a reel-to-reel tape recorder and we'd record music from the TV and radio; he loved the sound of the Shadows, with Cliff Richard on vocals."

As it's 2020, you have to wonder what still draws guitarists to the clean, twangy sound of pre-Beatles instrumental guitar.

"The '60s Shadows sound is timeless and captures the era perfectly," Cilia suggested. "The song that changed it for me was 'The Rise and Fall of Flingle Bunt.' I just loved the sound and toughness; the first record I ever bought was an Australian EP with cuts like 'Apache,' 'Man of Mystery,' 'The Stranger' and 'FBI.' I would daydream about what it must have been like, standing in the studio while they were being recorded.

"But, as the Shadows aren't recording any more, I decided to make songs in their style and flavor, which led to me joining the Atlantics. We recorded several albums in the late '90s which still sell well, and 'Flight of the Surf Guitar' has even become something of a classic. As long as there's still an audience for this music, I'll keep doing it."

Cilia (right) with Hank Marvin in the '80s.

5) Hard to find in Australia, vintage Firebirds like Cilia's '64 III (in all-original condition) are a special treat. "I use it when I want a sound between a Gibson and a Fender," he said. 6) Cilia appreciates the materials and workmanship of his 1960 Gibson Super 400CES. 7) The Gibson J-160E is famously associated with the Beatles, and while Cilia's 1970 is later, he says the sound is very similar.

Given his love for the Shadows and their music, it's no surprise Cilia has seen them in concert several times, both in England and Australia.

"The first was in the late '70s at the Hammersmith Odeon, where I first saw how they were actually playing the songs," he said. "It was such an eye-opener. I was very impressed by the acoustic part of their show, where Hank played wonderful slide on a D-28, I think, and delivered some CSN-style vocals. After the show, I went to the stage door with their latest album and they signed the cover for me. I asked a couple of geeky guitar questions that Hank politely answered."

In 1968, Cilia's family emigrated to Perth, Australia – the most isolated city in the world. Twenty years later, he moved to Sydney.

"Hank moved to Australia with his family in the late '80s, about the time I moved to Sydney," Cilia noted. "I've met him several

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Cilia's '62 Vox AC15 Twin.

times and he's always been encouraging – the last time was after one of his Gypsy-jazz trio gigs in 2017, and we had a great chat afterward."

Today, Martin gigs with the Atlantics, which had its biggest hit with "Bombora" (an Aboriginal term for giant waves hitting a shallow area, which surfers find desirable) in '63, long before he was part of the group. Its tricky guitar figure requires manipulating the vibrato bar and picking the melody at the same time – something Martin manages in his cover on *Shadowman*.

"'Bombora' is an interesting song and makes use of the range, from the highest fret to open strings. When playing the high melody, I tend to hold the vibrato arm and pick between the neck pickup and the end of the neck. This gives a fuller sound; on lower notes, I pick more toward the bridge, for a tighter sound."

"I was hesitant to record this version, as the original is so special. Then I thought maybe I could introduce it to a new audience. Also, this time I get to play the melody – with the Atlantics I played rhythm, which is very challenging itself."

Another piece of sacred instro is "Apache," a global smash for the Shadows in 1960. Danish guitarist Jørgen Ingmann recorded his echo-laced version later that year, and it became a #2 hit in the U.S. Martin worked up a modern version on *Shadowman*, replete with a vibrato-edge melody and string rakes on the backing chords.

"That was the first song I ever played in public, so it has a special meaning to me," he said. "We had a band at school – we were 13 – it was the opening song in the six-song set we performed in the Morley High School Hall."

Most associate "Australian rock" with AC/DC, though the country has a long history of bands such as the Easybeats ("Friday On My Mind"), Split Enz, INXS, Jimmy Barnes, Midnight Oil, and even popster Rick Springfield. There's also an

Cilia and his guitars in the '80s (top) and today with (from left) his '54 ES-175D, '54 Strat, '55 Les Paul Junior, '54 goldtop, and '59 Vibrolux.

Aussie genre called "pub rock," which fostered acts like Cold Chisel and Billy Thorpe.

"In Australia in the later '70s and '80s, pub-rock bands would play in beer barns," Cilia recalled. "These were large venues with the bands using big production – concert PA and lighting. A lot of great Australian bands came from this scene. I played that circuit, and you have to have a rock edge to survive it. On my solo albums, I use that influence, and it comes through in the intensity. With 'Apache,' I wanted to combine it with the British feel and add some California influences.

"On the Shadows version, there's this great acoustic rhythm guitar by Bruce Welch, but I decided to go with a second electric guitar part played on a '63 Fender Jaguar into a '63 Vibroverb."

8) A highlight of Cilia's collection is his "great-sounding" all-original Strat with neck and body dated May, 1954. **9)** When he bought it in 1983, this '63 Strat (in Candy Apple Red) cost him $100 less than a new vintage reissue. It has flatwounds and he often uses it for recording. **10)** This '63 Strat was refinished long before Cilia bought it. Its original color is a mystery and he speculates it may have been a "Selmer finish" from the '60s. **11)** One of Cilia's most-prized bits is this super-rare '57 Danelectro U2 in Jade Green.

Cilia also has plenty of classic British-rock influences, such as the Beatles. For *Shadowman*, he covered "Eleanor Rigby," in a version that actually speaks to another U.K. guitar hero – the great Ritchie Blackmore.

"Yes, well-spotted!" he laughed. "Deep Purple and Blackmore were big influences on me. I absolutely love the guitar sound and playing on *Machine Head* – Stratocaster into an AC30 and some sort of tape delay. With my version of 'Eleanor Rigby,' I didn't play any Fender guitars – they're all PAF Gibsons. The main melody is a '59 Les Paul Custom, the main riff is a '58 goldtop, and backing guitars are a '62 Les Paul/SG and a '64 ES-335."

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12, 13) Cilia's '57 Precision has a one-piece maple neck and was owned by INXS bassist Garry Gary Beers. His '65 Jazz is well-worn Candy Apple Red. 14) 1935 Martin 00-17.

A serious vintage collector, Martin pulled out all the stops for *Shadowman*.

"The main guitar is a '61 Strat, and the amp is an early-'60s AC30. Also used two '63 Strats and a '64 Strat in Candy Apple Red, along with a '64 Firebird. My oldest acoustic is '35 Martin 00-15 and I have three Gibson acoustics from the '60s. For bass, there are '57 and '64 Precision basses and a '65 Jazz.

A soup-to-nuts guy, he also has a nice back line of old amps and effects at his disposal.

"I have three Voxes, including '62 and '64 AC30s, and a '62 AC15. My Fenders are a '58 Bassman and a '63 Vibroverb, and there's a '73 Marshall 50-watt Super Lead head and cabinet. I have Boss DM-2 and DM-3 delay pedals, but the old ones are a '63 Fender Reverb tank and a '60s Klemt Echolette."

Asked if surf guitar sounds the same around the world, or if Australia has a unique brand, he pondered for a second.

"I think the Australian sound incorporates various influences from around the world *as well as* the Australian feel – a combination of British, American, Greek, and ethnic sounds, along with the sound of Australia and the echo of the Outback." VG

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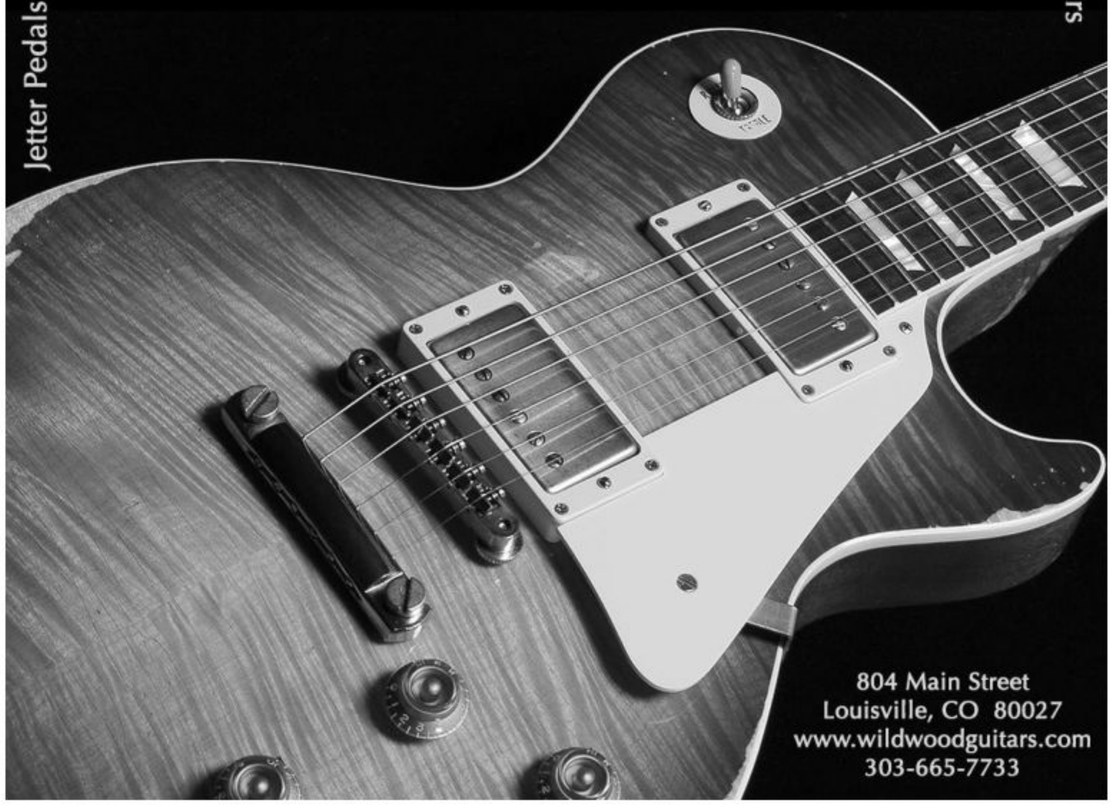

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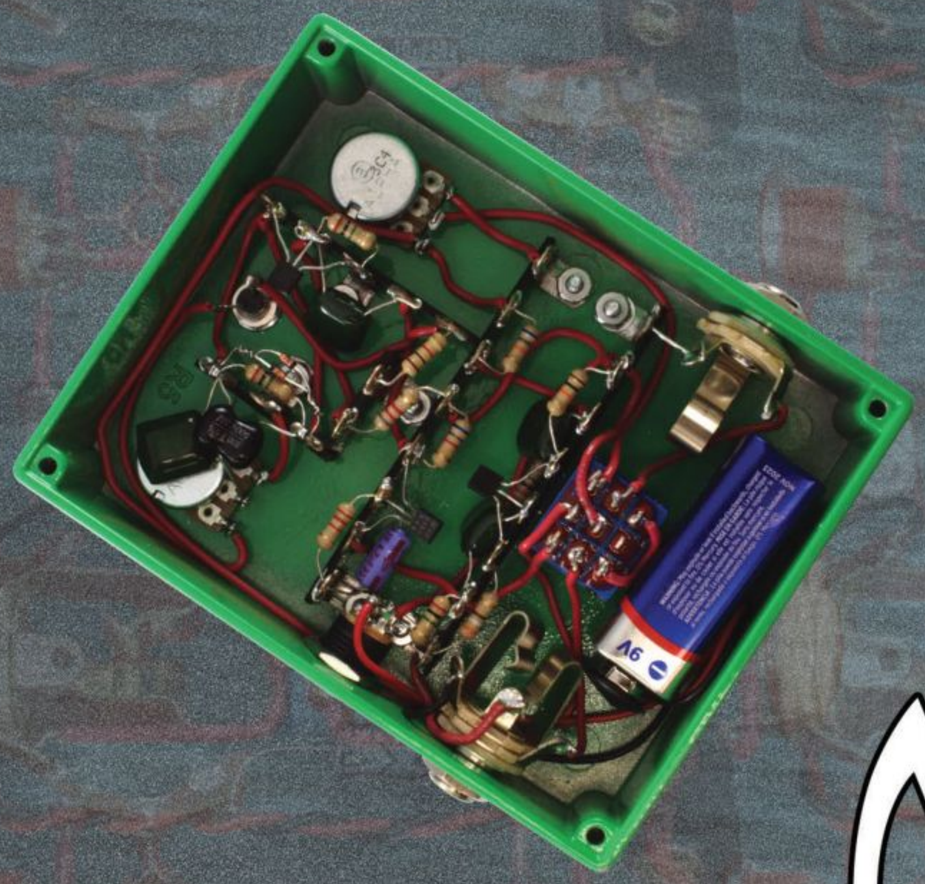

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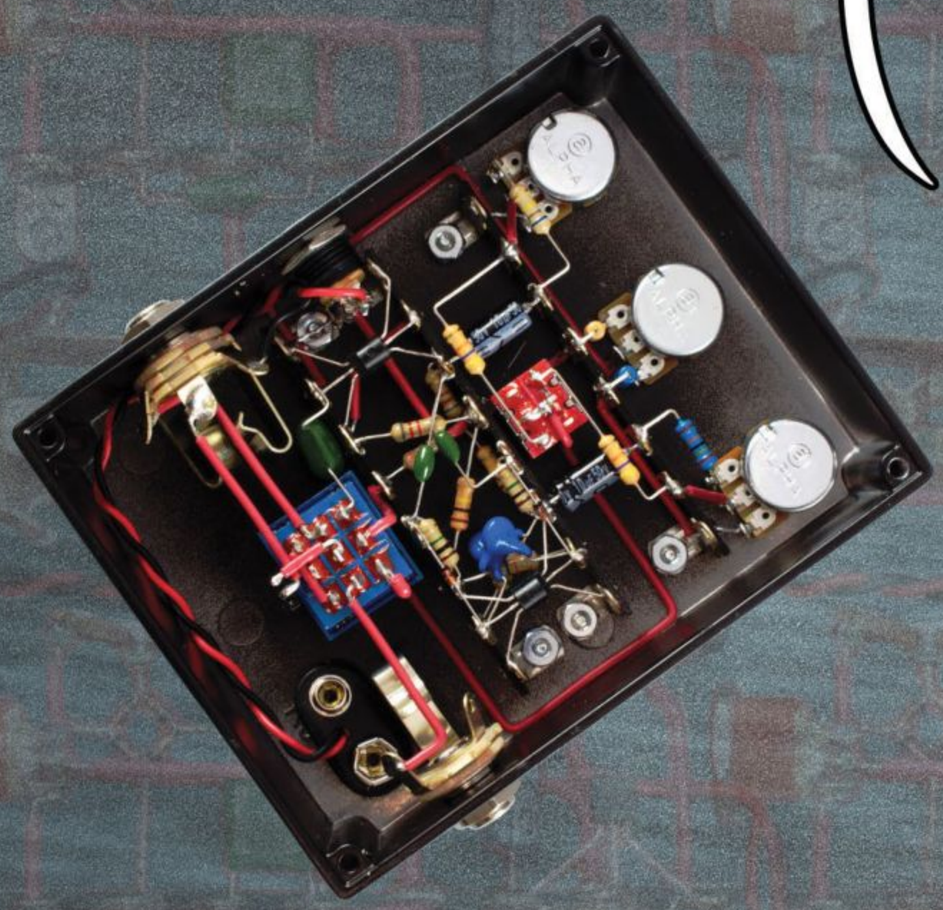

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MARCUS KING

From the Heart

By Oscar Jordan

Marcus King is an old soul with talent to match. A paid performer since age 11, he knew early on that making music would be his life, and his work today carries on a tradition started by his grandfather then passed to his father, "the minister of music" at a church where Marcus first stepped on a stage.

The 23-year-old recently joined forces with Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys to produce his first solo album. While focused on songwriting and vocals, *El Dorado* is bursting with splendid guitar playing and dirty blues riffs. His first work outside of The Marcus King Band, it marks a growing musical maturity deeply affected by loss, years spent feeling like an outsider, and his inherent artistry. Its 12 songs reflect his journey as a songwriter and a human being. Backed by some of the world's finest session cats, it oozes southern R&B and blue-eyed soul, creating a plethora of moods reminiscent of a more-genuine era.

King with his '65 Telecaster and Orange Rockerverb 50.

Marcus King: Tom Russell.

What prompted your move to Nashville?

I ran into Dan Auerbach about two years ago and we struck up a good friendship. As fate would have it, I ended up moving to Nashville with a car I’d just bought – a 1980 Eldorado Cadillac – on Dan’s advice. I said, “Should I get an old car?” He said, “Get an old Cadillac.” Around that time, I was reacquainted with a guitar which I had my very first memory of – my father’s early-’70s Epiphone El Dorado I remember grabbing at when I was about three years old.

Anyway, I saw Nashville as this mecca of good music, good energy, and a buzz that kept me going whenever I was there. It’s like a recharging station for me, especially with my El Dorado. It came together in a way that made me want to call my new record that.

Did you move for the inspiration?

Absolutely. For me, the guitar has always been my safety blanket. Over the years, it’s been my number one form of expression. Recently, I’ve come into my own as a vocalist and as a writer. I feel just as confident in those fields as I do on the guitar, which, for me, was a big leap forward in my overall confidence and internal Zen. On this record, it’s not so much that I put more focus on one thing over the other – we didn’t shine as much light on the guitar and my playing. We let the songs speak for themselves.

Still, there’s plenty of great guitar playing...

For me, it was a subtle approach to doing what each song needed. Some of my favorite guitar solos are like George Harrison’s on “Let It Be,” or Reggie Young on “I’m In Love” by Bobby Womack. Those are not guitar records, but they’re some of my favorite solos.

I’m getting more into the production side of things, learning how to put together a record. So, I play what the song needs, and sometimes a song doesn’t *need* a guitar solo. When you hear them live, *all* of them have guitar solos, because it’s what I do, but in the confines of a studio...

Why a solo album?

The opportunity presented itself in an organic fashion and there were a lot of opportunities I couldn’t say “no” to. One was working with Gene Christian and Bobby Wood, two remaining members of the Memphis Boys. The Bobby Womack track I mentioned, with Reggie Young – they were the drummer and keyboard player on that. They were the dudes! They played with Elvis Presley, Dusty Springfield, and all those cats.

Marcus King: Alysse Gafkjen.

There was so much vibe in the room that it was intimidating and comforting all at the same time. Dan uses this band for all his projects – they're like his house band. And, they're old-school. They have that Funk Brothers/A-Team mentality. It's an old art form that has become outdated. Now, when you bring it back, it's kind of a new way of thinking – it's retro. But they're the actual guys that did it.

I also look at my heroes like Tom Petty's *Full Moon Fever* or Gregg Allman's *Laid Back*. Those were good times in their careers, and there was no turmoil in the band. You gotta do things that make your heart beat. This made my heart beat, so I did it.

Did playing with those guys raise your game?

I'm intimidated by *anybody*. It's just kind of in my nature. You never know what someone's got in their back pocket. I was raised to never underestimate people you're working with. It allows you to be surprised. With these cats, knowing their discography and what they're a part of was even more intimidating. It was an honor and a blessing. These cats are 75 and 80 years old, and they had more energy than I did half the time. They're just so passionate about music, and it's great.

Nashville is a songwriting mecca. Did that inform *El Dorado*, as well?

Absolutely. We'd go in and start writing and just see what comes out. That's the reason it came along the way that it did. There was no negativity behind the process. It was, "We're going to write, and we're going to see what sticks." I told my story about coming of age in this industry – figuring out what to do and who I was going to be.

What gear did you use on "The Well?"

I used a copyright infringement SG Custom Ibanez tuned down a whole step, so I played everything in D. The amp was an old accordion amplifier and we just drove the s**t out of it.

Is that a fuzz on "Say You Will?"

I think there was fuzz on that, but I don't recall what. It *might* have been me running straight through that same amp, as well.

Is that you playing slide on "Turn It Up?"

Sure is. I was half stoned and half sleepy, trying to see if that guitar sound was going to work – a Telecaster plugged into that same amp – and we kept it. It's standard tuning; I don't use open tuning.

What's your number one guitar?

I've been using [a prototype] Gibson signature 345. It's modeled after my '62 Gibson, which was my grandfather's, and it's got a great sound. I've never played a guitar that was so true, right out of the box; it's an exact replica. I can certainly tell the difference between the two, but what they did was make it a little sturdier. It's a road horse and a killer guitar. With my grandfather's guitar, I'm gentle with it in the studio. With the new guitar, I can jerk it around a bit more, which is part of my nature when I play live. I like to beat the hell out of a guitar.

What do you use for backups?

A Tele from the Fender Custom Shop – '62 reissue with a lacquer finish. Its Fiesta Red with a rosewood fretboard, and a friend from Banker Custom Guitars relic'd it for me. I'm also playing a Banker Redtail Reverse on the road. They make excellent guitars.

Which amp do you use most?

My main rig is a '65 Fender Super Reverb I pair in stereo with an Orange Rockerverb 50-watt head with 6L6 tubes. That's running through Orange 2x12 cabinets with Vintage 30 speakers. Outside of that, I have a Fender reverb unit. I keep them all going at the same time.

Are you a pedal guy?

I haven't always been a big effects guy – I used a Crybaby wah, a TS9 when looking for that sound, and a Fulltone Deja Vibe. I *have* been getting more into pedals lately, working with Teddy Rasch at Tru-Fi. He makes fuzz pedals, and I've been digging his Colordriver. I also love the Zosa Fuzz, which is like the Tone Bender that Jimmy Page used on the Led Zeppelin records. I

Marcus King: Alysse Gafkjen.

King with his Gibson ES-345.

Marcus King: Tom Russell.

"I saw the guitar as an escape from everything. I still do. That's what I would do late at night – just play."

also have an MXR Phase 90 I use for very specific moments.

This album seems not only a progression for you as an artist, but also a good career move.

I'm always hopeful that I can get what I need to say to as many people as possible. In that regard, I'm excited to see what we can do with it. That's always the goal – just to be able to say what I need to get off my chest. Everything else that comes along with that is secondary. I'm just saying what needs to be said.

You've had some personal challenges, including going through school with undiagnosed bipolar disorder. Are you comfortable incorporating that with your music?

That's the only way I know how to do it. For me, it's strange, at times, being in a co-write situation because I'm an open book and it's like a therapy session. I try to go as deep as possible. That's what *I* like when I hear songwriters; I want to hear what you *are*, not what you think I want to hear. When I write, I like to strip it all down. If it doesn't rhyme or make sense, it's just something I need to say.

With this record, I worked with people who had more structure in their writing technique, and I learned *so* much. It was like when I started studying jazz guitar in high school and learned more about what I already loved. Everybody needs money, but if you're in it *just* for the money, people will see through that. People who know nothing about music can tell if you mean it. Everybody is born with a bulls**t detector.

What was it like being a guitar prodigy with mental health issues?

I saw the guitar as an escape from everything. I still do. That's what I would do late at night – just play. I always turned my nose up at the prodigy thing. There are kids who can play Bach at four and five years old. To me, *that's* real prodigy stuff. For me, it's music that I love. You can tell when it's sincere. I never had a second thought as to what I wanted to be. People would say, "You sound great for a 12-year-old," and people still say that now that I'm 23. All my heroes did my favorite things when they were my age. It's all about perspective.

It must feel good knowing Eric Clapton is a fan.

It's unreal. I never thought that would happen. Ever since I was a kid, I've had this bulldozer tenacity. It probably contributed to my compulsive disorder. If you obsess about good things, it can be rewarding. Music is one of those things. I always knew that I would get somewhere if I worked hard enough, but I never imagined I would be hanging out with Eric Clapton. He came out and watched my show. I came off the stage, and we just stared at each other (laughs). He said the nicest things, so I gave him a big, sweaty, South Carolina hug.

Any advice for younger guitarists?

I would say to the younger generation what my grandfather said to me, which was, "No matter how good you think you are, there's someone younger, playing for cheaper, and playing circles around you right around the corner. So keep your nose to the ground, and be the best person – and best player – you can be." VG

Upcoming Events

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***Denotes a new or updated listing.**

Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, second Sunday of each month at the Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441, Mt. Dora, FL. Hours 8-3. For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352) 735-0025 or visit www.lcmsm.com.

Tampa Bay Area Musicians Swap Meet, first Sunday each of each month, at the Big Top Flea Market, 9250 E Fowler Ave., Tampa, FL. For more info call Dave at (813) 324-6083 or visit www.tampamusicswap.com.

FEBRUARY

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, February 23, Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

MARCH

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo & Music Swap, March 1, Best Western Plus, 4400 Frontage Road, Hillside, IL., Hours 9-3. For more info contact R&B Productions at (847) 931-0707 or bakesguitar@aol.com

Jersey Shore Guitar & Amp Show & Musical Flea Market, March 1, at the Bayville NJ Elks Lodge #2394, 247 Rt 9, Bayville, NJ. For more info contact Joe at curlyjoe1956@gmail.com or (732) 598-7479.

Hudson Valley Guitar Show, March 6-7 at the Ramada Inn, 542 US 9, Fishkill, NY. Friday from 5-9p.m. and Saturday from 10a.m. to 5p.m. www.hudsonvallyeguitarshow.com or info.hvgs@gmail.com

Carolina Guitar Show, March 14-15, WNC Ag Center, Davis Event Center Bldg., I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher, NC. For more info (828) 298-2197 or bee3vintage@hotmail.com. **(See Advertisement on page 87.)**

Monroe Guitar Show, March 14, Knights of Columbus - Banquet Rental Hall, 202 W Front St, Monroe, MI. Hours 10-5. Contact Ray for more info at rgarza013@yahoo.com or at (419) 341-2582.

All Axes Show Swap Sell, March 15 at the TAK Music Venue, 1710 Center Ave, Dilworth MN. Opens at 1p.m. For more info, email sugarsackstudios@gmail.com **(See Advertisement on page 86.)**

Guitar Fest PA, March 22, Ramada by Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, 100 Ramada Inn Dr., Greensburg, PA. Hours 10-4. For more info visit www.guitarfestpa.com.

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show, March 28-29, Williamson County Ag Expo Park, Franklin, TN. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com. **(See Advertisement on page 91.)**

Lansing Music Instrument Swap, March 29, at the Causeway Bay Convention Center, 6820 S Cedar St., Lansing, MI. Hours 10-4. For more info contact Shawn at (517) 410-6409, shawn@audiologicdj.com or visit www.musicinstrumentswap.com.

SouthCoast Guitar Show, March 29, at Woodland Commons on the Campus of

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APRIL

Central Coast Guitar Show, April 4, at the Veteran's Memorial Building, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA. Hours 10-3. For more info contact Ed Miller at (805) 431-3067, centralcoastguitarshow@charter.net or visit www.centralcoastguitarshow.com

The Indiana Guitar Show, April 4 & 5, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit https://minorprophetstudio.com/the-indiana-guitar-show **(See Advertisement on page 88.)**

Colorado Guitar Show & Custom Luthier Expo, April 19, at The Denver Mart, 451 East 58th Ave., Denver, CO. Hours 10-4. For more info contact Duane at (720) 432-1363 or guitarshow@excite.com.

Cincinnati Guitar Show, April 19, at the Sharonville Convention Center, 11355 Chester Road, Cincinnati, OH. Hours 10-4. For more info Denny at (513) 503-1072 or visit www.cincyguitarshow.com.

Saratoga Springs Guitar Show, April 24 & 25, at the Saratoga Springs City Center, 522 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY. Hours Fri 5-8, Sat 10-5. For more info please call Matt at 518-581-1603 or visit http://saratogaguitar.com/guitarshow/.

Tacoma Guitar & Drum Festival, April 25 & 26, at 2727 E D St, Tacoma, WA. For more info contact Bruce at (253) 445-1973, bruce@adolphagency.com or visit www.tacomaguitarfestival.com.

Elmira Vintage Guitar Show, April 26, at the Woolwich Memorial Centre, 24 Snyder Ave S., Elmira, ON, Canada. For more info visit www.elmiravintageguitarshow.ca.

Guitar Fest Ohio, April 26, at the Summit County Fairgrounds Arena, 229 E Howe Road, Tallmadge, OH. Hours 10-5. For more info visit www.guitarfestohio.com.

MAY

Dallas Guitar Show, May 1-3, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com. **(See Advertisement on page 89.)**

Jakes Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 2 & 3, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, PA. Hours 8-1. For more info contact Justin at (484) 256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com.

*Northeast Guitar Expo, May 3 at the Verve Hotel, 1360 Worcester St. Natick, MA from 11a.m. to 4 p.m. For more info contact NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com

*Eastern Kentucky Guitar Show, May 3, Boyd County Community Center, 15605 KY-180 Catlettsburg, KY. Hours 11-5. Contact Jeff Preston at prestonffh@aol.com or text 606-923-4130. **(See Advertisement on page 86.)**

Amigo Chicago Guitar Show, May 16-17, Odeum Sports & Expo Center, Villa Park, IL. For more Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Rob at (417) 869-3325 or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

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Upcoming Events

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Mountain Acoustics Luthier Invitational, May 23 & 24 at the Town Center, 6 South Main St., Burnsville, NC. For more info contact Chee at (706) 424-2700, info@mountainacoustics.com or www.mountainacoustics.com.

JUNE

Central Arkansas Guitar Show, June 6, at the Benton Event Center, 17322 I-30, Benton, AR. Hours 10-5. For more info www.arkansasguitarshow.com.

Grinning Elk Guitar Show, June 12-14, at the Infinite Energy Forum, 6400 Sugarloaf Pkwy, Duluth, GA. For more info contact Lee at (678)-557-5641, lee@grinningelk@gmail.com or visit www.grinningelkguitarshow.com.

Summer Ohio Guitar Show, June 14, Makoy Center, 5462 Center St., Hilliard, OH. Show hours 11:30-5. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351, alexmack@ohio.net, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

JULY

Great American Guitar Show (Summer Philly), July 18 & 19, at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com.

AUGUST

Amigo, SoCAL Guitar Show, August 22-23, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

Jakes Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 19 & 20, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, PA. Hours 8-1. For more info contact Justin at (484) 256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com.

OCTOBER

Amigo International Guitar Show, October 3-4, Will Rogers Memorial Center, Ft. Worth, TX. For more info Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

NOVEMBER

Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, November 1, at the Webers Inn, 3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI. Hours 10-4. For more info contact Shawn at (517) 410-6409, shawn@audiologicdj.com or visit www.musicinstrumentswap.com.

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission or e-mail joant@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.

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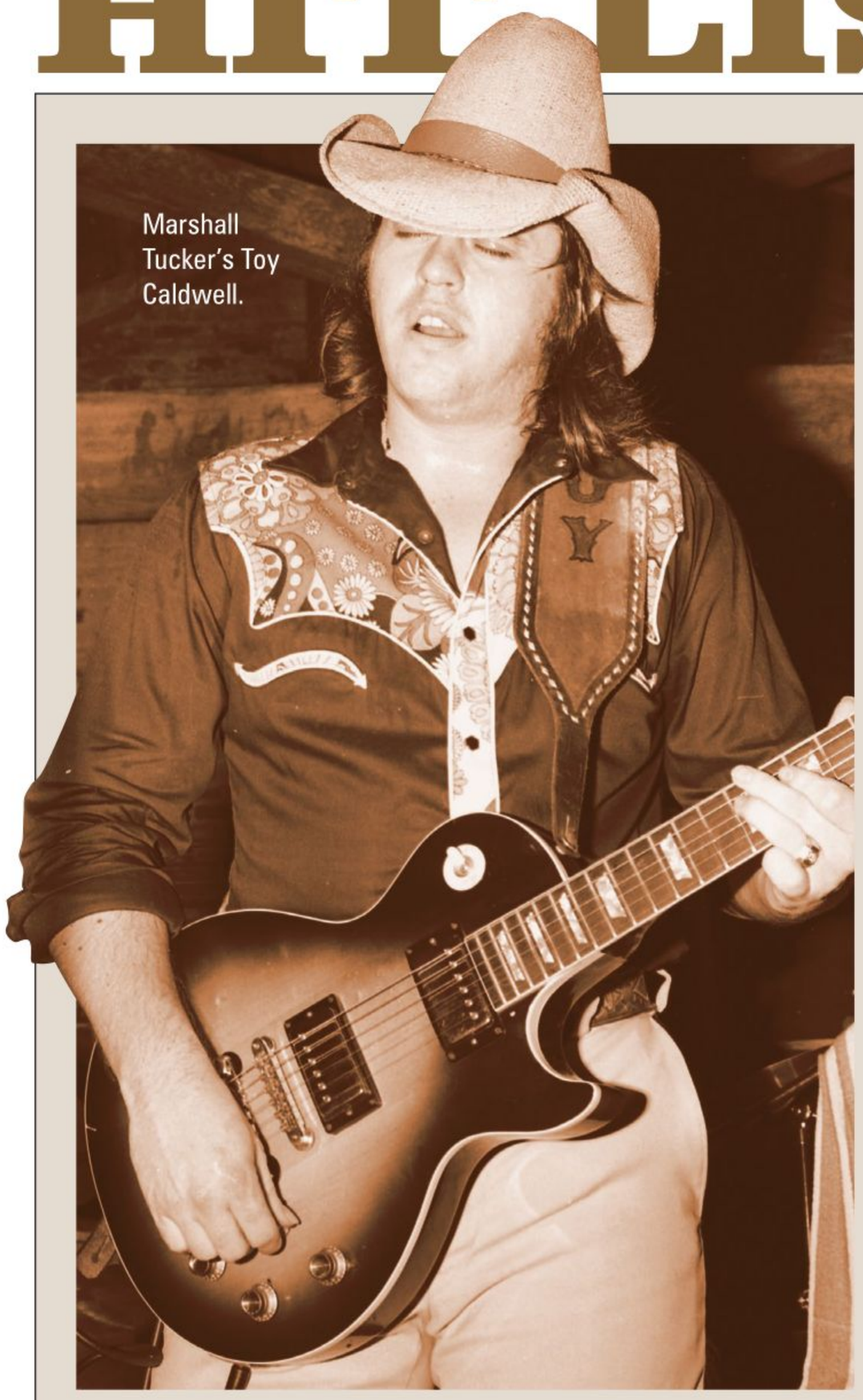


Marshall Tucker's Toy Caldwell.

BARNBURNER SOUTHERN GLORY

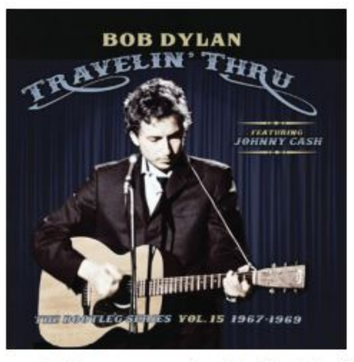
The Marshall Tucker Band
New Year's in New Orleans

Largely unknown to anyone under age 50, the Marshall Tucker Band was one of the original Southern bands, mixing country, blues, and Western swing with sweet rock-and-roll. This radio tape from New Year's Eve 1978-'79 finds the band at its peak, led by guitar flash Toy Caldwell, rhythm ace George McCorkle, and bassist Tommy Caldwell – all, sadly, gone now.

"Ramblin'" is a barnburner, with Toy's thumb-powered guitar licks on wild, even manic display. Written by McCorkle, the hit "Fire On The Mountain" deploys Toy to pedal steel for some minor-key high lonesome. "This Ol' Cowboy" brings jazzier textures out for a breezy jam, while the ballad "Can't You See" remains Marshall Tucker's best-known track and is captured here in full FM glory, despite Toy's hoarse vocal.

A highway-truckin' epic, "24 Hours At a Time" remains a show-stopper with extended jamming, sax solos, and long guitar improv. Like Wes Montgomery, Toy's thumb was a deadly picking weapon at any tempo. We also get a rare, string-popping George McCorkle guitar solo.

The Marshall Tucker Band is still touring behind singer Doug Gray, but this fiery live set captures the original band in their '70s Southern glory. Hard not to love it madly. – ***PP***



Bob Dylan (featuring Johnny Cash)
Travelin' Thru, 1967-1969: The Bootleg Series Vol. 15

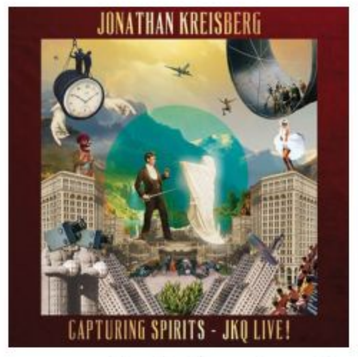
The music Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash made together in Nashville over two days in February, 1969, emanated from what was less a formal recording effort than a musical first-date. And like most first dates, their loose, genial meeting was a search for synchronicity, with results sublime and shaky.

But that's hardly a knock on *Travelin' Thru, 1967-1969*, the 15th installment in the enduring Dylan Bootleg Series. For while only a single track from these sessions ("Girl from the North Country") made it onto Dylan's classic *Nashville Skyline*, what remained was an array of duets underscoring a shared musical vocabulary. Highlights include several Cash standards – a Sun-styled "Big River" and a gliding "I Still Miss Someone" – alongside the Dylan-penned "Wanted Man," which Cash debuted days later at San Quentin State Prison in California.

It was exclusively an acoustic affair with the headliners; Dylan often used a Martin 000-18 at the time, though he appeared on the *Skyline* cover with a Gibson J-200 given to him by George Harrison.

That said, some of the instrumental highlights are courtesy of others; Carl Perkins (then backing Cash) shines on a half-dozen songs, and bluegrass banjo legend Earl Scruggs breezes through "Nashville Skyline Rag," recorded for a 1971 PBS special featuring Scruggs.

Ultimately, *Travelin' Thru* is an earthy document chronicling the fusion of two cultures – and one of the earliest excursions into the then-fledgling world of country-rock. – ***Sean McDevitt***



Jonathan Kreisberg Quartet
Capturing Spirits

Armed with his trusty Gibson ES-175, Kreisberg is on a whole 'nuther level of guitarmanship and proves it throughout this live recording from Germany. In "The Lift," Jonathan delivers a fiercely contemporary improv that somehow straddles past contemporary approaches, interweaving the complexity of

Toy Caldwell photo: Sidney Smith.

CHECK THIS ACTION

STEADY FREDDY

By Dan Forte

A covey of never-released songs by any of blues' "Three Kings" is big news, be it Albert, Freddy, or B.B. But Freddy King's *The Mojo* – featuring alternate takes of vocal tunes such as "See See Baby" and instrumentals like "Heads Up" – is especially welcome.

When I was eight years old, knowing I was into instrumentals by Duane Eddy and the Ventures, my father bought an album for me called *Let's Hide Away And Dance Away* by a guitarist I'd never heard of. The huge man dwarfing a Les Paul on the cover was named Freddy King, and though it was years before I took up guitar, I eventually learned all 12 instrumentals on the album, along with attempts at the solos, and did the same for *Freddy King Gives You A Bonanza Of Instrumentals*, a.k.a. *Freddy King Goes Surfin'*.

Although Freddy later played counter-culture ballrooms like both Fillmores and Austin's Armadillo World Headquarters, he didn't ride the late-'60s/early-'70s blues revival wave the way headliners B.B. and Albert did. Which is ironic, because Freddy was the first King to cross over to a young white audience. When guitar instrumentals by Eddy, the Ventures, and the Fireballs were all the rage, he scored a hit with "Hide Away," cracking *Billboard*'s Top 40 in 1961.

But "Hide Away" was the B-side of "I Love The Woman," a slow blues that transfixed a young Eric Clapton. In a 2014 interview, E.C. said, "There are radical moments – like the first time I heard 'That'll Be The Day' by Buddy Holly or 'I Love the Woman' by Freddy King or 'Crossroads Blues' by Robert Johnson. I can remember the room I was in and everything."

Interestingly, because of the picture of King on the cover of *Freddy King Sings*, Clapton bought a Les Paul. But he inadvertently got a sunburst with humbuckers, rather than the goldtop with P-90s that Freddy sported. And the guitar world would never be the same.

King is holding an ES-345 on the cover of *Bonanza*, but it's unclear whether he used it on the sessions for that album. Employing a plastic thumbpick and metal fingerpicks, his stinging tone was much the same in his early days, regardless of the guitar. Later, sometimes playing a 355, his tone was best described by Jimmie Vaughan, who backed him several times in his pre-Thunderbirds days: "He was the loudest guitar player I ever heard."

It was "Hide Away" that Clapton cut with John Mayall, with Peter Green and Mick Taylor keeping the Bluesbreakers tradition going with "The Stumble" and "Driving Sideways," respectively. Taylor's "Snowy Wood" also owes a debt to Freddy, and Clapton leaned on Freddy's vocabulary many times over the years, uncannily aping him on *From The Cradle*'s "Tore Down."

I interviewed Freddy for *Guitar Player* in '76, a couple of months before he died at age 42. It was short – about 25 minutes – but I was able to recycle portions of it into future liner notes and a '97 *GP* cover story. For the latter, I interviewed Bill Willis, who played bass on Freddy's King Records sessions, and later, organ with Jimmie Vaughan. He confirmed my suspicion that King and pianist/arranger Sonny Thompson weren't aiming at a blues audience with the instrumentals; they had their ears open to Duane, the Ventures, et al.

Born in Gilmer, Texas, King spent a formative period in Chicago. He told me that he and Magic Sam worked up "Hide Away," admitting, "We got that from Hound Dog Taylor." It makes sense that it would be a slide number, because the opening lick is reminiscent of "Steel Guitar Rag."

When I think of Chicago blues, the guitarists who come to mind are Robert Lockwood, Jimmy Rogers, and Hubert Sumlin. When I think of Texas blues, it's T-Bone Walker, Pee Wee Crayton, and Gatemouth Brown. Though he cited Rogers as an influence, Freddy King wasn't in either camp.

I didn't consciously learn those instrumentals; at some point, I'd listened to them so many times they just found their way under my fingers. As impassioned an artist as King was, there was a logic to his playing. As Vaughan said, "His playing sounded like it was worked out, but it wasn't. That's just the way he played."

The outtakes on *The Mojo* could have easily been released, and no doubt would've been just as memorable and successful as the now-familiar takes. "See See Baby" sounds every bit as good, as does "Just Pickin'." "High Rise" (under its alternate title, "Closed Door") sounds even better here, sans horns. The vinyl LP's mono fidelity is fantastic, and five 1968 demos, including three instrumentals, sound better than the resultant albums for the Cotillion label.

He may not have been "The King of the Blues" or "King of the Blues Guitar," but for a time he was the one blasting out of transistor radios.

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Frank Marino

Metheny, Martino, and Abercrombie with the classic fatbody tones of Tal Farlow and Wes Montgomery.

With deft acoustic support of bass, drums, and piano, the guitarist's electric archtop soars elegantly on "Relativity," interweaving chords and single-note runs effortlessly. Sometimes Kreisberg's gravity-defying solos sound like actual flying. His version of "Body and Soul" is absolutely mesmerizing – it's a nearly 90-year-old composition that sounds perfectly contemporary in Jonathan's hands. "Wild Animals We've Seen" kicks off with a flurry of arpeggios that dazzle with harmony and chops that would make a shredder blush.

If you don't know Jonathan Kreisberg yet, grab this album without fear – his improvisations are melodic and approachable, yet intriguing and full of harmonic depth. In all, *Capturing Spirits: JKQ Live!* celebrates one of current jazz's best guitarists and ensembles. Don't miss it. ***– Pete Prown***

Hershel Yatovitz
Narrabeen

As Chris Isaaks' Silvertone guitarist of 25 years, Yatovitz is a veritable atlas of tones. He describes this solo instrumental album as "cosmopolitan surf twang."

In that spirit, his 10 originals sample a broader range of styles than the prevailing mentality that instrumental guitar automatically equals surf music. He shifts from various Latin rhythms (cha cha, samba, uptempo tango) to the funky "Come On Up," a crunchy rocker in "Mr. Slam," the frenetic classic-surf "Fast Layne," complete with bongos, and the unaccompanied ballad "Droplets."

Delivering melodic hooks and solid arrangements, the unabashed guitar junkie employs the octave-higher neck of luthier Saul Koll's double-neck Hy-Lo before switching to a Czechoslovakian-made Jolana Tornado model on "Just Between Us." Also onboard are a 1956 Strat, a '56 Les Paul Junior with a second pickup, a Jerry Jones baritone, his custom Koll Yatocaster, and other makes and models.

Numerous amps and pedals also enter the fray, and there's liberal whammy bar, reverb, delay, and tremolo. But rather than a patchwork quilt, it all contributes to a cohesive, distinctive whole.

If Yatovitz ever played one of the many surf festivals, he'd surely blow some minds. ***– Dan Forte***

Frank Marino
Live At The Agora Theatre

To some, he was a myth, a legend – a name spoken by elder guitarists lost along the infinite corridors of time. *Live At The Agoura Theatre* marks the return of '70s guitar hero Frank Marino. Filmed in 2010, it's a stunning three-disc DVD box set performed at Cleveland's Agora Theatre. An accompanying 176-page book and photo album delves into Marino's past and the making of the box set.

An influence on many higher-profile guitarists, this release is a massive buffet of Marino's weighty post-Hendrix rock-fusion extrapolations. Older and newer material, converge into a sonic multi-verse of psychedelic jazz, blues-rock, acid jams, and pentatonic virtuosity. Marino plays better than ever. His group is fine-tuned with Marino orchestrating intoxicating dynamics and intensity.

The package includes "He's Calling," "Dragonfly," "Strange Dreams," and a suite that includes "Electric Reflections Of War," "Aftermath," and "The World Anthem." Marino also performs masterful versions of "Are You Experienced?," "Crossroads," and "She's Not There." The sound, editing, and cinematography are perfection. *Live At The Agora Theatre* is a testament to a guitarist who stands by his artistic principles, despite the slings and arrows of misfortune and musical trends. ***– Oscar Jordan***

John Moreland
LP5

The pride of Tulsa, Oklahoma, John Moreland finally won national recognition with his 2017 tour de force *Big Bad Luv*. Now he's back to prove it all over again with his fifth LP.

Many of Moreland's previous recordings have been solo outings with just his acoustic guitar, or at best minimal backing. This might seem fitting, as his songs are baldly honest, introspective, and haunting. And yet they seem to truly come alive with a backing band behind him, adding emphasis and even more color to the powerful, poignant lyrics. He's backed here by producer/drummer Matt Pence, bassist Bonnie Whitmore, and multi-talented multi-instrumentalist

extra EXTRA

BLACK STONE CHERRY
Black to Blues Volume 2

The Kentucky rockers' EP includes high-wattage covers of Freddy King, Robert Johnson, Otis Rush, Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James, and Son House standards. Vocalist/guitarist Chris Robertson and guitarist Ben Wells let rough riffs and sweaty solos fly. King's "Big Legged Woman" hangs on a main riff with slicing solos. Johnson's "Me and the Devil Blues" is cleverly turned into metallic R&B/funk. – ***BA***

DEAD MEN DON'T SURF
Dead Men Don't Surf

Ironically, the "debut" of DMDS packs decades of experience. Two Dick Dale alumni – Kerry Chester (rhythm guitar, keyboards, vocals) and Ron Eglit (lead, bass) – are joined by drummer Dusty Watson (John Blair, Agent Orange, Slacktone, the Sonics). Winning instrumentals exhibit the influence of Dale, Duane Eddy, the Ventures, and Ennio Morricone. Vocals are shakier, although the punky "Dead Men Don't Surf" is downright cool. – ***DF***

DON LATARSKI
Frozen Moments

A disciple of masters like Towner and Metheny, Latarski plays ambient acoustic music backed by serious guitar chops. The languid "The Dawning Moment" has a melody that will stay in your ear for days. The bubbling rhythms of "Shadow Crossing" conjure a hike in an Oregon forest, where Don submerges actual "water guitars" into streams and records the sounds wafting in the background. *Frozen Moments* is a sonic treat. – ***PP***

COCO MONTOYA
Coming In Hot

Gritty, blues-approved, and eclectic, Montoya blends all the earmarks of fine contemporary blues. Upper-echelon guitar playing permeates soul, R&B, and rock and roll styles like on the rollicking title track. Albert Collins' "Lights Are On But Nobody's Home" is jam-packed with tortured vocals and a master class in slow-blues guitar expertise. – ***OJ***

FRANK ZAPPA
The Hot Rats Sessions

Even 50 years later, Hot Rats sounds like a much-later jazz-rock record – giving you an idea how radical this music sounded in 1969. This six-disc box set delivers multiple versions of each cut, blending Zappa's wild guitar with polyrhythms, harmonic clusters, and ace musicianship. With his guitar a-blazing, Frank turned "Willie the Pimp" and "Peaches en Regalia" into utter fusion classics. – ***PP***

BIG BAND OF BROTHERS
A Jazz Celebration of the Allman Brothers Band

This orchestral jazz interpretation of the Allman repertoire commemorates the half-century anniversary of the ABB's debut album. Amid the brass and reeds, several guitarists and bassists are involved. Delivering scintillating, authentic slide-guitar lines is late-'90s Allman band member Jack Pearson. On "Stand Back" and "Statesboro Blues," he delivers solo work worthy of Duane or Dickey. – ***RK***

TOM FELDMANN
Tampa Red: Slide Guitar Wizard

This instructional DVD by acoustic blues maestro Feldmann explains in exquisite detail how to play the unique slide stylings of Hudson Whittaker, a.k.a. Tampa Red. But it's also so much more than that, offering a musical journey back in time to the 1930s and '40s. This is not just guitar technique; it's history re-told on six strings. – ***MD***

YASI HOFER
Freedom

The third album from Germany's Yasi Hofer straddles instrumental arena rock and gritty vocal soul-rock. Her Vai and Satriani influences congregate on a blossoming original aesthetic. Chops abound on "Skydiver," but the haunting "In Search for Change" and "Here I'll Stay" sheds her Youtube guitarist persona. Highlights include "Freedom," "Rollin' On," "Working Man's Life," and the funky "Midnight Feelings." – ***OJ***

RICHARD THOMPSON, JACKSON BROWNE, ETC.
If You're Going To The City: A Tribute To Mose Allison

Allison crossed over to more genres than probably any other jazz singer/songwriter. Here, the array paying homage stretches from Taj Mahal to Iggy Pop. Guitarists highlighted include Robbie Fulks, Dave Alvin, Ben Harper (dueting with Charlie Musselwhite), and pedal-steeler Greg Leisz. Included is a DVD of *Ever Since I Stole The Blues*, the 2005 documentary on this true American original. – ***DF***

MIKE OSBORN
Unbroken

Mike Osborn's third album is a musical diary of hardships and heartache. With bold guitar playing throughout, Osborn mines a variety of rock templates with a Southern accent. Osborn spices up the ballad "Time Machine" with reggae rhythms, rocks out on "Why" and "Complicated Lie," and performs impassioned country rock on "Family Crest" and "Won't Send." – ***OJ***

CHARLIE KARP
Runnin' Back to You

Karp first emerged with the Buddy Miles Express in the early '70s and later formed the bands White Chocolate and Slo Leak. This album, completed shortly before his death in 2019, serves as a valedictory. It showcases Karp's weathered voice and instrumental talents as soloist and accompanist, particularly on his gritty treatment of the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand." – ***RK***

TOTO
40 Tours Around the Sun

Playing for their rabid fanbase in Europe, Toto reveals its live prowess on this DVD. Heavy rock, melodic pop, funk, and prog merge over 25 cuts, all exhibiting Steve Lukather's gravity-defying axe work. He torches hits like "Hold the Line" and "Rosanna," and the jazz-rock fusion of "Jake to the Bone," with chops, tone, and taste. Luke's magnificent solo on "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" is a show-stopper. – ***PP***

Wayne Hancock

John Calvin Abney, who also added fire to Moreland's *Big Bad Luv* live shows.

Moreland's best songs tell of living like a balancing act between salvation and damnation: his lyrics are smart – and at times, menacing. As he kicks off the opening song, "Harder Dreams," "All the gods are watching wars on television / placing their bets and telling jokes about religion."

Standout tracks here include "East October," an homage to friend and fellow songwriter Chris Potter who was killed in a tour-van accident in '16. The song moves between touching tribute and rocking anthem at the drop of a hat – with stylish electric guitar work and organ thanks to Abney. "A Thought Is Just A Passing Train" is a slow-burning fuse while "Let Me Be Understood" sizzles with Abney's harmonica counterpoint.

Gorgeous. ***– Michael Dregni***

Wayne Hancock

Man of the Road: The Early Bloodshot Years

Since his debut way back in 1995, Wayne "The Train" Hancock has recreated the glory years of honky-tonk, country, and western swing while playing a sort of endless tour and proving himself a true man of the road. This LP offers a sort of career-spanning greatest-hits collection, including live tracks and rarities, dating back to his stellar "Thunderstorms And Neon Signs" up to 2009's *Viper Of Melody*.

Hancock may be the agitator, but it's the backing band he brings together that has created some of the best guitar-fueled country music going. He often has at least two guitarists with him and gives them all many a chorus of solo space. Plus, he typically eschews drums, opting for a traditional upright string bass to hold down the bottom end – and often solo, too.

Hancock's band has been a game of musical chairs for phenomenal guitarists. Among the best are Dave "LeRoy" Biller, Paul Skelton, and Izak Zaidman; and steel guitarists Lloyd "The Professor" Maines, Jeremy Wakefield, and Anthony Locke.

In fact, there's so much great guitar work here it's tough to know where to begin. Every track's a standout, but perhaps the best is a live "Johnny Law" with sizzling double-stop-laden solos from Biller and Skelton. Whoa! ***– MD***

Pink Floyd

The Later Years

The post-Roger Waters era of Pink Floyd remains controversial – was it Floyd or really guitarist David Gilmour's rebranded solo career? This massive, 16-disc box brings focus to the Gilmour era with 1987's *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* updated with recent studio additions. As heard on the hit "Learning to Fly," it was a surgically precise re-creation of '70s Floyd, replete with Strat solo and soulful female backing vocals. While lacking Waters' supremely cynical lyrics, the music is otherwise Floydian.

There are seven unreleased tracks from 1994, including a demo of "High Hopes" and "Blues I," a mid-tempo blues that never made it past a studio jam. You get the full 1990 Knebworth concert and remixed *Delicate Sound of Thunder* live album; also five terrific unreleased live cuts. A '94 tape of "One of These Days" roars with Gilmour's echoey steel-guitar; also cue up founder Syd Barrett's psych classic "Astronomy Domine," which the latter-day Floyd covers to perfection.

Look for another 11 discs of high-definition content, including *hours* of video content and 5.1 Blu Ray remixes of *The Division Bell* album – oddly, there's no regular CD version here. Overall, this box presents a huge payload of Gilmour-led Floyd, with mournful Stratocaster solos by the score. Yet one can fairly ask, is it really Pink Floyd? You decide. ***– PP***

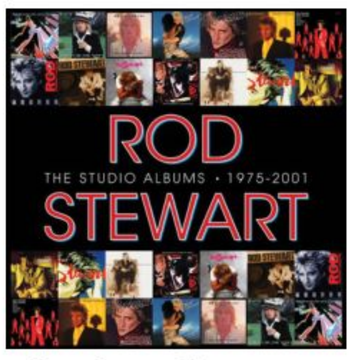
Jason James

Seems Like Tears Ago

Singer-songwriter Jason James' second album continues the Texas native's focus on traditional, late-20th century country. His raw voice has echoes of Lone Star legends George Jones, Ray Price and Ernest Tubb, as well as Bakersfield greats Merle Haggard and Wynn Stewart. His original lyrics possess the directness and simplicity of classic, no-frills honky tonk. Ballads such as the title song, "Simply Divine" and "Achin' Takin' Place" convey the feel of recordings Jones made in the mid '60s. Price's trademark shuffle beat drives "Foolish Heart." The buoyant, Cajun-flavored "Cry on the Bayou" could have been recorded in 1959.

James' sidemen greatly enhance the album's retro feel. Along with fiddler Cody Braun of the Austin band Reckless Kelly and bassist Jacob Marchese, former Kelly Willis sideman Geoff Queen ably doubles guitar and pedal steel. Well-versed in vintage styles, Queen's steel playing reveals his mastery of the styles of Nashville greats Lloyd Green, Don Helms and Hal Rugg. His chilling, high-register work on the ballad "Ole Used to Be" frames James' vocal perfectly. And Geoff's slashing, twang-drenched lead guitar infuses power into the churning "Move A Little Closer."

All told, James and his fine band aren't slavishly recreating the past. They're proving it never went out of style. **– *Rich Kienzle***



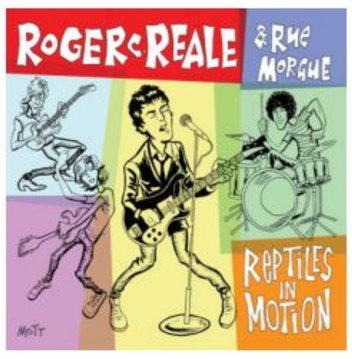
Rod Stewart

The Studio Albums 1975-2001

Blessed with that once-in-a-lifetime voice, Rod Stewart has covered a gamut of styles, all represented in this clamshell boxed set. It has 14 studio albums, from *Atlantic Crossing* to *Human*. Included are the good ("Hot Legs"), the bad ("Love Touch"), and the ugly (a truly horrifying synth-pop cover of Free's "All Right Now"). Top-notch guitarists (Jim Cregan, Gary Grainger, Billy Peek, Duran Duran's Andy Taylor, Jeff Golub, Robin Le Mesurier, etc.) and bassists (Phil Chen, Chic's Bernard Edwards, etc.) helped Stewart realize his crossover vision.

Leaving his ragged-yet-revered early style behind, Stewart brazenly embraced mainstream stardom. For some, '78's disco-drenched chart-topper "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" was the end of the universe; it wasn't. Listen closely how the guitars fluidly lock into the slinky groove. That's the open secret – how the guitars and the other instruments blend *together* to service these songs.

Countless big hits are obviously here, including "Infatuation," with Jeff Beck's fuzzy, stabbing guitar solos, but a collection like this entices listeners to dive into minor hits and album cuts. Gems include electric rockers ("Big Bayou," "Gi' Me Wings," "Red Hot in Black") and acoustic-tinged tunes ("You Got a Nerve," "Ain't Love a Bitch," "If Only"). **– *Bret Adams***



Roger C. Reale and Rue Morgue

Reptiles In Motion & The Collection

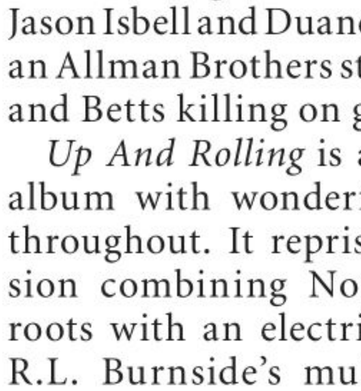
Envision the Ramones with more chops and you get an idea of what this band was like. Reale plays bass and delivers vocals ranging from raspy to snotty, backed by slamming drummer Hilly Michaels (Sparks, Ian Hunter) and ever-versatile guitarist G.E. Smith (Dylan, Hall & Oates, Jagger).

In '78, they cut *Radioactive*, which inexplicably flopped, resulting in their sophomore effort, *Reptiles In Motion*, languishing in some vault. Fortunately, *Reptiles*, which found Jimmy McAllister and Mick Ronson replacing Smith, is seeing the light of day 40 years later.

Smith struts his Chuck Berry chops on a blistering rendition of "Dear Dad," one of only three covers, and Ronson locks into Keith Richards mode on "She's Older Now." At 1:10, "Kill Me" ranks as one of the fastest, shortest, greatest rockers.

Considering Reale's prolific songwriting, Rue Morgue ranks as one of the best kept secrets of the punk era. The group played its first gig, a record launch at Hurrah's in Manhattan in '78; unfortunately, it was also the trio's last live performance.

Reptiles is lumped with *Radioactive* on the CD *Collection* and is available separately on vinyl. Get one, get both, and watch your friends ask, "How can these guys not be huge rock stars?" **– *DF***



North Mississippi Allstars

Up And Rolling

Inspired by photographs taken of Cody and Luther Dickinson by Wyatt McSpadden in 1996, the North Mississippi Allstars' 11th album is fueled by their origins. A 25-page book with photographs accompanies the CD. A history of the band and background on Otha Turner, R.L. Burnside, and Junior Kimbrough are included. The group (along with Shardé Thomas singing throughout) re-imagines "What You Gonna Do" by the Staple Singers starring Mavis Staples with visceral results. "Mean Old World" gets the sweet treatment with Jason Isbell and Duane Betts. It segues into an Allman Brothers style jam with Luther and Betts killing on guitar.

Up And Rolling is a low-down swamp album with wonderfully played guitar throughout. It reprises the band's mission combining Northern Mississippi roots with an electric boogie aesthetic. R.L. Burnside's multi-instrumentalist grandson Cedric Burnside is featured on "Out On The Road" and "Take My Hand, My Precious Lord," and it cooks.

The sensual raw grind of "Peaches" and "Bump That Mother" is what NMA is all about. Luther is a master of tasteful note selection, placement, and use of space. The Mississippi Hill Country folk tradition continues with profound southern groove and joyful guitar work. **– *OJ* VG**

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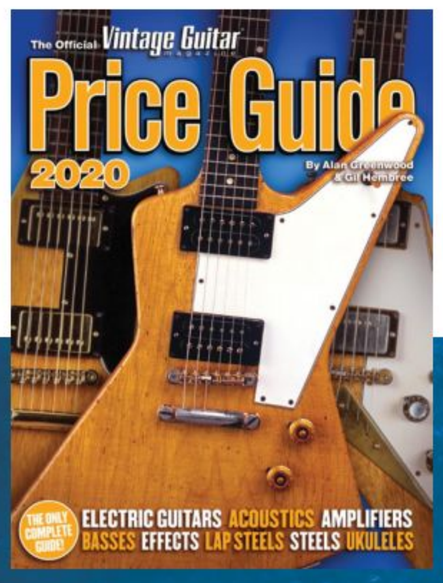

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AFFORDABLE JANGLE

Danelectro's 59X12

Renowned for econo electrics in the 1960s (including those manufactured under the Silvertone imprimatur) Danelectro, in its modern incarnation, has rolled out a parade of new models that retain the name's classic features while improving quality and remaining affordable.

The 59X12 has that classic masonite top and back, with spruce sides and a center block. Played acoustically, it resonates well. The maple neck (with pau ferro fretboard) has a flat profile and is comfortably wide, with sensible string spacing. Our test instrument had flawless fret work and a well-cut nut, set with low action.

The smartly designed chrome-plated bridge makes intonation and string changing (usually a chore with a 12-string) a breeze, while chrome die-cast knobs echo those used on yesteryear's Mosrites. As one might expect, a classic "seal" pickguard is standard, along with one Volume, one Tone knob and a selector toggle. Dual lipstick-tube humbuckers in the bridge, and a large single-coil in the neck are connected to a coil splitter on the Tone control, offering myriad tones.

Price: $499
www.danelectro.com

Plugged into a class-A tube amp, the 59X12 exhibited all the sparkle and chime one would want from an electric 12-string. Chording and single-note Byrds-like runs are a cinch. The classic Dano shorthorn body is extremely comfortable to play, sitting or standing. Better still, the tester stayed in tune and was well-intonated (another common concern with 12-strings) out of the box.

As an alternative to higher-priced electric 12-strings, 59X12 is a no-brainer for anyone on a budget – or, for that matter, anyone who wants a 12-string that plays and sounds good enough for a professional. ***– Bob Cianci***

Price: $185
www.analogman.com

FRESH FUZZ

The AnalogMan Peppermint Fuzz

Mike Piera is a living legend, having designed some of the coolest pedals in the guitar biz. His germanium-based AnalogMan Peppermint Fuzz is an evolution of the famed Arbiter Fuzz Face, with added tweaks, flexibility, and bitchiness.

Named for the 1967 song "Incense & Peppermints" by The Strawberry Alarm Clock, the true-bypass Peppermint Fuzz offers everything from warm-and-dirty boost to Jack White synth crunch. Accompanying controls for Volume and Fuzz, the Buzz knob affects *quality* of the fuzz, from hard to soft, and is also a bias that offers gated sounds when turned down. Working in concert, the three can yield everything from smooth overdrive to sputtering madness. In testing, sculpting proved easy for both humbuckers and single-coils. In addition, the internal trim pot can be adjusted to room temperature, adding further tonal options when used with the Buzz knob.

With the Fuzz cranked and Buzz hovering between 2 o'clock and maxed, triple-thick slabs of nasty are unleashed with a gorgeous vintage warble – cutting yet full, piercing without being shrill. The pedal's addictive edginess nails the trippy fuzz sounds of the '60s, but can be backed off for more-conservative sounds or personalized textures.

For an intense fuzz that offers a range of flavors, look no further than the AnalogMan Peppermint Fuzz. ***– Oscar Jordan***

MONDO MANDO

The Gold Tone F-12

Many guitarists attempting to pluck a mandolin for the first time are stymied by its eight strings and tuning. Gold Tone's F-12 "mando-guitar" offers a solution – a 12-string neck in standard tuning with a mandola-sized body for cool, chimey sounds that most ears will hear as a mandolin.

Well-made with a F-style body, satin finish, and solid construction, the imported F-12 has a spruce top with maple back and sides, and an adjustable walnut bridge. The neck's wide/slim profile emphasizes playing comfort, and one extra-cool feature is the zero-glide nut. The strings sit mostly on the polished fret next to the nut, not the nut itself – the nut's job is merely keeping the string from moving left or right, while the fret bears the downward pressure, resulting in better tuning and intonation.

The F-12 also has a passive piezo pickup and its tone is acceptable for live work; those wishing to upgrade can get a clip-on condenser mic and experiment with outboard preamps, as many acoustic/electric players do.

In-hand, it takes only a few seconds to acclimate to the F-12. While it's in standard tuning, the shorter-octave neck has frets much closer together than on a guitar, requiring an adjustment to technique. As on a traditional mandolin, tuning is critical, and the F-12 is stable. Even after some robust jamming, it stayed in tune, requiring only normal minor adjustments.

Price: $636
www.goldtonemusicgroup.com

Tonally, the F-12 is a lively box, evoking mandolin tones on the upper strings and, when you play full chords, something akin to a soprano guitar. Guitarists can use it to provide Kentucky-approved tones at their local folk or bluegrass jams, while others will find the F-12 works great for songwriting and recording. In the widely popular adult-alternative genre (think Arcade Fire or Molly Tuttle), this mando-guitar could be a nice tool, with its brash, effervescent tone and onstage cutting power. You'll certainly get questions about your new secret weapon.

The Gold Tone F-12 is a blast to play and explore – the perfect way to enter the mandolin universe without *any* learning curve. ***– Pete Prown***

GEARIN' UP

GRAPH TECH BASS RATIO TUNERS

Graph Tech Guitar Labs' Bass Ratio machine heads use varying ratios so one rotation of any key results in the same one-tone pitch change. They are available for four-, five-, and six-string instruments, with Y-style or clover-leaf buttons.

BOSS SY-1000 GUITAR SYNTH

Boss' SY-1000 Guitar Synthesizer crafts sounds using 10 oscillator waveforms, six filter types, amplifier control, two LFOs, and two 16-part step sequencers for automating pitch, filter, and amplitude parameters. Its patches can be built with three simultaneous instruments and combined by the user.

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES LIFE PEDAL V2

EarthQuaker Devices Life Pedal V2 distortion uses the same blendable octave up fuzz/booster as the original, but adds expression-pedal control over the octave blend and Flexi-Switch footswitches. Other features include three-way clipping switch and a second stage of clean boost.

Got something new and cool? Let us know at www.VintageGuitar.com/Gearin-Up-Submission

COCK OF THE WALK

Jam Pedals' Rooster Limited

Red leather and zippers sound like fodder from someone's '80s wardrobe, or maybe Amsterdam's red-light district. But in the hands of the crew at Jam Pedals, such saucy accessories work on a stompbox.

Jam's limited-edition Rooster treble boost features what *must* be an industry first – a zipper on the back panel. Unzipped, it reveals a Lucite window showing the pedal's point-to-point hand-wired innards and top-shelf components; a true-bypass footswitch, carbon-comp resistors, Tropical Fish capacitors, and, at its heart, a military-spec germanium OC44 transistor. Controls are a boost Level knob (chicken-head, natch) and a three-way toggle to boost bass, treble, and mid EQ positions.

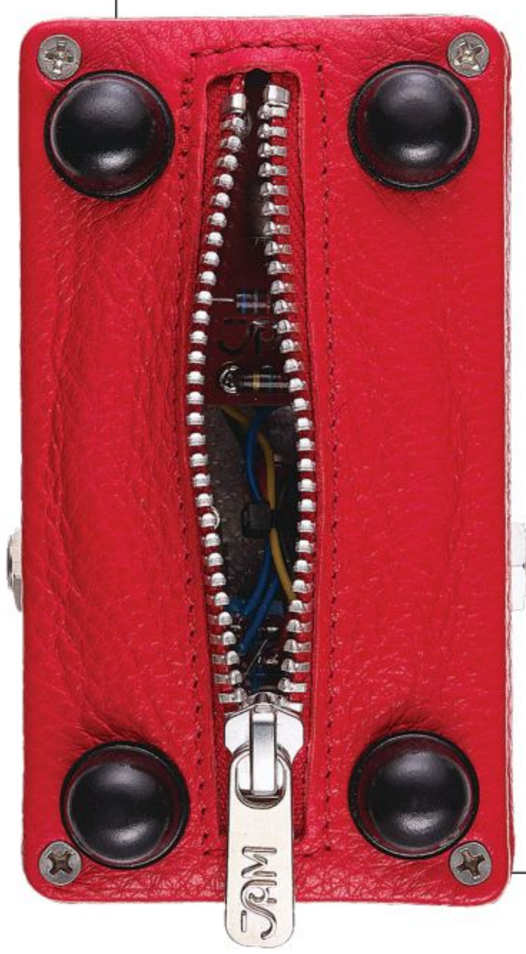
Price: $349
www.jampedals.com

Running with a Gibson Les Paul Standard, Fender Custom Shop reissue Strat, and Marshall JVM 2x12 combo, the Rooster offered a smooth, open, punchy boost with the toggle in the Bass position, while Treble and Mid produced a focused notch to the boost, pulling back lows and tightening low-end while boosting mids and highs.

While all positions worked well regardless of the guitar or the amp settings, the Rooster really shined in the Bass position with the Strat running though the clean channel, where it punched up the tone and added complexity. The Treble and Mid settings also worked well with the Gibson running through the amp's overdrive channel, driving it harder, with more sustain and attack, all while avoiding harsh or extraneous fuzziness.

The Rooster Limited ships with a silk bag, wood box, die-cast metal back plate (for board mounting), and a nifty plug that turns off the battery when inserted in the nine-volt socket.

While looking cool and quirky, the Rooster Limited's circuit and features are well-designed and render refined, functional tones. – ***Phil Feser***



Price: $140
www.xotic.us.com

SMOOTH SWELLING

Xotic Effects' XVP-250K

For ultimate control of your rig, it's tough to beat a good volume pedal. Incorporating top-notch components and a durable design, the XVP-250K High-Impedance Volume Pedal from Xotic Effects may be just the ticket.

Housed in a compact and lightweight aluminum casing, the XVP-250K uses high-quality potentiometers to maintain signal integrity while a nylon pivot bushing and rack pinion design that eschews string operation enhances durability yet results in smooth, even volume swells. In addition, the pedal is hand-wired with cloth-covered wire.

How well does the rack pinion design perform? In testing, it produced an effortless throw and solid consistency during sweeps. And though it uses less space than most volume pedals, the XVP-250K feels sturdy enough to withstand all measures of onstage abuse with no noticeable tone loss. It's true-bypass and comes with a tuner out jack, so functionality is stellar. That smaller footprint may take some getting used to, but quick volume flutters and returns to precise volume mix levels within a song proved a breeze.

If you're looking to take command of every aspect of your rig, the XVP-250K is worth investigating. Also check out Xotic's XVP-25K, a volume pedal for active instruments that can be used in the effects loop. – ***Oscar Jordan***

LUSH LIFE

The Victoria Deluxe 1x12

Price: $2,450
www.victoriaamp.com

The realities of the modern performing guitarist working the club circuit have less to do with big amps and everything to do with getting the best possible sound out of the smallest possible package. A good front-of-house operator and a well-placed mic will save back pain and let the player focus on their music, not how to avoid a hernia.

Inspired by the classic amplifiers designed by Leo Fender in the late '50s, the 20-watt Victoria Deluxe 1x12 combo is dressed in black Tolex. Its circuit is based on the Fender AB763 Deluxe Reverb, but without a Normal channel and tremolo, which prevents the signal loss associated with that period's blackface amps. It uses fixed-bias 6V6s, an all-tube transformer, and reverb via full-sized Accutronics tank. Three inputs and controls for Volume, Treble, Bass, and Reverb offer a range of tonal selections. There's also a handy half-power switch for low-volume recording and quicker breakup.

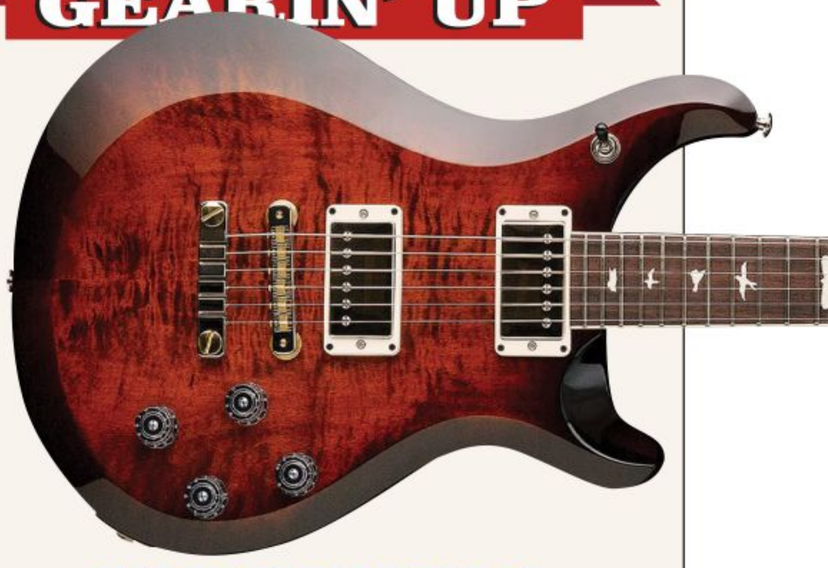
The amp's Custom Eminence Victoria 12" speaker works seamlessly with the other components to produce smooth tones with plenty of lush throatiness and snap. In testing, Teles, Les Pauls, and Strats created a broad spectrum of malleable sounds with chunk and spank. Lacking the earthier and glassier tones of its Fender counterpart, it yields a shimmer, punch, and clean articulation that performs superbly as a standalone amplifier or with stompboxes. At stage volume, its speaker provides the kind of sonic dispersion found in larger enclosures.

Minus a midrange knob, the Victoria Deluxe is a plug-in-and-go wonder that compels the user to dial-in EQ and volume levels swiftly so they can get down to business without all the dialing that can accompany having more knobs. Using the neck pickup, Input One yields beautifully smooth, robust tones, with plenty of substance and expression. The Victoria Deluxe holds dominance over that rare middle ground between the warmth and cleanliness of a jazz amplifier and the attitude and command of a rock amp. Cranking the Volume adds multi-purpose chunkiness, clarity, and grit. The Reverb is gorgeous, providing sweet slapback and radiant chime, perfect for rockabilly, country, and blues. It's also the ideal host for a variety of time-based or dirty stompboxes.

The Victoria Deluxe 1x12 is the perfect size for small-to-medium club dates. Offering superb sounds with upscale resonance, it's perfect for producing sweet high-end sounds in the most portable of packages.

– Oscar Jordan

GEARIN' UP



PRS S2 MCCARTY 594

PRS Guitars' S2 McCarty 594 uses the company's 58/15 S pickups with two Volume and push/pull Tone controls. It has a 22-fret mahogany neck with bound rosewood fretboard, PRS zinc two-piece bridge, vintage-style tuners, and Pattern Vintage neck shape.

ELECTRO-HARMONIX 2020

The EHX-2020 is a small-format tuner with true-bypass switching, color LED display, tuning range of B^0 (30.87Hz) to B^7 (3951.07Hz), flat-tuning capability, and a nine-volt power supply.

REVEREND ROUNDHOUSE

Reverend Guitars' Roundhouse is a set-neck/single-cut guitar with korina body, the company's HA5 humbuckers, flame-maple top, adjustable stop-tail bridge, and pau ferro fretboard. It's available in Violin Brown, Transparent Black, and Transparent Turquoise.

EARTHY ALL OVER

The Schertler Unico

Price: $1,488
www.schertler.com

Schertler began building acoustic amps in the early aughts to complement their popular line of contact microphones. The Unico is their latest iteration, combining a 10" woofer and 1" dome tweeter with 250 (200, plus 50 more when bi-amped) watts of power in a 31-pound package. It has five inputs, including a CD/computer and a stereo effects loop, plus three channels with full EQ – two with XLR inputs for a vocal mic or other low-impedance connections.

Tested using a Taylor 410 CE with all tone controls set flat, the Unico sounded very pleasing; tweaking the highs a bit and scooping mids with the parametric Mid control produced a well-balanced accompaniment tone for strumming. Adding a bit of gain brought up the punch, accentuating body taps and string popping – perfect for the modern fingerstyle player. The Unico flawlessly handles extreme dynamics.

The tone stack (Low, Mid, High) provides 15dB of boost/cut, allowing a range of tones from booming to sparkly. Midrange spans 300 Hz to 3.3 kHz, to pinpoint the sweet spots of a variety of instruments. It took seconds to dial in an earthy tone from an electric resonator. Even at high volume, the sound was clear, with no distortion, though the Taylor's strong low-end meant reaching for a quick fix via the Low Cut button, which removes frequencies below 180 Hz, leaving a well-rounded tone with enough bottom to feel full. The Unico's digital reverb ranges from just a hint to Dick-Dale-esque wash without getting muddy. Even set at full, it retained plenty of fundamental guitar tone.

From its light weight to plethora of usable features, the Unico's versatility is a testament to Schertler's understanding of the acoustic musician. ***– Julian Burtell***

Price: $229
www.walrusaudio.com

THE EQUALIZER

Walrus Audio's EB-10

Tone is the most mysterious, elusive part of the guitar experience, largely because each player hears equalization so differently. Walrus Audio attempts to address this challenge with the EB-10, a combination preamp, EQ, and booster guitar pedal. Does it handle the challenge of making something complicated less daunting?

The EB-10 has just three knobs and three cut/boost switches, so you don't need to be Eddie Kramer to use it. Walrus made another wise decision by foregoing frequency-range lingo (marked usually by Hz and kHz), instead using layperson's terminology – thus, the Low, Mid, and Hi controls, each with a 12-notch knob. These let the player boost or cut the three ranges, resulting in 700-plus combinations. In addition, a Live mode uses these settings in real time, while Preset lets you save your three favorite settings for easy retrieval.

So, how will you use the EB-10? In recording, the box lets you fine-tune your EQ with speed and precision; at gigs and rehearsals, it can combat the sonic challenges of a bad room or cut through a messy mix. Or simply push the Boost switch and it turns into a punchy MOSFET booster for solos.

No matter how it's employed, the EB-10 is a simple, powerful way to get your EQ under control and turn it into a sonic asset. ***– Pete Prown*** VG

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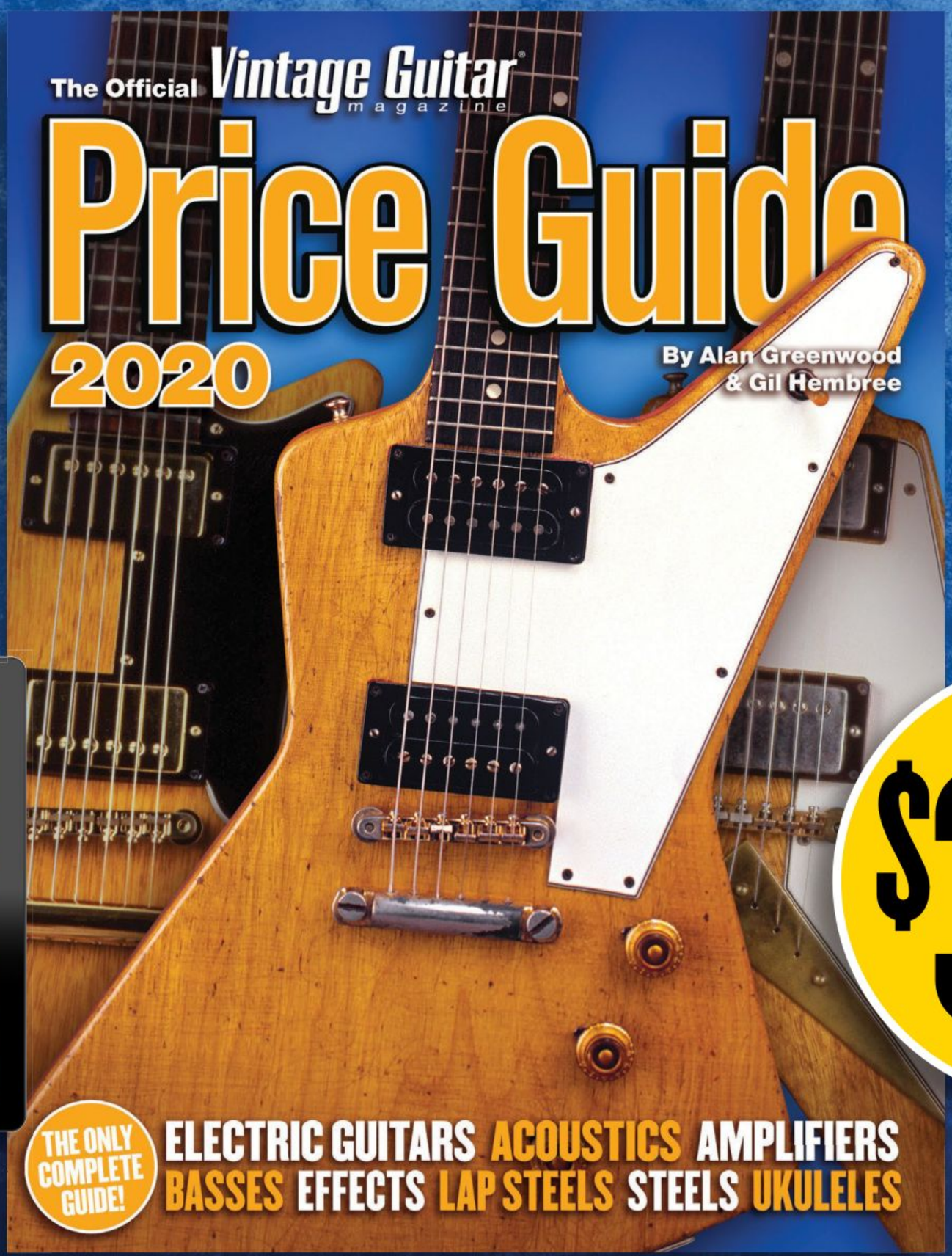

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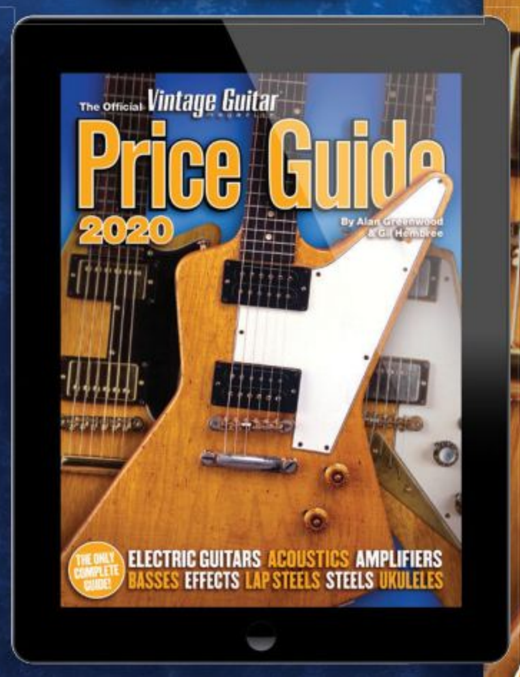

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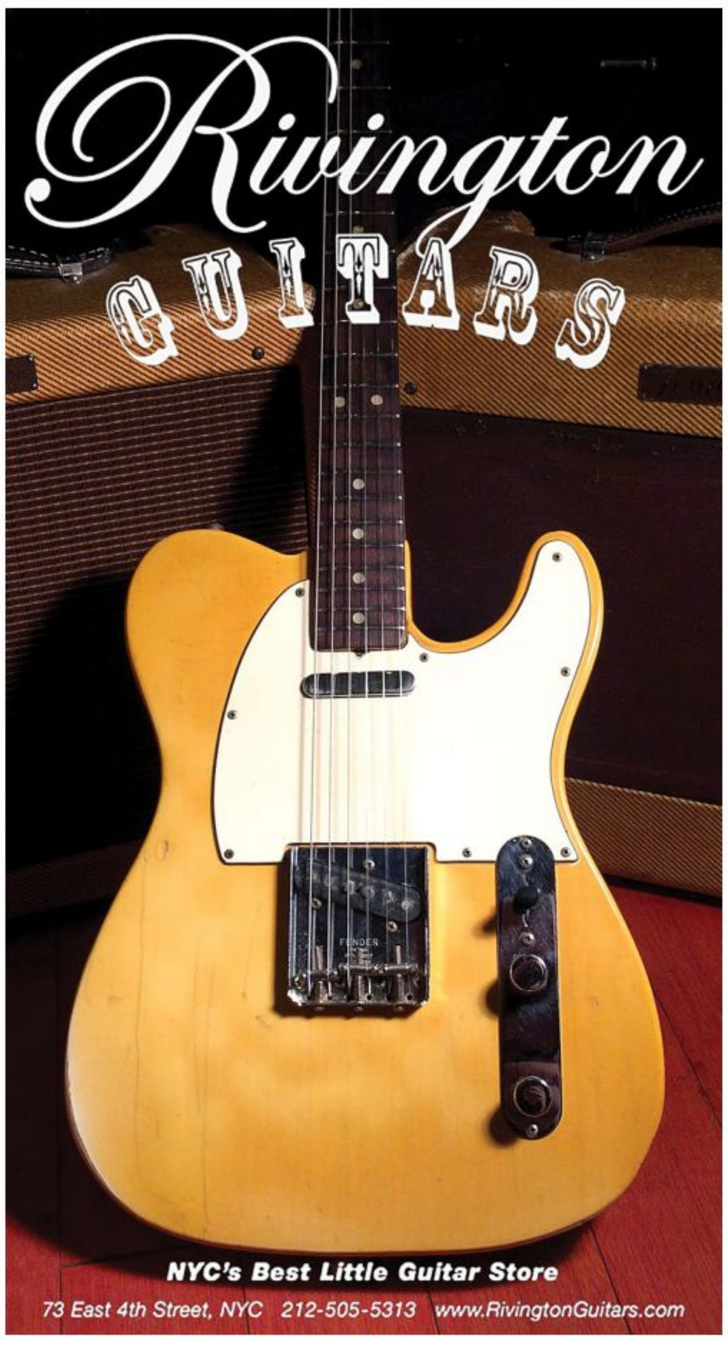

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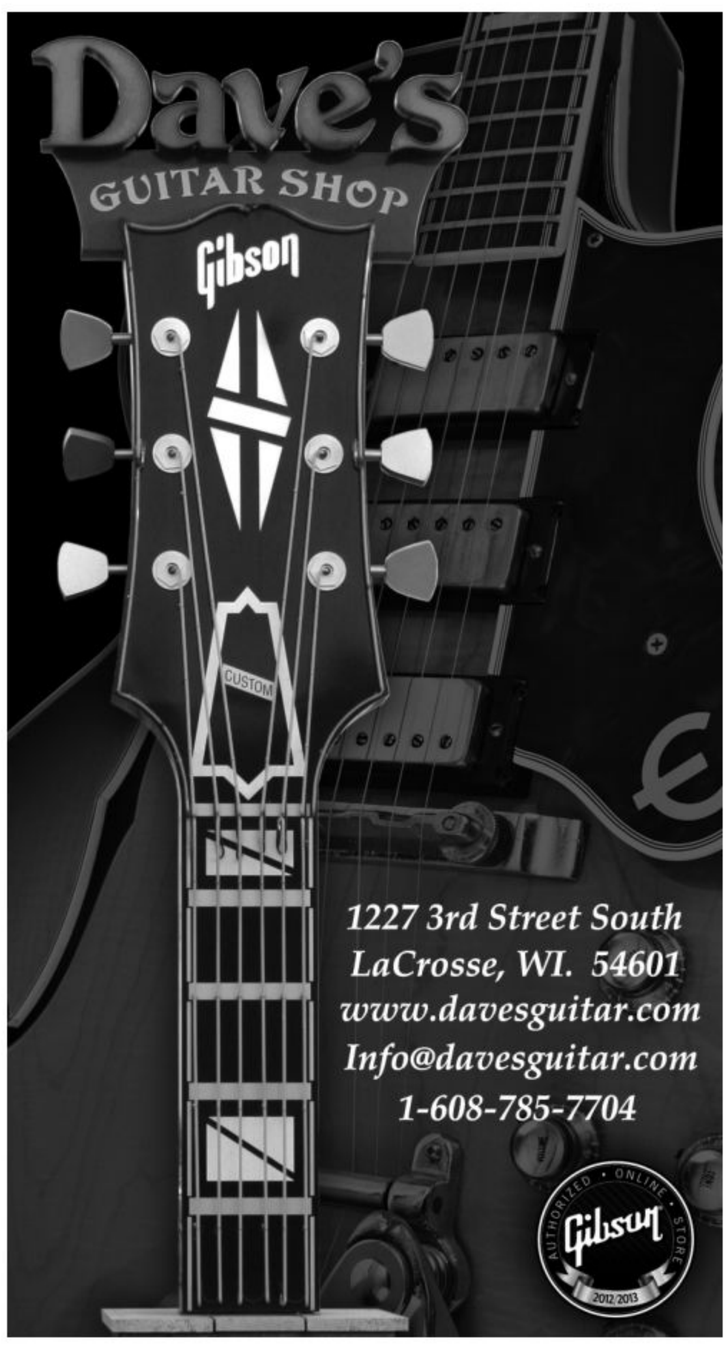

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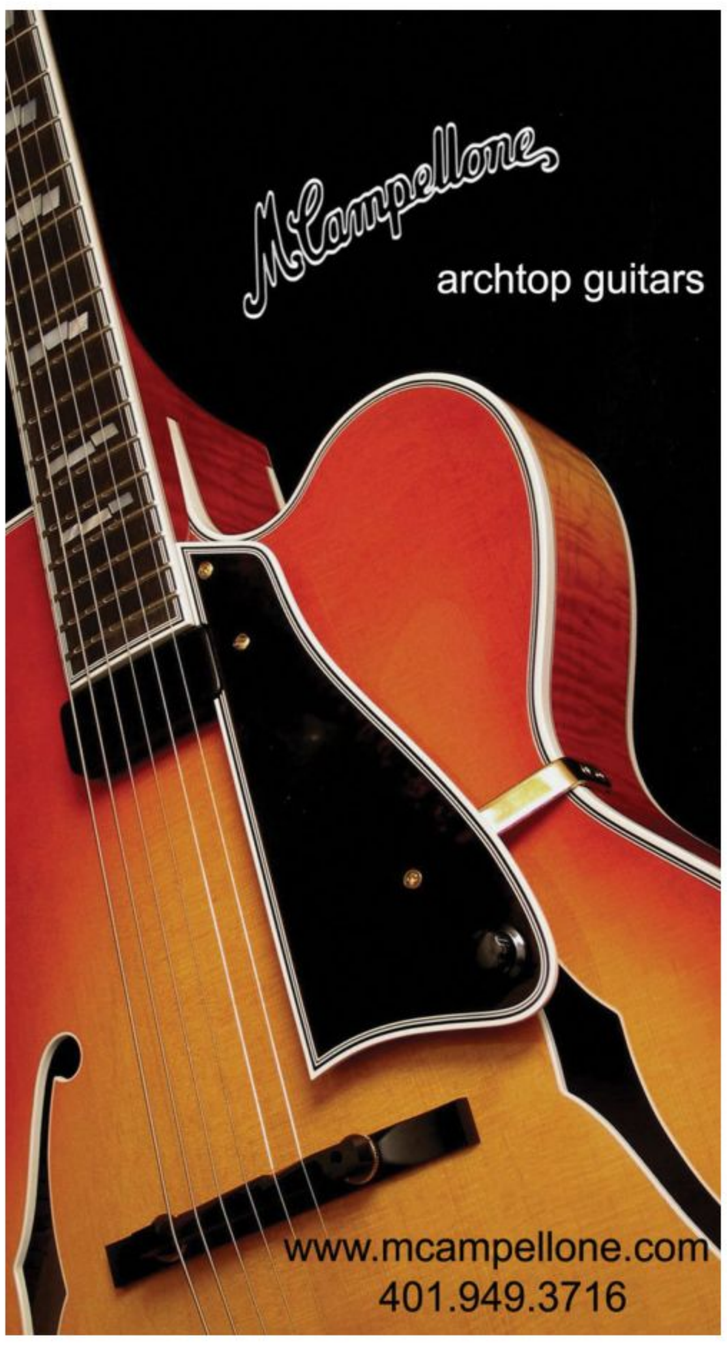
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1) Check out the Gibson portion of John Wesley Dickson's collection. From left are a '36 L-4, '69 Les Paul Deluxe, '57 ES-330TD, '64 EDS-1275, '65 ES-335TD, '88 Melody Maker, and '58 J-45.

2) Jim Camack has a nicely varied collection that includes this Gibson '60s Tribute Les Paul, 1973 Matsumuko-made Memphis LP copy, a modern American Telecaster and Stratocaster, a '71 Fujigen-made V copy, and an '05 Epiphone Sheraton Elitist.

3) Scott Chapin is a longtime subscriber whose amplifier choices are inspired by his favorite musical idiom, "It don't mean a thang if it ain't got that twang!" Proving it are (from front to back) his 1958 Fender Tremolux, '65 Vibrolux Reverb, '67 Twin Reverb, '67 Twin Reverb, '66 Deluxe Reverb, 'Bassman '59 reissue, '65 Tremolux Piggyback, '67 Bandmaster, '64 Concert, '66 Super Reverb, and '66 Showman.

4) Tony Sheedy believes Fender's reissue Strats made from 1982 through '84 are no-brainer collectibles. "With the nitro finish, cloth wire, small headstock, spaghetti logo, and three-way switch, these are great guitars," he said.

5) Anthony Perrotta, Jr. recently became enamored with Les Pauls, especially Burst Brothers '59 reissues. Here are the four he has scored so far, accompanied by his white '76 LP Custom.

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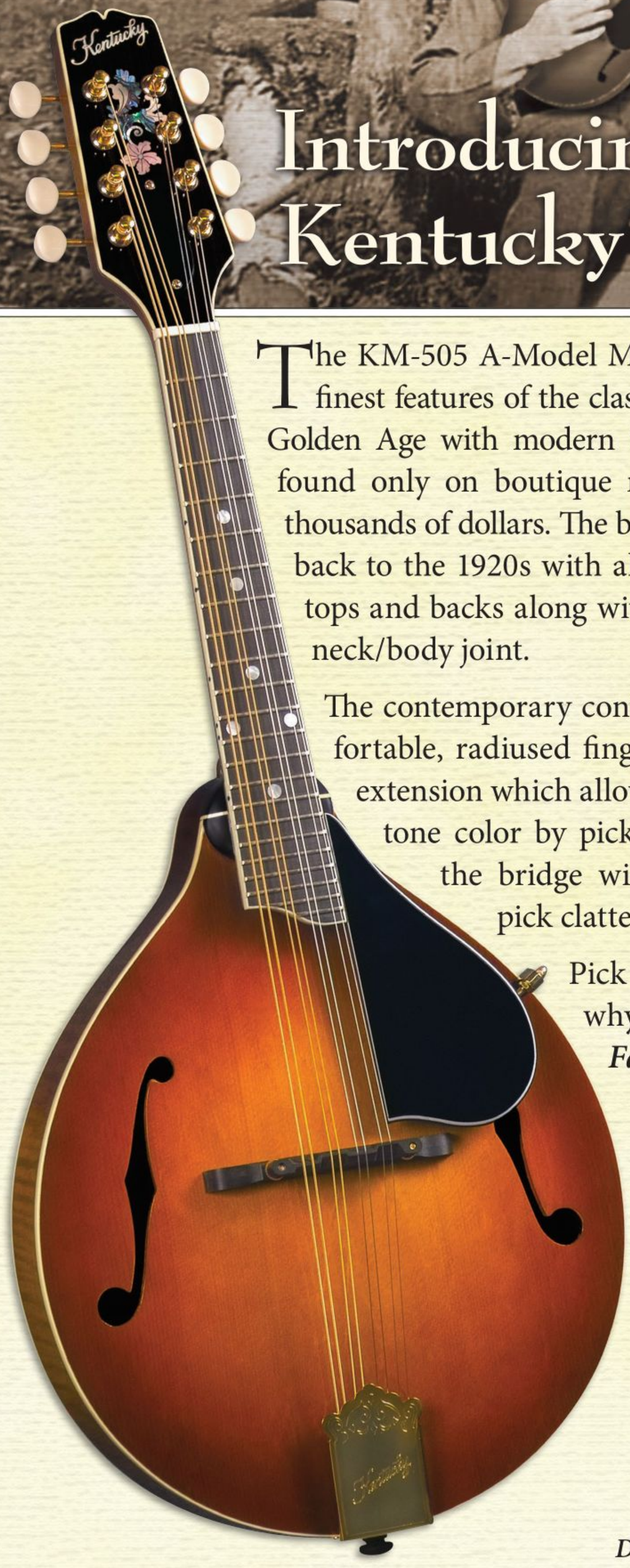

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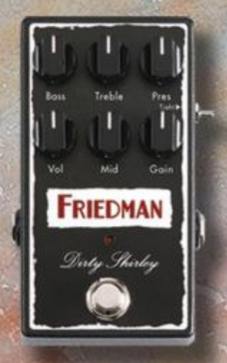

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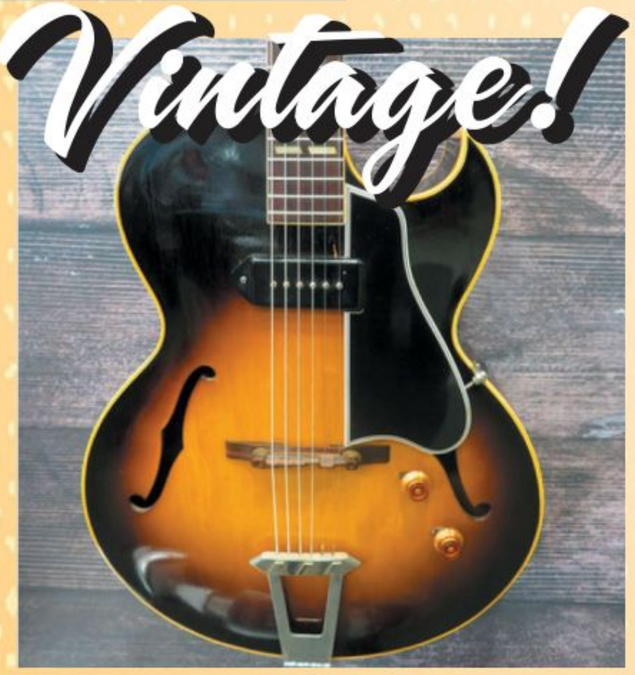

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